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Reduction, crystal structure and magnetic properties of $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_{4-\delta}$ ($0.0 \leq x \leq 2.0$, $0.0 \leq \delta \leq 1.0$). Comparison with the $\text{Co}/\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ Fischer-Tropsch catalyst

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ABSTRACT

Spinel type samples $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_4$ ($0.0 \leq x \leq 2.0$) were synthesized from citrate solutions and used as reference compounds for characterization of a 20% $\text{Co}/\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ Fischer-Tropsch catalyst. With increasing Al-content for the observed solid solution phase between CoAl_2O_4 and Co_3O_4 , the unit cell expands smoothly, antiferromagnetic ordering temperature decreases ($T_N \leq 40$ K) and the temperature required for reduction increases. Low-temperature reduction yields a partially reduced intermediate (Co^{II}) phase of NaCl-type. The crystal structure of such a partially reduced phase $(\text{Co}_{5/16}\text{Al}_{1/6})_{0.92}\text{O}$ is determined on the basis of powder X-ray and neutron diffraction data; space group $Fm\bar{3}m$; $a = 422.98$ (4) pm; $R_{\text{wp}} = 4.0$ %, $R_p = 3.1$ %. $(\text{Co}_{5/16}\text{Al}_{1/6})_{0.92}\text{O}$ orders antiferromagnetically below $T_N = 320 \pm 5$ K with a magnetic structure similar to that of CoO , $\mu_{\text{AF}} = 3.57$ (3) μ_B ; $R_M = 7.2$ %. TPR data for the oxidized catalyst show, consistent with PXD data, the presence of Co_3O_4 supported on $\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$, together with a mixed Co/Al-oxide phase, probably existing as an interface layer of $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_4$ with $x \approx 0.5$, the latter composition being consistent with the observed antiferromagnetic ordering temperature $T_N = 27$ K for the oxidized catalyst. The activated catalyst obtained on reduction

at 573 K was found to consist of fine particles (28 nm) of ferromagnetic cobalt (*fcc*) together with a partially reduced, NaCl-type phase ($\text{Co}_{0.88}\text{Al}_{0.08}\text{O}$) supported on $\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$.

INTRODUCTION

Cobalt supported on $\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$, usually promoted with noble metals like rhenium, platinum and rhodium and also rare earth elements like lanthanum, is an interesting catalyst for the synthesis of hydrocarbons by CO hydrogenation, the so-called Fischer-Tropsch synthesis. Cobalt is typically deposited in the oxidized state at the surface of $\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$. The catalyst is thereafter activated by reduction of di- and trivalent cobalt species to elementary Co(s) by means of hydrogen gas, preferably in the temperature range 573 - 673 K. Previous studies showed a complex reduction behavior for the oxidized Co/ $\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ catalyst, which was explained by a large degree of interaction at the interface between Co-species and $\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ during the catalyst preparation.¹ The interface reaction increases as a function of increasing calcination temperature due to a higher solid state diffusion rate. Owing to this interface reaction major amounts of cobalt are left in an oxidized state after the activation process. In addition to the spinel type Co_3O_4 and CoAl_2O_4 indications for mixed Co/Al-oxides both in the oxidized and the activated catalyst have been reported.¹⁻²

In the Co-Al-O system, three stoichiometric phases with spinel type crystal structure are reported, Co_3O_4 , Co_2AlO_4 and CoAl_2O_4 . In the spinel type structure, AB_2O_4 , the A and B atoms occupy respectively tetrahedral and octahedral holes in an *fcc* lattice of oxygen atoms (space group $Fd\bar{3}m$). Co_3O_4 has the normal spinel type structure with Co^{II} for A and Co^{III} for B.³ Co_2AlO_4 and CoAl_2O_4 have partially inverse spinel type structures with 27 and 15.5% of the A-position filled by trivalent Al-atoms, respectively.^{4,5} There are indications for a solid state solution phase $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_4$ ($0 \leq x \leq 2$).^{3,5} The stoichiometric Co-spinels are antiferromagnetically ordered at lower temperatures, $T_N < 46$ K. In the paramagnetic state minor deviations from Curie-Weiss behavior have been explained in terms of a temperature independent contribution to the paramagnetic susceptibility.^{3,6-8}

Comparative studies with closely related, single phase model compounds are often required in order to extract information about the different phases in multi-phase specimens like the Co/ $\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ catalyst. Hence, the present study focuses on detailed characterization, i.e. reduction, crystal structure and magnetic properties, of an extended number of model compounds with general composition $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_{4-\delta}$ ($0.0 \leq x \leq 2.0$, $0.0 \leq \delta \leq 1.0$). At the same time, similar studies are conducted for a (real) Co/ $\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ catalyst in order to approach an

improved understanding of the nature of the Co/Al-oxide interface layer, for the oxidized as well as for the reduced (activated) catalyst.

EXPERIMENTAL

Synthesis. Samples of spinel type $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_4$, $0.0 \leq x \leq 2.0$, were prepared from citrate solutions. The starting materials for the synthesis were $\text{Al}(\text{NO}_3)_3 \cdot 9\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (p.a., > 98%, Fluka), $\text{Co}(\text{CH}_3\text{COO})_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (p.a., > 99%, Fluka) and citric acid monohydrate, $\text{C}_3\text{H}_4(\text{OH})(\text{COOH})_3 \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O}$ (p.a., > 99.8%, Riedel-de Haën). Gravimetric analyses were made for $\text{Co}(\text{CH}_3\text{COO})_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$ and $\text{Al}(\text{NO}_3)_3 \cdot 9\text{H}_2\text{O}$ prior to use. $\text{Al}(\text{NO}_3)_3 \cdot 9\text{H}_2\text{O}$ was initially dissolved in a melt of citric acid (weight ratio 1 : 5) and 3 ml distilled water. A clear solution was obtained after removal of nitrous gases by boiling. Thereafter, $\text{Co}(\text{CH}_3\text{COO})_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$ was added along with additional distilled water. The citrate solution was dehydrated at 450 K, and carbonaceous species in the resulting X-ray amorphous xerogel were removed by incineration at 720 K. The fine powder was cold-pressed into pellets, placed in an alumina crucible, and calcined in air at 1100 K for 48 hours with one intermediate grinding followed by repelletization. The samples were slowly cooled to 570 K in the furnace before transferred to a desiccator. All samples were well crystalline powders with the exception of CoAl_2O_4 where a second calcination in air at 1300 K for 30 hours was required. The colour of the samples, as seen by the naked eye, changed from black ($x = 0.0$) via green ($x = 0.5, 1.0, 1.5$) to blue ($x = 2.0$). The oxidized 20% Co/ γ - Al_2O_3 catalyst was delivered by Statoil, Trondheim.^a

Reductions. Isothermal reductions of $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_4$ and the 20% Co/ γ - Al_2O_3 catalyst were performed in sealed silica glass ampoules using weighed chips of Zr (99.5% A. D. Mackay Inc.) as reducing agent (oxygen getter). The ampoules, with the samples, were repeatedly flushed with argon before evacuation and sealing in order to minimize the amount of gaseous oxygen in the system prior to the reduction. Zr was positioned in the warmer zone of the furnace at 873 K in order to assure complete oxidation to ZrO_2 .⁹ The sample temperature which was kept in the range 573 - 673 K typically used for catalyst activation, was controlled by varying the distance between the sample and Zr within the temperature gradient of the tube furnace. The ampoules were opened in an argon filled glovebox [$p(\text{O}_2)$ and $p(\text{H}_2\text{O}) < 1$ ppm].

^a The 20% Co/ γ - Al_2O_3 catalyst sample delivered by Statoil Research Center, Trondheim (Norway) had been prepared by incipient wetness impregnation of a γ - Al_2O_3 support (Puralox, Cordea, B-5207) with an aqueous solution of $\text{Co}(\text{NO}_3)_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (p.a., 99%, Fluka) and calcined at 648 K in air after drying.

Care was taken to assure inert atmosphere during storage, handling and subsequent characterization of specimens.

Temperature programmed reduction (TPR) was performed by an AMI-1 Catalyst Characterization System from Altamira Instruments. The temperature program used for all samples included a pretreatment of the sample in Ar at 748 K for 15 minutes (gas flow rate 30 cm³ min⁻¹, heating rate 20 K min⁻¹) prior to the reduction performed on heating to 1173 K in 10% H₂/Ar (gas flow rate 99 cm³ min⁻¹, heating rate 5 K min⁻¹). All gases were of purity > 99.99% and they were further purified in a molecular sieve and a cold trap before use.

