

Solid-state dye-sensitized mesoporous TiO₂ solar cells with high photon-to-electron conversion efficiencies

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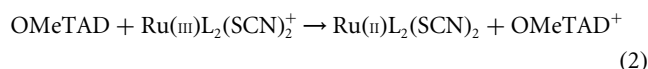
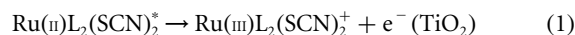
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Solar cells based on dye-sensitized mesoporous films of TiO₂ are low-cost alternatives to conventional solid-state devices¹. Impressive solar-to-electrical energy conversion efficiencies have been achieved with such films when used in conjunction with liquid electrolytes². Practical advantages may be gained by the replacement of the liquid electrolyte with a solid charge-transport material. Inorganic p-type semiconductors^{3,4} and organic materials^{5–9} have been tested in this regard, but in all cases the incident monochromatic photon-to-electron conversion efficiency remained low. Here we describe a dye-sensitized heterojunction of TiO₂ with the amorphous organic hole-transport material 2,2',7,7'-tetrakis(*N,N*-di-*p*-methoxyphenyl-amine)9,9'-spirobifluorene (OMeTAD; refs. 10 and 11). Photoinduced charge-carrier generation at the heterojunction is very efficient. A solar cell based on OMeTAD converts photons to electric current with a high yield of 33%.

The hole conductor contains a spiro-centre (a tetrahedral carbon linking two aromatic moieties) which is introduced in order to improve the glass-forming properties and prevent crystallization of

the organic material. Its glass transition temperature of $T_g = 120^\circ\text{C}$, measured by differential scanning calorimetry, is much higher than that of the widely used hole conductor TPD (*N,N'*-diphenyl-*N,N'*-bis(3-methylphenyl)4,4'-diamine; $T_g = 62^\circ\text{C}$). Crystallization is undesirable as it would impair the formation of a good contact between the mesoporous surface of the TiO₂ and the hole conductor. The methoxy groups are introduced in order to match the oxidation potential of the hole-transport medium (HTM) to that of the sensitizer Ru(II)L₂(SCN)₂ (where L is 4,4'-dicarboxy-2,2'-bipyridyl), used in this study.

Figure 1 shows a scheme for the electron-transfer processes occurring at the dye-sensitized heterojunction. Visible-light absorption by the sensitizer is followed by electron transfer to the conduction band of TiO₂. The dye is regenerated by hole injection into the HTM. The TiO₂ conduction-band electrons, as well as the holes in the HTM, are subsequently transported by electronic conduction to the contact electrodes. Pulsed nanosecond laser photolysis was used in conjunction with time-resolved absorption spectroscopy to scrutinize the dynamics of the photoinduced charge separation process. Figure 2 shows the transient absorption spectrum of a dye-sensitized mesoporous TiO₂ film in the absence and presence of OMeTAD, measured 50 ns after laser excitation. In the absence of OMeTAD, dye bleaching at ~500 nm is observed and a broad positive transient absorption appears above 600 nm due to the absorption of the oxidized dye Ru(III)L₂(SCN)₂⁺ and of the TiO₂ conduction-band electrons. Electron injection proceeds in the femtosecond domain¹², while the subsequent recapture of injected electrons by the oxidized dye takes several microseconds. In the presence of OMeTAD, the bleaching signal disappears. Instead, the transient absorption rises vertically within the laser pulse. Comparison of the transient spectra obtained in the presence of OMeTAD with the absorption band of chemically oxidized OMeTAD confirms that the species giving rise to the new spectral feature is the radical cation OMeTAD⁺. Apparently, electron injection from the excited sensitizer into TiO₂ is immediately followed by regeneration of the dye via hole transfer to OMeTAD, as shown below:



The process shown in equation (2) was too fast to be monitored with the laser equipment employed, setting an upper limit of 40 ns for the hole-transfer time.

A blank experiment was performed using mesoporous Al₂O₃ films instead of TiO₂ as a support for the Ru(II)L₂(SCN)₂ sensitizer; the results showed that hole transfer from the excited state of the dye

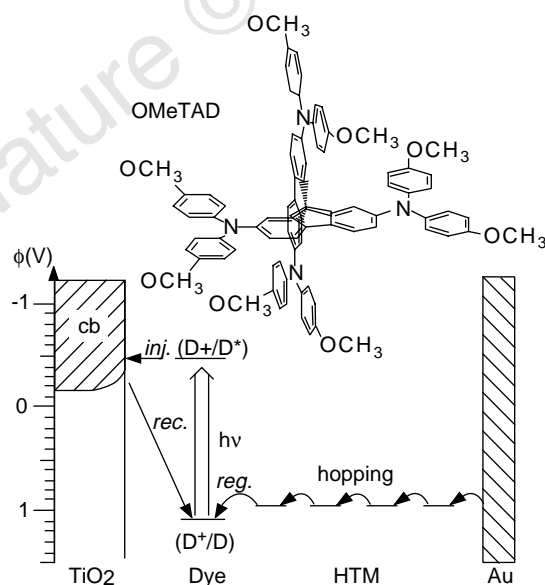


Figure 1 Scheme for the electron-transfer processes (inj., injection; reg., regeneration; rec., recapture; hopping) occurring in the dye-sensitized heterojunction. Also shown are the approximate redox potentials and band energies of the different components.

