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# Structural and thermal properties of $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$ and $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}^\dagger$

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The title compounds were prepared *via* a wet chemistry route and their crystal structures were determined from single crystal X-ray diffraction data.  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  crystallizes with a monoclinic symmetry, space group  $P2_1/c$ , with  $a = 5.5415(2)$ ,  $b = 8.3447(3)$ ,  $c = 11.2281(3)$  Å,  $\beta = 100.172(1)^\circ$ ,  $V = 511.05(3)$  Å<sup>3</sup> and  $Z = 2$ .  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  also crystallizes with a monoclinic symmetry, space group  $P2_1/c$ , with  $a = 12.5050(8)$ ,  $b = 6.4812(4)$ ,  $c = 10.0210(6)$  Å,  $\beta = 106.138(2)^\circ$ ,  $V = 780.17(8)$  Å<sup>3</sup> and  $Z = 2$ .  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  is a new member of the blödite family of compounds, whereas  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  is isostructural with  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mg}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$ . The structure of  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  is built up of  $[\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4]^{2-}$  building blocks connected through moderate  $\text{O}-\text{H}\cdots\text{O}$  hydrogen bonds with the sodium atoms occupying the large tunnels along the  $a$  axis and the manganese atom lying on an inversion center, whereas the structure of  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  is built up of  $[\text{Ni}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_6]^{2+}$  and  $[\text{Na}_2(\text{SO}_4)_2(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4]^{2-}$  layers. These layers which are parallel to the (100) plane are interconnected through moderate  $\text{O}-\text{H}\cdots\text{O}$  hydrogen bonds. The thermal gravimetric- and the powder X-ray diffraction-analyses showed that only the nickel phase was almost pure. At a temperature above 300 °C, all the water molecules evaporated and a structural phase transition from  $P2_1/c$ - $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  to  $C2/c$ - $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2$  was observed.  $C2/c$ - $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2$  is thermally more stable than  $\text{Na}_2\text{Fe}(\text{SO}_4)_2$  and therefore it would be suitable as the positive electrode for sodium ion batteries if a stable electrolyte at high voltage is developed.

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## 1. Introduction

The sulfate salts of general formula  $\text{Na}_2\text{M}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot n\text{H}_2\text{O}$  ( $n = 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 16$ )<sup>1–14</sup> have attracted much attention from mineralogists during the last century owing to their important role in desertification, soil contamination and surface and ground water salinization [ref. 13 and references therein]. These natural and synthetic sulfate salts crystallize with a wide range of crystal structure types depending on their degree of hydration. This parameter is at the origin of the presence of unique hydrogen bond features in these compounds. For this reason, numerous studies have focused on solving their crystal structures. In the system with magnesium five phases exist. The blödite-type  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mg}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}^8$  and the konyaite-type

$\text{Na}_2\text{Mg}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 5\text{H}_2\text{O}^9$  are both minerals that form due to the evaporation of saline solutions, whereas  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mg}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}^{13}$  and  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mg}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 16\text{H}_2\text{O}^{14}$  are synthetic phases that were obtained from the evaporation of solutions containing a 1 : 1 molar ratio of  $\text{MgSO}_4$  and  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4$  salts. When the same mixture was heated to 650 °C and slow cooled at a rate of 1° min<sup>−1</sup>,  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mg}(\text{SO}_4)_2$  was obtained.<sup>15</sup> The  $\text{Na}_2\text{M}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot n\text{H}_2\text{O}$  phases are very sensitive to temperature, pressure and relative humidity. When heated at relatively high temperatures ( $T > 200$  °C) these phases could be completely dehydrated to form the  $\text{Na}_2\text{M}(\text{SO}_4)_2$  phases which are of interest as positive electrodes for sodium- or lithium-ion batteries.

Among the  $\text{Na}_2\text{M}(\text{SO}_4)_2$  phases,  $\text{Na}_2\text{Fe}(\text{SO}_4)_2$  showed interesting electrochemical properties in Li- and Na-ion batteries. This phase enables the removal of nearly one sodium at potentials around ~3.6 V *vs.* Li<sup>+</sup>/Li or ~3.3 V *vs.* Na<sup>+</sup>/Na.<sup>16</sup>  $\text{Na}_2\text{Fe}(\text{SO}_4)_2$  could also be obtained by intercalating one sodium into the structure of the eldfellite-type  $\text{NaFe}(\text{SO}_4)_2$ .<sup>17</sup> At 0.1C, this material delivers a discharge capacity of 80 mA h g<sup>−1</sup> with an operating potential around 3.25 V *vs.* Na<sup>+</sup>/Na. Even the hydrated phases such as the blödite-type  $\text{Na}_2\text{Fe}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}^{16}$  or the kröhnkite-type  $\text{Na}_2\text{Fe}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}^{18}$  were active at ~3.3 V and ~3.25 V *vs.* Na<sup>+</sup>/Na, respectively. On the other hand, the  $\text{Na}_2\text{Co}(\text{SO}_4)_2$  phase did not show any electrochemical activity up to 5 V.<sup>16</sup> In the system  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot n\text{H}_2\text{O}$  two phases were

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<sup>†</sup> Electronic supplementary information (ESI) available: The theoretical powder X-ray diffraction patterns (PXRD) of  $\text{Na}_{12}\text{Mn}_7(\text{SO}_4)_{13} \cdot 15\text{H}_2\text{O}$ ,  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$  and  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$ , the experimental PXRD and the TGA of the sample containing manganese and the anisotropic displacement parameters (in Å<sup>2</sup>) for  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  and  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  are given in supplementary information. CCDC 1962424 and 1962425. For ESI and crystallographic data in CIF or other electronic format see DOI: 10.1039/d0ra00301h



reported ( $n = 0$  and  $2$ ). The thermal decomposition at  $500\text{ K}$  of  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}_{1.167}(\text{SO}_4)_2\text{S}_{0.33}\text{O}_{1.167}\cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}^{19}$  and the kröhnkite-type  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2\cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}^{20}$  led to the formation of two different  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2$  phases that crystallize with the glaukophane- and alluaudite-type of structures, respectively. The glaukophane-type  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2$  sample was not tested as positive electrode since it contains few  $\text{MnS}_2\text{O}_7$  impurities and the alluaudite-type  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2$  has shown to be active in sodium ion batteries (NIBs), however the performance was worse than the iron analogues.<sup>21–23</sup> In the system  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2\cdot n\text{H}_2\text{O}$  three phases are known ( $n = 0, 4$  and  $6$ ), however they were not tested as positive electrode materials for NIBs.<sup>24–26</sup> For these reasons we prepared recently several  $\text{Na}_2\text{M}(\text{SO}_4)_2\cdot n\text{H}_2\text{O}$  phases ( $\text{M} = \text{Mn}$  and  $\text{Ni}$ ) in order to test their electrochemical performances in NIBs.

In this paper we report on the synthesis of the new phases  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2\cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  and  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2\cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  by wet chemistry route. The crystal structures of these phases were solved using single crystal X-ray diffraction (XRD) and their compositions were confirmed by the combination of thermal gravimetric analyses (TGA) and energy-dispersive X-ray spectrometry analyses (EDX). The fully dehydrated phases were analyzed by *ex situ* powder XRD. Our results are presented in the following sections.

## 2. Experimental section

### 2.1. Synthesis

$\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2\cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  powder was synthesized *via* a wet chemistry route (super-saturation method) from a stoichiometric mixture of  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4$  (Aldrich,  $\geq 99\%$ ) and  $\text{MnSO}_4\cdot \text{H}_2\text{O}$  (Aldrich,  $\geq 99\%$ ). The starting materials with a  $1 : 1$  molar ratio were dissolved in  $20\text{ ml}$  of water (solution A). The solution A was stirred for few hours then left drying at room temperature during four weeks. This enabled the growth of a mixture of large colorless single crystals of  $\text{Na}_{12}\text{Mn}_7(\text{SO}_4)_{13}\cdot 15\text{H}_2\text{O}$ ,  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2\cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$  and the new phase  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2\cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$ . Powder sample of this sample was obtained by grinding few crystals.

