# lonospheric irregularities & scintillations

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# **Ground-based GNSS receivers**

# Probing the ionosphere with GNSS\*



GNSS signals pass through the entire ionosphere



Source	Effect	
Ionospheric effects	± 5 m	
Ephemeris errors	± 2.5 m	
Satellite clock errors	± 2 m	
Multipath distortion	± 1 m	
Tropospheric effects	± 0.5 m	
Numerical errors	± 1 m	



Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) is the standard generic term for satellite navigation systems that provide autonomous geo-spatial positioning with global coverage. This term includes e.g. the GPS, GLONASS, Galileo, Beidou and other regional systems.



\*Global Navigation Satellite System

## **Code and Carrier phase measurements equations**



The ionosphere will introduce a delay of the modulation (the code measurement will be larger than in vacuum), and an advance of the carrier phase (the carrier phase measurement will be smaller than in vacuum).

## Linear Combination of GNSS Measurements



**Estimation of Total Electron Content (TEC)** 



# **Ionospheric Scintillation**

# Categories of scintillation



# Categories of scintillation





# **Ionospheric Scintillation**

![](_page_10_Picture_0.jpeg)

# **Ionospheric Scintillation**

# **Ionospheric Irregularities**

![](_page_10_Picture_3.jpeg)

# Irregularities in a nutshell

Anomalies (i.e., ± gradients) w.r.t. a background, smooth, ambient, ideal ionosphere

![](_page_11_Figure_2.jpeg)

# Irregularities\* in a nutshell

![](_page_12_Figure_1.jpeg)

![](_page_12_Figure_2.jpeg)

# Irregularities\* in a nuthsell

Kelvin-Helmotz Instability

Small-scales embedded in EPBs

Growth/Decay of instabilities:

K-H and GDI at high-lat (very rare) R-T at low-latitudes (very common)

«few hundreds of meters»

![](_page_13_Figure_5.jpeg)

# Irregularities\* in a nutshell

Boundaries and edges of:	Auroral oval precipitation Polar cap patches Auroral blobs Storm-enhanced densities	Mostly	y storm-time phen	omena
	Equatorial plasma bubbles	Modulated by storm-time phenomena (electrodyamics)		
	«A» problem			
100 m	1 km	10 km	100 km	1000 km
Small scale	Medium scale		Large scale	
(Tresher's scale)			*from a	GNSS perspective

# Irregularities\* in a nuthsell

![](_page_15_Figure_1.jpeg)

# Irregularities in a nuthsell

HORIZONTAL SCALE 1 MAGNETIC FIELD (m) SCALE (km) 1000 100 10 100 10 0.1 0.01 Wandering of Normal to Ionosphere  $\sim$ Gyroradius **IRREGULARITIES** Multiple Normals to Ionosphere roradius Aggregate Phase. of TIDs Electron Scintillation 3 (Gravitationally Anisotropic ) ОF Amplitude Scintillation Plasma Turbulence DENSITY (Magnetically Anisotropic) Blurs on Ionograms (SPECTRAL Strong Back Scattering and Trans-Eorth Scale equatorial. propagation Piasma Waves ∖at .VHF ٥f mospheric Height (Magnetically LOG Anisotropic ) Radius đ i0² 105 IQ4 10<sup>3</sup> 10<sup>2</sup> ٥Ō 10 10 WAVE NUMBER (m<sup>-1</sup>)

Spectra of ionosphere irregularities and their intensity as function of wave number over spatial scale sizes covering from the electron gyro-radius to the radius of the Earth (Booker, 1956).

#### What causes phase and amplitude fluctuations in the GNSS signals?

![](_page_17_Figure_1.jpeg)

Scale size range: full ionospheric spectrum Affects: phase Physical mechanism: phase mixing

Scale size range: up to Fresnel's scale Affects: amplitude, phase Physical mechanism: decorrelation, interference What causes phase and amplitude fluctuations in the GNSS signals?

## Scale size range: up to Fresnel's scale

The first Fresnel zone is an elliptical region in free space which radio waves travel directly from transmission to reception without significant alterations

```
Diffraction occurs when F_{irr} \leq F_r
```

![](_page_18_Picture_4.jpeg)

![](_page_18_Figure_5.jpeg)

![](_page_19_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_19_Figure_1.jpeg)

# **Ionospheric Scintillation**

# GNSS scintillation: how to measure

#### **Ionospheric Scintillation Monitor Receivers**

Features:

- High-sampling frequency (50/100 Hz)
- Low-noise oscillators
- Stable clock
- Firmware providing scintillation indices (1-min resolution)
- Output in (quasi) real-time

#### - Amplitude scintillation, S4 index:

$$S_4 = \sqrt{\frac{(\langle I^2 \rangle - \langle I \rangle^2)}{\langle I \rangle^2}}$$
  
I = Signal Intensity

square-root of the normalized variance of signal intensity over a given interval of time.

