Denitrification by large NAT particles: the impact of reduced settling velocities and hints on particle characteristics


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Abstract. Vertical redistribution of HNO$_3$ through large HNO$_3$-containing particles associated with polar stratospheric clouds (PSCs) plays an important role in the chemistry of the Arctic winter stratosphere. During the RECONCILE (Reconciliation of essential process parameters for an enhanced predictability of Arctic stratospheric ozone loss and its climate interactions) campaign, apparently very large NAT (nitric acid trihydrate) particles were observed by the airborne in situ probe FSSP-100 (Molleker et al., 2014). Our analysis shows that the FSSP-100 observations associated with the flight on 25 January 2010 cannot easily be explained assuming compact spherical NAT particles due to much too short growing time at temperatures below the existence temperature of NAT ($T_{\text{NAT}}$). State-of-the-art simulations using CLaMS (Chemical Lagrangian Model of the Stratosphere; Grooß et al., 2014) suggest considerably smaller particles. We consider the hypothesis that the simulation reproduces the NAT particle masses in a realistic way, but that real NAT particles may have larger apparent sizes compared to compact spherical particles, e.g. due to non-compact morphology or aspheric shape. Our study focuses on the consequence that such particles would have reduced settling velocities compared to compact spheres, altering the vertical redistribution of HNO$_3$. Utilising CLaMS simulations, we investigate the impact of reduced settling velocities of NAT particles on vertical HNO$_3$ redistribution and compare the results with observations of gas-phase HNO$_3$ by the airborne Fourier transform spectrometer MIPAS-STR associated with two RECONCILE flights. The MIPAS-STR observations confirm conditions consistent with denitrification by NAT particles for the flight on 25 January 2010 and show good agreement with the simulations within the limitations of the comparison. Best agreement is found if settling velocities between 100 and 30 % relative to compact spherical particles are considered (slight preference for the 70 % scenario). In contrast, relative settling velocities of 30 % result in too weak vertical HNO$_3$ redistribution. Sensitivity simulations considering temperature biases of ±1 K and multiplying the simulated nucleation rates by factors of 0.5 and 2.0 affect the comparisons to a similar extent, but result in no effective improvement compared to the reference scenario. Our results show that an accurate knowledge of the settling velocities of NAT particles is important for quantitative simulations of vertical HNO$_3$ redistribution.
1 Introduction

Irreversible vertical redistribution of HNO₃ through denitri-

fication plays an important role in Arctic ozone depletion

chemistry (Solomon, 1999, and references therein). The

freezing-out of HNO₃-containing particles at altitudes above

c.a. 18 km followed by sedimentation delays the deactiva-
tion of ozone-destroying substances by limiting NOₓ (reactive ni-
trogen oxide radicals) availability from HNO₃ photolysis.

Furthermore, the formation of liquid and solid polar strato-
spheric cloud (PSC) particles and the reactive surface capable

of chlorine activation depend on HNO₃ availability in the
gas phase (Grooß et al., 2005, and references therein). Par-

cicles capable of denitrification are assumed to be composed of

NAT (nitric acid trihydrate), ice-coated NAT (or vice versa)

and potentially also further metastable phases composed of

HNO₃ and H₂O, with NAD (nitric acid dihydrate) being one

of the most likely candidates (Hanson and Mauersberger,

1988; Worsnop et al., 1993; Peter and Grooß, 2012, and refer-

ences therein). Potentially higher hydrates of HNO₃ are also

reported in the literature (e.g. Marti and Mauersberger,

1994; Tabazadeh and Toon, 1996), while experimental evidence

is sparse. Measurements of large HNO₃-containing particles

with significant potential to denitrify the lower stratosphere

were reported by Fahey et al. (2001).

In situ observations performed with the FSSP-100 (For-

ward Scattering Spectrometer Probe 100) during the Arctic

RECONCILE (Reconciliation of essential process parameters

for an enhanced predictability of Arctic stratospheric ozone

loss and its climate interactions) field campaign in early 2010

aboard the high-altitude research aircraft M-55 Geophysica

indicate potential NAT particles with unexpected large sizes

and high number densities (von Hobe et al., 2013; Molleker

et al., 2014). Such large NAT particles cannot easily be

explained with current theory of particle growth and sedi-

mentation assuming approximately spherical shape, compact

morphology and particle mass density described in the liter-

ature, as will be shown in this work for measurements made
during the flight on 25 January 2010.

The properties of micrometre-sized ice particles in the at-

mosphere are well known (Libbrecht, 2005, and references

therein). Depending on the crystallisation conditions, plates,

needles and more complex crystals are found, with many of

the particles found being considerably aspheric. For aspheric

ice particles, Westbrook (2008) estimated that the settling ve-

locities are significantly underestimated in simulations when

the settling characteristics of spherical particles are assumed.

Detailed knowledge on the shape and morphology of stratospheric

HNO₃-containing particles causing denitri-

fication is lacking. Films of HNO₃-containing particles near

the composition of NAT were characterised by Keyser

et al. (1993) under laboratory conditions. The authors re-

port granular micrometre-sized particles forming aggregates.

Grothe et al. (2006) analysed the shapes of micrometre-
sized NAT particles under laboratory conditions while inves-

tigating the crystallisation kinetics in the presence and ab-

sence of ice domains. In the absence of ice domains they

obtained plates with diameters of the order of microme-
tres, whereas needles grew in the presence of ice. Wagner

et al. (2005) reported NAD particles obtained in the cloud

chamber AIDA (Aerosol Interactions and Dynamics in the

Atmosphere), and their spectroscopic measurements are best

explained by assuming significantly oblate particles. Hence,

large HNO₃-containing particles in the stratosphere causing

denitrification might be partially composed of aspheric NAT

particles, and such particles might act as templates for large

NAT particles resulting from transformation of metastable

NAD into NAT.

In this work we use measurements of gas-phase HNO₃

from the airborne Fourier transform spectrom-

ter MIPAS-STR (Michelson Interferometer for Passive At-

mospheric Sounding-STRatospheric aircraft) (Piesch et al.,

1996; Woiwode et al., 2012, and references therein) deployed

aboard the high-altitude aircraft Geophysica to study denitri-

fication inside the Arctic polar vortex at the end of January

2010. The MIPAS-STR measurements resolve structures

resulting from vertical HNO₃ redistribution with vertical

calendar extensions of the order of 1 km and horizontal extensions

of several tens of kilometres along the flight track and pro-

vide information on cloud coverage and temperature.

