Leibniz-Institut für Astrophysik Potsdam

Energy partition in solar flares: the results from RHESSI and the prospects with STIX

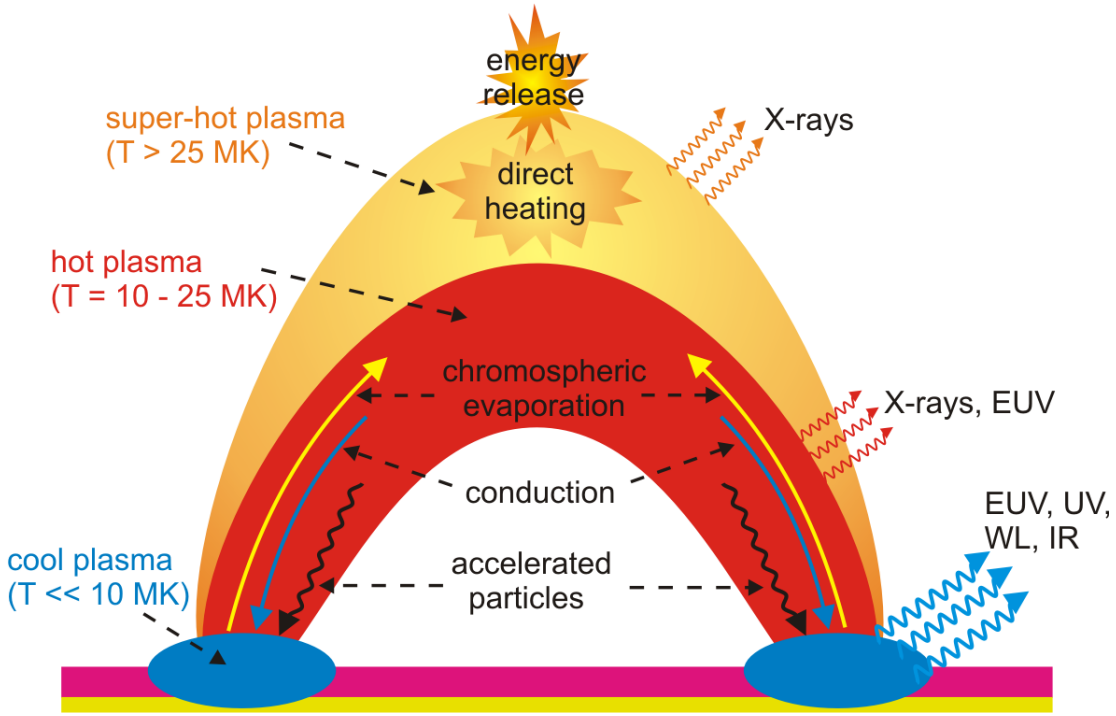
A. Warmuth[1], F. Schuller[1], G. Mann[1], S. Krucker[2,3], E. C. M. Dickson[2], A. F. Battaglia[2,4], H. Xiao[2], S. Maloney[5,6], M. Battaglia[2], G. Hurford[2], A. Veronig[7], J. Saqri[8] and the STIX team

[1]Leibniz Institute for Astrophysics Potsdam (AIP)
[2]University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland
[3]Space Sciences Laboratory, University of California
[4]ETH Zürich
[5]Trinity College Dublin
[6]Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies
[7]University of Graz

Solar flare energetics: nonthermal and thermal components

- energy in nonthermal electrons
- energy in nonthermal ions

- thermal energy of hot plasma
- radiative energy losses
- conductive energy losses
- kinetic energy in plasma flows
- gravitational energy of plasma



- standard scenario: energy input by nonthermal particle beams
  → nonthermal input has to balance thermal requirements

Observational constraints

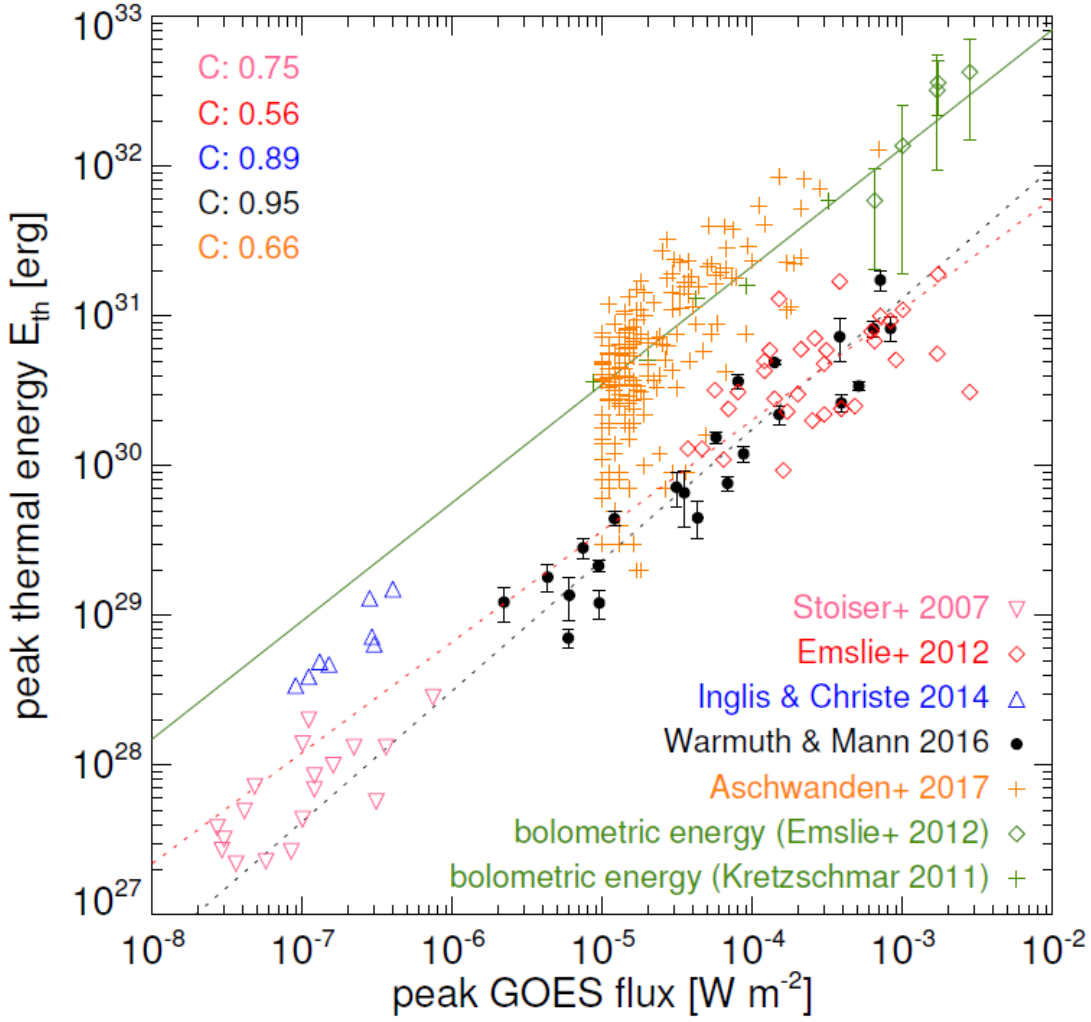
- HXR: RHESSI (2002-2018)
  - HXR imaging and spectroscopy
  - 3 keV – 18 MeV, 1 keV resolution
  - temperature sensitivity > 10 MK
  - thermal & nonthermal spectral fitting
  - thermal source volumes and footpoint areas
- SXR: GOES
  - isothermal fits of fluxes in two channels
  - temperature sensitivity 4-25 MK
- EUV: SDO/AIA (since 2010)
  - EUV images in six Fe emission lines
  - reconstruction of DEM distribution
  - thermal source volumes
- Bolometric: SORCE/TIM, SOHO/Virgo
  - total radiated energy
  - proxy for total energy released

