



2137-40

**Joint ICTP-IAEA Advanced Workshop on Multi-Scale Modelling for
Characterization and Basic Understanding of Radiation Damage
Mechanisms in Materials**

12 - 23 April 2010

**Experimental simulation of nuclear fuels: separate effect studies
(Part 4)**

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Part 4

**Experimental simulation of
nuclear fuels: separate effect
experiments**

Objectives of the separate effect studies



- **To model and to understand nuclear fuel behavior under irradiation** as well as under long term storage conditions
 - Volatile fission products I, Xe, Kr, Cs + He
 - Transport properties
 - Irradiation effects

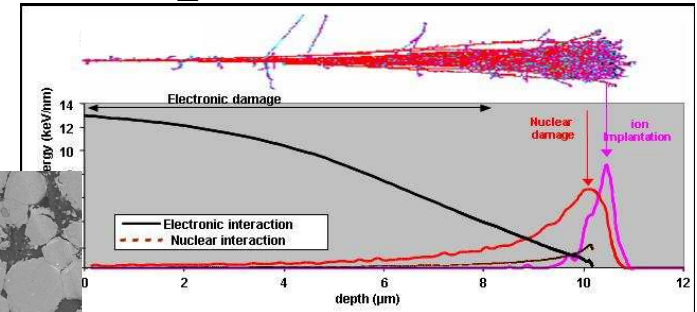
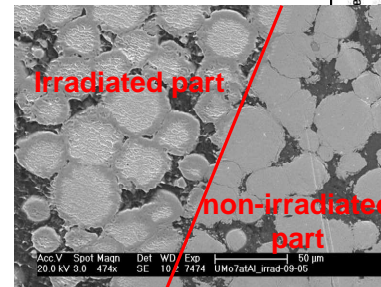
- **Direct support to modeling**
 - Guide: mechanism understanding
 - Basic data to be used in the models

- **Experimental and theoretical methodologies developed for application to a large panel of materials**
 - Oxides UO_2 and MOX $(\text{U,Pu})\text{O}_2$
 - Carbides UC and UPuC...

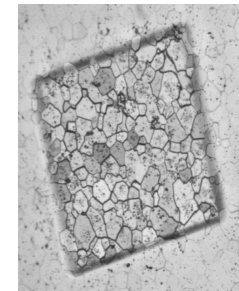
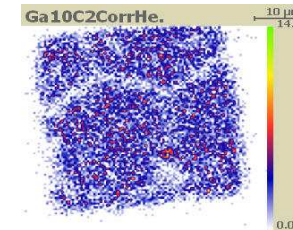
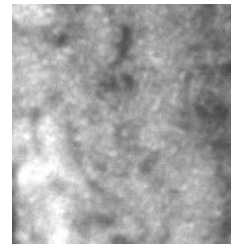
Separated effects studies : the approach



- Non active model materials such as UO_2
- Ion **implantation** to simulate FP
- **Thermal treatment** or heavy ion **irradiation**



- **Characterization with a large panel of dedicated techniques** (SIMS, RBS, NRA, TEM, XAS...)



- **Large scientific facilities** (particle accelerators and synchrotron radiation)

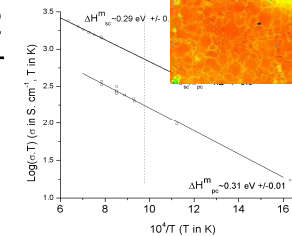
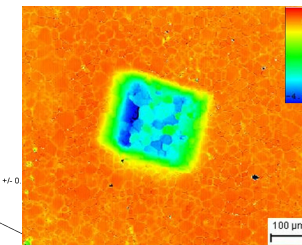
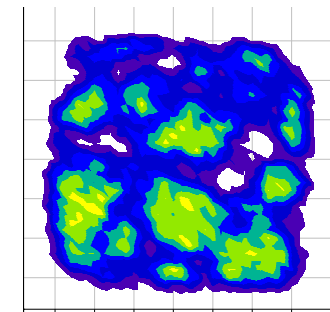
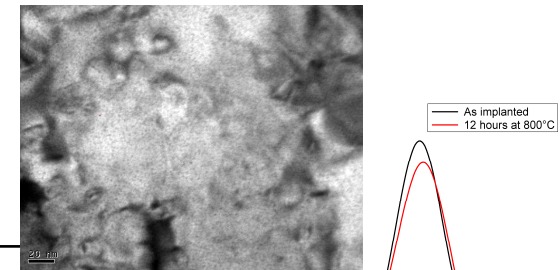
Separated effects studies : illustrations



Objective

Studies

1	Understand and model fission gas diffusion/precipitation/release in nuclear oxide fuels	XAS and TEM characterization of Xe bubbles in uranium dioxide
2	Understand and model He behavior in nuclear oxide fuels	Thermal diffusion of helium in uranium dioxide
3	Oxygen diffusion in relation to p-type doping in UO_2	Electrical conductivity and diffusion coefficient measurements in UO_2



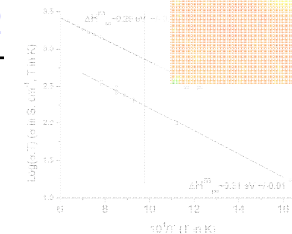
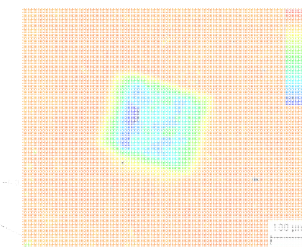
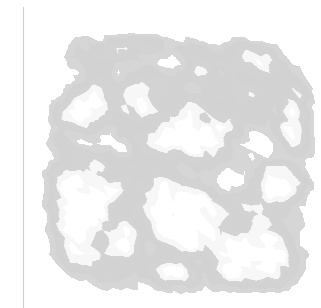
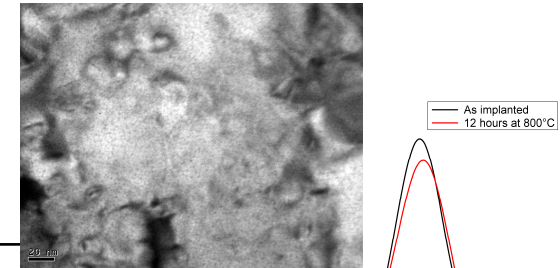
Separated effects studies : illustrations



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XAS and TEM characterization of Xe bubbles in UO₂



Issue : Understand and model xenon release in nuclear oxide fuels

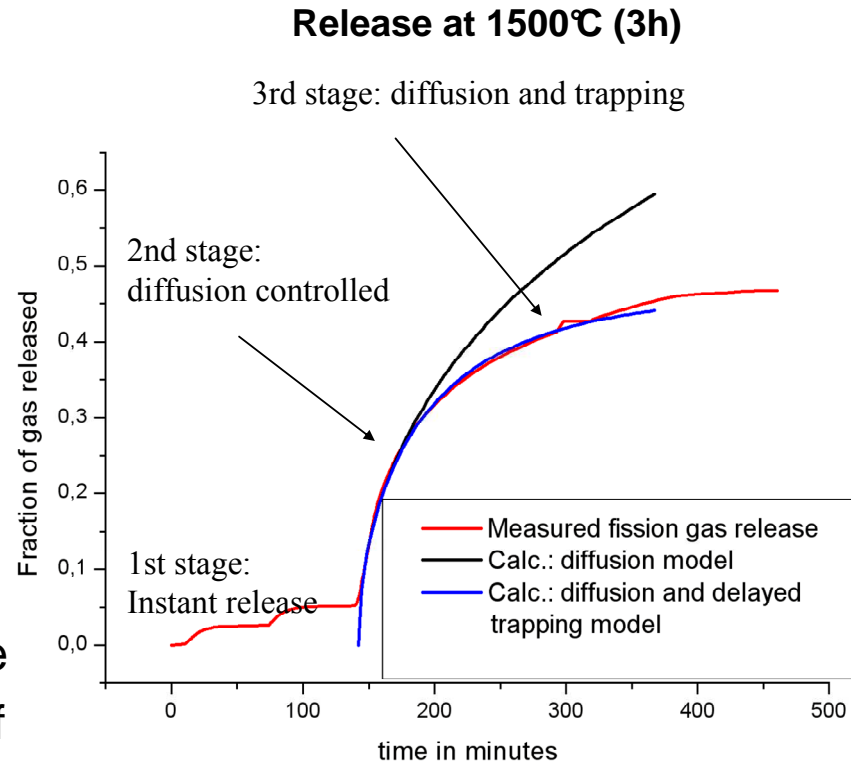
- Rare gases are highly **insoluble** in most materials (confirmed by 1st-principles and empirical potential calculations)
- Therefore predicting rare gas **transport** requires:
 - * understanding precipitation mechanisms
 - * rare gas bubble characteristics
 - * diffusion of gas atoms in presence of bubbles
- Two analytical tools are very powerful when coupled : Transmission electron microscopy (**TEM**) and X-ray absorption spectroscopy (**XAS**)

XAS and TEM characterization of Xe bubbles in UO_2



Understanding of thermally activated phenomena : post-irradiation annealing on irradiated fuel

- High temperature ($> \sim 1300^\circ\text{C}$) anneals of irradiated material
- At a given temperature, three stages generally identified (*Valin, Portier, PhD theses 1999-2005*)
 - (1) instantaneous release: gas accumulated at grain boundaries
 - (2) diffusion controlled release
 - (3) fractional release levels off



**Trapping efficiency?
Characteristic of bubbles?**

XAS and TEM characterization of Xe bubbles in UO₂



What information can we get from in situ transmission electron microscopy (TEM)?

