



INTERNATIONAL NICKEL STUDY GROUP



INSG Meetings, Lisbon, Portugal, April 2024
Industry Advisory Panel – Tuesday 23 April 2024

“Low Carbon Production of Nickel and Other Metals: A Review of Potential New Technological Approaches and the Role of Hydrogen”



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Topics covered

Nickel will play an indispensable role in the global energy transition – Ni has to have a low CO₂ footprint



1. Introduction & background/energy transition
2. Nickel- world production by country/ore types development of present Ni technology
3. New developments in iron and steel technology (for lower CO₂) - and link to Ni
4. Potential new technologies for nickel
5. Concluding comments

Appendix slides

The “Big Nickel”, Sudbury, Ontario, Canada, opened in 1964.
It is a large replica of the 1951 Canadian nickel coin (in 1951, Canada produced 74% of the world’s nickel)
It also celebrated the 200th anniversary of the isolation of Ni by Cronstedt in 1751

*Note: 1. Some tonnages approximate. Annual tonnages are generally for 2020 or 2022 as indicated
2. Slides in Appendix provide back-up details*





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Stop Press

Technology* & the way it is used can play a major role in keeping plant costs low

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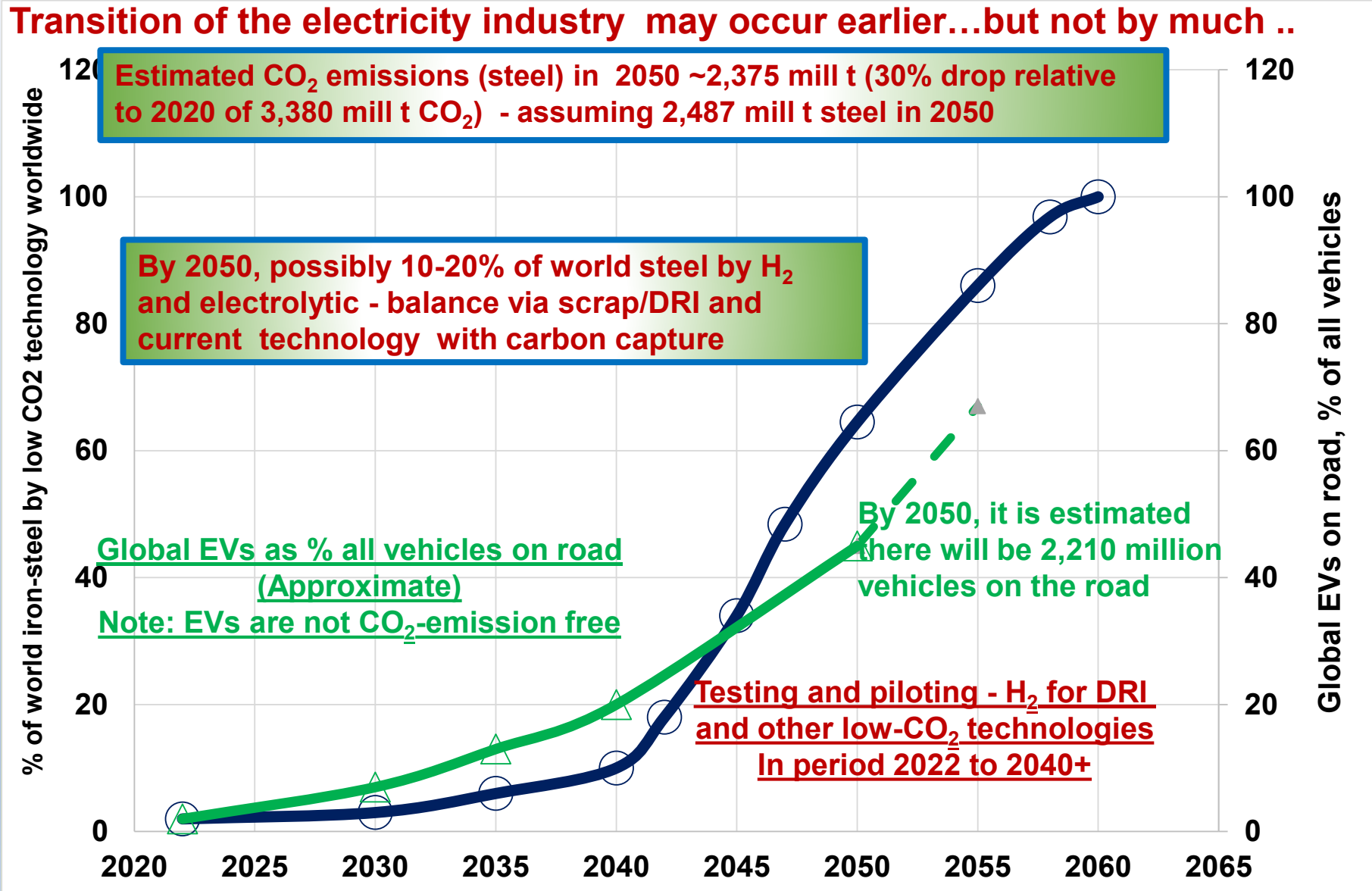


***Refers to the whole technology package encompassing: excellent safety and environmental record, high on-line time, low maintenance, long equipment/refractory life, good level of automation/labour saving**



Projected rate of world-wide take-up of low carbon technology in iron and steelmaking

(and global EV as % of all vehicles on road)



Note: Low carbon steel is <200 kg CO₂/t steel
 P.J. Mackey © 2024 Source: P.J. Mackey, 2022





2. Nickel- firstly, review of world production

- Overview
- By country
- By ore type and technology

It is noted that today, there are about 100 nickel smelters and refineries worldwide (half in Indonesia)



Nickel- 1

Overview of Ni - production by ore type and technology

While the world economy is expected to grow at less than about 3 to 3.3 % in the period 2025-2030 - down from 3.4% in 2021, growth in metal demand - such as for Ni- is expected to be somewhat higher- and stainless steel will continue to be important

Nickel (3.12 million t in 2022) is the 8th metal in terms of world metal tonnage after steel, aluminum, chromium, copper, manganese, lead and zinc; world steel tonnage is some 800 times larger than that of nickel

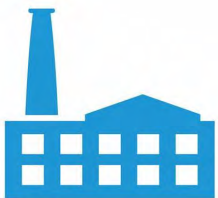
The six largest primary nickel producing countries (2022 smelter data) are: Indonesia, China, Russian Federation, Canada, Australia and New Caledonia

About 75% of current world primary nickel (2.34 million t) is produced from oxidic ores called laterites, the balance (25%) from sulphidic nickel ores (0.78 million t).

Of the amount produced from laterites - approximately 87% is by pyrometallurgy – saprolite (mainly RKEF), the balance (13%) is produced by hydrometallurgy by high pressure leaching of limonite (HPAL)

RKEF-Rotary Kiln Electric Furnace; HPAL-High Pressure Acid Leach

Nickel will play an indispensable role in the global transition to a low-carbon economy



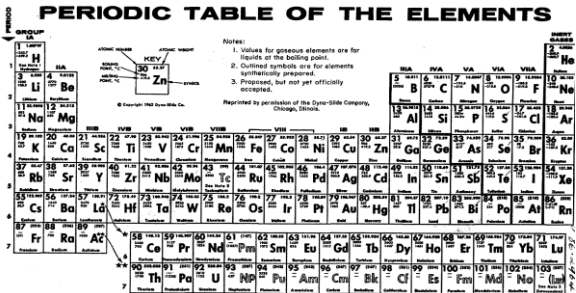
P.J. Mackey © 2024.

Source: refer to P. Mackey



Nickel- 2

In general, iron, cobalt and nickel share similar characteristics. These elements are adjacent to each other in Group 8 of the periodic table – also note, copper is next to nickel. This helps us understand technology processes



VIII		IB	
26 3000 1536 Fe Iron	55.847 2900 1493 Co Cobalt	28 2730 1453 Ni Nickel	29 2595 1083 Cu Copper



Copper and iron stretch back to antiquity- the Bronze Age (prior to 1200 BC) and the Iron Age (1200 BC to 500 BC).

Nickel however was only isolated in 1751 by A.F. Cronstedt by experimenting with cobalt ores from Helsingland, Sweden





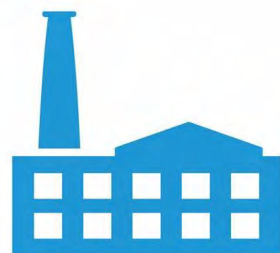
Nickel- 3

Extraction processes for nickel have traditionally followed the technology in place for copper (for Ni sulphides) and iron (for Ni laterites):



► When nickel sulphide deposits were discovered in Europe in the 1800s (Germany & Norway), miners turned to copper metallurgy for processing (blast, later reverberatory/electric furnaces, converters)

Early converter for Ni



► Similarly, when large nickel laterite deposits (oxidic Ni) were discovered in New Caledonia in the 1880s, miners turned to iron metallurgy for processing (blast furnace, electric furnace, rotary kiln, etc.)

► This adaptation has generally followed to the present day

Note: HPAL for leaching limonite - based on early pressure leaching of U ore & sulphides in Canada - began at Moa Bay, Cuba in 1959

Note: The production of pure Ni metal also required the development of new, specialized metallurgical processes – Hybinette electrolytic process, Orford process, etc

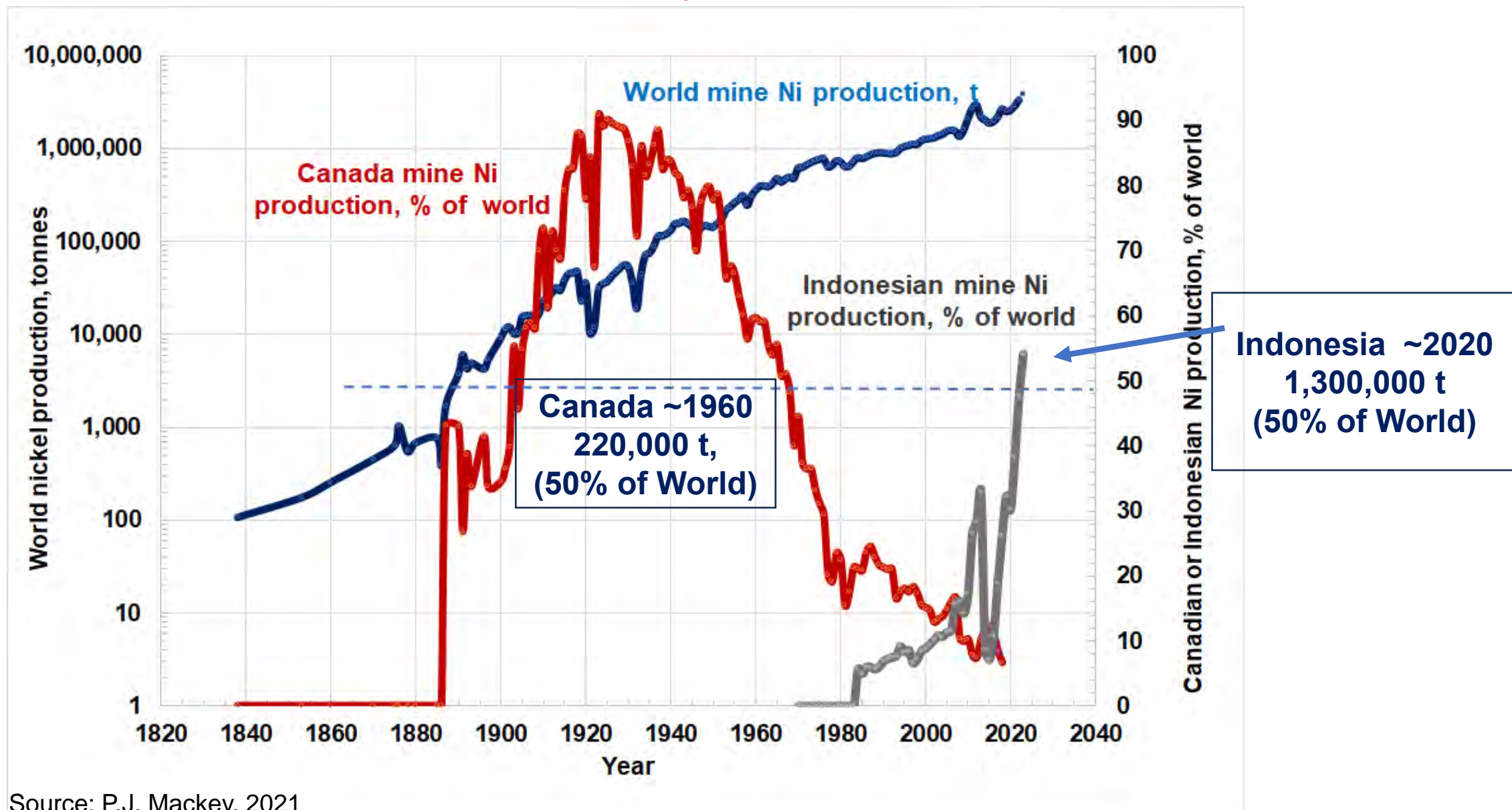


World nickel tonnages/ores

- Total by year since 1840
- Growth to 2030
- Split by ore type (saprolite/limonite)
- Major producing countries compared -
Canada (historical) & Indonesia (current)
- Production and total CO₂ emissions-
major metals

