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Towards the development of efficient electro-Fenton reactors for soil washing wastes through microfluidic cells

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10 Abstract

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This work focuses on the coupling of three different approaches into the same reactor at 11 12 the same time: microfluidic cells, anodic oxidation with diamond anodes and an electro-Fenton process. In order to supply oxygen a jet aerator was used and a CB/PTFE 13 Duocel[®] Al foam cathode was installed to promote the formation of hydrogen peroxide. 14 This novel concept is applied for the direct treatment (without the addition of salts or 15 other reagents) of soil washing wastes obtained in the remediation of soil spiked with 16 17 clopyralid. Results obtained pointed out that this approach can increase the efficiency of the process by folds as compared to traditional treatment technologies. The chemical 18 19 analysis of the intermediates showed different reaction mechanisms: anodic oxidation, 20 electro-Fenton and a negligible contribution of coagulation. The coupled system studied 21 in this work present several advantages such as high treatment efficiency and short treatment time which indicates that the development of electrochemical reactors for 22 23 diluted liquid wastes is progressing in an adequate direction.

24		
25	Keywords	
26	Microfluidic cells; electro-Fenton; diamond anodes; anodic oxidation; soil washing	
27	wastes.	
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1. Introduction

Soil remediation is a major interest topic nowadays, since its large impact on the water reservoirs preservation for human consumption ¹. One of the major pollutants in soils and water reservoirs are herbicides because they are widely applied in industrialized countries to control weeds in agricultural and non-agricultural systems. However, those compounds are often toxic and persistent; hence, a correct application is required to avoid their presence in the environment ².

In case of acute accidental emissions, rapid excavation and soil washing is a very interesting choice to avoid the diffusion of the pollution and limit the extension of the problem in the very first moments ³⁻⁵. This process produces a liquid waste (so-called soil washing waste) from the soil washing fluid (SW) used to extract the pollutants. This fluid is either water, when the pollutant is highly soluble in water, or more complex formulations (for instance, water plus a surfactant) when the solubility of the pollutant is low.

Clopyralid (3,6–dichloro-2-pyridine-carboxylic acid) is an organochlorinated compound commonly used as herbicide. The principal characteristics of this herbicide is the high persistence in soil and also a high-water solubility. Because of this, it has frequently been detected in natural environments, including drinking water. Its high solubility in water represents an advantage when it comes to be removed from polluted soils because it is amenable to be extracted via a conventional soil washing techniques, with no other solvent than water as the washing fluid ⁶

53 Once the pollutant is transferred from the soil to the liquid phase, the treatment of this 54 soil waste fluid is the important stage ⁷⁻¹³. Depending on the nature of the pollutant, 55 conventional and economic treatments such as biological oxidation or coagulationflocculation can be applied. However, many anthropogenic pollutants are bio-refractory and/or do not successfully coagulate. Under these circumstances, advanced oxidation processes (AOPs) are of great interest. Among them, electrochemical AOPs (EAOPs) are gaining interest in the last decades because of their outstanding performance ¹⁴⁻¹⁶

A great deal of effort has been put in order to development new processes ¹⁷⁻²⁰. In this context, the electrochemical cell design has a major role on the performance of the electrochemical processes and hence in its efficiency ²¹⁻²³. Until now, little scientific attention has been paid to the development of efficient reactors (most of it comes from companies) and most of the works devoted to wastewater treatment in the literature use stirred-tanks cells or parallel-plate flow-by reactors ^{24, 25}.

