

Carbon capture turned upside down: high-temperature adsorption & low-temperature desorption (HALD)

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Screening the international zeolite database identified
the most promising for high-temperature adsorption &
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Carbon capture turned upside down: high-temperature adsorption & low-temperature desorption (HALD)[†]

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Cite this: DOI: 10.1039/c5ee01690h

Carbon capture & sequestration (CCS) could reduce CO₂ emissions from large fossil-fuel power plants on the short term, but the high energy penalty of the process hinders its industrial deployment. Moreover, the utility of nanoporous materials, known to be selective for the CO₂/N₂ separation, is drastically reduced due to the competitive adsorption with H₂O. Taking advantage of the power plant's waste heat to perform CCS while at the same time surmounting the negative effect of H₂O is therefore an attractive idea. We propose an upside-down approach for CCS in nanoporous materials, high-temperature adsorption & low-temperature desorption (HALD), that exploits the temperature-dependent competitive adsorption of CO₂ and H₂O. First, we provide a theoretical background for this entropy-driven behavior and demonstrate under what conditions competitive adsorption can be in favor of CO₂ at high temperature and in favor of H₂O at low temperature. Then, molecular simulations in all-silica MFI provide a proof of concept. The International Zeolite Association database is subsequently screened for potential candidates and finally, the most promising materials are selected using a post-Pareto search algorithm. The proposed post-Pareto approach is able to select the material that shows an optimal combination of multiple criteria, such as CO₂/H₂O selectivity, CO₂/N₂ selectivity, CO₂ uptake and H₂O uptake. As a conclusion, this work provides new perspectives to reduce the energy requirement for CCS and to overcome the competitive adsorption of H₂O.

Received 30th May 2015,
Accepted 30th June 2015

DOI: 10.1039/c5ee01690h

www.rsc.org/ees

Broader context

Utilizing the residual heat of a power plant's flue gas to capture the CO₂ from this CO₂/N₂/H₂O mixture could drastically reduce the energy requirement of carbon capture and sequestration (CCS). The novel approach to CCS presented here, high-temperature adsorption & low-temperature desorption (HALD) of CO₂ in zeolites, exploits the temperature-dependent competitive adsorption of CO₂ and H₂O. A theoretical model demonstrates that differences in the adsorption enthalpy and entropy for CO₂ and H₂O can favor CO₂ adsorption at high temperature and H₂O uptake at low temperature. Using Grand Canonical Monte Carlo simulations, we perform a screening of the existing zeolite topologies to assess their adsorption properties. Afterwards, a post-Pareto analysis identifies the most promising materials. The proposed HALD behavior can be used in a temperature-swing process, which would not require the input of energy for regeneration, but instead would recover the CO₂ by saturating the material with water. In addition, the deeper understanding of the entropy-driven competitive adsorption of CO₂ and H₂O opens new perspectives to overcome the detrimental effect of water.

1 Introduction

Nearly half of the world's CO₂ emissions originate from fossil-fuel power plants. Cutting emissions at these concentrated CO₂ sources would therefore be very effective in fighting climate change.^{1–4} Carbon capture & sequestration (CCS) is one of the most promising technologies to reduce the CO₂ emissions from large power plants on the short term. CCS can act as an intermediary measure in the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy, tackling CO₂ emissions of the fossil fuel era, while providing breathing room for renewable technologies

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[†] Electronic supplementary information (ESI) available: Calculation of entropy, details of the force field, influence of cations and sensitivity of the Pareto analysis. See DOI: 10.1039/c5ee01690h

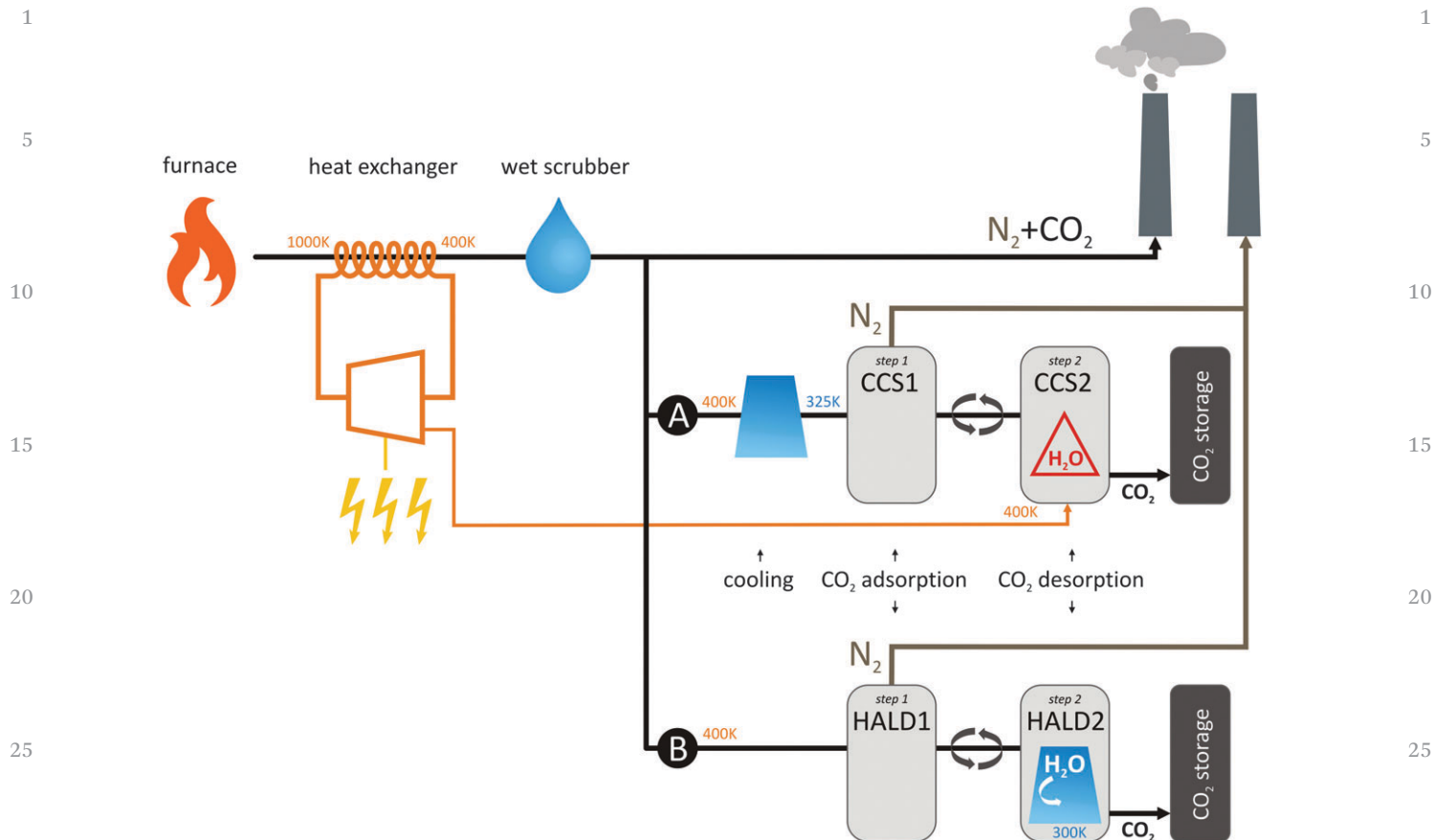


Fig. 1 Layout of a fossil fuel-fired power plant. In the heat exchanger, high-pressure steam is produced around 400 K, which is used to drive a turbine and generate electricity. NO_x and SO_x molecules are removed in a wet scrubber and the exhaust gases are typically released into the atmosphere with residual heat at 400 K, because the validation of low-temperature heat is difficult and the condensation of H₂O undesired. (A) Represents a power plant retrofitted with conventional carbon capture technology based on CO₂ adsorption on a nanoporous material. The exhaust gases are first cooled and CO₂ is subsequently adsorbed. Regeneration of the bed requires a parasitic energy from the power plant (orange arrow), which is even higher when H₂O is present (H₂O warning sign). (B) is a power plant retrofitted with the proposed high-temperature adsorption, low-temperature desorption technology. The regeneration step comprises cooling and saturating the material with H₂O.

to develop. There are nanoporous materials that can adsorb CO₂ and separate it from N₂, but the high energy penalty and associated monetary cost CCS imposes on the plant present a serious bottleneck for its industrial deployment. Moreover, most materials show a significant performance drop when H₂O is present in the exhaust stream, further increasing the energy penalty for CCS and hampering its large-scale application.

