

Environmental Compatibility – A New Key Performance Indicator of Multi-Objective Power Electronics Design

Jonas Huber and Johann W. Kolar

Power Electronic Systems Laboratory
ETH Zurich, Switzerland

June 27, 2024



Environmental Compatibility – A New Key Performance Indicator of Multi-Objective Power Electronics Design

Jonas Huber, Johann W. Kolar, Luc Imperiali, and David Menzi

Power Electronic Systems Laboratory
ETH Zurich, Switzerland

June 27, 2024





Outline

- Decarbonization
- The Elephant in the Room
- **Multi-Objective Optimization**
- Circular Economy Compatibility

Acknowledgment:

Franz Musil, Fronius International GmbH

The U.N. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

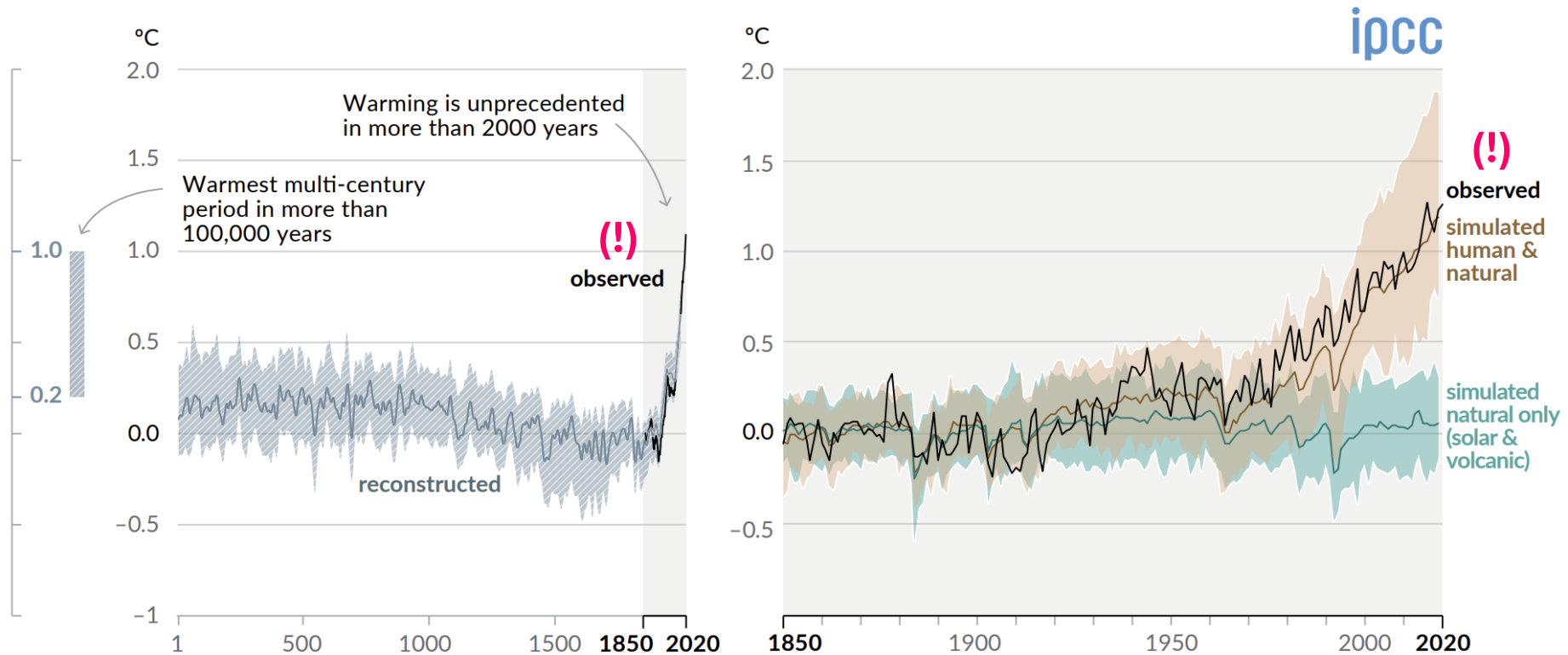


Source: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment>

■ #7 – “Affordable and clean energy” / #12 – “Responsible consumption and production” / ...

The Challenge

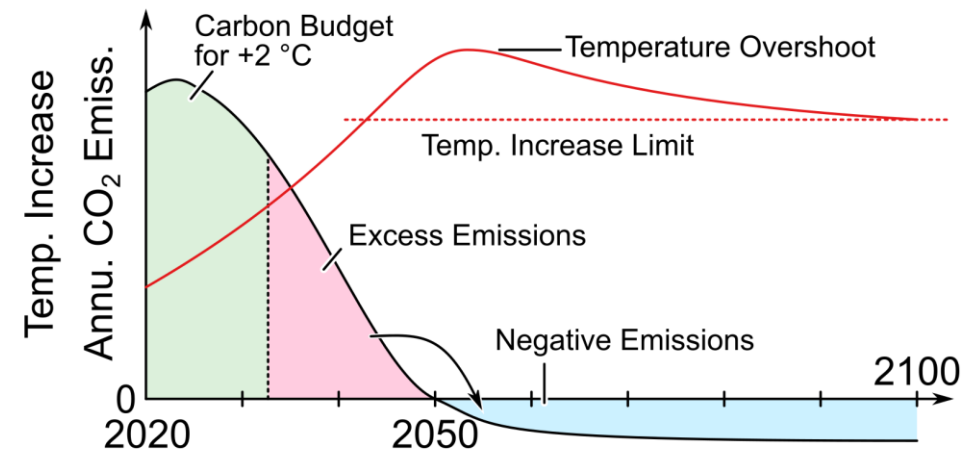
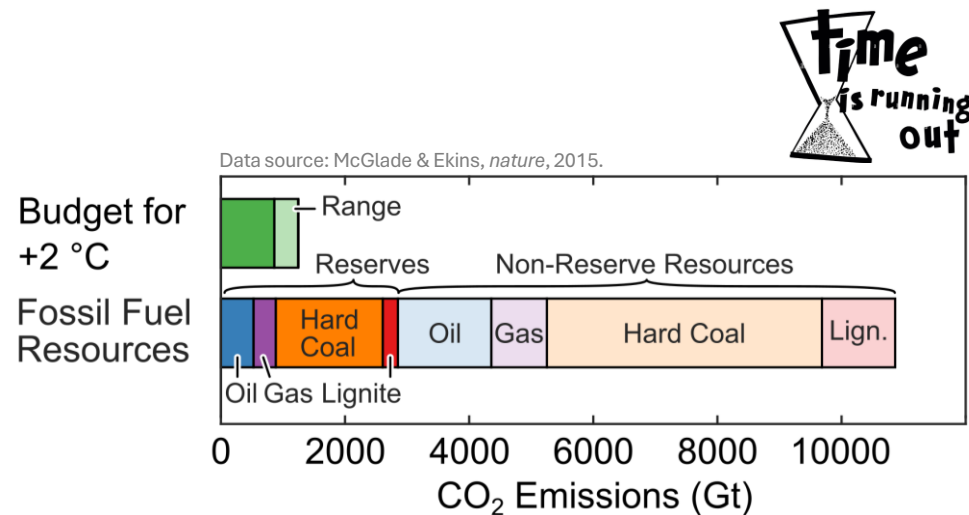
■ Fossil fuels facilitate rapid economic growth and development



■ Anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions cause climate change / global warming

Decarbonization / Defossilization

- **+2 °C target by 2100: Globally, 30% of oil, 50% of gas, and > 80% of coal reserves must remain unused (!)**
- **Ambitious pathway to “net-zero CO₂ emissions by 2050” → Temperature overshoot!**

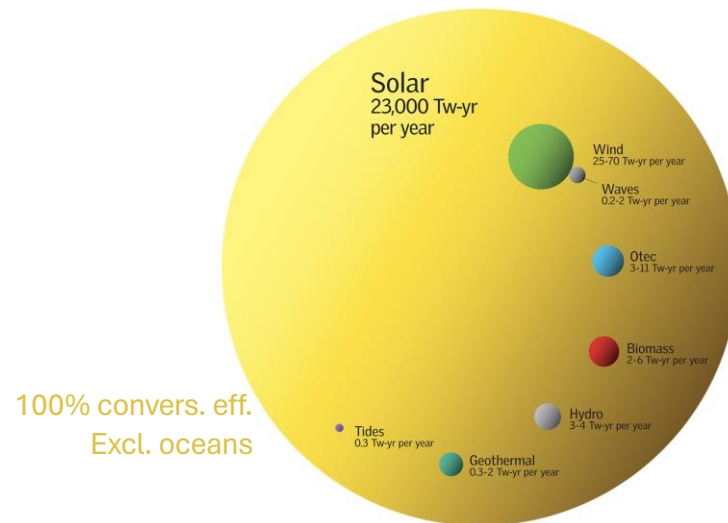


- Human history: **Transition from lower to higher energy density fuel** — Wood → Coal → Oil & Gas
- Challenge of stepping back from oil & gas quickly / **Can't wait for disruptive technologies / panacea!**

The Opportunity

(2009) 16 TW-yr \longrightarrow 16 Tw-yr per year \longleftarrow 27 TW-yr (2050)

Renewable energy resources per year



Note: Graphical representation assumes spheres, not circles

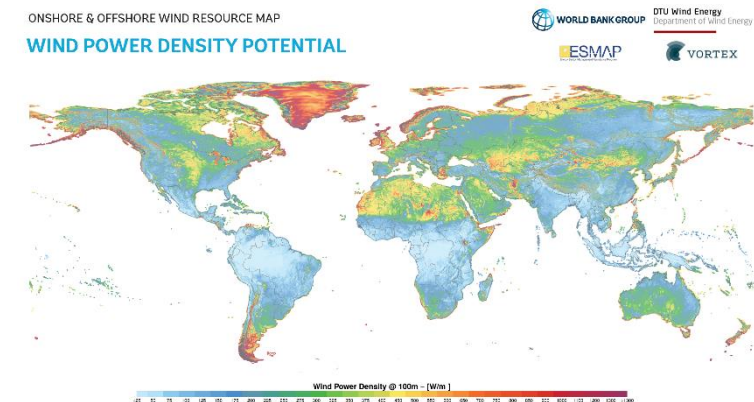
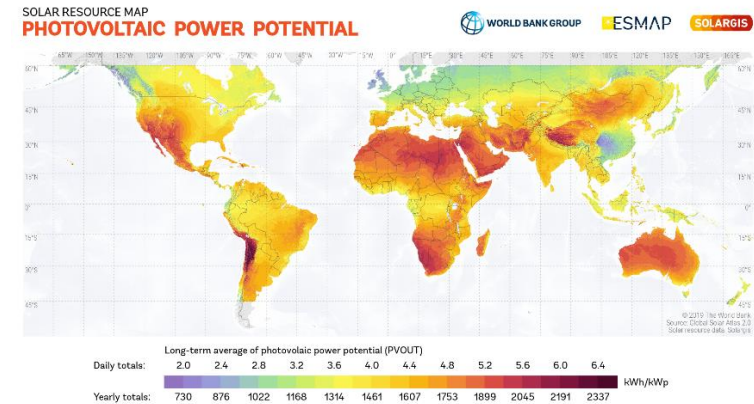
Primary consumption:
16 TWyr \rightarrow 27 TWyr
Final consumption:
11 TWyr \rightarrow 15 TWyr

Fossil energy resources - total reserve left on earth



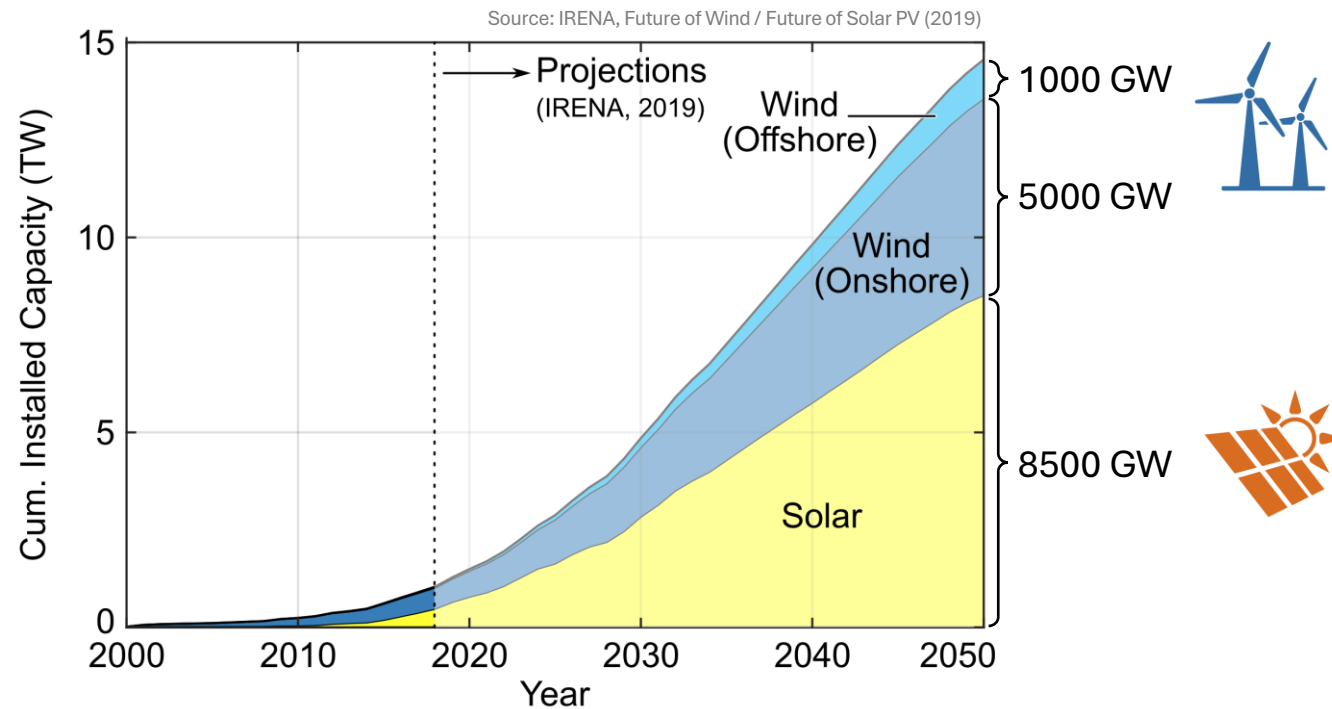
Source: R. Perez et al., IEA SHC Program Solar Update (2009)

Global distribution of solar & wind resources



The Approach

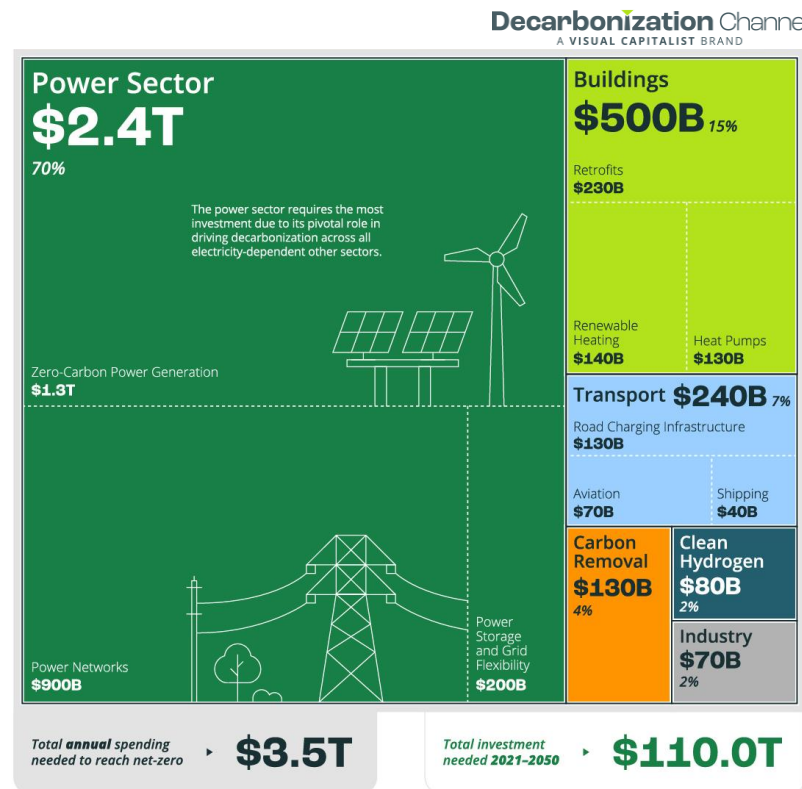
- Outlook of global cumulative installations until 2050
- In 2050 deployment of **370 GW/yr (PV)** and **200 GW/yr (onshore wind)** incl. replacements



- Dominant share of electric energy — **Power electronics as key enabling technology (!)**

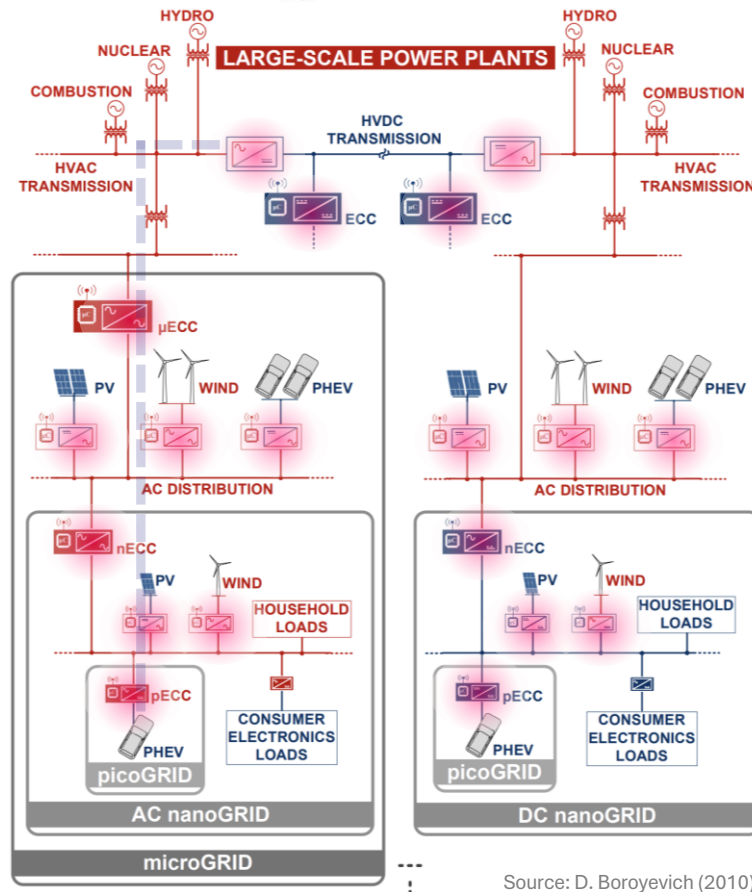
Remark: Cost of the Clean Energy Transition

