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To cite this version:

HAL Id: hal-01201563
https://hal.science/hal-01201563
Submitted on 18 Sep 2015

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Large-scale organization of carbon dioxide discharge in the Nepal Himalayas

Frédéric Girault1,2, Laurent Bollinger3, Mukunda Bhattarai4, Bharat Prasad Koirala6, Christian France-Lanord5, Sudhir Rajaure5, Jérôme Gaillardet1, Monique Fort4, Soma Nath Sapkota4, and Frédéric Perrier1

1Institut de Physique du Globe de Paris, Sorbonne Paris Cité, Université Paris Diderot, CNRS UMR 7154, Paris, France, 2Now at Laboratoire de Géologie, École Normale Supérieure, CNRS UMR 8538, Paris, France, 3CEA, DAM, DIF, Arpajon, France, 4National Seismological Centre, Department of Mines and Geology, Kathmandu, Nepal, 5Centre de Recherches Pétrographiques et Géochimiques, Université de Nancy, CNRS UMR 7358, Vandœuvre-lès-Nancy, France, 6Département de Géographie, Sorbonne Paris Cité, Université Paris Diderot, CNRS UMR Prodig 8586, Paris, France

Abstract Gaseous carbon dioxide (CO2) and radon-222 release from the ground was investigated along the Main Central Thrust zone in the Nepal Himalayas. From 2200 CO2 and 900 radon-222 flux measurements near 13 hot springs from western to central Nepal, we obtained total CO2 and radon discharges varying from 10−3 to 1.6 mol s−1 and 20 to 1600 Bq s−1, respectively. We observed a coherent organization at spatial scales of ≈10 km in a given region: low CO2 and radon discharges around Pokhara (midwestern Nepal) and in the Bhote Kosi Valley (east Nepal); low CO2 but large radon discharges in Lower Dolpo (west Nepal); and large CO2 and radon discharges in the upper Trisuli Valley (central Nepal). A 110 km long CO2-producing segment, with high carbon isotopic ratios, suggesting metamorphic decarbonation, is thus evidenced from 84.5°E to 85.5°E. This spatial organization could be controlled by geological heterogeneity or large Himalayan earthquakes.

1. Introduction

Convergent zones play an essential role in the global carbon dioxide (CO2) balance of the Earth [Kerrick and Caldeira, 1998]. In addition to their role of atmospheric CO2 sink through silicate weathering [Gaillardet et al., 1999; Gaillardet and Galy, 2008; Wolff-Boenisch et al., 2009], large orogens are also the location of the production and release of CO2-rich fluids [Irwin and Barnes, 1980]. Major active fault zones appear as a complex system where fluid circulation, crustal permeability, and possibly earthquake occurrence might be interrelated dynamically [Manning and Ingebritsen, 1999; Ingebritsen and Manning, 2010; Manga et al., 2012].

The Himalayas offer a natural laboratory where this essential coupling can be studied. High seismic activity is concentrated on a midcrustal ramp located below the Main Central Thrust (MCT) zone on the Main Himalayan Thrust accommodating the 2 cm yr−1 convergence between India and Southern Tibet [Avouac, 2003; Ader et al., 2012], where fluid occurrence might explain the high electrical conductivity observed by magnetotelluric sounding [Lemonnier et al., 1999]. Seasonal variations of seismicity [Bollinger et al., 2007] and deformation [Bettinelli et al., 2008; Chanard et al., 2014] can be related to surface hydrological forcing.

Evidence of CO2 release exists in the MCT zone of central Nepal. First, high alkalinity of hot springs up to 56 × 10−3 mol L−1 was shown to contribute from 0.5 to 25% to the total dissolved inorganic carbon (DIC) of the entire Narayani watershed [Evans et al., 2004]. Furthermore, the high carbon isotopic ratios (δ13C) of the hot springs, with values reaching +13‰, suggested a metamorphic decarbonation source at depth and a massive CO2 degassing near the water table, larger than 75% in the Trisuli and Marsyandi Valleys [Becker et al., 2008; Evans et al., 2008]. Second, explicit CO2 emission from the ground was discovered near hot springs of the Trisuli Valley, in the Syabru-Bensi hydrothermal system (SBHS) [Perrier et al., 2009], where it was found to be associated with a radon-222 signature and was subsequently mapped in detail [Girault et al., 2014], providing a valuable baseline for long-term monitoring [Girault et al., 2009]. In this paper, we present the results of systematic search and measurement of gaseous CO2 release in the vicinity of other significant hot springs from western to eastern Nepal.
2. Description of the Sites in the MCT Zone

The 2 to 10 km thick MCT shear zone in Nepal (Figure 1), associated with the steep topographic rise of the High Himalayas, places high-grade metamorphic rocks of the Greater Himalayan Sequence over low-grade metamorphic rocks of the Lesser Himalayan Sequence [Le Fort, 1975; Upreti, 1999]. This region is also characterized by numerous hot springs [Evans et al., 2004].