Characterization. Powder X-ray diffraction (PXD) data were collected by Guinier Hägg cameras at 298 K using Si as internal standard ($a = 543.1065$ pm). Both CrK α_1 ($\lambda = 228.970$ pm, detection limit for impurities ca. 0.3 wt%)¹⁰ and CuK α_1 ($\lambda = 154.0598$ pm) radiation were used. Unit cell dimensions were determined by least squares calculations using the program UNITCELL.¹¹ Synchrotron (SR) PXD data were collected for (Co_{5/6}Al_{1/6})_{0.92}O (Co_{3-x}Al_xO_{4- δ} , $x = 0.5$, $\delta = 0.75$) with the powder diffractometer in Debye-Scherrer mode at the Swiss Norwegian Beam Line (BM1) at ESRF (Grenoble). Monochromatic X-rays were obtained from a channel-cut Si(111) crystal. X-rays of wavelength 110.103 pm were used. The sample was contained in a sealed and rotating glass capillary, diameter 0.5 mm. Intensity data were collected at 298 K between $2\theta = 20$ and 90° in steps of $\Delta(2\theta) = 0.03^\circ$. Powder neutron diffraction (PND) data were collected for (Co_{5/6}Al_{1/6})_{0.92}O with the two-axis powder diffractometer PUS at the JEEP II reactor, Kjeller (Norway). A cylindrical sample holder of vanadium, carefully sealed with an indium washer, was used. Monochromatized neutrons of wavelength 112.74 pm were obtained by reflection from Ge(711) of a focusing composite germanium monochromator. The scattered intensities were measured by two detector units, each containing a vertical stack of seven position sensitive ³He detectors which covers 20° in 2θ . Intensity data were collected at 10 K and 298 K between $2\theta = 10$ and 125° in steps of $\Delta(2\theta) = 0.05^\circ$. The GSAS program package¹² was used for Rietveld-type profile refinements of the powder X-ray and neutron diffraction data collected at 298 K. The background was modelled by cosine Fourier series polynomials for both datasets. The peak shape of the PXD(SR) and PND patterns were modelled by a pseudo-Voigt function. The scattering lengths $b_{La} = 8.27$ fm, $b_{Co} = 2.53$ fm and $b_O = 5.81$ fm were taken from the GSAS library. For profile refinement of the PND data collected at 10 K (crystal and magnetic structure) the Fullprof program¹³ was used. The following parameters were varied for the PXD(SR) data and PND data (in parentheses); 1 (1) scale factor, 1 (1) zero point, 5 (5) profile parameters, 1 (1) unit

cell dimension, 2 (2) isotropic displacement factors, 17 (12) background parameters. In total, 27 (20) free variables entered into the least-squares refinements. 11 (18) Bragg reflections contributed to the observed profile consisting of 2333 (2300) data points. For the PND data at 10 K two magnetic components were refined in addition.

Thermogravimetric analysis (TGA) was performed with a Perkin Elmer TGA7. Data reduction was performed with standard programs for the systems.

Magnetic susceptibility data were measured by a Quantum Design SQUID-magnetometer (MPMS) in the temperature range 2 - 300 K for magnetic fields (H) up to 50.0 kOe. All samples were zero field cooled and the temperature dependence of the magnetic susceptibility was measured on heating. The air-sensitive, reduced samples were held in evacuated and sealed spherical silica glass ampoules, whereas gelatine capsules were used for all other samples. The measured magnetic susceptibility was corrected for diamagnetic contribution from the sample container and from core electrons.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

PXD characterization

The $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_4$ model samples were well crystalline and gave sharp Bragg reflections in the PXD data which were indexed according to the cubic spinel type structure, space group $Fd\bar{3}m$. The variation in the unit cell dimensions, Fig. 1, strongly indicates complete miscibility between the two end phases, Co_3O_4 and CoAl_2O_4 , of the spinel series $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_4$ ($0.0 \leq x \leq 2.0$). The relative intensity of certain reflections changes with the aluminium content (x) and can possibly be used as a separate measure for composition. For example, the PXD patterns for $x = 1.5$ and 2.0 appear slightly different compared to the remaining samples, e.g. with no intensity for (111).

The unit cell expands gradually upon increasing aluminium content (x), Fig. 1. The modest expansion (0.79 %) can be interpreted in terms of ionic radii for the substituting elements. Ionic radii, according to Shannon,¹⁴ are $r_{\text{tet}}(\text{Al}^{\text{III}}) = 39$, $r_{\text{oct}}(\text{Al}^{\text{III}}) = 53.5$, $r_{\text{oct}}(\text{Co}^{\text{III}}, \text{LS}) = 54.5$, $r_{\text{tet}}(\text{Co}^{\text{II}}, \text{HS}) = 58$ and $r_{\text{oct}}(\text{Co}^{\text{II}}, \text{HS}) = 74.5$ pm. Al^{III} substitutes for low-spin Co^{III} (LS, d^6) in $\text{Co}^{\text{II}}\text{Co}^{\text{III}}_{2-x}\text{Al}^{\text{III}}_x\text{O}_4$. There is almost no size difference between the tabulated values for these substituting atoms. Furthermore, the literature indicate that a partial inversion of the spinel type structure may occur for $x > 0$.^{4,5} This implies that some Co^{II} (HS) will be randomly distributed over octahedral sites and some Al^{III} will be located on tetrahedral sites. For such a

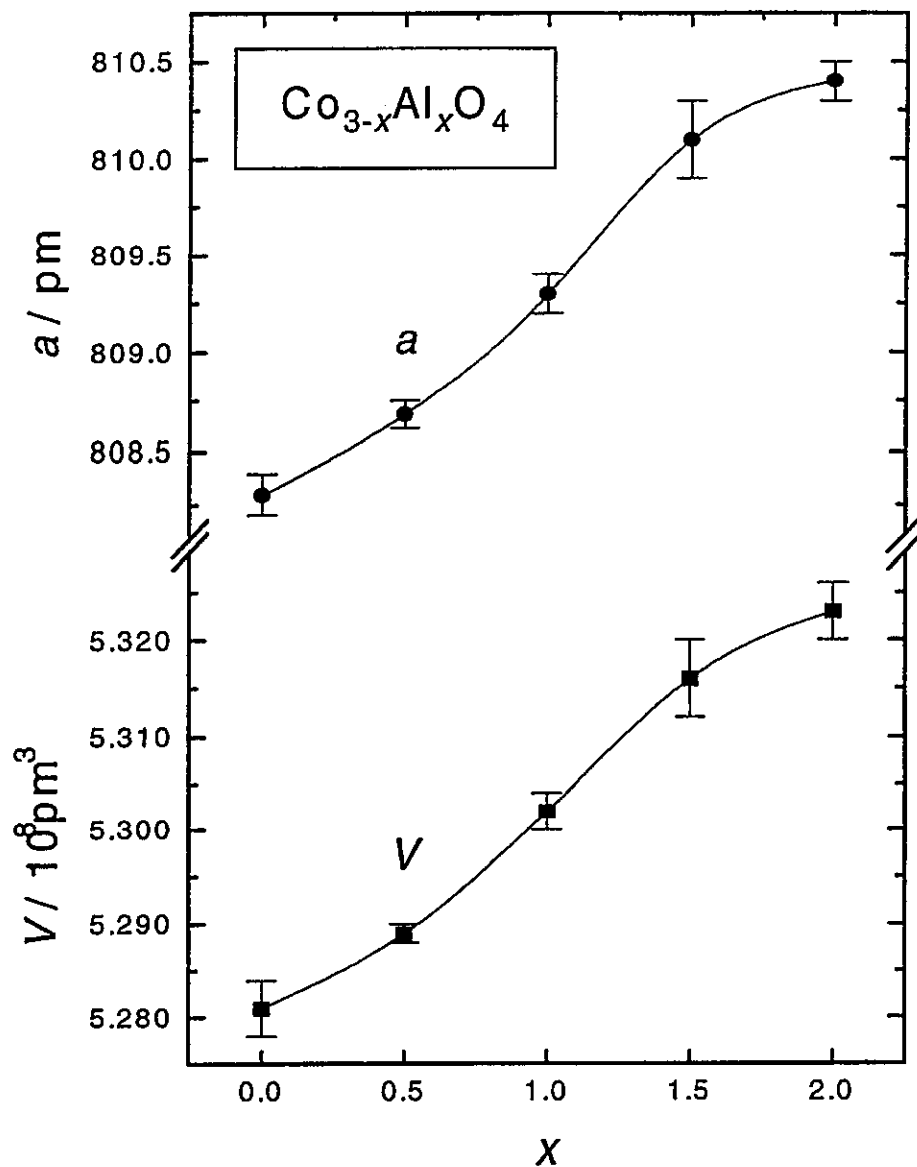


Fig. 1 Unit cell dimensions for cubic spinel type $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_4$ with $0.0 \leq x \leq 2.0$ at 298 K.

partial inversion, a minor unit cell expansion may be expected on the basis of the ionic radii. The observed unit cell expansion is probably a combined effect of substitution of Al^{III} for $\text{Co}^{\text{III}}(\text{LS})$ and partial inversion of the spinel type structure.

