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June 2020

## Theory, Fabrication, and Characterization of Perovskite Phototransistor

Fatemeh Khorramshahi University of South Florida

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Theory, Fabrication, and Characterization of Perovskite Phototransistor

by

Fatemeh Khorramshahi

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Electrical Engineering Department of Electrical Engineering College of Engineering University of South Florida

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> Date of Approval: May 12, 2020

Keywords: Methylammonium Lead Iodide, Capillary Motion, Photodetector, Microfluidic, Piezoelectricity

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## **Dedication**

To my parents for their absolute love, support, and motivation.

#### **Acknowledgments**

First and foremost, this work would be impossible to finish without the endless support, guidance, and advice from my major professor Dr. Arash Takshi. He has thought me the methodology to carry out the research and to present the research work. I would like to thank him for his friendship, empathy, and his patience during continuous hours of discussion. I am extending my heartfelt thanks to his wife, and family for helping me during my stressful time.

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my committee member, professor John Kymissis who trusted me after I talked to him for few minutes in the SPIE Optics + Photonics conference, on the most difficult moment of my studies without him knowing, he gave me extraordinary support, encouraged me and gave me the opportunity of working with his esteemed research group in his lab at the Columbia University for two months. He motivated me beyond what I thought was possible.

I would also like to thank my committee members Dr. Rasim Guldiken, Dr. Xiaomei Jiang, Dr. Jing Wang and Dr. Chris Ferekides who provided guidance and insightful feedback for my research. A warm thank you to Dr Shengqian Ma and Dr. Lukasz Wojtas for helping me in X-ray diffraction measurements, NREC's staffs, Richard Everly, Robert Tufts, Sclafani Louis-Jeune and Dr. Yusuf Emirov for their generous help and making the cleanroom such a good place to work.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to Seyedmorteza Hosseyni for being such a wonderful mentor and role model to me, students in Bio-Organic Electronics lab, CLUE lab students, Dr. Zachary Lamport, and Chrissy McGinn.

Above ground, I am indebted and forever grateful to my parents whose value to me only grows with age. Without their motivation, kind understanding and their full support I could have never accomplished all I have. I am also thankful for my brothers Ehsan, Mohammad, and Ali, and all my friends who bring happiness to my life.

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#### **Abstract**

<span id="page-12-0"></span>In recent years, there has been a significant interest in making electronic devices with lowcost techniques and materials for both industrial and medical applications. Methylammonium lead iodide perovskite (MAPbI<sub>3</sub>) is one of the novel materials which has drawn much attention owing to its outstanding optical and electrical properties along with inexpensive, simple, and easy fabrication methods. In this work, the feasibility of using microfluidic device fabrication techniques on making a perovskite phototransistor has been studied. The fabrication method well addresses challenges such as lead toxicity and instability.

In the first step, mechanical micromachining and laser engraving were employed to make two-terminal flexible perovskite photodetectors with an indium tin oxide (ITO)–MAPbI<sub>3</sub>–ITO horizontal structure. Photodetectors were made by filling engraved microchannels using the capillary motion of the solution containing the perovskite precursors. In addition to studying the photoelectric response of the devices with a solar simulator, potentiostat, and a Keithley source measure unit (SMU), the fabricated samples were characterized using scanning electron microscopy (SEM), X‐ray diffraction (XRD), and atomic force microscopy (AFM) methods.

Long term stability was observed when encapsulating the devices with either FluoroPel or CYTOP. Also, the effect of external normal and transverse forces on the photoelectric response of the devices were investigated, proving the piezotronic property of MAPbI3. In the highest state, when the normal force of 340 kPa was applied the photocurrent of the two-terminal photodetector increased by 97%. At this condition, the device exhibited a sensitivity (I<sub>photo</sub>/I<sub>dark</sub>) of 3250 with a photocurrent of ≈6.9 µA at 2.0 V bias and responsivity of 14.56 mA.W<sup>-1</sup> under white light illumination of 80 mW.cm<sup>-2</sup>.

Finally, a perovskite phototransistor was fabricated following the optimized parameter of the laser ablation method to form the microchannel on an ITO coated polyethylene terephthalate (PET) substrate. The transistor characteristic proved the formation of a depletion-mode field-effect transistor (FET) with a conductive channel at 0 V gate-source voltage (*Vgs*) entering the saturation mode when the drain-source voltage (*Vds*) was above 10.0 V.

The proposed fabrication method is fairly simple and can contribute to the integration of perovskite photovoltaic devices with optofluidic circuit elements which may help in the further development of low-cost and disposable medical devices.

#### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

#### <span id="page-14-1"></span><span id="page-14-0"></span>**1.1 Aims and Objectives**

Nowadays, photodetectors have spanned a vast range of applications from the integrated optical microfluidic biosensor [1] to inter-satellite communications [2]. The large market size of photodetectors in consumer electronics, industrial equipment, automobile applications, aerospace, and defense has led to intense research interest and studies on finding the best material and structure to make a high-performance photodetector. Semiconductor-based photodetectors have been made in three main configurations: photodiode, photoresistor, and phototransistors [3-5].

While every configuration has its unique assets, phototransistors are three-terminal devices that produce higher current and therefore larger photoresponsivity. Moreover, phototransistors photocurrent can remain constant in a wide range of voltage which can be beneficial in specific applications. Although the fabrication of transistors requires more steps than diodes and resistors, the signal-to-noise ratio is higher in phototransistors due to their internal amplification mechanism.

On the other hand, the recently developed optofluidic technologies allow the integration of optical components and microfluidic devices to manipulate or measure liquid, light, and matter [6]. Optofluidic devices combine the advantages of microfluidic and optics. The optical measurements provide the advantage of contactless measurement which is mainly beneficial in biosensing and analysis applications [7].

As is shown in [Figure 1.1,](#page-15-0) optofluidic circuits composed of two parts, a microfluidic circuit and an optical part which includes optical components, a light source, and a photodetector to monitor the photoabsorption of the liquid in the microchannels [8]. The optical part can be fully

integrated with the microfluidic circuit using optofluidic laser sources and optofluidic waveguides [9, 10].



<span id="page-15-0"></span>Figure 1.1 A schematic of the optofluidic microchip consisting of the microfluidics circuit and the optical part (used with permission [8]).

In biosensing applications, factors such as size, power, cost, and ease of implementation are of importance in the design of a photodetector. To reduce the cost and enable the production of a portable device, ambient light could be used as a natural light source. However, a highly sensitive photodetector would be needed to be integrated with the microfluidic circuit part of the optofluidic device. Various medical testing products including some pulse oximetry [11] and immunosensing [12] devices are examples using ambient light and highly sensitive photodetectors to reduce the size and cost.

On the other hand, metal halide perovskites are highly photosensitive and inexpensive semiconductors. Also, their various solution-based deposition methods have been employed for solar cells and visible light photodetectors [13]. Therefore, metal halide perovskites can be used as the photodetector component in optofluidic circuits for industrial or medical applications.

Particularly, perovskite photodetectors can be used in lab-on-a-chip (LOC) optofluidic devices for photo-spectroscopic measurement of analytes. A simple and low-cost fabrication method will allow fast production of inexpensive, disposable devices to be used for detecting contaminants in drinking water, testing blood or saliva [14-16].

Both organic and inorganic semiconductors have been used as photoactive materials for making photodetectors. Defect-free single crystals of inorganic materials such as silicon can be used to make photosensors. Although organic semiconductor-based photodetectors have shown lower performance, their fabrication process is low-cost and solution-based. Organic-inorganic perovskites offer both low-cost fabrication process and better performance than organic semiconductors [17]. Some of the challenges that hinder large-scale fabrication of highperformance perovskite devices are instability, the toxicity of lead and the existence of trap states and defects in the crystalline structure of the materials. [Table 1.1](#page-16-0) summarized the features and challenges scientists face when using different materials to make photodetectors.

<b>Material</b>	<b>Fabrication and Features</b>	<b>Challenges</b>	
Crystalline	The most mature conventional ٠	Mainly high temperature, $\bullet$	
Inorganic	fabrication process	complicated fabrication	
Semiconductors	Proper control ٠	process	
	Defect-free	Rigid substrate	
	Integration	Expensive	
	Resolution $\bullet$		
Organic	Low cost	Low performance	
Semiconductors	Simple, low-temperature ٠	<b>Defects</b>	
	fabrication	High recombination rate	
Halide Metal	Low cost $\bullet$	Instability	
Perovskites	Simple, low-temperature $\bullet$	Defects	
	fabrication	Toxicity	
	Bandgap tuning ٠		
	High performance		

<span id="page-16-0"></span>Table 1.1 Comparison between different materials of fabricating visible light phototransistors.

The majority of reported perovskite-based sensors are using thin-film fabrication methods such as spin coating that spread the toxic materials. Another challenge in the fabrication is in patterning the semiconductor for building devices, due to the high sensitivity of perovskites to the solvents used for photolithography. The objective of this work was to study the feasibility of fabricating perovskite-based photosensors using a novel method that employs the capillary force to fill patterned microfluidic channels with perovskite precursor solutions

Although the research focus in this dissertation is on MAPbI3, the studied fabrication method is applicable for fabricating various forms of flexible electronic devices and circuits. The total market of flexible electronics will be \$41.2 billion in 2020 and it has been projected that it will grow to \$74 billion in 2030 [18]. As is shown in [Figure 1.2,](#page-17-1) printed and flexible sensors are one of the majority segments.



<span id="page-17-1"></span>Figure 1.2 Market of the printed, organic, and flexible electronics industry in 2019 (open access article [18]).

#### <span id="page-17-0"></span>**1.2 Literature Survey**

MAPbI3-based phototransistor's structures are categorized into three general structures, photo-field effect transistor (photo-FET), hybrid photo-FET, and barristor-type [19]. Photo-FET structure can be top or bottom-gate while having top or bottom-contacts [20]. MAPbI<sup>3</sup> hybrid photo-FETs combine high absorption and slow recombination rate of MAPbI<sup>3</sup> with high mobility properties of another semiconductor to enhance the functionality of pure MAPbI<sup>3</sup> phototransistor. Gate-modulated Schottky barrier or barrister-type employs 2D materials such as graphene to interchange the nature of the gate-dielectric and gate electrode junction between Schottky barrier and ohmic contact [19].

The first pure MAPbI3-based phototransistor which was able to modulate drain-current by varying applied gate-voltages was introduced by Li et al [21]. They reported an ambipolar carrier transport with the mobility of 0.18 (0.17)  $\text{cm}^2\text{V}^{-1}\text{s}^{-1}$  for holes (electrons) at room temperature.