$\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2\cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  powder was also synthesized *via* a wet chemistry route (super-saturation method) from a stoichiometric mixture of  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4$  (Aldrich,  $\geq 99\%$ ) and  $\text{NiSO}_4\cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (Aldrich,  $\geq 99\%$ ). The starting materials with a  $1 : 1$  molar ratio were dissolved in  $20\text{ ml}$  of water (solution B). The solution B was stirred for few hours then left drying at room temperature during three weeks. This enabled the growth of large green single crystals of the new phase  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2\cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$ . Powder sample of this material was obtained by grinding few crystals. The solution B was also dried at  $80\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$  for  $12$  hours then the resulting powder was grinded and fired at  $350\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$  for  $32$  hours. This led to the formation of the green powder of  $\text{SS-Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2$ . A similar powder of  $\text{WC-Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2$  was obtained when heating under argon the crystals of  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2\cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  at  $400\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$  for  $6$  hours.

### 2.2. Powder X-ray diffraction measurements

To ensure the purity of the prepared powders, routine powder XRD measurements were performed. The data were collected at

room temperature over the  $2\theta$  angle range of  $5^\circ \leq 2\theta \leq 75^\circ$  with a step size of  $0.01^\circ$  using a Bruker D8 advance diffractometer operating with  $\text{CuK}\alpha$  radiation. Full pattern matching refinement was performed with the JANA2006 program package.<sup>27</sup> The background was estimated by a Legendre function and the peak shapes were described by a pseudo-Voigt function.

### 2.3. Single crystal X-ray diffraction measurements

$\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2\cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  and  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2\cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  single crystals suitable for single crystal X-ray diffraction were selected on the basis of the size and the sharpness of the diffraction spots. The data collections were carried out on a Bruker D8 Venture diffractometer using  $\text{MoK}\alpha$  radiation. Data processing and all refinements were performed with the APEX3 and JANA2006 program packages, respectively.<sup>27,28</sup> For the data collection details, see Table 1. Further details on the structure refinements of  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2\cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  and  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2\cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  may be obtained from the Fachinformationszentrum Karlsruhe, D-76344 Eggenstein-Leopoldshafen (Germany), by quoting the Registry No. CSD – 1962424 and 1962425.

### 2.4. Electron microprobe analyses

Semi-quantitative energy-dispersive X-ray spectrometry (EDX) analyses were carried out on the single crystals used for the data collections with a 7610F (JEOL) scanning electron microscope (SEM). The experimentally observed Na/M/S atomic ratios ( $\text{M} = \text{Mn}$  and  $\text{Ni}$ ) were close to  $2 : 1 : 2$ , as expected for  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2\cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  and  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2\cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$ .

### 2.5. Thermal analyses

Thermal gravimetric analyses (TGA) were carried out on the prepared samples  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2\cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  and  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2\cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  using a TA-SDT 650 instrument. The measurements were conducted between  $25$  and  $850\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$  at a heating rate of  $10\text{ }^\circ\text{C min}^{-1}$ . The experiments were performed in alumina crucible under  $\text{N}_2$  atmosphere.

## 3. Results and discussion

### 3.1. Structure refinement

The systematic absences observed for  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2\cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  and  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2\cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  agree with the space group  $P2_1/c$ . Atomic positions of the majority of atoms were found by the Superflip program implemented in JANA2006 program package.<sup>27,29</sup> The use of the difference Fourier synthesis allowed us to localize the remaining oxygen atomic positions. With anisotropic atomic displacement parameters (ADPs), the residual factors converged to the value  $R(F) = 0.0264$  and  $wR(F^2) = 0.0949$  (G.O.F. =  $1.92$ ) for  $79$  refined parameters and  $1198$  observed reflections for the compound  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2\cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  and  $R(F) = 0.0345$  and  $wR(F^2) = 0.1165$  (G.O.F. =  $1.92$ ) for  $106$  refined parameters and  $2781$  observed reflections for the compound  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2\cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$ . At this stage of the refinements the chemical formulas were  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2\cdot 4\text{O}$  and  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2\cdot 10\text{O}$ . The H atomic positions were determined from the difference-Fourier maps. The O–H distances and H–O–H angles were set to  $0.96\text{ \AA}$  and  $104.5^\circ$ ,

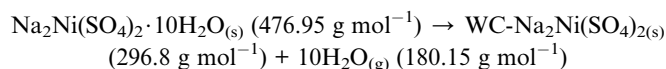
Table 1 Crystallographic data and structure refinements for Na<sub>2</sub>Mn(SO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·4H<sub>2</sub>O and Na<sub>2</sub>Ni(SO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·10H<sub>2</sub>O

Crystal data			
Chemical formula	Na <sub>2</sub> Mn(SO <sub>4</sub> ) <sub>2</sub> ·4H <sub>2</sub> O	Na <sub>2</sub> Ni(SO <sub>4</sub> ) <sub>2</sub> ·10H <sub>2</sub> O	
<i>M<sub>r</sub></i>	365.1	476.9	
Crystal system, space group	Monoclinic, <i>P</i> <sub>2</sub> <sub>1</sub> / <i>c</i>	Monoclinic, <i>P</i> <sub>2</sub> <sub>1</sub> / <i>c</i>	
Temperature (K)	293	293	
<i>a</i> , <i>b</i> , <i>c</i> (Å)	5.5415 (2), 8.3447 (3), 11.2281 (3)	12.5050 (8), 6.4812 (4), 10.0210 (6)	
β (°)	100.172 (1)	106.138 (2)	
<i>V</i> (Å <sup>3</sup> )	511.05 (3)	780.17 (8)	
<i>Z</i>	2	2	
Radiation type	Mo Kα	Mo Kα	
μ (mm <sup>−1</sup> )	1.84	1.66	
Crystal size (mm)	0.16 × 0.13 × 0.11	0.34 × 0.10 × 0.08	
Data collection			
Diffractometer	Bruker D8 VENTURE	Bruker D8 VENTURE	
Absorption correction	Multi-scan (SADABS)	Multi-scan SADABS	
<i>T</i> <sub>min</sub> , <i>T</i> <sub>max</sub>	0.88, 0.92	0.630, 0.747	
No. of measured, independent and observed [ <i>I</i> > 3σ( <i>I</i> )] reflections	9618, 1314, 1198	22 158, 3819, 2781	
<i>R</i> <sub>int</sub>	0.022	0.029	
(sin θ/λ) <sub>max</sub> (Å <sup>−1</sup> )	0.676	0.853	
Refinement			
<i>R</i> [ <i>F</i> <sup>2</sup> > 2σ( <i>F</i> <sup>2</sup> )], <i>wR</i> ( <i>F</i> <sup>2</sup> ), <i>S</i>	0.018, 0.060, 1.16	0.024, 0.079, 1.11	
No. of reflections	1314	3819	
No. of parameters	96	147	
No. of restraints	6	15	
H-atom treatment	All H-atom parameters refined	All H-atom parameters refined	
Δρ <sub>max</sub> , Δρ <sub>min</sub> (e Å <sup>−3</sup> )	0.19, −0.23	0.33, −0.33	

respectively. The *U*<sub>iso</sub>(H) were refined without constraints. This led to the final chemical formula Na<sub>2</sub>Mn(SO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·4H<sub>2</sub>O with the residual factors *R*(*F*) = 0.0198 and *wR*(*F*<sup>2</sup>) = 0.0629 (G.O.F. = 1.22 for 95 refined parameters) and the chemical formula Na<sub>2</sub>Ni(SO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·10H<sub>2</sub>O with the residual factors *R*(*F*) = 0.0251 and *wR*(*F*<sup>2</sup>) = 0.0707 (G.O.F. = 1.18 for 146 refined parameters). By refining the extinction parameters, the residual factors converged to the values given in Table 1. The refined atomic positions and anisotropic ADPs are given in Tables 2 and S1,† respectively. The EDX elemental analyzes performed on the crystals used for the data collection confirmed the compositions Na<sub>2</sub>Mn(SO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·*x*H<sub>2</sub>O and Na<sub>2</sub>Ni(SO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·*x*H<sub>2</sub>O (Fig. 1). The examination of the powder XRD pattern of the manganese sample revealed the presence of mainly Na<sub>12</sub>Mn<sub>7</sub>(SO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>13</sub>·15H<sub>2</sub>O<sup>30</sup> besides a small amount of Na<sub>2</sub>Mn(SO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·2H<sub>2</sub>O<sup>2</sup> and Na<sub>2</sub>Mn(SO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·4H<sub>2</sub>O (Fig. S1†), whereas the nickel sample was almost a pure Na<sub>2</sub>Ni(SO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·10H<sub>2</sub>O phase. Fig. 2 shows a good agreement between the experimental and calculated patterns of Na<sub>2</sub>Ni(SO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·10H<sub>2</sub>O. Evaluation of these data revealed the refined cell parameters *a* = 12.4926(5), *b* = 6.4763(2), *c* = 10.0153(4) Å and β = 106.070(2)° which are in good agreement with those from single crystal diffraction data (see Table 1). Only three tiny impurity peaks were detected. The composition of the Na<sub>2</sub>Ni(SO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·10H<sub>2</sub>O sample was confirmed by the combination of EDX (Fig. 1b) and TGA analyzes.

