

# Nanoplatelet-Based Light-Emitting Diode and Its Use in All-Nanocrystal LiFi-like Communication

Junling Qu, Prachi Rastogi, Charlie Gréboval, Clément Livache, Marion Dufour, Audrey Chu, Sang-Soo Chee, Julien Ramade, Xiang Zhen Xu, Sandrine Ithurria, and Emmanuel Lhuillier\*



Cite This: *ACS Appl. Mater. Interfaces* 2020, 12, 22058–22065



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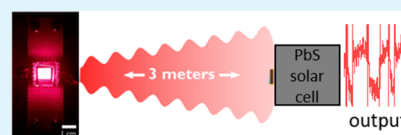


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Supporting Information

**ABSTRACT:** Now that colloidal nanocrystals (NCs) have been integrated as green and red sources for liquid crystal displays, the next challenge for quantum dots is their use in electrically driven light-emitting diodes (LEDs). Among various colloidal NCs, nanoplatelets (NPLs) have appeared as promising candidates for light-emitting devices because their two-dimensional shape allows a narrow luminescence spectrum, directional emission, and high light extraction. To reach high quantum efficiency, it is critical to grow core/shell structures. High temperature growth of the shells seems to be a better strategy than previously reported low-temperature approaches to obtain bright NPLs. Here, we synthesize CdSe/CdZnS core/shell NPLs whose shell alloy content is tuned to optimize the charge injection in the LED structure. The obtained LED has exceptionally low turn-on voltage, long-term stability ( $>3100$  h at  $100 \text{ cd m}^{-2}$ ), external quantum efficiency above 5%, and luminance up to  $35,000 \text{ cd m}^{-2}$ . We study the low-temperature performance of the LED and find that there is a delay of droop in terms of current density as temperature decreases. In the last part of the paper, we design a large LED ( $56 \text{ mm}^2$  emitting area) and test its potential for LiFi-like communication. In such an approach, the LED is not only a lightning source but also used to transmit a communication signal to a PbS quantum dot solar cell used as a broadband photodetector. Operating conditions compatible with both lighting and information transfer have been identified. This work paves the way toward an all NC-based communication setup.



**KEYWORDS:** nanoplatelets, light-emitting diode, efficiency droop, electronic transport, nanocrystal-based communication

## INTRODUCTION

Colloidal nanocrystals (NCs) have been incorporated as green and red sources into liquid crystal displays; however, their integration for electrically pumped light-emitting diodes (LEDs) has been challenged.<sup>1</sup> Even though there may remain several concerns (lifetime and light extraction) to reach industrial integration, a key open question is related to the choice of the material. Among possible candidates, CdSe two-dimensional (2D) nanoplatelets (NPLs)<sup>2</sup> appear to be one of the most promising because they combine (i) the narrowest photoluminescence (PL) signal,<sup>3</sup> (ii) the high maturity of II–VI NC colloidal syntheses, (iii) the spectral tunability based on quantum confinement<sup>4–7</sup> or doping<sup>8–11</sup> with (iv) the anisotropic emission diagram,<sup>12</sup> which means a macroscopic directive emission can be obtained from a well-aligned NPL assembly,<sup>13,14</sup> thus improving the light extraction efficiency of LED devices by overcoming total internal reflection.

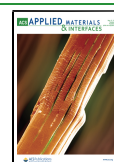
NPLs are 2D-shaped NCs with confinement occurring only along the thickness. The specific growth mechanism of these NCs leads to a lack of roughness along this direction, and consequently, the PL linewidth is not limited by inhomogeneous broadening as for spherical nanoparticles. Beyond their narrow luminescence spectrum, NPLs have also attracted interest for the design of transistors,<sup>15</sup> light detectors,<sup>16</sup> and low threshold lasers.<sup>17–20</sup> While the narrow PL achieved by NPLs was enough to motivate the design of LED from core-only objects,<sup>6,21</sup> the

integration of NPLs into LEDs has strongly benefitted from the development of core/crown<sup>22</sup> and core/shell structures. For long, only low-temperature methods,<sup>23</sup> such as colloidal atomic layer deposition,<sup>24</sup> have been used for the growth of core/shell NPLs. This approach enhances the PL efficiency by passivating surface dangling bonds and preserves the narrow linewidth of the NPLs. However, the PL quantum efficiency remains generally limited below 50% with a large batch-to-batch fluctuation. In spite of these limitations, first core/shell NPL-based LEDs<sup>25,26</sup> have been reported by Chen *et al.*<sup>27</sup> and improved latter by Giovanella *et al.*<sup>28</sup> More recently, high-temperature growth of shells on NPLs which preserve the 2D shape of the particles has been developed,<sup>29–35</sup> leading to high PL efficiencies (90% and more) in the red. The improvement in the PL efficiency has significantly enhanced the electroluminescence (EL) efficiency,<sup>34,36</sup> which has brought NPL-based LEDs to a new level of maturity and inspired the effort for their integration to more complex systems.

Received: March 20, 2020

Accepted: April 15, 2020

Published: April 15, 2020



In this paper, we choose the strategy of integrating high-temperature-grown core/shell NPLs into LEDs. The shell alloy ratio is optimized to match the band alignment of the diode structure and favor the charge balance in the device. The obtained LED based on NPLs achieves 5.15% of external quantum efficiency (EQE), sub-band gap turn-on voltage, and shows an extrapolated half-lifetime of 3160 h (time after which the emitted power drops by half for 100 cd m<sup>-2</sup> luminance). We then investigate transport in this LED at low temperature and show that the current droop occurs at higher current when temperature is decreased. We use this observation to suggest one path of improvement for this diode structure. Finally, we couple this LED to a NC-based solar cell used as a broadband detector. We demonstrate that this couple of all NC-based devices can be used as a LiFi-like communication setup.

