The Utilization of Alkaline Wastes in Passive Carbon Capture and Sequestration: Promises, Challenges and Environmental Aspects

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Abstract

Alkaline wastes have been the focus of many studies as they act as CO_2 sinks and have the potential to offset emissions from mining and steelmaking industries. Passive carbonation of alkaline wastes mimics natural silicate weathering and provides a promising alternative pathway for CO_2 capture and storage as carbonates, requiring marginal human intervention when compared to ex-situ carbonation. This review summarizes the extant research that has investigated the passive carbonation of alkaline wastes, namely ironmaking and steelmaking slag, mine tailings and demolition wastes, over the past two decades. Here we report different factors that

affect passive carbonation to address challenges that this process faces and to identify possible solutions. We identify avenues for future research such as investigating how passive carbonation affects the surrounding environment through interaction with the biosphere and the hydrosphere. Future research should also consider economic analyses to provide investors with an in-depth understanding of passive carbonation techniques. Based on the reviewed materials, we conclude that passive carbonation can be an important contributor to climate change mitigation strategies, and its potential can be intensified by applying simple waste management practices.

Keywords: Carbon sequestration; mineral carbonation; slag; tailings; artificial soil; silicate weathering.

1. Introduction

The United Nations Statistics Department (UNSD) defines wastes as substances that are not primary products (produced for the market) and are meant to be disposed of as the generators have no use for them in consumption, production, and transformation (UNSD, 2016). Several industries generate wastes of alkaline nature. For example, ironmaking and steelmaking produce slag, aluminium production produces red mud, mining operations produce tailings and buildings demolition produces demolition wastes (Renforth, 2019). The alkaline nature of these wastes is attributed to their content of alkaline earth oxides, notably calcium oxide (CaO) and magnesium oxide (MgO); both can hydrate to produce $Ca(OH)_2$ and $Mg(OH)_2$, respectively, which act as alkalinity sources (Riley and Mayes, 2015; Roadcap et al., 2006, 2005). High pH is associated with several leachates from alkaline residues (Mayes et al., 2006; Meyer, 1980). Such leachates cause several environmental problems like smothering of littoral aquatic habitats and reduction of light penetration to benthic producers (Mayes et al., 2008a). Leachates also contain metals at concentrations that are harmful to macrophytes and other organisms in the food web and can cause contamination of drinking water sources and agricultural land pollution (Gao et al., 2021; Olszewska et al., 2016). Alkaline wastes can contain high concentrations of ecotoxic metals such as lead and chromium (VI) which can reach 978 mg/kg and 851 mg/kg, respectively (Hu et al., 2020). Such metals can be released into the environment as a result of infiltration by rain or other water sources (Gomes et al., 2016; Mayes et al., 2011).

Historically, alkaline wastes have been either abandoned near production sites or collected into storage facilities (Riley et al., 2020; Santini and Banning, 2016). Recently, due to the increased awareness of sustainability and the drive towards a

circular economy, there have been several attempts to utilize alkaline wastes, particularly in road construction, land restoration, element recovery and more recently in carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) (Gomes et al., 2016; Santini and Banning, 2016; Sorlini et al., 2012). The latter idea gained considerable attention as it mimics natural weathering (Kelemen et al., 2020, 2011; National Academies of Sciences Engineering and Medicine, 2019). Natural silicate weathering and subsequent carbonate precipitation are critical processes that control the atmospheric CO_2 concentration (Daval, 2018; Huh, 2003; Schuiling and Krijgsman, 2006). This process captures carbon at a rate of 1-2.8 g C m^{-2} y^{-1} while mineral carbonation of alkaline wastes captures carbon at rates that are orders of magnitude greater than this value (Amiotte Suchet et al., 2003; Gaillardet et al., 1999; Huh, 2003; Oskierski et al., 2013; Wilson et al., 2014).

The high production of metals throughout the world (Fig. 1) results in vast amounts of alkaline wastes, which was estimated to be produced at an annual rate of 7 x 10^{12} - 1.7 x 10^{13} kg y^{-1} globally and projected to increase during this century (Renforth et al., 2011; Renforth, 2019). Power et al. (2013) estimated that ultramafic wastes can capture up to 1.75 x 10^{11} kg CO_2 y^{-1}, while Renforth et al. (2011b) estimated a CO_2 uptake potential of 7.0 x 10^{11} kg CO_2 y^{-1} when considering other alkalinity sources such as demolition wastes and slag. Renforth (2019) calculated that CO_2 emissions associated with different shared socioeconomic pathways and showed that by 2100, the CO_2 emissions are projected to be between 2.4 x 10^{13} kg CO_2 y^{-1} and 1.26 x 10^{14} kg CO_2 y^{-1}, and alkaline wastes carbonation can mitigate between 5% and 12% of these emissions. Carbonation of wastes has also been associated with reducing their environmental hazards since it reduces the pH of leachates as well as the concentration of metals in leachates, though the latter was found to depend on the

degree of carbonation (Gomes et al., 2016; Van Gerven et al., 2006). As CO_2 mineralisation can offset the emissions of mining and steelmaking industries, it can result in several economic, societal and biological benefits that are aligned with different sustainable development goals, including good health and well-being, climate action, sustainable cities and communities and quality of life on land (Olabi et al., 2022).

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) explains that to avoid catastrophic consequences of global warming, the global temperature must not increase by more than 1.5 °C by the end of this century, compared to the preindustrial period (1850-1900) (IPCC, 2021). Here, we study the opportunities and challenges of using passive carbonation as a simple and inexpensive climate change mitigation pathway. This paper is structured as follows: Section 2 describes the carbonation reactions, including how different conditions can affect the CO_2 uptake; Section 3 reviews relevant studies of passive carbonation in slag, demolition wastes and tailings. We focus on slag, construction and demolition wastes, nickel tailings, chrysotile tailing, diamond tailings and red mud. Large stocks of these materials are available worldwide, and except for chrysotile, these materials are produced in large amounts. These wastes have been passively managed for a period long enough to allow for passive carbonation to be observed. Additionally, they have favorable chemistry that enables them to offset emissions of mining and steelmaking industries (Bullock et al., 2022). Section 4 summarizes some limitations that reduce CO_2 uptake in alkaline wastes, and Section 5 suggests some large-scale methods that can utilize passive carbonation. Based on our engagement with the studied articles, we propose several areas of further research, particularly related to life cycle assessment, economic

110 analysis and the relation of passive carbonation to the surrounding environment.
111 These areas are discussed in Section 6.

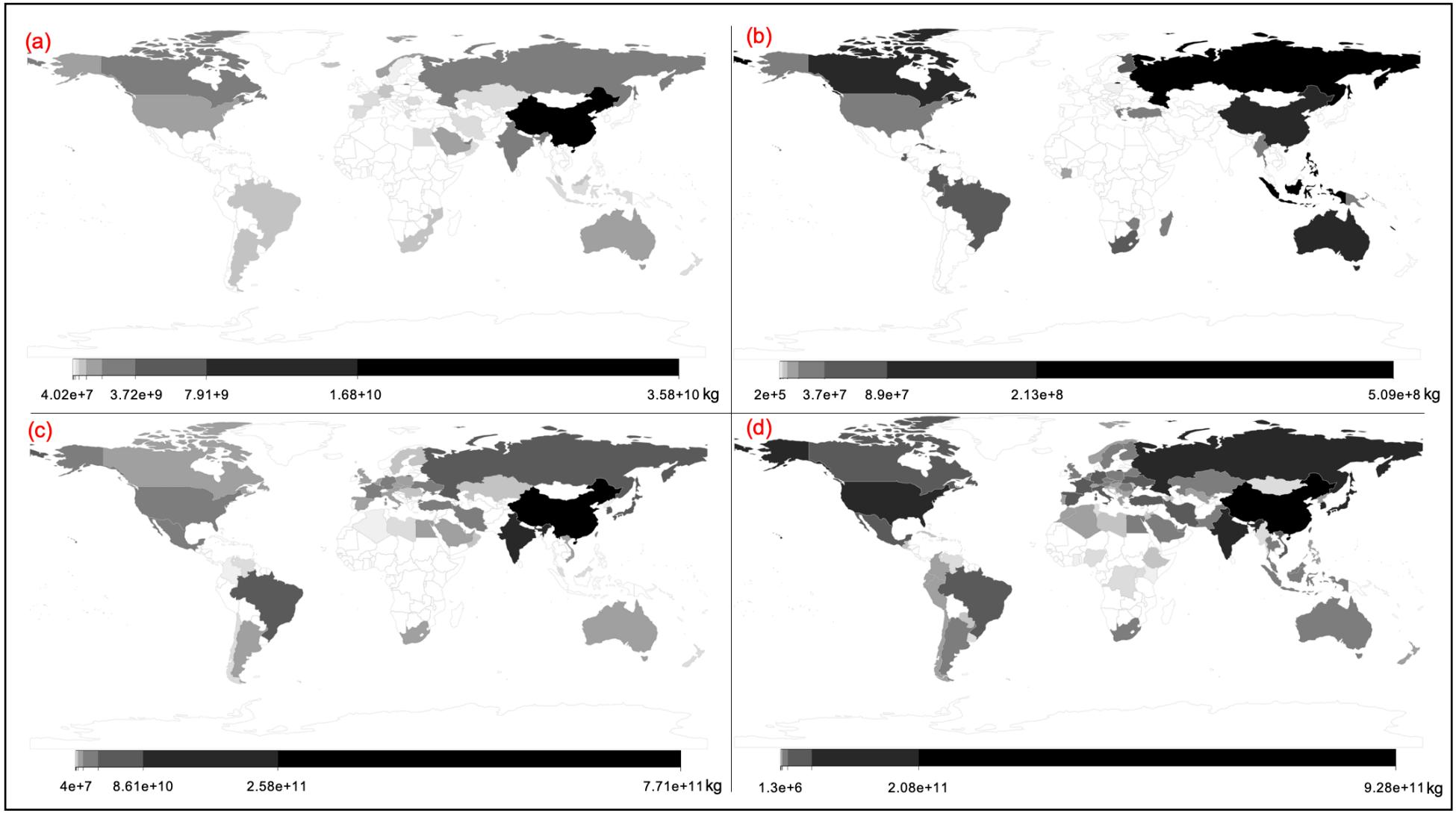

Fig. 1. Production (in kg) of (a) primary aluminum, (b) nickel, (c) pig iron, and (d) crude steel in 2018. White areas represent countries for which data were not available. Data from World Mineral Statistics contributed by permission of the British Geological Survey (Brown et al., 2020).

