Molecular dynamics as a tool to study heterogeneity in zeolites – Effect of Na\(^+\) cations on diffusion of CO\(_2\) and N\(_2\) in Na-ZSM-5

David Newsome\(^{a,b}\), Marc-Olivier Coppens\(^{c,*}\)

\(^{a}\) CFD Research Corporation, 701 McMillian Way, Huntsville, AL 35806, USA
\(^{b}\) Technical University of Delft, Delft Chem Tech, Julianalaan 136, 2628 BL Delft, The Netherlands
\(^{c}\) University College London, Department of Chemical Engineering, Torrington Place, London WC1E 7JE, United Kingdom

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Diffusion in Na-ZSM-5 zeolite is strongly affected by Al and Na\(^+\) cations.
- MD simulations quantify the effects on diffusion of quadrupolar guest molecules.
- CO\(_2\), with its larger quadrupolar moment, is more strongly affected than N\(_2\).
- A coarse-grained site-lattice representation for the pore network is derived.
- Molecular residence times and probabilities to hop between sites are calculated.

**ABSTRACT**

Zeolites typically contain extra-framework cations to charge-compensate for trivalent Al atom substitutions in the SiO\(_2\) framework. These cations, such as Na\(^+\), directly interact with quadrupolar guest molecules, such as CO\(_2\) and N\(_2\), which move through their micropores, causing energetic heterogeneity. To assess the effects of heterogeneity in Na-ZSM-5 on diffusion of CO\(_2\) and N\(_2\), molecular dynamics (MD) simulations are carried out. In silicalite-1, the pure-silicon form of ZSM-5, the self-diffusivity exhibits a monotonic decrease with molecular loading, while the corrected diffusivity shows a relatively constant value. In contrast, the Na\(^+\) cations cause a maximum or a flat profile over molecular loading for the self-and corrected diffusivities of CO\(_2\) at \(T=200\) and \(300\) K, while the cations only have minimal impact on the diffusivity of N\(_2\). The MD simulations allow us to identify energy basins or sites at which guest molecules spend a relatively long time, and construct a coarse-grained lattice representation for the pore network. Average residence times at these sites are calculated for both species. The trends observed in the residence times correlate to the trends observed in the diffusivity. The residence times for CO\(_2\) at \(T=200\) K are long at low loading, but decrease with loading as additional CO\(_2\) molecules compete to stay close to a cation. In contrast, the residence times for N\(_2\) are relatively insensitive to the cations, only mildly increasing near a cation. This difference in behavior can be associated to the quadrupole moments of these molecules.

© 2014 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).

**1. Introduction**

This article serves a dual purpose. First, it explores the use of molecular dynamics simulations as a way to probe the heterogeneity of zeolites, especially when Al and charge-balancing cations are present. Tightly confined molecules in the micropores of zeolites mostly reside around stable energy basins or “sites”, and diffuse through the pore space by jumping over activation energy barriers between these sites. This leads to a complex dependence on loading for the self- and corrected diffusivities of the molecules, which are hindered by each other and affected by non-uniform interactions with their heterogeneous environment. Calculating the residence times of molecules around various sites, and the barriers between those sites, allows us to parameterize a coarse-grained lattice model that can be used in macroscopic chemical engineering applications. The second purpose of this article is to illustrate this methodology by applying it to a relevant problem: N\(_2\) and CO\(_2\) diffusion in Na-ZSM-5. The (different) quadrupolar moment of these molecules leads to rich diffusion behavior.

CO\(_2\) is present in large quantities in combustion gases from fossil fuel power plants and chemical industries. Because it is a greenhouse gas, energy efficient technology needs to be developed...
to capture the CO₂ from flue gases, in which it is typically mixed with N₂ and CH₄ (Liu et al., 2009), to concentrate it for long-term sequestration or reutilization in other chemical processes. Current flue gas separation systems are often based on (amine) solvent absorption and desorption. However, this requires substantial heating to maintain the temperature differences that drive this separation. By comparison, membrane separations utilize differences in adsorption affinity and diffusion rate of molecular species in the material that constitutes the active membrane layer. These differences are controlled by atomic-scale differences in size, shape, and electronic configuration. Major advances have been made in membrane operations and pressure swing adsorption using nanoporous materials as the active layer (Liu et al., 2009).

One class of nanoporous material is zeolites, which are thermally stable and inorganic aluminosilicate crystals with pore widths generally below 1.2 nm, such as DDR and SAPO-34 (~3 Å), ZSM-5 (~5.5–5.7 Å), and FAU (~7 Å). These zeolites have different pore network topologies: constrained cages (DDR), narrow pores joined at intersections (ZSM-5), and large cages joined by narrow windows (FAU). A simplified schematic of the ZSM-5 pore network is featured in Fig. 1a, showing the straight and sinusoidal channels, which meet at intersections. Zeolites consist of a SiO₂ framework, but trivalent Al atoms can replace the tetravalent Si atoms during synthesis. A local charge deficit develops as a result of introducing Al, requiring the presence of an extra-framework cation to maintain a neutral net charge. These cations play an important role, as they exert strong electrostatic interactions on ions, polar and quadrupolar molecules, such as CO₂ and N₂. The strong Coulombic interactions create energetic heterogeneity, as the guest species find deeper energy basins next to the cations. In principle, ion exchange could be used to adjust the type and concentration of cations to tune the energetic heterogeneity, affecting the adsorption and separation performance of zeolites in gas storage and membranes. The extent of Al atoms and cations in the zeolite is designated by the Si to Al atomic ratio (Si/Al). ZSM-5, for example, can contain up to eight Al atoms per unit cell, yielding Si/Al > 11. When Si/Al = ∞ no cations are present and the ZSM-5 is designated as silicalite-1. Prior studies have focused on a wide range of cations from Group I and II, such as H⁺, Na⁺, Rb⁺, K⁺, Cs⁺, and Ba²⁺, and their effects on adsorption and, to a lesser extent, diffusion (Bonelli et al., 2000; Choudhary et al., 1992; Harlick and Tezel, 2002, 2003, 2004; Katoh et al., 1998, 2000; Koriabkina et al., 2002, 2005; Masuda et al., 1998; Newsome et al., 2014; Walton et al., 2006; Wirawan and Creaser, 2006a, 2006b).

Many research groups have performed experimental studies of the adsorption of CO₂, N₂, and CO in activated carbons and zeolites, such as ZSM-5 and FAU, that were impregnated with various cations at T = 300–473 K, observing a strong dependence of adsorption capacity to the cation size and strengths of the energetic heterogeneity (Bonelli et al., 2000; Calleja et al., 1998; Dunne et al., 1996a, 1996b; Harlick and Tezel, 2002, 2003, 2004; Katoh et al., 1998, 2000; Koriabkina et al., 2002, 2005; Masuda et al., 1998; Siriwardane et al., 2001; Walton et al., 2006; Wirawan and Creaser, 2006a, 2006b). CO₂ molecules have a stronger quadrupolar moment than N₂ or CO, so that CO₂ binds more strongly to the cations. A lower Si/Al ratio systematically increases the amount of adsorbed CO₂ at a given pressure, whether in a pure component form or in a mixture. Larger cations, like Na⁺ and Ba²⁺, interact more strongly with CO₂ than H⁺, with CO₂ in H-ZSM-5 showing an adsorption behavior similar to that in silicalite-1 (Bonelli et al., 2000; Calleja et al., 1998; Dunne et al., 1996a, 1996b; Katoh et al., 1998, 2000; Wirawan and Creaser, 2006a, 2006b).

