The assembly of “normal” galaxies at z\(\sim\)7 probed by ALMA

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ABSTRACT

We report new deep ALMA observations aimed at investigating the \([\text{CII}] 158\mu m\) line and continuum emission in three spectroscopically confirmed Lyman Break Galaxies at 6.8\(< z\leq 7.1\), i.e. well within the re-ionization epoch. With Star Formation Rates of SFR \(\sim 10 \, M_\odot \, yr^{-1}\), these systems are more representative of the high-z galaxy population than the extreme ones targeted in the past by millimeter observations. At the location of the optical emission, tracing both the Ly\(\alpha\) line and the far-UV continuum, no [CII] emission is detected. However, for the galaxy with the deepest observation we detect [CII] emission at redshift \(z=7.107\), fully consistent with the Ly\(\alpha\) redshift, but spatially offset by 0.7" (4 kpc) from the optical emission. These results support expectations from recent models that molecular clouds in the central parts of primordial galaxies are rapidly disrupted by stellar feedback. As a result, [CII] emission mostly arises from clumps of thermal and dust-heated gas, as well as from shocked gas, has been introduced into the ISM, both in local and high-z galaxies, excited by heating of UV photons in star forming regions, generally excited by heating of UV photons in star forming regions, primarily associated with their Photo-Dissociation-Regions (Madden et al. [1997], Kaufman et al. [1999], Graciá-Carpio et al. [2011], Pineda et al. [2014]), although contribution from diffuse atomic and partially ionized gas, as well as from shocked gas, has been inferred in some galaxies (Pineda et al. [2014], Appleton et al. [2013], Velusamy & Langer [2014], Cormier et al. [2012]).

Key words: galaxies: evolution - galaxies: high-redshift

1 INTRODUCTION

Millimeter and submillimeter observations of distant galaxies are a powerful tool to trace the evolution of the gas and dust content (e.g. Tacconi et al. 2012, Santini et al. 2014, Bothwell et al. 2013, Genzel et al. 2010, Daddi et al. 2010, Carilli & Walter 2013), to investigate their dynamics (e.g. Wang et al. 2013, De Breuck et al. 2014, Carniani et al. 2014, Carilli et al. 2013, Willott et al. 2013, 2015) to trace obscured star formation (e.g. Swinbank et al. 2014, Gallerani et al. 2012, Negrello et al. 2010, Hezaveh et al. 2013, Schaefer et al. 2015), and even to trace AGN and their effect on their host galaxy (Maiolino et al. 2012, Cicone et al. 2015, Gallerani et al. 2014).

Molecular (mostly CO) transitions are used to trace the content of molecular gas, while continuum emission is used to trace warm dust heated by ongoing star formation (and possibly by an AGN). At z\(\geq 4\) mm/submm observations are even more effective since the luminous [CII]\(158\mu m\) far-infrared fine structure line is redshifted into the primary bands of atmospheric transmission, at frequencies\(\nu < 350\, \, \, \text{GHz} \) (Maiolino et al. 2005, 2009, Walter et al. 2009, De Breuck et al. 2011). The [CII]\(158\mu m\) line is one of the main coolants of the ISM, both in local and high-z galaxies, excited by heating of UV photons in star forming regions, primarily associated with their Photo-Dissociation-Regions (Madden et al. 1997, Kaufman et al. 1999, Graciá-Carpio et al. 2011, Pineda et al. 2014), although contribution from diffuse atomic and partially ionized gas, as well as from shocked gas, has been inferred in some galaxies (Pineda et al. 2014, Appleton et al. 2013, Velusamy & Langer 2014, Cormier et al. 2012).

Until recently, at z\(\geq 4\) [CII], CO and continuum emission had been detected only in extreme galaxies such as quasar hosts or SMGs, characterized by star formation rates of the order of 1000 \(M_\odot \, yr^{-1}\), certainly not representative of the bulk of the galaxy

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population. In the last few years a few galaxies at z~6 with more modest star formation rates (50–300 M$_\odot$ yr$^{-1}$) have been detected in [CII] or in continuum (Carilli et al. 2013; Wagg et al. 2012; Carini et al. 2013; Williams et al. 2014; Riechers et al. 2014). However, at z~7, well within the re-ionization epoch, only one quasar host galaxy has been detected in [CII] and in continuum (at z=7.08, Venemans et al. 2012). “Normal” galaxies at z~7, with star formation rates more representative of the galaxy population at these early epochs, have not yet been detected either in [CII] or in continuum (Ota et al. 2014; Schaerer et al. 2015b; González-López et al. 2014). We also note that z~7.7 is the maximum redshift at which galaxies are spectroscopically confirmed (Oesch et al. 2015) and we recall that, even with the broad ALMA band, a spectroscopic redshift is needed to observe far-IR transitions redshifted into the millimeter band.

We have undertaken an ALMA programme targeting a sample of three spectroscopically confirmed galaxies at 6.8 < z < 7.1 with the aim of detecting or constraining both the [CII] line and the continuum thermal emission.

For consistency with other papers on similar sources we assume the following cosmological parameters: $H_0 = 70$ km s$^{-1}$ Mpc$^{-1}$, $\Omega_\Lambda = 0.7$ and $\Omega_m = 0.3$.

### 2 SAMPLE SELECTION, OBSERVATIONS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The list of galaxies observed is given in Tab. 1. These targets were initially selected as Lyman Break Galaxies through their z–Y dropout (Castellano et al. 2010; Ono et al. 2012) and all of them have solid spectroscopic confirmations, through the detection of Ly$\alpha$ with clearly asymmetric profile due to absorption of the blue side of the Ly$\alpha$ emission. This is probably significantly in excess (even by a few 100 km/s) with respect to the real systemic redshift of the sources, because of IGM absorption of the blue side of Ly$\alpha$. The quoted star formation rates are based on their UV emission, assuming no dust extinction (which however is likely to be very low given the very steep UV continuum). We have also corrected them, relative to the original papers, by adopting the new relation provided by Kennicutt & Evans (2012) (who use a Krupa IMF).

The ALMA observations were obtained between October 2013 and April 2014, with a number of antennae ranging from 26 to 40, depending on the specific observation (by also taking into account the fact that a few noisy antennae were removed—flagged as “bad”– from further reduction). An early observation of BDF3299 in May 2013 was not considered, because it was much noisier than the other data. The antennae were distributed in a semi-compact configuration, with most of them within about 200m from the array center, but with one or two antennae located as far as 500–1000m.

The ALMA data were reduced and analyzed by using CASA version 4.2.1. Unfortunately this CASA version does not assign physically-based weights to data taken at different epochs, with different integrations times, different atmospheric opacities and with different spectral resolutions. As a consequence, before combining the data, we manually re-scaled their relative weights so that they matched the noise variance measured in the two cubes. For the same reason, the same process had to be applied when combining data from different spectral windows (e.g. to generate the continuum maps) taken with different spectral resolution, i.e. the weights of the different spectral windows (when take with different resolutions) had to be adjusted manually.

