

Fundamentals and Catalytic Applications of CeO₂-Based Materials

Tiziano Montini, Michele Melchionna, Matteo Monai, and Paolo Fornasiero*

Department of Chemical and Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Trieste and ICCOM-CNR and INSTM Trieste Research Units
Via L. Giorgieri 1, 34127 Trieste, Italy

ABSTRACT: Cerium dioxide (CeO₂, ceria) is becoming an ubiquitous constituent in catalytic systems for a variety of applications. 2016 sees the 40th anniversary since ceria was first employed by Ford Motor Company as an oxygen storage component in car converters, to become in the years since its inception an irreplaceable component in three-way catalysts (TWCs). Apart from this well-established use, ceria is looming as a catalyst component for a wide range of catalytic applications. For some of these, such as fuel cells, CeO₂-based materials have almost reached the market stage, while for some other catalytic reactions, such as reforming processes, photocatalysis, water-gas shift reaction, thermochemical water splitting, and organic reactions, ceria is emerging as a unique material, holding great promise for future market breakthroughs. While much knowledge about the fundamental characteristics of CeO₂-based materials has already been acquired, new characterization techniques and powerful theoretical methods are deepening our understanding of these materials, helping us to predict their behavior and application potential. This review has a wide view on all those aspects related to ceria which promise to produce an important impact on our life, encompassing fundamental knowledge of CeO₂ and its properties, characterization toolbox, emerging features, theoretical studies, and all the catalytic applications, organized by their degree of establishment on the market.



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1. INTRODUCTION

Cerium is the most abundant of the so-called rare earth elements (about 0.0046 wt % of the Earth's crust, [Figure 1](#)), which are utilized today in many fields of application, such as magnetics, phosphors, alloys, and catalysis. Given to its large natural reserves, China has been for more than a decade the biggest producer of rare earths, with over 90% of the global production. The perspectives of the use of cerium are therefore mostly related to geopolitical matters, together with environmental concerns about mining practices used for rare earths extraction. Nonetheless, the progressive adoption of more restrictive regulations on greener methodologies may inevitably lead to cuts in the production and, as a consequence, to price spikes.

Despite these adverse market factors and in contrast with most of the other rare earth elements, cerium's price has consistently dropped over the last years, reaching a value of

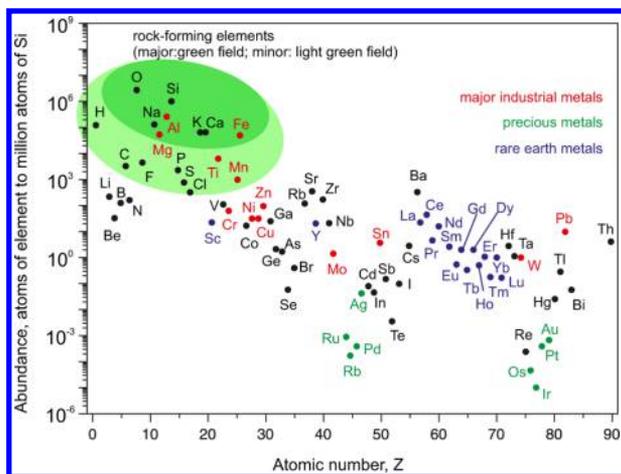


Figure 1. Relative abundance of elements in the Earth's upper continental crust in function of the atomic number. Rare earth elements are in blue. Adapted from ref 1 (Source: United States Geological Survey, 2002).

about 6.0 USD/kg in December 2015 (<http://www.metalprices.com/>). Even more interestingly, cerium oxide cost has enjoyed a steeper descend, and it is notably going below the price of lanthanum oxide.

When ranked in terms of value versus risk in the supply (Figure 2), cerium does not fall into what is called “critical rare earths” category, which denotes those elements with scarcity as compared to their utilization. Therefore, it is a highly exploitable element, whose potential in the short-to-medium term is projected to be relatively high.

Cerium dioxide (CeO_2), a pale yellow/white powder, is a very well-known cerium compound, formed by the calcination of cerium oxalate or hydroxide. CeO_2 is most commonly used as a catalyst or as a non-inert support for catalysts, and above all, it is of critical importance in the construction of three way catalysts (TWCs).

CeO_2 has long been the subject of a plethora of studies both in academia and in industry. The number of publications with the field “ CeO_2 ” or “ceria” from 1950 to 2015 exceeds 26000, and an analysis over the years since 1994 indicates a constant increase of interest in this subject (Figure 3). The number of papers on ceria associated with the field of “catalysis” is notably following a similar trend.

The years 2014 and 2015 have been the most prolific years in terms of publications recording more than 2300 papers on ceria materials; noteworthy is the fact that the papers concerning catalytic applications have for the first time become 50% of the total, with 1301 publications in 2015, a sign of the ever-growing interest in applying CeO_2 to catalysis. All this vast literature on ceria comprises a number of excellent reviews, which encompasses several specific aspects of this intriguing compound.^{3–10} Many of the original publications, on the other hand, refer to energy and environmental processes, spanning from the most traditional topics to the more cutting edge research based on nanostructured systems. However, it is worth mentioning the appearance of studies on the employment of ceria within new scientific areas such as biology and medicine. For example, CeO_2 has been used as a vehicle for intracellular drug delivery¹¹ or as a support for stem cells cultured in vitro.¹² Another remarkable investigation showed how CeO_2 nanoparticles could reduce ischemic brain damage by disruption of the blood–brain barrier after ischemia.¹³ Although fascinating, these brand new themes will only be briefly treated at the end of this review, as we believe that they deserve to be discussed in a dedicated comprehensive review. Photocatalysis by ceria-based compounds is emerging as a new and challenging research topic while the utilization of CeO_2 in solar reactors for the thermal splitting of H_2O and CO_2 for fuel generation is another rising field which merits special mention.^{14–16}

The goal of the present review is to provide the reader with a general and ample view on the properties of ceria-based materials and their applications ranging from the most well-established ones such as TWCs to those which have started to make tangible breakthroughs, even though they still suffer from some drawbacks that hamper marketing.

After discussing the main fundamental aspects related to the structural features of pure CeO_2 and of its solid solutions with other metal oxides, the review will outline the characteristics of redox chemistry and the derived properties, such as, above all, the so-called oxygen storage capacity (OSC). Given their widespread integral part into application-focused reports, some of the most representative theoretical studies will be presented, followed by two sections dedicated to nanostructured ceria and model catalysts. Finally, all the most widespread applications in catalysis will be reviewed, with selected examples provided. Given the vast number of examples, the list is far from being

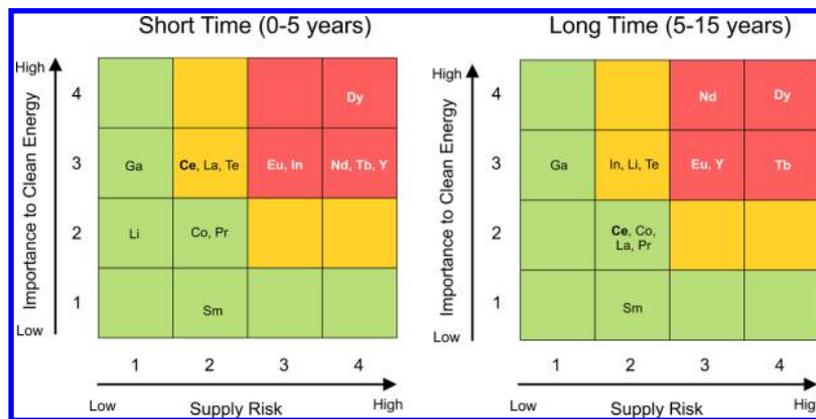


Figure 2. Charts illustrating value vs risk assessments on short-term and long-term ranges for rare earth elements. Adapted from ref 2 (Source: U.S. Department of Energy, 2011).

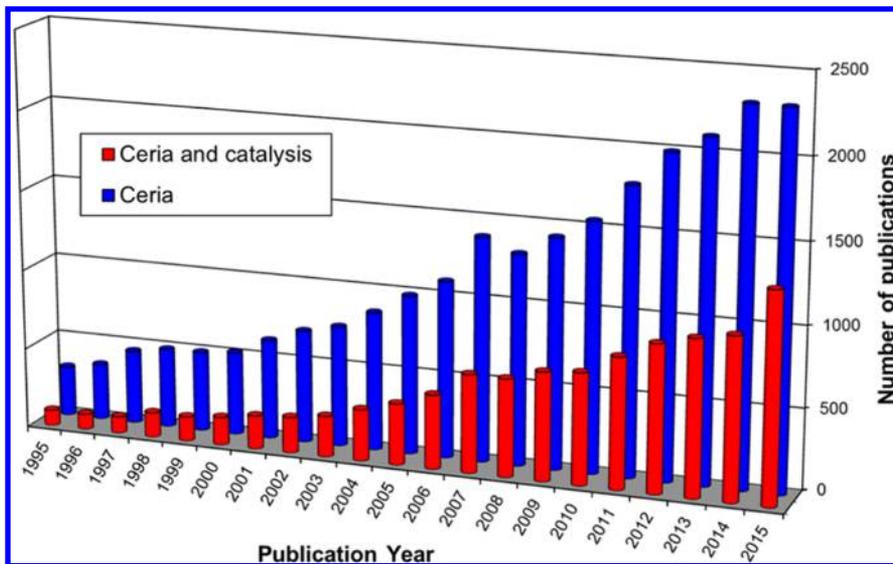


Figure 3. Histogram of number of publications on ceria (blue bars) and publications on ceria associated with catalysis (red bars) from 1994 to 2015 (Source: Web of Science, Jan 9, 2016).

exhaustive, but it aims at incorporating the most prominent research efforts that could be illustrative for the discussion.

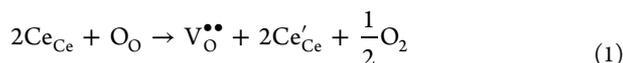
2. STRUCTURAL PROPERTIES OF CeO₂-BASED MATERIALS

2.1. Structural and Non-Stoichiometric Properties of CeO₂

Many different phases can be formed by oxidation of metal Ce with O₂, depending on temperature and oxygen pressure. Considering the possible oxidation states of Ce (III and IV), the extreme compositions of the oxides are Ce₂O₃ and CeO₂. The formation of these compounds from metal Ce is spontaneous with $\Delta G_{298}^0 = -1796$ and -1089 kJ mol⁻¹, respectively, expressed per mole of compound.

CeO₂ crystallizes in the fluorite structure, with a face-centered cubic (f.c.c.) unit cell within the space group *Fm* $\bar{3}$ *m* ($a = 0.541134$ nm, JCPDS 34-394). In this structure, eight equivalent nearest-neighbor oxygen anions are coordinated around each Ce cation at the corners of a cube, with each anion coordinated by four cations forming a tetrahedron.

Non-stoichiometric CeO_{2-y} can be formed by oxygen release and reduction of Ce(IV) to Ce(III), with the concomitant formation of oxygen vacancies within the crystal structure. The reaction can be expressed, following the Kröger-Vink notation (eq 1) as



Many different CeO_{2-y} phases have been identified depending on the amount of oxygen lost by the starting material and on the symmetry assumed by the oxygen vacancies, as can be deduced from the Ce₂O₃-CeO₂ phase diagram.¹⁷ It must be emphasized that conventional powder X-ray diffraction (XRD) have some constraints in the determination of the structural parameters of non-stoichiometric CeO_{2-y} oxides because of the low scattering power of oxygen. Considering this, the biggest part of the work reported in the literature for the identification of the different phases in the Ce₂O₃-CeO₂ phase diagram have been performed using neutron or electron diffraction techniques.¹⁸⁻²⁰ Moreover, it must be underlined that the studies presented in this section mainly concern well-crystal-

lized materials, while the properties of powders commonly employed in catalysis could be considerably different.

At elevated temperatures (above 685 °C) and low oxygen pressures, CeO₂ is reduced forming a continuum of oxygen-deficient non-stoichiometric oxides, the so-called α phase, with compositions in the range of $0 < y < 0.286$ for CeO_{2-y}. The α phase presents a disordered non-stoichiometric fluorite-related structure.^{18,19} High-temperature XRD patterns do not show superstructures, and the lattice parameter a of the cubic phase increases linearly with the content of Ce(III),²¹ in agreement with the larger ionic radius of Ce(III) compared to Ce(IV) (0.114 nm vs 0.097 nm).²² After thermal treatment, the α phase forms fluorite-related phases with general formula Ce_nO_{2n-2m} characterized by an ordered arrangement of the oxygen vacancies.^{20,23-26} Relevant examples of these phases are Ce₆O₁₁ (the β phase, monoclinic),²⁴ Ce₁₁O₂₀ (the δ phase, triclinic),²⁵ and Ce₇O₁₂ (rhombohedral).^{23,25,27} The most important features of the Ce-O phase diagram are presented in Figure 4, with detail on the Ce_nO_{2n-2m} phases.

As the amount of oxygen vacancies in CeO_{2-y} increases to $y > 0.286$, the high-temperature part of the Ce₂O₃-CeO₂ phase diagram is dominated by the presence of σ phase, with a non-stoichiometric, body-centered cubic (b.c.c.) structure. The compositional end member of the σ phase, the C-type sesquioxide Ce₂O₃ crystallizes in the bixbyite structure (space group *Ia* $\bar{3}$), that is closely related to the f.c.c. structure of CeO₂. The two cation arrays are almost identical, with oxygen anions occupying all the tetrahedral sites in the f.c.c. structure, while only three-quarters are occupied in the b.c.c. structure in a perfectly ordered array. For this reason, the cell parameter of C-type Ce₂O₃ is almost twice that of CeO₂: a value of 1.121 nm can be calculated by extrapolation from the cell parameters of the C-type sesquioxide of the other lanthanides or from the Vegard's law for the Ce₂O₃-CeO₂ systems.²⁸ The σ phase, commonly represented as Ce₂O_{3+ δ} is difficult to distinguish from the C-type sesquioxide. By reduction of high surface area CeO₂ materials with composition Ce₂O_{3+ δ} with $\delta = 0.2-0.33$ have been obtained^{21,29,30} and recognized as the σ phase from the cell parameter (1.112-1.113 nm), which is significantly lower than that expected for the C-type sesquioxide. In

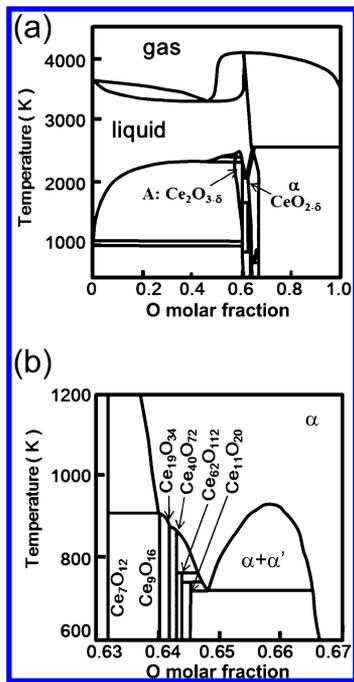


Figure 4. Calculated phase diagrams of the Ce–O system: (a) O molar fraction = 0.0 – 1.0, $T = 50 - 4500$ K; (b) O molar fraction = 0.63 – 0.67, $T = 600 - 1200$ K. Adapted with permission from ref 23. Copyright 2006 Elsevier.

agreement with this, neutron diffraction on a single crystal of $\text{CeO}_{1.68}$ ($\text{Ce}_2\text{O}_{3.36}$) gives a cell parameter of 1.1111 nm.²⁵

Finally, the A-type sesquioxide Ce_2O_3 (the so-called θ phase) possesses an hexagonal structure belonging to the $P32/m$ space group ($a = 0.389$ nm, $c = 0.607$ nm; JCPDS 23-1048).³¹ It was suggested that the preferred formation of the A-type Ce_2O_3 instead of the C-type material is not related to the thermodynamic stability of the hexagonal phase³² but to the higher reactivity of the sesquioxide with cubic structure with atmospheric oxygen.³⁰

2.2. Solid Solutions Containing CeO_2

The literature suggests that the fluorite structure of CeO_2 is able to form solid solutions with a large variety of oxides. The lattice parameter of the solid solution usually follows the Vegard's rule (i.e., a linear lattice parameter dependence on the solute concentration), although some deviation from this rule has been reported (see below).

It is important to emphasize that the term “dopant” should be strictly used for situations in which a foreign cation is part of the ceria lattice, in contrast to those cases in which simple physical mixtures of two oxides (with one of the two consisting only of a minor percentage) are discussed.

An empirical relation between the lattice parameter of the solid solution and the ionic radius and charge of a cation (dopant) dissolved into CeO_2 (and other fluorite-structured oxides) has been reported by Kim (eq 2):³³

$$a = 0.5413 + \sum_k (0.0220\Delta r_k + 0.00015\Delta z_k)m_k \quad (2)$$

where a (in nm) is the cell parameter of doped CeO_2 , $\Delta r_k = r_k - r_{\text{Ce(IV)}}$ (in nm) is the difference between the ionic radii of the k th dopant and Ce(IV), $\Delta z = z_k - z_{\text{Ce(IV)}}$ (in nm) is the difference between the charge of the k th dopant and Ce(IV), and m_k is the molar fraction of the k th dopant. In the same

work, Kim argued that the solubility of an oxide into the fluoritic lattice of CeO_2 is governed by the elastic energy per substituted ion introduced in the lattice because of the difference in ionic radius: the larger the Δr_k , the larger the elastic energy and the lower the solubility limit. The maximum in solubility is achieved for the dopant cations having a radius correspondent to the matching radius, r_m , that is the ionic radius resulting in Vegard's slope = 0. Following the calculations of Kim,³³ r_m assumes the value of 0.097 nm for tetravalent dopants, 0.1038 nm for trivalent dopants, and 0.1106 nm for divalent dopants. Similar values have been obtained by other authors.^{4,34}

Deviations from the Vegardian behavior have been occasionally observed. Nakamura rationalized the non-Vegardianity observed in $\text{MO}_2\text{-LnO}_{1.5}$ [M (IV) = Ce, Th; Ln (III) = lanthanide] solid solutions with a model comprising non-random distribution of defects within the crystal structure, with oxygen vacancies preferentially associated with the smallest cations.^{35,36} In the case of nanostructured $\text{CeO}_2\text{-ZrO}_2$ (the most relevant for catalytic applications), a significant increase of the cell parameters has been observed for both cubic and tetragonal structures having crystallite size below 12–15 nm.³⁷ This deviation from the Vegard's law has been related to relaxation of the outermost layers of the crystallites. Because of surface strain, these layers can be expanded or compressed, leading to significant modification of the “apparent lattice parameters” measured on the basis of XRD analysis.³⁷

It must be emphasized that the maximum amount of dopant tolerated by the fluorite structure is strongly influenced by the temperature. For oxides with a cationic radius close to r_m , a solubility limit of 15–25% of substitution of Ce(IV) is commonly observed for materials prepared around 1000 °C. This limit can increase above 40% for materials treated at 1500 °C.³⁸

Above the solubility limit for solid solutions, the preparation conditions are crucial to determine the structural properties of the obtained materials. The increases in the treatment temperature and time favor the formation of equilibrium phases by diffusional transformation. This requires the diffusion of cations until equilibrium is reached, resulting in the formation of the phases with the highest thermodynamic stability. Usually, a large miscibility gap is present in the phase diagram for CeO_2 -dopant oxide systems, and intermediate compositions are obtained as mixtures of the CeO_2 -rich and dopant oxide-rich phases. If temperature is not high enough to allow a significant cation diffusion, partitionless phase transition can take place producing bulk homogeneous, metastable materials with crystalline structure intermediate between the cubic fluorite-type structure of CeO_2 and the crystal structure of the dopant oxides.

The most important structural features of solid solutions containing CeO_2 will be summarized in this section, with particular attention to the materials with the wider catalytic application.

2.2.1. $\text{CeO}_2\text{-ZrO}_2$ Solid Solutions. $\text{CeO}_2\text{-ZrO}_2$ mixed oxides are certainly the best known because of their widespread use in TWCs, and as a consequence, they are probably the most investigated from a structural point of view. The ionic radius of Zr(IV) (0.084 nm for a 8-fold coordination)²² differs by ~15% to that of Ce(IV) (0.097 nm).

The equilibrium phase diagram of the $\text{CeO}_2\text{-ZrO}_2$ system has been studied experimentally by many researchers,^{39–42} and reviews summarizing the key results have become recently

available.⁴³ Yashima et al. studied the evolution of the CeO₂-ZrO₂ system by annealing in Na₂B₂O₇-NaF flux. The XRD analysis of the products allowed for the determination of the behavior of the system at temperatures lower than 1000 °C, presenting the complete equilibrium phase diagram of the CeO₂-ZrO₂ system, which is presented in Figure 5.⁴² A CeO₂-

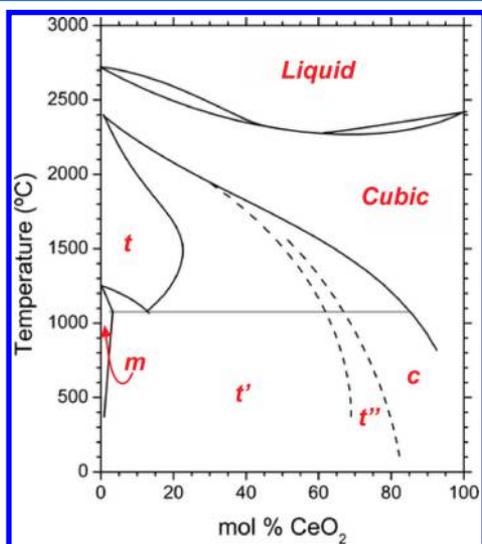


Figure 5. CeO₂-ZrO₂ phase diagram. Adapted with permission from ref 45. Copyright 1994 Wiley-VCH.

rich phase with cubic structure (c) has been recognized in equilibrium with a ZrO₂-rich phase with tetragonal (t) or monoclinic (m) structure, depending on temperature.⁴² At 1055 °C, an eutectoid reaction from t to (m + c) takes place, with equilibrium compositions of the t, m, and c phases of $x = 0.112$, 0.009, and 0.84 in Ce_xZr_{1-x}O₂, respectively.⁴² Notably, a consistent phase diagram was reported by Du et al.⁴⁴ following the CALPHAD (calculation of phase diagram) method.

Despite the fact that the equilibrium phase diagram of the CeO₂-ZrO₂ system is known with high reliability, the identification of the crystal structure and composition of the bulk homogeneous, metastable solid solutions was a difficult task. These phases are the most important from the point of view of the catalytic application, since they are formed at moderate temperatures (below 1055 °C). Various phases have been identified by a combination of XRD, Raman spectroscopy, differential scanning calorimetry (DSC), neutron diffraction, and high-resolution transmission electron microscopy (HR-TEM) studies.^{45–49} The most important phases identified are summarized in Table 1, presenting their main structural characteristics.

Pure ZrO₂ and Ce_xZr_{1-x}O₂ with $x < 0.12$ possess a monoclinic structure belonging to the P2₁/c space group. As the CeO₂ content increases, the a_m value approaches b_m , the angle β_m decreases (indicating a decrease of the monoclinic distortion) and all positional parameters of the monoclinic Ce_xZr_{1-x}O₂ approach those of the tetragonal structure.^{48,49} The phase boundary, around $x = 0.12$, is strongly dependent on the preparation of the sample and on the grain size, these being the factors that mainly influence the nucleation, growth, and kinetics of the transformation.⁵⁴

Above a CeO₂ content of $x = 0.12$, three phases with tetragonal structure have been identified.^{45–49} The t phase is stable at high temperature and for the lower CeO₂ contents. As

Table 1. Most Relevant Metastable, Bulk Homogeneous Phases Identified for the Ce_xZr_{1-x}O₂ Materials below 1055 °C

composition (x)	crystal system and phases	space group	unit-cell parameters	refs
$0.90 \leq x \leq 1$	cubic (c)	$Fm\bar{3}m$	$c/a = 1$	45–47
$0.65 \leq x < 0.90^a$	tetragonal (t'')	$P4_2/nmc$	$c/a = 1$	45–47
$0.20 \leq x < 0.65^a$	tetragonal (t')	$P4_2/nmc$	$c/a > 1$	45–47
$0.12 \leq x < 0.20^a$	tetragonal (t)	$P4_2/nmc$	$c/a > 1$	48 and 49
$0 \leq x < 0.12^a$	monoclinic (m)	$P2_1/c$	$a_m \neq b_m \neq c_m$ $\beta > 90^\circ$	48 and 49
$x = 0.5$, Ce ₂ Zr ₂ O _{7+y}	pyrochlore	$Fd\bar{3}m$	$c/a = 1$	50 and 51
$x = 0.5$, Ce ₂ Zr ₂ O ₈	phase κ (cubic)	$P2_13$	$a = 1.05270$ nm	52
$x = 0.5$, Ce ₂ Zr ₂ O ₈	phase t* (tetragonal)	$P4_2/nmc$	$c/a > 1$	53

^aThe compositional ranges are dependent on the processing and grain size.

the value of x increases, the t' and t'' phases are formed as metastable, non-equilibrium phases observed at lower temperature. The c/a ratio is slightly higher than 1 for the t and t' phases, while it is equal to 1 in the t'' form. The t'' phase belongs to the P₄₂/nmc space group because the oxygen ions are displaced along the c axis from the atomic position of the cubic structure. The existence of the t'' phase was confirmed by a combination of diffraction and spectroscopic techniques. In bulk Ce_xZr_{1-x}O₂ samples with $x = 0.65 - 0.70$, no splitting was detected by synchrotron XRD between the reflection 004_F and 400_F of the pseudofluorite lattice, indicating a cubic order in the cation sublattice.⁴⁷ At the same time, Raman spectra of the same samples showed the typical bands of a tetragonal phase, providing evidence that there is a displacement of the O sublattice from the position of the cubic fluorite-type structure.⁴⁵ Notably, neutron diffraction shows a detectable signal corresponding to the 112_F reflection,⁴⁷ which is present for the P₄₂/nmc space group but is forbidden for the cubic structure. As the CeO₂ content increases, the unit-cell parameters and the cell volume increase, as a result of the larger ionic radius of Ce(IV) compared to Zr(IV). The c/a_F ratio and the oxygen displacement decreases as x increases in Ce_xZr_{1-x}O₂ tetragonal phases. A discontinuity is observed for the c/a_F ratio around 0.6, corresponding to the t'-t'' transition.⁴⁷ Raman bands attributable to the tetragonal distortion disappeared at around $x = 0.9$, indicating the t''-c transition.^{45,47}

The local structure of CeO₂-ZrO₂ solid solutions has been deeply studied by extended x-ray absorption fine structure (EXAFS) spectroscopy.^{55,56} For an intermediate composition such as Ce_{0.5}Zr_{0.5}O₂, a significant distortion of O sublattice is evidenced especially around the Zr atoms. The best model describing the local environment around Zr involves 4 O atoms at 0.2115 nm, 2 O atoms at 0.2324 nm, and other 2 O atoms probably placed at a distance larger than 0.26 nm, while 8 O atoms at the distance of 0.2312 nm were detected around Ce (similarly to the case of pure CeO₂).⁵⁵ The longer Zr-O distances observed for some oxygen ions and the consequent weakness of the bond have been used to interpret the easier diffusion of these O atoms in these materials (also called oxygen mobility) and finally their catalytic properties.^{55–57}

Together with these phases recognized in the non-equilibrium phase diagram of $\text{CeO}_2\text{-ZrO}_2$ materials, particular structures have been identified for solid solutions with a Ce:Zr 1:1 molar ratio. Of particular importance is the non-stoichiometric phase related to the pyrochlore structure, obtained by reduction of the $\text{Ce}_{0.5}\text{Zr}_{0.5}\text{O}_2$ compounds at high temperature.^{50,51,53,58} The pyrochlore $\text{Ce}_2\text{Zr}_2\text{O}_7$ belongs to the $Fd\bar{3}m$ space group: the Ce and Zr cations are arranged in an ordered face-centered cubic sublattice and, compared to the fluorite structure, 1/8 of the anions are absent in a systematic way, producing an ordered defect structure. For this reason, the unit-cell parameter of the pyrochlore structure is double as compared to the unit-cell in the fluorite phase. Considering the fact that the materials obtained by reduction of $\text{Ce}_{0.5}\text{Zr}_{0.5}\text{O}_2$ are usually not fully stoichiometric, the pyrochlore structure in the $\text{Ce}_x\text{Zr}_{1-x}\text{O}_2$ system is often reported as $\text{Ce}_2\text{Zr}_2\text{O}_{7+y}$.^{50,51} Controlled oxidation at moderate temperature (600 °C) of the pyrochlore $\text{Ce}_2\text{Zr}_2\text{O}_{7+y}$ leads to the formation of the κ phase with formula $\text{Ce}_2\text{Zr}_2\text{O}_8$; this phase maintains the ordered arrangement of the cations with all the positions of anions occupied by oxide ions.^{52,53} The κ phase has been recognized as the $\text{Ce}_x\text{Zr}_{1-x}\text{O}_2$ material that releases and stores oxygen at the lower temperature.⁵³ Increasing the oxidation temperature, a new phase, named t^* , is formed with a tetragonal structure.

Considering the large number of non-equilibrium phases identified in the $\text{CeO}_2\text{-ZrO}_2$ system, major problems have been encountered in the determination of the exact crystallographic phase in nanocrystalline materials, which are the most interesting for catalytic applications. The broadening of powder XRD reflections often does not allow a reliable identification of the overlapping of patterns deriving from materials with similar composition and/or the splitting of particular reflections. Useful information could be obtained combining diffraction results with the analysis using Raman spectroscopy. Nevertheless, less common techniques could provide useful information.

