

Tunable diode laser measurements of hydrothermal/volcanic CO₂

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Tunable diode laser measurements of hydrothermal/volcanic CO₂, and implications for the global CO₂ budget

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Abstract

Quantifying the CO₂ flux sustained by low-temperature fumarolic fields in volcanic-hydrothermal environment has remained a challenge, to date. Here, we explored the potentiality of a commercial infrared tunable laser unit for quantifying such fumarolic volcanic/hydrothermal CO₂ fluxes. Our field tests were conducted (between April 2013 and March 2014) at Nea Kameni (Santorini, Greece), Hekla and Krýsuvík (Iceland) and Vulcano (Aeolian Islands, Italy). At these sites, the tunable laser was used to measure the path-integrated CO₂ mixing ratios along cross-sections of the fumaroles' atmospheric plumes. By using a tomographic post-processing routine, we then obtained, for each manifestation, the contour maps of CO₂ mixing ratios in the plumes and, from their integration, the CO₂ fluxes. The so-calculated CO₂ fluxes range from low ($5.7 \pm 0.9 \text{ t day}^{-1}$; Krýsuvík) to moderate ($524 \pm 108 \text{ t day}^{-1}$; "La Fossa" crater, Vulcano). Overall, we suggest that the cumulative CO₂ contribution from weakly degassing volcanoes in hydrothermal stage of activity may be significant at global scale.

1 Introduction

The chemical composition of volcanic gas emissions can provide hints onto the mechanisms of magma ascent, degassing and eruption (Allard et al., 2005; Burton et al., 2007; Oppenheimer et al., 2009, 2011), and can add useful information for interpreting the dynamics of fluid circulation at dormant volcanoes (Giggenbach, 1996; Chiodini et al., 2003, 2012).

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is, after water vapour, the main constituent of volcanic (Giggenbach, 1996) and hydrothermal (Chiodini et al., 2005) gases, and has attracted the attention of volcanologists because it can contribute to tracking magma ascent prior to eruption (Aiuppa et al., 2007, 2010). The volcanic/hydrothermal CO₂ flux sustained by diffuse soil degassing can be measured relatively easily during surveys (Chiodini et al., 1996, 2005; Favara et al., 2001; Hernández, 2001; Cardellini et al., 2003; Inguag-

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levels of CO₂ emission from such feeble volcanic point sources that we concentrate on in this study.

2 Background

Santorini, the site of the famous Minoan eruption ~3600 yr ago (Druitt et al., 1999), is an island located in the Aegean Sea, part of the Cyclades Archipelago. Santorini has a surface of 75.8 km² and is presently made up of five islands (Thera, Therasia, Aspronisi, Palea Kameni and Nea Kameni) that constitute the active intra-caldera volcanic field (Dominey-Howes and Minos-Minopoulos, 2004). Four periods of unrest in the 20th century have culminated into small-scale eruptions in 1925–1926, 1928, 1939–1941 and 1950 (Fyticas et al., 1990; ISMOSAV, 2009). Outside the caldera, volcanic activity has been recorded in 1649–1650 AD, in the Kolumbo submarine volcano (Vougioukalakis et al., 1994). Since the last eruption in 1950, the volcano has remained quiescent (Tsapanos et al., 1994; Papazakos et al., 2005; ISMOSAV, 2009). In early 2011, geodetic monitoring revealed a new stage of caldera-wide uplift (Newman et al., 2012; Parks et al., 2012), accompanied by swarms of shallow earthquakes. This unrest lasted from January 2011 to April 2012 (Parks et al., 2013). Degassing activity at Santorini is currently concentrated in a small, hydrothermally altered area on top of Nea Kameni islet (Parks et al., 2013), where a number of weakly fuming fumaroles (mostly CO₂, water vapour and air-derived gases; temperatures of 93–97 °C) are concentrated (Tassi et al., 2013). A recent survey carried by Parks et al. (2013) indicated increased diffuse CO₂ emissions between September 2010 and January 2012; this period was characterized by a change in the degassing pattern, with an increase in soil CO₂ emissions peaking at $38 \pm 6 \text{ t d}^{-1}$ in January 2012 (Parks et al., 2013). Tassi et al. (2013) examined the response of fumarole composition to the 2011–2012 unrest, and reported increasing CO₂ concentrations (and decreasing $\delta^{13}\text{C}-\text{CO}_2$) from May 2011 to February 2012, suggesting mantle CO₂ contribution. The summit fumarolic field was the site of our 9 April 2013 survey (see Figs. 1a and 2).

