

### Challenges for materials in fusion environment: interactions with tritium and morphology evolution under the WEST first wall conditions

#### **Elodie Bernard**

E. Hodille, F. Montupet-Leblond, J. Dark, M. Payet, J. Mougenot, Y. Charles, M. Cekada, C. Martin, C. Grisolia and the WEST team

I. Cristescu, C. Moreno, V. Malard, S. Markelj, T. Gilardi, D. Meyer and all TITANS collaborators



European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or he European Atomic Energy Community ('EC-Euratom'). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them







#### **1.** Reactor technologies and design: required material properties

- Plasma-wall interaction conditions, key functions and properties
- Materials of interest
- The burning issue of tritium behavior

### **2.** Plasma-facing materials in fusion reactors

- Evolution of surface conditions in realistic conditions in the WEST tokamak
- Understanding fundamental mechanisms: impact of He on W microstructure

### **3.** Tritium interaction with materials: the TITANS project

- Enhancement of tritium permeation barriers and tritiated waste management
- Tritium measurement and modelling
- Radiation protection, risk assessment and dosimetry studies following accidental exposure to tritiated dust in support to EU regulators (art. 31)



## Achieving magnetic confinement in reactors: the tokamak concept

- Confining the hot plasma for nuclear reactions to happen:
  - Inertial confinement
  - Magnetic confinement: tokamaks and stellarators

### In tokamaks, magnetic confinement is not perfect:

- Particles (and energy) losses
- Intense plasma wall interaction
  - > Production of particles (« dust »)
  - Irradiation of plasma-facing materials (PFM)





 → ITER: demonstrate scientific and technical feasibility of fusion as a source of energy + tests of Breeding Blanket (tritium production)

# From the magnetic confinement to the first physical barrier in ITER

- The vacuum vessel: double actively cooled stainless steel wall
  - 10<sup>19</sup>-10<sup>20</sup> m<sup>-3</sup> plasma densities
  - Minimize impurities: low background pressure (~10<sup>-5</sup>Pa)
- > First wall components: the first physical materials facing the plasma
  - Exposed to drastic conditions:
    - High thermal flux (stationnary and transients)

ITER: 10-20 MW/m<sup>2</sup>

up to 60 MJ/m<sup>2</sup> over a few ms

- Particle irradiation (D,T, He)
- Neutron irradiation
- Functions:
  - Extract the heat from plasma
  - Control impurities and particles (He)
  - Produce T



 Manage the contact while minimizing the pollution of the plasma and the modification of materials



# Plasma-Wall interactions in Tokamaks

- Combination of several mechanisms
- Irradiations:
  - D/T
  - He
  - 14 MeV neutrons
- + Conditioning (boronosation)
- + High temperatures (>500°C)
- + Drastic events: disruptions, ELMs, runaways electrons, arcs





# Materials in fusion reactors

### Required properties:

- No activation or transmutation
- High electric conductivity
- Good thermomechanical behavior
- Low D/T trapping and permeation
- ➤ Low plasma pollution → low erosion and/or plasma pollution
- Materials of interest:
  - Facing the plasma: tungsten (W)
  - Adaptative layer: Cu, CuCrZr
  - Structural material: EUROfer97, stainless steel

### + active cooling: heat sink (H<sub>2</sub>O)



Impact of interfaces Evolution of surface condition and bulk microstructure





### > W: used in JET, AUG, WEST, ITER

- intensive fluxes of He and H isotopes at high **→** temperatures
- Impact of He irradiation at the surface:
  - dislocation loops
    bubbles
    E < E<sub>disp. min</sub> (538 eV)

  - W-fuzz



W irradiated with 6.5x10<sup>19</sup> He.m<sup>-2</sup>



R. Sakamoto

He has a strong impact on the material.

These modifications can affect the trapping of hydrogen (T).