- Defect accumulation/annealing
- Threshold temperature for bubble precipitation
- Bubble size distribution
- Electronic excitation effects: bubble nucleation and fission gas re-resolution

TEM measurements by C. Sabathier *et al.* (CEA/DEC Cadarache)

Methodology

- *In situ* TEM experiments carried out in Orsay: IRMA (now JANNUS beam line)
- 390 keV Xe implanted UO₂ thin foils (Rp~60nm)
- Samples are observed at increasing doses and annealed for approx. 20 min. at various temperatures

XAS and TEM characterization of Xe bubbles in UO₂

Xe bubble precipitation: main results of TEM study



[Xe]	2.10 ¹⁵ Xe/cm ² (0.4 at.%)	1.10 ¹⁶ Xe/cm ² (2 at.%)
T _{thresh.}	600°C	400°C
Size (nm)	~ 1	2

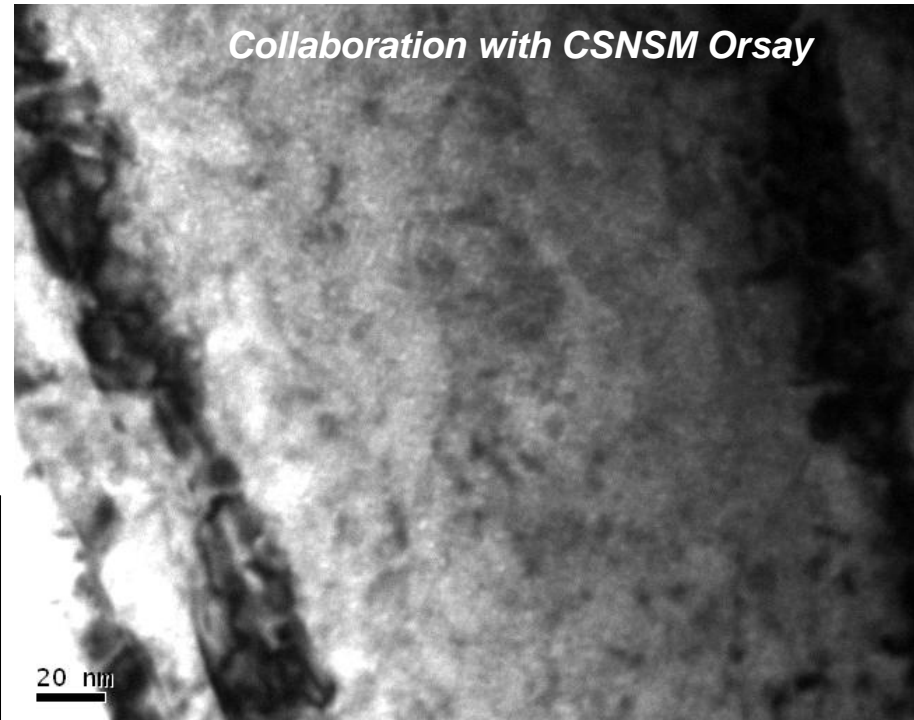
$$T_{\text{thres.}} = f(C_{\text{Xe}})$$

⇒ defect concentrations

Annealing conditions	400°C ~ 20 min	600°C ~ 20 min
Bubble density (b/m ³)	3.0 .10 ²³ ±1.0.10 ²³	4.0 .10 ²³ ±1.0.10 ²³
Bubble size (nm)	1.7 ± 0.3nm	1.8 ± 0.3nm

C. Sabathier *et al.* NIMB 266, 3027 (2008)

TEM observations on 2 at.% sample annealed at 600°C for 20 minutes



Same results obtained on irradiated UO₂ fuel, 49 GWd/Mt (0.5 at%), T~600°C :
4.3 10²³ b/m³ [Nogita *et al.* NIMB 141, 481 (1998)]

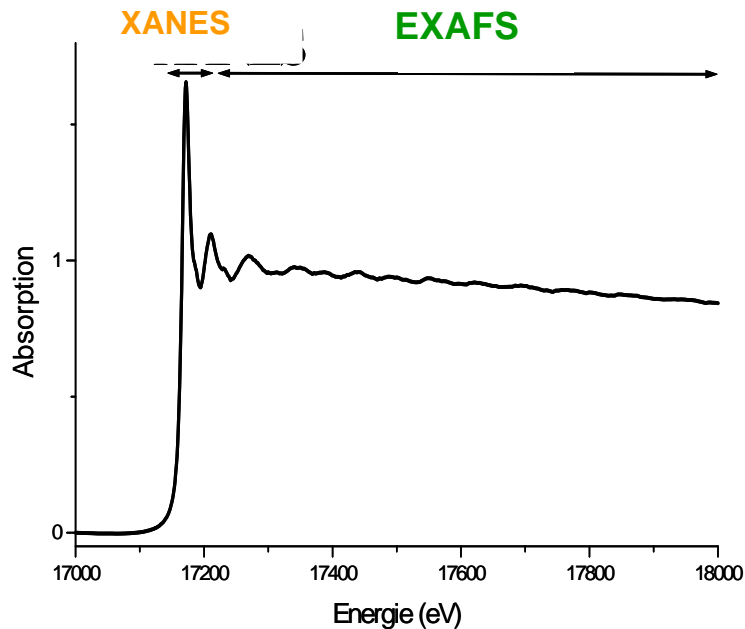
XAS and TEM characterization of Xe bubbles in UO₂



What information can we get from X-ray absorption spectroscopy (XAS)?

Determination of element local environment

EXAFS & XANES



*Extended X-ray Absorption
Fine Structure*

- Inter-atomic distances
- Number of nearest neighbours
- Thermal agitation

**Complete description of
local environment**

*X-ray Absorption
Near Edge Structure*

- Oxidation state
- Local symmetry

1° RG-RG distance

XAS and TEM characterization of Xe bubbles in UO₂



XAS sample preparation

- Polycrystalline UO₂ pellets
- **Ion Xe implantation** Influence of concentration on bubble precipitation
 - Multi-energy ion implantation 2 at.% ($E \leq 800$ keV)
 - Single-energy implantation ~8 at.% max ($E=800$ keV, 10^{17} Xe.cm⁻³, depth ~140 nm from surface)
- **Annealing** for precipitation/stability study of xenon bubbles
 - Annealing between 600°C and 800°C under reducing atmosphere

XAS and TEM characterization of Xe bubbles in UO₂

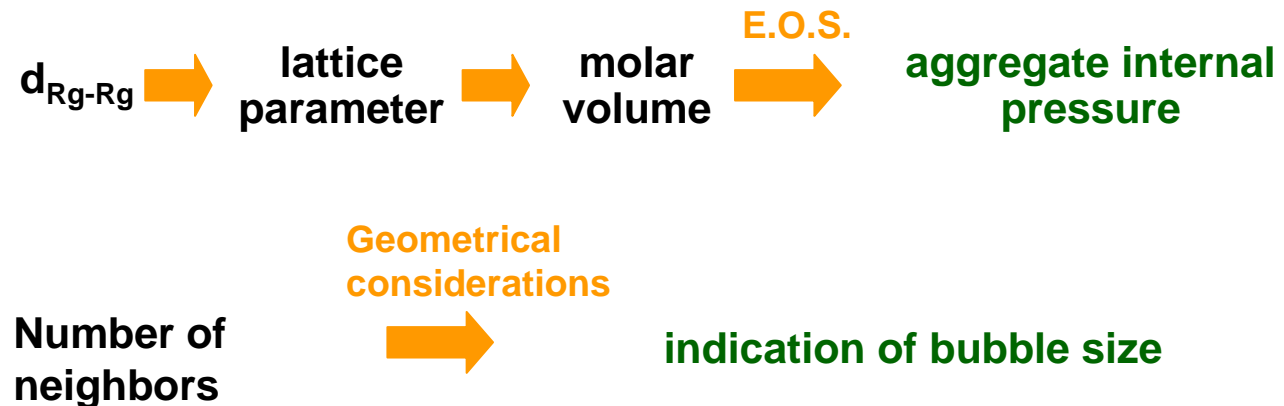


XAS experiment performed and data interpretation methodology

- Probe at the atomic scale, work performed mainly at low T(4-11K)
- Experiments performed on ESRF/FAME (BM30B), at Xe (34,5 keV) & Kr (14,3 keV) **K-edges**



Information relative to rare gas aggregates



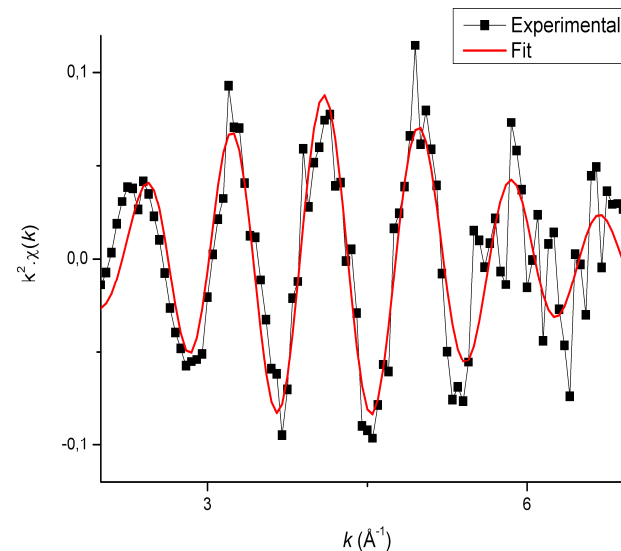
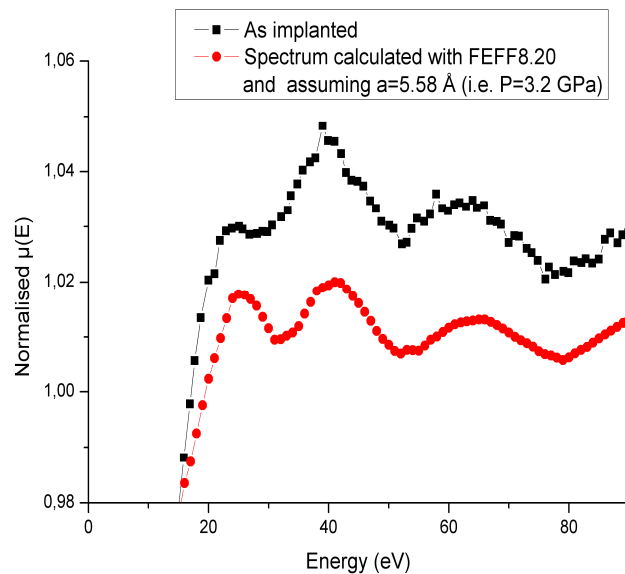
XAS and TEM characterization of Xe bubbles in UO₂

XAS bubble characterization: concentration effect



As implanted samples

- 2 at. % sample : no Xe-Xe bonds, no bubble nucleation / same conclusion using TEM
- 8 at. % sample : bubble nucleation occurs



Only one
Coordination
shell

Xe-Xe distance estimated at 3.97 ± 0.02 Å against 4.39 Å for un-pressurised crystal
Then using an E.O.S., $P=f(V,T)$ (K. Asaumi, Phys Rev. B 29(1984))

