mesago

6 – 8.5.2025 NUREMBERG, GERMANY

Challenges of Green Growth - Limited Energy Return on Energy Invested & Critical Raw Material Shortage

Johann W. Kolar Professor emeritus ETH Zurich

Messe Frankfurt Group





Challenges of «Green Growth»

Limited EROEI / Critical Raw Materials Shortage / Geopolitics / Economics / etc.



Johann W. Kolar et al. Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) Zurich Advanced Mechatronic Systems Group

www.ams.ee.ethz.ch

May 8, 2025







Challenges of «Green Growth» Limited EROEI / Critical Raw Materials Shortage / Geopolitics / Economics / etc.

Johann W. Kolar | Jonas Huber* | Uwe Drofenik* *Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) Zurich

⁺TU Wien / Power Electronics Research Group

May 8, 2025





Outline

Introduction



Net-Zero CO₂ by 2XXX
 Renewables & Storage
 Hard-to-Abate Sectors
 Raw Material Constraints
 The «Net Energy Cliff»
 Power Electronics 5.0

Conclusions



L. Imperiali

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft Confédération suisse Confederazione Svizzera Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Federal Office of Energy SFOE



Acknowledgement





The Challenge

Still Increasing Use of Fossil Fuels Increasing CO₂ Emissions / Global Warming Net-Zero by 2XXX / \$\$\$\$

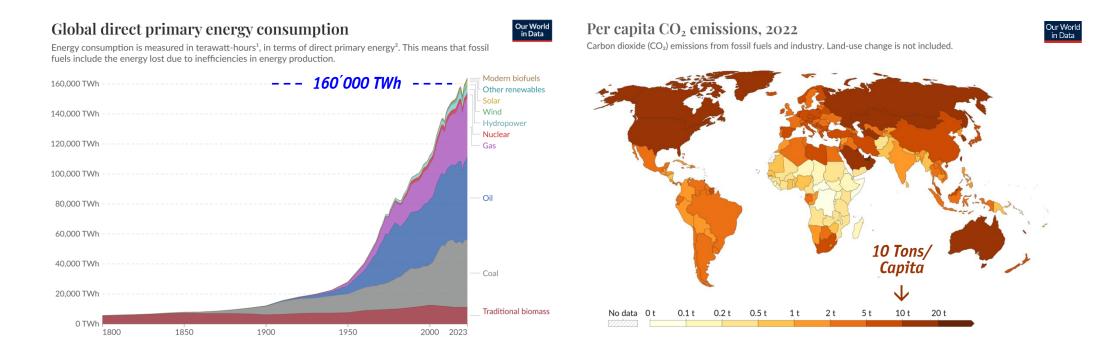






Industrial Revolution 1 – 4

- Technological / Economic Advances Linked to Exponential Increase of Fossil Fuel Consumption
- **Continuous "Energy Addition"** Adoption of Larger Share of Higher Energy Density Fuels Wood \rightarrow Coal \rightarrow Oil & Gas



2024 % of Global CO₂ Emissions / % Global Population — China 32%/18% | USA 13%/4% | India 8%/18% Poorest Countries Contributed Least to Historic CO₂ Emissions/Climate Change BUT Are Most Vulnerable to Impacts





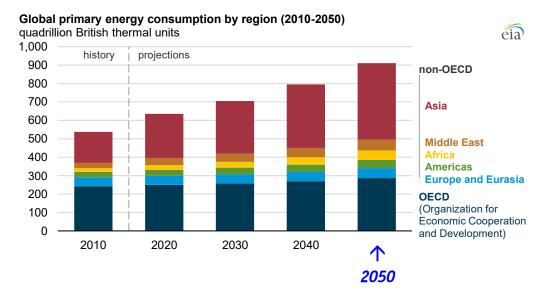
Growth of Population & Energy Demand

- Growth of World Population / Increasing Energy Use in Developing Non-OECD Countries 1980 4.4 Billion | \approx 10 TW.yr \rightarrow 2022 \approx 8 Billion | 20.4 TW.yr \rightarrow \approx 2.6 kW Continuous/Capita



Global population size: estimates for 1700-2022 and

projections for 2022-2100



Direct Relation of Energy Use & GDP/Capita — There are No Low-Energy Intensity Rich Countries (!) Lower Energy Intensity (Energy per Unit of GDP) Pot. Resulting from Offshoring Energy-Intense Manufacturing





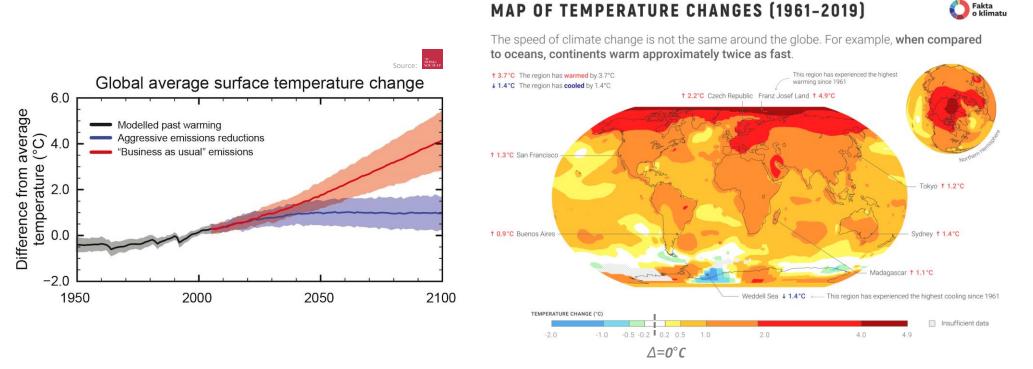
Source: United Nations, DESA, Population Division (2022). World Population Prospects 2022.



Fakta o klimatu

Global Warming

- Combustion of Fossil Fuels Increasing Atmospheric CO₂ Concentration / +50% Since Industrial Revolution
 Gradual Increase of Tropospheric Temperature of ≈ +1°C since 1960



- **Different Warming Rates for Different Locations / Land is Warming Faster than Oceans (+0.8°C)**
- Due to Climate System Feedback Loops Arctic Ocean Shows Highest Warming / +4°C since 1960 (!)

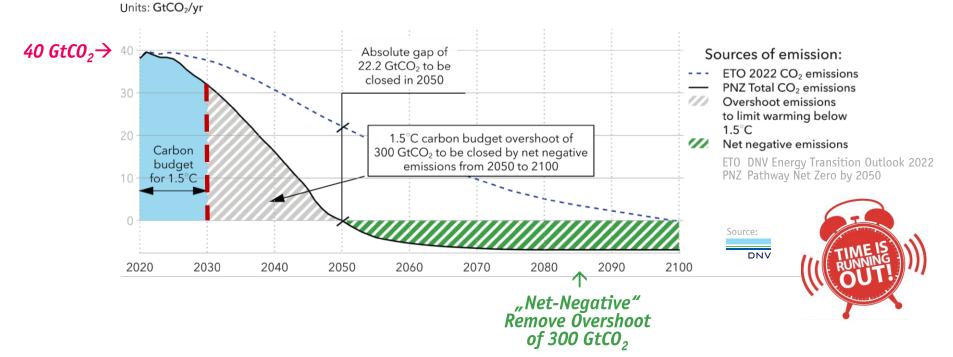






Decarbonization / Defossilization

"Net-Zero" Emissions by 2050 & Gap to be Closed 50 GtCO_{2eq} Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions / Year → 280 GtCO₂ Budget Left for +1.5°C Limit



Challenge of Stepping Back from Oil & Gas





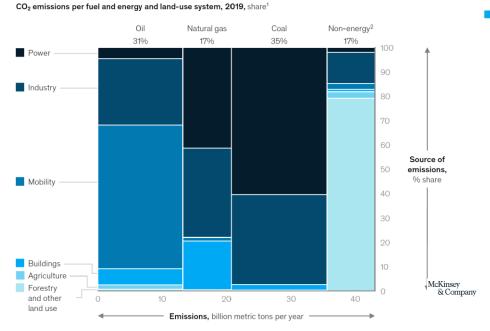


Energy Transition Costs

- ≈ 9 Trillion USD Annual Spend on Physical Assets for Energy & Land-Use Systems in NGFS NZ 2050 Scenario
 Power | Industry | Mobility | Buildings | Agriculture | Forestry | Etc.

