

**Il mercurio gassoso  
in contesti urbani:  
teoria, applicazioni  
e casi di studio**

# Hg - MERCURIO



**Come l'acqua ...  
ma 13.6 volte  
il peso di H<sub>2</sub>O!**

# Hg - MERCURIO



- Stato ordinario: Liquido
- Densità: 13534 kg/m<sup>3</sup>
- Serie chimica: Metalli di transizione
- Rispetto ad altri metalli, è un cattivo conduttore di calore, ma un buon conduttore di elettricità

Il mercurio viene utilizzato in termometri, barometri, misuratori di pressione, sfigmomanometri, alcuni tipi di valvole come pompe a vuoto, interruttori di mercurio, lampade fluorescenti e altri dispositivi

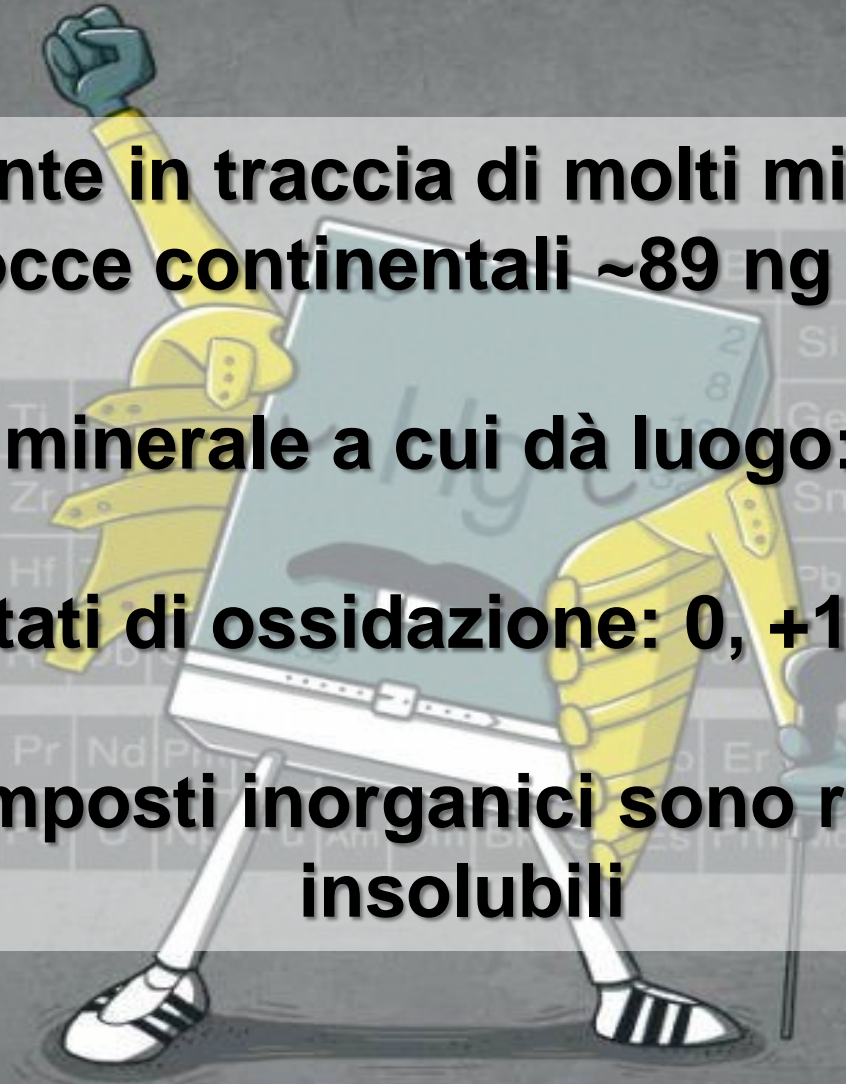


*Un operaio di una miniera di mercurio statunitense a sedere in una vasca di mercurio*



# Hg - MERCURIO

- componente in traccia di molti minerali (media rocce continentali  $\sim 89 \text{ ng g}^{-1}$ )
- principale minerale a cui dà luogo: cinabro,  $\text{HgS}$ 
  - stati di ossidazione: 0, +1 e +2
- i suoi composti inorganici sono relativamente insolubili



# Hg - MERCURIO

- tende a formare complessi e si lega al particolato accumulandosi nei sedimenti
- i complessi acquosi si deprotonano facilmente
- l'unico metallo che permane in fase gassosa
- limite per le acque potabili:  $1 \mu\text{g L}^{-1}$



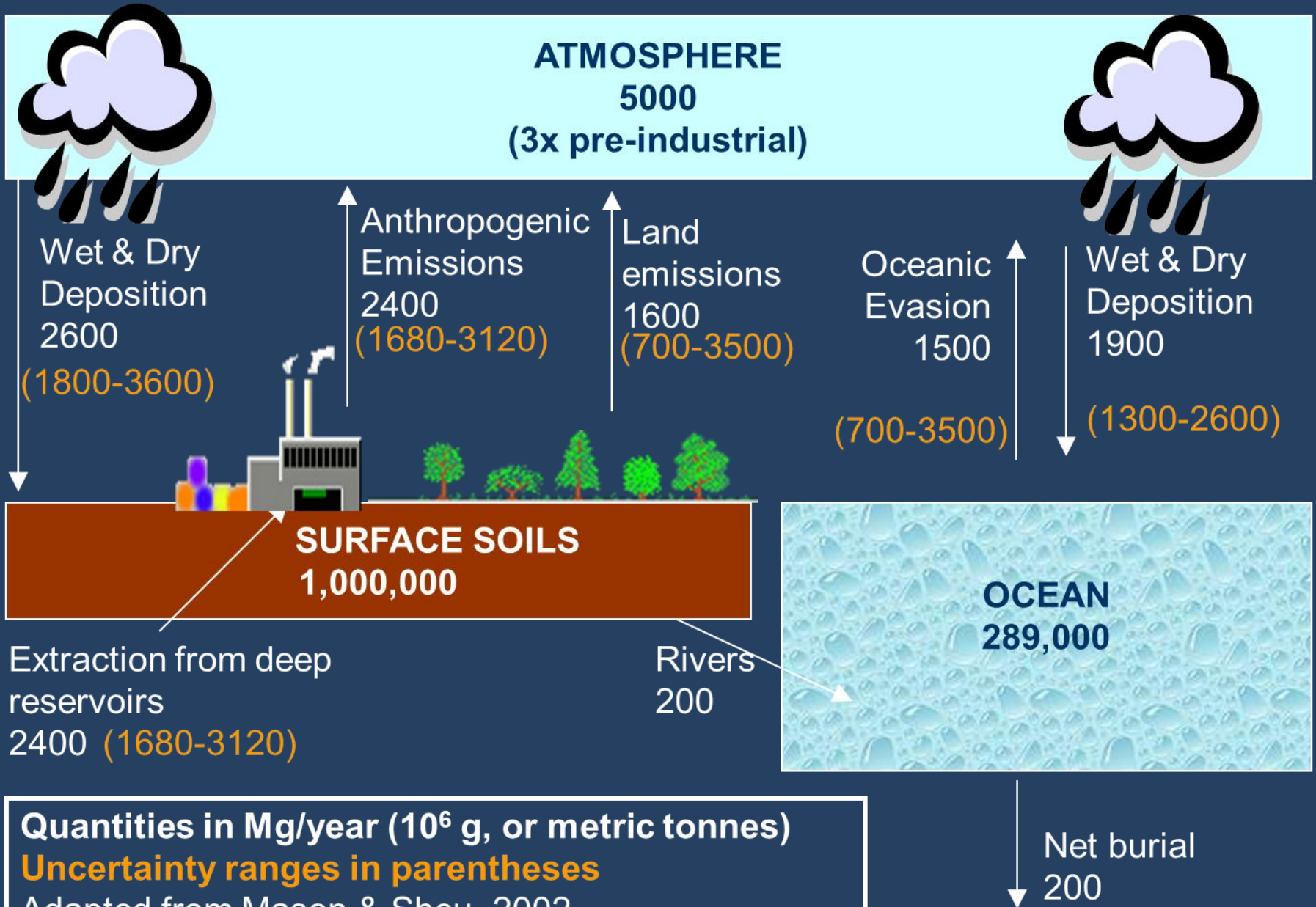


**Fonti naturali: sistemi vulcanici e geotermici e combustione di biomassa.**

**Una volta nell'ambiente, il suo ciclo è piuttosto complesso e sono coinvolte reazioni biogeochimiche.**

**Hg è presente come gas, ma si presenta anche in altre forme nell'atmosfera.**

# SCIENTIFIC UNCERTAINTIES: SOURCES AND SINKS



Quantities in Mg/year ( $10^6$  g, or metric tonnes)

Uncertainty ranges in parentheses

Adapted from Mason & Sheu, 2002



$$\text{TGM} = \text{GEM} + \text{RM}$$

Total Gaseous Mercury

Reactive Mercury

Gaseous Elemental Mercury

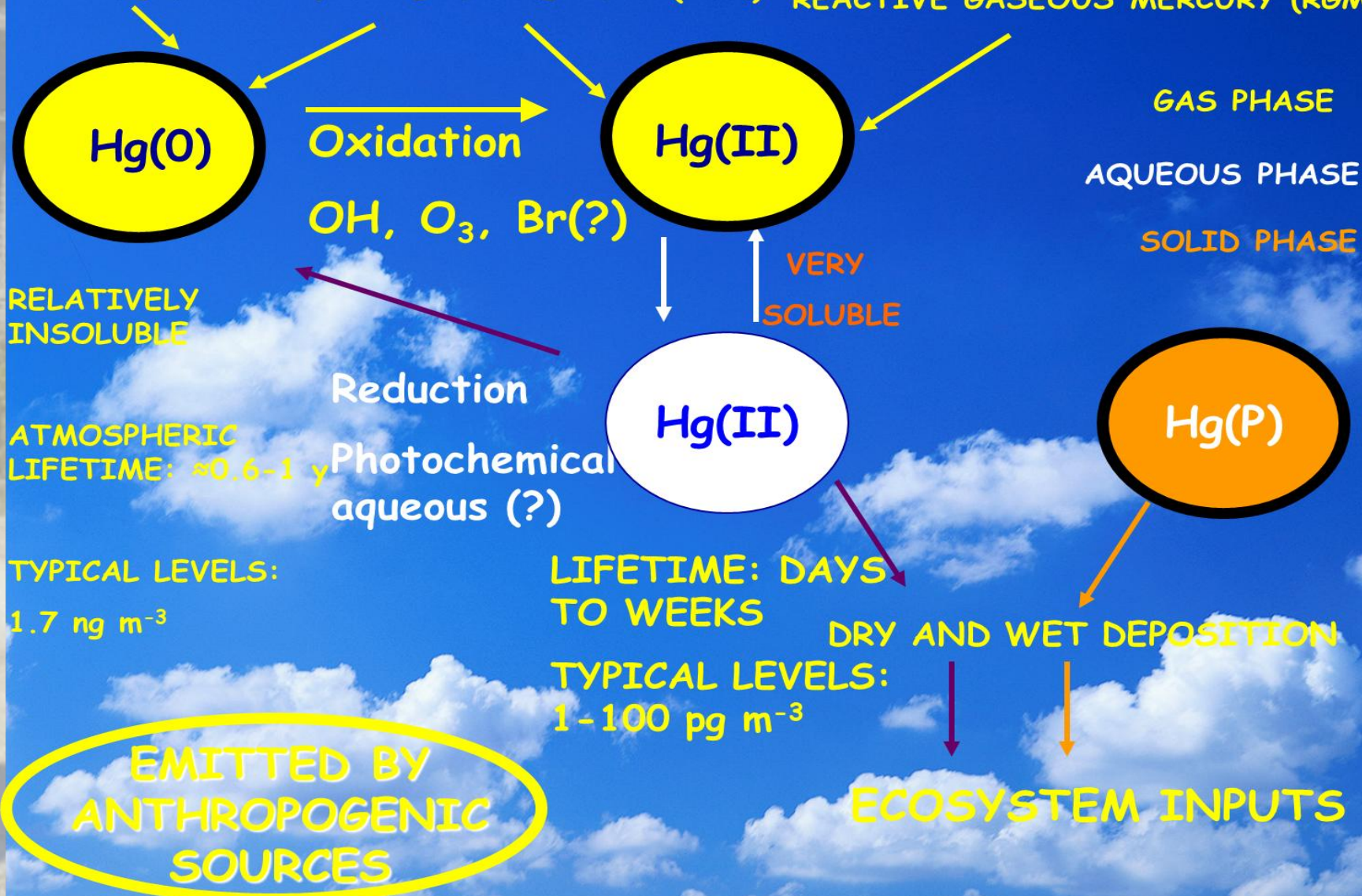
GOM + PBM

Gaseous Oxidized Mercury

Particulate Bounded Mercury

# SCIENTIFIC UNCERTAINTIES: ATMOSPHERIC CHEMISTRY

GEM - TOTAL GASEOUS MERCURY (TGM)      REACTIVE GASEOUS MERCURY (RGM)



RELATIVELY  
INSOLUBLE

ATMOSPHERIC  
LIFETIME: ~0.6-1 y

TYPICAL LEVELS:  
1.7 ng m<sup>-3</sup>

EMITTED BY  
ANTHROPOGENIC  
SOURCES

Oxidation  
OH, O<sub>3</sub>, Br(?)

Reduction  
Photochemical  
aqueous (?)

LIFETIME: DAYS  
TO WEEKS  
TYPICAL LEVELS:  
1-100 pg m<sup>-3</sup>

GAS PHASE  
AQUEOUS PHASE  
SOLID PHASE

VERY  
SOLUBLE

DRY AND WET DEPOSITION

ECOSYSTEM INPUTS

# The most important “emitters” of Hg

1. Volcanic and geothermal fluid discharges

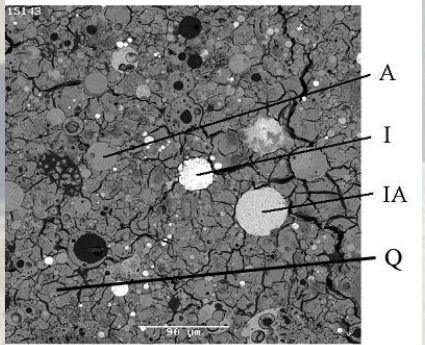
2. Fossil fuel combustion



3. Industrial waste and working refuse



4. Fly ashes and crematorium



5. Dental amalgam Hg-Lamp



**e...le miniere di mercurio**



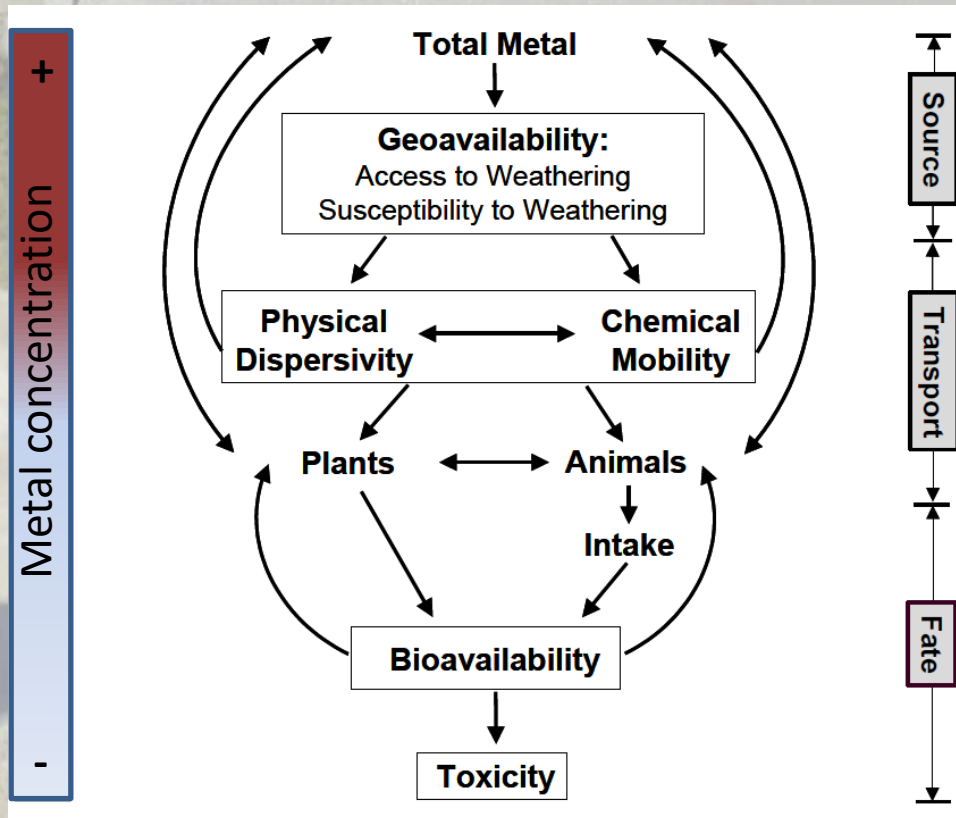


## Amalgamazione

- ✓ Forma un amalgama con argento e oro
- ✓ Hg è stato utilizzato in otturazioni dentali; anche per la superficie riflettente in vecchi specchi
- ✓ Ampiamente utilizzato nell'estrazione dell'oro, passato e presente
- ✓ Corrode rapidamente l'alluminio quando entra in contatto. Possibile sabotaggio degli aerei nella seconda guerra mondiale

# Geodisponibilità e biodisponibilità

**Geodisponibilità (USGS 1993):** porzione di elemento o composto rilasciata nell'ambiente (sub)superficiale (o la biosfera) da materiali geologici per processi meccanici, chimici e biologici



**Biodisponibilità (USGS 1993):** porzione di elemento o composto disponibile per l'assimilazione del biota

# Speciazione

Processo di identificazione e quantificazione delle differenti *specie chimiche* in cui un elemento occorre nel materiale

*specifici composti chimici o stati di ossidazione*

Definire la speciazione è quindi fondamentale per stabilire **biodisponibilità**, reattività e tossicità dei metalli (e quindi di Hg)

# Solubilità di Hg

**Cinabro**  
( $\alpha$ -HgS)



**Metacinabro**  
( $\beta$ -HgS)



**Hg metallico**  
(Hg<sup>0</sup>)



**Calomelano**  
(Hg<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>)



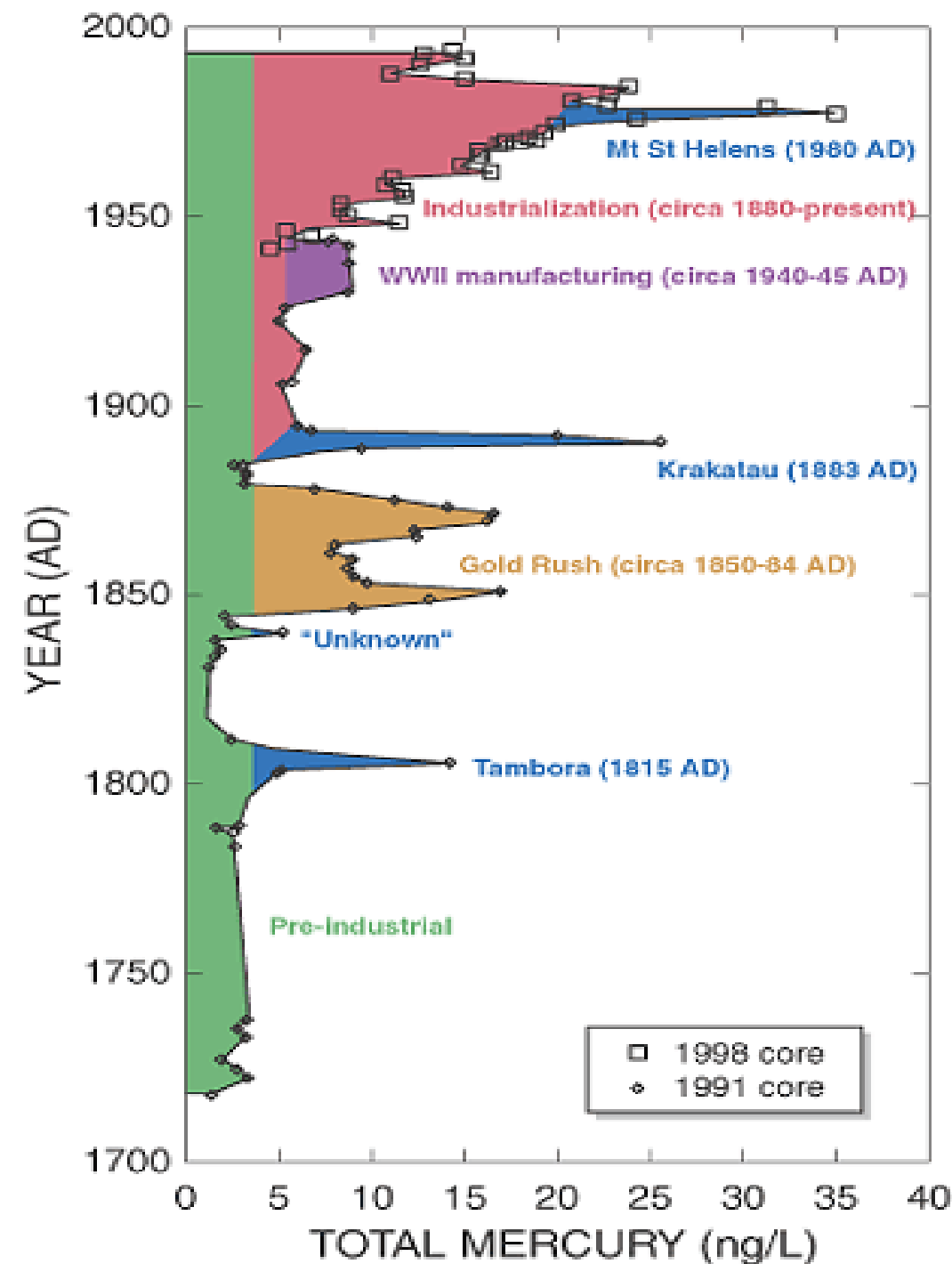
**Diversa solubilità tra le varie fasi mineralogiche ...**

**Calomelano > Hg<sup>0</sup> > metacinabro ≈ cinabro**

**Geochimicamente, è un elemento calcofilo e il suo minerale più comune è il cinabro (HgS). Può essere trovato come Hg (nativo), montroydite (HgO), calomelano (Hg<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>) e eglestomite (Hg<sub>3</sub>Cl<sub>3</sub>O (OH)).**



# Hg come "contaminante globale"



Le concentrazioni preindustriali  
indicano fonti naturali

Input vulcanico episodico

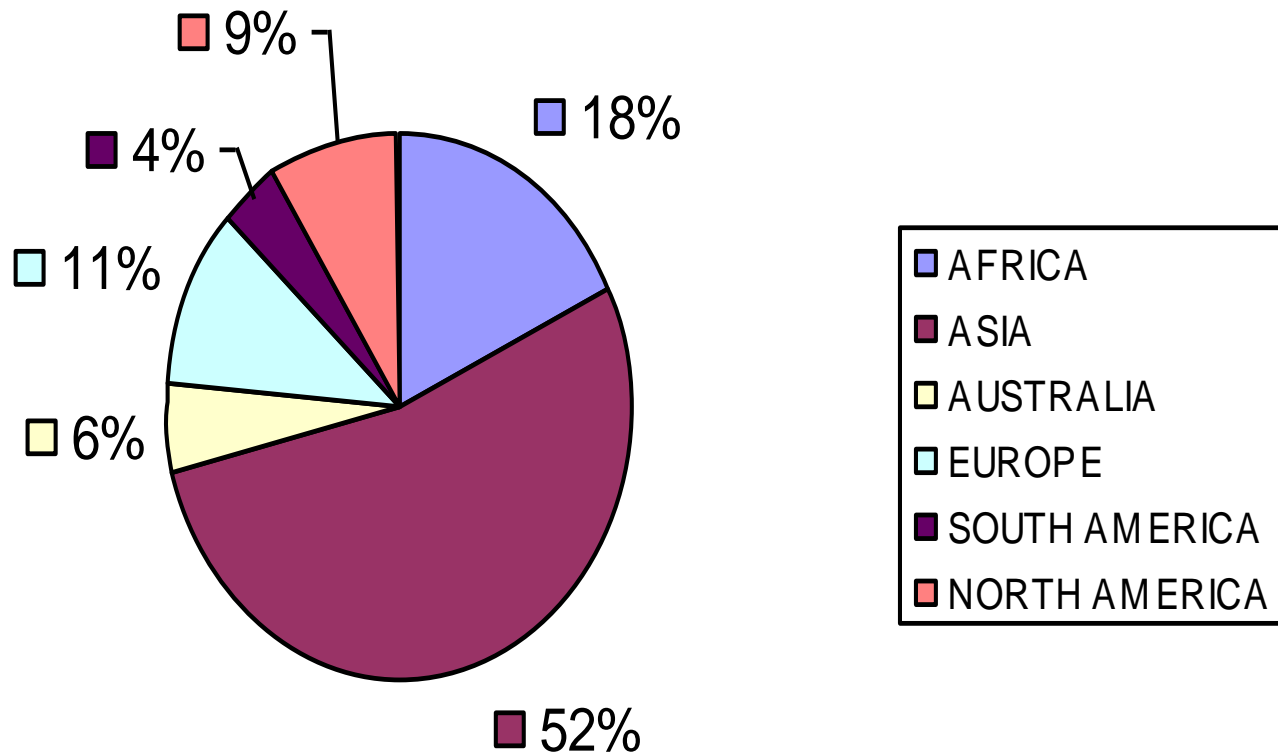
L'estrazione mineraria emerge

Industrializzazione e recente  
declino

*Record centrale di deposizione del  
ghiaccio del Wyoming, USA  
[Schuster et al., ES&T 2002]*

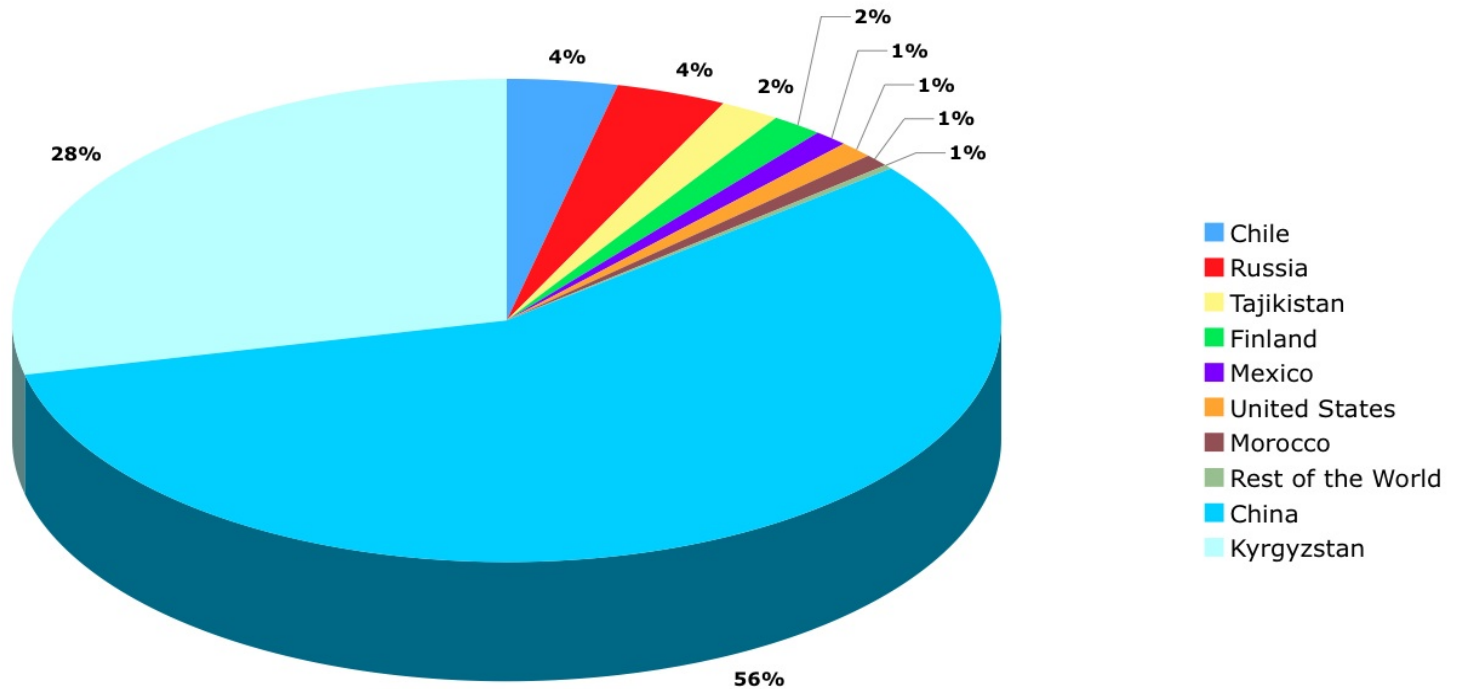
# Distribuzione geografica

Continents - Total emission: 2269 tonnes



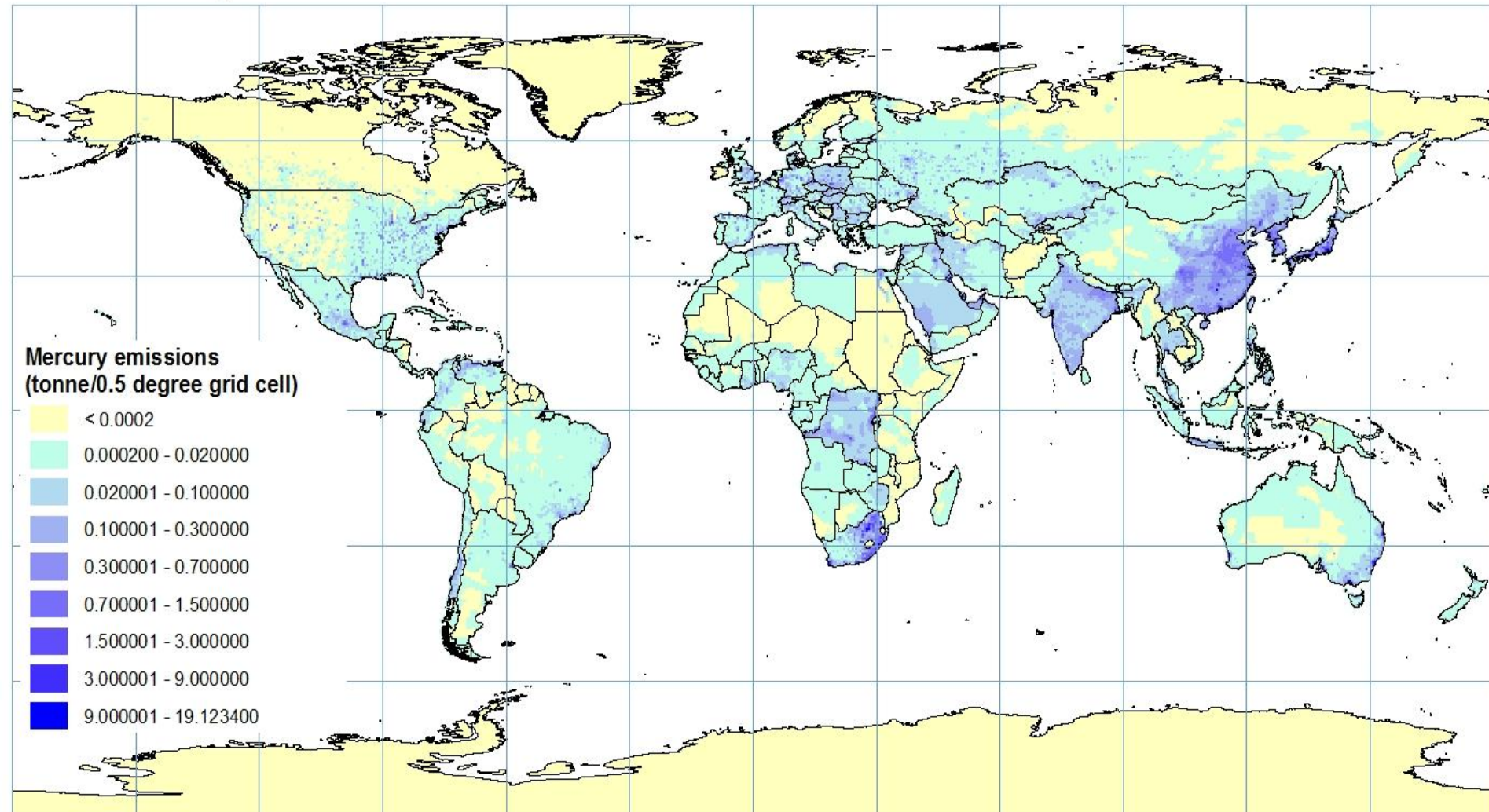
# Distribuzione globale della produzione di mercurio

**Global Distribution of Mercury Production**  
©2009 "Ranking America" (<http://rankingamerica.wordpress.com>)



# Mercury Emissions, 2000

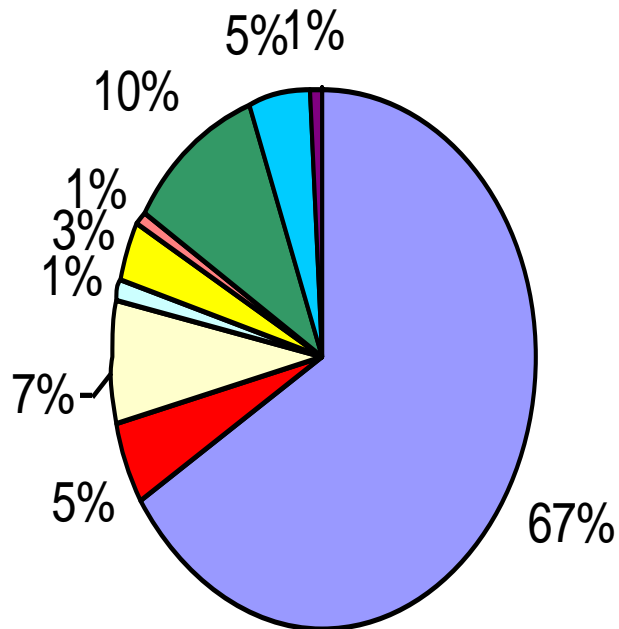
## diffuse + point sources



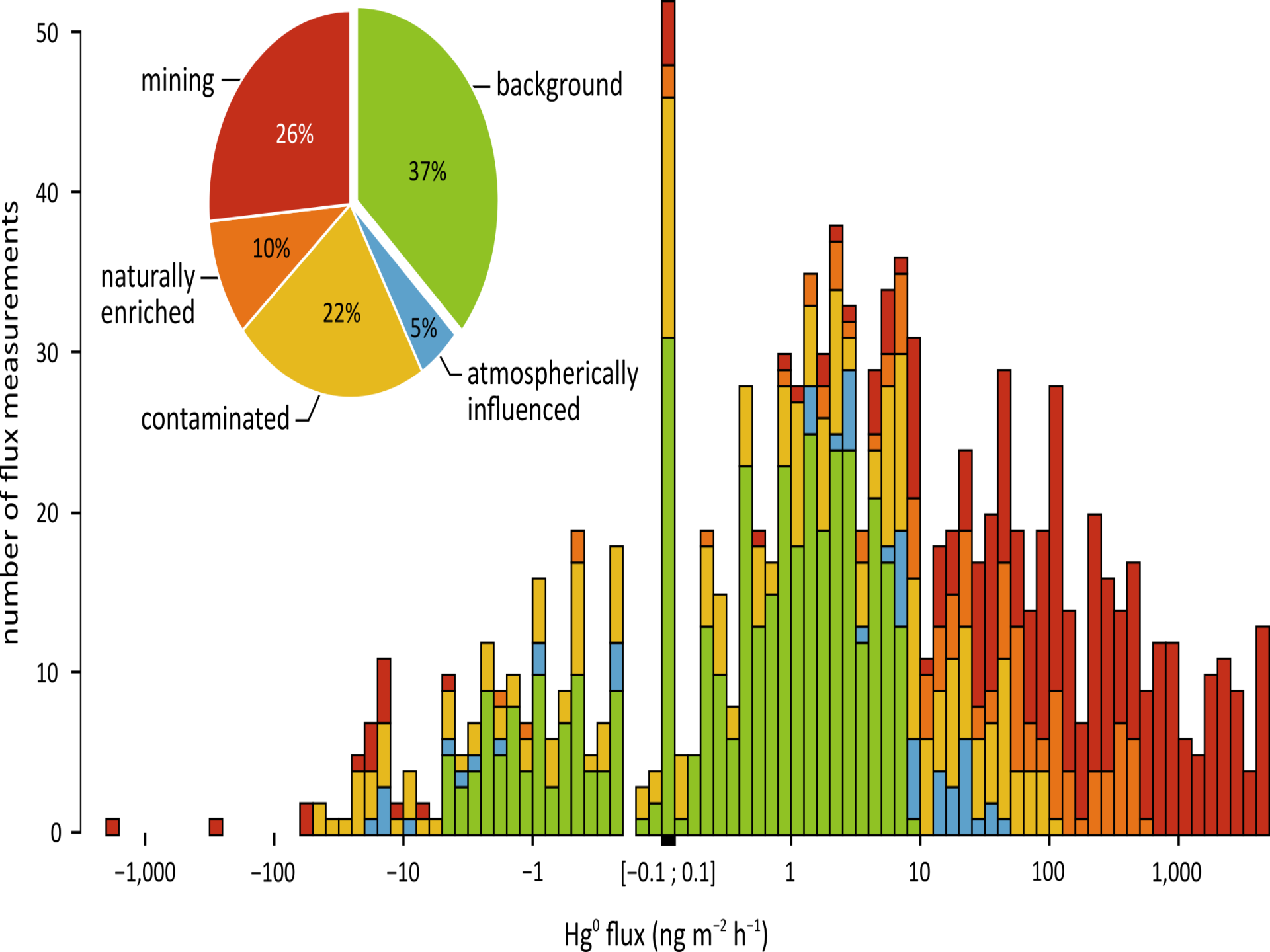
no projection (geographic)

# Categorie di emissione

Categories - Total emission: 2269 tonnes



- Stationary Combustion
- Cement Production
- Non-ferrous Metal Production
- Pig Iron & Steel Production
- Caustic Soda Production
- Mercury Production
- Gold Production
- Waste Disposal
- Other



