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► **To cite this version:**

Matteo Rinaldi, Stefano Decesari, Claudio Carbone, Emanuela Finessi, Sandro Fuzzi, et al.. Evidence of a natural marine source of oxalic acid and a possible link to glyoxal. *Journal of Geophysical Research*, 2011, 116 (D16), pp.D16204. 10.1029/2011JD015659 . hal-03203100

HAL Id: hal-03203100

<https://hal.science/hal-03203100>

Submitted on 21 Apr 2021

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Evidence of a natural marine source of oxalic acid and a possible link to glyoxal

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Received 20 January 2011; revised 26 May 2011; accepted 6 June 2011; published 26 August 2011.

[1] This paper presents results supporting the existence of a natural source of oxalic acid over the oceans. Oxalate was detected in “clean-sector” marine aerosol samples at Mace Head (Ireland) (53°20'N, 9°54'W) during 2006, and at Amsterdam Island (37°48'S, 77°34'E) from 2003 to 2007, in concentrations ranging from 2.7 to 39 ng m⁻³ and from 0.31 to 17 ng m⁻³, respectively. The oxalate concentration showed a clear seasonal trend at both sites, with maxima in spring-summer and minima in fall-winter, being consistent with other marine biogenic aerosol components (e.g., methanesulfonic acid, non-sea-salt sulfate, and aliphatic amines). The observed oxalate was distributed along the whole aerosol size spectrum, with both a submicrometer and a supermicrometer mode, unlike the dominant submicrometer mode encountered in many polluted environments. Given its mass size distribution, the results suggest that over remote oceanic regions oxalate is produced through a combination of different formation processes. It is proposed that the cloud-mediated oxidation of gaseous glyoxal, recently detected over remote oceanic regions, may be an important source of submicrometer oxalate in the marine boundary layer. Supporting this hypothesis, satellite-retrieved glyoxal column concentrations over the two sampling sites exhibited the same seasonal concentration trend of oxalate. Furthermore, chemical box model simulations showed that the observed submicrometer oxalate concentrations were consistent with the in-cloud oxidation of typical marine air glyoxal mixing ratios, as retrieved by satellite measurements, at both sites.

Citation: Rinaldi, M., et al. (2011), Evidence of a natural marine source of oxalic acid and a possible link to glyoxal, *J. Geophys. Res.*, 116, D16204, doi:10.1029/2011JD015659.

1. Introduction

[2] Oxalic acid is the most abundant dicarboxylic acid detected in tropospheric aerosols [Kerminen *et al.*, 1999],

with concentrations ranging from a few ng m⁻³ in remote regions up to 900 ng m⁻³ in urban air [Warneck, 2003, and references therein].

[3] Oxalic acid has often been observed in marine aerosols, although, given the high concentrations found in polluted environments, its origin has often been attributed to transport from the continent [Matsumoto *et al.*, 1998; Kawamura and Sakaguchi, 1999; Mochida *et al.*, 2003a, 2003b; Aggarwal and Kawamura, 2008].

[4] The idea of a biogenic marine source of oxalic acid and other low-molecular-weight (LMW) dicarboxylic acids has been sporadically proposed in the literature over the years. For instance, Kawamura *et al.* [1996a, 1996b] attributed oxalic acid and other LMW dicarboxylic acids in aerosol samples over the Antarctic Ocean to the photochemical degradation of fatty acids of phytoplankton origin, transferred into the atmosphere within sea-spray particles. Baboukas *et al.* [2000] also hypothesized a marine source of oxalic acid, although much weaker than continental ones, observing some correlation between oxalic acid and methanesulfonic acid (MSA), out of main continental outflows over the Atlantic Ocean.

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[5] More recently, *Turekian et al.* [2003] presented results of compound-specific $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ analyses, evidencing a marine origin for aerosol oxalic acid in Bermuda. *Warneck* [2003] discussed a chemical mechanism indicating a natural route to the production of oxalic acid in marine clouds from biogenic gaseous precursors, namely acetylene and ethene, through the formation of glyoxal and glycolaldehyde, respectively. The importance of the atmospheric oxidation of glyoxal (and glyoxylic acid) for the formation of oxalic acid was previously discussed by *Kawamura et al.* [1996a, 1996b], although without evidencing the role of liquid-phase chemistry in the process. Measurements performed below, above, and in-cloud in the near-coast marine atmosphere [*Crahan et al.*, 2004; *Sorooshian et al.*, 2007] supported *Warneck's* [2003] mechanism of oxalic acid production in marine clouds, even though the authors did not discuss the origin, whether natural or anthropogenic, of the gaseous precursors involved in the process. *Miyazaki et al.* [2010] suggested that substantial fractions of oxalic acid in biologically influenced marine aerosols over the western North Pacific resulted from the degradation of organic precursors emitted by sea-spray processes in oceanic regions with high biological productivity.

[6] This paper reports data supporting the existence of a natural source of aerosol oxalic acid over the oceans, also discussing the possibility that glyoxal, observed over the oceans in concentrations of the order of tens ppt, may be an important precursor of aerosol oxalic acid via in-cloud oxidation.

2. Experimental Setup

2.1. Sampling

[7] Aerosol sampling was performed at two coastal stations, one in the Northern Hemisphere, Mace Head (Ireland), facing the North Atlantic Ocean at $53^{\circ}20'\text{N}$, $9^{\circ}54'\text{W}$, and the other in the Southern Hemisphere, Amsterdam Island, located in the southern Indian Ocean sector of the Austral Ocean, at $37^{\circ}48'\text{S}$, $77^{\circ}34'\text{E}$.

[8] Sampling at Mace Head was performed throughout 2006, with an average frequency of about one sample per month (with the exception of the June–July period, when two samples per month were collected), and a sampling time of 30–100 h. Aerosol samples were collected by an eight-stage Berner low-pressure impactor, operating at 30 LPM and using tedlar foils as sampling substrates. Particle segregation was performed according to the following 50% equivalent aerodynamic cutoff diameters: 0.06, 0.125, 0.25, 0.5, 1, 2, 4, 8, 16 μm . To avoid contamination from both local sources and long-range transport of anthropogenic aerosols, a well-established clean-sector sampling strategy was adopted so that samples were collected only in unperturbed marine air masses. Details on the clean-sector aerosol sampling strategy and instrumentation can be found in previously published studies [*Facchini et al.*, 2008a; *Rinaldi et al.*, 2009]. Approximately one non-clean-sector sample (polluted samples, hereafter) per month was collected for comparison purposes.

