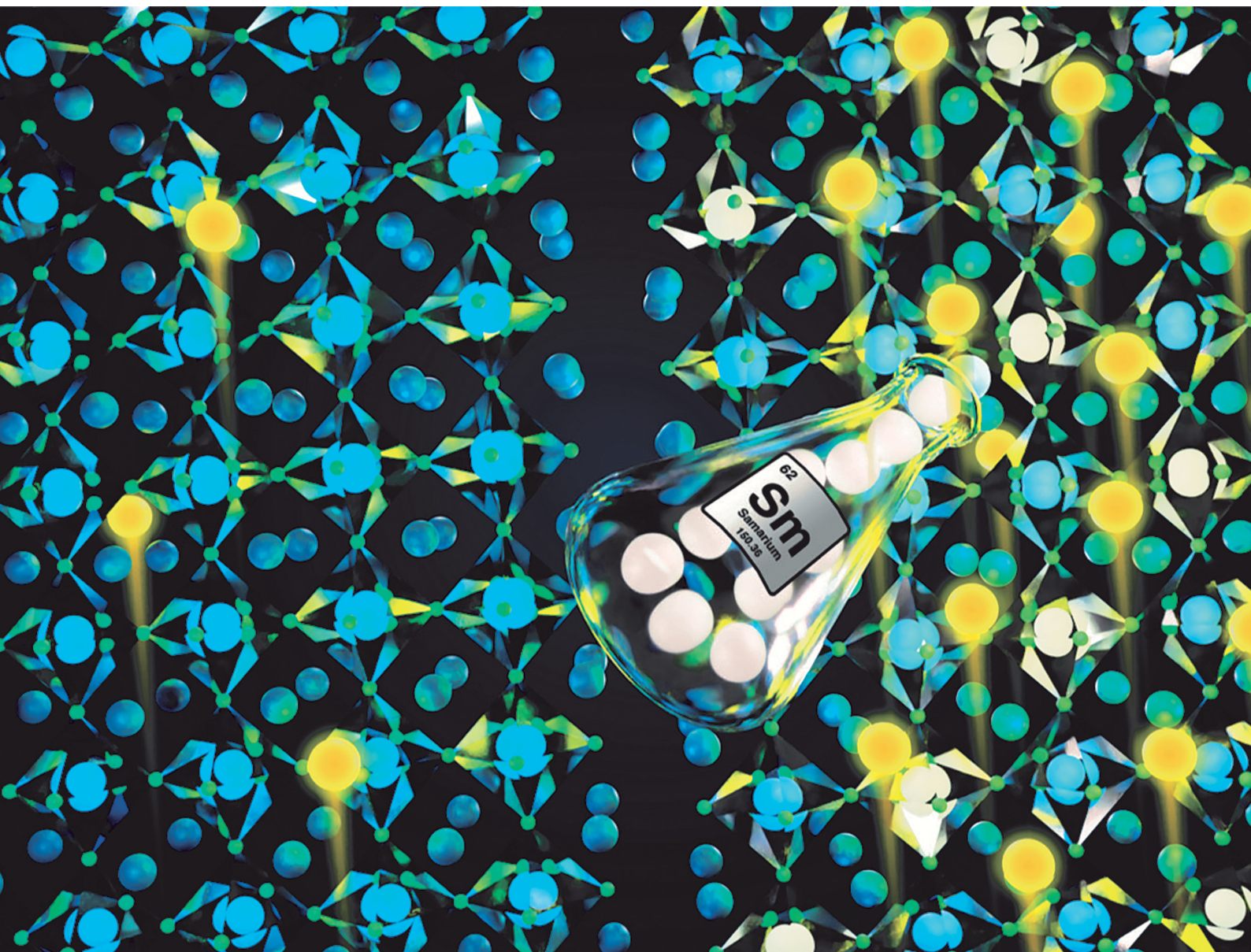


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Redox-active ions unlock substitutional doping in halide perovskites†