Recently, parallel-plate flow-by microfluidic (MF) electrochemical cells have been evaluated for the treatment of wastewater containing bio-refractory organic pollutants ¹⁸, 26 . The main advantage of a micro-fluidic cell is the minimum ohmic drop in the electrolyte thanks to an inter-electrode gap in the order of micrometers. Therefore, this cell configuration provides flexibility to achieve reasonable cell voltage even when it comes to treat low-conductive effluents. The main limitation comes from the operational problems derived from the high friction in the inter-electrode gap and the concomitant high pumping costs and low electrolyte flows ^{17, 27}. It also leads to an accumulation of gases on the electrode surface and within the inter-electrode gap, especially at high current densities which are desirable to intensify the treatment ^{28, 29}

In this context, a new design has been lately proposed to solve this drawback: the micro-fluidic flow-through cell ^{17, 27}. This reactor is aimed not only to produce a minimum ohmic drop in the electrolyte but also for maximizing mass transfer. Importantly, the high forced circulation of electrolyte through the three-dimensional electrodes strips the gases out of the IE gap, minimizing the aforementioned drawbacks

of microfluidic reactors. The microfluidic flow-through with a conductive-diamond mesh anode was applied to the treatment of a synthetic solution requiring from 4 to 10 times less electric charge and 6 to 15 times less energy consumption at 10 and 100 mA cm⁻², respectively, as compared to a conventional flow-by reactor ^{17, 27}.

If an appropriate cathodic material is selected $^{30, 31}$, hydrogen peroxide (H₂O₂) can be electrogenerated at the cathode via oxygen reduction reaction in a process generally known as Electro-Fenton (EF)^{23, 32}. Given that anodic oxidation takes places in the anode and the production of the Fenton reagent is a cathodic process, they can be combined in the same reactor in such a way that both electrodes contribute to the pollutant abatement, thus increasing the overall efficiency ³³. One of the key aspects of EF reactors is to produce H_2O_2 at a high rate and current efficiency which is, in turn, determined by the low solubility of oxygen under room conditions ³⁴. In a series of previous works, some of the authors studied the jet aerator (JA) as a new compressor-free system to produce H_2O_2 in electrolytic cells ^{31, 35, 36}. As a result, this system feeds the cathode with large oxygen flow rates thanks to the saturation of the medium and the formation of air bubbles, promoting a fast and efficient H₂O₂ generation. This state-of-the-art system can be used to aerate a microfluidic flow-through cells because the bubbles are easily stripped away from the inter-electrode gap, in contrast to what would occur in a conventional microfluidic cell.

100 In summary, the jet-aerated microfluidic flow-through (MF-FT) reactor used in this 101 work presents three new features to improve the treatment: *i*) combines the anodic 102 oxidation and the EF processes using state-of-the-art 3D electrodes *ii*) a cell design with 103 a low inter-electrode gap and an enhanced mass transfer conditions iii) aeration via a 104 compressor-free system. ³⁶.

With this background, this work focuses on the application of the jet-aerated MF-FT reactor to treat a complex and real waste with a low natural conductivity. This effluent is obtained after the application of soil washing technique to a soil polluted with the herbicide clopyralid. It is very important to highlight that this waste directly undergoes electrolysis after the extraction, without the addition of salts to artificially increase the conductivity, because this practice leads to a secondary pollution by inorganic ions which are less hazardous but a more persistent type of pollution causing environmental issues such as rivers salinization ^{37, 38}.

113 Several tests were carried out to study the influence of several parameters and isolating 114 the different removal processes that may contribute to the overall abatement of organic 115 pollutants, with especial emphasis on reactions mechanisms, in order to obtain valuable 116 information for the scale up of this promising reactor design.

118 2 Material & Methods

119 2.1 Reagents and Chemicals

Double de-ionized water (Millipore Milli-Q system, resistivity: $18.2 \ \mu\Omega \ cm^{-1} \ at \ 25 \ C$) was used to prepare water solutions. Clopyralid (3,6-Dichloro-pyridine-2-carboxylic acid), methanol and formic acid (HPLC grade) were used to prepare the mobile phase in HPCL analysis (Sigma-Aldrich, Spain). Sulfuric acid (H₂SO₄) used to adjust the pH and iron sulfate (FeSO₄·7H₂O) used as iron source in electro-Fenton test were employed as received from Panreac (Barcelona, Spain).

