Climate change and nuclear power

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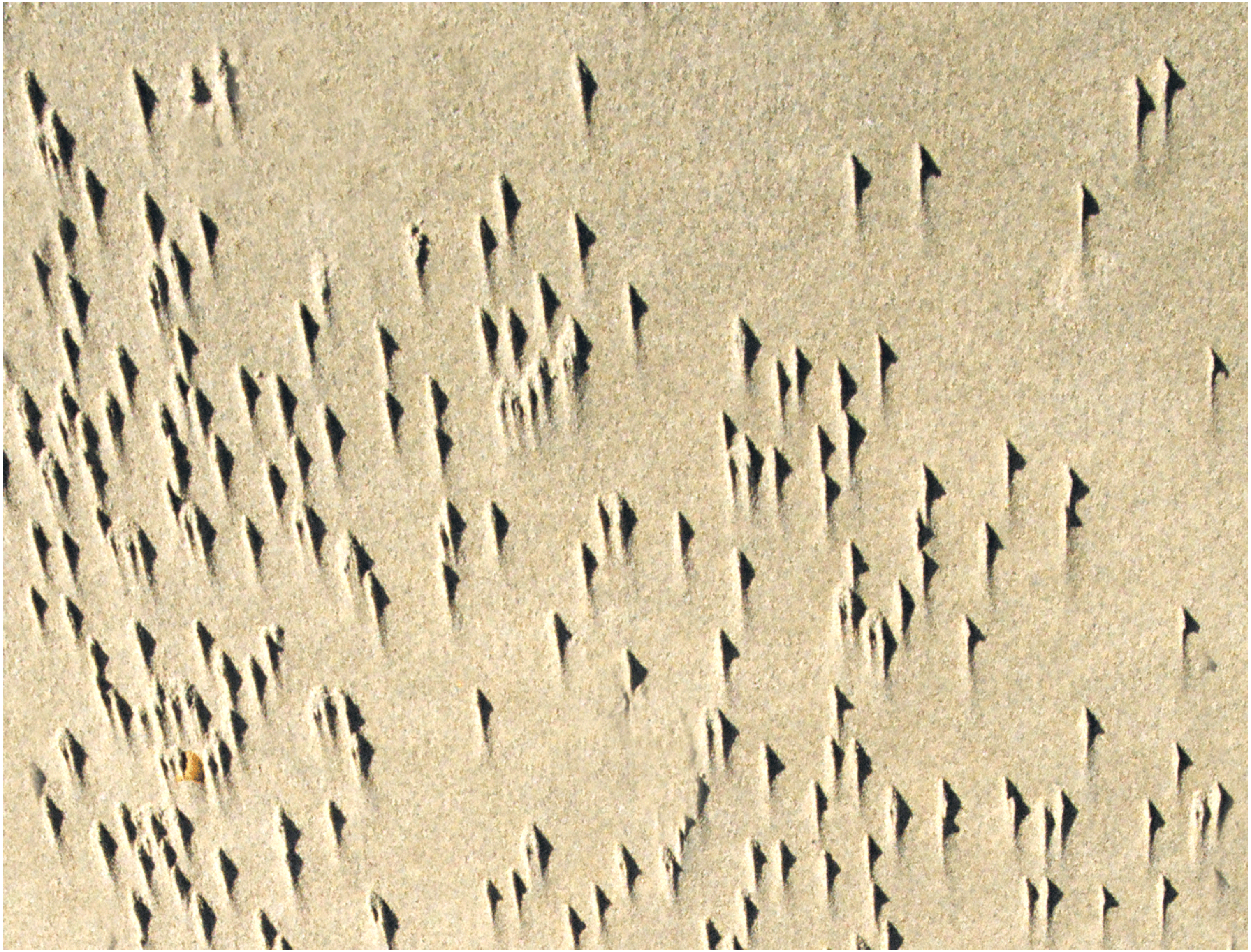
2006



Nuclear power - the energy balance

by

J.W. Storm van Leeuwen and P.B. Smith

August 2005

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Nuclear power - the energy balance

History of the study

About the study

Data:

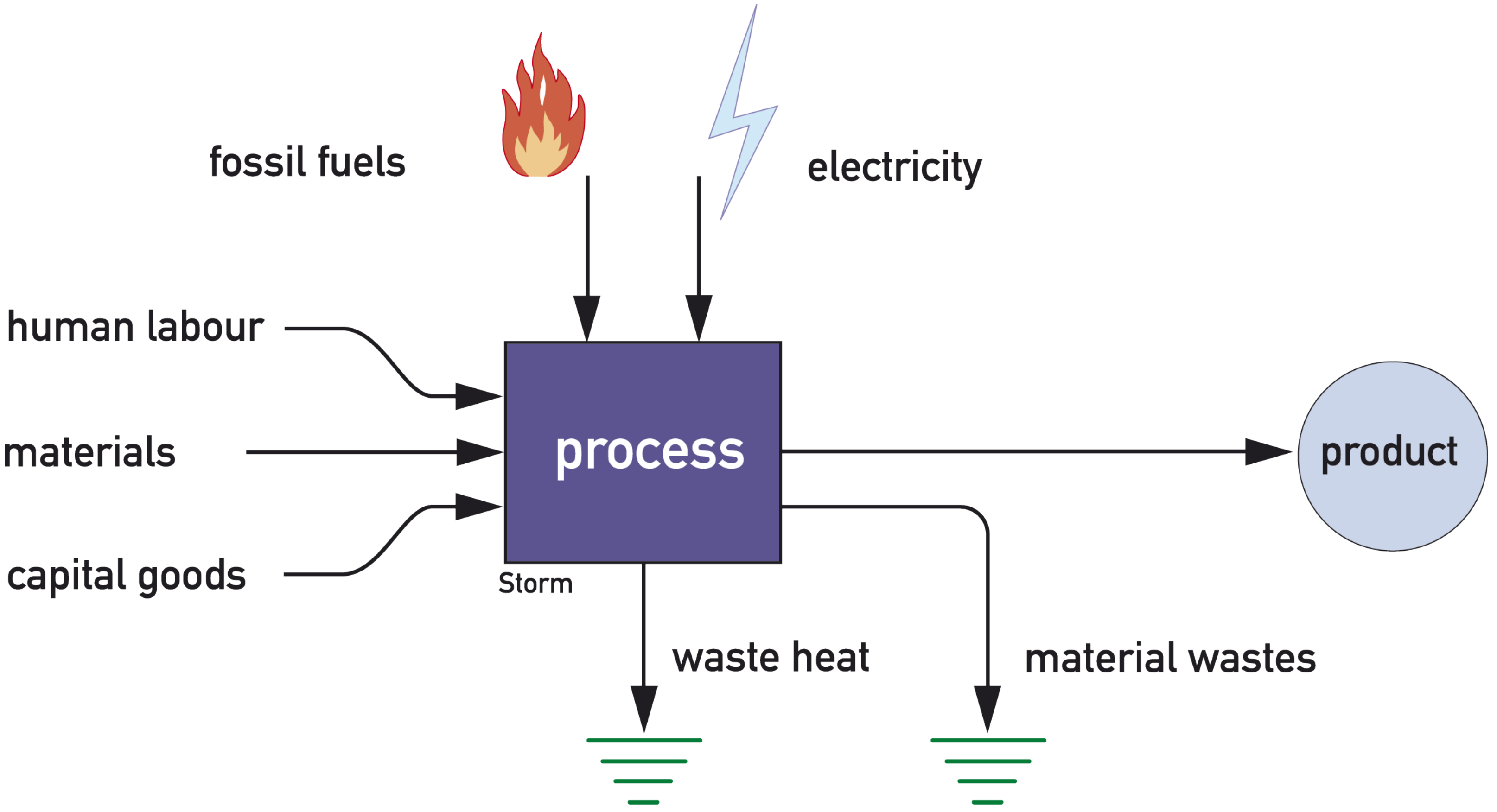
exclusively from nuclear industry itself

About the study

Methodology:

- physical relationships and quantities:
  mass and energy
- life cycle assessment (LCA)
- process analysis
- energy analysis of complex systems
  methods proven during the
  1970s and 1980s

Process analysis



Unique features of our study

- Exhaustive analysis
- Energy debt
  - construction
  - dismantling
- Ore grade - energy relationship
- Empirical figures, vs unproven concepts
- Larger database, recent data

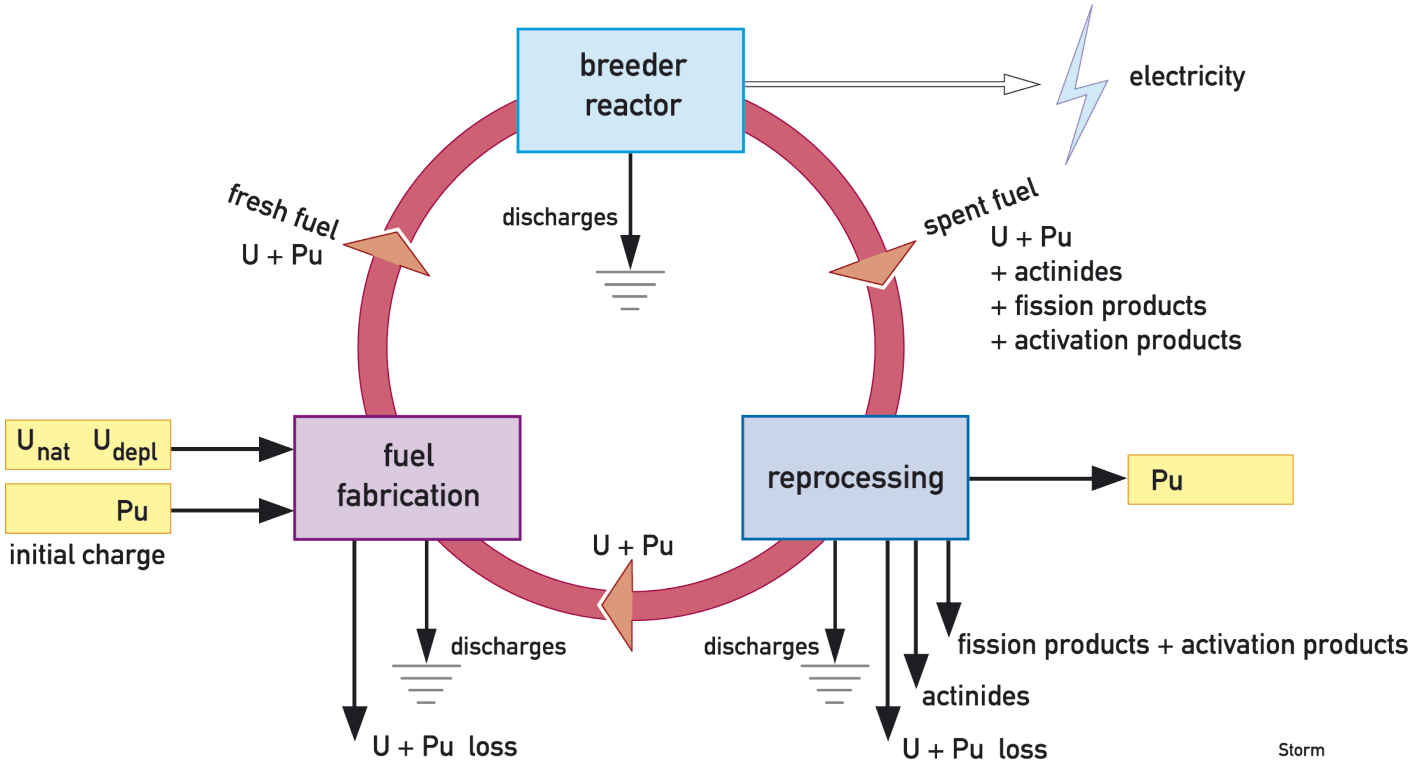
Contents

- Reactor technology
- Energy for energy
- Greenhouse gases
- Nuclear share
- Energy from uranium
- Conclusions