### Table 1. Sample and parameters of resulting from the observations.

| Name         | RA(J2000)     | DEC(J2000) | $z_{250}$ | SFR$^a$ [M$_\odot$ yr$^{-1}$] | $\nu_{\text{obs}}$([CII])$^b$ [GHz] | $\text{beam}^c$ [min $\times$ maj$^c$ (PA$^c$)] | $t_{\text{int}}$ [days] | $\text{antenna}$ | $\sigma_{\text{cont}}$ [mJy] | $\sigma_{\text{fux}}$ [mJy] | $L([\text{CII}])^d$ [10$^7$ L$_\odot$] |
|--------------|---------------|------------|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| BDF-3299     | 337.0511      | -35.1665   | 7.109$^b$ | 5.7                           | 234.374                          | 0.55 $\times$ 0.76 (85)                       | 5.1                       | 25–36          | 7.8                         | 0.095                       | <1.3                         |
| BDF-512      | 336.9444      | -35.1188   | 7.008$^b$ | 6.0                           | 237.330                          | 0.72 $\times$ 0.50 (68)                       | 1.4                       | 29             | 17.4                        | 0.267                       | <3.8                         |
| SDF-46975    | 200.9292      | +27.3414   | 6.844$^b$ | 15.4                          | 242.290                          | 0.96 $\times$ 0.82 (79)                       | 2.0                       | 40             | 19.2                        | 0.271                       | <3.6                         |

Notes: $^a$This is the SFR inferred from the rest-frame UV continuum and is adapted to the new calibration given in Kennicutt & Evans (2012), who adopt a Krupa IMF. $^b$Expected redshifted frequency of [CII] (LSRK) from the Ly$\alpha$ redshift. $^c$This column gives the synthesized beam (median value across SW1 minor and major axes (in arcsec) and position angle (in degrees, anticlockwise relative tot the North). $^d$On-source integration time (in hours). $^e$Rms on the continuum. $^f$Rms measured in the spectrum extracted from the central beam, avoiding regions of higher noise associated with atmospheric absorption (except for SDF-46975, see text), in spectral channels of 40 km/s. $^g$The upper limits on the [CII] luminosities are at 3$\sigma$, and are calculated on a width of 40 km/s. $^h$From Vanzella et al. (2011). $^i$From Ono et al. (2012).
The cubes were created with natural weighting and by shifting the channels to a common velocity reference (i.e. by setting mode='velocity' in the CASA clean command).

The resulting cubes images typically have a beam size of about 0.7"; yet the detailed beam shape and orientation for each observation is given in Tab.1. No cleaning was performed in any cube, since there are no sources bright enough in the field of view. The only exception is the continuum image of BDF3299, in which a 400µJy serendipitous source is detected and which has enabled us to perform the cleaning (with 500 iterations) of the continuum map.

The continuum maps were obtained by collapsing the four spectral windows (by taking care of the proper weighting between spectral windows with different channel widths, as discussed above).

The final sensitivity reached in each set of data is given in Tab.1, both for the continuum and for spectral bins (as detailed in the following). In the deepest cube (the one on BDF3299) we reach a continuum sensitivity of 7.8µJy by using the equivalent full spectral band of 7.8 GHz. The sensitivity to line detection depends on the specific frequency, since each band is affected by atmospheric absorption in some spectral regions. The sensitivity also depends on the spatial location, both because of the shape of the primary beam, which decreases the sensitivity at large radii from the phase center, and because continuum serendipitous sources may generate sidelobes in their vicinity. In Tab.1 we give the rms in spectral bins of 40 km/s (for consistency with other works at z~7. [Oka et al. 2014] and [González-López et al. 2014] obtained by extracting the spectrum on the central beam (phase center) and taking the rms spectrally, in the spectral region close to the expected frequency of the [CII] line. The latter may require the selection of different spectral ranges depending of the source, because of the different location of the atmospheric absorption features in different spectra (relative to the expected [CII] frequency). In the cases of BDF3299 and BDF521 the expected location of the [CII] line is in an excellent atmospheric region. In these cases we have measured the rms of the spectrum between -1000 km/s and +300 km/s; outside this range the rms increases as a consequence of atmospheric absorption features. In the case of SDF46975, an atmospheric absorption feature is located just redward of the expected [CII] frequency from the Lyα redshift; since we do not know exactly the expected location of the [CII] from the real accurate redshift, we conservatively estimate the noise from the spectral range around the atmospheric absorption feature.

The absolute astrometric accuracy of the maps is given by the accuracy of the phase calibration and the accuracy of the absolute coordinates of the phase calibrator. The global absolute astrometric uncertainty is estimated to be about 0.15". In the case of BDF3299, two observations were performed with two different phase calibrators; in the two observations the continuum serendipites have the same absolute position within less than 0.1", confirming the accuracy of the absolute astrometric calibration of ALMA.

The absolute astrometric accuracy is only relevant for the comparison with the Y-band images. In the case of BDF3299 the ALMA data reveal two serendipitous continuum sources detected at high level of significance (Carniani et al. 2015), both of which have a clear counterpart in the Y-band image or in the K-band image (which is cross-matched with the Y-band). However, both optical and near-IR counterparts are offset by about the same amount in the same direction relative to the ALMA continuum sources, and more specifically by ~0.4" towards the NW (PA~343°). Since these offsets are the same for both continuum sources we believe they are associated with an offset of the astrometry of the near-IR images relative to the ALMA images (we shall mention that the absolute astrometry of the Y-band and K-band images is linked to the USNO-B catalog, which has an average absolute astrometric accuracy of 0.25" at the epoch J2000, but variable across the sky with a dispersion about 0.12". Therefore, when comparing with the Y-band image, we will apply to the Y-band image an offset of 0.4" to the SW (PA=163°).

Figure 1. Top: spectra of the three sources in our sample, centered at the location of the optical counterpart, extracted from the central beam. The velocity reference is set to the redshift defined by the Lyα peak. Bottom: noise in the same velocity range measured across each plane associated with each spectral bin. The regions where the noise is higher are associated with spectral regions of telluric absorption. The spectral binning of these spectra is 40 km/s. The vertical red dashed line in the leftmost panel indicates the velocity of the [CII] line detected next to BDF3299 in clump “A”, illustrating that the line is located in a region of low noise.

3 [CII] EMISSION AT THE LOCATION OF THE OPTICAL SOURCES

The [CII] line is not detected (at a confidence higher than 3σ) in any of the three sources at the location of their Y-band emission (i.e.
within a radius 0.5" from the latter). We recall that in these sources the Y-band emission is partly contributed by UV stellar continuum from the latter). We recall that in these sources the Y-band emission is partly contributed by UV stellar continuum emission and Ly\(\alpha\) emission (at least for BDF521 and BDF3299, Ly\(\alpha\) and UV continuum contribute to 1/3 and 2/3, respectively, of the observed Y-band flux, Vanzella et al. 2011).

The spectra extracted from the central beam are shown in Fig. 1 along with the spectral distribution of the noise in the lower panels.