Statistical studies of energy partition in the RHESSI era

- electrons can account for thermal plasma
  (Emslie et al. 2012)
- electrons cannot account for thermal plasma
  (Inglis & Christe 2014)
- electrons can account for thermal plasma only in stronger events
  (Warmuth & Mann 2016)
- electrons can easily account for thermal plasma
  (Stoiser et al. 2009, Aschwanden et al. 2015/2016/2017)

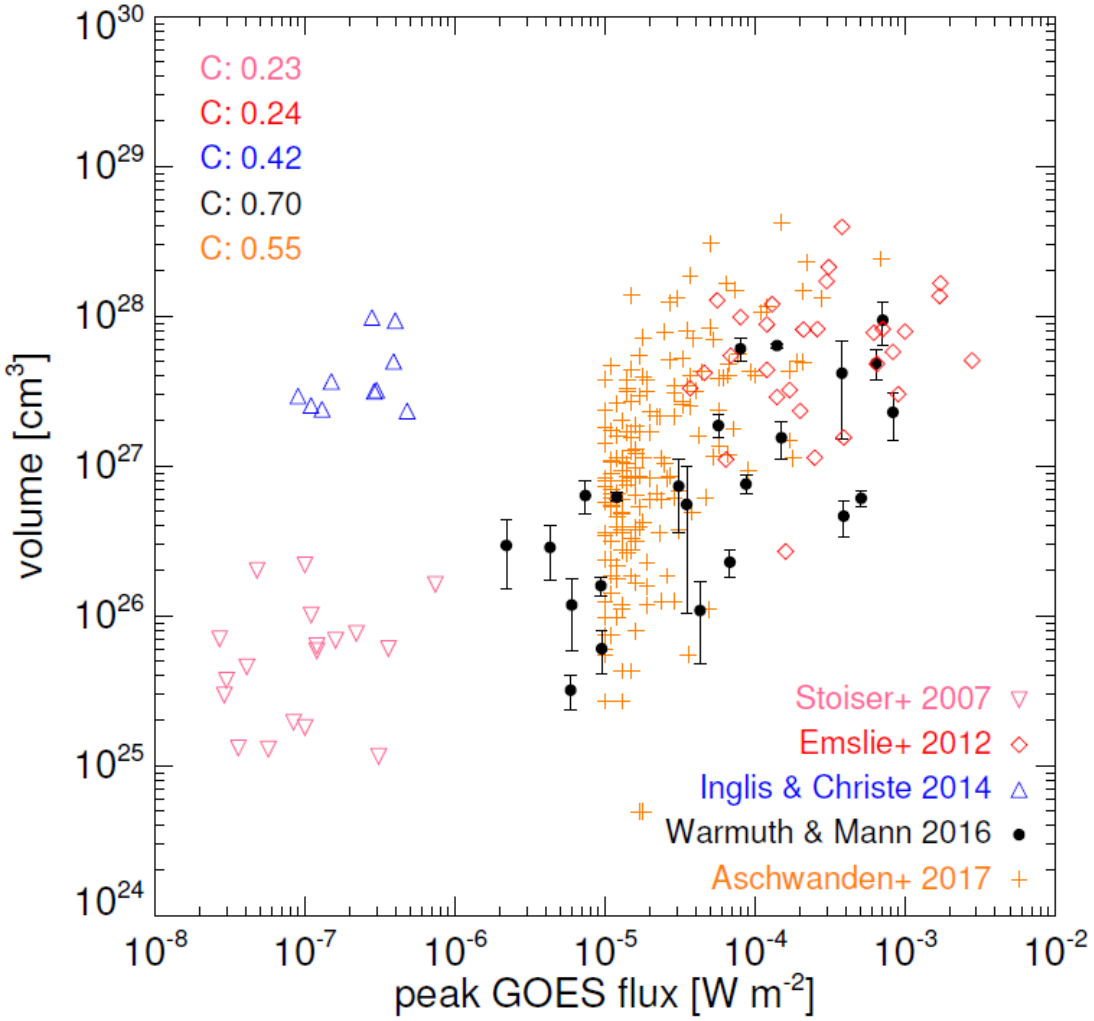
→ discrepancies resulting from limitations in these studies
(Warmuth & Mann 2020)