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Vulcano is a volcanic island belonging to the Aeolian Islands in the southern Tyrrhenian Sea (Italy). Since the last eruption in 1888–1890, this closed-conduit volcanic system has been characterized by intense fumarolic activity concentrated on the summit of La Fossa crater (Fig. 1d), a small (391 m a.s.l.; 2 km in diameter) < 5 ka old pyroclastic cone. Degassing activity has shown signs of intensification in the last decades, including increased fumarole temperatures (Badalamenti et al., 1991; Chiodini et al., 1995; Capasso et al., 1997), and episodic variations of gas/steam ratios (Chiodini et al., 1996; Capasso et al., 1999; Paonita et al., 2002, 2013). The CO₂ flux from the La Fossa fumarolic field has been measured previously by Aiuppa et al. (2005, 2006), McGonigle et al. (2008), Tamburello et al. (2011) and Inguaggiato et al. (2012). On 11 March 2014, we measured the CO₂ emissions from La Fossa using the measurement configuration of Fig. 1d.

3 Methods

The Tunable Diode Laser Spectroscopy technique (TDLS) relies on measuring the absorbance due to the absorption of IR radiation (at specific wavelengths) by a target gas. Like in previous work at Campi Flegrei (Pedone et al., 2014), we used a Gas-Finder 2.0 Tunable Diode Laser (produced by Boreal Laser Inc.), a transmitter/receiver unit that can measure CO₂ mixing ratios over linear open-paths of up to 1 km distance, operating in the 1.3–1.7 μm wavelength range. Radiation emitted by the IR laser transmitter propagates to a gold plated retro-reflector mirror, where it is reflected back to the receiver and focused onto a photodiode detector. Incoming light is converted into electrical waveform, and processed to determine in real-time the linear CO₂ column amount (in ppm m) along the optical path, using the procedure described in Tulip (1997). CO₂ column amounts are converted into average CO₂ mixing ratios (in ppm) along the path by knowledge of path lengths (measured with an IR manual telemeter, 1 m resolution). A portable meteorological station was continuously recording (frequency = 1 Hz) during the measurements to restrict post-processing to sampling intervals characterized

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positions are expressed by numbers (Fig. 1). During each campaign, and at each of the degassing areas, the position of the GasFinder unit was sequentially moved (e.g., from positions A to F in Fig. 1a) so as to scan the plume from different viewing directions and angles. We acquired along each single GasFinder – retro-reflector path (e.g., path A-1 in Fig. 1a) for ~ 4–5 min, before rotating the instrument' head to measure along the successive path (e.g., A-2). The number of operated paths ranged from 9 (Hekla) to 36 (Nea Kameni and Vulcano), and the entire measurement grid (e.g., the total number of possible Gas-Finder – retro-reflector paths) was covered in a few hours at most.

4.2 CO₂ mixing ratios and plume transport speed

The highest CO₂ mixing ratios (~ 1050 ppm) were measured at Hekla (Fig. 3), while the lowest mixing ratios values were detected at Nea Kameni and Krýsuvík (peaking at 590 ppm and < 500 ppm respectively, see Figs. 2 and 4). Intermediate CO₂ mixing ratios (~ 900 ppm) were detected at “La Fossa” crater at Vulcano Island (Fig. 5), reflecting gas contribution from fumarolic vents located on the rim and in the inner wall of the crater.

Background readings were obtained in each of the measurement sites by pointing the laser beam toward a mirror, positioned upwind the fumarolic area (Pedone et al., 2014). Background values of < 400 ppm were observed in all the analysed areas (Figs. 2–5).

During each campaign, the vertical plume transport speed was measured by a video camera pointing toward the fumarolic vents, and acquiring sequences of images of the atmospheric plume at 25 frames per second (see Aiuppa et al., 2013; Pedone et al., 2014). The sequences of frames were later post-processed to calculate the time-averaged plume transport speed, after converting camera pixels into distances (using a graduated pole, positioned close to the vent). Plume transport vertical speeds are reported in Table 1, and converge at 1–1.2 m s⁻¹ at all volcanoes.

