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Authors	Shimwell, T. W.; Röttgering, H. J. A.; Best, P. N.; Williams, W. L.; Dijkema, T. J.; et al.
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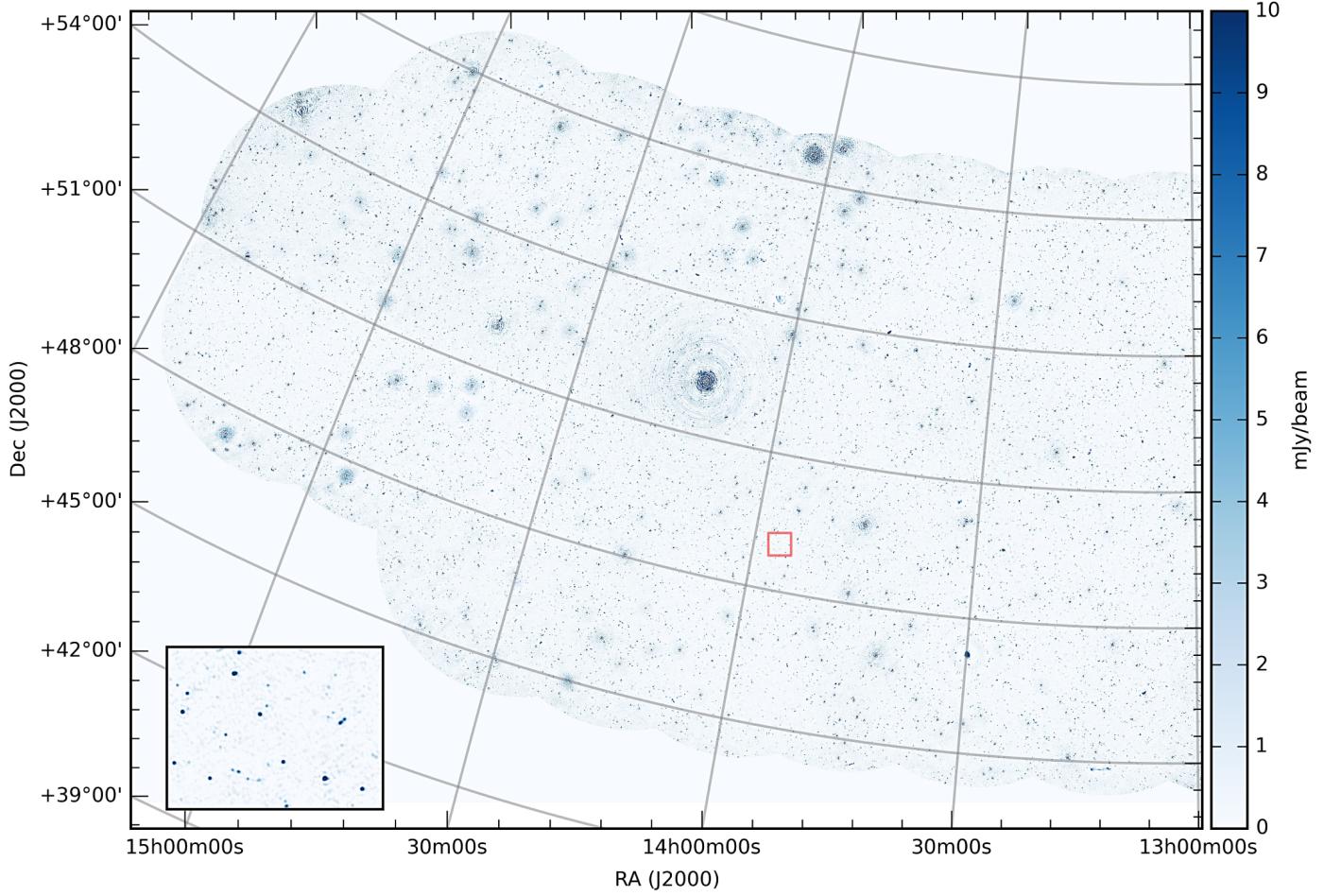


Fig. 17. Eastern half of the HETDEX Spring Field. A $0.5^\circ \times 0.5^\circ$ image of the region outlined in red is shown in the bottom left corner.

The main challenge of the survey is to robustly and efficiently perform a complex direction-dependent calibration of very large datasets. This is crucial in order to exploit the full potential of our LOFAR datasets. To demonstrate that such a reduction can reach our observational aims, we used the facet calibration technique, which was developed by [van Weeren et al. \(2016a\)](#) and [Williams et al. \(2016\)](#), to perform a direction-dependent calibration on one of the LoTSS datasets. The result is a high-fidelity 120–168 MHz image with a resolution of $4.8'' \times 7.9''$ and a sensitivity of $100 \mu\text{Jy}/\text{beam}$. These final high-resolution, high-fidelity LoTSS images will facilitate significant contributions to a wide variety of astronomical research areas and we intend to release such images to the wider scientific community in the future once our reduction strategy is finalised and we have processed a large area of the sky. In this publication we instead publicly released preliminary images and catalogues from a completely automated direction-independent calibration of 63 datasets in the region from right ascension $10h45m00s$ to $15h30m00s$ and declination $45^\circ 00' 00''$ to $57^\circ 00' 00''$. We provided a brief summary of the scientific potential of these preliminary images and whilst they have lower fidelity, resolution, and sensitivity than those that we will make using a direction-dependent calibration strategy, they are still significantly more sensitive than those produced by any other existing large-area low-frequency survey and can allow for many scientific objectives of the LoTSS to be partially or completely realised (see e.g. [Brienza et al. 2016](#); [Harwood et al. 2016](#); [Heesen et al. 2016](#); [Mahony et al. 2016](#); [Shulevski et al. 2015a,b](#), for examples).