2. Mineral carbonation chemistry

2.1 Carbonation reactions

Alkaline wastes contain metal oxides, notably CaO and MgO, as well as other minerals such as brucite ($Mg(OH)_2$), serpentine ($Mg_3Si_2O_5(OH)_4$), forsterite (Mg_2SiO_4) and wollastonite ($CaSiO_3$) (Power et al., 2013). These minerals can be carbonated through either dry or aqueous methods. Although the dry carbonation of these minerals is spontaneous (e.g., for carbonation of serpentine and wollastonite, Liu et al. (2021) reported ΔG values of -16.9 kJ/mol, and - 44.6kJ/mol, respectively), it has a low rate, which can only be improved through different pre-processing steps. These pre-processing steps aim to release the MgO and CaO through energy-intensive processes before CO_2 uptake can take place (Zevenhoven and Kavaliauskaite, 2004). Consequently, dry carbonation is unlikely to be commercialised (Huijgen and Comans, 2005). Alternatively, aqueous carbonation has been reported to occur passively at different sites worldwide (Power et al., 2014). The first step in this method involves CO_2 dissolution and speciation according to the pH of the solution in which carbonation occurs. Archer (2007) explained that when water is in equilibrium with CO_2, the following system of reactions is established:

$$CO_2 + H_2O \rightarrow H_2CO_3 \leftrightarrow HCO_3^- + H^+ \quad (1)$$

$$HCO_3^- \leftrightarrow H^+ + CO_3^{2-} \quad (2)$$

The solubility of CO_2 in water depends on the CO_2 partial pressure and on the system temperature. In an aqueous solution, the speciation of CO_2 depends on the pH: at a low pH value, the equilibrium shifts towards H_2CO_3 to reduce the concentration of H^+, while under basic conditions, the equilibrium promotes more dissolution of H_2CO_3 to produce H^+ (Pan et al., 2012). This step can be limited due to poor mixing between the atmospheric CO_2 and the solution, slow transfer of CO_2 from

the gas phase to the liquid phase and slow CO_2 hydration (Power et al., 2013; Stumm and Morgan, 1996; Wilson et al., 2011).

The production of H^+ promotes silicate dissolution as shown in equation 3 in which M can be Ca or Mg (Daval et al., 2009):

$$M_xSi_yO_{x+2y-t}(OH)_{2t} + 2xH^+ \leftrightarrow \ xM^{2+} + ySiO_2 + (x+t)H_2O \quad (3)$$

Several studies have identified the dissolution of minerals to be the rate-limiting step in mineral carbonation (e.g., (Daval et al. (2009) and Pullin et al., (2019)). The dissolution of a mineral depends on the chemical structure of the mineral itself. Dissolution of minerals such as brucite proceeds faster than the dissolution of serpentine since brucite dissolution requires breaking a single type of bonds, while the dissolution of silicate-rich minerals requires breaking of several strong Si-O bonds (Power et al., 2013; Schott et al., 2009). Consequently, the dissolution of silicate-rich minerals may proceed non-stoichiometrically, leaving behind a silicon-rich passivating layer, as described by Schott et al. (2012), Power et al. (2013) and the references therein.

This dissolution reaction is then followed by precipitations reactions as shown in equations 4 and 5 (Daval et al., 2009):

$$xM^{2+} + \ xCO_3{}^{2-} \leftrightarrow \ xMCO_3 \quad (4)$$

Or

$$xM^{2+} + 2xHCO_3{}^- \leftrightarrow xMCO_3 + xCO_2 + xH_2O \quad (5)$$

2.2 Reaction parameters

Due to the huge variation in the chemical and physical properties of alkaline wastes, and due to the different reactions involved in mineral carbonation, optimizing CO_2 uptake requires finding the optimum conditions that enhance the steps of the carbonation reaction. For example, pH has variable effects on the carbonation

process. Lower pH increases metal leaching thereby increases the reactants' concentrations while higher pH promotes carbonates precipitation (Azdarpour et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2019). While increasing the temperature is associated with decreased CO_2 solubility in the aqueous solution (Huijgen et al., 2005), increasing the temperature from 10 ºC to 40 ºC was found to positively correlate with cations release from alkaline wastes, and the decreased solubility of CO_2 did not represent a limiting step (Assima et al., 2014a, 2014b). Increasing the CO_2 partial pressure has also been found to increase the carbonation as it enhances mineral dissolution and promotes carbonate mineral precipitation (Harrison et al., 2012; Pokrovsky and Schott, 2000). Additionally, climate conditions and atmospheric CO_2 concentration can affect the CO_2 uptake (Fig. 2). Due to the variations in carbonation mechanism and extent due to the chemical and physical variation of alkaline wastes, the quantification of the CO_2 uptake relies on combining information obtained from several analysis techniques, some of which are portrayed in Table 1.

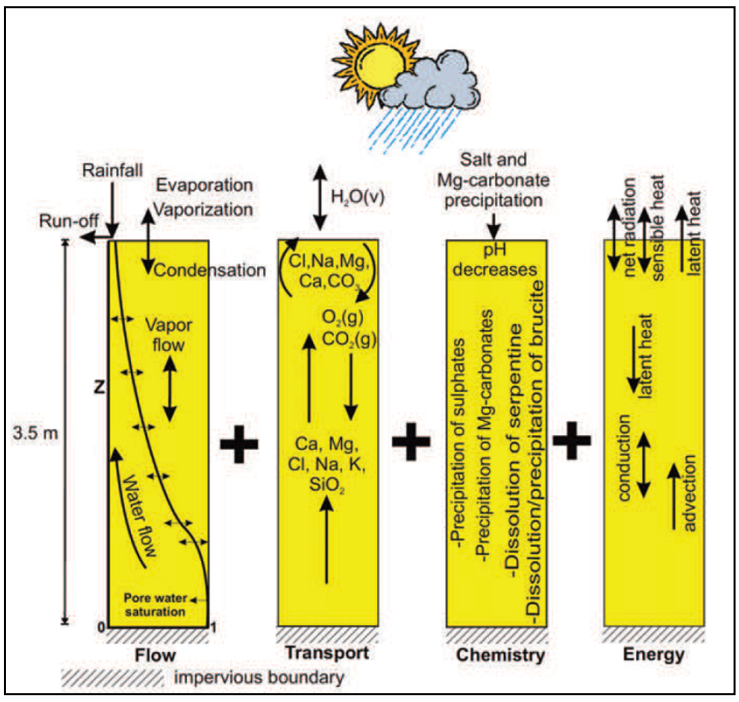

Fig. 2. Demonstration of interacting processes that affect CO_2 uptake in alkaline wastes in an arid environment. Reprinted from (Bea et al., 2012). Copyright (2012) with permission from Soil Science Society of America, Inc.

183 Table 1. Common analysis tools used in studying mineral carbonation of alkaline wastes

Method	Used for	Remarks	Reference
Thermogravimetric Analysis (TGA)	Study dehydroxylation of serpentine and minerals formation/recrystallization. Finding the weight fraction of $CaCO_3$ in a sample as it decomposes at a certain temperature range (500-1000 °C)	TGA cannot be used for quantification of different mineral phases within a sample. Thermal treatment of serpentine can increase the Mg released for carbonation. However, over heating should be avoided to avoid recrystallisation and production of less reactive minerals.	(Chiang and Pan, 2017; Dlugogorski and Balucan, 2014; Huijgen et al., 2005)
X-ray diffraction (XRD)	Qualitative/quantitative identification of mineral phases.	XRD can distinguish authigenic and pre-existing carbonates. Quantification of different phases in a semi-crystalline sample requires complicated methods such as Rietveld refinements.	(Wilson et al., 2009b, 2006)
Scanning electron microscopy (SEM)	Visualization of microstructures. Observing morphological changes upon carbonation. Identifying composition and mineral phases.	SEM imaging can be used to identify biological mineralisation of carbonates.	(McCutcheon et al., 2017; Ul-Hamid, 2018)
Total carbon/ organic carbon (TC/TOC)	Quantifying the amount of carbon within a sample	TOC/ TIC cannot distinguish between authigenic and pre-existing carbonates	(Dembicki, Jr., 2017; LECO Corporation, 2008)
X-ray computed tomography (XCT)	Observing the internal structures and morphology. Quantification and classification in 3D and 4D of mineral phases, porosity and pore connectivity, as well as individual grain analyses (shape, orientation, equivalent diameter, and so on).	XCT is suitable for studying in-situ carbonation. Geometry derived from XCT can be used as input for permeability modelling.	(Baker et al., 2012; Boone et al., 2014)
Stable isotope analysis	Quantify the origin of carbon in a sample (organic, lithogenic, atmospheric)	Stable isotope analysis can be corroborated with radiocarbon analysis to provide evidence of atmospheric CO_2 sequestration	(Renforth, 2011; Washbourne et al., 2012)

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3. Studies of alkaline wastes carbonation

3.1 Iron and steel slag

The importance of steel in the global economy is evident from the production of over 3500 types of steel that are consumed in many industries, ranging from simple cooking equipment to spacecraft (Lai et al., 2012; World Steel Association, 2021). In 2017, it was estimated that for every 1000 kg of steel produced, around 1830 kg CO_2 is emitted, making this high emission the “biggest challenge” to this industry, as described by the World Steel Association (World Steel Association, 2019). The production of 1000 kg of steel results in around 200-400 kg slag, depending on the mode of production (World Steel Association, 2017). Recently, attempts have been made to utilize slag in sustainable cement and concrete manufacturing since using it as aggregate can decrease energy consumptions and emissions associated with concrete industries, without compromising the mechanical properties of products (Gencel et al., 2021). Experimentally, it was shown that the carbonation of slag can produce building materials with compressive strength that increase with increased CO_2 uptake (Wang et al., 2019).

As the United Kingdom (UK) has a rich history in iron and steel production, over 1.90×10^{11} kg of slag deposits exist in the country, providing excellent opportunities for studying passive carbonation within these alkaline wastes (Riley et al., 2020). Chukwuma et al. (2021) studied the weathering of iron and steel slag deposits in South Wales, UK which are associated with iron and steel production that ceased in 1980. These deposits contain calcium-silicate minerals, dominated by gehlenite ($Ca_2Al_2SiO_2$) and åkermanite ($Ca_2MgSi_2O_2$). Across the studied sites, the stored CO_2 in the slag was found to reach 66 kg CO_2 / 1000 kg slag. The carbon capture potential

can be estimated based on chemical compositions according to Steinour's formula (Gunning et al., 2010; Renforth, 2019):

$$C_{pot} = \frac{MW_{CO_2}}{100}\left(\alpha\frac{CaO}{MW_{CaO}} + \beta\frac{MgO}{MW_{MgO}} + \gamma\frac{SO_3}{MW_{SO_3}} + \delta\frac{P_2O_5}{MW_{P_2O_5}}\right) \times 1000 \quad (6)$$

Where C_{pot} refers to the carbonation potential (kg CO_2 uptake/1000 kg wastes), CaO, MgO, SO_3 and P_2O_5 refer to the percentages of the corresponding compounds, MW refers to the molar mass, and the coefficients *α, β, γ, δ* consider the contribution of different compounds and they are 1, 1, -1, -2, respectively (Chukwuma et al., 2021). Consequently, the maximum measured CO_2 uptake was found to reach 77% of the total carbonation potential.