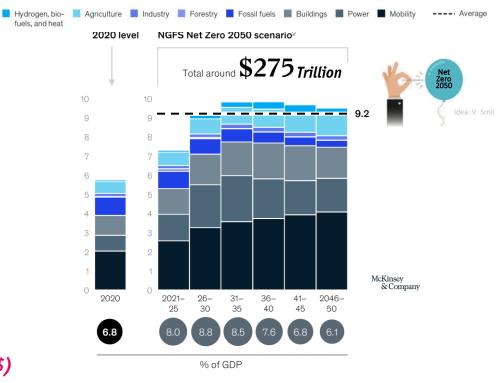
NGFS — Network for Greening the Financial System, 114 Central Banks, 2017

pcim



Energy use accounts for 83 percent of the CO_2 emitted across energy and land-use systems.

Annual spend on physical assets for energy and land-use systems,¹ \$ trillion per year



■ Total Cost of U.S. "Moonshot" ≈300 Billion USD (in 2020 \$)





Utilizing Renewable Energy

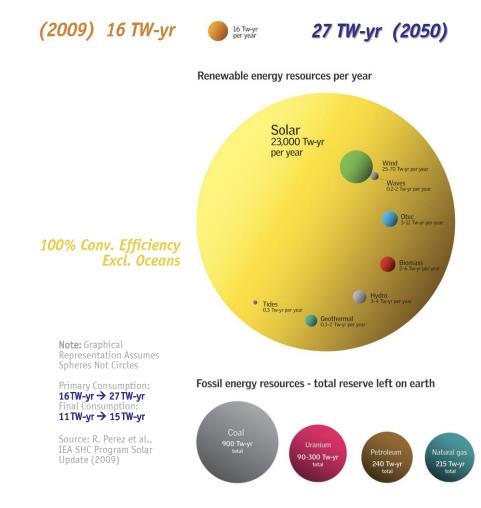
Renewable Energy Sources Long-Distance Transmission Short & Long-Term Storage



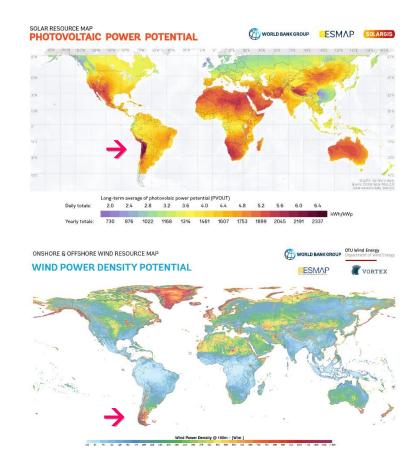




The Opportunity



Global Distribution of Solar & Wind Resources

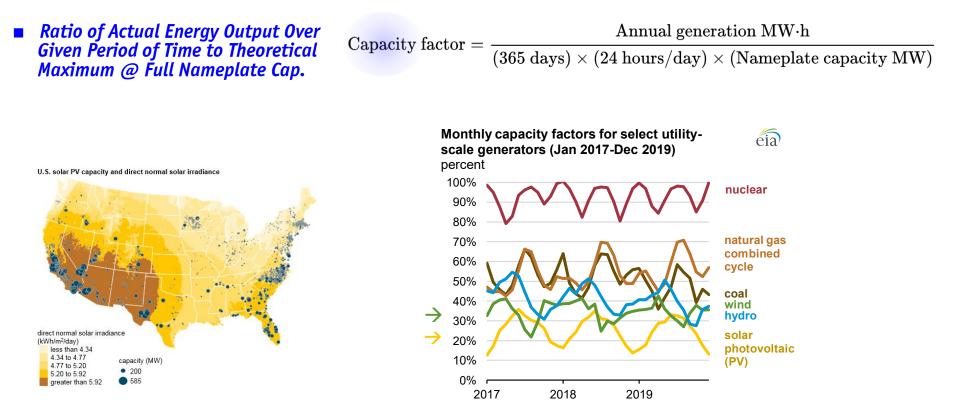








Challenge #1 – Low PV/Wind Capacity Factors



Capacity Factor of Renewables Dependent on Geogr. Location & Day/Night & Summer/Winter & Transm. Capacity

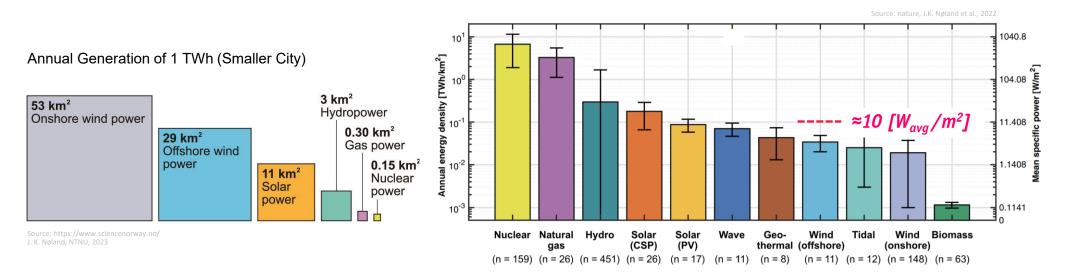
■ PV & Wind Partly Complementary — Typ. Annual Avg. ≈30% for U.S. Wind | ≈20% for U.S. Solar (12% in Germany)





Challenge #2 – Low PV/Wind Areal Energy Density

- Energy Density Determined by Power Density | Intermittency &/or Capacity Factor | Buffer Zones | Storage | etc.
 Land Footprint of Renewable Energy Sources Massively Larger Compared to Fossil Fuel / Nuclear Power Plants
- Land Footprint of Renewable Energy Sources Massively Larger Compared to Fossil Fuel / Nuclear Power Plant



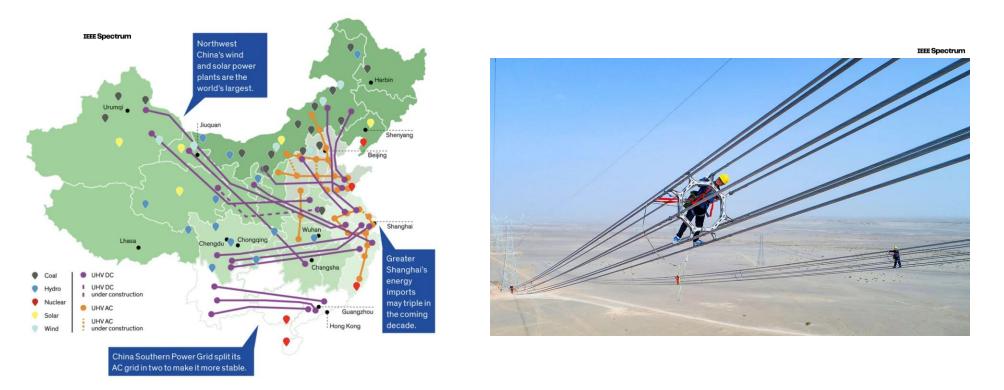
Low Energy Density of RES — Large Land Use / Collection Grid / Long Distance Transmission for Powering Load Centers
 ≈1.7 10⁵ TWh of World's Annual Energy Consumption (2023) — PV @ ≈0.09 TWh/km² → 1.9 10⁶ km² ≈ Algeria





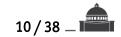
Challenge #3 — Long Distance Transmission

- Growth of Transmission in Line w/ Growth of Electricity Generation Capacity | 10 TW → ≈10 Million km HV Lines
 U-HVDC Transmission Lines Connecting Megacities to Remote Wind & Coal-Fired Power Plants / Solar Farms etc.



