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Physics, Simulation, and Photonic Engineering of Photovoltaic Devices

Alexandre Freundlich
Jean-Francois F. Guillemoles
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Contents

ix	Conference Committee
xi	Introduction
xiii	<i>Spinoptics: Spin degeneracy removal in nanostructures (Plenary Paper) [8269-100]</i> V. Kleiner, N. Shitrit, E. Hasman, Technion-Israel Institute of Technology (Israel)

SESSION 1 ADVANCED LIGHT MANAGEMENT AND SPECTRAL SHAPING

8256 02	Increasing upconversion by metal and dielectric nanostructures (Invited Paper) [8256-01] J. C. Goldschmidt, S. Fischer, H. Steinkemper, B. Herter, T. Rist, S. Wolf, B. Bläsi, Fraunhofer Institute for Solar Energy Systems ISE (Germany); F. Hallermann, G. von Plessen, RWTH Aachen Univ. (Germany); K. W. Krämer, D. Biner, Univ. Bern (Switzerland); M. Hermle, Fraunhofer Institute for Solar Energy Systems ISE (Germany)
8256 03	Simulations of solar cell absorption enhancement using resonant modes of a nanosphere array (Invited Paper, Green Photonics Award) [8256-02] J. Grandidier, M. G. Deceglie, D. M. Callahan, H. A. Atwater, California Institute of Technology (United States)
8256 06	Exact field solution to guided wave propagation in lossy thin films [8256-04] J. R. Nagel, S. Blair, M. A. Scarpulla, The Univ. of Utah (United States)

SESSION 2 PHOTONIC AND PLASMONICS DESIGNS FOR PHOTOVOLTAICS

8256 08	Plasmonic enhancement of up-conversion in ultrathin layers [8256-06] C. Andriamiadamanana, Institut de Recherche et Développement sur l'Energie Photovoltaïque (France) and Lab. of Chemistry of Condensed Materials, CNRS (France); A. Ferrier, Lab. of Chemistry of Condensed Materials, CNRS (France); L. Lombez, A.-L. Joudrier, N. Naghavi, Institut de Recherche et Développement sur l'Energie Photovoltaïque (France); P. Ghenuche, N. Bardou, J.-L. Pelouard, S. Collin, Lab. of Chemistry of Condensed Materials, CNRS (France); F. Pellé, Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Chimie de Paris (France); J.-F. Guillemoles, Institut de Recherche et Développement sur l'Energie Photovoltaïque (France)
8256 09	Improved efficiency for nanopillar array of c-Si photovoltaic by down-conversion and anti-reflection of quantum dots [8256-07] C.-C. Lin, H.-C. Chen, H.-V. Han, Y.-L. Tsai, C.-H. Chang, M.-A. Tsai, H.-C. Kuo, P. Yu, National Chiao Tung Univ. (Taiwan)
8256 0A	Scattering analysis of the indium-tin-oxide (ITO) nanowhiskers on ITO film substrate for thin film solar cell [8256-08] H.-W. Liu, C.-H. Chang, C.-C. Lin, P. Yu, National Chiao Tung Univ. (Taiwan)

SESSION 3 QUANTUM WELL AND SUPERLATTICE SOLAR CELLS

- 8256 0B **Improving photo-generated carrier escape in quantum well solar cells (Invited Paper)** [8256-09]
A. Alemu, A. Freundlich, Univ. of Houston (United States)
- 8256 0C **Exploring the radiative limits of dark current operation in InGaAs quantum well solar cells (Invited Paper)** [8256-10]
R. E. Welser, Magnolia Solar, Inc. (United States)
- 8256 0D **Exploring the potential of quantum wells for efficiency enhancement in photovoltaic cells** [8256-11]
M. Sugiyama, Y. Wang, H. Fujii, H. Sodabanlu, Y. Wen, K. Watanabe, Y. Nakano, The Univ. of Tokyo (Japan)