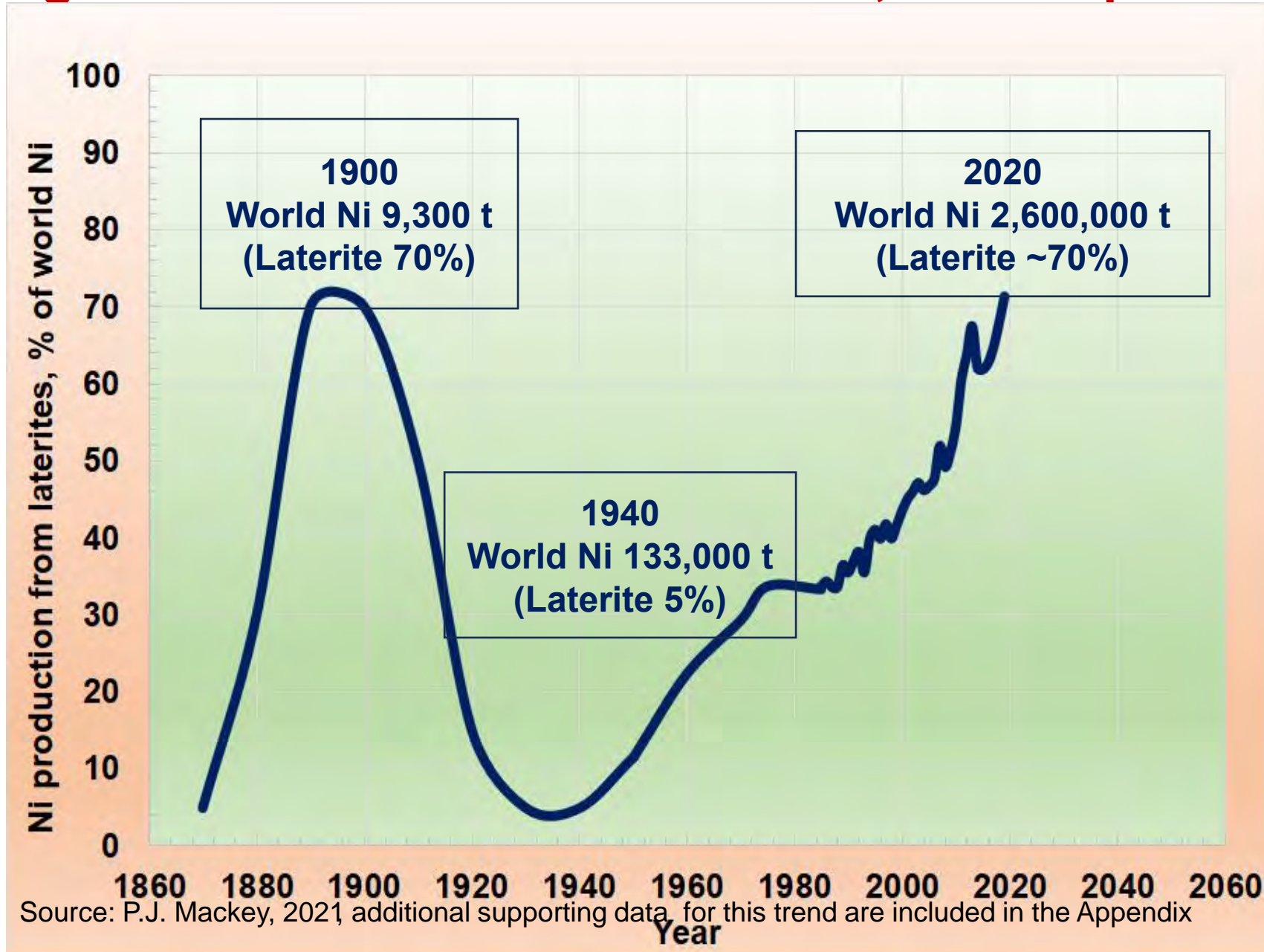
Canada Ni as % of world Ni - 1880 to present and rise of Indonesian Ni

(Canada dominated Ni for over 70 years from about 1900)



Source: P.J. Mackey, 2021

Changes in % of world Ni from laterite, 1860 to present day



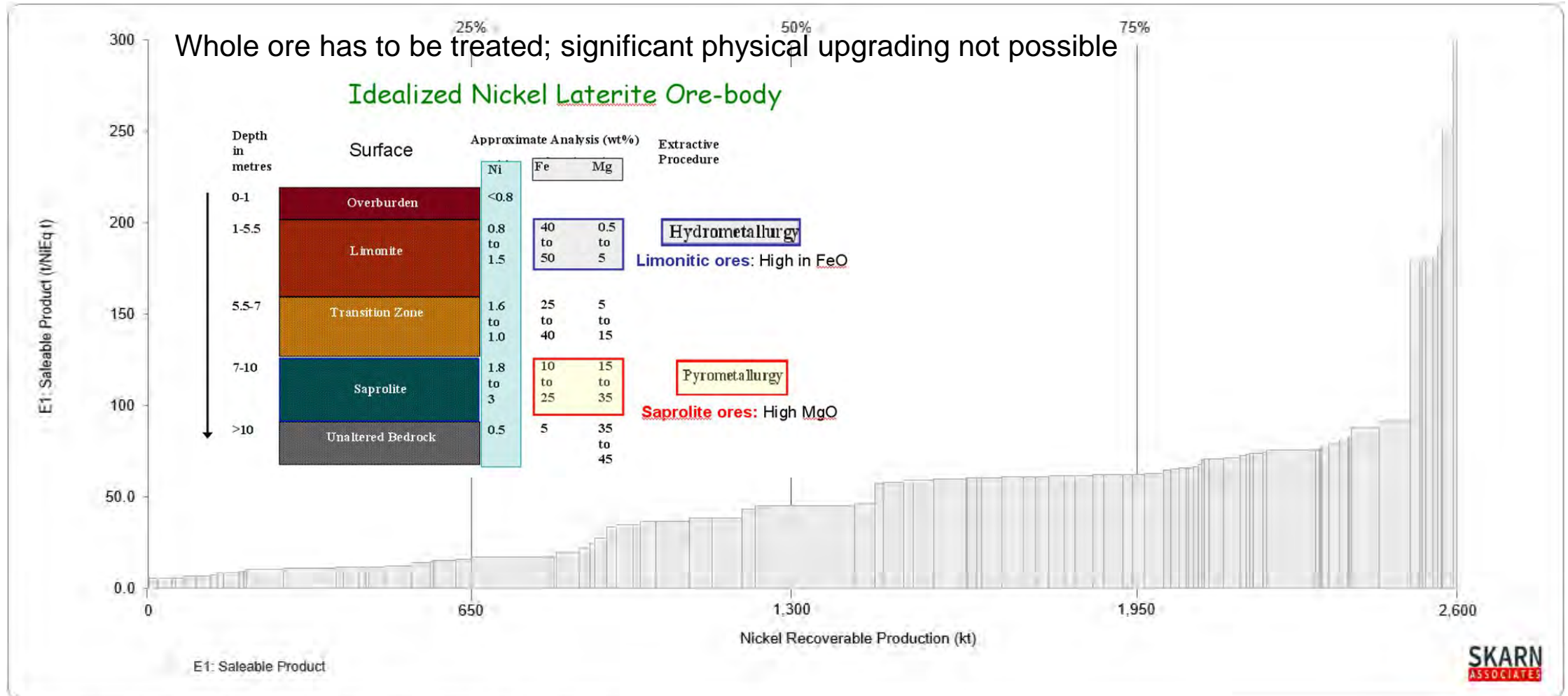
Projected growth in nickel demand

There are a number of published projections for annual nickel growth, ranging from 3 to over 7%.

In the median term, growth is expected to be quite modest

CO₂ emissions for world nickel production (and ore types)

(World average ~32 tonnes CO₂/t nickel - present author)



© Skarn Associates Limited. (E1 GHG Emission Metrics® is a registered trademark of Skarn Associates.)

Source (Main graph): Skarn Associates Limited, UK, 2024; Insert: Utigard, CIM 2009

P.J. Mackey © 2024

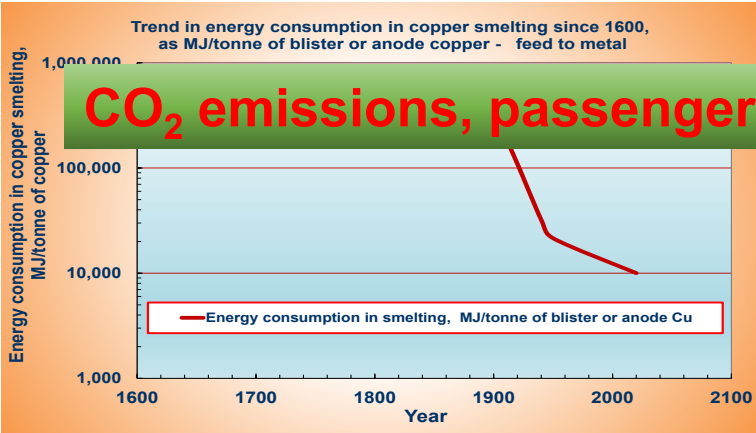


Global metal production and global CO₂ emissions for each metal

Metal (average global ore grade, %)	Production (2020), mill t	~ Value US\$ million	Global CO ₂ Mill t CO ₂	Proportion of total global CO ₂ , %	CO ₂ for metal t CO ₂ /t metal
Steel (57-62%Fe-Aust, US ~lower)	1,870	4,138,000	3,380	9.70	1.8 (Mine0.01t/t)
Aluminum (~ 40%)	64	169,000	1,000	2.90	15.7
Copper (Global avg 0.62% Cu)	21	190,000	82	0.24	4.5
Zinc (Range 2-6% Zn)	14	41,000	52	0.15	3.8
Nickel (1.6%Ni-L, 1-2% Ni-S)	2.4	42,000	76.9	0.22	32.0
Lithium (0.5-2% Li- hard rock)	0.0825	4,000	~2	<0.01	4 – 30 (Varies)
Ammonia (NH ₃)	230	230,000	550	1.6	2-3
Present world mining truck fleet	>5,000	-	71	0.21	0.01-0.02 (/t ore)
Cement	4,100	510,000	2,870	8.3	0.70

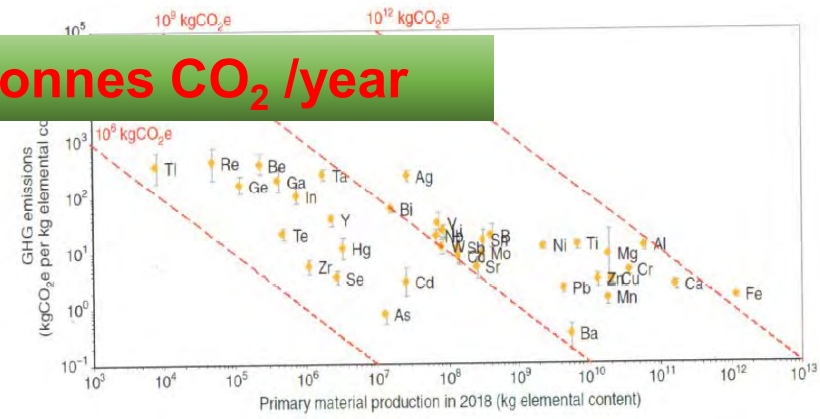
Note: Data are typical global

individual plants, countries varies widely. Depending, the CO₂ footprint of some metals produced in Canada could be lower than the above global average



