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Cost estimates of production scale semitransparent organic photovoltaic modules for building integrated photovoltaics.

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10	Abstract
11	Building integrated photovoltaics (BIPVs) are attached to commercial and residential structures to
13	enable solar energy harvesting. While conventional Si photovoltaics (PVs) are dominant in the
14	current market, second and third generation thin film solar cells based on amorphous Si, CdTe,
15	CIGS, perovskites or organic photovoltaics (OPVs) are often considered as an alternative for BIPV
16	applications since they may offer reduced costs compared to Si PVs. Indeed, recent advances in
17	performance suggest that lightweight, flexible and visibly transparent OPVs can potentially be
18	integrated into windows or other applications to which Si PVs are less well suited. Here, we
19	estimate the cost of high efficiency, semitransparent OPVs (ST-OPVs) based on solution
20	processing in a roll-to-roll (R2R) manufacturing line. Assuming modules with 10% power
21	conversion efficiency (PCE), a 70% geometric fill factor (GFF), and 95% inverter efficiency, we
22	anticipate a $1.6/W_p$ module manufacturing cost that includes the cost of the microinverter to
23	condition the OPV dc output to be compatible with the ac line voltage of the building. The
24	materials and inverter cost comprise ~90% of the total module cost. Hence, with simplified
25	material synthesis and a lower inverter cost, including marginally improved PCE and GFF, we
26	expect the cost can be as low as $0.47/W_{p.}$ While the module costs ${\sim}60\%$ of the average
27	(uninstalled) double-pane window, we expect the payback period can be as short as 2 to 6 years,
28	suggesting that OPVs can be an economic and attractive candidate for BIPV applications.

29

30 I. Introduction

31 Building integrated photovoltaics (BIPVs) are a space-efficient means for harvesting solar 32 energy by replacing or covering a part of a building (e.g. rooftop, façade or windows) with 33 photovoltaic modules.[1]–[4] More than 80% of the current BIPV market is based on rooftop 34 installed crystalline Si (c-Si) modules, with the remaining 20% installed mostly on facades.[4], [5] 35 Integration of c-Si photovoltaics onto windows, however, has the disadvantage of visible 36 opacity,[6], [7] requiring that the cells be perforated with holes, or applied in strips. Both strategies 37 result in a reduction in their geometric fill factor (GFF, is the ratio of active cell to total module 38 area), and hence limit the power that can be produced. An alternative approach is to employ visibly 39 semitransparent photovoltaics based on organic semiconductors, quantum dots and perovskites 40 integrated onto windows.[1]-[3], [8]-[10] However, besides organic semiconductors, application 41 of such materials in BIPV systems has not been reported due to inadequate device performance 42 and reliability, limited scalability, toxicity of materials, or high manufacturing cost compared to 43 c-Si photovoltaics.[1], [2] Despite the scalability and successful demonstration of display 44 manufacturing on an enormous scale, organic semiconductors are often considered to be an 45 immature alternative to c-Si PVs within the BIPV industry.[1], [2] Recently, organic photovoltaic 46 cells (OPVs) based on DBP:C₇₀ with accelerated intrinsic lifetimes extending to $T_{80} = 27000$ yr 47 have been reported, [11] where T_{80} is a time of operation for the *PCE* to drop to 80% of its initial 48 value. Furthermore, OPVs with cell PCE > 17%, [12] module PCE > 14%[13] and neutral density, 49 semi-transparent OPVs (ST-OPVs) with PCE > 10% have been reported. [14] 50 The visible transmittance of the ST-OPV cell is another important metric determining how

51 well the technology is suited for use in power generating windows. To define transparency of the

52 device, the average visible transmittance (AVT) which is the arithmetic mean of transmittance of 53 the cell from 400 to 650 nm is often used. However, a more apt comparison that quantifies the 54 appearance of the sunlight entering an interior space is provided by average photopic 55 transmittance (APT), which is the transmittance of the cell weighted by the spectral response of 56 human eye to a window illuminated by an AM 1.5G reference spectrum. Then, the light utilization 57 efficiency (LUE), which is the product of PCE and APT, combines these factors into a ST-OPV 58 figure of merit.[15], [16] A compilation of the LUE vs. APT for a range of thin film technologies 59 (including amorphous Si – a-Si – perovskites, and OPVs) originally summarized by Lunt et al.[16] 60 and updated by Li et al. [15] is provided in Fig. 1, and device performance of highlighted results 61 are shown in Table I. Apparently, ST-OPVs have the highest combination of transparency and 62 efficiency, with a maximum LUE = 5%, compared with other thin film solar cell technologies. 63 Given the scalability of OPVs using printing or other roll-to-roll (R2R) manufacturing processes, 64 [17]–[19] and their possibility for exceptionally long operational lifetimes,[11] these advances 65 point to their particular suitability for BIPV applications, especially for semi-transparent power 66 generating windows.