SESSION 4 QUANTUM DOT BASED SOLAR CELLS

- 8256 0G **Photovoltaic properties of silicon nanocrystals in silicon carbide** [8256-14]
P. Löper, A. Witzky, Fraunhofer-Institut für Solare Energiesysteme (Germany); A. Hartel, S. Gutsch, D. Hiller, Albert-Ludwigs-Univ. Freiburg (Germany); J. C. Goldschmidt, S. Janz, S. W. Glunz, Fraunhofer-Institut für Solare Energiesysteme (Germany); M. Zacharias, Albert-Ludwigs-Univ. Freiburg (Germany)
- 8256 0I **Numerical simulation of QD-intermediate band solar cells: effect of dot size on performance** [8256-16]
T. Bald, A. Fedoseyev, CFD Research Corp. (United States)

SESSION 5 NOVEL THIN FILM MATERIALS AND DEVICES

- 8256 0K **Cu(In,Ga)Se₂ photovoltaic microcells for high efficiency and low material usage** [8256-18]
M. Paire, Institut de Recherche et Développement sur l'Energie Photovoltaïque (France) and IRDEP, CNRS (France) and Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Chimie de Paris (France) and Univ. Pierre et Marie Curie (France); L. Lombez, F. Donsanti, M. Jubault, Institut de Recherche et Développement sur l'Energie Photovoltaïque (France) and IRDEP, CNRS (France) and Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Chimie de Paris (France); N. Péré-Laperne, S. Collin, Lab. de Photonique et de Nanostructures, CNRS (France); A. Perona, A. Dollet, Lab. de Procédés Matériaux et Energie Solaire, CNRS (France); J.-L. Pelouard, Lab. de Photonique et de Nanostructures, CNRS (France); D. Lincot, J.-F. Guillemoles, Institut de Recherche et Développement sur l'Energie Photovoltaïque (France) and IRDEP, CNRS (France) and Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Chimie de Paris (France)
- 8256 0M **Optimal optical designs for planar GaAs single-junction solar cells with textured and reflective surfaces** [8256-20]
S. Liu, D. Ding, S. R. Johnson, Y.-H. Zhang, Arizona State Univ. (United States)

SESSION 6 INTERMEDIATE BAND SOLAR CELLS

8256 0P **Device simulation of intermediate band solar cells** [8256-23]
K. Yoshida, Y. Okada, The Univ. of Tokyo (Japan); N. Sano, Univ. of Tsukuba (Japan)

8256 0Q **The thermodynamic limits of tandem photovoltaic devices with intermediate band**
[8256-28]
J. Lee, C. B. Honsberg, Arizona State Univ. (United States)

SESSION 7 ADVANCED TANDEM SOLAR CELLS

8256 0R **Spectrum-optimized Si-based III-V multijunction photovoltaics (Invited Paper)** [8256-25]
T. J. Grassman, A. M. Carlin, J. Grandal, C. Ratcliff, L. Yang, M. J. Mills, S. A. Ringel, The Ohio State Univ. (United States)

8256 0S **Simulation of novel InAlAsSb solar cells** [8256-26]
M. P. Lumb, U.S. Naval Research Lab. (United States) and The George Washington Univ. (United States); M. Gonzalez, U.S. Naval Research Lab. (United States) and Sotera Defence Solutions (United States); I. Vurgaftman, J. R. Meyer, J. Abell, M. Yakes, U.S. Naval Research Lab. (United States); R. Hoheisel, U.S. Naval Research Lab. (United States) and The George Washington Univ. (United States); J. G. Tischler, P. P. Jenkins, U.S. Naval Research Lab. (United States); P. N. Stavrinou, M. Fuhrer, N. J. Ekins-Daukes, Imperial College London (United Kingdom); R. J. Walters, U.S. Naval Research Lab. (United States)

8256 0T **Two-dimensional modeling of CdZnTe/Si based dual and triple junction solar cells** [8256-27]
Y. G. Xiao, Z. Q. Li, M. Lestrade, Z. M. S. Li, Crosslight Software Inc. (Canada)