P. Garcia *et al.*, J. Nucl. Mater. **352**, 136 (2006)
P. Martin *et al.* Nucl. Instrum. and Meth. B **266**, 2887 (2008)

P ~ 2.8 ± 0.3 GPa
Bubble size ~ 1-2 nm

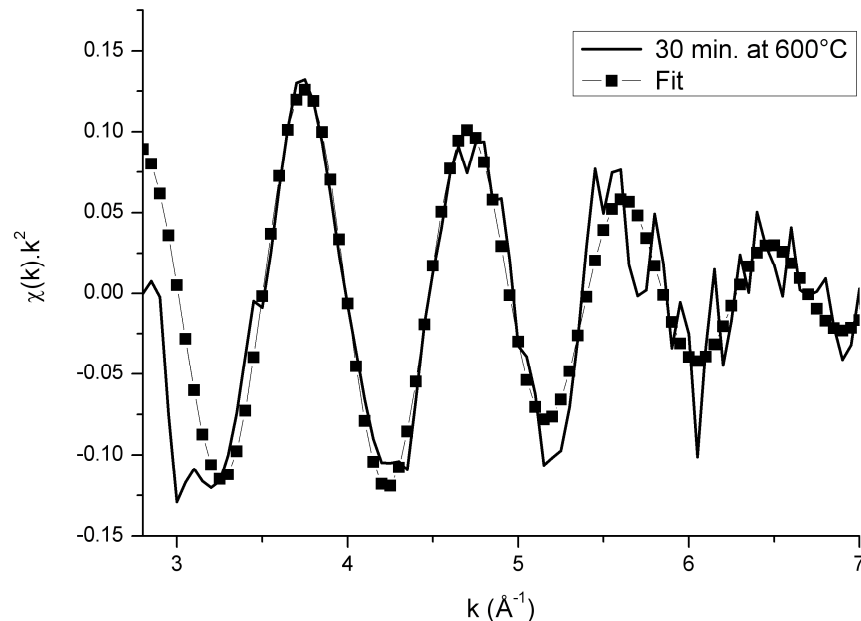
XAS and TEM characterization of Xe bubbles in UO₂

XAS bubble characterization: temperature effect



■ After annealing

■ 2 at.% Xe sample / annealing **600°C** during 30 minutes



Xe-Xe bonds
bubble nucleation occurs

P. Garcia *et al.*, J. Nucl. Mater. **352**, 136 (2006)
P. Martin *et al* Nucl. Instrum. and Meth. B **266**, 2887 (2008)

Same Xe local environment
observed for the 8 at.% sample
and for the as-implanted sample

P ~ 2.8 ± 0.3 GPa,
Bubble size ~ 1-2 nm

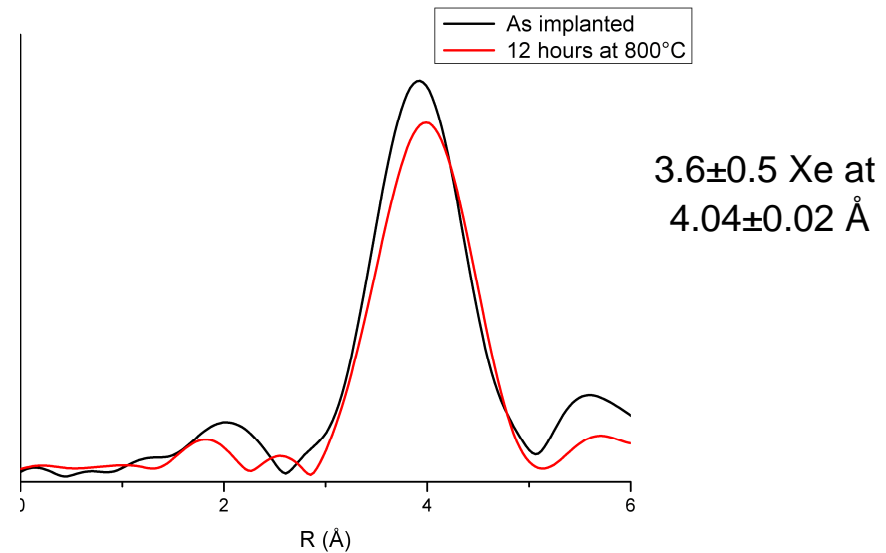
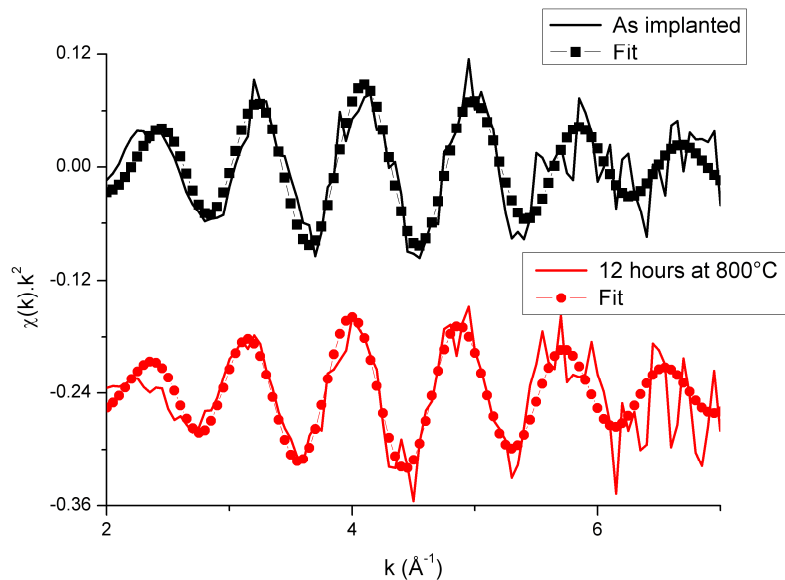
XAS and TEM characterization of Xe bubbles in UO₂

XAS bubble characterization: temperature effect



■ After annealing

■ 8 at .% Xe sample / annealing 12 hours at **600°C** and **800°C**



Small increase of Xe-Xe distance : Decrease of aggregate internal pressure **$P \sim 2.0 \pm 0.3$ GPa**,

No variation of N : Xenon bubbles remain small **Bubble size $\sim 1-2$ nm**

With annealing temperature up to 800°C:

Xenon aggregates remain small and highly pressurized ($P \sim 2.0$ GPa)

[P. Garcia et al., J. Nucl. Mater. 352, 136 \(2006\)](#) [P. Martin et al/NIMB. B 266, 2887 \(2008\)](#)

XAS and TEM characterization of Xe bubbles in UO₂



Coupling XAS and TEM : very useful to characterize rare gas bubbles

- XAS and TEM are efficient tools for characterising nanometer size bubble distributions
- Temperature induces xenon nucleation. So does irradiation by heavy ions (790 MeV Kr) in an inelastic or elastic energy loss regime (not presented): heterogeneous nucleation.
- Heavy ion (790 MeV Kr) irradiation induced xenon re-resolution was not observed.
- Pressures within nanometer size rare gas aggregates are extremely high
- Provide very important data to be used in the modeling of nuclear fuel behaviour in pile

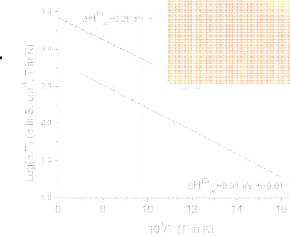
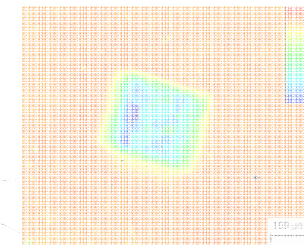
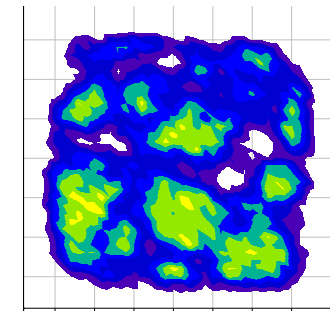
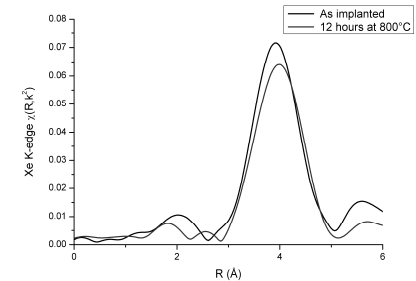
Separated effects studies : illustrations



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Thermo-diffusion of helium in uranium dioxide

— Issue : Understand and model helium behavior
in nuclear oxide fuels



- α -decay in spent fuels and minor actinides in fuel \Rightarrow Helium accumulation
- Nuclear reaction analysis (**NRA**) methods using the **$^3\text{He}(d,\alpha)p$ reaction** to characterize helium behavior in fuel

Studies conducted by Guillaume Martin *et al.*
(CEA-Cadarache with CEMHTI Orléans – France)

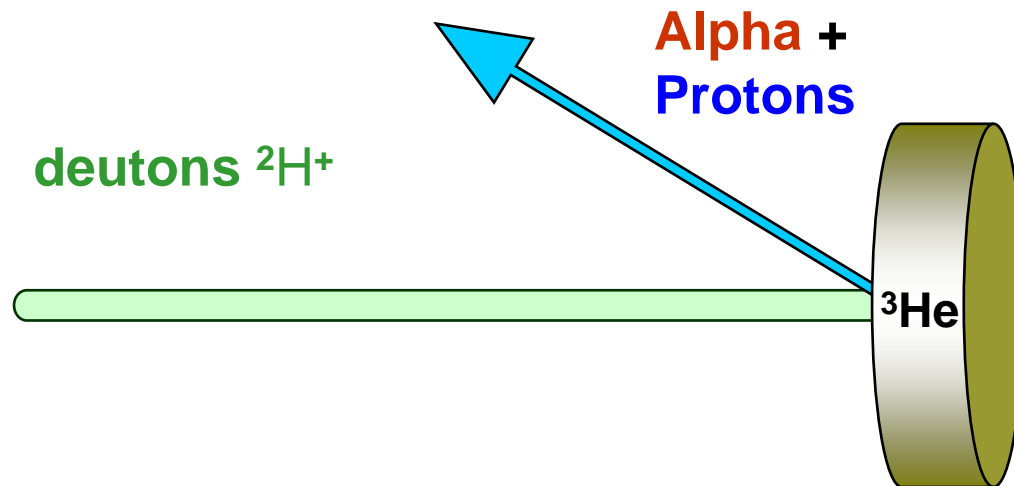
Thermal diffusion of helium in uranium dioxide



