

Chapter 6

Summary and Conclusions

Two fabrication techniques were investigated as they pertain to the assembly of advanced solid oxide fuel cells.

Polymer sphere lithography has been utilized to create two-dimensional metallic networks on fuel cell electrolyte materials. Although the fabrication process involves somewhat imprecise, random elements, the experimental variation from the expected geometries is extremely small. Under fuel cell operating conditions, the structures, and, hence, the 3PB and 2PB area fraction values, exhibit remarkable high temperature stability. These well-defined and well-behaved electrode structures access a wide range of 3PB regimes, lending themselves to future mechanistic studies on electrolyte-electrode material systems, as well as providing a strong experimentally correlated basis for computational modeling. Beyond mechanistic studies, these anti-dot structures have served as platforms for fabrication of three-dimensional electrodes.

The cathodic electrochemical deposition of undoped and Sm-doped ceria has been developed in templated and template-free configurations to produce a variety of tunable anode microstructures. The strictly chemical nature of the deposition step allows these electronically insulating coatings to deposit onto non-conducting areas of substrates, insofar as they are close enough to an exposed metal surface. The end result is ubiquitous CeO₂ coatings on thin, porous metallic networks overlaid onto YSZ/porous metal substrates, with quality metal|CeO₂ and YSZ|CeO₂ interfaces, which are morphologically

stable at high temperatures and reducing atmospheres. Deposition was also definitively shown to occur on two MIEC, fuel cell cathode materials—BSCF and SCN.

To probe the activity of CELD Sm-doped ceria anodes, detailed, morphologically-driven ACIS analyses were conducted, revealing two co-dominant, resistive processes for metal network embedded configurations. The LF arc was determined to be surface-related; the HF arc was determined to be configurationally related, in particular to the resistance of electron migration through the SDC deposit on top of the metal regions, and the resulting restriction of the field lines to the nominal 3PB region. The LF arc was therefore taken to represent the true measure of surface activity for CELD ceria. The lowest extrapolated ASR values for this arc were shown to be in the range of 1.3 – 6.8 $\text{m}\Omega \text{ cm}^2$ at 650 °C in 97% H_2 and 3% H_2O .

Appendix A

ImageJ Analysis Details

The following describes the analytical approach to identifying and characterizing the pores of the anti-dot networks using the ImageJ software described in Chapter 2. The process is briefly illustrated in Fig. A.1. First, an as-taken grayscale SEM image is imported into ImageJ (Fig. A.1a); then, the data bar region is cropped and the rest of the image is converted into a true black-and-white image (Fig. A.1b). The ImageJ user can define a grayscale threshold cutoff value, above which the associated pixels are converted to purely black, and below which the pixels are converted to purely white. Consequently, the ideal SEM image to be analyzed is one where there is significant grayscale contrast between the circular pores exposing the electrolyte surface, and the metal network lying on top. Secondary electron imaging mode was chosen owing to its inherent contrast associated with topographical features (recall that the metal network is 200-400 nm thick). Back-scattered mode, which provides elemental materials contrast, added anywhere from 5-15% areal error due to pore shading; and in-lens mode, known for its high contrast imaging ability, was found to provide inconsistencies related to charging effects from the non-conducting YSZ. Care was taken to provide qualitatively consistent contrast in the SEM images across the entirety of the substrate, to ensure accurate and uniform threshold application.

The resulting image (Fig.A.1b) is now a mixture of connected and disconnected black objects, which ImageJ can identify automatically. Problems arise, however, due to dark pixels that are not pore-related. The smaller dark objects can be automatically removed, and the image consequently cleaned up, as in Fig. A.1c. However, the messy,

larger unwanted dark objects remain—these are originally void areas left uncovered during the PS deposition process and result in planar metal regions after the thermal evaporation step. Fortunately, these areas are never circular, so a “circularity” filter can be applied when identifying objects. This filter is applied between Fig. A.1c and d. ImageJ defines a circularity of 1 to be a perfect circle, and 0 to be a straight line. In this way, fractal objects like these metal regions can be removed from the counting. Fig. A.1d is the final pictorial output of the ImageJ process, and shows which objects have been identified. Pore area (2PB), perimeter (3PB), and total pore coverage are all automatically enumerated. Depending on the pore size to be evaluated, different magnification was necessary to ensure accuracy—it was found that no more than 1500 pores could be evaluated from one image and retain acceptable levels of accuracy.

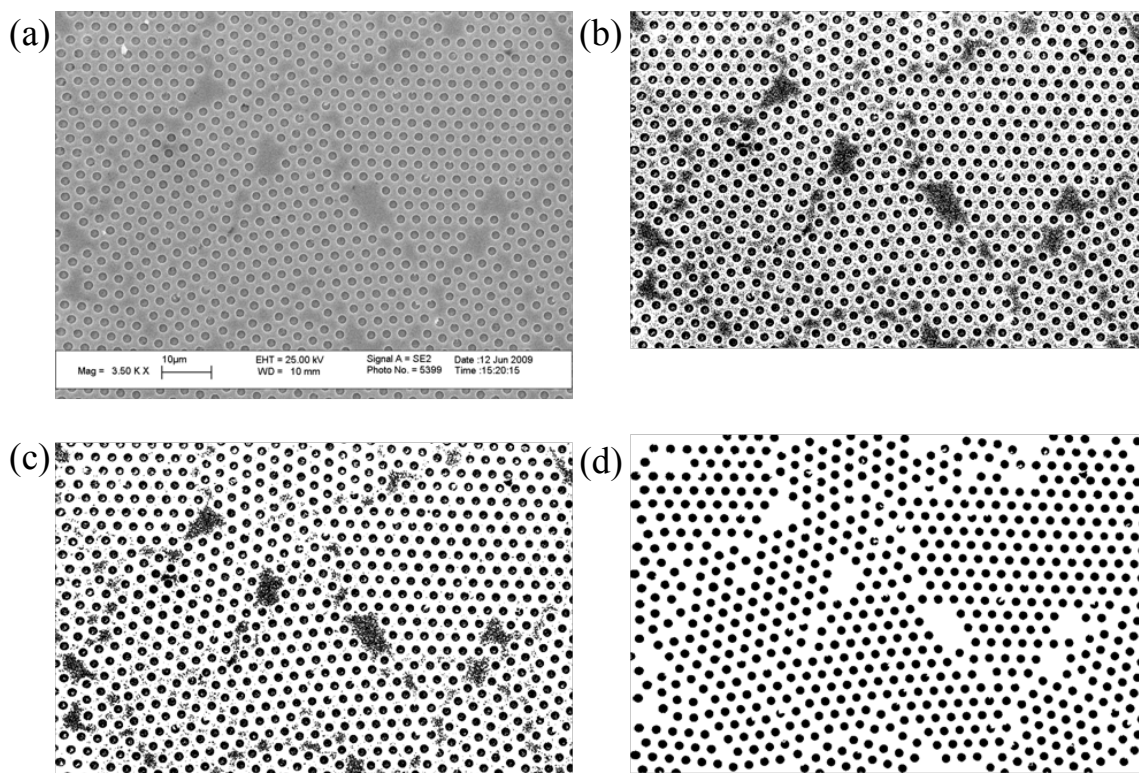


Fig A.1. The ImageJ image analysis process: (a) an as-taken SEM image; (b) cropping and conversion to black-and-white; (c) image clean-up; and (d) final image identifying the pores.

