



Transformative Science and Engineering for Nuclear Decommissioning

Small Modular Radiation Experimental Systems: Development and Future Application

Christopher Anderson (and many more), Dalton Cumbrian Facility, University of Manchester

Theme 4: Nuclear Materials

03/12/20

Location: Sunny Cumbria



Presentation Schedule

Section 1: Background and doctrine

Section 2: Current developments

Section 3: Future applications and plans

What is this project?

Small MOdular Radiation Experimental Systems

SMORES



Not as delicious

Based at DCF, West Cumbria

Project has expanded into a community of contributors



The idea of SMORES is in the name..

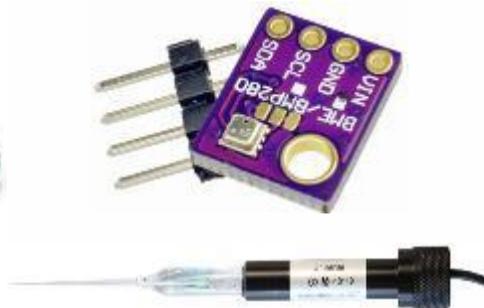
With the primary aim being:

- **Building a suite of modular components suitable for radiation experiments**

This component development will include but is not limited too..



Microcontrollers



Sensing technology



Infrastructure



Mechanical accessories

But why develop these systems?

- DCF has a history of building one off systems to serve one project before being abandoned
- Externals don't always have the ability to fully utilise the equipment at DCF
- Extant systems aren't always compatible with each-other
- There is a significant lack of gas related radiation experimental equipment (important because of Sellafield storage).
- Current methods and equipment for radiation experiments could be vastly improved upon with the right components

SMORES aims to remedy all of these issues by adhering to the following..

Core philosophy of SMORES

Modularity

Automation

Eventual Active lab
Compatibility

In-Situ Sensing

Component Standardisation
(where possible)

Remote Accessibility

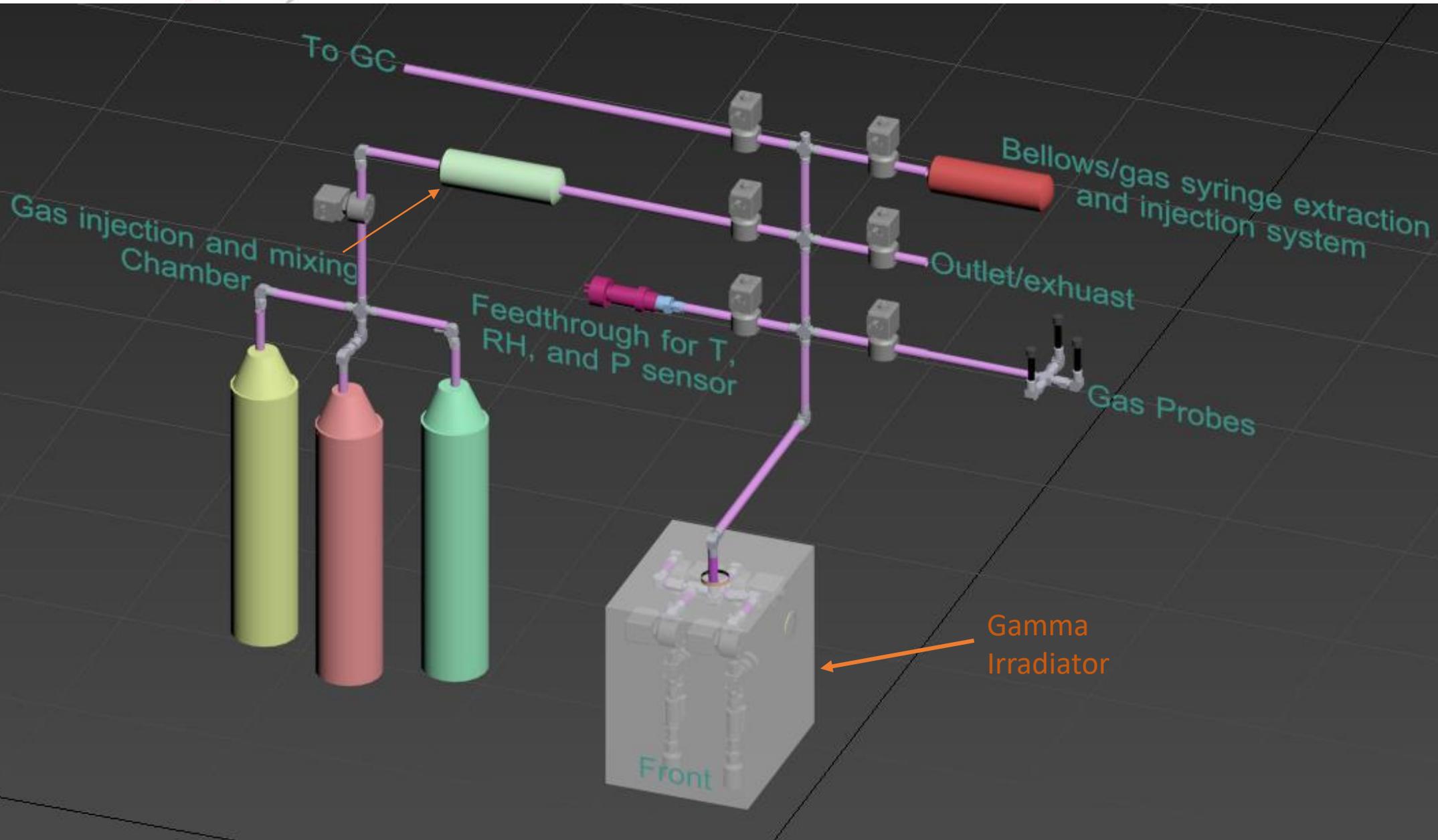
Section 2: Current developments in SMORES

Time to be more specific..

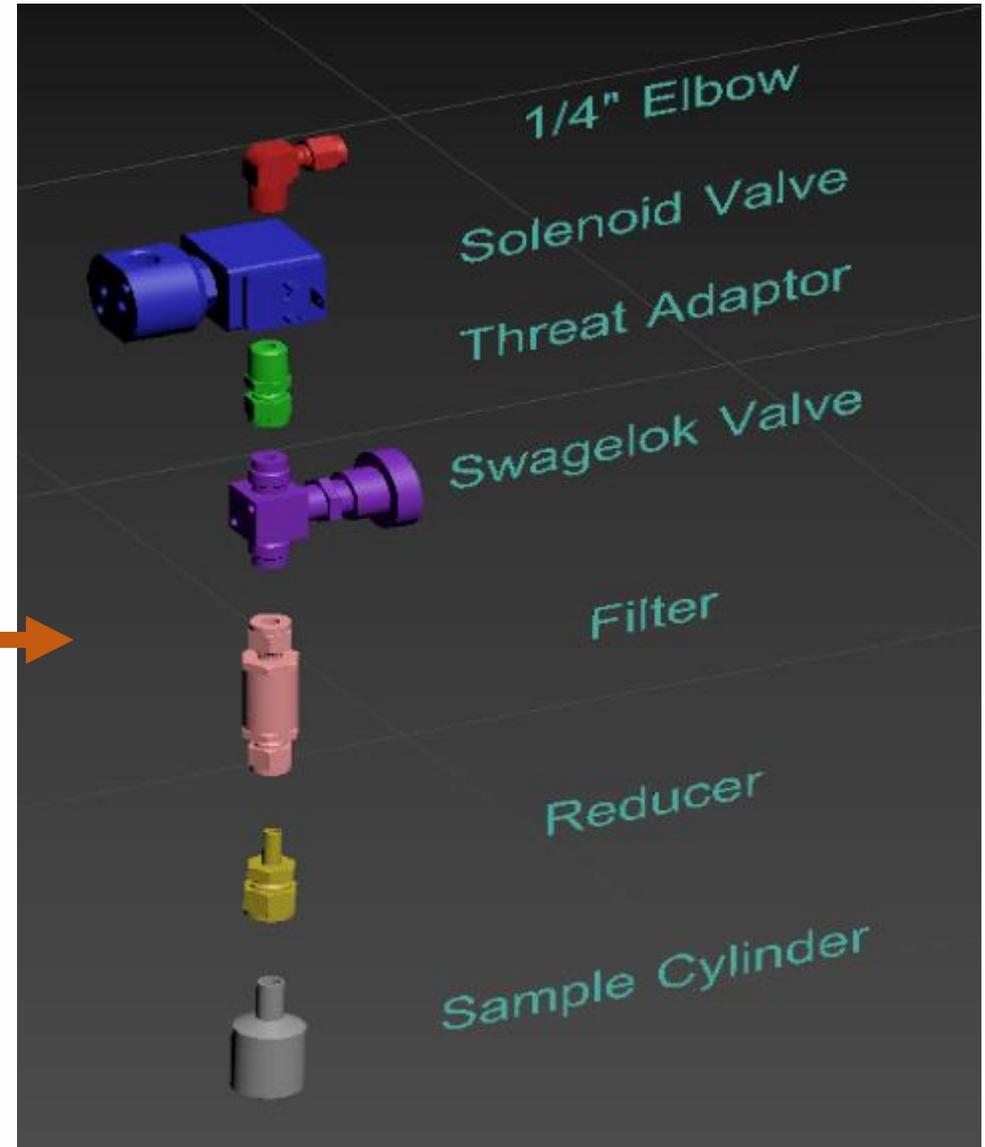
The core of SMORES will be based upon a newly designed gas manifold that incorporates the key ideals of the previous slide (first iteration will focus on this).

The manifold is standardised to the following:

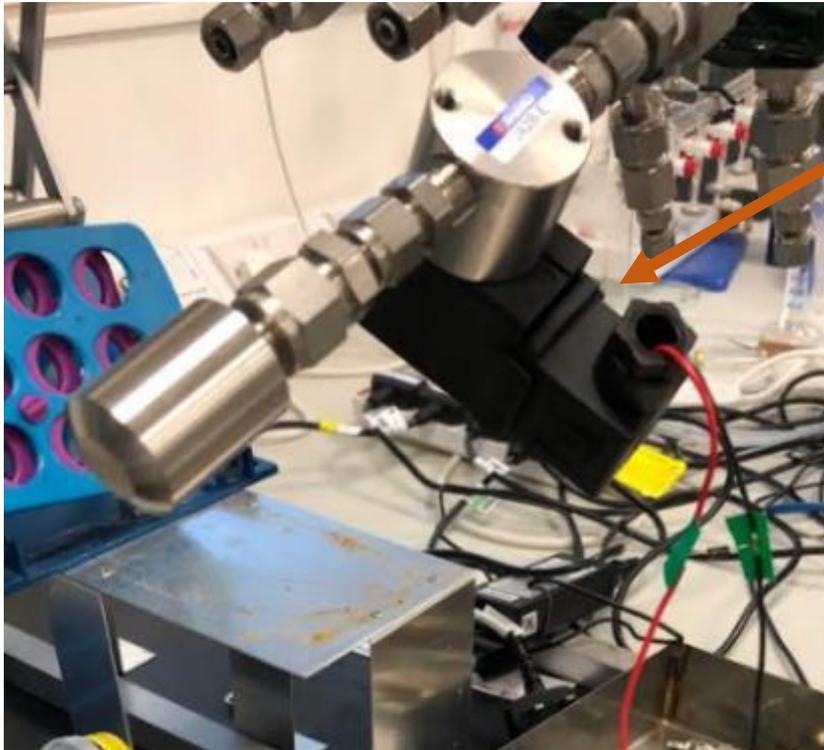
- Primarily Swagelok ¼” tubing and fittings connecting components
- Pressure ratings exceeding 28.4 bar (agreed in the DCF>NNL-Sellafield meeting)
- Arduinos as the microcontrollers (but with CANopen and python interfaces)
- Made of stainless steel



Repeating Sample Units (RSU's)



Repeating Sample Units (RSU's)



Solenoid Valve
(can be controlled via Arduino)

Swagelok Valves



SMORES Valves

Manual



Seal: Steel

Solenoids



EPDM

ethylene propylene diene monomer rubber



Ruby

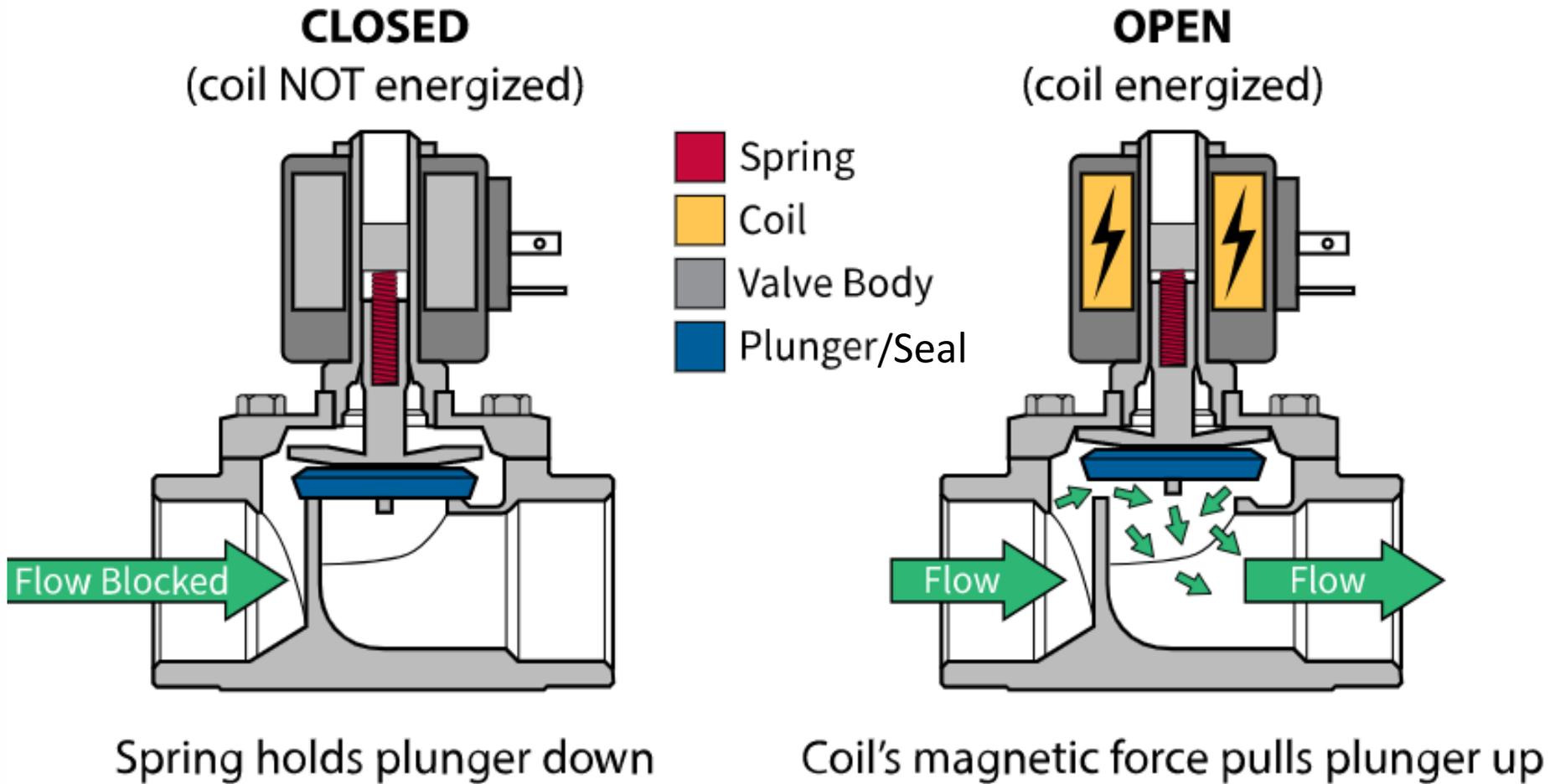
Why different types?

Cost difference is pretty huge!!

Stainless steel seal will be available eventually

Awaiting delivery to begin testing

SMORES Valves



Controlling SMORES valves

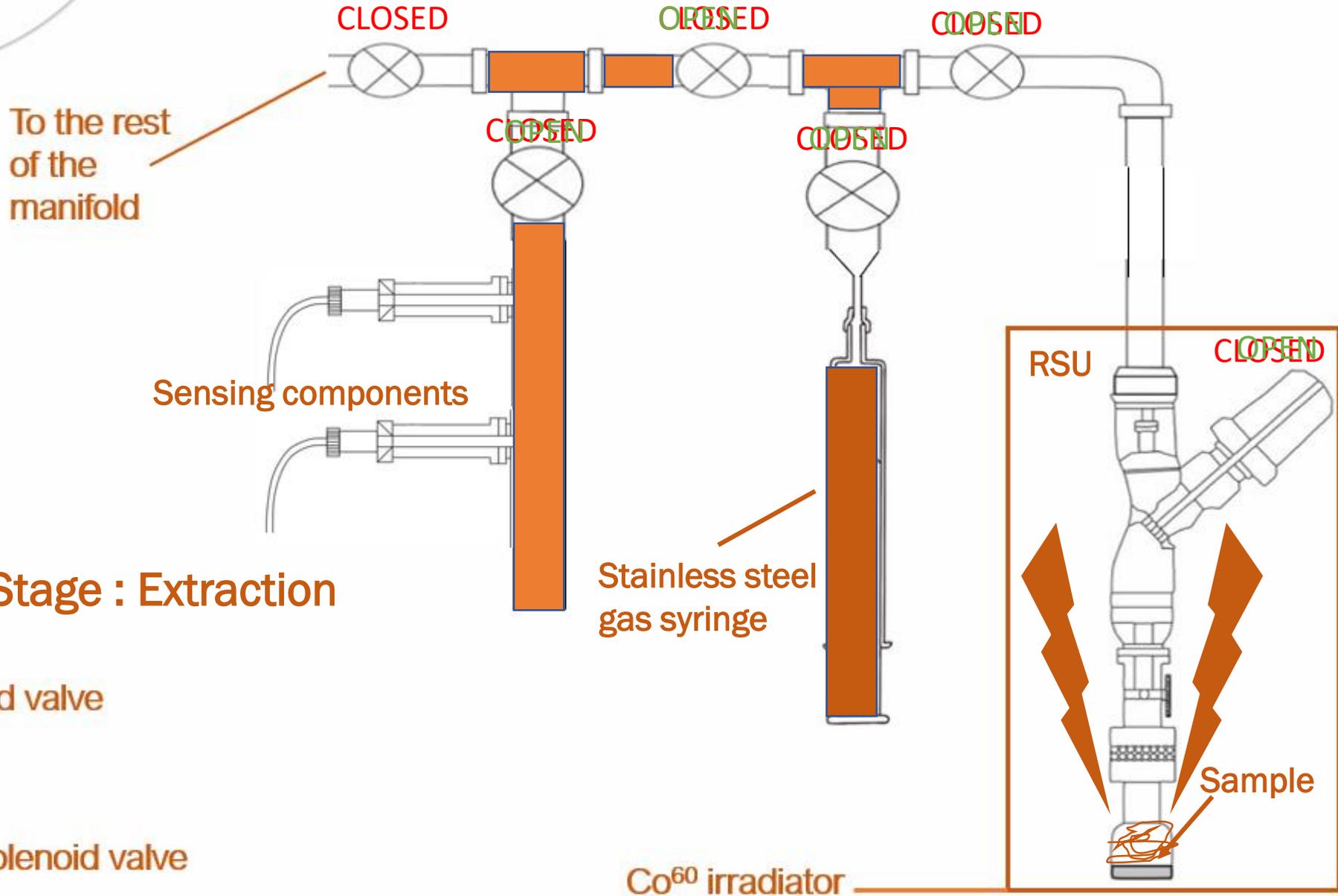


Controlling SMORES valves

```
int solenoidPin = 9;           //This is the output pin on the Arduino

void setup()
{
  pinMode(solenoidPin, OUTPUT); //Sets that pin as an output
}

void loop()
{
  digitalWrite(solenoidPin, HIGH); //Switch Solenoid ON
  delay(1000); //Wait 1 Second
  digitalWrite(solenoidPin, LOW); //Switch Solenoid OFF
  delay(1000); //Wait 1 Second
}
```



Stage : Extraction

Co⁶⁰ irradiator

Sensing capabilities

Most sensors will be out of the radiation field

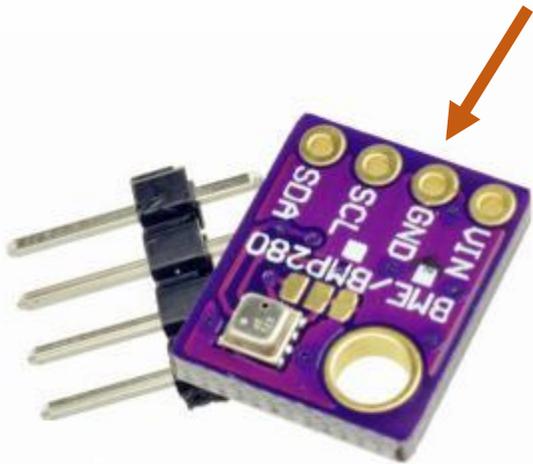
O₂, H₂, NO, N₂O, through Unisense probe sensors



CO₂, CO, and CH₄ through Edinburgh Sensors infra-red gas cards



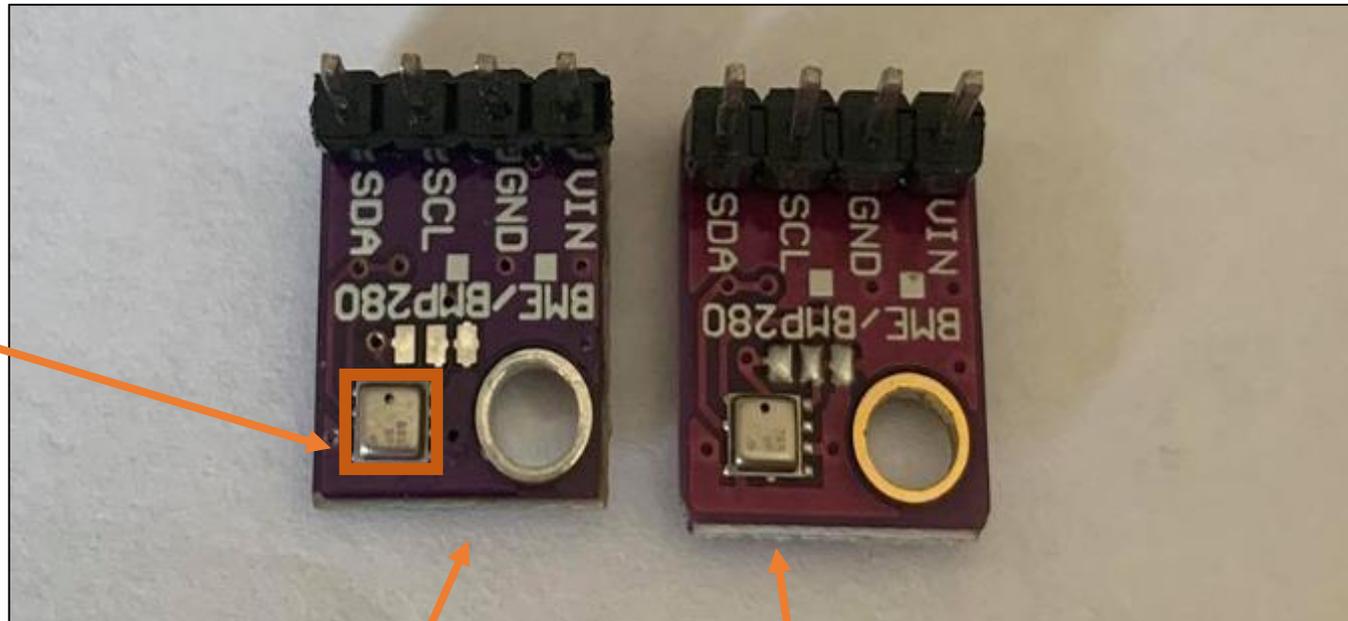
RH/T/P through BME280 microsensors



Radiation hardness testing

299,520 Gy

Actual sensor part



Irradiated

Not Irradiated



```
#include <Wire.h>
#include <SPI.h>
#include <Adafruit_Sensor.h>
#include <Adafruit_BME280.h>

unsigned long time;

#define BME_SCK 13
#define BME_MISO 12
#define BME_MOSI 11
#define BME_CS 10

Adafruit_BME280 bme;

Serial.println(F("BME280 test"));

bool status;

status = bme.begin(0x76);

if (!status) {
    Serial.println("Could not find a valid BME280 sensor,
check wiring!");
    while (1);
}

Serial.println("-- Default Test --");

delayTime = 1000;

Serial.println();
}
```

```
Serial.println("-- Default Test --");

delayTime = 1000;

Serial.println();
}

void loop() {
    printValues();
    delay(delayTime);
}

void printValues() {
    Serial.print("Temperature = ");
    Serial.print(bme.readTemperature());
    Serial.println(" *C");

    Serial.print("Pressure = ");
    Serial.print(bme.readPressure() / 100.0F);
    Serial.println(" hPa");

    Serial.println(" m");

    Serial.print("Humidity = ");
    Serial.print(bme.readHumidity());
    Serial.println(" %");

    Serial.print("Time: ");
    time = millis();
    Serial.println(time);

    Serial.println();
}
```

```
10:33:02.319 ->
10:33:32.274 -> Temperature = 22.58 *C
10:33:32.274 -> Pressure = 989.65 hPa
10:33:32.321 -> Humidity = 25.30 %
10:33:32.368 -> Time: 29
10:33:32.368 ->
10:34:02.289 -> Temperature = 23.21 *C
10:34:02.336 -> Pressure = 989.69 hPa
10:34:02.383 -> Humidity = 24.48 %
10:34:02.429 -> Time: 30
10:34:02.429 ->
10:34:32.351 -> Temperature = 23.84 *C
10:34:32.398 -> Pressure = 989.54 hPa
10:34:32.445 -> Humidity = 23.74 %
10:34:32.445 -> Time: 31
10:34:32.445 ->
10:35:02.412 -> Temperature = 24.26 *C
10:35:02.412 -> Pressure = 989.33 hPa
10:35:02.459 -> Humidity = 23.09 %
10:35:02.506 -> Time: 32
10:35:02.506 ->
10:35:32.458 -> Temperature = 24.88 *C
10:35:32.458 -> Pressure = 989.49 hPa
10:35:32.552 -> Humidity = 22.36 %
10:35:32.552 -> Time: 33
10:35:32.552 ->
10:36:02.489 -> Temperature = 25.65 *C
10:36:02.536 -> Pressure = 989.24 hPa
10:36:02.583 -> Humidity = 21.63 %
10:36:02.583 -> Time: 34
10:36:02.630 ->
10:36:32.535 -> Temperature = 26.15 *C
10:36:32.582 -> Pressure = 989.59 hPa
10:36:32.629 -> Humidity = 20.90 %
10:36:32.629 -> Time: 35
10:36:32.676 ->
10:37:02.597 -> Temperature = 26.91 *C
10:37:02.643 -> Pressure = 992.87 hPa
10:37:02.690 -> Humidity = 20.21 %
10:37:02.690 -> Time: 36
10:37:02.690 ->
10:37:32.642 -> Temperature = 27.59 *C
10:37:32.689 -> Pressure = 995.87 hPa
```



```

File Edit Format View Help
10:37:32.736 ->
10:38:02.688 -> Temperature = 28.37 *C
10:38:02.735 -> Pressure = 1001.18 hPa
10:38:02.782 -> Humidity = 18.87 %
10:38:02.782 -> Time: 38
10:38:02.829 ->
10:38:32.750 -> Temperature = 29.05 *C
10:38:32.750 -> Pressure = 1022.39 hPa
10:38:32.844 -> Humidity = 18.22 %
10:38:32.844 -> Time: 39
10:38:32.844 ->
10:39:02.811 -> Temperature = -146.45 *C
10:39:02.811 -> Pressure = 1123.62 hPa
10:39:02.858 -> Humidity = 100.00 %
10:39:02.905 -> Time: 40
10:39:02.905 ->
10:39:32.873 -> Temperature = -146.45 *C
10:39:32.873 -> Pressure = 1123.62 hPa
10:39:32.920 -> Humidity = 100.00 %
10:39:32.967 -> Time: 41
10:39:32.967 ->
10:40:02.924 -> Temperature = nan *C
10:40:02.924 -> Pressure = nan hPa
10:40:02.971 -> Humidity = nan %
10:40:02.971 -> Time: 42
10:40:03.018 ->
10:40:32.954 -> Temperature = nan *C
10:40:32.954 -> Pressure = nan hPa
10:40:33.001 -> Humidity = nan %
10:40:33.048 -> Time: 43
10:40:33.048 ->
10:41:02.985 -> Temperature = nan *C
10:41:02.985 -> Pressure = nan hPa
10:41:03.031 -> Humidity = nan %
10:41:03.078 -> Time: 44
10:41:03.078 ->
10:41:33.031 -> Temperature = nan *C
10:41:33.031 -> Pressure = nan hPa
10:41:33.077 -> Humidity = nan %
10:41:33.124 -> Time: 45
  
```

Nuclear Decommissioning

Sensor	Dose Rate (Gy/min)
A	312
B	312

Temperature = -146.45 *C
Pressure = 1123.62 hPa
Humidity = 100.00 %
Time: 40
Temperature = -146.45 *C
Pressure = 1123.62 hPa
Humidity = 100.00 %
Time: 41

Dose for Critical Damage
~5.03 kGy
~2.49 kGy

So they didn't

- Low dose exposure
- On the manifold
- Sacrificial sensors

on the surface

What about the solenoid irradiation?



200 kGy overnight

ce Proceedings

Influence of gamma radiation on EPDM compounds properties for use in nuclear plants

Cite as: AIP Conference Proceedings 1779, 080015 (2016); <https://doi.org/10.1063/1.4965559>
Published Online: 31 October 2016

Sandra Regina Scagliusi, Elisabeth Carvalho Leite Cardoso, Traian Zaharescu, and Ademar Benévolo Lugão



EPDM irradiated at 25, 50, 75, 100, 200 kGy

Suggests that mechanical properties become significantly worsened at 200 kGy

I very much agree

More to come in the following weeks..

Future applications and plans

- Radiolysis and recombination experiments

 - Especially those looking to measure gasses during/after irradiations

 - Direct beneficiary of SMORES is my personal project:

 - Gas generation from the radiolysis of water on Uranium and Thorium oxides**

- Testing more equipment

 - Sensing equipment

 - More Solenoid valves

 - Mass flow controllers, automated gas syringes, starting the manifold body, and more!

- Experiments with alpha

 - An adaptation of the manifold that is compatible for use with the accelerator at DCF is being designed

 - Will allow two types of radiation on the same samples to be explored with the same system



Transformative Science and Engineering for Nuclear Decommissioning



Thank you

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Transformative Science and Engineering for Nuclear Decommissioning

Safe Interim Storage of plutonium:
Water absorption onto thin-layer
plutonium analogues

Transcend Research Consortium

Dr. Dominic Laventine, Prof. Colin Boxall
Lancaster University

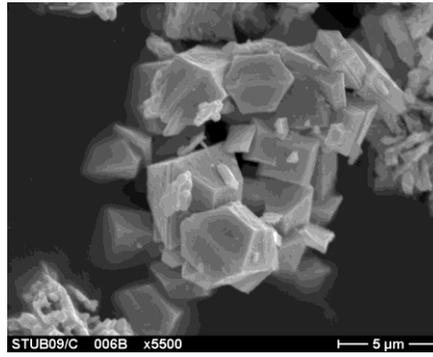
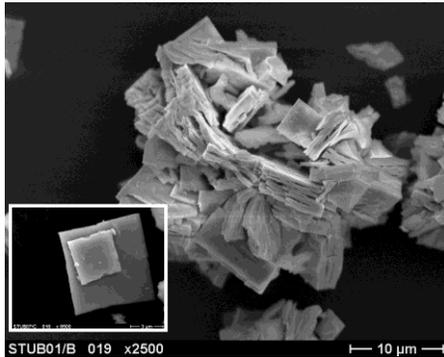


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- **Introduction to UK plutonium interim storage**
 - **Synthesis of thin-layer actinide coatings**
 - **Contact angle measurements**
 - **Piezo-crystal nano-balance experiments**

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Separation and Reprocessing in the UK

- Reprocessing of spent fuel allows the separation of plutonium from uranium and other species
- PUREX process co-extracts Pu and U as nitrates into an acidified raffinate.
- In the UK, further separation of Pu from the U performed at:
 - THORP reprocessing plant (due to close 2018) by hydrazine reduction of the plutonium
 - Magnox reprocessing plant (due to close 2020)



- Ca. 250 tonnes of separated Pu currently stockpiled worldwide. Approx. 137 tonnes is in interim storage in UK whilst the Government “develops its options”.

Plutonium interim storage in the UK

Interim storage of PuO_2 involves sealing in nested steel containers, under a partial argon atmosphere with (PVC) packing material.

During storage the radioactivity of the plutonium results in heating of the canisters to an estimated central line temperature of 600°C .

PuO_2 is hygroscopic and picks up water during the packaging process. The disposition of this water under the storage conditions is unclear: It may exist in a gaseous state, or be weakly or strongly bound to the PuO_2 surface. Radiolytic and catalytic processes may also result in formation of radicals and other chemical species.

Need to understand how the structure and properties of PuO_2 change with time under storage condition and how this affects water absorption.



Cannister pressurisation

Over time a small number of cannisters have been observed to deform due to pressurisation: this makes storage and efficient heat transfer difficult 5 routes to gas production have been suggested that could contribute to this pressurisation:

- (i) Helium accumulation from a decay
- (ii) Decomposition of polymeric packing material
- (iii) H_2O desorption (steam) from hygroscopic PuO_2
- (iv) Radiolysis of adsorbed water
- (v) Generation of H_2 by chemical reaction of PuO_2 with H_2O , producing a PuO_{2+x} phase.

The last 3 processes all involve $\text{PuO}_2/\text{H}_2\text{O}$ interactions and are complex, inter-connected & poorly understood.

- Experimental methods have been employed to determine extent of H_2O adsorption, typically through measurement of pressure changes and use of the ideal gas equation to indirectly determine water adsorption at the plutonium oxide surface.
- Current models suggest water is initially absorbed onto metal oxides as a chemi-absorbed monolayer followed by multiple, physi-sorbed layers (with possible intermediate layers of differing binding energies).

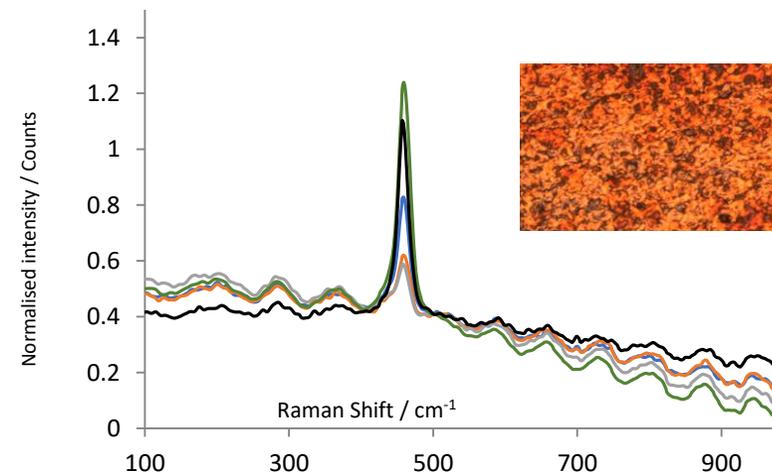
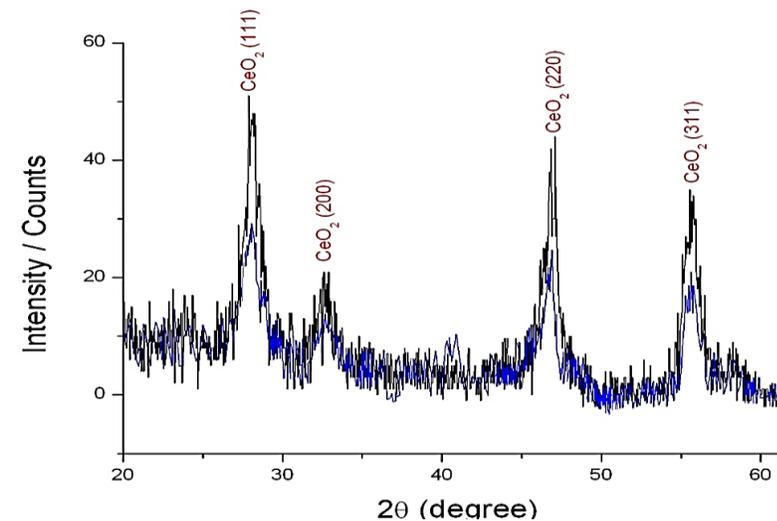
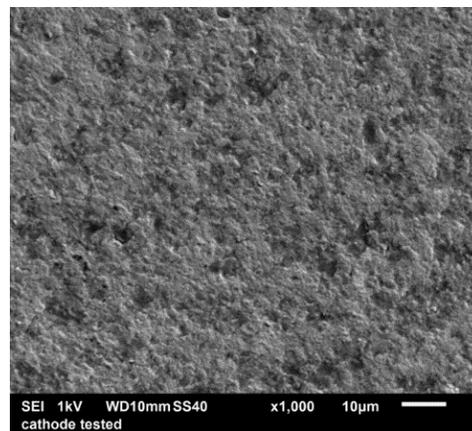
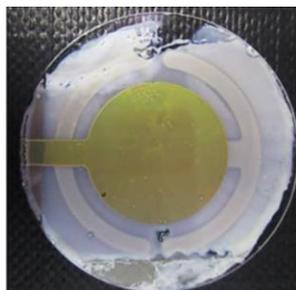
-
- Introduction to UK plutonium interim storage
 - **Synthesis of thin-layer actinide coatings**
 - Contact angle measurements
 - Piezo-crystal nano-balance experiments

Actinide thin layer synthesis

Thin (10-100s nm thick) layers of metal oxide synthesised by drop-coating of salt solutions with surfactant followed by evaporation and calcination. Allows surface characteristics to be investigated while using only small amounts of radioactive material.

Cerium, Thorium, and Uranium oxides used as analogues of plutonium oxide due to their similar structures and atomic radii.

50 ug $\text{Ce}(\text{NO}_3)_3$
10 uL H_2O
10 uL MeOH
5% Triton-X
Calc.: 350°C



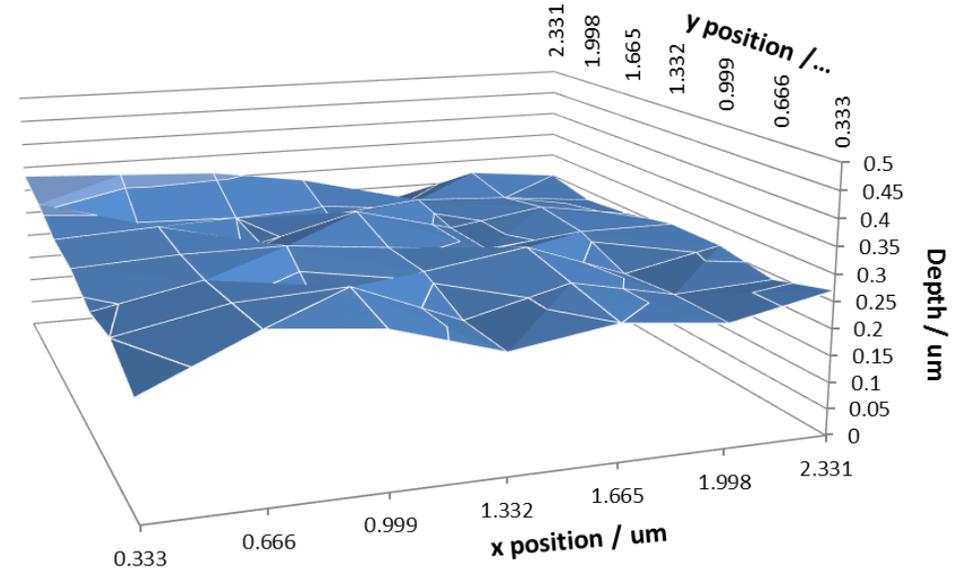
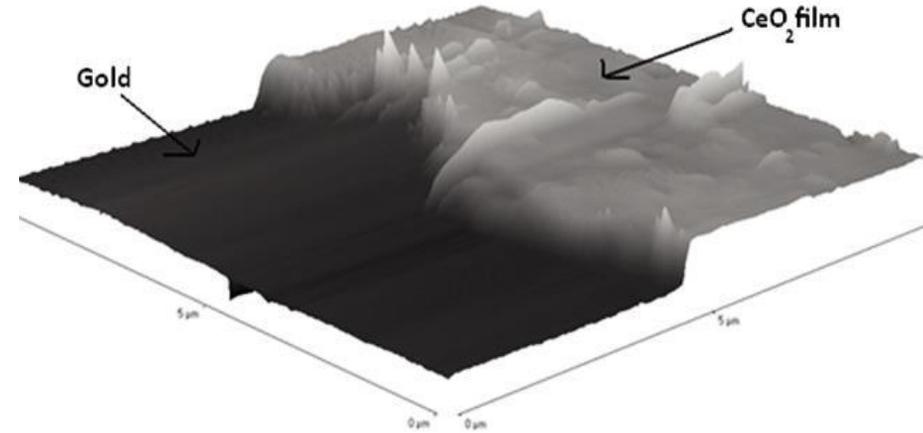
Thin layer depth analyses

Uncoated crystal $F_{25^\circ\text{C}} = 5833918 \text{ Hz}$
 Coated crystal $F_{25^\circ\text{C}} = 5826468 \text{ Hz}$
 $D F_{25^\circ\text{C}} = -7450 \text{ Hz}$
 $D m = 42 \text{ ug}$
 $\text{vol} = 5.5 \times 10^{-6} \text{ cm}^3$
 Thickness = **125 nm**

$$\Delta f = - \left(\frac{n f_0^2}{A \sqrt{\rho_q \mu_q}} \right) \Delta m$$

$\rho_q = 3.570 \text{ g.cm}^{-1}$ $n = 1$
 $\mu_q = 2.147 \times 10^{11} \text{ g.cm}^{-1}\text{s}^{-2}$
 Coated area = 1.33 cm^2
 Active area = 0.46 cm^2
 $d_{\text{CeO}_2} = 7.65 \text{ g.cm}^{-3}$

XRD thickness is $\sim 250 \text{ nm}$, indicating a porosity of 50%



-
- Introduction to UK plutonium interim storage
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 - **Piezo-crystal nano-balance experiments**

Microbalance water absorption

- Study the interactions of plutonium oxide and analogues with water.
 - Ceria (CeO_2)
 - Urania (UO_2 / U_3O_8)
 - Thoria (ThO_2)
 - Plutonium oxide (PuO_2) @ NNL Central Lab
- Use of quartz crystal microbalance methodology to experimentally determine:
 - The number of monolayers of water bound to the surface
 - The enthalpy of binding of the different layers.
- The QCM measures in-situ mass changes at the surface of a piezoelectrode. Changes in mass due to absorption or desorption at the electrode surface result in resonant frequency changes of the quartz crystal, and can be directly related via the Sauerbrey equation:

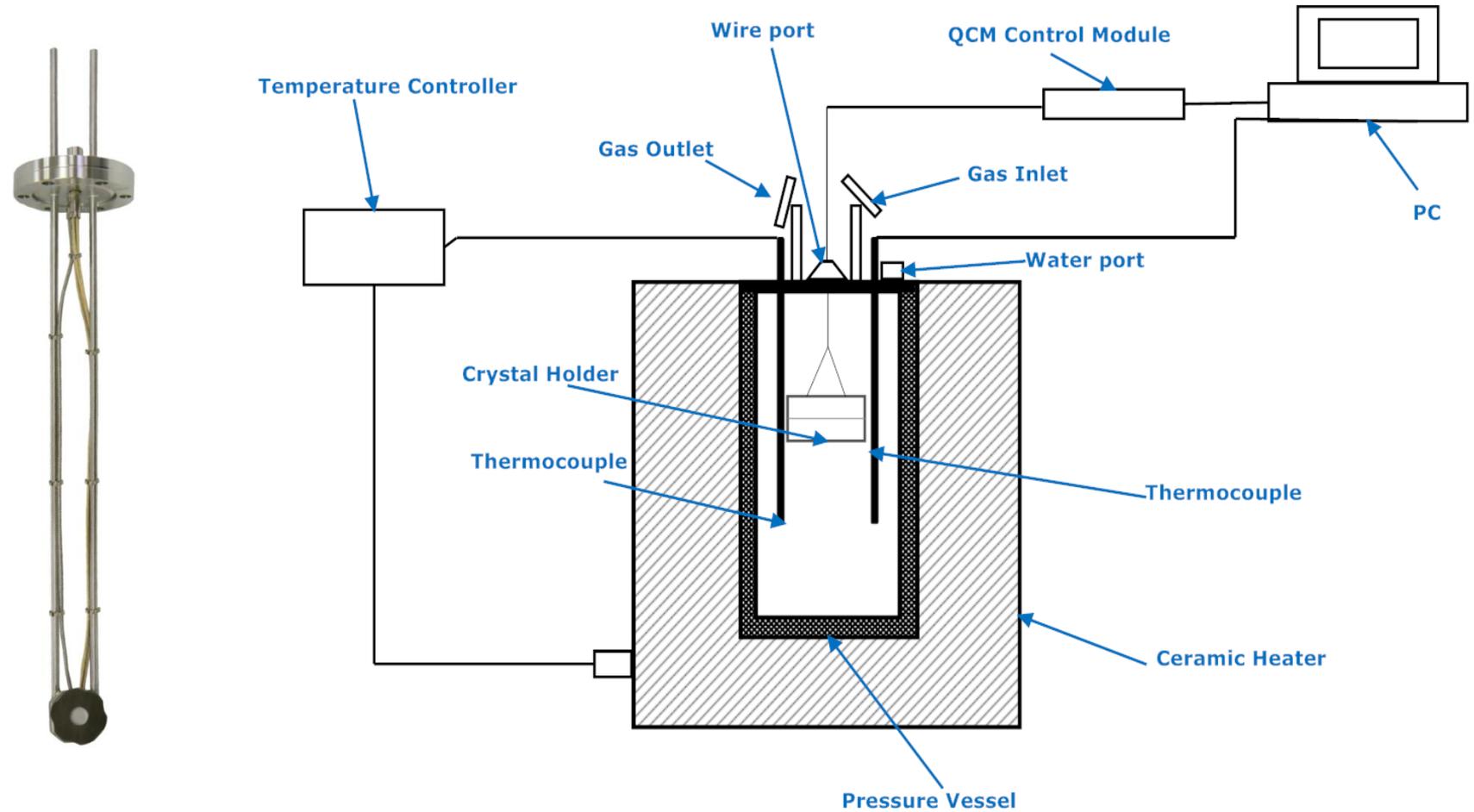
$$\Delta f = - \left(\frac{nf_0^2}{A\sqrt{\rho_q\mu_q}} \right) \Delta m$$



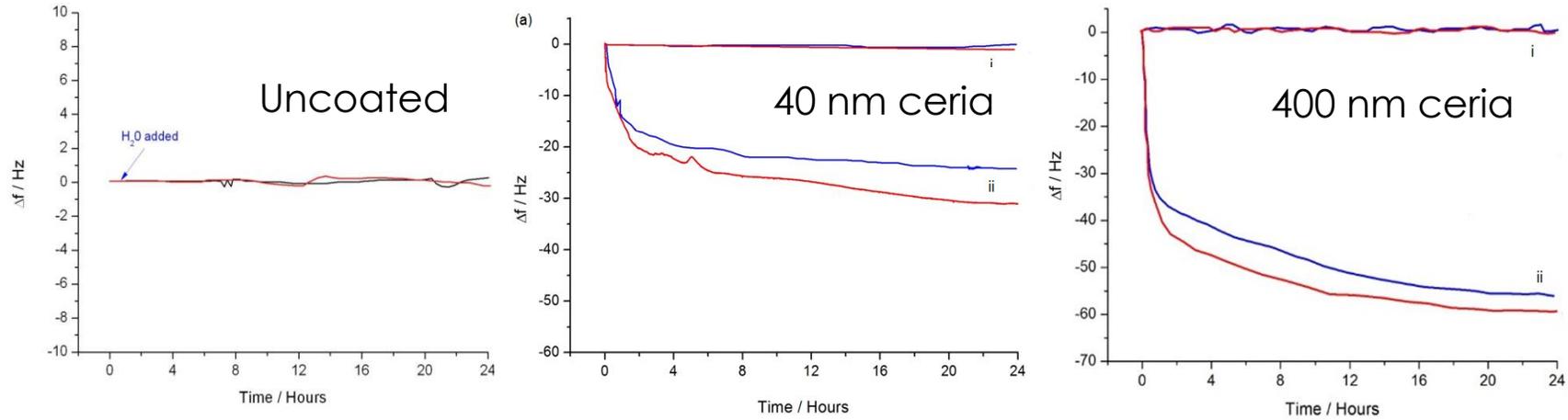
- Through control of temperature and partial pressure of the absorbed gas, the amount of water and enthalpy of absorption can be calculated.

