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Andrejs Česnokovs

The effect of point defects and their local structure on the conductivity of wide-gap materials: cases of CeO_2 and ZnO

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Scientific supervisor:

Dr. Rer. Nat. Deniss Grjaznovs, senior researcher of the Laboratory of kinetics in self-organizing systems at Institute of Solid State Physics, University of Latvia.

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ABSTRACT

Conductivity is a very broad term, used to describe a material's capacity to transport various objects – electrons, holes, ions, atoms, deformations, excitations, – through itself via some mechanism. It is an intrinsic property of any material and is affected by the material's composition and structure. Subtle changes in either can have a profound impact on conductivity and understanding this causality is vital to material design.

In this thesis two multifunctional materials, cerium dioxide (CeO_2) and zinc oxide (ZnO) are studied with density functional theory (DFT) methods. Both materials are known for their response to point defects, such as the formation of vacancies, or introduction of substitution defects: CeO_2 is a model material for small polaron conductivity, which is heavily impacted by oxygen vacancy formation, while ZnO is a well-known n-type semiconductor, with possibly untapped potential for p-type conductivity. At the root of this thesis is the development of robust, traceable, transparent computational models for tracking changes in local structure and electronic localization, and assessing their effects on the conductivities of these materials.

The work presented in this thesis shows how to build a causal link between experimentally observed data and computed properties of CeO_2 and ZnO. It is shown how to apply symmetry analysis in order to get all possible electronic localization solutions. An example of statistical thermodynamics coupled with DFT calculations is shown to yield predictions of dopant solubility. The ability to create experimentally grounded models such as those shown in this thesis is an important aspect of the material design process.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ca.	Circa
DFT	Density functional theory
DOS	Density of states
eq.	Equation
EXAFS	Extended x-ray absorbtion fine structure
fcc	Face-centred cubic [lattice]
GGA	Generalized gradient approximation
HF	Hartree-Fock
HSE	Heyd-Scuseria-Ernzerhof [exchange-correlation functional]
KS	Kohn-Sham
LDA	Local density approximation
OS	Oxidation state
PAW	Projector-augmented wave
PBE	Perdew-Burke-Ernzerhof [exchange-correlation functional]
RSH	Range-separated hybrid [exchange-correlation functional]
SCF	Self-consistent field
w.r.t.	With respect to
XC	Exchange-correlation [functional]

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General introduction and motivation

Conductivity, colloquially and broadly, is a material's innate ability to transport charge carriers. In solids specifically, charge carriers can be ions, electrons, or holes (a hole is a quasiparticle associated with the absence of an electron where it would normally be in an atom or atomic lattice). Material's dominant conducting mechanism defines its utility and application limits. Thus, materials with very high electronic conductivity are best suited for transmitting power or signals in the form of electrical flow, materials with very low electrical conductivity are best at separating the flow of electrical power from places it is not supposed to reach, materials whose conductivity depends on external conditions such as temperature or potential, are optimal for controlling the flow of energy, and materials with ionic conductivity mechanisms are suited for energy conversion.

Being an innate ability of the material, conductivity is affected by its composition and structure. For instance, pure water does not conduct electricity, but the addition of table salt makes it conductive, and carbon nanotubes, while having the same atomic constitution, may or may not conduct electrical current depending on their geometry [1]. This work is devoted to predicting the behaviour of point defects from the first-principles calculations.

Point defects are crystallographic defects that occur only at or around a single lattice point. While crystals are infinitely periodical in all directions, point defects do not extend in either dimension. In this work, three types of defects are investigated:

- vacancy defects, which are lattice sites that are normally occupied, but are empty;
- substitution defects, i.e. atoms of different chemical species (impurity or a dopant) occupying a regular lattice site;
- interstitial defects, or atoms that occupy a regular lattice position which is normally vacant.

Formation of these defects changes the distribution of electronic density and introduces distortions to the crystalline structure such as changes in bond lengths and atomic positions. Crucially, these changes do not propagate indefinitely in the crystalline structure, and as such their description can be contained to a relatively small-radius region (in comparison to the infinite crystal), i.e. to a local structure of the defect. This work explores point defects and their impact on conductivity in two materials with different conductivity modes and different applications.

The first material is cerium dioxide, CeO_2 (chapter 3), which is a wide-gap semiconductor, but also an ionic conductor, whose ionic conductivity depends on the energetics of oxygen vacancy formation. This work explores symmetry aspects of this defect and its effect on the material's surroundings, specifically, the localization of electrons and the associated magnetic properties, and provides a theoretical background for the observed small polaron formation. Another principal defect of interest is the cerium-substituting terbium (Tb) ion. Not only are lanthanides known to improve electronic and ionic conductivities of CeO_2 (see section 2.6), but Tb specifically has very promising solubility thermodynamics (see section 3.2.5). Tb's presence drastically lowers energetics of oxygen vacancy formation (section 3.2.6), thus improving CeO_2's ionic conductivity.

Lanthanide doping generally improves performance of ceria-based materials (section 2.6). Ionic conductivity in $Ce_{1-c}Tb_cO_{2-\delta}$ increases with Tb content, and this system's electronic conductivity (p-type) reaches noticeably high values at 50% Tb. However, utility of some lanthanides is limited by their solubility. For instance, calculated phase diagrams of $Ce_{1-c}Gd_cO_{2-c/2}$ [2, 3] show that the phase separation into Gd_2O_3 and CeO_2 occurs below certain transition temperature that weakly depends on Gd concentration.

Experiments on solid solutions with Tb content up to 60% [4] do not indicate a second phase formation. On the other hand, the electron energy loss spectroscopy and transmission electron microscopy measurements [5]

demonstrated the formation of domains containing Tb^{3+} and oxygen vacancies, in the range of Tb concentration from 0 to 50% with a secondary phase formation observed in x-ray diffraction spectra for Tb concentrations higher than 80% [6]. Thus, understanding solubility data of Tb^{+4} is missing as well and may be important for the use of $Ce_{1-c}Tb_cO_2$ for oxygen separation, because, as was observed in [7], the increase in Tb content leads to an increase in the oxygen uptake.

The second material of interest is zinc oxide, ZnO (chapter 4), also a wide-gap semiconductor, and a very promising material for transparent electronics, among its numerous other applications (section 2.7). This work explores whether the presence of Ir–O complexes may cause a measurable p-type conductivity in this material, and what are the associated structural changes when these complexes are created in ZnO.

The primary motivation for this investigation is the work by Mārtiņš Zubkins and his colleagues [8, 9]. They have shown that ZnO thin films, when doped with Ir, tend to become amorphous upon reaching a critical Ir concentration. Near this threshold, above 7 % Ir, the samples become amorphous in x-ray diffraction and EXAFS spectra, while computationally fitted structures of EXAFS spectra show the presence of 6-coordinated iridium ions [10]. Simultaneously, the samples start having a measurable electrical conductivity, and a sign change of the Seebeck coefficient is observed.

1.2 Aim and objectives of the work

The **aim** of this study is to explore and explain, using first-principles quantum chemistry calculations, the relationship between local and electronic structures of point defects in wide-gap materials such as CeO_2 and ZnO, and their conductivities–ionic, in the case of CeO_2, and electronic in the case of ZnO.

The **objectives** of the study are

- to develop robust, valid, and experimentally grounded computational models for analysing point defects in CeO_2 and ZnO;
- to perform calculations and gather data on point defects in CeO_2 and ZnO;
- to analyse the obtained data to interpret how changes in structure impact electronic distribution in the studied materials;
- to put forward a model that explains the emergence of observed properties in the studied materials.

1.3 The scientific novelty of the work

The results of research presented in this thesis are of scientific novelty and have been published in several international journals.

This study is among the first to use a site-symmetry approach to model polaronic and magnetically ordered point defects in CeO_2.

The solubility of Tb in CeO_2 for the entire range of Tb concentration has been predicted for the first time.

It was demonstrated that the computationally cost-effective PBE+U approach allows for exploring the localization of electronic defects and describing reduced lanthanide cations in a highly ionic environment.

A theoretical model for the phenomenon of emergent p-type conductivity in Ir-doped ZnO has been proposed.

1.4 Author's contribution

Data acquisition and analysis using a range of computational tools was performed by the Author at the Institute of Solid State Physics, University of Latvia (ISSP, UL). First-principles calculations have been carried out by the Author with the computational resources provided by LASC (Riga, Latvia), HPC centre of Max Planck Institute for solid state research (Stuttgart, Germany), and PDC Center for High Performance Computing at KTH (Stockholm, Sweden). Interpretation of the obtained results was performed in collaboration with the supervisor.

During the course of this study, the Author has submitted and completed a research project under the HPC-Europa3 initiative called "First Principles Calculations of Dopants in Transparent Conducting Oxide ZnO-based Thin Films". The project was carried out in KTH (Stockholm, Sweden), its results are included in this Thesis, and have been published as a paper in a peer-reviewed journal.

The Author has participated in 4 international schools during 2016-2023. The results of the research have been presented at 8 international conferences and workshops. During preparation of this thesis Author has contributed to 9 published peer-reviewed papers. Main results of this thesis have been published in 4 papers, and the Author is the first contributor for 2 of them. At the time of writing, Author's h-index is 4.

[A1] R. A. Evarestov, D. Gryaznov, M. Arrigoni, E. A. Kotomin, **A. Chesnokov**, and J. Maier, "Use of site symmetry in supercell models of defective crystals: Polarons in CeO_2", Phys. Chem. Chem. Phys. **19**, 8340–8348 (2017). The author has performed basis optimisation calculations for Ce and O, calculations of CeO_2 (both with- and without oxygen vacancy), has gathered the data and has contributed his writing to the paper.

[A2] D. Fuks, D. Gryaznov, E. Kotomin, **A. Chesnokov**, and J. Maier, "Dopant solubility in ceria: Alloy thermodynamics combined with the DFT+U calculations", Solid State Ion. **325**, 258–264 (2018). The author has performed most calculations of cerium and terbium oxides, has contributed text and figures to the paper.

[A3] **A. Chesnokov**, D. Gryaznov, and E. Kotomin, "First principles calculations on CeO_2 doped with Tb^{3+} ions", Opt. Mater. **90**, 76–83 (2019). The author has conducted all calculations on Tb-doped CeO_2, has conducted all calculations of all oxides related to parametrisation and validation of the model, has gathered the data, has contributed texts and figures to the paper, beginning with the original draft.

[A4] **A. Chesnokov**, D. Gryaznov, N. V. Skorodumova, E. A. Kotomin, A. Zitolo, M. Zubkins, A. Kuzmin, A. Anspoks, and J. Purans, "The local atomic structure and thermoelectric properties of Ir-doped ZnO: Hybrid DFT calculations and XAS experiments", J. Mater. Chem. C. **9**, 4948–4960 (2021). The author has conducted all calculations related to parametrisation and validation of the model, has conducted calculations of all systems and all properties, has gathered and interpreted all data, has prepared figures and the first draft of the paper.

2. THEORY

2.1 Crystallography fundamentals

By a textbook definition, a crystal is periodic structure created by infinitely repeating identical groups of atoms [11] across some lattice. One way to define a lattice in three dimensions is by three vectors a_1, a_2, a_3 such that the arrangement of atoms does not change when an arbitrary point $\mathbf{r}$ is translated by an arbitrary integral multiple of these vectors:

$$r' = r + u_1 a_1 + u_2 a_2 + u_3 a_3 \tag{2.1}$$

All possible integer values of u_i define the set r', or the lattice. Equally, a crystal is invariant under any translation $\mathbf{T}$ of the form

$$\mathbf{T} = u_1 a_1 + u_2 a_2 + u_3 a_3, \tag{2.2}$$

and so are all the local physical properties of the crystal, such as the charge concentration, average electron density, or magnetic moment density. Vectors a_1, a_2, a_3 form the crystallographic basis of the direct lattice. These primitive translations $\mathbf{T}$ form an invariant subgroup of every crystallographic space group. This group is of utmost importance, because from it the Brillouin zone is derived, which determines crystalline energy levels.

A parallelepiped built on the vectors a_1, a_2, a_3 is the unit cell of a crystal. The International Union of Crystallography distinguishes in the *International Tables for Crystallography* [12] the *unit* cell, the *conventional* cell, and a *primitive* cell.

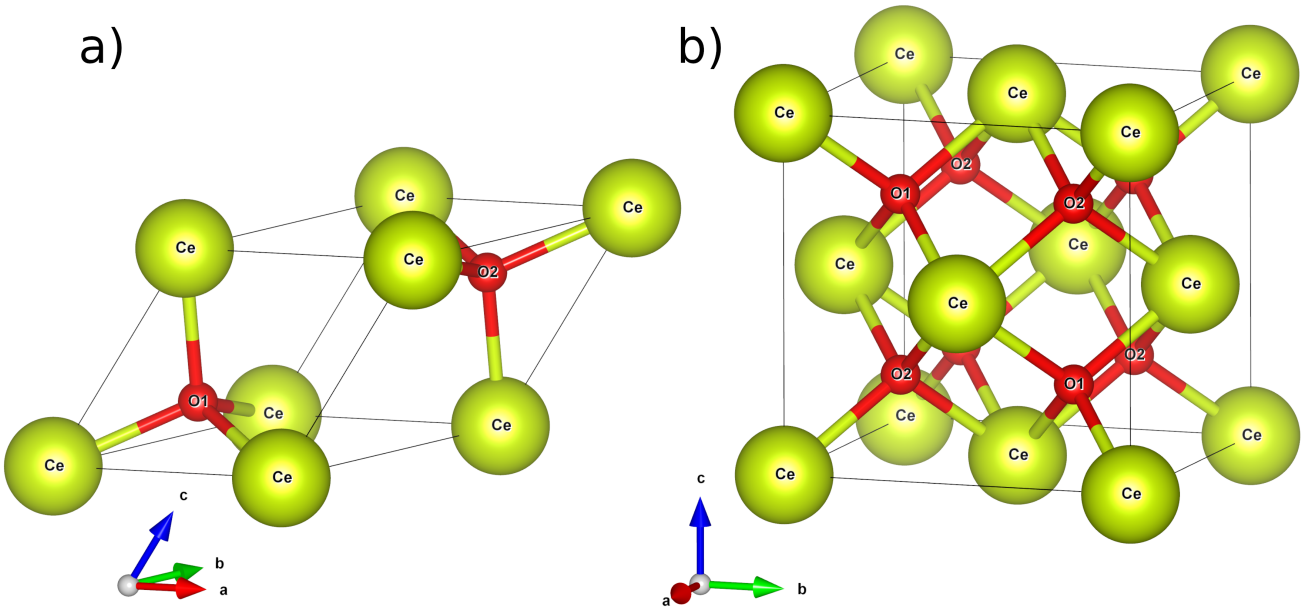

Figure 2.1: Primitive (a) and conventional (b) cells of CeO_2. Primitive cell has 1 Ce atom and 2 oxygen atoms. Conventional cell has 4 symmetrically equivalent Ce atoms (all occupying the same Wyckoff position with multiplicity 4), and 8 symmetrically equivalent O atoms (occupying a Wyckoff position with multiplicity 8, different numbers are for clarity)

Figure 2.1 shows difference between the primitive and conventional cell using CeO_2 as an example. CeO_2 crystal has fluorite structure (space group No. 225, $Fm\bar{3}m$, face-centred cubic lattice), and its conventional cell is also face-centred cubic. It has 4 lattice points, and as such it has 4 Ce atoms, and 8 O atoms. The primitive cell, on the other hand, is trigonal (sometimes called rhombohedral): each pair of its basis vectors forms a 60° angle, and all vectors have the same length. Figure 2.2 shows a way for constructing a primitive cell from the CeO_2's

conventional cell.

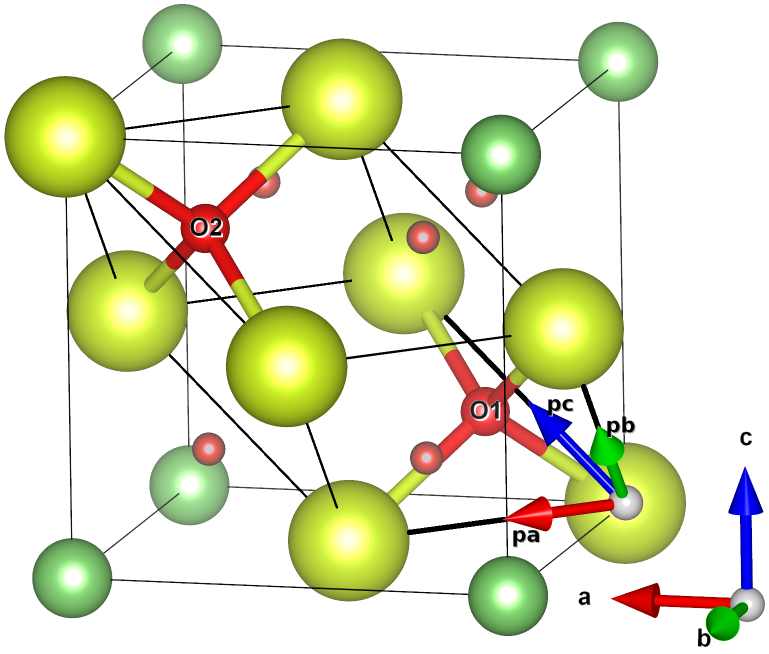

Figure 2.2: Relation between CeO_2's conventional cell (with *a, b, c* basis) and a primitive cell (with *pa, pb, pc* basis). All red spheres represent oxygen atoms, with labelled atoms belonging to the primitive cell; all other spheres represent Ce atoms, with larger ones belonging to the primitive cell

The finite list of all symmetry operations which leave the given point invariant taken together make up another group, which is known as the site symmetry group of that point. By definition, all points with the same site symmetry group (or a site symmetry group in the same conjugacy class) are assigned the same Wyckoff position [12]. A related but not strictly synonymous concept is that of crystallographic orbit, which is a set of all points generated from any given point in space by action of the space group. Two crystallographic orbits of a given space group belong to the same Wyckoff position if and only if the site-symmetry groups of any two points from the first and the second orbit are conjugate subgroups of the space group. By convention, each Wyckoff positon of a space group is labelled by a letter which is called the Wyckoff letter. Letters closer to beginning of the alphabet correspond to positions with higher site symmetry. In case of the group $P1$ the *only* position a is the general position, and in the case of $Pmmm$ the 27^{th} position (also the general position) is assigned the letter A [12, 13].