While most of the research groups have used  $SiO<sub>2</sub>$  as the gate oxide layer [21-27], poly(perfluorobutenylvinylether) (CYTOP) [28], HfO<sub>2</sub> [29, 30], Ta<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> [31], and AlO<sub>x</sub> [32]have also been used as the insulator layer between the gate contact and the semiconducting channel. In the work by Mohite et al., higher gate modulation and lower hysteresis were obtained using high dielectric constant HfO<sub>2</sub> (HfO<sub>2</sub> relative dielectric constant  $\varepsilon_r$  is 23.5) [30]. However, due to the presence of traps at the interface of HfO<sub>2</sub>/perovskite, a very low mobility of  $10^{-3}$  cm<sup>2</sup>V<sup>-1</sup>s<sup>-1</sup> was reported. On the other hand, fluoropolymer CYTOP ( $\varepsilon$ r ~ 2) yields a low density of electronic trap states at its interface with the semiconductors and consequently produce high-mobility organic field-effect transistors (OFETs) exhibiting minimal bias-stress effects [20]. The summary of fabricated MAPbI<sub>3</sub> based phototransistors is shown in [Table 1.2.](#page-18-0)

<span id="page-18-0"></span>



Table 1.2 (Continued)

2015	Hybrid graphene MAPbBr <sub>2</sub> I	Si	One-step spin coating	Ambipolar No current modulation	$[33]$
2015	Tetragonal MAPbI <sub>3</sub> thin-film	Si	One-step spin coating	$LT^{**}$ current modulation	$[22]$
2016	2D MAPbI <sub>3</sub>	Si	Combined solution process and vapor- phase conversion	No current modulation	$[23]$
2015	MAPbI <sub>3</sub> microplate crystals	Si	Seeded growth process		$[34]$
2016	Hybrid C8BTBT <sup>*</sup> onto MAPbI <sub>3</sub>	Si	Co-evaporating	Unipolar	$[35]$
2016	MAPbI <sub>3</sub>	Si	Modified vapor- assisted solution process	Unipolar No current modulation	$[24]$
2016	Orientationally pure crystalline MAPbI <sub>3</sub>	Si	Thermal-gradient- assisted directional crystallization	Ambipolar	$[26]$
2017	MAPbI <sub>3</sub> thin-film	Glass	Doctor blade	No current modulation	$[36]$
2017	MAPbI <sub>3</sub> microplates	Si	Vapor phase intercalation Process	P-type to ambipolar to N-type by thermal annealing LT current modulation	$[27]$
2017	Hybrid MAPbI <sub>3-x</sub> Cl <sub>x</sub> /CNT	Si	One-step spin coating	Ambipolar	$[37]$
2017	MAPbI <sub>3</sub> thin-film	Glass	Two-step spin coating	No transfer characteristic	$[38]$
2017	MAPbI <sub>3</sub> thin-film	Si and Glass	One-step spin coating	Ambipolar at <b>LT</b> Unipolar at $HT***$	$[39]$
2018	MAPbI <sub>3</sub> single crystal			Ambipolar No Saturation Regime	$[40]$
2018	$MAPbI_xCl_{3-x}$	Si	Multi-step annealing process	Ambipolar No Saturation Regime	$[41]$
2018	MAPbI <sub>3</sub> thin-film	Glass	One-step spin coating	Vertical structure with ITO contact	$[29]$

Table 1.2 (Continued)

2019	MAPbI <sub>3</sub> thin-film	Glass	One-step spin coating	Ambipolar	$[32]$
2019	MAPbI <sub>3</sub> micro/nanowire	Si		Unipolar/P- type	[42]
2019	MAPbI <sub>3</sub>	Glass	One-step spin coating	Ambipolar	[43]
2019	MAPbI <sub>3</sub> thin-film	Si	Hot-casting method	Unipolar/P- type	$[30]$
2019	$MAPbIxCl3-x$	Si	One-step spin coating	Ambipolar	[44]
2020	MAPbI <sub>3</sub> /PDVT-10 and MAPbI <sub>3</sub> /N2200 nanowire heterojunctions	Si/Glass	Cast and mold cleanroom microfluidic fabrication	Ambipolar	[45]

\* Dioctylbenzothieno[2,3-*b*]benzothiophene, \*\* Low temperature, \*\*\*High temperature

In this dissertation, the motivation and literature review are discussed in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 covers the background of the material structure and perovskite electro-optical properties along with the methods that were used for designing, fabricating, and characterizing sensors. In Chapter 3, the feasibility of fabricating a two-terminal perovskite photodetector by microfluidic techniques is demonstrated. The stability and electro-mechanical properties of the fabricated photodetectors are studied in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 respectively. The designed perovskite phototransistor is introduced in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 includes the conclusion and suggested works for the future.

#### **Chapter 2: Perovskite Background and Properties**

<span id="page-21-0"></span>In general, perovskite is a class of material with a chemical formula of ABX<sub>3</sub>. Where A is an organic or inorganic large cation, B is usually a medium-size cation that can be a metal ion, and X is an anion such as a halide or any mixture of different halides [46]. The name perovskite had been given by G. Rose in 1839 [47]. Materials with perovskite structure are classical systems for phase transition which depends on the tilting and rotation of the  $BX_6$  polyhedra in the lattice [48, 49]. Reversible phase transition may be induced by different stimuli such as electric field [50, 51], pressure [52, 53], and temperature [54, 55].

Over the past decade, metal halide perovskites (MHPs) and particularly methylammonium lead iodide (CH3NH3PbI<sup>3</sup> or MAPbI3) have attracted a lot of attention in solar cell research. This arises from two key characteristics: their excellent electro-optical properties and feasibility of using them to fabricate devices with low-cost and simple methods. In this chapter, perovskite material and its properties are discussed in detail.

#### <span id="page-21-1"></span>**2.1 Metal Halide Perovskites Basics**

Metal halide perovskites are semiconductors. In their ABX<sub>3</sub> structure, A site is Methylammonium (MA)  $CH_3NH_3^+$ , Formamidinium (FA)  $CH(NH_2)_2^+$ , Guanidinium (GA)  $C(NH<sub>2</sub>)<sub>3</sub><sup>+</sup>$  or Cs<sup>+</sup>, B site is Pb<sup>2+</sup> or Sn<sup>2+</sup> and X is I<sup>-</sup>, Br<sup>-</sup> or Cl<sup>-</sup> [56-61]. The optical bandgap and electronic properties can be tuned by changing the materials. It has been shown that, in the A-site of ABX<sup>3</sup> structure of MHP, by changing MA to mixed MA-FA or substituting a different mixture of any halide to X, the bandgap of perovskite can be tuned and crystal structure changes due to the different cation size [62].

Single crystal MHPs have a remarkably low density of trap-states [63]. MHPs have variety of applications such as solar cells (SCs) [64], light-emitting diodes (LEDs) [65], thin-film transistors (TFTs) [66], photodetectors [67], and Laser diodes [68]. [Figure 2.1](#page-22-1) shows the schematic of the perovskite crystal structure and the energy levels in some perovskite materials.



<span id="page-22-1"></span>Figure 2.1 A general schematic of the perovskite structure and the energy levels in perovskite materials (open acess article [69]). The numbers at the top and bottom of each column show the edge of conduction and valence bands in the materials, respectively.

#### <span id="page-22-0"></span>**2.2 Methylammonium Lead Iodide Structure, and Properties**

MAPbI<sup>3</sup> is the most common perovskite considered for photovoltaic applications. It has been extensively studied and employed in solar cells, due to the rapid growth of power conversion efficiency (PCE) reported for MAPbI3-based devices already exceeding 20% [70, 71].

Three phases have been identified in MAPbI<sup>3</sup> single crystals: orthorhombic, tetragonal, and cubic Polymorphs. Indeed it has been suggested that MAPbI<sup>3</sup> crystalizes in the tetragonal phase at room temperature, a tetragonal to orthorhombic transition occurs below ∼160 K with a cubic phase being stable from around 330 K and above [49]. It should be mentioned that the chemical and physical properties of lead halide perovskites strongly depend on its preparation method [72].

#### <span id="page-23-0"></span>2.2.1 Optical Properties

While the unique optical properties of perovskite semiconductors had been studied many years back [73], since the first MAPbI<sup>3</sup> based solar cell was reported by Miyasaka and his group in 2009 [74], a tremendous effort has been made by researchers to investigate these properties in a variety of forms of lead halide perovskite with deposition techniques. The direct bandgap of about 1.55-1.65 eV which is suitable for visible light absorption, has been reported by several research groups [75-77].

A broad absorption spectrum covering both visible and near-infrared regions has been observed in MAPbI<sup>3</sup> [78]. The reported absorption coefficient at visible wavelengths ranged between  $10^4$  and  $10^5$  cm<sup>-1</sup> [79]. Single crystal MAPbI<sub>3</sub> has a low number of defects and lower density of trap states, thus unlike polycrystalline form, it has long exciton diffusion length (>175  $\mu$ m under 1 sun) and high carrier recombination lifetime ( $\tau$ =92  $\mu$ s under 1 sun) [80].

#### <span id="page-23-1"></span>2.2.2 Electrical Properties

To predict some electrical characteristics such as conductivity, maximum photovoltaic potential, energy bending at the interfaces, and formation of Schottky or Ohmic contacts, it is needed to understand the doping mechanism of the semiconductor [81]. While in non-ionic crystalline semiconductors such as silicon or germanium, substitutional impurities can replace the host atoms and change the Fermi level and conductivity of the semiconductor, due to high ionicity of MAPbI3, ambipolar characteristics or preferential p-type or n-type transport characteristics might be observed from MAPbI3-based devices without any external dopant [32]. Substitutional impurities have been used in MAPbI<sub>3</sub> based devices as well. In a study by Yang et al., MAPbI<sub>3</sub> was doped by a group of polarized ferroelectric polymers [82].

Different processes such as thermal annealing and growth condition or precursor ratio (MAI/PbI2) may impact self-doping and change in the material type of MAPbI3. Field-induced and photoinduced self-doping effects have been also introduced to be responsible for the change in MAPbI<sub>3</sub> Fermi level [83]. In the work by Huang et al. it was shown that MAI-rich and PbI<sub>2</sub>-rich perovskite films are p and n self-doped, respectively. Ultraviolet photoelectron spectroscopy (UPS) of MAPbI<sup>3</sup> samples formed by one-step spin coating method is shown in [Figure 2.2](#page-24-1) [81].



<span id="page-24-1"></span>Figure 2.2 UPS measured energetic levels of perovskite films formed by one-step method with different precursor ratios (used with permission [81]).

To determine the material type, some research groups considered MAPbI<sub>3</sub> as a conventional semiconductor and then methods such as Kelvin probe [84] and Hall effect [85] were employed. Yet, the ambipolar characteristic has been reported by several researchers testing the materials in a transistor structure [21, 28]. Very large charge mobility higher than 100 cm<sup>2</sup>V<sup>-1</sup>s<sup>-1</sup> has been observed in MAPbI<sub>3</sub> single crystals [80].

#### <span id="page-24-0"></span>2.2.3 Piezoelectricity

As it was mentioned before, MAPbI<sup>3</sup> has three crystalline phases: cubic, tetragonal, and orthorhombic. The most stable phase at room temperature is the tetragonal phase [86], which has been ascribed to a polar space group I4cm [87] and is shown to be ferroelectric [87] and piezoelectric [88-92]. Polarized domains have been observed in both single crystal and thin-film polycrystalline forms of MAPbI<sup>3</sup> [89, 92].

#### <span id="page-25-0"></span>**2.3 Fabrication Techniques**

The feasibility of fabricating devices with low-cost methods using inexpensive precursor materials is one of the main advantages of lead halide perovskite-based devices. While spin coating as a low-cost method is the most common technique for thin-film deposition of MAPbI<sup>3</sup> [93, 94], a wide range of techniques have been introduced to make high-quality perovskite films. That includes co-evaporation [95], vapor-assisted solution process (VASP) [96], sputtering [97], doctor‐blading [98], spray coating [99] and inkjet printing [100].

Spin coating of perovskite can be done in two-steps or one-step. In both methods, MAI and PbI<sup>2</sup> are being used as precursors. In the one-step method, a precursor solution can be prepared by dissolving PbI<sup>2</sup> and MAI in a polar solvent such as N,N-dimethylformamide (DMF), dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO) and/or γ-butyrolactone (GBL). A thin film of perovskite can be made by spin coating the solution on a substrate and curing the sample. In the two-step method, first, a solution containing PbI<sup>2</sup> is spun coated on a substrate, and then the MAI solution will be dip coated or spun coated on a sample.

Despite the ease of fabrication and cost-effectivity of spin coating, this method is generally limited to a scale of  $\langle 10 \text{ cm}$ , and a large portion ( $>90\%$ ) of the precursor solution is wasted in the process [101]. On the other hand, spin coating is suitable for forming a thin coating layer of perovskite on the entire surface area and impossible to form different patterns of perovskite by spin coating. Also, hydrophobicity of some substrates makes the use of spin coating difficult for perovskite deposition [102].

In addition to above-mentioned drawbacks of spin coating method, in the case of MAPbI3, there is a growing concern regarding the lead toxicity driven by the result of the restriction of hazardous substances directive (RoHS) regulations. Lead toxicity related concerns lead to employing a method which does not waste the precursor and requires as low as possible amount of MAPbI<sup>3</sup> precursor.