Methodology and what we can get from NRA experiments

1. Helium implantation ^3He
2. Thermal annealing : helium migration, release
3. Analysis of helium remaining in the sample

NRA principle



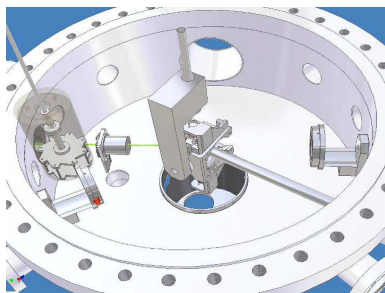
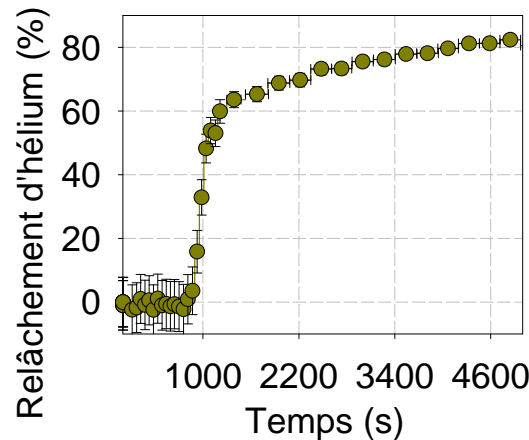
⇒ 3 techniques of characterization

Thermal diffusion of helium in uranium dioxide



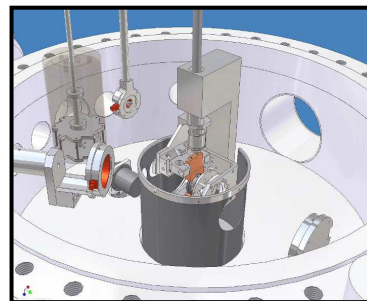
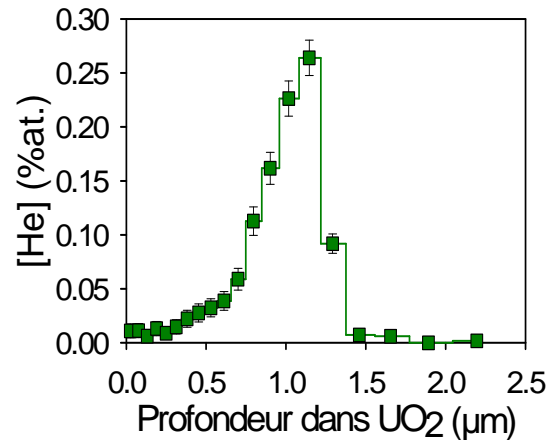
Three techniques for a 3-D characterization of He behavior: **space x,y,z, time t, temperature T**

<1> Desorption : t,T



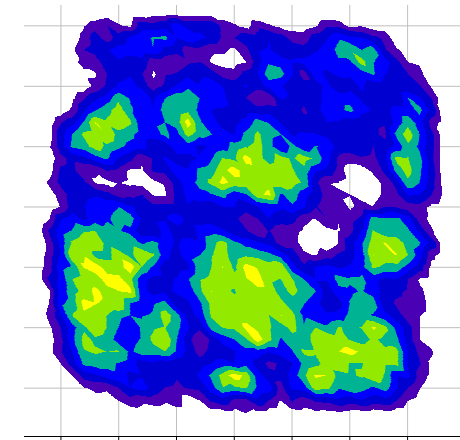
DIADDHEM (CEMHTI) : annealing and NRA measurements

<2> Depth profiles 1D : z



DIADDHEM : coincidence method

<3> 2D Cartography: x,y

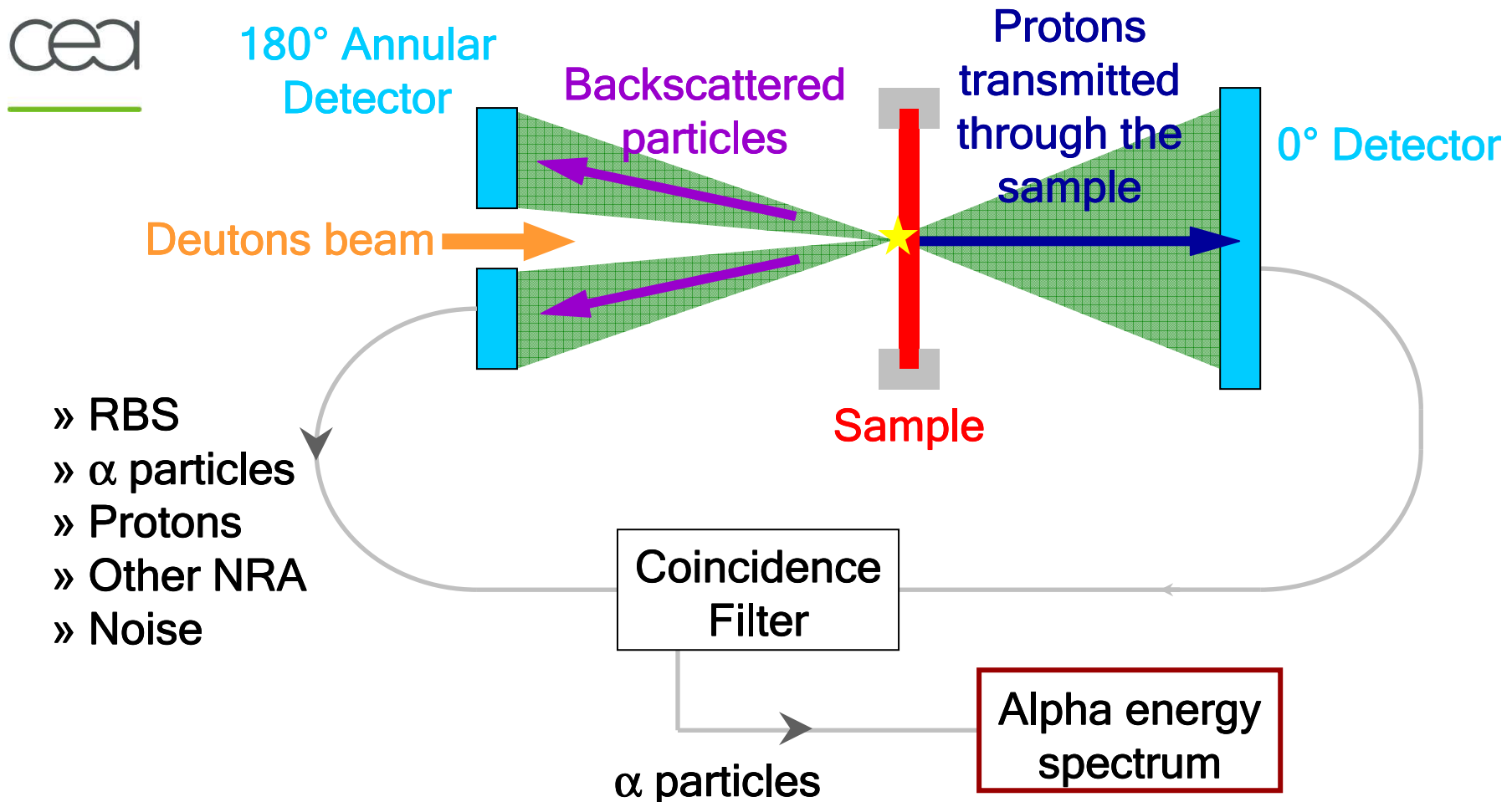


Labs involved:

- CNRS / CEMHTI (Orléans)
- CEA-CNRS / LPS (Saclay)

Thermal diffusion of helium in uranium dioxide

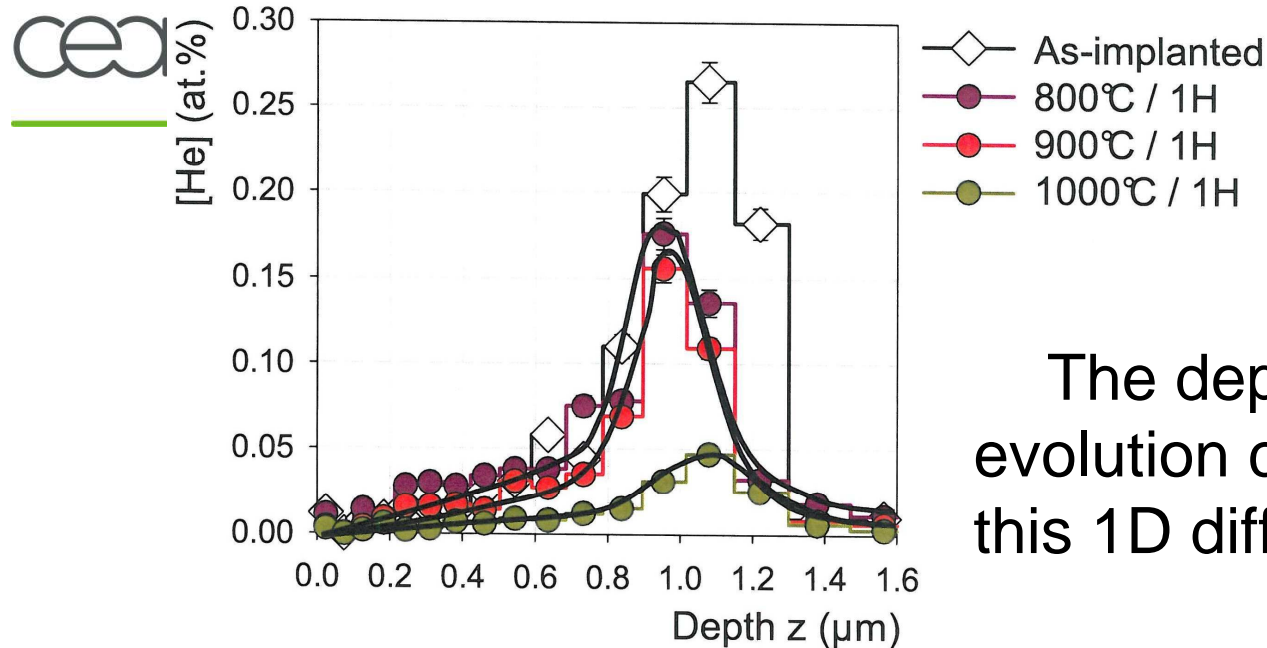
1-NRA: helium depth profiling



The greater the depth at which the α particle is produced within the sample, the more energy it loses as it reaches the sample surface

