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Secondary hydriding of zirconium-based fuel claddings at high temperature (LOCA conditions). Part 2: Effect of high hydrogen contents on metallurgical and mechanical properties. Part 1: Multi-scale study of hydrogen distribution

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SECONDARY HYDRIDING OF ZIRCONIUM-BASED FUEL CLADDINGS AT HIGH TEMPERATURE (LOCA CONDITIONS)

PART 2: EFFECT OF HIGH HYDROGEN CONTENTS ON METALLURGICAL AND MECHANICAL PROPERTIES

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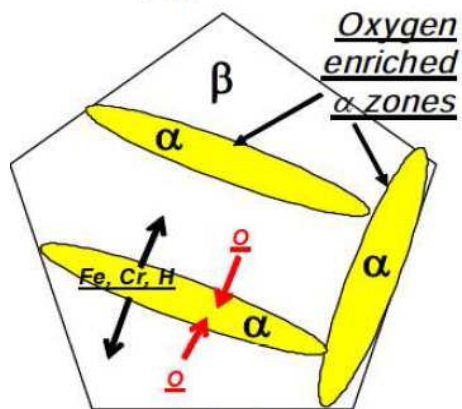
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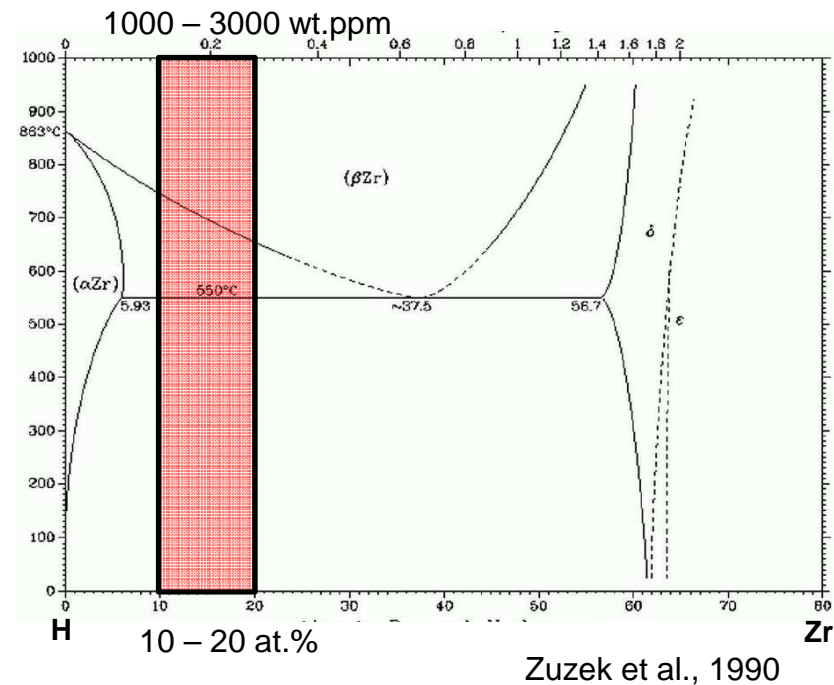
³ Now at DEN-Service d'Etudes des Matériaux Irradiés (SEMI), CEA, Université Paris-Saclay, F-91191 Gif-sur-Yvette, France

- Scientific context of this work and motivation/challenges have been presented by J-C. Brachet in “Secondary hydriding of zirconium based fuel claddings at high temperature (LOCA conditions). Part 1: Multi-scale study of hydrogen distribution”

- Study the coupled effects of oxygen (0,14-0,9wt.%) and high hydrogen contents (1000-3000 wt.ppm) on the metallurgical and mechanical properties of fuel claddings in zirconium based alloys, Zircaloy-4 and M5, during and after cooling/quenching from high temperature (β_{Zr} domain), *i.e.* LOCA conditions



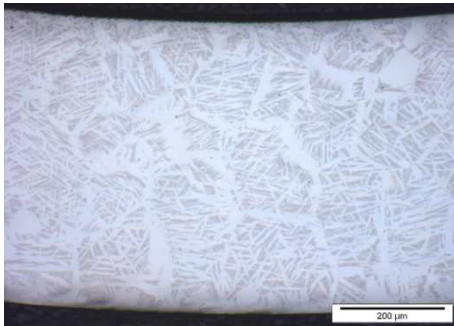
Heterogeneous “micro-composite” prior- β microstructure



This presentation : Effects of high hydrogen contents (up to 3000 wt.ppm)

Model materials homogeneously charged in hydrogen at 1000-3000 wt.ppm under hydrogenated Ar at 800°C, prepared from Zircaloy-4 and M5™* fuel cladding tube specimens

- ❖ Heat-treatment in the β phase temperature domain (1000°C)
- ❖ Cooling down to RT, water quenching or slow cooling, for studying the effects of cooling scenario



Microstructure of a tube in M5 prehydrogenated at 2000 wt.ppm under hydrogenated Ar at 800°C

Metallurgical characterizations (phase fractions, phase transition temperatures and evolution of lattice parameters) :