Fig. 3 clearly indicates a 37.7% of weight loss, which corresponds exactly to the evaporation of ten water molecules. This confirms that the prepared sample Na<sub>2</sub>Ni(SO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·10H<sub>2</sub>O

decomposes below 300 °C to form WC-Na<sub>2</sub>Ni(SO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub> according to the following scheme:



This decomposition mechanism was confirmed by powder XRD, since the powder pattern of the dehydrated Na<sub>2</sub>Ni(SO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·10H<sub>2</sub>O phase is identical to the theoretical pattern of Na<sub>2</sub>Ni(SO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub> and the experimental pattern of SS-Na<sub>2</sub>Ni(SO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub> (Fig. 4). Above 700 °C, the sample decomposes by releasing SO<sub>2(g)</sub>. It should be noted that the thermal behavior of the sample containing manganese was also performed (Fig. S2†). The weight loss was only 12.9% which is lower than the weight loss of 19.7% expected for Na<sub>2</sub>Mn(SO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·4H<sub>2</sub>O, however it is almost identical to the weight loss of 12.4% expected for Na<sub>12</sub>Mn<sub>7</sub>(SO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>13</sub>·15H<sub>2</sub>O. This is in good agreement with PXRD data which indicate that the prepared manganese phase contains mainly the Na<sub>12</sub>Mn<sub>7</sub>(SO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>13</sub>·15H<sub>2</sub>O phase.

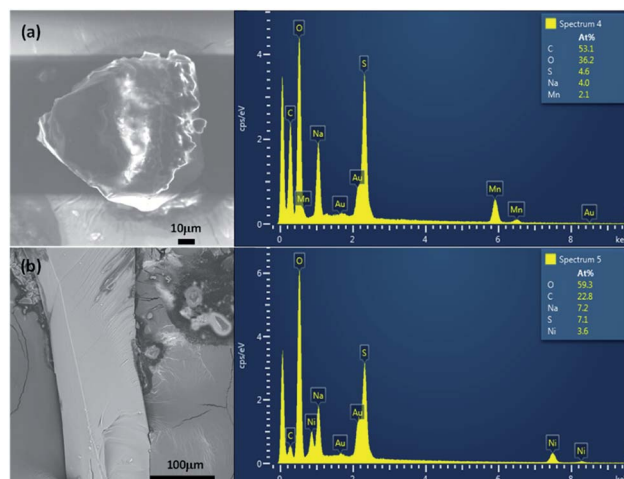
### 3.2. Crystal structure of Na<sub>2</sub>Mn(SO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·4H<sub>2</sub>O

The Na<sub>2</sub>Mn(SO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·4H<sub>2</sub>O compound is isostructural with the blödite-type compounds Na<sub>2</sub>M(SO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·4H<sub>2</sub>O (M = Mg, Fe, Co, Ni, Zn, Cd).<sup>31–37</sup> Conventionally, the blödite-type of structure is described as a stacking of layers parallel to the (010) plane and formed of MnO<sub>2</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>4</sub> and NaO<sub>4</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>2</sub> octahedra (Fig. 5a and b). These layers are interconnected through SO<sub>4</sub> tetrahedra to form a 3d-framework (Fig. 5c). The interatomic distances are listed in Table 3.



**Table 2** Fractional atom coordinates and isotropic atomic displacement parameters ( $\text{\AA}^2$ ) for  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  and  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$ 

Atom	Wyck	x	y	z	$U_{\text{eq}}/\text{iso}^*$
<b><math>\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}</math></b>					
Na1	4e	0.12901(9)	0.92766(6)	0.36268(5)	0.02082(16)
Mn1	2a	0	0.5	0.5	0.01387(10)
S1	4e	0.37292(5)	0.79212(3)	0.63561(2)	0.01132(10)
O1	4e	0.20851(18)	0.91681(12)	0.57815(8)	0.0234(3)
O2	4e	0.31892(17)	0.63864(11)	0.57209(9)	0.0233(3)
O3	4e	0.63145(16)	0.83269(11)	0.63209(9)	0.0222(3)
O4	4e	0.34724(18)	0.77406(12)	0.76397(8)	0.0216(3)
O5	4e	0.13017(16)	0.45884(12)	0.33232(8)	0.0181(3)
H5b	4e	0.232(3)	0.3650(13)	0.3423(18)	0.040(5)*
H5a	4e	0.235(3)	0.5421(17)	0.312(2)	0.053(6)*
O6	4e	0.18486(17)	0.28225(10)	0.58278(8)	0.0192(3)
H6a	4e	0.223(3)	0.210(2)	0.5222(13)	0.053(7)*
H6b	4e	0.3331(17)	0.288(2)	0.6416(12)	0.039(5)*
<b><math>\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}</math></b>					
Na1	4e	0.48096(4)	0.25441(7)	0.39586(5)	0.02511(14)
Ni1	2c	1.00000	0	1/2	0.01379(6)
S1	4e	0.72260(2)	0.51630(3)	0.33017(3)	0.01445(7)
O1	4e	0.79184(6)	0.42137(12)	0.24800(9)	0.0233(2)
O2	4e	0.78000(8)	0.49977(11)	0.48001(9)	0.0234(3)
O3	4e	0.61500(7)	0.41153(15)	0.29742(9)	0.0296(3)
O4	4e	0.70453(7)	0.73541(11)	0.29108(9)	0.0254(2)
O5	4e	0.86644(7)	0.03383(11)	0.33044(10)	0.0247(2)
H5a	4e	0.8331(9)	0.1634(11)	0.3001(15)	0.036(4)*
H5b	4e	0.8058(7)	−0.0615(16)	0.309(2)	0.057(5)*
H6a	4e	0.9914(11)	0.294(3)	0.6835(6)	0.064(6)*
H6b	4e	0.9025(7)	0.342(2)	0.5531(12)	0.029(4)*
O6	4e	0.97063(7)	0.27252(11)	0.58560(8)	0.0239(2)
O7	4e	0.60084(7)	0.40809(12)	0.60325(9)	0.0250(2)
H7a	4e	0.6193(11)	0.314(2)	0.6794(13)	0.059(5)*
H7b	4e	0.6698(7)	0.435(2)	0.5838(18)	0.057(5)*
O8	4e	0.38581(8)	0.03475(14)	0.52844(10)	0.0287(3)
H8a	4e	0.3566(12)	0.123(3)	0.5863(16)	0.068(6)*
H8b	4e	0.3216(8)	−0.023(2)	0.4645(15)	0.050(6)*
O9	4e	0.90973(6)	−0.16068(11)	0.61345(8)	0.0219(2)
H9a	4e	0.8634(10)	−0.085(2)	0.6567(16)	0.044(5)*
H9b	4e	0.8662(11)	−0.2770(18)	0.5734(19)	0.059(5)*

**Fig. 1** Images and EDX analyzes of  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (a) and  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (b). These are the single crystals used for the data collections.

0.12 + 1.38  $\text{\AA}$ ). The BVS value of 6.03 is in good agreement with the oxidation state 6+ expected for sulfur.

The sodium atom is coordinated to four oxygen atoms and two water molecules forming  $[\text{NaO}_4(\text{H}_2\text{O})_2]^{7-}$  octahedra. These octahedra share edges and form  $[\text{Na}_2\text{O}_6(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4]^{10-}$  dimer units (Fig. 5f). The average Na1–O distance of 2.4528  $\text{\AA}$  is consistent with the sum of the effective ionic radii of the six-coordinated  $\text{Na}^+$  and  $\text{O}^{2-}$  ( $\text{IR}_{(\text{Na}^+)} + \text{IR}_{(\text{O}^{2-})} = 1.02 + 1.40 \text{ \AA}$ ). The BVS value of 1.06 is in good agreement with the oxidation state 1+ expected for the Na atoms.

