

Supporting Information

Toward Efficient Tandem Electroreduction of CO₂ to Methanol using Anodized Titanium

Wei Jie Teh^a, Oriol Pique^b, Qi Hang Low^a, Weihan Zhu^a, Federico Calle-Vallejo^{b,}, Boon Siang Yeo^{a,*}*

^a Department of Chemistry, National University of Singapore, 3 Science Drive 3, Singapore 117543 and Solar Energy Research Institute of Singapore, National University of Singapore, 7 Engineering Drive 1, Singapore 117574.

^b Department of Materials Science and Chemical Physics & Institute of Theoretical and Computational Chemistry (IQT CUB), University of Barcelona, Martí i Franquès 1, 08028 Barcelona, Spain.

* To whom correspondence should be addressed: BSY (Email: chmyeos@nus.edu.sg) or FCV (Email: f.calle.vallejo@ub.edu).

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S1. Experimental and computational methods

S1.1. Anodization of Ti substrate

A polycrystalline titanium disc (99.99%, Diameter: 15 mm, Goodfellow) was progressively polished using a SiC paper (Grit 1200, Struers), 15- and 3 μm diamond slurries (Diapro, Struers). The disc was then sonicated in ultrapure water ($18 \text{ M}\Omega$) to remove any residual diamond slurry. The polished Ti disc was anodized in 0.2 M KCl electrolyte (99.0%, Sigma-Aldrich) at 0.25 A/cm^2 at 1, 2, 3 or 4 min. A platinum wire was used as counter electrode. The anodized Ti foil will be referred to as Ti_{an} . The exposed electrode area was 0.785 cm^2 . An Autolab PGSTAT 30 potentiostat (Eco Chemie) was used for controlling the electrochemistry.

S1.2. Preparation of control samples

The performance of the Ti_{an} catalyst for formic acid reduction (FAR) to methanol was compared against those of a polished Ti disc (0.785 cm^2) and commercial TiO_2 samples. 20 mg of commercial rutile (Sigma Aldrich, 99.9%, $< 5 \mu\text{m}$) or anatase (Sigma Aldrich, 99.8%, $< 5 \mu\text{m}$) TiO_2 was sonicated with 25 μL of Nafion[®] (5 % in aliphatic alcohols, Sigma Aldrich), 250 μL of ethanol (VWR chemicals, 99.97%) and 725 μL of ultrapure water. 25 μL of the catalyst ink was then dropcast onto a polished Ti disc and dried under a heat lamp, before being used for electrolysis.

S1.3. Electrochemical reduction of formic acid

FAR was conducted in 0.5 M HCOOH (Fluka, 98.0–100%) dissolved in aqueous 0.1 M K_2SO_4 (99.99%, Meryer) supporting electrolyte. A three-electrode configuration was used, with Ag/AgCl (saturated KCl, Pine) and graphite (Ted Pella) as the reference and counter electrodes, respectively. The cathodic (12 mL of 0.1 M K_2SO_4 + 0.5 M HCOOH) and anodic (8 mL of 0.1 M K_2SO_4) compartments were separated by a cation exchange membrane (CMV, AGC Asahi Glass).

A potentiostat (Gamry reference 600) was used to control the electrolysis of formic acid using chronoamperometry (CA). The current interrupt mode was used to compensate for the iR drop during CA measurements. The electrolysis period was 60 min. The potentials in this work are referenced to the reversible hydrogen electrode (RHE) using the average potential of the Ag/AgCl electrode ($E_{\text{Ag/AgCl}}$) (Equation 1).

$$E_{RHE} = E_{Ag/AgCl} + 0.197 + (0.059 \cdot pH) \quad (1)$$

The gaseous products (H_2 , CO, CH_4) were detected from the cathodic compartment by an on-line gas chromatograph (GC, Agilent 7890A) with flame ionization detectors (FIDs) and a thermal conductivity detector (TCD). N_2 (Chemgas, 99.999 %) was used as the carrier gas. The measurements were made over the course of seven GC injections (intervals of 492 s between adjacent injections). To ensure that the reported data is from a system under equilibrium conditions, only measurements obtained from the 4th to 7th injections were used for analyses. Details of our chromatography setups have been described in our previous work.¹ Solutions at various pH values (2.6, 3.4, 4.5 and 5.8) were adjusted with KOH (99.99%, Sigma-Aldrich) for 6 h electrolysis experiments. After electrolysis, the liquid products were analyzed using headspace-GC (HS-GC, Agilent, 7890B and 7697A). The sample was equilibrated in an oven at 90 °C for 30 min, before its headspace was injected into the GC. An example of the HS-GC chromatogram obtained is shown in Figure S4.

The presence of methanol was also verified using ¹H nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy. 1 mL of catholyte was mixed with 50 μ L internal standard, which consisted of 25 mM phenol (99.5%, Scharlau) and 5 mM dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO, 99.9%, Quality Reagent Chemical). 540 μ L of this mixture was further mixed with 60 μ L D_2O (99.96 % D, Cambridge Isotope Lab), and transferred to a NMR sample tube. ¹H NMR spectroscopy was performed with a 500 MHz spectrometer (Avance 500, Bruker). The water suppression method was used. The spectrum was collected after 16 continuous scans. An example of the ¹H NMR spectrum obtained is shown in Figure S4.