Weathering of slag deposits at Consett, UK, provides another example of passive CCS (Mayes et al., 2018). These 2 x 10^{10} kg deposits were produced over 100 years of operation (ended in 1980) of the Consett Iron and Steel Works that produced around 1.2 x 10^{11} kg of iron and steel (Mayes et al., 2018). XRD analysis revealed that the slag was dominated by melilite minerals, and that the downstream precipitate is almost entirely composed of calcite (Mayes et al., 2018; Pullin et al., 2019). By referring to slag density and chemical compositions, the largest heap was estimated to have the potential to sequester 6 x 10^9 -1.1 x 10^{10} kg CO_2 through mineral carbonation (Mayes et al., 2018). However, based on the draining water chemistry and calcium leaching and calcite precipitation rates, between 2.81 x 10^5 and 2.89 x 10^6 kg CO_2 has been sequestered since 1980, due to the limited inflow of CO_2 into the heap and due to the surface passivation of slag with carbonate (Mayes et al., 2018). This site was further studied by Pullin et al. (2019) after *Geosonic Drilling Company* drilled three boreholes across a 60 m transact. CO_2 concentrations in the boreholes were almost 85 ppm, while they reached almost 403 ppm at the surface, reflecting that the produced slag has had little interaction with the atmospheric CO_2 (Pullin et al., 2019).

With total carbon concentration of 0.42%, Pullin et al. (2019) estimated that only ~ 3% of CO_2 capture potential was utilized.

The production of 1000 kg of steel generates 400 kg of slag and emits 1830 kg of CO_2 (World Steel Association, 2019, 2017), The previous studies demonstrate that CO_2 can be passively sequestered within slag. The maximum theoretical CO_2 uptake in slag is controlled by slag composition and is dictated by CaO and MgO content (Mayes et al., 2018). With CaO and MgO concentrations vary from 29% to 44% and 5% to 12% respectively (Proctor et al., 2000), it is possible to calculate that utilizing slag can sequester 113-190 kg CO_2, or ~10% of CO_2 emitted from the production of 1000 kg of steel, based on the complete conversion of CaO and MgO. However, as depicted earlier, the CO_2 uptake is much less than the maximum theoretical CO_2 uptake due to several factors. Ca and Mg are usually incorporated into more complex mineral structures (Yildirim and Prezzi, 2015). Several slag-forming minerals have been identified in the literature, and these minerals have variable carbonation rates (Bodor et al., 2013). These minerals are produced during slag cooling and their presence is affected by the waste management practice. For example, the cooling rate has been determined to result in different mineral compositions in slag (Kriskova et al., 2013). Rapid cooling produces more reactive slag composed of tricalcium silicates while slow cooling produces åkermanite or gehlenite phases that are less reactive (Engström et al., 2013; Pullin et al., 2019; Scott et al., 1986). Another issue that reduces the CO_2 uptake in slag is that slag may be produced at gravel size causing it to have a low surface area thereby lowering its CO_2 uptake rate (Ragipani et al., 2021).

3.2 Demolition wastes in artificial soil

Artificial soils in urban and brownfield land originate from demolition and construction wastes and provide an opportunity for CCS as they are rich in Ca- and

Mg-silicates. These compounds can interact with carbon which originates from the dissolution of CO_2 from plant respiration and decomposition, or from CO_2 dissolving in alkaline water, to produce carbonates (Renforth, 2011). This section reviews studies that investigate the applicability of artificial soils and demolition wastes in CCS applications.

Jorat et al. (2020) investigated soil carbonation in over 20 brownfield sites across the UK by calculating soil carbonation rates and observing carbonation effects on permeability and ground strength. Carbonation rate was measured through TIC measurement of soil to a depth of 20 cm and presented as a function of site age, where the latter was defined as the period between the demolition and the sampling dates. Throughout the study period, sites aged between 7 and 26 years had no significant change in TIC, while there was a statistically significant increase in TIC for three young sites aged between 2 and 8 years (Jorat et al., 2020). Carbon sequestration occurred at a rate of 100-1600 g C m^{-2} y^{-1}, indicating that the higher carbonation rate occurred at more modern sites as they were more suitable for carbonation, possibly due to their inclusion of more fine-grained crushed concrete (Jorat et al., 2020).

The Science Central Park in Newcastle, UK, has been the subject of passive carbonation studies (Washbourne et al., 2012, 2015). The 10^5 m^2 site is made up of a 0.2-6 m thick layer of made ground, which contains crushed concrete and aggregate. Washbourne et al. (2015) studied soil carbonation at this site for 18 months. Over the study period, the $CaCO_3$ content within the top 100 mm of the soil increased from 5.3-43 wt % $CaCO_3$ to 26.5-61.4 wt% $CaCO_3$, where the ranges reflect the content at different locations within the study site (Washbourne et al., 2015). $CaCO_3$ content did not vary with depth in a consistent manner, although it was observed that for some pits the concentration was larger at shallow depths of less than 1 m, and a decline was

observed when the depth exceeded one meter (Washbourne et al., 2015). During the 18-month study period, CO_2 was sequestered at a rate of 2320 g C m^{-2} y^{-1} with calcite being the dominant phase of $CaCO_3$ (Washbourne et al., 2015).

Based on the estimations of Renforth et al. (2009) and the references therein, brownfields occupy 1.45 x 10^{10} m^2 globally. With a measured CO_2 uptake of 30 ± 15.3 kg C m^{-2}, it can be estimated that brownfields have already captured 4.353 x 10^{11} kg C (Renforth et al., 2009). The annual concrete wastes production reaches 6.8 x 10^{12} kg y^{-1}, and it has a maximum carbon capture potential of 2.9 x 10^{11} kg C y^{-1}, assuming it contains 20% CaO (Renforth et al., 2009). However, achieving high CO_2 uptake in demolition wastes is usually challenged by several factors. After the service life of a structure, it is destructed to produce concrete ruble which is then crushed and stockpiled for a period between 2 weeks and 4 months (Pade and Guimaraes, 2007). Importantly, the size of demolition waste materials is a critical factor in their CO_2 uptake, with sizes larger than 40 mm were found to be unsuitable for carbonation (Butera et al., 2015). While CO_2 uptake in concrete aggregate increases after demolition as a result of pulverization, it is also affected by the end use of the pulverized concrete. Crushed concrete in most countries is used in the manufacturing of roads and other below-ground applications, thereby reducing its CO_2 uptake (Marinković et al., 2014; Pade and Guimaraes, 2007).

3.3 Mine tailings

Modern industry consumes high quantities of metals, making mining operations pivotal in economic development. According to the Mining, Minerals and Sustainable Development (MMSD) Project, there are more than 3500 active mining waste facilities globally (Tayebi-Khorami et al., 2019), resulting in producing mine wastes at a rate of 2 x 10^{12} - 6.5 x 10^{12} kg y^{-1} (Renforth et al., 2011), and Power et al. (2013) estimated

309 that around 4.19 x 10^{11} kg of mafic and ultramafic wastes are produced annually.
310 Mineral compositions of tailings allow them to sequester CO_2 and offset emissions
311 from mining industries. The carbonation capacity of tailings is associated with the
312 complete conversion of their Ca and Mg to carbonates on a mole per mole basis (Paulo
313 et al., 2021). Several minerals, such as brucite, lizardite, diopside, forsterite and
314 wollastonite have been identified as possible sources for cations although these
315 minerals have different dissolution rates. Brucite has the highest dissolution rate
316 across a wide range of pH values that is orders of magnitude larger than that of Mg-
317 silicate minerals (Power et al., 2013). Nevertheless, other silicate minerals such as
318 serpentine provide significant CO_2 uptake capacity as they release magnesium that is
319 loosely bound to the silicate surface (Assima et al., 2013; Stubbs et al., 2022;
320 Vanderzee et al., 2019).

321 **3.3.1 Nickel mining**

322 Passive carbonation of mine tailings and waste rocks associated with nickel
323 mining operations in Québec, Canada has been the subject of some studies (Gras et
324 al., 2020, 2017, 2015). The CO_2 uptake by these wastes was estimated by following
325 the carbonation over a 4-year period using two different setups: the first one, referred
326 to as EC-1 cell, contained 1.04 x 10^5 kg of heterogeneous waste rocks, ranging from
327 block to silt size, and a second cell, referred to EC-2 cell, contained ~2.1 m^3 of mine
328 tailings (Gras et al., 2017). The dominant mineral phases were chrysotile, lizardite,
329 brucite and magnetite, while minor amounts of calcite and millerite were present (Gras
330 et al., 2017; Pronost et al., 2010). Upon weathering, crusts formed on the surface of
331 most rock fragments in EC-1 and near the edges of the tailings in EC-2 (Gras et al.,
332 2017). In both cells, the CO_2 concentration decreased from the atmospheric value of
333 390 ppmv at the surface, to 50 ppmv and 25 ppmv in EC-1 and EC-2, respectively,

and the CO_2 drop increased as the depth increased. CO_2 concentration within both cells increased from year to year and this increase was accompanied by a reduction of brucite peak in the XRD analysis and an increase in carbonate minerals. Therefore, the reduction of the carbon capture rate was attributed to the consumption of the brucite or the surface passivation due to the formation of carbonate (Gras et al., 2017).

Wastes from nickel mining were also investigated to quantify the carbonation process in Mount Keith, Western Australia (Wilson et al., 2014). XRD analysis of several samples collected from the tailing facilities showed that the majority of minerals were serpentines, including antigorite and lizardite, and hydrotalcite minerals, including iowate and woodalite. There were also minor amounts of brucite, chrysotile, calcite and dolomite. Efflorescence was spotted at the surface of the tailings, and it was dominated by hydromagnesite, halite and hexahydrate. Hydromagnesite was also detected in most of the collected samples, and its highest presence was recorded at shallow depths, mostly filling cracks and fissures of serpentine or on the surface of serpentine grains. The abundance of brucite/serpentine decreased with time, while the amount of hydromagnesite increased (Wilson et al., 2014). The greatest amount of hydromagnesite was recorded in the top 25 cm of the tailings, coinciding with the lowest amount of serpentine and brucite. Current rates of passive carbon mineralization offset ~11% of greenhouse gases emitted from Mount Keith mine, and enhancing carbon mineralization to carbonate the brucite alone will result in offsetting the CO_2 emissions from Mount Keith mining by at least 20% (Harrison et al., 2012; Wilson et al., 2014).