2.2 Soil washing

The soil used in this study was obtained from a quarry located in Toledo (Spain). It is characterized by its inertness, low hydraulic conductivity (10-8 cm s⁻¹) and lack of organic content ¹². The soil was contaminated with a water solution of clopyralid aleatory distributed over the clay surface and subsequently aerated for 1 day, obtaining a clopyralid concentration in soil of 100 mg kg⁻¹ soil. Then, the soil was washed with de-ionized water in a discontinuous stirred tank reactor (1 dm³ capacity) for 4 h at 100 rpm. Finally, the bi-phasic mixture soil-washing effluent was separated by decantation for 24 h.

2.3 Experimental set-up.

The core of the experimental setup used during this work is a micro-fluidic flow-through electrochemical cell (inter-electrode gap of $150 \,\mu\text{m}$) coupled to a jet aerator, as previously described ³⁶. The wastewater is continuously fed to the electrochemical cell from the reservoir tank by a centrifugal pump (Heidolph KrP 25/4). The reservoir tank is equipped with a cooling jacket for temperature control and which was kept constant (25 °C) by means of an external water bath. Electro-oxidation tests were carried out using a 3D-niobium mesh boron-doped diamond (Diachem[®]) supplied by Condias GmbH (Germany) as the anode and a perforated-plate stainless steel as the cathode, both of them with a wet cross section of 33 cm^2 . In the electro-Fenton tests, the cathode was replaced by an aluminium sponge (Duocel[®], supplied by ERG Materials & Aerospace) with a deposition of carbon black (Vulcan XC72) and polytetrafluoroethylene (Teflon[®]) prepared as described in a previous work ³⁶, 0.50 mM of Fe were added and the pH adjusted to 3 at the beginning of tests, a typical experimental conditions employed in EF^{39,40}

150 2.4 Analytical techniques

Clopyralid and intermediates concentration were measured via High Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC) using an Agilent 1200 series coupled a DAD detector and a ZORBAX Eclipse Plus C18 analytical column ³⁷. Degradation of clopyralid was also followed by measurement of Total Organic Carbon (TOC) concentration using a Multi N/C 3100 Analytik Jena analyzer. The pH and conductivity were measured using a CRISON pH25+ and CRISON CM35+. The anions present in the wastewater were detected and quantified via ion chromatography with a Shimadzu LC-20A system. The iron concentration in EF tests was measured by inductively coupled plasma atomic emission spectroscopy (ICP-AES) in a Varian Liberty RL sequential ICP-AES equipment. The oxidants generated was quantified iodometrically by potentiometric titration with thiosulphate in acidic media. This method analyze all oxidants capable to oxidize iodide (I^{-}) to iodate (IO_{3}^{-})⁴¹

163 The studies of electrode surface were obtained by means of Scanning Electron 164 Microscope (SEM) FEI model QUANTA 250 working under low vacuum with a 165 detector of secondary electron (LFD) or a backscattered electrons detector (BSED). The 166 Energy Dispersive Analysis X-Ray (EDAX) analyses were performed with an Apollo X 167 (Ametek, U.S.A.) coupled to the previous SEM system.

3. Results and Discussion

As described in the introduction, in the search of more efficient cells for the treatment of wastewater, microfluidic cells are an interesting alternative. Reducing the interelectrode gap minimize ohmic drops in the electrolyte and, therefore, leads to a reduction of cell voltage and energy consumption. In addition, a high mass transfer is expected in the MF-FT due to the local turbulence induced by mesh-electrodes and their larger surface area with respect to plate electrodes ^{22, 27}.

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Figure 1 shows the decay of the clopyralid contained in soil washing fluids during different electrolytic test carried out at the same current density (10 mA cm⁻²): commercial flow-by electrochemical cell with plate diamond electrodes MF-FT equipped with a conductive-diamond mesh as anode and the latter equipped with a cathode (CB/PTFE-Al) to produce H_2O_2 in the presence of catalytic amounts of soluble Fe (II) (EF process).