Formaldehyde (CH_2O) concentrations were measured using the chromotropic acid method.² 1 mL of electrolyte was added into a 10 mL volumetric flask, followed by 0.14 mL of 5 % chromotropic acid disodium dihydrate solution (technical grade, Sigma-Aldrich). 5 mL of concentrated sulfuric acid (98%, Fisher-Scientific) was then added, with the flask placed in a cool water bath. The solution was topped up to the mark using 0.1 M K_2SO_4 , left to stand for 15 min, and then analyzed using a Shimadzu UV-3600 UV-Vis-NIR spectrometer.

S1.4. Electrochemical reduction of formaldehyde

A three-electrode cell was used, with a cation exchange membrane to separate the anodic and cathodic compartments. Ag/AgCl (saturated KCl) and graphite were respectively employed as the reference and counter electrodes. A nominal amount (5 mM) of CH_2O (16% v/v, methanol-free, Sigma-Aldrich) was added into 14 mL of 0.1 M K_2SO_4 electrolyte. Before

CH_2O electrolysis, 1 mL of solution was extracted for HS-GC analysis for CH_3OH detection, while another 1 mL was extracted for formate detection using high-performance liquid chromatography (Agilent, HPLC-1260 Infinity Series; Aminex HPX-87H column; variable wavelength detector, and 0.5 mM H_2SO_4 mobile phase). The quantification process was repeated after 60 min of CH_2O electrolysis. The amount of HCOOH and CH_3OH formed from Cannizzaro disproportionation is based on the difference in HCOOH and CH_3OH concentrations before and after CH_2O electrolysis.³ The amount of CH_2O present in the electrolyte was quantified using the chromotropic acid method.

S1.5. Characterization of catalysts

Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM) (JEOL JSM-6701F, 5 keV) was employed to characterise the surface morphologies of the catalysts.

X-ray diffraction (XRD) analysis was used to determine the composition of the catalyst. The system used was a Bruker D8 Advance (Cu K_α 40 kV, 40 mA) with 2D Lynxeye XE PSD Counter detector, with the incoming signal fixed at 5°. The samples were loaded on a low background Si wafer (Diffraction free, p-type doped B, KMT corporation).

X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) was used to analyse the surface composition of the Ti electrodes. XPS measurements were performed using a SPECS system with XR50 X-ray Mg K_α (1253.7 eV) source. Surface etching was done by Ar ion sputtering with an operation energy of 2.0 kV under an argon pressure of 10^{-5} mbar. The adventitious C_{1s} peak at 285.0 eV was used as reference for calibrating the binding energies.

Raman spectroscopy was performed using a confocal Raman microscope (Horiba Jobin Yvon) in an epi-illumination mode (top-down). A He-Ne laser with 633 nm wavelength (CVI Melles Griot) was used as the excitation source. The laser beam was focused on the samples using a dry objective lens ($\times 50$ Olympus MPlan N, numerical aperture 0.75). The back-scattered light was filtered through a 633 nm edge filter, before being directed into a spectrograph (iHR320) / charge-coupled device detector (Synapse CCD). The acquisition time of each spectrum was 30 s.

Diffuse Reflectance Spectroscopy (DRS) was performed using a Shimadzu UV-3600 UV-Vis-NIR spectrometer. The samples were placed on the sample holder for analysis, with BaSO_4 powder (Wako) as the reference.

Electron Paramagnetic Resonance (EPR) Spectroscopy was performed using a JEOL FA200 ESR spectrometer. The Ti_{an} layers were removed from the Ti substrates, weighed, and loaded into a 250 mm Wilmad Quartz (Cfq) EPR (Diam. 5mm) tube for analysis. The spectra were measured at a microwave frequency of approximately 9.207 GHz, microwave power of 1.0 mW, modulation frequency of 100 kHz, width of 1.0 mT, sweep time of 2 min and time constant of 0.1 s. All spectra were taken at room temperature. Mn²⁺ embedded in MgO was used as a reference for all experimental g values. All signal areas were taken using the numerical double integration of the EPR spectra peaks.^{4,5}

Cyclic voltammetry was conducted on the samples after FAR. The electrolyte used was 0.1 M K₂SO₄ + 0.5 M HCOOH. The working electrode was scanned from -1.25 to 1.35 V vs RHE, at a scan rate of 50 mV/s. The TOV anodic peak area was measured from -0.85 to 1.35 V vs RHE.

Elemental analysis of the catholyte before and after FAR was performed using a Perkin Elmer Avio 500 Inductively Coupled Plasma-Optical Emission Spectrometer (ICP-OES).

S1.6. Computational methods

The VASP code was used to perform the DFT simulations.⁶ The PBE exchange-correlation functional was used to estimate the total energies⁷ and the projector augmented wave method was used to describe ion-electron interactions.⁸ To help in localizing the d states of Ti atoms, a Hubbard U_{eff} of 5 eV was used, obtained in previous works through a linear-response method.⁹ We used a plane-wave cutoff of 450 eV, k_BT = 0.2 eV (extrapolating total energies to 0 K), and the conjugate-gradient optimization algorithm until the maximal force on any atom was below 0.05 eV/Å.

