

# Global CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption by chemical weathering: What is the contribution of highly active weathering regions?

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## Abstract

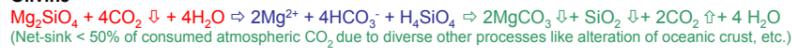
CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption by chemical weathering of silicates and resulting silicate/carbonate weathering ratios influences the terrestrial lateral inorganic carbon flux to the ocean and long-term climate changes (Fig. 1). However, little is known of the spatial extension of highly active weathering regions and their proportion of global CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption. Global CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption is calculated here at high resolution to adequately represent those regions, which may be of significant importance for global climate change.

The presented study applies functions for CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption spatially explicit. These were estimated using hydrochemical data from 382 catchment and their attributes (e.g. lithology, runoff). The CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption model (Fig. 2), is applied here to a global vector based lithological map with 15 lithological classes. The calibration data were obtained from areas representing a wide range of weathering environments. Resulting global CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption by chemical weathering is similar to earlier estimates (237 Mt C a<sup>-1</sup>) (Table 1), but the proportion of silicate weathering is 63% and thus larger than previous estimates (49 to 60%) (Table 1). The application of the enhanced lithological classification scheme reveals the importance of distinguishing the various types of sedimentary rocks and their diagenetic history. Results highlight the role of hotspots (>10 times global average weathering rates) and hyperactive areas (5 to 10 times global average rates) (Fig. 3). Only 9% of the global exorheic area is responsible for about 50% of CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption by chemical weathering (or if hotspots and hyperactive areas are considered: 3.4% of exorheic surface area corresponds to 28% of global CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption) (Fig. 4).

### Carbonate



### Olivine



### Albite

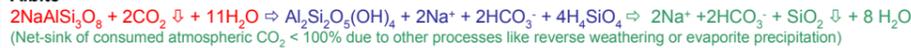


Fig. 1: Simplified, typical chemical weathering mineral reactions (educts → ions in dissolution → possible precipitation reactions in the ocean).

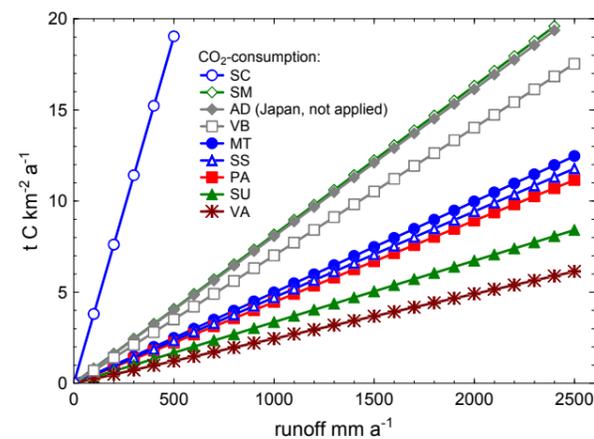


Fig. 2: CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption in dependence of runoff for selected lithological classes. Abbreviations are explained in Table 1. The contribution of carbonates to CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption from silicate dominated classes SS, SM, MT and PA is 13%, 53%, 46% and 16%, respectively. The function for SC is based on the work of Amiotte-Suchet et al. (1993).

Tab 1: Comparison of global modeled CO<sub>2</sub> consumption according to different studies.