Peak thermal energy



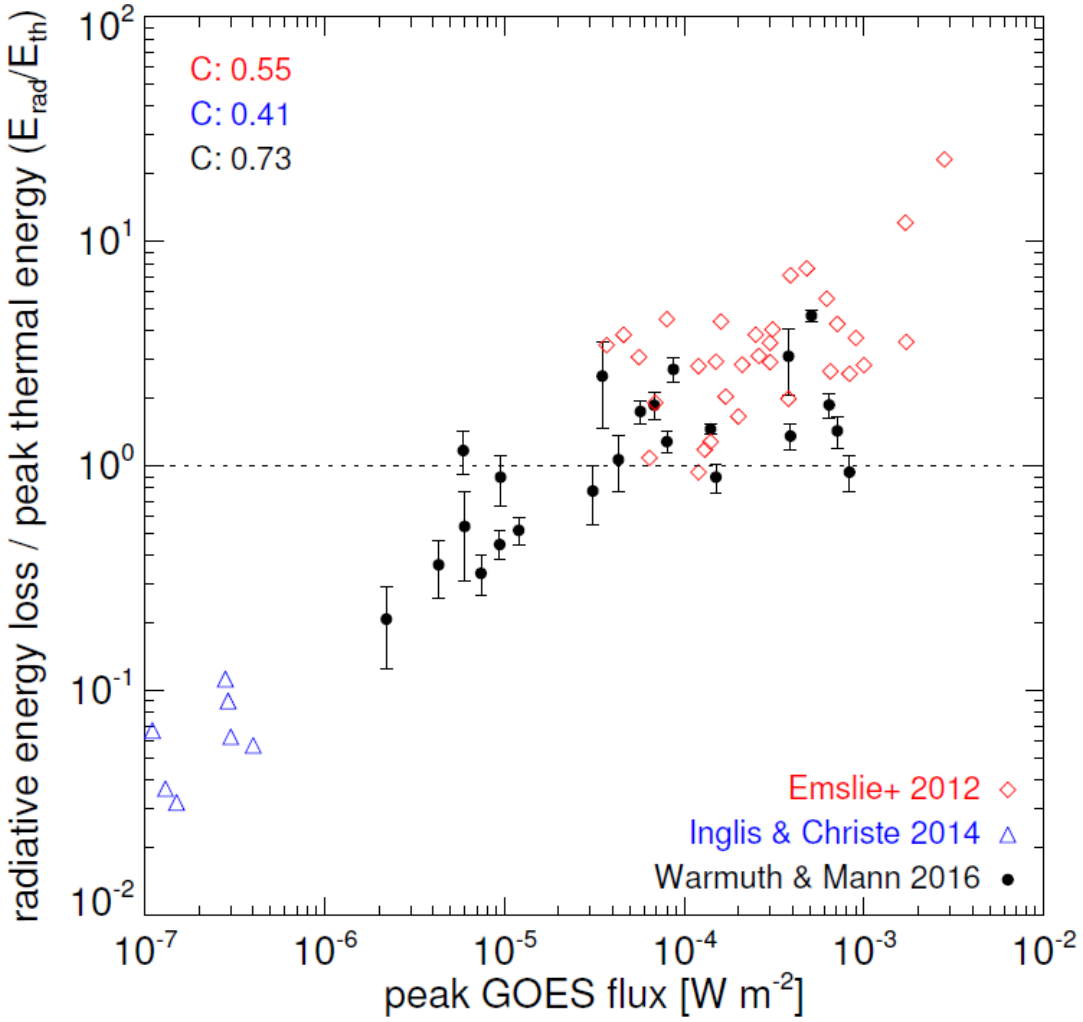
- correlation with GOES peak flux
- discrepancies by up to an order of magnitude
- bolometric energy shown as a proxy for total released energy
- reasons for discrepancies?

Thermal source voulumes



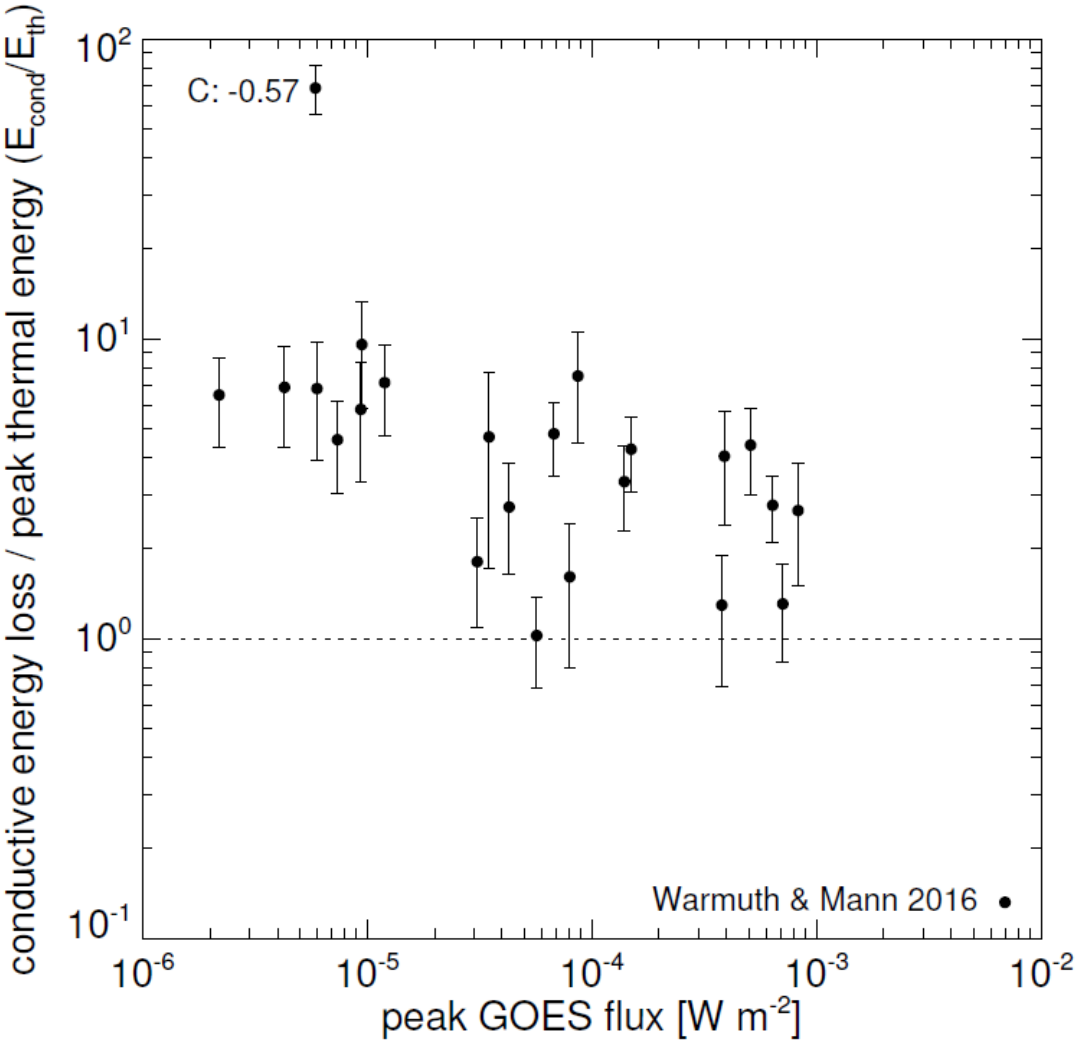
- volumes derived from RHESSI and AIA are consistent