Experimental methods also exist to quantitatively assess transport properties of molecular diffusion in porous materials. The Constant Volume Method, (Masuda et al., 1998) Positron Emission Profiling, (Koriabkina et al., 2002, 2005) Pulsed Field Gradient-Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (PFG-NMR), (Hedin et al., 2008; Kärger et al., 1993, 2012; Kärger and Pfeifer, 1991) and Quasi-Elastic Neutron Scattering (QENS) (Jobic et al., 2004; Jobic and Theodorou, 2007) have been applied to study experimentally the diffusion of gas molecules in zeolites, such as CO₂, N₂, CH₄, C₂H₆, benzene, p-xylene, and hexane in ZSM-5. These studies show how diffusivities depend on the shape and dimensions of the pore network and the guest molecules. Koriabkina et al. and Masuda et al. found that H⁺ cations in ZSM-5 cause a dramatic decrease in the diffusivity of the large molecules benzene, toluene,
p-xylene, hexane, and 2-methylpentane, in the range of $T = 393$–723 K. The cations impact diffusion more severely at lower loading and lower temperature.

As a complement to experimental measurement of diffusivities, atomically detailed molecular dynamics (MD) simulations provide theoretical insight and quantitative predictions of molecular diffusion in zeolites. Simulation results have been compared to experimental studies of PFG-NMR and QENS, showing encouraging agreement (Chong et al., 2005; Gaj et al., 2002; Jobic et al., 2004; Kärger et al., 1993; Papadopoulos et al., 2004). Similarly, grand canonical Monte Carlo (GCMC) has provided many examples of quantitative predictions of light gas adsorption in zeolites and compared well to experimental adsorption measurements (Newsome et al., 2014). MD and GCMC have been applied to study the behavior of light gases in many zeolites. For example, Sholl, Kohen, and coworkers studied CH$_4$, CF$_4$, and CO$_2$, in a variety of pure-silica zeolites (silicalite-1, ITQ-3, ITQ-7, and ZSM-12), demonstrating various types of behavior as a function of loading, pore topology, and molecular size (Gaj et al., 2002; Selasie et al., 2008; Skoulidas et al., 2003; Skoulidas and Sholl, 2003, 2002). Makrodimitris, Papadopoulos, Jobic, and Theodorou ran MD and GCMC simulations of CO$_2$ and N$_2$ in silicalite-1 (Makrodimitris et al., 2001; Papadopoulos et al., 2004). Their simulations demonstrated the preferential adsorption of CO$_2$ over N$_2$ due to strong electrostatic attractions with the zeolite framework, and also showed that the diffusivity of CO$_2$ is substantially lower than that of N$_2$. At this time, MD is usually limited to diffusivities $>10^{-11}$ m$^2$/s; slower transport can be analyzed with transition state theory (TST) or transition path sampling (TPS) methods. Jee and Sholl (2009) performed simulations of CO$_2$ and CH$_4$ in DDR zeolites, using MD combined with TST to analyze the faster diffusion of CO$_2$ in mixtures with slowly diffusing CH$_4$. Vlugt et al. (2000) used MD combined with TPS to analyze the hindered motion of isobutane in silicalite-1. Hironzani et al. (1997) used GCMC to analyze the role of Na$^+$ cations in ZSM-5, observing an enhanced adsorption of CO$_2$. Beersden et al. (2002, 2003) carried out GCMC simulations to study the role of a variety of cations on the adsorption of CH$_4$, C$_2$H$_6$, C$_3$H$_8$, and C$_4$H$_{10}$ isomers in ZSM-5 and MOR, observing strong correlations with cation size and Si/Al. The smaller cations Na$^+$ and Li$^+$ led to stronger adsorption relative to the larger cations K$^+$ and Cs$^+$, where pore exclusion was a limiting factor. Ija and Murad (2004, 2005) performed MD simulations of CO$_2$ and N$_2$ mixtures permeating through faujasite with Na$^+$, silicalite-1, and chabazite. Démontis et al. (1989, 2008) have demonstrated how MD simulations provide insight into dynamical behavior with cations present in the zeolite.

As a result of strong confinement, diffusion in zeolites is often activated: guest molecules “hop” through the pore network from one adsorption site to another. These sites correspond to free basins more frequently. For many pure-silica systems, hopping is sufficiently frequent that the diffusivities can be directly calculated from the MD trajectory data. However, MD as a stand-alone method is not practical for extended, macroscopic systems. In those cases, a multi-scale approach should be used, in which residence times are inserted into a coarse-grained lattice model. Lattice model based estimates, including dynamic Monte Carlo (DMC) simulations and mean field theory (MFT), use a bond and node lattice description of the zeolite network. This coarse-grained approach allows calculations on length and time scales not easily accessible with stand-alone MD (Auerbach, 2000; Dellago et al., 2001; Frenkel and Smit, 2002; Keil et al., 2000; Saravanan et al., 1999; Saravanan and Auerbach, 1997a, 1997b; Smit and Maesen, 2008; Theodorou et al., 1996; Vlugt et al., 2000). Other methods include MD runs at higher temperature, so as to provide enough momentum to achieve activation (Ramanan et al., 2004; Schuring et al., 2007), or Monte Carlo techniques (Voter, 1985). In our study, residence times are determined from MD simulations to explain trends in diffusivities.

Diffusivities calculated from MD simulations are presented for silicalite-1 (Si/Al = $\infty$), and ZSM-5 with 1 or 2 Na$^+$ cations per unit cell (Si/Al = 95 and Si/Al = 47). For Si/Al = 47, the diffusivities are $>10^{-11}$ m$^2$/s down to 300 K, so that stand-alone MD can be used. Residence times for CO$_2$ and N$_2$ could be determined with stand-alone MD for silicalite-1 and Na-ZSM-5 with Si/Al = 95, where diffusivities are $>10^{-11}$ m$^2$/s, even at 200 K.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. In Section 2 the MD method and the energy parameters used to gather trajectory data are briefly described. Diffusivity and residence time results are presented and discussed in Section 3. Conclusions are summarized in Section 4.

2. Methodology

2.1. Molecular dynamics (MD) simulations

MD simulations consist of an iterative solution of Newton’s equation of motions, providing the positions and velocities of atoms in a many-body system over time. The output is a collection of snapshots in time of the trajectories of the atoms, which can be used in subsequent analysis. Using these data sets, physical properties such as diffusivities and residence times can be calculated.