Experimental results obtained in these three tests are compared to the theoretical 100%efficiency performance for the mineralization of clopyralid. In every case, the soil
washing fluid was the same, obtained by washing 400 g of soil polluted with 100 g kg-1
of clopyralid with 1.0 dm3 of Milli-Q water.

This process produces a real waste with a conductivity of 0.75 mS cm⁻¹ that differs to previous experiments prepared it with a typical ion composition and higher conductivity $(1 \text{ mS})^{17}$.In these experiments also the ions concentrations were measured (only the most important species are shown): 6 mg Cl- dm-3, 150 mg SO42- dm-3, 8.5 mg NO3dm-3, 4 mg Na+ dm-3.

At this point, it is important to take into account that, as explained before, using real wastes without doping them with salts is an important challenge. Thus, although this addition could be positive in economic terms (lower cell voltage and improved production of oxidants at the anode surface), in fact, what it is introduced is really a new type of pollution in the waste, less hazardous but much more persistent ³⁷.



Figure 1. Removal of clopyralid from soil washing fluids (no electrolyte added). (●)
commercial Diacell[®] equipped with diamond anodes; (□) microfluidic reactor; (▲)
microfluidic reactor with electro-Fenton process; (◆) theoretical 100% efficiency
curve.

Results are represented in log-log plot because of the very different time-scales obtained for the degradation of the same waste. As stated before, these data confirm that by changing the cell configuration, an important improvement might be obtained. In particular, the largest improvement was obtained by promoting the Fenton reaction inside the cell with the addition of iron and the production of hydrogen peroxide. In every case, the same current density was employed, 10 mA cm⁻², a value low enough to get a high efficiency, even in a system controlled by diffusion. For comparison purpose, the electrical charge required to attain around 80% of clopyralid removal the electrical charge required is 6.0, 4.0 and 0.4 kA h m⁻³ in the case of using conventional cell, MF reactor or MF electro-Fenton reactor, respectively. This means that an outstanding

reduction of operation cost of more than one log can be attained by using this novelapproach.

In the MF-FT cell, the wastewater flows through the electrodes to improve mass transfer and, hence, to minimize diffusional limitations of the reagents towards the electrodes (pollutant to the anode and oxygen to the cathode). As seen in Figure 2, there are almost no differences in the treatment of the same soil washing waste at different flow rates (0.4, 1.0 and 1.6 L min⁻¹ corresponding to 3.77, 9.43 and 15.1 cm s⁻¹ considering the dimensions of the cell) at a fixed current density, which suggests that the microfluidic cells are not limited by mass transfer under those conditions.

Figure 2 also shows that removal of the intermediates is practically not influenced by the flow rate. Only two intermediates were measured at appreciable concentrations: 6-chloropicolinic acid and picolinic acid, although traces of 3- chloropicolinic acid were also observed. These intermediates generated during the electrooxidation of washing fluids in undivided cell may be promoted from the dehalogenation of the clopyralid molecule, which can occur mainly on the surface of the cathode ^{42, 43}. Regarding the concentration profile, a continuous decrease in the concentration of 6- chloropicolinic acid with time is observed up to its complete removal. On the other hand, picolinic acid undegoes a rapid increase up to a maximum and then a decrease, which indicates that the electrochemically-assisted dechlorination seems to go primarily through this intermediate instead of 6- chloropicolinic acid and 3-chloropicolinic acid



Figure 2. Influence of the flowrate in the removal of clopyralid (a), 6 chloropicalinic acid (b) and picolinic acid (c) using a microfluidic reactor. (\circ) 0.4 L min⁻¹; (\blacksquare) 1.0 L min⁻¹; (\blacktriangle)1.6 L min⁻¹.

