Structural changes in olivine \((\text{Mg, Fe})_2\text{Si}_4\) mechanically activated in high-energy mills

Peter Baláž \(^a,^b\), Erika Turianicová \(^a\), Martin Fabián \(^a\), Rolf Arne Kleiv \(^b\), Jaroslav Briančin \(^a\), Abdullah Obut \(^c\)

\(^a\) Institute of Geotechnics, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Watsonova 45, 043 53 Košice, Slovakia
\(^b\) Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Sem Sælandset 1, N-7491 Trondheim, Norway
\(^c\) Hacettepe University, Mining Engineering Department, 06800 Beytepe, Ankara, Turkey

**Abstract**

This study evaluates the structural changes in olivine \((\text{Mg, Fe})_2\text{Si}_4\) (deposit Åheim, Norway) generated by its mechanical activation. The high-energy milling in laboratory planetary and attrition mills as well as in an industrially nutating mill was applied during activation. To identify mechanically-induced changes in the mineral, scanning electron microscopy (SEM), X-ray diffraction (XRD), specific surface area measurement and infrared spectroscopy (IR) techniques have been used. The observed physico-chemical changes illustrate the possibility to modify the surface and/or volume properties of olivine depending on the applied activation mode. Infrared spectroscopy seemed to be suitable method for characterization of \(\text{CO}_2\) sorption modified on olivine.

**1. Introduction**

The increasing atmospheric \(\text{CO}_2\) concentration, mainly caused by fossil fuel combustion, has led to concerns about global warming (Huijgen et al., 2005). During the last 60 years, \(\text{CO}_2\) concentrations increased over 30% compared to pre-industrial levels. Consequently, the focus has been placed on managing \(\text{CO}_2\) emissions. Carbon management can be achieved through three different, but complimentary approaches: increasing the efficiency of energy conversion, using low-carbon or carbon-free energy sources and sequestering \(\text{CO}_2\) emissions. There is strong tendency to develop technologies with a possibility to achieve zero emissions (Maroto-Valer et al., 2005). The idea of \(\text{CO}_2\) sequestration was originally proposed by Seifritz (Seifritz, 1990) and first studied in more details by Lackner (Lackner et al., 1995). The basic concept behind \(\text{CO}_2\) mineral sequestration is to mimic natural weathering processes in which Ca- or Mg-containing minerals are converted into Ca- or Mg-carbonates (Huijgen et al., 2005) as exemplified by the following equation:

\[
(\text{Ca, Mg})\text{SiO}_3 + \text{CO}_2 \rightarrow (\text{Ca, Mg})\text{CO}_3 + \text{SiO}_2.
\]

The formed mineral carbonates are known to be stable over geological time periods (of thousands to millions of years).

There are several calcium and/or magnesium silicates suitable as mineral feedstock, e.g., wollastonite \(\text{CaSiO}_3\), enstatite \(\text{MgSiO}_3\), forsterite \(\text{Mg}_2\text{SiO}_4\), fayalite \(\text{Fe}_2\text{SiO}_4\), olivine \((\text{Mg, Fe})_2\text{SiO}_4\), diopside \(\text{CaMgSi}_2\text{O}_6\), talc \(\text{Mg}_3\text{Si}_2\text{O}_5(\text{OH})_2\) and serpentine \(\text{Mg}_3\text{Si}_2\text{O}_5(\text{OH})_4\).

However, under ambient conditions the process of silicate minerals conversion according to Eq. (1) is slow and a significantly higher extent of sequestration reactions and faster conversion rates are needed for its technical feasibility (Huijgen et al., 2006). Enhancement of the chemical process by mechanical activation can result in major improvement of the reaction rate (Baláž, 2000). The potential of mechanical activation lies in its possibility to control and regulate the course of heterogeneous processes by the complex influence on solids via formation of different defects like a new surface area, dislocations, point defects, etc. There are several studies aimed at improving the pretreatment of various silicates by mechanical activation performed by high energy milling in order to improve their \(\text{CO}_2\) sequestration (O’Connor et al., 1999, 2000, 2002, 2004; Kalinkina et al., 2001; Kalinkin et al., 2003, 2004; Hredžáš et al., 2004, 2005; Park and Fan, 2004; Kleiv and Thornhill, 2006; Kleiv et al., 2006; Zhang et al., 1997).