Radiative losses of hot plasma normalized by peak thermal energy



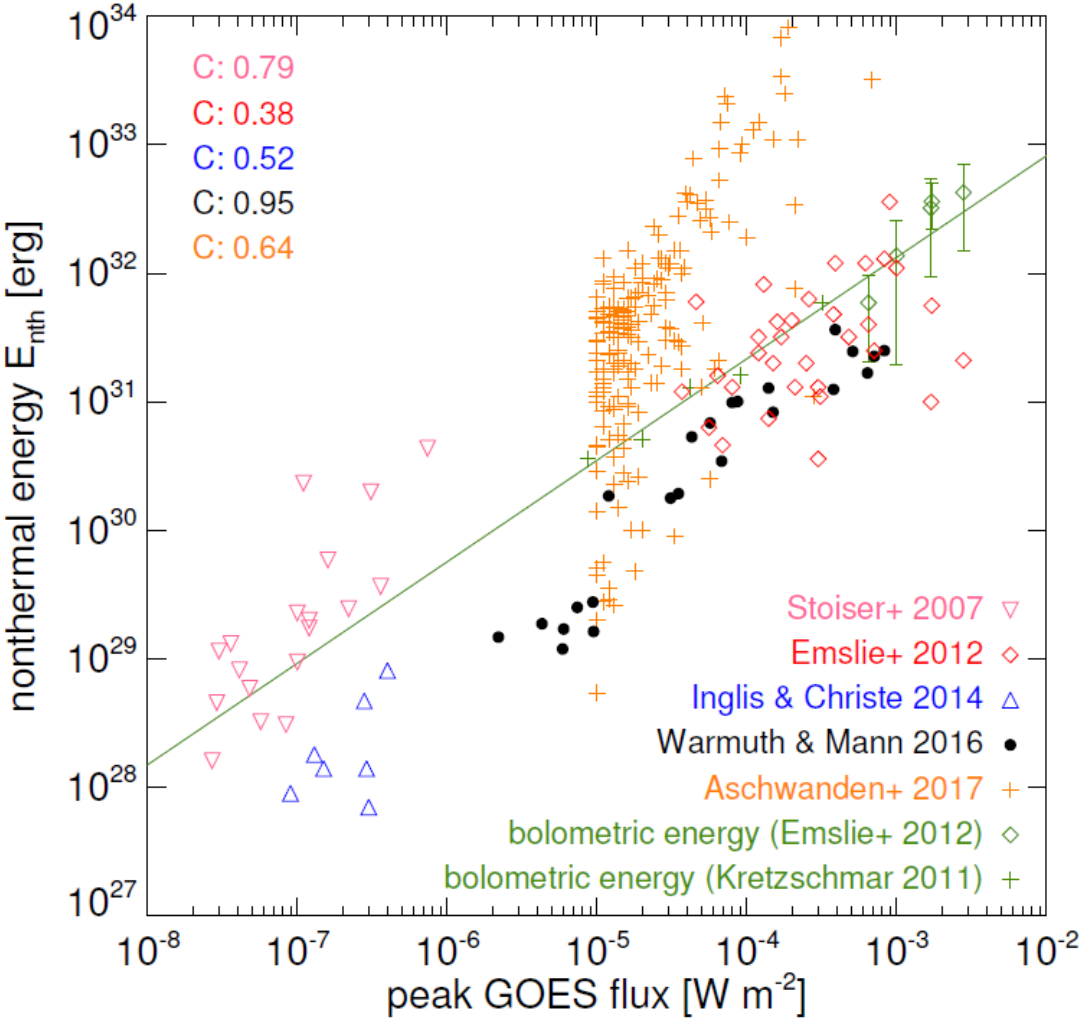
- radiative losses are energetically important for larger events

Conductive losses of hot plasma normalized by peak thermal energy



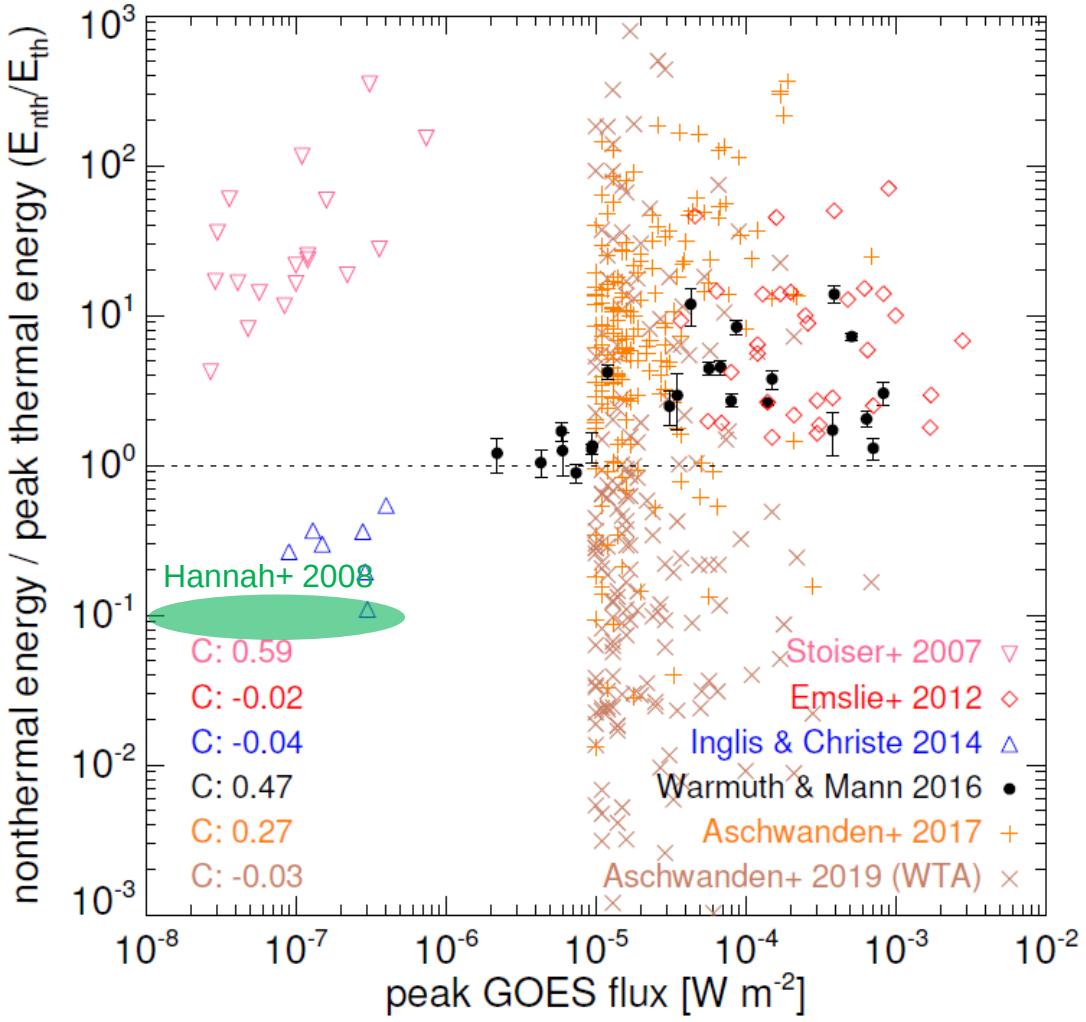
- conductive losses energetically important, especially for smaller events
- however, conduction may be suppressed