Different groups have tried to form perovskite patterns. Gu et al. introduced a vapor–solid– solid reaction (VSSR) process to grow ordered three-dimensional (3D) MAPbI<sub>3</sub> nano-wire arrays using a nanoengineered template [103]. Despite the feasibility of forming arrays of perovskite, the vapor deposition methods are complicated and require a high vacuum and high-temperature equipment [104]. The solution processability of halide perovskites has motivated to use novel fabrication methods. In this project, microfluidic methods have been suggested for patterning the perovskite precursor solution to fabricate photosensors.

#### <span id="page-26-0"></span>2.3.1 Microfluidic Methods

Microfluidic devices employ surface tension effect encoded by the geometry and surface chemistry of a microchannel to deliver liquid. The liquid flows through capillary action and it happens when the adhesion to the surface material is more powerful than the cohesive forces between molecules of a liquid [105]. Since the first microfluidic device was made in 1979 [106], many different approaches were employed to make capillary channels and chips including micromachining, cleanroom fabrication techniques, and rapid prototyping. Notable developments in capillary circuits are represented in [Figure 2.3.](#page-27-0)



<span id="page-27-0"></span>Figure 2.3 The three waves of capillary circuits with notable developments highlighted in the timeline (open acess article [105]).

Cleanroom fabrication of capillary circuits is expensive and needs complicated equipment to make cast and mold. Cast and mold degrade over time and the material wastes. On the other hand, mechanical micromachining is cast/mold- and cleanroom-free. It is easy to use on various types of substrates. This method is suitable for rapid fabrication, both mass production and prototyping of microfluidic devices.

In addition, over the last few years, with the high development of laser technology, laser ablation has been considered as an alternative technique to traditional lithography in the fabrication of microfluidic devices. Since MAPbI<sup>3</sup> has the solution-based deposition method, the capillary motion of the one-step method perovskite precursor can be used for filling a laser-engraved patterned conducting layer.

In general, laser engraving or laser ablation can be performed by melting or vaporizing the target material using a focused laser beam on a material surface or inside the bulk part and removing the intended parts of the target through heating. Sor far, to fabricate microfluidic devices, CO<sup>2</sup> [107], Nd:YAG [108] and Q-switched solid state [109] lasers have been employed. Among different types of laser sources,  $CO<sub>2</sub>$  source provides low-cost advantage [110]. The desirable microchannel dimensions can be fabricated by manipulating several factors, including focus length, the pulse repetition rate, machining speed, and the absorption coefficient of the materials [111].

Different polymers such as polymethyl methacrylate (PMMA) [112], PET [113] and polydimethylsiloxane (PDMS) [114] have been ablated by CO<sup>2</sup> laser to make a microchannel. Surface tension effect helps the fluid to flow in a microchannel which is called capillary motion. According to fluid mechanics, the flow resistance within a microchannel and the flow rate can be calculated using Equation (1) and (2) respectively [105]:

$$
R = \frac{\Delta P}{Q} \tag{2-1}
$$

$$
\mathbf{Q} = \mathbf{A} \times (\overline{\mathbf{v}}) \tag{2-2}
$$

where *A* is the cross-section area,  $\Delta P$  is the difference in capillary pressure across the microchannel, and  $\bar{v}$  is the average velocity of the fluid. The contact angles and microchannel size determine the capillary pressure [105]. Once microchannels are made, the one-step method precursor of lead halide perovskites can fill the engraved channels and after solidifying make the perovskite crystal inside the channel [102].

#### <span id="page-28-0"></span>**2.4 Stability**

Although perovskite solar cell is the fastest developing photovoltaic technology [115, 116] since 2010, the instability of organic-inorganic halide perovskites has hindered its implementation for large scale industrial applications. Humidity, heat, light, oxygen, and electric field can induce decomposition of methylammonium lead iodide perovskite. The responsible process for the potential initial step of the moisture-induced decomposition of CH<sub>3</sub>NH<sub>3</sub>PbI<sub>3</sub> is the following chemical reactions [69, 117]:

$$
CH3NH3PbI3(s) \leftrightarrows PbI2(s) + CH3NH3I(aq.)
$$
 (2-3)

$$
CH3NH3I(aq.) \le CH3NH2 + HI(aq.)
$$
 (2-4)

15



Some strategies such as minimizing the exposure to environment by encapsulation techniques [118, 119], improving film qualities [120], and engineering thermally stable, waterrepelling interlayers [121] have been proposed to suppress the decomposition of perovskite and improve the stability of device.

Hydrophobic fluoropolymers such as CYTOP provide a water repellant layer that does not let water molecules penetrate the perovskite layer. These polymers can be used for encapsulation in perovskite devices [122, 123]. FluoroPel is another type of fluoropolymer thin film coating fluid which is manufactured by Cytronix corporation [124]. FluoroPel dielectric strength and contact angle are higher than CYTOP [125]. FluoroPel is a true solution fluid and does not carry micronsized solids therefore results in much thinner, smoother coats than fluid based on carrying suspended solids [124]. Also, it has sufficient adhesion to the surface even without thermal curing.

#### <span id="page-29-0"></span>**2.5 Ion Migration**

Among all factors that cause the instability of MAPbI3, ion migration has been recently introduced as intrinsic to the perovskite polycrystalline films and cannot be removed by encapsulation methods [126].

The I-V hysteresis loop of the perovskite devices which can be capacitive and partly noncapacitive [127-131] is believed that arises from three major mechanisms: charge trapping/detrapping process on the surface and grain boundaries of the perovskite, ion migration [132], and polarization [130].

Extraction of photogenerated charge, recombination, and polling can cause a noncapacitive effect in perovskite-based devices [129, 130]. The contact material determines the activation energy required for ion migration at the interface and the rate of the ion migration at the interface of the perovskite layer depends on the contact material as well [133].

#### **Chapter 3: Two-Terminal Photodetectors**

<span id="page-31-0"></span>Methylammonium lead halide perovskites have shown outstanding electrical and optical properties which make them excellent candidates to be used as the photoactive layer in photodetectors[134]. Different structures have been introduced for fabricating MAPbI3-based photodetectors such as Schottky junction [135] and heterojunction [136] in vertical [137] or lateral [138] structures. Non-ohmic contacts provide low dark-current which leads to high sensitivity (the ratio of photocurrent to dark-current) and low shot noise in photodetectors [139]. By employing a mechanism that maintains the junction barrier in the dark but reduces it in the light, the sensitivity can be further improved.

In this chapter, two different photodetectors with lateral structures are introduced by using two non-lithographic and low-cost methods to make high aspect ratio MAPbI<sup>3</sup> microchannels on a flexible substrate. In the first method, manual mechanical machining was used to make a capillary microchannel. The second method uses a laser engraving tool which showed remarkable enhancement in the reproducibility of fabricated capillary channels.<sup>\*</sup>

#### <span id="page-31-1"></span>**3.1 Perovskite Photodetector by Mechanical Machining**

As it was discussed in the second chapter, mechanical micromachining is one of the fastest methods to make microchannels. These channels can be used to be filled with the perovskite precursor and form a lateral structure. The experimental details are presented in the next sections.

<sup>\*</sup> Sections 3.1.1-3.3 are as presented in the published work at Organic and Hybrid Sensors and Bioelectronics XI. Vol. 10738. International Society for Optics and Photonics, 2018.

#### <span id="page-32-0"></span>3.1.1 Experimental

#### <span id="page-32-1"></span>*3.1.1.1 Sample Fabrication*

Flexible photodetector devices were fabricated by cutting ITO coated polyethylene terephthalate, PET, (60  $\Omega$ sqr, Sigma-Aldrich) to 1 cm×2 cm pieces. The perovskite precursor solution was prepared by dissolving a mixture of equimolar 0.5 M lead iodide (98.5%, Alfa Aesar) and methylammonium iodide (Lumtec) in gamma-butyrolactone (99%, Aldrich). The solution was stirred overnight at 1200 rpm and kept at 50 °C.

As shown in [Figure](#page-33-1) 3.1, two different methods were used to make a channel on the ITO coated PET. In one method (similar to the conventional lithography), the entire surface of the ITO sheet was covered by the permanent marker as a mask. The tip of a tweezer was used to remove a part of the permanent marker by simply slipping the tip over the sample to make a straight line pattern with a width of  $\sim$ 200 µm and a length of 2 cm. Afterward, the sample was dipped into hydrochloric acid (1:2 HCl to DI water) to etch the exposed part of ITO. After removing the marker by acetone, two conductive ITO pads with a gap between was obtained. The sample was used to make a device by spin coating (500 rpm for 45 s) the perovskite precursor and heating on a hotplate for 10 minutes at 90°C.

In the other method, a custom-designed blade set up was used to make a groove on the ITO coated PET sample with a controlled depth [\(Figure](#page-33-2) 3.2.a). The groove formed a channel between the two sides (i.e. ITO pads) with a width of  $\sim$ 100  $\mu$ m. Instead of spin coating the perovskite solution, 2 µl of the perovskite precursor was placed on one end of the channel. The droplet immediately spread into the channel under the action of the capillary force. Then the sample was placed on the hotplate and heated to 90°C. The schematic in [Figure](#page-33-2) 3.2.b shows the structure of the device with the capillary method of fabrication.

As the final step, spin coating at 2000 rmp for 45 s was employed to deposit a 50 nm transparent layer of CYTOP on both samples for stability enhancement of the devices during the characterization step [122]. Then the samples were heated to 90°C for 40 minutes and kept in the desiccator for 24 hours to remove any residual solvent.



<span id="page-33-1"></span>Figure 3.1 Fabrication steps of two different photodetectors using capillary motion and spin coating. Certain areas of the sample made by using capillary motion are labeled as A, B, and C referring to the beginning, middle, and end of the channel, respectively.



<span id="page-33-2"></span>Figure 3.2 a) The custom-designed setup which was used to make the micro-channel. b) Schematic of the structure of the fabricated photodetector.

#### <span id="page-33-0"></span>*3.1.1.2 Characterization*

Scanning electron microscopy (SEM) images were taken by an Hitachi S800 Scanning Electron Microscope. Thickness profile of the sample was measured by Dektak D150 profiler. The I-V characteristics (photocurrent, and dark current) were carried out using a VersaSTAT 4 potentiostat. All measurements were performed in a dark box connected to a solar simulator (RST,

Radiant Source Technology) via an optical fiber. The light intensity at the sample location was measured to be  $\sim 80$  mW/cm<sup>2</sup>.

#### <span id="page-34-0"></span>3.1.2 Results and Discussion

The quality of the perovskite in the micro-channel was studied via optical microscopy and SEM methods. The optical images showed a fairly uniform coverage of perovskite along the micro-channel. SEM images of the fabricated sample using capillary motion are shown in [Figure](#page-34-1)  [3.3](#page-34-1). The width of the channel was measured to be 100 µm. The zoomed picture in [Figure](#page-34-1) 3.3.b shows perovskite grain size of  $\sim$ 2-5  $\mu$ m.



<span id="page-34-1"></span>Figure 3.3 Top view SEM images of the fabricated sample using capillary motion.

Using a Dektak profilometer, the profile of the channel was studied at different points along the groove. Specifically, the profiles were measured at the beginning, middle, and end of the channel (regions A, B, and C in [Figure](#page-33-1) 3.1). The measurement results are shown in [Figure](#page-35-0) 3.4. a, b and c. Thickness profile of the sample was also measured after filling the channel with perovskite and spin coating 50 nm of CYTOP, which are shown in [Figure](#page-35-0) 3.4. d, e, and f. As it can be observed the cut has made a channel with walls as high as  $\sim$ 30  $\mu$ m and depth of  $\sim$ 20  $\mu$ m. At the beginning of the channel (area which is marked by "A" in [Figure](#page-33-1) 3.1) perovskite covered the entire depth of the channel. Moving along the channel, the thickness of the perovskite was lowered.



<span id="page-35-0"></span>Figure 3.4 (a, b, and c) Dektak profile of the grooved ITO sample across the channel at the beginning, middle, and end of the channel (marked as A, B, and C i[n Figure 3.1\)](#page-33-1), respectively. (d, e, and f) The profile of the sample at area A, B, and C after crystallization of perovskite which was formed due to the capillary motion of the liquid along the channel.