- Total **annual spending** for net-zero until 2050: **3.5 TUSD** ($3.5 \cdot 10^{12}$ USD) / Total 110 TUSD until 2050



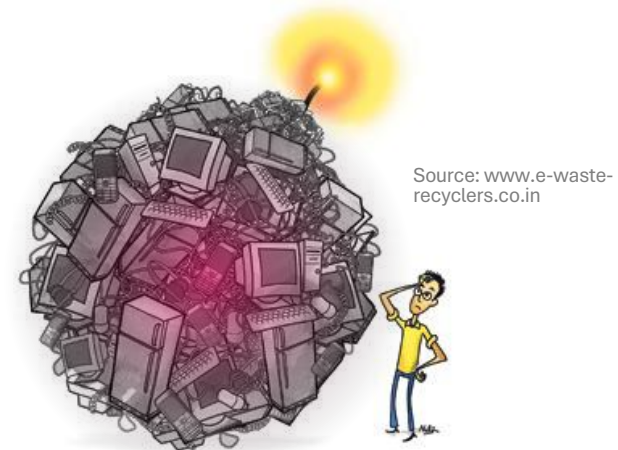
- **Perspectives:**
 - 3.5 TUSD are 12% of the U.S. GDP (2024) or **3% of the world GDP**
 - World defense expenditures 2023 were 2.4 TUSD

The in the Room



Source: D. Boroyevich (2010)

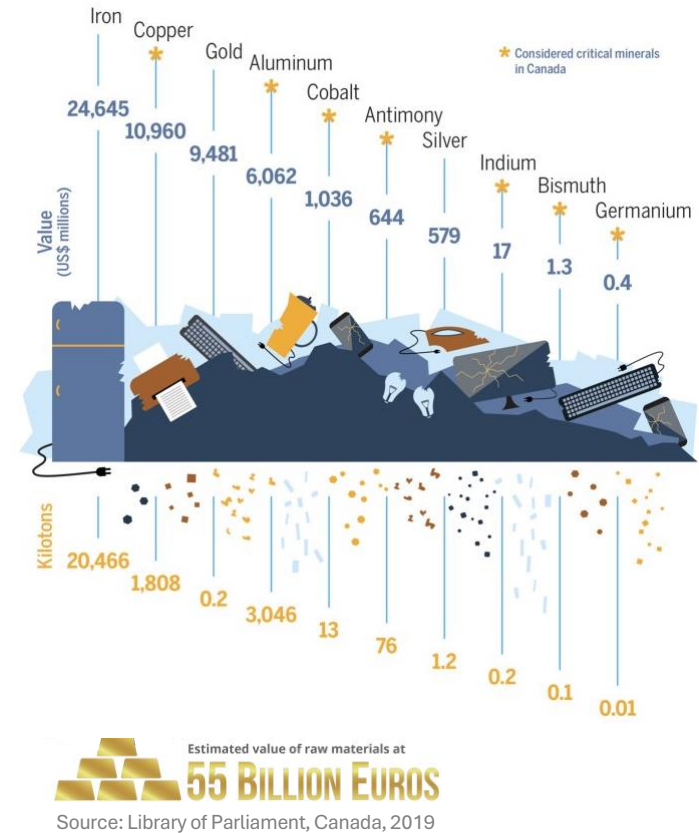
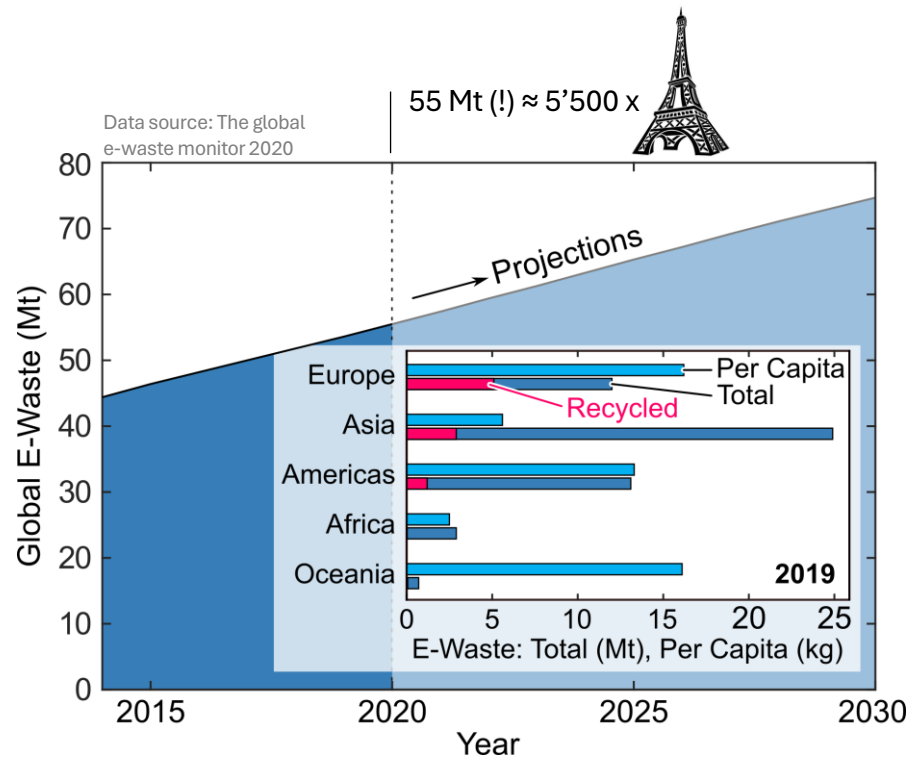
- **25'000 GW** installed renewable generation in 2050
- **15'000 GWh** installed battery storage
- **4 x power electronic conversion** btw. generation & load
- **100'000 GW** of installed converter power
- **20 years** of useful life



- **5'000 GW_{eq} = 5'000'000'000 kW_{eq}** of e-waste per year (!)
- **10'000'000'000 \$** of potential value

Growth of Global E-Waste (1)

- Growing global e-waste streams / < 20% recycling!
- 120'000'000 tons of global e-waste in 2050

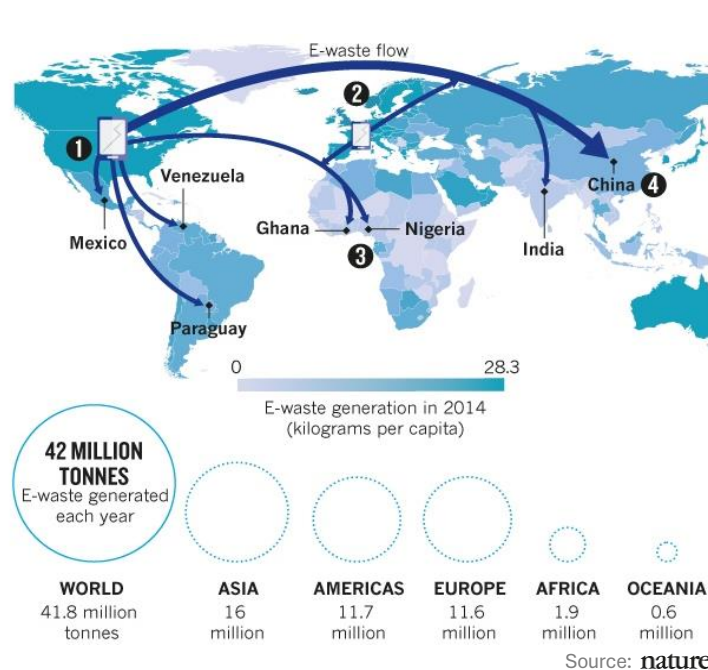


Global, 2019

- E-waste represents an “urban mine” with great economic potential

Growth of Global E-Waste (2)

- Growing global e-waste streams → 120'000'000 tons of global e-waste in 2050
- Increasingly complex constructions → Little repair or recycling



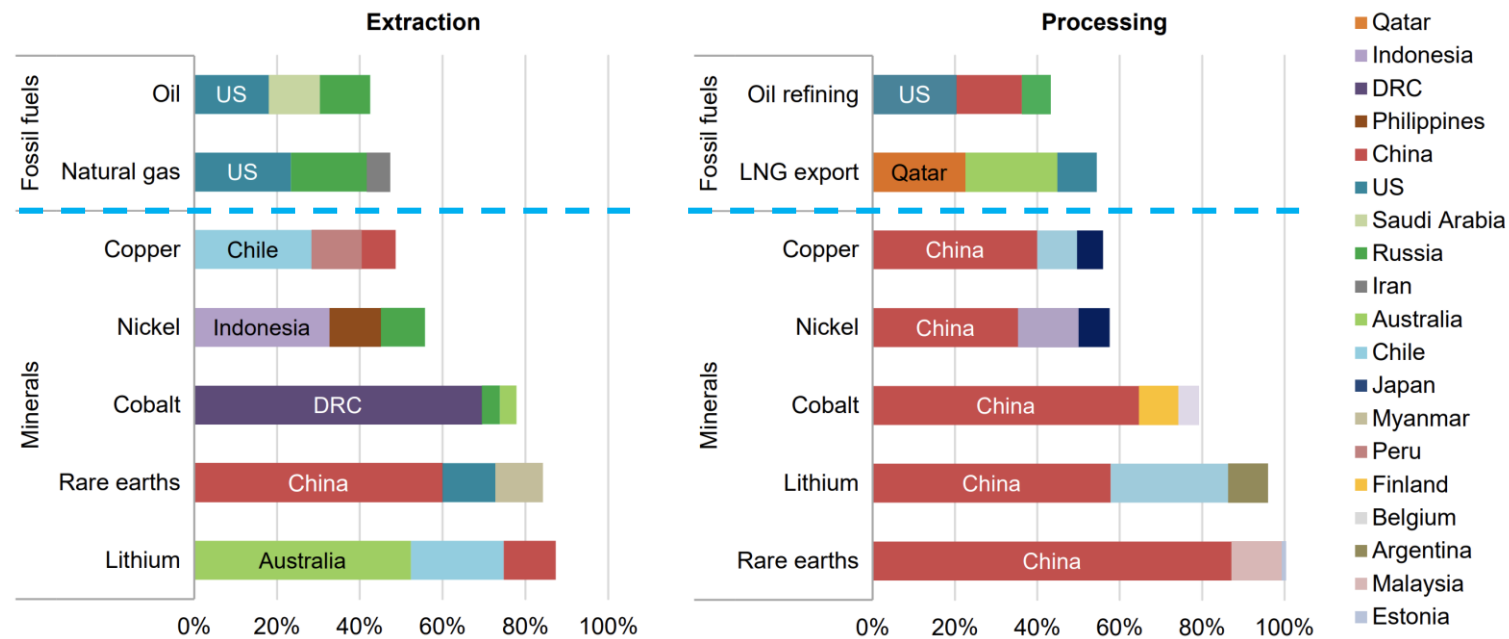
Source: Green IT Solution



- Growing global e-waste streams → Regulations mandatory (!)

Remark: Critical Minerals

■ Production of selected minerals critical for the clean energy transition

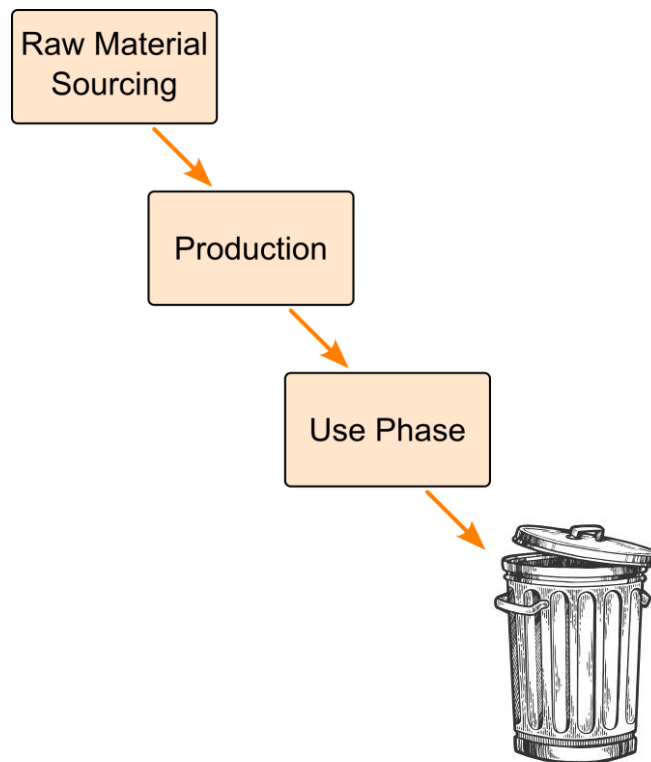


■ Extraction & processing more geographically concentrated than for oil & gas (!)

The Paradigm Shift

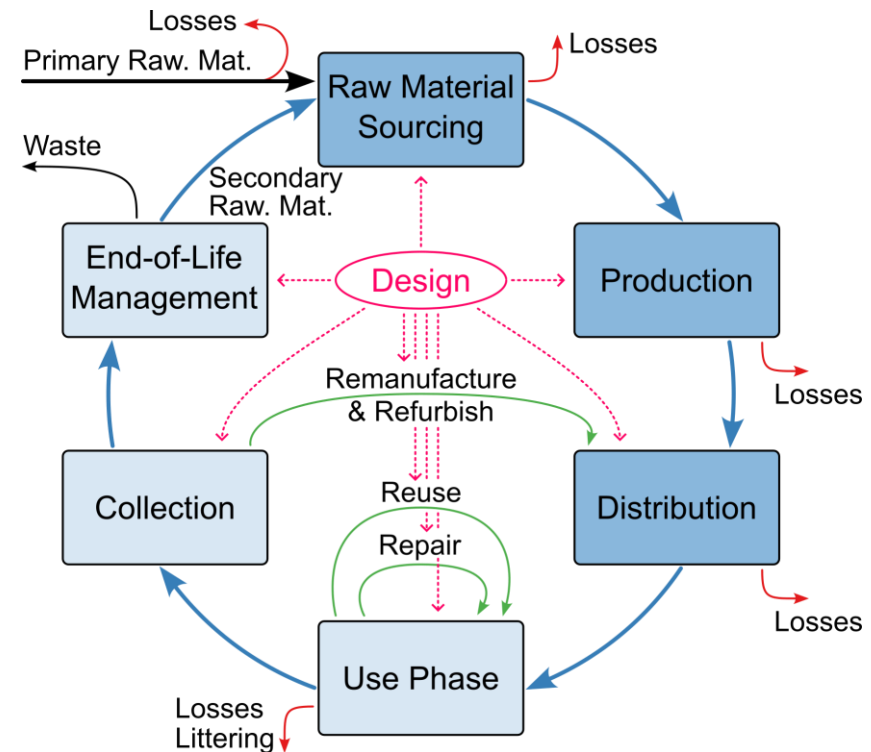
■ Linear Economy

- Take – make – dispose



■ Circular Economy

- Perpetual flow of resources



- Resources returned into the product cycle at end of life

Remark: Policymaking / Regulations / Standardization



■ European Green Deal

- Circular Economy Action Plan
- Net-Zero Industry Act
- Critical Raw Materials Act
- Environmental Footprint Methods
- Right to Repair
- Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation
- ...

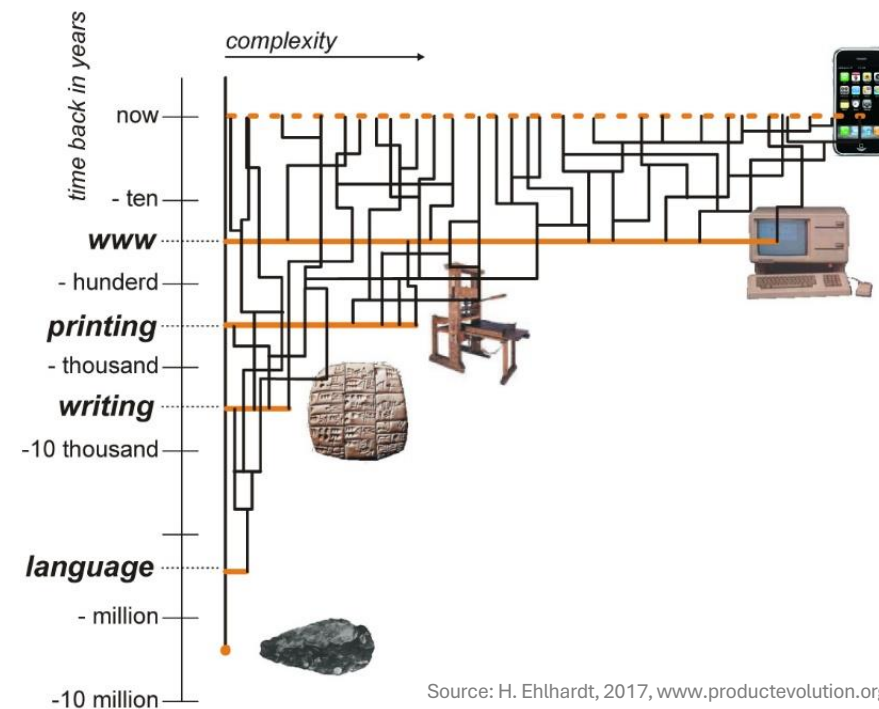
■ Standardization (Examples)



- ISO 14040/14044 Life-cycle assessment
- ISO 14067 Carbon footprint of products
- ISO 4555x Ecodesign and material efficiency
- IEC 62430 Environmentally conscious design for el. & electron. products
- IEC 61800-9-1/2 Ecodesign for drive systems
- ...

Complexity Challenge

- Technological innovation — **Increasing level of complexity & diversity** of modern products
- Exponentially accelerating technological advancement (R. Kurzweil)

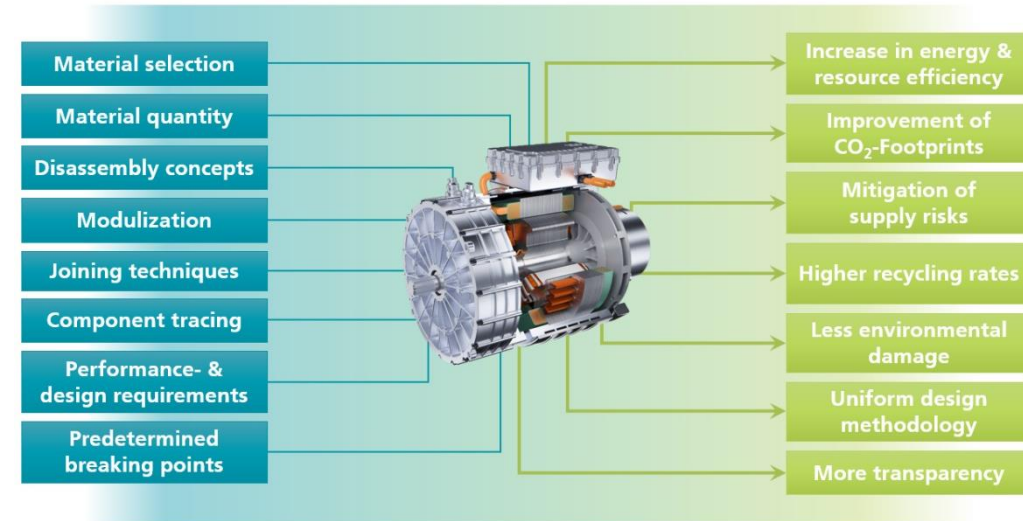


- **Ultra-compact systems / functional integration** — **Major obstacle for material separation!?**

Design for Repairability & Circularity

- **Eco-design** — Reduce environmental impact of products, incl. life-cycle energy consumption
- **Re-pair / Re-use / Re-cycle** / disassembly / sorting & max. material recovery, etc. considered
- EU eco-design directive (!)

