

Response to reviewers' comments

We thank the reviewers for their considered comments on our manuscript. Please find below our responses to their comments below.

Reviewer 1

This study reported an inter-comparison exercise between HONO measurements performed by multiple instruments. The results show that despite of good agreement on the temporal trends, the wet chemical methods consistently higher than the BBCEAS systems by between 12 and 39%. The reason for the divergence was not clear and the authors have speculated and discussed the potential influence of instrument locations. HONO is one of the most important precursors of OH radicals. Reliable measurements of HONO are key to understand its origin and role in the atmospheric chemistry. This study provides a great dataset to examine the performance and potential problems of HONO detectors in an atmosphere subject to strong anthropogenic influences. Overall, I think it is a nice study and would recommend its publication with revisions.

Response:

We thank the reviewer for the positive comments.

My main concerns are that (1) the authors may put too much weight on the contribution/discussion of spatial heterogeneity. Do you think that you may see a reverse relation (wet chemical concentration < BBCEAS) if you exchange the sampling locations?

Response:

This is difficult to answer definitively beyond speculatively. We do not know if we would see a reverse relation if the sampling locations were changed because we could not identify the mechanism/process that was driving the apparent disagreement between instruments. We have reduced the emphasis on the spatial heterogeneity, please see our response to reviewer 2, comment 1.

(2) the discussion about the daytime difference seems to be missing or mixed in the discussion. The 12% to 39% may not reflect the real difference up to several folds during daytime, the most relevant periods for the photochemical reactions.

Response:

While lower HONO concentrations are typically expected during the day due to photolysis this was not always the case in Beijing due to the level of haze attenuating solar UV (Shi et al. 2019). The agreement between all instruments was highly linear ($r^2 > 0.97$), which indicates that the relationship between instruments was similar at all times. Overall, we found that the agreement appeared to be more dependent on the concentration (as also shown by the normalized difference analysis) irrespective of the time of day. To demonstrate the high degree of linearity between instruments, which do not show any sub-populations indicating (for example) different behavior between daytime and nighttime, we have added the scatter plots (shown below, Fig S4) to the supporting information.

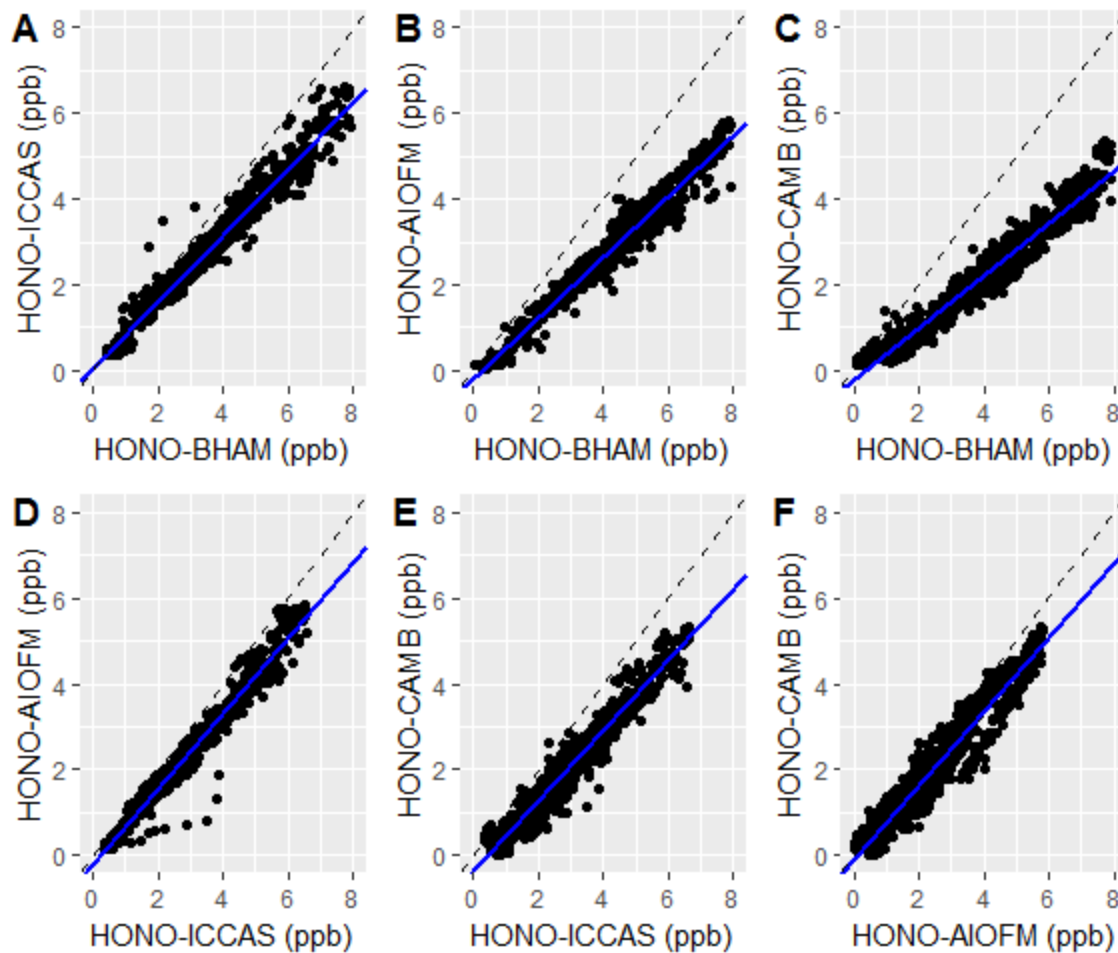


Figure S4: Regression relationships of HONO measured by different instruments from the formal winter inter-comparison period (10 – 14 Nov 2016) at IAP, Beijing. The blue line is the RMA regression and the black dashed line the 1:1 relationship.

Please find detailed comments below.

Page 1 line 36 “with the wet chemical methods consistently higher than the BBCEAS systems by between 12 and 39%.” Is it the case for daytime, night time, I saw 100%?

Response:

We did not see any evidence for changes in agreement between instruments during the day, please see our previous response. While there were periods when the agreement changed, the 12-39% was range of differences observed for the overall regression analysis between the wet chemical and BBCEAS instruments during the winter intercomparison. To clarify this, we have changed the text to read:

“with the wet chemical methods consistently higher overall than the BBCEAS systems by between 12 and 39%.”

Page 1 line 38 “The causes of the divergence in absolute HONO concentrations were unclear, and may in part have been due to spatial variability, i.e. differences in instrument location / inlet position.” Did you check the concentration of other trace gases aerosols, T, RH, etc?

Response:

For the field campaign, there were unfortunately only multiple instruments/techniques for measuring HONO at the IAP site. In any case, other species like NO_x and PM typically have much longer lifetime compared to HONO (in the order of hours/days compared to tens of minutes for HONO) and therefore we would not expect there to be significant variability for these species on the same spatial scales as HONO (Crilley et al. 2016).

Page 2 Introduction “contributing up to 40% of the OH budget in London (Lee et al., 2016).” The authors may consider referring to its contribution to the primary production of OH, where you can find more references (e.g., Kleffmann et al., GRL, 2005; Acker et al., GRL, 2006; Su et al., JGR, 2008) including measurements in Beijing (Yang et al., 2014).

Response:

We have added additional references on the contribution of HONO to OH budget for urban and rural areas:

“The contribution of HONO photolysis to the OH budget can be significant in megacities, up to 33% in Beijing (Yang et al., 2014) and 40% in London (Lee et al. 2016) as well as forest (33%, Kleffmann et al. 2005) and rural areas (42%, Acker et al. 2006).”

Page 2 Introduction “There are a number of known sources of HONO including direct emissions, heterogeneous reactions, homogenous, gas-phase reactions, biological processes and surface photolysis (see reviews by (Kleffmann, 2007; Spataro and Ianniello, 2014).” When talking about different sources, I’d suggest crediting the original research rather than exclusive referring to reviews.

Response:

There are many sources of HONO identified in the literature and to credit all the appropriate original research would add significant amount of text to the introduction. In the interests of brevity, we prefer to use the review articles, but have expanded these to include one further (earlier) study, and two significant papers published subsequent to the most recent available review. The text now reads:

“There are a number of known sources of HONO including direct emissions, heterogeneous reactions, homogenous, gas-phase reactions, biological processes and surface photolysis (see reviews by (Lammel and Cape 1996; Kleffmann, 2007; Spataro and Ianniello, 2014) and recently abiotic and biotic processes on soils and biocrusts (Weber et al. 2015; Kim and Or 2019).”

Page 2 line 14 “Positive artefacts can occur in inlet lines, as HONO is easily formed through heterogeneous reactions on wet surfaces (Zhou et al., 2003).” The study of Zhou is not about the heterogeneous reactions on inlets. It is discussing the formation of HONO and NO_x from

photolysis of HNO₃. Concerning the artefacts in inlet lines, you could refer to the studies of Zhou et al. (GRL,2002) and Su et al. (AE, 2008). The LOPAP style instruments have an outdoor sampling unit without additional inlet. Is this the case for the two wet chemical analyzers used here? What's the length of inlet of the other unspecified instruments?

Response:

We have corrected the reference for positive artefacts in inlet lines to Zhou et al. (2002) and Su et al (2008).

The BHAM LOPAP instrument used an outdoor sampling unit without additional inlet lines, precisely to avoid this issue. The ICCAS wet chemical instrument had the same inlet configuration as the BHAM instrument, and this information has been added to end of Section 2.2.2:

“The ICCAS and BHAM instruments both used a similar outdoor sampling unit that employed a short quartz inlet (<2.5cm).”

The CAM instrument inlet line length was 3 m long and this information has been added to Section 2.2.3:

“The inlet line was ¼’ outer diameter PFA tubing and was approximately 3m long.”

The AIOFM instrument inlet line was 4 m and this information has been added to Section 2.2.4:

“The inlet line was ¼’ outer diameter PFA tubing and was approximately 4m long.”

Page 8 line 26 “The co-efficient of variance (CV) is defined as the standard deviation divided by the mean and is used to compare the relative degree of variation between datasets.” The authors should explain how to calculate CV explicitly because the mean and deviation can be calculated for an individual dataset. My understanding is that here you calculate CV of data from different instruments at each time step and it is better to clarify this

Response:

Yes, the reviewer is correct. We calculated the CV for each time step. To clarify the calculation of the CV, we have updated the text at the start of Section 3.1.2 to read:

“We calculated the co-efficient of variance (CV) as a measure of the precision between the four instruments as per Eqn 1:

$$CV = \frac{\sigma}{\mu}$$

where μ is the mean and σ the standard deviation for the measurements by all four instruments at a given 5 min interval. The CV was used to compare the relative degree of variation between datasets and as a guide a CV of 0.1 is considered as acceptable by the US EPA for PM instruments”

Page 9 line 5 “the applied reference NO₂ spectrum might contain absorption signatures from HONO. This would result in a higher NO₂/HONO ratio retrieved from the BBCEAS compared to ambient air, and consequently reporting a low HONO mixing ratio (Kleffmann et al., 2006). However, the Voigt et al (2002) NO₂ cross-section, used by both BBCEAS instruments, has previously been shown to have negligible HONO absorption structures (Veitel, 2002).” This part of discussion is not optimal. On one hand, you stated that the applied reference spectrum might be problematic. On the other hand, you referred to Veitel et al. 2002 saying that it is negligible. Actually, this is also the information provided by Kleffmann et al. (2006). Since you were using the one from Voigt et al., it should solve the impurity issue as suggested by Kleffmann et al. (2006). I’d suggest a reformulation of this part.

Response:

We have re-worded this sentence to read:

“Both BBCEAS instruments use the Voigt et al (2002) NO₂ cross-section which has previously been shown to have negligible HONO absorption structures (Veitel, 2002; Kleffmann et al. 2006)”.

Page 9 line 15: “The systematic error for each instrument can be calculated by normalised sequential difference (NSD) according to Eqn 1 (Arnold et al., 2007)” The authors should better explain equation 1. What’s the meaning of t and t+1, is it time? You later used i, j, what’s their difference? Why it reflects a systematic error? People may have different ways to define a systematic error vs a random error. But the fact that BHAM was always higher than CAMB for me is a clear evidence for systematic errors.

Response:

To clarify the differences between the NSD and ND as well as their calculation, we have amended the text as follows:

“Firstly, the systematic error for each instrument was calculated by normalised sequential difference (NSD) according to Eqn 1 (Arnold et al., 2007).

$$NSD = \frac{(Conc_t - Conc_{t+1})}{(Conc_t \times Conc_{t+1})^{0.5}} \quad (1)$$

NSD is a method of calculating the variation between consecutive measurements for an individual instrument, where Conc_i is the concentration measured at time t and Conc_{t+1} the following measurement. The results are shown in Fig S1 (Supporting Information), and as each instrument showed a symmetrical and Gaussian distribution it suggests there was no internal systematic bias for any given instrument.

Secondly, we then examined the normalized difference (ND) between pairs of instruments to explore inter-instrument variability, calculated according to Eqn 2 (Pinto et al., 2014):

$$ND_{ij} = \frac{(C_i - C_j)}{(C_i + C_j)} \quad (2)$$

where C_i and C_j denote HONO levels measured by any pair of instruments (BHAM, ICCAS, AIOFM or CAM), calculated for each measurement period. For example, the ND for the BHAM and CAM instruments ($ND_{\text{BHAM-CAM}}$) would be calculated by $([\text{HONO}]_{\text{BHAM}} - [\text{HONO}]_{\text{CAM}}) / ([\text{HONO}]_{\text{BHAM}} + [\text{HONO}]_{\text{CAM}})$.

Page 10 line 2 “The ND was evaluated as function of wind direction and measured HONO concentration (Fig 3), to explore if ambient concentration or spatial heterogeneity could explain the disagreements.” Do you have other parameters (e.g., SO₂, O₃, NO_x, etc) that have been measured in different containers? A comparison of these parameters may give you a better idea about the spatial heterogeneity and help to disentangle it from the other effects. Besides, the spatial heterogeneity and HONO concentration might not be the only reasons for the observed differences. Artefacts and intrinsic limitation of individual methods could also results in different kinds of disagreement. These, however, were not discussed in this study. Do you consider these as minor issues here?