Reactor technology

- Thermal neutron reactors
  - LWR
  - other ('advanced')
- U-Pu breeder
- Th-U breeder

Breeder cycle



State of technology

LWR: mature
uranium efficiency ~0.7% maximum

Advanced thermal neutron reactors:
about same uranium efficiency as LWR

U-Pu breeder: proved not feasible
at least not within next 3-5 decades

Thorium breeder: still further away

Choice for the next decades

Thermal neutron reactors:
mainly LWR

Once-through fuel cycle

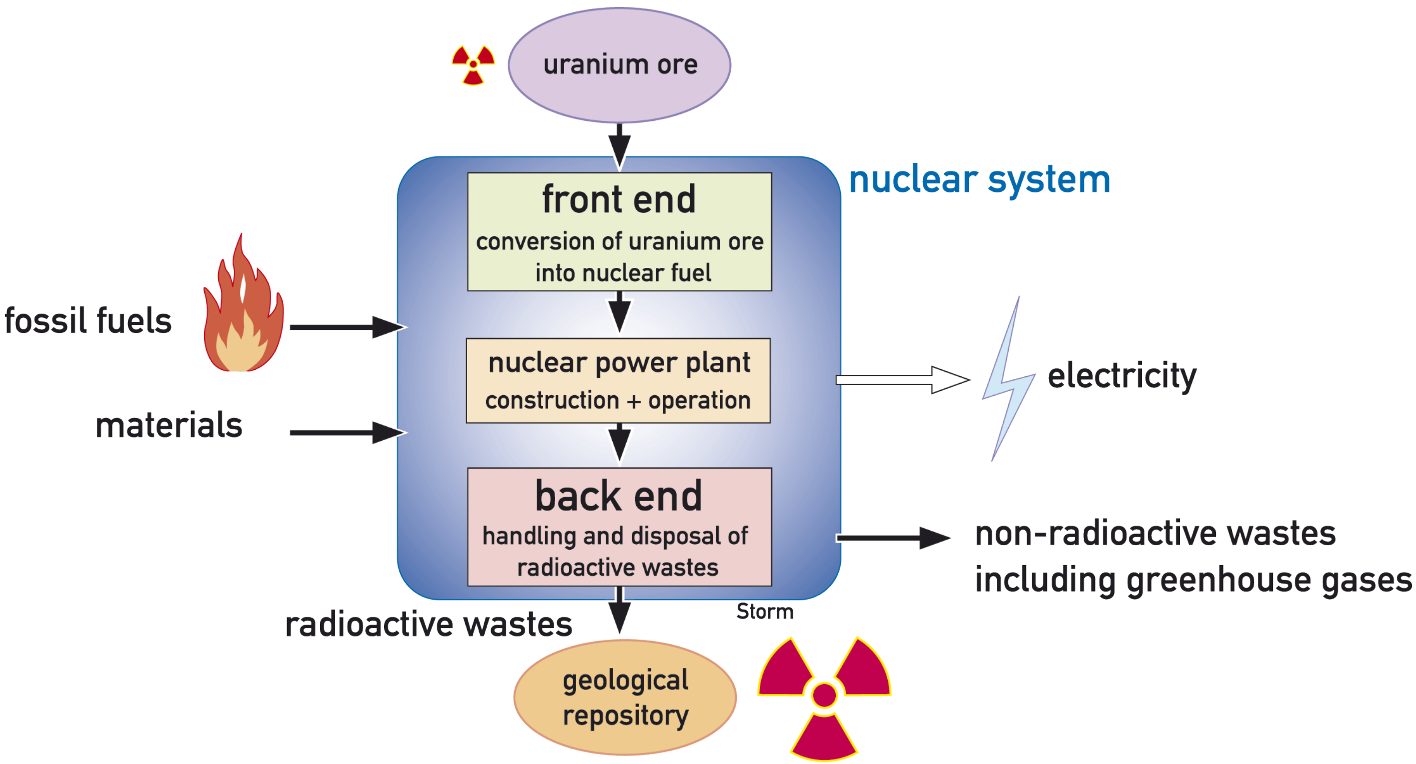
Key points

- Nuclear and greenhouse gases
- Nuclear share
- Uranium: how much energy?

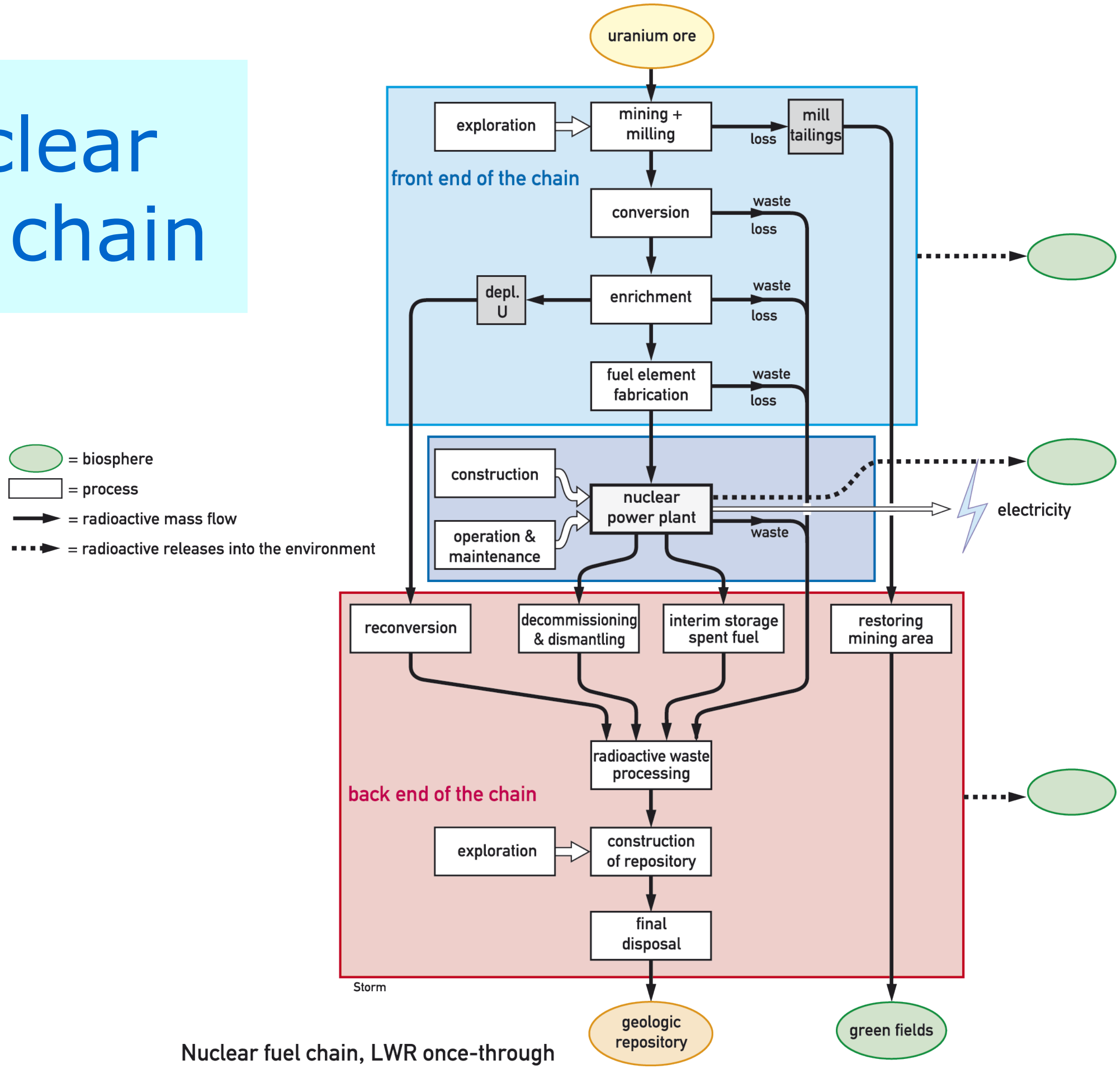
Energy for energy

- Releasing useful energy from uranium costs energy
- Nuclear reactor part of a complex system
- Nuclear process chain: conventional industrial and nuclear operations