[9] Bulk (TSP) aerosols were sampled at Amsterdam Island on a 10 day basis from May 2003 to December 2004, using an open-face filtration device (NILU, Norway) running on average at 28.4 ± 1.5 LPM with prefired 25 mm

diameter quartz filters. From January 2005 to November 2007, these bulk aerosols were sampled on an 8 day basis using an open-face filtration device (NILU, Norway) running on average at 41.8 ± 0.9 LPM with prefired 47 mm diameter quartz filters. Colocated size-segregated aerosols (PM1, PM2.5, PM10, TSP) were sampled within the same sampling intervals (8 days) from January 2005 to November 2007 on preweighed Teflon filters. Aerosol size segregation was performed with a four-stage cascade impactor (Dekati Ltd) running at 30 ± 1 LPM. A detailed description of the site characteristics is provided by *Sciare et al.* [2009]. Given the remote character of the site, no clean-sector strategy was necessary to avoid local contaminations, although the site can be affected by biomass-burning aerosols transported from South Africa and Madagascar from July to September, with a maximum in August [*Sciare et al.*, 2009]. A post-sampling filtration was applied to the database, discarding all samples associated with an equivalent black carbon (EBC) value higher than 10 ngC m^{-3} , effectively excluding all anthropogenically contaminated samples. Given the strong influence of African biomass burning during the month of August, the samples collected during that month were considered “contaminated,” regardless of their EBC concentration.

2.2. Analyses of Oxalate in Aerosol Samples

[10] Oxalate anion quantifications on aerosol water extracts were performed by ion chromatography at the Institute for Atmospheric Sciences and Climate, Bologna, Italy (Mace Head samples) and at the Laboratoire des Sciences du Climat et de l'Environnement, Gif-sur-Yvette, France (Amsterdam Island samples).

[11] The analytical protocol for Mace Head samples is described in detail by *Cavalli et al.* [2004] and *Facchini et al.* [2008a]. One unsampled substrate was associated with each impactor sample for blank correction. Blank oxalate levels in the tedlar substrates deployed at Mace Head were always below the detection limit (0.7 ppb).

[12] Details on the analytical protocols for Amsterdam Island samples are provided by *Sciare et al.* [2007]. Prefired quartz and Teflon filters were taken in the field on a monthly basis for blank corrections. Blank oxalate concentrations for prefired quartz filters were on average 7.9 ± 4.4 ppb while blank corrected atmospheric oxalate concentrations ranged from 13.4 to 118.5 ppb (mean, 38.4 ppb). Oxalate concentrations below the detection limit (~ 0.1 ppb) were observed for the blank Teflon filters.

[13] The overall error in the determination of oxalate is estimated to be of the order of 10% and takes into account the analytical accuracy and the filter blank variability (when applicable). Since ion chromatography allows the quantification of oxalate independently of its chemical form, in the following, we refer to the sum of oxalic acid and oxalate in aerosol particles as to oxalate.

2.3. Satellite Measurements of Glyoxal

[14] Six years (2003–2008) of glyoxal observations retrieved from the radiances recorded by the Scanning Imaging Absorption Spectrometer for Atmospheric Cartography (SCIAMACHY) were used in the present study. The SCIAMACHY instrument is an imaging ultraviolet-visible-near-infrared (UV-VIS-near IR) spectrometer on board the

Table 1. Average (\pm Standard Deviation) Oxalate Formation Rates, Calculated Between 0.5 and 3 h of Cloud Processing at Mace Head and Amsterdam Island^a

	Glyoxal Mixing Ratio (pptv)	Oxalate Formation Rate ($\text{ng m}^{-3} \text{min}^{-1}$)	
		pH 4	pH 6
MH_SS	187 \pm 103	0.36 \pm 0.11	1 \pm 0.17
MH_FW	67 \pm 54	0.11 \pm 0.035	0.33 \pm 0.057
AI_SS	101 \pm 65	0.52 \pm 0.13	1.2 \pm 0.12
AI_FW	34 \pm 47	0.16 \pm 0.043	0.38 \pm 0.038

^aInput glyoxal mixing ratios are also reported. MH, Mace Head; AI, Amsterdam Island; FW, fall-winter; SS, spring-summer.

ESA Envisat satellite [Burrows *et al.*, 1995; Gottwald *et al.*, 2006]. Envisat flies in a sun-synchronous near-polar orbit. It has a nominal ground pixel size of 30 km along track and 60 km across track (60×30 km) and the total across-track footprint provides global coverage every 6 days. The local equator overpass time is around 10:00 A.M. local time.

[15] The analysis of the vertical columns of glyoxal (VC_{GLY}) involved the following steps: (1) Differential optical absorption spectroscopy (DOAS) [Platt, 1994] was used to retrieve the glyoxal slant column densities (SC_{GLY}). Details on the retrieval method are provided by Vrekoussis *et al.* [2009]; (2) the SC_{GLY} were converted to VC_{GLY} using the air mass factor (AMF) calculations based on the radiative transfer model SCIATRAN [Rozanov *et al.*, 2005], accounting for the average light path length in the atmosphere.

[16] It should be noted that assumptions were made for the a priori realistic conditions of the atmosphere. However, the AMF based on the real conditions of the atmosphere may differ from the a priori AMF, with a potential impact on the reported VC_{GLY} . The largest error is introduced by potential differences between the real aerosol profile and the existence of residual clouds, which are considered to be less than 20% [Vrekoussis *et al.*, 2009]. Both the aerosol vertical distribution and aerosol type (e.g., urban versus maritime) will affect visibility and, hence, the photon light path. However, given the lack of information on the vertical distribution of aerosols, any attempt at a correction for aerosol effects would be speculative at this point. For the residual clouds, two extreme scenarios can be considered: (1) All glyoxal is found under the clouds, and, as a result, cloud shielding in the lower troposphere will lead to glyoxal underestimation; and (2) all glyoxal is found above a cloud's top height, so that the high surface reflectance will lead to glyoxal overestimation. The latter case is expected to be a rare possibility.

[17] Future improvement on the retrieval algorithms will take into account the synergistic measurements of aerosol and clouds performed by the other instruments aboard Envisat. A detailed discussion regarding the impact of clouds and aerosol distribution on the glyoxal AMF computation is given by Vrekoussis *et al.* [2009, 2010].

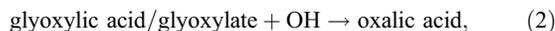
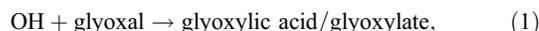
[18] For the present study the monthly mean values of VC_{GLY} were retrieved over Mace Head and Amsterdam Island and the extended area of 500 km around their central longitudes and latitudes.