Response:

There were measurements of a range of gas and particle phase parameters during the field campaigns at the IAP site (Shi et al. 2019). We chose to focus on the wind direction and HONO concentration as these would indicate if was any influence from spatial heterogeneity in HONO levels (wind direction) or detection limits or instrument response (HONO concentration) on the measured levels by the four instruments. For other parameters such as ozone or SO₂ we would not expect these to have any influence on the measured HONO levels by any of the instruments (e.g. as an interferent, as demonstrated previously, Helend et al., 2001; Kleffmann et al., 2002) and so we did not consider them for this analysis. Furthermore, as we showed earlier in Section 3.1.2, the levels of NO₂ did not influence the measured concentrations for any instruments.

Page10, Section3.1.4. Here the authors investigated the concentration dependence of instrument agreement through comparison of slopes between the whole dataset and a subset of data. Can you give more details why you were expecting a concentration dependence, or what could lead to a concentration dependence? Do you think the detection limit would be an issue here? This can be easily checked by exclusively comparing data above the threshold.

Response:

The results from the CV (Fig 2) and ND (Fig 3) analyses suggested that the level of agreement between instruments decreased at low HONO levels (see section 3.1.4.). This is why we chose to investigate the concentration dependence, and the relationship between instruments at low HONO levels by linear regression. As noted in section 3.1.4, the only change in relationship observed was between CAM relative to the other instruments (BHAM, ICCAS and AIOFM), which we suggest may be related to differences in instrument sensitivity.

I also have some technical questions: (1) how did you conclude “the observed slopes between the BHAM-ICCAS-AIOFM at low concentrations (<2 ppb) were similar to those ..”? Because according to the confidence interval in Table 2 and 4, these slopes could be significantly

different; (2) what's the criteria of choosing 2 ppb as the threshold, will the results change if you take other values, e.g., 0.5 ppb?

Response:

1. The reviewer rightly points out that the slopes between BHAM-ICCAS-AIOFM were not within the stated confidence intervals for low concentrations (<2 ppb, Table 4) compared to the whole dataset (Table 2). The point was not that the slopes were the same but that were similar. This contrasts with what was observed for the agreement with the CAM instrument to the other instrument, where the slopes were markedly decreased at low concentrations (Table 4) relative to that observed for the whole dataset (Table 2). We have changed the text in section 3.1.4 to read:

“From Table 4, the observed slopes between the BHAM-ICCAS-AIOFM at low concentrations (<2 ppb) were similar to those for the whole winter inter-comparison dataset (Table 2) unlike when compared to the CAM instrument. This suggests that the difference in measured concentrations between these instruments (BHAM-ICCAS-AIOFM, as indicated by the slope) was not related to concentration. The notable decrease observed in the slope for the low concentrations between CAM and the other three instruments compared to whole inter-comparison (Tables 2 and 4, respectively), potentially points to changes in the CAM readings at lower concentrations. This change may be related to differences in instrument sensitivity (Table 1).”

2. We choose 2 ppb as a threshold to ensure there were enough data for the linear regression. If we use a threshold of 1.0 ppb, the absolute values of the slopes do change but the overall trends do not, that is we observe similar slopes between BHAM-ICCAS-AIOFM and lower slopes between the CAM instrument and the other three instruments.

A more straight forward way to investigate the concentration dependence would be directly plot the difference or normalized difference against the concentration. HONO concentration also has a strong diurnal cycle, with a minimum around noon time with active photochemistry and temperature. The concentration dependence of bias might also be caused by a diurnal cycle of the interference signals as discussed in Su et al. (AE 2008). Can you check if the difference in your study also has a prominent diurnal cycle?

Response:

When we plot the ND as function of concentration, there is increase in the ND at low concentrations for all instruments (shown below, Fig 1). This information is also shown in Fig 3 (where the ND is plotted as a function of wind direction coloured by concentration). As part of the discussion in Section 3.1.4, we mention the relationship between ND and concentration (page 10, line 4):

“From Figure 3, for all instrument pairs the highest ND, and therefore largest relative difference, between instruments was at low HONO mixing ratios (ca. <1 ppb)”

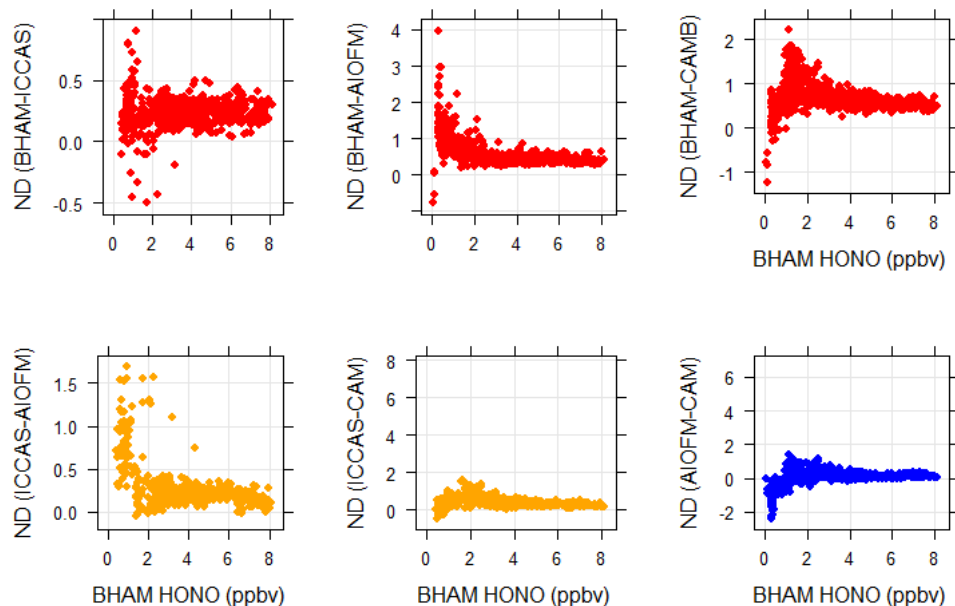


Figure 1: Normalised Differences (ND) for each instrument pair as a function of concentration as measured during the winter inter-comparison.

When we plot the diurnal cycle of the ND for each instrument pair (shown below, Fig 2), we do not see any noticeable diurnal trends for all instruments. For some instruments there is a peak in the afternoon, which may point to some photochemical influence but as this was not observed by all instrument pairs this may be more of a statistical artifact. We note that this shape is also apparent between the optical instrument pair, and between the wet chemical instrument pair. We also note that we only have a short time series and therefore any outliers may also have affected the results. As we have mentioned in previous responses, the overall ND and CV analyses indicate that HONO levels rather than time of day were the stronger determinant in affecting the instrument agreement.

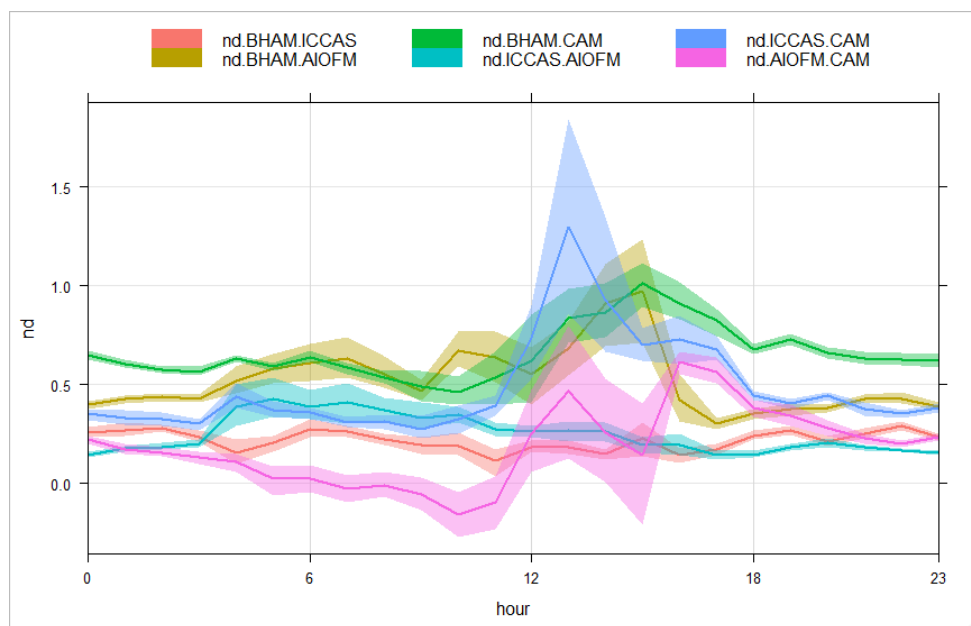


Figure 2: Mean diurnal trends in normalized differences (nd) for each instrument pair during the formal winter inter-comparison. The shaded areas represent 95% confidence intervals.

Reviewer 2

Review of “Intercomparison of nitrous acid (HONO) measurement techniques in a megacity (Beijing)”, AMT-2019-139 This paper presents a multi instrument comparison of HONO observations collected in Beijing. Considering the atmospheric importance of HONO, it is very important to determine the accuracy of various measurement techniques. The most refreshing part of this manuscript is that the authors make no attempts to disguise the differences between the various techniques, and do not attempt to identify a true measurement technique. This allows for a neutral consideration of the state of available technology to measure ambient HONO, while making it difficult to understand the cause of the variations. The presentation and discussion could use some work cleaning up and organizing the details of the results as it is sometimes confusing to keep track of what methods or time periods are being compared or can in fact be compared. I also find that the authors put a lot of stock in the location of sampling points as an explanation for the discrepancies, while providing limited evidence to support this. This work is valuable in that it draws attention to the continuing problem of evaluating the robustness of HONO observations. This work would benefit from attempting to arrive at a point where evidence-based suggestions can be provided to inform future observations or comparison studies. I support the publication of this work contingent upon addition minor revisions as suggested above and in the detailed comments provided below.

Response:

We thank the reviewer for their positive comments, especially regarding our transparency with the observed differences between instruments. We also would like to have arrived at more robust conclusions to the cause of the divergence between the different techniques but were unable to

definitively do so, within the available datasets. This may be because there were multiple factors that were driving the differences between instruments. Based upon the normalized difference analysis (ND, Section 3.1.3) the differences between instruments appeared to be related to HONO concentration, wind speed and direction. Thus, we believe this is evidence that spatial variability in HONO concentration may have affected the inter-comparison. As we discussed in the text, this may have been due to the horizontal spread of instrument inlets during the intercomparison (up to 13 m apart). However, we do acknowledge that the preceding discussion is not conclusive evidence for differences in inlet locations and hence spatial variability in HONO concentration affecting the intercomparison. It may be that the observed relationship between ND and wind direction/speed was more associative than casual.

Considering the above, we have toned down the conclusions regarding the effect of the inlet location, changing end of abstract to read (page 1, line 38):

“The causes of the divergence in absolute HONO concentrations were unclear and may in part have been due to spatial variability, i.e. differences in instrument location / inlet position but this observation may have been more associative than casual.”

We have also added the discussion above on the spatial heterogeneity (starting at page 12, line 13):

“However, in the current work the results do not conclusively point to spatial heterogeneity in HONO concentrations affecting the results. As both the current work and Pinto et al. (2014) found some evidence for spatial heterogeneity in HONO concentrations affecting their intercomparisons, this would suggest that to avoid this issue future studies should use a common inlet for all instruments in the field.”

Page 2, line 3-4: This is oddly specific towards London considering the number of publications on daytime HONO, and that this manuscript does not address London HONO. Suggest broadening the citations for the generalization of the introduction.

Response:

We have added additional citations to cover work elsewhere, including previous HONO work in China, please see our response to reviewer 1.

Page 2, line 9: The statement “depending on the proximity to emission sources” is meant to mean what? Emission of HONO, NO_x? Direct, indirect?

Response:

We have changed this sentence to read:

“high spatial heterogeneity in HONO concentration can be observed depending on the proximity to sources of direct emissions of HONO”.

Page 3, line 14: “highly polluted locations like Beijing” needs a citation or evidence otherwise that Beijing is highly polluted.

Response:

We have added the references Tong et al. 2016 and Wang et al 2017.

Page 4, line 3: edit to read “Measurements were performed as part of”?

Response:

We have made this change.

Page 4, line 15: “referred to as LOPAP throughout” is a bit confusing since you just introduced that instrument will be referred to by the institution and have already defined LOPAP acronym earlier in the manuscript.

Response:

We have edited this text to read:

“The University of Birmingham operated a LOPAP (QUMA Elektronik & Analytik GmbH) at IAP.”

Page 4, line 25: It would be helpful in this work to explicitly discuss what the main differences between the two LOPAP techniques are.

Response:

There were two main differences between the BHAM and ICCAS system; 1) the method used for baseline correction and 2) the length of the optical path length. This information has been added to the end of Section 2.2.2:

“While the BHAM and ICCAS instruments operated according to the same principles, there were two main differences. The first was the method for determining the baseline, the BHAM instrument used an overflow of N₂ while the ICCAS instrument replaced the reagents with water. The second was the optical path length, which was 2.0 and 0.5 m for the BHAM and ICCAS instruments, respectively.”

Page 5, line 12: AIOFM is not yet defined in the text.

Response:

The text has been changed to read;

“the instrument was moved to an adjacent container, also housing the other BBCEAS instrument”

The acronym AIOFM is defined in the next section.

Page 54, line 16-21: This is pretty hard to understand here. Are you simply stating that the flow controller was not properly calibrated and describing the process to calibrate it? If so this seems like it is an unnecessary discussion as one would expect that you have calibrated your flow controllers to get accurate measurements.

Response:

Yes, we are describing the calibration of the flow controller that was revised after the measurements. We feel necessary to keep a complete record of how/when calibrations have been completed and applied for the flow controller.

Page 6, line 3-4: How exactly did you consider sample loss and secondary formation of HONO in the instrument? That is not exactly the most straightforward thing to do, and it is glossed over here.