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degassing activity present, a CO₂ plume is imaged by our observations on the eastern, inner rim of the Nea Kameni crater. Low CO₂ mixing ratios (~390 ppm) are outputted by the Matlab routine on the north-western portion of the investigated area, while higher CO₂ mixing ratios (from 490 to ~540 ppm) are identified on the east, where the main gas emission vents are located. The peak CO₂ mixing ratio of ~590 ppm is located in correspondence to one principal gas vent (marked as “Fum6” in Fig. 2c).

Similar results have been obtained at Hekla, Krýsuvík and Vulcano. Figure 3 is a contour map of CO₂ mixing ratios at the Hekla measurement site (Fig. 1b). Given the positioning of Gas Finder and retro-reflectors, the Matlab-derived contour map is here relative to an hypothetical horizontal cross-section, taken at about 1 m height above the warm degassing ground identified by Ilyinskaya et al. (2014) on the rim of the 1980–1981 summit crater of Hekla (Figs. 1b and 3). In this area, the background CO₂ mixing ratio was evaluated at around 400 ppm. The peak CO₂ mixing ratio (~1050 ppm) was detected in the central portion of the investigated area, in the same sector where the highest soil CO₂ fluxes have been observed (Ilyinskaya et al., 2014).

The CO₂ contour map obtained at Krýsuvík is shown in Fig. 4. In this area, CO₂ mixing ratios ranged from 350–380 ppm at the periphery of the exhaling area, and up to ~500 ppm near the two main fumarolic vents (“FumA” and “FumB” in Fig. 4).

The CO₂ distribution map of “La Fossa” crater at Vulcano Island is shown in Fig. 5. The highest CO₂ mixing ratios (up to 880 ppm; Fig. 5) were detected in correspondence of the principal fumaroles (“F0”, “F5” and “F11”) of the crater rim and the “FA” fumarolic field in the inner wall of the crater.

4.4 Calculation of the CO₂ flux

The ability of the TDL to contour CO₂ mixing ratios in a volcanic gas plume cross section (Figs. 2–5) opens the way to quantification of the fumarolic CO₂ output from each of the studied areas.

In order to calculate the CO₂ output from each fumarolic area, we integrated each set of CO₂ mixing ratio values in each CO₂ contour map (Figs. 2–5), to obtain a CO₂

Integrated Column Amount (ICA) over the entire plume cross-section. This ICA was then multiplied by the vertical plume transport speed, yielding a CO₂ flux. The calculated CO₂ fluxes are listed, for each site and each campaign, in Table 1. The accuracy (1 σ) of the mean flux estimates are calculated from error propagation theory applied to both ICA and plume transport vertical speed.

Applying this procedure to the contour map of Fig. 2, we estimate a CO₂ flux from Nea Kameni fumaroles of $63 \pm 22 \text{ t day}^{-1}$. This fumarolic output is ~ 4 times higher than the total diffuse discharge from the soils of 15.4 t day^{-1} reported by Chiodini et al. (1998), and ~ 1.5 times higher than the soil CO₂ output of $38 \pm 6 \text{ t day}^{-1}$ estimated (in January 2012) by Parks et al. (2013). We conclude that the weak but persistent fumarolic activity on-top of Nea Kameni is the major emission source of CO₂ at this volcano.

For Hekla, we estimated a CO₂ flux of about $15 \pm 7 \text{ t day}^{-1}$ (Table 1). The large error in our flux estimate ($\pm 46\%$) is here reflecting the poor quality of our plume transport speed measurement, which determination was complicated by the strong winds blowing on top of Hekla by the time of our measurements. We still observe, however, that our $15 \pm 7 \text{ t day}^{-1}$ estimate matches closely the recently reported CO₂ flux for Hekla summit ($13.7 \pm 3.7 \text{ t day}^{-1}$), obtained using conventional (accumulation chamber) soil survey techniques (Ilyinskaya et al., 2014).

For the Hveradalur fumarolic field of Krýsuvík, we estimate a CO₂ flux of $5.7 \pm 0.9 \text{ t day}^{-1}$ (Table 1). This is the first CO₂ output estimate for this area, at least to our knowledge.

Finally, on March 2014 we evaluate the CO₂ flux at La Fossa crater at $524 \pm 108 \text{ t day}^{-1}$ which is in the same range of those obtained in previous studies by Aiuppa et al. (2005) ($420 \pm 250 \text{ t d}^{-1}$), Tamburello et al. (2011) (488 t d^{-1} , average of two campaigns in 2009) and Inguaggiato et al. (2012) (453 t d^{-1}) (see Fig. 6) and using different techniques.