#### - Phase scintillation, $\sigma_\phi$ (SigmaPhi) index:

 $\sigma_{\phi} = \sqrt{\langle \phi^2 \rangle - \langle \phi \rangle^2}$  standard deviation of detrended phase measurements.

![](_page_21_Picture_13.jpeg)

![](_page_21_Figure_14.jpeg)

![](_page_21_Picture_15.jpeg)

![](_page_22_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_23_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_24_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_25_Figure_0.jpeg)

Loss of lock

$$S_4^2 = \left( \left\langle I^2 \right\rangle - \left\langle I \right\rangle^2 \right) / \left\langle I \right\rangle^2$$
  
Ampl.

$$\sigma_{\varphi}^{2} = \left< \varphi^{2} \right> - \left< \varphi \right>^{2}$$
 Phase

![](_page_26_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_27_Picture_0.jpeg)

#### Home Scientific Metadata Space Physics Ontology

Home > All Scientific Metadata > Data Collection-related Metadata > Data Collections

#### **Data Collections**

Top-level definition of a collection of the model or measurement data, with CollectionResults pointing to its URL(s) for accessing the data. Note: data collections do not include begin and end times, please see Catalogue.

#### On This Page:

- Activity Indicators
- Sensor Measurements
- <u>Computational Models</u>
- <u>Mixed</u>
- <u>Other</u>

#### Mixed

eSWua IONOWORD tool: Nowcasting global TEC maps

eSWua IONOWORLD tool: Long-term forecasting global TEC maps

eSWua: Scintillation Indices and Total Electron Content (TEC) database

GIM: Global Ionosphere Maps

IRTAM 3D global real-time assimilative model of ionospheric electron density

RayTRIX-CQP: Oblique ionogram synthesizer with E, F1, F2 layer echo traces and MUF

## https://esc.pithia.eu/

#### eswua.ingv.it

![](_page_28_Picture_1.jpeg)

NEWS: hya) owned by the Kenya Space Agency (KSA) is now available in the eSWUa system; instrument code: NAIOP

IOP 19/09/2023 - New GNSS scintillation receiver installed at the Department of Space Science & Enginee

![](_page_28_Figure_4.jpeg)

#### eswua.ingv.it

INGV IONOSPHERIC MONITORING NETWORK

![](_page_29_Figure_2.jpeg)

![](_page_29_Picture_3.jpeg)

#### eswua.ingv.it

![](_page_30_Figure_1.jpeg)

## Impact on tracking

Occurrence of scintillation is strongly linked with Loss of Lock probability

![](_page_31_Figure_2.jpeg)

 $Prob \ lol_{scint}^{highlat}(\%) = \left[0.02955. \exp\left(3.26.\sigma_{\varphi}\right)\right].100$  $Prob \ lol_{scint}^{lowlat}(\%) = \left[0.00797. \exp\left(3.36.S4\right)\right].100$ 

X. Luo et al. | Advances in Space Research 60 (2017) 1039-1053

1045

![](_page_31_Figure_6.jpeg)

Fig. 5. Hourly occurrence probability of scintillation events and cycle-slips for GPS, GLONASS, and BDS satellites data collected at Sha Tin station from 6 October 2015 to 31 December 2016.

## Impact on positioning

![](_page_32_Figure_1.jpeg)

**Fig. 8.** Data for 2015-03-17 and 2015-03-18. (a) Phase scintillation index for all GPS and GLONASS satellites, from the scintillation receiver in Vega. (b) ROTI@Rec for the receiver VEGS. (c) Position errors for Steinkjer (RTK) and Vega (PPP) (receivers MSTE & VEGS). Blue line is RTK, red line is PPP.

![](_page_32_Figure_3.jpeg)

#### Distribution of positioning errors in the East, North and Up directions

Luo et al. (2018). Investigation of ionospheric scintillation effects on BDS precise point positioning at low-latitude regions. GPS solutions, 22(3), 1-12.

#### **Occurrence of scintillation decreases GNSS performance**

#### What causes phase and amplitude fluctuations in the GNSS signals?

![](_page_33_Figure_1.jpeg)

Scale size range: full ionospheric spectrum
Affects: phase
Physical mechanism: phase mixing
Effect: deterministic fluctuations
Mitigation: IFLC (1<sup>st</sup> ionospheric order)
Positioning issues: Cycle Slips, Losses and Lock, Phase Noise, 2<sup>nd</sup> order ionospheric effect (fraction of cm), etc.