Analysis of a sample with composition $\text{Ce}_{0.5}\text{Zr}_{0.5}\text{O}_2$ by neutron diffraction revealed that the material was constituted by nanodomains of $\text{Ce}_{0.4}\text{Zr}_{0.6}\text{O}_2$ with mean dimension of 2.5–3.0 nm within a matrix of $\text{Ce}_{0.7}\text{Zr}_{0.3}\text{O}_2$. Conventional XRD was ineffective for the determination of this structure.⁵⁰

The presence on nanodomains in samples that appeared homogeneous from XRD and Raman analysis has been revealed by luminescence spectroscopy, using Eu(III) ions as structural probe to investigate the local structure of the materials.^{59,60} Eu(III) was introduced into the bulk during the synthesis or by impregnation of the surface of the materials. Bulk-doped $\text{Ce}_x\text{Zr}_{1-x}\text{O}_2$ samples with thermally stable compositions ($x = 0.2$ and 0.8) show Eu(III) luminescence spectra compatible with the symmetry of the cationic sites of the tetragonal and cubic phases, respectively.⁵⁹ In particular, the analysis of the $^5\text{D}_0 \rightarrow ^7\text{F}_0$ transition provides evidence for bands attributable to Eu(III) hosted in bulk and surface sites (Figure 6).⁵⁹ On the other hand, metastable $\text{Ce}_{0.5}\text{Zr}_{0.5}\text{O}_2$ treated at 1000 °C appears homogeneous by XRD and Raman, belonging to the t'' phase, while Eu(III) luminescence shows a complex feature resembling that of a mixture of different phases.⁵⁹ Moreover, a more detailed study combining emission and excitation spectroscopies demonstrated that $\text{CeO}_2\text{-ZrO}_2$ materials could be formed by nanodomains after treatment at lower temperature (750 °C).^{60,61} Finally, luminescence spectroscopy was also able to evidence the diffusion of Eu(III) ions between surface and bulk of the materials^{62,63} and the presence and

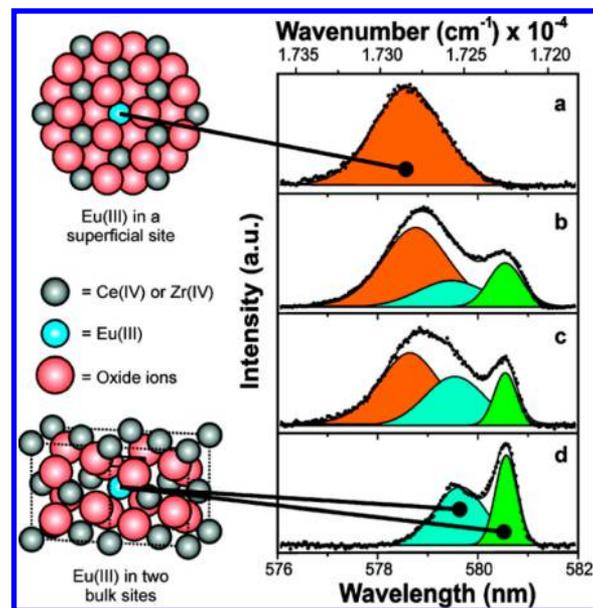


Figure 6. Eu(III) emission spectra of the thermodynamically stable tetragonal CZE-20 samples with the schematic representation of the Eu surface site located on the stable (101) surface of tetragonal $\text{Ce}_{0.2}\text{Zr}_{0.8}\text{O}_2$ and of the two Eu bulk sites of $\text{Ce}_{0.2}\text{Zr}_{0.8}\text{O}_2$ as indicated by EXAFS data.⁵⁵ The details of the $^5\text{D}_0 \rightarrow ^7\text{F}_0$ transition are reported for both surface and bulk Eu(III) doped materials after different thermal treatments: (a) surface-doped CZE-20 heated at 500 °C for 5 h, (b) bulk-doped CZE-20 calcined at 500 °C for 5 h, (c) bulk-doped CZE-20 calcined at 1000 °C for 5 h, and (d) bulk-doped CZE-20 calcined at 1400 °C for 5 h. In accordance with XRD pattern and Raman spectra, all materials show Eu(III) emission spectra consistent with the presence of a single tetragonal t' phase. Reprinted from ref 59. Copyright 2009 American Chemical Society.

location of oxygen vacancies inside the nanocrystals of $\text{CeO}_2\text{-ZrO}_2$ materials,^{64,65} as well as the interaction between different lanthanide ions codoping the materials.⁶⁴ These results highlight the potential power of the luminescence technique in evidencing the structure of mixed oxides at the nanometric level, helping in discriminating bulk homogeneous materials from nanocomposites. Finally, luminescence spectra can be useful to ascertain the presence of lanthanides impurities.⁶⁶

2.2.2. Other CeO_2 -Based Solid Solutions. Doped- CeO_2 incorporating many other metal oxides has been reported in literature. Despite their wide use in catalysis, no detailed studies on the real structural characteristics of doped- CeO_2 materials treated at moderate temperature (400–600 °C) have been reported, and generally, the possible formation of nanodomains cannot be ruled out.

Tetravalent dopants have been considered, comprising of both IVa and IVb groups on the periodic table. On the basis of the defect formation energy calculated following a DFT approach for materials with a dopant amount of ~ 3 mol%, IVb metals (Ti, Zr, and Hf) seem likely to remain dispersed in the bulk on CeO_2 , while IVa elements (C, Si, Ge, Sn, and Pb) should be preferentially segregated on the surface.⁶⁷ The defect formation energy decreases as the size of the dopant increases, as a result of the better size-match with Ce(IV) ions.⁶⁷ Despite suggestions from theoretical calculations, the synthesis of Ti-doped CeO_2 materials has been reported up to 25 mol % of Ti only for materials prepared at low temperatures.⁶⁸ It must be taken into account that, differently from the case of $\text{CeO}_2\text{-ZrO}_2$ solid solutions, the possible formation of nanodomains in

CeO₂-TiO₂ materials calcined at low temperatures has not been investigated up to now. After treatment at high temperature (usually above 800 °C), the low solubility of TiO₂ into CeO₂ leads to composite materials.^{69,70} Moreover the formation of stoichiometric cerium titanates have been observed: Ce₂TiO₅, Ce₂Ti₂O₇, and Ce₄Ti₉O₂₄ for Ce(III) and CeTiO₄ and CeTi₂O₆ for Ce(IV).⁷¹ Similarly, the formation of many cerium silicates have been observed in the CeO₂/Ce₂O₃-SiO₂ systems,⁷²⁻⁷⁴ although the information on Si-doped CeO₂ materials are scarce.^{75,76}

Samples in the CeO₂-HfO₂ system have a structural evolution which is very similar to that observed for CeO₂-ZrO₂ materials. Stable solid solutions of Ce_xHf_{1-x}O₂ are formed with cubic fluoritic structure for $x > 0.85$ (CeO₂-rich materials) and with monoclinic structure for the $x < 0.15$ (HfO₂-rich materials), as revealed by XRD analysis on samples treated at 1400 °C for 48 h, followed by slowly cooling.⁷⁷ Metastable tetragonal phases (t' as well as t'') have been observed for quenched samples by a combination of high-resolution XRD and Raman spectroscopy.⁷⁸ CeO₂-HfO₂ materials prepared by adopting relatively low calcination temperatures are usually reported as materials with cubic structure, although they should be often recognized as t'' phase.⁷⁹⁻⁸¹ Thermodynamic redox properties of the mixed oxides were also defined by coulometric titration, evidencing how for ceria-hafnia the similarities with ceria-zirconia are remarkable. These findings are of relevance to catalytic applications given the more marked weakness of the oxygen bonding.⁸² Moreover, ceria-terbia and ceria-praseodymia displayed an interesting phase stability, in particular Tb and Pr preserved their phase stability for a calcination temperature of 1100 °C.⁸²

Solid solutions of CeO₂ with Y₂O₃ and oxide of lanthanides in the 3+ oxidation state have been widely investigated for their possible application as electrolyte or mixed ionic electronic conductors for the electrodes of solid oxide fuel cells (SOFCs). The solubility limits of many M₂O₃ oxides into CeO₂ lattice have been reviewed by Etsell and Flengas.³⁸ Particular attention has been given to the data reported for systems after reaching the thermodynamic equilibrium following treatment at high temperature, for uses in SOFCs. In samples calcined at 1400 °C, complete miscibility with CeO₂ have been reported for M = Y, Sm, Eu, Gd, and Dy,^{38,83,84} while maximum solubility around 25 – 50 mol % are reported for M = La, Pr, Nd, and Yb.^{83,85,86} This is in agreement with the ionic radius of these elements in the 3+ oxidation state,²² with the first group having the best correspondence with the matching radius reported by Kim to minimize the elastic energy induced by the introduction of the kth dopant.³³ Increasing the temperature treatment to 1600 °C, the maximum amounts of M₂O₃ miscible into CeO₂ lattice significantly decreases for all the trivalent dopants considered.³⁸ The anion vacancy model has been confirmed for these solid solutions by both density and X-ray intensity analysis.^{85,86} In some cases, a certain long-range ordering of the anion vacancies, resulting in the formation of C-type rare earth oxide structure, has been observed, with ordering favored for the smaller trivalent metal cations.^{87,88} The formation of oxygen vacancies within the structure of M₂O₃-doped CeO₂ is a key factor to promote oxygen diffusion in the materials, allowing hopping of O²⁻ anions from one position to the next empty one.⁸⁹ Among the ceria-rare earth oxide systems, Sm(III) and Gd(III) have been shown to cause the highest increase of electrical conductivity given their ionic radii, which are very close to that of Ce(IV). Moreover, both cationic

dopants, in particular Sm, result in higher ionic conductivity of the doped ceria, which also has important implications for the assembly of low-temperature SOFCs.⁸⁹

Some data are reported in the literature for CeO₂ doped with divalent alkaline-earth ions (Mg, Ca, Sr, and Ba). Solubility limits of 2, 15, and 9 mol % have been recognized for Mg, Ca, and Sr, respectively, in doped-CeO₂ materials prepared at 1600 °C.⁹⁰ Samples prepared at 700 °C show the formation of CaO-CeO₂ solid solutions (on XRD basis) up to 30 mol % of Ca.⁹¹ Increasing the preparation temperature, the solubility limit decreases to ~20 mol% of Ca at 1000 °C and becomes even lower at 1200 °C, with the formation of a secondary phase recognized as Ce-doped CaO.^{92,93} Alkaline-earths elements have been tested as codopants in Sm-doped CeO₂ electrolytes for SOFCs, forming solid solutions and with the best conductivity at 800 °C for Ca and Sr.⁹⁴ Notably, in the case of Sr and Ba, ternary compounds have been identified: doped-SrCeO₃ and doped-BaCeO₃ show potential application such as high-temperature proton conductors for SOFCs⁹⁵ and electrolyzers,⁹⁶ while Sr₂CeO₄ is a luminescent material with blue-white emission.⁹⁷

3. REDOX PROPERTIES AND OXYGEN STORAGE CAPACITY (OSC)

The wide use of ceria and ceria-based mixed oxides as active component for catalytic oxidation in exhaust converters,^{98,99} in hydrocarbons reforming^{100,101} and water gas shift reaction (WGSR)¹⁰² has been traditionally associated with the unique excellent ability of these oxides to shuttle between Ce(III) and Ce(IV) states. This property is known as oxygen storage capacity (OSC),^{98,103} the quantification of which has seen a tremendous improvement in the adopted methodologies up to recent re-evaluation of its importance under reaction conditions.

Early investigation of ceria oxygen storage properties was triggered by the introduction of TWCs in automotive converters.^{98,104,105} Since the purpose of TWC is to promote the simultaneous oxidation of CO and HCs and the reduction of NO_x, the catalyst has to work around specific air-to-fuel (A/F) stoichiometric ratios to achieve optimal efficiency for all reactions. This is accomplished by coupling the engine with an A/F electronic control system and introducing an oxygen buffering material, such as ceria, or more recently ceria-zirconia.¹⁰⁴

OSC measurements were introduced to evaluate and compare redox properties. Simple temperature programmed reductions (TPR) and reoxidations give information on total-OSC, while more sophisticated methods include monitoring the effect of alternating an oxidant atmosphere with a reducing one under transient conditions. CO,¹⁰⁶⁻¹⁰⁸ H₂,¹⁰⁹ and HCs¹¹⁰ are the most common reductants used, while O₂ and NO are used as oxidants.¹¹¹

In their pioneering work, Yao and Yao⁹⁸ studied the transient oxidation of CO by ceria using pulse chromatographic systems. The OSC values of ceria range around 50–100 μmolO g⁻¹, and they are strongly dependent on surface area, and therefore on particle size, thermal or chemical pretreatment, and synthetic procedure.

In general, OSC of ceria is improved by incorporation of Zr^{106,112,113} or other additives (e.g., Ni and Cu)¹¹⁴ with optimum OSC for Ce_xZr_{1-x}O₂ in the region of 0.6 < x < 0.8. Simple calculations indicate that while oxygen storage in CeO₂ is restricted to the surface, for Ce-Zr mixed oxides, there is

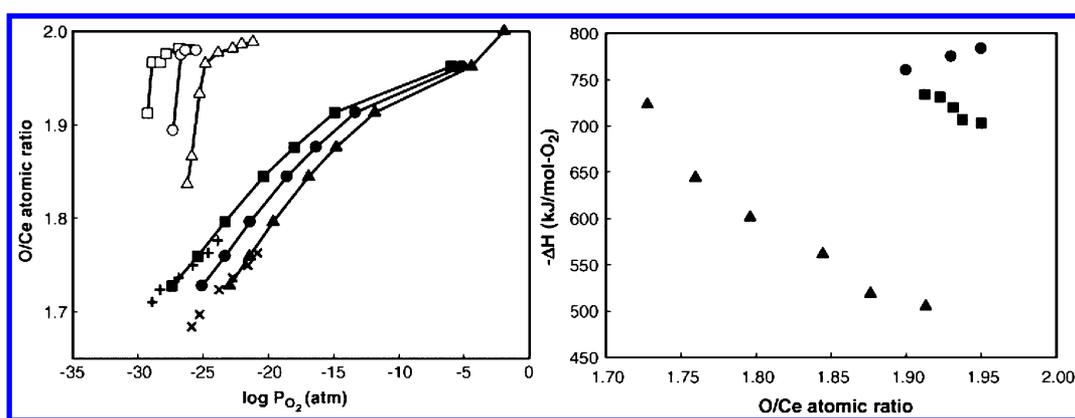


Figure 7. (Left) Oxidation isotherms for pure ceria (open symbols) and 30 wt % ceria/LA (filled symbols) at selected temperatures (■, 600 °C; ●, 650 °C; ▲, 700 °C). (Right) $-\Delta H$ of oxidation at 700 °C for (▲) 30 wt % ceria/LA, (■) $\text{Ce}_{0.8}\text{Sm}_{0.2}\text{O}_{1.9}$, and (●) pure ceria as a function of extent of reduction. LA = lanthanum-alumina. Reprinted with permission from ref 131. Copyright 2007 Elsevier.

participation of bulk oxygen in the storage process.¹⁰⁶ Structural defects and local compound formation have been proposed to be the cause of such changes in OSC properties and redox thermodynamics, as discussed later.^{55,115} Supported metals greatly promote OSC of ceria and ceria-zirconia, both directly participating through redox cycling of metal/metal oxide (M/MO) and activating oxygen species of the support.^{116–118} For example, OSC at 400 °C can increase 3–4 times for $\text{Ce}_x\text{Zr}_{1-x}\text{O}_2$ in the presence of supported noble metals (e.g., Ru, Ir, Pd, and Pt).¹¹⁸

Different experimental setups can be used to study oxygen storage kinetics, such as in high-frequency OSC measurements¹¹⁷ and in oxygen buffering capacity (OBC) measurements, indicating the capability of a material to attenuate fast oscillation in O₂ pressure.¹¹⁹

Oxygen isotopic-exchange measurements, based on ¹⁸O₂ labeling and mass spectroscopic analysis, are very powerful in giving insights into the processes and kinetics at the basis of OSC.¹²⁰ Oxygen activation process was studied,^{121,122} as well as oxygen diffusivities on the surface and bulk of the material.¹²³ Oxygen species involved in OSC were identified by coupling oxygen exchange with FT-IR: superoxide species were observed to form on $\text{Ce}_x\text{Zr}_{1-x}\text{O}_2$ during oxygen adsorption at room temperature, and a correlation between the population in O₂⁻ species and OSC at 400 °C was found.¹²⁴ Moreover, a simultaneous exchange of ¹⁶O₂⁻ with ¹⁸O₂⁻ during isotopic exchange experiments strongly suggests that binuclear oxygen species may be involved in oxygen mobility on ceria-based materials.

The influence of alumina supports on the redox properties of ceria entities was investigated through several analytical techniques, including XRD, Raman, UV–vis DRS, TEM-EDS, XANES, and EPR to establish a solid model. In the study, two types of ceria entities were found, namely three-dimensional (3D) aggregated crystalline species and two-dimensional (2D) patches, both exhibiting different redox properties than free-standing ceria, thus highlighting the importance to consider the support for evaluating redox characteristics.¹²⁵

OSC and related measurements have paved the way toward a better understanding of redox properties of ceria-based materials and the development of more efficient catalysts. However, the role of ceria in catalytic converters is actually more complex than that of a simple oxygen capacitor, and OSC measurements are often not representative of catalytic activity in exhaust after treatments.

For instance, catalysts showing comparable OSC performed much differently from each other in transient conditions on a vehicle.¹²⁶

Catalysts deactivation is also tentatively followed through OSC measurements, both in poisoning (e.g., phosphorus poisoning of real and model TWC^{127–129}) or sintering and thermal aging.¹¹⁹ However, generally there is no simple and direct relationship between OSC values and deactivation extent, even if a common trend may be extrapolated. In certain cases, OSC measurements can be misleading, as it was reported that ceria-based catalysts OSC values increased after exposure to SO₂, while the loss of catalytic activity due to SO₂ poisoning is well-documented.¹³⁰

Redox properties of materials can be investigated at equilibrium using different approaches. Regarding ceria, by measuring equilibrium data at different temperatures for the reaction (eq 3),



reliable oxidation enthalpies can be determined.

Since the activities of the solid phases are unity, the equilibrium constant for (eq 3) is equal to $P(\text{O}_2)^{1/2}$. The oxygen partial pressure can be controlled by exposing the material to equilibrium mixtures of H₂–H₂O or CO–CO₂ or via coulometric titration, controlling the oxygen chemical potential electrochemically.^{131,132}

Figure 7 shows isotherm data and differential oxidation enthalpies for bulk ceria and for 30 wt % ceria on La-modified alumina.

Notably, supported ceria reduction begins at significantly higher $P(\text{O}_2)$ compared to bulk ceria. Also, the oxidation enthalpies of the two samples are quite different: for bulk ceria values of -750 and -800 kJ mol⁻¹ O₂, almost independent from stoichiometry, were calculated, while for the supported catalyst, the oxidation enthalpy varies from -500 kJ mol⁻¹ O₂ for low extent of reduction to values comparable to bulk ceria at higher extents.

Ceria-zirconia mixed oxides oxidation enthalpies were also found to be around -500 kJ mol⁻¹ O₂ but did not change with variation in oxygen stoichiometry or Ce:Zr ratio.^{132–134} This observation was ascribed to the formation of ordered pyrochlore-type Ce₂Zr₂O₇ structure, whose local formation in the mixed oxides would cause the appearance of a plateau in the oxidation isotherms.¹³²

An explanation of pure ceria oxidation enthalpies variation with the extent of reduction and thermal treatment would be ascribed to the stabilization of Ce(IV) state by ordered fluorite structure, which is broken by defects in supported or low-temperature calcined ceria. This hypothesis is supported by some general considerations but still lacks experimental evidence.

After almost 50 years of research, redox properties of ceria-based materials remain puzzling, and their understanding requires new techniques and the knowledge coming from emerging fields of application of these materials. In this context, it is worth mentioning the combination of CeO₂ with other forefront materials in nanotechnology such as graphene. It was proven for instance that deposition of CeO_{2-y} on a layer of graphene on Ru {111} causes irreversible intercalation of oxygen under the graphene layer, emphasizing the excellent oxygen storage-release capacity of CeO_x and the potential to give access to intriguing nanodevices.¹³⁵

One final point that needs to be highlighted concerns the definition of OSC. Despite its traditional definition, which we have used herein, studies have shown that under real working conditions (namely in the real engine components), the presence of water can alter the reducibility of the CeO₂ phase.^{115,136} Thus it is claimed that a redefinition of the OSC of ceria should be given, with the calculation of OSC done under real conditions.

4. COMPUTATIONAL STUDIES

Many theoretical studies have been devoted to providing a fundamental understanding of the properties of CeO₂ to different levels of detail. Indeed, computational studies have become an essential part in the design of ceria-based materials in most application-driven research.

Several aspects have been theoretically investigated using different approaches and methods. Very recently, Sauer et al. reviewed the surface chemistry of CeO₂,³ particularly focusing on oxygen-defect formation, which has been subject of extensive and sometimes contradictory investigations. For instance, the once believed reduction of the Ce ions which are nearest neighbors (NN) to the oxygen defects has been more recently revisited through a number of density-functional theory (DFT) calculations. Thus, DFT with the HSE06 (Heyd-Scuseria-Ernzerhof hybrid functional) and the DFT+U approach (U = Hubbard-like term describing the on-site Coulomb interactions) suggest that the Ce cations neighboring the oxygen vacancies might be still in 4+ oxidation state, and that the O vacancy-induced two excess electrons might not necessarily sit on NN cations. The explanation is based on the fact that the lattice structure can relax into a global minimum energy with electrons localizing on ions further away from the vacancy (next nearest neighbors, NNN).^{137,138} More detailed DFT analysis combined with scanning tunneling microscopy (STM) imaging afforded a more accurate (although still not precise) positioning of the two excess electrons, which appear to be always confined in two different coordination spheres around the defect.^{138,139}

These examples testify to the great debate on the important issue of the relative stability of surface and subsurface oxygen vacancies and are somehow in contrast with earlier reports, in which LDA+U results combined with STM images of materials subject to annealing at 900 °C and cooling to 300 °C led to interpretation of the Ce(III) ion localized in NN position.¹⁴⁰ On the basis of DFT calculations, Kullgren et al.¹⁴¹ recently

claimed that those observations are to be explained as originating from fluorine impurities that are often present in specific ceria crystals.¹⁴² While a critical assessment of the influence of such impurities is certainly relevant, the study neglects several important issues: (i) discussion of multiple defects such as triple protrusions, (ii) adequate consideration that the O vacancy does break the symmetry of the hexagon formed by the O atoms NN to the vacancy, or (iii) discussion of the thermodynamic stability of the F dimer on the basis of tiny calculated binding energies. More recently, the presence of neighboring hydroxyls has been indicated to significantly stabilize the thermodynamically unstable oxygen vacancy clusters, and the behaviors of oxygen vacancies become largely consistent with the STM observations.¹⁴³

The examples given above tacitly introduce the two main approaches employed to overcome shortcomings arising in the calculation of total energies for Ce compounds. The first approach is based on the use of a so-called Hubbard-like functional, which models the on-site correlation of the 4f electrons of cerium by favoring their localization. For integral values of the occupation numbers, this procedure does not change the total energy; on the other hand, it allows us to capture the essential features of the cerium ion if the 4f states are occupied to some extent. A striking example of this is Ce₂O₃, which is described as a metallic conductor by conventional DFT methods, while it becomes an insulator, in agreement with the experimental evidence, when a Hubbard term is included in the Hamiltonian.¹⁴⁴ It is noteworthy that the calculated energies and structural parameters are not dependent on the U parameter if this is defined in terms of maximally localized Wannier functions.¹⁴⁴ The second approach relies on the use of hybrid functionals, in which a fraction of the Fock exchange energy is added to the gradient-corrected DFT exchange energy.¹⁴⁵ The two approaches have their own weaknesses, and it is convenient at times to carry out a cross-check investigation using both methods. Common consensus places a warning on the use of DFT+U because of its non-universality (dependence on band gap, lattice constants, etc.), therefore, very careful interpretation of the results needs to be conducted. For instance, Branda et al.¹⁴⁶ reported the study of electronic structure and oxidation state of atomic Au deposited on CeO₂ {111} by means of periodic DFT-based calculation using the LDA+U, GGA+U, as well as the HSE06 exchange-correlation potentials. Thus, the authors highlighted the difficulty to univocally predict the oxidation state of Au, as the results are strongly affected by the method chosen and, in the case of the DFT+U approach, by the chosen U.¹⁴⁶

Doping of ceria is a common strategy to tune the properties of the final material, and it has been the subject of several theoretical investigations. As an example, praseodymium¹⁴⁷ and gadolinium¹⁴⁸ doping have been simulated using kinetic lattice Monte Carlo methods. Study of Ti doping of CeO₂ nanoparticles, nanorods, and framework architectures provided a general atomistic model by means of a simulated synthesis of the various nanostructured shapes. This theoretically confirms previous experimental observations¹⁴⁹ on how the Ti ions are able to “smooth” the ceria surface, converting the {111} and {100} facets of the hexagonal prism-shaped nanorods into more cylindrical morphologies and the framework architectures from faceted pores and channels with well-defined {111} and {100} surfaces to “smooth” pores and channels (Figure 8).¹⁵⁰

Given the importance of the noble metals-cerium oxide electronic interaction (i.e., electron transfer from a reduced

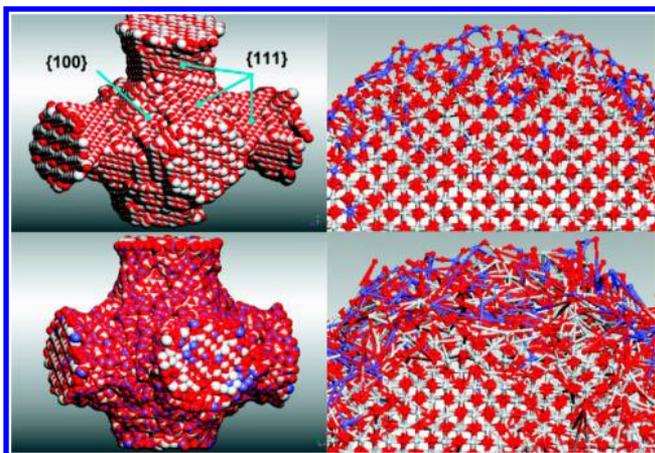


Figure 8. Low-temperature nanoporous framework architectures for CeO₂ (top left) and Ti-doped CeO₂ (bottom left). Ball and stick model of the Ti-doped CeO₂ nanocrystal taken after 1000 ps (top right) and after 1050 ps (bottom right) of molecular dynamic simulation around 3500 °C. Ce is colored white, Ti blue, and O red. Adapted from ref 150. Copyright 2007 American Chemical Society.

cerium oxide to a metal), in catalytic applications, numerous calculations have been carried out in order to understand the synergy between the two components. Au-CeO₂ represents a special system that has been most widely investigated, and exhaustive examples of computational studies have been recently reviewed.¹⁵¹ In general, most authors agree that deposition of Au clusters on CeO₂ results in an oxidation of the Au and reduction of the ceria in defect-free surfaces.¹⁵¹ On the other hand, a much stronger binding occurs at O-vacancies, but it is associated with an electron transfer from one of its Ce(III) ions to the Au atom, which becomes negatively charged, as demonstrated by density of states projected onto states with f symmetry.¹⁵²

In comparison with Au, a higher adsorption energy for the other two coinage metals Ag and Cu has been reported; in this case, the two metals turn out to be always oxidized due to the lower ionization potential.¹⁵³ In another report, a DFT

approach (with LDA+U and GGA+U) has been used as a robust method to complement STM and X-Ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy (XPS) analysis of Ag nanoparticles deposited on CeO₂ films, suggesting that the O transfer from the CeO₂ to the Ag particles is an energetically unfavored process, thus ruling out an earlier hypothesis of oxygen diffusion on the surface of the Ag nanoparticles leading to a CeO_{2-x}/Ag_nO_m system with partially oxidized Ag nanoparticles supported on partially reduced ceria; conversely, the direct electron transfer from Ag to the ceria is shown to be an energetically more favorable process.¹⁵⁴

As far as other noble metals are concerned, DFT+U studies on Pd-doped CeO₂ showed that the noble metal affects the oxygen vacancy formation energy by introducing gap states above the valence band and below the empty Ce 4f states.¹⁵⁵ Similar conclusions were drawn for a system consisting of platinum clusters (Pt₈) on ceria nanoparticles with different shapes and sizes, for which lowering the vacancy formation energy was shown to be dependent upon the size of the nanoparticle and location of Pt cluster relative to the vacancy, and it determines the oxygen spillover from the support to the metal.¹⁵⁶ Upon comparison of the adsorption energies of Pd and Pt on both ceria and zirconia through periodic DFT analysis within GGA Hamiltonian, higher energies for Pt deposition (400 kJ mol⁻¹ vs 200 kJ mol⁻¹ for Pd) were found. Moreover, it was observed that the thermodynamically more favored Pt-Pt interactions in comparison with Pd-Pd are the determining factor for the resulting cluster shapes and metal growth modes.¹⁵⁷

An important perspective to understand the role of CeO₂ in catalysis is to study the mechanism of activation of small molecules that are involved in a specific catalytic process. For example, DFT+U analysis of the catalytic activity of Ce-supported Au nanoparticles (NPs) for CO oxidation suggested that this reaction proceeds via three possible mechanistic pathways, all crucially relying on the rich presence of oxygen vacancies on the CeO₂ surface (Figure 9),¹⁵⁸ while two major mechanisms for the Au/CeO₂-catalyzed water-gas shift reaction were proposed based on DFT calculations, although the