# Hg GASSOSO

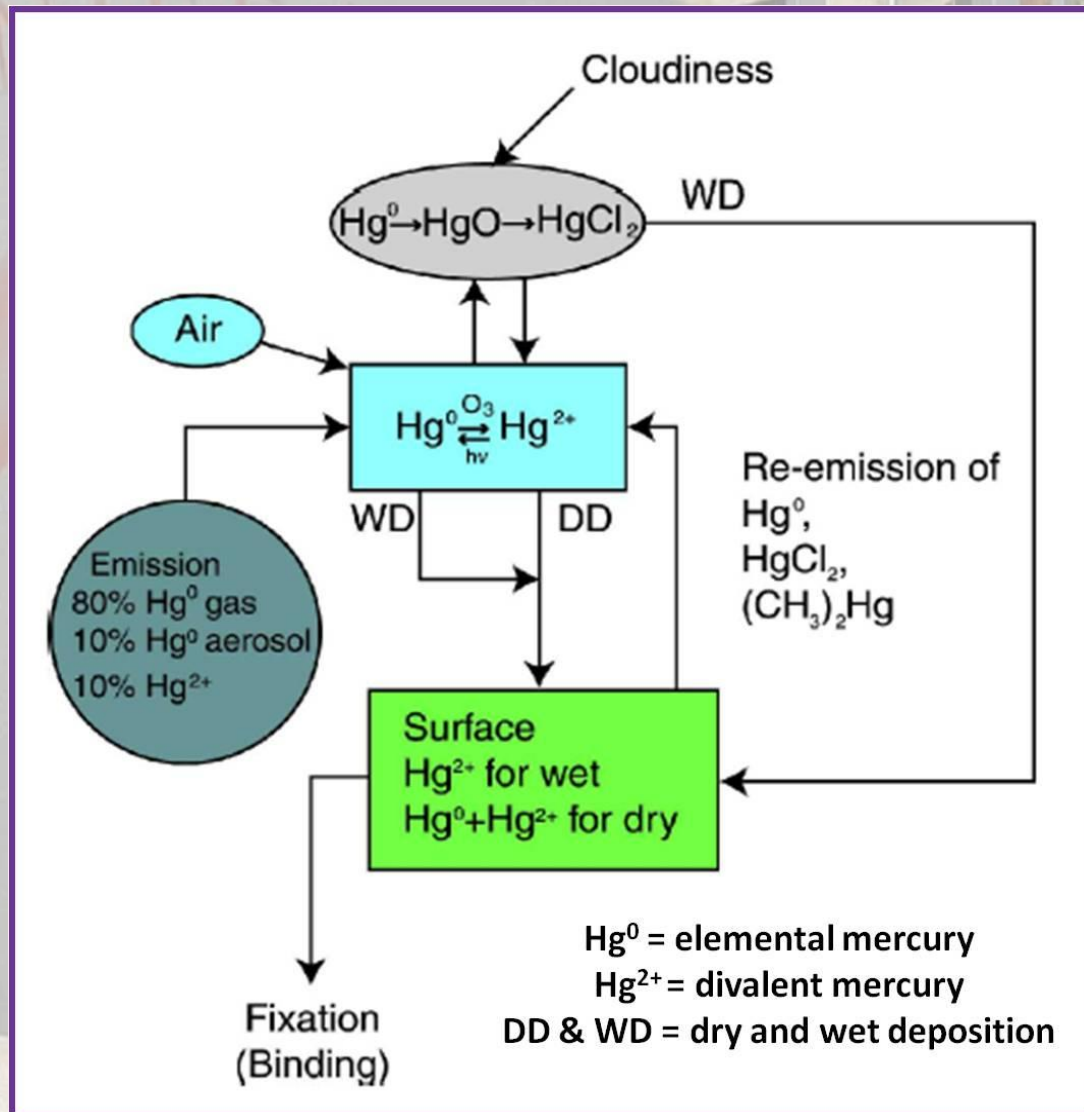
La forma dominante di Hg in atmosfera (95-98%) è il mercurio gassoso elementare ( $\text{Hg}^0$  o gaseous elemental mercury: GEM), caratterizzato da elevata stabilità e volatilità, bassa solubilità e tempo di residenza di 1-2 anni a causa della sua inerzia chimica

Oltre al GEM sono presenti in atmosfera anche la fase gassosa reattiva, corrispondente allo stato di ossidazione +2 (reactive gaseous mercury: RGM), e la fase aderente al particolato (total particulate mercury: TPM)

In particolare RGM è costituito da specie di mercurio idrosolubili (e.g.  $\text{HgCl}_2$ ) ed eventualmente da altri composti di mercurio bivalente, quali  $\text{HgO}$ ,  $\text{HgSO}_3$  e dimetilmercurio

# Hg GASSOSO

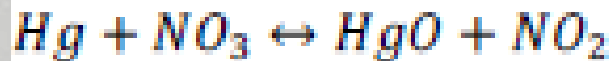
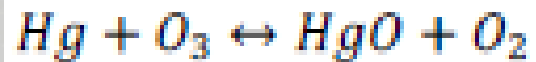
Nonostante il lungo tempo di residenza, negli strati più alti dell'atmosfera ha luogo la conversione del mercurio elementare in forme divalenti tramite processi di ossidazione, i quali possiedono però una cinetica lenta e dipendono soprattutto dalla presenza di molecole come ozono e radicali ossidrili





# Hg GASSOSO

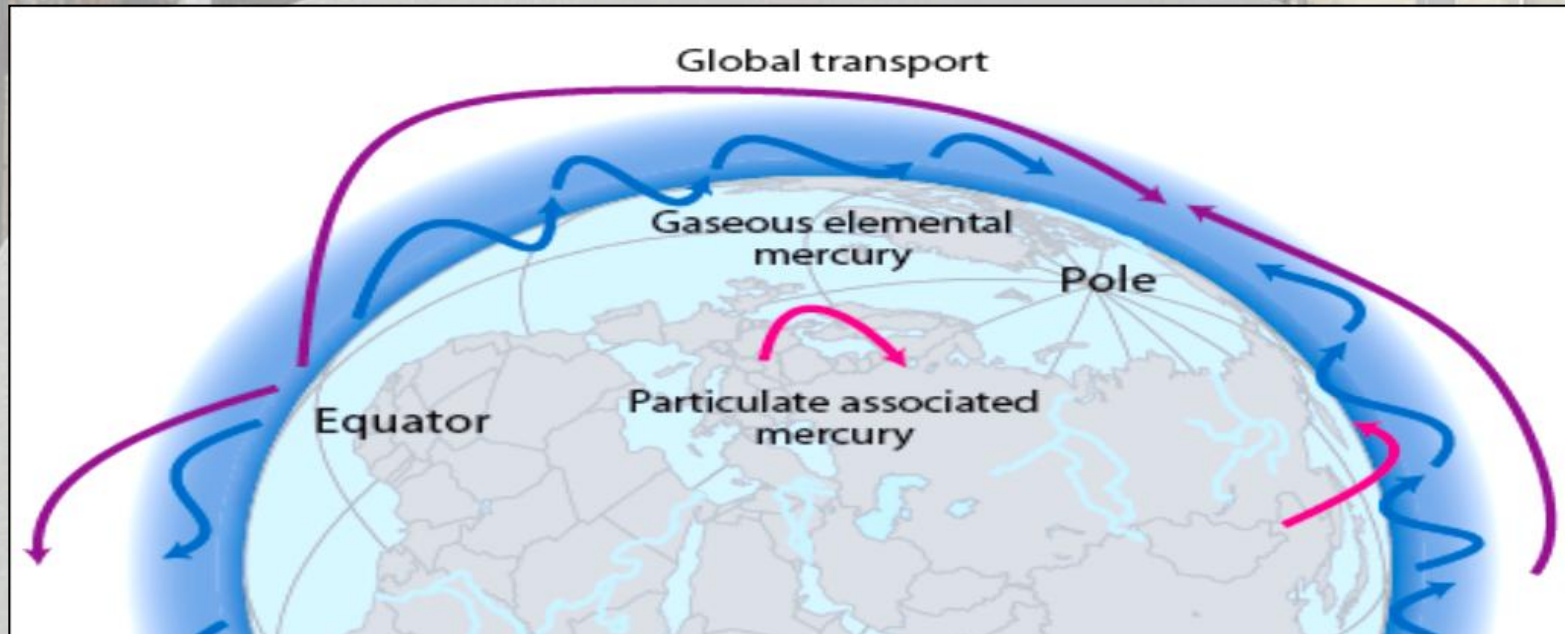
Tra i meccanismi di ossidazione più importanti vi sono le reazioni con l'ozono, il radicale ossidrile, il radicale nitrato e gli alogeni (Cl e Br)



Per quanto riguarda le reazioni di riduzione, il processo principale consiste nella fotoriduzione, indotta principalmente dalle radiazioni ultraviolette



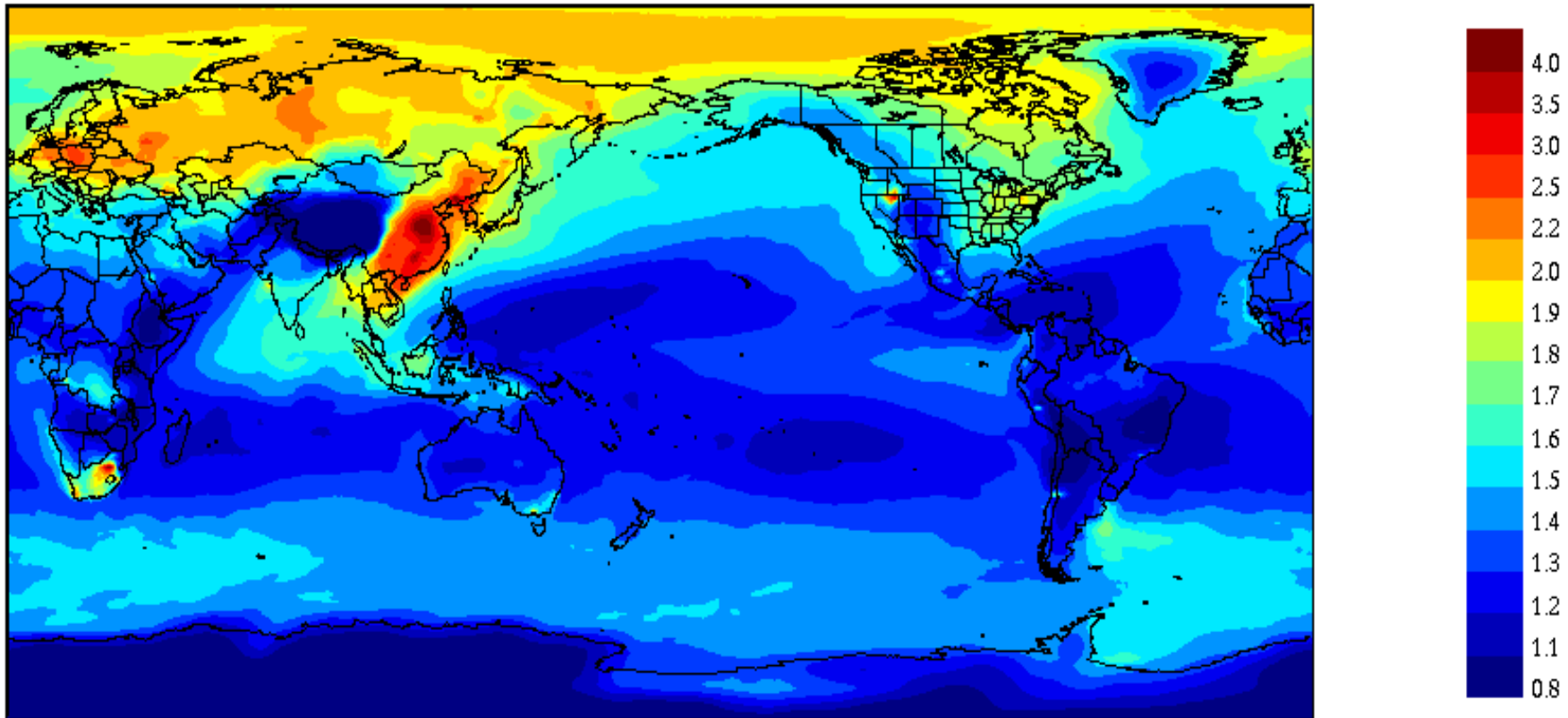
# Hg GASSOSO



**Hg<sup>0</sup> è in grado di essere trasportato per distanze molto lunghe (decine di migliaia di km), Hg<sup>2+</sup> in fase gassosa può essere disperso per alcune decine fino ad alcune centinaia di km dalla sorgente, mentre il mercurio particolato è solitamente depositato a distanze intermedie, a seconda del diametro e della massa dell'aerosol**

# Modellazione del trasporto globale

Concentrazioni superficiali medie del mercurio elementare per gennaio 2001 ( $\text{ng}/\text{m}^3$ )



**GRAHM (Global/Regional Atmospheric Heavy Metals Model)  
simulation – Ashu Dastoor, Meteorological Service of Canada,  
Environment Canada**

# Hg GASSOSO

Hg tossico e fortemente volatile, fino ad inquinante globale  
TGM – Concentrazione di background: **1-4 ng/m<sup>3</sup>**  
Valori più elevati si osservano in aree urbane e suburbane  
(e.g. USA: concentrazione media nell'aria **tra 10 e 20 ng/m<sup>3</sup>**)  
Fino a **10-15 µg/m<sup>3</sup>** presso ambienti come miniere

## SORGENTI:

- 1) combustibili fossili e processi di combustione ad alta temperatura (e.g. carbone), impianti di trattamento di cloro-alkali e incenerimento di rifiuti urbani (ca. 4,000 t/a);
- 2) sorgenti naturali (ca. 2,000 t/a): suoli, foreste, specchi d'acqua, oceani e, soprattutto, vulcani attivi (circa il 78% delle emissioni naturali);
- 3) aree naturalmente arricchite in Hg (cintura mercurifera)

# **SORGENTI URBANE**

- **combustione di combustibili fossili**
  - **produzione di metalli**
  - **produzione di cemento**
- **scarichi di rifiuti medici e industriali**
  - **cremazioni**
  - **produzione di soda caustica**

**Ulteriori fonti non-puntuali possono essere importanti nei budget urbani complessivi, ma sono difficili da quantificare: una miscela di Hg trasportato in città e/o proveniente da sorgenti piccole o sconosciute**

**Le emissioni veicolari diffuse possono inoltre contribuire significativamente alle emissioni di Hg**

# **SORGENTI URBANE**

Da: Agenzia Europea dell'Ambiente

***Attualmente il mercurio è impiegato in vario modo in tutto il mondo. Molto poco utilizzato in Europa, nei prossimi anni sarà impiegato principalmente per gli amalgami dentali, dal momento che le applicazioni in ambito industriale sono state vietate. In altre parti del mondo lo si utilizza maggiormente nelle attività industriali e nell'estrazione dell'oro su piccola scala***

***Una delle principali fonti di inquinamento da mercurio in Europa e altrove è la combustione di combustibili solidi – carbone, lignite, torba e legno – a livello sia industriale che domestico. Quando questi combustibili bruciano, i piccoli quantitativi di mercurio che contengono vengono rilasciati nell'ambiente. Le emissioni di tali combustibili, che costituiscono la principale fonte di inquinamento da mercurio in Europa, sono legate ad attività quali la produzione di energia elettrica, la fabbricazione di cemento e la produzione di metalli***

# LINEE GUIDA

L'inquinamento atmosferico del mercurio comporta  
2 rischi:

- (1) inalazione diretta di mercurio gassoso (al lavoro o a casa), con vari effetti sulla fisiologia umana;
- (2) speciazione del mercurio, e.g. GEM in RGM, o RGM in metil-mercurio

L'UE e le legislazioni nazionali non indicano valori limite per quanto riguarda il mercurio nell'aria

EPA: **300 ng/m<sup>3</sup>** limite per esposizione cronica a Hg  
ATSDR: **200 ng/m<sup>3</sup>** limite per esposizione cronica a Hg  
WHO: valore medio annuo di **1,000 ng/m<sup>3</sup>** come linea guida per il mercurio inorganico nell'aria

# LINEE GUIDA

Limite legge italiana GU sett. 2012: **20,000 ng/m<sup>3</sup>** per 8 h (Hg tot)

OSHA: **100,000 ng/m<sup>3</sup>** (limite su media 8 h lavoro, è la concentrazione massima permessa) (non specificato se Hg<sup>0</sup>)

NIOSH: **50,000 ng/m<sup>3</sup>** (si specifica Hg vapor quindi Hg<sup>0</sup>, in media su 10 h lavoro) e **100,000 ng/m<sup>3</sup>** come Hg tot

ACGIH: valore soglia di **25,000 ng/m<sup>3</sup>** su 8 h di lavoro (non specificato se Hg<sup>0</sup>)

EPA (2001) definisce inoltre 3 livelli di azione in risposta alla concentrazione di Hg misurata in aria: 1)  **$\geq 10,000$  ng/m<sup>3</sup>** (in tempo reale), i residenti devono essere trasferiti immediatamente; 2) **tra  $>1,000$  e  $<10,000$  ng/m<sup>3</sup>**, il trasferimento deve essere programmato al più presto possibile; 3)  **$\leq 1,000$  ng/m<sup>3</sup>** (8 ore come tempo medio di esposizione), nessuna azione è necessaria.



# LINEE GUIDA

World Health Organization  
Regional Office for Europe  
Copenhagen



**Table 19. Concentrations of total mercury in air and urine at which effects are observed at a low frequency in workers subjected to long-term exposure to mercury vapour**

Observed effect <sup>a</sup>	Mercury level		Reference
	Air <sup>b</sup> (µg/m <sup>3</sup> )	Urine (µg/litre)	
Objective tremor	30	100	(5)
Renal tubular effects; changes in plasma enzymes	15 <sup>c</sup>	50	(6)
Nonspecific symptoms	10–30	25–100	(5)

<sup>a</sup> These effects occur with low frequency in occupationally exposed groups. Other effects have been reported, but air and urine levels are not available.

<sup>b</sup> The air concentrations measured by static air samplers are taken as a time-weighted average, assuming 40 hours per week for long-term exposure (at least five biological half-times, equivalent to 250 days).

<sup>c</sup> Calculated from the urine concentration, assuming that a mercury concentration in air of 100 µg/m<sup>3</sup> measured by static samplers is equivalent to a mercury concentration of 300 µg/litre in the urine.

## WHO Guideline Values

Water: 1 µg/litre for total mercury <sup>8</sup>

Air: 1 µg/m<sup>3</sup> (annual average) <sup>9</sup>

WHO estimated a tolerable concentration of 0.2 µg/m<sup>3</sup> for long-term inhalation exposure to elemental mercury vapour, and a tolerable intake of total mercury of 2 µg/kg body weight per day. <sup>10</sup>

**Table I:  
Environmental and Occupational Health  
Standards for Inhalation Exposure to Mercury  
Vapor**

Agency	Mercury Concentration (µg/m <sup>3</sup> ) <sup>1</sup>
OSHA Ceiling limit <sup>2</sup>	100
NIOSH REL <sup>3</sup>	50
ACGIH TLV <sup>4</sup>	25
ATSDR MRL <sup>5</sup>	0.2
ATSDR Action Level, for indoor exposures	1.0
EPA Rfc <sup>6</sup>	0.3

<sup>1</sup> micrograms per cubic meter

<sup>2</sup> Ceiling limit = the concentration of mercury vapor cannot exceed this value at any time

<sup>3</sup> REL = Recommended Exposure Limit, a time weighted average for an 8-hour day.

<sup>4</sup> TLV = Threshold Limit Value, a time weighted average for an 8-hour day

<sup>5</sup> MRL = minimal risk level

<sup>6</sup> Reference concentration

# **Tossicità del mercurio elementare**

- ✓ **Il mercurio è una potente tossina**
- ✓ **Il vapore è dannoso: l'esposizione cronica porta alla "malattia del cappellaio matto" (*erethism mercurialis*)**
  - ✓ **Perdita di capelli, denti e unghie.**
  - ✓ **Sordità**
  - ✓ **Mancanza di coordinamento**
  - ✓ **Problemi di memoria**
  - ✓ **Disturbi emotivi**
  - ✓ **Danni ai reni**
  - ✓ **Effetti riproduttivi negativi, difetti alla nascita e aborti spontanei.**
  - ✓ **Reazioni allergiche che causano eruzioni cutanee, stanchezza e mal di testa.**

# Alice nel Paese delle Meraviglie

## Il Cappellaio Matto

Il trattamento delle pelli utilizzate per fare cappelli comportava l'uso di nitrato di mercurio.

I cappellai mettevano i cappelli sulla testa per modellarli e il risultato era una colorazione arancione fosforescente. Inoltre, l'assorbimento del mercurio ha causato effetti neurologici come il bipolarismo comportamentale.



# **UNEP Minamata Convention on Mercury**

**Primo grande trattato ambientale mondiale in più di un decennio**

**Aperto alle firme nell'ottobre 2013; già firmato da 128 paesi**



- **Richiede la migliore tecnologia di controllo disponibile per le centrali elettriche a carbone**
- **L'estrazione del mercurio sarà vietata in 15 anni**
- **Molti prodotti commerciali contenenti mercurio saranno vietati**

***La Convenzione prevede la ratifica da parte di 50 paesi per entrare in vigore; nove (compresi gli Stati Uniti) hanno finora ratificato***

# **METODI DI MISURA: ATTIVI**

**Tradizionalmente, il monitoraggio di Hg nelle aree urbane è stato condotto con strumenti di misurazione attivi in installazioni a lungo termine in un numero limitato di siti**

## **Esempi:**

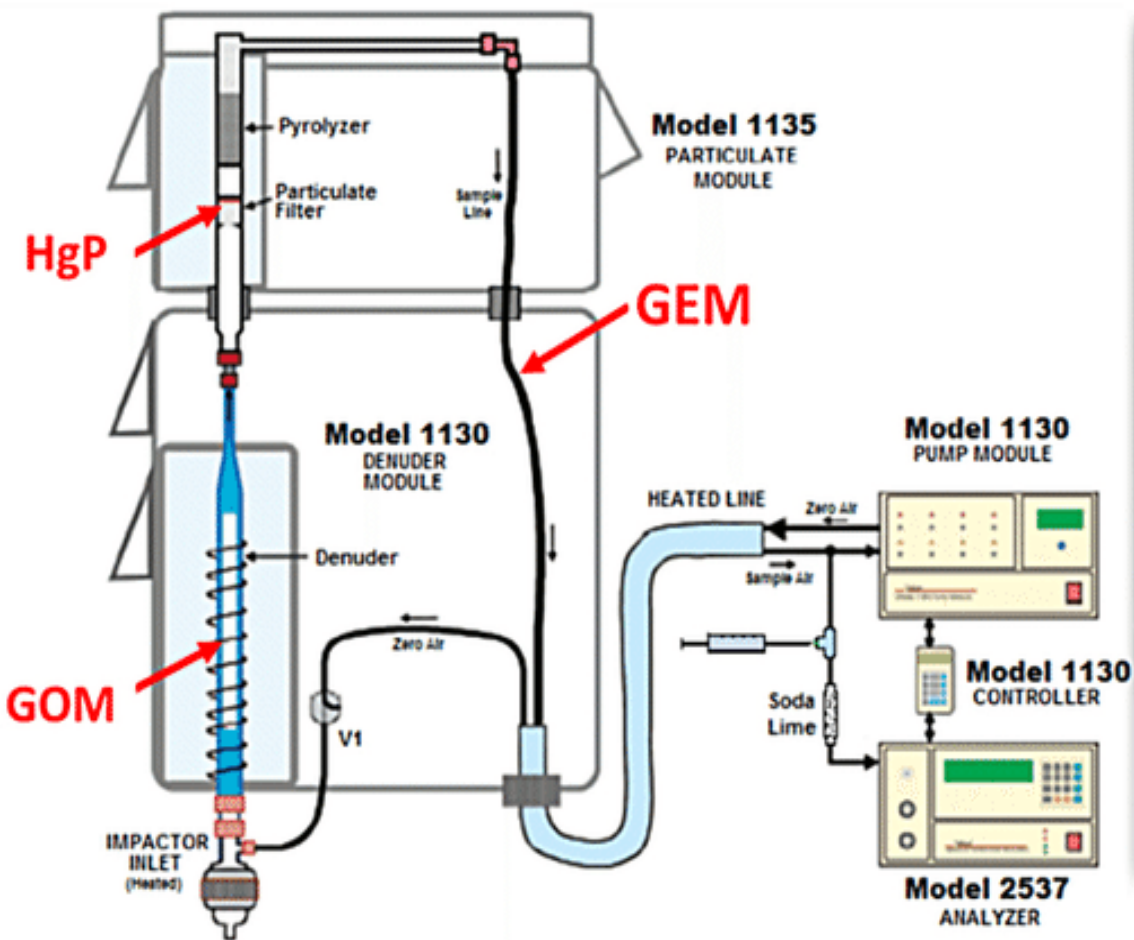
- tubi di silice rivestiti in oro connessi ad una pompa**
- analizzatori d'aria ad alto flusso (e.g. Tekran®, Lumex®)**

**Le misurazioni di GEM in aria avvengono comunemente mediante desorbimento termico e quantificazione mediante spettrometria di fluorescenza atomica a vapore freddo (CVAFS), dopo aver intrappolato il mercurio su un substrato rivestito di oro**

# TEKRAN

Tekran mercury speciation system (da Wängberg et al., 2016)

(a)



(b)



# **METODI DI MISURA: ATTIVI**

## **VANTAGGI**

- **La strumentazione attiva è efficace nel fornire informazioni sia a breve che a lungo termine, e.g. in città con concentrazioni alte e variabili nel tempo (e.g. Asia orientale, con elevate emissioni a carbone)**
- **È possibile misurare ad alta frequenza, in real-time ed in continuo e distinguere variazioni quasi istantanee di concentrazione**

## **SVANTAGGI**

- **Il costo degli strumenti di misurazione attivi è elevato e generalmente la risoluzione spaziale è scarsa**
- **Misure tramite un singolo strumento attivo presuppongono una non facile attribuzione della variabilità della concentrazione a fattori spaziali o temporali**

# **METODI DI MISURA: PASSIVI**

**Alternativamente, si può ricorrere all'uso di campionatori passivi**

## **VANTAGGI**

- **sono a basso costo, facili da usare e non richiedono energia, quindi sono dispiegabili contemporaneamente in numero elevato**
- **monitoraggio a lungo termine dei livelli di GEM, e.g. nelle regioni remote e nei paesi in via di sviluppo**

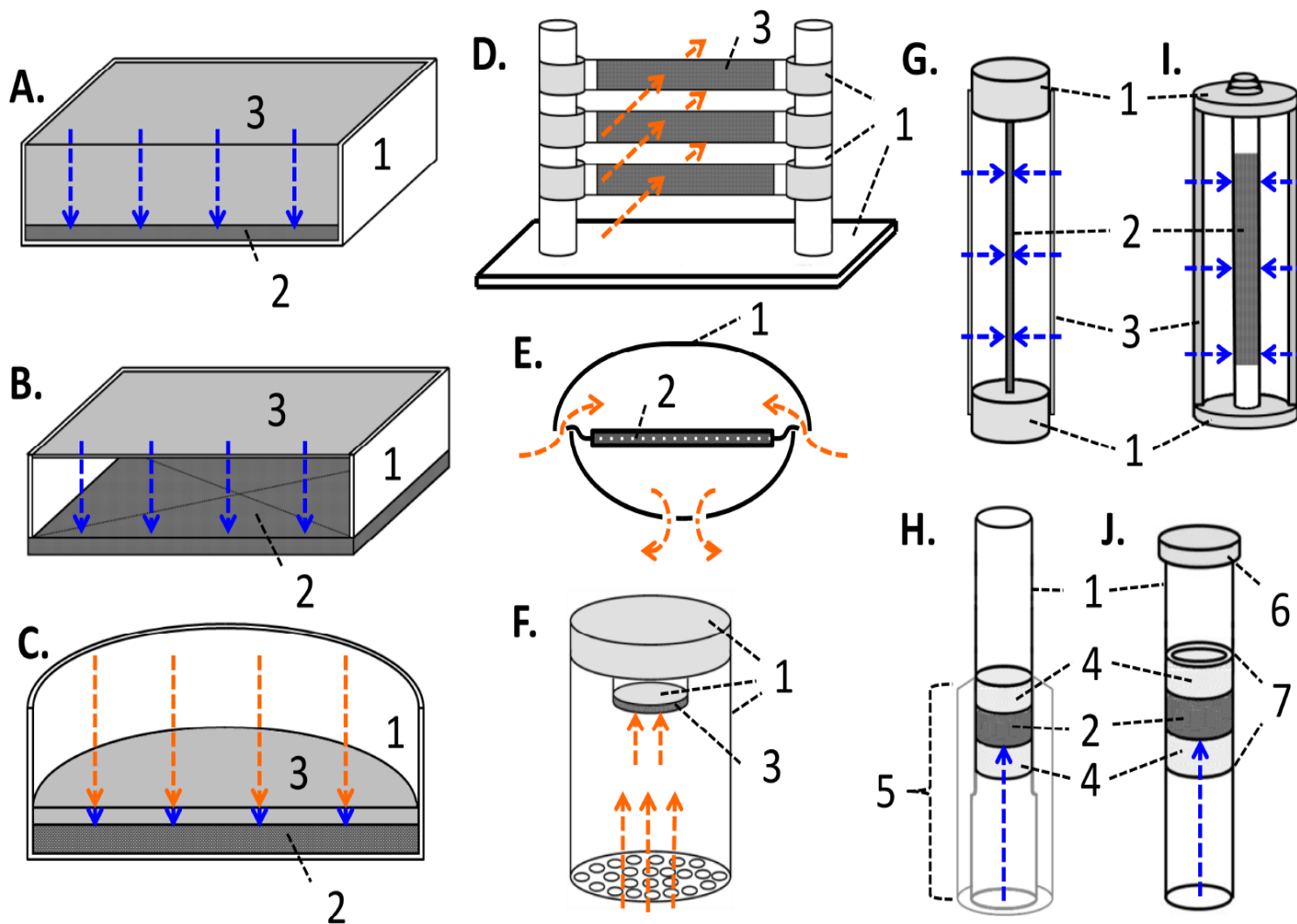
## **SVANTAGGI**

- **frequenze di campionamento che possono variare a causa di fattori meteorologici e incoerenze di fabbricazione**
  - **capacità di assorbimento spesso bassa e/o instabile**
- **spesso non sono in grado di rilevare la variabilità temporale a causa del loro ampio tempo di esposizione**



# PASSIVI

Schematics of existing PASs for GEM (da McLagan et al., 2016)



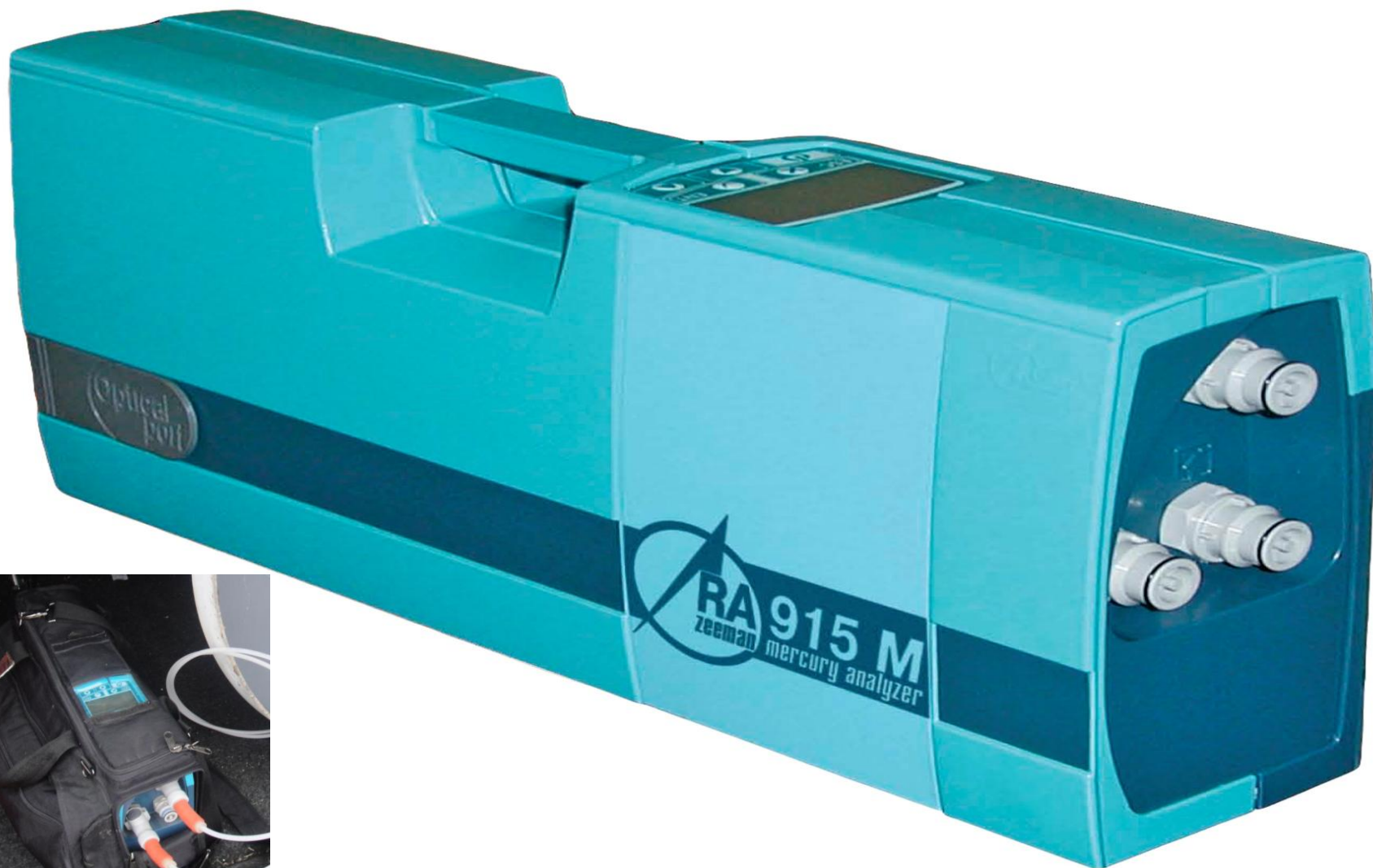
## Legend:

1. Non-diffusive sampler housing
  2. Sorbent material
  3. Diffusive barrier
  4. Quartz wool
  5. Teflon® diffusor tube (variable length)
  6. End Cap (non-diffusive)
  7. Crimp in quartz tube
- ↑ Transport by predominantly turbulent airflow  
↑ Transport by predominantly diffusive airflow

# LUMEX<sup>®</sup> RA-915M

- spettrometro di assorbimento atomico ad effetto Zeeman con polarizzazione della luce (lampada ad Hg) modulata ad alta frequenza
- effetto Zeeman: separazione delle linee spettrali emesse da un gas eccitato dovuta alla presenza di un campo magnetico esterno permanente
  - intervallo dinamico di lettura: 2-30.000 ng/m<sup>3</sup> per misure in tempo reale ed in continuo (10-15 L/min)
- applicazioni: ambienti urbani (in- e out-door), agricoli e forestali, sistemi vulcanici, aree mineralizzate

# LUMEX® RA-915M



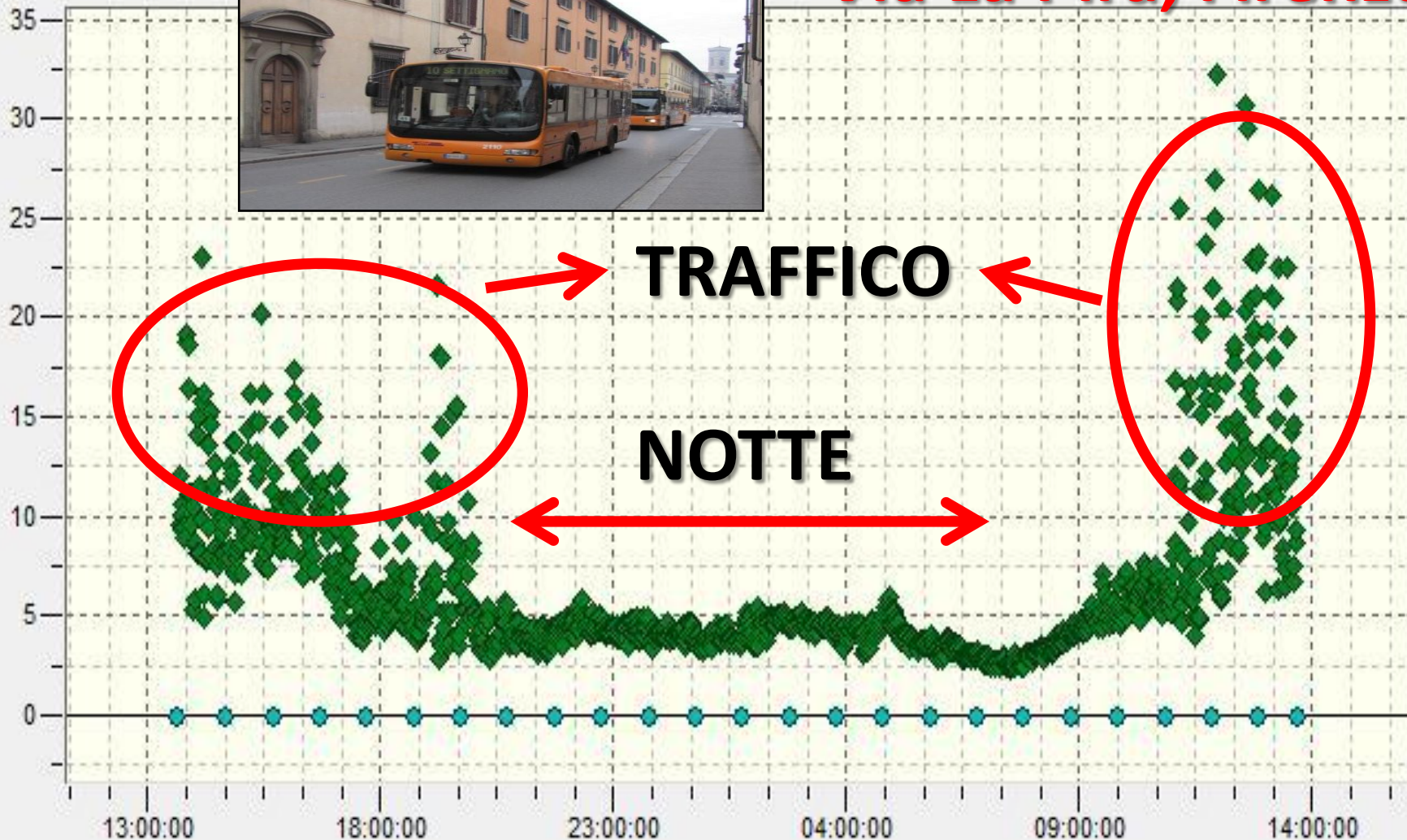
# TECNICHE UTILIZZATE

- **Misura della concentrazione di  $\text{Hg}^0$  in aria tramite Lumex (tracciati e punti fissi)**
- **Tecnica di misura combinata di  $\text{Hg}^0$ ,  $\text{H}_2\text{S}$ ,  $\text{SO}_2$ ,  $\text{CO}_2$ ,  $\text{CH}_4$ , ... (tracciati e punti fissi) tramite Lumex e altri strumenti**
- **Misura dell'emissione di  $\text{Hg}^0$  dal suolo tramite Lumex: flussi**
- **Moss-bags: bioaccumulatori passivi del mercurio presente in atmosfera, sia tramite deposizione secca che umida**
  - **+ casi di studio (erbari, campionatori passivi,...)**

# MISURE IN CONTINUO: PUNTI FISSI

Hg concentration, ng/m<sup>3</sup>

Via La Pira, Firenze



**TRAFFICO**

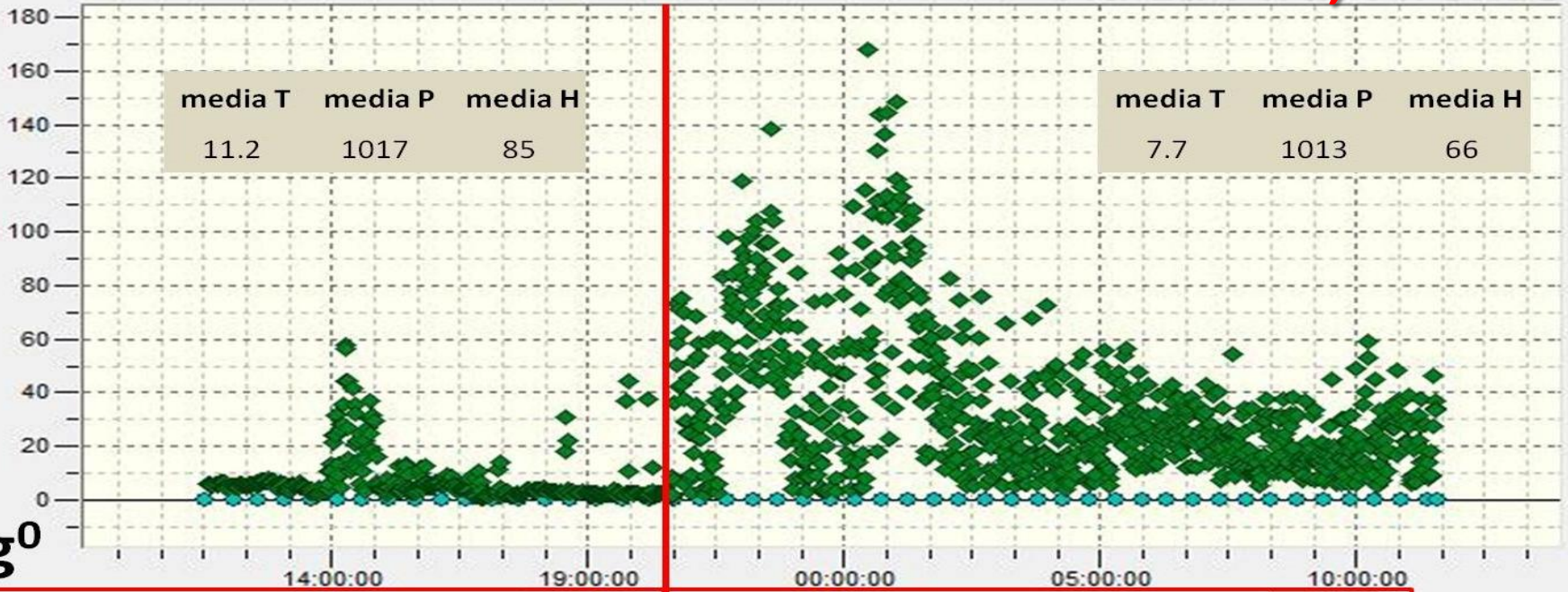
**NOTTE**

Time

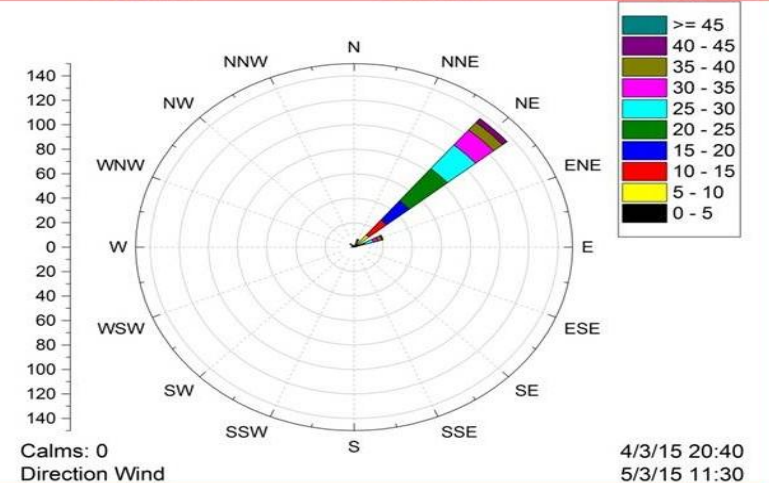
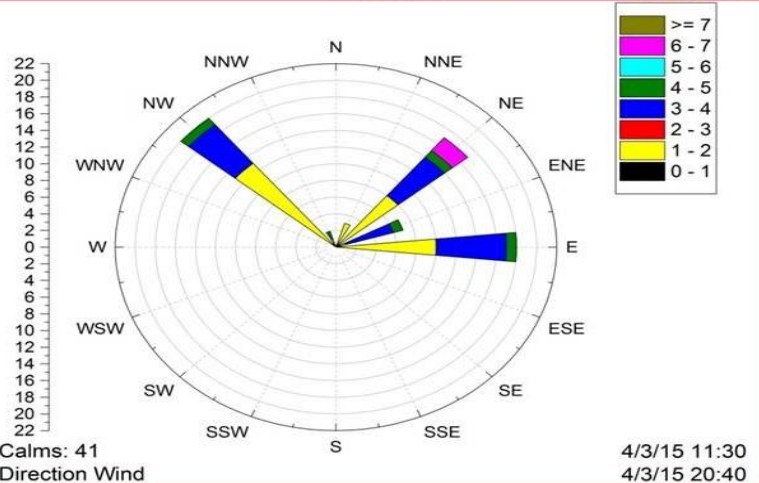
# MISURE IN CONTINUO: PUNTI FISSI

Via La Pira, Firenze

Hg concentration, ng/m<sup>3</sup>



Hg<sup>0</sup>



Time

**Lab  
Martin  
Peccatore**

**4-3-15  
11:30**

-

**5-3-15  
11:30**

# MISURE IN CONTINUO: PUNTI FISSI



GEM ng/m<sup>3</sup>

Osservatorio Ximeniano, Firenze

Dipendenza da:

- Temperatura
- Direzione e intensità del vento
- Umidità

ciclicità?!



