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Nuclear Fusion and Plasma Physics

Lecture 10

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Swiss Plasma Center

Lay-out

Part I

Plasma wall interaction

Part II

Structural materials

Part I – Plasma-wall interaction

Requirements for reactor first wall

Limiters and divertors

The plasma scrape off layer

Advantages of divertor concept

First wall materials for ITER

Further challenges for divertors

Innovative divertor configurations

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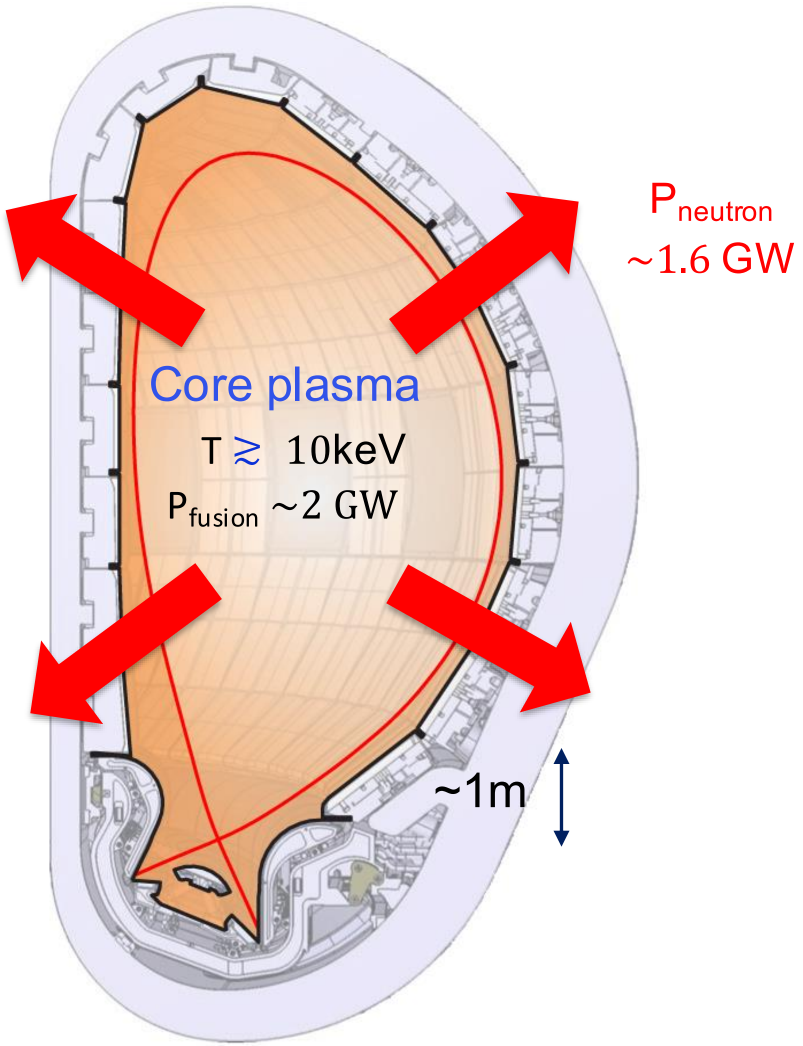
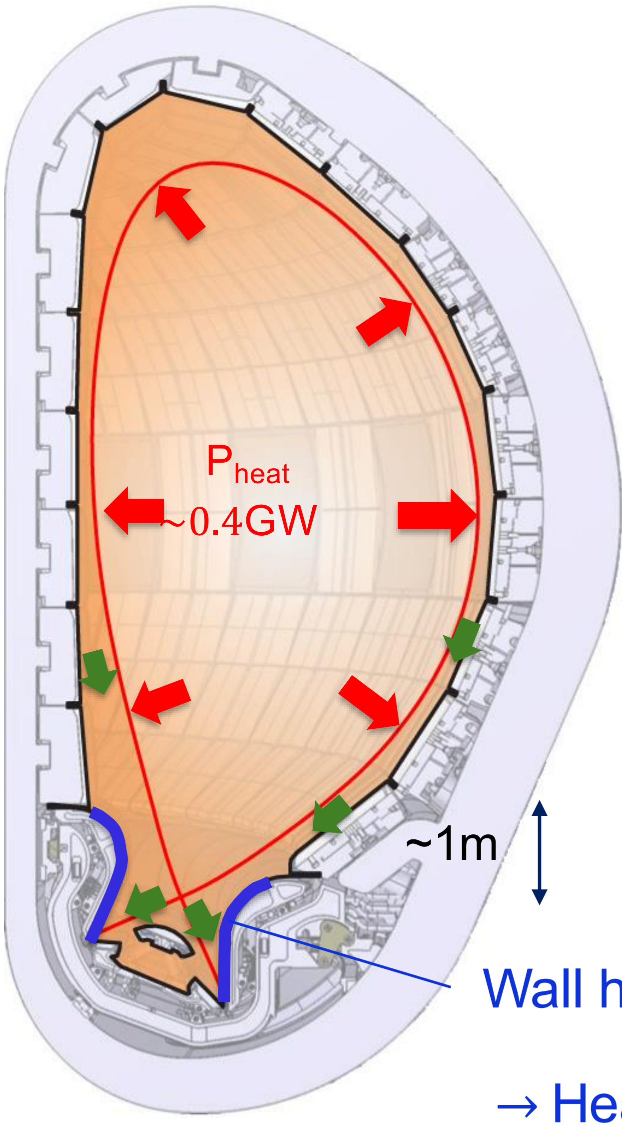
Power on a tokamak reactor first wall



Power on a tokamak reactor first wall



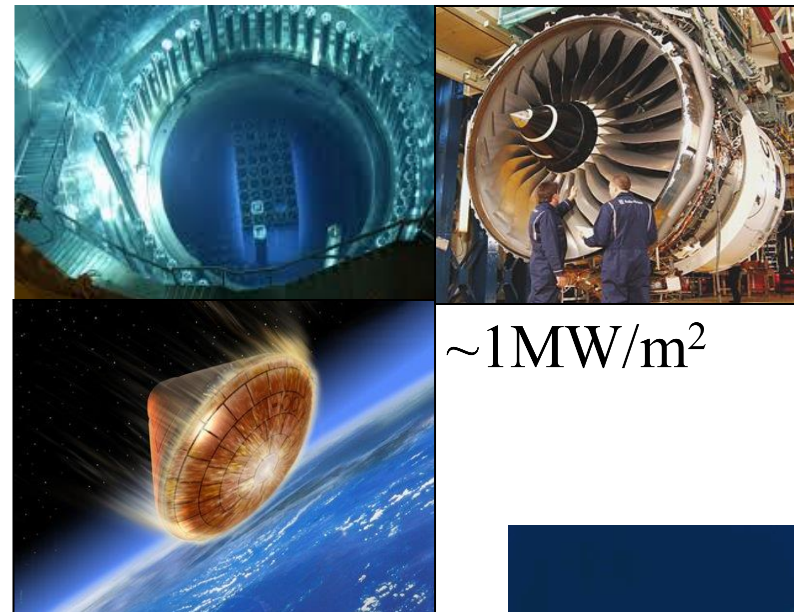
Wall heat flux ≤ 10MW/m^2; $T_{plasma} \lesssim$ a few eV

→ Heat exhaust challenge

Requirements for reactor first wall

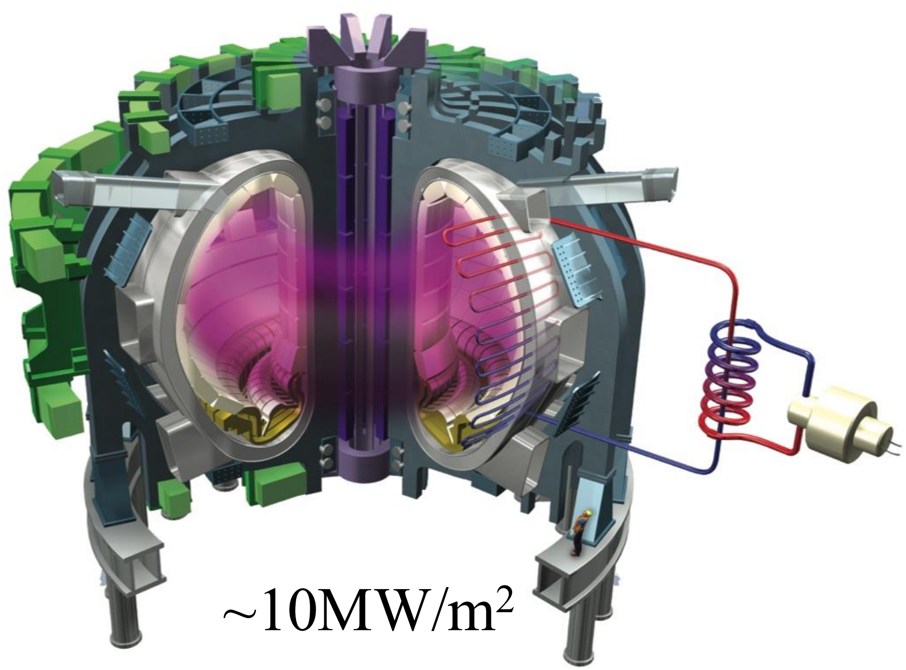
Withstand very large heat fluxes on the material

Limit erosion, melting



~1MW/m^2

~80MW/m^2



~10MW/m^2

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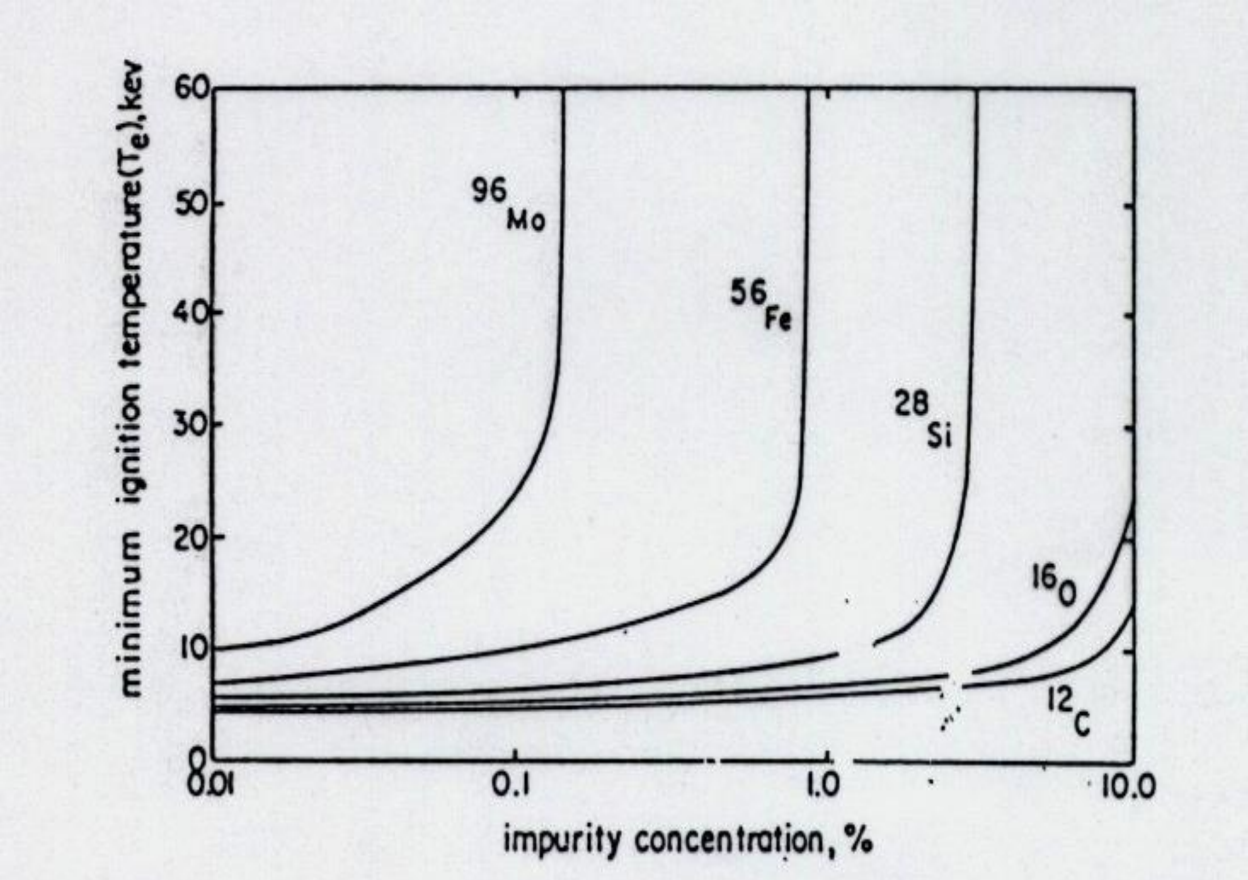
Requirements for reactor first wall

Keep the plasma pure

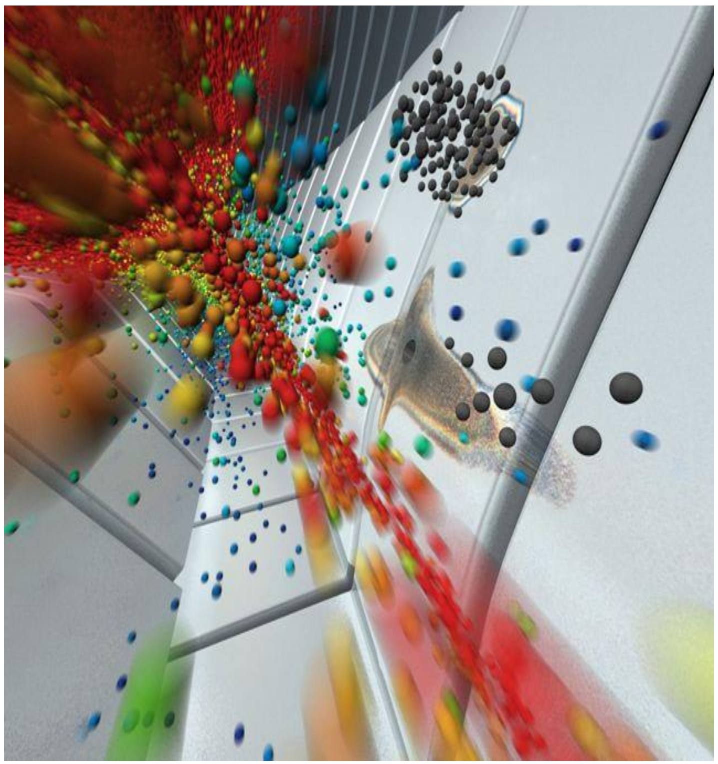
$$\frac{P_b}{\text{volume}} \simeq A n^2 Z_{\text{eff}} T_e^{1/2}$$



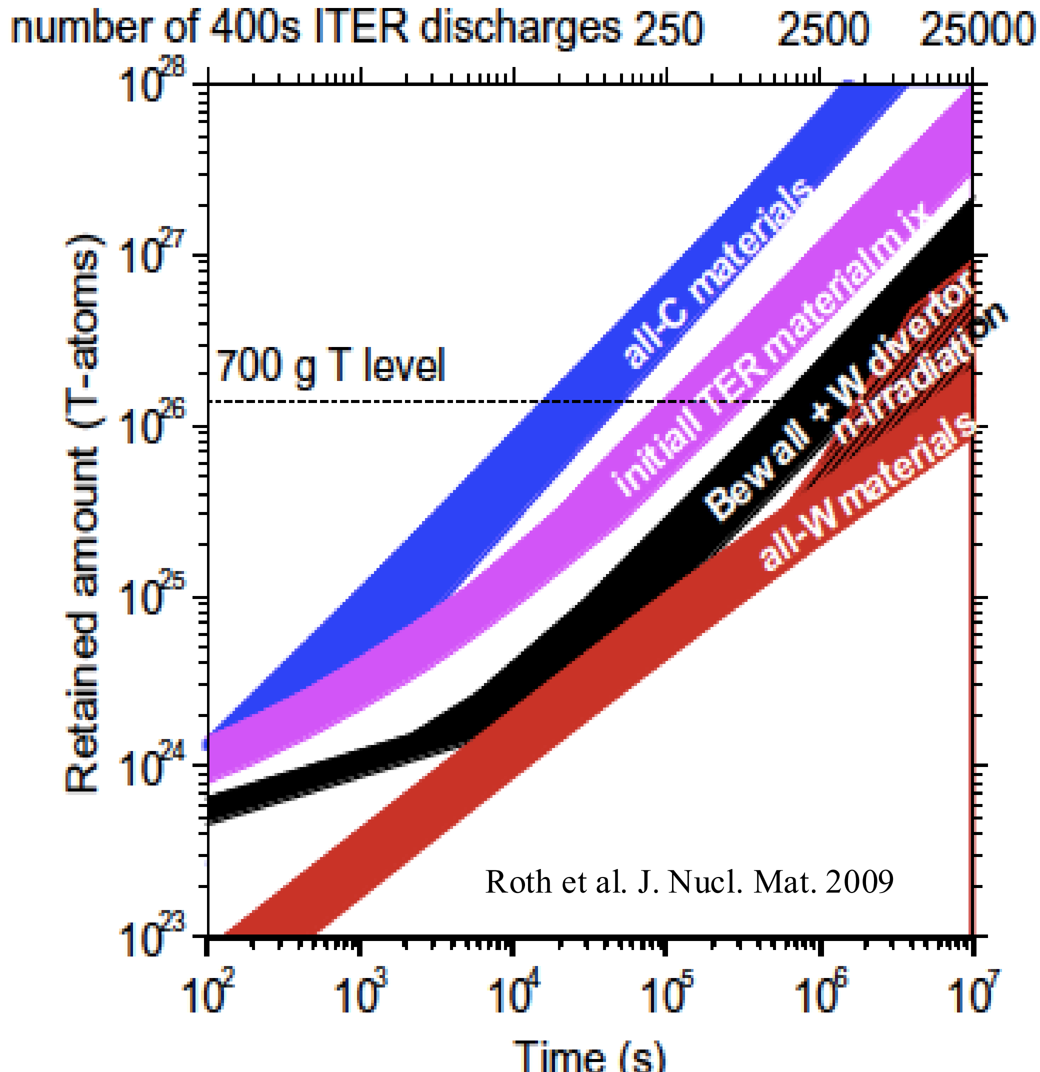
Minimum ignition temperature goes up with impurity concentration and with the atomic number of the impurity species

Requirements for reactor first wall

Minimise retention of Tritium
(co-deposition with Carbon)



Courtesy of Leena Aho-Mantila and Jyrki Hokkanen
(CSC – IT Center for Science Ltd).