Piezo-crystal nano-balance

Metal crystal transducer and GaPO_4 piezo-electric crystals allow higher temperature measurements compared to typical QCM.



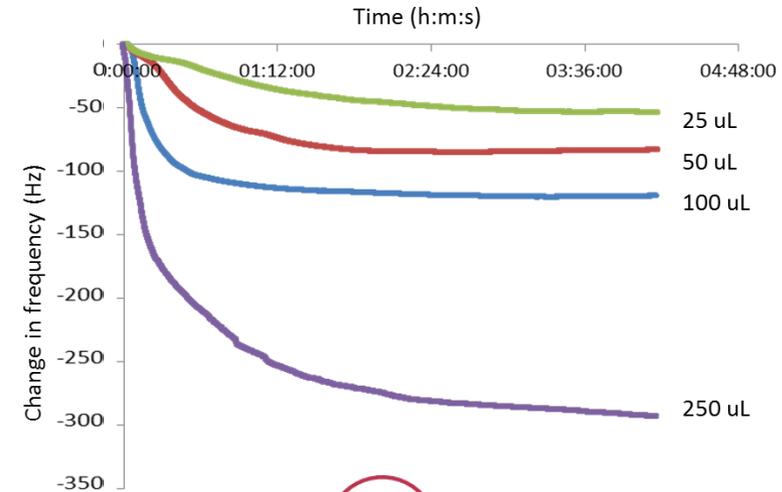
Water absorption: Pilot experiments



Frequency changes due water adsorption onto quartz crystals at 25°C, 10% humidity. Uncoated crystals showed no appreciable water absorption. Ceria-coated crystals showed a reduction in frequency due to absorption of water.

Different amounts of water were added to the pre-dried system at RT and equilibrated for 4 hours.

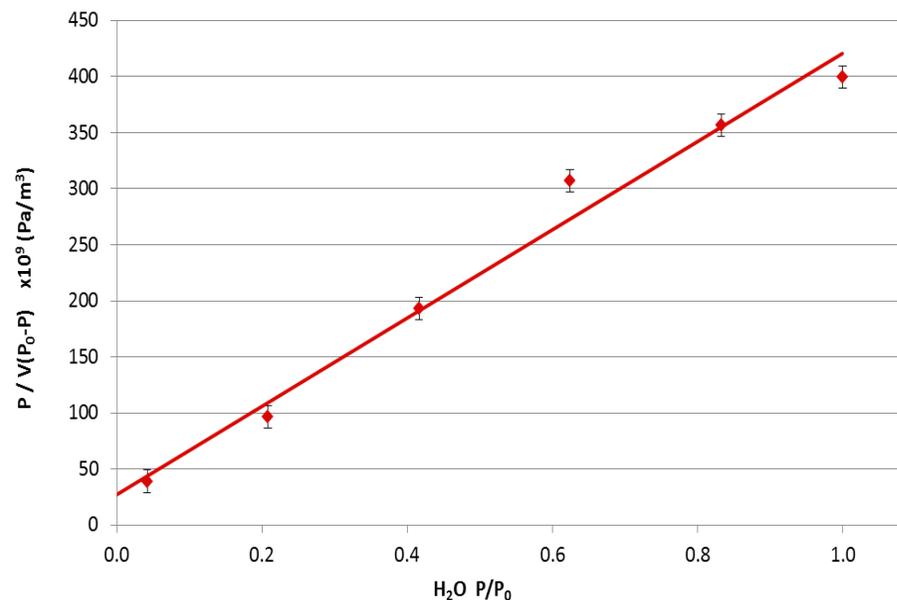
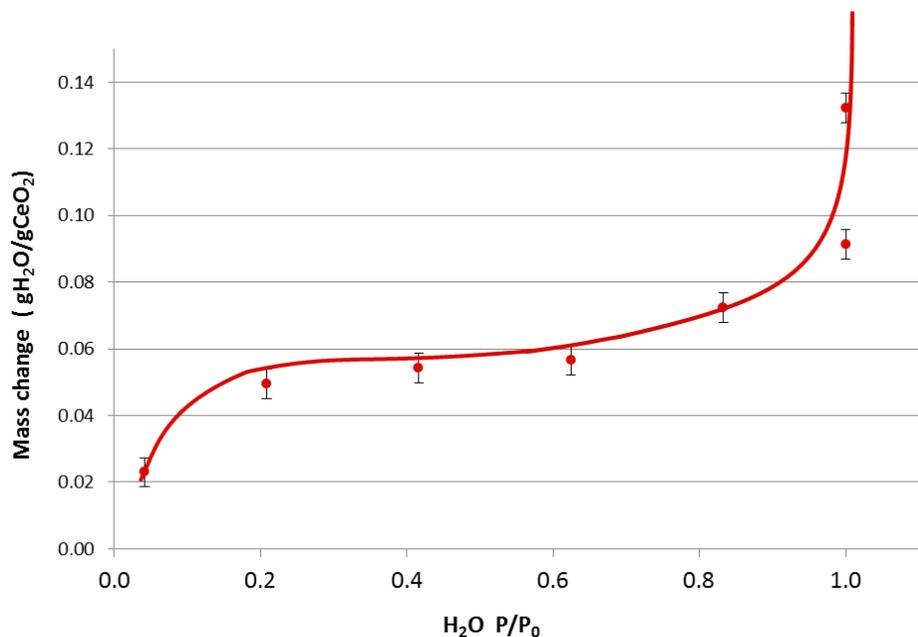
The change in frequency is proportional to the mass of water absorbed onto the ceria, and increased as the amount of water increased.



Ceria films on GaPO₄ crystals: Humidity variation(old)

The BET equation allows the volume of a monolayer and the enthalpy of absorption to be calculated:

$$1/\left[V_a \left(\frac{P_0}{P} - 1\right)\right] = \left(\frac{C-1}{V_M C}\right) \left(\frac{P}{P_0}\right) + \frac{1}{V_m C} \quad C = e^{(\Delta H_{ads} - \Delta H_{liq})/RT}$$



A plot of $P/V(P_0-P)$ against P/P_0 gives an intercept of $1/V_m C$ and a gradient of $(C - 1)/(V_M C)$, therefore we can calculate:

$$V_m = 2.43 \times 10^{-12} \text{ m}^3 \quad SA = 28 \text{ m}^2\text{g}^{-1}$$

$$\Delta H_{abs} = 44.3 \text{ kJmol}^{-1} \quad \Delta H_{bind} = 2.5 \text{ kJmol}^{-1}$$

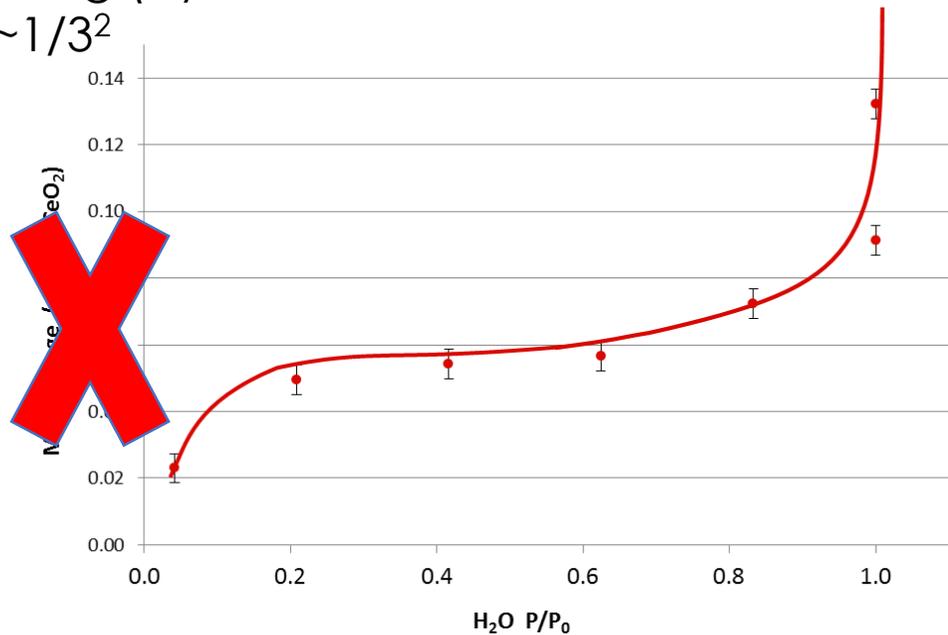
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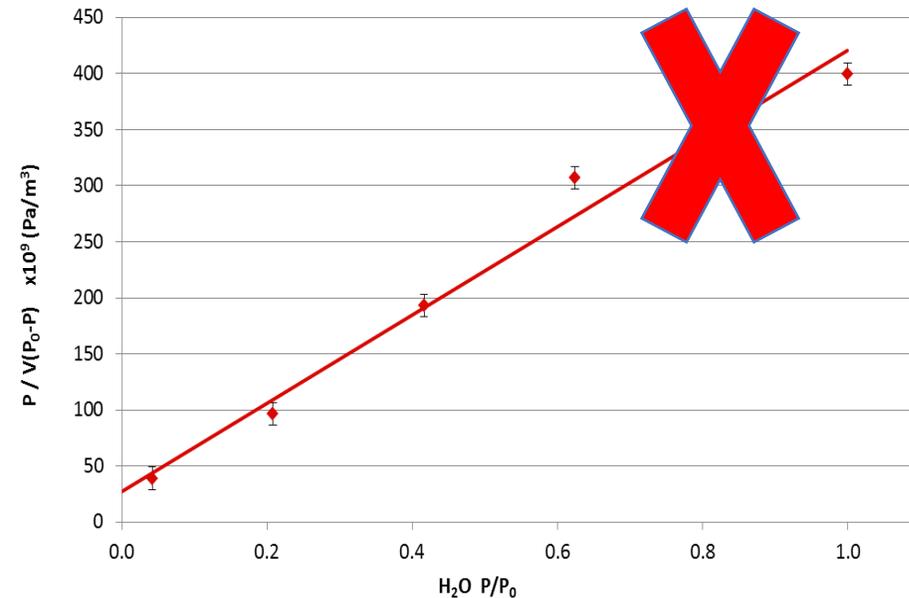
$$1/\left[V_a \left(\frac{P_0}{P} - 1\right)\right] = \left(\frac{C-1}{V_M C}\right) \left(\frac{P}{P_0}\right) + \frac{1}{V_m C}$$

$$C = e^{(\Delta H_{ads} - \Delta H_{liq})/RT}$$

Sensitivity factor of supplier wrong (by factor of $\sim 1/3^2$)



BET equation breaks down at $P/P_0 > 0.35$



A plot of $P/V(P_0-P)$ against P/P_0 gives an intercept of $1/V_m C$ and a gradient of $(C-1)/(V_M C)$, therefore we can calculate:

$$V_m = 2.43 \times 10^{-12} \text{ m}^3 \quad SA = 28 \text{ m}^2\text{g}^{-1}$$

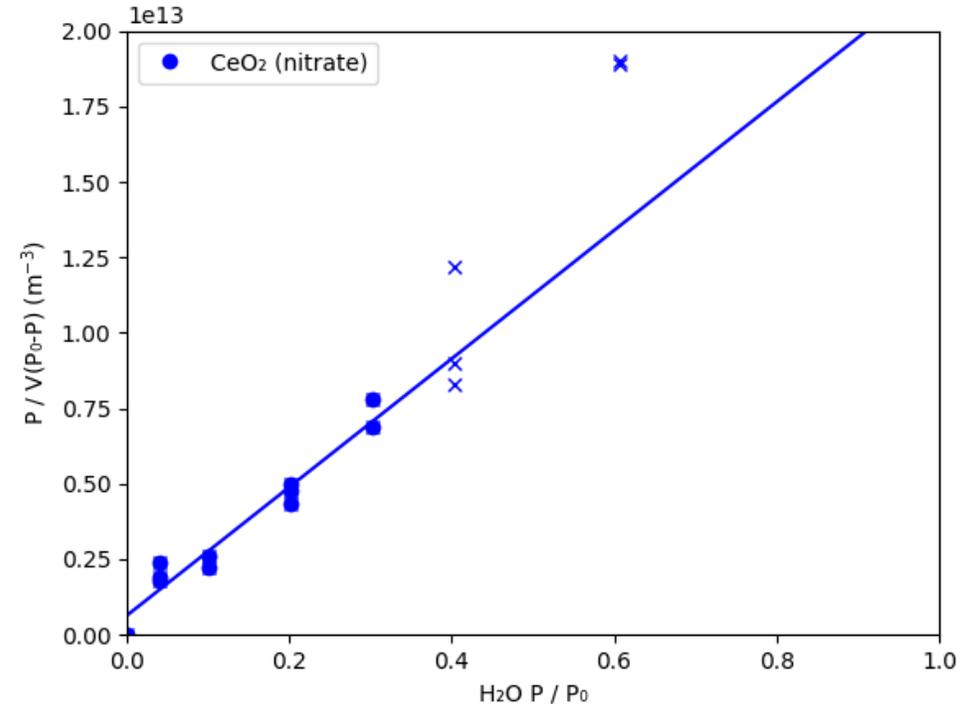
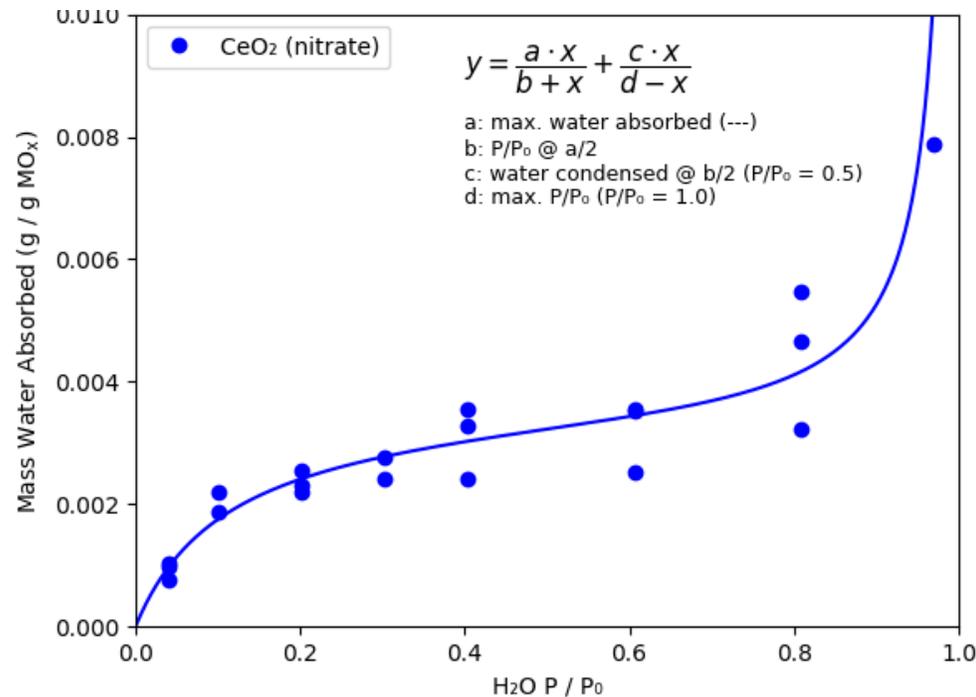
$$\Delta H_{abs} = 44.3 \text{ kJmol}^{-1} \quad \Delta H_{bind} = 2.5 \text{ kJmol}^{-1}$$

Ceria films on GaPO₄ crystals: Humidity variation

The BET equation allows the volume of a monolayer and the enthalpy of absorption to be calculated:

$$1/[V a \left(\frac{P_0}{P} - 1\right)] = \left(\frac{C-1}{V_M C}\right) \left(\frac{P}{P_0}\right) + \frac{1}{V_m C}$$

$$C = e^{(\Delta H_{ads} - \Delta H_{liq})/RT}$$

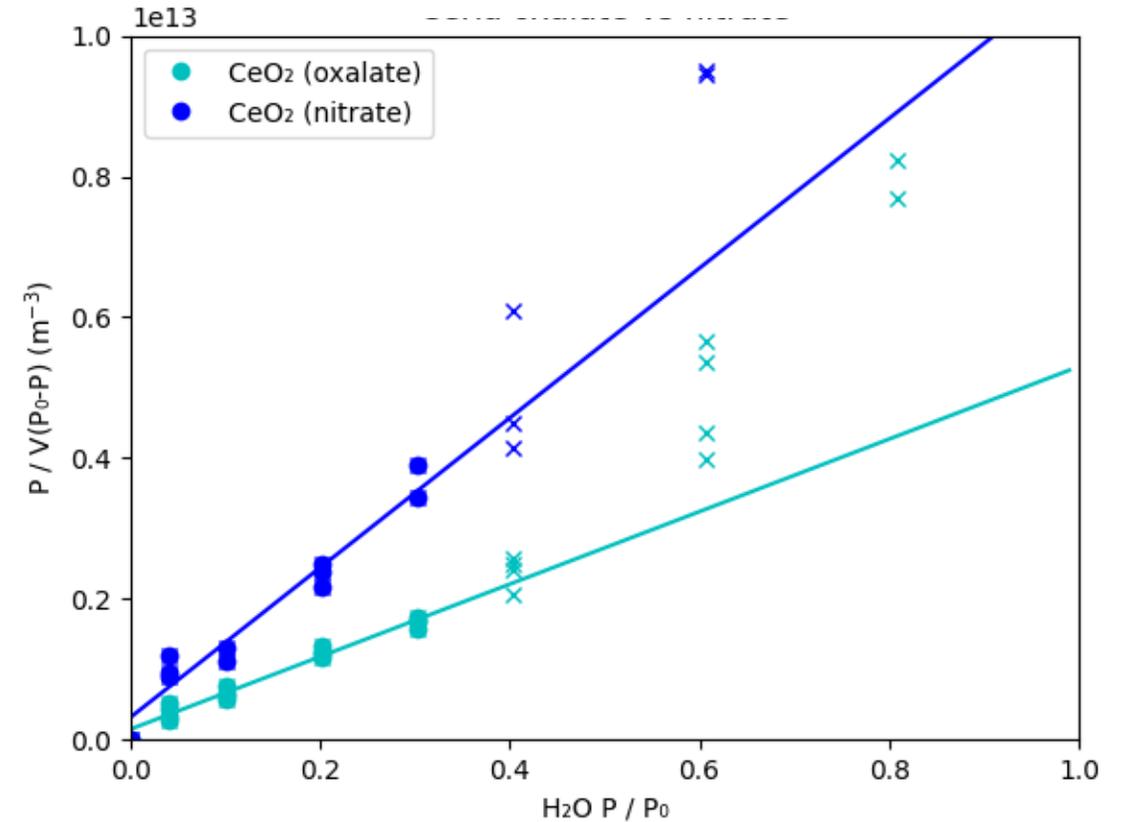
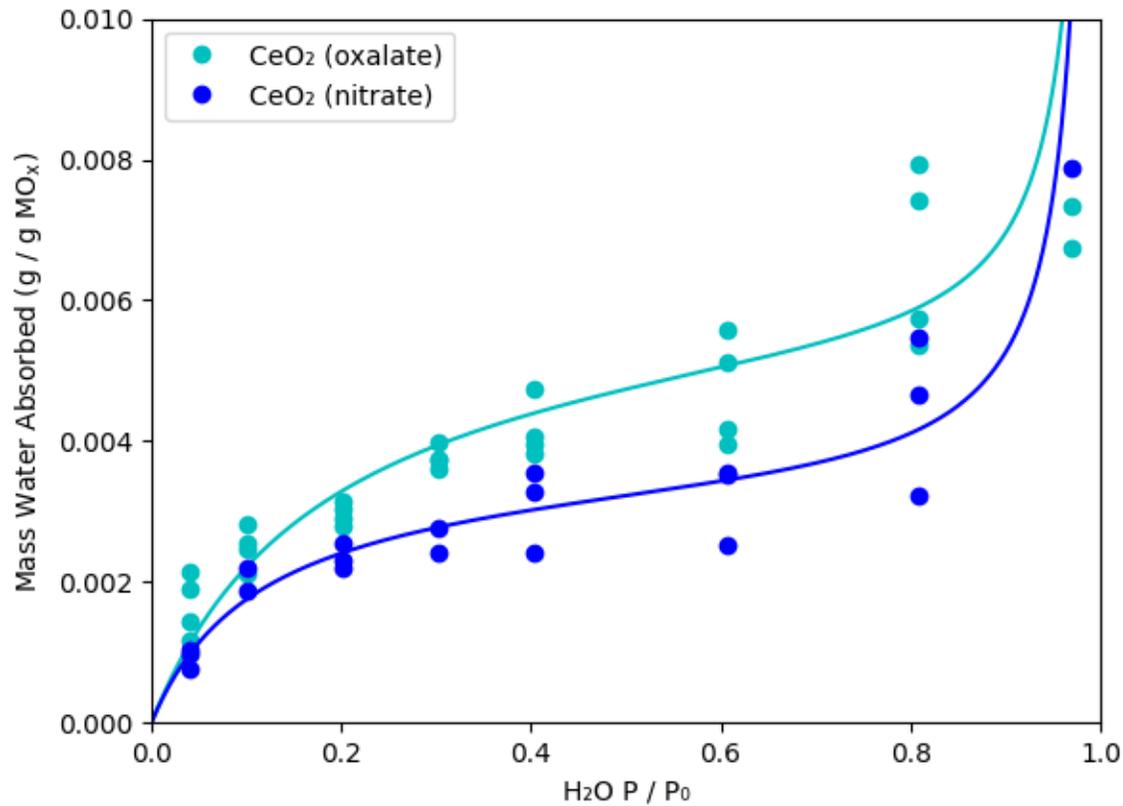


A plot of P/V(P₀-P) against P/P₀ gives an intercept of 1/V_mC and a gradient of (C - 1)/(V_MC), therefore we can calculate:

$$V_m = 9.13 \times 10^{-14} \text{ m}^3 \quad SA = 10.6 \text{ m}^2\text{g}^{-1}$$

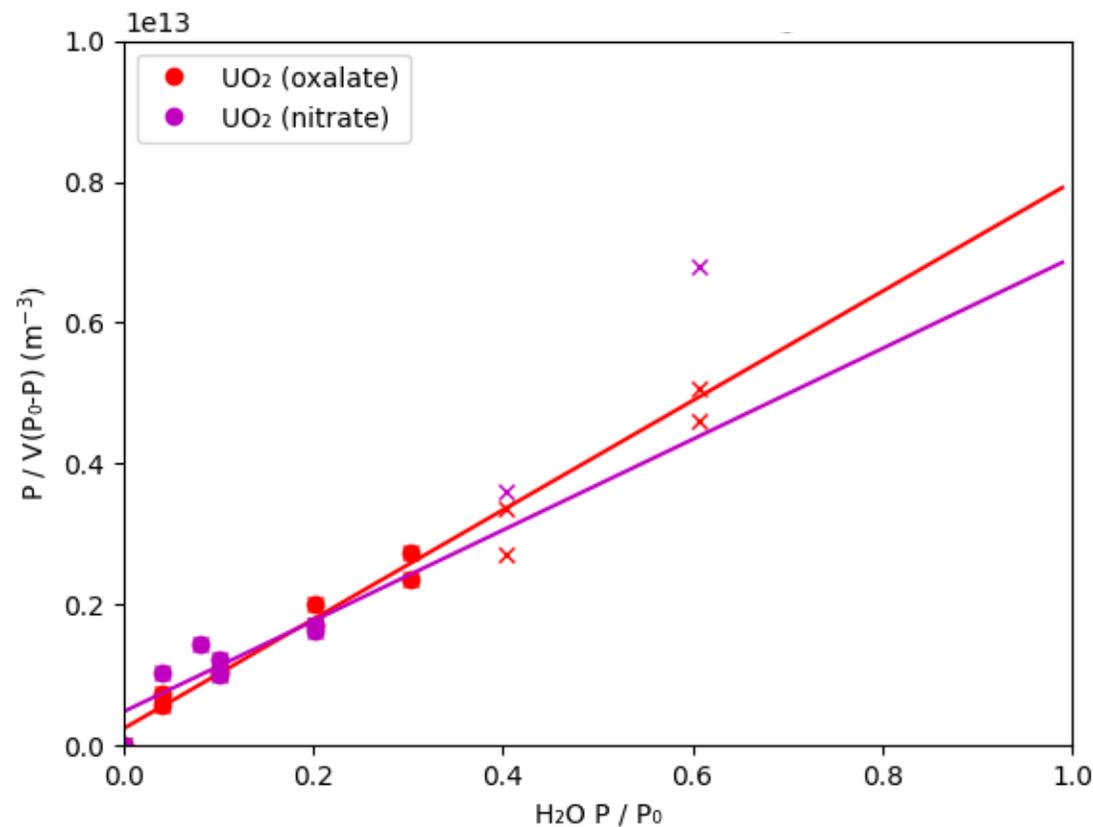
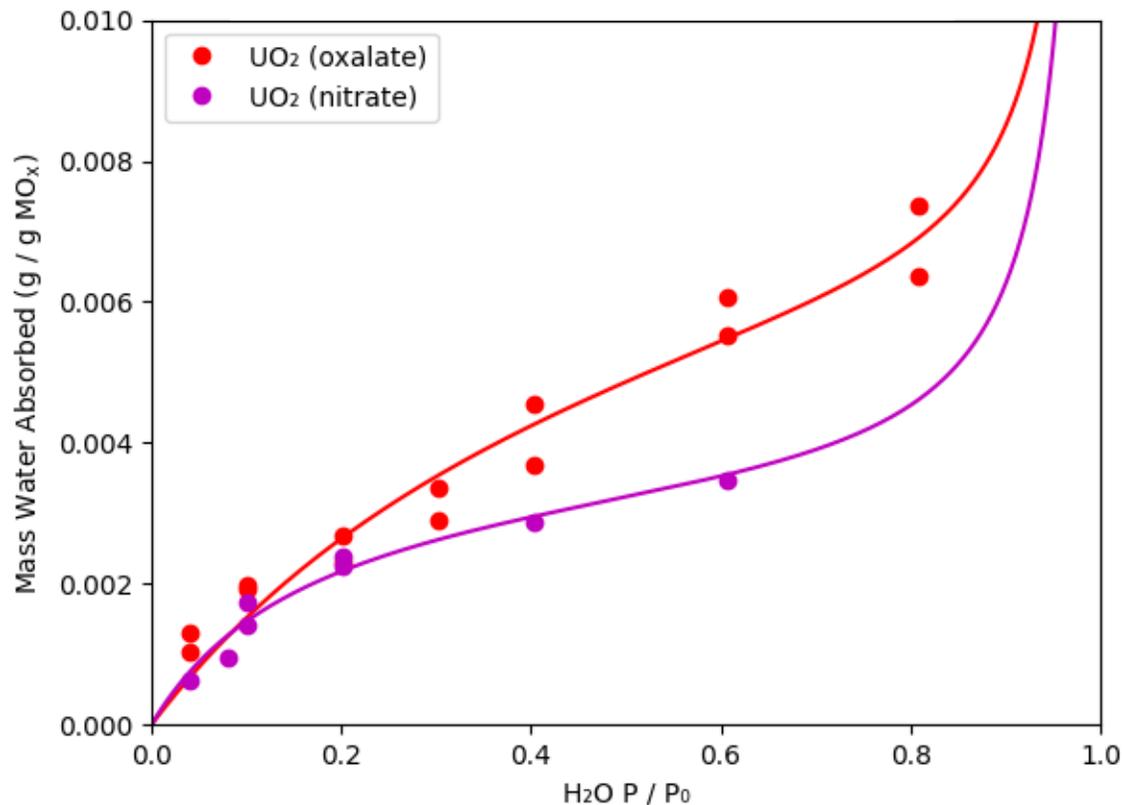
$$\Delta H_{abs} = 52.0 \text{ kJmol}^{-1} \quad \Delta H_{bind} = 10.2 \text{ kJmol}^{-1}$$

Ceria films on GaPO₄ crystals: Humidity variation



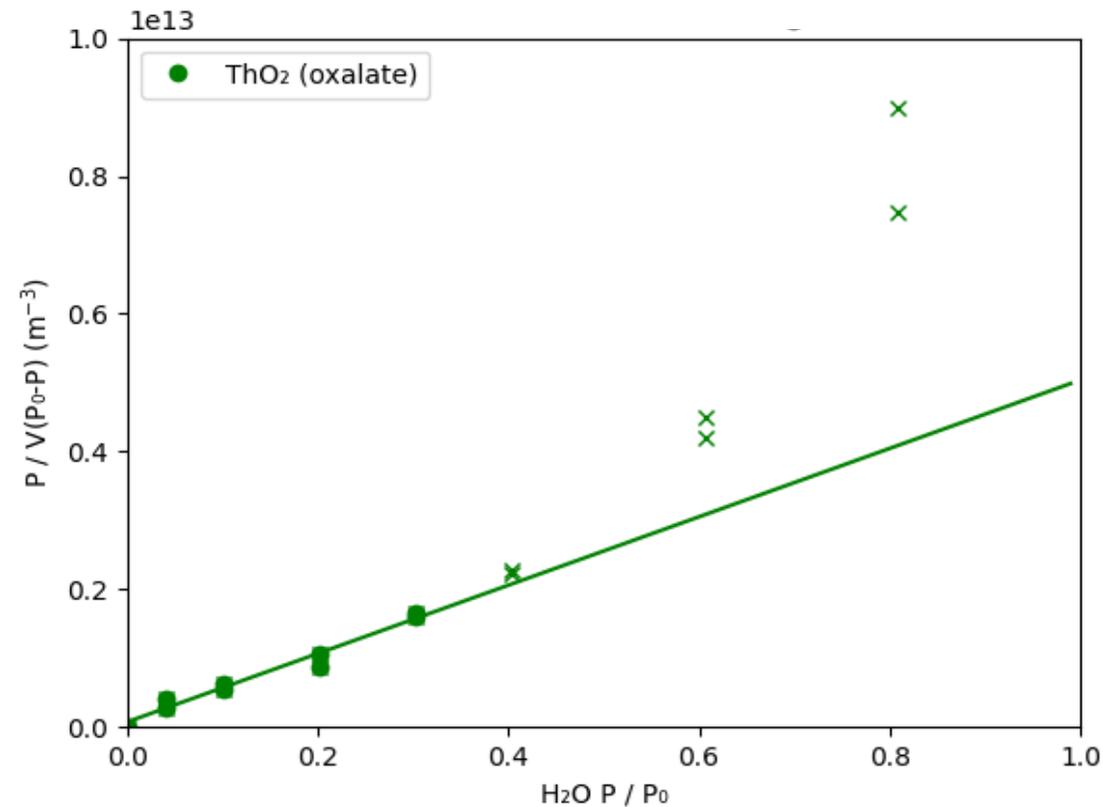
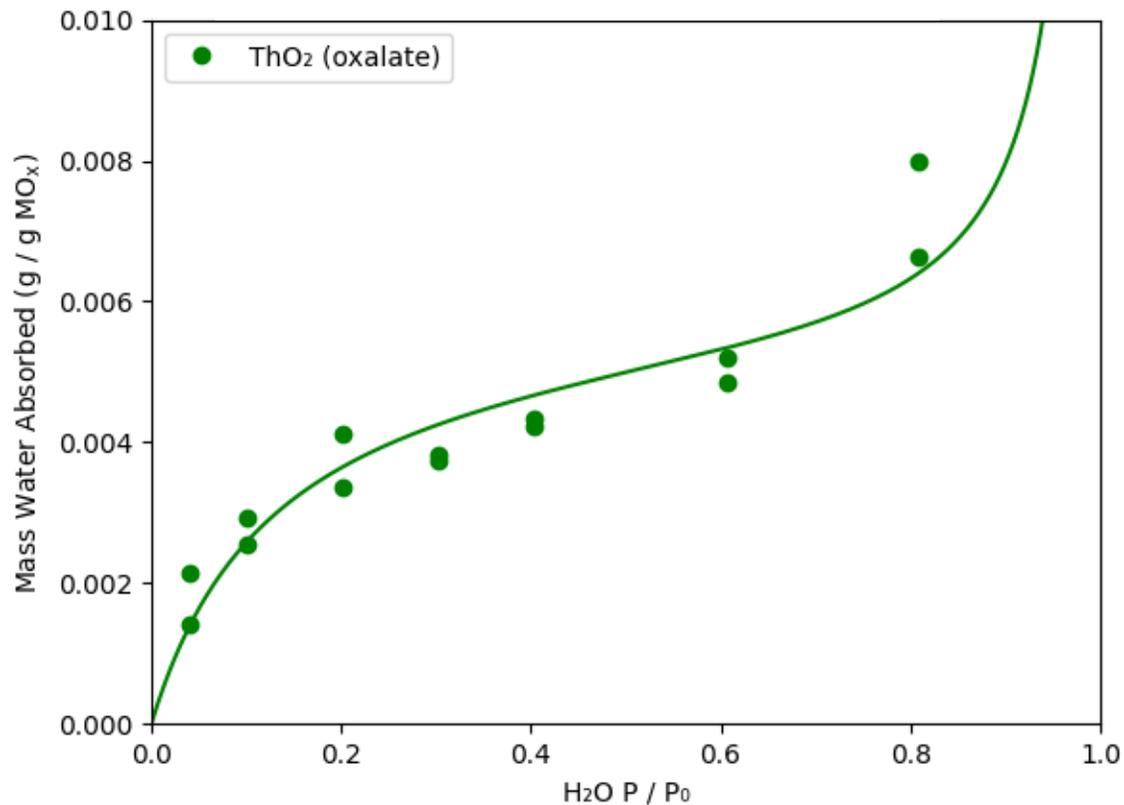
Oxide	Prec. Salt	BET slope X 10 ¹³	BET incpt. x 10 ¹²	SA m ³ / g	Hads kJ / mol
CeO ₂	nitrate	1.06	0.318	10.6	52.0
CeO ₂	oxalate	0.515	0.149	14.6	52.1

Urania films on GaPO₄ crystals: Humidity variation



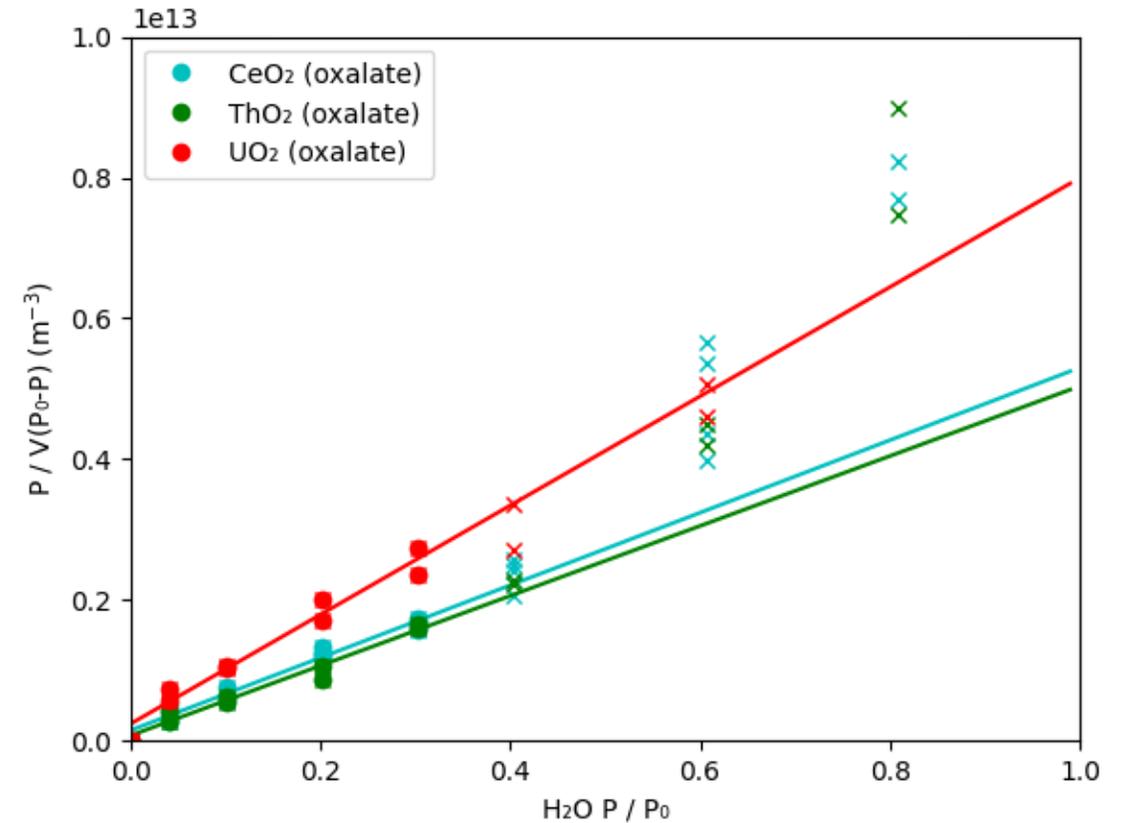
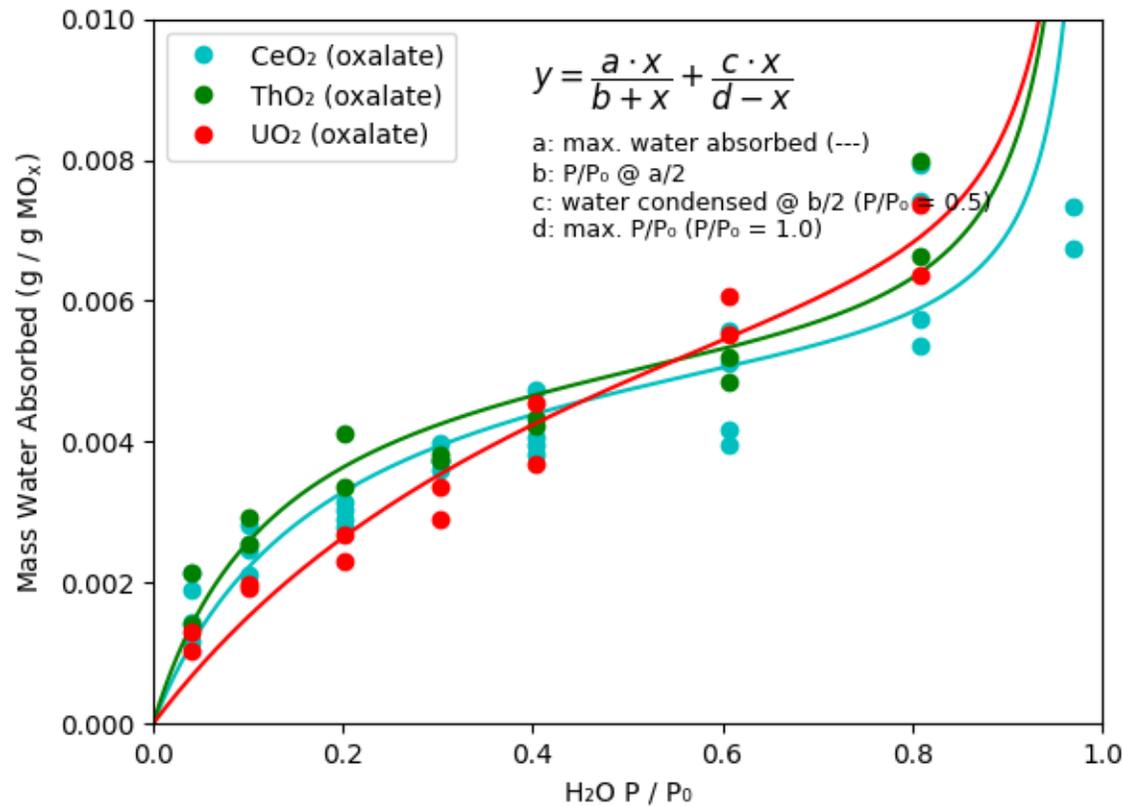
Oxide	Prec. Salt	BET slope X 10 ¹³	BET incpt. x 10 ¹²	SA m ³ / g	Hads kJ / mol
UO ₂	nitrate	0.644	0.481	11.9	49.5
UO ₂	oxalate	0.775	0.214	12.2	50.4