Appendix B

Additional Images

B.1 Additional CELD Images

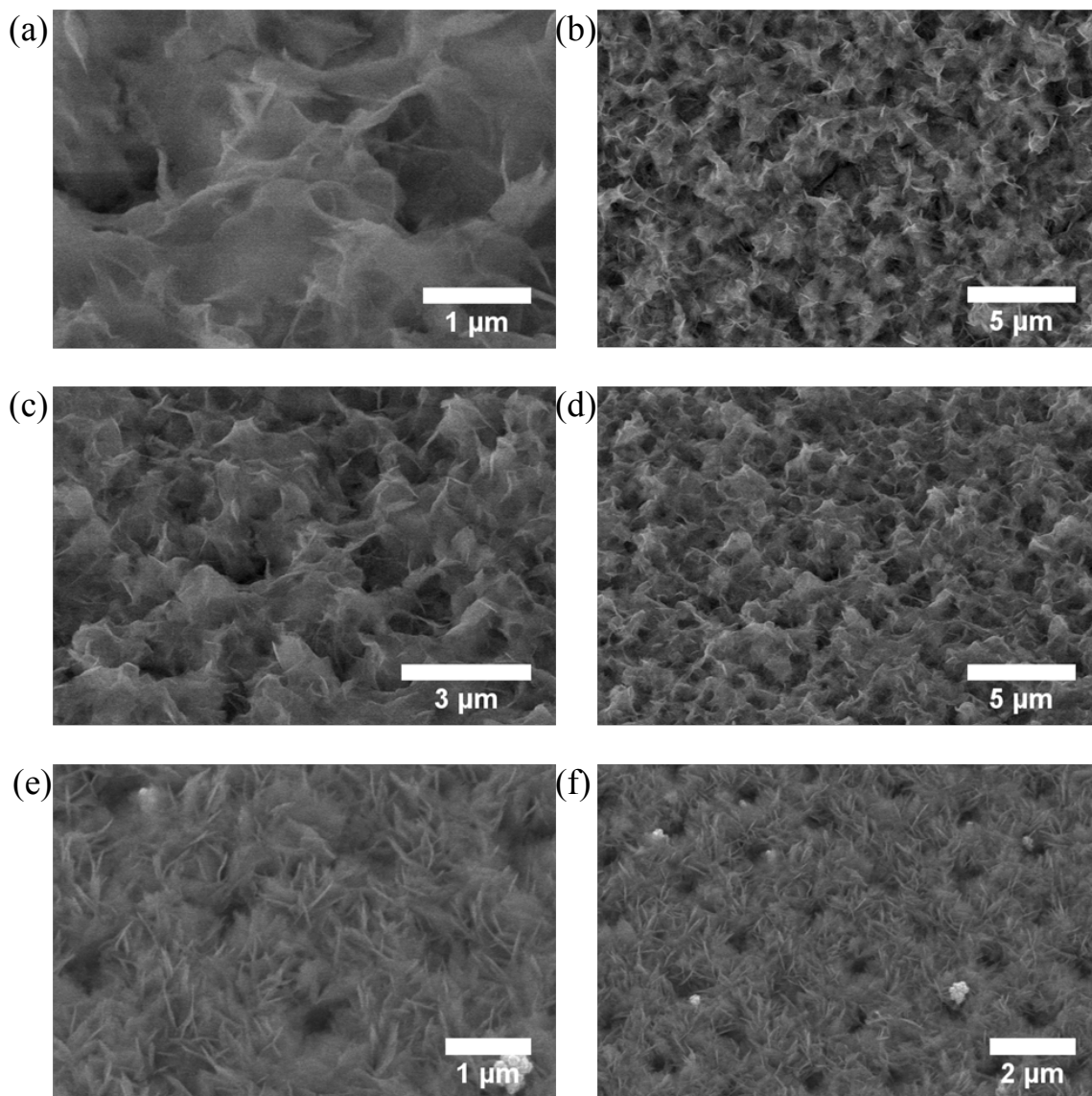


Fig. B.1. Angled (45°) SEM images of the HSA microstructure deposited at 0.8 mA cm^{-2} with a 0.05 M doped electrolyte for 5 minutes (a through d); and a 0.1 M undoped electrolyte for 5 minutes (e and f).