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Requirements for reactor first wall

Exhaust fusion & external heating power, withstanding large heat fluxes

Keep the plasma pure

Minimise retention of Tritium

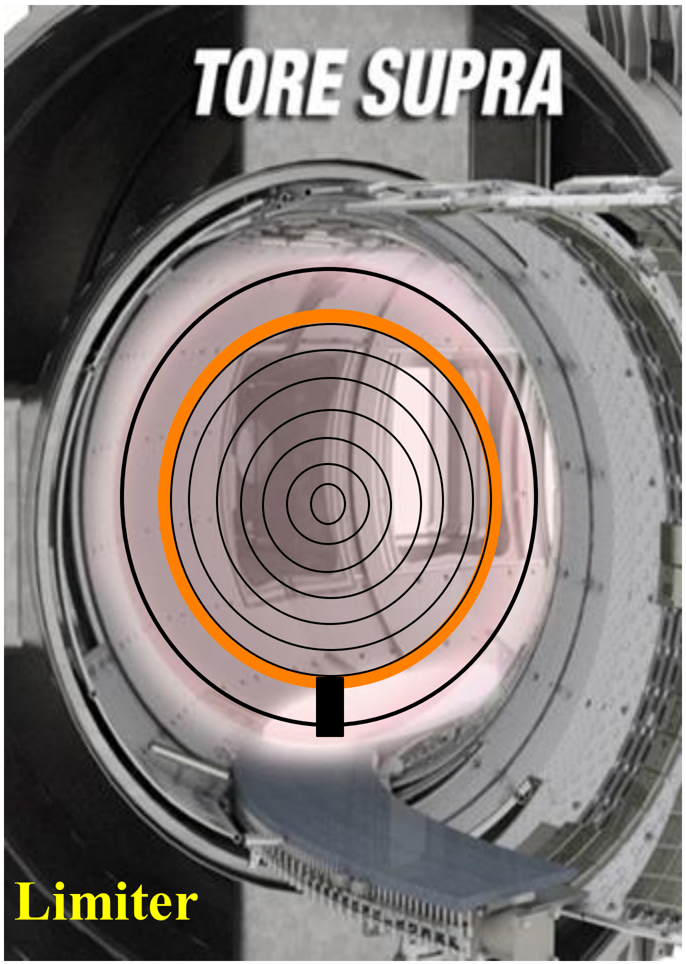
Minimise dust production

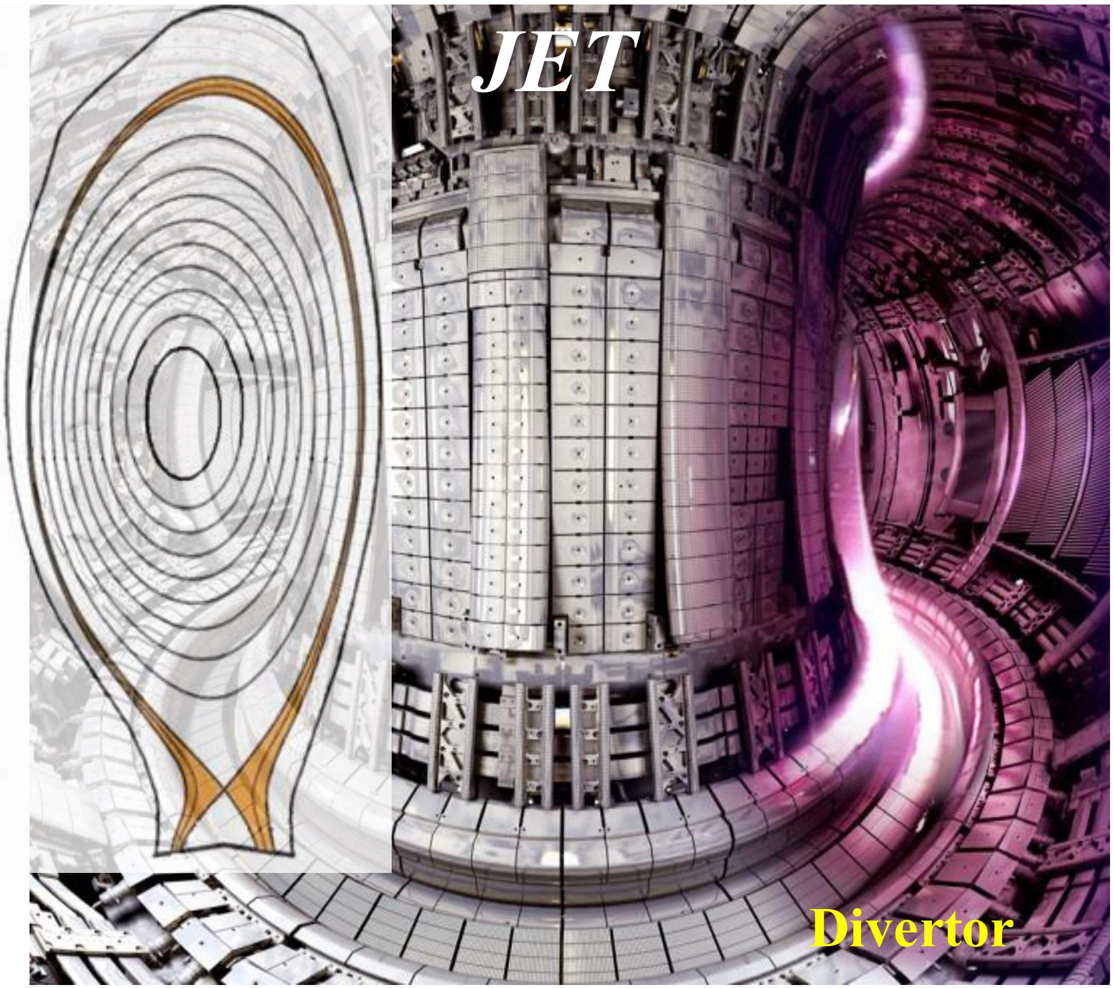
Provide vacuum containment

Remove Helium ashes (pumping)

Limiters and divertors

Direct contact of plasma with vessel wall must be limited to well-defined areas, which take the power carried by particles and not radiated by plasma





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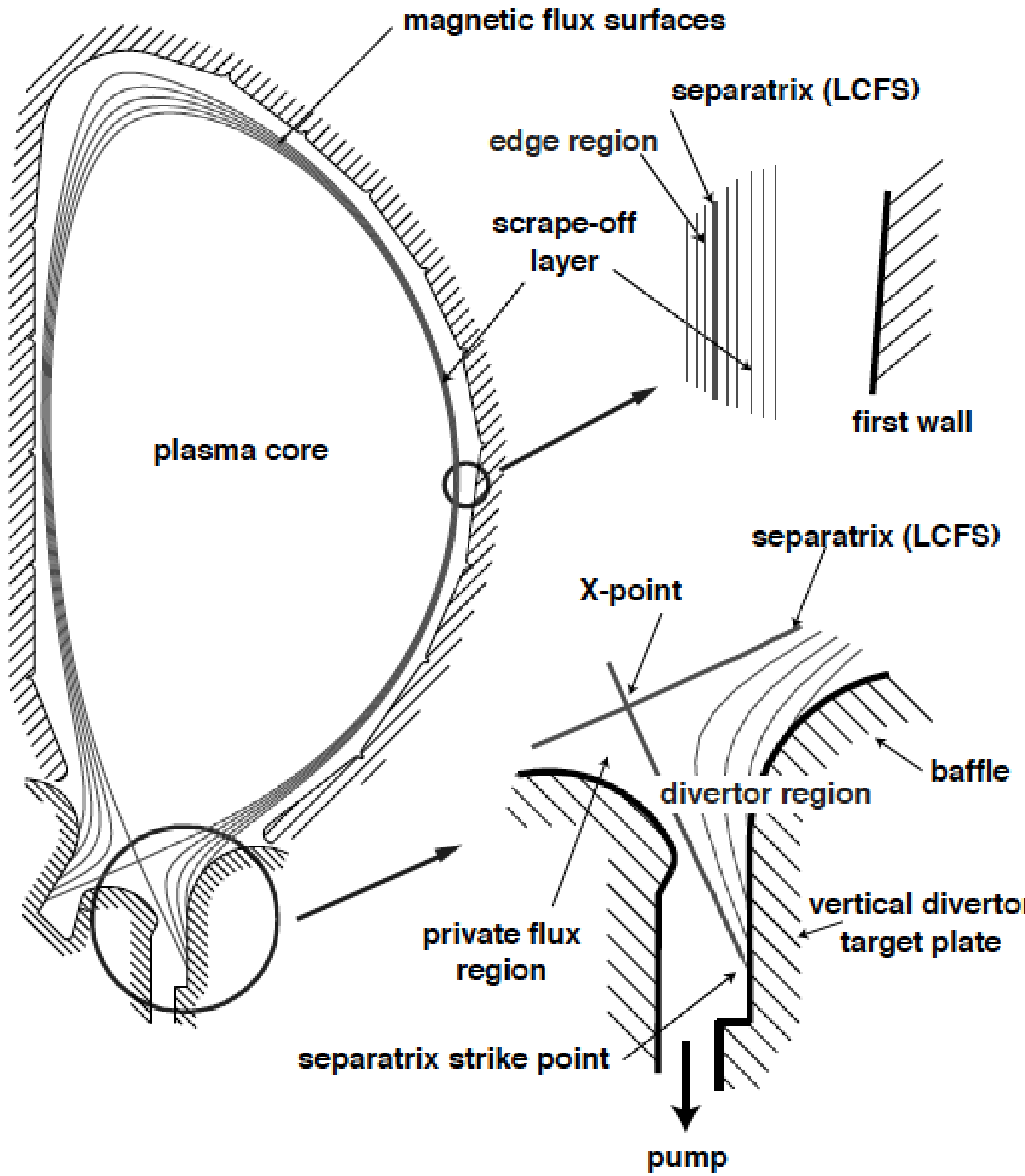
The Scrape-Off-Layer

The Scrape-Off-Layer (SOL) is the outer layer of plasma in direct contact with the material wall

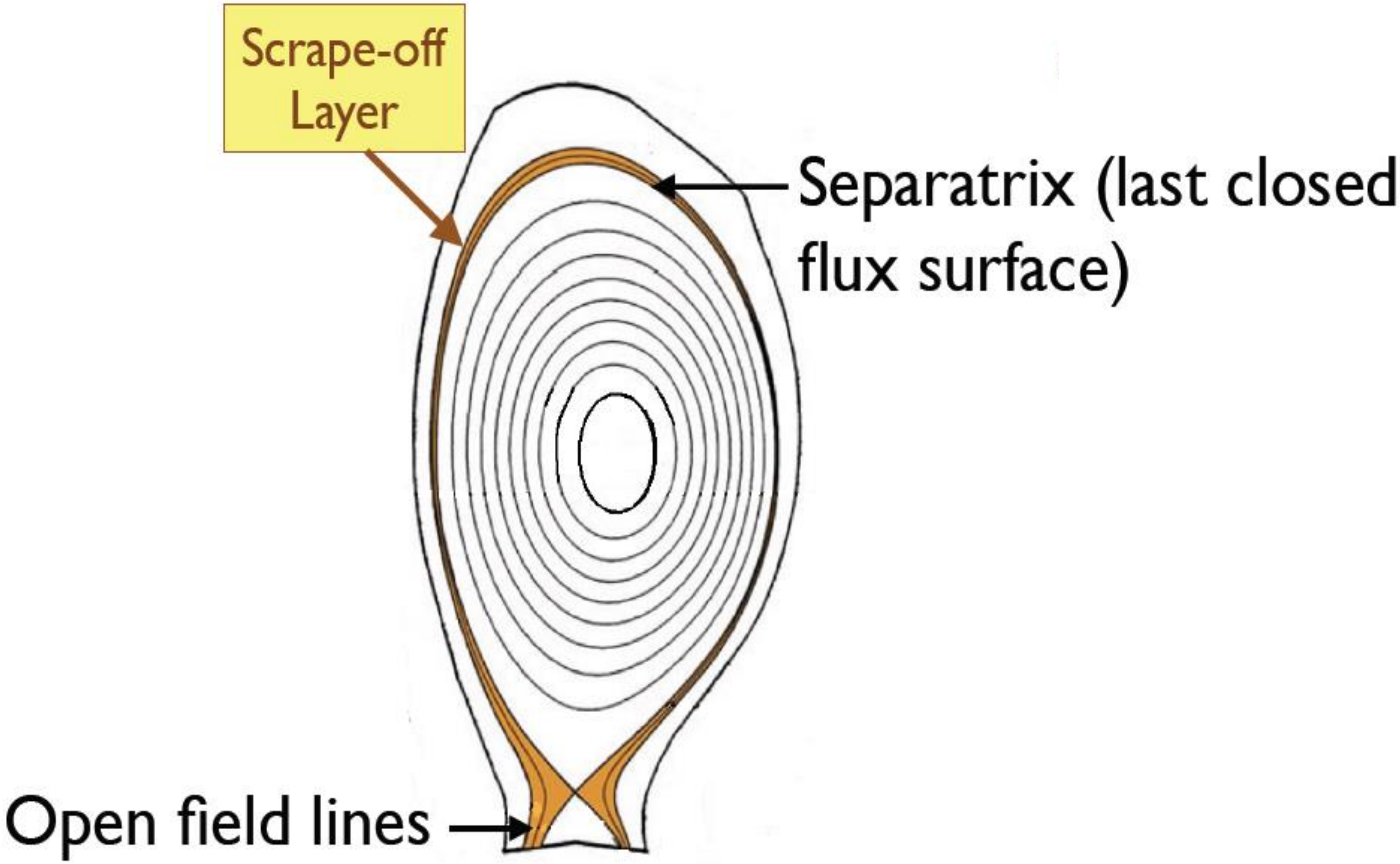
The SOL thickness results from balance between cross-field and parallel dynamics



Advantages of divertor – lower power flux

Long connection length parallel to B (= length of field line before it touches the wall, e.g. in ITER ~150m) reduces parallel power flux arriving to target

Parallel gradient of T allows low T in divertor chamber (~5eV)



