

# Noble, but Troublesome: Radon in Dark Matter Experiments

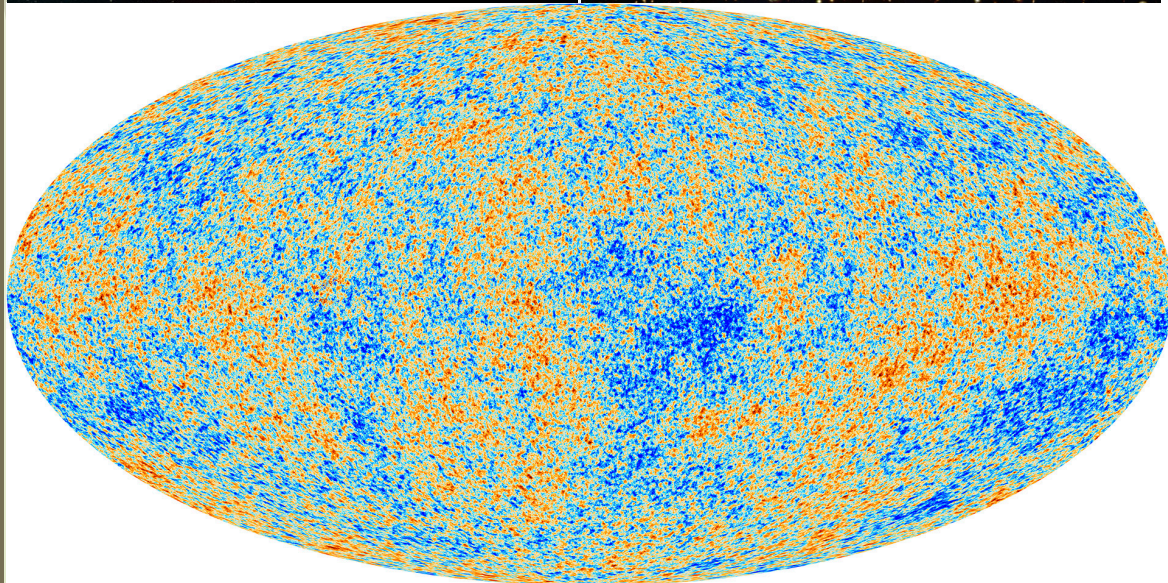
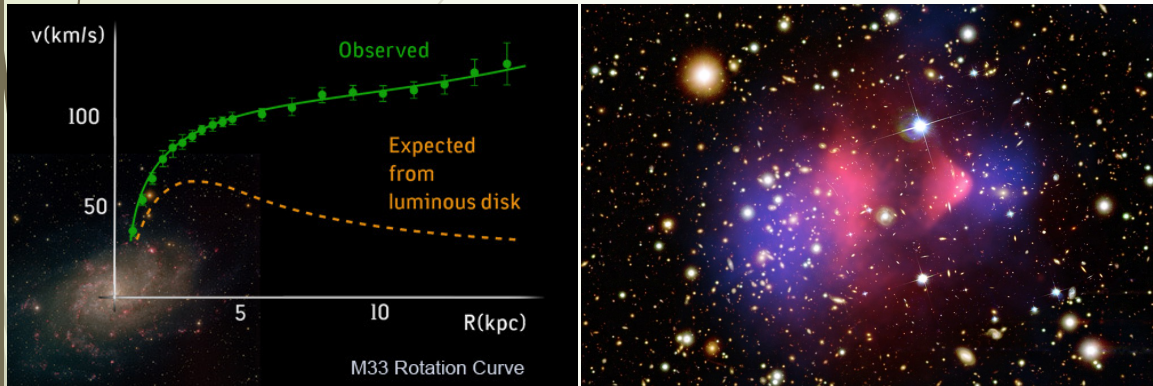


**Hardy Simgen**

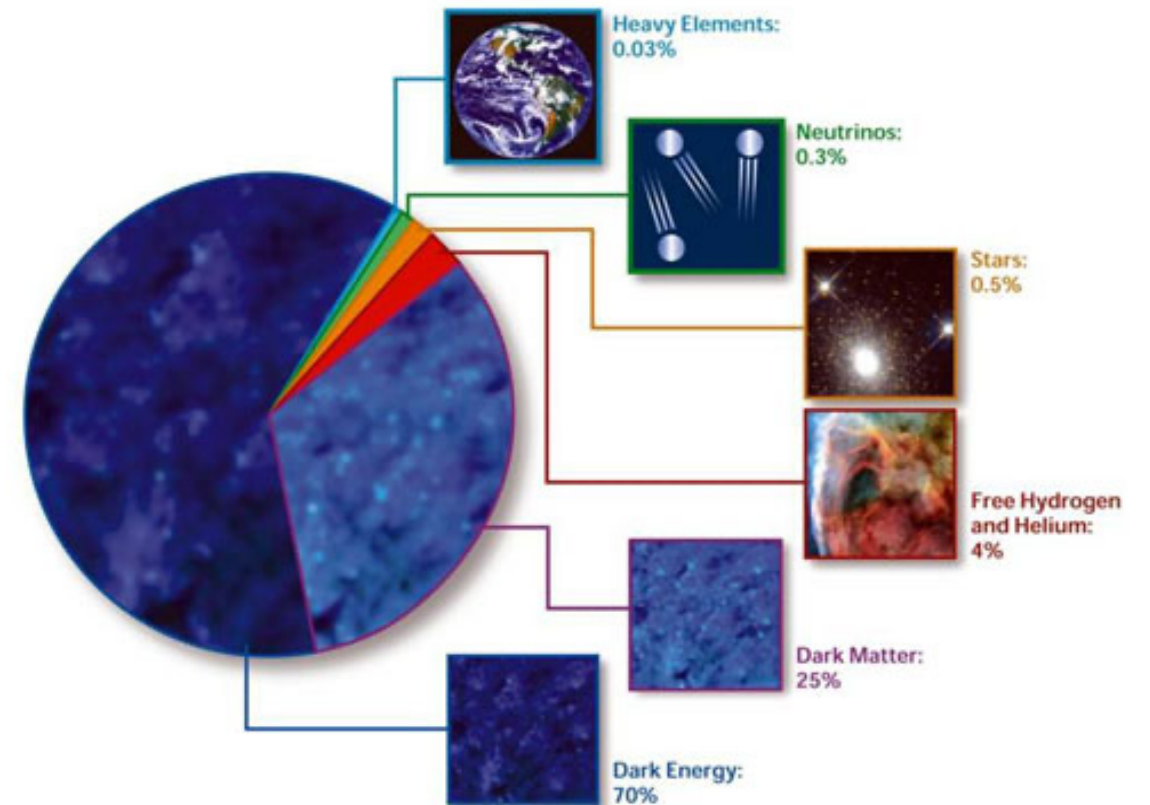
Max-Planck-Institute for Nuclear Physics



# Dark Matter in the Cosmos



## COMPOSITION OF THE COSMOS





# Hunting Dark Matter

## Indirect detection



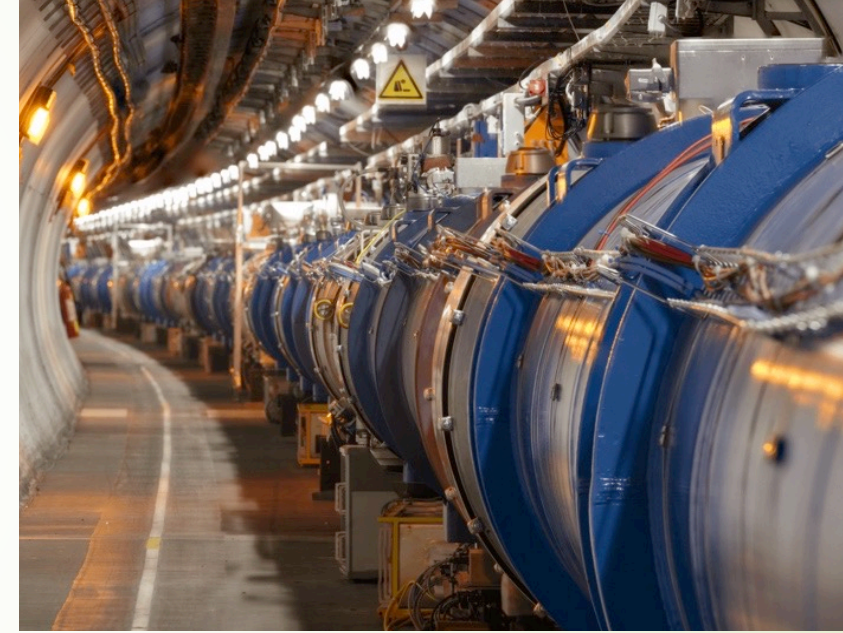
$$\chi + \chi \rightarrow f + \bar{f}$$

## Direct detection



$$\chi + N \rightarrow \chi + N$$

## Production



$$p + p \rightarrow \chi + \dots$$

- 3 complementary channels
- very different techniques

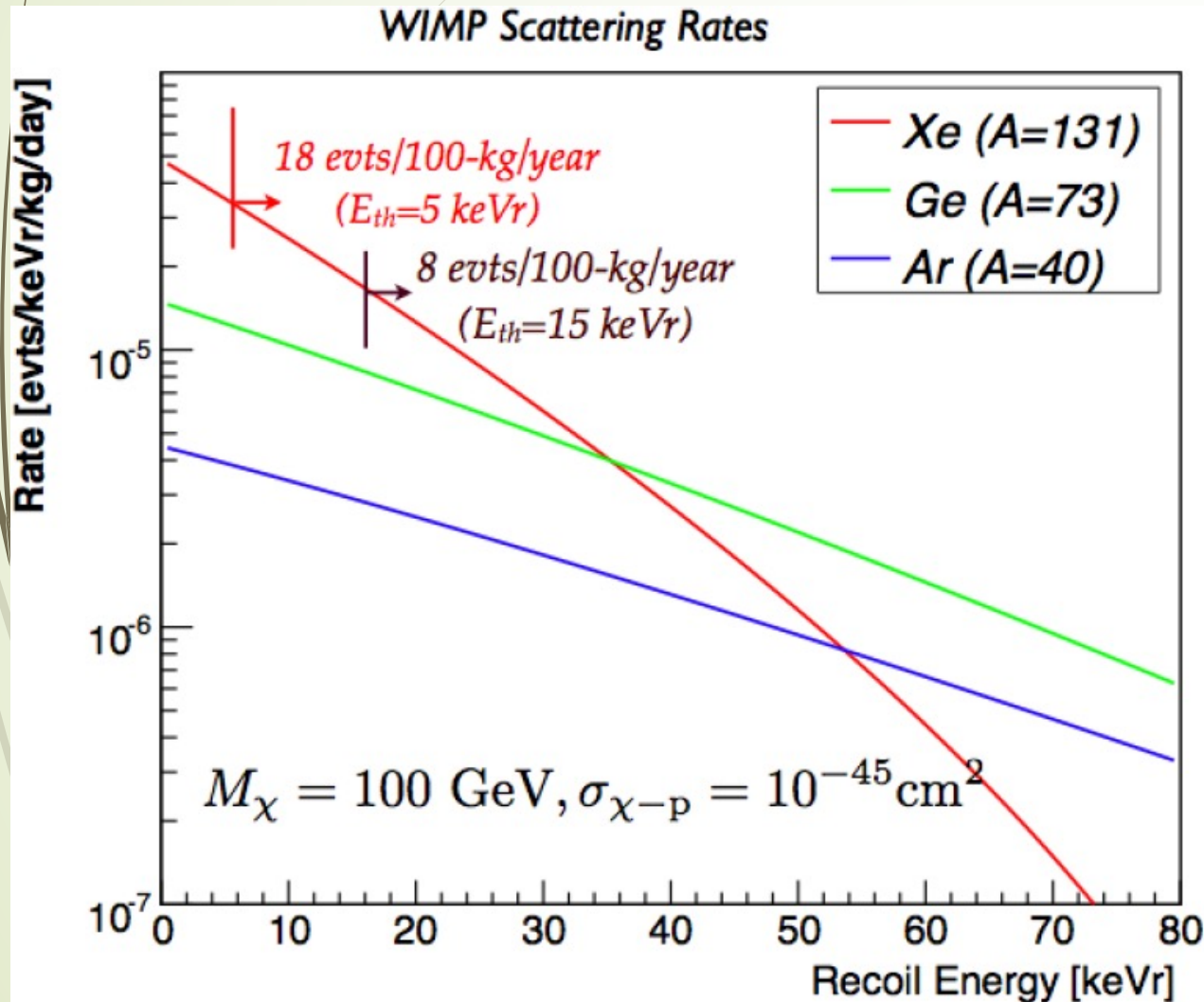


XENON  
collaboration



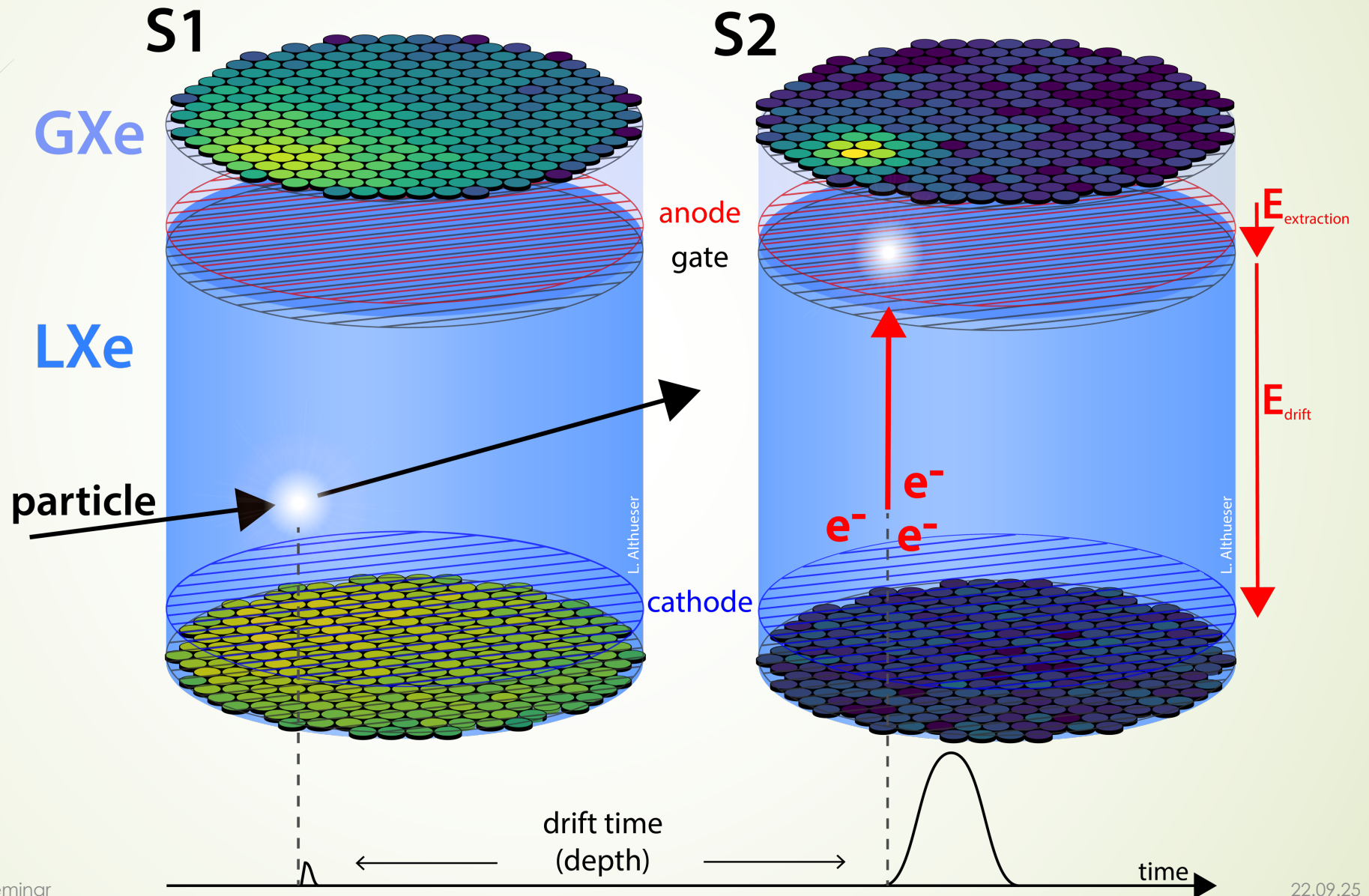


# Why xenon?



- High mass number (131) → relatively high rate
- LXe: Good self-shielding
- 178 nm scintillation photons: No wavelength shifter necessary
- No long-lived radioactive isotopes
- $^{129}\text{Xe}$  and  $^{131}\text{Xe}$  → spin-dependent interactions

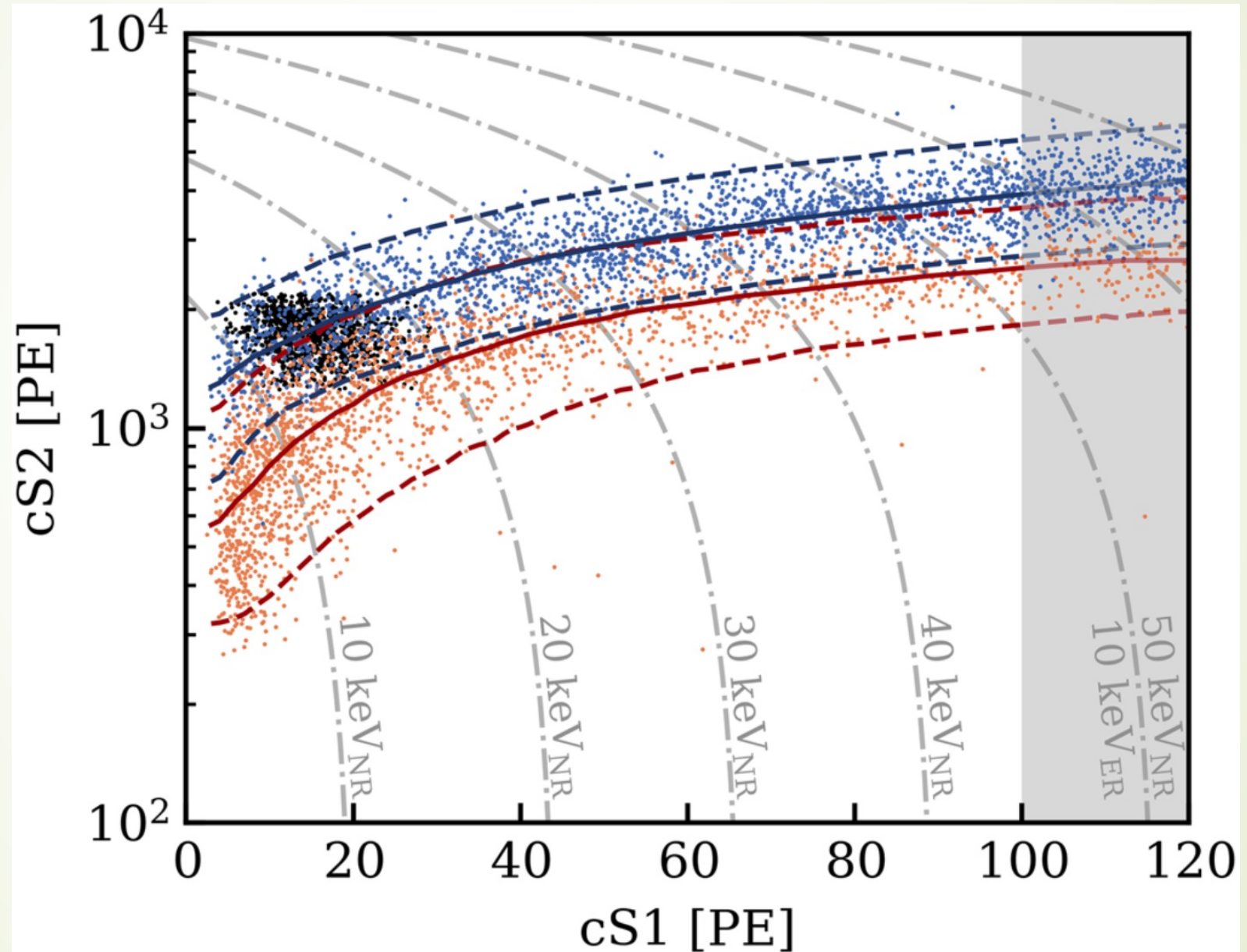
# XENONnT working principle



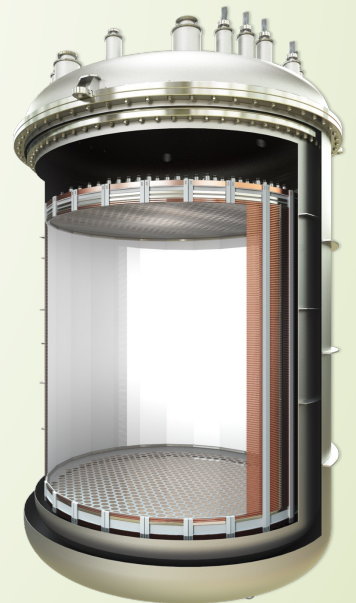
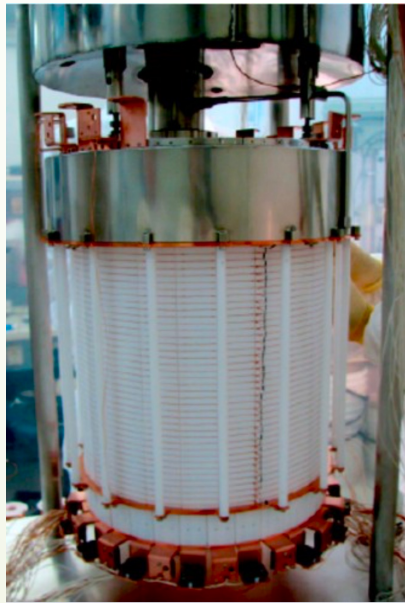
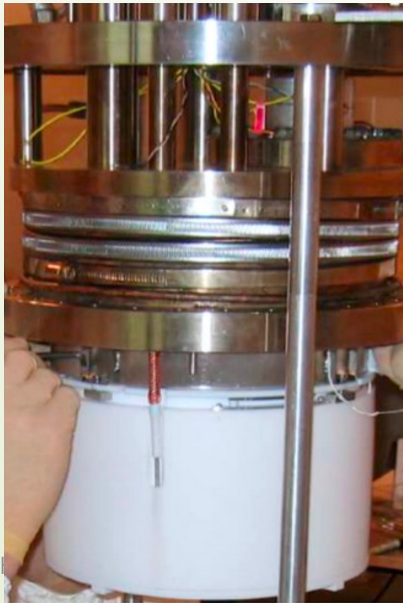
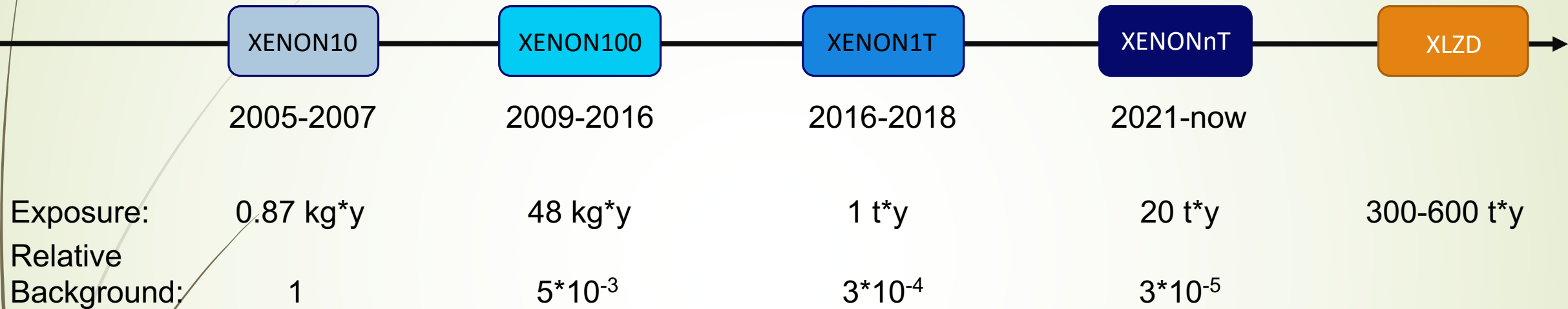


# Detector calibration

7



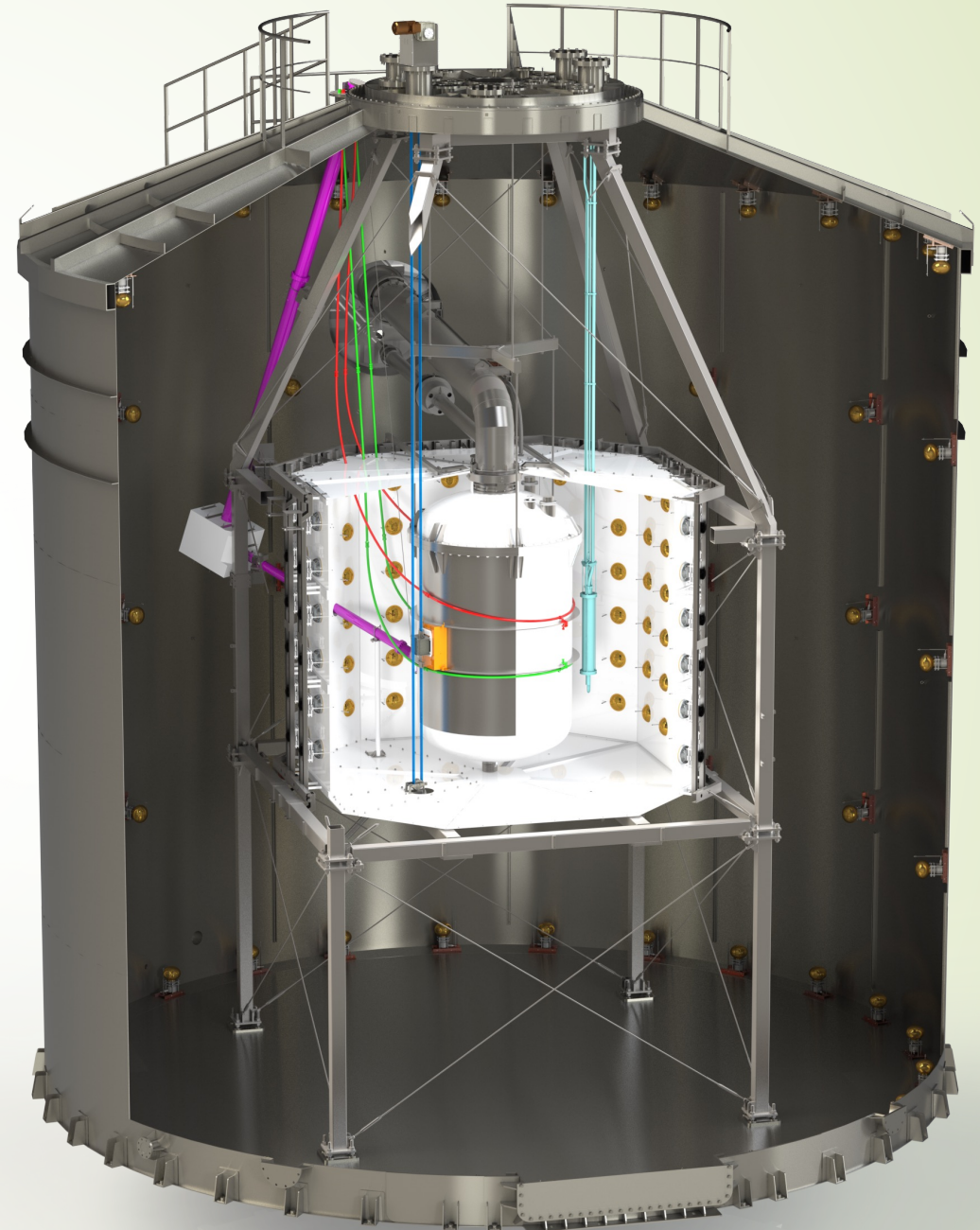
# The XENON program



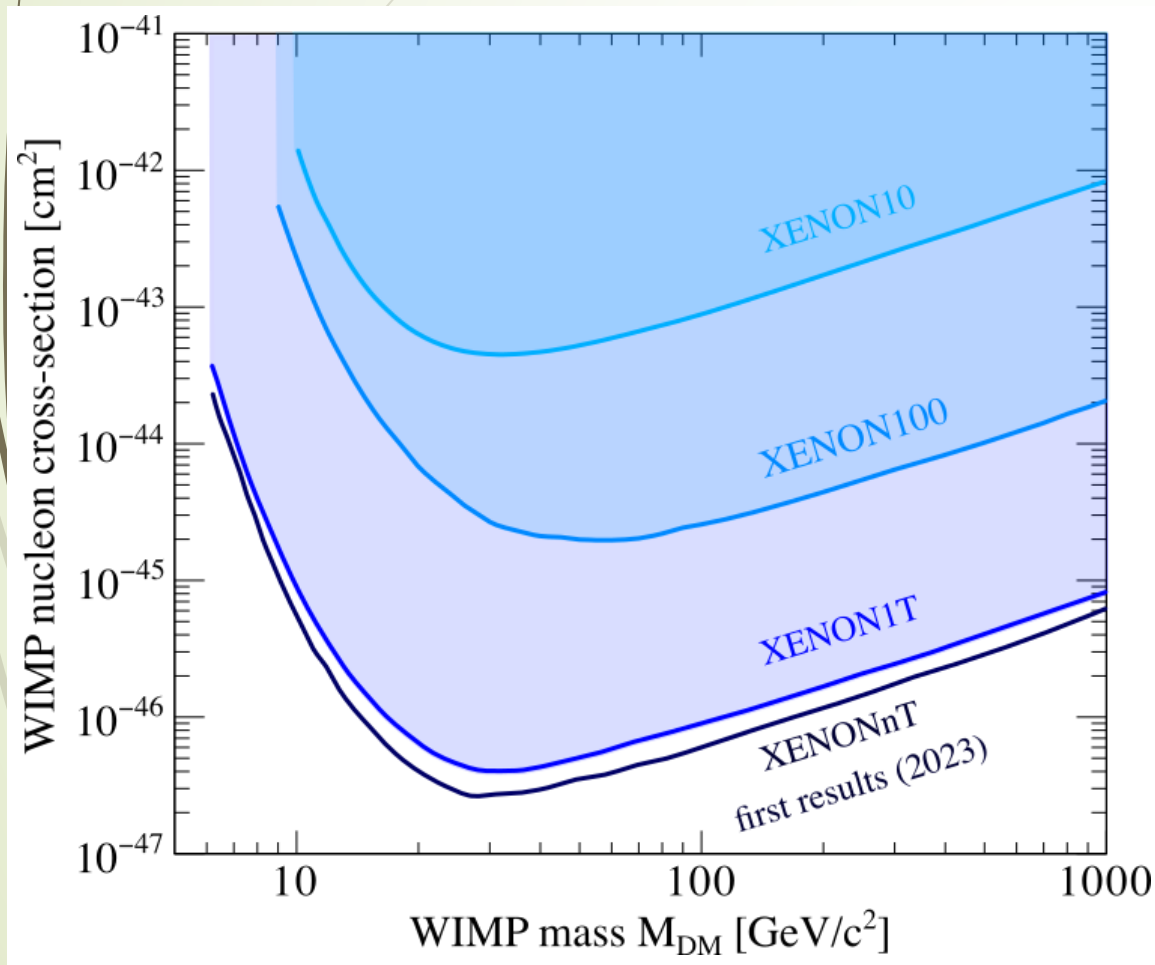


# XENONnT

- 3 nested detectors
  - Water Cherenkov detector
  - Neutron veto system (Gd-loaded water)
  - Dual phase xenon TPC
- Many auxiliary systems
  - GXe purification system
  - LXe purification system
  - 2 xenon distillation columns
  - Cryogenic system
  - Calibration system
  - Xenon storage system
  - ...