Thoria films on GaPO₄ crystals: Humidity variation



Oxide	Prec. Salt	BET slope X 10 ¹³	BET incpt. x 10 ¹²	SA m ³ / g	Hads kJ / mol
ThO ₂	nitrate	TBD			
ThO ₂	oxalate	0.496	0.741	15.1	54.0

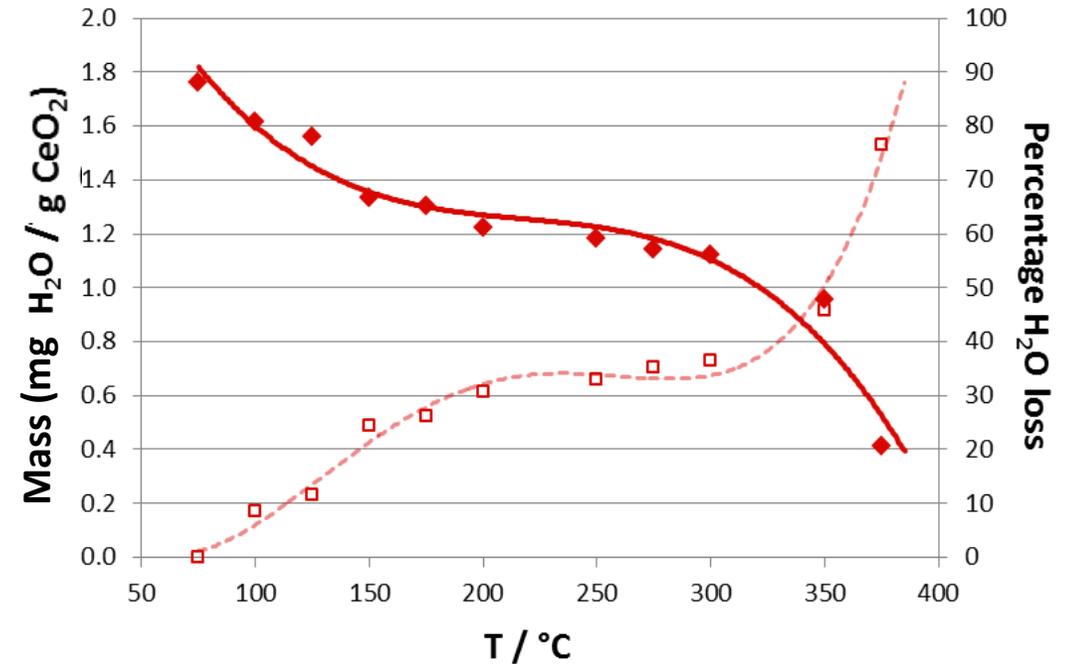
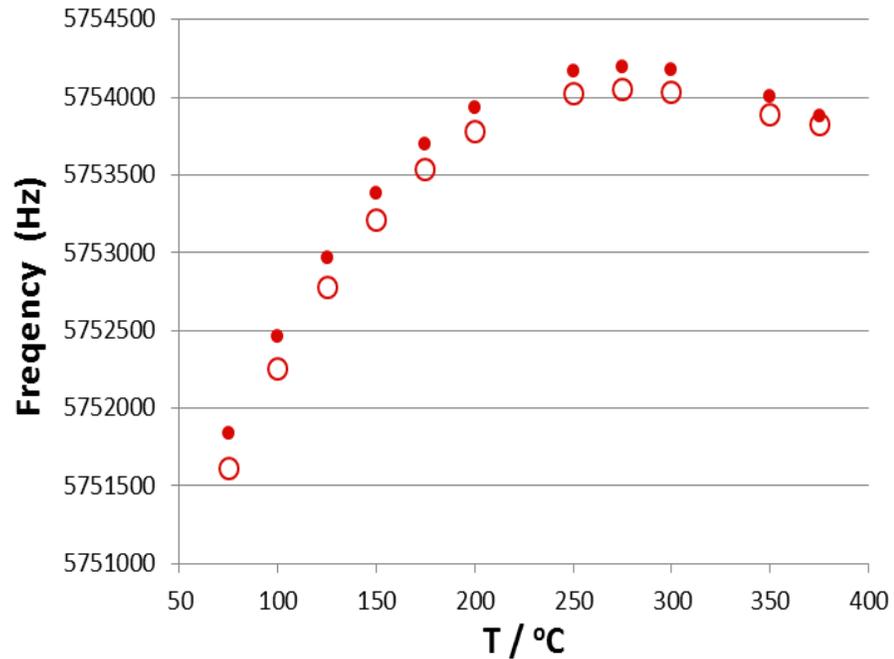
Films from oxalate on GaPO₄ crystals: Humidity variation



Oxide	Prec. Salt	BET slope $\times 10^{13}$	BET incpt. $\times 10^{12}$	SA m^3 / g	Hads kJ / mol
CeO ₂	oxalate	0.515	0.149	14.6	52.1
UO ₂	oxalate	0.775	0.214	12.2	50.4
ThO ₂	oxalate	0.496	0.741	15.1	54.0

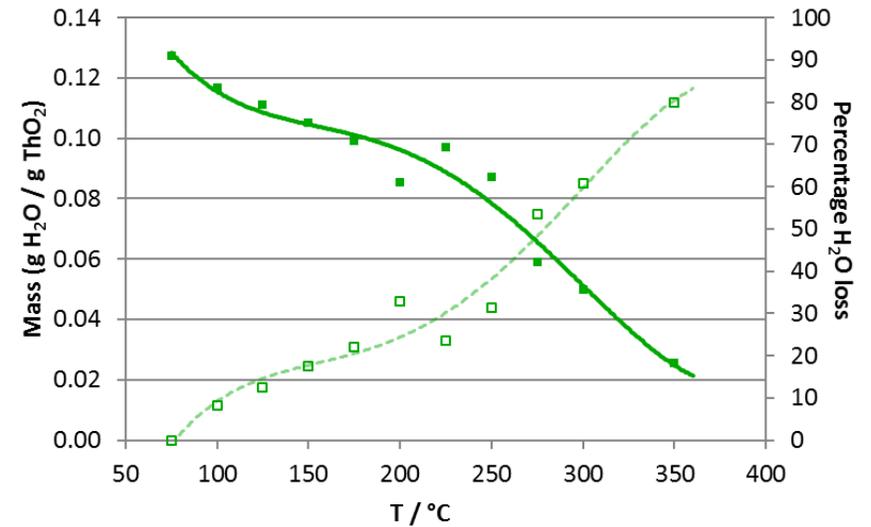
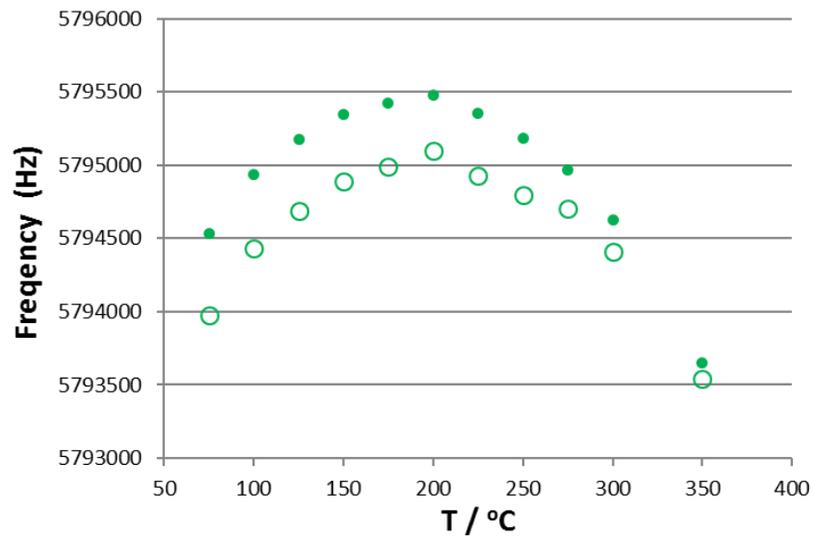
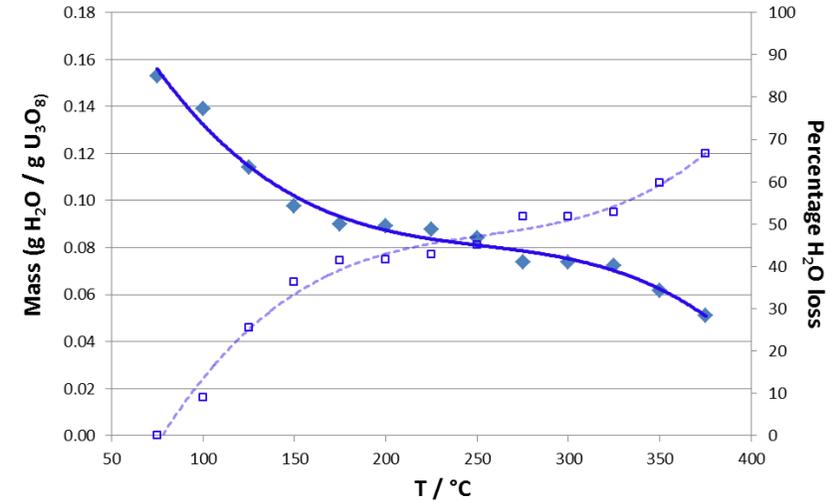
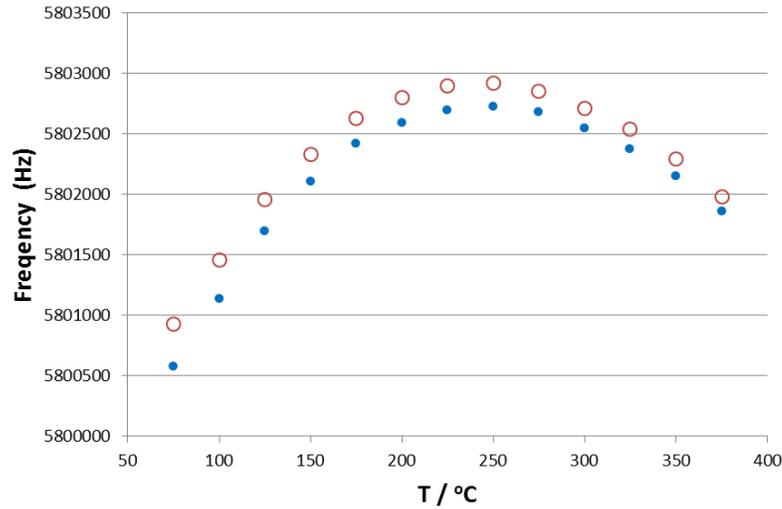
Ceria water absorption: Temperature variation

The water saturated system (75°C, 100% rel. humidity) was then heated to approx. 400°C, causing the bound water to desorb as the relative humidity drops.



Approximately 20% of the water remains bound to the surface at 375°C.

Urania & Thoria films on GaPO₄ crystals



-
- Introduction to UK plutonium interim storage
 - Synthesis of thin-layer actinide coatings
 - **Contact angle measurements**
 - Piezo-crystal nano-balance experiments

Macroscopic water absorption: contact angle measurements

- Contact angle measurements of liquids on surfaces give an indication of the wettability of the surface.
- Surface irregularities disrupt droplet cohesion, increasing the wettability of a surface. Chemical characteristics also effect wettability.
- Therefore the surface finish resulting from different processing methods will alter the wettability.
- Plutonium's intrinsic radioactivity and high levels of decay heat causes surface damage during storage to an unknown extent.

$$r \cdot \cos\theta_c = \cos\theta_m$$

$$\gamma_{LG} \cdot \cos\theta_c = \gamma_{SL} - \gamma_{SG}$$

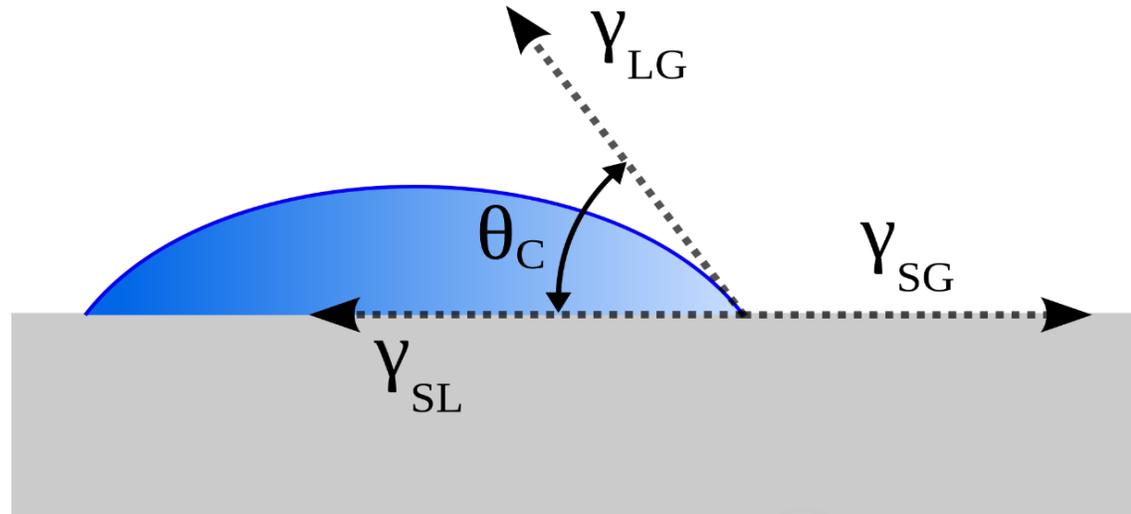
$\theta_c =$ contact angle

r: roughness factor

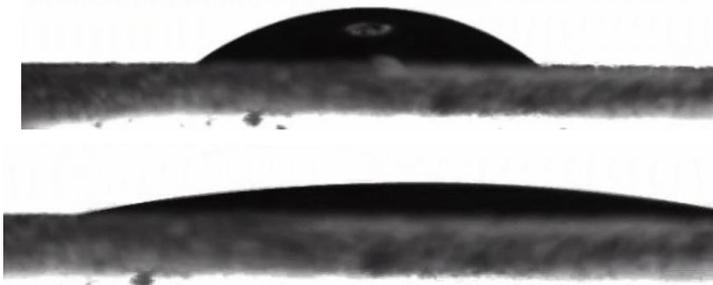
γ_{LG} : surface tension

γ_{SL} : solid-liq IE

γ_{SG} : solid-gas IE

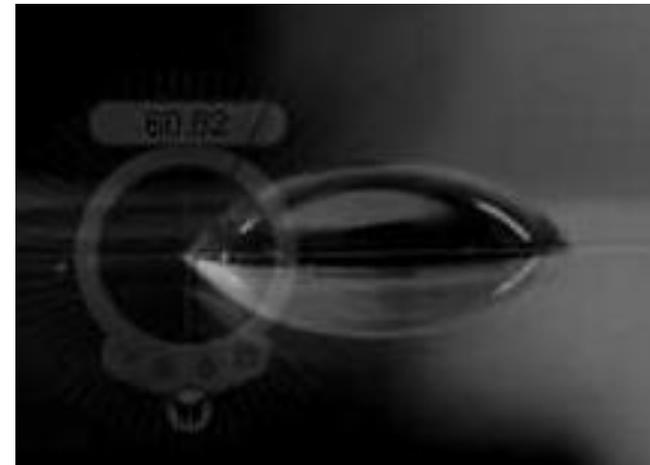
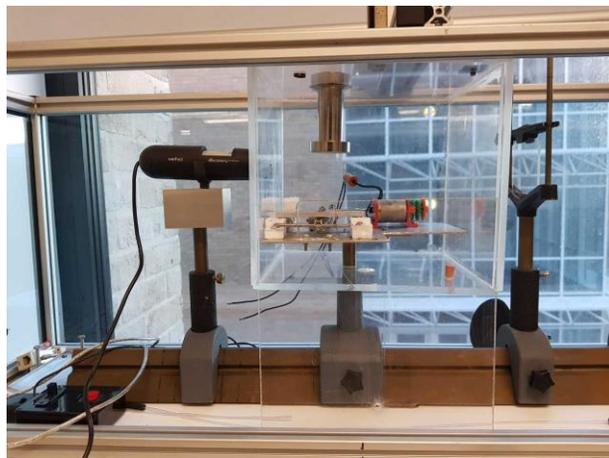


Contact angle measurements: method



Water droplet on oxide nano-thick layer at 100% humidity, before and after UV irradiation.

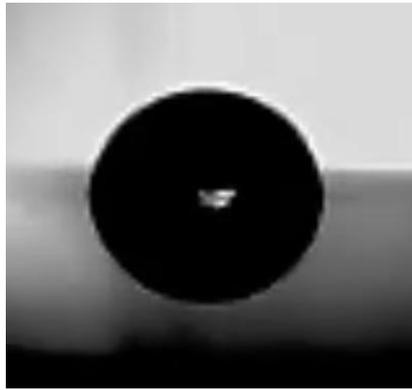
- Measure contact angles of plutonium oxide analogues (CeO_2 , ThO_2 , UO_2 , $\text{Ce}_{1-x}\text{Eu}_x\text{O}_2$) produced at a range of calcination temperatures.
- Vary humidity of the environment.
- Measure initial contact angles and variation in contact angle during evaporation.
- Automate droplet measurements using image recognition / machine learning.



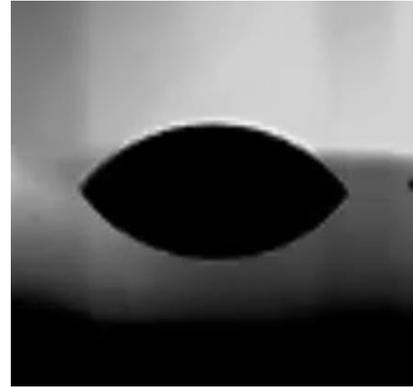
Contact angle measurements calcination temperature

- Higher calcination temperatures result in more hydrophilic surfaces, and lower contact angles.

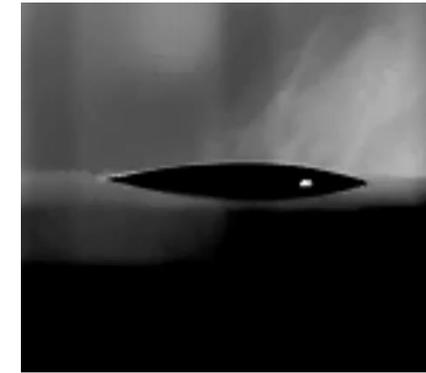
UO₂: 300°C



UO₂: 400°C



UO₂: 500°C



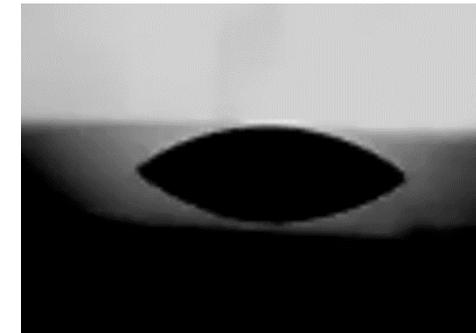
ThO₂: 300°C



ThO₂: 400°C



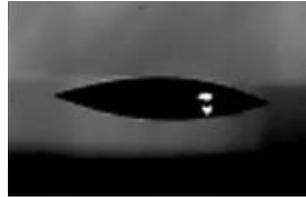
ThO₂: 500°C



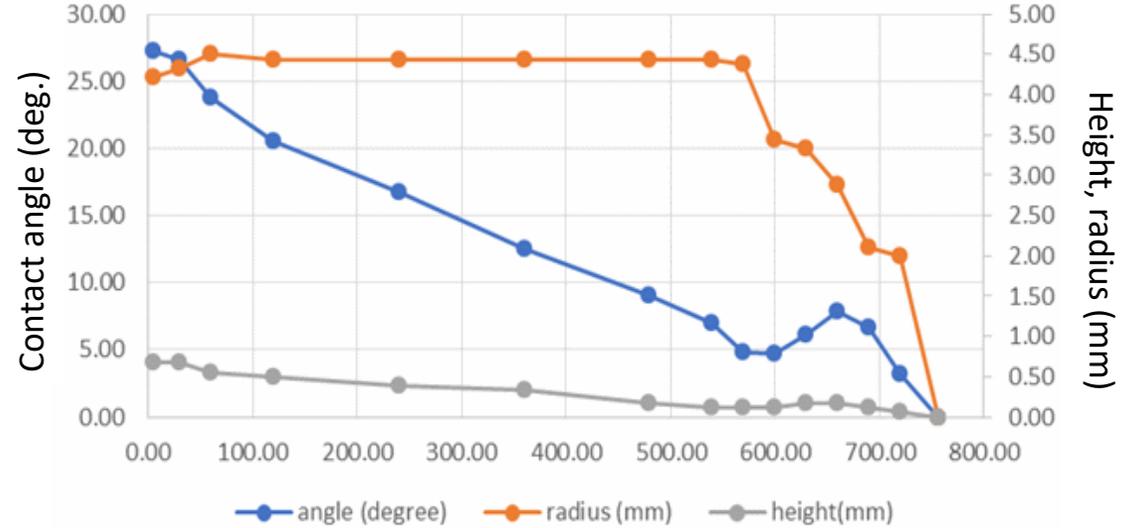
Macroscopic water absorption: contact angle measurements

- metal oxide layer on glass substrate ($\sim 10 \mu\text{g}$ metal / cm^2), calcined at 300°C
- water droplet ($1 \mu\text{L}$) deposited at initial 40% humidity

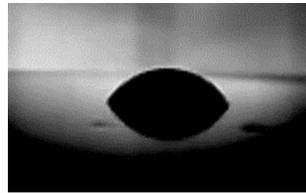
ThO_2



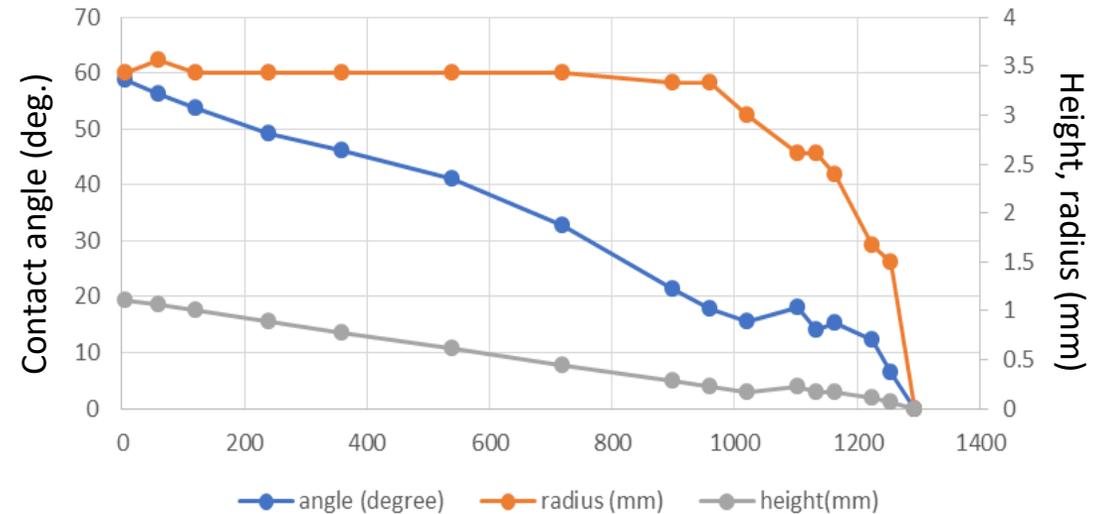
Init. contact angle = 27°



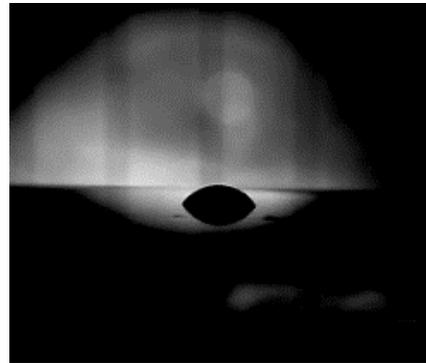
CeO_2



Init. contact angle = 58°

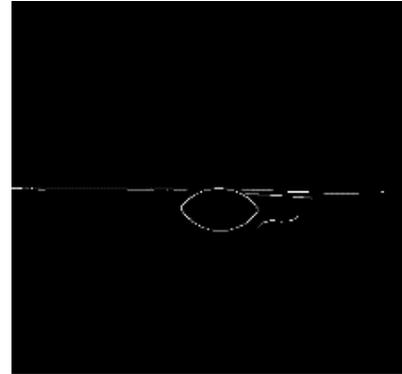


Macroscopic water absorption: contact angle measurements



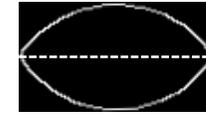
1. Greyscale
2. Blur
3. Edge detect
4. Dilate
5. Erode

Image contour



6. Adjust to horizontal
7. Select largest contour
8. Crop, bisect

droplet contour

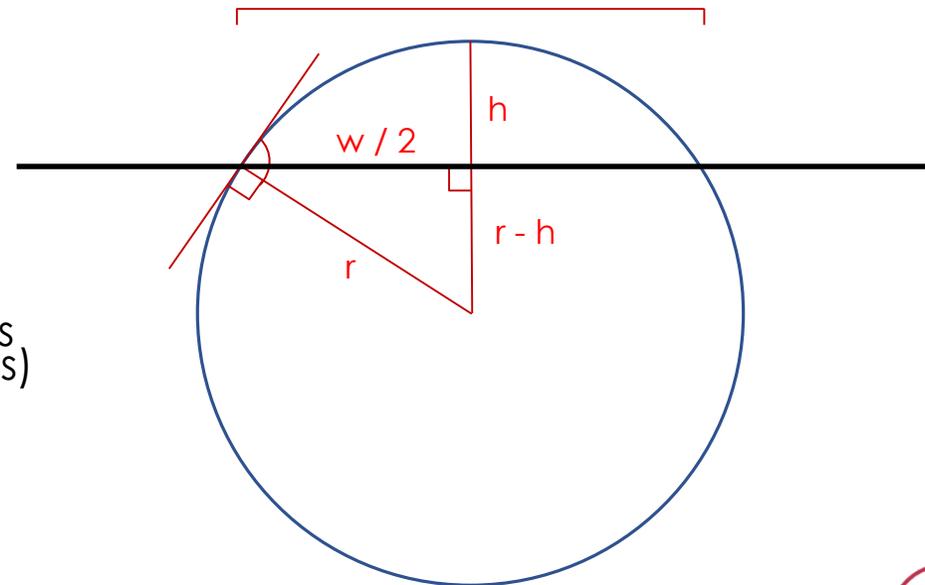


w

$$r = (h / 2) + (w / (8 * h))$$

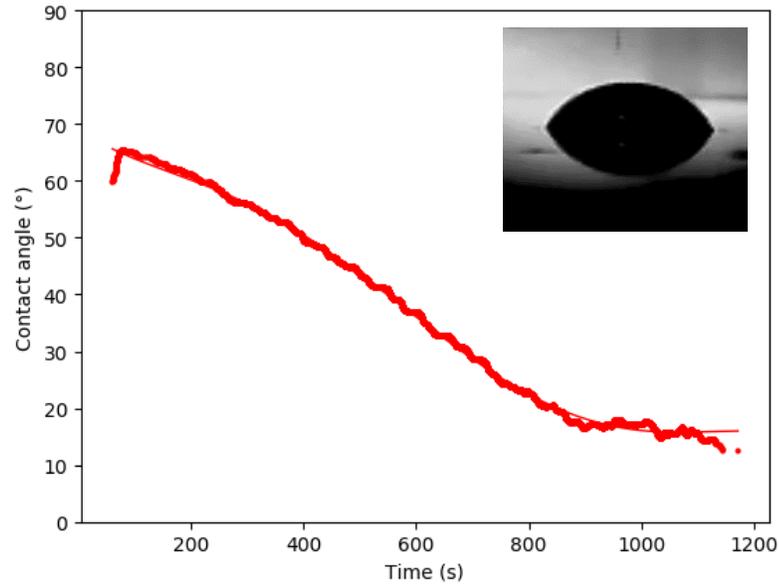
$$CA = 90 - \sin^{-1}(r-h / r)$$

As the drop evaporates and flattens, the modelled circle gets bigger (w increases, h decreases) and the CA decreases

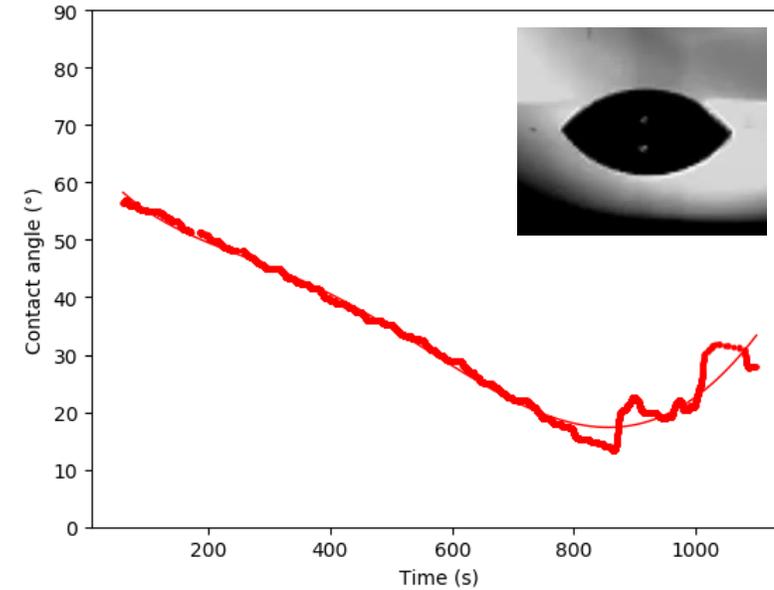


Macroscopic water absorption: contact angle measurements

UO₂ calcined at 300°C, 40% hum.

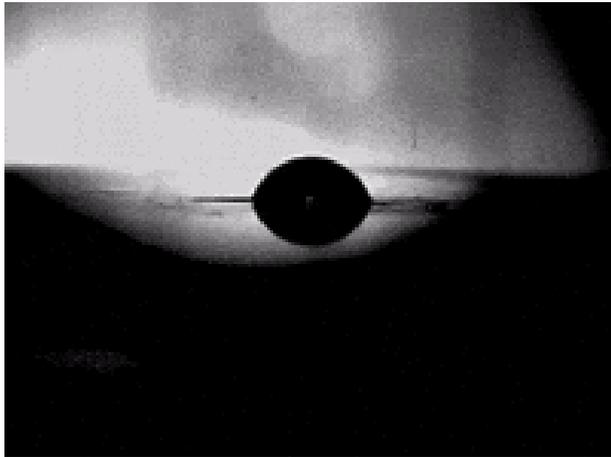


UO₂ calcined at 400°C, 40% hum.



- Calcination at higher temperature gives a lower initial contact angle.
- Rate of evaporation remains approx. the same.
- More contraction events seen for more hydrophilic surface.

Contact angle measurements: Further work

- Reduce size of equipment to fit through glove-box port.
 - Improve camera / lighting to give better illumination and resolution.
 - Improve automated image recognition.
- 
- Collect more data at different humidities and calcination temperatures, of CeO_2 , ThO_2 , UO_2 .
 - Change pH and ionic strength (e.g. salt content) of droplets.
 - Measure repeatability of on dry versus pre-wetted surfaces.

Conclusions

- Thin-layers of ceria and thoria (and Urania and plutonia) produced through drop-coating process onto glass and metal surfaces.
- Oxide-coated piezoelectric crystal electrodes used to measure the extent of water absorption onto the oxide surface via changes in frequency.
- Temperature and humidity of the system altered to produce isotherms and the energy of water binding determined.
- Contact angle measurement of water droplets on the oxide layers indicate the wettability and hydrophilicity of the surfaces. Pilot studies indicate significant differences between ceria and thoria, and effects due to calcination temperature and humidity.

Acknowledgments

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Pat Murphy

Richard Wilbraham



ITU

Detlef Wegen



NNL

Robin Taylor

Robin Orr

Dave Woodhead



Thanks for your attention



Transformative Science and Engineering for Nuclear Decommissioning

Atomistic Simulation of Helium Incorporation in PuO_2

Elanor Murray, University of Birmingham

TRANSCEND/NDA/NWDRF Virtual Conference

3/12/2020
Zoom



Is it pressurised?

Has its structure changed?

What's it like inside?



Is it still edible?

Does it need throwing away?

Can it stay in the storage?

Do I really want to open this?

Is it pressurised?
Helium generation

Has its structure changed?

What's it like inside?



Is it still edible?
Can it be used in
future reactors?

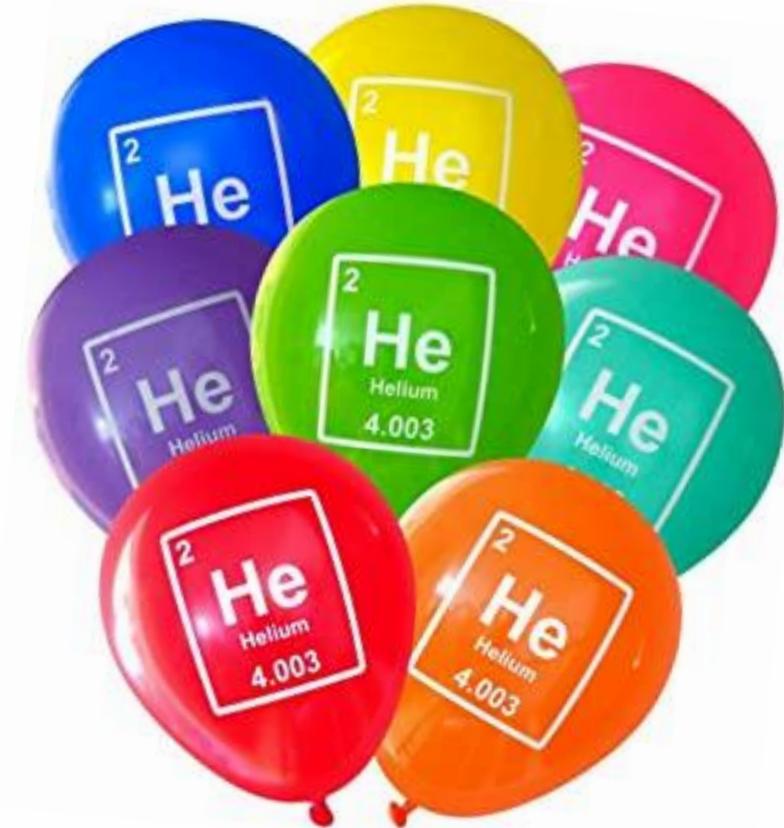
Does it need throwing away?
Need to go in GDF eventually?

Do I really want to open this?
Use computational chemistry methods

Can it stay in the storage?
Is it safe to remain in interim storage?

Helium Incorporation

- *Static loading – how much helium can the lattice accommodate?*
- *What are the likely trapping sites?*
- *Is helium diffusion vacancy assisted?*
- *How does helium aggregate?*
- *What is the mechanism for bubble formation?*





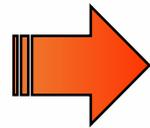
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Modelling procedure

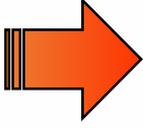
GULP overview



Crystal Structure
'Force Field'

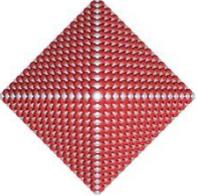


GULP



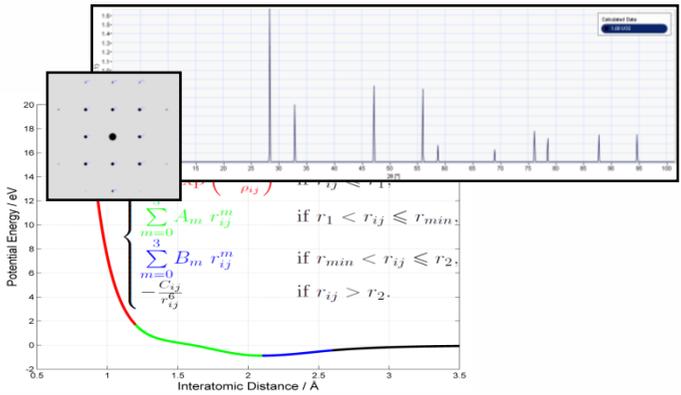
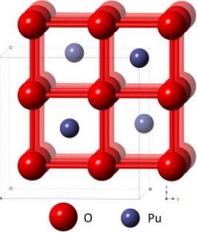
Geometry Optimised
Crystal Structure

Physical Properties:
Mechanical
Optical



Initial position of ions
Forces acting between them

Geometry optimise
Final position of ions
Predict properties



Potential model

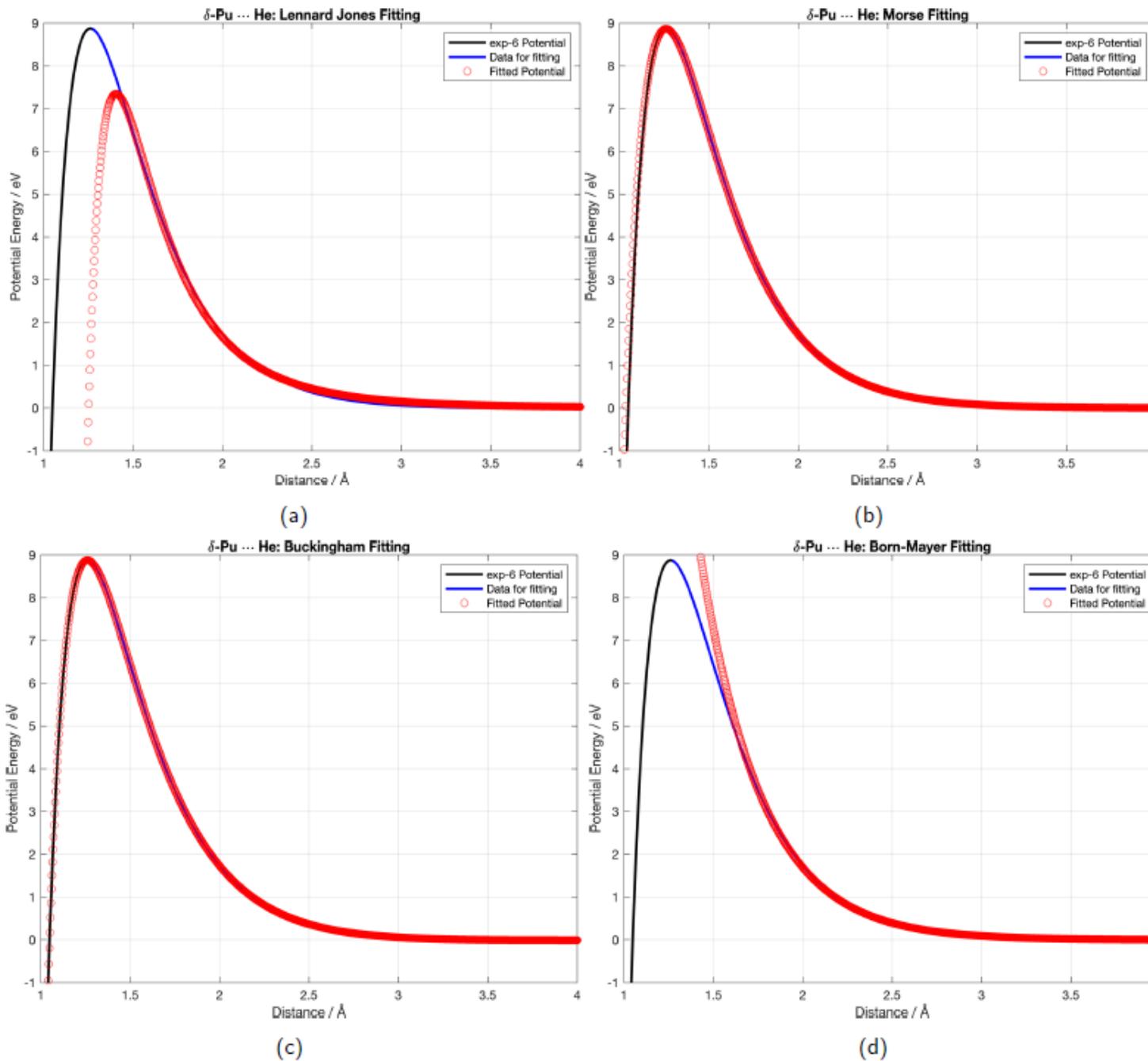
- Pu ... Pu ✓
- Pu ... O ✓
- O ... O ✓
- O ... He ✓
- Pu ... He ✗
- He ... He ✗

Atomistic simulations of helium dynamics in a plutonium lattice
 Vladimir Dremov, Philipp Sapozhnikov, Andrey Kutepov, Vladimir Anisimov, Michael Korotin, Alexey Shorikov,
 Dean L. Preston, and Marvin A. Zocher
 Phys. Rev. B **77**, 224306 – Published 30 June 2008

$$\Phi(r) = \epsilon \left\{ \left(\frac{6}{\alpha - 6} \right) \exp \left[\alpha \left(1 - \frac{r}{r^*} \right) \right] - \left(\frac{\alpha}{\alpha - 6} \right) \left(\frac{r^*}{r} \right)^6 \right\}$$

Found potential! But exp-6 not included in GULP so need to fit to standard form...