The optimized bulk parameters were found to be a = 2.995 Å and b = 4.715 Å for the rutile phase, and a = 3.889 Å and b = 9.732 Å for the anatase phase. All TiO₂ slab models had 4 atomic layers, the two bottommost were fixed at the bulk equilibrium distances, whereas the topmost two and the adsorbates were fully allowed to relax. The TiO₂(110) slab contained 24 Ti and 48 O atoms, the TiO₂(120)-CT and TiO₂(120)-BT slabs had 39 Ti and 78 O atoms each, and the A-TiO₂(101) slab had 32 Ti and 64 O atoms. Those slabs avoid lateral interactions between adsorbates. The vertical distance between repeated images was at least 13 Å. Monkhorst-Pack¹⁰ meshes of 4×6×1, 3×4×1, 3×4×1, and 3×5×1 for TiO₂(110), TiO₂(120)-CT,

$\text{TiO}_2(120)$ -BT, and A- $\text{TiO}_2(101)$, respectively, ensured convergence of the adsorption energies within 0.05 eV. Isolated molecules were calculated in boxes of $9 \text{ \AA} \times 10 \text{ \AA} \times 11 \text{ \AA}$ using $k_{\text{B}}T = 0.001 \text{ eV}$ and sampling the Γ -point only.

The reaction free energies were approximated as $\Delta G \approx \Delta E_{DFT} + \Delta ZPE - T\Delta S$, where ΔE_{DFT} is the DFT-calculated reaction energy, ΔZPE is the zero-point energy change and $T\Delta S$ is the entropy change at $T = 298.15 \text{ K}$. ΔS only includes vibrational contributions for the adsorbates and all contributions for the free molecules. No explicit solvation was considered for two reasons: (I) the scope of this work is the identification of activity trends which, according to previous studies, remain intact after the inclusion of explicit solvation in TiO_2 .¹¹ (II) Our systems are large, and the inclusion of explicit solvation would make this work intractable. However, we did perform implicit solvent calculations for the intermediates in the most favorable pathways on $\text{TiO}_2(110)$ and $\text{TiO}_2(110)\text{-O}$.¹² In general, we observed a destabilization of all adsorbates by $\sim 0.3 \text{ eV}$, in agreement with previous theoretical works.¹³ The results are shown in Section S1.9.

The energetics of proton-electron pairs was evaluated using the computational hydrogen electrode approach.¹⁴ The limiting potentials U_L were calculated based on the largest positive free energies of reaction: $U_L = -\Delta G_{max}/e^-$, where e^- is the charge of an electron. To ensure that the calculated and experimental equilibrium potentials agree, we corrected the total energies of liquids and gases using a semiempirical method.¹⁵

S1.7. Gas-phase corrections

The free energies of gas-phase molecules were estimated as: $G = E_{DFT} + ZPE - TS$. ZPE values were obtained from vibration frequency analyses and TS values were obtained from thermodynamic tables at $T = 298.15 \text{ K}$, see Table S1. Moreover, corrections to the formation energies of 0.19, 0.04, 0.03, and 0.46 eV were applied to HCOOH , CH_3OH , CH_4 , and O_2 , respectively, following the method described by Granda-Marulanda et al.¹⁵

Table S1. Zero-point energy and entropy contributions to the free energies of gas-phase molecules. All values are in eV.

Molecule	ZPE	TS
H ₂	0.27	0.40
H ₂ O	0.57	0.58
O ₂	0.10	0.63
CH ₄	1.19	0.58
CH ₃ OH	1.34	0.74
HCOOH	0.89	0.77

S1.8. Liquid-phase corrections

Formic acid, methanol, and water are in the liquid phase. Their free energies from gas-phase DFT calculations are approximated using the method described by Calle-Vallejo et al.,¹⁶ which is based on TS corrections. Such corrections are for formic acid, methanol, and water – 0.13, –0.04, and –0.09 eV, respectively.

S1.9. Implicit solvent calculations

Table S2. Free energies of adsorption of the intermediates involved in the most favorable pathway of FAR to methanol, with implicit solvent (ΔG_{sol}), without it (ΔG), and their absolute difference ($\Delta\Delta G$). All values are in eV.

TiO ₂ (110)	ΔG	ΔG_{sol}	$\Delta\Delta G$
*HCOOH	–0.44	–0.05	0.38
*H ₂ COOH	1.27	1.76	0.49
*H ₂ CO	–0.09	0.28	0.37
*H ₃ CO	1.12	1.45	0.32

TiO ₂ (110)-O	ΔG	ΔG_{sol}	$\Delta\Delta G$
*HCOOH	–0.03	0.18	0.21
*H ₂ COOH	–1.11	–0.57	0.54
*O + CH ₃ OH _(l)	–1.64	–1.63	0.02
*OH	–1.58	–1.24	0.34