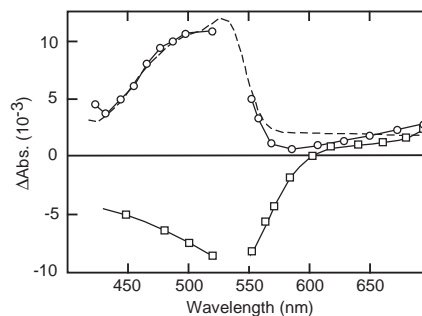


Figure 2 Absorption spectra from time-resolved laser photolysis experiments. Shown are the transient absorption spectra of a dye-sensitized mesoporous TiO₂ film in the absence (squares, contact medium propylene carbonate) and in the presence (circles) of solid OMeTAD, 50 ns after excitation at 532 nm. For comparison, the absorption spectrum of chemically oxidized OMeTAD in chlorobenzene:acetonitrile = 90:10 is also shown (dashed line, arbitrary units).

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to the OMeTAD does not contribute significantly to the photo-induced charge-separation phenomena observed.

The photovoltaic performance of the dye-sensitized heterojunction was studied by means of sandwich-type cells, shown schematically in Fig. 3a. The working electrode consisted of conducting glass (F-doped SnO_2 , sheet resistance $10\ \Omega$ per square) onto which a compact TiO_2 layer was deposited by spray pyrolysis¹³. This avoids direct contact between the HTM layer and the SnO_2 which would short-circuit the cell. A $4.2\text{-}\mu\text{m}$ -thick mesoporous film of TiO_2 was deposited by screen printing onto the compact layer¹⁴, and derivatized with $\text{Ru}(\text{II})\text{L}_2(\text{SCN})_2$ by adsorption from acetonitrile. The HTM was introduced into the mesopores by spin-coating a solution of OMeTAD in chlorobenzene onto the TiO_2 film, and subsequent evaporation of the solvent. A semi-transparent gold back contact was evaporated on top of the hole conductor under vacuum.

Figure 3b shows the photocurrent action spectrum of a typical cell under short-circuit conditions. The given values are not corrected for reflection and absorption losses of the conducting glass, which are estimated to be at least 15% in the visible region of the spectrum. The spectrum closely matches the absorption spectrum of the dye, confirming that the observed photocurrent arises from electron injection by the sensitizer. The maximum value of the incident photo-to-electron conversion efficiency (IPCE) is 33%, which is more than two orders of magnitude larger than the previously reported value for a similar dye-sensitized solid heterojunction⁹ and only a factor of ~ 2 lower than with liquid electrolytes².

The coating solution used for the device in Fig. 3b contained 0.33 mM $\text{N}(\text{PhBr})_3\text{SbCl}_6$ and 15 mM $\text{Li}[(\text{CF}_3\text{SO}_2)_2\text{N}]$ in addition to 0.17 M OMeTAD. In the absence of these additives, the maximum IPCE was only 5%. $\text{N}(\text{PhBr})_3\text{SbCl}_6$ acts as a dopant, introducing free charge carriers in the HTM by oxidation, as confirmed by spectro-electrochemical measurements. Partial oxidation of OMeTAD by $\text{N}(\text{PhBr})_3\text{SbCl}_6$ is a convenient way to control the dopant level¹⁵. On adding $\text{N}(\text{PhBr})_3\text{SbCl}_6$ to a solution of OMeTAD in chlorobenzene, the radical cation OMeTAD^+ is instantly formed. The spectral features of OMeTAD^+ remained unchanged during solvent evaporation and glass formation, except for a small hypochromic shift. No subsequent absorption changes were detectable over several weeks, confirming the temporal stability of OMeTAD^+ in the HTM.