In this work, we measured the diffuse CO$_2$ discharge in the vicinity of 13 of these hot springs (Table 1 and Table S1 in the supporting information). All the main hot springs along the Trisuli River in central Nepal were studied (Figure 1, inset): Timure and Chilime, Langtang, and Bharku, located north, east, and south of the SBHS, respectively. Springs located in midwestern Nepal, such as the Myagdi (Beni), Kali Gandaki (Tatopani, Narchyang), Seti, and Marsyandi Rivers were also examined (Figure 1). This set was complemented (Figure 1) by the Kodari hot spring east of Kathmandu and two hot springs in Lower Dolpo (western Nepal) near tributaries of the Thuli Bheri River: Sulighad near Juphal airport, and Tarakot 20 km eastward.

These hydrothermal systems show various settings (Tables 1, S1, and S2). Kodari, Chilime, Beni, and Tatopani springs, with significant flow rate (>1 L s$^{-1}$), are major pilgrimage and touristic sites. Sulighad, Tarakot, Timure, Bharku, and Langtang springs, with smaller flow rate (<1 L s$^{-1}$), are largely preserved in natural conditions due to their remote location. SBHS, Timure, and Seti springs, with insufficient flow rate to attract much economic activity, show moderate human impacts limited to cemented basins. SBHS, Tatopani, and Chilime sites have pronounced H$_2$S odor helpful to identify CO$_2$ degassing [Girault et al., 2009], a signature totally lacking at Sulighad and Tarakot sites despite a similar geological context. At SBHS and Timure sites, several independent CO$_2$ discharge zones, separated by >500 m, were found.

3. Measurement Methods

At each site, a systematic experimental approach developed in the SBHS was implemented. Methods are briefly recalled here. Details are given in Girault et al. [2014].
Table 1. Characteristics of CO₂ and Radon Emission From the Ground

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Estimated DIC Discharge From Hot Springs (10⁻³ mol s⁻¹)</th>
<th>CO₂ Fluxes Min–Max Range (gm⁻² d⁻¹)</th>
<th>Radon Fluxes Min–Max Range (10⁻² Bq m⁻² s⁻¹)</th>
<th>Correlation CO₂–Radon (Figure 2) N a</th>
<th>CO₂ Discharge (10⁻³ mol s⁻¹)</th>
<th>Radon Discharge (Bq s⁻¹)</th>
<th>δ¹³C CO₂ From CO₂ (PDB) (%) Mean ± 1σ (Min/Max)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western Nepal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Dolpo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suligad</td>
<td>8.4 ± 3.3 g</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1.1–259</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>7.0–3070</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3.0 ± 0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarakot</td>
<td>1.1 ± 0.3 g</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>0.8–70</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0–1410</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3.8 ± 0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwestern Nepal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beni</td>
<td>14.1 ± 4.2 f,g</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>0.7–35</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0–27</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>&lt;0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kali Gandaki Valley</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narchyeng</td>
<td>9.7 ± 3.9 g</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.7–70</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7.0–111</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>&lt;0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tatopani</td>
<td>14.7 ± 4.5 f,g</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>0.6–163</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0–403</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>&lt;0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seti</td>
<td>32 ± 16 f,g</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.4–176</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.3–66</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.5 ± 0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marsyangdi</td>
<td>14.1 ± 6.1 d,e,f,g</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2800–3600</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>n.m.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>&gt;130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Nepal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chilime</td>
<td>15.7 ± 3.3 d,g</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>3.4–123,000</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>5.0–3810</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>390 ± 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bharku SBHS</td>
<td>n.m.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.9–20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>n.m.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>&lt;0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GZ1-2</td>
<td>123 ± 38 d,e,g</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>2.5–236,000</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>4.5–38,500</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>900 ± 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GZ3</td>
<td>21.1 ± 9.3 g</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>2.0–19,000</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>1.2–10,400</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>740 ± 130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>150 ± 50 d,e,g</td>
<td>1314</td>
<td>2.0–236,000</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>1.2–38,500</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>1600 ± 400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timure</td>
<td>12.9 ± 2.6 d,e,g</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>0.7–11,100</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>0–1640</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>830 ± 170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langtang</td>
<td>0.45 ± 0.14 f,g</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.6–65</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>n.m.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>&lt;0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kodari</td>
<td>25 ± 10 f,g</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0–31</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>n.m.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>&lt;0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>&gt;300 ± 100</td>
<td>2189</td>
<td>0–236,000</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>0–38,500</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>&gt;3000 ± 700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Number of CO₂ and radon flux measurements.