Utilising simulations performed with CLaMS (Chemical

Lagrangian Model of the Stratosphere) (Grooß et al., 2005),

we analyse the formation conditions of potential NAT parti-

cles sampled in situ by the FSSP-100 during the Geophys-

ica flight on 25 January 2010. We investigate the sensitivity

of vertical HNO₃ redistribution to reduced sedimentation ve-

locities of simulated NAT particles and compare the results

with the gas-phase HNO₃ observations by MIPAS-STR. We

consider the hypothesis that the new saturation-dependent

parameterisation of heterogeneous NAT nucleation rates ap-

plied in CLaMS (Grooß et al., 2014) represents the masses

of the largest NAT particles in a realistic way, but that these

particles have larger apparent sizes compared to compact

spherical particles, e.g. due to aspheric shape and/or non-

compact morphology. Furthermore, we analyse sensitivity

runs considering temperature biases and modified NAT nu-

cleation rates to estimate the relative impact of these param-

eters on vertical HNO₃ redistribution. Finally, we discuss po-

tential properties of particles involved in denitrification in the

context of measured and simulated vertical redistribution of

HNO₃ and the in situ particle observations.

The combination of a literature review (above) and

measurements presented in this study lead to the follow-

ing assumptions considered in this work: (i) stratospheric

HNO₃-containing particles might be approximately spheri-

cal, but consist of loosely packed aggregates of smaller sub-

units and therefore have a reduced net particle mass den-

sity compared to compact spherical particles, or (ii) these

particles might be compact but significantly aspheric (e.g.

needle- or disk-shaped). Both assumptions would allow for

Atmos. Chem. Phys., 14, 11525–11544, 2014

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growth of particles with larger maximum sizes (e.g. diameter or length) compared to compact spherical particles, which are often assumed in simulations for simplification. Moreover, in both cases, characteristic reduced settling velocities were expected, altering the vertical redistribution of HNO₃.

This study complements a previous study by Woiwode (2013) and takes into account the finalised CLaMS setup for the Arctic winter 2009/10, considering the new saturation-dependent parameterisation of heterogeneous NAT nucleation rates introduced by Grooß et al. (2014) and based on the results by Hoyle et al. (2013).

2 Campaign, observations and model

The RECONCILE field campaign was carried out from January until March 2010 and was based in Kiruna, Sweden (von Hobe et al., 2013). Flights of the high-altitude aircraft M-55 Geophysica allowed for probing of the polar vortex with in situ and remote sensing instruments, including the particle probe FSSP-100 and MIPAS-STR. As discussed by Dörnbrack et al. (2012), a strong and cold vortex was formed in the middle of December 2009. The subsequent mid-winter period was exceptionally cold, allowing for the existence of synoptic-scale PSCs until the end of January 2010 and resulting in strong denitrification (Khosrawi et al., 2011). Spaceborne lidar observations indicated PSCs composed of mixtures of NAT and STS (supercooled ternary solutions, composed of H₂O, HNO₃ and H₂SO₄) inside the Arctic vortex at the end of January 2010 (Pitts et al., 2011).

The measurements from the FSSP-100 (de Reus et al., 2009) are designated for studying the abundances and sizes of micrometre-sized particles. The FSSP-100 is capable of detecting particles with sizes in the range of about 1.05 to 37.5 µm based on single forward scattering of laser light. The measurements are usually evaluated considering the Mie theory, assuming approximately spherical particles. Advanced methods (not applied here) allow for the determination of accurate size distributions of aspheric particles, taking into account a priori knowledge on particle shape (Borrmann et al., 2000). In this work, these methods were not applied due to the scope of this paper.

The MIPAS-STR limb- and upward-viewing measurements allow for the reconstruction of vertical profiles and cross sections of temperature and trace gas distributions along the flight track and provide information on cloud coverage. Details on the MIPAS-STR sampling and data processing are discussed by Woiwode et al. (2012). Forward calculations and inversion of the MIPAS-STR measurements were carried out using the forward model KOPRA (Karlsruhe Optimized and Precise Radiation transfer Algorithm; Stiller et al., 2002) and the inversion module KOPRAFIT (Höpfner et al., 2001), using the Tikhonov–Phillips regularisation approach (Tikhonov, 1963; Phillips, 1962). Retrievals were carried out utilising a regular vertical 0.5 km grid in the considered vertical range (grid-spacing increases at higher altitudes). Observations with tangent points lower than 12 km were omitted to avoid tradeoffs in regularisation. Vertical resolutions given in this context were estimated according to Purser and Huang (1993).

Temperature was retrieved utilising the CO₂ signatures in the microwindows from 810.1 to 813.1 cm⁻¹ and 955.6 to 958.5 cm⁻¹. Subsequently, HNO₃ was retrieved using the signatures in the microwindow from 866.0 to 870.0 cm⁻¹. Retrieval parameters were the target parameter (temperature or volume mixing ratio) along with wave-number-independent background continuum, spectral shift and O₃ as an additional parameter in the temperature retrieval. Total combined 1σ uncertainties were estimated considering uncertainties due to spectral noise, radiometric calibration, spectroscopic line data, line-of-sight knowledge, the adopted CO₂ profile (temperature retrieval) and retrieved temperatures (HNO₃ retrieval). Details on the MIPAS-STR retrieval and its validation are discussed by Woiwode et al. (2012).

No cloud filtering according to Spang et al. (2004) omitting stratospheric spectra with low cloud index values was performed. Practically all stratospheric limb measurements associated with the flight on 25 January 2010 showed cloud index values below 4, indicating that the flight was carried out inside PSCs. The highest limb views exhibited minimum cloud index values as low as 1.6 as a consequence of continuum absorption by PSC particles. The spectra, however, showed clear trace gas emission signatures suitable for retrievals of atmospheric parameters.

Moderate continuum-like contributions from aerosols are typical for mid-infrared limb observations of the upper troposphere–lower stratosphere (UTLS) region and are considered in the MIPAS-STR data processing by the reconstruction of wave-number-independent background continuum. For the flight on 25 January 2010, spectra with rather low cloud index values were included. Therefore, wave-number-independent background continuum was inverted logarithmically, resulting in low residuals between the observed and simulated spectra close to the noise level. This approach meets the high dynamical range in the continuum background between spectra associated with different vertical viewing angles, especially at the lower boundaries of PSCs, where the continuum background can decrease sharply.
Pressure-broadened tropospheric H$_2$O and CO$_2$ signatures as described by Höpfner et al. (2004), indicating scattering of tropospheric radiation by PSC particles into the MIPAS-STR field of view at high limb views, were not identified. However, the H$_2$O retrieval was not exploited for this flight considering the weak intensity of the utilised H$_2$O signature under the conditions of this flight and the resulting high uncertainties and low vertical resolution of the retrieval results. Furthermore, it was not clear whether potential weak contributions of scattered tropospheric radiation not obviously identified in the spectra might significantly alter the weak H$_2$O signature observed at higher viewing angles.