2.4. Chemical Box Model

[19] A box model has been developed that includes a reaction scheme based on laboratory and model studies

[Ervens *et al.*, 2003a, 2004] and represents glyoxal oxidation by the OH radical in the aqueous phase of cloud droplets. The uptake of glyoxal and OH is described by a kinetic approach; no OH liquid-phase formation pathways are considered. Glyoxal is oxidized to oxalic acid in a two-step reaction pathway with glyoxylic acid as an intermediate compound. The oxidation of both glyoxylic acid and oxalic acid is pH dependent, with higher rate constants for the dissociated forms [Ervens *et al.*, 2003b].

[20] The aqueous phase reactions considered in the model are summarized as follows:



[21] The box model does not include any microphysical processes (cloud formation or evaporation). Clouds are presented by a constant liquid water content (LWC) of 0.1 g m^{-3} , this being of a typical order of magnitude for marine stratocumulus clouds. Since no measurements of cloud fractions were available from the experiments, cloud-processing times between 0.5 and 3 h were considered, as they are representative for cloud processing in multiple cloud cycles.

[22] The chemical concentrations of the gas-phase species glyoxal and the OH radical were maintained constant throughout the simulation period, implying a continuous source. OH concentrations of 10^6 and $3 \times 10^6 \text{ cm}^{-3}$ were assumed at both locations to simulate oxalate production in fall-winter and spring-summer, respectively. These OH concentrations and seasonal trends are in agreement with previous OH measurements at similar locations (e.g., Monks *et al.*, [2000]). The glyoxal concentration is constrained by satellite measurements (see previous section). To convert the column density satellite retrievals into actual concentrations, use was made of the AR5 version of the GISS model E general circulation model. The model ran with the year 2000 anthropogenic emissions and allowed the calculation of climate variability. Five years of simulations (after a year of spin-up) were sampled daily at 10:00 A.M. local time and averaged per month in order to obtain the average climatology of the boundary-layer height at Mace Head and Amsterdam Island, along with as the standard deviation of its variability during the 5 year simulation. These boundary-layer heights were used in the conversion of glyoxal columnar densities to number densities (molecules cm^{-3}), assuming that all glyoxal is well mixed within the boundary-layer height and that 1 pptv of glyoxal is equal to $2.45 \times 10^7 \text{ molecules cm}^{-3}$ for pressure $P = 1 \text{ atm}$ and temperature $T = 25^\circ\text{C}$. Average fall-winter and spring-summer mixing ratios were computed at both sites based on the above mentioned calculations (Table 1).

3. Results

3.1. Oxalate in Marine Aerosols

[23] Oxalate was detected in marine air masses at Mace Head and Amsterdam Island in concentrations from 2.7 to 39 ng m^{-3} and from 0.31 to 17 ng m^{-3} , respectively. As shown in Figure 1, oxalate concentrations followed a clear

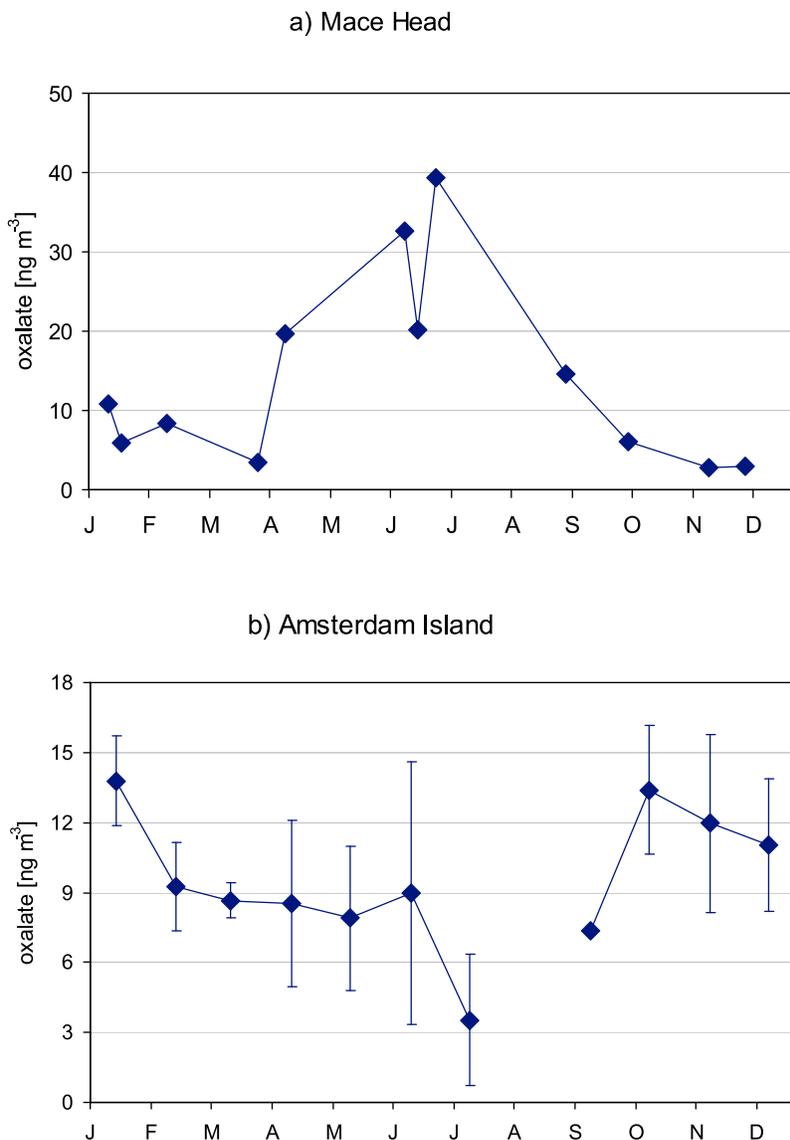


Figure 1. Observed oxalate concentrations as a function of time at (a) Mace Head (PM_{10}) and (b) Amsterdam Island (TSP). Data points represent single samples collected in 2006 for Mace Head and monthly averages from 2003 to 2007 for Amsterdam Island (the bars represent ± 1 standard deviation), after the postsampling filtration.

seasonal trend at both sites, with maxima in the spring-summer period and minima in the fall-winter period. The spring-summer oxalate concentration was significantly higher ($p < 0.01$) than the fall-winter one, with 25 ± 10 versus $5.7 \pm 3.0 \text{ ng m}^{-3}$ and 11 ± 3.0 versus $7.2 \pm 4.0 \text{ ng m}^{-3}$ at Mace Head and Amsterdam Island, respectively. The trend closely follows the yearly cycle of oceanic biological activity, which is characterized by the highest productivity during the period from spring through fall and by a quiescent period during the cold season [Cavalli *et al.*, 2004; O'Dowd *et al.*, 2004; Sciare *et al.*, 2009]. The seasonal trend is typical of biogenic components of marine aerosols, such as MSA, non-sea-salt (nss) sulfate [Cavalli *et al.*, 2004], and ammonium and alkylammonium salts [Facchini *et al.*, 2008a], suggesting, also for oxalate, the presence of a natural source in the MBL.