SESSION 8 CARRIER RELAXATIONS AND HOT CARRIER SOLAR CELLS

8256 0W **Modeling carrier relaxation in hot carrier solar cells (Invited Paper)** [8256-30]
S. M. Goodnick, C. Honsberg, Arizona State Univ. (United States)

8256 0X **InGaAs/GaAsP quantum wells for hot carrier solar cells** [8256-31]
L. C. Hirst, M. Fürher, D. J. Farrell, Imperial College London (United Kingdom); A. Le Bris, J.-F. Guillemoles, Institut de Recherche et Développement sur l'Energie Photovoltaïque (France); M. J. Y. Tayebjee, R. Clady, T. W. Schmidt, The Univ. of Sydney (Australia); M. Sugiyama, Y. Wang, H. Fujii, The Univ. of Tokyo (Japan); N. J. Ekins-Daukes, Imperial College London (United Kingdom)

SESSION 9 NANOSTRUCTURES AND EMERGING PHOTOVOLTAIC APPROACHES

8256 0Z **Hot carrier cells: an example of third generation photovoltaics (Keynote Paper)** [8256-33]
G. Conibeer, The Univ. of New South Wales (Australia)

8256 10 **Multiple exciton generation in PbSe nanorods** [8256-34]
P. D. Cunningham, J. E. Boercker, E. E. Foos, U.S. Naval Research Lab. (United States); M. P. Lumb, U.S. Naval Research Lab. (United States) and The George Washington Univ. (United States); A. R. Smith, J. G. Tischler, J. S. Melinger, U.S. Naval Research Lab. (United States)

SESSION 10 ADVANCED DEVICE CHARACTERIZATION

- 8256 13 **Spectroscopic ellipsometry: metrology for photovoltaics from the nanoscale to gigawatts (Invited Paper)** [8256-37]
S. Marsillac, Old Dominion Univ. (United States); R. W. Collins, The Univ. of Toledo (United States)
- 8256 14 **Characterization of solar cells using electroluminescence and photoluminescence hyperspectral images (Invited Paper)** [8256-38]
A. Delamarre, L. Lombez, J. F. Guillemoles, Institut de Recherche et Développement sur l'Energie Photovoltaïque, CNRS, Chimie ParisTech (France)
- 8256 15 **Spectroscopic analysis of InAs quantum dot solar cells** [8256-39]
S. J. Polly, Rochester Institute of Technology (United States); C. G. Bailey, U.S. Naval Research Lab. (United States); Z. S. Bittner, Y. Dai, E. G. Fernandez, S. M. Hubbard, Rochester Institute of Technology (United States)
- 8256 16 **A novel method to eliminate the measurement artifacts of external quantum efficiency of multi-junction solar cells caused by the shunt effect** [8256-40]
J.-J. Li, S. H. Lim, Y.-H. Zhang, Arizona State Univ. (United States)

SESSION 11 ADVANCED LIGHT CONCENTRATION AND LIGHT TRAPPING FOR PHOTOVOLTAICS

- 8256 17 **Toward high efficiency ultra-thin CIGSe based solar cells using light management techniques (Invited Paper)** [8256-41]
N. Naghavi, Z. Jehl, F. Donsanti, J.-F. Guillemoles, Institut de Recherche et Développement sur l'Energie Photovoltaïque, CNRS, Chimie-Paris Tech (France); I. Gérard, M. Bouttemy, A. Etcheberry, Institut Lavoisier de Versailles, CNRS, Univ. de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en Yvelines (France); J.-L. Pelouard, S. Collin, C. Colin, N. Péré-Laperne, Lab. de Photonique et de Nanostructures, CNRS (France); N. Dahan, J.-J. Greffet, Institut d'Optique, CNRS, Campus Polytechnique (France); B. Morel, Z. Djebbour, Lab. de Génie Électrique de Paris, CNRS, Univ. Pierre et Marie Curie Univ. Paris-Sud 11 (France); A. Darga, Lab. de Génie Électrique de Paris, CNRS, Univ. Pierre et Marie Curie Univ. Paris-Sud 11 (United States); D. Mencaraglia, Lab. de Génie Électrique de Paris, CNRS, Univ. Pierre et Marie Curie Univ. Paris-Sud 11 (France); G. Voorwinden, B. Dimmler, Wuerth Elektronik Research GmbH (Germany); M. Powalla, Zentrum für Sonnenenergie- und Wasserstoff-Forschung (Germany); D. Lincot, Institut de Recherche et Développement sur l'Energie Photovoltaïque, CNRS, Chimie-Paris Tech (France)
- 8256 18 **Trackfree planar solar concentrator system** [8256-42]
V. Zagolla, C. Moser, École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (Switzerland)
- 8256 19 **A cascable circular concentrator with parallel compressed structure for increasing the energy density** [8256-43]
N.-L. Ku, Y.-Y. Chen, W.-C. Hsieh, A. J.-W. Whang, National Taiwan Univ. of Science and Technology (Taiwan)

