

Gateway to the Earth

# The geology of decarbonisation

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SoS RARE



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# Why decarbonisation?



- Figure from the IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels
- Shows global emissions pathways required to keep warming at these levels
- All scenarios require decarbonisation of energy and transport



### **Decarbonisation of energy and transport**







#### **End of the** diesel and petrol car

vehicles must be fully electric by 2040

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on how it might be ill announce that "comprehensive clean-air strategy to tackle the full range of pollutants" will

Shaken, not deterred Daniel Craig is expected to play James Bond for a fifth time, having said that he would rather slash his wrists than take the role again. Page 7

#### The Economist

#### Electric cars The death of the internal combustion engine

It had a good run. But the end is in sight for the machine that changed the world







"A transition to a low-carbon society, a change that will require vast amounts of metals and minerals. Mineral resourcing and climate change are inextricably linked..... because the world cannot tackle climate change without an adequate supply of raw materials to manufacture clean technologies"

Ali et al., 2017, Nature



# **Raw materials for decarbonisation**





#### Solar panels

- Gallium
- Indium
- Tellurium
- Selenium
- Copper

#### **Magnets in motors**

- Neodymium
- Dysprosium
- ≻ REE
- Praseodymium \_



#### **Batteries**

- Lithium
- Cobalt
- Graphite
- Nickel
- Manganese





### Controls on ore deposits: the mineral system

- Enriched source (mantle or crust)
- Emplacement of elements into the crust
- Focusing/ trapping of the elements
- Exposure at or near the surface
- Enhancement/preservation through weathering and erosion



Controlled by surface processes



Figure from Champion & Huston 2016, Ore Geo Rev



## **Tectonic setting of deposits: the** simple view





G221.001

#### Modern tectonics

VS

#### Past tectonics



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Li et al 2008, Precamb Res

# **Types of primary REE resources**

High-temperature deposits formed by magmatic and hydrothermal processes

- Alkaline igneous rocks
- Carbonatites
- Vein & skarn (hydrothermal)
- Fe oxide-apatite
- Granite & pegmatite

Low-temperature deposits formed by erosion and weathering

- Bauxites
- Placers
- Laterites & ion-adsorption clays
- Other deposits (phosphorites etc)







### **Global REE resources**





- Alkaline igneous rocks & carbonatites are often associated, most commonly in continental rift settings
- REE deposits in large peralkaline (agpaitic) undersaturated syenite intrusions, or in carbonatites and alkaline intrusions with carbonate metasomatism
- Other settings are available..... Especially post-collisional



### **REE metallogenetic belts in Europe**



#### Goodenough et al. 2016, Ore Geology Reviews



### Importance of surface processes

- A large percentage of the world's REE come from weathered deposits or from placers
- Deposits are typically low-grade but can be large
- Processing and extraction of the REE from these deposits can be easier than from hard rock deposits
- Notably, placers and ion adsorption deposits with minable REE can occur in areas of very 'standard' geology – forming on granites







## Ion Adsorption REE Deposits (IADs)



Diagram by Eva Marquis after Peel et al. 2017, Sanematsu & Watanabe 2016

Formed in areas of temperate-tropical weathering Main source of the world's HREE in Southern China, increasing production elsewhere in SE Asia Recovered by in situ or heap leaching

# **Types of primary lithium resources**

- Pegmatite (hard-rock); around 50% of global production
- Evaporative brines, largely in South America; around 50% of global production
- Some other geothermal brines
- Clays (hectorite, jadarite)









### Lithium resources



(28) Jadar, Serbia

- (6) Separation Rapids, Canada (7) Magnolia, USA
- (13) Salar de Atacama (14) Salar de Atacama
- (20) Sal de Los Angelas, Argentina (21) Sal de Vida, Argentina

- (34) East Taiji Nai'er, China (35) Qinghai Salt Lake, China
  - (41) Mount Catlin, Australia
  - (42) Mount Marion, Australia

Map from BGS Mineral Profile for lithium



## **LCT pegmatites in Africa**







- Lithium deposits dominantly occur in areas of continental collision
- Both surface and tectonic processes interact to form deposits



# Main pegmatite mineralisation





#### Main orogenic events

# **Types of primary cobalt resources**

- Sediment-hosted deposits (cobalt produced as a byproduct of copper)
- Wide range of hydrothermal and volcanogenic deposits (polymetallic)
- Magmatic sulphide deposits (polymetallic)
- Laterite deposits (copper produced as a by-product of nickel)
- Seafloor nodules and crusts





Photo from Pierre Josso



# Conclusions

- Some of the most important critical metals for decarbonisation form in very different geological settings
- Plate tectonics at the time the mineralisation was formed provide a first-order control on where metallogenetic belts occur
- Surface processes (erosion, weathering, groundwater circulation are also of crucial importance)
- The talks to come will explore some of the details!