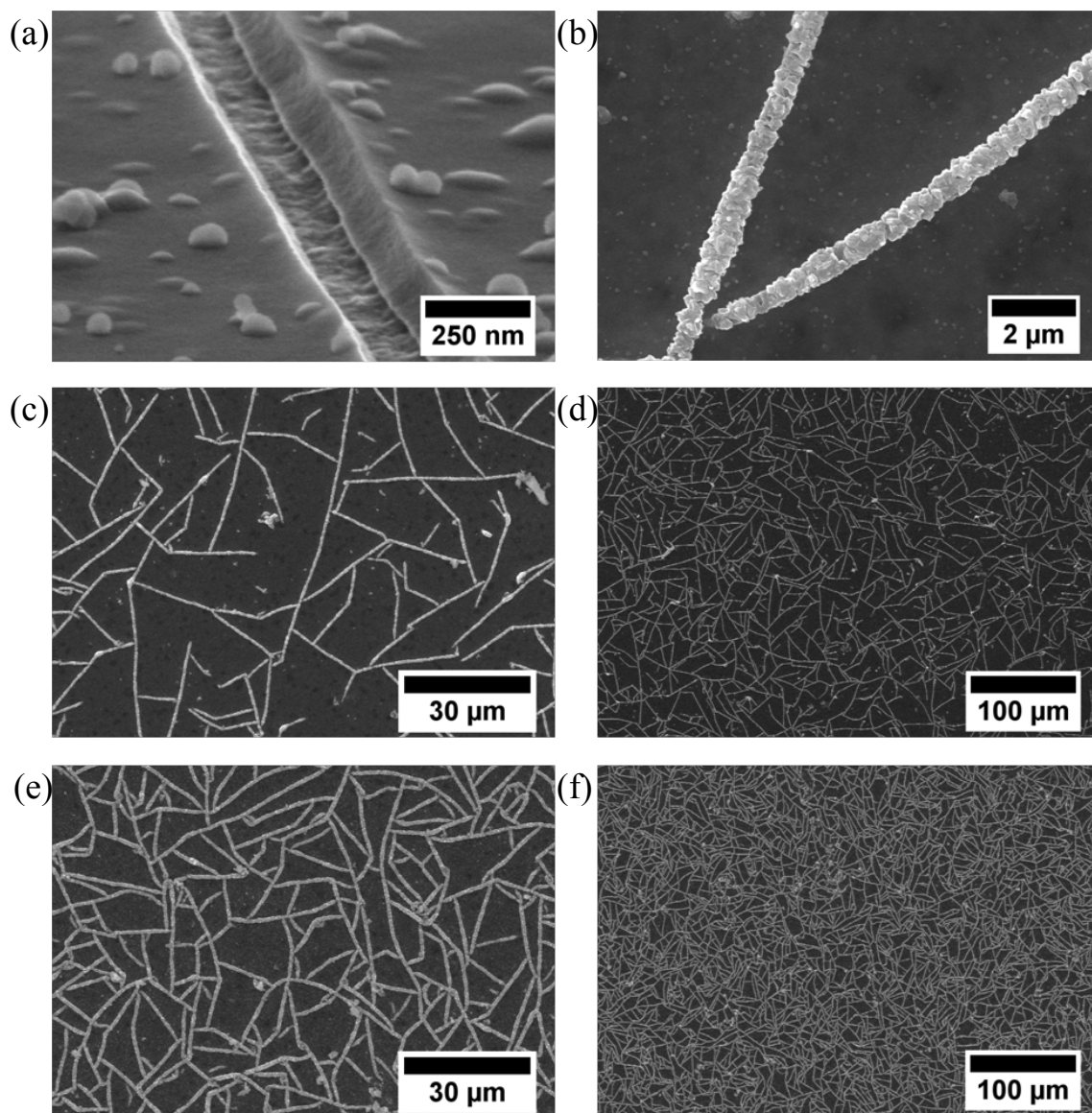


Fig. B.2. SEM images of CELD thin films of ceria deposited at -0.55 V vs. SCE with the doped + H_2O_2 electrolyte on thin films of Ni on silicon substrates for different times: (a) – (d) 5 minutes; (e) and (f) 10 minutes. (a) shows an as-deposited crack that forms for thicknesses greater than 300 nm ceria films. (b) – (f) are images taken after annealing in an Ar atmosphere at 600°C for 10 hours. The white strips are crack areas that originally formed as-deposited as in (a), but the exposed Ni metal has oxidized to NiO and volume-expanded out of the crack. The higher degree of cracking for the thicker film in (e) and (f) is easily visualized.

The following TEM images are taken from the same sample shown in Fig. 3.24. (a) is a bright-field image, and (b) through (d) are corresponding dark-field images taken at different tilting angles to highlight various grain orientations, which consequently appear white. (e) is the selected-area diffraction pattern, labeled with approximate lattice parameters. (f) is a HRTEM view of the polycrystalline deposit.

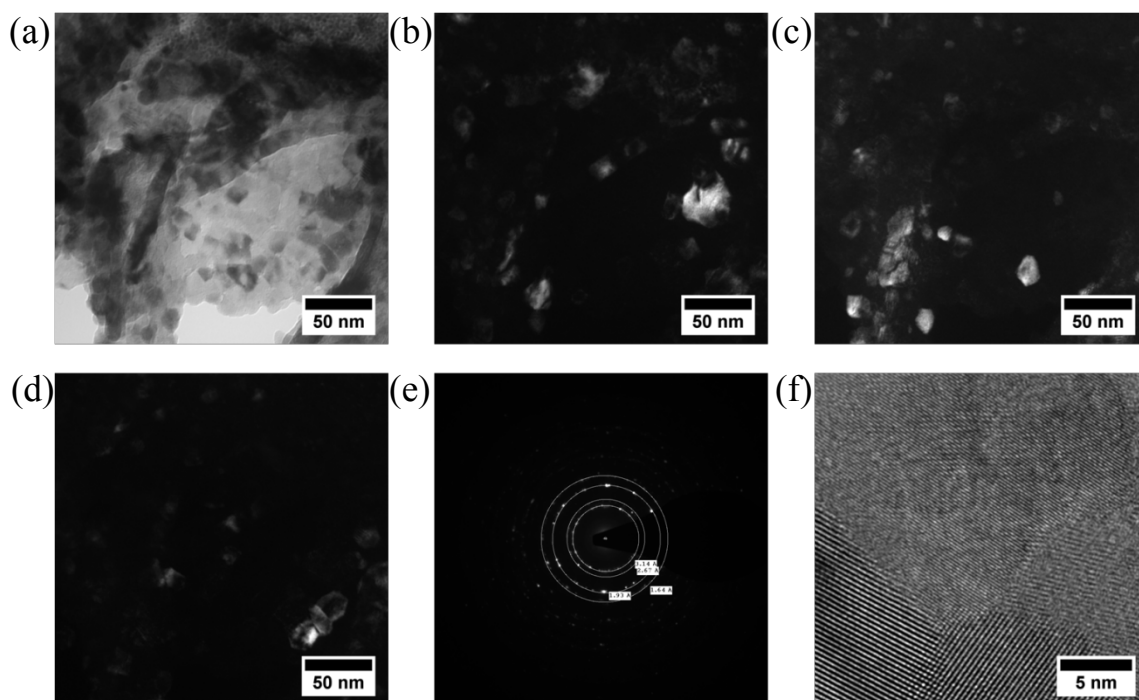


Fig. B.3. TEM images taken from the same sample as in Fig. 3.24. See description above.