67 Beyond these promising studies of laboratory cell performance, the acceptability of a PV 68 technology ultimately hinges on the cost to produce large scale modules at high volume. Several 69 different estimates of OPV module cost have varied from \$0.2 to \$1.2/W_p based on differing 70 assumptions of materials sets employed, and on module efficiencies that range from 5-10%.[20]-71 [24] Up until now, however, most cost analyses are based on opaque cells while also omitting the 72 costs of inverters, and miscellaneous costs such as sales, administrative, marketing, and R&D. 73 Furthermore, they do not consider recent significant advances in OPV technology that have 74 occurred over the last few years. In this work, we estimate manufacturing cost of *semitransparent* 75 OPV modules based on assumptions and accuracy corresponding to Class 4 of the Cost 76 Engineering Classification System.[25] Starting with estimations of high throughput R2R 77 equipment costs needed for realizing a high efficiency single junction ST-OPV structure, we 78 estimate the maintenance, utility, labor and materials costs. We further estimate costs due to the 79 inclusion of a microinverter for making the solar output compatible with most in-building ac 80 electrical systems. Inclusion of the inverter significantly simplifies power window installation, [26] 81 but is counterbalanced by the added cost of the inverter. Assuming the PV modules are integrated 82 within double-pane windows to simplify encapsulation, we expect a manufacturing cost of 83 \$106.16/m². This places a premium on the average double-pane window cost in U.S. of 84 \$106.80/m²[27]–[29] including the sealant, frame and assembly costs, based on market data and assuming a 30% margin. We estimate the cost can be as low as \$57.24/m², provided that the 85 86 materials and inverter costs can be incrementally reduced. We assume a base case semitransparent 87 module PCE = 10%, which compares with current non-transparent module PCE > 14%.[13] With 88 GFF = 70%, and an inverter efficiency of $\eta_{inv} = 95\%$, the estimated module cost without the inverter is \$0.68/W_p, at ~160MW annual production volume. We estimate a microinverter cost of 89 90 \$0.78/W_p based on market data, which is similar to the household scale Si PV microinverter cost 91 of $0.45/W_p[30]$ considering the efficiency differences between the two PV technologies. 92 Assuming modest cost reductions in microinverters, OPV materials, contacts and optical coatings, 93 we estimate the total system cost including miscellaneous costs can be further reduced from $1.6/W_p$ to $0.47/W_p$ in the foreseeable the future. This suggests an energy payback period of 2 to 94 95 6 years depending on the window orientation, local cost of electricity, and location of installation. 96

98 II. Cost estimate assumptions and results

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100 We divide the manufacturing cost into four categories – capital equipment, labor, utilities 101 and materials. Additional miscellaneous costs including marketing, general and administrative 102 (G&A), research and development (R&D) are assumed to be 10% of total manufacturing cost 103 based on recent 3-year average of PV manufacturing industry standards.[31] Then, the desired 104 OPV module structure for cost analysis is chosen and performance assumptions are established. 105 For this analysis, we assume a 1 m wide R2R manufacturing web for PV module fabrication. 106 Figure 2(a) shows a schematic of an archetype semitransparent OPV cell structure. Starting from 107 flexible barrier substrate, the first deposited layer is the transparent cathode, followed by the 108 cathode buffer/exciton blocking layer, active layer, anode buffer, and transparent anode. The layers 109 are encapsulated by a second barrier substrate. For transparency, a mixture of non-fullerene 110 acceptors and energy-level-matched donors that selectively absorb near-infrared (IR) photons are 111 used as the active layer.[32]–[36] Optical layers for outcoupling the visible and reflecting the IR 112 photons are included to increase efficiency and transparency.[15]