Response:

A HONO standard generator was developed to supply stable concentrations of HONO and the experiment of sample loss for CEAS-AIOFM was operated in the laboratory as following: 1. HONO from the standard generator directly flowed into the IBBCEAS instrument, with its steady-state concentration measured by IBBCEAS. 2. The HONO source was replaced by a fast N₂ flow (10 SLPM) which was kept running for about 5 mins. 3. A second 1 μm PTFE filter and 3-m length PFA inlet tube and a piece of PFA tube of the same dimension as that of the optical cavity were added upstream of the IBBCEAS cavity to reproduce any potential loss on the particle filter, inlet and cavity walls. The HONO flow was re-introduced through the extra components and the IBBCEAS cavity and the new steady-state HONO concentration was measured by IBBCEAS. 4. The particle filter, PFA inlet tube, and the PFA “cavity” tube were all removed, and pure nitrogen was again flowed through the IBBCEAS instrument. In this experimental cycle, the relative humidity (RH) was about 65 % and temperature was about 23 °C, the sample loss of the IBBCEAS instrument for HONO was found to be about 2.0 % (from average 46.0 ppb to average 45.1 ppb). We also repeated this experiment at different RH levels and found that the sample loss of the IBBCEAS instrument for HONO was about 2.1 % at 25 % RH and about 1.9 % at 50 % RH, suggesting a weak RH dependence of the sample loss of the CEAS instrument for HONO.

To investigate any potential secondary HONO formation for CEAS-AIOFM on the inlet or cavity walls from NO₂, about 80 ppb NO₂ at different RH levels (about 20% RH, 30% RH, 50% RH and 70% RH) flowed through a 3-m PFA inlet tube into the IBBCEAS instrument for a long time at typical sampling flow rates, respectively, no [HONO] was observed in the optical cavity, suggesting that the secondary HONO formation is negligible for this IBBCEAS instrument under this typical operation condition.

Page 6, line 24 and elsewhere: One major thing missing here that is likely very important is a detailed discussion on how the function instrument zero was determined and the associated errors involved. For example, how was the absolute error of 33ppt calculated here? Is that the variability between instrument zeros? Is once every 45 minutes sufficient to capture the variability in the background for the CIMS. Are the timescales for others important? From figure 1 it seems like incorrect background subtraction for each instrument could easily explain the difference in magnitude between the various instruments, especially considering the high degree of correlation observed. I'd really like to see a more detailed discussion of the background determination and subtraction and its impact on the reported values for each instrument.

Response:

For the CIMS, we agree that that background determination is an important omission that was also raised elsewhere. We have therefore, on your recommendation included figures and more detailed text to show this process over an example time period. The variability between backgrounds is low and therefore we feel that once every 45 minutes is sufficient to capture the variability, particularly as the instrument detects a range of species and it is infeasible to do species specific backgrounds.

We have now included a figure which shows the variation in background over a range of typical sample and background measurement cycles as well as the following text to describe the background determination.

“The CIMS instrument zero was determined by flowing dry nitrogen into the IMR periodically, and the backgrounds were applied consecutively. As shown in Figure S1, there was very little variability of this background during the measurement period. Though the overflowing of dry N₂ will have an effect on the sensitivity of the instrument to those compounds whose detection is water dependent, due to the low instrument backgrounds, the absolute error remains small and we deem this an acceptable limitation in order to measure a vast suite of different compounds for which no best practice backgrounding method has been established. We therefore calculated the absolute error of 33 ppt as 3 sigma deviations of the background signal.”

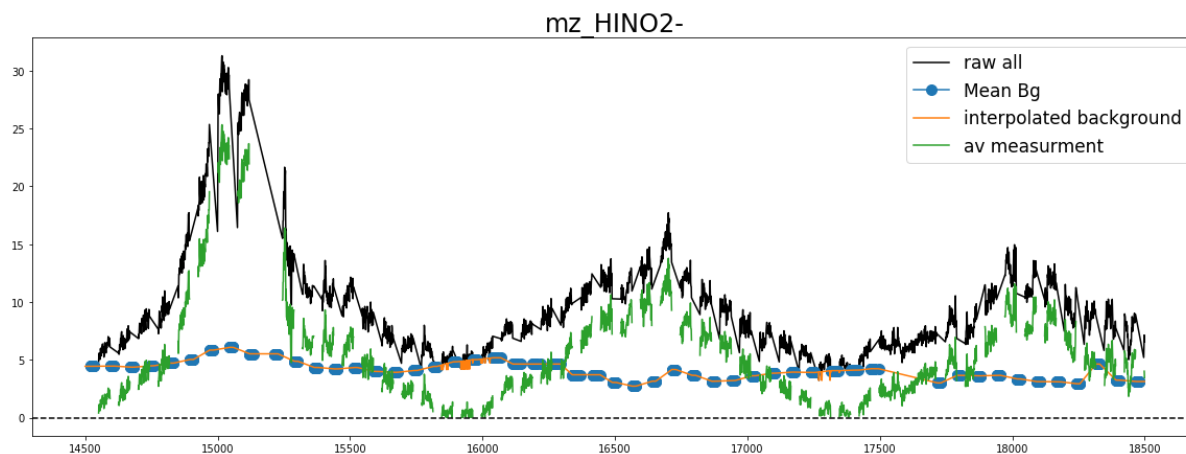


Figure S1: Illustration of the backgrounding procedure used in the CIMS instrument

We have also added further discussion on the effect of the different background corrections for the BHAM and ICCAS wet chemical instruments, please see our response to the final comment.

Page 6, line 30: The lack of humidity in the dry N₂ zero should significantly impact the HONO sensitivity, you should include the humidity dependent calibration of your instrument. Does HCOOH display the same dependence? This could impact your ability to use formic acid as a surrogate to track changes in instrumental sensitivity. While this is commonly done in past studies it may not be accurate. This is also a concern for the SIFT instrument backgrounds.

Response:

For the CIMS, we agree that this method of backgrounding will have associated errors, however with an instrument of this type specific backgrounding for individual species is not feasible (also discussed in previous response in more detail). Furthermore, the formic acid calibrations were all carried out under the same conditions meaning that they are comparable to one another and can therefore be used as a valid surrogate to track changes in instrumental sensitivity.

In terms of the SIFT instrument background, Spanel and Smith (2000) investigated the detection of gaseous HONO using SIFT-MS. This was done through the analysis of a sample of acidified nitrite headspace. Bimolecular reaction of H_3O^+ and nitrous acid produces H_2NO_2 (m/z 48, 67%) and NO^+ (m/z 30, 33%). The rate constant (k) of this exothermic proton transfer reaction is calculated to be $2.7 \times 10^{-9} \text{ cm}^3\text{s}^{-1}$ with respect to hydronium (H_3O^+) and $2.2 \times 10^{-9} \text{ cm}^3\text{s}^{-1}$ with respect to hydronium mono-hydrate ($\text{H}_3\text{O}\cdot\text{H}_2\text{O}^+$) (Spanel and Smith, 2000). Nitrous acid does not undergo proton transfer with hydronium di-hydrate ($\text{H}_3\text{O}\cdot\text{H}_2\text{O}^2$)⁺ and tri-hydrate ($\text{H}_3\text{O}\cdot\text{H}_2\text{O}^3$)⁺ in SIFT-MS. Nitrous acid mixing ratios herein were determined using the branching ratio corrected protonated product ion m/z 48 intensity normalized to both H_3O^+ and $\text{H}_3\text{O}\cdot\text{H}_2\text{O}$ with their respective k values. As such, calculated HONO mixing ratios using SIFT-MS should be independent of the humidity of the gas sample. This description has been added to the method section of the manuscript for clarification. However, we do recognize that humidity dependent surface effects are not taken into account via this reagent ion normalization. We had a platinum catalytic converter (held at 380°C) based zero air generator for routine background determination of a wide range of VOCs (not covered in this paper) using the SIFT-MS. Unfortunately, HONO was appreciably higher in this background, likely due to the thermal decomposition of alkyl amides, and so could not be used for HONO background subtraction. Dry nitrogen based backgrounds were the only available alternative. Hourly HONO gas phase backgrounds in nitrogen were 110 ± 40 pptv during the measurement period presented and as such are unlikely to have a significant contribution on the determined mixing ratio.

Page 7, line 20: The compounds used in the relative transmission calibration curve are very different from HONO. How well is method expected to perform in approximating the HONO sensitivity considering these differences? Are the portions of a given molecule's real sensitivity that are not accurately captured by this method, for example surface losses or secondary ion chemistry, or fragmentation?

Response:

For data herein, the secondary ion chemistry and fragmentation of HONO using SIFT-MS is well documented and has been taken into account for the data presented. The bimolecular reaction of H_3O^+ and nitrous acid produces H_2NO_2 (m/z 48, 67%) and NO^+ (m/z 30, 33%). No other fragment ions occur. The rate constant (k) of this exothermic proton transfer reaction is calculated to be $2.7 \times 10^{-9} \text{ cm}^3\text{s}^{-1}$ with respect to hydronium (H_3O^+) and $2.2 \times 10^{-9} \text{ cm}^3\text{s}^{-1}$ with respect to hydronium mono-hydrate ($\text{H}_3\text{O}\cdot\text{H}_2\text{O}^+$) (Spanel and Smith, 2000). Nitrous acid does not undergo proton transfer with hydronium di-hydrate ($\text{H}_3\text{O}\cdot\text{H}_2\text{O}^2$)⁺ and tri-hydrate ($\text{H}_3\text{O}\cdot\text{H}_2\text{O}^3$)⁺ in SIFT-MS (Spanel and Smith, 2000). Nitrous acid mixing ratios herein were determined using the branching ratio corrected protonated product ion m/z 48 intensity normalized to both H_3O^+

and $\text{H}_3\text{O}\cdot\text{H}_2\text{O}$ with their respective k values. As such, calculated HONO mixing ratios using SIFT-MS should be independent of the humidity of the gas sample.

A known sample artefact is production of HONO on internal surfaces exposed to NO_2 and H_2O . Previous studies (Muller, et al 2016) involving PTR-MS have investigated this artefact through the introduction of a gas-phase NO_2 standard to a humidified inlet stream. In this case, a high concentration NO_2 stream (25 ppbv) produced a signal corresponding to 3.5% of what the same concentration of HONO would produce. Considering the literature, it is generally suggested that a fast, turbulent sample flow is recommended during sampling which minimises sample residence time within sample lines in order to reduce this effect. These considerations were implemented during our sampling procedure.

As stated, a HONO calibration source was not available for on-site calibration of the SIFT-MS, hence mixing ratios were calculated using the instrument specific transmission coefficients and reaction rates taken from Spanel and Smith, 2000. The instrument specific transmission coefficients were calculated daily. Despite the careful calculation of coefficients, previous studies (de Gouw and Warneke, 2007) have suggested mixing ratios calculated using this approach can have large systematic errors, therefore some systematic bias in mixing ratios cannot be ruled out here and are difficult to quantify. Future work will be to develop a portable HONO gas generation device to directly calibrate SIFT-MS in the field and reduce this bias.

Page 7, line 24-25: This is a poorly written sentence and needs work.

Response:

This sentence has been edited to read:

“The formal inter-comparison of the four established techniques for measuring HONO (2 wet chemical and 2 BBCEAS) took place during the 9th-14th November 2016.”

Page 8, line 1-2: It is very difficult throughout this manuscript to keep track of when things overlap, how collocated sampling locations are, etc. I would really encourage the authors to come up with a better way to organize that information. Maybe a diagram would be helpful, one for summer and one for winter.

Response:

We have added a diagram of the winter and summer inlet locations to the SI to clarify the inlet locations for all instruments, shown below for winter.

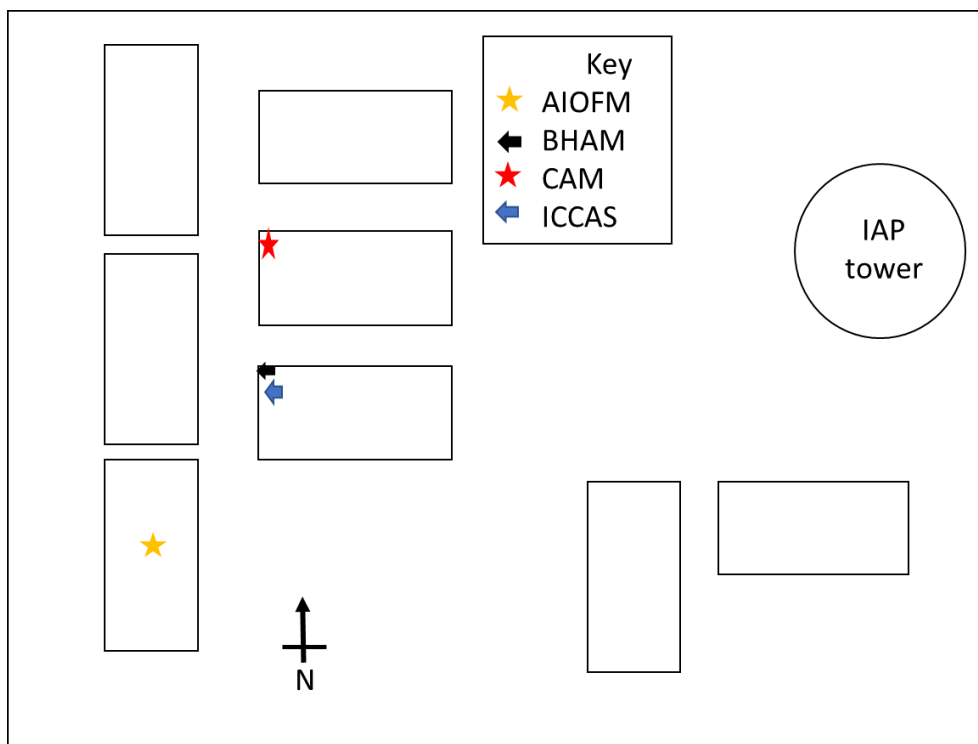


Figure S2: Schematic indicating the relative position of each instrument inlet during the winter inter-comparison. Each rectangle represents a shipping container laboratory. Note not to scale.