# XENON experiments: WIMP results

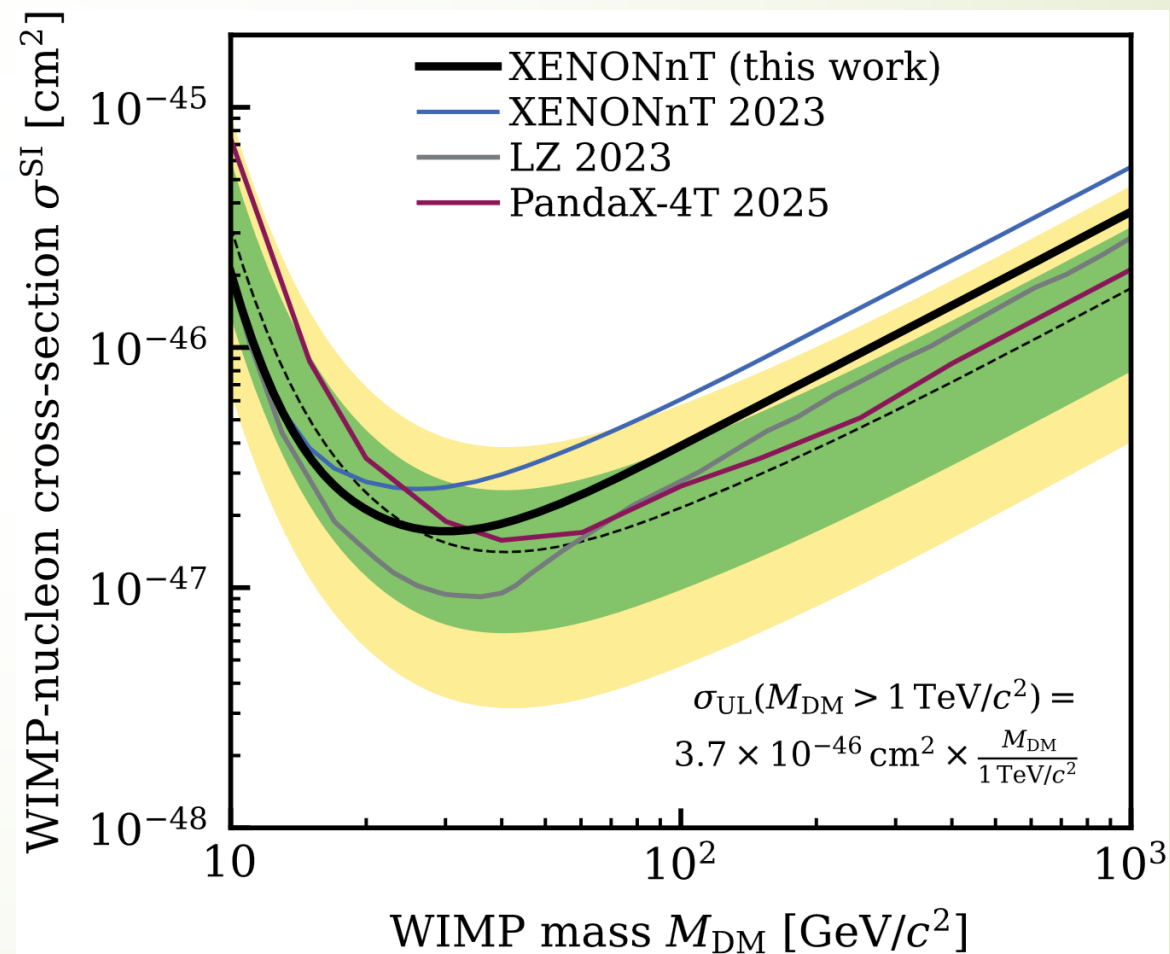
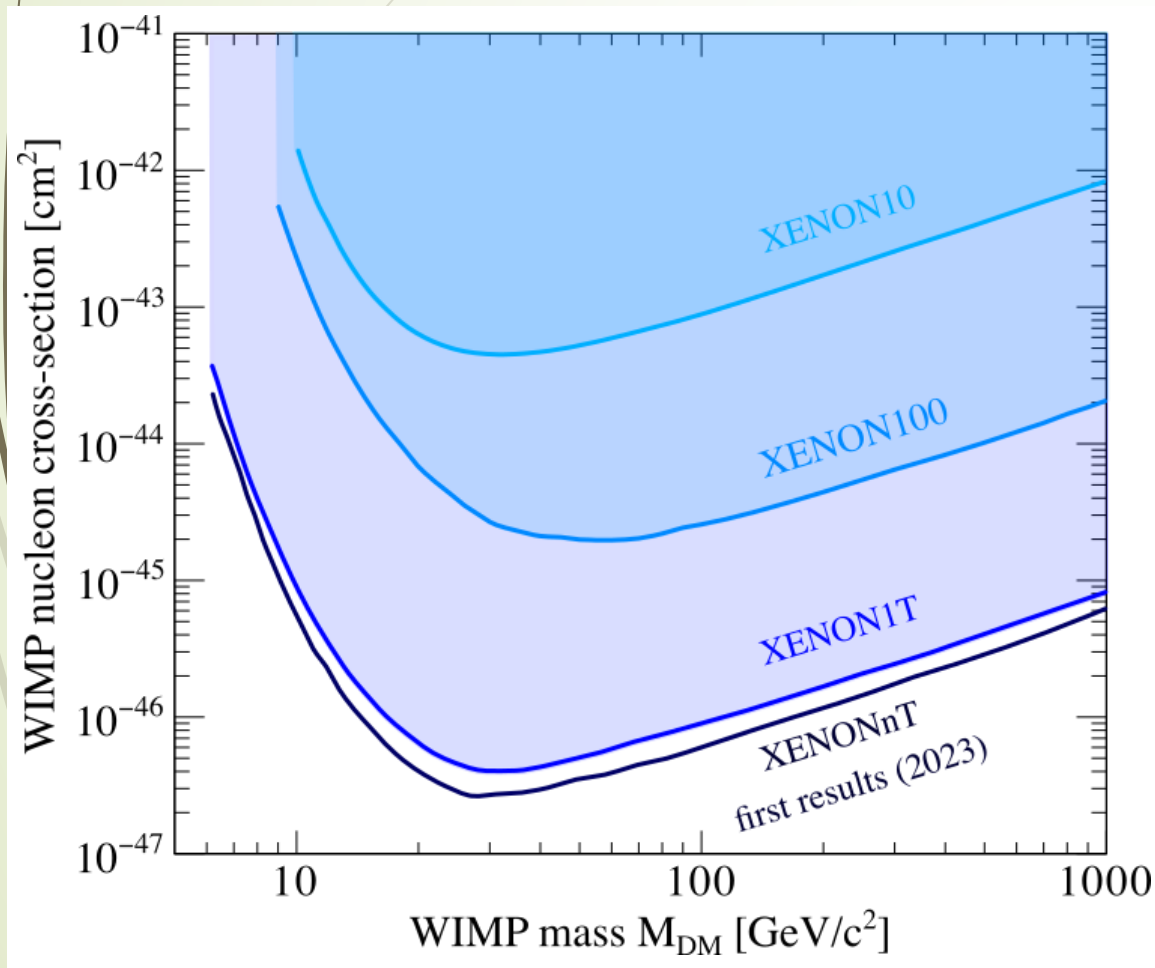


- Dual phase LXe TPCs have boosted direct dark matter search
- 4 orders of magnitude sensitivity improvement



# XENON experiments: WIMP results

arXiv : 2502.18005

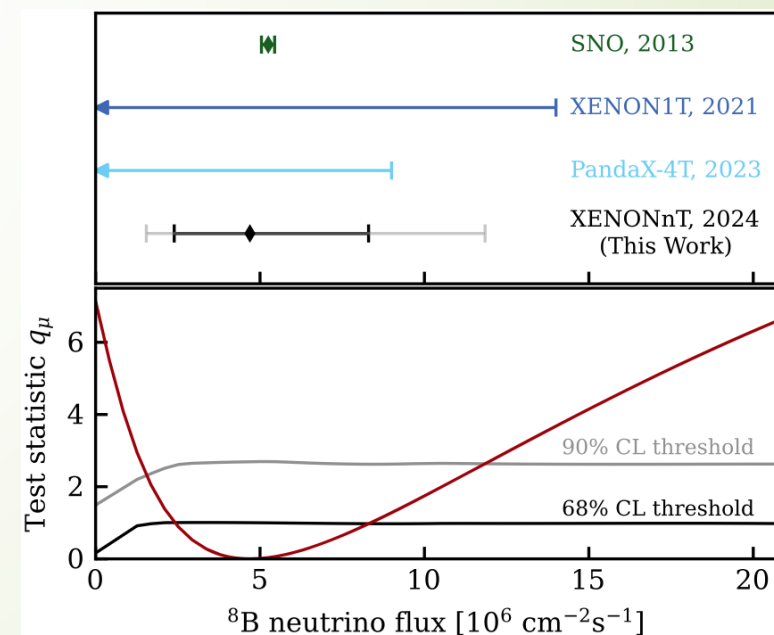
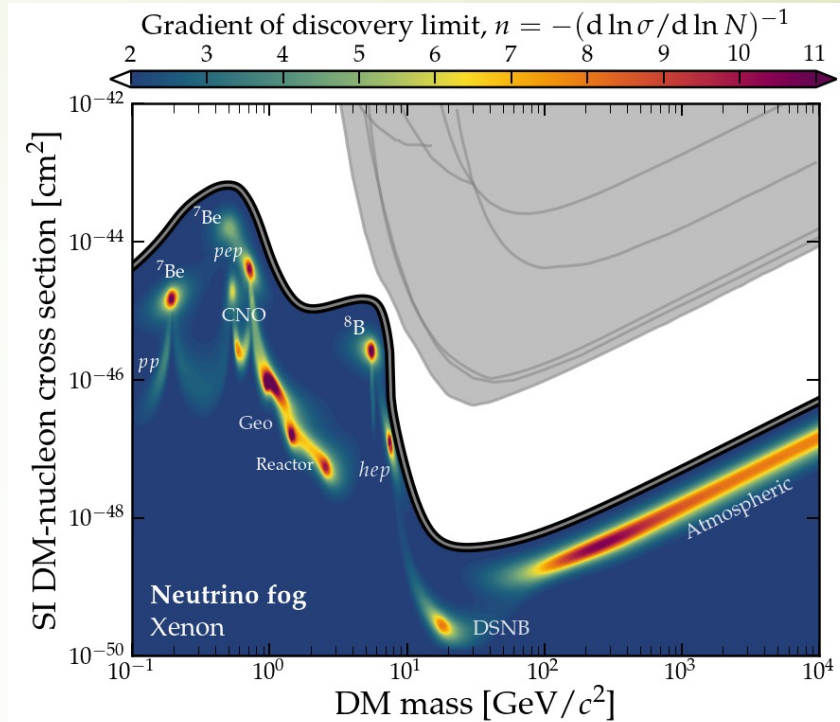


# XENONnT: First signals from neutrinos

- DM sensitivity improved  $\rightarrow$  neutrino signal within reach
- Special low-threshold analysis
- Very different background
- $2.7\sigma$  evidence for solar  ${}^8\text{B}$  neutrinos via CevNS

Component	Expectation	Best fit
AC (SR0)	$7.5 \pm 0.7$	$7.4 \pm 0.7$
AC (SR1)	$17.8 \pm 1.0$	$17.9 \pm 1.0$
ER	$0.7 \pm 0.7$	$0.5^{+0.7}_{-0.6}$
Neutron	$0.5^{+0.2}_{-0.3}$	$0.5 \pm 0.3$
Total background	$26.4^{+1.4}_{-1.3}$	$26.3 \pm 1.4$
${}^8\text{B}$	$11.9^{+4.5}_{-4.2}$	$10.7^{+3.7}_{-4.2}$
Observed	37	

PRL 133, 191002 (2024)





# Electronic recoil background evolution

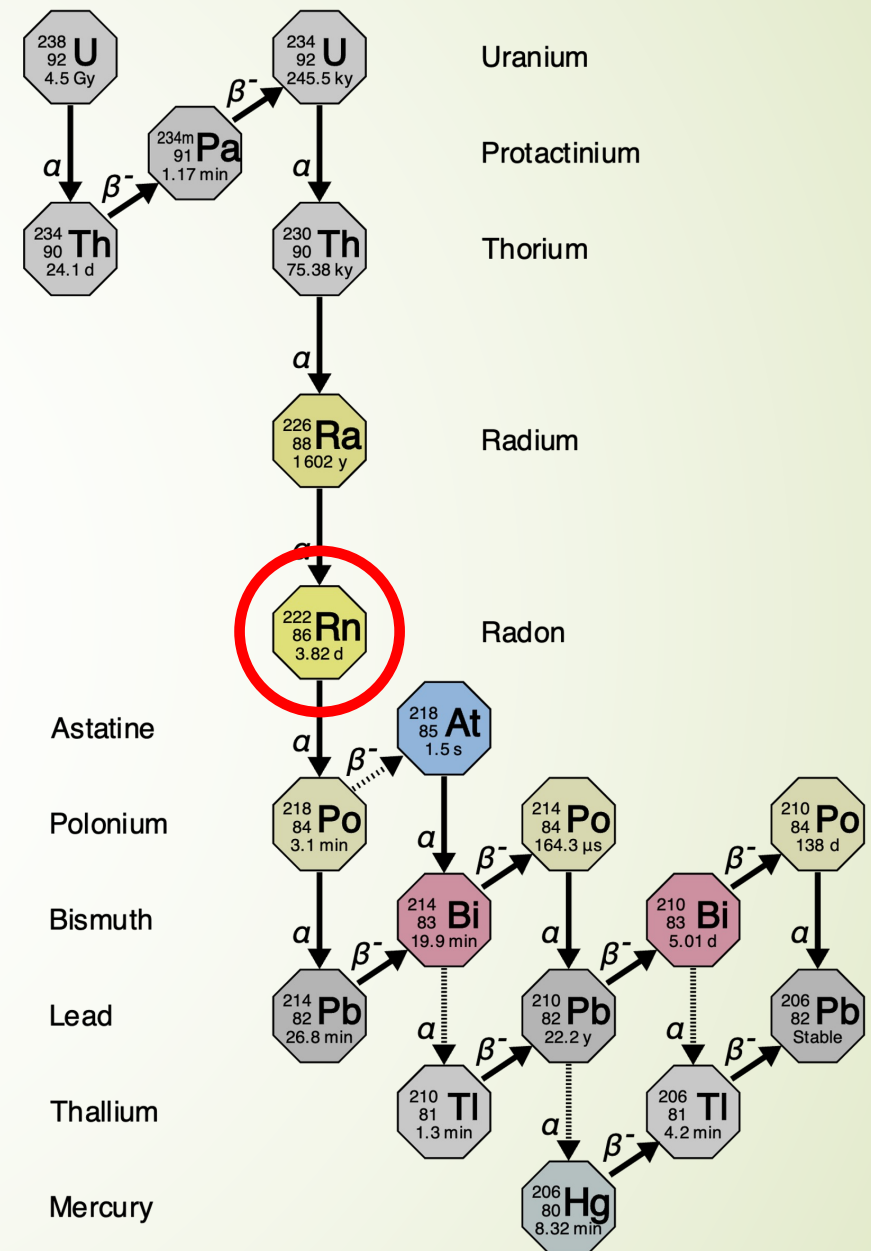
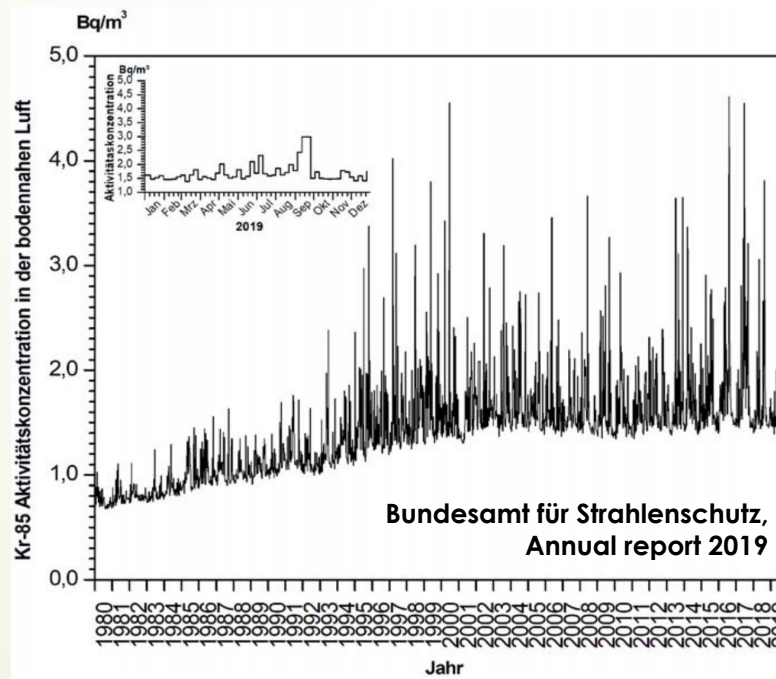
Background [events/t/y/keV]	XENON100 [PRD 83, 082001] (2011)	XENONnT [PRL 129, 161805] (2022)
Detector materials	1160	1.7
$^{85}\text{Kr}$	860	0.6
$^{222}\text{Rn}$ ( $^{214}\text{Pb}$ )	<140	5.9

- XENON100:  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  subdominant
  - Small detector → Material radioactivity dominant
  - Kr problem not yet solved
- XENONnT:  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  dominant

# $^{222}\text{Rn}$ versus $^{58}\text{Kr}$

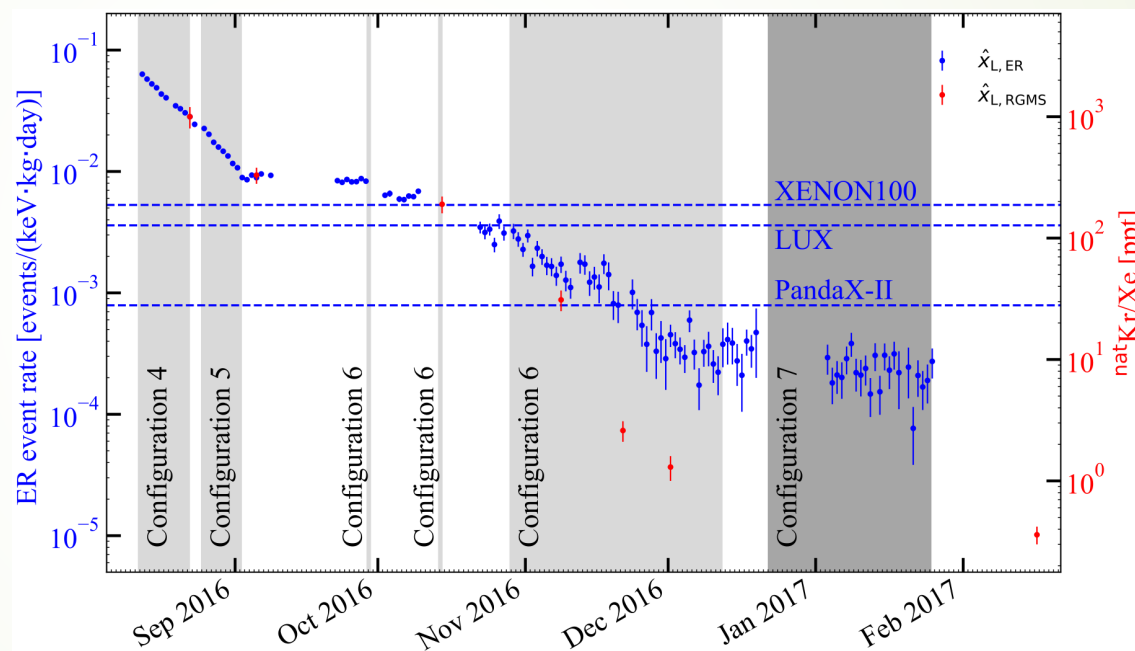
	$^{85}\text{Kr}$	$^{222}\text{Rn}$
Half-life	10.4 years	3.8 days
Decay product	stable	Radioactive daughters
Origin	Man-made	Natural
Source	Nuclear fission	$^{238}\text{U}$ chain

$^{85}\text{Kr}$  in air  
(southern  
Germany)



# Kr removal in XENON1T / XENONnT

- Distillation column built for XENON1T
- Measured separation  $\sim 640.000$  with 99% Xe recovery
- At least up to 6.5 kg/h throughput
- Lowest achieved concentration: 26 ppq
- Reliable Kr/Xe analytics with ppq-sensitivity required



EPJC 77:275 (2017)

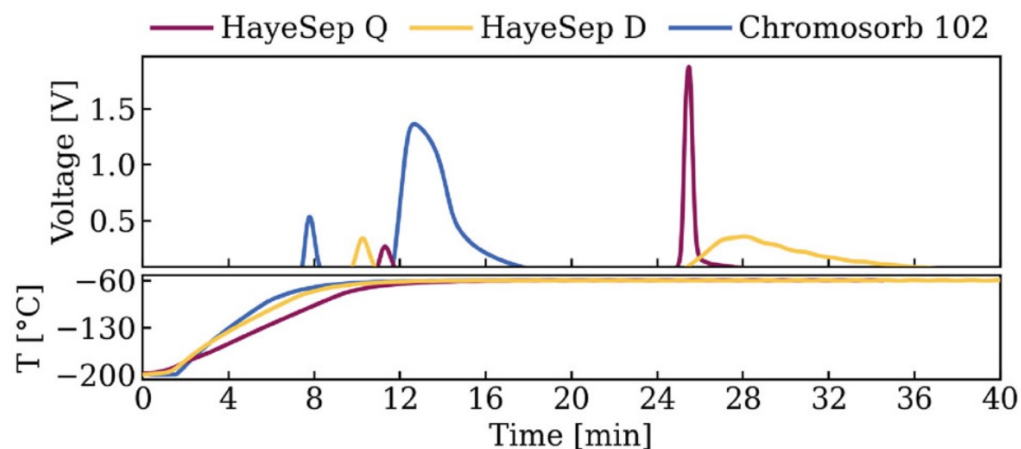
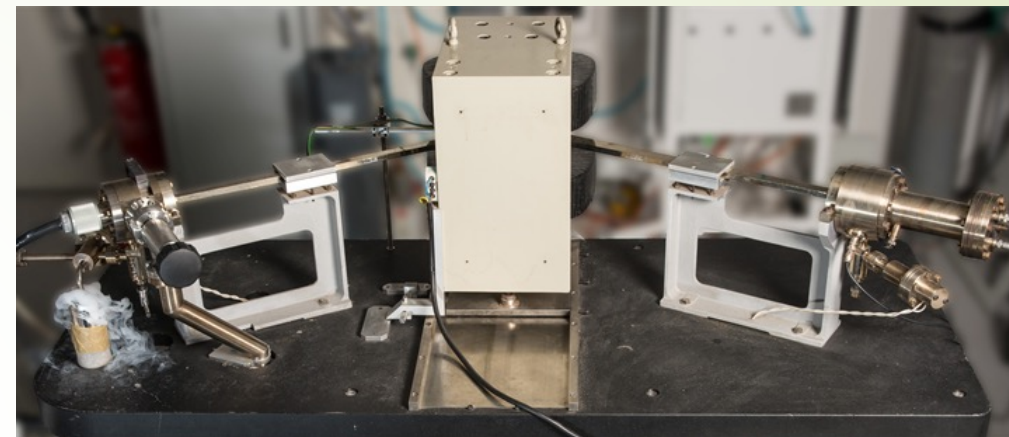




# Rare Gas Mass Spectrometry (RGMS) at MPIK

EPJC 74:2746 (2014)