## DISCUSSION

We start by growing core/shell NPLs made of a CdSe core and an alloyed shell of CdS and ZnS. Current NC-based LED structures rely on organic hole transport layers (HTLs), while electron transport layers (ETLs) are typically based on oxides (ZnO or TiO<sub>2</sub>). A successful structure for CdSe-based NC LEDs has been proposed by Dai *et al.*,<sup>37</sup> which includes the following stack of layers: ITO/PEDOT:PSS/poly-TPD/PVK/NCs/ZnO/Ag, where PEDOT:PSS, poly-TPD, and PVK are, respectively, poly(3,4-ethylenedioxythiophene) polystyrene sulfonate, poly(*N,N'*-bis-4-butylphenyl-*N,N'*-bisphenyl)-benzidine, and poly(9-vinyl)carbazole. The HTLs have been identified as limiting blocks for the LED structure because of (i) the acidity of PEDOT:PSS which can etch the transparent conductive electrode, (ii) the limited stability of the organic layer, and (iii) the lower carrier mobility of the HTLs with respect to ETL. To minimize the limitation coming from the HTL, we design the NPL in order to minimize the HTL/NPL energy barrier.

The highest occupied molecular orbital of the PVK is located  $5.8 \pm 0.1$  eV below the vacuum level. To determine the energy of the maximum of the valence band in the core/shell NPL, we use X-ray photoemission (XPS) and determine the work function (Figure 1c) and the relative position of the valence band with respect to the Fermi energy (Figure 1d). For the ZnS shell, we found the valence band located at  $5.7 \pm 0.1$  eV below the vacuum level, which is quasi-resonant with the PVK within the accuracy of the photoemission.

To further optimize this band alignment and the balance of the charge injection, we tune the confinement energy. In NPLs, changing the core level leads to discrete values for the band edge energy and this approach is not a continuous path to tune the band edge energy. Here, we rather choose to tune the shell content thanks to alloying. The introduction of a small amount of CdS in the ZnS shell favors the electron delocalization over the whole structure, reducing the band edge energy. This allows a fine continuous tuning of the exact energy of the valence and conduction band. We observe that a 5% content of CdS within the CdZnS shell minimizes the LED turn-on voltage while maximizing its quantum efficiency, see Figure S1 and Table S1.

We thus choose to focus on CdSe/Cd<sub>0.05</sub>Zn<sub>0.95</sub>S core/shell NPLs in the following.<sup>30,38</sup> The absorption and PL spectra of the material are given in Figure 1a. The PL peak at 620 nm ( $\approx 2$  eV) presents a full width at half-maximum (fwhm) of 27 nm. The particles are of a parallelepipedic shape with a lateral extension of  $10 \times 40$  nm<sup>2</sup> as shown in Figure 1b. Photoemission spectra unveil a work function of 4.4 eV and a Fermi level deep in the

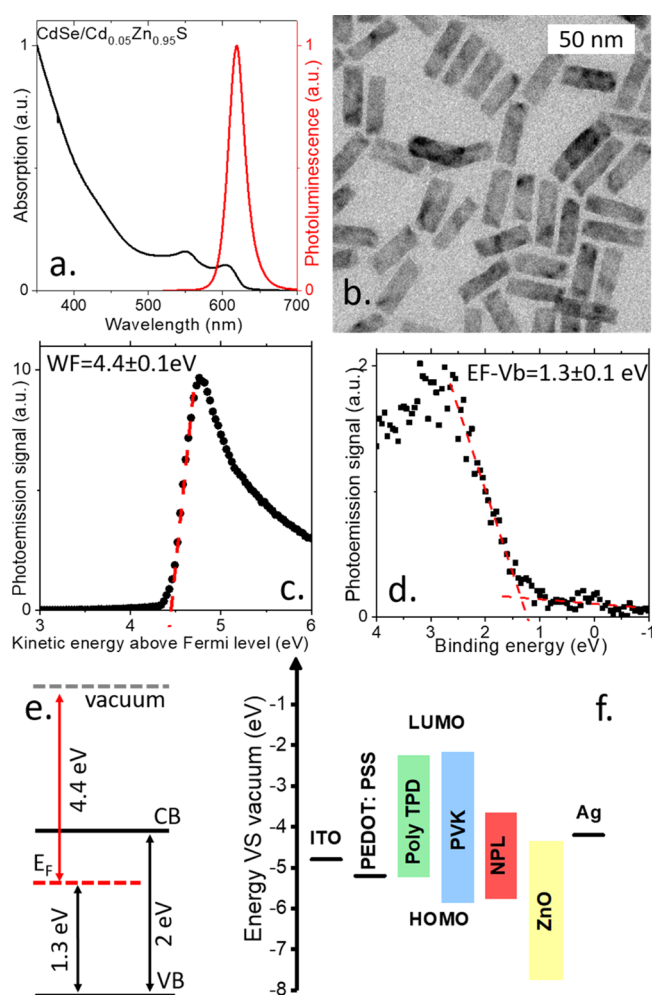


**Figure 1.** (a) Absorption and PL spectra of CdSe/Cd<sub>0.05</sub>Zn<sub>0.95</sub>S core/shell NPLs. (b) Transmission electron microscopy image of CdSe/Cd<sub>0.05</sub>Zn<sub>0.95</sub>S core/shell NPLs. (c) Photoemission spectrum relative to the secondary electron cut-off for the core/shell NPLs. (d) Photoemission spectrum relative to the valence band for the core/shell NPLs. (e) Electronic spectrum of the core/shell NPLs. (f) Energy alignment for the LED. The energies for the different layers except the NPLs one are taken from refs 27 and 37.

band gap located 1.3 eV above the valence band. This suggests an n-type nature for this material, consistent with previous transport measurements for CdSe core-based NPLs.<sup>15</sup> We thus propose an effective electronic spectrum for the heterostructure as given in Figure 1e. The chosen alloy composition provides a quasi-resonant band alignment with the HTL, while reducing the conduction band offset with ZnO compared to the pure ZnS shell, see Figure 1f.