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Electrical doping of metal halide perovskites (MHPs) is a key step towards the use of this efficient and cost-effective semiconductor class in modern electronics. In this work, we demonstrate n-type doping of methylammonium lead iodide (CH₃NH₃PbI₃) by the post-fabrication introduction of Sm²⁺. The ionic radius of the latter is similar to that of Pb²⁺ and can replace it without altering the perovskite crystal lattice. It is demonstrated that once incorporated, Sm²⁺ can act as a dopant by undergoing oxidation to Sm³⁺. This results in the release of a negative charge that n-dopes the material, resulting in an increase of conductivity of almost 3 orders of magnitude. Unlike substitution doping with heterovalent ions, furtive dopants do not require counterions to maintain charge neutrality with respect to the ions they replace and are thus more likely to be incorporated into the crystalline structure. The incorporation of the dopant throughout the material is evidenced by XPS and ToF-SIMS, while the XRD pattern shows no phase separation at low and medium doping concentrations. A shift of the Fermi level towards a conduction energy of 0.52 eV confirms the doping to be n-type with a charge carrier density, calculated using the Mott–Schottky method, estimated to be nearly 10¹⁷ cm^{−3} for the most conductive samples. Variable-temperature conductivity experiments show that the dopant is only partially ionized at room temperature due to dopant freeze-out.

1. Introduction

The rapid development of metal halide perovskite (MHP) photovoltaic devices owes much to pre-existing knowledge

New concepts

Metal halide perovskites have demonstrated their ability to combine excellent optoelectronic properties with printing processes. Nevertheless, the control of their doping remains a challenge for both fundamental sciences and industrial applications. Whereas several examples of p-type doping have been reported in the literature, n-type doping is trickier and only a few reports with no or poor doping efficiency exist. Our paper reports a totally new approach using metastable ions to n-doped halide perovskite semiconductors leading to an increase of 3 orders of magnitude of the conductivity and shift of the Fermi level towards a conduction energy of 0.52 eV. This new method using redox active ions is unique in that it mimics the classical substitutional doping used with great success in covalent semiconductors (Si, GaAs, *etc.*).

gained from both inorganic semiconductors (band structures, photon absorption, charge transport, *etc.*) and organic semiconductors (wet processes, soft substrates, *etc.*). However, as pointed out in the reviews by Brenner *et al.*¹ and Fakharuddin *et al.*,² the critical role of surface properties and interface quality in the operation of MHP-based devices and their stability has emerged as one of the major challenges limiting the development of these technologies. While we can consider that this is generally true for any type of thin film device, in the case of inorganic semiconductors (and for silicon-based devices in particular), this difficulty is partially solved by using well-controlled doping. Indeed, doping allows combining contacting metal electrodes with highly doped semiconductor layers, removing interfaces away from the carrier collection area. Moreover, connecting semiconductors through highly doped interfacial layers render the contact almost insensitive to the value of the metal WF, giving more flexibility in selecting metals as electrodes. In the case of MHPs, well-controlled doping would allow the design of more complex devices based on the p–n junction concept, making the emerging perovskite-based technology architecturally compatible to current inorganic semiconductors.³

One may note that the term “doping” is overused in the perovskite community because it is often confused with the use of additives impacting the crystallinity or surface passivation of

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In this paper, we present a totally new method to n-dope halide perovskites leading to an enhancement of 3 orders of magnitude of the conductivity. We demonstrate that n-type doping of MHPs is possible by introduction of furtive heterovalent atoms. The latter are metastable ions whose charge and ionic radius are identical or very similar to one of the constituent ions of the MHP. For example, ions whose ionic radius is similar to that of the Pb^{2+} ion ($1.19 \text{ \AA}$)¹² but that are metastable at the 2+ valence state could impart n-doping upon substitutional doping of Pb^{2+} followed by oxidation to the +3 state and release of an electron. To demonstrate the validity of this

The substrates were cleaned in a sonication bath first with Hellmanex™ III solution (Sigma Aldrich) and in DI water for 15 minutes each and then in isopropanol (4N) for 10 min. Subsequently, they were treated with a UV-ozone for 15 minutes. Sample fabrication was performed under a controlled atmosphere in a glove box. The perovskite precursor solution was prepared by dissolving 0.72 M PbAc₂·3H₂O and 2.2 M MAI in DMF and stirring at room temperature for 30 min. The solution was filtered through a 0.45 μm PTFE filter and spin coated at a spin rate of 2500 rpm for 2 min. The sample was then dried at RT for 3 min and annealed for 25 min at 100 °C. The perovskite film thickness was around 270 nm. SmI₂ was dissolved in isopropanol and DMF (0.1% v/v) and stirred

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as with SmI_2 (Fig. 1(b)). One can clearly see that only SmI_2 leads to a significant enhancement of the perovskite layer's conductivity. The concept of doping described above is expected to work not only for MAPi, but for other perovskites as well. Indeed, formamidinium lead iodide (FAPbI_3) and a mixed cation $\text{MA}_{0.07}\text{FA}_{0.93}\text{PbI}_3$, doped with SmI_2 , using the same procedure as for MAPi, demonstrated an increased conductivity by up to 2 and 2.5 orders of magnitude, respectively (see the ESI† for details, Fig. S3).