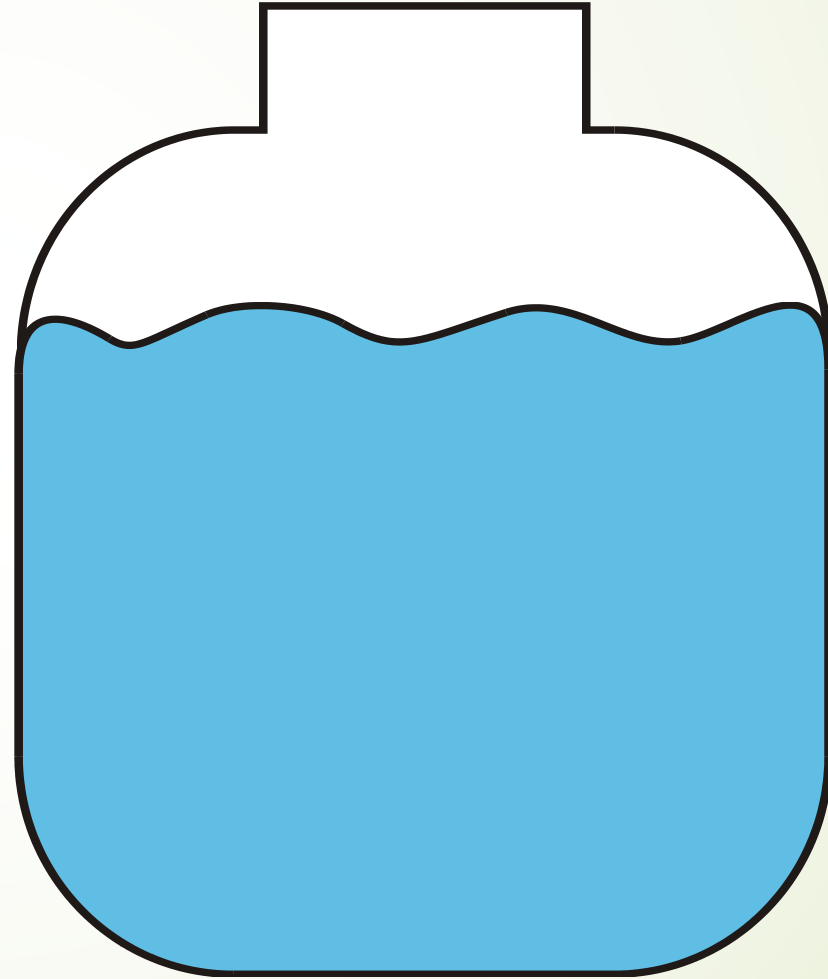
- Requires efficient removal of Xe → gas chromatography.
  - Homemade UHV-qualified system
  - Low mass packed columns
- 8 ppq detection limit
- Future: Automated RGMS (Auto-RGMS)
  - Fully automated operation (Improved repeatability)
  - Improved separation columns



EPJC 85:576 (2025)

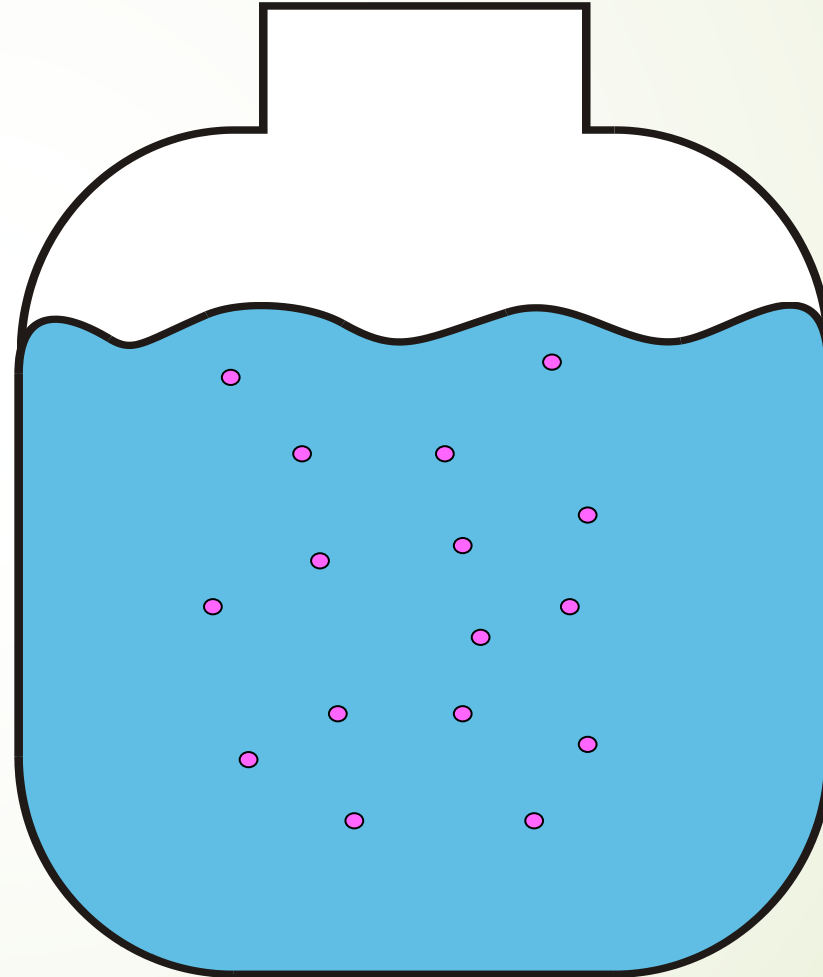


# Radon sources in a generic experiment



# Radon sources in a generic experiment

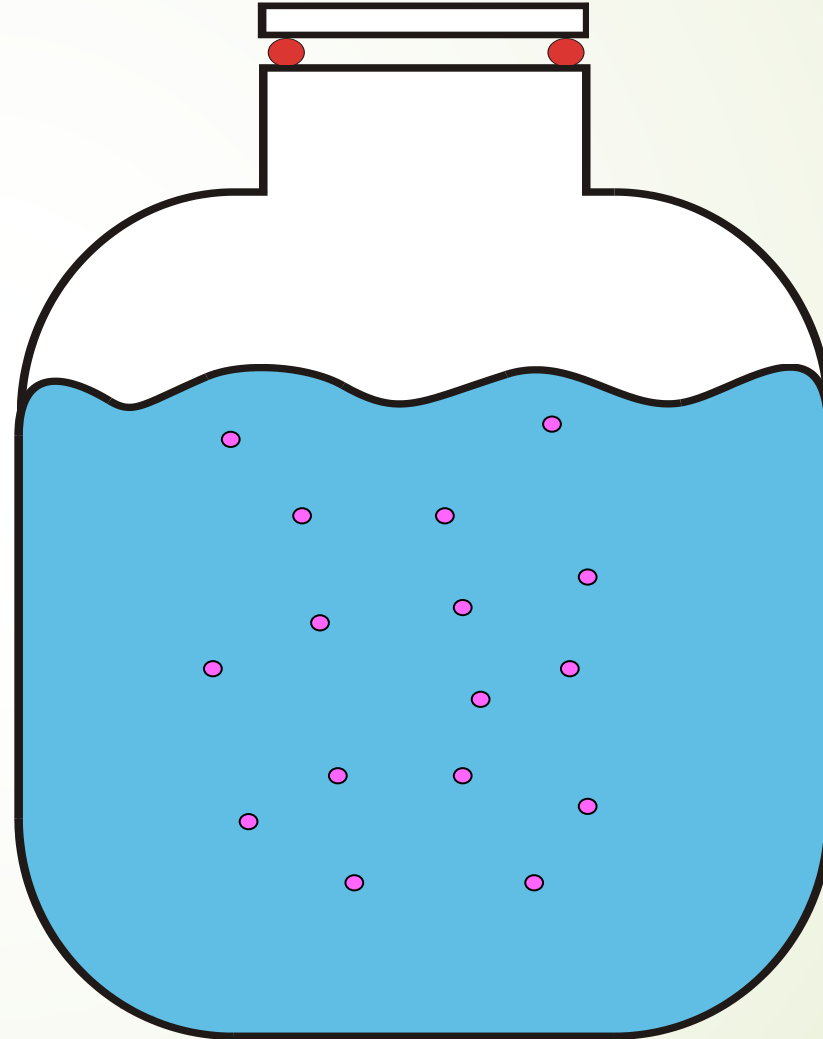
- Intrinsic radium (uranium/thorium) contamination





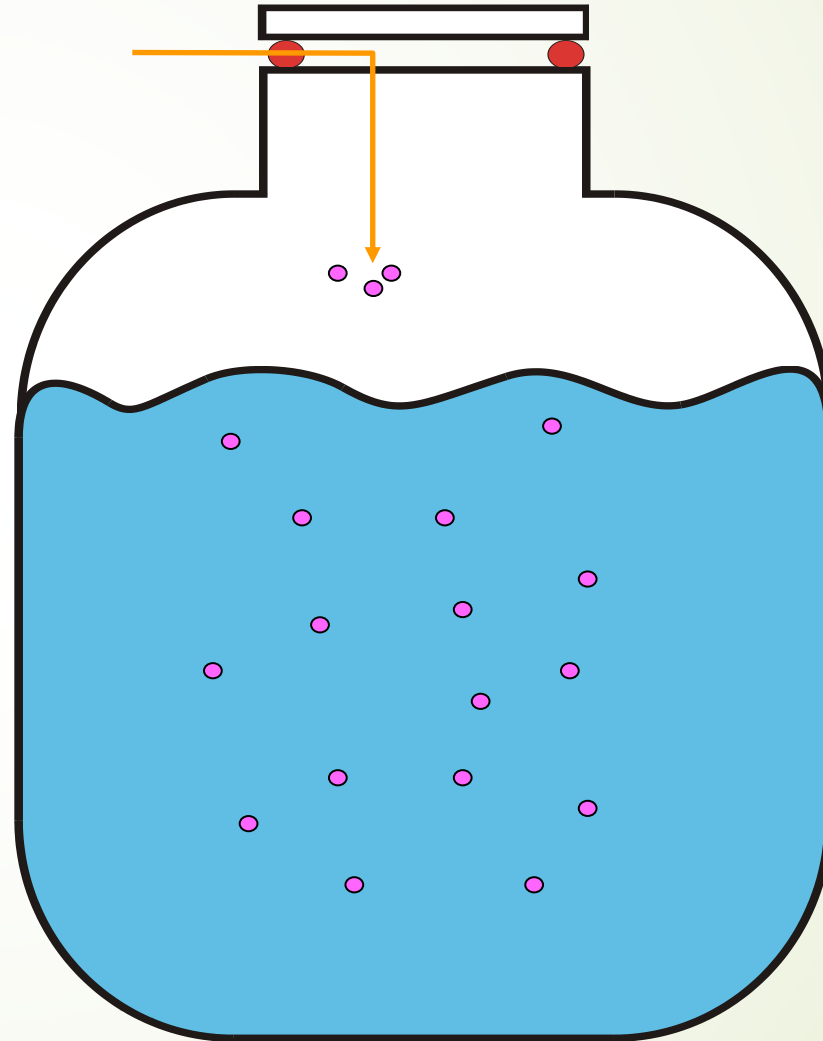
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# Radon sources in a generic experiment

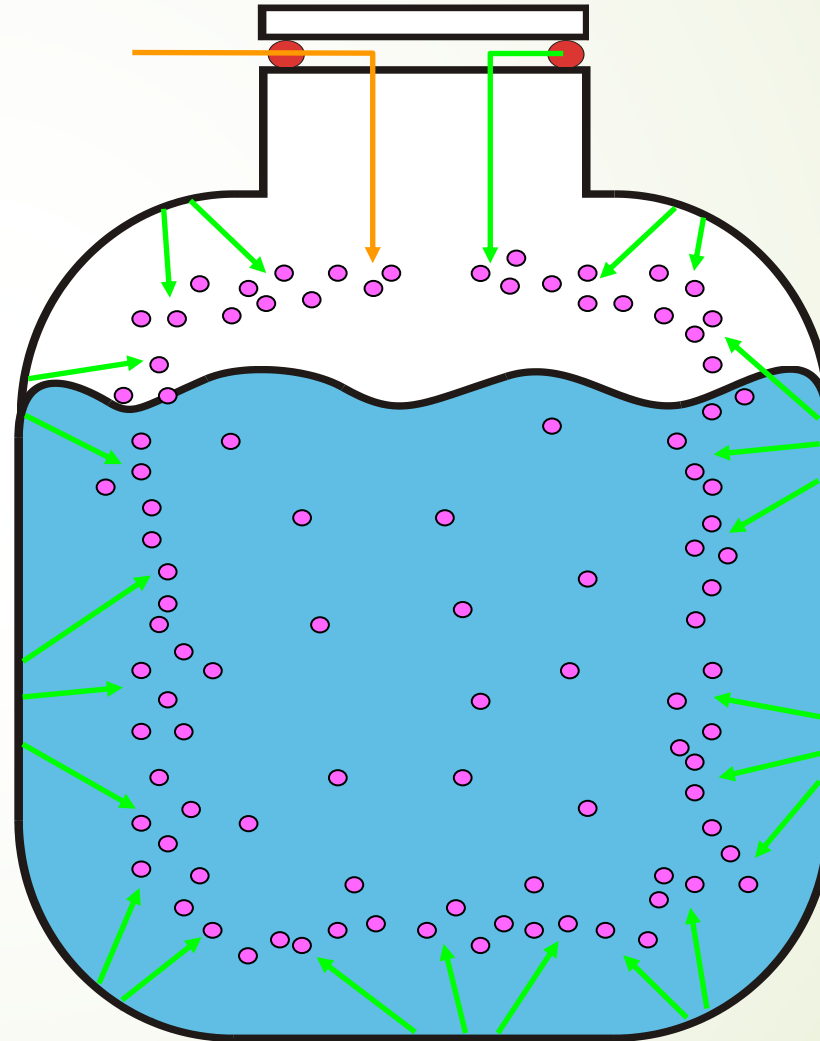
- Intrinsic radium (uranium/thorium) contamination
- Diffusion through seals





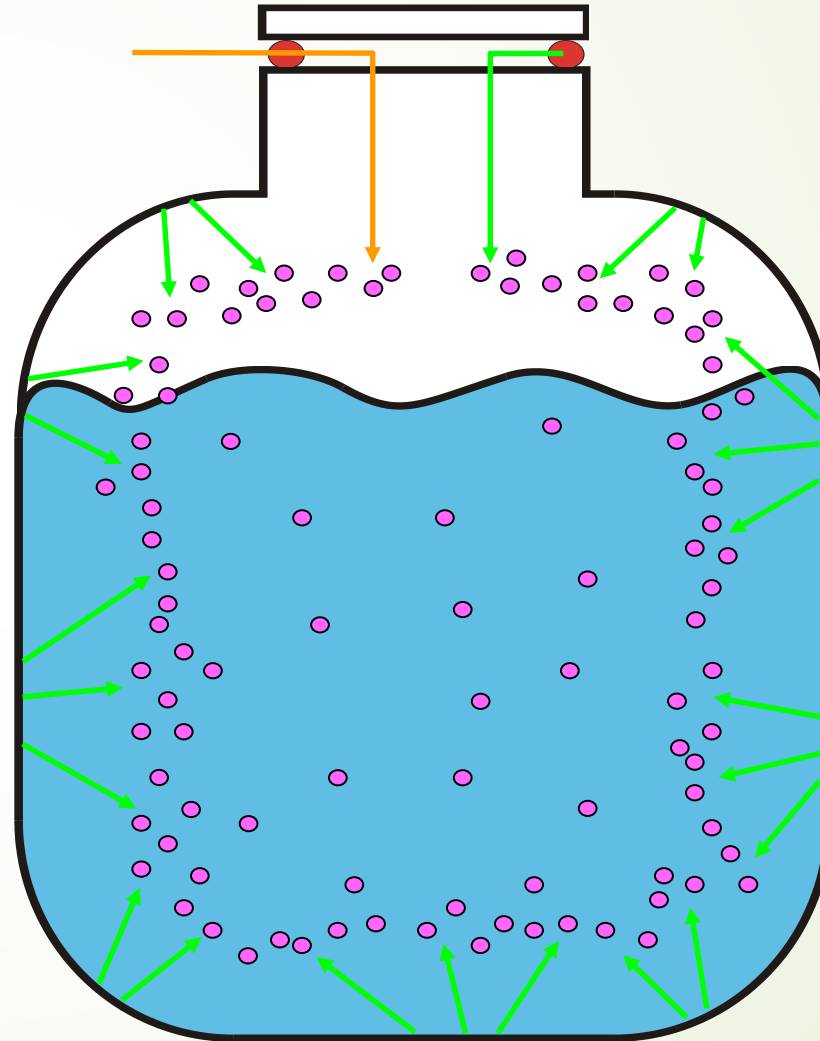
# Radon sources in a generic experiment

- Intrinsic radium (uranium /thorium) contamination
- Diffusion through seals
- Emanation from vessel and instrumentation



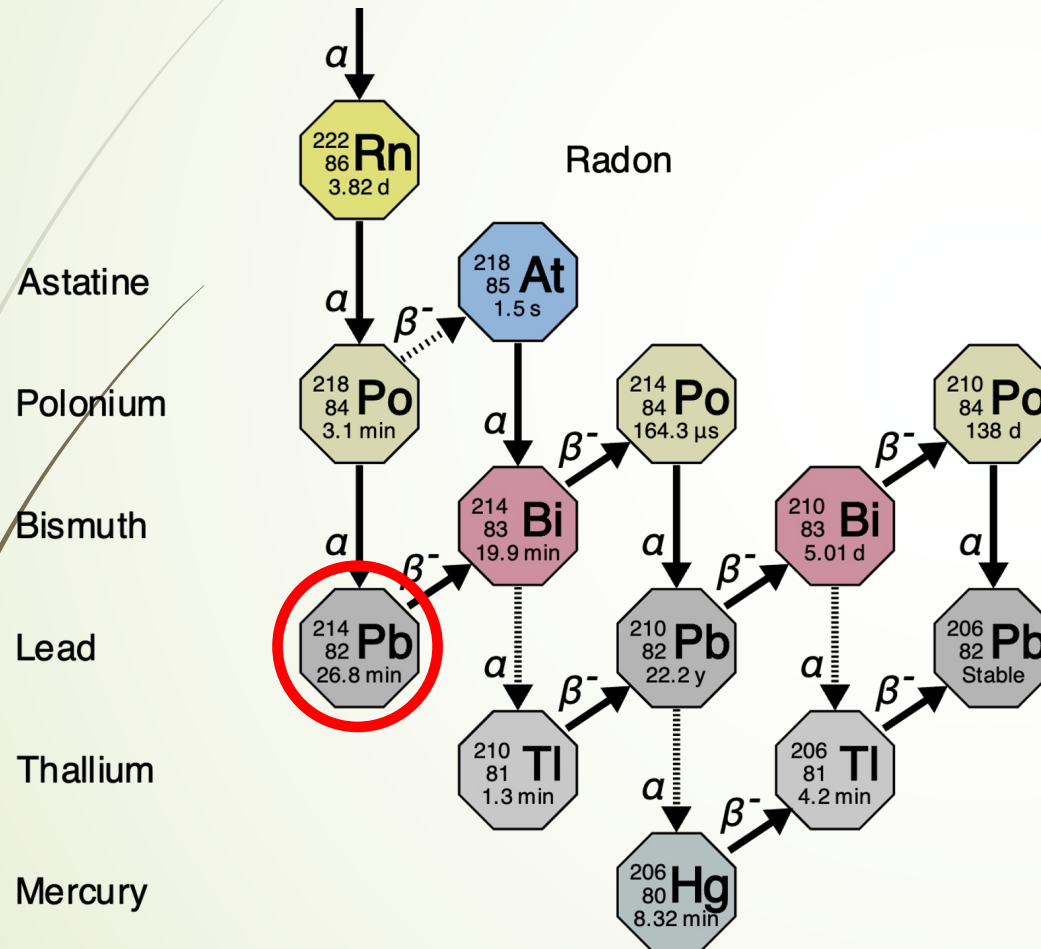
# Radon sources in a generic experiment

- Intrinsic radium (uranium /thorium) contamination
- Diffusion through seals
- Emanation from vessel and instrumentation
- A successful radon mitigation strategies must address all radon sources!





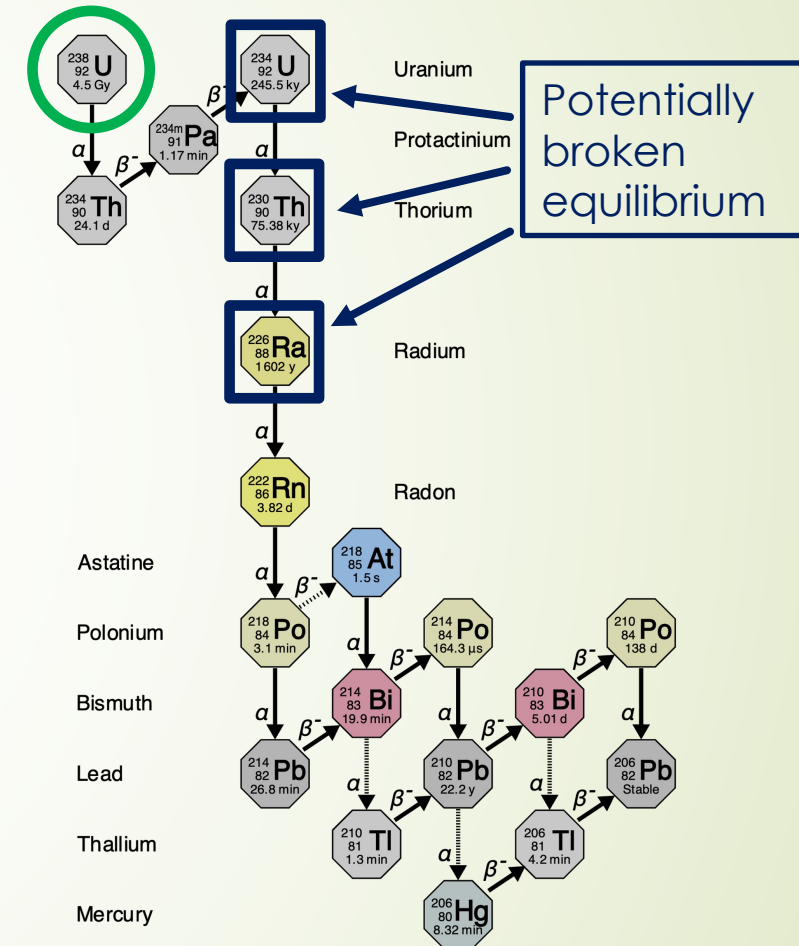
# $^{222}\text{Rn}$ in the XENON experiments



- Dark Matter signal is low-energetic (<10 keV)
- Alpha emitter  $^{222}\text{Rn}$ ,  $^{218}\text{Po}$ ,  $^{214}\text{Po}$ : High energy events (MeV)
- Long-lived daughters out of equilibrium
- $^{214}\text{Bi}$ - $^{214}\text{Po}$  coincidence
- Background only due to  $^{214}\text{Pb}$ : Isolated beta emitter

# Radon detection (at low level)

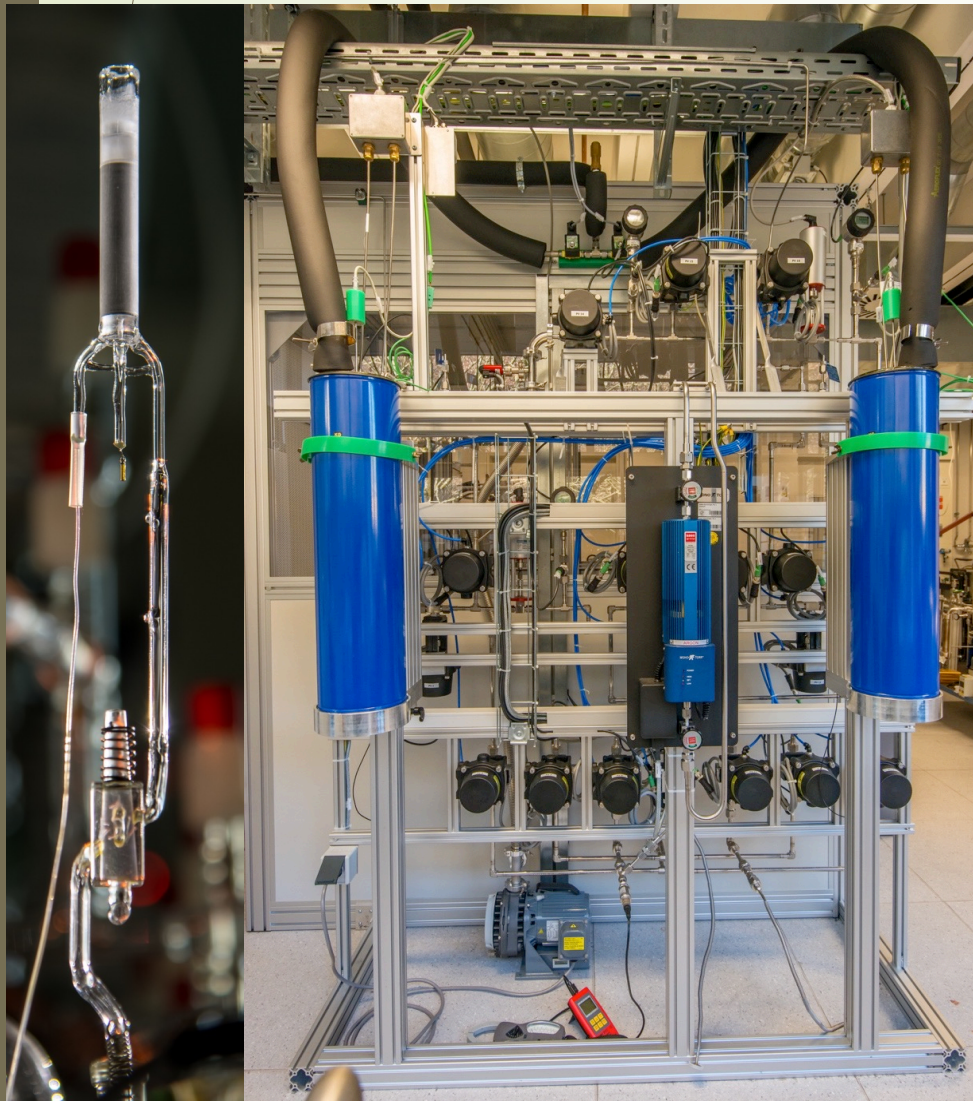
- All radon detection by measurement of radioactivity (Alpha decays)
- Low-level → Requires radon collection
  - By cryo-trapping
  - By electrostatic collection of charged daughters
- Low-level → Clean materials and vacuum
- Warning: ICP-MS / NAA has fantastic sensitivity for U/Th. But radioactive may be broken, so no information about Rn!



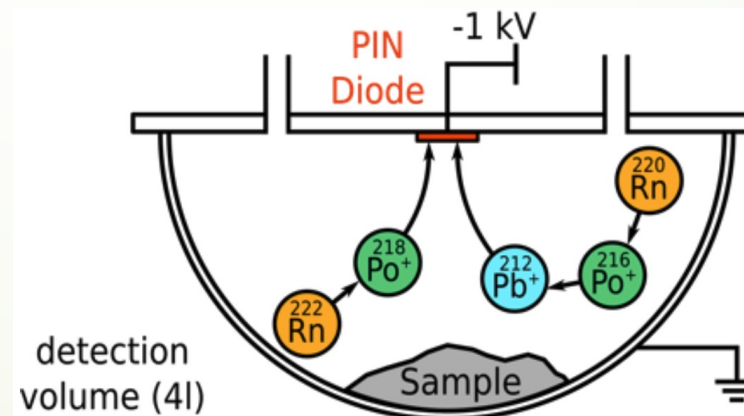
By <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:BatesIsBack>



# Material screening by $^{222}\text{Rn}$ emanation



- $^{222}\text{Rn}$ -emanation rate provides complementary information
- MPIK  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  infrastructure:
  - >20 ultralow background miniaturized proportional counters
    - Sensitivity:  $\sim 10$  atoms.
    - 8 parallel counting lines
  - Fully automated  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  concentration system (AutoEma).
  - $\sim 15$  sample vessels (0.1 – 80 lit.)
  - 3 electro-static  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  monitors



# The radon emanation process

- *Thermochimica Acta*  
192,1 (1991)

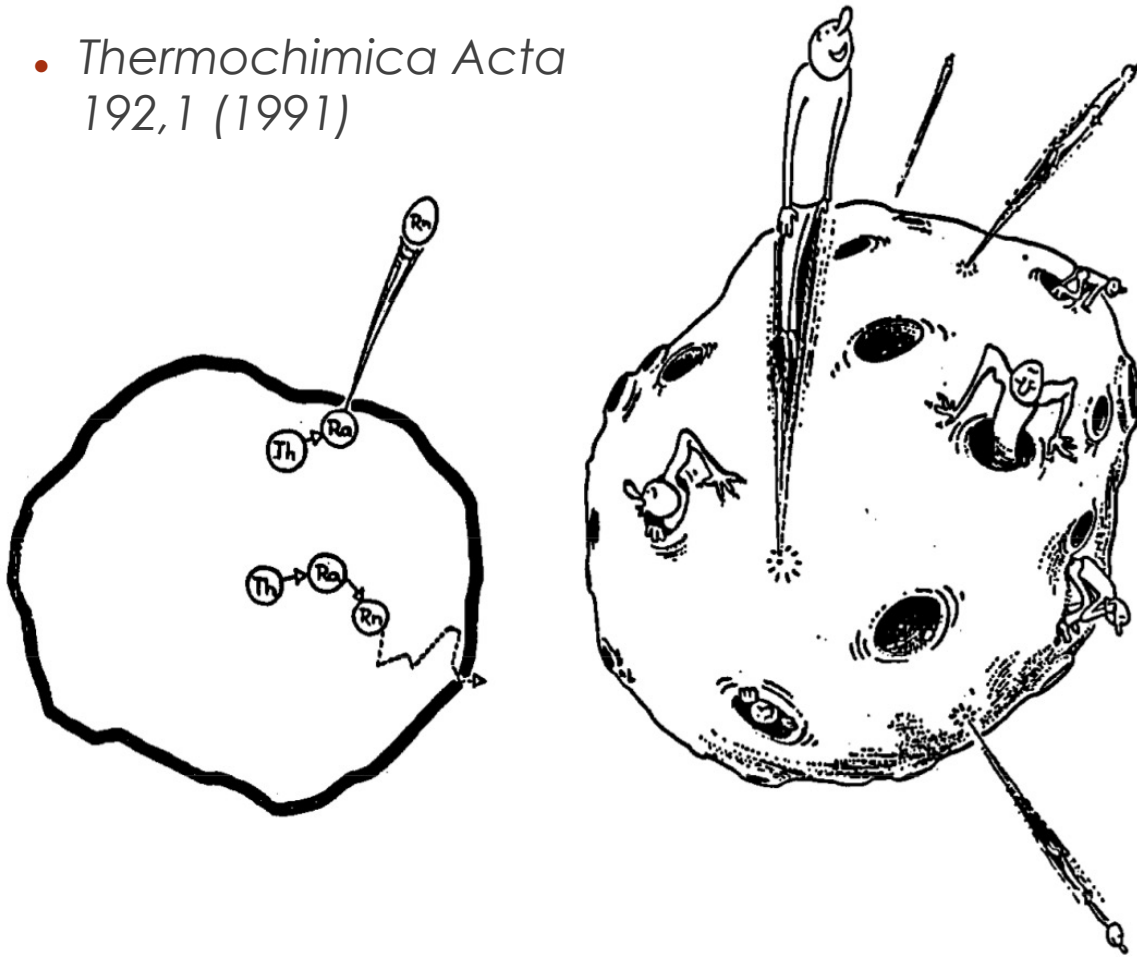


Fig. 2. Scheme of the release of radon from the sample by recoil and diffusion mechanisms.

