PhD position: How to prevent the mechanical failure of a complex fluid undergoing drying

Duration

36 months

Job status

PhD position, full time. The salary complies with French standards.

Description

Microfluidic pervaporation techniques proved successful for making functional materials such as optical metamaterials [1, 2], conductive tracks, organic MEMS [3], out of water-based dispersions or solutions. These tools combine microscaled top-down architectures and bottom-up self-assemblies to make it possible the precise printing of advanced materials starting from dilute complex fluids, an issue of prime importance within the LabEx Amadeus.

While the pervaporation process leading to dense materials is well understood [4, 5], several issues remain unsolved: they concern the mechanical instabilities that often occur during the solidification. In most of the investigated cases (dispersions, polymers, inks, ...), the evaporation of the solvent indeed significantly deforms the pervaporation matrix, leading to the delamination of the material from the substrate and very often, fracture and crack eventually form. Such an outcome is quite deleterious to the good quality of the final material, both for its characterization and its application.

We wish to understand (and to master) the combined roles of i) the microfluidic matrix and ii) the dispersed fluid undergoing evaporation on the properties of the final printed micro-structures. Importantly, the high confinement of the pervaporation technique is likely to play a crucial role as compared to the traditional case of the drying of thin films, but the two techniques share important similarities which we will exploit next in the film-making processes in order to produce large-scale materials.

[1] Angly et al., ACS Nano 2013; [2] Baron et al., Opt. Mat. Exp. 2013; [3] Yao et al., Laval et al., in preparation; [4] Merlin et al. Soft Matter 2012; [5] Leng et al. Phys. Rev. Lett. 2006

The aim of the PhD work is to investigate the interplay between the mechanical properties of the dispersion and that of the matrix into which it evaporates on the morphology and properties of the final dried material (dimensions, composition, fractures, delamination, etc.), in order to provide experimental guides that may lead to a better shaping of organized soft materials.

This work by far exceeds the microfluidic pervaporation, as indeed such instabilities may occur in all the techniques involving a drying stage (inkjet printing, drop casting, spin-coating, thin film coating …). Yet, the microfluidic geometry is a model one, and as such quite useful. We thus plan to investigate the microfluidic drying kinetics of a series of complex fluids (from polymer solutions to colloidal dispersions) with well-defined properties in terms of rheology and physical-chemistry.

In particular, the materials synthetized in the framework of AMADEus are excellent candidates essentially because they can be tailor tuned. We identified two main families that can be supplied by partners from the LabEx consortium: nanoparticle dispersions and polymer solutions. In particular (but not only), plasmonic nanoparticles are extremely interesting because their optical signature permits us to measure their concentration while they can be coated with a variety materials such as polymers or silica, turning them from soft to hard. Copolymers are also interesting especially if they possess a hydrophobic group which can get adsorbed onto the microfluidic matrix. It is thus possible, in principle, to tune the coupling between the solution undergoing drying and the matrix into which it dries.

The outcomes of the PhD are expected to be manifold: a guide to dry in a controlled manner complex fluids in confined geometry, the opportunity to assemble nanoobjects manufactured in AMADEus, and precious information concerning the larger scale process of thin film formation.

Profile of applicant

We are looking for an experimentalist in physics with a good knowledge of mechanics and rheology of hard and soft matter systems and with a strong interest physical-chemistry. Experience in microfluidics is not a prerequisite.

Research labs involved

- Laboratoire du Futur (LOF), UMR 5258, 178 Avenue A. Schweitzer, 33 600 Pessac, France
- Institut de Chimie de la Matière Condensée de Bordeaux (ICMCB), UPR 9048, 87 Avenue A. Schweitzer, 33 600 Pessac, France
- Laboratoire de Chimie des Polymères Organiques (LCPO), UMR 5629, Université de Bordeaux/CNRS/INP Bordeaux, Allée Geoffroy St Hilaire, B8, CS50023 – 33600 Pessac, France

Co-Supervisors

Dr. Jacques Leng, Researcher
Laboratoire du Futur (LOF), UMR 5258, 178 Avenue A. Schweitzer, 33 600 Pessac, France
Email: jacques.leng-exterieur@solvay.com
Phone: +33 (0) 5 56 46 47 49

Dr. Mona Treguer-Delapierre, Assistant professor
Institut de Chimie de la Matière Condensée de Bordeaux (ICMCB), UPR 9048, 87 Avenue du Dr Albert Schweitzer, 33600 Pessac, France.
Email: treguer@icmcb-bordeaux.cnrs.fr
Phone: +33 (0) 5 40 00 63 33

How to apply

Please upload a letter of intent, including a list of potential reference scientists, and a full CV, through the AMADEus web platform http://amadeus.labex.u-bordeaux.fr/en/Jobs/ (job offer ref.: 2015 AMADEus 047). The precise start date, not earlier than 1st October 2015, can be negotiated. Applications will be considered until the position is filled.