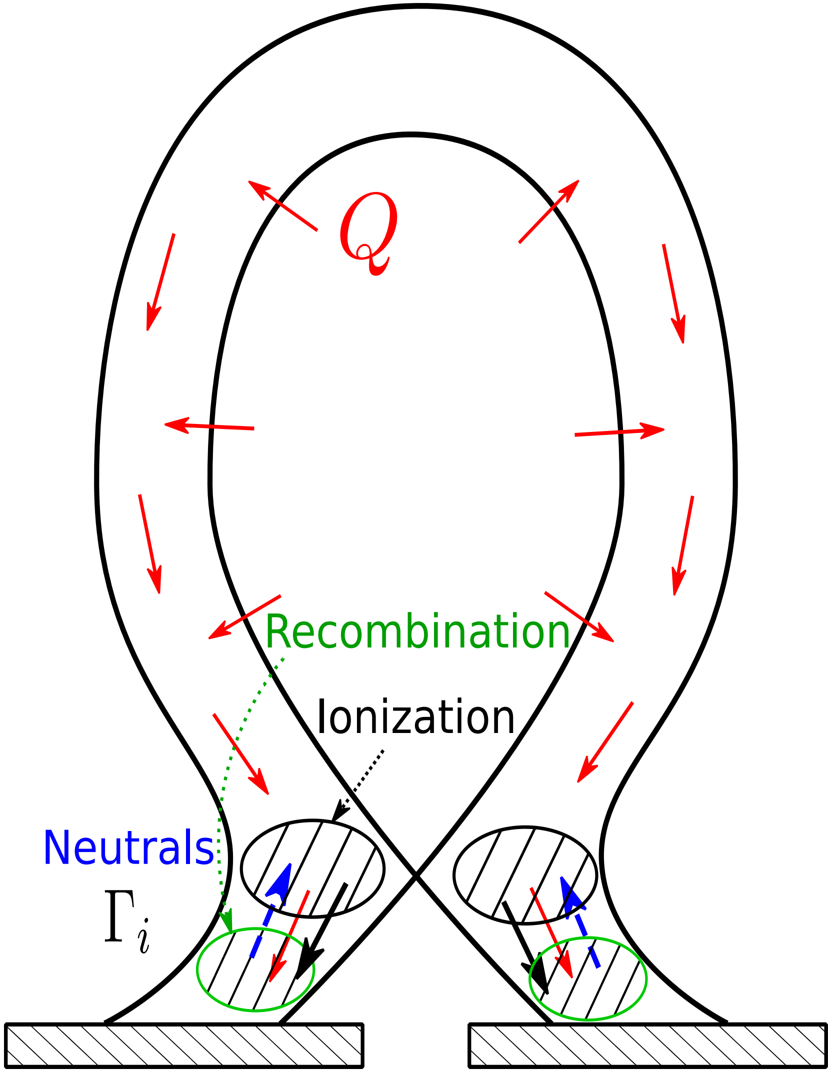
Advantages of divertor - *detachment*

At ~5eV $\sigma_{\text{ionisation}} < \sigma_{\text{charge exchange}}$

Energy is transferred from ions to neutrals, which spread power deposition (*neutral cushion*)

T is further reduced and e-i volumetric recombination occurs close to the targets

Low energy flux to the target as most of power is dissipated in radiation



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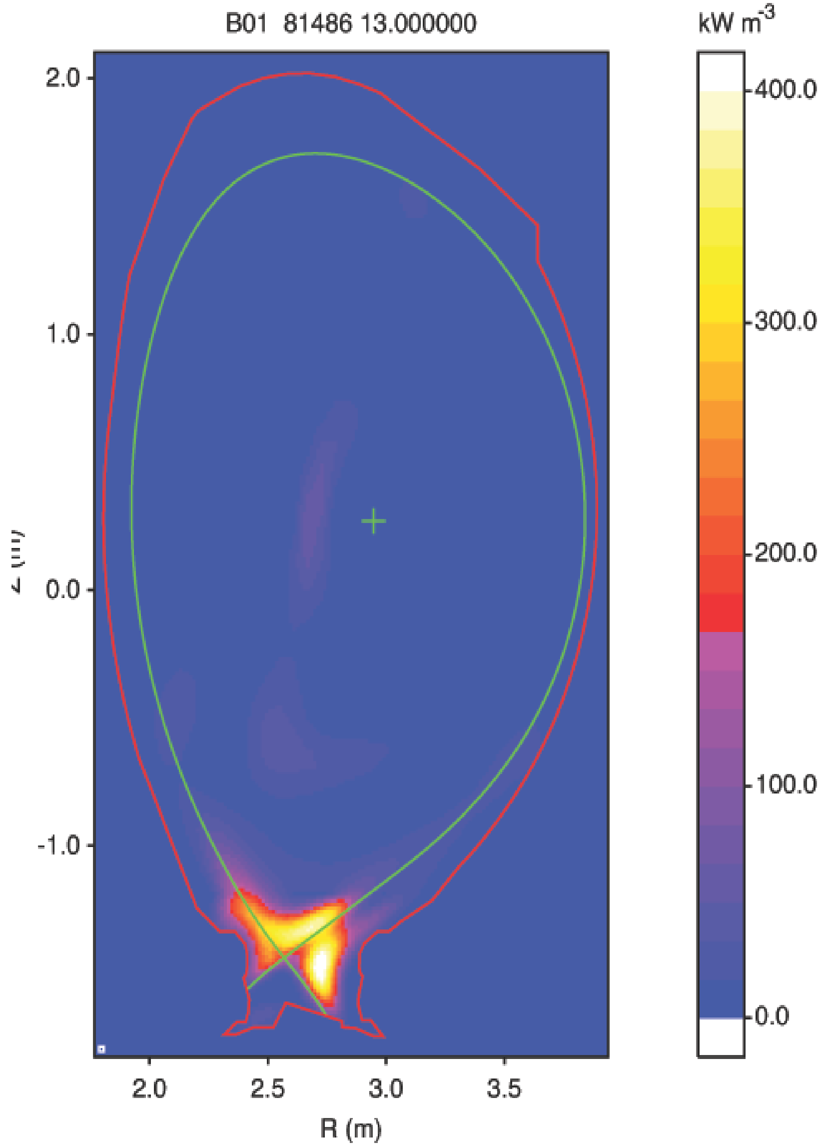

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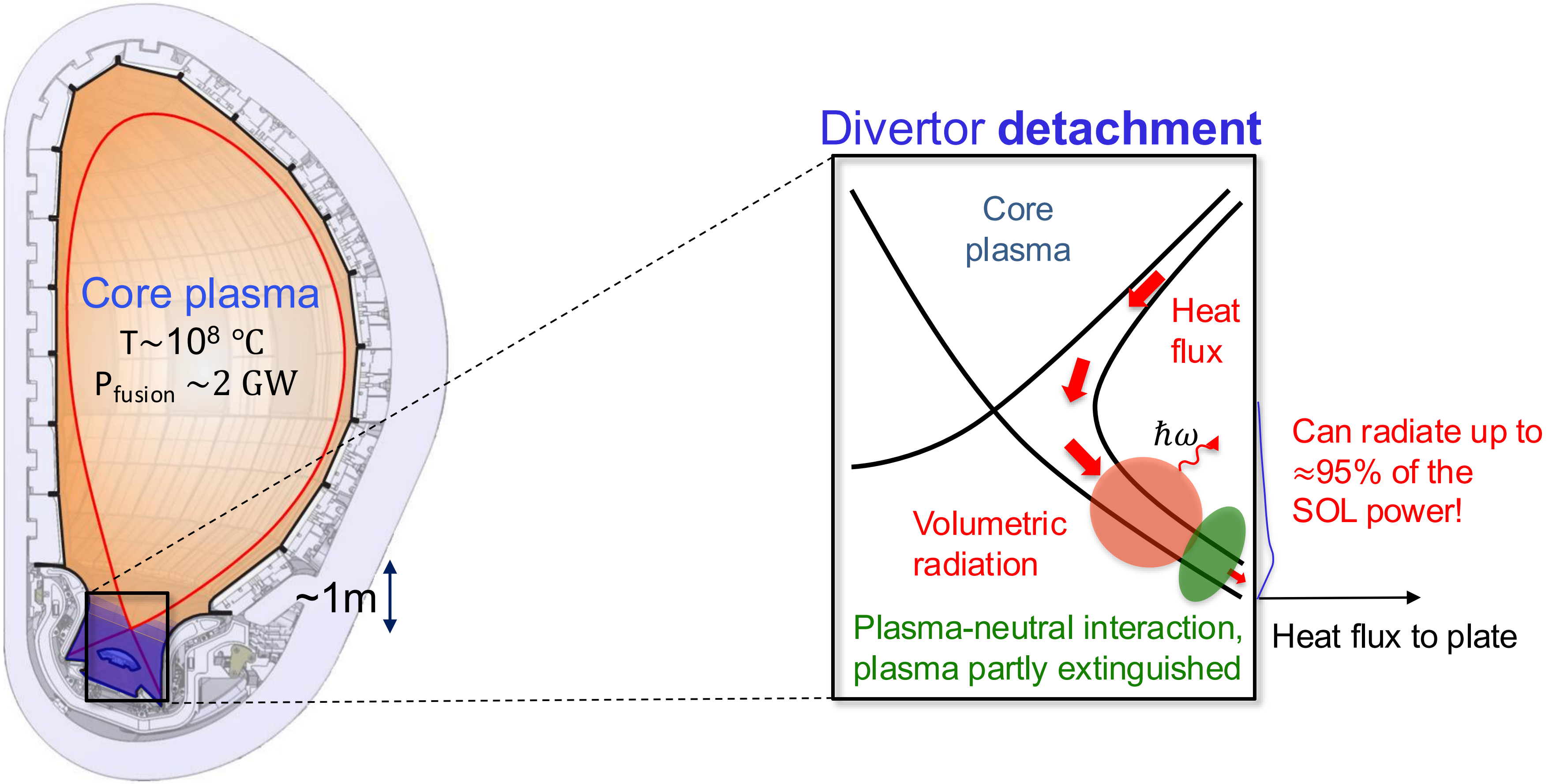
Advantages of divertor - *detachment*



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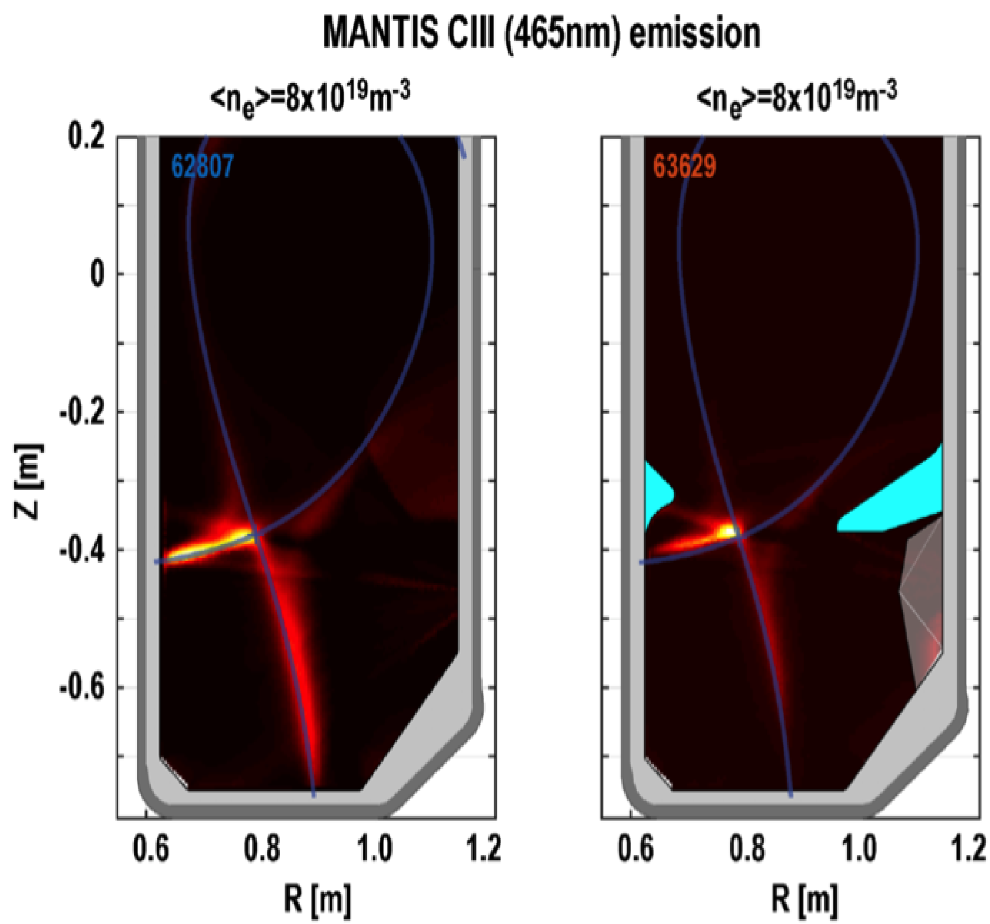
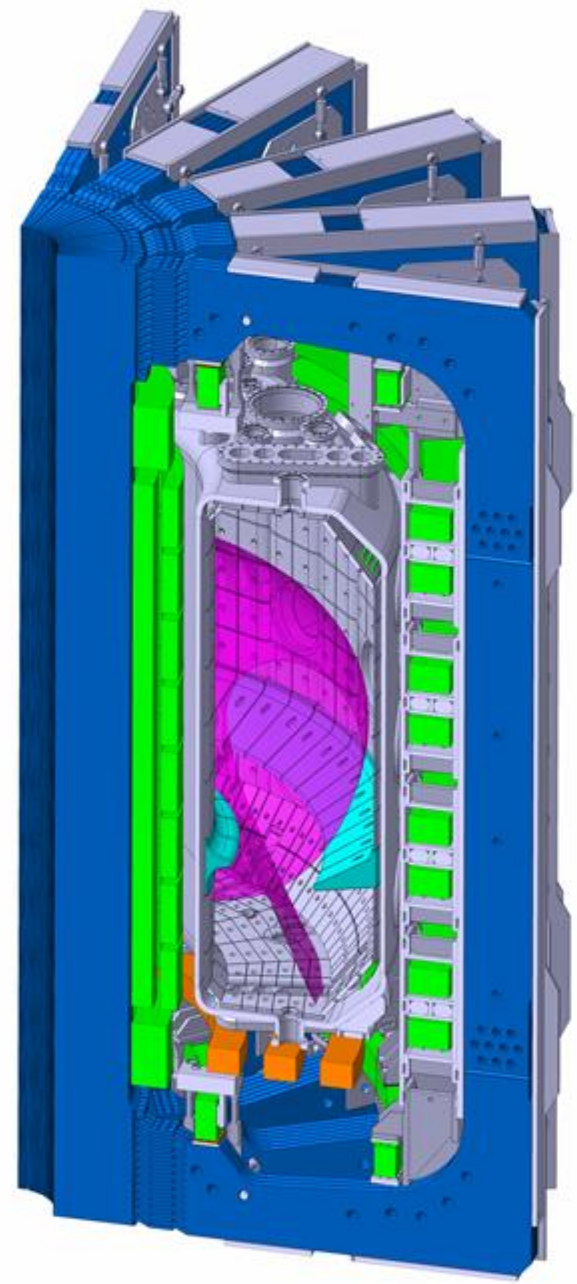
Ex. of plasma detachment on TCV

Internal baffles allow higher neutral and plasma pressure in the divertor and easier plasma detachment





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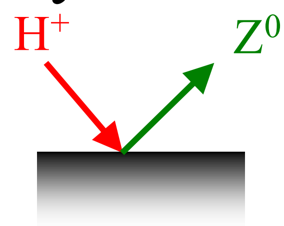
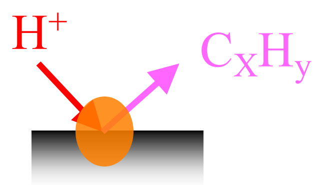
Advantages of divertor – lower erosion

Because of lower plasma temperature, reduction in erosion and impurity production by

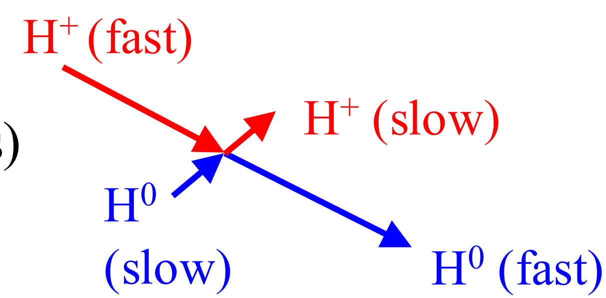
Physical sputtering by ions



Chemical sputtering by ions

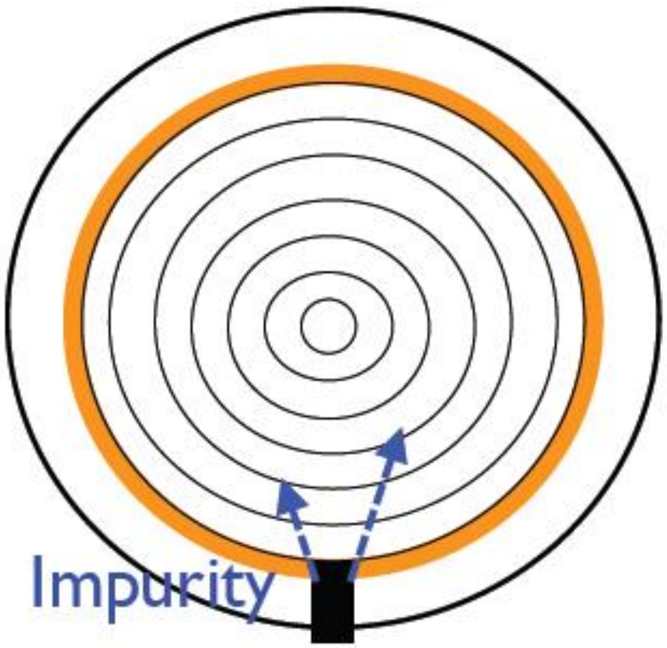


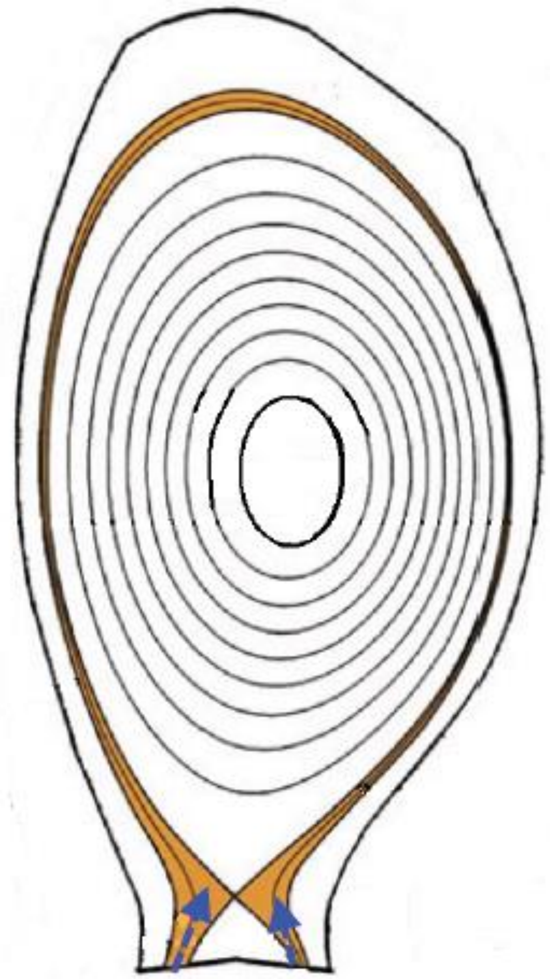
Neutral impact (charge exchange collisions)