- 8256 1A **Minimizing solar cell reflection loss through surface texturing and implementation of 1D and 2D subwavelength dielectric gratings** [8256-44]
W. Wang, A. Mehrotra, A. Alemu, A. Freundlich, Univ. of Houston (United States)

SESSION 12 EPITAXY AND CHARACTERIZATION OF III-V PHOTOVOLTAIC MATERIALS

- 8256 1B **Interface quality enhancement of the epitaxial regrowth process for *nipi* photovoltaic devices** [8256-45]
M. A. Slocum, D. V. Forbes, S. M. Hubbard, Rochester Institute of Technology (United States)
- 8256 1C **The role of Sb compositions on the properties of InAs/GaAsSb quantum dots (QDs)** [8256-68]
K.-Y. Ban, Arizona State Univ. (United States); S. P. Bremner, The Univ. of New South Wales (Australia); D. Kuciauskas, National Renewable Energy Lab. (United States); S. N. Dahal, C. B. Honsberg, Arizona State Univ. (United States)
- 8256 1D **Characteristics of bulk InGaAsN and InGaAsSbN materials grown by metal organic vapor phase epitaxy (MOVPE) for solar cell application** [8256-47]
T.-W. Kim, T. J. Garrod, Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison (United States); K. Kim, J. Lee, Ajou Univ. (Korea, Republic of); L. J. Mawst, T. F. Kuech, Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison (United States); S. D. LaLumondiere, Y. Sin, W. T. Lotshaw, S. C. Moss, The Aerospace Corp. (United States)
- 8256 1E **Dilute nitride GaInNAs and GaInNAsSb for solar cell applications** [8256-48]
S. L. Tan, W. M. Soong, The Univ. of Sheffield (United Kingdom); M. J. Steer, Univ. of Glasgow (United Kingdom); S. Zhang, J. S. Ng, J. P. R. David, The Univ. of Sheffield (United Kingdom)
- 8256 1F **Intersubband and intrasubband transition in InGaN quantum dot for solar cell application** [8256-49]
K.-C. Wang, Y.-R. Wu, National Taiwan Univ. (Taiwan)

SESSION 13 SPACE PHOTOVOLTAICS

- 8256 1G **Advanced photovoltaic development at Air Force Research Laboratory (Keynote Paper)** [8256-50]
D. M. Wilt, Air Force Research Lab. (United States)
- 8256 1H **Modeling of defect-tolerant thin multi-junction solar cells for space application** [8256-51]
A. Mehrotra, A. Alemu, A. Freundlich, Univ. of Houston (United States)
- 8256 1I **Radiation effects on quantum dot enhanced solar cells** [8256-52]
C. Kerestes, D. Forbes, C. G. Bailey, Rochester Institute of Technology (United States); J. Spann, B. Richards, P. Sharps, Emcore Photovoltaics (United States); S. Hubbard, Rochester Institute of Technology (United States)