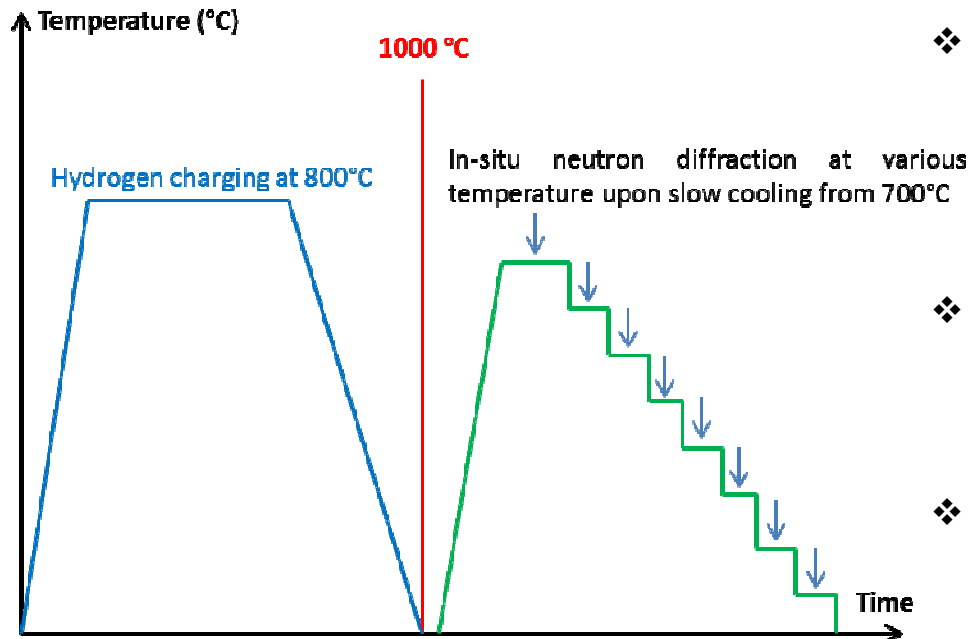
- ❖ In situ neutron diffraction during cooling from 700°C down to 20°C
- ❖ Neutron and X-ray diffraction at RT
- ❖ Comparison to thermodynamic equilibrium prediction obtained by Thermo-Calc and Zircobase thermodynamic database

Mechanical characterizations :

- Uniaxial tensile tests at various temperatures (700°C-30°C) during cooling from high temperatures

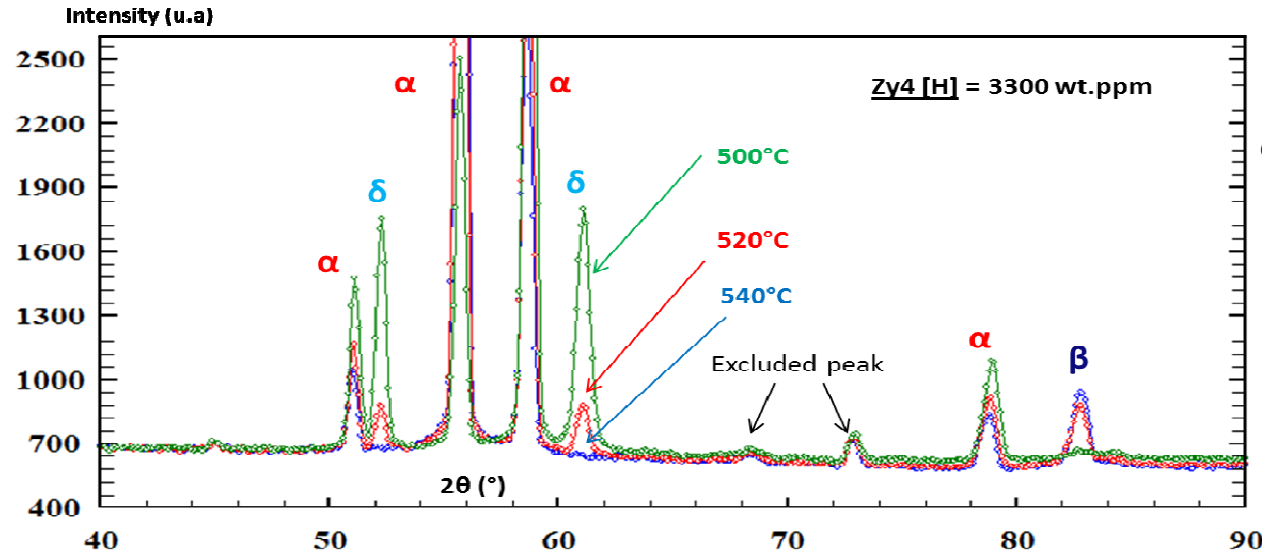
METALLURGICAL PROPERTIES OF PREHYDRIDED MATERIALS

In situ neutron diffractions



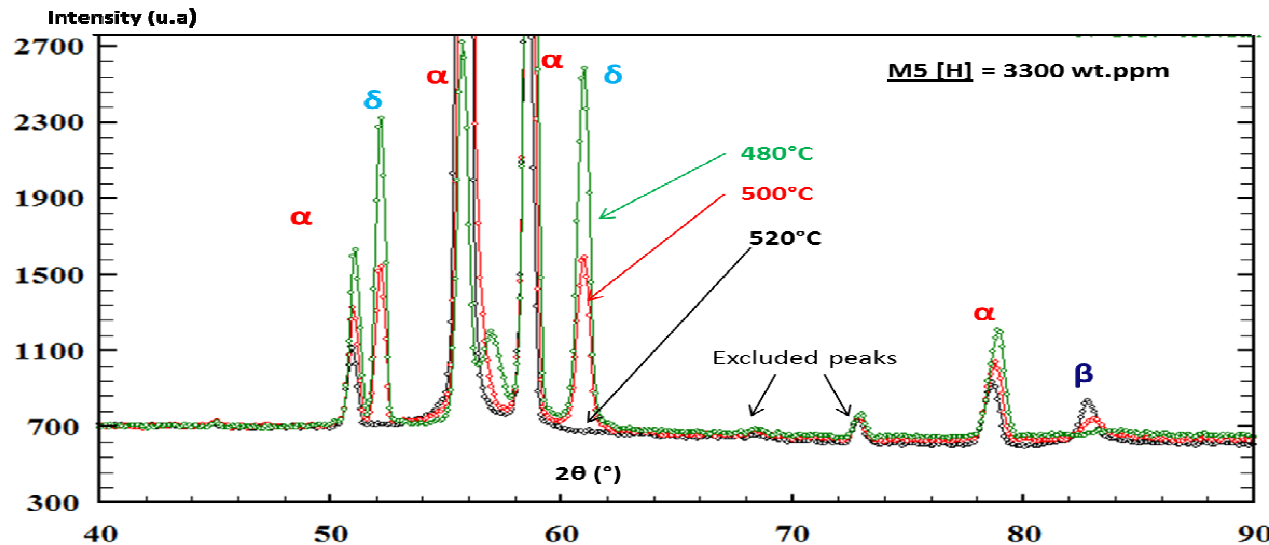
- ❖ **Experimental conditions:** Data acquisition at various temperatures during slow cooling from 700°C (near-equilibrium conditions) to RT
- ❖ **Objectives:** Phase transition temperatures and metallurgical evolutions
- ❖ **Refinement method:** Rietveld refinement and Fullprof software

