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PAPER

Wormlike core-shell nanoparticles formed by co-assembly of double hydrophilic block polyelectrolyte with oppositely charged fluorosurfactant†

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Formation of polyelectrolyte-surfactant complexes (PE-S) between anionic polyelectrolyte, poly(sodium 2-sulfamate-3-carboxylate isoprene)-*block*-poly(ethylene oxide) (PSCI-PEO) and cationic fluorosurfactant, *N*-(3,3,4,4,5,5,6,6,7,7,8,8,9,9,10,10,10-heptadecafluorodecyl)pyridinium chloride (HFDPCI) was studied in alkaline aqueous solutions by static, dynamic and electrophoretic light scattering. The structure of the formed PE-S nanoparticles was investigated by SAXS, cryogenic transmission electron microscopy and atomic force microscopy. The results show that tendency of the fluorosurfactant to form elongated threadlike micelles drives the PE-S co-assembly to a flexible core-shell cylindrical morphology with the core of the PE-S and the shell of the PEO blocks. Unlike other PE-S systems involving double hydrophilic polyelectrolytes, well-defined core-shell particles exist only in the narrow range of HFDPCI-to-PSCI units stoichiometric ratios corresponding to zero ζ potential of the aggregates.

1 Introduction

Complexes of polyelectrolytes with oppositely charged surfactants (PE-S) have attracted attention of many researchers in the past two decades due to general interest in nanostructured self-assembled systems, as well as due to pharmaceutical and other applications of such materials.^{1–3} PE-S are stabilized by electrostatic interactions between the surfactant head groups and the polyelectrolyte side groups and by hydrophobic interactions between the hydrophobic backbone of the polyelectrolyte and the alkyl chains of the surfactant. It has been found that the oppositely charged surfactant condenses on the polyelectrolyte chains and forms micelles at concentrations far below its critical micelle concentration (cmc) in the absence of the polyelectrolyte^{4,5} and that water-insoluble stoichiometric PE-S with zero net charge form various water-insoluble ordered crystalline-like phases.⁶

Block copolymers consisting of a polyelectrolyte block and a neutral hydrophilic block (further referred to as double hydrophilic block polyelectrolytes, DHBE), such as poly(methacrylate)-*block*-poly(ethylene oxide)^{7–9} or poly(acrylate)-*block*-poly(acrylamide)^{10–12} co-assemble with oppositely charged ionic surfactants into core-shell particles with the shell formed by the neutral hydrophilic block and the core formed by the insoluble PE-S of the polyelectrolyte block and the surfactant. SANS and SAXS measurements indicate that the core contains disordered densely packed surfactant micelles.^{10,11}

Surfactants with perfluorocarbon tails have been a subject of

study due to their favorable properties such as lower solubility in water, lower cmc and stronger surface activity as compared with their hydrocarbon analogs.¹³ Surfactants containing perfluorinated alkyl chains differ in many respects from hydrocarbon surfactants not only because the fluorocarbon tail is both hydrophobic and lipophobic but also because of its larger excluded volume as compared with hydrocarbons which causes fluorosurfactants to prefer self-assembly with a less curved interface, such as elongated micelles or vesicles.¹³ Although a number of papers deal with complexes of homopolymers with fluorosurfactants,^{14–18} and formation of co-assembled nanoparticles of block copolymers with fluorosurfactants in organic solvents have also been reported,^{19,20} there is only a few studies on PE-S of DHBE with an oppositely charged fluorosurfactant in aqueous solutions.²¹

Here we report on the formation and structure of PE-S nanoparticles composed of an anionic DHBE, poly(sodium 2-sulfamate-3-carboxylate isoprene)-*block*-poly(ethylene oxide), PSCI-PEO,²² and a cationic fluorosurfactant, *N*-(3,3,4,4,5,5,6,6,7,7,8,8,9,9,10,10,10-heptadecafluorodecyl)pyridinium chloride, HFDPCI, in alkaline aqueous solutions. It has been reported that above certain critical concentration (which is dependent on ionic strength), HFDPCI undergoes the transition from spherical to elongated, threadlike micelles.²³ In this paper, we investigate how tendency of the surfactant to form elongated micelles influences the coassembly with DHBE. As a DHBE component of the studied PE-S complexes, we use PSCI-PEO, a biocompatible copolymer whose polyelectrolyte block contains both strong (SO₃H) and weak (COOH) acidic groups (similarly to

heparin^{24,25}) and its backbone is strongly hydrophobic due to the presence of unmodified poly(isoprene) units. The ability of PSCI-PEO to form nanoparticles with various positively charged species has been widely studied. It has been reported that PSCI-PEO copolymers form complexes with cationic polyelectrolytes and surfactants,²⁶ cationic vesicles,²⁷ proteins with a high isoelectric point²⁸ or bivalent metal cations.²⁹