In Fig. 1, a typical fossil-fuel power plant is outlined schematically. A fossil fuel is burned and the hot combustion gases are brought into contact with a heat exchanger. The high-pressure steam that is produced drives a turbine, which subsequently produces electricity. The exhaust gases still contain some residual heat (around 400 K), but it is difficult to convert into work or electricity and therefore essentially waste heat. In many countries, environmental regulations stipulate that the most hazardous components should be removed from the flue gases before they are released into the atmosphere. Therefore, components such as NO_x and SO_x are removed in 'wet scrubbers',⁵ where flue gases are contacted with a reactive solution that removes the undesired components from the gas stream.

As the hot gases go through an aqueous solution, some H₂O evaporates from the scrubber into the exhaust gases. In order to avoid corrosion in downstream equipment, it is important that this water does not condense, so the exhaust gases should leave the stacks of the power plant well above the saturation point of H₂O.

To remove CO₂ from the exhaust gases of an existing power plant, a post-combustion carbon capture facility could be installed before the flue gases leave the stacks. Currently, the most mature technology to selectively capture CO₂ from post-combustion flue gases is amine scrubbing.^{6,7} The flue gases are washed with an amine solution, in which CO₂ binds with the amines in a chemical reaction. The solution is regenerated in a second step by 'stripping' the CO₂ from the amines at high temperature.

Heating the dilute aqueous mixture imposes a severe energy penalty on the process and alternative technologies have therefore been explored. Several nanoporous materials demonstrated a high CO₂/N₂ selectivity, a good CO₂ uptake as well as a less energy demanding regeneration than the amine

solutions.^{8,9} Advantageous materials can be found among zeolites,^{10,11} cation-exchanged zeolites (CEZ),^{12,13} metal-organic frameworks (MOFs),^{14,15} zeolitic imidazolate frameworks (ZIFs)^{16,17} and porous polymer networks (PPNs).^{18,19}

In the current work, we focus on zeolites. Zeolites are nanoporous materials that are mainly built from SiO₂, although their frameworks may also contain Al, Ge, P and some other elements.²⁰ From the thousands of theoretically possible topologies only 225 framework topologies have actually been synthesized and included in the database of the international zeolite association (IZA).²¹ Due to its industrial availability as well as commercial applications, all-silica MFI (also known as silicalite-1) is often used as a reference material.^{22–30}

Fig. 1(A) and 2(A) show how an existing power plant can be retrofitted with CCS technology based on nanoporous materials. CCS is a cyclic two step process: in step 1, the flue gas is sent over a bed of the nanoporous material, which retains CO₂ while letting N₂ go through towards the stacks. The CO₂ uptake and CO₂/N₂ selectivity of nanoporous materials drop significantly with temperature, so the incoming stream is cooled, typically to 325 K. In step 2, the CO₂ saturated bed is taken out of the exhaust gases and regenerated by heating, applying a vacuum or both.^{31,32} Either way, an energy penalty is imposed on the

process, lowering the power output of the plant, which is indicated with the orange arrow in Fig. 1(A).

The CCS performance of nanoporous materials can easily be evaluated with one straightforward metric: the parasitic energy, *i.e.* the energy output parasitized by CCS.³² Although the parasitic energy of some nanoporous materials is lower than for amine scrubbing, still some 20–30% of the power plant's energy output would be used for CCS, corresponding to \$40–\$60 per tonne of CO₂ abated.³³ Additionally, H₂O in the exhaust stream has a detrimental effect on the performance of most nanoporous materials that have been proposed for CCS in the past, because most of the adsorption sites for CO₂ are fully saturated with H₂O instead. This lowers the CO₂ uptake and increases the energy for the regeneration, as H₂O also has to be removed from the adsorption bed, resulting in an even higher parasitic energy altogether. The detrimental effect of water is indicated with the H₂O warning sign in Fig. 1(A).

In this paper, we propose an alternative operation of the carbon capture process that circumvents the high energy penalty for the CO₂/N₂ separation in the presence of H₂O. CO₂ adsorption is performed at high temperature (400 K), whereas the release of CO₂ happens at low temperature, through saturation of the absorbent with H₂O. Inspiration for the proposed methodology was found in the chemisorption of NO_x on phosphotungstic acid.^{34,35} At high temperature, NO_x molecules are chemisorbed in the crystal structure of the acid, substituting the H₂O molecules that were present in the crystal structure before. The NO_x moieties are released only at low temperature and in the presence of H₂O. The phenomenon of competitive adsorption of H₂O and NO_x is driven by the entropy difference between the adsorbed and desorbed molecules. Although the search for efficient absorbents is most often based on differences in adsorption enthalpy,^{36,37} this and other examples show the potential of entropy-driven adsorption/desorption processes.^{38,39} In HALD, we also want to exploit the entropy as a driver for competitive adsorption and desorption of CO₂ and H₂O.

A practical setup for this HALD approach is shown in Fig. 1(B) and 2(B). The carbon capture unit is installed immediately after the wet scrubbers, taking in the wet flue gas without cooling at 400 K (step 1). In step 2, the regeneration cycle, the bed is cooled down and saturated with H₂O. When the regenerated bed, empty of CO₂ but full of H₂O, is brought into contact with the hot exhaust gases again, the waste heat of the exhaust gases is used to desorb the H₂O and give CO₂ again a competitive advantage. H₂O is in this process no longer sabotaging the process, but assisting in the adsorption/desorption cycles.

In this process, CO₂/H₂O selectivity, CO₂/N₂ selectivity, CO₂ uptake and H₂O loading are important criteria. When screening a large set of materials, it is interesting to select those that perform best for the four parameters. This multicriteria selection problem can be tackled with a so-called Pareto-approach to selecting the best candidates. First, the materials that outperform each other material for at least one criterium are selected, thereby drastically reducing the number of candidates. Afterwards, a post-Pareto procedure can

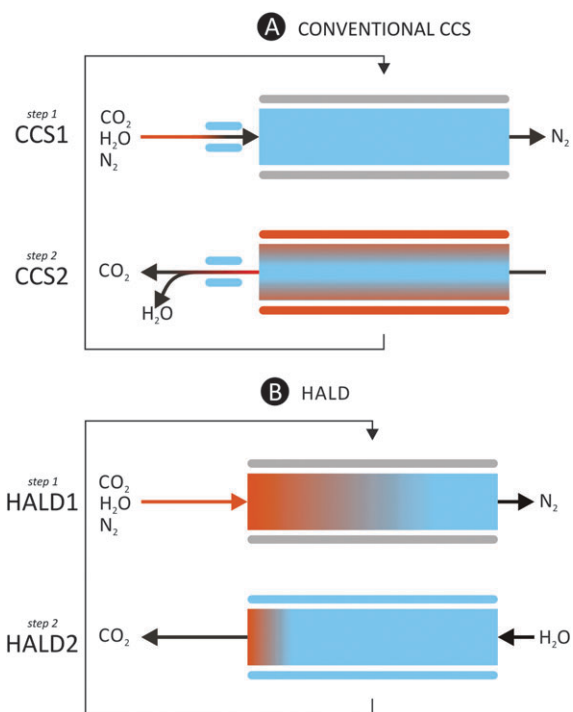


Fig. 2 (A) Conventional carbon capture based on nanoporous materials. CCS1: the exhaust gases are first cooled, CO₂ is adsorbed on a bed of a nanoporous material while N₂ is not retained. CCS2: the bed is regenerated by heating, with the presence of H₂O imposing an additional energy penalty. (B) High-temperature adsorption, low-temperature desorption (HALD). HALD1: adsorption is performed at high temperature, to favor the competition of CO₂ over H₂O, no cooling is required. HALD2: regeneration of the bed by cooling (competitive advantage of H₂O over CO₂) and saturation with H₂O.

rank the materials in the Pareto set by determining how much one or more criteria can be improved with a minimal deterioration in all other parameters.⁴⁰ The concept of Pareto efficiency is borrowed from economics, where Pareto efficiency indicates that resources are allocated in a way that no individual can improve his/her situation without making other individuals worse off.⁴¹

In this manuscript, the concept of 'high-temperature adsorption & low-temperature desorption' (HALD) is proposed. First, a Langmuir model shows how this counterintuitive approach is based on the temperature dependence of the competitive adsorption between CO₂ and H₂O. Molecular simulations on the all-silica MFI zeolite subsequently provide a proof of principle for HALD. Furthermore, the Langmuir model is tested by screening the IZA database for the expected trends and the best performing materials are selected using a post-Pareto approach. Finally, we provide an outlook on the commercialization of this technology, and the opportunities and challenges ahead.