B.2 Additional AAO Images

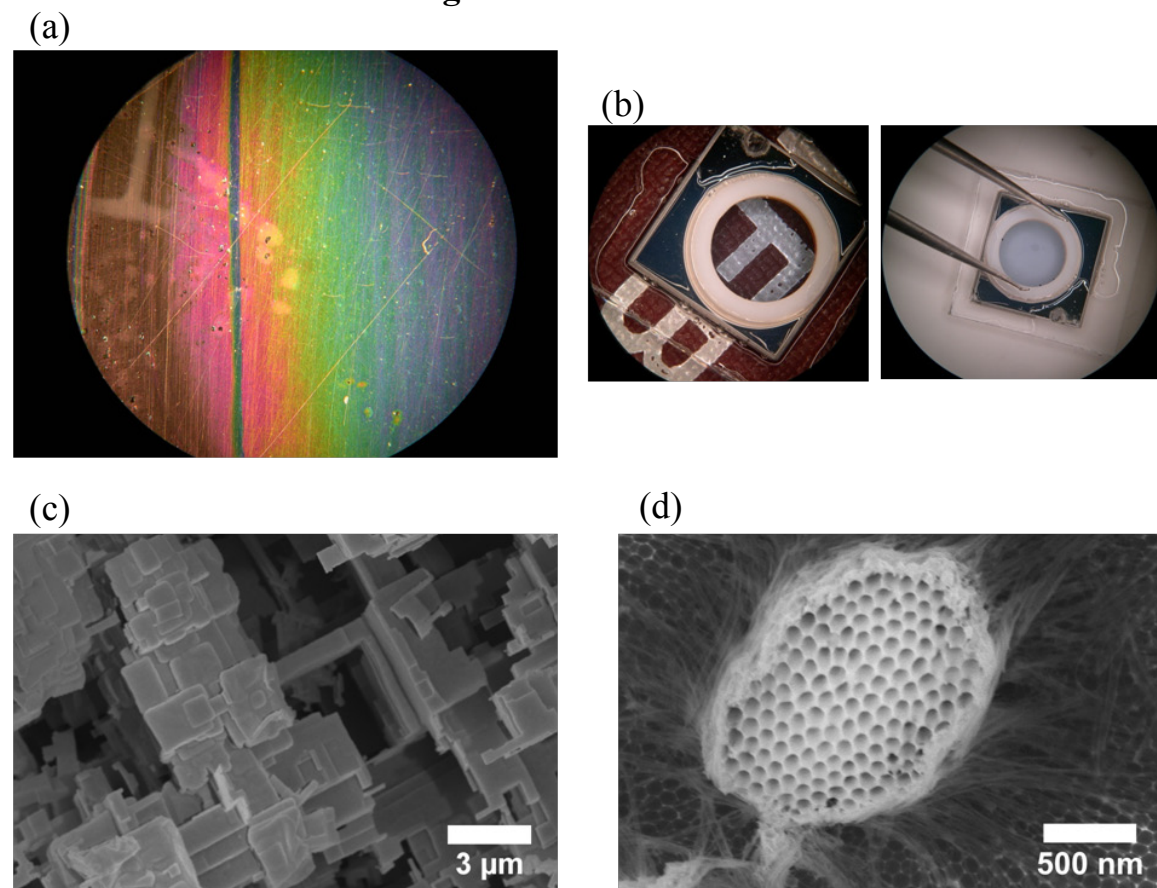


Fig. B.4. Various AAO images: (a) optical image of thin film interference patterns resulting from the complete anodic oxidation of sputtered Al on a glass slide; (b) when the sputtered Al is sectioned off, complete anodic oxidation results in a transparent window, seen here on a YSZ single crystal substrate 1 x 1 cm; (c) if Al metal is left in the oxalic acid electrolyte too long, crystallographic etching occurs; and (d) when the AAO template is etched in chromic and phosphoric acid, incomplete template removal results in peculiar structures.

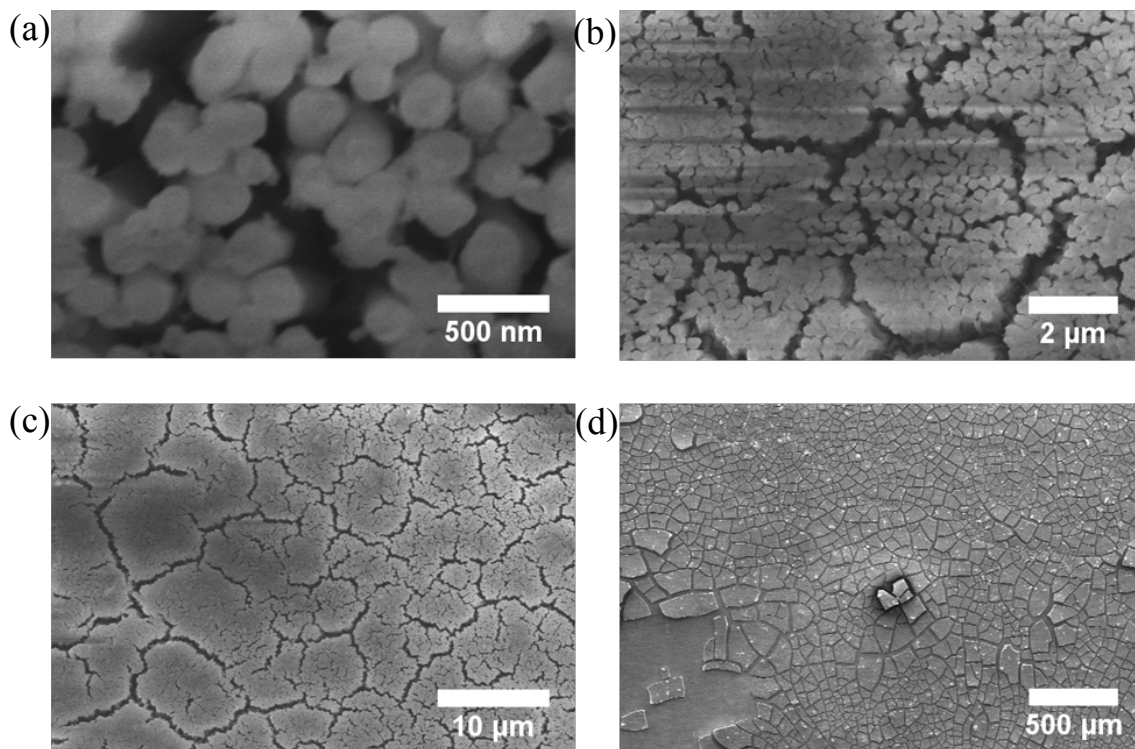


Fig. B.5. CELD ceria nanowires from the same sample shown in Fig. 5.7. (a) – (c) are after etching in 3 M NaOH for 2.5 minutes. (d) is as-deposited, showing the scale-like overgrowth of ceria once deposition was complete in the entire pore lengths of the AAO template.

B.3 Additional Inverse Opal Images

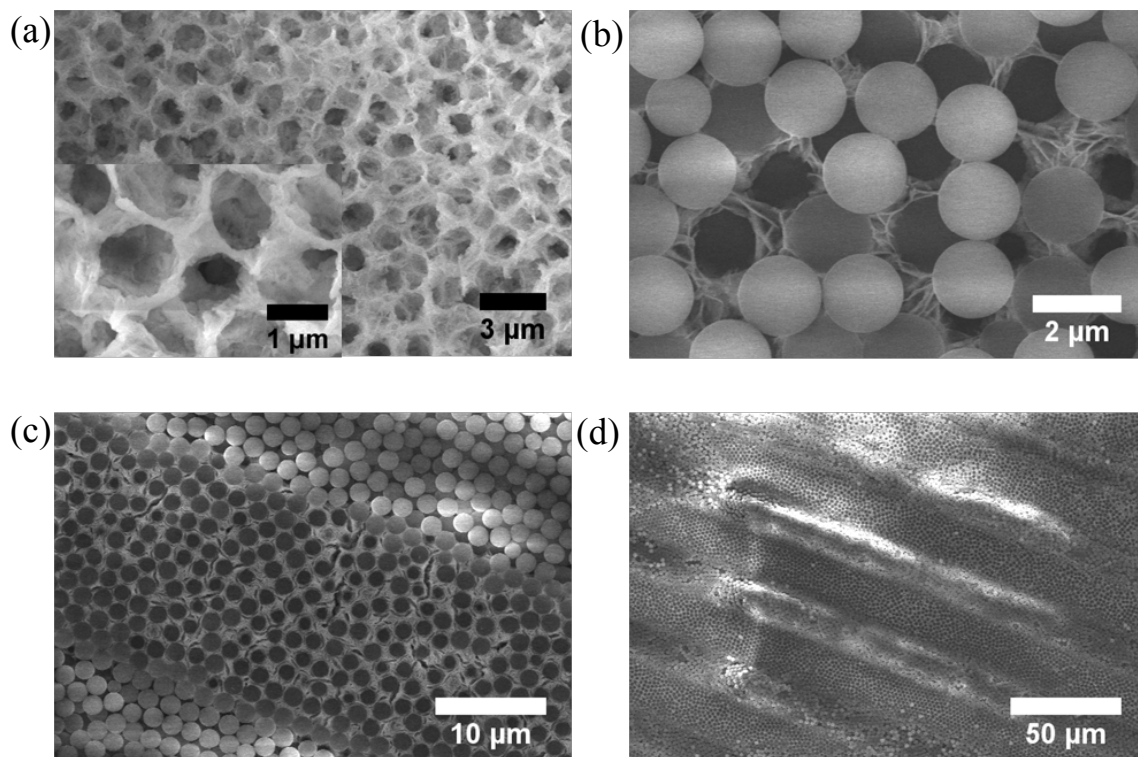


Fig. B.6. Various SEM images of inverse opal structures from the same samples as in Fig. 5.9.