CO₂ emissions, passenger cars globally

3,000 mill tonnes CO₂ /year



Smelting energy – 1700 to present P.J. Mackey © 2024



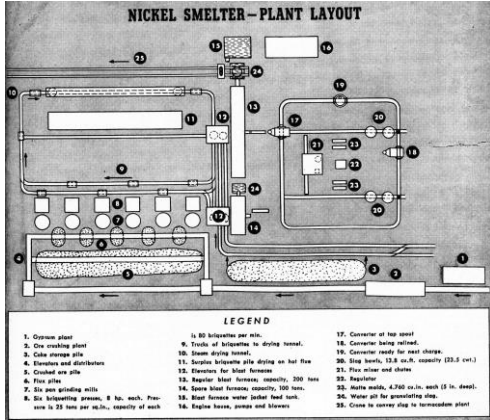
Energy consumption- all metals



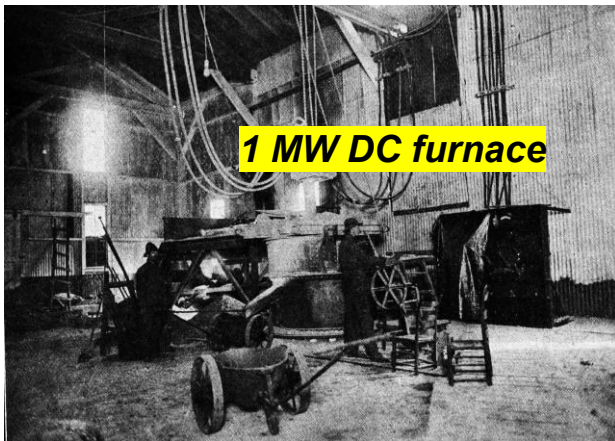
Nickel - Technology development

Details of nickel technology development, 1880 to 2024

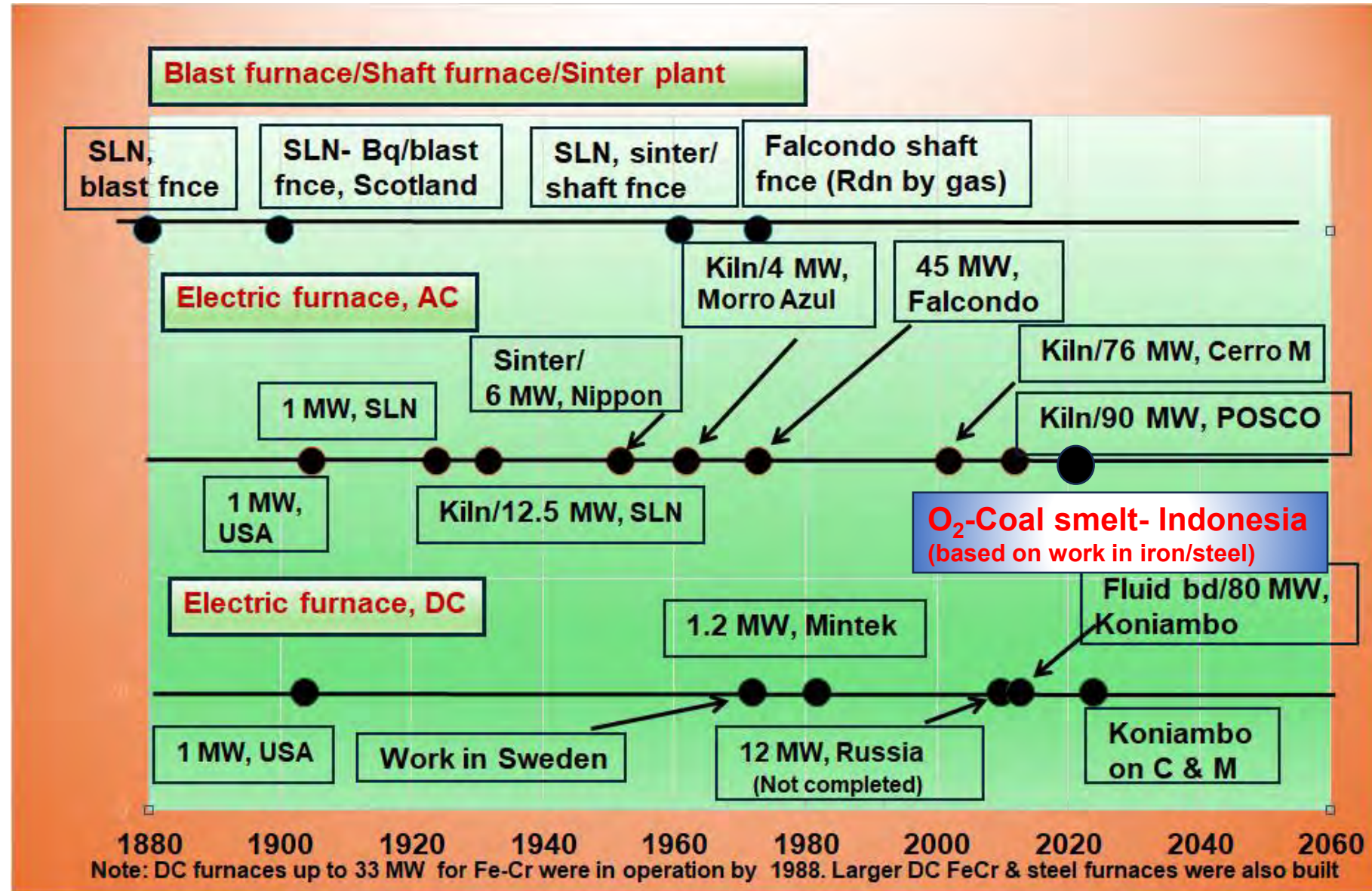
Laterite ore - pyrometallurgy



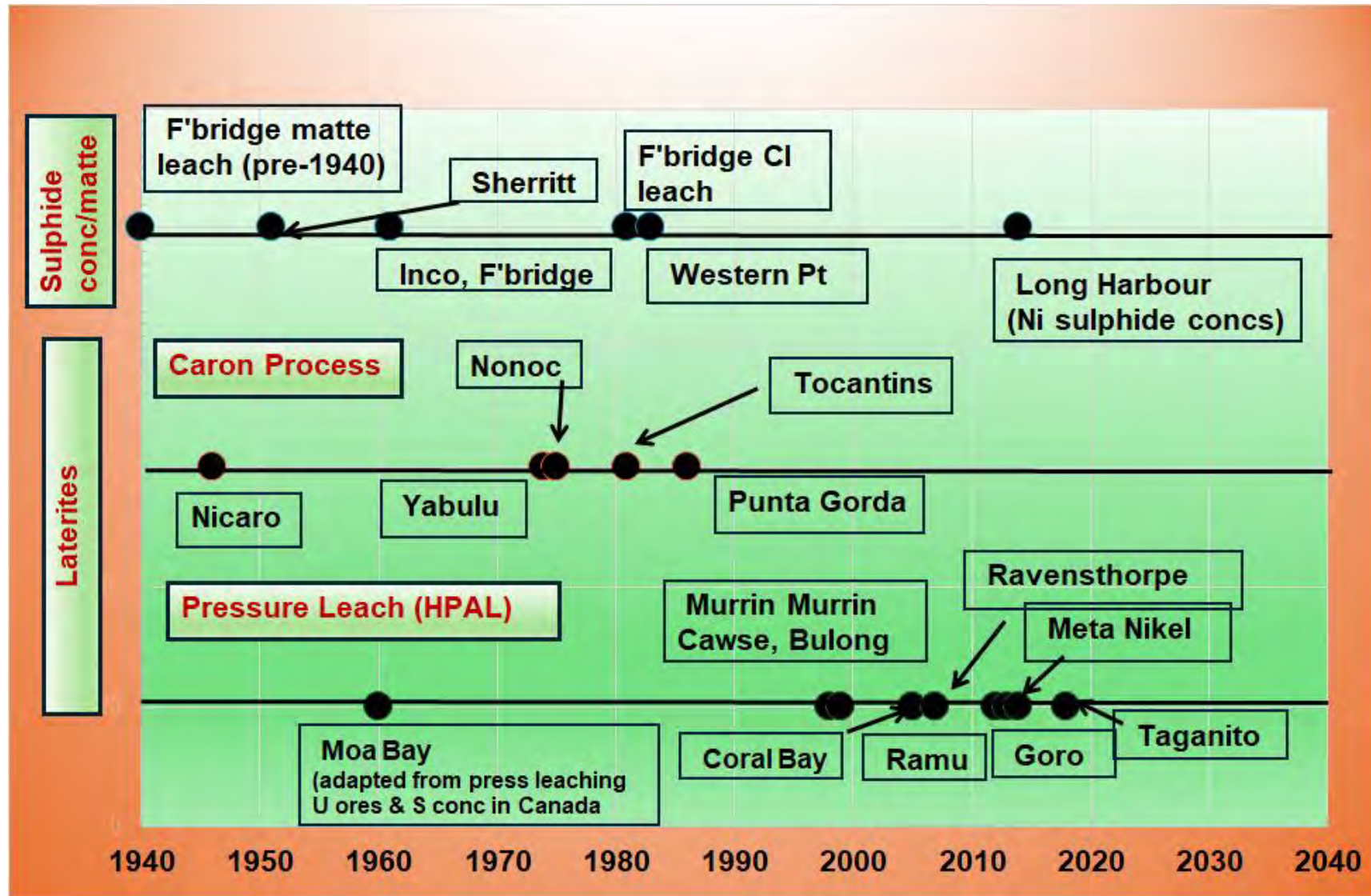
Layout of large laterite blast furnace/converter plant, Glasgow, 1900



First DC furnace testing of laterite ore, USA, 1904



Development of nickel technology- Hydrometallurgy (for sulphide concentrates, matte and laterites)

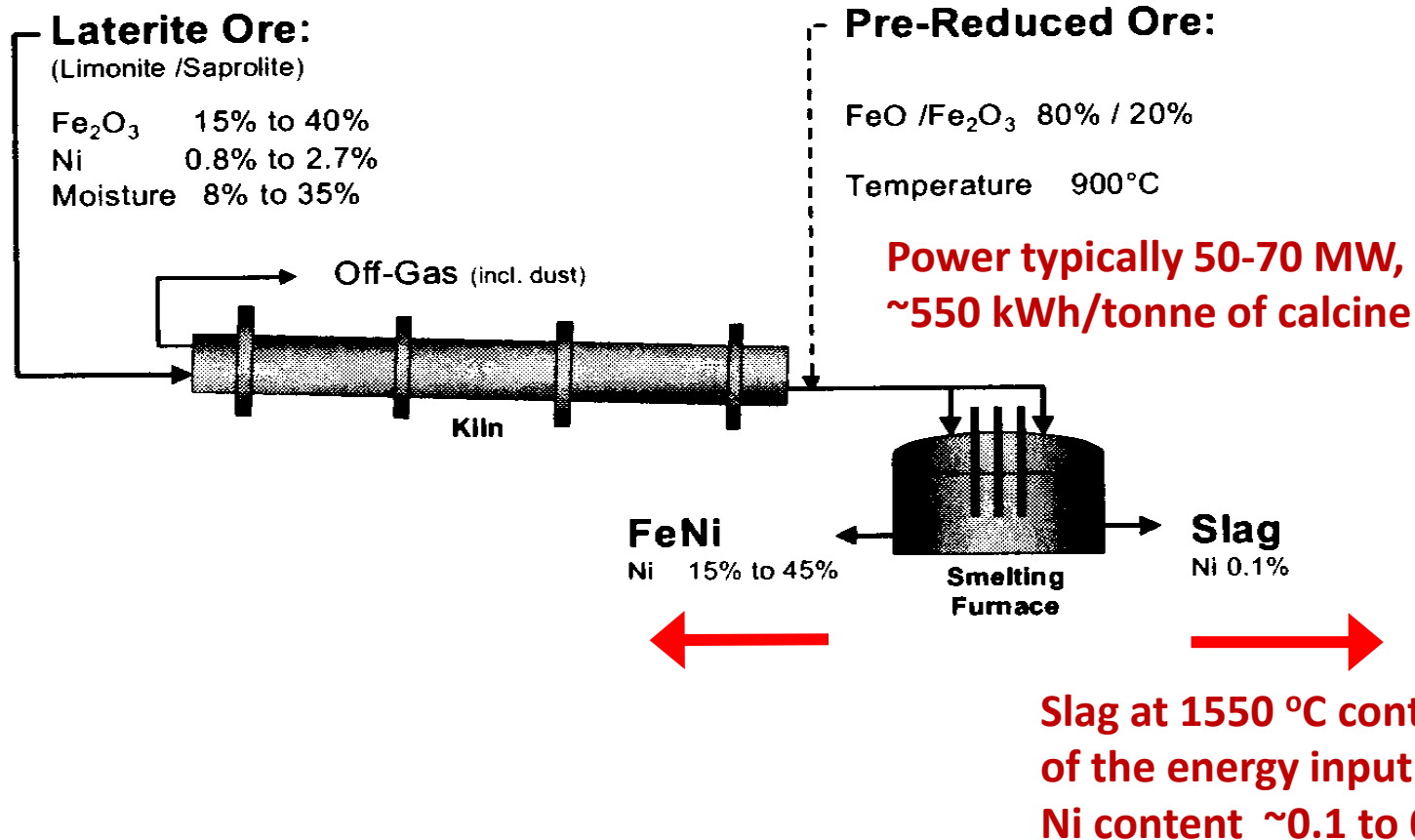
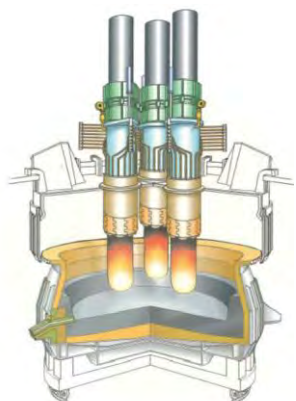




Nickel production processes - 1

Nickel from saprolite/transition laterite ore – Rotary Kiln-Electric Furnace (RKEF) - 65% of primary Ni today

Calcine ~ 80-120 t/h

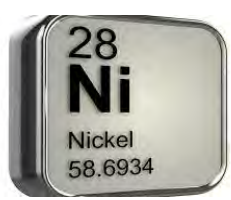




Nickel production processes - 2

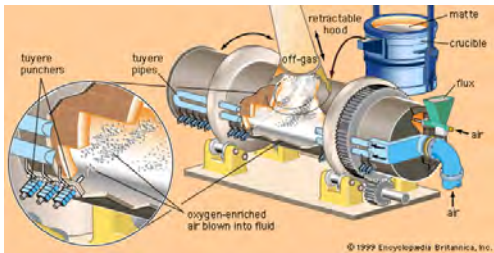
Nickel from limonite laterite ore – High Pressure Acid Leaching (HPAL) - 10% of primary Ni today (there is a trend now in Indonesia to build more HPAL plants)