We build the all solution-processed ITO/PEDOT:PSS/poly-TPD/PVK/NCs/ZnO/Ag diode with the optimized NCs layer; see a scheme of the device in Figure 2a. We also add an encapsulation layer to avoid any exposure of the device to oxygen and moisture during operation. In the following, the device is stored and operated under room conditions (*i.e.*, air exposed). The LED presents an EL spectrum which matches the band gap of CdSe/Cd<sub>0.05</sub>Zn<sub>0.95</sub>S core/shell NPLs, with a peak wavelength at 622 nm; see Figure 2b. The fwhm of the EL is 28 nm. The CIE coordinate in the chromaticity diagram is shown in Figure 2c. Note that the emission of the NPL-based LED follows a Lambertian angular dependence; see Figure S2.

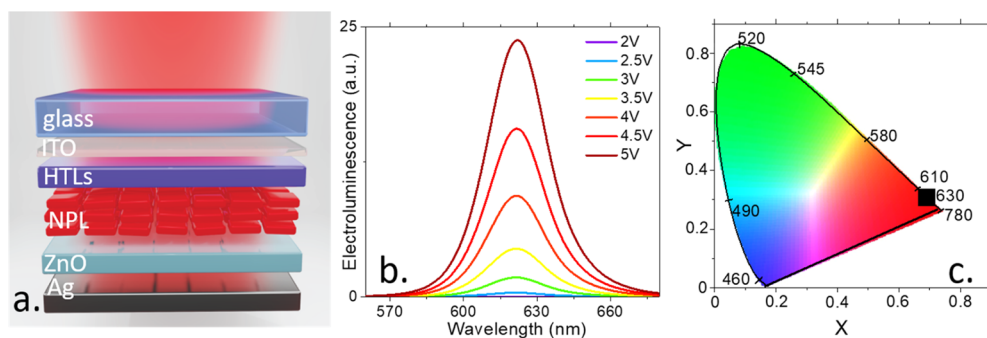


**Figure 2.** (a) Scheme of the LED made of glass/ITO/HTLs (PEDOT:PSS/poly-TPD/PVK)/CdSe/Cd<sub>0.05</sub>Zn<sub>0.95</sub>S core/shell NPLs/ZnO/Ag. (b) EL spectra of the LED, where the emitting layer is made of CdSe/Cd<sub>0.05</sub>Zn<sub>0.95</sub>S core/shell NPLs at room temperature and under various applied bias. (c) Chromaticity diagram and the color associated with the spectrum of the LED based on CdSe/Cd<sub>0.05</sub>Zn<sub>0.95</sub>S core/shell NPLs.

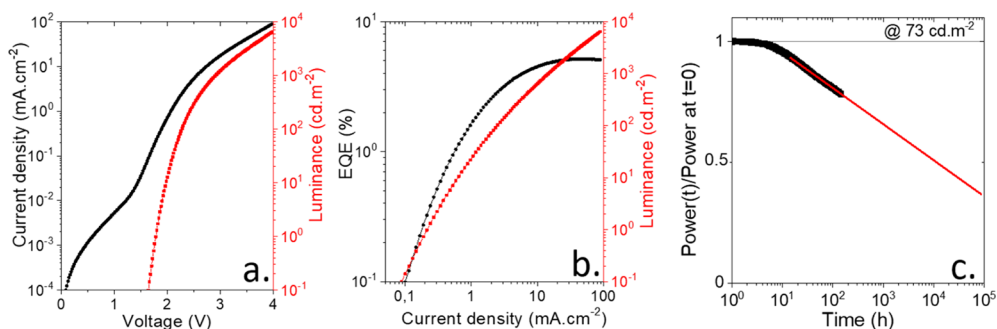


**Figure 3.** (a) Current density and luminance as a function of the applied bias for the LED based on CdSe/Cd<sub>0.05</sub>Zn<sub>0.95</sub>S core/shell NPLs. (b) EQE and luminance as a function of the driving current. (c) Normalized light power extracted from the LED as a function of time. The LED is driven under a constant current of 14  $\mu$ A here which correspond to an initial luminance of 73  $\text{cd m}^{-2}$ . The experimental data are in black, while the red (solid) curve is an extrapolation. The extracted power drops by half after  $\approx 11,000$  h.

**Table 1. Comparison of Different Figures of Merit for NPL-Based LEDs**

| reference | material (NPL)                               | wavelength (nm) | PLQY (%)      | fwhm (nm) | EQE <sub>max</sub> (%) | $L_{\text{max}}$ ( $\text{cd m}^{-2}$ ) | $V_{\text{ON}}$ (V) | pixel size ( $\text{mm}^2$ ) | $t_{1/2}$ at 100 $\text{cd m}^{-2}$ (h) | $J_{90}$ ( $\text{mA cm}^{-2}$ ) |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------|------------------------|-----------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 36        | CdSe/Cd <sub>0.15</sub> Zn <sub>0.85</sub> S | 648             | 86            |           | 5.66                   | 16,010                                  | 2.4                 | 4                            |                                         |                                  |
|           | CdSe/Cd <sub>0.25</sub> Zn <sub>0.75</sub> S | 650             | $\approx 100$ | 26        | 19.32                  | 23,490                                  | 2.4                 | 4                            | 12.8                                    |                                  |
|           | CdSe/ZnS                                     | 618             | 85            |           | 4.69                   | 18,730                                  | 2.8                 | 4                            |                                         |                                  |
| 34        | CdSe/CdS/CdZnS                               | 634–648         | 75–89         | 21        | 9.92                   | 46,000                                  | 2.3                 | 16                           | 560                                     | 276                              |
|           | CdSe/CdS                                     | 650             | 48            | 21        | 1.8                    | 10,650                                  | 2.3                 | 16                           |                                         | 372                              |
| 28        | CdSe/CdZnS                                   | 658             | $40 \pm 5$    |           | 8.39                   | 1540                                    | 4.05                | 5.4                          |                                         |                                  |
| 22        | CdSe/CdSeTe core/crown                       | 599             | 85            | $>40$     | 3.57                   | 34,520                                  | 1.9                 | 1                            |                                         |                                  |
| 40        | CdSe/CdS                                     | 556             | 60            | 14        | 5                      | 33,000                                  | 2.25                | 4                            |                                         |                                  |
| 27        | CdSe/CdZnS                                   | 646             | 30            | 26        | 0.63                   | 4499                                    | 4.7                 | 4                            |                                         |                                  |
| 21        | CdSe/CdSSe                                   | 520             | 35            | 12.5      |                        | 100                                     | 2.1                 |                              |                                         |                                  |
| this work | CdSe/Cd <sub>0.05</sub> Zn <sub>0.95</sub> S | 620             | 35            | 29        | 5.15                   | 35,100                                  | 1.63                | 1                            | 3160                                    | 295                              |
|           | CdSe/Cd <sub>0.1</sub> Zn <sub>0.9</sub> S   | 640             | 65            | 23        |                        |                                         | $\approx 1.7$       | 56                           |                                         |                                  |