In this paper, the formation of PE-S between PSCI-PEO and HFDPCI is followed by a combination of static, dynamic and electrophoretic light scattering. The structure of the formed nanoparticles is studied in detail using small angle X-ray scattering (SAXS), cryogenic transmission electron microscopy (Cryo-TEM) and atomic force microscopy (AFM).

2 Experimental

2.1 Materials

The PSCI-PEO copolymer was prepared by the postpolymerization reaction of polyisoprene-*block*-poly(ethylene oxide) (PI-PEO), prepared by living anionic polymerization,²¹ with chlorosulfonyl isocyanate. Details on the synthesis can be found in ref. 21. Weight average molar mass of the PI-PEO precursor by SEC was, $M_w = 17.4 \text{ kg mol}^{-1}$, the PSCI-PEO sample composition by ¹³C solid state NMR was 42, 34 and 24 mol. % for PEO units, PSCI units and unmodified polyisoprene units, respectively.

HFDPCI was synthesized from 1H,1H,2H,2H-perfluorodecyl iodide and pyridine following the procedures outlined in ref 30.

PE-S complexes were prepared by mixing stock solutions of PSCI-PEO and HFDPCI. Stock solutions of PSCI-PEO in 50 mM aqueous sodium tetraborate (pH 9.3) and HFDPCI in deionized water were mixed under stirring and left to stand at least 24 hours for equilibration prior to measurements. PSCI-PEO concentration in the solutions was 1 mg mL⁻¹.

2.2 Methods

Static and dynamic light scattering measurements were carried out with an ALV photometer (ALV, Langen, Germany) consisting of a 22 mW He-Ne laser, an ALV CGS/8F goniometer, an ALV High QE APD detector and an ALV 5000/EPP multibit, multitau autocorrelator at 20°C. The copolymer concentration in all solutions was, $c = 1 \text{ mg/mL}$.

Static light scattering (SLS) measurements of the corrected excess scattering intensity $I(q)$, of the copolymer solutions, as a function of the magnitude of the scattering vector $q = (4\pi n_0/\lambda)\sin(\theta/2)$ (θ being the scattering angle, $n_0 = 1.332$ the refractive index of the solvent and $\lambda = 632.8 \text{ nm}$ the wavelength of the incident light) were treated by fitting the data in the angular range from 30° to 90° to the Guinier equation,

$$\ln \frac{I(q)}{I(0)} = -\frac{1}{3} R_g^2 q^2, \quad (1)$$

to obtain the forward scattering intensity, $I(0)$, and the radius of gyration, R_g .

Dynamic light scattering measurements were evaluated by fitting the measured normalized time autocorrelation function of

the scattered light intensity, $g^{(2)}(t)$, related to the electric field autocorrelation function, $g^{(1)}(t)$, by the Siegert relation, $g^{(2)}(t) = 1 + \beta |g^{(1)}(t)|^2$, where β is the coherence factor. A constrained regularization algorithm (CONTIN) provided the distribution of relaxation times τ , $A(\tau)$, as the inverse Laplace transform of $g^{(1)}(t)$ function

$$g^{(1)}(t) = \int_0^\infty A(\tau) \exp\left(-\frac{t}{\tau}\right) d\tau, \quad (2)$$

The $A(\tau)$ distributions were recalculated to the distributions of apparent hydrodynamic radii, R_H^{app} , assuming the apparent diffusion coefficient $D^{\text{app}} = 1/\tau q^2$ and using the Stokes-Einstein formula, $R_H^{\text{app}} = k_B T / 6\pi\eta D^{\text{app}}$, where k_B is the Boltzmann constant, T the temperature and η the solvent viscosity.

Electrophoretic light scattering measurements were carried out with a Nano-ZS Zetasizer (Malvern Instruments, U.K.). ζ -Potential values were calculated from electrophoretic mobilities (averages of 15 up to 100 measurements) using the Smoluchowski approximation.