Thermal diffusion of helium in uranium dioxide

1-NRA: helium depth profiling, temperature effect



G.Martin *et al.*,
J. Nucl. Mater. 357, 198 (2006)

The depth profiles evolution can be modeled with this 1D diffusion equation:

Depth profiles after annealing do not broaden significantly: helium is able to migrate and is then **released via diffusion short-cuts such as grain boundaries**

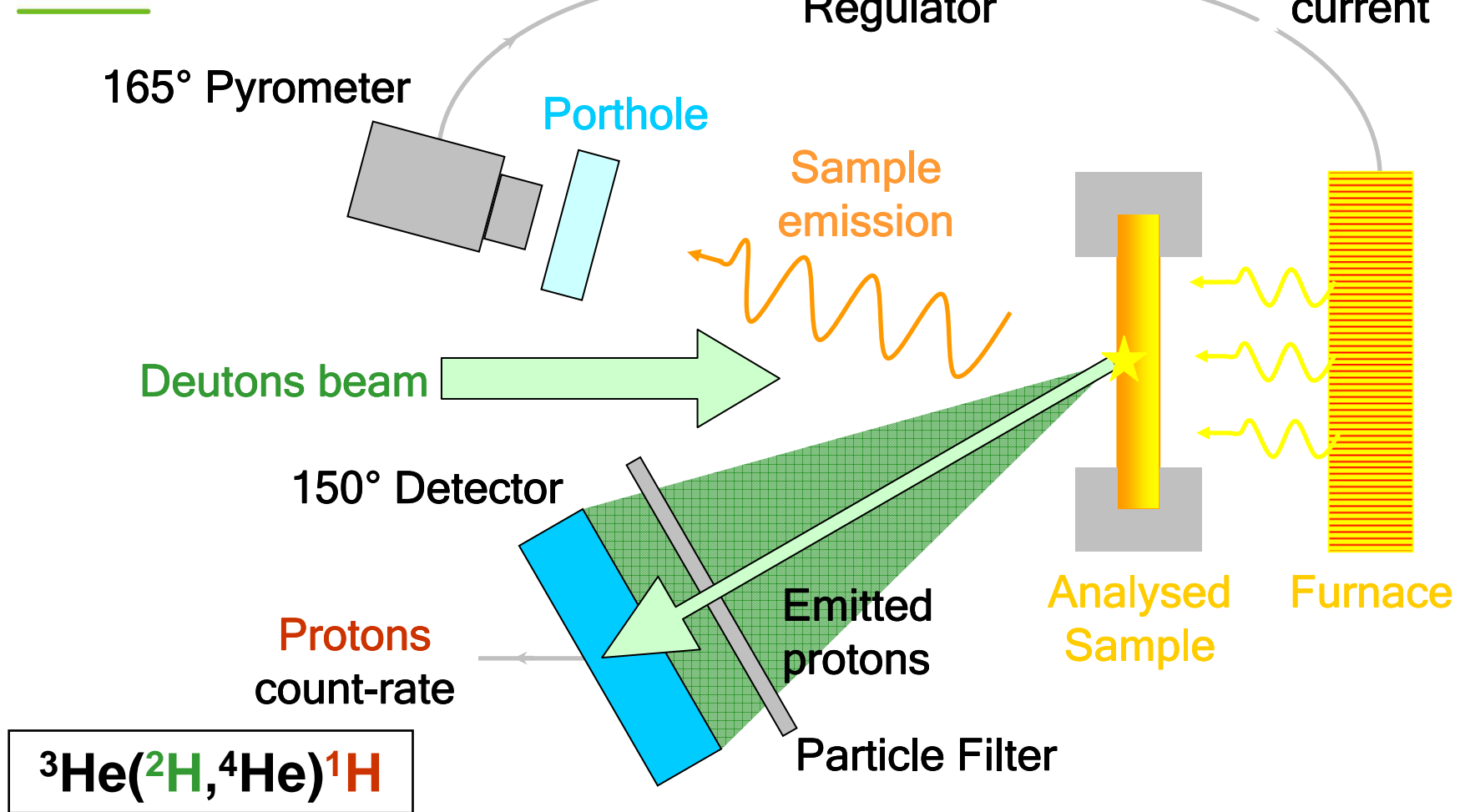
$$\frac{\partial C}{\partial t} = \frac{\partial}{\partial x} \left[D \frac{\partial C}{\partial x} \right] - kC - v \frac{\partial C}{\partial x}$$

Annotations:

- Fick law** points to the diffusion term $D \frac{\partial C}{\partial x}$.
- direct loss term** points to the sink term $-kC$.
- drift term** points to the advection term $-v \frac{\partial C}{\partial x}$.

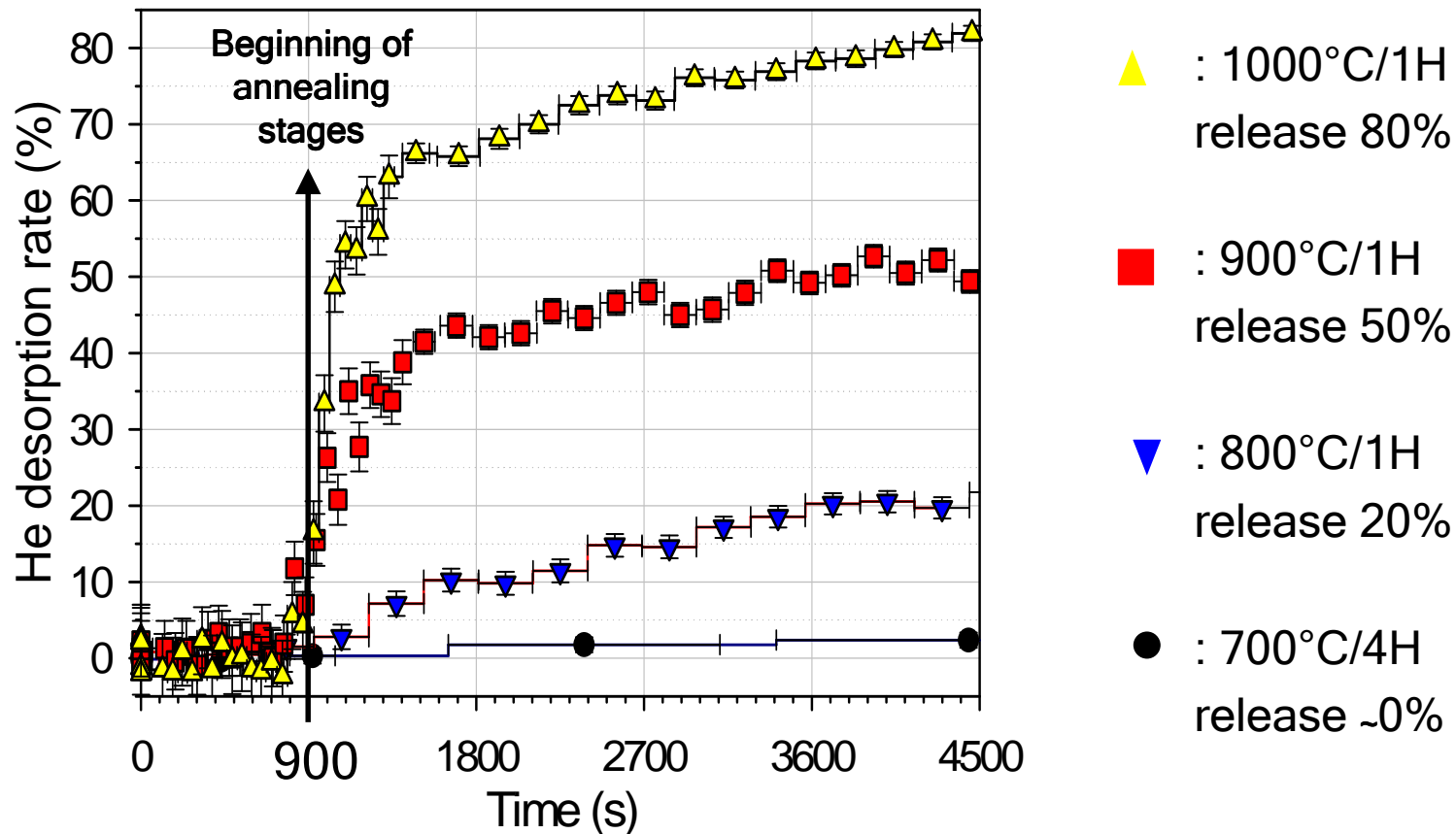
Thermal diffusion of helium in uranium dioxide

2-NRA: helium release measurements



Thermal diffusion of helium in uranium dioxide

2-NRA helium release measurements : Temperature effect on helium release



At 800° C, helium release regular and slow.

Above 800° C, two successive stages. Fast transient helium release stage.