The aim of the present paper is to investigate the physico-chemical properties of olivine mechanically activated in laboratory and industrial mills. The various experimental techniques will be applied to identify mechanically-induced changes in olivine structure.
2. Experimental

2.1. Material

The olivine sample used in this study was kindly supplied by the North Cape Minerals company and originated from the production plant at Åheim (Norway). The sample of 95% purity contains approximately 93% forsterite \( \text{Mg}_2\text{SiO}_4 \) and 7% fayalite \( \text{Fe}_2\text{SiO}_4 \). Small amounts of accessory minerals like chlorite, chromite, enstatite, serpentinite and talc can also be found in the sample. The bulk chemical composition of the sample under study is shown in Table 1.

2.2. Mechanical activation

The olivine sample was mechanically activated in three high energy mills:

- Laboratory planetary mill Pulverisette 6 (Fritsch, Germany) with loading of the mill with 50 balls of 10 mm diameter; material of 250 ml milling chamber and balls: WC. Weight of milling balls and sample was 360 and 18 g, respectively. The mill was run at the planet carrier rotation speed 450 revs min\(^{-1}\) for milling times of 2–30 min and was operated at ambient temperature and free access of air.
- Laboratory attritor mill Molinex PE 075 (Netzsch, Germany) with 500 ml milling chamber which contained 100 g of sample and 2000 g of 2 mm diameter stainless balls and 100 ml of water. The mill was running at rotation speed 1500 revs min\(^{-1}\) for milling times of 5–120 min and was operated at ambient temperature and free access of air.
- Industrial nutating mill Hicom 15 (Hicom International Pty, Ltd., Australia) with 5000 ml milling chamber and milling charge of 1 kg of sample. The mill was run at 900 revs min\(^{-1}\) using mixture of 10 kg of 5 mm and 2 kg of 20 mm diameter stainless steel balls. The mill was operated in a dry mode and at ambient temperature and free access of air. In several experiments the milling was performed with the presence of \( \text{H}_2\text{O} \) (50, 100, 200 and 500 ml, respectively).

2.3. Specific surface area

The specific surface area was determined by the low temperature nitrogen adsorption method in a Gemini 2360 sorption apparatus (Micromeritics, USA).

2.4. Scanning electron spectroscopy

The scanning electron microscopy (SEM) was carried out with a BS 340 (Tesla Brno, Czech Republic).

2.5. X-ray diffractometry

The X-ray diffraction measurements were carried out using a diffractometer X’Pert (Philips, Netherlands) working in the 2\(\theta\) geometry with CuK\(\alpha\) radiation. The XRD lines were identified by comparing the measured patterns to the JCPDS data cards. The effect of mechanical activation was evaluated by the decrease of crystalline phase \( X \) of the olivine

\[
X = \frac{I_0}{I_1} \times 100(\%)
\]

where \( I_0 \) and \( I_1 \) denote the background of the reference and activated sample, while \( I_0 \) and \( I_1 \) are integral intensities of selected diffraction lines of reference sample and activated sample, respectively (Ohlheger and Strickler, 1962).

2.6. Infrared spectroscopy

The IR spectroscopy measurements were carried out using a FT-IR Avatar 330 spectrometer (Thermo-Nicolet, USA) using KBr technique for preparation samples.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Changes in surface area

Mechanical activation of olivine was performed in planetary (PM), attritor (AM) and nutating (NM) mills and the dependence of specific surface area \( S_A \) of the samples on the time of mechanical activation is represented in Figs. 1–3. These plots show that the new surface formation is affected by both the time of mechanical activation and the milling conditions (type of mill). We can see the increase in specific surface area for the olivine sample milled in an attrition mill (Fig. 1) is much higher than for the sample milled in a planetary mill (Fig. 2) or a nutating mill (Fig. 3).