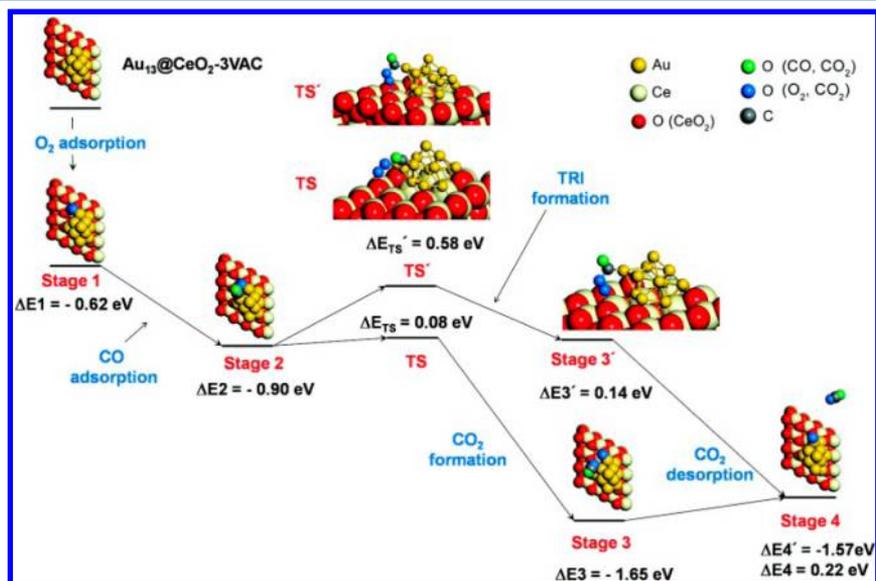


Figure 9. Possible pathways for CO oxidation following the coadsorption mechanism calculated by Kim et al. on Au₁₃@CeO₂-3VAC (Au nanoparticle in contact with partially reduced CeO₂ with three vacancies). Reprinted from ref 158. Copyright 2012 American Chemical Society.

common shortcoming of surface oxygen atom reproduction was identified in both mechanisms.¹⁵⁹ The methanation of CO₂ by a Ru-doped ceria catalyst was studied via a PAW approach, employing the LDA+U(5.5) method, and a segregation of the Ru at the surface was proposed; moreover, the calculations ruled out the possible formation of CO as intermediate in the catalytic sequence.¹⁶⁰

Computational studies are available in literature where the exclusive interaction between the small molecule and the CeO₂ is considered. As an example, the (GGA-type) PW91 xc functional was applied to explore the adsorption of CO on {111} and {110} planes, finding that adsorption on the former is weaker (energy = 16.4 kJ mol⁻¹) than that on the {110} surface (ranging from 17.4 to 189 kJ mol⁻¹) due to the formation in the latter of a carbonate species following chemisorption on a O-bridging atom.¹⁶¹ Other computational reports on CO adsorption convey toward the weak adsorption of CO on facets other than {110} an {100}, over which a chemisorption phenomenon occurs with formation of CO₃²⁻ species. Other typical molecules that have been computationally evaluated are H₂O and H₂S. Adsorption of water on both ceria and reduced ceria, typically on the {111} facet, proceeds molecularly or via a dissociative mechanism.^{162,163} Although it has been demonstrated that H₂O can strongly bind the CeO₂ surface on O vacancies, there is still a gap of knowledge as regards to the two adsorption states. On the other hand, H₂S can adsorb on the {111} facet in a similar fashion to the water molecule; however, in this case it is clearer that the reduction of CeO₂ can occur more readily.^{164,165} Interaction of ceria with several other small molecules such as NO₂,^{166,167} N₂O,¹⁶⁸ SO₂,¹⁶⁹ Cl₂, Br₂, and CH₄¹⁷⁰ have been computationally assessed. Not long ago, formation of the paramagnetic superoxide O²⁻ radical, an elusive species evolving from exposing reduced ceria to molecular oxygen, was shown to form by direct interaction of O₂ with low-coordinated Ce(III) ions on reduced ceria nanoparticles, and a full atomistic model of this system was presented.¹⁷¹ The conversion from methanol to formaldehyde or syngas was thoroughly studied through DFT+U calculations, unraveling the dependence of the reaction on the inherent stoichiometries of the different surfaces of CeO₂.¹⁷²

5. NANOSTRUCTURES

An ever growing converging tendency toward the fabrication of materials with nanodimensions has contributed to the advent of what has been symbolically termed “nanotechnology revolution”. The term is justified by the incredible expansion of applicative options that nanomaterials may offer. Indeed, the decrease of particle size to the nanometer scale is in most cases accompanied by a distinct change of the physical and chemical properties as compared to bulk materials. This also translates into a different catalytic behavior. For instance, nanosized CuO/CeO₂ composite were shown to behave much more efficiently in the decomposition of N₂O as compared to bulk analogues.¹⁷³ Moreover, tailoring the shape of the nanoparticles has emerged as an equally important aspect as it may lead to further changes of such properties. Thus, considerable attention is being given to the preparation of ceria nanostructured materials with defined size and morphology. Doping with other metals or metal oxides represents an additional attractive possibility in relation to the well-documented improved characteristics of the doped bulk material analogues in several applications.

In a work by Li et al., the influence of the morphology of CeO₂ nanoparticles in catalysis was investigated, comparing traditional irregularly shaped CeO₂ nanoparticles with single crystalline CeO₂ nanorods in the catalytic oxidation of CO.¹⁷⁴ Despite the smaller size and higher surface areas of the former, the nanorods displayed a 3-times higher activity, which according to the authors originates by the exposure of the unusually reactive facets {001} and {110} instead of the more stable {111} facets exposed by the nanoparticles (Figure 10).

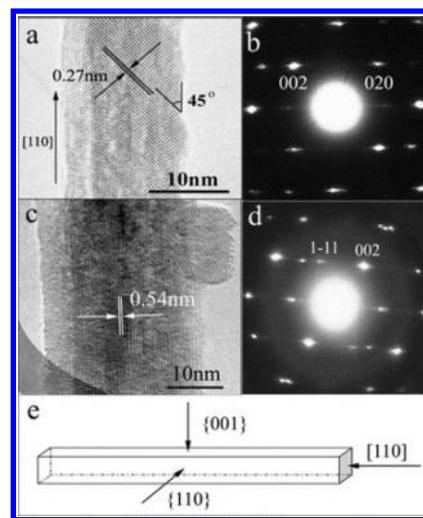


Figure 10. (a) Representative HR-TEM of a CeO₂ nanorod view along [001]; (b) selected area electron diffraction (SAED) pattern of (a); (c) representative HRTEM of a CeO₂ nanorod view along [110]; (d) the SAED pattern of (c); and (e) the structural models of CeO₂ nanorods. Reprinted with permission from ref 174. Copyright 2005 Elsevier.

The example is a milestone for the recognition of the importance of morphology/activity relationship. However, a number of studies in conjunction with advanced characterization techniques such as HR-TEM have evidenced that there are still uncertainties on the actual morphology/exposed facet correlation and, therefore, on the mechanism of crystal growth.^{175,176} Some light is being shed through TEM and surface reactivity experiments,¹⁷⁷ but this area still requires further elucidation. Never-the-less, Zhou’s work paved the way to the proliferation of synthetic methodologies that allow control over the morphology, size, and faceting of nanostructured ceria. Today it is possible to control the final architecture of CeO₂-based materials to obtain zero-, one-, two-, and three-dimensional structures, classified based on the number of dimensions which are not confined to the nanoscale range (<100 nm).

Zero-dimensional (0D) nanostructured ceria can be regarded as a stand-alone case due to the isotropic cubic phase of the fluorite structure. As a result, there is absence of a preferential growth direction of the seeding crystals, thus 0D nanostructures synthesis are the most straightforward. The simplest preparative approach for CeO₂ nanopolyhedra is to apply the standard protocols traditionally used for other material nanoparticles. The coprecipitation method takes advantage of the very low solubility of ceria and because of its simplicity is the method of choice for commercial production. Alkaline solutions of NaOH,¹⁷⁸ urea,¹⁷⁹ ammonia,¹⁸⁰ etc. can be used as precipitating agents. The relationship between the specific

polyhedron, its size, and the dominance of a particular crystallographic plane was also systematically studied via high-resolution TEM.¹⁸¹ An extra requirement is often the use of a surfactant such as cetyltrimethylammonium bromide (CTAB)¹⁸² or polyvinylpyrrolidone (PVP)¹⁸³ to avoid the problem associated with the quick precipitation of too small-sized crystals and to allow for a better tuning of the final nanoparticle dimensions and shape.

The use of different capping agents often results in variation of the final morphology. By adopting a certain range of concentrations of PVP and reaction time, spheres of CeO₂ could be selectively prepared after calcination at 500 °C from the hydrothermally formed Ce(OH)CO₃. By selecting a different value of the two parameters, disk-like morphologies were obtained instead.¹⁸⁴ On the other hand, oleic acid¹⁸⁵ and oleate anion¹⁸⁶ lead to the formation of small nanocubes, whose dimensions could be tailored by varying the Ce precursor.

For lower-order symmetry nanoparticles [one-dimensional (1D), 2D, and 3D], synthetic protocols require a more demanding evaluation of the suitable reaction conditions, as the crystal growth has to be kinetically controlled and appropriately fine-tuned in order to diverge from the thermodynamically favored structures. The typical strategy relies on two general approaches, which are (i) use of capping agents and (ii) template-assisted method.

The former method exploits the distinct interaction of the capping agent with a specific crystallographic plane, which alters the facet surface energies and favors growth along some preferred directions. For example, several anions were investigated as mediators in the CeO₂ nanocrystals growth, and it turned out that NO₃⁻ was effective in the synthesis of nanocubes, while halides and SO₄⁻ favored the assembly of nanorods (Figure 11).¹⁸⁷ This finding is explained in terms of

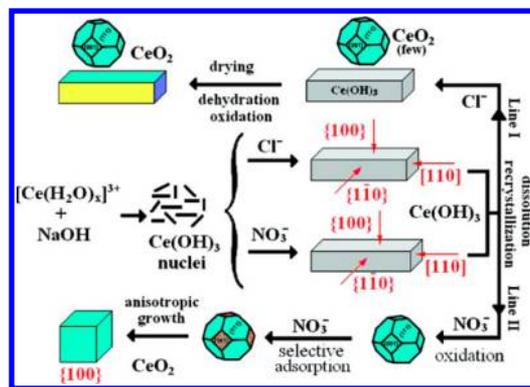


Figure 11. Schematic illustration for the conversion from nanorods to nanocubes depending on the presence of chloride or nitrate ions. Reprinted with permission from ref 187. Copyright 2008 American Chemical Society.

the preferential interaction of the nitrate ion with the {100} plane; thus, the initially formed nanorods can convert to cubes by anisotropic growth of the {110} plane as already reported by Mai et al.¹⁸⁸ More recently, a comparative study of the catalytic activity for carbon dioxide reforming of methane and coke resistance of nickel deposited on CeO₂ nanorods (NRs) and nanopolyhedra (NPs) (prepared via hydrothermal method in the presence of NaOH) showed the superior performance of the monodimensional Ni/CeO₂ NRs system.¹⁸⁹

The second general synthetic methodology is based on the use of a template that restricts growth either through Ostwald ripening mechanism (soft template) or by spatial confinement (hard template). Soft templates are typically surfactants, and the strategy has already been illustrated earlier for the morphology-controlled synthesis of nanospheres and nanodisks by applying critical concentrations of PVP.

CeO₂ nanotubes have been accessed through micellar nanoparticle formation and aging in a double microemulsion system consisting of bis(2-ethylhexyl)sulfosuccinate sodium salt (AOT), toluene, and water.¹⁹⁰ Similarly, nanowires consisting of many interconnected nanocrystallites of about 7 nm in size have been synthesized via a solution-phase route using sodium bis(2-ethylhexyl) sulfosuccinate as a structure-directing agent.¹⁹¹ Many parameters such as pH, solvent, surfactant type, and ratio to cerium precursor, temperature, etc. can play a pivotal role in determining the resulting final architecture.¹⁹²

Ethylene glycol-mediated synthesis can lead to nanorods, nanospindles and nanospheres according to the experimental reaction time and concentration of the cerium precursor.¹⁹³

Hard templates such as anodic aluminum oxide (AAO) or polycarbonate membrane filters represent an effective alternative to the soft-template methodology for the assembly of 1D motifs. For instance, the Ce precursor can diffuse through capillary force into the hexagonally ordered AAO channels and form the dioxide species upon hydrolysis and/or heating.¹⁹⁴ The surge of carbon nanostructures into material chemistry has opened interesting opportunities in the assembly of inorganic–organic hybrid systems in a broad array of diverse applications. Carbon nanotubes (CNTs) have been predominantly explored as rigid scaffold to template the fabrication of 1D nanostructures.¹⁹⁵ The possibility of removing the carbonaceous scaffold by heat treatment after coating with CeO₂, leaving all-inorganic hollow tubes, is of particular interest. To overcome the problems associated with the hydrophobicity of the carbon support and guarantee an adequate interaction with the Ce precursor, it is a standard prerequisite to treat the carbon nanotubes with strong oxidizing acids in order to introduce polar functionalities (hydroxyl and carboxyl groups) or alternatively by adsorbing appropriate negatively charged organic entities on the CNT sidewalls; by this means, solubility in polar solvents is enhanced, and the scaffold are endowed with anchor points for the Ce salt, which is adsorbed through metal–oxygen bonds or electrostatic forces. Final hydrolysis results in the deposition of CeO₂ layers along the CNTs framework. Calcination treatment of the hybrid removes the CNTs, leaving the hollow CeO₂ tubular structure.^{196,197}

However, the common choice is to retain the carbon support because of the beneficial effects arising from the carbon nanostructure chemical and physical properties.¹⁹⁸ For example, retaining the multi-wall carbon nanotubes (MWCNTs) scaffold after the synthesis of a MWCNTs/Pd@CeO₂ hybrid catalyst resulted in a higher stability for the low-temperature water-gas shift reaction (LT-WGSR) as compared to the analogue catalyst where CNTs had been removed.¹⁹⁹

In another report, ZnO has been successfully employed as hard template for CeO₂ nanorods. The ZnO nanorods were prepared with high precision on cordierite or glass substrates and instantaneously removed by dissolution assisted by the protons released during precipitation of the CeO₂.²⁰⁰

Electrochemical methods turn out to be convenient strategies for the preparation of CeO₂ nanoparticles of different geometries and suitable for photo- or electro-catalytic screening

in several transformations. One-dimensional oriented hexagonal CeO₂ nanorods (NRs) mainly exposing the {110} planes were prepared through template-free electrochemical growth on a Ti substrate and showed excellent activity in the photocatalytic hydrogen evolution, with H₂ productivity reaching 741 mmol g⁻¹.²⁰¹

Given the peculiar properties and huge prospects of monodimensional (1D) CeO₂ nanoparticles, they have been more explored than 2D and 3D architectures, and a wide variety of preparative protocols are available. However, 2D and 3D architectures are emerging as intriguing alternatives in several catalytic and energy applications, and their preparation is drawing significant attention.

In general, for 2D and 3D morphologies, the template-assisted method appears to be the inevitable choice, given that controlling the crystal growth rate along two or more facets is considerably challenging. One of the very few examples of a template-free method for preparing disklike structures is based on a solvothermal method.²⁰² In another recent contribution, hydrothermal synthesis was applied for the preparation of disk- and triangle-shaped cobalt-doped CeO₂ nanostructures; the selectivity of the resulting morphology is determined by the doping amount of cobalt nitrate during the reaction.²⁰³ Ultrathin ceria nanoplates were prepared through soft surfactant-assisted (oleic acid or oleylamine) synthesis in the presence of mineralizers (sodium diphosphate or sodium oleate). Several parameters could be adjusted to tune the morphology of the final products. Depending on the synthetic conditions, the nanoplates had a squared or elongated geometry (e.g., increasing the amount of surfactant resulted in circular shapes, while decreasing the reaction time gave access to less elongated plates).²⁰⁴ Comparison of the OSC of the different 2D structures with that for 3D counterparts prepared by hydrothermal and combustion method, underlined the considerable higher reducibility of the former.

Electrochemical methods have also been employed to access 2D structures. Synthesis of nanosheets and nanobelts was reported via electro-deposition of Ce(III) in solution of NH₄NO₃. The final geometry was determined by the applied current density.²⁰⁵

As with the case of 1D structures, removable templates can direct the assembly of hollow 2D or 3D architectures. Carbon spheres have emerged as particularly useful scaffolds in the facile assembly of hollow spherical morphology. One typical approach is to generate the carbon spheres by hydrothermal treatment of aqueous solutions of glucose and polysaccharides, followed by adsorption of the metal precursor and calcination, which removes the carbon template and forms the hollow oxide spherical framework. The protocol can be applied to various metal oxides.²⁰⁶ Alternatively, silica spheres could be adopted as hard templates, and after precipitation of the CeO₂ nanocrystals, they were removed by alkaline etching leaving hollow oxide structures.²⁰⁷

A similar concept was adopted to construct a spongy mesoporous CeO₂ microspheres, exploiting the in situ formation of the removable template by graft polymerization reaction between acrylamide and glucose (Figure 12).²⁰⁸ The obtained CeO₂ microspheres have open 3D porous and hollow structures consisting of nanosheets as the petals. The method has also been generalized to prepare a series of pure and element-doped CeO₂ microspheres.^{208–210} Large surface area endows these materials with high reactivity and stability in CO oxidation^{209,210} and ethanol steam reforming.^{210,211} Moreover,

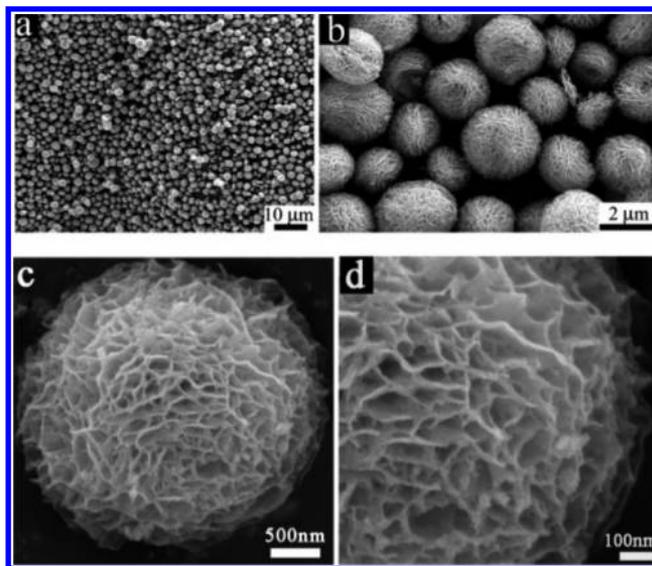


Figure 12. Representative SEM images of the CeO₂ microspheres. (a and b) Overall morphology of the products; (c and d) high-magnification SEM image of an individual microspheres, revealing the detailed spongelike substructure of the microspheres. Reprinted from ref 208. Copyright 2006 American Chemical Society.

they were successfully applied in SOFC as reforming catalytic layer on the anode side²¹² and as a component of the cathode.²¹³

Several other methods have been reported for spherical nanostructures.^{181,214–216} The spherical structure has proven to be particularly suitable for bearing doping cations. For example, Ce_{1-x}Ti_xO₂ (0 < x < 0.25) nanospheres were prepared by liquid-phase flame spray pyrolysis of cerium and titanium alcoholic (or other flammable solvents) solutions,¹⁴⁹ while Cu-doped CeO₂ hollow nanospheres were obtained through soft surfactant-assisted hydrothermal method.²¹⁷

Other 3D shapes have been accessed through various protocols. For example, prism-shaped mesocrystals were obtained via hydrothermal methods using suitable concentrations of OH⁻,²¹⁸ while tadpole structures were isolated in the sol-gel synthesis using cerium(III) nitrate, diphenyl ether, and appropriate surfactants.²¹⁹

As far as catalytic applications are concerned, the synthesis of ceria nanoparticles requires in most cases the combination with metal nanoparticles that function as the catalytically active sites. Strategies exploiting metal nanoparticles to dictate assembly of nanoceria with specific geometries or high-ordered hierarchical arrangements are an interesting approach which is increasing in popularity. As a representative example, formation of core-shell systems, in which a CeO₂ porous shell enwraps a noble metal nanoparticle core can be prepared via a simple sol-gel method. The layering of Ce alkoxide precursor is harnessed by a ligand-exchange reaction with a bifunctional capping agent such as mercapto-undecanoic acid (MUA). Hydrolysis and calcination lead to isolation of nanosized M@CeO₂ (M = Pd, Pt) core-shells, in which, in addition to participation into the catalysis, the CeO₂ shell provides protection of the metal NPs toward aggregation.²²⁰ The stability can be further enhanced by immobilizing the core-shells on modified alumina, which results in exceptional activity in the oxidation of methane under dry conditions,²²¹ while some deactivation was observed under wet conditions.²²² Recently, in situ high-temperature TEM observation shows that these systems undergoes structural

evolutions.²²³ While the alkoxide ligand has been used for the assembly of these core-shell structures, it is interesting to speculate that by using different Ce metal complex precursors with ad-hoc designed ligands, it would be possible to tune the redox properties of the final CeO₂, particularly if the ligand remains coordinated to the oxide surface. For instance, in one latest report, Schelter and co-workers prepared a 1,3-bis[(20-tertbutyl)hydroxyaminophenyl]-benzene Ce complex, in which the ligand was proved to influence the stability of the Ce(III)/Ce(IV) redox couple.²²⁴

Core-shell systems based on other precious metal cores have also been prepared. Ag@CeO₂ was synthesized by reverse micelle/redox reaction,²²⁵ while Au@CeO₂ have been recently prepared through a facile hydrothermal/calcination process.²²⁶

An emerging and attractive field of research is to deposit CeO₂ nanoparticles on a sheet of graphene to improve electronic characteristics and provide an enhanced dispersion of the nanocatalysts over a 2D plane. A CeO₂-ZrO₂ catalyst deposited on graphene oxide by continuous hydrothermal flow synthesis was assembled to successfully carry out the green synthesis of dimethyl carbonate from MeOH and CO₂.²²⁷

A hierarchical system, which is very active for the sequential two-step sequence (1) CH₃OH-decomposition to CO and H₂ followed by (2) hydroformylation of ethylene, was synthesized using CeO₂ nanocube building blocks, which were assembled on a 2D sheet of Pt nanocubes. The Pt cubes had been previously drop-casted onto a SiO₂ substrate, and after removal of the capping agents by ultraviolet/ozone treatment, a ternary system composed of Pt/CeO₂ bilayers on SiO₂ was attained, with effective interfacing of the three components.²²⁸

6. MODEL CATALYSTS

Given the complexity of CeO₂-based systems, many model catalysts have been prepared and studied in order to gain a deeper understanding of general or specific catalytic phenomena. A typical approach has been the synthesis of thin films (thickness in the order of 20Å), which allows the possibility of an atomic scale study (as opposed to bulk materials) and is a strategy used not only for ceria but for many other metal oxides.²²⁹ In practical terms, thin films offer the double advantage of (1) a more straightforward application of analysis techniques involving charge transfers between the ceria and the probed sample as a result of the increased charge carrier mobility, (2) an easier investigation of the ceria/metal interactions, and (3) the possibility to tune the structural and electronic properties of the supported films by appropriate selection of the supporting substrate. There are several methods to prepare thin films. One versatile method is the electrodeposition, which was for example used to prepare a CeO₂ thin film on a highly oriented pyrolytic graphite. The thickness could be tailored by changing the Ce³⁺ concentration in solution and the deposition time.²³⁰ In another example, anodic electrodeposition from Ce(III) ions suitably complexed by organic ligands allowed the deposition of thin films of CeO₂ onto several types of substrates. Tuning of the temperature and current density also results in a preferential crystallographic facet orientation.²³¹ Mechanistic studies of the anodic electrodeposition of CeO₂ films under several conditions have also been reported.²³¹ Recently, a careful control of the electrochemical parameters afforded the growth of porous films of isotropic CeO₂ nanoparticles on copper surfaces for application in condensate microdrop self-propelling (CMDSP) surfaces (Figure 13). The synthesis of the porous films made use of

small bubbles generated through the hydrogen evolution reaction which functioned as pore-making templates.²³²

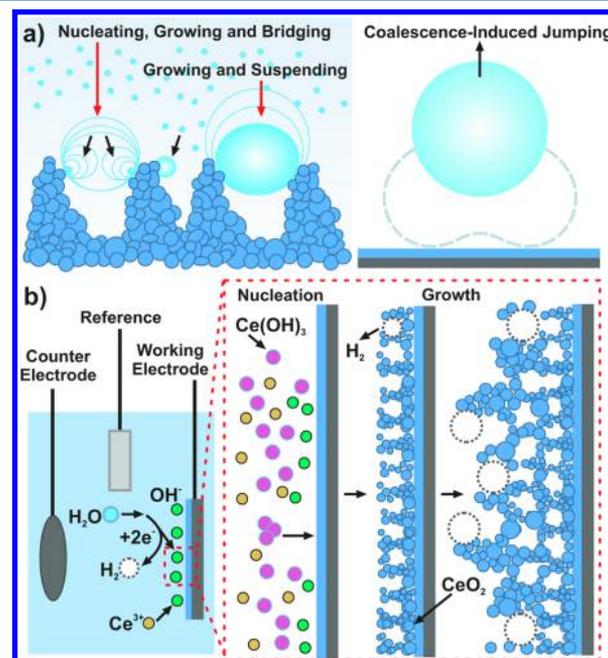


Figure 13. (a) Schematic diagrams of utilizing rugged, porous, nanoparticle films to endow copper surfaces with a condensate microdrop self-propelling function. (b) Schematic diagrams of synthesizing porous films of cerium oxide nanoparticles by the control of the preferential growth of isotropic nanoparticles and the synergistic utilization of tiny bubbles, released by the hydrogen-evolution reaction, as pore-making templates. Sky blue H₂O, green OH⁻ ions, orange Ce(III) ions, pink Ce(OH)₃, blue CeO₂, and white H₂. Reprinted with permission from ref 232. Copyright 2015 Wiley-VCH.

Atomic force microscopy (AFM) is a very powerful and popular technique that is applied to the study of ultrathin films and is often performed under ultrahigh vacuum conditions. Despite the fact that the adopted experimental conditions are significantly far from those of real catalytic applications (especially in the early studies), very relevant information of the interaction of model surfaces with small molecules and with water in particular can be obtained. The so-called non-contact mode (nc-AFM) was employed to outline the structural features of stoichiometric, slightly reduced, and contaminated terraces formed on the CeO₂(111) surface, and it turned out that water readily adsorbs on the ceria surfaces provided that oxygen vacancies are present.²³³ In a more recent report, water adsorption and dissociation was evaluated for oxidized and reduced CeO₂(111) and CeO₂(100) surfaces. Adsorption occurs both molecularly and dissociatively, and in accord with theoretical calculations,²³⁴ dissociation was more favorable on the reduced surface compared to the oxidized surface for the CeO₂(100); however, the effect is far more significant in the case of CeO_{2-y}(111).²³⁵ Interaction with water was also studied for systems based on the deposition of CeO₂(111) films on Cu(111). The analysis was conducted by photoelectron spectroscopy (PES), STM, and temperature-programmed desorption (TPD), revealing the molecular adsorption of water at $T < -153$ °C on stoichiometric CeO₂(111) surfaces and a partially dissociative adsorption on surface reduced by ion bombardment.²³⁶ The same authors also compared stoichiometric CeO₂(111)/Cu(111), partially reduced CeO_{2-y}/Cu-

(111), and Pt/CeO₂/Cu(111) model catalysts by synchrotron–radiation photoelectron spectroscopy (SRPES), resonant photoemission spectroscopy (RPES), infrared reflection absorption spectroscopy (IRAS), and DFT calculations.²³⁷ Due to the surge of bioderived hydrocarbons as potential feedstock for hydrogen production, the same investigation was carried out for the adsorption and reactions of formic acid. Depending on the system and the operative temperature, the percentages and rates of formation of a number of possible products were evaluated.²³⁸

A series of studies on the adsorption/reactivity of several other molecules such as CO₂,²³⁹ CO,²⁴⁰ CH₄,²⁴¹ and SO₂²⁴² by similar model catalysts was reported, while an alternative synthetic method for reduced thin films involving the physical vapor deposition of metallic Ce onto a stoichiometric CeO₂(111) film on Cu(111) was more recently accomplished. Here, it was proposed that the as-obtained highly ordered films of Ce₂O₃ were formed through the interfacial reaction of the CeO₂ with metallic Ce at high temperatures, and the strategy allows for the presence of ordered oxygen vacancy clusters both on the surface and subsurface.²⁴³

Acetone was shown to weakly chemisorb on oxidized CeO₂(111) in a η_1 configuration (η term refers to the number of atoms of a molecule coordinated with the surface, in this case one) while adsorption on reduced CeO_{2-y}(111) is much stronger and it occurs through formation of the ketone carbanion.²⁴⁴ Other than small organic molecules, the interaction of metals with CeO₂ has also been studied, being of high relevance for the assembly of catalytic metal systems. The adsorption of Cu onto slightly reduced CeO₂ (111) surfaces was investigated through calorimetric and surface spectroscopy techniques, highlighting that at lower temperature (–173 °C) with respect to a previous study (27 °C),²⁴⁵ there is formation of isolated Cu adatoms onto CeO₂ (111) terraces, which are accompanied by a higher Cu chemical potential as compared to Cu nanoparticles.²⁴⁶

An interesting variation was introduced by Rodriguez with the assembly of the so-called “inverse” catalysts²⁴⁷ in which the ceria nanoparticles are deposited onto the catalytically active metal phase, rather than the other way round. The interaction between the metal and the nanostructured support alters the electronic states of the oxide support resulting in different chemical properties which give rise to new and enhanced catalytic properties.