CLaMS provides a full three-dimensional simulation of both stratospheric chemistry and particle sedimentation based on the Lagrangian concept. Details on the simulation of particle nucleation, growth and sedimentation are given by Grooß et al. (2014, and references therein). The authors successfully applied CLaMS for simulating denitrification in the Arctic winter 2009/10, utilising a new saturation-dependent parameterisation for heterogeneous nucleation rates of NAT (see Hoyle et al., 2013). At temperatures below $T_{\text{NAT}}$, growth and sedimentation of large NAT particles are simulated according to Carslaw et al. (2002).

During the Arctic winter 2009/10, synoptic ice PSCs were frequently observed (Khosrawi et al., 2011; Pitts et al., 2011). NAT nucleation on ice and vice versa was not considered in the simulations associated with this work and might lead to increased condensation of HNO$_3$ and faster downward transport of HNO$_3$ due to larger sizes of the coated particles. On the other hand, such particles would spend less time at certain altitude levels, and therefore less time would be available for the removal of HNO$_3$ from the gas phase through condensation, limiting the potentially resulting additional HNO$_3$ downward transport.

For the particle observations on 25 January 2010 discussed here such coated particles are unlikely, as the associated particle backward trajectories and the observed temperatures shown in the following are not compatible with nucleation and persistence of ice particles due to temperatures above the existence temperature of ice ($T_{\text{ICE}}$, around 188 K). Furthermore, due to the occurrence of a major sudden stratospheric warming around the end of January 2010 (Khosrawi et al., 2011; Pitts et al., 2011; Dörnbrack et al., 2012), the presence of ice particles during the flight on 25 January 2010 appears unlikely.

In the presented simulations, spherical NAT particles with a particle mass density of 1.62 g cm$^{-3}$ (compare Drdla et al., 1993) are assumed in the standard scenario. Horizontal advection is simulated on isentropic levels based on background wind fields provided by ECMWF (European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts) ERA-Interim reanalyses. Vertical sedimentation of NAT particles is computed considering gravitational settling and the viscosity of air. The sedimentation velocities are calculated according to the Stokes equation (i.e. Pruppacher and Klett, 1997) and un-
ider consideration of the Cunningham correction for slip flow for spherical particles (i.e. Müller and Peter, 1992). The horizontal resolution of the considered CLaMS simulations is about 70 km and the vertical resolution is about 0.7 km.

3 In situ particle measurements and backward trajectories

During RECONCILE flights probing potentially NAT-containing PSCs, the FSSP-100 instrument detected large particles with diameters of more than 20 µm at temperatures above the frost point under the assumption of spherical particles (von Hobe et al., 2013; Molleker et al., 2014). Figure 1 shows an example FSSP-100 size distribution associated with the vortex flight on 25 January 2010. Two main modes peaking at diameters of about 5.5 and 14 µm with very high number densities of about 0.004 and 0.007 cm$^{-3}$ can be identified. Particles with extremely large diameters of more than 20 µm are found. The maximum number density of the second mode is about a factor of 5 higher than the maximum of the large NAT mode reported by Fahey et al. (2001) peaking at 14.5 µm. The shown representation indicates differential number densities. In this representation, the large NAT mode discussed by Fahey et al. (2001) peaks at about 0.0014 cm$^{-3}$ (compare Molleker et al., 2014). Assuming spherical particles, the HNO$_3$ content of the complete size distribution is estimated to be equivalent to about 11.5 ppbv of gas-phase HNO$_3$ considering an ambient temperature of 195 K and a pressure of 60 hPa. Thereby, 11 ppbv would correspond to the size bins larger than 9.5 µm.

Figure 1 shows also the associated size distribution corresponding to the CLaMS reference scenario assuming compact spherical particles (CLaMS HR). The particle mode situated between about 5 and 11 µm and causing the simulated denitrification is by a factor of 2 to 6 lower compared to the observed number densities in this size range. The largest particles observed with sizes above 11 µm are not reproduced by the simulation. One possible (partial) explanation for the observed discrepancy might be that observed NAT particles have masses close to the simulated values, but larger apparent sizes (diameter or length) compared to compact spherical particles due to non-compact morphology and/or aspheric shapes. The small particle mode below 2 µm corresponds to simulated STS droplets. The high number density mode of small NAT particles described by Grooß et al. (2005) was not considered in the discussed simulations. Also shown in Fig. 1 are the corresponding size distributions obtained when alternative model setups are applied (see Sect. 5). While the shape of the NAT mode is modified in the alternative scenarios and the $T + 1$ K scenario hardly produces any NAT particles capable of denitrification for this flight, these scenarios also fail to reproduce particles with masses larger than that of compact spherical particles with diameters of 11 to 12 µm.

For eight representative particles with diameters between 5 and 11 µm that were generated by the reference simulation, the corresponding sedimentation backward trajectories were reconstructed. Prior to the nucleation events, the trajectories were continued by air mass trajectories in order to further study the history of the air masses where the nucleation occurred. The obtained trajectories are presented in Fig. 2 together with the flight track of the Geophysical on 25 January 2010. The extracted trajectories beginning at 07:00 UTC show the following characteristics: (i) the trajectories remain compact during the entire interval of about 4.5 days considered, indicating the absence of significant shear in the flow of the overlying air masses passed by the individual particles at different times as a consequence of their different settling velocities. (ii) All trajectories approach $T_{\text{NAT}}$ (typically between 194 and 198 K, depending on the actual partial pressures of H$_2$O and HNO$_3$) around the north-east coast of Greenland about 2 days prior to the FSSP-100 measurements, resulting in growth of the simulated compact spherical particles to maximum diameters of not more than 11 µm in the CLaMS domain. (iii) Going further back in time, the temperatures of the associated air parcels further increase. Temperatures of 210 K (red triangles) are reached about 2.8 days prior to the in situ particle observations. (iv) Temperature profiles between 80 and 90° N perpendicular to the locations where the trajectories reach about 210 K (blue asterisks connected by line) show all temperatures that are well above...
\( T_{\text{NAT}} \) in the vertical range considered (inset in Fig. 2). Considering that the ambient regions were also characterised by temperatures above \( T_{\text{NAT}} \) and the compactness of the trajectories for particles with diameters between 6 and 11 µm it appears unlikely that larger particles have entered the locations of the discussed particle observations along very different trajectories. Note that temperature fluctuations along the trajectories that are not considered by the model might also influence the size distribution of real NAT particles in the stratosphere. However, considering the steady increase of the temperatures along the discussed trajectories towards temperatures well above \( T_{\text{NAT}} \), temperature fluctuations of a few K are unlikely to explain the large particle sizes observed. Furthermore, the size distribution of the scenario considering a negative temperature bias of 1 K (Fig. 1; see also Sect. 5) does not change the simulated maximum sizes notably.

In summary, for the flight on 25 January 2010 the CLaMS simulations indicate growth of compact spherical particles with maximum diameters not larger than 11 to 12 µm as a consequence of limited growing time. In contrast, the FSSP-100 observations shown in Fig. 1 indicate potential NAT particles with maximum sizes larger than 20 µm.