- Recoil-driven emanation:
  - O(5 MeV)  $\alpha$ -decay creates O(100 keV) nuclear recoil
  - Recoil range 10 – 100nm, depending on material
  - Independent of temperature
- Diffusion-driven emanation
  - Strongly depends on temperature
  - Diffusion coefficient varies a lot between materials

# Radon emanation from charcoal

- Many charcoals screened at MPIK:
  - 30 years ago: Discovery of “CaroAct”
  - 15 years ago: Discovery of “Saratech”

NIM A 903, 267 (2018)

Charcoal	Specific activity (mBq/kg)	Price (USD/kg)	References
Calgon OVC 4 × 8	$53.6 \pm 1.3$	6	This work
Shirasagi G2 × 4/6–1	$101.0 \pm 8.0$	27	This work
Saratech	$1.71 \pm 0.20$	35	This work
HNO <sub>3</sub> etched Saratech	$0.51 \pm 0.09$	135	This work
Carboact	$0.23 \pm 0.19$	15,000	This work
Carboact	$0.33 \pm 0.05$	15,000	[28]



## $^{222}\text{Rn}$ emanation from Saratech charcoal

- $^{222}\text{Rn}$  release rate strongly depends on extraction parameters
- $^{226}\text{Ra}$  activity (HPGe spectroscopy):  $(7 \pm 1)$  mBq/kg
- Gamma-ray measurement of  $\text{HNO}_3$ -cleaned charcoal ongoing.
- $^{222}\text{Rn}$  emanation into xenon?

Charcoal	Extraction conditions	$^{222}\text{Rn}$ emanation rate [mBq/kg]
Saratech	Room temperature	$<0.3$
Saratech	200 °C and prolonged extraction	$3.5 \pm 0.2$
$\text{HNO}_3$ -cleaned Saratech	200 °C and prolonged extraction	$1.0 \pm 0.1$



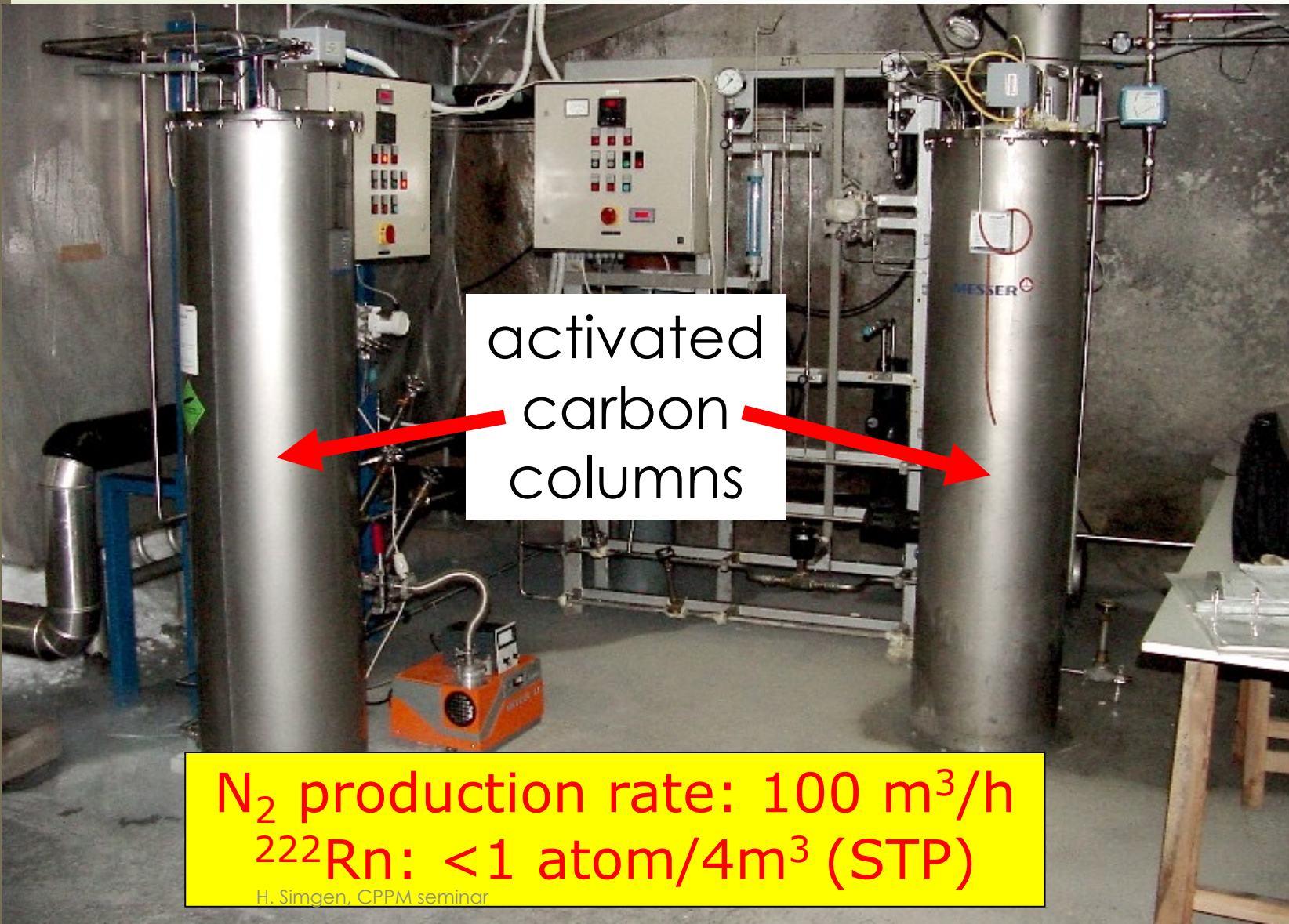
# BOREXINO

**$<1 \text{ nBq/ton } ^{222}\text{Rn}$**   
 **$<2 \text{ nBq/ton } ^{220}\text{Rn}$**

**Less than one  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  atom  
in 300 tons of scintillator**



# High Purity nitrogen for BOREXINO



**N<sub>2</sub> production rate: 100 m<sup>3</sup>/h**  
**<sup>222</sup>Rn: <1 atom/4m<sup>3</sup> (STP)**

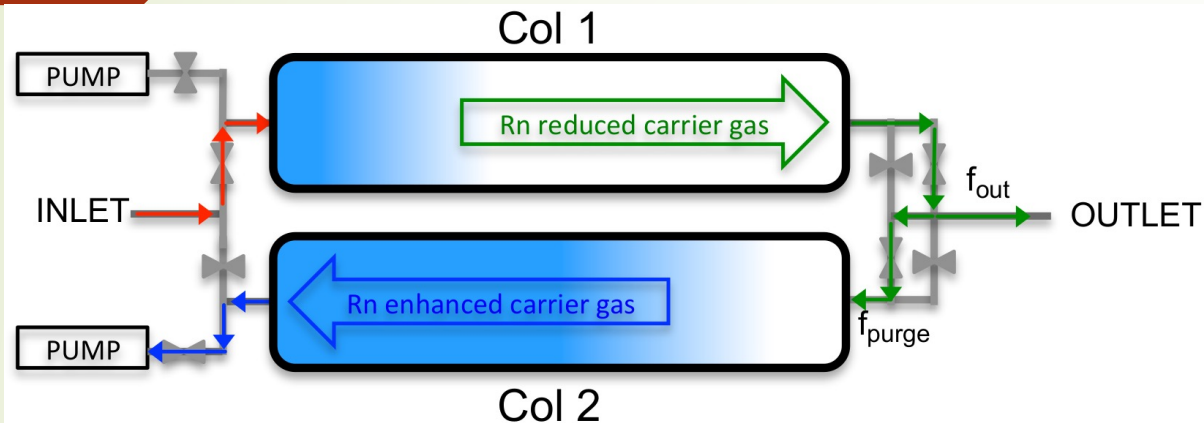
H. Simgen, CPPM seminar

- Radon-free nitrogen for scintillator sparging
- Large flow-rate (100 m<sup>3</sup>/h)
- Simple concept with little maintenance needed
- Liquid nitrogen cooled columns
- Purifications of liquid nitrogen (less efficient, but high throughput)
- Key: Low <sup>222</sup>Rn emanating activated carbon

*Appl. Rad. Isot. 52 (2000) 691*

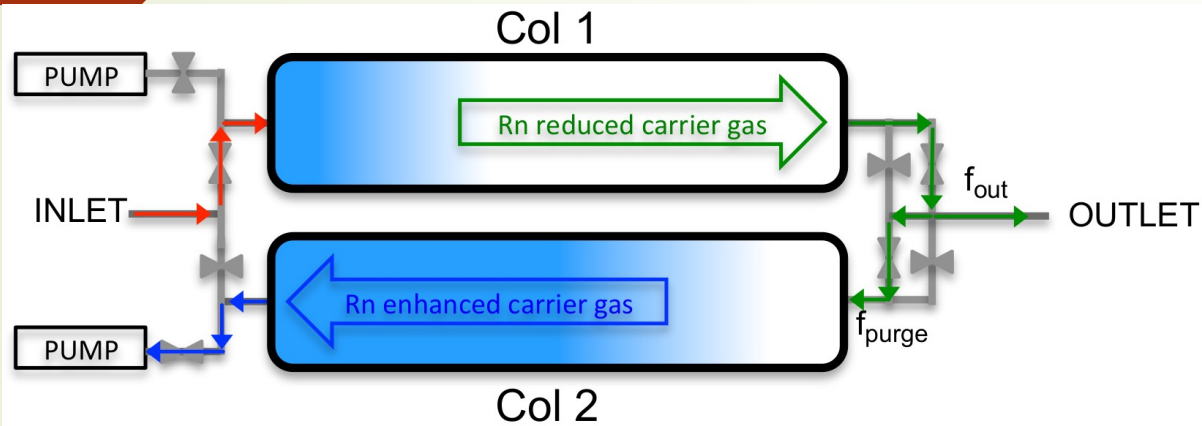


# Improving adsorption gas purification



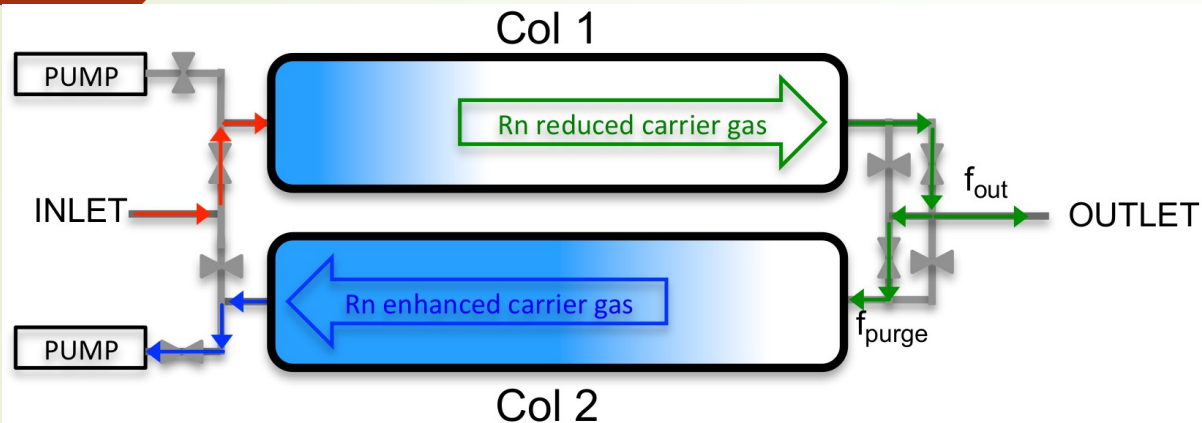
- Improving performance by doubling columns and avoiding equilibrium
- Vacuum swing adsorption technique can reduce amount of adsorbents
- Gain in radiopurity → purer gas
  - *JINST 16 P07047 (2021)*

# Improving adsorption gas purification

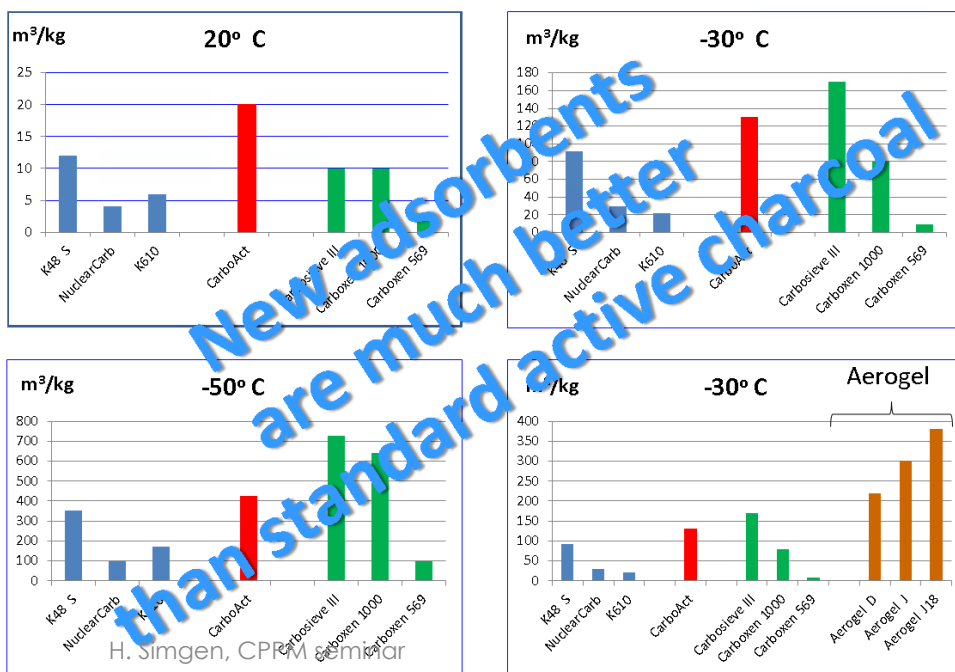


- Improving performance by doubling columns and avoiding equilibrium
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- Gain in radiopurity → purer gas
  - *JINST 16 P07047 (2021)*
- New adsorber materials → José Busto
  - Carbon molecular sieves
  - metal organic frameworks
  - molecular cages
  - carbon aerogel
  - ...

# Improving adsorption gas purification



K\_factor for several materials in  $N_2$



- Improving performance by doubling columns and avoiding equilibrium
- Vacuum swing adsorption technique can reduce amount of adsorbents
- Gain in radiopurity → purer gas
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- New adsorbent materials → José Busto
  - Carbon molecular sieves
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J. Busto,  
GDR Nov. 22



# $^{222}\text{Rn}$ emanation rate of some stainless steel vessels

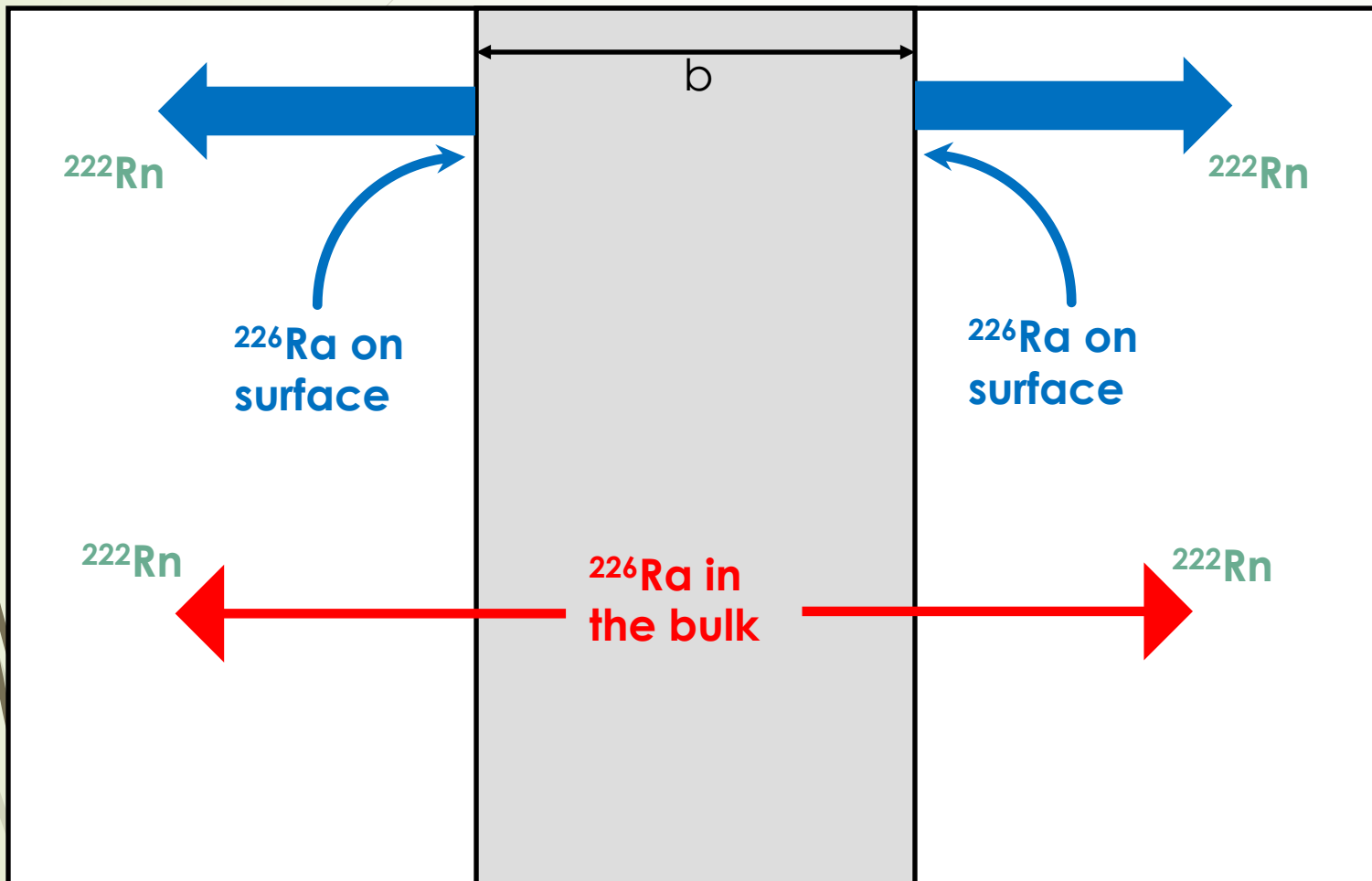
Vessel	Size	$^{222}\text{Rn}$ emanation rate [mBq]
BX storage tank HT2	2.1 m <sup>3</sup>	1.2 ± 0.4
BX storage tank D330	1.6 m <sup>3</sup>	7.1 ± 1.2
GERDA cryostat	64 m <sup>3</sup>	13.7 ± 1.9
XENON1T cryostat	~2 m <sup>3</sup>	1.8 ± 0.3
XENONnT cryostat	~4.5 m <sup>3</sup>	1.9 ± 0.2
Borexino water extraction column	0.6 m <sup>3</sup> , 608 m <sup>2</sup> (SS packings)	4.8 ± 0.7 → 8 μBq/m <sup>2</sup>

# Nylon film during measurement @ MPIK

35



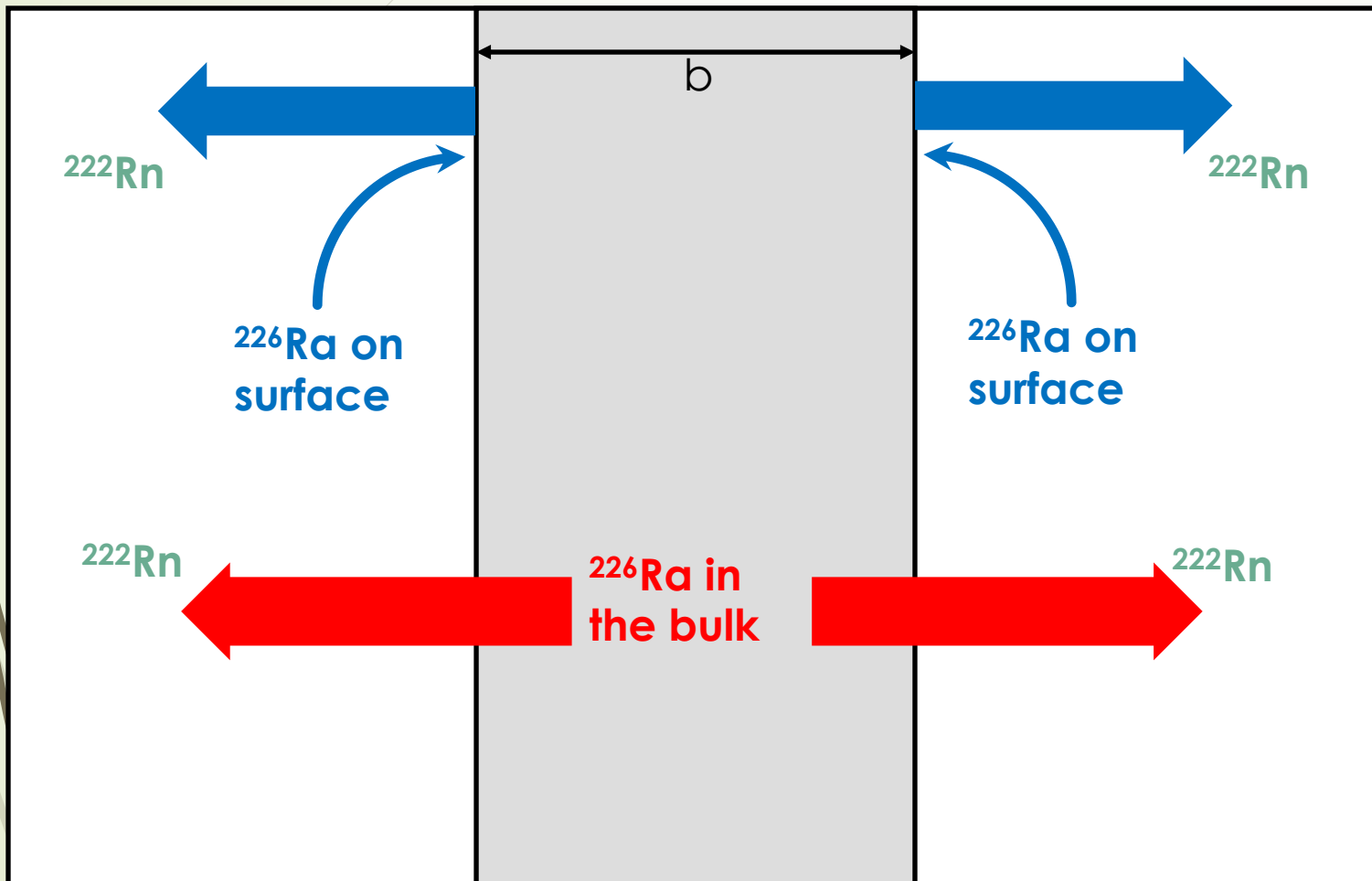
# Radon in the BOREXINO nylon vessel



- Radon measurement from thin nylon foil yields
  - Contribution from surface plus
  - Unknown fraction of bulk contamination
- For  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  mitigation it is crucial to know its origin.
- Nylon can absorb a lot of water (10% of its weight)
  - „widening“ of polymers
  - much faster radon diffusion



# Radon in the BOREXINO nylon vessel

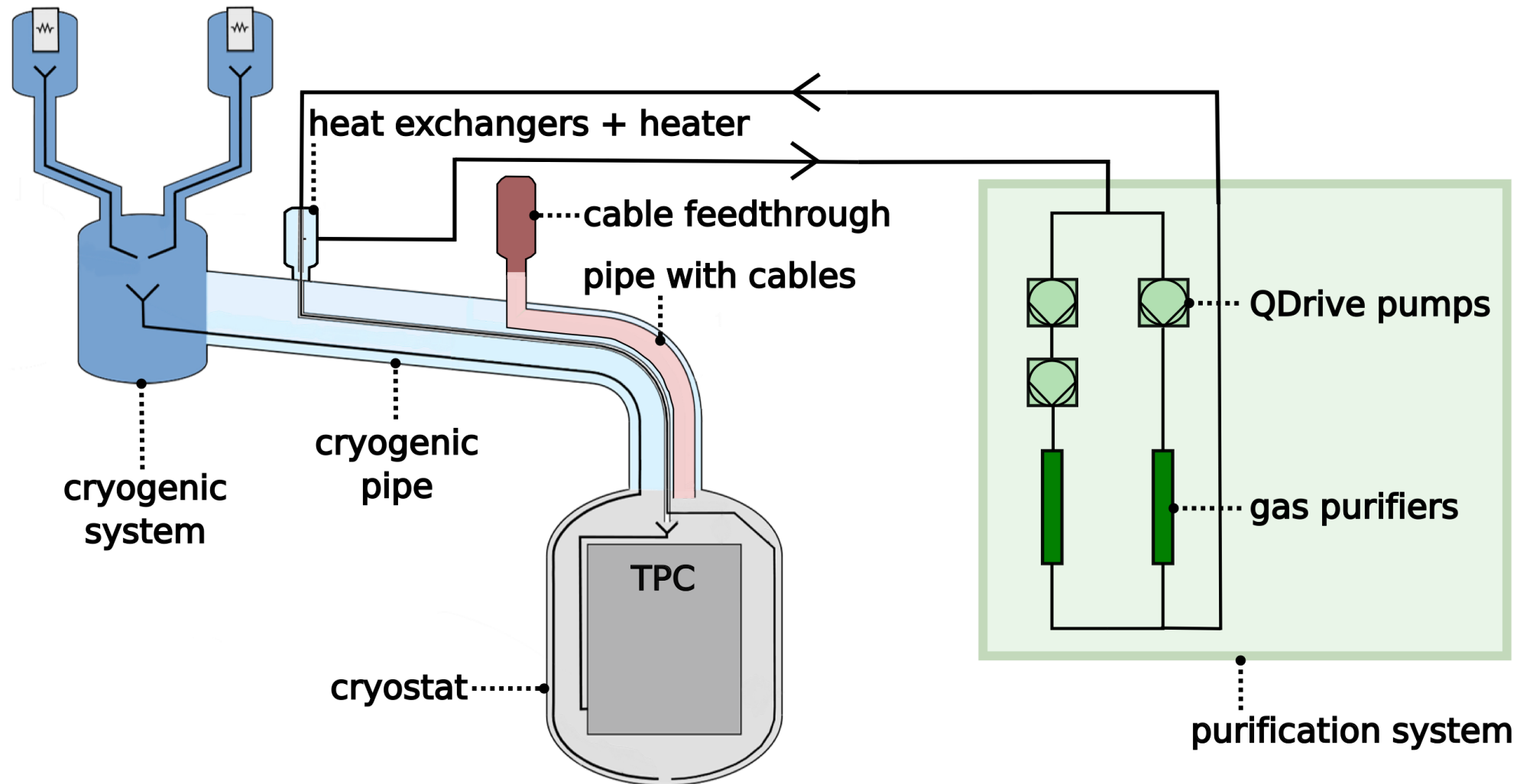


- $d_{\text{dry}} = (270 \pm 30) \mu\text{m}$
- $d_{\text{humid}} = (7 \pm 1) \mu\text{m} = 40 \times d_{\text{dry}}$   
(NIM A 449 (2000) 158-171)
- 1-dimensional, stationary model of diffusion:
  - $A_{\text{dry}} = A_{\text{surf}} + 0.144 \times A_{\text{bulk}}$
  - $A_{\text{humid}} = A_{\text{surf}} + 0.988 \times A_{\text{bulk}}$
- Disentanglement of bulk and surface contribution
- Finally upper limits for both:
  - $A_{\text{bulk}} < 15 \mu\text{Bq/kg}$
  - $A_{\text{surf}} < 0.9 \mu\text{Bq/m}^2$