# CO<sub>2</sub> & CH<sub>4</sub>: Picarro® Analyzer

- Picarro® G2201-i Analyzer: basato sulla tecnica di spettroscopia laser CRDS (cavity ring-down spectroscopy) per misurare le concentrazioni di CO<sub>2</sub> e CH<sub>4</sub>

- CO<sub>2</sub>: dalla concentrazione in aria fino a 2,000 ppm

- CH<sub>4</sub>: High Precision (1.8 – 12 ppm) e High Range (fino a 1000 ppm)



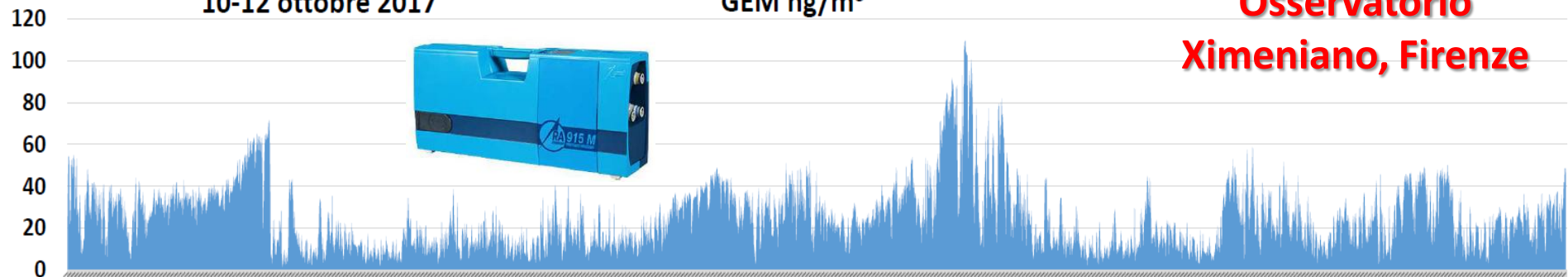


# MISURE IN CONTINUO: PUNTI FISSI

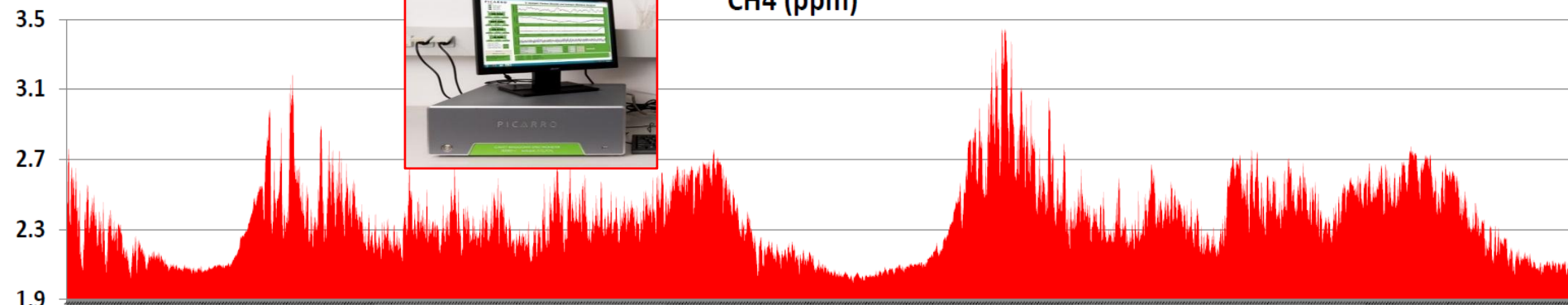
10-12 ottobre 2017

GEM ng/m<sup>3</sup>

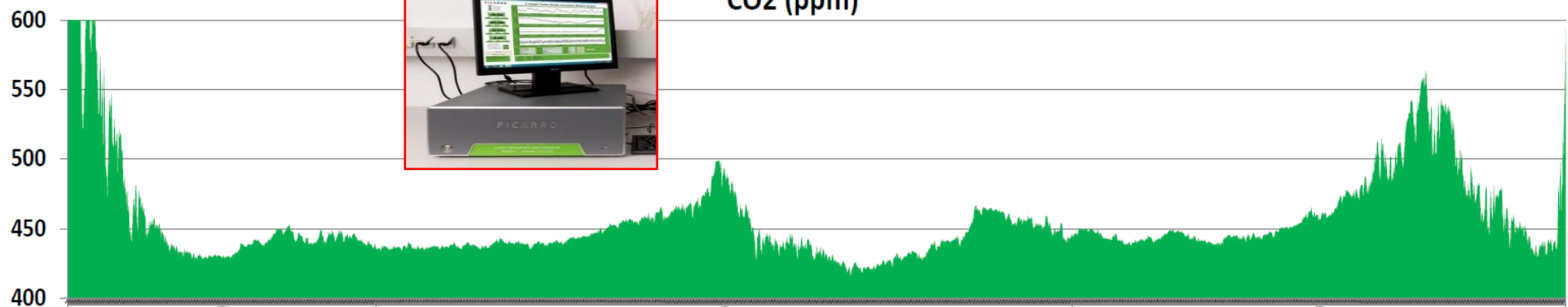
**Osservatorio  
Ximeniano, Firenze**



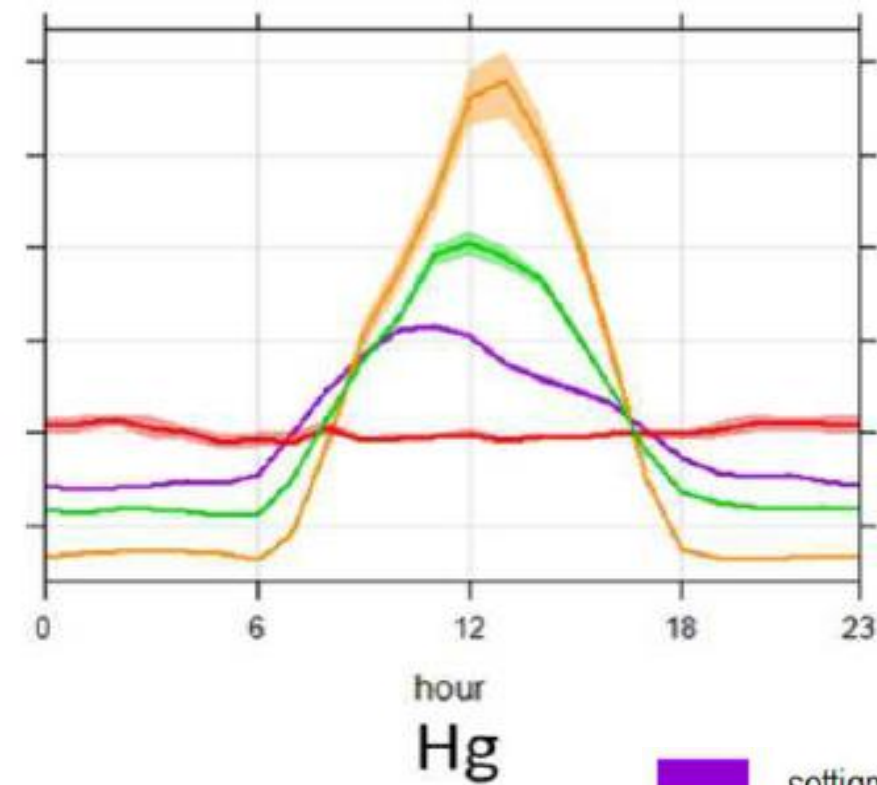
CH<sub>4</sub> (ppm)



CO<sub>2</sub> (ppm)



La media giornaliera del mercurio in FI-GRAMSCI, FI-BASSI, FI-SETTIGNANO e FI-MOSSE è caratterizzata da un andamento totalmente diverso da  $\text{CO}_2$  e  $\text{CH}_4$ . Ciò implica che la sorgente principale di Hg non sia la stessa delle due specie gassose del carbonio o che comunque il suo comportamento in atmosfera rispetto a quest'ultime non sia il medesimo.



setignano

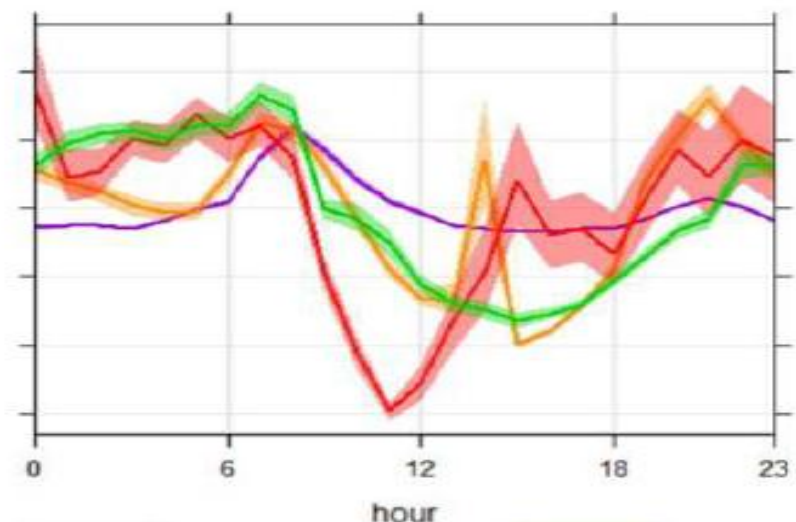
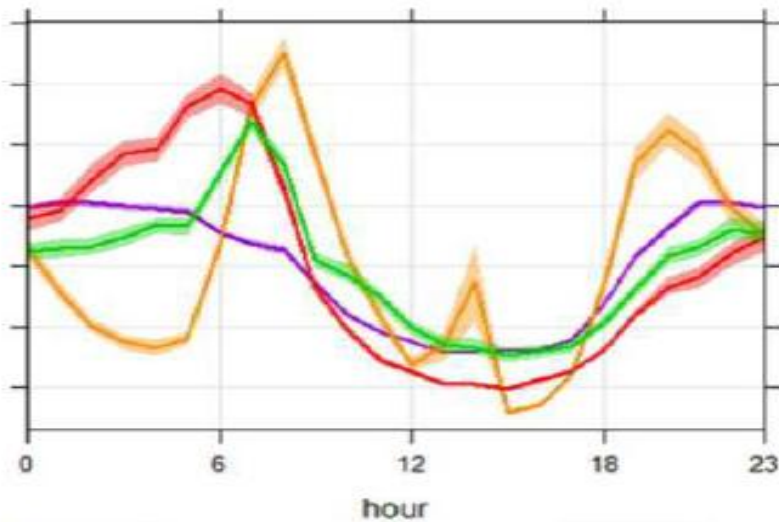
gramsci

mosse

bassi

$\text{CO}_2$

$\text{CH}_4$



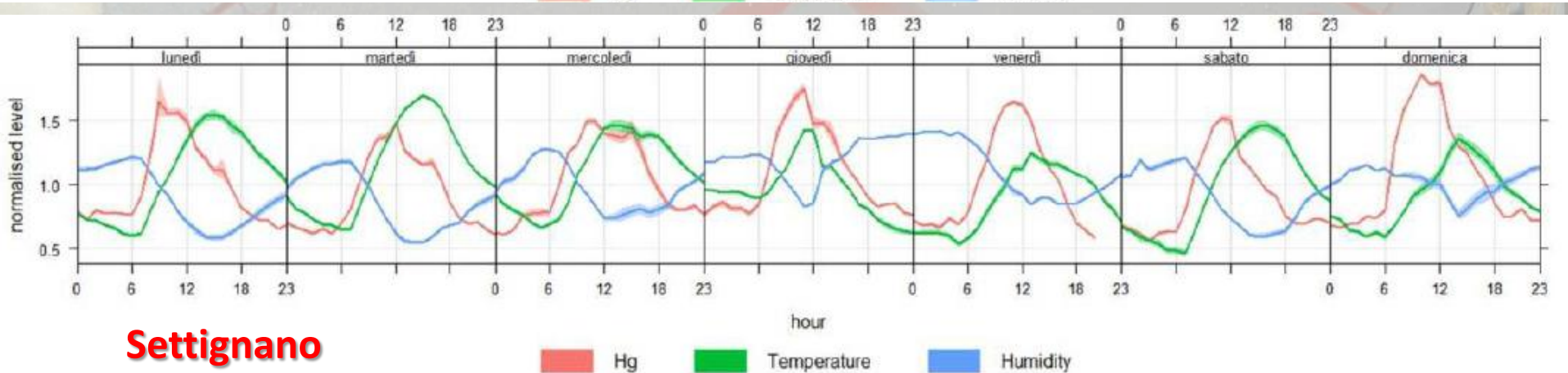
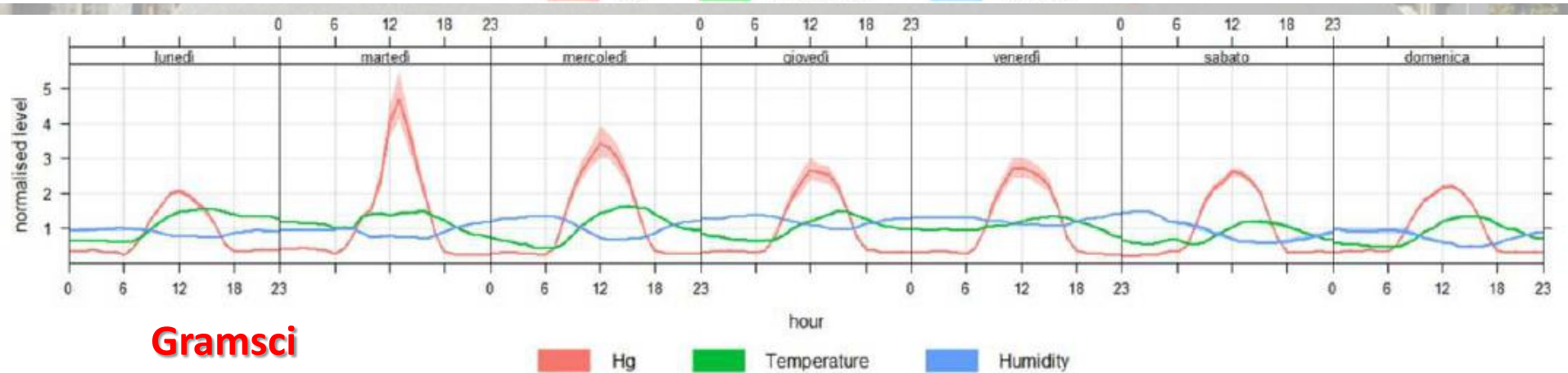
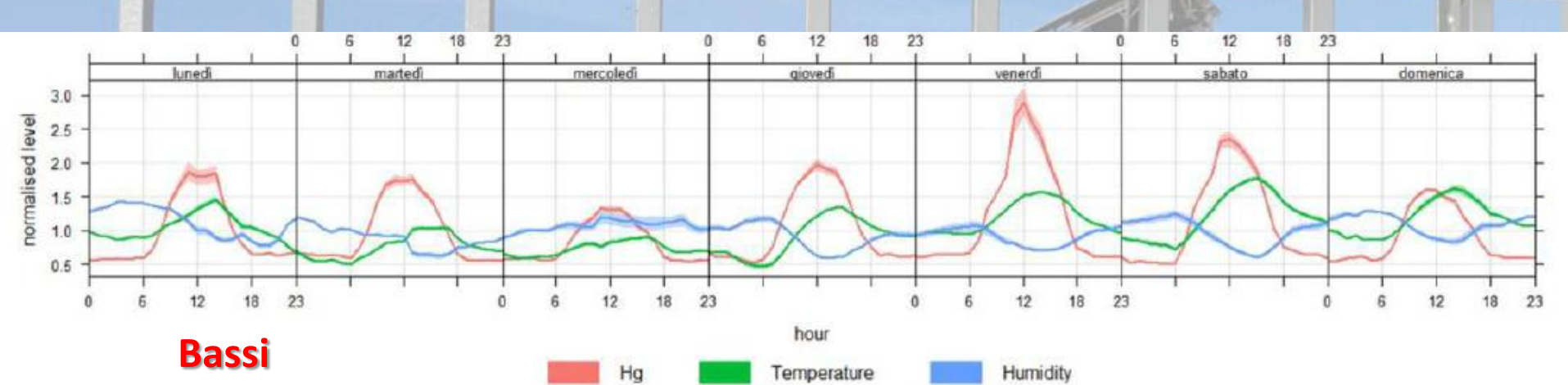
**A parte Fi-MOSSE, è evidente un picco alle ore 12:00, dunque il traffico non sembra influenzare le concentrazioni di Hg in quanto non esiste collegamento fra aumento delle concentrazioni e ore di punta.**

**È invece possibile dedurre una correlazione diretta dei picchi di Hg con la temperatura e una correlazione inversa con l'umidità: i processi fotochimici durante il giorno sono quelli che maggiormente influenzano le emissioni di mercurio atmosferico.**

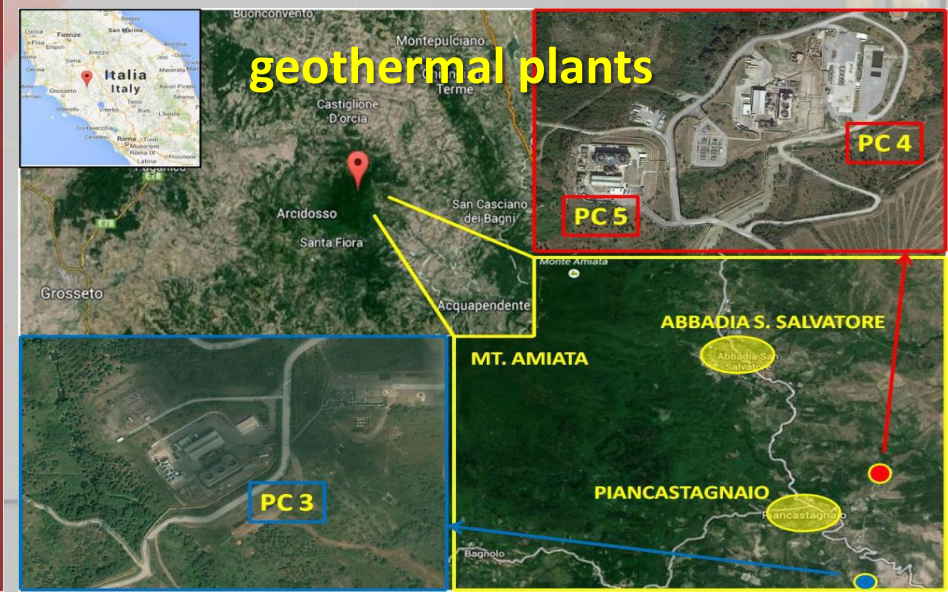
**La radiazione solare, che raggiunge il suo massimo nelle ore centrali della giornata, induce la fotoriduzione di  $\text{Hg}^{2+}$  in  $\text{Hg}^0$ .**

**Avendo la radiazione solare un'influenza diretta sulla temperatura dell'aria ed una indiretta sull'umidità, le correlazioni tra concentrazione di Hg e questi parametri riflettono la correlazione tra Hg e radiazione solare.**

**FI-MOSSE: andamento estremamente irregolare. Campionamento dell'ultima parte di Aprile, in cui le temperature hanno subito un incremento e ciò potrebbe aver aumentato l'altezza dello strato di rimescolamento, con conseguente diluizione di Hg in aria durante le ore diurne, assenza di correlazione fra Hg, temperatura e umidità, oltre a valori di Hg mediamente più bassi.**




# CASO DI STUDIO: MT. AMIATA



# ABBADIA SAN SALVATORE

Area mineraria a Hg dedita fino al 1976 all'estrazione del cinabro e situata nelle vicinanze del centro urbano della medesima cittadina



**Legislazione Amiata:  
a fine bonifica <300  
(outdoor) e <500  
(indoor) ng/m<sup>3</sup>**



LOTTO 4

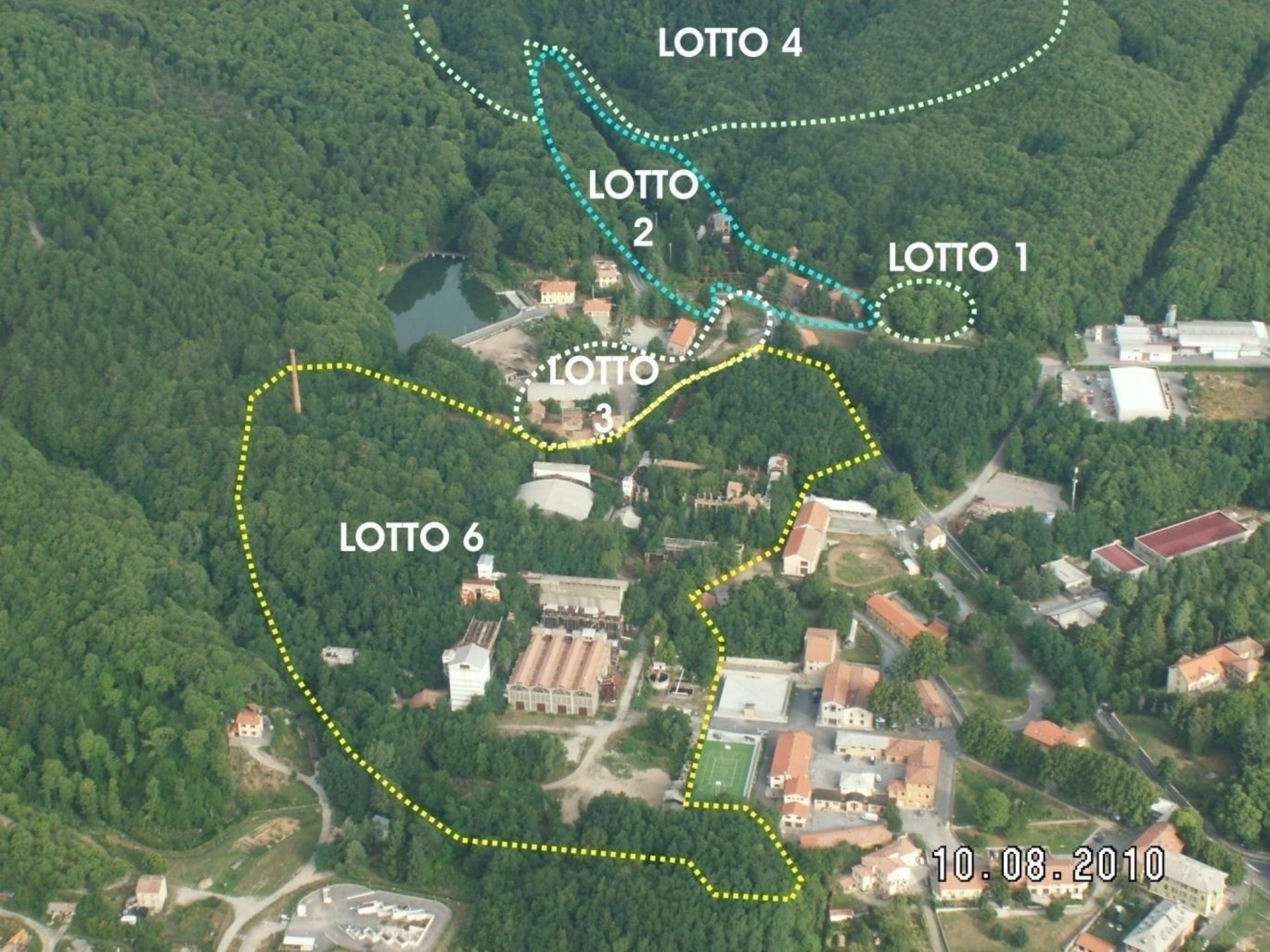
LOTTO  
2

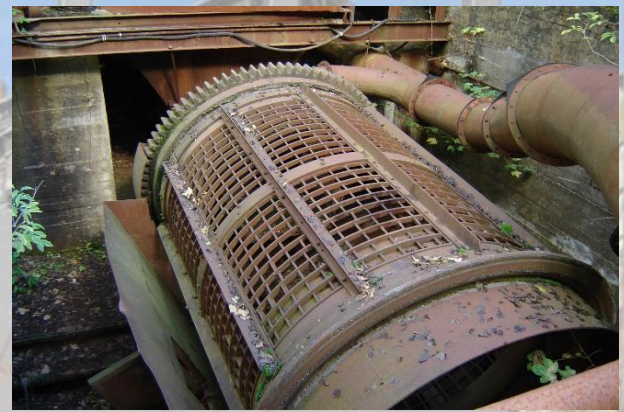
LOTTO 1

LOTTO  
3

LOTTO 6

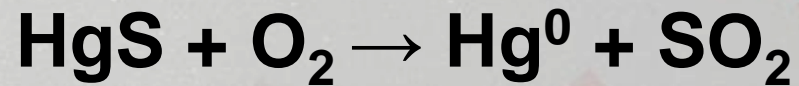
10.08.2010







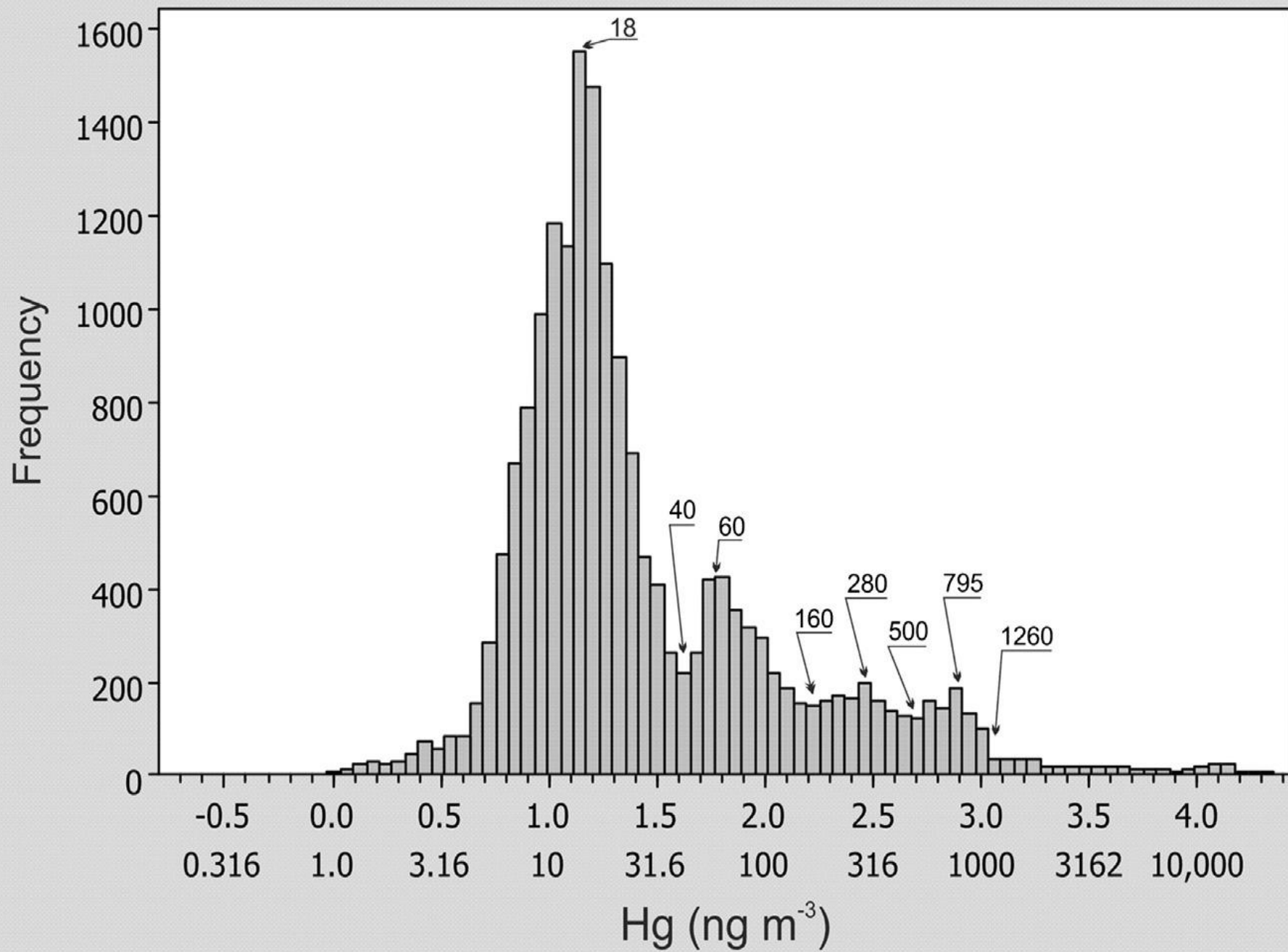
**L'estrazione di Hg liquido dal cinabro veniva generalmente effettuata in forni rotanti ove la reazione con O<sub>2</sub> produce SO<sub>2</sub>:**



**Per T > 350 ° C, Hg tende a vaporizzare e veniva condensato nel suo stato liquido a T<sub>ambiente</sub>.**

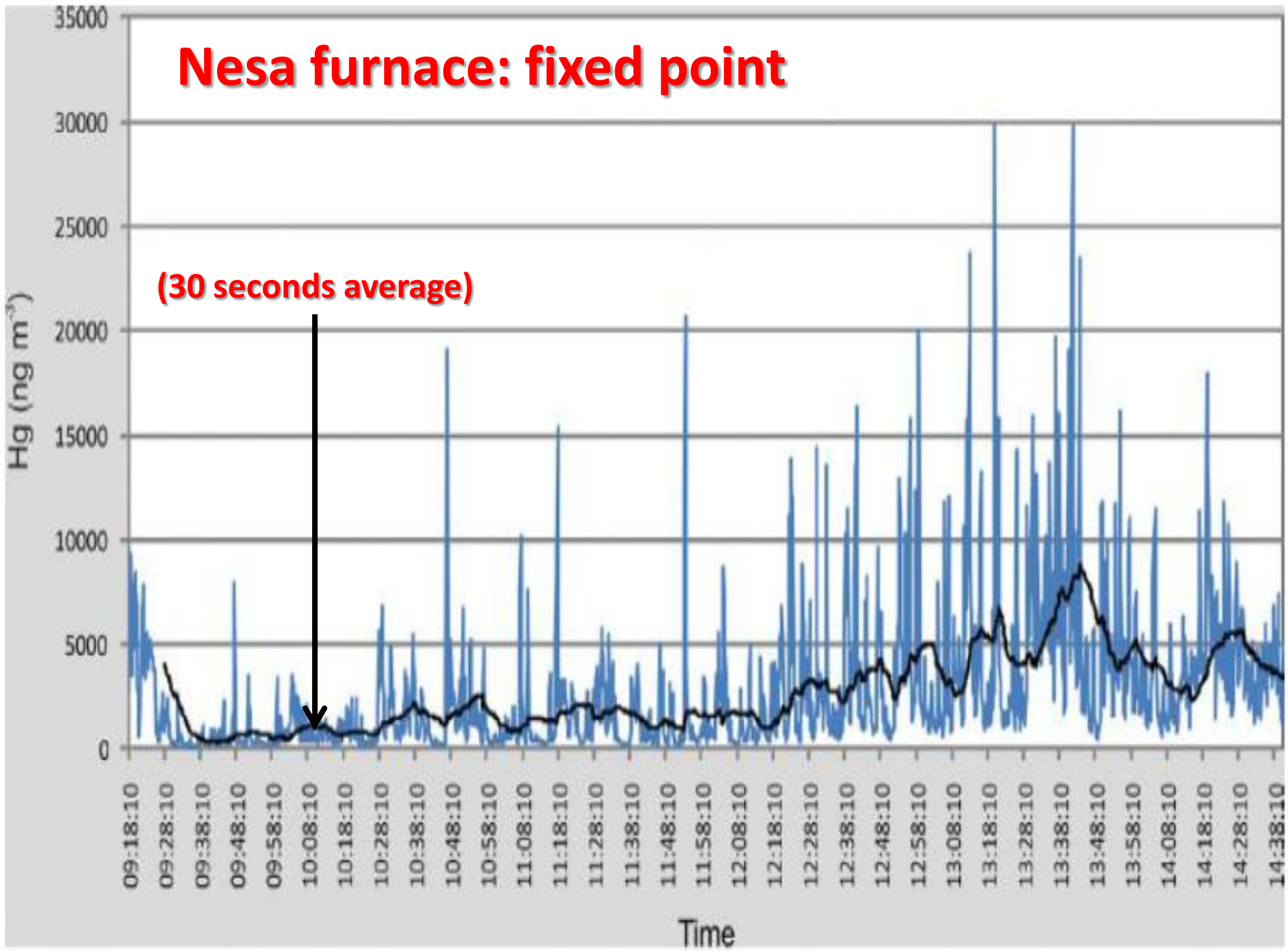
**Scorie > 1000 mg kg<sup>-1</sup> dovute al cinabro non convertito, formazione di meta-cinabro, HgO ed altri sali di Hg.**