The PXD pattern for the 20% $\text{Co}/\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ catalyst shows weak and broad reflections which corresponds to the patterns for $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_4$ ($x = 0.0, 0.5, 1.0$). From the center positions of the broad reflections $a = 808.2$ pm is derived. This corresponds well to the value for Co_3O_4

(Fig. 1). If the broad reflections are a result of composition fluctuations in a spinel type solid solution, one may derive unit cell dimensions in the range 806.9 - 809.4 pm. However, the lower value of these is too small (cf. Fig.1) and it is more likely that the broadening is caused by small particle size. If so, an average particle size of 42 nm for this spinel phase is estimated on the basis of the Scherrer formula for particle size broadening. Nevertheless, the existence of poorly crystalline $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_4$ with varying but low Al-content at the interface between the γ - Al_2O_3 support and Co_3O_4 can not be excluded on the basis of the PXD data.

Temperature programmed reduction

TPR studies of $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_4$ show that the onset temperature for reduction rise gradually with increasing aluminum content (x), Fig. 2. Furthermore, several steps (peaks) appear in the TPR-curves for $\text{Co}_{2.5}\text{Al}_{0.5}\text{O}_4$, Co_2AlO_4 and $\text{Co}_{1.5}\text{Al}_{1.5}\text{O}_4$ suggesting a stepwise reduction from Co^{III} via Co^{II} to $\text{Co}(\text{s})$. The stepwise reduction behavior is most prominent for $\text{Co}_{2.5}\text{Al}_{0.5}\text{O}_4$, whose TPR-curve can be roughly divided into two separate peaks. The area confined under the TPR-curve corresponds to the amount of hydrogen consumed during the reduction. The ratio between the areas of the two TPR-peaks for $\text{Co}^{\text{II}}\text{Co}^{\text{III}}_{1.5}\text{Al}^{\text{III}}_{0.5}\text{O}_4$ is 32/100. This corresponds closely to the theoretical 30/100 ratio for the hydrogen consumption in a two step reduction path from Co^{III} via Co^{II} to Co^0 . Hence, the results for the $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_4$ model compounds clearly indicate the existence of a distinct, partially reduced intermediate phase, $\text{Co}^{\text{II}}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_{4-\delta}$. The consecutive reduction of the intermediate phase gives rise to a separate TPR-peak. Earlier and present TPR data for Co_3O_4 shows only one broad peak which implies that reduction signals from Co_3O_4 and CoO overlap completely. On that basis it has been generally assumed that the partially reduced phases formed during stepwise reduction from Co^{III} via Co^{II} to Co could not be resolved by TPR.¹ The present study on $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_4$ shows definitely that the intermediate state can be resolved. In this way $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_4$ shows some resemblance to the LaCoO_3 perovskite, where TPR exhibits several separable peaks owing to formation of vacancy ordered, partially reduced intermediate phases.^{9, 15-16} The TPR-results for $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_4$ in Fig. 2 show that complete reduction into Al_2O_3 and $\text{Co}(\text{s})$ requires an increase in temperature from 700 K ($x = 0.0$) to about 1000 K ($x = 0.5$) when small amounts of aluminium enters into the cobalt spinel.

Interpretation of the complex TPR curve observed for the oxidized 20% $\text{Co}/\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ catalyst (Fig. 3) requires data for suitable reference materials, e.g. like those given above for $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_4$. The first, sharp TPR-peak for the catalyst at 407 K (15% of the total reduction) is

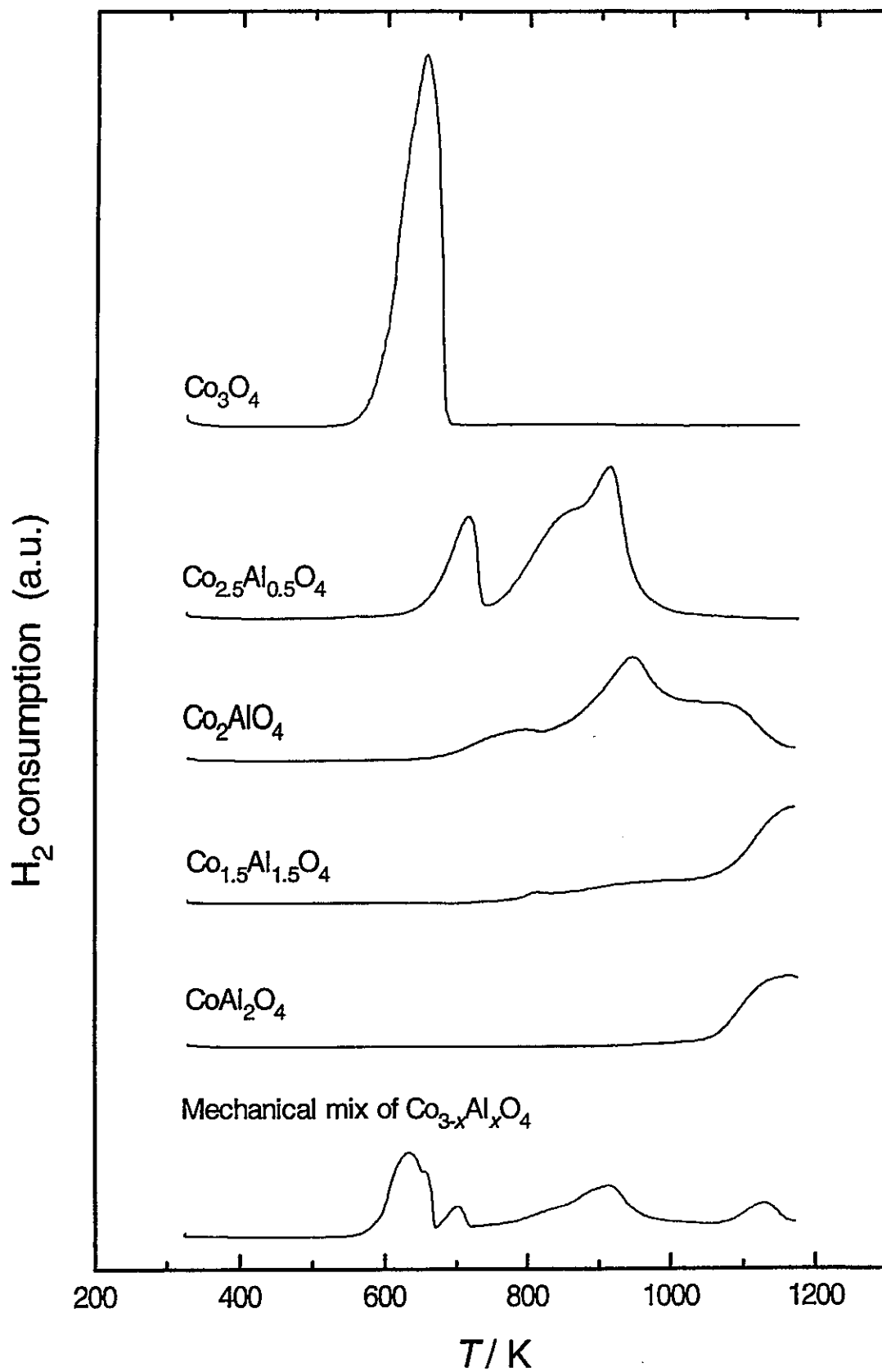


Fig. 2 TPR results for $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_4$ ($0.0 \leq x \leq 2.0$). Heating rate 5 K min^{-1} .