The main difference expected to be produced by the current density is the formation of oxygen bubbles at large current densities, which may have a negative impact on conventional microfluidic cells because of the short inter-electrode gap ^{28, 29}, preventing their use. To observe this the MF-FT can be operated at high current densities. A value of 100 mA cm⁻² was selected for the next tests. In addition, a less concentrated waste (obtained after the washing of 0.2 kg per each dm³) was used in order to magnify the effect of diffusional limitations.

As seen in Figure 3, only the raw clopyralid and the dehalogenation intermediate picolinic acid were detected by HPLC. However, what seems to be more important is the huge difference between the results obtained in the two tests. As in previous cases,

the total removal of organics is attained but with important differences in efficiency. It was observed that by increasing the current density from 10 to 100 mA cm⁻² in the same electrochemical cell, the efficiency decays more than 20 times (the current charge required is more than 20 times higher for the same result), because of the promotion of side reactions that do not contribute to clopyralid degradation and the diffusion control of the clopyralid elimination rate ⁴⁴. Thus, these results confirm the relevance of the use of a suitable current density with this type of cells.



Figure 3. Changes in the concentration of clopyralid (\Box, \circ) and picolinic acid (\blacksquare, \bullet) during the electrolysis of a soil washing waste obtained with a ratio soil / SWF of 0.2 kg soil / kg⁻¹ of SWF. a) 10 mA cm⁻² b) 100 mA cm⁻².

As shown in Figure 4, the formation of oxidants does not seem to be promoted, only delayed by operating at such high current densities. Thus, at 10 mA cm⁻² the production of oxidants is important, even at low applied current charges and this production only becomes important operating at high current densities at much higher charges, indicating the preferential formation of oxygen instead of valuable oxidants when operating at very high current densities.



Figure 4. Changes in the concentration of oxidants during the electrolysis of a soil washing waste obtained with a ratio soil / SWF of 0.2 kg soil / kg⁻¹ of SWF at 10 mA cm⁻² (\blacksquare) and 100 mA cm⁻² (\circ).

Those results point out that no operational problems are observed working in this microfluidic reactor at high current densities, but still work has to be done to homogenize the current distribution to increase the efficiency.

Once evaluated the efficiency of the MF-FT architecture as an anodic oxidation reactor, the next step was to optimize the efficiency of the microfluidic cell using a cathode to produce H_2O_2 and promote the Fenton reaction.

Figure 5 shows the main changes observed when a soil washing fluid polluted with clopyralid is treated in a microfluidic reactor, with and without promotion of the Fenton reaction by addition of Fe (II) into the electrolyte. As seen, results are completely different being much efficient the system in which iron is added. This configuration

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depletes organic concentration is less than 1.5 Ah dm⁻³, while the other electrolytic system needs 4 times more current charge to achieve the same removal. This proves that the promotion of the Fenton reagent is highly effective. It is probably due to the fact that this mechanism takes places in the bulk and, thus, in the absence of diffusional problems. It is particularly important the differences observed in the concentration of picolinic acid, which is known to be a typical difficult-to-oxidize species in the single electrolytic test and which shows a clear profile of intermediate during the oxidation.

288 With respect to by-products, four intermediates were detected. Those molecules do not correspond to the dehalogenation compounds but are probably compounds formed by 289 oxidation. Those species were not observed in the single electrolytic system proving the 290 291 existence of different mechanisms in the Fenton-assisted process. At this point, it is important to highlight that the behavior observed in the MF-FT cell as anodic oxidation 292 reaction, in which no oxidative intermediates are detected, is characteristic of the anodic 293 oxidation of diluted wastes and it has been described in many other previous papers 45-294 ⁴⁸. It is explained in terms of the strong oxidative conditions produced by the anodic 295 oxidation technology with diamond anodes (weakly physisorbed HO radicals and the 296 promotion of an oxidative cocktail that promotes different oxidation mechanism at the 297 same time) which leads to the complete mineralization. However, Fenton mechanisms 298 accelerates the process by producing the oxidants in the bulk but lead to the occurrence 299 of other intermediates (namely dihydroxypiridin-2 carboxylic acid, oxalic acid, tartronic 300 301 acid and oxamic acid during our experience).