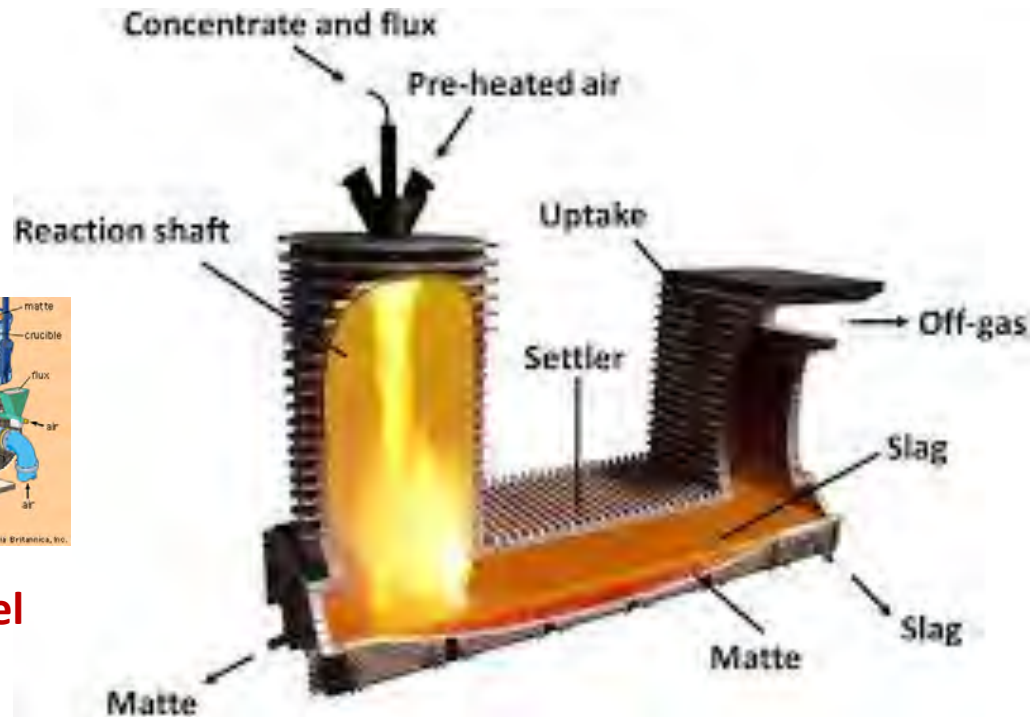


Nickel production processes - 3

Nickel from nickel sulphide concentrates - 25% of primary Ni



Converters for nickel matte converting

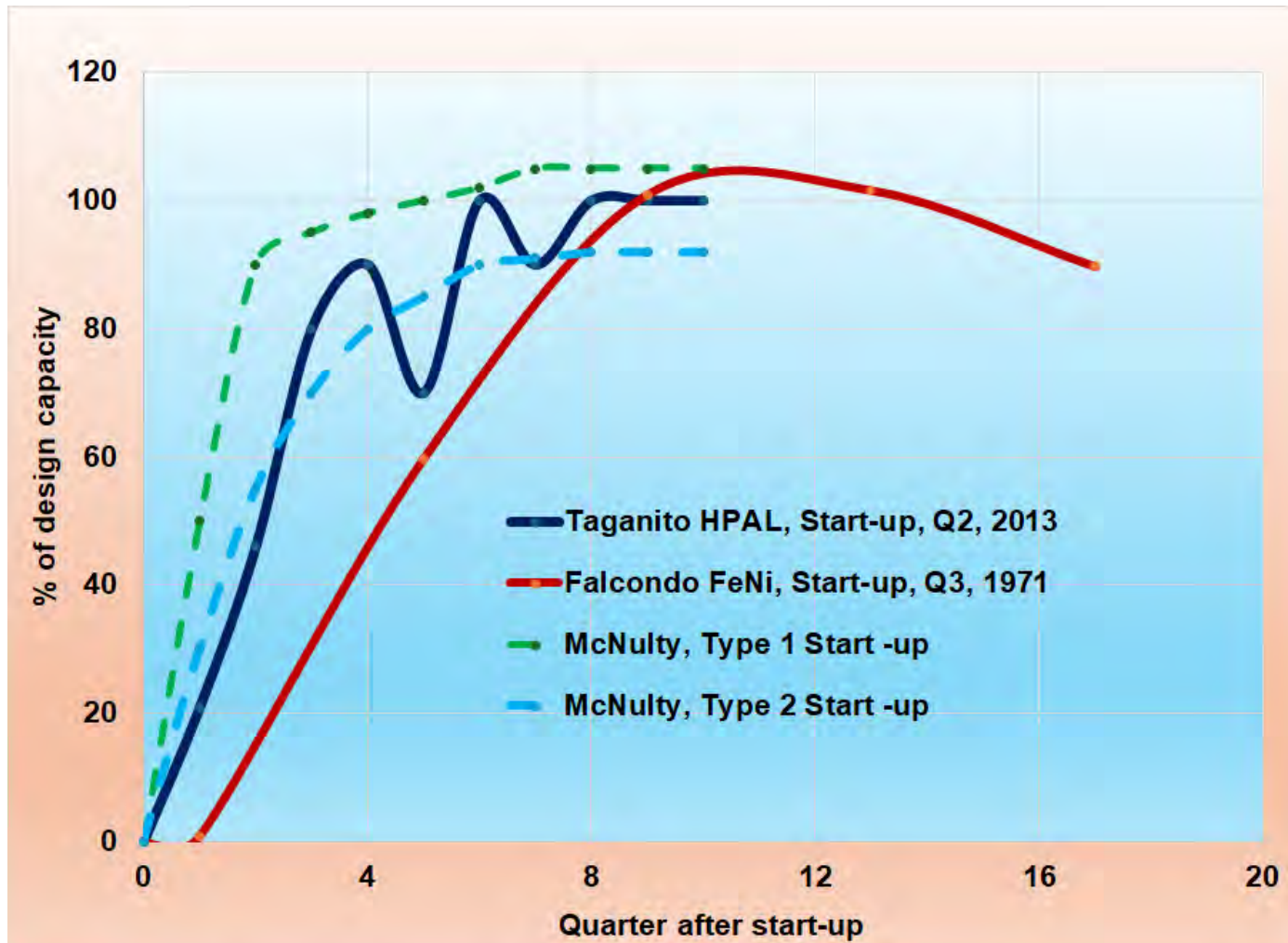


Flash furnace for smelting nickel sulphide concentrates

The electric furnace is also used for smelting nickel sulphide concentrates

Well piloted new Ni plants can have a good start-up

Evidence: Falcondo - red curve pyro (1970s) and Taganito – dark blue curve hydro HPAL(2013)



Good start-up = follow rules for metallurgical plant development and project implementation

Source: P.J. Mackey, 2023

P.J. Mackey © 2024



New technology (for lower CO₂)



3. New developments in iron and steel technology (for lower CO₂)

New developments in iron and steel technology.

Important to understand that technologies developed for iron & steel have generally been adapted for nickel (along with specialized Ni refining processes)

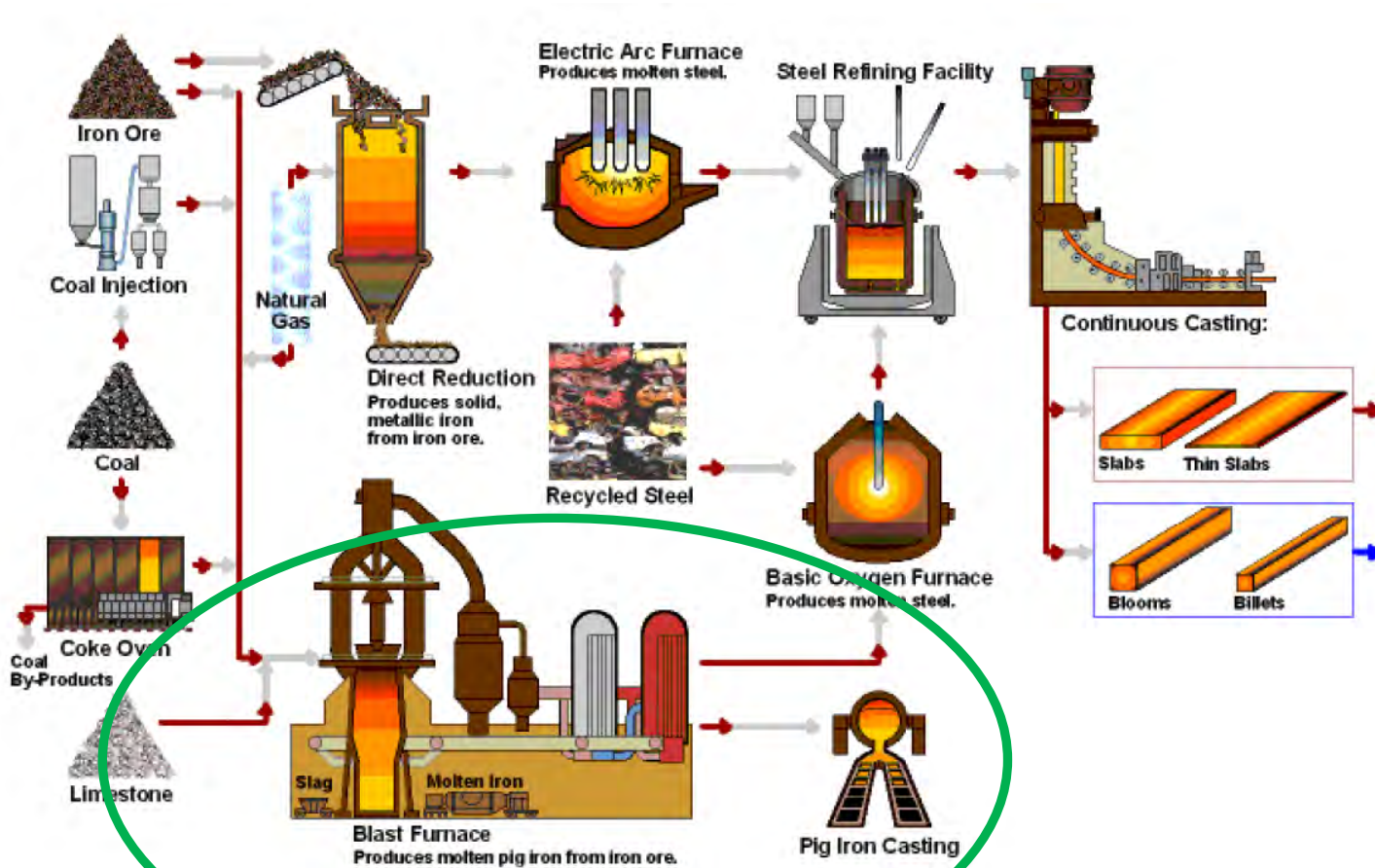
In other words, emerging developments that we see today for iron and steel, will eventually be adapted for nickel

Summary- production and CO₂ data- iron and steel and non-ferrous metals

Metal	CO ₂ emissions, % of global	CO ₂ emissions, t CO ₂ /t metal
Iron and steel (1870 mill t, 2020)	9.7	~ 2
Four non-ferrous metals (Cu, Zn, Ni & Li) (102 mill t, 2020)	0.6	~ 5.6



About 70% of world steel is produced via the iron blast furnace
(Balance of steel by scrap and Direct Reduced Iron (DRI))
(The iron blast furnace is a major source of CO₂ emissions)



Reduction by coke

Source: Refer to P.J. Mackey
P.J. Mackey © 2024



The iron blast furnace dates back centuries. Early laterite smelting utilized the blast furnace (Insert below- Closed BFs- Bethlehem, USA, now outdoor museum)

It is recognised that the technology needs to change if CO₂ emissions are to be reduced

We will look at these new and emerging technologies



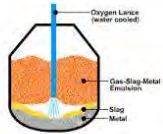


How long does it take to develop and commercialize a successful new metallurgical technology

Steps of: Lab testing-piloting-commercialization



Let us take a look at how processes in use today started – what level of piloting and scale-up was successful (simplified review)



Data are given for the **Basic Oxygen Furnace (BOF)** for steel, the **Midrex Process** for Direct Reduced Iron and later, the **Falcondo FeNi** process



2 t Pilot BOF



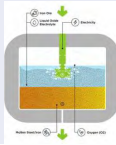






Summary- Development Time and Scale-up Factors (BOF, Midrex – iron/steel and Falcondo FeNi processes)

Process	Development Time, years	Scale-up factor. Pilot to commercial	
		Shaft furnace	Furnace
BOF	13	-	36 (in 3 stages)
Midrex	15	98	-
Falcondo (FeNi)	16	18	34 (Electric furnace)

8 selected low-CO₂ iron-making technologies under development in 2024

No	Process/Developer	Country	Current Status
1	H ₂ /DRI (Midrex, (Energiron, Greeniron) 	USA/ Germany/Sweden	300 t/d demo plant, ~4 m shaft furnace. Is a pilot for H ₂ Green Steel, Boden, 2.5 mill t/yr
2*	H ₂ /DRI (Hybrit) 	Sweden	24 t/d pilot plant (1,000 kg/h) with ~2 m shaft furnace, and accompanying electric furnace
3	H ₂ /DRI (MS&T)	USA/Intl.	0.2 t/d lab/pilot scale (8 kg/h), ~0.25 m unit
4*	Hi Temp Electrolytic (Boston Metals) 	USA	3 t/d pilot plant operating at 200 kA (3 to 4 individual cells)
5	Lo Temp Electrolytic (McGill/Mittal)	Canada/India	Small-scale laboratory experiments currently underway
6	H ₂ /DRI (Calix) "Zesty" 	Australia	Testing at a small pilot scale now underway - 60 kg/h (a 0.2 m electrically-heated shaft)
7*	H ₂ reduction (Breakthrough Energy). H ₂ version of coal technologies 	USA	Bath smelting process using injected H ₂ for reduction of iron ore. A 2 MW pre-pilot unit is under construction near Houston, Texas.
8	CO recycling to BF (Univ. Birmingham)* Described in following slides	UK	Theoretical study- Uses a perovskite crystal structure to convert CO ₂ to CO for the BF

Hybrit Process (Sweden)- Schematic Process Flowsheet (2024)