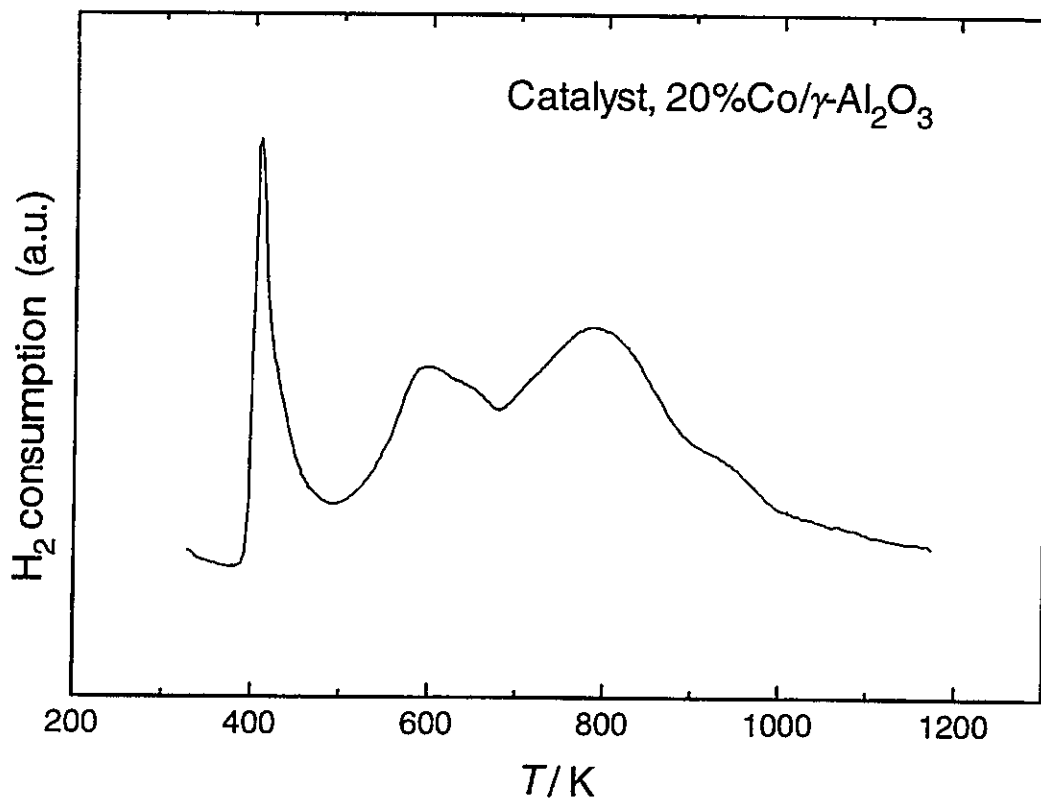


Fig. 3 TPR results for the 20% Co/ γ -Al₂O₃ catalyst. Heating rate 5 K min⁻¹.

attributed to H₂-assisted decomposition of Co-nitrate species which are not decomposed during the calcination.¹ Several broad, overlapping peaks in the temperature range 500 - 1173 K suggests a complex reduction process. From comparison with model data, it is likely that the peak in the range 500-700 K (30% of the total reduction) corresponds to reduction of Co₃O₄ which is consistent with the PXD results for the oxidized catalyst. The sparse crystal structure data for γ -Al₂O₃ describes it as a cation defect spinel ($a = 791$ pm) where Al^{III} randomly occupies 2/3 of the normally filled tetrahedral sites in addition to the octahedral sites.¹⁷ Hence, γ -Al₂O₃ (Al_{2/3}Al₂O₄) and CoCo_{2-x}Al_xO₄ are structurally closely related. The cobalt atoms may fill and substitute on the tetrahedral and octahedral sites in γ -Al₂O₃. Therefore a reaction at the interface between γ -Al₂O₃ and deposited cobalt-species (e.g. Co₃O₄) is expected, which probably leads to a spinel type Co/Al-oxide interface layer. If the temperature was sufficient for solid state diffusion, one would expect growth of the interface layer, favouring spinel type Co_{3-x}Al_xO₄ with a smooth increase in x from the Co rich to the Al rich side of the interface layer. The reduction process for such Co_{3-x}Al_xO₄ interface materials will probably resemble that

of inhomogenous, bulk $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_4$ with a broad TPR-peak above 700 K. This fits in fact the observations for the 20% Co/ $\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ catalyst between 700 - 1173 K (about 55% of its total reduction), see Fig. 2 where TPR data for a mechanical mixture of equal amounts of $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_4$ with $x = 0.0, 0.5, 1.0, 1.5, 2.0$ are included for purpose of comparison. Although the calcination and reduction temperatures adopted for catalyst preparation ($T < 700$ K) are too low for solid state diffusion,¹ TPR shows that a reaction layer of $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_{4-\delta}$ must have been formed, the growth possibly progressing locally by help of produced reaction heat. In this respect the high dispersion of cobalt on the surface of $\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ after impregnation enhances reactivity via the large contact area. The formation of cation defect Co/Al-phases structurally analogous to $\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ cannot be neglected, however no data on such phases are at hand. According to the TPR-results for the catalyst, a reduction limited to 700 K leave major amounts of cobalt in a catalytically less active, oxidized state.

Reduced intermediate phases, $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_{4-\delta}$

The TPR-experiments (Fig. 2) indicate the formation of an intermediate phase $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_{4-\delta}$ [alternatively written $(\text{Co,Al})_{1-y}\text{O}$] upon reduction of Co^{III} to Co^{II} . Samples of nominal composition CoO ($x = 0.0, \delta = 1.00$), $\text{Co}_{2.5}\text{Al}_{0.5}\text{O}_{3.25}$ ($x = 0.5, \delta = 0.75$), and $\text{Co}_2\text{AlO}_{3.5}$ ($x = 1.0, \delta = 0.50$) were prepared by isothermal reduction at 673 K of $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_4$ with $x = 0.0, 0.5, 1.0$, respectively. PXD showed that the samples of CoO and $\text{Co}_{2.5}\text{Al}_{0.5}\text{O}_{3.25}$ are single phase and adopts the cubic NaCl-type structure, space group $Fm\bar{3}m$. Sharp PXD reflections (Guinier Hägg) for CoO indicates a well crystalline phase with $a = 426.3$ (1) pm, which corresponds closely to literature data.¹⁸ The PXD reflections (Guinier Hägg) for $\text{Co}_{2.5}\text{Al}_{0.5}\text{O}_{3.25}$ are rather broad, $a = 422.4$ (3) pm. In order to emphasize the relation to the NaCl-type structure, $\text{Co}_{2.5}\text{Al}_{0.5}\text{O}_{3.25}$ should be rewritten as $(\text{Co}_{5/6}\text{Al}_{1/6})_{0.92}\text{O}$, having probably a high concentration of cation vacancies. The oxygen content of $(\text{Co}_{5/6}\text{Al}_{1/6})_{0.92}\text{O}$ was confirmed by thermogravimetric analysis, Fig. 4, where subsequent PXD analysis assured complete reoxidation back to the $\text{Co}_{2.5}\text{Al}_{0.5}\text{O}_4$ spinel phase. For the sample with nominal composition $\text{Co}_2\text{AlO}_{3.5}$ [$(\text{Co}_{2/3}\text{Al}_{1/3})_{0.86}\text{O}$] PXD data show on spinel type phase ($a = 809.7$ (4) pm) and a NaCl-type phase $(\text{Co,Al})_{1-y}\text{O}$ ($a = 416$ (1) pm, broad reflections). The two-phase situation indicates that the solid solubility range for aluminium in CoO has been exceeded. The cubic unit cell contracts considerably when Al^{III} substitutes for Co^{II} in CoO (cf. ionic radii above). The Al/Co-ratio of the $(\text{Co,Al})_{1-y}\text{O}$ phase of the nominal $\text{Co}_2\text{AlO}_{3.5}$ sample must be close to 1/2 as judged from the small unit cell dimension of this phase compared to those for CoO and