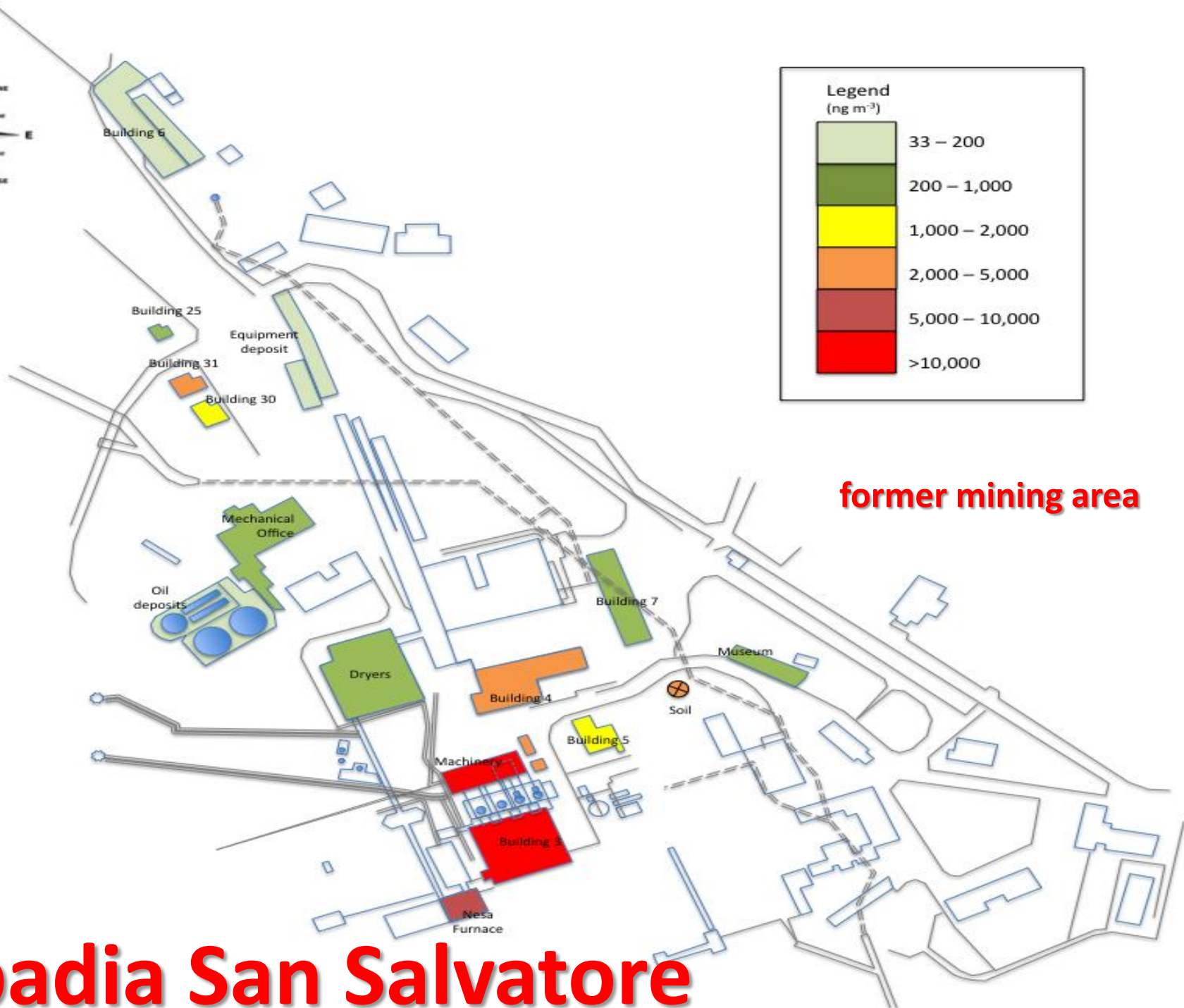
**Le scorie, esposte a cielo aperto, interagiscono con le acque meteoriche.**



# Nesa furnace: fixed point

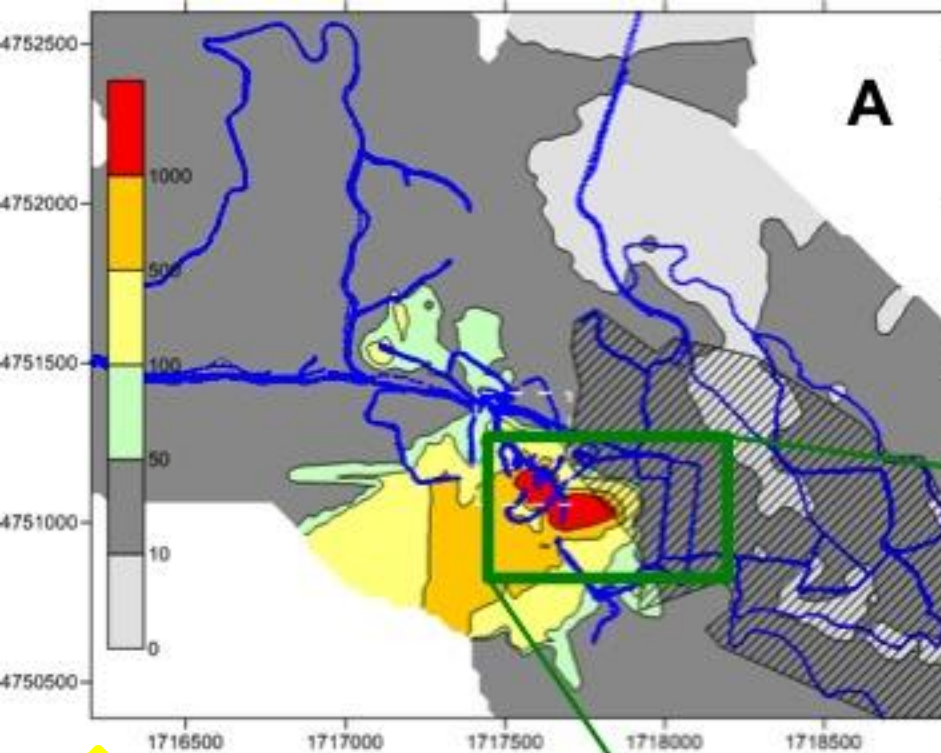
(30 seconds average)





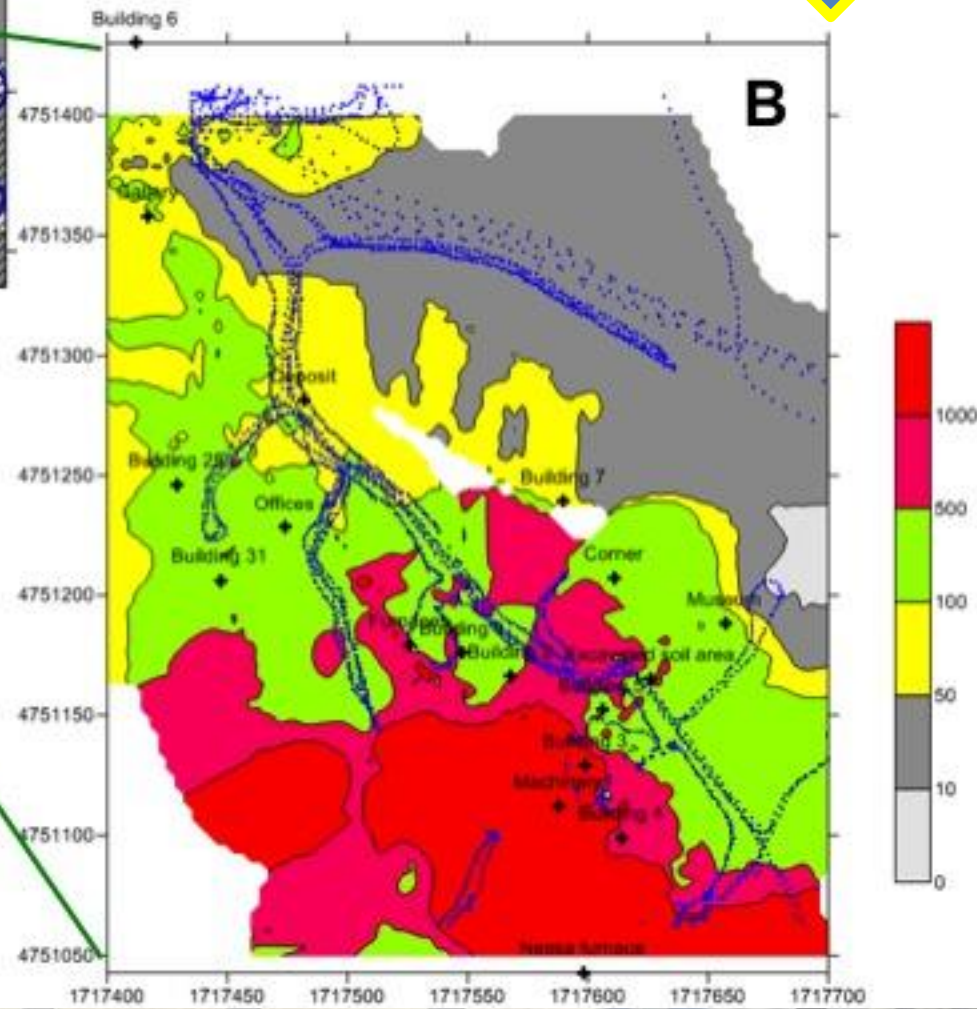
# Contour Map

Abbadia San Salvatore  
former mining area



Hg<sup>0</sup>

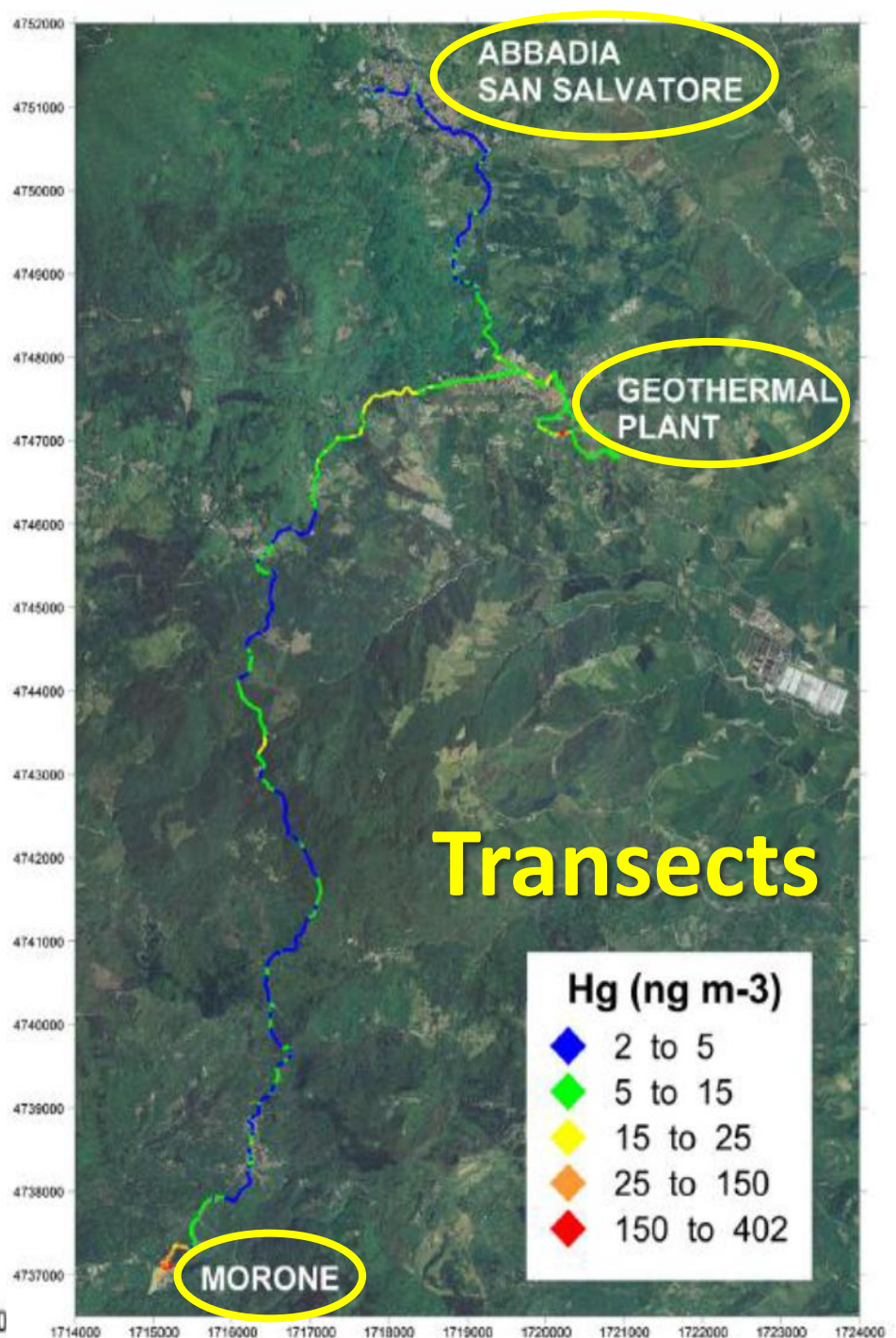
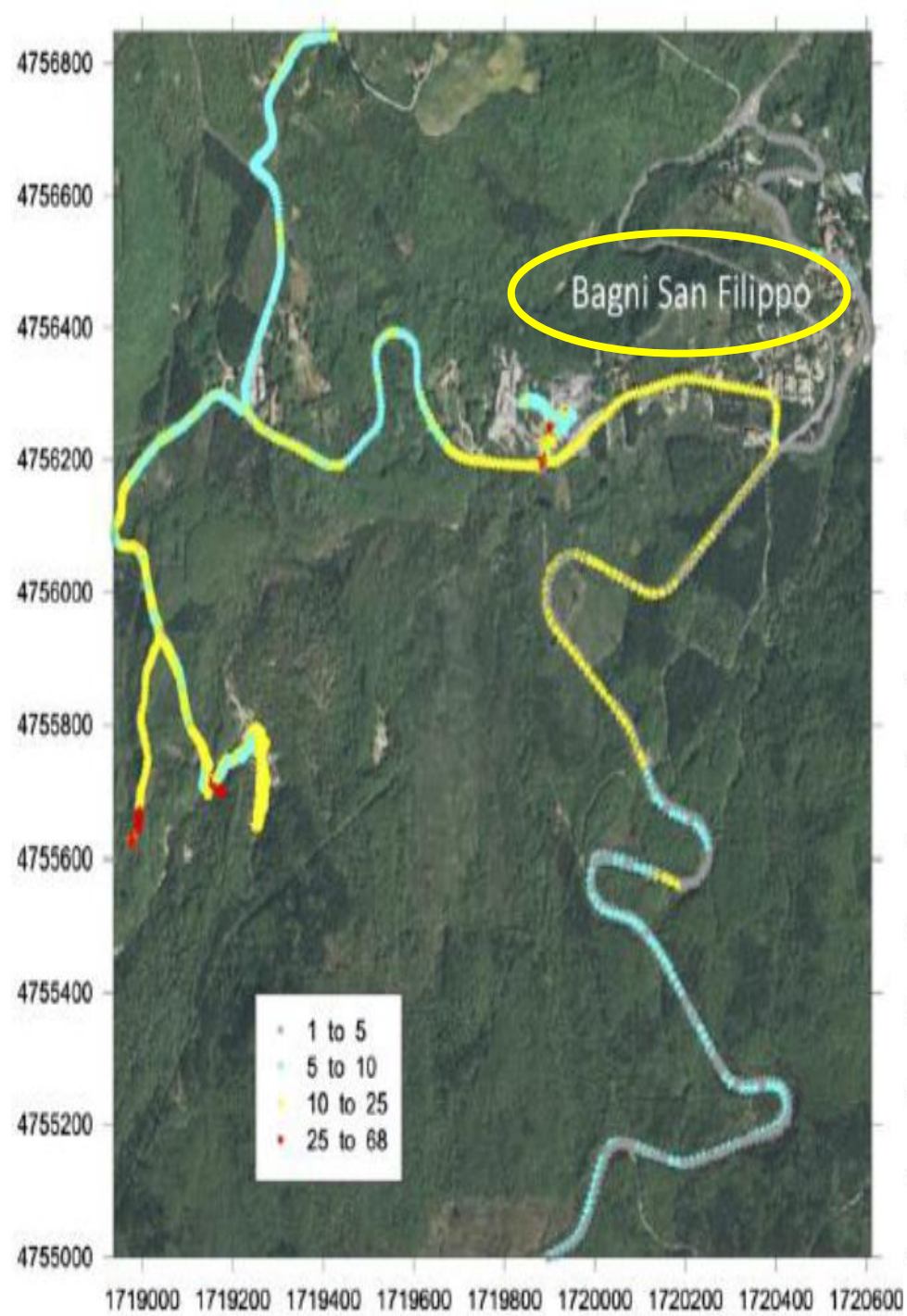
Abbadia San Salvatore,  
including the urban area  
(shaded grid)



# MISURE IN CONTINUO: TRANSETTI

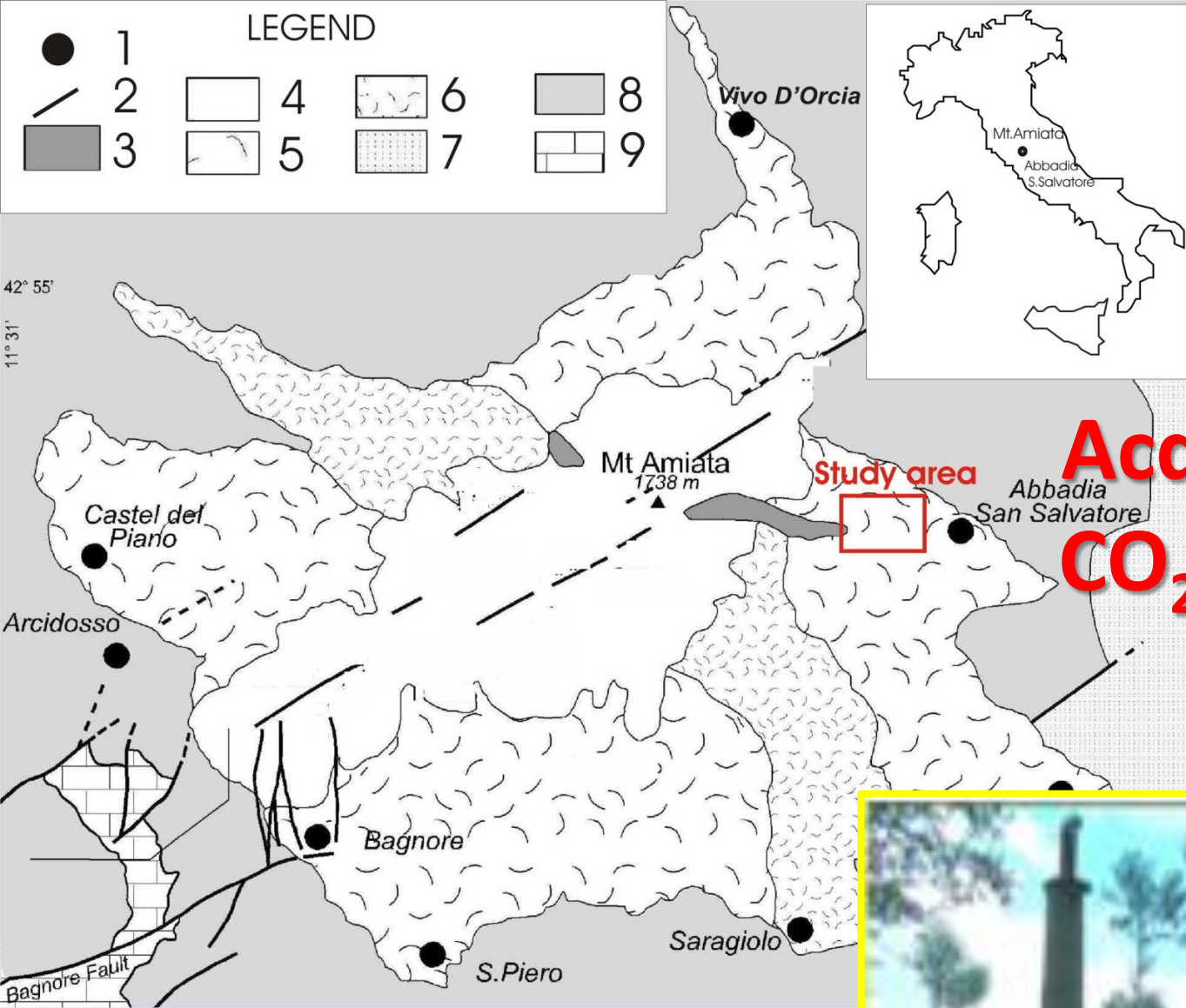
- registrazione in continuo percorrendo dei transetti a velocità costante
- acquisizione dei dati ad altissima frequenza (anche 1 dato al secondo)
- misura continua della posizione GPS: coordinate spaziali per ciascun valore di concentrazione
- contemporanea registrazione delle condizioni meteo





LEGEND

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9

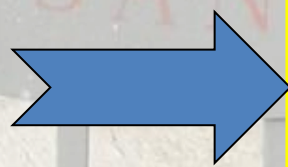


**Camino**

**Acquapassante**  
**CO<sub>2</sub>=1.8k ton/y**



**Camino Ermeta**  
**CO<sub>2</sub>=13k ton/y**







Hg0 (ng/m3)

17 - 20

20 - 30

30 - 40

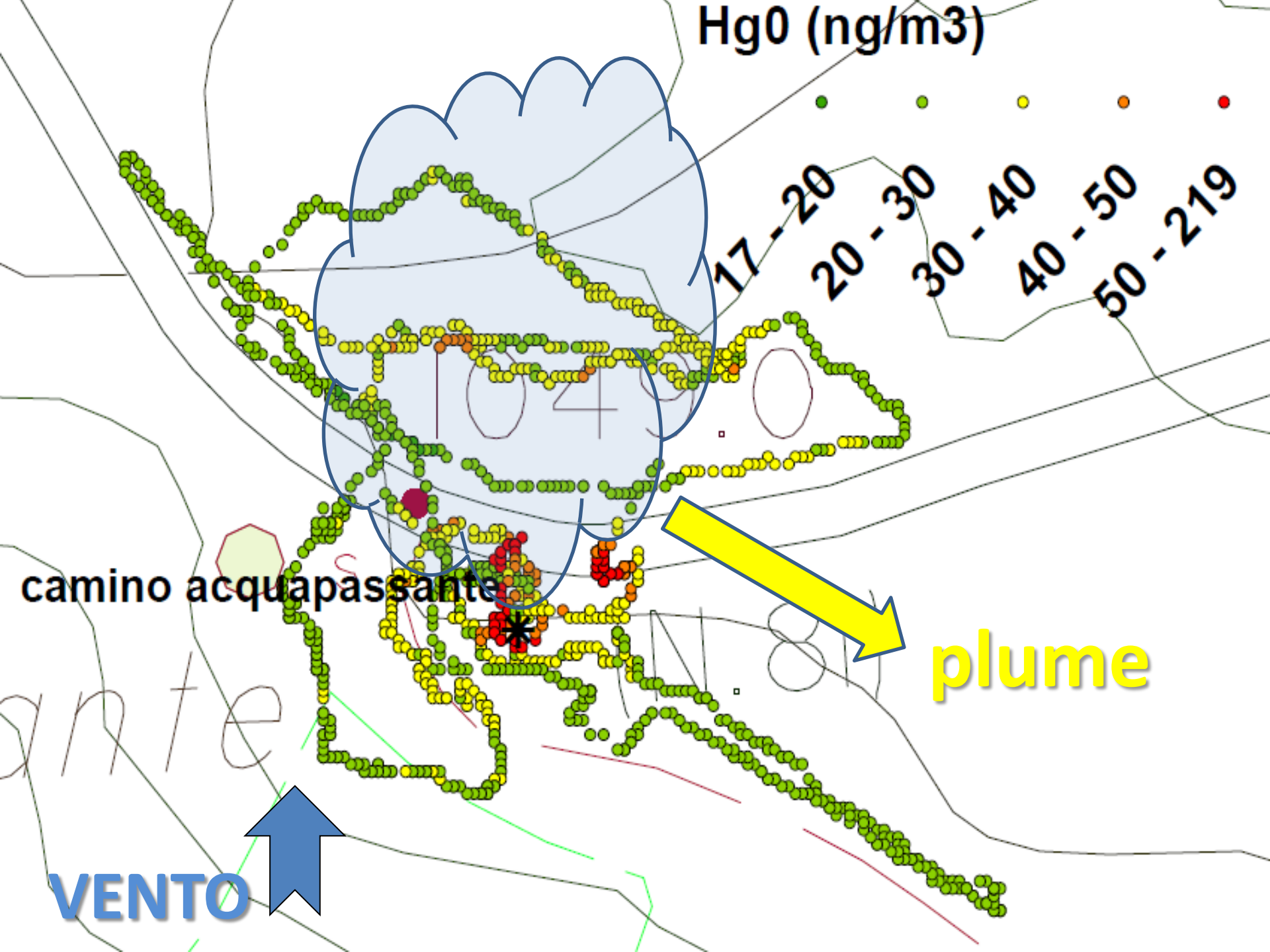
40 - 50

50 - 219

camino acquapasante

plume

VENTO



# ALTRI INQUINANTI ATMOSFERICI

Parallelamente a  $\text{Hg}^0$ , sono stati misurati tre inquinanti:



Emessi dai sistemi idrotermali e/o vulcanici attivi e da molte attività antropiche

$\text{H}_2\text{S}$ : tossico in quanto irritante e soffocante, rilevabile a concentrazioni molto basse causa odore sgradevole

$\text{SO}_2$ : dall'odore pungente e fortemente irritante, soprattutto per gli occhi e il tratto respiratorio

$\text{CO}_2$ : uno dei principali gas serra presenti nell'atmosfera, legame diretto con il riscaldamento globale

# H<sub>2</sub>S & SO<sub>2</sub>: Legislation

**H<sub>2</sub>S**: almost all the exposed subjects distinguished the characteristic smell in correspondence of 7 µg/m<sup>3</sup> (~ 5 ppb): hydrogen sulfide should not exceed this concentration to prevent claims about smell nuisance.

However, the guideline concentration for H<sub>2</sub>S is 150 µg/m<sup>3</sup> (~ 107 ppb) with an averaging time of 24 hours (WHO, 2000)

**SO<sub>2</sub>**: the following concentrations should not be exceeded (WHO, 2000, 2006):

- 1) 500 µg/m<sup>3</sup> (0.175 ppm) for an average of 10 minutes;
- 2) 20 µg/m<sup>3</sup> (~ 7 ppb) on the average of 24 hours;
- 3) 50 µg/m<sup>3</sup> (17.5 ppb) on annual average

LUMEX ( $\text{Hg}^0$ )



THERMO  
( $\text{H}_2\text{S}$ ,  $\text{SO}_2$ )



**STRUMENTI  
COMBINATI**



**Sulfur Dioxide Analyzer, Model 450i, Thermo Scientific**

# **H<sub>2</sub>S & SO<sub>2</sub>: Thermo<sup>®</sup> Analyzer**

- **Thermo<sup>®</sup> Scientific Model 450i Analyzer:** utilizza la fluorescenza a pulsazione per misurare le concentrazioni di H<sub>2</sub>S e SO<sub>2</sub>
- **limite di rilevabilità: 1-2 ppb (60 secondi di tempo medio) con una portata di 1 L/min**
- **range dinamico: da 0-0.05 a 10 ppm**

LUMEX ( $\text{Hg}^0$ )

MULTIGAS  
( $\text{CO}_2$ ,  $\text{H}_2\text{S}$ , ...)

STRUMENTI  
COMBINATI



3. Automatic data-logging in memory board

4. Radio transfer back to observatory after each acquisition cycle

$\text{SO}_2$  ( $\text{H}_2\text{S}$ )  
electrochemical sensors

radio

$\text{CO}_2$ ,  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$   
IR spectrometer, Licor

1. Gas pumped in

pump

2. GAS sensing: 30 minute cycle at 0.1-0.5 Hz (4-10 cycles per day)

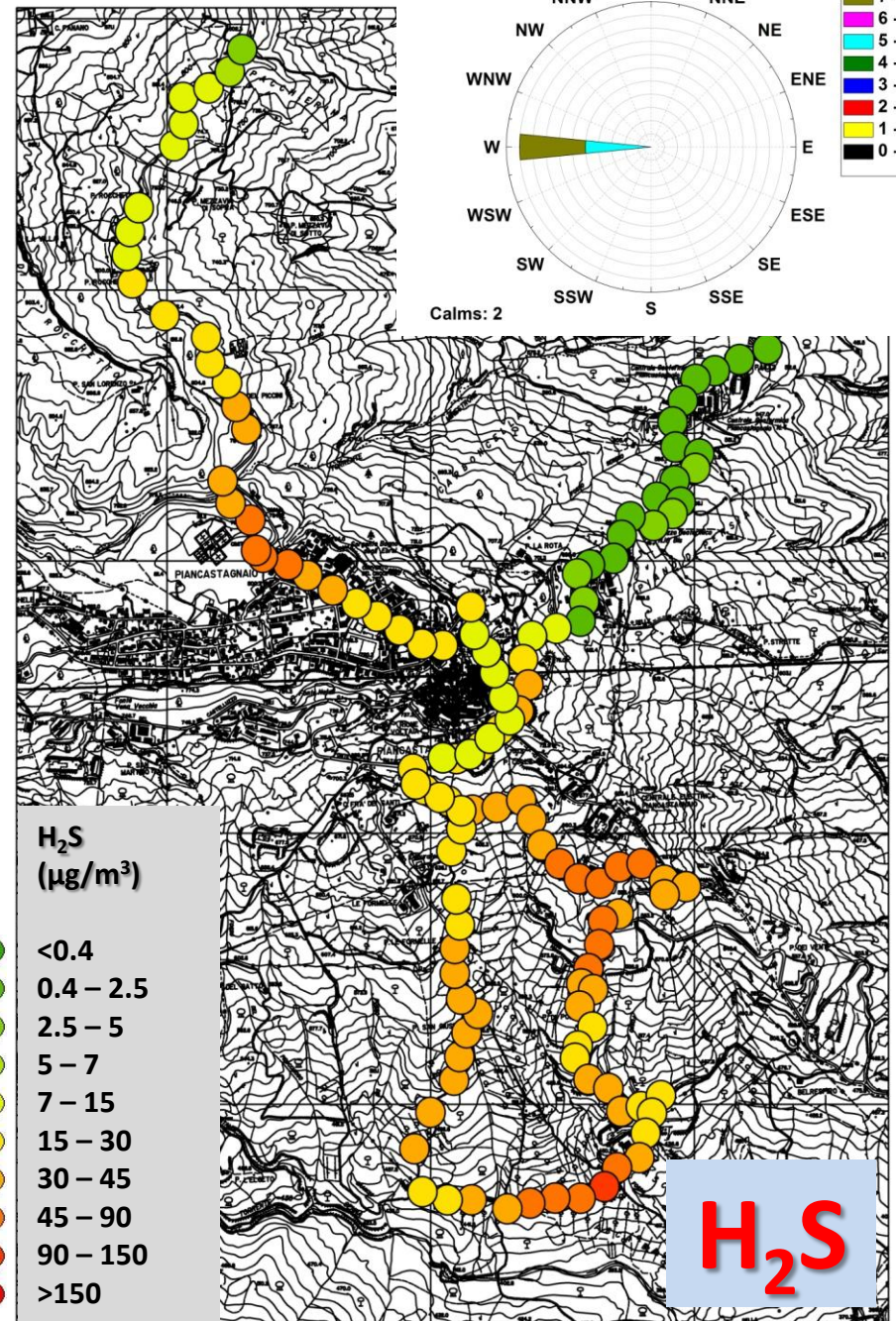
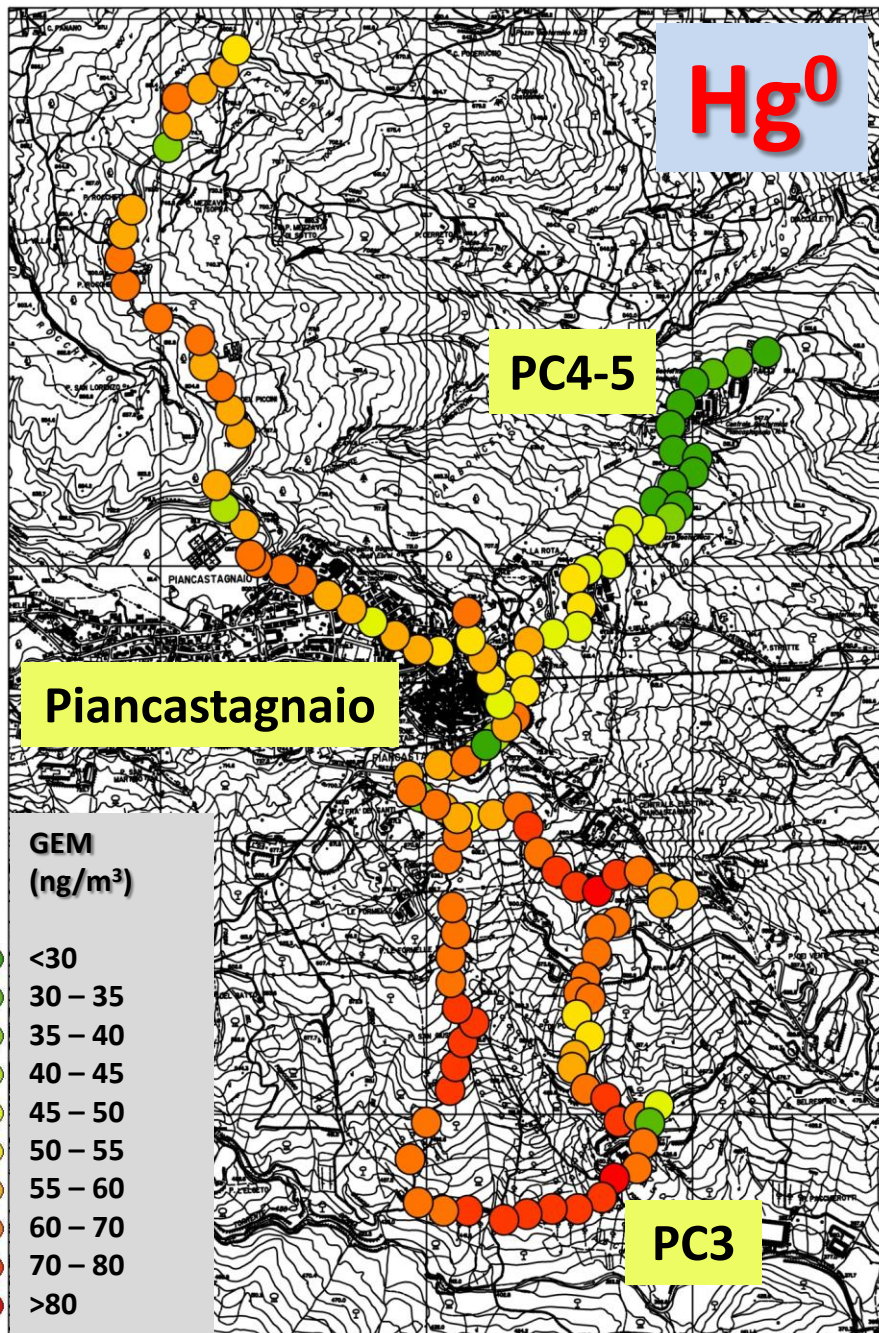
assemblato  
presso  
INGV-PA



# **CO<sub>2</sub>: Multi-GAS (INGV)**

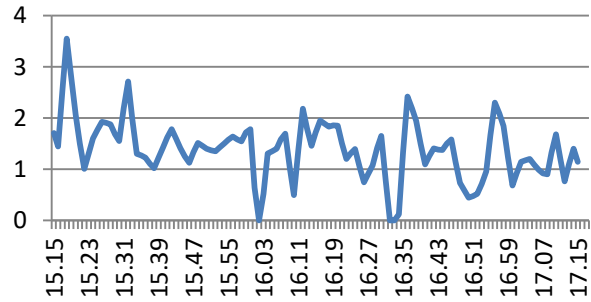
- **Multi-sensor Gas Analyzer System (INGV-Palermo): integra all'interno uno spettrometro ad IR per la determinazione della CO<sub>2</sub>**
- **intervallo di calibrazione: 0-4000 ppmv**
  - **risoluzione: 0.8 ppmv**  
**con portata media di 0.6 L/min**



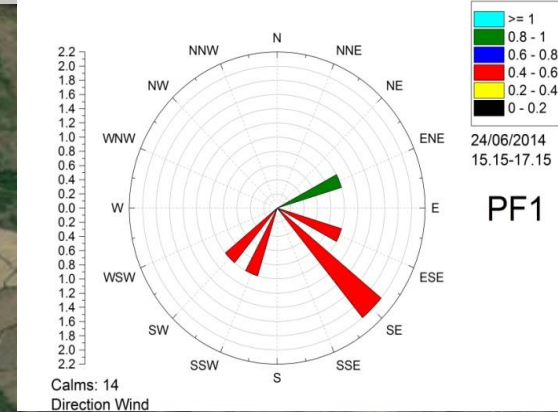
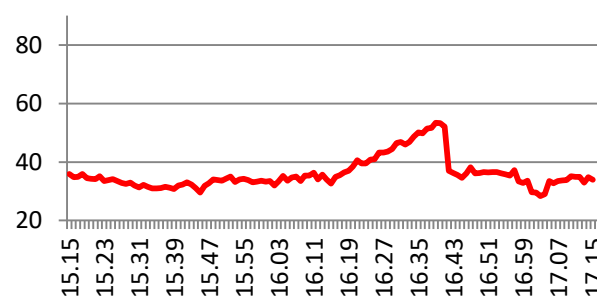