Page 8, line 27-28: you need to define what deviation in the upward or downward direction mean for CV. Is .5 better or worse than .1?

Response:

An increase in the CV indicates that the agreement between the instruments decreased. To clarify this point, we have altered the text to read:

“The CV was however observed to increase at the end of the inter-comparison, coinciding with period of the lowest mean HONO concentration (< 1 ppb, Fig 2). An increase in the CV indicates worsening agreement between instruments possibly due to the concentrations approaching the detection limit (DL) of some instruments (Table 1).”

Page 9, line 9: The however doesn't seem to below here. This isn't really a contradiction of the previous statements.

Response:

Sentence now reads:

“Overall, Fig 2 demonstrates no apparent relationship between the CV and NO₂.”

Page 10, line 5: no comma here.

Response:

Fixed

Page 10, line 9: Could these observations be coupled, e.g. clean high winds from the west lower local HONO concentrations to a level that the instruments have a difficult time measuring in resulting in poorer agreement?

Response:

These observations could be coupled, but as we do not have an explanation as to why there could be low HONO concentrations associated with westerly winds, given the reasonably homogeneous surrounding areas, we do not wish to speculate in the manuscript.

Page 11, line 25-26: delete “for and extended single continuous period,”

Response:

Done.

Page 11, 29-30: “This suggests the YORK instrument was measuring HONO at reasonable concentrations.” What does this even mean? Do you mean to say it is accurate? Precise? How do you determine which measurement is correct to evaluate the performance of the YORK instrument?

Response:

The reviewer makes a valid point and we have removed this sentence from the text.

Page 12, line 30-31: The two-channel stripping coil will only perform well if the chemical interferant is not efficiently removed in the first stripping coil. If the interference is removed efficiently in the first coil the second coil experiences a significantly lower signal and therefore does not effectively remove the signal observed in the first coil. Please consider this possibility that the two coil system is not perfect at interference removal.

Response:

The reviewer rightly points out that the two-channel stripping coil will not effectively account for any interference if the chemical interferent is removed completely in the first coil. It is important to note that the azo-dye will only react with nitrite in solution. The work by Heland et al. (2001) and Kleffmann et al. (2002) conclusively showed that for known chemical interferents that may react in solution with the azo-dye (e.g. NO₂ and PAN) the real interference (Ch1-Ch2) was small, in order of 0.01%. We of course cannot discount that an unknown chemical interferent being sampled completely in coil 1 but this has been shown to be unlikely to be significant based upon results for known compounds (e.g. NO₂).

Page 12, line 33: I think you are trying to make the argument here that HONO should not partition to particles because they are acidic? Do you have evidence for that at the sampling location? What about other forms of particle nitrogen that could potentially yield signal in the instrument? You say do you have any measurements to back up any of the statements that you are making here?

Response:

We are making the argument that due to the acidic nature of the aerosol in Beijing (Song et al. 18) we do not expect there to be much particle-phase nitrite. Furthermore, Broske et al. (2003, from Kleffmann 2006) demonstrated that the uptake of aerosol in the 50-800 nm fraction by the LOPAP sampling inlet is small (in the order of 1%). While larger particles may be sampled by impaction, Kleffmann et al. (2006) argued that this unlikely to be significant as the uptake would need to be an order of magnitude higher (>10%) for it to be significant interferent, which seems unlikely. Consequently, we do not expect there to be significant signal from other forms of particle nitrogen. To clarify our arguments, we have modified the text to read:

“The aerosol in Beijing is typically acidic (Song et al. 2018) and based on the effective Henry’s law constant for HONO we would expect there to be little particle-phase nitrite (Kleffmann et al. 2006). This combined with the expected low uptake of particles by the LOPAP sampling inlet (in order of 1% for particles with a diameter between 50-800 nm, Broske et al. 2003) suggests that there would be limited chemical interference from particle-phase species. We also note that particle-phase chemical interference would likely be corrected for by the two-channel system.”

Page 13, line 11-13: If water lowers the base line measurement compared to zero air this would impact the resulting background corrected ambient measurement. The percentage of ambient that is subtracted would large at low ambient HONO levels but would be negligible at large HONO levels. This could lead to large disagreement at low HONO levels. Yes, the calibration curve measured will only change in intercept, but the ambient data reported would be impacted.

Response:

We investigated the agreement between BHAM and ICCAS instruments at low concentrations (<2ppb) in Section 3.1.4 and found that the relationship between BHAM and ICCAS instruments was similar to that observed over the whole measured range. The reviewer is right to point out that the change in baseline measurements would have more impact at lower concentrations and we have added the following text to clarify this point at page 13, line 11:

“Tests have shown that water results in a lower baseline measurement for the LOPAP (approx. 80-100 ppt). We note that the ambient HONO was typically within the ppb range during the inter-comparison (Fig 1) and the effect of this baseline difference would be negligible at these levels. But at lower concentrations (low ppt), it would proportionally have a greater influence on the reported HONO levels by the BHAM and ICCAS instruments. High ND was observed at low concentration (<1ppb, Fig 3) and the difference in absolute baseline correction may explain this.”

Short comment 1

This paper presents measurements of HONO by several instruments and is of interest to many researchers (myself included) who are interested in HONO. Given the growth in the use of the iodide ToF chemical ionization mass spectrometer method, it would be helpful for further details of the instrument's operation to be presented. The IMR pressure is held at 400 mbar, which is higher than that used for most research groups' IMRs (~50 – 100 mbar). What is the reason for operating at this relatively high pressure?

Response:

We agree that this is higher than normal, as a group we also run our IMR pressure at 50-100 mbar when using the Po-210 source, as is recommended by the instrument supplier and from our detailed experimental understanding of the instrument. In China the use of Po-210 as is normal, was not possible, and we therefore used the Tofwerk X-ray ionisation source within the range of operating pressures suggested by the instrument supplier (300-500 mbar). This is also in line with conditions which have been used in previous studies (Breton et al. 2018). We have added the following text to the method to clarify this:

“This flow enters an ion molecule region (IMR) which was maintained at a pressure of 400 mbar using an SSH-112 pump fitted with an Aerodyne pressure control box to account for changes in ambient pressure. The IMR pressure is significant higher than is usual for this CIMS instrument when using PO-210, but is necessary given the change in ionisation source in this study.

Operation is comparable to the Breton et al., (2018) study who also used the same Tofwerk X-ray ionisation source.”

Backgrounds were determined using dry N₂. The authors state “The overflowing of dry N₂ will have a small effect on the sensitivity of the instrument for those compounds C1 whose detection is water dependent. Here we find that due to the very low instrumental background for HONO, the absolute error remains small (the absolute error remains small (<33 ppt)”. According to the same Lee et al. 2014 paper referenced in the manuscript, the sensitivity (as configured in Lee et al) varies by a factor of five between dry conditions and the most humid conditions tested (PH₂O = 0.8 mbar). It would be useful if there were a figure that showed the time series for m/z 174 for a typical sample & background measurement cycle to support the statement that the uncertainty in the background is essentially inconsequential.

Response:

We have now included a figure which shows the variation in background over a range of typical sample and background measurement cycles as well as additional text to describe the background correction method. Please see our response to Reviewer 1.

The sensitivity is quoted as 0.28 counts/s/ppt – at what humidity?

Response:

This sensitivity was reported at 5% relative humidity.

A graph of the HONO sensitivity as a function of humidity would be helpful, especially since it could differ than that measured by Lee et al given the different IMR pressures used. Is this sensitivity normalized to 1,000,000 cps of reagent ion? What is the total reagent ion signal?

Response:

This wasn't done, and this is now noted in the manuscripts as a limitation of this method. This was not deemed necessary to do because there was little variation in the I:H₂O:I- ratio throughout the day. The sensitivity is not reported normalized to 1,000,000 cps as with X-Ray ionisation CIMS operates at much lower counts of ca. 100,000 and therefore we feel that normalisation of sensitivity to 1 million does not represent the actual data. A critical parameter which determines sensitivity which enables sensitivities to be more widely compared, however is not widely reported in literature is the ToF extraction frequency. Our calibrations were carried out at a ToF extraction frequency of 16 kHz. The following text has been added to the method section to clarify:

“A limitation of the CIMS calibration approach for HONO is that it was not established as a function of humidity. This was not deemed necessary because there was an average variation of only 2% in the I:H₂O- ratio throughout the day.”

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Intercomparison of nitrous acid (HONO) measurement techniques in a megacity (Beijing)

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Abstract. Nitrous acid (HONO) is a key determinant of the daytime radical budget in the daytime boundary layer, with quantitative measurement required to understand OH radical abundance. Accurate and precise measurements of HONO are therefore needed; however HONO is a challenging compound to measure in the field, in particular in a chemically complex and highly polluted environment. Here we report an inter-comparison exercise between HONO measurements performed by two wet chemical techniques (the commercially available LOPAP and a custom-built instrument) and two Broadband Cavity Enhanced Absorption Spectrophotometer (BBCEAS) instruments at an urban location in Beijing. In addition, we report a comparison of HONO measurements performed by Time of Flight Chemical Ionization Mass Spectrometer (ToF-CIMS) and Selected Ion FlowTube Mass Spectrometer (SIFT-MS) to the more established techniques (wet chemical and BBCEAS). The key finding from the current work was that all instruments agree on the temporal trends / variability in HONO ($r^2 > 0.97$), yet displayed some divergence in absolute concentrations, with the wet chemical methods consistently higher overall than the BBCEAS systems by between 12 and 39%. We found no evidence for any systematic bias in any of the instruments, with the exception of measurements near instrument detection limits. The causes of the divergence in absolute HONO concentrations

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were unclear, and may in part have been due to spatial variability, i.e. differences in instrument location / inlet position but this observation may have been more associative than casual.

1 Introduction

5 Nitrous acid (HONO) is one of the key daytime sources of radicals in the boundary layer, as it readily undergoes photolysis to form the OH radical, the contribution of HONO photolysis to the OH budget can be significant in megacities, up to 33% in Beijing (Yang et al., 2014) and 40% in London contributing up to 40% of the OH budget in London (Lee et al., 2016) as well as forest (33%, Kleffmann et al. 2005) and rural areas (42%, Acker et al. 2006). The OH radical is the primary oxidant in the troposphere that drives chemical processing, principally the oxidation of volatile organic compounds (VOC) that lead to the
10 formation of ozone and secondary organic aerosols. There are a number of known sources of HONO including direct emissions, heterogeneous reactions, homogenous gas-phase reactions, biological processes and surface photolysis (see reviews by (Lammel and Cape 1996;Kleffmann, 2007;Spataro and Ianniello, 2014) and recently abiotic and biotic processes on soils and biocrusts (Weber et al., 2015;Kim and Or 2019). Across urban areas, high spatial heterogeneity in HONO concentration can be observed depending on the proximity to direct emission sources of HONO (Crilley et al., 2016;Lee et al., 2013). Despite,
15 the importance of HONO to the overall radical budget, the contributions of these different sources, particularly in the urban environment, are poorly understood (See e.g. (Lee et al., 2016;Michoud et al., 2014)).

As a result of the significance of HONO to tropospheric photochemistry, accurate and precise concentration measurements are required, but are challenging due to a number of known potential artefacts in the available approaches: Positive artefacts can
20 occur in inlet lines, as HONO is easily formed through heterogeneous reactions on wet surfaces (Zhou et al., 2003). Furthermore, the highly reactive nature of HONO means that within inlet lines wall interactions could also lead to a negative artefact, unless inert materials are employed (Pinto et al., 2014). Other challenges include interferences from species such as NO₂. There are a number of approaches to measure HONO that can be classed as either wet chemical, spectroscopic techniques or off-line methods (Spataro and Ianniello, 2014). Some of the main instrumentation used recently to measure ambient HONO
25 in the literature include differential optical absorption spectroscopy (DOAS, e.g. (Perner and Platt, 1979)), wet chemical techniques (e.g. Long Path Absorption Photometer (LOPAP), (Heland et al., 2001)), broadband cavity enhanced absorption spectroscopy (e.g. (Duan et al., 2018)), soft chemical ionization mass spectrometry (CIMS, e.g. (Veres et al., 2015)), on-line ion chromatography (e.g. (Stutz et al., 2010;Cheng et al., 2013)) and wet denuder (e.g. (Acker et al., 2004)). In order to compare reported measurements across studies, it is necessary to understand how the different approaches/techniques compare relative
30 to each other, under actual ambient (field) conditions.

There have been a number of studies reporting inter-comparisons between HONO instrumentation (e.g. (Stutz et al., 2010;Ródenas et al., 2013;Pinto et al., 2014;Kleffmann et al., 2006)). Generally, HONO measurements by DOAS systems are used as a reference during inter-comparison studies, as optical methods are artefact free with respect to sampling method, though impurities in the HONO and NO₂ reference spectra can affect retrievals (Stutz et al., 2010;Kleffmann et al., 2006). A further complication with using DOAS systems as a reference is that the spatial averaging inherent in the system means that comparison with point measurements may be subject to bias due to spatial heterogeneities in HONO concentrations. Typically, most in-situ instruments report higher concentrations during the day compared to simultaneous measurements by a DOAS system, thought to be due to the positive interferences in the in-situ techniques (see e.g. (Febo et al., 1996;Appel et al., 1990;Stutz et al., 2010;Spindler et al., 2003)). An exception is the work by Kleffmann et al. (2006), who reported excellent agreement between a LOPAP and DOAS system in both chamber based and field measurements of HONO under both day and night conditions. The reason for the better performance of the LOPAP is the two channel stripping coil employed in the LOPAP successfully corrects for positive artefacts and chemical interferences during measurement, as demonstrated by Kleffmann and Weisen (2008).