113 A conceptual, schematic top view of a ST-OPV module integrated into a $1 \text{ m} \times 2 \text{ m}$ window 114 used in our cost estimates is shown in Fig. 2(b). An array of 2 cm \times 2 cm ST-OPV cells are 115 connected in a series-parallel circuit within the window module. Electrical interconnects and a 116 microinverter for each module are integrated outside the viewing space of the window. The 117 transparent PV cell foils can be directly attached onto a single-pane window surface without 118 additional encapsulation, [4], [37] or they can be inserted into the pocket of a double-pane 119 window[38] as shown in Fig. 3. In this analysis, we use the latter configuration since it allows for 120 simplified OPV encapsulation with inert gas commonly used within the gap between the panes. 121 The optical coupling layers can be separately deposited onto the inner surfaces of the opposite

panes. Integration of the optical coupling layers with the PV module itself is simplified compared
to the direct attachment onto a single-pane window, which requires deposition of all layers onto
the substrate film, or integration with the encapsulating lid.

125 Figure 4 shows materials choices and manufacturing processes used in the study. Starting 126 from an ITO-coated transparent PET substrate, the bottom contact is patterned by laser scribing. 127 The ZnO cathode buffer/exciton blocking layer, PTB7-Th:BT-CIC active layer, and MoO₃ anode 128 buffer are consecutively applied via slot-die coating. Each solution process is followed by solvent 129 annealing in an oven integrated within the R2R tool. Before top contact deposition, the active layer 130 is patterned for interconnect attachment using laser scribing. Contact layers are patterned during 131 printing and sputtering and do not require additional scribing. The roll is transferred into a vacuum 132 chamber for thin Ag transparent top contact[15] R2R sputter deposition. After contact patterning, 133 the roll is encapsulated by attachment of a second barrier substrate, spliced into the desired size, 134 laminated onto a glass pane, and assembled into the double pane window.

135 A list of required manufacturing equipment and their annual costs assuming 10 year linear 136 depreciation is summarized in Table II. Here, we assume a 10 year equipment lifetime, although 137 depreciation rates of 5 to 7 years are often used to maximize financial efficiency (i.e. to reduce 138 soft costs due to tax adjustments, etc.).[39], [40] An accurate plant cost estimate depends on 139 location and total area. For our estimate, therefore, we simply assume a plant cost of four times 140 the total equipment cost, with an additional 10% contingency for waste handling.[22], [41] The 141 machine platform comprises a skeletal support structure and R2R web manipulation components including rollers, tensioning systems, motors, etc. Printing and slot-die coating stations include 142 143 baking ovens for thermal annealing the films after coating. Scribing and test/sort equipment costs 144 were estimated by proportionally scaling the lamination station cost. [23] Assumptions for labor,

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145 utilities cost and production parameters are provided in Table III. A 5 m/min roll translation speed 146 during deposition ensures stable thickness and quality control of each layer.[23], [39], [40] 147 Considering a 1 m web width and 5% roll preparation time during the manufacturing cycle, the 148 annual PV module production area is 2.25×10^6 m², assuming 11 month/yr and 24 h/day utilization. 149 This production rate corresponds to ~ 160 MW/year production, assuming a base case module 150 performance of GFF = 70%, $\eta_{inv} = 95\%$ and PCE = 10%, which is consistent with recent advances 151 in ST-OPV efficiency of nearly 11%[14] and a reported opaque OPV module efficiency of 152 14%.[13] Here, GFF = 70% is a conservative estimate that allows room for inter-cell contacts, and 153 window structures outside of the viewing area. We also assume one unskilled personnel per each 154 lamination, splicing and scribing station, and one skilled personnel per each coating and printing 155 station, resulting in a total of 6 unskilled labor and 5 skilled labor per production line. With 55% 156 employee benefits, \$15/h and \$20/h unskilled and skilled wages, the annual labor costs are 157 \$1.2MM and \$1.3MM, respectively. As our estimate is not at a stage to confirm detailed manpower 158 cost such as marketing, human resources, legal or financial cost, the marketing and selling costs 159 are included in the 10% miscellaneous cost. Additional labor might be required when detailed 160 manpower structures are confirmed. We include electricity costs of \$83K/year for sputtering and 161 \$44K/year for coating and printing utilities support based on estimated power consumption and an 162 industrial electricity costs of \$0.07/kWh.[42] Lamination, splicing and testing/sorting stations are 163 assumed to use half the power of the coating and printing stations. Additional utilities costs such 164 as process chilled water are \$100K/system/year. Maintenance of \$10K/year is assumed for each 165 station.