Advantages of divertor – less impurities

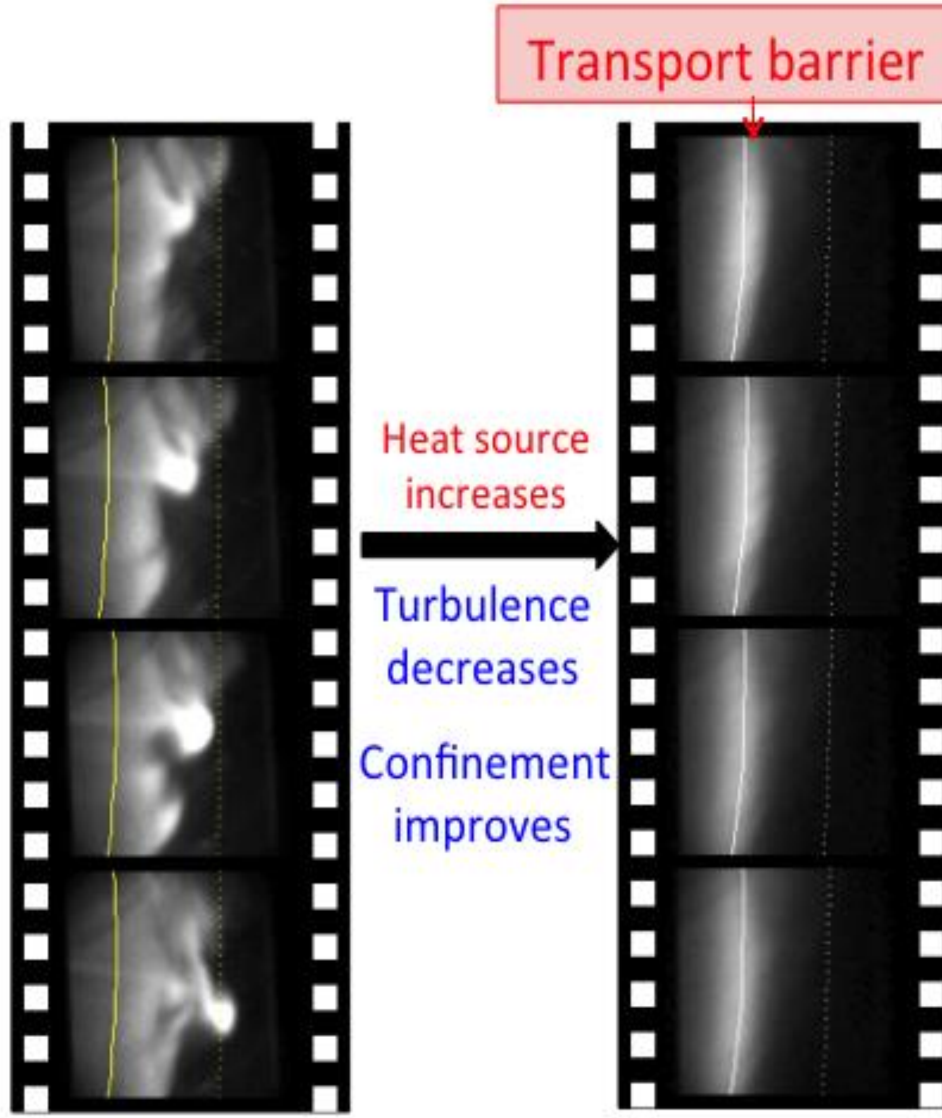
Reduction in impurity transport back to core plasma





Advantages of divertor – confinement

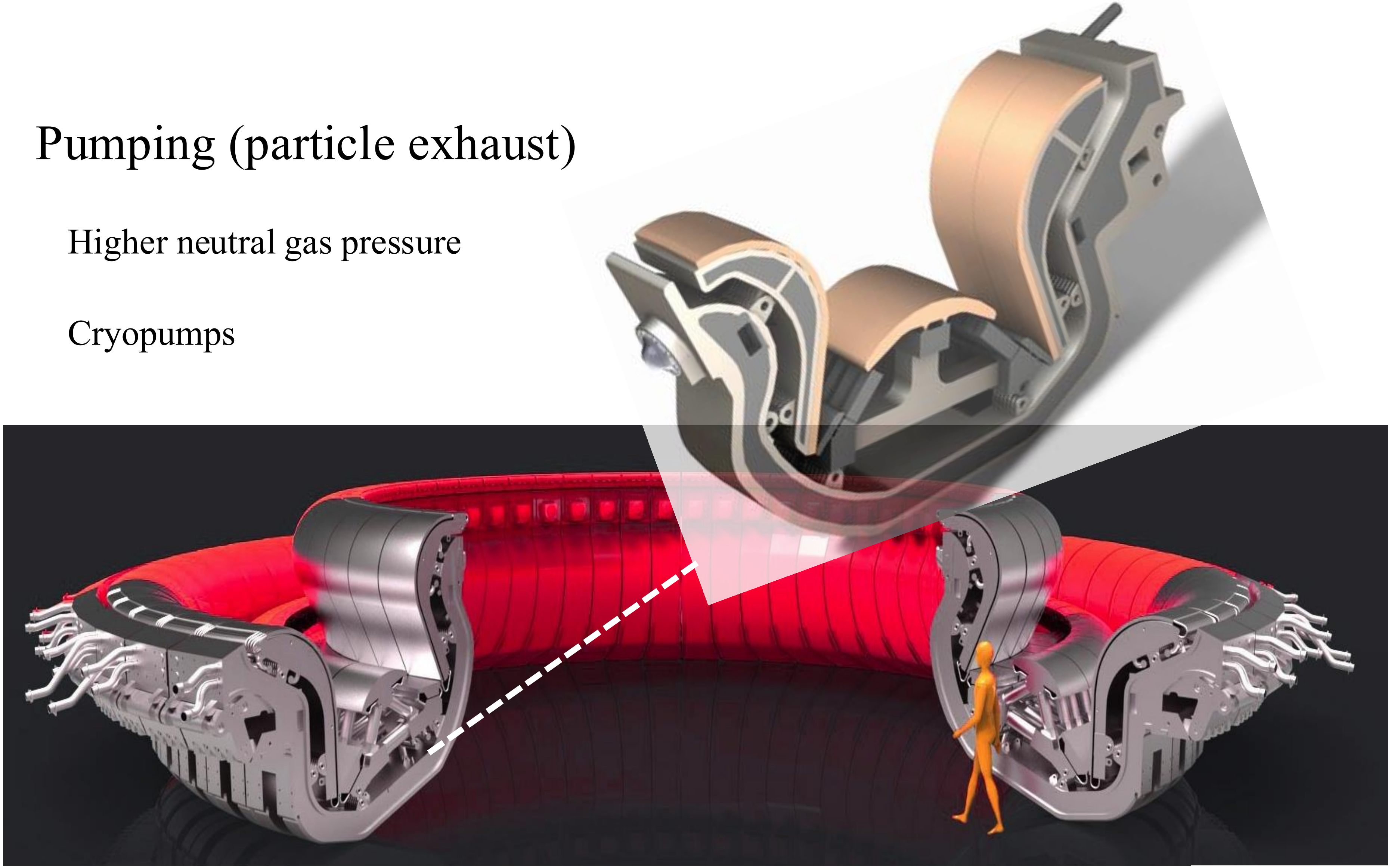
Easier access to high confinement regimes



Advantages of divertor - pumping

Pumping (particle exhaust)

- Higher neutral gas pressure
- Cryopumps



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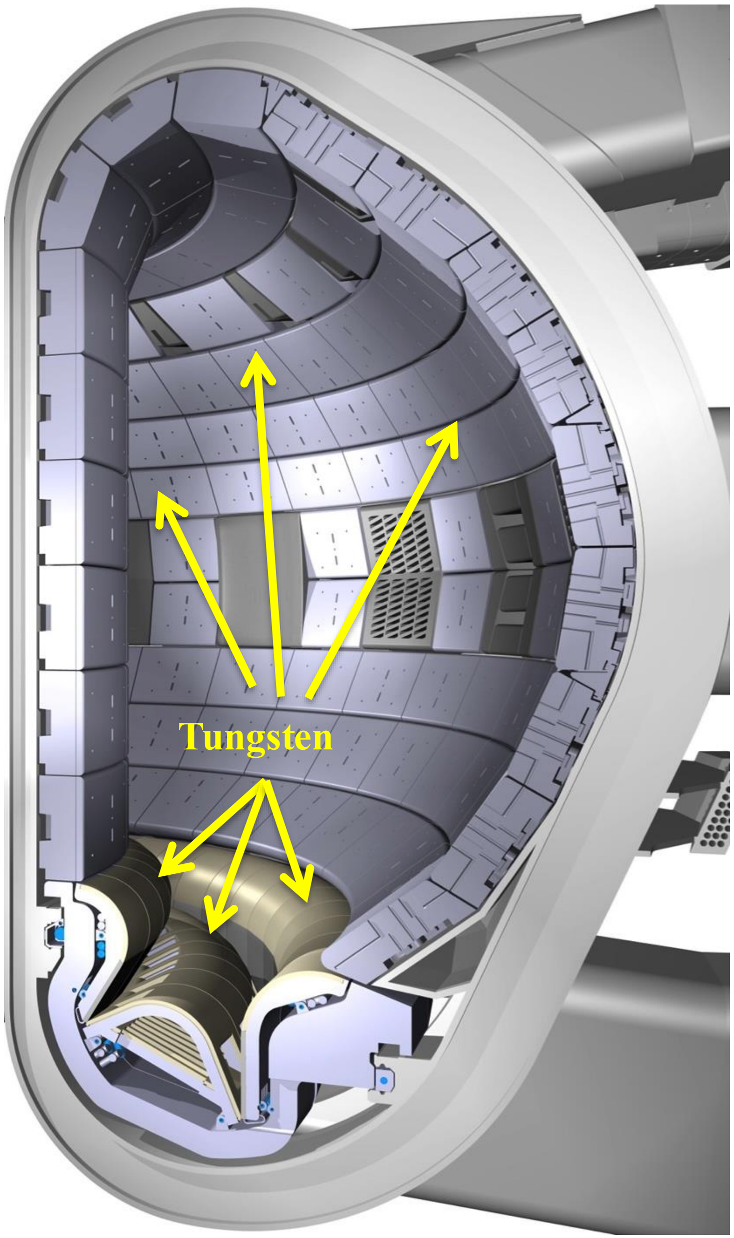
First wall materials for ITER

ITER walls will be made of W

Low T-retention, high threshold for sputtering

Materials chosen also to minimise deterioration of thermo-mechanical properties under neutron irradiation



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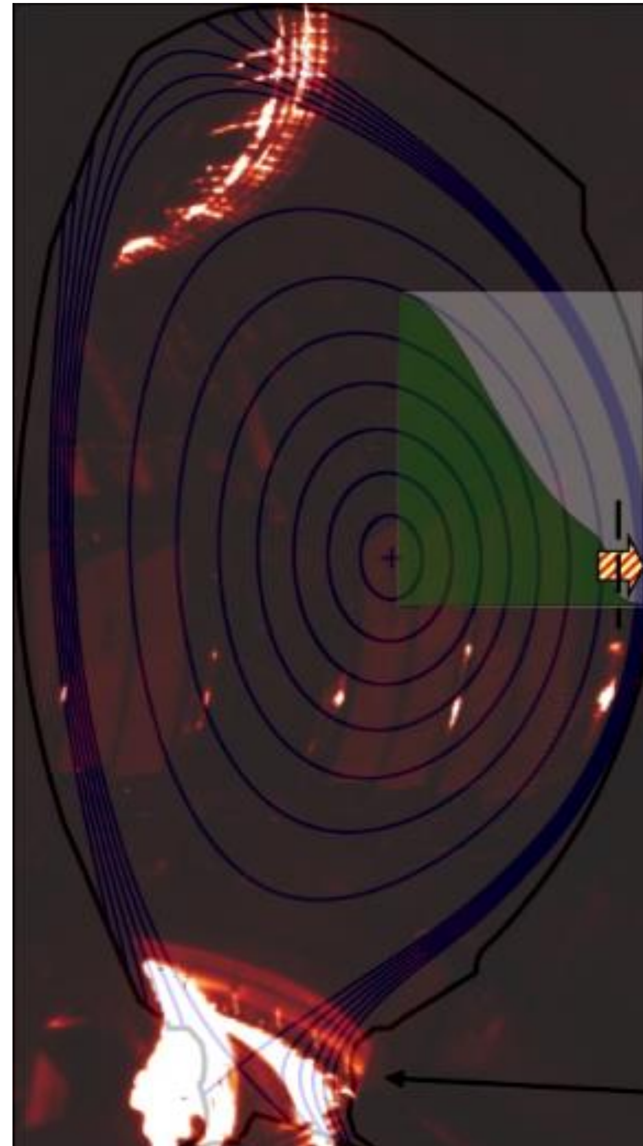
Further challenges for divertors
Transients

Edge Localised Modes, ELMs
Large edge gradients give rise to instabilities that generate outwards bursts of energy and particles → large thermal loads

Ex. ELMs in ITER

15MJ in 0.2ms over 6m^2
→ 10GW/m^2
→ surface temperature ~ 6000° C
→ melting



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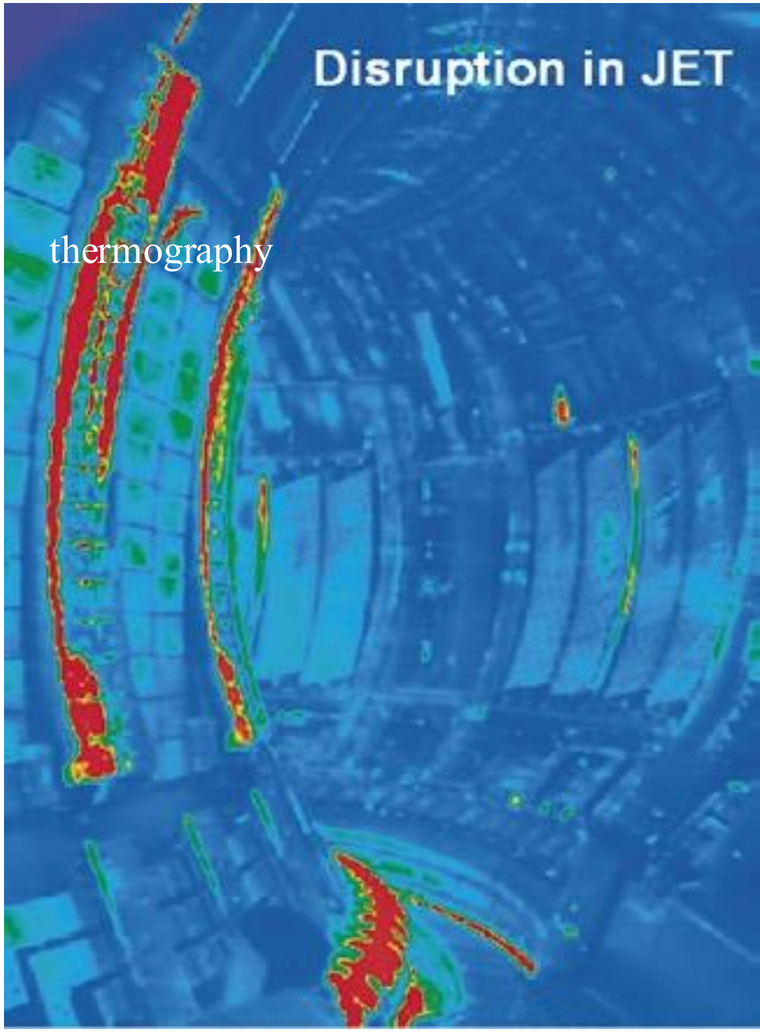
Further challenges for divertors
Transients