Energy in nonthermal electrons



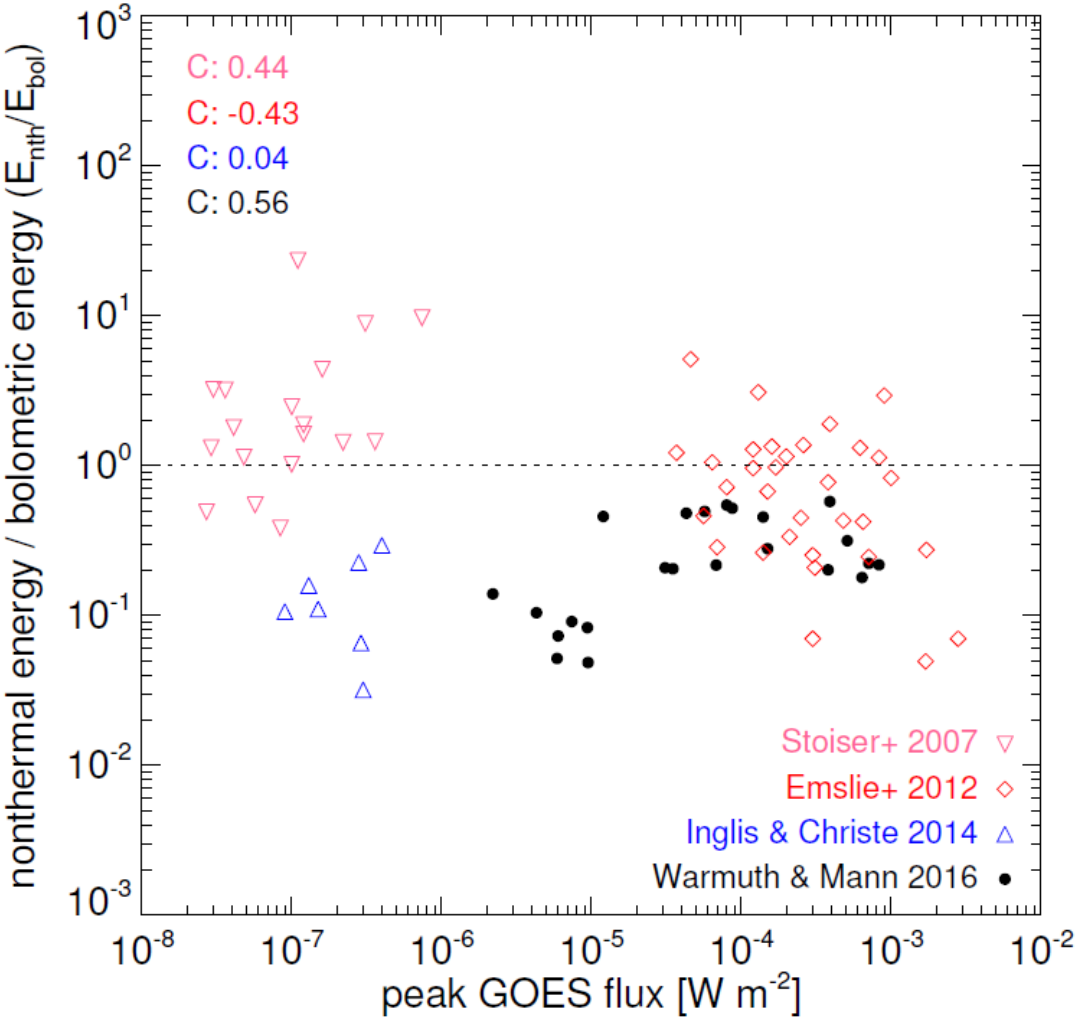
- energy input correlates with GOES class
- large discrepancies between studies
- partly orders of magnitude larger than bolometric energy
- problem: low-energy cutoff

Nonthermal fraction: nonthermal / peak thermal energy



- nonthermal energy larger than thermal energy in most events and studies
- energy in nonthermal ions not considered

Nonthermal fraction: nonthermal / bolometric energy



- sufficient energy to power thermal flare component only in larger events (X class)
- additional energy transport mechanism required to explain bolometric loss (conduction, waves)

Explanation for different results on energy partition

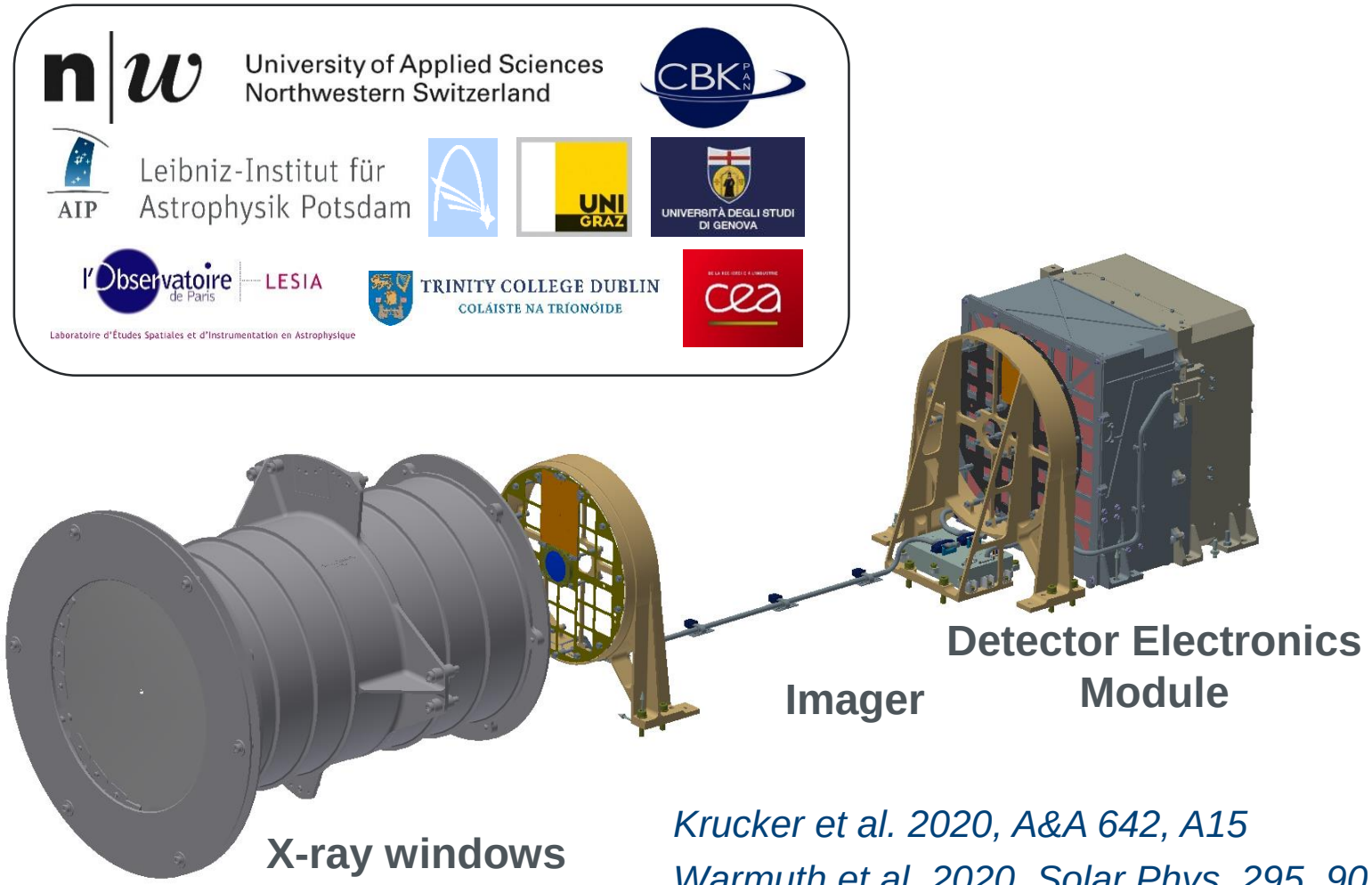
- electrons can account for thermal plasma *(Emslie et al. 2012)*
- electrons cannot account for thermal plasma *(Inglis & Christe 2014)*
- electrons can account for thermal plasma only in stronger events *(Warmuth & Mann 2016)*