The  $I$ – $V$  curve, luminance and EQE of the device are then shown in Figure 3a,b. The diode presents a sub-band gap threshold with a turn-on voltage as low as 1.63 V (about 0.4 V lower than the band gap), which is the lowest reported so far.<sup>39</sup> The maximum EQE has been determined to be 5.15%, partly limited by the PL efficiency of around 35%. The luminance can reach 35,100  $\text{cd m}^{-2}$  under 7 V operation; see Figure S3. The lifetime of the diode with an initial luminance of 73 and 1000  $\text{cd m}^{-2}$  has been monitored, under constant current. A reasonable extrapolation allows us to estimate that 50% of the extracted power will remain after 11,000 h (at 73  $\text{cd m}^{-2}$ ); see Figure 3c. Under higher luminance of 1000  $\text{cd m}^{-2}$ , we found the half lifetime to be 100 h; see Figure S4. Assuming that the  $L^{1.5}T_{50}$  is

constant,<sup>37</sup> with  $L$  being the initial luminance and  $T_{50}$  being the duration when the LED drops to half of its efficiency, we can determine the half lifetime under 100  $\text{cd m}^{-2}$  luminance to be at least 3160 h.

It is worth pointing that Kelestemur *et al.*<sup>34</sup> recently reported a similar LED based on core/shell NPLs grown at high temperature and for which the HTL is made of PEDOT:PSS and PVK. Our LED achieves better EQE than the CdSe/CdS NPL-based LED but lower than the one based on core/shell/shell (CdSe/CdS/CdZnS) NPLs. The latter material leads to EQE as high as 10%, but the turn-on voltage (2.3 V) is higher. It indicates a less-optimized band alignment for charge injection.

More comparisons of the LED performance with previously reported LED based on NPLs are given in Table 1.

The LED shows interesting performance such as a narrow EL signal, low turn-on operation, and long lifetime; however, under high driving current, we observe an efficiency droop. Efficiency droop is a general feature for LEDs and NC-LEDs, where the EQE decreases with the higher current. Currently, the most common strategy to prevent the efficiency droop is to design the NC band profile to reduce the Auger effect.<sup>41</sup> Graded interfaces have been proposed as a possible route to reach this goal.<sup>42</sup>

We then investigate the thermal properties of the LED because low-temperature transport is a powerful probe to reveal transport mechanisms and possible ways to improve the LED structure. Upon cooling, the EL signal shows a blue shift which follows the shift of the PL signal. Thus, we can attribute the EL shift to the change of band gap of NPLs with temperature. Temperature-dependent transport reveals two regimes of bias in the  $I$ - $V$  curve. In the first region at low bias, typically below the turn-on voltage of the LED, the transport is almost temperature-independent; see Figures 4a and S2. At higher bias, the current

situation where in NC-LEDs, the nanoparticles are mostly a recombination center and transport is entirely driven by the ETLs and HTLs. Complementarily with the shift of the turn-on voltage depending on the temperature, we observe that the EQE droop is shifted toward higher current density at lower temperature (see Figure 4d and its inset).

The fact that the appearance of the droop is strongly temperature-dependent suggests two origins for the droops. The first path is the temperature-dependent Auger recombination within the NPL.<sup>43,44</sup> Temperature dependence of the Auger process remains so far uninvestigated in NPL. However, thanks to their large volume,<sup>45</sup> NPLs should present a reduced Auger recombination with respect to other kinds of NCs. In addition, NPLs with a thin shell, as it is here, are supposed to be the ones with the lowest Auger rate.<sup>46</sup> Thus, it is likely that the delay of droop is assisted by the Auger effect occurring in the transport layers. Such speculation is supported by the fact that the shift of the  $V_t$ , which follows shift of the droops with temperature, is also observed in the NPL free device; see Figure S7.

NC-based LEDs and detectors have for the moment been used independently. The maturity of these devices has reached a high level, motivating their integration into more complex systems. Here, we explore the possibility to design an all-NC-based communication setup which operates in LiFi-like operation. In such a setup, a light source, here, the NPL-based LED, is used not only for lightning but also to send information. For this application, we have updated the LED device and expanded it to a larger active area, typically  $7 \times 8 \text{ mm}^2$  to generate more photons; see Figure 5a. The thicknesses of the ZnO and PEDOT:PSS layers have also been increased to prevent electrical shorts in the device which are more likely to occur as the device size is increased. However, the device structure is maintained and so is the low turn-on voltage around 1.7 V. The electrical and optical characteristics of the diode are given in Figures S8 and S9.