B.4 Additional MIEC Substrate Images

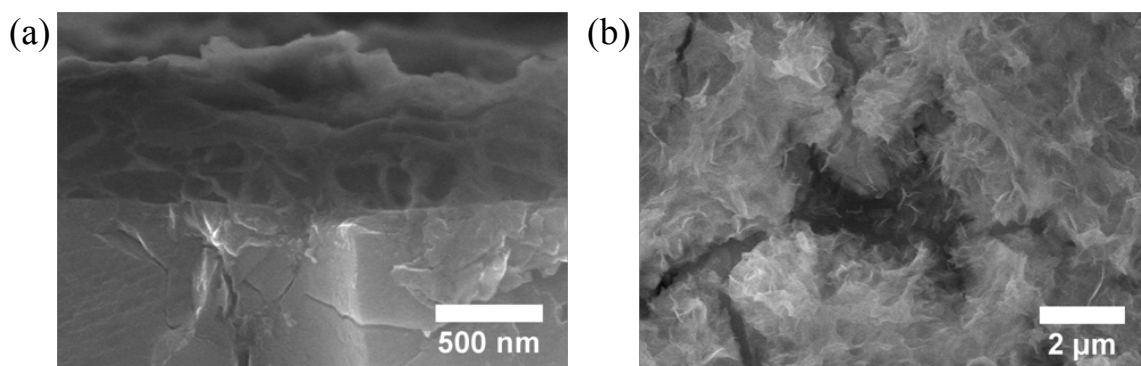


Fig. B.7. SEM images of HSA ceria grown on BSCF at 0.8 mA cm^{-2} for: (a) 1 minute, showing a good interface between ceria and BSCF; and (b) 5 minutes, showing HSA bridging of a pore in the underlying BSCF filled with nail polish (dark area).

B.5 Additional Oxidation Protection Coating Images

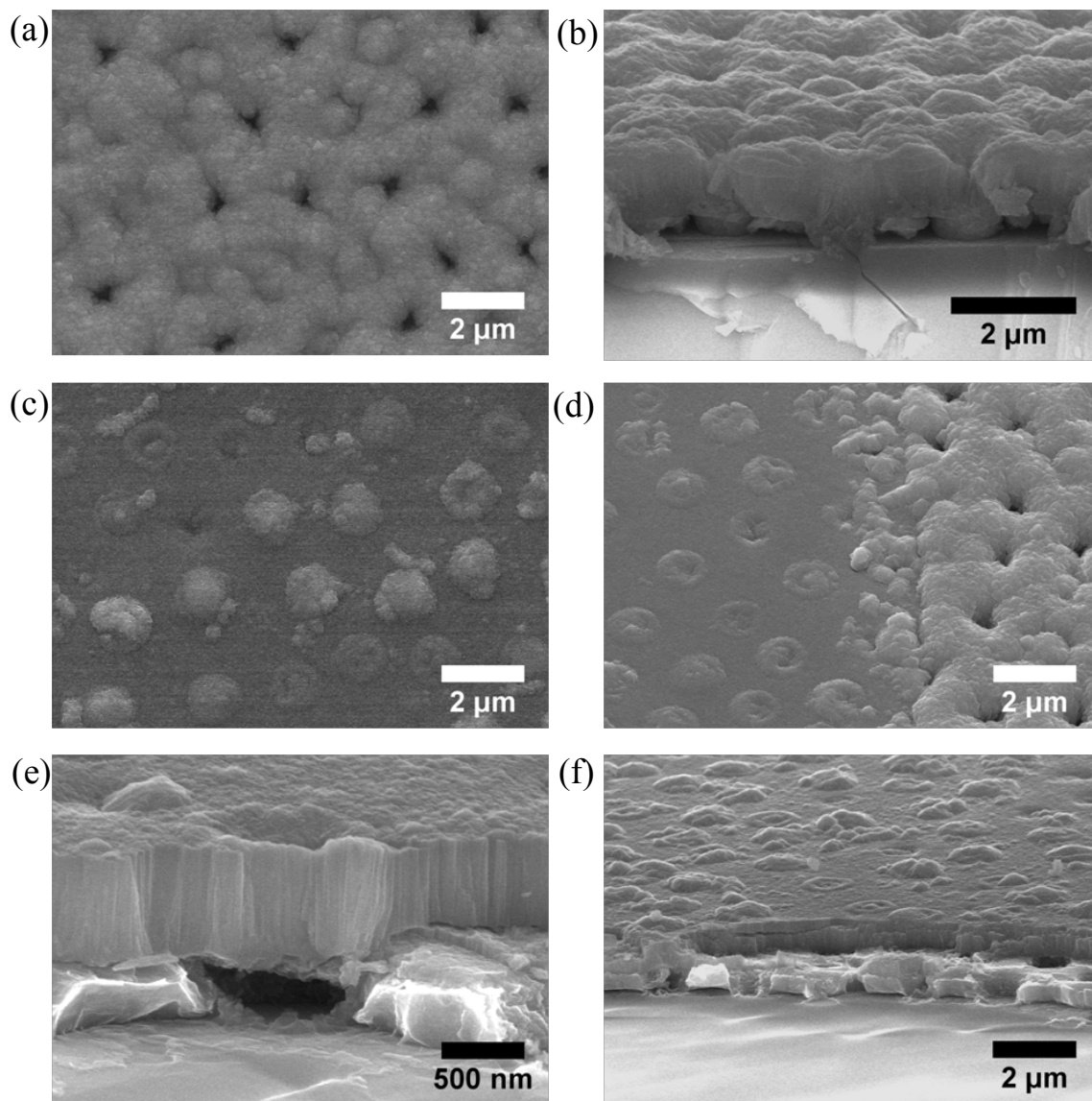


Fig. B.8. SEM images of the oxidative protection coating action of CELD ceria, as in Fig. 5.11: (a) and (b) are the Ni anti-dot areas uncovered by CELD; (c) is the area covered by CELD; (d) is the border between the covered and uncovered CELD regions; (e) and (f) are cross-sectional views of the CELD covered regions. All images have a PLD top coating.

Appendix C

Alternate SOFC Microstructure Fabrication Routes

C.1 Solution Impregnation into AAO Templates

A straightforward solution-phase approach to filling the pores of AAO templates was reported in [124]. Briefly, an AAO template is immersed into a 2.5 M cerium nitrate bath for 4 hours, dried at 50 °C for 4 hours, and then thermally treated from 150 – 500 °C to solidify the nanowires/tubes. In an attempt to mimic this approach, an identical cerium nitrate solution was employed with unaided impregnation (Fig. C.1), sonication-assisted impregnation (Fig. C.2), stirring-assisted impregnation (Fig. C.3), and a combination of stirring- and sonication-assisted impregnation (Fig. C.4). The last approach worked best, in terms of filling fraction of the AAO pores. However, any solution-phase route to making nanowires suffers from a common drawback—there is no inherent attachment to an underlying substrate. Attempts were made to thermally sinter nanowires made from these methods to a YSZ underlying substrate while they were still held in place by the surrounding AAO matrix, but thermal treatment of the assembly has the undesirable side-effect of crystallizing the alumina into an un-etchable form. Prolonged treatment in acids, e.g., chromic and phosphoric, and bases, e.g. NaOH, had zero effect, as can be seen in Fig. C.5. Accordingly, this method was abandoned.