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4.5 Implications for the global volcanic CO₂ flux

Our CO₂ observations were taken at four volcanoes displaying a range of fumarolic activity, from weak (Hekla) to moderately strong (La Fossa of Vulcano). As such, our results add novel information on the CO₂ degassing regime of quiescent volcanoes in Solfatara stage of activity, and on their potential contribution to the global volcanic CO₂ budget.

The current state-of-the-art of volcanic CO₂ flux research has recently been summarised in Burton et al. (2013). The authors presented a compilation of 33 subaerial volcanoes for which CO₂ flux observations were available at that time. These “measured” emissions totalled a cumulative CO₂ output of 59.7 Mt yr⁻¹. The same authors used linear extrapolation, from the measured 33 to the 150 plume-creating, passively degassing volcanoes on the GVP catalogue (Siebert and Simkin 2002), to obtain an extrapolated global volcanic CO₂ flux of ~271 Mt yr⁻¹.

The linear extrapolation approach of Burton et al. (2013) is based on the implicit assumption that the measured 33 volcanoes represent a statistically significant sub-set of the volcanic CO₂ flux population. However, we argue that past volcanic CO₂ observations have been prioritized at strongly degassing volcanoes under unrests; therefore, the 33 volcanoes population may be biased towards the category of top gas emitter, implying the linear extrapolation technique may be incorrect. The low CO₂ output associated to “quiet” volcanoes, as reported in our present work, corroborates this conclusion.

The alternative extrapolation approach used to quantify CO₂ emissions from “unmeasured” volcanoes is to assume that the distribution of volcanic CO₂ fluxes obeys a power law (Brantley and Koepenick, 1995), as other geophysical parameters do (Marret and Allmendinger, 1991; Turcotte, 1992). If volcanic emissions follow a power-law distribution, then the number of volcanoes (N) with an emission rate $\geq f$ are given by:

$$N = af^{-c} \quad (1)$$

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In view of our novel results (listed in Table 1), we propose that the non-linear behavior of the volcanic CO₂ flux population may (at least in part) reflect the scarcity of CO₂ flux information on weakly fuming, quiescent volcanoes. The case Hekla is emblematic in this context: the volcano has remained in a very active state in the last century (it violently erupted only fourteen years ago; Höskuldsson et al., 2007), but shows today no visible plume or gas emission. Yet however, our data suggest the volcano may contribute daily ~ 15 t of CO₂ to the atmosphere in invisible, but probably persistent form. Similarly, no plume is seen on top of Nea Kameni in Santorini, which weak fumaroles yet release 63 ± 22 t of CO₂ every day (in addition to a sizeable diffuse contribution from the soil), and 5.7 ± 0.9 t of CO₂ are released daily by quiet hydrothermal activity at Krýsuvík (which most recent activity probably dates back the 14th century; Smithsonian Institution, 2013). While the individual contribution of each of the above volcanoes is negligible globally, the cumulative contribution of all feebly degassing volcanoes on Earth may not, and may impact the global CO₂ flux distribution of Fig. 7.

To explore the latter argument further, we consider that, of the 1549 volcanic structures listed in the GVP catalogue, around 500 are considered to have been active in the Holocene (Smithsonian Institution, 2013), and thus still potentially degassing. For the sake of illustration, we assume that all such 500 volcanoes have a CO₂ flux equal to or higher than 10 t day^{-1} (the mean of our measured Krýsuvík and Hekla fluxes). This yields to a new point in Fig. 7, with coordinates $\log f = 1$ (CO₂ flux = 10 t day^{-1}) and $\log N = 2.69$ (500 volcanoes), which lies right above the linear regression line of the high CO₂ flux ($\log f > 2.5$) population (see dashed line H in Fig. 7). The regression line (line H₁; $R^2 = 0.98$) obtained considering the high CO₂ flux volcanoes ($\log f \geq 2.5$) plus this new $\log f = 1$ point has slope $c = -0.72$. Using this value in Eq. (2), and with $N = 500$, we calculated an extrapolated CO₂ flux of 67 Mt yr^{-1} . From these preliminary calculations, we conclude that (i) the power-law distribution may be an appropriate representation of the population of CO₂ flux data, provided the output of the several hundreds of weakly degassing, quiescent/hydrothermal/dormant volcanoes is considered;

(ii) a large number of volcanoes remain to be measured, possibly being characterized by intermediate CO₂ output (log f between 1 and 2.5 in Fig. 7).