2.2 Supercell model and splitting of Wyckoff positions

Supercell model is an excellent tool for modelling point defects in crystalline solids. A point defect cannot be introduced into the unit cell because then the concentration of the defect will be too high, at which point it will no longer be a point defect, but an entirely new material, or some exotic phase. The concept of a supercell has been introduced in a work by A. M. Dobrotvorskii and R. A. Evarestov [14, 15], and initially was named the *quasi-molecular large unit cell model*. In a nutshell, the idea of this approach is to expand the motif, effectively replacing the unit cell with a larger fragment of the crystal, corresponding to a practical concentration of the studied defect. This larger fragment, created with the same translational symmetry as the parent crystal, is the supercell, which, when combined with periodic boundary conditions, represents the entire crystal with its defects. A later work by Evarestov and Smirnov [16] lists for each crystal class transformations that generate the most symmetrical supercells with regards to both direct and inverse lattices.

Atoms of the same chemical species in the supercell are not necessarily identical by symmetry, even though they originate from identical atoms of the unit cell. Consider an example of CeO_2 (figure 2.3). Two transformations

of its basis vectors keep the full symmetry of its space group [16], one is isotropic expansion:

$$\begin{bmatrix} n & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & n & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & n \end{bmatrix}, \tag{2.1}$$

and the other is a transformation from face-centred cubic cell to primitive cubic cell with an isotropic expansion:

$$\begin{bmatrix} -n & n & n \\ n & -n & n \\ n & n & -n \end{bmatrix}. \tag{2.2}$$

Both transformations yield cells with the same number of symmetry operations, yet divide all Ce atoms into those with high point symmetries (in the fig. 2.3 b&c these are positions a and b, belonging to the O_h point group), and those with low symmetry (in the same figure, positions d and c, with point groups D_{2h} and D_{4h} respectively). O atoms have a different splitting pattern: in the same space group (fig. 2.3 b) oxygens are split into two groups, each belonging to the Wyckoff position f (point group C_{3v}), while in a different space group (fig. 2.3 c) all oxygens belong to the same Wyckoff position g (point group C_{3v}).

This loss of symmetry equivalence is called splitting of symmetry orbits, and it is governed by group-subgroup relations. Several papers by Wondratschek et al. provide mathematical foundation to this phenomenon [17, 18]. They describe a generalized case of group-subgroup relations that may occur as a result of structural changes in crystals caused by chemical interactions or continuous phase transitions.

In the realm of supercell model, because creation of a supercell replaces the primitive crystallographic motif with a larger one, the crystallographic pattern is distorted. By definition, the symmetry group of a crystal pattern is its space group, so the symmetry group of a different crystal pattern (supercell) is some subgroup of the parent space group. Practically it means that supercells cannot have more symmetry operations than the primitive cell, but they can have fewer symmetry operations. Consequently, since creation of a supercell can change the point group of the space group (figure 2.3 C), points of the new supercell can also have fewer associated symmetry operations, and hence may be assigned new Wyckoff positions.

As a result, within the supercell model, creation of a supercell may move the same atomic species to different Wyckoff positions, making them symmetrically inequivalent. This has huge implications for modeling point defects, especially substitution defects, because, if accounted for, local site symmetry influences the distribution of electronic density, effectively allowing or disallowing certain localisation of electrons, affecting possible magnetic orientations, etc. Specifically, results obtained in chapter 3 rely heavily on this concept.

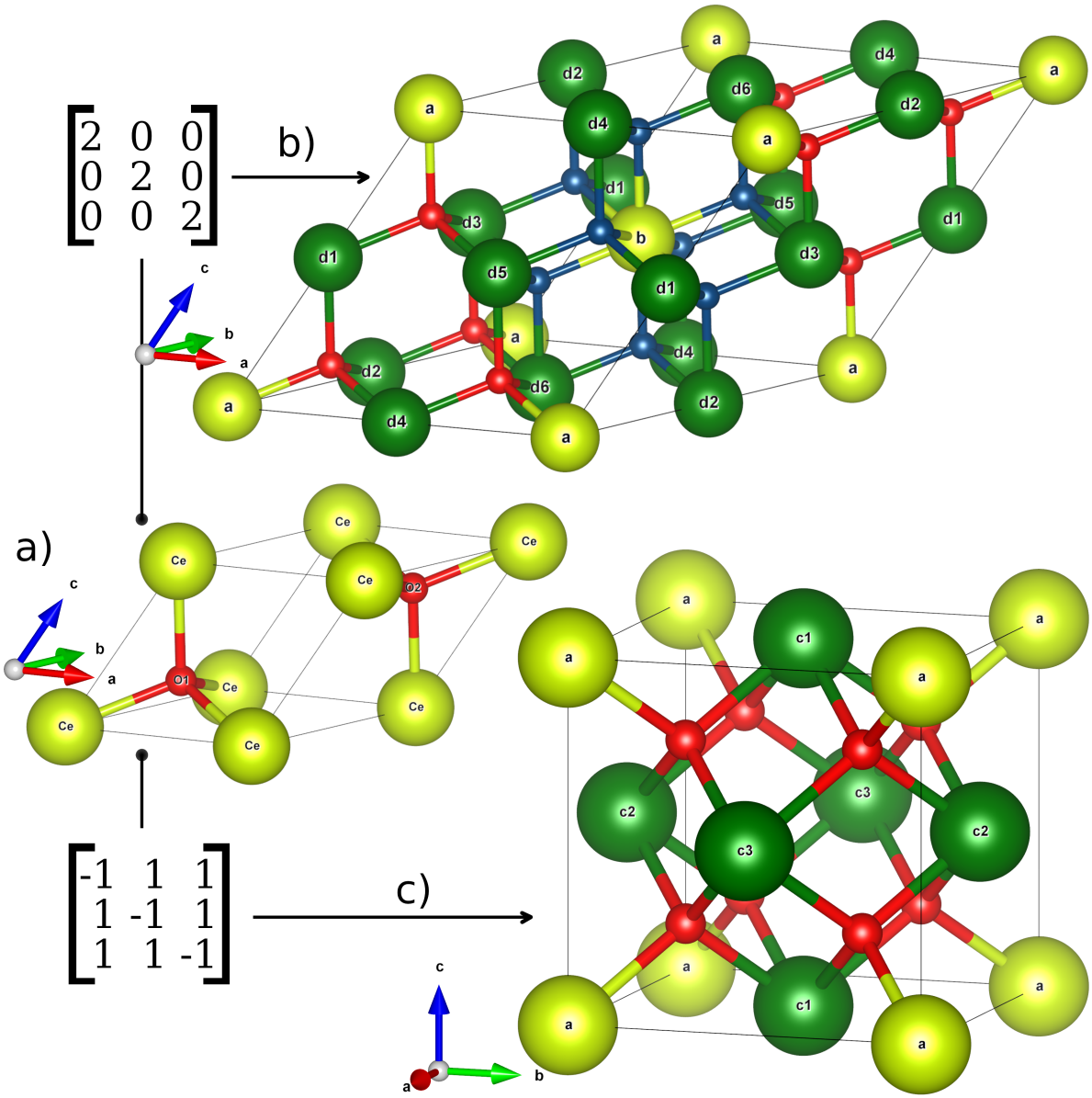

Figure 2.3: Splitting of Wyckoff positions in some CeO_2 supercells.
a: primitive cell.
b: $2 \times 2 \times 2$ (L8) supercell. Light green sites are high-symmetry Ce sites (Wyckoff positions a and b), dark green sites are low-symmetry Ce sites (Wyckoff position d), red and blue spheres represent symmetrically inequivalent O sites belonging to the doubly degenerate Wyckoff position f.
c: mapping of the primitive cell to the conventional $1 \times 1 \times 1$ (L1) cell, or, equivalently, mapping of the space group No. 225 to the space group No. 221 ($Fm\bar{3}m \rightarrow Pm\bar{3}m$); light green spheres are high-symmetry Ce sites (Wyckoff position a), dark green spheres are low-symmetry Ce sites (Wyckoff position c), red spheres are oxygen sites (Wyckoff position g)

2.3 Basics of DFT approximation

In this work, the electronic structure is calculated from first principles by using the fundamental Schrödinger equation along with a set of approximations. Unless specified otherwise, the principal approximation is the use of Density Functional Theory (DFT). Dozens of books as well as every other thesis—bachelor's, master's and doctor's,—cover theoretical foundations of DFT from every possible angle. For a brief summary, in the Kohn-Sham (KS) formulation of DFT, the total energy is given by

$$\begin{aligned} E_{tot}^{KS-DFT} = & -\frac{1}{2}\sum_i \int \psi_i^*(\mathbf{r})\nabla^2\psi_i(\mathbf{r})d^3r && \text{non-interacting kinetic energy of electrons} \\ & -\sum_A \int \frac{Z_A}{|\mathbf{r}-\mathbf{R}_A|}n(\mathbf{r})d^3r && \text{electrons-nuclei attraction energy} \\ & +\frac{1}{2}\iint \frac{n(\mathbf{r})n(\mathbf{r}')}{|\mathbf{r}-\mathbf{r}'|}d^3rd^3r' && \text{classical Coulomb electron-electron repulsive energy} \\ & + E_{xc} && \text{–exchange-correlation energy} \\ & +\frac{1}{2}\sum_{A\neq B}\frac{Z_AZ_B}{|\mathbf{R}_A-\mathbf{R}_B|} && \text{nuclei-nuclei repulsion energy.} \end{aligned} \tag{2.1}$$

The orbitals ψ_i and the electron density $n = \sum_i |\psi_i|^2$ that are used to evaluate E_{tot} are obtained by solving self-consistently the KS equations

$$\left(-\frac{1}{2}\nabla^2 - \sum_A \frac{Z_A}{|\mathbf{r}-\mathbf{R}_A|} + \int \frac{n(\mathbf{r}')}{|\mathbf{r}-\mathbf{r}'|}d^3rd^3r' + v_{xc}(\mathbf{r})\right)\psi_i(\mathbf{r}) = \epsilon_i\psi_i(\mathbf{r}) \tag{2.2}$$

The only terms in E_{tot} and in the KS equations that are not known exactly are the exchange-correlation energy functional E_{xc} and potential $v_{xc} = \partial E_{xc}/\partial n(\mathbf{r})$. Therefore, the accuracy of the calculated properties depends mainly on the approximation used for E_{xc} and v_{xc}.

In this text, the focus is on the practical aspects of using this approximation – as implemented in the Vienna Ab Initio Simulation Package (VASP), and in CRYSTAL17 by University of Torino. The principal difference between these two implementations is in the way they expand the single particle wave functions. In the former, central quantities, like the one-electron orbitals, the electronic charge density, and the local potential are expressed in plane-wave basis sets, an idea that naturally arises when analysing wave equation of electron in a periodic potential [11]. In CRYSTAL17, each "crystalline orbital" (single particle wave function) is expanded as a linear combination of Bloch functions defined in terms of local functions (or atomic orbitals), which, in turn, are linear combinations of Gaussian type functions [19].

2.4 Theoretical background of VASP calculations

In VASP, central quantities, like the one-electron orbitals, the electronic charge density, and the local potential are expressed in plane-wave basis sets. The interactions between the electrons and ions are described using norm-conserving or ultrasoft pseudopotentials, or the projector-augmented-wave method. According to its manual, VASP is a complex package for performing ab-initio quantum-mechanical molecular dynamics (MD) simulations. The approach implemented in VASP is based on the (finite-temperature) approximation with the free energy as variational quantity and an exact evaluation of the instantaneous electronic ground state at each MD time step. VASP uses efficient matrix diagonalisation schemes and an efficient Pulay/Broyden charge density mixing. Forces and the full stress tensor can be calculated with VASP and used to relax atoms into their instantaneous ground-state.

2.4.1 Electronic groundstate in VASP

Most of the algorithms implemented in VASP use an iterative matrix-diagonalization scheme: the used algorithms are based on the conjugate gradient scheme [20, 21], block Davidson scheme [22], or a residual minimization scheme

– direct inversion in the iterative subspace (RMM-DIIS) [23, 24]. For the mixing of the charge density an efficient Broyden/Pulay mixing scheme[24, 25] is used by default, although other approaches are also available. Input charge density (ρ_{in}) and wavefunctions (ϕ_{n}) are independent quantities (at start-up of a calculation these quantities are set according to user settings, with initial KS orbitals being random (unless precomputed ones are available), and with initial charge density being a superposition of atomic charge densities, unless a precomputed one is available). Within each selfconsistency loop the charge density is used to set up the Hamiltonian, then the wavefunctions are optimized iteratively so that they get closer to the exact wavefunctions of this Hamiltonian. From the optimized wavefunctions a new charge density is calculated, which is then mixed with the old input-charge density.

The accuracy of calculation in general is controlled by several parameters: the maximal kinetic energy of plane wave included in the basis set (largely depends on the pseudopotentials used); grid sizes used for representation of the pseudo orbitals and for localized augmentation charges (in more precise calculations, those are two separate grids defined along lattice vectors, with the augmentation grid being much finer); and by accuracy of projector's representation in real space (the number of grid points within the integration sphere around each ion). The precision of calculation is determined by the self-consistency loop, which is broken when either consistency is reached (relaxation of the electronic degrees of freedom stops if the total energy change and the band-structure-energy change between two steps are both smaller than a specified threshold), or when a specified number of SCF cycles has passed.

2.5 Theoretical background of CRYSTAL calculations

In CRYSTAL, each "crystalline orbital" (CO, a single particle wave function) is expanded as a linear combination of Bloch functions:

$$\psi_i(\mathbf{r};\mathbf{k}) = \sum_{\mu} a_{\mu,i}(\mathbf{k})\phi_{\mu}(\mathbf{r};\mathbf{k}), \tag{2.1}$$

defined in terms of local functions (or atomic orbitals, AO):

$$\phi_{\mu}(\mathbf{r};\mathbf{k}) = \sum_{\mathbf{g}} \varphi_{\mu}(\mathbf{r}-\mathbf{A}_{\mu}-\mathbf{g})\; e^{i\mathbf{k}\cdot\mathbf{g}}. \tag{2.2}$$

AOs, in turn, are linear combinations of Gaussian type functions (GTF, see below). This approximation is inspired by the Slater-type orbitals (which are analytical solutions of the stationary Schrödinger equation of hydrogen-like atoms), but uses GTFs, which ensures that a two-centre distribution can be replaced by a one-centre distribution, simplifying integration. Although combination of GTFs increases the number of functions and integrals in the calculation, the integrals involving Gaussian functions are quicker to compute than Slater-type orbitals, so there is a net gain in the efficiency of the calculation.

2.5.1 Construction of atomic orbitals in CRYSTAL

Eqs 2.1 and 2.2 show how CRYSTAL constructs COs from AOs. The latter are expressed as linear combination of a certain number of Gaussian type functions (GTF):

$$\varphi_{\mu}(\mathbf{r}-\mathbf{A}_{\mu}-\mathbf{g}) = \sum_{j}^{n_G} d_j\; G(\alpha_j;\mathbf{r}-\mathbf{A}_{\mu}-\mathbf{g}), \tag{2.3}$$

where the sum over μ is limited to the number of basis functions; A is the centre (defined by atomic coordinates), $\mathbf{r}$ is the coordinate of an electron, $\mathbf{g}$ is the direct lattice vector (the sum over $\mathbf{g}$ in eq. 2.2 is extended to all lattice vectors of (periodic) direct lattice), $\mathbf{k}$ is lattice vector defining a point in the reciprocal lattice. Coefficients a, d and α are constants defined in the basis set. Coefficients a (eq. 2.1) are variational coefficients for multiplying Bloch functions; d are coefficients of the primitive gaussians in the contraction, fixed for a given basis set (the sum over j is limited to the number of functions in the contraction), and α are the exponents. Large values of α

are used to construct narrow GTOs (in the limit of infinite α a GTO approximates the Dirac delta function), i.e. it restricts electron to a small region around the centre (atomic nucleus), while small values of α generate diffuse (spread out) functions, and can describe electrons in chemical bonds (far from the nucleus).

The AOs belonging to a given atom are grouped into shells. The shell can contain either all AOs with the same quantum numbers, n and l (for instance 3s, 2p, 3d shells), or all the AOs with the same principal quantum number n and different l (sp shells; exponents of s and p gaussians are the same, but their coefficients are different).