To estimate the upper limit on the line flux we assume a line width of 40 km/s, both for consistency with previous works (Ota et al. 2014; Gonzalez-Lopez et al. 2014), whose data will be used in our analysis, and because simulations do predict these early, low-SFR systems to have relatively narrow [CII] lines (Vallini et al. 2013), which are indeed observed in some systems at high-z, despite Ly\(\alpha\) being relatively broad (Williams et al. 2014). The 3\(\sigma\) upper limits on the [CII] luminosity are given in Tab. 1.

Since [CII] is primarily excited as a consequence of heating by soft-UV radiation (mostly in PDRs associated with star forming regions, but also in HII regions or in the diffuse medium), many authors have identified a correlation between SFR and [CII] luminosity (e.g. Sargsyan et al. 2012; De Looze et al. 2014).

If the far-IR luminosity is used to measure the SFR, then the correlations seems to break down at high far-IR luminosities (in the ULIRGs regime) and it is not yet clear whether this is associated with an additional contribution to the far-IR from powerful AGNs, hence resulting in an inappropriate measurement of the star formation rate from the far-IR emission (Sargsyan et al. 2012; Malhotra et al. 2001), or associated to different physical conditions in ULIRGs, which may suppress the emission of [CII] (Kaufman et al. 1999; Graciá-Carpio et al. 2011). However, our sources are certainly not in the ULIRG luminosity range, so we will not consider the latter issue any further.

Fig. 2 shows the L([CII]) versus SFR relation for various classes of galaxies presented in De Looze et al. (2014). The blue line indicates the relation for local normal star forming and starburst (non-ULIRG) galaxies, while the shaded region shows the 1\(\sigma\) dispersion. The orange line and hatched region show the relation and dispersion of local low metallicity galaxies (in the range \(Z/Z_\odot < 1\)). For many of the low metallicity galaxies in the sample of De Looze et al. (2014) the L([CII])/SFR ratio tends to be even higher than in normal galaxies (this is mostly a consequence of [CII] being a coolant of the ISM), however at very low metallicities (\(Z < 0.1\ Z_\odot\)) the L([CII])/SFR start to decrease and becomes lower than in normal galaxies.

"Normal" galaxies at z\(\sim\)7 (those with SFR < 100 M\(_\odot\)yr\(^{-1}\)), i.e. not including the extreme QSO at z\(\sim\)7.08 are indicated with red symbols and upper limits in Fig. 2. Circles indicate our new observations, while squares are for additional galaxies at 6.8\(<z<11\) from previously published studies (Ota et al. 2014; Schaerer et al. 2015b; Gonzalez-Lopez et al. 2014). Clearly the bulk of galaxies at z\(\sim\)7 (at least those for which a meaningful constraint on L([CII]) has been obtained) have, at a given SFR, a [CII] luminosity significantly lower than observed in most local galaxies, even by including the low metallicity ones. It is particularly interesting that for BDF3299, which is the galaxy at z\(\sim\)7.1 with the deepest ALMA observation, the 3\(\sigma\) upper limit on the [CII] luminosity is 6 times lower than expected from normal local galaxies.

However, we note that the lowest metallicity local galaxies in the De Looze et al. (2014) sample (Z \(\sim\) 0.1 – 0.2 Z\(_\odot\)) have [CII]/SFR values comparable with the 3\(\sigma\) upper limit on BDF3299 (although they have much lower SFR). Therefore, in principle, such a [CII] line deficit in z\(\sim\)7 normal galaxies could be ascribed to low metallicity. Low metallicity of high-z galaxies has been a possible interpretation for the lack of [CII] detection in some star forming galaxies at z\(\sim\)6.5 (Ouchi et al. 2013; Vallini et al. 2013). Yet, one should bear in mind that the intensity of the [CII] line, as many other coolants of the ISM, does not scale linearly with metallicity (see e.g. Naga (2011); Madden (2011); Cormier (2012); Röllig (2006). Most importantly, we will show in the next section that [CII] emission is actually detected in a gas clump next to BDF3299. Therefore, while metallicity may play a role, it is probably not the only origin of the [CII] deficiency in the core of these primeval galaxies, as discussed in the following.

4 [CII] EMISSION CLUMP NEXT TO BDF3299 AT z\(\sim\)7.1

4.1 Line detection

In the ALMA cube of BDF3299, which is the deepest of our observations, we have detected a line consistent with [CII] at the redshift, z\(\sim\)7.1, inferred from the Ly\(\alpha\) of the galaxy (especially once IGM absorption of Ly\(\alpha\) is taken into account), but offset by 0.7" (i.e. 4 kpc) relative to the location of the primary galaxy in the Y-band image (which traces UV+Ly\(\alpha\) emission).

The map of the line emission is shown in Fig. 3 extracted with a spectral width of 100 km/s and centered at –64 km/s, relative to the velocity scale set by the redshift inferred from Ly\(\alpha\). Black contours are at levels of 2, 3 and 4 times the noise per beam of the map, i.e. 6.4 mJy beam\(^{-1}\), while grey contours indicate negative fluxes at –2, –3 and –4 \(\sigma\) (the latter level is never reached over the whole map). The white cross indicates the centroid of the Y-band image of BDF3299.

Figure 2. [CII]158\µm luminosity versus SFR. The blue line shows the relation found by De Looze et al. (2014) for local star forming galaxies and starbursts (non including ULIRGs), while the shaded region shows the 1\(\sigma\) dispersion. The orange line and hatched region show the relation and dispersion found by De Looze et al. (2014) for local low metallicity dwarfs and irregulars. The red symbols are the [CII] data for galaxies at z\(\sim\)7 (specifically at 6.8\(<z<11\)): circles are our new observations and squares are data from the literature (Vanzella et al. 2011).

The spectra extracted from the central beam are shown in Fig. 1 along with the spectral distribution of the noise in the lower panels.
Figure 3. Top: Map of the [CII] emission obtained with a velocity interval of 100 km/s, centered at –64 km/s (relative to [CII] frequency expected from the Lyα redshift, z = 7.109), in the ALMA data of BDF3299. Black contours are at levels of 2, 3 and 4 times the noise per beam in the same map, i.e. 6.4 × 10^{-3} mJy beam^{-1}. Grey contours are at the same levels, but for negative fluxes (note that –4σ is not reached anywhere). The ALMA beam is indicated in the bottom-left corner. The white cross indicates the location of the Y-band image centroid of the galaxy BDF3299. Label “A” indicates the contours associated with the [CII] detection, whose spectrum is shown in Fig. 4, while “B1” and “B2” indicate two marginal detections discussed in the text. Bottom: zoom of the central 3′′ around the location of BDF3299. Note that the coordinates are relative to the phase center of the ALMA observation in 2013, which was centered on the nominal coordinates of the optical image (but see the text for a discussion on the astrometry of the original Y-band images and their shift relative to the ALMA astrometry, which has been corrected here).