S2. Characterization of catalysts

S2.1. X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy of Ti_{an}

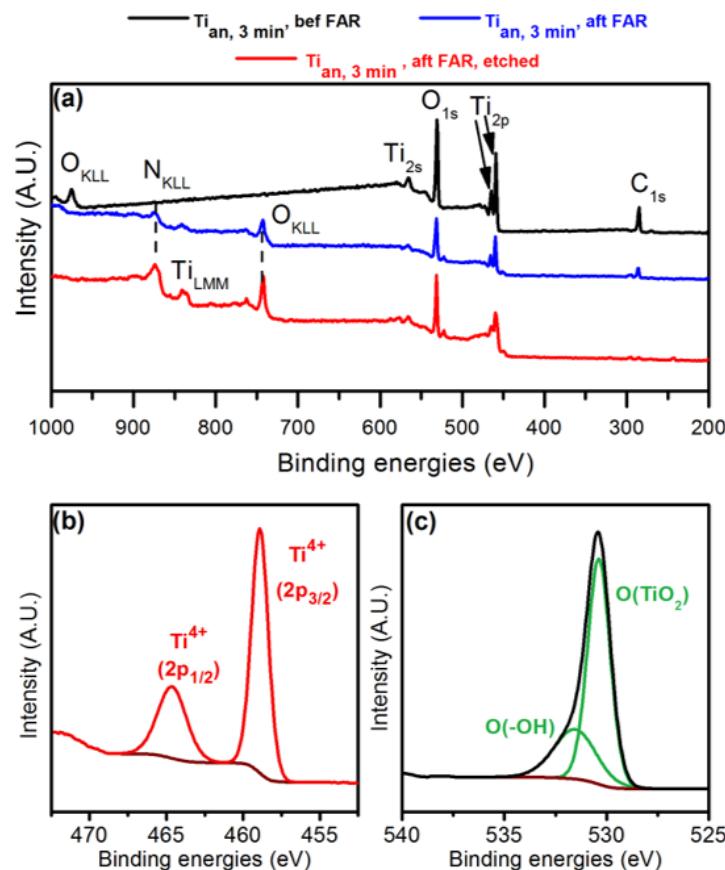


Figure S1. (a) XPS survey spectra of a Ti_{an}, 3 min catalyst before and after FAR at -1.00 V vs RHE. (b)-(c): Ti_{2p} and O_{1s} spectra of Ti_{an}, 3 min after FAR at -1.00 V vs RHE, before Ar⁺ etching.

Table S3. Experimental (Exp) and literature (Lit) O_{1s} binding energies (BEs) of lattice TiO₂ (Ti-O) and surface hydroxyl groups (Ti-OH) in different forms of TiO₂.

Ti-O BEs (eV) (Exp)	Ti-OH BEs (eV) (Exp)	TiO ₂ substrate	Ti-O BEs (eV) (Lit)	Ti-OH BEs (eV) (Lit)	References
		Amorphous	530.5	531.8	17
530.4	531.6	Anatase	530.5	531.5	18
		Rutile	530.1	531.7	19

S2.2. Diffuse reflectance spectroscopy of Ti_{an} catalyst

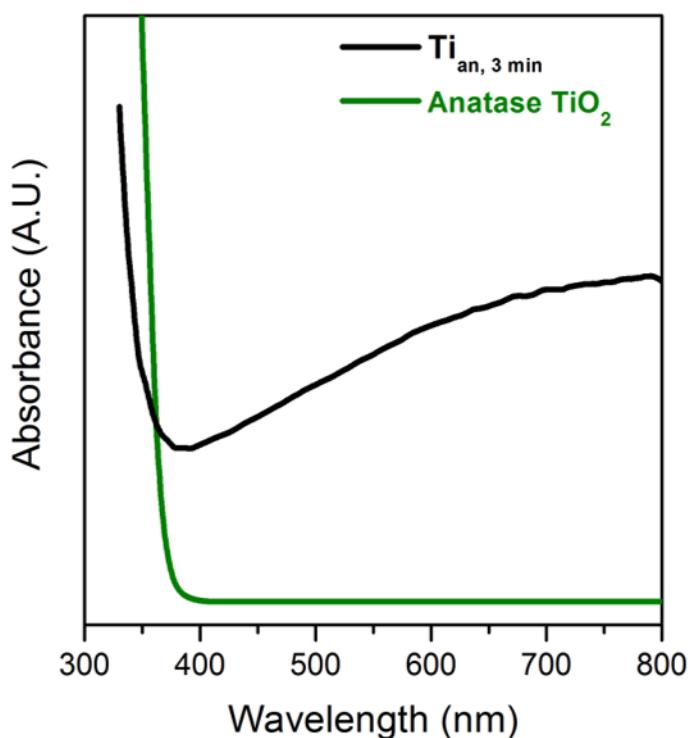


Figure S2. Diffuse reflectance spectroscopy (DRS) spectra of $\text{Ti}_{\text{an}, 3 \text{ min}}$ sample after FAR at -1.00 V vs RHE. For comparison, commercial anatase TiO_2 was also analyzed using DRS. The absorption region in the UV region ($< 400 \text{ nm}$) is attributed to the 3.2 eV band gap transition in bulk TiO_2 .²⁰ The absorption between 400 to 800 nm observed in the $\text{Ti}_{\text{an}, 3 \text{ min}}$ catalyst is attributed to TOVs, resulting in a continuous vacancy band of electronic states induced below the conduction band of TiO_2 .²¹