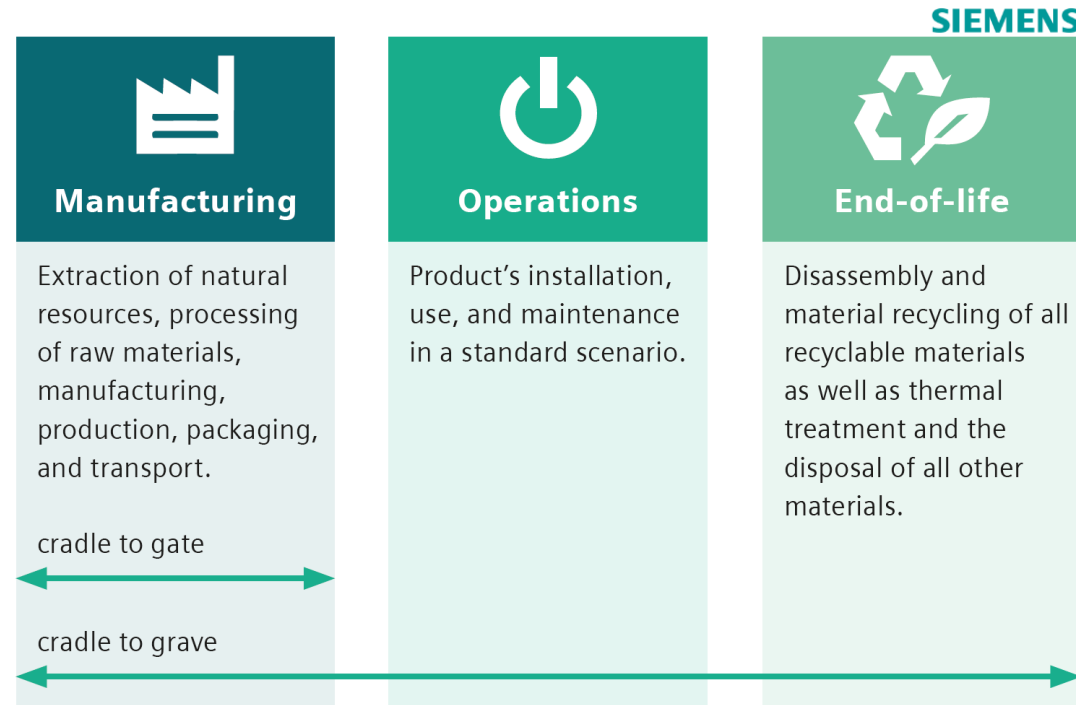
Source:  DLR



- **FAIRPHONE** — Modular design / man. replaceable parts / 100% recycl. of sold products / fairtrade materials
- “80% of environmental impact of products are locked-in at the design stage” — J. Thackara, *In the bubble: Designing in a complex world*. Cambridge, MA, USA: The MIT Press, 2006.

LCA: Life Cycle Assessment (1)

- Quantification / **benchmarking** of **eco-design** & circular economy approaches

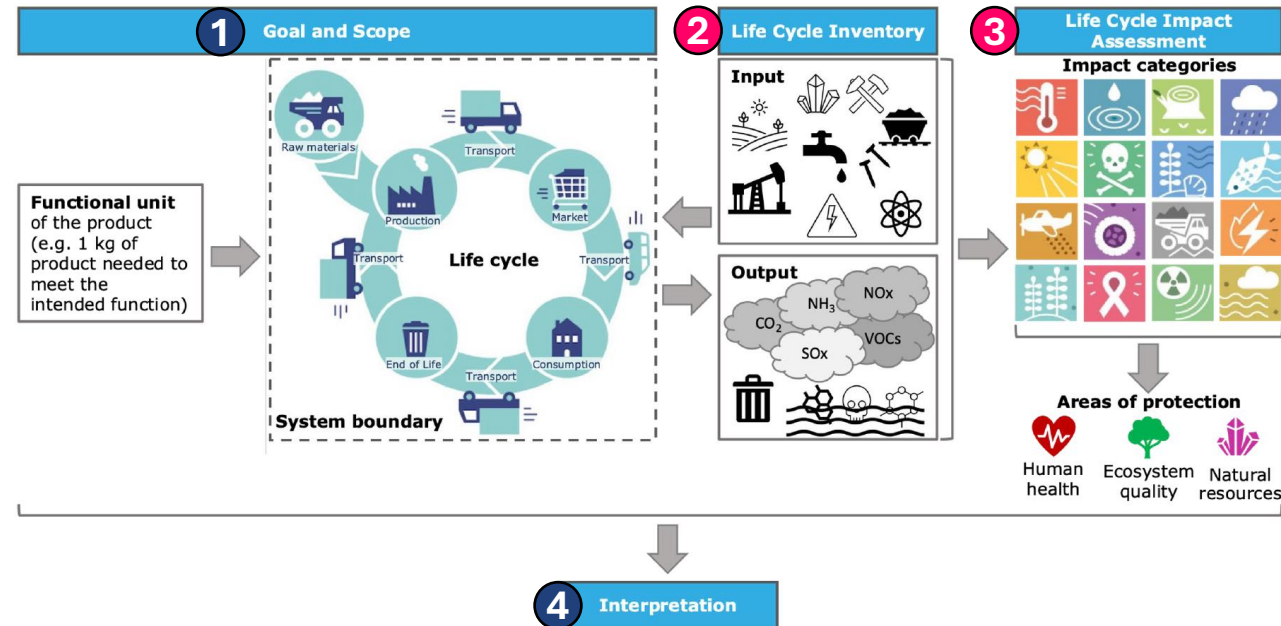


- **Scope of LCA can include**

- **All** life-cycle phases (**cradle to grave**) or
- **Individual** life-cycle phases (**cradle to gate** or gate to gate)

LCA: Life Cycle Assessment (2)

- Quantification / benchmarking of eco-design & circular economy approaches



- 2 LCI – Life Cycle Inventory**
Compilation & quantification of inputs and outputs for a product throughout its life cycle

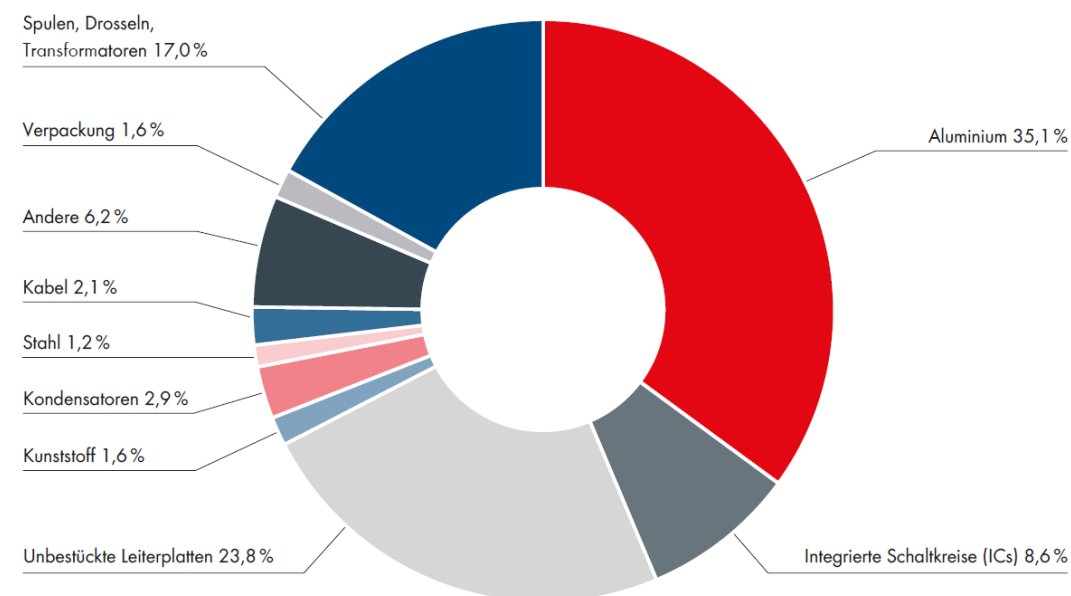
- 3 LCIA – Life Cycle Impact Assessment**
Assignment of LCI results to (environmental) impact categories / Aggregation involves weighting factors & value choices

LCA Example: Carbon Footprint of a 150-kW PV Inverter

- **Production phase** / embodied carbon footprint of **903 kg CO₂eq** (15...20% of life-cycle carbon footprint)
- **Use phase** contributes **>80% to life-cycle carbon footprint** (conversion losses & standby/night consumption)



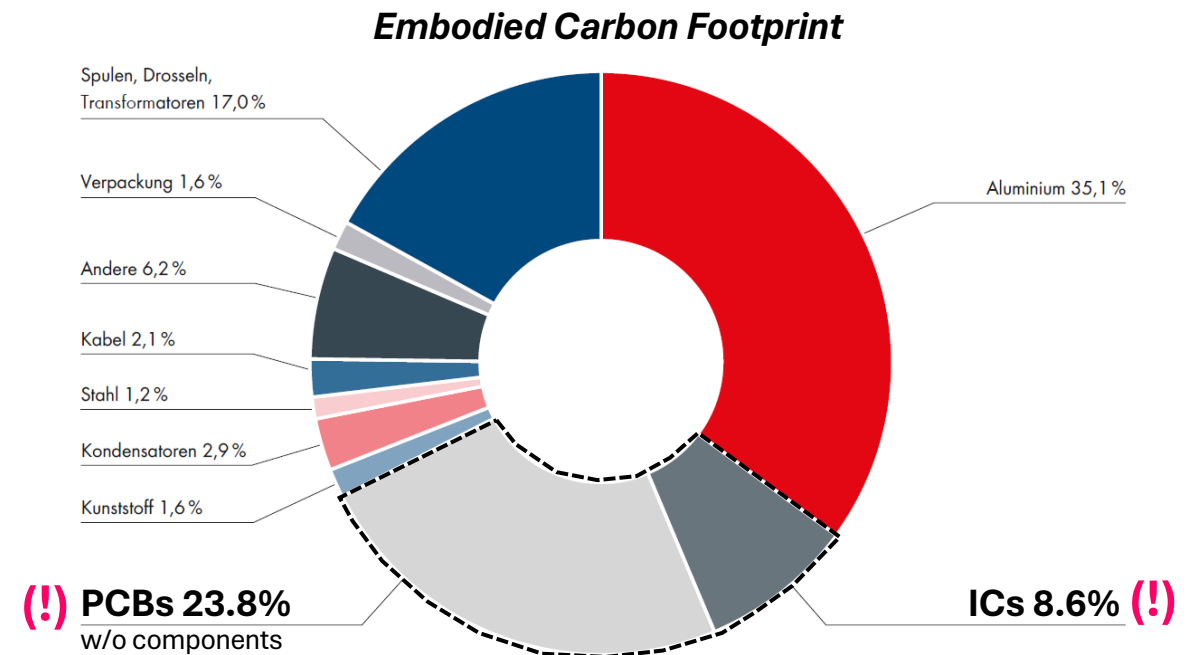
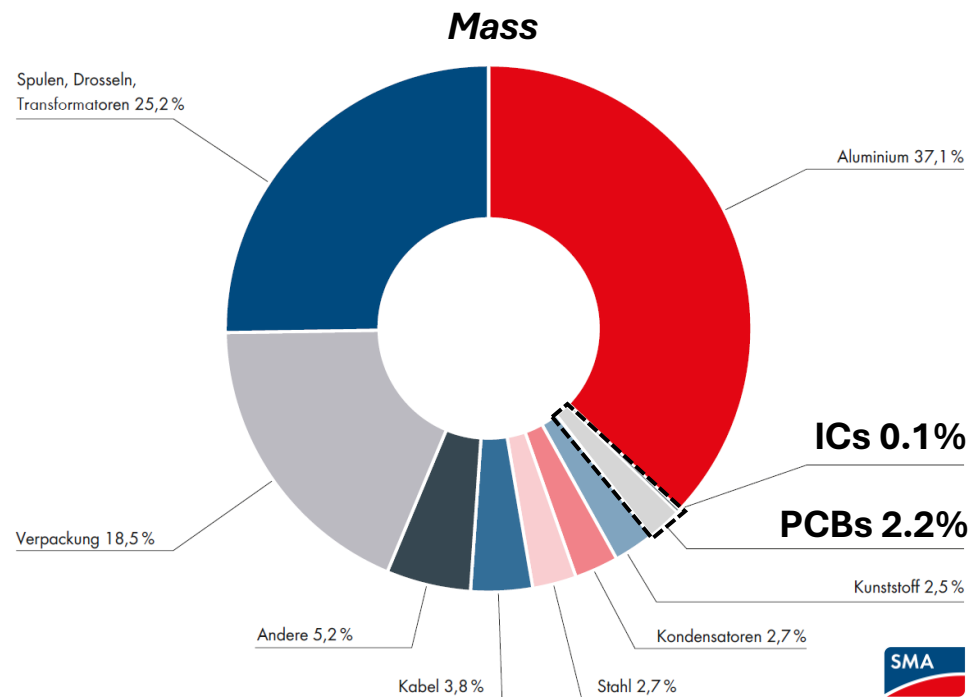
Embodied Carbon Footprint



- **150 kW rated power for typ. 225 kW_p PV system**

LCA Example: Carbon Footprint of a 150-kW PV Inverter

- **Production phase** / embodied carbon footprint of **903 kg CO₂eq** (15...20% of life-cycle carbon footprint)
- **Use phase** contributes **>80% to life-cycle carbon footprint** (conversion losses & standby/night consumption)



- **Small / lightweight components with large contributions to carbon footprint (!)**

Carbon Footprint is Not Enough!

- Life cycle **impact** assessment (**LCIA**) phase of LCA — **Environmental profile w. wide range of perf. indicators**

- Example: ReCiPe 2016

Three areas of protection / endpoint categories

- **Human Health**

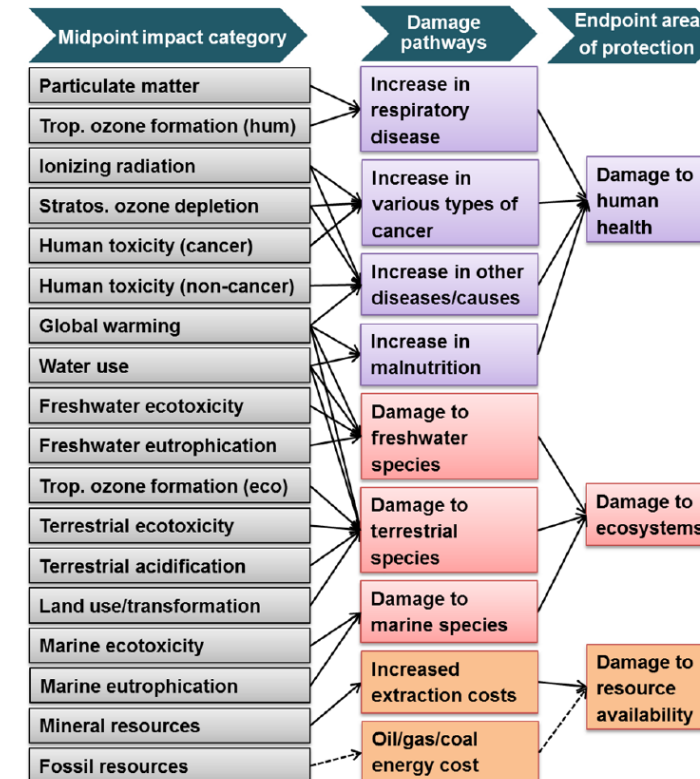
Damage to Human Health (DHH)
in Disability-Adjusted Loss of Life Years (DALY)

- **Ecosystem Quality**

Damage to ecosystem quality (DESQ)
in Time-Integrated Species Loss (species · yr)

- **Resource Scarcity**

Damage to resource availability (DRA)
in surplus cost / dollars (\$)

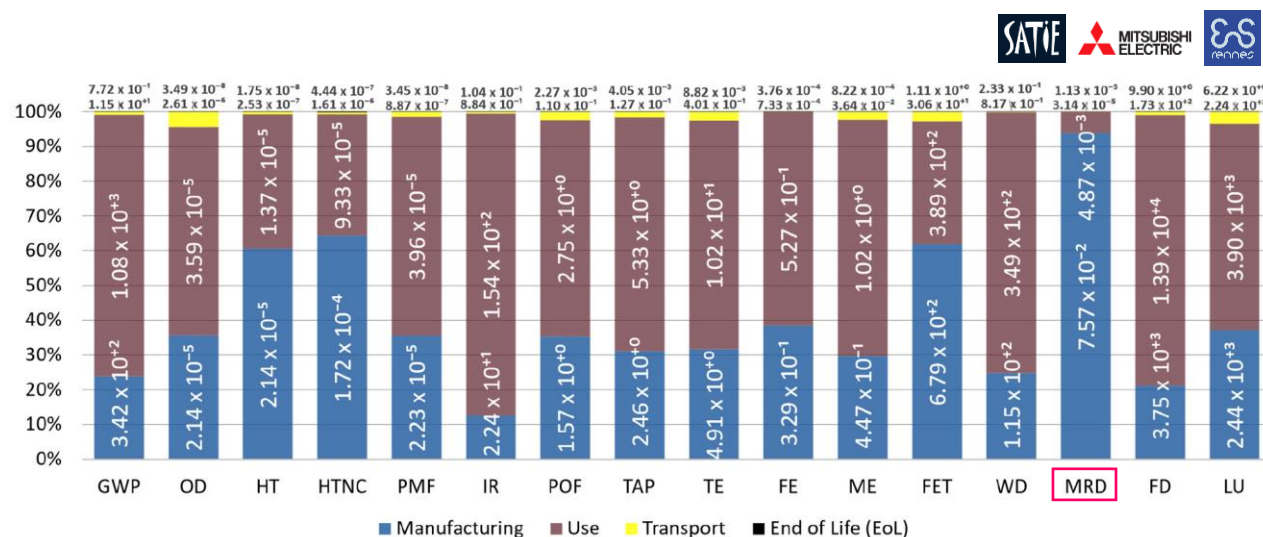


Source: Huijbregts et al., ReCiPe 2016 v1.1 Report

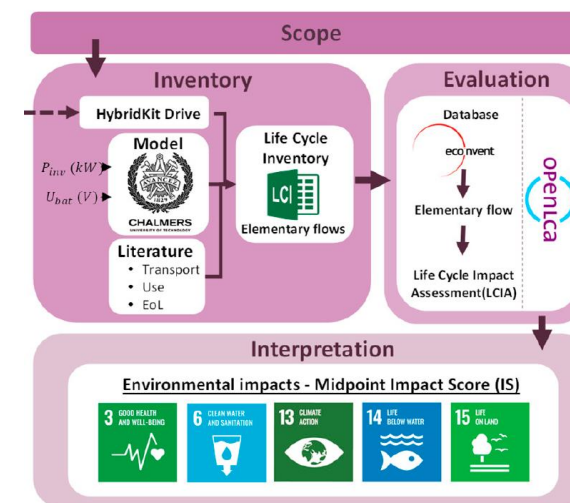
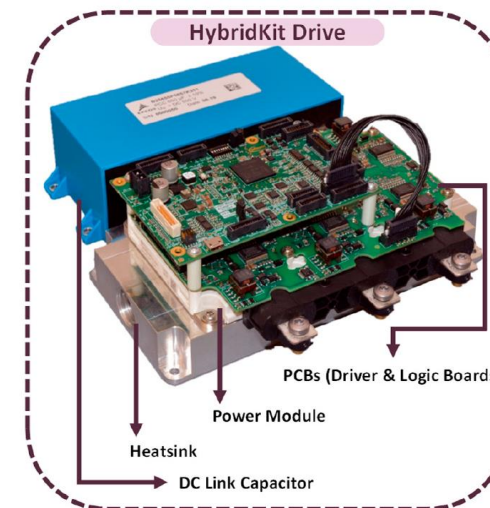
- Value choices (**individualist** / **hierarchist** / **egalitarian**) affect time horizon, included effects, etc.
- Alternative frameworks like **EU Environmental Footprint (EF 3.1)** exist

LCA Example: 150-kW EV Drive Inverter (1)

- 150-kW inverter, 450 V DC bus 15 years / 10'000 operating hours w. avg. 97% efficiency (WLTP driving cycle)
- 16 Impact categories: **EU Product Environmental Footprint (PEF)**
 - **GWP**: Climate change (carbon footprint)
 - **MRD**: Resource use, minerals and metals,
 - ...