Basic nuclear process chain

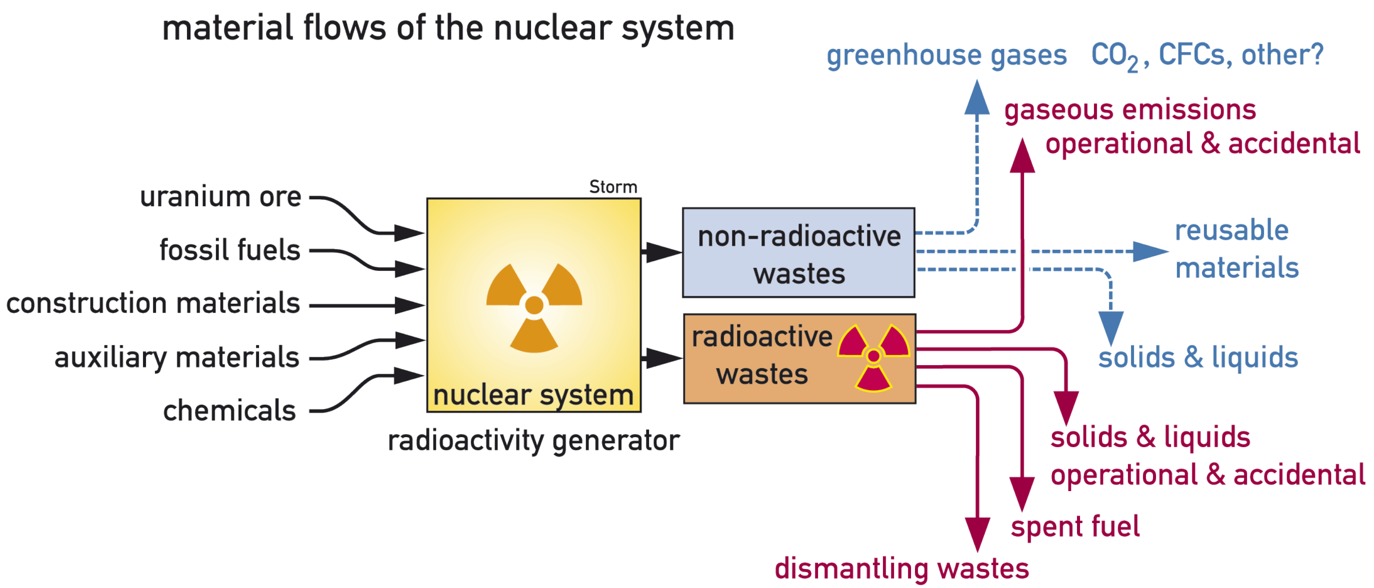


Full nuclear process chain

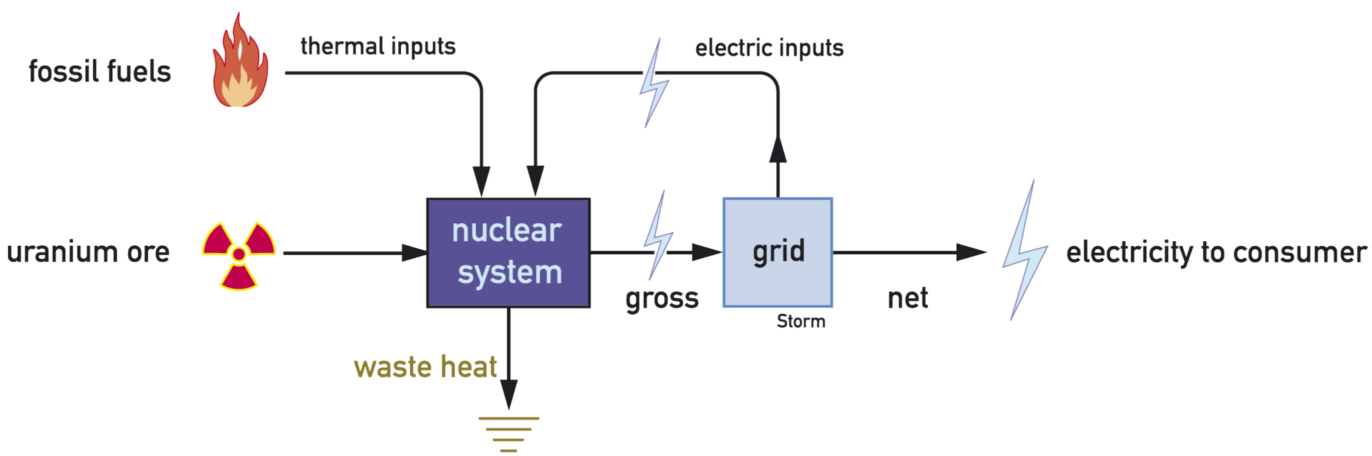


Nuclear fuel chain, LWR once-through

Waste flows of the nuclear system

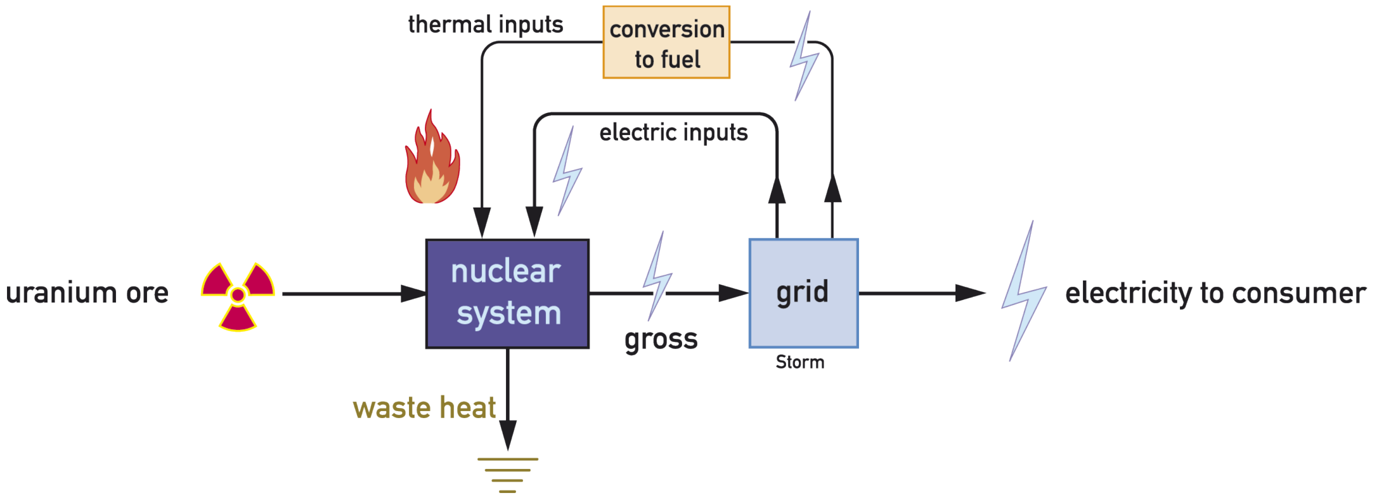


Energy flows of the nuclear system



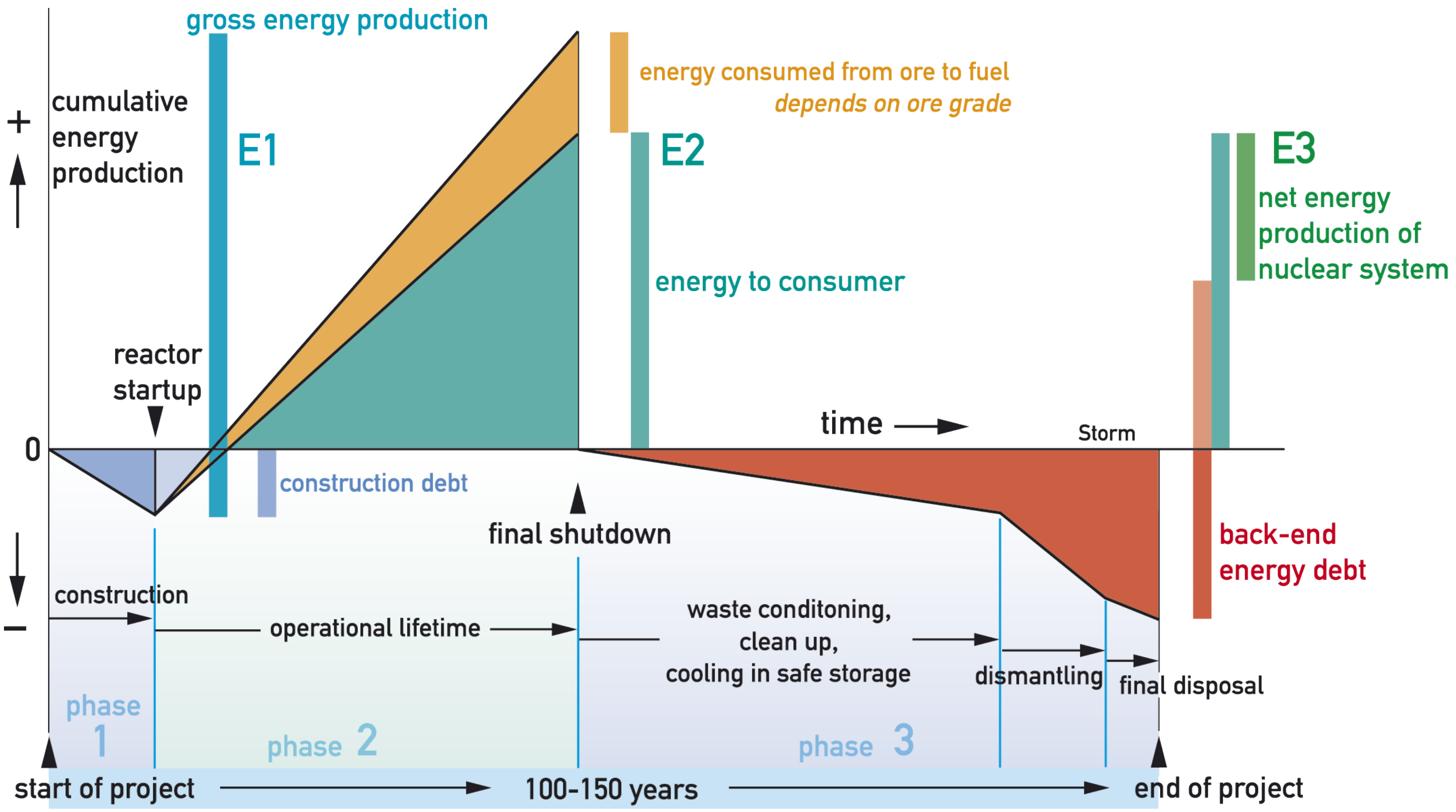
Fossil fuel-assisted system (current situation)

Energy flows of the nuclear system



All-nuclear system (comparable to renewables)

Energy debt



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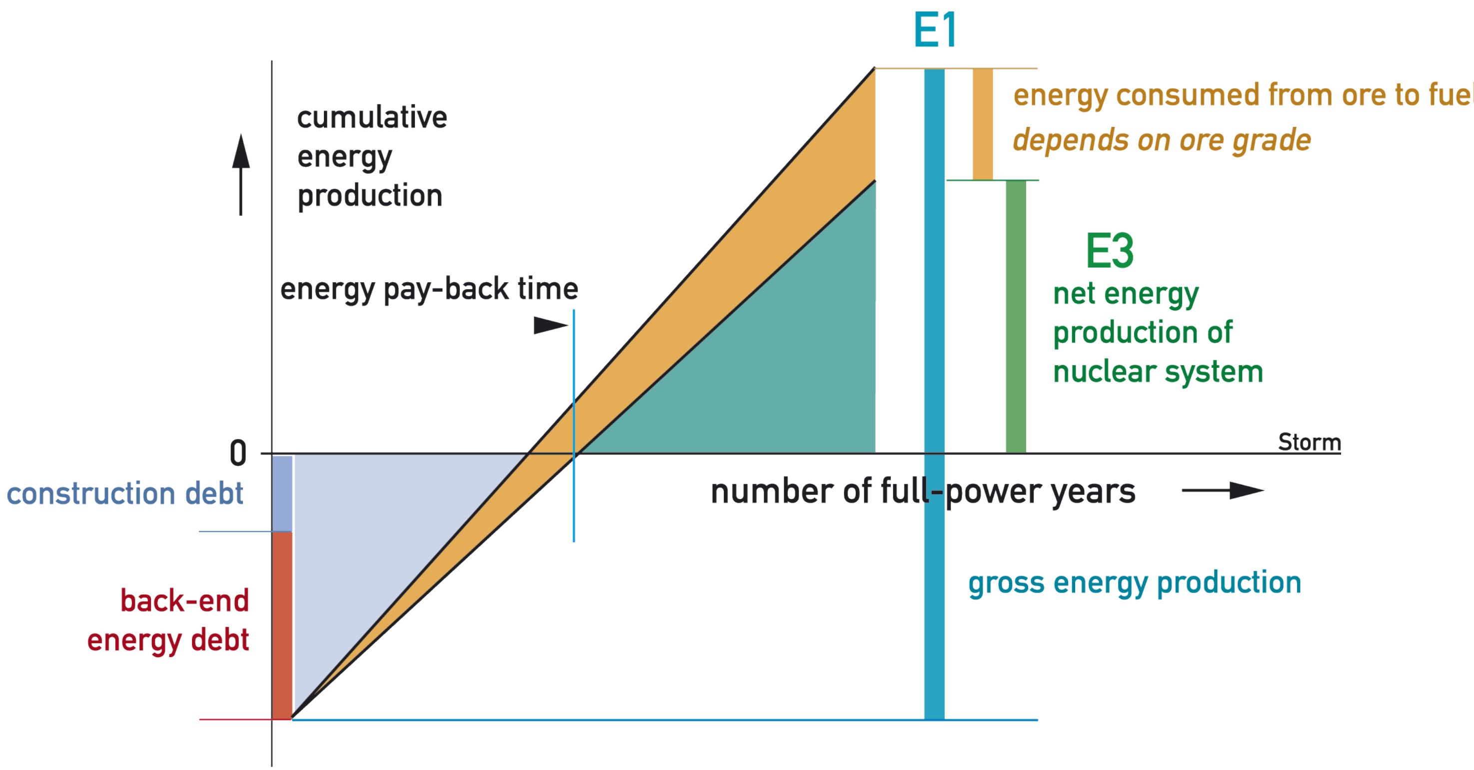
Energy debt 'capitalized'