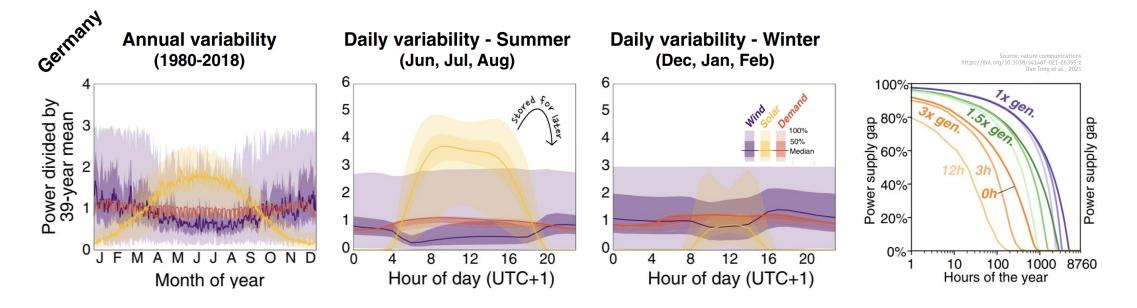
30'000 km U-HVDC Links Built Over Last Decade in China / Emerging Nationwide Super-Grid Interconn. Reg. Grids





Challenge #4 – Storage Requirements 1/3

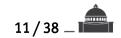
- Variability of Renewables & "Dunkelflaute" Batt. Storage | HVDC-Links | Sector Coupling | Gas/Coal/Hydro Plants
- World's Largest Battery Storage / Pumped Hydro Storage 3.3 GWh @ 0.875 GW / 40 GWh @ 3.6 GW



- Considerable Overdesign of Optimal PV & Wind & 12 Hours Storage Still Leaves Considerable Power Supply Gap (Germany)
- Islanded Megacity \rightarrow Power Supply of 10 Million People x 2.6 kW x 1 Hour = 26 GWh \rightarrow 86 000 Tons of 300 Wh/kg Batteries



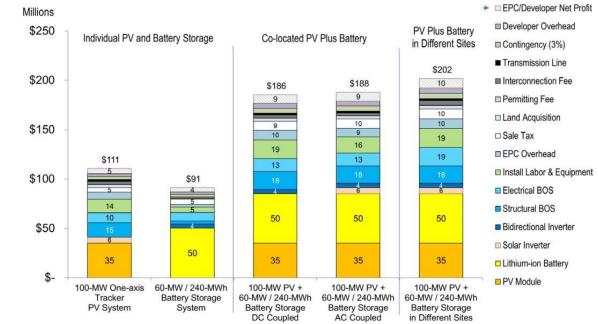




Challenge #4 – Storage Requirements 2/3

■ U.S. Cost Benchmarks for Utility-Scale PV-Plus-Storage Systems (4 Hours) / DC-Coupled or AC-Coupled





Comparison of PV & Fossil Fuel Power Gen. Must be Based on "LCOE" (Panels/Inverter/Cap. Factor/ Storage/Transmission etc.)

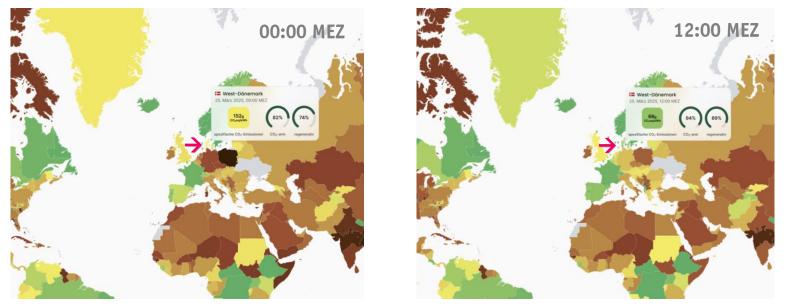






Challenge #4 – Storage Requirements 3/3

- Ensure Reliable Supply @ High Share of Intermittent RES Power Balance on Different Time Scales
 Accurate Forecast / Local Storage / HVDC Interconnectors to Neighboring Countries / Sector Coupling



- Opt. Use of Cross-Energy Sector Flexibility Coupling of El. Power / Heating / Nat. Gas or H_2 or Methane Direct or Indir. Storage Grid Conn. Batteries / CHP & Heat Storage / $H_2 \rightarrow$ Methane Long Term Gas Store

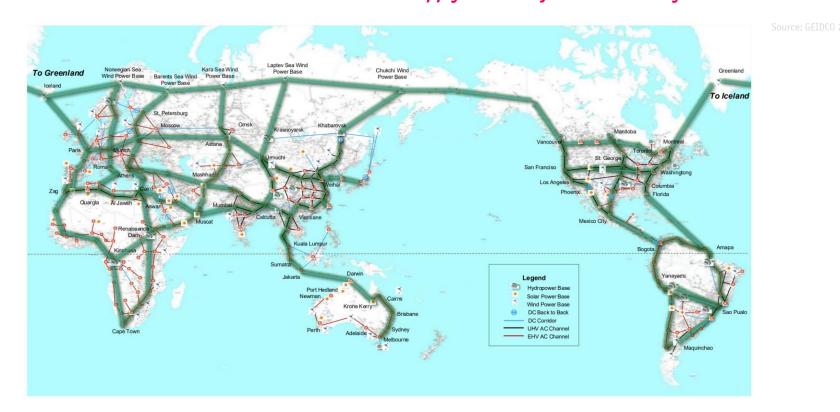






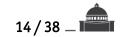
Remark The Global Grid

"Super/Mega/Overlay Grid"- Concepts Proposed since 1950s — GENESIS (1994), DESERTEC (2003), etc.
 U-HVDC Trans-Continental or Multi-National Supply & Trade of Clean Electricity



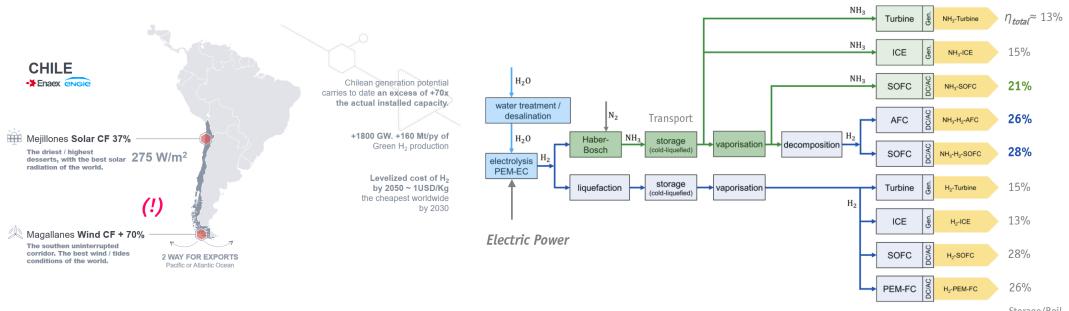
Example of the "Global Energy Interconnection Backbone Grid" (GEIDCO) Proposed by China in 2015





Remark Power-to-X-to-Power

- Hydrogen Economy H₂ Produced & Used Directly or in Synthesis w/ Nitrogen or Carbon (Ammonia, Methanol, etc.)
- **Prod.** @ High RES Intensity Locations NH₃ Transp. by Ships Use for Long-Term Storage & Hard-to-Abate Sectors



Storage/Boil-Off-Losses Not Considered

pcim

- Hydrogen Hype A Story of Energy Loss (?) / Direct Use of Electricity Clearly Superior if Possible (!)
 Low-Efficiency Processes 60% Electrolysis / 70% Liquefying Hydrogen / 60% Fuel Cells / etc.