- Production and use phase dominate all indicators

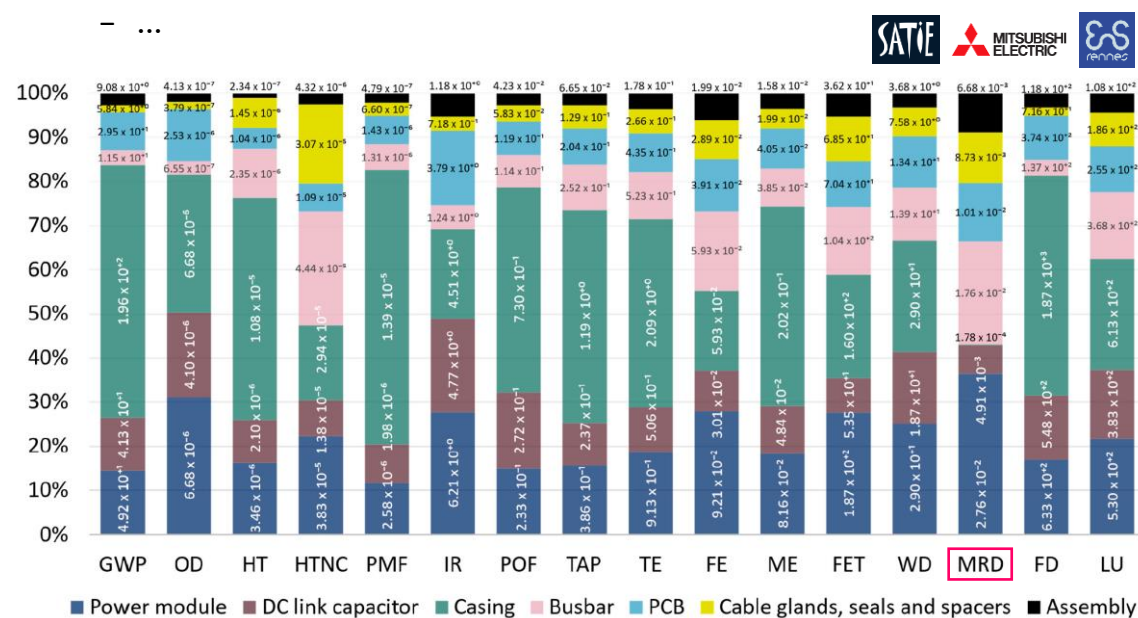


LCA Example: 150-kW EV Drive Inverter (2)

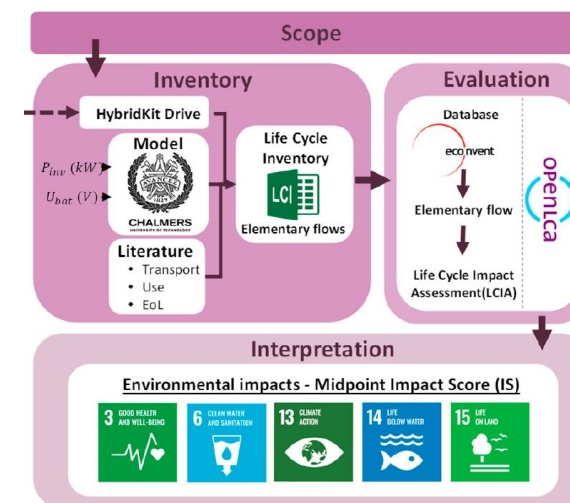
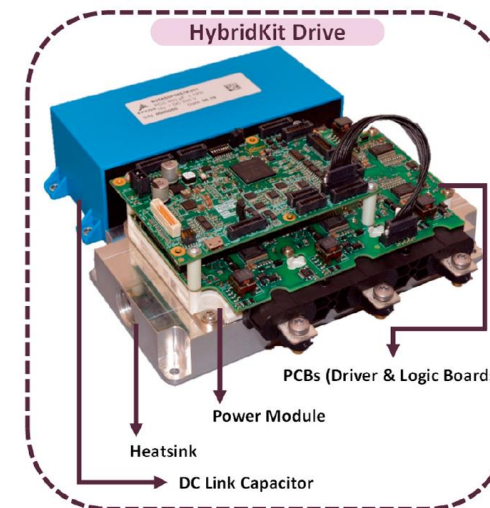
- 150-kW inverter, 450 V DC bus 15 years / 10'000 operating hours w. avg. 97% efficiency (WLTP driving cycle)

- 16 Impact categories: **EU Product Environmental Footprint (PEF)**

- **GWP:** Climate change (carbon footprint)
- **MRD:** Resource use, minerals and metals
- ...



- Detailed **breakdown of component contributions** to prod. phase



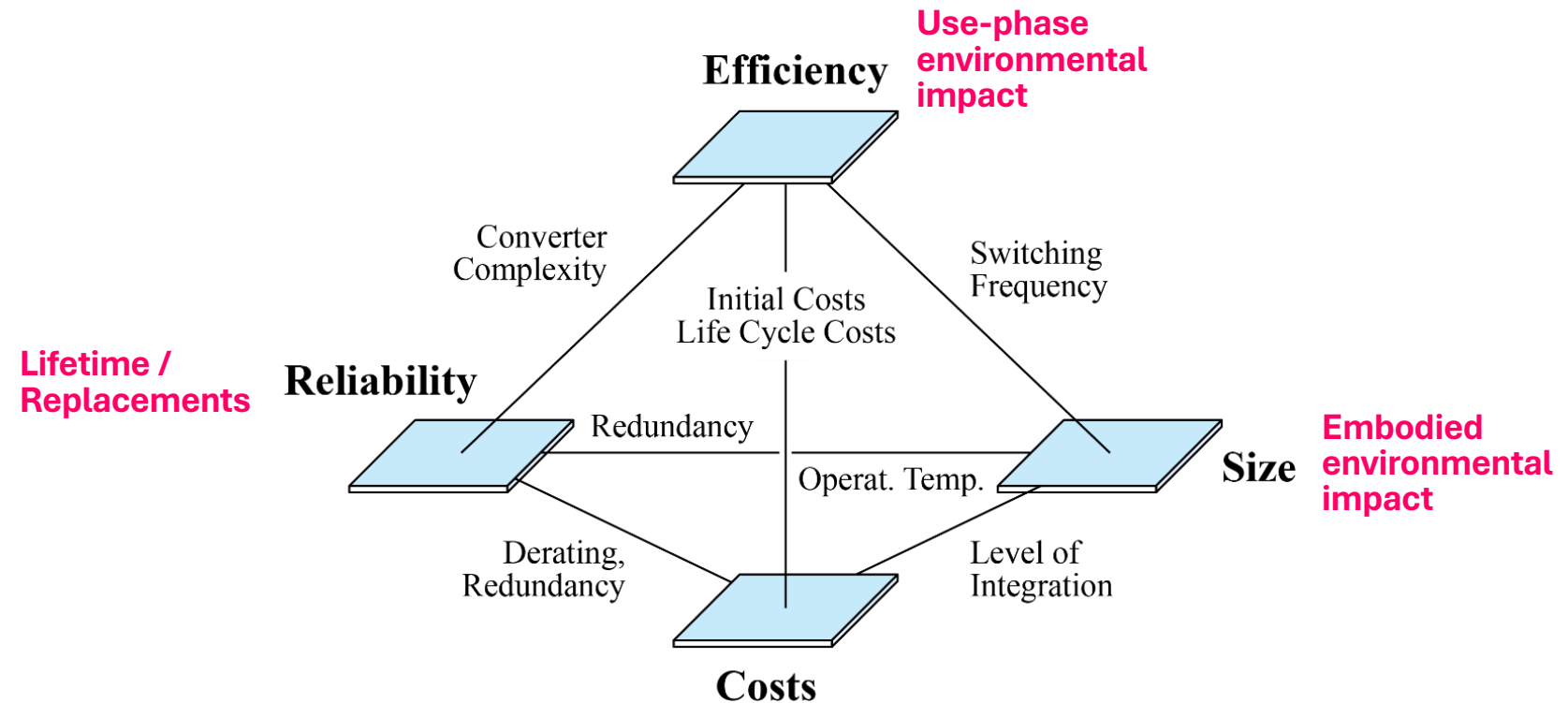
New Holistic Design Procedure



Multi-Objective Optimization with Environmental Impacts as New Performance Indicators

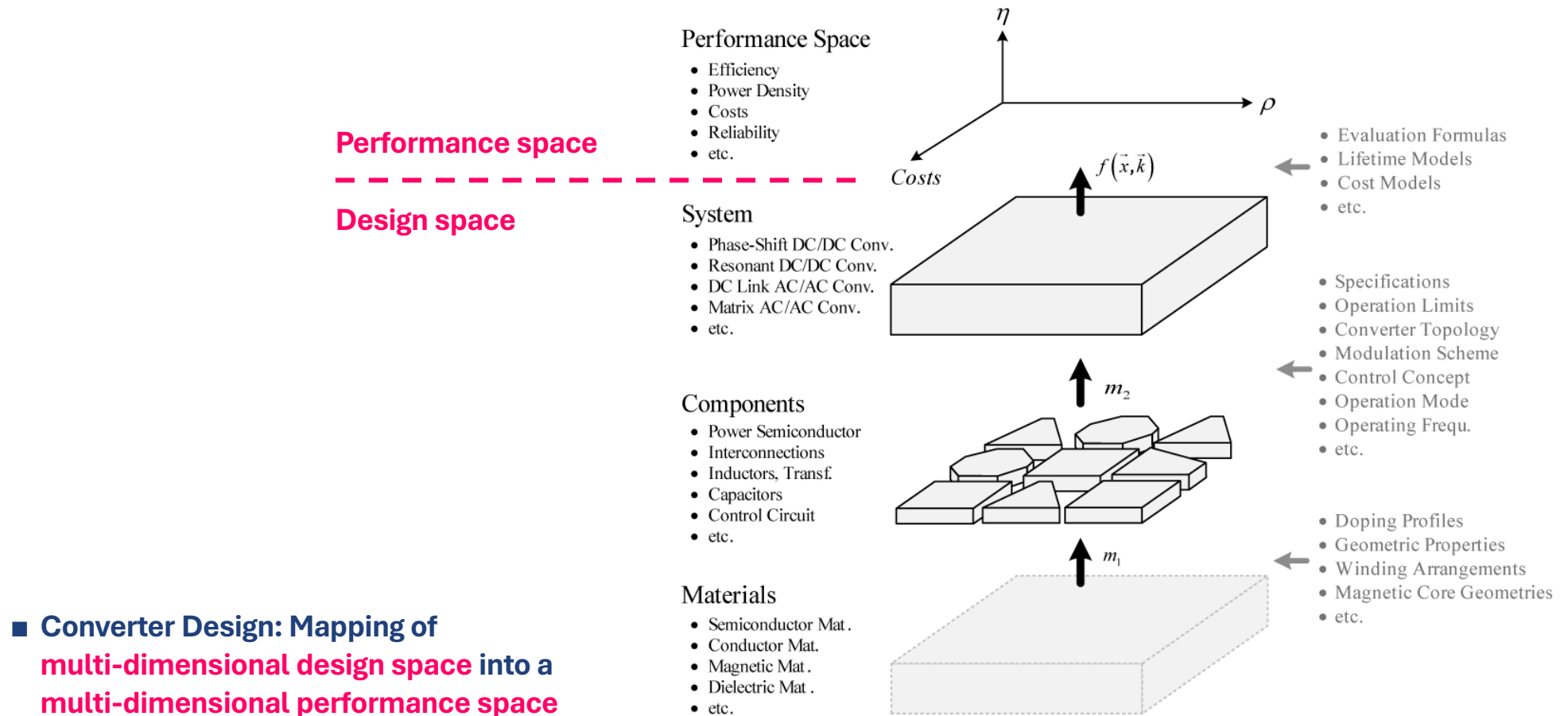
System Design Challenge

- Mutual coupling of performance indicators → **Trade-off analysis!**



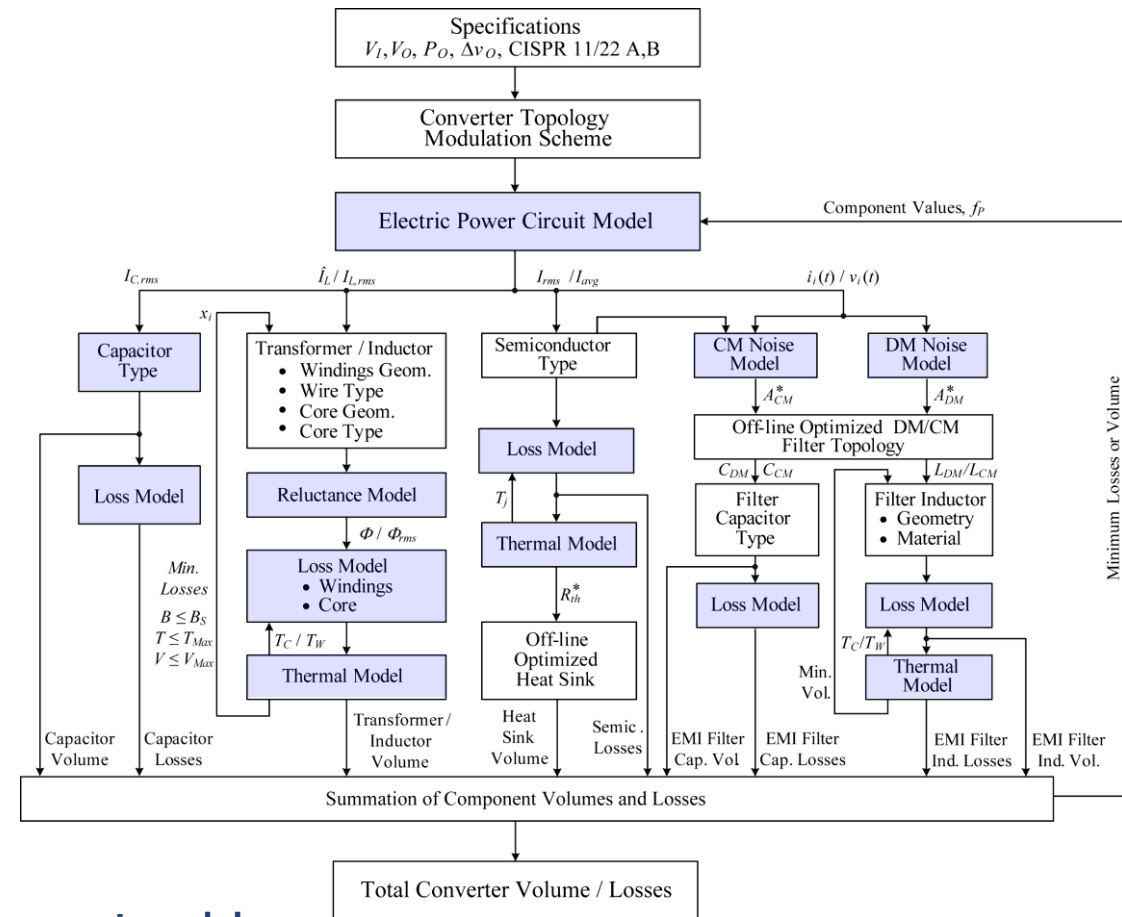
- For optimized systems, it is not possible to improve several perf. indicators *simultaneously*

Abstraction of Power Converter Design



■ **Converter Design: Mapping of multi-dimensional design space into a multi-dimensional performance space**