Scale size range: up to Fresnel's scale
Affects: amplitude, phase
Physical mechanism: decorrelation, interference
Effect: stochastic fluctuations
Mitigation: e.g., Conker et al., Aquino et al., etc., de-weighting methods.
Positioning issues: stochastic nature is challenging, TEC cannot be calculated

Amplitude scintillation:

1 mechanism: diffraction triggered by small-scale irregularities

Stochastic effect

Stochastic effects are the most threating for GNSS positioning

![](_page_34_Figure_5.jpeg)

Phase "fluctuations":

2 mechanisms: -<u>diffraction</u> (small-scale irregularities) -refraction (all scale range and scaling with 1/f)

Stochastic and deterministic effects

![](_page_35_Figure_4.jpeg)

Phase "fluctuations":

2 mechanisms: -<u>diffraction</u> (small-scale irregularities) -refraction (all scale range and scaling with 1/f)

Stochastic and deterministic effects

If cutoff frequency is "wrong" (ususally fixed at 0.1 Hz), detrending is wrong,  $\sigma_{\Phi}$  value includes mainly phase fluctuations due to refraction, i.e., mostly deterministic effects. **Overestimated**  $\sigma_{\Phi}$ 

![](_page_36_Figure_5.jpeg)

![](_page_37_Figure_1.jpeg)

Scintillation on L1?

![](_page_38_Figure_1.jpeg)

![](_page_39_Figure_1.jpeg)

Scintillation on L1?

Scintillation on L2?

NO! Ionosphere-Free Linear Combination says NO!

![](_page_39_Figure_5.jpeg)

![](_page_40_Figure_1.jpeg)

![](_page_41_Figure_1.jpeg)

YES! Ionosphere-Free Linear Combination doesn't account for all fluctuations

![](_page_42_Figure_1.jpeg)

![](_page_42_Figure_2.jpeg)

# If properly detrended, SigmaPhi has almost the same information content of S4

Ghobadi et al. (2020). *GPS Solutions* 

Spogli et al. (2021). *IEEE Geoscience and Remote Sensing Letters*.

#### This is an issue for high-latitude only, where plasma convection is way larger

![](_page_43_Figure_1.jpeg)

IEEE Geoscience and Remote Sensing Letters.

0.1 Hz cutoff is not that bad at low latitudes...

![](_page_44_Figure_0.jpeg)

Spogli et al. (2021). IEEE Geoscience and Remote Sensing Letters.

![](_page_44_Figure_2.jpeg)

Wang et al. (2018) Journal of Geophysical Research: Space Physics

![](_page_45_Figure_1.jpeg)

![](_page_46_Figure_1.jpeg)

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## How to mitigate?

Cutting the elevation angle (typically 30°) Sidereal rejection (every day, 4 minutes time advance)

![](_page_47_Figure_3.jpeg)

## **Radio Frequency Interference**

Artificial RFI reported in Lampedusa (Sicily, Italy) island

![](_page_48_Figure_3.jpeg)

Pica et al. (2023) IEEE Journal of Selected Topics in Applied Earth Observations and Remote Sensing.

Mitigation is not trivial!

### What can support the identification of the scale sizes?

- Rate of TEC index, ROTI

 $ROT = \frac{\Delta TEC}{\Delta t}, \text{ e.g. 5 minutes}$  $ROTI = \sqrt{\langle ROT^2 \rangle - \langle ROT^2 \rangle}$ 

ROTI can provide valuable information about **phase fluctuations due to irregularities at about few to few tens km scale** It depends on the Nyquist frequency of ROT sampling, usually (2\*30s)<sup>-1</sup>

![](_page_49_Figure_4.jpeg)

Cherniak et al., 2018

#### **ROTI is not Scintillation!**

But:

- it is very useful (measures phase fluctuations)
- It can be (not easily) rescaled to (weak) scintillation (Carrano et al., 2019)

![](_page_49_Figure_10.jpeg)

#### **Frequency of the GNSS scintillation**

#### **GNSS signal fading due to scintillation**

![](_page_50_Figure_2.jpeg)

Among the most known pictures of climatological modelling of scintillation

![](_page_51_Figure_0.jpeg)

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![](_page_51_Figure_2.jpeg)

Kintner at al., 2009

Among the most known pictures of climatological modelling of scintillation

# Scintillation climatology at low latitudes

#### Highlights from Climatology: Solar Cycle dependence of EPB-related scintillation

![](_page_53_Figure_1.jpeg)

![](_page_53_Figure_2.jpeg)

Data available at <a href="http://lisn.igp.gob.pe/">http://lisn.igp.gob.pe/</a>

# Highlights from Climatology: LT and season

![](_page_54_Figure_1.jpeg)

![](_page_54_Figure_2.jpeg)

Occurrence maximizes between September and April

Residual multipath effects (streaks in the occurrence)  $\rightarrow$  elevation cutoff at 25° in not suitable

## Highlights from Climatology: LT and season

![](_page_55_Figure_1.jpeg)

![](_page_55_Figure_2.jpeg)

![](_page_55_Figure_3.jpeg)