Doping of a semiconductor results in an increase in the charge carrier density that in turn generates an increase in the material's conductivity. However, the observation of the latter phenomenon is not a sufficient proof of doping, as conductivity is the product of charge carrier density and mobility. In order to obtain more details on the origin of the conductivity enhancement, we characterized the doping type (n or p) and carried out analyses of (i) the samarium distribution on the surface or in the bulk of the layer; (ii) the proportion of Sm^{2+} and Sm^{3+} in the perovskite layer; (iii) and the impact of SmI_2 on the perovskite crystal structure.

The two-step method used for the doping consists of depositing SmI_2 on top of the active layer. To investigate whether the dopant remained on the surface or was distributed throughout the material, we used time of flight secondary ion mass spectroscopy (ToF-SIMS) with ion sputtering on the surface to track the elemental composition of the thin film throughout the layer. The results obtained show that the signal corresponding to Sm is detected throughout the active layer up to the appearance of the In signal corresponding to the ITO substrate (Fig. S4, ESI†). From this, we conclude that the dopant is incorporated throughout the perovskite layer during the second annealing step.

Oxidation of Sm^{2+} to Sm^{3+} is expected to release a free electron into the conduction band. We therefore used XPS (Fig. S5 and S6, ESI†) to determine the oxidation state of Sm inside the perovskite layer since each Sm valence state has a specific signature.^{24,25} In Fig. 2, the $\text{Sm } 3d_{5/2}$ region of the spectrum of the SmI_2 layer spin coated on the ITO substrate is shown, together with the spectra of the Sm-doped perovskite with 2, 5 and 10 mg mL^{-1} doping solution concentrations. The spectra of the perovskite layers were collected at a depth of ca. 200 nm in order to avoid the contribution of the surface layer that may be altered due to the doping method. Moreover, the oxygen signal is negligible whereas at the surface one can clearly see some contamination with oxygen (Fig. S7, ESI†) even though a transfer box was used to transport the samples from the nitrogen filled glovebox ($[\text{O}_2] < 1 \text{ ppm}$ and $[\text{H}_2\text{O}] < 1 \text{ ppm}$) to the XPS vacuum chamber. This surface contamination explains why the XPS analysis of the SmI_2 reference layer (20 nm) shows the presence of both Sm^{2+} and Sm^{3+} . In the doped MHP samples, the $\text{Sm}^{2+}/\text{Sm}^{3+}$ ratio decreases to almost zero in agreement with the hypothesis that each Sm^{2+} doping ion undergoes oxidation and releases an electron once located in the perovskite layer. One can also observe a small shift of the binding energy of the Sm^{3+} peak between the SmI_2 layer and the doped perovskite layers. The environment of Sm^{2+} and Sm^{3+} is different between the native SmI_2 and the doped perovskite



Fig. 2 (a) XPS spectra of a thin film of SmI_2 and perovskite thin films with different doping concentrations. The spectra are separated on the Y-axis for clarity. (b) Normalized X-ray diffraction (200) peaks of undoped and doped MAPI films.

samples. In other words, this observation is consistent with a substitutional position of Pb^{2+} by Sm^{3+} . The main peak in the XRD pattern is also slightly shifted for the doped samples towards lower diffraction angles (see Fig. 2(b)), indicating the expansion of the perovskite crystal lattice. This fine variation is not an artefact since the error due to the experimental setup has been corrected using the PbI_2 peak as the reference (Fig. S9b, ESI†). Considering that the ionic radius of Sm^{2+} is bigger than that of Pb^{2+} ($1.27 \text{ \AA} > 1.19 \text{ \AA}$), it is expected that samarium ions are in the oxidation state 2+ at the time of crystallization. Thus, both XPS and shifts in the diffraction pattern are compatible with the hypothesis of ionic substitution.