Each shell, depending on its type, and regardless of n, is used to generate a fixed number of AOs: s shells generate 1 AO, sp – 4 AOs, p – 3, d – 5, and f – 7. The formal shell electronic charge is the number of electrons attributed to each shell as initial electronic configuration. The electronic configuration of the atoms is used in the calculation of the atomic wave function only (and only when the guess for SCF is a superposition of atomic densities). The formal charge may correspond to a neutral atom or to an ion.

2.5.2 Boltzmann transport equation in CRYSTAL

With CRYSTAL it is possible to post-process DFT wavefunctions for evaluating the electron transport properties by solving the Boltzmann equation in the relaxation time approximation. Classically, it has the following form [11]:

$$\frac{\partial f}{\partial t} + \alpha \cdot \mathrm{grad}_v f + v \cdot \mathrm{grad}_r f = -\frac{f - f_0}{\tau}, \tag{2.4}$$

where r are Cartesian coordinates, v is velocity, α is acceleration dv/dt, $f(r, v)$ is a distribution function, such that

$$f(r, v)drdv = \text{number of particles in } drdv,$$

$\tau(r, v)$ is relaxation time, defined by the equation

$$\left(\frac{\partial f}{\partial t}\right)_{coll} = -(f - f_0)/\tau, \tag{2.5}$$

where f_0 is the distribution function in thermal equilibrium.

Solution of the classical Boltzmann transport equation provides the classical distribution function that describes positions and velocities of classical particles. In CRYSTAL, the semiclassical Boltzmann transport theory is used. Solution of the semiclassical transport equation yields a distribution function that describes electrons in an energy band. From the distribution function macroscopic quantities of interest, such as Seebeck coefficient and electronic conductivity, are derived [26].

At the core of the equations coded into CRYSTAL for obtaining transport coefficients is the transport distribution function, cast as the energy projected tensor:

$$\Xi_{qr}(E) = \tau \sum_{\mathbf{k}} \frac{1}{N_k} \frac{1}{V} \sum_{i,j} v_{i,q}(\mathbf{k}) \delta(E - E_i(\mathbf{k})), \tag{2.6}$$

where $N_{\mathbf{k}}$ is the number of $\boldsymbol{k}$-points used in sampling the reciprocal space, $v_{i,q}(\mathbf{k})$ is the velocity of the i^{th} (j^{th}) band, calculated along the direction $q(r)$, and defined as the derivative of the band energies $E(i, \mathbf{k})$ w.r.t. a reciprocal space vector k_q:

$$v_{i,q}(\mathbf{k}) = \frac{\partial E_i(\mathbf{k})}{\partial k_q}. \tag{2.7}$$

In eq. 2.6, δ is an approximation to Dirac's delta function, and τ is the electronic relaxation time, which is assumed to be not dependent on k (constant relaxation time approximation). Relaxation time is temperature-dependent and cannot be obtained from first-principles calculations, and, therefore, must be either fitted or obtained

experimentally [19, 27].

By integrating conductivity distributions written with tensors of eq. 2.6, it is possible for CRYSTAL to obtain conductivity tensors, for instance, the electrical conductivity σ:

$$\sigma_{qr}(T;\mu) = e^2 \int dE \left(-\frac{\partial f_0}{\partial E}\right) \Xi_{qr}(E), \tag{2.8}$$

where μ is the chemical potential or Fermi level, E is the energy, f_0 is the Fermi-Dirac distribution, and T is the temperature. Thermoelectric coefficient σS, where S is the Seebeck coefficient, is cast as:

$$[\sigma S]_{qr}(T;\mu) = \frac{e}{T} \int dE \left(\frac{\partial f_0}{\partial E}\right) (E-\mu)\Xi_{qr}(E). \tag{2.9}$$

From eqs 2.9 and 2.8, the Seebeck coefficient is then calculated for each value of μ. Computationally, precision of these calculations is determined, mainly, by the pre-computed wavefunctions. Accuracy depends on the density of k-points: too few points results in sparse evaluation of $v_{i,q}(\mathbf{k})$, which yields a coarse transport distribution function.

2.6 Cerium dioxide

Cerium dioxide (CeO_2, ceria) is a material whose utility stems from its ionic and polaronic conductivities. Thus, it is not surprising that the polaron properties of ceria were the subject of numerous experimental and theoretical studies [28–32]. The applications based on these properties of CeO_2 include the use of it as an electrolyte in solid oxide fuel cells [33], membranes for oxygen separation [34, 35], oxygen sensors [35, 36], it has a high electrostriction coefficient, making it useful in micro-electro-mechanics and other electromechanical applications [37, 38], and it is a well-known catalyst [39]. This work focuses on interaction between oxygen vacancies and the lattice of CeO_2, including other point defects that may be present in the material.

Usually,CeO_2 exists in a fluorite structure (space group No. 225, $Fm\bar{3}m$, face-centred cubic lattice) with Ce^{+4} occupying a high-symmetry position, neighboured by eight O^{2-} ions. Pure ceria has a characteristically low small polaron conductivity [40]. In this material, polarons are created when electrons re-localize to distinct Ce^{+3} ions, affected by formation of oxygen vacancies.

Conductivity of ceria is improved when CeO_2 is doped with lanthanide ions. For example, Gd- or Tb-doped CeO_2 demonstrates higher electrical conductivity relative to undoped samples [41, 42]. Trivalent rare earth dopants, e.g. Gd^{+3}, Sm^{+3}, and Pr^{+3} promote oxygen vacancy formation and, thus, enable ionic conductivity [43–47].

Tb ions are particularly effective enhancers of ionic conductivity, therefore ceria doped with Tb is a prospective material for mixed-conductive membranes for oxygen separation; in addition, this material is distinguished by fast transport of oxygen ions, favourable redox catalytic properties and pronounced chemical compatibility with water and carbon dioxide at high temperatures [34, 48]. In contrast to other trivalent dopants, specifically, Gd^{+3} with limited solubility in ceria [2], Tb is much more compatible with the lattice of CeO_2, which results in much better solubility (section 3.2.5).

2.7 Zinc oxide

Zinc oxide (ZnO) is a multi-functional material. Despite more than two decades of intensive research, the capabilities of ZnO are still not exhausted, and new insights for materials science can still be learned by studying this compound and its defects. The form of ZnO is no less versatile than its function: zinc oxide can be grown as large single crystals of high purity, deposited as thin films, or made amorphous [49–51]. It has a 3.4 eV wide band gap, strong room temperature luminescence, high electron mobility, high thermal conductivity and large exciton binding energy [52].

This material has found uses in a large variety of applications, including but not limited to: thin film transistors, solar cells, diodes, displays [53–56], transparent conductors, sensors/emitters of blue and UV light, and to functional coatings [52, 57]; ZnO also has pigmental, (photo) catalytic, piezoelectric, antibacterial, and varistor properties [58–60] that are being explored for their application across many fields of industry.

A shared fundamental aspect for these application is the fact that creating an n-type semiconductor from ZnO is a relatively straightforward task because, among its intrinsic defects, oxygen vacancies are the most stable [61–64]. This, combined with its large band gap, electron mobility, and dopant-induced n-type conductivity [65–67] make it a very good material for transparent electronics.

Still novel applications emerge in various domains but they often require the preliminary stabilization of a p-type ZnO counterpart to the natural n-type ZnO to be stimulated. Obtaining p-type ZnO thin films would be an important milestone in transparent electronics, allowing the production of wide band gap p–n homo-junctions [68–70], opening doors to revolutionary technologies in light emitting diodes, lasers, etc. [57, 71, 72]. Unfortunately the lack of p-type ZnO slows down the launch of this promising new market activity.

Because of its considerable technological interest, a lot of research was made on the formation of local and extended defects in ZnO that might be able to produce p-type conductivity [58, 73]. In summary, all experiments and first-principle calculations carried out on ZnO bulk agree that large amount of Zn vacancies, an intrinsic p-type defect, are difficult to stabilize [74–76], even though such defects and their complexes are expected to play a pivotal role in the generation of p-type charge carriers [73].

At the same time, p-type doping in ZnO thin films is hindered by a self-compensation effect from native donor defects (V_O and Zn_i) and/or hydrogen incorporation and mostly requires elevated growth temperatures [77]. The conductivity of p-type ZnO thin films is substantially lower compared to n-type ZnO. The cause of lower conductivity is the large effective mass and thus the low mobility of the holes in the valence band, which is mainly composed of p-orbital levels of oxygen. A new approach to obtain p-type ZnO instead of doping is to produce a significant number of Zn vacancies and their complexes in order to generate p-type charge carriers [78, 79].

Among other difficulties related to achieving p-type conductivity through doping, is a strange behaviour of oxygen-substituting nitrogen. Extensive theoretical investigations clearly stipulate that nitrogen, that is considered so far as the most natural substituent for oxygen to trigger the appearance of p-typeness in ZnO, cannot lead to p-type conductivity at ambient conditions because of too deep acceptor levels [52, 80–82]. These assertions clearly point out the recurring problem in engendering p-type ZnO in a reproducible way. In that context, a recent discovery of nitrogen-doped zinc-deficient ZnO nanoparticles that clearly exhibit p-type properties for periods longer than 2 years and half on samples stored at ambient conditions is very surprising [83].

As a result of advances in growing methods, current research on p-type conductivity in ZnO-related topics is shifting towards complex materials such as In-Ga-Zn-O thin films [84–88], In-Zn-Sn-O [89], mixes of oxides or spinels [73, 90–92], and to amorphous phases of ZnO and related materials [67, 70, 93–96].

3. THE CASE OF CERIUM DIOXIDE

3.1 Oxygen vacancy in undoped CeO_2

In this work the investigated system is reduced ceria, i.e. cerium dioxide with oxygen vacancies. To model this system, a supercell of CeO_2 is created, from which one oxygen atom is then extracted, together with its 8 electrons. Ce ions adjacent to the vacancy become reduced (they no longer have to share some of their electrons with the extracted oxygen, so they gain them back). This work explores how relaxation of such system with DFT methods depends on the choice of supercell (local symmetry of the defect), and which mode of electronic (de)localization is more probable in such system.

Small polaron conductivity is typical for undoped CeO_2 [40, 97]. Ceria intrinsically forms oxygen vacancies that are modelled here as positively charged w.r.t. undisturbed system (a region of space where an oxygen atom used to be, when vacant, has a lower electronic density), and, to compensate this charge, Ce^{3+} ions are formed.

3.1.1 Supercell selection

An argument stated in section 2.2 poses that by varying the size of a supercell one can obtain cells with symmetrically different positions originating from the same source (the so called Wyckoff positions' splitting). It follows then, that for any given material there are electronic solutions incompatible with the space group symmetry, e.g. if all metal ions in a cell are symmetrically equivalent, an antiferromagnetic alignment of their electronic spins will have to break this symmetry.

Because introduction of a point defect nullifies the "inner" translations of the supercell (combinations of the host crystal primitive translations), the point group of the defective crystal is defined by the site symmetry group of the defect. Fig. 3.1 illustrates this point with a 96-atom supercell of CeO_2, created with eq. 2.2, where $n = 2$.

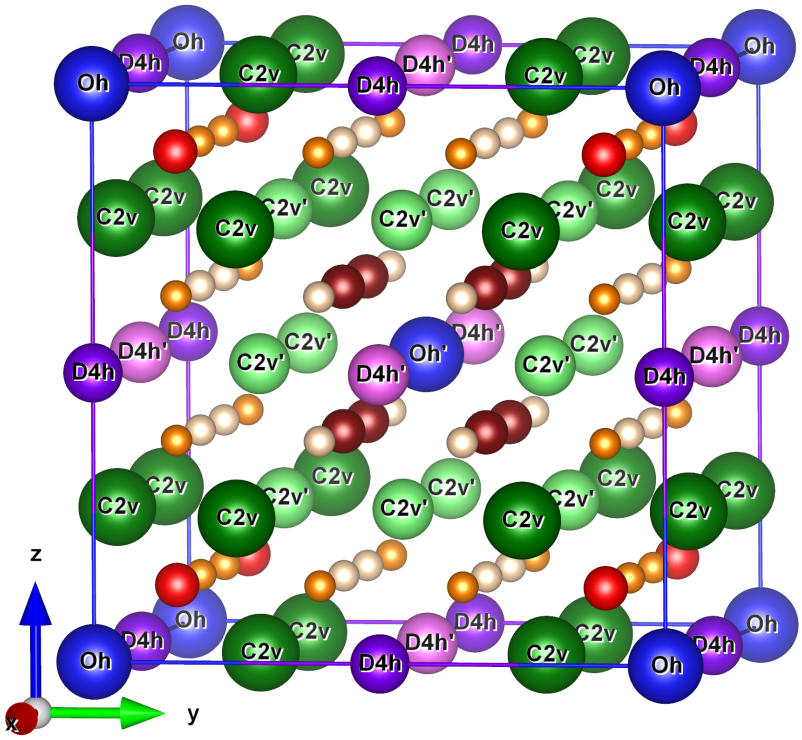

Figure 3.1: Distribution of symmetry orbits in a 96-atom CeO_2 supercell. Cationic sites are labelled. Colours and labels represent orbits of the same symmetry, see text and tables 3.1 – 3.2

If all atoms belonging to the same symmetry orbit (same colour) are substituted with a different atomic species, the entire symmetry of the supercell remains intact, including "inner" translations that exist only within this symmetry orbit and do not coincide with lattice translations. However, if the substitution is partial, changing only some atoms in the orbit, then the "inner" translations are violated and the number of symmetry operations is reduced. In effect, all possible symmetry-compatible solutions to electron localization depend on the choice of the defect placement.

In the following sections, a symbol **L *V* (*A*)** will be used to identify supercells. L marks the type of Lattice (F for face-centred cubic, P for primitive), V is Volume expansion factor (determinant of the transformation matrix, the number of unit cells in a supercell), and A is Atom count. For instance, F64(192) means "a face-centred cubic supercell consisting of 64 unit cells, totalling 192 atoms". It also means that eq. 2.1 with $n = 4$ was used to create this supercell. P32(96) means a supercell created with eq. 2.2, where $n = 2$.

Using the program WYCKSPLIT [98] of the Bilbao Crystallographic Server[1] [99], it is possible to identify all symmetry-allowed splittings of Wyckoff positions. Tables 3.1 and 3.2 list distribution of oxygen and cerium atoms over the symmetry orbits for reasonably small supercells (under 200 atoms).

Table 3.1: Oxygen site symmetry in different supercells

F1(3)	F8(24)	F27(81)	F64(192)	P1(12)	P32(96)
T_d (S24)[i]	$2 \times C_{3v}$ (S6)	C_s (S2); C_{2v} (S4); $2 \times C_{3v}$ (S6); T_d (S24)	$4 \times C_s$ (S2); $4 \times C_{3v}$ (S6)	C_{3v} (S6)	$2 \times C_s$ (S2); $2 \times C_{3v}$ (S6)

i. SN is the number of point symmetry operations in a given orbit in the supercell

Table 3.2: Cerium site symmetry in different supercells

F1(3)	F8(24)	F27(81)	F64(192)	P1(12)	P32(96)
O_h (S48)	D_{2h} (S8); $2 \times O_h$ (S48)	C_{2v} (S4); C_{3v} (S6); C_{4v} (S8); O_h (S48)	C_s (S2); $2 \times C_{2v}$ (S4); D_{2h} (S8); C_{4v} (S8); T_d (S24); $2 \times O_h$ (S48)	D_{4h} (S16); O_h (S48)	$2 \times C_{2v}$ (S4); $2 \times D_{4h}$ (S16); $2 \times O_h$ (S48)

Based on this initial symmetry assessment for the purpose of modelling oxygen vacancy, not only is F27(81) the smallest supercell with a low-symmetry C_s position, it is also the most inclusive supercell, representing all possible point symmetries an oxygen position can have. Therefore, this supercell has been used in all the following calculations. As an additional note, C_s is the lowest-symmetry point group of the $Fm\bar{3}m$ space group, which further solidifies the choice of F27(81).

3.1.2 Computational details

All calculations were made using CRYSTAL [19]. Tolerance factors of 8, 8, 8, 8, and 20 for the Coulomb and exchange integrals were used. The SCF convergence threshold for the total electron energy was set to 10^{-9} Hartree, and the threshold for change in energy between consecutive geometry optimization steps was set to 10^{-8} Hartree.

Two hybrid exchange-correlation functionals were tested: PBE0 [100] and HSE06 [101, 102]. Hybrid DFT functionals with the selected basis sets generally outperform LDA and GGA(+U) functionals, yielding results that are, on average, more consistent with experimentally observed properties of CeO_2. Both functionals reproduce basic properties of bulk ceria reasonably well, and, while HSE06 better reproduces the band gap of this material

[1] https://www.cryst.ehu.es

in comparison to PBE0, the latter is computationally less demanding, and produces more accurate vibrational frequencies. For these reasons the calculations for F27(81) supercells with oxygen vacancy were performed exclusively with PBE0 functional.

All calculations of defective cells were spin-polarized. The reciprocal space was sampled with Monkhorst-Pack [103] k-point grids of varying densities: $2 \times 2 \times 2$ for all calculations of the F27(81) supercell; $3 \times 3 \times 3$ for calculations of the primitive cell, and $32 \times 32 \times 32$ for calculating elastic constants with the primitive cell.