Eutectoid transformation temperature



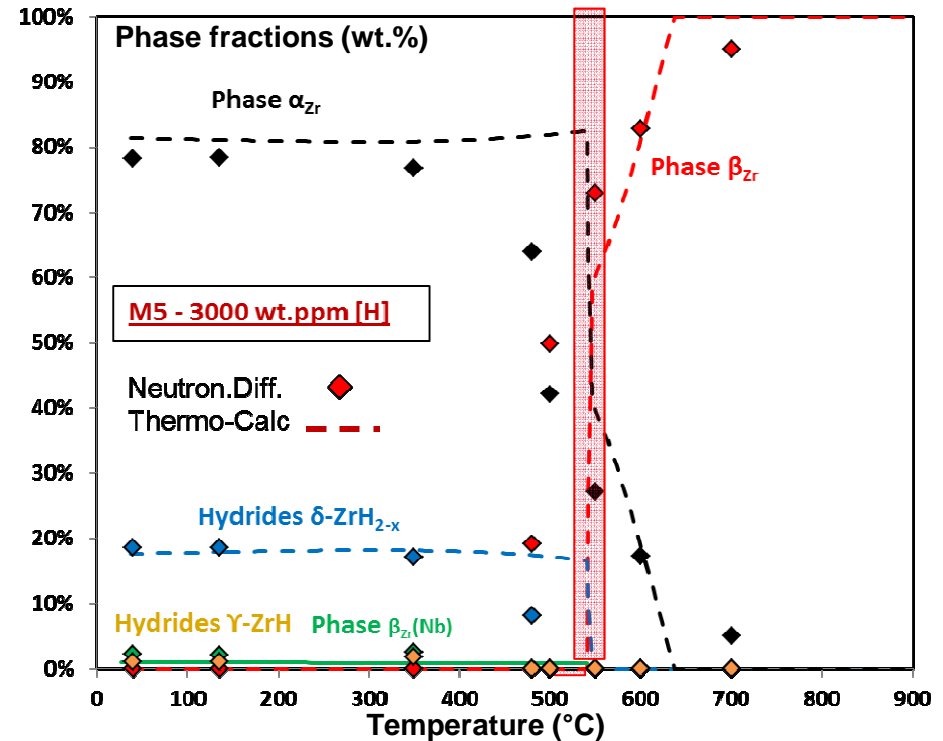
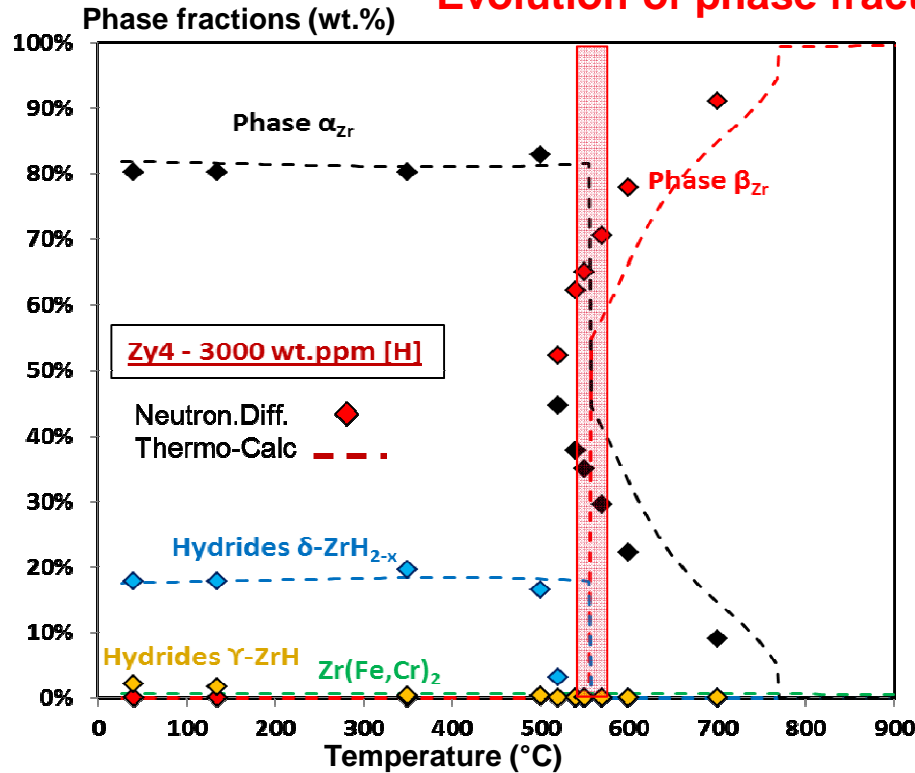
Neutron diffraction diagrams obtained for prehydrided Zy4 and M5 at 3300 wt.ppm, during slow cooling from 700°C after heat-treatment at 1000°C in steam