2 Theoretical origin of HALD

The concept of high-temperature adsorption & low-temperature desorption (HALD) is based on a competitive adsorption between CO₂ and H₂O. We want to exploit a behavior in which CO₂ wins the competition at high temperatures, whereas H₂O adsorption is favored at low temperature. To introduce the concept properly, we first give a theoretical rationalization of the effects governing the process.

Fig. 3 explains the HALD approach with a breakdown of the Gibbs free adsorption energy for CO₂ and H₂O into an enthalpic and an entropic contribution, at low temperature (here chosen to be 300 K) and high temperature (here set to 400 K). The energy diagram shows a hypothetical situation where the enthalpy and entropy are assumed to be temperature-independent. In the ESI,[†] we justify this choice by pointing out that ΔH_{ads} and ΔS_{ads} only have a weak temperature dependence in the 300–400 K interval. For H₂O to adsorb preferentially at low temperature (and in the limit at 0 K), the adsorption enthalpy for H₂O should be more negative than for CO₂ ($\Delta H_{\text{ads,H}_2\text{O}} < \Delta H_{\text{ads,CO}_2} < 0$). If

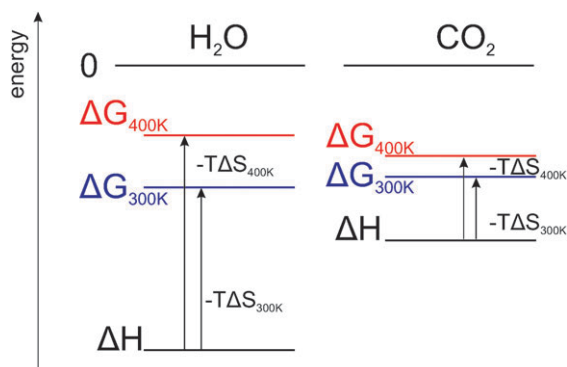


Fig. 3 Illustration of the HALD concept with a hypothetical breakdown of the Gibbs free adsorption energy for H₂O and CO₂ in an enthalpic and an entropic contribution. ΔH and ΔS are assumed temperature-independent.

then the entropy loss upon adsorption of H₂O is higher than that of CO₂ ($\Delta S_{\text{ads,H}_2\text{O}} < \Delta S_{\text{ads,CO}_2} < 0$), there will be a temperature at which the relative order of the Gibbs free adsorption enthalpy switches. It should also be mentioned that at high temperature, the driving force for adsorption of both gas molecules has decreased significantly, as ΔG has become less negative for both gases.

A more detailed approach to the competitive adsorption of CO₂ and H₂O is to consider a Langmuir model. Assuming that both gases are competing for the same adsorption sites, the coverage of CO₂ and H₂O can be written as:

$$\theta_{\text{CO}_2} = \frac{K_{\text{CO}_2} p_{\text{CO}_2}}{1 + K_{\text{CO}_2} p_{\text{CO}_2} + K_{\text{H}_2\text{O}} p_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}} \quad (1)$$

$$\theta_{\text{H}_2\text{O}} = \frac{K_{\text{H}_2\text{O}} p_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}}{1 + K_{\text{CO}_2} p_{\text{CO}_2} + K_{\text{H}_2\text{O}} p_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}} \quad (2)$$

θ_x is the fraction of adsorption sites covered with molecule x , p_x is the partial pressure of molecule x in the gas phase and K_x is the equilibrium constant of the adsorption of molecule x . Dividing eqn (1) by 2 yields

$$\alpha = \frac{\theta_{\text{CO}_2}}{\theta_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}} = \frac{K_{\text{CO}_2} p_{\text{CO}_2}}{K_{\text{H}_2\text{O}} p_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}} \quad (3)$$

And given that

$$K_x = \exp\left(-\frac{\Delta G_{\text{ads},x}}{RT}\right) \quad (4)$$

we can write

$$\alpha = \frac{\theta_{\text{CO}_2}}{\theta_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}} = \frac{p_{\text{CO}_2}}{p_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}} \exp\left(-\frac{\Delta G_{\text{ads,CO}_2} - \Delta G_{\text{ads,H}_2\text{O}}}{RT}\right) \quad (5)$$

or

$$\alpha = \frac{\theta_{\text{CO}_2}}{\theta_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}} = \frac{p_{\text{CO}_2}}{p_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}} \exp\left(-\frac{\Delta H_{\text{ads,CO}_2} - \Delta H_{\text{ads,H}_2\text{O}}}{RT}\right) \times \exp\left(\frac{\Delta S_{\text{ads,CO}_2} - \Delta S_{\text{ads,H}_2\text{O}}}{R}\right) \quad (6)$$

ΔG_{ads} , ΔH_{ads} and ΔS_{ads} are the Gibbs free energy, the enthalpy and the entropy of adsorption respectively, T is the temperature and R is the universal gas constant. Eqn (6) contains three terms: the first term, the ratio of the CO₂ and H₂O partial pressures, is imposed by the flue gas composition and set to be 14 kPa CO₂ and 6 kPa H₂O. That is the typical composition of the exhaust gases of coal-fired power plants, where most of the H₂O enters the exhaust gas stream during the wet scrubbing stages.⁴² The second term in eqn (6) is dependent on the difference in adsorption enthalpy between CO₂ and H₂O. Finally, the third term of eqn (6) includes the difference in adsorption entropy between CO₂ and H₂O, which is expressed as a function of temperature ($\Delta S_{\text{ads,CO}_2} - \Delta S_{\text{ads,H}_2\text{O}}(T)$). In ESI,[†] we compare several models for assessing the adsorption entropy and we selected the model that shows the best agreement with simulation results. Overall, α (the CO₂/H₂O selectivity) can be written as a function of $\Delta H = \Delta H_{\text{ads,CO}_2} - \Delta H_{\text{ads,H}_2\text{O}}$ (the difference in adsorption

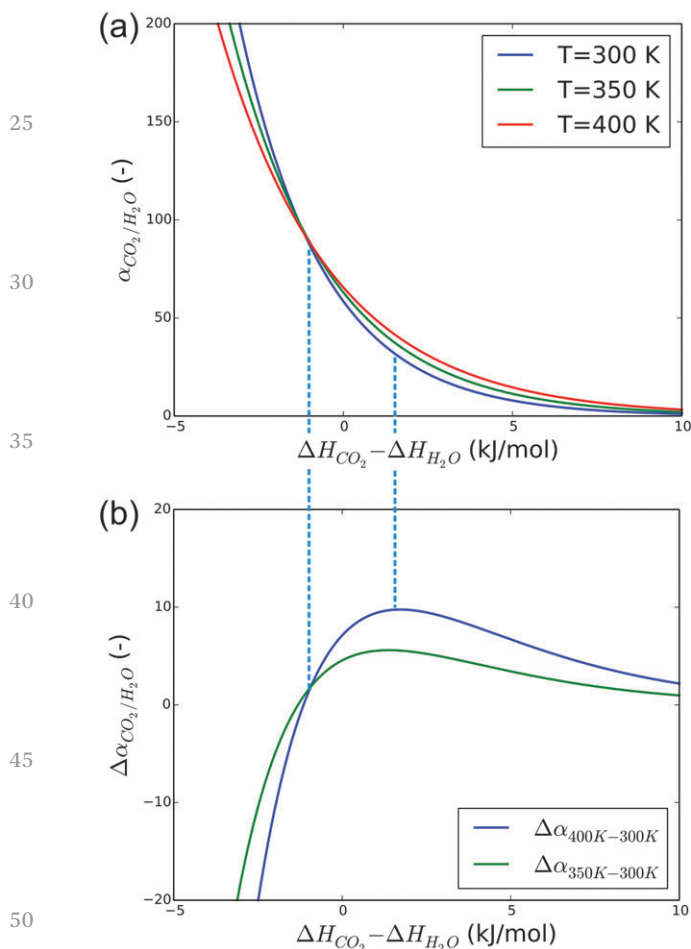
1 enthalpy between CO₂ and H₂O, a material property) and T (the
2 temperature, a process condition),

