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Time-resolved X-ray Absorption Spectroscopy of Copper Zinc Tin Sulfide Nanoparticles

Christian Rein1, Mariana Mar Lucas1, Kristoffer Haldrup3, Asbjørn Moltke2, Jens Uhlig3, Jens Wenzel Andreasen1

1 - DTU Energy, Technical University of Denmark, Risskov, Denmark.
2 - DTU Physics, Technical University of Denmark, Lyngby, Denmark.
3 - Lund University, Lund, Sweden.

Introduction

Photoelectronic processes of the earth abundant and non-toxic Cu2ZnSnS4 (CZTS) absorbing material in 3rd generation solar cells can be investigated by time-resolved X-ray absorption spectroscopy (TR-XAS) using a synchrotron-based X-ray source and synchronized laser excitation (pump-probe method). Such experiments require high quality CZTS [1] stabilized as a nanoparticle (NP) ink as a model system, which is also applicable for low-cost up-scaleable roll-to-roll (R2R) printing.

CZTS

Kesterite structured CZTS has the best performance when the composition is Cu-poor and Zn-rich [2] within a small region on the phase diagram (figure 1), which reduces the probability for detrimental secondary phases [3]. Theoretical work has also shown that absorber materials with this composition will contain Cu-vacancies responsible for a p-doping of the semiconductor CZTS [2].

Upscaling solar cell fabrication using CZTS requires the material to be synthesized as ink for R2R printing. Oleylamine (OLA) is commonly used as ligands during hot inject synthesis to stabilize CZTS NPs (figure 2-4) [4].

Probing photoexcited CZTS with TR-XAS

Upon absorbing a photon (E_{photon} > 1.5 eV) an electron is excited from the Cu-3d/S-3p* state (valence band) to the Sn-5s/S-3p* state (conduction band, Fig. 5), and photocarrier generation, localization, and recombination occurs on the fs-, ps-, and ns-scale, respectively [5-7]. Localization reduces mobility of charges and it is therefore important to know on what atoms these localizations occur in order to improve the efficiency of the CZTS absorber. By using TR-XAS (Fig. 6) the fate of the charge carriers in the photoexcited CZTS is interrogated at both the Cu and Zn K-edges. We have modeled the expected change in XAS near the Cu-edge for both hole and electron trapping, and is currently comparing it to experimental data (Fig 7).

Referencias:

(1) Ahmad, R., et al., Crystal Eng Comm., 17, 4970-4984, 2015.