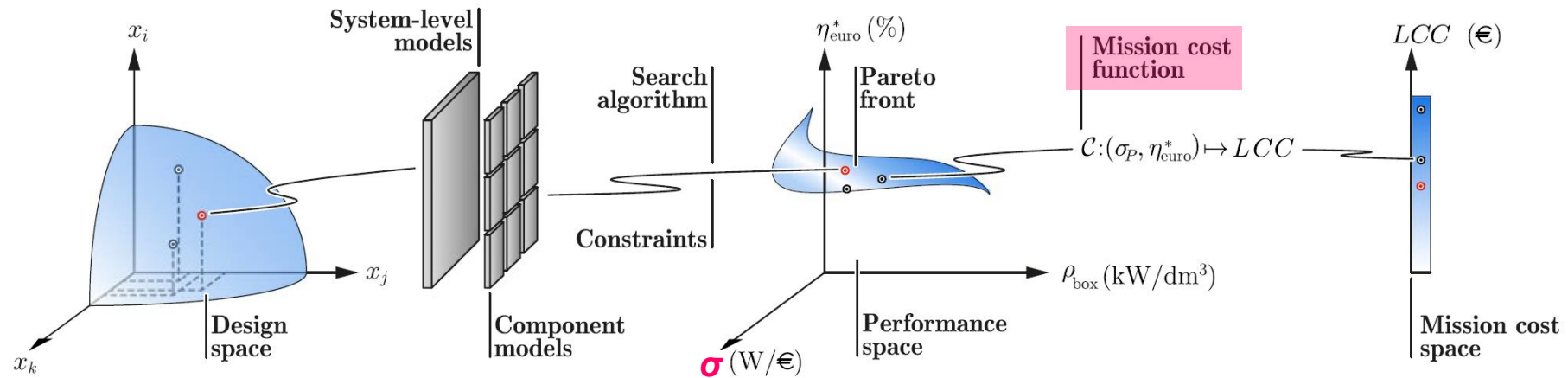
Modeling of Converter Designs



- System/circuit & component models
- Iteration over all combinations of design degrees of freedom

Multi-Objective Optimization of Converter Designs

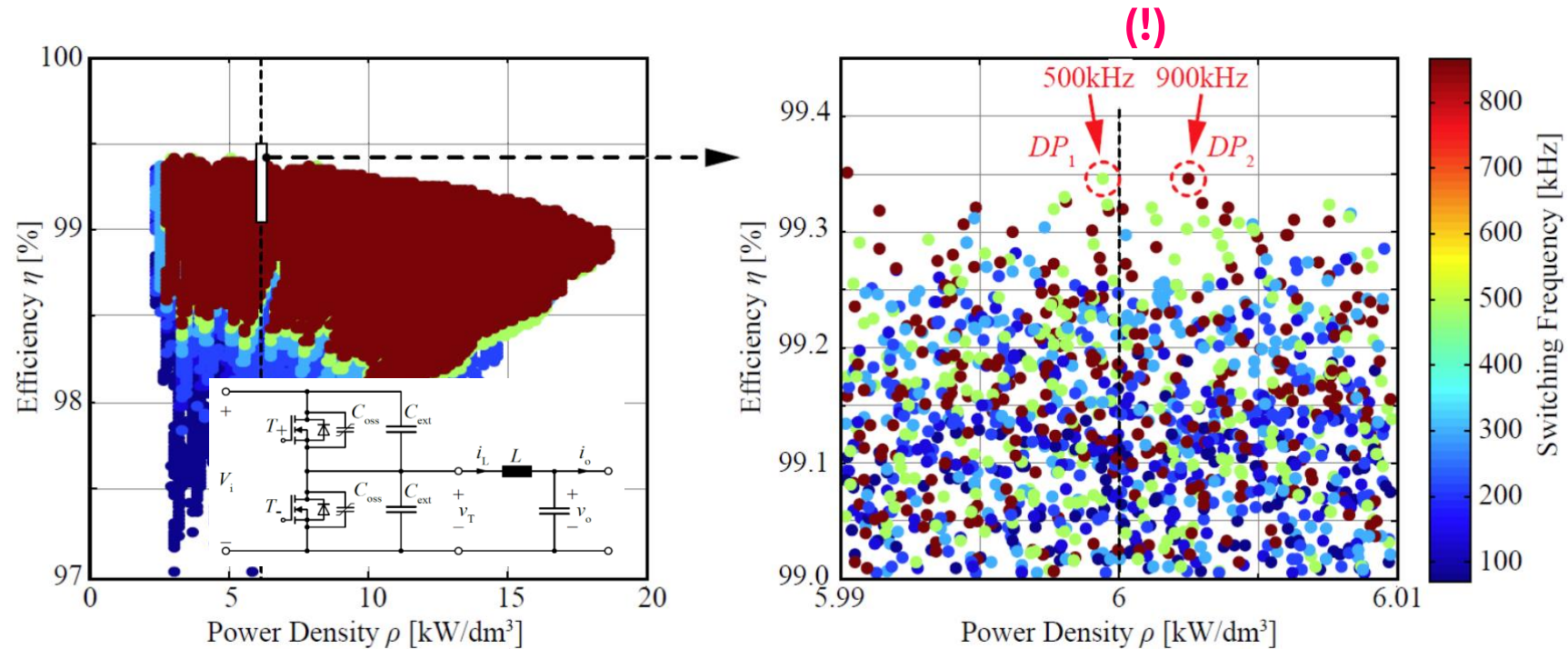
- **Pareto front:** Boundary of the feasible performance space
- **Mission profiles:** Power loss → Energy loss / **Life-cycle cost (!)**



- **Typically considered performance indices:**
 - η Efficiency in %
 - ρ Volumetric power density in kW/dm³
 - γ Gravimetric power density in kW/kg
 - σ **Cost density in W/€**

Design Space Diversity

- Very different design space coordinates map to very similar performance space coordinates

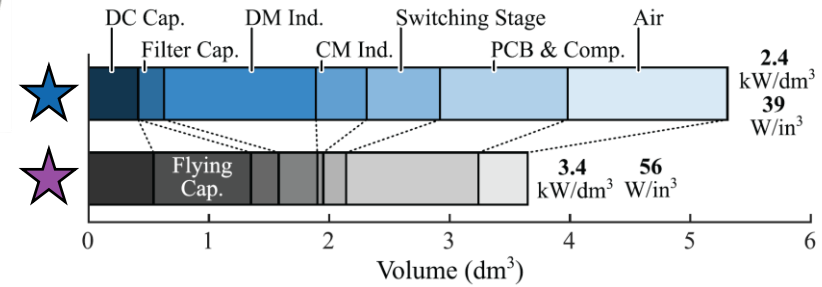
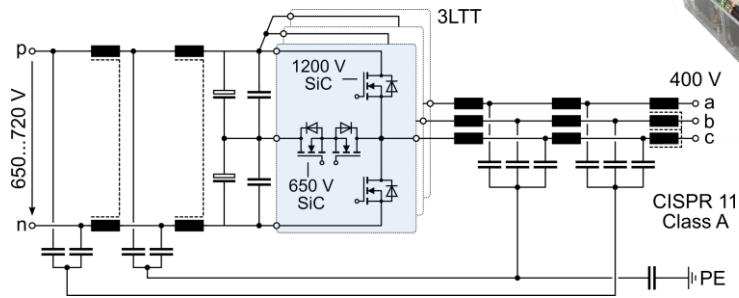


- Example: Google Littlebox design optimization w. PWM operation / Mutual comp. of HF and LF loss contrib.

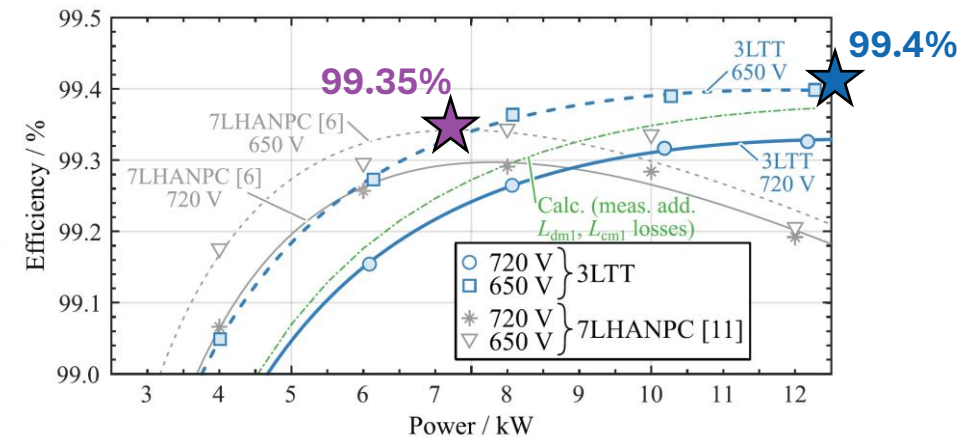
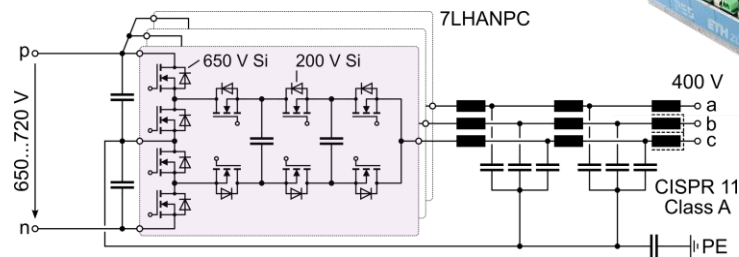
Design Space Diversity: 3L & 7L PV Inverters

■ **Two concepts / similar specs** — 12.5 kW, 650...720 V DC, CISPR 11 Class A — **Similar perf.** ($\eta_{CEC} = 99.1\%$)

3-Level All-SiC T-Type PV Inverter ★
99.4%, 2.4 kW/dm³



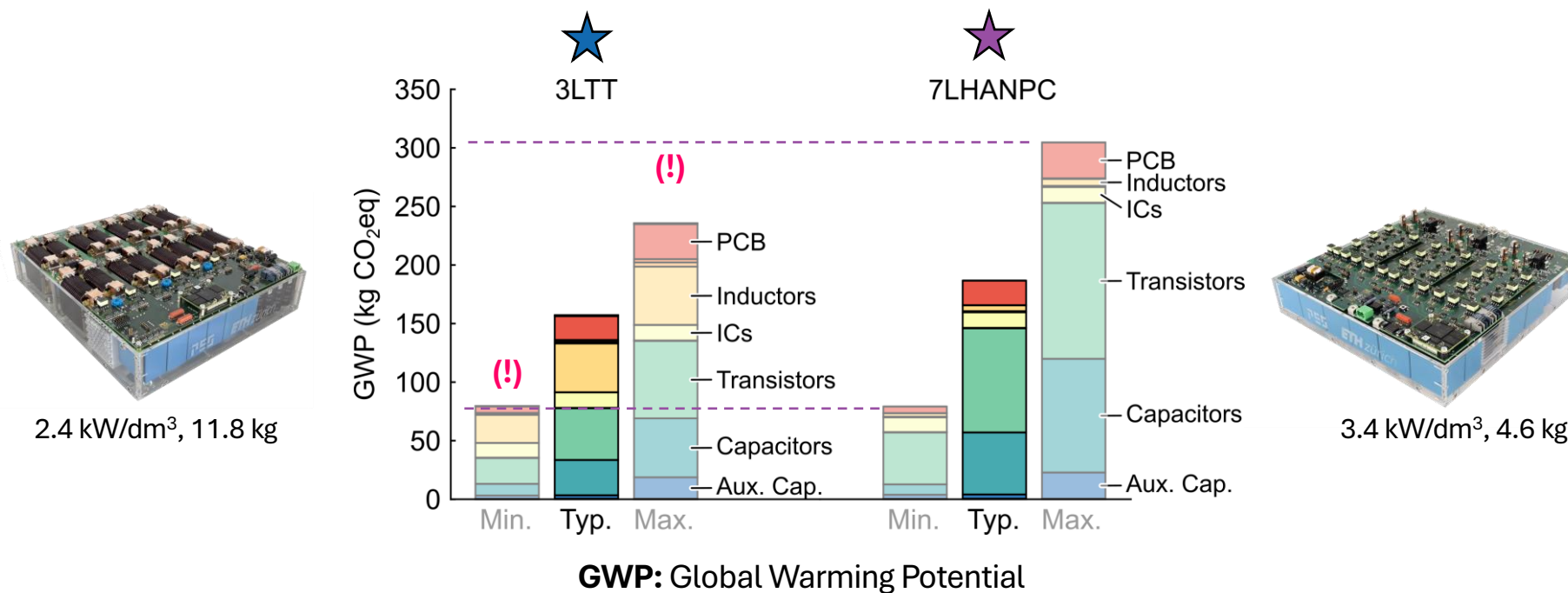
7-Level All-Si HANPC PV Inverter ★
99.35%, 3.4 kW/dm³



■ **Differences in environmental impact?**

A Posteriori LCA of 3L & 7L PV Inverters (1)

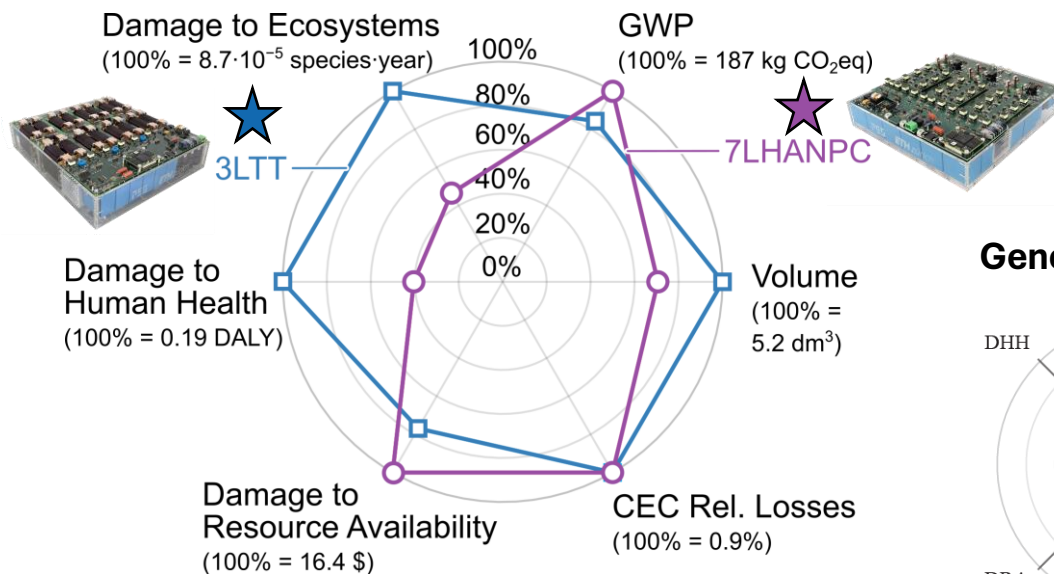
■ **Two concepts / similar specs** — 12.5 kW, 650...720 V DC, CISPR 11 Class A — **Similar perf. ($\eta_{CEC} = 99.1\%$)**



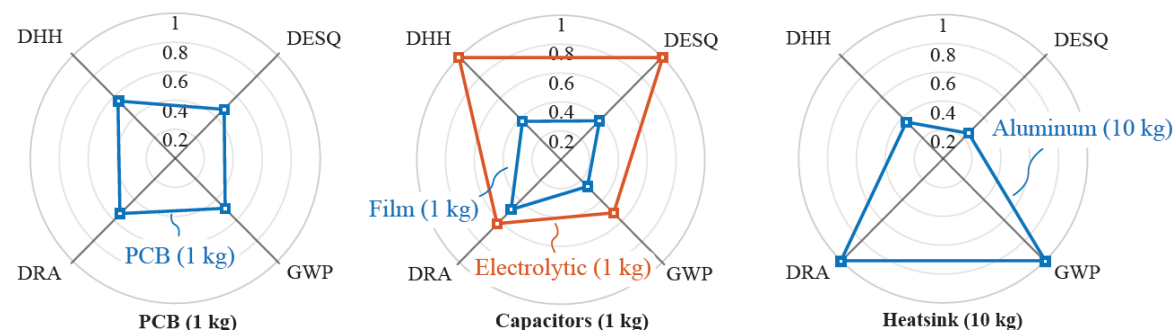
- **Generic comp. models / ecoinvent database & lit. → Widely varying embodied carbon footprint (GWP) res. (!)**
- **Data availability / quality as key challenge!**

A Posteriori LCA of 3L & 7L PV Inverters (2)

- **Two concepts / similar specs** — 12.5 kW, 650...720 V DC, CISPR 11 Class A — **Similar perf.** ($\eta_{CEC} = 99.1\%$)
- **Life Cycle Impact Assessment (LCIA) w. ReCiPe framework:**
 - Damage to ecosystems (DESQ) | Damage to human health (DHH) | Damage to resource availability (DRA)



Generic Comp. Mod.



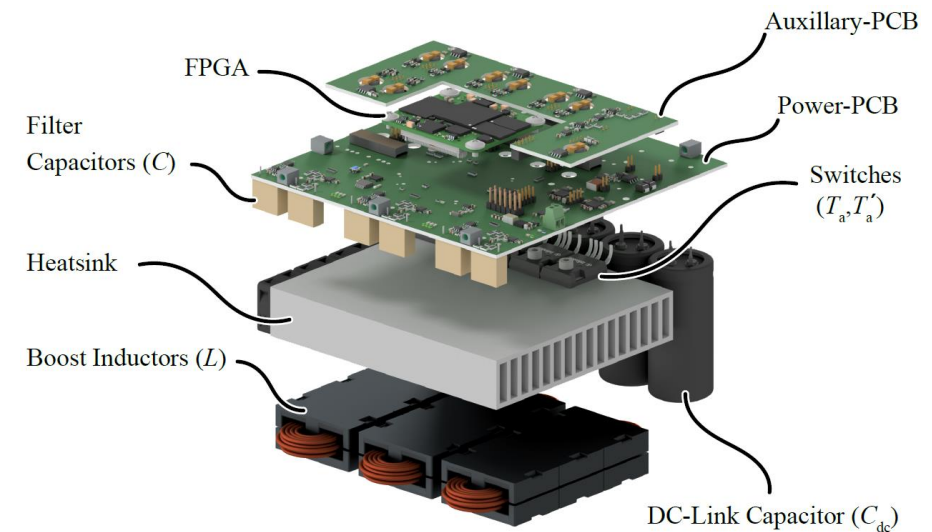
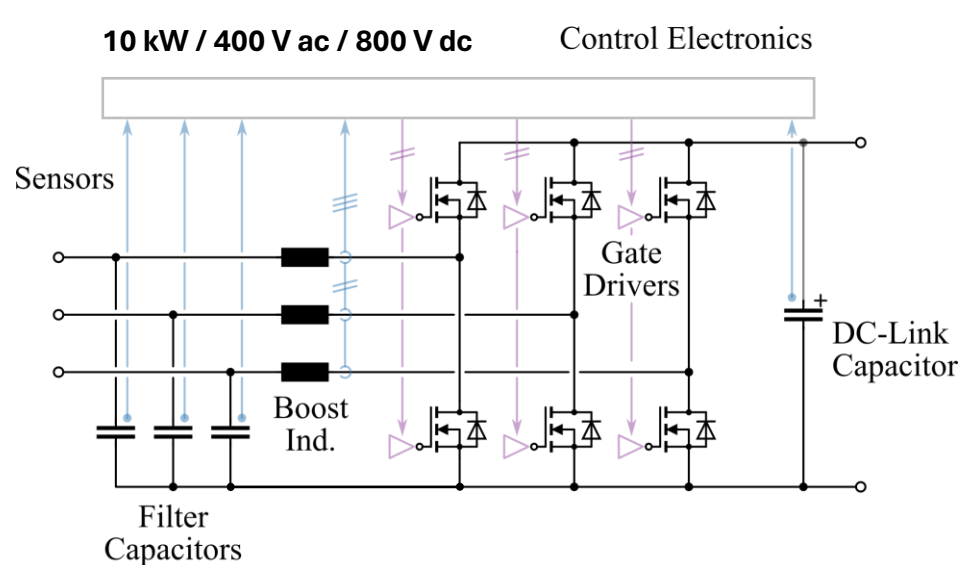
Normalized scales due to ecoinvent licensing restrictions.