## Tritium: a key isotope for fusion devices operation and safety

- Radioactive hydrogen isotope: <sup>3</sup>H (T)
  - $^{3}H \rightarrow ^{3}He^{+} + _{-1}e^{-} + v_{e}$

 $(E_{max} = 18,6 \text{ keV} - E_{moy} = 5,68 \text{ keV}, t_{1/2} = 12,5 \text{ year})$ 

- H: high mobility in the environment and materials (as gas, water or OBT)
- Very large re-circulation of tritium in the installation (tokamak, tritium plant, ...)
  - Impacts the power plant efficiency, operability, safety, dismantling and waste management



- All fusion devices will be confronted with T handling and management:
  - > Fuel availability:  ${}^{6}Li + n \rightarrow {}^{3}H + {}^{4}He$
  - > Safety requirements:
    - Address the tritium retention (max 700 g of tritium in ITER Vacuum Vessel)
    - Control the permeation
    - Limit the tritium releases from tritiated waste



(Breeding Blanket)





#### **1.** Reactor technologies and design: required material properties

- Plasma-wall interaction conditions, key functions and properties
- Materials of interest
- The burning issue of tritium behavior

### **2. Plasma-facing materials in fusion reactors**

- Evolution of surface conditions in realistic conditions in the WEST tokamak
- Understanding fundamental mechanisms: impact of He on W microstructure

### **3.** Tritium interaction with materials: the TITANS project

- Enhancement of tritium permeation barriers and tritiated waste management
- Tritium measurement and modelling
- Radiation protection, risk assessment and dosimetry studies following accidental exposure to tritiated dust in support to EU regulators (art. 31)



# **PLASMA FACING COMPONENTS IN WEST**



### Divertor in next step fusion devices will handle unprecedented particle fluence

▶ High priority research area for ITER : divertor lifetime appropriateness to allow operation until well into FPO with the 1<sup>st</sup> tungsten divertor [Loarte, ITER R&D needs, 2020] First PFPO-1 PFPO-2 FPO-1-3 Plasma Engineering Integrated Integrated Integrated operation Assembly IV Assembly III Comm. II H. He Comm. III Comm. (IV) (SC magnets) (15 months) (12 months) (6 months) (9 months) (9 months) ~6 vears (6 months) > 10 years or > 2000 hours of plasma operation WEST ready for phase 2 – summer 2021 [R. Pitts, NME2019] **ITER Vertical Target** (ITER PFU) WEST : full W superconducting tokamak targeted at preparing ITER divertor operation W Monoblock WEST operates with an ITER grade divertor  $\rightarrow$  long pulse capability WEST Target **Copper Twisted Tay** "High Fluence" phase run at the end of the first experimental campaign of phase 2 WEST PFU) Cu-OFHC Objective : cumulate ITER relevant particle fluence and assess evolution of ITER CuCrZr Interlayer Tube grade divertor  $\leftrightarrow$  plasma operation Attachment (U-shaped fixing) jacket for fixation

# +50°

-50°

-70°



- LFS: PJ2

Goal: expose samples at first wall conditions for an easy access to each campaign impact on the surface and stucture of the material (EUROfer, W + various original surface conditions)

## First-wall exposure in WEST: WHIrr sample holders

Far in the Scrape Of Layer

- Grazing field line
- Charge exchange area
- Deposition area
- The larger the poloidal angle, the further the sample is from the lower divertor.





12

# Exposure history throughout WEST phase 14

- Samples exposed during C1, C2, C3, C4 and C5
  - + Cumulative exposure: C3+C4
  - Focus on C3/C4 comparison to consider the impact on He plasma
- Operational conditions:
  - C3 campaign (D campaign):
    - ➤ 3 boronizations
    - > 2h D plasma
    - ➢ 12 ITER-like PFUs in sector Q3B
  - C4 campaign (D+He campaign):
    - 13 boronizations
    - 2h45 D plasma +0.5h He plasma
    - 14 ITER-like PFUs in sector Q3B
- Major visual changes from C3
  - Shadowing of sample-holders: preferential incident angles for the deposition process
  - Composition and variation of the deposited layer?









- C3: layer of nanoparticles of metal oxide (WO3). The closer the deposit is to the divertor, the larger the particle size and the greater the surface coverage
- C4: boron layer except for -70° layer with large W nanoparticles. Low roughness for B layer on
- recrystallized W and tips along poloidal direction on industrial W (+50°).