Basis sets were adopted from literature. Oxygen atoms were represented with a basis set taken from Bredow *et al.* [104], and for Ce atoms a basis with quasi-relativistic effective-core pseudopotential with 28 core and 30 valence electrons was adopted from [105]. Prior to the main calculations both basis sets were partially modified using the program OPTBAS [106] and HSE06 functional.

Oxygen vacancies were introduced in supercells by removing oxygen atoms from various lattice positions. Oxygen-rich conditions were assumed, as these are the operational conditions that CeO_2 is subject to as electrolyte in solid oxide fuel cells and in oxygen-separating membranes, and it is under these conditions that bulk diffusion of oxide ions is rate limiting. Therefore, formation energy of a V_O^{+2} in a neutral supercell was calculated as

$$E_F = E_{tot}^{V_O^{+2}} - E_{tot}^{p} + \mu_O, \tag{3.1}$$

where superscripts p and V_O^{+2} respectively denote a perfect supercell, and a supercell with one oxygen vacancy; E_{tot}^{X} is the total electron energy, and μ_O is the chemical potential of an oxygen atom, calculated as half of the total electron energy of a O_2 molecule.

3.1.3 Oxygen vacancies and electronic localization

Normally, cerium dioxide is ionic enough to safely assume that all Ce ions, having donated all their outer shell electrons ($4f^1 5d^1 6s^2$), are in the 4+ oxidation state, and all oxygen ions are 2–. Therefore, creation of an oxygen vacancy by removing an oxygen atom from the supercell together with its own valence electrons, leaves behind the two donated electrons that tend to localize in the conduction sub-band formed by Ce's $4f$ orbitals. One way of modelling experimentally observed formation of small polarons [40] is to consider the four Ce ions which are nearest neighbours to an oxygen vacancy, and to compare different modes of electronic localization over these ions. In the text below, electrons' localization over two neighbouring Ce ions will be considered as representation of a small polaron, and localization over three and more Ce ions—a large polaron, for such localization, together with atomic displacements w.r.t. their original positions, exceeds the boundaries of CeO_2 primitive cell, even though it is still confined to the supercell.

Table 3.3 presents all possible[2] configurations of these localizations. The first column names the site symmetry of the removed oxygen ion, and categorizes symmetry equivalence of the neighbouring Ce ions. For instance, the label $C_s(S2)/$(Ce1,Ce2)(Ce3)(Ce4) means that an oxygen vacancy at a C_s site that has two symmetry operations, is surrounded by three distinct groups of Ce ions, one of which has two symmetrically equivalent ce ions (Ce1 and Ce2). Label $C_{3v}(S6)/$(Ce1)(Ce2,Ce3,Ce4) marks an oxygen vacancy at a C_{3v} site with 6 symmetry operations, surrounded by two groups of Ce ions, one of which has three symmetrically equivalent Ce's. For each allowed magnetic configuration, all symmetrically equivalent Ce ions must have the same spin projection, either $1/2$, $-1/2$, or 0.

Columns 2-4 of table 3.3 describe the magnetic properties of each solution. Second column lists the total projected spin (S_z) for each starting magnetic configuration, as well as the distribution of electrons: '+' marks a Ce ion with a non-zero net magnetic moment (*some* degree of electronic localization), and '–' marks a Ce ion without an associated magnetic moment. In the 3$^{\text{rd}}$ column, N is the number of displaced Ce ions with a non-zero

[2] Computationally viable, see text below

magnetic moment. The next column lists values of the magnetic moments (μ) of these ions after relaxation (signs denote spin orientation).

Columns 5-6 list bond lengths between displaced Ce ions and their closest O [d(Ce–O)], and relative displacements of all V_O^{+2}-encircling Ce ions with respect to their distances in a perfect crystal (positive sign of Δd(Ce–Ce) means an outward motion). For $N = 2$ (S2 and S4) there are 3 values: the change in distance between the Ce ions closest to the V_O^{+2}, the change of distance between the other two Ce ions, and the change of distance between these two pairs of ions. For $N = 3$ (S2) these three values are: distance change in the closest pair, distance change for the next closest ion, and distance change between Ce with non-zero μ, same as for $N = 4$ (S4), except all values refer to pairs of ions. For $S6$ two values are given: changes of distances between the three equivalent ions, and the distance change between the other ion and the three equivalent ones. For S24 there is only one value, the distance change between the 4 equivalent ions.

Formation energies according to eq. 3.1 are in the 7^{th} column, and are given with respect to solution with the lowest energy (first row of the table, $C_s(S2)$ with $S_z = 0$, and $E_F = 4.10$ eV). The last column lists volumes of the relaxed supercells.

Table 3.3 clearly demonstrates that exploiting symmetry is necessary for exploring all possible magnetic configurations. At the time of publishing [107], this has been a novel approach to modelling point defects in symmetric supercells. Another symmetry-related conclusion is that symmetry reduction is necessary to obtain a solution with the lowest energy: the highest vacancy formation energies correspond to the most symmetrical solutions, where the two leftover electrons are delocalized over the four neighbouring Ce cations, forming a large polaron.

In contrast, for symmetry configurations with 2 Ce ions neither of which is symmetrically equivalent to either of two remaining cations, it is possible to obtain a small polaron, with vacancy electrons localizing on 2 Ce cations. Three such solutions that are listed in table 3.3 as $C_s(S2)$ with $S_z = 0$, $C_s(S2)$ with $S_z = 1$, and $C_{2v}(S4)$ with $S_z = 1$, have low vacancy formation energies, with the first one, corresponding to opposite-spin solution, being the lowest. Crucially, the opposite-spin solution is only available for the $C_s(S2)$ configuration, in which the 4 Ce atoms are split into 3 symmetry orbits. Small energy differences between spin-aligned and opposite-spin solutions are consistent with previous results [31].

Structural changes are consistent across the entirety of results: Ce ions move away from the vacancy and closer to the other O ions, while volume of the supercell increases, with largest expansion corresponding to small polaron-like solutions. This result corresponds well to experimental data: Marrocchelli *et al.* [108, 109] has attributed volume increase in CeO_2 to chemical expansion caused by larger cation size of reduced Ce ions.

Results presented in this section are published in ***[A 1]***. The author has performed basis optimisation calculations for Ce and O, calculations of CeO_2 (both with- and without oxygen vacancy), has gathered the data and has contributed his writing to the paper.

Table 3.3: All magnetic configurations allowed by point symmetries in the F27(81) supercell

Site symmetry/ symmetry equivalence of Ce atoms	Spin projection (S_z)	N	μ, μ_B	d(Ce–O)[i], Å	Δd(Ce–Ce)[ii], Å	ΔE_F[iii], meV	Volume[iv], Å^3
$C_s(S2)$/ (Ce1,Ce2)(Ce3)(Ce4)	0 (–,–)(+)(+)	2	0.96 -0.96	2×2.30	0.17 0.23 0.30	0	1068.07
	1/2 (+,+)(–)(+)	3	2×-0.49 0.96	2×2.24 2.30	0.20 0.22 0.20	306	1067.47
	1 (–,–)(+)(+)	2	2×0.96	2×2.30	0.17 0.23 0.30	0.2	1068.06
	3/2 (+,+)(–)(+)	3	2×0.50 0.96	2.25 2.25 2.31	0.21 0.23 0.21	338	1067.27
$C_{2v}(S4)$/ (Ce1,Ce2)(Ce3,Ce4)	0 (+,+)(+,+)	4	$2 \times +0.49$ 2×-0.49	2×2.25	0.22 0.22 0.23	610	1066.56
	1 (–,–)(+,+)	2	2×0.96	2×2.30	0.17 0.23 0.30	0.2	1068.08
	2 (+,+)(+,+)	4	4×0.49	4×2.25	0.22 0.22 0.23	611	1066.50
$C_{3v}(S6)$/ (Ce1)(Ce2,Ce3,Ce4)	1 (+)(+,+,+)	4	-0.95 3×0.35	2.30 3×2.23	0.21 0.24	432	1066.67
	3/2 (–)(+,+,+)	3	3×0.65	3×2.27	0.22 0.26	396	1067.82
	2 (+)(+,+,+)	4	0.97 3×0.35	2.30 3×2.23	0.21 0.24	431	1066.82
$T_d(S24)$/ (Ce1,Ce2,Ce3,Ce4)	2 (+,+,+,+)	4	4×0.49	4×2.24	0.25	768	1066.71

i. 2.34 Å in the perfect crystal
ii. 3.82 Å in the perfect crystal
iii. As calculated by eq. 3.1, w.r.t. the first row of this table with $E_F = 4.10$ eV
iv. 1059.19 Å^3 for the perfect crystal

3.2 Tb in CeO_2

3.2.1 Supercell selection

Four structures were used to analyse Tb solubility in CeO_2: two unit cells for the cases of pure CeO_2 and TbO_2 in fluorite structure, representing a +4 oxidation state of either ion. The other two are superstructures (ordered solid solutions), representing two different (absolutely ordered) Tb distribution modes at 50% substitution. The first superstructure is a primitive cell, P1(12), with Tb layers ordered in the [001] direction, fig. 3.2(a). The second superstructure is a 8-fold isotropic expansion of the face-centred cubic cell, F8(24), with Tb layers ordered in the [111] direction, fig. 3.2(b).

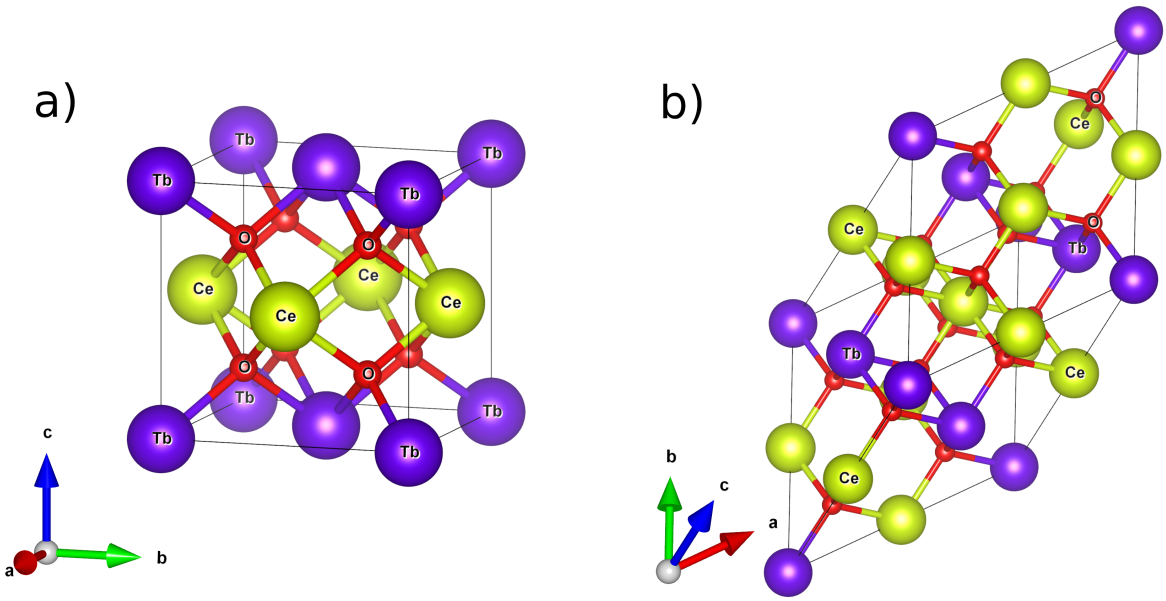

Figure 3.2: Two superstructures, representing different orderings in $Ce_{0.5}Tb_{0.5}O_2$ solutions, corresponding to (a): P1(12), and (b): F8(24) supercells, adopted from [110]

A detailed analysis of Tb properties in CeO_2 matrix, including Tb's effect on oxygen vacancy formation and the associated electronic localization, was performed using a 96-atom supercell P32(96). The choice of this supercell is motivated by a balance between reasonable concentration (ca. 3 at.%), relatively small size, and a good variety of sites for Tb placement, see tables 3.1 and 3.2.

3.2.2 Computational details

At the time of conducting this research, no reliable, un-ionized, gaussian-type orbital basis set was available for Tb, therefore, a plane-wave basis set was used in this part of the study. DFT calculations were performed using VASP 5 with PBE PAW potentials generated by Georg Kresse, following methods suggested by Peter Blöchl [111, 112]. PBE exchange-correlation functional [102] was used with an on site +U correction, as formulated by Dudarev *et al.* [113]. U values were chosen based on available data in literature: for Ce $4f$ electrons, U=5.0 was used [31, 114], while U=6.0 was applied to Tb $4f$ electrons [115]. Both values were applied simultaneously. Plane-wave cutoff energy was set to 520 eV, all calculations were spin-polarized, convergence threshold for difference in total energy was set to 10^{-6} eV. Integration in the reciprocal space was done using the following Γ-centred Monkhorst-Pack meshes of k-points: $4 \times 4 \times 4$ for primitive cells and P1(12) supercell (fig. 3.2(a)), $3 \times 3 \times 3$ for F8(24) supercell (fig. 3.2(b)), and $2 \times 2 \times 2$ for P32(96) supercell. Charges of ions were calculated using Bader's space-partitioning scheme [116, 117].

3.2.3 The method of concentration waves

To use DFT results in the analysis of the relative stability of phases at $T \neq 0$ K, Concentration Waves method (CW), as formulated in refs. [118, 119] was used. In CW approach the distribution of B atoms in a binary A–B alloy is described by a single occupation probability function, $n(\vec{R})$. This function gives the probability to find the atom B (Tb, in this case) at the site $\vec{R}$ of the lattice. Such approximation is based on the treatment of ordered phases in the crystalline structure of solid solution which are stable with respect to the formation of antiphase domains. The choice of these ordered structures does not depend on the type of interatomic interactions and is dictated only by symmetry considerations [120, 121].

In CW method the structure determination problem is formulated in terms of the reciprocal lattice through the analysis of CW amplitudes which can be interpreted as both structure amplitudes of the superlattice reflections and as long-range order (LRO) parameters. The occupation probability $n(\vec{R})$ for atoms at position $\vec{R}$ can be represented in a Fourier series by linear superpositions of static concentration waves:

$$n(\vec{R}) = c + \frac{1}{2}\sum_j [Q(\mathbf{k}_j)\exp(i\mathbf{k}_j\vec{R}) + Q^*(\mathbf{k}_j)\exp(-1\mathbf{k}_j\vec{R})] \tag{3.1}$$

A static CW is represented as $\exp(i\mathbf{k}_j\vec{R})$, where $\mathbf{k}_j$ is a non-zero wave vector defined in the first Brillouin zone of the disordered alloy, $\vec{R}$ is a site vector of the lattice, and the index j denotes the wave vectors in the Brillouin zone. $Q(\mathbf{k}_j)$ is amplitude of a static CW, and c is the atomic fraction of the alloying element. The star set of wave vectors $\mathbf{k}_j$ is formed by several interpenetrating Bravais lattices that can be brought in coincidence with each other by the superlattice rotation and reflection symmetry operations. Usually, the term refers only to sublattice sites that form the Bravais lattice.

The concentration waves are eigenfunctions of the matrix formed by pairwise interatomic energies $\tilde{V}_{pq}(\vec{R}, \vec{R\prime})$. In an AB binary system, $\tilde{V}(\vec{R}, \vec{R\prime})$ is the interaction energy for atoms at lattice sites $\vec{R}$ and $\vec{R\prime}$ [118, 119, 122]:

$$\tilde{V}\left(\vec{R}, \vec{R}'\right) = V_{AA}\left(\vec{R}, \vec{R}'\right) + V_{BB}\left(\vec{R}, \vec{R}'\right) - 2V_{AB}\left(\vec{R}, \vec{R}'\right). \tag{3.2}$$

3.2.4 Formation energy

Gibbs formation energy for oxygen vacancy in Tb-doped CeO_2 was calculated as

$$\Delta G_F^{V_O^{+2}} = E_{tot}^{Tb,V_O} - E_{tot}^{Tb} + \mu_O(T, p_{O_2}), \tag{3.3}$$

where E_{tot}^{Tb,V_O}, E_{tot}^{Tb} are total electronic energies of supercells, with, respectively, co-presence of Tb and V_O^{+2}, and that which only has a Tb ion. Oxygen chemical potential $\mu_O(T, p_{O_2})$ was calculated according to a method published in [123], which casts it as

$$\mu_O(T, p_{O_2}) = \mu_O^0(T) + \frac{1}{2}k_BT\ln\frac{p_{O_2}}{p^0} = E_{tot}^{AO} - E_{tot}^{A} - \Delta G^{AO}(T^0) + \Delta\mu_O(T) + \frac{1}{2}k_BT\ln\frac{p_{O_2}}{p^0}, \tag{3.4}$$

where $\mu_O(T)$ is the standard chemical potential, superscripts AO and A denote, respectively, a reference oxide, and its metal; $\Delta G^{AO}(T^0)$ is the oxide's standard heat of formation, taken from a database of experimentally obtained values [124]. $\Delta\mu_O(T)$ is difference between chemical potential at a temperature T and that in the standard state ($T^0 = 298.15$ K), which is also taken from the database. k_B is the Boltzmann constant, p_{O_2} and p^0 are partial oxygen pressure and start pressure, respectively.