SESSION 14 HYBRID PHOTOVOLTAIC APPROACHES

- 8256 1K **Photonic crystals for improving light absorption in organic solar cells (Invited Paper)** [8256-54]
D. Duché, L. Escoubas, J.-J. Simon, Institut Matériaux Microélectronique Nanosciences de Provence, CNRS, Aix-Marseille Univ. (France); C. Gourgon, C. Masclaux, CEA-LETI (France); Ph. Torchio, J. Le Rouzo, F. Flory, Institut Matériaux Microélectronique Nanosciences de Provence, CNRS, Aix-Marseille Univ. (France)
- 8256 1L **Resonance energy transfer from PbS colloidal quantum dots to bulk silicon: the road to hybrid photovoltaics** [8256-55]
P. Andreakou, M. Brossard, Univ. of Southampton (United Kingdom); M. Bernechea, G. Konstantatos, ICFO - Institut de Ciències Fotòniques (Spain); P. Lagoudakis, Univ. of Southampton (United Kingdom)
- 8256 1O **Full device analysis of novel metamaterial coated PN and MIS solar cells using numerical methods** [8256-57]
I. Mandel, The City College of the City Univ. of New York (United States); J. N. Gollub, C. Sarantos, Phoebus Optoelectronics, LLC (United States); N. Pishbin, D. T. Crouse, The City College of the City Univ. of New York (United States)

SESSION 15 POSTER SESSION

- 8256 1Q **Energy converting material for solar cell application** [8256-59]
M. Pokhrel, G. A. Kumar, D. K. Sardar, The Univ. of Texas at San Antonio (United States)
- 8256 1V **Dynamic thermal analysis of a concentrated photovoltaic system** [8256-64]
J. T. Avrett II, S. C. Cain, M. Pochet, Air Force Institute of Technology (United States)
- 8256 1X **Analysis of radiation hardness and subcell I-V characteristics of GaInP/GaAs/Ge solar cells using electroluminescence measurements** [8256-66]
R. Hoheisel, George Washington Univ. (United States) and Naval Research Lab. (United States); S. Messenger, D. Scheiman, P. P. Jenkins, R. J. Walters, Naval Research Lab. (United States)
- 8256 1Z **Optical simulation and fabrication of periodic triangular gratings for the enhancement of photovoltaic solar panels** [8256-69]
R. Dey, E. V. Bordatchev, M. Tauhiduzzaman, H. Reshef, National Research Council Canada (Canada)

Author Index

Conference Committee

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Masakazu Sugiyama, The University of Tokyo (Japan)
Robert J. Walters, U.S. Naval Research Laboratory (United States)
Peichen Yu, National Chiao Tung University (Taiwan)

Session Chairs

- 1 Advanced Light Management and Spectral Shaping
Gavin J. Conibeer, The University of New South Wales (Australia)
- 2 Photonic and Plasmonics Designs for Photovoltaics
Jean-Francois Guillemoles, Institut de Recherche et Développement
sur l'Energie Photovoltaïque (France)

- 3 Quantum Well and Superlattice Solar Cells
Seth M. Hubbard, Rochester Institute of Technology (United States)
- 4 Quantum Dot Based Solar Cells
Masakazu Sugiyama, The University of Tokyo (Japan)
- 5 Novel Thin Film Materials and Devices
Alexandre Freundlich, University of Houston (United States)
- 6 Intermediate Band Solar Cells
Olivier Durand, Institut National des Sciences Appliquées de Rennes (France)
- 7 Advanced Tandem Solar Cells
David Wilt, Air Force Research Laboratory (United States)
- 8 Carrier Relaxations and Hot Carrier Solar Cells
Gavin J. Conibeer, The University of New South Wales (Australia)
- 9 Nanostructures and Emerging Photovoltaic Approaches
Stephen M. Goodnick, Arizona State University (United States)
- 10 Advanced Device Characterization
Marek Osinski, The University of New Mexico (United States)
- 11 Advanced Light Concentration and Light Trapping for Photovoltaics
Peichen Yu, National Chiao Tung University (Taiwan)
- 12 Epitaxy and Characterization of III-V Photovoltaic Materials
Christopher Kerestes, Rochester Institute of Technology (United States)
- 13 Space Photovoltaics
Robert J. Walters, U.S. Naval Research Laboratory (United States)
- 14 Hybrid Photovoltaic Approaches
Alexandre Freundlich, University of Houston (United States)
Jean-Francois Guillemoles, Institut de Recherche et Développement sur l'Energie Photovoltaïque (France)