# Understanding $^{222}\text{Rn}$ source distributions

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Example: XENON1T setup

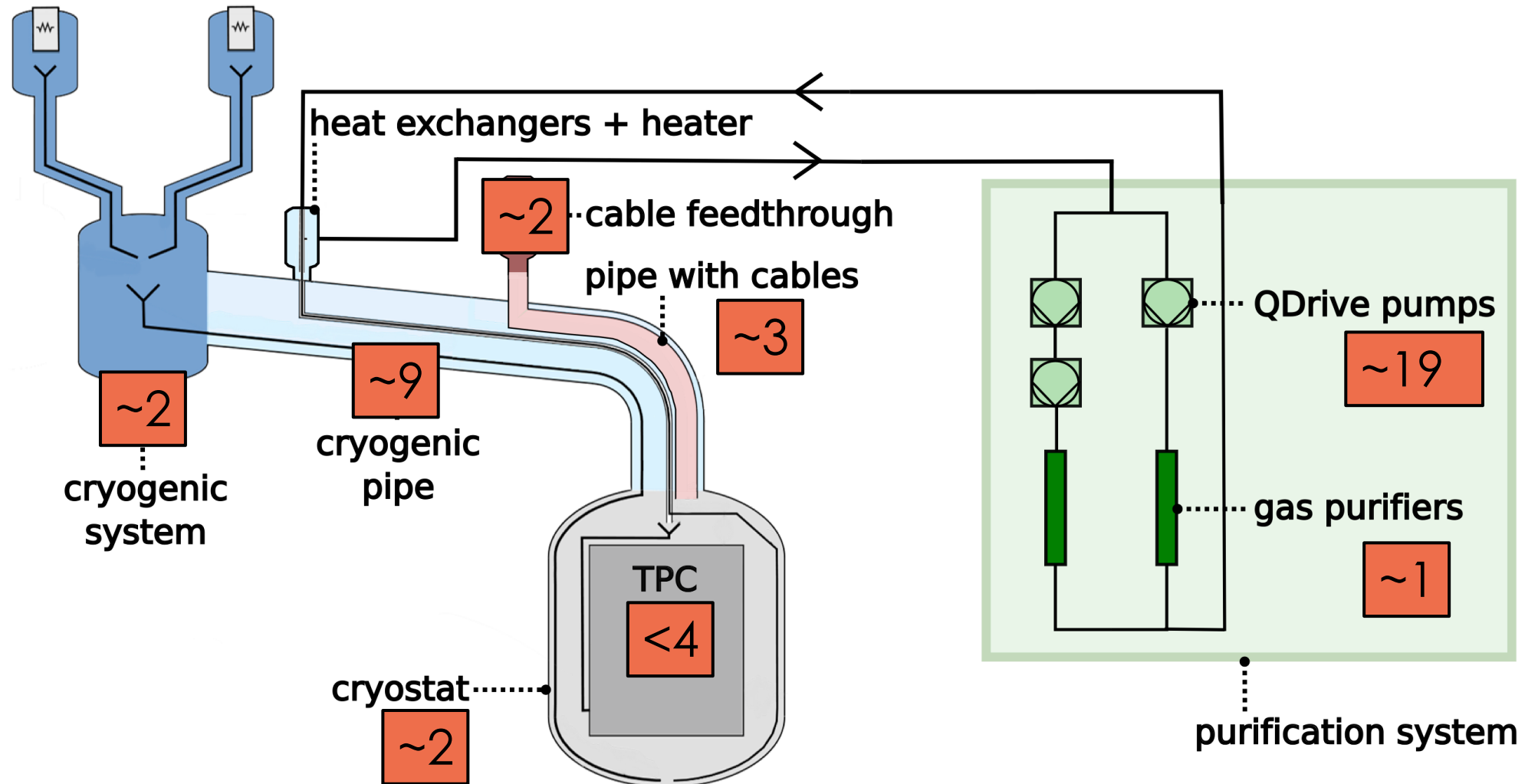


EPJC (2021) 81:337

# Understanding $^{222}\text{Rn}$ source distributions

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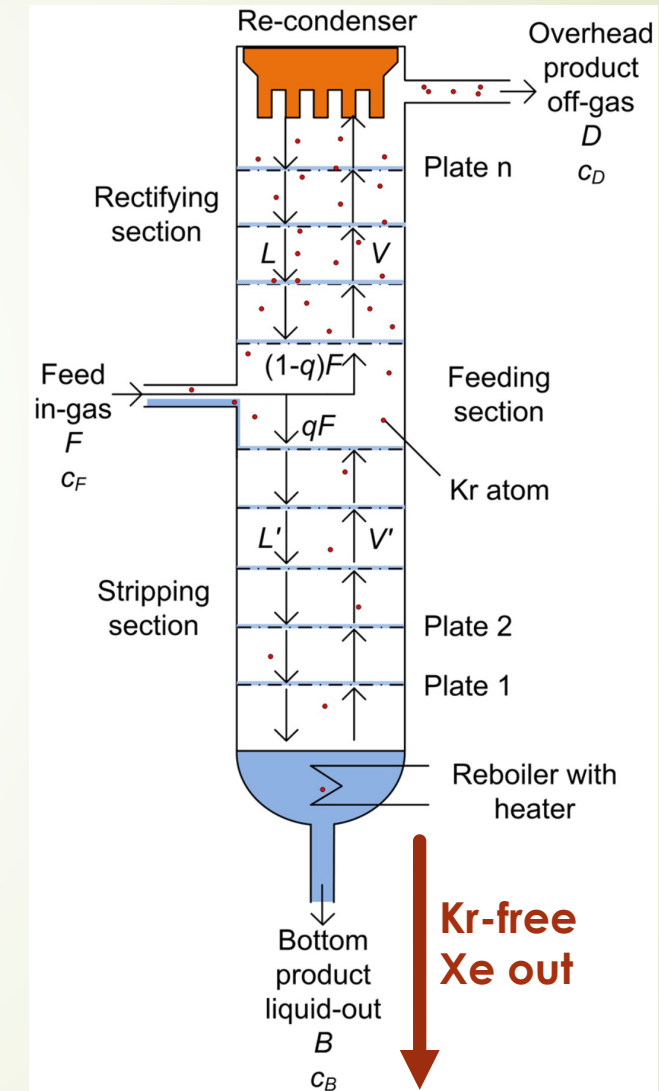


EPJC (2021) 81:337



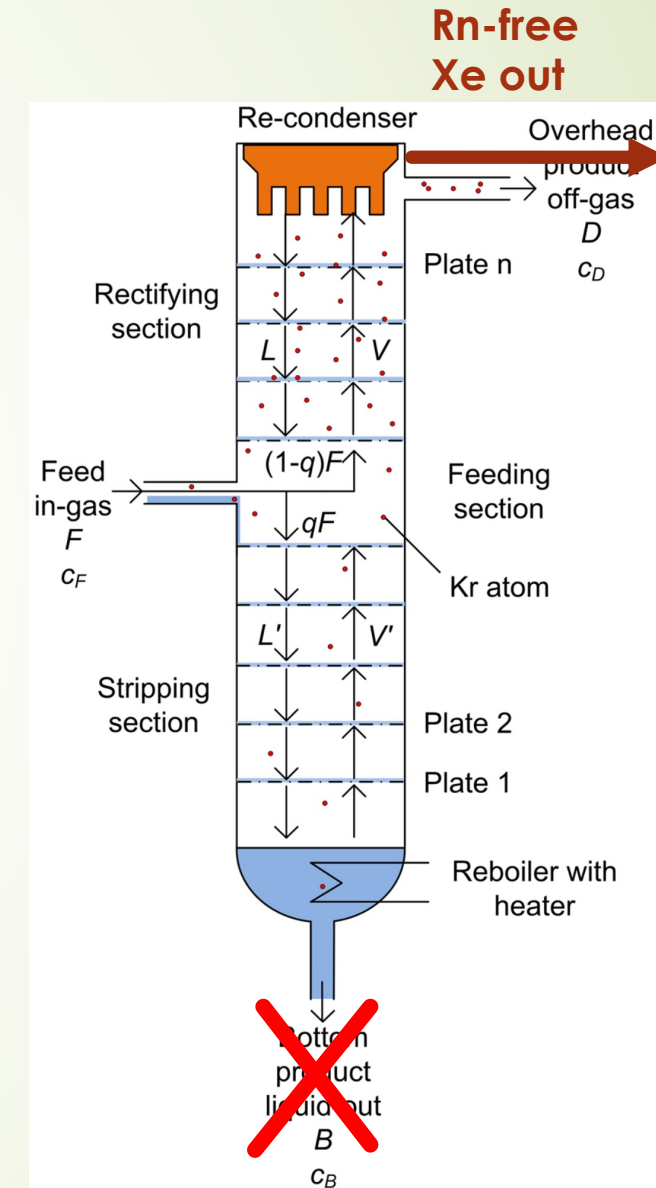
# Radon removal by xenon distillation

- Radon is less volatile than xenon → reverse operation mode w.r.t. Kr removal
- Feasibility demonstrated in Xenon100: [EPJC \(2017\) 77:358](#)
- Applied in XENON1T: 4.5  $\mu\text{Bq/kg}$  achieved: [EPJC \(2021\)81:337](#)
- High flow radon removal system developed for XENONnT: [arXiv: 2205.11492](#)
- **0.8  $\mu\text{Bq/kg}$  achieved**
- **Future: Further upscaling?**
  - Need to process entire budget in  $O(^{222}\text{Rn half-life})$
  - Processing speed for XLZD must be  $\geq 10$  tons/day
  - Efficiency in power consumption and xenon holdup versus radon reduction is crucial



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# PandaX talk at LRT 2024 workshop

## Surface Treatments to Boost the Sensitivity



Different types of polishing methods were tested on the same chamber to lower the radon background.



	7.4 SS detector	7.4 SS detector	7.4 SS detector
Polishing	Electrochemical	Mirror	Mirror + electrochemical
Roughness [ $\mu\text{m}$ ]	$3.00 \pm 0.44$	$0.12 \pm 0.04$	$0.13 \pm 0.03$
Blank [ $\text{mBq}/\text{m}^2$ ]	$9.08 \pm 0.71$	$0.48 \pm 0.14$	$0.33 \pm 0.10$
Bulk* [ $\text{mBq}/\text{kg}$ ]	$10.15 \pm 0.68$		

\*ICP-MS  $^{238}\text{U}$ -early chain measurement



# Radon mitigation by surface polishing

- $^{222}\text{Rn}$  emanation often due to surface impurities
- 2 effects of polishing
  - Removing material
  - Smoothing
- Tests with 4% thoriated tungsten → smoothing is the dominant effect
- Metallic samples → Rn diffusion negligible →  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  emanation only due to surface impurities

Untreated



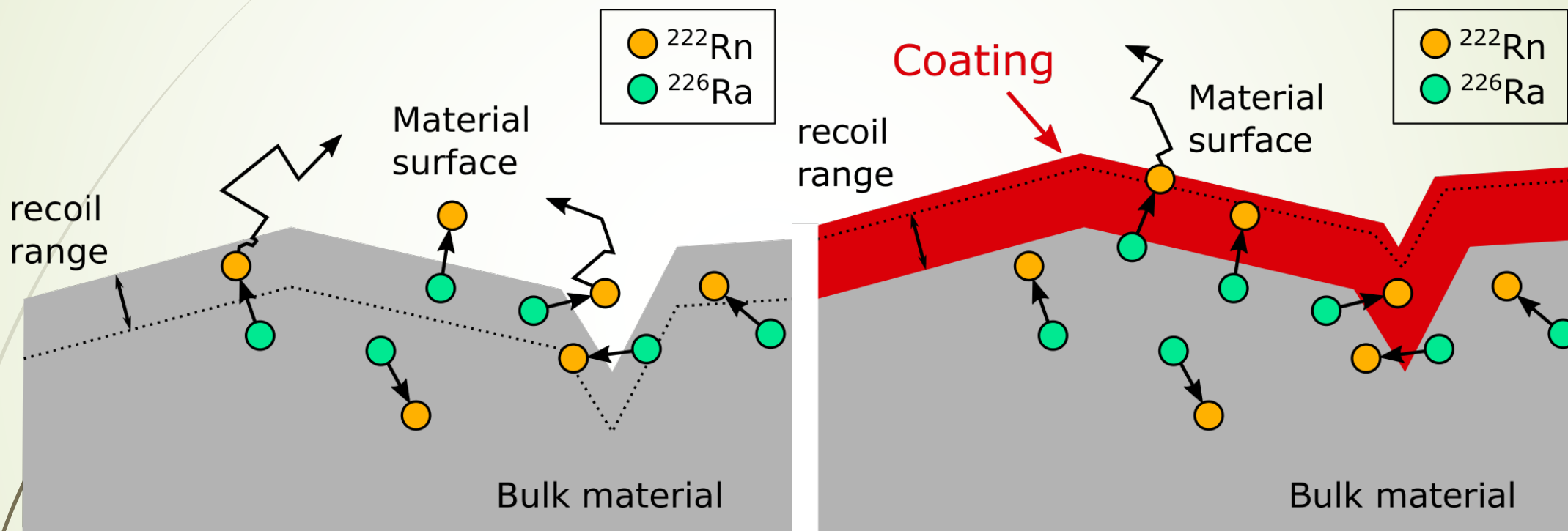
Roughness  
2.5 micron

Mirror polished



Roughness  
1.5 micron

# Radon mitigation by surface coating



- Idea: A Rn-tight, clean (Ra-free) surface coating blocks Rn-emanation
- Should work for recoil-driven (86 keV) AND diffusion-driven emanation

# Radon mitigation by surface coating

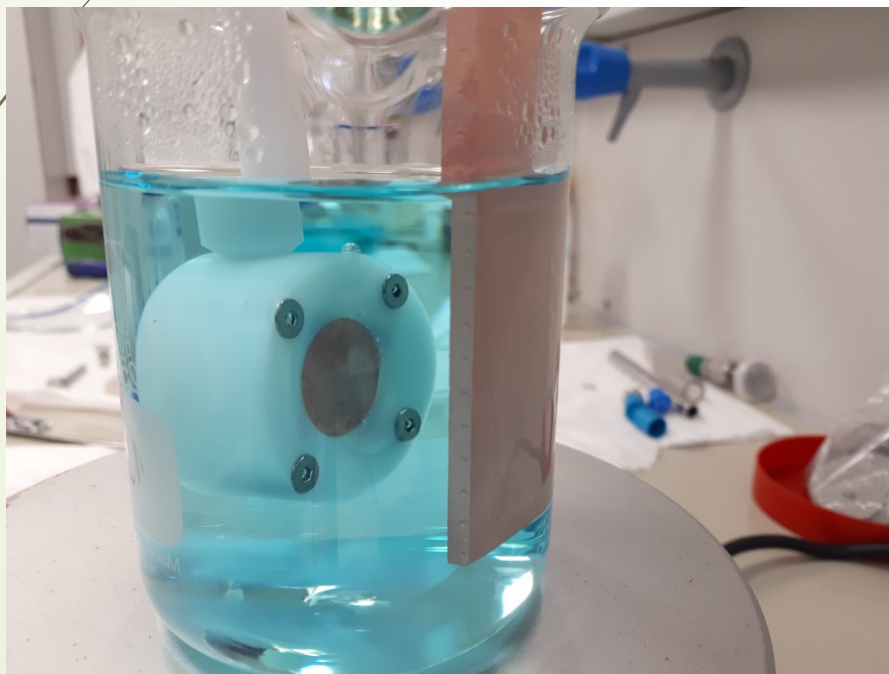


- Countless different coating techniques exist: Where to start?
- Required properties: Tight, homogeneous, stable (also at low temperature)
- Coating cleanliness may be ultimate limitations → start with the cleanest!
  - Vacuum processes
    - Physical Vapor Deposition (PVD)
    - Chemical Vapor Deposition (CVD)
  - In-house electro-deposition
    - Experience from electro-formed Cu
- Samples: Metallic (ideally stainless steel) with high radon emanation rate
- Initially 4% thoriated tungsten welding rods
  - Wrong substrate tungsten
  - Wrong isotope  $^{220}\text{Rn}$ : Much shorter half-life than  $^{222}\text{Rn}$

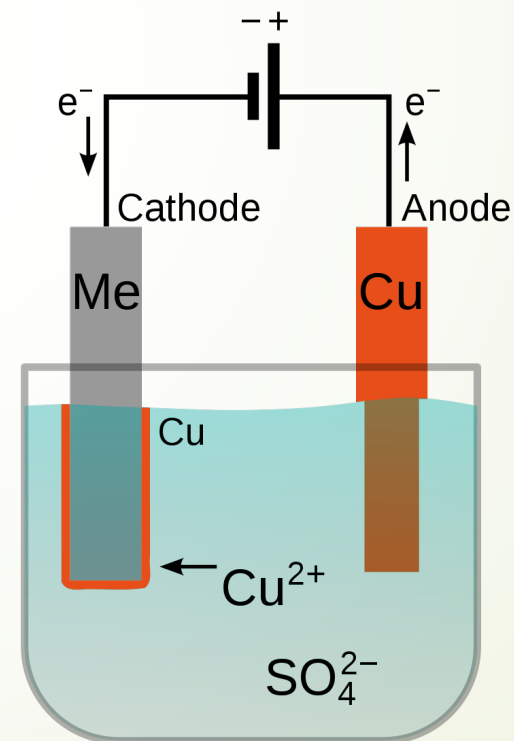


# Copper electro-deposition

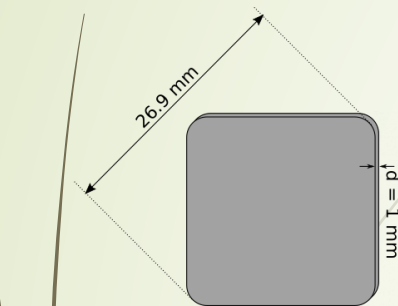
- Motivated by experience with electro-formed copper (clean!)
- In-house development at MPIK: 5  $\mu\text{m}$  thick Cu layer
- Anode made from copper
- Good mechanical stability on tungsten
- Efficient blocking of  $^{224}\text{Ra}$  alpha-decay
- $^{220}\text{Rn}$  reduction factor up to 100 observed!



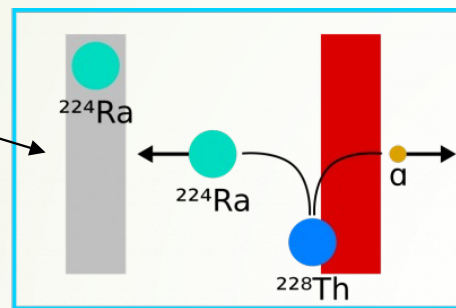
H. Simgen, CPPM seminar



# From tungsten to stainless steel: Recoil-implanted $^{224}\text{Ra}$



Sample



Oil Pump

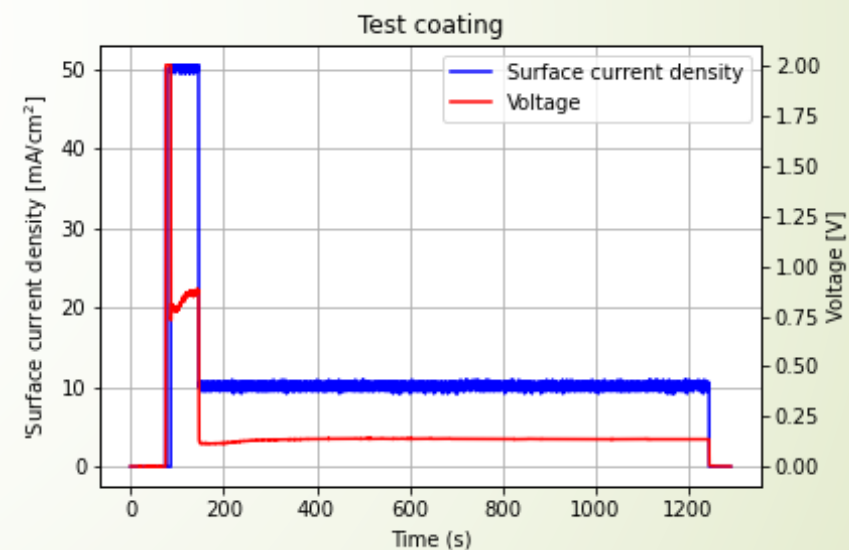
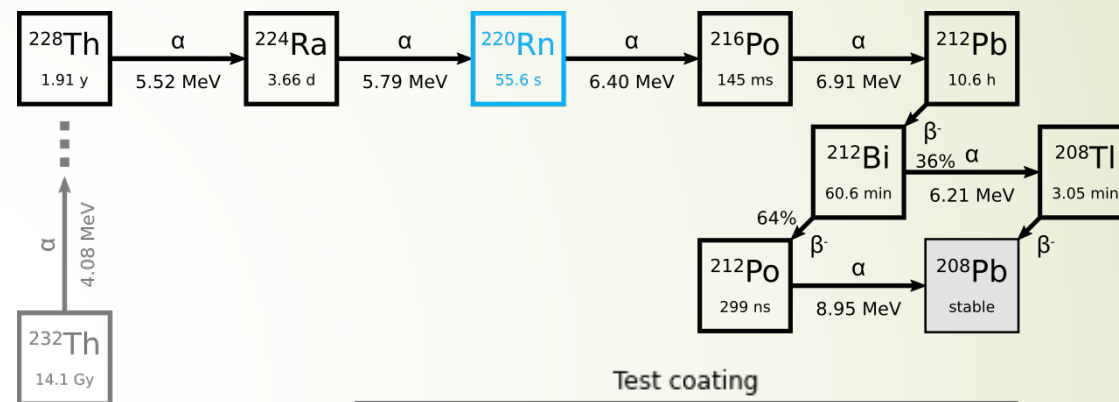
Particle Filter

Vacuum gauge

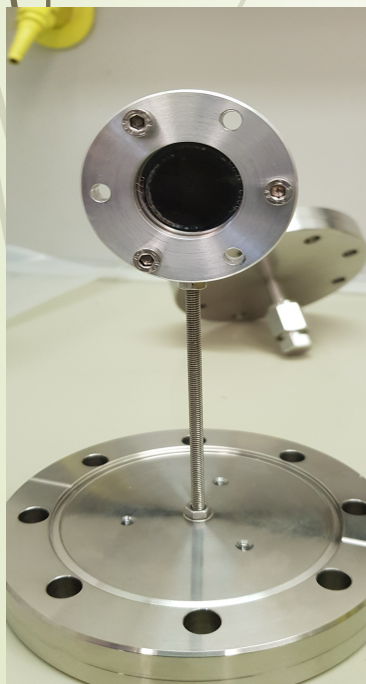
$^{228}\text{Th}$  source

Holder

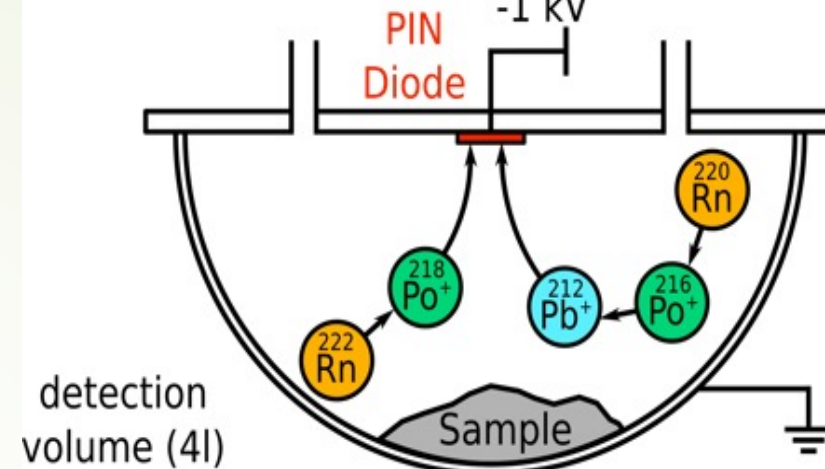
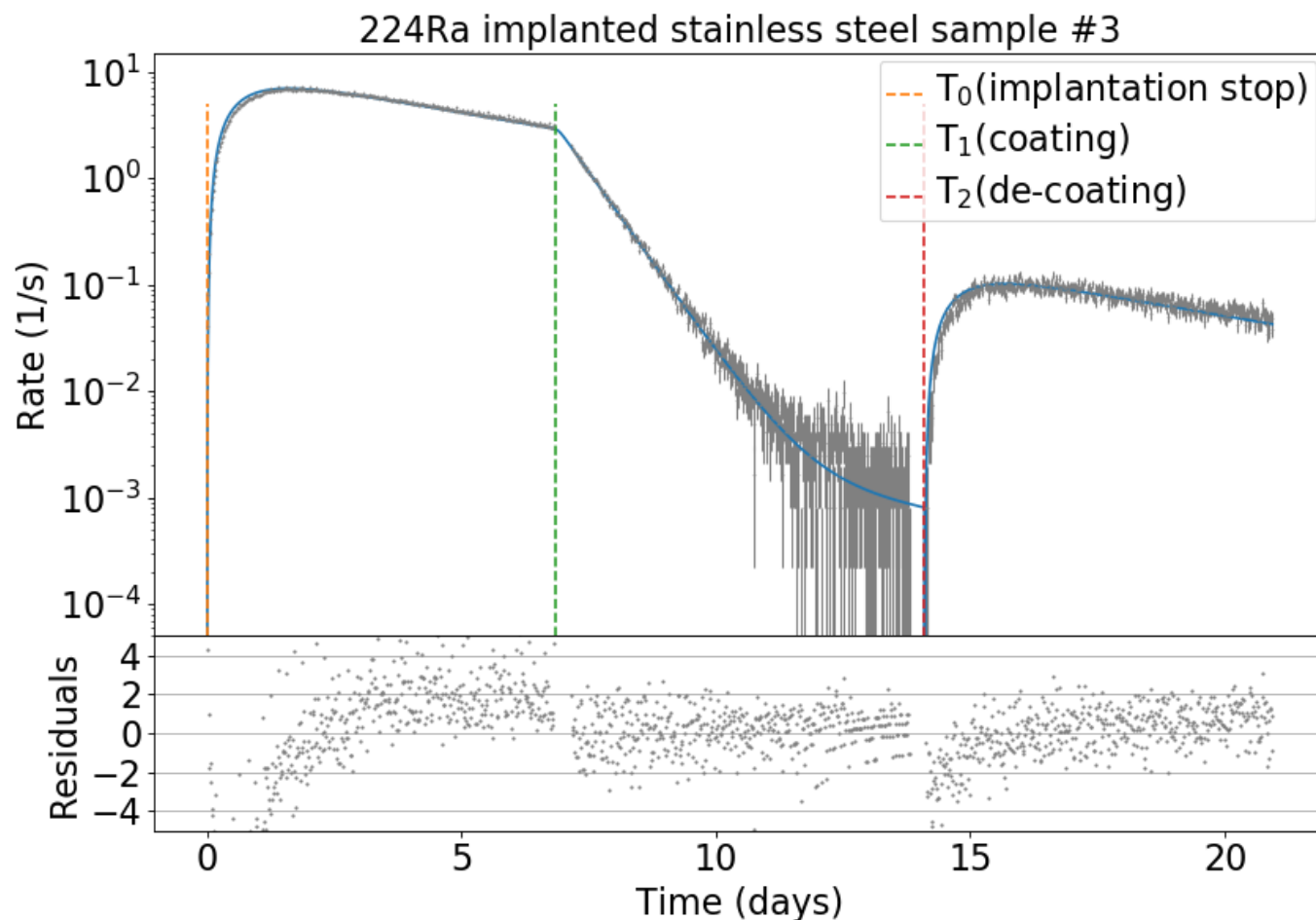
- $^{228}\text{Th}$  source recoils  $^{224}\text{Ra}$  into SS disc
- Short-lived ( $t_H=3.7$  days)  $^{220}\text{Rn}$ -emanating SS disc
- Easy to produce, relatively high activity