$$\alpha = \alpha(\Delta H, T) \quad (7)$$

5 Assuming that the entropic term in eqn (6) is temperature-
independent, the Langmuir model implies that α increases with
increasing temperature only if $\Delta H_{\text{CO}_2} - \Delta H_{\text{H}_2\text{O}} > 0$, in line with
the observations from Fig. 3. However, as the adsorption
entropy $S(T)$ is dependent on temperature, the threshold from
10 HALD to non-HALD behavior will be shifted to a slightly
different value than $\Delta H_{\text{CO}_2} - \Delta H_{\text{H}_2\text{O}} = 0$. This dependence on
temperature is clearly visible in Fig. 4a, which shows $\alpha_{\text{CO}_2/\text{H}_2\text{O}}$ as
a function of ΔH for different T and Fig. 4b displays the
difference between the curves at different temperatures.

15 In Fig. 4a, it is clear that if ΔH_{CO_2} is becoming more negative
than $\Delta H_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}$, the selectivity towards CO₂ adsorption increases
for all temperatures. However, when considering the difference
in selectivity at various temperatures ($\Delta\alpha$ in Fig. 4b), it becomes
apparent that the CO₂/H₂O selectivity is higher at 400 K than at

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Fig. 4 (a) The CO₂/H₂O selectivity α as a function of the difference in enthalpy of adsorption of CO₂ and H₂O, $\Delta H_{\text{CO}_2} - \Delta H_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}$ for 300 K, 350 K and 400 K (b) the difference in selectivity $\Delta\alpha$ between the curves at different temperatures. The two connecting lines highlight that the curves cross around -2 kJ mol^{-1} and that the difference between the curves is maximal around $+2 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$.

300 K only if ΔH is higher than approximately -2 kJ mol^{-1} . The exact threshold value between HALD and non-HALD behavior is based on the temperature dependence of the entropy, which is determined by the model for the entropy (*cf.* ESI†) as well as by the temperatures at which the adsorption and desorption are considered. In the case of Fig. 4, if ΔH is higher than -2 kJ mol^{-1} , the selectivity for CO₂ is higher at 400 K than at 300 K and HALD is possible, whereas if ΔH is smaller than -2 kJ mol^{-1} , the selectivity towards CO₂ only decreases as a function of temperature.

Moreover, the spacing between the curves at different temperatures is highest around $\Delta H = +2 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$, so the model predicts materials in this region show good performance for HALD. At high ΔH , the selectivity is less dependent on temperature and the corresponding materials will likely not perform well for HALD. The relatively small range between -2 kJ mol^{-1} and $+2 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$ is an indication that the method will be sensitive to small variations, in material properties (ΔH) and process conditions (T) alike.

These simple theoretical considerations give a preliminary insight into the factors that control the HALD concept. For materials with $\Delta H_{\text{CO}_2} - \Delta H_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}$ larger than -2 kJ mol^{-1} , an entropy-driven adsorption/desorption of CO₂ and H₂O is theoretically possible. We validate this concept by means of molecular simulations (Section 4), but we first present the used methodology (Section 3).

3 Methodology

In the previous section, we have provided a theoretical background for HALD. In the next sections, we want to validate this model with Monte Carlo simulations.⁴³ To do so, we need to assess the adsorption enthalpies, ΔH_{CO_2} and $\Delta H_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}$, and the CO₂/H₂O selectivity. The adsorption enthalpies can be determined with single-component NVT simulations whereas the CO₂/H₂O selectivity requires GCMC calculations of binary mixtures. We fixed the composition of the adsorbing binary mixture at 14 kPa CO₂ and 6 kPa H₂O.⁴² Adsorbate molecules are allowed to make translation, rotation, swap, and regrowth moves^{44,45} and the zeolite framework is assumed rigid.^{30,46} The CO₂/N₂ selectivities are determined using the ideal adsorbed solution theory (IAST)^{47,48} and taken from previous work.^{13,32} These studies have shown that these assumptions give reasonable predictions for CO₂/N₂ binary mixtures.

The simulations in this work are performed using existing force fields. The Lennard-Jones parameters and partial atomic charges for CO₂ are taken from the Calero force field, which has proven to be successful in reproducing experimental CO₂ isotherms in zeolite frameworks.⁴⁹ Parameters for H₂O are taken from previous work where the H₂O-H₂O interactions are modeled with the SPC/E model⁵⁰ and the H₂O-framework interactions obtained by scaling the H₂O-H₂O parameters with the ratio of the CO₂-CO₂ to CO₂-framework parameters.⁵¹ The electrostatic contribution is computed with the Ewald summation, set at a cut-off of 12.5 Å. For all simulations, inaccessible pockets in the zeolite framework are determined with Zeo++⁵²⁻⁵⁴ and blocked during the simulations. The force field parameters and atomic charges are listed in the ESI.†

The performance of a H₂O/zeolite force field is highly sensitive to the H₂O model,²⁶ partial charges⁵⁵ as well as the crystal structure⁵⁶ and cation content⁵⁷ of the zeolites. We used the computationally cheap three-site H₂O model, although it will likely favor H₂O–H₂O interactions and might not describe the H₂O–framework interactions accurately. However, the predicted trends should remain valid for other force fields, except for a possible shift of the H₂O isotherms to slightly different pressures and temperatures.

We will now use these Monte Carlo simulations to demonstrate the concept of HALD

1. for the showcase example of all-silica MFI. For MFI, the difference in adsorption enthalpy between CO₂ and H₂O can be determined, so the only variable left in eqn (7) is the temperature, $\alpha(T)$.

2. in a screening of the IZA database. Across the materials in the database, $\Delta H_{\text{CO}_2} - \Delta H_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}$ varies. If the adsorption conditions are fixed at 400 K and 14 kPa CO₂/6 kPa H₂O, it is possible to examine $\alpha(\Delta H)$. This screening also allows us to pinpoint the most promising materials.

4 HALD in MFI: $\alpha(T)$

First, we want to provide a proof of concept for HALD using the commercially available all-silica MFI zeolite (often referred to as silicalite-1). For MFI, we find an adsorption enthalpy for CO₂ and H₂O of -26.6 and -31.9 kJ mol⁻¹ respectively. The difference in adsorption enthalpy between CO₂ and H₂O is $+5.5$ kJ mol⁻¹, so according to the proposed model, this material should exhibit HALD behavior. As the ΔH is now fixed for this material, the only remaining variable in eqn (7) is the temperature, $\alpha(+5.5 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}, T)$. Using GCMC simulations, we want to assess whether the CO₂/H₂O selectivity of MFI indeed increases with increasing temperature.

Fig. 5 displays the binary CO₂ (red) and H₂O (blue) loadings as a function of the temperature. The temperature range of this

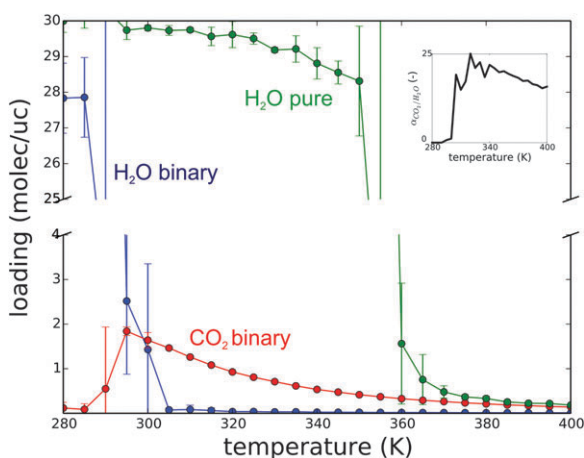


Fig. 5 Illustration of the HALD principle for MFI: the red and the blue curve represent the CO₂ and H₂O loadings as a function of the temperature when MFI is contacted with a binary mixture of 14 kPa CO₂ and 6 kPa H₂O (adsorption conditions). The green curve shows the H₂O loading in MFI equilibrated with 100 kPa pure H₂O (desorption conditions). The inset shows the CO₂/H₂O selectivity as a function of the temperature and is obtained by dividing the red and blue curve.