SAXS experiments were performed on the P12 BioSAXS beamline at the storage ring PETRA III of the Deutsche Elektronen Synchrotron (DESY, Hamburg, Germany) at 20 °C using a Pilatus 2M detector and synchrotron radiation with the wavelength of $\lambda = 0.1 \text{ nm}$. The sample-detector distance was 3 m, allowing for measurements in the q -range interval from 0.11 to 4.4 nm⁻¹. The q range was calibrated using the diffraction patterns of silver behenate. The experimental data were normalized to the incident beam intensity, corrected for non-homogeneous detector response, and the background scattering of the solvent was subtracted. The solvent scattering was measured before and after the sample scattering to control for possible sample holder contamination. Eight consecutive frames comprising the measurement of the solvent, sample, and solvent were performed. No measurable radiation damage was detected by a comparison of eight successive time frames with 15 s exposures. The final scattering curve was obtained using the program PRIMUS by averaging the scattering data collected from the different frames. The automatic sample changer for sample volume 15 μL and filling cycle of 20 s was used.

Cryo-TEM measurements were carried out using a Tecnai G2 Sphera 20 electron microscope (FEI Company, Hillsboro, OR, USA) equipped with a Gatan 626 cryo-specimen holder (Gatan, Pleasanton, CA, USA). The samples for cryo-TEM were prepared by plunge-freezing as described earlier.³¹ Briefly, 3 μL of the sample solution were applied to an electron microscopy grid covered with perforated carbon supporting film (C-flat 2/2-2C, Electron Microscopy Sciences) glow discharged for 20 s with 5 mA current. Most of the sample was removed by blotting (Whatman no. 1 filter paper) for approximately 1 s, and the grid was then plunged into liquid ethane held at -183 °C. The grid was then transferred without rewarming into the microscope. Images were recorded at the accelerating voltage of 120 kV and microscope magnification ranging from 5000× to 14 500× using a Gatan UltraScan 1000 slow scan CCD camera (giving a final pixel size from 2 to 0.7 nm) and low dose mode with the electron dose not exceeding 1500 electrons per nm². Typical value of applied underfocus ranged between 0.5 to 2 μm . The applied blotting conditions resulted in the specimen thickness varying between 100 to ca. 300 nm.

AFM measurements were performed in the tapping mode under ambient conditions using a commercial scanning probe microscope, Digital Instruments NanoScope dimensions 3, equipped with a Nanosensors silicon cantilever with a typical spring constant of 40 N m^{-1} . Polymeric micelles were deposited on a fresh (i.e., freshly peeled out) mica surface (flogopite, theoretical formula $\text{KMg}_3\text{AlSi}_3\text{O}_{10}(\text{OH})_2$, the Geological Collection of the Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic) by a fast dip coating in a PSCI-PEO/HFDPCI aqueous solution (c ca. 10^{-2} g L^{-1}). After the evaporation of water, the sample was dried in vacuum oven at ambient temperature for ca. 5 hours.

3 Results and discussion

3.1 Light scattering study of PE-S aggregates formation

At first, the formation of PE-S in PSCI-PEO/HFDPCI system has been studied by static, dynamic and electrophoretic light scattering. Fig. 1 shows the dependences of the forward scattering intensity, $I(0)$ (curve 1), and the gyration radius, R_g (curve 2) of the PE-S aggregates formed in PSCI-PEO/HFDPCI alkaline aqueous solutions as functions of stoichiometric ratio between the surfactant and the polyelectrolyte units of PSCI, $\beta = [\text{HFDPCI}]/[\text{SCI}]$. The results indicate that large aggregates are present already in pure PSCI-PEO alkaline solution ($R_g = 118 \text{ nm}$) due to hydrophobic interactions between unmodified isoprene units. For low β up to 0.36, both average size of the scatterers in the PSCI-PEO/HFDPCI solution and forward scattering intensity increase with the increasing stoichiometric ratio as the formation the PE-S complex further promotes aggregation of PSCI-PEO chains. When the amount of the surfactant is further increased, R_g decreases (while $I(0)$ still grows) because the polyelectrolyte chains collapse due to charge neutralization by the bound surfactant micelles and consequent decrease of the electrostatic repulsion between the PSCI segments.