4 MIPAS-STR measurements of temperature, PSC coverage and gas-phase HNO\(_3\)

For the flight on 25 January 2010 (take-off 05:50 UTC and landing 09:19 UTC in Kiruna, Sweden), the flight track of the \textit{Geophysica} and the horizontal distribution of the tangent points associated with the MIPAS-STR observations are shown in Fig. 3. Practically all MIPAS-STR observations were located inside the polar vortex. The tangent points of the MIPAS-STR observations subsequently covered the regions labelled A, B and C. During the turn-around at 07:30 UTC, further scans, named B\(_1\), B\(_2\) and B\(_3\), were performed. Between the scans B\(_3\) and C, sampling was interrupted as the instrument was pointing towards the rising sun.

In Fig. 4 the retrieved vertical distribution of temperature is shown for the flight the on 25 January 2010. The interval of the FSSP-100 measurements (Fig. 1) and the starting positions of the particle backward trajectories (Fig. 2) correspond to the interval between 06:30 and 07:00 UTC in section B. Also shown is the level where the retrieved temperatures from MIPAS-STR are equal to the existence temperature of NAT (at higher altitudes the retrieved temperatures are below \( T_{\text{NAT}} \)). \( T_{\text{NAT}} \) and the \( T_{\text{NAT}} \) line were calculated considering the MIPAS-STR retrieval results of HNO\(_3\) (see below, typical vertical resolution about 1–2 km) and temperature (typical vertical resolution about 2–3 km) in combination with a smoothed vertical profile of H\(_2\)O constructed from the in situ observations by FLASH-A (Khaykin et al., 2013) during the ascent and descent phase of the discussed flight (i.e. H\(_2\)O volume mixing ratios of 4.2 ppmv below 17.5 km and values within 4.2 to 5 ppmv at higher altitudes). Thermodynamic parameters for the calculation of \( T_{\text{NAT}} \) were taken from Hanson and Mauersberger (1988). The absolute values obtained for \( T_{\text{NAT}} \) are typically about 198 K.

Temperatures below \( T_{\text{NAT}} \) and above \( T_{\text{ICE}} \) are found around flight altitude during the entire flight. In sections A, B and C, temperatures approach \( T_{\text{NAT}} \) mainly around an
altitude of 16 km. Warmer temperatures are found between the end of section B (after 07:00 UTC) and the beginning of section C, with the $T_{\text{NAT}}$ line rising up to 18 km. In section C, two spots situated around 17.5 km show temperatures slightly above the calculated $T_{\text{NAT}}$ (i.e., less than 1 K).

Figure 5 shows the corresponding cross section of retrieved wave-number-independent continuum absorption for the 810.1 to 813.1 cm$^{-1}$ microwindow associated with the temperature retrieval. Enhanced continuum absorption qualitatively indicates the presence of broadband absorbers such as cloud and aerosol particles. Along almost the entire flight track, significantly increased continuum absorption indicates the presence of PSC particles around flight altitude and above. An extended maximum is found in the section between 06:15 and 07:10 UTC, with a sharp contrast to low continuum absorption indicating the absence of continuum absorbers below about 17.5 to 18.0 km. In the last part of the flight between 08:15 and 08:45 UTC (section C), enhanced continuum absorption is found at altitudes higher than 17 km. Local minima around 18.0 to 18.5 km suggest different PSC layers.

In the vertical regions where enhanced continuum absorption indicates the presence of PSCs, temperatures below $T_{\text{NAT}}$ are found. The only exceptions are the two spots around 17.5 km in the section with retrieved temperatures slightly above $T_{\text{NAT}}$, which are probably due to the limited vertical resolution and uncertainties of the MIPAS-STR retrieval results or effects from horizontal gradients along the viewing direction. For example, a PSC layer might be located in a colder region along the viewing direction, while warmer temperatures in other sections along the viewing direction might lead to a warmer net temperature retrieved. Furthermore, the values obtained for $T_{\text{NAT}}$ are sensitive to potential local variations in the mixing ratios of H$_2$O (see Khaykin et al., 2013) and retrieved HNO$_3$. The sensitivity of calculated $T_{\text{NAT}}$ towards variations in the mixing ratios of these gases is discussed below (see Fig. 7). It can serve as an estimate for the amplitudes of variations in $T_{\text{NAT}}$ as well as the delta between temperature and $T_{\text{NAT}}$ due to horizontal gradients and/or local temperature fluctuations.

Figure 6 shows the associated vertical distribution of HNO$_3$ along the flight track retrieved from the MIPAS-STR measurements. The horizontal extent of section B is indicated for guidance. Local maxima of HNO$_3$ are found at altitudes ranging from 15.5 to 17.0 km. In sections A and B, maximum volume mixing ratios of HNO$_3$ of 8.5 ppbv are found, compared to minimum values below 6.5 ppbv around in this vertical region. The maxima in section B$_1$ to B$_3$ peak at about 10 ppbv above flight altitude and 11 ppbv at 16.5 km, compared to minimum values around 7 ppbv in between. Another strong maximum is observed in section C, peaking at 15.5 to 16 km altitude, and shows enhanced HNO$_3$ mixing ratios of 10.5 ppbv compared to minimum values of less than 6 ppbv around. The local maxima show excess HNO$_3$ resulting from renitrification, with denitrified air masses above (compare also Sect. 5). While denitrified layers present at higher altitudes are not covered by the MIPAS-STR observations, denitrification at higher altitudes at that stage of the polar winter was confirmed by Aura/MLS observations (Khosrawi et al., 2011, Fig. 3). The resolved vertical thickness of the local HNO$_3$ maxima in Fig. 5 is of the order of 1 km. The locations of the HNO$_3$ maxima show considerable coincidence with the regions where the retrieved temperatures approach $T_{\text{NAT}}$, supporting the evaporation of NAT particles around these altitudes.
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of these gases. The retrieved temperature is equal to \( T_{\text{NAT}} \) at about 16 km altitude, and supersaturated conditions are found above. The continuum absorption maximum associated with the lower PSC layer peaks 1.5 km above, indicating that supersaturated conditions are also present at regions with weak continuum absorption (i.e. cloud-free). The retrieved temperatures above 16 km are below \( T_{\text{NAT}} \) by up to about 2 K. The shifts in \( T_{\text{NAT}} \) due to enhanced HNO\(_3\) and H\_2O are small and comparable to the uncertainties of the retrieved temperatures.