As a sensor, we use a PbS NC-based solar cell which has been proved to be an efficient broadband absorber over the visible range. We fabricate the solar cell according to the structure proposed by Chuang *et al.*,<sup>47</sup> and the detailed fabrication can be found in the Supporting Information and ref 48. The PbS solar cell characteristics are shown in Figure S10. Briefly, the structure relies on PbS NCs with a band gap at 920 nm. The p-n junction is made of a thick layer of iodide-capped PbS and a p-type layer of ethanedithiol-capped PbS NCs. The dark current of such a diode operated at 0 V can be as low as  $10 \text{ nA cm}^{-2}$ , and the diode presents a strong current modulation under illumination. Interestingly, the time response of the diode has been found to be 10 ns for the rise time and  $1 \mu\text{s}$  for the decay time. This is too slow to establish a high speed (GHz or THz) telecommunication channel but can be used to transfer information. To operate this system, we apply a constant driving voltage to the LED, which is compatible with lightning application. On the top of this signal we setup an AC-modulated (@10 kHz here) signal to generate signal modulation. The light is then collected by the solar cell as shown in Figure 5b. The current in the photodiode is then filtered to keep the AC part only.

We first investigate how the distance between the source and the detector affects the signal acquisition; see Figure 5c. In the current configuration, where signal collection is not optimized and conservative bias are applied on the LED, photocurrent to dark current ratio above 1 can be preserved up to 1.5 m. The drop of the signal with distance follows a decay slower than  $1/R^2$  (i.e., the optical power decay), with  $R$  being the source to

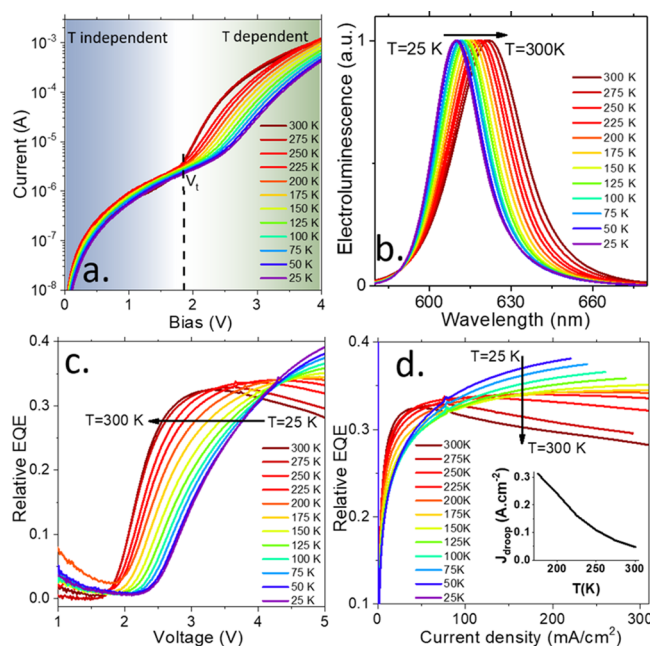


**Figure 4.** (a) Current as a function of bias under various temperatures of the LED based on CdSe/Cd<sub>0.05</sub>Zn<sub>0.95</sub>S core/shell NPLs. (b) EL spectra obtained at different temperatures under 5 V bias. A clear redshift is observed as the temperature increases. (c) Uncalibrated EQE as a function of the applied bias for various temperatures. (d) Uncalibrated EQE as a function of the driving current under different temperatures.

depends more strongly on the temperature and we particularly observe a shift of the voltage ( $V_t$ ), where the device enters a strongly conductive state. This shift is also responsible for a similar shift of the turn-on voltage with temperature in the EQE curve as a function of bias; see Figure 4c. We may have naively attributed this shift of the transport and EQE to the change of the band gap with temperature. However, the shift of PL and EL with temperature is much smaller than the one observed in transport; see Figures S5 and S6. Indeed, this shift with temperature in the  $I$ - $V$  curve is also observed in the diode built without NPLs; see Figure S7. As a result, we believe that the NPLs are not related to the shift. This is consistent with the

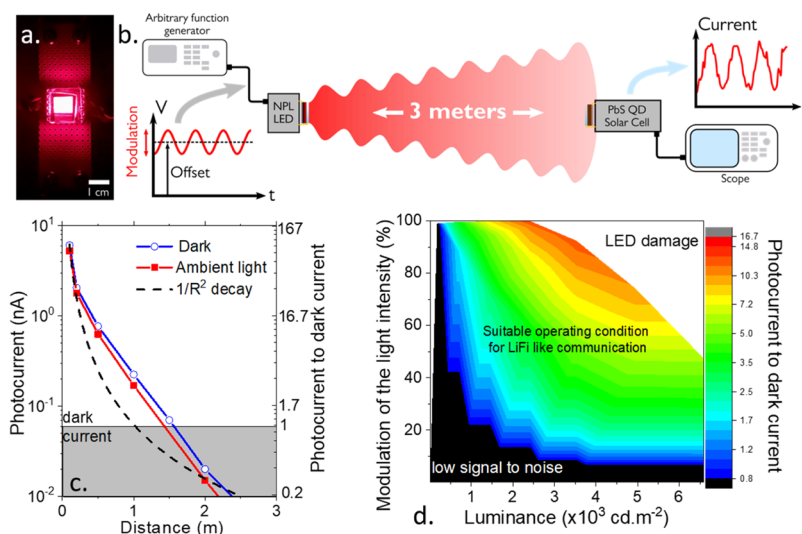


**Figure 5.** (a) Picture of the large LED based on NPLs under operation. (b) Scheme of the developed communication setup. The LED is driven with a constant bias on the top of which a modulated signal is applied. The signal is then collected on a PbS NC-based solar cell used as a broadband detector. The AC component of the signal is then amplified using a lock-in setup. (c) Photocurrent and photocurrent to dark current ratio as a function of the LED to detector distance.  $1/R^2$  decay law is also plotted. The signal is modulated at 10 kHz here. (d) Photocurrent to dark current ratio as a function of the luminance of the LED and as a function of the signal modulation. 100% modulation means that the LED is turned on and off, while for lower modulation, the LED is always emitting some light.

detector distance. We attribute this behavior to the improvement in the quantum efficiency of the solar cell when the incident power flux is reduced. We also consider the impact of the luminance and the signal modulation amplitude of the LED; see Figure 5d. For luminance compatible with lightning ( $5000 \text{ cd m}^{-2}$ ), we can maintain photocurrent to dark current ratio above 1 for signal modulation as low as 25% which is not visually detectable. Transmission of the binary signal, beyond a simple plane wave, has also been tested with a 1 m distance, see Figure S11, and the obtained signal matches the LED input.