# PF1 (24-06-14, 15:15-17:15)

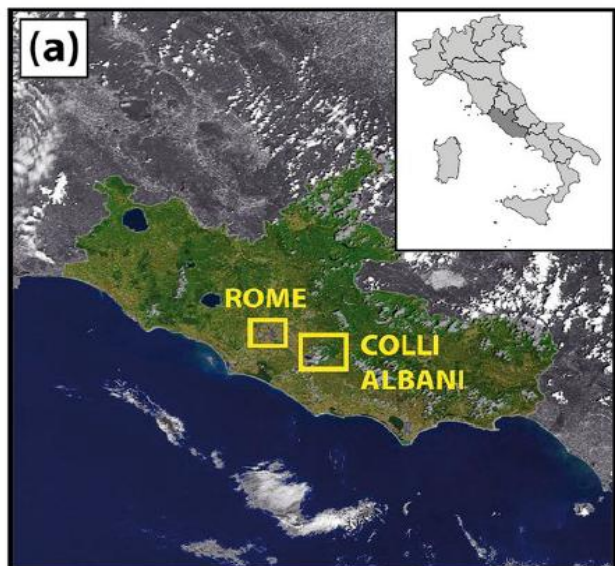
**H<sub>2</sub>S (ppb)**

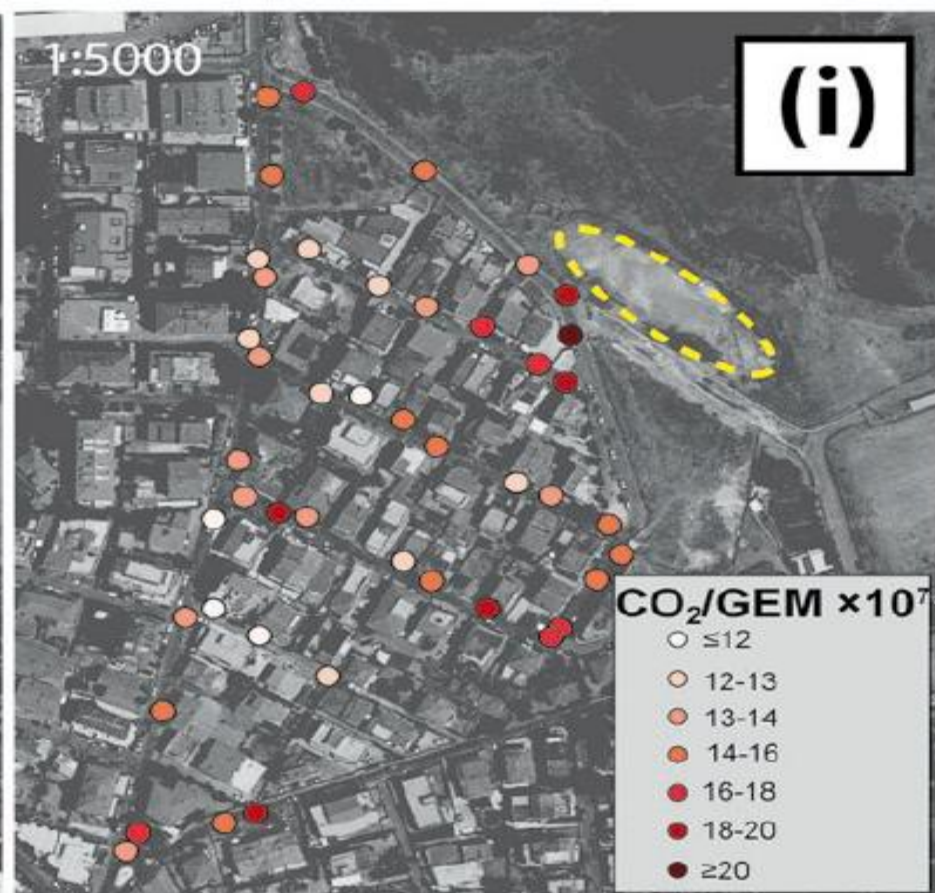
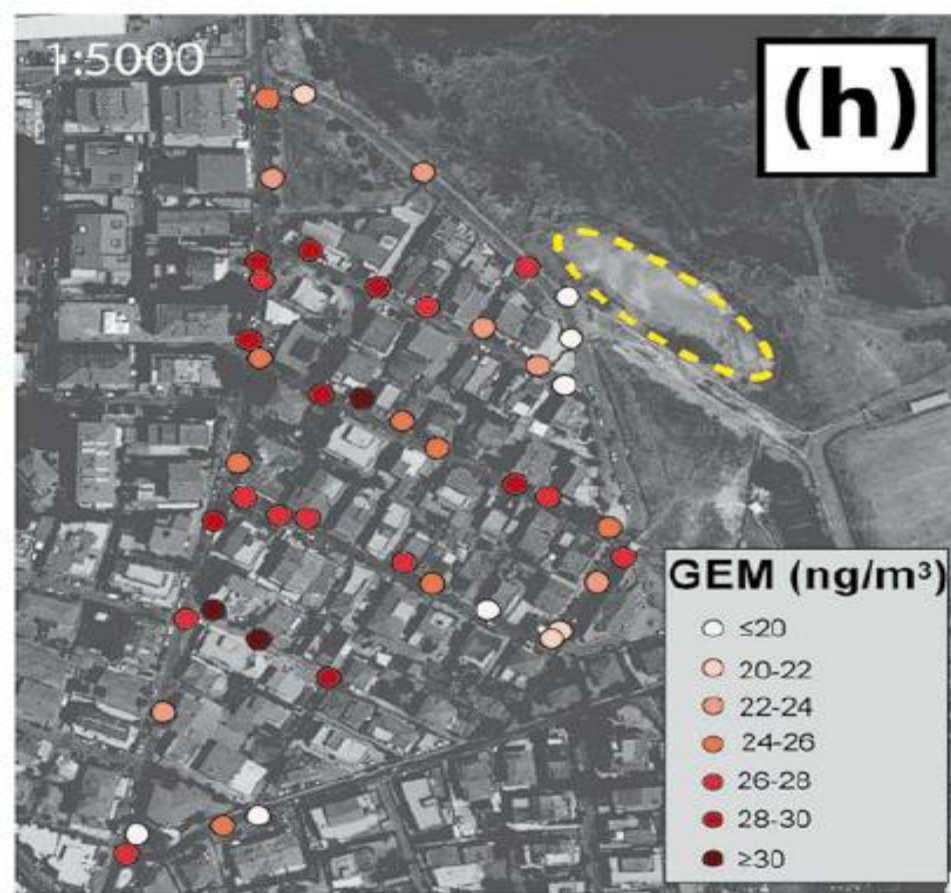


**Hg<sup>0</sup> (ng/m<sup>3</sup>)**

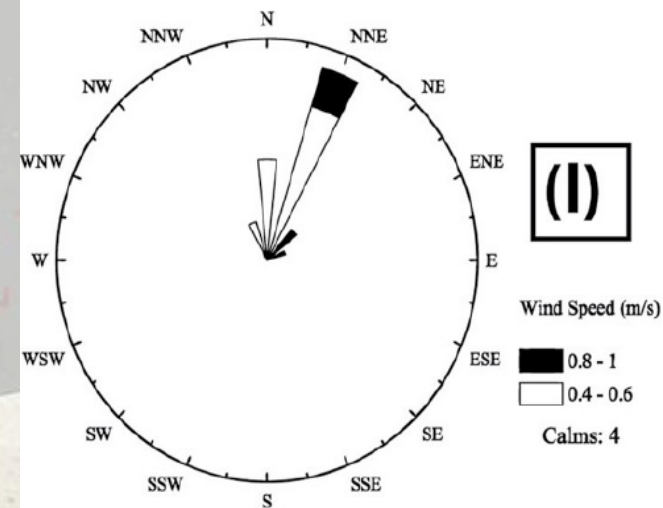


# CAVA DEI SELCI





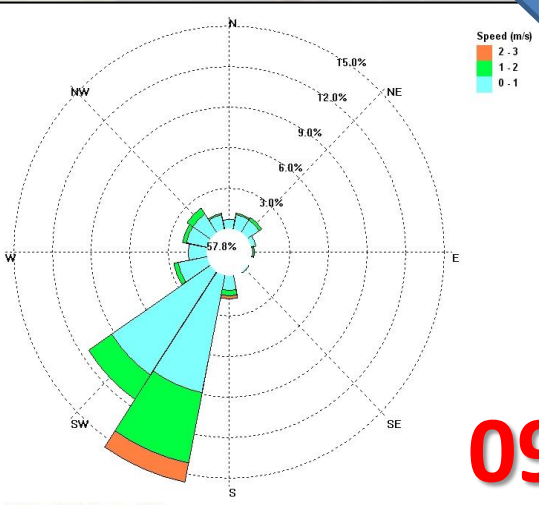
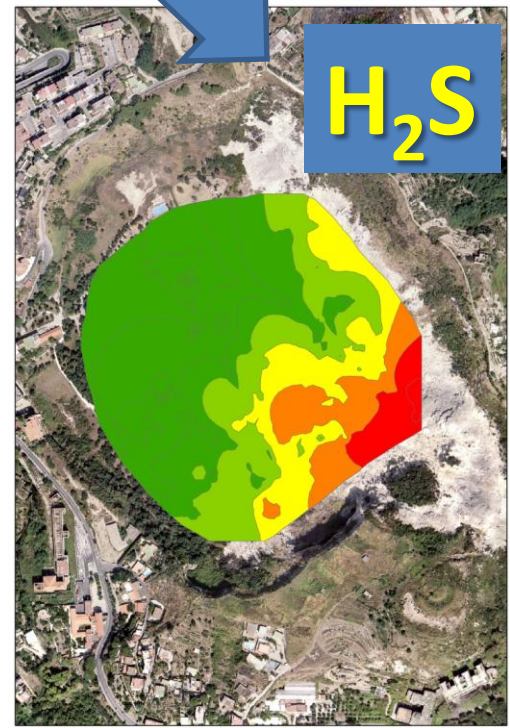
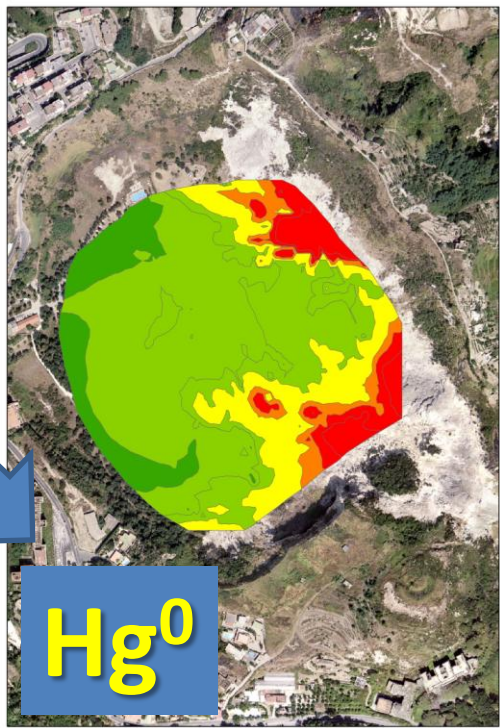
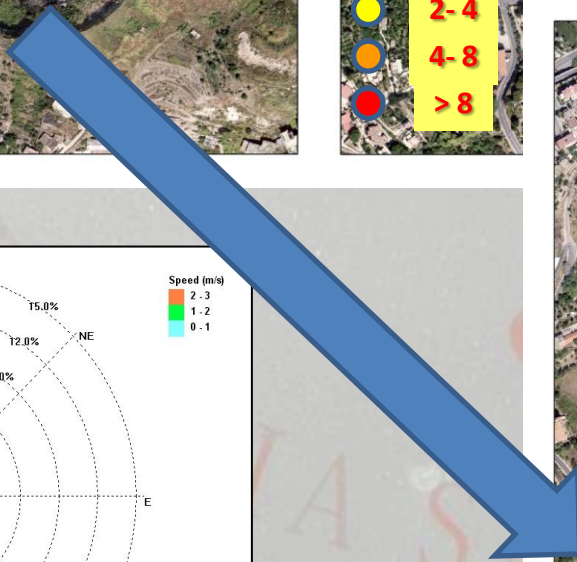
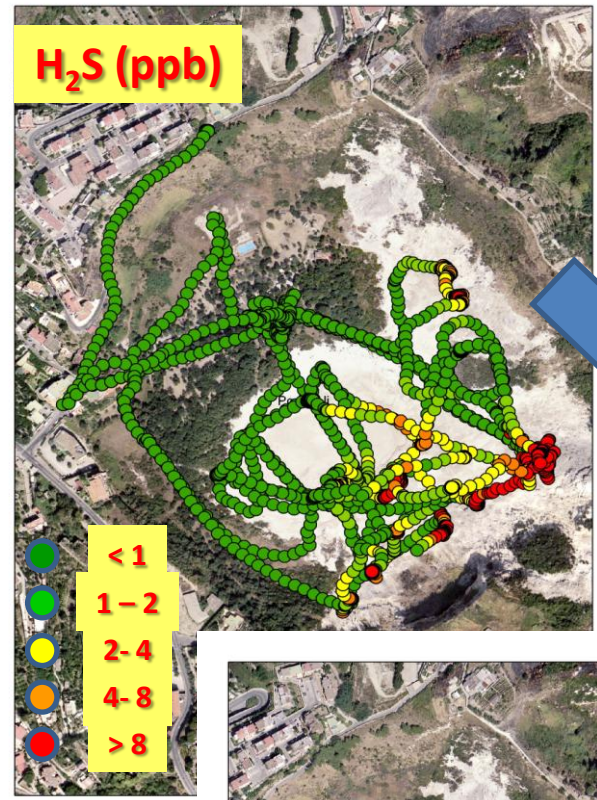
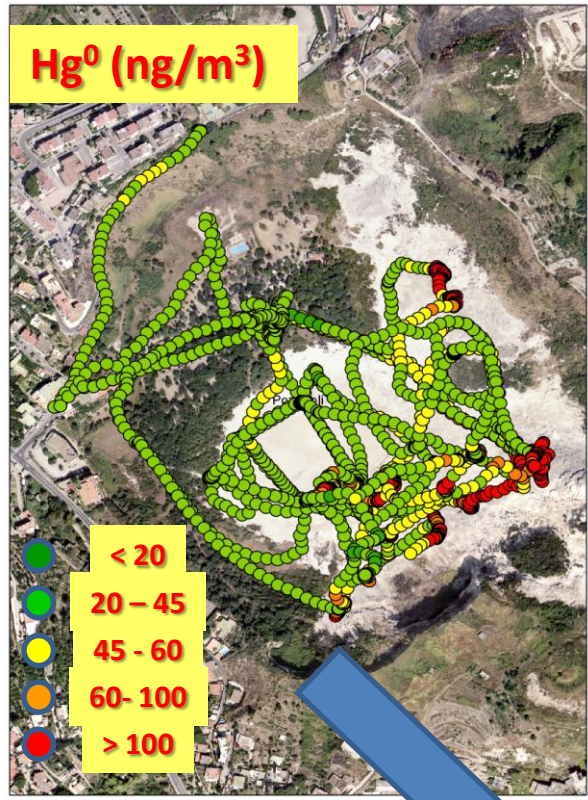
Along the measuring pathway in the residential area GEM ranged from 19 to 33 ng/m<sup>3</sup>, i.e. above the mean concentrations in some urban environments. However, the GEM spatial distribution was decoupled with respect to those of CO<sub>2</sub>. This suggests a different transport dynamic of GEM with respect to those of CO<sub>2</sub> and also H<sub>2</sub>S, controlled by peculiar processes regulating the behavior of the pollutant once released in the air.

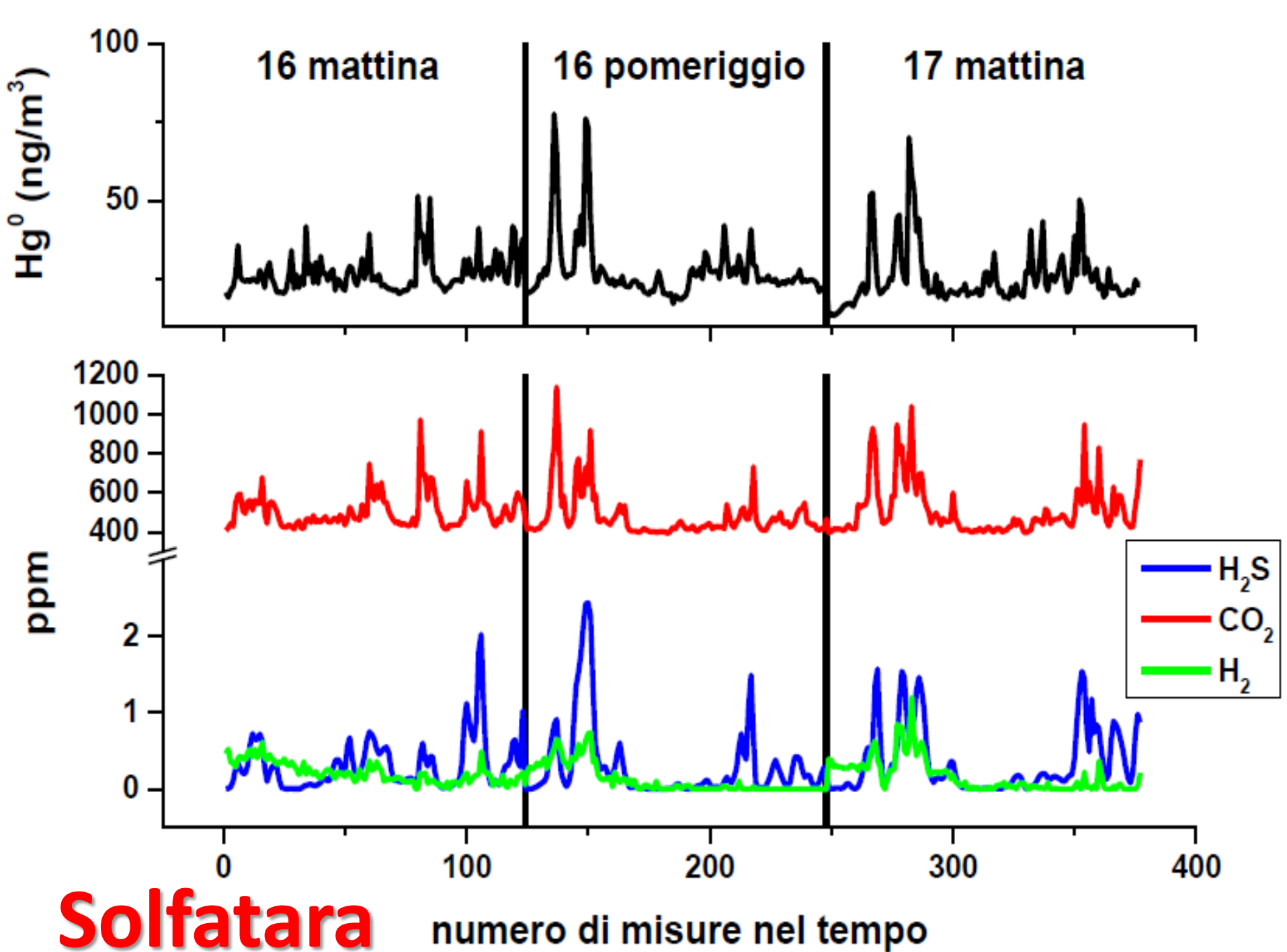


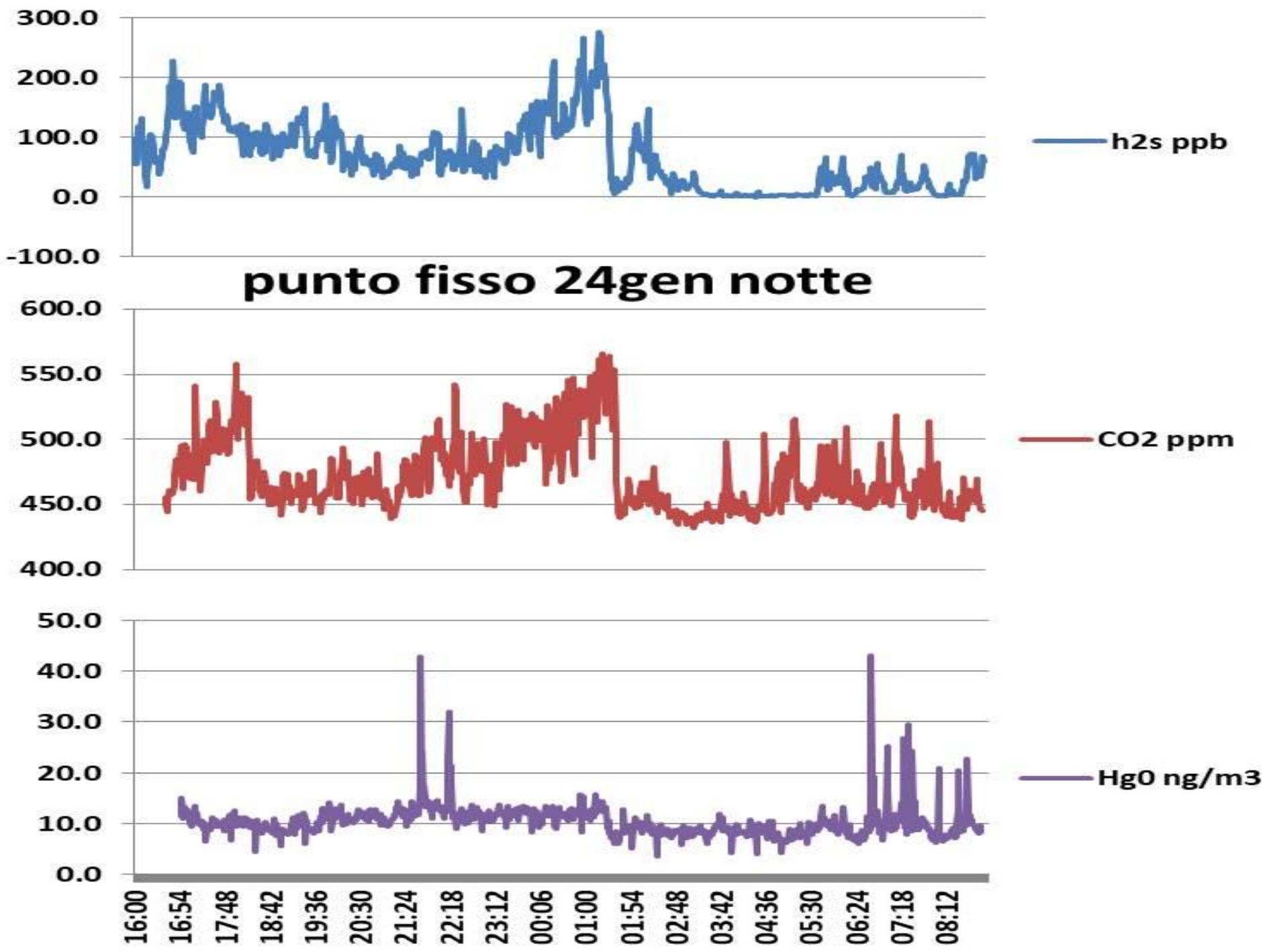


# Solfatara

From transects to direct mapping of the contaminant



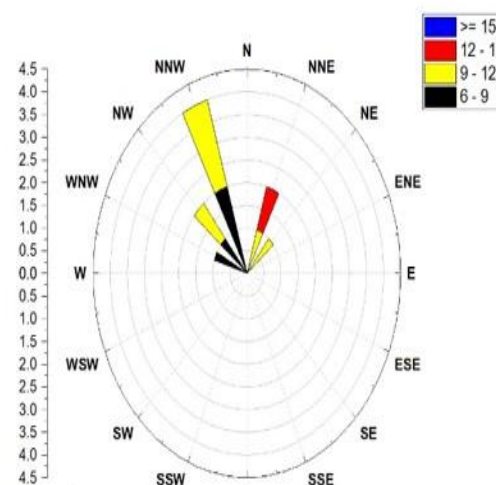
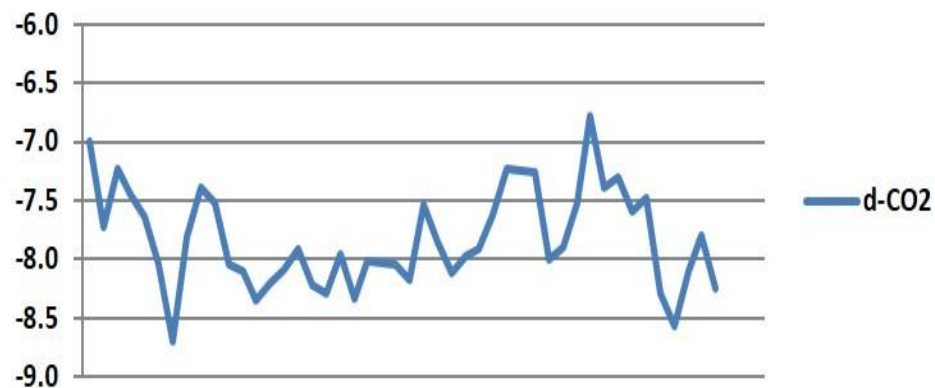
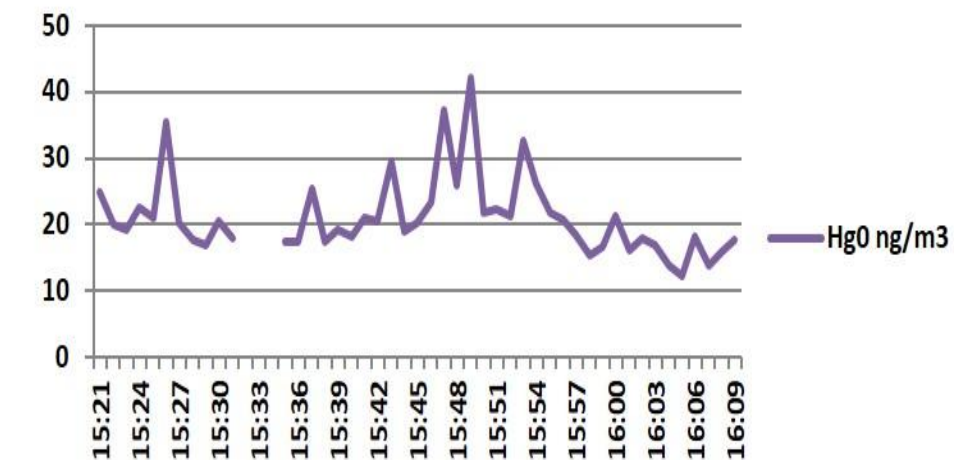
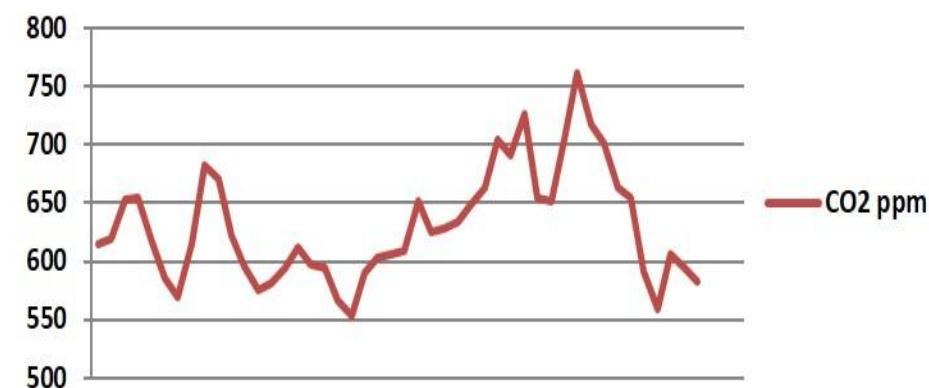
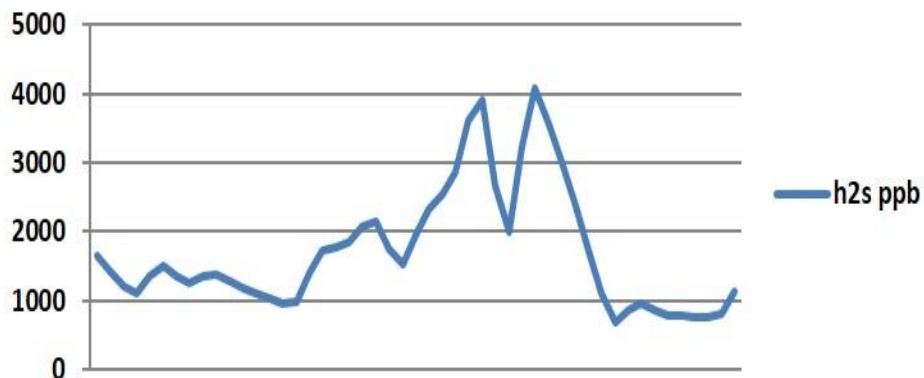






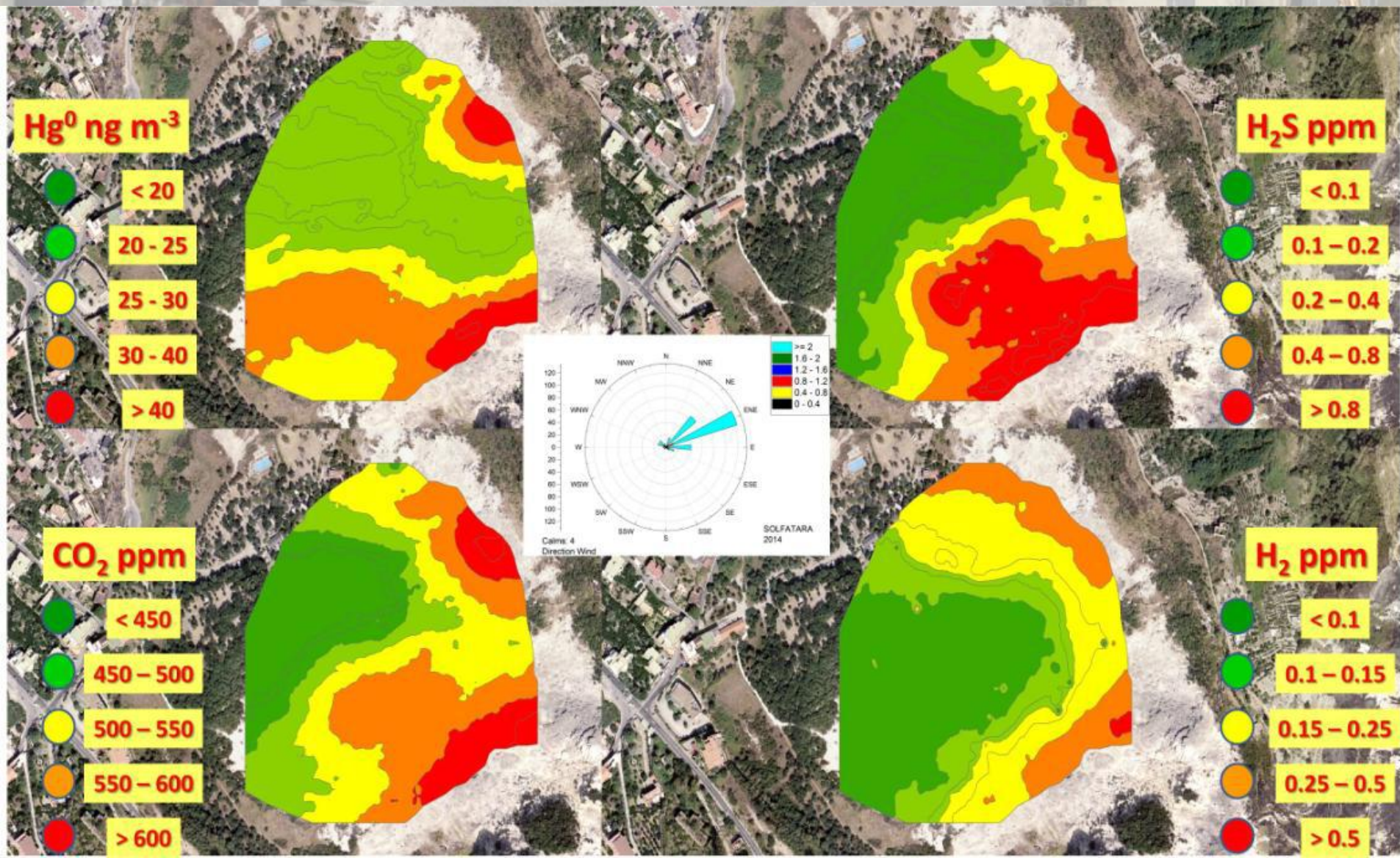
## punto fisso BN 25 gennaio

CO2/H2S	
min	161
max	978
media	439
mediana	419
dev. st.	190

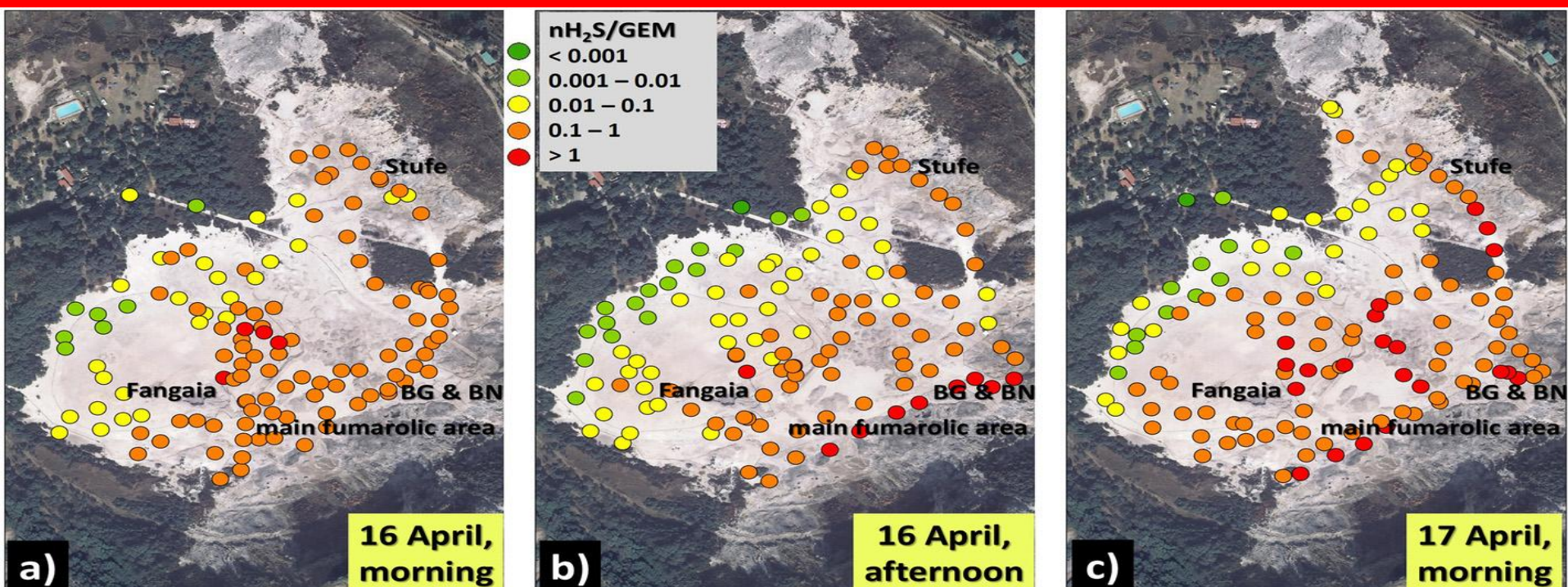
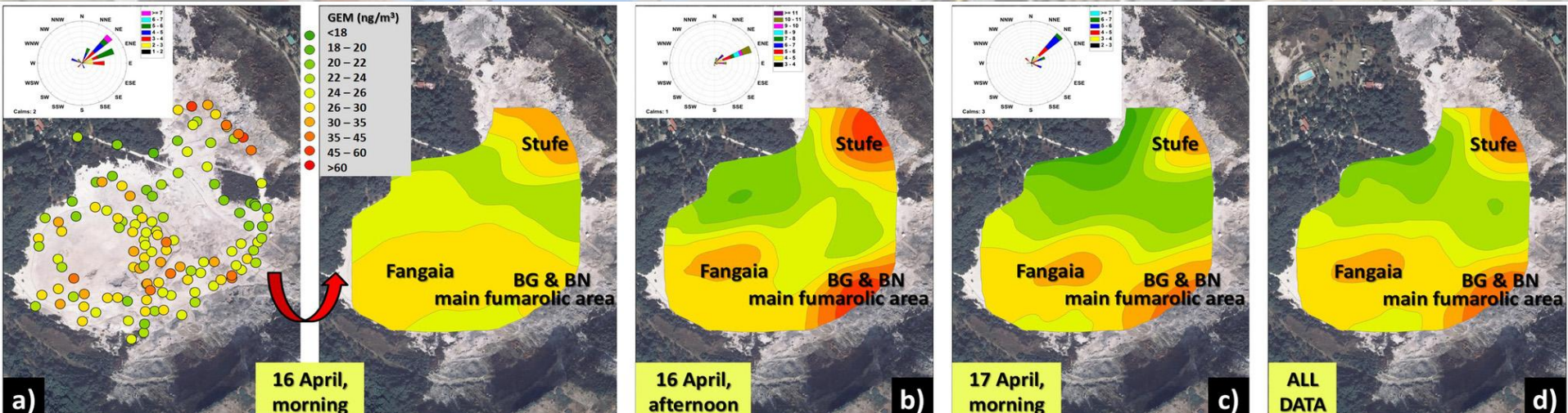


Calms: 0  
25/01/2019, punto fisso BN, 15:20 - 16:05

# Solfatara, 04/2014

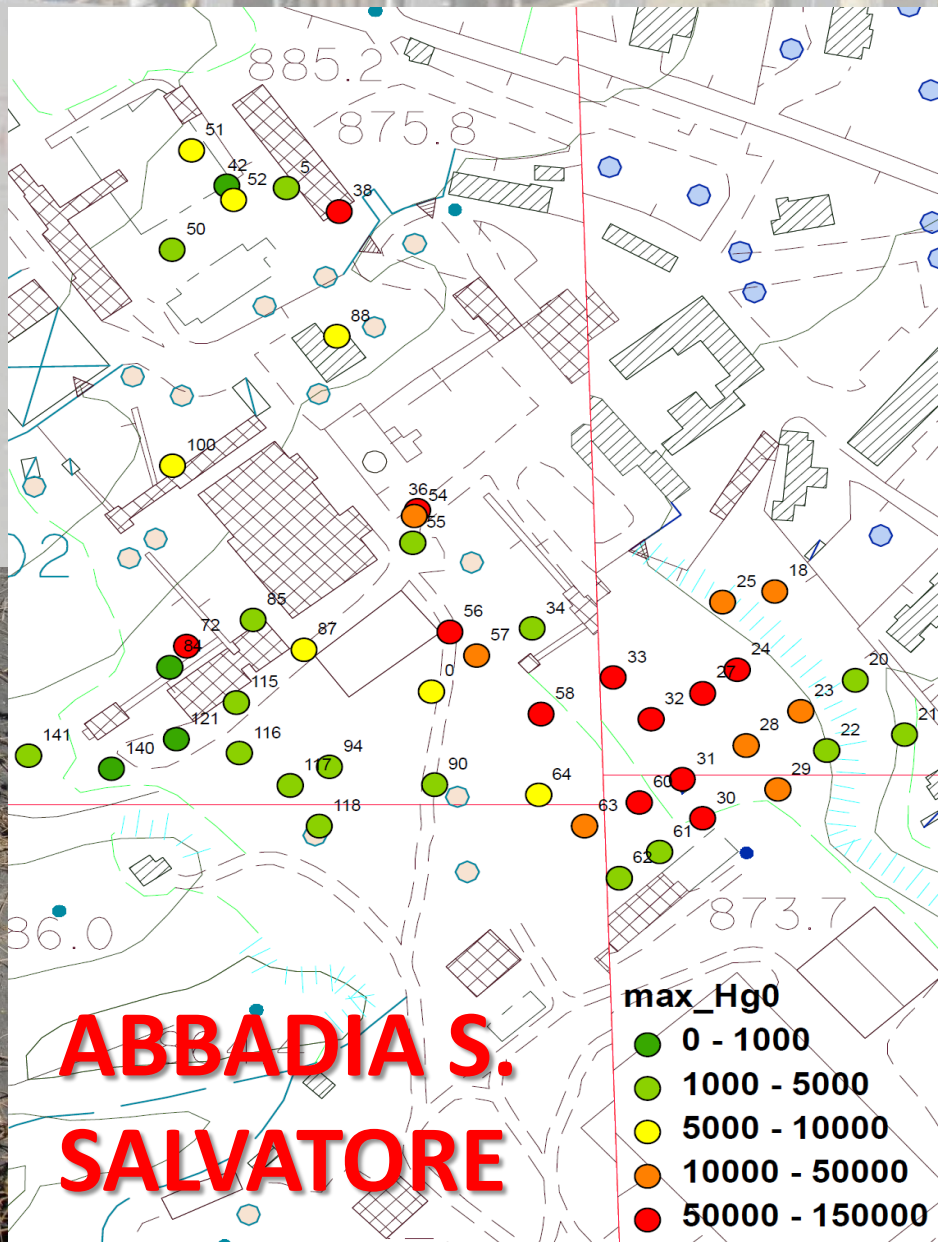


# Solfatara, 04/2014

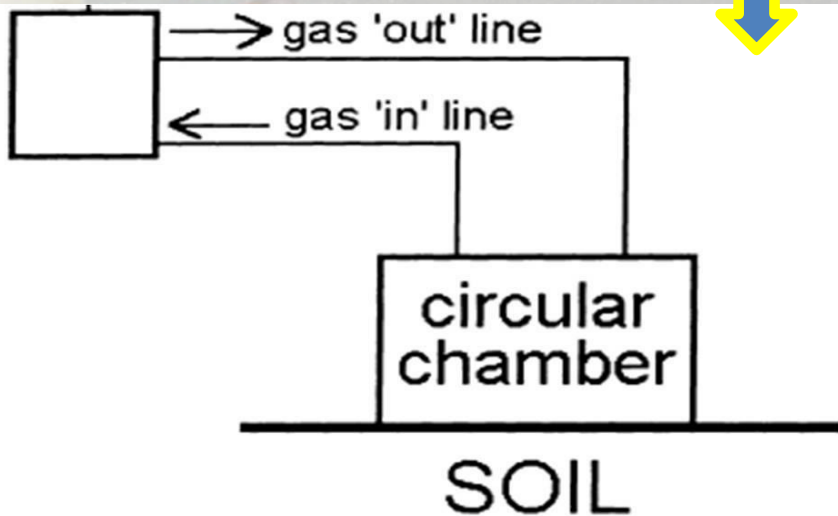
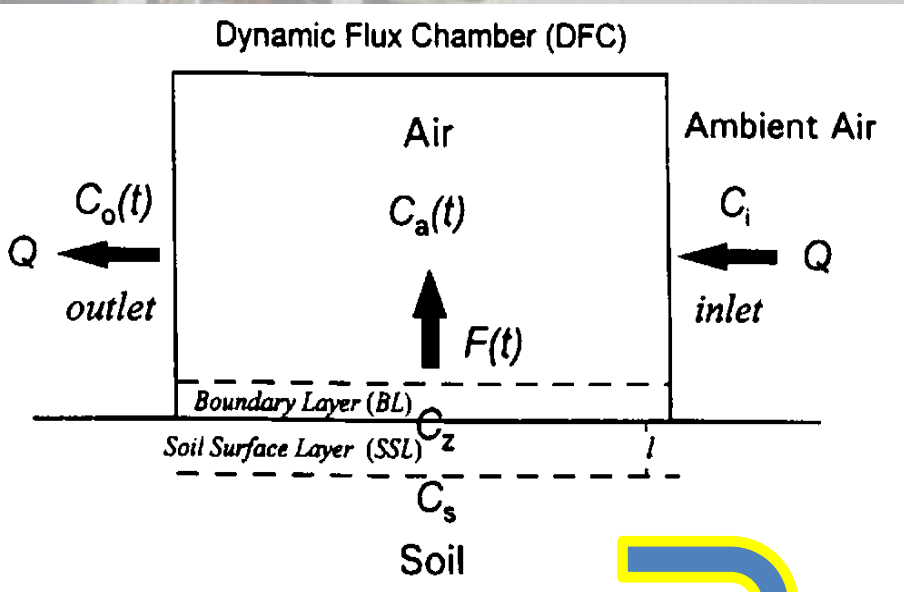