Figure 7b shows the retrieved profiles of HNO\(_3\) with typical 1σ uncertainties of about 10 % and a high typical vertical resolution of about 1 km above 15 km and 1 to 2 km below. The corresponding HNO\(_3\) profile from the CLaMS standard scenario is shown for comparison together with simulated passive NO\(_x\) \(^{\text{cli}}\) (i.e. considering no condensation and vertical redistribution of HNO\(_3\)). The comparison shows that the maxima observed by MIPAS-STR peaking at about 16 and 18 km are reproduced well. Note that vertical fine structures of the order of 1 km and localised profiles are considered. The simulated peak values differ each by about 1 ppbv from the retrieved values and the lower maximum is significantly shifted towards lower altitudes by 0.5 to 1.0 km. Considerably higher simulated HNO\(_3\) mixing ratios compared to the observations are found above 18.5 km. While even several fine structures are reproduced well by the simulation, the observed stronger discrepancies from the observations (especially at higher altitudes) are primarily attributed to the complex PSC scenery with significant amounts of HNO\(_3\) being condensed.

In summary, (i) the in situ observations of large potential NAT particles, (ii) the retrieved vertical cross section of continuum absorption indicating extended PSC coverage along the flight track, (iii) temperatures below \( T_{\text{NAT}} \) and above \( T_{\text{ICE}} \) around the flight altitude, and (iv) the observed HNO\(_3\) maxima vertically coinciding with the \( T_{\text{NAT}} \) line suggest an ongoing denitrification process with NAT particles being involved. Furthermore, PSCs classified as NAT were observed by lidar from Esrange (Kiruna, Sweden) on 24 January 2010 at around 18 km altitude, supporting a composition of NAT at these altitudes at the day before the discussed Geophysical flight was performed (P. Achtert, personal communication, 2014; no lidar observations were available for 25 January 2010).

The retrieved continuum distribution shows no significant enhancement within typically 1.0 to 1.5 km above the \( T_{\text{NAT}} \) line and where the HNO\(_3\) maxima are found. Considering the in situ observations of large potential NAT particles with sizes of tens of micrometres (Fig. 1) at the lower edge of the PSC (Fig. 5, 06:30 to 07:00 UTC) and potentially capable of settling several hundreds of metres per day (compare Pruppacher and Klett, 1997; Fahey et al., 2001), the scenario shown would be compatible with very few large NAT particles falling out of a more dense PSC around flight altitude (e.g. mixed-phase PSC containing NAT and potentially
Table 1. CLaMS scenarios considering reduced settling velocities for simulated NAT particles (v: velocity; D: diameter; ρ: particle mass density; h: height; AR: aspect ratio). All indicated example particles have the same mass but different relative settling velocities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model setup</th>
<th>Corresponding particle properties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scenario</td>
<td>Relative settling speed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v = 100 %</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v = 70 %</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v = 50 %</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v = 30 %</td>
<td>0.3</td>
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</table>

* Assuming horizontally oriented disks (see text).

STS and giving rise to significant continuum absorption) and evaporating at altitudes where temperatures approach $T_{\text{NAT}}$. This is furthermore supported by the fact that the FSSP-100 started detecting potential NAT particles already around 17 km altitude during the ascent phase, which is below the PSC detected by MIPAS-STR in this region (compare Fig. 5, section A and the beginning of section B).

5 CLaMS simulations and comparison with MIPAS-STR

The analysis described in the following investigates the impact of reduced settling velocities of NAT particles on the denitrification process. Reduced settling velocities are expected, for instance, for (i) approximately spherical NAT particles with low mass density and (ii) aspheric NAT particles, which might explain the in situ observations of large particles on 25 January 2010. Different CLaMS scenarios considering the NAT particle settling velocities reduced by constant factors were carried out, and the impact on the fingerprint in the simulated vertical redistribution of HNO$_3$ was analysed. The reference simulation and the scenarios considering reduced settling velocities of NAT particles are summarised in Table 1. The reference simulation is the scenario $v = 100 \%$ (settling velocities of simulated NAT particles not modified; “$v$” stands for relative settling velocity). Three alternative setups with the settling velocities of the simulated NAT particles multiplied by constant factors of 0.7 ($v = 70 \%$), 0.5 ($v = 50 \%$) and 0.3 ($v = 30 \%$) were carried out. Furthermore we investigated the relative impact of temperature biases of ±1 K (scenarios $T + 1$ K and $T - 1$ K) and the NAT nucleation rates multiplied by factors of 0.5 and 2.0 (scenarios $J \times 0.5$ and $J \times 2.0$) on vertical HNO$_3$ redistribution.

In the following, MIPAS-STR measurements of vertical redistribution of HNO$_3$ are compared with the results from the different CLaMS scenarios for the two vortex flights on 25 January 2010 and 30 January 2010. As discussed above, the first flight was carried under the conditions of synoptic-scale PSCs and probably ongoing vertical HNO$_3$ redistribution. The second flight was performed on 30 January 2010 under conditions free of PSCs. The flight track and distribution of the MIPAS-STR tangent points are shown in Fig. 8. The observations suitable for processing were between 07:30 and 09:00 UTC and were situated well within the polar vortex according to the definition of Nash et al. (1996) at the potential temperature level of about 430 K (determined from the ECMWF ERA-Interim reanalysis). The cloud index values (not shown) of the MIPAS-STR observations associated with this flight indicate cloud-free conditions at stratospheric altitudes (i.e. values higher than 4 according to Spang et al., 2004), and the retrieved temperatures (not shown) are above calculated $T_{\text{NAT}}$.

As the horizontal resolution along the viewing direction and the vertical resolution of the MIPAS-STR observations is somewhat lower compared to the CLaMS simulations, local
Figure 9. Vertical cross sections of gas-phase HNO₃ extracted from the CLaMS reference simulation ($v = 100\%$), scenarios considering reduced settling velocities of NAT particles ($v = 70\%$, $v = 50\%$ and $v = 30\%$), temperature biases of $±1\ K$ ($T−1\ K$ and $T+1\ K$) and modified nucleation rates ($J\times0.5$ and $J\times2.0$) for the PSC flight on 25 January 2010. Other parameters (including $T_{\text{NAT}}$ line) as in Fig. 6.
atmospheric fine structures are resolved to a lesser degree. To consider for effects from atmospheric inhomogeneities along the viewing direction of MIPAS-STR, the CLaMS results were extracted (i) directly at the individual virtual tangent points (i.e. spatial interpolation of the finer retrieval grid onto the tangent point geolocations) of the MIPAS-STR measurements and the same positions also shifted (ii) towards and (iii) away from the observer by the half-distance between observer and nominal virtual tangent point, weighted with a ratio of 3 : 1 : 1. Measurements at and above flight altitude were also smoothed horizontally in a similar manner by extracting the model results at the observer coordinates and two further positions along the viewing direction. This simple approach allows for a useful approximation of the limited horizontal resolution of an infrared limb sounder along the viewing direction, which typically increases from several tens to a few hundreds of kilometres from the observer altitude towards lower altitudes (compare Ungermann et al., 2012). Furthermore, the vertical smoothing inherent to the MIPAS-STR measurements was taken into account by smoothing the resulting CLaMS profiles with the averaging kernels of the corresponding individual profiles retrieved from the MIPAS-STR observations according to Rodgers (2000).