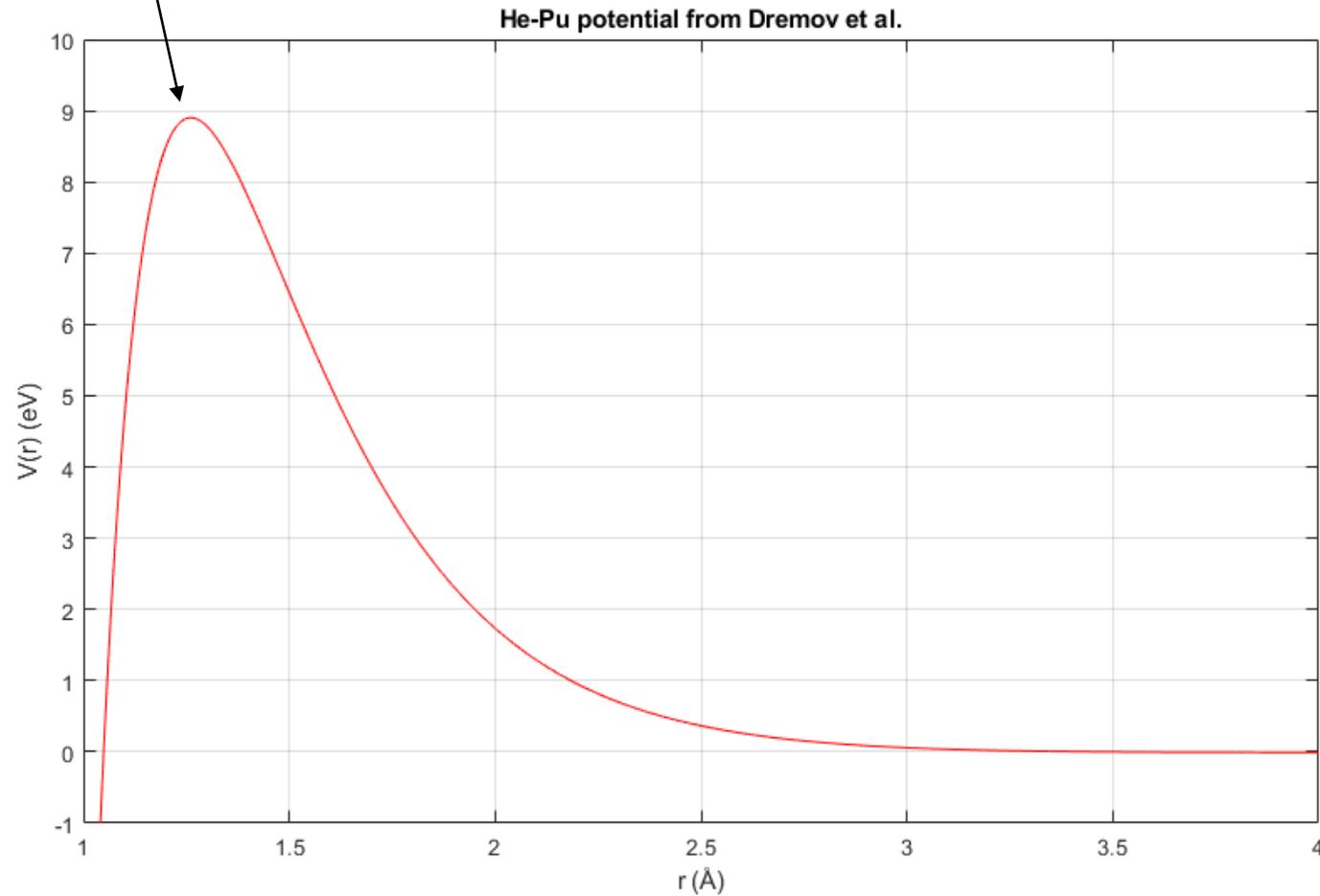
Fitting



$$V_{\text{eq}} = 8.9 \text{ eV}$$

$$r_{\text{eq}} = 1.26 \text{ \AA}$$

- Pu ... Pu ✓
- Pu ... O ✓
- O ... O ✓
- O ... He ✓
- Pu ... He ✓
- He ... He ✓



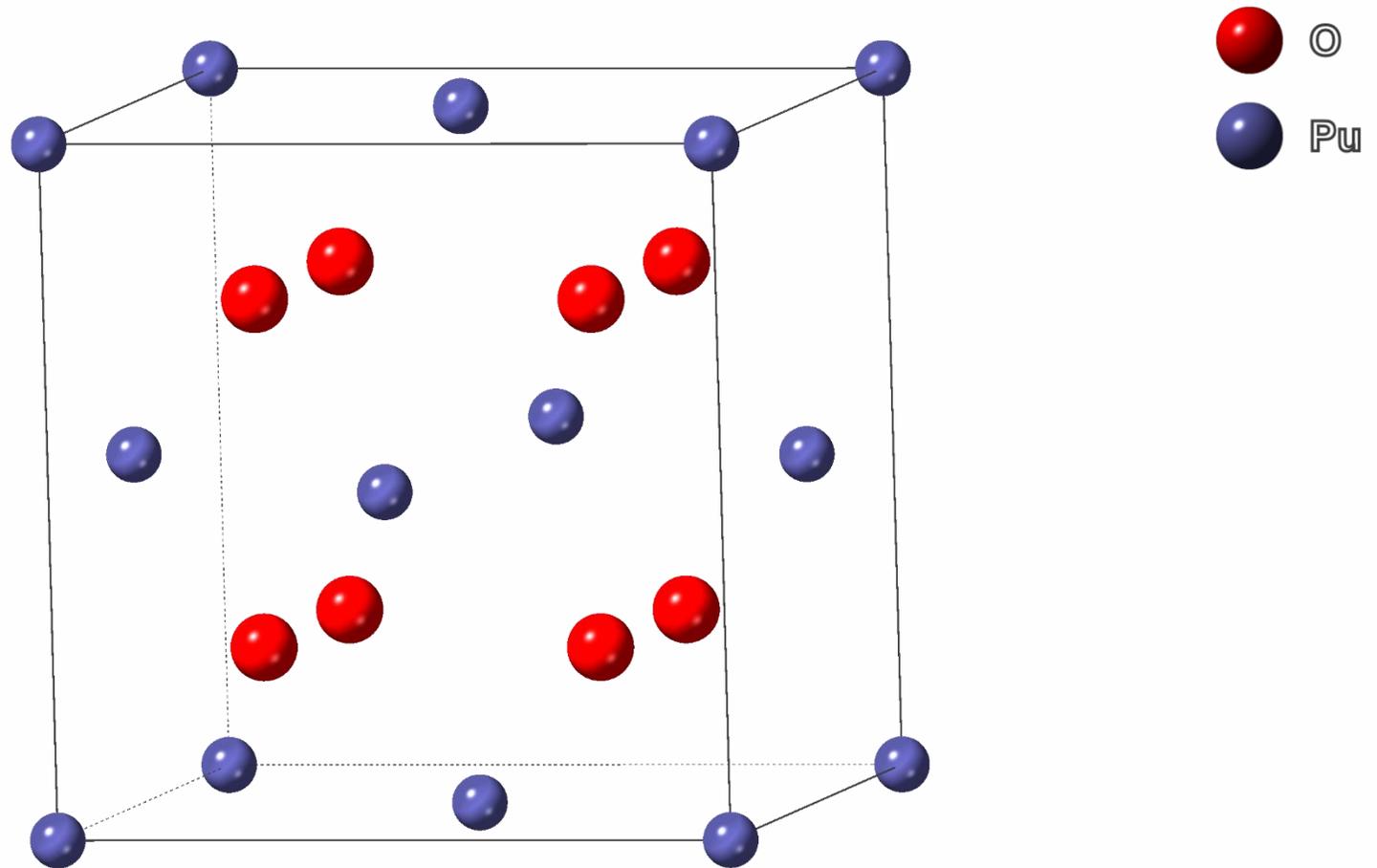


Transformative Science and Engineering for Nuclear Decommissioning

He in Pure PuO₂

Single He Interstitials

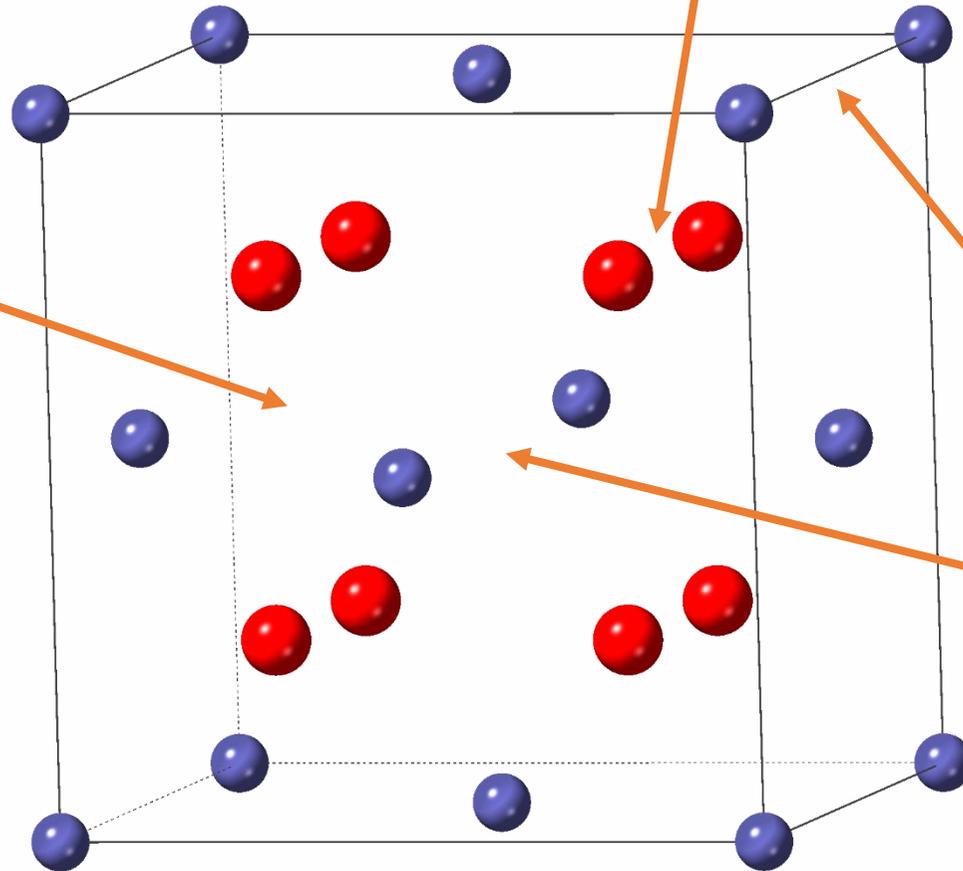
Interstitial Sites



Interstitial Sites

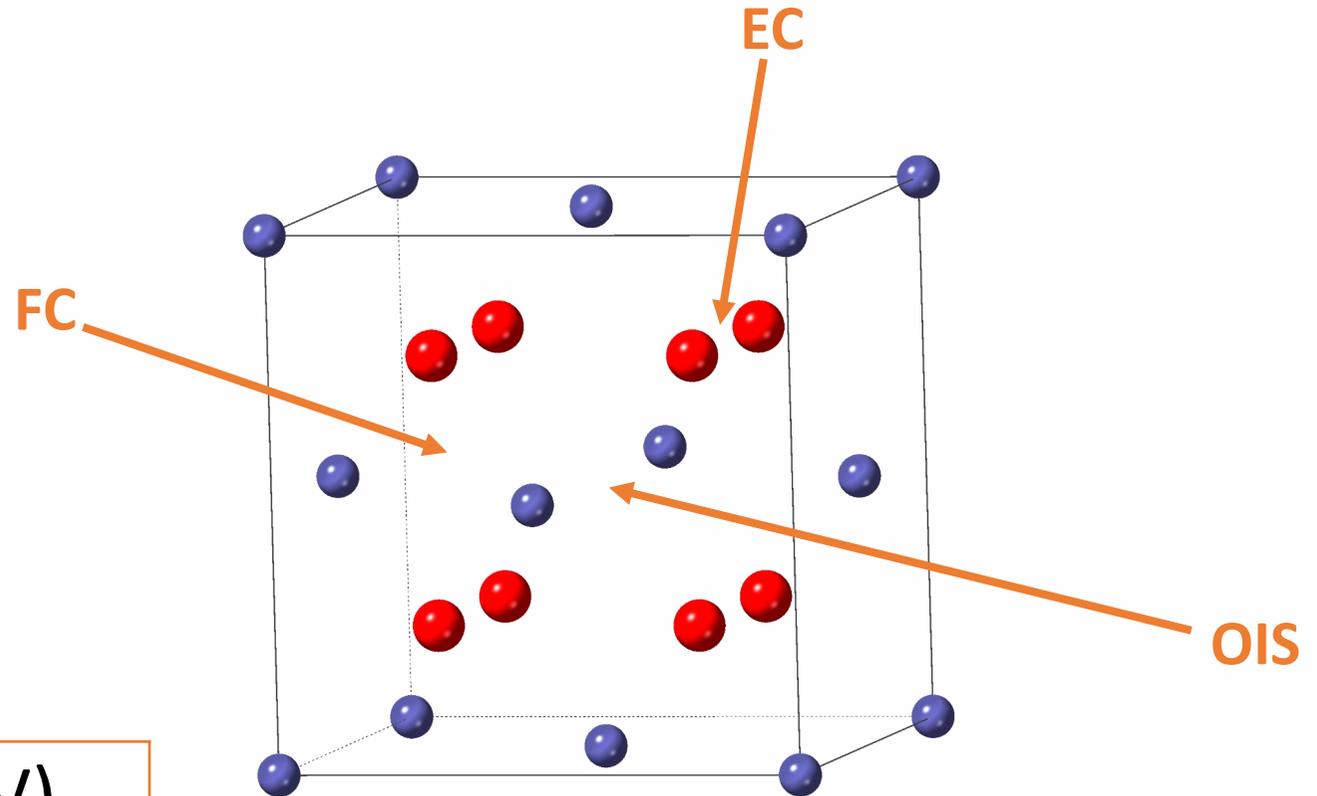
Edge-Centred (EC)

Face-Centred (FC)



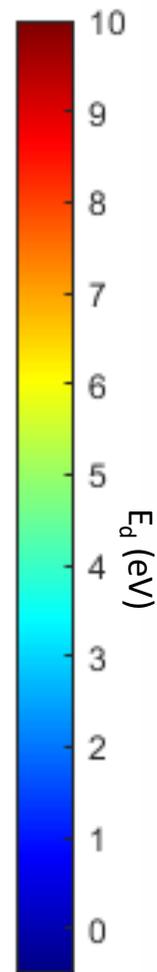
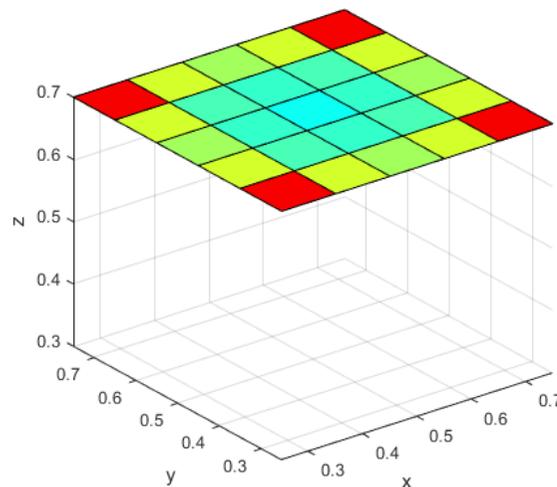
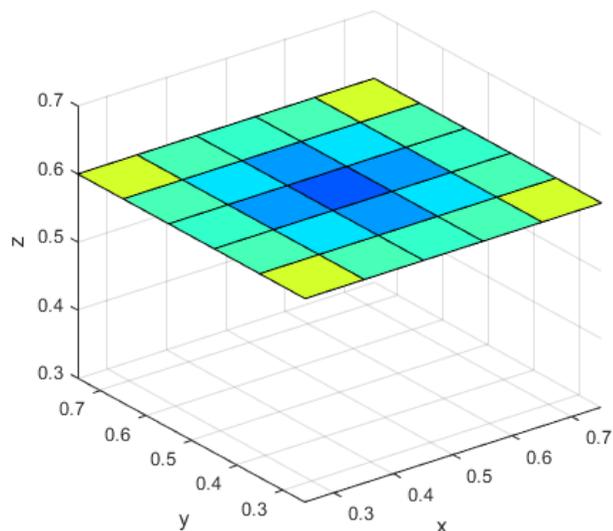
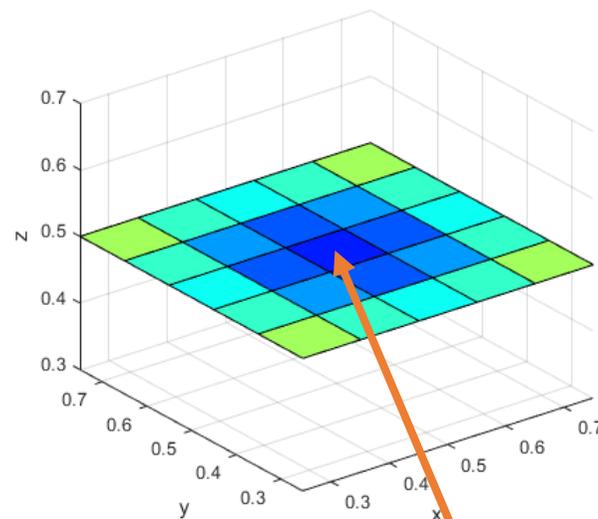
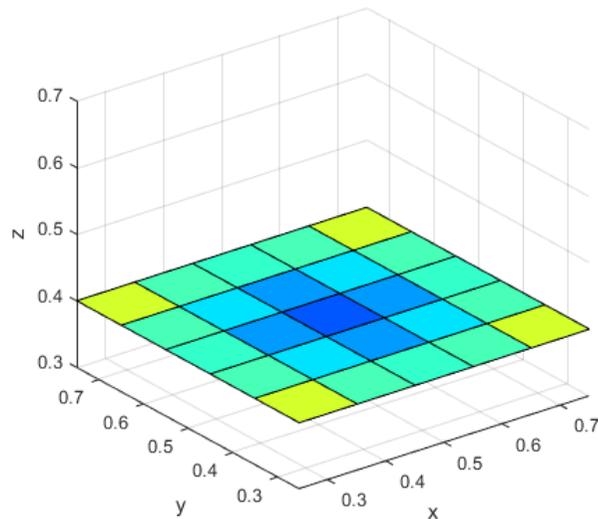
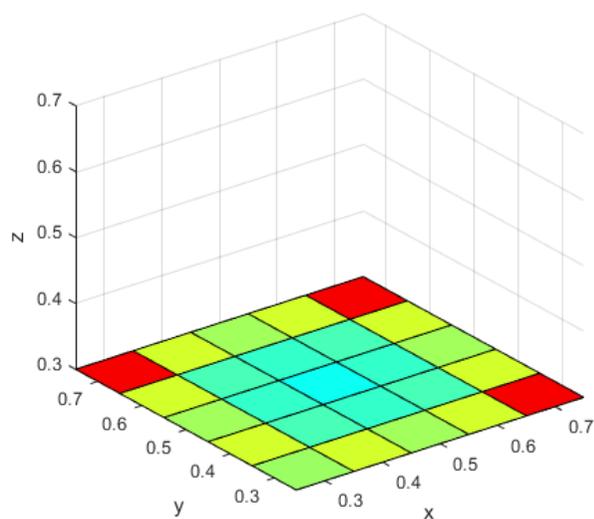
Octahedral Interstitial Site (OIS)

Interstitial Sites



Name	E_d (eV)
OIS	1.06
FC	7.07
EC	5.60

Energy Profile



OIS



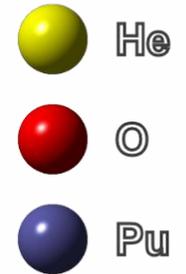
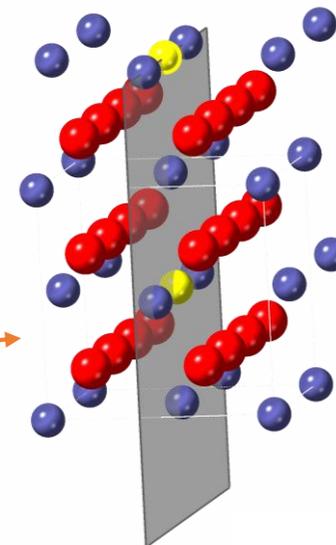
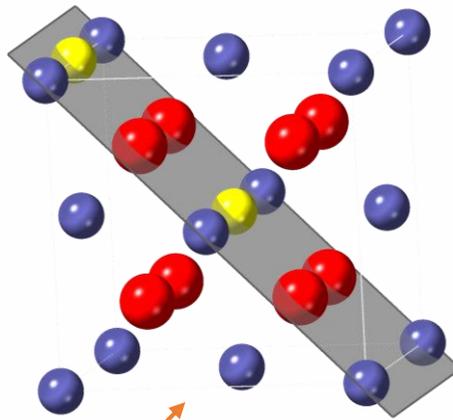
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He in Pure PuO_2

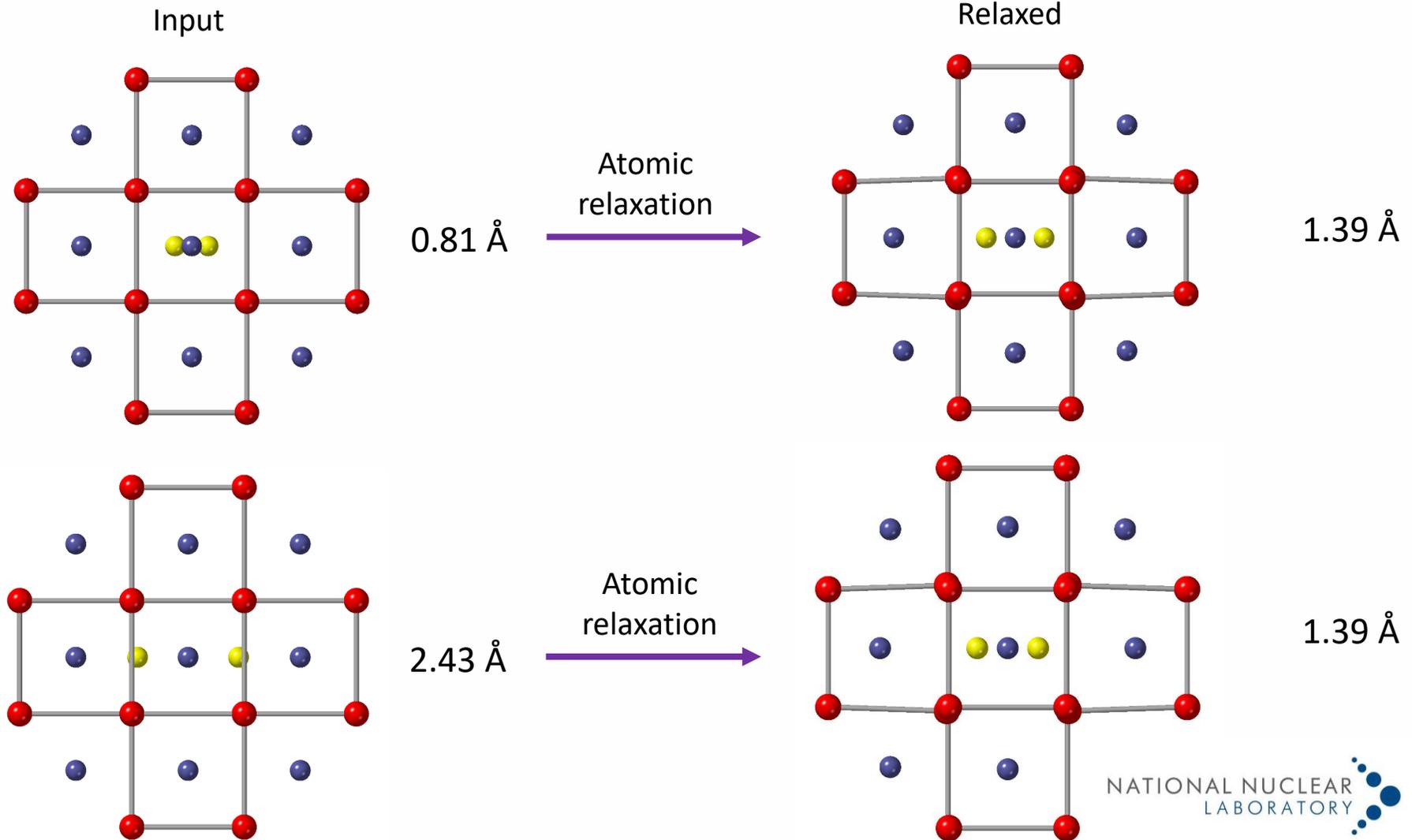
Build up of Helium

Two Helium Interstitials

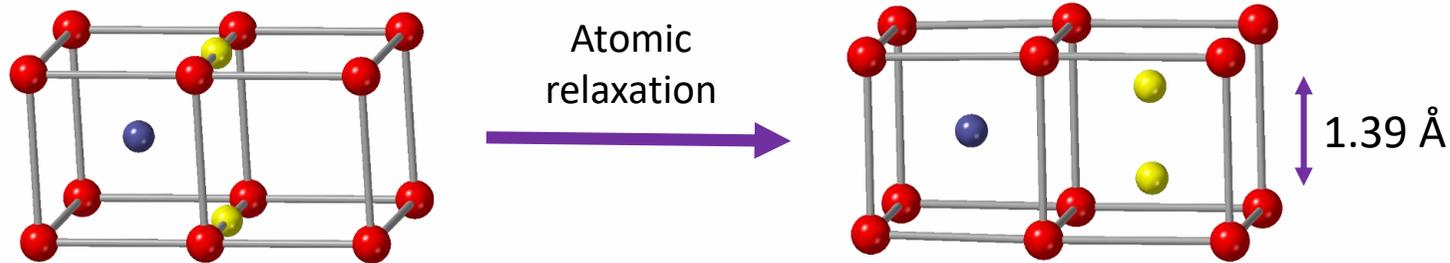
Name	E_d (eV)
OIS_OIS	2.13
EC_OIS	2.11
FC_OIS	8.15
EC_EC	5.25
FC_FC	14.28
EC_FC	6.40
110	2.11
100	2.13
DB	5.25



Two Helium Interstitials



Dumbbell Configuration

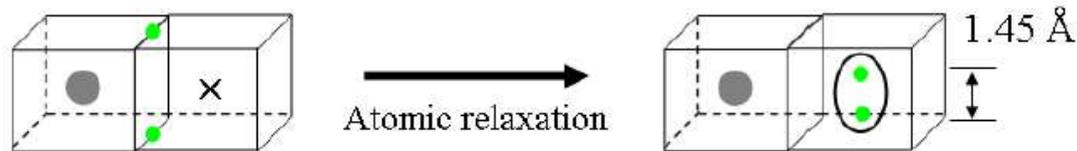


First-principles study of helium behavior in nuclear fuel materials

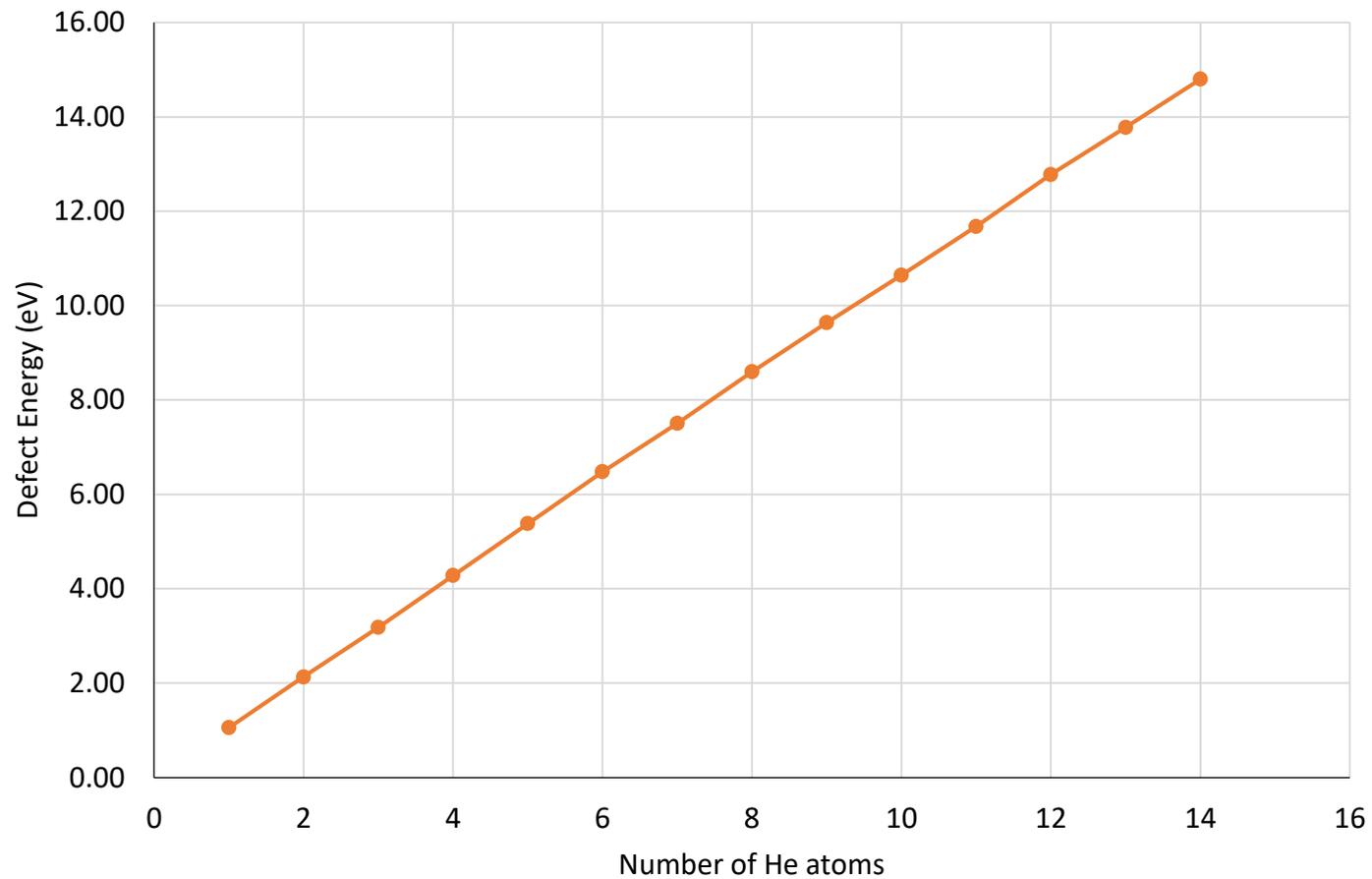
Younsuk Yun¹, Olle Eriksson², and Peter M. Oppeneer²

¹Laboratory for Reactor Physics and Systems Behaviour, Paul Scherrer Institut, CH-5232 Villigen
PSI, Switzerland

²Department of Physics and Astronomy, Uppsala University, Box 516, SE-751 20 Uppsala, Sweden



Helium Loading





Transformative Science and Engineering for Nuclear Decommissioning

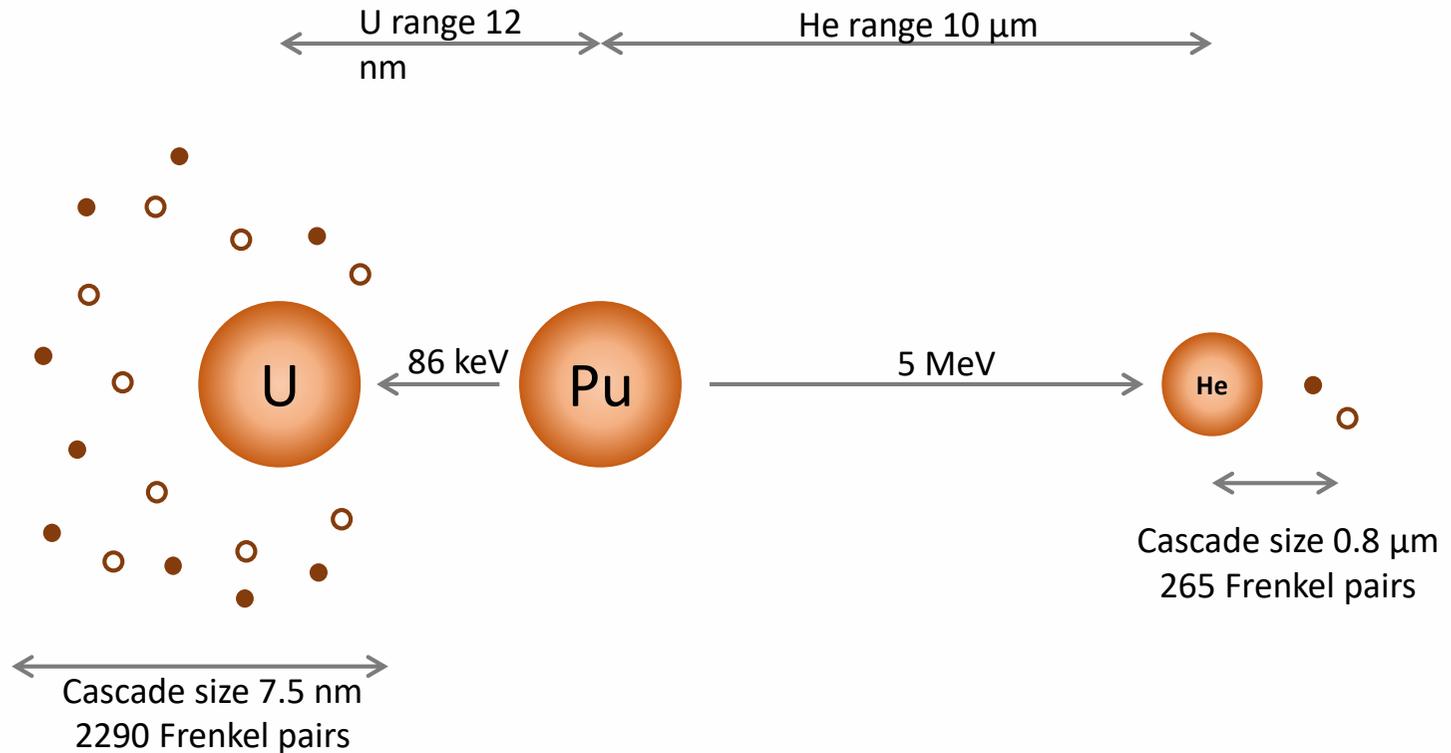
Defective PuO_2

Single Helium Atoms Incorporation

Defect Sites

Frenkel pair:

- Vacancy
- Self-interstitial

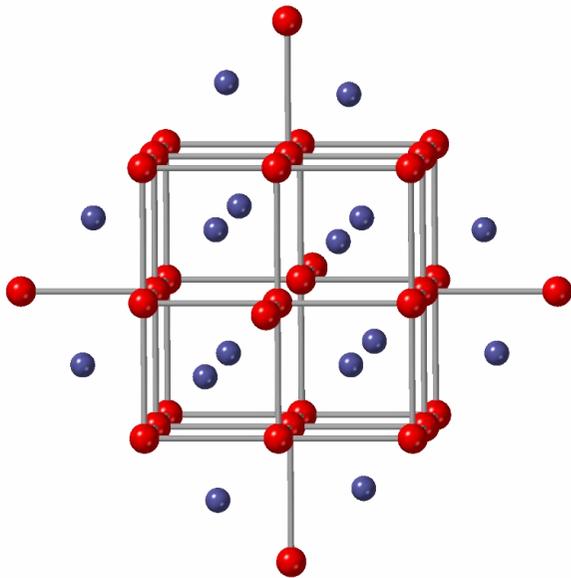


Pu vacancy, O vacancy, Pu Frenkel pair, O Frenkel pair, Divacancy, Schottky Trio

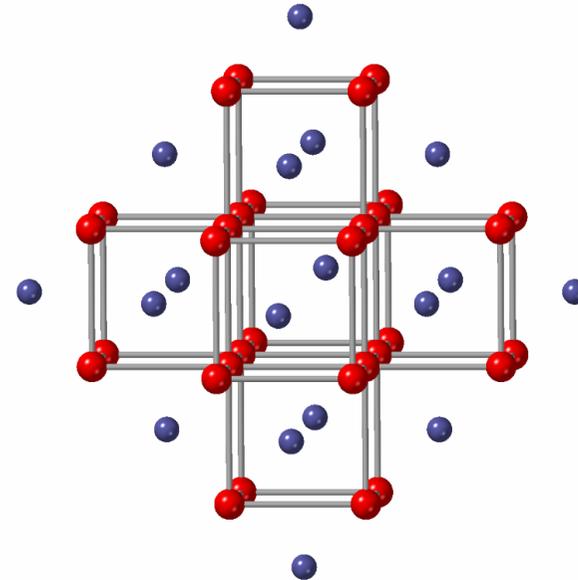
$$E_{inc} = E_d - E_T$$

Helium Incorporation at Vacancies

Oxygen vacancy

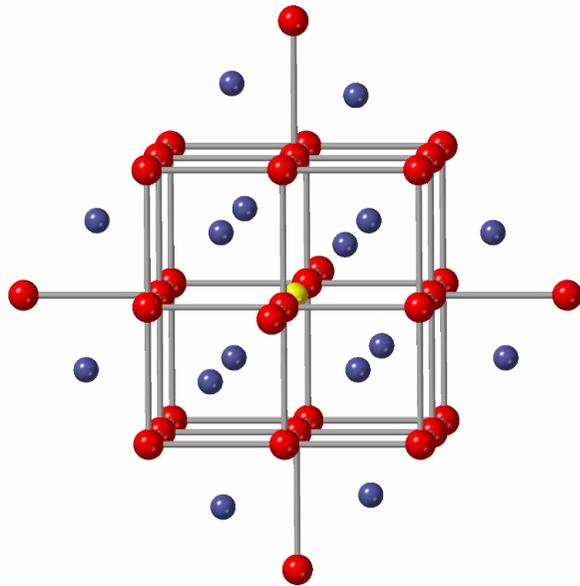


Plutonium vacancy

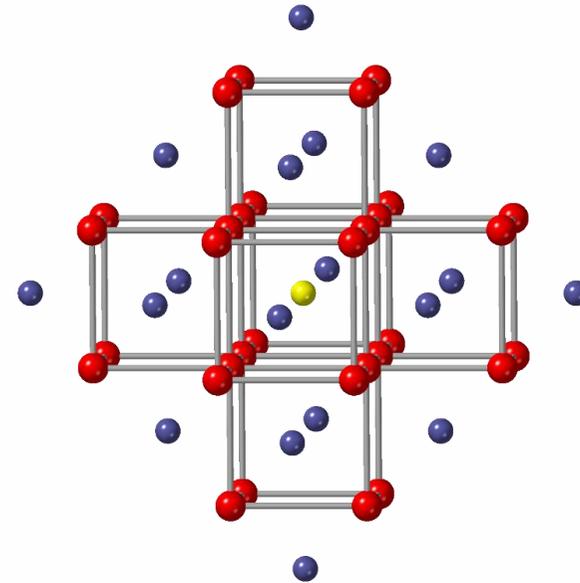


Helium Incorporation at Vacancies

Oxygen vacancy

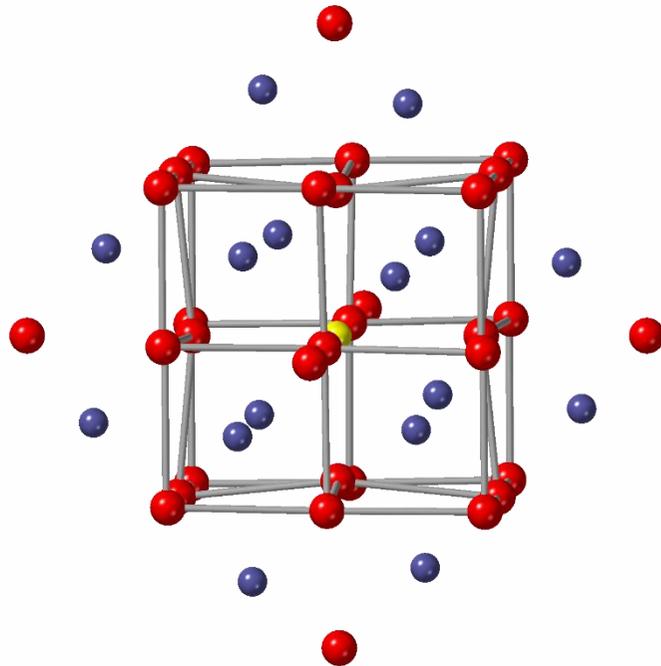


Plutonium vacancy



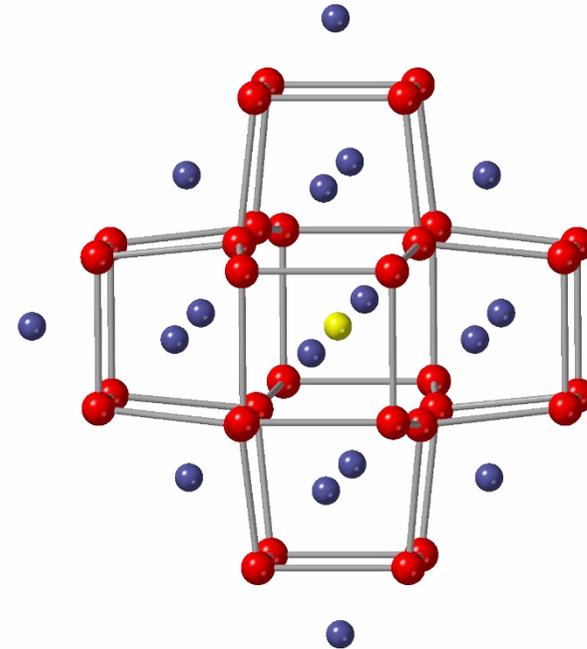
Helium Incorporation at Vacancies

Oxygen vacancy



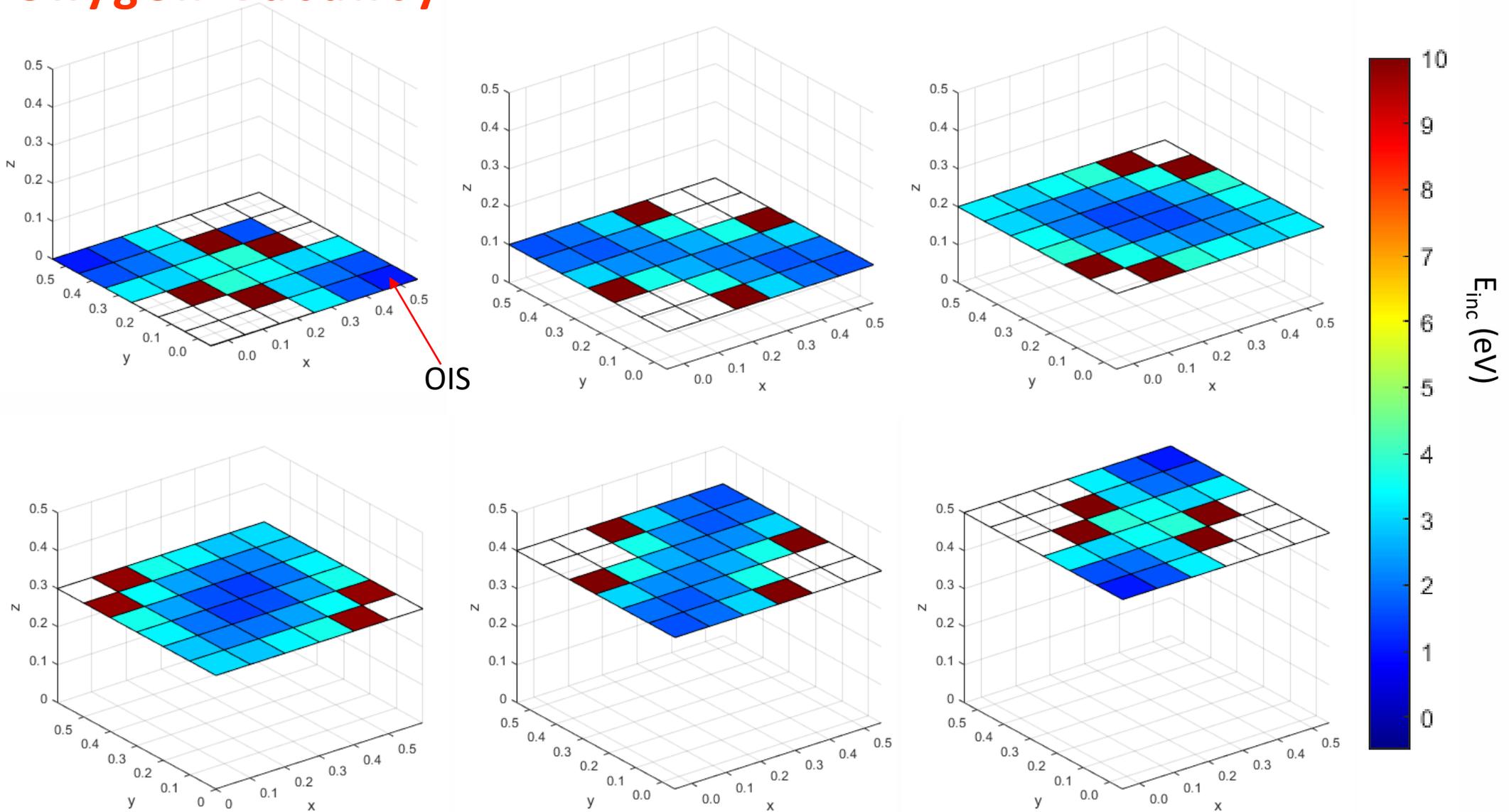
Site	E_d (eV)	E_{inc} (eV)
O_vac	18.37	1.28
OIS	18.12	1.03

Plutonium vacancy

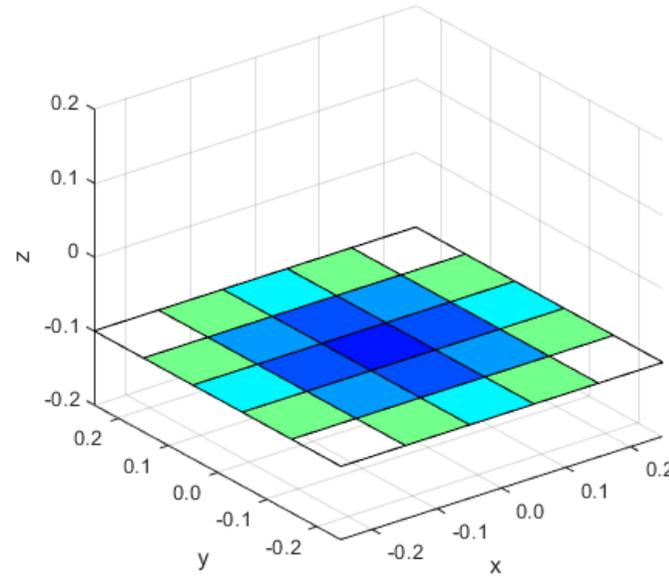
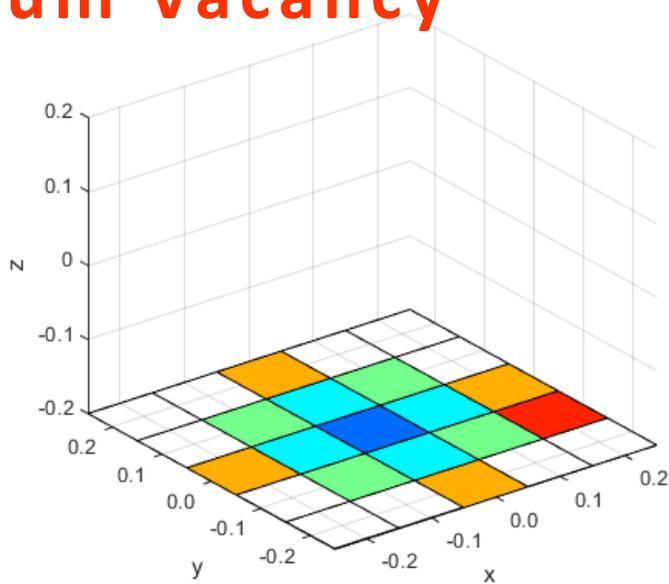