166 With these assumptions, the manufacturing cost is calculated by dividing the total cost for 167 annual production by the area produced, as listed in Table IV. Materials costs for each layer is the

168 product of the amount of material required, and the source material cost based on weight, We 169 assume 80% material utilization efficiency for solution processed layers, and 25% for sputtered 170 layers [39], [40] Since active layer materials costs are unavailable in volume quantities, we 171 estimate the bulk organic semiconductor cost based on \$31/g/synthesis step, times number of steps 172 required.[43] A three-step synthesis of PTB7-Th,[44] five-step synthesis of BT-CIC[32], [33] for 173 a PTB7-Th:BT-CIC 1:1.5 mixture results in \$130.2/g. Using the density of the mixture after 174 annealing, an active layer thickness of 160 nm, we obtain $29.67/m^2$ for the active layer materials. 175 Materials cost estimates for ITO on PET, barrier substrates, ZnO, MoO₃, and Ag are provided in 176 SI, Table I.

177 The optical coating structure depends on the location and orientation of the installation. 178 We estimate the cost of the coating by subtracting the cost of glass without coating $(\$3/m^2)$, from 179 the cost of glass with an anti-reflective coating $(\$7/m^2)$.[45] A microinverter is required to combine 180 the outputs of several photovoltaic modules into the ac power line of the building to compensate 181 for non-uniform solar illumination on each module [26]. For a 2 m \times 1 m module comprising an 182 array of series and parallel connected 2 cm \times 2 cm cells, each with an open circuit voltage of 0.7 183 V and short circuit current of 16 mA/cm² for APT = 50% [15] we estimate a 16 Adc and 34 Vdc 184 maximum module output. We use an inverter price of $52/m^2$ estimated by applying a 20% bulk 185 purchase discount from commercial price.[46] With an additional 10% miscellaneous cost 186 premium, we arrive at a total module cost estimate of \$48.96/m² and \$106.16/m² without and with 187 the inverter, respectively.

188 Although our materials cost estimates are as realistic as possible at this time, we 189 nevertheless expect a $\pm 30\%$ error for active layer and optical layer coatings, considering the lack 190 of information on bulk-production active layer materials cost, and location and orientation

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191 dependence of the window. We expect a potential $\pm 20\%$ error for other PV layers due to cost 192 variations between different vendors, and the expected purchase volume. A sensitivity chart 193 according to the estimated errors is shown in SI, Fig. 1.

194

195 III. Discussion

196 Our analysis indicates that materials cost comprises ~90% of total PV module 197 manufacturing cost. This result agrees with previous analyses normalized to our production levels 198 that indicate the material costs are dominant, accounting for 90-98% of total module cost [20]-199 [24]. Due to high R2R system throughput, the fixed costs scale inversely, whereas material and 200 microinverter costs scale linearly with the area produced. Indeed, this conclusion is consistent with 201 other volume-manufactured PV technologies where materials are found to consume a large 202 fraction of the total system cost. [30], [45], [47], [48] The production of 160 MW/year can lead to 203 additional costs for handling and warehousing; considerations needed to refine future cost 204 estimates.

205 Figure 5(a) shows a potential scenario in materials cost reduction without including the 206 10% miscellaneous cost contribution. The most expensive device component is its active layer due 207 to its thickness, and the several steps used in materials synthesis. If the materials require only a 2-208 step synthesis, the materials cost can be reduced by 38%. The ITO on PET anode and the optical 209 coating are the next most expensive contributions. This suggests that development of cost-effective, 210 flexible and transparent contacts is an important challenge to be met for reducing ST-OPV costs. 211 With the assumption of 50% future reduction in the bottom contact, optics and barrier substrate 212 costs, the total materials cost is reduced by additional 11%. PV glass cost including the module, 213 inverter and miscellaneous costs compared with double-pane windows[27]–[29] is shown in Fig.