- ❖ δ -ZrH_{2-x} starts to precipitate in Zy4-3300H at ~ 540°C
- ❖ Temperature range of co-existence $\alpha + \beta + \delta$: 520°C-540°C



- ❖ Apparition of δ -ZrH_{2-x} hydrides in M5-3300H at ~520°C
- ❖ Temperature range of co-existence $\alpha + \beta + \delta$: 480°C-520°C

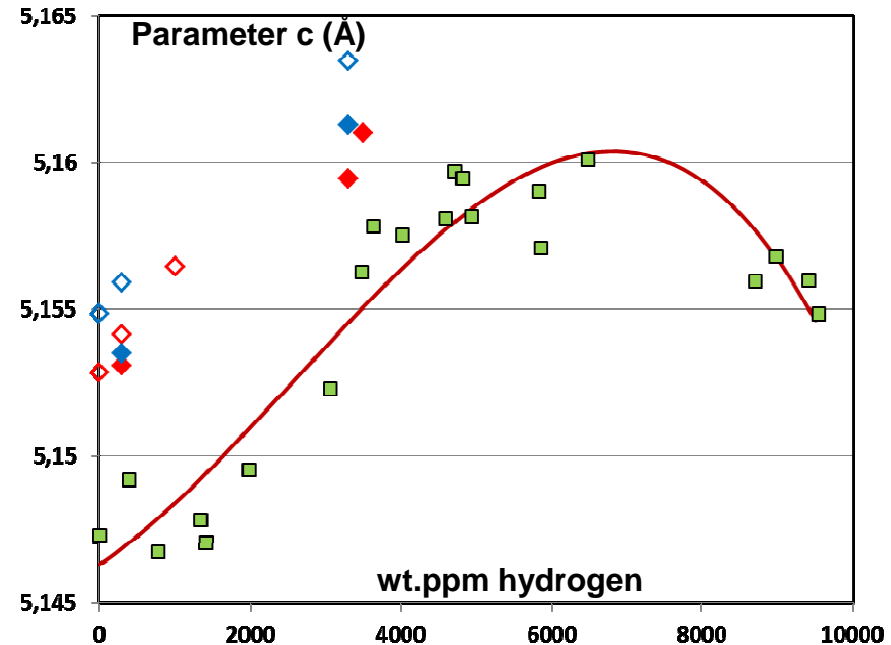
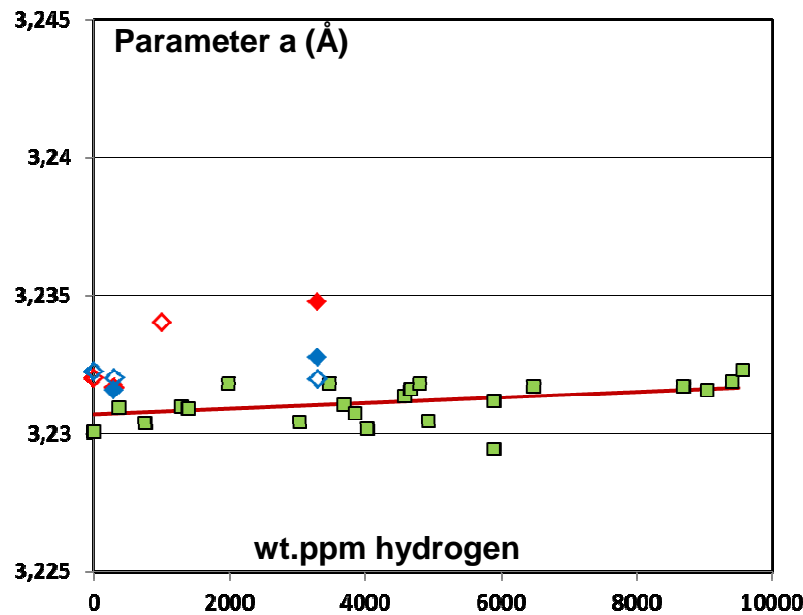
Evolution of phase fractions with temperature



- ❖ Good agreement between Thermo-Calc prediction and neutrons diffraction data
- ❖ Phase transition temperature of M5 < Zy4 because of the presence of Nb
- ❖ Apparition of $\gamma-ZrH$ hydrides (~2 wt.%) (potentially metastable) at the end of cooling in both cases
- ❖ Not shown here but presence of metastable $\gamma-ZrH$ hydrides also observed at room temperature in the materials heat-treated at high temperature containing lower quantities of hydrogen (~300 wt.ppm)