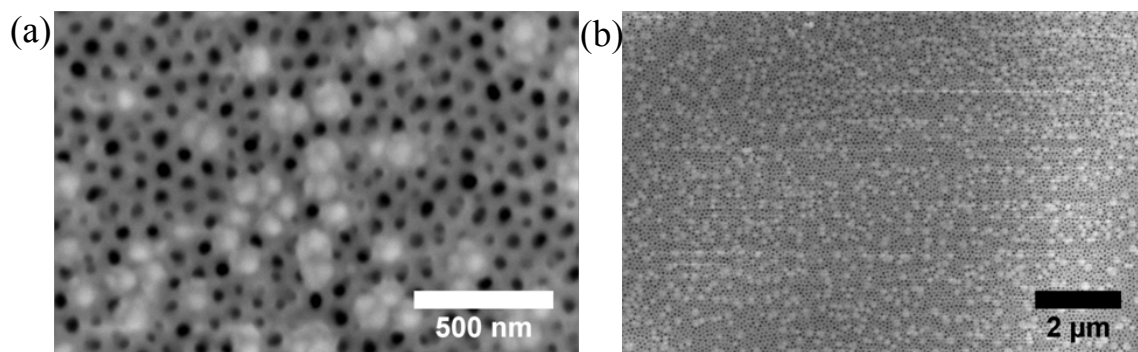


Fig. C.1. Ceria nanowires partially filling the pore of an AAO template after unaided solution phase impregnation.

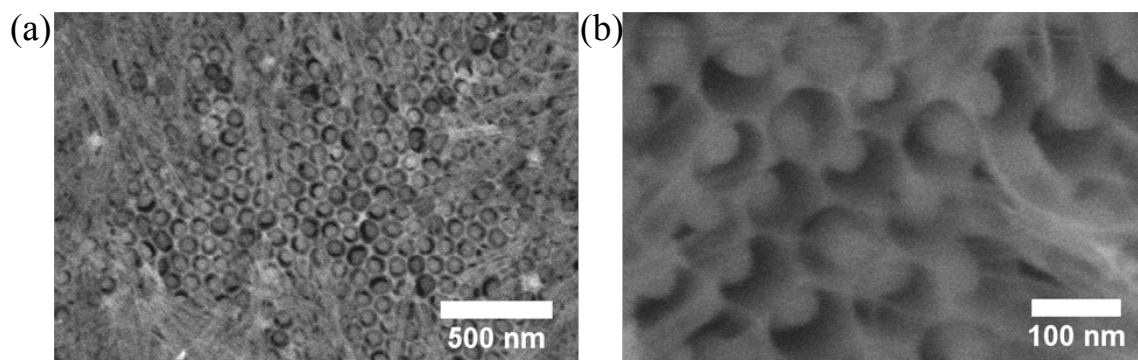


Fig. C.2. Ceria nanowires partially filling the pore of an AAO template after sonicated solution phase impregnation.

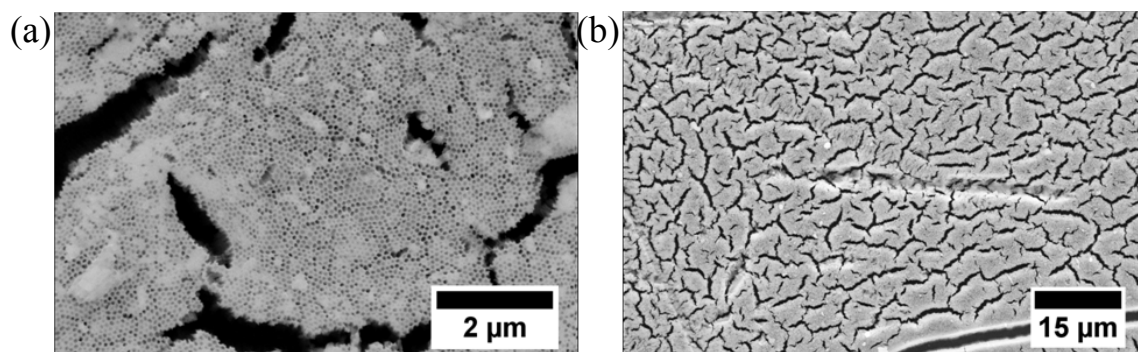


Fig. C.3. Ceria nanowires partially filling the pore of an AAO template after stirred solution phase impregnation.

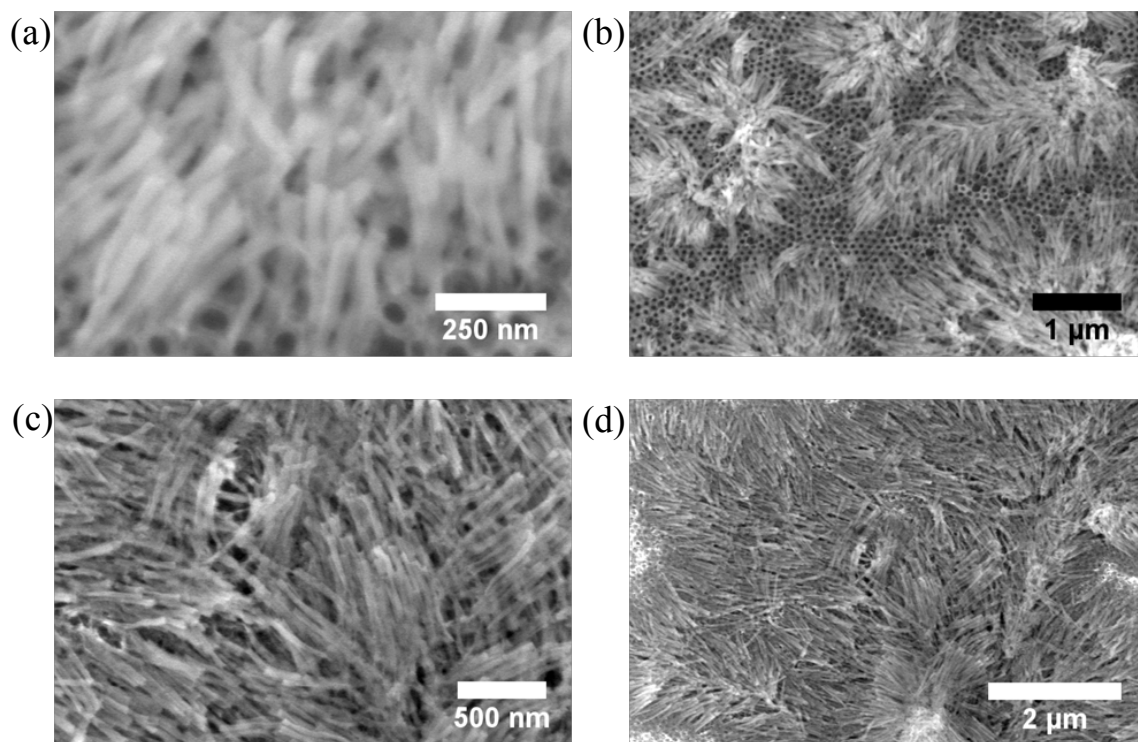


Fig. C.4. Ceria nanowires partially filling the pore of an AAO template after sonicated/stirred solution phase impregnation.