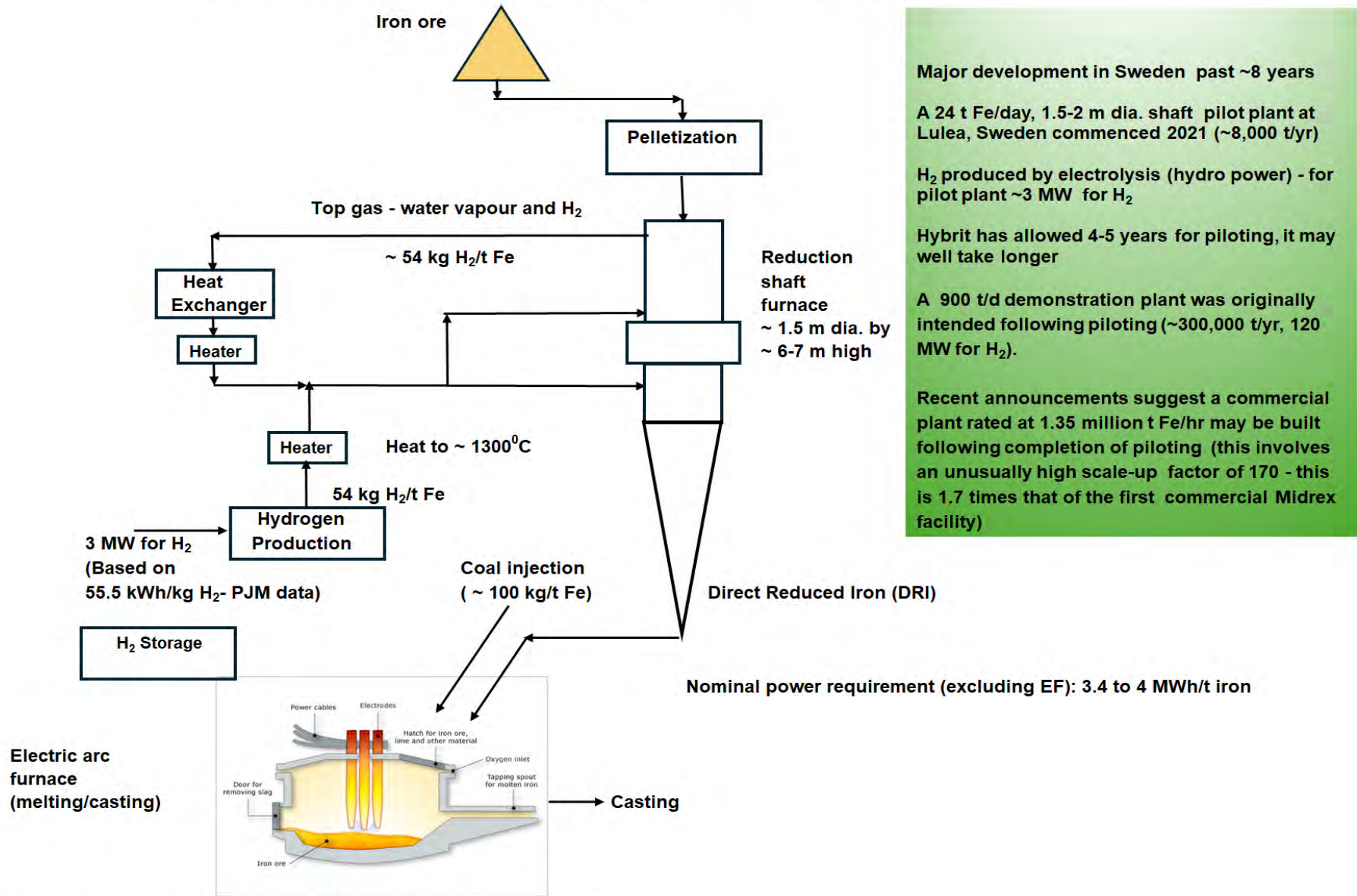
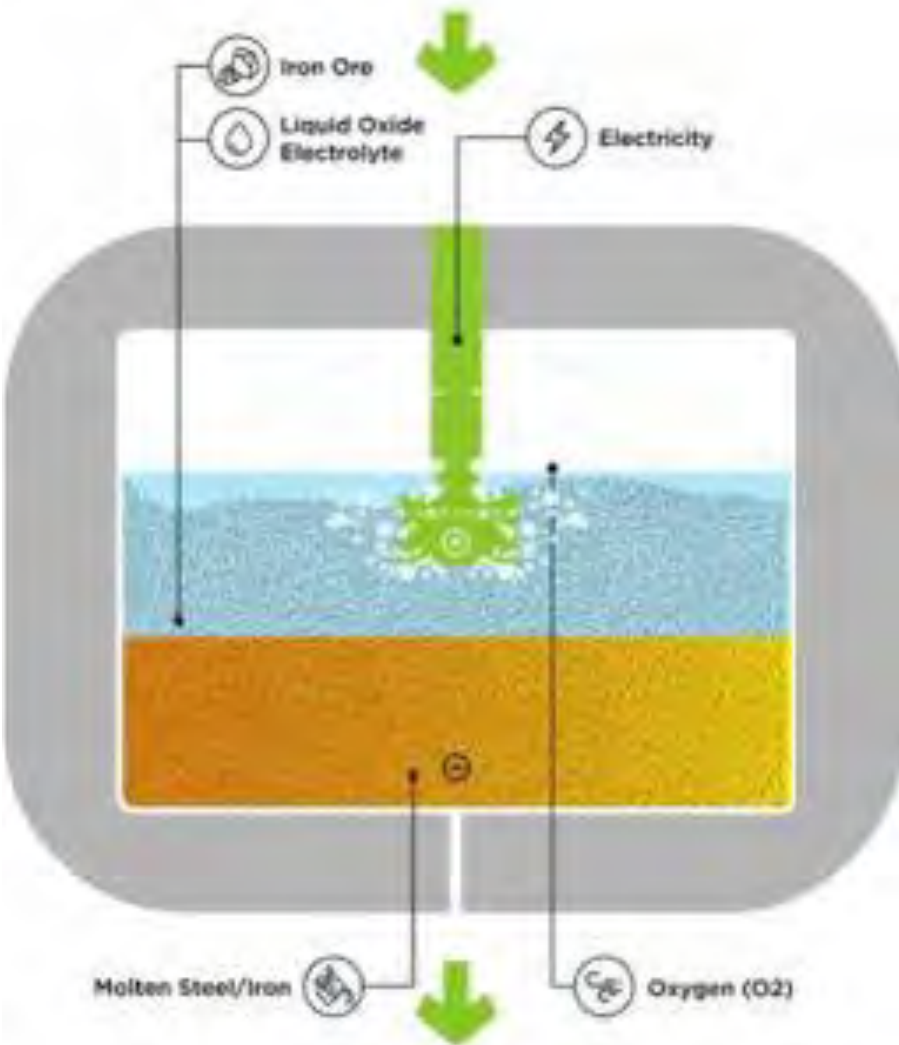


Diagram prepared by P.J.Mackey 2024 based on published information

Hybrit: **H**ydrogen **B**reakthrough **I**ronmaking **T**echnology

4. Electrolytic Production of Iron- Boston Metals



Direct production of iron from iron ore by molten salt electrolysis (akin to the Al production in the Hall-Herault cell)

Pilot plant was scaled-up from initial laboratory tests carried out at MIT using inert Cr-Fe electrodes operating at ~5 V.

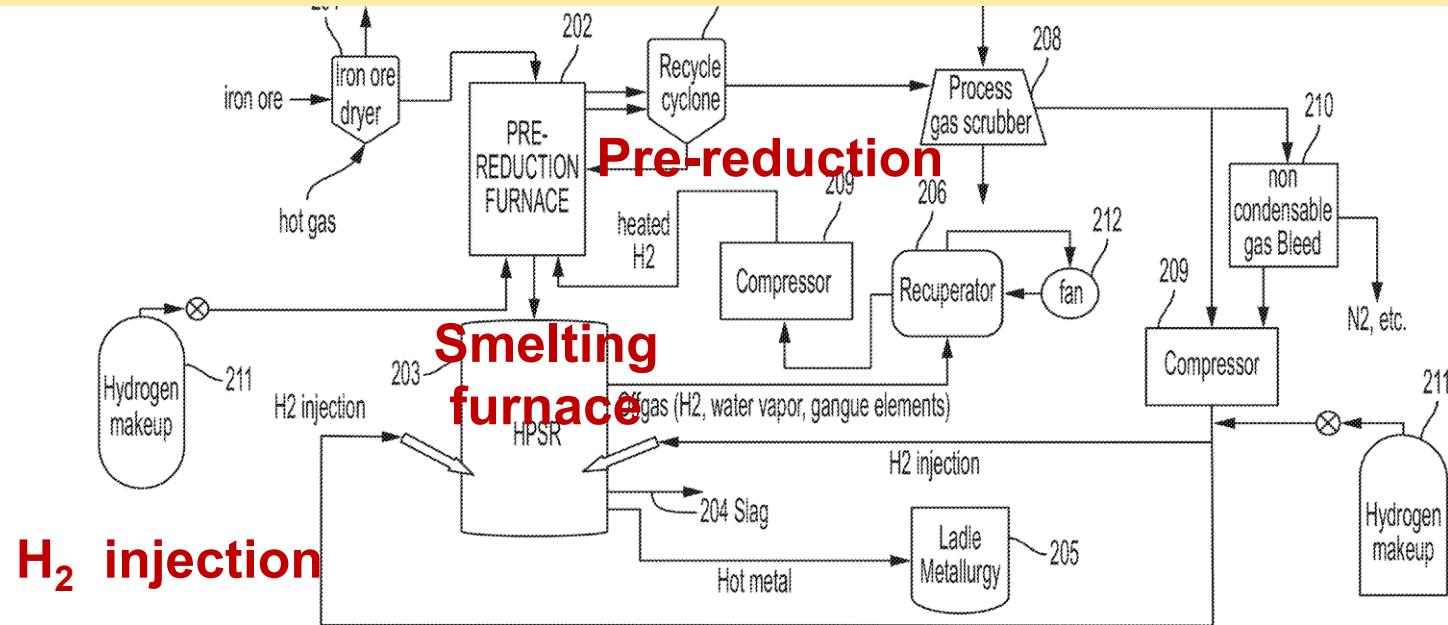
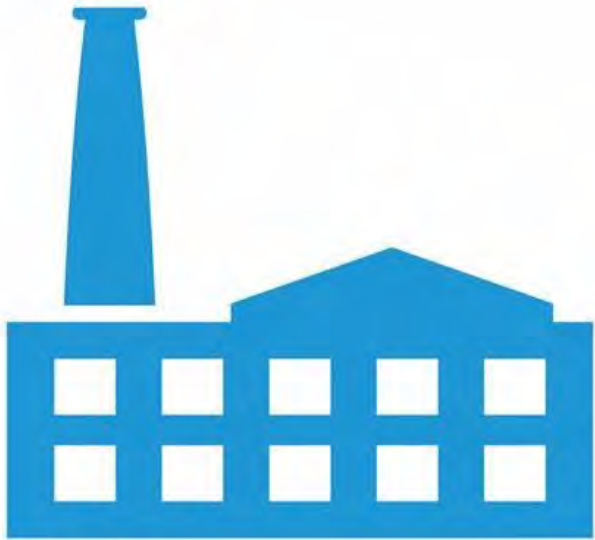
Current plans include a pilot or demonstration plant rated at 3 t Fe/day and operating at ~200 kA. Plans beyond this not published

Nominal power requirement: 3.5 to 4 MWh/t iron

Ref. Boston Metals, Allanore et al, 2013, Wang and Sadoway, 2011

Reduction of molten iron ore using H₂

For more than 80 years, the reduction of solid iron ore with H₂ has been tested and piloted- but not commercialized (Past unsuccessful processes include: H-iron, NU-Iron, Gas-solid ironmaking). Bath smelting with coal/O₂ also tested. A new development is the use of H₂ instead of coal in a bath smelting furnace (below). A 1-2 MW pilot furnace (~200-400 kg/hr) is presently under construction, Texas, USA



Flowsheet taken from a recent US patent application

If successful, the concept could be adapted to process Ni laterite using H₂

Source: US patent application, US2024/002644/6 A1 (2024)

Potential new technologies for nickel

Laterites

1. H₂ reduction using a shaft furnace (the Ni equivalent of the direct reduction of iron ore by H₂, except the degree of reduction is far less)
2. Bath smelting with coal and tonnage oxygen (possibly eventually by H₂)

Sulphides

1. H₂ reduction of sulphides

The next set of slides summarize potential new technologies for nickel, followed by a timeline in nickel process development (Falcondo process)