For instance, an inverse model catalysts composed of 20–30% of CeO_{2-y} NPs covering Au(111) films was studied for the WGS. While clean Au(111) was inert toward this reaction, the presence of the ceria (and titania) NPs allowed the H₂O dissociation onto the O vacancies, which was ensued by the reaction at the Au-CeO₂ interphase with Au-adsorbed CO, leading to moderate catalytic activity.²⁴⁸ The same rationale was used to prepare CeO_x/Cu₂O/Cu(111) inverse systems (Figure 14) for the WGS and the CO oxidation; for the latter reaction, the ceria NPs serve to achieve the crucial O₂ dissociation, which secures a considerable activity enhancement.²⁴⁹

By means of reactive deposition of Ce with use of molecular or atomic oxygen as the oxidizing gas, epitaxial growth of CeO₂ ultrathin films on Pt(111) surfaces was achieved, with stabilization provided by means of Pt oxidation (Figure 15).²⁵⁰

Very recently, Matolin et al. prepared an anode catalyst made of Pt-CeO_x thin films and evaluated the activity in a hydrogen proton exchange membrane fuel cell (PEMFC), showing

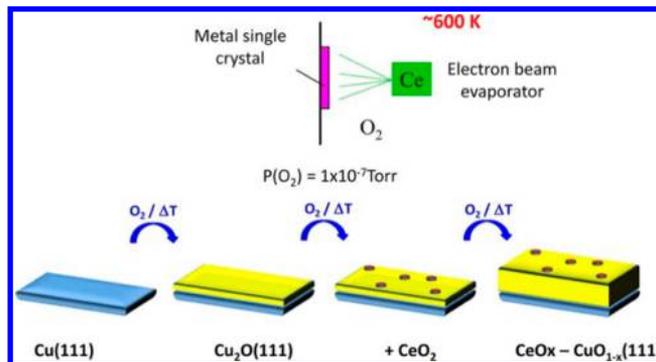


Figure 14. Scheme of evaporation process (top). Growth of CeO_x on a Cu(111) surface (bottom). Reprinted from ref 249. Copyright 2013 American Chemical Society.

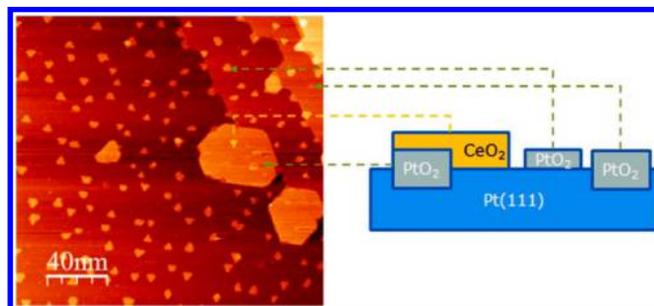


Figure 15. STEM image and schematic representation of epitaxially grown CeO₂ film on Pt. Reprinted from ref 250. Copyright 2011 American Chemical Society.

comparable performance to that of commercial anodes, which implied a much higher specific power than that of conventional reference cells.²⁵¹

Ceria-based thin films have also been prepared in combination with other oxides. Inverse CeO₂-TiO₂ opals with a core–shell structure obtained via a combination of colloidal crystal template and atomic layer deposition (ALD) were screened as model catalysts for the photodegradation of methylene blue (MB), which could be degraded under UVA light with moderate activity.²⁵² Ordered mesoporous CeO₂-ZrO₂ thin films were assembled in order to study the size dependence of the reactivity driven by defects. Given the considerable conductivity deviation from classical point defect models for binary oxides upon changing of the oxygen partial pressure, a new “surface” defect model was suggested, which considered the effective charges of the lattice ions near the surface not necessarily similar to those of the bulk phase.²⁵³

In general, the presence of a metal boosts the activity of ceria catalysts for most processes. Therefore, many efforts are being made to develop model catalysts able to provide insights into kinetics, mechanisms, and energetics occurring at the surface. Noble metal nanoparticles are surely the most prominent and investigated class of catalysts.

The intimate contact between Pt and CeO₂ often results in a considerable increase of activity. Two types of important interactions were identified by means of DFT and RPES on well-defined Pt-ceria, namely (1) electron transfer from the Pt nanoparticle to the support, and (2) oxygen transfer from ceria to Pt. These two events require a close contact between the noble metal and the ceria, which in turn relies on the nanosize effect of the oxide support.²⁵⁴ In another report, the relevance of such contact was demonstrated under the working

conditions, showing the involvement of ceria lattice oxygen in the oxidation of CO. The length of the ceria-metal interface could be tailored because of the use of monodisperse nickel, palladium, and platinum nanocrystals.²⁵⁵ The CO oxidation performance was also set as model reaction for a shape-activity dependence investigation with three different ceria nanocrystal morphologies: octahedra, rods, and cubes,²⁵⁶ while a shape-dependency was reported for the total oxidation of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons.²⁵⁷ The importance of the nanoscale structure was also highlighted in an electrochemical study of mesoporous ceria films exhibiting a periodic nanoscale porosity prepared by a template-assisted method. Nanoporosity favored Li^+ intercalation and could be of better potential for application requiring charge storage.²⁵⁸ Recently, it has been shown that nanostructured cerium oxide films expose $\{100\}_c$ nanofacets, which can stabilize Pt atoms in the form of Pt(II) ions.²⁵⁹ This is particularly interesting as there is a growing attention toward the design of stable atomically dispersed supported noble metal catalysts as a new generation of cost-effective catalytic materials.

Another consideration that needs to be looked into is that the chosen film support plays very often a non-innocent role onto the CeO_2 properties. For example, Gorte et al. compared the properties of CeO_2 films supported onto yttria-stabilized zirconia (100) (YSZ 100) and $\alpha\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3(0001)$ single crystals and found a much decreased reducibility when the latter support was used, with ceria being stable for temperatures as high as 727 °C. In contrast, when the YSZ was employed, reduction to Ce_2O_3 took place already at 552 °C. The two supports also behaved differently under oxidation conditions, with CeO_2 reacting with $\alpha\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3(0001)$ at 1000 °C to form CeAlO_3 , while with the YSZ system agglomeration of ceria occurs at $T > 552$ °C, leading to oriented bar-shaped structures. For temperatures below 552 °C, the CeO_2 turns out to be stable toward oxidation.²⁶⁰

7. APPLICATIONS

7.1. Well-Established Applications

7.1.1. Three Way Catalysts (TWCs). The most diffused and known application of CeO_2 -based materials is as promoter in the automotive TWCs. Mounted after an internal combustion engine, the TWCs role is to remove the pollutant produced by the combustion of gasoline, promoting at the same time the oxidation of CO and unburnt hydrocarbons (HC) and the reduction of nitrogen oxides (NO_x). Catalytic converters generally consist of a monolithic support (usually made of cordierite) with honeycomb structure with the inner surface of the channels covered by the catalytic material. This comprises of a thermally stable support (usually doped Al_2O_3), the active phase made by noble metals, and a CeO_2 -based promoter (usually $\text{Ce}_x\text{Zr}_{1-x}\text{O}_2$). The oxidation reactions are promoted by Pt and/or Pd, while some Rh is essential to catalyze the reduction of NO_x .²⁶¹

Figure 16 presents the conversion efficiency of the three classes of pollutants as a function of A/F. A good removal of all the pollutants is obtained only in a narrow window around the stoichiometric value, which is near 14.6.²⁶² This is achieved by a continuous control of the oxygen pressure in the gas stream and the modulation of the air and fuel flows by the electronic system of the car (the so-called λ -sensor). Nevertheless, the required tight stoichiometry requirements are not easily attainable in a randomly (to the driving features) oscillating dynamic combustion, and the gas phase coming out of the

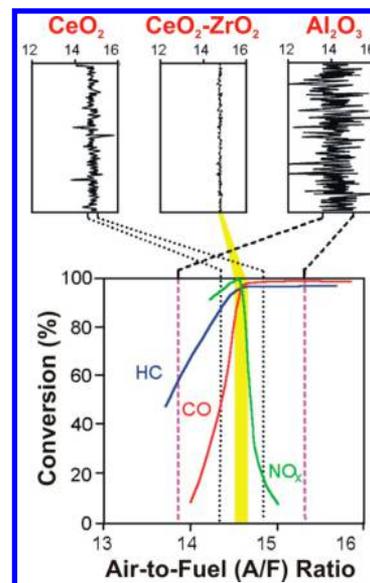


Figure 16. Conversion efficiency of HC, CO, and NO_x , with the control of the A/F ratio depending on different supports used in TWCs. Adapted from ref 262. Copyright 2000 Elsevier.

engine rapidly fluctuates between lean ($A/F > 14.6$) to rich conditions ($A/F < 14.6$) and vice versa.

The principal role of CeO_2 in TWCs is to act as oxygen buffer, extending the three-way “window” of operation of the TWC (Figure 16).²⁶² Reduced ceria (CeO_{2-y}) is able to store oxygen during lean-to-rich transients, promoting the reduction of NO_x . On the other hand, CeO_2 is able to provide the oxygen needed for CO and HC oxidation during rich-to-lean transients. As described in a previous section, the maximum amount of oxygen that the $\text{CeO}_2/\text{CeO}_{2-y}$ composite is able to provide/accept to/by the gas stream is the so-called OSC.

During 1970s–1980s, the preparation of TWC consisted essentially in the coimpregnation of the noble metals and CeO_2 precursors on doped Al_2O_3 support. Even if this preparation method is very simple, the performance of TWC was dramatically improved.²⁶³

Since the mid-1980s, a second generation of CeO_2 -containing TWCs was developed, known as “high tech” catalysts. The improvements in the performance of these catalysts have been achieved mainly through the developments in the preparation technology in order to increase the CeO_2 content but, at the same time, optimizing the CeO_2 dispersion on the doped- Al_2O_3 support, although preventing formation of undesirable CeAlO_3 and the interaction between CeO_2 and the noble metals. Also in this case, a dramatic enhancement in the performance of TWCs has been observed. Nevertheless, the high-tech catalysts were not able to meet the stricter requirements introduced in the USA and Europe for car pollution control, such as lower emission limits and longer durability of the converters. The most problematic aspect was the thermal stability of the TWCs, because the trend was to move the catalyst close-coupled to the exhaust manifold to obtain faster light-off. The loss of performance on the high-tech TWC were associated with the decrease of OSC due to CeO_2 sintering and to the loss of contact between CeO_2 and the noble metals.²⁶⁴

Nowadays, the efficient control of pollutant emission is realized by the use of the so-called advanced TWCs. They use $\text{CeO}_2\text{-ZrO}_2$ solid solution instead of pure CeO_2 .⁹⁹ As described

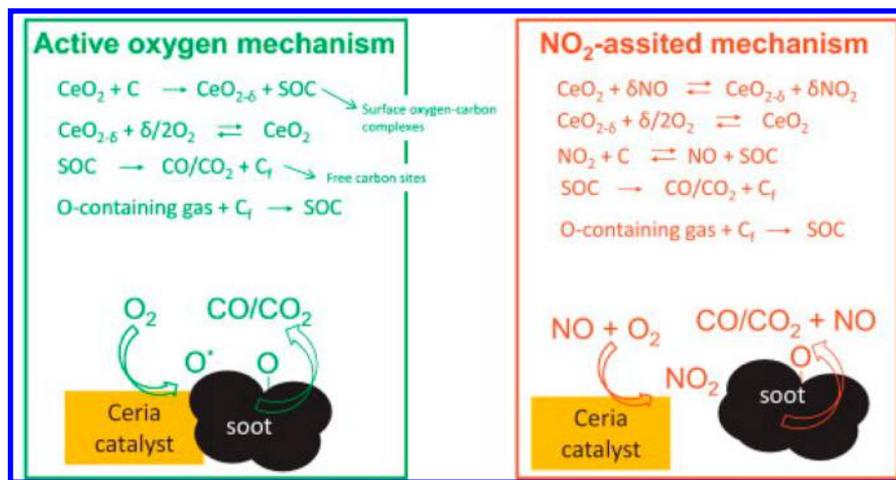


Figure 17. Schemes of the two main mechanisms accepted for CeO₂-catalyzed soot combustion. SOC = surface oxygen complexes, C_f = free carbon site, O* = oxygen atom transferred to the carbon particle. Reprinted from ref 271. Copyright 2014 Elsevier.

previously, the introduction of ZrO₂ into the CeO₂ lattice enhances the OSC of the materials involving also bulk oxygen ions in the redox cycles, improving the activity of the catalyst and reducing emission at the start of the engine.

TWCs are exposed to high operative temperature, usually close or above 1000 °C, for very long periods (even more than 200000 km). For this reason, the catalytic components must be thermally stable. Sintering of the active components results in loss of “active oxygen”, in a reduction of the exposed metal surface area, and in loss of the contact between noble metal particles and the CeO₂-based promoter. Although sintering phenomena cannot be completely avoided, the use of CeO₂-ZrO₂ in advanced TWC instead of CeO₂ helps to overcome the detrimental effects of long high temperature treatments. First, CeO₂-ZrO₂ solid solutions are more resistant to sintering compared with bare CeO₂.²⁶⁵ Moreover, the controlled deposition of CeO₂-ZrO₂ on the doped Al₂O₃ support enhances the sintering resistance of the composite, preventing the transformation of Al₂O₃ into the α form characterized by a very low surface area.^{266,267} In addition, undesirable fixation of Ce(III) in the stable CeAlO₃ is hindered.²⁶⁷

OSC and surface area are not strictly correlated in CeO₂-ZrO₂ materials and “active oxygen” is available also after severe sintering of the materials. Mamontov et al. ascribed this effect to the presence of Frenkel defects (vacancy-interstitial pairs) in CeO₂-based materials with high surface area.^{268,269} By neutron diffraction analysis, the amount of these defects significantly decreases in CeO₂ above 800 °C while they remain almost unaffected at higher temperature in CeO₂-ZrO₂ materials, despite the collapse of the surface area of the materials.

7.1.2. Diesel Engines. Together with NO_x, CO, and unburned hydrocarbons, soot is one of the main pollutants emitted by diesel engines, and its proven adverse effects on human health impose stringent regulations on the limits of emission. Several strategies have been proposed to reduce the soot emission levels, with catalytic filters surely representing one of the most advocated techniques.²⁷⁰ It is based on the filtering and subsequent catalytic oxidation of the particulates. Some of the drawbacks reside in the complex filter regeneration and the limited soot-catalyst contact efficiency. Moreover, the catalyst is required to be active and stable in a wide temperature range.

Ceria is among the best catalyst for soot combustion, as it has recently been reviewed.^{271,272} It can considerably lower the temperature of combustion leading to less power-demanding filter regeneration. There are two main accepted mechanisms for the ceria-catalyzed soot combustion (Figure 17): (1) Active oxygen mechanism, in which there is direct oxygen exchange between the catalyst and the gas-phase O₂ and (2) NO₂-assisted mechanism, which exploits the higher temperature-induced oxidation of NO to NO₂, which is a better oxidant than O₂.

A great deal of formulations includes modification of the CeO₂ with other metal species. For example, ultrasonic-assisted incipient-wetness impregnation was used to produce a CeO₂-supported cobalt oxide which displayed a highly enhanced activity in comparison with the corresponding CeO₂ catalyst prepared by autocombustion. The CoO_x, which exists as CoO at low Co loadings and as spinel Co₃O₄ at medium and high loadings, favors the Ce(IV) ↔ Ce(III) process by means of its strong redox properties.²⁷³ Rare earth-modified ceria CeMO_x (M = La, Pr, Sm, Y) were compared with pure ceria prepared by calcination of a nitrate precursor, showing improved soot oxidation despite a decrease of the surface area, which is however compensated by an increase of the meso/macro pore volume. This last factor is one important parameter when O₂ is used as oxidant.²⁷⁴ Trovarelli et al. reported on the promotion effect of alkali metals in ceria-catalyzed soot combustion, with an order of activity Cs > Rb ≈ K > Na. Moreover, the performance is sensitive to the amount of metal and the selected precursor, with chlorides being always nearly inactive. The activity was interpreted in terms of oxygen exchange mechanism in which carbon–oxygen complexes (C–O–M with M alkali metals) are the active sites (i.e., the M promote the oxidation of carbon located near the catalyst). The effect of alkali metals is to favor the chemisorption of molecular oxygen with the formation of carbon surface complexes that eventually reacts with soot.²⁷⁵

As for the TWC, many studies have been devoted to the replacement of pure ceria with ceria-zirconia-based catalyst. Parallel removal of soot and NO_x by a series of Ce-Zr mixed oxide was explored. The catalytic activity was found to be dependent on the chemical composition of the solid solutions, with Ce_{0.7}Zr_{0.24}O₂ showing an optimal performance, as the result of high thermal stability and efficient redox properties, in

contrast, to pure CeO₂, which provided lower activity and progressive deactivation with increase of temperature.²⁷⁶ Potential benefits brought about by alkali metals have been explored for ceria-zirconia, too. Ce_{0.65}Zr_{0.35}O₂ and CeO₂ supported on cordierite monolith were impregnated with potassium, and the system was compared with K-free catalysts. Deactivation for K/Ce_{0.65}Zr_{0.35}O₂ and K/CeO₂ was found after 10 cycles of soot combustion, as opposed to the pure oxides, which became more active after the 10 cycles. However, the presence of NO/O₂ significantly improved the performance of the K-modified oxides.²⁷⁷ Doping with rare earth metals (La, Pr, Sm, and Tb) was also reported to enhance textural properties as well as activity of the CeO₂-ZrO₂ catalysts.²⁷⁸ A Ce_{0.73-x}Zr_{0.27}Nd_xO₂ mixed oxides ($x = 0, 0.01, 0.05, 0.09, 0.2,$ and 0.3) was reported by Bueno-López et al. to be an active catalyst for the simultaneous oxidation of CO, propylene, benzene, and soot from a simulated diesel exhaust mixture. In this case, when in low amounts, the neodymium favors the formation of oxygen vacancies and the surface area reducibility, thus leading to improved performances. However, when present in amounts higher than 0.2, the final performance is worsened due to promotion of sintering and decrease of surface area.²⁷⁹ An important investigation was carried out by Trovarelli et al. on the effect of the exposed ceria and ceria-zirconia crystal planes in soot combustion. Calcination conditions can drive the exposure of the more reactive {100} and {110} over the more stable and less reactive {111} planes,²⁸⁰ although this preference becomes decreasingly important as the samples are enriched with Zr.²⁸¹ As a result, a correlation between soot combustion activity and exposed facets could be found for the ceria catalyst, while such correlation remains unclear for the corresponding CeO₂-ZrO₂.²⁸¹ As another example, functionalized Fe-Al-Cr alloy fibers covered with Pt/CeO₂-ZrO₂ oxidation catalyst, with concomitant high filtration capability were recently proposed.²⁸²

Temperature-programmed experiments are a powerful technique to clarify behavior of the catalysts under conditions which are comparable to those found in commercial applications.²⁸³ The problem of the soot-ceria contact has been recently addressed using experimental microkinetics with temperature-programmed experiments on three mechanically mixed ceria-soot mixtures, in which the contact was varied from tight to loose.²⁸⁴ In another paper, preparation of highly porous ceria nanofibers deposited on SiC diesel particulate filters (DPFs) led to a bigger number of contact points between the soot and the fiber, as the soot particles could penetrate into the nanofibers network. This translates into a higher activity for the loose contact mode, with combustion temperatures being sensibly lowered. However, the effects under tight contact conditions were not very significant.²⁸⁵

Several experiments addressed the stability of the CeO₂-based catalyst under thermal stress or other factors. For instance, the good activity of Ba,K/CeO₂ catalyst for soot combustion was retained at temperatures as high as 830 °C. A further increase of temperature determined formation of perovskite phase as BaCeO₃ and depletion of K content from the catalyst surface, with a resulting drop of activity.²⁸⁶ Another factor that has recently been evaluated is the presence of CO₂, H₂O, and SO₂ in the diesel exhaust mixture, with the inhibition effects following the trend SO₂ > H₂O > CO₂.²⁸⁷ As described in the section on ceria nanostructures, the controlled morphology of CeO₂ at the nanoscale level can produce

considerable catalytic performance enhancement. Recently, CeO₂ nanocubes were reported to be excellent catalysts, especially after deposition of Co₃O₄ onto the ceria cubes, for the low-temperature diesel soot oxidation,²⁸⁸ while Co₃O₄-CeO₂ supported via isovolumetric impregnation on a SBA-15 monolith turned out active in the NO_x-assisted soot combustion, with optimum Co/Ce ratio being 1:4.²⁸⁹

7.2. Prototypes and Niche Applications

7.2.1. Solid Oxide Fuel Cells.

Solid oxide fuel cells (SOFCs) constitute an environmentally friendly and therefore very attractive class of fuel cells, with outputs in most cases being simply electricity, water (when H₂ is used as fuel), and heat. They offer the advantage of compatibility with several fuels without suffering from CO poisoning. The literature on the use of ceria in SOFCs is too vast to be comprehensively reviewed, so only a flavor is given herein through few representative examples.

There are three places where ceria is commonly used in SOFC: (1) doped ceria is used as an electrolyte in some designs, (2) CeO₂ is used as a barrier layer for cathodes to prevent reaction with the YSZ electrolyte, and (3) CeO₂ is sometimes added as a catalyst in both cathodes and anodes.^{290,291} In the latter case, doping with other bi- (less common) or trivalent elements is a strategy to further improve the performances. A classic example is the Gd-doped ceria anode (CGO), for which the cell performance is increased as a consequence of the increased oxygen vacancy concentration arising from the doping.²⁹² The reported higher resistance of ceria-based ionic conductors to carbon deposition results in an extra asset, as hydrocarbon fuels can be directly supplied to the anodes.^{293,294} Murray et al. fabricated an intermediate-temperature SOFC consisting of a thin (0.5 μm) yttria-doped ceria (YDC) anode which was deposited on porous La_{0.8}Sr_{0.2}MnO₃ (LSM) cathodes and combined with a Ni-ceramic composite thicker layer as current collector. The as-assembled cell stack could work with direct oxidation of methane, generating power densities of up to 0.37 W cm⁻² at 650 °C.²⁹⁵ The catalyst morphology is an aspect that is worth some special care during the electrode assembly stage. Pd@CeO₂ core-shell systems proved to be effective anodic catalysts with H₂ and CH₄ as fuels, with extra stabilization provided by the core-shell structure; the synthetic design included a silanization step of the YSZ (YSZ = yttria-stabilized zirconia) in order to have a uniform coverage of the electrode with the Pd@CeO₂ nanoparticles (Figure 18). Activities were retained at high temperature either during oxidative (calcination) or operative reduction conditions.²⁹⁶

Sun et al. improved the efficiency of a previously reported anode based on Ru-CeO₂ catalyst using iso-octane as fuel.²⁹⁷ The enhanced performance originates from the porous flowerlike microsphere morphology of the CeO₂ support, reaching maximum power densities up to 654 mW cm⁻² at 600 °C.²¹²

An important aspect to take into consideration is the sulfur tolerance of the anode, as sulfur is often a detrimental poison for the cell. Cu can considerably improve such tolerance, with H₂-fueled SOFCs performance reportedly being maintained with H₂S impurity levels up to 445 ppm.²⁹⁸ Similarly, when conventional Ni-YSZ anodes were infiltrated with ceria nanoparticles, the tolerance to sulfur was considerably enhanced, with the cathodic cell delivering a power density of 220–240 mW cm⁻² for 500 h with H₂ fuel contaminated with

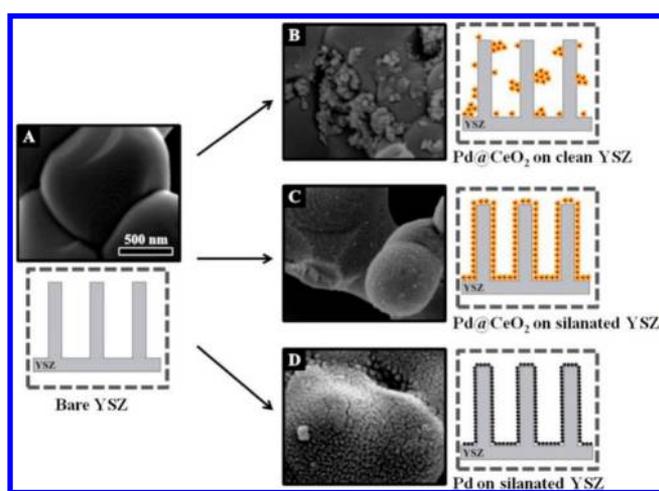


Figure 18. SEM images and schematic representations of (A) bare YSZ, (B) Pd@CeO₂ nanoparticles deposited on clean YSZ porous electrode, (C) Pd@CeO₂ nanoparticles deposited on silanated YSZ porous electrode, and (D) uncoated Pd nanoparticles deposited on silanated YSZ porous electrode. YSZ = yttria-stabilized zirconia. Reprinted from ref 296. Copyright 2013 American Chemical Society.

40 ppm of H₂S. In contrast, when ceria-free Ni-YSZ anodes were employed, the cathodic cell exhibited a much diminished performance, with power density dropping to 0 after 13 min under the same operating conditions.²⁹⁹

The variation of the anode thickness was set as a parameter for the evaluation of the long-term durability and performance in a SOFC working with humidified methane. Both Ni-YSZ and Ni-samarium-doped ceria (Ni-SDC) were employed as anodic components, and an improvement with the latter composite was observed, independent upon the thickness of the electrode. Such enhancement was attributed to the higher catalytic activity of the Ni-SDC and higher electronic conductivity of the SDC, in which the partial reduction of Ce(IV) to Ce(III) under reducing atmosphere plays a critical role.³⁰⁰

Another wide explored area in SOFCs development concerns the use of ceria-based composites as electrolytes, given the ionically conductive and electronically insulating properties of CeO₂.³⁰¹ The number of reports on doped ceria used as electrolyte in SOFCs is large, and recent literature provides a comprehensive list of composite electrolytes, their properties, and performance.⁵ Gadolinium, samarium, yttrium, and calcium are typical dopants. In the case of nanostructures, the enhancement in conductivity is associated with a larger contribution of the grain-boundary conductivity in comparison with traditional polycrystalline solids. In this region, nano-electrolytes exhibit faster oxygen ions diffusion than in the bulk, in contrast with conventional micro-sized electrolytes.^{302,303}

There has been a convergence to study two-phase electrolyte materials on account of the highly improved ionic conductivity arising from the binary conductive nature (O²⁻/H⁺),³⁰⁴ and at present, the interest is predominantly focused on this type of electrolyte in which the doped-ceria is combined with other salts. Without doubt, the most explored and promising composite is obtained by combining ceria with carbonates,^{305–310} although recently some skepticism has arisen for these systems that present several question marks. Ceria-carbonate composites are generally accessed by means of mechanical mixing or by infiltration techniques. The microstructure is typically of a core-shell type, where crystalline core ceria is enveloped in the amorphous shell of carbonate.³¹¹

Other than carbonates, oxides,^{312–314} hydroxides,³¹⁵ sulfates,³¹⁶ and halides³¹⁷ are also becoming more and more popular electrolytes.

