Digital Twin

An essential research content is the development of digital twins for our experimental activities. They allow us to gain a deep understanding of the fundamental scientific relationships and enable the development of new separation processes. We simulate chemical reactions and model the formation of membrane structures. Experimental data are digitally recorded and evaluated using artificial intelligence methods. In parallel, systems of equations are set up that describe substance separation and flow in membrane modules and thus enable the simulation of separation processes.

Membranes for sustainability

Clean air
The 2°C climate target can only be achieved by strictly avoiding CO2 emissions. Separating CO2 from exhaust gas streams and processing H2 are separation tasks that are essential for a future industrial society in order to reduce CO2 pollution on the one hand and produce valuable substances on the other.

Clean water
Millions of people worldwide have little or no access to clean water. Regions that are already suffering from water shortages due to climate change are particularly affected. Therefore, the sustainable supply of drinking and process water is one of the major challenges of the coming decades.

Institute of Membrane Research:

Our contribution to problem solving
Water shortage, climate change and the energy transition - material separations play a central role in these challenges. In order to contribute to solving these global problems, the Institute of Membrane Research develops innovative membrane processes for both liquid phase and gas phase applications. In doing so, it follows a holistic, interdisciplinary approach.

Holistic membrane development

Our membrane research covers the entire research and development chain. Interdisciplinary teams synthesize new polymers on a laboratory and pilot scale and test their suitability as membrane materials. The next step is to develop the production of membranes on a square meter scale and to design apparatuses, i.e. membrane modules, that enable their technical use. These modules are then examined in test facilities for various separation tasks.

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**Applications**

**Power-to-X**

New valuable substances are created from CO₂ and regeneratively produced hydrogen.

**CO₂-Separation**

For the separation of CO₂, we use thin-film composite membranes: these are CO₂-selective separation layers up to 70 nm thin, embedded in a supporting structure that provides stability. These membranes are in turn located in membrane modules that are connected in such a way that streams with 95 vol.-% CO₂ are obtained from exhaust gases containing 15 vol.-% CO₂. The energy required for this of 230 kWh/tCO₂ is significantly lower than with other processes.

**H₂-Processing**

Similar membranes are used for the separation or purification of H₂: e.g. H₂ can be separated from the natural gas grid with membranes or dried after electrolysis and is thus available for further use. It can serve either directly as a fuel or via membrane reactors to produce new substances (power-to-X). Here, the combination with metal hydride storage systems for hydrogen developed by Hereon plays an important role.

**Separation of pollutants and recovery of raw materials from water**

There are many applications for membrane technology in water treatment, and the energy requirement is often lower than for conventional processes. Membranes can be used, for example, for the separation or recovery of

- Industrial waste (e.g. dyes)
- Toxic salts (e.g. arsenates)
- Agricultural residues (e.g. nitrate)
- Strategically important components (e.g. lithium salts)

**Contaminations**

**Valuable Raw Materials**

**Clean Water**

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**Helmholtz-Zentrum Hereon**

Max-Planck-Straße 1

21502 Geesthacht

www.hereon.de/membranforschung

Contact: Prof. Dr. Volker Abetz    •    T +49 4152 87-2461   •    volker.abetz@hereon.de