5.1 Vertical cross sections

Figure 9 shows the vertical cross section of HNO$_3$ obtained from the CLaMS reference scenario $v = 100 \%$ (Fig. 9a) along with scenarios considering reduced settling velocities of the simulated NAT particles (Fig. 9b–d), temperature biases (Fig. 9e–f) and modified NAT nucleation rates (Fig. 9g–h). The cross sections correspond to the MIPAS-STR observations shown in Fig. 6. The major structures indicated by the MIPAS-STR observations are reproduced by all scenarios to a high degree. While comparably low mixing ratios are found around flight altitude in section A, the first part of section B, and section C, enhanced values are found at these altitudes at the end of section B and for the scans B$_1$ to B$_3$.

The strong HNO$_3$ maximum indicated by the MIPAS-STR observations at 15.5 to 16.0 km in section C is reproduced best by the scenario $v = 70 \%$. To a lesser extent it is also reproduced by the scenarios $v = 100 \%$, $v = 50 \%$ and $T = 1$ K, as well as the scenarios with modified nucleation rates. In contrast, this structure is practically missing in the scenarios $v = 30 \%$ and $T = 1$ K. The faint maximum indicated by MIPAS-STR around 16 km in section A can be identified to a different extent only in the scenarios considering reduced settling velocities. Another strong maximum indicated by MIPAS-STR in scans B$_1$ to B$_3$ around 16.0 to 17 km and the faint maximum in the middle of section B around 16.5 to 17 km are only marginally reproduced or not at all by the individual simulations. Further weak local maxima and sub-structures produced by the simulation cannot be attributed one to one to structures identified in the MIPAS-STR observations and vice versa and are consequences of differences in the model domain (e.g. limited spatial resolution and accuracy of the temperature and wind background fields used in the simulations as well as the way fine-scale structures are generated through the mixing parameterisation) and the atmosphere as observed by the instrument (e.g. smoothing characteristics along line of sight and uncertainties of the measurements).

Figure 10 shows the vertical cross section of HNO$_3$ retrieved from the MIPAS-STR observations associated with the flight on 30 January 2010. Compare Fig. 6 (from Woiwode PhD thesis, 2013, with modifications).

Figure 10. Vertical cross section of gas-phase HNO$_3$ retrieved from the MIPAS-STR observations associated with the flight on 30 January 2010. Compare Fig. 6 (from Woiwode PhD thesis, 2013, with modifications).
Figure 11. Same as Fig. 9 but for the flight on 30 January 2010 under conditions free of PSCs.
between the MIPAS-STR observations and the CLaMS simulations varies for individual profiles and subsections.

5.2 Ensemble profiles

In Fig. 12a–h the ensemble profiles of gas-phase HNO$_3$ corresponding to the flight on 25 January 2010 under PSC conditions are shown. The comparison is performed on levels of constant potential temperature to avoid biases from different pressure and temperature layering in the model domain compared to the atmosphere as seen by MIPAS-STR. All MIPAS-STR data points and associated CLaMS data points for this flight are plotted where both retrieved temperature and HNO$_3$ from MIPAS-STR are available. In the case of MIPAS-STR the potential temperature levels were calculated considering retrieved temperatures in combination with the corresponding pressure profiles extracted from ECMWF and used for the retrievals. Comparisons are shown again for the reference scenario, the scenarios considering the discussed reduced settling velocities, and the scenarios considering temperature biases and modified NAT nucleation rates.

Each plot shows (i) retrieved gas-phase HNO$_3$ from MIPAS-STR, (ii) simulated gas-phase HNO$_3$ from CLaMS associated with the geolocations of the MIPAS-STR data points and (iii) simulated passively transported NO$_3^*$ (without consideration of HNO$_3$ condensation and vertical redistribution by NAT particle sedimentation) extracted from CLaMS for the same geolocations. The data points for NO$_3^*$ from CLaMS were smoothed horizontally and vertically in the same way as for HNO$_3$. Simulated NO$_3^*$ can be compared directly to simulated and measured gas-phase HNO$_3$ for the discussed flights, as HNO$_3$ dominates the NO$_3^*$ budget in the lower stratosphere under Arctic winter conditions (e.g. Wiegele et al., 2009).

The comparison of measured and simulated gas-phase HNO$_3$ relative to NO$_3^*$ shows, for all scenarios, reduced HNO$_3$ mixing ratios at potential temperature levels higher than about 420 K (about 17.0 km altitude) and excess HNO$_3$ at lower altitudes. Reduced HNO$_3$ mixing ratios above the 420 K level in the model domain are the consequence of HNO$_3$ being partially condensed in PSC particles and sedimentation of NAT particles, while the excess in HNO$_3$ at lower levels results from evaporation of settled NAT particles. Accordingly, the simulation confirms that the MIPAS-STR measurements associated with the flight on 25 January 2010 show vertical redistribution of HNO$_3$ through denitrification and associated renitrification rather than dynamical features without these processes being involved.

While the overall scattering of the MIPAS-STR data points is mostly higher than for the simulation and the simulated renitrification maxima are located by trend at slightly lower potential temperature levels (typically by 10 to 20 K), the amplitudes of the de- and renitrification structures show considerable agreement with the measurements for the scenarios $v = 100\%$, $v = 70\%$ and $v = 50\%$ (Fig. 12a–c). In contrast, the scenario $v = 30\%$ shows only a weak renitrification signal (Fig. 12d). A slightly more developed renitrification maximum compared to the other scenarios is found for the scenario $v = 70\%$, showing that this structure is not correlated linearly with the settling velocities. The scenario $T - 1$ K (Fig. 12e) and the scenarios with modified nucleation rates (Fig. 12g and h) show a comparable renitrification maximum to the reference scenario, while the scenario $T + 1$ K shows hardly any renitrification (Fig. 12f).

Figure 13a–h show the results of the comparison for the flight on 30 January 2010 under conditions free of PSCs and all previously condensed HNO$_3$ being released back to the gas phase. Both the MIPAS-STR and CLaMS results show a strong maximum peaking around a potential temperature level of 400 K. The comparison with simulated NO$_3^*$ allows for clear assignment to a strong renitrification structure, while the data points in the upper section above the 420 K level indicate effectively denitrified air. The observed maximum around 400 K exceeds simulated NO$_3^*$ by up to 7 ppbv. The CLaMS reference scenario $v = 100\%$ (Fig. 13a) reproduces the shape and the vertical extent of the observed maximum to a high degree. However, the simulated maximum appears slightly more narrow, and several data points exceed the maximum values inferred from the observations by up to 4 ppbv.