## CONCLUSIONS

We build a LED based on core/shell NPLs grown at high temperature. The obtained diode presents a maximal EQE of 5.15% with a record low turn-on voltage of 1.63 V and extremely long lifetime (3160 h at  $100 \text{ cd m}^{-2}$ ). Under large current injection, an efficiency droop appears, where the current threshold of the droop appears to be strongly temperature-dependent. Lower temperatures shift the droop toward larger current density. Such strong temperature dependence on the droop threshold suggests that future efforts need to be focused on the transport layers. We have also successfully demonstrated the potential of the LED into a LiFi-like communication setup and show that communication can be obtained once the LED is coupled to a solar cell as a detector. This paves the way for future developments of all NC-based communication setup.

## METHODS

**Chemicals for NPL Growth.** Octadecene (ODE, Alfa Aesar, 90%), cadmium acetate dihydrate ( $\text{Cd}(\text{Ac})_2$ , Sigma, 98%), cadmium oxide ( $\text{CdO}$ , Strem, 99.99%), zinc oxide ( $\text{ZnO}$ , Sigma, 99.99%), myristic acid (Fluka, 98%), oleic acid (OA, Alfa Aesar, 90%), selenium powder (Strem Chemicals 99.99%), zinc acetate dihydrate (Aldrich, 98%), octanethiol (Fluka, 97%), trioctylamine (TOA, Sigma-Aldrich, 98%), hexane (VWR, 99%), ethanol ( $\text{EtOH}$ , VWR, <99%), toluene (Carlo Erba, <99%), and methanol (VWR, <99%).

**Precursors.** *Cadmium Myristate*  $\text{Cd}(\text{Myr})_2$ . In a 50 mL three-neck flask, 2.56 g of  $\text{CdO}$  and 11 g of myristic acid were mixed and degassed

at  $90^\circ\text{C}$  for an hour. Then, under Ar flux, the temperature was set to be  $200^\circ\text{C}$ . When the solution turns colorless (in approximately 40 min), the reaction was stopped and the temperature decreased. At  $60^\circ\text{C}$ , 30 mL of methanol was added to the mixture. Cadmium myristate was washed 4 times with methanol and dried overnight at  $50^\circ\text{C}$  under vacuum.

**Cadmium Oleate in ODE (0.1 M).**  $\text{CdO}$  (6.42 g, 50 mmol) was added to 100 mL of OA in a 250 mL three-neck flask and heated at  $160^\circ\text{C}$ . When the mixture became colorless, the flask is cooled down to  $70^\circ\text{C}$  and degassed under vacuum for 1 h. Then, 400 mL of ODE was added to obtain the final concentration. The solution was transferred into a bottle and stored for several months. The precursor was heated prior to use.

**Zinc Oleate in ODE (0.1 M).** In a 250 mL flask, 50 mmol of  $\text{ZnO}$  (4.074 g) and 100 mL of OA are introduced. The mixture was heated to  $180^\circ\text{C}$  and stayed at that temperature until there was a clear solution. The reaction was cooled down immediately to  $120^\circ\text{C}$  and degassed at this temperature to remove the water. Then, the heating mantle was removed and the mixture was allowed to cool down naturally. To get 0.1 M zinc oleate, 16 mL of ODE was added to 4 mL of 0.5 M zinc oleate. The precursor was heated prior to use.

**$\text{Cd}_x\text{Zn}_{1-x}$  Oleate (0.1 M).**  $\text{Cd}_x\text{Zn}_{1-x}$  oleate (0.1 M) can be obtained by mixing cadmium oleate (0.1 M) and zinc oleate (0.1 M) described above according to the desired ratio.

**CdSe Core NPL Synthesis.** A mixture of 340 mg of  $\text{Cd}(\text{Myr})_2$  (0.6 mmol), 24 mg of Se powder (0.3 mmol), and 30 mL of ODE was degassed in a three-neck flask for 30 min under vacuum. Then, under Ar flux, the temperature was set to  $240^\circ\text{C}$  and as it reached  $180^\circ\text{C}$ , 80 mg (0.3 mmol) of  $\text{Cd}(\text{OAc})_2 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$  solid was rapidly added to the flask. Twelve minutes after the addition of  $\text{Cd}(\text{OAc})_2$ , the reaction was quenched by injecting 2 mL of OA. Then, the mixture was cooled down to room temperature. Hexane and ethanol were added to the reaction mixture before it was precipitated by centrifugation. A second cleaning was conducted with hexane/ethanol, and the final CdSe core NPLs were redispersed in 12 mL of ODE.

**CdSe/ $\text{Cd}_x\text{Zn}_{1-x}$ S Core/Shell NPL Synthesis.** The recipe was taken from the literature with modifications.<sup>30</sup> 15 mL of TOA was added to a 100 mL three-neck flask and degassed at  $100^\circ\text{C}$  for 30 min. Then, the atmosphere was switched to Ar and the temperature was set to  $300^\circ\text{C}$ . Meanwhile, 7 mL of 0.12 M octanethiol and 7 mL of 0.1 M of  $\text{Cd}_x\text{Zn}_{1-x}$  oleate ( $x = 0.05$  or  $0.1$ ) were put into two syringes and set on a pump. When the temperature stabilized at  $300^\circ\text{C}$ , the syringe pump was

started and pumped at a constant rate of 4.7 mL h<sup>-1</sup>. After several drops of pumping, 3 mL of the NPL core in ODE was swiftly injected to the flask. Then, the mixture was baked for another 90 min at 300 °C after all the injection were finished. The flask was then cooled down with air flux and at the temperature of 100 °C, 2 mL of OA was injected. 15 mL of hexane and 10 mL of ethanol were added to precipitate the NPLs by centrifugation. After second purification with ethanol and hexane, the NPLs were finally dispersed in 5 mL of toluene.