Recently, there have been multi-instrumental inter-comparison studies performed in ambient air and in simulation chambers. These include the Formal Intercomparison of Observations of Nitrous Acid (FIONA) project, which involved 18 instruments measuring within the European Photoreactor (EUPHORE) chamber over a wide range of HONO concentrations (Ródenas et al., 2013). While in general, good agreement was observed during the different experiments of FIONA, at high concentrations (>15 ppb) divergence was observed between some instruments possibly due to some instruments experiencing saturation (Ródenas et al., 2013). These high HONO concentrations however are not typical even in highly polluted locations like Beijing (Tong et al. 2016; Wang et al. 2017). Pinto et al. (2014) described an inter-comparison of field measurements performed in Houston using a number of instruments for measuring HONO. The instruments tested included a long-path DOAS, a number of wet chemical (including a LOPAP), on-line ion-chromatography and a Time of Flight Chemical Ionisation Mass Spectrometer (ToF-CIMS) -using iodide as a reagent ion CIMS. Overall, while good agreement between all the instruments was observed in terms of the temporal trends, the absolute concentrations varied. Pinto and co-workers were unable to pinpoint the cause of the disagreement in absolute concentrations but speculated it might have been due to chemical interference in the in-situ techniques, and the effect of heterogeneous surface reactions due to the distance between some inlets.

Here, we report an inter-comparison exercise of co-located wet chemical and broadband cavity enhanced absorption spectrophotometer (BBCEAS) instruments for measuring HONO in an urban location within Beijing. Ambient concentrations of HONO can vary by several orders of magnitude in Beijing, up to 9 ppb during haze events with a typical concentration of 1.44 ± 1.33 ppb (Wang et al., 2017), making it a challenging location for field measurements. In addition, we report a comparison of HONO retrievals by a ToF-CIMS and Selected Ion FlowTube Mass Spectrometer (SIFT-MS) to the more

established techniques (wet chemical and BBCEAS) for measuring HONO. Based on the inter-comparison findings, the factors that may have influenced the measured concentrations are investigated.

2 Method

2.1 Site description

5 Measurements were performed as part of the Air Pollution and Human Health in a Chinese megacity (APHH-Beijing, www.aphh.org.uk) program and of the ‘An integrated study of air pollution processes in Beijing’ (AIRPRO) project, which aimed to understand atmospheric processes affecting air pollution in Beijing. An overview of the APHH-Beijing project is provided in Shi et al. (2018). Measurements were performed at the Chinese Academy of Sciences’ Institute of Atmospheric Physics (IAP) tower campus, an urban site located near the 4th ring road in the northern suburbs of Beijing. There were two
10 field campaigns, the first took place during Nov-Dec 2016 (referred to as winter) and second during May-June 2017 (referred to as summer).

2.2 Instrument descriptions

An overview of all the instruments that measured ground-level HONO at IAP is provided in Table 1. As instruments of the same type were used in this study, throughout this paper the instruments will be referred to by their institution name, as per
15 Table 1. A brief description of each instrument follows.

2.2.1 University of Birmingham LOPAP

The University of Birmingham operated a ~~Long Path Absorption Photometer (LOPAP-03, (QUMA Elektronik & Analytik GmbH)~~ at IAP, ~~referred to as the LOPAP throughout~~. The LOPAP is a wet chemical technique and has been described in detail in Heland et al. (2001) and Kleffmann et al. (2002). Briefly, a stripping coil is used to sample gas-phase HONO into an
20 acidic solution where it is derivatized into an azo dye. The light absorption of the azo dye, principally at 550 nm (though higher wavelengths can also be used), is then measured with a spectrometer using an optical path length of 2.4 m. The LOPAP was operated and calibrated according to the standard procedures described in Kleffmann and Wiesen (2008). The time resolution of the LOPAP was 5 minutes and baseline measurements were taken at frequent intervals (8hrs). The operationally defined detection limit (2σ) of the LOPAP was calculated to be 35 and 5 ppt for winter and summer, respectively and varied due to
25 changes in purity of reagents and zero air used. The LOPAP was housed within a temperature controlled shipping container and sampled at a height of 3m above ground level.

2.2.2 Institute of Chemistry, Chinese Academy of Sciences wet chemical HONO analyser

ICCAS applied a custom-built instrument, described in detail elsewhere (Hou et al., 2016). It is a wet chemical technique similar in principle to the LOPAP. Gas-phase HONO is almost completely absorbed by an absorption solution into a two-channel stripping coil, where it forms an azo dye, detected by absorption spectroscopy at a wavelength of 550 nm with an optical path length of 0.5 m. The instrument has a detection limit (2σ) of 134 ppt for a response time of 5 min. [The ICCAS and BHAM instruments both used a similar outdoor sampling unit that employed a short quartz inlet \(<2.5cm\). While the BHAM and ICCAS instruments operated according to the same principles, there were two main differences. The first was the method for determining the baseline, the BHAM instrument used an overflow of N₂ while the ICCAS instrument replaced the reagents with water. The second was the optical path length, which was 2.0 and 0.5 m for the BHAM and ICCAS instruments, respectively.](#)

2.2.3 University of Cambridge BBCEAS

The University of Cambridge ran a three-channel BBCEAS instrument during the campaign, with one channel measuring NO₂ and HONO simultaneously in the UV (362-374 nm) wavelength region. Reference absorption cross-sections of HONO (Stutz et al., 2000) and NO₂ (Voigt et al., 2002), were fitted to the absorption coefficient to retrieve HONO and NO₂ concentrations. Details of the instrument can be found in Kennedy et al. (2011). Two mirrors (Layertec 109053) with peak reflectivity of ~99.95% at 365 nm were used to form the cavity. Given an inter-mirror distance of 92 cm, the effective absorption pathlength in the case of an empty cavity was around 1.8 km.

Both instrument inlet and the optical cavity were made of perfluoroalkoxy alkane (PFA) which is well known for its chemical inertness. [The inlet line was ¼' outer diameter PFA tubing and was approximately 3m long.](#) During the winter phase of the campaign, instrument inlet was placed at the top of the container and was about 3 m from ground. During the summer phase however, the instrument was moved to an adjacent container, also housing the [other BBCEAS/AIOFM](#) instrument, and the height of instrument inlet was changed accordingly from ~3 to ~2 m.

To allow a more stable cavity throughput (i.e. to minimise flow turbulence effect on the optical signal), the sampling flow was set to 2 LPM for the HONO/NO₂ measurement channel. This was close to the very low end of the operational range of the flow controller (0-50 LPM), leading to the actual flow rate potentially differing from that set. Post-campaign analysis identified that this affected both the dilution factor (dilution of the sample flow by the two mirror purge lines) and the length the sample gas occupied in the cavity. A post-campaign calibration was therefore performed by injecting a known amount of NO₂ into the cavity under otherwise identical operating conditions, and a scaling factor of ~1.27 was found to be necessary to account for these two factors, and was then applied to the measured NO₂ and HONO concentrations.

2.2.4 Anhui Institute of Optics and Fine Mechanics BBCEAS

The custom-built BBCEAS instrument from the Anhui Institute of Optics and Fine Mechanics (AIOFM), Chinese Academy of Sciences has been described in detail in Duan et al. (2018); therefore only a brief description is given here. Light is emitted by a single light emitting diode with peak wavelength of 365 nm, FWHM of 13 nm and is introduced into the resonant cavity, consisting of a pair of high reflective (HR) mirrors with reflectivity of about 0.99985 at 368 nm, separated by 55.0 cm. The emergent light intensity passing through the cavity exit mirror is received by an Ocean Optics QE65000 spectrometer through an optical fibre with 600 μm diameter, and a 0.22 numerical aperture.

In order to avoid the drift of the center wavelength of the LED, the temperature of the LED was controlled to be approximately 20 ± 0.05 °C by using a TEC unit. In order to prevent particulate matter from entering the cavity and reducing the effect of particulate matter on the effective absorption path, a 1 μm PTFE filter membrane (Tisch Scientific) was used in the front end of the sampling port. The time resolution of the IBBCEAS instrument was 1 min, and the 2σ detection limit of HONO was about 120 pptv. The fitting wavelength range was selected as 359–387 nm, with the same reference cross-sections used in the retrieval of NO_2 and HONO as for the University of Cambridge instrument. Sample loss and secondary formation of HONO were both considered in this instrument and the measurement error of HONO was estimated to be approximately 9%. [The inlet line was ¼' outer diameter PFA tubing and was approximately 4m long.](#)

2.2.5 University of Manchester ToF-CIMS

A time of flight chemical ionisation mass spectrometer (ToF-CIMS) (Lee et al. 2014), using an iodide ionisation system was coupled with a filter inlet for gases and aerosols (FIGAERO) originally developed by Lopez-Hilfiker et al. (2014) and recently described and characterised by Bannan et al. (2019). The detailed setup during this campaign can be found in Zhou et al. (2018). The FIGAERO enabled near simultaneous, real-time measurements of both the gas and particle phase composition. Only gas phase data is presented here, so of every 75 minutes of continuous data 35 minutes (particle phase mode) are omitted. The gas phase inlet consisted of 5 m ¼" I.D. PFA tubing connected to a fast inlet pump with a total flow rate of 13 standard litres per minute (slm) from which the ToF-CIMS sub-sampled 2 slm.

Methyl iodide gas mixtures (CH_3I) in N_2 were made up in the field using a custom-made manifold (Bannan et al. 2014). 20 standard cubic centimetres per minute (sccm) of the CH_3I mixture was diluted in 4 slm N_2 and ionised by flowing through a Tofwerk X-ray ionisation source. This flow enters an ion molecule region (IMR) which was maintained at a pressure of 400 mbar using an SSH-112 pump fitted with an Aerodyne pressure control box to account for changes in ambient pressure. [The IMR pressure is significantly higher than is usual for this CIMS instrument when using PO-210, but is necessary given the change in ionisation source in this study. Operation is comparable to the Breton et al., \(2018\) study who also used the same Tofwerk X-ray ionisation source.](#) A short segmented quadrupole (SSQ) was positioned behind the IMR and was held at a pressure of 2 mbar using a Tri scroll 600 pump.

The CIMS instrument zero was determined by flowing dry nitrogen into the IMR periodically, and the backgrounds were applied consecutively. As shown in Figure S1 (Supporting Information), there was very little variability of this background during the measurement period. Though the overflowing of dry N₂ will have an effect on the sensitivity of the instrument to those compounds whose detection is water dependent, due to the low instrument backgrounds, the absolute error remains small and we deem this an acceptable limitation in order to measure a vast suite of different compounds for which no best practice backgrounding method has been established. We therefore calculated the absolute error of 33 ppt as 3 sigma deviations of the background signal.

During the campaign, gas phase backgrounds were established through regularly overflowing the inlet with dry N₂ for five continuous minutes every 45 minutes (Priestley et al. 2018) and were applied consecutively. The overflowing of dry N₂ will have a small effect on the sensitivity of the instrument for those compounds whose detection is water dependent. Here we find that due to the very low instrumental background for HONO, the absolute error remains small (<33 ppt) and is an acceptable limitation in order to measure the wide range of different compounds that can be detected using the iodide CIMS.

Field calibrations were regularly carried out using known concentration formic acid gas mixtures made in the manifold. The instrument was calibrated for a range of other species after the campaign, and relative calibration factors were derived using the measured formic acid sensitivity as has been performed previously (Le Breton et al., 2014; Le Breton et al., 2017; Bannan et al., 2014; Bannan et al., 2015). HONO was measured at m/z 174 as I.HNO₂⁻ during the period of 27th May – 17th June 2017. A stable and pure gas phase source of HONO was generated for calibrations using the method described by Ren et al. (2010) and Febo et al. (1995) and a sensitivity of 0.28 cps/ppt was applied to the data with a LOD of 33 ppt. Data analysis is performed using the “Tofware” package (version 2.5.11) running in the Igor Pro (WaveMetrics, OR, USA) environment. The mass axis was calibrated using I⁻, I₂⁻ and I₃⁻. Extracted high resolution time series were then normalised to the iodide reagent ion trace. A limitation of the CIMS calibration approach for HONO is that it was not established as a function of humidity. This was not deemed necessary because there was an average variation of only 2% in the I⁻:H₂O⁻ ratio throughout the day.

2.2.6 University of York SIFT-MS

The data presented in this paper has been measured using a Voice200 Selected ion flow tube mass spectrometer (SIFT-MS, Syft Technologies, Christchurch, New Zealand). This instrument consists of a switchable reagent ion source capable of rapidly switching between multiple reagent ions. The ion source region where the reagent ions are generated in a microwave discharge, acts on an air/water mix at a pressure of approximately 440mTorr to generate the three reagent ions H₃O⁺, NO⁺, and O₂⁺. These ions are extracted into the upstream quadrupole chamber maintained at a pressure of approximately 5 x 10⁻⁴ torr, using a 70 L/s turbo-molecular pump. The reagent ions pass through an array of electrostatic lenses and the upstream quadrupole mass filter, and those not rejected by the mass filter are passed into the flow tube where they are carried along in a stream of nitrogen and selectively ionise target analytes. Gas phase data presented herein was determined using the H₃O⁺ reagent ion only.

5 Sampling was carried out at a height of ~3m using a gas phase inlet consisting of 3.5m ¼” I.D. PFA tubing connected to a diaphragm inlet pump (KNF) at a total flowrate of 5 standard litres per minute (slpm), from which the SIFT-MS sampled approximately 2 slpm through an in house built pressure controlled inlet maintaining a consistent absolute inlet pressure of 0.5 bar. The flow tube is pumped by a 35 m³/h scroll-type dry pump (Edwards) resulting in a mass flow controlled gas flow of 25 sccm for the nitrogen carrier gas (research grade, BOC) and a sample flow of 100sccm from the pressure controlled inlet system. These flows result in a continuous total flow tube pressure of 460 mTorr and a reaction time of approximately 8ms (Hera et al. 2018). During the campaign, gas phase backgrounds were established through regularly overflowing the sample inlet with dry nitrogen for 5 continuous minutes every hour. The determined HONO gas phase backgrounds in nitrogen were 110±40 pptv during the measurement period presented and as such are unlikely to have a significant contribution on the ambient mixing ratio.