S2.3. X-ray diffraction of Ti_{an} catalyst

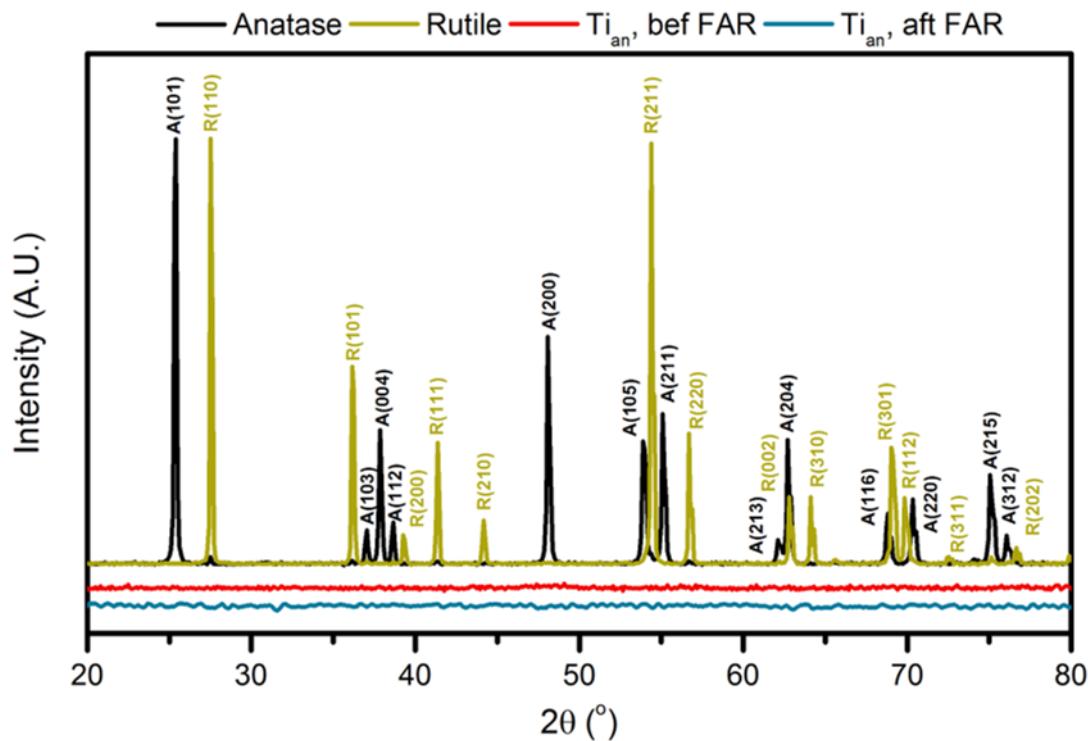


Figure S3. XRD analysis of $\text{Ti}_{\text{an}}, 3 \text{ min}$ powder before and after FAR at -1.00 V vs RHE. For comparison, crystalline anatase and rutile TiO_2 samples were also analyzed using XRD. No well-defined anatase or rutile TiO_2 XRD peaks were observed from the $\text{Ti}_{\text{an}}, 3 \text{ min}$ powder before and after FAR. This indicates that the anodized catalyst was XRD-amorphous.

S2.4. Raman spectroscopy of Ti_{an} catalyst

Table S4. Observed Raman shifts and peak assignments for titanium species shown in Figure 1g

Raman shift (cm ⁻¹) of titanium species						
Ti _{an} , before electrolysis	Ti _{an} , after FAR electrolysis		Rutile TiO ₂	Anatase TiO ₂	Literature values	Peak assignment
	Major	Minor	standard	standard		
153	153	-	142	-	144	B _{1g} (Rutile)
-	-	-	236	-	235	Second-order Raman scattering
446	446	-	446	-	448	E _g (Rutile)
610	610	-	610	-	612	A _{1g} (Rutile)
-	-	151	-	142	147	E _g (Anatase)
-	-	398	-	398	398	B _{1g} (Anatase)
-	-	515	-	515	515	A _{1g} , B _{1g} (Anatase)
-	-	630	-	639	640	E _g (Anatase)

Literature values for rutile and anatase TiO₂ are taken from ²².

S3. Electrolysis on Ti_{an}

S3.1. Electrolysis of HCOOH on Ti_{an}

Table S5. Products obtained from the electrocatalytic FAR using Ti_{an}, 3 min catalysts at different applied potentials. Electrolysis were conducted for 60 min in 0.1 M K₂SO₄ + 0.5 M HCOOH.

Potential (V vs RHE)	Products obtained					CH ₃ OH detected (μM)
	CH ₃ OH	H ₂	CH ₄	CH ₂ O	Total	
-0.90	8.4±1.9	77±10	1.7±0.9	0.41±0.07	87±11	594±183
	<i>-1.07±0.29</i>	<i>-9±4</i>	<i>-0.15±0.04</i>	<i>-0.019±0.003</i>	<i>-10±4</i>	
-0.95	10.2±1.8	81±9	1.3±0.4	0.24±0.04	93±9	771±135
	<i>-1.39±0.13</i>	<i>-11±4</i>	<i>-0.17±0.01</i>	<i>-0.021±0.002</i>	<i>-13±4</i>	
-1.00	12.6±1.8	77±3	1.4±0.3	0.14±0.04	91±4	1122±188
	<i>-1.95±0.20</i>	<i>-12±2</i>	<i>-0.20±0.03</i>	<i>-0.019±0.001</i>	<i>-14±2</i>	
-1.05	5.3±1.0	88±8	0.8±0.2	0.06±0.01	94±8	1231±93
	<i>-1.96±0.19</i>	<i>-29±7</i>	<i>-0.23±0.05</i>	<i>-0.024±0.005</i>	<i>-31±7</i>	
No potential (pre-reduced Ti _{an})	N.D.	N.D.	N.D.	N.D.	-	N.D.

Numbers in bold are the Faradaic efficiencies in %, while numbers in italics are partial current densities in mA/cm². N.D.: Not detected.