Greenhouse gases

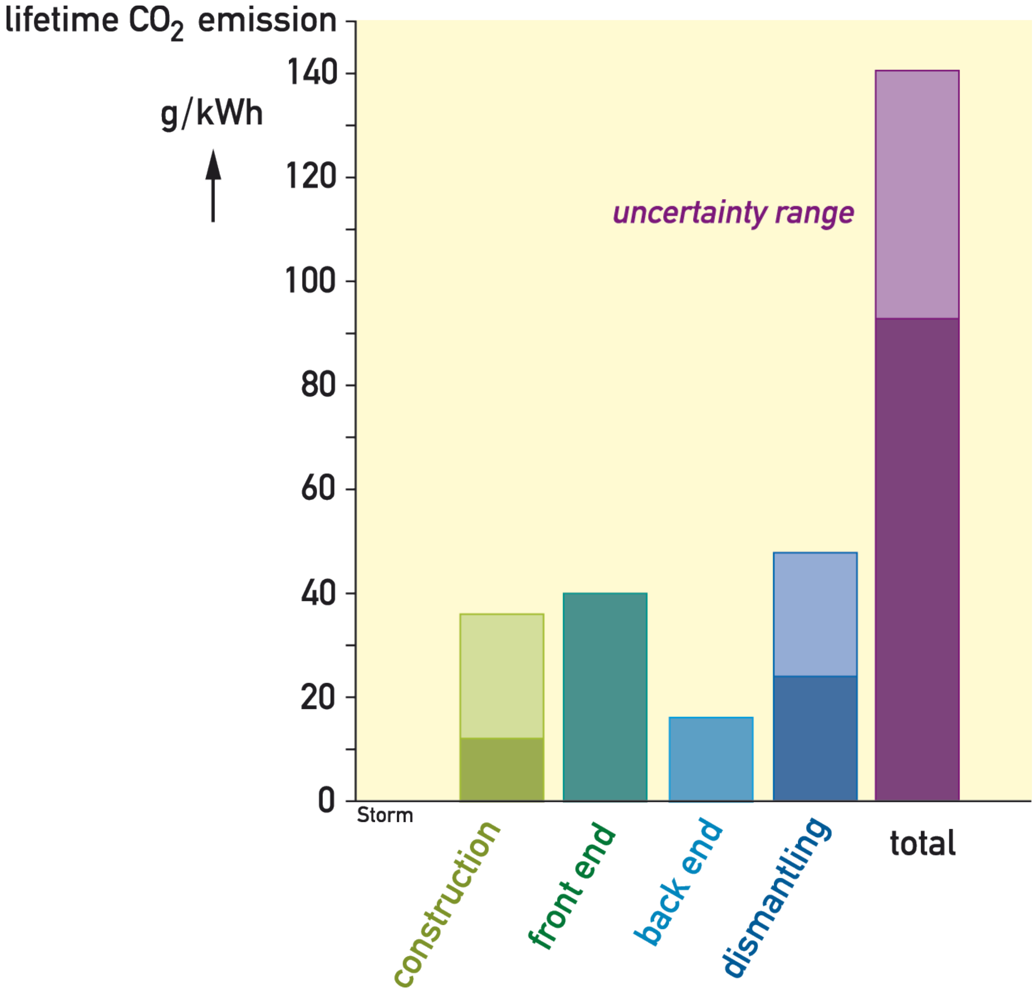
- Carbon dioxide CO_2
- Other greenhouse gases

Only carbon dioxide emisions analyzed

CO_2 emission from construction

	our study		Sizewell B
	low	high	
total CO_2, Tg	2.5	7.5	3.74
spec CO_2, g/kWh	12	35	14

CO_2 emissions



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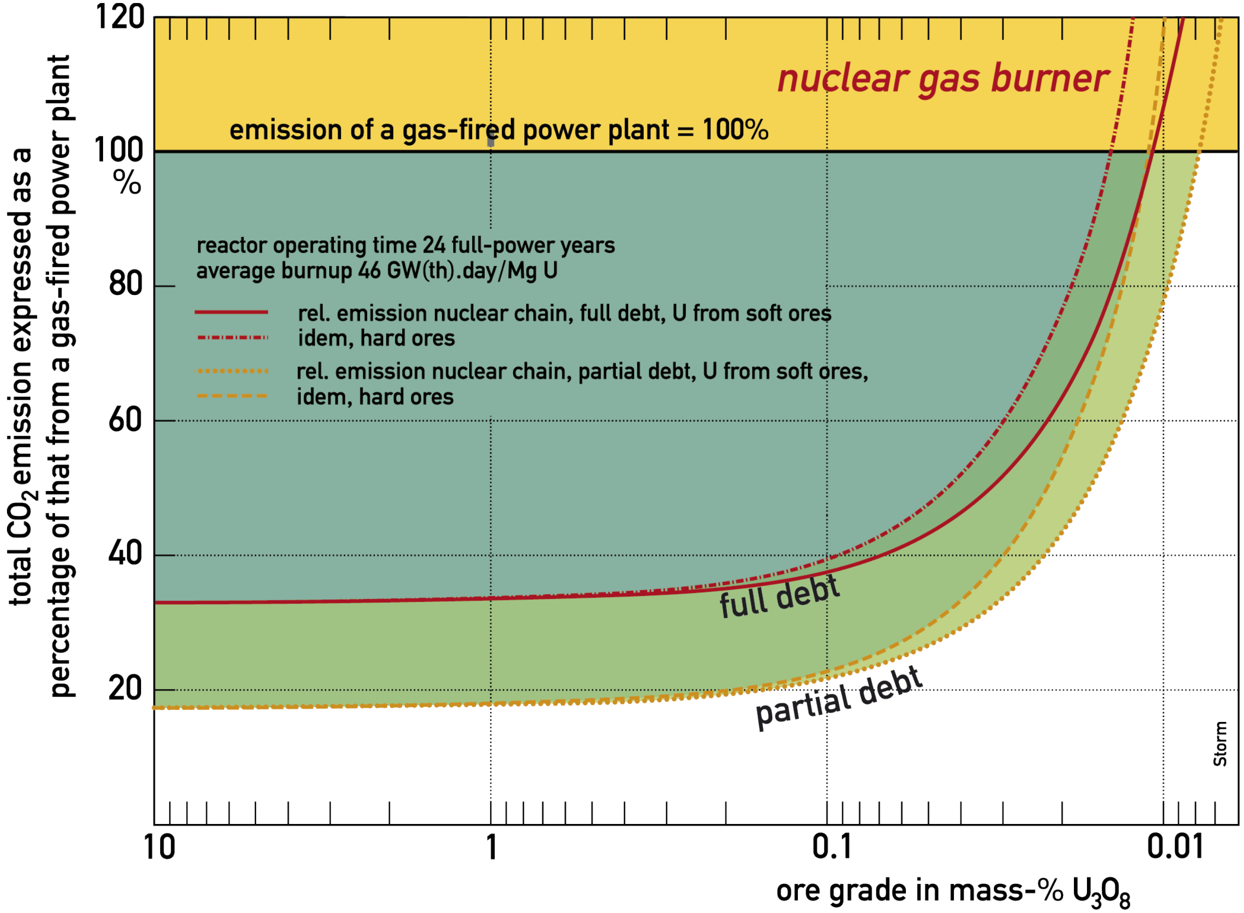
Specific emission of CO_2 vs ore grade



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Emission of other greenhouse gases

- Enrichment ~5 g CO_2-eq/kWh freon-114.

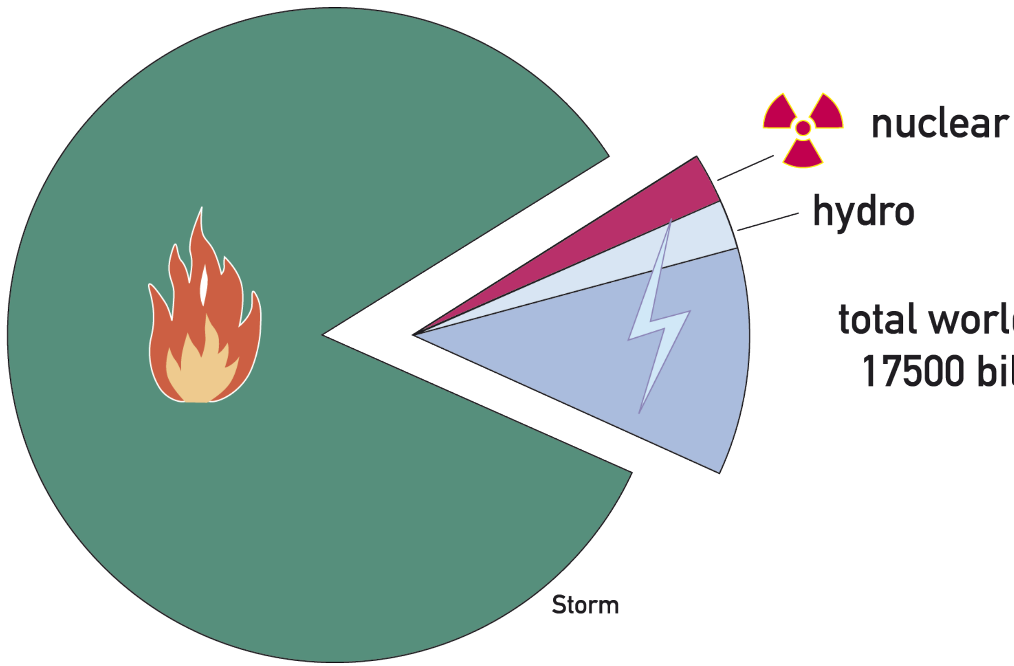
- Other greenhouse gases?
- All nuclear-related processes?