b Number of measurement points for CO₂–radon correlation (see Figure 2).

c Data from the SBHS are detailed in Girault et al. (2014).

d Data from Becker (2005).

e Data from Becker et al. (2008).

CO₂ and radon fluxes, expressed in g m⁻² d⁻¹ and Bq m⁻² s⁻¹, respectively, were measured with the accumulation chamber method. After the chamber is installed on the ground, gas concentration was monitored as a function of time, and the initial rate of increase provides a measurement of the flux. The method was tested in detail in the field, and experimental uncertainties were determined to be 5–40% for CO₂ flux and 8–35% for radon flux. An overall common uncertainty of 5% was added quadratically. Mean CO₂ and radon fluxes in background locations without degassing were 16.6 ± 1.3 g m⁻² d⁻¹ and 0.10 ± 0.02 Bq m⁻² s⁻¹, respectively. To obtain the total discharge, expressed in mol s⁻¹ or d⁻¹ for CO₂ and Bq s⁻¹ or MBq d⁻¹ for radon, spatial integration was performed using kriging and interpolation of the available flux data, with uncertainty varying from 10 to 60% as estimated by Monte Carlo simulations.

Sampling of gas and spring water was performed using glass tubes and copper tubes, respectively. Determination of the CO₂ fraction was done manometrically. Carbon isotopic ratios of CO₂ (δ¹³C, defined relative to the standard values of Pee Dee belemnite, PDB) were obtained by mass spectrometry.
Radon concentration, expressed in Bq L$^{-1}$, was systematically measured on site in hot and cold water springs by radon emanometry in air ([Girault and Perrier, 2014]. Experimental uncertainties were 5–30%. Radium concentration in water, expressed in Bq L$^{-1}$, was determined in a similar manner in the laboratory. Methods could not always be applied optimally, owing to several factors (electricity, permission, human impact, and lack of time). Searches were initiated in the immediate vicinity of the hot springs, assisted by infrared thermal imaging. Local people could sometimes indicate suspected gas discharge zones where lethal accidents had occurred.

4. Results

Measurements were carried out during the dry winter seasons between December 2007 and January 2011. Uncertainties correspond to one sigma standard deviation (68% confidence interval), and averages are geometric means.

4.1. CO$_2$ Flux and Integrated Discharge

A total of 2189 CO$_2$ and 900 radon fluxes were measured at 580 measurement points (Table 1 and Figure 2). Maximum CO$_2$ fluxes of 236 ± 50 kg m$^{-2}$ d$^{-1}$ and 123 ± 25 kg m$^{-2}$ d$^{-1}$ were recorded in the SBHS and at Chilime, respectively. Significant CO$_2$ discharges of 1.6 ± 0.4, 0.83 ± 0.17, and 0.39 ± 0.10 mol s$^{-1}$ were observed at the SBHS, Timure, and Chilime sites, respectively. At Timure, significant discharge was observed despite smaller CO$_2$ fluxes (maximum of 11.1 ± 2.8 kg m$^{-2}$ d$^{-1}$), due to a larger surface area of CO$_2$ degassing, extending 150 m from the hot spring on an infrared image (Table S1). Significant CO$_2$ discharge is thus not a specific feature of the SBHS but is a widespread feature of the upper Trisuli Valley in central Nepal.
By contrast, modest CO₂ discharge, similar to background values, was identified southward at Bharku and eastward at Langtang and Kodari. Similarly, in midwestern Nepal, modest CO₂ discharge was observed at Tatopani. Modest CO₂ fluxes were also measured at all sites investigated from Beni to Seti hot springs. In Marsyandi Valley, only two points were measured, but they gave significant flux values (mean of 3200 ± 300 g m⁻² d⁻¹). In western Nepal at Sulighad and Tarakot, maximum CO₂ fluxes from the ground (259 ± 22 and 70 ± 5 g m⁻² d⁻¹) were significantly above local background flux of 6.5 ± 0.5 g m⁻² d⁻¹, but CO₂ discharges are small.