7.2.2. Polymer Exchange Membrane Fuel Cells (PEMFCs). Although to a lesser extent in comparison with SOFCs, polymer electrolyte-membrane fuel cells (PEMFCs) have also been explored in combination with ceria-based composites. Most of the studies focused on the half reaction of the cell, typically implying a reforming processes to produce H₂ which is then employed as PEMFC fuel, as discussed in the section dedicated to reforming.³¹⁸

PEMFCs offer advantages such as absence of electrolyte leakages, lower corrosion, and simplicity of the stack design, although there is still much work to be done to improve the kinetics for the oxygen reduction reaction and the conveyance of protons and reagents toward the cathode.³¹⁹ Modification of a Pt/C catalyst with CeO₂ via sol-gel method resulted in an initial electrochemical reduction of ceria at the cathode, which was then oxidized by an intermediate product of oxygen reduction (i.e., hydrogen peroxide). This determines an enhancement of the PEMFCs performance, as the overall cyclic process promotes the rate for oxygen reduction.³²⁰ Similarly, the ceria redox properties were exploited to assemble a highly durable catalyst in combination with mesoporous carbon-supported Pt nanoparticles; when integrated into a PEMFCs, an appreciable performance enhancement at low humidity compared with the conventional Pt/C catalyst was observed together with higher resistance to corrosion. One of the reasons for the improved performance was related to the water retention by the ceria component.³²¹

One issue to be addressed in the use of CeO₂ in PEMFCs is its stability under acidic conditions, which are normally employed in PEMFCs. Given its solubility in acids, latest developments point to the assembly of ceria-based PEMFCs working under alkaline conditions, where ceria is more stable. Moreover, the use of basic pH would open the door to the exploration of other non-noble metals as catalyst, which are incompatible with acid solutions. We reported the first example of direct ethanol PEM fuel cell with an anode made of Pd supported on CeO₂/carbon black. The importance of the ceria component becomes evident as the analogue Pd catalyst supported only on carbon black has a half energy efficiency when tested; presumably, the ceria promotes formation of Pd-OH_{ads} species, which can decrease the onset energy (E_{onset}) of ethanol.³²²

In a recent and elegant work, Chueh et al. opened new perspectives to optimize the activity of ceria-based electrodes. The direct spectroscopic quantification of the samaria-doped ceria-gas interface revealed the surface oxygen-ion incorporation pathway during electrochemical hydrogen oxidation and water splitting. Facile reactivity of oxygen vacancies with water molecules was observed together with the rapid rates at which additional vacancies and polarons were transported between the bulk and the surface. On the basis of these operando observations, it was suggested that electron-transfer between cerium cations and hydroxyl ions is the rate-determining step.³²³ The same group also studied the surface electrochemistry of CO₂ reduction and CO oxidation on Sm-doped CeO_{2-y}, proving that the reactions proceeds via a stable carbonate intermediate, the coverage of which is coupled to the surface Ce(III) concentration.³²⁴

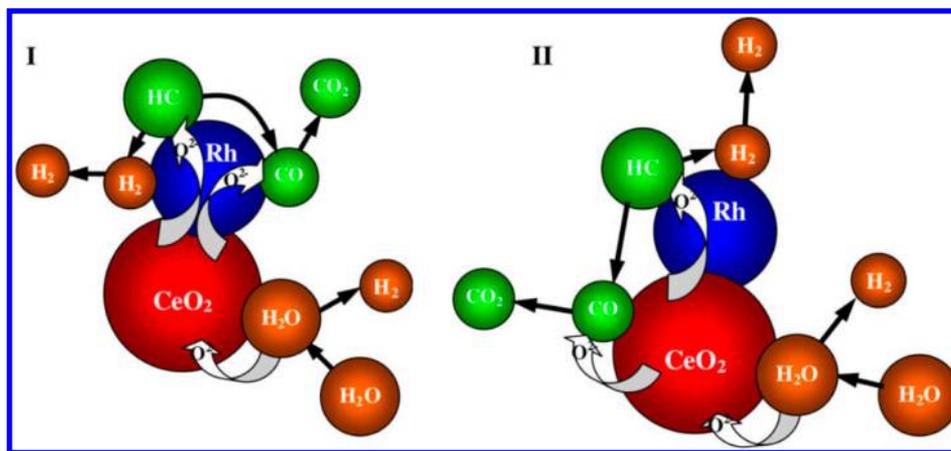
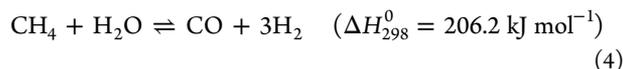


Figure 19. Scheme for hydrocarbon steam reforming and water-gas shift reaction on Rh/CeO₂ according to mechanisms I and II. Reprinted with permission from ref 338. Copyright 2009 Elsevier.

7.3. Emerging Applications

7.3.1. Reforming. In this section, steam, dry, and autothermal reforming of hydrocarbons or oxygenated compounds using CeO₂-based catalysts will be reviewed.

7.3.1.1. Steam Reforming. Steam methane reforming (SMR) is the method most widely applied by industry to produce hydrogen. Compared to other reforming processes, the theoretical H₂/CO ratio is higher (equals 3) but the reaction is thermodynamically unfavored, being overall endothermic. Therefore it must be conducted at high temperatures:³²⁵



Nevertheless, the number of reports on the use of CeO₂-catalyst for the SMR has enjoyed an exponential growth in the 2000–2010 decade, reaching a plateau in the last couple of years.

Similarly to other reforming processes, the most explored systems are based on ceria-zirconia mixed oxides, on account of their improved redox properties. CeO₂-ZrO₂ oxides typically serve as active supports for groups 8, 9, and 10 metal nanoparticles, which act as the catalytically active phase for the activation of hydrocarbons. For instance, Kusakabe and co-workers investigated the different SMR performances of Ni, Pt, Ru, and Rh catalysts prepared by the urea hydrolysis method, concomitantly varying the ceria-zirconia composition (Ce_xZr_{1-x}O₂, 0.5 < x < 1). The catalysts were active at relatively low temperatures (500–600 °C), and the authors noticed that the Ni-supported cubic system with Ce_{0.5}Zr_{0.5}O₂ composition was more active than the corresponding tetragonal Ni/Ce_{0.25}Zr_{0.75}O₂ and Ni/Ce_{0.75}Zr_{0.25}O₂.³²⁶ This finding somehow contrasts with a later report in which the superior activity of Ce_{0.75}Zr_{0.25}O₂ over other Ce_xZr_{1-x}O₂ phases for the SMR was observed,³²⁷ highlighting an overarching mechanistic complexity that still eludes predictability despite the massive bulk of studies and information available today on CeO₂-ZrO₂-based materials. Kinetic and temperature programmed experiments for the SMR by a Rh/Ce_{0.6}Zr_{0.4}O₂ catalyst elucidated several mechanistic aspects and showed a non-linear dependence on CH₄ and steam partial pressures,³²⁸ while the effect of the Ce/Zr ratio was tested for a 10% Ni-loaded support. In this latter case, the highest performance found for Ni/Ce_{0.8}Zr_{0.2}O₂ was put in relation with its higher thermal stability, higher redox capacity and smaller Ni crystallite size.³²⁹

A comparative study on two different preparation methods (impregnation and coprecipitation) for the same catalyst was also reported; the difference in the synthetic protocol is reflected in their SMR performance.³³⁰

Due to its comparatively lower cost, nickel has been a widely explored metal for the steam reforming process. The addition of ceria to the commercial Ni/SiO₂/Al₂O₃ catalyst resulted in a lower carbon deposition and thus better performance for the SMR when the water-to-methane ratios were kept low. The authors also varied the synthetic protocol for the ceria deposition, which led to different degrees of carbon inhibition.³³¹

Doping with cations (usually trivalent) other than zirconium represents another commonly explored approach. Gadolinium, lanthanum, yttrium, and samarium have been successfully employed as dopants in ceria materials for several catalytic processes. For instance, Ce_{0.9}Gd_{0.1}O_{2-y} has been shown to be an active catalyst for the SMR at 900 °C with reaction rates similar to those for the corresponding dry reforming, a fact explained in terms of a mechanism that is rate-controlled by the slow reaction of adsorbed CH₄ with oxygen.³³² However, it must be noted that the effect of the dopant is not always beneficial, and that, in some cases, it can lead to a decrease in the performance of the ceria-based material. A series of mixed oxide with Yb₂O₃, Y₂O₃, Sm₂O₃, Gd₂O₃, La₂O₃, Nb₂O₅, Ta₂O₅, and Pr₆O₁₁ were prepared via sol-gel method, and it was found that all the mixtures were less active than pure CeO₂ in the oxidation of *n*-butane.³³³ Hence, a merely structural effect by the dopants may also be the cause of variation in activity, with enhanced or decreased surface area playing the dominant role. This highlights how there are still unclear issues, and that more studies would be required in this area.

In general, for the most widely industrially utilized Ni-based catalysts, the use of higher hydrocarbons in the steam-reforming reactions is thwarted by the carbon deposition (coke) that leads to catalyst deactivation.³³⁴ Nevertheless, higher hydrocarbons have also been investigated, albeit to a lesser extent. In a seminal work by Gorte and co-workers, stable reaction rates for the steam reforming of *n*-butane were reported with a Pd/ceria catalyst, while under the same conditions, an immediate coking occurred with a Ni/silica catalyst; the authors proposed a dual-function mechanism with alkane activation on the Pd phase followed by oxidation on the CeO₂.¹⁰¹ The scope of the catalytic process was then extended

to hydrocarbons of several sizes subject to steam reforming by the same Pd/ceria system.³³⁵ With the purpose of building low-cost reactors for solid oxide fuel cells, propane was investigated as reforming gas using a Rh/Ce_{0.5}Zr_{0.5}O₂ catalyst prepared by sol-gel method. The conversion of propane began at lower temperature (250 °C) than the corresponding alumina-supported Rh catalyst (320 °C), with a 3-fold enhancement of the overall conversion.³³⁶

Use of CeO₂ as dopant (14 wt %) in a Ni/Al₂O₃ catalytic system for the steam reforming (SR) of ethane and propane resulted in an improved resistance toward carbon formation at high temperature (900 °C).³³⁷ More recently, the kinetics of hexadecane SR were investigated using microchannels coated with Rh/CeO₂. The experimental data were combined with numerical simulations to produce a model able to accurately predict not only hexadecane but also methane and ethane turnover frequencies.³³⁸ Two possible pathways have been proposed (Figure 19) for steam reforming of hydrocarbons, involving hydrocarbon activation on Rh surface, water activation on CeO₂, and spillover of activated O from CeO₂ to Rh.³³⁸ CO oxidation can take place on both the metal surface (mechanism I) or on the CeO₂ support (mechanism II).³³⁸

Methanol is the most investigated alcohol in reforming studies due to its high energy density (high hydrogen-to-carbon ratio), relatively lower temperatures of the reforming (200–300 °C) and easier storage. As for the case with alkanes, ceria-zirconia mixed oxides in combination with other metals, such as copper in particular, have been subjected to a number of investigations for the methanol steam reforming (SRMe). Pioneering work was carried out by Kumagai's group, who prepared a highly active SRMe catalyst composed of Cu/CeO₂,³³⁹ while Oguchi et al. reported on a substantial acceleration of the conversion when ZrO₂ was added as promoter into a CuO/CeO₂ catalyst, unveiling the presence of Cu₂O traces together with metallic Cu in the ZrO₂-modified catalyst. This was evidence of the Cu stabilization provided by the ZrO₂ resulting in the observed longer durability. The system turned out to be rather sensitive to the CuO content, with 80 wt % being the optimum CuO amount.³⁴⁰

Excellent durability was also detected for a Cu/CeO₂/ZrO₂ composite prepared via coprecipitation and polymer template method, with Cu content in the range of 5–15 wt %; moreover, the catalyst showed little CO production. In this case, stability was not significantly enhanced by increasing the Cu loading, while reduction of CO was more pronounced in Cu-richer systems, presumably due to alteration of the microstructures (and therefore of the active Cu surfaces) when using higher concentrations of the Cu precursors in the synthetic protocol.³⁴¹ CeO₂-Gd₂O₃ mixed oxides have also been explored as supports for Cu catalysts in the SRMe process,³⁴² while a comparative study was carried out between Cu/CeO₂ and Cu/ZnO [and Cu/Zn(Al)O] that highlighted the superior performance of the CeO₂-based catalyst.³⁴³

Gold is emerging as a promising catalyst for the SRMe process in combination with CeO₂. Flytzani-Stephanopoulos et al. demonstrated the dependence on catalyst morphology of the SRMe for Au-ceria systems with different nanoshapes such as nanorods and nanocubes. They proposed a mechanism based on the cooperation between Au and ceria that, respectively, adsorb as-formed formaldehyde and oxygen to form methyl formate (Figure 20), which in turn is hydrolyzed to formic acid and eventually leads to release of CO₂ and H₂.^{344,345}

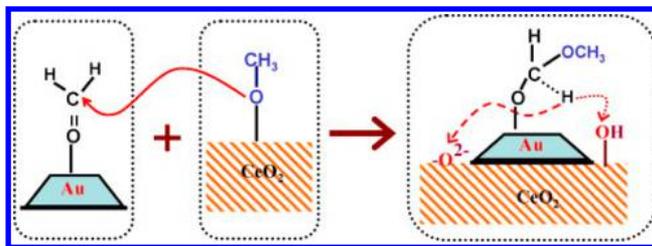


Figure 20. Schematic possible mechanism of steam reforming of methanol catalyzed by Au/CeO₂ systems. Reprinted with permission from ref 344. Copyright 2010 Elsevier.

Very recently, the effect of the support on Au-based catalysts for SRMe has been evaluated by changing the composition of Ce_{1-x}Zr_xO₂ oxides, with best activities obtained up to 25 wt % Zr. Calcination temperatures were also found to critically affect the performance, with CeO₂ agglomeration and ZrO₂ segregation occurring above 400 °C.³⁴⁶

Steam reforming of ethanol (SRE) is a promising and greener alternative route to H₂ production,³⁴⁷ particularly in view of its use as biofuel (bioethanol) derived from renewable resources. As far as noble metals are concerned, several studies indicate a general Rh ≫ Pd > Pt = Ni trend in terms of activity and selectivity. High activities at low temperature (450 °C) were reported for Rh/Ce_xZr_{1-x}O₂, justified by the high oxygen transfer rate, which favors dehydrogenation of ethanol and reforming of acetaldehyde over methane production.³⁴⁸ A simple synthetic protocol gave access to Rh(1%)/Ce_xZr_{1-x}O₂/Al₂O₃ nanocomposites in which the porous metal oxide phase was grown around the Rh catalyst. Embedding of the active phase protects it from sintering, resulting in stable activities for the SRE, without compromising accessibility of the Rh nanoparticles to the reactive gas feed, as substantiated by chemisorption analysis.^{349,350} Insights into the origins of large amounts of methane formation during the SRE with a Rh/Ce_{0.5}Zr_{0.5}O₂ prepared by wet impregnation were supplied by Duprez et al., who studied the CO/CO₂/CH₄ interconversion reactions and concluded that formation of methane occurs through CO hydrogenation, favored by the specific catalytic system, while no CO₂ hydrogenation was observed.³⁵¹ As a less expensive alternative to Rh, nickel has been the subject of several studies.^{352,353} A very active Ce_{0.8}Ni_{0.2}O_{2-y} synthesized through reverse-microemulsion method displayed no (or very minor) methane formation side-reaction, which was suppressed by the metal-ceria interaction that introduces a perturbation in the electronic structure of Ni.³⁵⁴

Ru, Pd, and Ag were investigated as catalytic active phases in SRE after wet impregnation on ceria-ytria stabilized zirconia supports. Despite some degree of sintering detected by combination of TEM, XRD, and chemisorption techniques, Ru and Pd displayed decent performances, while poor performances were observed for the Ag-based system.³⁵⁵ Ce/Mn mixed oxides prepared by coprecipitation and added with SiO₂ were shown to have enhanced selectivity, with neither methane nor CO being detected under the used conditions.³⁵⁶ A commercial bimetallic Pt-Ni catalyst supported on CeO₂ was very successfully utilized in SRE at temperatures above 300 °C due to the synergy between the two metals.³⁵⁷ On the other hand, NiCo bimetallic particles on CeO₂-ZrO₂ displayed high activity above 530 °C with high H₂ yields; the basicity of ceria is responsible for limiting the undesirable formation of ethane as side products.³⁵⁸

In an interesting investigation, Davis and co-workers utilized ethanol as a steam reforming model alcohol compound in hydrogen-rich conditions to assess the effect of partially reduced ceria in a Pt/CeO₂ system. The experimental observations suggest that defect sites arising from reduction to Ce(III) are responsible for the activation of ethanol by dissociative adsorption to form ethoxy species, that in the presence of steam rapidly convert to acetate. The acetate intermediate eventually decomposes to CO₂ and CH₄, with the latter requiring additional energy to be activated for further H₂ production. The finding is important as it inherently conveys toward the perception that methanol is a better-suited alcohol for H₂ generation by Pt/ceria, as the hydrogen evolution does not take place through CH₄ formation.³⁵⁹ Recent advances on Pt/ceria systems led to the discovery of an effect of improved stability of the catalytic ensemble by alloying Pt with Sn or by cofeeding the reactive gas with CO₂.³⁶⁰

Ozkan et al. carried out extensive investigations on Co/CeO₂-based systems as cost-effective alternative to Rh-based catalysts for the SRE, evidencing the importance of oxygen mobility,^{361,362} morphology of the CeO₂ support,³⁶³ and the Co precursor for the activity, stability, and selectivity of the catalytic system.³⁶⁴ More recently, a study on the macro- versus nanosized-particle (MP vs NP) of the CeO₂ support confirmed the profound differences that the nanometer scale of CeO₂ imparts to the cobalt catalyst active phase and that this is associated with a considerable performance enhancement (Figure 21).³⁶⁵

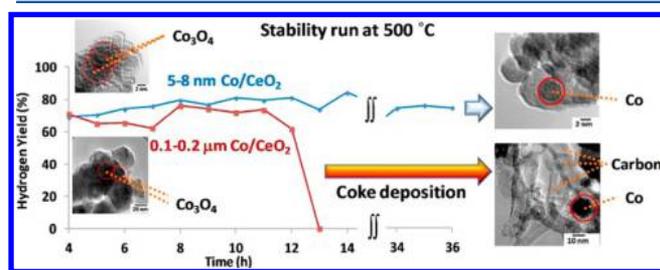


Figure 21. Time-on-stream performance of CoCeO₂(MP) and CoCeO₂(NP) during steam reforming of ethanol. Reprinted from ref 365. Copyright 2012 American Chemical Society.

More accurate insights on the role of oxygen mobility in Co/CeO₂ systems were provided by Noronha and co-workers, who demonstrated the correlation between a higher oxygen/OH group mobility in ceria having high surface area with the high stability of Co/CeO₂ catalysts.³⁶⁶ They also proposed a mechanism of catalyst deactivation, which is dependent upon the nature of the carbon deposition and the reaction conditions.³⁶⁷

Although less attractive than cobalt, iridium has also drawn some attention as CeO₂-supported catalysts for SRE. A comparison in SRE activity by Co, Ir, and Ni on CeO₂ prepared via deposition-precipitation was carried out in the temperature range of 300–700 °C, revealing the better stability of the Ir-based species as a consequence of the strong metal–support interaction between Ir and CeO₂, which prevents sintering of the highly dispersed Ir particles.³⁶⁸ In a more recent study, the influence of CeO₂ doping with PrO_x on the SRE catalysis was proved to be beneficial, thanks to the surface vacancies introduced by the PrO_x dopant.³⁶⁹

Steam reforming of bio oil derivatives is increasing in popularity for sustainability issues. However, given the complexity of the bio oil organic mixture, other oxygenated compounds have been explored mainly as model compounds for catalyst design and mechanistic studies.³⁷⁰ Acetic acid was shown to lead to high rates of hydrogen evolution over ceria-zirconia-supported Rh and Ni catalysts,³⁷¹ while in a more recent study, the effects of Ni and Ce content, as well as those of the reaction temperature, steam-to-carbon ratio, and liquid hourly space velocity were screened.³⁷²

Recent advances in sustainability rely on the use of byproducts derived from biodiesel production, such as glycerol. One issue associated with glycerol steam reforming is the lower selectivity toward H₂ production arising from the formation of several byproduct intermediates that lead to catalyst deactivation and coke formation. However, a reported CeO₂-supported Ir (and to a less extent Co and Ni) catalyst could convert glycerol to H₂ with selectivity higher than 85%.³⁷³ Recently, it was shown that addition of CeO₂ (and of La₂O₃) to Pt/Al₂O₃ composites reduces the acidity of the support, and in turn improves the stability of the catalyst, leading to complete conversion of glycerol to syngas at temperatures as low as 350 °C.³⁷⁴ In another latest study, a nickel-ceria mixed oxide catalyst prepared by microemulsion exhibited excellent activity in glycerol steam reforming and, in contrast to standard Ni-based catalysts, largely improved long-time stability with no detected byproducts.³⁷⁵ Some studies also deal with reforming of more complex and real renewable raw feedstocks, such as the steam reforming of bio-oil products (obtained from the fast pyrolysis of rice hull) over a series of Ni/CeO₂-ZrO₂ catalysts³⁷⁶ or the steam reforming of palm fatty acid distilled (PFAD) and free fatty acids (palmitic, oleic, and linoleic acids) over CeO₂ and CeO₂-ZrO₂ based catalysts.³⁷⁷

7.3.1.2. Dry Reforming. The dry reforming process offers an attractive opportunity from the environmental point of view as it makes use of a greenhouse gas such CO₂ to generate syngas.

As far as fundamental dry-reforming studies by ceria-related catalysts are concerned, attention has almost exclusively been focused on methane. In the dry reforming of methane (DRM), the intrinsic higher endothermicity (in comparison with standard steam reforming) is counterbalanced by a CO-richer syngas formation, as a consequence of the accompanying reverse water-gas shift reaction (RWGS).

The study of the effect of the ceria surface area prepared by a surfactant-assisted method indicated that an increase in surface area considerably reduces thermal sintering and deactivation by carbon coke formation. Kinetic experiments are in agreement with a mechanism similar to that for the SR process and, therefore, with a rate governed by the methane adsorption step.³⁷⁸ Use of ceria as dopant (8 wt %) in Ni/Al₂O₃ resulted in higher activities and stability, thanks to hindered carbon formation (Figure 22).³⁷⁹ As expected, exploration of CeO₂-ZrO₂ mixed oxides as supports for DR has been a fruitful field. Small amounts of ceria (6 wt %) are sufficient to impart enhanced stability to Pt/ZrO₂ systems; the prevention of catalyst deactivation was related to the close contact between the CeO₂ and the Pt nanoparticles together with the higher oxygen mobility introduced by ceria, which accelerates gasification of coke deposited on Pt particles.³⁸⁰ Comparable results were found under similar conditions using Ru/Ce_{0.75}Zr_{0.25}O₂.³⁸¹

Worthy of note is the fact that nickel appears to be an interesting prospect due to its cost. As for SR, the main

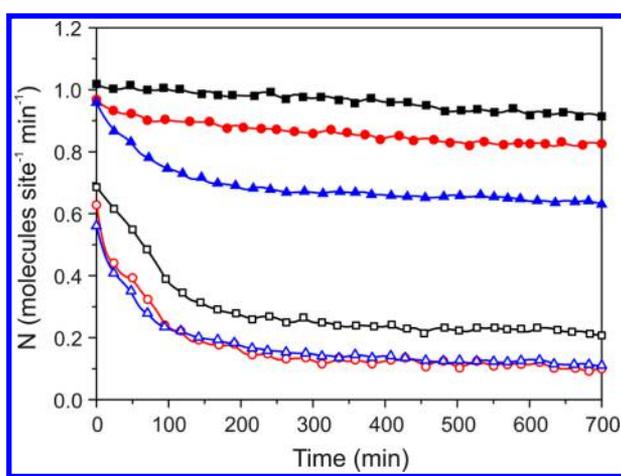


Figure 22. Dry reforming of methane at 900 °C for: Ce (8 wt%) Ni/Al₂O₃ (filled symbols) and Ni/Al₂O₃ (empty symbols); and various inlet CH₄/CO₂ ratios: 1.0:3.0 (black squares), 1.0:1.0 (red circles), 1.0:0.3 (blue triangles). Adapted with permission from ref 379. Copyright 2005 Elsevier.

drawback of Ni catalysts resides in the generally more pronounced coke deposition on the metal nanoparticles. An in-depth study on a series of catalysts based on Ni supported on several CeO₂-ZrO₂ with different Ce/Zr ratios was carried out for the DRM, and despite the complexity of the electronic alteration introduced by the zirconia could not be completely rationalized, the as-prepared materials displayed a higher activity trend for the reaction.³⁸² A series of Ni/CeO₂ catalysts with Ni loading ranging from 7 to 26 wt% were prepared via combustion synthesis, which allows good control of the final stoichiometry. The actual Ni phase was found to be NiO, and albeit the system had good stability and activity, some carbon nanofibers were deposited over the course of the catalysis.³⁸³

Bimetallic Co-Ni supported on ceria have been shown to lead to improvements in the DRM compared to the corresponding monometallic systems. Despite the larger size of the Ni-Co nanoparticles, the alloy catalyst presents a higher activity after activation with H₂ at 800 °C. Moreover, the presence of cobalt is effective in preventing coke deposition.³⁸⁴ In a parallel study, the Ni-Co metal nanoparticles were dispersed on CeO₂-ZrO₂ and the effect of the variable loading of the two metals, the specific synthetic method and aging process, as well as the oxygen mobility was evaluated.³⁸⁵ More recently, a Co-based catalyst, supported on CeO₂-ZrO₂, was successfully tested in DRM.³⁸⁶

Manganese was also tested as doping metal in a Co/CeO₂-ZrO₂ ensemble. It was claimed that the structural distortion induced by Mn favors the migration of the lattice oxygen and therefore the availability of oxygen on the surface and, as a consequence, leads to an enhanced activity toward the DRM.³⁸⁷ However, the effective insertion of Mn into the CeO₂ lattice remains controversial, and the possibility that simple oxide mixtures Mn₂O₃-CeO₂ (in place of a real doping) are formed can also be invoked based on experimental evidence. In a report by Gorte et al., coulometric titration experiments indicated that the manganese oxide phase remains separated from the solid.³⁸⁸ The open question of real doping versus simple physical oxide mixtures with CeO₂ can be extended to other metals, for which a real insertion of the metal into the CeO₂ lattice has not been unequivocally proven.

There are only very few investigations on the dry reforming of molecules other than methane by ceria-based materials, and most of them incorporate the dry-reforming process into the field of fuel cells assembly, which is discussed in a separate section. Two examples given here are the work by Noronha and co-workers, who prepared two types of Rh/CeO₂ catalysts by incipient wetness impregnation on low (14 m² g⁻¹) and high surface area (275 m² g⁻¹) ceria and tested them in the DR of ethanol. In comparison with the SR process by the same catalyst, the selectivity to CO was higher, while that to H₂ was lower due to the concomitant reverse water-gas shift reaction. When the CO₂/EtOH molar ratio was increased from 1 to 4, the stability of the catalyst turned out to be superior. In general, however, the performances were not exceptional.³⁸⁹ Butane was studied as the model molecule in several syngas-producing processes, among which was dry reforming, over Rh/CeO₂-ZrO₂ catalysts to evaluate the advantages of employing a disk-shaped reactor, which appears to bring benefits in terms of both conversion and selectivity toward H₂ and CO.³⁹⁰

7.3.1.3. Autothermal Reforming. Autothermal reforming (ATR) integrates the SR with catalytic partial oxidation (CPO), and it has been proven to be a useful solution for small scale production of H₂ because of the fast start-up, small size, and a higher hydrogen purity.