Figure 5. Treatment of soil washing fluids containing clopyralid in microfluidic reactor (a) and microfluidic electro-Fenton (b). (\bullet) clopyralid; (\blacksquare) picolinic acid, (\blacktriangle) 3chloropicolinic acid; (\Box) 6-chloropicolinic acid. Onsets: intermediates formed by electrolytic processes: (\bullet) dihydroxypiridin-2 carboxylic acid; (\blacksquare) oxalic acid; (\bigstar) tartronic acid; (\Box) oxamic acid.

Fenton reactions are known to combine oxidation and coagulation mechanisms, because the separation of Fe from the treated effluent is accomplished by increasing the pH and promoting its precipitation in the form of insoluble $Fe(OH)_3$. A similar mechanism can take place on the cathode due to the formation of OH⁻ in the reduction of water to hydrogen. However, in the case of clopyralid coagulation is not expected to have a great significance because it is dissolved and not in the form of colloid. As it is known, in that case only the inefficient adsorption mechanisms can play a role in coagulation processes 49.

In order to confirm this hypothesis, and hence to evaluate the effects of the coagulation on the removal of the species involved in the degradation of clopyralid, a jar test was carried out by adding different doses of iron coagulants to a solution containing clopyralid and the three dehalogenated derivatives. The results are shown in Figure 6.



Figure 6. a) Coagulation of clopyralid with iron chloride: (\circ) clopyralid, (\blacksquare) picolinic acid and (\Box) 6-chloropicolinic acid at pH 7. b) Fenton experiment of clopyralid solution: (\circ) clopyralid, (\blacksquare) picolinic acid, (\Box) oxalic acid, (Δ) tartaric acid and (\blacktriangle) oxamic acid at pH 3.

The adsorption of these pollutants onto the growing flocs is not very important even at the highest concentration tested, which is largely superior to the one added in the electro-Fenton test. Therefore, the coagulation mechanism is negligible and confirms that the important improvement in the performance obtained by adding iron to the microfluidic cell must be associated to oxidative processes (Fenton reaction).

On the other hand in Part b, it can be seen the results obtained in the degradation of clopyralid by a chemical Fenton process, obtained by adding different concentrations of H_2O_2 (within range 80-240 ppm) and 0.5 mM Fe at pH 3.0 to the raw wastewater at a constant temperature of 25°C for 24 hours. The reaction time was expanded up to 24 h. to ensure total conversion of hydrogen peroxide. As can be seen, the reaction products Industrial & Engineering Chemistry Research

(picolinic acid, oxalic acid, tartaric acid and oxamic acid) were nearly the same than in
the electroFenton process. The occurrence of carboxylic acids as the final by-product is
typical in those processes¹.

In order to gain insight into the electro-Fenton process, two additional test were carried
out at higher current densities to observe if the effect of increasing of current density is
detrimental also in the case of the coupled approach.

Figure 7 shows the time course of clopyralid and intermediates of the electrolysis carried out at higher current densities (30 and 50 mA cm⁻²). They supplement the information given in Figure 5b in which the results of the same process, operated at 10 MA cm⁻² were shown.



Figure 7. Electro-Fenton of a SWF carried out at 30 mA cm⁻² (a) and 50 mA cm⁻² (b).
(○) clopyralid; (■) picolinic acid; (▲) 3-chloropicolinic acid; (□) 6-chloropicolinic
acid. Onsets: Fenton Oxidative intermediates: (○) dihydroxypiridin-2 carboxylic acid;
(■) oxalic acid; (▲) tartronic acid; (□) oxamic acid.