## Highlights from Climatology: LT and season

Ground-based GNSS for scintillation CIGALA/CALIBRA network

![](_page_56_Figure_2.jpeg)

![](_page_57_Figure_0.jpeg)

## Highlights from Climatology: geographical distribution

**CIGALA/CALIBRA** network

**ERICA - EquatoRial Ionosphere Characterization in Asia** 

esa

European Space Agency

1.2

0.8

0.6

0.4

0.2

0

E

S4 Occurrence > 0.25 (%)

## **Highlights from Climatology: Scintillation inhibition/enhancement**

GPS L1 - Novatel GSV4004B – Station6 - Period March 2015 **Quiet days Disturbed days** 25 **GNSS** - Scintillation Phu Thuy 20 20 15 15 Pontianal Bandung Öccurrence (%) Occurrence (%) Latitude (°N) Latitude (°N) Kupang Google earth -10 -10 15 20 15 20 Local Time Local Time · e esa

S4 occurrence > 0.1

ERICA EquatoRial Ionosphere Characterization in Asia

Spogli et al. (2016). Journal of Geophysical Research: Space Physics, 121(12).

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## **Highlights from Climatology: Scintillation inhibition/enhancement**

#### In case of a geoffective Space Weather event, the low latitude electrodynamics is altered

Equatorial zonal electric field **E**, eastward in dayside and westward in nightside, is modified and the mechanisms ruling out the formation of EIA and EPB is altered.

![](_page_59_Figure_3.jpeg)

![](_page_59_Figure_4.jpeg)

#### **Prompt Penetration Electric Fields (PPEF)**

Penetration of Electric Field from Interplanetary Electric Field. Prompt effect, perturbations in the zonal electric field for shorter durations of <u>about 30 min to 2 h</u> *Involved parameter/index: IMF-Bz, IEF-Ey* 

#### Disturbance Dynamo Electric Fields (DDEF)

Cross-equatorial winds due to thermospheric changes induced by heating at high latitude (often with LSTID). Delayed effect, non-uniform time delays at different latitudes and lasts for <u>few hours to more than a day</u>

*Involved parameter/index: AE, Joule heating* 

![](_page_59_Figure_10.jpeg)

![](_page_59_Figure_11.jpeg)

# Scintillation climatology at high-latitude

![](_page_60_Picture_1.jpeg)

## Climatology over (more than) 1 solar-cycle!

![](_page_61_Figure_1.jpeg)

The Ny-Ålesund ionospheric station is the perfect site to study scintillations in the auroral/cusp/cap regions

De Franceschi et al., Sci.Rep, 2019

![](_page_62_Figure_0.jpeg)

![](_page_62_Picture_1.jpeg)

Bz =-10 nT By=00 nT F10.7 = 120

![](_page_62_Figure_3.jpeg)

![](_page_62_Picture_4.jpeg)

Kelvin-Helmotz Instability

![](_page_63_Figure_0.jpeg)

Occurrence according to different space weather conditions.

 $\sigma_{\Phi} \ge 0.25 \text{ rad}$ 

Comparing climatology of amplitude and phase scintillation occurrence to learn about irregularities scale size and dynamics

![](_page_63_Figure_4.jpeg)

 $v_{\text{cut-off}} = 0$ 

1 Hz

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## What about mid-latitudes?

![](_page_64_Figure_1.jpeg)

ISMR in Lampedusa and Nicosia climatologically see EPBs

PPEF and DDEF can cause the spill-over of very intense equatorial plasma bubbles

![](_page_64_Figure_4.jpeg)

# Takehome messages

- Irregularities in the ionosphere cause (on GNSS signals)
  - (i) phase fluctuations and
  - (ii) phase/amplitude scintillation
- These cause tracking (phase fluctuation) and positioning (scintillation) issues
- S4 and  $\sigma_{\Phi}$  are routinely provided on a 1-minute basis by Ionospheric Scintillation Monitor Receivers
- They must be used wisely
- High- and low-latitude ionosphere are featured by scintillation and phase fluctuations
  - High-lat: forcing from geospace. Auroral oval, polar cap patches, auroral blobs,
  - Low-lat: EPB are quasi-regular phenomenon, modulate by geospace forcing and neutral dynamics
  - Mid-lat: spill-over from high- and low-latitudes SED (not show)
- Climatological modelling reveals the overall features of GNSS scintillation

# Thanks for your attention!

![](_page_66_Picture_1.jpeg)

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Acknowledgments: Giorgiana De Franceschi, Lucilla Alfonsi, Vincenzo Romano, Claudio Cesaroni, Carlo Marcocci, Emanuele Pica Ionospheric irregularities & scintillations

![](_page_66_Picture_5.jpeg)

2<sup>nd</sup> PITHIA-NRF Training School supported by T-FORS project February 5 - 9, 2024, Leuven

![](_page_66_Picture_7.jpeg)