Disruptions
Sudden loss of plasma leading to large deposition of energy on walls

Ex. ITER full energy disruptions: peak energy densities on divertor of 5-20 MJ/m^{-2} over 3ms
W divertor lifetime exceeded in ~300 disruptions

We don’t have materials that withstand for sufficiently long time these thermal loads, therefore we need to act on plasma to avoid or mitigate these violent transient events

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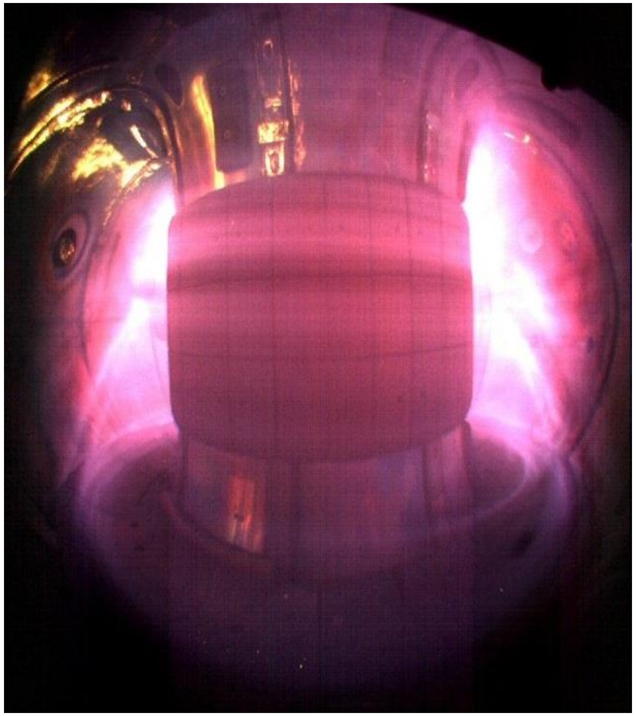
Innovative divertor configurations

New divertor configurations are explored for DEMO and reactors

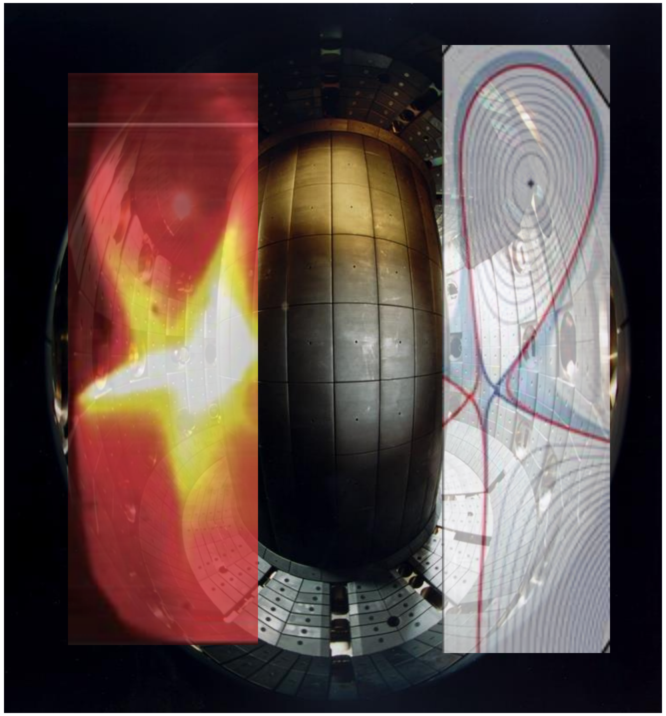
Limit material erosion, increase radiated power with detached plasma, keep plasma pure

Ex. of alternative concepts: liquid metal, super-X, snowflake, …



Liquid metal walls
Compass (CZ)

Super-X divertor
MAST-U (UK)



Snowflake divertor
TCV (CH)

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Summary of part I

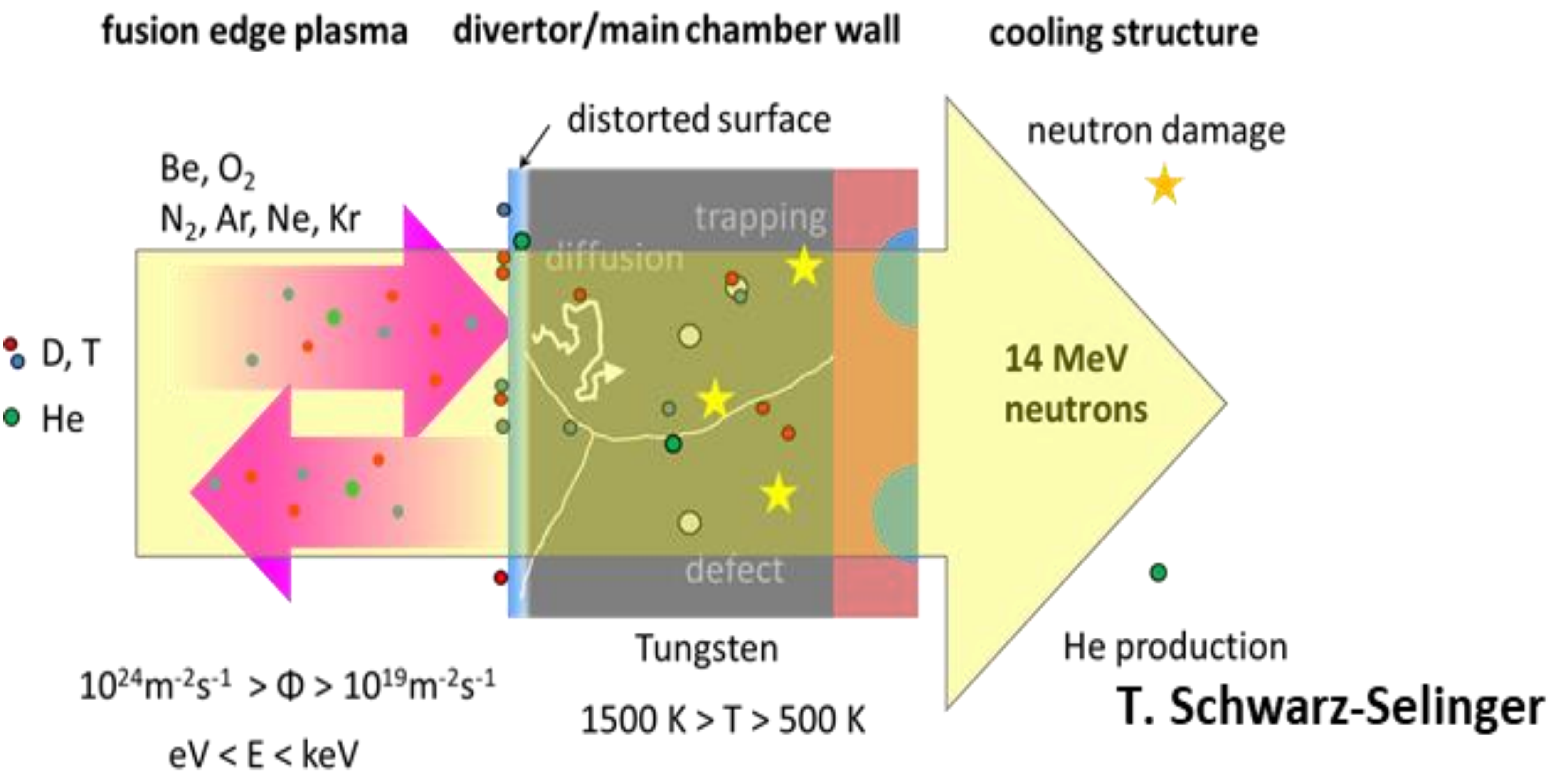
Reactor first wall must satisfy a number of stringent requirements

Divertor concept is adopted as it has several advantages

New divertor configurations are explored for DEMO and reactors

Plasma wall interaction results from integration of plasma, atomic and materials physics

From the plasma to the material walls



Part II – Structural materials

Requirements for fusion materials

Fusion vs. fission

Effects of 14 MeV neutrons

Evolution of materials properties

Candidate structural materials

Tests of fusion materials

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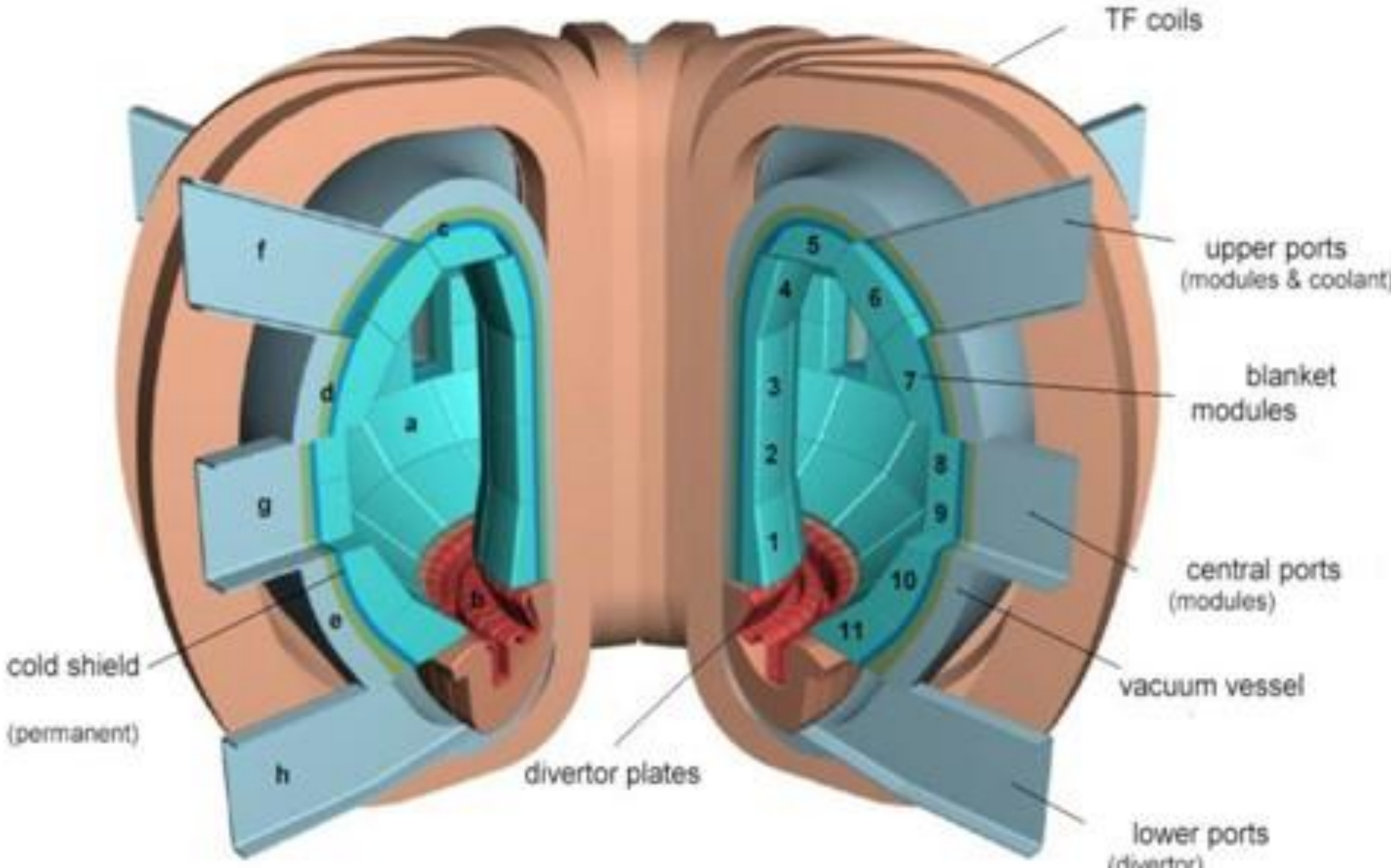
Part II – Structural materials

Main irradiated components



Requirements for structural materials

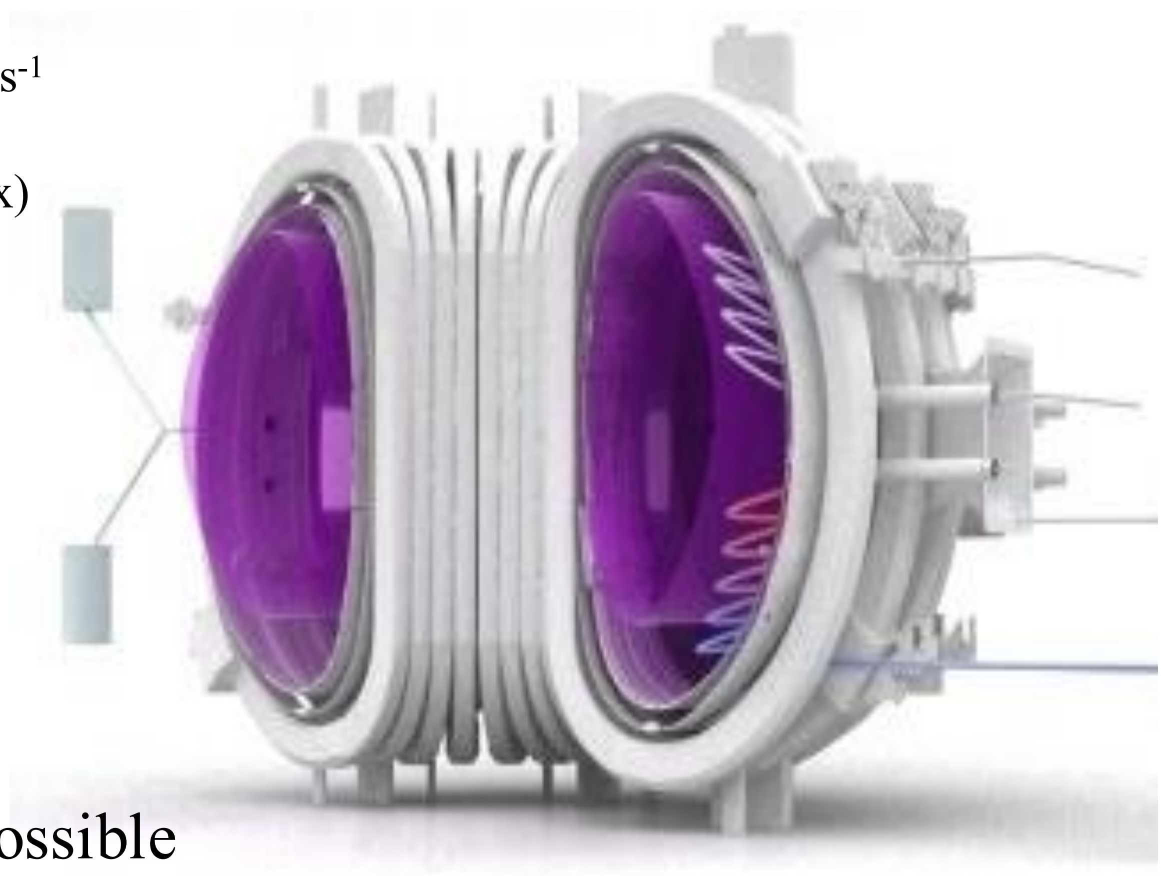
Withstand very large fluxes of 14.1MeV neutrons

Ex. DEMO

flux ~ 10^{19}-10^{20} neutrons $m^{-2}s^{-1}$

fluence ~ 5MW y m^{-2}

(fluence is the integral of flux)