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5(b). Initial estimates suggest that PV glass is approximately twice as expensive as an average double-pane window. With modestly improved cost efficiencies, the additional cost from PV module integration can be only ~60% of average, uninstalled windows cost. Another important factor to consider is that double-pane windows are priced between $50/m^2 - 200/m^2$, from lowend to high-end models.[27]–[29] Considering that power generating windows will be positioned as high-end products, the PV module cost can range from 33% to as low as 25% of the total installed power generating window cost.

The module cost including the microinverter is shown in Fig. 6. Additional simplifications in materials synthesis and a 50% reduction in microinverter costs changes the module cost from a base case of $1.6/W_p$, to $1.16/W_p$. Provided that ST-OPV lab efficiency is increased to yield a module *PCE* = 15% and *GFF* = 90%, the cost further reduces to $0.47/W_p$. These realistic improvements in performance in the near future suggest that the production cost of ST-OPVs can be on par with Si photovoltaics.[30]

To estimate the economic feasibility of ST-OPV windows, we simulate annual power generation from a BIPV module with PCE=15%, GFF=90% using the PV-GIS tool[49] in multiple regions across the U.S., from latitudes 27° to 48°. For comparison, a calculation based on the annual solar path assuming uniform, AM 1.5G solar irradiance of 800W/m² is also provided to show the latitude dependence without effects of weather or altitude of different locations.[47]

Five different configurations were modelled: east and south facing windows, east and south facing 45° tilted surfaces, and the optimal orientation determined by the PV-GIS tool. The data points in Fig. 7 show the estimate based on annual solar irradiance data, whereas dashed lines show calculation based on uniform irradiance throughout the year. Bars centered at each data point allow for variants in altitude differences within the regions at the same latitude.

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There is only a small dependence of annual power generation on latitude for south facing, 45° tilted surfaces, and east facing windows. East facing 45° tilted surfaces show a monotonic decrease, and south facing windows show an increase of power generation with increasing latitude. With the module cost estimate of \$55.52/m², and a typical residential electricity cost of \$0.13/kWh,[42] the payback period of the ST-OPV window module ranges from 2 to 6 years, depending on the location and orientation of the installation.

243

244 IV. Conclusion

245 Our study of the manufacturing cost for ST-OPV modules used in power generating 246 windows suggests that high throughput R2R manufacturing can potentially enable large scale 247 production of economically feasible and visually attractive building applied solar harvesting 248 appliances. A principal conclusion of our analysis is that materials and microinverter costs are the 249 dominant contributors to total module cost, significantly overtaking the costs of equipment and 250 other miscellaneous operational costs. Starting from \$1.6/W_p estimate based on current ST-OPV 251 performance, we expect the cost could be as low as \$0.47/W_p with modest future improvements in 252 module performance and production cost reductions. When used in high end, double-pane 253 thermally insulating windows, we anticipate an average energy payback period of 2 to 6 years, 254 depending on the location, window orientation and local electricity cost of the installation.

255

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273 **Conflict of interest**

One of the authors (SRF) holds an equity interest in one of the sponsors of this work (UDC). This
apparent conflict is under management by the University of Michigan Office of Research.

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Active layer	J _{sc} (mA/cm ²)	V _{oc} (V)	FF	PCE (%)	APT* (%)	LUE (%)	Reference
PTB7-Th : IEICO-4Cl	17.6	0.714	0.554	6.97	38	2.65	[36]
PTB7-Th:BT-CIC	15.8	0.68	0.662	7.10	39	2.75	[33]
PTB7-Th : IEICS-4F	16.97	0.72	0.58	7.20	34	2.44	[35]
PTB7-Th: ATT-2	17.23	0.71	0.57	7.02	32	2.25	[34]
PTB7-Th : BT-CIC : TTFIC	16.6	0.68	0.72	8.00	44	3.56	[15]
PTB7-Th : A078	20.4	0.75	0.70	10.8	45.7	5.0	[14]

Table I. Recent advances in semitransparent OPV performance

*APT recalculated from the literature if possible, otherwise AVT was used.