Procedure modification : Adhesion layer ( $\sim 1 \mu\text{m}$ ) for mechanical stability



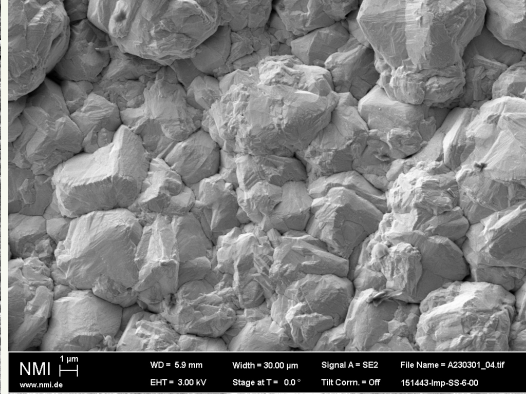
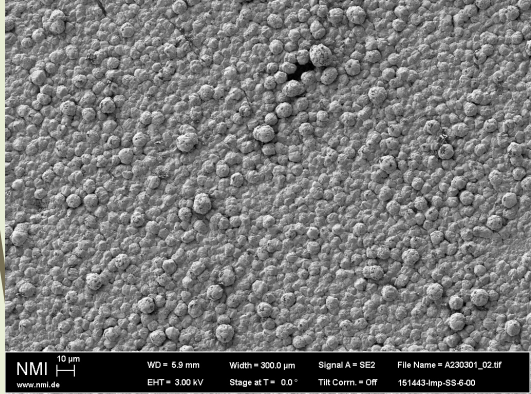
# Coating (and de-coating) of $^{224}\text{Ra}$ -implanted SS disc



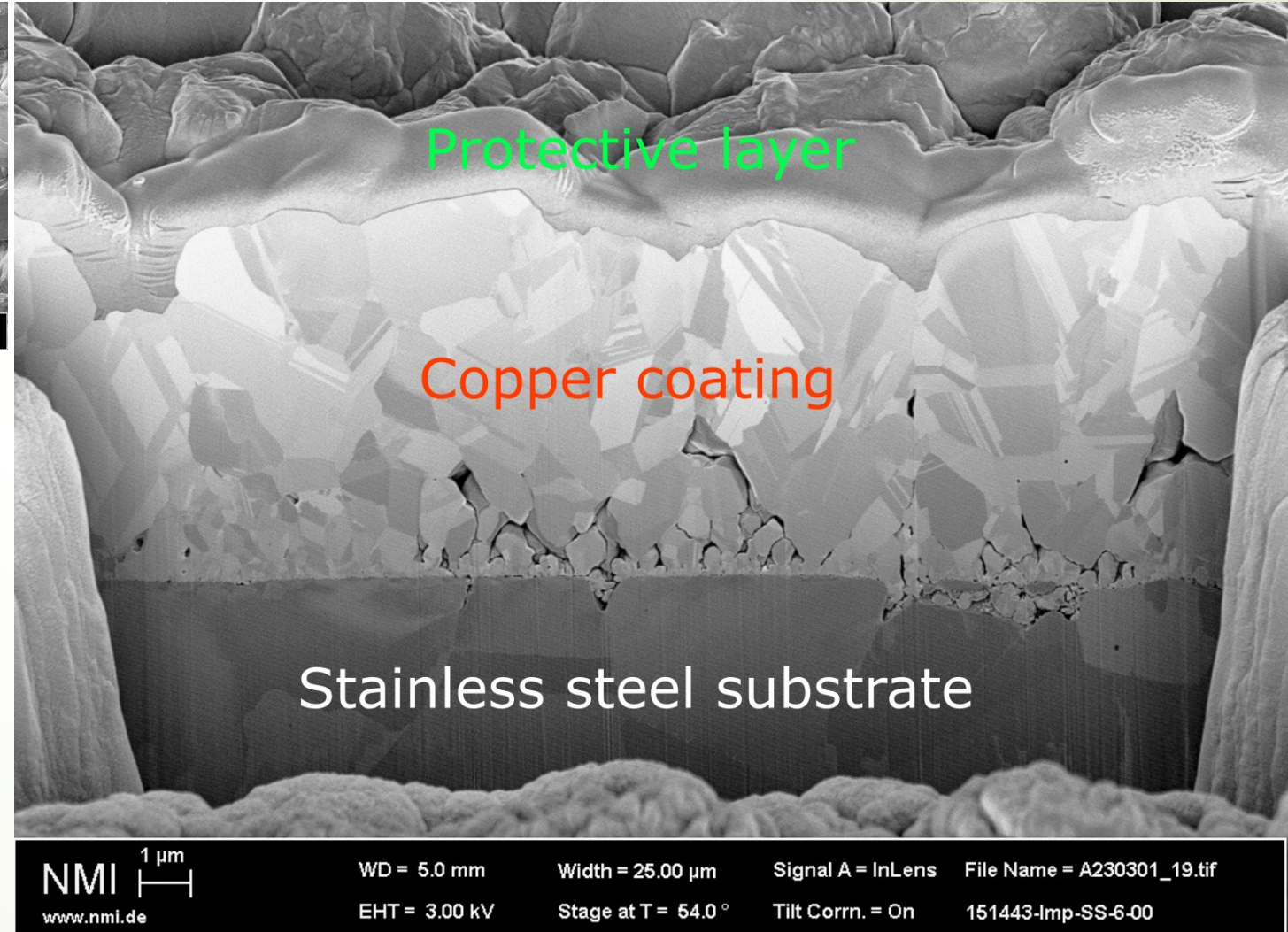
- $^{224}\text{Ra}$  decays on SS disc
- $^{220}\text{Rn}$  is emanated and decays in electrostatic radon monitor
- Charged  $^{212}\text{Pb}$  ( $^{220}\text{Rn}$ -daughter) is collected on PIN diode
- Counting of  $^{212}\text{Po}$   $\alpha$ -decays
- Possible issue: Activity wash-off in electrolyte
- Procedure: Implantation  $\rightarrow$  coating  $\rightarrow$  de-coating
- Upper limit from coating, lower limit from de-coating
- Results for reduction factor R:  
 **$20 < R < 1000$**



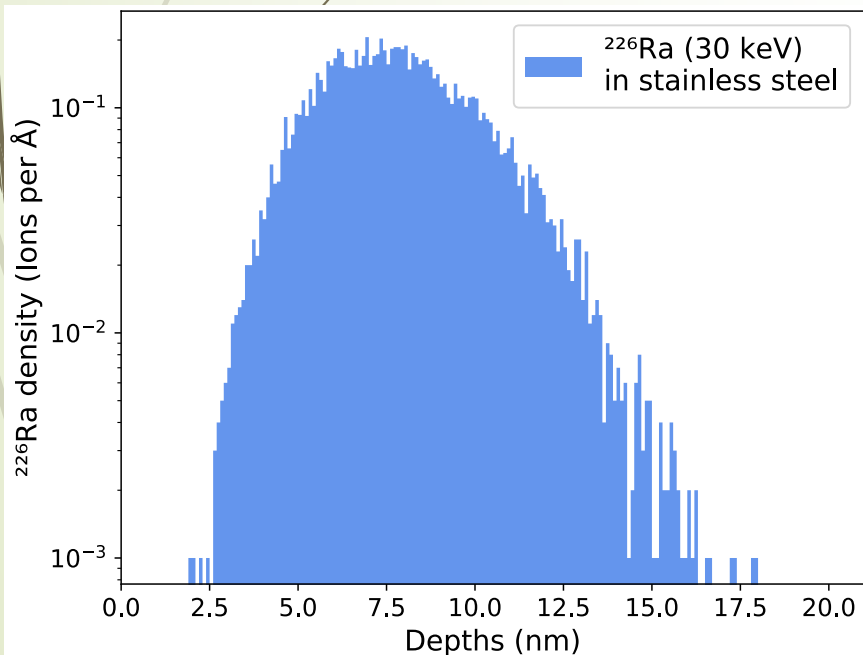
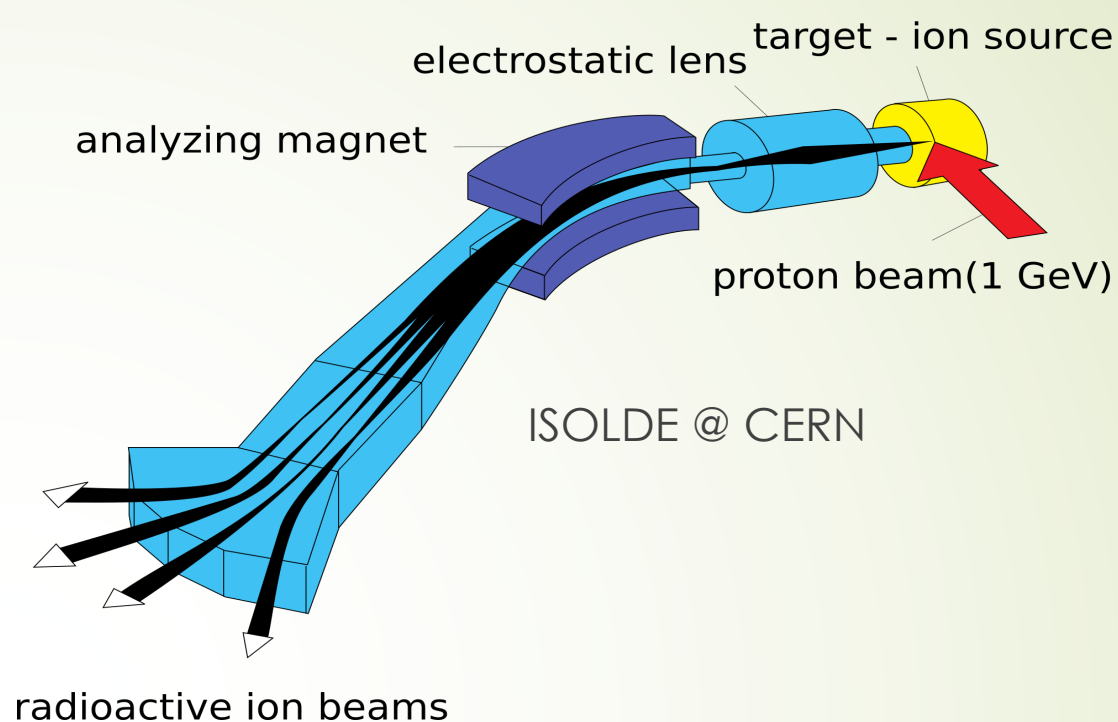
# Secondary Electron Microscopy (SEM) investigation of our coating



- Rough surface texture with spherical structures.
- Unhomogeneous adhesive layer with small grain size and holes.
- Tight cover layer with larger grains.



# Finally: $^{222}\text{Rn}$ on SS

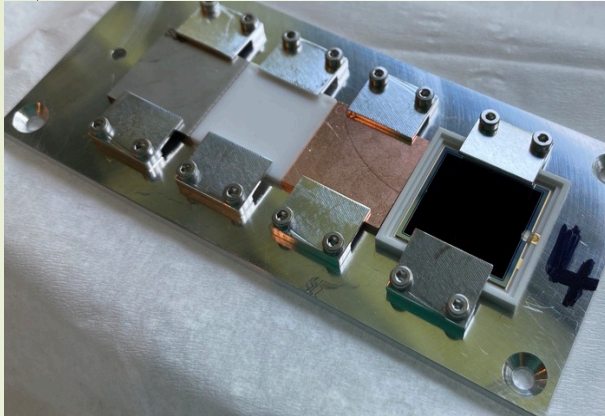


- $^{226}\text{Ra}$ -implanted stainless steel discs (2cm x 2cm)
- Produced at ISOLDE facility (CERN)
- 30 keV implantation energy
- Ion range distribution simulation in SS (SRIM):
  - $\mu = 7.9\text{nm}$ ,  $\sigma = 2.3\text{nm}$
- 2 test samples produced in 2017
- Summer beam time for 20 new samples approved

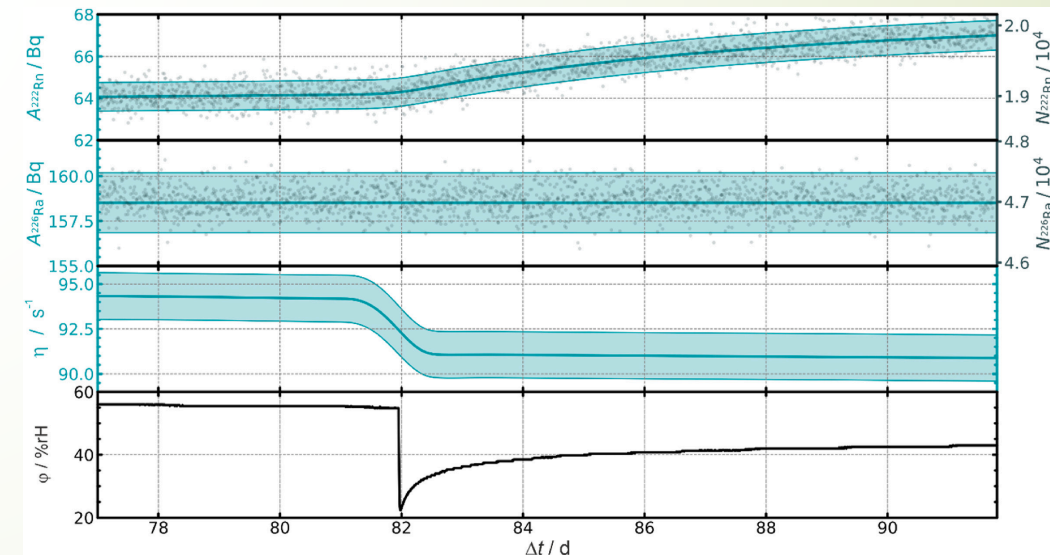
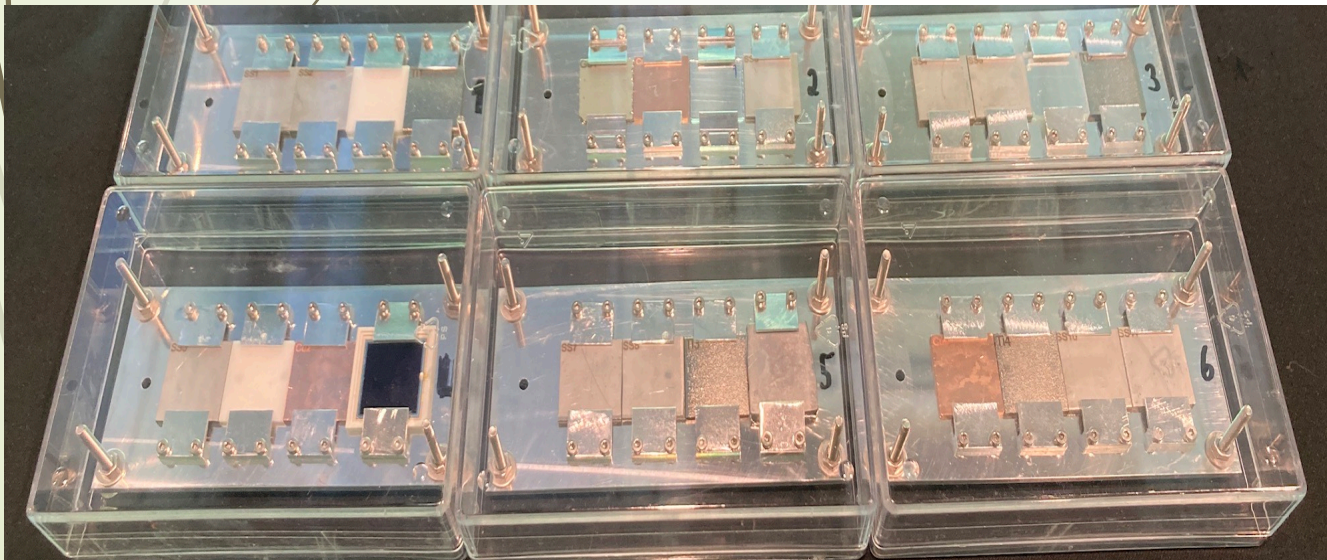
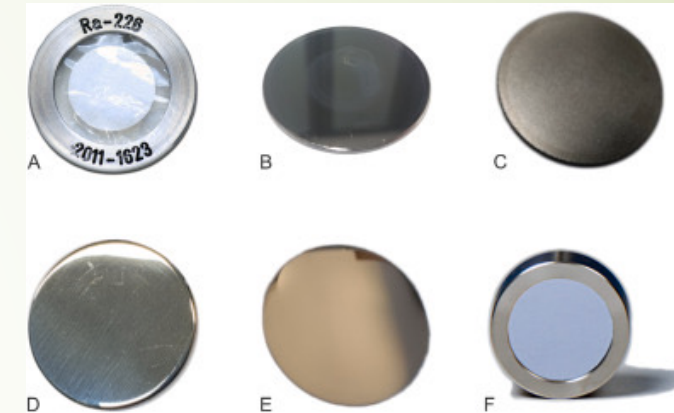


# Novel $^{222}\text{Rn}$ sources

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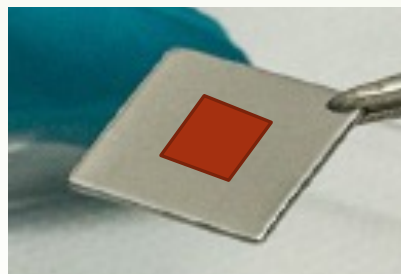
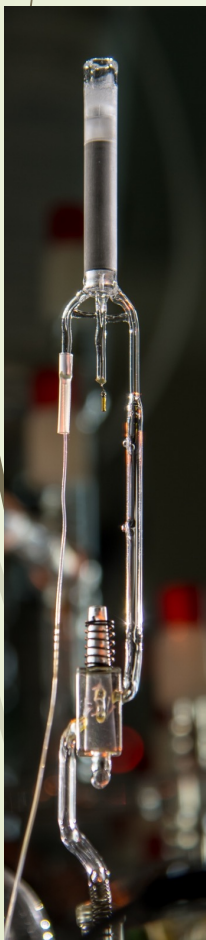
- $^{226}\text{Ra}$  implantation in SS, Cu, Ti, Pb, Ge, Si, PTFE,  $\text{SiO}_2$ , acrylic.
- >30 samples.
- Similar development at PTB (Braunschweig): Traceable  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  sources.
- Deposition on an active Si detector allows online emanation rate monitoring.



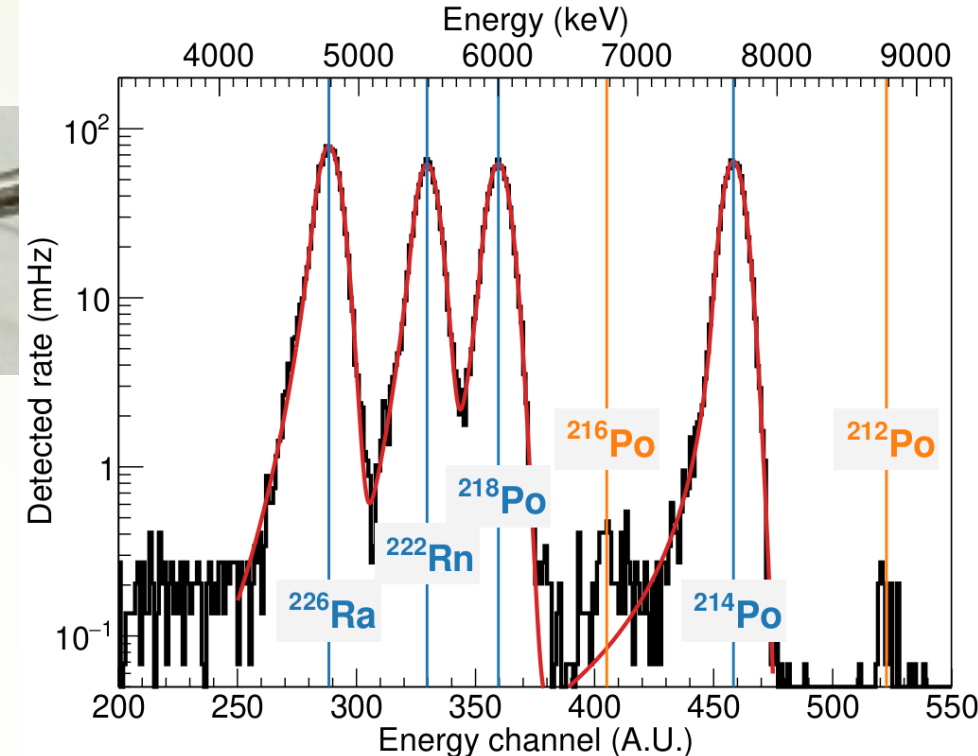
Appl. Rad. Isot. 196 (2023) 110726



# ISOLDE sample characterization



- Alpha measurement:
  - Short-lived contaminants (from  $^{235}\text{U}$  chain)
  - $\sim 8.5 \text{ Bq } ^{226}\text{Ra}$  activity
  - Central deposition confirmed
- Gamma measurement confirms alpha measurement
  - Unexpected  $^{139}\text{Ce}$  discovered ( $t_H = 137.6 \text{ d}$ )
- Direct  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  emanation test with proportional count
  - Sample a:  $(2.00 \pm 0.05) \text{ Bq}$
  - Sample b:  $(2.07 \pm 0.05) \text{ Bq}$
- Wipe test: Less than 1% of activity removed

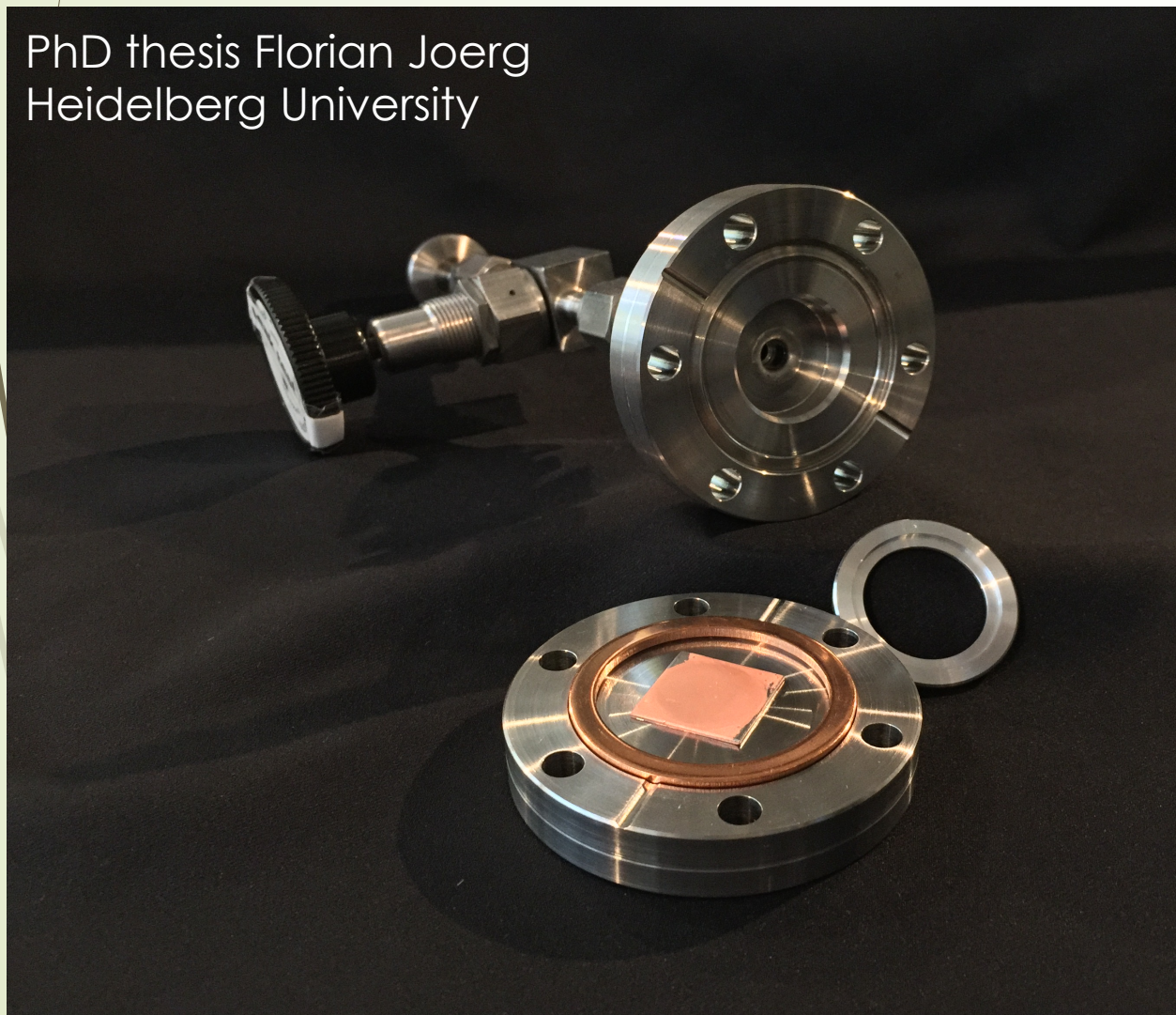


Measurement		Result (Bq)
$^{222}\text{Rn}$ emanation	a	$2.07 \pm 0.03 \text{ (stat)} \pm 0.04 \text{ (syst)}$
	b	$2.00 \pm 0.03 \text{ (stat)} \pm 0.04 \text{ (syst)}$
$\gamma$ -spectrometry	a	$7.4 \pm 0.1 \text{ (stat)} \pm 0.9 \text{ (syst)}$
	b	$8.4 \pm 0.3 \text{ (stat)} \pm 1.0 \text{ (syst)}$
$\alpha$ -spectrometry	a	$8.7 \pm 0.1 \text{ (stat)} \begin{smallmatrix} +2.0 \\ -1.8 \end{smallmatrix} \text{ (syst)}$
	b	$9.1 \pm 0.1 \text{ (stat)} \begin{smallmatrix} +0.7 \\ -0.4 \end{smallmatrix} \text{ (syst)}$

*Appl. Rad. Isot. 194 (2023) 110666*

# Coating of the 1<sup>st</sup> ISOLDE sample

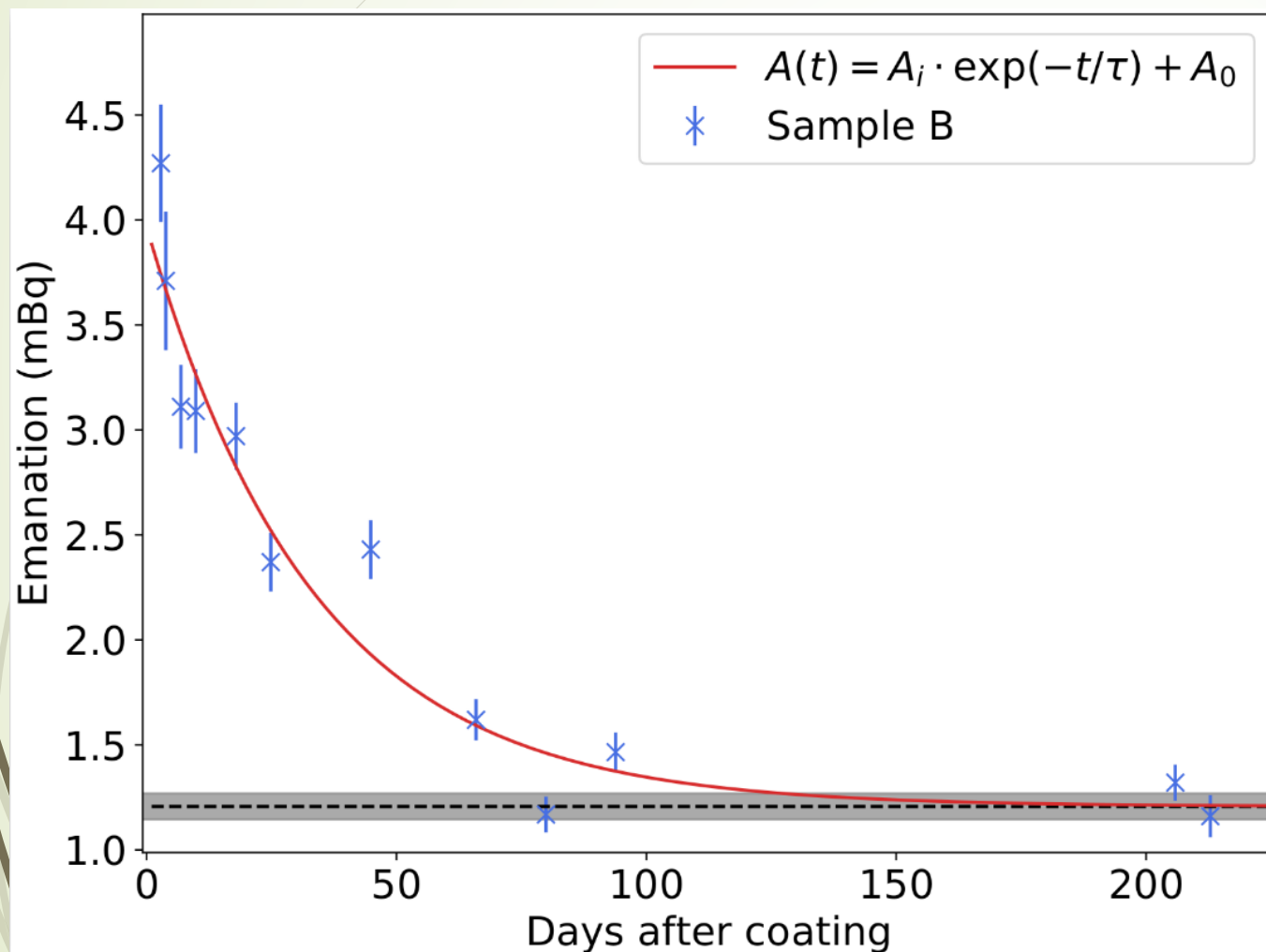
PhD thesis Florian Joerg  
Heidelberg University