The above mentioned charge neutralization can be followed by electrophoretic light scattering measurements. Inset in Fig. 1 shows the ζ potential of the PSCI-PEO/HFDPCI system, which reflects the effective net charge of the formed PE-S aggregates, as a function of β . The ζ values increase from negative to positive as the increasing amount of cationic surfactant is bound to the complex with the polyelectrolyte. The zero ζ potential (and thus the zero effective charge of the PE-S nanoparticles) appears at $\beta = 0.71$, very close to the composition at which the gyration radius of the particles reaches its minimum value. On the other hand, the zero effective charge indicated by the ζ potential measurement is reached at a much lower amount of the added surfactant than that expected from the stoichiometry (as the charge of the SCI unit in alkaline solution should be -2 , the PE-S complex should have the zero net charge at $\beta = 2$). However, since the ζ potential value reflects rather the surface charge of the nanoparticles than their overall charge, this difference can be explained by the assumption that the charge ratio is shifted in favour of positive charges close to the surface of the aggregates as compared with their inner parts, most probably due to adsorption of excess surfactant cations. Another factor which can influence the charge balance in

the system is possible suppression of the ionization of carboxylic protons in the neighbourhood of SO_3^- groups so that the effective charge per one SCI unit is lower than -2 .

The presence of stable nanoparticles with the zero ζ potential in the PSCI-PEO/HFDPCI system indicates that the particles are not stabilized electrostatically and that a steric stabilization takes place, suggesting that PEO blocks segregate from the insoluble PE-S complex and the nanoparticles have a core-shell structure.

Fig. 1 Forward scattering intensity, $I(0)$ (curve 1), and gyration radius, R_g (curve 2) of PSCI-PEO/HFDPCI aggregates as functions of the stoichiometric ratio, β . Inset: ζ potential of PSCI-PEO/HFDPCI aggregates as a function of β .

For $\beta > 0.71$, the gyration radius increases again suggesting that the compact nanoparticles are disrupted and looser aggregates are formed again. This assumption is further supported (i) by the dependence of $I(0)$ which slightly decreases with increasing β above $\beta = 1.07$, and (ii) by the ζ potential dependence which shows that the aggregates overcharge, so that increasing electrostatic repulsion may contribute to the disruption of the nanoparticles and formation of loose aggregates.

Fig. 2 DLS distributions of apparent hydrodynamic radii at the scattering angle, $\theta = 90^\circ$, for PSCI-PEO/HFDPCI aggregates. The stoichiometric ratios, β , are given above the corresponding curves.

Fig. 2 shows distributions of apparent hydrodynamic radii of

aggregates present in PSCI-PEO/HFDPCl solutions at different compositions of the PE-S complexes. In pure PSCI-PEO and at $\beta = 0.18$, the distributions are very broad, indicating formation of polydisperse aggregates. At $\beta = 0.36$, the distribution becomes clearly bimodal due to the coexistence of larger, loose aggregates with smaller, compact particles with a narrower size distribution which form as a result of charge neutralization. The scattering from the latter particles dominates at $\beta = 0.71$, where also the minimum of R_H^{app} is reached at the same point as in the case of the minimum R_g and the zero ζ potential. For higher β , the width of the R_H^{app} distribution is further increased indicating the disruption of the nanoparticles.

3.3 SAXS study of PE-S aggregates structure

In order to obtain information about the structure of aggregates and particles formed in the PSCI-PEO/HFDPCl mixed system, we have contacted small-angle X-ray scattering experiments. Fig. 3 depicts SAXS data for stoichiometries of the PE-S corresponding to pure PSCI-PEO solution ($\beta = 0$), to loose aggregates prior to the formation of insoluble PE-S ($\beta = 0.36$), to compact PE-S nanoparticles ($\beta = 0.71$) and to loose aggregates formed by disruption of compact PE-S nanoparticles in excess of HFDPCl ($\beta = 1.43$).

Fig. 3. SAXS of PSCI-PEO/HFDPCl aggregates. The stoichiometric ratios, β , are given at the corresponding curves. The solid line is the fit of Eqn. (3) to the data for $\beta = 0.71$, the dashed line is a function proportional to $q^{-2.84}$.

While scattering from PSCI-PEO coils in the pure copolymer solution is too weak for analysis of the curve, after addition of the surfactant, a dominant Guinier scattering contribution with the gyration radius $R_g = 2.04 \pm 0.10$ nm appears for $\beta = 0.36$. This behaviour can be attributed to the formation of spherical HFDPCl micelles attached to PSCI chains.