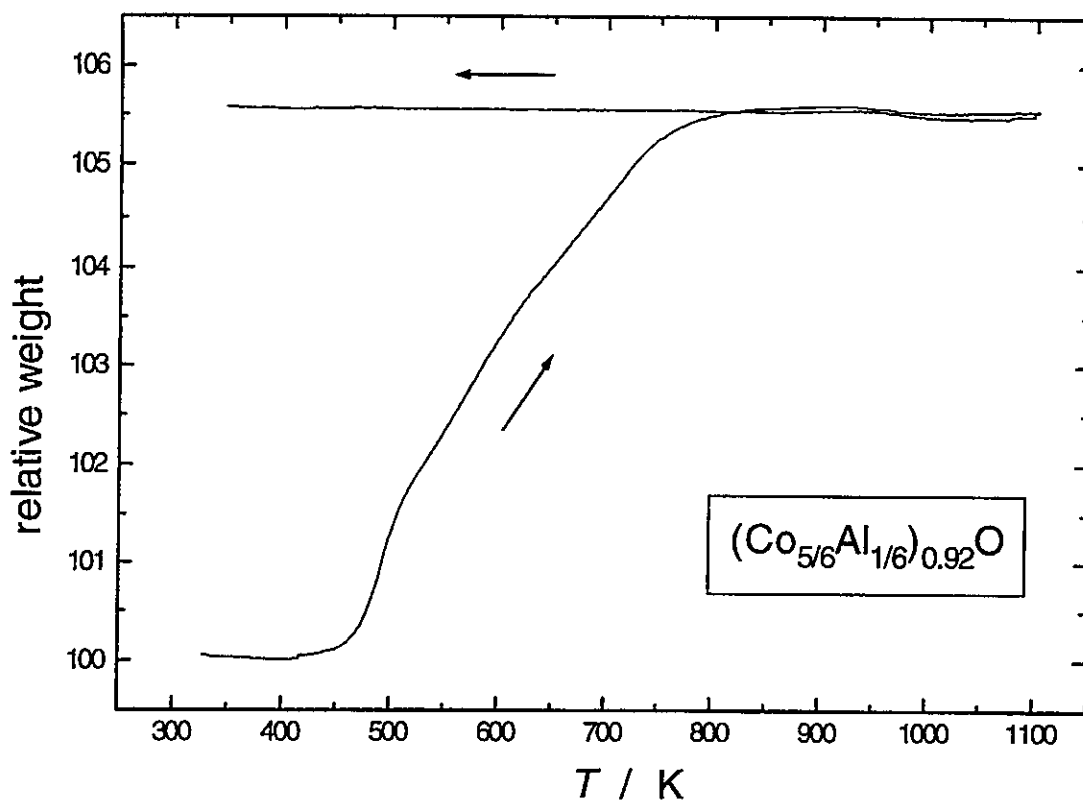


Fig. 4 Thermogravimetric data for oxidation of $(\text{Co}_{5/6}\text{Al}_{1/6})_{0.92}\text{O}$ in air. Heating rate 5 K min^{-1} .

$(\text{Co}_{5/6}\text{Al}_{1/6})_{0.92}\text{O}$. The unit cell for the spinel phase corresponds approximately to $\text{Co}_{1.75}\text{Al}_{1.25}\text{O}_4$ ($x = 1.25$, cf. Fig. 1. The absence of (111) is another indication for $x > 1.0$). The fact that the observed spinel phase has $x < 2.0$ implies that Co^{III} -atoms exist in the structure. Since there are no indications for incomplete oxidation of the zirconium (reducing agent), the average oxidation state for cobalt in the nominal $\text{Co}_2\text{AlO}_{3.5}$ sample is considered to be 2.0. Hence, some $\text{Co}(s)$ ought to be precipitated, and the reduced, nominal $\text{Co}_2\text{AlO}_{3.5}$ sample consists of three phases. This was confirmed by magnetic susceptibility data which showed a weak ferromagnetic behavior, see below.

Crystal structure of the reduced intermediate phase $(\text{Co}_{5/6}\text{Al}_{1/6})_{0.92}\text{O}$

Powder synchrotron X-ray and neutron diffraction data were collected at 298 K for $(\text{Co}_{5/6}\text{Al}_{1/6})_{0.92}\text{O}$. No peak splitting was resolved for the unusually broad Bragg reflections in the synchrotron experiments, Fig. 5. Separate Rietveld profile refinements for the PXD(SR) data and PND data were performed on the basis of the NaCl-type structure for

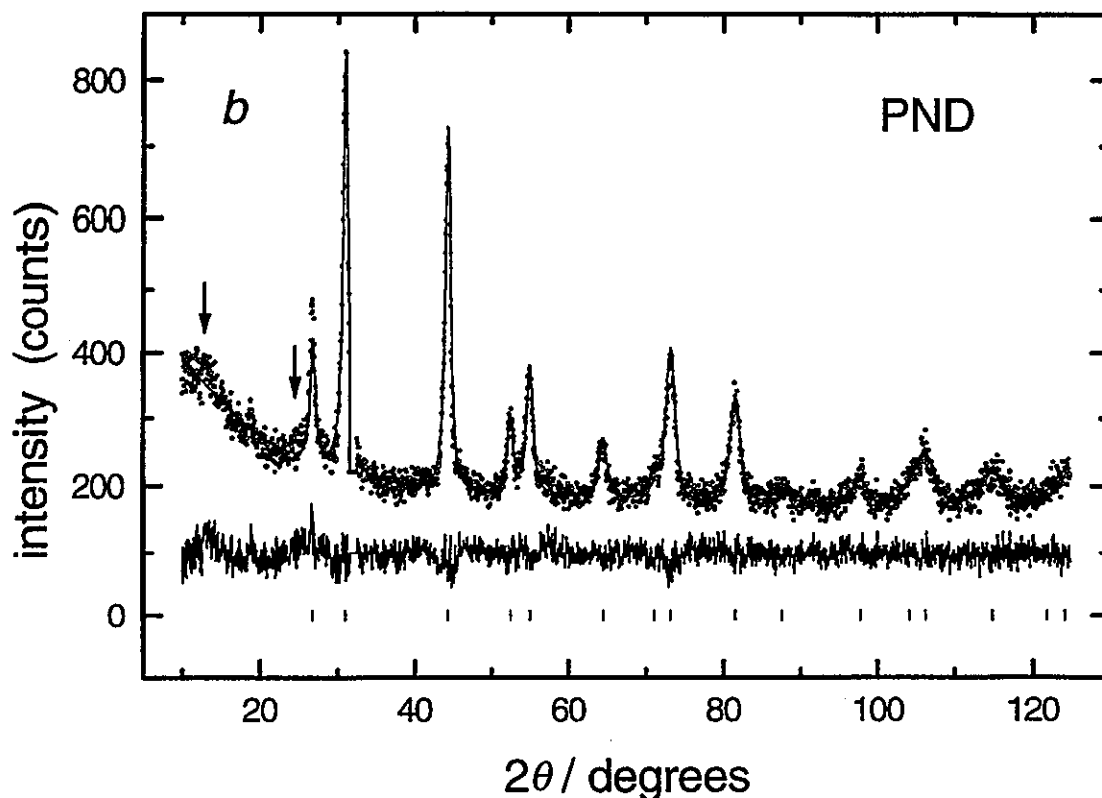
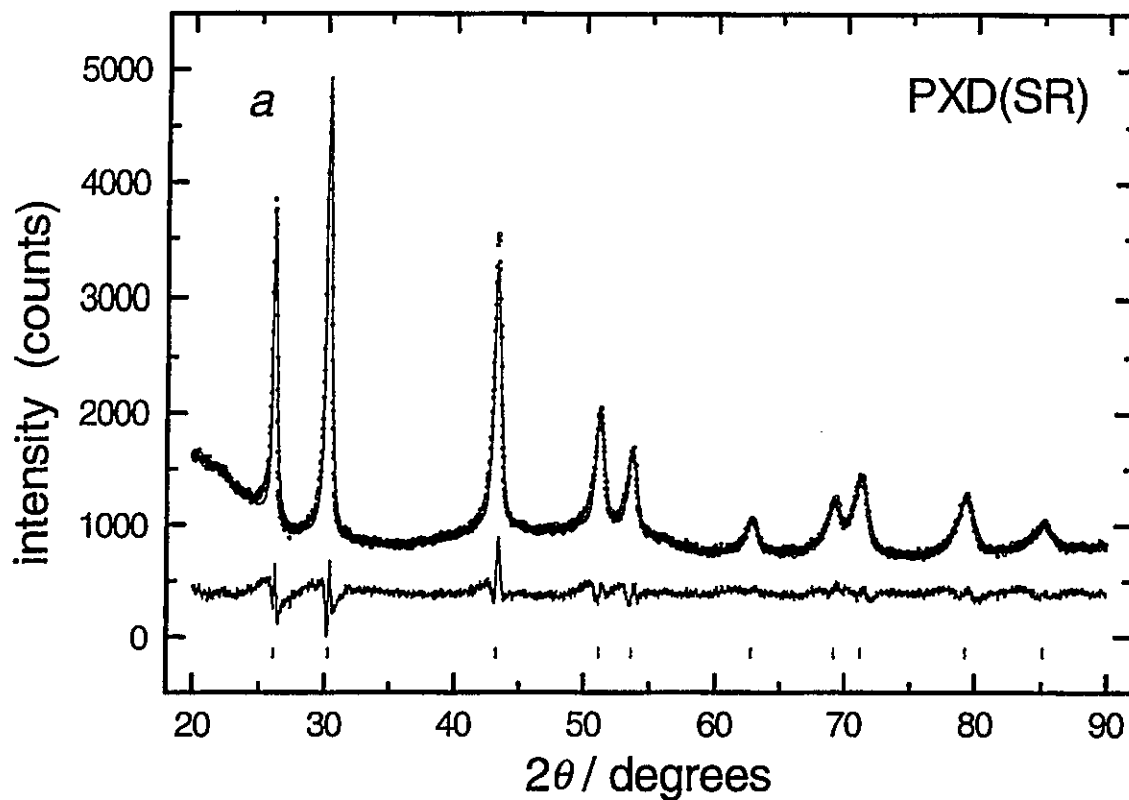