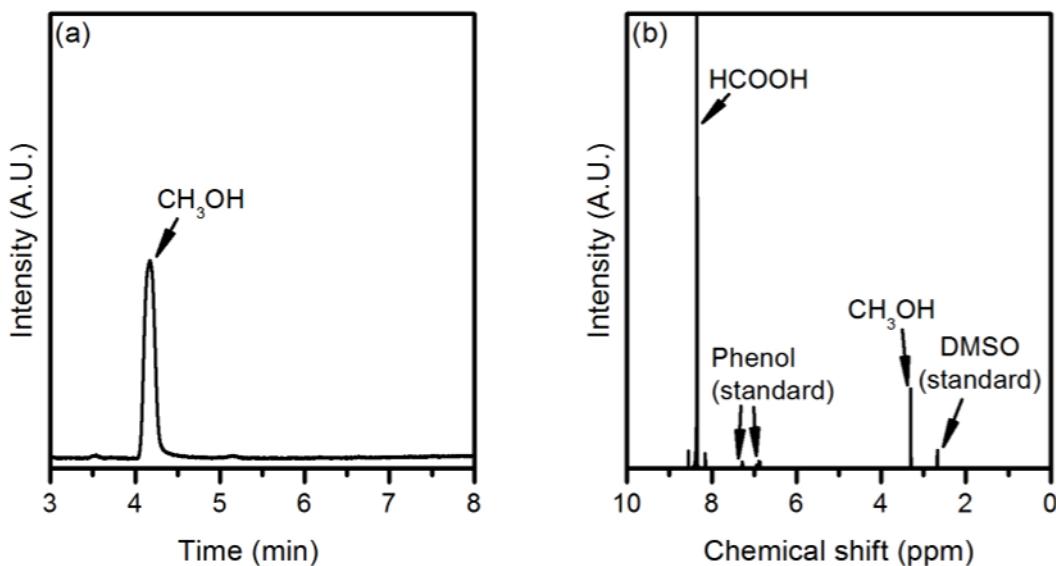


Figure S4. Detection of CH₃OH in the electrolyte using (a) HS-GC and (b) ¹H NMR. The electrolyte was analyzed after FAR, with FAR performed using Ti_{an}, 3 min catalysts biased at -1.00 V vs RHE.

S3.2. Electrolysis of FAR products on Ti_{an}

Table S6. Data obtained from the reduction of CH₃OH or CH₂O on a Ti_{an}, 3 min catalyst at -1.00 V vs RHE.

Reactant	Current density (mA/cm ²)	CH ₄ detected (ppm)
CH ₃ OH	-5.1	N.D.
CH ₂ O	-1.9	N.D.

N.D.: Not detected.

S3.3. Production of CO from HCOOH

Table S7. Concentrations of CO detected from a $\text{Ti}_{\text{an}, 3 \text{ min}}$ catalyst in the presence of HCOOH.

Injection	CO detected (ppm)
	FAR, -1.00 V vs RHE
1	9.9
2	14.2
3	3.8
4	3.0
5	3.6
6	3.9
7	4.5

S3.4. Stability tests for FAR on Ti_{an}

Table S8. Stability test of $\text{Ti}_{\text{an}, 3 \text{ min}}$ at -1.00 V vs RHE for six hours. The electrolyte used was 0.1 M $\text{K}_2\text{SO}_4 + 0.5 \text{ M HCOOH}$ at pH 2.6.

Electrolyte pH	Time (h)	FE _{CH₃OH} (%)	Accumulative CH ₃ OH concentrations (mM)
2.6	1	13.8 \pm 1.3	0.8 \pm 0.2
	2	11.3 \pm 1.8	1.5 \pm 0.3
	3	8.8 \pm 2.5	2.1 \pm 0.4
	4.5	4.9 \pm 0.8	2.7 \pm 0.6
	6	3.4 \pm 1.6	3.2 \pm 0.5

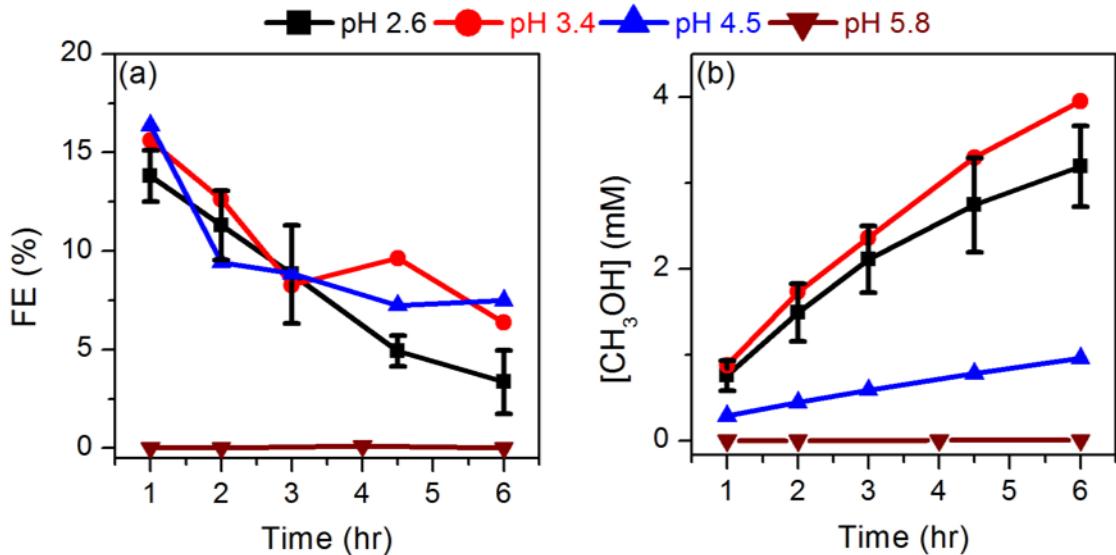


Figure S5. (a) Faradaic efficiencies (%) and (b) accumulated concentrations (mM) of CH₃OH after six hours FAR at -1.00 V vs RHE at various pH values. The pH values were adjusted using KOH.