![Fig. 1. Specific surface area \( S_A \) and content of crystalline phase \( X \) of olivine as a function of milling time \( t_{\text{AM}} \) in an attritor.](image)

![Fig. 2. Specific surface area \( S_A \) and content of crystalline phase \( X \) of olivine as a function of milling time \( t_{\text{PM}} \) in a planetary mill.](image)

![Fig. 3. Specific surface area \( S_A \) and content of crystalline phase \( X \) of olivine as a function of milling time \( t_{\text{NM}} \) in a nutating mill.](image)

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MgO</td>
<td>50.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>SiO(_2)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>FeO(_2)</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>MnO</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CaO</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Na(_2)O</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K(_2)O</td>
<td>0.01</td>
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</table>
milled in planetary and nutating mills (Figs. 2–3). The disintegration of olivine by mechanical activation is accompanied by an increase in the number of particles and by the generation of fresh, previously unexposed surface (Park and Fan, 2004; Kleiv and Thornhill, 2006). By application of the three mills the common features in plots in Figs. 1–3 can be identified. After the first stage where the increase in surface area is almost proportional to the milling time, the second stage is manifested. Here, the new surface area formation is slow down. This effect is the most pronounced in a planetary mill and in literature is attributed to particle enlargement (aggregation and/or agglomeration). In some cases when the very intensive milling is applied, the changes in the crystal structure and mechanochemical reactions appear in this stage (Baláž, 2000; Beke, 1984; Juhász and Opoczky, 1990; Tkáčová, 1989).

Special effect has been observed by milling of olivine for 10 min in nutating mill in the presence of small amounts of water (Fig. 4). The less water is applied, the higher values for specific surface area ($S_A$) have been obtained: for 5% (w/w) $H_2O$ the value of $S_A$ was $21.6 \text{ m}^2\text{g}^{-1}$ which is comparable with values obtained by wet milling in an attritor (Fig. 1). The effect of the addition of small amounts of a liquid to accelerate the solid-state reactions carried out by milling is called kneading in the chemical engineering. Kneading has been described as a sort of catalysis, where the small amount of solvent provides a lubricant for solid-state diffusion (Braga and Grepioni, 2004, 2005).

Fig. 5 illustrates scanning electron micrographs (SEM) of the as-received (a) as well as mechanically activated (b–d) olivine samples. The as-received sample shows particles irregular in shape with characteristic sharp edges. During milling the particles are rounded, fractured and diminished. Some large particles still exist but an overall reduction in size appears to have occurred as a result of high-energy milling. The attritor milled samples (b) show the most significant reduction in size which is in agreement with the results of olivine milling published in paper (Summers et al., 2005). In some cases (c, d) the evidence of well-bonded aggregates can be seen.
3.2. Changes in crystal structure

To appreciate the lattice defect deformation in the bulk of olivine several physico-chemical methods can be used. The application of the XRD method enables us to investigate the disordering of olivine crystal structure during high-energy milling. The induced changes can be observed by looking at the line broadening, the reduction of peaks intensity and the shift of XRD peaks (Baláž, 2000; Tkáčová, 1989; Pourghahramani and Forssberg, 2006a,b).

The results obtained from XRD measurements show a large reduction in selected olivine peak height together with line broadening with increasing activation time (Figs. 6–9). Decrease of the crystalline phase content X as a measure of olivine disordering has been calculated according to the Eq. (2). The dependence of the calculated values of X on the time of mechanical activation is shown in Figs. 1–3. In Fig. 4 the dependence of X as a function of H$_2$O addition by nutating milling is shown. In all cases of high-energy milling, disordering in the bulk of olivine increases with the time of mechanical activation (the values of X are diminishing).

The decrease in crystalline phase X values 100% to 12%, 100% to 17% and 100% to 57% for attrition, planetary and nutating milling (dry mode) have been documented. The differences between the mills result from changes in milling conditions. Generally, the observed trend manifested by plots in Figs. 1–3 is well documented in mechanoochemical monographs (Baláž, 2000; Tkáčová 1989).