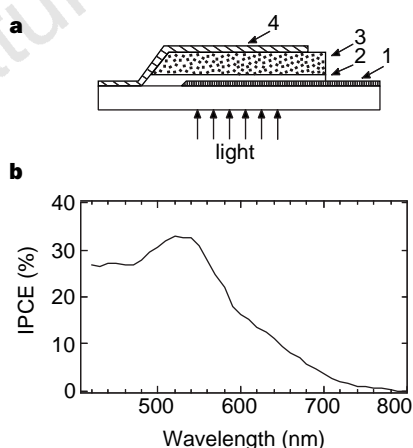


Figure 3 Structure and spectral response of the photovoltaic devices. **a**, Structure 1, conducting F-doped SnO_2 -coated glass; 2, compact TiO_2 layer; 3, dye-sensitized heterojunction; 4, gold electrode. **b**, Photocurrent action spectrum for a dye-sensitized heterojunction, the structure of which is shown above. The IPCE value corresponds to the number of electrons generated by monochromatic light in the external circuit, divided by the number of incident photons. The $4.2\text{-}\mu\text{m}$ -thick mesoporous TiO_2 film was sensitized with $\text{Ru}(\text{II})\text{L}_2(\text{SCN})_2$, spin-coated with a solution of 0.17 M OMeTAD, 0.33 mM $\text{N}(\text{PhBr})_3\text{SbCl}_6$ and 15 mM $\text{Li}[(\text{CF}_3\text{SO}_2)_2\text{N}]$ in chlorobenzene with 5% acetonitrile added.

The second additive, $\text{Li}[(\text{CF}_3\text{SO}_2)_2\text{N}]$, is a source of Li^+ ions, which are known to be potential-determining for TiO_2 (ref. 16). Along with the protons from the carboxylic acid groups of $\text{Ru}(\text{II})\text{L}_2(\text{SCN})_2$, they confer a positive charge on the surface of the oxide. As the sensitizer is negatively charged a local electrostatic field is produced, assisting electron injection into the TiO_2 while retarding recapture of the electron by the oxidized dye. The lithium salt may also compensate for space-charge effects. Under light illumination of the heterojunction, a net positive space charge is expected to be formed in the HTM, inducing a local field that impairs current flow. The lithium salt could screen this field, thereby eliminating the space-charge control of the photocurrent. Improvement of the photovoltaic performance of dye-sensitized heterojunctions by immersion in LiClO_4 solutions was also reported by Murakoshi *et al.*⁵.

Figure 4 shows current-density/voltage curves employing the device structure shown in Fig. 3a. Curves I and II were obtained with hole conductor containing both the $\text{N}(\text{PhBr})_3\text{SbCl}_6$ dopant and the $\text{Li}[(\text{CF}_3\text{SO}_2)_2\text{N}]$ salt, whereas these additives were absent for curve III. Curve I was measured in the dark, whereas II and III were obtained under light illumination. The device that contains the hole conductor without additives performs poorly, the conversion yield being only 0.04% at a white-light illumination of 9.4 mW cm^{-2} . Addition of the dopant and Li^+ salt increases the overall conversion efficiency to 0.74%. Under full sunlight (100 mW cm^{-2} , air mass 1.5), the short-circuit photocurrent density reached 3.18 mA cm^{-2} , a value which is unprecedented for solar cells based on organic solids. Further improvement of the photovoltaic performance is expected, as many parameters of the cell assembly have not yet been optimized. Preliminary stability tests performed over 80 h using the visible output of a 400 W Xe lamp showed that the photocurrent was stable within $\pm 20\%$, while the open-circuit voltage and the fill factor (see Methods) increased. The total charge passed through the cell during illumination was 300 C cm^{-2} ; corresponding to turnover numbers of about 8,400 and 60,000 for the OMeTAD and the dye, respectively. This shows that the hole conductor can sustain photovoltaic operation without significance degradation.

From the present findings, the concept of dye-sensitized heterojunctions emerges as a very interesting and viable option for future

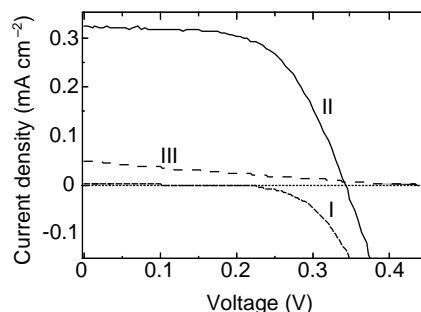


Figure 4 Current-density/voltage characteristics. Shown are characteristics of the same device as in Fig. 3, obtained in the dark (I) and under white-light illumination at 9.4 mW cm^{-2} (II). The spectral distribution corresponded to global air mass 1.5 corrected for spectral mismatch. The short-circuit current density was 0.32 mA cm^{-2} , the open-circuit voltage 342 mV and the fill factor 62% corresponding to an overall conversion efficiency of 0.74%. For comparison, the photocurrent-density/voltage characteristic of a cell containing no $\text{N}(\text{PhBr})_3\text{SbCl}_6$ or $\text{Li}[(\text{CF}_3\text{SO}_2)_2\text{N}]$ is also shown (III).

low-cost solid-state solar cells. Photodiodes based on interpenetrating polymer networks of poly(phenylenevinylene) derivatives^{17,18} present a related approach. The main difference to our system is that at least one component of the polymer network needs to function simultaneously as an efficient light absorber and a good charge-transport material. The dye-sensitized heterojunction cell offers a greater flexibility, as the light absorber and charge-transport material can be selected independently to obtain optimum solar-energy harvesting and high photovoltaic output. □

Methods

Compounds. OMeTAD was pure according to ¹H-NMR and HPLC analysis. The synthesis will be reported elsewhere. Ru(II)L₂(SCN)₂ was prepared as previously described².