3.3.2 Chrysotile mining

Due to the health problems of asbestos, chrysotile mining has significantly decreased (World Health Organization, 2014). However, there are several chrysotile

359 tailings sites that provide excellent opportunities to study and quantify mineral
360 carbonation within chrysotile tailings. For example, Clinton creek in Yukon Territory,
361 Canada hosts $1x10^{10}$ kg of tailings (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2008; Wilson
362 et al., 2009a). Nesquehonite was observed to form towards the surface of the tailings
363 as a result of evaporative precipitation, while dypingite and hydromagnesite were
364 observed to cement serpentine grains below the nesquehonite-covered surfaces, or
365 on the surface of cobbles. High CO_2 uptake of 1.64×10^8 kg was calculated,
366 corresponding to 6.3×10^6 kg CO_2 y^{-1} when considering the age of 26 years (Wilson
367 et al., 2009a, 2006).

368 Oskierski et al. (2013) investigated the carbonation potential of chrysotile mine
369 tailings within Woodsreef asbestos mine in Australia, where mining took place
370 between 1906 and 1983, producing about 5.5×10^8 kg of fibers from 2.5×10^{10} kg ore,
371 most of which was produced between 1971 and 1983 (Brown et al., 1992; Oskierski
372 et al., 2013). At the studied location, there were several modes of carbonate
373 occurrence, including horizontal and vertical crusts. Crust samples were analyzed
374 through XRD analysis which revealed the predominance of serpentine minerals
375 (Oskierski et al., 2013). Brucite and carbonate minerals, such as hydromagnesite,
376 pyroaurite, calcite, dolomite and magnesite, were present at varying amounts. Around
377 1.4×10^6 kg of CO_2 are stored within the crusts, providing a lower estimate of the
378 carbonation (Oskierski et al., 2013). An upper estimate of 7.0×10^7 kg CO_2 can be
379 calculated if pyroaurite, which was estimated to have a concentration of 4.3 wt% within
380 the tailings pile, is also considered as product of mineral carbonation. Considering that
381 carbonation has occurred since the closure of the mine over a period of 29 years, the
382 carbonation rate was calculated to be between 27 g C m^{-2} y^{-1} and 1330 g C m^{-2} y^{-1}
383 (Oskierski et al., 2013). Oskierski et al. (2016) highlighted the importance of

384 evaporation in carbonate precipitation, as evident from the high δ ^{18}O signature in the
385 precipitated hydromagnesite, and the high values of $\delta^{13}C$ that was associated with
386 evaporative enrichment prior to precipitation (Oskierski et al., 2021, 2016).

387 Woodsreef mine wastes were further studied in later research which
388 investigated the mineral composition of the top 120 cm of the mine wastes (Turvey et
389 al., 2018b). The amount of captured CO_2 was estimated using two different
390 approaches: i) quantitative XRD, where the mineral composition was estimated using
391 structureless fitting methods, as explained elsewhere (Turvey et al., 2018b, 2018a,
392 2017) and the references therein; ii) and by measuring the total elemental carbon and
393 then finding the inorganic carbon by assuming an average value of the organic carbon
394 to be 0.02 wt % C as suggested in the literature (Hamilton et al., n.d.; Turvey et al.,
395 2018b). XRD data demonstrated that the presence of several forms of carbonates
396 varied with depth. To provide conservative estimates of carbonation rates, it was
397 assumed that carbon sequestration occurred within the top 120 cm of the tailing. XRD
398 analysis showed that there were different modes of carbonation occurring within the
399 study region: in the shallow depths (up to 40 cm), CO_2 sequestration occurred as a
400 result of brucite carbonation that produces hydromagnesite. On the other hand, at
401 larger depth where CO_2 supply is limited, coalingite and pyroaurite were the primary
402 carbonation products, as portrayed in Fig. 3. The carbon content based on XRD data
403 and elemental carbon measurement through the studied region was found to be 3.9 x
404 10^6 kg CO_2 and 6.9 x 10^6 kg CO_2, respectively. The value obtained from the XRD
405 provides a lower estimate, since XRD analysis does not take into account the carbon
406 that resides in amorphous structures, and the quantification method was shown to
407 underestimate the amount of carbonates within tailings (Turvey et al., 2018a). On the
408 other hand, as the elemental carbon data report the total carbon content, without

restricting the amount of carbon to the minerals that were produced as a result of CO_2 sequestration, the obtained value reflected the upper estimates of the CO_2 sequestration at Woodsreef. Considering these end members, the carbonation potential was estimated to be between 62 and 110 g C m^{-2} y^{-1}, a range that overlaps with the carbonation range reported by Oskierski et al. (2013). Turvey et al. (2018b) attributed this to the fact that Oskierski et al. (2013) estimated that pyroaurite has a concentration of 4.3%, which was proven to be not the case, as shown in Fig. 3. More representative values of CO_2 sequestration can be obtained by obtaining mineralogical composition and carbon content at higher depth within tailings.

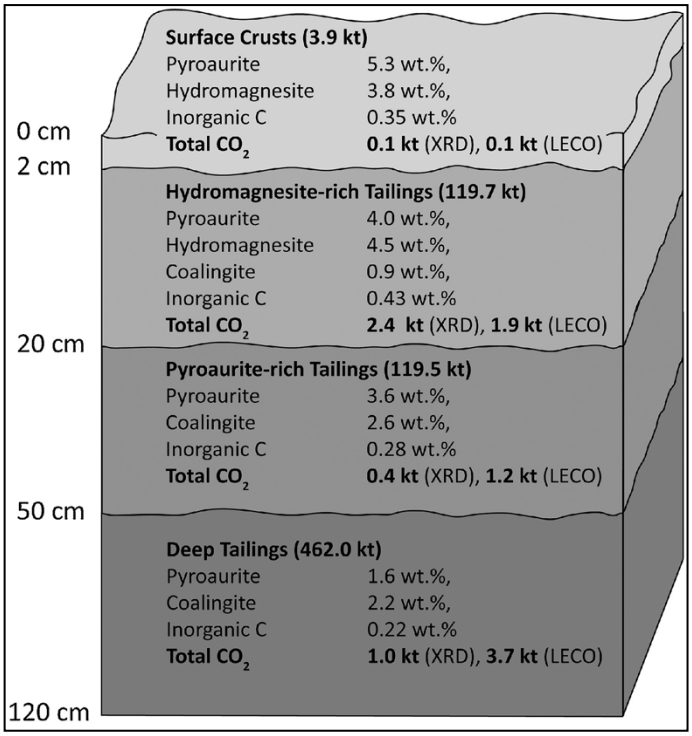


Fig. 3. Variation in mineralogical composition and CO_2 sequestration with depth at Woodsreef mine tailings. Values next to XRD represent the amount of CO_2 sequestered as estimated using XRD analysis while values next to LECO represent the amount of CO_2 sequestered as estimated using total elemental carbon. Reprinted from (Turvey et al., 2018b), Copyright (2018) with permission from Elsevier.

3.3.3 Kimberlite mining

Kimberlites are volatile-rich, ultramafic rocks that are being mined for diamonds. (Mitchel, 1986; Wilson et al., 2011). There is some evidence that processed kimberlite

427 can sequester atmospheric CO_2. For example, it was estimated that around 1.8 x 10^6
428 kg CO_2 may have been sequestered in the processed kimberlite at the Diavik diamond
429 mine in the Canadian northwestern territories (Wilson et al., 2009b). At Diavik, the
430 processed kimberlite contained serpentine minerals, forsterite and minor amounts of
431 other minerals, including clay minerals, Mg-rich garnet and plagioclase feldspar
432 (Wilson et al., 2011, 2009b). Nesquehonite was the most common form of secondary
433 carbonates, taking the shape of continuous films at the surface of the tailings. Wilson
434 et al. (2011) reported that nesquehonite formed on the surface of forsterite and
435 serpentine, indicating that it precipitated due to mineral weathering, resulting in
436 trapping of carbon at a rate of 102-114 g C m^{-2} y^{-1}, which is two orders of magnitude
437 higher than natural silicate weathering in river catchments in areas with similar climatic
438 conditions (Huh, 2003; Wilson et al., 2011). The waste management practice, in which
439 the tailings are stored under process water, severely limits the carbonation rate
440 (Wilson et al., 2011, 2009b).

441 Mervine et al. (2018) studied the carbonation potential of processed kimberlite
442 in different mines in Canada and in South Africa. Several minerals with high
443 carbonation potentials were detected, including serpentine, olivine, brucite, and
444 smectite. Serpentine was the most abundant mineral, having the bulk of CO_2 capture
445 potential associated with its high content of labile Mg^{2+} (Mervine et al., 2018; Stubbs
446 et al., 2022; Vanderzee et al., 2019). Although present at a small fraction, brucite is
447 important as it can be carbonated at relatively low temperature and pressure. Different
448 forms of carbonates, including calcite, dolomite, magnesite and siderite were detected
449 at variable concentrations. Using the mineral and chemical properties of the kimberlite
450 and carbonation potential correlation published elsewhere (Wilson et al., 2009b), it
451 was estimated that carbonation of 4.7 to 24 wt% of the annual processed kimberlite

452 can result in offsetting 100% of CO_2 equivalent emitted from each mining site (Mervine
453 et al., 2018).

454 **3.3.4 Red mud**

455 Red mud is produced from bauxite/aluminum ore processing. Due to its
456 physical and chemical properties, notably ductility and malleability, aluminum is the
457 most used metal after iron and steel (Geoscience Australia, 2018). Red mud is
458 produced at a rate of 1-1.5 kg per kg of produced alumina (Al_2O_3) (Yang and Xiao,
459 2008), resulting in a world stock of ~4 x 10^{12} kg in 2015 (Gore, 2015; Mukiza et al.,
460 2019). Most of today's alumina is produced through the Bayer process, which involves
461 mixing the finely ground ore with caustic soda (Geoscience Australia, 2018). The
462 produced alumina is in turn smelted through the Hall-Héroult smelting process to
463 produce aluminum (Geoscience Australia, 2018). The by-product residue is thickened
464 in a process known as dry stacking. Mixing the residue with CO_2 can reduce the pH of
465 the suspension from 13 to less than 10.5, making the slurry more suitable for biological
466 activities that promote the breakdown down of organic residues. Residue carbonation
467 has been found to enhance drying rates, requiring less area thereby resulting in
468 aesthetic and cost benefits (Alcoa, 2012).