In the crystal structure of  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$ , the  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  molecules play the role of hydrogen-bond donors whereas the oxygen atoms O3 and O4 are the hydrogen bond acceptors (Table 4 and Fig. 6). The O–H...O hydrogen bonds connect the  $[\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4]^{2-}$  building blocks (Fig. 5e) forming a tunnel-like structure with large voids along the *a* axis (Fig. 6a). In these voids, the sodium atoms are located (Fig. 5d and 6a). This feature indicates that the compounds of the blödite-family might be good ionic conductors. This may explain the electrochemical activity of the  $\text{Na}_2\text{Fe}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  phase in NIBs and LIBs.<sup>16</sup> Based on the classification of Jeffrey, all the O–H...O hydrogen bonds are moderate (Table 4 and Fig. 6b and c).<sup>40,41</sup>

It is very interesting to notice that the manganese phases  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  [this work],  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$ ,<sup>20</sup>  $\text{Na}_{2+\gamma}\text{Mn}_{1-\gamma/2}(\text{SO}_4)_3$ ,<sup>20</sup>  $\text{Na}_{12}\text{Mn}_7(\text{SO}_4)_{12}[\text{S}_2\text{O}_7] \cdot 12\text{H}_2\text{O}$ <sup>19</sup> and  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2$ <sup>19</sup> that crystallize with the blödite-, kröhnkite-, alluaudite-, löweite- and glauberite-type of structures, respectively were prepared *via* a supersaturation method at different temperatures and using the same precursors ( $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4 + \text{MnSO}_4 \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O} + \text{H}_2\text{O}$ ). At 25 and 70 °C, pure kröhnkite- and löweite-phases were formed, respectively whereas at 22 °C a mixture of kröhnkite-, blödite- and löweite-phases was observed. Furthermore, the thermal treatment of the kröhnkite-phase at 227 °C, led to the formation of an alluaudite-phase with the composition  $\text{Na}_{2+\gamma}\text{Mn}_{1-\gamma/2}(\text{SO}_4)_3$ .<sup>20</sup> A similar phase could also be prepared *via* a solid state synthesis route when a mixture of  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4$  and  $\text{MnSO}_4$  was

The manganese atom is lying on an inversion center and is coordinated to two oxygen atoms and four water molecules forming  $[\text{MnO}_2(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4]^{2-}$  octahedron. This octahedron share corners with two  $\text{SO}_4$  tetrahedra forming the building block  $[\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4]^{2-}$  (Fig. 5e). The  $[\text{MnO}_2(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4]^{2-}$  octahedron share also corners with four  $[\text{Na}_2\text{O}_6(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4]^{10-}$  dimer units leading to layers in the (010) plane (Fig. 5a). The  $d_{(\text{Mn1-O})}$  distances range from 2.1475 to 2.2088  $\text{\AA}$  with an average distance of 2.1718  $\text{\AA}$  which is slightly shorter than the sum of the effective ionic radii of the six-coordinated  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$  and  $\text{O}^{2-}$  ( $\text{IR}_{(\text{Mn}^{2+})} + \text{IR}_{(\text{O}^{2-})} = 0.83 + 1.4 \text{ \AA}$ ).<sup>38</sup> The BVS value of 2.14 is in good agreement with the oxidation state 2+ expected for the Mn atoms.<sup>39</sup>

The slightly distorted  $\text{SO}_4$  tetrahedra share only corners with the  $\text{MnO}_2(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4$  and  $\text{NaO}_4(\text{H}_2\text{O})_2$  octahedra (Fig. 5c). The  $d_{(\text{S1-O})}$  distances range from 1.4565 to 1.4807  $\text{\AA}$  with the average value of 1.4718  $\text{\AA}$ . This value is shorter than the sum of the effective ionic radii of the four-coordinated  $\text{S}^{6+}$  and  $\text{O}^{2-}$  ( $\text{IR}_{(\text{S}^{6+})} + \text{IR}_{(\text{O}^{2-})} =$





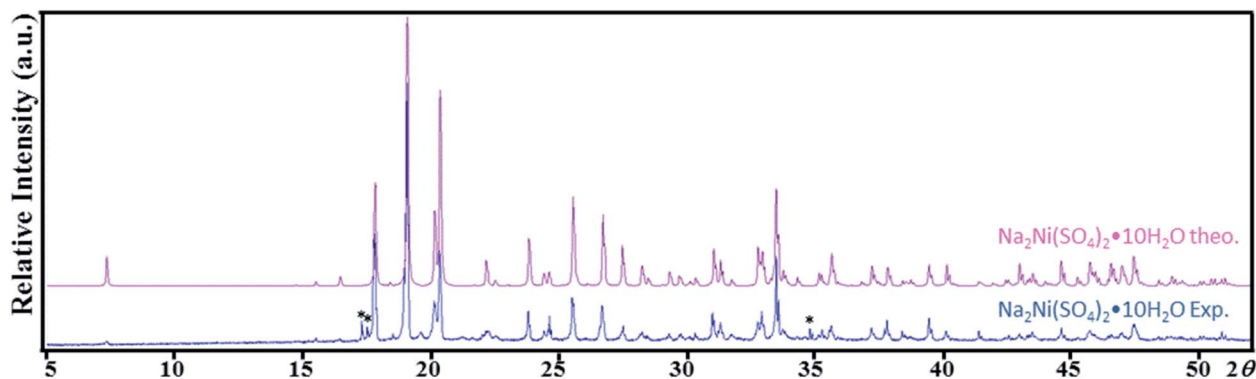


Fig. 2 Theoretical and experimental powder X-ray diffraction patterns of  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (Cu-K $\alpha$  radiation). Asterisk (\*) corresponds to an unidentified impurity.

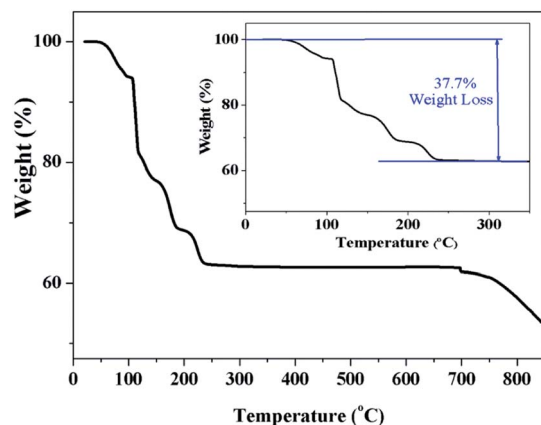


Fig. 3 TGA thermal analysis of the  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  sample.

ball milled then annealed at 350 °C for few hours.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, at 227 °C the löweite-phase decomposed into the glauberite-phase  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2$  besides an impurity that could be  $\text{MnS}_2\text{O}_7$ .<sup>19</sup>

Although, the five phases were prepared from the same precursors, their crystal structures are different (Fig. 7). Indeed, the thermal treatments affected significantly the coordination sphere of the Mn atoms. In the blöndite- $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$ , the Mn atom is coordinated to two oxygen atoms and four water molecules forming the  $[\text{MnO}_2(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4]^{2-}$  octahedron. This octahedron share two corners with the  $\text{SO}_4$  tetrahedra to form the  $[\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4]^{2-}$  building block (Fig. 7a). In the kröhnkite- $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$ , the Mn atom is coordinated to four oxygen atoms and two water molecules. The  $\text{MnO}_6$  octahedra share corners with four  $\text{SO}_4$  tetrahedra to form infinite chains along the *c* axis (Fig. 7b). These chains are condensed at 227 °C to form the 3d-framework of the alluaudite- $\text{Na}_{2+\gamma}\text{Mn}_{1-\gamma/2}(\text{SO}_4)_3$ . In this structure the  $\text{MnO}_6$  octahedra share edges and form dimer units that are interconnected through  $\text{SO}_4$  tetrahedra (Fig. 7c). In the löweite- $\text{Na}_{12}\text{Mn}_7(\text{SO}_4)_{12}[\text{S}_2\text{O}_7] \cdot 12\text{H}_2\text{O}$ , two Mn atoms exist. Mn1 is coordinated to two water molecules and four oxygen atoms, whereas Mn2 is coordinated to six oxygen atoms. The  $\text{Mn1O}_6$  and  $\text{Mn2O}_6$  octahedra are bridged by the  $\text{SO}_4$  tetrahedra to form a 3d-framework (Fig. 7d). At 227 °C, the water molecules of the löweite evaporated and