Fig. 5 a) Synchrotron PXD ($\lambda = 110.103$ pm) and b) PND ($\lambda = 112.74$ pm) profiles for $(\text{Co}_{5/6}\text{Al}_{1/6})_{0.92}\text{O}$ at 298 K. Experimental points marked by open circles, full line marks calculated profile, and lower full line marks difference plot. Vertical bars mark positions for Bragg reflections, and arrows mark traces of reflections of magnetic origin.

(Co_{5/6}Al_{1/6})_{0.92}O; space group $Fm\bar{3}m$ with Co and Al in $4a$ (0,0,0) and O in $4b$ (1/2,1/2,1/2). Since variation of the occupation numbers for Co and Al did not improve the refinement (R -factors), they were fixed to the nominal values 0.769 and 0.154, respectively. For the PXD(SR) data $a = 422.98$ (4) pm ($R_{wp} = 4.0$ %, $R_p = 3.1$ %), whereas $a = 423.23$ (8) pm ($R_{wp} = 6.6$ %, $R_p = 5.2$ %) for the PND data (the PXD and PND samples stemmed from different batches). Isotropic displacement factors (in 10^4 pm²) are $B(\text{Co,Al}) = 1.21$ (8) and $B(\text{O}) = 1.09$ (5). The structural model gives a quite reasonable fit to the observed data, as shown by the calculated and difference diffraction profiles in Fig. 5.

For the PXD(SR) data the full width at half maximum (FWHM) is 0.34° at $d = 243.81$ pm, (111). This value contrasts that for a well crystalline and ordered phase like the perovskite oxide LaCoO₃ with FWHM = 0.028° for (104) at $d = 268.70$ pm as well as for its reduced, vacancy ordered derivatives La₃Co₃O₈ and La₂Co₂O₅.^{9,16} Reduction of the perovskite proceeds topotactically, i.e. leaving the cationic sublattice intact, whereas an ordered arrangement of oxygen vacancies form on the oxygen sublattice. However, the reduction mechanism for the Co_{3-x}Al_xO₄ spinel type oxide is different since the removal of oxygen atoms from the solid phase requires considerable mass redistribution in order to retain the fcc -lattice of oxygen atoms in the reduced NaCl-type (Co,Al)_{1-y}O phase. Furthermore, the cations are shifted from tetrahedral to octahedral interstices. Examination of scanning electron micrographs showed that the (macroscopic) particle size distribution remains essentially constant during the reduction. Since the reductions are carried out at low temperatures, the products do probably not represent an equilibrium situation. Hence, particle strain or inhomogenous Al/Co-distribution are possible sources for the peak-broadening, together with a possible location of Al-atoms in tetrahedral interstices in the reduced NaCl-type (Co,Al)_{1-y}O phase. However, the PXD(SR) and PND data showed no evidence for such interstitial (cation Frenkel) defects.

Characterization of the activated catalyst

The oxidized 20% Co/ γ -Al₂O₃ catalyst was activated by reduction at 573 K for 12 hours by using Zr as oxygen getter (heating/cooling rate 1 K min⁻¹). Two phases were identified by PXD at room temperature. One of the phases is elementary cobalt, predominantly in the cubic (fcc) high-temperature form with only barely detectable amounts of an additional hexagonal (low temperature) form in some samples. This contrasts the situation after reduction of bulk Co₃O₄ at $T < 620$ K which give the hexagonal modification.¹⁸ On the other hand, a small particle size is reported to favour the cubic form of cobalt.¹⁹ The present cobalt particles

in the activated catalyst are small, approximately 28 nm as estimated from the Scherrer formula for particle size broadening of PXD reflections. The second phase in the activated catalyst is of $(\text{Co,Al})_{1-y}\text{O}$ -type (see above) with $a = 424.5$ (1) pm. Its unit cell dimension indicates an aluminium content $x = 0.23$. This indicates that the interface layer of the reduced catalyst consists of a partially reduced intermediate NaCl-type phase of composition $\text{Co}^{\text{II}}_{0.88}\text{Al}^{\text{III}}_{0.08}\text{O}$.

Magnetic properties

Figure 6 shows that the temperature dependence of the inverse magnetic gram susceptibility, $\chi_g^{-1}(T)$, for $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_4$ ($x = 0.0, 0.5, 1.0, 1.5, 2.0$) obeys the Curie-Weiss law at temperatures above the respective ordering temperatures, T_N . The samples $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_4$ with $0.0 \leq x \leq 1.5$ exhibit a minimum in $\chi_g^{-1}(T)$ at low temperatures indicating long range antiferromagnetic ordering. The ordering temperatures (T_N) given in Table 1 agree with available literature data.^{3, 6, 7} The present $\chi_g^{-1}(T)$ data for CoAl_2O_4 shows no indication for magnetic order and agree in that sense with literature reports on a poorly defined minimum in $\chi_g^{-1}(T)$ around 4 K and weak indications for antiferromagnetic peaks in PND at 4 K.⁷

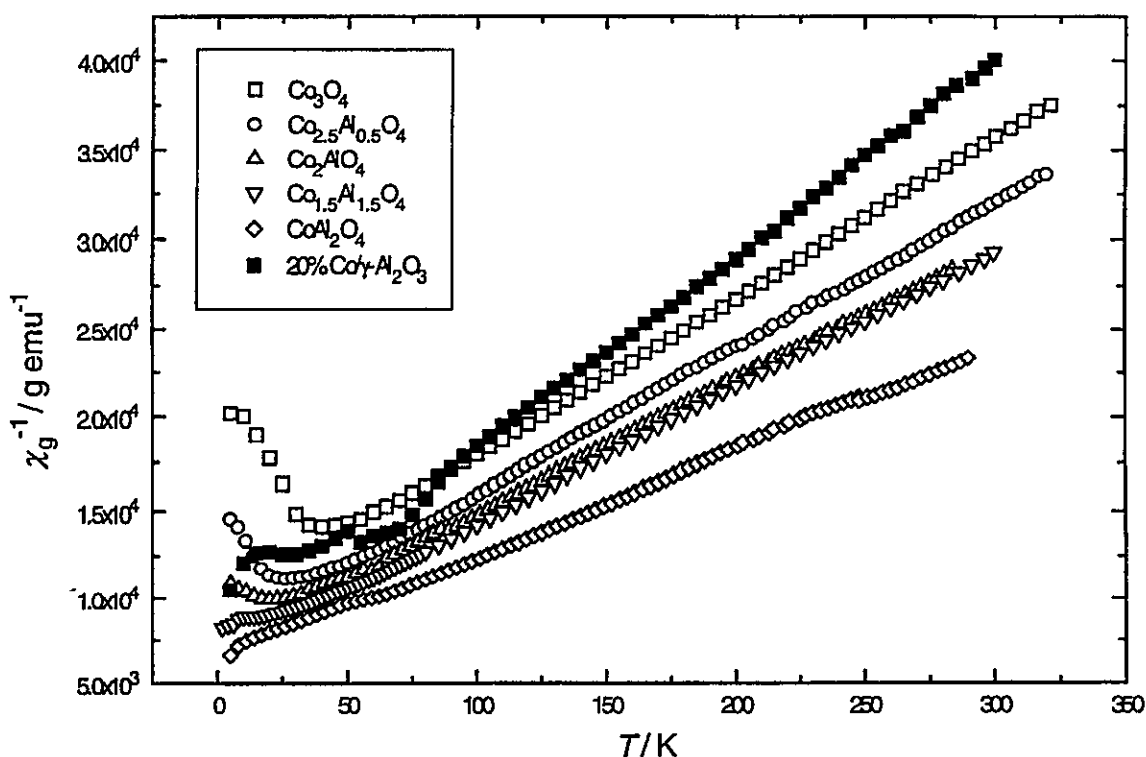


Fig. 6 Temperature dependence of the inverse magnetic susceptibility (χ_g^{-1}) for $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_4$ ($0.0 \leq x \leq 2.0$) and the oxidized 20% $\text{Co}/\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ catalyst.