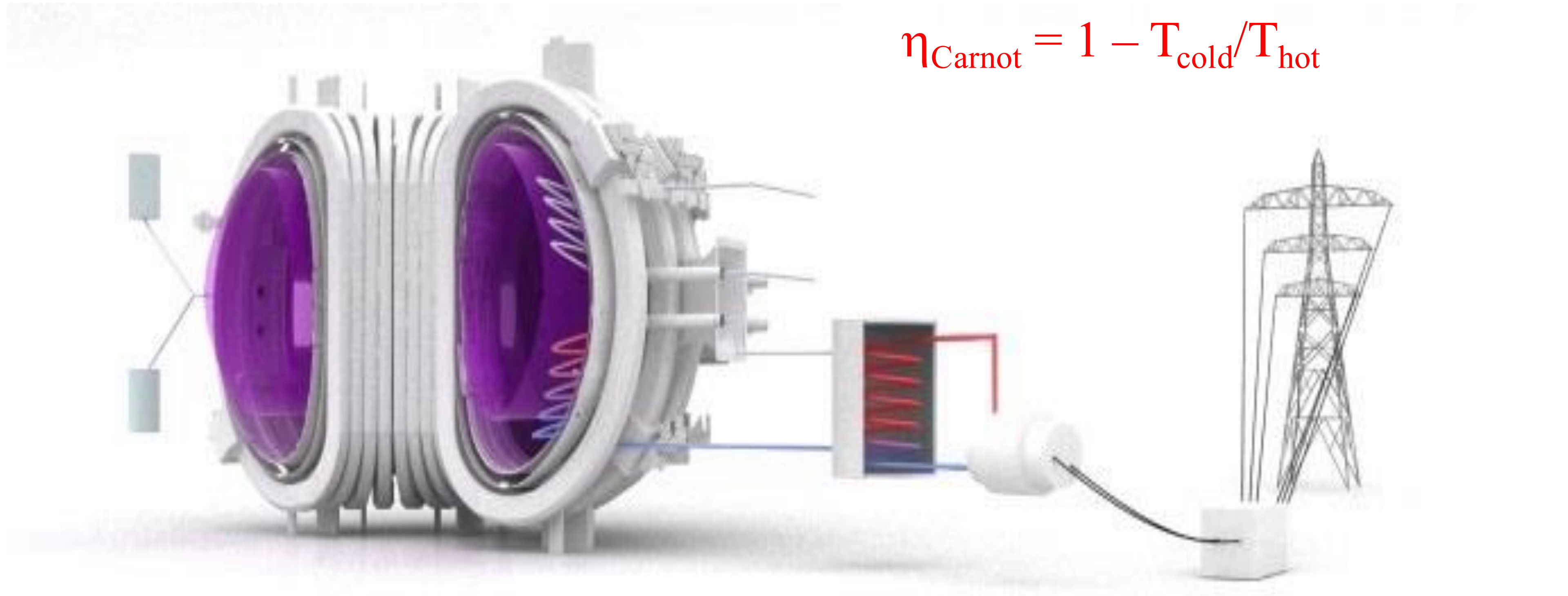


As low activation as possible

Requirements for structural materials

Operate at the highest possible temperatures to optimise thermal efficiency of power plant

$$\eta_{Carnot} = 1 - T_{cold}/T_{hot}$$



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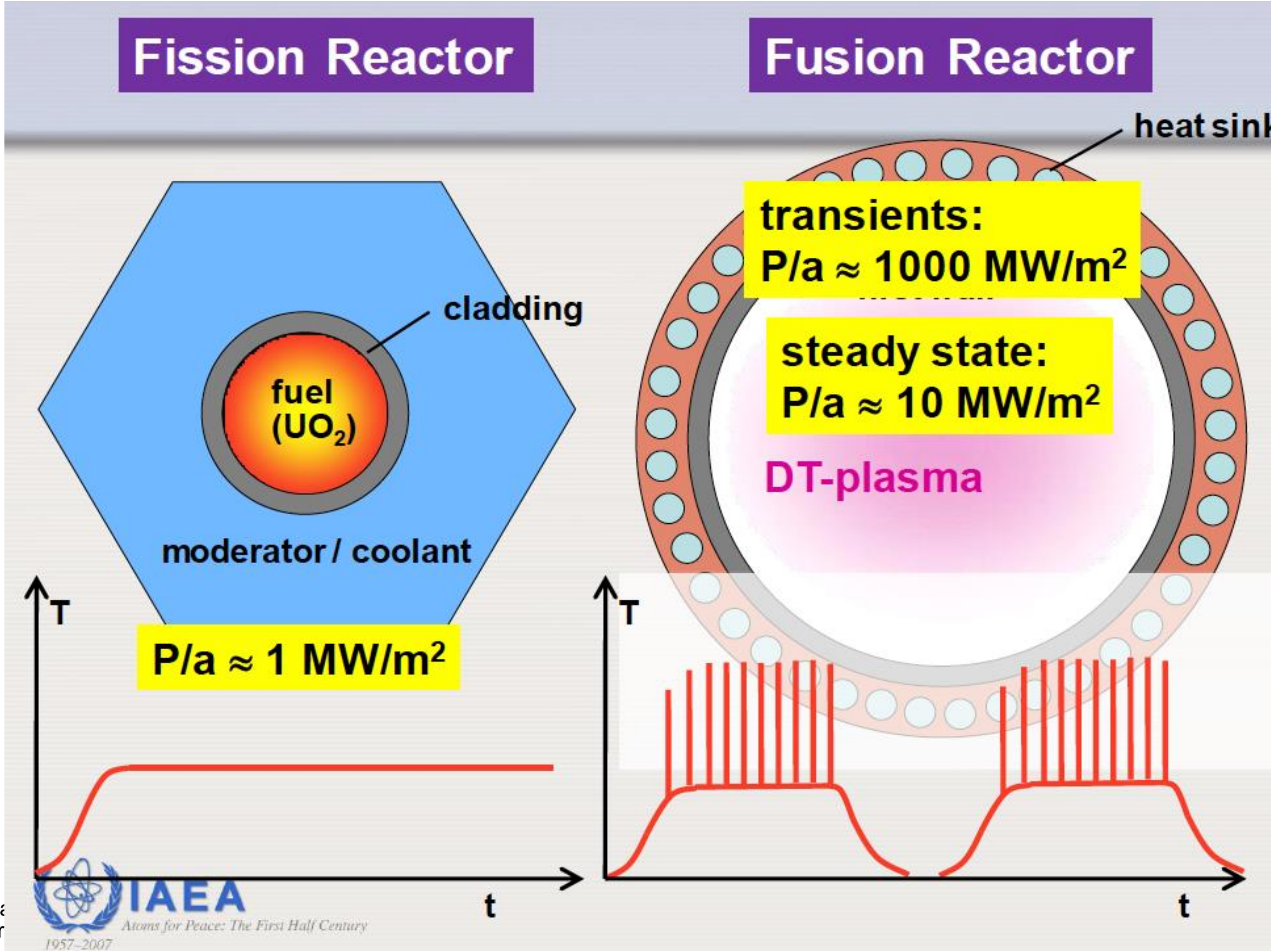
Fusion vs. fission



Courtesy of
R.Kamendje

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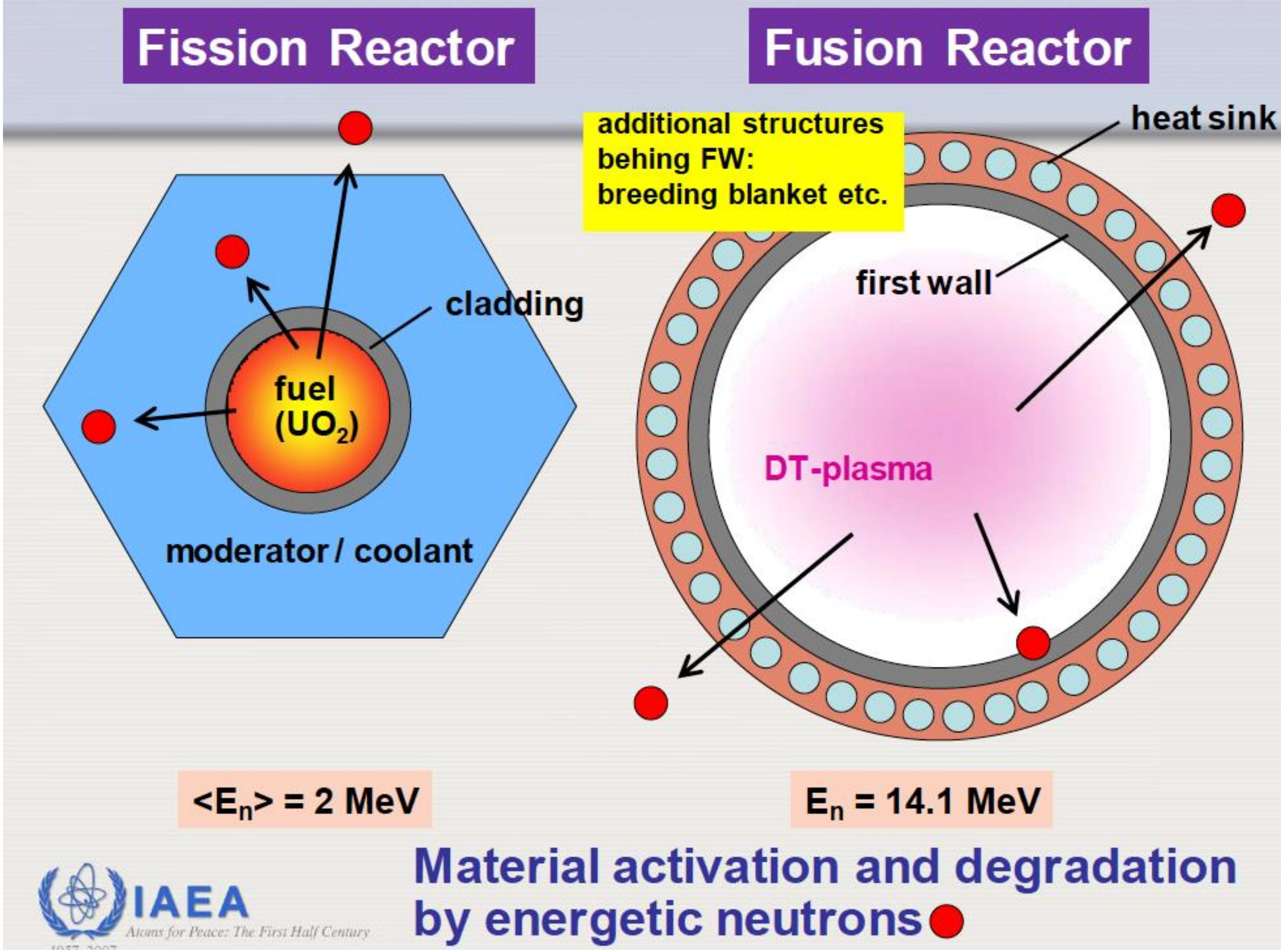
Fusion vs. fission



Material activation and degradation by energetic neutrons

Courtesy of R.Kamendje

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Effects of 14MeV neutrons

The 14MeV neutrons produce

atomic displacement cascades

transmutation nuclear reactions

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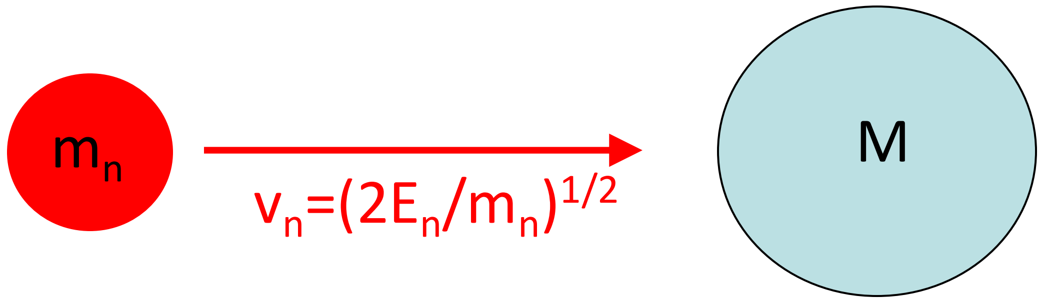
Atomic displacement

Mechanical effect of neutron of energy E_n hitting atom of mass M at rest in lattice



Max energy transfer $E_{max} = E_n \frac{4 m_n M}{(m_n + M)^2} \sim E_n \frac{4 m_n}{M}$

Ex. iron M = 56 amu, E_n = 14.1MeV : $E_{max} = 14.1 \times \frac{4}{56} MeV \sim 1 MeV$

Note: $E_{max} \gg E_{Wigner}$ (~25eV) (threshold energy for displacement)

→ iron atom is displaced and ejected from lattice

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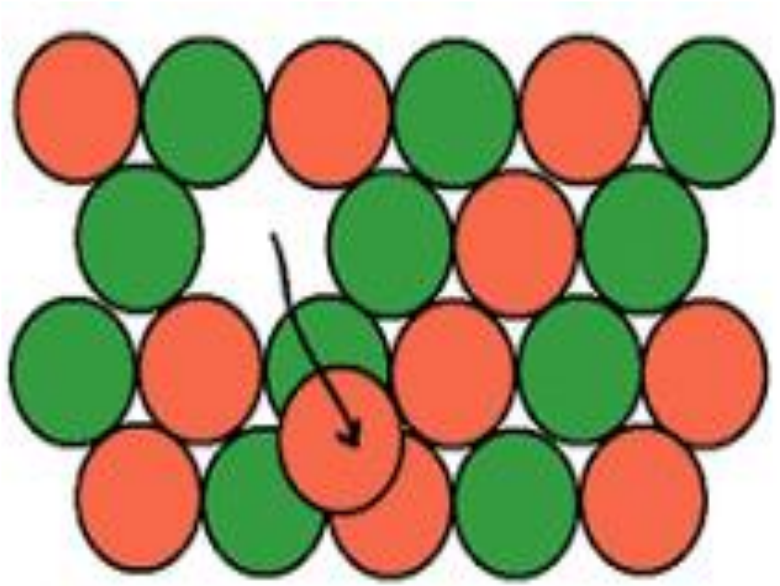
Atomic displacement

Point structure defects

The ejected atom leaves behind a vacancy and goes to an interstitial location (Frenkel pair)



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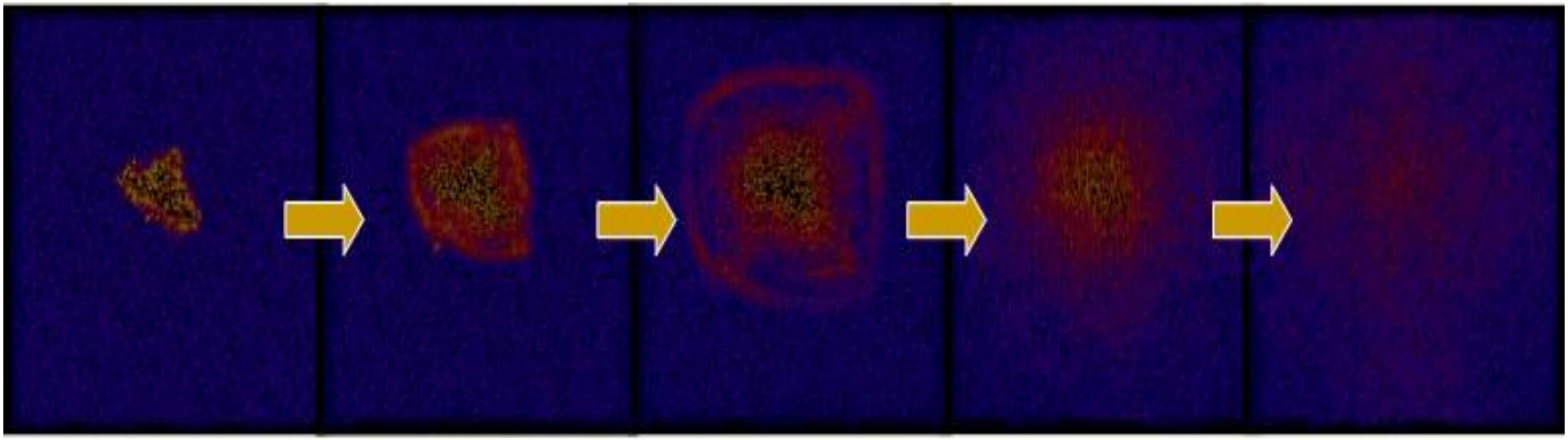
Atomic displacement cascades

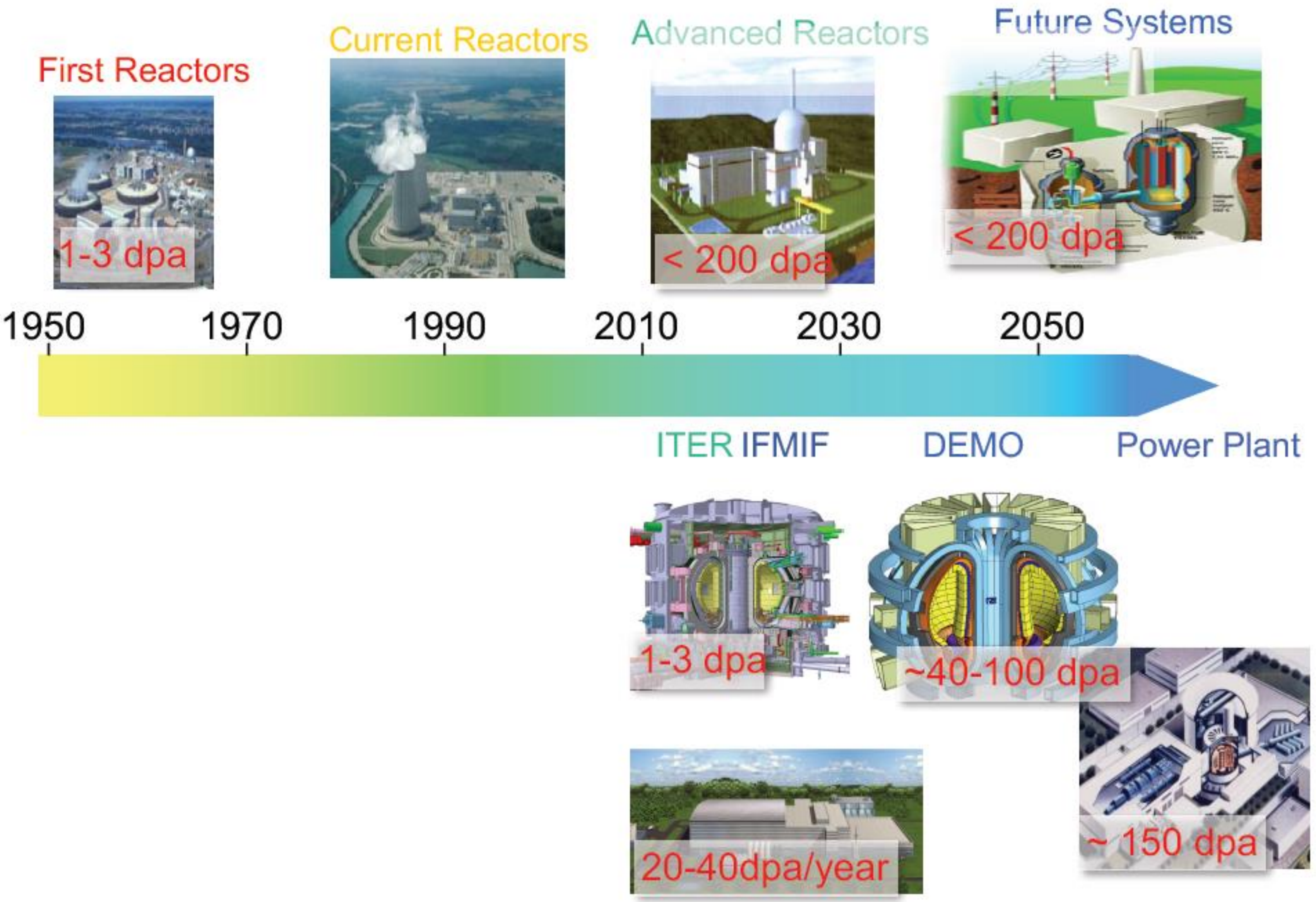
As $E_{max} >> E_{Wigner}$, the primary knock-on atom initiates a series of other knock-on events, leading to an atomic displacement *cascade*
Vacancies and interstitials form clusters (swelling)
The strength of the material is affected