469 Red mud has a potential to passively sequester CO_2 at ambient conditions. Si
470 et al. (2013) investigated the carbonation potential of different red mud residues that
471 were collected from different aluminum refineries in China and Australia. They
472 calculated the maximum carbonation potential (which they defined as the total
473 alkalinity of red mud, assuming that 2 moles of OH^- can capture 1 mole of CO_2) and
474 actual carbonation (defined as total carbon concentration of red mud) and revealed
475 that the maximum carbonation significantly exceeds the actual carbonation by up to
476 more than 100%. This was attributed to the treatment of red mud with seawater, which

477 removes a considerable amount of alkali metals that could have been utilized in
478 carbonation. Additionally, XRD analysis detected perovskite and larnite, indicating that
479 TiO_3^{2-} and SiO_4^{2-} compete with carbonate for Ca^{2+}. Based on the current red mud
480 production rate of 1.2 x 10^{11} kg y^{-1} (Power et al., 2011) and based on the estimated
481 CO_2 uptake of 15 kg C / 1000 kg red mud, Si et al. (2013) estimated that approximately
482 6x10^9 kg of CO_2 can be sequestered within red mud annually, and another 6x10^9 kg
483 CO_2 can be sequestered if adequate technologies (such as supplying of Ca^{2+}) are
484 used.

485 Renforth et al. (2012) investigated the accidental release of a high quantity (6 x
486 10^5 – 7 x 10^5 m^3) of hyper alkaline (pH= 13) red mud in Ajka, western Hungary (Urbán
487 and Cséplı, 2010). Atmospheric CO_2 readily ingresses in such hyperalkaline solutions.
488 As a mitigation strategy, gypsum was added since it provides a source of Ca^{2+} and
489 result in precipitation of calcium carbonate resulting in decreasing the pH, as show in
490 equation 7:

491 $$2\,OH^- + CaSO_4 \cdot 2H_2O + 2CO_2 \leftrightarrow CaCO_3 + {SO_4}^{2-} + 2H_2O + H_2CO_3 \quad (7)$$

492 Based on carbonate, elements, and stable isotope analysis, it was shown that
493 high sulfur content was strongly correlated with high atmospheric CO_2 sequestration.
494 It was calculated that mixing 1000 kg of red mud with 860 kg of gypsum can result in
495 sequestration of 220 kg CO_2. With the figures of gypsum and red mud production rates
496 that are reported in Renforth et al. (2012) and the references therein, it was estimated
497 that red mud carbonation through gypsum addition can sequester around 1.3 x 10^{10} -
498 2.6x10^{10} kg CO_2 which corresponds to 3 - 4% of CO_2 emitted from primary production
499 of aluminum (Harnisch et al., 1998; Renforth et al., 2012).

500 The idea of adding Ca^{2+} sources to neutralize alkaline red mud was also
501 investigated by Han et al. (2017). Particularly, the effect of adding gypsum or calcium

chloride on enhancing the sequestration potential of bauxite residue and on the pH reduction was studied on two scales: 55-day batch tests, during which the pH values of slurry solutions were reduced using atmospheric CO_2 at ambient conditions, and field neutralization tests, during which 100 kg of bauxite was distributed over a 4 m^2 area for 120 days. Batch tests demonstrated that carbonation decreased pH to 9.5 (bauxite residue), indicating consumption of pore water alkalinity. The addition of Ca^{2+} sources decreased the pH further, as demonstrated for the gypsum-treated and $CaCl_2$-treated residues, for which the pH dropped to 8.3 and 7.7, respectively. Han et al. (2017) quantified that it is possible to sequester 0.083 g CO_2 to neutralize 1 g of bauxite residue, or to $2.3x10^7$ kg CO_2 per the $2.8x10^8$ kg of bauxite residue produced in Korea.

Another study (Khaitan et al., 2010) investigated simultaneous CO_2 sequestration and bauxite residue neutralization at two different locations in Texas, US, namely the Sherwin and Copano bauxite storage facilities, aged 35 and 14 years at the time of study, respectively. The older site had lower pH; the surface pH at Sherwin was 9.5, while at Copano it was 10.5. Total carbon was higher at Sherwin and in both sites, and there was a trend showing that higher carbonation extent occurred closer to the surface. Moreover, XRD results at Copano showed that a more pronounced peak of calcite occurred at the surface accompanied by a decrease in tricalcium aluminate as compared to deeper regions. Atmospheric CO_2 could reduce the pH of red mud, and the existence of some vegetation such as bitter weed and Bermuda grass could further reduce the pH to 9, in alignment with increased carbon content in vegetated locations.

3.4 Summary: alkaline wastes carbonation potential

Annually, around 7 x 10^{12} kg of silicate wastes are produced on the global scale (Renforth et al., 2011). Using Steinour's formula (equation 6), Renforth (2019) estimated the carbon capture potential of these wastes, as shown in Fig. 4. Renforth (2019) modelled the production of alkaline wastes and their contributions to carbon mitigation strategies based on different socioeconomic pathways, which are scenarios that enable an analysis of future climate impacts, vulnerabilities, mitigation and adaptation based on several drivers, such as urbanization, population and economic growth (Riahi et al., 2017). CO_2 emissions are predicted to be between 2.4 x 10^{13} - 1.26 x 10^{14} kg CO_2 y^{-1} by 2100, and CO_2 uptake potential within alkaline wastes can be between 2.9 x 10^{12} - 5.9 x 10^{12} kg CO_2 y^{-1}. In other words, alkaline wastes can mitigate 5-12 % of CO_2 emissions (Renforth, 2019).

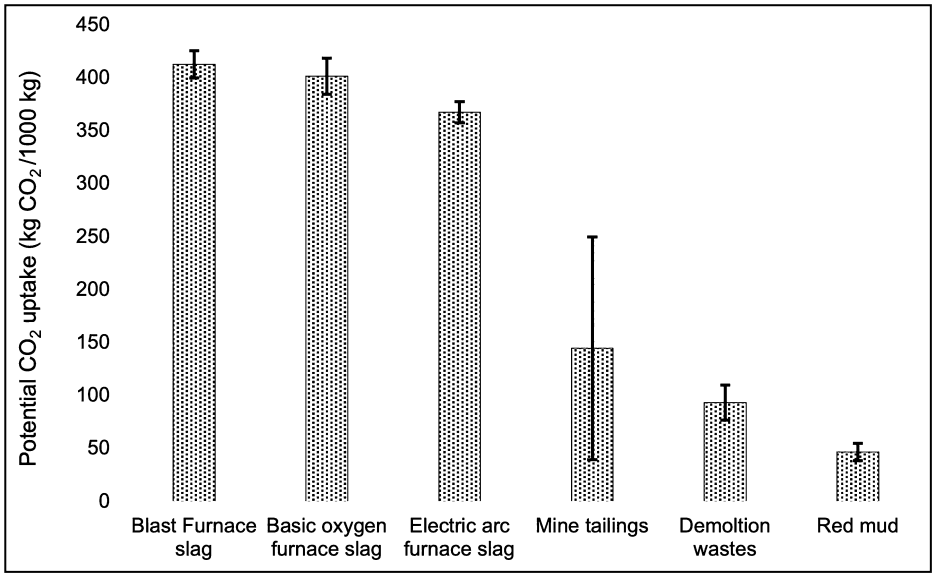


Fig. 4. CO_2 capture potential of various alkaline wastes. Error bars reflect variation of carbonation potentials as a result of different compositions. The figure is based on data from (Renforth, 2019)

Clearly, the studied wastes can offset significant amounts of CO_2 emissions. Nevertheless, the CO_2 uptake potential of alkaline wastes can be overestimated. This is because it is calculated based on the conversion of Mg and Ca to carbonate minerals on a mole per mole basis. Paulo et al. (2021) explained that the source of

these cations should be considered in the estimation of carbonation capacity, since these cations may be present in carbonate minerals, and carbonates are an undesirable source of cations. Consequently, Paulo et al. (2021) suggested a leaching test that is coupled with a TIC test to identify the cations that reside in carbonates and to exclude them from carbonation capacity calculations.

Table 2 reports the CO_2 uptake at various locations showing. At Mount Keith, passive sequestration offsets 11% of annual emissions and has carbon capture potential that exceeds the emissions by a factor of 10 (Wilson et al., 2014). A smaller offset is observed at Diavik in Canada where the tailings offset 0.2% of the emissions due to the arid and cold climate in that region and due subaqueous waste storage (Wilson et al., 2011). Though it is difficult to compare carbonation rates since minerals, emplacement and climate conditions vary, Table 2 shows that carbonation rates from reviewed sites are generally in the same order of magnitude, and carbonation occurs even in subarctic and arid climates. One issue to be addressed is that the reported CO_2 uptake values are based on different assumptions. For example, the value provided for Clinton creek was based on two samples: the first sample was assumed to be representative of 2/3 of the tailings while the second one was assumed to be representative of 1/3, and the overall CO_2 uptake was estimated based on the composition of these sample (Wilson et al., 2006). On the other hand, Turvey et al. (2018b) reported the distribution of the minerals with depth and considered the incomplete conversion to hydrotalcite minerals in the estimation of carbonation. Clearly, different methods may result in different estimation of CO_2 uptake in alkaline wastes.

567 Table 2. CO_2 uptake and the observed carbonates at different sites

Commodity	Location	CO_2 uptake	Observed carbonates	Remarks	Reference
Slag	Consett, UK	$7.6x10^3$-$7.8x10^4$ (kg CO_2/y)	Calcite	$\delta^{13}C$, $\delta^{16}O$ data suggest that between 54% and 99% of the precipitated carbon is from atmospheric origin and the rest is from lithogenic origins.	(Mayes et al., 2018)
Slag	Ohio, United states	0.23 – 3.94 (kg CO_2 /1000 kg slag / y)	Calcite	The slag was used to neutralize acid-mine drainage, and the provided uptake value is based on PHREEQC calculations.	(Goetz and Riefler, 2015)
Demolition wastes	Several towns in England, UK	0.4–5.9 (kg CO_2/m^2/y)	Calcite	The largest amount of CO_2 was captured during the first 15 years after demolition. $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{16}O$ suggest the removal of CO_2 from the atmosphere via biological and chemical processes.	(Jorat et al., 2020)
Nickel wastes	Dumont, Québec, Canada	0.60-2.2 (kg CO_2/m^2/y)	Hydrotalcites, aragonite, nesquehonite, dypingite and hydromagnesite	$\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{16}O$ suggest precipitation of carbonates under an evaporative environment.	(Gras et al., 2017; Kandji et al., 2017)
Chrysotile wastes	Woodsreef, Australia	0.099- 4.9 (kg CO_2/m^2/y)	Hydromagnesite, hydrotalcite, dolomite, calcite, magnesite	High values of $\delta^{13}C$, $\delta^{16}O$ and F14C in hydromagnesite suggest precipitation form atmospheric CO_2 contained in meteoric water. For pyroaurite, the $\delta^{13}C$, $\delta^{16}O$ are close to those of bedrock, although it contained significant radiocarbon.	(Oskierski et al., 2013)
Chrysotile wastes	Woodsreef, Australia	0.229-0.405 (kg CO_2/m^2/y)	Hydromagnesite, coalingite and pyroaurite	Availability of CO_2 affect the type of carbonate produced. At a shallow depth, hydromagnesite is produced while at a larger depth, hydrotalcite is produced. Modern atmosphere CO_2 was found to be a source of carbon in the precipitated hydromagnesite and pyroaurite.	(Turvey et al., 2018b)
Chrysotile wastes	Yukon, Clinton creek, Canada	6.2 (kg $CO_2/m^2/y^1$)	Nesquehonite hydromagnesite, dypingite, lansfordite	Several modes of carbonates were observed, including cements, cobble coatings and crusts. Values of $\delta^{13}C$, $\delta^{16}O$ and $F^{14}C$ indicate carbonates formation from modern CO_2.	(Schuiling et al., 2011; Wilson et al., 2009a)