Several metals supported on CeO₂ or CeO₂-based mixed oxides have been investigated as catalysts for autothermal reforming of methane (ATRM). Temperature treatments and CeO₂ loadings were correlated to the activity and stability of a Pd/CeO₂-Al₂O₃ catalytic systems for the ATRM. The performance critically depends on CeO_{2-γ} species partially covering Pd, which, in addition to prohibiting CO adsorption in bridge carbonyl form, could promote coke gasification, leading to improved accessibility of the active sites to CH₄.³⁹¹ The favorable influence of La was proven in a Rh/CeO₂-ZrO₂-La₂O₃ catalyst and related to formation of “Rh-La interfacial species” which could promote catalytic activity and H₂ selectivity for ATR reactions but needed to be controlled to an optimum content of 15% in order not to compromise the amount of exposed Rh required by the catalytic process.³⁹² Hori et al. studied the effect of different metal promoters such as Pd, Pt, and Ag on Ni/CeO₂-ZrO₂ systems for ATRM and CPO. While the general trend rules out any change in surface areas, NiO particle size, and metal dispersion, the Ag-promoted system did exhibit higher methane conversion, explained in terms of a better redox capacity consequent to the higher CO and CO₂ desorption in CO₂ temperature-programmed desorption (TPD).³⁹³ Recently, more insights into ATR by nanostructured nickel and other noble metals such as Pd, Pt, and Rh were provided by Ismagilov et al., who employed La₂O₃, Ce_xGd_{1-x}O_y, and Ce_xZr_{1-x}O_y as supports and correlated the activity to the composition of the catalytic system.³⁹⁴ Several other studies on ceria-zirconia-based systems have been conducted for the ATRM, including a trend evaluation of CeO₂-ZrO₂-supported platinum catalysts in relation to parameters such as reaction temperature, presence of CO₂ in the feedstock, and H₂O/CH₄ molar ratio, as well as different preparative methods. While increase of H₂O/CH₄ molar ratio has a positive influence, increase of temperature lowers the catalyst activity. Presence of CO₂ results in initial higher methane conversion, but it is associated with a lower stability of the catalyst.³⁹⁵ An indirect two-step mechanism based on total combustion at lower temperatures followed by methane reforming by CO₂ or steam at higher temperature was

proposed for a Ni/CeO₂-ZrO₂ catalyst with different compositions. The catalysts were also compared with the Al₂O₃-supported analogues as well as mixed oxide supports CeO₂/Al₂O₃ and Ce_{0.5}Zr_{0.5}O₂/Al₂O₃, and the chief role of CeO₂-ZrO₂ was identified in providing an alternative available pathway for the adsorption and dissociation of oxygen and steam; thus, the formation of O₂⁻ and OH⁻ on the support surface aided to avoid deactivation by reacting with the carbon deposit.³⁹⁶ Similarly, high activity and stability were observed for a Ni/CeO₂-ZrO₂/θ-Al₂O₃ catalyst and were attributed to the formation of stable NiO_x species rather than free NiO or inactive NiAl₂O₄ favored by a CeO₂-ZrO₂ layer precoated on θ-Al₂O₃.³⁹⁷

Hydrocarbons other than methane received less although decent attention. A ceria-supported Pt catalyst prepared by combustion method exhibited good stability over several hours for the oxidative steam reforming of propane; the activity was shown to be critically dependent upon the O₂:C₃H₈ and H₂O:C₃H₈ ratios of the feed.³⁹⁸ CeO₂ was also tested as an additive in the Pt/Al₂O₃ catalyst for the ATR of diesel surrogates, resulting in the inhibition of the formation of the α-phase of the Al₂O₃ substrate and thus improved performances.³⁹⁹

Tolerance to sulfur is an important factor to be considered for the design of market-oriented catalysts. A series of Pt/CeO₂-Al₂O₃ catalysts doped with Gd₂O₃ (from 0.8 wt % to 4 wt %) were prepared by stepwise incipient wetness impregnation (IWI) method and employed in the ATR of sulfur-containing (158–500 ppm) gasoline, exhibiting promising performances depending on the preparation method.⁴⁰⁰ Bimetallic Rh-Pt supported on several types of supports, among which was CeO₂, were investigated as catalysts for the ATR of low-sulfur diesel fuels, and the authors established an order of conversion RhPt/SiO₂ < RhPt/TiO₂ < RhPt/Al₂O₃ < RhPt/CeO₂ (17.5 wt %)-ZrO₂ (1 wt % Pt and Rh loading), with ceria-zirconia reaching up to 98%, with such activity related to the ability of the support to provide higher reducibility of RhO_x species and better Rh and Pt dispersion.⁴⁰¹

Iso-octane was investigated as fuel for the ATR catalyzed by Ni-based catalysts in relation to the effect of metal nanoparticle size in the presence of sulfur⁴⁰² and the influence of thiophene in the ATR process,⁴⁰³ while a highly active quaternary RuO-NiO-CeO₂-Al₂O₃ xerogel catalyst prepared by the sol-gel method was lately reported for the ATR of *n*-dodecane.⁴⁰⁴

CeO₂ has been shown to be a good promoter for the ATR of methanol (ATRMe) when incorporated into a Cu/Al₂O₃ catalyst, increasing the metal dispersion and surface area, as well as lowering the temperature of catalyst reduction.⁴⁰⁵ On the other hand, Ni-impregnated CeO₂-ZrO₂ supports of different compositions were tested, with activity reaching highest values for Ce-rich materials.⁴⁰⁶ Three different CeO₂ washcoats mixed with ZnO-CuO and supported on porous alumina for the ATRMe exhibited a strong Cu-CeO₂ interaction which led to formation of Cu-O-Ce bridges and was held responsible for the high activity.⁴⁰⁷

A comparison between SR, CPO, and ATR processes for H₂ production from ethanol was carried out using a Pt/Ce_{0.75}Zr_{0.25}O₂ catalyst; at low temperature, autothermal conditions, under which ethanol decomposition was inhibited, resulted in more efficient conversions, although a lower selectivity toward H₂ was observed. Improved activity also in terms of selectivity was observed at higher temperature. A mechanism based on two different pathways, in which the role

of the support as oxygen buffer was clearly confirmed by diffuse reflectance infrared fourier transform spectroscopy (DRIFTS) analyses, was proposed.⁴⁰⁸

The superior behavior of CeO₂-ZrO₂ supports was also recently proved in the ATR of biobutanol raw mixture (butanol/acetone/ethanol = 6/3/1 mass ratio) by bimetallic Co-Ir. The order of performances with different supports was shown to follow the order of OSC and reducibility of the catalyst: CoIr/CeO₂-ZrO₂ > CoIr/ZnO > CoIr/TiO₂.⁴⁰⁹

Autothermal reforming of ethanol (ATRE) was investigated on a Al₂O₃-supported Ni catalyst promoted by Ce_{0.5}Zr_{0.5}O₂, which other than enhancing activity by reducing the Ni particle size and dispersion, is crucial to increase the number of surface oxygen species and decrease coke formation.⁴¹⁰

The addition of CeO₂ to Rh/Al₂O₃ considerably enhanced methanol, ethylene glycol, and glycerol conversion during ATR, with selectivity to H₂ near to the equilibrium, chiefly due to an increase of the surface oxidation rates.⁴¹¹ The concept of “hydrogen economy” had been exploited by the same group in a milestone work in which ethanol could be directly converted into H₂ simply and with high efficiency (~100% selectivity and > 95% conversion) under ATR conditions using Rh-ceria on a ceramic foam made of low-area alumina or alumina spheres.⁴¹²

7.3.2. Water-Gas Shift Reaction and Preferential Oxidation of CO. From the industrial point-of-view, processes like Fischer-Tropsch synthesis, methanol synthesis, or hydroformylation require well-defined H₂/CO/CO₂ ratios to be efficiently operative. For this reason, after being produced, the H₂/CO ratio in the syn-gas must be adjusted to the desired value. On the other hand, in order to be used for ammonia synthesis, for hydrogenation reactions or as possible energy vector in combination with PEMFC, H₂ must contain very low amounts of CO (sometimes below 10 ppm), to avoid poisoning of the various catalysts employed.

The most promising process to purify H₂ stream from CO appears to be a combination of the water gas shift reaction (WGSR) and the preferential oxidation (PROX) of residual CO, in the presence of an excess of H₂, using O₂.⁴¹³

It is important to underline that the WGSR is an exothermic reaction ($\Delta H_{298}^0 = -41 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$), and that the equilibrium constant decreases with increasing temperature. Hence, the CO concentration is essentially dictated by the thermodynamic of the reaction at the temperature of the exit of the reactor, and, in order to obtain a high CO removal, the temperature should be as low as possible. The WGSR is usually performed in two consecutive stages: a high-temperature (HT-WGSR, operative between 300 and 450 °C and a low-temperature stage (LT-WGSR, operative between 200 and 300 °C). The HT-WGSR is commonly catalyzed by Fe₂O₃-Cr₂O₃, while the LT-WGSR usually involves Cu/ZnO catalysts. Moreover, the CO oxidation in the final PROX step requires the development of highly selective catalysts, able to promote the removal of CO without a significant loss of H₂.

CeO₂-based catalysts appear to be particularly useful for LT-WGSR and PROX. However, reports are available in which HT-WGSR has been explored. For example, the effect of the preparation method for a Ni:Cu (1:1 mol)/CeO₂ catalyst was determined for the HT-WGSR, indicating the evaporation-induced self-assembly method as the most favorable one.⁴¹⁴ On the other hand, the effect of chlorine was investigated in the PROX by Pt/CeO₂ using two different metal precursors, namely (Pt(NH₃)₄)(NO₃)₂ and H₂PtCl₆, and it was established that for low temperature PROX, the chlorine-free

catalyst could perform better.⁴¹⁵ In general, many noble and non-noble metals supported on pure or doped CeO₂ function as active catalysts for H₂ purification. Among them, Pt, Au, and Cu represent certainly the most promising systems and therefore are the most studied in detail.^{416,417}

Two reaction mechanisms have been proposed for CeO₂-based catalysts under WGS or PROX conditions:

• **Formate Route.** The reaction involves the formation of OH groups on Ce ions, which react with CO to form formates. CO₂ and/or H₂ are produced by decomposition of the intermediate species (formates or carbonates adsorbed on the oxide surface). The role of the metal is to allow the adsorption of CO and to promote the cleavage of the C–H bond of formate.^{418,419}

• **Redox Route.** Reactive oxygen atoms are transferred from the support to the metal particles, leading to oxygen vacancies on the support surface. Active oxygen reacts with CO adsorbed on the metal particles producing CO₂, while H₂O or O₂ restore surface oxide anions, producing H₂.^{102,420–423}

Some variations from the above main mechanisms have also been proposed based on DFT or microkinetic modeling, in particular, when Pt is used as a catalyst. In such alternative mechanisms, the rate-determining step is the formation of a COOH species, with the formate acting mainly as the spectator,^{424,425} with the CO reacting with OH rather than water.⁴²⁶

Going back to the two main mechanisms, the effective occurrence of the formate mechanism on WGS catalysts was reviewed a few years ago by Burch and co-workers,⁴²⁷ highlighting that formate could be the main reaction intermediate only for the catalysts with lower activity (for example, 0.2% Rh/CeO₂ reported by Shido and Iwasawa).⁴¹⁹ In the case of catalysts with high catalytic activity (such as Au/CeO₂-La₂O₃,⁴²⁸ Pt/CeO₂,⁴²⁹ and Au/CeZrO₄⁴²⁹) and of interest for current fuel cell applications, the major contribution of a formate mechanism was not proven, since the formate decomposition rate calculated from IR data accounts for less than 10–15% of the total WGS reaction rate. Moreover, DRIFTS and near ambient pressure-XPS indicated that formates seem not necessarily involved in the main reaction path, at least for Cu- and Pt-based catalysts.^{430,431} Recently, using a combination of in situ and operando techniques, Rodriguez et al. showed that both metal (Cu, Au, and Pt) and the oxide support (CeO₂ and CeO₂-TiO₂) undergo important modifications during WGS. XRD, EXAFS, and pair distribution function (PDF) analyses evidenced the partial reduction of the support, favoring H₂O dissociation that is not active on the metal alone.⁴³⁰ Key issues still need to be addressed to understand possible reorganization of the surface during catalysis, the nature of the active sites for H₂O activation and the atomic arrangements required to facilitate the formation of intermediates, such as carboxylic groups (HOCO), formates (HCOO), or carbonates. Particular interest should be devoted in developing multitechnique experiments to investigate structural, morphological, and electronic properties of the catalysts and the nature of adsorbates during WGS.⁴³⁰

Pt/CeO₂ catalysts demonstrated promising performance under realistic WGS conditions (presence of H₂ and CO₂ in the reaction mixture), although they suffer from deactivation by carbonate deposition during start–stop operation.⁴³² This disadvantage can be limited by doping ZrO₂ in CeO₂, although Pt sintering is observed in this case.⁴³³ WGS on Pt/Ce_xZr_{1-x}O₂ proceeds mainly via the redox mechanism, with

activity dependent on reaction temperature, support composition (Ce/Zr ratio), and Pt particle size.⁴³⁴ Efstathiou and co-workers extensively studied the activity and the mechanism of WGS on Pt supported on La-doped CeO₂; the best activity was observed for Ce_{0.8}La_{0.2}O_{2-δ}, which had the highest OSC in the 250–550 °C range.⁴³⁵ Steady state isotopic transient kinetic analysis (SSITKA)-DRIFT and transient isothermal response experiments suggest that WGS can proceed through both a “redox mechanism” and an “associative formate with –OH regeneration” mechanism.⁴³⁶

Pt-based catalysts for WGS often promote CO methanation, with a considerable loss of H₂ and the production of an undesired byproduct. CH₄ formation can be suppressed by engineering the catalyst at the nanoscale level. “Pt-in-ceria” catalysts prepared by a microemulsion approach to maximize the metal–support interaction, resulted in suppression of CH₄ production.⁴³⁷

Au/CeO₂ represents one of the most promising systems studied for H₂ purification, although many aspects are still to be clarified. In particular, the real form of Au particles (size and/or charge) under working conditions is still unclear. Au nanoparticles (less than 5 nm in size)^{438,439} or cationic/partially positive gold species (Au^{δ+})^{440–442} are candidates as active phase in Au/CeO₂ catalysts. Other than the nature of the metal phase, the electronic interaction of the metal nanoparticles with the CeO₂ surface (i.e., electron transfer from a reduced ceria to a metal) represents a critical point to obtain active and selective catalysts. When metallic gold clusters are in intimate contact with the CeO₂-based support, the Au atoms at the interface with the support would be expected to carry a small positive charge (Au^{δ+}),⁴⁴¹ providing the active sites for the WGS. On the other hand, the active sites for the WGS were reported as involving pure gold nanoparticles in contact with oxygen vacancies.^{248,443} Moreover, the activity for the WGS was strongly related to the morphology at the nanoscale level (e.g., different geometry and exposed crystal planes).⁴⁴⁴

Au-based catalysts have been investigated on a large variety of CeO₂-containing supports as solid solutions or composite materials, including CeO₂-Al₂O₃,^{445,446} CeO₂-Fe₂O₃,^{447,448} CeO₂-MnO₂,⁴⁴⁸ CeO₂-SnO₂,⁴⁴⁸ CeO₂-Ga₂O₃,⁴⁴⁹ CeO₂-RE₂O₃ (RE = La, Sm, Gd, Yb, Y),^{428,450–454} CeO₂-TiO₂,^{455–458} and CeO₂-ZrO₂.^{429,441,459,460} In most cases, the promotional effect is not dramatic, and the activity is mainly dependent on the preparation method, as exemplified by the work of Tabakova and co-workers.⁴⁴⁸

The situation for Cu/CeO₂ catalysts is very similar. Cu is usually present, in the as-prepared catalysts, as CuO entities. In one example, a series of CuO/CeO₂ catalysts were prepared and tested in the WGS, with activity strongly influenced by the amount of surface oxygen vacancies.⁴⁶¹ Other authors proposed that metallic Cu interacts in a complex fashion with CeO₂ oxygen vacancies, with water dissociation occurring at the interface between Cu and O vacancies.^{462,463} Moreover, the activity of Cu/CeO₂ catalysts can be increased by doping of the support with ZrO₂.⁴⁶⁴ Addition of Cu to Ni/CeO₂ catalysts also suppresses CH₄ production thanks to the formation of Ni-Cu alloyed particles.⁴⁶⁵

CO oxidation and, in particular, PROX have been widely studied on CeO₂-supported catalysts. By precisely controlling the size of metal nanoparticles supported on CeO₂, Cargnello et al. clearly demonstrated that the active sites for CO oxidation on Pt/CeO₂, Pd/CeO₂, and Ni/CeO₂ are peripheral metal atoms in contact with CeO₂.²⁵⁵

Also in the case of PROX, Pt, Au, and Cu gave the best performance when supported on CeO₂-based oxides.^{417,466} The poor selectivity of Pd/CeO₂ compared to Pt/CeO₂ has been related to the formation of Pd β -hydride, which rapidly reacts with activated oxygen (from the gas phase or from the CeO₂ support) forming H₂O and decreasing the selectivity of the process.⁴⁶⁷ “Ir-in-ceria” catalysts prepared following a coprecipitation (CP) method showed good activity and selectivity to CO₂ compared to reference materials prepared by deposition-precipitation (DP), even if CO conversion was lower than that which is reported for the most active metals (Figure 23).⁴⁶⁸

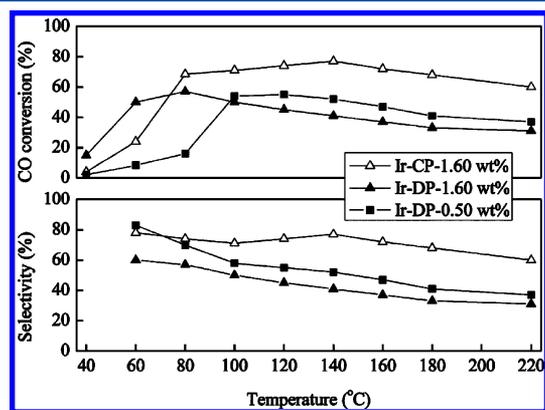


Figure 23. CO conversion and selectivity to CO₂ as a function of reaction temperature in the PROX reaction over 100 mg of the coprecipitated Ir-CeO₂ catalyst (Ir-CP-1.60 wt %) and Ir-CeO₂ catalysts prepared by deposition-precipitation (Ir-DP-1.60 wt % and Ir-DP-0.50 wt %). Reacting gas composition: CO/O₂/He/H₂ = 2/1/57/40 (vol %); gas hourly space velocity (GHSV) = 40000 mL h⁻¹ g⁻¹. Reproduced with permission from ref 468. Copyright 2008 Elsevier.

CeO₂-based materials are fundamental to promote the activity and to control the reaction mechanism of Pt-based catalysts for the PROX process.^{423,469–473} The mechanism of preferential CO oxidation through activated oxygen from CeO₂ has been clearly demonstrated,^{470,471} as well as the detrimental effect on the CO oxidation activity by residual chlorides through blocking of oxygen vacancies and hindering O mobility at the Pt-CeO₂ interface.^{415,423} Selectivity of Pt/CeO₂ to CO oxidation in the PROX process has been interpreted by a change in the reaction mechanism depending on CO coverage on Pt nanoparticles: at high coverage, reaction proceeds through a Mars-van Krevelen mechanism, while, at low coverage, a Langmuir–Hinshelwood mechanism is operative.⁴⁷² CO coverage on Pt is controlled mainly by the CO/O₂ ratio and, at low CO coverage, H₂ oxidation takes place to a considerable extent, decreasing the selectivity of the process.⁴⁷² Again, CO oxidation rates well-correlate with the interfacial Pt length, accounting for the importance of the Pt-O-Ce bonds formed at the interface between Pt and CeO₂ for the redox activity.⁴⁷² Gao et al. studied the effect of CeO₂ morphology on the CO oxidation in the PROX reaction.⁴⁷³ The activity order of Pt/CeO₂ was nanorods > cubes > octahedra, in parallel with reducibility of materials and concentration of oxygen vacancies.⁴⁷³

Au/CeO₂ catalysts exhibit peculiar properties in the PROX process. The control of the particle size of CeO₂ support is important as well as the control of the dimension of Au nanoparticles. Carrettin et al.⁴⁷⁴ evidenced that specific rate of

CO oxidation on Au nanoparticles deposited on nanocrystalline CeO₂ is two orders of magnitude higher than that of a catalyst prepared using conventional precipitation. This is reasonably explained in terms of the strong electronic interaction between the two components, at the interface of which CO is adsorbed on Au atoms in close proximity to highly defective CeO₂ able to activate O₂.⁴⁷⁴ With the aim of maximizing Au-CeO₂ electronic interaction (i.e., the possibility of an electron transfer from partially reduced ceria to the metal) and of preventing sintering of Au nanoparticles, Au@CeO₂ catalysts which showed good activity and selectivity as well as remarkable stability under PROX conditions were prepared. The observed deactivation was fully reversible and assigned to carbonate deposition on the active sites.⁴⁷⁵ Similarly to Pt/CeO₂, the morphology of CeO₂ in Au/CeO₂ has a peculiar effect on CO oxidation activity, in the order: nanorods > polyhedra > nanocubes.^{476,477} Three different synthetic protocols, namely solvated metal atom dispersion (SMAD), deposition-precipitation, and coprecipitation methods were used for the preparation of Au/CeO₂ catalysts for CO oxidation, with the SMAD method turning out to be the most efficient. Rather than being related to the small gold particles obtained via SMAD, the highest activity was due to the strong interaction between ionic gold and ceria, which also enhanced the ceria surface oxygen reducibility.⁴⁷⁸

Among nanocomposite materials, CeO₂ shows a beneficial effect when added to Au/Al₂O₃,^{479,480} Au/SiO₂,⁴⁸¹ Au/Co₃O₄,^{482–484} and Au-TiO₂.⁴⁸⁵ CeO₂ doped with many different cations has been tested for the PROX reaction, including Zr,⁴⁸⁶ Fe,^{486–490} Zn,^{486,491,492} Mn,^{487,493} and RE (RE = La, Sm, Gd, and Y).^{491,492,494} Also in the case of the PROX reaction, the preparation method of the CeO₂-based support and the technique adopted for the deposition of Au nanoparticles strongly influence the catalytic activity.

Concerning Cu/CeO₂ catalysts, a partial reduction of Cu(II) at the interface CuO-CeO₂ is observed, and the CO conversion well fits with the intensity of the Cu(I)-CO band of IR spectra.^{495,496} In-situ XAFS spectroscopy evidenced that partially reduced CuO entities are present when CO oxidation is predominant, while at higher temperature, full reduction of CuO to Cu is responsible for H₂ oxidation.^{495,496}

The morphology and the exposed faces of CeO₂ particles also influence the performance of the catalysts. CuO/CeO₂-nanocubes, exposing mainly (100) faces, are more selective in PROX of CO compared to CuO/CeO₂-nanorods and CuO/CeO₂-nanospheres, exposing mainly (111) faces, although the latter catalysts are slightly more active.^{497,498} This is due to the strong electronic interaction of CuO entities with CeO₂ (100) faces, resulting in a more difficult reduction of copper to the zerovalent state.^{497,498} The successful dispersion of the CuO component within CeO₂ is also an important parameter. Recently, very homogeneous dispersions of CuO_x clusters up to 10% loading on CeO₂ nanorods surface was achieved via deposition-precipitation methods, resulting in excellent activity.⁴⁹⁹

Considering the low cost of Cu-based catalysts, CuO/CeO₂ composites have been prepared in a wide range of compositions, investigating also materials with a high CuO content, the so-called “inverse” CeO₂/CuO catalysts.^{500,501} In this type of catalyst, an improvement in CO₂ selectivity is observed when doping ZnO into CuO phase, as a result of the stabilization of CuO against reduction, which in turn enables to extend the temperature window of the catalysts.⁵⁰²

Table 2. Most Relevant Results from Studies on Methane Catalytic Combustion

catalyst	preparation method ^a	BET surface area (m ² g ⁻¹)	GHSV (mL g ⁻¹ h ⁻¹)	methane concentration	T ₅₀ ^b (°C)	ref
Ce _{0.75} Zr _{0.25} O ₂ , calcined at 500 °C	S-G	108.4	60000	2%	545	542
CeO ₂ calcined at 500 °C		101.6			675	
ZrO ₂ calcined at 500 °C		79.0			721	
Ce _{0.75} Zr _{0.25} O ₂ , calcined at 900 °C		9.2			625	
CeO ₂ calcined at 900 °C		4.6			750	
ZrO ₂ calcined at 900 °C		12.2			>750	
5 wt % Cu/CeO ₂	hydrothermal	22.6	27000	1%	540	543
	S-G	43.8			525	
	TD	68.7			490	
1 wt % Cu/CeO ₂	TD	68.7	54000		540	
Ce _{0.85} Cu _{0.1} Ca _{0.05} O _{2-δ}	citric acid complexation-combustion	31.3	30000	1%	478	544
Ce _{0.9} Cu _{0.1} O _{2-δ}		38.9			538	
Co ₃ O ₄ -CeO ₂	CP	31	60000	0.3%	471	545
CeO ₂	S-G	9	13500	0.2%	600	546
Ce(0.6)-La-O	S-G	52.4			505	
CeO ₂ flowerlike microspheres (FM)	modified DP	181.4	30000	1%	550	547
La-doped-CeO ₂ FM		97.4			525	
10 wt % CeO ₂ -Mg-Al-oxide	CP	52	16000	1%	561	548
CeO ₂		16			635	
Mg-Al-oxide		188			725	
2 wt% Pt/Ce _{0.67} Zr _{0.33} O ₂	IMP of support, prepared by CP	79	12800	1%	300	536
2 wt% Pd/Ce _{0.67} Zr _{0.33} O ₂		77			320	
Pd@CeO ₂ /SiO ₂ -Al ₂ O ₃	bottom-up synthesis	100	200000	0.5%	350	221

^aCP = coprecipitation, IMP = impregnation, DP = deposition precipitation, MCD = metallic colloid dispersion, TD = thermal decomposition, and S-G = sol-gel. ^bLight-off temperature at which conversion of methane is 50%.

Nanocomposites comprising CuO/CeO₂ active phase have been prepared using Al₂O₃,^{503,504} Al-pillared clay,⁵⁰⁵ ZrO₂,^{503,504} SiO₂,^{504,506–508} TiO₂,⁵⁰³ MnO₂,⁵⁰³ Co₃O₄,⁵⁰⁹ or MWCNT⁵¹⁰ as supports, showing moderate improvements of the performance in comparison with CuO/CeO₂ materials.

An increase in CO conversion is observed on Cu-based catalysts supported on CeO₂-ZrO₂, although the extent of the promotional effect depends on the Cu loading.^{511–513} Promotion in activity of CuO/CeO₂ has been reported also for ceria doped with MnO₂,^{514–516} TiO₂,⁵¹⁷ Tb₄O₇,⁵¹⁸ and PrO₃,⁵¹⁸ while La₂O₃ doping has a detrimental effect on the activity,⁵¹⁸ although differences among the various dopants are significantly reduced in the presence of H₂O and CO₂ in the reaction feed.⁵¹⁸

Finally, CeO₂ was used as support for bimetallic catalysts comprising various combinations of Pt, Au, and Cu. Pt-Au/CeO₂ displayed the best catalytic performance compared to the correspondent monometallic catalysts.^{519,520} Pt-Cu/CeO₂ catalysts have been prepared by a radiolytic process, and the resulting strong contact between Pt and CuO_x entities led to the formation of new active sites, responsible for a decrease of light-off temperature and an increase of CO₂ selectivity, widening the operative temperature window of the catalysts.^{521–525} Au, added by incipient wetness impregnation, acts as a promoter for CuO/CeO₂, even if the particle size of Au was quite large (20–40 nm).⁵²⁶ A reduction treatment in H₂, resulting in the formation of Au-Cu alloy nanoparticles, increases the performance of Au-Cu/CeO₂ catalysts compared to the parent monometallic materials, regardless of the Au/Cu molar ratio.⁵²⁷

7.3.3. Oxidation of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC). Ceria and ceria-based materials are efficient catalysts

for VOCs catalytic combustion (and in general for refractory organic pollutants in industrial wastewaters), thanks to their excellent reducibility and OSC.^{528,529} The reaction is considered to follow a Mars-van Krevelen type mechanism, in which ceria supplies oxygen to the reaction and it is reoxidized by gas phase oxygen.^{530–532} When ceria is used as high surface area support for noble metals (Pd, Pt, and Au), the catalytic systems are particularly active at low temperature, due to the increased metal dispersion and to CeO₂ participation into the reaction.^{528,533–538} An extensive and detailed review on Au-based catalysts for VOCs abatement was recently published by Scirè and Liotta.⁵³⁹

Methane (CH₄) is the most difficult VOC to be oxidized and represents an environmental hazard due to its global warming effect and ozone depletion potential.^{540,541} Methane combustion over metal free and metal-doped ceria based materials has been deeply investigated as summarized in Table 2. However, the dramatic influence of the GHSV on the light-off temperature makes a proper comparison difficult. The catalytic performances are mostly related to the ability of the systems to release lattice oxygen. Pure ceria or mixed oxides show medium-high temperature methane conversion, while metal-doped systems have significantly lower conversion temperatures. The methane oxidation activity of CeO₂-ZrO₂ solid solution prepared via urea hydrolysis was found to be dependent on the Ce:Zr ratio, with a maximum activity for the Ce_{0.75}Zr_{0.25}O₂ composition and a gradual decrease in activity with increasing Zr concentration, as a result of the phase separation and modification of redox properties. Despite the usually good thermal stability of these materials,^{99,261} a general deactivation of the catalysts during light off experiments was observed.⁵⁴²

In one study, the presence of a strong electronic interaction between Co_3O_4 and CeO_2 (i.e., electron transfer) led to enhanced redox properties and improved methane oxidation.⁵⁴⁵ Similarly, when CuO/CeO_2 catalysts were employed, it turned out that optimization of the CuO dispersion, metal loading, and its electronic interaction with ceria led to enhancement of the catalytic activity. Despite the promising performances, presence of H_2O caused a remarkable decrease in activity.⁵⁴³ The incorporation of Ca in $\text{Ce}_{0.9-x}\text{Cu}_{0.1}\text{Ca}_x\text{O}_{2-y}$ solid solutions also favored the formation of oxygen vacancies; although a remarkable enhancement of the catalytic performance was obtained, a loss of activity over time was observed, due to the Ca migration to the surface with consequent formation of calcium carbonate species.⁵⁴⁴

La–Ce–O mixed oxides were also explored, resulting in a general improvement of the reducibility of ceria, together with increased production of oxygen vacancies and surface superoxide ions. It was noted that when the ratio $\text{Ce}/(\text{Ce} + \text{La})$ was maintained in the range from 1.0 to 0.2, significantly smaller crystal sizes were generated as a result of the formation of $\text{La}_x\text{Ce}_{1-x}\text{O}_{2-x/2}$ solid solutions.⁵⁴⁶ Similarly, a boost of activity was observed when testing the methane combustion over flowerlike mesoporous microspheres made of $\text{La}_x\text{Ce}_{1-x}\text{O}_{2-x/2}$ or $\text{Pr}_x\text{Ce}_{1-x}\text{O}_{2-x/2}$ as a result of the more pronounced production of oxygen vacancies and improved oxygen mobility.⁵⁴⁷

Noble metal (NM)-based catalysts, and Pd-based catalysts in particular, show significantly superior performances.⁵⁴⁹ Pd oxidation to PdO and PdO decomposition to Pd during methane combustion are very important for the catalytic activity because of the different specific activity of Pd and PdO. The cycling between the two phases depends on many factors, among which the temperature of the catalyst, the oxygen partial pressure, and the support are especially relevant.^{537,550} CeO_2 considerably speeds up the Pd reoxidation to PdO, thus reducing the characteristic Pd–PdO hysteresis.⁵³⁷ Nevertheless, anticipated reoxidation threshold is not enough to enhance catalytic activity, since also PrO_x , La_2O_3 , and Tb_4O_7 promote Pd reoxidation, but their effect on activity loss is almost negligible. This confirms the complexity of the role of support on Pd reoxidation, which involves both direct surface interaction, as for ceria-doped catalyst, and indirect control of Pd dispersion, as for Pd supported on zirconia. PrO_x , La_2O_3 , Tb_4O_7 , and $\text{CeO}_2\text{-ZrO}_2$ as well as bare ZrO_2 supports all promote the onset of Pd oxidation upon cooling compared to Pd supported on alumina, with higher oxidation rates for Pd supported on $\text{CeO}_2\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ and ZrO_2 .⁵³⁸

An ordered and stable Pd–O–Ce surface superstructure was revealed by DFT calculations on the basis of HR-TEM data on one-step solution combustion synthesis (SCS) of Pd/CeO₂ catalysts (Figure 24). When compared with samples prepared by IWI, the T_{50} temperature for SCS catalysts was lower, with full conversion occurring already at about 100 °C lower temperature. Furthermore, no deactivation was observed after repeated combustion cycles or after aging up to 15 h at 900 °C in all samples investigated.⁵⁵¹

As revealed by XPS analysis of model Pt/CeO₂ catalysts and recent calculations, CeO₂–NM oxygen transfer requires nanometric contact between the two phases to occur.²⁵⁴ Optimized contact leads in general to better catalytic performances. For instance, methane complete oxidation was obtained at temperatures lower than 400 °C over nanostructured Pd@CeO₂ catalysts (composed of a Pd nanoparticle core