5 Conclusions

We have investigated the fumarolic CO₂ output from 4 quiescent volcanoes in hydrothermal state of activity, using an Infra Red TDL. At each of the studied volcanoes, the acquired TDL results have been used to contour CO₂ mixing ratios in the plumes' cross-sections, and consequently to quantifying the fumarolic CO₂ output. The highest output ($524 \pm 108 \text{ t day}^{-1}$) is obtained at La Fossa of Vulcano Island, the only volcano of the 4 where a persistent atmospheric plume is observed. The lowest CO₂ output ($5.7 \pm 0.9 \text{ t day}^{-1}$) is associated with hydrothermal activity at Krýsuvík, with intermediate emissions at Hekla ($15 \pm 7 \text{ t day}^{-1}$) and Nea Kameni ($63 \pm 22 \text{ t day}^{-1}$). The latter 3 volcanoes all currently display weak exhalative activity and no visible plume emission. We therefore suggest that a 5.7–63 t day⁻¹ CO₂ output range may be characteristic of many of the ~500 volcanoes active in the Holocene, this in spite the majority lack obvious surface manifestations of degassing. Assuming a representative CO₂ output of 10 t day⁻¹ for such 500 Holocene volcanoes, we show that the global population of CO₂ emissions may approach a simple power-law distribution.

Author contribution. M. P. carried out the field campaigns in the study areas and drafted the manuscript. A. A. allowed the work realization and actively contributed to drafting the manuscript. G. G. participated and provided technical support during field campaigns. F. G. provided important suggestions during data processing. V. F. provided technical assistance during the field work. B. B. and E. I. participated and provided technical support during field campaigns in Iceland. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

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Table 1. CO₂ fluxes (in t day⁻¹) and standard deviation (1 σ) calculated in this study. The plume transport vertical speed (in m s⁻¹) is also given for each site.

Volcano	Date	Gas speed (m s ⁻¹) ($\pm 1 \sigma$)	CO ₂ Flux (t d ⁻¹) ($\pm 1 \sigma$)
Nea Kameni	9 Apr 2013	1.20 \pm 0.4	63 \pm 22
Hekla	2 Jul 2013	1.00 \pm 0.5	15 \pm 7
Krýsuvík	5 Jul 2013	1.17 \pm 0.18	5.7 \pm 0.9
Vulcano	11 Mar 2014	1.00 \pm 0.20	524 \pm 108

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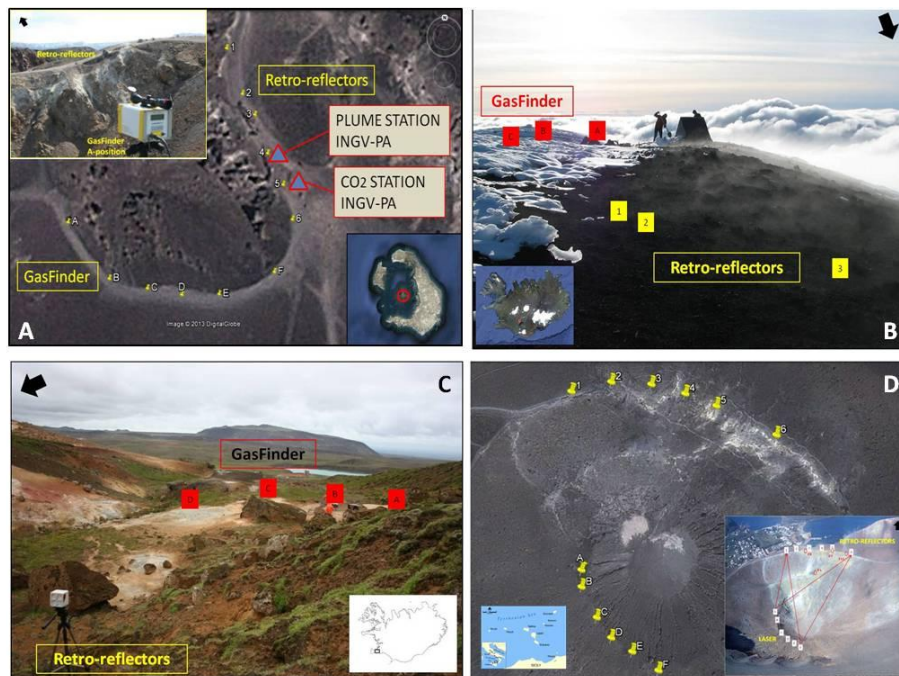


Figure 1. The study areas. **(A)** Nea Kameni summit crater (Greece) **(B)** Hekla summit (Iceland) **(C)** Krýsuvík hydrothermal field **(D)** “La Fossa” crater (Vulcano Island). In each picture, the positions of GasFinder and retro-reflectors are shown with letters and numbers, respectively.