[24] A similar contribution of oxalate carbon (C_{oxa}) to total organic carbon (OC) was observed at the two sites, with

average values of $1.6\% \pm 0.8\%$ at Mace Head and $2.2\% \pm 1.0\%$ at Amsterdam Island. Assuming that all observed aerosol oxalates are of marine origin, the similarity of the $\text{C}_{\text{oxa}}/\text{OC}$ ratio at the two sites suggests that the oxalate source has the same relative strength with respect to the other marine organic aerosol sources. Amsterdam Island is generally characterized by lower aerosol mass concentrations than Mace Head, as already documented by Sciare *et al.* [2009]. The present $\text{C}_{\text{oxa}}/\text{OC}$ ratios are fairly consistent with those reported by Kawamura *et al.* [2010] (0.5%–3.5%) and Miyazaki *et al.* [2010] (0.6%–1.0%) for Arctic Ocean and North Pacific Ocean aerosols, respectively. Moreover, Kawamura and Sakaguchi [1999] reported $\text{C}_{\text{oxa}}/\text{OC}$ ratios from less than 1% to 10% over the Pacific Ocean, with the greater contributions at tropical latitudes.

[25] In clean marine samples, oxalate was distributed along the whole size spectrum (Figure 2), with the submicrometer

fraction contributing $46\% \pm 15\%$ and $33\% \pm 18\%$ of the oxalate mass at Mace Head and Amsterdam Island, respectively. The largest contribution in the submicrometer fraction was observed at Mace Head in the $0.25\text{--}0.5\ \mu\text{m}$ size range ($22\% \pm 9\%$), while this information was not available for

Amsterdam Island because of the lower resolution of the sampling device. As for the supermicrometer fraction, the largest contribution was observed in the $1.0\text{--}2.0\ \mu\text{m}$ size range at Mace Head and in the $1.0\text{--}2.5\ \mu\text{m}$ size range at Amsterdam Island.

[26] It is also worth noting that the oxalate size distribution in clean marine samples observed at Mace Head differs from that of nitrate (Figure 2c), with 79% of its mass in the $1.0\text{--}4.0\ \mu\text{m}$ size range, and from that of nss sulfate, which is mainly present in the submicrometer fraction (80% of the mass). By contrast, it closely resembles the MSA size distribution, which is characterized by almost equivalent submicrometer and supermicrometer modes.

[27] The samples collected at Mace Head under continental influence conditions (polluted samples) showed a different oxalate mass size distribution, peaking in the accumulation mode, with 63% of the oxalate mass accounted for by the submicrometer fraction. Samples collected at Amsterdam Island during August and September under the influence of South African biomass-burning events [Sciare *et al.*, 2009], exhibited a mass peak in the submicrometer range. This observation is coherent with previous studies, where oxalate is observed to undergo a shift toward larger diameters in clean marine samples as compared with polluted ones [Matsumoto *et al.*, 1998; Kerminen *et al.*, 1999]. The latter present an oxalate distribution consistent with those observed in continental polluted areas [Kerminen *et al.*, 2000; Yao *et al.*, 2002; Hsieh *et al.*, 2007], suggesting that the difference cannot be attributed to the preferential removal of coarse particles during the advection of continental air masses over the open ocean. The size distribution difference between clean marine and polluted samples strongly suggests a different formation pathway, or a combination of different formation routes, over remote oceanic regions.

[28] Mochida *et al.* [2003b] proposed the preferential partitioning of oxalate into coarse particles, because of the mildly alkaline properties of supermicrometer marine aerosols, as for nitrate, to explain the distribution of oxalate in marine aerosols. However, the different size distributions observed for nitrates at Mace Head during 2006 suggest that this hypothesis alone cannot explain the complexity of oxalate mass size distribution. According to Kerminen *et al.* [1999], the lower supermicrometer oxalate mode (geometric mean diameter at $2\ \mu\text{m}$) could be formed by condensation from the gas phase (hypothesis also considered by Turekian *et al.* [2003]), by heterogeneous reactions between a precursor compound and sea-salt particles, or in cloud droplets. Indeed, there is growing evidence from atmospheric observations that oxalate is a product of cloud processing [Chebbi and Carlier, 1996; Ervens *et al.*, 2003a, 2004; Crahan *et al.*, 2004; Yu *et al.*, 2005; Carlton *et al.*, 2007]. In particular, the studies of Warneck [2003], Crahan *et al.* [2004], Sorooshian *et al.* [2006], and, more recently, Miyazaki *et al.* [2010] demon-