Site	E_d (eV)	E_{inc} (eV)
Pu_vac	94.26	-0.23
OIS	95.54	1.05

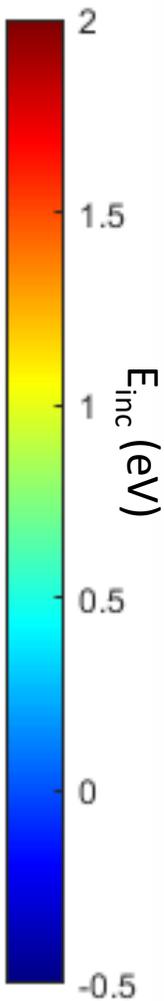
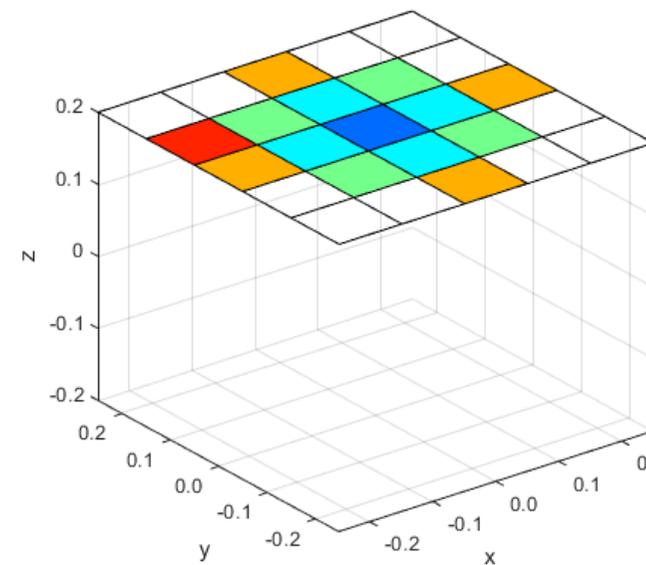
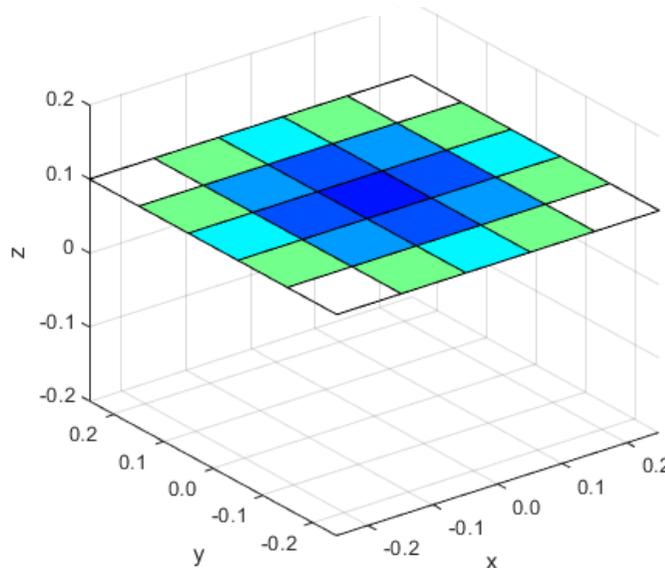
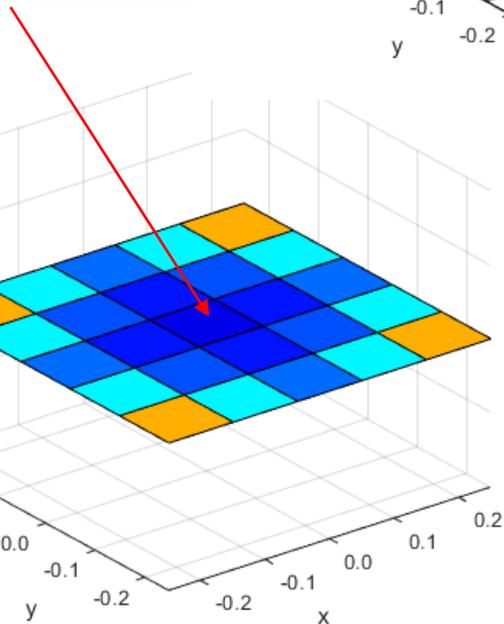
Oxygen Vacancy



Plutonium Vacancy



Pu vacancy



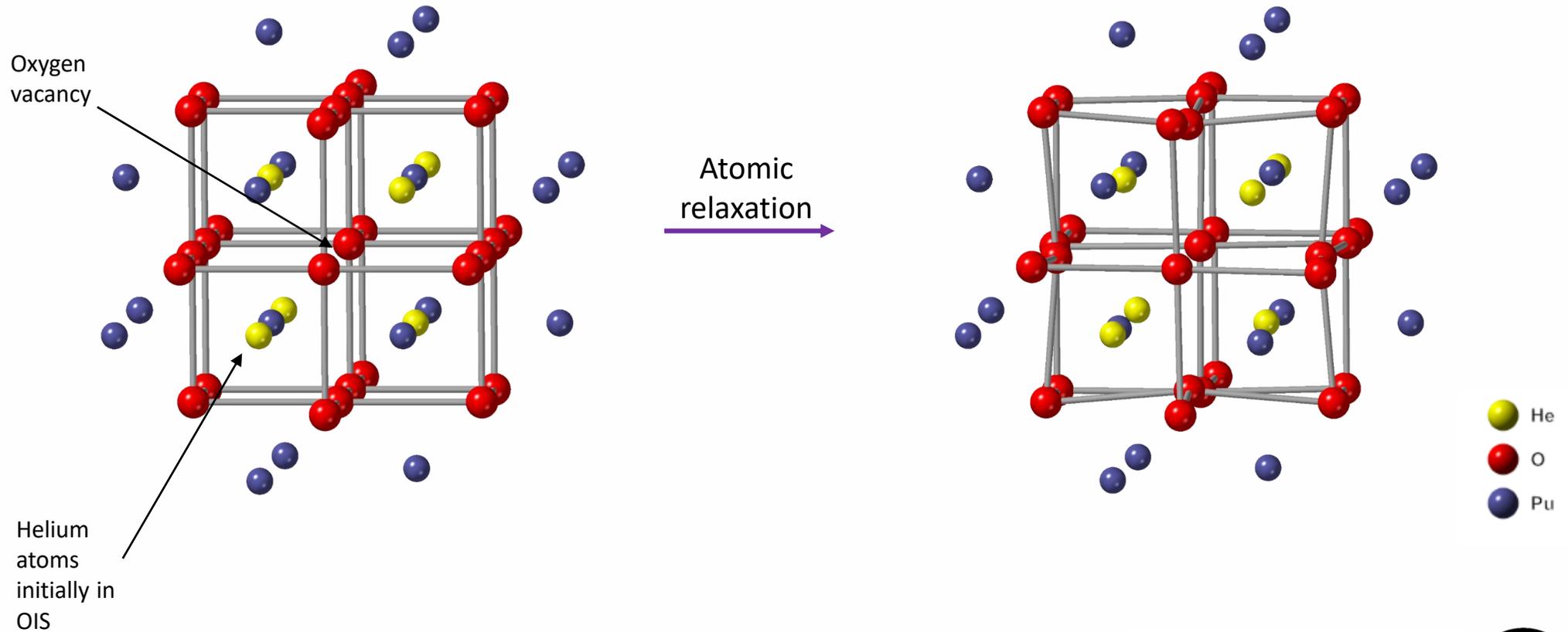


Transformative Science and Engineering for Nuclear Decommissioning

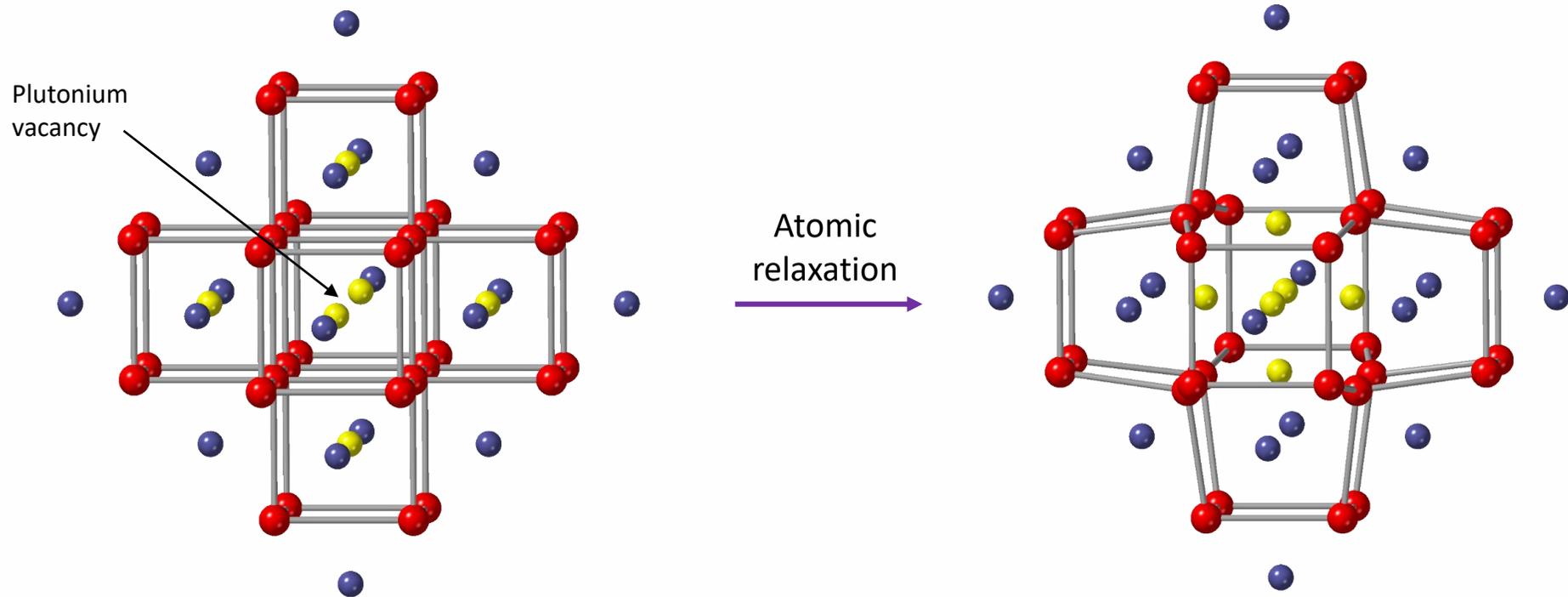
Defective PuO_2

Helium build up

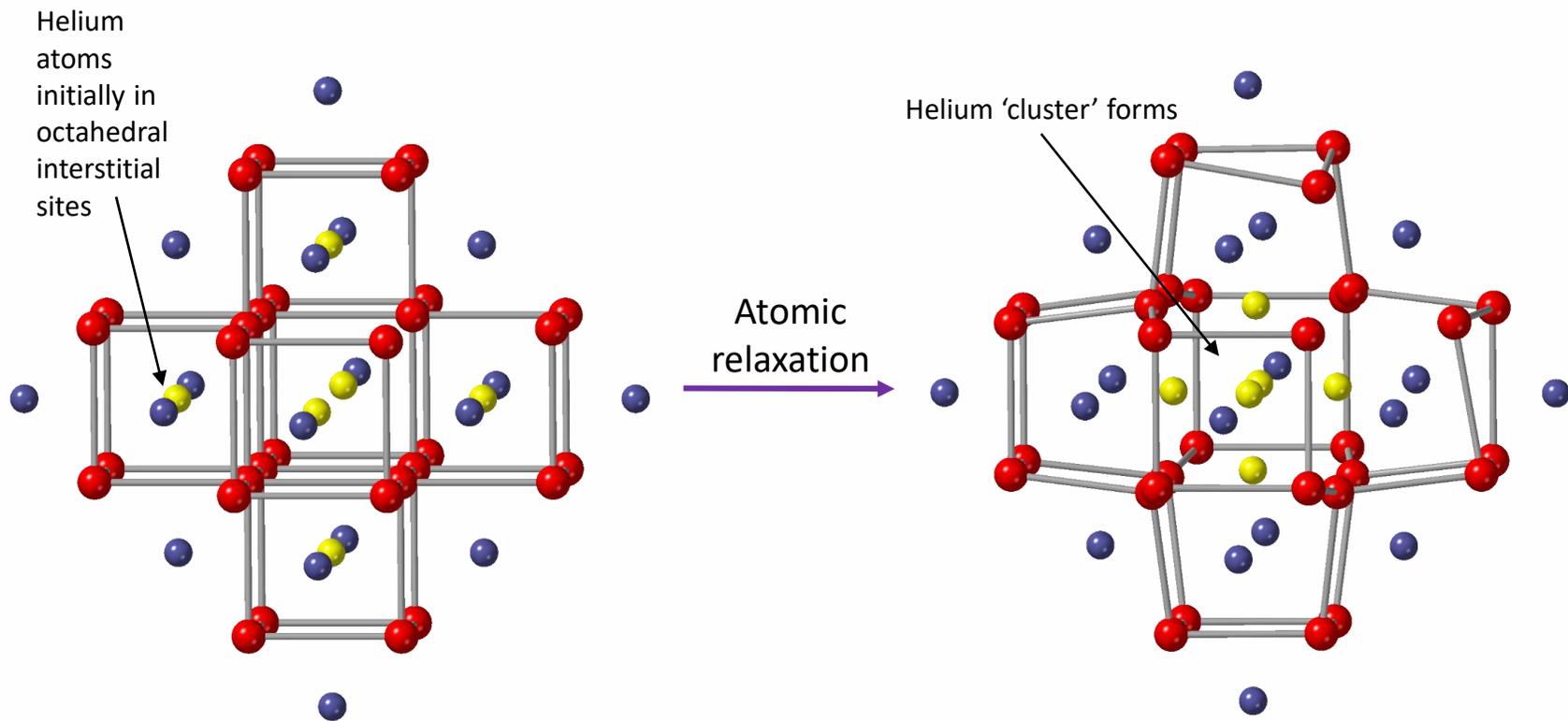
Six He surrounding an O vacancy



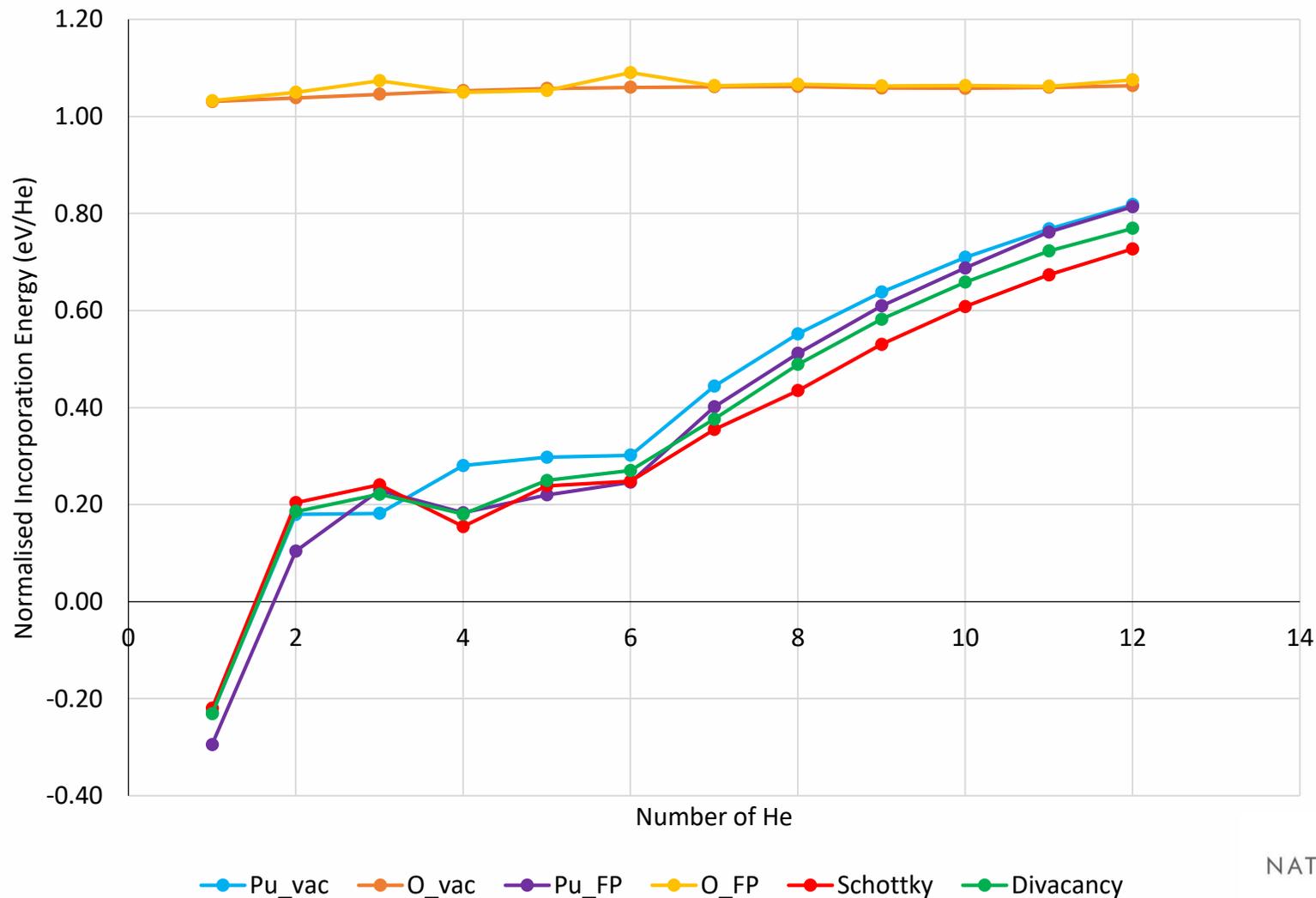
Six He surrounding a Pu vacancy



Six He surrounding a Divacancy



Normalised Incorporation Energies

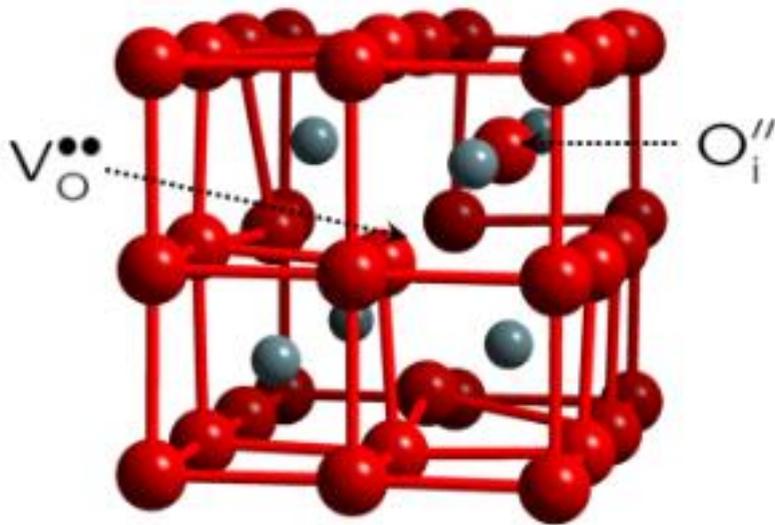




Transformative Science and Engineering for Nuclear Decommissioning

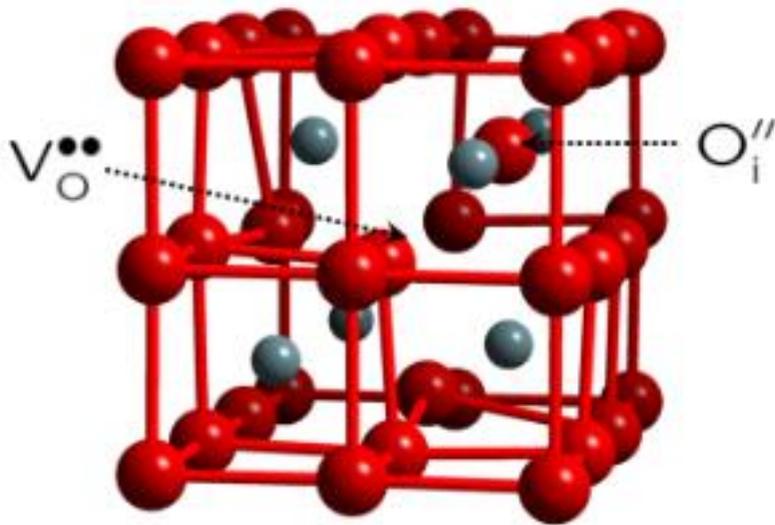
Oxygen Frenkel Pair Results

Oxygen Frenkel Pair Configurations



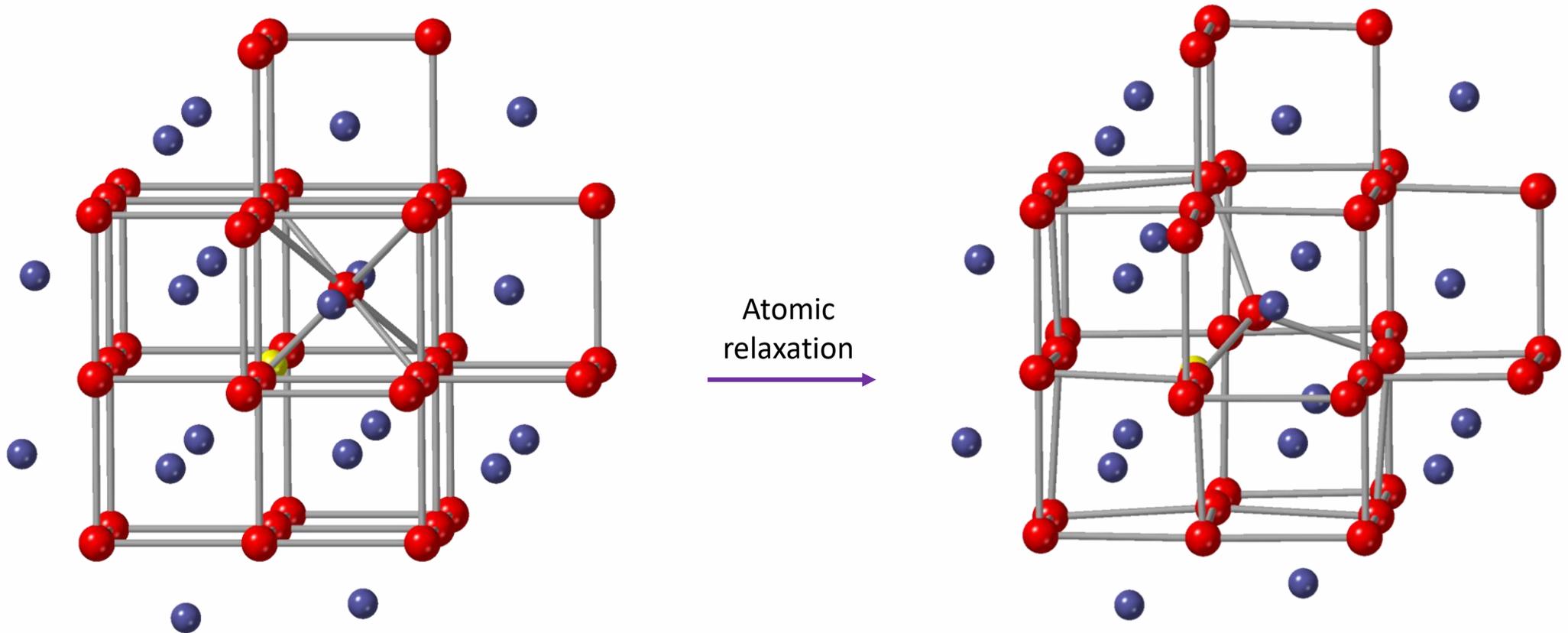
Type of defect	V_{O} position	O_i'' position	Formation energy (eV)	Formation energy (eV/Defect)	Binding energy (eV/Defect)
OFP 1	$(-1/4, -1/4, -1/4)$	$(1/2, 1/2, 1/2)$	4.14	2.07	-0.60
OFP 2	$(-1/4, -1/4, 1/4)$	$(1/2, 1/2, 1/2)$	4.23	2.12	-0.55

Oxygen Frenkel Pair Configurations



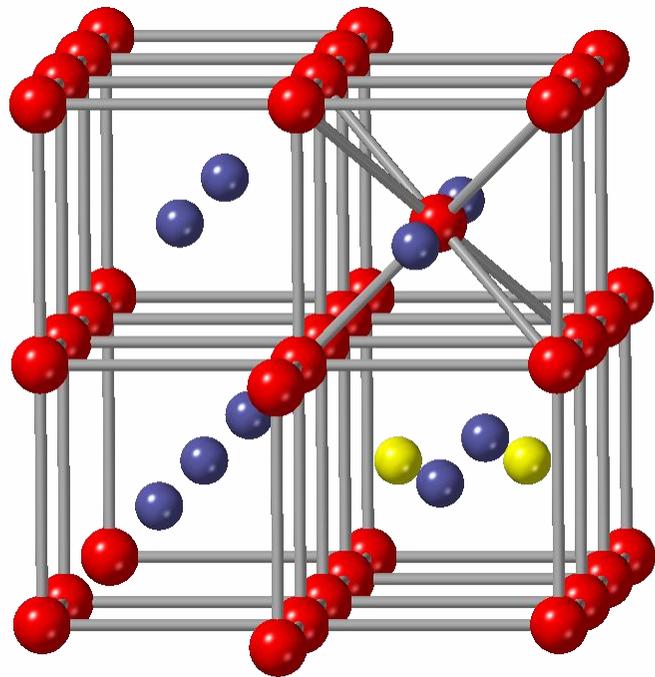
Type of defect	V_{O} position	O_i'' position	Formation energy (eV)	Formation energy (eV/Defect)	Binding energy (eV/Defect)
OFP 1	$(-1/4, -1/4, -1/4)$	$(1/2, 1/2, 1/2)$	4.14	2.07	-0.60
OFP 2	$(-1/4, -1/4, 1/4)$	$(1/2, 1/2, 1/2)$	4.23	2.12	-0.55
OFP 3	$(1/4, 1/4, 1/4)$	$(1/2, 1/2, 1/2)$	0.00	-	-

He in OFP 3

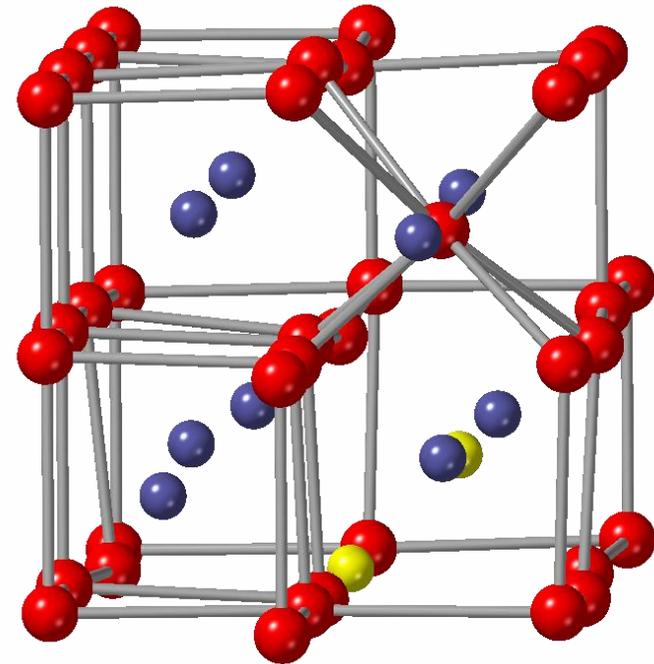


Oxygen doesn't recombine! He interstitial makes more Frenkel pairs possible

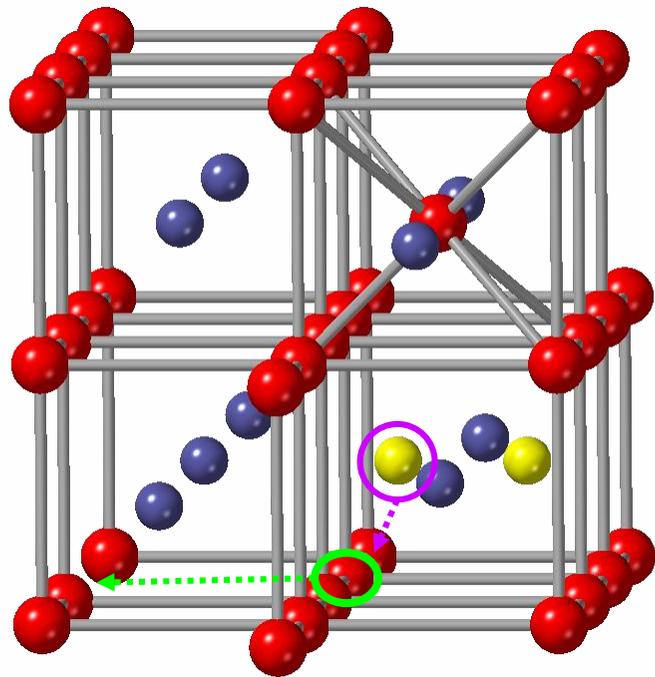
DB in OFP



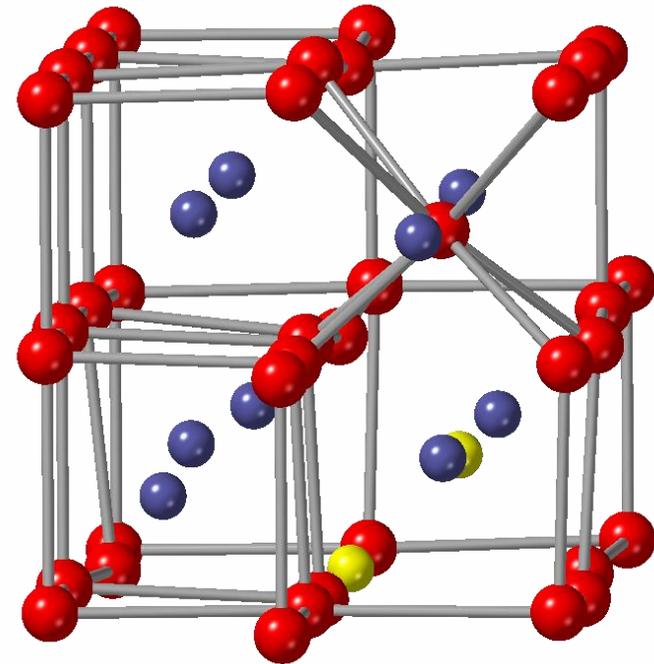
Atomic
relaxation
→



DB in OFP



Atomic
relaxation
→



Lots of new questions!

- Does the helium push the oxygen?
- Which moves first?
- How close does the helium have to be for this rearrangement?
- What if there is more helium atoms in the OIS – do more oxygen atoms move?

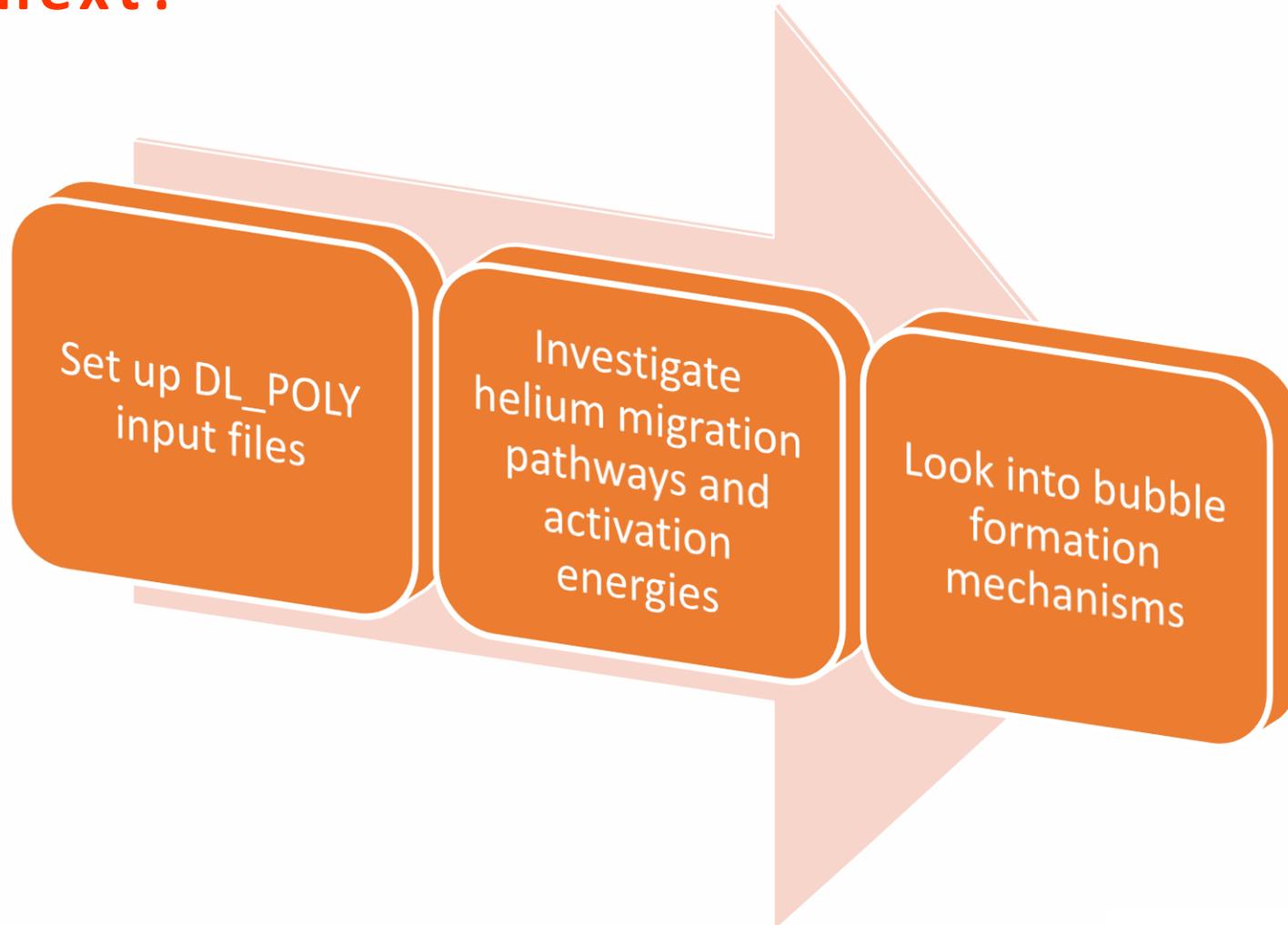
Great place to start a Molecular Dynamics simulation from...



Transformative Science and Engineering for Nuclear Decommissioning

What's Next?

What's next?





Transformative Science and Engineering for Nuclear Decommissioning

Thanks to

Dr Mark Read - University of Birmingham

Dr Rob Jackson – University of Keele

Dr Helen Steele - Sellafield Ltd.

Dr Robin Orr - NNL



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM



Sellafield Ltd



Transformative Science and Engineering for Nuclear Decommissioning

Thank you

exm350@student.bham.ac.uk

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- ❖ X.-Y. Liu and D. Andersson, Journal of Nuclear Materials, vol. 498, pp. 373 – 377, 2018.
- ❖ Y. Yun, O. Eriksson, and P. M. Oppeneer, Journal of Nuclear Materials, vol. 385, no. 3, pp. 510 – 516, 2009.
- ❖ T. Petit, M. Freyss, P. Garcia, P. Martin, M. Ripert, J.-P. Crocombette, and F. Jollet, Journal of Nuclear Materials, vol. 320, no. 1, pp. 133– 137, 2003. Proceedings of the 2nd Seminar on European Research on Materials for Transmutation

Impact of Am on the defect chemistry of PuO_2

William Neilson, Lancaster University

w.neilson@lancaster.ac.uk

Supervisor: Dr Samuel T. Murphy

TRANSCEND Thematic Meeting

3rd Dec 2019

INTRODUCTION

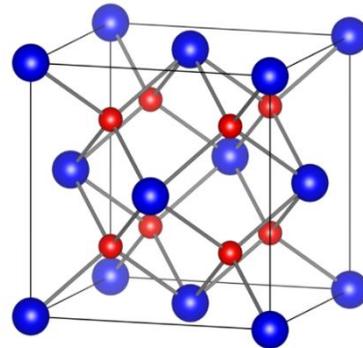
This project has used atomistic simulations to understand the defect chemistry of PuO_2 , followed by investigating how Am is accommodated into PuO_2 and what impact Am has on the defect chemistry.

Defect chemistry:

- The formation of defects (the addition or removal of atoms from the perfect lattice) can describe deviations from stoichiometry in PuO_2 , resulting in $\text{PuO}_{2\pm x}$
- Can examine the defect concentrations as a function of temperature and oxygen partial pressure.
- Describes how impurities, such as Am, are incorporated into the lattice .
- Help in understanding of how PuO_2 continues to evolve when kept in storage.
- May help identify hazards, such as the potential pressurisation of canisters used for storage.

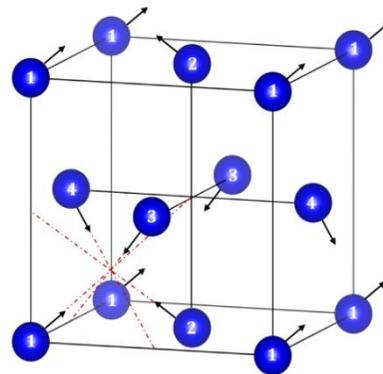
Modelling the PuO₂ ground state

Create PuO₂ unit cell



$Fm\bar{3}m$ crystal symmetry
 12 atoms
 Pu (blue)
 O (red)

Apply magnetic properties

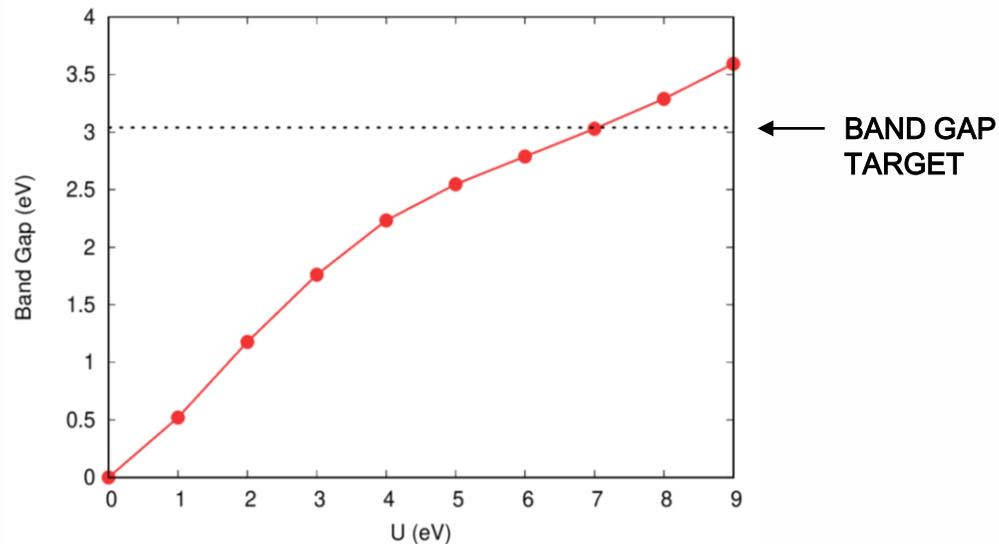


Atom	Magnetic moment
1	(1, 1, 1)
2	(-1, -1, 1)
3	(-1, 1, -1)
4	(1, -1, -1)

Longitudinal 3k anti-ferromagnetic ground-state found and adopted

Computational details

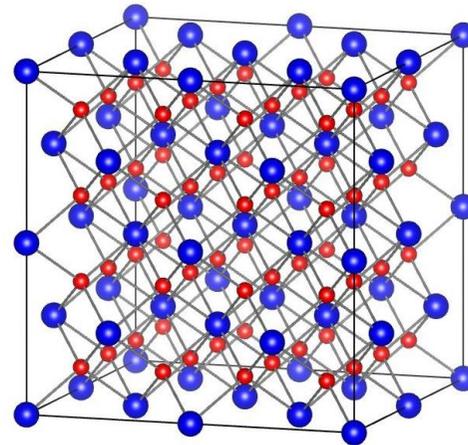
- *Simulate with DFT.* Computational method: VASP, PBEsol + U
 Noncolinear with spin orbit coupling.
- Choose U value such that bandgap is reproduced. However large discrepancy exists in the reported bandgap:
 McNeilly *et al.* reports a bandgap of 1.8 eV
 McCleskey *et al.* reports a bandgap of 2.8 eV



$U = 7.0$ eV, reproducing hybrid functional (HSE06) band gap (3.04 eV).