Characterization of the 10 mg mL^{-1} doped MHP surface using AFM and SEM (Fig. 3(e) and (f)) shows significantly different topologies than those of the undoped sample (Fig. 3(a) and (b)). While on the surface of the undoped perovskite grains with a size in the range of 100–500 nm are clearly seen, the doped layer is covered with the oval-like shared grains of a much smaller size (between 50 and 100 nm). The small grains on the surface of the doped sample are assigned to the presence of residual SmI_x or





Fig. 3 Surface AFM (a), (c), and (e) and SEM (b), (d), and (f) images of undoped MAPI films (a) and (b), MAPI treated with the dopant solvent (c) and (d) and MAPI doped with 10 mg mL^{-1} SmI_2 . For higher doping concentrations, see Fig. S8 (ESI†).

SmO_x . As expected, the sample treated with only solvent (Fig. 3(c) and (d)) did not show any alteration in morphology to the untreated sample.

To determine the impact of doping treatment on the crystal structure of the MAPI layer, X-ray diffraction (XRD) analyses were carried out (Fig. 4). The XRD spectra of the undoped sample and those doped with SmI_2 concentrations of 2–10 mg mL^{-1} exhibit a diffraction pattern that is characteristic of tetragonal MAPI,²⁶ with diffraction peaks at 13.6° , 27.8° , 31.3° , 42.6° and 58.3° that correspond to the (110), (220), (213), (330) and (440) Miller planes, respectively. Small peaks corresponding to PbI_2 at 12.1° and 25.0° are also present, which is not uncommon in MAPI thin films.²⁷ The identical positions of the principal diffraction peaks indicate that the crystal structure of the perovskite remains unchanged upon doping. A decrease in the peak intensity with the increasing dopant concentration suggests, however, that the incorporation of the dopant renders the polycrystalline layers more defective.

Doping of a perovskite semiconductor would not be expected to alter the material's bandgap. To verify this, Fig. 5 shows the electronic absorption spectra of MHP layers with various doping concentrations. The absorption edge at 765 nm, typical for MAPI, is unaltered for all the doping concentrations. The bandgap energy (1.61 eV), extrapolated from the Tauc plots, is therefore the same for the doped and undoped MAPI samples. This excludes that the increase of the conductivity observed upon doping can be due to a reduction of the injection barrier and/or to additional energy bands within the bandgap.



Fig. 4 XRD spectra of the undoped MAPI film and MAPI doped with concentrations of 2–20 mg mL^{-1} . For higher doping concentrations, see Fig. S9 (ESI†).



Fig. 5 UV-visible absorption spectra of the undoped and doped perovskite thin films. The inset presents the Tauc plots for these samples. For higher doping concentrations, see Fig. S10 (ESI†).

According to the propensity of Sm^{2+} to undergo oxidation, we expect that the resulting material will be n-doped. To confirm the majority charge carrier type, ultraviolet photoelectron spectroscopy (UPS) experiments were carried out to



measure the variation of the WF *versus* the dopant concentration. The results of the surface potential difference measurements using a Kelvin probe (KP) (Fig. S11, ESI†) showed that for all the concentrations for which an increase in the conductivity is observed (2–10 mg mL^{−1}), the WF saturates at the same level. Therefore, lower concentrations were chosen for the UPS experiments. In Fig. 6, the secondary electron cut-off region, corresponding to the WF of the material is presented for undoped

MAPI and MAPI samples treated with solutions containing 0.01–10 mg mL^{−1} SmI₂. A decrease of the WF from 4.51 eV for the undoped MAPI to 3.98 eV is observed for dopant concentrations as low as 0.01 mg mL^{−1}. Instead, for dopant concentrations between 0.1 and 10 mg mL^{−1}, the WF differs only by 0.11 eV. WF defines the position of E_F with respect to the vacuum level (E_{vac}), which is different for every material and can change due to the presence of surface dipoles. In order to define the position of E_F in the bandgap, the valence band region of the UPS spectra was also analyzed. Due to the low density of states in the valence band in perovskites, the valence region analysis requires subtracting the satellites coming from the non-monochromatic radiation of the He lamp^{28,29} (Fig. S12 and S13, ESI†). Fig. 6(b) shows the valence band onset energy with respect to E_F for different dopant concentrations. The intersection of the average background level with the extrapolation of the linear part of the valence band onset allows the determination of the ionization energy with respect to the Fermi level (E w.r.t. E_F) (for more details, see Fig. S14, ESI†). For the undoped MAPI samples, the absolute value of this difference is around 0.83 eV, placing E_F in the middle of the bandgap.³⁰ The position of E_F increases along with the dopant concentration, reaching ~0.3 eV below E_C at dopant concentrations of ≥ 0.2 mg mL^{−1}. This clearly demonstrates the n-type character of the doped samples. For the doped samples, E_{vac} changed by around −0.3 eV, which can be interpreted as the energy of the surface dipoles (E_μ) resulting probably from the altered surface composition due to the doping method. The energy of the surface dipole for the undoped MAPI was therefore assumed to be close to zero. The energy levels are schematically presented in Fig. 6(c) for different doping concentrations and the values of E w.r.t. E_F , WF and E_μ are tabulated in Table 1.