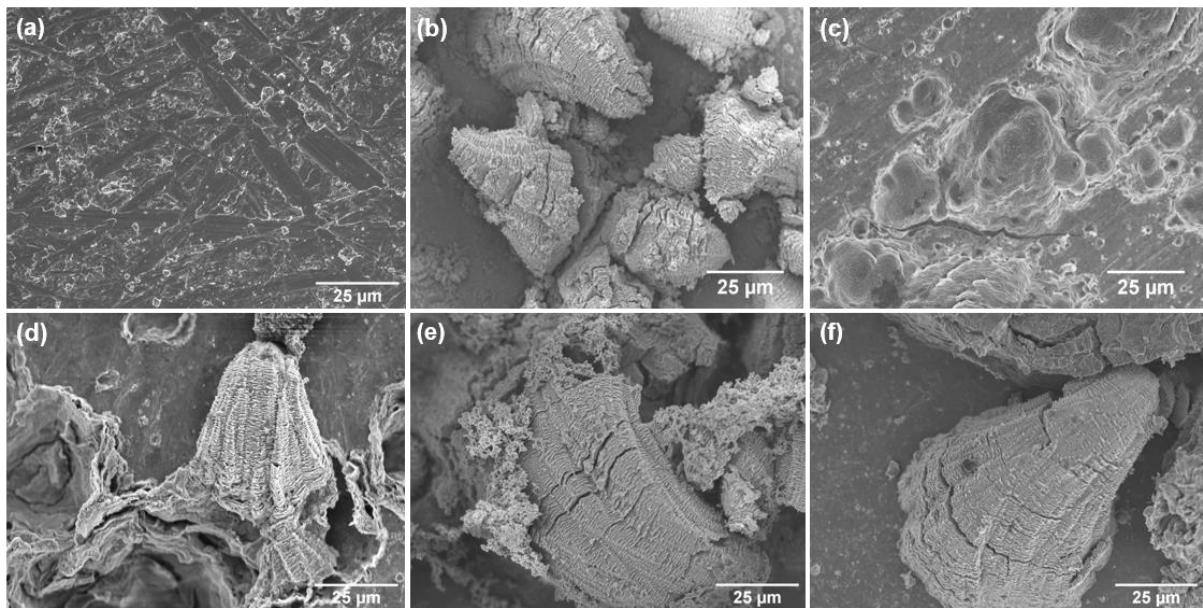


Figure S6. SEM images of (a) polished Ti disc, and (b) Ti disc anodized in 0.2 M KCl for 3 min (Ti_{an}, 3 min), before FAR. Ti_{an}, 3 min after six hours of FAR at -1.00 V vs RHE at (c) pH 2.6, (d) pH 3.4, (e) pH 4.5, and (f) pH 5.8. Significant loss of Ti_{an}, 3 min catalyst was observed after six hours of FAR at pH 2.6, and the amount of delaminated Ti_{an}, 3 min catalyst decreases at higher pH.

Table S9. Elemental analyses of Ti content in 0.1 M K₂SO₄ electrolytes before and after they were used for 6 h of FAR at -1.00 V vs RHE. Ti_{an, 3 min} catalysts were used. The mass of dissolved Ti is calculated from the final electrolyte volume (12 mL). To verify that the Ti in the electrolyte is mainly from Ti_{an} and not from the underlying metallic Ti disc substrate, we performed FAR on a polished Ti disc electrode for 6 h. Only a very small amount of Ti (0.14 ppm) could be detected in the electrolyte.

Experiment	pH	Ti in the electrolyte (ppm)	Mass of dissolved Ti (mg)
Ti_{an}, before FAR	2.6	N.D.	N.D.
Ti_{an}, after 6 h FAR	2.6	8.56	0.103
	3.4	0.45	0.0050
	4.5	0.20	0.0024
	5.8	0.04	0.0005
Ti disc, after 6 h FAR	2.6	0.14	0.0016

N.D.: Not detected.

S3.5. FAR on other metal catalysts

Table S10. Activities of metal catalysts for FAR at -1.00 V vs RHE in 0.1 M K₂SO₄ + 0.5 M HCOOH.

Catalyst	Substrate	Current density (mA/cm ²)	FЕ _{CH₃OH} (%)	j _{CH₃OH} (mA/cm ²)	CH ₃ OH detected (μM)
Fe		-61	N.D.	N.D.	N.D.
Co		-56	N.D.	N.D.	N.D.
Cu	Anodized (+0.25 A/cm ²	-216	N.D.	N.D.	N.D.
Zr	for 3 min in	-13	N.D.	N.D.	N.D.
Sn	0.2 M KCl)	-13	N.D.	N.D.	N.D.
Cr		-100	0.005	-0.007	1.4
Ti		-14	12.6	-1.95	1122
Pd		-95	N.D.	N.D.	N.D.
Cr	Polished disc	-108	0.07	-0.08	22.6
Ti		-87	0.22	-0.12	62.3

N.D.: Not detected.