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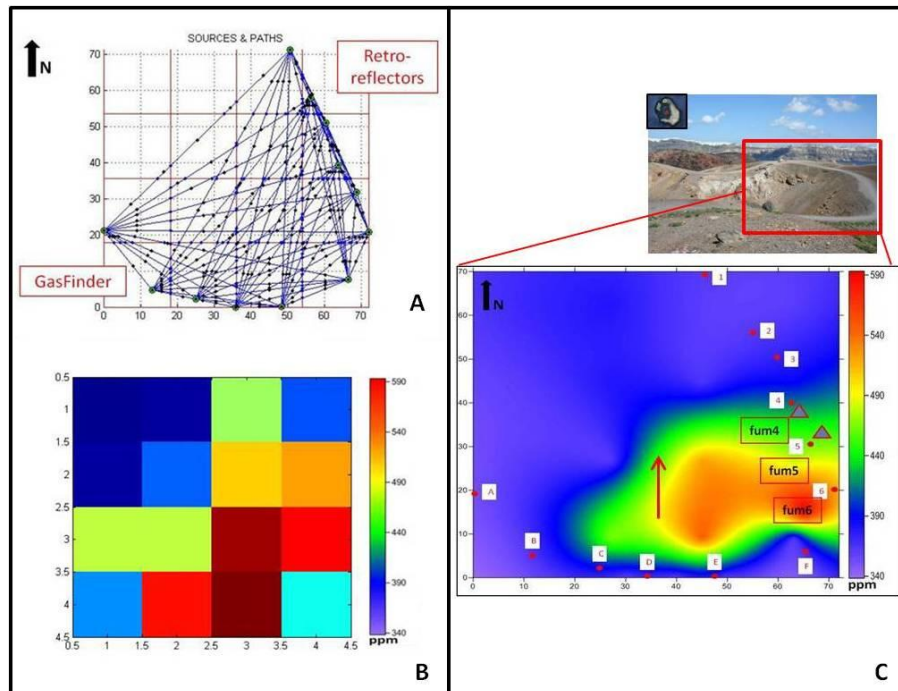


Figure 2. Output of the tomographic algorithm. Example for the Nea Kameni campaign, 9 April 2013. **(A)** Geometric reconstruction of the field experimental set-up and **(B)** tomographic matrix. The script uses a data inversion procedure to assign an averaged CO₂ mixing ratio (in ppm) to each cell of the matrix. **(C)** CO₂ mixing ratios (ppm) contour map. GasFinder and retro-reflectors positions are shown with letters and numbers respectively. “Fum4”, “Fum5” and “Fum6”: positions of main degassing vents; blue triangles: permanent INGV-PA stations; red arrow: principal direction of plume dispersal. See text.

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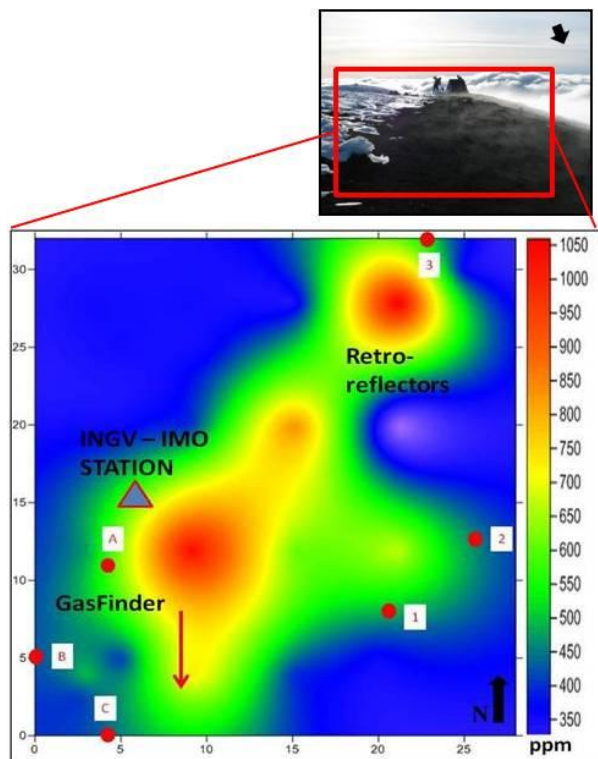


Figure 3. Contour map of CO₂ mixing ratios (ppm), Hekla campaign of 2 July 2013. GasFinder and retro-reflectors positions are shown with letters and numbers respectively. Blue triangle: ING-V-IMO station; red arrow: principal direction of plume dispersal.