Comparison of estimated global CO <sub>2</sub> -consumption presented in previous studies (Gaillardet et al., 1999; Munhoven, 2002; Amiotte-Suchet et al., 2003) with results from this study. <sup>a,b</sup>												
	Gaillardet et al. (1999)		Amiotte-Suchet et al. (2003) <sup>b</sup>		Munhoven (2002)		This study		This study		This study <sup>c</sup>	
	Reverse model; large rivers; fixed end-member compositions	GEM-CO2 model; runoff data of Korzoun et al. (1977); lithological map Amiotte-Suchet and Probst (1995)	GEM-CO2 model; runoff data of Korzoun et al. (1977); lithological map Amiotte-Suchet and Probst (1995)	GEM-CO2 model; GRDC runoff data (Fekete et al., 2002); lithological map Amiotte-Suchet and Probst (1995)	Original set up	Basalt weathering law of Dessert et al. (2003) applied	No carbonate contribution from plutonic and metamorphic rocks assumed					
	10 <sup>6</sup> t C a <sup>-1</sup>	%	10 <sup>6</sup> t C a <sup>-1</sup>	%	10 <sup>6</sup> t C a <sup>-1</sup>	%	10 <sup>6</sup> t C a <sup>-1</sup>	%	10 <sup>6</sup> t C a <sup>-1</sup>	%	10 <sup>6</sup> t C a <sup>-1</sup>	%
Silicates	140	48.6	154	59.9	133.2	60.3	149	63.0	167	65.6	155	65.6
Carbonates	148	51.4	104	40.1	87.6	39.7	88	37.0	88	34.4	81	34.4
Flux total	288		258		220.8		237		255		237	

<sup>a</sup> Carbonate proportions on total CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption from lithological classes SS, SM, MT and PA are applied as explained in the text.  
<sup>b</sup> The difference in the work of Amiotte-Suchet et al. (2003) and Munhoven (2002) is the applied runoff data. The global runoff of Korzoun et al. (1977) is about 19% higher than the global runoff calculated by Fekete et al. (2002). However, the global CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption after Amiotte-Suchet et al. is (a) 17.3% and (b) 8.8% higher than calculated (a) by Munhoven (2002) and (b) in this study with the original set up.  
<sup>c</sup> The last column assumes that the calculated CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption from acidic plutonics and metamorphic rocks is entirely from silicate weathering (globally the carbonate CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption from lithological classes MT and PA are not highly important based on the results of the applied model; compare with column four).

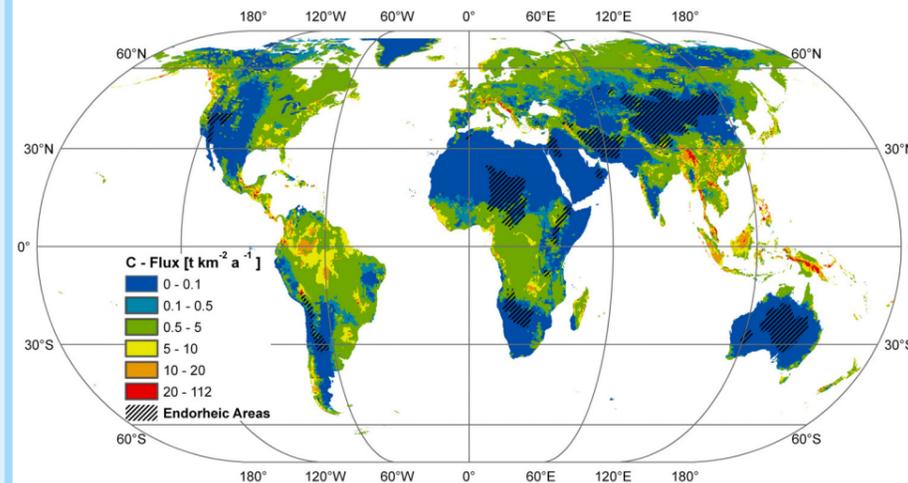


Fig. 3: Global distribution of CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption by chemical weathering. The global average for exorheic areas is ~2 t C km<sup>2</sup> a<sup>-1</sup>.