Adding intrinsic defects

○ *Create supercell*



2 x 2 x 2, 96 atoms

○ *Add defects to supercell*

ADD OXYGEN ATOMS

Oxygen interstitials: O_i^{\times} , O_i^{1-} and O_i^{2-}

REMOVE OXYGEN ATOMS

Oxygen vacancies: V_O^{\times} , V_O^{1+} and V_O^{2+}

ADD PLUTONIUM ATOMS

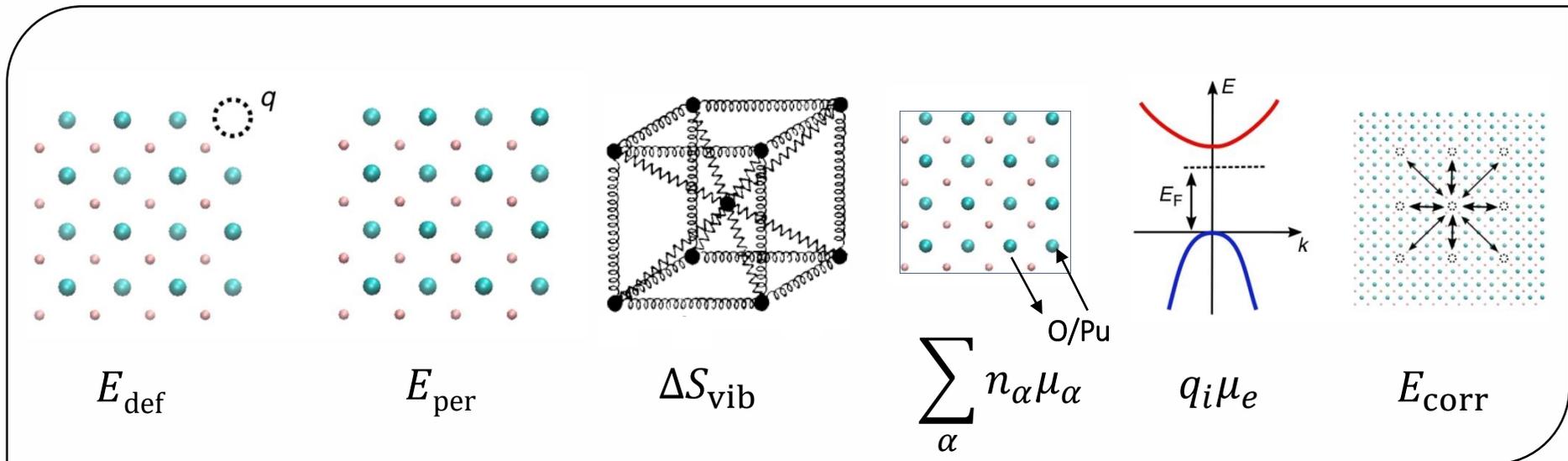
Plutonium interstitials: Pu_i^{\times} , Pu_i^{1+} , Pu_i^{2+} , Pu_i^{3+} and Pu_i^{4+}

REMOVE PLUTONIUM ATOMS

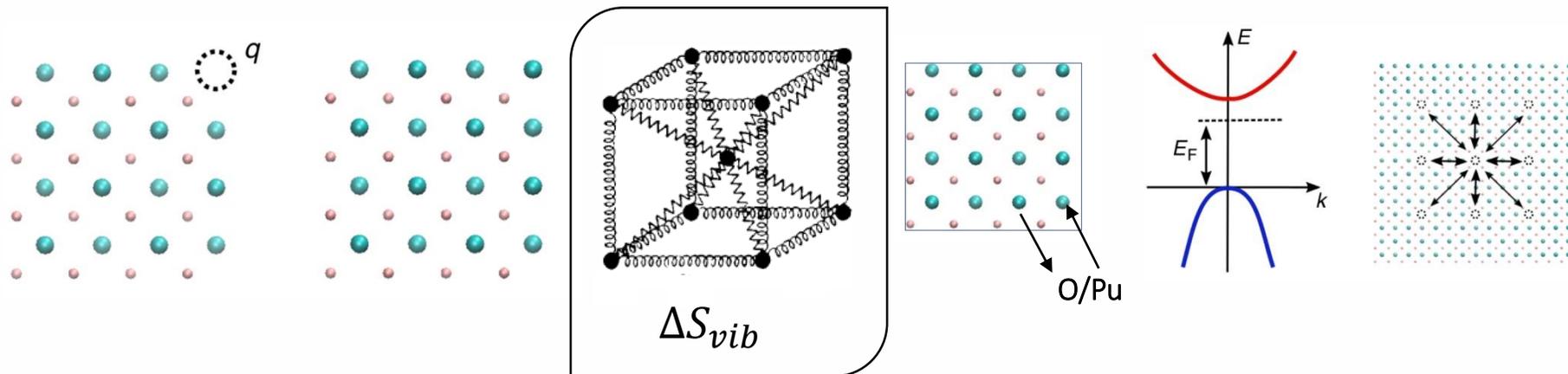
Plutonium vacancies: V_{Pu}^{\times} , V_{Pu}^{1-} , V_{Pu}^{2-} , V_{Pu}^{3-} and V_{Pu}^{4-}

Defect formation: methodology

$$\Delta G_f^i = E_{\text{def}} - E_{\text{per}} - T\Delta S_{\text{vib}} + \sum_{\alpha} n_{\alpha}\mu_{\alpha} + q_i\mu_e + E_{\text{corr}}$$

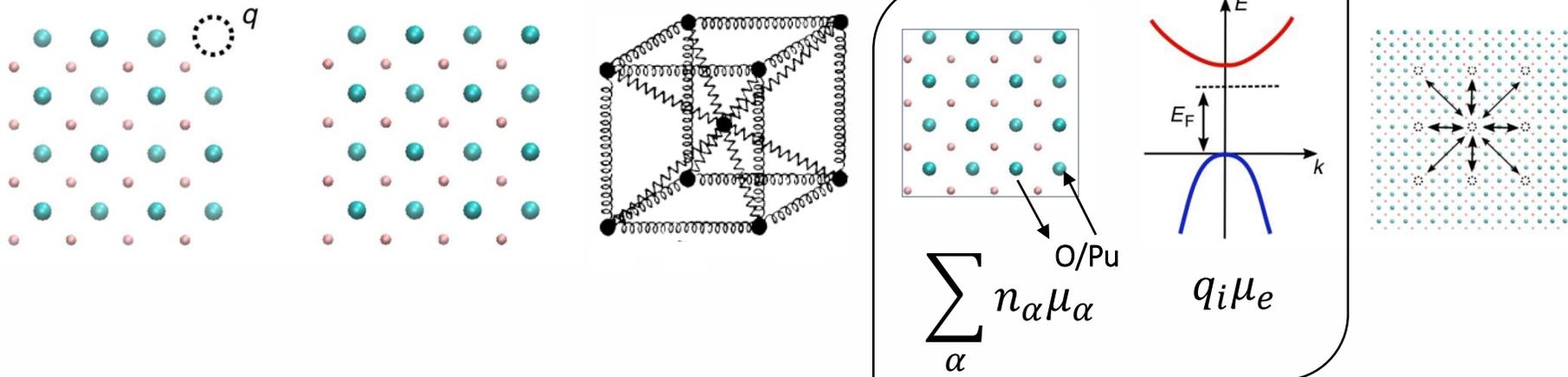


Defect formation: methodology



- Vibrational entropies are obtained using empirical potentials due to limitations in computational resources; the force calculations required become very large when defects are introduced, due to the removal of symmetry.
- The General Utility Lattice Program (GULP) together with the Cooper, Rushton and Grimes (CRG) potential is adopted.
- The CRG potential is a many-body potential model used to describe actinide oxide systems which achieves good reproduction of thermodynamic and mechanical properties.

Defect formation: methodology



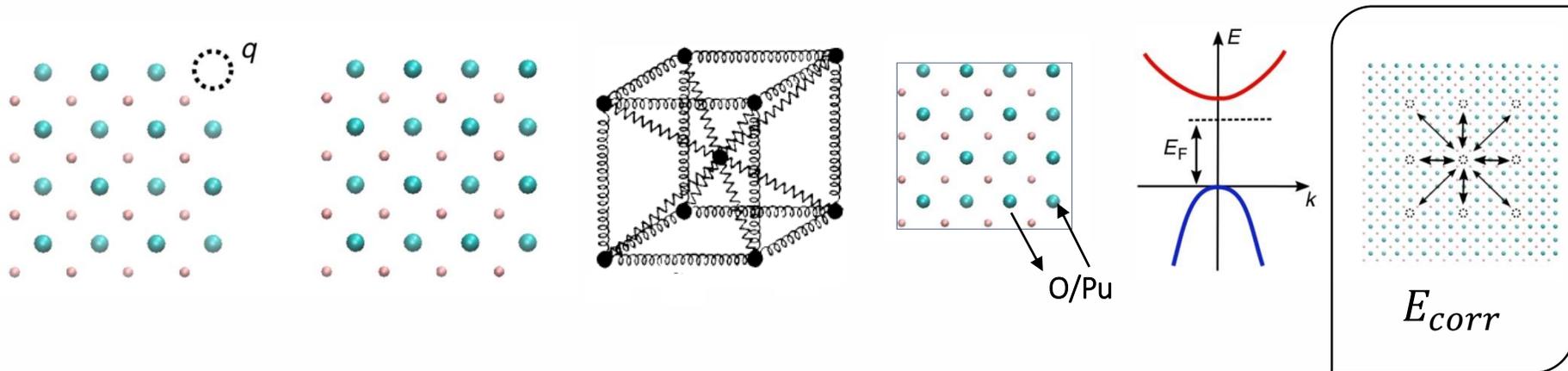
$\mu_{Pu(s)}$: Obtained in DFT

$\mu_{O_2}(P_{O_2}, T)$: Calculated as a function of pressure and temperature using real gas relations.

$\mu_e = E_{VBM} + \varepsilon_F$: Fermi level computed such that the whole system is charge neutral
Fermi-Dirac statistics applied to the electronic density of states to obtain the concentrations of electrons (e^-) in the conduction band and concentration of holes (p^-) in the valence band

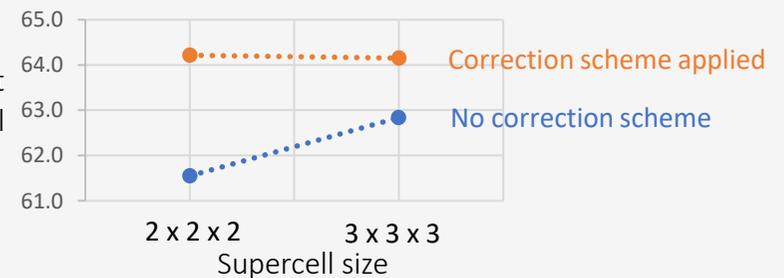
μ_{Am} : Found in DefAP: Linear bisection finds values that achieve desired concentration of Am

Defect formation: methodology



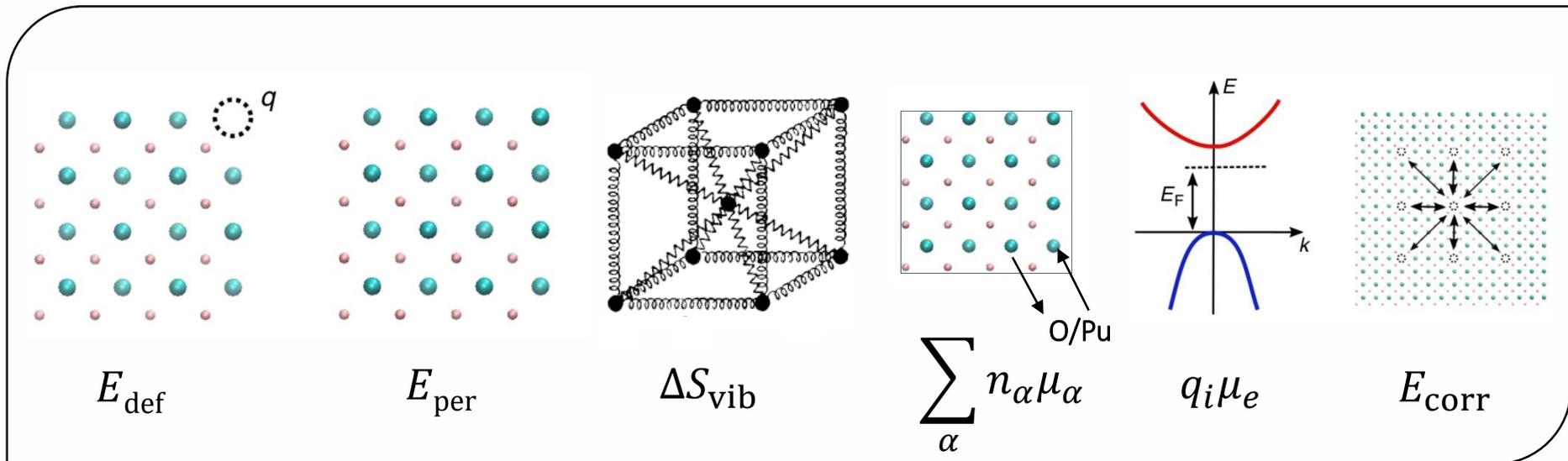
- The introduction of charge defects into the small simulation supercells accessible using DFT introduces a number of finite size effects, including coulombic interactions between the defect and its periodic image as well as with the background charge.
- Use scheme of Kumagai and Oba which uses atomic site electronic potentials to compare perfect and defective supercell.

Difference in DFT energy (eV) between perfect supercell and V_{Pu}^{4-} containing supercell



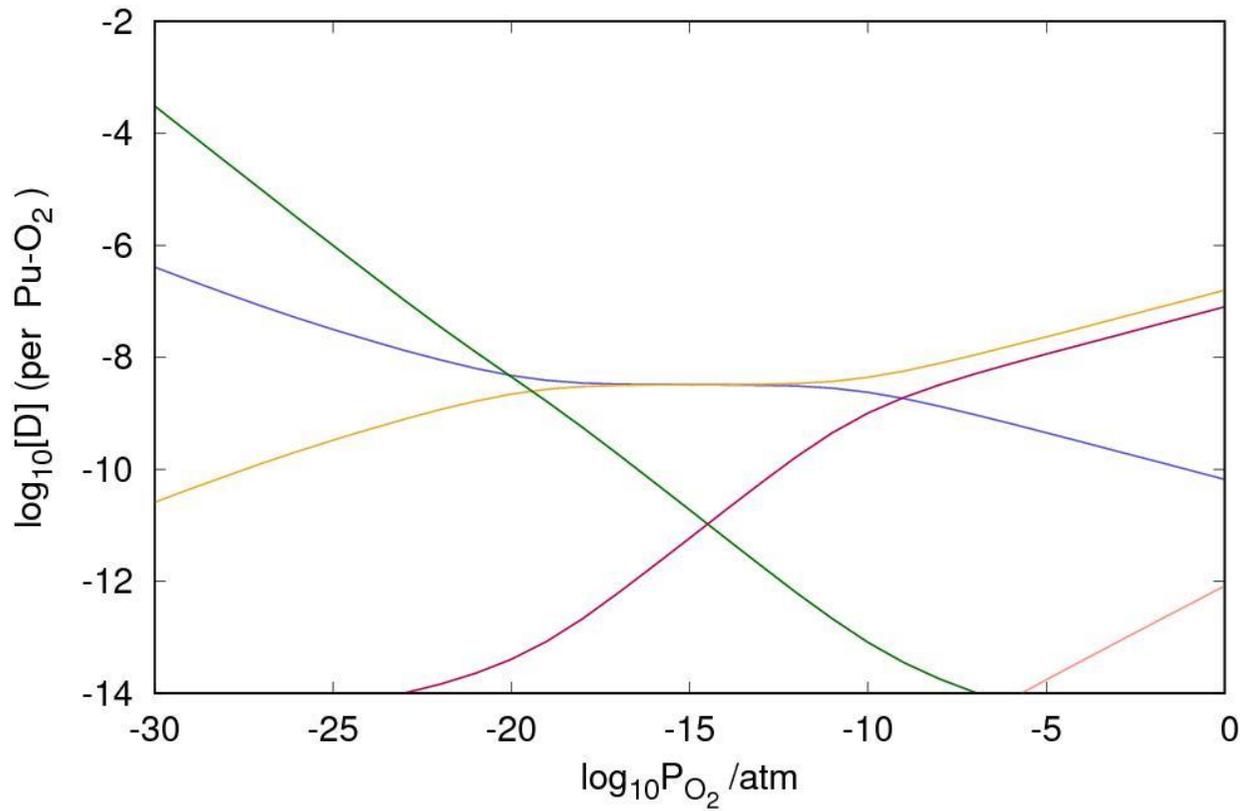
Defect formation: methodology

$$\Delta G_f^i = E_{\text{def}} - E_{\text{per}} - T\Delta S_{\text{vib}} + \sum_{\alpha} n_{\alpha}\mu_{\alpha} + q_i\mu_e + E_{\text{corr}}$$



$$c_i = m_i \exp\left(\frac{-\Delta G_f^i}{k_B T}\right)$$

Brouwer diagram - Defect concentrations in PuO_2 as a function of oxygen partial pressure.
 Temperature: 1000 K

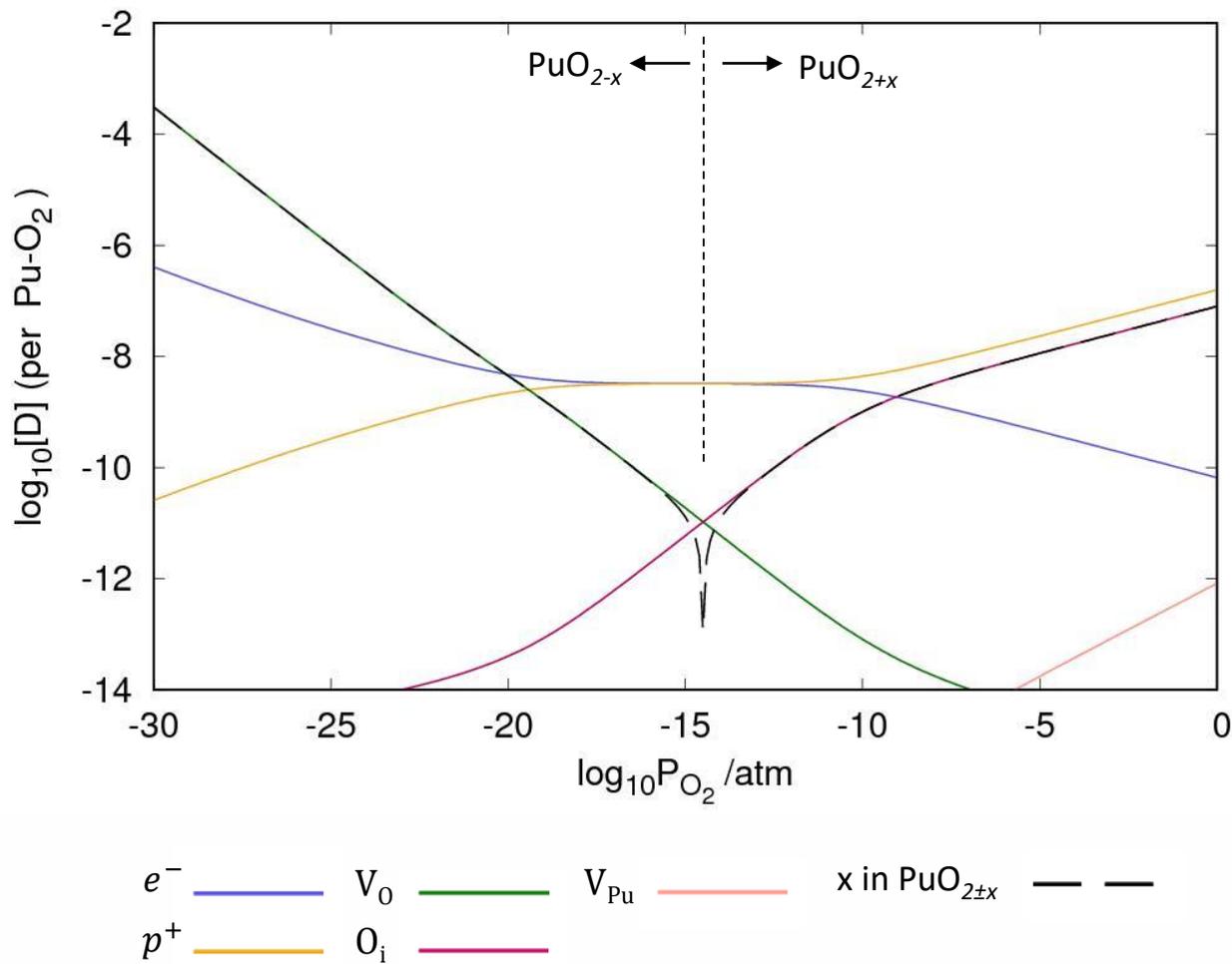


- Oxygen defects dominant

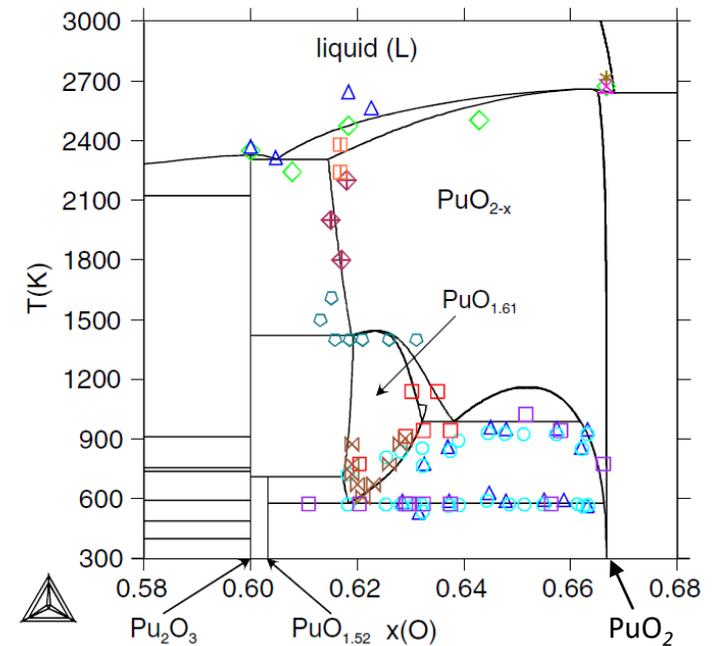
e^- ——— V_O ——— V_{Pu} ———
 p^+ ——— O_i ———

Brouwer diagram - Defect concentrations in PuO_2 as a function of oxygen partial pressure.

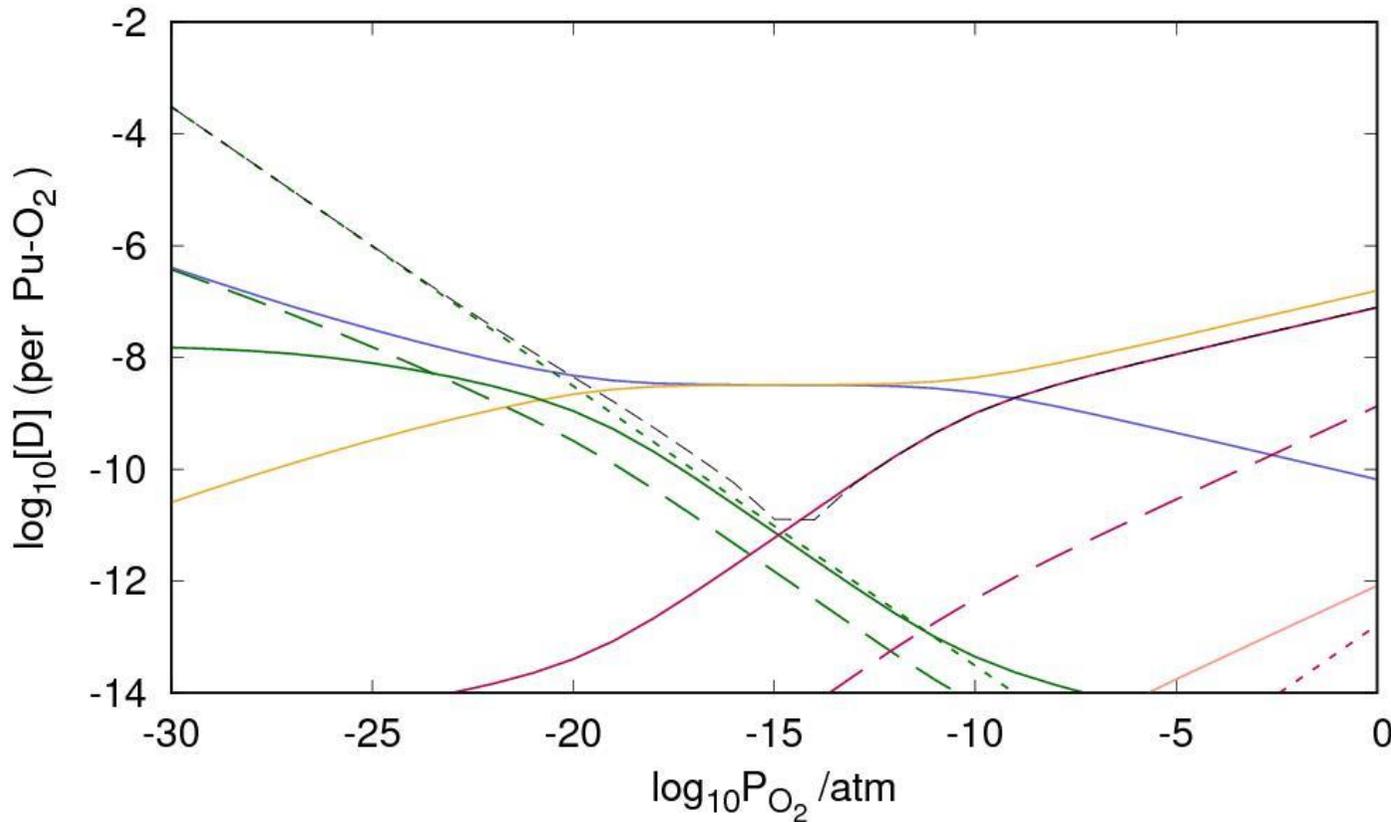
Temperature: 1000 K



- Oxygen defects dominant
- Hyper-stoichiometry negligible
- Hypo-stoichiometry much more favourable



Brouwer diagram - Defect concentrations in PuO_2 as a function of oxygen partial pressure.
 Temperature: 1000 K

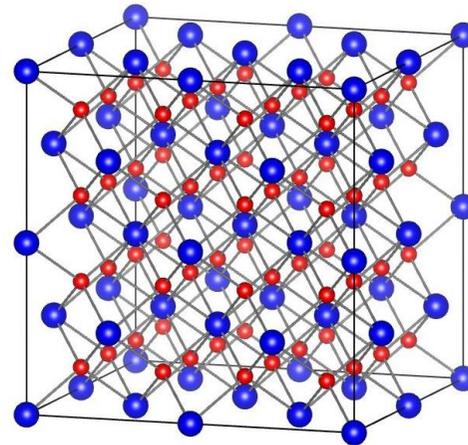


- Oxygen defects dominant
- Hyper-stoichiometry negligible
- Hypo-stoichiometry much more favourable
- Formally charged defects dominate at near-stoichiometry, non-formally charged defects become dominant with increased non-stoichiometry.



Adding americium defects

Create supercell



2 x 2 x 2, 96 atoms

Add defects to supercell

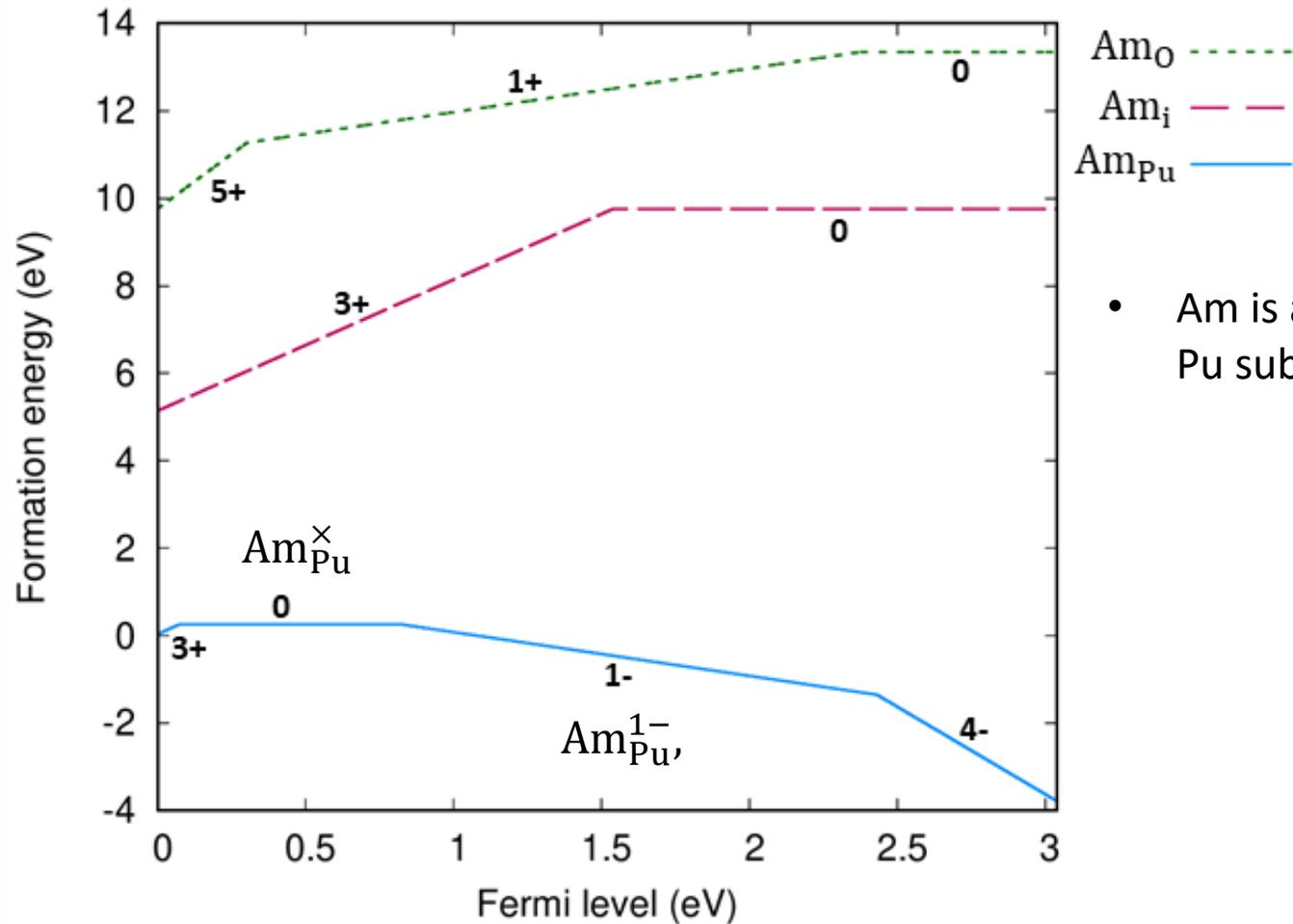
ADD AMERICIUM ATOMS

Americium interstitials: Am_i^{\times} , Am_i^{1+} , Am_i^{2+} , Am_i^{3+} , Am_i^{4+}

Oxygen substitutions: Am_O^{\times} , Am_O^{1+} , Am_O^{2+} , Am_O^{3+} , Am_O^{4+} , Am_O^{5+} and Am_O^{6+}

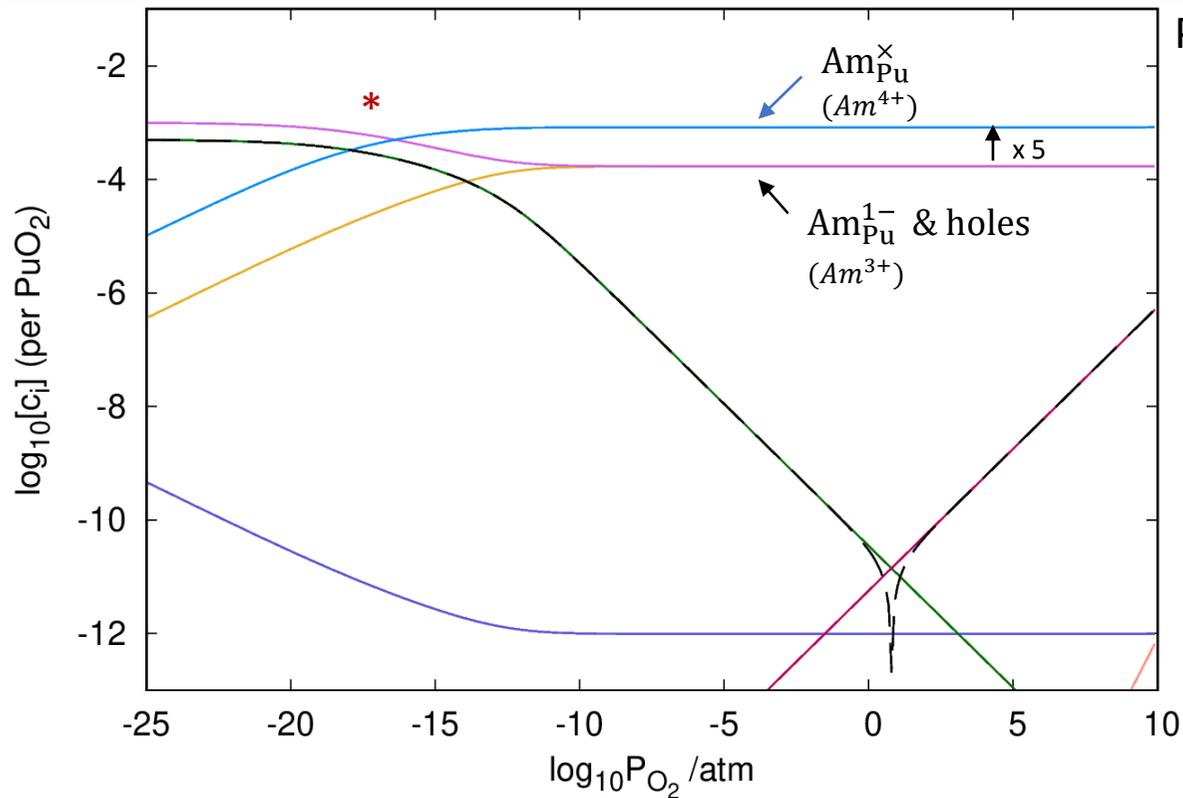
Plutonium substitutions: $\text{Am}_{\text{Pu}}^{4-}$, $\text{Am}_{\text{Pu}}^{3-}$, $\text{Am}_{\text{Pu}}^{2-}$, $\text{Am}_{\text{Pu}}^{1-}$, $\text{Am}_{\text{Pu}}^{\times}$, $\text{Am}_{\text{Pu}}^{1+}$, $\text{Am}_{\text{Pu}}^{2+}$,
 $\text{Am}_{\text{Pu}}^{3+}$, $\text{Am}_{\text{Pu}}^{4+}$ and $\text{Am}_{\text{Pu}}^{5+}$

Accommodation of americium



- Am is accommodated in Pu substitutions.

Brouwer diagram - Defect concentrations in $\text{Pu}_{0.999}\text{Am}_{0.001}\text{O}_{2\pm x}$ as a function of oxygen partial pressure. Temperature: 1000 K

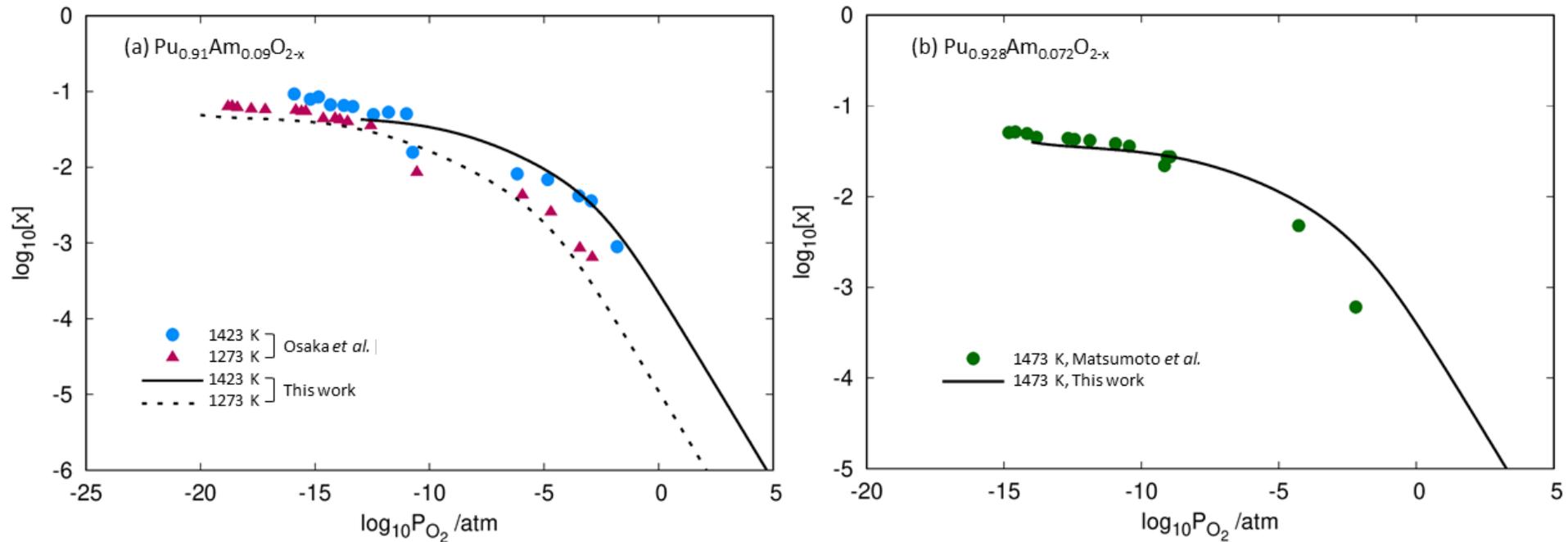


$\text{Pu}_{0.999}\text{Am}_{0.001}\text{O}_{2\pm x}$

- Oxygen defects are the dominant intrinsic defect and control the stoichiometry in $\text{Pu}_{1-y}\text{Am}_y\text{O}_{2\pm x}$. Hyper-stoichiometry always found negligible.
- Am is accommodated in Pu substitutions under all conditions.
- At * Am reduced from +IV to +III as partial pressure decreases, in agreement with experimental observation.

e^- ——— V_{O} ——— $\text{Am}_{\text{Pu}}^{1-}$ ——— x in $\text{Pu}_{1-y}\text{Am}_y\text{O}_{2\pm x}$ ———
 p^+ ——— O_i ——— Am_{Pu}^x ———
 V_{Pu} ———

Comparison with experiment

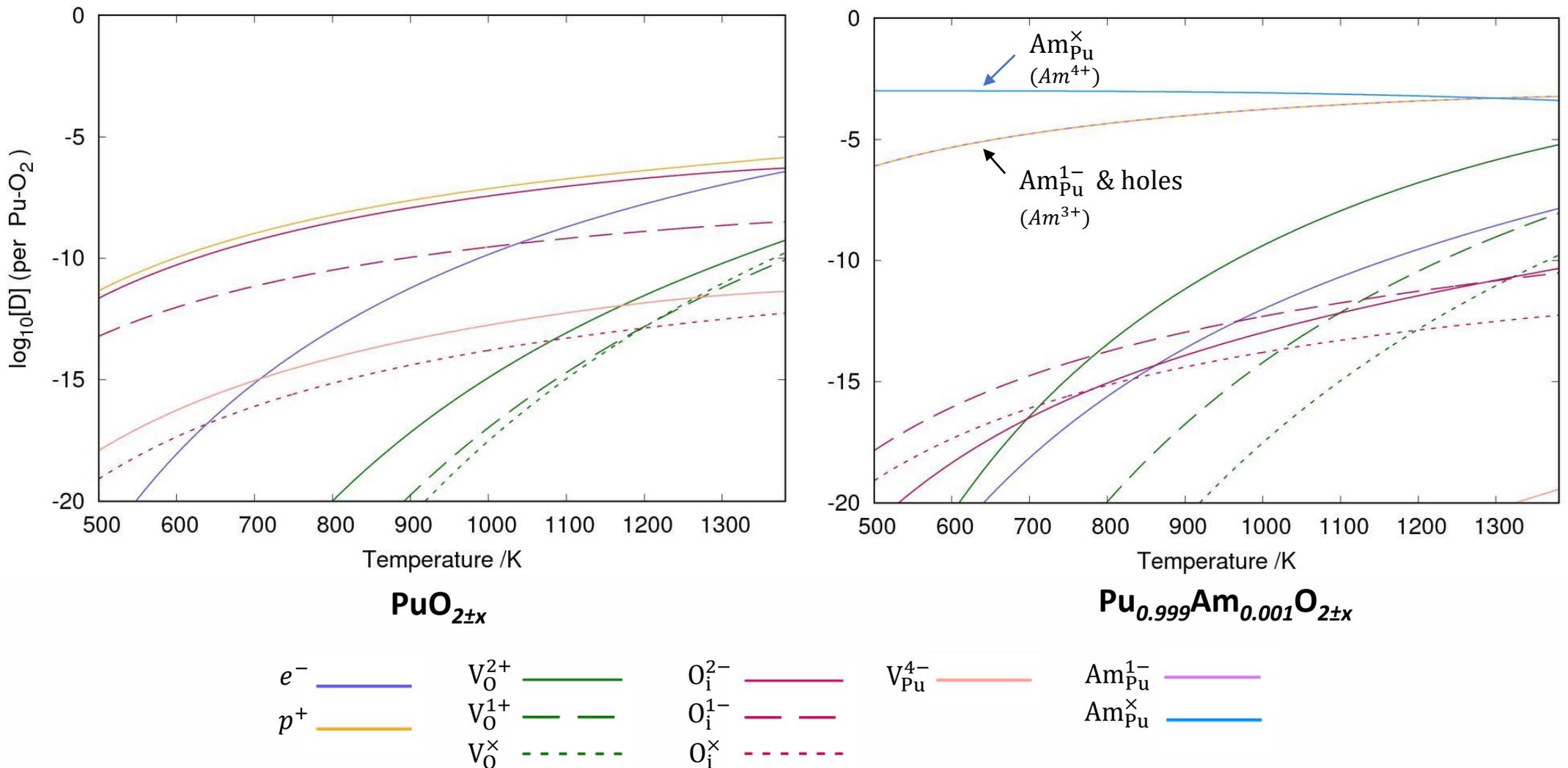


Values of x in $\text{Pu}_{1-y}\text{Am}_y\text{O}_{2\pm x}$ as a function of oxygen partial pressure at y values of a) 0.09 and b) 0.072, with comparison to experimental results

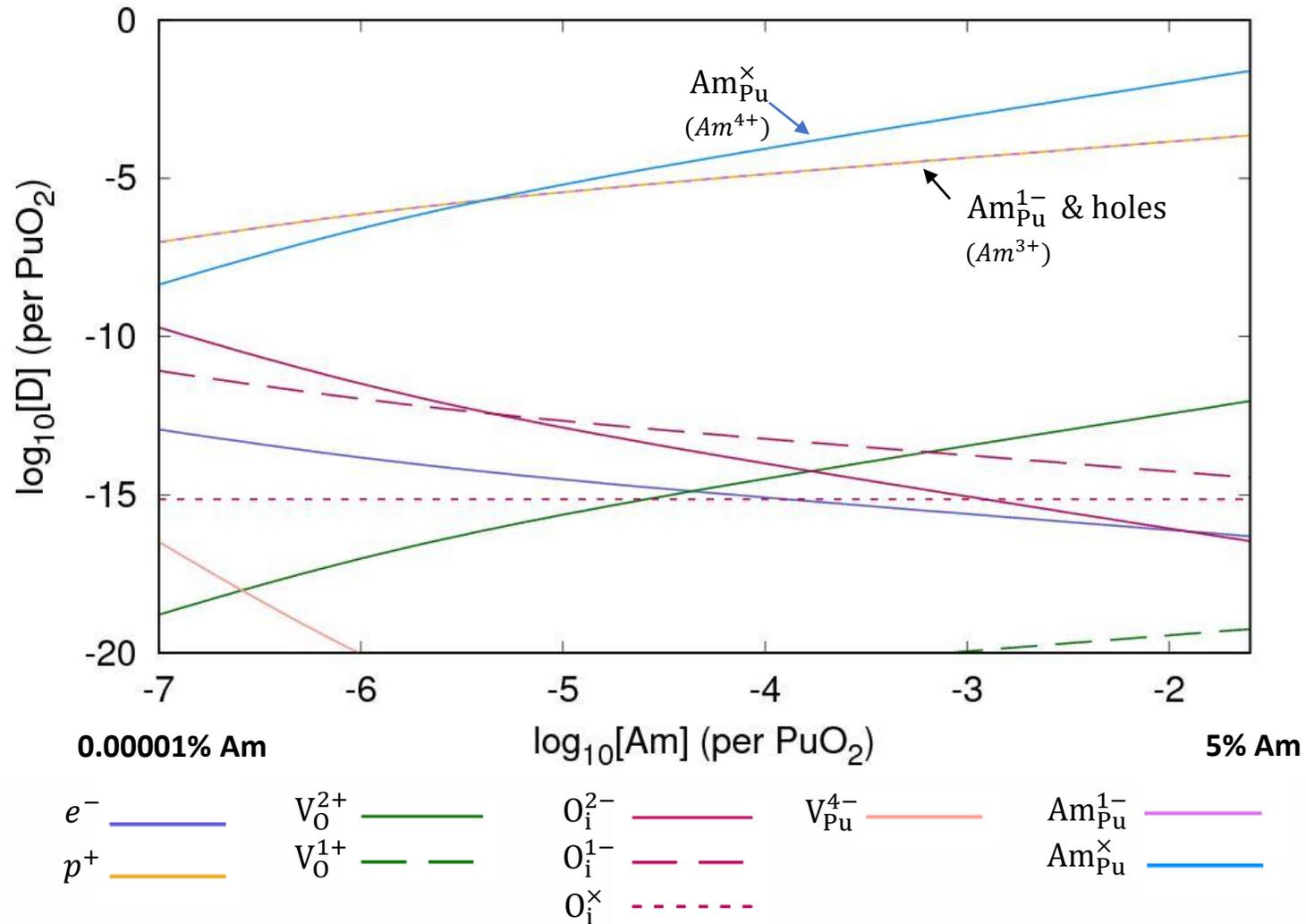
M. Osaka, K. Kurosaki, S. Yamanaka, Oxygen potential of $(\text{Pu}_{0.91}\text{Am}_{0.09})\text{O}_{2-x}$, J. Nucl. Mater. 357 (2006) 69–76. doi:10.1016/j.jnucmat.2006.05.044.

T. Matsumoto, T. Arima, Y. Inagaki, K. Idemitsu, M. Kato, K. Morimoto, T. Sunaoshi, Oxygen potential measurement of $(\text{Pu}_{0.928}\text{Am}_{0.072})\text{O}_{2-x}$ at high temperatures, J. Nucl. Sci. Technol. 52 (2015) 1296–1302. doi:10.1080/00223131.2014.986243.

Defect concentrations in $\text{Pu}_{1-y}\text{Am}_y\text{O}_{2\pm x}$ as a function of temperature.
 Oxygen partial pressure: 0.01 atm.



Defect concentrations in $\text{Pu}_{1-y}\text{Am}_y\text{O}_{2\pm x}$ as a function of Am concentration.
 Oxygen partial pressure: 0.01 atm. Temperature: 800 K.



Acknowledgements

- Dr. James T. Pegg
- Dr. Helen Steele
- The High End Computing facility at Lancaster University

A large, white-outlined speech bubble with a tail pointing towards the bottom left. Inside the bubble, the words "Thank you" are written in a white, sans-serif font.

Thank you



Transformative Science and Engineering for Nuclear Decommissioning

Water Adsorption on $\text{ThO}_2(\text{111})$ surface

Xiaoyu Han, University of Manchester

Nuclear Materials

2-3 December, 2020





The Sellafield nuclear reprocessing site in Cumbria © Redharc Images/Alamy

UK has the world's largest stockpile of the PuO_2 .