- **Environmental footprint of converter as aggregate of components' environmental footprints**

A Priori Consideration of Environmental Impacts in the Design Process? 

A Priori LCA Example: 10-kW Three-Phase AC-DC PEBB

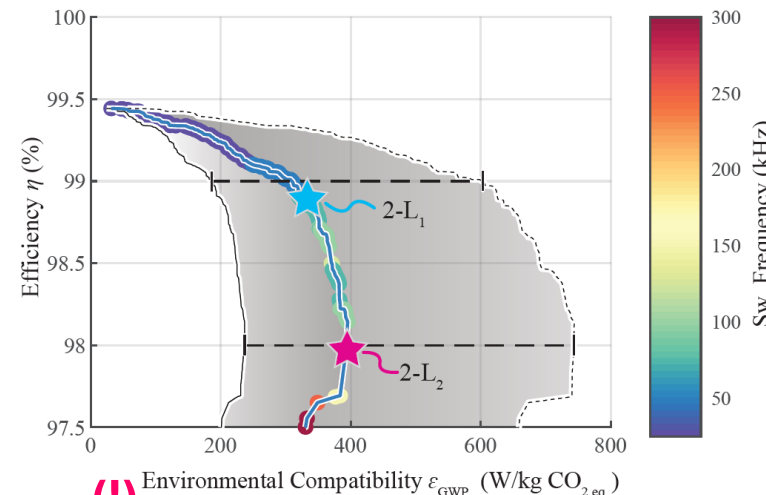
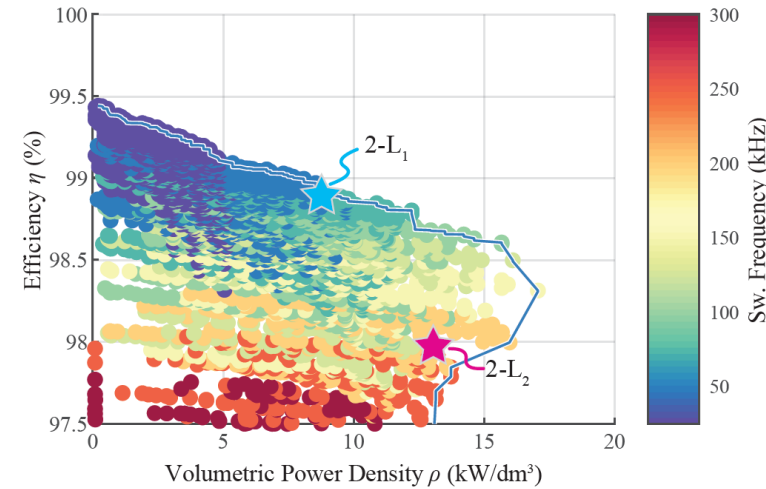
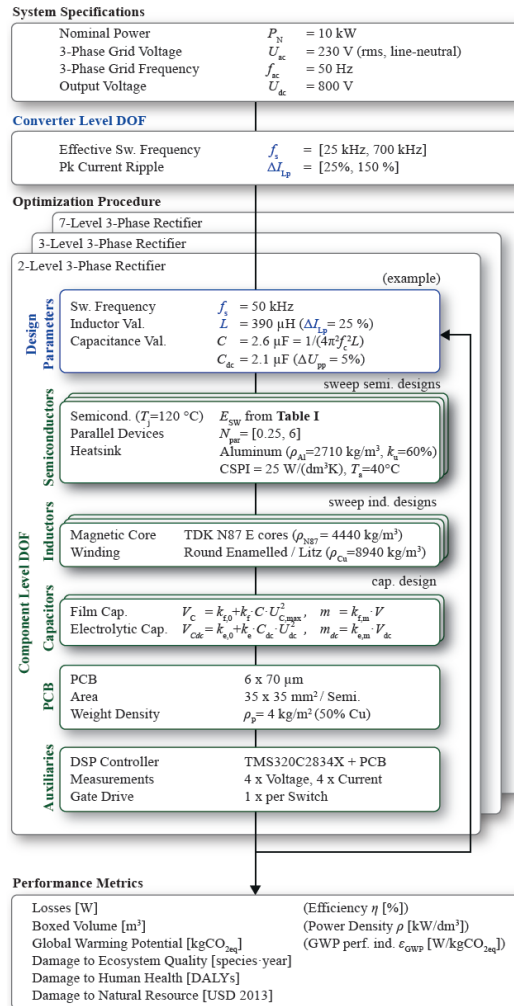
■ Key power electronic building block (PEBB) for three-phase PFC rectifiers & inverters



- **Degrees of freedom:**
- Switching freq. [25...700 kHz]
 - Rel. Ind. Peak cur. ripple [0.25...1.5]
 - Var. transistor chip area
 - Variable ind. size (N87; solid/litz)

- **Assumptions:**
- Junction temp. @ 120 °C
 - Ambient temp. 40 °C
 - Necessary heat sink vol. via CSPI = 25 W/(K dm³)

Multi-Objective Optimization Including Env. Impacts (1)

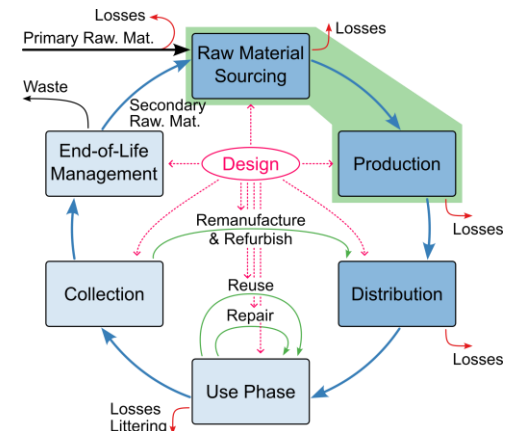


(!) Environmental Compatibility ε_{GWP} ($\text{W/kg CO}_2\text{eq}$)

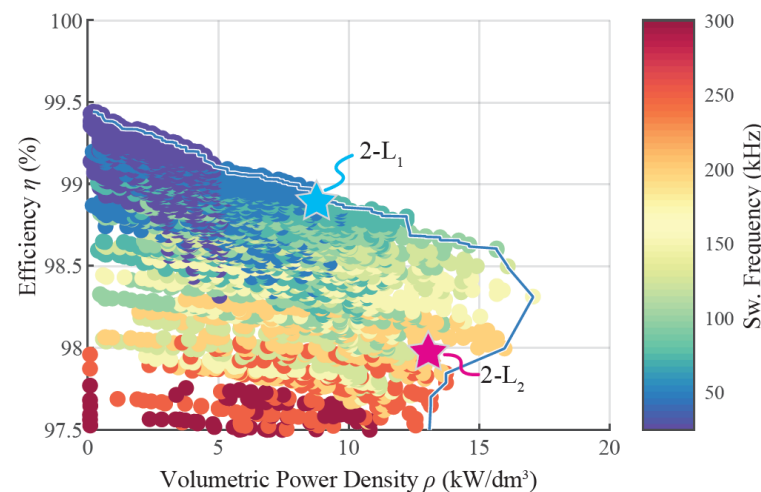
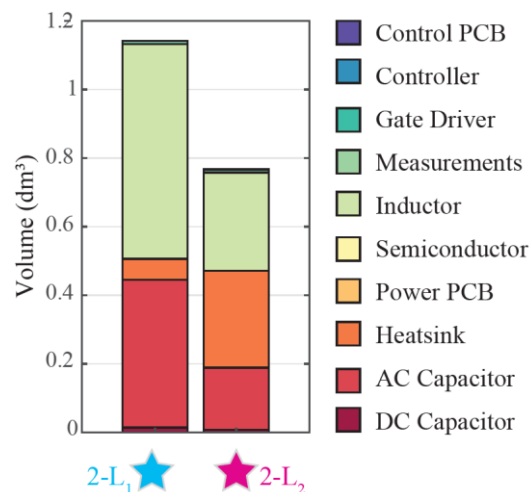
Trade-Offs

- Efficiency vs. power density
- Efficiency vs. environmental compatibility regarding embodied GWP (carbon footprint)

Env. Impacts with high uncertainties due to data availability/quality



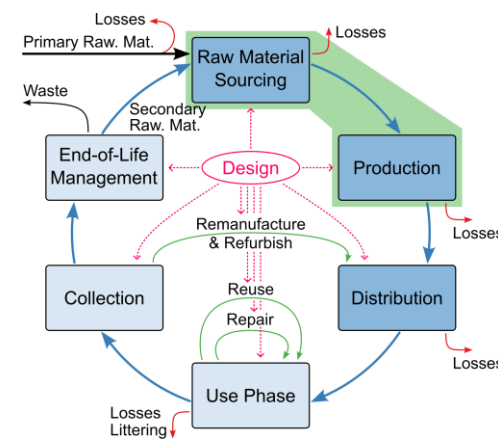
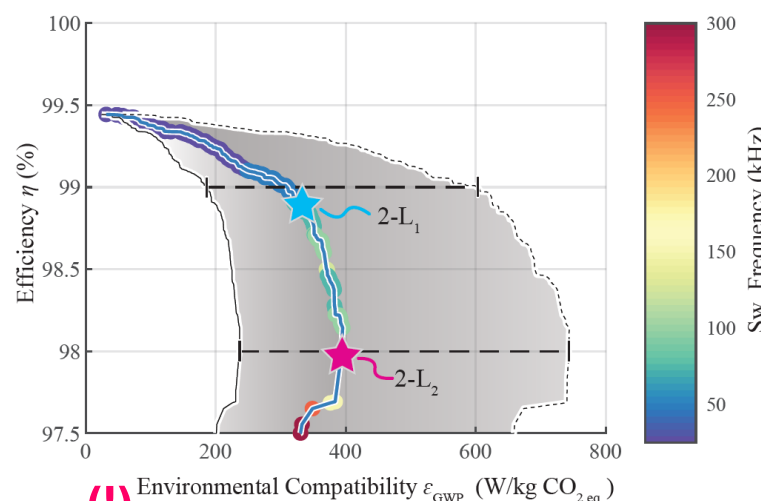
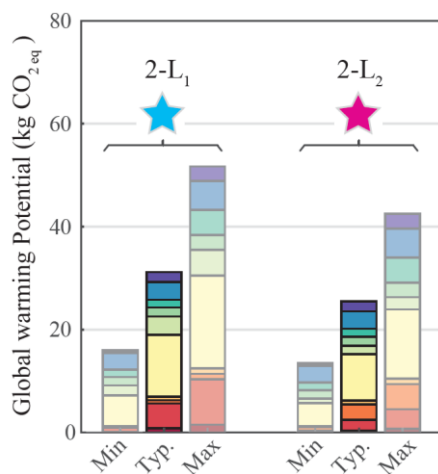
Multi-Objective Optimization Including Env. Impacts (2)



Trade-Offs

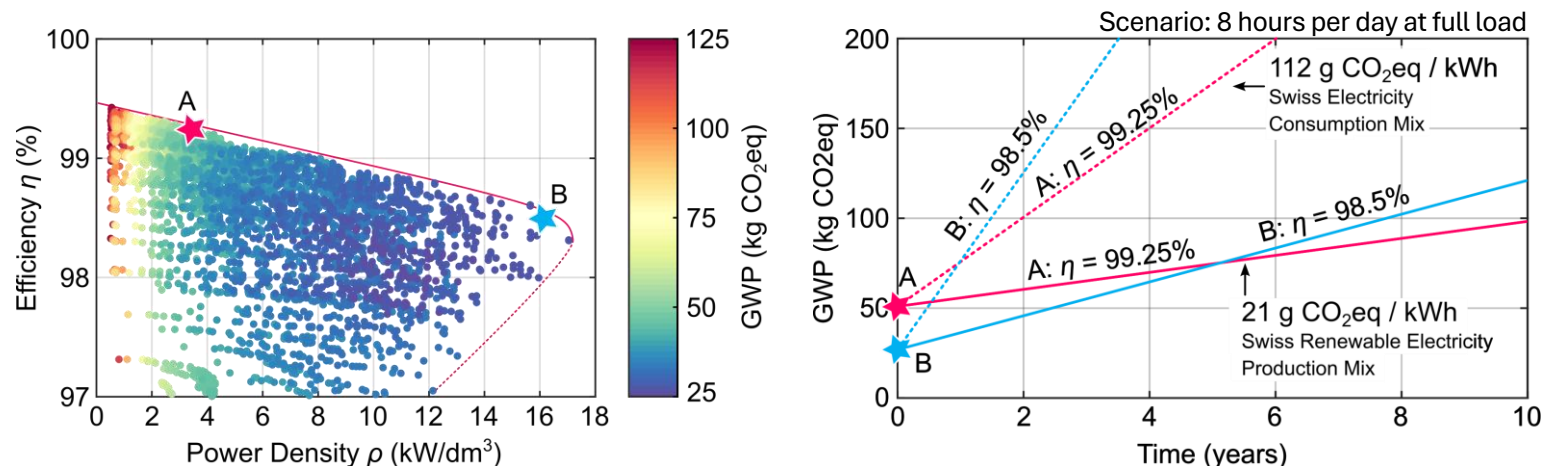
- Efficiency vs. power density
- Efficiency vs. environmental compatibility regarding embodied GWP (carbon footprint)

Env. Impacts with high uncertainties due to data availability/quality

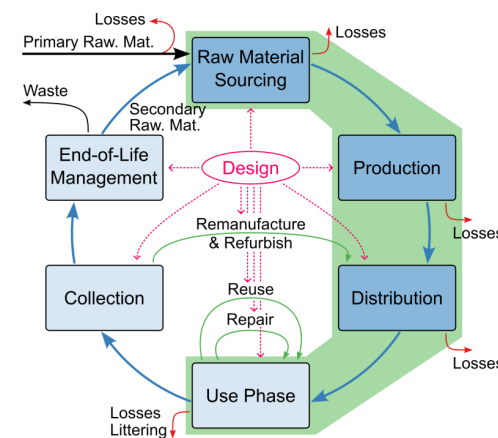
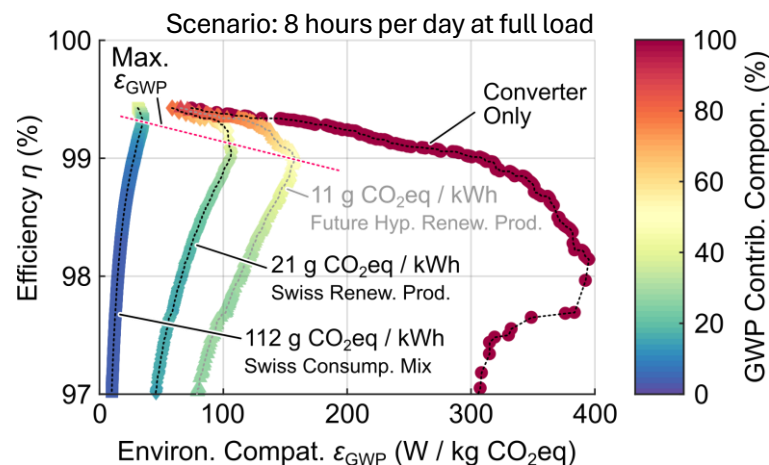


Multi-Objective Optimization Including the Use Phase

- Life-cycle carbon footprint strongly depends on electricity mix and mission profile / usage intensity

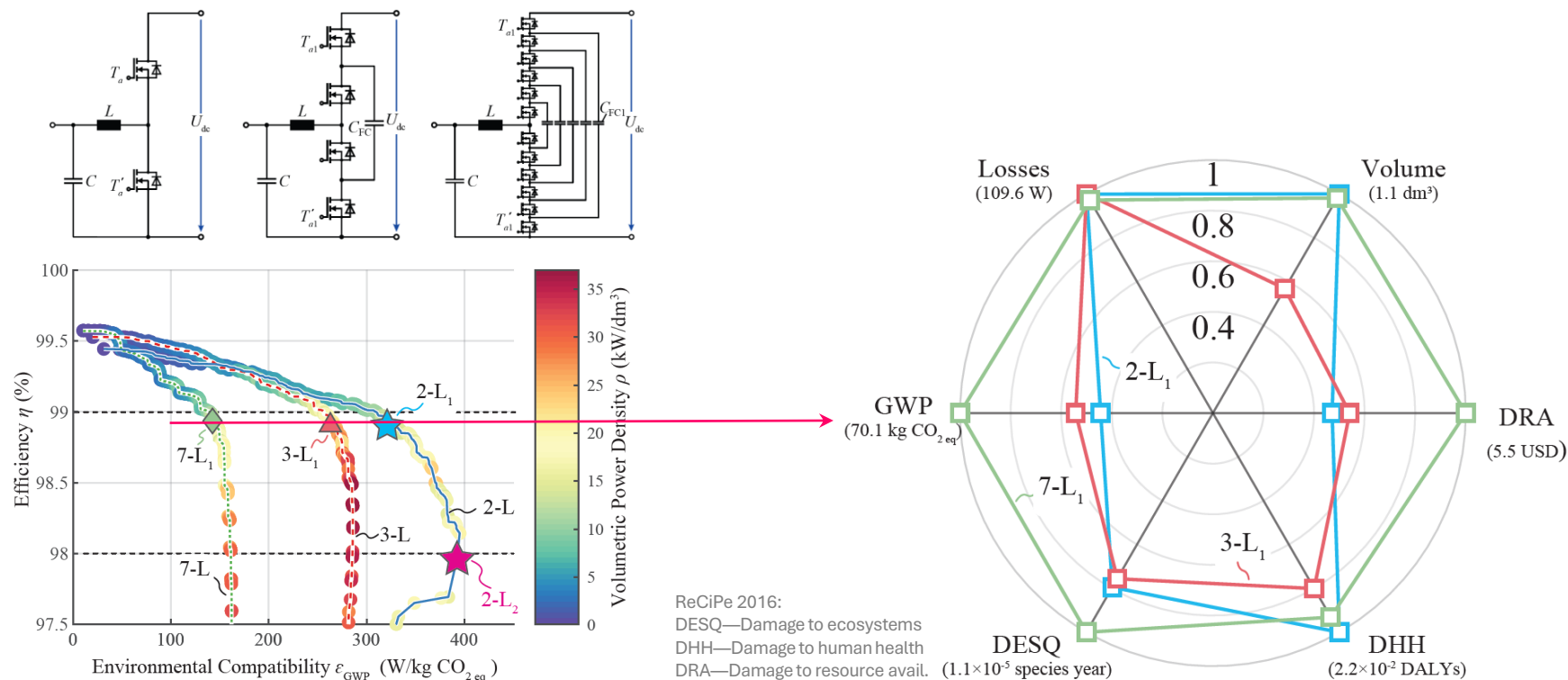


- Design should consider use phase for best life-cycle performance
- Analogy to total cost of ownership (TCO) perspective



Comprehensive Environmental Impact Profiles

- Different bridge-leg topologies — 2-Level (1200-V SiC) | 3-Level (650-V SiC) | 7-Level (200-V Si)



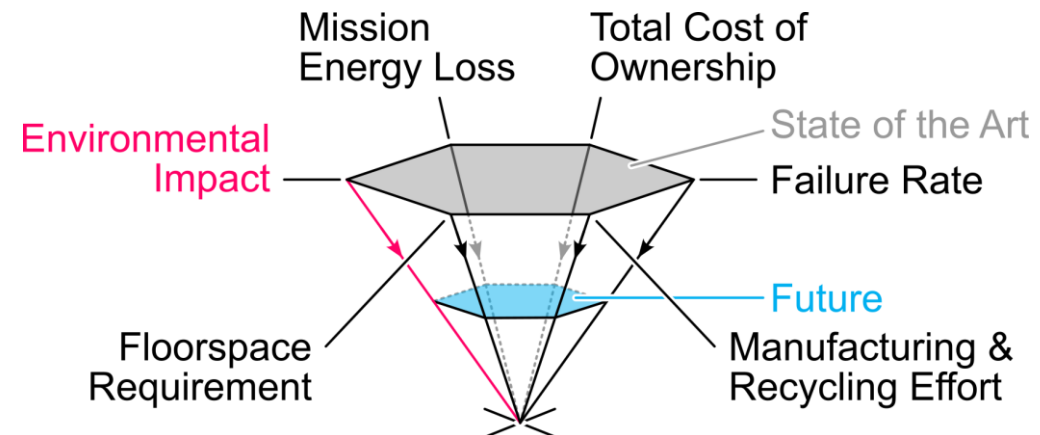
- Embod. env. footprint of 2L/3L/7L-designs with $\eta \approx 99\%$ and max. env. compat. ϵ_{GWP} in W / kg CO_2eq
- Same efficiency via different usage of act./pass. components — Different environmental impact profile!