10 The bimolecular reaction of H₃O⁺ and nitrous acid produces the products ions H₂NO₂⁺ (m/z 48, 67%) and NO⁺ (m/z 30, 33%). The rate constant (k) of this exothermic proton transfer reaction is calculated to be 2.7 x 10⁻⁹ cm³s⁻¹ with respect to hydronium (H₃O⁺) and 2.2 x 10⁻⁹ cm³s⁻¹ with respect to hydronium mono-hydrate (H₃O•H₂O)⁺ (Spanel and Smith, 2000). Nitrous acid does not undergo proton transfer with hydronium di-hydrate (H₃O•H₂O²)⁺ and tri-hydrate (H₃O•H₂O³)⁺ in SIFT-MS. Nitrous acid mixing ratios herein were determined using the branching ratio corrected protonated product ion m/z 48 intensity normalized to both H₃O⁺ and H₃O•H₂O with their respective k values (Taipale et al. 2008). As such, calculated HONO mixing ratios using SIFT-MS should be independent of the humidity of the gas sample.

15 The data presented in this paper were measured using a Voice200 Selected ion flow tube mass spectrometer (SIFT MS, Syft Technologies, Christchurch, New Zealand). This instrument consists of a switchable reagent ion source capable of rapidly switching between multiple reagent ions. Reagent ions are generated in a microwave discharge ion source region, acting on an air/water mix at a pressure of approximately 440 mTorr to generate H₃O⁺, NO⁺, and O₂⁺. These ions are extracted into the upstream quadrupole chamber maintained at a pressure of approx. 5 x10⁻⁴ torr, using a 70 L/s turbo molecular pump. The reagent ions pass through an array of electrostatic lenses and the upstream quadrupole mass filter, and those not rejected by the mass filter are passed into the flow tube where they are carried along in a stream of nitrogen and selectively ionise target analytes. Gas phase data presented herein was determined using the H₃O⁺ reagent ion only. Sampling was carried out at a height of approx. 3 m using a gas phase inlet consisting of 3.5 m ¼” I.D. PFA tubing connected to a diaphragm inlet pump (KNF) at a total flowrate of 5 standard litres per minute (slpm), from which the SIFT MS sampled approximately 2 slpm through an in-house built pressure controlled inlet maintaining a consistent absolute inlet pressure of 0.5 bar. The flow tube is pumped by a 35 m³/h scroll type dry pump (Edwards) resulting in a mass flow controlled gas flow of 25 sccm for the nitrogen carrier gas (research grade, BOC) and a sample flow of 100 sccm taken from the pressure controlled inlet system. These flows result in a continuous total flow tube pressure of approximately 460 mTorr and a reaction time of approx. 8 ms (Hera et al., 2017). During the campaign, gas phase backgrounds were established through regularly overflowing the sample inlet with dry nitrogen for five continuous minutes every hour.

Nitrous acid (HONO) was measured at product ion m/z 48 (H_2ONO^+) following protonation using the H_3O^+ reagent ion. As a HONO calibration source was not available, a relative transmission curve calibration (between 19–107 m/z) was carried out daily as describe by Taipale and colleagues (Taipale et al., 2008) using a 2 ppm gas standard containing ethylene, Isobutane, benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, tetraflourobenzene, hexafluorobenzere and octafluoro benzene.

2.3 Formal inter-comparison

~~The formal inter-comparison of the four established techniques for measuring HONO (2 wet chemical and 2 BBCEAS) took place during the 9th-14th November 2016. The formal inter-comparison measurements took place during the 9th-14th November 2016, and comprised the four established techniques for measuring HONO (2 wet chemical and 2 BBCEAS).~~ All instruments had a sampling height of 3m during the inter-comparison, and inlets were located as close as possible to each other ([Figure S24, Supporting Information](#)). The BHAM and ICCAS instrument were housed within the same shipping container, with their respective inlet heads located beside each other on the roof. The CAM and AIOFM BBCEAS instruments were housed in separate containers, with inlets located approximately 5 and 10 m, respectively, from the two wet chemical inlet heads. At the completion of the formal winter intercomparison, the inlet locations changed for some of the instruments.

There was no formal inter-comparison between all four instruments in the summer campaign. The BHAM, CAM and ICCAS inlets were located in the same position as per the winter intercomparison at the start (22nd May - 30th June 2017). Therefore, further analysis was performed between these three instruments for this period to examine for any changes in their relationships compared to the winter measurements. The AIOFM instrument was housed within the same container as per the winter however, the inlet was located approximately 3 m further away from other instruments in the summer. On the 30th May, the CAM instrument was moved to the same container as the AIOFM, with the inlets located approx. 3 m from each other.

The ToF-CIMS and SIFT-MS were not initially set up to measure HONO at IAP; but were able to provide some useful data during the summer measurements and are therefore compared to the more established techniques. [A schematic of inlet locations during the summer campaign is provided in Fig S32 \(Supporting Information\).](#)

2.4 Data Analysis

The BHAM and ICCAS instruments were operated with a time response of 5 min, and as this was the longest (Table 1), 5 min averages were used for all instruments in the inter-comparison analyses. For each instrument, their normal quality control procedures were applied and only data that passed the quality control was used for subsequent analysis. Data analysis was performed in R (v 3.5.1) using the openair package (Carslaw and Ropkins, 2012) and the lmodel2 package for Reduced Major Axis (RMA) regression analysis.

3 Results

3.1 Winter formal intercomparison

3.1.1 Time series

The time series (Figure 1) demonstrates that while all instruments captured the same temporal trends, the absolute concentrations differed. The correlation coefficients from regression analyses show that there is little scatter between measurements from the different instruments with r values being consistently between 0.96 and 0.98 (Table 2 and Figure S43, Supporting Information). Overall, the BHAM LOPAP measurements were consistently the highest, followed by ICCAS, AIOFM and CAM. The slopes from the RMA analysis demonstrated that none of the instruments were in agreement (Table 2) within their stated error (Table 1) during the formal inter-comparison exercise. Therefore, in the following sections we investigate possible reasons to account for the lack of agreement between instruments.

3.1.2 Analysis of Co-efficient of Variance

We calculated the co-efficient of variance (CV) as a measure of the precision between the four instruments as per Eqn 1:

$$CV = \frac{\sigma}{\mu} \quad (1)$$

where μ is the mean and σ the standard deviation for the measurements by all four instruments at a given 5 min interval. The CV was used to compare the relative degree of variation between datasets and as a guide a CV of 0.1 is considered as acceptable by the US EPA for PM instruments. The co-efficient of variance (CV) is defined as the standard deviation divided by the mean and is used to compare the relative degree of variation between datasets. Therefore, the CV is a measure of precision, and as a guide a CV of 0.1 is considered as acceptable by the US EPA for PM instruments (Sousan et al., 2016). From Fig 2, the CV was fairly consistent throughout the winter inter-comparison, at an average of 0.28 ± 0.07 . The CV was however observed to increase at the end of the inter-comparison, coinciding with period of the lowest mean HONO concentration (< 1 ppb, Fig 2). An increase in the CV indicates worsening agreement between instruments, possibly due to the ~~suggesting that as the concentrations approached the detection limit (DL) of some instruments (Table 1), there was a decrease in the level of agreement.~~ NO_2 is a potential interferent for the measurement of HONO for both wet chemical and BBCEAS instruments (Heland et al., 2001). Both BBCEAS instruments use the Voigt et al. (2002) NO_2 cross-section, which has previously been shown to have negligible HONO absorption structures (Veitel, 2002, Kleffmann et al. 2006). ~~For the BBCEAS instruments, the fitting algorithm used should isolate HONO and NO_2 very well in theory; however, the applied reference NO_2 spectrum might contain absorption signatures from HONO. This would result in a higher NO_2/HONO ratio retrieved from the BBCEAS compared to ambient air, and consequently reporting a low HONO mixing ratio (Kleffmann et al., 2006). However, the Voigt et al (2002) NO_2 cross section, used by both BBCEAS instruments, has previously been shown to have negligible HONO absorption structures (Veitel, 2002).~~ We also note that HONO reference spectrum should contain little structure from NO_2 .

Overall, Fig 2, ~~however~~, demonstrates no apparent relationship between the CV and NO₂. This likely reflects the efforts taken during processing and measurement to reduce the influence of interference from NO₂ in all instrument types.

3.1.3 Normalised difference analysis

Firstly, ~~the~~ systematic error for each instrument can be calculated by normalised sequential difference (NSD) according to

5 Eqn ~~24~~ (Arnold et al., 2007):

$$NSD = \frac{(Conc_t - Conc_{t+1})}{(Conc_t \times Conc_{t+1})^{0.5}} \quad (21)$$

NSD is a method of calculating the variation between consecutive measurements for an individual instrument, where Conc_t is the concentration measured at time t and Conc_{t+1} the following measurement. The results are shown in Fig S54 (Supporting

Information), and as each instrument showed a symmetrical and Gaussian distribution it suggests there was no internal systematic bias for any given instrument.

Secondly, ~~w~~we then examined the normalized difference (ND) between pairs of instruments to explore inter-instrument variability, calculated according to Eqn ~~32~~ (Pinto et al., 2014):

$$ND_{ij} = \frac{(C_i - C_j)}{(C_i + C_j)} \quad (32)$$

15 where C_i and C_j denote HONO levels measured by any pair of instruments (BHAM, ICCAS, AIOFM or CAM) calculated for each measurement period. For example, the ND for the BHAM and CAM instruments (ND_{BHAM-CAM}) would be calculated by $([HONO]_{BHAM} - [HONO]_{CAM}) / ([HONO]_{BHAM} + [HONO]_{CAM})$. We also calculated the co-efficient of divergence (CD), which is a normalized measure of the similarity between two measurement time series, derived via Eqn ~~43~~ (See Pinto et al. (2014) and references therein):

$$20 \quad CD_{ij} = \sqrt{(1/p) \times \sum (ND_{ij})^2} \quad (43)$$

Where p is the number of observations and ND_{ij} is defined in Eqn ~~32~~. A CD of one means the time series are completely different, while of CD of zero indicates that they are identical. The calculated CD for each instrument pair is shown in Table 3 and demonstrate that each of the two overall approaches - wet chemical (BHAM and ICCAS) and BBCEAS (AIOFM and CAM) - agreed well internally. The ICCAS and AIOFM also agreed well, but CAM and BHAM had a higher CD with AIOFM and ICCAS (Table 3).

If there is no difference between a pair of instruments, then the calculated ND should be scattered around zero, and from Fig 3 this was not observed for any instrument pair, pointing to differences between instruments. The ND was evaluated as function of wind direction and measured HONO concentration (Fig 3), to explore if ambient concentration or spatial heterogeneity could explain the disagreements. From Figure 3, for all instrument pairs the highest ND, and therefore largest relative difference, between instruments was at low HONO mixing ratios (ca. <1 ppb) and was also associated with a westerly direction.

At high wind speeds, the ND was also high between all instrument pairs (Fig S652, Supporting Information). As we observed high ND at relatively high wind speeds, it would suggest that spatial variability in ambient HONO concentrations did not affect the intercomparison as high wind speeds typically homogenise ambient concentrations from point and local sources. Overall from Figs 3 and S52, the periods of low HONO concentration, high wind speeds and westerly winds all coincided during the formal winter intercomparison making it difficult to disentangle the influence of these factors on the observed ND.

3.1.4 Instrument agreement at low concentrations

There was evidence from the CV (Fig 2) and ND (Fig 3) analyses that the level of agreement between instruments decreased at low HONO mixing ratios. Therefore we applied RMA correlation analysis for periods when the HONO level was below 2 ppb (as measured by CAM), and the results are shown in Table 4. From Table 4, the observed slopes between the BHAM-ICCAS-AIOFM at low concentrations (<2 ppb) were similar to those for the whole winter inter-comparison dataset (Table 2) ~~unlike when compared to the CAM instrument~~. This suggests that the difference in measured concentrations between these instruments (~~BHAM-CAM-AIOFM~~, as indicated by the slope) was not related to concentration. ~~There was however a notable~~ decrease in the slope for the low concentrations between CAM and the other three instruments compared to whole inter-comparison (Tables 2 and 4, respectively), potentially pointing to changes in the CAM readings at lower concentrations. This change may be related to differences in instrument sensitivity (Table 1).

3.2 Summer Measurements

While there was no formal intercomparison during the summer measurements, at the start of the summer measurements the BHAM, ICCAS and CAM instrument inlets were co-located as per the winter formal intercomparison (Figure S24). The relationship between instruments for this period is shown in Table 5. The agreement (gradient) between BHAM and ICCAS improved in the summer to 0.91 compared to winter (0.77) but with slight changes in intercept (Tables 2 and 5). A change was also observed between CAM and ICCAS with a lower slope observed for the start of summer (Table 5) compared to winter intercomparison period (Table 2).

The AIOFM instrument started measuring halfway through the summer campaign, and while the instrument was housed in the same container the inlet location was a few meters further from the other three instruments than in the winter inter-comparison (Figure S32). As a result, we compared the instrument readings for one week after the AIOFM instrument started measuring (7th-14th June 2017), with the results shown in Table 6. Note during this period the CAM instrument had moved to sample from the same container as AIOFM (Figure S32). From Table 6, the agreement between instruments of the same type were within their stated uncertainties for the summer. However, when comparing the between the two different instrument types (wet chemical and BBCEAS, e.g. AIOFM-BHAM, etc), the agreement was notably worse compared to the winter (Tables 2 and 6). The exception was that the agreement between the BHAM and CAM, which was similar in the winter and summer (Tables 2 and 5), despite the CAM inlet ~~moving being~~ further away from BHAM inlet ~~on the 30th May 2017~~ (Table 6).

Generally, the level of agreement between instruments varied between the summer and winter and this may reflect spatial variability in HONO concentrations as some of the instrument inlet locations varied from summer to winter. In the summer, the CAM inlet moved closer to the AIOFM inlet and the agreement between the two BBCEAS improved to be within uncertainty (Table 6). However, we also note that the BHAM and ICCAS inlets were in the same location winter and summer and yet the agreement between instruments changed considerably between the two measurement periods. We re-calculated the ND for two inter-comparison periods analysed in the summer (Tables 4 and 5) and found no relationship between the ND and wind direction (Figures S764 and S875, Supporting Information). This suggests that during the summer measurements the wind direction may have exerted less influence on the spatial variability of the HONO levels or that observed relationship between wind direction and ND in winter was associative not causal.