## C3 exposed W: Three layer of boron deposition interlayed with metal oxide particles

SEM surface observation + TEM cross-section images and EDS quantitative elemental mapping

- Color variation of the deposit is associated with different thickness of B deposition layer and density of surface metal oxide particles, but the struture of the deposited layer is similar and present everywhere
- > 3 B layers
- Deposition thickness is higher in Q3A and at 50° angle
- Metal oxide layer (particles) is observed in the 2 B layer and at the surface
- Lesser oxygen is observed in B rich layers



# C4 exposed W: a more complex composition of layers

- Different tendency of deposit thickness compared to C3, with a specific surfacic layer at the 70° position (i.e. closer to the divertor) composed of metallic particles
- Comparison between the 2 campaigns:
  - Strong presence of B on the first wall after both C3 and C4
  - Deposition layer:
    - Similar structure and elements
    - Variation of boron and metal oxide particles
  - Profile of deposition layer
    - After C4 at -70° only (near divertor) metal oxide layer is thickest
    - Metal oxide layer (W nanoparticles) are observed (2 for C3 and 5 for C4) not directly linked with boronization history





# Modulated heat and particle loads on the WEST divertor

- ► WEST divertor heat/particle load pattern modulated by ripple
- Toroidal bevel to protect leading edge (ITER) : local monoblock shadowing



Simulated heat load deposition (PFCflux code)



- ► High fluence campaign conditions:
  - ~ 380 repetitive shots run for 1 month, cumulating ~3 hours of plasma / 30 GJ of energy
  - ITER relevant fluence reached (~2 PFPO shots) : ~5 10<sup>26</sup> D/m<sup>2</sup>

# UFO hampered the High Fluence campaign





- ► UFO analysis : peak > 200 kW on P<sub>rad</sub> from bolometry (+ distinction from MHD crash) → database of ~ 700 UFO
- ▶ 3 classes of UFO defined :
  - small impact (~80%) : plasma survives w/o subsequent issues
  - medium impact (~17%) : drives plasma into "cold branch" regime prone to MHD → disruption > 200 ms, up to several seconds later
  - large impact (<3%): leads to disruption within ~200 ms
- UFO detected with IR originate mostly from HFS (thick deposits area)

## Complex erosion / deposition divertor pattern

- Divertor : "usual" complex erosion / deposition pattern, as observed in phase 1
- New features : impact of toroidal bevel

Phase 1 erosion / deposition pattern



M. Diez, NME 2023



## Peposits in shadowed area of beveled monoblocks

New : "thin foil like" deposits in area shadowed by the toroidal bevels (and in gaps ?), both on HFS/LFS
 These deposits tend to delaminate easily (exposure to air ?) ≠ thick adherent deposits on HFS



# Complex deposited layer structure

- HFS thick deposited layers collected on PFU exposed to C5-C7
- Up to 50 μm deposited layers
- Complex structure : mix of high Z / low Z layers, delamination, impact of off normal events (molten material) ?
- ► High fluence : mainly W dense layers ?
- Enhanced dust collection after C7 (quantity and dust size > 100 microns)





- Partial divertor cleaning performed after C7 (HFS deposits) : adhesive tape used
- R&D ongoing to improve the divertor cleaning method (will be required again after the spring 2024 campaign)



### Understanding fundamental mechanisms at stake: the insight of nanoscience techniques

- He bubbles form in W under tokamak-relevant conditions:
  - Post-mortem characterization via Transmission Electron Microscopy (FIB-TEM)
  - Competing simultaneous phenomena
  - Crucial impact temperature
    - → Initial stages and kinetics are out of reach





Simplify the system to allow experimental characterization of the fundamental mechanisms for He irradiation of W

### **Coupling Grazing Incidence Small X-ray Scattering and He implantation in « ideal » W**

Grazing-incidence Small Angle X-ray Scattering (GISAXS):

non destructive technique using a **photons probe** to study nanostructure materials, combining the **length scales of small-angle scattering** and **surface sensitivity of grazing incidence diffractio**n.