Potential new technologies for nickel - Paths to decarbonization

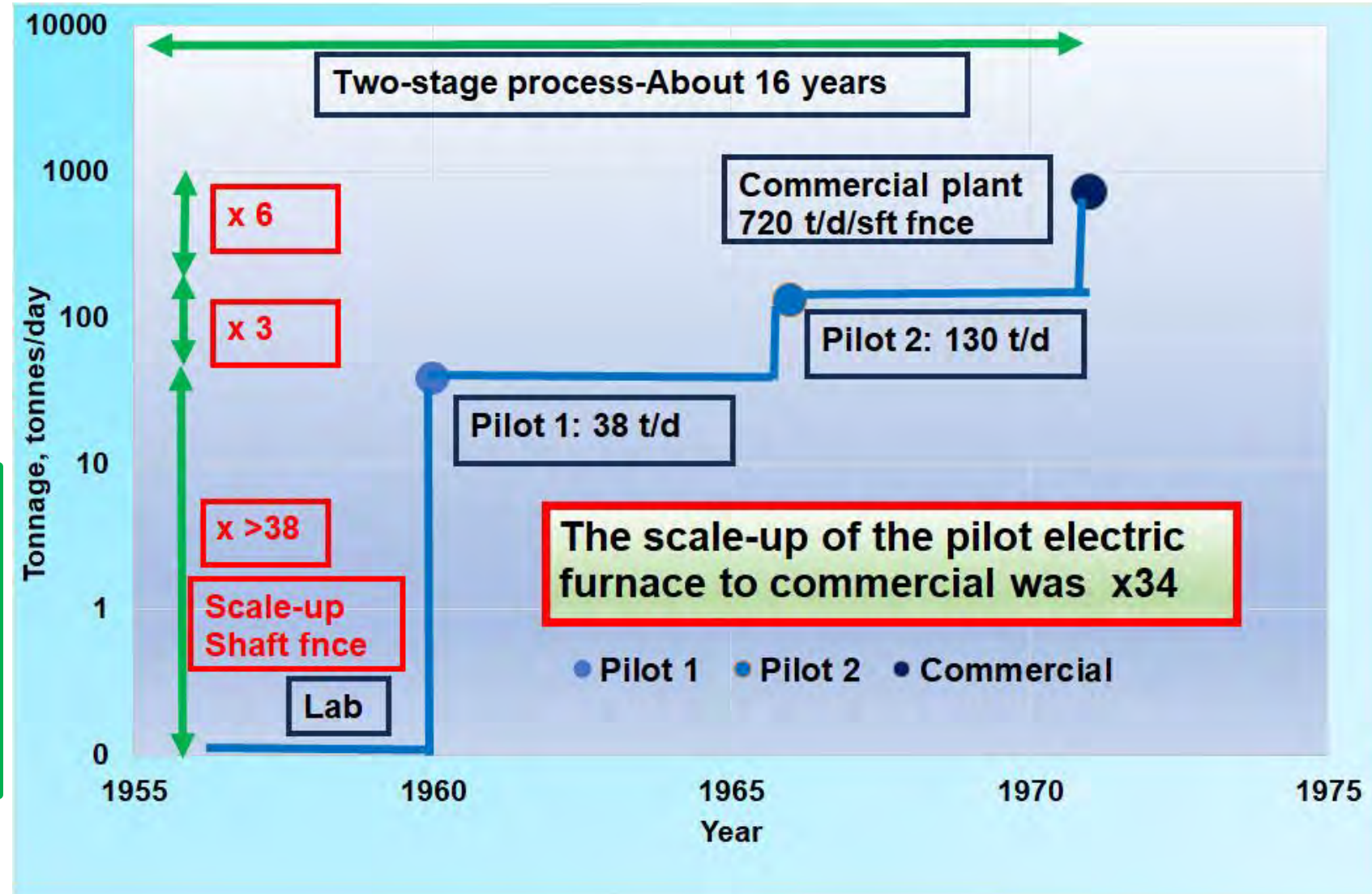
Item		% reduction in CO ₂
<u>Nickel Laterites (75% of Ni production today)</u>		
<u>Mine</u>	Electric (or H ₂) vehicles	6%
<u>Process</u>	Upgrade RKEF Technology (partial use electricity, use of bio-mass etc.) Heat recovery from molten tapped slag	Up to 20-30% To be determined
	H ₂ Shaft furnace (P. Mackey – small-scale lab/pilot tests in 2024) Coal-O ₂ bath smelting (Commenced in Indonesia- 2022) (Ni kilns will adapt new ideas tested for cement kilns)	63-76% 20-30% (Relative to coal-fired power)
<u>Nickel Sulphides (25% of Ni production today)</u>		
<u>Mine</u>	Electric (or H ₂) vehicles	8%
<u>Mill</u>	Ore sorting, improved comminution	10%+
<u>Process</u>	H ₂ reduction of sulphides P. Mackey-lab testing in 2024-25)	To be determined
	Solid state conversion to FeNi	To be determined

Source: P.J. Mackey, 2024

Development time - Falcondo- FeNi (2-stages)-1957-1973



The Falcondo Ni process was developed by Falconbridge, Canada in the 1960s at about the same time that the Midrex shaft furnace process was developed for iron ore (Independent developments)



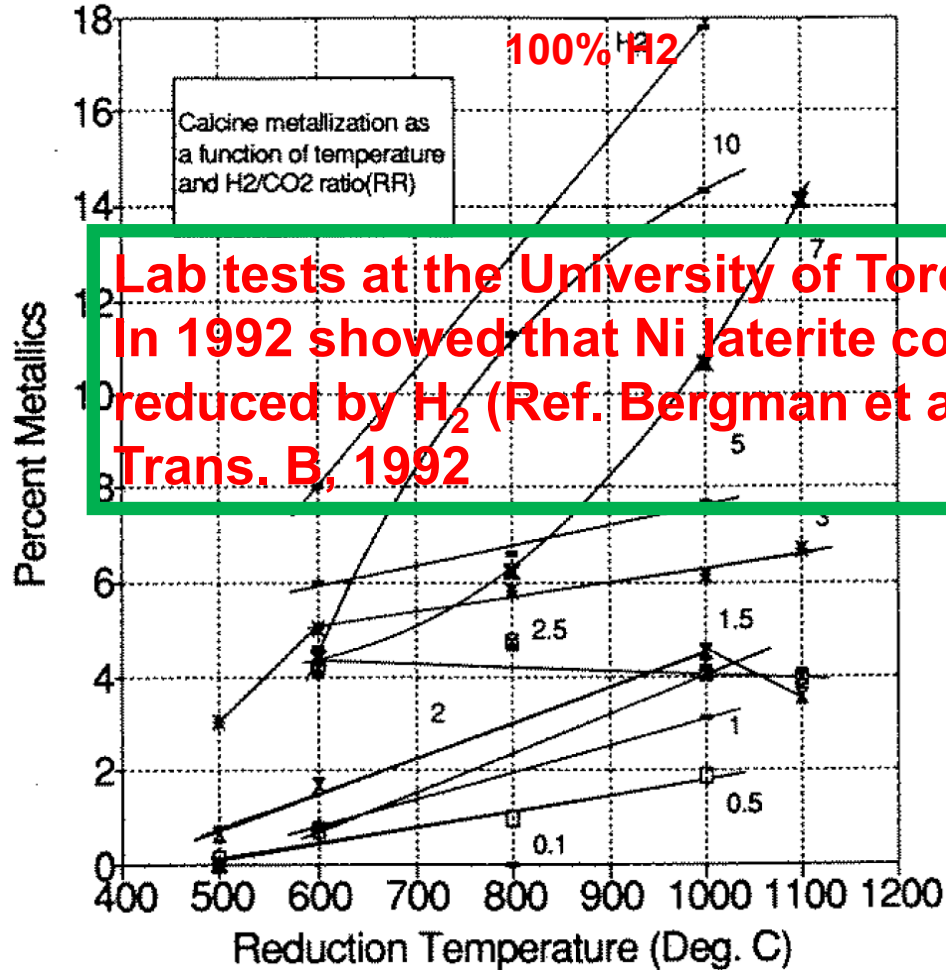
Source: P.J. Mackey, 2024

P.J. Mackey © 2024



H₂ Shaft furnace for Ni - Potential new technology for nickel laterite (Using a shaft furnace - much like Falcondo)

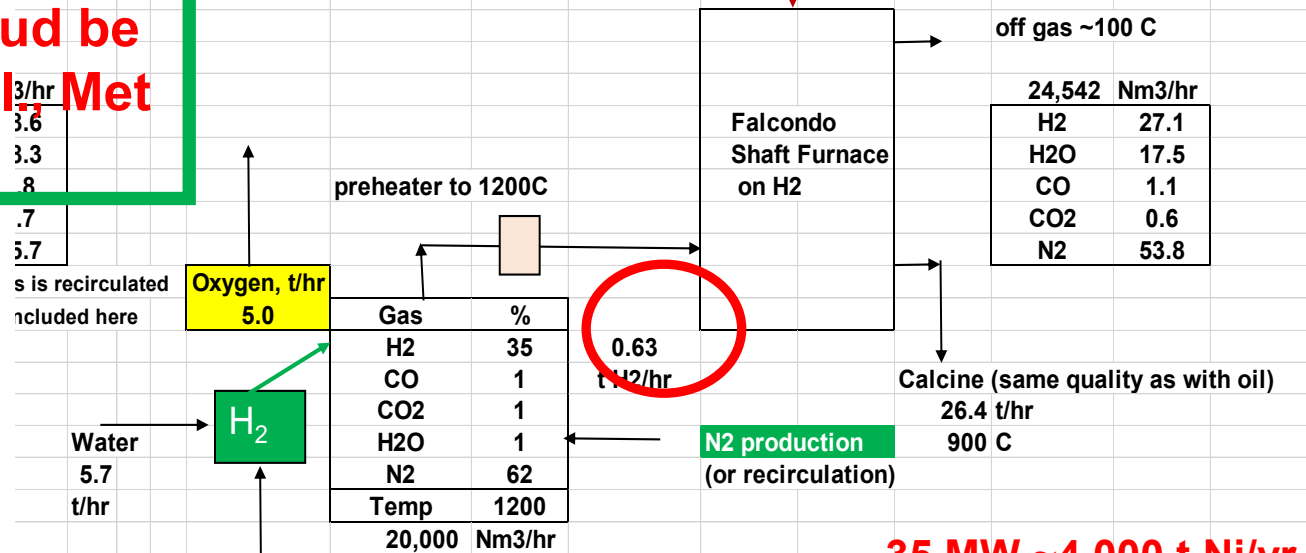
Falcondo nickel laterite shaft furnace process- using naththa as at present and also based on H₂ (schematic flowsheet, draft only)
(Note, this is for 30 t/hr ore, equal to present capacity of one Falcondo shaft furnace, roughly 3800 t/yr Ni (ore 1.7% Ni, 95% rec, 330 d/yr)



issions xxx t/t Ni With H₂ as source of reducing gas (new) - CO₂ emissions xxx t/t Ni
(H₂ ex renewable power)

Briquetted Ore 30 t/hr

(for those interested, please contact the author)



**35 MW ~4,000 t Ni/yr
~320 MW ~ 36,000 t Ni/yr
Two EFs ~ 140 MW**

inlet gas, Nm³/kg calcine 0.67
inlet gas, kg/kg calcine 0.67
(assuming 1.04 gm/Lit, refer Falcondo calc sheet)

inlet gas, Nm³/kg calcine 0.76
inlet gas, kg/kg calcine 0.65
(assuming 0.86 gm/Lit, refer Falcondo calc sheet)

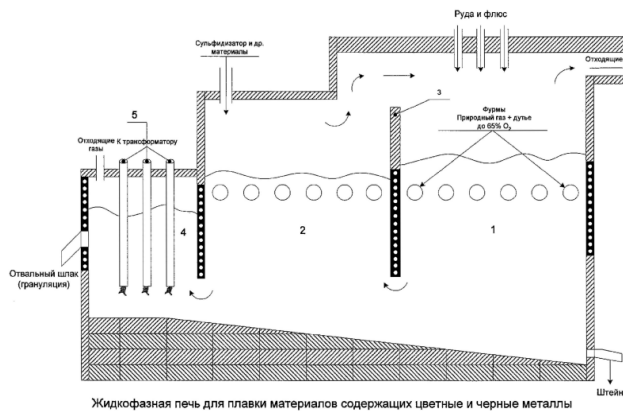
Note: The above projections for CO₂ reduction are based on modelling. Testwork and piloting will be required to develop actual process design criteria.

Recent press release- Indonesia Coal/O₂ Ni bath smelting process

“Indonesia Hengsheng oxygen-enrich side-blown Ni project was successfully put into operation”,

20 September 2023

Reportedly 3-4 furnaces now in operation (10 kt Ni/ each furnace), 2 by CNGR in Morowali Park (started Oct. 2022), and 1 to 2 operated by Hengsheng, started 2023 as noted above. Furnace adapted from those used for copper, Ni process piloted in China



Representation of furnace (Russian Patent)

Photos: Thanks to J. Chuanyu



Matte tapping

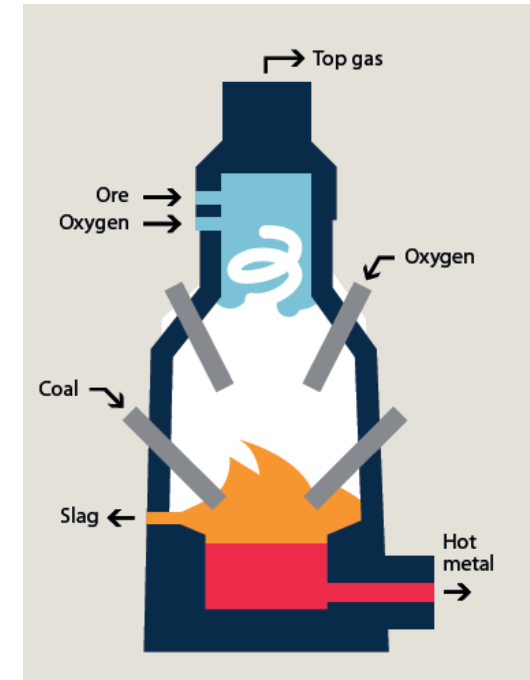
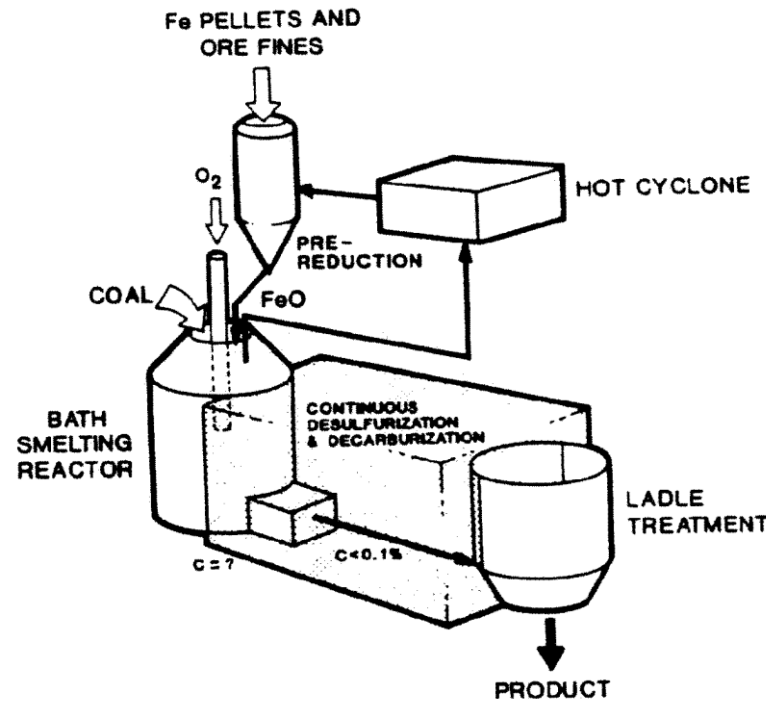
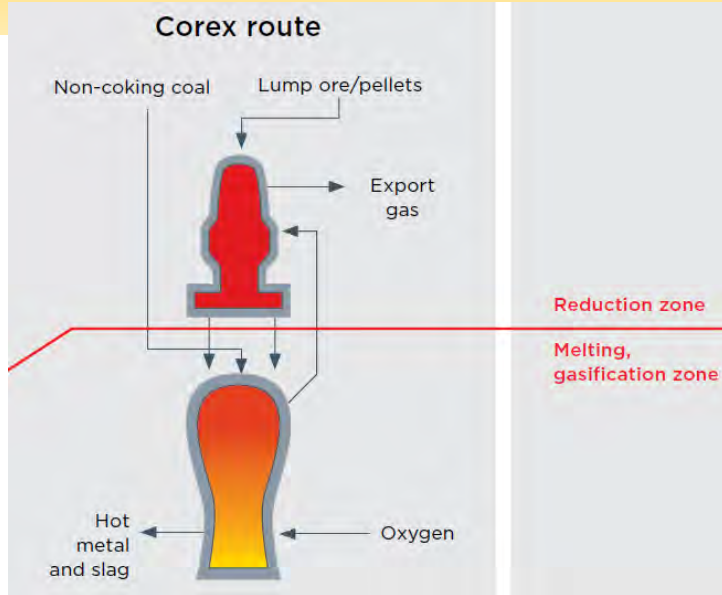