Figure 4. Top: ALMA spectrum of the [CII] source (clump “A”), extracted from the elliptical aperture obtained by fitting the emission in the [CII] map (the spectrum flux has been corrected for the flux lost outside the extraction aperture, see text). The gray shaded region indicates the part of the spectrum affected by higher noise because of atmospheric absorption. Bottom: Lyα profile from the optical spectrum obtained by Vanzella et al. (2011). It should be noted the strongly asymmetric profile due to IGM absorption of the blue side of the line. The green line indicates the sky background spectrum. Velocities are relative to the peak of Lyα (orange dashed vertical line). The red dashed line indicates the velocity of the peak of the [CII] line.

The [CII] emitting clump is marked with an “A” and is located at RA(J2000) = 22:28:12.325, DEC(J2000) = –35:10:00.64. Its emission peak is detected at 4.5σ. However, the source is marginally resolved (along a Position Angle of –33.5°) hence the significance cannot be inferred simply by the peak surface density in units of flux per beam. In this case, as for extended sources, to properly assess the significance of the detection, we have to extract the spectrum of the source. We have first fitted a two-dimensional Gaussian to the [CII] emission, and then extracted the spectrum from an aperture corresponding to the section of the ellipsoid at half maximum of its peak (i.e. an ellipsoid which has minor and major axes of 0.55′′ and 1.03′′ respectively). Since the extraction aperture has a size close to the beam, we have applied a flux aperture correction (inferred from the flux extracted with the same aperture from the continuum serendipitae), which results to be a factor of 2.5. The resulting spectrum is shown in Fig. 4, rebinned to 40 km/s, together with the optical spectrum of Lyα. The line has a peak at a velocity of –64 km/s relative to the Lyα peak. As already mentioned, such a velocity offset is expected, indeed the Lyα is artificially redshifted as a consequence of IGM absorption (as clearly shown by its strongly asymmetric profile), hence the real redshift of BDF3299...
is certainly slightly lower than inferred from Lyα. Therefore, the blueshift by $-64 \text{ km/s}$ is fully consistent with the rest-frame of the galaxy. We have measured the significance of the line by measuring the noise in the spectrum between $-1000 \text{ km/s}$ and $+300 \text{ km/s}$; this is a region with uniform, low noise, while outside this spectral range atmospheric absorption makes the noise higher (see Fig.1). To avoid any potential baseline residual instability, we have also subtracted a continuum fitted on the same spectral window (which however is consistent with zero within the noise). By integrating the line under the shaded region in Fig.1 ($-200 < V < 0 \text{ km/s}$), we obtain a significance of the detection of $7\sigma$. A summary of the [CII] line properties of clump A is given in Tab.2.

We note that the same map in Fig.3 reveals two potential additional marginal detections (B1 and B2) whose peak emission is above $3\sigma$. These are the only two additional marginal detections in the map with significance higher than $3\sigma$ within a radius of $6''$ and will be discussed later on.

The spatial location of the [CII] detection relative to the Y-band source is shown in Fig.5 in which the green contours are the same as the (black) contours in Fig.3 while the colored background image is the Y-band image.

We note that at the location of the optical source the ALMA [CII] map shows a some signal at the $2\sigma$ level. However, this signal is very marginal and it will not be discussed any further.

4.2 Reliability of the detection

In this section we discuss more in detail the significance of the [CII] detection.

First we have verified that the detection is not the result of a glitch in a single subset of the data. We have separated the visibilities obtained for BDF3299 in three data sets: the set of observations obtained in November 2013, and we have divided into two halves the visibilities obtained in April 2014. These three data subsets have similar depths (though the data in 2013 are somewhat shallower than each of the two halves data taken in 2014). We have verified that in each of these three data sets a signal of the [CII] line is seen, at a flux level consistent with the value observed in the merged data, within the noise of each individual subset of data. More specifically, by only taking the (more sensitive) data taken in 2014, the measured line flux is $46.0 \pm 7.7 \text{ mJy km s}^{-1}$. If the 2014 data (4 scans in total) are split in two groups of two scans each, then the line flux in each of the two scans is $44.7 \pm 14.0 \text{ mJy km s}^{-1}$ and $47.3 \pm 12.7 \text{ mJy km s}^{-1}$. If only the (lower sensitivity) data taken in 2013 are used, then the measured line flux is $49.9 \pm 17.9 \text{ mJy km s}^{-1}$ (note that all of these fluxes, and associated errors, have been scaled by the same aperture correction factor of 2.5 discussed above).

We have then checked whether negative sources are detected with the same significance or not. We have searched for additional emission line detections within SPW1, within the spectral region between $-1000 \text{ km/s}$ and $+300 \text{ km/s}$ (i.e. the region in which the noise is low and not affected by atmospheric absorption features). We have adopted the same velocity width ($100 \text{ km/s}$) as for the [CII] detection, to extract maps for the initial selection of putative sources. We have restricted the search to this criterion both because the sidelobes of the continuum serendipitae may affect different velocity ranges in a different way, and because we have verified that the noise does not scale exactly as $\Delta V^{-1/2}$, possibly because of some residual baseline problems (see also Vio et al., in prep, for a thorough analysis of the noise in the ALMA data). We have discarded putative detections (either positive or negative) for which: 1) the signal is not seen at the expected level (within the noise)
in the three subsets of data discussed above (i.e. the detection is mostly resulting from a glitch in one or two of the three subsets of data); 2) the measured size of the putative detection is smaller than the synthesized beam, or 3) larger than 1.5 times the beam (real sources are not expected to be very extended). The latter two requirements come from the fact that a source with size significantly smaller (or much larger) than the synthesized beam must be due to noise associated with individual antennae, or group of antennae (these sources of noise are not correlated and therefore should give features with angular profiles much different than the beam). Side-lobes of serendipitae, or from strong sources outside the field of view, would also introduce features with sizes different from the beam. However, to be on the safe side, we have also excluded the region within 2″ from the 0.4 mJy continuum serendipitous source, since the uncleaned continuum map shows some low-level side-lobe residuals in this area. For each putative detection passing this screening we have extracted the spectra as for the [CII] detection and estimated the significance as discussed in Sect. 4.1 (i.e. over the same velocity interval of 200 km/s as for our detection). The resulting distribution of the positive (red) and negative (blue) detections is shown, as a function of the Signal-to-Noise ratio, in the top panel of Fig. 6. The cumulative distribution of the positive and negative detections (i.e. the number of detection with significance above a given threshold) is shown in the middle panel of Fig. 6.

It is interesting to note that the number of positive detections at > 3σ is 30% higher than the number of negative detections, suggesting that a significant fraction of the positive detections are real even down to the 3σ level. Focusing on the detections at > 5σ, we note that there are no negative detections, hence giving further confidence that our positive detection at 7σ next to the optical position of the galaxy (clump “A”), is real.

If we restrict the search within a radius of 3″ from the optical location of BDF3299 (but still owe the full velocity range −1000 < AV < +300 km s⁻¹), then the resulting distribution of detections is shown in the bottom panel of Fig. 6 in which there are only three potential positive detections, and no negative detections, above 3σ. This further supports the reliability of our detection in clump “A”.

4.3 Line identification

The match of the line frequency with the one expected for [CII] at the redshift of BDF3299 (Fig. 4) strongly supports this identification of the line.