Damage is quantified in average number of displacements per atom (*dpa*) during the working life of a material

dpa is proportional to neutron fluence (time integrated flux)

Neutron induced dpa in fission and fusion



Transmutation nuclear reactions

Nuclear reactions between fusion neutrons and lattice atoms

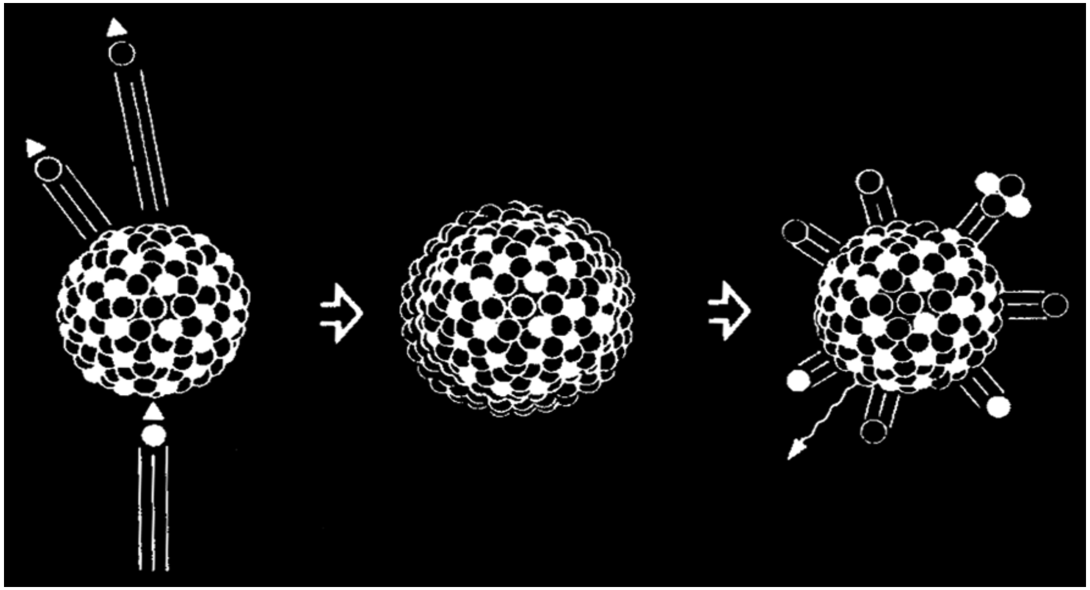
Generation of radioactive atoms and of He and H

$^{56}Fe + n \rightarrow {}^{53}Cr + \alpha$

(n energy threshold 2.9MeV)

$^{56}Fe + n \rightarrow {}^{56}Mn + p$

(n energy threshold 0.9MeV)



Individual He and H atoms tend to coalesce, forming gas bubbles that weaken the material

Effect is quantified in atomic parts per million (*appm*) of He or H

in fusion the *appm/dpa* ratio is much higher than in fission:

~10-15 *appm* He/*dpa* and ~40-50 *appm* H/*dpa*

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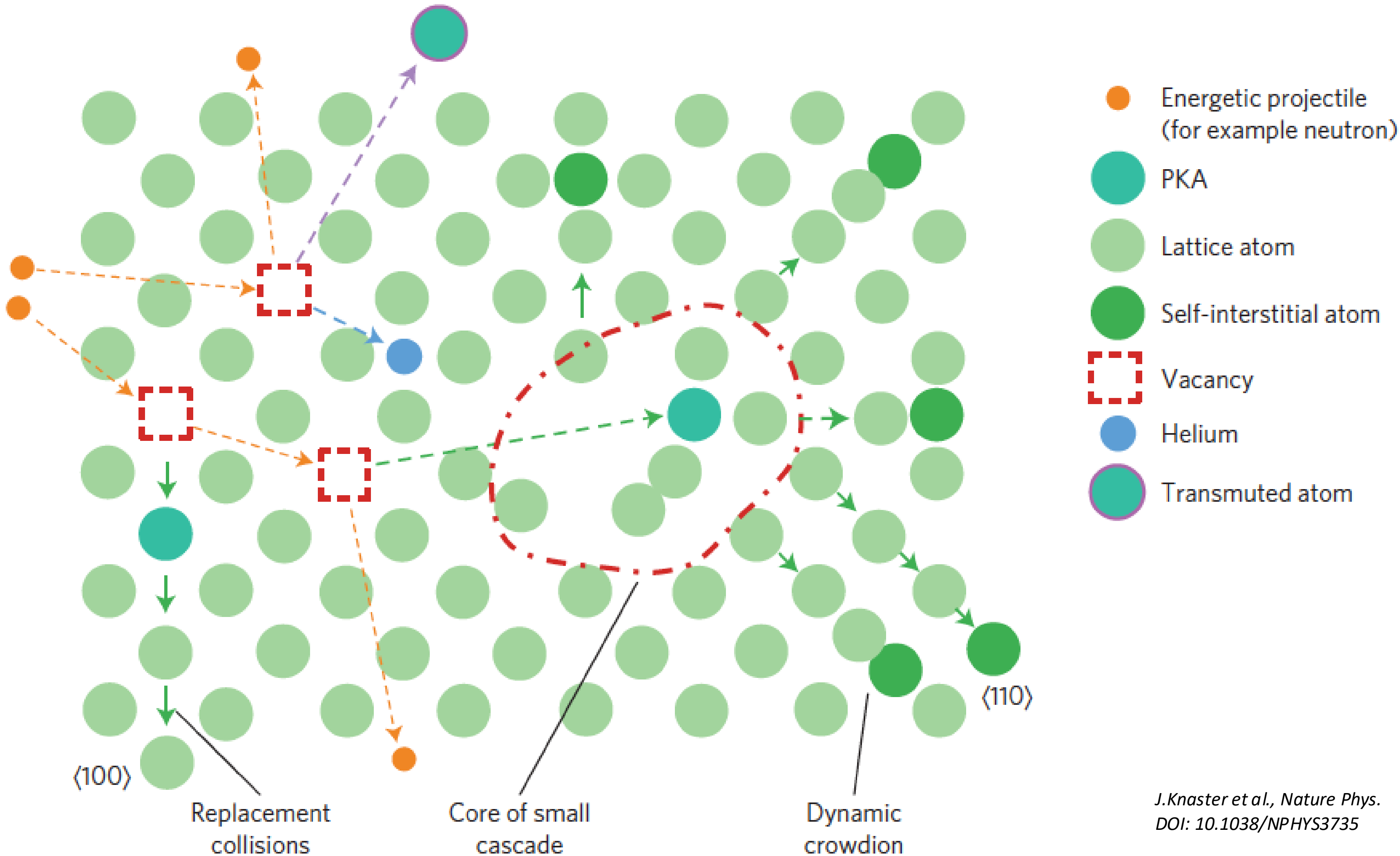
The two effects together



J.Knaster et al., Nature Phys. DOI: 10.1038/NPHYS3735

The modifications of the microstructure degrade the macroscopic chemical, physical and mechanical properties

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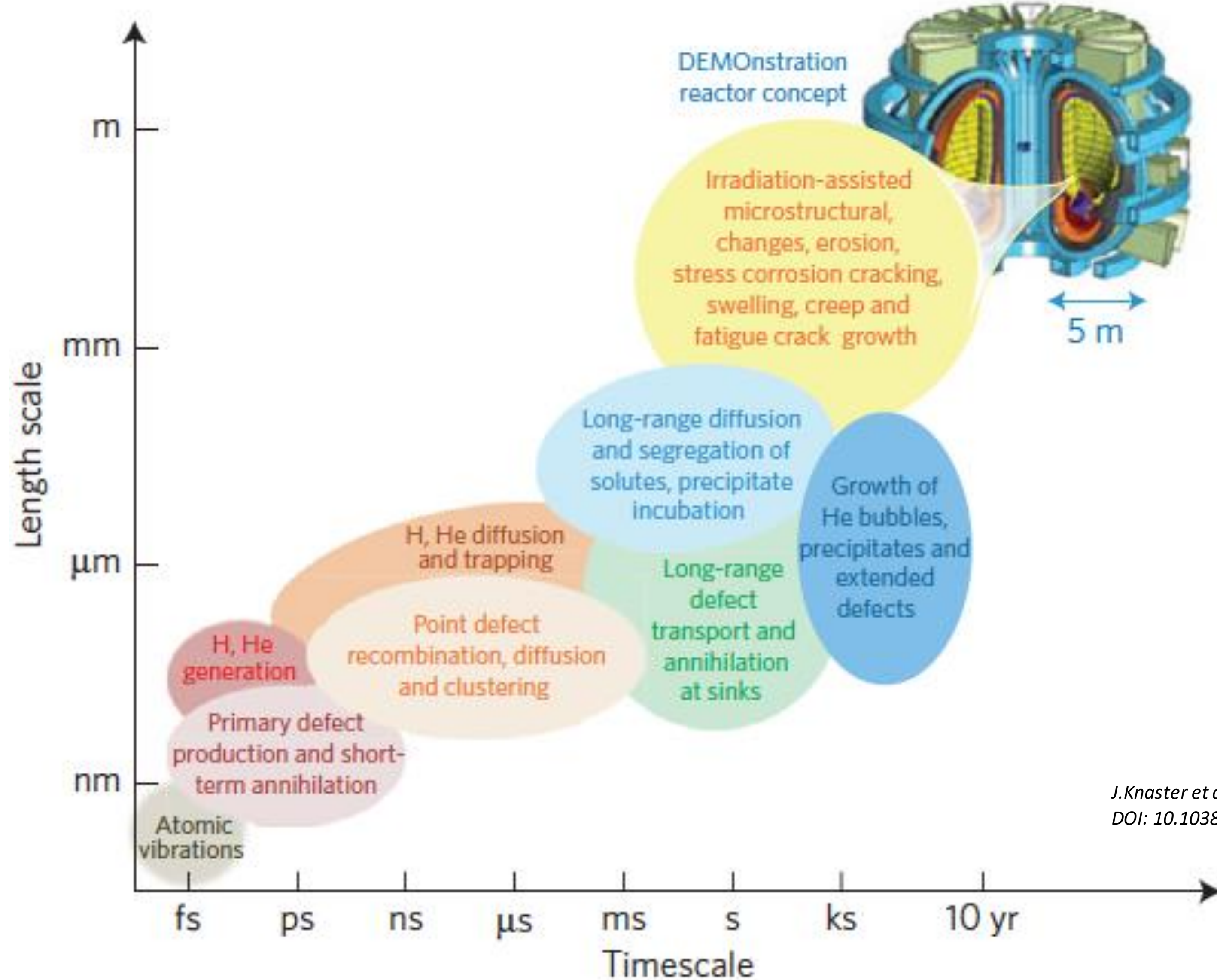
Irradiation time and length scales



J.Knaster et al., Nature Phys.
DOI: 10.1038/NPHYS3735

Evolution of materials properties

Change in the chemical composition

Physical properties – important for functional materials

- Decrease of electrical conductivity and of thermal conductivity

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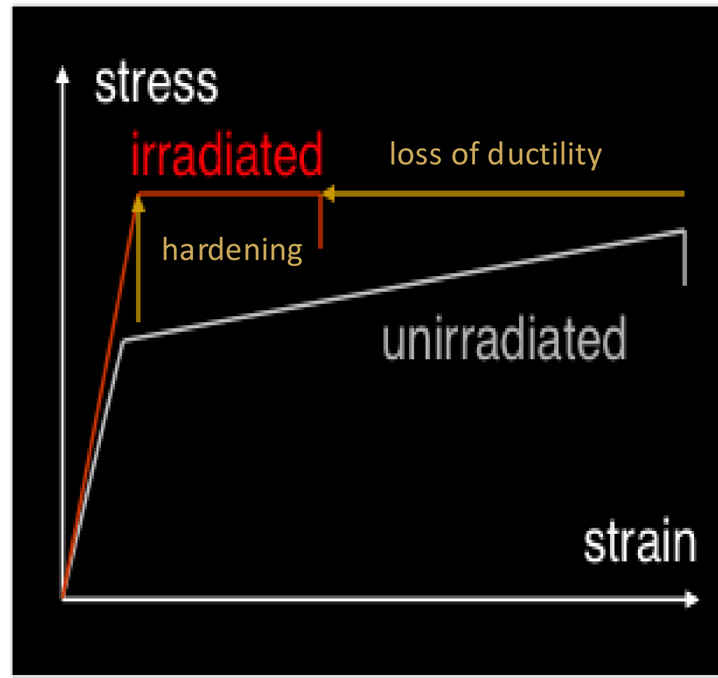
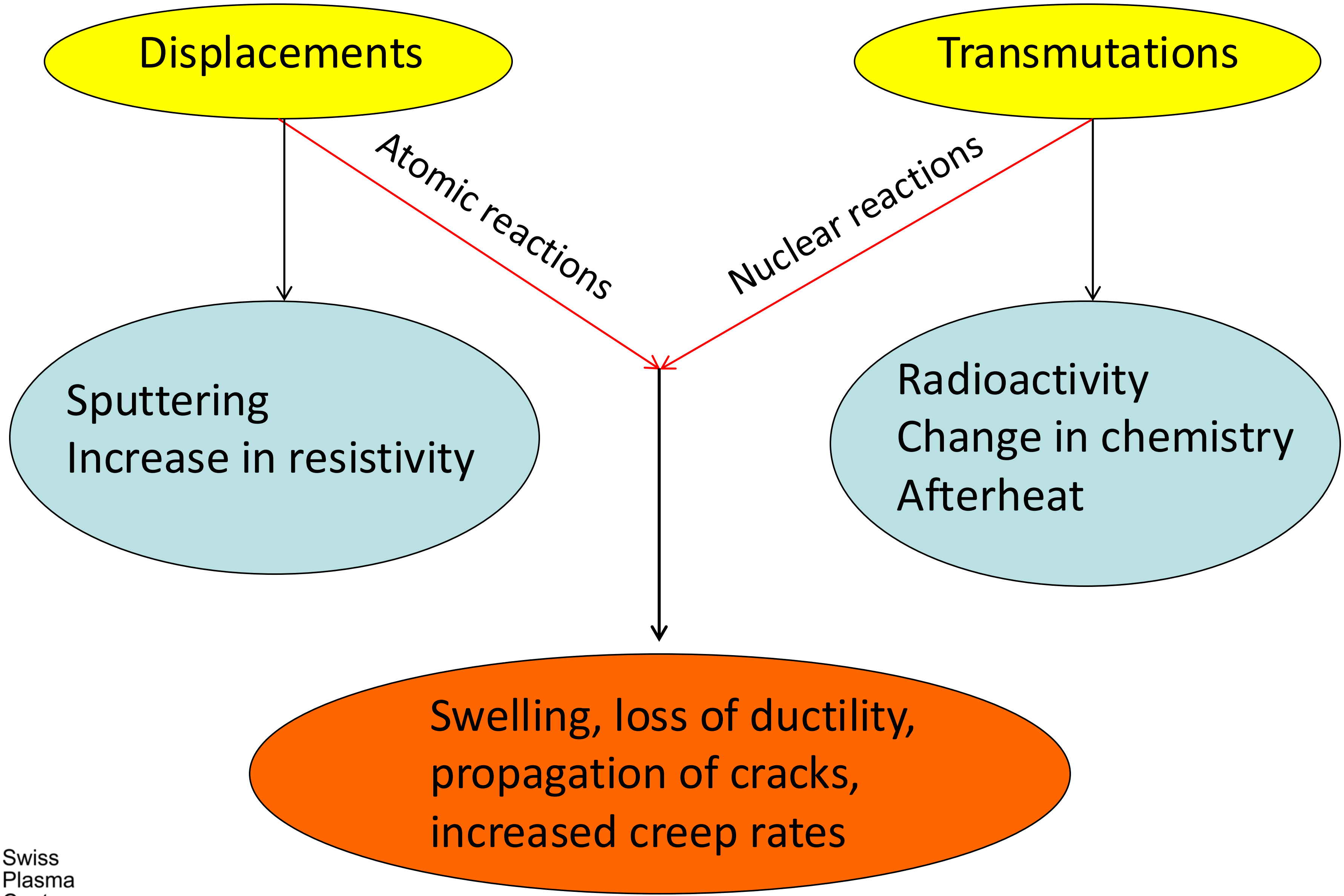
Evolution of materials properties