In this work the DL_POLY package was used. This is an open-source MD program from Daresbury Laboratory (2003). The simulations were implemented with the velocity-Verlet integration scheme in a canonical (NVT) ensemble, with the Nosé–Hoover thermostat applied for temperature control. The trajectories were typically run for 200 ps until equilibration, and 13–28 ns for further analysis, using a time step of 4 fs. Trajectory snapshots were collected at 1 ps intervals for later analysis. For many of the simulation state points, 2–20 simulations starting from different initial conditions were executed to allow proper statistical sampling.

The zeolite lattice atom positions were taken from the experimental work of van Koningsveld et al. (1987), to construct an entire ZSM-5 unit cell (Beersden et al., 2003). A simulation box of 27 ZSM-5 unit cells was used, with three unit cells in each orthogonal direction. The structure was assumed to be orthorhombic, and belonging to the Pnma space group for all temperatures, though it is possible that the crystalline structure (and space group) vary with temperature (Makrodimitris et al., 2001; Skoulidas and Sholl, 2002; van Koningsveld et al., 1987). This box size is large enough to maintain a sufficiently high population of molecules and to fulfill the minimum image convention, so that the molecules do not see their periodic ghost image when periodic boundary conditions are applied (Frenkel and Smit, 2002). The interaction parameters were collected from prior literature sources, as summarized in Tables 1 and 2. Both long-range Coulombic and short-range dispersion forces were used to describe the guest–guest atom and guest–zeolite atom interactions.
The self-interaction terms are included. Berthelot mixing rules were applied for the cross-atomic interactions, so that only the first charge refers to ZSM-5 with Al and Na. The * refers to cases with Al framework substitution, which requires changes in the partial charges. The List of the Coulombic charges for each atom site, in terms of the elementary charge. Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Atom pairs</th>
<th>ε [kJ/mole]</th>
<th>σ [Å]</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C–C</td>
<td>0.2245</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>Potoff and Siepmann (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O₆–O₆</td>
<td>0.6568</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>Potoff and Siepmann (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N–N</td>
<td>0.30264</td>
<td>3.318</td>
<td>Makrodimitris et al. (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Na–Na</td>
<td>2.5325</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>Beersdens et al. (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Na–C</td>
<td>0.1746</td>
<td>2.7217</td>
<td>Hirotani et al. (1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Na–O₆</td>
<td>0.2946</td>
<td>2.833</td>
<td>Hirotani et al. (1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Na–N</td>
<td>0.87547</td>
<td>2.824</td>
<td>Lorentz-Berthelot average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si–Guest</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Makrodimitris et al. (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si–Na</td>
<td>2.5325</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>Beersdens et al. (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O₂–Guest</td>
<td>0.745</td>
<td>2.806</td>
<td>Makrodimitris et al. (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O₂–Na</td>
<td>2.5325</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>Beersdens et al. (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al–C</td>
<td>0.1965</td>
<td>1.3021</td>
<td>Hirotani et al. (1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al–O₆</td>
<td>0.3316</td>
<td>2.0134</td>
<td>Hirotani et al. (1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al–N</td>
<td>0.3316</td>
<td>2.0134</td>
<td>Assumed same as Al–O₆</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al–Na</td>
<td>2.5325</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>Beersdens et al. (2002)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CO₂ molecules are modeled as a linear triatomic molecule, with two covalent bonds of length 1.16 Å between the C and O atoms. N₂ is also treated as a linear triatomic molecule with a single covalent bond of 1.10 Å between the N atoms. A central fictional site of zero-mass with a positive partial charge is inserted between the N atoms. This third site is included to maintain a proper charge distribution when modeling the quadrupole moment and is therefore defined without any dispersion interactions, as implemented in Makrodimitris et al. (2001) and Goj et al. (2002). The quadrupole moment of N₂ is \( Q = -4.67 \times 10^{-10} \) C m², while that for CO₂ is \( Q = -13.67 \times 10^{-10} \) C m². Makrodimitris et al. (2001) tested this feature for N₂, determining that the presence of charges as a three-site distribution gave a better agreement with experimental adsorption isotherms, compared to a two-site dumb-bell model without any charges.

Initial configurations were made with a separate pre-processing algorithm. The algorithm randomly inserted the central atom of the three-site model and then grew the second and third atoms along opposite ends of a random vector, which was scaled to the length of the covalent bonds. A trial initial position of a molecule was accepted if each atom was at least 2.5 Å from the zeolite atoms and other prior inserted guest atoms. This length of 2.5 Å was empirical; shorter lengths caused the MD runs to stop in error, as the initial overlap with other atoms would be too great, while longer lengths prevented the algorithm from inserting molecules, especially at higher loadings.

The Na⁺ cations were inserted using the same overlap entry criteria as for the guest molecules but with a randomly oriented distance of 2.8 Å from a pre-chosen Al atom at the intersections. This length is also empirical, but was chosen thus as it is a typical dispersion interaction length. During the MD equilibration the Na⁺ cations relaxed into positions near the Al atoms. They vibrated but never diffused away during the course of the simulations due to the strong Coulombic attraction with the lattice charge deficit.

### 2.2. Diffusivities

The self-diffusivity, \( D₀ \), measures the tracer motion of individual molecules and is defined by the well-known Einstein relationship

\[
D₀ = \lim_{t \to \infty} \frac{1}{6t} \left( \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{N} \left| \vec{r}_i(t) - \vec{r}_i(0) \right|^2 \right).
\]

Similarly, the corrected-diffusivity \( D_{\text{c}} \), which measures the collective motion, is defined as:

\[
D_{\text{c}} = \lim_{t \to \infty} \frac{1}{6t} \left( \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{N} \left| \vec{r}_i(t) - \vec{r}_i(0) \right|^2 \right).
\]

At low loading, \( D = D₀ = D₅ \). However, at higher loadings, correlations between the trajectories of individual molecules mean that \( D₀ \neq D₅ \). Theodorou et al. (1996) and Skoulidas and Sholl (2002) discuss these diffusion properties in more detail.

Self- and corrected diffusivities can be calculated from the MD trajectory data. The procedure described in Frenkel and Smit was used to construct a linear plot of the mean squared displacement (MSD) over time, using post-process analysis algorithms to calculate \( D₅ \) and \( D₀ \) (Frenkel and Smit, 2002). In Eq. (1) the tracer motion of each molecule makes a unique contribution to the calculation of the MSD. In contrast, the collective MSD in Eq. (2) is based on the motion of the center of mass of a swarm of molecules, and not the many more, individual contributions from each molecule separately. As a result, the number of samples is substantially smaller compared to the MSD for self-diffusion, thus is more prone to noise, especially at longer times. Since the...
statistics are inherently poor, 20 simulations were implemented at any given state point, but initialized for unique initial configurations. The statistics of the self-diffusivities were excellent; the MSD plots showed nice linear trends after 50 ps to a few ns. The collective MSD plot showed more pronounced curvature at longer times, due to the expected sampling limits, even after combining data from the 20 simulations of each state point. Therefore, as a practical necessity, the linear fit was made over a shorter time frame of a few ns, where the MSD showed a clear linear trend due to the inclusion of more data samples. For the case studies for Si/Al = 95 and 47 at T = 200 and 300 K, the molecules spend much of their time nearby the cations. The slow motion in these case studies leads to a longer transition time of a few ns. Therefore, the self-diffusivities were fitted only after a few ns elapsed, say 2–4 ns, and based on a MSD averaged over a period of 15 ns or more. A 95% confidence interval at each snapshot in time of a MSD plot was determined, and then used to rerun the linear fit to check the sensitivity. The error bars were only a few percent of the values of the diffusivities in all cases, since many displacement samples were included in the averaging.