A large increase in the scattering intensity in the low q range after increasing β from 0.36 to 0.71 corresponds to the formation

of large compact PE-S nanoparticles. The scattering curve for the compact particles at $\beta = 0.71$ (the minimum size, the zero ζ potential) exhibits oscillations characteristic for compact scatterers with spherical or cylindrical symmetry, suggesting formation of spherical or wormlike core/shell particles. The positions of local maxima and minima of the form factors for spheres and cylinders are associated with the radii of the objects, R ; for the first minimum q_m , $q_m R = 4.46$ for the monodisperse spheres and $q_m R = 3.83$ for the long monodisperse cylinders. In the measured scattering curve, $q_m = 0.33 \text{ nm}^{-1}$, which would correspond to the radius of 13.5 nm for the spherical geometry and 11.5 nm for the cylindrical geometry. The assumption that the PE-S complex forms a compact self-assembly is supported by the scattering behaviour in the high q -range which reflects close packing of the surfactant micelles in the formed PE-S complex, whose characteristic spacing l manifests itself as a structure peak with the maximum at $q_c = 2\pi/l$. (Presence of similar peaks was reported for several other PE-S systems, both in the bulk⁶ and in the cores of DHBE core-shell nanoparticles.^{10,11}) In section 3.5, we propose a model for the scattering behaviour of the PSCI-PEO/HFDPCl system at $\beta = 0.71$, consistent with the results of Cryo-TEM measurements (section 3.4).

With further increasing amount of the surfactant, the oscillations disappear, indicating loss of the spherical or cylindrical shape. At $\beta = 1.43$, the scattering curve exhibits a power law behavior, $I(q) \sim q^{-d}$, with the exponent $d = 2.84$ in the q range $0.15 - 0.4 \text{ nm}^{-1}$ corresponding to mass fractal aggregates of a sponge-like structure with the fractal dimension 2.84 on the lengthscale of ca. 10 – 40 nm. It is worth mentioning that the SAXS curve for the fractal aggregate retains the structure peak at $q = 1.71 \text{ nm}^{-1}$, which means that the packing of surfactant micelles in the aggregate is preserved, even though the broadening of the peak indicates that the correlation length within the packed complex of HFDPCl micelles and PSCI chains is decreased as compared with the compact particles at $\beta = 0.71$.

3.4 Cryo-TEM and AFM imaging of PE-S aggregates

Since SAXS measurements indicated that at the stoichiometric ratio $\beta = 0.71$, PSCI-PEO and HFDPCl co-assemble in spherical and/or cylindrical nanoparticles, the PSCI-PEO/HFDPCl system of this composition was imaged by Cryo-TEM and AFM. Cryo-TEM (Fig. 4a) shows (i) wormlike nanoparticles with the cross-section radius of about 13 nm and length of several hundreds nm and (ii) spherical objects with a similar radius as the cross-section radius of the wormlike particles, which can either be spherical particles or short cylindrical particles imaged along their longitudinal axes. The presence of elongated particles can be explained by the fact that HFDPCl undergoes a transition from spherical to threadlike micelles,²³ which, occurring simultaneously with the co-assembly of the surfactant cations with PSCI blocks, can lead to the formation of wormlike core-shell PE-S particles. (A few isolated threadlike HFDPCl micelles can also be observed in the PSCI-PEO/HFDPCl system at $\beta = 0.71$. The detail of a Cryo-TEM micrograph showing such a micelle is given as Supplementary Information.)

Fig. 4b is an AFM scan of PE-S nanoparticles at $\beta = 0.71$ in dry state, deposited on mica surface from diluted aqueous

solution ($c = 10^{-2}$ mg/mL). Instead of isolated clusters, interconnected particles form a continuous two-dimensional network with both variable height and width on the substrate surface. It is noteworthy that the minimum width of the network is about 30 nm, which is in accordance with the dimensions of the worms. This observation suggests that at these points the junctions of the network are formed by single wormlike nanoparticles.

Fig. 4 Images of PSCI-PEO/HFDPCI nanoparticles at the stoichiometric ratio, $\beta = 0.71$: (a) Cryo-TEM (scale bar = 200 nm), (b) AFM ($2 \times 2 \mu\text{m}^2$ scan)

3.5 SAXS model for compact nanoparticles

In order to describe the SAXS scattering behaviour of the PEO/HFDPCI system at $\beta = 0.71$, we have taken into account the Cryo-TEM results which show that at this stoichiometric ratio, the PE-S complex forms both wormlike and spherical (or short cylindrical) particles. In the proposed model, scattering from wormlike micelles, $P_{\text{worm}}(q, L, b, R_c)$, is described by the form factor for the semiflexible chain with the contour length L and the Kuhn length b ,³² assuming that the chain has a local cylindrical morphology with homogeneous scattering length density and the cross-section radius R_c , while spherical particles are treated by the simple form factor $P_{\text{sphere}}(R_s, q)$ for monodisperse spheres with the radius R_s .