**Material Characterization.** *Absorption and PL.* The JASCO V-730 spectrometer was used for UV–visible spectroscopy. PL spectra and PL quantum yield (PLQY) in a solution sample were obtained by the Edinburgh Instrument spectrometer.

*Transmission Electron Microscopy Image.* A JEOL 2010 transmission electron microscope operated at 200 kV was used to observe the NCs. The grids were prepared by drop-casting a diluted solution of NPLs dispersed in toluene and degassed overnight under secondary vacuum to remove solvent residue and volatile organics.

*XPS Measurements.* For ultraviolet photoemission spectroscopy, the films of NCs were spin-casted on a gold-coated Si substrate (gold layer is 80 nm thick). The film was ligand-exchanged by dipping the film into a 1% in volume solution of ethanedithiol in ethanol. The samples were introduced in the preparation chamber and degassed until the vacuum reached below 10<sup>-9</sup> mbar. Then, samples were introduced to the analysis chamber. Photoenergy in the 60–1000 eV range was used. The signal was acquired by a detector SCIENTA SES2002 analyzer equipped with a delay line detector developed by ELETTRA. A gold substrate was used to measure the Fermi energy. The exact value of the energy of the beamline was determined by measuring the second harmonic of Cd core-level peaks. The measurement of the low binding part of the photoemission spectrum was used to determine the value of  $V_B - E_F$ . Then, the energy of the conduction band was determined from the valence band offset by the absorption gap. Finally, the work function was determined by measuring the cut-off of secondary electrons.

**LED Fabrication.** *Materials for LED.* PEDOT:PSS (Al 4083, M121, Ossila), poly-TPD (Ossila), PVK (average  $M_n$  25,000–50,000, Aldrich), chlorobenzene (anhydrous, 99.8%, Sigma-Aldrich), *m*-xylene (anhydrous, ≥99%, Sigma-Aldrich), zinc acetate dihydrate (97+%, Alfa Aesar), tetramethylammonium hydroxide pentahydrate (TMAOH, 98%, Alfa Aesar), dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO, ≥99.9%, Sigma-Aldrich), ethyl acetate (VMR), ethanol absolute anhydrous (VMR), acetone (VWR), and toluene (Carlo Erba, 99.3%). All the materials were used as received.

*Synthesis of ZnO Nanoparticles.* The procedure was taken from ref 37. In flask A, 3 mmol of zinc acetate was dissolved in 30 mL of DMSO by vigorous stirring. At the same time, 5.5 mmol of TMAOH was dissolved with 10 mL of ethanol in flask B. Then, the content of the two flasks was mixed and stirred for 24 h under ambient conditions. The reaction mixture turned whitish during the first few seconds and became clear soon after. ZnO particles were precipitated by ethyl acetate and redispersed in ethanol. 2-ethanolamine (160 μL) was added to stabilize the nanoparticles before they were precipitated and redispersed with ethyl acetate and ethanol, respectively, again. Finally, the ZnO nanoparticles in ethanol is filtered using a 0.22 μm PTFE filter.

*ITO Substrate Patterning.* ITO substrates (10 Ω/sq) were cut into 15 mm × 15 mm pieces and cleaned by sonication in acetone for 5 min. After sonication, the substrates were rinsed with acetone and isopropanol before drying completely with N<sub>2</sub> flow. The substrates were further cleaned with O<sub>2</sub> plasma for 5 min to remove organic residuals on the surface. After cleaning, TI Prime and AZ 5214E photoresist were sequentially spin-coated on the surface of ITO substrates at a rate of 4000 rpm for 30 s and baked at 110 °C for 120 and 90 s, respectively. In the next stage, a mask aligner was used to expose the substrates to UV light for 20 s through a lithography mask (1 mm width). Photoresist was then developed using AZ 726 developer for 20 s before rinsing with deionized water and dried with N<sub>2</sub> flux. After another 5 min plasma cleaning, the substrates were etched in a 25% HCl (in water) bath for 10 min at 40 °C before they were dipped immediately in deionized water. Finally, the lift-off was conducted in an acetone bath. Before using, the patterned ITO substrates were cleaned with acetone and isopropanol first and put under plasma for 10 min.

*LED Fabrication.* PEDOT:PSS solution (filtered through 0.45 μm filter) was spin-coated on a patterned ITO glass electrode at 4000 rpm for 60 s and annealed at 140 °C for 10 min in air. Inside a nitrogen-filled glovebox, poly-TPD (8 mg mL<sup>-1</sup> in chlorobenzene), PVK (1.5 mg mL<sup>-1</sup> in *m*-xylene), NPLs, and ZnO nanoparticles were successively spin-coated at 2000 rpm for 45 s on the PEDOT:PSS-coated substrate. After the deposition of poly-TPD, the sample was annealed at 110 °C for 20 min, and for PVK, the annealing was at 170 °C for 30 min. Finally, 80 nm of Ag was deposited on top of the ZnO using a shadow mask by thermal evaporation. The thicknesses of NPL and ZnO layer were 18 and 80 nm respectively, as obtained by profilometry. The devices were encapsulated inside the glovebox with a piece of glass by Araldite crystal glue. The size of the pixel was 1 mm<sup>2</sup> which was the overlap of ITO and Ag electrode.