2.3. Stable basin definitions

Stable basins or sites correspond to sub-volumes that have a relatively higher occupational probability or density, as observed from the MD trajectories. Molecules spend a high proportion of their time in these basins. To define them, a unit cell is first discretized into volume elements, or voxels, of edge size \( \sim 0.6 \, \text{Å} \). The local density of each voxel is determined, which is proportional to the average Boltzmann weight for the voxel. From each snapshot in time the actual location of the center of mass of a molecule is backtracked to its position in a single unit cell; each of the three coordinates is divided by the voxel length to determine the voxel indices. The average density for any voxel is defined as the average residence tally per unit voxel volume taken over many snapshots.

2.4. Placement of the Na\(^+\) cations

For ZSM-5 the cations can be inserted into either channels or intersections. Beerdens et al. (2003) placed the cations into both intersections and channels, using only certain tetrahedral sites for substitutions. Other computational studies have used DFT to determine the energetically preferable location of the framework substitutions in ZSM-5. Placement of Na\(^+\) cations in channel sites creates more pore blockage, as molecules would have less room to bypass the cation. Aoki et al. (2000) performed permeance measurements in ZSM-5 with framework substitutions. Based on the separation of butane isomer mixtures, they speculated that, at least for their samples, the cations were likely positioned in the more spacious intersection regions. Prior lattice studies by Coppens et al. (Coppens et al., 1999; Coppens and Iyengar, 2005; Iyengar and Coppens, 2004) assumed the strong sites to be in the intersections as well. Following this work, the Na\(^+\) cations and Al framework substitutions were placed in the intersection region of the ZSM-5 unit cell.

Simulations were carried out for 0, 1 and 2 Al/Unit Cell (Si/Al = \( \infty \), 95, and 47). The Al framework substitutions were made at the Si atom positions of \( T^\prime = [3.73, 1.17, 8.99] \, \text{Å} \) and \( T^\prime = [6.27, 11.13, 2.30] \, \text{Å} \) (where positions are set with the origin at the lower corner of the unit cell). Fig. 1b and c presents isodensity contour plots (units of \( 10^{-6} \) Å\(^{-3} \)) that compare the pattern of the potential energy landscape of ZSM-5 in the forms of Si/Al = \( \infty \) and 95 for a cross-section of a sinusoidal channel. The isocontours plot was constructed using the ‘contourslice’ function in MatLab. The contour lines are drawn to represent constant density values within the voxels at a given fixed plane. In Fig. 1b (for silicalite-1) no cation is present, thus the two shown stable basins are energetically similar. Interestingly, it is the channel basins that are energetically stable, corresponding to higher density levels, while the intersections have lower density levels. In contrast, for Na-ZSM-5 with Si/Al = 95, as presented in Fig. 1c, the local density contours are at higher levels around the Na\(^+\) cation. A clear void space is also seen around the cation due to local volume exclusion. Additional cross-sections are included in Supplementary material.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Diffusion of CO\(_2\)

The self- and corrected diffusivities of pure CO\(_2\) are presented in Fig. 2a–c for (a) T = 200 K, (b) 300 K, and (c) 400 K, for Si/Al = \( \infty \), 95, and 47, over a typical loading range of 1–14 CO\(_2\)/Unit Cell. This range of temperature corresponds to the standard range found in experimental studies of adsorption and permeation for light gases, with most studies around 300 K (Bernal et al., 2004; Bowen et al., 2002; Dunne et al., 1996a, 1996b; Hasegawa et al., 2002; Himeno et al., 2007; Zhu et al., 2006).

For silicalite-1, in the low-loading regime, \( D = D_0 = D_1 = 9 \times 10^{-10} \, \text{m}^2/\text{s} \) at 200 K, \( D = 3.5 \times 10^{-9} \, \text{m}^2/\text{s} \) at 300 K, and \( D = 7 \times 10^{-9} \, \text{m}^2/\text{s} \) at 400 K. The self-diffusivities for silicalite-1 for all three temperatures monotonically decrease with loading. The CO\(_2\) molecules uniformly distribute along the basins due to energetic homogeneity; crowding leads to an approximately linear drop in self-diffusivity with increased loading (Coppens et al., 1999). The corrected diffusivities, on the other hand, are relatively insensitive to loading over the range of 0–8 CO\(_2\)/Unit Cell, a trend previously noted by Skoulidas and Sholl (2002). A favorable comparison of these MD results for both CO\(_2\) and N\(_2\) in silicalite-1 with prior PFG-NMR and QENS experimental measurements is included in Supplementary material, indicating the reliability of this MD force field model and software utilized in this study. Also other groups have compared MD results to these experimental data, indicating good agreement (Jobic and Theodorou, 2007; Makrodimitris et al., 2001; Selassie et al., 2008).

The diffusivities for Na-ZSM-5 with Si/Al = 95 show a dramatically different trend for 200 K and 300 K, as presented in Fig. 2a and b. For 200 K, at very low loading (1 molecule per unit cell), the diffusivity is about \( 4 \times 10^{-11} \, \text{m}^2/\text{s} \), which is still above the calculation threshold of stand-alone MD. Both the self- and the collective diffusivities increase to a maximum of \( 2.3 \times 10^{-10} \, \text{m}^2/\text{s} \) for 8–12 CO\(_2\)/Unit Cell. For 300 K, the diffusivity for 1 molecule per unit cell is \( 7 \times 10^{-10} \, \text{m}^2/\text{s} \), increasing to \( 9.15 \times 10^{-10} \, \text{m}^2/\text{s} \) for 5–12 CO\(_2\)/Unit Cell.

Thus, for Si/Al = 95, in the low loading range, the self-diffusivities initially increase with loading. The CO\(_2\) molecules preferentially reside near the cations due to the stronger attraction. Even if they hop into a nearby weaker basin, they still feel the long-range attraction of the Na\(^+\) cation and are prone to return or perhaps hop to another cation, unimpeded by other molecules. At higher loading, the CO\(_2\) molecules compete to interact with the cations. The CO\(_2\) molecules closest to a cation shield this cation from other CO\(_2\) molecules, reducing the strength of the electrostatic interactions, causing faster diffusion and longer residence in the weaker basins. The guest–guest steric hindrance plays a greater role at higher loading, so that the self-diffusivity displays the same monotonic decrease as observed in silicalite-1. The maximum in the diffusivity at 300 K is clearly less pronounced, as the higher temperature reduces the attractive influence of the cation.