In addition to the scattering contributions from worms and spheres, it was necessary to treat correlations in the high q region. The latter contribution was modelled by the structure factor for disordered cell-cell correlations,³³ $S_{\text{cor}}(q, l, \xi)$, where ξ is the correlation length. The overall scattering function, $I_{\text{PE-S}}(q)$, thus has the form,

$$I_{\text{PE-S}}(q) = I_1 P_{\text{worm}}(q, L, b, R_c) + I_2 P_{\text{sphere}}(q, R_s) + I_3 S_{\text{cor}}(q, l, \xi) \quad (3)$$

where I_1 and I_2 , respectively, are the forward scattering intensities for worms and spheres and I_3 is the amplitude of the correlation peak. (The full expression for $I_{\text{PE-S}}(q)$ is given as Supplementary Information.)

The resulting parameters of the fit of Eqn. (3) to the SAXS data for $\beta = 0.71$ (shown in Fig. 3 as the solid line) with the fixed contour length $L = 600$ nm and Kuhn length $b = 200$ nm are, $R_c = 15.5 \pm 0.2$ nm, $R_s = 13.8 \pm 0.1$ nm, $l = 3.67 \pm 0.02$ nm and $\xi = 6.8 \pm 0.5$ nm, with $\chi^2 = 5.4$. The radii of the worms and spheres are consistent with the Cryo-TEM images, being only slightly larger than those obtained from the microscopic image. This difference can be ascribed to the fact that hydrated aggregates or domains in the particles are not visible because of low electron contrast difference between these structures and amorphous ice of the solvent. The characteristic packing distance compares with the cross-section diameter of threadlike micelles. It should also be pointed out that even though the scattering contribution from the spheres is relatively low ($I_2/I_1 = 1.7 \times 10^{-2}$), it cannot be neglected as running the fit with the I_2 value fixed at $I_2 = 0$ (without the presence of spherical particles) results in a significantly higher χ^2 value ($\chi^2 = 62.4$), so that the SAXS data analysis corroborates the Cryo-TEM observation of spherical particles coexisting with the worms.

Fig. 5 Scheme of the PSCI-PEO/HFDPCI core-shell wormlike nanoparticle.

4 Conclusion

In this article, we have studied the interaction of a double hydrophilic anionic block polyelectrolyte, PSCI-PEO, with a cationic fluorosurfactant, HFDPCI, in aqueous solutions, by a combination of scattering (SLS, DLS, SAXS) and microscopic (Cryo-TEM, AFM) techniques. We have demonstrated that double hydrophilic block polyelectrolytes are able to form PE-S complexes with oppositely charged fluorosurfactants in a similar way as for PE-S complexes involving hydrocarbon ionic surfactants, so that at the stoichiometric ratio between SCI units and HFDPCI corresponding to ζ potential values of the aggregates close to zero, the block polyelectrolyte co-assembles with the fluorosurfactant in compact core-shell nanoparticles with the core formed by the phase consisting of densely packed

fluorosurfactant micelles and polyelectrolyte blocks and the shell of hydrophilic neutral blocks. In the case of PSCI-PEO/HFDPCI system, however, micellization of HFDPCI in threadlike, cylindrical micelles causes the formation of long wormlike core-shell nanoparticles (coexisting with a small fraction of spherical PE-S nanoparticles), as was shown by cryogenic transmission electron microscopy and attested by SAXS measurements. The formed core-shell nanoparticles are apt to disruption if HFDPCI is added in excess with respect to the stoichiometry corresponding to the zero effective charge.

SAXS data for the wormlike core-shell nanoparticles were treated by the model for semiflexible chains with the local cylindrical cross-section and homogeneous scattering length density, with an additional term taking into account the correlations between densely packed surfactant micelles in the core of the nanoparticles. The structure of the wormlike nanoparticles proposed on the basis of SAXS and Cryo-TEM measurements is depicted in Fig. 5.

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Notes and references

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† Electronic Supplementary Information (ESI) available: (i) The Cryo-TEM micrograph of a HFDPCI micelle and (ii) the full expression for the scattering function $I_{\text{PE-S}}(q)$ (Eqn. (3)). See DOI: 10.1039/b000000x/

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