Chrysotile wastes	Thetford, Québec, Canada	0.98 - 120 (kg $CO_2/m^2/y$)	Hydromagnesite, pyroaurite, sjögrenite	The exothermic CO_2 mineralization reaction resulted in warming the air that vent the surface of chrysotile heap. This warm air is CO_2 depleted, in winter, this air contained 10-18 ppm CO_2, while in summer it contained 260-370 ppm CO_2	(Lechat et al., 2016; Pronost et al., 2012)
Kimberlite wastes	Diavik NT, Canada	0.374-0.418 (kg $CO_2/m^2/y$)	Nesquehonite, dolomite, calcite, vaterite, and other Na/Ca bearing carbonates	$\delta^{13}C$, $\delta^{16}O$ and F14C analyses suggested that at least 89% of carbon in secondary carbonates is sourced from the atmosphere either directly or through biological activity.	(Wilson et al., 2011)

568

4. Limitations of passive carbonation

4.1 Slow carbonation due to limited CO2 supply

One of the primary reasons for the low carbonation rate of alkaline wastes is the low concentration of CO_2 in the atmosphere. Passive carbonation relies on using atmospheric air which is ~0.04% CO_2, causing it to be more difficult when compared to techniques that use a concentrated CO_2 stream (Buis, 2019; Wilcox et al., 2017). Therefore, increasing the exposure of wastes to CO_2 has been suggested as a method to increase CO_2 uptake. In a study that investigated the carbonation of a subarctic chromite mine shaft in Norway, it was noted that air circulation can enhance the carbonation (Beinlich and Austrheim, 2012). For mines that have a single entrance, carbonation was limited near the entry point while for mines that have multiple entrances, air circulation was enhanced and carbonation was observed to occur throughout these mines. Harrison et al. (2012) studied the carbonation of brucite, at conditions that mimic those at Mount Keith nickel mine. They investigated the effect of increasing the CO_2 concentration, under a system pressure of 0.1 MPa, on the carbonation of brucite, and demonstrated that as the concentration of CO_2 increased from 0.04% to 100%, the carbonation rate increased by ~2400 fold. This carbonation rate can offset up to ~57% of CO_2 emissions from Mount Keith nickel mine (Harrison et al., 2012).

Different carbonation products may form in different environments, depending on CO_2 availability. In environments where CO_2 supply is limited, incomplete carbonation can produce hydrotalcite minerals. This was documented at Woodsreef where at shallow depth hydromagnesite ($Mg_5(CO_3)_4(OH)_2{\cdot}4H2O$) is produced while hydrotalcite minerals such as pyroaurite ($Mg_6Fe_2^{3+}(CO_3)(OH)_{16}{\cdot}4H2O$) and coalingite

($Mg_{10}Fe_2^{3+}(CO_3)(OH)_{24}\cdot 2H_2O$) are produced at larger depths where CO_2 supply is limited (Turvey et al., 2018b). The work of Turvey et al. (2018b) provides evidence that increasing CO_2 availability in tailings results in the formation of more efficient CO_2 sinks that can sequester a higher amount of CO_2 for a given amount of Mg and result in a lower volume of precipitated carbonates.

4.2 Carbonation reduction due to negative feedbacks

Negative feedback loops can be caused by the carbonation reaction products which precipitate at or near the reactive sites and thus prevent CO_2 from reaching those sites. This behaviour has been reported particularly in ex-situ carbonation studies. For example, Chang et al. (2012) observed that as pulverized slag (<63 μm) is carbonated, a layer of carbonate forms around the particle, and its thickness increases as the reaction proceeds, resulting in limiting further carbonation. The generation of the passivation layer can also result from silanol polymerization. Assima et al. (2013) investigated this issue by studying CO_2 uptake in chrysotile mining wastes that contained different amounts of water. For a given amount of water, Assima et al. (2013) showed that increasing the watering frequency positively correlated with increasing CO_2 uptake. Higher watering frequency resulted in Mg^{2+} supersaturation in pore water and increased its pH, resulting in more carbonate precipitation. When water was added, it transported the carbonation products to larger depths and allowed upper pores to host further carbonation reactions. Additionally, it was demonstrated that the addition of water on episodes reduces surface passivation through silica gel polymerisation, since polymerisation is promoted when an excess amount of water is added (Assima et al., 2012; Grénman et al., 2008). It should be noted that carbonation may be reduced as a result of permeability reduction caused by carbonates precipitation. However, Assima et al. (2013) observed that when chrysotile wastes

interact with CO_2-lean stream in a saturation-controlled porous bed, the pressure drop decreased as the carbonation progressed, reflecting that clogging was outpaced by dissolution.

However, it should be noted that volume expansion can cause a positive feedback, which is explained by a “reaction driven cracking” as explained by Kelemen et al. (2020) and the references therein. In this process, volume expansion due to the carbonation causes differential stresses which in turn cause fractures that enhance the permeability and facilitate delivery of reactants to reactive sites, thereby enhancing the degree of carbonation as observed in carbonates precipitation in mines walls and ceilings (Beinlich and Austrheim, 2012). Understanding the chemo-mechanical factors can help in establishing a phase diagram that elucidates the conditions that promote positive feedback and carbonation enhancement (Kelemen et al., 2020).

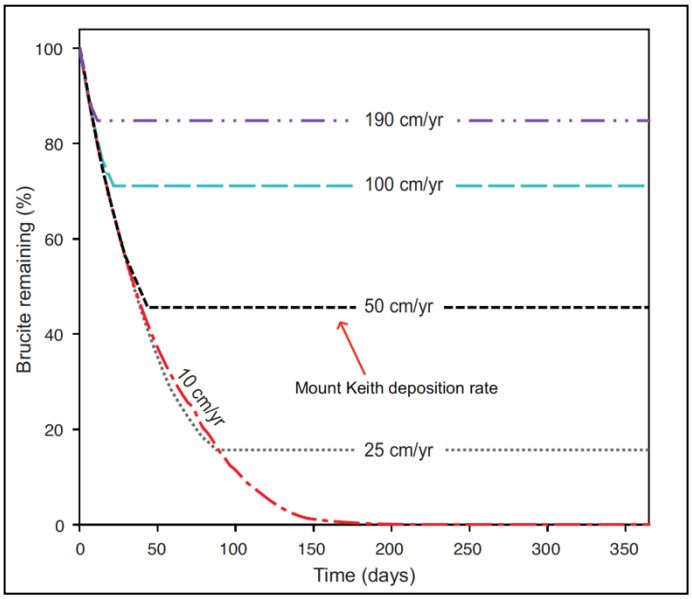
4.3 Waste generation and management practice

Alkaline wastes have the potential to sequester 1.90×10^{11} - 3.32×10^{11} kg C y^{-1} (Renforth et al., 2011). Yet this potential is hindered because when tailing storage facilities were designed, mineral carbonation had not been considered. Waste management practice can be tailored to favour CCS by enhancing cations leaching (Power et al., 2014). This can be done through different pathways, for example, by acidity generation through bioleaching using different kinds of bacteria, such as *L. ferrooxidans*, *A. ferrooxidans* and *A. thiooxidans* (Edwards and Goebel, 1999; Nordstrom and Southam, 1997; Power et al., 2014). These bacteria decrease the pH by producing sulfuric acid through bio-oxidation of sulphur that exists within minerals in copper, uranium and gold ores. Power et al. (2010) reported that the addition of sulphur (which acts as an acid-generating species) and *A. thiooxidans* to tailings increased the concentration of magnesium in leachates by an order of magnitude. This

643 magnesium-rich leachate can be transferred to carbonation ponds where
644 cyanobacteria is added to generate alkalinity and to provide nucleation sites for
645 carbonate precipitation (McCutcheon et al., 2016; Power et al., 2010).

646 Additionally, passive carbonation can be enhanced by increasing the contact
647 between tailings and the atmosphere and/or water, whether from meteoric or process
648 sources (Power et al., 2014). For a given deposition rate, increasing the number of
649 deposition points results in decreasing the period during which tailing are deposited
650 over a given area, allowing for a formation of thinner tailings that cover a larger area
651 (Wilson et al., 2014). At Mount Keith mine, tailings are deposited from nine risers that
652 are concentrated towards the center of the tailings storage facility. Increasing the
653 number of risers results in a more thin and uniform distribution of tailings across a
654 large surface area, allowing for more time for mineral carbonation and CO_2
655 sequestration, as was shown through reactive transport modelling done by Wilson et
656 al. (2014) (Fig. 5). Alternatively, using forced-air systems to enhance air circulation
657 inside wastes piles has also been suggested, based on numerical modeling that
658 showed that CO_2 concentration is reduced inside the waste piles since the
659 mineralization rate is higher than the CO_2 supply rate (Nowamooz et al., 2018). Power
660 et al. (2014) established a decision tree for choosing a waste management practice,
661 based on the availability of resources (water, waste organics, and area) and sources
662 of CO_2, whether from the atmosphere or a concentrated CO_2 stream, as depicted in
663 Fig. 6. In Scenario A, low carbon can be enhanced by introducing waste organics or
664 by increasing the waste deposition area, making this scenario suitable for application
665 at abandoned sites or away from CO_2 generating sources. Scenario B aims to increase
666 the concentration Mg^{2+} in the presence of a concentrated CO_2 stream, cation
667 availability limits carbonation (Harrison et al., 2013; Power et al., 2014). Scenario B

668 can also increase dissolution of minerals and increase the availability of cations for
669 carbonation (Daval et al., 2013; Power et al., 2014).



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671 Fig. 5. MIN3P reactive transport modeling of Mount Keith tailings carbonation demonstrating the effect
672 of tailings deposition rate on brucite carbonation. Reprinted from (Wilson et al., 2014). Copyright
673 (2014) with permission from Elsevier.