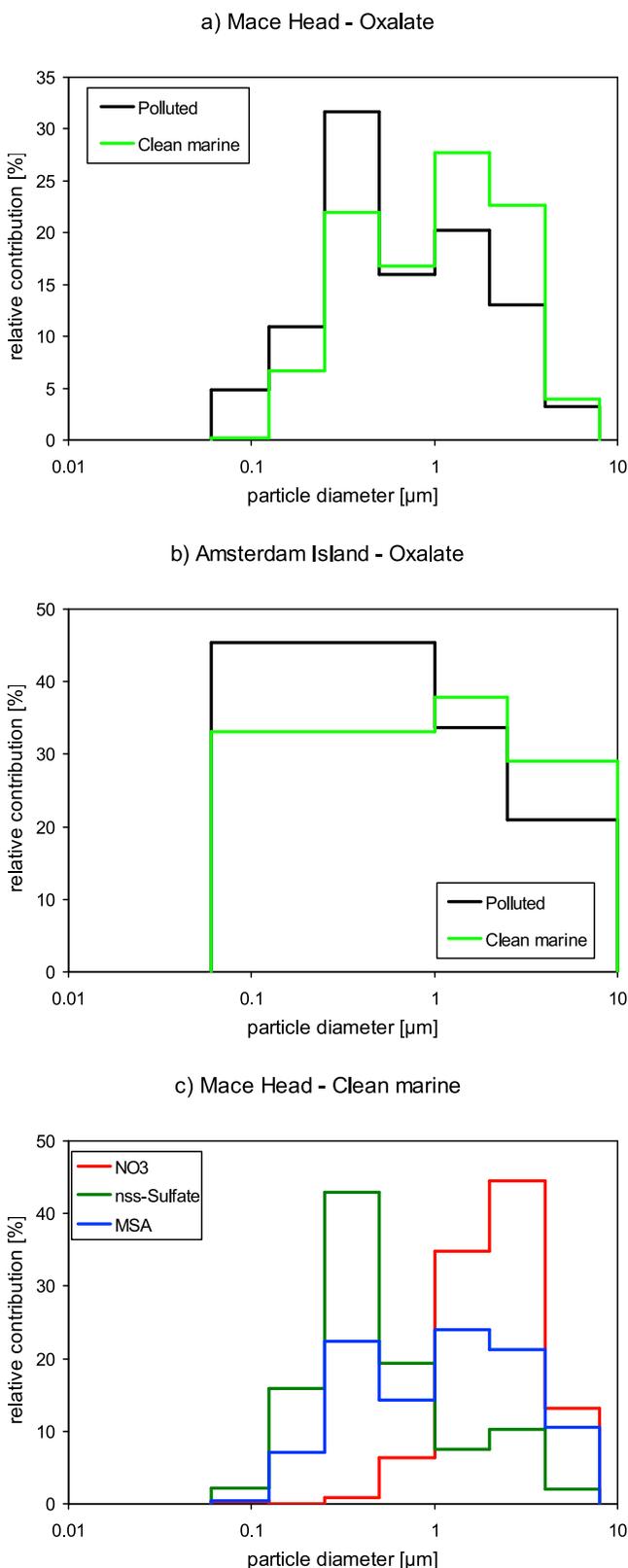


Figure 2. Observed average normalized size distribution of (a) oxalate at Mace Head in clean marine and polluted samples, (b) oxalate at Amsterdam Island in clean marine and polluted samples, and (c) nitrate, nss sulphate, and MSA at Mace Head in clean marine samples for comparison purposes. The average concentration of the aerosol component in each stage is normalized to the total concentration of the component.

strate the potential importance of this formation pathway in the MBL. In addition, observations on aged dust particles suggest that oxalate and other highly oxidized compounds can be formed in the aqueous phase of deliquesced particles [Yao *et al.*, 2002], although, in such highly concentrated solutions, highly oxidized polymeric compounds are expected to be favored, with oxalate remaining a minor product [Tan *et al.*, 2009; Ervens and Volkamer, 2010]. As for the gas-phase production of oxalate, no reaction is currently known [Warneck, 2003], and the process is considered unlikely. Finally, the photochemical oxidation of biogenic unsaturated fatty acids, enriched in sea-spray particles produced from biologically active waters [Keene *et al.*, 2007; Facchini *et al.*, 2008b], could be a potential source of oxalate in clean marine aerosol [Matsumoto *et al.*, 1998; Kawamura and Sakaguchi, 1999; Turekian *et al.*, 2003; Miyazaki *et al.*, 2010].

[29] A direct emission of oxalate from oceanic water by sea-spray processes can be also hypothesized, although recent studies have shown that water-insoluble, low-oxidized biomolecules rather than water-soluble species (such as oxalate) are preferentially transferred from the sea surface by sea spray [Facchini *et al.*, 2008b; Miyazaki *et al.*, 2010]. Moreover, Miyazaki *et al.* [2010] recently concluded that oxalate is mainly secondary over the Pacific Ocean, far from continental outflows, given the systematic lack of correlation between this aerosol component and Na^+ .

[30] The oxalate mass size distribution observed in clean marine air masses probably results from a combination of the above secondary processes, with in-cloud processes mainly contributing to the submicrometer fraction. It has been shown that cloud processing leads to a relatively larger mass production of submicrometer particles that is due to their relatively high contribution to the total mass and hence to liquid water in clouds [Feingold and Kreidenweis, 2000; Ervens *et al.*, 2004]. The condensation of gaseous oxalic acid mainly contributes to the coarse-mode oxalate, as a result of the higher pH of coarse particles in marine aerosol [Keene *et al.*, 1998, 2002, 2004] favoring the formation of stable salts. The volatilization from fine particles, in which oxalic acid formed in clouds may be only partially stabilized as oxalate salts, because of the lower pH, can be an important source of gas-phase oxalic acid, able to subsequently condense on coarse particles. As a consequence, in-cloud processes may also be indirectly responsible for supermicrometer oxalate. The photochemical oxidation of a biogenic primary organic aerosol may potentially contribute to both the submicrometer and supermicrometer aerosol fractions, as primary organics have been observed in comparable concentrations throughout the whole size spectrum [Facchini *et al.*, 2008b].

[31] The hypothesis of a multiprocess origin for oxalate is also supported by the similarity observed between its mass size distribution and that of MSA. In fact, MSA and nss sulfate are both oxidation products of biogenic dimethyl sulfide (DMS) in the MBL, although they present different size distributions as a function of the different formation routes. Nss sulfate derives mainly from in-cloud oxidation of DMS-derived SO_2 and from new particle-formation events involving gas-phase H_2SO_4 [Von Glasow and Crutzen, 2004; Barnes *et al.*, 2006; Hopkins *et al.*, 2008], resulting in a narrow accumulation mode peaked size distribution. The formation of MSA in a marine aerosol follows a number of parallel routes, involving the

adsorption of gas-phase-produced MSA onto sea-salt particles, but also the multistep oxidation in clouds or particles of organosulfur DMS oxidation intermediates, like dimethyl sulfoxide and methanesulfinic acid [Bardouki *et al.*, 2002; Von Glasow and Crutzen, 2004; Barnes *et al.*, 2006]. As a result, MSA typically presents a broad size distribution, with a significant supermicrometer fraction [Hopkins *et al.*, 2008].

3.2. A Hypothesis for the Origin of Submicrometer Oxalate Related to Glyoxal

[32] With regard to in-cloud-mediated production, this paper suggests that glyoxal may be an important oxalate precursor in the MBL. In fact, a natural source of gaseous glyoxal, one of the main known oxalate precursors via in-cloud oxidation [Ervens *et al.*, 2004; Lim *et al.*, 2005; Carlton *et al.*, 2007], has recently been discovered over remote oceanic regions from modeling studies [Fu *et al.*, 2008; Myriokefalitakis *et al.*, 2008], ground-based observations [Sinreich *et al.*, 2010], and satellite measurements [Wittrock *et al.*, 2006; Vrekoussis *et al.*, 2009, 2010].