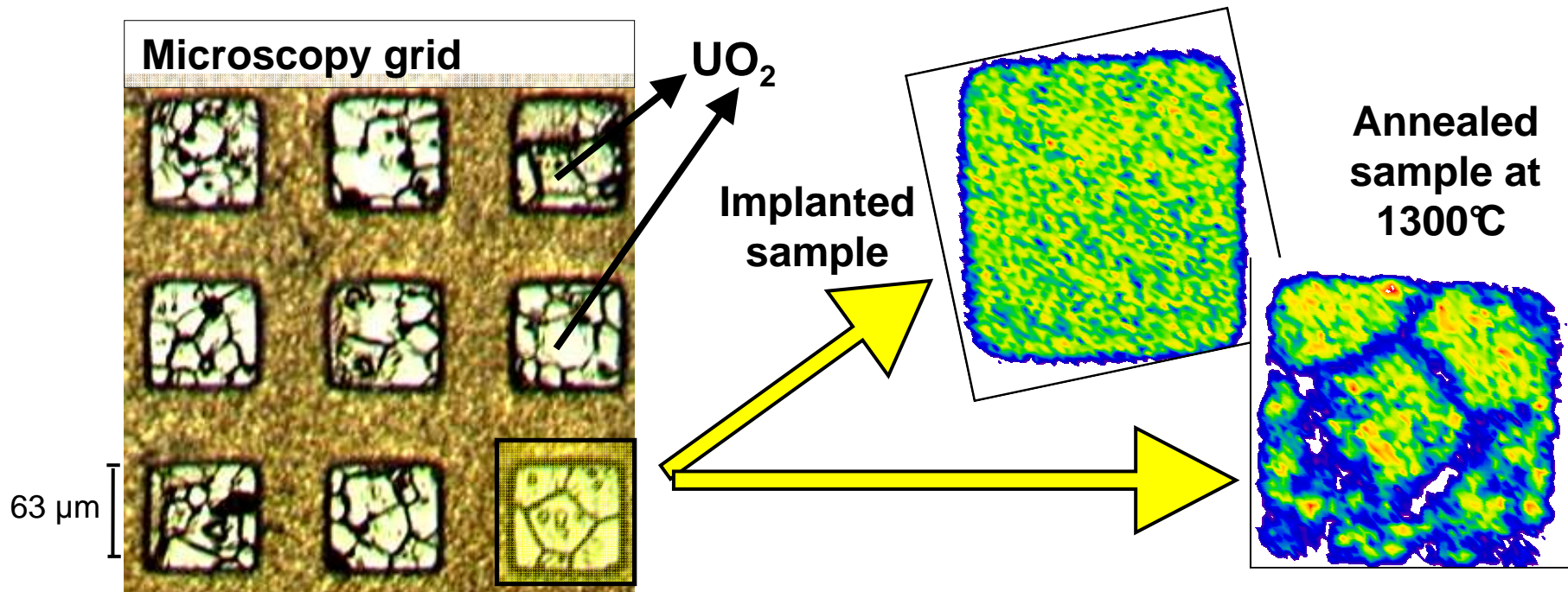
Thermal diffusion of helium in uranium dioxide



3- Micro-NRA: helium cartography

Measurement of remaining helium :

- Micrometric beam
- Analyzed area characterized by optic microscopy



T. Sauvage *et al.*, NIMB **240**, 271 (2005)

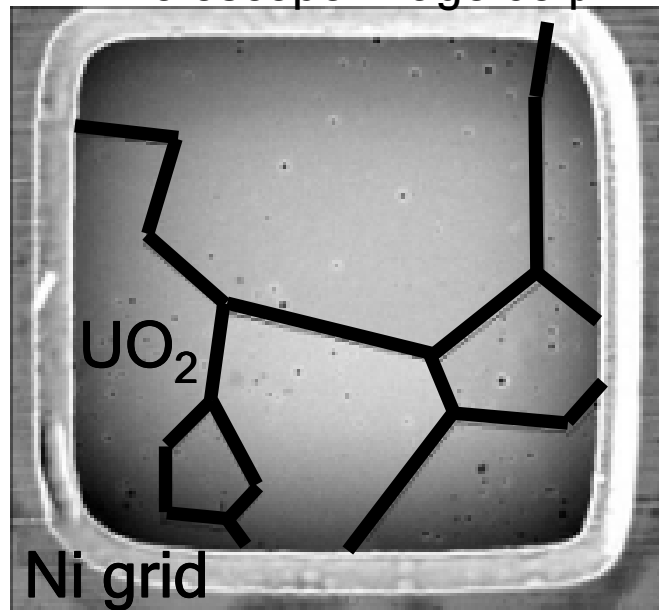
μ -NRA consists in counting protons on every pixel scanned on the surface sample

Thermal diffusion of helium in uranium dioxide

μ -NRA helium cartography : microstructure effect

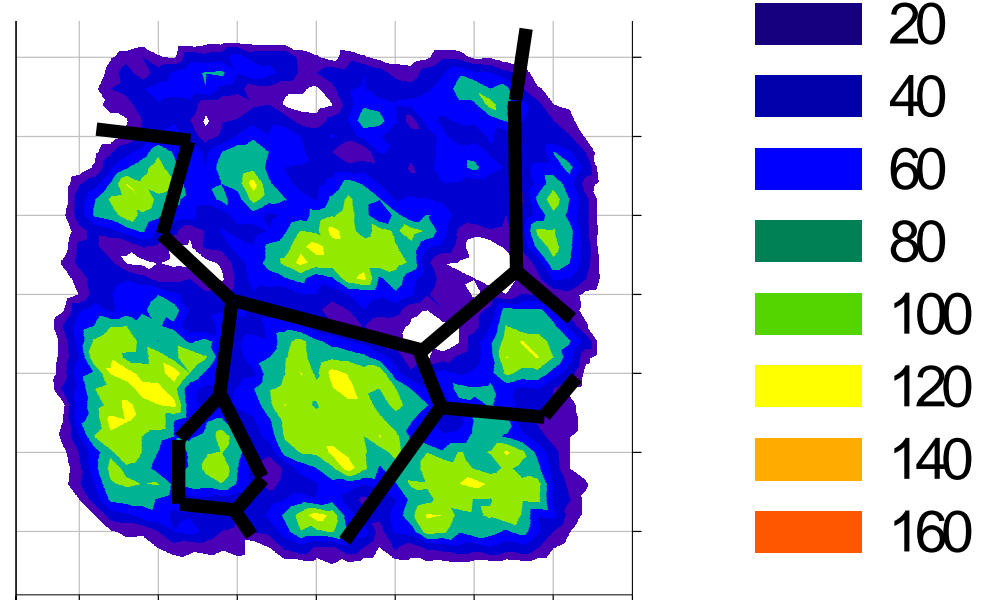


Scanning Electron
Microscope image 63 μm



Helium relative content (%)

μ -NRA cartography 1000°C



At 1000°C, depletion width > 3 μm

Helium diffusion higher near grain boundaries

Thermal diffusion of helium in uranium dioxide



Coupling various NRA techniques offers interesting possibilities to study helium in fuels

- Generating data to be used in fuel behavior code
- Providing mechanisms to be modeled
- Giving helium release stages as a function of temperature
- Demonstrating strong effects of microstructure , grain boundaries, to be taken into account in the transport mechanisms

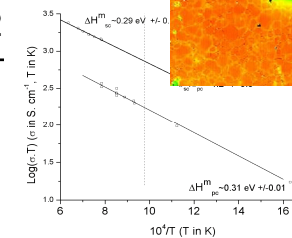
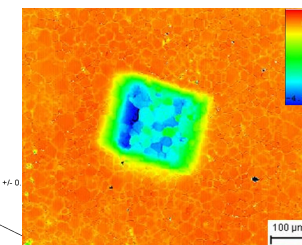
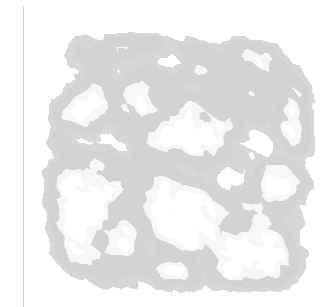
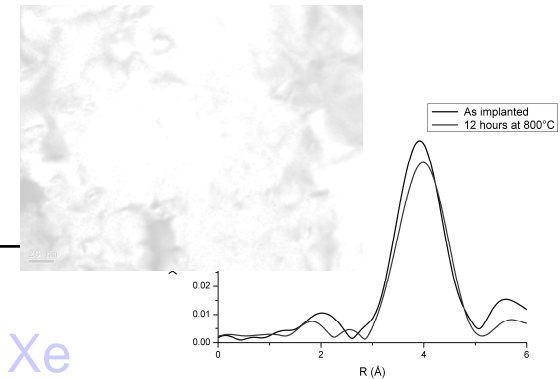
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Oxygen diffusion in relation to p-type doping in UO₂



Aim: generate experimental data that can be compared to theoretical approaches, such as the nature of the defects, their migration mechanisms, ...

Basic theory & Methodology

Combination of electrical conductivity and of intrinsic diffusion coefficients

Experimental

Techniques and materials

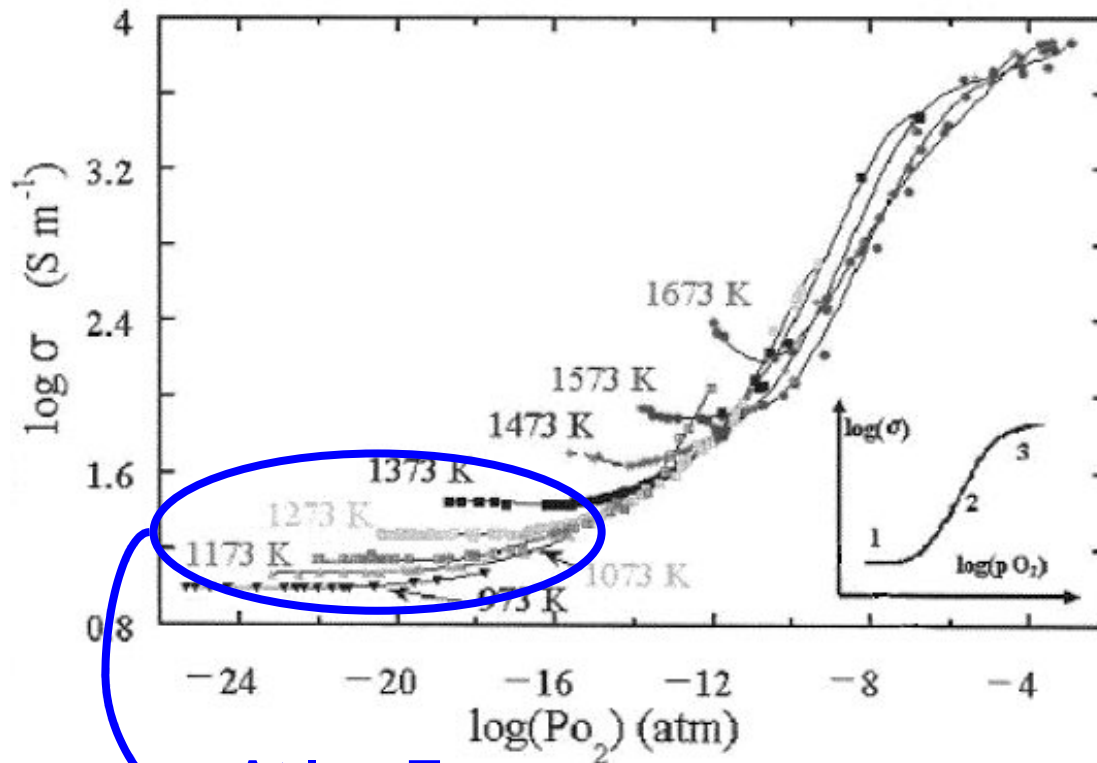
Electrical conductivity results

Diffusion coefficient measurements by secondary ion mass spectroscopy (**SIMS**)

Study led by Philippe Garcia (CEA-Cadarache)

P. Garcia, M. Fracziewicz, C. Davoisne, G. Carlot, B. Pasquet, G. Baldinozzi, D. Siméone, C. Petot, J. Nucl. Mater. (2010), in press.