- Ever investigated and/or published?

Nuclear share in the future

- Current share
- Nuclear scenarios
- World energy scenarios
- Uranium requirements

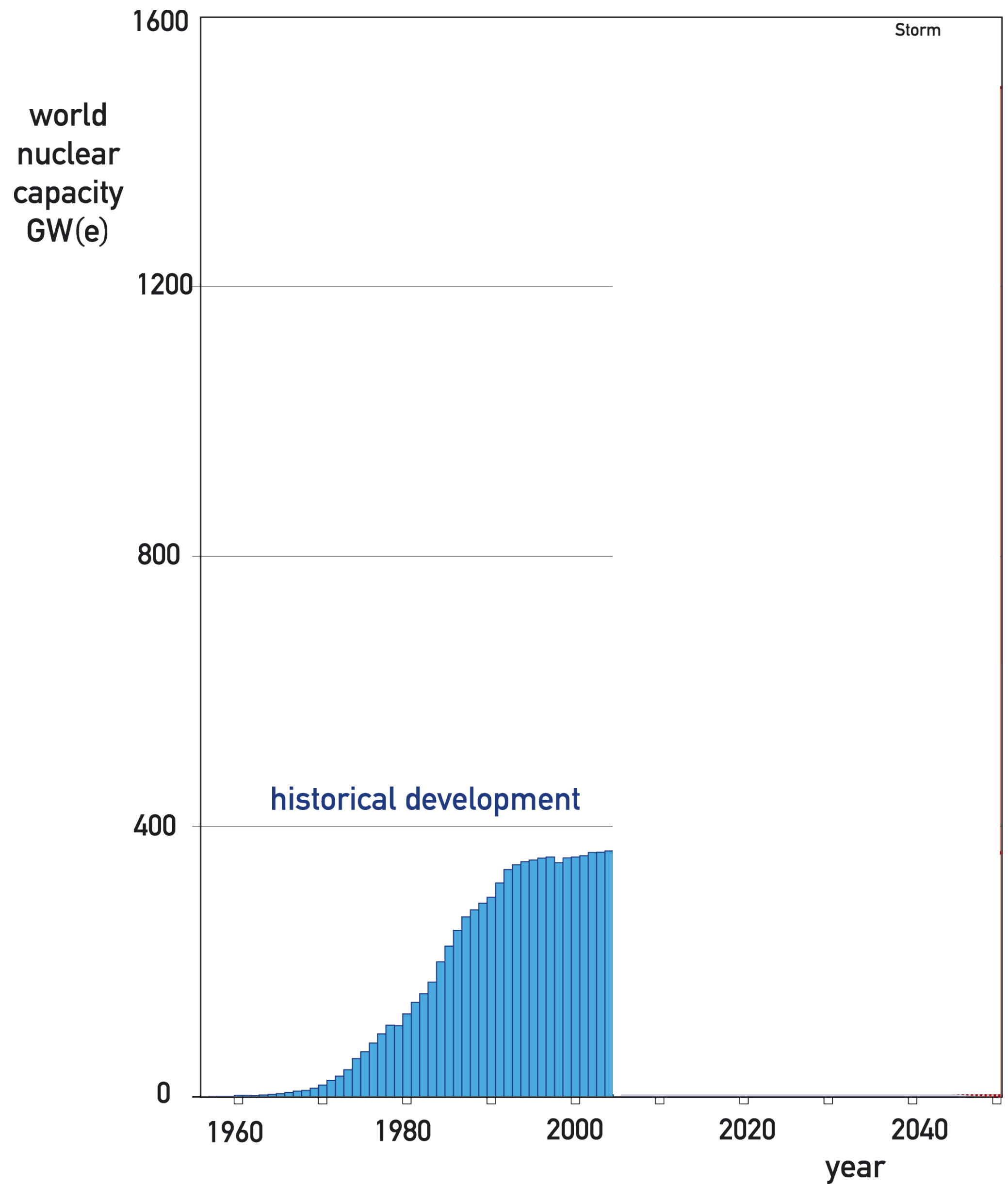
Current nuclear share



total world electricity in 2004:
17500 billion kWh (62.8 EJ)

total world final energy consumption in 2004: ~400 EJ

Nuclear scenarios



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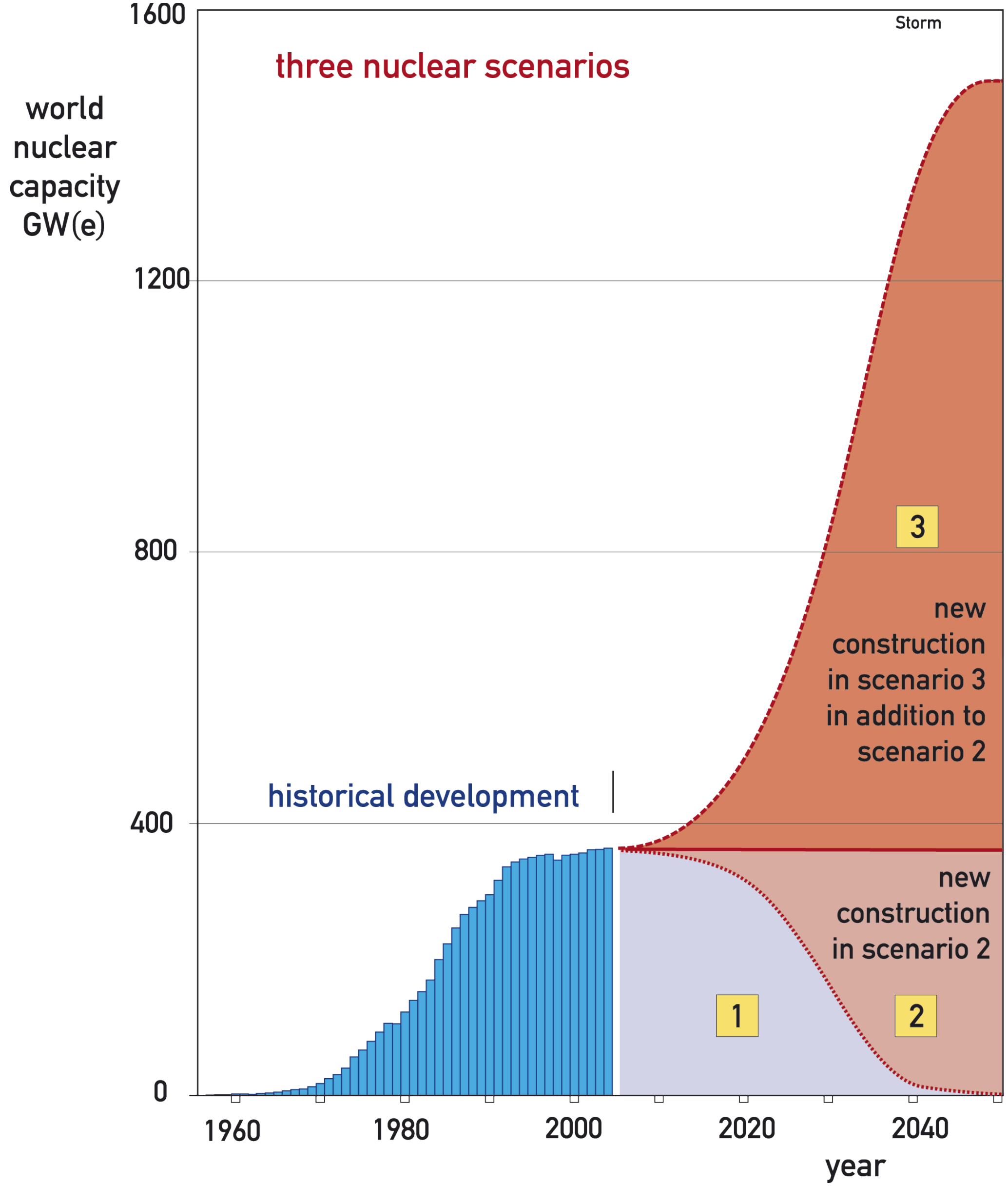
Nuclear scenarios