# MISURE IN CONTINUO: CAMERA

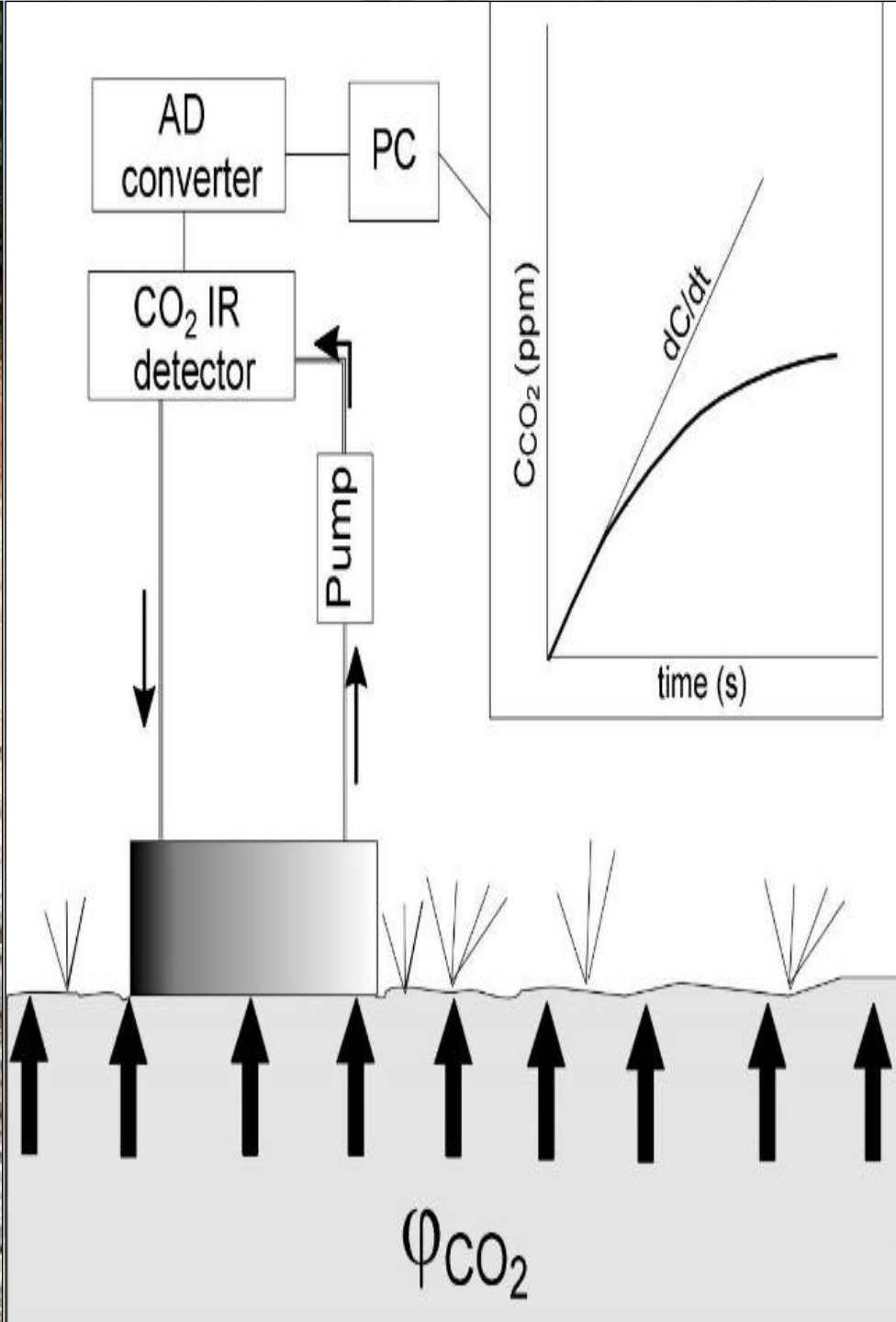
Misura delle massime concentrazioni di  $\text{Hg}^0$  dal suolo connettendo direttamente allo strumento Lumex una camera d'accumulo da porre a terra



# FLUSSI: DFC vs. Accumul. Chamber

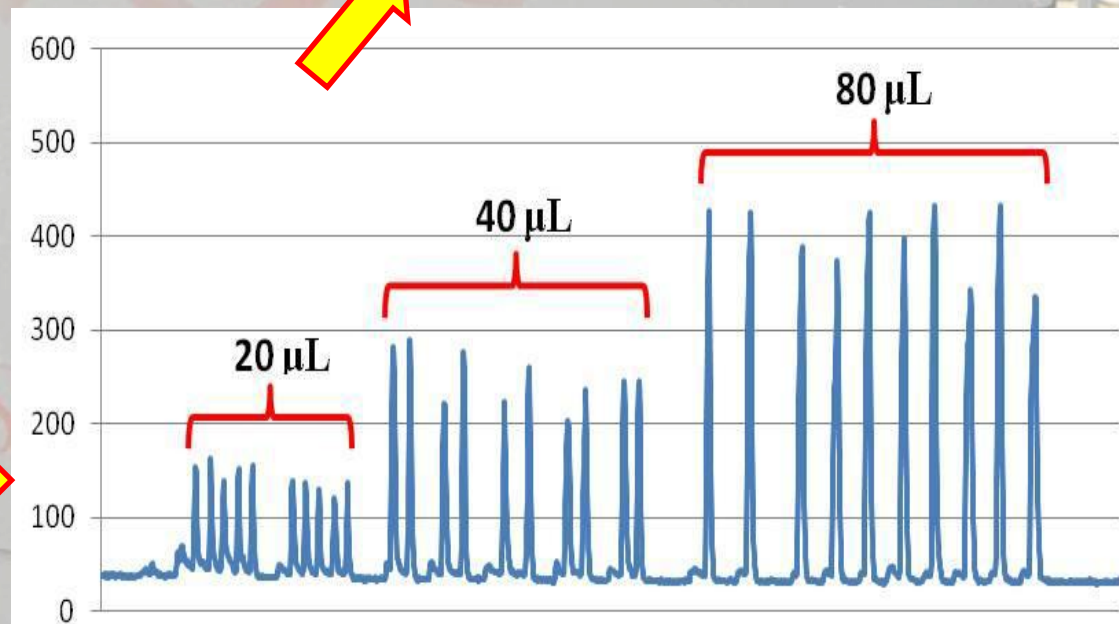
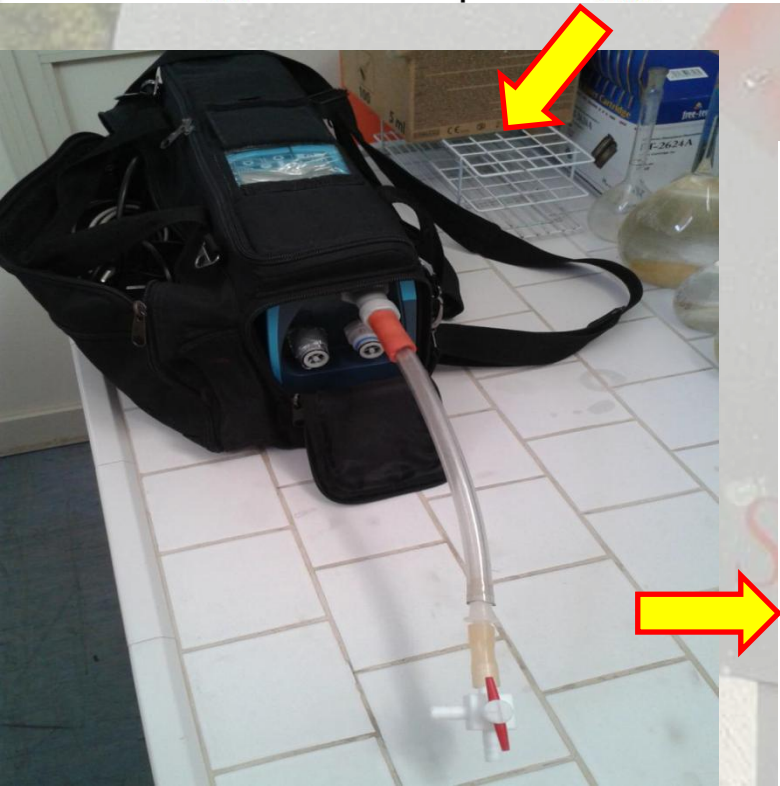
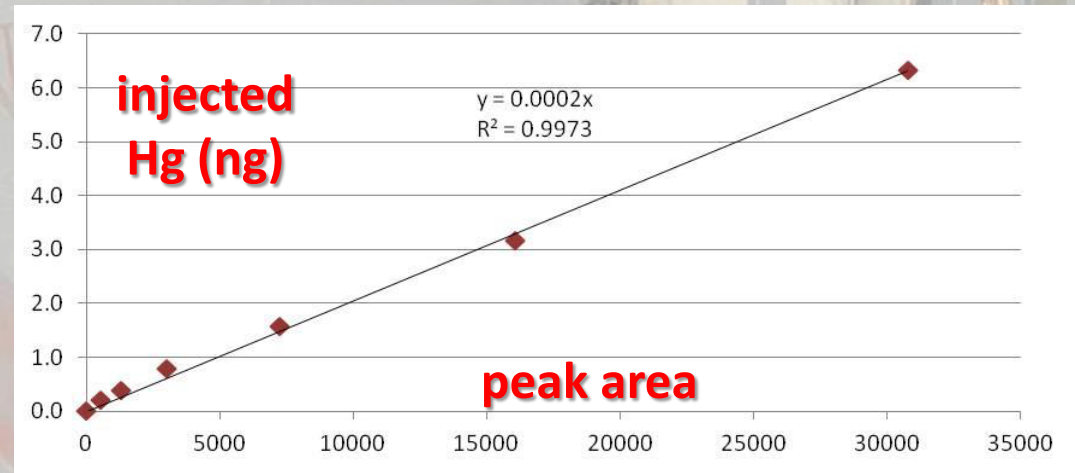


the great variability of  $Hg^0$  concentration and the development of non-uniform concentration-time curve not allow to calculate a real flow

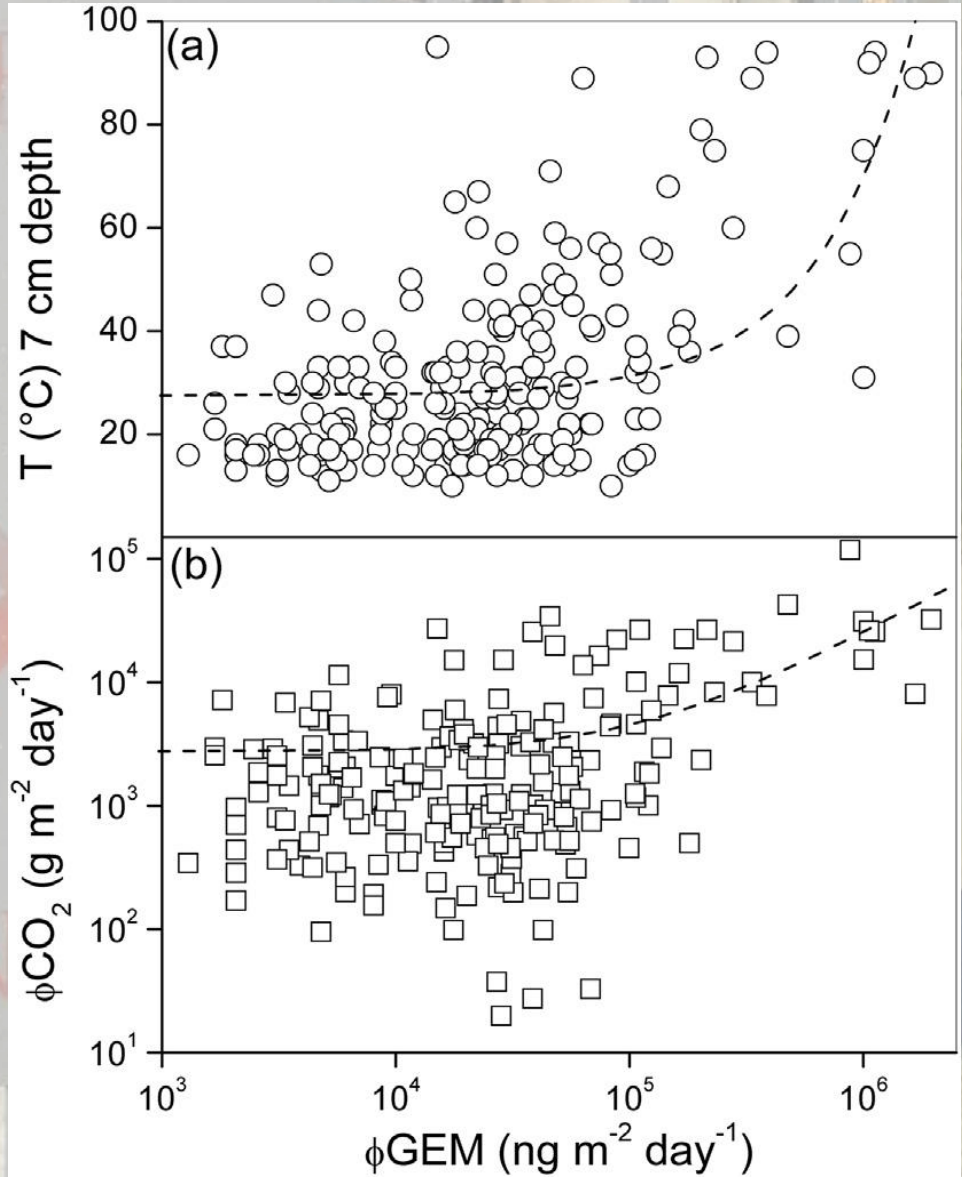
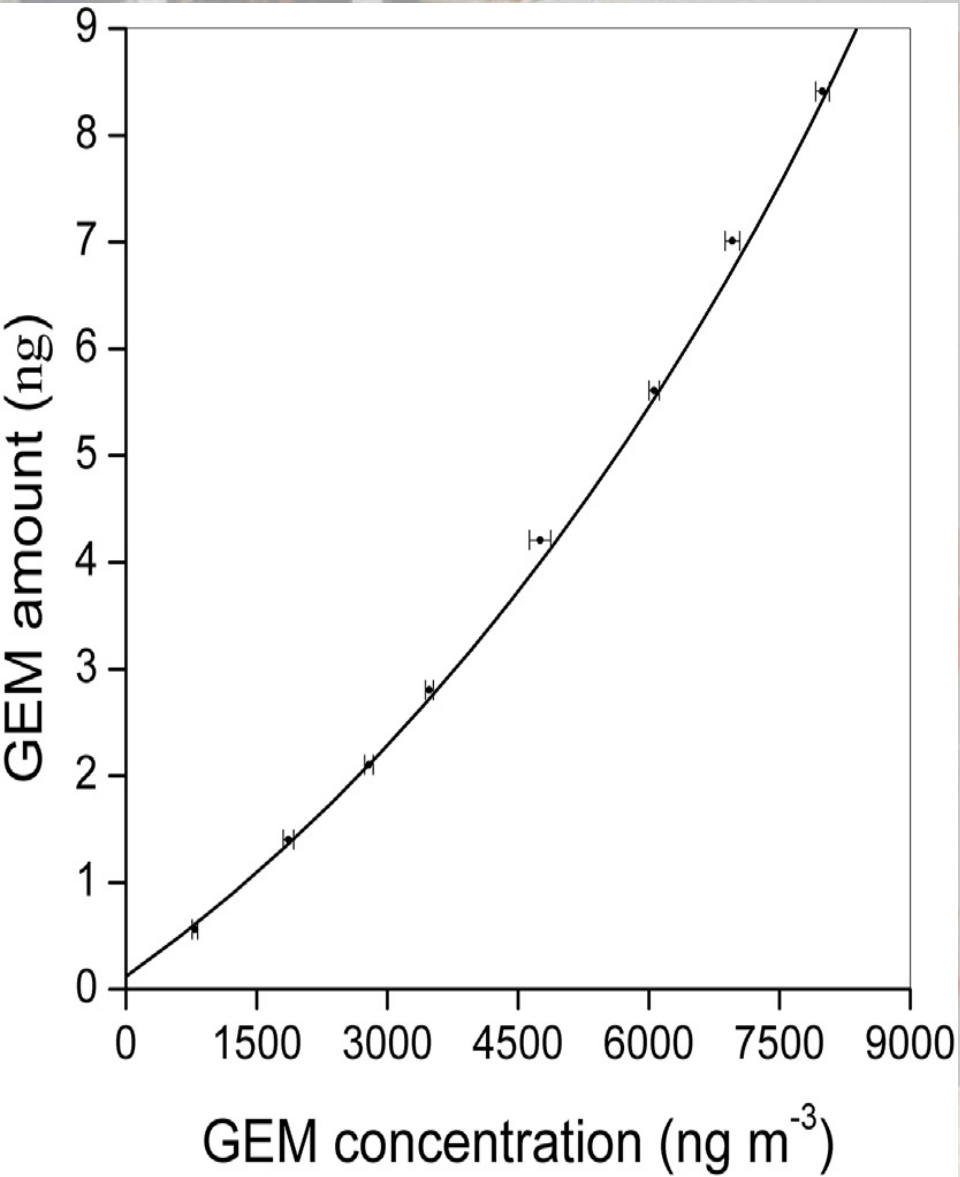


# FLUSSI DI GEM DAL SUOLO

Volume of Hg Saturated Air Injected ( $\mu\text{L}$ )	Amount of Hg Injected (ng)
0	0
20	0.198
40	0.396
80	0.793
160	1.586

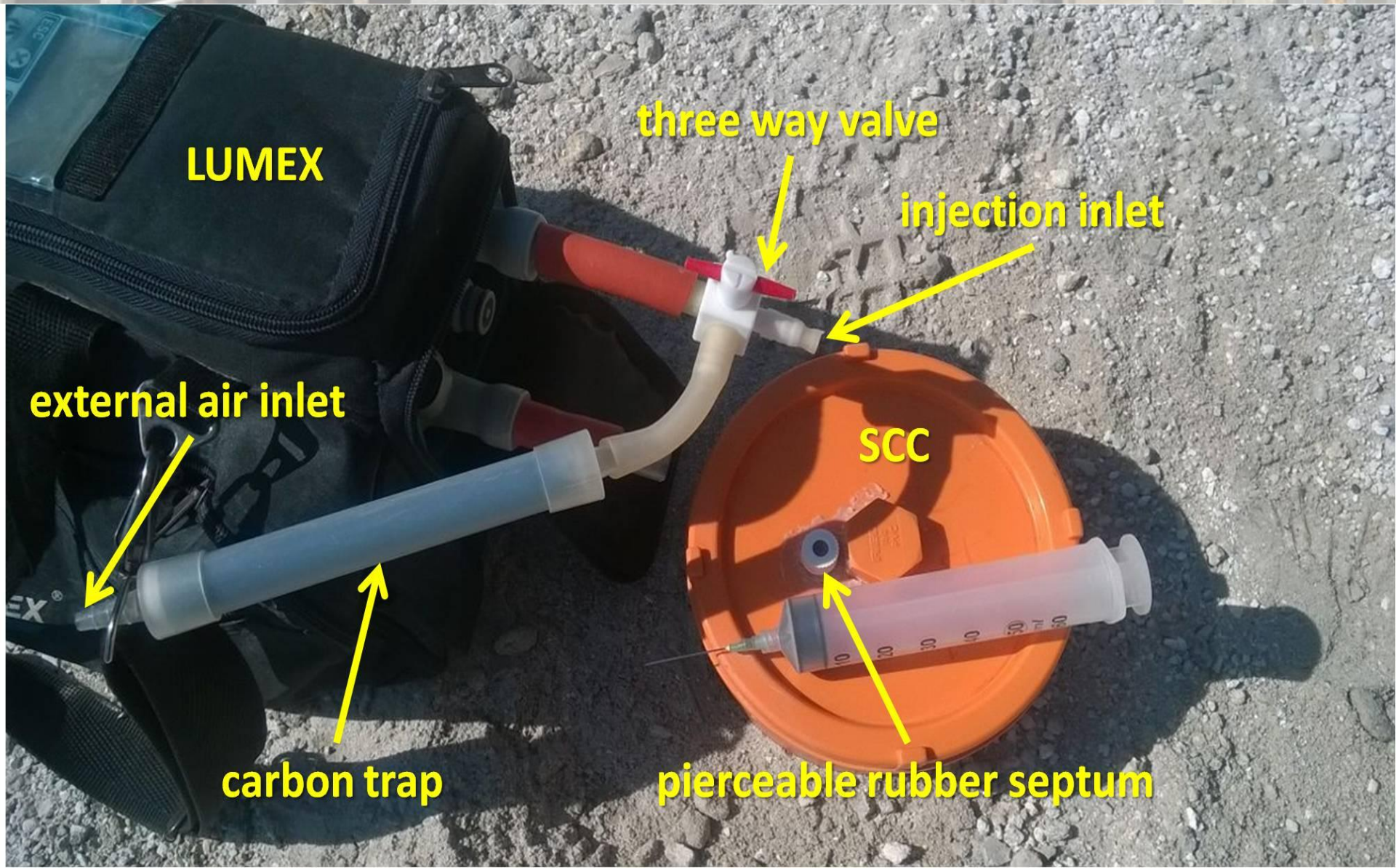


# FLUSSI DI GEM DAL SUOLO

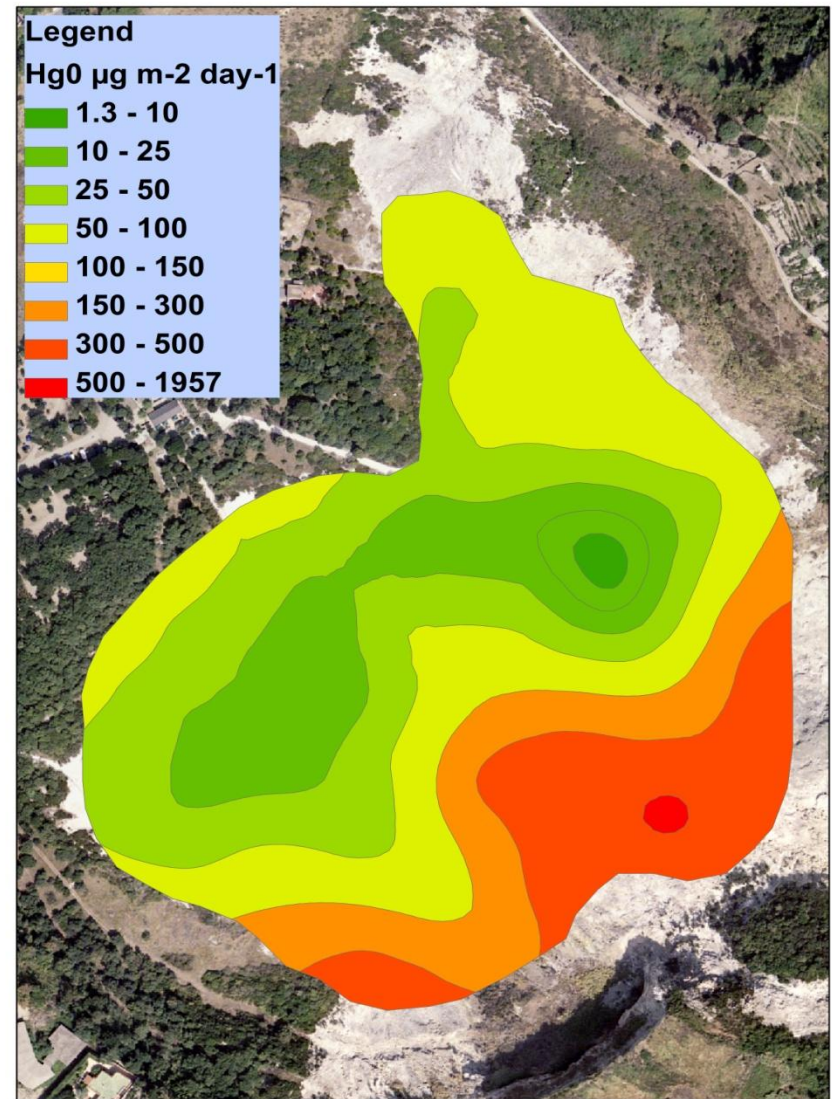
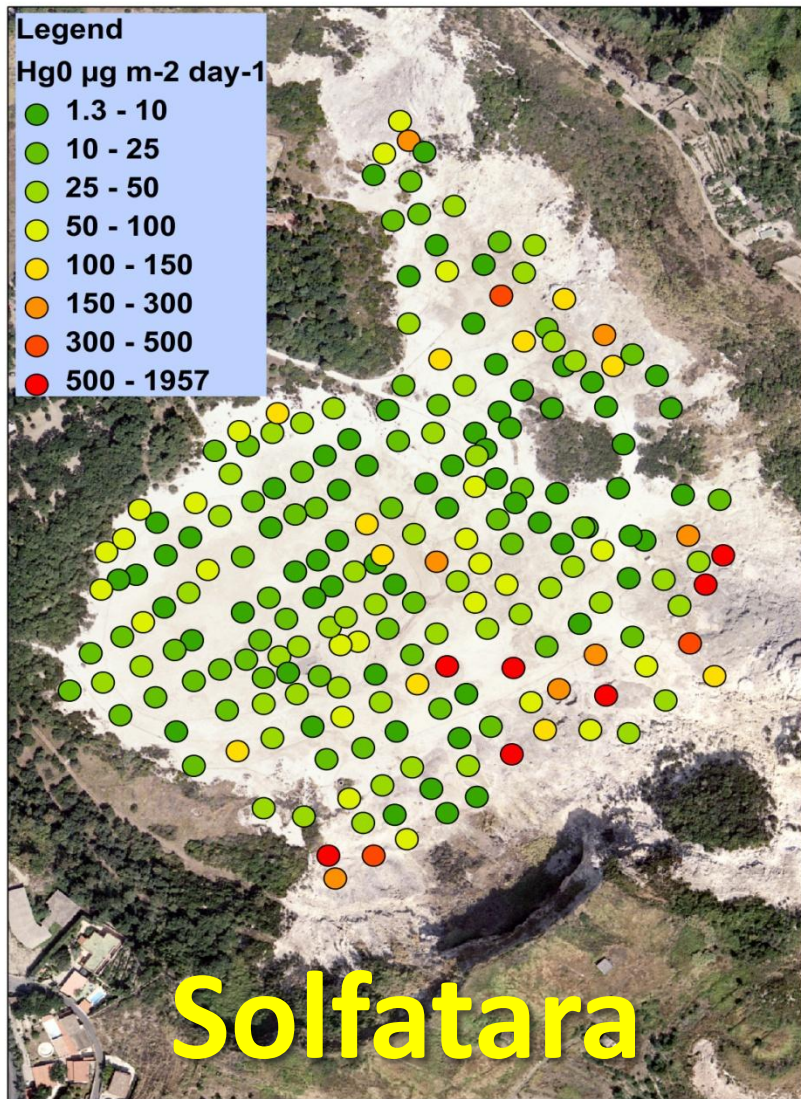




# FLUSSI DI GEM DAL SUOLO

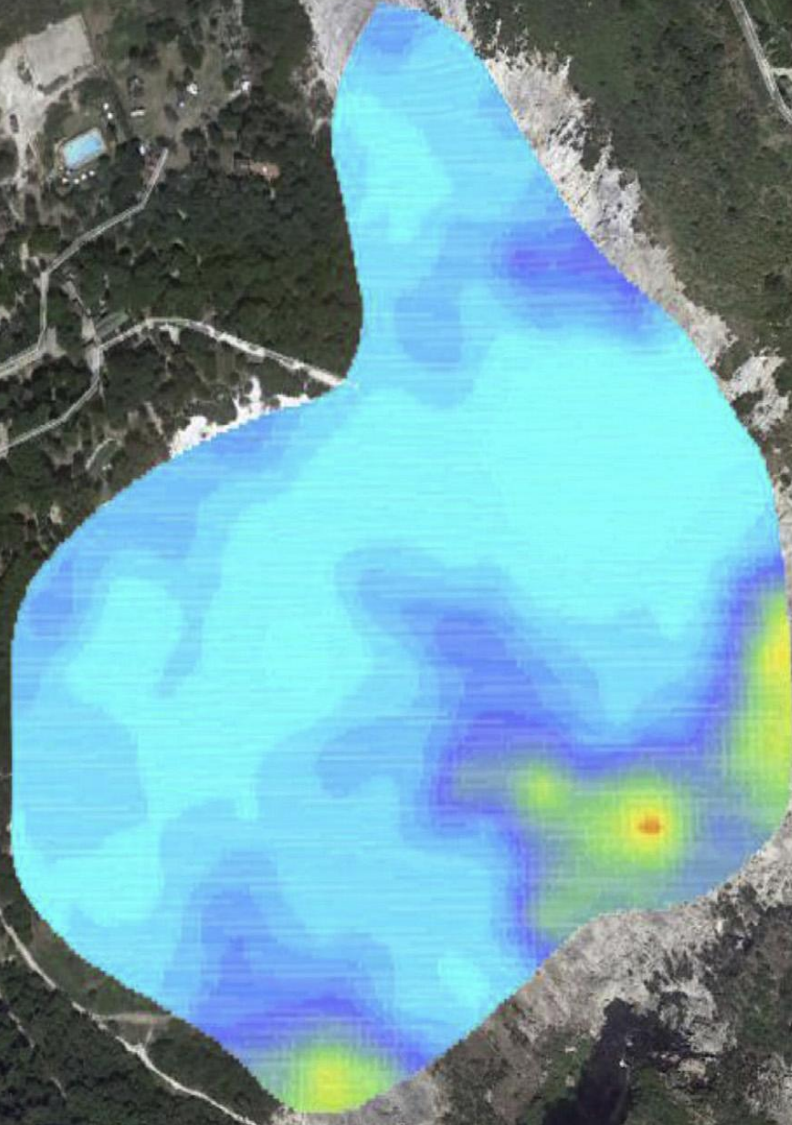


# FLUSSI DI GEM DAL SUOLO

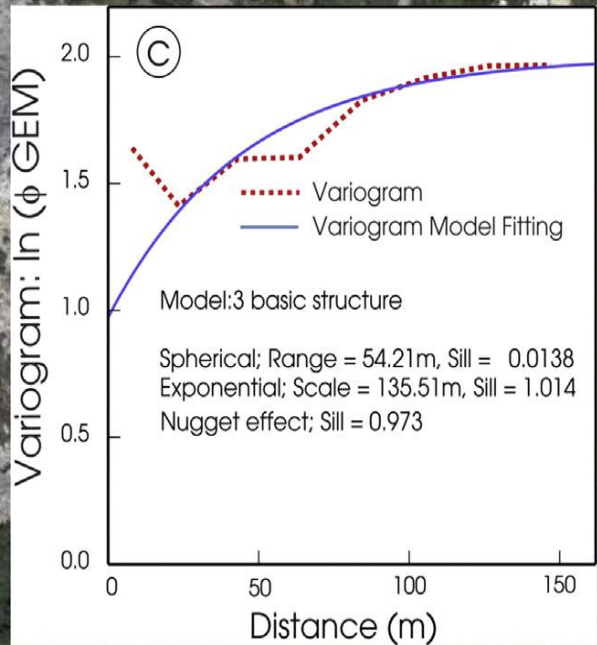
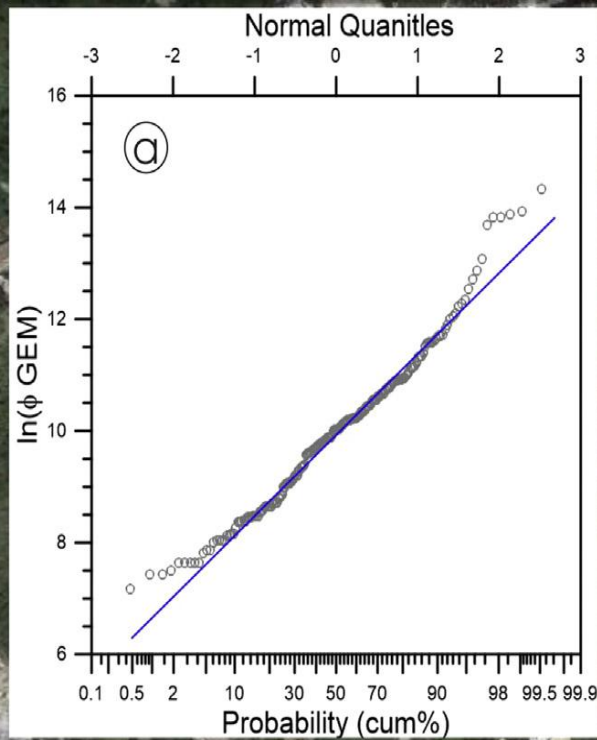


$\phi$  GEM ( $\text{g m}^{-2} \text{day}^{-1} 10^{-6}$ )

(b)



© 2015 Google



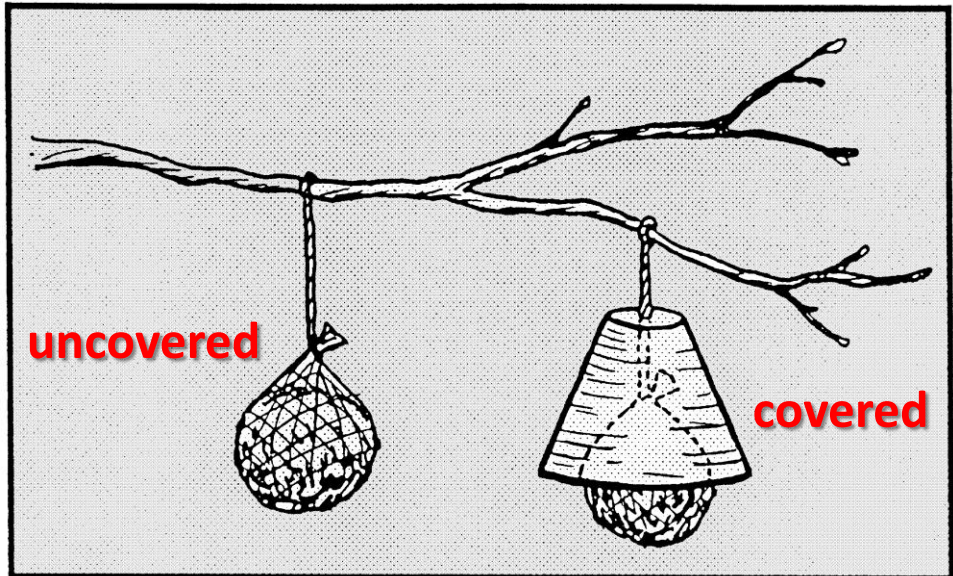
# **MISURE CUMULATE: MOSS-BAGS**

**bio-monitoring: use of organisms (bio-indicators) to obtain information about certain characteristics of the environment**