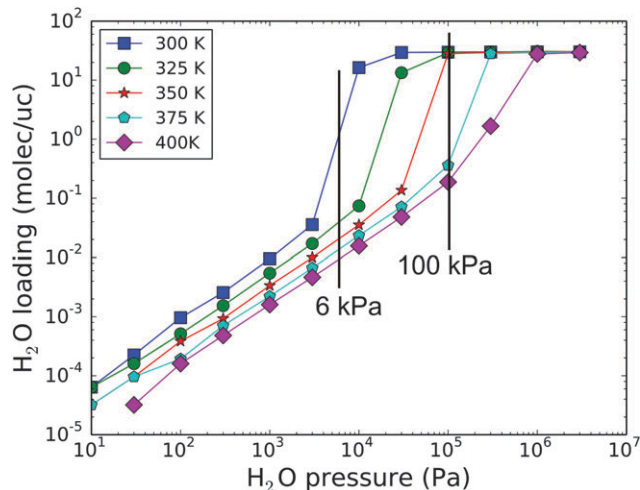


Fig. 6 Adsorption isotherms for H₂O at different temperatures. At 6 kPa, there is a drop in the loading below 325 K while at 100 kPa, this occurs between 350 and 375 K.

plot is extended towards lower temperatures, to visualize the drop in the binary H₂O loading, starting before 300 K. It is clear that the drop in the H₂O loading is more sudden than the gradual decrease in the CO₂ loading, resulting in a peak in the CO₂/H₂O selectivity. Note that at high temperatures, loadings of both components are very low (<1 molecule per unit cell). Fig. 5 also shows the H₂O loading for single-component H₂O (green) adsorption at 100 kPa. At 100 kPa and 300 K (low temperature desorption conditions in HALD), the material is fully saturated with H₂O. At higher temperatures, there is a sudden drop in the H₂O loading. The drops/steps in the H₂O loadings can also be observed in the pure H₂O isotherms in Fig. 6. For all isotherms, there is a pressure at which the H₂O suddenly increases and the framework saturates with H₂O. The step moves towards higher pressures with increasing temperature. At a fixed pressure, the same step is visible: at 100 kPa for instance, the CO₂ drops drastically between 350 and 375 K. At 6 kPa on the other hand, this drop already occurs at 300 K. The CO₂ isotherm does not display such a sudden drop and can be seen in ESI† (Fig. S6).

The steps correspond to a sudden saturation of the framework with water as an extensive H₂O network forms. This has implications for the H₂O adsorption enthalpy (Fig. 7). At low loadings (<1 water molecule per unit cell), the adsorption enthalpy is as weak as -20 kJ mol⁻¹. Near saturation however, $\Delta H_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}$ can range from -45 to -75 kJ mol⁻¹. It is important to notice here that it is hard to uniquely define ‘the’ H₂O adsorption enthalpy: at too low loadings, the adsorption properties of the H₂O network are not taken into account, while at high loadings, the spread on the adsorption enthalpy is large. Moreover, the step region is poorly sampled.

To understand the origin of the discrepancy between theory and simulations, Fig. 8 shows the CO₂/H₂O selectivity as a function of the temperature. The black curve represents the data from the simulations of a binary mixture, where the CO₂/H₂O selectivity is defined as the ratio of the CO₂ and H₂O

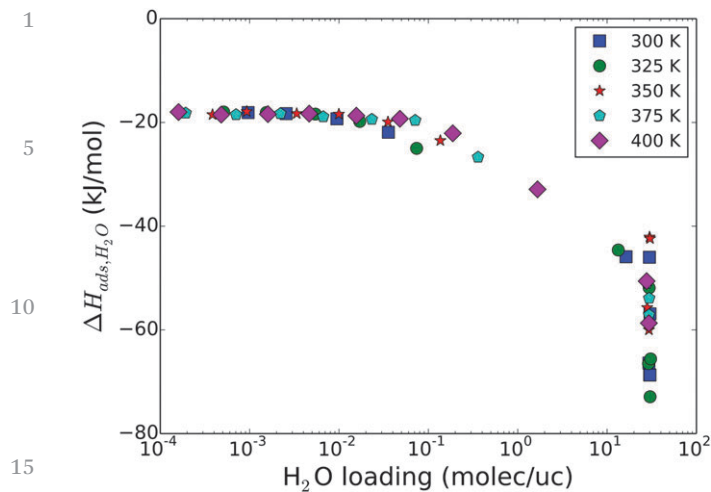


Fig. 7 Adsorption enthalpy for H₂O as a function of loading. Data were gathered from the H₂O isotherms at different temperatures.

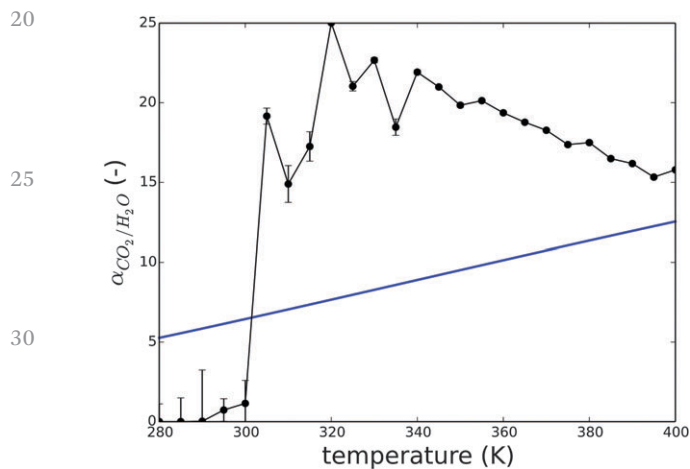


Fig. 8 The CO₂/H₂O selectivity as a function of the temperature. The black line shows the simulation results whereas the blue line represents the Langmuir model, $\alpha(+5.5 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}, T)$. The peak in the simulated selectivities is related to the sudden drop in the H₂O loading (blue curve in Fig. 5).

loadings. The blue curve on the other hand is the Langmuir model for MFI from eqn (7). It is clear that for both curves, the CO₂/H₂O selectivity is higher at 400 K than at 300 K. The material is therefore suitable for the HALD process. However, the monotonous rise in the theoretical $\alpha(T)$ curve is not seen in the simulation results. The peak in the simulated selectivities is related to the sudden drop in the H₂O loading (blue curve in Fig. 5), which cannot be described with the Langmuir model.

Fig. 9 demonstrates the sensitivity of the HALD method on the flue gas composition. The solid lines represent the Langmuir model from eqn (6), the connected points in the same color are taken from the simulations at the corresponding partial pressures. The blue line, corresponding to a binary mixture with 14 kPa CO₂ and 6 kPa H₂O is taken as a reference. When the H₂O partial pressure is reduced from 6 kPa to 3 kPa (green line), the Langmuir model predicts that the CO₂/H₂O

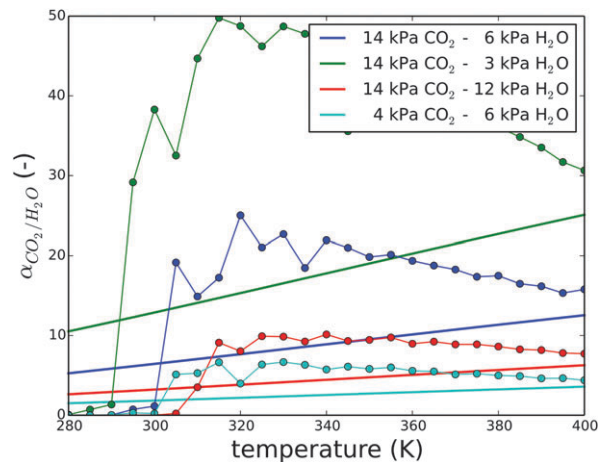


Fig. 9 Influence of the CO₂ and H₂O partial pressure in the binary mixture on the CO₂/H₂O selectivity as a function of the temperature. The solid lines represent the Langmuir model, the points are the simulation results.

selectivity to be higher. The simulations confirm this and show that the peak in the selectivity occurs at lower temperature than was the case for the reference mixture (blue line). On the other hand, when the H₂O partial pressure in the flue gas is doubled compared to the reference case, the CO₂/H₂O selectivity is lower and the peak occurs at higher temperatures. Finally, we also considered a situation where the H₂O partial pressure is kept at the original 6 kPa and the CO₂ partial pressure is decreased from 14 kPa (the flue gas composition of a coal-fired power plant) to 4 kPa (the composition of exhaust gases of a natural gas-fired power plant). In this case, the peak occurs at the same temperature as for the reference, whereas the CO₂/H₂O selectivity is lower. As a general conclusion, the CO₂/H₂O selectivity is mainly driven by the partial pressures of CO₂ and H₂O, which is clear from the first term in the Langmuir model and confirmed by the simulations. The temperature at which the peak occurs is related to the sudden H₂O desorption from the material and is imposed by the partial pressure of H₂O in the binary mixture (see Fig. 6).