To explore the photoelectric properties of the samples, first, the transient photoresponse of the samples was measured and compared with the one made with the spin coating method. As shown in [Figure](#page-36-0) 3.5, the device made by using capillary motion showed almost three times higher photocurrent while the device was biased at 2.0 V. The detail characteristic study was conducted by measuring the I-V characteristics under 80 mW/cm<sup>2</sup> visible light illumination and compared with the dark condition. As it can be observed in [Figure](#page-37-1) 3.6.a, the photodetectors fabricated using capillary motion and spin coating showed the dark current as low as 2 nA and 0.5 nA at 2.0 V, respectively. The photocurrent at 2.0 V reached to 211 nA in the sample made by the capillary motion while it was only 76 nA in the spin coated sample. Light absorption at the surface of the perovskite layer causes electron and holes to be generated. Under the existence of electric field, generated charges were transported toward the electrodes. The non-symmetry I-V curves can be due to formation of Schottky barrier between CH3NH3PbI<sup>3</sup> and ITO.


Figure 3.5 Transient photoresponses of the samples biased at 2.0 V.

In order to compare the two photodetectors, three figures of merit (i.e. sensitivity, responsivity, and normalized detectivity) were calculated as it is suggested in the literatures [140]. At 2 V the spin coated device reached the responsivity of 0.036 A/W, sensitivity of 40 and detectivity of  $7.5\times10^{7}$  Jones. While the device made by capillary motion showed a superior performance. At 2.0 V, the sensitivity of 172, responsivity of 0.1 A/W and normalized detectivity  $2.6 \times 10^8$  Jones were calculated for the other sample made by capillary motion. Which are respectively 4.3, 2.8 and 3.5 times higher than those in the spin coated sample [\(Table 3.1\)](#page-37-0). The calculated responsivity in visible light for sample made using capillary motion is higher than the amount reported previously for the flexible photodetectors having lateral topology using ITO/CH3NH3PbI3/ITO structure [141].



Figure 3.6 I-V characteristics of the fabricated samples a) in dark, b) under illumination.

	<b>Responsivity</b> A/V	<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Normalized detectivity</b> (Jones)
<b>Capillary</b>	U.I	172	$2.5 \times 10^8$
<b>Spin Coated</b>	0.036	40	$7.5\times10^7$

<span id="page-37-0"></span>Table 3.1 Comparison between figures of merit in fabricated samples.

To further understand the difference in the nature of the junction made between perovskite and ITO when two different methods of fabrication was used to make a channel on ITO, the impedance of the samples were measured in the dark. As shown in [Figure](#page-38-0) 3.7, the absolute value of impedance (at low frequencies) for the capillary used sample is one order of magnitude lower than the spin coated sample. This can be an indication of lower contact resistance between perovskite and ITO in the capillary sample. This lower impedance may explain the higher dark current in the capillary device. Nevertheless, the superior response from the device made with the capillary method is promising particularly for reducing the consumption of the toxic materials.



<span id="page-38-0"></span>Figure 3.7 Impedance spectroscopy measurement ot the fabricated samples, a) amplitude and b) phase.

# 3.1.3 Conclusion

A novel method was introduced to pattern perovskite crystal along a micro-channel using the capillary force motion. This method was employed for fabrication of a photodetector. Another photodetector was made employing spin coating of perovskite precursor on a gap between two electrodes. The optical and electrical properties of the two devices were measured and compared. The sample made by capillary motion showed the better photoelectric properties. This enhancement was attributed to existence of the better contact between perovskite and the electrodes as the result of capillary motion of the perovskite precursor through the channel's walls. In future works, this novel method can be used for simple fabrication of low-cost devices based on perovskite micro-channels.

## **3.2 Perovskite Photodetector by Laser Ablation**

Here a laser engraving technique for fast production of lead halide perovskite photodetectors is introduced. Several microchannels were fabricated using laser engraving of a conductive flexible layer (ITO coated PET). The optimum laser parameters were found, and the photodetectors were fabricated by simply filling the microchannels by perovskite. †

## 3.2.1 Experimental

Several photodetectors were made by laser ablation of ITO coated polyethylene terephthalate, PET,  $(60 Ωsqrt, Sigma-Aldrich)$  using a commercially available  $CO<sub>2</sub> laser$  (Epilog Fusion M2, 60 watt) which provides a laser beam of 10.6 μm wavelength printing in the vector mode with lowest beam diameter of 76.2 μm. The maximum number of laser pulses that the laser (used in this experiment) fires per inch of travel was 5000 pulses per inch (PPI) and its maximum machining speed was 254 mm.s<sup>-1</sup>. The laser power, PPI and the machining speed were manipulated in order to fabricate the different microchannels.

The perovskite precursor solution was prepared by a mixture of equimolar 0.5 M lead iodide (98.5%, Alfa Aesar) and methylammonium iodine (Lumtec) in gamma-butyrolactone (99%, Aldrich). The solution was stirred over night at 300 rpm and at 50 $\degree$ C. 2 µl of the perovskite precursor was placed at one end of the laser engraved microchannel. The solution droplet was immediately pulled into the channel due to the capillary motion effect. Then the sample was placed on the hotplate and heated to 100 °C for 6 minutes. Afterward, a transparent layer of hydrophobic FluoroPel (CYNTONIX) was deposited by deep coating to protect the perovskite from degradation due to moisture. Finally, the sample was heated to 100 °C for 10 minutes and kept in vacuum in a desiccator for 24 hours to remove any residual solvent.

The fabricated samples were characterized by an Hitachi S800 Scanning Electron Microscope. The cyclic voltammetry, photocurrent and impedance measurements were carried out using a VersaSTAT 4 potentiostat. The light intensity at the sample location was measured to be

<sup>†</sup> Sections 3.2.1-3 are as presented in the published work at Organic and Hybrid Sensors and Bioelectronics XII. Vol. 11096. International Society for Optics and Photonics, 2019.

80 mW/cm<sup>2</sup> . The light pulses were applied by switching on and off the light source. All experiments were performed at room temperature and under ambient condition.



Figure 3.8 Schematic showing laser engraving of ITO coated PET and the schematic of the fabricated photodetector.

3.2.2 Result and Discussion

SEM images of the four different microchannels made by laser engraving are shown in [Figure 3.9.](#page-41-0) Laser machining speed and power were varied in order to find the optimum values for each parameter. As the power increased (from 0.6 watt to 1.2 watt) the microchannel width increased, and deeper cracks were observed. The speed had a different effect, by increasing the laser speed (from 25.4 mm.S<sup>-1</sup> to 50.8 mm.S<sup>-1</sup>), a more uniform and shallower microchannel was made. The channel width of the microchannels shown in [Figure 3.9](#page-41-0) (a to d) are 117 μm, 100 μm, 197 μm, and 227 μm, respectively.

The four microchannels were filled with perovskite in order to make a photodetector. In addition, another photodetector was fabricated by forming a microchannel which was made by using the highest machining speed and PPI of the CO<sub>2</sub> laser. Using the highest speed and PPI provided a higher degree of freedom in the choice of laser power which was increased to 2.4 watts. The fabricated samples were named as A, B, C, D, and E which are shown in Table 1.



<span id="page-41-0"></span>Figure 3.9 The SEM image of the microchannels engraved at different laser powers and speeds (images are taken at 44 degrees tilt angle): (a)  $0.6$  watt,  $25.4$  mm.S<sup>-1</sup>, (b)  $0.6$  watt,  $38.1$  mm.S<sup>-1</sup>, (c) 1.2 watt, 38.1 mm.S<sup>-1</sup> and (d) 1.2 watt, 50.8 mm.S<sup>-1</sup>.

Table 3.2 Laser engraving parameters of the fabricated samples.



Sample D and E showed a poor performance therefore we omit them from the rest of the study. The cyclic voltammetry of the samples A, B, and C measured in dark and under light exposure are presented in [Figure 3.10.](#page-42-0) Sample A and B showed a lower dark current. In the light condition, sample B presented the highest photocurrent of  $\sim$ 2.7  $\mu$ A. The lower photocurrent of sample C while having a higher dark current is most likely because the perovskite precursor has gone over the ITO, cover a part of the electrodes, and made better contact. As a result, no significant change in the current was observed when the sample was under light illumination.

In addition, in dark condition, a hysteresis loop was observed in the I-V characteristics of all three samples. For samples A and B, the observed hysteresis loops were clockwise, but sample C showed a partly clockwise and partly counterclockwise loop (in larger bias voltages). As it can be seen in [Figure 3.10.](#page-42-0)a, the area of the hysteresis loop of sample A was clearly larger than the observed loop in I-V characteristic of sample B, indicating a larger capacitive effect which can be due to the cracks and pores formed on the PET substrate during the laser engraving affecting the perovskite channel.



<span id="page-42-0"></span>Figure 3.10 The cyclic voltammetry of the fabricated samples, (a and b) in dark and (c) under 80 mwatt.cm<sup>-2</sup> light exposure.

The current response of the samples was measured at 2.0 V bias voltage when the light pulses of 20 seconds were illuminated to the samples [\(Figure 3.11\)](#page-43-0). As it was expected, sample B showed the highest photocurrent and sample A showed the lowest photocurrent.



<span id="page-43-0"></span>Figure 3.11. Current response of the photodetectors to light pulses at 2.0 V bias.

The amplitude and phase of the samples impedances were measured using the potentiostat. As shown in [Figure 3.12,](#page-43-1) all sample had a pole which can be due to the capacitive effect exists between the perovskite grains. Sample C has shown a lower impedance which also confirms the I-V plot in dark condition.



<span id="page-43-1"></span>Figure 3.12 The bode (a) phase and (b) amplitude diagram of the fabricated photodetectors in dark condition.

As sample B represented the best performance, an equivalent circuit was proposed to model the impedance behavior of the device and the simulated data was fitted to the bode amplitude plot of the impedance [\(Figure 3.13\)](#page-44-0). The simulation was performed by EIS Spectrum Analyser software. For frequency ranges below 5000 Hz, a RC circuit model can be fitted to the bode amplitude plot. As it was seen in [Figure 3.12.](#page-43-1)a the phase increased to values over 90 degrees in the higher frequencies (>2500 Hz). In order to model a circuit to get impedance phases higher than 90 degrees and considering potentiostat calculated all phases as positive numbers, an inductor can be added to the equivalent circuit. More studies are required to investigate the inductive behavior of the fabricated samples in high frequencies.



<span id="page-44-0"></span>Figure 3.13 The simulated equivalent circuit bode plot fitted on sample B data points.

## 3.2.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, we fabricated several perovskite photodetectors by laser engraving ITO coated PET substrates to form a microchannel and then filling the channel by perovskite precursor. The most promising result was obtained by using the laser power of 0.6 watts, the laser speed of 38.1 mm.S-1 , and the laser pulse per inch of 2500 to engrave the microchannel. Along with simplicity, low cost, and cleanroom free advantages, our proposed fabrication method profits a clean and speedy micromachining which is beneficial for mass production.

#### **Chapter 4: Stability in Photodetectors**

The objective of this chapter is to study the stability of CH3NH3PbI<sup>3</sup> under CYTOP and FluoroPel coatings. In order to achieve this goal, a lateral structure photodetector was employed to facilitate fully encapsulation of perovskite. Here, as of our knowledge, for the first time, FluoroPel was used as a water repellent layer to enhance  $CH_3NH_3PbI_3$  stability.<sup>‡</sup>

## **4.1 Experimental**

The samples were made on 1 cm  $\times$  2 cm pieces of ITO coated polyethylene terephthalate, PET,  $(60 Ωsqrt, Sigma-Aldrich)$ . The substrates were laser engraved using a commercially available CO<sup>2</sup> laser (Epilog Fusion M2, 60 watts) which provides a laser beam of 10.6 μm wavelength printing in the vector mode with the lowest beam diameter of 76.2 μm. The macro channels were laser engraved when the laser fired 5000 pulses per inch (PPI) at the power of 0.6 watts and machining speed of  $38.1 \text{ mm.s}^{-1}$ .