**LED Characterization.** The EQE of the device was determined according to the method from ref 49. Considering the Lambertian emission of the LED device, the flux leaving the device directly can be described as  $F_{\text{ext}} = \int_0^{\pi/2} 2\pi L_0 \cos \theta \sin \theta d\theta = \pi L_0$ , with  $L_0$  being the flux per solid angle of light leaving the device in the forward direction. Because the solid angle from the photodetector to the light source is  $\Omega = S_1/l^2$  with  $S_1$  being the area of the detector and  $l$  being the distance between the light source and detector, then  $L_0 = P_{\text{det}}/\Omega = P_{\text{det}} l^2/S_1$  and  $F_{\text{ext}} = \pi P_{\text{det}} l^2/S_1$ . The number of photons emitted per second to the forward direction then can be calculated by  $N_p = F_{\text{ext}}/h\nu = \pi P_{\text{det}} l^2/\lambda S_1 hc$ , with  $\lambda$  being the wavelength of EL,  $h$  being the Planck's constant, and  $c$  being the speed of light. The number of electrons injected per second can be obtained by  $N_e = I/e$ , with  $I$  being the current flow of the device. Thus, the EQE can be calculated as  $\text{EQE} = N_p/N_e = \pi P_{\text{det}} l^2 \lambda e / S_1 hc I$ . The irradiance of the device is  $R = F_{\text{ext}}/S_2 = \pi P_{\text{det}} l^2 / S_1 S_2$ , with  $S_2$  being the area of the pixel. The luminance of the device  $L = 683 \cdot V(\lambda) \cdot F_{\text{ext}}/\pi \cdot S_2$ , with  $V(\lambda)$  being the function of photonic eye sensitivity. For characterization, we collected current–voltage–luminance characteristics with a Keithley K2634B sourcemeter unit and a PM100A powermeter coupled with the S120C Si detector from Thorlabs. Knowing that the working diameter of detector area is 9.5 mm and assuming the distance between detector and device to be 6.5 mm, the geometry related value of  $l^2/S_1 \approx 0.6$ .

**Operation of the Communication Setup.** To probe the ability of the LED for all-NC-based communication, we used a MFLI lock-in amplifier to drive the LED and measure the detected signal from the PbS solar cell. The signal output of the MFLI was used to send a periodic signal composed of an offset voltage ( $V_{\text{offset}}$ ) over which is added a sinusoidal signal at 10 kHz with an amplitude (zero-to-peak) of  $V_{\text{pk}}$ . On the detection side, the solar cell is operated at 0 V bias and current is amplified through a Femto DLPCA-100 transimpedance amplifier (TIA). The output voltage of the TIA was then sent to the signal input of the lock-in. After demodulation, the photocurrent at the reference frequency is measured. The amplitude of the modulation is defined as  $V_{\text{pk}}/V_{\text{offset}}$ .

## ■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

### Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acsami.0c05264>.

Video illustrating the operation of the LEDs under pulsed mode (MP4)

LED characterization (angular dependence operation under high electric field, low-temperature operation), operation of the all NC-based communication setup (large-scale LED fabrication, solar cell fabrication and characterization, and transmission of binary signal) (PDF)

## ■ AUTHOR INFORMATION

## Corresponding Author

**Emmanuel Lhuillier** — Sorbonne Université, CNRS, Institut des NanoSciences de Paris, INSP, F-75005 Paris, France;  
✉ [orcid.org/0000-0003-2582-1422](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2582-1422); Email: [el@insp.upmc.fr](mailto:el@insp.upmc.fr)

## Authors

**Junling Qu** — Sorbonne Université, CNRS, Institut des NanoSciences de Paris, INSP, F-75005 Paris, France;  
✉ [orcid.org/0000-0003-2504-1274](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2504-1274)

**Prachi Rastogi** — Sorbonne Université, CNRS, Institut des NanoSciences de Paris, INSP, F-75005 Paris, France;  
✉ [orcid.org/0000-0003-3535-0441](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3535-0441)

**Charlie Gréboval** — Sorbonne Université, CNRS, Institut des NanoSciences de Paris, INSP, F-75005 Paris, France;  
✉ [orcid.org/0000-0002-0314-7273](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0314-7273)

**Clément Livache** — Sorbonne Université, CNRS, Institut des NanoSciences de Paris, INSP, F-75005 Paris, France; Laboratoire de Physique et d'Etude des Matériaux, ESPCI-Paris, PSL Research University, Sorbonne Université Univ Paris 06, CNRS UMR 8213, 75005 Paris, France; ✉ [orcid.org/0000-0002-2588-2607](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2588-2607)

**Marion Dufour** — Laboratoire de Physique et d'Etude des Matériaux, ESPCI-Paris, PSL Research University, Sorbonne Université Univ Paris 06, CNRS UMR 8213, 75005 Paris, France; ✉ [orcid.org/0000-0001-9588-9524](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9588-9524)

**Audrey Chu** — Sorbonne Université, CNRS, Institut des NanoSciences de Paris, INSP, F-75005 Paris, France;  
✉ [orcid.org/0000-0002-6905-7131](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6905-7131)

**Sang-Soo Chee** — Sorbonne Université, CNRS, Institut des NanoSciences de Paris, INSP, F-75005 Paris, France;  
✉ [orcid.org/0000-0001-9111-3358](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9111-3358)

**Julien Ramade** — Sorbonne Université, CNRS, Institut des NanoSciences de Paris, INSP, F-75005 Paris, France

**Xiang Zhen Xu** — Laboratoire de Physique et d'Etude des Matériaux, ESPCI-Paris, PSL Research University, Sorbonne Université Univ Paris 06, CNRS UMR 8213, 75005 Paris, France

**Sandrine Ithurria** — Laboratoire de Physique et d'Etude des Matériaux, ESPCI-Paris, PSL Research University, Sorbonne Université Univ Paris 06, CNRS UMR 8213, 75005 Paris, France; ✉ [orcid.org/0000-0002-4733-9883](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4733-9883)

Complete contact information is available at:  
<https://pubs.acs.org/10.1021/acsami.0c05264>

## Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

## ■ ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The project is supported by ERC starting grant blackQD (grant no. 756225) and Ne2Dem (grant no. 853049). We acknowledge the use of clean-room facilities from the “Centrale de Proximité Paris-Centre”. This work has been supported by the Region Ile-de-France in the framework of DIM Nano-K (grant dopQD). This work was supported by French state funds managed by the ANR within the Investissements d'Avenir programme under reference ANR-11-IDEX-0004-02, and more specifically within the framework of the Cluster of Excellence MATISSE and also by the grant IPER-Nano2, Copin, Frontal, Graskop. J.Q. thanks Chinese Scholarship Council for PhD grant while A.C. thanks Agence innovation defense.

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