In comparing the x-axis of the three panels, it is evident that the increase in the current density leads to a more inefficient treatment and the differences are important as in the case of the single electrolysis. In this case, the range of study was not as broad but even so, the process become much less efficient at high current densities and required a much larger current charge to obtain the same degree of pollutant removal. The reason behind this behavior is mainly the inefficient production of H₂O₂ at such current densities. As demonstrated in previous works ^{31, 34}, current density and oxygen transport to the cathodic surface must be balanced for an efficient production. An excess of current density results detrimental for H₂O₂ generation due to the promotion of parasitic reactions, particularly the reduction of H_2O_2 to H_2O_2 , as discussed previously ³⁰. A further improvement on this regard may be the use of a pressurized-jet aerator to provide larger oxygen flow rates to the MF-FT cell ⁵⁰.

Regarding intermediates, it has to be pointed out that the formation of carboxylic acids (tartronic, oxalic and oxamic acids) is in agreement with the mechanisms proposed in the literature and that finally are transformed into carbon dioxide, which becomes an important difference.

A last important point that should be highlighted is that the concentration in the bulk of soluble iron added to promote the Fenton reaction was steadily decreasing over time (Figure 8). Considering that clopyralid is removed at early stages and also the carboxylic acids are generated, the final removal of these compounds can mostly be promoted by anodic oxidation due to the depletion of soluble iron that inactivates the Fenton reaction.

The most plausible explanation for this fact is the formation of insoluble iron hydroxide due to the basic local pH on the cathode and the low value of the solubility product constant of Fe(OH)₃. In fact, the occurrence of red particles over the cathodes surface over the treatment support this hypothesis (Figure 9). Images A, B and C in this figure
shows the aspect with the naked eye of the Al foam prior to CB/PTFE deposition, once
deposited and after the EF tests, respectively. In the latter, red-colored particles
deposited onto the surface can be seen.

The nature of this deposition was further investigated by a post-mortem characterization by SEM images combined with EDAX analysis. As shown in images D, E y F, the raw material is composed mainly by Al, whereas after the deposition the surface is covered by carbon and fluorine, the components of the CB and PTFE. In contrast, in the last image the presence of amorphous structures composed mainly of Fe, O and also Al observed. The presence of Fe and O is attributed to the presence of insoluble $Fe(OH)_3$, thus confirming that iron was deposited onto the cathodic surface. Interestingly, also aluminum is detected. It may come from either the dissolution of the Al foam used as cathode or from the Al foil used as current collector. The Al in the bulk may also precipitates in the form of hydroxide due to the low solubility of this compound in basic medium, as in the case of iron hydroxide. This information is quite interesting to continue the development of the reactor by improving the reusability of the cathodic materials by eliminating or substituting those components that may lead to the current of undesirable operational problems.



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400 Figure 8. Changes iron concentration (a) and pH (b) during the electro-Fenton 401 technology with microfluidic reactors. $\Box 10 \text{ mA cm}^{-2}$; $\blacksquare 30 \text{ mA cm}^{-2}$; $\blacktriangle 50 \text{ mA cm}^{-2}$



Figure 9. Photographs of aluminum cathode a) before and b) after deposition CB/PTFE
and c) after the test with soil washing fluid. SEM photographs and EDAX analysis of
the cathode d) before and e) after deposition CB/ PTFE and f) after the test with soil
washing fluid.

4. Conclusions

408 From this work, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Clopyralid is removed faster in the MF-FT than in a commercial flow cell at 10 mA cm⁻². Likewise, at this current density, flow rate does not have a great influence on the organic degradation indicating that under this condition it is not mass transfer controlled.

The combined use of boron-doped diamond as anode and a CB/PTFE Duocel[®]
Al foam as cathode in the presence of catalytic amounts of Fe (0.5 mM) leads to
synergistic effect for clopyralid removal. Dehalogenation of raw molecule seems
to be quite relevant, while coagulation does not seem to play an important role.

The higher the current density the lower is the efficiency of both anodic
oxidation and electrofenton processes.

Improving current distribution and optimization of the aeration system could
 result in an improvement of the reactor. The main drawback to be solved is the
 deposition of iron or aluminium particles on cathodic surface.

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