Electrical conductivity of UO_2



At low T

Low $p(\text{O}_2)$: extrinsic behaviour: charge carrier $[h^{\cdot}]$ controlled by doping levels, σ independent of $p(\text{O}_2)$

At higher $p(\text{O}_2)$: intrinsic defects predominate, p-type charge carriers

At higher T:

n-type carriers at low $p(\text{O}_2)$

p-type charge carriers at high $p(\text{O}_2)$

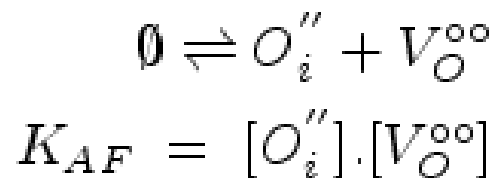
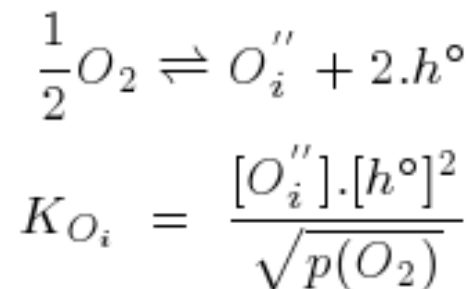
P. Ruello *et al.* JACS 88, 604 (2005)

Basic equations, at low T, extrinsic regime

Expression for electrical conductivity yields the hole concentration $[h^\circ]$ and the enthalpy of migration E^m

$$\sigma = e \cdot \mu^p \cdot [h^\circ] = e \cdot \frac{\mu_o^p \cdot e^{\frac{-E_p^m}{k_b \cdot T}}}{T} \cdot [h^\circ]$$

“Simple” charged point defect model



Assumed equilibria

- **Interstitial mechanism** $D_O \propto [O_i''] \cdot e^{-\frac{E_m^{O_i}}{k_b T}}$

- **Vacancy mechanism** $D_O \propto [V_O^{oo}] \cdot e^{-\frac{E_m^{V_O}}{k_b T}}$

Objectives

Questions are:



- What mass balance equations?
- Nature of defects assumed correct?
- What diffusion mechanism for O?
- Role of dopant concentration on diffusion properties ?
- Migration energies, free energies for mass balance equations?

• How do we check the theory?

- Take two materials containing **different doping levels**: single crystals (**SC**) / polycrystals (**PC**)

- Measure σ : $\frac{\sigma_{sc}}{\sigma_{pc}} = \frac{[h^\circ]_{sc}}{[h^\circ]_{pc}} = r_\sigma$
 - Measure D_o : $\sqrt{\frac{D_{pc}^O}{D_{sc}^O}} ? \frac{1}{r_\sigma}$ or r_σ
- vacancy mechanism since $D_O \propto [V_O^{\circ\circ}] \cdot e^{-\frac{E_m^{V_O}}{k_b T}} \propto [h^\circ]^2$.
- interstitial mechanism since $D_O \propto [O_i^{''}] \cdot e^{-\frac{E_m^{O_i}}{k_b T}} \propto \frac{1}{[h^\circ]^2}$

Materials used



- **Single crystals** prepared from very large grain polycrystalline bloc

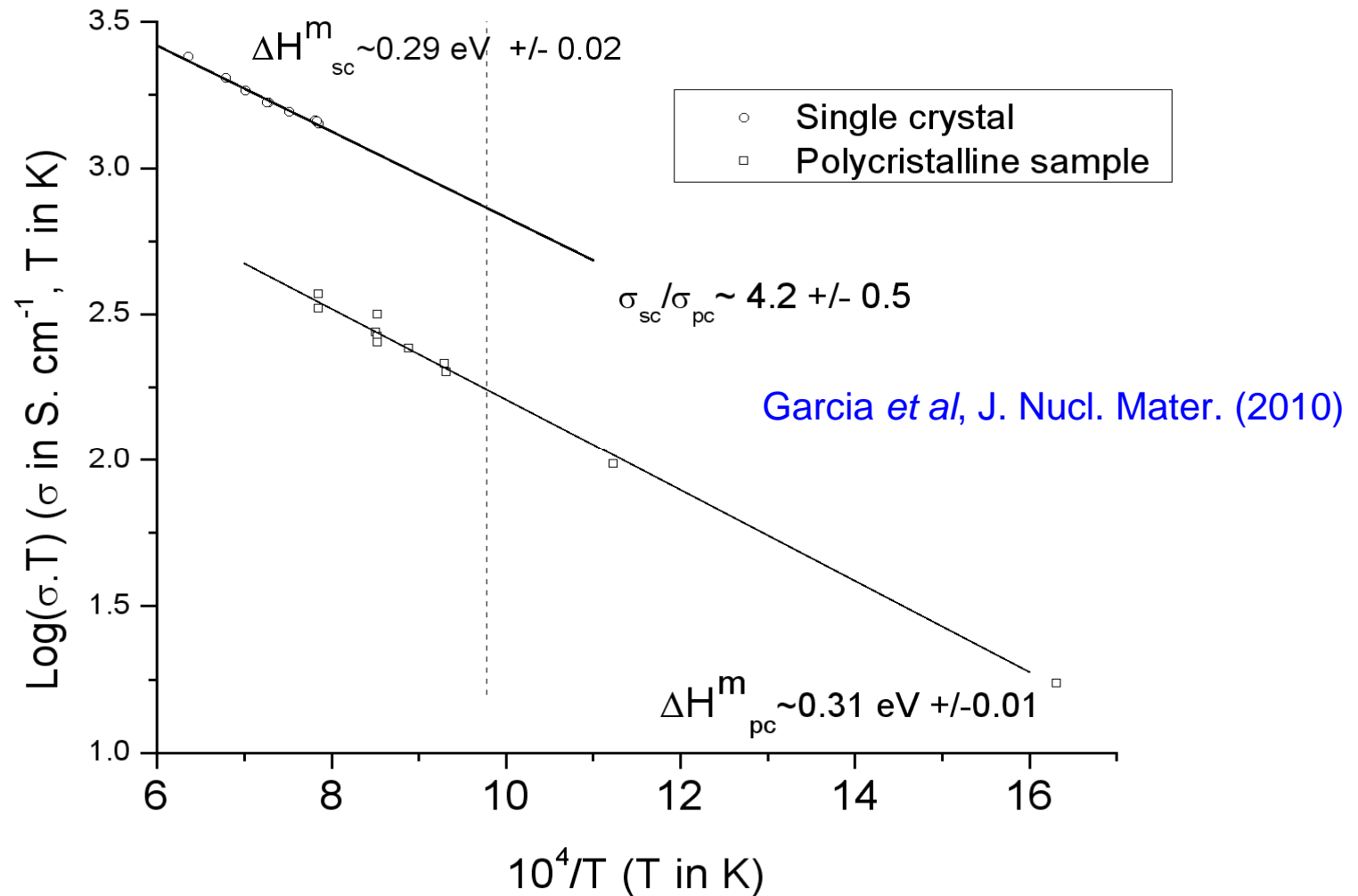
- Obtained from cooling of a molten mass of UO_2
- **Grain size ~ 1-2mm**

- **Polycrystalline samples**

- High density (98.5 % th.d) annealed at 1700°C for 80 hours
- **Grain size ~ 24 μm**

element	P	SC
Cr	7	522
Fe	36	1649
Gd	9	
Mo	2	
Mn		59
Ca		1423
Ni		190
sum ppm	51	5516
Total concentration	$1.2-2.1 \cdot 10^{18} \text{cm}^{-3}$	$1.3-1.7 \cdot 10^{20} \text{cm}^{-3}$

Electrical conductivity at low oxygen potential



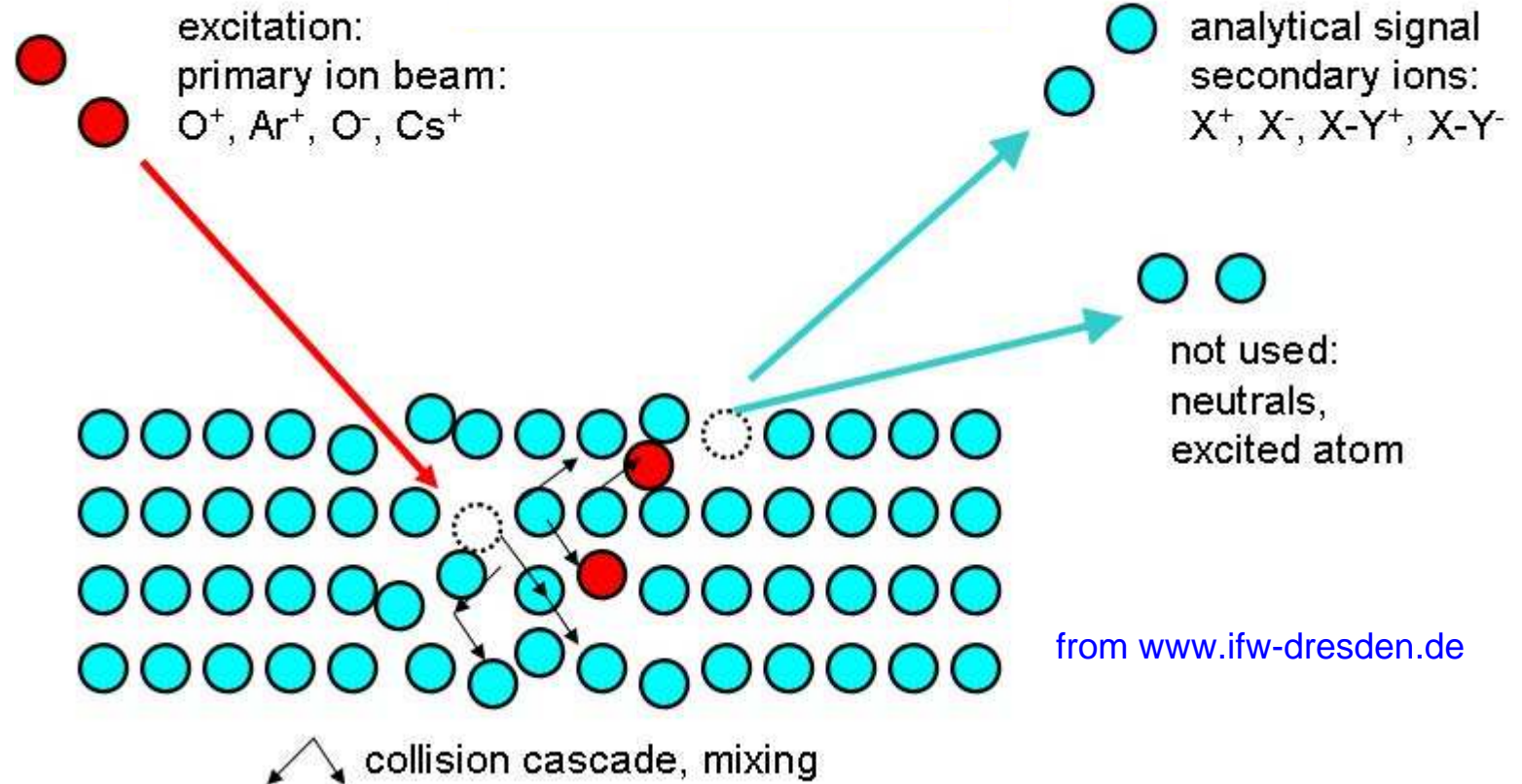
Parallel lines: charge migration energy identical