Multi-Carrier Energy System

*Electricity / Heat / H*₂ / *E-Fuels / CO*₂ *Infrastructure Aviation etc. / Green Steel / Cement / Chemicals*

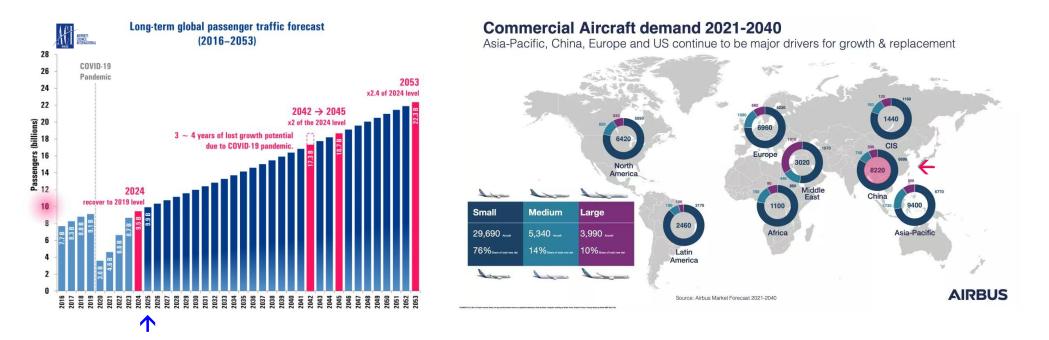






Hard-to-Abate Sector #1 – Aviation

2.5% of Global CO₂ Emissions / ≈1.2 Billion Liters of Aviation Fuel/Day in 2024 / ≈35% SAF by 2050
 30′000 New Commercial Aircraft & Freighters in 2021-2040 incl. Replacements — 4.8 Trillion USD



Growing Air Travel Demand Driven by Growing Middle-Class & Desire to Explore / Connect Globally

E-Commerce Drives ≈5%/Annum Growth in the Freight Sector — 200 Million Tons of Global Air Cargo







Hard-to-Abate Sector #2 – Shipping

2.8% of Global CO₂ Emissions / ≈85% of World Trade Carried by Sea / 12.3 Billion Tons / 100´000 Vessels IMO Strategy on NZ Shipping around 2050 incl. Green H₂ & Derivatives (E-Ethanol, E-Ammonia)

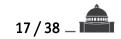


Ultra-Large Container Vessels (ULCVs) — 20'000 Twenty Foot Containers / 15'000 Liters of Heavy Fuel Oil per Hour

80 MW @120 rpm / 2´300 Tons Largest Diesel Engine Used in ULCVs

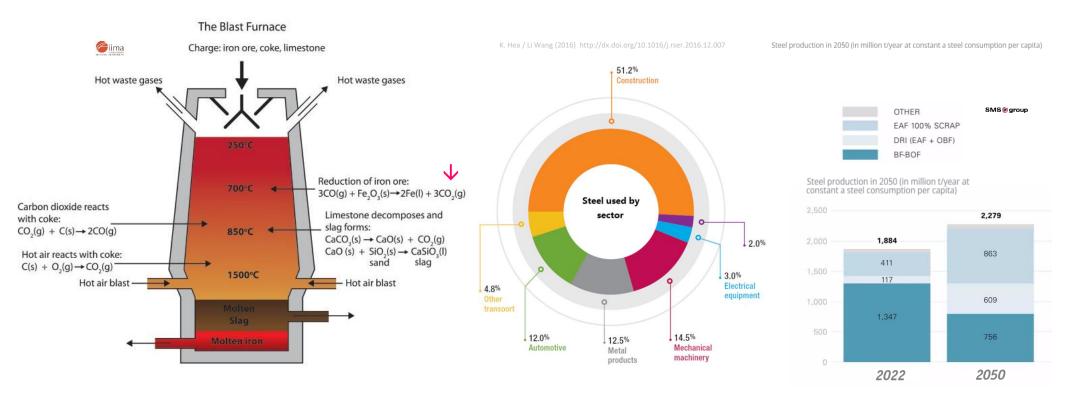






Hard-to-Abate Sector #3 – Iron & Steel

- Crude Iron Production in Blast Furnaces Reliant on Coal/Coke as Reducing Agent to Extract Iron from Ore/Fe₂O₃
 Basic Oxygen Converter Turns Crude Iron into Easily Formable Steel / Electric Arc Furnaces Recycle Steel Scrap



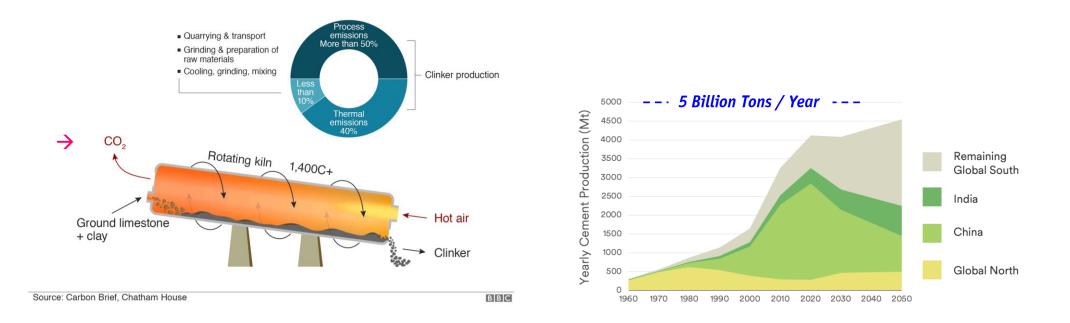
- Steel Production Responsible for ≈8% of All Global Direct Emissions From Fossil Fuels
- Global Steel Demand Expected to Increase from ≈1.9 Billion Tons/a in 2021 to Over ≈2.3 Billion Tons/a by 2050





Hard-to-Abate Sector #4 – Cement

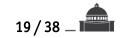
Cement — Key Ingredient in Concrete / Chemical Process & High Heat / 8% of Global CO₂ Emissions
 Concrete is the Most-Consumed Human-Made Material on Earth / Buildings & Infrastructure etc.