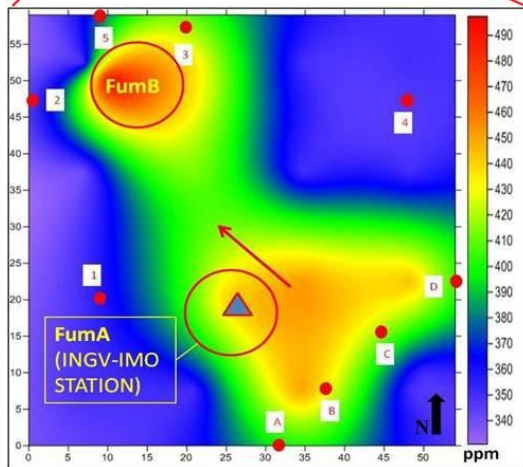
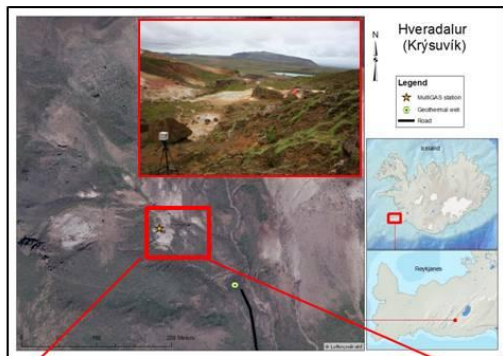


Figure 4. CO₂ Contour map of CO₂ mixing ratios (ppm), Krýsuvík campaign of 5 July 2013. GasFinder and retro-reflectors positions are shown with letters and numbers respectively. “FumA” and “FumB”: positions of main degassing vents; blue triangle: INGV-PA/IMO station; red arrow: principal direction of plume dispersal.

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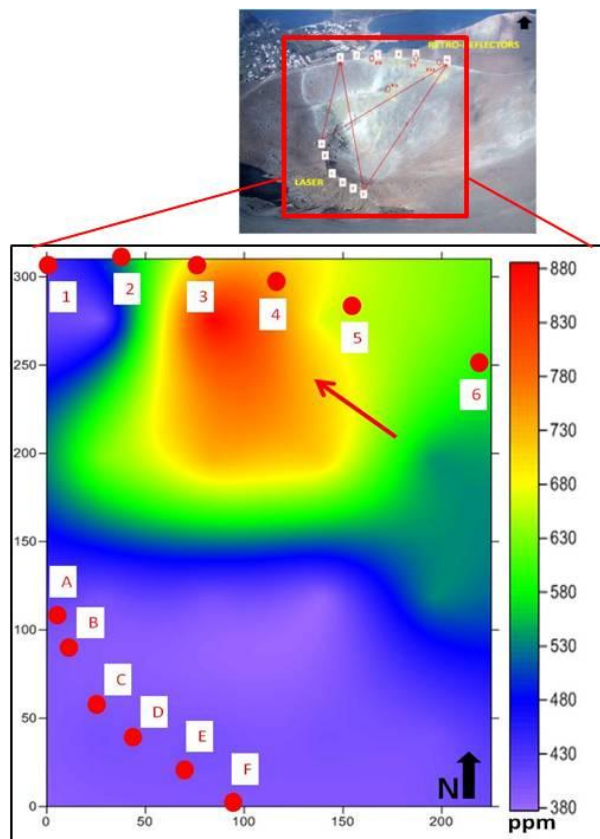


Figure 5. Contour map of CO₂ mixing ratios (ppm), “La Fossa” campaign, Vulcano Island, 11 March 2014. GasFinder and retro-reflectors positions are shown with letters and numbers respectively. Red arrow: principal direction of plume dispersal.