Cast matte ingots

Bath smelting (coal and O₂) has been studied for iron-making for decades

Schematic diagrams of three Fe bath smelting processes piloted

The approach is now being adapted in Indonesia for nickel laterites



Corex - Austria, 1970s
(Several commercial plants installed, most closed by now)

AIST- USA 1990s
(Tested on a 5 t/hr pilot plant, not commercialised)

Hisana-Europe 2000s
(Originally Hismelt in Australia, starting 1970s, commercial plant presently in China)

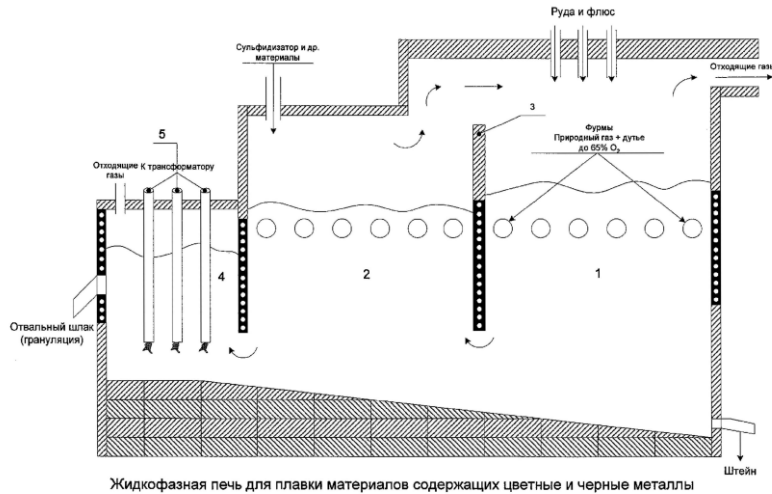
Source: Refer to P.J. Mackey, 2024



Bath smelting of nickel laterite with coal and oxygen

(With acknowledgement to Hengsheng New Energy Materials, Indonesia)

Vanyukov furnace arrangement used by Hengsheng



Hengsheng plant, Indonesia

Source: P.J. Mackey, 2021

P.J. Mackey © 2024

Potential Alternative arrangement (by Author)

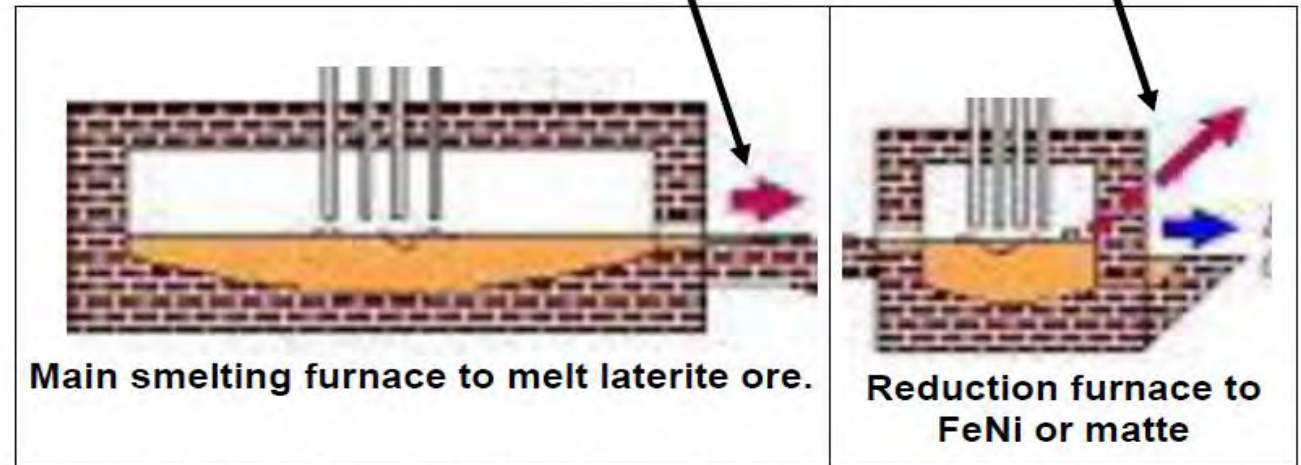
Schematic arrangement of bath smelting furnaces for nickel laterite (Rectangular or circular furnace, top lancing)

Inputs - Main furnace: partly dried ore, coal and O₂

Inputs - Reduction furnace: Coal, O₂-pyrite optional

Products: Matte or FeNi & slag

Molten ore flow



Source: Indonesia Hengsheng New Energy Materials Co., Ltd, News report, Sept 2023. Conceptual arrangement only



Bath smelting of nickel laterite with coal and oxygen CO₂ emissions- RKEF and Bath Smelting compared- Very approx. only

	RKEF- Power from coal		Bath smelting (O ₂ -coal)	
	t coal/t Ni	t CO ₂ /t Ni	t coal/t Ni	t CO ₂ /t Ni
Mining (Diesel)	0.30	0.8	0.3	0.8
Coal for dryer	2.9	7.8	2.9	7.8
Coal for kiln (incl. reduction)	8.6	23.3	0.0	0.0
Power- Electric furnace (coal equiv.)	12.9	34.8	Bath smelting coal	10.6
Power- Other (coal equiv.)	2.6	7.0	Power (Other) (coal equiv.)	2.6
Power for O ₂	0.0	0.0	Power for O ₂ (coal equiv.)	2.1
<u>Total</u>	<u>27.0</u>	<u>72.9</u>		<u>18.1</u> <u>49.7</u>
	(With hydro power ~36.1)		(Range considered 44 to 54)	
			Reduction relative to coal-fired	
			power- 20-30% (approx.)	

Ideas for lowering CO₂ emissions in ferronickel production

(CO₂ emissions as t CO₂/t Ni, power data assuming 30,000 t Ni/yr, ore 1.7% Ni)

Plant area	RKEF process		MFSF Process (new)
	Typical present	Part use of H ₂ (50% of coal by H ₂)	H ₂ used as reductant in shaft furnace
Mining	0.8	13 MW	13 MW
Dryer	7.8	3.9	7.8
Kiln Burner	12.0	6.0	-
Kiln Reductant	11.3	11.3	-
Sub-total	31.9	21.2	7.8

Electric Furnace

Plant area	RKEF process				MFSF Process (new)	
	HYDRO	COAL	HYDRO	COAL	HYDRO	COAL
Electric furnace	0	32	0	16	0	16
Total, t CO ₂ /t Ni	<u>31.9</u>	<u>63.9</u>	<u>21.2</u>	<u>37.2</u>	<u>7.8</u>	<u>23.8</u>
% Reduction in CO ₂	0	0	34	42	76	63
H ₂ required, t H ₂ /t Ni				1.03		1.31
Renewable power, MW						
For H ₂				217		298
For EF				70		70
Total, MW				287		368

Note: 1. RKEF: Rotary kiln-electric furnace, MFSF: Modified Falcondo shaft furnace;
 2.Data approximate; 3. Power to pre-heat H₂ in MFSF included; 3. CO₂ does not include any additional fossil fuel related to use of H₂.

Note: The above projections for CO₂ reduction are based on modelling. Testwork and piloting will be required to develop actual process design criteria.

Source: P.J. Mackey, 2024



Stop press (Electrically heated kilns):

Pilot tests are now underway in Belgium and Norway of the use of an electrically-heated kiln in cement manufacture.

This may potentially be applied to a Ni laterite kiln

A large kiln – say for ~ 25,000 t Ni/yr - would require ~ 120 MW power- this will require a lot of development work

New technology- nickel sulphide concentrate - Reduction by H₂

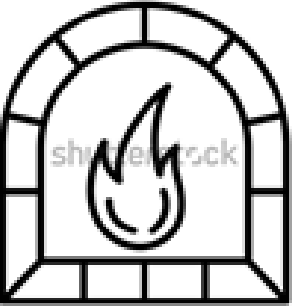
Laboratory tests reported in the 1970s showed H₂ reduced the sulphides to metal at moderate temperatures with CaS formed from added lime.

The CaS is later converted to CaCO₃ and elemental S for use in the chemical industry

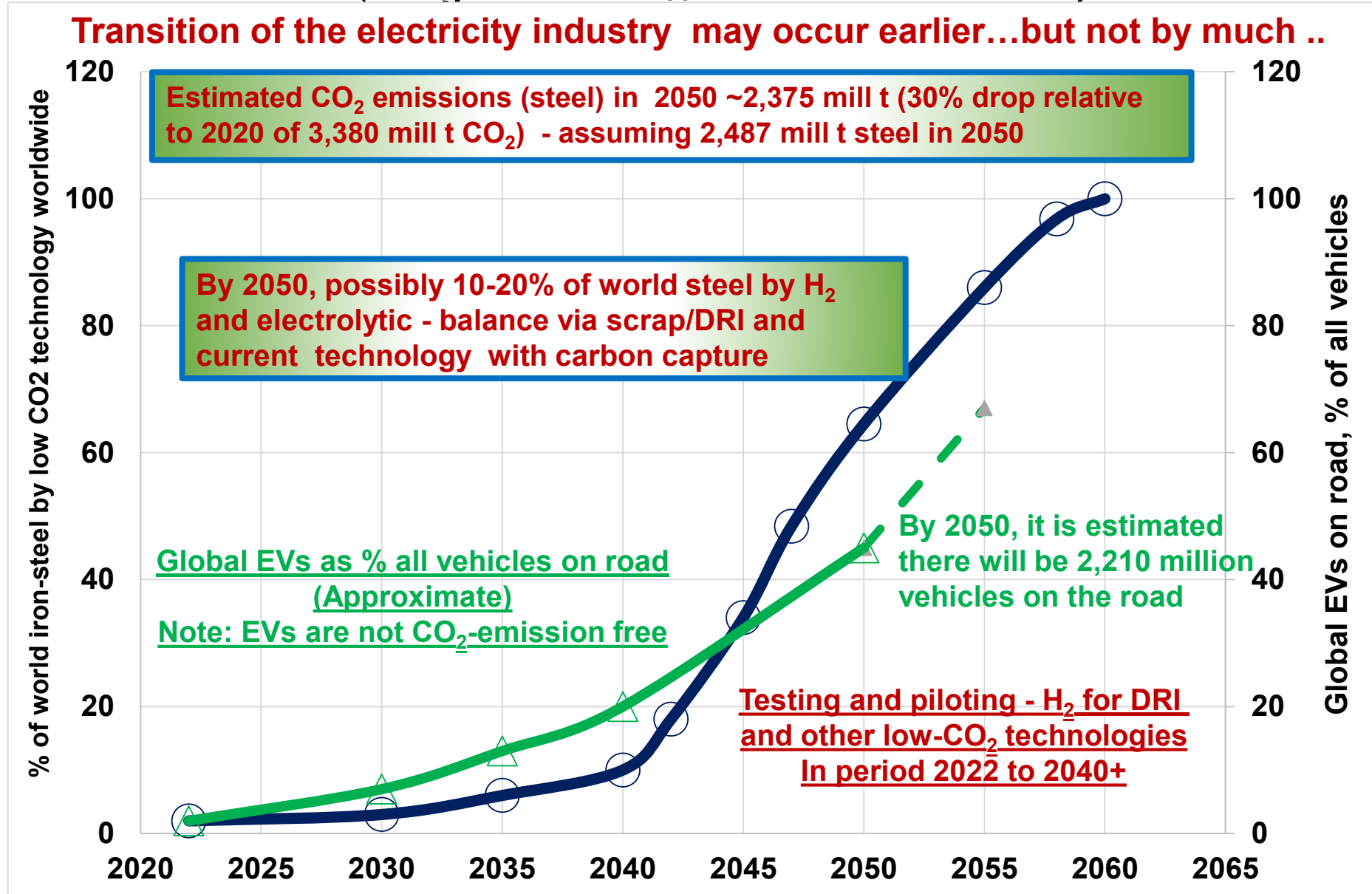
Reactions confirmed - thermochemical calculations (by author)

Avoids SO₂ /acid production, energy requirement to be reviewed

Candidate for new laboratory testing in 2024-2025 to verify technical feasibility (for those interested, please contact the author)