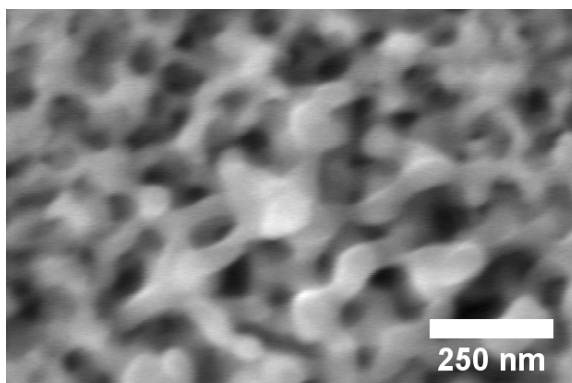


Fig. C.5. SEM image of an AAO template after thermal treatment at 1100°C for 5 hours in air, and after unsuccessful, repeated attempts to etch the template in chromic/phosphoric acid mixtures and NaOH.

C.2 Copper Nanowire Synthesis

It has been known since the 1960's that copper oxide nanowires form spontaneously on the outer surface of the oxide scale during thermal treatment of copper metal at temperatures exceeding 400 °C [125-129]. The aspect ratio and number density can be altered by changing the growth temperature and surrounding atmosphere. This approach works well with bulk copper foil substrates, and also works on copper thin films grown on a supporting substrate. However, the copper metal thin films must be greater than 500 nm in order to produce an appreciable amount of CuO nanowires. The as-produced CuO nanowires can be subsequently reduced in a hydrogen plasma to copper metal [130]. Higher power density plasmas can significantly alter the original CuO morphology, but lower power density plasmas can completely reduce the CuO to Cu without much morphological evolution. Below are selected images from this approach. The combination of copper metal thin film thickness limitations and the inconsistencies of the process lead to its abandonment.

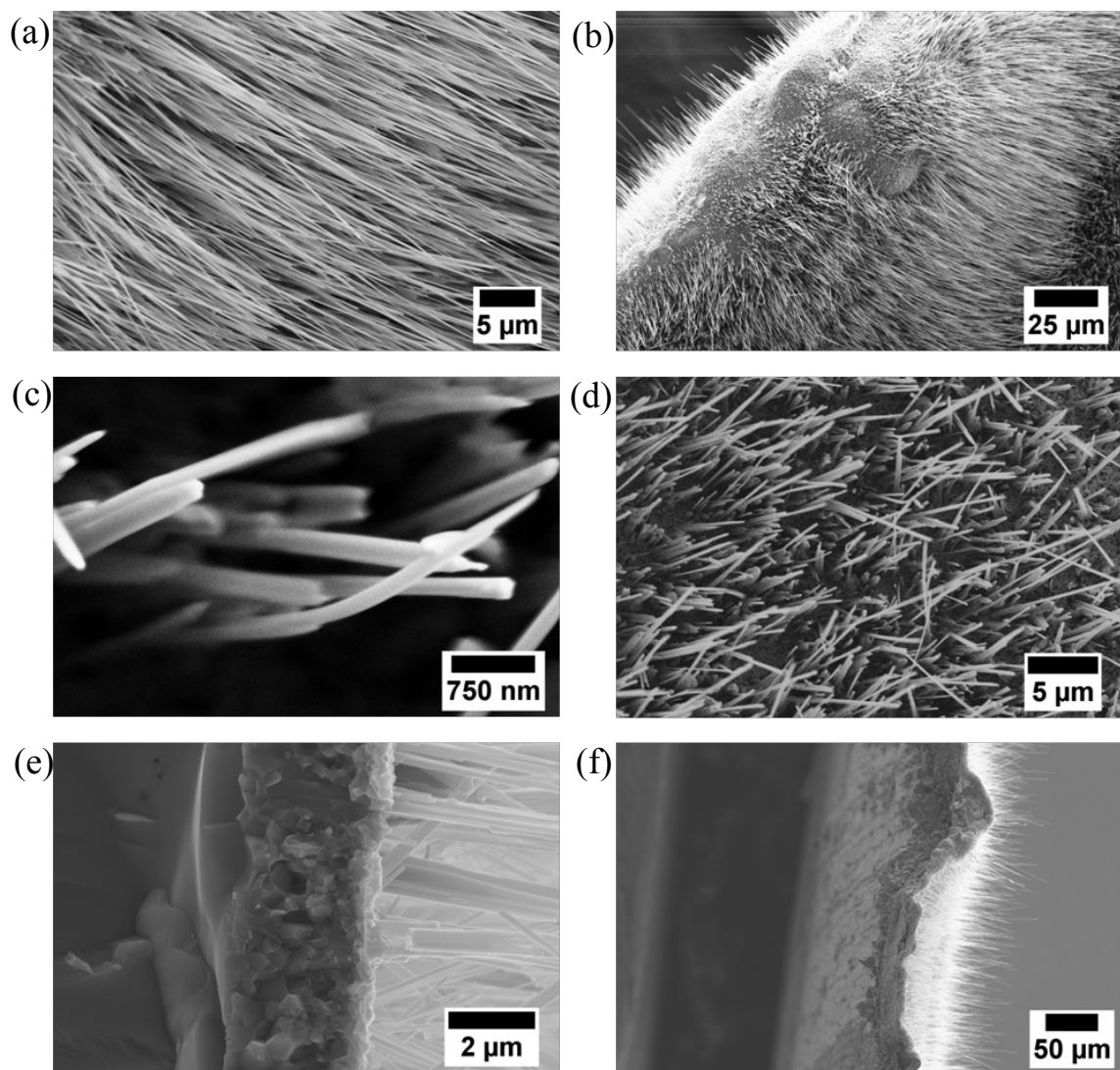


Fig. C.6. SEM images of CuO nanowires grown at $\sim 500^\circ\text{C}$ for a couple of hours in ambient air from a 0.25 mm Cu foil.