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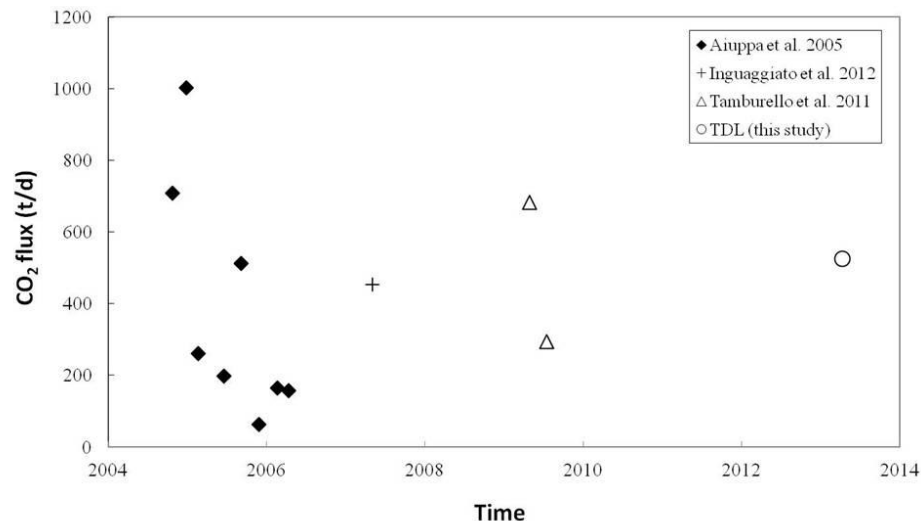


Figure 6. Time-series of CO₂ flux values (tons/day) for “La Fossa crater” (Vulcano Island). Previous works: Aiuppa et al. (2005, 2006), Tamburello et al. (2011) and Inguaggiato et al. (2012). The flux value of $524 \pm 108 \text{ t d}^{-1}$, obtained in this study, is also shown.

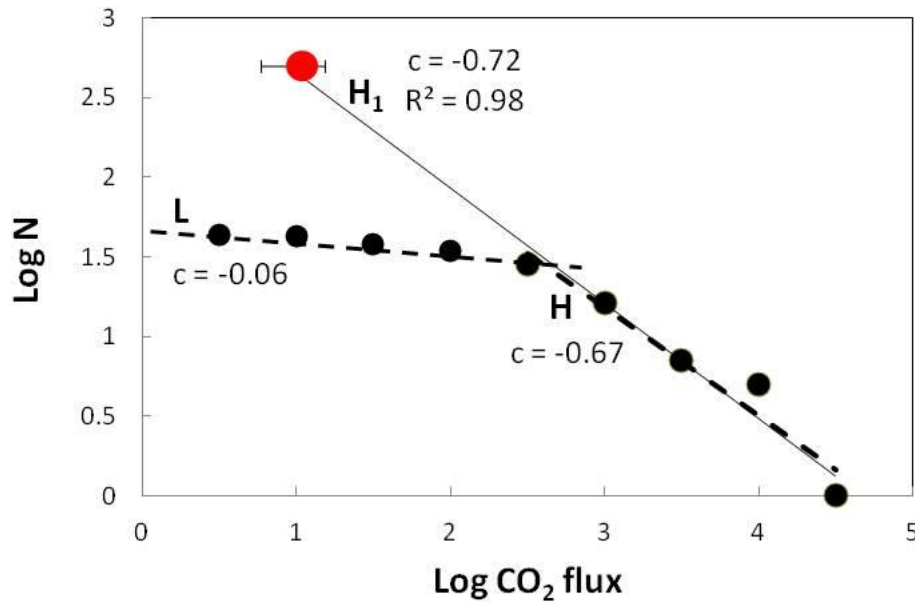


Figure 7. Cumulative frequency of the number of volcanoes (N) emitting CO_2 flux $\geq f$ (in logarithmic scale). The diagram is based upon the dataset of Burton et al. (2013), implemented with new results from this study and additional data (see text). Red point, with coordinates $\log f = 1$ (CO_2 flux = 10 t day^{-1}) and $\log N = 2.69$ (500 volcanoes), lies right above the linear regression line of the high CO_2 flux ($\log f > 2.5$) population (dashed line H). The regression line (line H_1 ; $R^2 = 0.98$) is obtained considering the high CO_2 flux volcanoes ($\log f \geq 2.5$) plus this new $\log f = 1$ point.

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