[33] The origin of glyoxal in the MBL is still matter of debate, and it is beyond the scope of this paper to fill the present knowledge gap. Nevertheless, given its short atmospheric lifetime (2–3 h) [Myriokefalitakis *et al.*, 2008], it is clear that the concentrations observed over remote oceanic regions cannot be attributed merely to transport from land. As for MBL sources, an interesting mechanism has recently been proposed for the photodegradation of chlorophyll (as a proxy for marine organic matter) in the presence of ozone at the air-sea interface [Reeser *et al.*, 2009a, 2009b], one that could explain the formation of volatile organic products like glyoxal. However, the high solubility of glyoxal is expected to determine a preferential diffusion from the sea surface microlayer into the bulk seawater rather than its volatilization into the atmosphere [Zhou and Mopper, 1990, 1997], unless unrealistically high concentrations of glyoxal are assumed in surface seawaters. This leads to the conclusion that the most likely source of glyoxal is the MBL, even though it remains unclear whether it is due to gas-phase reactions [e.g., Warneck, 2003] or to heterogeneous chemistry in aerosols or clouds.

3.2.1. Satellite Measurements of Glyoxal

[34] Supporting the hypothesis that glyoxal is an important oxalate precursor in the MBL, Figure 3 shows SCIAMACHY satellite-retrieved glyoxal column concentrations over the two sampling sites, demonstrating a clear seasonal trend for the concentration of gas-phase glyoxal, similar to that of aerosol oxalate (Figure 1). Maximum column concentrations were observed over Mace Head between June and August, with an average spring-summer period concentration of 3.2×10^{14} molecules cm^{-2} , while the minimum was observed in January, with an average concentration for the fall-winter period of 1.6×10^{14} molecules cm^{-2} . At Amsterdam Island the maximum concentration was observed in December, with an average spring-summer period concentration of 2.2×10^{14} molecules cm^{-2} and an average concentration for the fall-winter period of 0.78×10^{14} molecules cm^{-2} . According to the calculations presented in section 2.4, average concentrations of 67 ± 54 and 187 ± 103 pptv were found for Mace Head in fall-winter and spring-summer conditions, respectively, while mixing ratios of 34 ± 47 and 101 ± 65 pptv were calculated for Amsterdam Island in fall-winter and spring-summer conditions, respectively. The uncertainty ranges associated with the above glyoxal mixing ratios derive

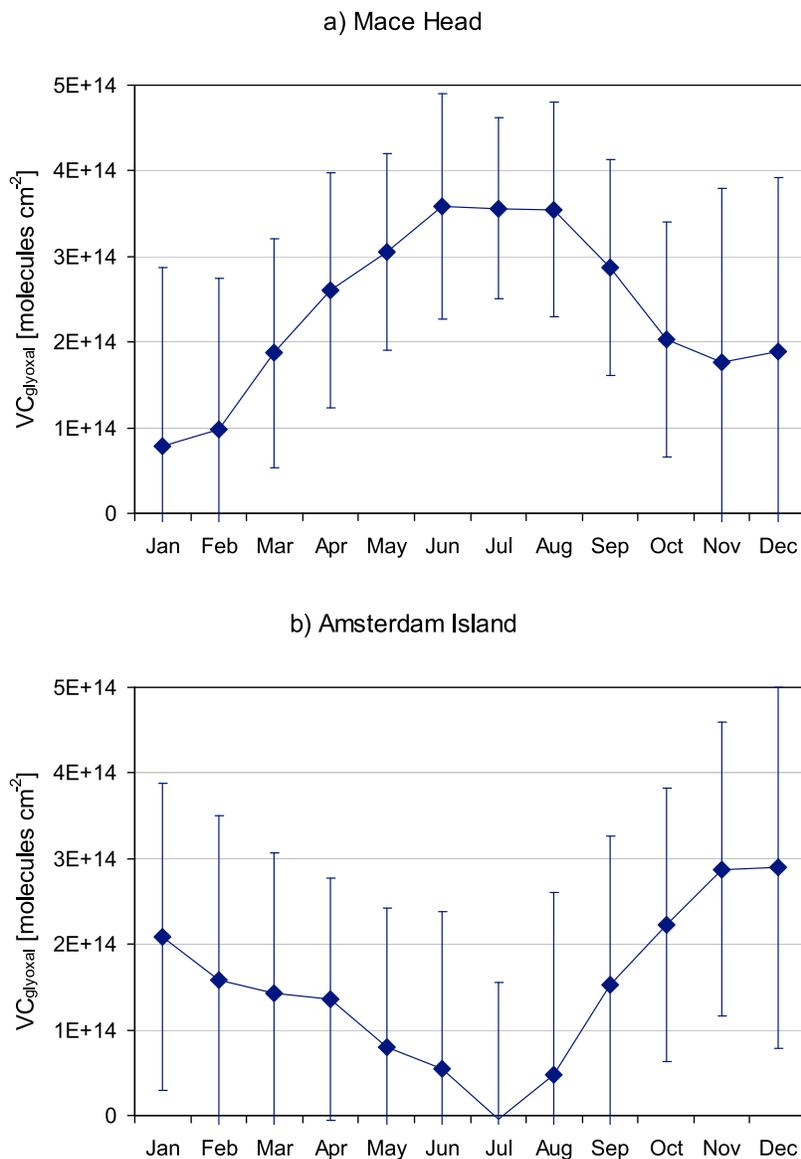


Figure 3. Monthly average SCIAMACHY satellite retrieved glyoxal column concentration around (a) Mace Head and (b) Amsterdam Island. Error bars represent the standard deviation associated with the monthly averages.

from the error affecting the satellite measurements [Vrekoussis *et al.*, 2010] combined with the variability of the MBL height computation results.

[35] Glyoxal mixing ratios measured at Mace Head and Amsterdam Island are fairly consistent with previous measurements performed in the MBL: Zhou and Mopper [1990] reported 80 pptv as the typical glyoxal concentration over the open Caribbean Sea and Sargasso Sea, while Sinreich *et al.* [2007, 2010] presented concentrations ranging between 75 and 350 pptv for the gulf of Maine and between 25 and 140 pptv over the remote tropical Pacific Ocean. For comparison, glyoxal mixing ratios measured in Tokyo urban air range between 30 and 700 pptv (average 170) [Okuzawa *et al.*, 2007].

3.2.2. Modeling of Oxalate Formation

[36] To test the hypothesis of the role of gas-phase glyoxal as a precursor of particulate oxalate, a chemical box

model was deployed (section 2.4), using the above glyoxal mixing ratios as input data. Aerosol oxalate concentrations resulting from model simulations are reported in Figure 4 and Table 1. The nominal size cut of the predicted oxalate concentrations is 2 μm , even if most of the modeled oxalate is submicrometer. Generally, higher oxalate concentrations are predicted in spring-summer conditions than in the fall-winter period, since the oxalate formation rates are higher because of higher OH concentrations. Results are shown for pH 4 and pH 6, this being a typical range for cloud droplets in clean (marine) scenarios [Graedel and Weschler, 1981; Collett *et al.*, 1994]. Higher oxalate concentrations are predicted at higher pH, since the rate constant of the oxalate loss is significantly lower at higher pH, when oxalate is present in its monoanion or completely dissociated form.