Projected rate of world-wide take-up of low carbon technology in iron and steelmaking (and global EV as % of all vehicles on road)

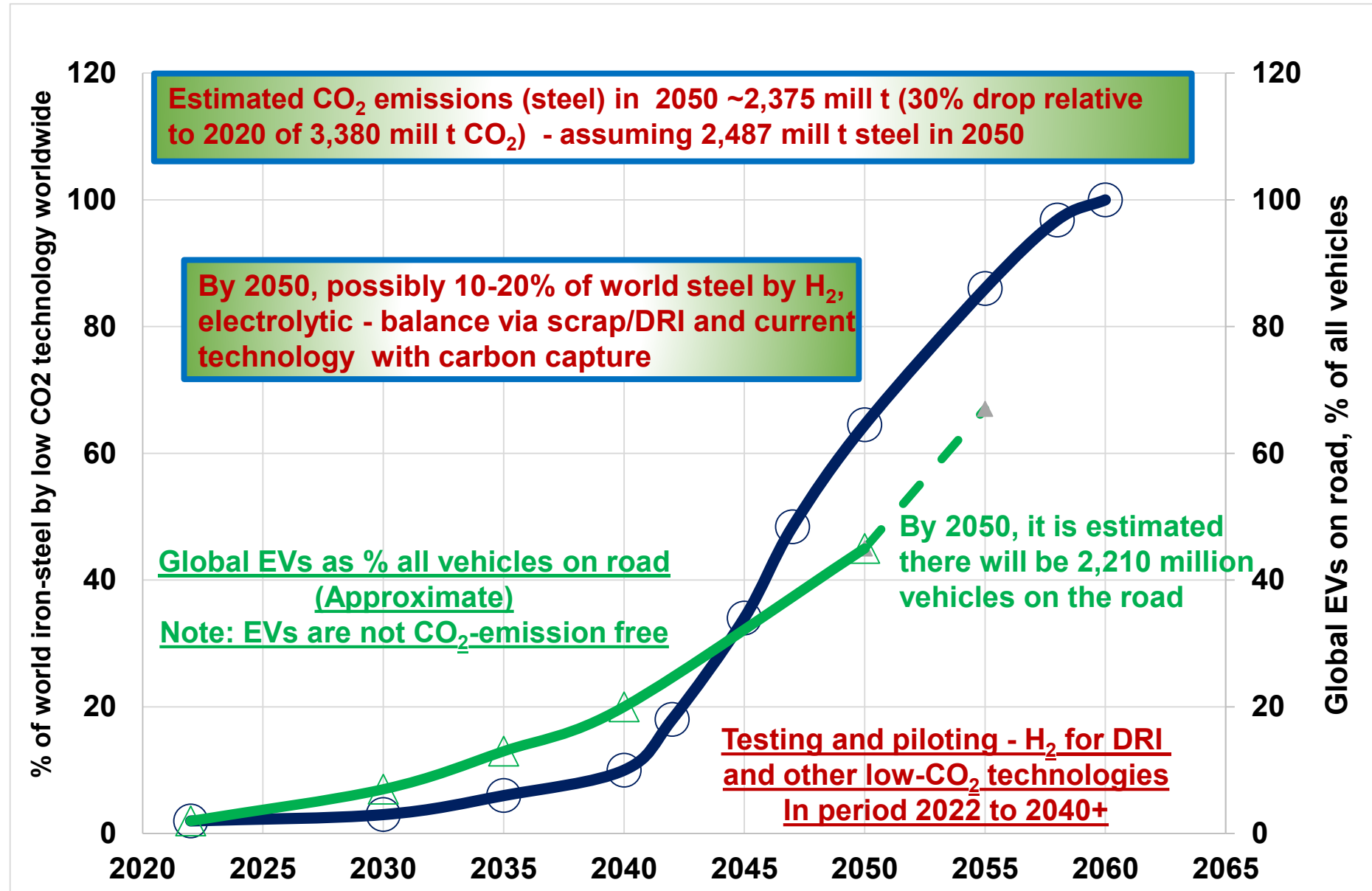


Note: Low carbon steel is <200 kg CO₂/t steel

P.J. Mackey © 2024 Source: P.J. Mackey, 2022



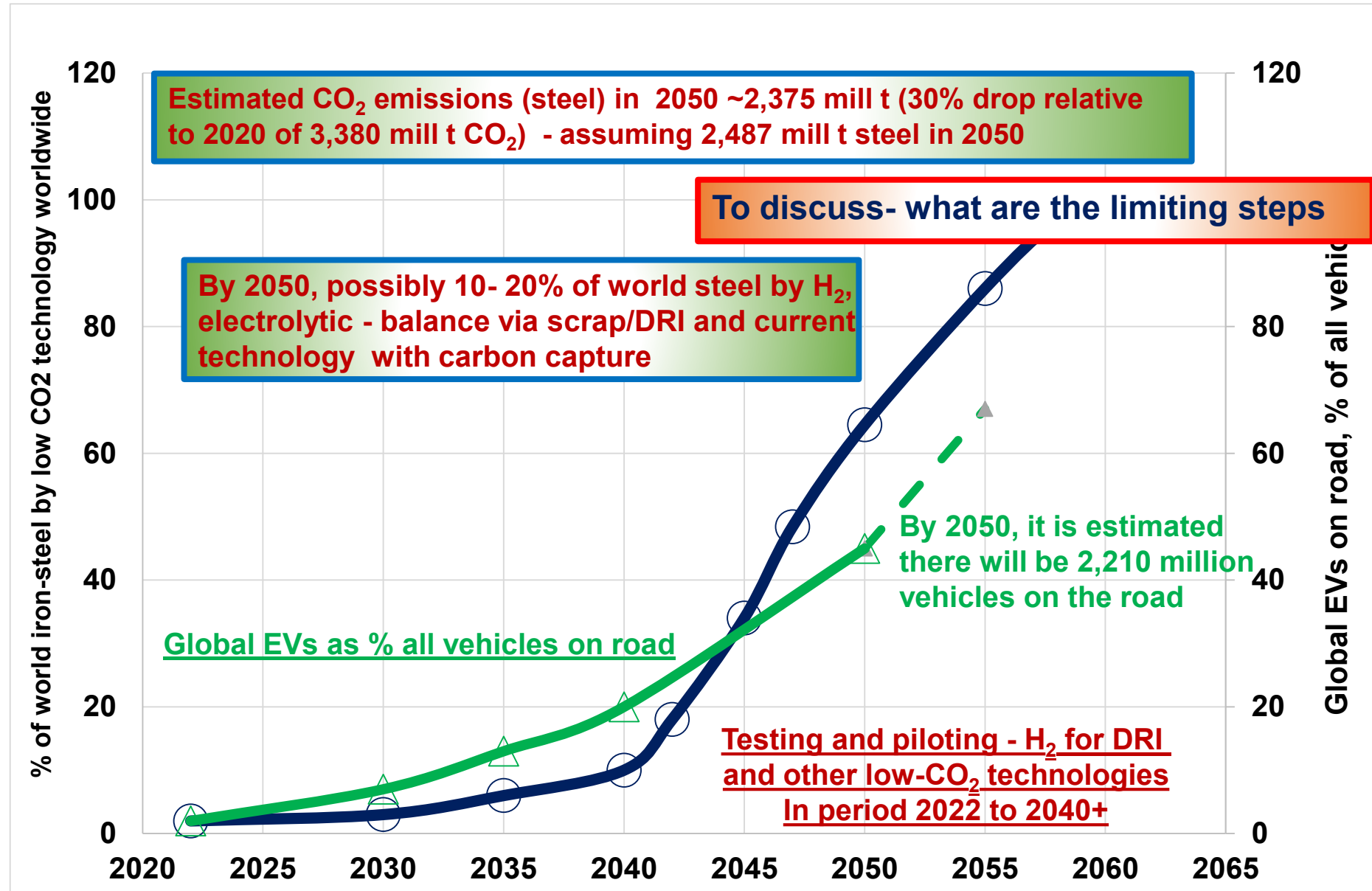
Example of possible rate of world-wide take-up of zero/low carbon technology in iron and steel making
(and global EV as % of all vehicles on road)



Note: Low carbon steel is <200 kg CO₂/t steel

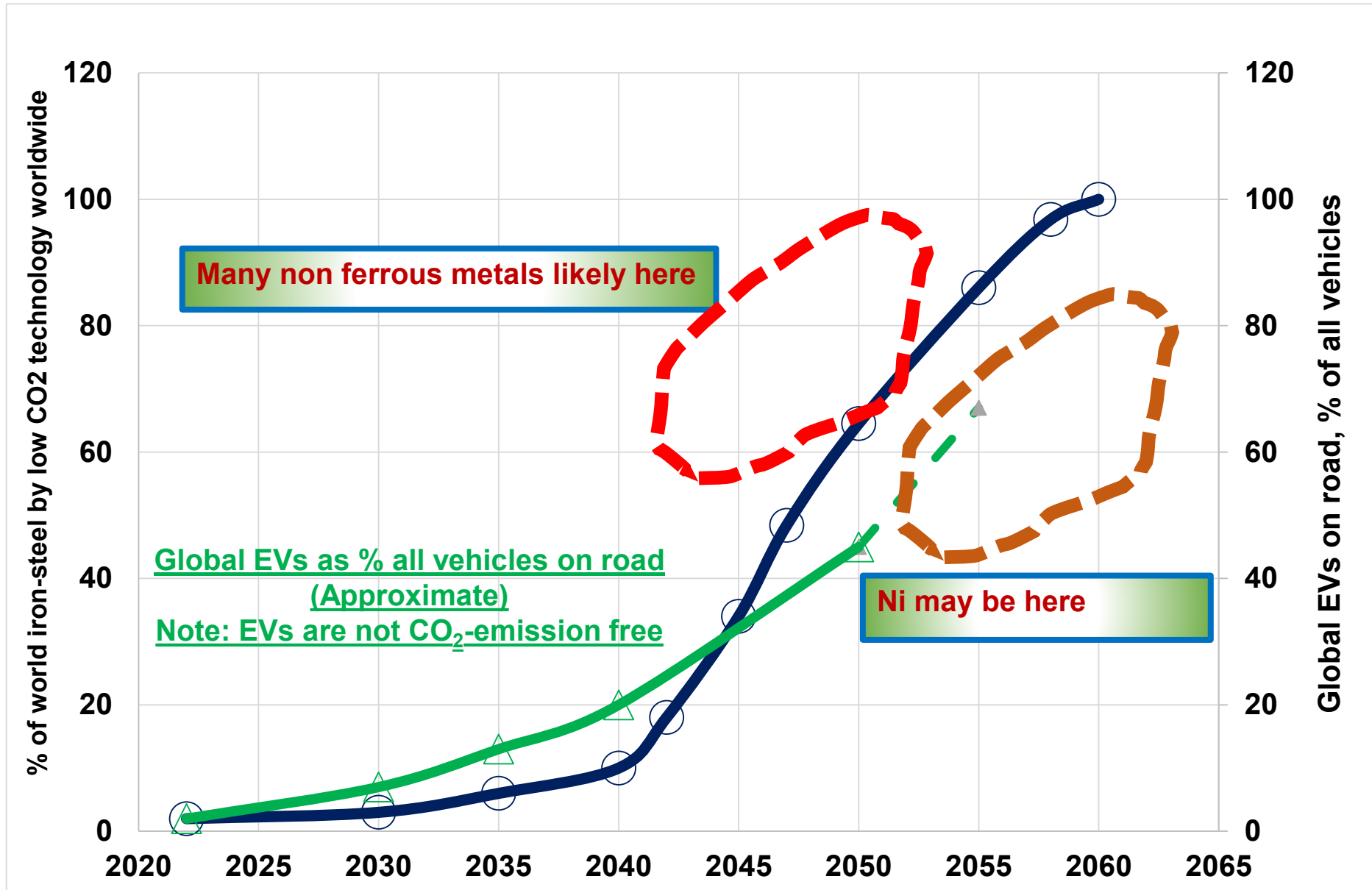


Example of possible rate of world-wide take-up of zero/low carbon technology in iron and steel making
(and global EV as % of all vehicles on road)



Note: Low carbon steel is <200 kg CO₂/t steel

Example of possible rate of world-wide take-up of zero/low carbon technology in iron and steel making & Non ferrous metals
(and global EV as % of all vehicles on road)



Note: Low carbon steel is <200 kg CO₂/t steel



Is a significant technological transition in nickel technology around the corner?

- **No – not immediately**
- **Present technology with enhancements will continue – at least for the next decade or more**
- **But work currently under way in iron and steel (H_2 reduction- in a shaft furnace or H_2 bath smelting), if successful, will start to spread to nickel within about a decade or two.**

Concluding Comments - 1

Present technologies in use for Ni will continue for the next decade - but a wide range of incremental improvements will continue: automation, use of biomass, heat recovery from slag, greater use of “green” electricity etc. Whether we will have large numbers of new HPALs is debateable. More O₂/coal plants are expected

A large number of new developments are in progress for the low CO₂ production of iron and steel, especially the use of H₂; these concepts will slowly spread to Ni



Concluding Comments - 2

As in the past, technology developments in the iron and steel industry will likely be adapted for Ni-probably starting over the next decade

The energy transition (& EVs) and decarbonization of the metal industry, including Ni, will take many decades



**Obrigado
Thank You
Merci
Gracias**

Questions and Discussion

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Acknowledgements

The author acknowledges the kind assistance given by a number of colleagues and organisations in the industry who helped by providing ideas and information.

Thanks are given to INSG for the opportunity to present this paper.

Some material used in this presentation was adapted from the author's 2021 Elliott Lecture (AIST) and his 2022-2023 Distinguished Lecture, CIM, Montreal, Canada



Appendix

Additional slides

Appendix slides to be added later