Oxygen diffusion experiments in UO_2



- **Gas-solid isotopic exchange method**, vapour enriched in $^{18}\text{O}_2$
- **Annealing conditions:**
 - Simultaneous annealing of polycrystalline and single crystals
 - At 750°C and lowest oxygen potential ($\sim 2.8 \cdot 10^{-22}$ atm.)
- **SIMS analysis of 2 samples**
 - 10 kV Cs beam (beam current between 30-100 nA), 5 kV extraction field
 - beam rastered over $150 \times 150 \mu\text{m}^2$, extracted from an area $30 \mu\text{m}$ in diameter
 - Several craters in each sample
 - ^{16}O , ^{18}O , ^{235}U , $^{235}\text{U}^{16}\text{O}_2$ signals were systematically collected
- **Crater depths determined using optical method (chromatic confocal microscopy)**

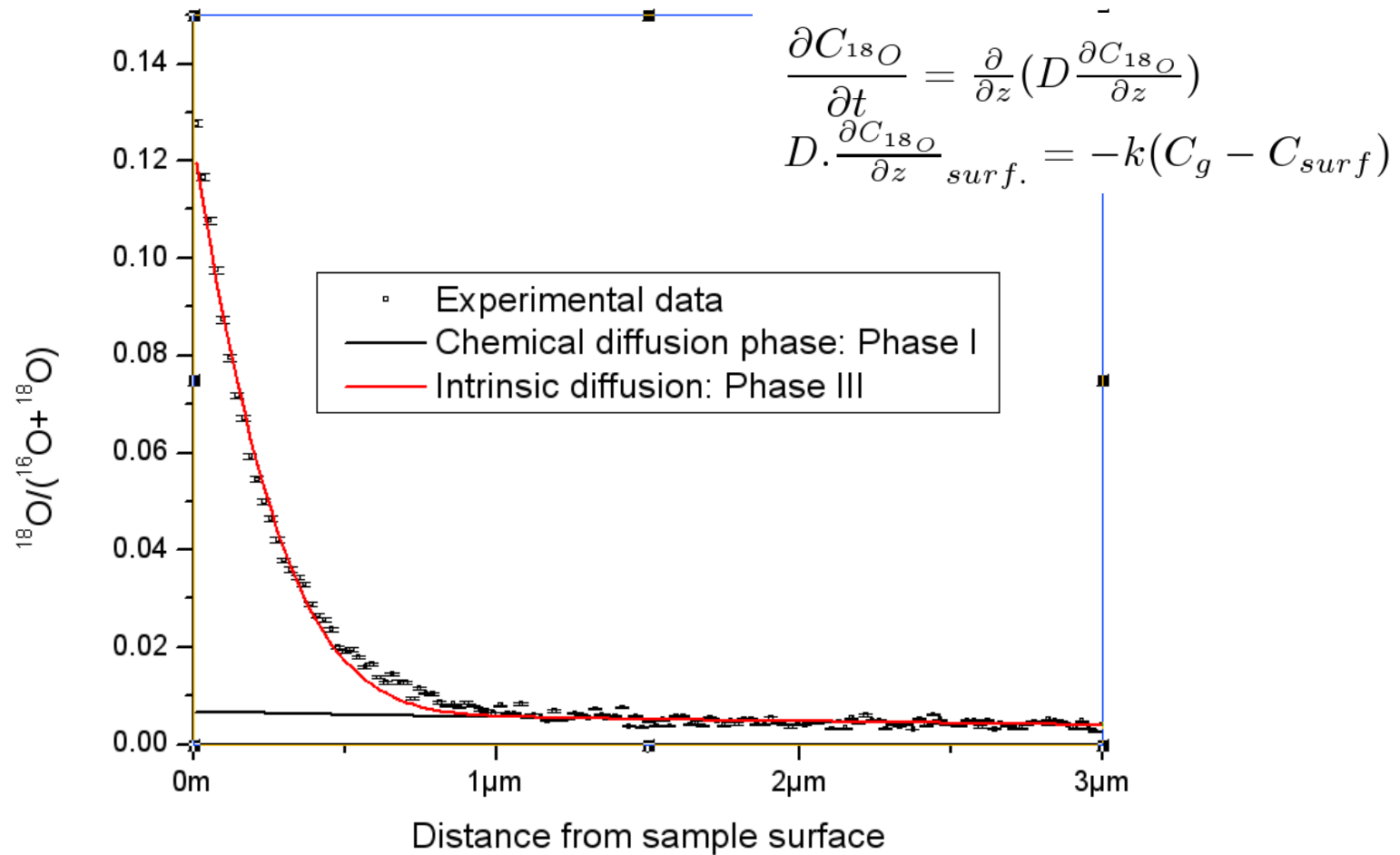
Principles of SIMS



from www.ifw-dresden.de

Conversion time dependence to depth dependence yields chemical composition as a function of depth

Results obtained on a polycrystalline sample



Model reproduces satisfactorily the experimental data

Garcia et al, J. Nucl. Mater. (2010)

Summary of the measurements



profile	$D(m^2.s^{-1})$	$k(m.s^{-1})$
S1	$5.4 \times 10^{-19} \pm 10^{-19}$	$4.8 \times 10^{-13} m^2.s^{-1} \pm 6 \times 10^{-14}$
S2	$6.4 \times 10^{-19} \pm 1.6 \times 10^{-19}$	$3.2 \times 10^{-13} m^2.s^{-1} \pm 4 \times 10^{-14}$
S3	$7.6 \times 10^{-19} \pm 10^{-19}$	$7.6 \times 10^{-13} m^2.s^{-1} \pm 8 \times 10^{-14}$
P1	$1.0 \times 10^{-17} \pm 3 \times 10^{-18}$	$4.5 \times 10^{-12} m^2.s^{-1} \pm 7 \times 10^{-13}$
P2	$1.4 \times 10^{-17} \pm 3 \times 10^{-18}$	$5.3 \times 10^{-12} m^2.s^{-1} \pm 6 \times 10^{-13}$
P3	$1.8 \times 10^{-17} \pm 2 \times 10^{-18}$	$5.7 \times 10^{-12} m^2.s^{-1} \pm 4 \times 10^{-13}$

Accurate determination of parameters

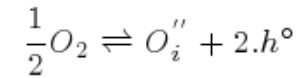
- $r = \sqrt{\frac{D_O^{pc}}{D_O^{sc}}} \sim 4.7 \pm 0.6$ compared to 4.2 ± 0.5 for $\left(\frac{\sigma_{sc}}{\sigma_{pc}}\right)$

$$D_O \propto \frac{1}{[h^\circ]^2} \cdot \sqrt{p(O_2)} \cdot K_{O_i} \cdot e^{-\frac{\Delta H_m^{O_i}}{kT}} + [h^\circ]^2 \cdot \frac{K_{AF}}{K_{O_2}} \cdot \frac{1}{\sqrt{p(O_2)}} \cdot e^{-\frac{\Delta H_m^{VO}}{kT}}$$

Concluding remarks and prospects



Efficient way of characterising nature of point defects and associated mass balance equations



- Relevant mass balance equation for UO_2 :
$$K_{O_i} = \frac{[O_i''] \cdot [h^\circ]^2}{\sqrt{p(O_2)}}$$
- In the extrinsic region studied, **doubly charged oxygen** interstitials are no doubt the point defects responsible for atomic migration

First-principles calculations tell us it is an interstitialcy mechanism

- Oxygen defect concentrations are controlled at low T and $p(O_2)$ by impurity concentration on cation sublattice
- Prospects
 - Determine D_o dependence on all parameters: oxygen potential, impurity concentration and temperature
 - Assess data against *ab initio* calculations
 - formation and migration energies
 - vibrational properties along migration paths

Part 4 conclusion



Necessary coupling between separated effects studies, PIE and fuel modeling

- **The separate effect studies** are complementary to the post irradiation examinations
- **The separate effect studies** enable us
 - to decorrelate and improve understanding of the relevant phenomena (thermal, irradiation, chemical effects)
 - Identification of mechanisms at lower scale
 - Determination of basic data to be used in the fuel behavior codes

- ➡ **Essential to in-pile fuel behavior modeling**
- ➡ **Essential to validate approximations in modeling**

General conclusion



- **Numerical and experimental simulations at the atomic scale of the fuel behavior under irradiation provide data, mechanisms to be used in fuel performance codes**

- **Various communities have to work together:**
 - **modelling and experiment**
 - **applied physics and basic research**

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