Future Performance Indicators

- Assuming 20+ years lifetime → **Systems installed today reach end-of-life by 2050 (!)**
- Life cycle assessment (**LCA**) mandatory for all future system designs

■ Complete set of new performance indicators

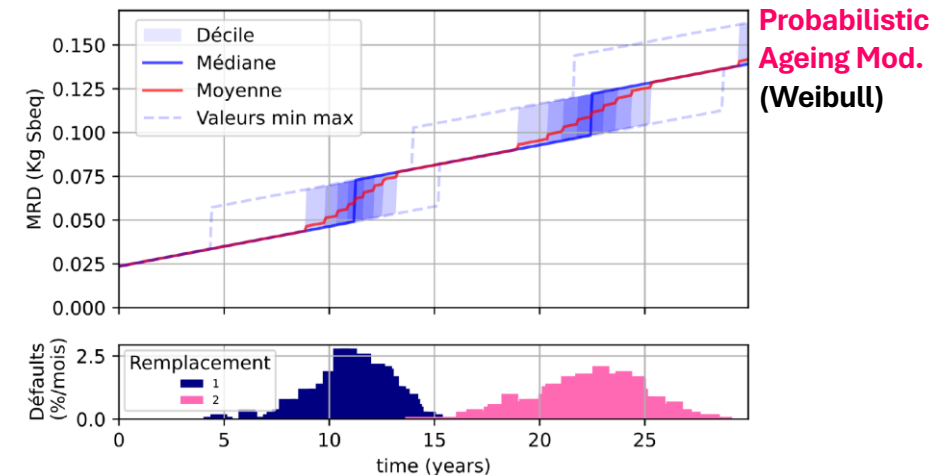
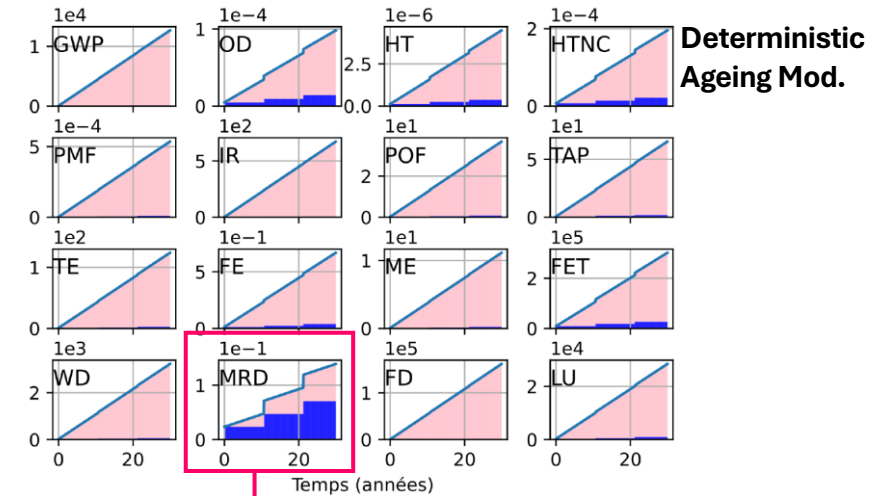
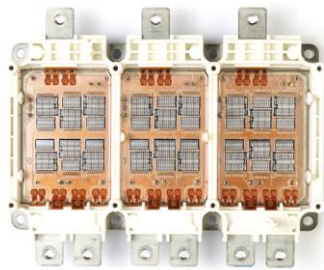
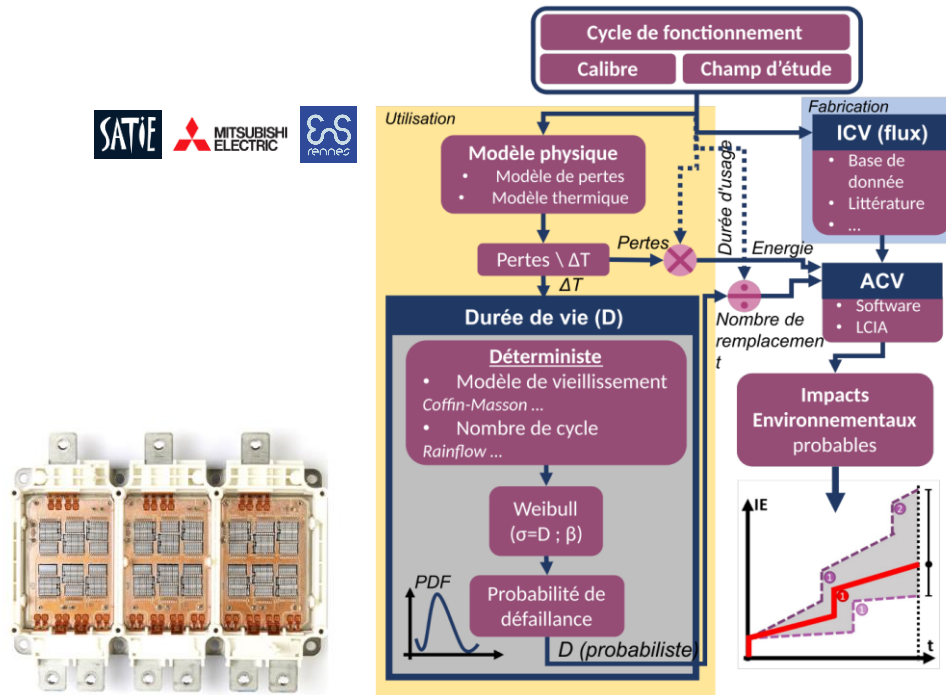
- Environmental impact [kg CO₂eq / kW, ...]
- Resource efficiency [kg_{xx} / kW]
- Embodied energy [kWh / kW]
- TCO [\$ / kW]
- Power density [kW/dm³, kW/dm²]
- Mission efficiency [%]
- Failure rate [h⁻¹]



- Mission/location-specific **trade-off embod. vs. life-cycle environ. impact** — Losses / Reliability / Lifetime
- Compatibility with a circular economy (!) — **Repairability / Reusability / Recyclability**

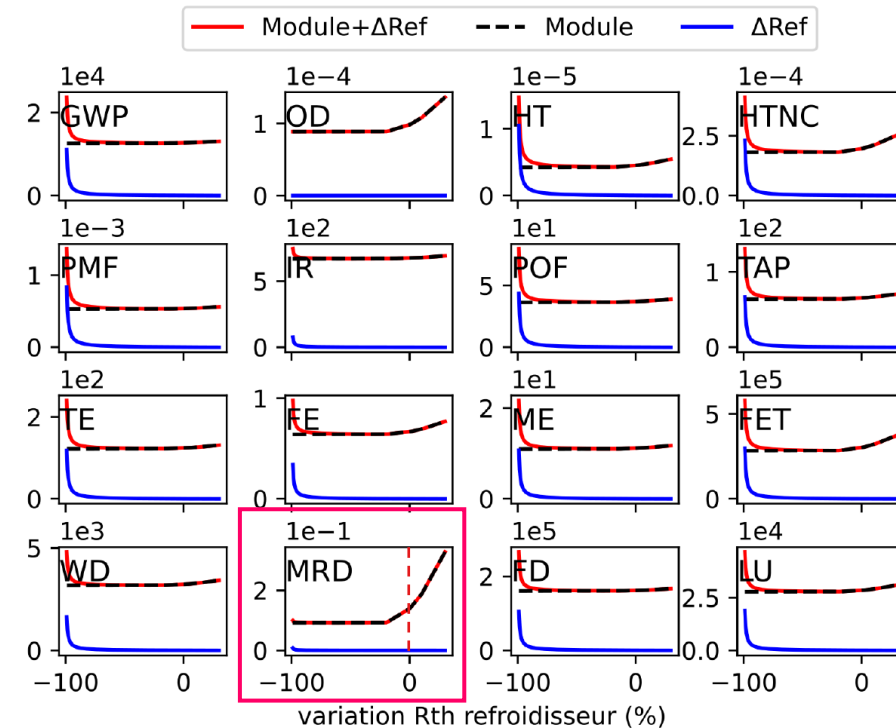
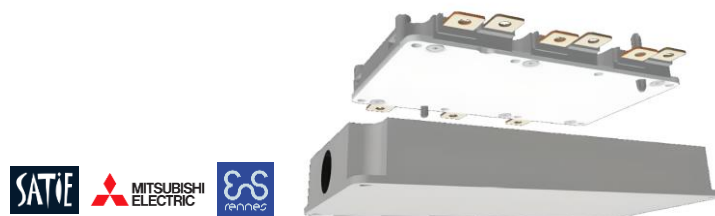
Remark: Ageing Modeling and Environmental Impacts (1)

- IGBT module / 30 yr / 20'000 op. hours WLTP cycle
- Life-cycle environmental impacts with **(probabilistic) ageing models** (Coffin-Manson) & replacement
- Focus on **MRD** — Resource use, minerals and metals



Remark: Ageing Modeling and Environmental Impacts (2)

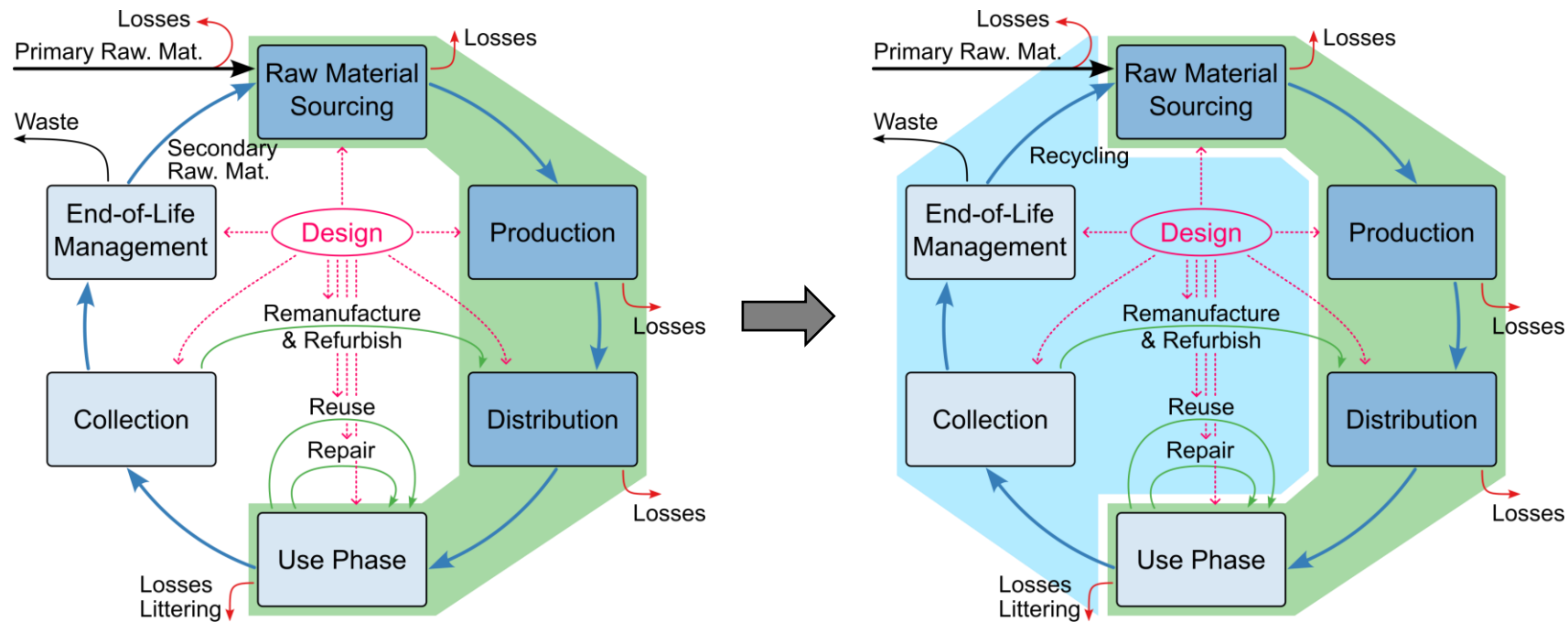
- Larger heat sink: **Higher realization effort** \leftrightarrow Lower temperatures and **slower ageing**
- IGBT module / 30 yr / 20'000 op. hours WLTP cycle



- Optimum thermal resistance R_{th} (heat sink size) exists!

“Closing the Loop”

- Including **4R** into the design process — **Repair / Reuse / Refurbish / Recycle**

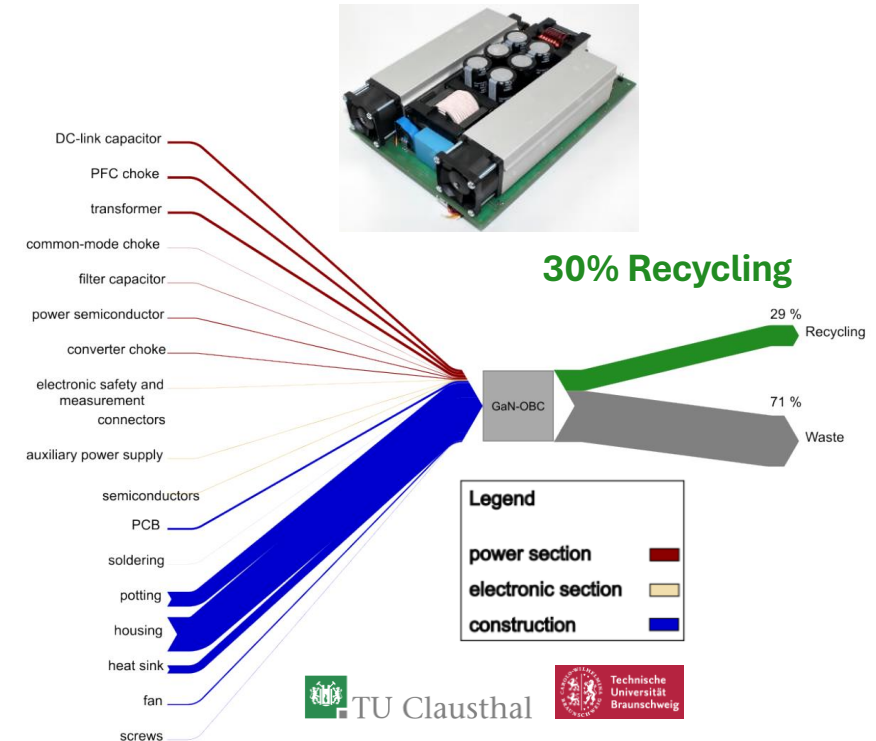
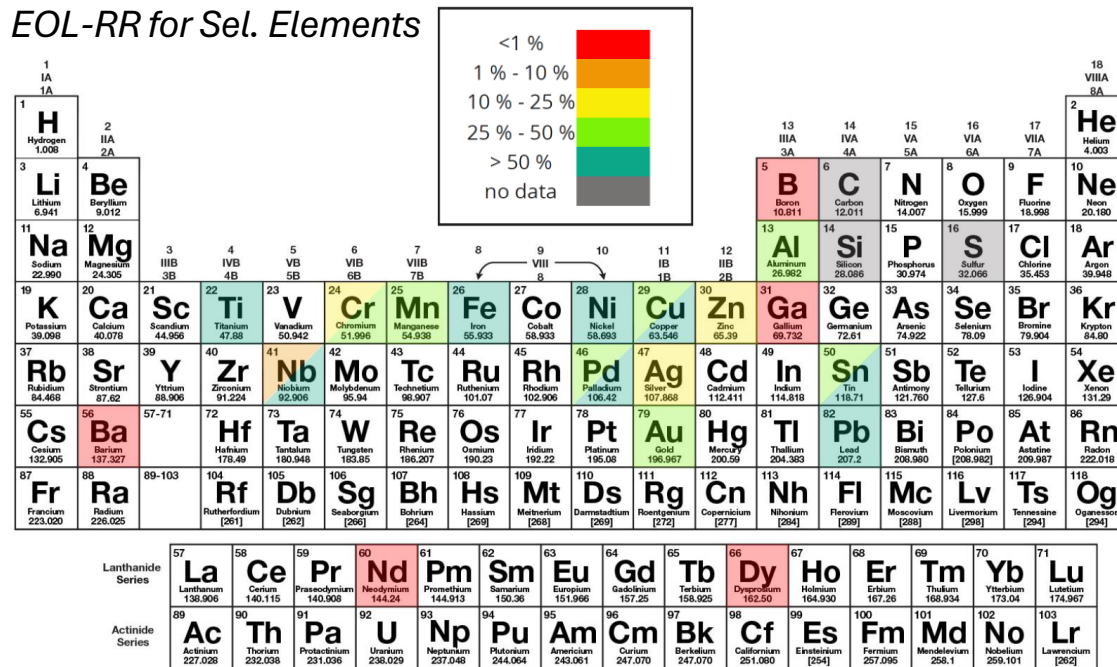


- **How to quantify** repairability / reusability / ...?
- Value proposition through life-cycle cost perspective (suppliers *and* customers)?