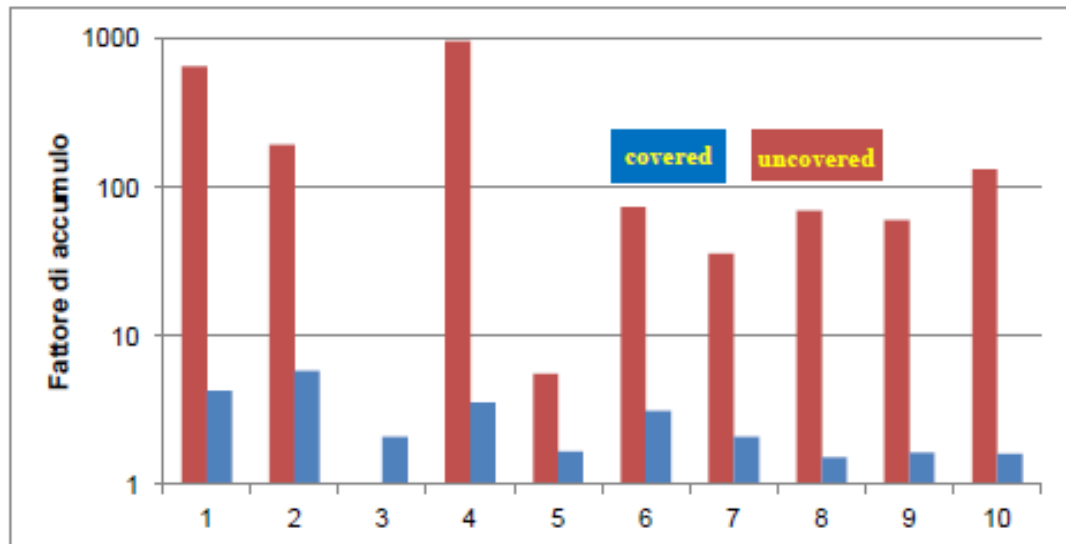
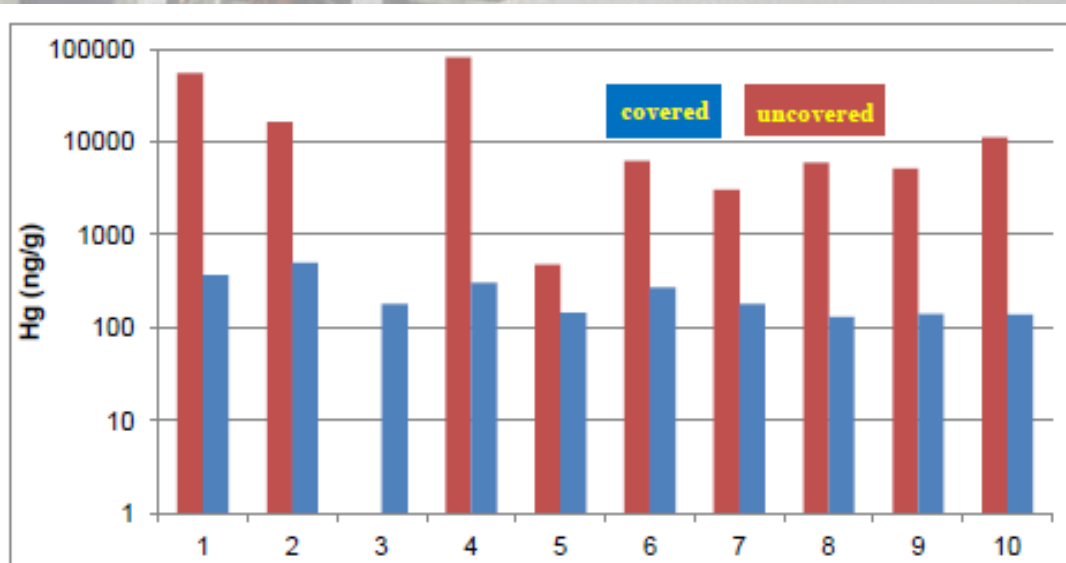
**the mosses accumulate efficiently large quantities of trace metals and are therefore useful to identify the sources of pollution and to estimate the metals spatial distribution on a local scale**

**the passive accumulation occurs both through dry and wet deposition, regardless of organism viability**

# Moss-Bags: Covered vs. Uncovered



# Hg Accumulation: Moss-Bags



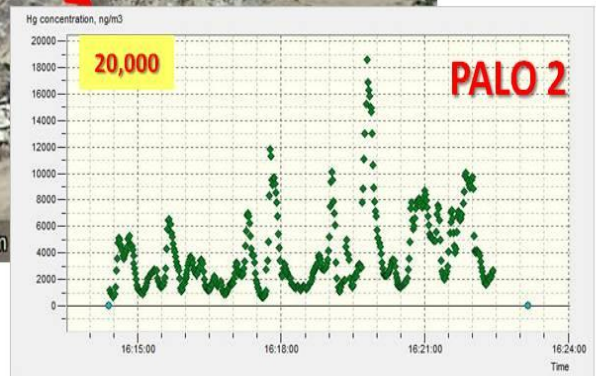
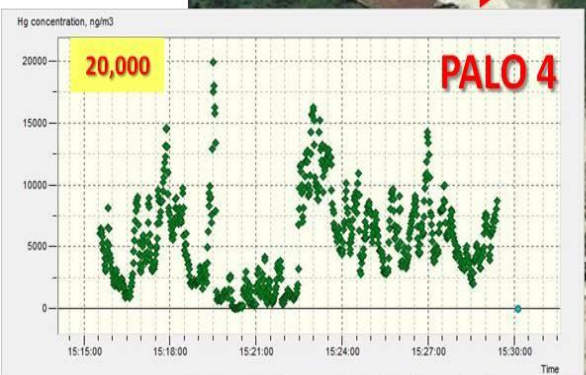
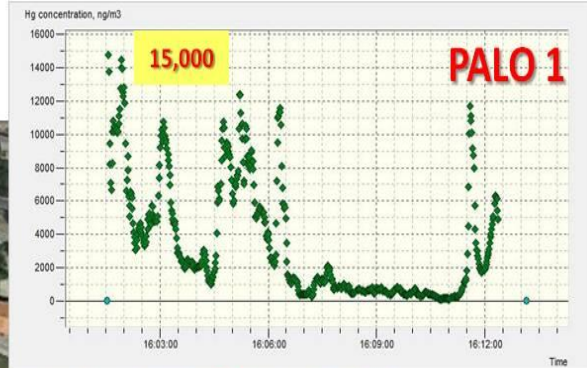
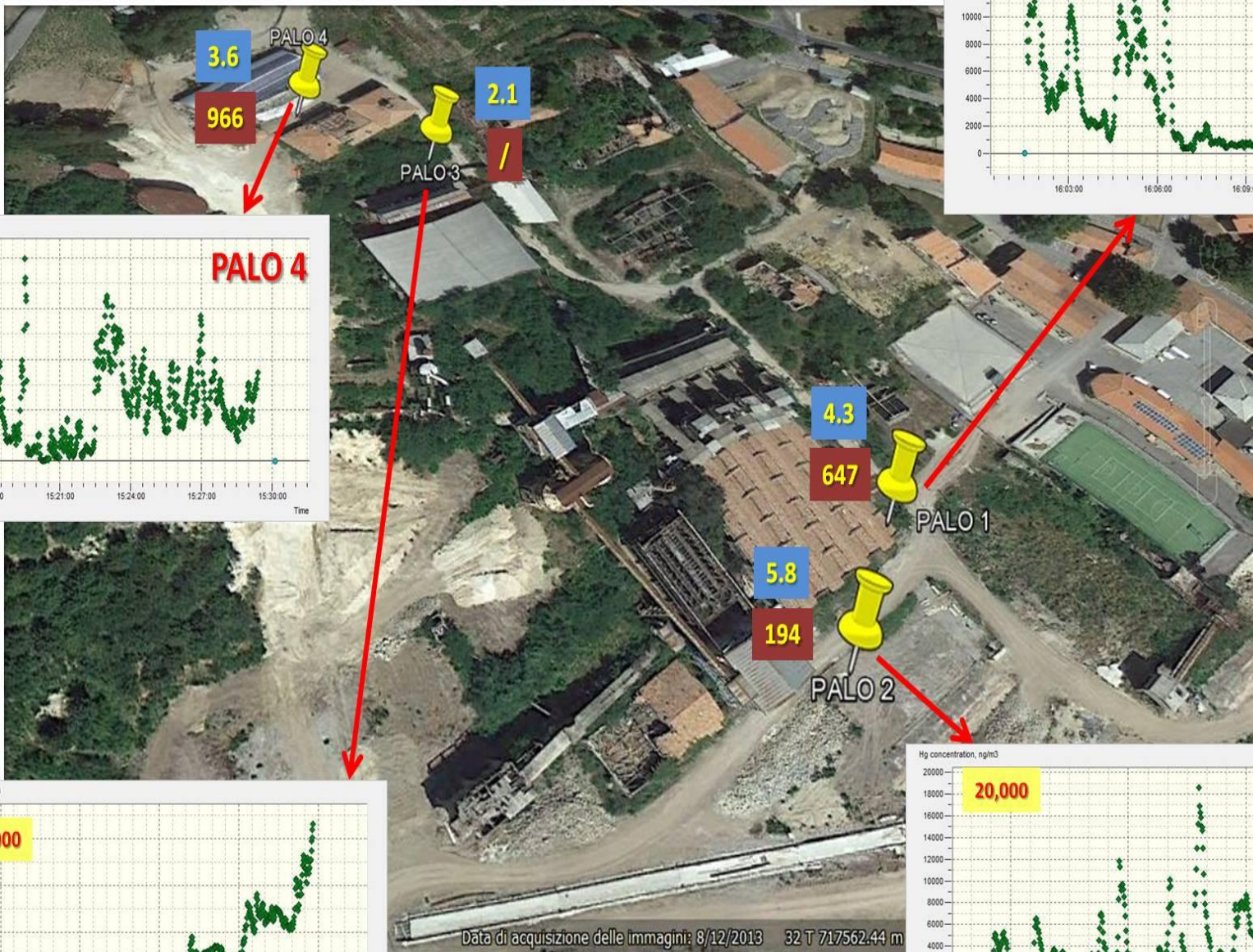
Higher accumulation factor of uncovered moss



predominant wet deposition compared to dry



# Lotto 6, ex-mining area, Abbadia S.S.



# Characterization and Quantification of Atmospheric Mercury Sources Using Passive Air Samplers

David S. McLagan<sup>1</sup>, Fabrizio Monaci<sup>2</sup> , Haiyong Huang<sup>1</sup>, Ying Duan Lei<sup>1</sup>, Carl P. J. Mitchell<sup>1</sup> , and Frank Wania<sup>1</sup> 

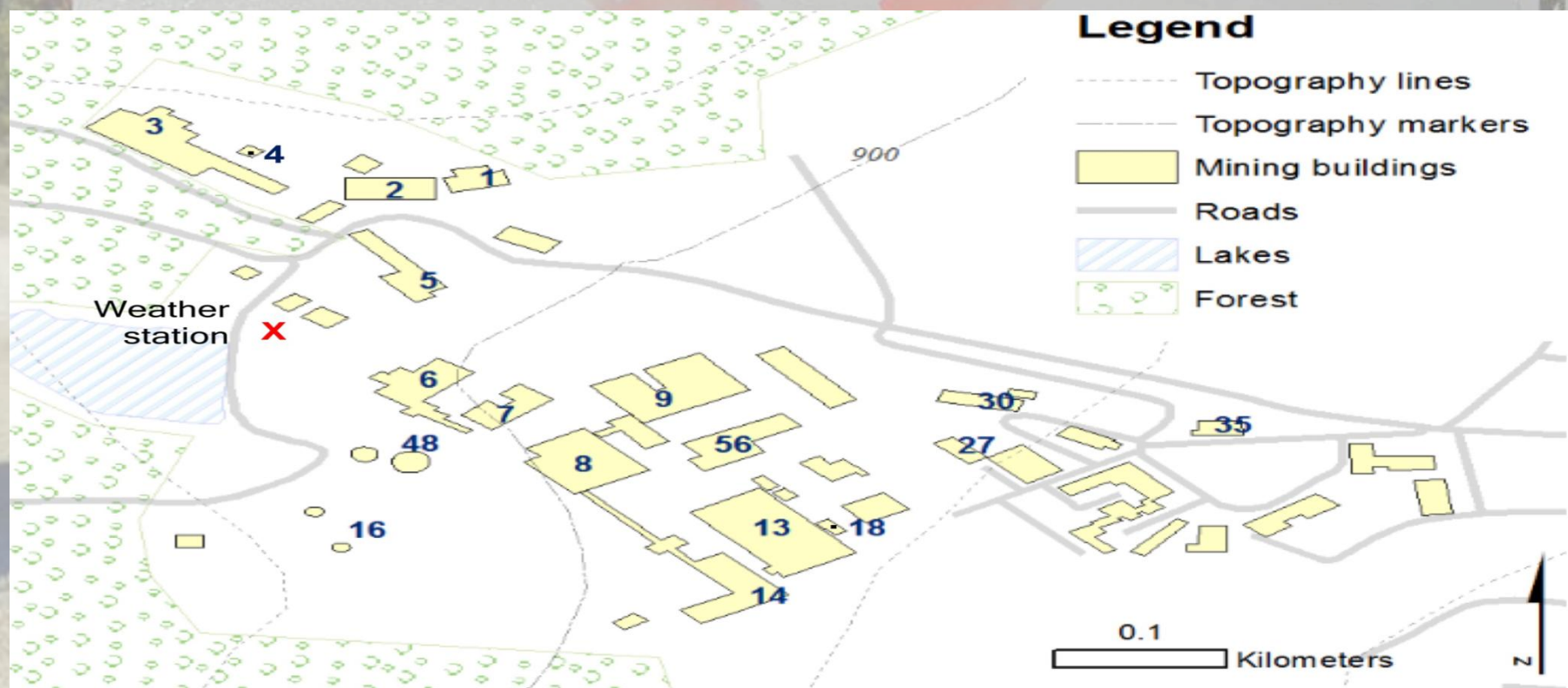
<sup>1</sup>Department of Physical and Environmental Sciences, University of Toronto Scarborough, Toronto, ON, Canada,

<sup>2</sup>Department of Life Sciences, Università di Siena, Siena, Italy

### Key Points:

- Gaseous Hg concentrations, ranging over 4 orders of magnitude, can be measured concurrently at numerous sites
- The concentrations are averaged over time periods of relevance to chronic population exposure and meaningful emission estimation
- Cheaper and simpler than previous methods, the approach yields data with precision and accuracy of state-of-the-art active instruments

**Abstract** The Minamata Convention on Mercury (Hg) requires improved atmospheric Hg monitoring and characterization of Hg sources. Here we demonstrate how a network of passive air samplers (PASSs) can be used cost effectively to determine the spatial distribution of gaseous Hg and estimate atmospheric Hg emissions at contaminated sites. Gaseous Hg concentrations were mapped around a former Hg mine in the









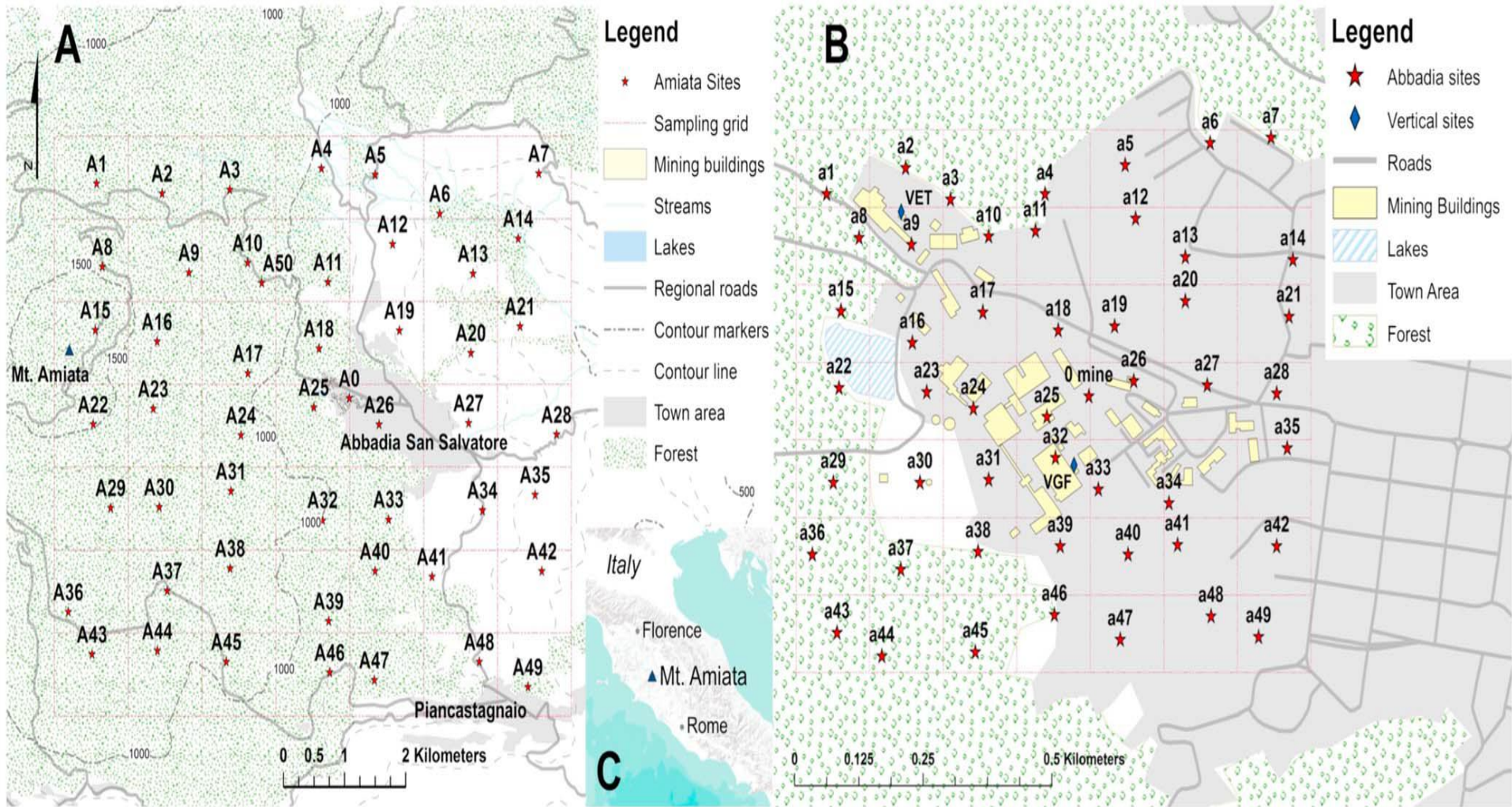
Gaseous Hg sorbs to sulfur-impregnated activated carbon (HGR-AC; Calgon Carbon) sorbent, which is contained in a stainless steel mesh cylinder. The rate of diffusion from the atmosphere to the sorbent is controlled by a porous polyethylene diffusive barrier (white Radiello®) which is housed inside a polypropylene container that acts as a protective windshield and rain shield during deployments



Meteorological parameters such as wind speed and temperature have a minor and quantifiable impact on the rate of mercury uptake in the PAS

While a quantification of the accuracy of a PAS measurement is not possible in the absence of knowledge of the true concentration of Hg in the atmospheric gas phase, it is feasible to compare concentrations obtained with the PAS with those recorded simultaneously by a state-of-the-art active instrument.

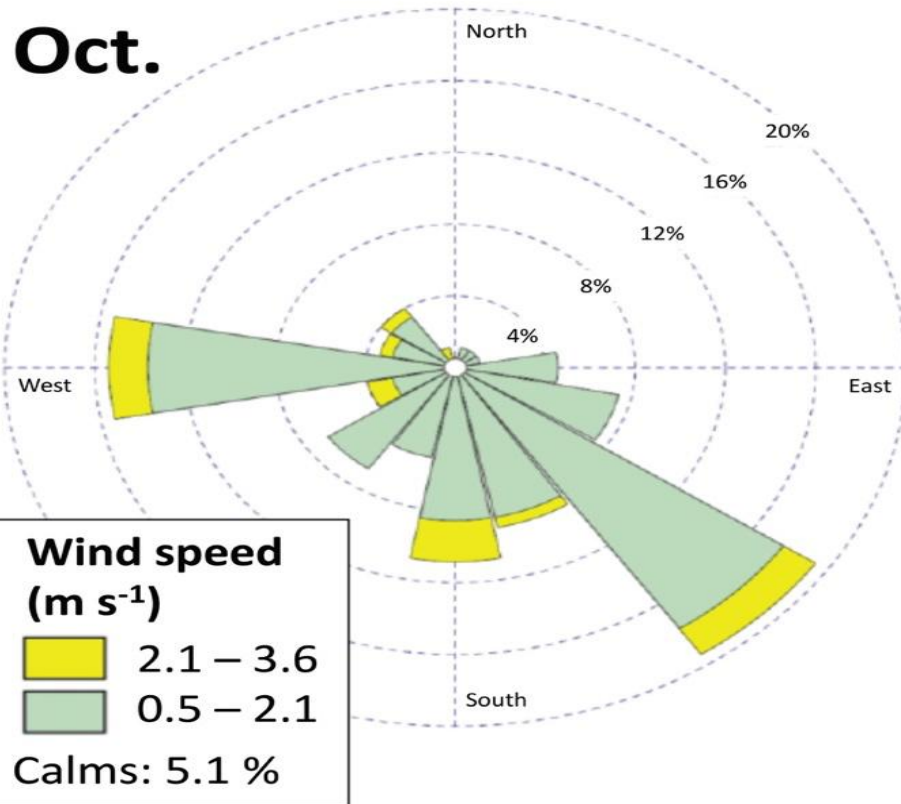




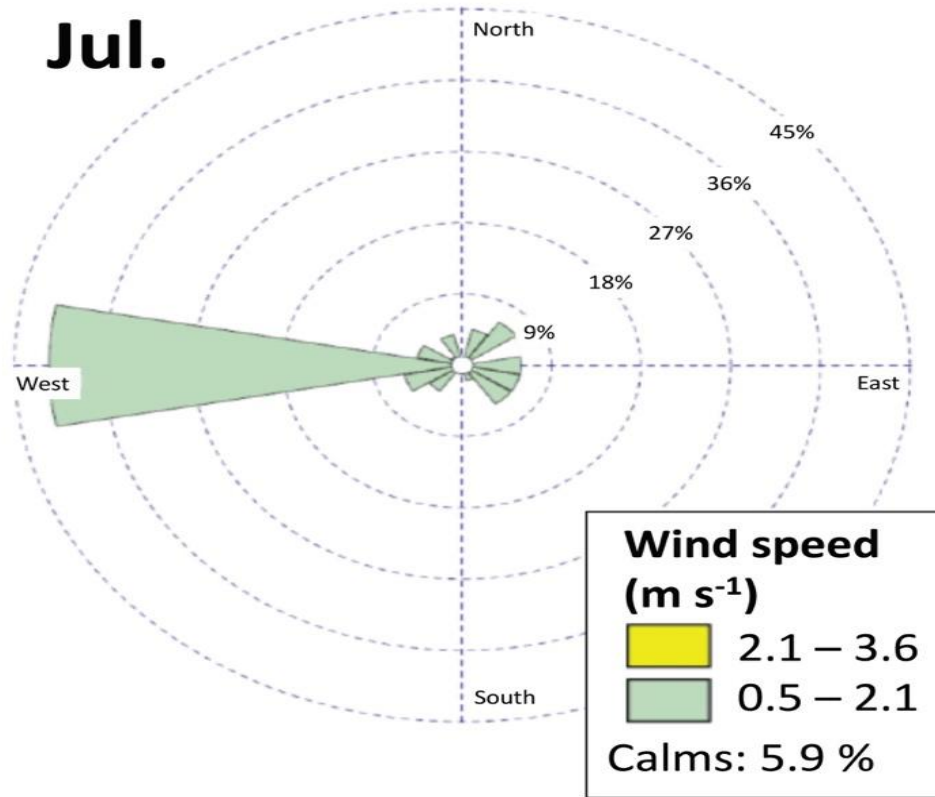
**PASs were deployed to determine the air concentration variability of gaseous Hg at two spatial scales: a 0.56 km<sup>2</sup> box (extending 750 m NS and EW) comprising the former buildings of the ASSM, termed the Abbadia grid, and a 41.6 km<sup>2</sup> box (extending approximately 6.5 km NS and EW) covering the eastern slope of Monte Amiata, termed the Amiata grid**

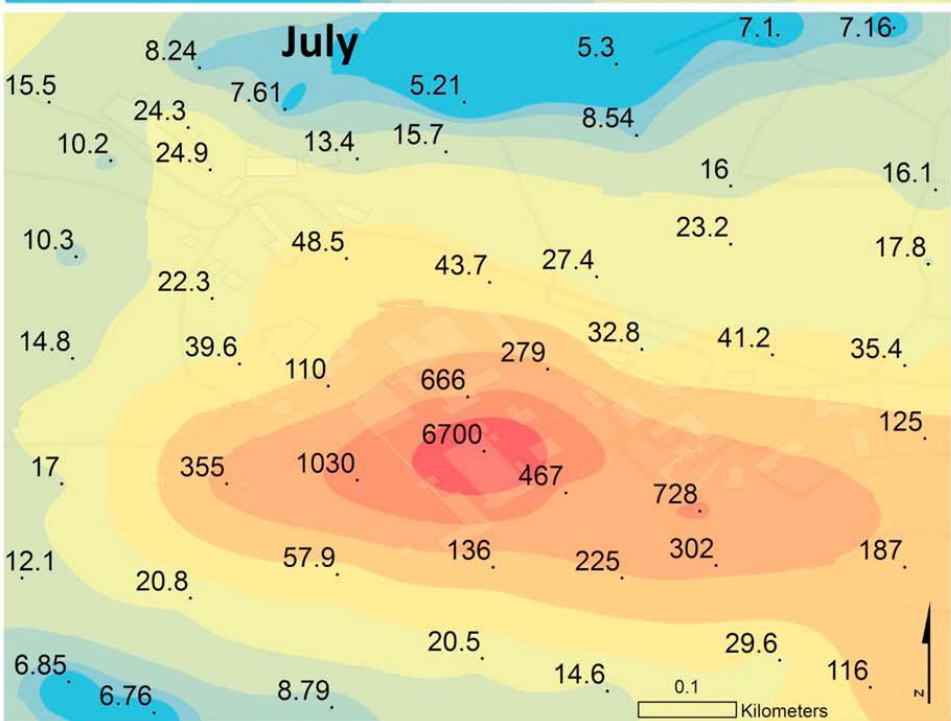
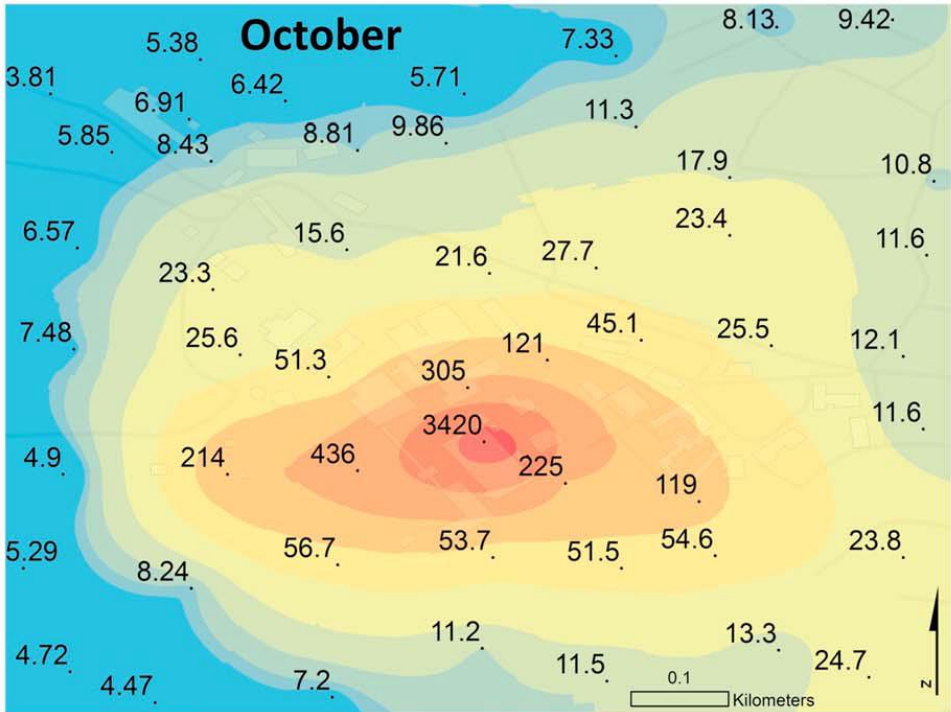
The sorbent was analyzed for total Hg using an AMA254 Total Mercury Analyzer (Leco Instruments) using USEPA method 7473. All samples were blank adjusted. The gaseous Hg concentration (C; ng/m<sup>3</sup>) was calculated by dividing the quantified mass of sorbed Hg (m, ng) by the product of the deployment time (t, day) and the sampling rate (SR, m<sup>3</sup>/day). The SR of 0.135 m<sup>3</sup>/day, obtained from a global-scale calibration experiment, was adjusted for temperature and wind speed. Average wind speed and temperature at the Laghetto Verde Meteorology Station was used for the PAS deployed for two 1-week periods. The average of the wind speed measured at Laghetto Verde and Monte Amiata Peak was applied to all PASs deployed seasonally in the larger Amiata grid.

**Oct.**



**Jul.**





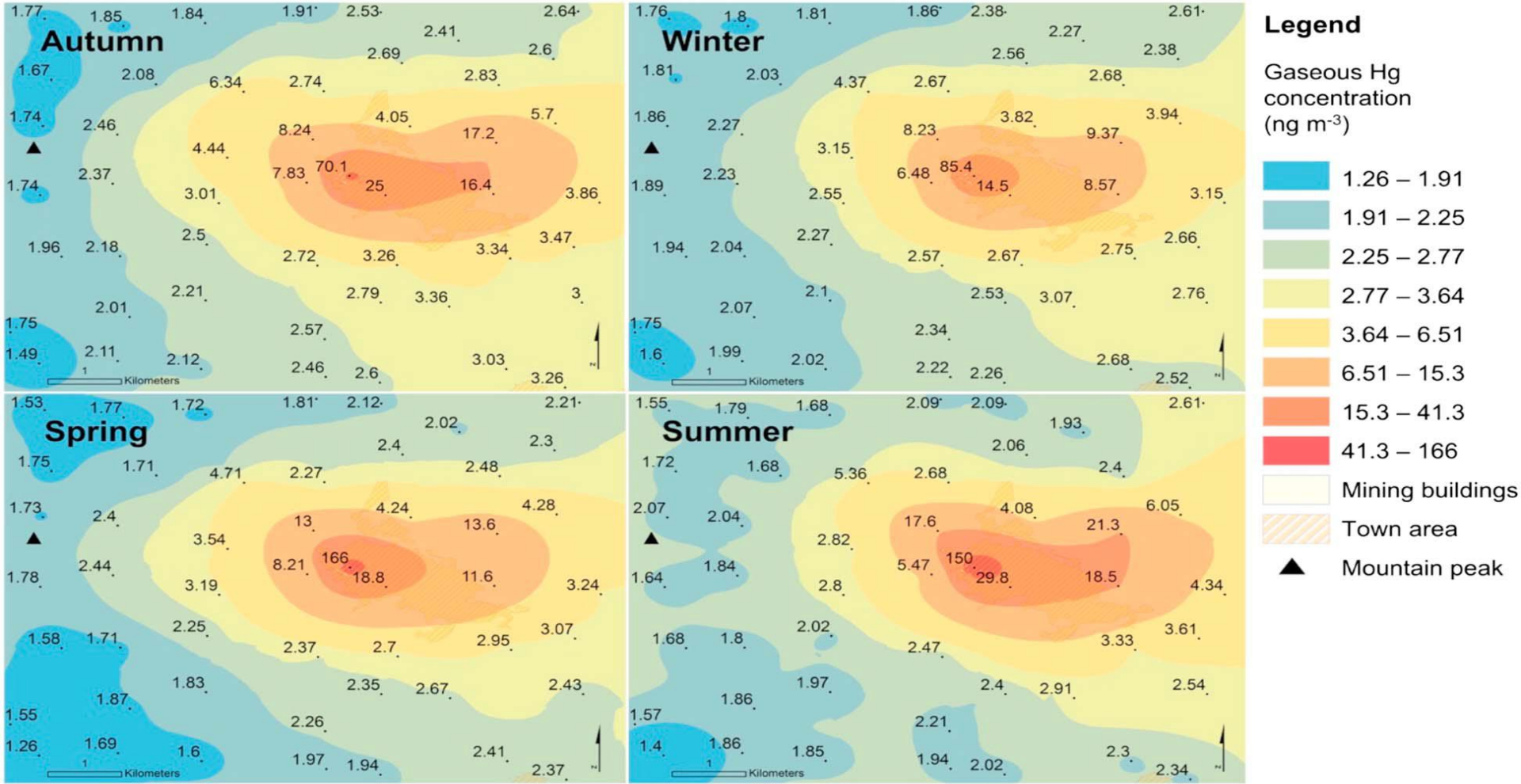
**Legend**

Gaseous Hg concentration (ng m<sup>-3</sup>)

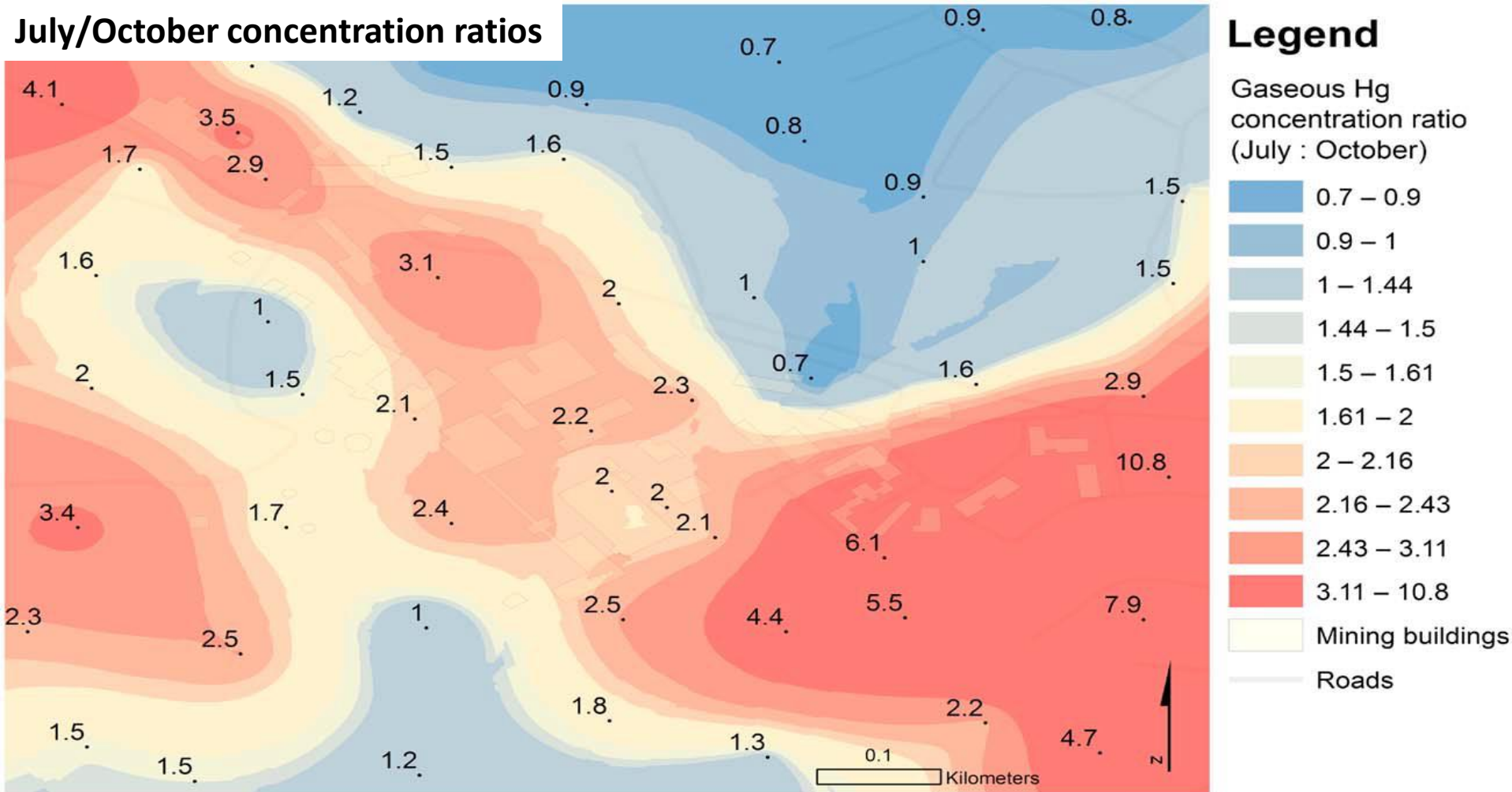
- 5.2 – 8.02
- 8.02 – 8.94
- 8.94 – 11.5
- 11.5 – 18.6
- 18.6 – 38.3
- 38.3 – 93
- 93 – 244
- 244 – 664
- 664 – 1,827
- 1,827 – 6,690
- Mining buildings
- Roads

**Measured (numeric values) and contoured prediction (Kriging) maps for gaseous Hg concentrations for October (upper) and July (lower) deployments in the smaller Abbadia grid.**

**Furnaces and condensing units are the major emission source within the ASSM**



**The ASSM as the major emission source in the Amiata region. Background concentration levels were observed in the northwest and southwest corners of the larger Amiata grid across all four seasonal deployments. Concentrations incrementally increased moving from these sites at the western edge of the Amiata grid toward the ASSM**



Hg emissions from soils and contaminated areas have been reported to be greater under elevated temperatures and solar radiation, related to increased vapor pressure at higher temperatures and photolytic reduction of  $\text{Hg}^{2+}$  to  $\text{Hg}^0$ . Concentrations doubled in the most contaminated part of the ASSM in summer, in agreement with earlier observations. The largest seasonal differences of up to an order of magnitude were seen for the east-southeast edge of the Abbadia grid, which represents the periphery of the Abbadia San Salvatore urban area. This is at least partly explained by the wind conditions



- **By sampling simultaneously with a high number of PASs, it is possible to isolate concentration changes to spatial variability.**
- **Reproducing these measurements with a network of active instruments is not possible due to the extremely high costs and infrastructure that would be required.**
- **Mobile active techniques cannot sample multiple sites simultaneously, only producing short-term “snapshots in time”.**

**BUT...**

- **Environmental conditions (wind speed and direction, humidity, temperature) are known to strongly affect passive measurements.**
- **Active measurements highlighted the occurrence of short-term temporal variations of the concentrations, with peak values potentially harmful to the human health.**
- **Although passive samplers may offer the opportunity to carry out low-cost surveys, the use of the high-frequency analyzer is preferred when an accurate assessment of air quality is required.**

# 100 years of high GEM concentration in the Central Italian Herbarium and Tropical Herbarium Studies Centre (Florence, Italy)

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jes.2019.07.007>

# Intro

**Herbaria represent unique archives for botanists, hence the stored specimens need to be properly preserved through physical or chemical treatments**

**Up to 1980s, the most used preservative and biocide was mercuric chloride ( $\text{HgCl}_2$ ), sublimating at ambient air conditions**

**In herbaria, ionic Hg reduces to  $\text{Hg}^0$  (i.e. gaseous elemental mercury, GEM) and easily diffuses throughout the poor ventilated environment**

**Recent studies recognized that high GEM levels may indeed persist for decades, representing a health hazard for humans**

# Intro

**A key question concerns how long high GEM levels could be recognized from the last  $\text{HgCl}_2$  treatment**

**In this study, we present new original GEM data in the Central Italian Herbarium (Natural History Museum) and Tropical Herbarium Studies Centre of the Botanical Department of the University of Florence**

**These herbaria host one of the largest plants collection in the world**

**Here,  $\text{HgCl}_2$  was documented as a plant preservative up to the 1920s**



# Scope of the work

**The main aims of this work were then to:**

- (i) test whether GEM high concentrations persist after about 100 years from the last Hg-chloride treatment**
- (ii) assess whether GEM concentrations showed seasonality (consequently, three surveys were carried out in different periods)**
- (iii) identify possible strategies to minimize the environmental impact of GEM on workers and visitors**