The identification with another transition associated with a foreground galaxy at lower redshift, which by chance happens to be at 0.7″ from BDF3299, is extremely unlikely, since the sky density of molecular and atomic lines in this band, and with fluxes comparable with the line detected in our data, is extremely low. Even in such unlikely case, the galaxy should be clearly seen in the optical/near-IR images and in the thermal millimeter continuum. In the following we quantify these statements, hence excluding the line identification with a lower redshift transition.

The CO rotational transitions are the brightest transitions that can be seen in low/intermediate redshift galaxies at this frequency. Other transitions are generally much fainter [da Cunha et al. (2013b)] have inferred the cumulative space density of CO transitions as a function of flux detection threshold.

We have considered their expectations including all CO rotational transitions from (7−6) to (2−1). [da Cunha et al. (2013b)] consider both the CO Spectral Line Energy Distribution (SLED) of the MW and the extreme CO SLED observed in the center of the starburst galaxy M82. We have first conservatively adopted the CO
SLED of the M82 center; this is a conservative assumption, since the bulk of high-z galaxies have CO excitation closer to the MW (e.g. [Dannerbauer et al. 2009]). With this assumption we obtain that the cumulative probability of finding a CO emitter within a radius of 1″ of a given position, within a velocity range of ±300 km s\(^{-1}\) from a given frequency in band 6, and with a flux brighter than 30 mJy km/s (i.e. 50% lower than the flux of the line detected by us), is about 10\(^{-4}\).

If the CO SLED typical of the MW (which is closer to the CO SLED of the bulk of high-z galaxies) is taken, then the probability of chance CO detection drops to 2 \(10^{-5}\), within a velocity interval of ±300 km s\(^{-1}\), and to 7 \(10^{-6}\), within a more reasonable velocity interval of ±100 km s\(^{-1}\).

In the calculations above we have conservatively assumed the putative foreground galaxies to have solar metallicity, which has been used to estimate the CO sky densities. However, high redshift galaxies are characterized by lower metallicity than local galaxies (e.g. [Maiolino et al. 2008]). The CO-to-H\(_2\) conversion factor depends steeply on metallicity ([Bolatto et al. 2013]), with low metallicity galaxies being much less efficient in emitting CO for a given molecular gas mass. Therefore, the probability of finding a foreground CO emitter in the vicinity of BDF3299, and at the same frequency expected for its [CII] emission, is even lower than inferred above.

In addition, to such extremely low probabilities of having a chance detection of a foreground, low-z CO emitter, one should take into account that a putative CO emission, with the intensity observed by us, should be associated with a relatively bright galaxy. Indeed, according to the Schmidt-Kennicutt law, CO emission tracing molecular gas in a galaxy, must be associated to a certain SFR. Assuming, for instance, that the observed line is CO(4-3) at z=1 and conservatively assuming the S-K law observed for local galaxies ([Kennicutt & Evans 2012]), one expects that the host galaxy should have a SFR \(\approx 25M_{\odot}\) yr\(^{-1}\). Such a SFR should be associated with a galaxy with a brightness in the Y-band of \(Y_{AB}=20\) mag. However, there is not such bright counterpart at the location of the line detection. Beside BDF3299 itself, there is a faint source, marginally detected ([Fig.5]), but confirmed in new HST images ([Castellano et al. in prep.]), located 0.3″ to the South-East, but which is \textit{seven magnitudes fainter} than expected. The faintness in the Y-band could in principle be associated with extreme dust extinction. However, a SFR of \(25M_{\odot}\) yr\(^{-1}\) should also result into a 10\(\sigma\) continuum detection in our ALMA data, while we do not even have a marginal detection at the location of the line. Similar or even more extreme expectations are obtained for other CO transitions or for any other submm molecular or atomic transition.

These expected brightness in the Y-band and in the millimeter should be considered as very conservative. Indeed, it has been shown that the S-K law evolves at high redshift, in the sense that for a given CO luminosity, or for a given gas content, high-z galaxies are characterized by higher SFR than local galaxies ([Tacconi et al. 2013] [Santini et al. 2014]). High-z, low metallicity (faint) galaxies would be even more offset from the S-K relation, in the sense that their CO emission would be even fainter (because of the steep metallicity dependence of the CO-to-H\(_2\) conversion factor) or, equivalently, for a given CO luminosity the associated SFR rate (hence Y-band or far-IR continuum luminosity) should be even higher than estimated above.

Finally, the arguments above, based on the S-K law, apply to “normal” galaxies. Starburst galaxies have an efficiency of star formation (SFR per unit gas mass) one order of magnitude higher ([Genzel et al. 2010] [Daddi et al. 2010]). Therefore, depending on whether the putative foreground galaxy is “normal” or “starburst” the expected luminosity in any band should be a factor of a few, up to an order of magnitude, higher than estimated above.

Summarizing, the identification of the detected line with another transition associated with a foreground galaxy is extremely remote, leaving [CII] at \(z=7.107\) as the only realistic viable interpretation.

### 4.4 Interpretation of the [CII] emission

[CII] emission offset relative to the UV and Ly\(\alpha\) emission has already been seen in some other high redshift galaxies (e.g. [Williams et al. 2014], [Gallerani et al. 2012]), therefore our finding of offset [CII] emission is not a novelty. However, previous cases were associated with peculiar objects, such as quasar host galaxies, or galaxies in an overdense environment and in the vicinity of a quasar.

Interestingly, displaced [CII] emission in primeval galaxies, as observed in our ALMA data, is expected from cosmological simulations of early galaxy formation ([Vallini et al. 2013] Vallini et al. submit.). The [CII] line can be collisionally excited in many different ISM components (e.g. cold neutral medium, and high density photodissociation regions (PDRs) in molecular clouds). However, negative (thermal, radiative, mechanical) feedback from stars can efficiently disperse or disrupt nearby molecular clouds, therefore quenching their [CII] PDR emission. In this case, [CII] emission can only arise from accreting/satellite clumps of neutral gas displaced from the primary galaxy main body.

To illustrate this scenario more quantitatively, in the top panel of Fig. 7 we show the model of primeval galaxies developed by [Vallini et al. 2013], but specifically tailored to a galaxy at \(z=7.1\), with the same SFR as BDF3299. The black points show the distribution of young hot stars, i.e. what we observe as UV rest-frame continuum emission. The color image shows the distribution of warm ionized gas, which is observed as Ly\(\alpha\) emission. The contours show the [CII]158\(\mu\)m emission associated with the neutral gas (or mildly ionized gas). Clearly the central galaxy is expected to emit strong UV continuum and Ly\(\alpha\), but being completely photoionized, it does not emit any [CII]. However, very interestingly, the model expects [CII] emission from gas clumps at a few/several kpc (~1″ (~2″)) from the primary galaxy. These are satellite gas clumps in the process of accreting onto the primary galaxy, which have survived photoionization, owing to their distance from the source of UV photons (and because a significant fraction of UV photons are absorbed internally by the ISM of the primary galaxy).

Such [CII] emission in the satellite, accreting gas clumps is expected to be faint, but our deepest observation, the one of BDF3299, does have the sensitivity to detect it.