- Ideal complement for TEM: determines average particle properties on a larger scale
- Simultaneous He irradiation and GISAXS measurement at BM 32 at the European Synchrotron Radiation Facility (ESRF).
- Cleaning and surface roughness minimization:
  - Single crystalline W
  - 15 min Oxygen annealing 1200 K
  - 40 s high temperature flash (2200 K) under vacuum





# Identification of migration coalescence mechanism for He bubbles

Experimental

 $Ax^{n}(1 - \exp(-(Bx)^{m}))$ 

 $\cdot 10^{21}$ 

 $Ax^1$ 

Analysis of GISAXS data allow tracking of the bubble growth



In the literature, several growth mechanisms: static mechanism (Oswald ripening) and dynamic mechanism (Migration and coalescence)







He (2 keV) at 600°C, flux = 2,40x10<sup>17</sup> m<sup>-2</sup>s<sup>-1</sup>, fluence = 1,00x10<sup>22</sup> m<sup>-2</sup>

# Enhanced preferential facetting at high temperatures



Ultra high vacuum annealing up to 1500°C

- Preferential faceting appears at high temperatures during or after He irradiation
- Enhanced during annealing up to 1500°C
  - Good agreement with TEM







25

# **PRISTINE W:** Major increase of **T** trapping with **PRE EXISTING defects**



Major increase of T trapping with defects in W structure, desorbing only at high temperature

What is the impact of He triggered damages to the W microstructure?

TITANS

# Plasma-facing materials in fusion devices: take-home messages

- Plasma-facing materials (W) are submitted to extreme conditions in tokamaks
  - Strong surface evolution observed after in situ exposure: complex deposit and erosion patterns
    - Crucial for T inventory, trapping and permeation
  - Multi-scale analysis needed to guarantee the materials integrity and properties conservation
  - Simultaneous phenomena integrated over a whole campaign complexifies identification of respective impacts



- > Coupling to laboratory studies is crucial to understand fundamental mechanisms at stake
  - Simplified systems to isolate respective contributions
  - Expansion of the experimental range at reach

\* Impact of pre existing defects, neutron irradiation, higher fluences...





#### **1.** Reactor technologies and design: required material properties

- Plasma-wall interaction conditions, key functions and properties
- Materials of interest
- The burning issue of tritium behavior

### **2.** Plasma-facing materials in fusion reactors

- Evolution of surface conditions in realistic conditions in the WEST tokamak
- Understanding fundamental mechanisms: impact of He on W microstructure

### **3. Tritium interaction with materials: the TITANS project**

- Enhancement of tritium permeation barriers and tritiated waste management
- Tritium measurement and modelling
- Radiation protection, risk assessment and dosimetry studies following accidental exposure to tritiated dust in support to EU regulators (art. 31)



## TITANS: Tritium Impact and Transfer in Advanced Nuclear reactorS

- > 21 partners, 3 years EU Horizon Europe 2021-2027
- Goal: fusion/fission cross cutting multidisciplinary project to provide suitable innovative answers to the major tritium challenges
  - Release mitigation
  - Minimization of sources
- Throughout the whole T cycle
- + Improve knowledge on the health effects of T -> Support to radiation protection authorities



### → Handle, control & protect





**1. WP1: Enhancement of tritium permeation barriers and tritiated waste management (KIT)** 

- Upgrade of tritium permeation barrier (treatment of surfaces)
- Binder matrix to immobilize tritiated metallic dust and minimize the tritium release
- Compare methods and procedures of decommissioning tritiated components/systems
- Design of a mobile water detritiation facility



# **Permeation experimental methods**

H/D/T exposure:  $H_2/D_2$  OR  $T_2$  gas loading •

> no damage creation + trap saturation

Trapping parameters: TDS, T desorption (t, temperature) • + NRA (depth profiling)



bypass

- **Transport parameters:** measure the permeation timelag and permeation flux •
  - $H_2/D_2$  permeation in Hypertomate:
    - $\succ$  diffusivity, solubility and permeability at temperatures from 100 to 550°C