[37] Based on the model results, average oxalate formation rates between 0.5 and 3 h of cloud-processing time (the sum

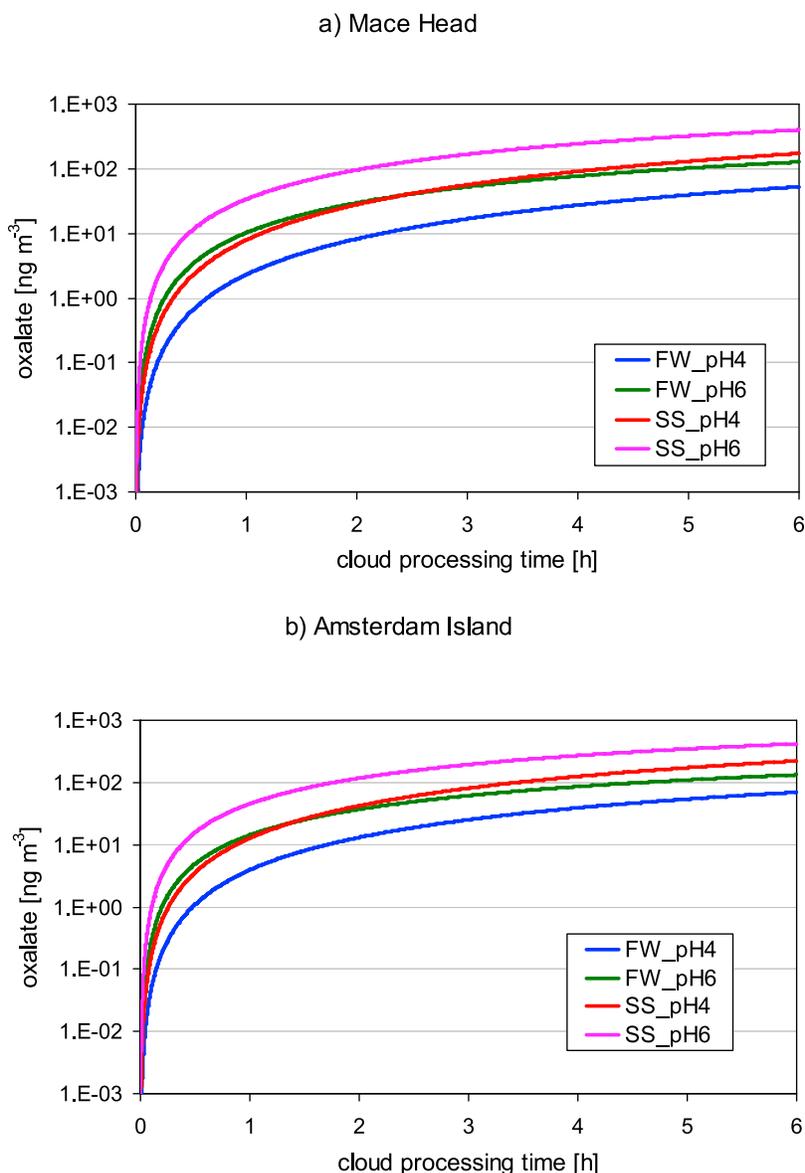


Figure 4. Modeled oxalate concentration as a function of cloud-processing time at (a) Mace Head and (b) Amsterdam Island. FW, fall-winter; SS, spring-summer.

of the time an air parcel spends in a cloud over several days) have been calculated (Table 1). Previous model studies showed that the net oxalate production slows down after several cloud cycles, since oxalate can be efficiently oxidized to CO_2 . In the present case, the highest oxalate production rate is observed for Amsterdam Island in spring-summer conditions (pH 6). In these conditions, the maximum net production rate is reached after ~ 3 h of cloud-processing time.

[38] The results in Figure 4 reveal that the predicted oxalate concentrations are not directly proportional to the initial gas-phase glyoxal concentrations. Such effects can be explained by the more efficient OH removal by glyoxal in the aqueous phase as compared with the oxidation of glyoxylic acid or oxalate. The transport of OH into the aqueous phase is not fast enough to replenish its concentration there, and a high glyoxal concentration leads to a relatively low oxalate for-

mation rate. According to the model results, in-cloud oxalate formation from glyoxal is therefore an oxidant-limited process. Actually, this conclusion might be due to the limited number of chemical processes in the box model employed, which does not take into account any additional (aqueous phase) OH sources (e.g., H_2O_2 , Fe). However, it has been shown that OH in the aqueous phase is mostly consumed by other organic compounds [Ervens *et al.*, 2003a]. Since their concentrations cannot be constrained in the present model study, both OH(aq) source and sink terms are associated with great uncertainty. Because no observational data are available to constrain such processes, both oxalate production and loss rates might be biased, and a comparison with observations should be made on the basis of common trends and orders of magnitude, rather than an accurate reproduction of measured oxalate concentrations.

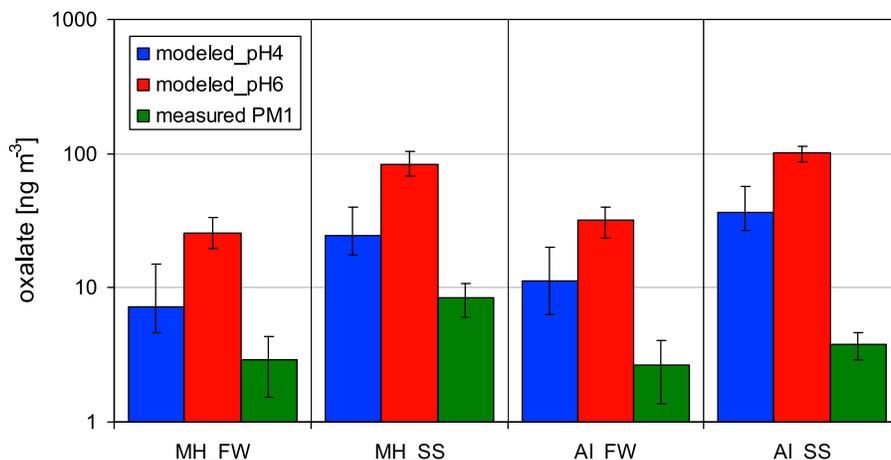


Figure 5. Predicted and observed submicrometer aerosol oxalate concentrations at Mace Head (MH) and Amsterdam Island (AI). FW, fall-winter; SS, spring-summer. The error bars associated with the model predictions represent the model output variability as a consequence of the uncertainty in glyoxal input data; the error bars associated with the measurements represent ± 1 standard deviation. For Amsterdam Island, oxalate submicrometer concentration is an estimation, based on the submicrometer oxalate contribution in a subset of size-segregated samples.