The images we released cover an area of over 350 square degrees and contain over 44 000 radio sources when a detection threshold of seven times the noise is used. We used a Monte Carlo simulation to estimate that the catalogue is 90% complete for sources with a flux density in excess of $3.9 \text{ mJy}/\text{beam}$. Our astrometry checks of the catalogue revealed that the positional error is approximately $1.70''$ and our photometry measurements indicated that our integrated flux density measurements are accurate to within 20%.

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¹ Leiden Observatory, Leiden University, PO Box 9513, 2300 RA Leiden, The Netherlands

² SUPA, Institute for Astronomy, Royal Observatory, Blackford Hill, Edinburgh, EH9 3HJ, UK

³ Centre for Astrophysics Research, School of Physics, Astronomy and Mathematics, University of Hertfordshire, College Lane, Hatfield AL10 9AB, UK

⁴ ASTRON, the Netherlands Institute for Radio Astronomy, Postbus 2, 7990 AA Dwingeloo, The Netherlands

⁵ CSIRO Astronomy and Space Science, 26 Dick Perry Avenue, Kensington 6151 WA, Australia

⁶ Kapteyn Astronomical Institute, University of Groningen, Postbus 800, 9700 AV Groningen, The Netherlands

⁷ Max-Planck-Institut für Radioastronomie, Auf dem Hügel 69, 53121 Bonn, Germany

⁸ Sydney Institute for Astronomy, School of Physics A28, The University of Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia

⁹ ARC Centre of Excellence for All-Sky Astrophysics (CAASTRO), Australia

¹⁰ University of Hamburg, Hamburger Sternwarte, Gojenbergsweg 112, 21029 Hamburg, Germany

¹¹ GEPI, Observatoire de Paris, CNRS, Université Paris Diderot, 5 place Jules Janssen, 92190 Meudon, France

¹² Department of Physics & Electronics, Rhodes University, PO Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140, South Africa

¹³ Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, 60 Garden Street, Cambridge, MA 02138, USA

¹⁴ INAF–Istituto di Radioastronomia, via Gobetti 101, 40129 Bologna, Italy

¹⁵ Astronomical Observatory, Jagiellonian University, ul. Orla 171, 30-244 Kraków, Poland

¹⁶ Department of Earth and Space Sciences, Chalmers University of Technology, Onsala Space Observatory, 439 92 Onsala, Sweden

¹⁷ Department of Astrophysics/IMAPP, Radboud University Nijmegen, PO Box 9010, 6500 GL Nijmegen, The Netherlands

- ¹⁸ Jodrell Bank Centre for Astrophysics, School of Physics and Astronomy, University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL, UK
- ¹⁹ Astrophysics, University of Oxford, Denys Wilkinson Building, Keble Road, Oxford, OX1 3RH, UK
- ²⁰ Physics and Astronomy Department, University of the Western Cape, 7535 Bellville, South Africa
- ²¹ Department of Physics and Astronomy, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA, UK
- ²² RAL Space, The Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Chilton, Didcot, Oxfordshire OX11 0NL, UK
- ²³ Astronomical Institute “Anton Pannekoek”, University of Amsterdam, Postbus 94249, 1090 GE Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- ²⁴ Joint Institute for VLBI in Europe, Postbus 2, 7990 AA Dwingeloo, The Netherlands
- ²⁵ Thüringer Landessternwarte, Sternwarte 5, 07778 Tautenburg, Germany
- ²⁶ Station de Radioastronomie de Nançay, Observatoire de Paris, CNRS/INSU USR 704, Université d’Orléans OSUC, route de Souesmes, 18330 Nançay, France
- ²⁷ Laboratoire Lagrange, Université Côte d’Azur, Observatoire de la Côte d’Azur, CNRS, Bvd de l’Observatoire, CS 34229, 06304 Nice Cedex 4, France
- ²⁸ Astronomisches Institut Ruhr-Universität Bochum/Forschungszentrum Jülich, JSC, 52425 Jülich, Germany
- ²⁹ School of Physics and Astronomy, University of Southampton, Southampton SO17 1BJ, UK
- ³⁰ International Centre for Radio Astronomy Research (ICRAR), The University of Western Australia, 35 Stirling Hwy, Crawley WA 6009, Australia
- ³¹ Institute of Cosmology & Gravitation, University of Portsmouth, Burnaby Road, PO1 3FX, Portsmouth, UK
- ³² Toruń Centre for Astronomy, Faculty of Physics, Astronomy and Informatics, NCU, Grudziacka 5, 87-100 Toruń, Poland
- ³³ Sodankylä Geophysical Observatory, University of Oulu, Tähtelätie 62, 99600 Sodankylä, Finland
- ³⁴ STFC Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, Didcot OX11 0QX, UK
- ³⁵ National Centre for Radio Astrophysics, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, 411007 Pune, India
- ³⁶ Fakultät für Physik, Universität Bielefeld, Postfach 100131, 33501 Bielefeld, Germany
- ³⁷ Leibniz Institute for Astrophysics Potsdam (AIP), An der Sternwarte 16, 14482 Potsdam, Germany
- ³⁸ European Southern Observatory, Karl-Schwarzschild-Str. 2, 85748 Garching, Germany
- ³⁹ Department of Astronomy, University of Cape Town, 7701 Rondebosch, South Africa