China & India Account for Around 50% of Global Cement Production
 Intensity of Cement Use Declines After Initially Rising w/ Increasing GDP/ Capita

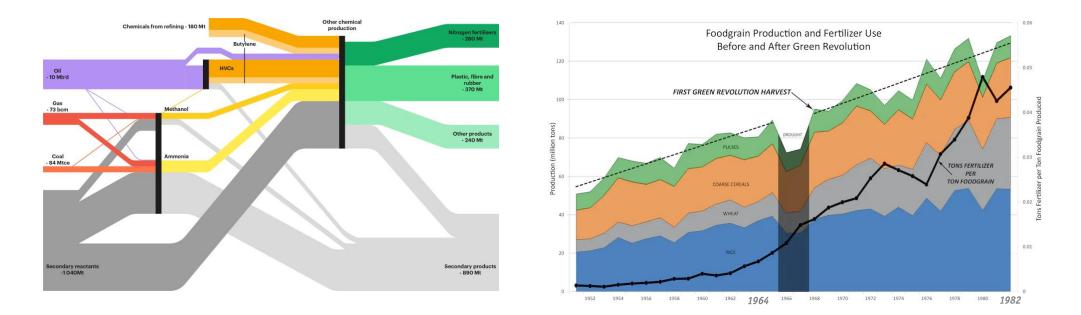






Hard-to-Abate Sector #5 – Chemicals

- 11%/8% Global Oil/Gas Used for Production of Chemicals Fertilizers, Pharmaceutics, Plastics etc.
- 50+% of Energy Input as "Feedstock" Finally Embedded in Products (Globally ≈1 Mio PET Bottles Sold/Minute)



Green Revolution" in Mid-20th Century — Higher Yield Due to Use of Fertilizers & Pesticides & Mechanization

Chemical Sector — Largest Industrial Energy Consumer / 3rd Largest CO₂ Emissions after Steels & Cement

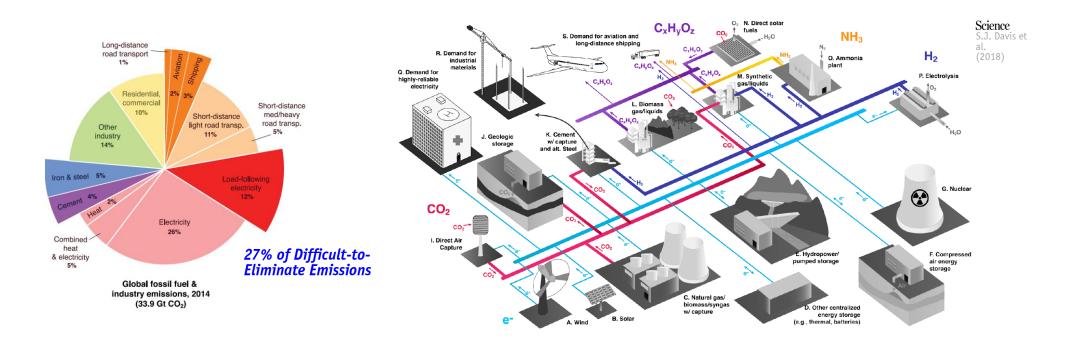






Multi-Carrier Energy Society

- CO₂-Free Electricity / Electrification Viable Pathway for Reducing Emissions !&! Costs (Long Term)
- **E**-Fuels & P2X for Long-Haul Transport / Aviation / etc. & Short Term / Seasonal Storage



- Integrated Net-Zero Multi-Carrier Energy System E-Energy | Heat & Cold | etc. | Storage | CO₂C&S
- Missing Multi-Discipl. Research on Cross-Sector Converters / Technologies / Geogr. Diversity / Economics etc.



Critical Raw Materials

"Blind Spot" of Clean Transition Requirements & Geopolitical Dependencies Mining Constraints







"Peak Minerals/Metals" of Net-Zero Scenario 1/2

- Minerals/Metals-Intensive Clean Energy Transition will Potentially Face Supply Deficits
- USD 2.1 Trillion Investment to Meet Net-Zero 2050 Demand / 6.5 Billion Tons of End-Use Materials

BloombergNEF

Figure 1: Market balances for energy transition metals under BNEF's Economic Transition Scenario and Net Zero Scenario – expected supply surplus and supply deficits

Metal	Scenario	2024-2030	2031-2040	2041-2050
Steel	ETS	2024		
	NZS	2024		
Aluminum	ETS	2024		
	NZS	2024		
Copper	ETS	2024		
	NZS	2024		
Lithium	ETS	2025		
	NZS	2025		
Graphite	ETS	2028		
	NZS	2026		
Nickel	ETS		2030	
	NZS	2028		
Cobalt	ETS			2050
	NZS		2034	
Manganese	ETS			
	NZS			

²⁰²⁴

- Primary copper demand scenarios versus mine supply potential Wood Mackenzie AET-2 — 2°C Acc. Energy Transition Scenario Other possible 50 Lower risk possible Off radar projects 45 Probable Projects 40 Base Case capability —Primary Demand 35 -AET-2 Demand ₫ 30 25 20 15 10 2020 2022 2024 2028 2032 2026 2030 2034 2036 2038 2040
- **50** New Lithium / 60 Nickel / 17 Cobalt Mines Required to Meet 2030 EV Battery Demand

2050

Source: Wood Mackenzie

Development of a New Mine Takes 5...15 Years / x100 Million USD (!) - "Valley of Death"



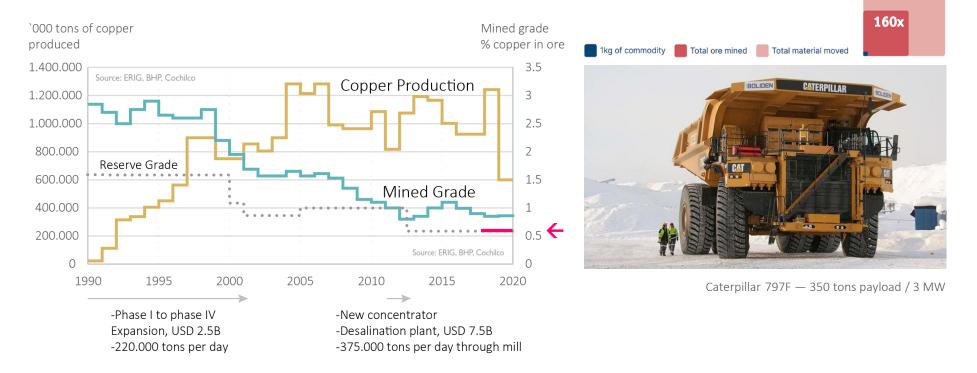




510>

"Peak Minerals/Metals" of Net-Zero Scenario 2/2

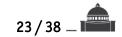
- Declining Ore Body Grades Require Ever-Increasing Tonnage to be Moved & Processed
- Higher Production Costs / Declining Amount of Economically Extractable Mineral



Higher Diesel Consumption of Truck/Shovel Fleet | Higher Energy Effort for Grinding/Extraction per Unit Metal

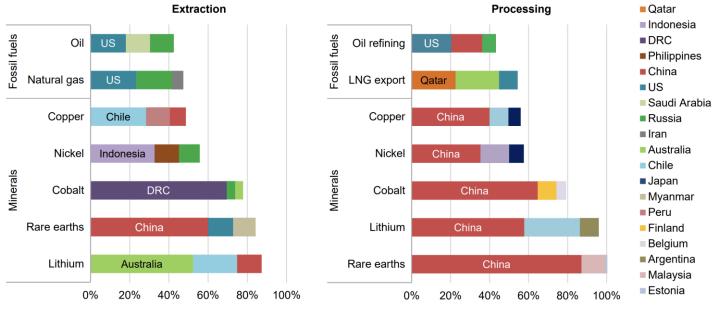






Remark Critical Mineral Dependencies

Production of Selected Minerals Critical for the Clean Energy Transition



Shares of top three producing countries, 2019

Extraction & Processing More Geographically Concentrated than for Oil & Nat. Gas (!)