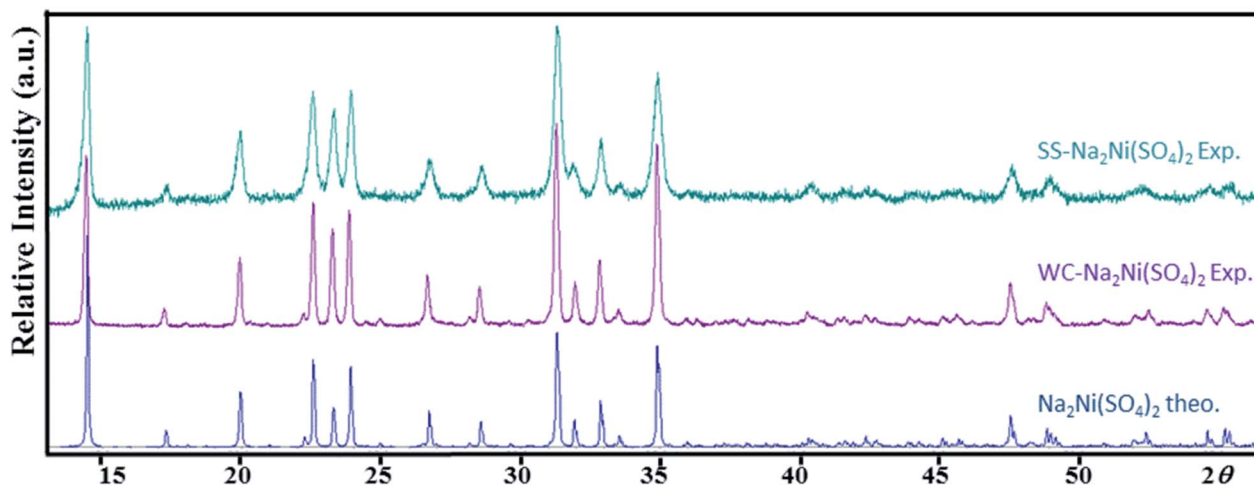


Fig. 4 Theoretical and experimental powder X-ray diffraction patterns of  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2$  (Cu-K $\alpha$  radiation). SS- $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2$  was obtained using solid state synthesis method, whereas WC- $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2$  corresponds to the dehydration of  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  obtained using wet chemistry route.



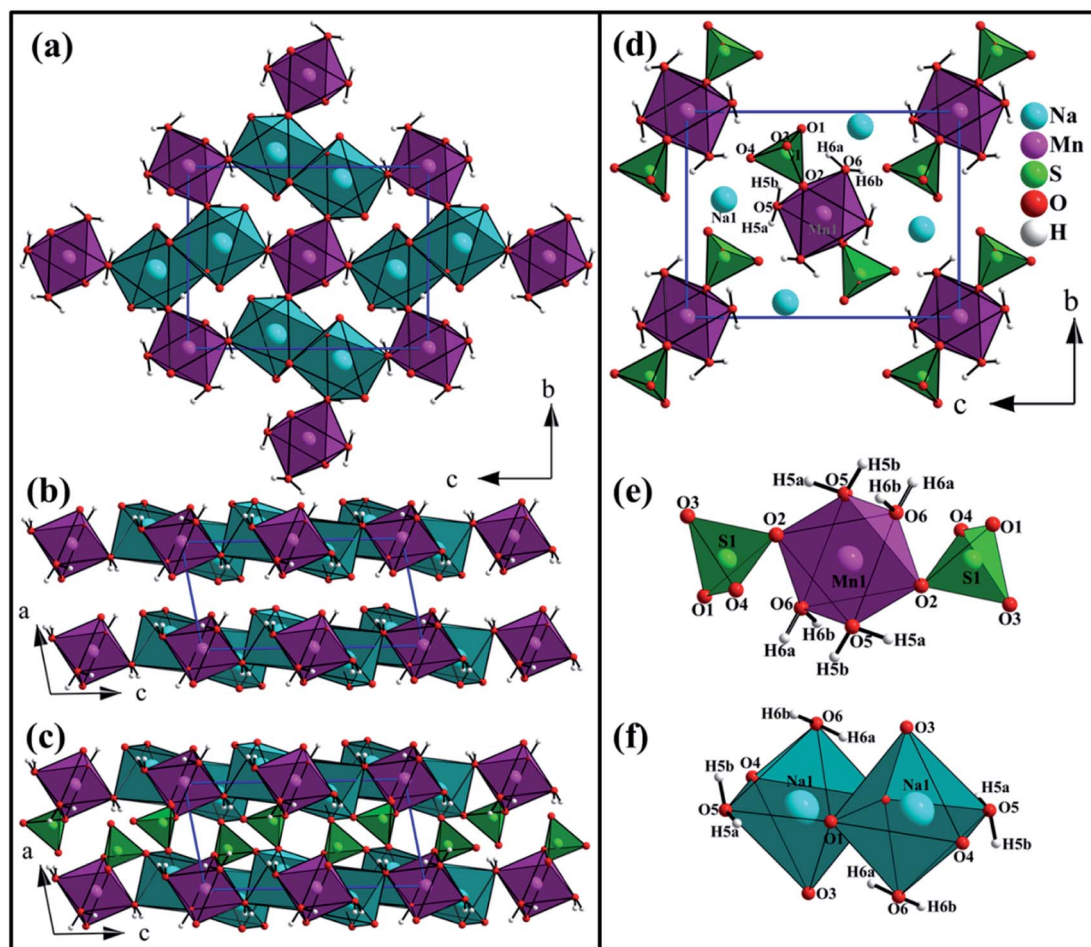


Fig. 5 View along the *a* and *b* axes of the layers of  $\text{MnO}_2(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4$  and  $\text{NaO}_4(\text{H}_2\text{O})_2$  octahedra (a and b), and projection view of the crystal structure of  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  in the (010) plane (c). View along the *a* axis of the crystal structure of  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (d). The atoms of the asymmetric unit are labeled (d). View of the building block  $[\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4]^{2-}$  (e) and the  $[\text{Na}_2\text{O}_6(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4]^{10-}$  dimer units (f).

a structural transition to the glauberite- $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2$  was observed. In this structure the  $\text{MnO}_6$  octahedra share corners with six  $\text{SO}_4$  tetrahedra to form a 3d-framework (Fig. 7e).

### 3.3. Crystal structure of $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$

The  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  compound is isostructural with  $\text{Na}_2\text{-Mg}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$ .<sup>12</sup> The structure is built up of  $[\text{Ni}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_6]^{2+}$  and  $[\text{Na}_2(\text{SO}_4)_2(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4]^{2-}$  layers parallel to the (100) plane. These layers are interconnected through hydrogen bonds forming the structure of  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$ . The interatomic distances and the hydrogen bonds are listed in Tables 3 and 4, respectively.

The nickel cations are coordinated to six water molecules forming isolated distorted  $[\text{Ni}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_6]^{2+}$  octahedra. These octahedra are interlinked by the  $\text{O6-H6a} \cdots \text{O9}$  hydrogen bonds forming the layer 2 parallel to the (100) plane (Fig. 8c). The  $d_{(\text{Ni1-O})}$  distances range from 2.0365 to 2.0892 Å with an average distance of 2.0555 Å which is slightly shorter than the sum of the effective ionic radii of the six-coordinated  $\text{Ni}^{2+}$  and  $\text{O}^{2-}$   $\{\text{IR}_{(\text{Ni}^{2+})} + \text{IR}_{(\text{O}^{2-})} = 0.69 + 1.4 \text{ Å}\}$ .<sup>38</sup> The BVS value of 2.03 is in

good agreement with the oxidation state 2+ expected for the Ni atoms.<sup>39</sup>

The  $\text{SO}_4$  tetrahedra are regular. The distances range from 1.4607 to 1.4842 Å with the average value of 1.4740 Å. This value is shorter than the sum of the effective ionic radii of the four-coordinated  $\text{S}^{6+}$  and  $\text{O}^{2-}$   $\{\text{IR}_{(\text{S}^{6+})} + \text{IR}_{(\text{O}^{2-})} = 0.12 + 1.38 \text{ Å}\}$ . The BVS value of 6.00 is in good agreement with the oxidation state 6+ expected for sulfur.

The  $\text{Na}^+$  cations are surrounded by six oxygen atoms forming distorted octahedra. These octahedra share edges and form infinite chains running along the *b* axis (Fig. 8b). These chains share corners with the  $\text{SO}_4$  tetrahedra forming  $[\text{Na}_2(\text{SO}_4)_2(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4]^{2-}$  layers parallel to the (100) plane (see layer 1 in Fig. 8b). The average  $\text{Na1-O}$  distance of 2.4537 Å is consistent with the sum of the effective ionic radii of the six-coordinated  $\text{Na}^+$  and  $\text{O}^{2-}$   $\{\text{IR}_{(\text{Na}^+)} + \text{IR}_{(\text{O}^{2-})} = 1.02 + 1.40 \text{ Å}\}$ . The BVS value of 1.04 is in good agreement with the oxidation state 1+ expected for the Na atoms.