Table 1 Antiferromagnetic ordering temperatures, T_N , for $\text{Co}_{3-x}\text{Al}_x\text{O}_4$ ($0.0 \leq x \leq 2.0$) and oxidized 20% $\text{Co}/\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ catalyst. T_N taken as minimum in $\chi_g^{-1}(T)$.

	T_N / K
Co_3O_4	40
$\text{Co}_{2.5}\text{Al}_{0.5}\text{O}_4$	26
Co_2AlO_4	20
$\text{Co}_{1.5}\text{Al}_{1.5}\text{O}_4$	12
CoAl_2O_4	---
20% $\text{Co}/\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$	27

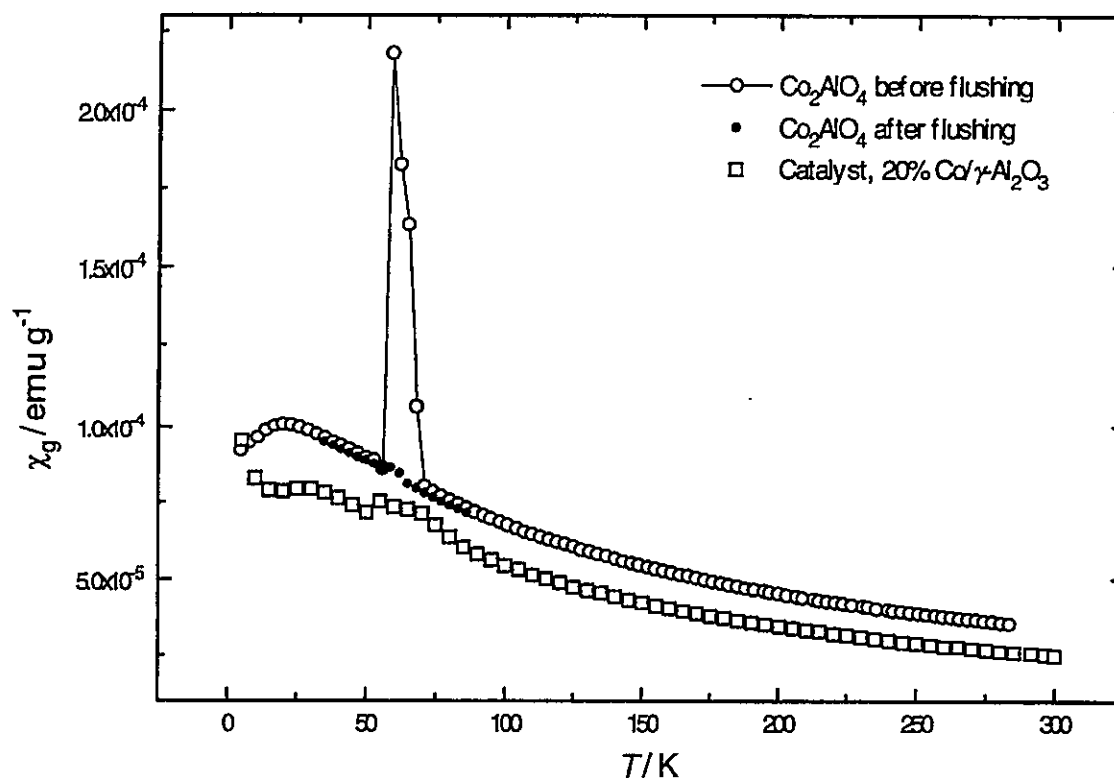


Fig. 7 Comparison of magnetic susceptibility for the 20% $\text{Co}/\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ catalyst (squares) with that for Co_2AlO_4 prior (open circles) and after (filled circles) removal of surface oxygen by repeated flushing with helium.

The magnetic susceptibility data for the oxidized 20% $\text{Co}/\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ catalyst in Fig. 6 refers to the cobalt containing part (i.e. mainly Co_3O_4 , estimated to around 27 weight percent) after correction for diamagnetic contribution from (unreacted) $\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$. The anomaly in $\chi_g^{-1}(T)$ between 50 and 80 K is most probably due to an antiferromagnetic transition in adsorbed oxygen, as supported by corresponding test experiments on Co_2AlO_4 (Fig. 7) where the

marked cusp in $\chi_g(T)$ almost completely disappeared after repeated flushing of the sample chamber with helium gas.

The minimum in $\chi_g^{-1}(T)$ at 27 K for the oxidized 20% Co/ γ -Al₂O₃ catalyst indicates long range antiferromagnetic ordering for a spinel type Co_{3-x}Al_xO₄ phase with aluminium content slightly less than $x = 0.5$. Hence, low temperature magnetic susceptibility data appears to be an additional valuable tool in characterization of the oxidized catalyst. For the activated catalyst $\chi_g(T)$ data show the presence of ferromagnetic cobalt. Although PXD suggest an average particle size as small as 28 nm, the catalyst does not exhibit superparamagnetic behaviour at 298 K [$M(H)$ hysteresis is observed].

The approximately temperature independent magnetic susceptibility for the nominal Co₂AlO_{3.5} sample (inset to Fig. 8), and the relatively high χ_g -values compared to those for (Co_{5/6}Al_{1/6})_{0.92}O, indicates the presence of small amounts of ferromagnetic Co(s) in the sample after reduction. This ferromagnetic cobalt completely dominates the measured magnetic susceptibility. Hence, no para- or antiferromagnetic contributions to the magnetic susceptibility from the (Co,Al)_{1-y}O-phase are detectable.