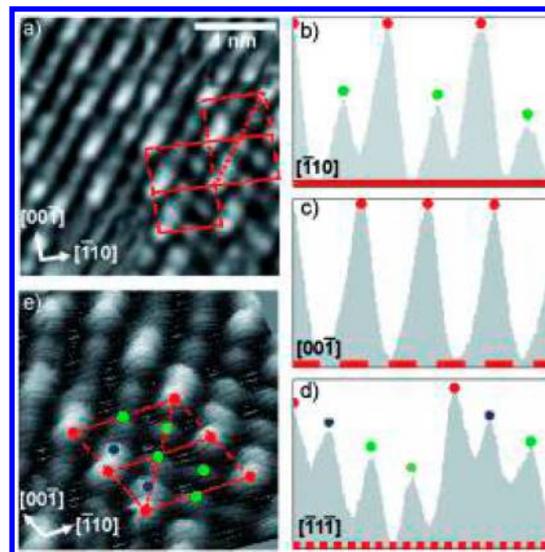


Figure 24. Profile line analysis of the periodic Pd–O–Ce superstructure. (a) HRTEM image of the superstructure. (b–d) Profile line analysis for one of the samples (sample SCS2). All line profiles shown in (b–d) span a distance of 2.2 nm. Colored circles correspond to the atomic rows marked in the computed 3D image shown in (e). Reproduced with permission from ref 551. Copyright 2009 Wiley-VCH.

surrounded by a porous CeO₂ shell) deposited on a modified $\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ support (Figure 25). The remarkably high activity of

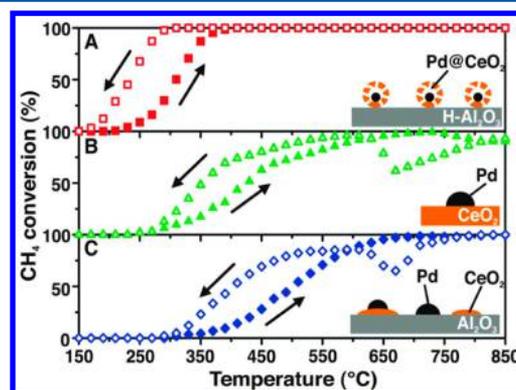


Figure 25. Heating and cooling (10 °C min^{-1}) light-off curves of CH_4 conversion against the temperature for the three catalyst formulations used. (A) Pd@CeO₂/hydrophobic Al₂O₃ (H-Al₂O₃) core–shell catalyst, (B) Pd/CeO₂ prepared by incipient wetness impregnation, and (C) Pd/CeO₂/Al₂O₃ prepared by coimpregnation of Pd and Ce precursors. Reproduced with permission from ref 221. Copyright 2012 AAAS.

the core–shell catalysts was rationalized in terms of thermal stabilization of Pd nanoparticles against sintering and optimal contact between Pd and CeO₂, ensured by the bottom-up synthetic approach, which facilitates oxygen transfer from CeO₂ to the active phase.²²¹

A main drawback in the use of Pd-based catalysts is their susceptibility to water and sulfur poisoning, which can cause severe and in most cases irreversible deactivation of the catalysts under real conditions.^{552–554} Quantitative measurements indicate that Pd/CeO₂/Al₂O₃ adsorbs less SO₂ than Pd/Al₂O₃ catalysts under reaction conditions. However, both catalysts are strongly deactivated by SO₂.⁵⁵⁰ The addition of Pt

Table 3. Most Relevant Results from Studies on Non-Methane VOC Catalytic Combustion

catalyst	preparation method ^a	BET surface area (m ² g ⁻¹)	VOC	GHSV (mL g ⁻¹ h ⁻¹)	VOC concentration	T ₅₀ ^b (°C)	ref	
CeO ₂	S-G	3	toluene	200000	1000 ppm	430	528	
		28				275		
		32				270		
		55				245		
5 wt % CeO ₂ /Al ₂ O ₃	IMP	161				425		
90 wt % CeO ₂ /Al ₂ O ₃		82				250		
5 wt % CeO ₂ /Al ₂ O ₃	IMP	156	toluene	54000	1400 ppm	275	558	
Ce _{0.9} Zr _{0.1} O ₂	S-G	56	toluene	20000	1000 ppm	221	559	
			ethanol			1000 ppm	207	
CeO ₂	citric acid complexation	23	benzene	60000	1700 ppm	526	560	
Ce _{0.9} Zr _{0.1} O ₂						445		
Ce _{0.7} Zr _{0.3} O ₂		28				479		
LaCoO ₃		11.3				330		
20 wt % LaCoO ₃ /CeO ₂		15.7				337		
20 wt % LaCoO ₃ /Ce _{0.9} Zr _{0.1} O ₂		22.7				333		
20 wt % LaCoO ₃ /Ce _{0.7} Zr _{0.3} O ₂		15.1				355		
CeO ₂	citric acid complexation	23	toluene	60000	1700 ppm	380	560	
Ce _{0.9} Zr _{0.1} O ₂						295		
Ce _{0.7} Zr _{0.3} O ₂		28				310		
LaCoO ₃		11.3				244		
20 wt % LaCoO ₃ /CeO ₂		15.7				218		
20 wt % LaCoO ₃ /Ce _{0.9} Zr _{0.1} O ₂		22.7				192		
20 wt % LaCoO ₃ /Ce _{0.7} Zr _{0.3} O ₂		15.1				240		
CuO-CeO ₂ /γ-Al ₂ O ₃	IMP	156	propane	2300	5.9%	350	561	
Cu _{0.13} Ce _{0.87} O ₂	combustion	27	acetone	60000	1000 ppm	200	562	
MnO _x -CeO ₂	S-G	22.2	formaldehyde			580 ppm	160	532
	CP	126.3				140		
	modified CP	124.0				90		
MnO _x -CeO ₂	modified CP	124	benzene	30000	200 ppm	260	532	
Cu/MnO _x -CeO ₂	modified CP	118	benzene			200		
3 wt % Ag/MnO _x -CeO ₂	DP	124.0	formaldehyde	30000	580 ppm	70	563	
3 wt % Pt/MnO _x -CeO ₂	IMP	124.0	formaldehyde	30000	580 ppm	20	564	
0.5 wt % Pt/CeO ₂	IMP	3	toluene	200000	1000 ppm	180	528	
1.5 wt % Au/CeO ₂	DP	79	propene	35000	1000 ppm	230	533	
			toluene	35000	1000 ppm	293		
0.25 wt % Pt/23 wt % CeO ₂ /Al ₂ O ₃	S-G	95	acetic acid	30000	1000 ppm	175	534	
	S-G	3	<i>n</i> -butanol	200000	1000 ppm	430		

^aCP = coprecipitation, IMP = impregnation, DP = deposition precipitation, MCD = metallic colloid dispersion, TD = thermal decomposition, and S-G = sol-gel. ^bLight-off temperature at which conversion of VOC is 50%.

to the formulation of the catalyst leads to increased resistance to both water and SO₂ poisoning.^{555,556}

Pt catalysts are also active for methane combustion, but their activity is generally lower than that of Pd.⁵⁵⁷ In a series of Pt/Ce_{1-x}Zr_xO₂ catalysts with various compositions, Ce_{0.67}Zr_{0.33}O₂ exhibited the best thermal stability, the highest oxygen mobility, and the best catalytic activity after aging at 1000 °C. Furthermore, the fresh Pt/Ce_{0.67}Zr_{0.33}O₂ catalyst was much more active than the corresponding Pt/Al₂O₃, although a deactivation on stream was observed in the 200–500 °C temperature range, and the promoting effect disappeared after aging at 1000 °C.⁵³⁵

The time on stream deactivation was associated with a gradual oxidation of the catalysts, whereas a reduction at 300 °C strongly activates the solids. After the reduction, a large amount of oxygen vacancies were introduced on both Pd- and Pt-based catalysts supported on Ce_{0.67}Zr_{0.33}O₂, thus favoring

activity because of an electron transfer to the noble metals and an improvement of the lattice oxygen mobility. Consistently, the observed time-on-stream deactivation was accompanied by the slow filling of these vacancies.⁵³⁶

Table 3 reports a selection of ceria-based materials investigated for non-methane VOC (NMVOCs) combustion.

Pure CeO₂ catalytic performances depend mostly on the specific surface area and the crystallites size of the oxide,⁵²⁸ that in turn are affected, for example, by the preparation conditions,^{528,565} the calcination temperature,⁵²⁸ and by the particular VOC chosen as reactant. The presence of defects and the nanostructure of CeO₂ also influence the reducibility of the oxide.⁵⁶⁶ As for applications which have been previously mentioned, the modification of ceria with other metal oxides can enhance the catalytic performances of the material in terms of thermal stability, redox properties, and oxygen mobility. Once again, CeO₂-ZrO₂ catalysts have been widely investigated

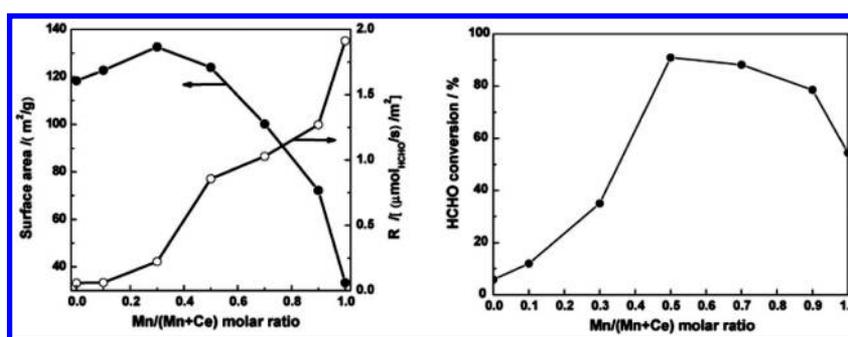


Figure 26. (Left) Surface area (●) and specific activity (○) vs Mn/(Mn+Ce). (Right) Formaldehyde conversion at 90 °C over MnO_x-CeO₂ (HCHO = 580 ppm, O₂ = 20.0 vol %, He balance, GHSV = 30000 mL g⁻¹ h⁻¹). Reprinted with permission from ref 564. Copyright 2008 Elsevier.

for the oxidation of VOCs, chlorinated VOCs, and methane oxidation.^{567–569}

Ce_{1-x}Zr_xO₂ ($x = 0-0.3$) have been studied as catalysts and as supports for LaCoO₃ perovskites in the catalytic combustion of benzene and toluene. Ce_{1-x}Zr_xO₂ were all more active than pure CeO₂ in the combustion of benzene and toluene, with a shift to almost 100 °C lower values of the light-off temperature corresponding to 50% of conversion (T_{50}) for Ce_{0.9}Zr_{0.1}O₂ catalyst.⁵⁶⁰ Cu_xCe_{1-x}O_{2-y} ($x = 0.06, 0.13, \text{ and } 0.23$) catalysts prepared by combustion method were studied for the catalytic combustion of acetone. The activity was dependent on the catalyst composition which determines the presence of different CuO species, as revealed by XPS analysis. Among the three catalysts, Cu_{0.13}Ce_{0.87}O_y was found to be the most active. Pulse reaction of pure acetone in the absence of O₂ confirmed the participation of lattice oxygen from the catalyst in the acetone combustion, in accordance with a Mars-van Krevelen type mechanism. XRD analysis of the aged catalyst showed that the segregation of bulk CuO was responsible for the observed deactivation.⁵⁶² A synergistic effect between cupric oxide (CuO) and ceria was observed during total oxidation of propane. The activation energies for reduction and reoxidation of the binary metal oxide catalyst are 20 kJ mol⁻¹ lower than those obtained on the single CuO- or CeO₂-based catalysts.⁵⁶¹

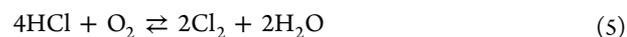
MnO_x-CeO₂ mixed oxides tested for ethanol, ethyl acetate, formaldehyde, and toluene oxidation showed higher activity when compared to CeO₂ and MnO_x, even though the specific activity was lower, taking into account the higher surface area resulting from thermal stabilization of the catalysts (Figure 26).^{564,570}

Formaldehyde combustion by MnO_x-CeO₂ mixed oxides highlighted a dependence upon the oxides preparation methods. The increased catalytic activity was ascribed to the formation of MnO_x-CeO₂ solid solution, which led to a higher oxidation state of manganese and richer lattice oxygen species on the surface, promoting activation of molecular oxygen through the oxygen transfer mechanism.⁵³² Copper may have a significant promoting effect on the catalytic activity of the MnO_x-CeO₂, as demonstrated by the increased activity in the oxidation of benzene, with complete conversion taking place at 250 °C over the 2.5 wt % Cu/MnO_x-CeO₂ catalyst, as opposed to 380 °C when the copper-free catalyst was used. XRD and H₂-temperature programmed reduction (TPR) measurements indicated that the copper species were highly dispersed on the surface of the mixed oxide and could improve the redox properties of the catalyst. Through XPS and FTIR analyses, it was established that the improved performance must be ascribed to an increased generation of surface oxygen species

by copper and of active sites for benzene adsorption.⁵¹⁴ A promoting effect on MnO_x-CeO₂ mixed oxides activity toward formaldehyde combustion was observed when Ag or Pt were added to the formulation of the catalysts.^{563,564}

Among VOCs, chlorinated volatile organic compounds (CVOCs) have drawn special attention on account of their toxicity, high stability, and widespread application in industry.⁵⁷¹ Photocatalytic decomposition, catalytic hydrodechlorination and steam reforming are promising techniques for CVOCs removal but all present critical drawbacks.⁵⁷¹ Catalytic combustion is still an effective technology for reducing the emissions of CVOCs from waste gaseous streams. Among transition metal oxide catalysts, Cr-based catalysts have exhibited the highest activity for CVOCs abatement, but their use is restricted because of leaching of toxic chromium oxychloride.⁵⁷¹ Industrial catalysts are usually based on vanadium and manganese oxides supported on alumina and loaded with noble metals such as palladium or platinum.⁵⁷²

The formation of undesired higher chlorinated compounds and of molecular chlorine, due to activity of the catalysts in the Deacon reaction (eq 5) and oxychlorination reaction (eq 6), is a major drawback of CVOCs catalytic oxidation.



Chlorination of the metal active sites can occur, leading to deactivation of the catalyst.⁵⁷³ Therefore, there is still a call for the development of more suitable catalysts for efficiently eliminating CVOCs and overcoming deactivation and selectivity problems.⁵⁷¹ For this reason, in the last years, the abatement of CVOCs has also been studied on many CeO₂-based catalysts, in which ceria was used as an actual catalyst, catalytic support, or additive to other catalysts. In general, thanks to the redox properties of ceria, its addition to the catalyst formulation has led to enhanced complete oxidation activity (less byproducts concentration, higher CO₂ selectivity over unwanted CO) and lower light-off temperatures. However, ceria activity for oxidation can be detrimental in some cases because it can favor Deacon reaction at higher temperature (300–400 °C), leading to Cl₂ formation. Moreover, time-on-stream deactivation problems are still encountered in some cases, depending on reactant, reaction conditions, and catalyst formulation.

CeO₂-based catalysts have been tested in catalytic combustion of model chlorinated compounds found in many industrial off-gases [e.g., trichloroethylene (TCE), 1,2-dichloroethane (DCE), and chlorobenzene (CB)]. Pure ceria was also

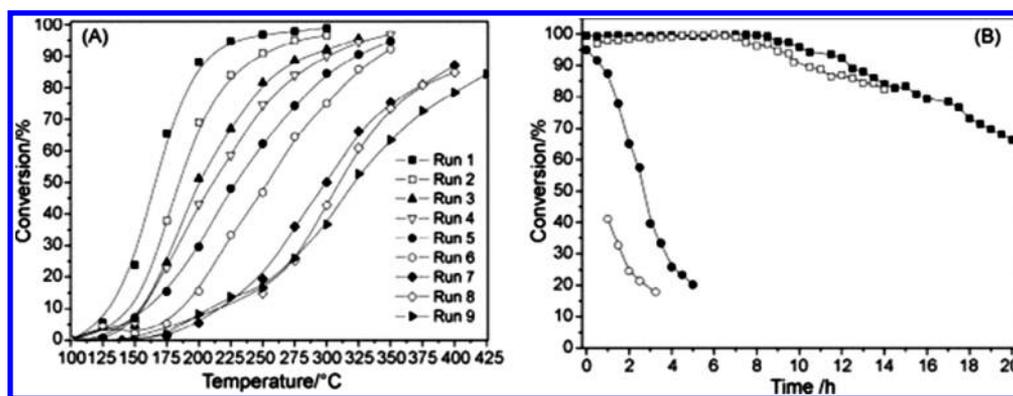


Figure 27. Stability of CeO₂ for trichloroethane catalytic combustion: (A) the reaction runs under dry condition; (B) the reaction under different conditions at constant temperature: (■) 350 °C in dry condition; (□) 350 °C in humid condition; (●) 200 °C in dry condition; (○) 200 °C in humid condition; gas composition: 1000 ppm TCE, air balance; GHSV = 15000 h⁻¹. Reprinted with permission from ref 571. Copyright 2008 Elsevier.

found to be quite active in CVOCs catalytic oxidation.^{565,571} The performances of pure CeO₂ catalysts depend on many factors, such as calcination temperature, morphology, and reaction conditions (GHSV, chlorinated compound species, and concentration). For example, nanostructured ceria, in the form of flowerlike microspheres obtained by hydrothermal routes, exhibited much higher activity in catalytic combustion of TCE than CeO₂ obtained by deposition precipitation or thermal decomposition.⁵⁷⁴ However, deactivation and poor selectivity are common obstacles with CeO₂ catalysts. Their activity quickly diminishes at temperatures lower than 400 °C due to the strong adsorption of HCl or Cl₂ produced from the decomposition of chlorinated compounds on the active sites of CeO₂ (Figure 27).^{571,575}

Deactivation can be avoided at higher temperature by oxidation of dissociatively adsorbed Cl to Cl₂ via the Deacon reaction, but as a result, lower HCl selectivity is observed.^{575,576} Slow accumulation of Cl species may result in the formation of higher chlorinated byproducts during steady-state experiments even after hours of running time, as observed for CB combustion over CeO₂ catalysts.⁵⁷⁶ Therefore, activity and selectivity of CVOCs catalysts should be monitored in long steady-state experiments at different temperatures in order to evaluate catalysts actual performances.

Introduction of limited amounts of water in the reaction feed (1.5 vol %) can enhance HCl selectivity by hindering the Deacon reaction, without the occurrence of water-related deactivation problems. At higher concentration (3 vol %) water was observed to inhibit TCE oxidation, while at even higher concentration (12 vol %), it enhanced the activity to a certain extent. This complex behavior suggests that TCE destruction occurs via both hydrolysis and oxidation under humid conditions.⁵⁷¹ Sweeping the catalyst with humid air after operation may also remove Cl species, but the removal of chlorine or chloride ions from CeO₂ surface is slow.⁵⁷¹

Ceria-based mixed oxides generally perform better than pure ceria catalysts in the oxidation of CVOCs because of their different redox properties and acid sites population. Ce_xZr_{1-x}O₂ catalysts having different compositions were tested in DCE and TCE combustion, and they proved to be more active than both CeO₂ and ZrO₂ alone. Moreover, the use of the mixed oxide resulted in an increase in selectivity to CO₂ and HCl as well as a lower content of chlorinated byproducts, such as tetrachloroethylene (in the case of TCE) and vinyl chloride (from

DCE).⁵⁷³ The simultaneous oxidation of both chlorinated feeds (TCE and DCE) and *n*-hexane⁵⁶⁹ or toluene over these Ce-Zr mixed oxides catalysts revealed that the presence of non-chlorinated VOC could affect the catalysis both in terms of activity and product selectivity.⁵⁶⁷ In general, a mutual inhibition was observed, resulting in higher temperatures required for deep combustion of all the reactants. TCE was more affected by the presence of *n*-hexane, while the oxidation of *n*-hexane was inhibited to a larger extent in the presence of DCE. Inhibition effects appeared to be related to competition between VOC molecules for adsorption sites. However, no specific species was able to dominate the adsorption sites, thereby completely preventing the adsorption and reaction of other species. The addition of *n*-hexane considerably promoted the catalyst selectivity to HCl. This effect was ascribed to water produced in situ from *n*-hexane combustion, which would reverse the Deacon reaction.⁵⁶⁷ Stability under operating conditions, which is a crucial issue for CVOCs catalytic oxidation, unfortunately was not reported for CeO₂-ZrO₂ systems.^{567,569,573}

However, the poor stability of ceria-based catalysts at temperatures lower than 400 °C can be dramatically improved by incorporation of praseodymium.⁵⁷⁷ The best performances for DCE combustion were observed for Ce_{0.5}Pr_{0.5}O₂, which was more active and stable than both CeO₂ and PrO₂ alone thanks to improved reducibility of the material and better resistance to Cl species formation and accumulation. As revealed by XPS and Raman analysis, the chlorination of the best performing mixed oxides was limited to the surface of the material and did not increase considerably after long steady-state aging, while in the case of PrO₂ and Pr-rich oxides chlorination was more extensive and it affected the bulk of the material as well. Remarkably, at 335 °C, 60% DCE conversion was observed over Ce_{0.5}Pr_{0.5}O₂ for more than 115 h. Despite these encouraging results, the selectivity to CO₂ and HCl was low (only 25% and 50%, respectively), and vinyl chloride was continuously produced during the test in 100 ppm concentration.⁵⁷⁷ Low-temperature catalytic combustion of CB was evaluated over MnO_x-CeO₂ mixed oxide catalysts.⁵⁷⁸ The incorporation of MnO_x into CeO₂ greatly improves the activity and stability of the catalyst compared to the pure oxides. During steady-state aging experiments, a deactivation process depending on the amount of Ce in the catalyst was observed, which presumably arises from adsorption of Cl species on Ce active sites.⁵⁷⁸

Ceria was also studied as additive in state-of-the-art catalysts to improve their performance (e.g., with zeolites catalysts,^{579,580} V₂O₅-based catalysts,⁵⁸¹ and noble metal based catalysts).⁵⁸² Zeolites are catalytically active for the oxidation of CVOCs on account of their strong surface acidity, high internal surface area, and 3D channel system. The activity for DCE catalytic oxidation was tested over a H-ZSM5-type zeolite, both pure and deposited with different amount of CeO₂.⁵⁷⁹ Addition of CeO₂ resulted in slightly higher activity than pure H-ZSM5 for DCE oxidation in light-off experiments, reaching peak performances with 11 wt % CeO₂. The product distribution of DCE oxidation was better for CeO₂-added catalysts than for pure H-ZSM5, reaching very high HCl selectivity (>90%) at 350 °C (complete conversion of DCE), even if CO₂ selectivity was low in all cases (30–60%). Notably, methyl chloride and vinyl chloride production was lower and limited to low temperature (<350 °C), and no other carbon compounds were detected. Addition of CeO₂ into the formulation of the catalysts led to a reduced coke deposition, which in turn resulted in better stability in steady-state experiments. The enhanced catalytic performance of CeO₂/H-ZSM5 catalysts was ascribed to the combination of acidic and oxidizing properties of the two components.⁵⁷⁹ Similar results in DCE oxidation were observed for USY type zeolite added with CeO₂ and/or CuO.⁵⁸³ Both CeO₂/USY and CeO₂-CuO/USY catalysts were very active and stable, reaching complete conversion of DCE at 300 °C with no deactivation over time. However, product distribution was not as good as that of CeO₂/H-ZSM5: incomplete oxidation of DCE produced acetaldehyde and acetic acid, while methyl and vinyl chloride were produced up to 450 °C when using CeO₂/USY. Nonetheless, chlorinated byproducts formation during DCE oxidation was much reduced and very limited in the temperature range (200–300 °C) on the CeO₂-CuO/USY catalyst. This was not the case for TCE and DCM combustion over the same catalyst, for which also chlorinated byproducts were obtained in considerable amounts.⁵⁸³

Doping TiO₂ supports with ceria resulted in an improvement of activity for V₂O₅-based catalysts in the oxidation of CB.⁵⁸¹ In another study, a series of pure and sulfonated TiO₂ and TiO₂-CeO₂ aerogel supports loaded with 2 wt % V₂O₅ was investigated. The sulfonated and cerium-doped catalyst showed the best catalytic performance thanks to the introduction of acid sites on the surface and to its redox properties. Stable levels of CB conversion were observed in short steady-state experiments (2 h 30 min) between 100 and 400 °C. As for selectivity, CO₂ and CO were the only carbon products observed (up to 30% CO), while HCl/Cl₂ ratio was not reported.⁵⁸¹

Noble metal catalysts supported on ceria have been studied for CB and DCM and were generally found to promote CeO₂ activity and stability. Ru/CeO₂ catalysts tested for CB oxidation proved to be stable during steady-state experiments at 300 °C, the temperature at which pure CeO₂ rapidly deactivates due to blocking of active sites by Cl species.⁵⁷⁶ Ru catalyzes the removal of adsorbed chlorine species from CeO₂ via the Deacon reaction at lower temperature than CeO₂ itself, thus stabilizing the catalyst. However, this causes a sharp decrease in HCl selectivity due to Cl₂ production.⁵⁷⁶ Au and Pt deposited on ceria-zirconia mixed oxides were also tested for CB oxidation, leading to a great improvement of activity and carbon selectivity in light-off experiments. Indeed, no CO was detected for the Pt (1 wt %)-loaded catalyst, while it was the only product observed over the pure support.⁵⁸⁴ Despite the

very promising results reported, neither HCl selectivity nor stability during steady state experiments were addressed for these catalysts.⁵⁸⁴ Similar observations were reported for Pt (1 wt %) and Pd (1 wt %) catalysts supported on 25 wt % CeO₂/Al₂O₃ in the oxidation of perchloroethylene (PCE).⁵⁸² These catalysts proved to be superior when compared to catalysts based on Rh and V₂O₅ and to ceria-free, Al₂O₃-supported catalysts. Noticeably, in the case of Pt (or Pd)/CeO₂-Al₂O₃ catalysts, the selectivity to CO₂ and HCl was almost complete at every temperature.

For common CVOCs, such as TCE, DCE, and CB in particular, noble metals/CeO₂-based catalysts bear the potential to define new state-of-the-art catalysts in CVOCs oxidation if activity and stability during steady state experiments could be increased to some extent.