The perovskite precursor solution was prepared by a mixture of equimolar 0.5 M lead iodide (98.5%, Alfa Aesar) and methylammonium iodide (Lumtec) in gamma-butyrolactone (99%, Aldrich). The solution was immersed in a bath of water and stirred overnight at 300 rpm and at 60 °C. 2 µl of the perovskite precursor was placed at one end of the laser engraved microchannel. The capillary motion helped the solution droplet to pull into the channel. Then the sample was placed on the hotplate and heated to 90 °C for 6 minutes.

‡ Sections 4.1-4.4 are as presented in the published work in the journal of MRS Advances, 2020.

One group of four samples was prepared for the purpose of X-ray diffraction (XRD) characterization and another group of four samples were prepared for electrical and optical characteristics measurement. A 50 nm of CYTOP was spin-coated on two samples from each group and a 50 nm of hydrophobic FluoroPel (CYNTONIX) was spin-coated on the rest of the samples, to protect the perovskite from degradation due to moisture.

Four samples (one coated with CYTOP and one coated with FluoroPel from the first group and one coated with CYTOP and one coated with FluoroPel from the second group of samples) were kept in vacuum inside a desiccator and four other samples were kept under the ambient condition in order to study the effectiveness of hydrophobic coatings.

The fabricated samples were characterized by an Hitachi S800 and Hitachi SU70 Scanning Electron Microscopes. The cyclic voltammetry was carried out using a VersaSTAT 4 potentiostat. The light intensity at the sample location was measured to be  $80 \text{ mW/cm}^2$ . The light pulses were applied by switching on and off the light source. All experiments were performed at room temperature, under ambient condition and at the same time for all the samples. The schematic of the fabrication steps is shown in [Figure 4.1.](#page-46-0)



<span id="page-46-0"></span>Figure 4.1 Schematic of the fabrication steps of the samples.

# **4.2 Characterization**

The tilted (44 tilt degrees) view SEM image of the channel made by laser ablation is shown in [Figure 4.2.](#page-47-0)a. Also, the top view SEM image of the perovskite layer grown inside the channel is presented in [Figure 4.2.](#page-47-0)b.



Figure 4.2 SEM image of the (a) the laser-engraved microchannel, (b) the perovskite layer inside the microchannel.

<span id="page-47-0"></span>In order to estimate the crystalline quality of the perovskite layer, four samples were made by laser ablation of 19 microchannels (with a distance of 1 mm from each other) on the ITO coated PET substrates. XRD was performed over 22 days period on the mentioned samples as shown in Figure 3.

It has to be noted that the full XRD spectra had been shown in our previous work [[104]]. Therefore, here to simplify the comparison, the first two peaks are presented. The sharp peaks at 2Ɵ of 13.95 and 14.22 degrees were assigned to (002) and (110) planes of tetragonal CH3NH3PbI3, space group I4/mcm [[142]]. In all samples, the perovskite crystal quality enhanced over 6 days. In addition, the PbI<sub>2</sub> diffraction peak at 2 $\Theta$  of 12.6 degrees [[143]] which is known as a clear sign of the perovskite degradation, was not observed in any of the XRD data.



Figure 4.3 X-ray diffraction pattern of the arrays of CH3NH3PbI<sup>3</sup> microchannels formed on the PET substrate and coated with (a) CYTOP and kept in the desiccator, (b) CYTOP and kept under ambient condition, (c) FluoroPel and kept in the desiccator, and (d) FluoroPel and kept under ambient condition.

# **4.3 Result and Discussion**

I-V characteristics of the sample were measured in dark and under light illumination of 80 mW/cm<sup>2</sup>. In order to investigate the effectiveness of the two fluoropolymer coatings on the stability of the samples, the measurements were repeated over the 38 days.

The dark current of all samples (shown in [Figure 4.4\)](#page-49-0) dropped below 2 nA after the first week from the fabrication date. Afterward, no significant changes were observed in all the samples. On the other hand, the photocurrent (the current under illumination) varied over the time. The I-V plots of the sample under light exposure are presented in [Figure 4.5.](#page-50-0) To clearly display the photocurrent variation for samples, the percentages of the change in the photocurrent is shown in Figure 6.



<span id="page-49-0"></span>Figure 4.4 I-V characteristics of the ITO-CH3NH3PbI3-ITO microchannels formed on the PET substrate and coated with (a) CYTOP and kept in the desiccator, (b) CYTOP and kept under ambient condition, (c) FluoroPel and kept in the desiccator, and (d) FluoroPel and kept under ambient condition, and in dark.

As can be seen in [Figure 4.6](#page-50-1) both the samples which were kept under ambient conditions (coated by CYTOP or FluoroPel) showed a significant increase in the photocurrent for 22 days after the fabrication. Also, regardless of the fluoropolymer coating material and the storage conditions, all the samples showed higher photocurrent frequently.



<span id="page-50-0"></span>Figure 4.5 I-V characteristics of the ITO-CH3NH3PbI3-ITO microchannels formed on the PET substrate and coated with (a) CYTOP and kept in the desiccator, (b) CYTOP and kept under ambient condition, (c) FluoroPel and kept in the desiccator, and (d) FluoroPel and kept under ambient condition, and under light illumination.



<span id="page-50-1"></span>Figure 4.6 Comparison between the percentage of the change in the photocurrent of the samples at 2 V over the time.

Equation 1 was used to calculate the average measured changes in the photocurrent over 38 days for each sample. The [Table 4.1](#page-51-0) shows the calculated values. The two samples kept under ambient condition were found to be more unstable and showed higher variation in the photocurrent. This may prove that the coating layers are not fully defect-free. The sample coated with FluoroPel and kept in vacuum was the most stable sample and showed the lowest average change in the photocurrent.

$$
\Delta I_{ph} = \frac{\frac{I_{day1} - I_{day1}}{I_{day1}} + \frac{I_{day6} - I_{day1}}{I_{day1}} + \frac{I_{day15} - I_{day1}}{I_{day1}} + \frac{I_{day22} - I_{day1}}{I_{day1}} + \frac{I_{day38} - I_{day1}}{I_{day1}}}{6} \times 100 \tag{4-1}
$$

<span id="page-51-0"></span>Table 4.1 The average of the percentage of the change in the photocurrent.

	<b>CYTOP</b>	<b>CYTOP</b>	<b>FluoroPel</b>	<b>FluoroPel</b>
	Vacuum	Air	Vacuum	Air
Avg. $\Delta I_{ph}(\%)$	10.79	18.21	7.71	70.26

The unusual behavior of the raise in the photocurrent over the time needs to be investigated along with the higher peak intensity in X-Ray diffraction data. The absence of the PbI<sup>2</sup> diffraction peak at 2Ɵ of 12.6 degrees confirms that the formation of PbI<sup>2</sup> due to the perovskite decomposition in this unique lateral structure is unlikely. Since the perovskite layer is encapsulated from the two walls of the microchannel and the PET substrate underneath. In addition, the perovskite upper part is coated by a fluoropolymer.

On the other hands, it has been reported that the high dipole moment of the strong polar C-F bond in fluoropolymers can favorably change the electrical characteristics of the device [144]. As it was discussed before, the grown perovskite is in the tetragonal phase which is ferroelectric [123]. Since the light was illuminated from the top-side of the samples, it passes through the polymer coating, and is mainly absorbed by the part of the perovskite which is in contact with the fluoropolymer. The enhance in the photocurrent over a long period of time can be due to the effect of the high dipole moment of the strong polar C-F bond in fluoropolymers on aligning of the domains in the ferroelectric perovskite layer.

Sharpening of the perovskite (002) and (110) planes diffraction peaks after 6 days from the fabrication time indicates more ordered crystalline domains by passing the time which can be as the result of nearly fully encapsulating the perovskite inside a microchannel and coating it by a fluoropolymer. More study is needed to investigate the effect of perovskite confinement during the growth and encapsulation.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

In summary, we employed two fluoropolymers as the encapsulation layer to protect the perovskite microchannel from degrading due to exposure to oxygen and moisture. Four photodetectors were fabricated using laser micromachining. Two photodetectors were coated by CYTOP and the other two photodetectors were coated by FluoroPel. To investigate the effect of the ambient environment, one photodetector from each coating was kept in the vacuum inside a desiccator and one photodetector was kept under ambient environment.

Unexpectedly, the average photocurrent of all four samples increased over 38 days from the fabrication time. The sample which was coated by FluoroPel and kept in the vacuum was the most stable sample. This study suggests the use of FluoroPel in perovskite solar cell applications.

## **Chapter 5: Ion Migration and Piezo-Photocurrent Modulation**

Recently, MAPbI<sup>3</sup> has been found to have piezoelectricity. Alignment of polarized domains via the polling process can generate a permanent polarization in the material, but in such a form, both dark and photocurrents are expected to be increased by reducing barriers under an external force (leading to an insignificant improvement in the device sensitivity) [145].

Many efforts have been made to boost the functionality of fabricated lead halide perovskite photodetectors [146]. Recent investigations have revealed that the piezoelectric property of MAPbI3 [88-92] causes a piezo-phototronic effect. This effect can be employed to reduce the structural barrier under illumination to enhance the photoresponse of a MAPbI<sub>3</sub> single crystal photodetector [91]. It has been shown that the piezoelectric coefficient increases by several-fold under illumination [90].

Ion migration has been suggested as a mechanism for photo-induced self-polling effect. This enhances the photocurrent in MAPbI<sup>3</sup> based photovoltaic devices under illumination by accumulating ions at the interfaces and making a p-i-n homojunction in the perovskite layer [147- 149].

In this chapter, the effect of external forces in different directions on the photocurrent of the photodetector structure which was introduced in the previous chapters has been investigated. The device was also characterized by SEM, XRD, AFM, and profilometer.<sup>§</sup>

<sup>§</sup> Sections 5.1-5.4 are as presented in the published work in the journal of Advanced Electronic Materials 2019.

## **5.1 Experimental**

The perovskite precursor solution contained a mixture of equimolar 0.5 M lead iodide (98.5%, Alfa Aesar) and methylammonium iodine (Lumtec) in gamma-butyrolactone (99%, Aldrich). The solution was stirred over night at 1200 rpm and at 50 °C.

1.5 cm $\times$ 2 cm piece of ITO coated polyethylene terephthalate, PET, (60  $\Omega$ sqr, Sigma-Aldrich) was cut and placed into a microcutting tool that comprises an X-Acto knife blade protruding wedge into the ITO coated PET substrate to form a micro-channel with  $\sim$ 100  $\mu$ m width. 2 µl of the perovskite precursor was placed at one end of the channel. The solution droplet was immediately pulled into the channel due to the capillary motion effect. Then the sample was placed on the hotplate and heated to 90 °C for 6 minutes. Afterward, a  $\sim$  50 nm transparent layer of water repellent fluoropolymer CYTOP (AGC Chemicals) was deposited by spin coating to protect the perovskite [150]. Finally, the sample was heated to 100 °C for 90 seconds followed by another annealing process for 30 minutes at 90 °C and kept in the desiccator for 24 hours to remove any residual solvent. Figure 22.a illustrates the process of preparing the photodetector. SEM, XRD, AFM, and profilometer were employed to characterize the perovskite channel.

For the I-V characterization under the light, dark, compressed and released conditions, a VersaSTAT 4 potentiostat was connected to the device electrodes inside a dark box. A solar simulator (RST, Radiant Source Technology) was used as the light source. The light intensity at the sample location was measured to be  $\sim 80 \text{ mW/cm}^2$ . In-house designed setups were used for bending the devices and applying normal forces while they were tested under the dark and light conditions. Figure 22.b shows the schematic of a home-made vice setup that was used for bending the device by turning the screw (Figure S1.a in the Supporting Information). For the normal tests (Figure 22.c), a pneumatic actuator was used to apply the pressure over the device while the light was illuminated through the transparent window at the back of the device (Figure S1.b). Both setups were designed to be placed in the dark box connected to the light source.



<span id="page-55-0"></span>Figure 5.1 Schematic of (a) the fabrication process steps, (b) the setup used for bending the device and (c) the setup used for applying normal forces.