In the middle panel of Fig. 7 we have smoothed the simulation to the angular resolution of our optical observations (0.5″ seeing) and to the ALMA beam of our observations. The simulation is not meant, by any means, to exactly reproduce our observations (this would require a huge number of simulated objects with the same detailed modelling of the photoionization and radiative transfer in the ISM and IGM shown here, and then finding the best matching case). However, the middle panel of Fig. 7 illustrates that the offset between Y-band emission and [CII] emission is indeed expected to be resolved for various [CII] clumps (and especially for the brightest one) with the angular resolution delivered by our ALMA observation. Lower angular resolution observations would probably hamper the capability of resolving the spatial offset and would probably associate the [CII] emission with the primary UV-Ly\(\alpha\) emitting galaxy.
The simulation also highlights that more than one [CII] clump may be present around BDF3299, but probably below our detection limit and likely also because of beam dilution (many of the isolated small clumps disappear in the smoothed simulated map). Actually, in the ALMA cube of BDF3299 we find other positive [CII] detections, at lower significance than clump “A”, but in excess relative to the “negative” detections, hence suggesting that they are not spurious detections. Two of such marginal detections are marked as B1 and B2 in Fig. 3. These are the only two features with a peak flux detected at a significance higher than 3σ within a radius of 6″ (half a beam radius) from the primary galaxy, in the same map, centered at ∼64 km s⁻¹. Certainly, deeper and/or higher angular resolution observations are required to further confirm these marginal detections.

In principle the line width and spatial extension can provide information on the dynamical mass of the blob. Determining a dynamical mass of the [CII] clump detected in the vicinity of BDF3299 is not easy, both because we do not know whether the line width is tracing a rotating system or a velocity dispersion dominated system, and because the [CII] map is only marginally resolved, hence the intrinsic dimension (beam deconvolved) is difficult to estimate. If we assume that the system is rotationally supported and with a radius of about 1.5 kpc (inferred from the Gaussian fit deconvolved from the beam in quadrature), we obtain a rough estimate of the clump dynamical mass of about 5 × 10⁹ M⊙. If the system is not virialised, then this is actually an upper limit to the dynamical mass. If we adopt a similar analysis to BDF3299, by assuming that the Lyα profile is primarily tracing rotation (i.e. neglecting outflows and velocity dispersion), and assuming that half of Lyα is absorbed by the IGM, then we obtain a rough estimate of the dynamical mass of about 2 × 10⁹ M⊙. Although all these dynamical mass estimates are extremely uncertain, they suggest that indeed the [CII] clump is a small satellite of the more massive primary galaxy.

According to the model, in these satellite/accreting clumps the [CII] excitation is not expected to primarily originate from in-situ star formation, but mostly as a consequence of heating from the soft-UV irradiation from the central primary galaxy. This is consistent with the fact that we do not detect a clear Y-band source (i.e. Lyα+UV continuum) at the location of the [CII] clump. The vicinity of BDF3299 at 0.8″ and of another faint foreground galaxy at 0.4″ (see next section) prevent us to set tight upper limits on the Y-band emission associated with the [CII] clump. However, according to the [CII]-SFR relation for local (and intermediate redshift) galaxies (De Looze et al. 2014), the [CII] luminosity would imply a SFR ∼ 6 M⊙ yr⁻¹, i.e. comparable to the main galaxy BDF3299, i.e. the [CII] clump should have similar or higher Y-band flux. The inconsistency between the [CII] clump and the local [CII]-SFR relation is also illustrated in Fig. 2 which also shows the location of the [CII] clump, undetected in Y-band, on the [CII]–SFR diagram. The clump is clearly inconsistent with the distribution of local galaxies, but it could still be marginally consistent with the expectations for low metallicity galaxies. Therefore, we cannot exclude some contribution to the [CII] excitation from in-situ star formation, but we can also state that the non-detection of a clear Y-band counterpart is certainly consistent with the models expectations.

The bottom panel of Fig. 7 shows the integrated [CII] spectrum from the simulation. The metallicity of the clumps has been adjusted so that the peak flux density matches our [CII] detection. The implied metallicity is about 0.05 Z⊙. Such a small level of metal enrichment in this clump may result either from pre-enrichment as a consequence of metals expelled from the primary galaxies (De Looze et al. 2014), the [CII] luminosity would imply a SFR ∼ 6 M⊙ yr⁻¹, i.e. comparable to the main galaxy BDF3299, i.e. the [CII] clump should have similar or higher Y-band flux. The inconsistency between the [CII] clump and the local [CII]-SFR relation is also illustrated in Fig. 2 which also shows the location of the [CII] clump, undetected in Y-band, on the [CII]–SFR diagram. The clump is clearly inconsistent with the distribution of local galaxies, but it could still be marginally consistent with the expectations for low metallicity galaxies. Therefore, we cannot exclude some contribution to the [CII] excitation from in-situ star formation, but we can also state that the non-detection of a clear Y-band counterpart is certainly consistent with the models expectations.

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galaxy, or from in-situ production. Indeed, even a very low SFR of only 0.2 M$_\odot$/yr, certainly undetectable by our observations (as discussed above), would be enough to enrich this small clump to a metallicity of $\sim$0.05 Z$_\odot$ in less than 100 Myr.

We finally noted that the integrated [CII] spectrum inferred from the simulation, shown in the bottom panel of Fig. 7, expects additional narrow emission [CII] lines emitted from small accreting/satellite clumps illuminated by the primary source. We have tentatively identified narrower (10-20 km/s) [CII] emission sources in the vicinity of BDF3299, but which need to be confirmed with deeper and higher angular resolution observations.

The ALMA data of the other two sources in our sample (BDF521 and SDF46975) do not reveal clear evidence of [CII] emission in the vicinity of the UV-Lyα primary galaxy. However, the latter data are significantly shallower than the observation of BDF3299 (at least a factor of two in sensitivity). The same line seen in BDF3299 would be undetectable in the lower S/N observations of BDF521 and SDF46975.

Moreover, these two sources are brighter in the UV relative to BDF3299, hence their photoionization effect may extend to larger distances, therefore preventing neutral clouds to survive in the proximity of the galaxy.

4.5 Possible lensing from foreground galaxies

We already mentioned that a faint galaxy, marginally detected in the Y-band (but confirmed by recent HST data, Castellano et al. in prep.), is found at 0.3" to the SE of the [CII] emitting clump. The galaxy is marginally detected also in the V band, so it must be a foreground galaxy, certainly not associated with the z=7.1 system. Proper constraints on the redshift of this foreground galaxy will come from additional HST observations, as well as from forthcoming KMOS-VLT observations. Here we note that finding a foreground galaxy so close to the ALMA line detection is intriguing.

The possibility that the line is actually CO at low redshift, and associated with this foreground galaxy, was already discussed and discarded above: both the extremely low sky density of CO emitters and the extremely faint counterpart (both in the Y-band and in the millimeter continuum) make this scenario implausible. Here we only add, to the arguments discussed above, that the putative CO emission would be offset from the Y-band counterpart, which would imply molecular gas offset by several kpc from the galaxy center, which would be at odds with any known galaxy, where the molecular gas is found within the central few kpc of galaxies.