Item	Required quantity	Depreciation (\$/year)	Reference
Machine platform	1	183K	[40]
Slot-die coating station	3	209K	[40]
Sputtering station	1	178K	[39]
Splice table	1	10K	[40]
Laminating station	2	25K	[40]
Laser scribing	2	75K	[40], [23]
Test / sort equipment	1	25K	[40],[23]
Plant cost	-	5.1MM	[22],[40]

Table II. Required equipment and plant cost estimate for manufacturing	Table	II.	Req	uired	equi	pment	and	plant	cost	estimate	for	manu	factı	uring	g (a)
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(a) Plant cost is assumed to be 4 times the total equipment cost, with additional 10% for

waste handling.

Item	Unit	Value
Roll moving speed	m/hr	300
Roll preparation and loading time	hr/hr	0.05
Substrate width	m	1
Production area per system	m ² /year/system	2.25MM
Unskilled labor	/system	6
Skilled labor	/system	5
Unskilled wage	\$/system/year	\$1.2MM
Skilled wage	\$/system/year	\$1.3MM
Electricity – Sputter ^(a)	\$/equipment/year	\$83K
Electricity – Coating / Printing station ^(b)	\$/equipment/year	\$44K
Utilities – Process chilled water, etc.	\$/system/year	\$100k
Maintenance	\$/equipment/year	\$10K
Maintenance time	month/year	1
From refs. [38],[40]		

Table III. Assumptions for cost of ownership estimates

(b) From refs. [39],[40]

(a)

Layer	Equipment/plant	Utilities	Labor	Materials	Inverter	Total
Plant cost	2.24	0	0	0	0	2.24
Machine platform	0.08	0.02	0.09	0	0	0.19
ITO on PET substrate	0	0	0	5.00	0	5.00
ZnO Cathode buffer	0.09	0.02	0.12	0.02	0	0.25
PTB7-Th : BT-CIC Active layer	0.09	0.02	0.12	29.67	0	29.89
MoO ₃ Anode buffer	0.09	0.02	0.12	0.03	0	0.26
Ag Top contact	0.08	0.04	0.12	0.13	0	0.37
Top barrier substrate	0	0	0	1.5	0	1.5
Lamination	0.02	0.03	0.17	0.09	0	0.31
Splicing / Scribing	0.09	0.04	0.26	0	0	0.39
Testing / sorting	0.01	0.01	0.09	0	0	0.11
Optics	0	0	0	4	0	4.00
Inverter	0	0	0	0	52	52.00
Total ^(a)	2.78	0.23	1.07	40.43	52	96.51

Table IV. Itemized manufacturing cost estimates, in \$/m²

(a) Values shown in the table are before an additional 10% miscellaneous cost is added.

Figure captions

Figure 1: Compilation of light utilization efficiency (*LUE*) vs. average photopic transmittance (*APT*) of semitransparent photovoltaic cells with different technologies. Data adapted from Refs. [15], [16]. APT is recalculated from literature when possible, otherwise the reported average visible transmittance (AVT) is used.

Figure 2: A schematic of an (a) archetype semitransparent OPV device structure, and (b) proposed PV module layout for window integration. The microinverter (μ -inverter) is positioned outside of the viewing area, and individual cells are laid out in a series-parallel array configuration.

Figure 3: Illustration of ST-OPV integrated onto windows. (Left) The PV module is laminated onto a single pane, and (right) into the pocket between a double pane, thermally insulating window. Typically, inert gas fills the gap between the panes.

Figure 4: Process sequence for manufacturing power generating modules comprising organic ST-OPVs and a double pane window.

Figure 5: Waterfall diagrams showing (a) materials cost in manufacturing ST-OPV modules with the impacts of several cost reduction scenarios, and (b) total PV glass cost including the window panes and the impacts of several cost reduction scenarios.

Figure 6: Waterfall diagram showing module and inverter cost in W_p and the impacts of several cost reduction scenarios based on projected modest device performance improvements described in text

Figure 7: Simulated annual power generation from ST-OPV windows vs. latitude. The calculations are shown for different module orientations, and are based on annual solar irradiance from the PV-GIS tool (data points), and based on uniform, AM1.5G, 800 W/m² (peak) solar irradiance (dashed lines). The vertical bars for each data point account for variations in average cloud cover and altitudes at different locations within a given latitude.



b

Figure 2

а

Optics (Outcoupling / DBR)

Transparent barrier substrate

Transparent Anode

Anode buffer

Active layer Cathode buffer

Transparent Cathode

Transparent barrier substrate



Figure 3



Figure 4





Figure 6