The "Net Energy Cliff"

Energy Return of Energy Invested — Fossil Fuels vs. Renewables

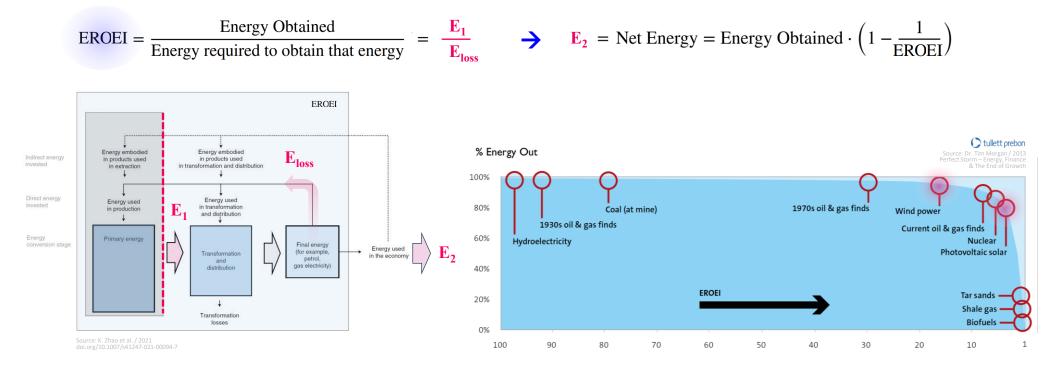






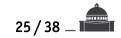
Energy Return on Energy Invested (EROEI)

- **Energy Supply Must Provide Sufficient Energy Surplus after Accounting for Own Energy Requirements**
- Energy Invested for Production / Transformation / Transportation



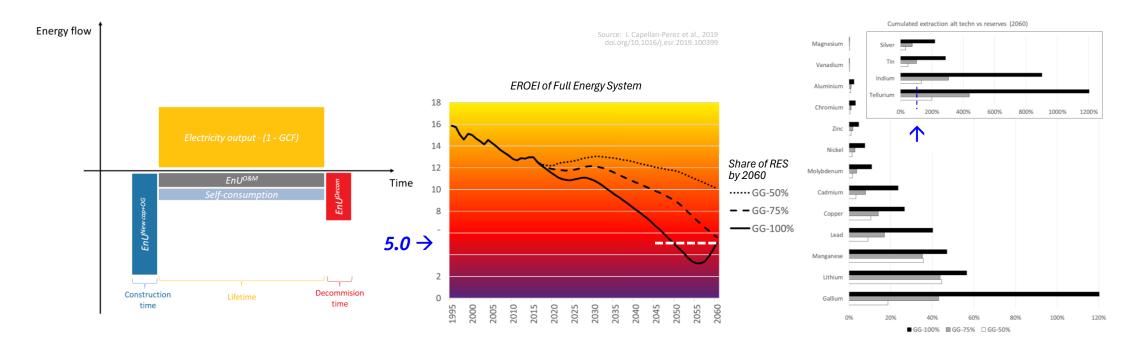
- "Pyramids of Energy Needs" Higher EROEI Values Enable Medical Care/Education/Technology Innovation/Art etc.
- The "Net Energy Čliff" Indicates the Minimum EROEI = 5...10 Required to Maintain a Complex Industrial Society





Falling-Off the "Net Energy Cliff" (?)

- Analysis of Energy & Material Investments for Global Transition from Fossil Fuels to RES in Electricity Sector Transition to 100% RES by 2060 Could Decrease EROEI from 12:1 to 3:1 by 2050 / Stabilizing @ 5:1



- Resulting EROEI Level Potentially Below Threshold Required to Sustain Complex Industrial Society
- **Transition Could Drive Substantial Re-Materialization of the Economy / Deplete Critical Mineral Resources**





Advanced Mechatronic Systems Group

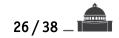


Power Electronics 4.0

"Do-More-With-Less"

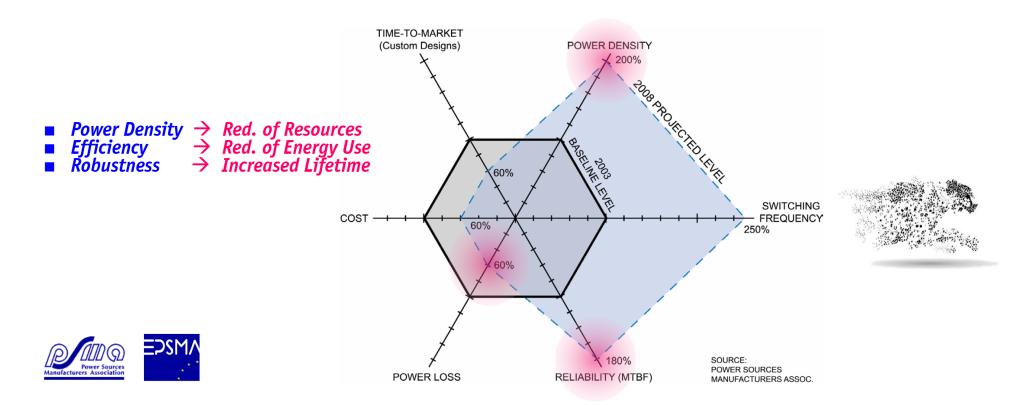






Power Electronics 4.0 — "Reduce-to-the-Max"

Today's Power Electronics Innovation Inherently Contributes to Lower Environmental Impact

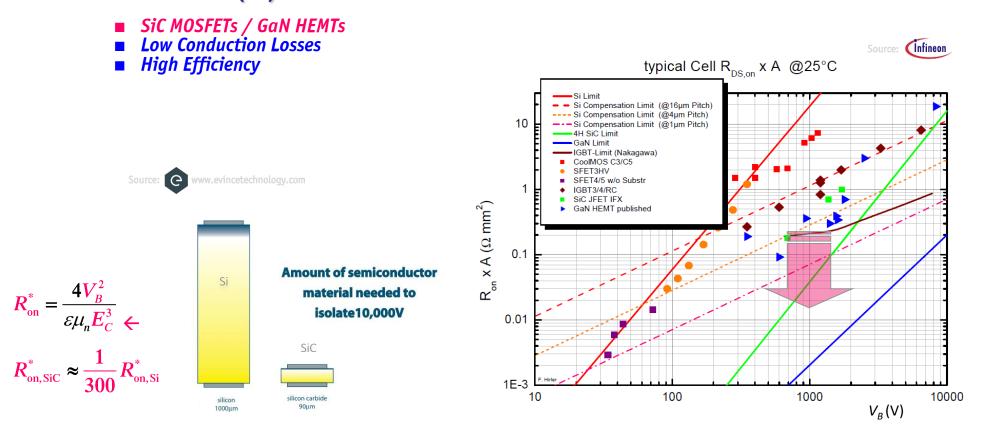


• New Set of Key Performance Indicators Mandatory to Meet Future Environmental Compatibility Objectives