# **5.2 Device Characterization**

The top view SEM image of the sample [\(Figure 5.2.](#page-56-0)a, b and c) showed that the channel is filled with a packed layer of perovskite. As it can be seen in [Figure 5.2.](#page-56-0)b the grains sizes of the perovskite layer vary across the channel. Larger grains were observed at the edges of the channel which could be the result of the coffee ring effect [151]. For further investigation, the thickness profile of the channel was measured at different spots along the channel (Figure S2). The profile image showed a groove shape with two standing walls before the channel was filled with perovskite. After filling, at the beginning of the channel where the capillary motion started, perovskite fully filled the channel and crystalized over the walls. As it reached toward the end, the thickness of the perovskite decreased (Figure S.3).

Using AFM in the contact mode, the morphology of the perovskite in the channel was studied on a sample without the CYTOP coating. The surface height morphology is shown in [Figure 5.2.](#page-56-0)d demonstrating a relatively rough surface. The XRD pattern [\(Figure 5.2.](#page-56-0)e) was measured on a sample with an array of parallel channels with 300  $\mu$ m distance between them while all the channels were filled with perovskite using the capillary motion. The pattern displayed five sharp peaks at 20 of 14, 28.3, 31.8, 40.5 and 43 degree indicating the channels were filled with tetragonal-phase MAPbI3 [152]. The absence of a diffraction peak at 12.65 degrees suggests that the level of the PbI<sup>2</sup> impurity phase is negligible [21]. The wide broad peak at 25 degrees is due to the PET substrate.



<span id="page-56-0"></span>Figure 5.2 (a, b and c) Top view SEM image of the fabricated perovskite microchannel at different zooming levels. (d) AFM height image of MAPbI3. (e) X-ray diffraction pattern of the arrays of MAPbI<sup>3</sup> microchannels formed on the PET substrate. The inset picture shows the XRD pattern of the PET substrate.

#### **5.3 Results and Discussion**

To study the effect of stress perpendicular to the applied electric field across the perovskite, the device was placed in the compressing setup shown in [Figure 5.1.](#page-55-0)c (Figure S1.a ) that was equipped with a pressure regulator to adjust the applied stress to the sample. Then the I-V measurement was carried out with the voltage ranged between -2.0 V and +2.0 V under illumination while the device was compressed or released at different normal pressures. Also, the device was tested in the dark in the relaxed mode (no pressure) as the reference. As shown in [Figure 5.3.](#page-58-0)a, a non-linear I-V characteristic was observed which is likely due to the formation of Schottky junctions between the ITO electrodes and MAPbI<sub>3</sub> [141, 153]. The response under different pressures clearly shows that the current under illumination (photocurrent) increased with the pressure. Also, the low dark-current verifies the behavior of the device as a photodetector. At  $+2.0$  V biasing, the photocurrent magnitude reached from 3.5  $\mu$ A at the no pressure condition to 6.9 μA at the highest normal force of 340 kPa which is 97% higher than the released state.

To investigate the effect of compressive and tensile forces across the channel, the setup shown in Figure 22.b (Figure S1.b) was used to bend the device inward (concave shape) and outward (convex shape), respectively. The I-V characteristics of the device were measured again in the voltage range of  $-2.0$  V and  $+2.0$  V and as an example under one curvature for each bending direction (inward or outward). The inverse of the curvature radius is reported as the curvature, κ, in [Figure 5.3.](#page-58-0)b. The results showed a higher photocurrent when the device was under a compressive force (inward bending). At  $+2.0$  V biasing, the photocurrent magnitude was 4.5  $\mu$ A at the inward curvature of  $0.3 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ , which was  $\sim 30\%$  larger than that at the flat position. In contrast, the measured photocurrent at the outward curvature of  $-0.3$  cm<sup>-1</sup> had the lowest magnitude of 2.8  $\mu$ A which is ~20% lower than the photocurrent at the flat position.



<span id="page-58-0"></span>Figure 5.3 I-V characteristics of the fabricated device in the dark (no pressure and flat condition) and under  $\sim 80$  mW/cm<sup>2</sup> light exposure while the device was tested (a) under different normal pressures and (b) at different bending curvatures (inward and outward bending curvatures are shown with positive and negative numbers, respectively).

To study the transient response of the current, the sample was biased at 2.0 V and a constant normal pressure was applied when the light was switched on and off every 20 sec (Figure S4). The results from different experiments under different normal forces are presented in [Figure 5.4.](#page-59-0)a. In the first few cycles of light exposure under no external pressure, the photocurrent showed a constant increase with time until it reached a stable value after a few cycles. The following cycles were tested when the sample was under a constant pressure. The current pulses show a higher photocurrent at higher pressures, after four steps of compression from 310 kPa to 340 kPa, the device was released, and the photocurrent was measured to be less than all photocurrents under pressure. However, its value was higher than the primary state before applying any pressure. To ensure that the change in the photocurrent is the effect of the normal force, the dynamic respond of the photocurrent to the normal forces was measured by compressing and releasing the device under light illumination [\(Figure 5.5.](#page-59-1)a). Fast and reversible response to the normal force was observed.



<span id="page-59-0"></span>Figure 5.4 Current response of the photodetector to light pulses at 2.0 V bias under different compressive/tensile pressures. (a) under different normal pressures. (b) under different bending curvatures (inward bending is showed with the positive number and outward bending with a negative sign).



<span id="page-59-1"></span>Figure 5.5 Dynamic photocurrent response of the fabricated sample at 2.0 V bias under continuous illumination to (a) a normal force and releasing for 3 cycles, (b) manually bending into inward position and flattening for 2 cycles.

Static and dynamic responses to the compressive and tensile forces aligned with the applied electric field were measured using the fabricated setup in Figure 22.b for bending the sample inward and outward at different curvatures. [Figure 5.4.](#page-59-0)b shows the effect of the static force under different curvatures. The higher inward curvatures resulted in the higher photocurrent. Changing the bending curvature from inward to outward resulted in a lower photocurrent. However, returning to the flat position, the photocurrent increased to a higher level than the primary flat state photocurrent. This can be due to the illumination history and electric field history as reported before [154]. To ensure that the change in the photocurrent is the effect of bending the device, dynamic response of the photocurrent was measured by bending the device under illumination [\(Figure 5.5.](#page-59-1)b).

For the better understanding of this apparent piezoelectric effect in the perovskite photodetector, the device was tested in the dark under various pressures and bending conditions. The dark-currents versus time are shown in Figure 27 at  $+2.0$  V bias voltage. Although some changes were observed in the dark-current when a mechanical stress was applied, the changes were not coherent with the magnitude and direction of the forces. More importantly, the variation in the dark-current was less than 12% under different normal forces (Figure 27.a) while a coherent change of photocurrent up to 30% was observed for the same range of the forces. Similarly, the dark-current under the bending conditions did not show any specific relation to the curvature. Even as shown in Figure 6.b, the dark-current was exactly the same for the flat position and the max inward bending at the curvature of  $\kappa$ =0.4 cm<sup>-1</sup>. The coherent response of the photocurrent to the external forces and the lack of any relationship between the dark-currents and the forces clearly indicate that the change in the photocurrent is not due to the mechanical contacts between the perovskite and ITO. Furthermore, much larger boosts in the photocurrent and smaller changes in the dark-current suggest that the mechanism of governing the charge transport through the device is not a simple piezoresistive effect [155].



Figure 5.6 I-t responses of the device in dark, (a) under different normal pressures and (b) at different bending curvatures.

To ensure the stability of the device during the measurement, the dark current-voltage characteristic of the device was measured by the scan rate of 50 mV/sec, once before starting the measurements and compared with the dark current-voltage characteristic of the device after more than 100 cycles of all tests that were performed including I-V measurements and I-t transient characteristics under light and at different pressures or bending positions. The results are shown in Figure S6. The I-V of the final test was in a good match with the first I-V measurements which proves that no significant cracking happened.

The performance of the photodetector can be evaluated by sensitivity (*S*) and responsivity (*R*) [156], which are defined by the equations (5-1) and (5-2) respectively:

$$
S = \frac{I_{light} - I_{dark}}{I_{dark}} \times 100 = \frac{I_{ph}}{I_{dark}} \times 100
$$
 (5-1)  

$$
R = \frac{I_{ph}}{P} (A/W)
$$
 (5-2)

where, *I*<sub>light</sub> is the measured current under illumination, *I*<sub>dark</sub> is the dark-current, *I*<sub>ph</sub> is the difference between measured current under illumination and the dark-current (=*Ilight - Idark*) which in our device is almost equal to *Ilight*, *P* is the optical power received by the active area of the photodetector. The sensitivity and responsivity of the device were measured and calculated at +2.0 V bias voltage while the device was exposed to nearly 80 mW/cm<sup>2</sup> power density. As shown in

[Figure 5.7,](#page-62-0) the device sensitivity and responsivity increased by bending into inward positions and applying normal forces while the sensitivity and responsivity of the device decreased when it was bended into outward positions. The sensitivity of  $2.08 \times 10^5$  A/A and responsivity of 9.1 mA/W at +2.0 V flat position and no applied stress were calculated. As we increased the applied normal pressure the amount of sensitivity and responsivity raised to the highest point of  $3.25 \times 10^5$  and 14.56 mA/W while the device was under 340 kPa normal force. This level of sensitivity is two orders of magnitude higher than a previously reported device under a normal compressive pressures [91].



<span id="page-62-0"></span>Figure 5.7 The responsivity of the device (a) under different normal pressures, (b) under different curvatures. The sensitivity of the device (c) under different normal pressures and (d) under different curvatures. All plots are measures at  $+2$  V forward bias and  $\sim 80$  mW/cm<sup>2</sup> illumination power density.

The effect of pressure on the optical and electrical properties of MAPbI<sup>3</sup> has been investigated by several groups [52, 157-161]. It has been shown that increasing the pressure to few

GPa may affect carrier life time, bandgap, tilting of  $[PbI<sub>6</sub>]<sup>4</sup>$  octahedra and yielding new phases [52, 162]. However, the applied pressure in our experiments was four orders of magnitude lower than the pressure level required for a crystalline change in the material.

To explain the photocurrent modulation by the applied stress/pressure, the band-bending at the ITO-MAPbI<sup>3</sup> was considered as a Schottky contact [141]. In the absence of any electric field (no DC biasing) and in the dark, the device is in equilibrium with a symmetrical band bending at the both ITO-MAPbI<sup>3</sup> junctions [\(Figure 5.8.](#page-65-0)a). However, in the presence of light when an external electric field is applied across the perovskite channel (biasing at 2.0 V across 100 μm), migration of interstitial iodine accelerates and ions/vacancies drift toward the ITO electrodes [163, 164]. This break the symmetry of the band structure. As explained by Yuan et al. [148], the drift of ions/vacancies accumulates the positive ions at the proximity of the anode resulting in an n‐type doping of the MAPbI<sup>3</sup> layer. Similarly, the accumulation of negative ions/vacancies close the cathode is expected to induce a p‐type doping region and consequently forms a p-i-n homojunction in the perovskite material that modifies the band bending at the ITO-MAPbI<sub>3</sub> interfaces (Figure [5.8.](#page-65-0)b). This process is known as light-induced self-poling (LISP) effect [147-149].

Illumination generates a large number of electrons and holes. Through the aforementioned mechanism, holes can more easily hop or tunnel through the narrowed barrier at n-MAPbI3/ITO side and electrons can pass though p-MAPbI3/ITO side. The time-scale of the ion-migrationinduced barrier modification is reported to be in the order of several minutes [130]. This can be the reason for the observed non-steady state increasing photocurrent in the first pulses in [Figure](#page-59-0)  [5.4](#page-59-0) and [Figure 5.5.](#page-59-1) Also, the history effect observed after extended illumination time under a constant electric field can be due to the same ion migration effect. The fact that the tested sample

recovered its original characteristic in the dark (Figure S6) supports the theory of LISP being responsible for the suggested band diagram in [Figure 5.8.](#page-65-0)b [164].