7.3.4. Dehalogenation. Exploitation of CeO₂ in the oxidation of HCl is emerging as an interesting strategy, able to become an economic alternative to the costly state-of-the-art RuO₂-based catalysts. HCl oxidation is an important reaction as hydrochloric acid (HCl) is a hazardous byproduct of many processes of growing industrial interest, such as polycarbonates production from dihydroxylated organics and phosgene and organics chlorination reactions. Cl₂ is becoming the most attractive industrial output for HCl disposal.⁵⁸⁵ Stable activity for CeO₂-based catalytic systems was reported in O₂-rich feeds (O₂/HCl > 0.75), as a consequence of the resistance of cerium oxide against chlorination, which is limited to few surface and subsurface layers, while bulk chlorinated phases that deactivate the catalyst are formed only in stoichiometric or sub-stoichiometric feeds (O₂/HCl < 0.25). The negative impact of high Cl coverages on the activity was attributed to the more difficult vacancy formation. The original activity of deactivated samples can be restored by exposure to an excess of oxygen, indicating a reversible deactivation induced by chlorination.⁵⁸⁶ Supporting the CeO₂ active phase on ZrO₂ enhances the long-term stability of the catalysts (700 h on stream). The catalyst also showed reduced chlorine uptake in comparison to CeO₂.⁵⁸⁷

7.3.5. Partial Hydrogenation. CeO₂ shows a high activity and selectivity in the gas-phase hydrogenation of alkynes to olefins. This finding has direct impact on the purification of olefin streams and on the manufacturing of fine chemicals, since ceria is less expensive than viable state-of-the-art Pd-based catalysts (Lindlar's catalyst). The use of ceria in hydrogenation reactions has been investigated for years as a promoter or as a carrier of noble metal nanoparticles.^{588,589} Activation of hydrogen on CeO₂ is often regarded as the limiting step of the reaction, as also observed for other functional groups, including substituted nitroarenes.⁵⁹⁰

DFT applied to CeO₂{111} was employed to rationalize the applicability of CeO₂ as a catalyst for olefin production. The high selectivity toward formation of alkenes was attributed to the lower activation barrier leading to gas-phase C₂H₄ compared to that for the formation of β-C₂H₄ radical species, which would open up the reaction pathway to alkane formation. The outstanding performance of CeO₂ in comparison with other oxides was tentatively explained on the basis of CeO₂ ability of stabilizing highly reactive β-C₂H₂ radicals on the {111} surface by easily accommodating one electron into Ce 4f states (Figure 28).⁵⁹¹

TiO₂-, Al₂O₃-, and ZrO₂-supported CeO₂ catalysts with different Ce loadings prepared by simple impregnation of Ce salts were evaluated in the three-phase hydrogenation of

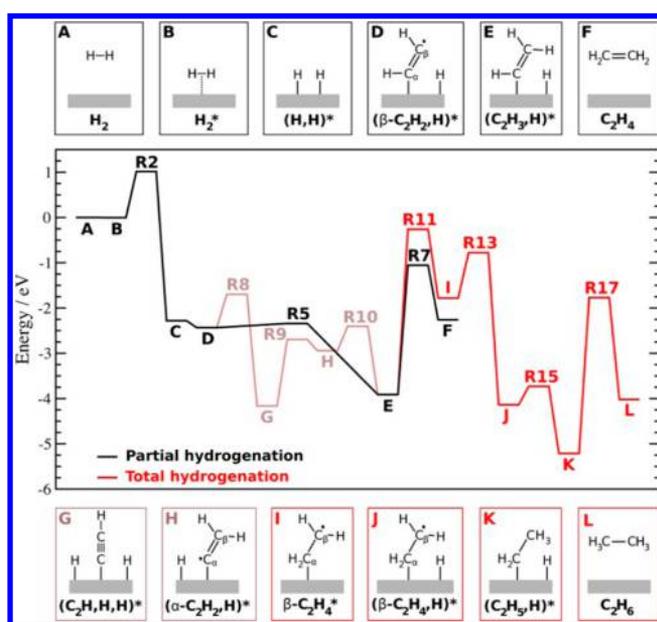


Figure 28. Reaction energy profile for acetylene hydrogenation on $\text{CeO}_2\{111\}$. All energies are referenced to the total energy of $\text{H}_2(\text{g})$, $\text{C}_2\text{H}_2(\text{g})$, and the clean $\text{CeO}_2\{111\}$ surface (state A). States A–L stand for minima, and their structures are schematically shown in the insets, whereas transition structures are indicated by R2–R17. Colors indicate different pathways: partial hydrogenation of acetylene to ethylene via R5 (black line) or via dissociative acetylene adsorption (light brown), and total hydrogenation to C_2H_6 (red line). Reprinted from ref 591. Copyright 2014 American Chemical Society.

alkynes under continuous-flow conditions at variable temperature (20–140 °C) and H_2 pressure (1–90 bar). A number of acetylenic compounds, possessing terminal or internal triple bonds, conjugated unsaturations, and additional functionalities were systematically assessed. The CeO_2 -based catalysts required demanding conditions of temperature and pressure (140 °C, 90 bar) because of the intrinsic inability of ceria to activate hydrogen. However, selectivity-wise, supported ceria outperformed the state-of-the-art Lindlar catalyst. The results revealed the full stereo- and chemoselective character of the ceria catalysts, which was not influenced by the type of carrier and the Ce loading. These results enabled the use of a cheap metal oxide for the production of olefinic compounds in fine chemical and pharmaceutical applications.⁵⁹²

7.3.6. Photocatalysis. In the past decade, cerium-based materials have gained increasing attention as photocatalysts alternative to the more conventional TiO_2 , both for wastewater treatment^{593–597} and water splitting.^{598–600}

CeO_2 is a wide band gap semiconductor (3.2–3.4 eV), and therefore, photogeneration of charge carriers is obtained under UV light. Mesoporous ceria nanorods have been shown to possess a lower band gap (~2.75 eV), thanks to the presence of Ce(III).⁶⁰¹ More recently, an electron beam irradiation approach was proposed to narrow the band gap of pristine CeO_2 nanostructures to enhance their visible light activity through defect engineering.⁶⁰² The resulting modified CeO_2 exhibits superior photocatalytic activities in the degradation of 4-nitrophenol and methylene blue in the presence of visible light ($\lambda > 400$ nm) compared to the pristine CeO_2 . Surface defects such as oxygen vacancies can prevent hole–electron recombination working as electron traps and can also act as strong binding and dissociation sites for adsorbates. Therefore,

the introduction of oxygen vacancies in an oxide can improve its photocatalytic activity, as recently shown.⁶⁰³

Doping CeO_2 with 3d transition metal ions has been indicated as a suitable way to enhance the mobility of excitons, thus facilitating its surface reaction. Accordingly, CeO_2 nanoparticles doped with different transition metal cations such as Fe, Mn, and Co showed improved optical activity as well as enhanced capability in methylene blue (MB) degradation.⁶⁰⁴ Recently, exciton diffusion visualization in tetracene molecular crystal via time and space-resolved fluorescence spectroscopy demonstrated that on the archetypical thin film the mechanism of exciton transport depends strongly on the nanoscale morphology. This imaging technique can be a powerful tool to investigate and lead the design of systems that rely on exciton transport, comprising photocatalytic materials.⁶⁰⁵

Most of the photocatalytic experiments reported in the literature are conducted at room temperature, testing the catalyst performances when irradiated with the UV and visible window of the solar spectrum. However, higher temperatures can favor mobility of oxygen vacancies, improving photocatalytic activity, as revealed by a recent study on mesoporous nanorod-like ceria in the temperature range of 160–240 °C.⁶⁰¹ Similarly, the photocatalytic efficiency of the Y-doped ceria (YDC) systems in dyes degradation was much higher (20-fold increase) at 100 °C than at room temperature.⁶⁰⁵

The factors governing photocatalytic activity of CeO_2 in the degradation of dyes are not yet fully understood, but there is an evident dependence of activity on the textural and crystallinity properties of the oxide. Many different preparation methods have been explored, leading to CeO_2 microspheres,⁵⁹⁴ lamellar ceria crystallites,⁵⁹⁵ nanorods,⁶⁰⁶ and nanoparticles.^{593,606} The promising performances of CeO_2 were attributed to the good adsorption capacity and to the 4f electron configuration that enhanced electron transfer from the adsorbed dye to oxygen species.⁵⁹³

Doping of metal oxides is a common strategy for changing their electronic properties. Both MB and naphthol blue black (NBB) catalytic photodegradation was enhanced on transition metal doped CeO_2 . A significant increase in the photocatalytic activity of CeO_2 was observed by substitution of Mn(IV) in CeO_2 crystal lattice (up to 30 mol %)⁶⁰⁷ and upon CeO_2 doping with 5 mol % Co.⁶⁰⁴ This effect was ascribed to the reduction of the CeO_2 band gap thanks to the empty 3d states of the dopant ions, lying at energy lower than the 4f states of Ce.⁶⁰⁴

CeO_2 -doped TiO_2 and CeO_2 - ZrO_2 codoped TiO_2 have been studied for the photodegradation of MB in comparison with TiO_2 , showing that the addition of CeO_2 improved the catalytic performances of the catalysts.^{608–610} Well-dispersed CeO_2 nanoparticles loaded on reduced graphene oxide (RGO) nanosheets were tested for the degradation of MB under simulated sunlight irradiation, outperforming bare CeO_2 nanoparticles. The enhanced activity was attributed to the improved separation of electron–hole pairs and improved adsorption due to the presence of RGO.⁶¹¹ CeO_2 - Bi_2O_3 composites were also investigated showing increased photocatalytic activity for the degradation of RhB as compared to pure Bi_2O_3 or CeO_2 . The results were discussed in terms of suppression of charge recombination in CeO_2 - Bi_2O_3 .⁶¹² The role of interface contact between CeO_2 and TiO_2 was found to be crucial for the photocatalytic elimination of toluene.⁶¹³ Similarly, solar light-driven elimination of benzene was achieved

by the use of a nanocomposite consisting of $\text{CeO}_2\text{-TiO}_2$, with a much superior activity than those of the individual oxides. In this instance, however, the authors assigned the photocatalytic ability to the TiO_2 phase, while the CeO_2 would thermochemically assist the process thanks to a promotion of the reduction of CeO_2 by the titania catalyst.⁶¹⁴ In another report, $\text{CeO}_2/\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$ nanospindles synthesized by the coprecipitation method displayed an improved efficiency for the degradation of eosin yellow (EY) under visible light (Figure 29), as a result of the intercrossing of both photogenerated holes and electrons between the conduction band and valence band of the two oxides.⁶¹⁵

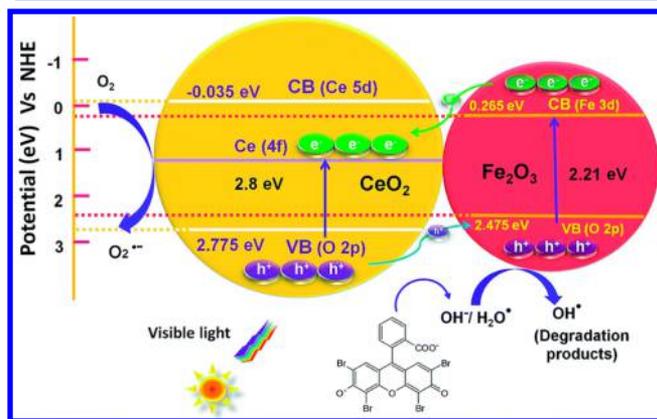


Figure 29. Proposed photodegradation mechanism of $\text{CeO}_2/\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$ composite nanospindles in degrading eosin yellow dye under visible light irradiation. Reprinted with permission from ref 615. Copyright 2015 Royal Society of Chemistry.

The reduction of the health-hazardous Cr(VI) to the less toxic and more easily precipitated Cr(III) was made photochemically viable upon utilization of CeO_2 nanotubes. In addition to the nanostructured morphology of the ceria, the key to this experiment is the presence of oxalic acid, which is responsible for the light-induced ligand-to-metal electron transfer to surface Ce atoms, which in turn causes the reduction of Cr(VI) .⁶¹⁶

7.3.7. Thermochemical Water Splitting. Over the past decade, ceria has been gaining an accelerated popularity as a non-stoichiometric catalyst component for the production of H_2 fuel from the thermochemical splitting of water, which was first demonstrated in 2006 for fuel cell applications.⁶¹⁷ Later studies indicated that the addition of other cations such as Zr would favor the reduction step of ceria.⁶¹⁸ $\text{CeO}_2\text{-ZrO}_2$ indeed appear to be the most promising materials for the thermochemical water splitting, as the presence of Zr severely affects the OSC and in turn the oxygen release during the reduction step. In function of variable amounts of Zr, the reduction step was shown to proceed with yield as high as 27% when operating at 1200 °C. Other dopants such as Y, La, Pr, and Gd cations may affect very poorly the reducibility, while they do improve the thermal stability over repeated cycling.⁶¹⁹ The effect of dopants was evaluated also in other investigations. In particular, Ta(V) considerably increased the reduction yield but also caused some structural changes after high-temperature thermal treatment which compromised H_2 yields. On the other hand, lanthanide elements such as La, Sm, and Gd can improve the thermal stability but overall do not affect the performance in comparison with pure ceria. In contrast, lanthanide-doped

$\text{CeO}_2\text{-ZrO}_2$ generates higher activity than the corresponding $\text{CeO}_2\text{-ZrO}_2$.⁶²⁰

Despite the fact that a good deal of reports is available on thermochemical water splitting by CeO_2 , most efforts have been focused on the production of syngas (H_2 and CO) by coupling the water splitting with the CO_2 thermochemical splitting. If concentrated solar energy is used as a source of heat, high solar-to-fuel energy conversion efficiencies are attained. Ceria has rapidly gained the role as state-of-the-art catalyst due to its rapid redox kinetics. For example, solar-to-fuel efficiencies as high as 0.8% were reported in a seminal work by Steinfeld et al., which demonstrated the benefit of directly exposing CeO_2 to the concentrated solar irradiation by building a scalable reactor (Figure 30).⁶²¹

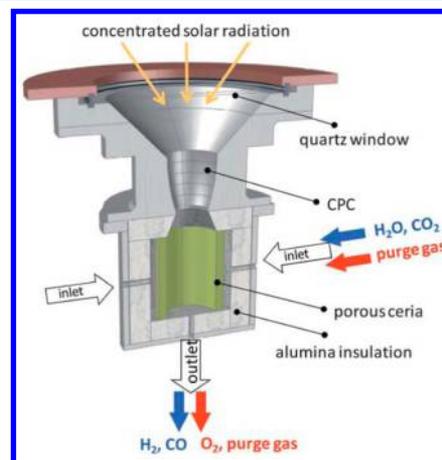
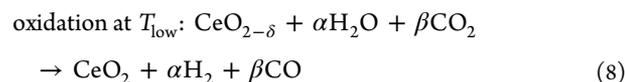
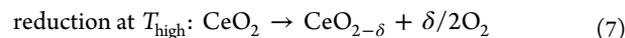


Figure 30. Schematic of the solar reactor for the two-step, solar-driven thermochemical production of fuels. It consists of a thermally insulated cavity receiver containing a porous monolithic ceria cylinder. Concentrated solar radiation enters through a windowed aperture and impinges on the ceria inner walls. Reacting gases flow radially across the porous ceria toward the cavity inside, whereas product gases exit the cavity through an axial outlet port at the bottom. Blue arrows indicate ceria reduction; red arrows indicate oxidation. CPC: compound parabolic concentrator. Adapted with permission from ref 622. Copyright 2012 Royal Society of Chemistry.

As a common depiction, the solar thermochemical redox cycles are described in terms of two separate reduction/oxidation steps with ceria as reactive intermediate:



with $\alpha + \beta = \delta$. Temperature for the reduction process are generally above 1200 °C, while for the oxidation step they are considerably lower. The temperature becomes an important parameter to consider as it can affect the thermodynamic of the oxidation step, in which either H_2O or CO_2 is reduced first. It is also important that the reaction proceeds at T below the melting point of the catalyst, which makes CeO_2 a less problematic candidate than iron oxide based catalysts, the other benchmark catalyst class for the thermochemical H_2O and CO_2 splitting, and which further mitigate the relatively lower OSC of ceria as compared to other redox metal oxides.⁶²³

As for the pure water splitting, an attractive feature for the H_2O and CO_2 simultaneous splitting is CeO_2 doping, which

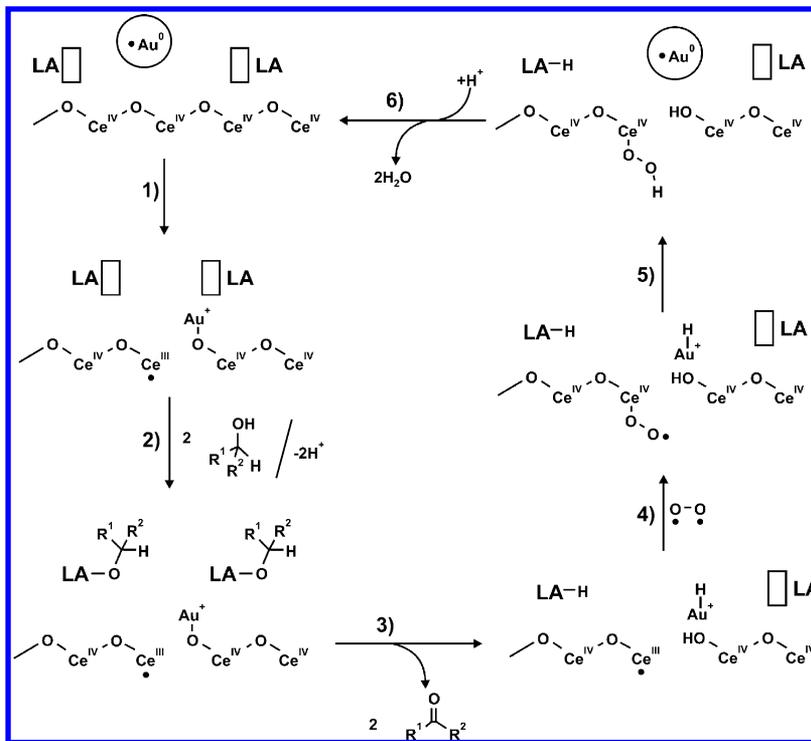


Figure 31. Proposed mechanism for the oxidation of alcohols in the presence of Au/CeO₂ prepared using nanoparticulated support. LA = Lewis acid. Reproduced with permission from ref 632. Copyright 2005 Wiley-VCH.

further improves the thermodynamic and kinetic properties of ceria compared to the thermochemical redox cycle. A careful evaluation of Zr(IV)-doped CeO₂ in function of the Zr(IV) content underlined the higher reduction extent of the doped ceria in the two-step H₂O and CO₂ splitting. The different thermodynamic properties of the Zr-doped derivative were also described and compared to those of pure CeO₂.⁶²⁴ In another study, the thermodynamic characteristics were investigated by increasing the Zr content up to 20%, and it was shown how the benefit of including Zr can be especially pronounced if isothermal or near-isothermal conditions are applied, in contrast with the two-temperature cycling, in which the system pays a price in terms of steam-to-hydrogen conversion efficiency.⁶²⁵

Another important parameter to consider is the H₂O:CO₂ molar ratio in order to have control on the syngas molar ratio. This aspect was most prominently investigated by varying the H₂O:CO₂ molar ratio in the range from 0.8 to 7.7, resulting in the formation of syngas with H₂:CO molar ratio that could be varied from 0.25 to 2.34.¹⁵ An aspect that is still under debate is the solar-to-fuel maximum efficiency that can be reached, as several studies seem to produce varying results. Moreover, in some cases the theoretical maximum efficiency under realistic conditions was not reported for both solar and mechanical work. Very recently, this feature was analyzed in the presence of an inert sweep gas in order to facilitate reduction. A robust model was built based on a mixed flow method for chemical equilibrium. The model proved that the efficiency needed are strongly dependent on oxidation temperature, and a maximum efficiency of 11% was predicted under these conditions.⁶²⁶

The pure thermochemical CO₂ splitting has also been investigated using pure ceria as a catalyst. Superior performances were disclosed when using a dual-scale porosity ceria

reticulated porous ceramic, with solar-to-fuel energy conversion efficiency of 1.72%.⁶²⁷

7.3.8. Organic Reactions. Organic synthesis is one of the most prominent areas of chemistry research. Reports on CeO₂ used as catalyst or catalytic support for organic transformations are being released at an increasing rate, witnessing the versatility of this material in catalytic applications. The range and scope of organocatalytic reactions is wide and has been well-reviewed.⁸ Only few representative examples will be provided here. Other than partial hydrogenation, already discussed, CeO₂-based catalysts have been employed for the hydrogenation of olefins and carbonyl bonds. For instance, 1,3-butadiene could be reduced to 1-butene with good yield by a Pd/CeO₂ catalyst supported on alumina. Thanks to the presence of ceria, the selectivity toward 1-butene was excellent, much higher than that of the alumina-supported Pd catalyst.⁶²⁸

On the other hand, crotonaldehyde has served as a model compound to test the selectivity of Pt/CeO₂ catalysts toward C=C or C=O bonds. Temperature can have a pronounced effect on the evolution of the reduction; in one study, selectivity toward crotyl alcohol was promoted by the ceria support for the high-temperature condition, while a 100% butanal was obtained for hydrogenation conducted at 200 °C,⁶²⁹ in agreement with another report in which PtZn/CeO₂ was employed as the catalyst.⁶³⁰ Remarkably, hydrogenation of benzene is also a viable process, especially if cyclohexane is obtained as the selective product, as observed when using a catalyst consisting of nickel clusters adsorbed on ceria, which displayed high catalytic activity and selectivity toward this product.⁶³¹ One more obvious use of CeO₂ resides in its exploitation as an oxidant, owing to its powerful ability to store and supply oxygen. Oxidation of alcohol is a typical application, and very good selectivity can be achieved. This was the case in the oxidation of a series of alcohols by Au/CeO₂ in the presence of

a Lewis acid (Figure 31), for which selectivity in many reactions overcame 99% with high Turn Over Frequencies (TOFs). The results were related to an extra stabilization of the positive oxidation states of Au due to the nanometric electronic interaction with the ceria surface.⁶³²

Higher activities for CeO₂-supported Au were also found during a study of the mechanism of the oxidation of alcohols using different supports, in which also other parameters such as Au particle size and gold content were screened. The authors could hypothesize a mechanism based on a metal-alcoholate, β -hydride shift from carbon to metal, and the oxidation of the resulting M-H (metal-hydride).⁶³³

Beyond oxidations and hydrogenations, CeO₂ is proving its value in other more complex organic reactions, in both traditional and advanced synthesis, projecting CeO₂ as a very versatile and attractive catalyst. In one of the latest investigations on the ability of several metal oxides in catalyzing the low-temperature conversion of alcohols and amines into imines, CeO₂ exhibited excellent activity, as high as 96%, on account of its redox properties, while no other oxide was capable of catalyzing the reaction. Furthermore, the catalyst could be reused three more times without loss of any activity.⁶³⁴ The reusability of the catalyst is indeed being pursued quite extensively, leading also to the assembly of very efficient functional systems. Magnetic recyclability has been exploited by combining CeO₂ with magnetic Fe₃O₄ in the one pot multicomponent synthesis of dihydropyridines under environmental friendly conditions.⁶³⁵

Classic coupling reactions such as aldol condensation,^{636,637} Knoevenagel condensation,⁶³⁸ Mannich reaction,⁶³⁹ Suzuki-Miyaura,⁶⁴⁰ or Sonogashira cross couplings⁶⁴¹ have also been reported, although in various cases ceria-zirconia is used as support.

7.3.9. Biomedical Applications. Ceria shows tremendous potentialities in a large variety of biomedical applications, in superoxide dismutase mimetic activity, catalase mimetic activity, hydroxyl radical scavenging, nitric oxide radical scavenging, peroxidase mimetic activity, oxidase mimetic activity, and phosphatase-mimetic activity, as recently overviewed by Xu and Qu.⁶⁴² Indeed, nanoceria, which is apparently well-tolerated by the organism, might fight chronic inflammation and the pathologies associated with oxidative stress, which include cancer and neurodegeneration, and this promises a revolution in pharmacology to improve or create ex novo therapies.^{643,644} Here, only some key applications will be briefly highlighted.

The very promising biomedical performances are mostly related to ceria redox capability and the possibility to engineer its vacancies by making nanostructured materials. Thanks to this flexibility, ceria can effectively interact with many radicals or superoxides, and therefore, it has been tested in both animal and cell culture models to determine its ability to protect against oxidative stress.⁶⁴⁵⁻⁶⁴⁷

As a consequence of the reduced oxidative stress induced by ceria, treatment of adult rat neurons with 10 nm nanoceria resulted in a significant decrease in cellular senescence after 30 days.⁶⁴⁸ Among several factors including size/surface area and oxygen vacancy sites, the oxidation state of cerium have been shown to play a key role that may be responsible for the effectiveness of nanoceria in catalyzing superoxide dismutase (SOD) activity.⁶⁴⁹ Nanoceria has been shown to be able to protect primary cells from the detrimental effects of radiation therapy⁶⁴⁷ and to prevent retinal degeneration induced by intracellular peroxides.⁶⁵⁰ Furthermore, nanoceria has been

implicated as a critical mediator of inflammation reactive oxygen species (ROS) production in states of inflammation and therefore it serves as a novel therapy for chronic inflammation.⁶⁵¹ The excellent biocompatibility and free radical scavenging properties of ceria has recently stimulated studies on its application in orthobiologic materials. Consistently, cytotoxicity measurements showed that mesoporous ceria foams were non-toxic and no significant inflammatory response was measured when monocytic cells were cultured with the ceria foam.⁶⁵² More so, hybrid ceramic polymeric bioactive scaffolds loaded with ceria hold great potential for tissue engineering applications.¹² Remarkably, ceria nanoparticles have also shown protective effects against ischemic stroke in living animals.¹³ Polymer-coated ceria nanoparticles have been shown to be robust and water-soluble redox catalysts with excellent oxidase-like activity, as they can facilitate the fast oxidation of organic dyes and small molecules in slightly acidic conditions without the need of hydrogen peroxide.⁶⁵³ CeO₂ nanomaterials were also proposed as potential drug delivery systems.⁶⁵⁴ Yb(III) and Er(III) codoped cerium oxide nanoparticles exhibited strong upconversion properties that were found to kill lung cancer cells by inducing apoptosis, thereby demonstrating the potential to be used as clinical contrast agents for imaging and as therapeutic agents for treatment of cancer.⁶⁵⁵

CeO₂ nanoparticles, coupling UV shielding with biological and genetic protection, appear to be ideal candidates for next-generation sun shields. In fact, irradiated CeO₂ nanoparticles exerted impressive protection on UV-treated cells, by buffering oxidation, preserving viability and proliferation, reducing DNA damage, and accelerating repair; strikingly, they almost eliminated mutagenesis, thus acting as an important tool to prevent skin cancer.⁶⁵⁶

8. CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

In the last 40 years, ceria, first thought to be an “inert” support able to well-disperse and stabilize catalytically active metal nanoparticles, has become first a non-innocent support, that directly participate to the reaction with lattice oxygen, then a cocatalyst, and more recently a catalyst itself. In this process, two major directions have been followed to boost the applications of ceria-based materials in catalysis.

First, the increase of surface area and the enhancement of its thermal stability was a mandatory target for application in car converters, which happens to be the most relevant industrial application of ceria. Formation of solid solutions with transition and/or rare earth metals, zirconium in particular, gained this goal, with the additional benefit to boost also redox properties as the introduction of cations with different ionic radii into the ceria lattice induces structural disorder that facilitates oxygen release. These successful approaches allowed for the development of closed coupled catalysts CCC that can cope with a working temperature higher than 1000 °C, making modern ceria-zirconia-based TWCs the most relevant example of environmental catalysts. This application is mature, the materials are mostly optimized and widely adopted in current car converters, and improvements are essentially limited to the reduction of the amount of active components and to changes of formulation needed to cope with fluctuation in cost and availability. However, still, intriguing is the ongoing debate on the importance of compositional phase homogeneity of these doped/nanocomposites materials. In particular, besides the use of neutron diffraction in combination with XRD and Raman

spectroscopy, very stimulating is the recent and still poorly applied use of Eu luminescence as a structural probe to analyze compositional heterogeneity.^{59,60}

Second, the advent of nanotechnology allowed for the obtention of well-controlled nanomaterials in shape and size. Despite some limitations due to the thermal instability of nanostructures in general, this opened the perspective of understanding the different reactivity of exposed facets, and in combination with today's state-of-the-art computational simulations allowed for the clear correlation of structural parameters and reactivity. This approach has proven to be successful in demonstrating how OSC depends on nanostructure,²⁰⁴ the surface dependence of soot combustion,²⁸⁰ or the effect of ceria crystal plane on CO and propane oxidation.⁶⁵⁷

Impressive catalytic improvements have been achieved by modulating metal support interaction in ceria-based systems, opening new directions for boosting existing materials. Very sensitive is the case of gold supported on ceria-based systems, in which CO chemisorbed capability of gold was significantly perturbed by mild reduction treatments.⁶⁵⁸ The possibility to tune the metal support interface by making core-shell, embedded catalysts is a suitable and successful strategy that is finding more and more applications.^{221,468} Very challenging is also the investigation of highly dispersed metal ions on ceria, which qualify as single-atom catalysts and hold a promise of radical reduction of precious metal load in critical large-scale catalytic systems.⁶⁵⁹ The intrinsic difficulties in characterizing these materials highlights the importance of a multidisciplinary approach, which shall take advantage of state-of-the-art characterization techniques, including synchrotron radiation facilities, coupled with state-of-the-art computational capabilities.

While oxidation reactions, including those involved in organic reactions,⁸ are effectively promoted by ceria-based materials, and emerging applications are proposed, such as in fuel cells, halogen production, or dimethyl carbonate synthesis, there is still plenty of room for applications under reducing conditions.

Increasing attention is dedicated to ceria-based photocatalysts, due to the observation of UV photoinduced processes. While these studies are relevant from an intellectual point of view, the observed performances are still much less promising with respect to those of many visible light photocatalysts, limiting the interest for photoelectro applications mainly in the field of solar fuels. Finally, nanostructures ceria-based materials are extremely promising for biomedical applications,⁶⁴² in which the structural and reactivity data derived from materials science and catalytic studies are extremely useful for understanding interactions with biologically relevant species such as radicals or H₂O₂.

Summarizing, CeO₂ is a very versatile and robust catalytic material with surface acid-base properties and structure that can be nicely tuned by doping with transition or rare earth metals. As recently proposed by Pérez-Ramírez and co-workers, a suitable interpretation and prediction of the catalytic behavior of ceria-based material can be made by the identification of descriptors, that can be derived either experimentally or computationally.⁶⁶⁰ This new approach can inspire the development of new and more active/selective heterogeneous catalysts.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

Corresponding Author

*E-mail: pforناسiero@units.it.

Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

Biographies

Tiziano Montini obtained his degree in Chemistry in 2002 and his Ph.D. in 2006 at the University of Trieste (Italy). After a postdoctoral fellowship, he was appointed as an assistant professor in 2014 with a "tenure track" at the University of Trieste. His major research interests are in design and characterization of heterogeneous catalysts with applications to environmental protection and sustainable energy production. In 2012, he was awarded with the "Alfredo Di Braccio" prize by the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei and the 4th Junior Research Award by the European Rare-Earth and Actinide Society, both assigned to a researcher younger than 35 years old.

Michele Melchionna completed his Ph.D. in Chemistry at the University of Edinburgh in 2007. He then carried out postdoctoral research both in academia (University of Helsinki, Finland, and Palacky University, Czech Republic) and industry (Advanced Molecular Technologies, Australia) focusing on organic synthesis and catalysis. He currently holds a position as a senior postdoctoral fellow at the University of Trieste, working on carbon nanostructure-based catalysts for energy applications.

Matteo Monai graduated in Chemistry in 2013 and is now a Ph.D. candidate in the Graduate School of Chemistry at the University of Trieste (Italy). His research project concerns the design, synthesis, and characterization of nanostructured heterogeneous catalysts. He spent various periods in synchrotron facilities.

Paolo Fornasiero obtained his degree in Chemistry in 1992 and his Ph.D. in 1997 at the University of Trieste (Italy). After a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Reading (UK), he was appointed as an assistant professor in 1998 and an associate professor of inorganic chemistry in 2006 at the University of Trieste. Since 2008, he has been the scientist responsible for the CNR research unit associated with the Institute of Chemistry of OrganoMetallic Compounds (ICCOM-CNR) of Florence. In 2015, he became an associate editor of the journal, *ACS Catalysis*. He received the Nasini Gold medal in 2005 for his contribution in Inorganic Chemistry and the Chiusoli Gold medal in 2013 for his studies in catalysis by the Italian Chemical Society. In 2016, he received the Heinz Heinemann Award for his contribution to catalyst science and technology from the International Association of Catalysis Societies.

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