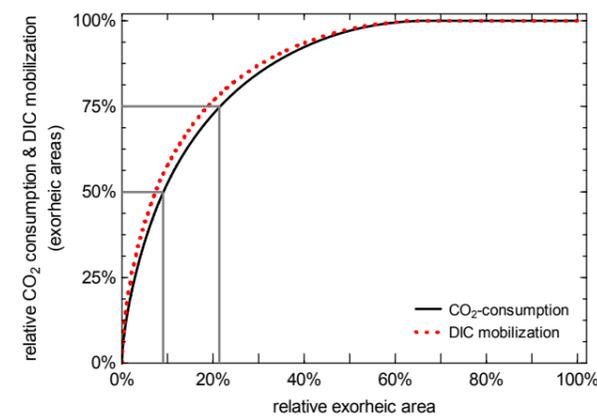


Fig. 4: Relative proportion of exorheic CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption and bicarbonate (DIC) transport into the aquatic system due to chemical weathering compared to the relative exorheic land area. Hotspots (10 times world average) and hyperactive areas (> 5 times world average) are responsible for 8.6 and 19.6% of CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption, while representing only 0.51 and 2.9% of the exorheic land area, respectively.

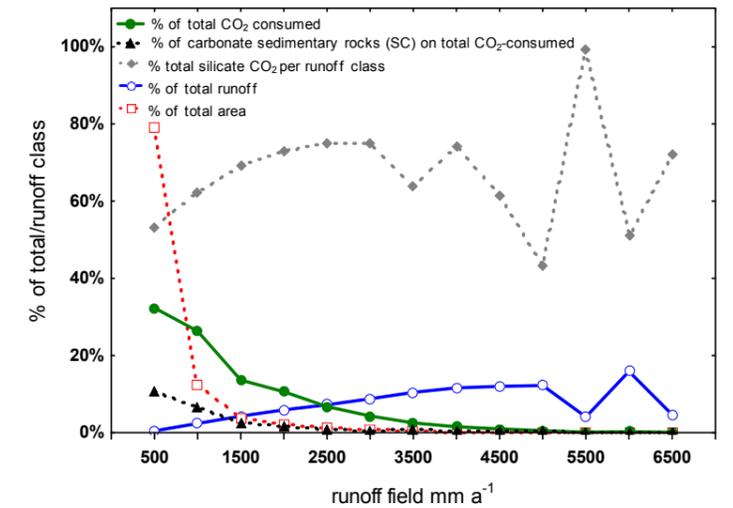


Fig. 5: Proportions of runoff volumes (in 500 mm steps) on total CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption, CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption of carbonate sedimentary rocks, of silicates per runoff class, total runoff and total exorheic land area.

## Conclusions

- For the first time, differences in sediment composition beyond the three classes of carbonates, shales and sandstones are recognized using a new high-resolution model for global CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption by chemical weathering.
- Trace carbonates in crystalline lithological classes contribute only little to the CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption budget according to the model presented here (Table 1).
- Because CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption is linked to the combination of runoff (and thus climate) and lithology (Fig. 2), future global dynamic carbon models need to recognize changes in the spatial correlation between runoff and lithology for analysis of feedback between weathering rates and the climatic system.
- A significant impact on the global CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption rate can be expected if identified highly active areas are affected by changes in the overall spatial patterns of the hydrological cycle due to climate change. Since the last Glacial Maximum those changes very likely affected the Global Carbon Cycle. It is expected that results will contribute to improve global carbon and circulation models.
- Earth System Models emphasizing a spatial resolution of typically 2 to 3.75° may not resolve the contribution of identified small regions responsible for most of global CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption and their variability due to changes in climate. However, many of the highly active CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption areas are spatially correlated. Thus, global weathering modules integrated in to global circulation models should be calibrated for scaling effects for representative CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption estimations.
- Future global weathering models should be calibrated region by region, incorporating local to regional data on geochemical composition of rocks for distinguished lithological classes, as well as weathering and diagenetic history, specifically for sediment classes.

## References

Hartmann, J., Jansen, N., Kempe, S., Dürr, H.H., Köhler, P. (2009) Global CO<sub>2</sub>-consumption by chemical weathering: What is the contribution of highly active weathering regions? *Global and Planetary Change*, 69, 185-194.  
 References cited in Table 1 are provided in Hartmann et al. (2009).