3.2.1 Performance of MANC ToF-CIMS

Measurements from the Manchester ToF-CIMS are compared to the BHAM and CAM instruments for the summer campaign as these instruments had the best data coverage for periods when the MANC instrument was measuring, as well as representing the typical upper and lower measurements (Fig S98, Supporting Information+). In general the MANC instrument captured the temporal trends ($r > 0.84$) but recorded higher HONO concentrations than the other instruments (Table 7). Similar distributions were observed between the BHAM and MANC datasets, with the exception of a number of outliers for MANC (Figure 4). We note that MANC was not co-located with either BHAM or CAM instrument and while this will likely have affected the inter-comparison, the results do point to the MANC instrument capturing the temporal trends but at a higher concentration than the other instruments (157-239%, Table 7).

20 3.2.2 Performance of the YORK SIFT-MS

The York SIFT-MS was primarily used for measuring VOC fluxes and so did not typically measure at ground level. To enable an inter-comparison with the other techniques, the YORK instrument measured at ground level ~~for an extended single continuous period~~, from 1800 30/05/2017 until 0900 31/05/2017. The results are shown in Fig 5 and while the short time period and spatial distance between inlets (approx. 50m) limits the conclusions that can be drawn, it is clear that the YORK instrument captured the temporal trends (r of 0.9-0.96 compared to other techniques) and gave comparable concentrations to the BHAM instrument (slope of 0.78). ~~This suggests that the YORK instrument was measuring HONO at reasonable concentrations.~~ Furthermore, we note that a co-located PTR-MS (PTR-TOR 1000, Ionicon) was unable to see a HONO signal despite both instruments using H_3O^+ to detect HONO.

4 Discussion

From the literature, the recent inter-comparison of ambient field measurements of HONO concentrations described by Pinto et al. (2014) is the most relevant to the current work. Overall, in their study Pinto and co-workers found that in general the level of disagreement between instruments was greater than the stated uncertainties for each instrument. While there was some evidence for a chemical interference (but Pinto and co-workers could not identify the compounds responsible definitively), there were additional factors that also appeared to affect the inter-comparison. The best agreement in Pinto et al. (2014) was found for instruments with co-located inlets compared to instruments with inlets several meters apart and so points to spatial heterogeneity in HONO concentrations (possibly due a source on the roof surface) affecting the inter-comparison. Overall, the results from the current work are similar to that observed previously (Pinto et al. 2014), as there was a separation of up to 13 meters between some instrument inlets and this may have affected the results for the inter-comparison in the current work. With respect to photolysis, the lifetime of HONO at midday ranged from 17-300 and 9-33 min for winter and summer, respectively (depending upon weather / cloud cover / aerosol loading) and may have contributed to spatial heterogeneity in HONO concentrations. However, in the current work the results do not conclusively point to spatial heterogeneity in HONO concentrations affecting the results. As both the current work and Pinto et al. (2014) found some evidence for spatial heterogeneity in HONO concentrations affecting the intercomparison, this would suggest that to avoid this issue future studies should use a common inlet for all instruments in the field.

Duan et al. (2018) presented results of an inter-comparison at a rural site in China between a BBCEAS and a LOPAP, with good agreement observed (slope of 0.94 and r^2 0.89). The slope appeared to deviate from linearity above approximately 2 ppb suggesting that at higher concentrations the relationship was changing, as observed here between CAM and wet chemical techniques (BHAM and ICCAS) (Tables 2 and 4). A divergence in the measured concentrations at high concentrations was also observed for all instruments as part of the FIONA inter-comparison (Ródenas et al., 2013), but at much higher concentrations (>15 ppb) than most of those encountered here. However, we did not observe such a change in relationship at high and low concentrations between the AIOFM-BHAM/ICCAS, suggesting that this result was not related to instrument type. Furthermore, as the measurements from Duan et al. (2018) were performed in a rural site, conditions may also be more homogenous mix compared to an urban location and this may explain why there was better agreement between the LOPAP and BBCEAS in their study compared to the current work.

Throughout this work, the wet chemical techniques generally measured higher concentrations than the spectroscopic techniques, in agreement with previous studies (e.g. Stutz et al., 2010; Pinto et al., 2014). Pinto et al. (2014) suggested the possible cause may be a positive chemical interference in the wet chemical instruments. The observed dependence of the normalized difference between each instrument pair on wind direction may reflect changes in composition affecting the instrument readings. We note that the two-channel stripping coil used in the sampling inlet for both the BHAM and ICCAS

instruments should account for any chemical interferences, particularly in the gas-phase (Kleffmann et al., 2002). ~~Particle-phase nitrite is also expected to be corrected by the two-channel system. The aerosol in Beijing is typically acidic (Song et al. 2018) and based on the effective Henry's law constant for HONO we would expect there to be little particle-phase nitrite (Kleffmann et al. 2006). This combined with the expected low uptake of particles by the LOPAP sampling inlet (in order of~~
5 ~~1% for particles with a diameter between 50-800 nm, Broske et al. 2003) suggests that there would be limited chemical interference from particle-phase species. We also note that particle-phase chemical interference would likely be corrected for by the two-channel system, and we also note that based on the effective Henry's law constant for HONO and the typically acidic nature of Beijing aerosol that little particle-phase nitrite would be expected (Kleffmann et al. 2006). Therefore, we do not expect there to be significant chemical interference on the BHAM and ICCAS wet chemical instruments.~~

10

In the current work, differences were observed between measurements from instruments of the same type (BBCEAS and wet chemical). The cause of this disagreement was difficult to pinpoint, but may reflect differences in calibration and corrections applied by each group. In particular the BHAM and ICCAS instruments inlets were next to each other during the inter-comparison (<0.5m), and thus the differences likely reflect more differences in the operating conditions of the BHAM and
15 ICCAS instruments. Both instruments used the same nitrite standard for calibration. Notably, there is a significant difference in DL between the instruments (Table 1) likely due to the different methodologies for determining baseline correction. For example, the BHAM instrument used zero air sampled at the inlet to determine the baseline, whereas ICCAS used water introduced into the wet chemical side of the instrument. ~~Tests have shown that water results in a lower baseline measurement for the LOPAP (approx. 80-100 ppt), however when comparing the two wet chemical methods this would only result in a~~
20 ~~change in the intercept, not the slope. Tests have shown that water results in a lower baseline measurement for the LOPAP (approx. 80-100 ppt). We note that the ambient HONO was typically within the ppb range during the inter-comparison (Fig 1) and the effect of this baseline difference would be negligible at these levels. But at lower concentrations (low ppt), it would proportionally have a greater influence on the reported HONO levels by the BHAM and ICCAS instruments. High ND was observed at low concentration (<1ppb, Fig 3) and the difference in absolute baseline correction may explain this.~~

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The scaling factor to correct for the discrepancy in flow rate applied to the CAM instrument after the campaigns is unlikely to be the cause of the disagreement between the two BBCEAS. The two BBCEAS systems agree to within $\pm 10\%$ for NO_2 measurements, and the larger disagreement for HONO (13%, Table 2) likely reflects higher spatial variability of ambient HONO compared to NO_2 , as the CAM and AIOFM inlets were the furthest apart during the formal winter inter-comparison.
30 The agreement between the two BBCEAS decreased at lower concentrations and this may reflect differences in DL (Table 1). The two BBCEAS instruments were found to be in better agreement in the summer compared to the winter. This may reflect the inlets being closer in summer compared to the winter, however there was still a distance of 3m between inlets. We do not know the reasons why the agreement between the AIOFM and CAM instruments changed in the summer compared to winter. Whilst there were some variability in path length and purge flows between the two BBCEAS systems, these are not thought to

account for the discrepancy as they did not vary winter to summer. Furthermore, another factor may be losses/production of HONO and NO₂ on the inlet filter and/or tubing losses/production that may also influence the intercomparison results as these were naturally different across systems due to different residence times (~3 s and ~0.5 s for the CAM and AIOFM BBCEAS, respectively). Laboratory tests using the same tubing material (Teflon) have however shown that neither the production nor the loss of HONO were significant in the CAM instrument (to less than a few percent) even at considerably longer inlet and cavity residence times, suggesting this was insignificant.

Generally, the agreement between instrument pairs varied from winter to summer, with the exception of CAM and BHAM instruments. As all instruments were operated and calibrated according to the same procedures in winter and summer, there were no changes in instrument operation that can explain these changes and as such, the cause is unclear. The concentrations observed during summer (mean of 1.2 ± 0.9 ppb (1σ)) were typically lower compared to the winter (mean of 2.35 ± 1.9 ppb (1σ)), and this may have affected the results.

5 Conclusions

Overall, from the winter inter-comparison all instruments were found to agree on the temporal trends and variability in HONO ($r > 0.97$), yet displayed some divergence in absolute concentrations (slopes of 0.61-0.88), with the wet chemical methods consistently somewhat higher than the BBCEAS systems. We found no evidence for any systematic bias in any of the instruments, with the exception of measurements near instrument detection limits. There was evidence that the relationship between some instruments varied for the different measurement periods (e.g. winter/summer) however the reason for this change was unclear. When considering the mass spectrometric methods (MANC ToF-CIMS and YORK SIFT-MS), these captured the temporal trends in HONO concentrations but were found to differ in absolute concentration relative to the other instrumentation.

There was no evidence for a definitive cause of systematic bias between the four instruments during the formal HONO inter-comparison, which might justify scaling or excluding results from one or more instruments. As a result, we could not say with confidence, which instrument (if any) provided the ‘correct’ measurement of HONO concentration. Therefore, to meet the needs of the wider APHH-Beijing program for a single ground level HONO measurement, a merged HONO dataset was produced using the mean and range concentration of the four instruments that participated in the formal winter inter-comparison (two wet chemical and two BBCEAS). This merged dataset will be used for future ground level analyses (e.g. model evaluation) across the APHH-Beijing program.

Authors contributions

Study conceived by BO and LC. Measurements were performed by LC, LK, BO, JD, WZ, MS, AM, TB, SW, JA and AB. Formal analysis performed by LC, LK and BO. All co-authors contributed to data curation. LC prepared the manuscript with contributions from all co-authors.

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Table 1: Instrumentation measuring HONO at IAP.

Institution	Instrument	Manufacturer	DL (ppt)	Error	Time resolution	Reference
Birmingham (BHAM)	Wet Chemical (LOPAP.03)	QUMA	Winter: 35 Summer: 5 (2 σ , 30s)	10%	5 min	(Heland et al., 2001)
ICCAS	Wet Chemical	Custom built	134 (2 σ , 30s)	10%	5 min	(Hou et al. 2016)
Cambridge (CAM)	BBCEAS	Custom built	25 (1 σ , 60s)	9%	5 s	(Kennedy et al., 2011)
AIOFM	BBCEAS	Custom built	120 (2 σ , 60s)	9%	1 min	(Duan et al. 2018)
Manchester (MANC)	ToF-CIMS	Aerodyne Research Inc / Tofwerk.	33 (2 σ , 60s)	19 %	1 Hz	(Priestley et al., 2018)
York	SIFT-MS Voice ultra 200	Syft Technologies	130 (2 σ , 60s)	22%	19 secs (1min averaged)	(Hera et al., 2018)

Table 2: Results of the reduced major axis regression analysis with 95% confidence intervals during the formal winter inter-comparison. Variability shown is the 95% confidence interval of the slope and intercepts.

INSTRUMENTS	INTERCEPT	SLOPE	R	N
BHAM-ICCAS	0.09±0.04	0.77±0.01	0.97	865
BHAM-AIOFM	-0.18±0.03	0.71±0.01	0.98	1070
BHAM-CAM	-0.23±0.03	0.61±0.01	0.98	1125
ICCAS-AIOFM	-0.20±0.03	0.88±0.01	0.98	954
ICCAS-CAM	-0.38±0.04	0.82±0.01	0.97	991
AIOFM-CAM	-0.09±0.03	0.87±0.01	0.96	1206

Table 3: Calculated CD values for each instrument pair during the winter inter-comparison.

	ICCAS	AIOFM	CAM
BHAM	0.11	0.22	0.32
ICCAS	-	0.12	0.21
AIOFM	-	-	0.11

Table 4: RMA regression analysis (with 95% confidence intervals) for times when the abundance of HONO was less than 2 ppb as measured by CAM during the formal winter intercomparison period. Variability shown is the 95% confidence interval of the slope and intercepts.

INSTRUMENTS	INTERCEPT	SLOPE	R	N
BHAM-ICCAS	-0.01±0.06	0.82±0.02	0.96	437
BHAM-AIOFM	-0.25±0.03	0.76±0.01	0.98	529
BHAM-CAM	-0.06±0.03	0.53±0.01	0.95	613
ICCAS-AIOFM	-0.23±0.05	0.91±0.03	0.95	478
ICCAS-CAM	-0.12±0.05	0.68±0.02	0.91	556
AIOFM-CAM	0.07±0.03	0.72±0.02	0.92	655

Table 5: RMA regression relationships of HONO measured by BHAM-ICCAS-CAM during the co-located measurements at the start of the summer campaign (22nd May-30th May 2017). All three inlet locations were the same as the formal winter intercomparison. Variability shown is the 95% confidence interval of the slope and intercepts.

INSTRUMENTS	INTERCEPT	SLOPE	R	N
BHAM-ICCAS	-0.24±0.02	0.91±0.01	0.97	2061
BHAM-CAM	-0.34±0.02	0.61±0.01	0.90	1233
ICCAS-CAM	0.21±0.02	0.69±0.01	0.85	1346

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Table 6: RMA regression relationships (with 95% confidence intervals) of HONO measured by all instruments in the middle of the summer campaign (7th-14th June 2017). Note that BHAM and ICCAS inlets were in same location for this period. The CAM instrument had moved to the same container as AIOFM, whose inlets were 3 meters apart. Variability shown is the 95% confidence interval of the slope and intercepts.