Furthermore, we emphasize that adsorption at 400 K and desorption at 300 K are chosen process conditions and could be changed to optimize the HALD behavior. For instance, the CO₂/H₂O selectivity peaks at 320 K (Fig. 5), so adsorption at that temperature offers a competitive advantage for CO₂ adsorption. However, if the amount of adsorbed CO₂ is important (for instance to minimize the size of the adsorption bed), then adsorption at 310 K may become more favorable, as the CO₂ loading is still relatively high, while the step in the H₂O loading has already occurred. In Section 6, we will return to the point of simultaneously optimizing the CO₂/H₂O selectivity and CO₂ loading at high temperature in Section 6.

Finally, we provide a short outlook on the possibilities of cation exchanged zeolites (CEZs). Extra-framework cations balance the net negative charge, which is introduced when some silicon atoms in the framework are replaced by aluminum atoms. In Fig. 10, the CO₂/H₂O selectivity is shown as a function of the temperature for different Si/Al ratios in the MFI

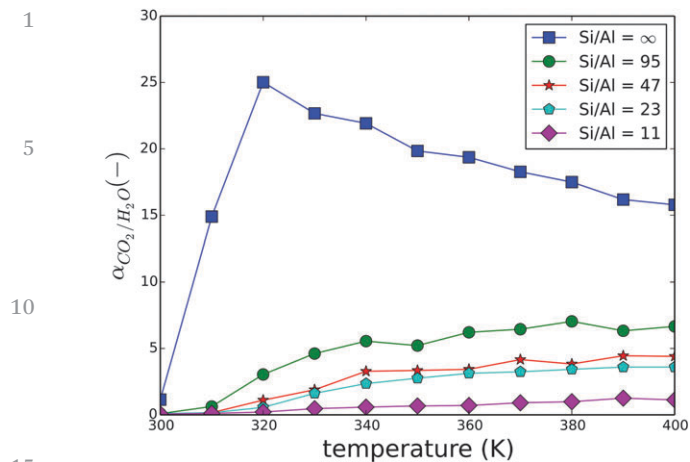


Fig. 10 $\text{CO}_2/\text{H}_2\text{O}$ selectivity as a function of the temperature, for different Si/Al ratios in the MFI framework. The net negative charge introduced by aluminum is countered by Na^+ cations.

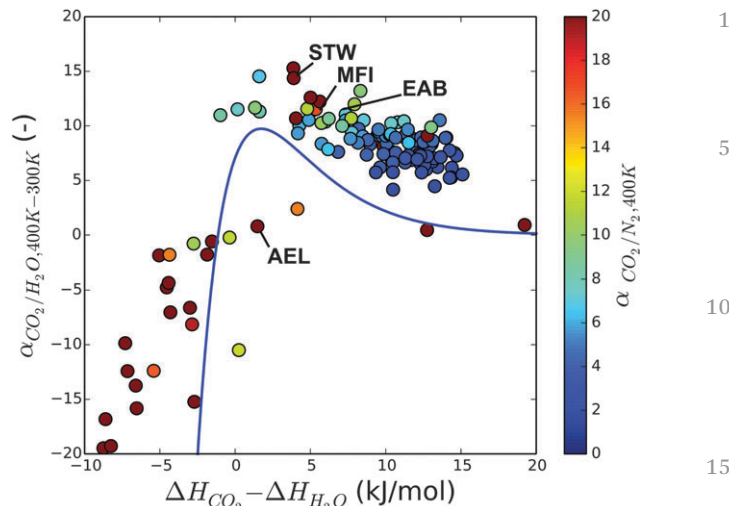


Fig. 11 Difference between the $\text{CO}_2/\text{H}_2\text{O}$ selectivity $\alpha_{\text{CO}_2/\text{H}_2\text{O}}$, at 400 K and 300 K as a function of the difference in adsorption enthalpy between H_2O and CO_2 , $\Delta H_{\text{CO}_2} - \Delta H_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}$, color coded with the CO_2/N_2 selectivity at 400 K. The solid blue line indicates the behavior as predicted by the Langmuir model.

framework and with Na^+ countercations. CEZs have lower $\text{CO}_2/\text{H}_2\text{O}$ selectivities than the all-silica framework, with a decreasing selectivity as the Si/Al ratio becomes lower. For all finite Si/Al ratios considered moreover, the peak in the $\text{CO}_2/\text{H}_2\text{O}$ selectivity of the all-silica MFI framework ($\text{Si}/\text{Al} = \infty$) disappears and the increase in selectivity is monotonous as a function of temperature. Indeed, the extra-framework Na^+ cations are easily coordinated with H_2O , decreasing the hydrophobicity of the zeolite and increasing the competitive advantage of H_2O .

In conclusion, it is theoretically possible to exploit the competitive adsorption of CO_2 and H_2O for HALD in MFI. The HALD principle is applicable at a wide range of CO_2 and H_2O partial pressures and was also demonstrated for CEZs.

5 IZA database screening: $\alpha(\Delta H)$

MFI provides a promising proof of principle for the HALD concept. Now, we want to identify the most interesting materials for HALD from the IZA database of all-silica zeolites.²¹ Across the different zeolites, $\Delta H_{\text{CO}_2} - \Delta H_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}$ varies. Considering a 14 kPa CO_2 and 6 kPa H_2O binary mixture and fixing the adsorption and desorption temperature at 400 K and 300 K respectively, it is possible to examine $\alpha(\Delta H, 400 \text{ K}) - \alpha(\Delta H, 300 \text{ K})$ and check the correspondence of the simulations with the theoretical model.

Fig. 11 shows the difference between the $\text{CO}_2/\text{H}_2\text{O}$ selectivity at 400 K and 300 K as taken from the binary simulations. It is expressed as a function of the difference in adsorption enthalpy between CO_2 and H_2O assessed with single-component NVT simulations. The IZA frameworks are color coded according to their CO_2/N_2 selectivity at 400 K (determined using IAST), to ensure that despite the high temperature, the framework is still selective enough for CO_2 with respect to N_2 . The blue line corresponds to the theoretical Langmuir model that was derived previously (Fig. 4b). Materials that are explicitly mentioned in the text are indicated in both Fig. 11 and subsequent plots.

The shape of the theoretical curve qualitatively follows the simulation data points. First of all, at negative values for $\Delta H_{\text{CO}_2} - \Delta H_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}$, there is a deep trench of points for which the $\text{CO}_2/\text{H}_2\text{O}$ selectivity is lower at 400 K than at 300 K. The corresponding frameworks are therefore not suited for the HALD process, although they show very favorable CO_2/N_2 selectivities (20 and up). Secondly, for enthalpy differences between 0 and 10 kJ mol^{-1} , there is a group of materials (including MFI) that perform better than most other materials and also have high CO_2/N_2 selectivities. Finally, for values higher than 10 kJ mol^{-1} , there is a long tail of materials that show decreasing performance with increasing ΔH . In this region, most CO_2/N_2 selectivities are also low. The discrepancy between the simulation data and the theoretical curve is most likely due to the larger number of adsorption sites for H_2O than for CO_2 , partly driven by the formation of H_2O networks.

In conclusion, the difference in adsorption enthalpy between CO_2 and H_2O as determined by NVT simulations provides a first indication of candidate materials that are suited for the concept of high-temperature adsorption & low-temperature desorption and this could simplify the search in further screening procedures. In the next section, we will determine what materials have the best performance among the materials that show HALD behavior.

