



Proposition de thèse – PhD proposal

SYNTHESIS AND CHARACTERISATION OF A NEW 2D MATERIAL SYNTHESE ET CARACTERISATION D'UN NOUVEAU MATERIAU 2D

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Since the first isolation of graphene in 2004 [1], the scientific community has moved towards new 2D materials with (more) interesting properties. As a matter of fact, despite its numerous qualities that have made it a champion of 2D materials, graphene is still a semi-metal, and until now, no stable 2D material with metallic behavior had been identified. Recently however, it was theoretically demonstrated that a mono-atomic 2D layer of boron, borophene, would present such a metallic behavior with a relatively high electron mobility [2,3]. Moreover, borophene would possess a 100% optical transmittance in the visible range – which would make borophene more transparent than graphene [3]. Interestingly, the chemical boron–boron bond is almost as strong as the carbon–carbon one, and borophene would thus possess mechanical properties close to the ones of graphene [4]. Borophene should also be super-stretchable and super-flexible, it should present stress-induced allotropic transitions [5–7] and even a superconducting behavior [8,9]. Combining all these properties (Figure 1), borophene could be an excellent candidate for use as an anode [10,11] or electrical contact [12].

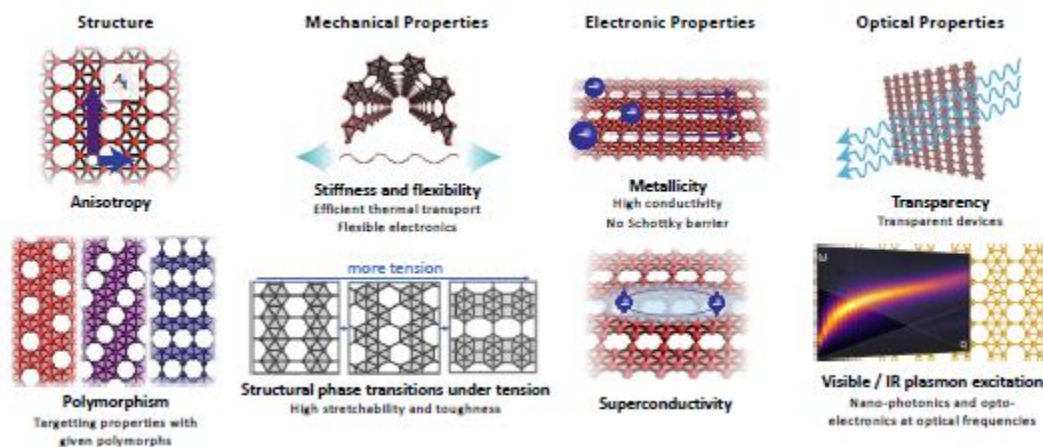


Figure 1: Summary of the various properties of borophene

The first attempts at synthesizing boron-based planar structure were focused on the production of small molecular clusters, such as B_{30}^- , B_{35} and B_{36} [13–16], that were thought of as building blocks for larger borophene structures. In 2015 [17] and then again in 2016 [18], the first borophene flakes were grown by epitaxy on silver(111) surfaces in ultra-high vacuum conditions. Atomic-scale characterization showed that these borophene islands possess metallic characteristics that are compatible

with the theoretical predictions of a highly anisotropic 2D metal [2,17]. These results, combined with the intrinsic potential properties of borophene, have led to considerable interest for this material, and especially for applications in energy storage: from 2 publications about this material in the span 2014-2015, it went to 31 in 2016, 58 in 2017, 67 in 2018, and 63 in 2019 – mainly from China and the USA, none from France. Until now, only theoretical studies were performed in Europe, and there is still a lot to do for optimizing and mastering the synthesis of this 2D material. Moreover, as the current synthesis method does not allow for covering large surfaces and requires ultra-high vacuum, the scientific community is still limited in its ability to experimentally study borophene and to develop its potential applications. There is therefore a very strong need, expressed by the international community of both experimentalists and theoreticians, for easily manipulated borophene samples of large surface and good quality.

In this context, the LMI recruits a PhD candidate to start studying the synthesis of borophene via a new “soft” chemical method, that should allow covering large surfaces of different substrates within a precise environment and with an atomic-scale thickness control. Optimizing the synthesis parameters will however necessitate an in-depth characterization of the obtained structures, using different microscopy and spectroscopy techniques useful for the characterization of ultra-thin layers (STM, AFM, SEM, TEM, XPS, XRD, Raman...). The candidate will benefit of the short retro-action loop possible at the LMI, thanks to the local expertise in chemical synthesis (C. Marichy) and boron chemistry and the recent CR2 recruitment of C. Bousige on this project. Several national and international collaborations will be established to perform the experimental and theoretical studies that we will not be able to achieve locally. As the LMI is implicated in the Graphene Flagship as well as the Nanotube-Graphene GDRi (through C. Journet), we will be in direct contact with a large international community that will be awaiting our samples. Locally, the links already existing with the neighbor Institut Lumière Matière will facilitate some studies, e.g. for electronic and thermal transport or for the mechanical properties.

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