- Standard MPIK electrochemical Cu-on-SS coating recipe applied
- $^{222}\text{Rn}$  emanation rate
  - Before coating:  $(2.00 \pm 0.05) \text{ Bq}$
  - After coating:  $(4.3 \pm 0.3) \text{ mBq}$
- Unexpected large  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  reduction factor:  $\sim 465$
- Gamma spectroscopy results:

Activity [Bq]	$^{226}\text{Ra}$ (186 keV)	$^{222}\text{Rn}$ daughters
ISOLDE sample before coating	$8.4 \pm 1.0$	$6.0 \pm 0.3$
ISOLDE sample after coating	$7.7 \pm 1.0$	$7.2 \pm 0.4$
Electrolyte after coating	---	$0.34 \pm 0.02$

# 1<sup>st</sup> coated ISOLDE sample: Temporal development of $^{222}\text{Rn}$ emanation rate



- $^{222}\text{Rn}$  emanation rate was found to decrease
- Coating is getting “tighter”
- Oxidation?
  - But storage under protective atmosphere
- Re-crystallisation?
- **Final  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  reduction factor: ~1700**
- Currently: Temperature dependency studies ongoing



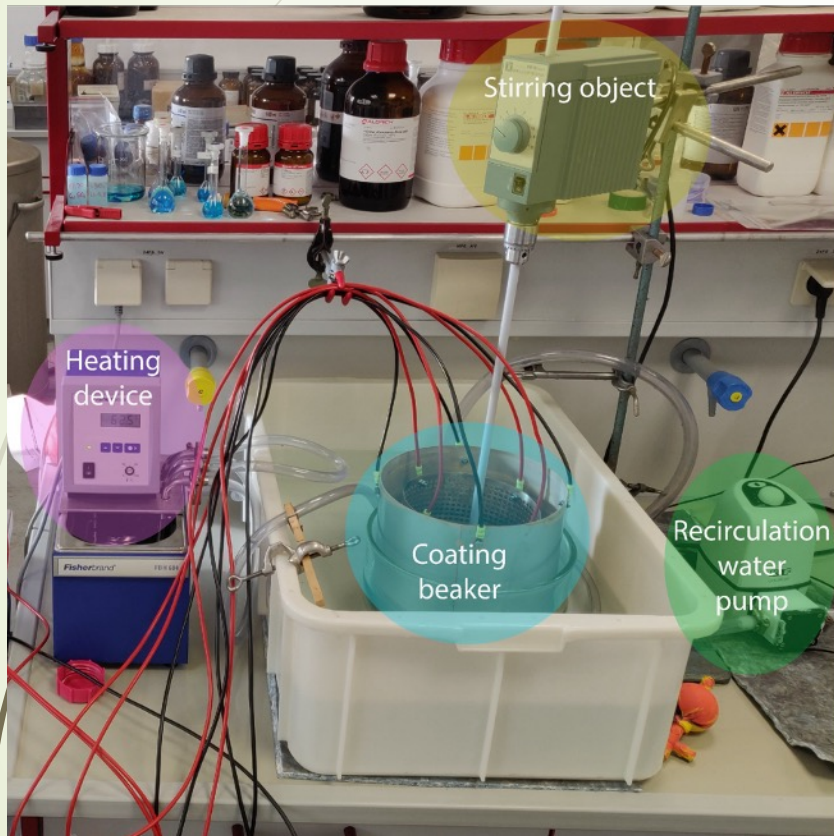
# Upscaling

- All samples so far were few cm<sup>2</sup> - size
- Applicability to XLZD requires (much) larger coated surfaces.
  - Larger coating vessels
  - Higher-current power supply
  - New copper electrode
  - Better temperature control
  - Improved mixing
- New samples:
  - Stainless steel cylinders
    - ~20cm height
    - ~20cm diameter
    - 1250 cm<sup>2</sup> surface



# Upscaling

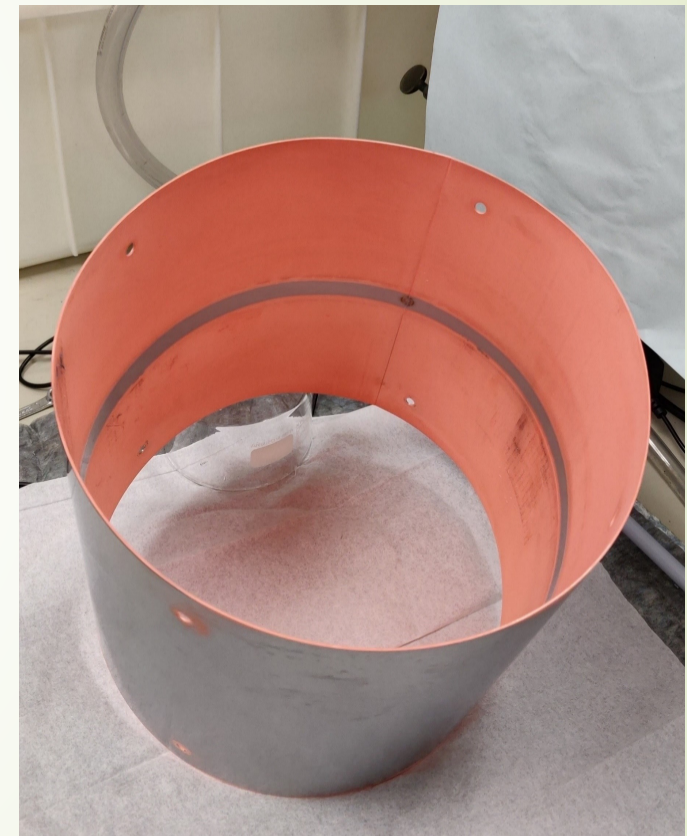
First tests with temporary setup



New copper electrode

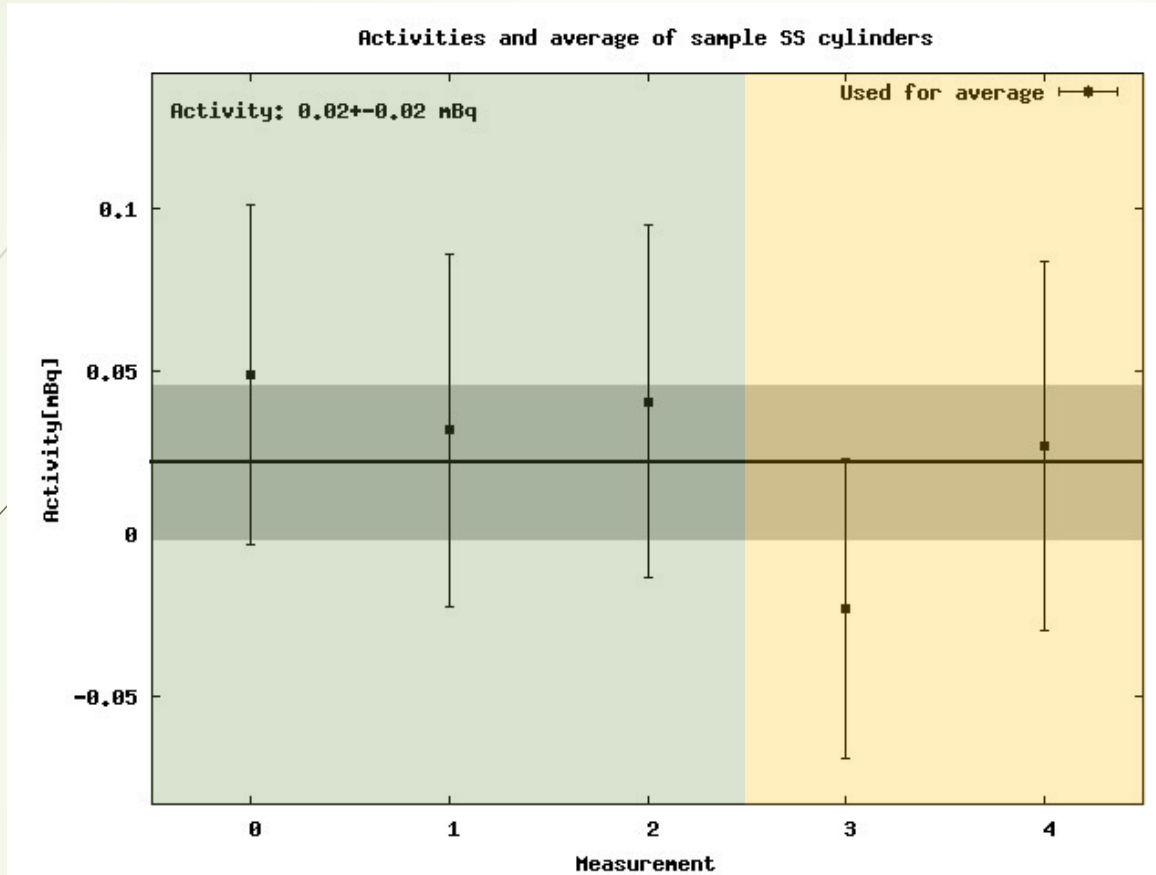


First "large surface" coating

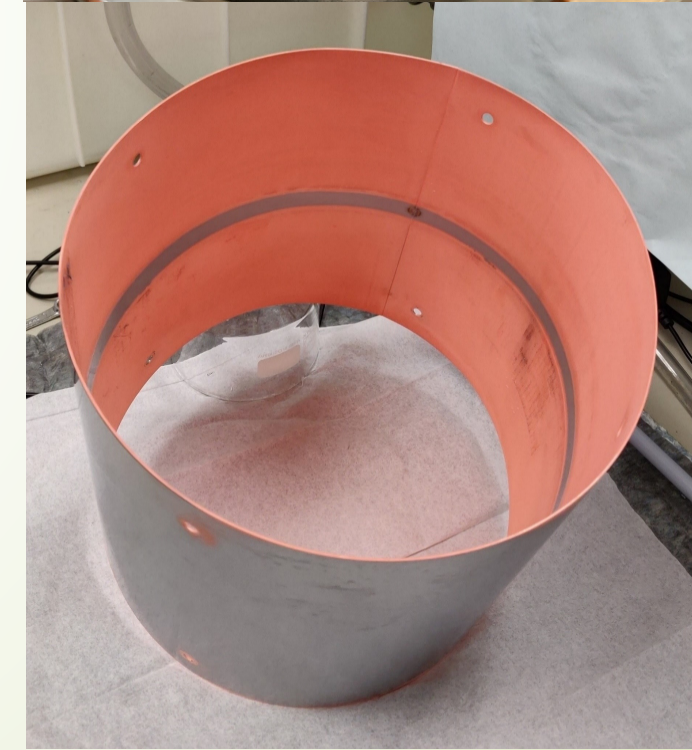




# First radiopurity tests

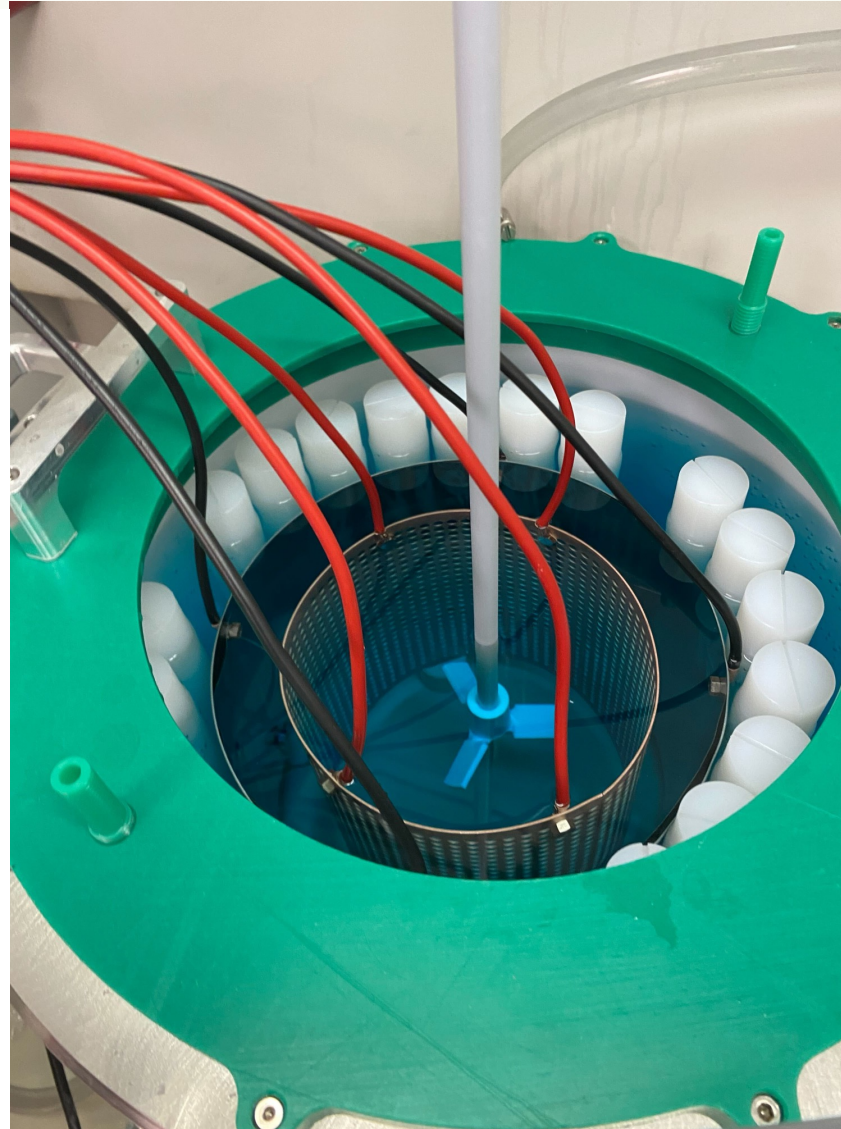
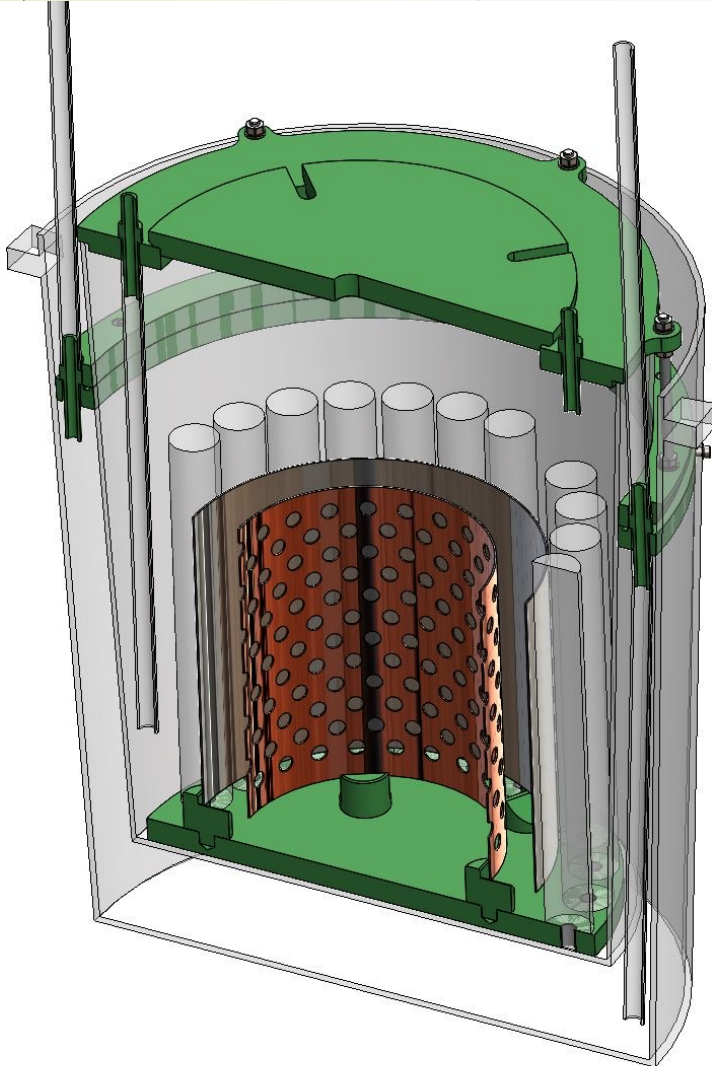


- $^{222}\text{Rn}$  emanation rate from five stainless steel cylinders measured before and after coating.
- No increase observed: Extra  $^{226}\text{Ra}$  introduced  $< 80 \mu\text{Bq}/\text{m}^2$ .





# New dedicated coating vessel

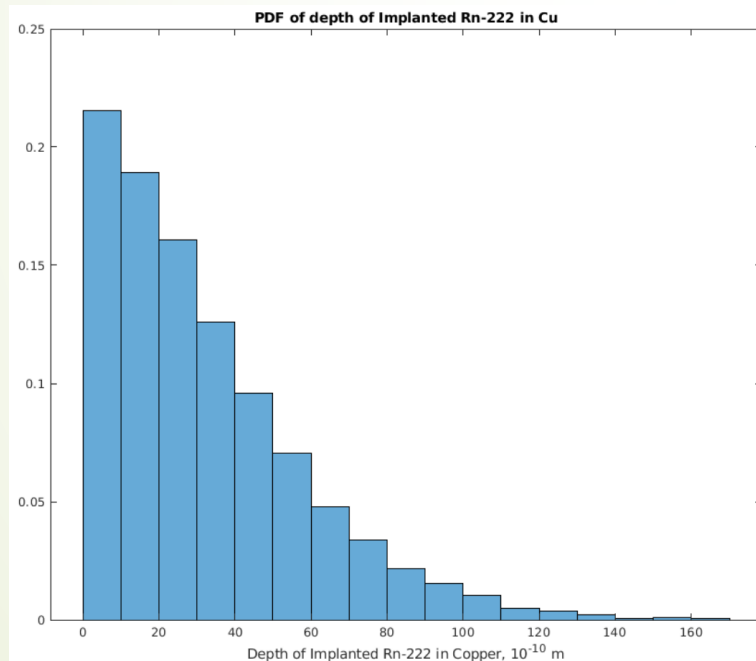
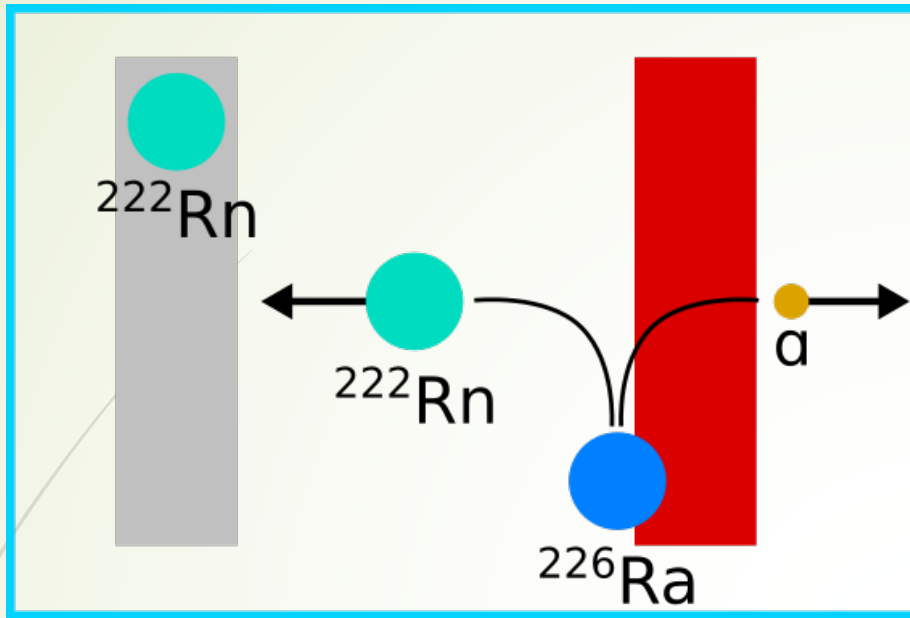


- Newly designed HDPE vessel.
- Sufficiently high.
- Stronger power supply unit.
- Electrolyte immersed in thermally controlled water bath.





- Fully coated inner cylindrical mantle.
  - ~20 cm height
  - ~20 cm diameter
  - ~1250 cm<sup>2</sup> surface
- Coating is stable and homogenous.
- Meanwhile >10 cylinder mantles successfully coated.



# Radon diffusion studies

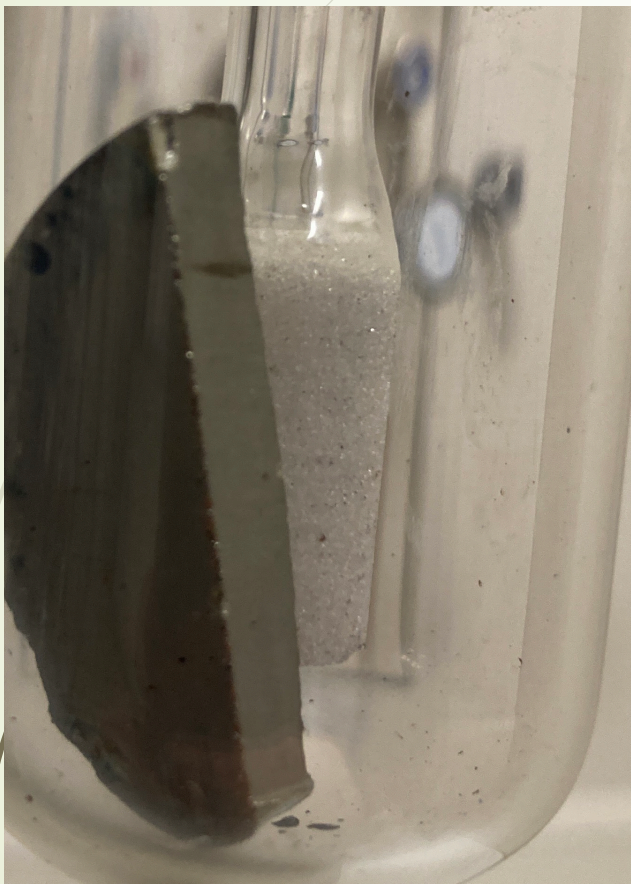
- $^{226}\text{Ra}$  source: How to measure only  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  emanation by diffusion (no recoil)?
- Need  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  source without  $^{226}\text{Ra}$
- Recoil-implant  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  in substrate and measure  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  emanation
- Diffusion in metals is low  $\rightarrow$  only  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  close to surface relevant.
- Alpha counter  $\rightarrow$  Total activity
- Proportional counter  $\rightarrow$  Emanation fraction
- Simple diffusion model predicts emanated radon fraction:

$$R = \frac{\text{Emanation}(t)}{\text{Activity}(t)}$$

$$\sim \sqrt{D \cdot t}$$



# PRELIMINARY results



$$R = \frac{\text{Emanation}(t)}{\text{Activity}(t)}$$

## Material

## Radon diffusion constant

Copper

 $(5 \pm 2) \times 10^{-23} \text{ cm}^2/\text{s}$ 

HP Germanium

 $\sim 2 \times 10^{-23} \text{ cm}^2/\text{s}$ 

HP Germanium (Li-doped)

 $\sim 2 \times 10^{-22} \text{ cm}^2/\text{s}$ 

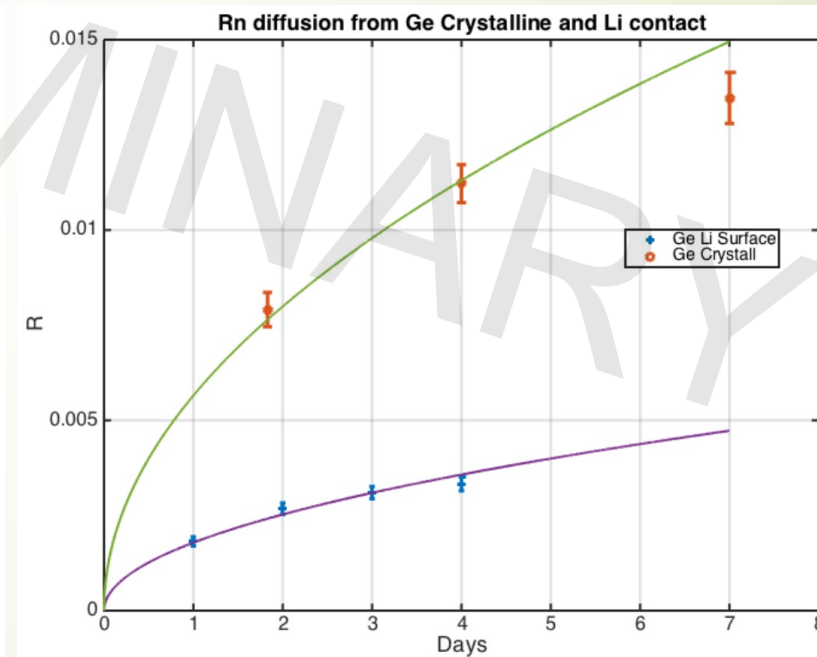
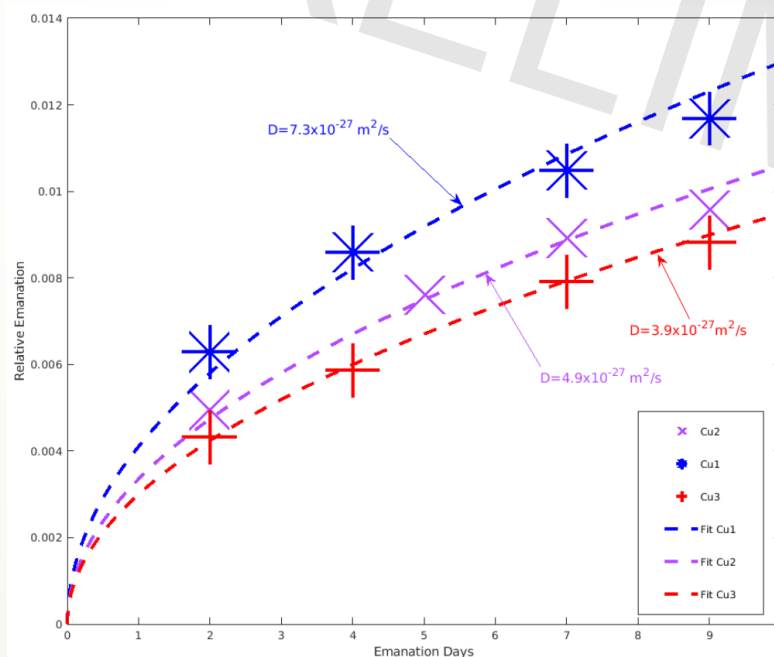
Stainless steel

 $\sim 1 \times 10^{-22} \text{ cm}^2/\text{s}$ 

Quarz glass (amorphous)