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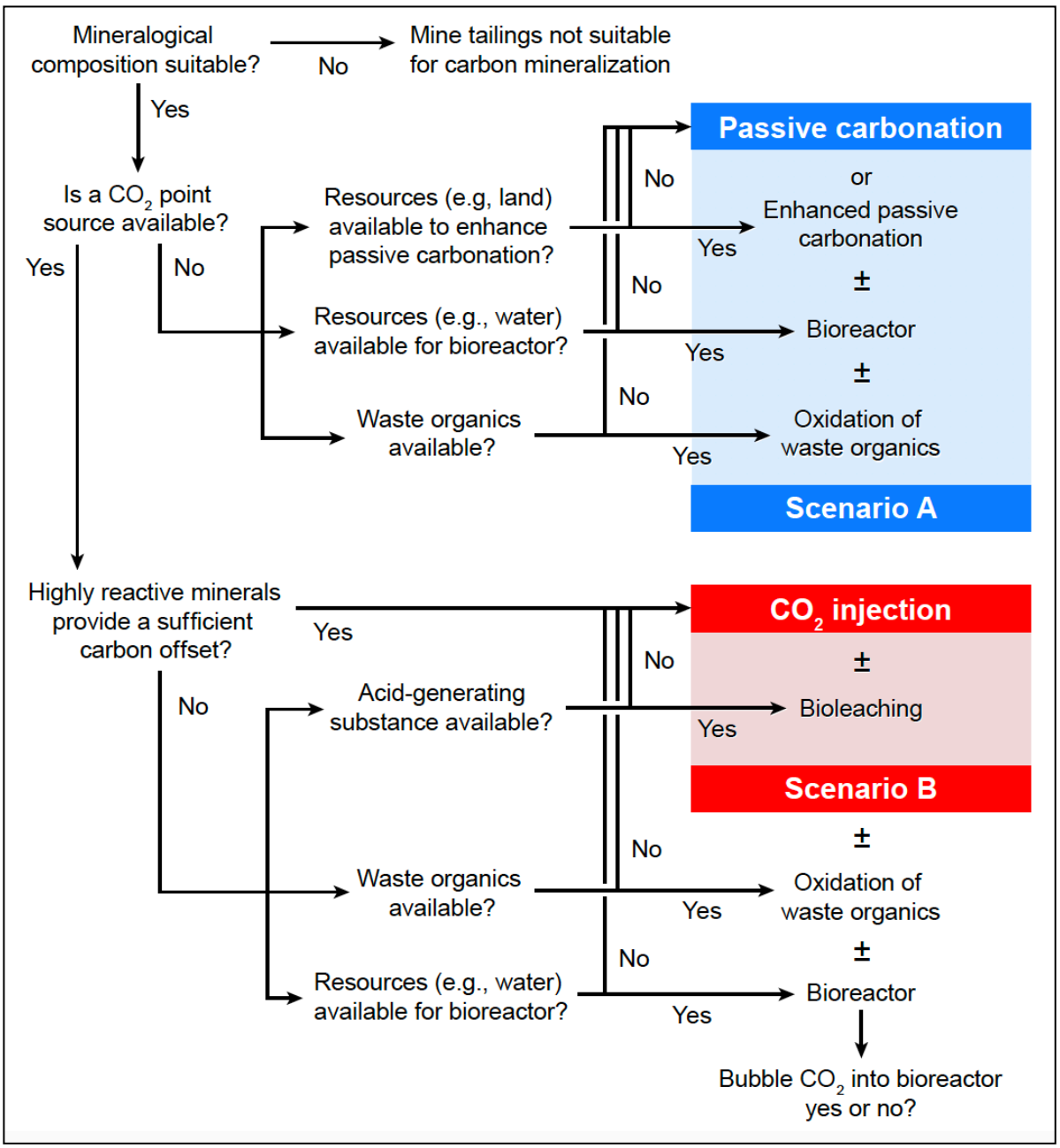

Fig. 6. Decision Tree for selecting mineral carbonation method. In Scenario A, CO_2 is captured from a low-concentration stream such as the atmosphere, while in scenario B CO_2 is captured from a high-concentration stream such as flue gas (Power et al., 2014). Reproduced from MDPI.

Finally, bacteria can be utilized to increase the CO_2 production within tailings. McCutcheon et al. (2017) studied this increase by observing hydromagnesite precipitation rates in two 0.5 m^3 passive carbonation cells, one of which was inoculated with cyanobacteria. Over a period of 11 weeks, the weight fraction of hydromagnesite reached 1.9% for the inoculated sample compared to 1.1% for the bacteria free sample, in the top 2-4 cm of the tailings. For inoculated cells the CO_2 uptake reaches

137 g cm^{-2}, a rate that is much faster when compared to the control experiment in which CO_2 uptake was estimated to be 27 g cm^{-2} (McCutcheon et al., 2016).

5. Proposed large-scale passive CCS methods

As shown previously, alkaline wastes can be used as a carbon sink thereby providing a negative emissions solution. This section summarizes published work in which methods that can utilize passive carbonation on large scales were proposed, and it shows some results from their applications.

5.1 Direct air capture within designated cells

Abanades et al. (2020) proposed a system, composed of portlandite, that can capture CO_2 passively over a 6-month time scale, based on equations 8 (Renforth, 2019):

$$Ca(OH)_2 + CO_2 \rightarrow CaCO_3 \text{ , } \Delta G = -82.8 \text{ kJ/mol} \quad (8)$$

The proposed design can sequester 1 x 10^9 kg CO_2 per year by reacting it with 1.68 x 10^9 kg $Ca(OH)_2$. It is composed of multiple stacks of 2 x 2 x 0.03 m^3 plates composed of $Ca(OH)_2$ having a porosity of 0.5. Based on the reactions kinetics and air flow considerations, the proposed CCS system occupies a total volume of ~4.6 x 10^7 m^3, having a total area of ~4.6 x 10^6 m^2 and a height of ~10 m (Abanades et al., 2020).

The proposed design requires a volume that is one to two orders of magnitude larger than competitive, large-scale direct air capture systems. However, Abanades et al. (2020) argued that based on cost estimation proposed elsewhere (Guandalini et al., 2019), their proposed system is feasible. Their cost estimation considers different factors including the capital cost required for purchasing the oxy-combustion unit required for CaO production through calcination of $CaCO_3$, including fixed, variable

and fuel costs. Handling and transportation of structural elements, transporting the CO_2 produced during calcination to permanent storage as well as land cost were also incorporated in the cost estimation. They calculated that the cost of capturing 1000 kg of CO_2 through the proposed design ranges from US$ 138 - 341, a value that is significantly lower than the cost of US$ 600 / 1000 kg CO_2 reported by Climworks (Tollefson, 2018). At least 67% of this cost is allocated to the capture and storage of CO_2 produced through oxy-combustion of $CaCO_3$ which the authors considered to be the most appropriate source of $Ca(OH)_2$ that is used in the stacks.

McQueen et al. (2020) suggested an alternative process for direct air capture in which MgO is spread on land to capture CO_2 and form $MgCO_3$ spontaneously (ΔG = -75.9 kJ/mol (Renforth, 2019)). MgO is spread over a large area, and it reacts with CO_2 to produce $MgCO_3$. This process can remove between 6.0×10^{10} and 1.8×10^{11} $kgCO_2\ y^{-1}$, requiring an area of 4×10^8 - $1.1 \times 10^9\ m^2$, and it was estimated to cost 48-159 $ / 1000 $kgCO_2$. The provided cost includes the capital expenditure and operating expenditure, and the ranges reflect the uncertainties that are associated with the estimations of different variables, including calcination time and temperature, kiln efficiency, CO_2 uptake kinetics and capacity, energy prices and other economic factors. It should be noted that in the methods suggested by Abanades et al. (2020) and McQueen et al. (2020), CaO and MgO are assumed to be produced through calcination that produces a CO_2 stream, which is assumed to be stored elsewhere or sold. Clearly, the efficiency of these methods depends on the availability of points at which the produced CO_2 is either permanently stored or utilized in different applications.

5.2 Hot-stage carbonation

Another study proposed carbonation of slag, with flue gas, at an early stage immediately after the production and disposal of steel slag, in a process referred to as hot-stage carbonation (Santos et al., 2012). This process is based on enhancing the carbonation reaction by utilizing the hot temperature of slag to increase the reaction rate. To test this idea, BOF slag was subjected to calcination in order to remove any $CaCO_3$ that might have already formed, and then, using thermogravimetric analysis, the slag was cooled from 900 °C to 200 °C under CO_2 flowing at 100 ml/min in two different experiments: in the first one, the gas composition was 20% vol CO_2 as such a stream resembles a typical flue gas from iron and steel industry (Gielen, 2003). In the second experiment, the gas composition was set to 100% CO_2. Pressurization did not enhance CO_2 uptake significantly, and Santos et al. (2012) suggested it is more feasible to use CO_2 from flue gas for slag carbonation. Slag carbonation seemed to be diffusion-controlled as the CO_2 must diffuse through the inert constituent of the slag to the reactive site from the beginning of the carbonation process (Santos et al., 2012).

5.3 Reactivity enhancement by aqueous treatment

Alkaline pretreatment has been proposed to enhance leaching behavior and carbonation capacity of slag (Chen et al., 2019). The proposed carbonation enhancement method involves pretreating slag with alkaline solution since, as shown in a previous study (You et al., 2011) and illustrated in Fig. 7, when slag comes into contact with water, a dense layer of aluminosilicates may form and inhibit the carbonation reaction. This layer can be broken down upon the addition of alkaline sources and then converted to hydrated calcium phases, thereby producing more phases that can be carbonated to $CaCO_3$ (Chen et al., 2019; Matsushita et al., 2000).

To confirm this hypothesis, TGA analysis was carried out to determine the extent of carbonation for raw slag, and of the one that was pretreated with 1 M NaOH at a liquid/solid ratio of 10 mL/g prior to a long term (4-weeks) humidification. By measuring the weight loss between 600 and 800 ºC, the amount of $CaCO_3$ can be calculated. It was demonstrated that the amount of CO_2 captured within the pretreated slag was higher, as demonstrated in the calcite formation which was 17.05 and 50.68 mg $CaCO_3$ g^{-1} slag, for the raw slag and pretreated slag, respectively.