In  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  the water molecules are the hydrogen-bond donors, whereas the oxygen atoms O1, O3, O4 and O9 play the role of hydrogen bond acceptors (Table 4 and Fig. 9).



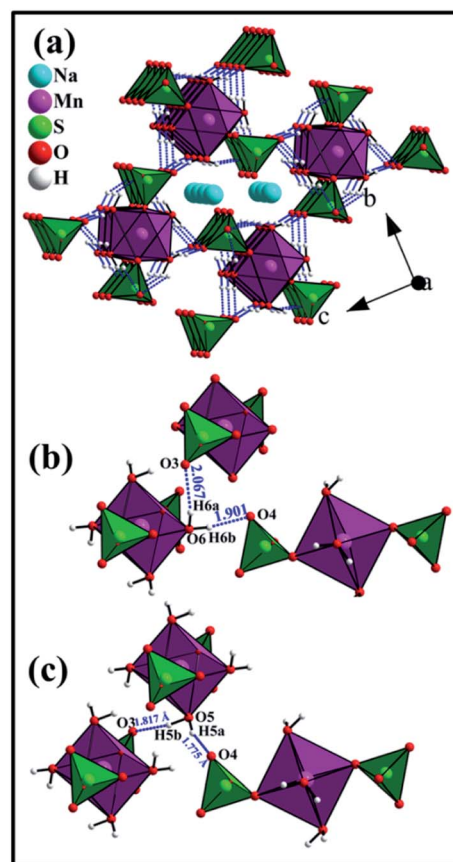
**Table 3** Interatomic distances (in Å) and bond valence sums (BVS) for  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  and  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$ <sup>a</sup>

Distances (Å)		Distances (Å)	
<b><math>\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}</math></b>		<b><math>\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}</math></b>	
Na1–O1	2.3831(10)	Na1–O3	2.3956(11)
Na1–O3	2.3952(11)	Na1–O4	2.5474(9)
Na1–O5	2.4111(9)	Na1–O7	2.4138(9)
Na1–O4	2.4490(11)	Na1–O7	2.4159(9)
Na1–O1	2.4623(12)	Na1–O8	2.4671(12)
Na1–O6	2.6162(11)	Na1–O8	2.4821(10)
$\langle d_{\text{Na1-O}} \rangle$	$\langle 2.4528 \rangle$	$\langle d_{\text{Na1-O}} \rangle$	$\langle 2.4537 \rangle$
BVS	<sup>b</sup> 1.06[6]	BVS	<sup>b</sup> 1.04[6]
Mn1–O2 ( $\times 2$ )	2.1475(9)	Ni1–O5 ( $\times 2$ )	2.0365(8)
Mn1–O5 ( $\times 2$ )	2.1593(9)	Ni1–O6 ( $\times 2$ )	2.0409(8)
Mn1–O6 ( $\times 2$ )	2.2088(9)	Ni1–O9 ( $\times 2$ )	2.0892(9)
$\langle d_{\text{Mn1-O}} \rangle$	$\langle 2.1718 \rangle$	$\langle d_{\text{Ni1-O}} \rangle$	$\langle 2.0555 \rangle$
BVS	<sup>b</sup> 2.14[6]	BVS	<sup>b</sup> 2.03[6]
S1–O1	1.4565(10)	S1–O1	1.4842(10)
S1–O2	1.4707(10)	S1–O2	1.4772(9)
S1–O3	1.4794(9)	S1–O3	1.4607(9)
S1–O4	1.4807(10)	S1–O4	1.4738(7)
$\langle d_{\text{S1-O}} \rangle$	$\langle 1.4718 \rangle$	$\langle d_{\text{S1-O}} \rangle$	$\langle 1.4740 \rangle$
BVS	<sup>b</sup> 6.03[4]	BVS	<sup>b</sup> 6.00[4]

<sup>a</sup> Average distances are given in  $\langle \rangle$  and coordination numbers are given in  $[\ ]$ . <sup>b</sup> Bond valence sum,  $\text{B.V.} = e^{(r_0 - r)/b}$  with the following parameters:  $b = 0.37$ ,  $r_0(\text{Na}^{\text{I}}-\text{O}) = 1.803$ ,  $r_0(\text{S}^{\text{VI}}-\text{O}) = 1.624$ ,  $r_0(\text{Ni}^{\text{II}}-\text{O}) = 1.654$  and  $r_0(\text{Mn}^{\text{II}}-\text{O}) = 1.624$ .

The hydrogen bonds can be divided into two categories; intra- and inter-layers bonds as depicted on Fig. 9a, c and b, respectively. Based on the classification of Jeffrey all the O–H...O hydrogen bonds are moderate (Table 4 and Fig. 9).<sup>40,41</sup>

It is worth to mention that in the nickel system  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot n\text{H}_2\text{O}$  four phases have been reported ( $n = 0, 2, 4$  and  $6$ ), however only the crystal structures of  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2$ ,<sup>24</sup>  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$ <sup>25</sup> and  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ <sup>26</sup> were solved (Fig. 10). These phases were prepared *via* solid state-, room temperature- and hydrothermal-synthesis routes, respectively and using



**Fig. 6** Perspective view along the *a* axis of the crystal structure of  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (a). The dashed blue lines correspond to the O–H...O hydrogen bonds interconnecting the  $[\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4]^{2-}$  building blocks involving the water molecules H6a–O6–H6b (b) and H5a–O5–H5b (c). The sodium atoms are located in the tunnels (a).

different precursors and solvents. These experimental conditions are at the origin of the variation in the degree of hydration *n* of the  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot n\text{H}_2\text{O}$  phases which induced several

**Table 4** Hydrogen bonds for  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  and  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$ 

Donor	Hydrogen	Acceptor	D–H distance	H...A distance	D–A distance	A–H...D angle
<b><math>\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}</math></b>						
O5	H5b	O3	0.960(13)	1.817(12)	2.7634(13)	168.3(15)
O5	H5a	O4	0.960(17)	1.774(16)	2.7074(14)	163.3(14)
O6	H6a	O3	0.960(17)	2.067(16)	2.9400(14)	150.4(16)
O6	H6b	O4	0.960(10)	1.901(10)	2.8483(12)	168.8(13)
<b><math>\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}</math></b>						
O5	H5a	O1	0.949(8)	1.785(8)	2.7263(11)	171.2(10)
O5	H5b	O4	0.955(9)	1.800(10)	2.7480(11)	171.0(13)
O6	H6a	O9	0.952(6)	2.088(7)	3.0022(11)	160.5(12)
O6	H6b	O2	0.939(10)	1.817(10)	2.7512(11)	172.9(11)
O7	H7a	O3	0.955(13)	1.888(14)	2.8137(12)	162.4(12)
O7	H7b	O2	0.952(12)	1.988(15)	2.9045(14)	160.9(13)
O8	H8a	O4	0.955(17)	1.861(17)	2.8111(14)	172.9(15)
O8	H8b	O1	0.952(11)	2.236(13)	3.1189(11)	153.7(13)
O9	H9a	O1	0.950(15)	1.795(15)	2.7389(12)	172.3(11)
O9	H9b	O2	0.951(12)	1.889(13)	2.8384(10)	175.4(17)