Values of E_{tot}^{AO} and E_{tot}^{A} were calculated with DFT method; computational treatment of oxides included van der Waals correction by Grimme *et al.* [125], since inclusion of these corrections yielded more precise values of lattice constants (especially for lighter metal oxides), and produced a smaller root mean square deviation for the

whole dataset. The final value of $\mu_O(T, p_{O_2})$ was obtained by averaging the values computed for different oxides.

3.2.5 Tb solubility in CeO_2

The effective interatomic mixing potential is expressed in the form

$$\tilde{V}\left(\vec{R},\vec{R}'\right) = V_{CeCe}\left(\vec{R},\vec{R}'\right) + V_{TbTb}\left(\vec{R},\vec{R}'\right) - 2V_{CeTb}\left(\vec{R},\vec{R}'\right), \tag{3.5}$$

where $V_{CeCe}\left(\vec{R},\vec{R}'\right)$, $V_{TbTb}\left(\vec{R},\vec{R}'\right)$, and $V_{CeTb}\left(\vec{R},\vec{R}'\right)$ are effective pairwise interatomic potentials, and $\vec{R}$, $\vec{R}'$ are sites in the cationic sub-lattice. Configurational part of the free energy for a solid solution (neglecting the phonon contribution) in CW approach is given in [118] as:

$$\begin{aligned} F = \frac{1}{2}\sum_{\substack{\vec{R},\vec{R}'\\ \vec{R}\neq\vec{R}'}} \tilde{V}\left(\vec{R},\vec{R}'\right) n\left(\vec{R}\right) n\left(\vec{R}'\right) \\ + kT\sum_{\vec{R}}\left[n\left(\vec{R}\right)\ln\left(n\left(\vec{R}\right)\right)+\left(1-n\left(\vec{R}\right)\right)\ln\left(1-n\left(\vec{R}\right)\right)\right] \\ - \mu\sum_{\vec{R}} n(\vec{R}). \end{aligned} \tag{3.6}$$

Summation in eq. 3.6 runs over sites of the Ising lattice (fcc in this case), with Ce and Tb atoms distributed in it. The first term in eq. 3.6 corresponds to the internal energy, the second one is entropy term (-TS), and μ is chemical potential (strictly, indefinite multiplier of Lagrange). The function $n\left(\vec{R}\right)$ that determines the distribution of solute atoms in the ordered superstructures that are stable with respect to the formation of antiphase domains may be expanded into the Fourier series:

$$n\left(\vec{R}\right) = c + \frac{1}{2}\sum_{s}\eta_s\sum_{j_s}\left[\gamma_s\left(j_s\right)\exp\left(i\vec{\mathbf{k}_{j_s}}\vec{R}\right)+\gamma_s^*\exp\left(-i\vec{\mathbf{k}_{j_s}}\vec{R}\right)\right], \tag{3.7}$$

where $\vec{\mathbf{k}_{j_s}}$ are vectors of the reciprocal lattice belonging to the star s, j_s numerates vectors of the star s, and $\gamma_s(j_s)$ are coefficients that determine symmetry of the function $n\left(\vec{R}\right)$ with respect to reflection and rotation operations. $n\left(\vec{R}\right)$ linearly depends on the long range order (LRO) parameters (η_s) of the superstructures that may be formed on the basis of the Ising lattice of the disordered solid solution. The LRO parameters are defined in such a way that they are equal to unity in a completely ordered state, where the occupation probabilities $n\left(\vec{R}\right)$ on all the lattice sites $\left\{\vec{R}\right\}$ are either unity or zero. To determine the LRO parameters, an additional normalization condition for $\gamma_s(j_s)$ should be used:

$$\sum_{j_s}\gamma_s(j_s) = 1 \tag{3.8}$$

For the disordered state all η_s are equal to zero. Substitution of eq. 3.7 into eq. 3.6 allows casting the free energy of formation of solid solution in terms of Fourier transforms of the effective interatomic mixing potential, $\tilde{V}\left(\vec{\mathbf{k}_{j_s}}\right)$:

$$\tilde{V}\left(\vec{\mathbf{k}_{j_s}}\right) = \sum_{a}\tilde{V}\left(\vec{R_a}\right)\cdot\exp\left(i\vec{\mathbf{k}_{j_s}}\vec{R_a}\right). \tag{3.9}$$

The two superstructures (fig. 3.2) used here to represent $(Ce_{1-c}Tb_c)O_2$ solid solution are characterized by their $\vec{k_{j_s}}$ vectors: $\vec{k_1} = \frac{2\pi}{a}(0,0,1)$ for P1(12), and $\vec{k_1} = \frac{2\pi}{a}(\frac{1}{2},\frac{1}{2},\frac{1}{2})$ for F8(24), where a is the cubic lattice parameter. Substituting these vectors in eq. 3.7 yields the following occupation probabilities for each superstructure:

$$n_1\left(\vec{R}\right) = c + \eta_1\gamma_1\exp(2\pi iz) \tag{3.10}$$

$$n_2\left(\vec{R}\right) = c + \eta_2\gamma_2 \exp\left(i\pi(x+y+z)\right). \tag{3.11}$$

For both superstructures in this analysis $c = 0.5$, and LRO parameters are unitary, thus $\gamma_1 = \gamma_2 = 1/2$.

Substituting eqs 3.10 and 3.11 into eq. 3.5, free energies of formation for the superstructure 1 and 2 (per site of fcc sub-lattice), respectively, are obtained:

$$\begin{aligned} F_1 = {} & \frac{1}{2}\tilde{V}(0)c(c-1) + \frac{1}{8}\tilde{V}\left(\vec{\mathbf{k}_1}\right)\eta_1^2 \\ & + kT\left[\left(c+\frac{1}{2}\eta_1\right)\ln\left(c+\frac{1}{2}\eta_1\right) + \left(1-c-\frac{1}{2}\eta_1\right)\ln\left(1-c-\frac{1}{2}\eta_1\right)\right] \end{aligned} \tag{3.12}$$

$$\begin{aligned} F_2 = {} & \frac{1}{2}\tilde{V}(0)c(c-1) + \frac{1}{8}\tilde{V}\left(\vec{\mathbf{k}_2}\right)\eta_2^2 \\ & + kT\left[\left(c+\frac{1}{2}\eta_2\right)\ln\left(c+\frac{1}{2}\eta_2\right) + \left(1-c-\frac{1}{2}\eta_2\right)\ln\left(1-c-\frac{1}{2}\eta_2\right)\right], \end{aligned} \tag{3.13}$$

where $\tilde{V}(0)$ is is the Fourier transform of the effective interatomic mixing potential for $k = 0$. In these eqs the first two terms are structures' mixing energies, and the last term is configurational entropy of mixing. These free energies F_i show energy (dis)advantage of the structures with respect to a standard state that is the mixture of their constituents, CeO_2 and TbO_2, which has the energy

$$E_{stand} = E_{CeO_2}\cdot(1-c) + E_{TbO_2}\cdot c, \tag{3.14}$$

where E_{CeO_2} and E_{TbO_2} are the total energies of these compounds, obtained from DFT+U calculations at $T = 0$ K. For absolutely ordered structures at $T = 0$ K, $c_{st} = 1/2$, and $\eta_{1,2} = 1$, mixing energies are

$$\Delta E_1 = \frac{1}{8}\tilde{V}(0) + \frac{1}{8}\tilde{V}\left(\vec{\mathbf{k}_1}\right) \tag{3.15}$$

$$\Delta E_1 = \frac{1}{8}\tilde{V}(0) + \frac{1}{8}\tilde{V}\left(\vec{\mathbf{k}_2}\right), \tag{3.16}$$

and may be obtained from DFT calculations as difference between the total energies of corresponding superstructures and the total energy of the mixture of constituents given by eq. 3.14. From eq. 3.9 it follows that

$$\tilde{V}\left(\vec{\mathbf{k}_1}\right) = -4\tilde{V}\left(\vec{R_1}\right) + 6\tilde{V}\left(\vec{R_2}\right) - 8\tilde{V}\left(\vec{R_3}\right) + \ldots, \tag{3.17}$$

$$\tilde{V}\left(\vec{\mathbf{k}_2}\right) = -6\tilde{V}\left(\vec{R_2}\right) + 12\tilde{V}\left(\vec{R_4}\right) + \ldots, \tag{3.18}$$

$$\tilde{V}\left(0\right) = 12\tilde{V}\left(\vec{R_1}\right) + 6\tilde{V}\left(\vec{R_2}\right) + \ldots \tag{3.19}$$

With the approximation of interactions in the two nearest neighbours on the Ce/Tb sub-lattice this yields

$$\Delta E_1 = \tilde{V}\left(\vec{R_1}\right) + \frac{3}{2}\tilde{V}\left(\vec{R_2}\right) \tag{3.20}$$

$$\Delta E_2 = \frac{3}{2}\tilde{V}\left(\vec{R_1}\right). \tag{3.21}$$

Calculated values of ΔE_1 and ΔE_2 are 0.228 eV and 0.056 eV respectively. Their positive sign means that both superstructures are energetically unfavourable in comparison with a mixture of constituents, CeO_2 and TbO_2, and do not exist. with these values obtained, however, it is possible to calculate $\tilde{V}(0)$, which is responsible for the behaviour of disordered Ce/Tb lattice. Solving eqs 3.20 – 3.21, and substituting the result into eq. 3.19, a value for $\tilde{V}(0) = 1.210$ eV is obtained.

Eqs 3.12 and 3.13, for a case of absolutely disordered structures ($\eta_1 = 0,\ \eta_2 = 0$), are similar to a model of

regular solid solution used for construction of phase diagrams in [126]. In this model, the free energy of mixing for the disordered solid solution is cast as $\Delta F_{mix} = \Delta E - T\Delta S$, where ΔS is the configurational entropy of mixing, and the mixing energy is $\Delta E = L \cdot c \cdot (1-c)$. Here, $L = -\frac{1}{2}\tilde{V}(0)$.

This shows that a model which assumes that a mixture of CeO_2 and TbO_2 will have a fluorite structure with Ce/Tb atoms distributed over fcc sub-lattice, requires only two calculations of *absolutely ordered* structures to compute energy parameter that determines mixing energy of an absolutely disordered $(Ce_{1-c}Tb_c)O_2$ solid solution. A second important assumption that allows to calculate the free energy of mixing, and to predict solubility at different temperatures and concentrations, c, is based on a work by P. A. Žguns *et al.* [3], in which a decomposition of $(Ce_{1-c}Gd_c)O_{2-c/2}$ solid solutions was studied, using a cluster expansion method. Their finding is that cluster interaction parameters $V_{AA}, V_{BB}, \text{and} V_{AB}$ do not depend on the dopant concentration. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that for $\vec{k_s} = 0$ (i.e. no vector in the reciprocal space can be symmetrized with respect to dopant distribution in the lattice), $\tilde{V}(0)$ is also concentration-independent, and that $L = const$ for the whole range of concentration.

Fig. 3.3 presents mixing energy (ΔE), configuration entropy of mixing term ($-T\Delta S$), and the free energy of mixing ΔF_{mix} as functions of Tb concentration at $T = 1000$ K. The function of ΔF_{mix} is concave in the entire concentration range, thus at temperature(s) where fluoride structures of both CeO_2 and TbO_2 exist, an unlimited solubility of Tb in CeO_2 should be observed. According to binary Tb–O and Ce–O phase diagrams, this temperature region is above ca. 700 °C.

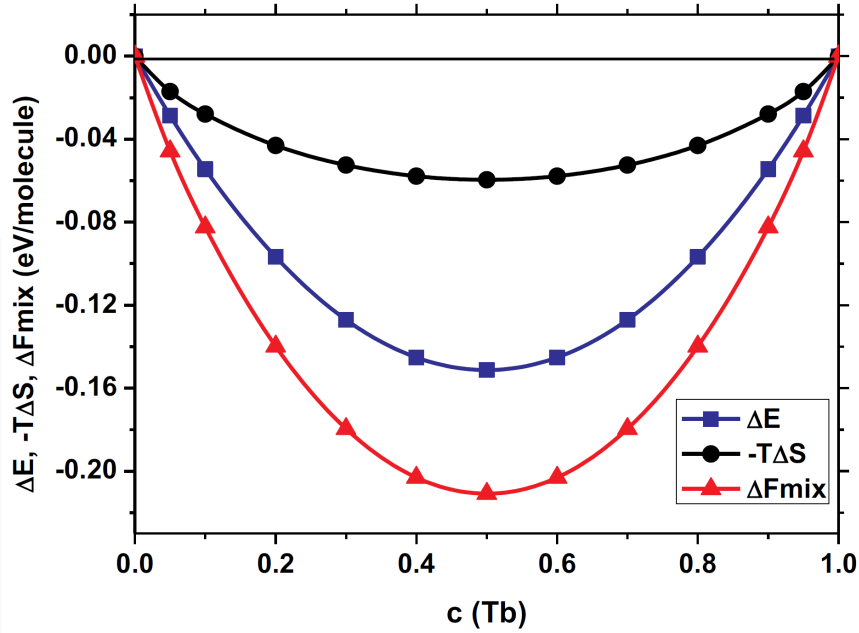

Figure 3.3: Thermodynamic parameters of CeO_2/TbO_2 mixture as functions of Tb concentration at $T = 1000$ K, adopted from [110]

3.2.6 Reduced Tb and oxygen vacancy in CeO_2

Not only is Tb absolutely soluble in CeO_2, it can also exist in either +3 or +4 oxidation state. Both solutions require Tb to be located at a low-symmetry site, and in these calculations their energy difference is only 0.07 eV/cell in favour of the +4 oxidation state. This assertion of mixed OS coexistence is consistent with an experimental observation that in $Ce_{1-c}Tb_cO_{2-\delta}$, lattice constant's dependence on c is nicely approximated by averaging theoretically obtained dependencies for cases of pure Tb^{3+} and Tb^{4+} [4].

Naturally, Tb +3 has to be compensated by an electronic hole. In these calculations, its complementary hole is delocalized over the entire supercell, leading to an enhanced Fermi energy occupation by O $2p$ states, and,

thus, enhanced hole conductivity. Increased hole conductivity is also consistent with the electrical conductivity measurements from the literature [4].

It was shown in the previous section (3.1) that in case of undoped $CeO_{2-\delta}$, localization of two electrons on $4f$ orbitals of two nearest Ce cations, corresponding to formation of a small polaron, is the most favourable case w.r.t. the defect formation energy, about 0.61 eV lower in energy than the large radius polaron with localization on all four Ce ions. So, the minimum energy state was observed for $S_z = 1$ at low symmetrical C_s(or, alternatively, at C_{2v}-position) of V_O^{+2} in the 81-atom supercell, with $\Delta G_F^{V_O^{+2}} = 4.10$ eV at 0 K (table 3.3). Repeating this calculation with PBE+U functional, a PW basis set, μ_O as defined in eq. 3.3 and shown in fig. 3.4, and with p_{O_2} yielded $\Delta G_F^{V_O^{+2}} = 3.10$ eV (all at $T = 0$ K). At $T = 400$ K in undoped $CeO_{2-\delta}$ $\Delta G_F^{V_O^{+2}} = 2.64$ eV.

In Tb-doped CeO_2 formation of V_O^{+2} complicates electronic interactions, but it also simplifies behaviour of Tb ion. Tables 3.4 and 3.5 summarise these results. In both tables distance between an ion and a vacancy refers to an unrelaxed fluorite structure with lattice constant 5.41 Å. Distance between metal ions is measured after a full structure relaxation, S_z is the spin projection, μ is the magnetic moment, q is the atomic charge, and $\Delta G_F^{V_O^{+2}}$ is the Gibbs formation energy of an oxygen vacancy, calculated w.r.t. the chemical potential of oxygen μ_O at T = 400 K, and $p_{O_2} = p^0$ (eq. 3.3, and fig. 3.4). Table 3.4 lists results for systems, in which V_O^{+2} is among the nearest neighbours of Tb ($d(Tb - V_O) = 2.34$ Å). Table 3.5 lists results for the next nearest neighbours ($d(Tb - V_O) = 4.49$ Å), all of which have the same site symmetry, C_s.

First important conclusion drawn from this data is that presence of Tb ion lowers the $\Delta G_F^{V_O^{+2}}$ by a factor of 4: 0.66 eV (the most favourable case, table 3.4) vs. 2.64 eV for an undoped system. Second, the key factor determining the magnitude of $\Delta G_F^{V_O^{+2}}$ is Tb oxidation state. All solutions with μTb $>$ 6.2 μB (Tb +4) have very high formation energies, regardless of distances, spin orientation, and vacancy–ion distance. Third, localization on next-nearest Ce ions w.r.t. oxygen vacancy is more favourable than on the nearest neighbours or more remote metal ions.

The most favourable solution corresponds to a system in which oxygen vacancy is located next to Tb, and residual electrons localize on Tb and on a Ce ion from O's 3rd coordination sphere in an antiferromagnetic alignment.