Mechanical properties – important for structural materials

- Loss of creep strength, change in ductile to brittle transition temperature
- Embrittlement (hardening, loss of ductility, loss of fracture toughness)
- Change in mechanical dimensions (swelling)



Overview of radiation effects in fusion

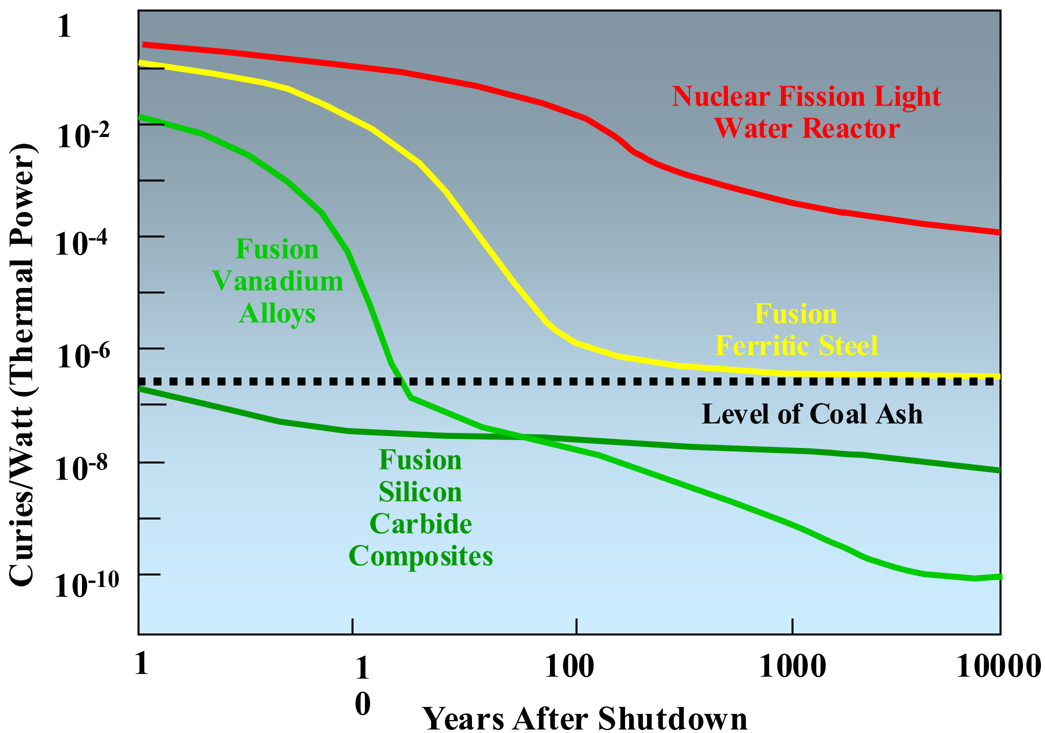


Structural materials for fusion

Candidate structural materials must have a chemical composition based on low activation elements: Fe, Cr, V, Ti, W, Si, C

Based on safety, waste disposal, and performance, the leading candidate structural materials are

Reduced activation ferritic/martensitic steels (ex. EUROFER 97)
Vanadium alloys
Tungsten alloys
SiC/SiC composites
(but dpa/fluence is 3 times larger in SiC than in steel)



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Fusion needs large amounts of steel

Ex. present version of European DEMO

Components	Steel	Quantity needed / tons
Blanket	EUROFER	~ 2,180
Divertor Cassette Body	EUROFER	~ 1,170
Vacuum Vessel	SS (ITER grade)	> 10,000
Superconducting Coils	SS (ITER grade)	~ 29,300
Cryostat	SS (ITER grade)	~ 15,300
BoP	SS	~ 4,500

- **3,300 tons EUROFER**
- **> 62,450 tons SS**

cf **~ 406 M€**

The need to test materials for fusion

Experimental knowledge of materials behavior in fusion reactor conditions is very limited

- Extrapolations from current conditions to fusion regime is much larger for fusion materials than for core plasma parameters

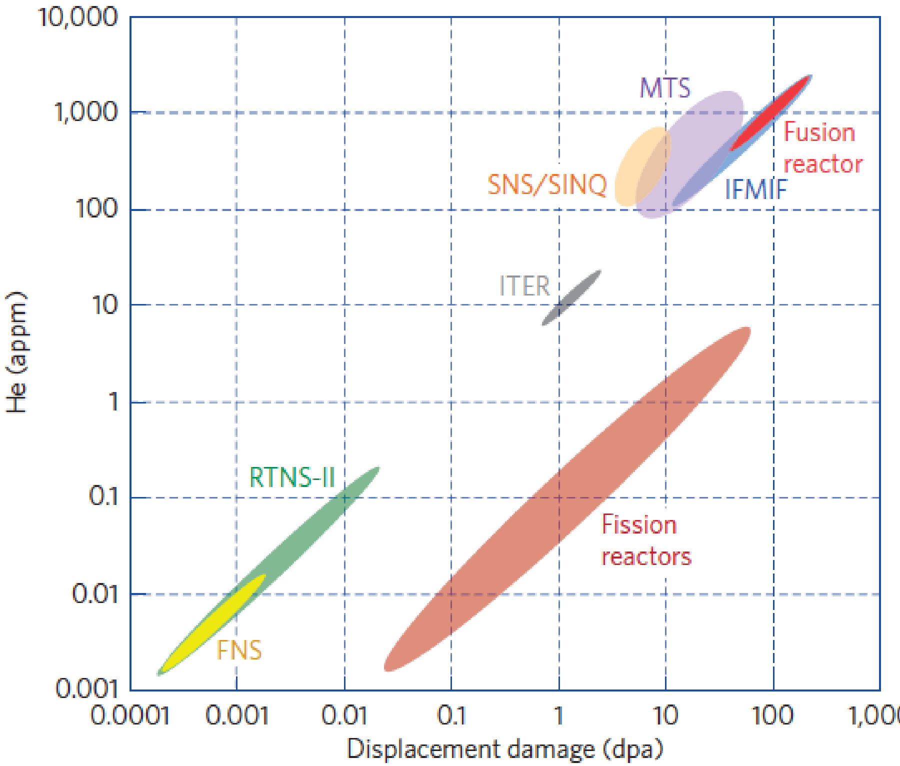


Figure 4 | Graph showing the correlation of dpa_{NRT} versus appm of He generated for the different possibilities of testing materials (alternative and IFMIF) compared with fusion reactor conditions. MTS, Materials Test Station spallation source at Los Alamos National Laboratory; RTNS-II, Rotating Target Neutron Source-II, previously at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory; SINQ, Swiss Spallation Source at Paul Scherrer Laboratory; SNS, Spallation Neutron Source at Oak Ridge National Laboratory; FNS, Fusion Neutron Source at Japan Atomic Energy Agency. Figure modified from ref. 31, © 2014 Annual Reviews.

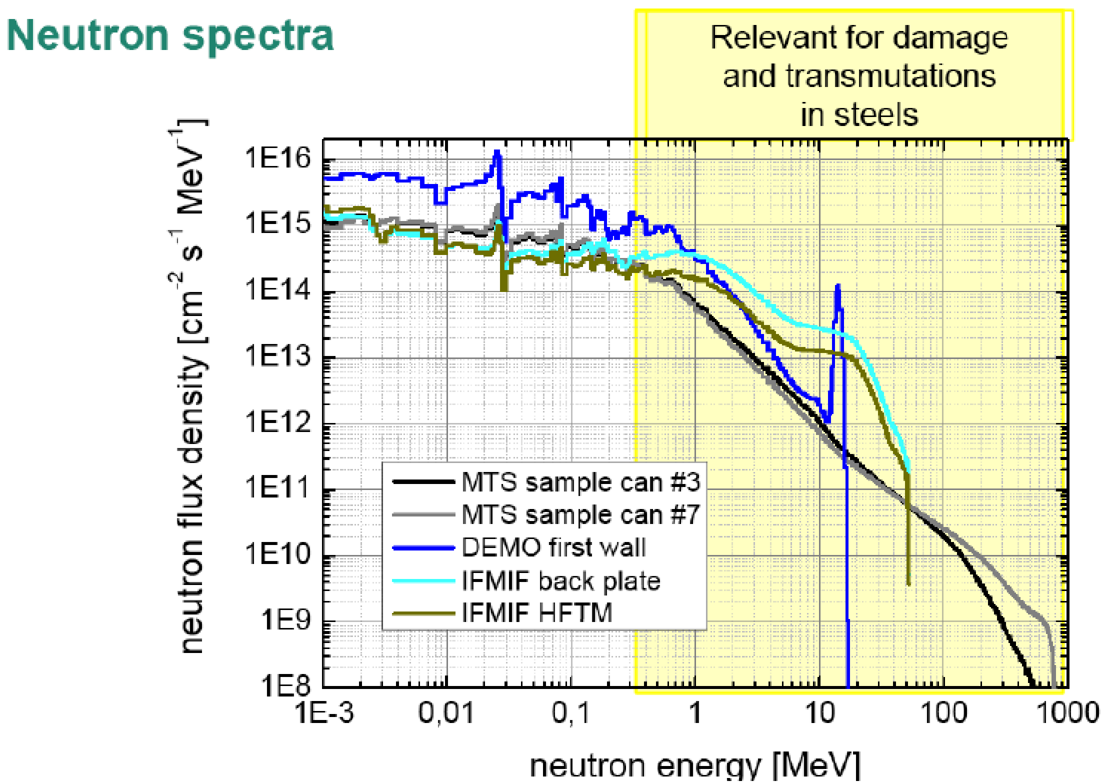
J.Knaster et al., Nature Phys. DOI: 10.1038/NPHYS3735

The need to test materials for fusion

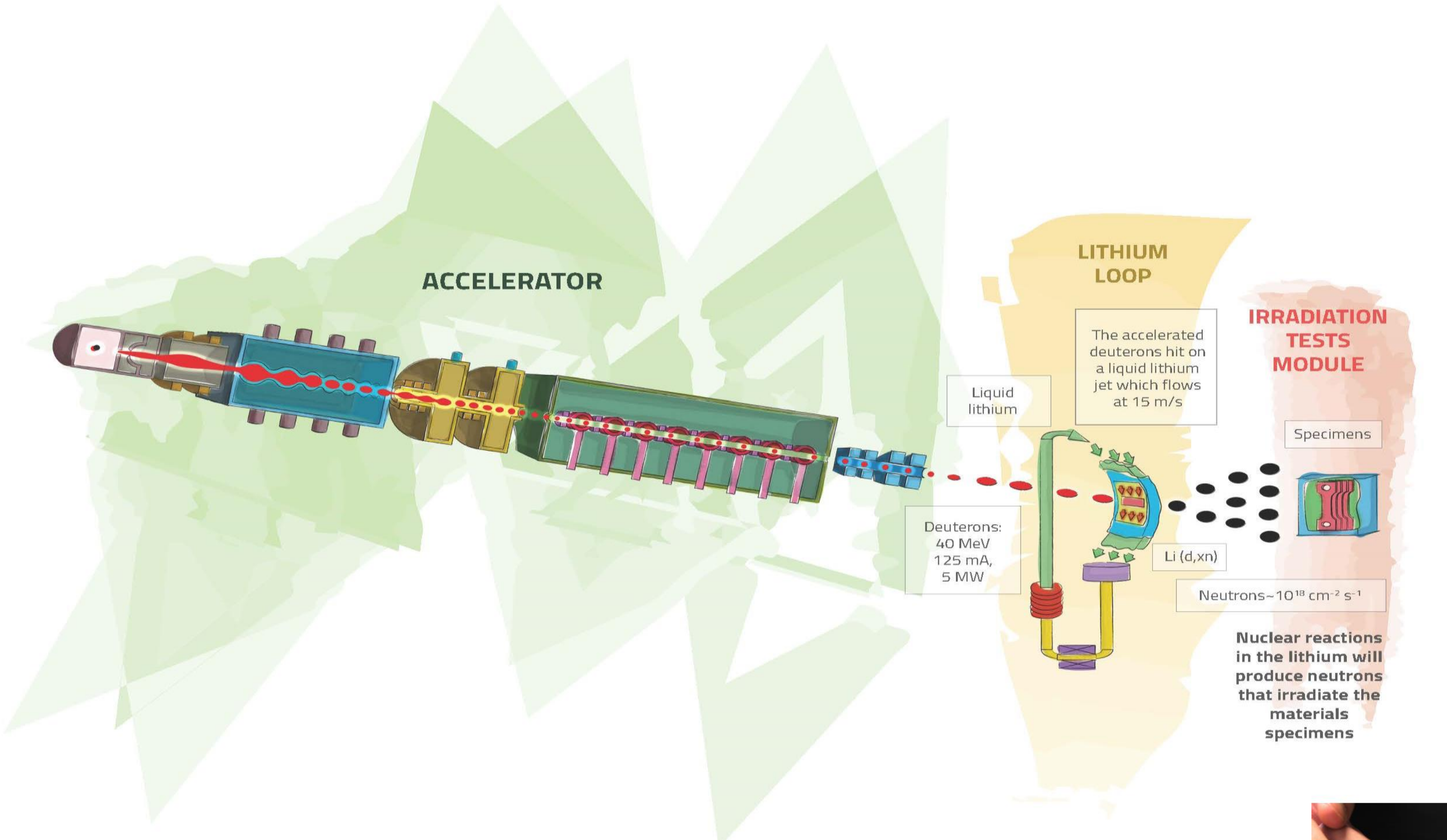
Urgency of fusion materials tests is universally recognized

But how can we produce the relevant spectrum of neutrons ?

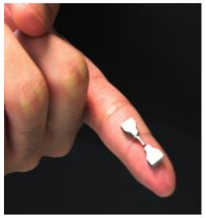
- Volumetric neutron sources, e.g. low fusion gain tokamak producing DT neutrons
- Accelerator based irradiation facilities (e.g IFMIF), producing neutrons from Li + d → Be + n



IFMIF-DONES irradiation test facility



Must extrapolate results obtained in small volume (0.5l at 20dpa/y) to large reactor: small specimen test technology



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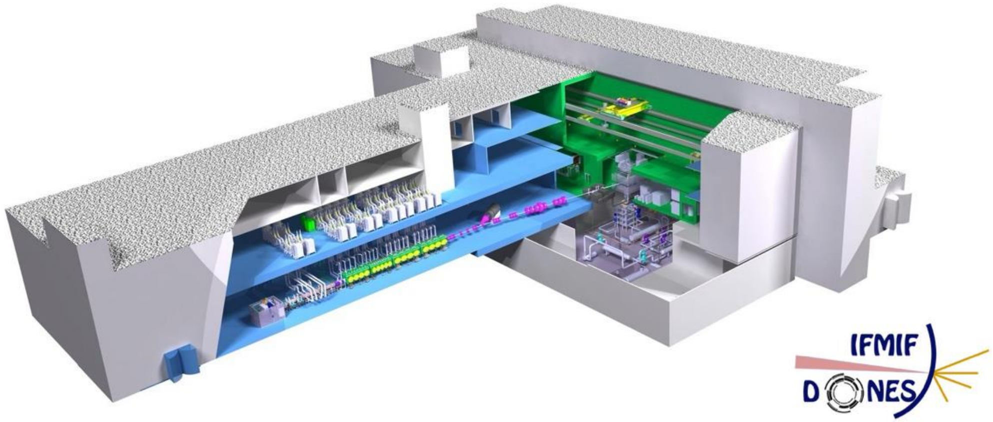
IFMIF-DONES irradiation test facility

DONES - Demo Oriented Neutron Source in Grenada (Spain)



Site at Escúzar, close to Granada, Spain
Operation expected in ~2034

Summary of part II

Fusion structural materials must satisfy stringent requirements

Material properties affected by n-irradiation, but experimental knowledge of effects is incomplete

Need tests of candidate materials

Material science plays a crucial role in fusion energy research