Recycling Potential of On-Board Chargers

- Theor. **best-case** mass-based **end-of-life recycling rates** (EOL-RR) for GaN-based 3.7-kW EV OBC

EOL-RR for Sel. Elements

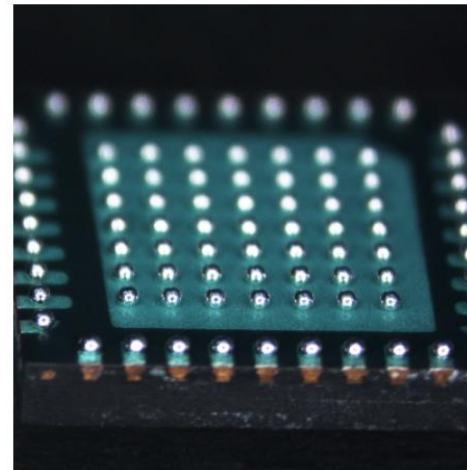
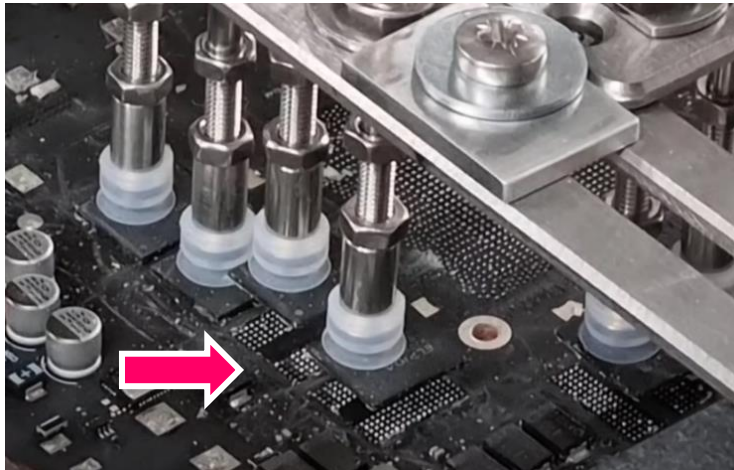


- Includes (currently) low typical collection rates
- EOL-RR data availability / quality: Only for metals, wide range of reported values

Source: C. Minke, R. Mallwitz, P. Burfeind, and D. Hu, "Recycling potential of power electronics solutions - an exemplary study about on-board chargers," in *Proc. 13th Int. Conf. Integrated Power Systems (CIPS)*, Düsseldorf, Germany, Mar. 2024.

Remark: Electronic Component Reclaim / Reuse

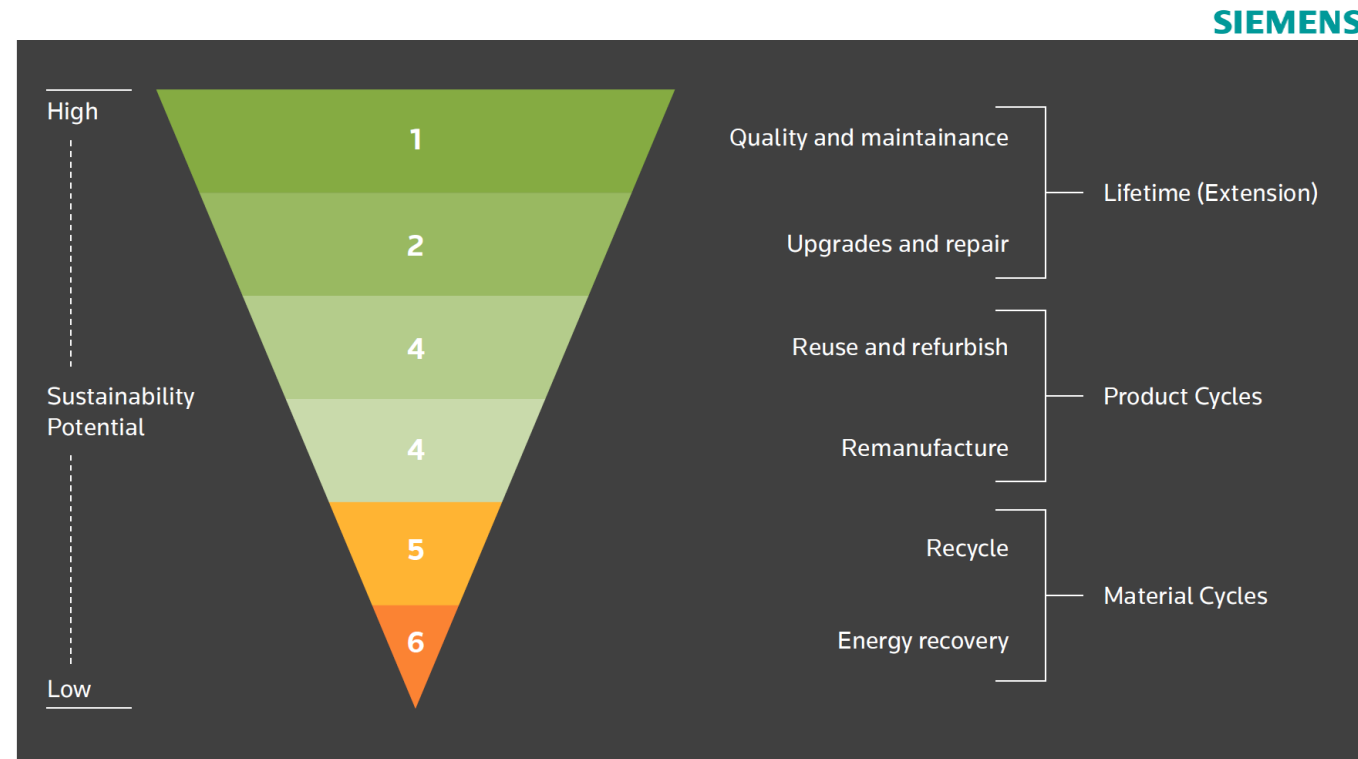
- Electronic waste recycling today: Shred / incinerate / extract most valuable resources — if at all!
- Alternative: **Reclaim & refurbish** / Desolder & re-ball



- Challenging logistics etc. for reclaiming PCBs from customers / Circular economy thinking needed
- Business case today especially for **scarce / valuable components**

Sustainability Potential

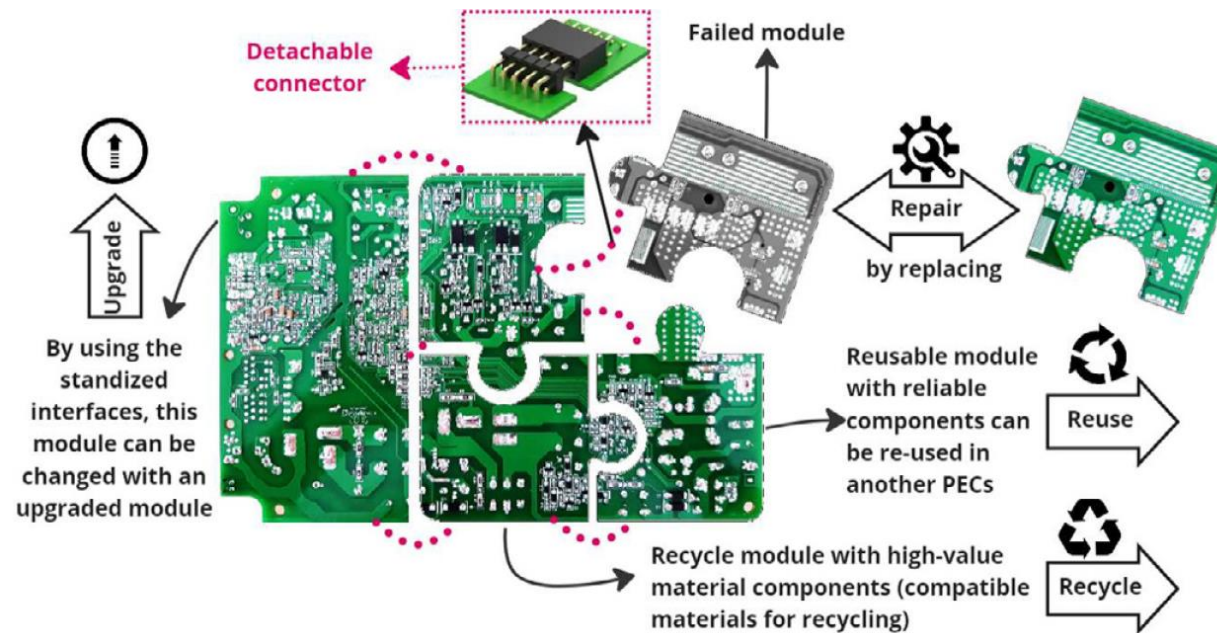
■ 2nd  circular economy principle: **Circulate products and materials at their highest values**



■ **High reliability / lifetime extension** → **Lifetime / aging modeling**

Modularity: Upgrade, Reuse, Repair, ...

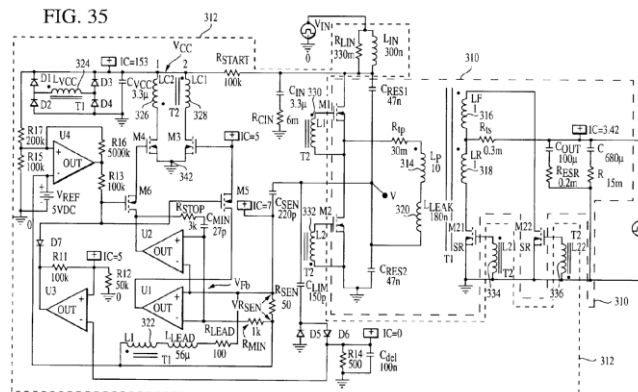
- Module design for ease of disassembly: **Maintainability, upgradability, repairability, reusability, recyclability**



- **Grouping of components** according to reliability level and expected lifetime / level of reusability or recyclability / ...
- Standardized interfaces / **Mechanically loose connections** ↔ **Electrical characteristics**
- Potential for leveraging economies of scale to compensate interface costs

Integration: Minimize Size / Initial Resource Usage

- **Maximum integration facilitates extreme power densities (10...100 x conv.)**
- Example: **30 kW** non-isolated fixed-ratio conversion (**400 V to 800 V**)
in 92 x 80 x 7.4 mm³ — **550 kW/dm³** and 130 kW/kg
- **Low initial material usage** ↔ **Difficult material separation**
- **Importance of recyclability?**

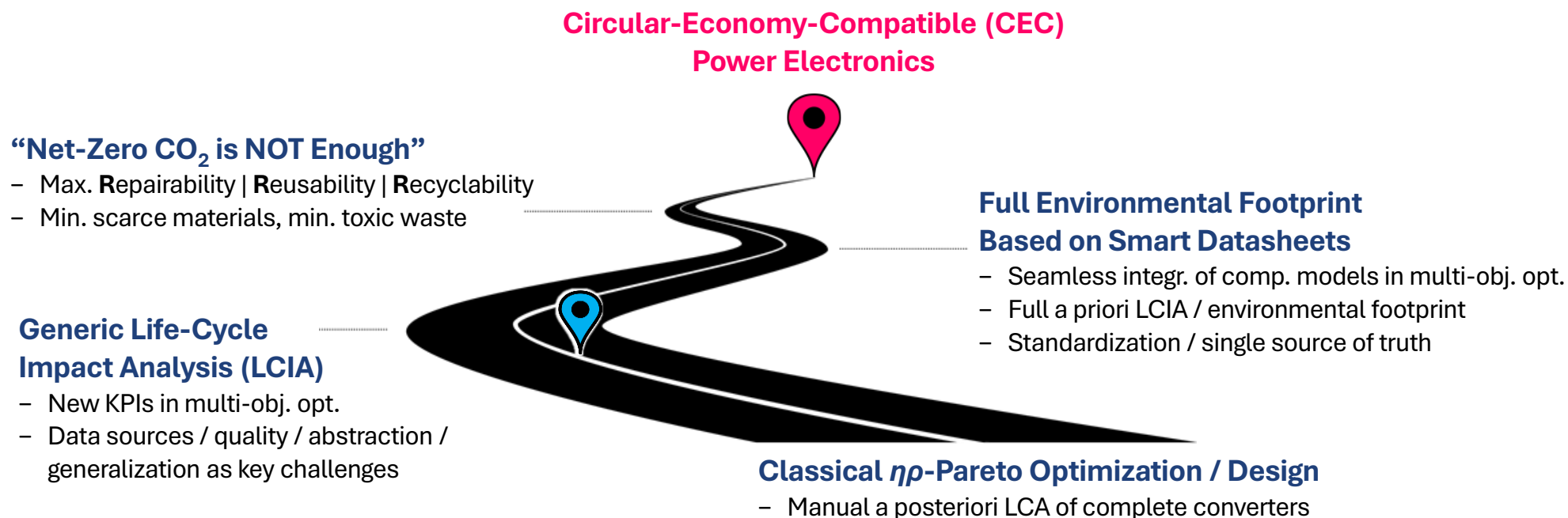


Example: Isolated dc-dc



CEC Power Electronics Roadmap

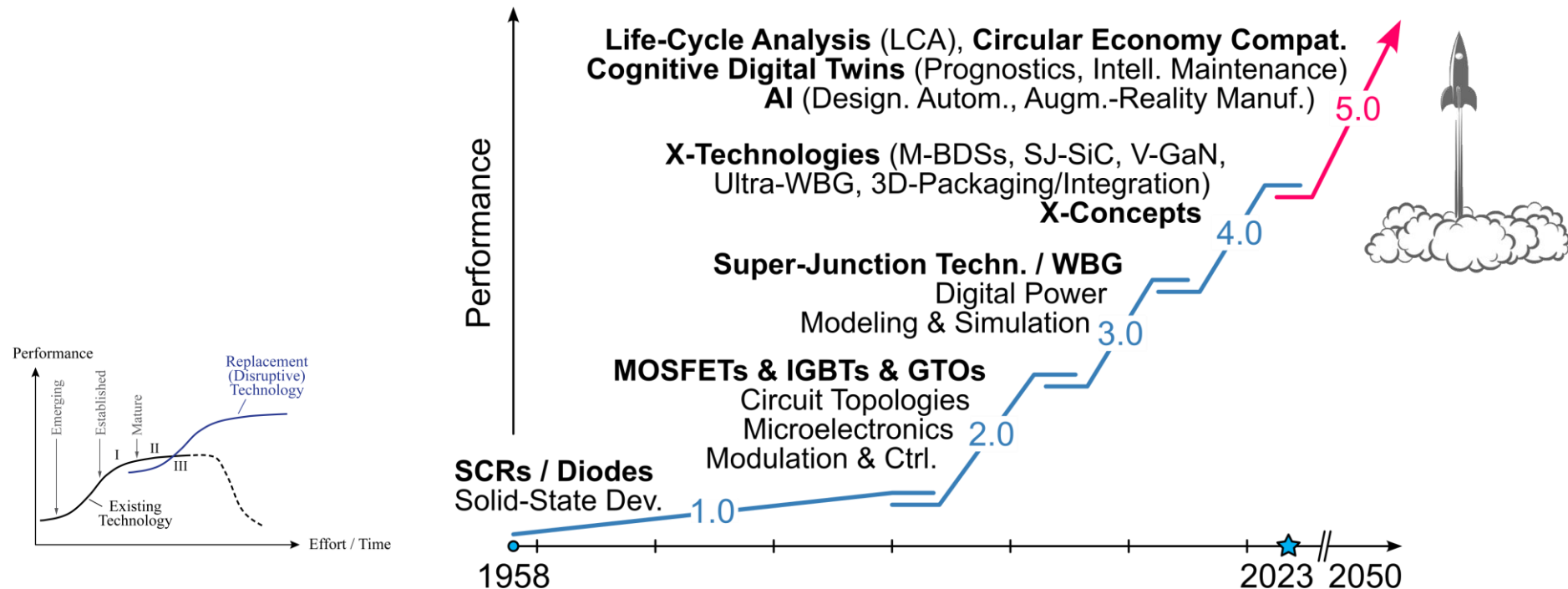
- **Environmental awareness** as integral part of **environmentally conscious power electronics design**



- **Automated design** | **On-line monitoring** | **Preventive maintenance** | **Digital product passport**

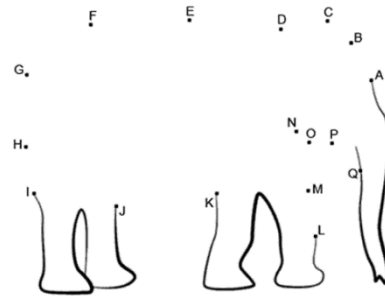
Power Electronics 5.0

- Power Electronics 1.0 → Power Electronics 5.0
- X-Technologies & X-Concepts
- New main performance indicators (!)



- Life-cycle analysis / circular economy compatibility are key for sustainable Power Electronics 5.0

Thank You!



Further Reading

- J. Huber, L. Imperiali, D. Menzi, F. Musil, and J. W. Kolar, “Life-cycle carbon footprints of low-voltage motor drives with 600-V GaN or 650-V SiC power transistors,” in *Proc. Int. Conf. Integr. Power Syst. (CIPS)*, Düsseldorf, Germany, Mar. 2024.
- J. Huber, L. Imperiali, D. Menzi, F. Musil, and J. W. Kolar, “Energy efficiency is not enough!,” *IEEE Power Electron. Mag.*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 18–31, Mar. 2024.
- L. Imperiali, D. Menzi, J. W. Kolar, and J. Huber, “Multi-objective minimization of life-cycle environmental impacts of three-phase AC-DC converter building blocks,” in *Proc. IEEE Appl. Power Electron. Conf. Expo. (APEC)*, Long Beach, CA, USA, Feb. 2024.
- J. W. Kolar, L. Imperiali, D. Menzi, J. Huber, and F. Musil, “Net zero CO₂ by 2050 is NOT Enough (!),” *Keynote at the 25th Europ. Conf. Power Electron. Appl. (EPE)*, Aalborg, Denmark, Sep. 2023.