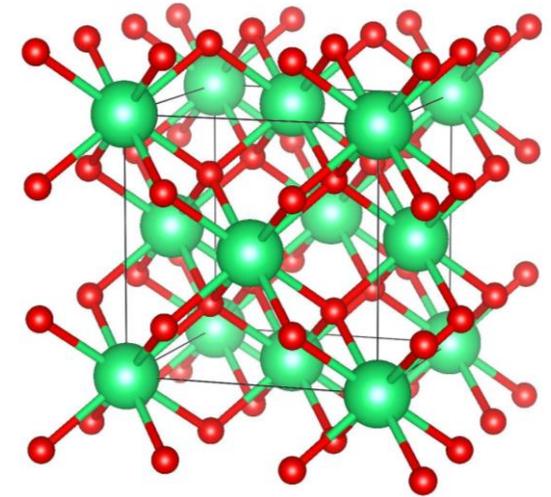
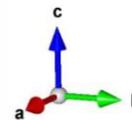
- Sellafield in Cumbria
- 2 "Magnox" research sites and 10 nuclear power stations

Inside of the PuO_2 storage container, **water** and other small molecules might interact with PuO_2

A major barrier to making progress --- **lack of knowledge** about the retired facilities.

ThO₂ as the surrogate for PuO₂

- Ionic radii
- The fluorite *fm-3m* structure
- +IV oxidation state
- No open-shell 5f electron as in PuO₂
- Less radioactivity as PuO₂ experimentally



Computational settings

- VASP
- PAW method
- 650 eV cutoff
- 5 × 5 × 5 and 15 × 15 × 15 *k* point mesh for bulk geometry relaxation and pDOS, respectively
- For the slab, 2 × 2 supercell with 5 layers, the bottom 2 layer fixed.
- Dipole correction along the surface direction
- 15 Å vacuum slab
- DFT- D4 correction for the vdW correction
- Ci-NEB method for the dissociation energy calculation
- The elementary reaction free energy were calculated, $\Delta G = \Delta E_{DFT} + \Delta E_{ZPE} - T\Delta S$

OUTLINE

- ❖ The computational challenge of the ThO_2 ;
 - The Dudarev approach vs The Liechtenstein approach;

- ❖ The water reaction on the ThO_2 (111) surface;
 - 1st water adsorption and dissociation;
 - 2nd water adsorption and dissociation;

Lattice parameters error

$$\sigma_L = \frac{L - L_{exp}}{L_{exp}}$$

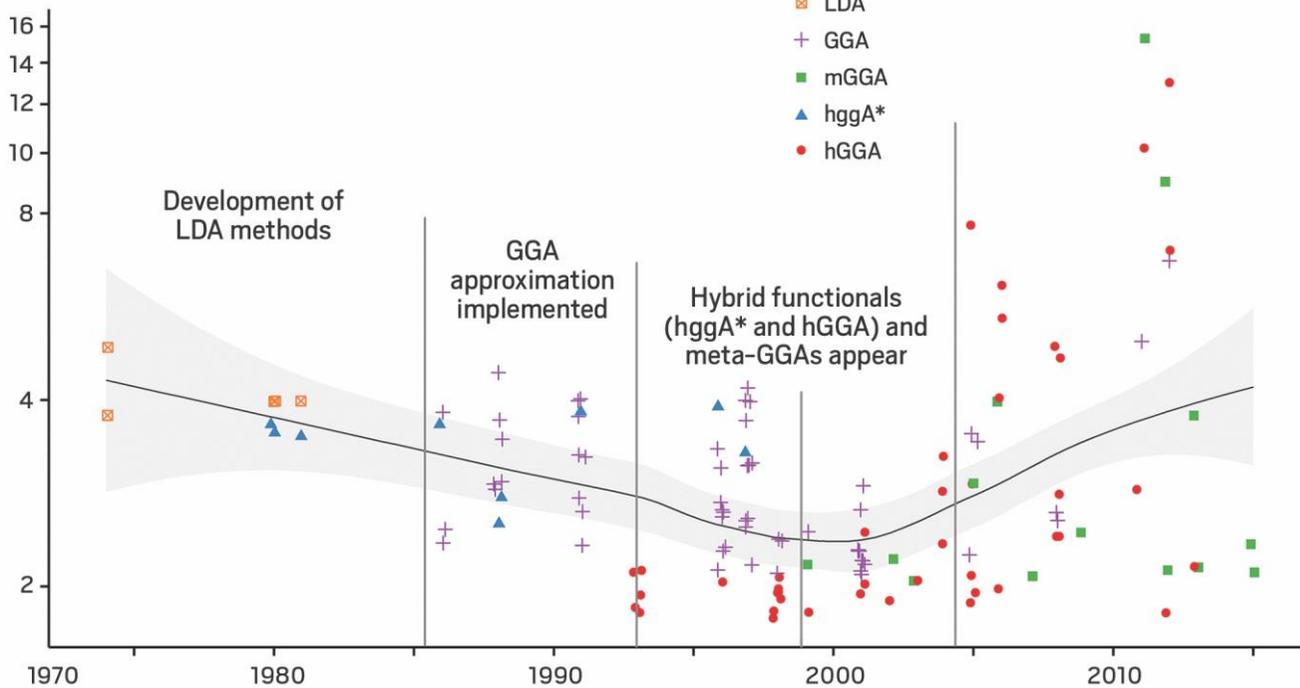
Bandgap errors

$$\sigma_{gap} = \frac{G - G_{exp}}{G_{exp}}$$

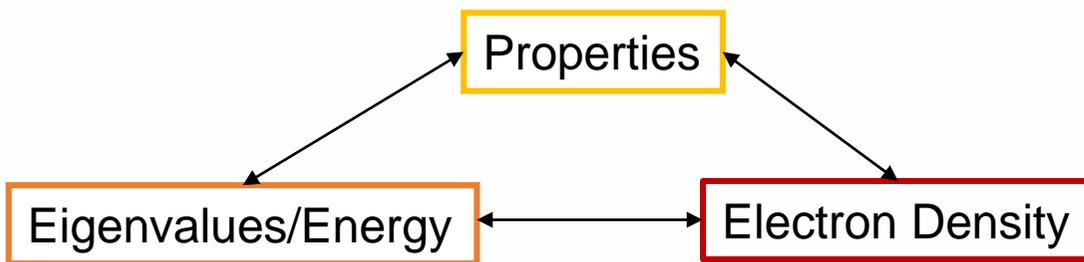
the root mean square error (**RMS**)

$$\sigma_{RMS} = \sqrt{\frac{(\sigma_L^2 + \sigma_{gap}^2)}{2}}$$

Normalized error



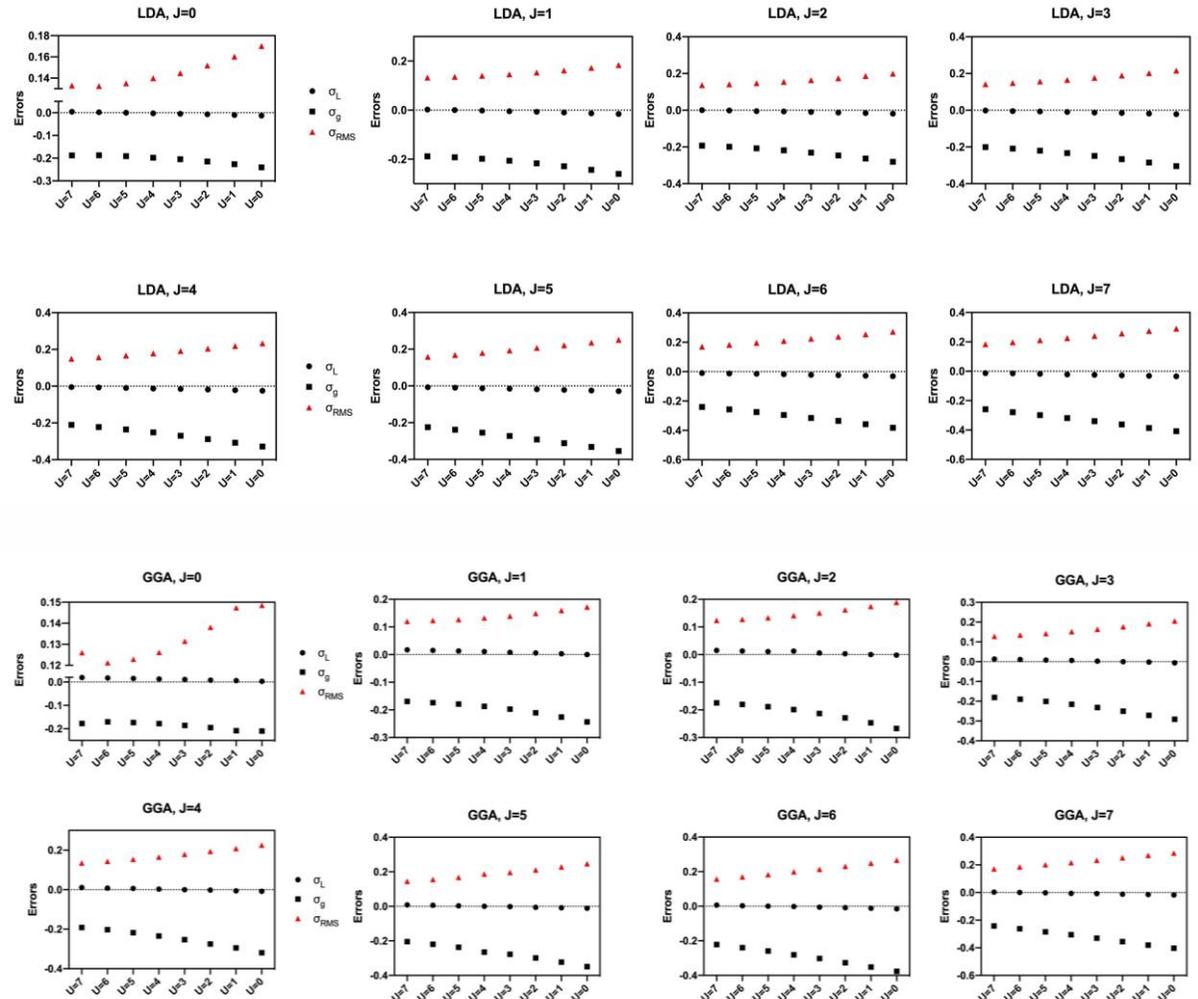
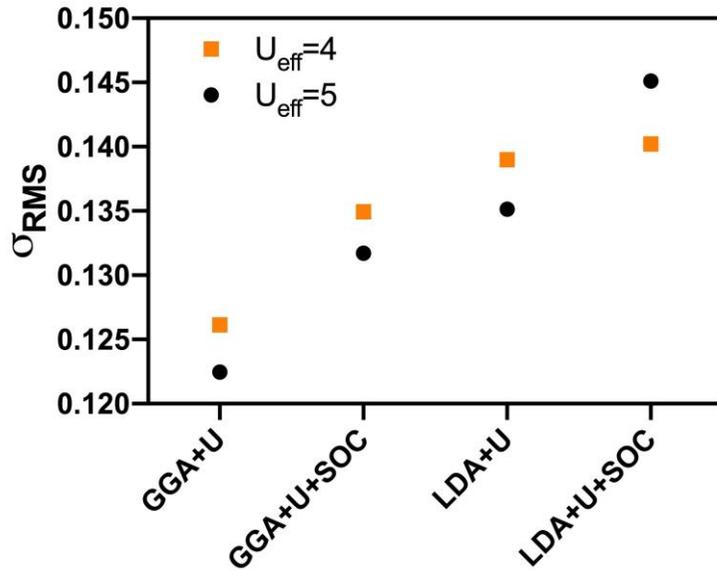
The historical trends in maximal deviation of the density produced by various DFT methods from the exact one. ¹



1. Science Vol. 355, Issue 6320, pp. 49-52

The Liechtenstein approach

The Dudarev approach



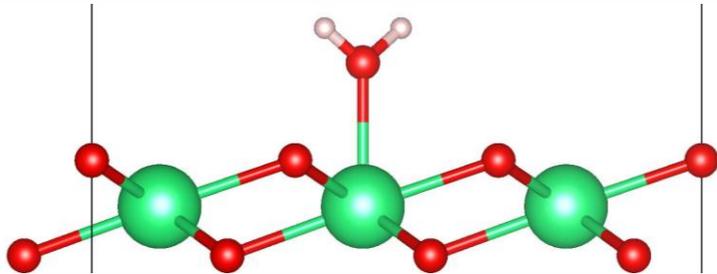
The best setting for Dudarev approach
GGA with $U_{\text{eff}}=5$ eV

Balanced the **mechanical** and **electronic** properties

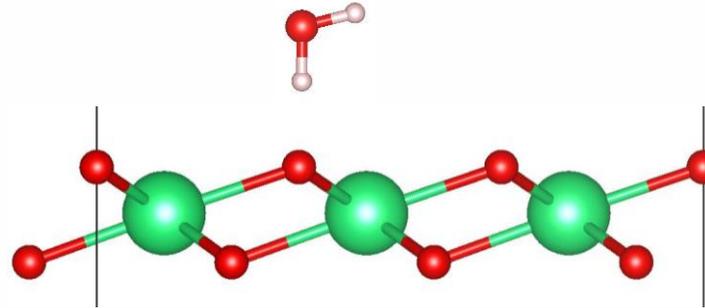
When **U = 6** and **J = 0**, **LDA+U** using **GGA functional** give the best performance

Long pair v.s. H bond

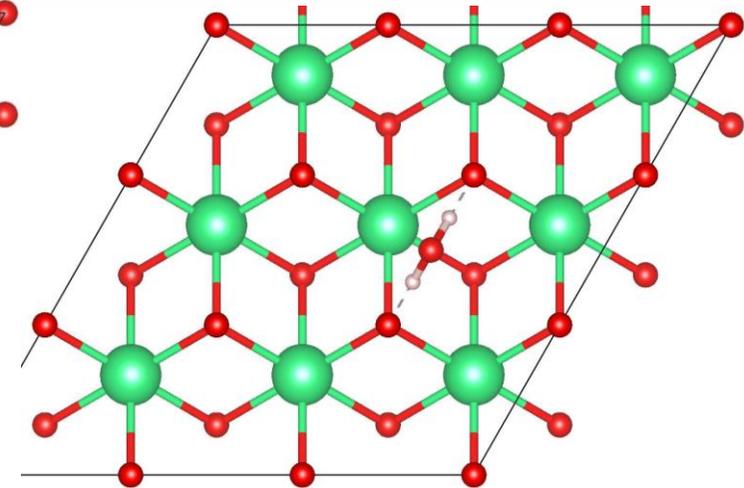
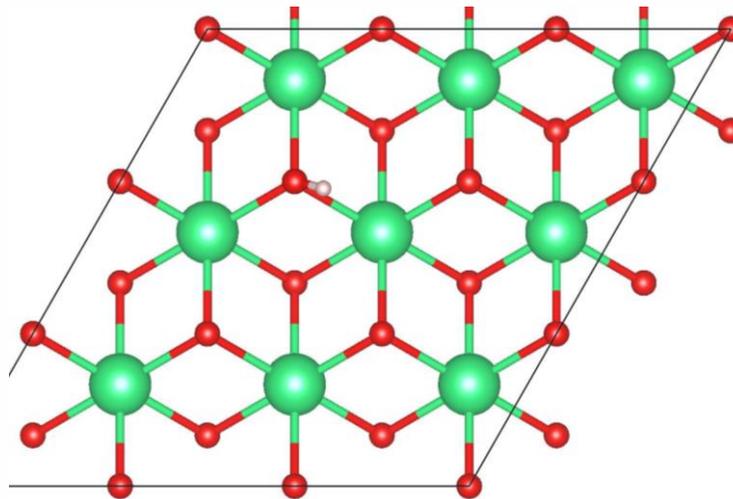
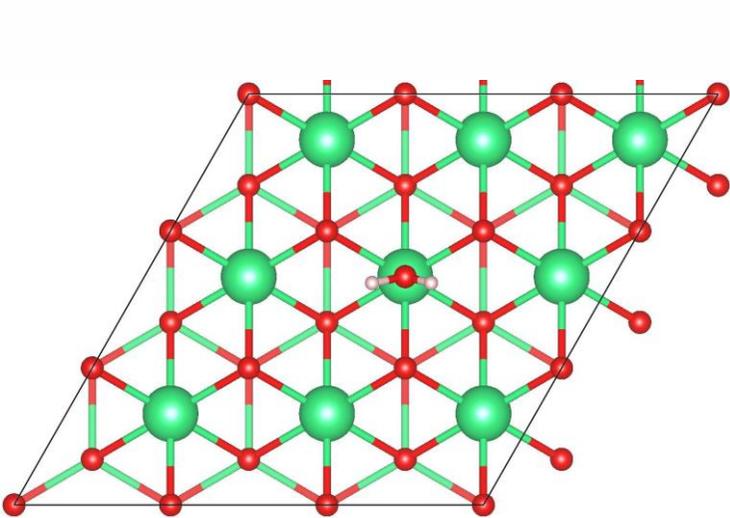
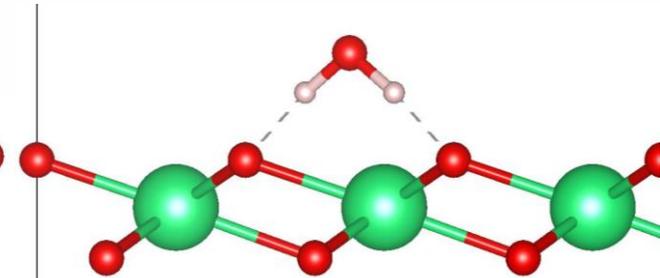
0-leg



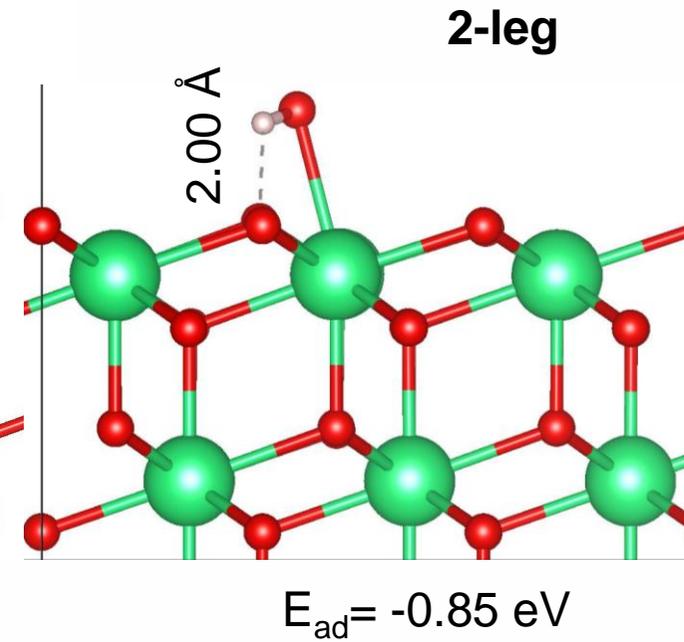
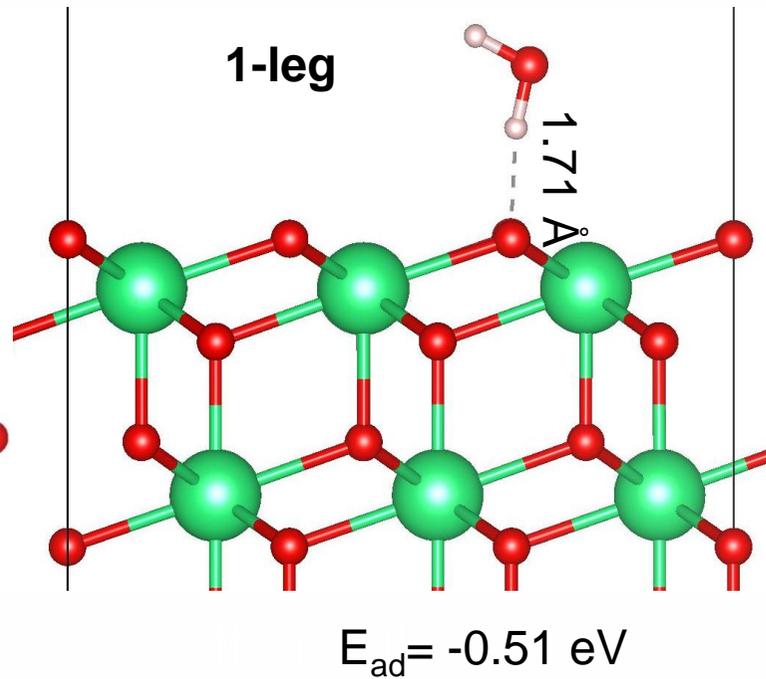
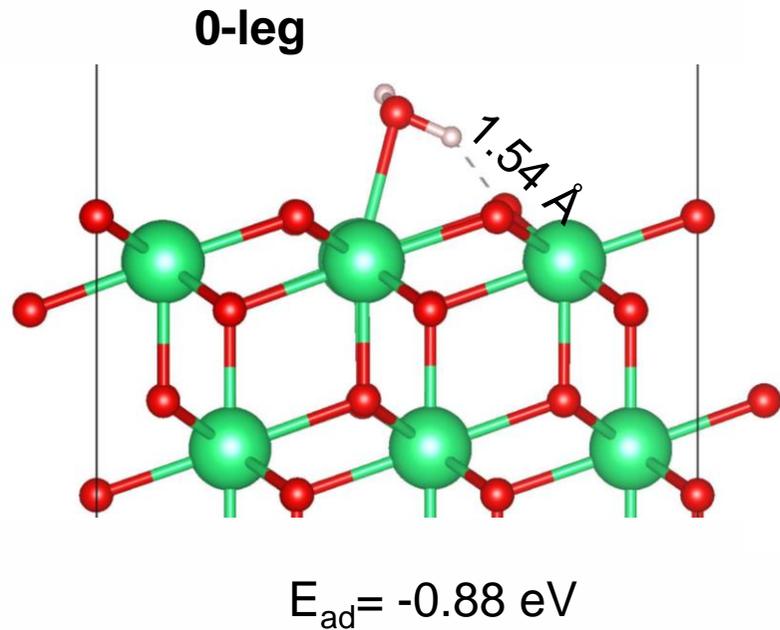
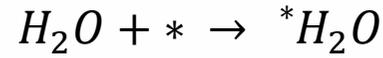
1-leg



2-leg

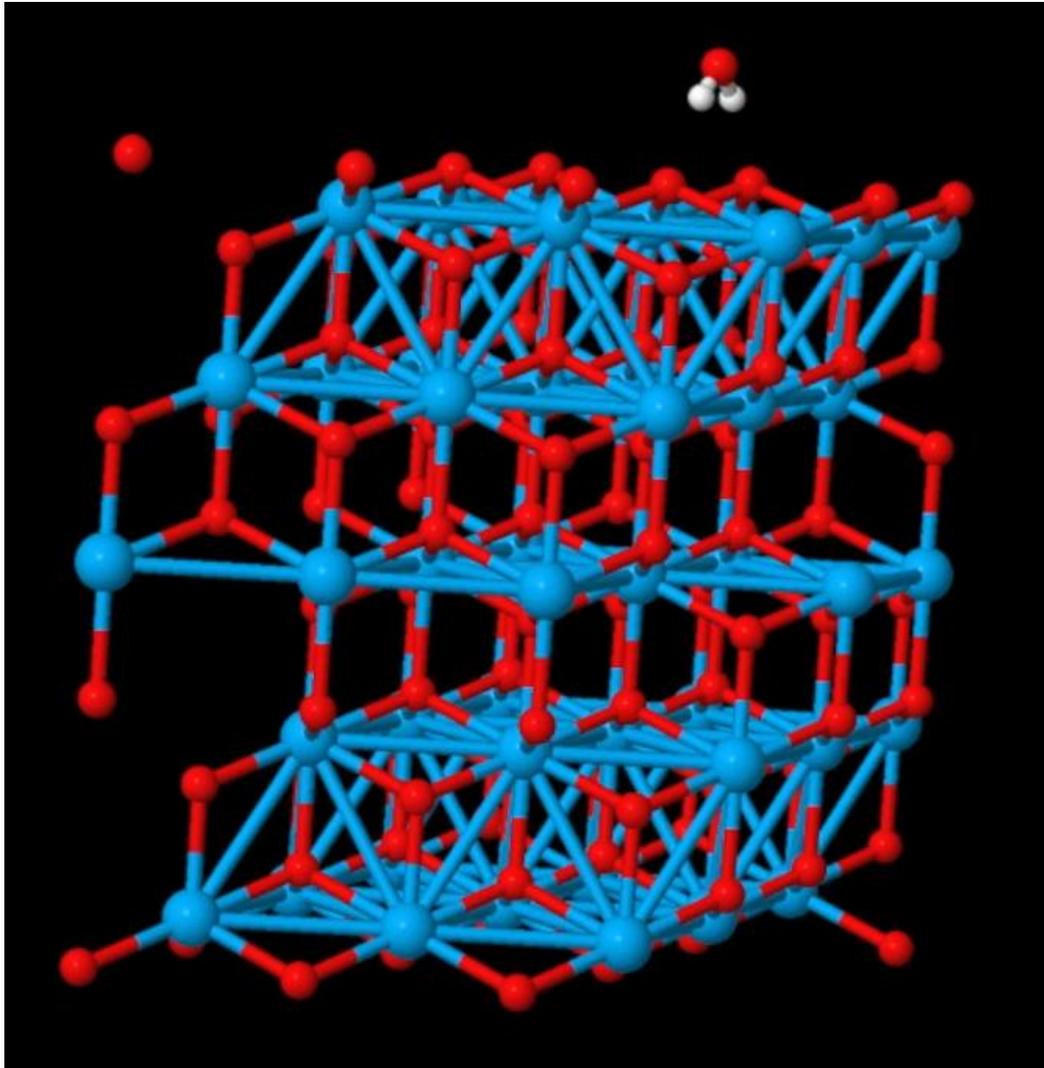


Step 1



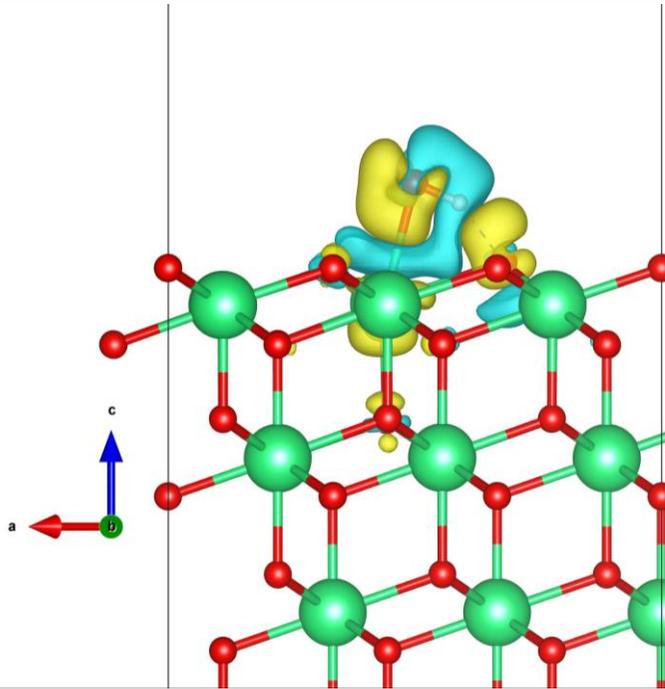
ΔG_0	298K (RT)	500K
0-leg	-0.82 eV	-1.31 eV
1-leg	-0.46 eV	-0.95 eV
2-leg	-0.78 eV	-1.26 eV

- **Exothermic reaction**
- **High T promotes the reaction**



Lone pair > H bond

Charge difference of H₂O@ThO₂(111) The Bader charge analysis* on the (111) ThO₂ vs. bulk

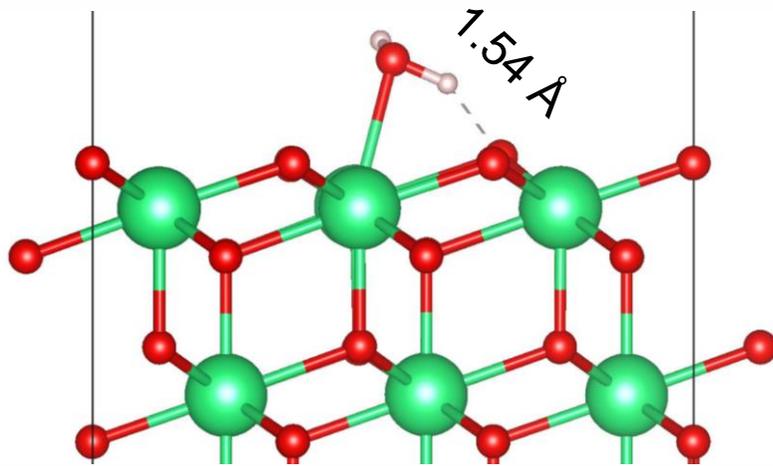


Blue - Yellow + (0.001e/r_b³)

	Before adsorption	After adsorption
Top layer O (6)	7.39	7.39
Top layer Th (12)	9.24	9.19
2 nd layer O(6)	7.38	7.41
3 rd layer O (6)	7.38	7.41
water	8	8.04

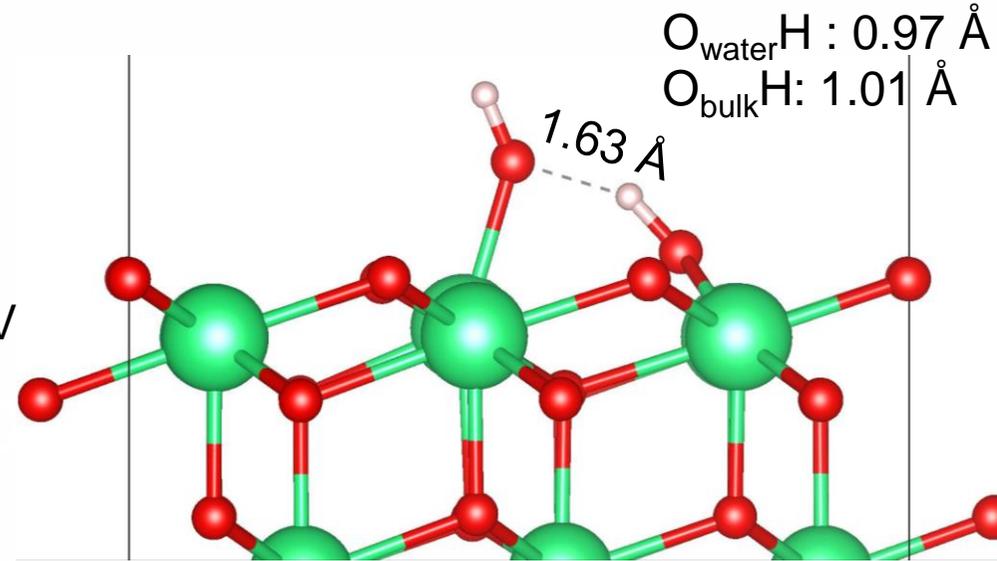
Summary

1. Water adsorption is an **Exothermic reaction**;
2. Water **lone pair** outplay the H bond
3. The surface back donate electron to water;
4. More polarized hydroxyl group in water for further water splitting.

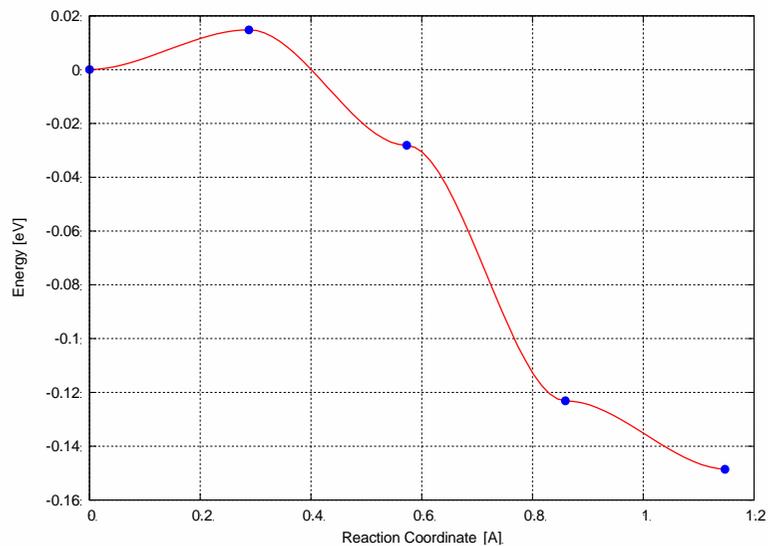


$$\Delta G_{1(rt)} = -0.65 \text{ eV}$$

$$\Delta G_{1(500)} = -0.72 \text{ eV}$$

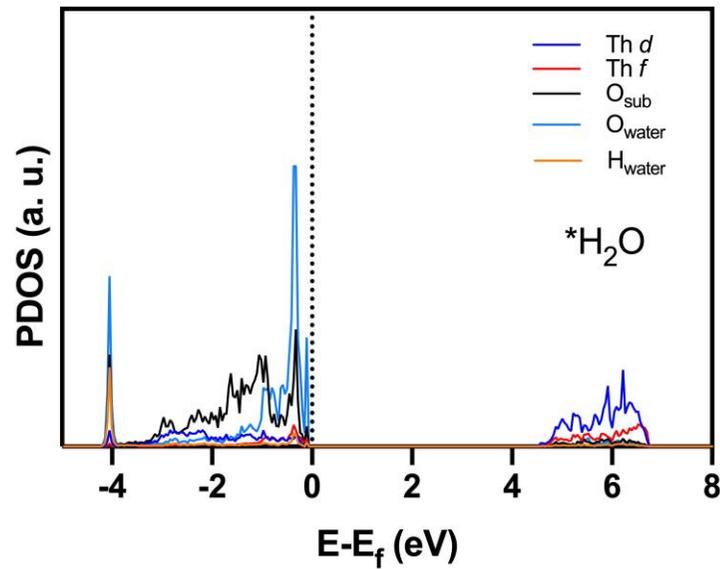


The dissociation energy barrier E_d is only **14.8 meV**



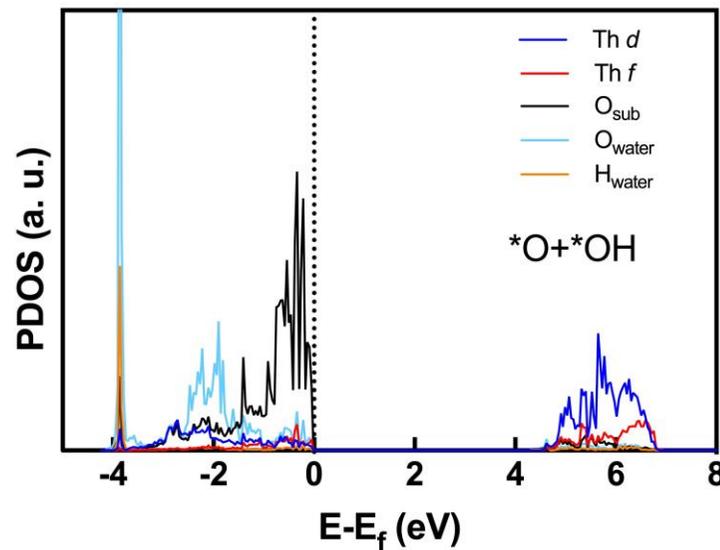
The desorption E (0.88 eV) is more than 55 times larger than E_d ;
 K_bT at Room temperature is 25 meV.

The water dissociation is barrierless



The hybridization of H with O_{water}, the surface O remain unchanged;
Only the O_{water} moved to the lower level.

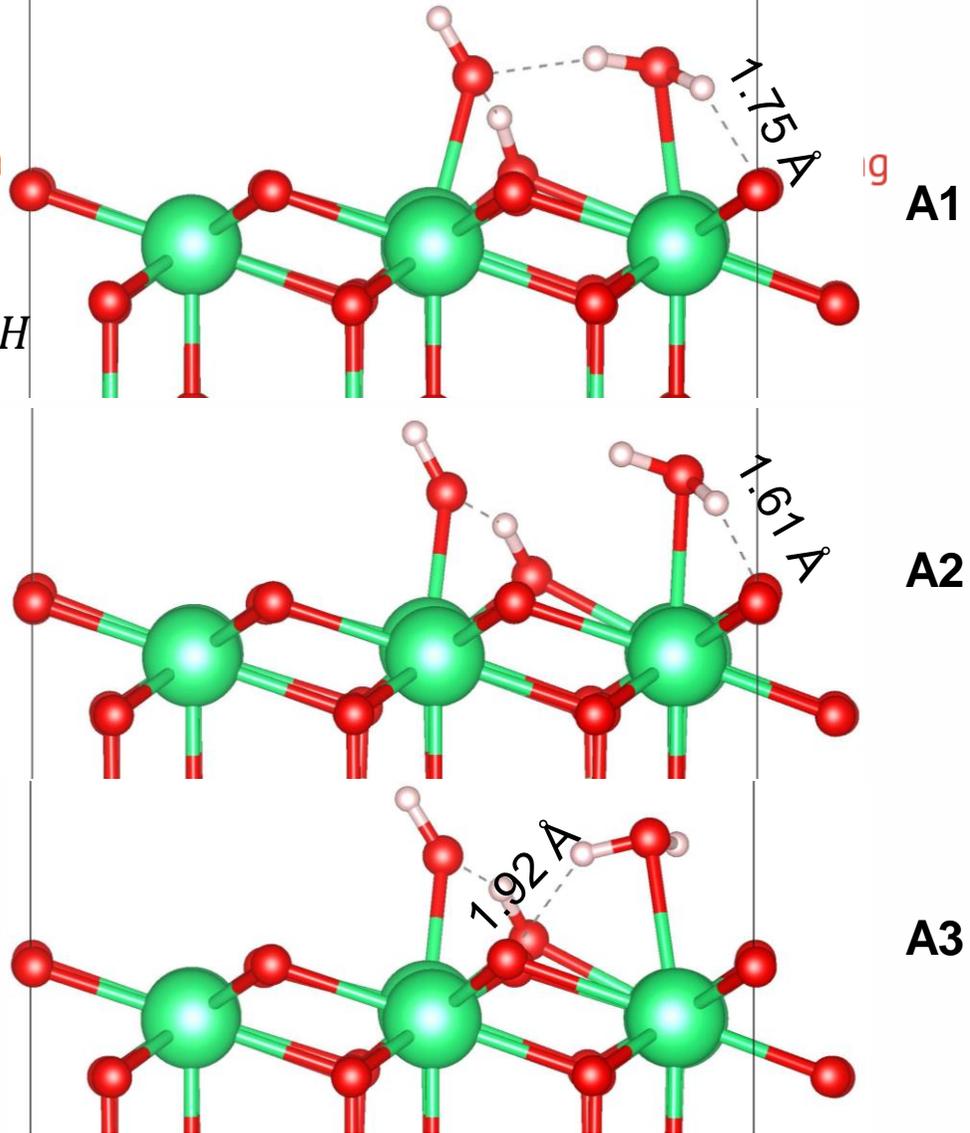
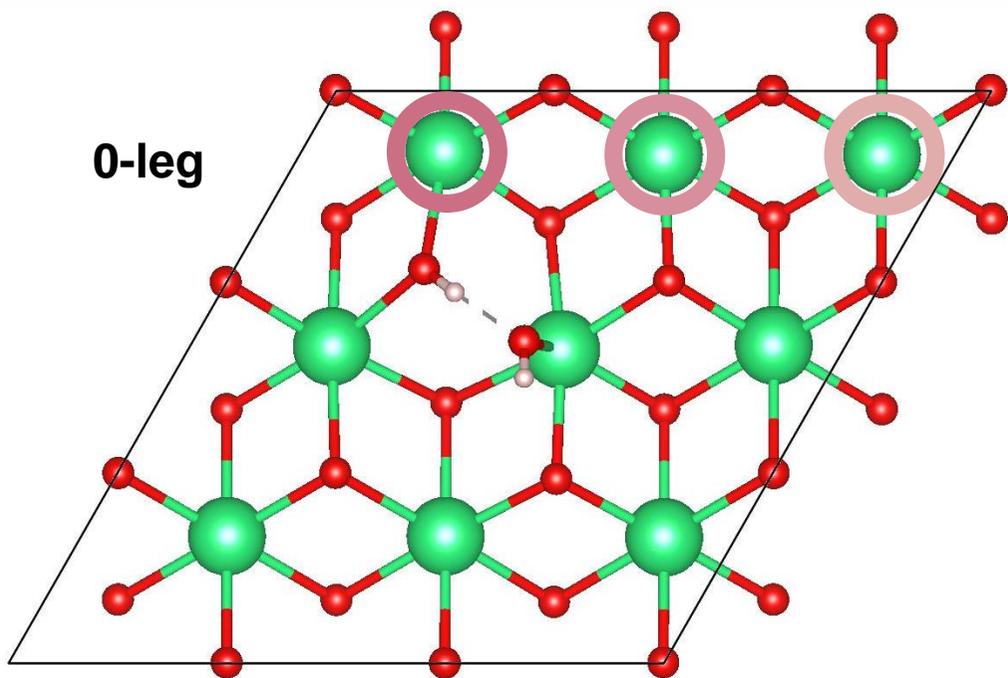
The splitting of water is driven by itself



→ The “wetted” surface is ready for further water adsorption



A: the water interact with substrate first
 B the water interact with the hydroxyl group



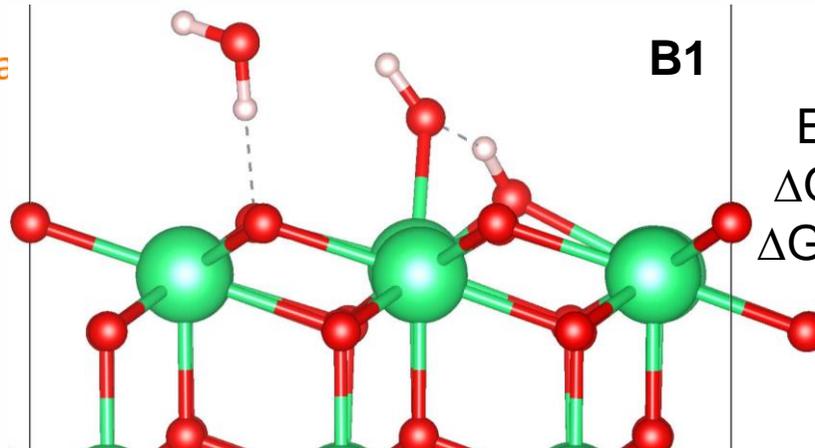
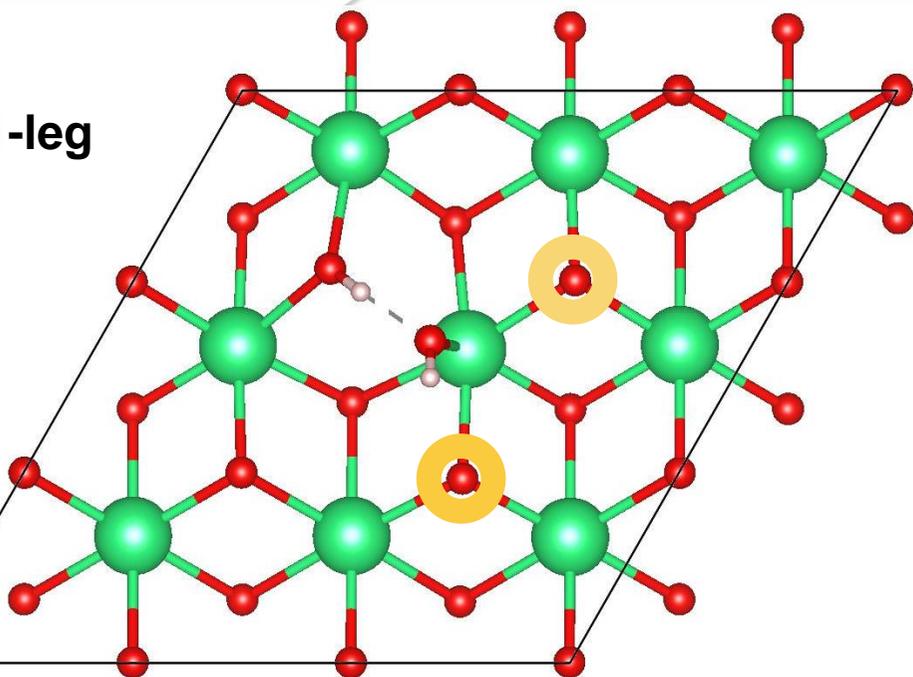
- A1: Th atom nearby $-O_{bulk}H$ group
- A2: Th atom nearby $-O_{water}H$ group
- A3: far away