The scenario $v = 70\%$ (Fig. 13b) reproduces the shape of the observed ensemble profile significantly better. Except for some data points exceeding the observed distribution by up to about 2 to 3 ppbv above the 390 K level, all simulated values lie well within the scattering of the observations. The scenario $v = 50\%$ (Fig. 13c) also reproduces the observations reasonably. A few data points above the 390 K level, however, significantly exceed the simulated values by up to 4 ppbv, and the data points indicating effectively denitrified air (i.e. HNO$_3$ mixing ratios lower than NO$_3^*$) above 420 K are reproduced to a lesser degree. The agreement of the $v = 30\%$ (Fig. 13d) with the observations is significantly worse. The simulation shows lower HNO$_3$ mixing ratios compared to the observations below 400 K and exceeds the observed values by up to 8 ppbv at higher altitudes.

The scenarios considering temperature biases (Fig. 13e–f) show significant differences from the reference scenario but no effective improvement. While the $T - 1$ K scenario reproduces the observations well above 420 K, a more narrow and less developed maximum is found at lower altitudes. The scenario $T + 1$ K overestimates the observed maximum values around 410 K by up to 3 ppbv and shows practically no effective denitrification above 420 K.

The scenarios considering modified nucleation rates (Fig. 13g–h) show only small differences compared to the reference scenario. The overall shape of the observed ensemble profile is also fairly well reproduced by these scenarios, with the maximum values around 400 K being overestimated by up to about 3 ppbv. Furthermore, the scenario $J \times 0.5$ reproduces the observed denitrification above 420 K.
Figure 12. Comparison of the measured ensemble profile of gas-phase HNO₃ from MIPAS-STR with the CLaMS reference simulation ($v = 100\%$) and scenarios considering reduced settling velocities of NAT particles ($v = 70\%$, $v = 50\%$ and $v = 30\%$), temperature biases of $\pm 1$ K ($T - 1$ K and $T + 1$ K) and modified nucleation rates ($J \times 0.5$ and $J \times 2.0$) for the PSC flight on 25 January 2010. NO$_{y}$ corresponds to simulated passive NO$_{y}$. 
Figure 13. Same comparison as in Fig. 12 but for the flight on 30 January 2010 under conditions free of PSCs.
to a slightly lesser degree compared to the reference simulation and the observations.

In summary, the simulations reproduce the major features (renitrification maxima below and denitrification minima above about 420 K) of the observed ensemble profiles well in general (Figs. 12 and 13), while the quantitative agreement varies for the different scenarios. An important aspect is that the amplitudes of the changes resulting from the settling velocities reduced by a few tens of percent are of the same order or even higher compared to the effects from temperature biases of ±1 K and the nucleation rates divided or multiplied by 2.

For the flight on 30 January 2010, the best agreement is found for the scenario $v = 70\%$. Considerably worse agreement is found for the scenarios $v = 30\%$ and $T + 1 $K for both flights and the scenario $T - 1 $K for the flight on 30 January 2010. While the reference scenario $v = 100\%$ and the scenarios $J \times 0.5$ and $J \times 2.0$ show very similar results and reasonable agreement with the observations in general, these scenarios notably overestimate the maximum observed on 30 January 2010. Finally, the scenario $v = 50\%$ also shows reasonable agreement with the observations, with a slightly weaker renitrification maximum for the flight on 25 January 2010 and notable overestimation in the upper part of the profile for the flight on 30 January 2010.

5.3 Discussion

The presented results show that moderately reduced settling velocities of NAT particles between 100 and 50\% relative to compact spherical particles were compatible with our observations of HNO$_3$ redistribution. In the following we discuss which types of particles are expected to approximately show the settling characteristics considered in the different simulations in the context of the in situ observations (Fig. 1). We point out that conclusions from our study on the physical appearance of the particles are speculative due to the limitations of the comparison of the MIPAS-STR observations with the simulations and the fact that we can only derive indirect information on the particle characteristics via the parameter settling velocity. But we think that the discussion below gives a useful overview of the approximate relative settling velocities that have to be expected for some characteristic particle types in the considered size regime.

Approximately spherical particles with a net mass density lower than 1.62 g cm$^{-3}$ (e.g. particles consisting of aggregates of smaller subunits) would have lower settling speeds compared to compact spherical particles of the same mass due to their larger hydrodynamic radii. Furthermore, compact (i.e. mass density of about 1.62 g cm$^{-3}$) needle- or disk-shaped particles would also have reduced settling velocities compared to mass-equivalent compact spherical particles (Westbrook, 2008). More complex combinations of particle shapes and mass densities are possible, but in the following we will focus on only these cases.

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The first row of column 3 in Table 1 contains the mass density and dimensions of a typical compact spherical NAT particle capable of denitrification as simulated by CLaMS. The diameter of 10 µm approximately corresponds to the sizes of the largest particles found in the CLaMS domain for the flight on 25 January 2010 under the conditions discussed in Sect. 3. Below, the sizes of potential spherical particles with reduced mass density having the same mass and approximately meeting the relative settling speed condition indicated in column 2 are listed.

It is pointed out that, in all modified CLaMS scenarios, the respective settling velocities of the simulated particles were multiplied by constant factors to approximate the settling speeds of alternative particle types. The Cunningham slip correction factors taken into account, however, were in all cases calculated corresponding to the equivalent compact spherical particles. When calculating the sizes of the mass-equivalent alternative particle types approximately meeting the relative settling velocity conditions indicated in column 2, only the mass equivalence and the Stokes equation were considered. Contributions from different Cunningham corrections applying to larger diameters or different sizes as a consequence of reduced particle mass density or alternative particle shapes were not considered for conversion. However, the slip correction factor for a hypothetic low mass density spherical particle with a diameter of 20 µm is only by about 5\% lower compared to that of a compact spherical particle with a diameter of 10 µm. Furthermore, when transferring the mass of a compact spherical particle of similar size into a compact moderately aspheric particle (see below), the effective difference in the Cunningham correction is expected to be of the same order. As the aim of this work is only to give typical sizes of certain particle classes approximately fulfilling the indicated relative settling velocity conditions rather than a full quantitative assessment, these simplifications are acceptable here.

According to Table 1, a spherical NAT particle with a diameter of 14 µm and a mass density of 0.56 g cm$^{-3}$ would have a settling velocity of approximately 70\% compared to a mass-equivalent compact spherical NAT particle in the reference scenario (density of 1.62 g cm$^{-3}$ and diameter of 10 µm). Similarly, mass-equivalent spherical particles with diameters of 20 and 33 µm and the indicated mass densities would have relative settling velocities of approximately 50 and 30\%.