However, the LISP effect alone does not explain the apparent piezo-photocurrent modulation. In general, electric polarization can have three primary contributions: electronic, ionic, and dipole reorientation-related [145]. The tetragonal phase of MAPbI<sub>3</sub> has a natural polarized structure with the previously reported ferroelectric and piezoelectric properties [87, 89]. In the polycrystalline form, domains are randomly distributed. The low external electric field of 0.02 V/μm which is also weakened by the internal electric field due to ion migration may not be large enough for the poling process. However, the accumulation of positive and negative ions near the ITO-MAPbI<sup>3</sup> interfaces can establish a large electric field near the interfaces. This high electric field can align domains and make polarized structures at the perovskite sides close to the ITO-MAPbI<sup>3</sup> interfaces such as the polarization mechanism induced by the poling process in piezoelectric materials. With this light-induced self-poling at the interfaces, it is likely that the polarized regions near the interfaces have been formed that were responding to the external mechanical forces. Therefore, although we have not performed poling process purposely, the response of this polarized structure to the mechanical stresses can be called an apparent piezoelectric effect.

Bending inward or compressing the perovskite induces an electric field in the same direction as the external field, resulting in further band bending in favor of lowering the barrier for a larger current to pass through the device. In contrast, the outward bending may generate an electric field opposite of the external field direction that reduces the current in the device. More studies are required for a better understanding of the possible mechanisms, and also measuring the piezo coefficients at different directions.

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<span id="page-65-0"></span>Figure 5.8 Energy diagrams of the device (a) in equilibrium and (b) under the DC biasing. Both light and mechanical stress can affect the band bending. (c) schematic of the device structure at three states of equilibrium, under light and applied electric field (ion/vacancies accumulate at the interfaces) and under applied stress.

# **5.4 Conclusion**

In summary, here we fabricated an ITO–MAPbI<sub>3</sub>–ITO lateral structure. This unique structure demonstrated an apparent piezo effect for two different directions of stress. Also, the induced piezo electric field was found to be more effective under illumination perhaps due to the LISP effect. The photocurrent and consequently responsivity and sensitivity of the device were enhanced while the sample was under normal pressure and at inward bending positions. At the highest state, the responsivity enhanced from 9.1 mA W<sup>-1</sup> to 14.56 mA W<sup>-1</sup> and I<sub>ph</sub>/I<sub>dark</sub> from 2.08  $\times$  10<sup>3</sup> to 3.25  $\times$  10<sup>3</sup>. While more study is needed for better understanding of the mechanisms of charge transport and the effect of stress and light on the electrical behavior of the device, the observed apparent piezo-phototronic effect can be employed to design photosensors with a higher level of sensitivity.

#### **Chapter 6: Methylammonium Lead Iodide Transistor**

As it was discussed in the previous chapters, motivation for using perovskite is their lowcost. Additionally, the solution processability of lead halide perovskitesis an advantage for making low-cost devices with simple fabrication methods. Yet, using their extraordinary electro-optical properties for making highly sensitive phototransistors.

Several groups have reported on the different MAPbI3–based field-effect transistor (FET) structures  $[21, 22, 28, 30, 33, 44]$ . A challenge in fabrication of MAPbI<sub>3</sub> FETs is the incompatibility of the standard patterning techniques such as photolithography and E-beam lithography to be applied for perovskites, due to the sensitivity of  $MAPbI<sub>3</sub>$  to polar solvents [27] and their low activation energy for degradation [165]. The other challenges are instability of transistors under ambient conditions, biased at high electric fields [166] and a limited current modulation at room temperature [29].

In this chapter, we introduced two different designs to make perovskite photodetectors. The first phototransistor is made on a flexible PET by laser engraving and the second designed phototransistor was made using a pneumatic nozzle printer. The electrical and electro-optical properties of the fabricated phototransistors are studied.

# **6.1 Fabrication of Perovskite Transistors Using Laser Ablation**

Portable and wearable applications of transistors require the use of lightweight flexible substrates. Different technologies and materials have been employed to develop flexible phototransistors by low-temperature fabrication methods [167]. Among the materials that are compatible with low-temperature processes, organic semiconductors suffer from low mobility [168] and metal oxide semiconductors have complicated and costly deposition techniques in order to reach a high-quality film [169].

Thus, the combination of suitable perovskite transistor architectures with fast and reproducible patterning methodologies on flexible substrates can accelerate the progress towards industry-relevant applications [66]. Here we have demonstrated a MAPbI<sub>3</sub> transistor with a lateral structure made using an extremely simple and low-cost fabrication process. As of our knowledge, the device is the first MAPbI<sup>3</sup> channel transistor produced on a flexible plastic sheet.

## 6.1.1 Experimental

Perovskite precursor was prepared by mixing 0.5 M PbI<sup>2</sup> (98.5%, Alfa Aesar) and 0.5 M MAI (Lumtec) in GBL (99%, Aldrich) and keeping it on the hotplate at 60°C overnight. The sample was fabricated using 1 cm×1 cm pieces of ITO coated PET sheet (60 Ωsqr, Sigma-Aldrich). A 200 µl of PMMA in chlorobenzene (0.369 g in 3 ml chlorobenzene) was spun coated at 1000 rpm for 40 seconds. This layer was used as an isolating layer between ITO (drain and source contact material) and the gate contact.

After chlorobenzene was evaporated, the sample was laser engraved (Epilog Fusion M2, 60 watt) at the power of 0.6 watts, speed of  $38.1 \text{ mm.s}^{-1}$  and pulse per inch (PPI) of 5000. Then the laser engraved channel was filled with a  $2 \mu$  of the perovskite precursor solution using the capillary force when a droplet of the solution was placed at the one end of the channel. The sample was placed on the hotplate at 85°C for 6 minutes.

After that, for making the gate dielectric, a 50 µl of CYTOP CTL-809M (AGC Chemicals, Tokyo, Japan) was spun coated at 2000 rpm for 40 seconds and formed a  $\sim$ 1  $\mu$ m thick CYTOP layer. Afterward, the sample was kept inside the desiccator overnight in order to remove any residual solvent. Then a very narrow piece of Cu tape was placed on the channel to serve as the gate contact. For better adhesion, a layer of Acrylic (MG Chemicals) was poured on the Cu tape.

The sample was characterized by SEM (Hitachi SU70), XRD (Bruker D8 Advance) and a two channels source measure unit (SMU) (Keithley 2602A). All the measurements under light were performed when the sample was illuminated by a solar simulator (RST 300S) at 80 mW/cm<sup>2</sup> optical power. A schematic of the device structure is illustrated in Figure 6.1.



Figure 6.1 The schematic of the fabricated perovskite transistor by laser engraving.

## 6.1.2 Result and Discussion

The SEM image of the laser engraved channel is shown in [Figure 6.2.](#page-68-0)a. The channel width was measured to be  $~60 \mu$ m. As it was expected from our previous devices [102, 104, 123], the crystallized precursor inside the microchannel formed tetragonal phase MAPbI3.



<span id="page-68-0"></span>Figure 6.2 (a) The SEM image of the laser engraved microchannel ( the image is taken at 44 degrees tilt angle), (b) the XRD spectra of the perovskite channel.

The transistor characteristics were measured in dark and under white light illumination (power density of 80 mW.cm<sup>-2</sup>) which are represented in [Figure 6.3.](#page-69-0) Since CYTOP surface hydrophobicity worsen at high electric field [170] and may cause degradation of the perovskite layer, the output characteristics (drain current (*ID*) versus drain voltage (*VDS*)) were measured from 0 V to 20.0 V while varying gate voltage (*VGS*) from 10.0 V to 30.0 V by 10.0 V steps. The transfer characteristic (*I<sup>D</sup>* versus *VGS*) of the fabricated device was measured at *VDS* of 20 V.



<span id="page-69-0"></span>Figure 6.3 Transfer and output characteristics of the fabricated flexible transistor (a and b) under light illumination, (c and d) in dark.

As the channel was well encapsulated by CYTOP, all measurements were performed in ambient condition. To minimize ion-migration and bias stress effect the overall time duration of each scan was set to ~8 seconds and the time interval of few minutes was set between every two measurements while the sample was kept in the dark condition. In order to ensure that the decrease in current is not as the result of time, the output characteristics measurements were repeated in the reverse order as well (starting at *VGS* of 30 V and decreasing the *VGS*) and the same trend was observed.

As can be seen from [Figure 6.3,](#page-69-0) under light illumination condition, the current in both output and transfer characteristics is larger than the dark current at the equal bias voltages. From the output characteristics, the transistor reaches the saturation region when the drain-source voltage is above 10.0 V. As the gate voltage increased, the saturated drain current decreased. The same trend was observed from the transfer characteristics both in dark and light conditions. The drain current dropped when the gate voltage increased at a drain voltage of 20.0 V.

In this design, as the channel is very thick  $(\sim 40 \,\mu m)$ , light is not able to penetrate the whole channel. Therefore, the top gate does not modulate the gate effectively. Positive gate voltage makes a temporary inverted area near the gate contact. This area has a higher conductivity and the overall drain current is dominated by this area.

The crystallization of grains at low temperatures by solution-based fabrication process generates a large number of defects. These defects and trap states provide low activation energy and make a channel for intrinsic migration of  $\Gamma$ ,  $MA^+$ ,  $Pb^{2+}$ , and in some cases  $H^+$  ions. These ions accumulate at the interfaces, screen the applied gate electric field, and they can reduce the mobile electrons concentration in the accumulation layer of FET [39]. Therefore ion migration plays an important role in carrier transport in lead halide perovskite [132]. The concentration of carriers changes mobility [171, 172]. As the saturation current is in direct relation with the mobility, decreasing the mobility lower the saturation current. The mobility of the fabricated device was calculated from the linear region of the transfer characteristic on using Equation 6-1 to be 1.7  $\text{cm}^2\text{V}^{-1}\text{S}^{-1}.$ 

$$
\mu = \frac{I_{ds}}{c.V_{ds} w} \left( V_{th} - V_{gs} \right) \tag{6.1}
$$

57

where, *C* is the capacitor of CYTOP layer, *l* is the channel length, *w* is the channel width and *Vth* is the threshold voltage.

This novel fabrication method provides a simple solution to make MAPbI<sub>3</sub> transistor on flexible substrates with comparably high mobility. Under application of a positive gate voltage, the negative charged point defects drift toward the CYTOP/perovskite interface, screen the applied gate electric field. The transistor showed a p-type transport characteristic.

In the next section, a hybrid structure of zinc oxide (ZnO)/perovskite is studied. The perovskite thin film was deposited on the ZnO electron transport layer using a pneumatic nozzle printing method.

## **6.2 Fabrication of Perovskite Transistor Using Pneumatic Nozzle Printer**

Printing techniques are among fast, simple and low-cost methods for the fabrication of flexible electronic devices and sensors [173]. Contact and non-contact approaches are usually used to develop a printing system. Contact printing methods such as dry transfer printing [174], offset printing [175] and nano-imprinting [176] place pre-patterned parts of a module in contact with the flexible (or non-flexible) substrates and transfer the ink onto them.

Non-contact printing techniques like inkjet printing [177], screen printing [178] and pneumatic nozzle printing [179] dispense the ink via openings or nozzles and define structures by moving the stage and/or nozzle.

Ink formula, substrate physical and chemical properties, printing speed, nozzle size and distance, solvent evaporation during the deposition and annealing conditions are among the factors that influence the printing quality [177, 180, 181]. Here, we employed a pneumatic nozzle printer to make a thin layer of MAPbI<sub>3</sub> and use this layer as the channel of a thin film transistor.
## 6.2.1 Ink Development

Ink properties such as viscosity, surface tension, and wetting behavior influence the crystallization and the quality of the perovskite film [181]. Thus, developing a proper ink is of utmost concern. Unlike some materials that solvents are mainly solubilizing agents and evaporation of the solvent after printing results in the desired layer, perovskite crystallite morphology relies heavily on the solvent [181].