Low R^{*}_{DS(on)} High-Voltage Devices



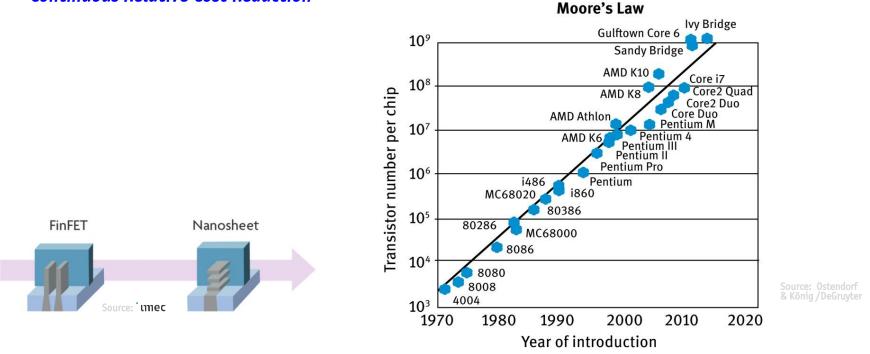
High Voltage Unipolar (!) Devices \rightarrow Excellent Switching Performance / High Power Density





Digital Signal / Data Processing

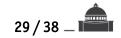
- Exponentially Improving uC / Storage Technology (!)
- Extreme Levels of Density (nm-Nodes) / Processing Speed
- Continuous Relative Cost Reduction



Fully Digital Control / Distributed Intelligence — "Complexity Management"
 AI-Based Design / Digital Twins / Industrial IoT (IIoT)

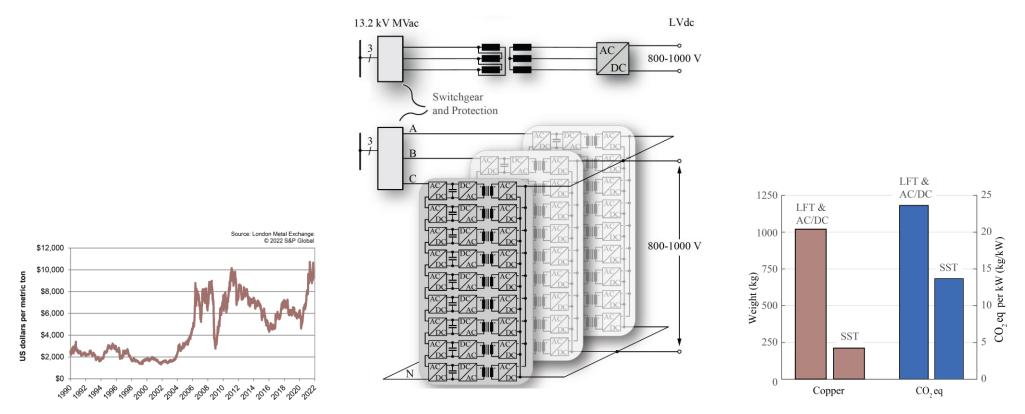






Remark Solid-State Transformers

- 3-Φ AC/DC SST 1.2MW Fully-Modular Solid-State-Transformers (SST) w/ HF-Isol. Stages Comparative Evaluation w/ Conventional Realization 50Hz Transformer (LFT) & Low-Voltage AC/DC Converter



Lower Raw Material Effort / Lower Impact of Increasing Raw Material Costs & Lower Carbon Footprint







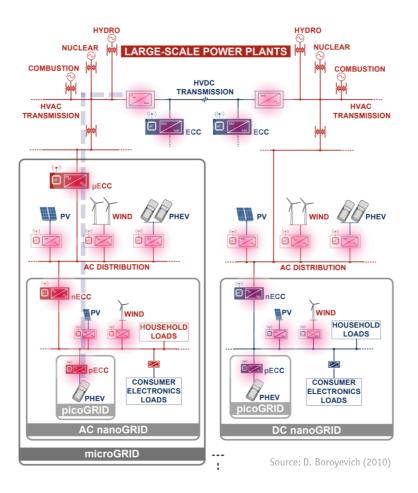
Power Electronics 5.0

"Zero-Waste" Paradigm _____

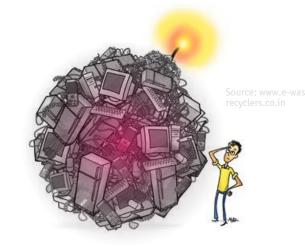








- Global Population by 2050 10bn 100 2.5 kW/Capita
 25'000 GW Installed Ren. Generation in 2050
- 4x Power Electr. Conversion btw Generation & Load
- **100'000 GW** of Installed Converter Power
- **20 Years of Useful Life**



5'000 GW_{eq} = 5'000'000'000 kW_{eq} of E-Waste / Year (!)
 10'000'000'000 \$ of Potential Value



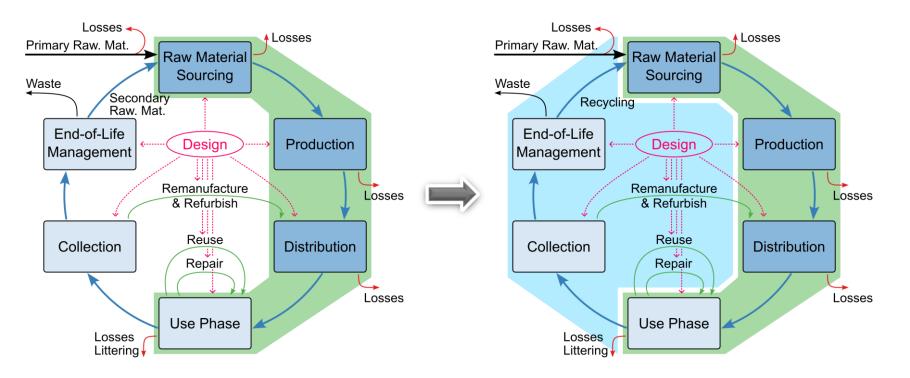


30/38_



Power Electronics 5.0 — "Closing the Loop"

Infinite Consumption form a Finite Resource Base is Impossible (!) 80% of Environmental Impact of Products Locked-In @ Design Stage



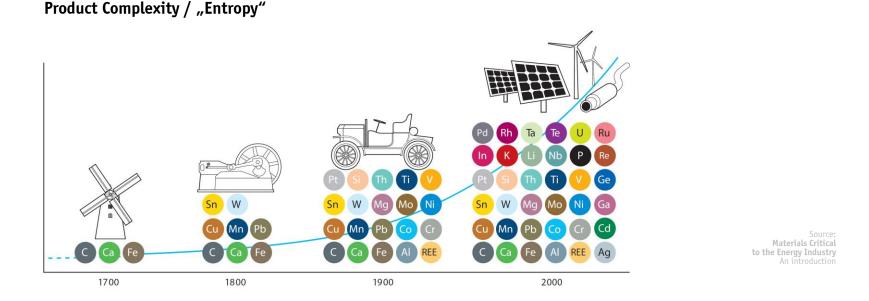
"4R" Included Into the Design Process — Repair | Reuse | Refurbish | Recycle "Life-Cycle Cost Perspective" — Potentially Advantageous for Suppliers & Customers





Remark The Complexity Challenge

Technological Innovation — Increasing Level of Complexity & Diversity of Modern Materials / Products
 Exponentially Accelerating Technological Advancement (R. Kurzweil)

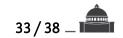


More than 60 Metallic Elements Involved in Pathways for Substitution of Conv. Energy Systems