Table 3.4: Effect of local symmetry and electronic localization on the energetics of oxygen vacancy formation near Tb ion †

Point symmetry	$d(Ce^{+3}\text{-}V_O)$, Å	S_z	$d(Tb\text{-}Ce^{+3})$, Å	μTb, μB	qTb, e	μCe, μB	qCe, e	$\Delta G_F^{V_O^{+2}}$, eV
C_s	4.59	1	6.76	6.06	2.09	-0.93	2.13	0.66
C_s	2× 4.59	−1/2	2× 6.76	6.06	2.09	2× −0.51	2.31	1.00
C_{3v}	2.34	2	4.17	6.04	2.17	3× 0.37	2.3	1.10
C_s	2.34	1	4.13	6.03	2.09	-0.93	2.09	1.16
C_{3v}	3× 2.34	-1	3× 4.18	6.07	2.08	3× −0.35	2.32	1.28
C_{3v}	—	1/2	—	6.05	2.09	—	—	1.49
C_s	2× 4.56	1	2× 5.60	6.24	2.16	2× 1.00	2.14	2.19
C_{3v}	3× 4.56	3/2	3× 5.60	6.24	2.17	3× 0.70	2.28	2.43
C_{3v}	3× 2.34	3/2	4.18	6.25	2.17	3× 0.71	2.22	2.58
C_{3v}	3× 4.49	−3/2	3× 6.92	6.35	2.20	3× −0.47	2.33	2.74

† $d(Tb - V_O) = 2.34$ Å

Results presented in this section are published in ***[A2]*** and ***[A3]*** . The author has performed most calculations of cerium and terbium oxides, all calculations on Tb-doped CeO_2, has conducted all calculations related to

Table 3.5: Energetics of oxygen vacancy formation at the next nearest site w.r.t. Tb ion †

d(Ce^{+3}-V_O), Å	S_z	d(Tb^{+3}-Ce^{+3}), Å	μTb, μB	qTb, e	μCe, μB	qCe, e	$\Delta G_F^{V_O^{+2}}$, eV
5.87	1	4.12	6.12	2.09	0.97	2.09	0.84
4.49	1	7.79	6.05	2.12	-0.97	2.14	0.95
2.34	1	6.76	6.05	2.12	-0.88	2.12	1.04
2.34	1	5.43	6.05	2.12	0.93	2.12	1.16
$2\times$ 4.58	-1	$2\times$ 6.75	6.05	2.12	2×-0.51	$2\times$ 2.31	1.21
$2\times$ 4.49	3/2	$2\times$ 6.74	6.05	2.12	$2\times$ 0.52	$2\times$ 2.31	1.25
$3\times$ 2.34	-1	$3\times$ 4.18	6.07	2.08	3×-0.35	$3\times$ 2.32	1.27

† $d(Tb - V_O) = 4.49$ Å; C_s symmetry

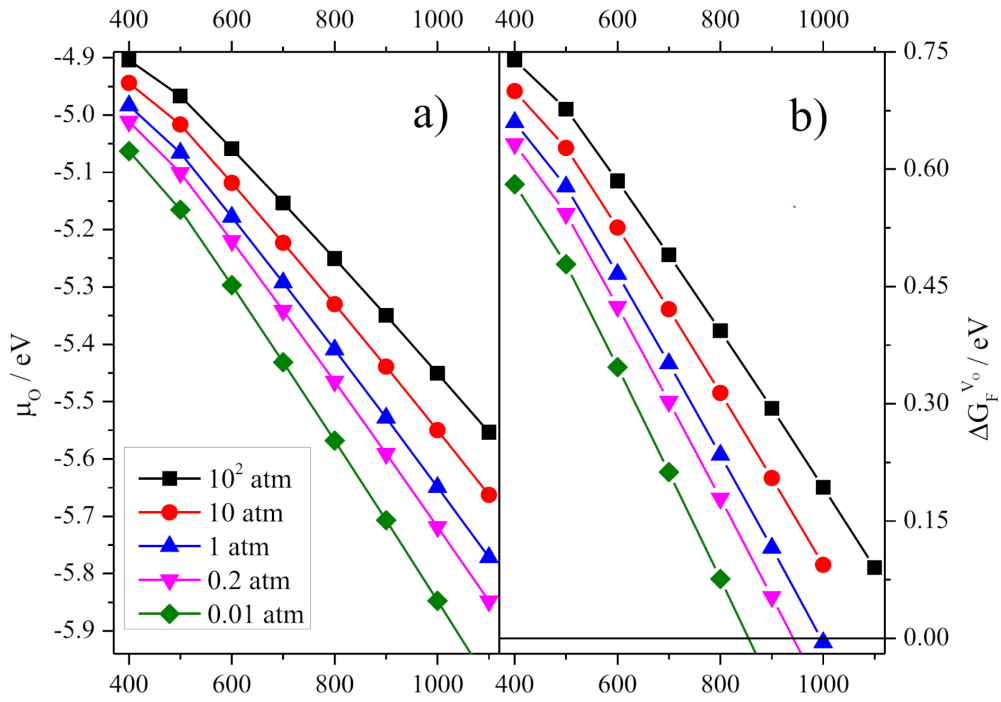

Figure 3.4: (a) oxygen chemical potential, as defined by eq. 3.4, calculated from metal oxides; and (b) formation energy of $\Delta G_F^{V_O^{+2}}$ for the lowest-energy case, presented as functions of temperature; adopted from [127]

parametrisation and validation of the model, has gathered the data, has contributed texts and figures to papers.

4. THE CASE OF ZINC OXIDE

4.1 Supercell selection

ZnO crystallizes in the wurtzite structure (space group No.186, $P6_3mc$), making it impossible to embed an experimentally observed six-coordinated Ir in a ZnO matrix by simply placing Ir atom in a regular lattice site or by substituting a Zn atom. Therefore, a model of a six-coordinated Ir requires presence of interstitial oxygen atoms in the wurtzite structure. The inclusion of interstitial atoms disrupts the crystalline structure and is not compatible with symmetry operations of the space group to which wurtzite structure belongs. Ultimately, two supercells were chosen, P4(16), and P48(192), representing Ir concentrations of 12.5% and 1.04%, respectively. Concentration in P4(16) supercell corresponds to the amorphization/conductivity threshold described in [9], whereas low concentration of P48(192) is chosen as a control sample for validating the model.

4.2 Computational details

4.2.1 DFT parameters

All calculations were made using public release of CRYSTAL17 ver. 1.0.2 [19]. Tolerance factors of 7, 7, 7, 9, and 30 for the Coulomb and exchange integrals were used. The SCF convergence threshold for the total electron energy was set to 10^{-7} Hartree, and the threshold for change in energy between consecutive geometry optimization steps was set to 10^{-7} Hartree. All calculations of defective structures in the neutral supercells were spin-polarized and did not include the spin–orbit effects; the use of symmetry operations was explicitly omitted.

PBE0 exchange-correlation functional was used, as the employed basis sets were optimized for and have been used on the compounds of interest with this functional [128, 129]. Basis set for Zn from Gryaznov et al. [129] has been re-optimized with OPTBAS utility [106] for use with other basis sets. For calculating vibrational frequencies the frozen phonon method (direct method) [130, 131] was used, and the SCF convergence threshold for the total electron energy was adjusted to 10^{-9} Hartree. In all calculations, reciprocal space was sampled with the following Monkhorst-Pack k-point grids: $4 \times 4 \times 4$ for P4(16) supercells, and $2 \times 2 \times 2$ for P48(192).

4.2.2 O incorporation

This study's principal object of interest is a six-coordinated Ir–O complex embedded in ZnO matrix. However, since it is impossible to obtain a six-coordinated Ir by simply placing it anywhere in ZnO structure, a presence of interstitial O atoms is necessary. Relaxation of atomic positions is highly sensitive to initial placement of atoms, and may lead to various stable solutions. To compare obtained configurations of interstitial O atoms around Ir, O incorporation energy $E_{inc}(O_i)$ is used:

$$E_{inc}(O_i) = E(O_i) - E(Ir) - E(O_2), \tag{4.1}$$

where $E(O_i)$ is is the total electronic energy of the supercell with two O_i atoms and an Ir atom; $E(Ir)$ is the total electronic energy of the supercell with only $Ir^{+2}O_4$[1] without O_i; $E(O_2)$ is the total electronic energy of an oxygen molecule. A negative value of $E_{inc}(O_i)$ means that incorporation is energetically favourable. All total electronic energies in eq. 4.1 are calculated using the same basis set and exchange–correlation functional.

[1] Here, a +2 oxidation state of Ir is set by definition: Ir is forced to substitute a +2 Zn ion in a ZnO matrix, with the same surroundings as Zn ion. This oxidation state, while theoretically possible, is not an optimal OS of iridium.

4.2.3 Thermoelectric parameters

This study's principal *quality* of interest is an alleged emergence of p-type conductivity in Ir-doped ZnO, observed as positive values of Seebeck coefficient [9]. In the original experiment performed by Zubkins *et al.* the electrical transport of the thin films was studied by measuring the DC electrical conductivity at room temperature and as a function of temperature between 90 K and 330 K. Seebeck coefficient was determined by controlling a temperature difference across the sample and measuring the resulting voltage [9].

In this work, $\tau = 10$ fs was used in thermoelectric calculations, which is a conservative estimate for a system leaning towards conductivity (see section 2.5.2 and eq. 2.6). Reported values of τ, obtained from charge carrier mobility data, range from 17 to 57.9 fs for carrier concentrations $\sim 10^{16}\text{cm}^{-3}$ [58, 132]. As a scalar positive pre-factor, precise value of τ does not affect behaviour of the transport distribution function, and only impacts the scale of values. For convenience, in analysing results, the Fermi level is shifted by the valence band maximum (E_{VBM}): $\mu_F = \mu - E_{VBM}$.

One can clearly see that the calculated conductivity and Seebeck coefficient are not strictly equivalent to experimentally obtained data. In an experimental setup the Seebeck coefficient S is calculated at zero current density from measured thermoelectric voltage ΔV and measured temperature difference ΔT:

$$S = -\frac{\Delta V}{\Delta T}. \tag{4.2}$$

When obtained from eqs 2.9 and 2.8, S is a tensor. Its reduction to a scalar is described in section 4.3.

4.3 Conductivity baselines

Whereas experimentally determined electrical conductivity and Seebeck coefficient are scalars, when calculated from first principles, they are tensors. Experimental values are measured for real samples, and are, effectively, averaged over many crystalline domains. Calculated thermoelectrical parameters are, effectively, expressed as functions of chemical potential and direction (section 4.2.3, eqs 2.6–2.9). Here, to reduce dimensionality of these objects to a simple function of the $f(x)$ type, thermoelectric parameters are presented as their largest value (by absolute value) for a given value of chemical potential μ. The results of calculations on ideal ZnO and ZnO with intrinsic defects (Zn vacancy for a p-type defect and O vacancy for a n-type defect) define a baseline for conductivity in this material. Fig. 4.1 shows thermoelectrical properties of several idealized systems.

In intrinsic semiconductors the bands may conduct in parallel, and the observed value and sign of the Seebeck coefficient depends on the majority charge carrier: positive for hole-dominated conduction and negative for electron-dominated conduction. This results in a crossover behaviour seen in fig. 4.1. The crossover is in the middle of band gap. Undoped ZnO is a typical wide-gap semiconductor, and as such its conductivity diagram is a classical 'V' shape, and its Seebeck coefficient shows a mid-gap p-n switching pattern, as the chemical potential increases, fig. 4.1(a).

A neutral zinc vacancy, by definition a p-type defect, establishes the baseline pattern for this type of conductivity: lower absolute values of Seebeck coefficient, an additional switching mode due to an acceptor level near the top of valence band, and a local maximum of conductivity corresponding to positive range of Seebeck coefficient, fig. 4.1(b). On the other hand, n-type semiconductors, as in the case of interstitial O and a complex O–O defect, either exhibit intrinsic semiconductor behaviour, simultaneously narrowing the band gap, 4.1(c), or have a defect level close to the bottom of conduction band, with the conductivity maximum matching a negative Seebeck coefficient, fig. 4.1(d). Finally, two iridium compounds, Ir_2O_3(e) and IrO_2(f), represent, respectively, a non-conductive and conductive Ir systems. A conductive system does not have a distinct conductivity well across the entire range of chemical potential, and is characterized by low values of Seebeck coefficient.

To interpret results obtained with this model, it is important to keep in mind that under real temperatures

electrons in the valence band will be thermally excited, and as a result the potential will increase with respect to the level calculated at 0 K. In fig. 4.1 this can be seen as, for instance, slower-than-exponential decay of conductivity in Ir_2O_3(e). A region of chemical potential where switch to pure exponential decay (transition from a curve to a straight line) may therefore be used to assess the position of Fermi level at a given temperature.

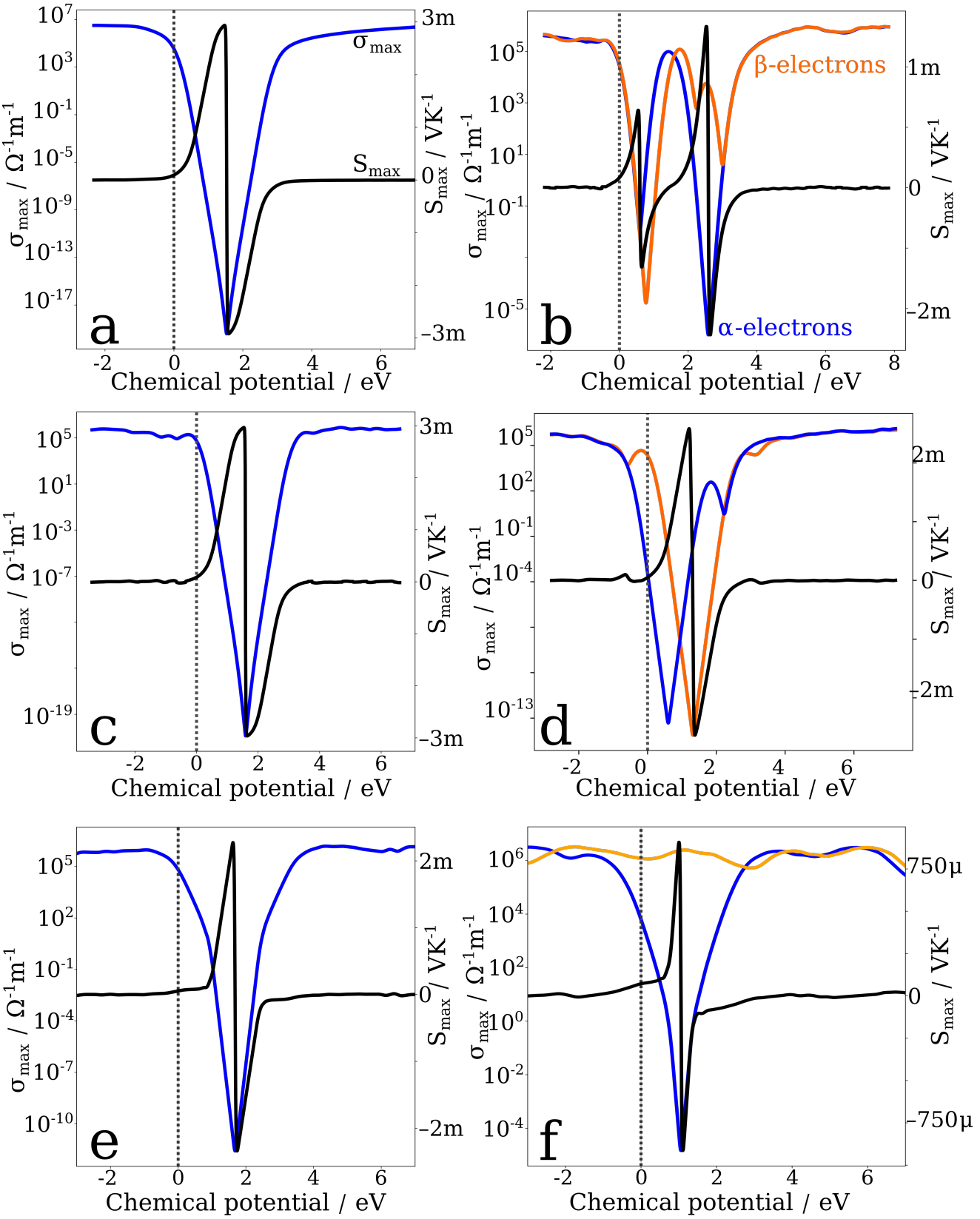

Figure 4.1: Conductivity and Seebeck coefficients of idealized systems at $T = 300$ K. Dashed gray line marks 0 eV = VB top = $E_{Fermi}(0\ K)$. Solid black lines are Seebeck coefficients $S_{max}(\mu)$.
a: pure ZnO;
b: ZnO with Zn vacancy, p-type conductivity pattern;
c: ZnO with O vacancy, semiconducting pattern;
d: ZnO with O–O defect, n-type conductivity pattern;
e: pure Ir_2O_3, a semiconductor;
f: pure IrO_2, electrically conductive

4.4 Structural description

4.4.1 Relaxation and Ir–O complexes

It was posed in section 4.1 that the ZnO-Ir-O system is very sensitive to the initial placement of interstitial oxygens. Table 4.1 sums up some of the possible solutions, all obtained for the same supercell, with the same number of atoms, with two interstitial oxygen atoms.