Columns 4 and 5 in Table 1 give the dimensions of the potential of columnar needle- and disk-shaped particles containing the same mass as the indicated spherical particles and approximately meeting the indicated relative settling velocity conditions. The aspect ratio here is the ratio between height and diameter of a hypothetical cylinder (i.e. column or disk). For estimating the sizes of the indicated aspheric particle types associated with the discussed relative settling velocity conditions the respective hydrodynamic radii were approximated by the corresponding capacitances according...
to Westbrook (2008). The relation between particle size and capacitance for cylindrical particles was taken from Smythe (1962). Furthermore, for the discussed hypothetical disk-shaped particles, the approximation for horizontally oriented disks as discussed by Westbrook (2008, references therein) was taken into account, since potential disk-shaped NAT particles in the considered size regime might show preferentially horizontal orientations under stratospheric conditions.

According to Table 1, a compact columnar (i.e. needle-shaped) particle with a length of 34 µm and an aspect ratio of 7.6 would have a settling velocity of approximately 70 % compared to a mass-equivalent spherical particle in the reference simulation. Relative settling velocities of 50 and 30 % would approximately apply to columnar particles that have lengths of 68 and 168 µm and that are characterised by the indicated aspect ratios. Furthermore, compact mass-equivalent disk-shaped particles with diameters of 11, 21 and 38 µm and the indicated aspect ratios would have relative settling velocities of about 70, 50 and 30 %. We mention, however, that the simplification regarding the Cunningham slip correction has to be regarded critically for the extreme cases.

For the flight on 25 January 2010, maximum particle masses equivalent to that of compact spherical particles with diameters not larger than 11 to 12 µm are expected as a consequence of limited growing time (compare Sect. 3). From the in situ observations shown in Fig. 1, maximum particle sizes around 30 µm were obtained for this flight. According to Table 1, (i) spherical particles with a rather low mass density of about 0.04 g cm\(^{-3}\) and a relative settling velocity of about 30 %, (ii) compact columnar particles with an aspect ratio of about 7.6 and a relative settling velocity of 70 %, and (iii) compact disk-shaped particles with an aspect ratio of 0.01 and a relative settling velocity of 30 % would have maximum dimensions (diameter of a sphere or circular disk or height of a circular cylinder, respectively) similar to the maximum sizes indicated by the in situ particle observations. The considered spherical and disk-shaped particles that were characterised by relative settling velocities of about 50 % also would have maximum dimensions significantly larger than the corresponding particles in the reference simulation, but were still smaller compared to the most extreme sizes indicated by the in situ observations.

The comparisons between simulated and measured overall HNO\(_3\) redistribution show reasonable agreement for simulations considering relative settling velocities between 100 and 50 % (best agreement by trend for the 70 % scenario). In contrast, the simulation considering relative settling velocities of 30 % significantly underestimates the observed vertical redistribution of HNO\(_3\).

We point out that it is not clear how (i) the maximum sizes inferred from the FSSP-100 measurements have to be interpreted in the context of significantly aspheric particles, and (ii) limitations of the comparison between the MIPAS-STR measurements and the CLaMS simulations affect the discussed results. However, combining the presented results into one picture, we speculate that the large particles indicated by the in situ observations during the flight on 25 January 2010 were compact, aspheric significantly elongated NAT particles. Such particles could grow to larger maximum extensions in a shorter time compared to compact spherical particles having the same mass, and, at the same time, such particles were expected to have moderately reduced relative settling velocities compared to mass-equivalent compact spherical particles.

6 Conclusions

This study analyses the combination of airborne in situ particle observations, airborne remote sensing observations of gas-phase HNO\(_3\), temperature and PSC coverage as well as Lagrangian simulations of vertical HNO\(_3\) redistribution by NAT particles associated with the Arctic winter stratosphere at the end of January 2010. The observations and simulations suggest that an ongoing denitrification process with NAT particles involved was observed during the Geophysica PSC flight on 25 January 2010. The analysis of the formation conditions of large particles detected by the FSSP-100 utilising particle backward trajectory analyses shows that the observations are not consistent with compact spherical NAT particles. Ice particles and NAT-coated ice particles or ice-coated NAT particles appear unlikely due to too warm temperatures, as indicated consistently by the observations and the model. We investigated the hypothesis that the simulation reproduces the NAT particle masses in a realistic way, but that real NAT particles have larger apparent sizes compared to compact spherical particles, e.g. due to non-compact morphology or aspheric shape. We focused on the fact that reduced settling velocities have to expected for such particles when compared to compact spherical particles, altering the vertical redistribution of HNO\(_3\).

Using simulations by CLaMS and observations of MIPAS-STR, we studied the impact of reduced settling velocities of large NAT particles on vertical HNO\(_3\) redistribution. The reference scenario and the scenarios considering reduced relative settling velocities of 70 and 50 % result in reasonable agreement with the observed overall HNO\(_3\) redistribution. While the best agreement is found for the 70 % scenario, relative settling velocities of 30 % result in a significant underestimation of the vertical HNO\(_3\) redistribution by the simulation. Sensitivity simulations considering temperature biases of ±1 K show no effective improvement in the agreement between simulation and observation, while simulations with the NAT nucleation rates multiplied by factors of 0.5 and 2.0 change the results of the simulations only marginally.

We find that changing the settling velocities of the simulated NAT particles by a few tens of percent has comparable effects on HNO\(_3\) redistribution in terms of amplitudes of HNO\(_3\) maxima and minima when compared to the discussed scenarios considering temperature biases and
modified nucleation rates. Accordingly, the choice of the simulated settling velocities of NAT particles significantly affects the resulting vertical HNO$_3$ redistribution.

One possible interpretation of the large particle sizes observed during the flight on 25 January 2010 in the context of this study would be that these particles were compact and considerably aspheric. Such particles would have larger maximum extensions than compact spherical particles of the same masses and were expected to have moderately reduced settling velocities at the same time. However, we point out that no quantitative conclusions on the physical appearance of the particles can be drawn from our study and that the effect of considerably aspheric particles on the interpretation of the in situ observations is unclear. Further observations and advanced evaluation techniques are necessary to determine the properties of the particles involved in denitrification unambiguously.

However, our results show that an accurate knowledge of the settling velocities of NAT particles involved in denitrification is important for quantitative simulations of vertical HNO$_3$ redistribution.

Acknowledgements. RECONCILE was funded by the European Commission under the grant number RECONCILE-226365-FP7-ENV-2008-1. We thank the RECONCILE coordination team, the Myasishchev Design Bureau and Enviscope for making the RECONCILE field campaign a success. ECMWF data for the MIPAS-STR retrievals were obtained via NILU’s NADIR database. The CLaMS simulations were performed using computing time granted on the supercomputer EUROPA at Jülich Supercomputing Centre (JSC) under the VSR project ID JICG11. We acknowledge support by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and Open Access Publishing Fund of the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology.

The service charges for this open access publication have been covered by a Research Centre of the Helmholtz Association.

Edited by: F. Khosrawi

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