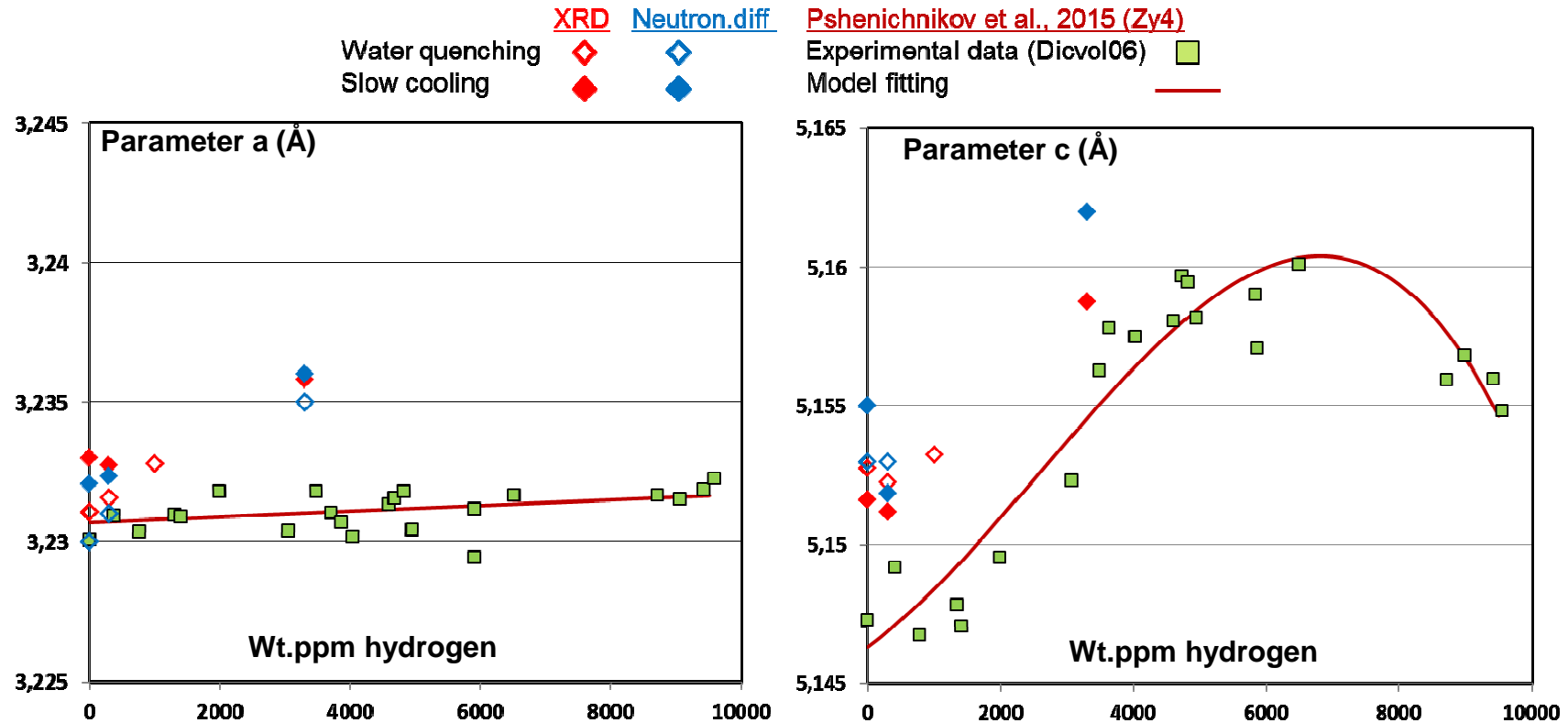
Evolution of lattice parameters – Diffraction at RT (case Zy4)

◇ XRD Water quenching
◇ Neutron.diff Slow cooling
■ Pshenichnikov et al., 2015 (Zy4) Experimental data (Dicvol06)
— Model fitting



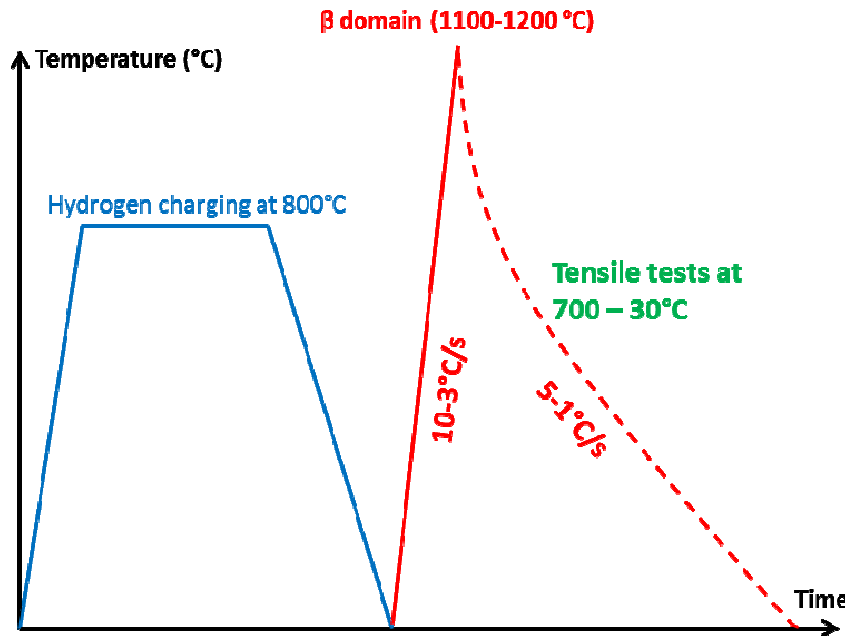
The results of both CEA XRD and neutrons diffraction at room temperature show a relative a and c parameters increase as a function of the mean H content, as already observed by KIT for Zy4

Evolution of lattice parameters – Diffraction at RT (case M5)



Similar results obtained for M5

**MECHANICAL BEHAVIOR OF THE HIGHLY
HYDROGEN-CHARGED (PRIOR-) β PHASE
DURING COOLING FROM β DOMAIN
TEMPERATURES**



Thermal cycles for tensile tests

Uniaxial tensile tests in air

Temperatures: **700 °C – 20°C** on cooling from β domain (1100-1200°C)