# Herbaria

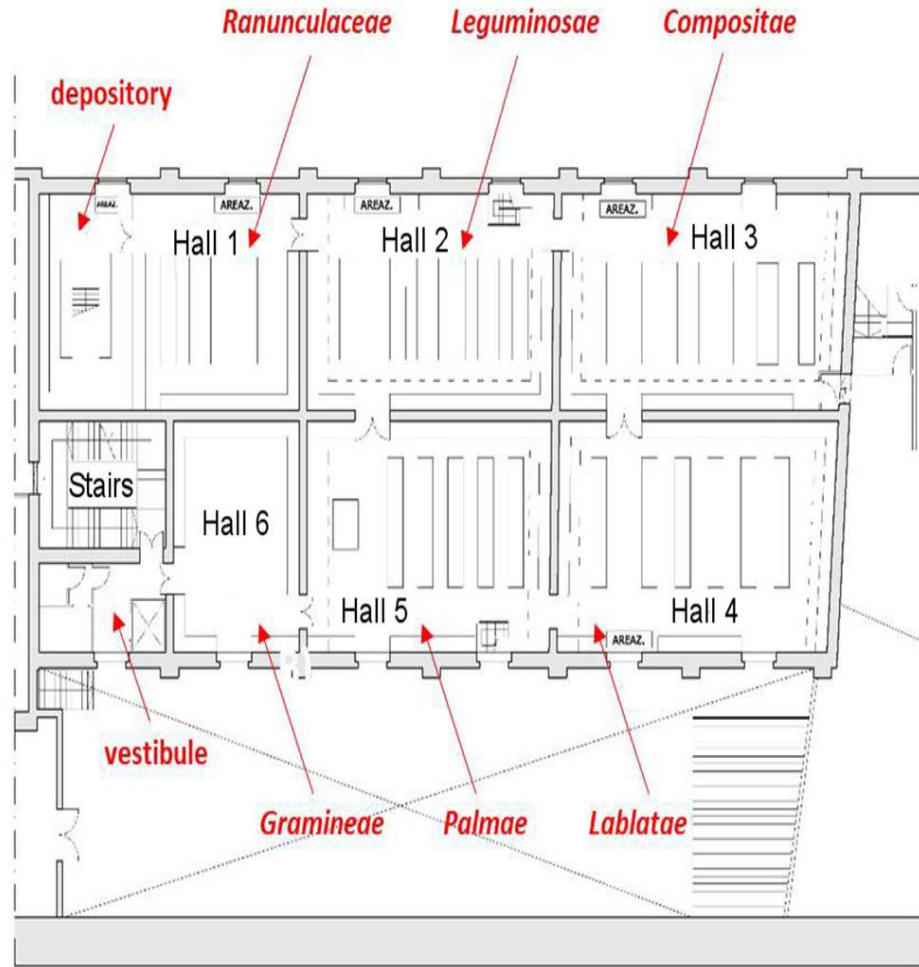
**Central Italian Herbarium (1° floor) consists of 6 halls where different plant species are stored and a depository**

**The 2° floor, hosting the most ancient collections and the Tropical Herbarium Studies Centre, has offices/laboratories and 5 main halls**

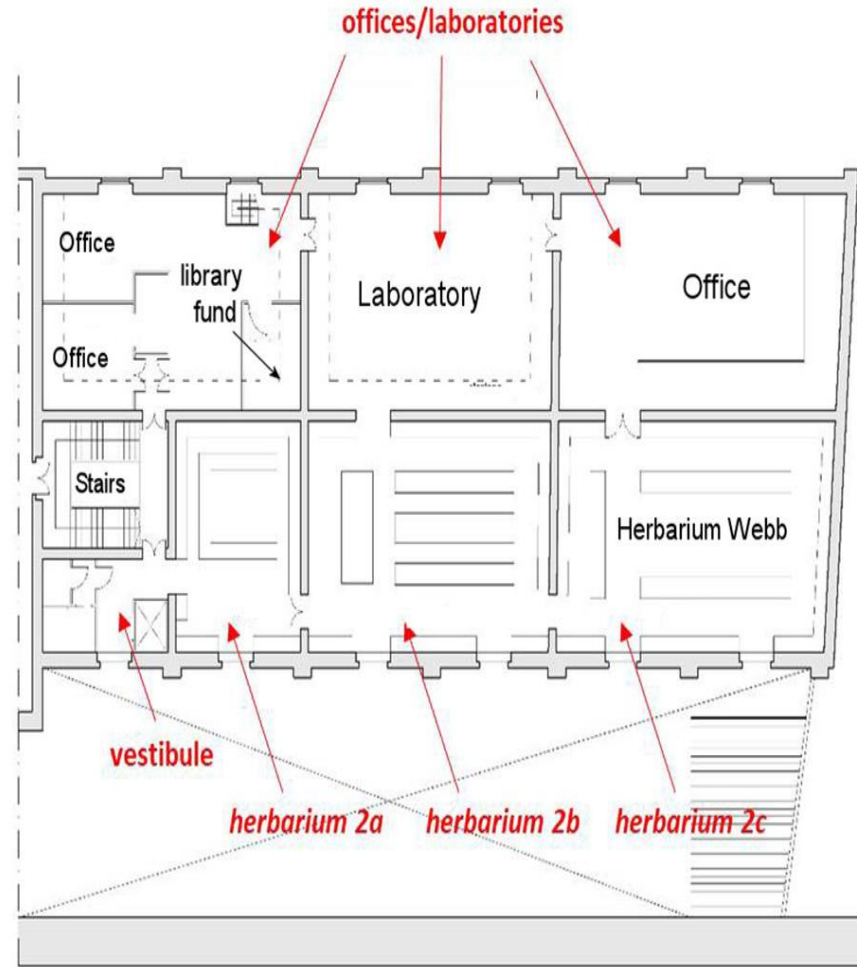
**On the 1° floor, a new air-conditioned system was installed in 2017, while on the 2° floor only one room (2a) has a climate control**

**The halls of the 2° floor are equipped with fans at the windows, allowing air circulation with the outside. At Herbarium Webb air is only exchanged with that circulating among the surrounding halls**





**FIRST FLOOR**



**SECOND FLOOR**

**Map of the first (a) and second (b) floor and of the respective halls and rooms hosting the collections of the Central Italian Herbarium and Tropical Herbarium Studies Centre**

**The base map is taken from the cadastral plan of the herbaria building**

# Surveys

**The first survey for GEM measurements was conducted in July 2013 on the first and second floor, including internal balconies above some halls, offices of the museum staff, some warehouses and museum entrances**

**Additional surveys were performed in July and December 2017 to detect GEM temporal and seasonal variations**

**The total sampling points were 166 and were maintained fixed during each survey to avoid any bias**

**Fifteen sampling points were also selected outside the building hosting the herbaria: (a) the university courtyard, (b) the Botanical Garden and (c) the nearby streets and squares up to few hundred meters from the herbaria**





# GEM measurements

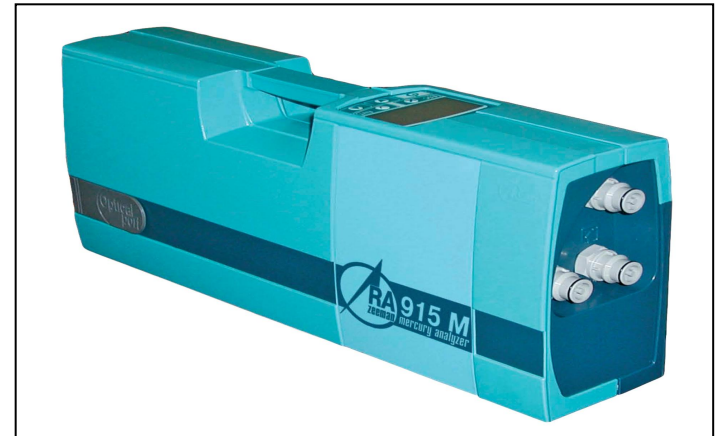
Continuous GEM measurements in air were performed with a portable Lumex® (RA-915M) analyzer

Its operation is based on differential atomic absorption spectrometry using high-frequency modulation of light polarization (ZAAS-HFM)

The detection limit of the instrument was  $2 \text{ ng/m}^3$  at a constant flow rate ( $\sim 15 \text{ L/min}$ )

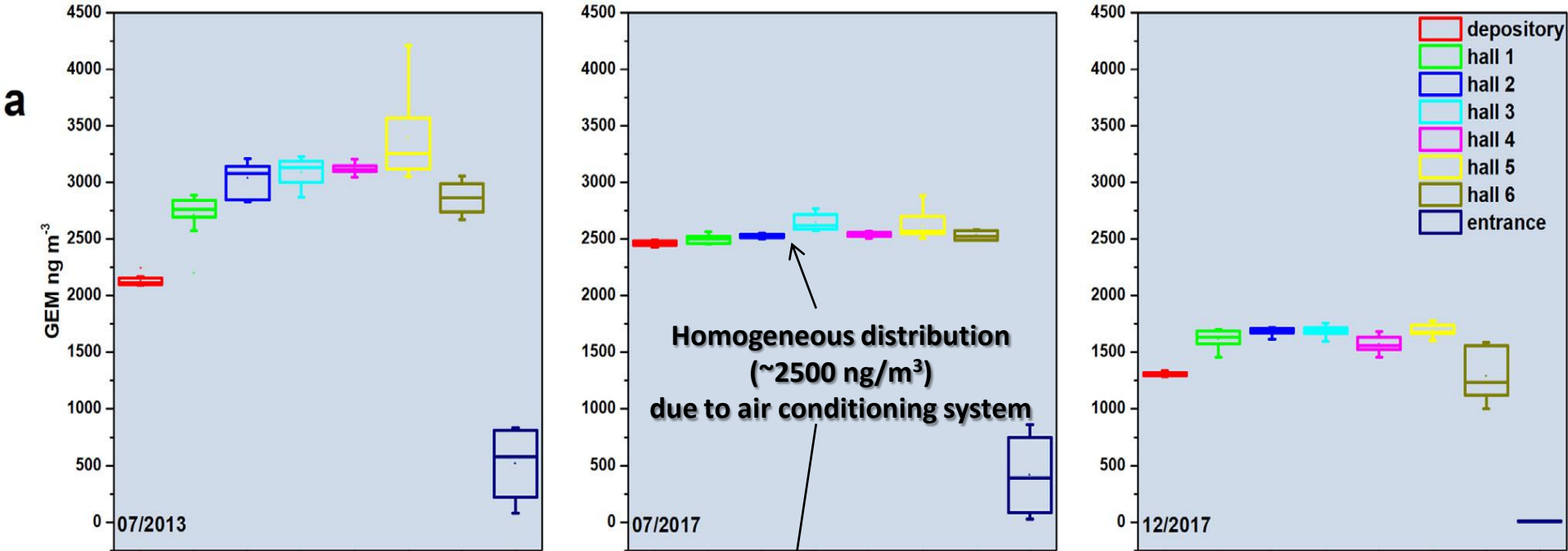
The Lumex was kept at a height of  $\sim 1 \text{ m}$  from the ground

Measurements were acquired as single points and were referred to the average of three blocks of 10 sec each (mean value every 10 sec)

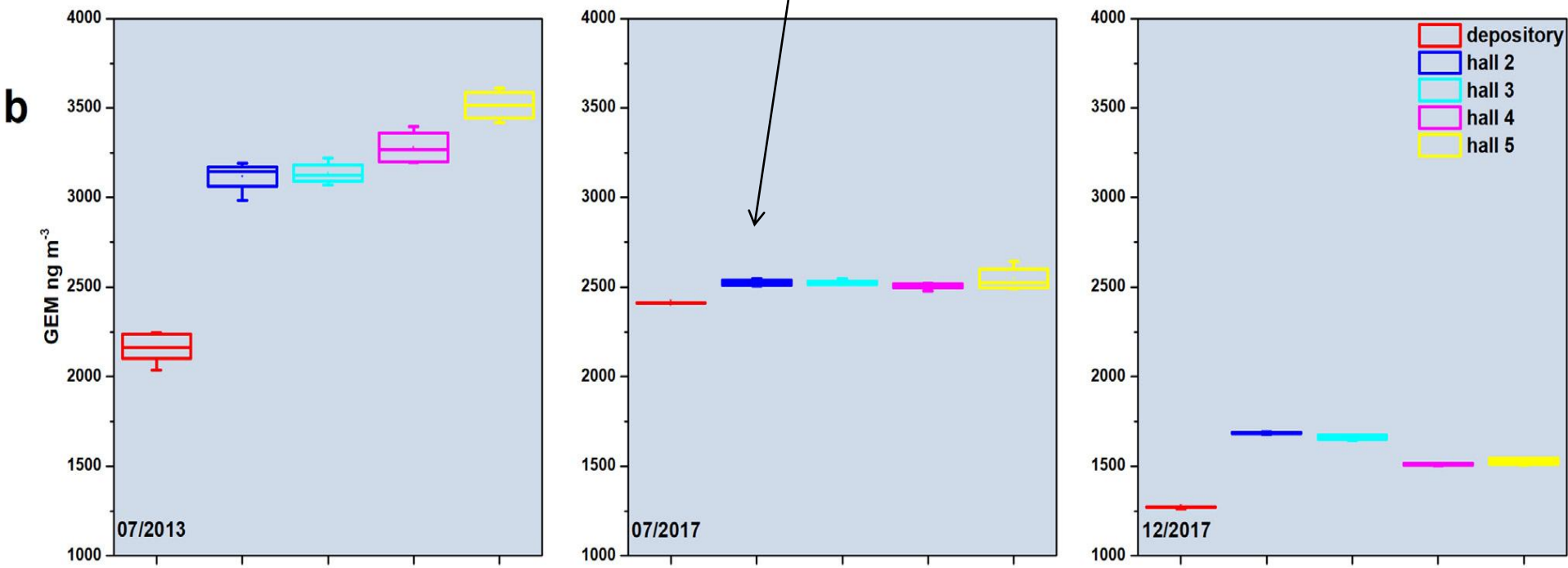


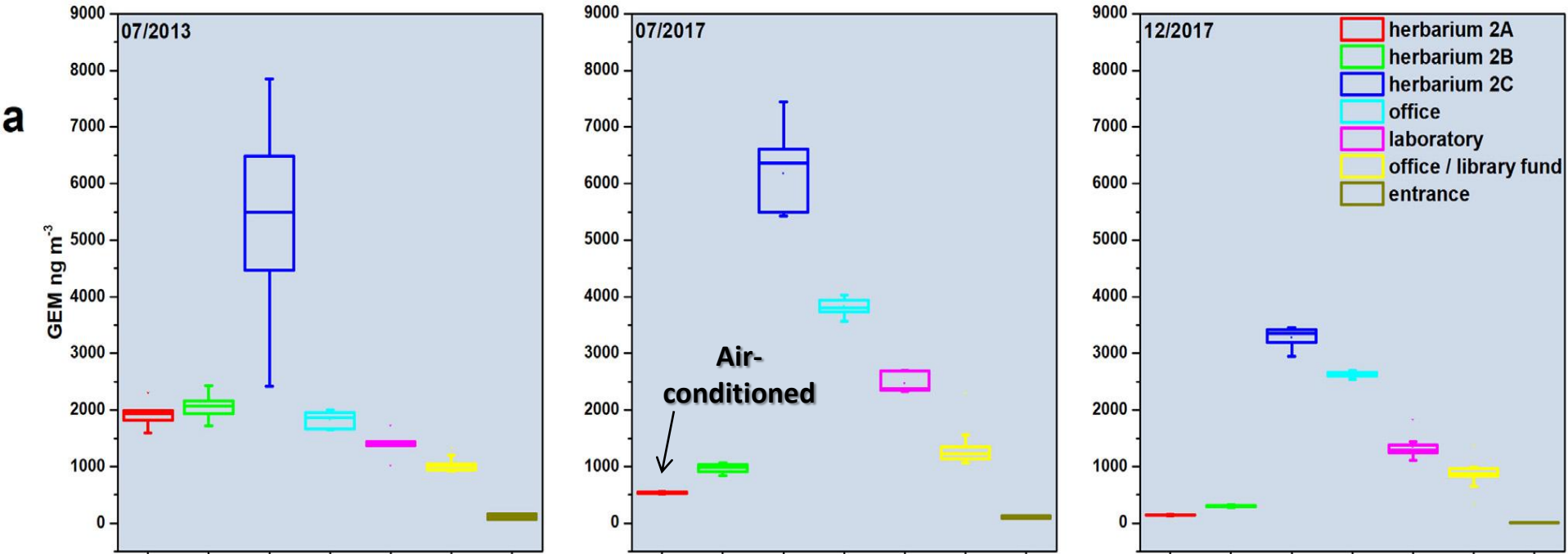
# Results

<b>FIRST FLOOR</b>				<b>BALCONIES - FIRST FLOOR</b>			
N = 73				N = 21			
	<b>July 2013</b>	<b>July 2017</b>	<b>Dec. 2017</b>		<b>July 2013</b>	<b>July 2017</b>	<b>Dec. 2017</b>
<b>min</b>	77	27	4	<b>min</b>	2037	2400	1264
<b>max</b>	4209	2884	1778	<b>max</b>	3609	2642	1692
<b>median</b>	3013	2526	1636	<b>median</b>	3147	2512	1518
<b>mean</b>	2813	2433	1530	<b>mean</b>	2998	2497	1519
<b>st. dev.</b>	683	502	312	<b>st. dev.</b>	509	59	158
<b>SECOND FLOOR</b>				<b>BALCONIES - SECOND FLOOR</b>			
N = 64				N = 8			
	<b>July 2013</b>	<b>July 2017</b>	<b>Dec. 2017</b>		<b>July 2013</b>	<b>July 2017</b>	<b>Dec. 2017</b>
<b>min</b>	71	89	10	<b>min</b>	922	1094	771
<b>max</b>	7846	7446	3455	<b>max</b>	1087	1616	1432
<b>median</b>	1897	1933	1050	<b>median</b>	973	1240	964
<b>mean</b>	2277	2533	1416	<b>mean</b>	985	1313	1062
<b>st. dev.</b>	1654	2044	1215	<b>st. dev.</b>	52	207	249
<b>OUTDOOR</b>							
N = 15							
	<b>July 2013</b>	<b>July 2017</b>	<b>Dec. 2017</b>				
<b>range</b>	5 ÷ 30	5 ÷ 30	2 ÷ 5				

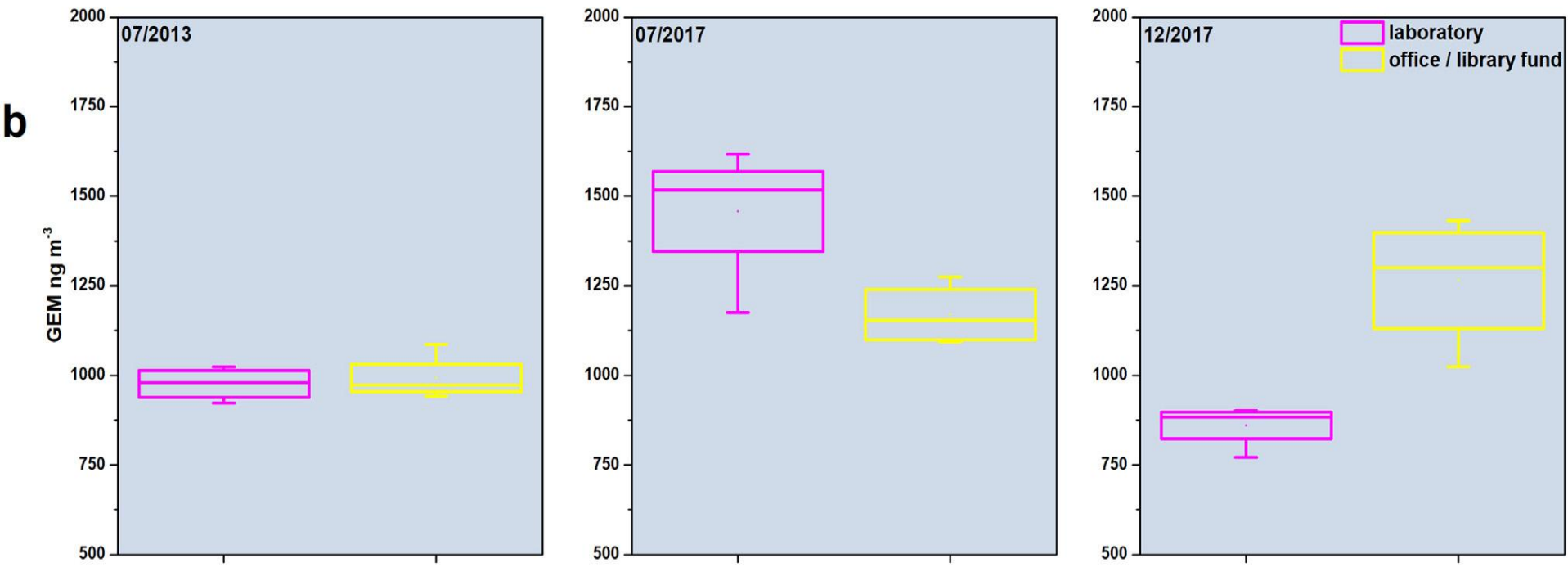


**Box plots for the first floor halls and rooms (a) and balconies (b) in July 2013, July 2017 and December 2017**





**Box plots for the second floor halls and rooms (a) and balconies (b) in July 2013, July 2017 and December 2017**



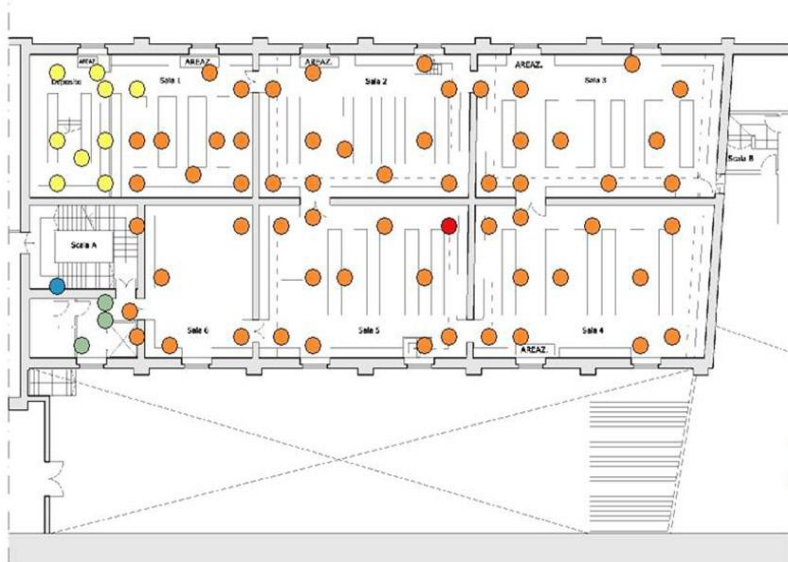
# Results

## First floor:

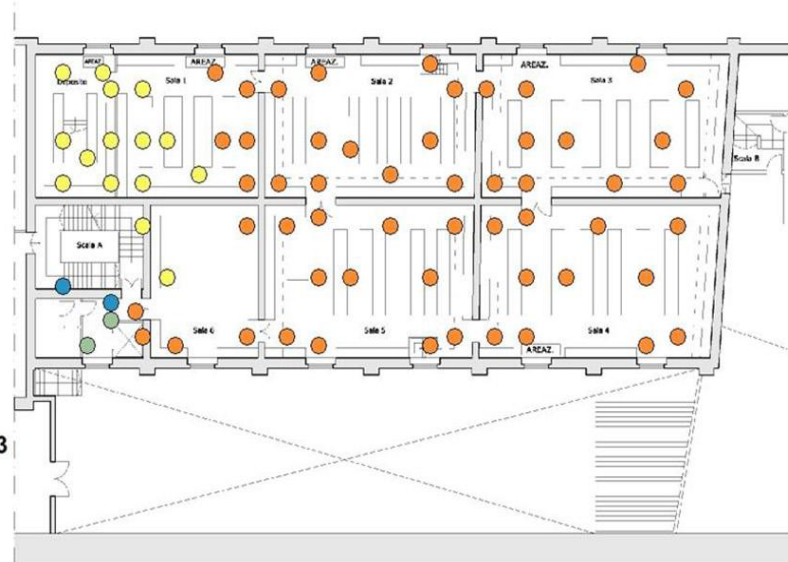
- in 2017 surveys the GEM values were remarkably lower and more uniform than in 2013
- in December 2017 GEM values were lower than those in July 2017
- balconies values were close to those of the underlying halls

## Second floor:

- GEM values generally higher than those of the first floor, with the highest values in summertime
- in December 2017 all the values were lower
- GEM values appeared to be more unevenly distributed than in the first floor (no air conditioning system)
- the highest values and the more dispersed data distributions in the hall 2c (Herbarium Webb), where ancient specimens extensively treated with  $\text{HgCl}_2$  are located (GEM > 50,000 ng/m<sup>3</sup> when wood cabinets were opened)

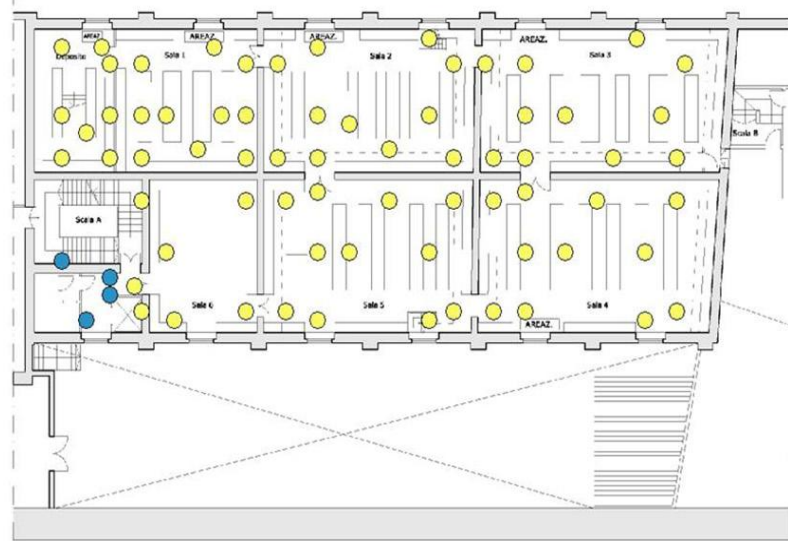


**1° floor 07-2013**  
**GEM ng/m<sup>3</sup>**  
 ● < 200  
 ● 201 - 1000  
 ● 1001 - 2500  
 ● 2501 - 4000  
 ● > 4000



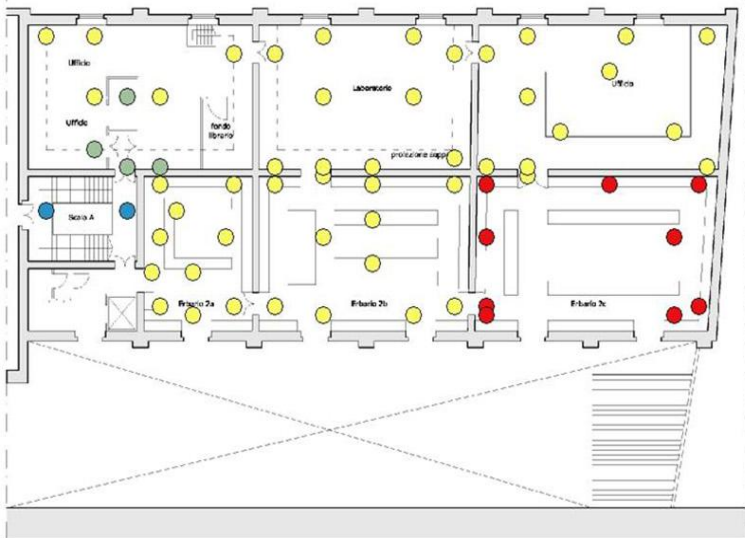
**1° floor 07-2017**  
**GEM ng/m<sup>3</sup>**  
 ● < 200  
 ● 201 - 1000  
 ● 1001 - 2500  
 ● 2501 - 4000  
 ● > 4000

**Dot-maps at the first floor of the herbaria. The guidelines proposed by ATSDR (1999) and WHO (2000), i.e. 200 and 1000 ng/m<sup>3</sup>, respectively, were considered to distinguish the first two classes of the legend (5 total classes)**



**1° floor 12-2017**  
**GEM ng/m<sup>3</sup>**  
 ● < 200  
 ● 201 - 1000  
 ● 1001 - 2500  
 ● 2501 - 4000  
 ● > 4000

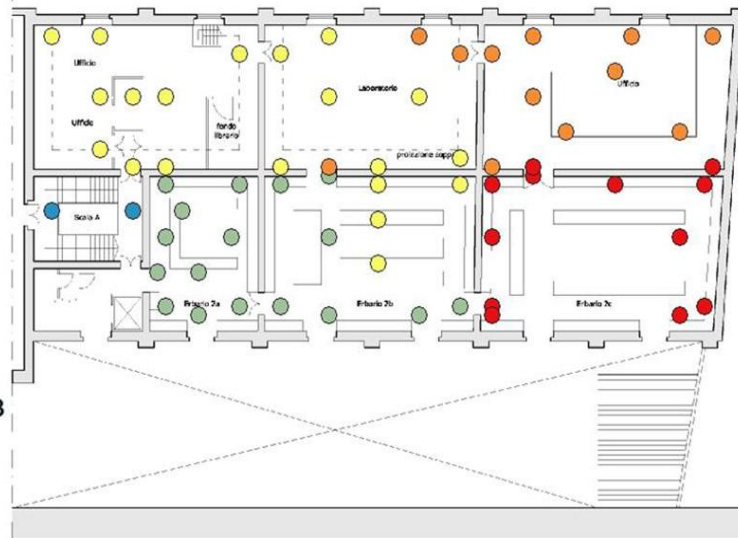
**If the guideline value of 1000 ng/m<sup>3</sup> proposed by WHO (2000) is considered, all the first floor is above this threshold**



**2° floor 07-2013**

**GEM ng/m<sup>3</sup>**

- < 200
- 201 - 1000
- 1001 - 2500
- 2501 - 4000
- > 4000

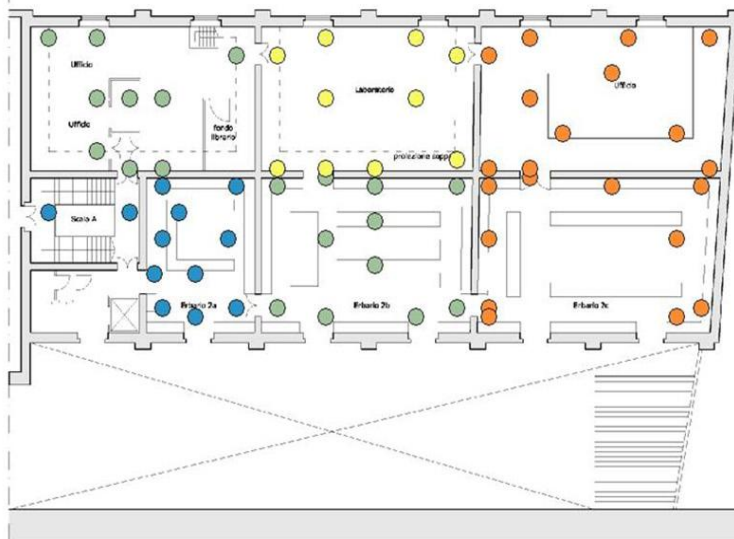


**2° floor 07-2017**

**GEM ng/m<sup>3</sup>**

- < 200
- 201 - 1000
- 1001 - 2500
- 2501 - 4000
- > 4000

**Dot-maps at the second floor of the herbaria. The guidelines proposed by ATSDR (1999) and WHO (2000), i.e. 200 and 1000 ng/m<sup>3</sup>, respectively, were considered to distinguish the first two classes of the legend (5 total classes)**



**2° floor 12-2017**

**GEM ng/m<sup>3</sup>**

- < 200
- 201 - 1000
- 1001 - 2500
- 2501 - 4000
- > 4000

**If the guideline value of 1000 ng/m<sup>3</sup> proposed by WHO (2000) is considered, most rooms of second floor are above this threshold**



# Discussion

The positive effect of temperature on GEM contents suggests a reduction of ionic to metallic Hg

However, the conversion process from  $\text{HgCl}_2$  to GEM is still unclear. Both biotic and abiotic processes can contribute to the reduction of  $\text{HgCl}_2$  to  $\text{Hg}^0$ , i.e. driven by bacteria, through interaction with humic acids or cellulose materials, by exposition to the light or temperature increase.

GEM concentrations in the range of those observed ( $10^3$ – $10^4$  ng/m<sup>3</sup>) are typical of Hg mining facilities and buildings and were measured in other herbaria in the world.

Since in Florence the Hg-chloride was dismissed in the 1920s, that is 25–50 years before than elsewhere, our data indicate that this time range has no practical effects on the GEM abatement.

# Discussion

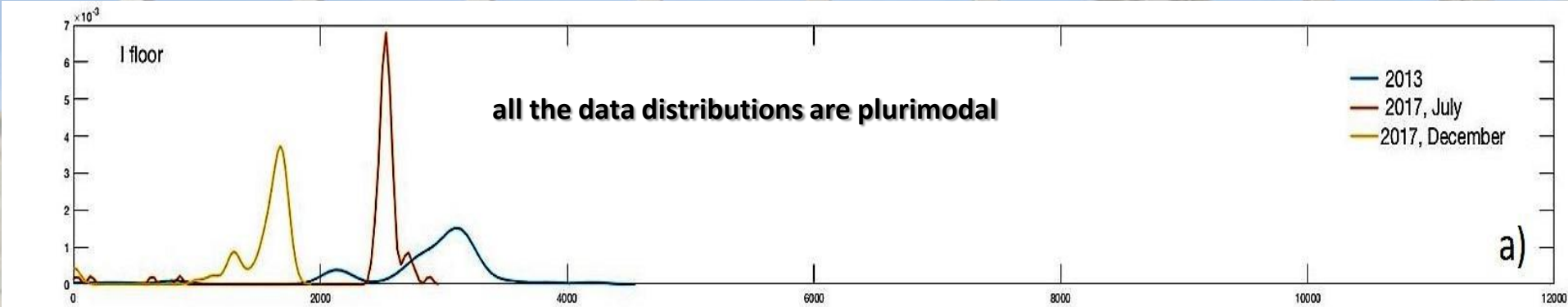
**The volatility of Hg and the poor ventilation represent the “perfect” trap where Hg vapors could be accumulated**

**It could be excluded that external Hg sources have any effect, clearly the HgCl<sub>2</sub>-treated plant collections are the Hg pollution source**

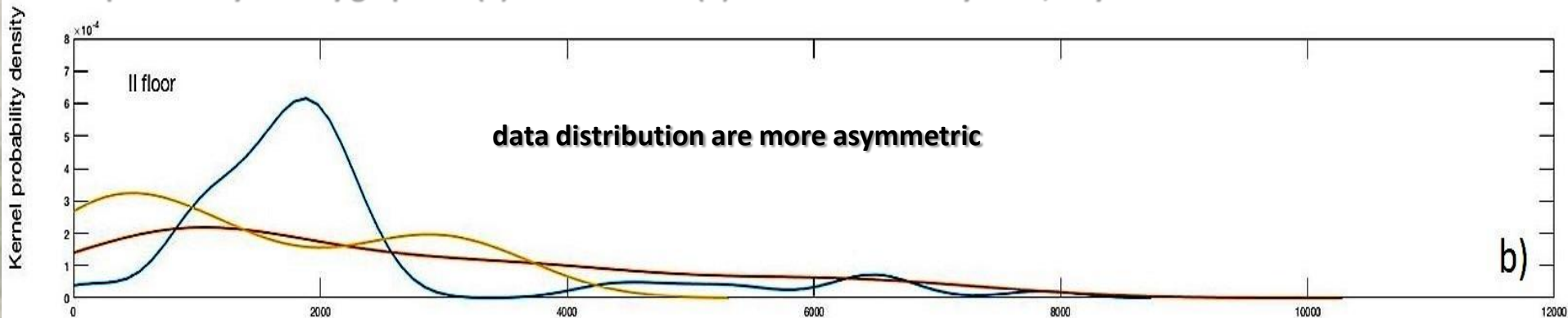


**The first floor air conditioning system, designed not to expel air but recycle it, can maintain a much lower temperature in summertime than in the past, favoring a homogeneous GEM distribution and an overall decrease in GEM concentrations**

**BUT...to lower the indoor GEM content in the herbaria, an efficient air renewing, equipped with opportune filters able to minimize any contamination, should be installed**



**Kernel probability density graphs at (a) first floor and (b) second floor in July 2013, July 2017 and December 2017**



**On the second floor, in 2013, GEM concentrations almost follow a normal distribution, suggesting dispersion through air internal circulation between the rooms, excluding Herbarium Webb acting as an isolated hotspot**

**On the contrary, during 2017 data distribution is more variable and fragmented, likely due to strong decrease of GEM in herbarium 2a and 2b from 2013 to 2017 (more efficient air conditioning system installed in 2a) and the increase in the other rooms**

# Discussion

**We reported extremely elevated GEM values inside the cabinets much higher than the current Italian permissible exposure limit for total Hg of 20,000 ng/m<sup>3</sup>, considering an 8-hr workday (Gazzetta Ufficiale n. 218, September 18, 2012)**

**This is a safeguard threshold, being lower than those of US NIOSH (10-hr TWA limit of 50,000 ng/m<sup>3</sup> for mercury vapor, ACGIH (8-hr TWA limit of 25,000 ng/m<sup>3</sup> for total Hg), and US OSHA (permissible exposure limit for total mercury of 100,000 ng/m<sup>3</sup> averaged over an 8-hr work-shift)**

**However, it should be remarked that this study was focused on GEM. Some studies are also on the way about the presence of mercury in particulate matter (PHg)**

**In April 2018, the effect of mercury exposure on workers was evaluated by urine collection. The available data indicated Hg values of 0.71 and 2.76 µg/L on two female employers of 60 and 45 years old, respectively, i.e. below that considered the average background concentrations for Hg in urine (4 µg/L), and comprised in the 0.1–5.0 µg/L range (5°–95° percentile) of the Italian population.**

# Conclusions

- **GEM concentrations were in the range of those reported for other herbaria worldwide and higher than those measured in the outdoor**
- **Very poor internal ventilation and intrinsic persistence of the treatment makes the disinfestation practically irreversible after almost 100 years from the last use of  $\text{HgCl}_2$**
- **The highest concentrations corresponded to the oldest collections (2° floor)**
- **A recent air conditioning system in the 1° floor resulted in more homogeneous GEM distribution and marked decrease of GEM levels from 2013 to 2017**
- **By considering a normal working day of 8 hours, Hg exposure for the local workers is below the limit established by the Italian law concerning occupational safety values**
- **Preliminary data indicate Hg levels in urine well comprised in the range of Italian population**
- **Further studies to quantify total mercury in the investigated herbaria are presently ongoing**

# Recommendations

- **The use of specific personal protection devices such as gloves, lab coats and masks, reducing the direct contact and not moving the poisoned specimens on personal desks, and the installation of ventilated worktables and/or storage cabinets, connected to local exhaust lines, to ensure air movement and prevent Hg accumulations, are strongly suggested**
- **Moreover, it is strongly advisable to keep away from the GEM-saturated lockers, keeping them closed at any time, to adequately train personnel for periodic cleaning and to move the offices of the staff outside the herbaria.**

# CONCLUSIONI/SVILUPPI

- stima dell'impatto di inquinanti atmosferici quali GEM sull'ambiente, confrontando i dati prodotti nei diversi siti al variare delle condizioni meteorologiche, e valutazione del loro impatto sulla salute umana in riferimento alle linee-guida
- individuazione di traccianti geochimici (e.g. rapporto tra GEM ed un altro gas) caratterizzanti le diverse sorgenti
- elaborazione dei dati Lumex+Multigas+Thermo+Picarro ed estensione delle misure ad altri siti industriali-urbani-naturali
- caratterizzazione dettagliata della distribuzione dei gas in aria, tramite transetti e punti fissi (real-time), e successiva elaborazione dei dati per ottenere mappe di dispersione