Table 4.1: Ir–O complexes in P4(16) supercell

Coordination number	d_{Ir-O}, Å	q_{Ir}, e	μ_{Ir}, μ_B	d_{O-O}, Å	νO–O, cm^{-1}	$E_{inc}(O_i)$, eV
6	1.893–1.972	1.325	0.514	—	—	-5.15
6	1.825–2.125	1.383	1.569	—	—	-4.95
6	1.844–2.051	1.415	1.542	—	—	-4.92
6	1.853–2.046	1.384	0.562	—	—	-4.84
6	1.850–2.085	1.366	-0.003	—	—	-4.82
5	1.828–2.024	1.095	0.695	1.540	810	-4.37
4	1.846–1.920	1.193	1.795	1.470	942	-3.77
5	1.854–2.186	1.282	2.236	—	—	-3.49
4	2.136–2.176	0.751	2.530	—	—	0[i]

i. This is $Ir^{+2}O_4$, or $E(Ir)$ from eq. 4.1, no interstitial oxygen atoms. Ir incorporation energy is ca. +6 eV w.r.t. pure ZnO.

This table shows the breadth of possibilities that Ir has in ZnO environment. First, negative incorporation energies show that Ir-doped ZnO requires interstitial oxygen atoms. Second, while 6-coordinated Ir–O complexes are energetically more favourable than lower-coordinated alternatives, these are not the guaranteed solution. Ir is able to change its oxidation state and its magnetic configuration, forming low-spin, high-spin, and intermediate-spin complexes. This is reflected in the first 6 rows of table 4.1, where the chief differences in $E_{inc}(O_i)$ are attributed to different spin-states of Ir, with another factor being other atoms' electronic localization.

Formation of peroxide moiety was not observed for 6-coordinated Ir–O complex (at a fixed concentration of interstitial oxygen atoms), but other peroxide solutions are possible, yet costly. The costs associated with formation of this defect are both energetic and structural: presence of peroxide distorts the structure, see fig. 4.2. There, Ir-centred radial distribution functions are plotted for interstitial-oxygen-lacking $Ir^{2+}O_4$ (a), 4-coordinated peroxide-forming Ir–O (b), 5-coordinated Ir–O with peroxide (c), and lowest-energy 6-coordinated Ir–O (d).

It is apparent that among the 4 structures, solutions without peroxide, fig. 4.2(a,d), are more ordered, with clear, sharp peaks. At the same time, 6-coordinated Ir–O, fig. 4.2(d) shows clear signs of structural deterioration, with broader, less resolved and lower peaks. Peroxide solutions, fig. 4.2(b,c), appear amorphous in the 3–6 Å region, with convoluted peaks in the 2–4 Å region, indicating that Ir's next-neighbouring Zn–O bonds have large variances.

Results presented in this section agree with experimentally observed behaviour of this system: 6-coordinated Ir–O complex is more likely to form in ZnO, and the incorporation of additional oxygen atoms causes significant structural distortions, making the material appear XRD-amorphous. Four structures from this section have been selected for further analysis: a zero-interstitial system $Ir^{+2}O_4$, both peroxide solutions, and a groundstate 6-coordinated Ir–O.

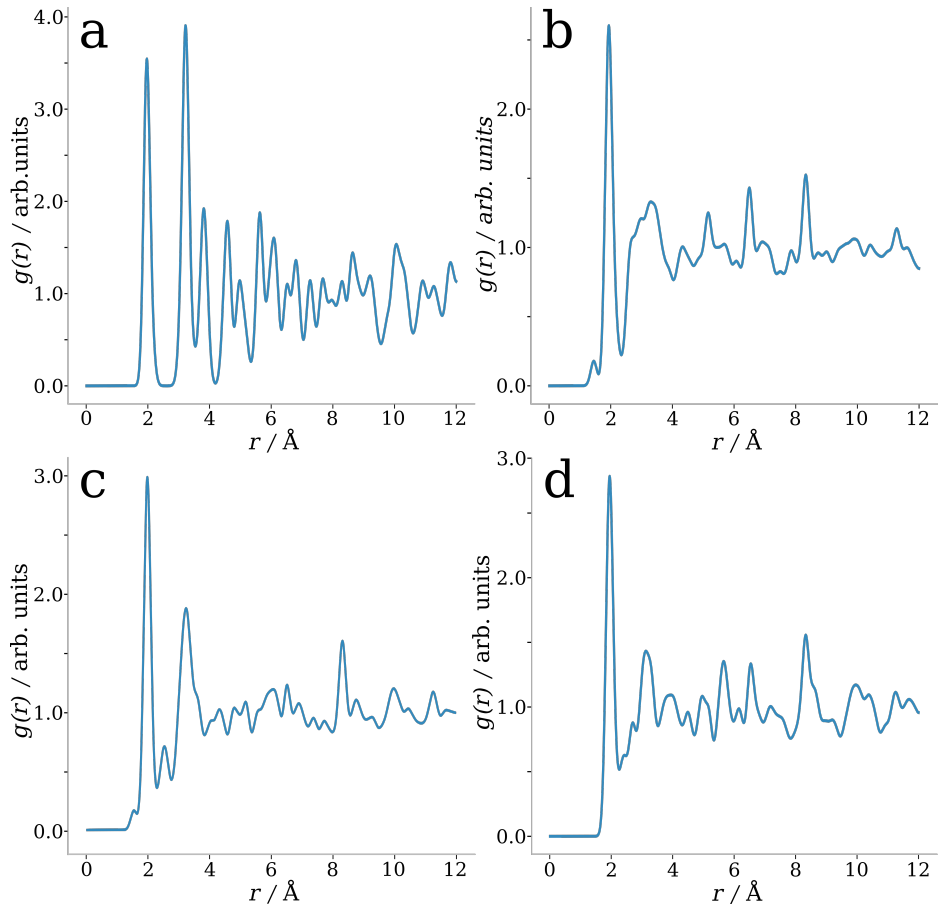

Figure 4.2: Ir-centred radial distribution functions of Ir–O complexes in ZnO
a: ZnO + $Ir^{2+}O_4$ [12.5%];
b: 4-coordinated Ir–O with peroxide
c: 5-coordinated Ir–O with peroxide
d: groundstate 6-coordinated Ir–O

4.4.2 Electronic structure

Even without interstitial oxygen atoms Ir produces significant changes in the electronic structure of its host material. Magnetic moment of its 4 oxygen neighbours is non-zero, same as for 6-coordinated Ir, regardless of concentration, see fig. 4.3. Magnetic moments on oxygens hint at presence of partially filled electronic levels associated with Ir–O bonds.

From calculated density of states (DOS, fig. 4.4) it can be seen that $Ir^{+2}O_4$ (a) and a 6-coordinated Ir–O (b) have a region extending down to about 0.4 eV below Fermi level, consisting entirely of Ir and O states. Only below this region projections from other atoms appear. This confirms that the top of valence band consists of Ir–O levels, and from fig. 4.3 it is known that they are only partially filled. Bottom of conduction band is also due to Ir–O, and is much closer than that of pure ZnO, narrowing the band gap down to 1.75–1.9 eV.

Selected Ir–O complexes were assigned the following oxidation states: +3 for a 4-coordinated solution with peroxide fragment ($Ir^{+3}O_4$); +4 for 5-coordinated, peroxide-forming complex ($Ir^{+4}O_5$), and +4 for the 6-coordinated complex ($Ir^{+4}O_6$). These are also the most stable positive oxidation states of iridium, and are consistent with the ones found in amorphous IrO_x powders [133].

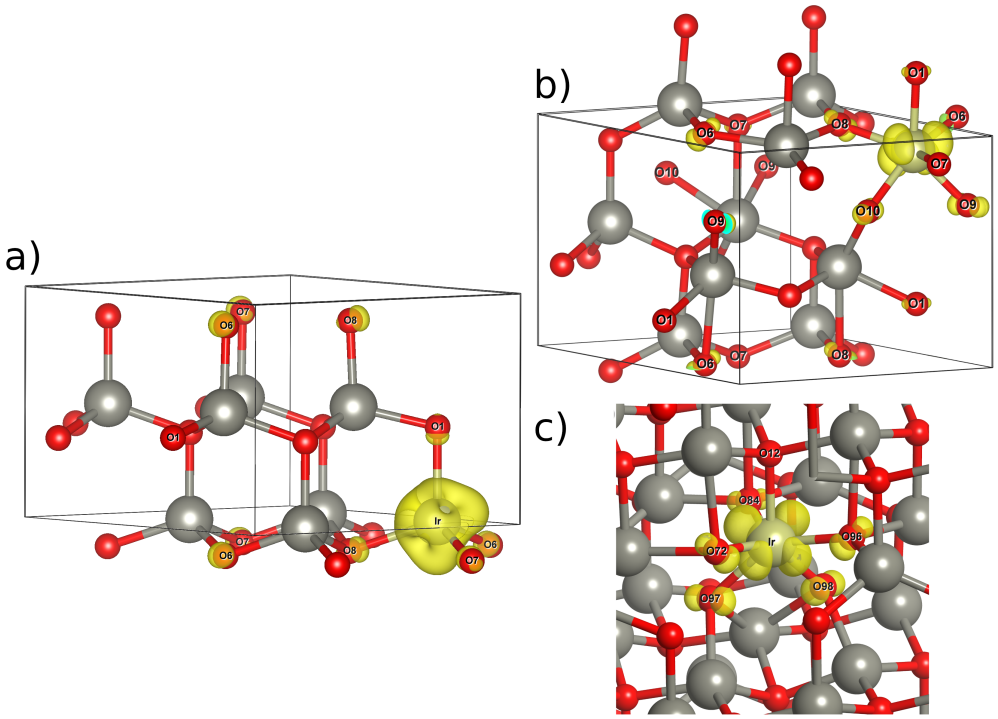

Figure 4.3: Magnetic moments of Ir–O complexes in ZnO. Yellow clouds represent charge density isosurfaces for orbitals with unpaired electrons.
a: ZnO + $Ir^{2+}O_4$ [12.5%];
b: ZnO + 6-coordinated Ir–O [12.5%]
c: ZnO + 6-coordinated Ir–O [1.04%], fragment

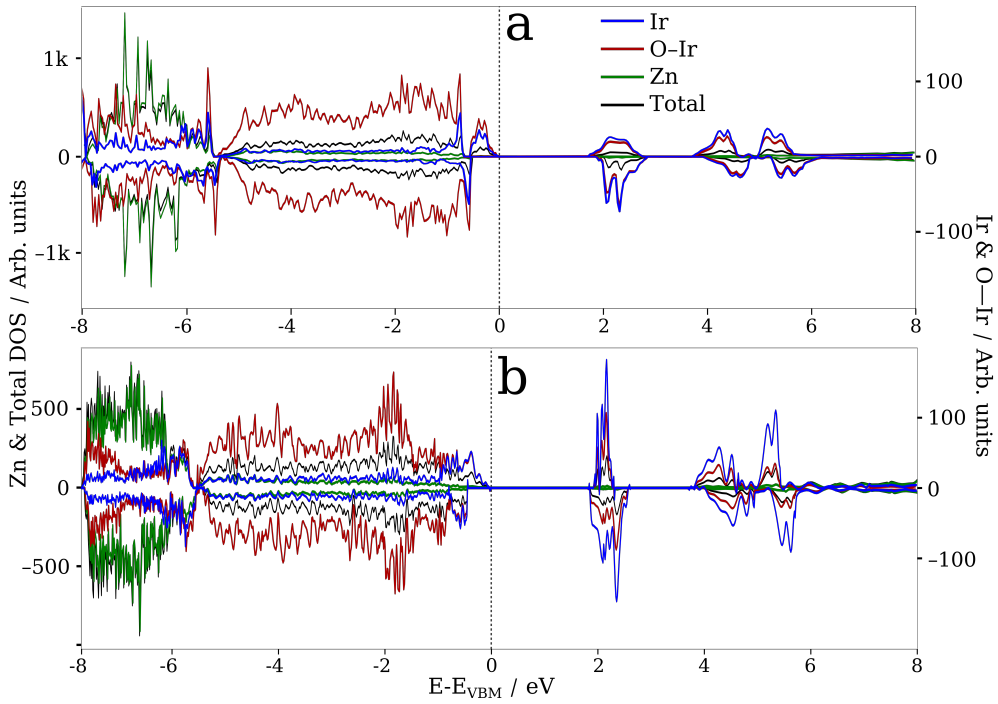

Figure 4.4: DOS of ZnO:Ir. Negative values correspond to spin-down channel.
a: ZnO + $Ir^{+2}O_4$ [12.5%];
b: ZnO + 6-coordinated Ir–O [12.5%]

4.5 Thermoelectric properties

Electronic conductivities and Seebeck coefficients for selected systems are summarized in fig. 4.5. Here, an idealized case of $ZnIr_2O_4$, fig.4.5(a), is given as a baseline, representing a 6-coordinated Ir in a system of Zn-O bonds. Zinc-iridium spinel is behaving like a semiconductor. When measured experimentally, at room temperature and in polycrystalline thin film samples [134], its Seebeck coefficient is reported as 53.9 μVK^{-1}, and its conductivity is $2.09 \times 10^2\ \Omega^{-1}m^{-1}$.

Here, taking values at thermally-adjusted Fermi level (see end of section 4.3 for details), $ZnIr_2O_4$'s Seebeck coefficient is 92.3 μVK^{-1}, and its conductivity is $1.72 \times 10^2\ \Omega^{-1}m^{-1}$, a good agreement with experimental results. See table 4.2 for the rest of numerical values. The importance of this result is in showing that on its own, 6-coordinated Ir, even when interacting with a system of Zn-O bonds, does not necessarily lead to emergence of p-type conductivity.

Fig. 4.5(b) represents $Ir^{+2}O_4$, a 4-coordinated Ir in ZnO without interstitial oxygen atoms. The position of 0 K Fermi level and two regions of conduction mode switching indicate presence of a strong defect level in the electronic structure. According to DOS projections (fig. 4.4(a)), this level is occupied and consists of Ir–O states. Non-zero spin on oxygen atoms (fig. 4.3(a)) suggests that this level is not fully occupied, and is therefore an acceptor level capable of p-type conductivity.

Results for $Ir^{+3}O_4$ and $Ir^{+4}O_5$ correspond to letters c and d on fig. 4.5. These systems represent solutions with a peroxide complex. In comparison to other Ir-O complexes at the same concentration, fig.4.5(b,e), these are characterized with high values of Seebeck coefficient and lower conductivities, hinting that a peroxide complex is not the defect responsible for observed p-type conductivity, in contrast to a hypothesis put forward in [9].

Finally, 6-coordinated complex $Ir^{+4}O_6$ at target concentration [12.5%] and at a low concentration [1.04%], respectively, is shown in fig.4.5(e,f). Once again, it has a partially filled Ir-O level near the top of valence band (figs. 4.4(b) and 4.3(b,c)), its conductivity peaks correspond to positive values of Seebeck coefficient, and bottom of the conductivity well is at $\sim 10^2\ \Omega^{-1}m^{-1}$, showing all signs of a p-type conductive material. Its low-concentration counterpart, while exhibiting the same qualitative traits, quantitatively behaves much closer to pure ZnO, but still has a potential for p-type conductivity.

In conclusion, it has been shown that Ir in ZnO creates a partially filled electronic acceptor level capable of producing measurable p-type conductivity, and that this Ir-O complex induces strong local structural changes by pulling in interstitial oxygen atoms (assuming oxygen-rich formation conditions) to make energetically favourable 6-coordinated Ir-O complexes. Results presented in this section are published in [10].