The mutual dependence of new surface area $S_A$ formation and the content of crystalline phase X of the mechanically activated olivine in various mills is depicted in Fig. 10. From this figure is evident, that the products of milling in the attritor, planetary

![Fig. 7](image7.png) XRD pattern of olivine (020) peak as a function of milling time in a planetary mill.

![Fig. 8](image8.png) XRD pattern of olivine (020) peak as a function of milling time in a nutating mill.

![Fig. 9](image9.png) XRD pattern of olivine (020) peak as a function of H$_2$O addition by nutation milling.

![Fig. 10](image10.png) Specific surface area $S_A$ of olivine as a function of content of crystalline phase X. (■) attritor mill, (▲) planetary mill, (●) nutating mill (dry milling), (○) nutating mill (wet milling with H$_2$O).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>The milling parameters and physico-chemical properties of the olivine sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of mill</td>
<td>Revolutions (revs min$^{-1}$)</td>
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<tr>
<td>As received sample</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attritor</td>
<td>1500</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1500</td>
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<td>1500</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1500</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planetary mill</td>
<td>450</td>
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<td>450</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nutating mill</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

Values of milling energy have been calculated according to the equations given for attritor and planetary mill in paper (Pourghahramani and Forssberg, 2006a). Values for the nutating mill have been calculated from the values of power input measured continuously during the milling experiments.
mill and nutating mill differ in a specific structural deterioration. Milling in wet mode (attritor and several experiments in the nutating mill) show the highest values of specific surface area. The two-stage process of the new surface area formation can be deduced from the plots in Fig. 10. In the first stage characteristic for dry milling, the increase of \( S_h \) values with olivine deterioration (decrease of \( X \) values) is very small. In the second stage characteristic for wet milling (in presence of \( H_2O \)) only small changes in values of \( X \) bring about the massive increase of \( S_h \). However, some limiting values of \( X \) are required in this case: \( X<55\% \) and \( X>35\% \) for milling in attritor and nutattr mill, respectively.

Summary of the milling results is given in Table 2. Milling in an attritor seemed to be very promising from the point of view of induced physico-chemical changes: both in values of \( X \) bring about the massive increase of \( S_h \). The application of XRD method enabled monitoring of the bulk changes in olivine:

- The most intensive band is for sample 4 with the highest value of specific surface area \( S_h \) and the lowest value of \( X \) (see inset in Fig. 11).
- The second region with values for nutatting milling. However, the values of \( S_h \) and \( X \) are not the same.

The future studies on mill selection in connection with effective CO\(_2\) sequestration are required in this case: \( X \) are relatively high in comparison with the values for nutatting milling.

### 3.3. Infrared spectroscopy

Fig. 11 shows the infrared spectra of non-activated (1) and mechanically activated (2–4) olivine. Three regions of IR-bands can be identified. In the first region there is an intensive band with maximum at 3500 cm\(^{-1}\) which corresponds to OH\(^-\) vibrations as a result of hydration of olivine. No differences in intensity of this band have been detected for samples without or with application of the drying step during preparation of samples for IR measurements. Therefore the water molecules seemed to be bound by chemisorption. The intensity of this band rises with increasing of olivine disordering by milling. The most intensive band is for sample 4 with the highest value of specific surface area \( S_h \) and the lowest value of \( X \) (see inset in Fig. 11). The second region with values for nutatting milling. However, the values of \( S_h \) and \( X \) are not the same. The future studies on mill selection in connection with effective CO\(_2\) sequestration are needed.

### 4. Conclusions

- Changes in the surface area and morphology of olivine samples were detected as a consequence of high-energy milling. Milling in the wet mode show the higher values of specifc surface area.
- The application of XRD method enabled monitoring of the bulk changes induced in olivine samples during milling. The results obtained show a large reduction in selected (020) olivine peak intensity with increasing milling time which manifest decrease in content of crystalline phase of the mineral.

#### Acknowledgments

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#### References


Fig. 11. FT-IR spectra of olivine: (1) initial, (2, 3, 4) after attritor milling. Characteristic bands for CO\(_2\) are shown.

The infrared spectroscopy offers a possibility to monitor carbonate absorption which is a suitable identification tool for future CO\(_2\) sequestration studies.