Estimation of the ionized dopant concentration was performed using the Mott-Schottky method.³¹ The voltage dependent capacitance measurement ($C(V)$) consists of measuring the small impedance signal of the device under tests as a function of an applied voltage V and a frequency f . In order to measure the capacitance accurately, the leakage current should be minimized. To this end, a capacitor structure was fabricated using a thin layer of insulating poly(methylmethacrylate) (PMMA) between the MAPI and the gold electrode. This particular structure includes a blocking contact at the MAPI/PMMA/gold interface and an ohmic contact at the MAPI/SnO₂ side of the sandwich structure (Fig. S15, ESI†). Despite these precautions, the leakage current was not completely negligible over the full applied voltage range; consequently, the capacitance data exploited in this work were limited to the voltage range where $G \ll C\omega$, where G is the conductance and $\omega = 2\pi f$. In this case, it was verified that the measured capacitance in a



Fig. 6 Secondary electron cut-off region (a) and valence band onset (b) of the undoped MAPI film and MAPI doped with 0.01–10 mg mL^{−1} SmI₂, measured with UPS and concluded energy levels for the corresponding doping concentrations (c).

Table 1 Energy values for different doping concentrations, determined from the UPS measurement and $E_g = 1.61$ eV

C (mg mL ^{−1})	0	0.01	0.1	0.5	2	10
E w.r.t. E_F (eV)	−0.83	−1.06	−1.24	−1.32	−1.33	−1.35
WF (eV)	4.51	3.98	3.79	3.70	3.80	3.68
E_μ (eV)	0	−0.3	−0.31	−0.32	−0.21	−0.31

10 mg mL⁻¹. This value is quite low compared to XPS analyses where we measured samarium concentrations in the range of $N_d \sim 10^{20}$ cm⁻³.

The Mott-Schottky analysis starts with plotting $1/C^2$ versus the applied voltage. In the depletion regime, the $1/C^2$ curve should be linear with a slope equal to $2/(q\epsilon N_d^+)$, where q is the elementary charge, ϵ is the MAPI dielectric permittivity and N_d^+ is the average ionized dopant concentration. As pointed out by Kirchartz *et al.*³⁶ and supported by Fig. S17 (ESI[†]), this method requires that the depletion length remains lower than the layer thickness (270 nm). Because the depletion length increases when the doping level decreases, the ionized dopant concentration has to be higher than $1.1 \times 10^{16} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ to be able to detect a variation of the capacitance with an applied bias close to 0 V. Experimental $1/C^2$ curves versus voltage are shown in Fig. 7. For lower doping concentrations, the $C(V)$ curve tends to saturate at a constant value when a high reverse bias is applied. This saturation occurs when the depletion layer extends beyond the layer thickness. We therefore note that the charge carrier concentration for our undoped sample is lower than the limit of detection of the Mott-Schottky method.^{36–38} Even though one can notice a slight excess of PbI_2 revealed by XRD (Fig. 4) that could be responsible for unintentional doping, UPS confirms that the Fermi level is almost in the middle of the bandgap (Fig. 6). We may then assume that our reference is undoped and use the typical intrinsic charge carrier density for intrinsic MAPI that is in the range of 10^{11} cm^{-3} .²³ For doped samples, a clear linear trend was obtained in all cases allowing the extraction of the ionized dopant concentration, ranging from $2 \times 10^{16} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ for 2 mg mL⁻¹ to $9.8 \times 10^{16} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ for