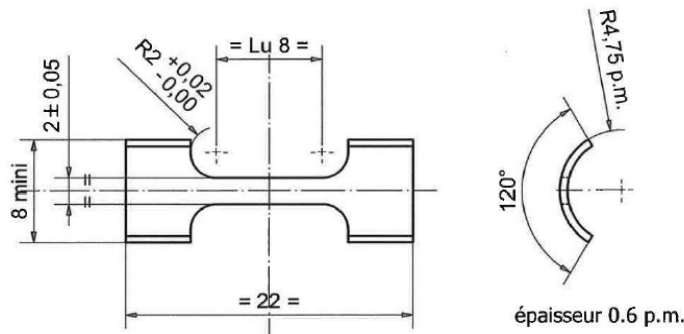
Geometry: Specimens were fabricated from the cladding tubes

Materials: **Zy4 et M5™**

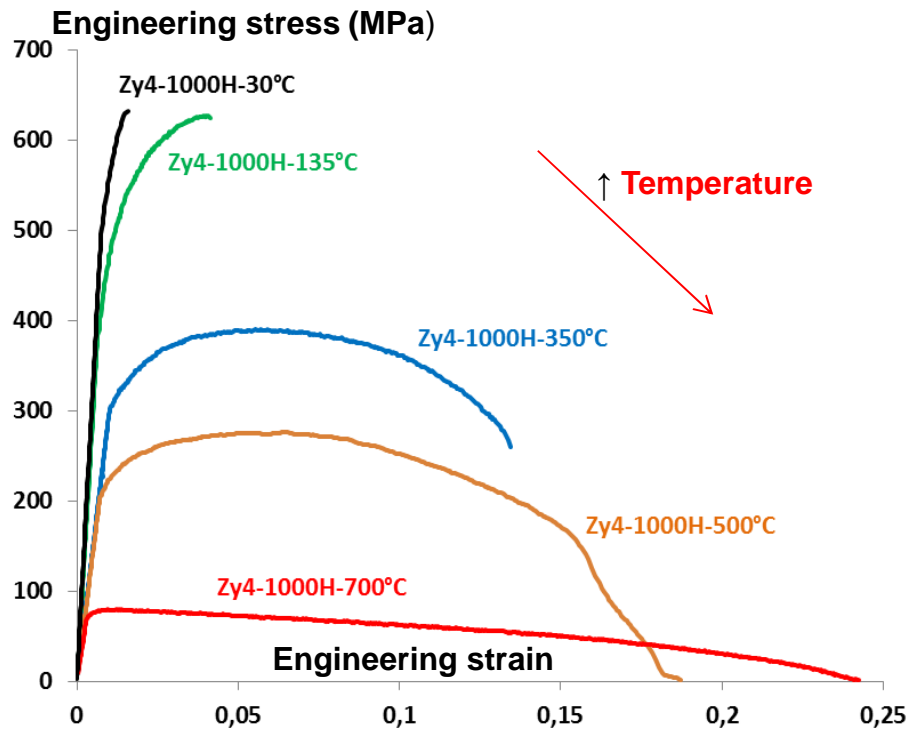
- ❖ as-received
- prehydrided at 1000, 2000 and 3000 wt.ppm

Strain rate : $\dot{\epsilon} = 10^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$