The corrected diffusivities of pure CO\(_2\) in Na-ZSM-5 with Si/Al = 95 at 200 K (Fig. 2a) and at 300 K (Fig. 2b) show the same initial
increase at low loading as the self-diffusivities. Recall that, by definition, at low loading the self-diffusivity equals the corrected diffusivity. At higher loading the correlation effects manifest themselves, and the corrected diffusivities become consistently larger than the self-diffusivities, showing a weak dependence with loading instead of the monotonic decrease seen for silicalite-1.

The self- and corrected diffusivities of CO₂ for Si/Al=95 at 400 K are presented in Fig. 2c. They no longer show an increase in the low-loading range, for the higher temperature substantially reduces the interaction strength induced by the cations. At low loading, \( D = 3 \times 10^{-9} \text{ m}^2/\text{s} \). The self-diffusivity decreases in a monotonic manner to \( 9 \times 10^{-10} \text{ m}^2/\text{s} \) for 14 CO₂/Unit Cell, while the corrected diffusivity remains essentially independent of loading.

For the case of Si/Al=47 the self- and corrected diffusivities are presented for 300 K and 400 K in Fig. 2b and c, respectively. They were not determined for 200 K, as diffusion is too slow to lead to reasonably accurate estimates from stand-alone MD. Even for Si/Al=95 at 200 K, stand-alone MD is near the threshold of \( 10^{-11} \text{ m}^2/\text{s} \). At 300 K and low loading, \( D = 1.5 \times 10^{-10} \text{ m}^2/\text{s} \). The self-diffusivity slightly increases to a maximum of \( 1.8 \times 10^{-10} \text{ m}^2/\text{s} \) around 3–4 CO₂/Unit Cell, then decreases in a similar, monotonic manner to \( D = 8 \times 10^{-11} \text{ m}^2/\text{s} \) for 14 CO₂/Unit Cell. The corrected diffusivities remain consistently larger, increasing to a relatively constant value of \( D = 3 \times 10^{-10} \text{ m}^2/\text{s} \) in the range of 4–12 CO₂/Unit Cell. At this temperature diffusion is sufficiently fast that stand-alone MD can be used, even though now there are two cations/Unit Cell. Due to the larger number of cations per Unit Cell for Si/Al=47, the diffusivities are \( \approx 1/4 \) of the values for Si/Al=95.

The diffusivity for Si/Al=47 and 400 K at low loading is \( D = 9 \times 10^{-10} \text{ m}^2/\text{s} \). The self-diffusivity decreases to \( 3 \times 10^{-10} \text{ m}^2/\text{s} \), while the corrected diffusivity shows a much weaker dependence on loading over the range 4–12 CO₂/Unit Cell. These trends are similar to those observed in silicalite-1, as the cations have a reduced impact at this higher temperature.

3.2. Diffusion of N₂

To assess the effect of its lower quadrupole moment, analogous simulations were performed for N₂ at 200 and 300 K. Though N₂ has a larger kinetic radius than CO₂, its quadrupole moment is about 1/3 of the value for CO₂, so that N₂ molecules will diffuse faster compared to CO₂, due to weaker Coulombic interactions with the cations. The diffusivities of N₂ for Si/Al=∞, 95, and 47 at 200 K and 300 K are featured in Fig. 3a and b. At low-loading and 200 K \( D = 8 \times 10^{-10} \text{ m}^2/\text{s} \) for silicalite-1, \( D = 5 \times 10^{-10} \text{ m}^2/\text{s} \) for Si/Al=95, and \( D = 3 \times 10^{-10} \text{ m}^2/\text{s} \) for Si/Al=47. For 300 K the low-loading diffusivities are \( D = 1.7 \times 10^{-8} \text{ m}^2/\text{s} \) for silicalite-1, \( D = 1.1 \times 10^{-8} \text{ m}^2/\text{s} \) for Si/Al=95, and \( D = 7.0 \times 10^{-9} \text{ m}^2/\text{s} \) for Si/Al=47. Results in silicalite-1 are also compared to published experimental data in Supplementary material, showing reasonable agreement for the N₂ model in this MD algorithm. The diffusivities for N₂ at very low loading in silicalite-1 could not be determined. The N₂ molecules were observed to get caught in a local symmetry site of the zeolite lattice, where they rapidly rotated. This unnatural movement caused the thermostat to respond by removing momentum from all other molecules, leading to an artificial freezing problem. This problem did not occur at higher loading, since molecular collisions pushed molecules away from the symmetry site and prevented this unnatural rotation. Hence the low loading diffusivity at 1 N₂/Unit Cell in Fig. 3a and b is a linear extrapolation from the higher loading values. This extrapolation was carried out to maintain a complete set of diffusivities for N₂ in silicalite-1 over all loadings.

The self-diffusivity of N₂ in Na-ZSM-5 with Si/Al=95 and 47 shows the same monotonic decrease as in silicalite-1, in contrast to CO₂, which shows an initial increase with loading for both 200 and 300 K, before decreasing at higher loading. The self-diffusivity of N₂ is less sensitive to the Si/Al ratio than the self-diffusivity of CO₂, and values are typically an order of magnitude larger, indicating the strong impact of the quadrupole moment. Though the self-diffusivity of N₂ shows the same qualitative pattern for all Si/Al ratios, the values systematically decrease with lower Si/Al, due to weaker electrostatic interactions and pore blockage. Like for CO₂, but even more pronounced, the corrected diffusivity of N₂ is relatively insensitive to loading in all situations.
The presence of more cations, the CO$_2$ molecules become less effective in counter-balancing the electrostatic charge of the cations. In the Unit Cell. The presence of the second cation per unit cell increases the overall activation energy barrier for long-range diffusion. In the Unit Cell, decreasing to 14 kJ/mole over the range from 2 to 8 CO$_2$/Unit Cell. For Si/Al = 95, the activation energy barrier of CO$_2$ depends on loading, with $E_a$ = 4 kJ/mole for Si/Al = 95, increasing to 5.7 kJ/mole at 8 CO$_2$/Unit Cell. In contrast, the activation energy barrier of N$_2$ for silicalite-1 is $E_a$ = 3 kJ/mole, independent of loading. The small increase in activation barrier for N$_2$ when cations are present is due to the slightly stronger interaction between N$_2$ and the cations. In strong contrast, and analogous to the diffusion of CO$_2$ and N$_2$ for Si/Al = 95, and 47. An Arrhenius fit was made for the self-diffusivity based on the calculations at 200, 300 and 400 K. While this range is narrow, the results are informative. The activation barrier of N$_2$ for silicalite-1 is $E_a$ = 3 kJ/mole and, for CO$_2$, $E_a$ = 6.8 kJ/mole, irrespective of loading, due to the energetic homogeneity of the potential energy landscape in silicalite-1. For Na-ZSM-5 with Si/Al = 95, $E_a$ = 3.5 kJ/mole for N$_2$, independent of loading. The small increase in activation barrier for N$_2$ when cations are present is due to the slightly stronger interaction between N$_2$ and the cations. In strong contrast, and analogous to the diffusivities, a different trend is observed for the CO$_2$ activation energy barrier in Na-ZSM-5 with Si/Al = 95. At 2 CO$_2$/Unit Cell, where the Na$^+$ cation is more exposed, $E_a$ = 12.5 kJ/mole, then decreases as a function of loading to 7 kJ/mole at 8 CO$_2$/Unit Cell. For Si/Al = 47, the activation energy barrier of N$_2$ is $E_a$ = 4 kJ/mole and remains constant as a function of loading. In contrast, the activation energy barrier of CO$_2$ depends on loading, with $E_a$ = 16 kJ/mole at 2 CO$_2$/Unit Cell, decreasing to 14 kJ/mole over the range from 2 to 8 CO$_2$/Unit Cell. The presence of the second cation per unit cell increases the overall activation energy barrier for long-range diffusion. In the presence of more cations, the CO$_2$ molecules become less effective in counter-balancing the electrostatic charge of the cations.