 $(4 \pm 2) \times 10^{-24} \text{ cm}^2/\text{s}$ 

Quarz crystal

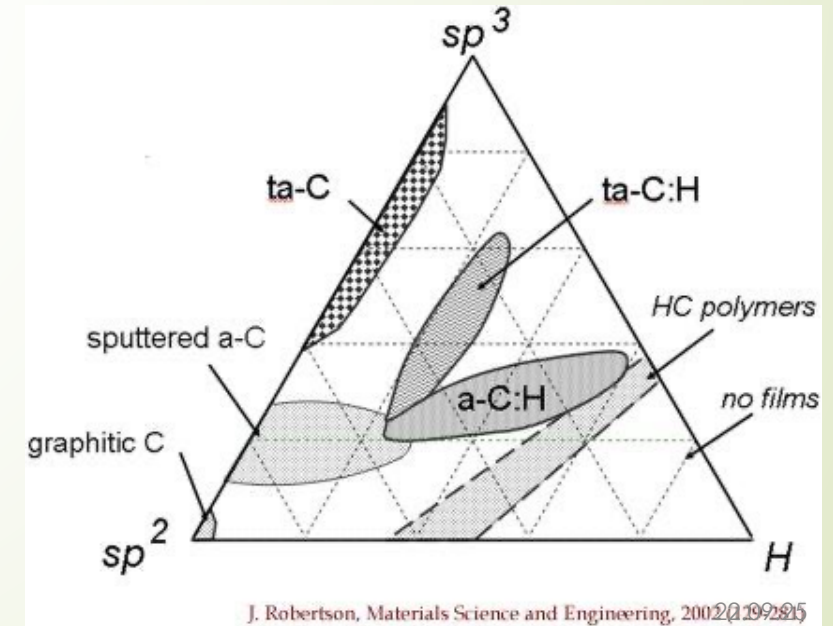
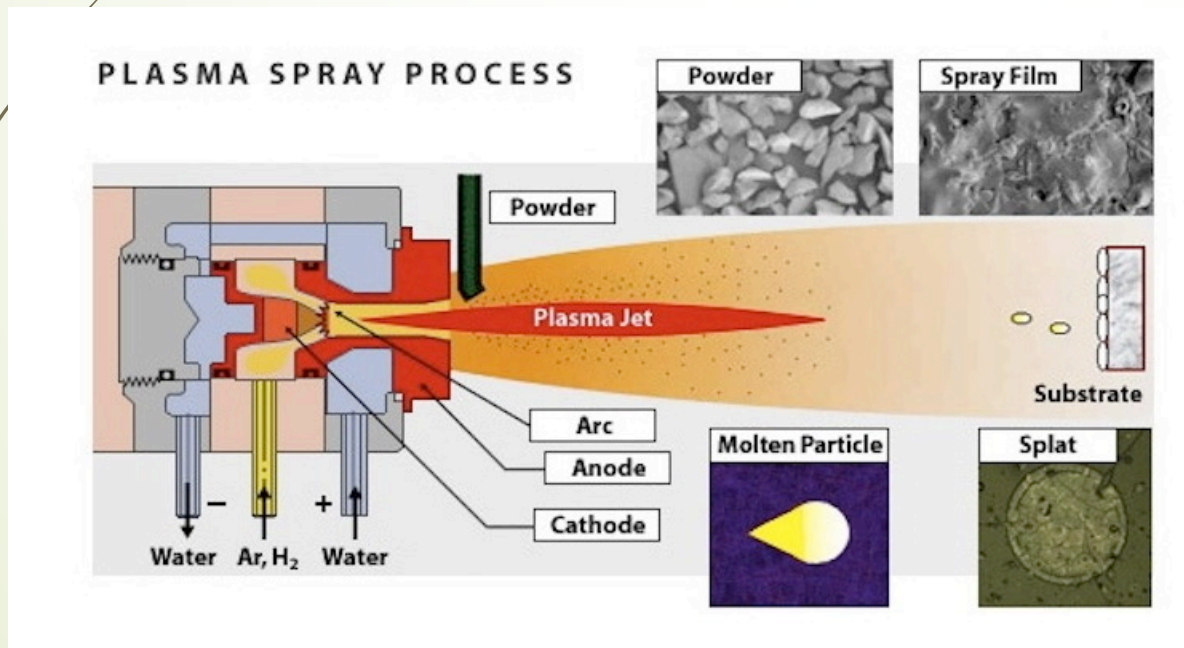
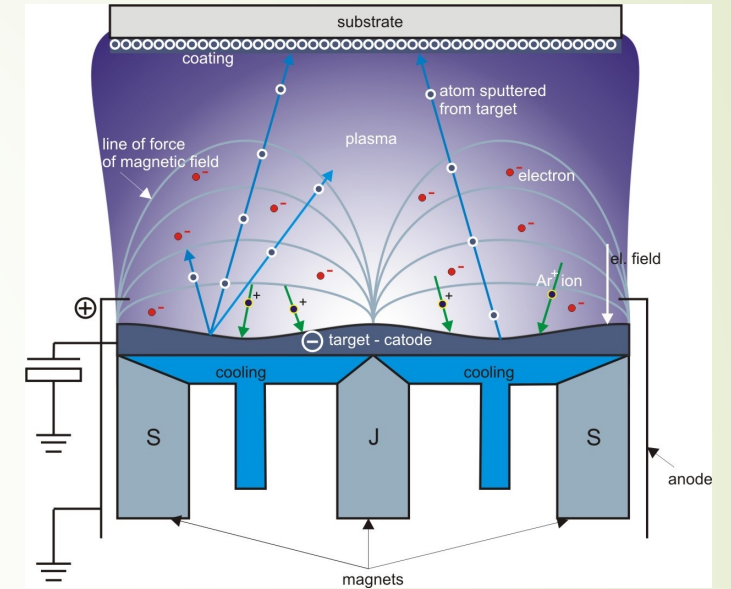
 $(3 \pm 1) \times 10^{-22} \text{ cm}^2/\text{s}$ 

# Backup

# Investigated vacuum coating techniques

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- Physical vapor deposition (PVD)
  - Titanium sputtering
- Chemical vapor deposition (CVD):
  - Amorphous hydrogenated carbon coating (a-C:H)
- Copper plasma deposition



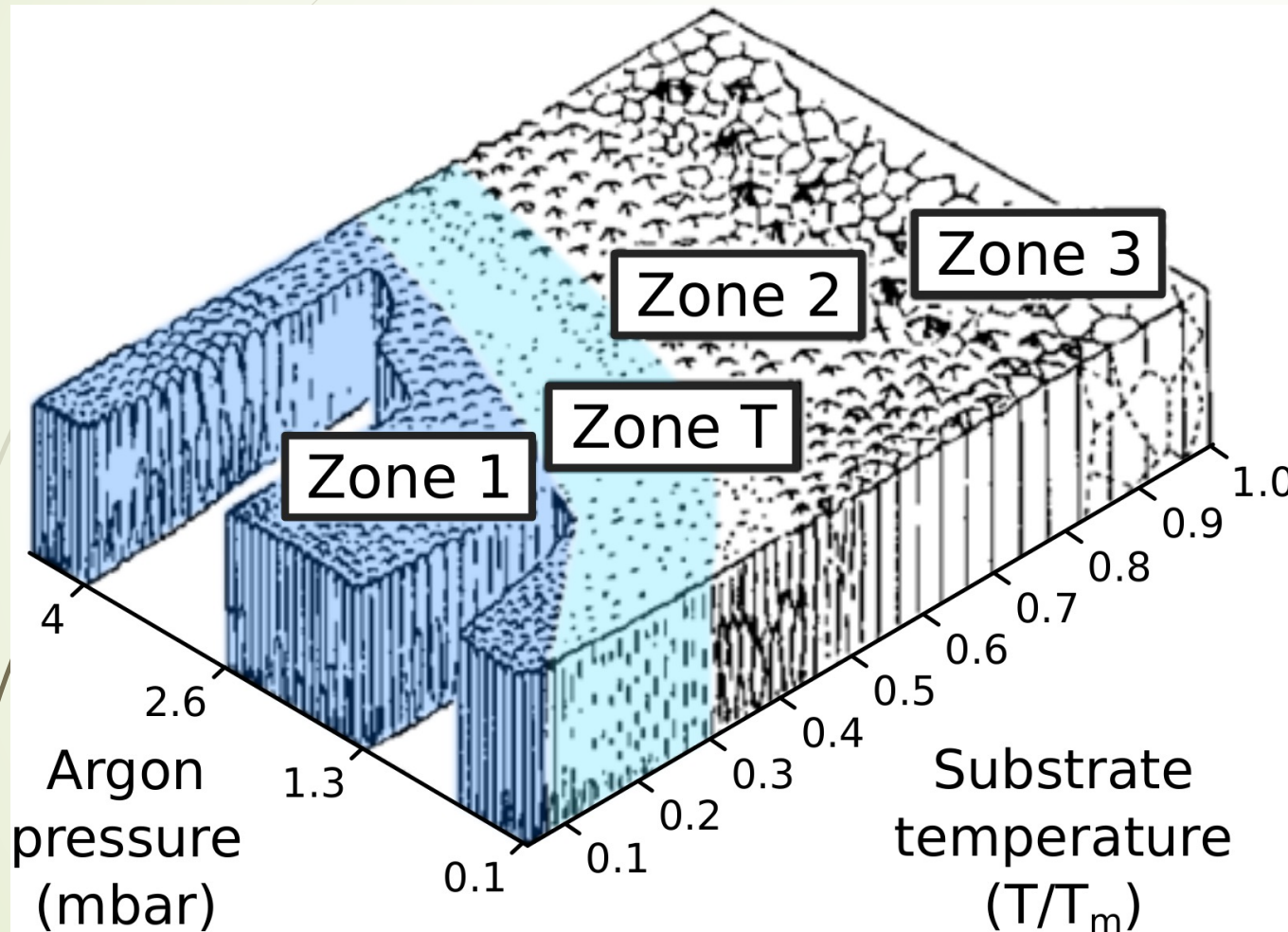


# Results: $^{222}\text{Rn}$ emanation reduction factors

Method	Coated material	Company	$^{220}\text{Rn}$ reduction	$^{222}\text{Rn}$ reduction
Physical vapor deposition (sputtering)	Ti	Europcoating	1 – 5	~1
Plasma deposition	Cu	Dr. Laure	2 – 20	---
Chemical vapor deposition	C-H	Innovative Coating Solutions	~3	~1,5

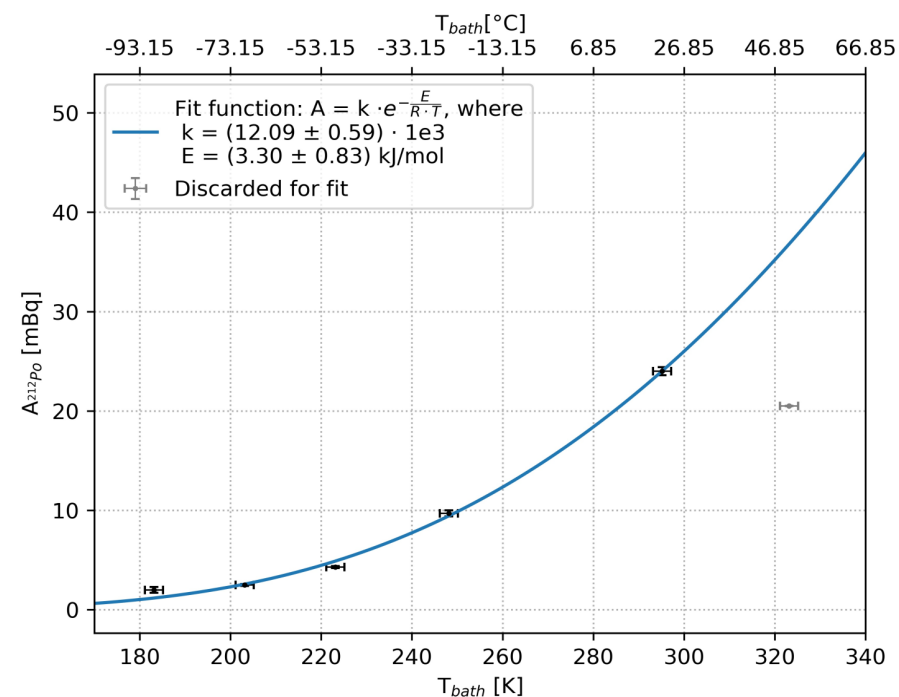
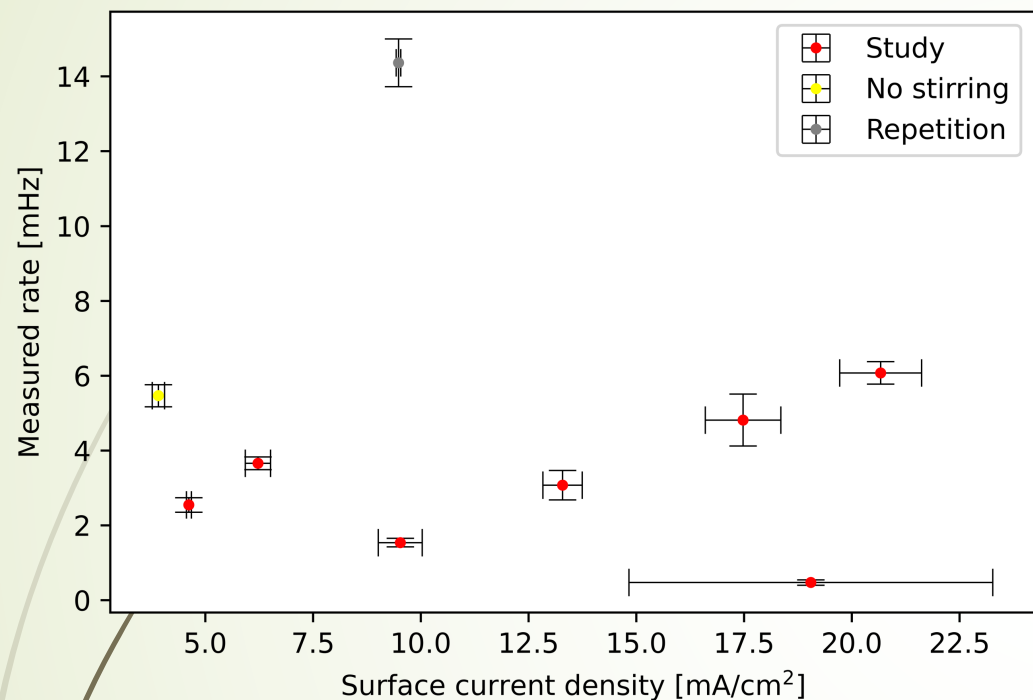
- Little  $^{220}\text{Rn}$  reduction and essentially no  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  reduction
- Best result for „hot“ plasma deposition, but re-evaporation due to hot substrate

# Thornton structure zone model:



- Sputtering is low temperature process
- Growth of vertically aligned grain boundaries
- May block reactive gases (corrosion protection), but „diffusion highway“ for noble gases.
- Focus on high temperature applications (plasma coating) or non vacuum-growth technique.
- But what about CVD?

# Optimization of Cu coating procedure and $^{220}\text{Rn}$ reduction results

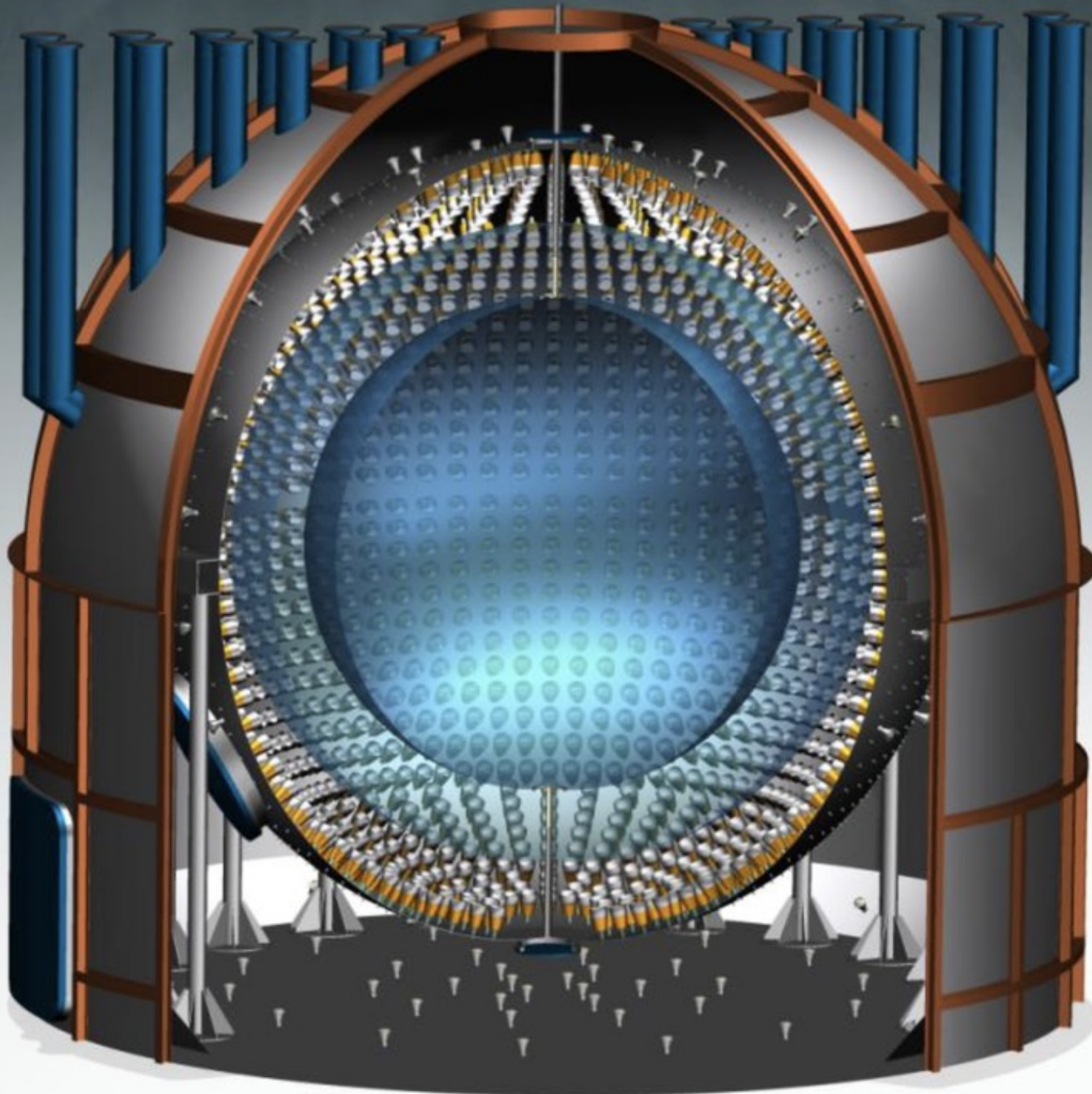


- Optimum surface current density identified.
- Avoid whisker growing by careful parameter control.
- Diffusion-driven emanation confirmed by tests at different temperatures.
- Even hints for slight  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  reduction.



# Radon – Some properties

- Noble gas.
- Heaviest existing gas → not **so** noble.
- No stable isotopes → All radon is radioactive.
- Part of natural (primordial) radioactivity.
- Short-lived:  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  (3.82 days) by far the longest living, rest much shorter
- Followed by a chain of radioactive heavy metals ( $\alpha$ -,  $\beta$ - and  $\gamma$ -emitters)



© A. Brigatti  
R. Lombardi

# BOREXINO

- Liquid target
  - „easy“ to purify
  - Repeated purification possible
- Minimization of vessel material (nylon balloons)
- Minimization of seals
- Thorough  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  screening campaign (complementing bulk impurity screening program)
- Thermal stability → No convection → Inner „fiducial“ volume remains clean!

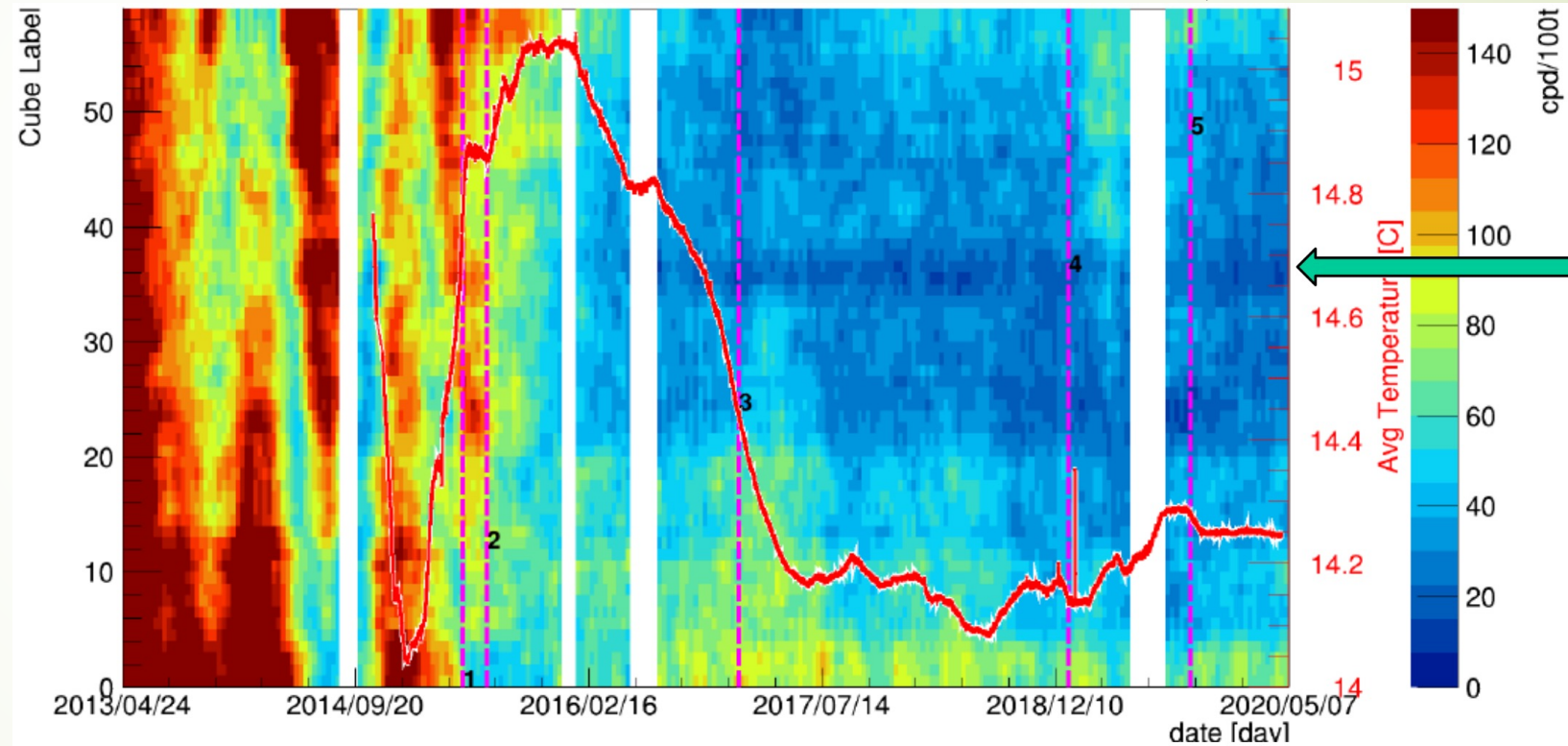


# BOREXINO: Thermal stabilization



H. Simgen, CPPM seminar

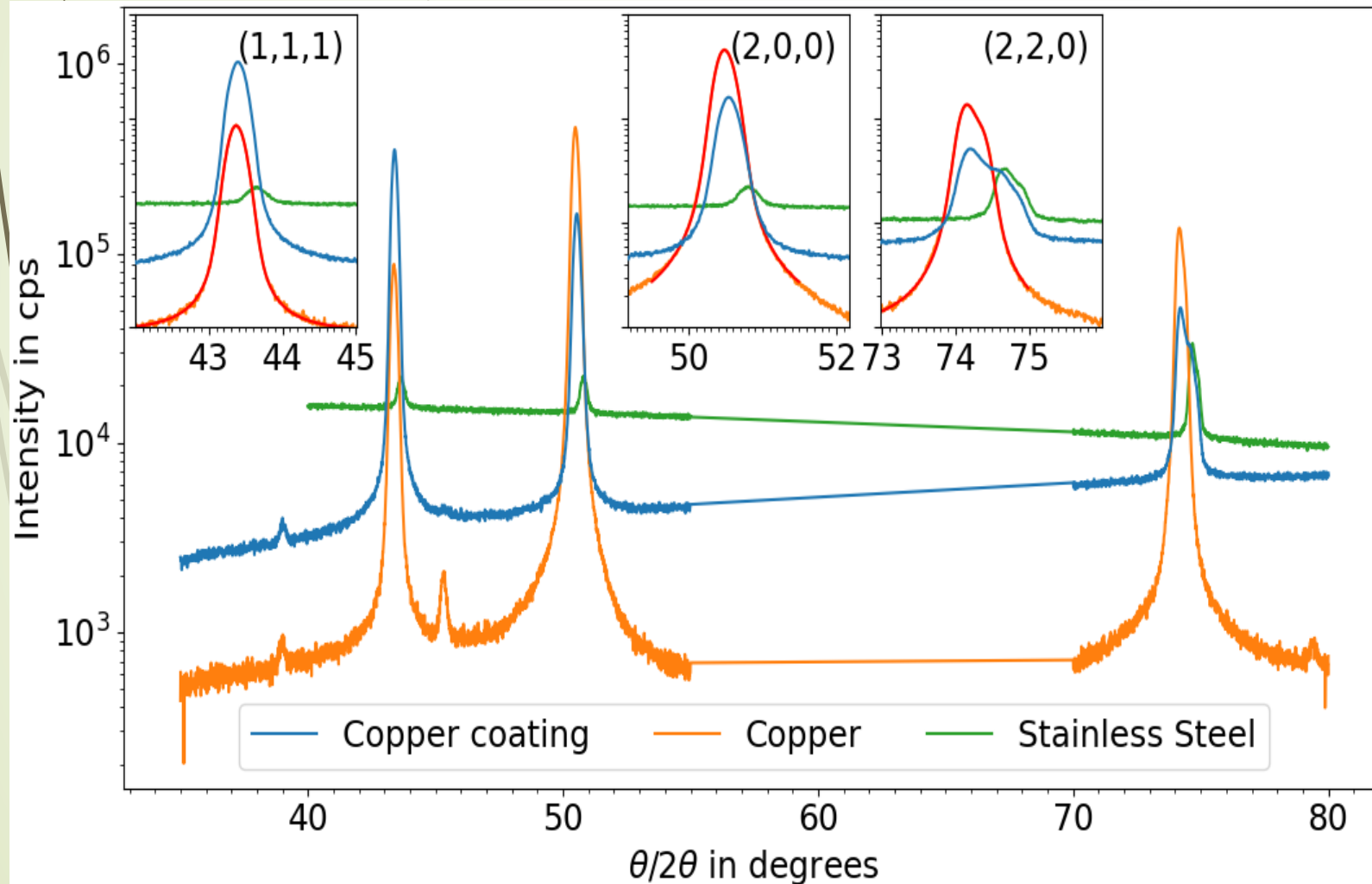
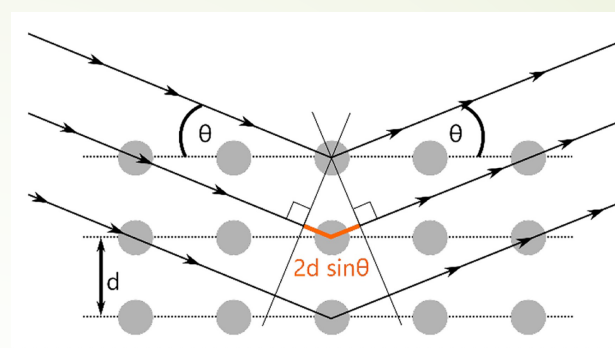
G. Ranucci, Neutrino 2020



- Switch off convection to achieve ultimate purity!



# X-ray diffraction



- Very preliminary study
- Done at Heidelberg University (IMSEAM: Institute for molecular systems engineering and advanced materials)
- Basic features as expected, but some unexplained effects:
  - Amplitude ratios doesn't always match expectation (directionality in lattice?)
  - Peak positions slightly shifted (material stress?)
  - Not understood low intensity peaks