Fast camera (250 images/second) → Digital Images Correlation

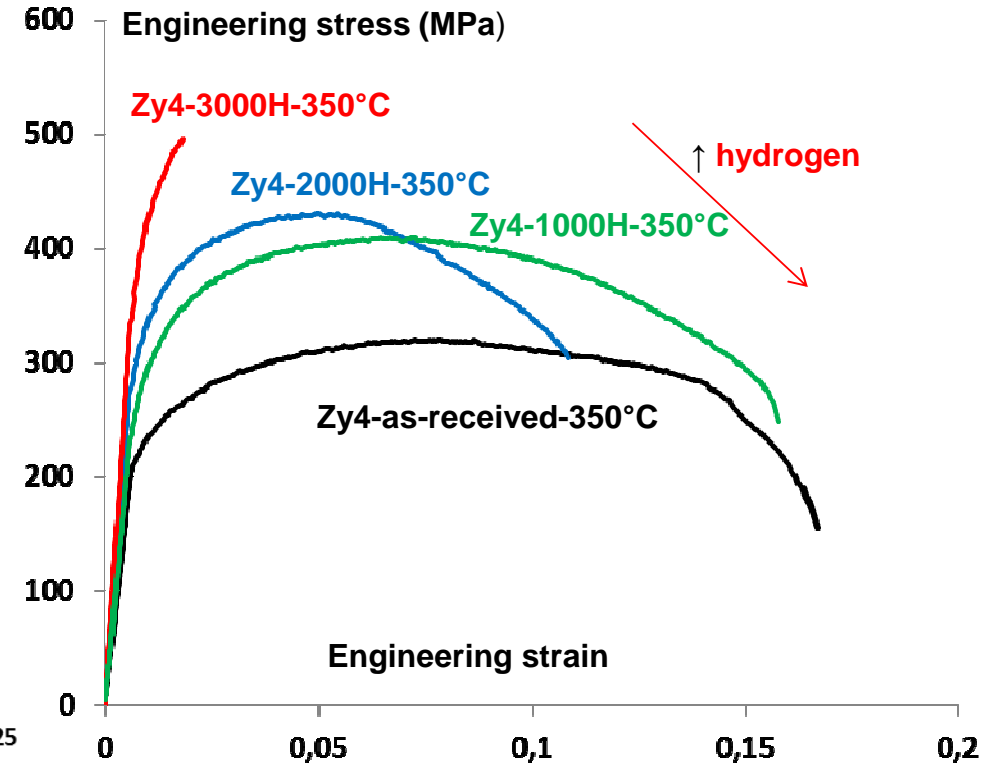


Temperature effect



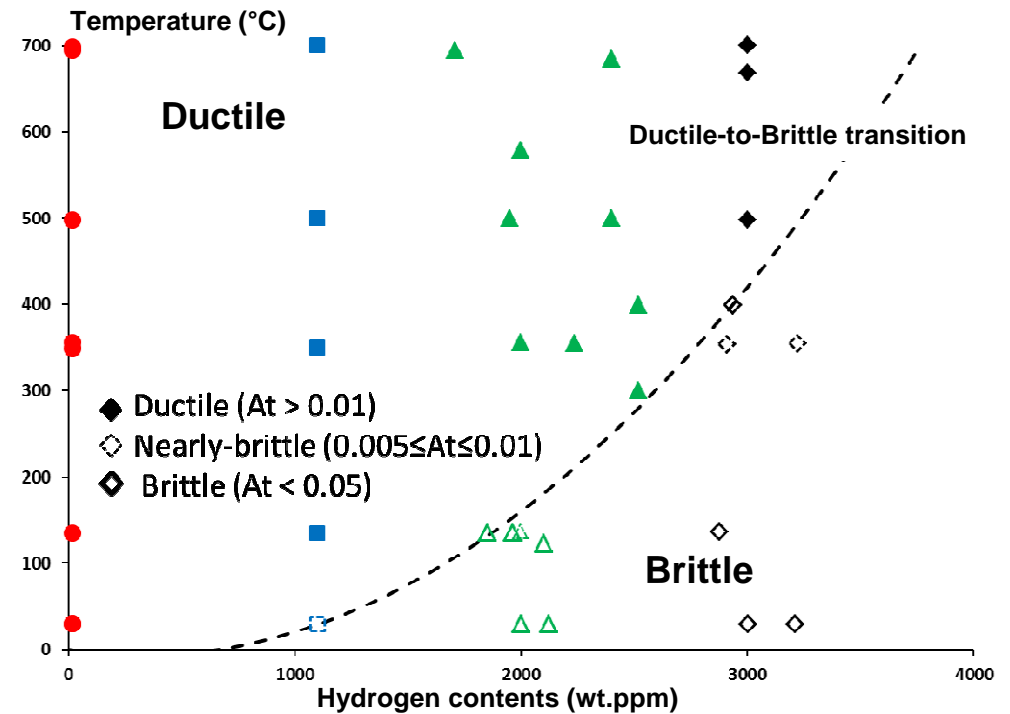
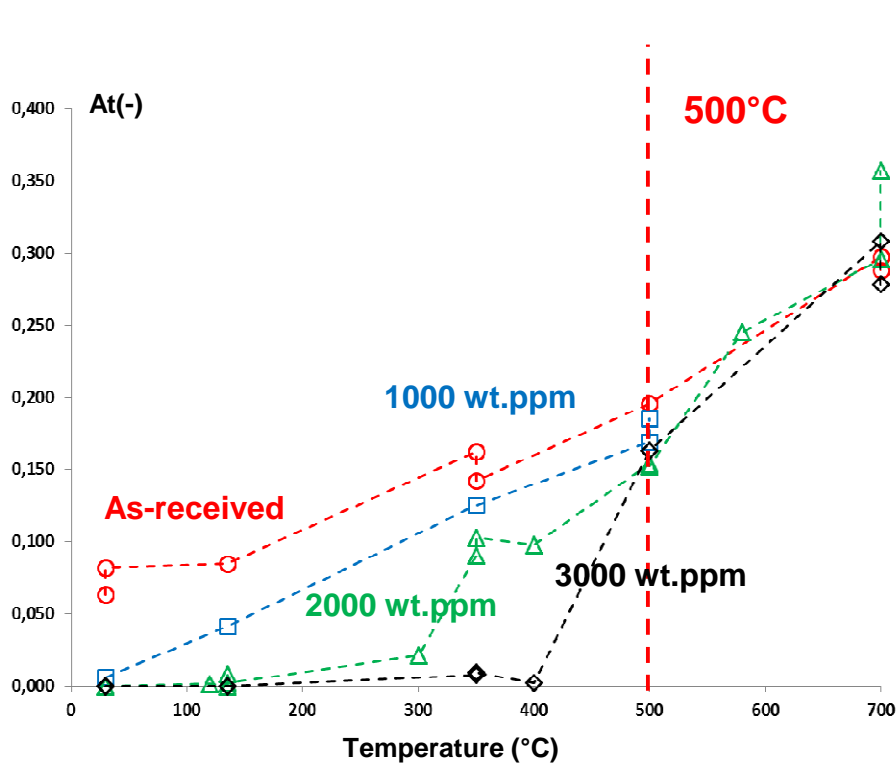
Engineering stress-strain curves of tensile tests on prehydrided Zy4 at 1000 wt.ppm