To summarize, substantial CO₂ discharge has thus far only been detected between the Marsyandi and upper Trisuli Valleys, i.e., along a 110 km long region of the Nepal Himalayan belt. Westward and eastward of this region, only low CO₂ discharge, close to background level, was identified (Figure 3).

4.2. Radon Signature of the CO₂ Discharge

Significant radon flux was observed in association with the CO₂ at all sites (Figure 2 and Table 1). Radon fluxes >1 Bq m⁻² s⁻¹, similar to fluxes in the SBHS [Girault et al., 2014], were observed at Timure and Chilime, yielding radon discharges of 840 ± 170 and 290 ± 70 Bq s⁻¹, respectively, significant compared with the discharge in the SBHS (1600 ± 300 Bq s⁻¹). In Dolpo, radon discharges were also significant (180 ± 40 and 70 ± 15 Bq s⁻¹). Insignificant radon discharge, consistent with the regional background, characterized all other sites.

Figure 3. Characteristics of CO₂ degassing from the ground and from water along the Nepal Himalayan arc: (a) Carbon isotope ratios of gaseous CO₂ from the ground and bubbles in springs, (b) carbon isotope ratios of water (dissolved inorganic carbon), (c) radon concentration in spring waters, and (d) CO₂ and radon discharge from the ground (see supporting information). Data are summarized in Tables 1, S1, and S2. Epicenter and rupture lengths of the last significant earthquakes are displayed: the megaequakes of 1505 (M ≥ 8) [Ambraseys and Jackson, 2003] and 1934 (Mw 8.2) [Ambraseys and Douglas, 2004; Sapkota et al., 2013], and the intermediate earthquakes of 1833 (Mw 7.3), 1866 (Mw 7.2), and 1936 (Mw 7.0) [Gutenberg and Richter, 1949; Szeliga et al., 2010].

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The largest average values were observed in the Marsyandi in water along the Nepal and radon Becker et al. for the dissolved inorganic carbon in hot springs is given in Figure 3 at Chilime, from 0.7 ± 0.1 to 19 ± 1 Bq L⁻¹, similar to fluxes measured in central Nepal, while the CO₂ flux is relatively low. We therefore propose a classification of the sites based on CO₂ and radon flux data: a first group (group I) with large CO₂ and radon discharges (upper Trisuli Valley including SBHS, Timure, and Chilime, possibly Marsyandi); a second group (group II) with low CO₂ discharge but large radon discharge (Sulighad and Tarakot in Lower Dolpo); and a third group (group III) with low CO₂ and radon discharges (Langtang and Bharku in central Nepal, Kodari to the east, Tatopani, Narchyeng, Beni, and Seti in midwestern Nepal). We did not observe a case of large CO₂ discharge with low radon discharge.

Values of radon concentration in the hot springs confirm this organization (Figure 3 and Table S2): large in Dolpo (205 ± 10 and 33 ± 2 Bq L⁻¹), but small in the hot springs of midwestern and central Nepal (0.70 ± 0.18 Bq L⁻¹ at Marsyandi, 3.8 ± 0.2 Bq L⁻¹ at Chilime, from 0.7 ± 0.1 to 19 ± 1 Bq L⁻¹ in the SBHS, from 5.8 ± 0.4 to 12 ± 4 Bq L⁻¹ at Timure, and 0.90 ± 0.09 Bq L⁻¹ at Kodari). Except at Langtang and Kodari, radon concentration in water was high when CO₂ discharge was insignificant and low in the presence of large CO₂ discharge.

4.3. Carbon Isotopic Anomalies

In central Nepal, gaseous CO₂ samples showed δ¹³C between −1.6 ± 0.1 and −0.5 ± 0.1‰ (mean of −1.2 ± 0.2‰), consistent with previous data which support the concept of a deep metamorphic decarbonation source [Becker et al., 2008; Evans et al., 2008; Perrier et al., 2009]. In Dolpo, similar δ¹³C are obtained at both sites, −10.2 ± 0.1 and −11.7 ± 0.3‰, intermediate values between the mean δ¹³C of central Nepal and that of biogenic carbon (−25 ± 5‰) [Cerling, 1984].