Introduction

Minimizing anthropogenic alterations of the world climate calls for the deployment of tens of terawatt of carbon-free renewable power generation resources, and solar photovoltaics (PV) has been recognized as a promising technology to help us meet these targets in a sustainable manner. Boosted by regulatory incentives, the PV industry is experiencing a strong growth and a significant influx of capital investment. Recent advances in solar cells and, in particular, in inexpensive thin films and concentrator PV devices, together with the growing penetration of PV into the energy markets, continue to drive down the cost of solar electricity generation. Today the production cost of the kwh in many applications approaches the retail price of electricity generated by traditional means (fossil fuels). However, in order for PV to become a major component of the global renewable energy portfolio, a nearly two-to-three-fold further cost reduction is needed. Such a cost reduction would require transformative technological breakthroughs that would significantly enhance the efficiency and/or simplicity of PV modules.

Within the framework of feeding into the innovation pipeline needed to the development of revolutionary and practically viable high efficiency and cost-effective PV technologies, this first edition of the conference attempted to capture recent advances in the modeling and application of novel photonic engineering approaches, as well as in the understanding of the physics at play for the next generation of PV devices. The conference provided an interdisciplinary forum that aimed at enhancing interactions between physicists, photonic engineers and photovoltaic device specialists, at both the experimental and theoretical levels.

Theoretical and experimental papers presented at the conference highlighted recent advances in basic material/device physics, simulation, demonstration and optimization of:

- Advanced light management concepts and architectures, including new approaches to spectral engineering, light concentration, surface texturing, and light trapping (i.e., plasmonics nano-cavities, micro/nano-engineered ARs, track-free nano-engineered concentrators), as well as synergistic hybrid/multifunctional designs.
- Non-conventional PV converters, addressing the application of advanced photonics to enable unique conversion mechanisms. Presenters also provided an in-depth discussion of the fundamental aspects and recent developments in the demonstration of advanced quantum confined or nanostructured concepts, intermediate band concepts, multiple-exciton-generations, and hot-carrier effects. Also, particular focus was placed on deciphering the science at play in photo-generation, recombination, and

carrier transport in quantum well/quantum dot, wire and superlattice devices.

- Advanced single- and multi-junction materials and devices leveraging on innovative materials or/and photonic architectures. In particular, several presentations focused on the simulation or/and demonstration of the application of cross-cutting photonic engineering approaches for enhancing the performance, reliability and functionality of thin film and multi-junction devices. Several presentations dealt with development of predictive simulation tools to optimize and enhance the defect tolerance (dislocations, radiation defects, etc.) of solar cells for space and terrestrial applications, as well as recent inroads in identifying and realizing novel more effective PV absorbers.

During and post conference, we received much positive feedback and encouragement from attendees and presenters. We are truly humbled by the experience, and hope that all attendees enjoyed the conference as much as we did. Of course, the primary ingredient for a successful technical conference is the quality of the work presented by the contributors, and, to this end, we would like to thank all the contributors for the quality of their presentations. We would like also to express our gratitude to all keynote and invited speakers for presenting exceptional overviews and igniting thought-provoking discussions. We would like also to congratulate Jonathan Grandidier and his coworkers from Caltech, as their work presented in our conference was this year's winner of the "Green Photonics Award for Renewable Energy Generation: Fusion and Photovoltaics." We are grateful to the committee members and session chairs, as their support and dedication before and during the event had a significant impact on the outcome and success of the meeting. We would like also to acknowledge the SPIE support staff for their invaluable help.

Alexandre Freundlich
Jean-Francois F. Guillemoles