It is possible that the proximity of this source is simply resulting from a chance superposition. The source has a magnitude AB ∼ 27 and density of sources at such faint fluxes is about 100 arcmin$^{-2}$mag$^{-1}$ (Guo et al. 2013). The probability of randomly finding a galaxy with this magnitude, or brighter, within a radius of 0.3" of a given position is less than 10$^{-2}$. This probability is larger than that estimated for the chance CO detection discussed above, but still relatively small. It is curious that the first ALMA detection of [CII] in the vicinity of a normal galaxy at z>7 is found in the vicinity of a foreground galaxy, which has a random chance probability of being found there of less than 1%.

Another possible scenario is that the foreground low-z galaxy is gravitationally magnifying the [CII] emission at z=7.1. Indeed, according to models, the primary galaxy at z=7.1 should be surrounded by several [CII] emitting clumps. Although these clumps are abundant within a radius of ∼ 6" of the primary galaxy (30 kpc), the [CII] emission is probably below the detection threshold of our observations for most of them, especially as a consequence of their low metallicity. If a foreground galaxy happens to be in the field, this can introduce an even mild gravitational lensing that can boost the [CII] flux above our detection threshold.

This scenario would naturally explain the proximity of [CII] emission at z=7.1 with a foreground galaxy, without invoking very unlikely chance superpositions. Indeed, in this scenario the several [CII] clumps become visible (their emission is boosted above the detection threshold) only when a foreground galaxy is located next to them in projection, so that some gravitational lensing can occur.

The effect is particularly effective if the foreground galaxy is at z=1.5, which is the redshift maximizing the lensing magnification of radiation at z=7.1. Unfortunately we do not have elements to test this scenario more quantitatively, since we do not yet have information on the redshift, mass and light profile of the putative lensing galaxy and we do not have high enough resolution ALMA observations to properly investigate the morphology of the putative lensed emission. Therefore, for the time being this has to be regarded as a speculation, which would explain the observations, but to be tested with additional data.

However, in support of this lensing scenario, we note that the other two marginal [CII] detections in the vicinity of BDF3299 (B1 and B2 in Fig[3]) are also found within 0.4" of two foreground galaxies, as seen in Fig[5]. The galaxy next to B1 is only marginally detected in our Y-band image, but it is confirmed in new HST data (Castellano et al. in prep.). The galaxy next to B2 is clearly detected and the data currently available give an approximate photometric redshift z$_{phot}$ ~ 1, which is consistent with the lensing scenario.

The cumulative probability of having, by random chance superposition, three Y-band detections within 0.4" of three given positions (our [CII] detection “A” and the other two marginal [CII] detections “B1” and “B2”) is 10$^{-6}$. The lensing scenario would instead naturally explain the co-location of [CII] emission and foreground galaxies, without having to invoke extremely low chance probabilities.

Certainly additional data are required to confirm and quantitatively test the lensing scenario.

5 CONTINUUM DUST EMISSION

While we have found a few serendipitous continuum detections (Carniani et al. 2015), the continuum dust thermal emission is not detected in any of our galaxies. This result is in line with previous results at high redshift (Walter et al. 2012; Ota et al. 2014; Schaerer et al. 2015b), which have found that distant “normal” star forming galaxies, close to the re-ionization epoch, have a rest-frame far-IR/UV luminosity ratio significantly lower relative to the bulk of local star forming galaxies, with upper limits on the far-IR emission typically consistent with local low-metallicity dwarf or irregular galaxies. This suggests that these early systems are characterized by a small content of dust (which should reprocess UV light into IR thermal emission), both because of their low metallicity and because of shortage of time to produce dust (Valiante et al. 2009 2011; Schneider et al. 2014; Hirashita et al. 2014; Nozawa et al. 2007). Our non detections go in the same direction, but achieving even tighter upper limits on the far-IR/UV luminosity ratio.

Fig. 8 shows the ratio (f$_{FIR}$/f$_{UV}$)/(f$_{FIR}$/f$_{UV}$) versus galaxy metallicity for local galaxies, where (f$_{FIR}$/f$_{UV}$) is estimated at $\lambda_{rest}$ =1530Å (i.e. GALEX FUV band, for galaxies in the local Universe), and (f$_{FIR}$/f$_{UV}$) is estimated at $\lambda_{rest}$ =160μm (i.e. Herschel-PACS longest wavelength band, for galaxies in the local Universe). Data are taken from [Dale et al. 2007], [Dale et al. 2012], [Ota et al. 2014] and
Depending on the assumed dust temperatures we obtain upper limits between 25 K and 45 K. We follow a similar approach as irregular galaxies. Schaerer et al. (2015b) assume a range of temperatures at z=7.1 resulting from the average of 17 local dwarf and poor dwarfs, the latter typically have SFR’s one or two orders of magnitude lower than the SFR of typical galaxies, with solar-like metallicities, but are inconsistent with metal-poor (hence inconsistent with the UV-to-IR SED of typical local galaxies, with solar-like metallicities, but are consistent with metal-poor local galaxies. The upper limit on the [CII] luminosity inferred for the sample of our galaxies at z=7, specifically: red for BDF3299, orange for SDF46975, green for BDF521.

![Figure 8. Far-IR (λ_{rest} = 160μm) to far-UV (λ_{rest} = 1500Å) luminosity ratio for local galaxies as a function of metallicity (black symbols). The blue dashed line is a linear fit to the data. The colored solid lines indicate the upper limits on (νF_{ν IR}/νF_{ν UV}) inferred for the sample of our galaxies at z=7, specifically: red for BDF3299, orange for SDF46975, green for BDF521.](image)

priv. comm.) and from Moustakas et al. (2010) (in the latter we have used the calibrations from Draine & Tielens 2005). We have applied the correction to the far-IR fluxes, as discussed in Ota et al. (2013a), to take into account the fact that at high redshift the detectability of thermal emission is more difficult because of the CMB temperature being non-negligible relative to the dust temperature in galaxies (for the sake of simplicity we have adopted the same correction assuming all three sources at z=7). For local galaxies, there is a clear trend in (νF_{ν IR}/νF_{ν UV}) to increase with metallicity, implying that a larger fraction of the UV light is reprocessed by dust at high metallicities. This is very likely a consequence of the dust content scaling with metallicity (e.g. Kéray-Kuyer et al. 2014; Draine et al. 2007). The blue dashed line is a linear fit to the data in the log-log plane. The 3σ upper limits on the (νF_{ν IR}/νF_{ν UV}) on z=7 sources are indicated with horizontal colored lines (see legend). Clearly, galaxies at z=7 are inconsistent with the UV-to-IR SED of typical local galaxies, with solar-like metallicities, but are consistent with metal-poor (hence dust-poor) local dwarf galaxies, with metallicities about 10 times lower than solar. Yet, while this suggests that the z=7 galaxies in our sample must have metallicities similar or lower than local metal poor dwarfs, the latter typically have SFR’s one or two orders of magnitude lower than the sources observed by us. Therefore, the galaxies observed by us at z=7.1 are probably scaled up versions (by at least an order of magnitude) of local low metallicity dwarfs.