Sample Sample Cell 1 Cell 2 Each permeation cell connected to a dedicated bubble. To obtain direct comparison, upstream conditions and membranes identical.

bypass

- T<sub>2</sub> permeation in WAPITI
  - > diffusivity, solubility and permeability at RT with/without water
    - → Longer permeation time but complementary with
      - Hypertomate conditions

[E. Bernard JNM 2015] [F. Montupet-Leblond NME 2021]

upstream

#### 32

Hydrogen isotopes transport & trapping in Eurofer97

- Hydrogen gas-driven permeation experiments were conducted on Eurofer97
  - Good agreement with existing studies
  - Diffusivity is not purely interstitial
    - influence of trapping sites on permeation in the 200°C to 400°C temperature range



[F. Montupet-Leblond Nuc. Fus. 2022]

# Hydrogen isotopes transport & trapping in Eurofer97

- Additional TDS experiments to investigate trapping sites present:
  - 3 trapping sites are needed to adequately model the observed behavior

more than one trapping site in Eurofer97 invalidates the hypotheses required for the effective diffusivity to be valid.

➔ Underestimation of retention and of the time need for tritium to reach the cooling system



	$E_{\mathrm{dt},i}$ (eV)	$n_i ({ m m}^{-3})$
Trap 1	0.51	$6.01\cdot 10^{25}$
Trap 2	1.26	$6.44 \cdot 10^{22}$
Trap 3	1.65	$3.88\cdot 10^{23}$

# Hydrogen isotopes transport & trapping in Eurofer97

- Simulation of the T retention fields in a 2D section of a WCLL Breeding blanket with FESTIM:
  - Adding the 2 high detrapping energy traps leads to a 18-fold increase of the retention:
    - 1-trap model: 1.72 · 10<sup>20</sup> T.m<sup>-1</sup> (0.86 mg/m of WCLL)
    - 3-traps model: 3.12 · 10<sup>21</sup> T.m<sup>-1</sup>(15.5 mg/m of WCLL)
  - + permeation through the pipe is done in 29 s with the 1-trap model vs 3.8 hours with 3-traps model









[J. Dark Nuc. Fus. 2021]



- **1. WP1: Enhancement of tritium permeation barriers and tritiated waste management (KIT)** 
  - Upgrade of tritium permeation barrier (treatment of surfaces)
  - Binder matrix to immobilize tritiated metallic dust and minimize the tritium release
  - Compare methods and procedures of decommissioning tritiated components/systems
  - Design of a mobile water detritiation facility



# Decommissioning and treatment of tritiated components

- SCK CEN Tritium laboratory:
  - Commissionned in 1975
  - > 30 years operation
  - Max inventory: <u>37 TBq</u>

- Low T release limit: intensive decontamination labor
  - Significative impact of the approach

- > Characterisation of tritium contaminated metal:
  - Large range of activity measured: 6 to180 kBq/dm<sup>2</sup>
  - Historical data: ~ 4 GBq/kg

→20 times lower than measured



UK Atomic

Energy Authority sck cen

	"Idealistic"	"Pragmatic"
Comp. nucl. Waste	4.0 m <sup>3</sup>	5.7 m³
Free rel. metals	79 % (weight)	27 % (parts)
Free rel. other mat.	75 % (weight)	65 % (parts)
Man hours (h)	4000 h	1300 h
Time span (years)	2.75 у	1 y



# Study of <sup>3</sup>H release during various cold cutting techniques

Pneumatic cutter:	up to 240 kBq/m <sup>3</sup>
Sawing :	up to 70 kBq/m <sup>3</sup>
Milling machine:	up to 50 kBq/m <sup>3</sup>
Drilling:	up to 40 kBq/m <sup>3</sup>
Background-signal	20 ± 10 kBq/m³

- + Advantages:
  - no contaminated oil (dry)
  - less tritium emission
- Disadvantages:
  - Dry friction heating causes material hardening
    - → time consuming + wear of cutting materials