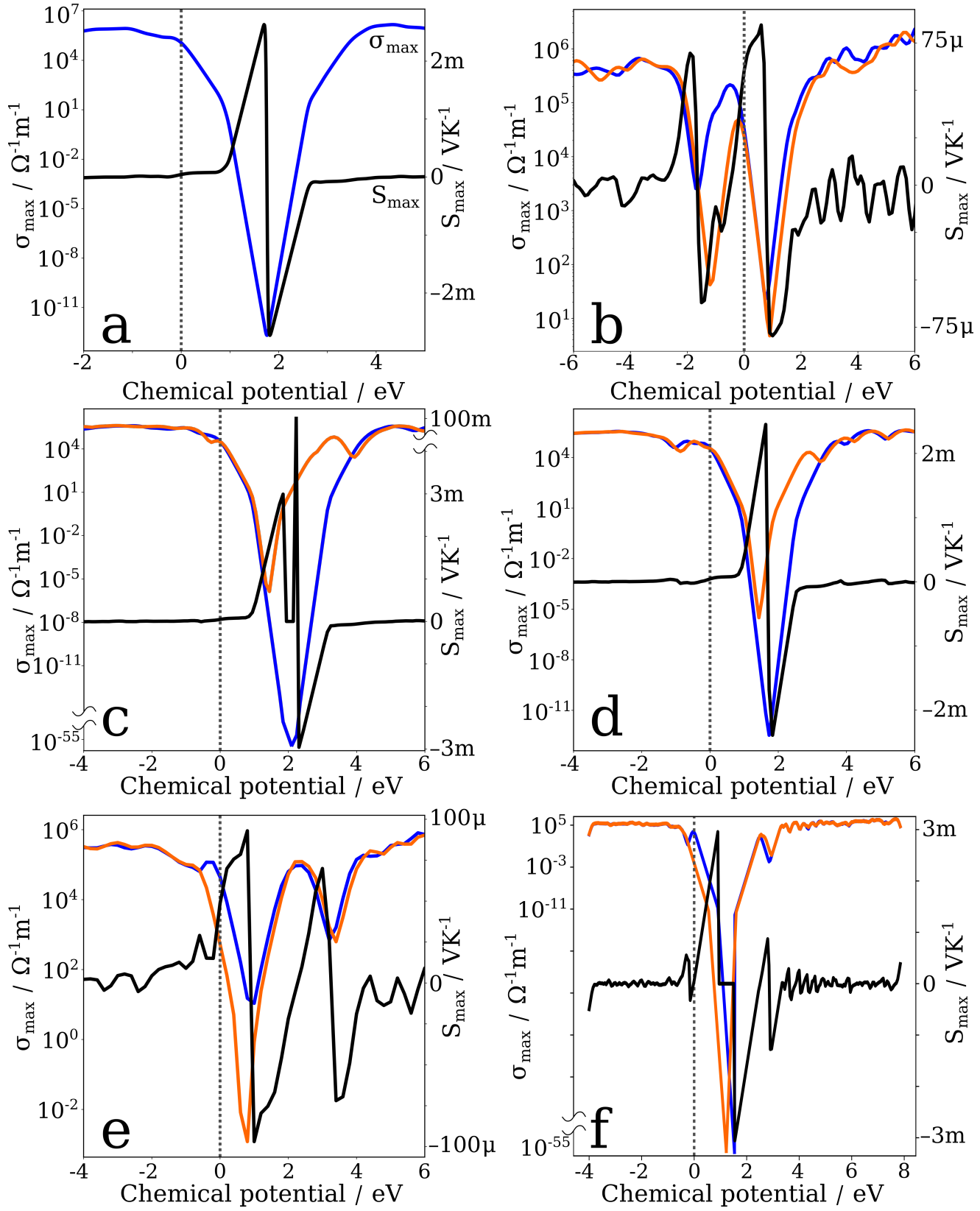

Figure 4.5: Conductivity and Seebeck coefficients of ZnO:Ir at $T = 300$ K. Dashed grey lines mark band edges, with 0 eV = VB top = $E_{Fermi}(0\ K)$
a: pure $ZnIr_2O_4$;
b: ZnO + $Ir^{+2}O_4$ [12.5%];
c: ZnO + $Ir^{+3}O_4$ [12.5%];
d: ZnO + $Ir^{+4}O_5$ [12.5%];
e: ZnO + $Ir^{+4}O_6$ [12.5 %];
f: ZnO + $Ir^{+4}O_6$ [1.04%]

Table 4.2: Calculated thermoelectric properties at temperature-adjusted Fermi levels

Compound	$S, \mu VK^{-1}$	$S_{exp}, \mu VK^{-1}$	$\sigma, \Omega^{-1}m^{-1}$	$\sigma, \Omega^{-1}_{exp}m^{-1}$
ZnO	2510	Non-conductive	6.05×10^{-8}	Non-conductive
$ZnIr_2O_4$	92.3	53.9 [i] [134]	1.72×10^2	$2.09 \times 10^2, 3.39 \times 10^2$ [i] [134]
IrO_2	63.9	—	1.32×10^6	$1.15–2.90 \times 10^6$ [135, 136] $0.68–1.67 \times 10^6$ [ii] [137] 2.94×10^6 [ii] [137]
Ir_2O_3	105	—	8.98×10^1	—
$Ir^{2+}O_4$	80.1	6.8 [iv] [9]	2.57×10^2	47.6 [iv] [9]
$Ir^{3+}O_4$	88.7		3.20×10^1	
$Ir^{4+}O_5$	89.4		4.13×10^1	
$Ir^{4+}O_6$ [12.5%]	83.8		1.62×10^2	
$Ir^{4+}O_6$ [1.04%]	2335		3.49×10^{-8}	

i. Measured at RT; two values for σ for polycrystalline and epitaxial thin films whereas the Seebeck coefficient was measured for polycrystalline films only; the thin films prepared by PLD between 773 and 973 K.
ii. The values are taken at RT for 100 nm films prepared by PLD and oxidized at 0.05-0.2 mBar and 500 °C
iii. The bulk value measured at RT
iv. Ir concentration is 16.4%

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This thesis presents the results of density functional theory (DFT) calculations on cerium dioxide(CeO_2) and zinc oxide (ZnO) supercells using corrected generalized gradient approximation (GGA) and hybrid GGA functionals. The results were obtained using massively parallel calculations on high-performance computing systems.

Model formulation and selection of simulation cells is not a trivial task, and it was shown in this work that symmetry analysis of a simulated object can be crucial for obtaining all possible solutions for electron localization and defect distribution in the investigated system. Specifically, the site-symmetry approach, as used in this thesis, was applied to the problem of modelling small polarons in CeO_2, and it was shown that:

- certain supercells and certain atomic positions within these supercells will yield only high-symmetry, highly delocalized solutions;
- larger supercells are not necessarily better for modelling point defects, as they may lack diversity of symmetry orbits;
- localized electronic solutions require lowering or loss of symmetry.

Application of the concentration waves approach (a method of statistical thermodynamics that is also grounded in symmetry analysis) has shown that if a mixture of CeO_2 and TbO_2 were to have a fluorite structure in a temperature where either constituent also has the fluorite structure, an unlimited solubility of Tb in CeO_2 should be observed. This conclusion is good news for high-temperature applications of Tb-doped CeO_2, such as mixed-conductive membranes for oxygen separation, because it asserts that no phase separation should occur at the operating conditions.

The presence of Tb in membranes for oxygen separation has the added benefit of lowering the energy of oxygen vacancy formation even at high partial pressure – a key parameter that enables the transport of oxygen ions across the membrane. It has been demonstrated in this work that in Tb-doped CeO_2 the energy of oxygen vacancy formation is ca. 4 times lower when compared to an undoped system.

It was confirmed that Ir, when embedded in the ZnO matrix, is more likely to form a 6-coordinated complex in comparison to other coordination numbers. It was also shown that, while the formation of peroxide moiety in this system is not impossible, its formation is energetically more demanding in comparison to a peroxide-free system.

The formation of a 6-coordinated Ir-O complex in the ZnO lattice was shown to be a probable cause for the emergence of measurable p-type conductivity in this material. At the same time, peroxide-containing complexes exhibit lower conductivities with higher Seebeck coefficients. This work also shows that well-ordered 6-coordinated Ir on its own cannot be a p-type conductor, even in a system with Zn–O bonds: $ZnIr_2O_4$, a compound with 6-coordinated Ir in a system of Zn–O bonds is shown to exhibit a pure semiconductor-like behaviour. It must be concluded, then, that the emergence of p-type conductivity in Ir-doped ZnO is a combination of lattice distortion and electronic acceptor levels introduced by Ir with interstitial oxygen atoms.

Main conclusions

1. The site-symmetry approach is a powerful instrument for modelling polaronic properties in crystalline structures.

2. In CeO_2 crystals (and in all materials that have the same crystalline structure) there are supercells with both high- and low-symmetry orbits, as well as supercells in which there are no symmetry orbits corresponding to primitive cell symmetries.

3. The mode of electronic localization can affect the formation energy of a point defect by up to *ca.* 1 eV in a simple binary configuration (such as CeO_2), and by up to *ca.* 3 eV in a more complex configuration when multiple oxidation states are possible (for instance, Tb-doped CeO_2).

4. The mode of electronic localization can be a more important factor affecting the energetics of a solution than the relative defect placement.

5. Ir, when embedded in ZnO under oxygen-rich conditions, creates a 6-coordinated Ir-O complex, which distorts the lattice of ZnO, and produces electronic acceptor levels. At high enough concentrations of Ir these effects compound to such a degree that the resultant structure becomes amorphous, and starts to exhibit a p-type conductivity.

MAIN THESES

The results obtained in the course of this work using DFT-based modelling techniques can be used to put forward and provide support for the following propositions:

1. It is possible to list all symmetry-allowed atomic and magnetic configurations of a system using the site-symmetry approach without performing an exhaustive search.
   Published in ***[A1, A3]***.

2. In the CeO_2 crystals, both small- and large-radius polarons are able to form, with small polarons having lower energy of formation, and being accompanied by a decrease in local symmetry.
   Published in ***[A1]***.

3. Tb ions have unlimited solubility in CeO_2 and may exist as both Tb^{3+} and Tb^{4+}. If an oxygen vacancy is formed alongside a Tb impurity, then Tb^{3+} is the most stable oxidation state.
   Published in ***[A2, A3]***.

4. The addition of Tb ions to CeO_2 lowers the formation energy of oxygen vacancies in the material's crystalline structure.
   Published in ***[A3]***.

5. In the ZnO crystal Ir ion is likely to create a 6-coordinated complex with the lattice and interstitial oxygen atoms. Such a complex has lower formation energy in comparison to other possible complexes with different coordination numbers.
   Published in ***[A4]***.

6. ZnO-embedded Ir complex increases the material's electronic conductivity, lowers its Seebeck coefficient, and can be a cause for measurable p-type conductivity.
   Published in ***[A4]***.

AUTHOR'S PUBLICATION LIST

Publications directly related to this thesis

[A1] A. Chesnokov, D. Gryaznov, N. V. Skorodumova, E. A. Kotomin, A. Zitolo, M. Zubkins, A. Kuzmin, A. Anspoks, and J. Purans, "The local atomic structure and thermoelectric properties of Ir-doped ZnO: Hybrid DFT calculations and XAS experiments", J. Mater. Chem. C **9**, 4948–4960 (2021).

[A2] R. A. Evarestov, D. Gryaznov, M. Arrigoni, E. A. Kotomin, A. Chesnokov, and J. Maier, "Use of site symmetry in supercell models of defective crystals: Polarons in CeO_2", Phys. Chem. Chem. Phys. **19**, 8340–8348 (2017).

[A3] D. Fuks, D. Gryaznov, E. Kotomin, A. Chesnokov, and J. Maier, "Dopant solubility in ceria: Alloy thermodynamics combined with the DFT+U calculations", Solid State Ion **325**, 258–264 (2018).

[A4] A. Chesnokov, D. Gryaznov, and E. Kotomin, "First principles calculations on CeO_2 doped with Tb^{3+} ions", Opt. Mater. **90**, 76–83 (2019).

Author's other contributions

[B1] M. F. Hoedl, A. Chesnokov, D. Gryaznov, R. Merkle, E. A. Kotomin, and J. Maier, "Proton migration barriers in $BaFeO_{3-\delta}$ – insights from DFT calculations", J. Mater. Chem. A **11**, 6336–6348 (2023).

[B2] D. Zavickis, G. Zvejnieks, A. Chesnokov, and D. Gryaznov, "Single oxygen vacancy in $BaCoO_3$: Hybrid DFT calculations and local site symmetry approach", Solid State Ion **375**, 115835 (2022).

[B3] D. Bocharov, A. Chesnokov, G. Chikvaidze, J. Gabrusenoks, R. Ignatans, R. Kalendarev, M. Krack, K. Kundzins, A. Kuzmin, N. Mironova-Ulmane, I. Pudza, L. Puust, I. Sildos, E. Vasil'chenko, M. Zubkins, and J. Purans, "A comprehensive study of structure and properties of nanocrystalline zinc peroxide", J. Phys. Chem. Solids, 110318 (2021).

[B4] A. Ivanova, A. Chesnokov, D. Bocharov, and K. S. Exner, "A Universal Approach to Quantify Overpotential-Dependent Selectivity Trends for the Competing Oxygen Evolution and Peroxide Formation Reactions: A Case Study on Graphene Model Electrodes", J. Phys. Chem. C **125**, 10413–10421 (2021).

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PARTICIPATION IN CONFERENCES

International conferences

1. 29.05.–02.06.2023, Spring meeting of the European Materials Research Society (Strasbourg, France),
   oral presentation "*Atomistic insight into proton migration barriers in $BaFeO_{3-\delta}$*" (A. Chesnokov, M. F. Hoedl, D. Gryaznov, R. Merkle, E. A. Kotomin, J. Maier)

2. 04.07.–06.07.2022, The joint Functional Materials and Nanotechnologies (FM&NT) and Nanotechnology and Innovation in the Baltic Sea region (NIBS) conference, (Riga, Latvia),
   oral presentation "*A first-principles study of point defects and electronic conductivity in ZnO*" (A. Chesnokov, D. Gryaznov, D. Bocharov, A. Kuzmin, J. Purans)

3. 31.05.–03.06.2021, Spring meeting of the European Materials Research Society (Online),
   oral presentation "*Thermoelectric properties of Ir-doped ZnO from hybrid DFT calculations*" (A. Chesnokov, D. Gryaznov, A. Kuzmin, J. Purans, E. A. Kotomin, N. V. Skorodumova)

4. 23.11.–26.11.2020, 11th International Scientific Conference "Functional Materials and Nanotechnologies" (Online),
   oral presentation "*Role of interstitial oxygens in Ir-doped ZnO*" (A. Chesnokov, D. Gryaznov, J. Purans, E. A. Kotomin, N. V. Skorodumova)

5. 16.09.–20.09.2019, Fall meeting of the European Materials Research Society (Warsaw, Poland),
   oral presentation "*Hybrid density functional calculations of Ir doped ZnO*" (A. Chesnokov, D. Gryaznov, J. Purans, E. A. Kotomin, N. V. Skorodumova);
   poster presentation "*Defects in CeO_2: DFT and site symmetry approach*" (A. Chesnokov, D. Gryaznov, E. A. Kotomin)

6. 30.05.–01.06.2019, 118th General Assembly of the German Bunsen Society for Physical Chemistry, Bunsentagung 2019 (Jena, Germany),
   poster presentation "*Calculating Tb^{3+}-doped CeO_2 from first principles*" (A. Chesnokov, D. Gryaznov, E. A. Kotomin)

7. 24.04.–27.04.2017, 11th International Scientific Conference "Functional Materials and Nanotechnologies" (Tartu, Estonia),
   poster presentation "*First principles calculations of defective CeO_2: use of site symmetry in a supercell model*" (A. Chesnokov, D. Gryaznov, R.A. Evarestov, E.A. Kotomin)

Local conferences

1. 28.02.–02.03.2023, 39th annual ISSP UL scientific conference (Riga),
   oral presentation "*Atomistic insight into proton migration barriers in $BaFeO_{3-\delta}$*" (A. Chesnokov, M. F. Hoedl, D. Gryaznov, R. Merkle, E. A. Kotomin, J. Maier)

2. 22.02.–24.02.2022, 38th annual ISSP UL scientific conference (online),
   oral presentation "*First-principles description of ZnO_2: a comparative DFT study*" (A. Chesnokov, D. Gryaznov, D. Bocharov, J. Purans)

3. 23.02.–25.02.2021, 37th annual ISSP UL scientific conference (online),
   oral presentation "*Local atomic structure of Ir-doped ZnO: a comparison between experimental results and hybrid DFT calculations*" (A. Chesnokov, D. Gryaznov, J. Purans, A. Kuzmin, E. A. Kotomin, N. V. Skoro-

dumova)

4. 11.02.–13.02.2020, 36th annual ISSP UL scientific conference (Riga),
   oral presentation "*ZnO-embedded IrO_2: a first-principles approach to electronic defects*" (A. Chesnokov, D. Gryaznov, J. Purans, A. Kuzmin, E. A. Kotomin, N. V. Skorodumova)

5. 29.03.2019, – The 77th conference of the University of Latvia (Riga),
   oral presentation "*First principles calculations on CeO_2 doped with Tb^{3+} ions*" (A. Chesnokov, D. Gryaznov, E. A. Kotomin)

6. 20.02.–22.02.2019, – 35th annual ISSP UL scientific conference (Riga),
   poster presentation "*First principles calculations on CeO_2 doped with Tb^{3+} ions*" (A. Chesnokov, D. Gryaznov, E. A. Kotomin);
   poster presentation "*Exploring structure of defective Zinc Oxide*" (A. Chesnokov, D. Gryaznov, N. V. Skorodumova)

7. 06.04.2018, The 76th conference of the University of Latvia (Riga),
   oral presentation "*Electron localization effects in Tb-doped CeO_2*" (A. Chesnokov, D. Gryaznov, E.A. Kotomin)

8. 20.02.–22.02.2018, 34th annual ISSP UL scientific conference (Riga),
   oral presentation "*Electron localization effects in Tb-doped CeO_2*" (A. Chesnokov, D. Gryaznov, E.A. Kotomin)

9. 22.02.–24.02.2017, 33rd annual ISSP UL scientific conference (Riga),
   poster presentation "*Use of site symmetry in supercell model of defective CeO_2*" (A. Chesnokov, D. Gryaznov, R.A. Evarestov, E.A. Kotomin)

10. 17.02.–19.02.2016, 32nd annual ISSP UL scientific conference (Riga),
    oral presentation "*Calculation of pure and doped cerium dioxide properties in bulk phase*" (A. Chesnokov, D. Gryaznov, M. Arrigoni, R. A. Evarestov)

PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

During the preparation of this Thesis, its Author has participated in the following international schools:

2021. Virtual school on electronic excitations in solids and nanostructures using the Yambo code, *Online*

2019. Advanced Electronic Structure Methods in Condensed Matter Physics, *Lausanne, Switzerland*, poster presentation "*Use of site symmetry in supercell model of defective* CeO_2", (A. Chesnokov, D. Gryaznov, R.A. Evarestov, E.A. Kotomin)

2018. PDC-PRACE workshop "HPC Tools for the Modern Era", *Stockholm, Sweden*

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