energy partition changing with flare importance

- electrons can easily account for thermal plasma *(Stoiser et al. 2009, Aschwanden et al. 2015/2016/2017)*

nonthermal energy overestimated

Spectrometer/Telescope for Imaging X-rays (STIX)

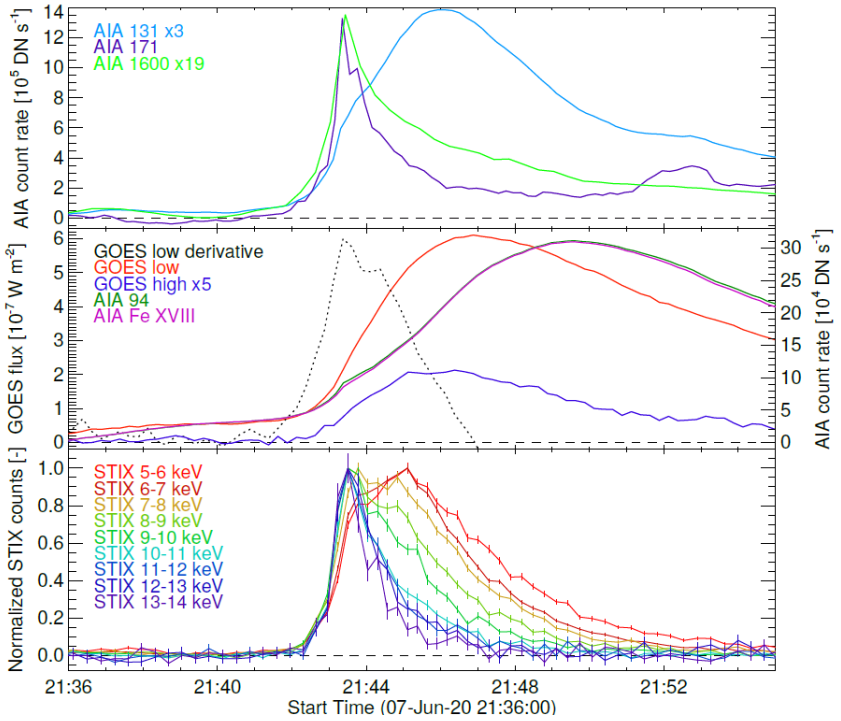


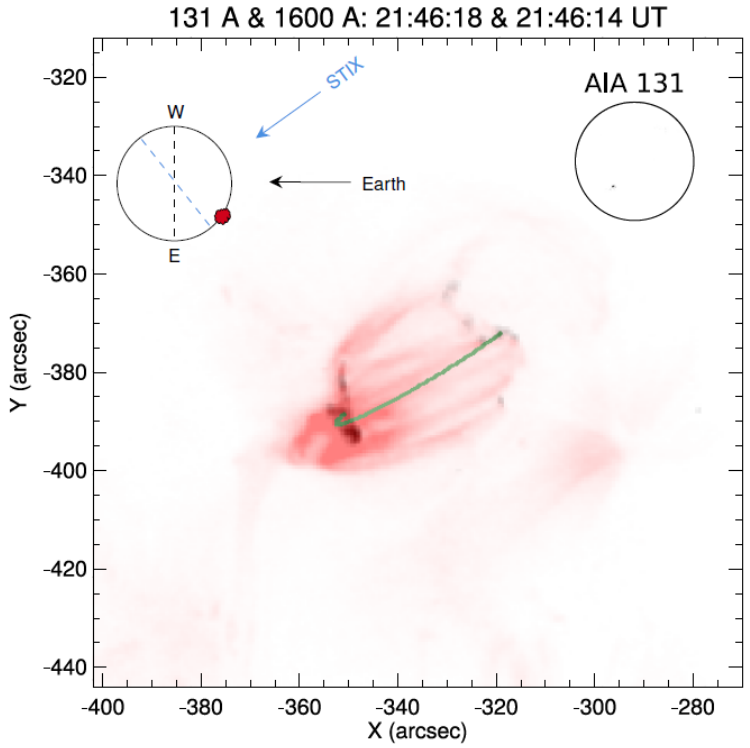
RESOURCES	• 6.6 kg • 8 W
SPECTRAL	• 4-150 keV • 1 keV at 6 keV • 32 energy bins
IMAGING	• full disk • 7” angular resolution (perihelion: equivalent to 2”) • 30 visibilities
TIME RESOLUTION	• counts are binned to statistically significant numbers • minimum bin size <1 s
SENSITIVITY	• 6 cm^2 effective area (perihelion: equivalent to 70 cm^2) • low background