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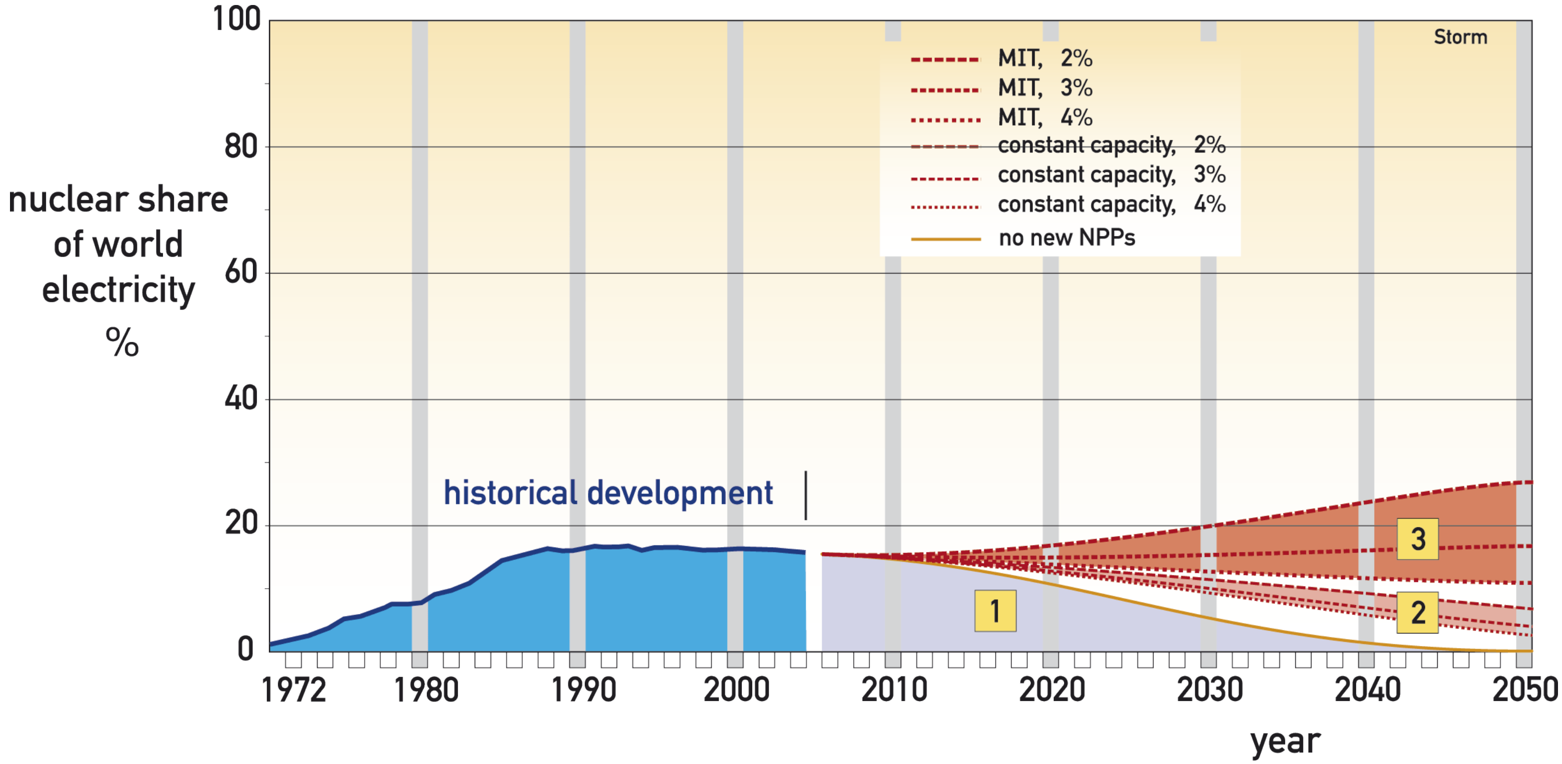
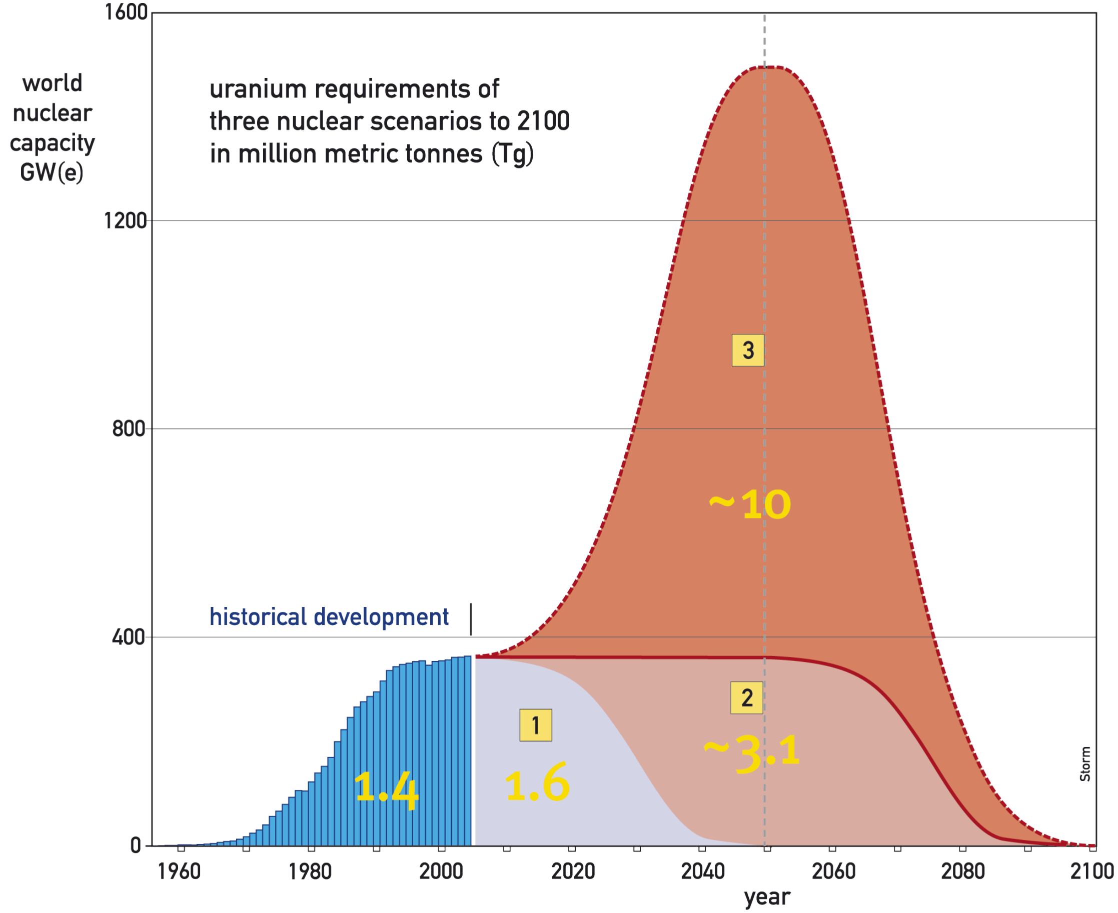
Nuclear share of world electricity



Uranium requirements



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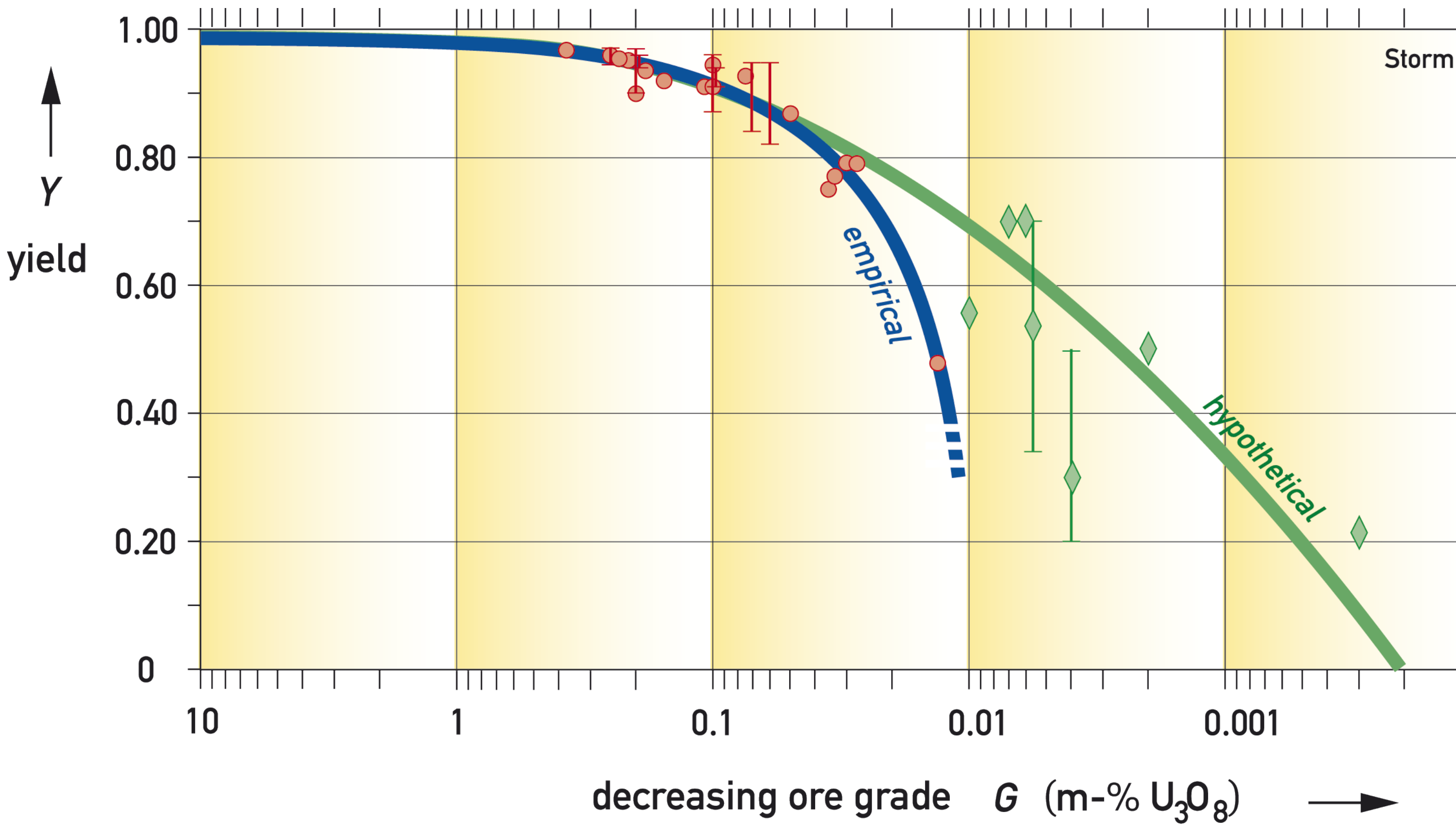
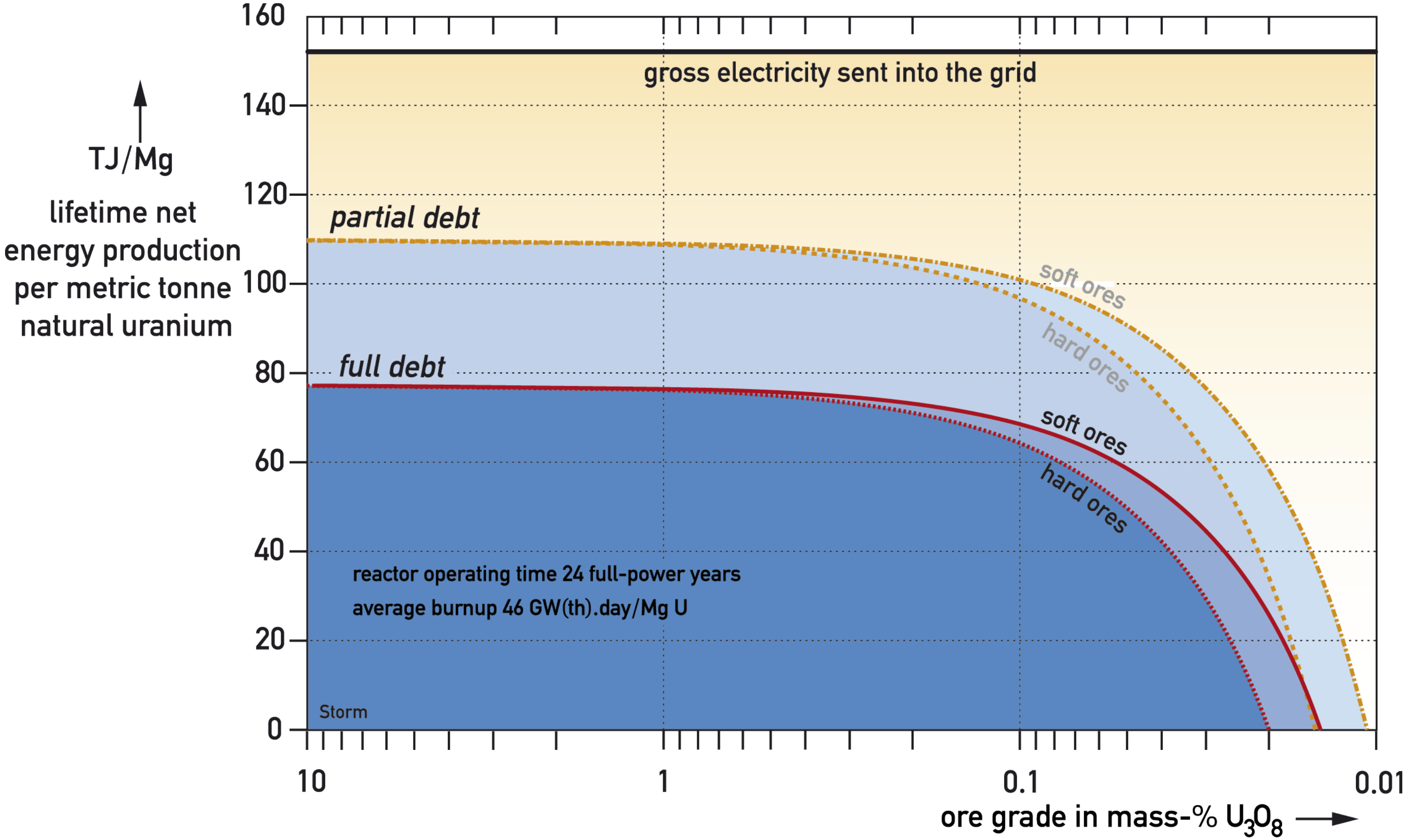
Energy from uranium