A synthesis of available values of δ¹³CDIC for the dissolved inorganic carbon in hot springs is given in Figure 3 and Table S2. Compared with the δ¹³C of gas, there was a larger dispersion of δ¹³C in water along the Nepal Himalayan belt, ranging from −13.8 to +13.2‰. The largest average values were observed in the Marsyandi (12.5‰) [Becker et al., 2008] and upper Trisuli Valleys (12.3 ± 0.7‰) [Becker, 2005; Evans et al., 2008].

5. Discussion

We divide the studied sites into three groups, on the basis of CO₂ and radon data (Figures 3 and S1). These must reflect source and transport processes, and a preliminary interpretation is proposed below. In the hydrothermal model of Becker et al. [2008] and Evans et al. [2008], metamorphic reactions at 10–20 km depth produce CO₂, which percolates through fracture networks, reaching the MCT fault system, where it mixes with meteoric water which eventually is discharged at 60–80°C at the surface. At or near the water table, CO₂ may interact with the atmosphere and degas, enhancing the remnant δ¹³CDIC. The simplest model for the radon signature is degassing of the radon contained in water [Girault and Perrier, 2014]. This model predicts a relationship between radon and CO₂ discharge (Figure S1). For some sites (group II), the radon signature can be accounted for by a small amount of degassing of radon-rich hydrothermal water. By contrast, even when a broad range of conditions are considered (gray band), this model cannot account for the largest CO₂ and radon discharges observed at group I sites Timure and SBHS. The Chilime site appears here intermediate, marginally compatible with simple degassing of radon-bearing water. This analysis indicates that group I is...
anomalous and signals the presence of another mechanism, with radon being incorporated at a depth after 
CO$_2$ is degassed from water or perhaps suggesting that CO$_2$ is transported and released independently from 
hydrothermal circulations [Girault and Perrier, 2014]. Differences in the radon flux can be accounted for by 
different depths of CO$_2$ degassing or by variations in the effective radium concentration of rocks (i.e., the 
radon source term) [Girault et al., 2012; Girault and Perrier, 2014, Figure 14].

In a given region, sites separated by 5–10 km showed remarkably similar characteristics, suggesting that 
local topography and hydrology are not major factors controlling the CO$_2$ heterogeneity. Instead, this 
consistency indicates a CO$_2$ source depth of the same typical spatial scale (5 to 10 km). The similar $\delta^{13}$C of 
$–1.6 \pm 0.4\%o$ points indeed the same CO$_2$ source, most likely metamorphic decarbonation, over the Nepal 
Himalayan belt. However, CO$_2$ emission is modulated along the arc. Indeed, a 110 km long region (Figure 3), 
which here coincides with group I, showed large CO$_2$ and radon discharges where hot springs yielded $\delta^{13}$C$_{DIC} > 10\%o$. Outside this region, CO$_2$ discharge was low, and hot springs gave $\delta^{13}$C$_{DIC} < –4\%o$. 
Numerous factors might control this large-scale heterogeneity. First, the CO$_2$ production rate must strongly 
depend on the available rock material (e.g., the thickness of Greater Himalayan Sequence units), lateral 
lithology (e.g., along strike changes in lithology, or the lithology of Lesser Himalayan Sequence units), 
temperature distribution, and other rheological factors associated with MCT activity. Second, the midcrust 
permeability must affect the CO$_2$ discharge. A more detailed petrological modeling of the metamorphic 
reactions [Groppo et al., 2013] is however necessary before the role of permeability can be assessed.

Alternative mechanisms for CO$_2$ production involving sulfuric acid [Torres et al., 2014] may also need to be 
considered in this case.