6 Selection of the best materials

Before selecting the best performing materials, it is necessary to determine which criteria are the most important. Bae and Snurr proposed five criteria to evaluate the performance of nanoporous materials for CCS: CO_2 uptake, CO_2/N_2 selectivity, CO_2 working capacity, regenerability and a sorbent selection parameter.⁵⁸ Some of these parameters can be translated into the context of HALD.

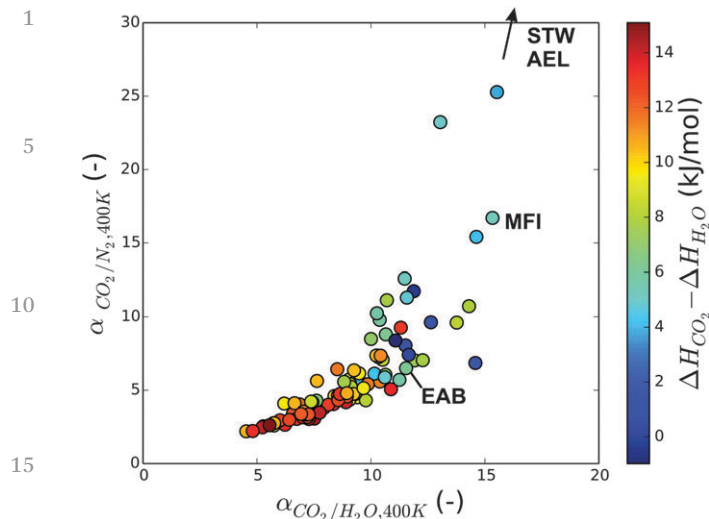


Fig. 12 CO_2/N_2 versus $\text{CO}_2/\text{H}_2\text{O}$ selectivity at 400 K, color coded with the difference in adsorption enthalpy between CO_2 and H_2O .

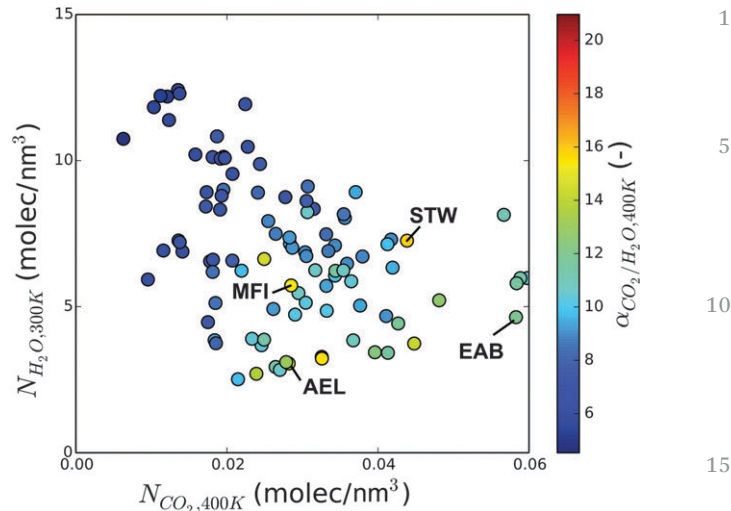


Fig. 13 H_2O versus H_2O uptake at 400 K and 300 K, respectively, color coded with the $\text{CO}_2/\text{H}_2\text{O}$ selectivity.

As we discussed earlier, the $\text{CO}_2/\text{H}_2\text{O}$ selectivity at 400 K is of paramount importance, because it is the basis of the competitive adsorption behavior. It is also important the CO_2/N_2 selectivity does not drop at high temperature. In Fig. 12, the CO_2/N_2 versus $\text{CO}_2/\text{H}_2\text{O}$ selectivity at 400 K shows a high correlation. Materials that show good selectivity for CO_2 at high temperature, do so both when competing with H_2O and with N_2 . The color code in Fig. 12 further demonstrates that the materials with the lowest $\Delta H_{\text{CO}_2} - \Delta H_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}$ have the highest selectivities. Materials that do not show HALD behavior have not been included, so the range of ΔH is smaller than in Fig. 11. This further highlights the sensitivity of the HALD method: ΔH should be low, but if it is too low, the material does not show the HALD behavior anymore.

Apart from the $\text{CO}_2/\text{H}_2\text{O}$ and CO_2/N_2 selectivity, the amount of adsorbed CO_2 is important as well. As the adsorption takes place at high temperature, only small amounts of CO_2 are adsorbed. To minimize the size of the adsorption column, it is desirable to maximize the CO_2 uptake of the material at high temperature. Note that in this competitive adsorption, the CO_2 uptake and working capacity are in principle the same: if enough pure H_2O is added to the material in the regeneration cycle, H_2O will completely substitute the CO_2 that is present in the material. This is not the case for conventional carbon capture, where even at high temperature or low pressure, some residual CO_2 may be left in the material.

Finally, the amount of H_2O that is necessary to regenerate the material by competitive adsorption at low temperature is also important. Fig. 13 shows that there is no clear correlation between the H_2O uptake at 300 K (desorption conditions) and the CO_2 uptake at 400 K (adsorption conditions). The H_2O working capacity is the difference between the loading at 300 K and 100 kPa pure H_2O and the H_2O loading at 400 K and the 6 kPa $\text{H}_2\text{O}/14$ kPa CO_2 binary mixtures, but since the latter term is negligible compared to the first term, the H_2O working capacity is approximately equal to the uptake at 300 K. In

Fig. 13, we are therefore interested in materials that have a high CO_2 uptake at 400 K and a low H_2O uptake at 300 K. The CO_2 uptake at 400 K is two orders of magnitude lower than the H_2O uptake at 300 K. To put this in perspective however, for the binary $\text{CO}_2/\text{H}_2\text{O}$ mixtures, the H_2O loading drops by more than 3 orders of magnitude between 300 K and 400 K, whereas the CO_2 loading drops only by one. This is exactly the competitive advantage of CO_2 adsorption at high temperature.

To find the material that has an optimal combination of all mentioned properties, a multicriteria optimization is necessary. Lejaeghere *et al.* reported how promising materials, with various competing properties, can be selected from a database with a post-Pareto algorithm.⁴⁰ From all data points, a so-called Pareto set is determined *i.e.* a selection of the materials that no other candidate can improve on with respect to all criteria simultaneously. Then, a minimum win fraction is defined, which represents the trade-off between the different Pareto solutions: how much minimally needs to be sacrificed of one set of properties to improve some other properties, while also considering relative importances of the properties. Below, we will apply this approach to the four previously mentioned properties of HALD.

In Table 1, the criteria and their units are reported. The uptake is defined as the volumetric uptake in molecules per nm^3 , to emphasize the volume of the adsorption column, rather than the weight. The third column shows the relative

Table 1 Properties optimized with the Pareto approach, the units, their relative weights and the objective (to maximize or to minimize the criterion)

Property	Unit	Weight	Objective
$\alpha_{\text{CO}_2/\text{H}_2\text{O}}$	(—)	1	Max
$\alpha_{\text{CO}_2/\text{N}_2}$	(—)	1	Max
$N_{\text{CO}_2,400\text{K}}$	molecules per nm^3	1	Max
$N_{\text{H}_2\text{O},300\text{K}}$	molecules per nm^3	1	Min

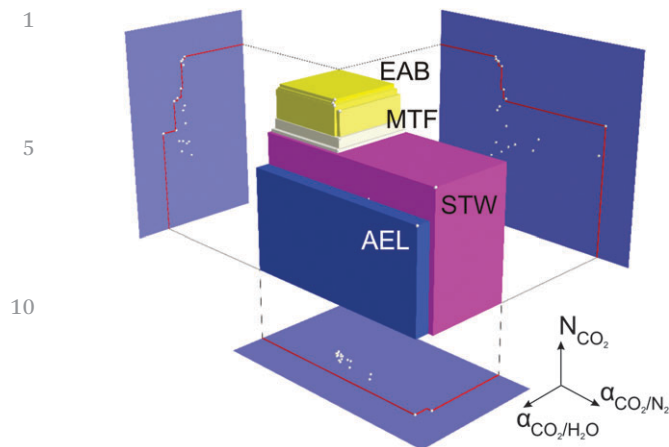


Fig. 14 Graphical representation of the Pareto set (a so-called skyline plot), *i.e.* the selection of materials that outperform each other material with respect to at least one property. Results for the CO₂/H₂O selectivity, the CO₂/N₂ selectivity and the CO₂ uptake are depicted. The H₂O uptake has been omitted from this plot, but is considered in the overall analysis. The planes represent 2D projections of the 3D plot.

importance of the criteria, the last column the objective of the optimization (maximization or minimization). The weighing of the criteria is performed by normalizing each property to its range in the entire zeolite data set, followed by a multiplication by the appropriate scaling factor. Here, all criteria are considered equally important. In the ESI,[†] we show that increasing the importance of the CO₂/H₂O and CO₂/N₂ selectivity does not have a large influence on the obtained minimum win fractions.