Constraints on the dust mass are in principle physically more interesting. However, it is not possible to obtain an upper limit on the dust mass based on a single upper limit on the rest-frame far-IR or submm emission, since the dust temperature is not known. (Ota et al. 2014) assumes a dust temperature of 27.6 K (and an emissivity index β = 1.5) resulting from the average of 17 local dwarf and irregular galaxies. Schaerer et al. (2015b) assume a range of temperatures between 25 K and 45 K. We follow a similar approach as these papers to infer an upper limit on the dust mass from our 3σ upper limits at λ_{lim} = 1.2 mm, corrected for the effects of CMB. Depending on the assumed dust temperatures we obtain upper limits on the dust mass in the range between a few times 10^6 M⊙ and several times 10^7 M⊙, as detailed in Tab. 5. We note that such low dust content is in agreement with the finding that the SFR inferred from Lyα is consistent, within uncertainties, with the SFR inferred from the UV emission (Vanzella et al. 2011).

In the early universe the dust content is not only determined by the metallicity, but also by timescale issues associated with the dust production mechanisms. Indeed, AGB stars, which are thought to be the main factory of dust in the local universe (e.g. Ventura et al. 2012b; Di Criscienzo et al. 2013, Schneider et al. 2014), require a timescale of several 100 Myr to evolve and to contribute significantly to the dust content, hence a timescale comparable to the age of the universe at z=7. Dust forming in the ejecta of core-collapse supernovae may be an additional source of dust on very short timescales, and indications that SN dust can indeed contribute significantly to the overall dust budget in the early universe, has been found by observational studies (e.g. Maiolino et al. 2004; Gallerani et al. 2010; Stratta et al. 2007, 2011). Extensive models have been developed to investigate the expected dust evolution in primordial galaxies (e.g. Valiante et al. 2009, 2011, Hirashita et al. 2014, Nozawa et al. 2015; Gall et al. 2011). Our tight upper limits on the dust mass in these early systems further suggest that at these early epochs primeval galaxies have little time to produce masses of dust comparable with lower redshift galaxies. A more quantitative comparison with models of dust formation in the early universe goes beyond the scope of this paper and will be discussed in other forthcoming papers (Valiante et al. in prep., Ferrara et al. in prep.).

6 CONCLUSIONS

We have presented new ALMA millimeter observations aimed at constraining the [CII]158μm and thermal dust continuum emission in three primeval galaxies at z=7, whose redshift had been spectroscopically confirmed through the detection of (asymmetric) Lyα. In contrast to many previous millimeter observations of high redshift galaxies, which have targeted galaxies with high star formation rates (100—1000 M⊙ yr⁻¹), the galaxies in our sample have SFR ~ 5 — 15 M⊙ yr⁻¹, more typical of the bulk of galaxies at these early epochs.

At the location of the optical (Y-band) counterpart, which samples the rest-frame Lyα and UV emission, no [CII]158μm line emission is detected. The 3σ upper limit on the [CII] luminosity is about twice lower than what is observed in local galaxies with similar star formation rates, even including many metal poor local galaxies. The upper limit on the [CII]/SFR ratio in these galaxies is comparable with the ratio observed in the lowest metallicity galaxies in the local universe, suggesting that extremely low metallicity may play a role in strongly reducing the [CII] emission in these primeval galaxies.

However, in the deepest of our ALMA observations, targeting the highest redshift galaxy of our sample (BDF3299 at z=7.109) we do detect [CII] emission, slightly spatially offset, by 0.7” (4 kpc), relative to the optical (Y-band) counterpart.

The line is detected at 3σ. The level of confidence is verified by checking the detection in subsets of the same data, by checking the absence of any negative detection at confidence level higher than 3σ in datacube over the whole ALMA primary beam and over a broad frequency interval, as well as the absence of any negative detection at a confidence level higher than 3σ within a radius of 3” from the optical source.

The detection of [CII] spatially offset from the optical galaxy,
along with the absence of [CII] emission at the location of the optical counterpart, is in nice agreement with the predictions of recent models of galaxy formation in the early universe. According to these models, strong negative stellar feedback in these primeval systems quickly destroys or disperses molecular clouds, hence quenching the emission of [CII] (the bulk of carbon is therefore in higher ionization states). However, [CII] emission arises from accreting/satellite clumps of neutral gas displaced from the primary galaxy main body.

Therefore, our ALMA observations are directly probing such early phases of galaxy formation, in which both stellar feedback and gas accretion are at work.

In the accreting clump [CII] emission is likely resulting primarily as a consequence of heating by the strong UV radiation from the primary galaxy. However, some contribution to the [CII] excitation from in-situ star formation cannot be excluded.

A simple dynamical modelling suggests that the clump is significantly less massive than the primary galaxy, hence supporting the scenario in which the [CII] emission is tracing a small accreting satellite (although better data are required to properly investigate the dynamics of this system).

At larger distances from the same galaxy (∼ 2′′ − 4′′, i.e. ∼ 10 − 20 kpc) we obtain two additional marginal [CII] detections at the redshift consistent with Lyα. These marginal detections need to be confirmed with additional data, but their presence would be in line with the expectations of the models discussed above, according to which several satellites clumps of neutral gas should be emitting faint [CII] line in the surrounding of the primary primeval galaxy.

It is interesting that both the [CII] detection and the two marginal detections are located in the vicinity (within 0.3′′ − 0.5′′) of foreground galaxies at lower redshifts. We show that the association of the millimeter lines with other transitions at lower redshift (in particular CO transitions) is extremely remote and inconsistent with the properties of the counterparts (in terms of SFR). Chance superposition coincidence is possible, but very unlikely. We suggest, as an alternative explanation, that gravitational lensing by foreground galaxies may boost the flux of the [CII] clumps located in the vicinity of the primary z=7.1 galaxy, hence bringing them above the detection threshold. Testing this scenario more quantitatively requires a deeper knowledge of the properties of the foreground galaxies (redshifts, masses, mass profile distribution, etc...) and higher angular resolution data of the [CII] emission. However, if confirmed, this scenario would indicate that lensing from foreground galaxies at z∼1−2 could be an effective way to detect faint neutral clumps of accreting gas in the vicinity of primeval galaxies around re-ionization.

Continuum thermal emission is not detected in any of the three galaxies of our sample. The 3σ upper limit on the (rest-frame) IR-to-UV continuum emission ratio is consistent with the value observed for the lowest metallicity local galaxies, in which the dust content is very low. Constraints on dust masses are difficult to infer, because only one single photometric upper limit per source is available for the IR SED, hence no constraints on the dust temperature are available. By assuming the dust temperature typical of local low metallicity galaxies, we obtain 3σ upper limits on the dust masses of a few times 10$^4$M$_\odot$. The latter confirms that these early systems have a very low dust content, both because of low metallicity and because of shortage of time to produce dust at these early epochs through some of the standard dust production channels.

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