- The energy cliff
- Uranium resources
- Nuclear energy resources

Extraction of uranium from ore



The energy cliff



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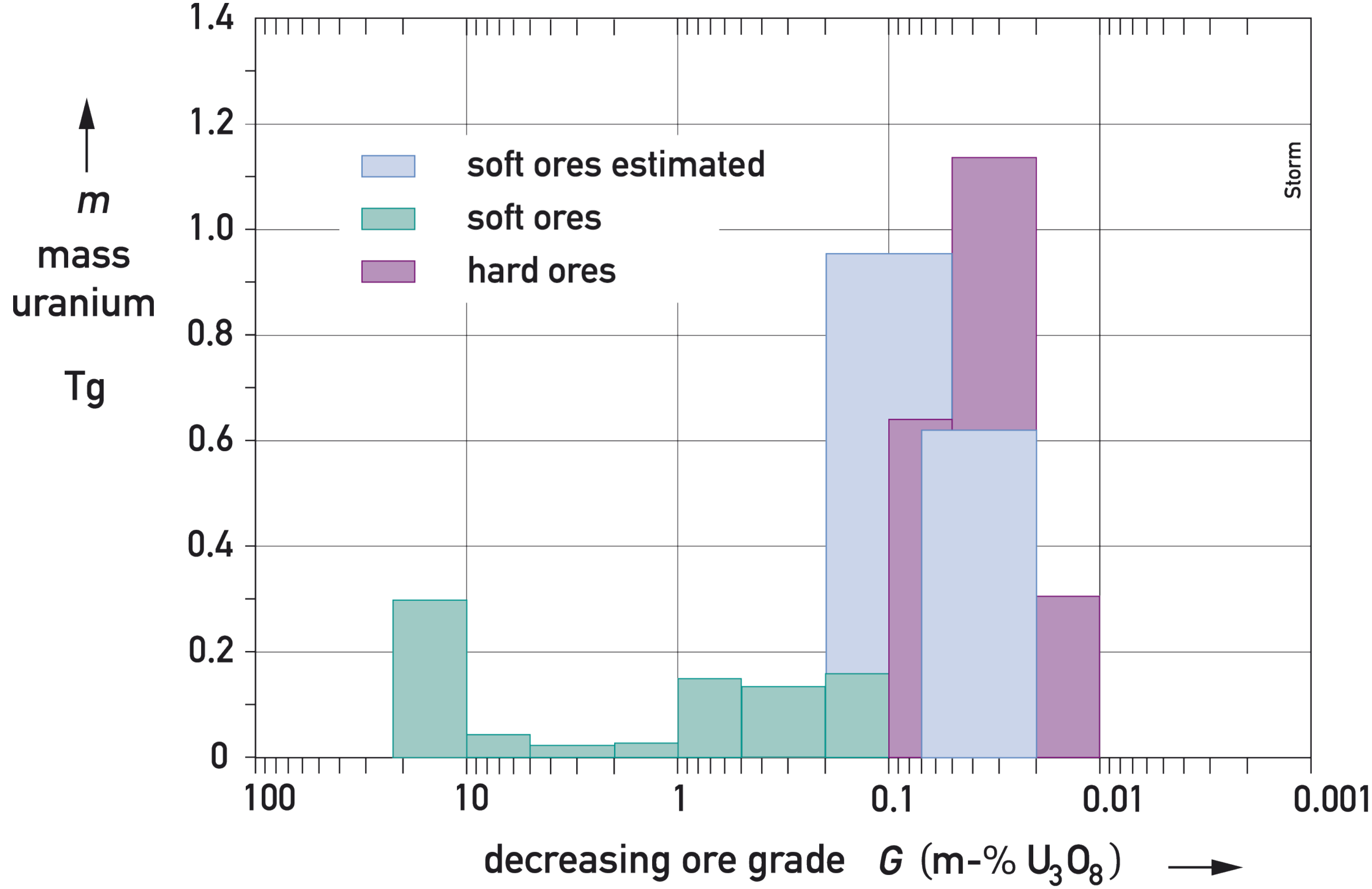
Quantities of available uranium depend on ore grade



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Uranium in the future: *economic view by WNA*

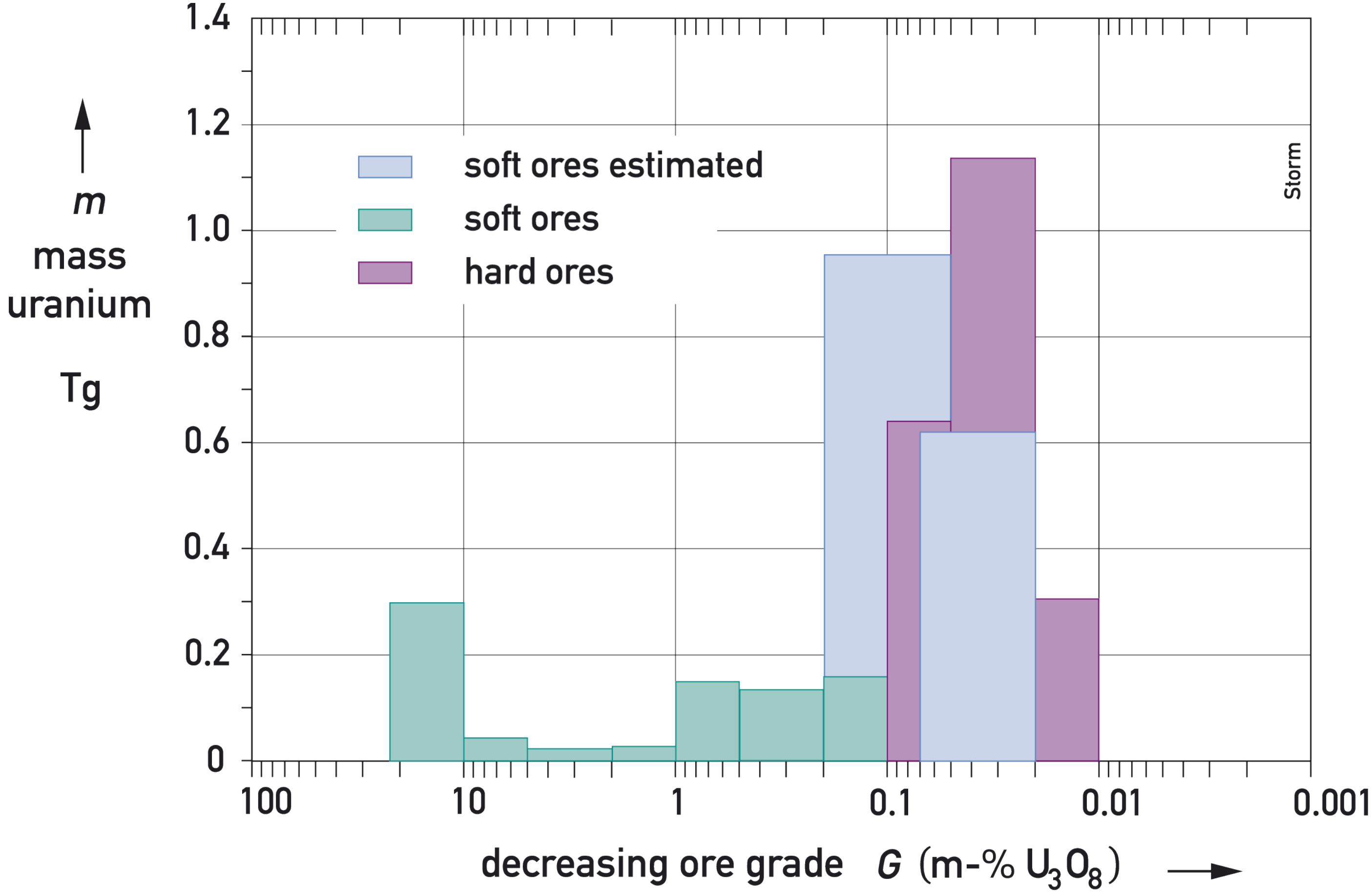
- Higher prices –>
- More exploration, advanced techniques –>
- More discoveries, lower costs –>
- More resources.