Transient absorption spectroscopy. This was carried out with a Nd-YAG laser as excitation light source, producing a 6-ns pulse at 532 nm of typically 1 mJ cm⁻², with a repetition frequency of 30 Hz. The probe light was provided by a Xe lamp, which was spectrally narrowed by cut-off and interference filters before passing the device. A monochromator combined with a photomultiplier was used as detection system. A Tektronix 524 TDS oscilloscope was used to record and store the data. For the laser experiments, dye-sensitized mesoporous semiconductor films were deposited on ordinary glass.

Photocurrent-voltage characteristics. These were measured with a Keithley 2400 Source Meter and a 400 W Xe lamp. A Schott KG3 filter was used in order to approach the spectral distribution of the lamp to air mass 1.5 G. The light intensity was regulated to the desired energy output by using a silicon solar cell, calibrated at the ISE-Fraunhofer Institut in Freiburg Germany. Efficiencies were corrected for the spectral mismatch. The fill factor (FF) is defined as $FF = V_{opt} I_{sc} / I_{oc} V_{oc}$, where V_{opt} and I_{opt} are respectively current and voltage for maximum power output, and I_{sc} and V_{oc} are the short-circuit current and open-circuit voltage, respectively.

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Accumulation of persistent organochlorine compounds in mountains of western Canada

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Persistent, semi-volatile organochlorine compounds, including toxic industrial pollutants and agricultural pesticides, are found everywhere on Earth, including in pristine polar and near-polar locations^{1–4}. Higher than expected occurrences of these compounds in remote regions are the result of long-range transport in the atmosphere, precipitation and 'cold condensation'—the progressive volatilization in relatively warm locations and subsequent condensation in cooler environments^{3,4} which leads to enhanced concentrations at high latitudes. The upper reaches of high mountains are similar to high-latitude regions in that they too are characterized by relatively low average temperatures, but the accumulation of organochlorine compounds as a function of altitude has not yet been documented. Here we report organochlorine deposition in snow from mountain ranges in western Canada that show a 10- to 100-fold increase between 770 and 3,100 m altitude. In the case of less-volatile compounds, the observed increase by a factor of 10 is simply due to a 10-fold increase in snowfall over the altitude range of the sampling sites. In the case of the more-volatile organochlorines, cold-condensation effects further enhance the concentration of these compounds with increasing altitude. These findings demonstrate that temperate-zone mountain regions, which tend to receive

Table 1 Correlation between organochlorine concentrations in snow and site elevations

Compound	Correlation coefficient	Vapour pressure (Pa)
α-HCH	0.85*	0.1
Heptachlorepoxyde	0.75*	0.1
γ-HCH	0.73*	0.03
Dieldrin	0.42*	0.016
Endosulphan-I	0.76*	0.008
c-Chlordane	0.42*	0.003
t-Chlordane	0.34	0.003
p,p'-DDT	0.00	0.0001
PCBs		
Σ Dichloro-	0.54*	0.2 (0.008–0.60)
Σ Trichloro-	0.53*	0.04 (0.003–0.022)
Σ Tetrachloro-	0.00	0.006 (0.003–0.10)
Σ Pentachloro-	0.00	0.001 (0.0003–0.009)
Σ Hexachloro-	0.11	0.0002 (7 × 10 ⁻⁴ – 0.012)
Σ Heptachloro-	0.17	3 × 10 ⁻⁴ (2.7 × 10 ⁻⁵ – 0.0015)

Correlation coefficients (r) are shown for organochlorine concentrations (ng l⁻¹) in snow and site elevation (m.a.s.l.) for the equation $\text{conc.} = ae^{b \text{Elev}}$, where a and b are fitted constants. Asterisks show significance at P ≤ 0.05, for 19 degrees of freedom. Sub-cooled liquid vapour pressures are included for pesticides at 20°C (ref. 21) and PCBs at 25°C (ref. 22). Published vapour pressures vary considerably, so these values represent mean reported values for all PCBs in that class. Ranges of published vapour pressures for each PCB category are shown in brackets. Only compounds with mean sample concentrations that were ten times higher than blanks were considered.

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