The spatial organization of the CO$_2$ emissions may be discussed also in relation with the distribution of 
earthquakes. Group II is located in the section of the MCT which shows the least seismic activity over the 
1994–2012 time period. This is also (Figure 3) the region covered by the rupture of the large earthquake 
($M \geq 8$) of 1505. The eastern group III section is approximately bordered to the east by the 220 km long 
rupture of the 1934 $M_w$8.2 Bihar Nepal earthquake [Sapkota et al., 2013; Bollinger et al., 2014], a region where 
no hot springs are reported. Group I, by contrast, is located in the seismic gap (Figure 3) between the two 
1505 and 1934 earthquakes, with smaller major earthquakes ($7 \leq M_w \leq 8$) which have only partially released 
the accumulated slip deficit since 1505. These relations are unlikely to be coincidental, as Himalayan 
earthquakes have a dramatic effect on the large-scale crustal permeability, but the current data are not 
sufficient to substantiate hypotheses at this stage.

The systems presented in this study are among the first examples of degassing in an active orogen away from 
volcanic activity. To first order, we can characterize the CO$_2$ emission by the value of the discharge and the 
area of the emission, defined as the area with flux larger than 500 g m$^{-2}$ d$^{-1}$. In Figure 4, we compare these 
two parameters for our sites with more familiar instances of mofette sites and a selection of volcanic and 
hydrothermal sites (reviewed in Girault et al. [2014]). The points of group I (SBHS, Timure, and Chilime) with 
significant discharge over a comparatively small surface area fall at the lower edge of the trend of volcanic 
and hydrothermal sites. Points of this group therefore are not fundamentally different from volcanic sites, 
and we can name them “tectonic fumaroles.” The contribution of such features, over all active orogens and 
convergent margins, might not be insignificant compared with active volcanoes. Group II (Sulighad and 
Tarakot) by contrast, are outside this trend but could be considered as extending the trend of points from 
major faults.

6. Conclusions

Diffuse CO$_2$ emissions in the Nepal Himalayas have a remarkably uniform isotopic signature. The 
accompanying radon signature varies from site to site but shows coherent spatial organization. Over the 
350 km long Nepal Himalayan arc that we investigated, significant CO$_2$ and radon discharges appear 
concentrated in a 110 km long region spanning about 84.5°E to 85.5°E. We measured a total diffuse CO$_2$ 
discharge thus far of 3.0 ± 0.7 mol s$^{-1}$ (or 11 ± 3 t d$^{-1}$). This minimum estimate, dominated by three sites 
located in the upper Trisuli Valley in central Nepal, is larger than the contribution from dissolved inorganic 
carbon in hot springs (<0.5 mol s$^{-1}$). This direct observation confirms previous inference [Becker et al., 2008; 
Evans et al., 2008] that gaseous release of CO$_2$ dominates the total contribution of the Himalayas, and
this may also be the case in other active orogens. The observed heterogeneity, however, makes extrapolation to a whole chain from a few sites particularly difficult.

This study can only be considered a first step toward obtaining a reliable estimate of CO₂ release by the Himalayas. Degassing has not yet been studied in large areas of the Nepal Himalayas, including the far western region characterized by intense seismic activity (Figure 1) and the eastern region East from Makalu. No CO₂ emissions have been measured so far in India, Bhutan, or Pakistan. In western Nepal, the region from Marsyandi Valley to Ganesh Himal deserves more detailed mapping. Furthermore, we have sometimes observed degassing away from the hot springs along the MCT, at Timure or in the SBHS, for example, and our ability to measure large CO₂ fluxes was due to the use of infrared images or an element of luck.

The origin of the CO₂ released in the Nepal Himalayas, while likely metamorphic, remains insufficiently constrained. A better understanding of the source, including petrological [Groppo et al., 2013] and thermomechanical modeling [Bollinger et al., 2006], is mandatory before transport properties of the MCT zone can be assessed. The spatial distribution of our data suggests that in the future some attention should definitely be given to relationships between CO₂ emissions, deformation, and Himalayan earthquakes. The presence of different types of diffuse CO₂ emissions makes the Himalayas a unique natural laboratory where, for example, a dynamic connection between crust permeability and the earthquake cycle [Ingebritsen et al., 2006] can be studied. Such working hypotheses may have important consequences in terms of coseismic or preseismic gas bursts.

Acknowledgments
The authors thank the Department of Mines and Geology, Kathmandu, for a fruitful and enthusiastic collaboration. This research was supported in part by CNRS-INSU. This paper has been improved, thanks to the insightful comments of the Editor, Steve Ingebritsen, and one anonymous reviewer. This is IPGP contribution 3566.

The Editor thanks two anonymous reviewers for their assistance in evaluating this paper.

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