MASTER DE PHYSIQUE ET APPLICATIONS - 2ème année

Spécialité Sciences des Matériaux et Nano-objets

UPMC Paris 6, ENS, ENS Cachan, Chimie ParisTech, ESPCI et l'École Polytechnique

Proposition de stage 2014-2015

Laboratoire: Laboratoire de Physique et d'Etude des Matériaux
Adresse: 10, rue Vauquelin 75005 Paris
Directeur du laboratoire : Ricardo Lobo

Responsable(s) du stage: Cheryl Feuillet-Palma, Dimitri Roditchev
Téléphone: 01 40 79 45 71
e-mail: cheryl.palma@espci.fr, dimitri.roditchev@espci.fr

Scanning Tunneling microscopy of superconducting single photon detectors

Superconducting single photon detector (SSPD) technology has emerged as a building block for numerous applications, including quantum communication, optical quantum computing or space-to-ground communications [1]. Such devices are made of nano-patterned ultrathin superconducting films (in our case – 3-5nm-thick NbN elaborated on sapphire substrate). The detector is a long (about 10-100 micron) folded superconducting nanowire (typically 10-100nm wide) (see figure 1); the wire is biased by a super-current who's intensity is just below the critical current value, that keeps the wire very close to the transition to the normal (resistive) state. When an incident high-energy particle (photon, electron etc.) hits the wire and gets absorbed, it locally destroys already weakened superconductivity and creates a resistive region, generating a measurable voltage drop across the detector [2].

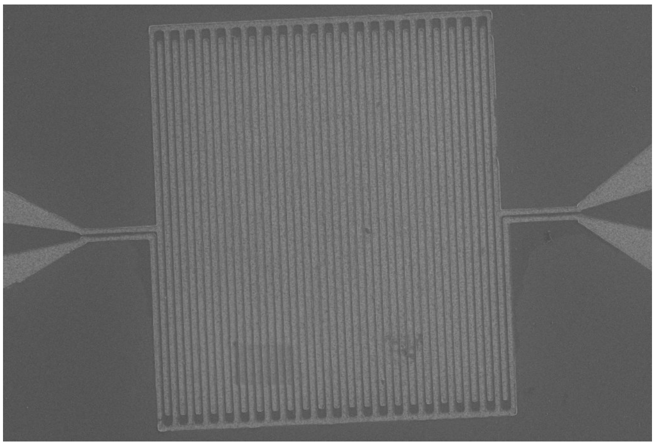

Figure 1: Scanning Electron Miscroscope image of a typical SSPD made on NbN ultrathin films : surface 10x10 µm2, the wire is 70 nm wide and 50 µm long.

While such ultra-sensitive detectors become widely used, the microscopic picture of the particle-to-signal conversion is far from being understood. How the presence of strong supercurrents before the particle absorption modifies the superconducting properties of the wire? Are there "preferential locations" where the conversion takes place? How the film structure, intrinsic and extrinsic inhomogeneities [3], wire edges and bends affect the detector efficiency? Are there vortices, and do they influence the detection process? At least some of these open questions will be addressed during this project, using the new ultrahigh vacuum low-temperature Scanning Tunneling Microscopy / Scanning Tunneling Spectroscopy / Atomic Force Microscope (STM/STS/AFM) equipment recently installed at LPEM-ESPCI and unique in France. For the first it will allow studying both the distribution of supercurrents and vortices when biasing the superconducting nanowire and give relevant information to understand the conversion process. This study may potentially have a strong impact since it could give ideas for optimizing design and improving efficiency of SSPDs.

Nanofabrication will be carried out using electron beam lithography at ESPCI and using clean room facility at ENS. Then the real current-biased device will studied at low temperatures with the STM/STS/AFM equipment. As a second step, the device will be triggered using a local current pulse produced by STM tip or by a photon delivered by a laser connected to an optical fiber, and its local and global responses will be analyzed.

[1] Nature Photon. 3 696–705 (2009) [2] Supercond. Sci. Technol. (2012) [3] C. Carbillet PhD Thesis, Paris. (2014)

Techniques utilisées : transport électronique DC, nano-fabrication (lithographie, gravure....), cryogénie basse température, techniques ultra-vides, microscopie à effet tunnel et microscopie à force atomique.

Qualités du candidat requises : Etudiant motivé ayant une solide formation en physique quantique et physique de la matière condensée et attiré par la physique expérimentale.

Rémunération éventuelle du stage : non
Possibilité de poursuivre en thèse ? oui
Si oui, mode de financement envisagé : écoles doctorale