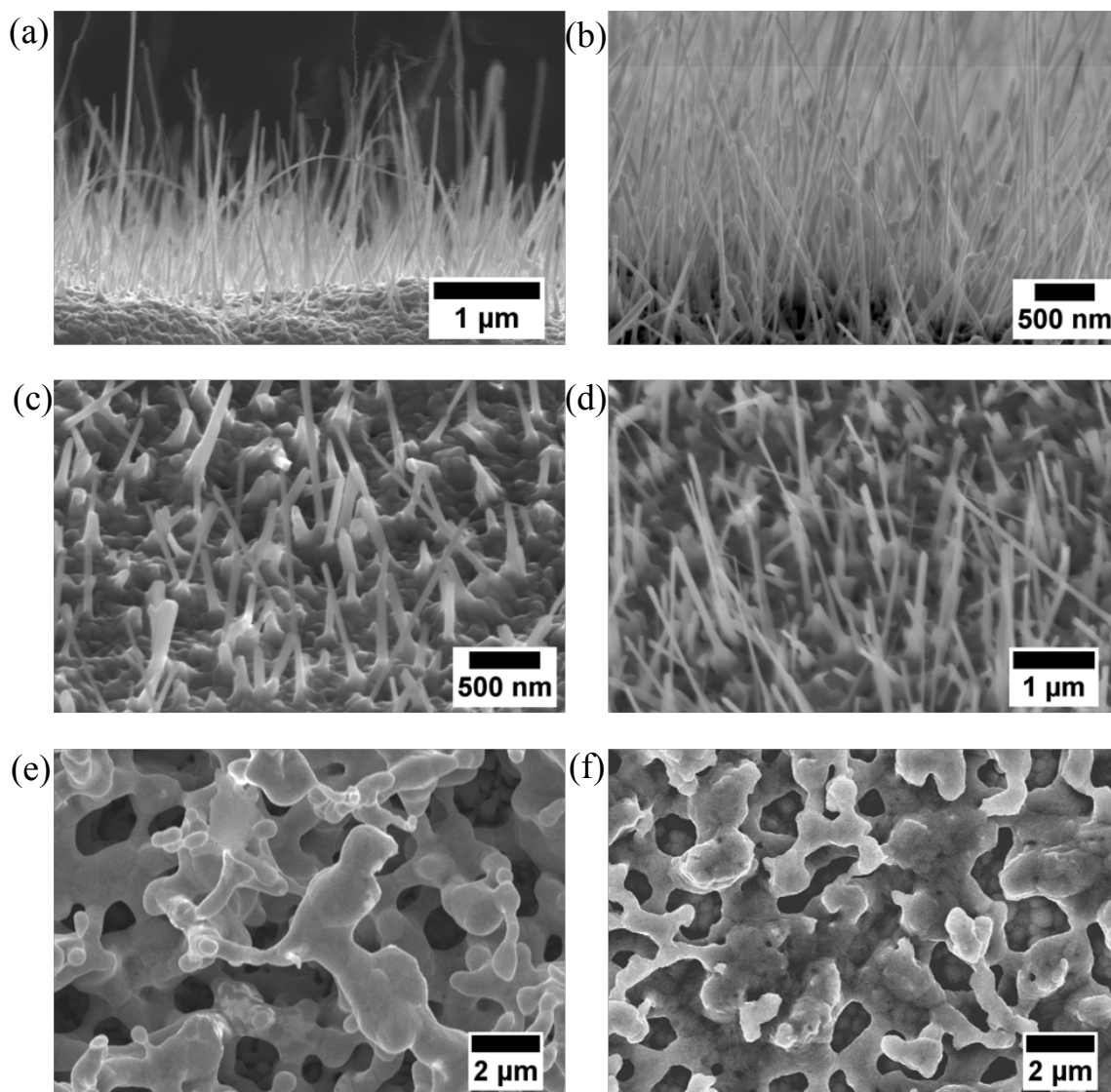


Fig. C.7. SEM images of CuO nanowires grown at $\sim 500^\circ\text{C}$ for a couple of hours in ambient air from a thin film of Cu thermally evaporated onto polycrystalline SDC pellets (a) – (d); (e) and (f) show the highly evolved morphology of CuO nanowires to a porous Cu film after they have been reduced in a high power density hydrogen plasma for ~ 5 minutes.

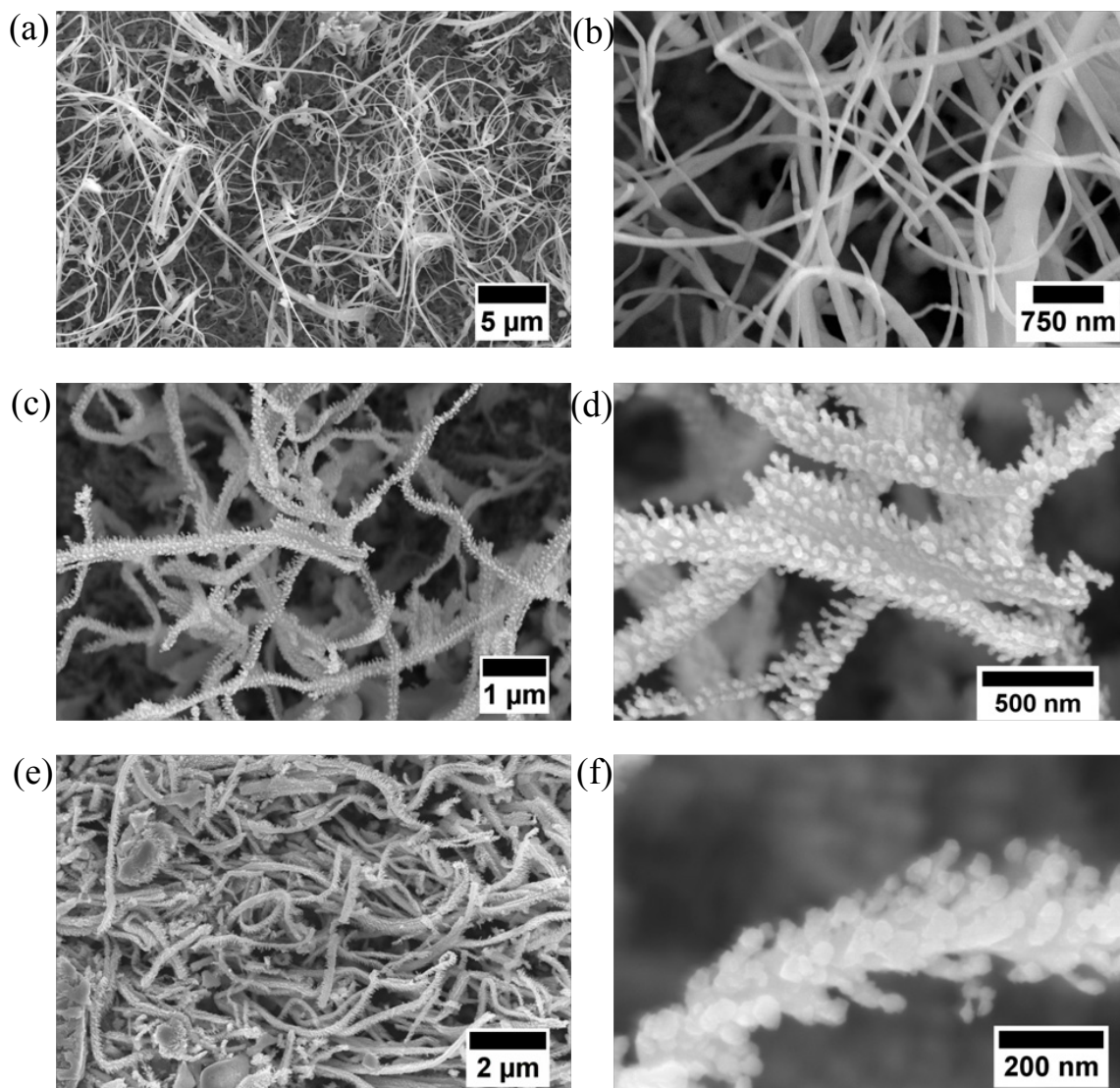


Fig. C.8. SEM images of Cu nanowire structures resulting from a moderate power density hydrogen plasma reduction of the CuO nanowires picture in Fig. C.6. (a) and (b) are treated with the plasma for a couple of minutes; (c) – (f) have been treated for greater than 5 minutes, and show some texturing on the nanoscale as a result.

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