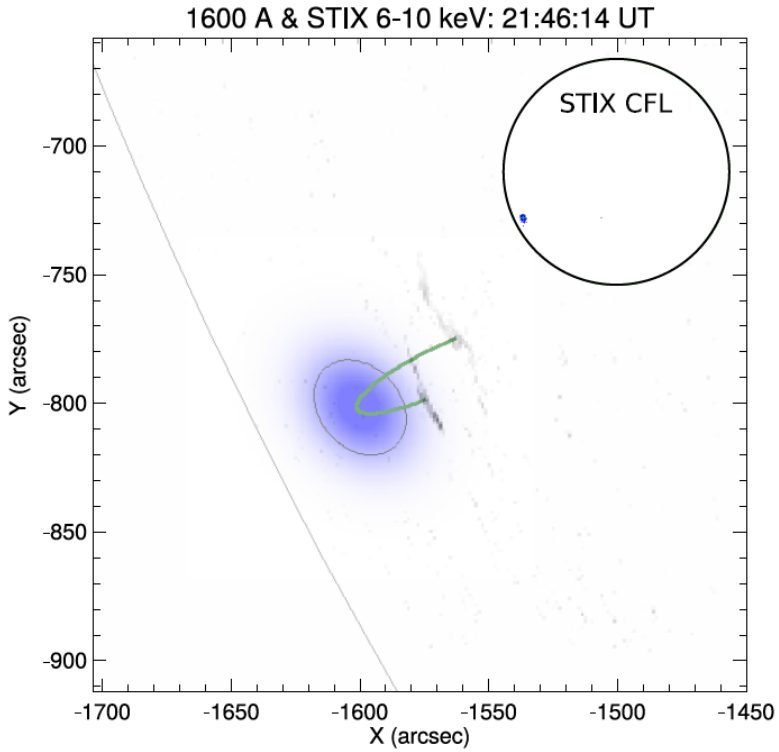
Krucker et al. 2020, A&A 642, A15

Warmuth et al. 2020, Solar Phys. 295, 90

B6 flare seen from from 0.5 AU

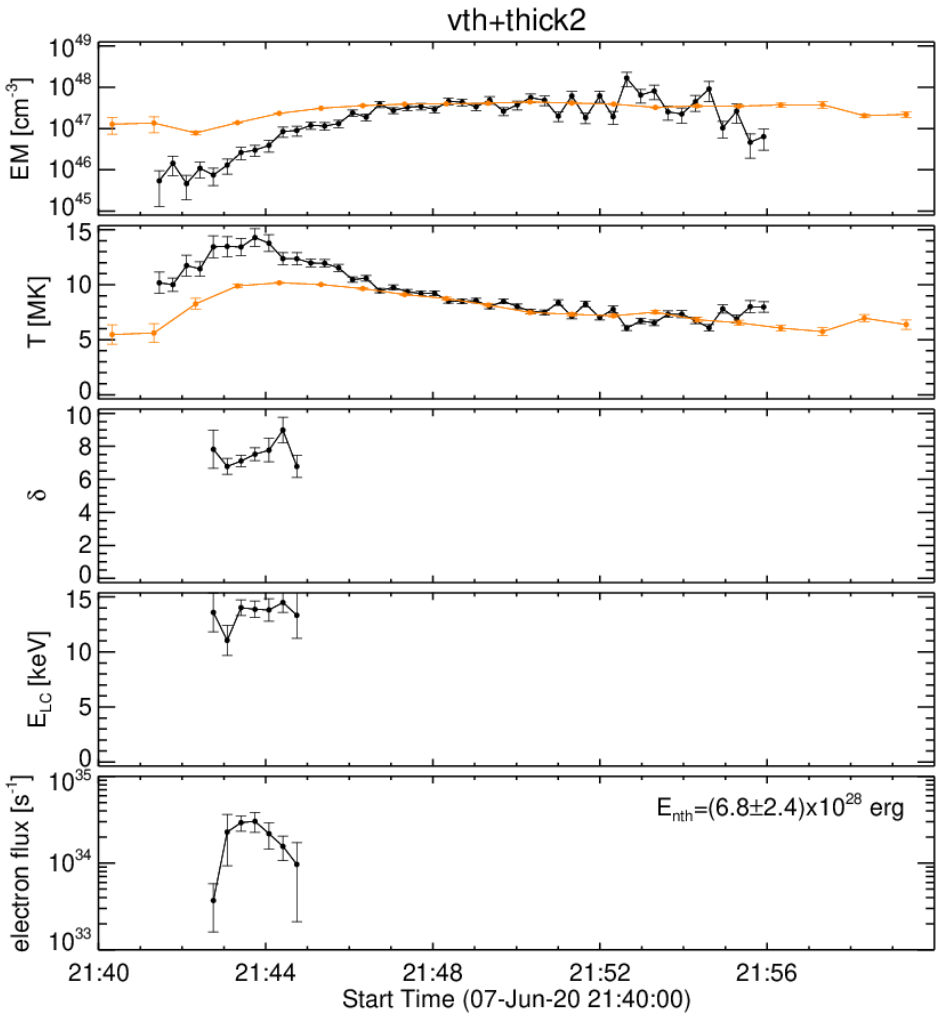


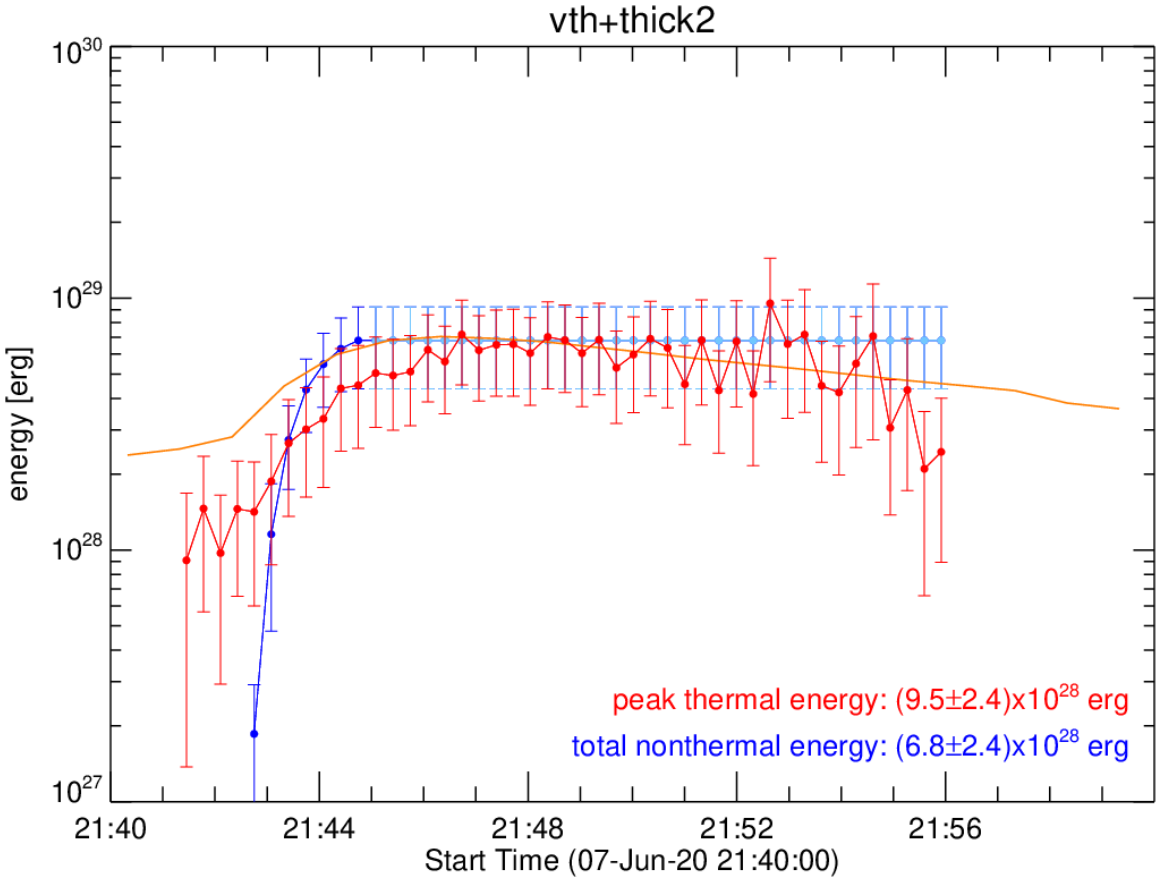


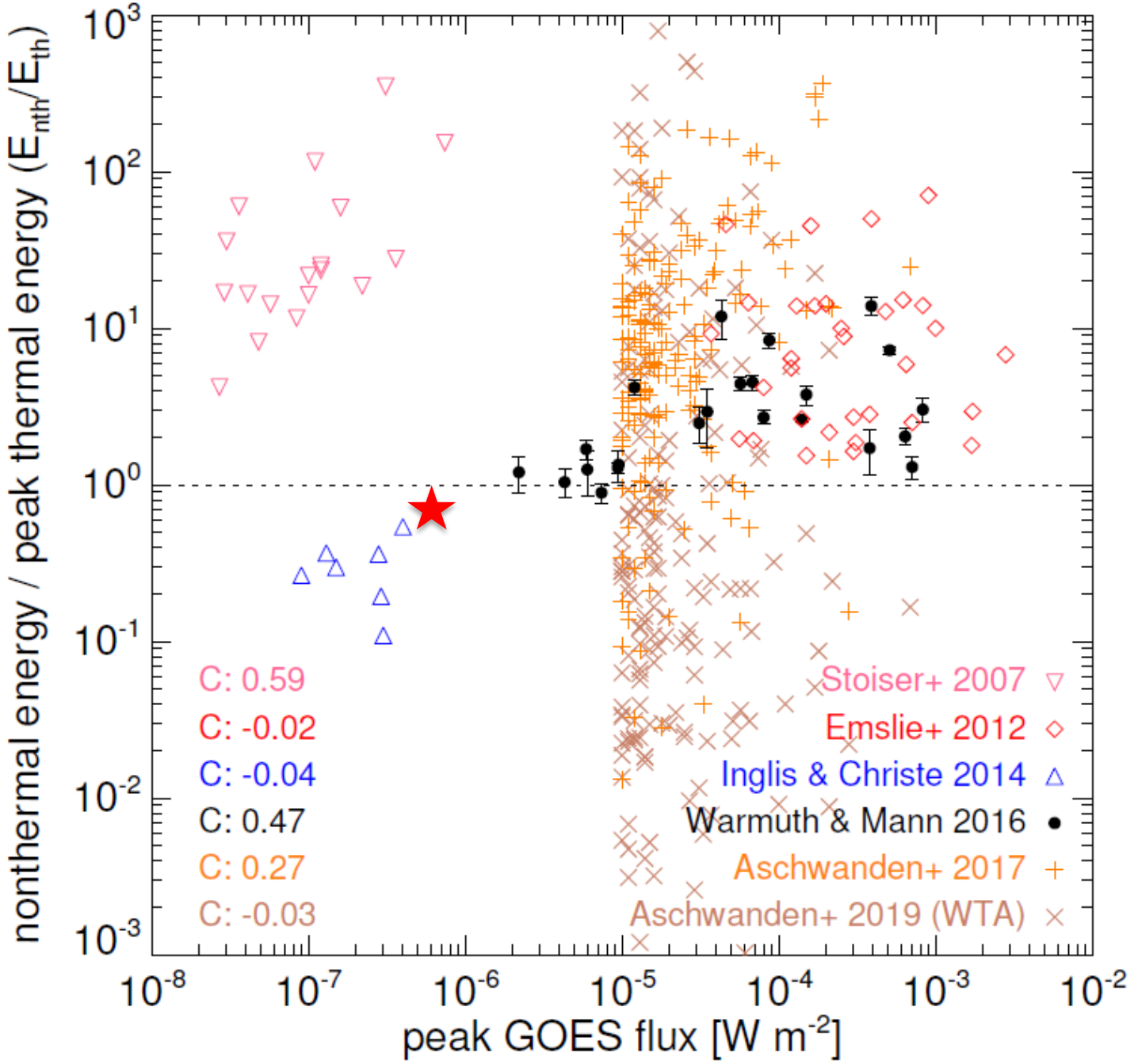


Battaglia et al. 2021, A&A, in press

B6 flare: isothermal & thick-target fit






nonthermal energy / peak thermal energy (E_{nth}/E_{th})
peak GOES flux [W m^{-2}]
10^{3}
10^{2}
10^{1}
10^{0}
10^{-1}
10^{-2}
10^{-3}
10^{-8}
10^{-7}
10^{-6}
10^{-5}
10^{-4}
10^{-3}
10^{-2}
C: 0.59
C: -0.02
C: -0.04
C: 0.47
C: 0.27
C: -0.03
Stoiser+ 2007
Emslie+ 2012
Inglis & Christe 2014
Warmuth & Mann 2016
Aschwanden+ 2017
Aschwanden+ 2019 (WTA)

Conclusions

- largest uncertainties in energy partition: determination of DEM distribution and low-energy cutoff
- bolometric energy provides an important constraint on both thermal and nonthermal energetics
- thermal losses of hot plasma are energetically important
- decreasing nonthermal fraction in smaller events
- need for additional heating and energy transport mechanisms

Outlook

- application of warm-target model to get upper limit on energy in accelerated electrons
- prospects for more reliable results on partition in microflares with STIX