### ▲ Mobilizable dust created







TiTAN



**1. WP1: Enhancement of tritium permeation barriers and tritiated waste management (KIT)** 

#### **2.** WP2: Tritium measurement and modelling (CIEMAT)

- Tritium measurement in solid, dust and aerosol
  - Autoradiography
  - Nuclear reaction analysis
  - Nuclear Magnetic resonance
  - Tritium inventory in aerosol
- Tritium measurement in liquid metal
- Tritium transport code from system to detail level in fission and fusion devices



### **Benchmark study and validation of fusionfission system level codes: KUTIM-EcosimPro**

- Benchmarking of 2 system codes:
  - EcosimPro Tritium Transport Libraries (fusion)
  - KUTIM (fission)
    - Influence of temperature
    - Impact of the H source term (secondary circuit)
    - Impact of Na flowrate in cold traps
    - + Consequences on overall permeation transfers
- Transfer fluxes in cold traps
  - Different approaches applying temperature to calculate Na density
    - Na density equation calculated with corrected temperature
  - Different modelling approaches to simulate the cold trap component in the process material balance





Cold Trap Tritium purification

### **Benchmark study and validation of fusion/fission system level codes: KUTIM vs EcosimPro**

- → Permeation:
  - EcosimPro: permeability is the product of solubility and diffusivity

$$\boldsymbol{P}_{H} = \boldsymbol{D}_{H} \cdot \boldsymbol{K}_{SH}^{met} = \boldsymbol{P}_{o} \boldsymbol{e}^{\left(-\frac{L_{p}}{RT}\right)}$$

 KUTIM: permeation is based on "permeability coefficient" Pe<sub>X</sub> (kg<sub>Na</sub>.m<sup>-1</sup>.s<sup>-1</sup>)

$$Pe_{H}(T) = D_{H} \cdot \frac{K_{SH}^{met}}{K_{SH}^{Na}} \cdot \rho^{Na} = e^{\left(-\frac{a}{T} - b\right)}$$

- → 0.05 % difference for the global gaseous release analysis
  - Sensitivity analysis (temperature, H source, flow rate to cold Trap)
  - Implement validation scenario for liquid sodium loop (Superfennec training loop at CEA)



# **TITANS: HANDLE, CONTROL & PROTECT**

**1. WP1: Enhancement of tritium permeation barriers and tritiated waste management (KIT)** 

### **2.** WP2: Tritium measurement and modelling (CIEMAT)

- **3. WP3: Radiation protection, risk assessment and dosimetry studies following accidental exposure to tritiated dust (CEA)** 
  - Dispersion and deposition of aerosols on vegetation
  - Establish a dose-effect relationship (essential to radiation risk assessment) in the case of:
    - Contamination of skin
    - Contamination of human lung macrophages
    - Contamination of a population of mussels







### Study of tritium particles biokinetic by the skin route: a fast track to T bio accumulation?

TiTAN

cea



Evaluation of tritium and metals' permeation through intact and damaged human skin following exposure to tritiated particles (OECD Guidelines and Regul Toxicol Pharmacol. 2020 Nov, 117:104752)

# Skin decontamination can increase steel particle element permeation through the skin



- Only decontaminated and broken skin present an increase of metal permeation, with different profiles:
  - For broken skins: permeation after 8 h
  - Decontaminated skins using soap: caused by surfactant action of soaps on stratum corneum integrity?

TiTAN

NIVERSITA



## TITANS project: take-home messages

- Develop and test innovative technologies to measure T in materials and mitigate T release in the environment
  - Learn from decommissioning activities and prepare waste management
  - Develop T measurements techniques
  - Develop and upgrade experimental benches for T testing
  - Validate and benchmark modelling tools
- Provide inputs to ICRP biokinetic models and dose coefficients for radioprotection guidelines
  - Understand potential dispersion routes
  - Evaluate T contamination routes (skin permeation, food chain integration)
  - Estimate geno and cyto-toxic impact

### > TITANS built on strong interaction between fusion/fission experts

- All the major tritium EU experts/institutions involved
- All results, workshop, news accessible: <u>https://titans-project.eu/</u>
  - newsletter available!









## Thanks for your attention

CEA Cadarache DRF/IRFM 13 115 St Paul lez Durance cedex France elodie.bernard@cea.fr