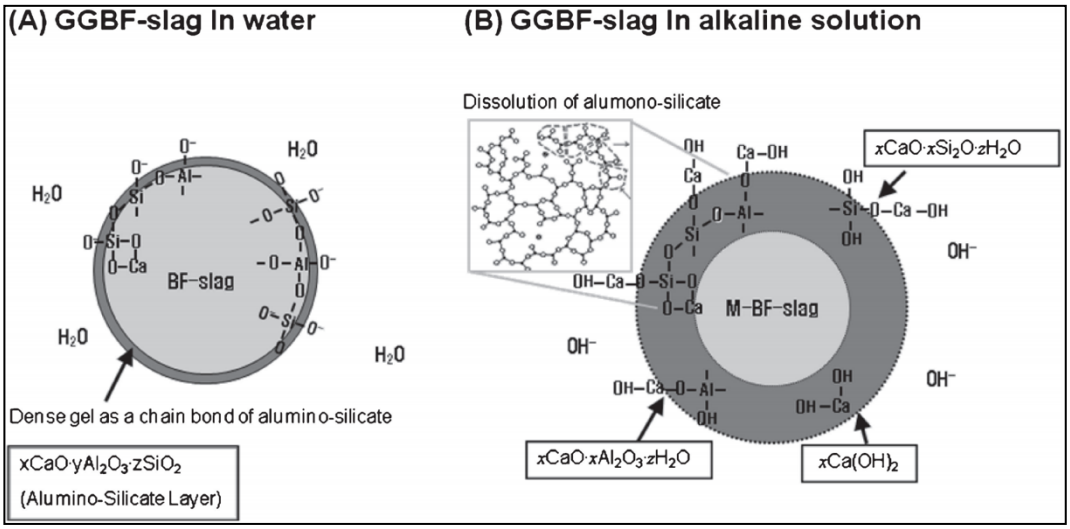

Fig. 7. Demonstration of alumino-silcate dissolution upon introducing NaOH to ground granulated blast furnace (GGBF) slag. Reprinted from You et al. (2011), Copyright (2011) with permission from The Japan Institute of Metals and Materials

Additionally, a waste management practice was proposed to enhance the carbonation, reduce leachate pH and allow for reactivity enhancement of the slag (Chen et al., 2019). Portrayed in Fig. 8, the method suggests placing the slag under a roof to limit the uncontrolled introduction of water. A geomembrane is also introduced to prevent leachate from reaching the surface beneath the slag. Finally, NaOH solution can be sprayed over the slag to enhance the carbonation reaction. This method, however, depends on the availability and cost of NaOH. Additionally, the emissions associated with NaOH manufacturing should also be considered to estimate the net CO_2 uptake through this process.

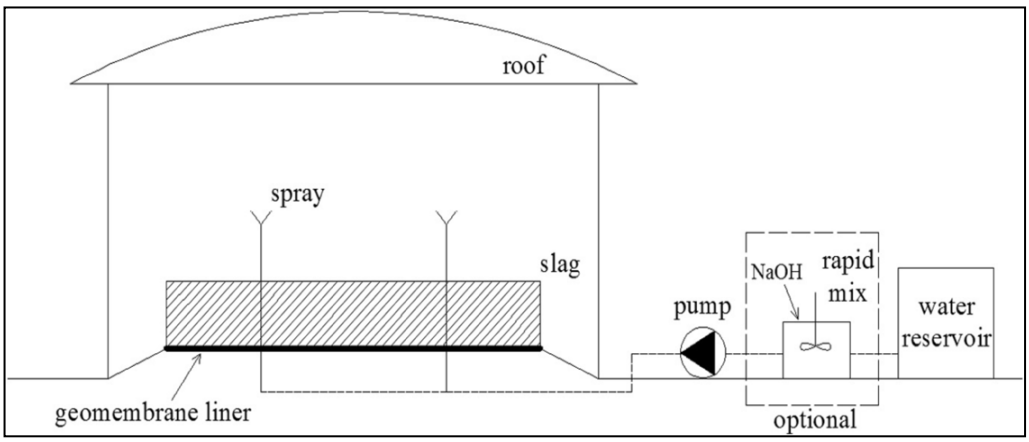

Fig. 8. Proposed slag carbonation method. Reprinted from (Chen et al., 2019). Copyright (2019) with permission from Elsevier.

6. Points for future research

6.1 Economic valuation of passive carbonation

Understanding the economics of CCS projects provides incentives for enterprises to develop CCS technologies and allow decision-makers to formulate policies that promote development for CCS technologies (J. Li et al., 2019). As explained earlier, there are several methods that can enhance mineral carbonation, and implementing them is associated with the cost related to area requirement, size reduction and establishing and maintaining piping systems for CO_2 delivery (Song et al., 2021; Wilson et al., 2014). There is a lack in understanding the economics of passive mineral carbonation. Valuation of carbon capture projects has been carried using different methodologies, including optimization models, process simulation and real options valuation (J. Li et al., 2019). One interesting method is the real options (RO) valuation (Dixit and Pindyck, 2012), which is considered as a continuation of financial options theory in that “firms with discretionary investment opportunities have the right—but are under no obligation—to acquire expected cash flows by making an investment on or before the date that the (investment) opportunity ceases to exist (Glantz and Mun, 2011).” RO valuation has been used to study CCS projects,

considering several sources of uncertainties, such as policy, carbon prices, government incentive, and technological changes, as summarized by (H. Li et al., 2019) and the references therein. Additionally, it has been applied to CCS projects that involve CO_2 storage in geological formations or through using amine solution to absorb CO_2 (Ding et al., 2020; J. Li et al., 2019).

To our knowledge, only a single study (Power et al., 2014) explained about using RO to evaluate passive CO_2 mineralization projects. Investment in CCS technologies should be evaluated through the RO valuation since by doing so, a company can develop such technologies even when the CO_2 price is low, and it will have the right, but not the obligation, to apply such technologies when the CO_2 price becomes more accurate, and CCS becomes economically beneficial (Power et al., 2014). Passive carbonation is simple compared to other carbon capture technologies, and as such can have relatively low operation and transportation costs. Research on techno-economical evaluation can give confidence for mining companies to invest and apply passive carbonation techniques, and it provides an area of fundamental research.

6.2 Mobility of transition elements

There have been several studies showing that mining wastes can be a vital source of different transition metals (Gomes et al., 2016). Nevertheless, it has been argued that carbonation of alkaline wastes may reduce their environmental burdens (Bobicki et al., 2012; Mayes et al., 2008b; Renforth, 2019). For example, Hamilton et al. (2018) analyzed the mobility of transition elements during passive weathering and CO_2 sequestration within the chrysotile deposits at Woodsreef. Upon weathering, dissolution of serpentine and brucite released these elements, however they were captured upon precipitation of carbonates, either by substituting the Mg and Fe atoms

of the hydromagnesite and pyroaurite, or by being physically trapped within carbonate cement (Hamilton et al., 2018). As there were no detectable concentrations of transition metals within the mine pit water, Hamilton et al. (2018) concluded that mineral carbonation did not release toxic metals. While Hamilton et al. (2018) demonstrated that carbonates formed during CO_2 mineralization can also sequester transition metals, they also mentioned other issues that should be highlighted in future research. For example, hydrated carbonate such as nesquehonite transform to hydromagnesite and then to magnesite. It is not clear how this transformation affects the sequestered metals. Additionally, Mayes et al. (2008b) recommended examining the long-term stability of these metals in different precipitates under different conditions. Carbonation of other alkaline wastes may have different consequences on metals leaching. For example, the carbonation of slag was found to have a mixed effect on metals leaching – it decreased the leaching of barium, nickel and cobalt though it increased the leaching of chromium and vanadium (Santos et al., 2012). The carbonation of different alkaline wastes leads to the precipitation of different carbonates such as calcite, which may interact differently with ecotoxic metals, presenting an avenue for future research.

6.3 Life cycle assessment (LCA) consideration

LCA is a scientific method that evaluates the environmental impact of a process, quantitatively and qualitatively, throughout its life span (Li et al., 2022). LCA analysis measures different environmental impacts, such as air pollution, global warming, ecological toxicity, waste generation and resources depletion associated with a particular process, to ensure that it can actually solve an environmental problem rather than shifting it to another problem (Kikuchi, 2016). For example, Butera et al. (2015) highlighted that when demolition wastes are used in an unbound form, metals may

leach out and pollute the environment. Butera et al. (2015) highlighted that when LCA studies are performed, leaching is not always considered, or the used data may not reflect actual leaching behavior. Nevertheless, as carbonation of construction and demolition wastes may lower the leaching of metals, Butera et al. (2015) suggested that further research should be directed toward this issue to provide better understanding of environmental impacts associated with the carbonation of demolition wastes.

The physical properties of alkaline wastes may dictate having auxiliary operations such as crushing and transportation (Collins, 2010). Such steps may cause mineral carbonation to be less effective compared to geological sequestration and to cause other environmental problems (Giannoulakis et al., 2014). To our knowledge, however, there are limited LCA studies that evaluate the environmental impact of waste management practices that can enhance passive carbonation. For example, using flue gas to carbonate slag requires less transportation since both materials are produced in close locations, but may result in other emissions that are associated with maintaining and operating a CO_2 piping system as well as slag pulverization. LCA can assist in understanding the overall CO_2 uptake through this carbonation route and comparing it to other methods. Unlike mine waste, slag is produced at a larger size, and it must be pulverized before carbonation can take place. This makes mining wastes “low hanging fruits” as described by Kelemen et al. (2020), since they are already produced with large surface area as a consequence of mineral processing.

Finally, it should be noted that current LCA models require the calculation of the amount of industrial wastes that must be treated to capture a given amount of CO_2. This information can be calculated from the reaction rate laws that are available in the literature (e.g., Chang et al. (2013); Thom et al. (2013)). However, some interactions

between the operating conditions can result in unexpected CO_2 uptake. For example, Polettini et al. (2016b) demonstrated that under 1 bar 50 ºC and 40% CO_2, steel slag can capture CO_2 at an amount of 30 g CO_2/100g slag compared to 33 g CO_2/100 g slag captured under more elevated conditions of 10 bar, 100% CO_2 and 100 ºC. This indicates that there is room for further kinetic analysis of carbonation since the reduction of operating conditions and CO_2 concentration reduces the environmental impact of the mineral carbonation process.

7. Concluding remarks

There is growing evidence indicating that passive carbonation of alkaline wastes occurs to an extent that can reduce or offset the amount of CO_2 emitted from energy-intensive industries, such as steelmaking and mining. Globally, alkaline wastes are produced at a rate of 7×10^{12} - 1.7×10^{13} kg y^{-1} and by 2100, they are estimated to have an annual CO_2 capture potential of 2.9×10^{12} to 8.5×10^{12} kg y^{-1} (Renforth, 2019). However, studies show that the CO_2 uptake potential of alkaline wastes is underutilized due to several factors such as slow dissolution kinetics of silicate minerals, low CO_2 ingress into alkaline wastes and due to the passivation of reactive surfaces as a result of silica gel polymerization and carbonates precipitation. These challenges can be overcome through the application of different waste management practices such as controlling waste deposition rate, controlling the water saturation and the watering frequency and enhancing the contact between these wastes and the atmosphere. While the reviewed literature demonstrates that these methods can result in larger CO_2 uptake, the proposed methods should be evaluated through lifecycle assessment, which in turn requires adequate knowledge of leaching mechanisms of different ecotoxic metals that reside in the alkaline wastes. Although the proposed waste management practices are simple, they are associated with different costs

related to the area footprint and maintenance of CO_2 piping systems. Consequently, they should be evaluated from a techno-economic perspective.

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