[39] No information is available on cloud LWC and cloud fractions close to the sampling locations. Absolute oxalate production rates will be enhanced in a greater reaction volume (LWC) and with an extended in-cloud processing time. While a cloud over several hours (as assumed in the highly simplified model approach applied here) is not realistic, a prolonged processing time reflects several subsequent cloud cycles (several minutes each), with the assumption that oxalate mostly remains in the particle phase upon drop evaporation, forming stable salts, as suggested by *Baboukas et al.* [2000]. This assumption cannot be verified, and the evaporation between subsequent cloud cycles cannot be quantified. It is therefore likely that the model predictions overestimate in-cloud oxalate production.

[40] Measured submicrometer oxalate concentrations and the model predictions are compared in Figure 5, where the model results are averaged between 0.5 and 3 h of total cloud-processing time to give a reasonable atmospheric concentration value. The comparison can be made only roughly and only in terms of order of magnitude, as the chemical box model does not include the dynamic atmospheric processes affecting oxalate concentrations measured at the sampling point. Real concentrations are expected to be lower than those predicted by chemical modeling alone, as a result of aerosol dilution within the MBL after formation in cloud layers and of removal processes.

[41] The model output is generally consistent with the above considerations, with modeled oxalate concentrations being from 2.5 to 25 times higher than measured submicrometer oxalate concentrations in the atmosphere. Such differences can be reasonably attributed to aerosol dilution within the MBL after formation in cloud layers and to removal processes; oxalic acid overprediction that is due to the above discussed model assumptions may also contribute.

[42] This result supports the hypothesis that a significant fraction of the submicrometer oxalate observed over remote oceanic regions derives from the in-cloud oxidation of glyoxal. Unfortunately, given the uncertainties involved in

the determination of the precursor concentrations and the limits of the modeling approach itself, the results do not allow a more quantitative determination of the contribution of in-cloud glyoxal oxidation with respect to other parallel submicrometer oxalate production routes.

[43] The fact that the formation of oxalate from in-cloud glyoxal oxidation appears to be an oxidant-limited process has important implications for SOA formation in the MBL. Indeed, only a small portion ($\sim 5\%$) of the glyoxal available in marine clouds is oxidized to produce oxalate, as shown by the model results. In fact, recent laboratory studies [*Liggio et al.*, 2005; *Carlton et al.*, 2007; *Galloway et al.*, 2009; *Shapiro et al.*, 2009; *Ervens and Volkamer*, 2010] have shown that glyoxal uptake into aqueous particles leads to the efficient formation of high-molecular-weight, multifunctional organic compounds, contributing to SOA mass by additional aqueous-phase oxidation pathways. Even though the aqueous volume of particles is much smaller than the LWC of clouds, it has been suggested that, compared with cloud droplets, more efficient processes occur in the aqueous phase of wet particles, which might determine similarly high SOA yields from glyoxal [*Ervens and Volkamer*, 2010]. This implies that glyoxal, in the MBL, can act as a source of both submicrometer oxalate and other SOAs.

4. Conclusions

[44] Aerosol measurements performed at Mace Head (Northern Hemisphere) and Amsterdam Island (Southern Hemisphere) support the existence of a natural source of oxalate over the oceans. Oxalate represents an omnipresent aerosol component in unperturbed marine air masses, and it is characterized by the typical seasonal trend in the concentration of marine aerosol biogenic components (maxima in spring-summer and minima in winter).

[45] Several formation processes can explain the presence of oxalate in marine aerosol. In-cloud oxidation of gaseous precursors and the degradation of primary biogenic organic

matter, emitted within sea spray, have been indicated in the literature as potentially important sources of oxalate in the marine boundary layer. Additionally, the neutralization of gaseous oxalic acid onto sea-salt particles may play a role.

[46] As for in-cloud sources, several precursors have been suggested based on laboratory studies (e.g., glyoxal, methylglyoxal, glycolaldehyde, and ethene, through glycolic acid [Warneck, 2003, Tan et al., 2009; Perri et al., 2009]). This paper investigated the role of glyoxal as a precursor for the in-cloud production of oxalate mainly because of the important natural source of glyoxal recently discovered in the marine boundary layer. Furthermore, the lack of gas-phase precursor measurements at the described locations limited the possibility of investigating the contribution of other precursors.

[47] This paper suggests that the in-cloud oxidation of gaseous glyoxal may be an important source of submicrometer oxalate in the marine boundary layer. Satellite measurements and chemical cloud box model predictions support this hypothesis, showing that, over the oceans, glyoxal shares the same seasonal concentration trend as aerosol oxalate and that the observed submicrometer oxalate concentrations are consistent with the in-cloud oxidation of typical marine boundary layer glyoxal mixing ratios.

[48] The model also suggests that only a small amount of the glyoxal available in cloud droplets is oxidized to oxalate, due to the kinetic limitation of oxidant (OH) uptake into cloud droplets. This implies that glyoxal in the marine boundary layer is also available for other reactions or processes. For instance, it can be oxidized in the aqueous phase of wet aerosol particles, producing high-molecular-weight SOAs by virtue of the different aqueous-phase concentration regimes with respect to cloud droplets. Thus further investigation of the different glyoxal aqueous-mediated oxidation routes in the MBL is desirable in the future to better characterize the still poorly understood marine SOA sources.

[49] Other observations are also necessary for an improved characterization of the marine oxalate source on a regional scale, as marine biogenic productivity undergoes high inter-annual variability [Sciare et al., 2000; Rinaldi et al., 2010], potentially determining considerable changes in the contribution of the marine oxalate source from one year to the next.

[50] **Acknowledgments.** The experimental work performed at Mace Head was supported by the EU Project MAP (Marine Aerosol Production) and the Irish EPA project EASI-AQCIS (Exchange at the Air-Sea Interface: Air Quality and Climate Impacts). ACCENT (Atmospheric Composition Change the European Network of Excellence) is also gratefully acknowledged. Results obtained at Amsterdam Island were supported by the French Polar Institute (IPEV) within the AEROTRACE project. Barbara Ervens acknowledges funding from the U.S. Department of Energy (BER), ASP program, grant DE-FG02-08ER64539. Mihalis Vrekoussis acknowledges the A. von Humboldt Foundation and the European Union (Marie Curie, EIF and RG) for the consecutive research fellowships.

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