- Conclusion:
  uranium is a sustainable energy resource

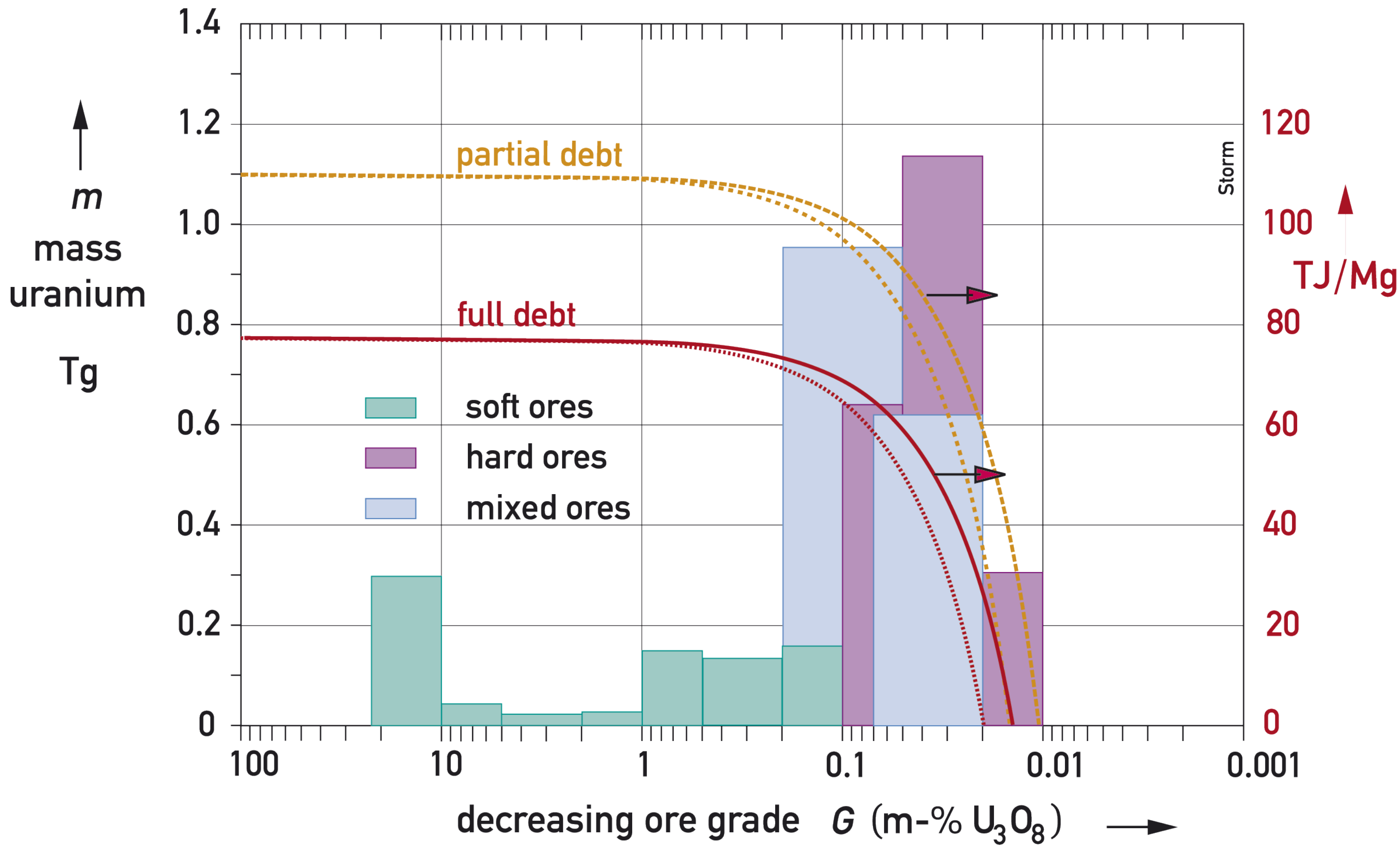
Uranium in the future:
physical facts

- The larger amount of U in rock, the lower its grade.
- Easily discoverable and mineable uranium resources are already in production.
- Physical laws stay in force, cannot be circumvented by economics.

Quantities of available uranium depend on ore grade



Nuclear energy resources



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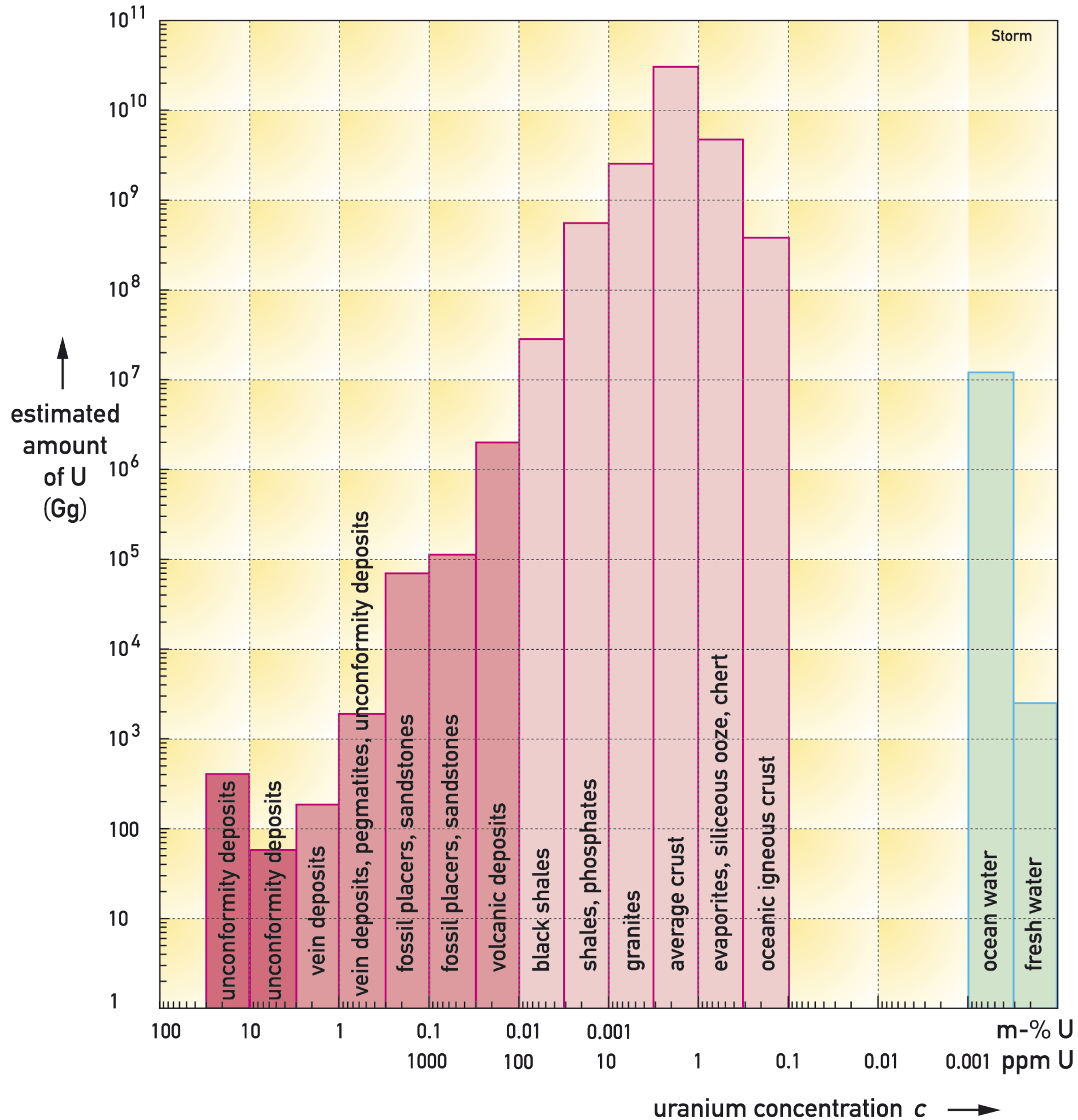
Uranium in the earth's crust



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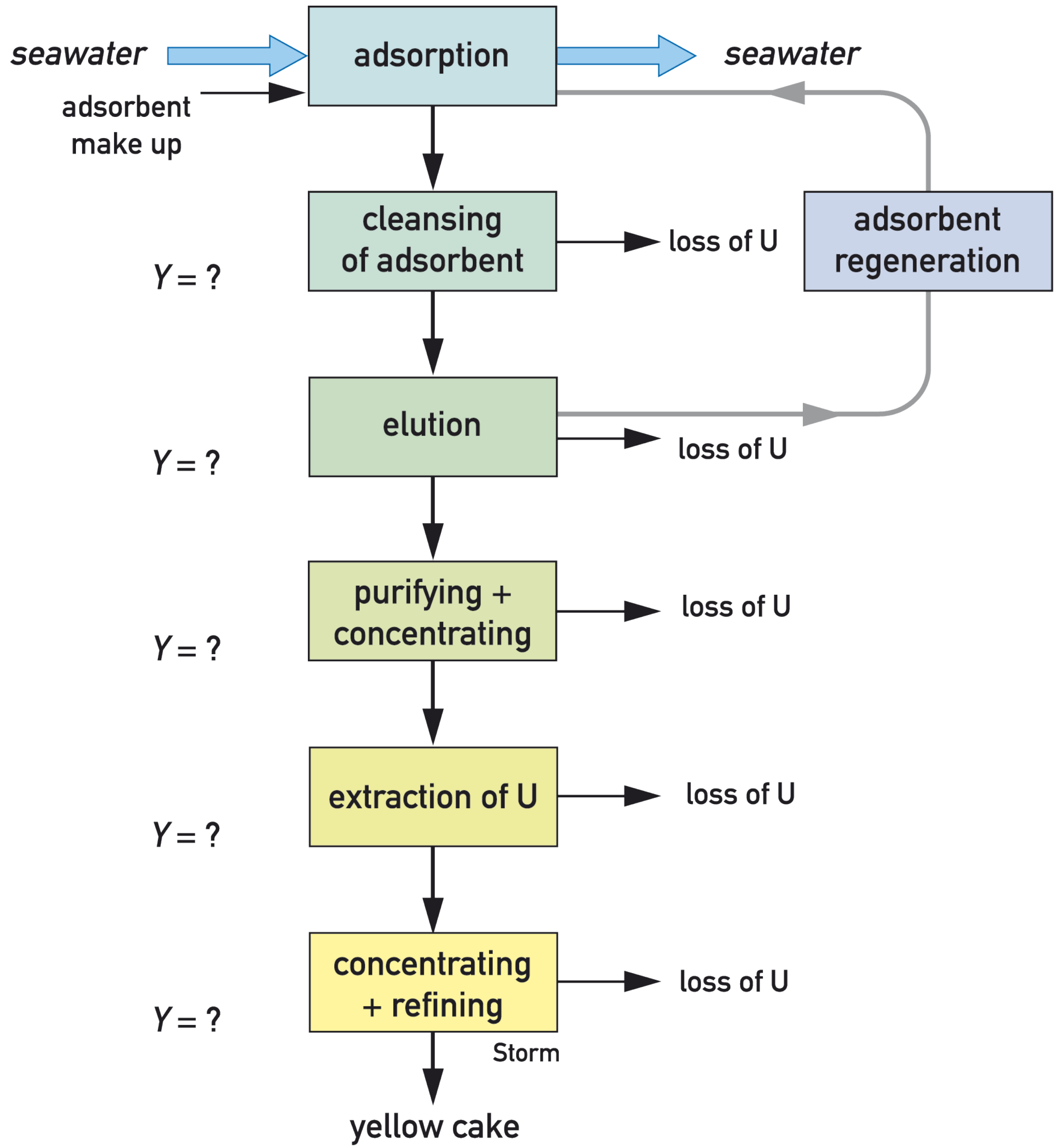
Uranium in seawater

- Dissolved uranium in seawater:
  3.34 milligram per cubic meter
- 1.37 billion km^3 seawater
- 4.5 billion metric tonnes uranium in the oceans

- *A net energy resource?*

Uranium extraction from seawater



Uranium extraction from seawater

- 162 Mg natural uranium per year per GW
- Overall extraction yield = 17%
  (excluding the first stage)
- 285 km^3 seawater per year per GW = =
  90400 m^3 per second per GW
- 428000 km^3 per year in MIT scenario = =
  14 million m^3 per second

Conclusions

- Greenhouse gas emissions by nuclear?
  Yes, carbon dioxide and other
- Nuclear share in the future?
  Marginal to negligible
- Availability of nuclear energy from uranium?
  Serious misconceptions
  Very large uncertainties

Concluding remarks

The industrial society meets the thermodynamic limits in drawing its energy needs from mineral resources.

The time has come to divert to the only entropy-free energy source: the sun.


sun, sand and wind