### 3.3. Activation energy barriers

The activation energy barriers, $E_a$, are presented in Fig. 4 for both CO$_2$ and N$_2$ for Si/Al = ∞, 95, and 47. An Arrhenius fit was made for the self-diffusivity based on the calculations at 200, 300 and 400 K. The numerator is a double summation of $h_{m\alpha}$, the binary characteristic function for a stable basin $\alpha$ and a stable basin $\alpha'$ where $m$ is the number of residence events for each molecule. An entry event is defined as the first time snapshot when all three sites of a molecule are present in the stable basin. The exit event for this molecule occurs when the last stable basin is no longer occupied by the molecule. Many prior studies have applied MD to assess rate constants for transport in nanoporous materials (Auerbach, 2000; Dellago et al., 2001; Frenkel and Smit, 2002; June et al., 1991; Saravanan et al., 1999; Saravanan and Auerbach, 1997a, 1997b; Vlugt et al., 2000; Voter, 1985). In this work, residence times are determined by accumulating values of a binary characteristic function over the course of the trajectory time length for all molecules. The binary characteristic function for a stable basin $\alpha$ is defined as

$$h_{\alpha} = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if the molecule is not in the stable basin } \alpha \\ 1 & \text{if the molecule is in the stable basin } \alpha \end{cases}$$

so that, at any given time step, $h_{\alpha}$ is only 1 for the basin associated with the location of the molecule, while, for all other basins, $h_{\alpha} = 0$. Using this simple quantity, the average residence time is defined as

$$\tau_{\alpha} = \frac{1}{N_m} \sum_{m=1}^{N_m} \frac{1}{\sum_{\alpha=1}^{N_{events}} h_{m\alpha}}$$

The numerator is a double summation of $h_{m\alpha}$ first over the set of time steps ($N_t$) along the entire course of the simulation, then as a second summation amongst the population of molecules ($N_m$). Multiple simulations were combined to improve the statistical basis. Incomplete residence events at the beginning of the simulations are excluded, such that only those residence periods where a distinct entry and exit event occur are included in the sampling. The denominator is the summation, over all molecules, of the number of residence events for each molecule. An entry event is defined to start at the first time snapshot when all three sites of a CO$_2$ or N$_2$ molecule are found to reside in the volume of the stable basin, so that $h_{m\alpha} = 1$. The exit event for this molecule occurs when $h_{m\alpha} = 1$ for a different stable basin. The residence event for the current basin is then considered complete and $N_{events}$ is incremented by 1 for the current basin. In the final step the intermediate calculations are scaled by the sampling period, $\tau_{samp} = 1$ ps, to allow for proper time units.

The stable basins are defined such that their volumes are large enough to accommodate the molecules while they are also sufficiently separated by a distance more than the size of a CO$_2$ molecule. An isosurface plot of the ZSM-5 pore network in Fig. 5a shows the z-oriented projection of the location of CO$_2$ molecules in silicalite-1 at 200 K. The isosurface plots were constructed using the ‘isosurface’ function in Matlab. The isosurface was defined to

---

**Fig. 3.** Self- and corrected-diffusivities for N$_2$ at (a) 200 and (b) 300 K at Si/Al = ∞, 95, and 47. The same symbol scheme from Fig. 2 applies.

**Fig. 4.** The activation energy barriers $E_a$ for CO$_2$ and N$_2$ over a range of loading. The $E_a$ results were taken from the Arrhenius analysis of the self-diffusivities.
3.5. Residence times for CO₂ and N₂ in silicalite-1

Fig. 6 shows the residence times in the sinusoidal and straight channel sites of (a) CO₂ and (b) N₂ for silicalite-1 at 200, 300, and 400 K. These were calculated from the same MD simulations used to calculate the diffusivities. For CO₂ at low loading, the residence times are τ = 98–125 ps at 200 K, τ = 30–33 ps at 300 K, and τ = 17.6–18.8 ps at 400 K. For N₂ the low-loading residence times are τ = 18–25 ps at 200 K and τ = 10–13 ps at 300 K. These results clearly show the dependence on the relative quadrupole moments of CO₂ and N₂. The residence times for both CO₂ and N₂ monotonically increase with loading. As molecules attempt to leave, other molecules nearby block them from entering other basins. A linear relationship of (1 + θ) correlates the residence times remarkably well for this case, where θ is the fractional loading. This is not based on any physical argument. The residence times for the sinusoidal channel basins are larger by a small percentage compared to the values for the straight channels, since the sinusoidal channels are tortuous pathways, making it somewhat harder for the molecules to leave the channel basins.

The Arrhenius analysis for the residence times is presented in Fig. 7a for the case of 2 CO₂ molecules per unit cell at 200, 300, and 400 K. Fig. 7b compares the activation energy barriers for silicalite-1, calculated from the residence time analysis and from the self-diffusivity. Even though the temperature range is narrow, agreement is fairly good. The two sets of activation barriers agree within a fraction of a R₂Τ (e.g. R₂Τ ≈ 1.67 kJ/mole at 200 K). The discrepancy between the two types of calculations is due to the weak activation barriers for CO₂ and N₂ diffusion in silicalite-1, where molecules can easily jump into neighboring basins, reside for a short period, and then depart again for other basins. Attempts to cross an activation barrier may also be unsuccessful, so that a molecule returns to its origin after attempting to cross. These short time contributions create overall lower displacements when calculating the diffusivities, but appear in the residence time measurements as shorter time samples.

3.6. Residence times for CO₂ and N₂ in Na-ZSM-5 with Si/Al = 95

ZSM-5 with Al and Na⁺ cations is next considered, to determine the role energetic heterogeneity plays on the residence times. The residence times of CO₂ in the eight channel basins are presented in Fig. 8a and b at 200 K, in Fig. 8c and d at 300 K, and in Fig. 8e and f at 400 K. For this particular case, the basins are classified as strong, moderate, and weak in energetic strength, since the cations change the shape of the potential energy landscape.