Fig. 14 graphically shows the Pareto front for three out of four criteria. The H₂O uptake is omitted in this 3D graphical representation, but is taken into account in the minimum win fractions. In Table 2, the minimum win fractions of these materials are given. The AEL framework surfaces as the best material: with respect to STW, AEL has a slightly lower CO₂/N₂ selectivity and smaller CO₂ uptake, but this is compensated by a better CO₂/H₂O selectivity and smaller H₂O uptake. EAB has one of the highest CO₂ uptakes, but performs worse for the other criteria. MFI is not a part of the Pareto set, although it is clear from Fig. 12 and 13 that its performance is relatively close to the best performing materials.

Table 2 Minimum win fractions (mwf) showing the optimality of the materials in the Pareto set, with respect to the CO₂/H₂O selectivity, CO₂/N₂ selectivity and CO₂ uptake at 400 K of the binary mixture and the H₂O uptake at 300 K and 100 kPa

mwf (–) (%)		mwf (–) (%)	
AEL	57.4	VET	3.2
STW	42.6	PAU	2.9
EAB	29.9	TER	2.9
MTF	19.4	CAN	2.1
STI	17.7	RTE	2.1
AWW	16.9	ATO	1.9
UFI	9.9	MTT	1.4
LTF	9.5	TON	1.3
LEV	8.7	AFO	0.5
IHW	7.5		

The Pareto set does not change drastically when the adsorption temperature is set to 375 K, 350 K or 325 K (a Pareto analysis at these temperatures is included in the ESI[†]) and also the relative order of the materials in the set remains more or less unchanged. The AEL framework outperforms the other materials for all temperatures considered. The advantage of adsorption temperatures that are not as high as 400 K, is the higher CO₂ uptake at that temperature. For AEL for instance, CO₂ uptake is only 0.03 molecules per nm³ at 400 K, but rises to 0.20 molecules per nm³ at 325 K, while keeping the competitive advantage over H₂O. By optimizing the adsorption temperature, the efficiency of HALD can therefore be increased.

Pareto analyses are gaining attention for engineering applications^{59,60} but are still brand new in the field of carbon capture. By using this innovative post-Pareto approach, we have highlighted some potential candidates for HALD behavior, based on multiple criteria. The method is transferrable to larger screenings¹⁰ and other materials.⁶¹

7 Perspectives and conclusions

The concept of high-temperature adsorption & low-temperature desorption (HALD) provides potentially major advantages over conventional technologies. Most importantly, there is in principle no energy penalty on the CO₂/N₂ separation, as HALD effectively uses the waste heat of the exhaust gases to regenerate the nanoporous material. Additionally, H₂O in the flue gas is no longer sabotaging CCS due to the competitive advantage of CO₂ in the adsorption cycle.

First of all, a breakdown of the Gibbs free adsorption energy of CO₂ and H₂O shows that if $\Delta H_{\text{ads,H}_2\text{O}} < \Delta H_{\text{ads,CO}_2} < 0$ and $\Delta S_{\text{ads,H}_2\text{O}} < \Delta S_{\text{ads,CO}_2} < 0$, H₂O adsorbs preferentially at low temperature, but at a high enough temperature, CO₂ adsorption will become more favorable. This is confirmed by a simple Langmuir model, that expresses the CO₂/H₂O selectivity as a function of $\Delta H_{\text{CO}_2} - \Delta H_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}$ (a material property) and the temperature (a process condition), *i.e.* $\alpha(\Delta H, T)$.

Grand Canonical Monte-Carlo simulations for the commercially available all-silica MFI can be used to investigate the HALD concept in more detail. In this case, the adsorption enthalpy for CO₂ and H₂O is fixed, so the CO₂/H₂O selectivity is only dependent on the temperature, $\alpha(T)$. Adsorption at 400 K favors the adsorption of CO₂ over H₂O, although the loading of both components is very low. Desorption of CO₂ is obtained by saturation of the framework with pure H₂O at 300 K. Optimizing the adsorption and desorption conditions might provide room for improvements in both selectivity and uptake. This example already shows the challenges that may arise when deploying HALD on an industrial scale. The working capacity of any nanoporous material at high temperatures is low and therefore, large adsorption columns may be required. Moreover, since the H₂O loading at 300 K is much higher than the CO₂ loading at 400 K, large amounts of H₂O will be needed for the regeneration of the material. However, it might be beneficial to perform the adsorption at temperatures that are

1 somewhat lower than 400 K, to have a reasonable CO₂ loading, as well as a competitive advantage.

Furthermore, the Langmuir model can also rationalize the results of a screening of the IZA database. Across the materials in this database, ΔH_{CO_2} and $\Delta H_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}$ change, but if we fix the process conditions (partial pressures and temperatures), it is possible to evaluate $\alpha(\Delta H)$. Not only is this an excellent validation of the model, it also demonstrates that the CO₂/H₂O selectivity can be predicted solely with single-component adsorption enthalpies, that are computationally much easier to assess, providing an interesting perspective for future studies. There is an enormous database of existing and even commercial nanoporous materials that could be suitable for the HALD process and screenings based on molecular simulations have proven to be successful in the past.^{14,31} Such a screening also allows to compare the performance of different materials for HALD.

To determine the best performing materials, we argue that the most important parameters of the HALD method are the CO₂/H₂O selectivity, CO₂/N₂ selectivity, the CO₂ uptake at high temperature and H₂O uptake at low temperature. An innovative Pareto-based search algorithm can identify the most promising materials for HALD (including AEL, STW, EAB and MTF), considering the four criteria simultaneously.

Finally, the results in this manuscript do not only intend to provide a proof of principle for the HALD method, they are highly relevant to the conventional operation of carbon capture with nanoporous materials as well. Industrial flue gases always contain some H₂O, which will compete with CO₂ for adsorption sites in the pores of the material. We showed that a small increase in the adsorption temperature might already shift this competition in favor of CO₂, thereby reducing the H₂O uptake in the adsorption step and lowering the regeneration cost of the material. Moreover, in the conventional regeneration cycle, heating of the material is sometimes done by injecting steam directly into the adsorption bed. Also here, the competition of H₂O with CO₂ is a very important factor, as the competitive advantage of CO₂ over H₂O at high temperature may actually reduce the efficiency of this steam injection approach.

In conclusion, the upside-down HALD alternative to traditional CCS methods opens new perspectives to reduce the energy penalty of CCS, to validate the waste heat of the exhaust gases in the CO₂/N₂ separation and to overcome competitive adsorption of H₂O.

Acknowledgements

L.J., K.L. and V.V.S. acknowledge the Fund for Scientific Research – Flanders (FWO), the Research Board of Ghent University (BOF) and BELSPO in the frame of IAP/7/05 for financial support. L.J. is a 2013–2014 grantee of the Commission for Educational Exchange between the United States and Belgium, which administers the Fulbright Belgium and Fulbright Schuman programs. V. Van Speybroeck acknowledges funding from the European Research Council under the

European Community's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7(2007–2013) ERC grant agreement number 240483). J.M.H. was supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, priority program SPP 1570). B.S. was supported as part of the Center for Gas Separations Relevant to Clean Energy Technologies, an Energy Frontier Research Center funded by the U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Science, Office of Basic Energy Sciences under Award Number DE-SC0001015. We thank Wim De Witte for help with Fig. 1 and 2. L.J. thanks Steven Vandenbrande for fruitful discussions.

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