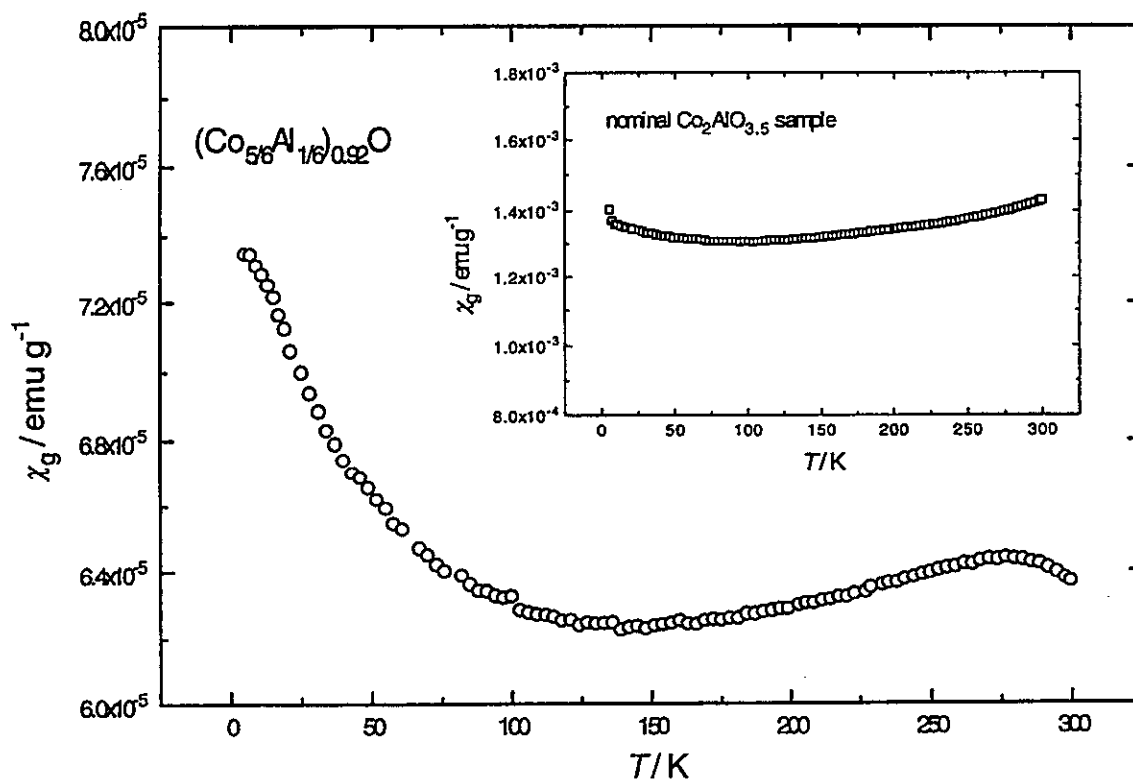


Fig. 8 Magnetic susceptibility for $(\text{Co}_{5/6}\text{Al}_{1/6})_{0.92}\text{O}$. Inset shows magnetic susceptibility for the three phase, nominal $\text{Co}_2\text{AlO}_{3.5}$ sample $[(\text{Co}_{2/3}\text{Al}_{1/3})_{0.86}\text{O}]$.

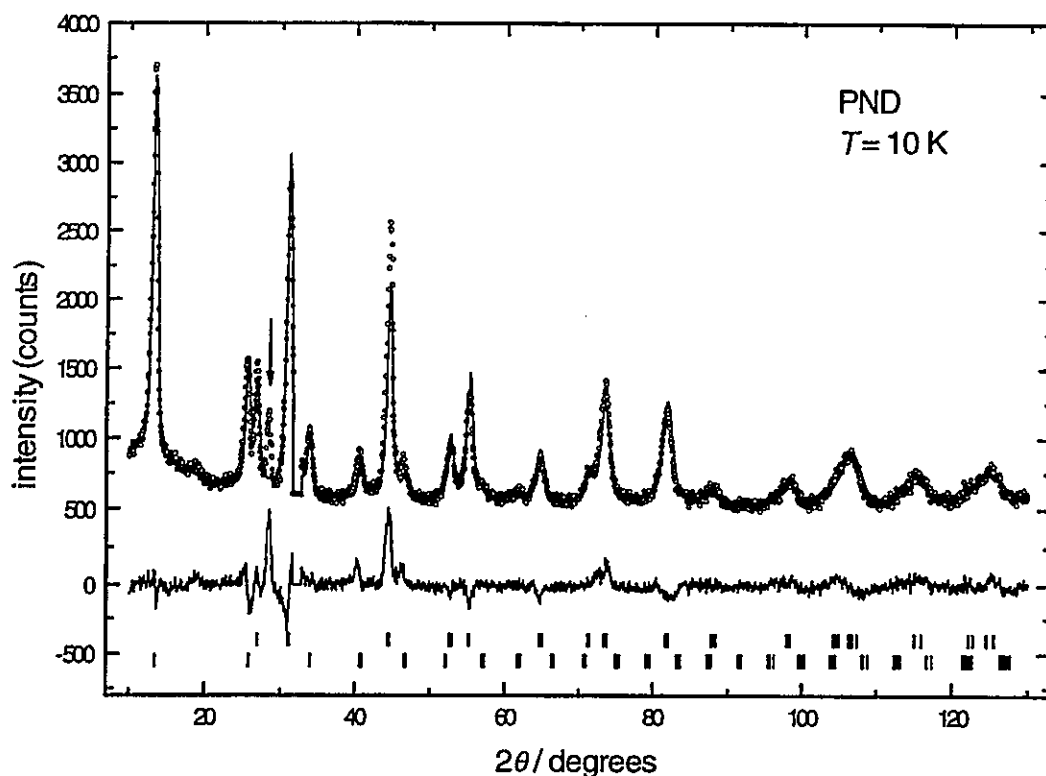


Fig. 9 PND profile at 10 K for $(\text{Co}_{5/6}\text{Al}_{1/6})_{0.92}\text{O}$ ($\lambda = 112.74$ pm). Experimental points are marked by open circles, full line marks calculated profile, and lower full line marks difference plot. Vertical bars marks positions for Bragg reflections of crystallographic (upper row) and magnetic origin (lower row). Arrow indicate non-explained reflection.

Powder neutron diffraction data for $(\text{Co}_{5/6}\text{Al}_{1/6})_{0.92}\text{O}$ at 10 K show a number of additional reflections of magnetic origin, see Fig. 9. Their intensities gradually decrease on increasing temperature, Fig. 10. There is still minor magnetic scattering into (111), (113) and (311) at 298 K, see arrows in Fig. 5 (Miller indices refer to the magnetic unit cell). The antiferromagnetic ordering temperature $T_N = 320 \pm 5$ K is estimated by extrapolation of the integrated intensity for (111) to the background level (Fig. 10). The magnetic susceptibility data for $(\text{Co}_{5/6}\text{Al}_{1/6})_{0.92}\text{O}$ in Fig. 8 refer then to the antiferromagnetic state. The additional magnetic reflections (the one at $2\theta = 28.5^\circ$ non-explained) could be indexed on a slightly tetragonally distorted unit cell ($F4/m12/m$ non standard setting of space group $I4/mmm$); $a = 846.2$ (3) pm, $c = 841.0$ (5) pm; $R_{wp} = 7.1$ %, $R_p = 5.0$ %. The unit cell and magnetic structure is similar to that of CoO ($T_N = 291$ K, $\mu_{AF} = 3.80 \mu_B$).²⁰ The refined magnetic moment is $\mu_{AF} = 3.57$ (3) μ_B with components $\mu_{\perp} = 1.45$ (9) μ_B and $\mu_{\parallel} = 3.27$ (6) μ_B ; $R_M = 7.2$ %. Figure 9 shows the observed, calculated and difference diffraction profile (10 K) for $(\text{Co}_{5/6}\text{Al}_{1/6})_{0.92}\text{O}$.

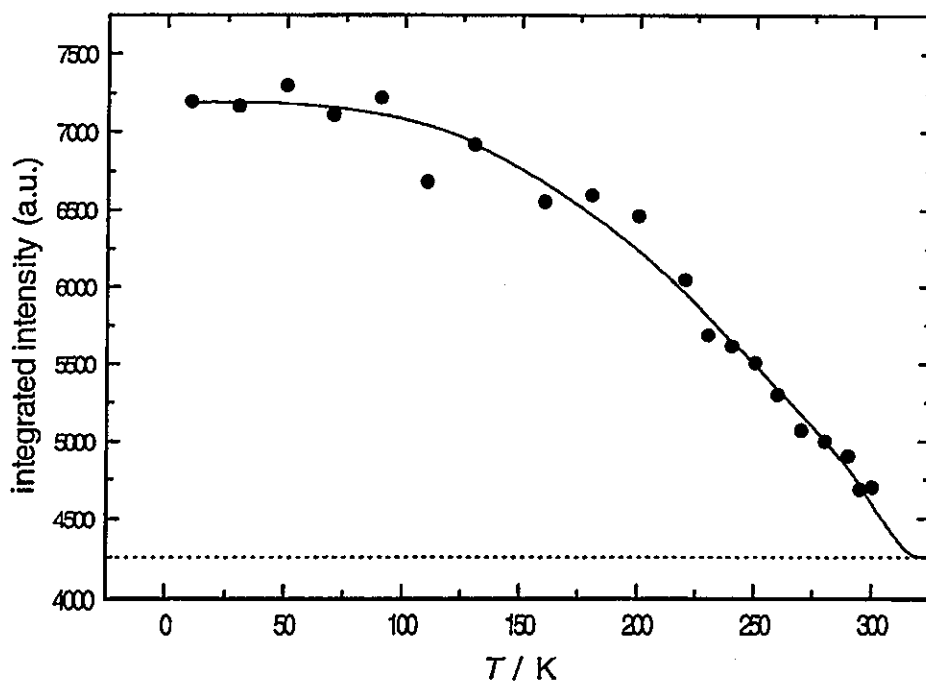


Fig. 10 Temperature dependence of integrated PND intensity for the magnetic (111) for $(\text{Co}_{0.516}\text{Al}_{0.484})_{0.92}\text{O}$. Dashed line represents background level. Fully drawn line as guide to the eye.

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