There is one cation per unit cell. As this cation is placed at an intersection, molecules can access the cation from either a sinusoidal or straight channel, creating two strong basins, designated as Sin1 and Str1. The cation effectively separates these two strong basins, via partial pore blockage, as it becomes more difficult for molecules to bypass the cation. In silicalite-1 the intersections could be ignored as basins, but, when Si/Al = 95, the intersection with the cation is considered to be part of one of the strong basins, Sin1. The three other intersections, without cations, were treated in the same way as for silicalite-1.

The basin Sin3 is spatially close to Sin1, preventing any distinct spacing between the basin volumes, as was done for silicalite-1 by
using the intersections as the separation zone. An analysis of the isosurface plots indicated that Sin3 is a distinct basin. Therefore, two options exist to handle this basin: it can be effectively included in the strong basin, or it can be considered as a separate basin, as done in silicalite-1. For this analysis the second option was chosen, as it does not seem logical to remove basins merely because they are weaker in strength. Doing this would artificially increase the residence times associated to Sin1, as molecules would leave this basin less often.

The effect of the cation is most impressive at 200 K for CO2, where the relative strength of the activation barrier near the cation is highest, as seen in Fig. 8a and b. The residence time of CO2 at Sin1 is \(\tau = 2 \times 10^3\) ps at low loading, then decreases with loading to \(\tau = 540\) ps at 8 CO2/Unit Cell. For Str1 the residence time also shows a dramatic decrease, where \(\tau = 1.67 \times 10^3\) ps at low loading, then decreasing to \(\tau = 800\) ps for 8 CO2/Unit Cell. For comparison, the low-loading residence times in silicalite-1 are in the range \(\tau = 98–125\) ps. At low loading CO2 molecules spend more time near a cation. When a molecule hops to a weaker basin, it can easily return to the cation or hop to another one. At increased loading, molecules compete to adsorb on the cations, displacing each other and hindering access to the cations. This causes an increased chance for the molecules to hop to other, weak basins, so that the average residence times for the strong sites decrease with loading, at least to 200 K. The residence time for Str1 is less sensitive to loading compared to Sin1, as it is better surrounded by the zeolite lattice (as observed in density isosurface plots). Sin1 is more exposed, since it includes the volume of the nearby intersection, making it more accessible.

The Sin3 basin is labeled as of moderate strength, due to its intermediate value of \(\tau = 330–379\) ps over all loadings. Str2 is also designated as a moderate basin, with \(\tau = 390–465\) ps over all loadings. The residence times of Sin3 and Str2 are shorter than for Sin1 and Str1, but longer than residence times for basins Sin2, Sin4, Str3, and Str4, which are in the range of \(\tau = 64–300\) ps, which can be designated as weak basins. The residence times for these weaker basins mostly increase with loading, since the CO2 molecules spend more time at the weaker basins at higher loading as they become competitively displaced away from the cations and also must compete with other molecules at higher loading, due to a crowding effect. However, at relatively low loadings, a decrease in residence time, to a minimum around 3 molecules/unit cell, is noted for Sin4 and Str4.

Fig. 8c and d shows the residence times of CO2 at 300 K, which are up to 370 ps on a strong site. For comparison, in silicalite-1 at 300 K \(\tau = 33–53\) ps. At this higher temperature the residence times are substantially lower, but show qualitatively similar trends to the residence times at 200 K. The Sin1 residence times are \(\tau = 370\) ps at low loading, decreasing to \(\tau = 190\) ps for 8 CO2/Unit Cell. For Str1 \(\tau = 170\) ps at low loading, decreases to \(\tau = 140\) ps, then increasing to \(\tau = 160\) ps. These trends for residence times on strong sites are consistent with those for CO2 diffusivities in the same system: the mild decrease in residence times correlates to a mild increase in diffusivities at low loading (see Fig. 2b). The residence times of CO2

![Residence times of (a) pure CO2 and (b) pure N2 in silicalite-1 at 200, 300, and 400 K.](image)

![Arrhenius analysis of the residence times of CO2 for the case of 2 CO2/Unit Cell in silicalite-1 in the range of 200–400 K.](image)
on the moderate basin Sin3 has a value of $\tau = 105$–125 ps at 300 K, relative to $\tau = 330$–380 ps at 200 K. For the other moderate basin Str2, $\tau = 90$ ps at low loading, then increasing to $\tau = 100$ ps with loading. The weak basins Sin2, Sin4, Str3, and Str4 have values in the range $\tau = 24$–61 ps, which increase with loading.

The residence times for CO$_2$ were also determined at 400 K, and presented in Fig. 8e and f. As expected, the residence times were much shorter for all the basins, and the cations had a diminished impact at this higher temperature as well. The residence time for Sin1 was $\tau = 100$ ps at low loading, decreasing to $\tau = 90$ ps around 8 CO$_2$/Unit Cell: for Str1 $\tau = 48$ ps at low loading, but now increased to $\tau = 62$ ps at higher loading. At 200 K the residence times for Str1 decreased with loading, while at 300 K they were effectively independent of loading. At this higher temperature the molecular competition becomes less relevant for both strong basins. For comparison, $\tau = 18$–30 ps in silicalite-1 at 400 K (see Fig. 6a). These nearly constant residence times are consistent with the trend for Na-ZSM-5 with Si/Al=95 at 400 K, as in Fig. 2c, where the self-diffusivities monotonically decrease. Sin3 is still labeled as a moderate basin, with a nearly constant $\tau = 51$–59 ps. For the so-called moderate basin Str2, $\tau = 38$ ps at low loading, increasing to $\tau = 48$ ps at higher loading. The weaker basins, Sin2, Sin4, Str3, and Str4, have residence times in the range $\tau = 16$–48 ps, which is essentially the range observed for silicalite-1. At this higher temperature, the distinction between strong, moderate, and weak basins is diminished.

The residence times for N$_2$ were also determined, so as to examine the effect of a smaller quadrupole moment on the residence
times. Fig. 9a and b shows the residence times for \( \text{N}_2 \) at 200 K. In the basin \( \text{Sin1} \) \( \tau = 61 \) ps at low loading, but mildly decreases to \( \tau = 56 \) ps. For the second strong basin \( \text{Str1} \), \( \tau = 35\text{–}38 \) ps at all loadings. The competition effect observed for \( \text{CO}_2 \) in the strong basin at low temperature is clearly absent for \( \text{N}_2 \). The six other channel basins all fall within the same range of \( \tau = 17\text{–}37 \) ps and increase with loading; the notion of moderate strength for \( \text{Sin3} \) and \( \text{Str2} \) is inapplicable even at this low temperature. The overall magnitude and qualitative dependence with respect to loading for \( \text{N}_2 \) at 200 K is similar as that for \( \text{CO}_2 \) at 400 K, where the effect of the cations was minimal.