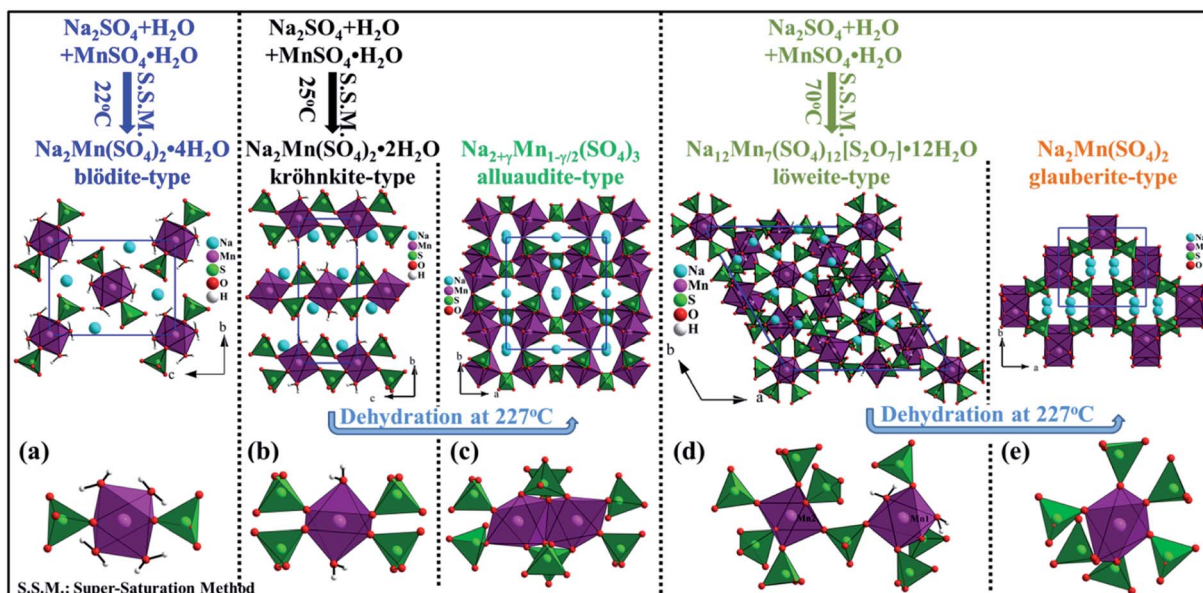


Fig. 7 Synthesis methods and crystal structure views for  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (a),  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (b),  $\text{Na}_{2+\gamma}\text{Mn}_{1-\gamma/2}(\text{SO}_4)_3$  (c),  $\text{Na}_{12}\text{Mn}_7(\text{SO}_4)_{12}[\text{S}_2\text{O}_7] \cdot 12\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (d) and  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2$  (e). The coordination spheres of the Mn atoms are also provided for comparison.

structural changes. Our careful analyses indicate that the presence of water molecules affects in first place the coordination sphere of the transition metal (nickel) due to its large electrical charge  $z$ . Indeed, for  $n = 0$ , the  $\text{NiO}_6$  octahedra share one edge and four corners with five  $\text{SO}_4$  tetrahedra leading to  $[\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2]^{2-}$  3d-framework (Fig. 10d). Whereas, for  $n = 4$ , the Ni atoms are coordinated to four water molecules and two oxygen atoms, from two adjacent  $\text{SO}_4$  tetrahedra, forming the isolated  $[\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4]^{2-}$  building block of the blödite-type of structure (Fig. 10a). For  $n = 6$  and 10, six water molecules are coordinated to the Ni atoms forming the isolated  $[\text{Ni}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_6]^{2+}$  octahedra (Fig. 10b and c) which are connected to the  $\text{SO}_4$  tetrahedra only through hydrogen bonds. For  $n = 10$ , the  $(n - 6)$  extra water molecules are coordinated to the sodium atoms.

Since  $n \leq 10$ , in the four phases the water molecules are coordinated. One would expect to observe interstitial water only for  $n > 12$ . Indeed in the case of  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mg}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 16\text{H}_2\text{O}$ , six water molecules are coordinated to the magnesium atoms, six water molecules are coordinated to the sodium atoms and four water molecules are interstitial.<sup>14</sup> Therefore the chemical formula can be written as  $\{[\text{Na}_2(\text{H}_2\text{O})_6][\text{Mg}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_6][(\text{SO}_4)_2]\} \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$ .

### 3.4. Comparison of the crystal structures

The quantitative comparison of the isotopic crystal structures within the  $\text{Na}_2\text{M}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  series ( $\text{M} = \text{Mg}, \text{V}, \text{Mn}, \text{Fe}, \text{Co}, \text{Ni}, \text{Zn}, \text{Cd}$ ) and between the two isotopic structures of  $\text{Na}_2\text{M}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  ( $\text{M} = \text{Mg}, \text{Ni}$ ), respectively was performed using

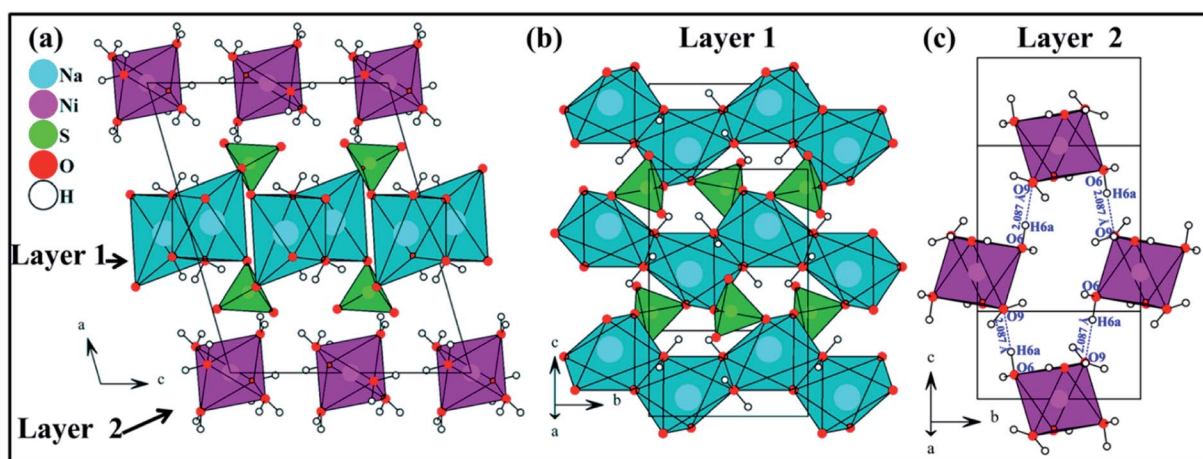


Fig. 8 View along the  $b$  axis of the crystal structure of  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (a), view of  $[\text{Na}_2(\text{SO}_4)_2(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4]^{2-}$  layer 1 on the (100) plane (b) and view of  $[\text{Ni}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_6]^{2+}$  layer 2 on the (100) plane (c).



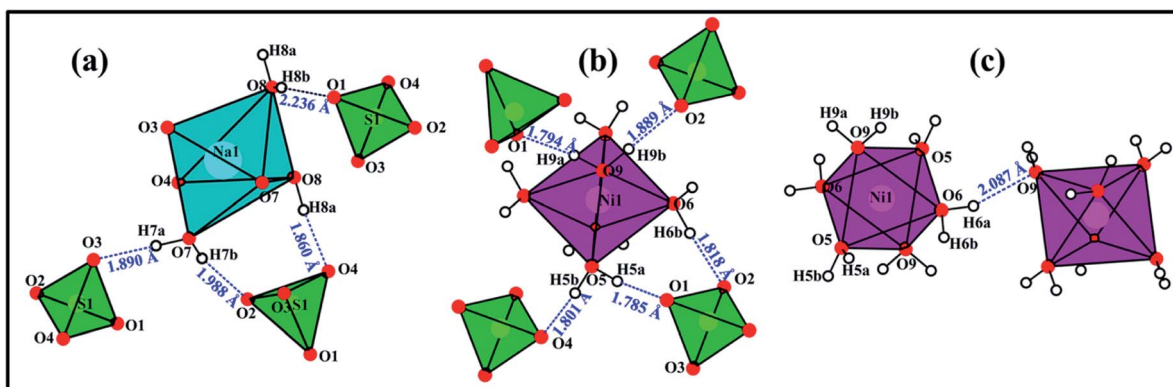


Fig. 9 View of the hydrogen bonds within the layer 1 (a), between layer 1 and layer 2 (b), and within the layer 2 (c).

the program compstru.<sup>43–46</sup> The comparisons did not include the hydrogen atoms since in the various structural refinements different constrains/restrains on the water molecules were applied. Origin shifts of  $(0 \frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{2})$  and  $(0 \frac{1}{2} 0)$  were applied to the crystal structures of  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  and  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$ , respectively. All the crystal structures in the  $\text{Na}_2\text{-M}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  series were compared to  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  which was chosen as a reference. The numerical details of the comparisons are given in Table 5. The crystal structures of  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  and its Mg, Fe, Co, and Zn analogues show a very high similarity ( $\Delta < 0.02$ ) due to similar ionic radii of the five metal cations. Larger differences were observed with Mn and Cd ( $\Delta = 0.044$  and  $0.079$ , respectively) due to their greater ionic radii. It should be also noted that the cell volume

increases almost linearly with the ionic radii of the metal cations (Fig. 11).