	A1	A2	A3	0-leg
E_{ad}	-1.06 eV	-0.89 eV	-0.86 eV	-0.88 eV
$\Delta G_{2(rt)}$	-0.89 eV	-0.77 eV	-0.72 eV	-0.82 eV
$\Delta G_{2(500)}$	-1.38 eV	-1.26 eV	-1.21 eV	-1.31 eV

TRANSCEND

Transforma

1-leg



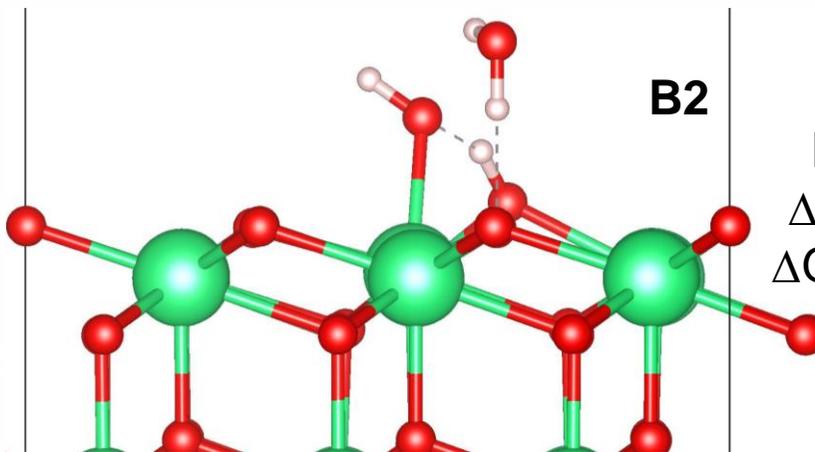
B1

ommissioning

$$E_{ad} = -0.61 \text{ eV}$$

$$\Delta G_{2(rt)} = -0.53 \text{ eV}$$

$$\Delta G_{2(500)} = -1.02 \text{ eV}$$



B2

$$E_{ad} = -0.61 \text{ eV}$$

$$\Delta G_{2(rt)} = -0.54 \text{ eV}$$

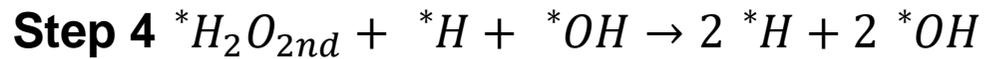
$$\Delta G_{2(500)} = -1.02 \text{ eV}$$

B1: water lone pair facing H in $-\text{O}_{\text{water}}\text{H}$, i.e. 2nd water in 1-leg configuration at ●

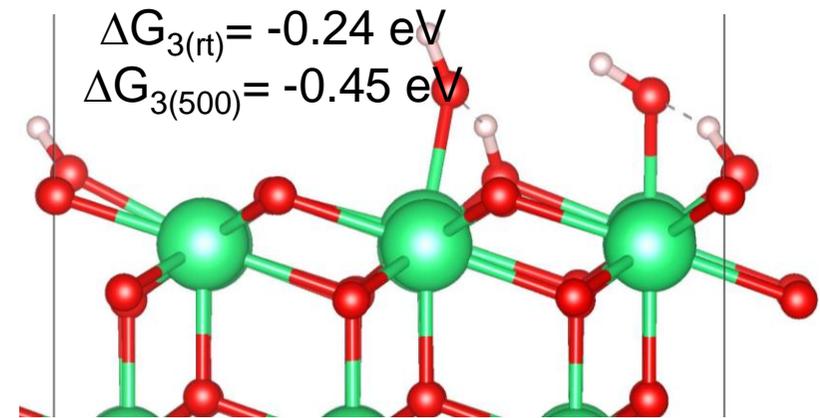
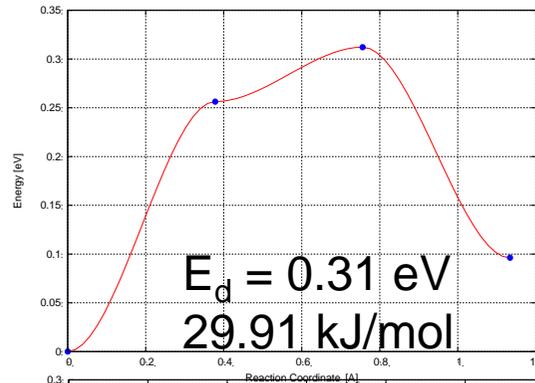
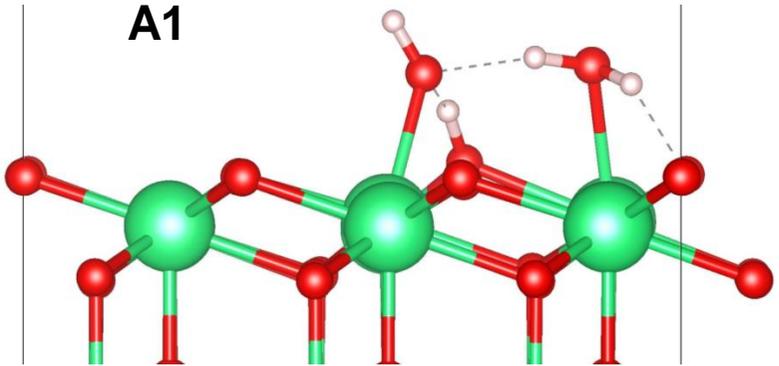
B2: H_{water} facing O in $-\text{O}_{\text{water}}\text{H}$, i.e. 2nd water in 1-leg configuration at ●

Summary

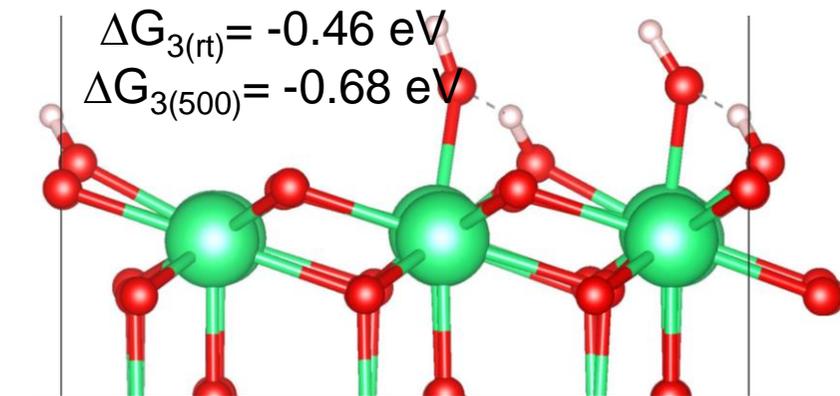
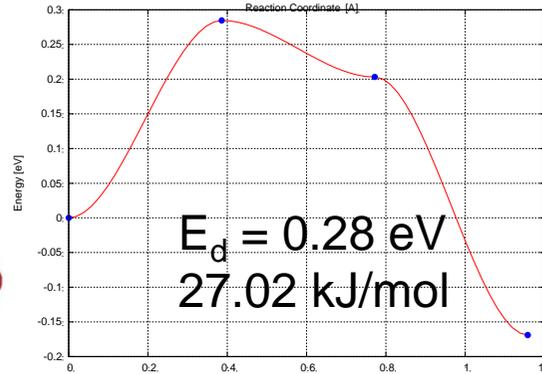
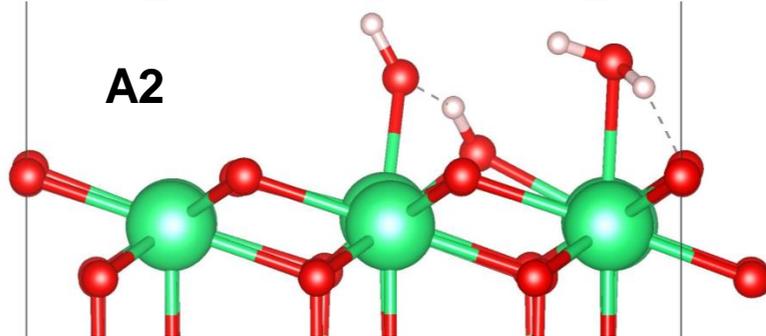
The "wetted" surface promote further water adsorption at nearby $-\text{O}_{\text{sub}}\text{H}$ hydroxyl group



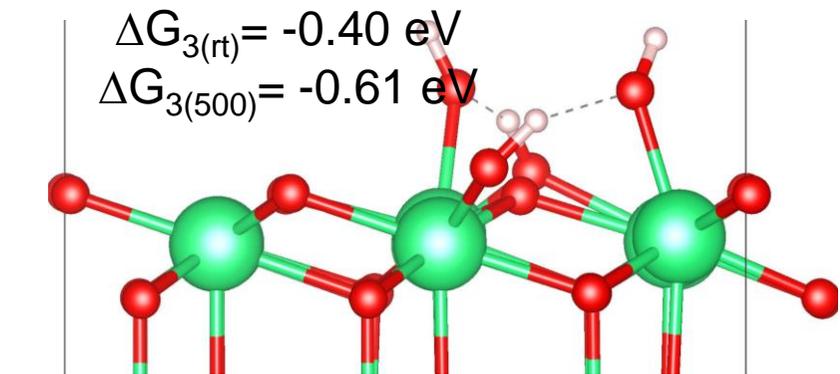
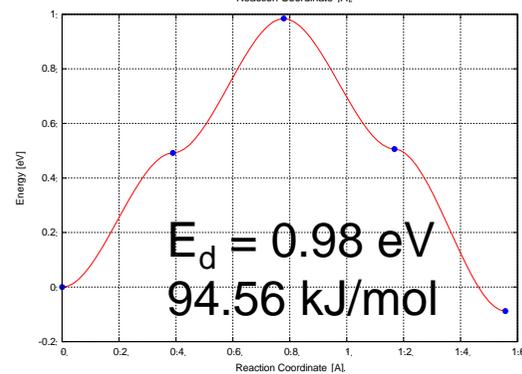
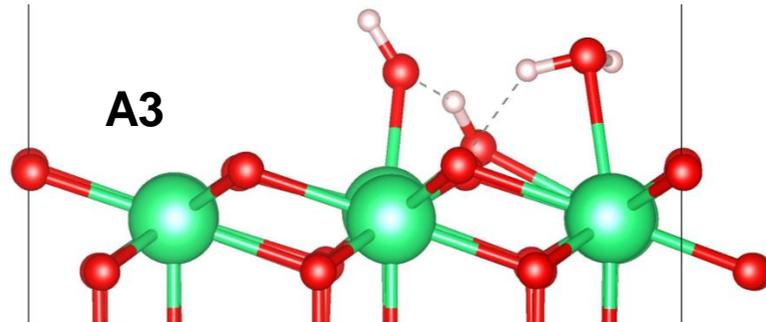
A1



A2



A3



- All possess much **higher energy barrier** than the first water splitting
- **Exothermic reaction** for the 2nd Water splitting but **water at A3 site tends to desorption**

Summary

- Systematic studied the two DFT+U approaches of the prediction of the ThO₂;
- Provide a balanced consideration on both mechanical (lattice) and electronic (bandgap) properties;
- The ThO₂ (111) surface is hydrophilic and undergoes barrierless water dissociation at RT.
- The “wetted” surface even more attract water;
- However, it requires more energy to overcome the dissociation energy of the 2nd water.

Acknowledgements

- Prof. N. Kaltsoyannis and the group members
- EPSRC: EP/S01019X/1;
- Archer HPC and Grace@UCL and their associated services;





Transformative Science and Engineering for Nuclear Decommissioning

Thank you

Assessment of zirconolite as a suitable waste-form for Pu immobilisation: first/initial results of durability experiments

Clémence Gausse, Ellie Ormerod, Laura J. Gardner, Neil C. Hyatt, Martin C. Stennett and Claire L. Corkhill

NucleUS Immobilisation Science Laboratory, University of Sheffield, United Kingdom

3rd December 2020
Virtual meeting



Context



- Upon completion of fuel reprocessing, the UK will have a stockpile >140t of PuO₂
- Dual track strategy of immobilisation & reuse by MOX fabrication for LWR

- *Not all Pu will be suitable (Am-241 ingrowth) for MOX*

- *Commercial case for MOX utilisation uncertain*

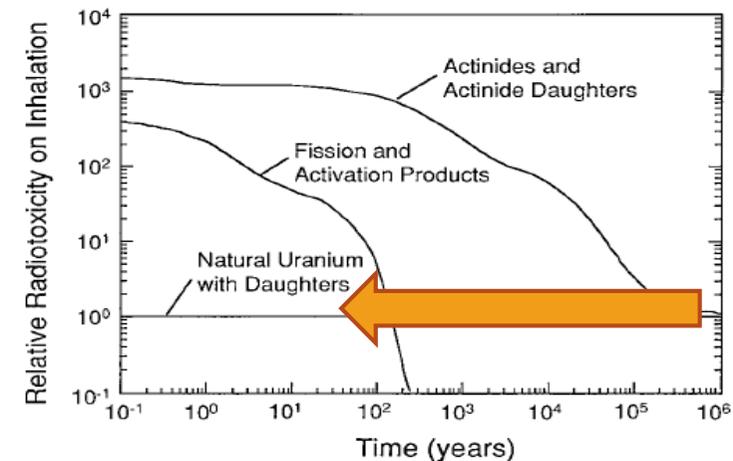


- Wasteform selected for Pu immobilisation will need to play a functional role in supporting safe disposal

- *Retaining Pu and its daughters for over 100,000 years*

- Hot Isostatic pressing identified as possible thermal treatment for PuO₂ wastes

- ✓ Uniform incorporation of radionuclides
- ✓ Batch process (inventory control)
- ✓ No off-gas production
- ✓ Minimal secondary wastes produced
- ✓ Hermetically sealed wasteform
- ✓ Facilitates high waste-loadings
- ✓ Significant cost saving



Zirconolite ceramic / glass-ceramic

- $\text{CaZrTi}_2\text{O}_7$
- Natural mineral present in a wide variety of localities in Earth

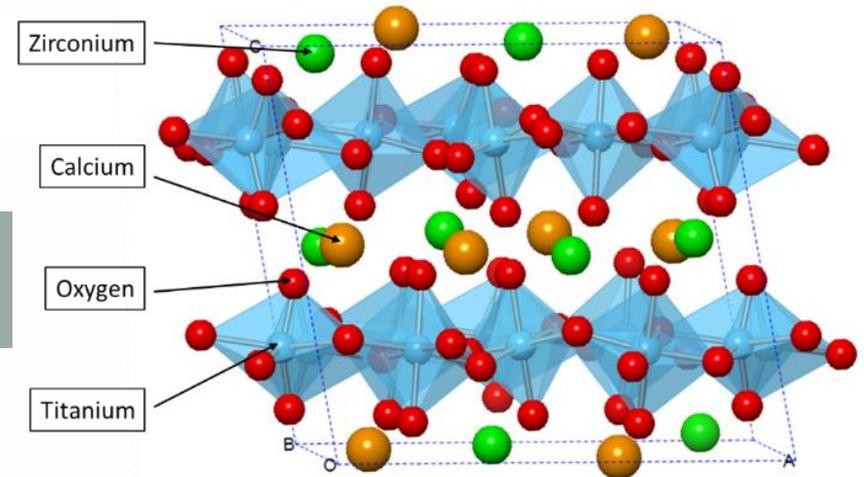
- Demonstrates a good chemical flexibility (incorporation of various cations)

- High durability and radiation tolerance

- Full ceramic suitable for relatively pure Pu-residues
- Glass-ceramic suitable for higher impurity Pu-residues

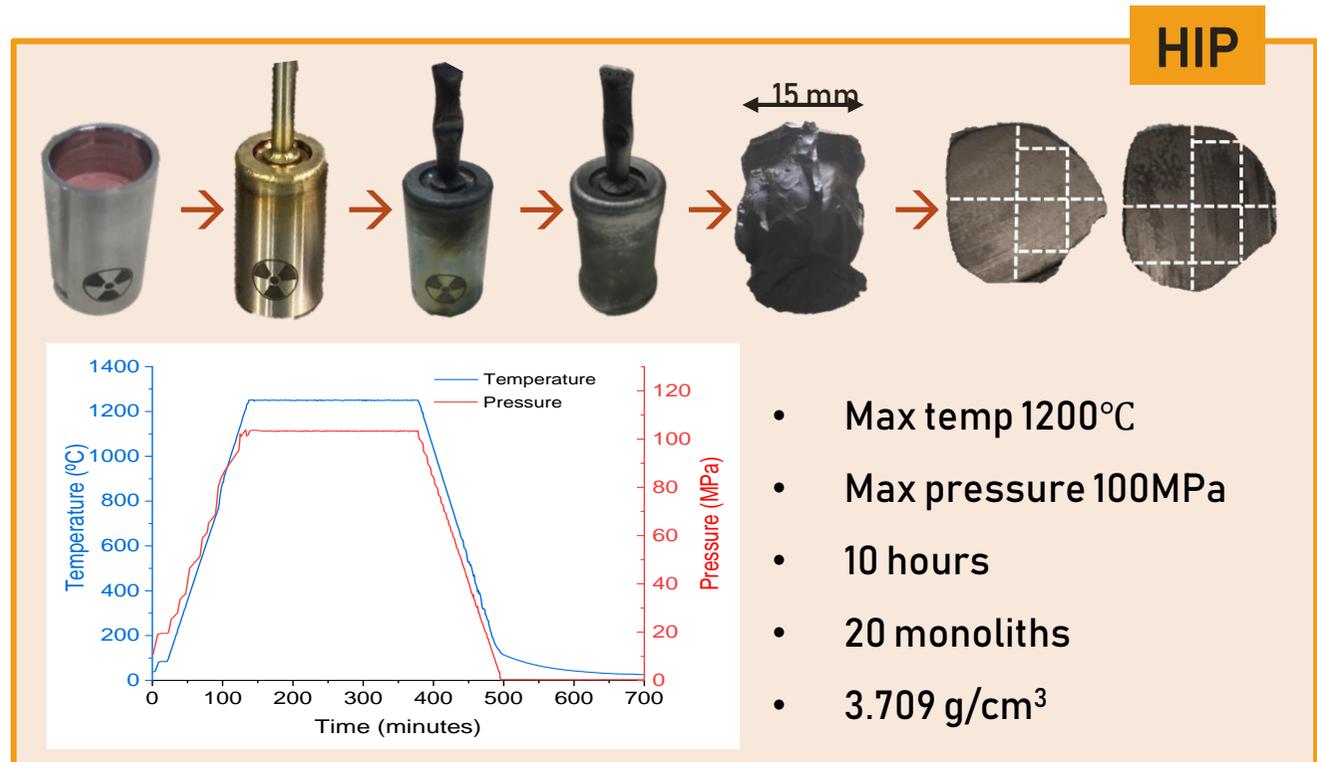
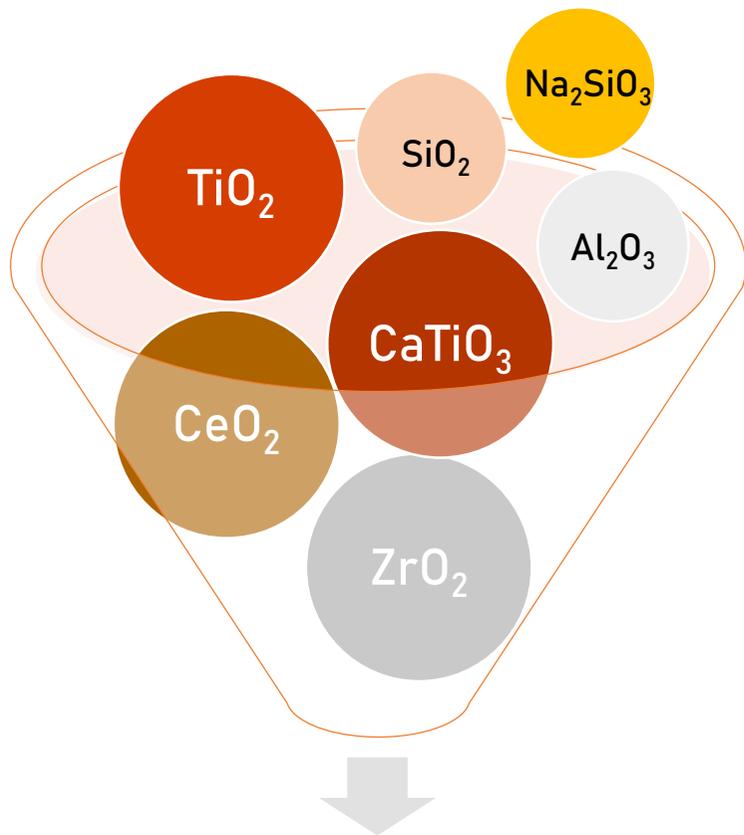
1. Synthesis & characterisation of the zirconolite ceramic & glass-ceramic

2. Investigate the zirconolite *durability* via dissolution experiments

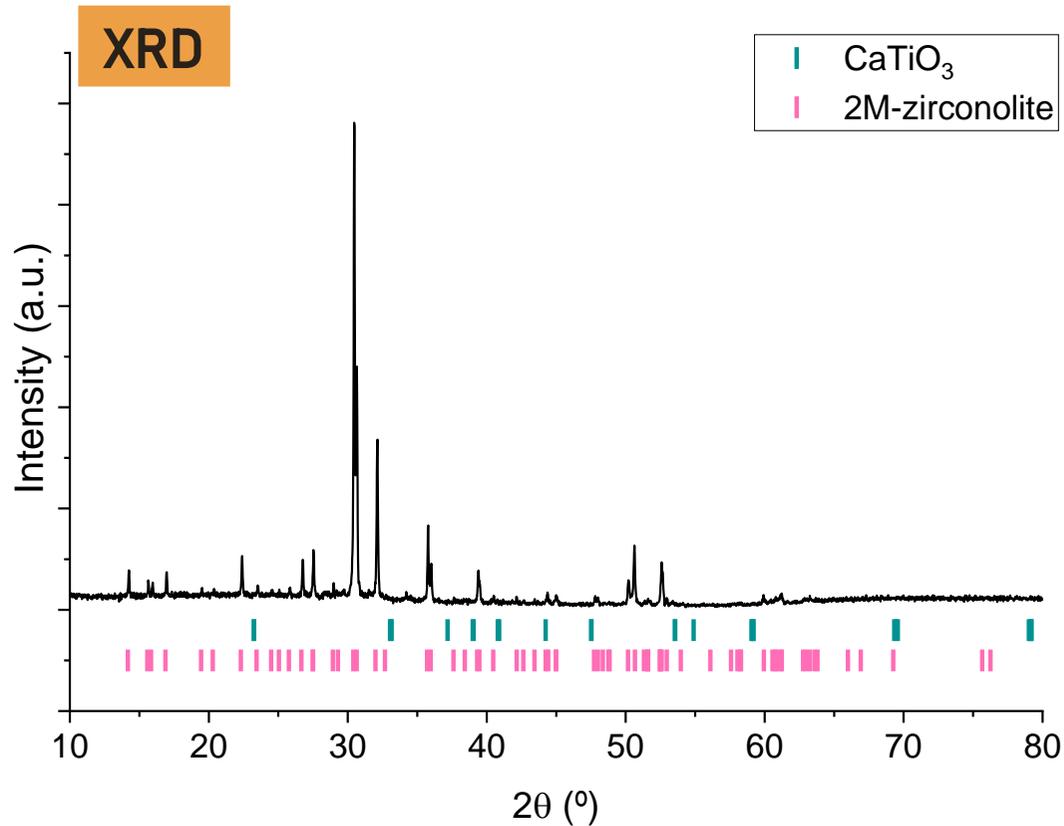


Synthesis of Ce-zirconolite glass ceramic

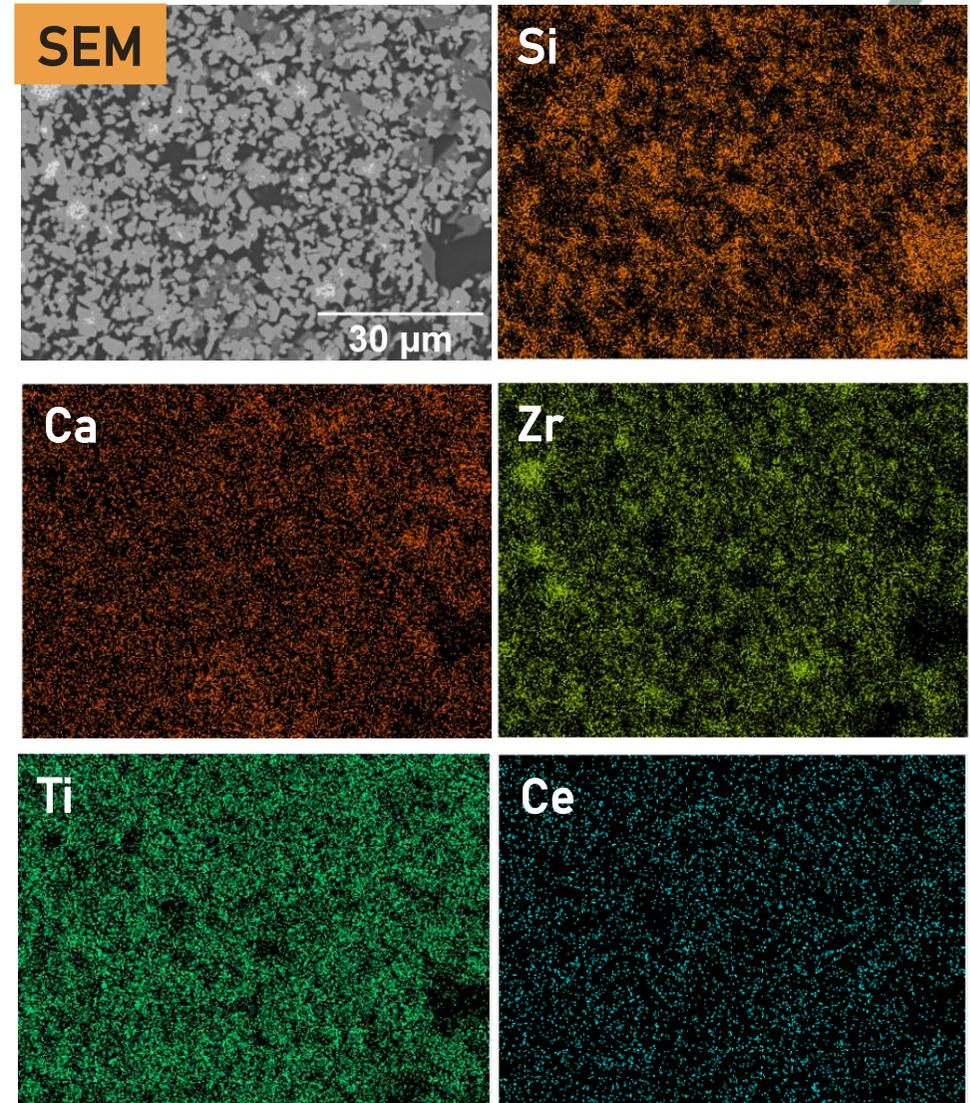
- $\text{CaZr}_{0.9}\text{Ce}_{0.1}\text{Ti}_2\text{O}_7 : \text{Na}_2\text{Al}_2\text{Si}_6\text{O}_{16}$ (70:30 ceramic glass ratio)
- Hot isostatic pressing (HIP) → Uniformly dense samples & void removal



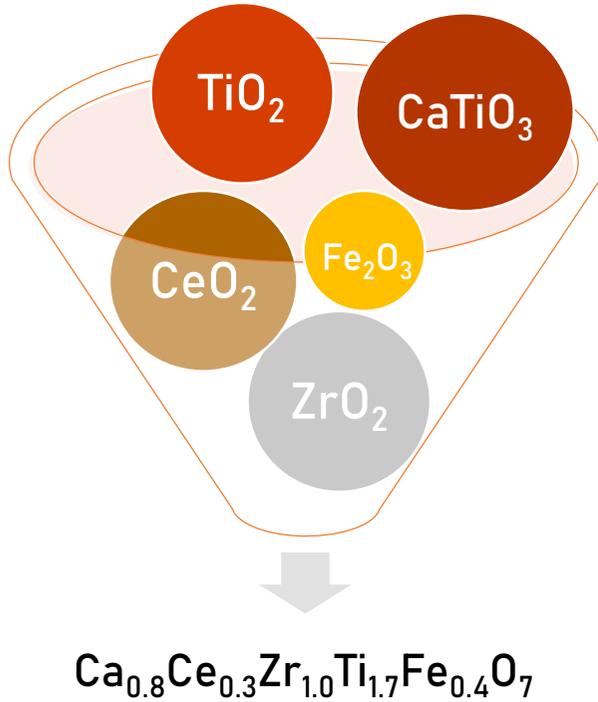
Characterisation of Ce-zirconolite glass ceramic



- No evidence of the perovskite CaTiO₃ phase on the XRD pattern
- ZrO₂ rich phase & Ca rich phase evidenced on SEM/EDS analyses

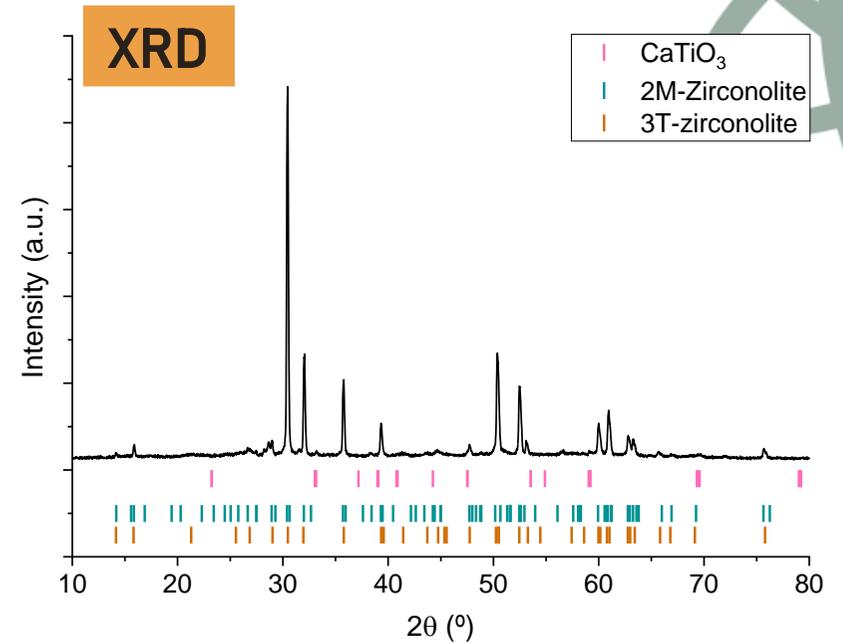


Synthesis & characterisation of $\text{Ca}_{0.8}\text{Ce}_{0.2}\text{Zr}_{0.9}\text{Ce}_{0.1}\text{Ti}_{1.7}\text{Fe}_{0.3}\text{O}_7$



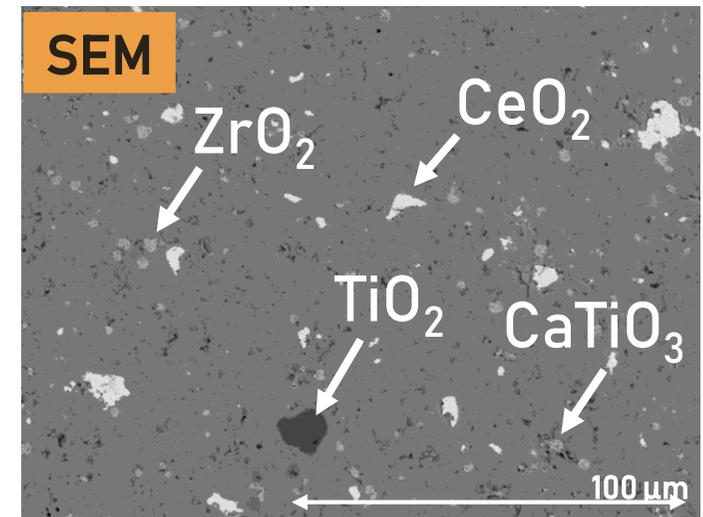
10 mol% ZrO_2 & 10 mol% TiO_2 excess

Avoid in-growth of $(\text{Ca,Ce})\text{TiO}_3$



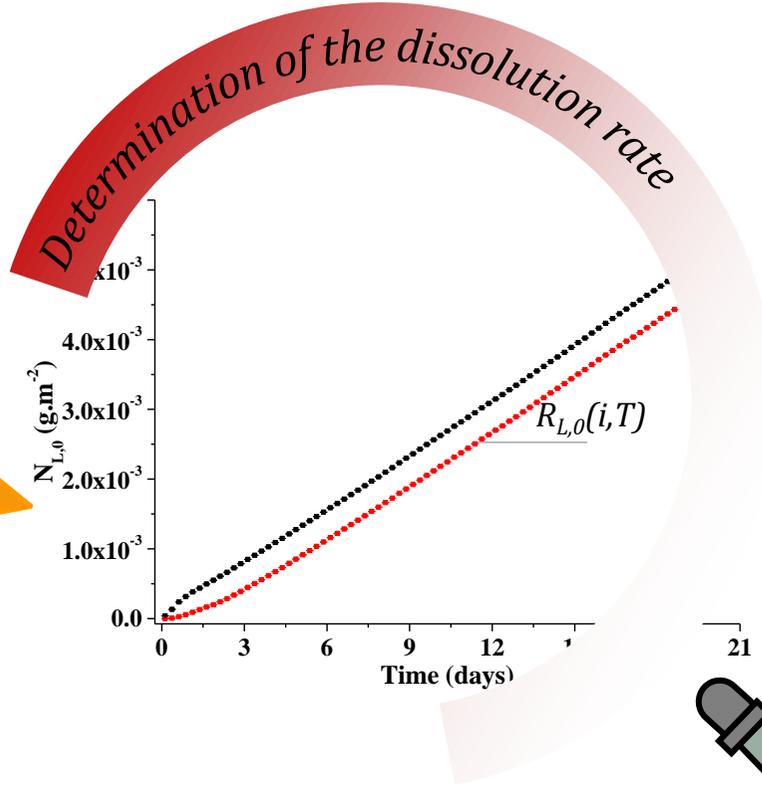
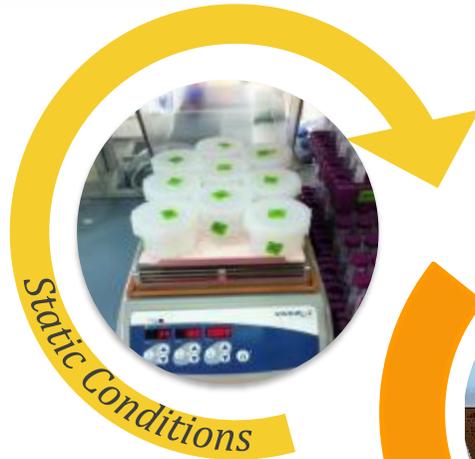
HIP

- Max temp 1350°C
- Max pressure 100MPa
- 10 hours
- 7 monoliths
- 4.734 g/cm³



Dissolution experiments methodology

Close to equilibrium



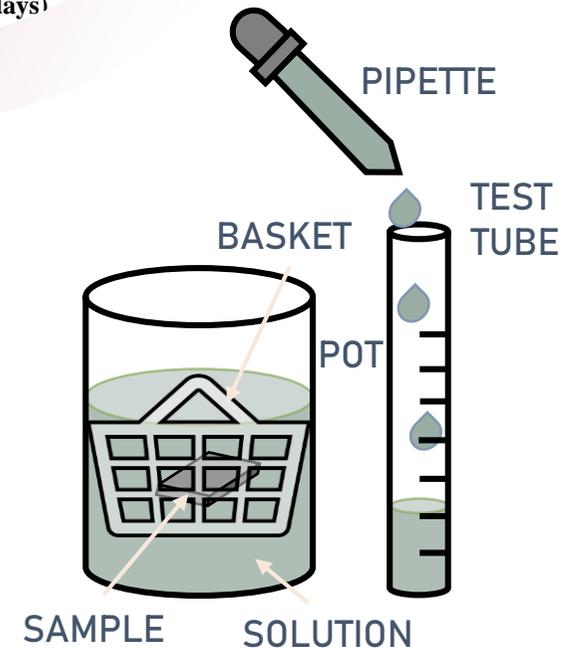
→ Study of the effect of the **dissolution media and saturation** on the normalized dissolution rate

$$R_{L,0}(i, T) = \frac{dN_L(i)}{dt} = \frac{1}{f_i} \times \frac{d}{dt} \left(\frac{C_i \times V}{S} \right)$$

$C_i \times V$: Amount of (E_i) in solution ($g.L^{-1}$)
 S : Effective surface area (m^2)
 f_i : Mass ratio of (E_i) in the solid

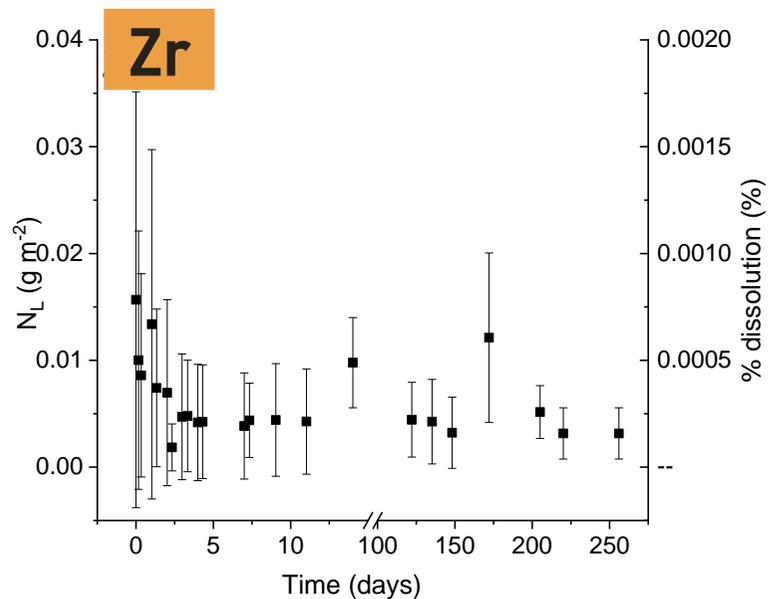
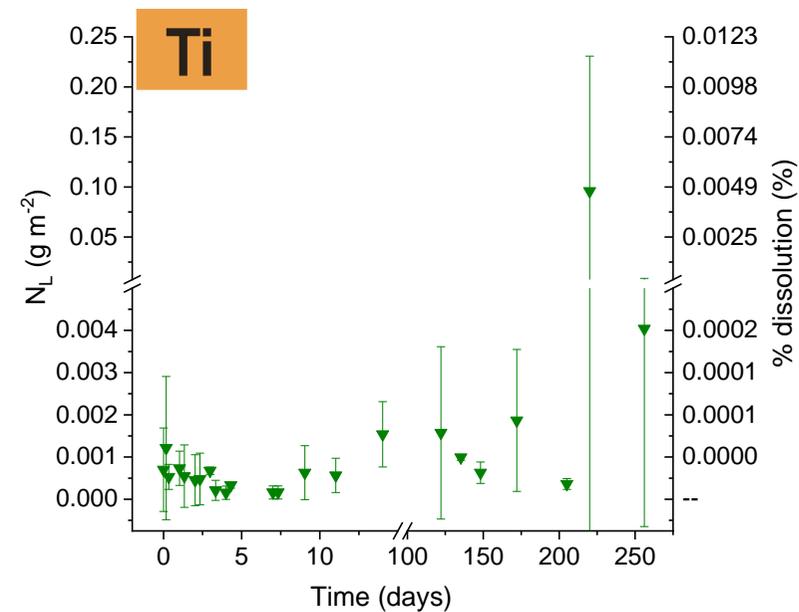
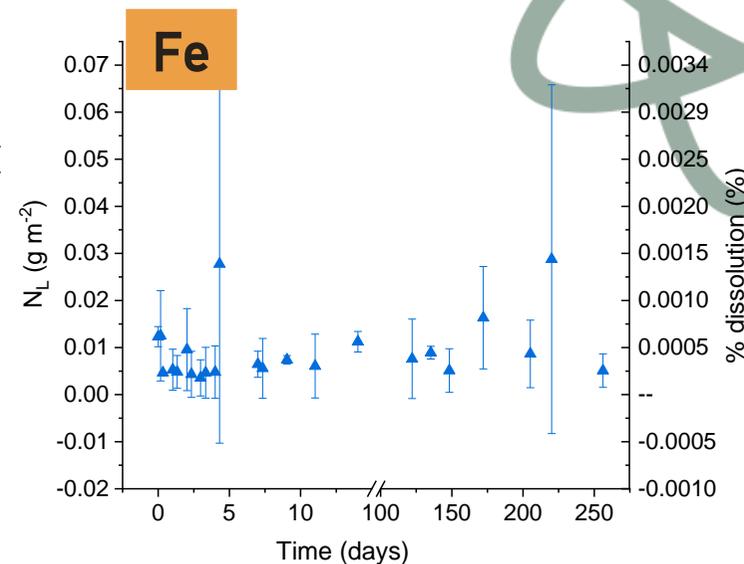
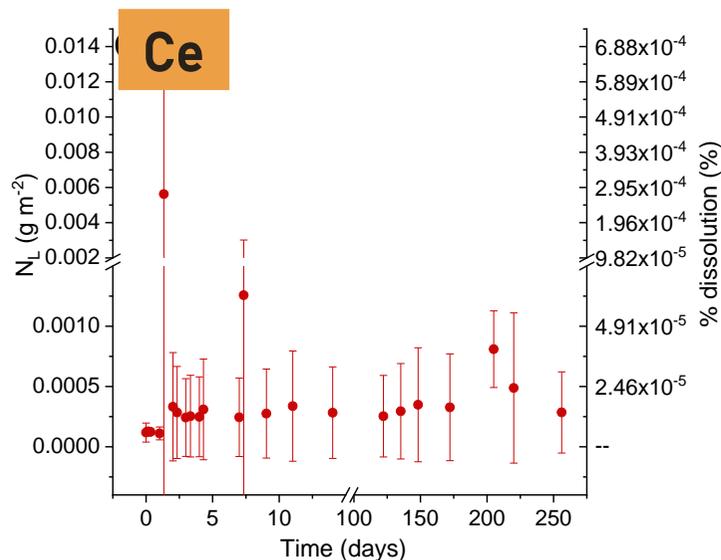
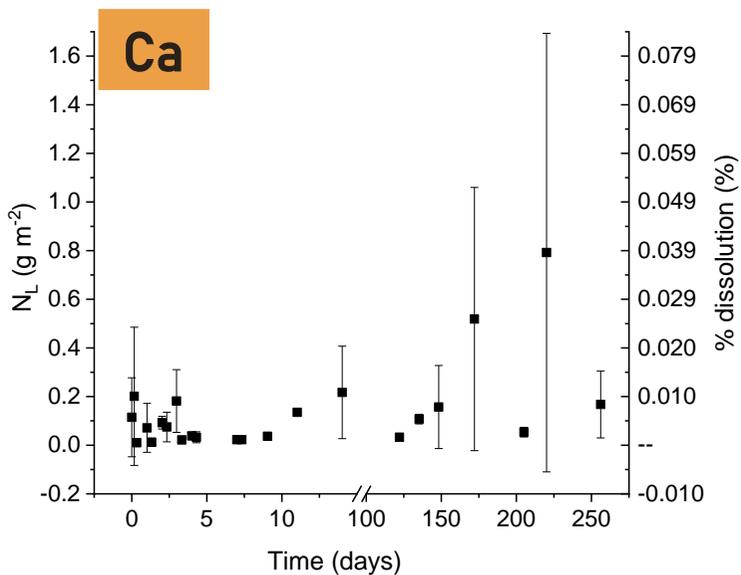
$R_L(i) \approx R_L(j)$ Congruent dissolution

$R_L(i) \neq R_L(j)$ Incongruent dissolution



First durability results

19 mM NaCl + 1mM NaHCO₃ – 40°C



Great durability over time in conditions relevant to geological disposal

SI (TiO₂) = 1.74



Conclusion

1. HIPed zirconolite glass-ceramic & ceramic synthesised

2. HIP resulted in secondary phase formation, but a uniformly dense structure

3. First results in dissolution evidenced a great durability after 256 days

4. Dissolution experiments initiated for zirconolite glass-ceramic

Future work

- Determine the initial amount of secondary phases
- Synthesis & characterisation of HIPed U-doped zirconolite glass-ceramic
- Initiate static and dynamic dissolution experiments at different temperatures and acidity





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ANSTO

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Immobilisation Science Laboratory