Solvents may become incorporated into crystalline intermediate Phases. High coordinating solvents such as DMSO are beneficial to form homogeneous and pinhole-free thin films [181]. Also, while high boiling point solvents are favorable to stop early crystallization and clogging of the ink in the nozzle, a mixture of low and high boiling solvents can result in a homogeneous film formation [182]. Furthermore, the inhomogeneous mixture of solvents may adversely affect the reproducibility of the printed film with the same crystallization quality. For example, as ethanol ratio in the perovskite precursor can cause the formation of MAPbI<sub>3</sub> microcrystals [183], using the inhomogeneous ink containing 0.75 M equimolar PbI<sup>2</sup> and MAI, Acetic Acid, and ethanol, with the same printing parameters, resulted in the formation of perovskite microcrystals [\(Figure 6.4.](#page-72-0)a) and perovskite film with nano-size grains [\(Figure 6.4.](#page-72-0)b) due to different ethanol concentration.



<span id="page-72-0"></span>Figure 6.4 The top-view SEM image of MAPbI<sup>3</sup> printed on polyethylene naphthalate (PEN) showing inhomogeneous ink resulted in crystal size difference due to variation in ethanol concentration.

Molarity and hydrophobicity of the ink and substrate affect the film quality. Since  $PbI_2$  is known as a highly polar salt and raise in its concentration results in higher hydrophobicity.

## 6.2.2 Device Fabrication

To make the transistor, a heavily doped 4-inch p-type <100> silicon wafer (0.005  $\Omega$ .cm) with 285 nm dry chlorinated thermally grown silicon dioxide layer was used as the substrate. Prior to fabrication, the substrate was placed under ultraviolet–ozone treatment for 10 min. Thereafter, an 80 nm ZnO layer was deposited on SiO<sup>2</sup> using RF-magnetron sputtering system.

To make the drain and source contacts, the wafer was covered with a shadow mask and a 5 nm layer chromium (adhesion layer) was thermally evaporated followed by 80 nm gold thermal evaporation. The gold and chromium evaporation rates were kept at 0.5  $\degree$ A.s<sup>-1</sup> and 0.4  $\degree$ A.s<sup>-1</sup> respectively during the process.

The perovskite precursor was prepared by mixing 1 M PbI<sup>2</sup> and 2 M MAI in a solution containing GBL and DMSO with a 1:3 ratio and it was kept at 60°C overnight. The precursor was then loaded into the syringe with a 25 gauge needle. During the printing, the substrate temperature was set to 85 $^{\circ}$ C. The printing speed was kept at 0.1 mm.s<sup>-1</sup> and 0.7 and 0.7 psi of vacuum and forward pressure was applied, respectively. The width of the printed strip was ~470 µm. The transfer and output characteristics of the fabricated transistor were measured under ambient light. The schematic of the device is shown in [Figure 6.5.](#page-73-0)



<span id="page-73-0"></span>Figure 6.5 The schematic of the fabricated perovskite transistor by the pneumatic nozzle printing method.

## 6.2.3 Results and Discussion

Prior to the perovskite deposition, current-voltage characteristics of the gold contacts on the ZnO layer were measured and no current was observed by varying the gate voltage. Therefore, the ZnO layer is not performing as a transistor channel. As it can be seen i[n Figure 6.6,](#page-74-0) at the drainsource voltage of 10.0 V and the gate-source voltage of 0 V, nearly 0.46  $\mu$ A current passed through the semiconductor, showing that the device was a normally ON transistor.

As the gate-source voltage was increased, the Ids increased as well. However, the *Ids/Vgs* slope reduces at higher voltages and the current remains constant at the gate-source voltages above 24.0 V suggesting that there is another mechanism hindering the transistor normal functionality.



<span id="page-74-0"></span>Figure 6.6 The transfer characteristic of the fabricated transistor at *Vds* 10 V and under ambient light.

[Figure 6.7](#page-75-0) shows the output characteristics of the device. The drain-source current was measured at different constant gate-source voltages while increasing *Vds*. To limit the electric field induced degradation of the perovskite layer, we discontinued the measurement for the drain-source voltages higher than 20.0 V. However, the last test was performed to show that the transistor reaches the saturation mode at higher voltages. The drain-source current was measured at the drain-source voltage of 40.0 V [\(Figure 6.7.](#page-75-0)b).

Although the transfer characteristics showed higher *Ids* as *Vgs* gets higher, no meaningful relation between *Vgs* and *Ids* was observed in the output characteristics which may imply an inevitable perovskite degradation while measurement was carried on under ambient condition when the device was not encapsulated.



<span id="page-75-0"></span>Figure 6.7 The output characteristics of the fabricated transistor.

Since ZnO layer was not conductive before the perovskite deposition, change in the carrier transport type observed in [Figure 6.6](#page-74-0) in compare with the [Figure 6.3.](#page-69-0)b and d can be due to the significant role of defect at the surface of ZnO which is in contact with the perovskite layer. As time passed, degradation became the dominant mechanism and the current reduced [\(Figure 6.7\)](#page-75-0). More studies are needed to better understand the mechanism.

## **6.3 Conclusion**

In conclusion, in this chapter, we studied the feasibility of fabricating perovskite transistors by non-spin coating and non-lithography techniques. In the first design, by laser engraving, MAPbI<sub>3</sub> channel transistors were made.

In the second design, ZnO was placed between the gate oxide and the perovskite layer while having direct contact with the Au electrodes. This layer was aimed to drive excess carriers from the perovskite layer, to lower the concentration, and raise the mobility. Although the drain current increased by increasing *Vds* and *Vgs*, as time passed the decomposition became the dominant process.

Both transistors operated in the ON state at zero gate-source voltage. Although cut off mode was not observed, at higher drain-source voltages, both transistors entered saturation mode. In addition, it was observed that encapsulation helps to suppress the perovskite decomposition rate by protecting it from moisture. However, degradation is an intrinsic process and can be electric field induced. Therefore, the perovskite transistor operation voltage has to be chosen at very low voltages. This study can facilitate a better understanding of charge carrier transport in MAPbI3.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusion and Future Works**

## **7.1 Conclusion**

Since the first reported perovskite solar cell, this material has expanded its application in different photovoltaic devices. Owing to the extraordinary optical properties and the direct bandgap in the visible region, one of the interesting applications of MAPbI<sub>3</sub> can be an ambient light detector in a phototransistor configuration. Solution-based fabrication methods provide the capability to make perovskite devices and integrate them with capillary circuits for the label-free biosensing applications.

In this work, first, to ensure the feasibility of the idea, different methods were employed to make two-terminal photodetectors. The capillary channels were made by mechanical micromachining and laser engraving. Photolithography was found to be incapable of producing a cost-effective device since it requires many fabrication steps to make cast and mold and making high-quality contact with perovskite is complicated and difficult.

Mechanical micromachining was employed by using a custom-designed blade set up to engrave a wedge-shape capillary microchannel on an ITO coated PET substrate. An extremely small portion of the perovskite precursor filled the microchannel and made high-quality contact with ITO on both sides. The optical and electrical properties of the fabricated photodetector were characterized and compared with a photodetector with the same structure which was fabricated by lithography.

In a different approach, to enhance the reproducibility of the device, an industrial laser cutter was employed to engrave micro-channels on ITO coated PET substrates. This approach proved as a high-speed manufacturing method with the ability to produce devices in large scales.

Stability, ion-migration, and toxicity are the main challenges in MAPbI<sub>3</sub> based devices. The lead halide perovskite precursor can be prepared by mixing lead iodide and methylammonium iodide in a solution. All the proposed methods dramatically reduce the required amount of PbI<sub>2</sub> in comparison to the conventional spin coating technique. Also, the precursor waste percentage is zero in these methods. Therefore, only a very small amount of lead was used.

In another study, the stability of the fabricated photodetectors was examined by encapsulation technique using two different fluoropolymers (FluoroPel and CYTOP) and it was found that the photodetector's photocurrent encapsulated with either of the polymers, does not drop in a time period of 38 days and the encapsulation is highly effective. However, due to higher sustainability, CYTOP was chosen as the encapsulation material for the rest of the study. We also showed stress-induced ion migration can greatly enhance the photocurrent of the fabricated photodetectors.

Finally, perovskite phototransistor was made by using the top contact gate configuration and laser engraving method which was used to make the two-terminal photodetector. The perovskite layer was fully covered, and the gate contact did not require any photolithography steps and glove box condition. This design is extremely low-cost, reproducible, and simple.

## **7.2 Future Works**

There are mainly 4 challenges we face in lead halide perovskite phototransistors which are: lead toxicity, instability, defects and current modulation. The proposed method effectively reduces the amount of lead in a way that makes it far below the dangerous level defined by the U.S. standard and regulations for lead toxicity level, therefore the device can be counted as non-toxic [184].

Regarding stability, defects and current modulation more studies are needed to address many still open questions, such as (1) what is the effect of encapsulation of perovskite on the crystalline structure, phase and grains? (2) how does capillary motion affect element distribution in a microchannel? And does the stoichiometry vary across the channel? (3) does surface tension affect the crystal orientation during solidification of the precursor inside microchannels?

For future works, it is suggested more characterization techniques to be performed such as piezo-force microscopy (PFM) to determine the piezoelectric coefficients. A higher resolution laser cutter can be employed to narrow the channel length of the transistor and increase the widthto-length ratio. The crystal growth of the perovskite in curved or zig-zag shaped microfluidic channels is also feasible and encouraged to be studied. In addition, to fully understand ion migration impact to perovskite phototransistor performance, I-V characteristics can be measured at low to moderate temperatures to suppress the migration of ions or accelerate them and observe the related effect. Since a high electric field induces material to degrade, the upper limit voltage which indicates as a typical operation voltage of the device needs to be found.

It was shown that perovskite transistor fabrication by pneumatic nozzle printer is possible. This method is simple, fast and cost-effective with the feasibility of large-scale fabrication and capability to make nonplanar structures. It has the potential to be one of the highest demanded industrial products.

One of the main advantages of printing techniques is having the degree of freedom to manipulate many parameters and optimize crystallization. Developing the proper ink would help to print a defect-free homogeneous film and optimize the ink printing behavior to make it independent of the substrate physical properties.

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## **Appendix A: Supplementary Information for Chapter 5**



Figure S 1 The setups used for the I-V measurements under light illumination. (a) for different bending curvatures which were performed by turning the screw and changing the distance between the two plates, and (b) for applying the normal forces (two valves were using to push or release the piston connected to a pressure gauge).



Figure S 2 Thickness profile of the cut layer (microchannel) across the channel and at the different spots along the channel.



Figure S 3 Thickness profile of the perovskite layer across the channel and at the different spots along the channel.



Figure S 4 Single photocurrent response cycle of the device at 2.0 V bias with light irradiation on and off, at different normal pressures (illumination for  $\sim$  20 s, manually started at  $\sim$  2<sup>nd</sup> second, 80  $mW/cm<sup>2</sup>$ ).



Figure S 5 Single photocurrent response cycle of the device at 2.0 V bias with light irradiation on and off, at different bending curvatures (illumination for  $\sim$ 20 s, manually started at  $\sim$ 2<sup>nd</sup> second,  $80 \text{ mW/cm}^2$ ).



Figure S 6 I-V characteristics of the device in dark before applying compressive/tensile stress on the device as the first test and after all measurements (compressive normal force and concave/convex bending) as the last test, 50 mV/sec scan rate.

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## **About the Author**

Fatemeh Khorramshahi received her B.Sc. in Electrical Engineering in 2010 and her M.Sc. in Photonics Engineering in 2013. During her master's studies, she served as a Teaching Assistant and later as an instructor at Amirkabir University of Technology (Tehran Polytechnic) in the Department of Electrical Engineering and the Department of Computer Engineering and Information Technology.

She earned her Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering at the University of South Florida (USF) in 2020 where she served as a Research Assistant in Bio-Organic Electronics lab. Her research was mainly focused on advanced techniques for fabrication of perovskite photovoltaic devices, ion-migration and piezoelectricity in lead halide perovskites, and ion-sensitive FETs for studying the self-assembly of photosynthetic proteins.

Fatemeh also served as a Teaching Assistant in USF for several courses at the Department of Electrical Engineering and as a researcher at Columbia University. In her Ph.D. studies, she received Matching Grant Research Award from Florida High Tech Corridor Council and scholarship from the Persian American Society of Tampa Bay.