The crystal structure of  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  was also compared to the Mg analogue using the compstru program. As indicated in Table 5, the two isotypic compounds are essentially coincident ( $\Delta = 0.005$ ). The largest deviations of 0.0444 and 0.0430 were observed for the atom pairs O1 and O3 of the  $\text{MgO}_6$  octahedron.

## 4. Conclusion

After the recent discovery of the new polymorphic modification of  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}_3(\text{SO}_4)_4$  and the solid solution  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}_{3-x}\text{Mg}_x(\text{SO}_4)_4$ ,<sup>47</sup> two other sulfate phases were prepared for the first time by a wet

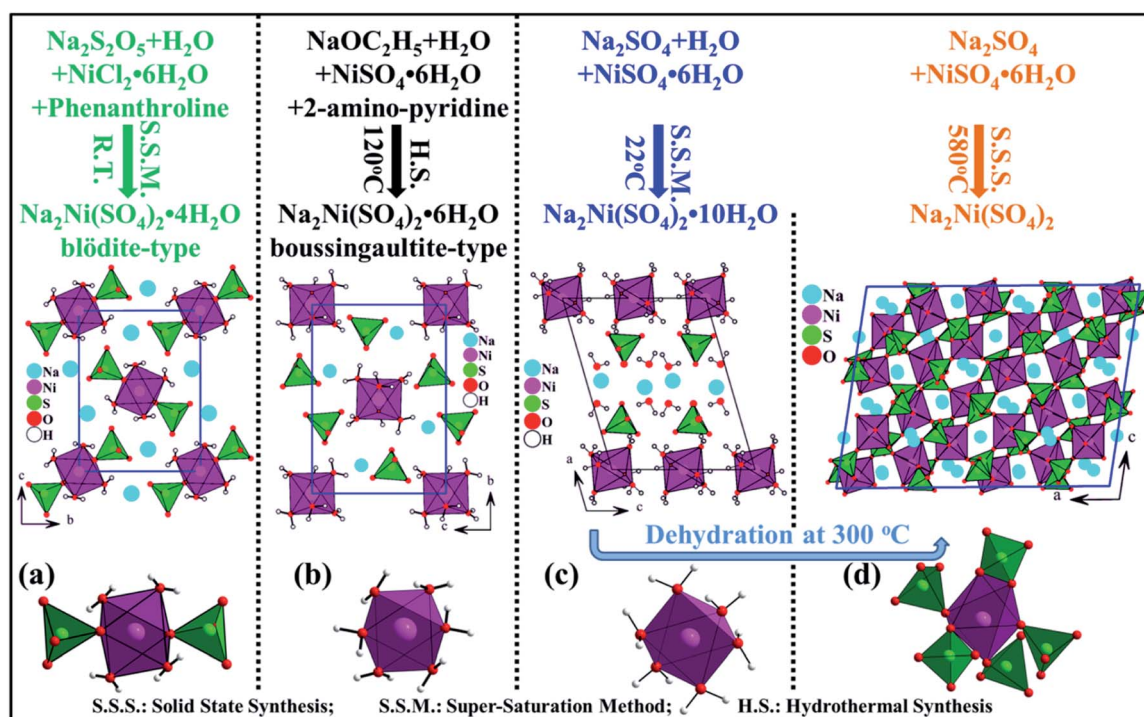


Fig. 10 Synthesis methods and crystal structure views for  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (a),  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (b),  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (c) and  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2$  (d). The coordination spheres of the Ni atoms are also provided for comparison.

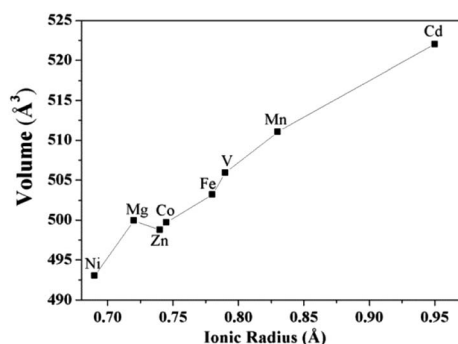


**Table 5** Numerical details from the comparisons of the crystal structure of  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  with isotopic structures in the  $\text{Na}_2\text{M}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  series ( $\text{M} = \text{Mg}, \text{V}, \text{Mn}, \text{Fe}, \text{Co}, \text{Ni}, \text{Zn}, \text{Cd}$ ), and between  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mg}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  and  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  using the compstru program ( $|u|$  is the atomic displacement)

<b><math>\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}</math> versus <math>\text{Na}_2\text{M}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}</math></b>								
M	Mg	Zn	Co	Fe	V	Mn	Cd	
Atom	$ u /\text{\AA}$	$ u /\text{\AA}$	$ u /\text{\AA}$	$ u /\text{\AA}$	$ u /\text{\AA}$	$ u /\text{\AA}$	$ u /\text{\AA}$	
Ni1/M	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	
Na1	0.0153	0.0088	0.0070	0.0091	0.0157	0.0285	0.0467	
S1	0.0361	0.0197	0.0142	0.0241	0.0369	0.0523	0.0692	
O1	0.0310	0.0216	0.0243	0.0505	0.0298	0.0626	0.0905	
O2	0.0602	0.0172	0.0085	0.0226	0.0623	0.0325	0.0628	
O3	0.0787	0.0320	0.0212	0.0343	0.0799	0.0797	0.1563	
O4	0.0147	0.0183	0.0113	0.0115	0.0122	0.0456	0.1058	
O5	0.0174	0.0228	0.0292	0.0580	0.0174	0.0965	0.1814	
O6	0.0328	0.0337	0.0400	0.0719	0.0311	0.0971	0.1742	
Degree of lattice distortion (S)	0.0034	0.0030	0.0030	0.0046	0.0057	0.0082	0.0138	
The maximum distance ( $d_{\text{max}}$ )/\AA	0.0787	0.0337	0.0400	0.0719	0.0799	0.0971	0.1814	
Arithmetic mean ( $d_{\text{av}}$ )/\AA	0.0337	0.0205	0.0183	0.0332	0.0336	0.0582	0.1043	
Measure of similarity ( $\Delta$ )	0.019	0.014	0.014	0.018	0.027	0.044	0.079	
Ref.	7	7	7	34	33	This work	1	

<b><math>\text{Na}_2\text{Mg}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}</math> versus <math>\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}</math></b>	
Atom	$ u /\text{\AA}$
Mg1/Ni1	0.0000
Na1	0.0117
S1	0.0217
O1	0.0444
O2	0.0220
O3	0.0430
O4	0.0210
O5	0.0132
O6	0.0242
O7	0.0181
O8	0.0094
O9	0.0377
Degree of lattice distortion (S)	0.0017
The maximum distance ( $d_{\text{max}}$ )/\AA	0.0444
Arithmetic mean ( $d_{\text{av}}$ )/\AA	0.0232
Measure of similarity ( $\Delta$ )	0.005



**Fig. 11** Unit-cell volumes as a function of the ionic radius of the M cation in the blöndite-type of compounds  $\text{Na}_2\text{M}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  ( $\text{M} = \text{Mg}, \text{V}, \text{Mn}, \text{Fe}, \text{Co}, \text{Ni}, \text{Zn}, \text{Cd}$ ).

chemistry route and their crystal structures were solved using single crystal XRD data.  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mn}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  with the blöndite-type structure is the missing link in the series of  $\text{Na}_2\text{M}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  sulfates ( $\text{M} = \text{Mg}, \text{V}, \text{Mn}, \text{Fe}, \text{Co}, \text{Ni}, \text{Zn}, \text{Cd}$ ), whereas  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  is the first compound isostructural with the aristotype  $\text{Na}_2\text{Mg}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$ . The powder XRD data revealed

that only the nickel phase was almost pure, whereas the manganese phase was a mixture of at least three phases. The TGA data provided the optimal conditions to fully dehydrate the nickel phase. When  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  is heated at temperatures between 300 and 600 °C, the anhydrous phase WC- $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2$  could be obtained. Interestingly, it is isostructural with SS- $\text{Na}_2\text{Ni}(\text{SO}_4)_2$  which was prepared by solid state synthesis route and it is thermally more stable than  $\text{Na}_2\text{Fe}(\text{SO}_4)_2$  which is a suitable cathode material for NIBs. Therefore, the dehydration of hydrous sulfates and phosphates should be considered as a promising step toward further realization of novel cathode materials for NIBs.

## Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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