INSTRUMENTS	INTERCEPT	SLOPE	R	N
BHAM-ICCAS	0.17±0.04	0.93±0.03	0.90	900
BHAM-AIOFM	-0.18±0.03	0.61±0.02	0.81	1377
BHAM-CAM	0.02±0.03	0.65±0.02	0.86	1395
ICCAS-AIOFM	-0.08±0.02	0.43±0.01	0.81	1153
ICCAS-CAM	0.07±0.03	0.53±0.02	0.82	1167
AIOFM-CAM	0.20±0.01	1.07±0.02	0.92	1982

5

Table 7: RMA regression relationships of HONO measured by BHAM-CAMB-MANC for the whole summer by period. Variability shown is the 95% confidence interval of the slope and intercepts.

INSTRUMENTS	INTERCEPT	SLOPE	R	N
BHAM-MANC	-0.35±0.06	1.57±0.04	0.84	1896
BHAM-CAM	0.00±0.02	0.63±0.01	0.84	4106
CAM-MANC	-0.30±0.05	2.39±0.05	0.88	2372

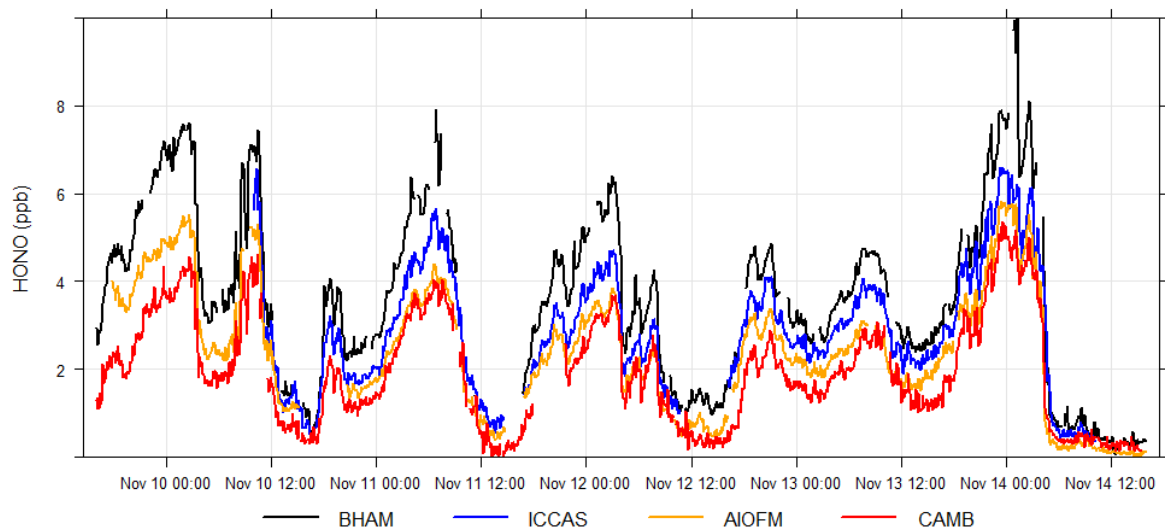


Figure 1: Time series of the measured mixing ratios during the formal winter inter-comparison for each instrument

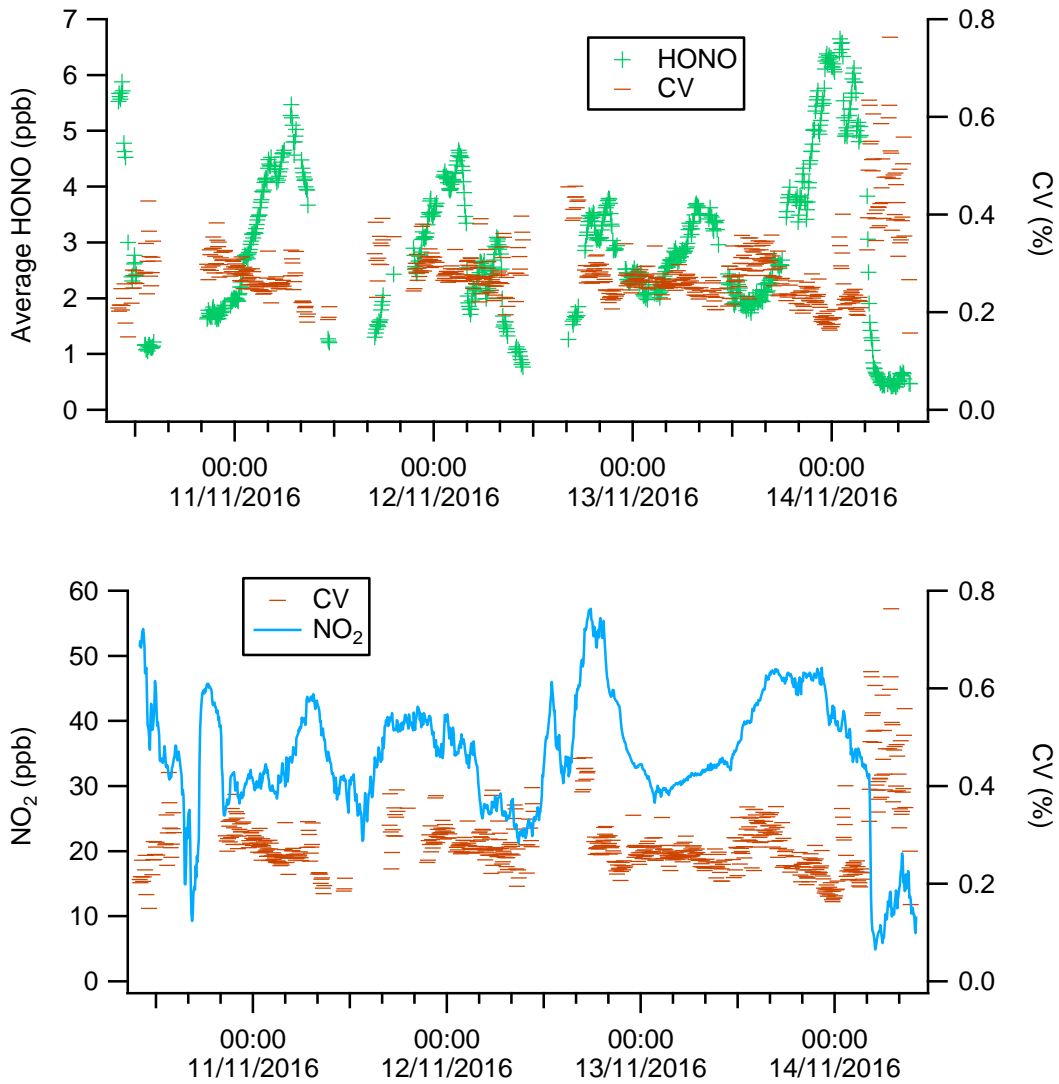
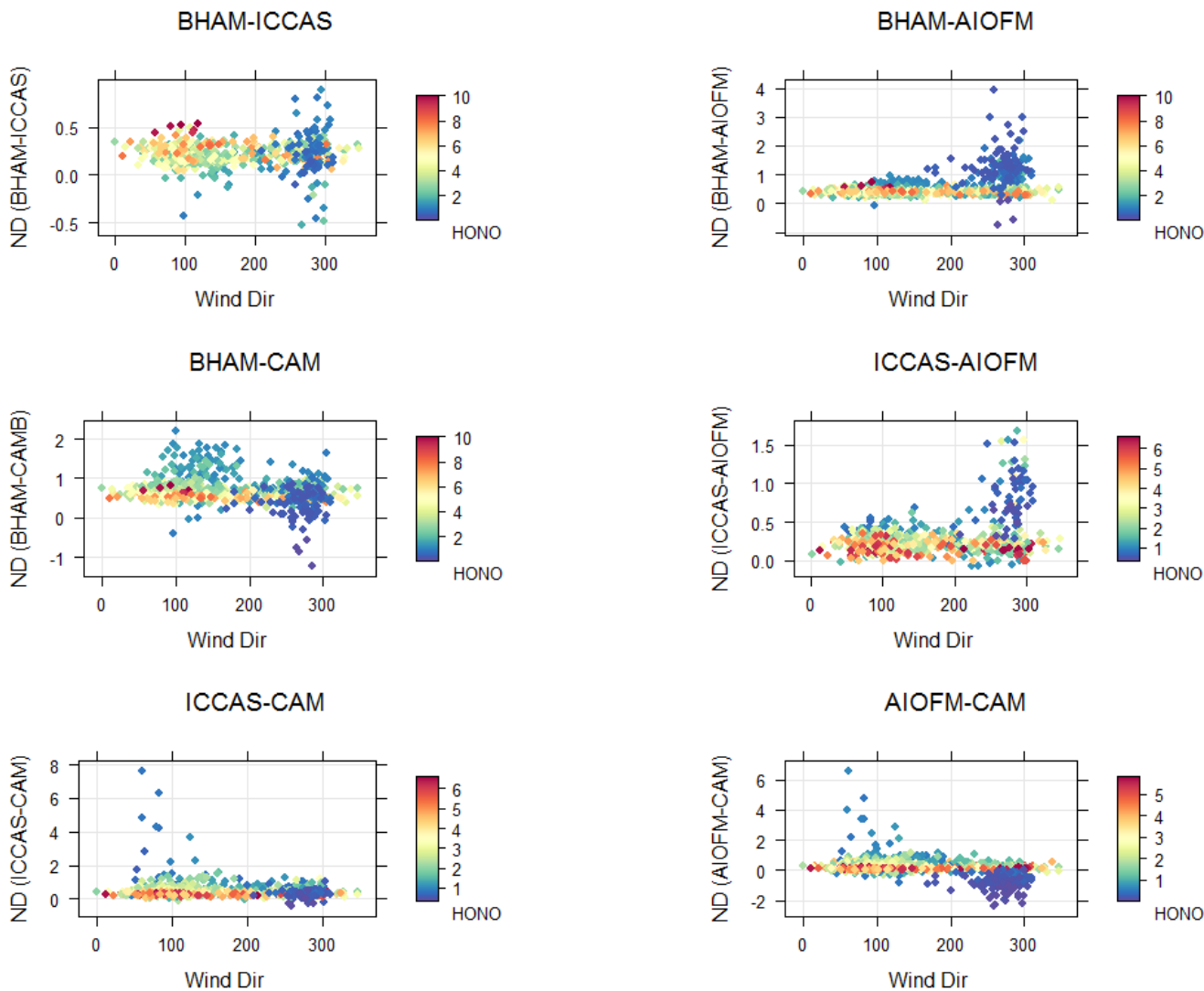


Figure 2: Time series of the co-efficient of variance (CV), mean mixing ratio of HONO (top) and NO₂ (bottom) during the winter inter-comparison. Note only when all four instruments were measuring were the mean HONO and CV calculated.



5 **Figure 3: Normalised Differences (ND) for each instrument pair as a function of wind direction coloured by measured HONO concentration for the winter intercomparison. Note the different scales for the y-axes and HONO abundance colour key.**

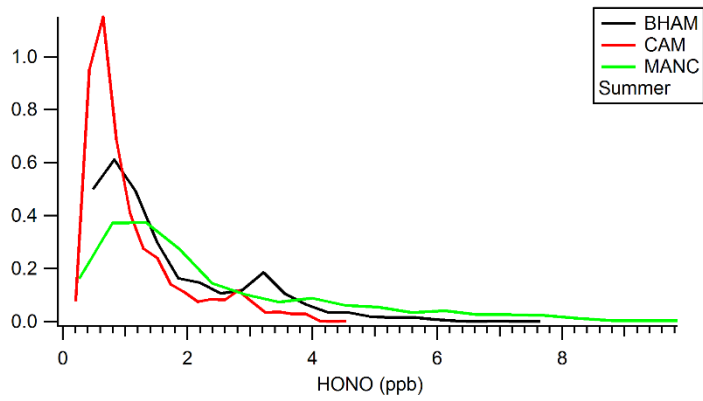


Figure 4: Histogram of measured summer concentrations (only for periods when all three instruments were measuring).

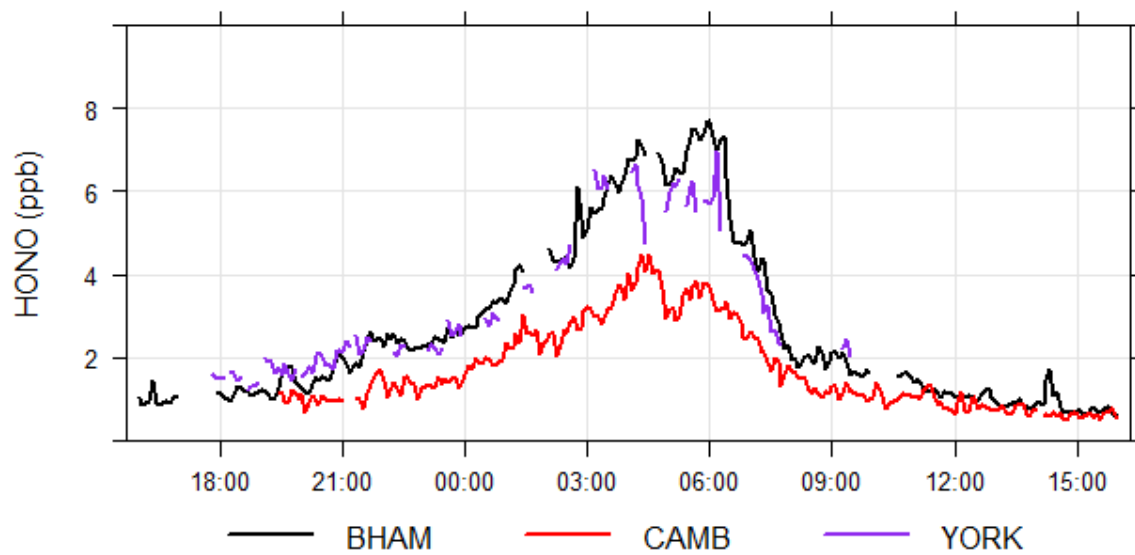


Figure 5: Time series for the period when the YORK instrument measured at ground level during the summer campaign.