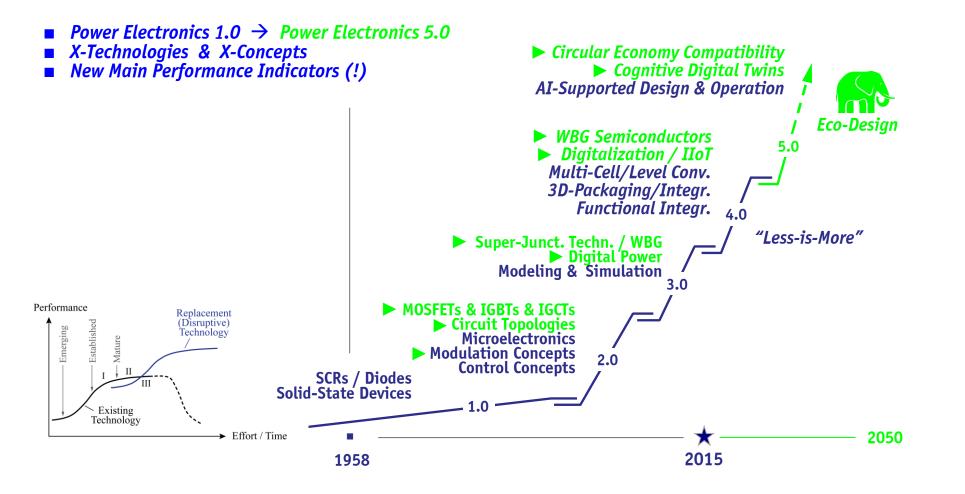
Ultra-Compact Systems / Functional Integration — Main Obstacles for EOL Material Separation (!)







Power Electronics 5.0

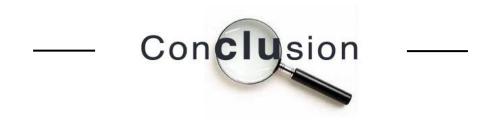






Advanced Mechatronic Systems Group





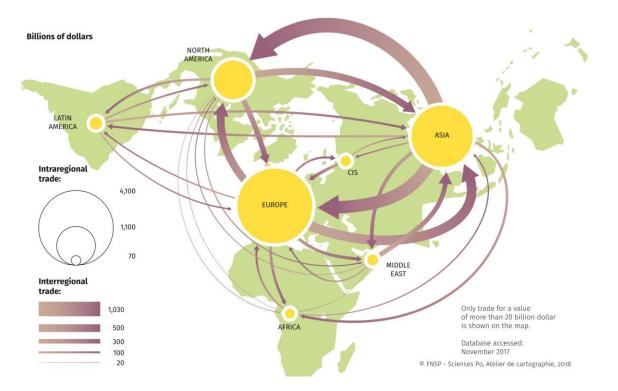






Economic Challenges of NZ by 2050

- Globalization / Global Trade Complex Couplings / Interdependencies of Main Economies No Immediate Reward BUT Massive Costs / Political Challenges of NZ-by-2050 Trajectories



Environmental Impact Aggregates Over Time — No Serious \$\$\$-Consequences / "Tragedy of Commons"
 "Prisoner's Dilemma" — Why Take Action If You Can't Be Sure Other Countries Will Act As Well?







Remark The NZ-by-2050 "Marshmallow Test"

- "You Can Have One Marshmallow Now, OR, If You Wait, You Can Have Two" (!)
- Experiment Measuring Children's Ability to Self-Control / Delay Gratification (W. Mischel / Stanford / 1960s)



- "You Can Have One Marshmallow Now, OR, If You Wait, Others Will Take It" (!)
 "Instant-Effortless-Everything"- Society Might Face Serious Challenges Passing the NZ-by-2050 Marshmallow Test





Develop a Global "Clean Energy Moonshot Spirit"

• Aim for a Net-Zero/Environmentally-Neutral Integrated Multi-Carrier Energy System

Full "Circularity" (Closed Carbon Cycle & Raw Materials Cycle, etc.) / Sustainability / etc.



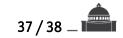
"We choose to go to the Moon *in this decade, ..., because* that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our engineers and skills – because that challenge is one we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one we intend to win!"

- Power Electronics Engineers are the Rocket Scientists of the 2020's (!) "Transformational Industrial Clusters" (El. Energy, Chemistry, Microbiology, etc.) & "First Mover Coalitions"



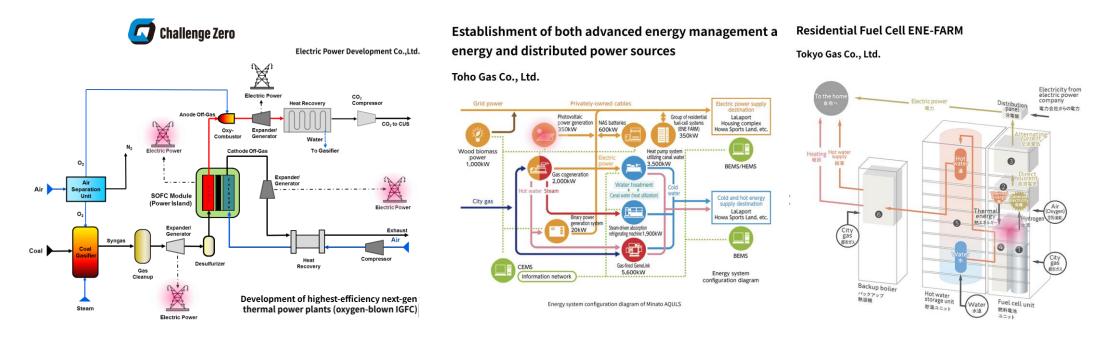


36/38_1



Challenge Zero & "Green Growth" Strategy Japan

"Challenge Zero" — A New Action by Japanese Industry in the Field of Climate Change (2020)
 200 Members / 400 Projects on Zero Emission & Transition Technologies



Very Wide Range of Topics — WBG Power Semiconductors / Power-to-Chemicals / Red.-CO₂ Steel etc.
 "Green Growth" Strategy — 14 Focus Areas Announced (2021) – Asia Zero Emission Community (2023)

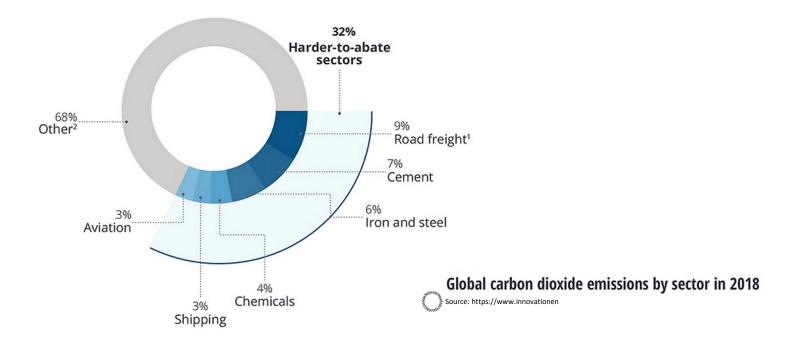




Power Electronics for New / "Hard-to-Abate" Sectors

Sometimes Named "Horseman of the Climate Apocalypse" — 30 Trillion USD to Achieve NZ by 2050

Collectively Responsible for ≈30% of World's CO₂ Emissions (Cement, Steel, Chemicals, Aviation etc.)



Highly Interdisciplinary BUT Fascinating Opportunities for Future Power Electronics Applications (!)

High-Eff./High-Dyn. Chemistry — Plasma Techn., Microwave Reactors, Pulsed Power, Cryog. Power Electr., etc.





pcim

mesago

6 – 8.5.2025 NUREMBERG, GERMANY

Thank you for the attention!

I'm pleased to answer your questions. kolar@lem.ee.ethz.ch

Messe Frankfurt Group