Hydrogen effect

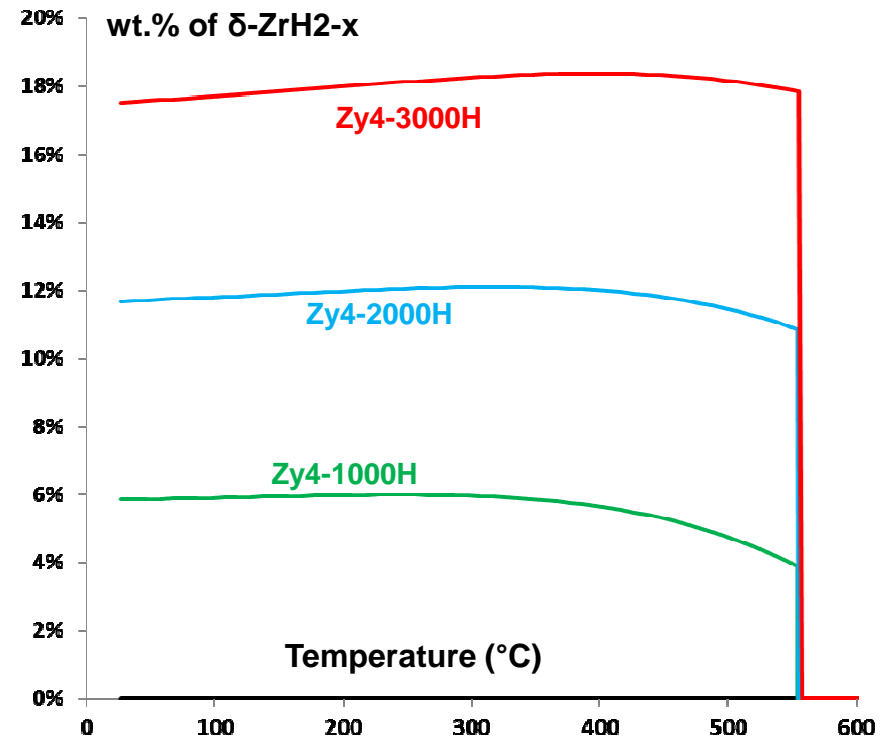
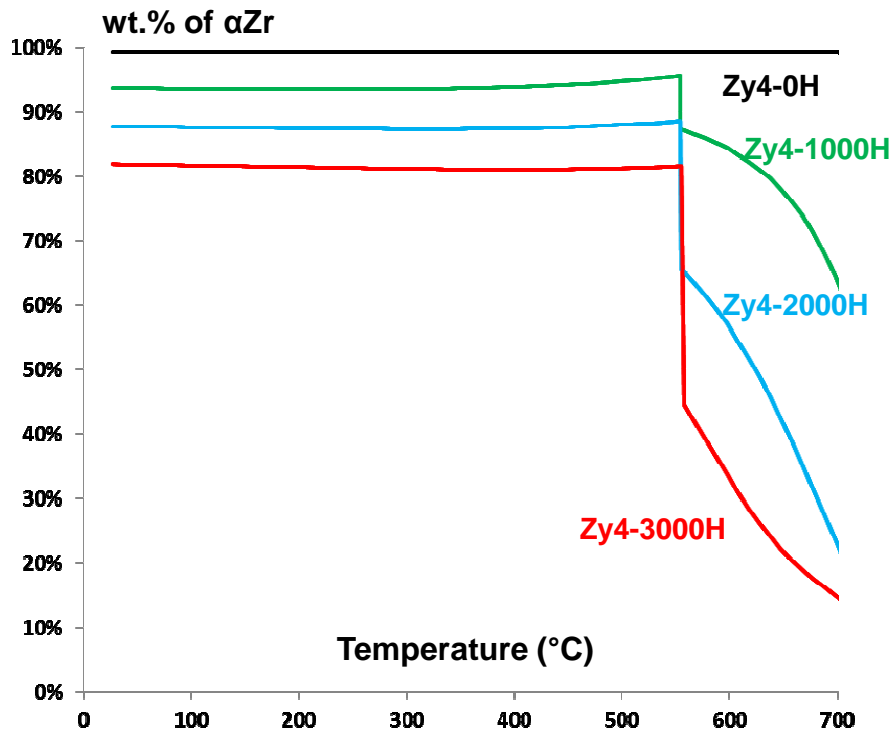


Engineering stress-strain curves of tensile tests on as-received and prehydrided Zy4 at 1000, 2000 and 3000 wt.ppm, tested at 350°C

Plastic elongation of as-received and prehydrated Zy4 at 1000, 2000 and 3000 wt.ppm, tested in tension on cooling after heat-treatment in the β domain



- $T > 500^\circ\text{C}$, no effects of hydrogen and all materials are ductile
- $T < 500^\circ\text{C}$, significant embrittlement effect of hydrogen



Evolution of phase weight fractions obtained by thermodynamic calculation at equilibrium by ThermoCalc and thermodynamic database Zircobase

Metallurgical behavior :

- ❖ Concerning the evolution of phase weight fractions with temperatures, good agreement between neutron diffraction data and thermodynamic prediction obtained by Thermo-Calc software and thermodynamic database Zircobase of CEA. No significant difference between Zy4 and M5
- ❖ The precipitation of metastable γ -ZrH hydrides was observed at low temperatures in materials containing high (1000 and 3000 wt.ppm) and lower (300 wt.ppm) hydrogen contents
- ❖ Same observations made by KIT (Pshechnikov et al., 2015) for the evolution of lattice parameters (a and c) at room temperature as a function of mean hydrogen content.
- ❖ X-rays diffraction will be performed on materials (Van Arkel Zirconium) containing a low content of oxygen (100 wt.ppm) heat-treated in the β domain followed by \neq cooling scenarios. Try to understand the effects of hydrogen on the lattice parameter and to decorrelate from the effects of oxygen

Mechanical behavior :

- ❖ Embrittlement effect of hydrogen for temperatures below 500°C
- ❖ Ductile-to-Brittle transition map as a function of temperature and hydrogen content was established from experimental data

Thank you for your attention

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