In order to elucidate the discrepancy between the ionized dopant concentration extracted by Mott-Schottky and samarium concentrations determined by XPS, conductivity measurements as function of temperature were carried out. We limited our investigation to the sample that exhibits the highest conductivity (10 mg mL^{-1}) and the undoped sample as the reference. The measurement of the conductivity as a function of temperature was performed by cooling the sample from 373 K to 188 K (Fig. 8). The activation energy E_a is determined from the slope of the Arrhenius plot. Above 250 K, E_a is the same for both doped and undoped samples ($E_{a1} = 500 \text{ meV}$) even though the conductivity increases upon doping. For the doped sample below 250 K, a different slope can be distinguished, characterized by a lower activation energy $E_{a2} = 350 \text{ meV}$. These results can be interpreted as the competition between two mechanisms impacting the temperature dependence of the conductivity. The first mechanism with $E_{a1} = 500 \text{ meV}$ is the same in both doped and undoped samples and probably corresponds to the thermal activation of carrier transport through grain boundaries. The second mechanism at $T < 250 \text{ K}$ and $E_{a2} = 350 \text{ meV}$ is observed only for the doped samples. This second mechanism can be observed only at low temperatures. For $T < 250 \text{ K}$, the thermal activation of mechanism 1 is not efficient and charge transport through grain boundaries probably occurs by tunneling (that is almost not thermally activated). Therefore, the second mechanism becomes the main limiting charge carrier transport. The temperature dependence of the doping ionization is consistent with the occurrence of dopant freezing, which in this case is observed even at room temperature. Such dopant freeze-out may explain the discrepancy between Mott-Schottky and XPS measurements, as the prior is sensitive only the ionized dopant concentration and the latter to the overall dopant concentration. There are other examples of dopant freeze out at room temperature in crystalline semiconductors, such as Mg

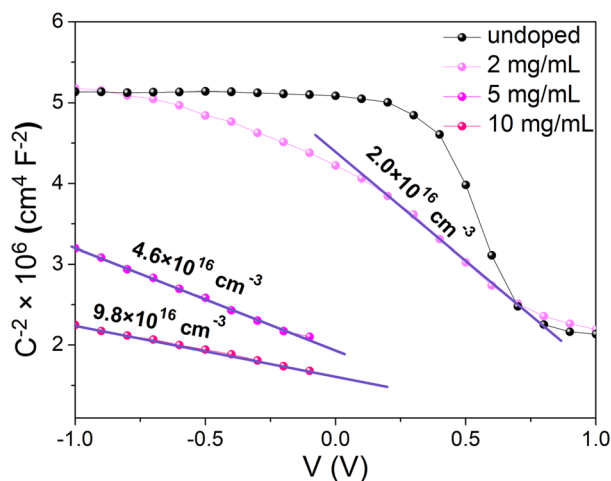


Fig. 7 Mott–Schottky plots with extracted ionized dopant densities for different doping concentrations. Note that the concentration of the undoped sample is below the limit of detection.

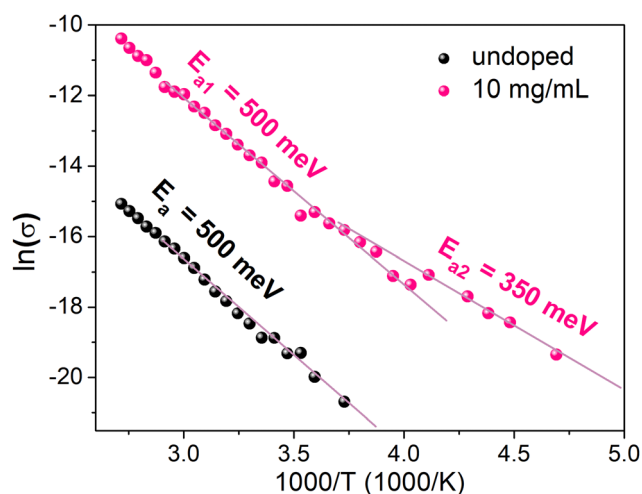
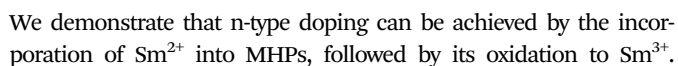


Fig. 8 Temperature dependent conductivity of the undoped MAPI film and MAPI doped with 10 mg mL⁻¹ Sml₂.



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