The residence times for \( \text{N}_2 \) at 300 K are shown in Fig. 9c and d. The residence time for \( \text{N}_2 \) at \( \text{Sin1} \) is \( \tau = 23 \) ps at low loading, only slightly increasing to \( \tau = 28 \) ps for 8 \( \text{N}_2 \)/Unit Cell. In this example, the residence time of \( \text{N}_2 \) at \( \text{Sin1} \) increases with loading, unlike the behavior for \( \text{CO}_2 \) or for \( \text{N}_2 \) at 200 K, where it decreases with loading. For \( \text{Str1} \) \( \tau = 15 \) ps at low loading, then increases to \( \tau = 20 \) ps. In the other examples the residence times for this basin decreased with loading. Also in this example there is no meaningful difference between the two strong basins and the other weak basins, as the cations have no meaningful impact, where the quadrupole moment is low and the temperature is sufficiently high. The residence times for the other basins are in the range \( \tau = 11\text{–}21 \) ps, and increase with loading.

An Arrhenius analysis was also performed for these residence times to extract the activation energy barriers. The molecules primarily spend their time in the stronger basins, especially for \( \text{CO}_2 \). Therefore, the average of the activation energy barriers for the two strongest basins is presented in Fig. 10 and compared to the activation energies calculated from the self-diffusivity. The agreement between these barriers is close, within \( 1 \frac{R_gT}{k} \). The results for \( \text{CO}_2 \) virtually coincide with the notable exception of 2 \( \text{CO}_2 \)/Unit Cell. From the Arrhenius analysis of the self-diffusivities, \( \nu_{\text{CO}_2} = 12 \text{kJ/mol} \), while from the residence times \( \nu_{\text{res}} = 10 \text{kJ/mol} \). This is a distinct difference compared to the activation barriers at higher loadings, where the agreement systematically improves. The \( \text{CO}_2 \) molecules have a higher chance of returning to and staying in the strong basins relative to the other basins, reducing the net displacement. Hence, even though they are closely related, the activation energy barrier associated to the self-diffusivity must be higher than the activation energy barrier associated to the residence time. At higher loading the increased competition effect prevents this ease of return, so that the activation barriers become more consistent. The activation barriers are self-consistent for \( \text{N}_2 \) over all loadings, as the smaller quadrupole moment prevents any correlation with the cations. In fact, the motion of \( \text{N}_2 \) is hardly activated at all under these conditions (\( \nu_{\text{res}} < 3\frac{R_gT}{k} \)).

### 4. Conclusion

Diffusion of \( \text{CO}_2 \) and \( \text{N}_2 \) were studied by molecular dynamics simulations over a range of temperatures and loadings in silicalite-1 and in Na-ZSM-5, with \( \text{Si}/\text{Al} = 95 \) and \( \text{Si}/\text{Al} = 47 \). The extra-framework \( \text{Na}^+ \) cations substantially impact the diffusion of \( \text{CO}_2 \) and \( \text{N}_2 \). At the lower temperatures of 200 and 300 K, the diffusivities of \( \text{CO}_2 \) for \( \text{Si}/\text{Al} = 95 \) initially increase with loading, before decreasing at higher loading. Only at 400 K does the self-diffusivity of \( \text{CO}_2 \) monotonically decrease for the three cation levels in this study, while the collective (or corrected) diffusivity is almost independent of loading. In contrast, the diffusivity of \( \text{N}_2 \)
does not increase with loading in the low-loading regime for Si/Al = 95 and 47. The magnitude of the self- and collective diffusivities decreases with lower Si/Al, but trends are similar to those for silicalite-1. Note that, again, the collective diffusivity is almost independent of loading.

The residence time for CO₂ near a Na⁺ cation can increase by an order of magnitude or more when compared to silicalite-1, consistent with the substantial decrease in diffusivity. At 400 K the residence time for CO₂ near Na⁺ sharply decreases, leading to higher values for the self-diffusivity, which still decreases with loading in a monotonous manner. The residence time of N₂ also increases near a cation, but variations between sites are not as large compared to CO₂.

These simulation results demonstrate the inherent complexity of analyzing the molecular mobility in the potential energy landscape of zeolite pore networks that include extra-framework Na⁺ cations. A remarkable result is that the stable basins in silicalite-1 can be easily separated by only considering channels, at least for molecules such as CO₂ and N₂. Such ease of separation is not possible in Na-ZSM-5, so some degree of approximation was made, based on the near proximity of weak and strong basins, associated to Na⁺. However, also in this case, a coarse-grained lattice representation with residence times associated to sites corresponding to different stable basins is possible. This is very useful as input to dynamic Monte Carlo simulations or mean field theory calculations, as part of a multi-scale approach to model diffusion in zeolites.

Some recommendations can be made for future studies. Extension of this study is possible to molecules of other polar light gases, such as CO, NO, H₂O, as well as O₂ in ZSM-5 with cations. A comprehensive data set could be compiled using the described methodology. This would be especially useful if coarse-grained lattice techniques are to be applied for systems with high energetic heterogeneity. The calculations could also be extended to different cation sizes, locations, and zeolite pore topologies, if different materials are to be considered as adsorbents or as active layers in membranes. Special care should be taken that the stable basins are properly defined, with inactivated but accessible regions excluded. In this particular case study, MD simulations showed that the intersections could be excluded as basins, but this will not always be the case. For example, for isobutane the intersections are the dominant basins and the channels are the separation zones (Vlugt et al., 2000).

One recommended strategy is to first develop the necessary MD algorithms and verify which, if any, conditions (temperature, loading, molecules, host environment, cation content) can be analyzed with stand-alone MD. It may be possible to use higher temperatures to first identify the location of the stable basins. Our proposed methodology is to use short-time MD simulations, which are accelerated using pre-tabulation methods, and to identify the different basins with associated residence times, which are parameters to coarse-grained simulations for longer time and length scales.

**Nomenclature**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D₀</td>
<td>self-diffusivity [m²/s]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dₐ</td>
<td>corrected or collective diffusivity [m²/s]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eₐ</td>
<td>activation energy barrier [kJ/mole]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>time [ps]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>position [Å]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hₐ</td>
<td>Characteristic function [dimensionless]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rₑ</td>
<td>universal gas constant [8.143 kJ/mole K]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>temperature [K]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nₙ</td>
<td>number of molecules [dimensionless]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nₜ</td>
<td>number of time steps [dimensionless]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevents</td>
<td>number of molecules [dimensionless]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>τ</td>
<td>residence time [ps]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>θ</td>
<td>fractional loading [dimensionless]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Acknowledgments**

The authors gratefully acknowledge funding from the European Union via STREP Project 014032 FUSION (Fundamental Studies of Transport in Inorganic Nanostructures). Part of the simulation work was carried out at computer clusters of the Technical University of Delft, Delft, the Netherlands and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, New York.

**Appendix A. Supporting information**

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found in the online version at http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ces.2014.09.024.

**References**