S4. Active site analysis of Ti_{an} for FAR

S4.1. Electron paramagnetic resonance analysis of Ti_{an}

Table S11. Mass of Ti_{an} (anodized at 1, 2, 3 and 4 min) catalyst powders removed from their disc substrates after they were used for electrocatalytic FAR; their TOV signals were measured using EPR spectroscopy. FAR was conducted for 60 min at -1.00 V vs RHE in 0.1 M K₂SO₄ + 0.5 M HCOOH. Three discs were studied at each anodization time. The TOV signal areas were taken from g = 2.1 to g = 1.81.

Anodization time (min)	Mass of powder from each substrate (mg)		Mass of accumulated powder from 3 substrates (mg)	TOV EPR signal area (A.U.)	Normalized TOV signal area/mg of powder (A.U.)	<i>j</i> _{CH3OH} (mA/cm ²)	
1	0.28	0.19	0.20	0.67	25	37	-0.80
2	0.60	0.76	0.60	1.96	76	39	-1.42
3	1.03	0.98	0.99	3.00	121	40	-1.95
4	1.00	1.17	1.05	3.22	146	45	-2.00
3 (Before FAR)	1.45		1.45	N.D.	N.D.	-	

N.D.: Not detected.

S4.2. Cyclic voltammetry and double layer capacitances of Ti_{an}

Table S12. TOV anodic peak areas of Ti_{an} catalysts (anodized at 1, 2, 3 and 4 min) after FAR at -1.00 V vs RHE, measured using cyclic voltammetry. The TOV anodic peak area is taken from -0.85 V to 1.35 V vs RHE. The scan rate was 50 mV/s.

Anodization time/min	Anodic charge densities (mC/cm ²)
1	104 ± 26
2	351 ± 54
3	575 ± 47
4	661 ± 49

S4.3. FAR on control samples

Table S13. Faradaic efficiencies and partial current densities of products detected from electrocatalytic FAR on anatase and rutile TiO₂ dropcast on Ti discs. Experiments were conducted at -1.00 V vs RHE in 0.1 M K₂SO₄ + 0.5 M HCOOH for 60 min.

Sample		CH ₃ OH	H ₂	CH ₄	CH ₂ O	Total
Anatase TiO₂	FE(%)	0.18±0.04	90±2	0.021±0.003	N.D.	90±2
	<i>j</i> (mA/cm ²)	-0.05±0.01	-31±6	-0.008±0.002		-31±6
Rutile TiO₂	FE(%)	0.03±0.01	90±7	0.02±0.01	0.008±0.006	90±7
	<i>j</i> (mA/cm ²)	-0.05±0.02	-139±38	-0.03±0.02	-0.003±0.002	-139±38

N.D: Not detected.

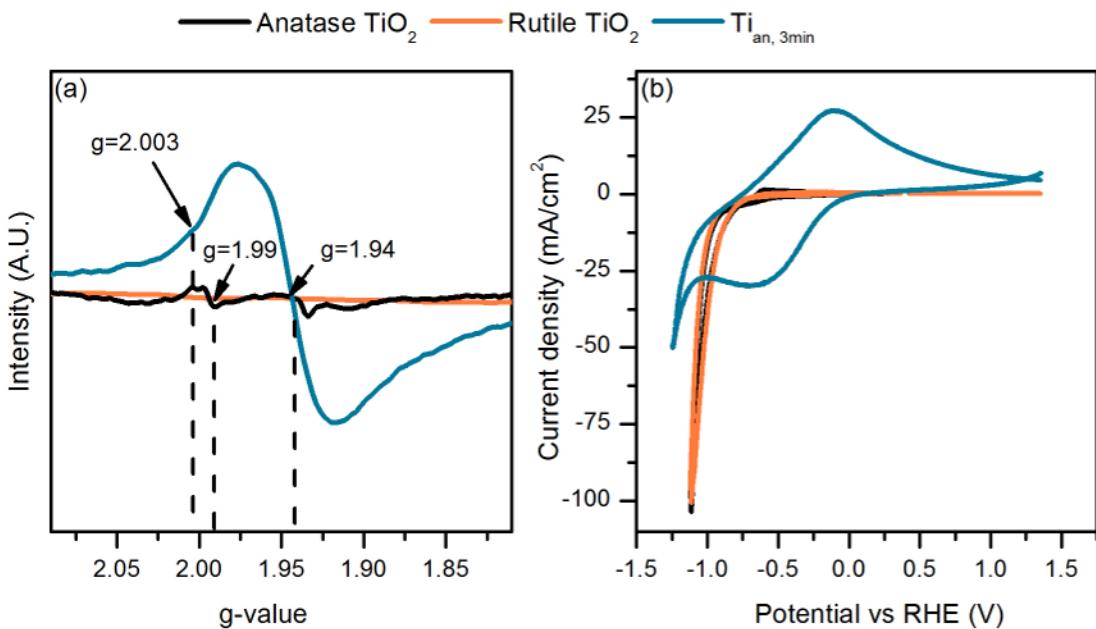


Figure S7. (a) Electron paramagnetic resonance (EPR) spectrum and (b) cyclic voltammogram (CV) of a $\text{Ti}_{\text{an}, 3\text{min}}$ catalyst, in comparison to those from control anatase and rutile TiO_2 samples. EPR spectroscopy and CV were conducted after 60 min FAR at -1.00 V vs RHE. The peak at $g = 1.99$ in the EPR spectrum of anatase TiO_2 corresponds to Ti^{3+} centres trapped in the TiO_2 lattice.²³ No Ti^{3+} signals were observed in the EPR spectrum of rutile TiO_2 .

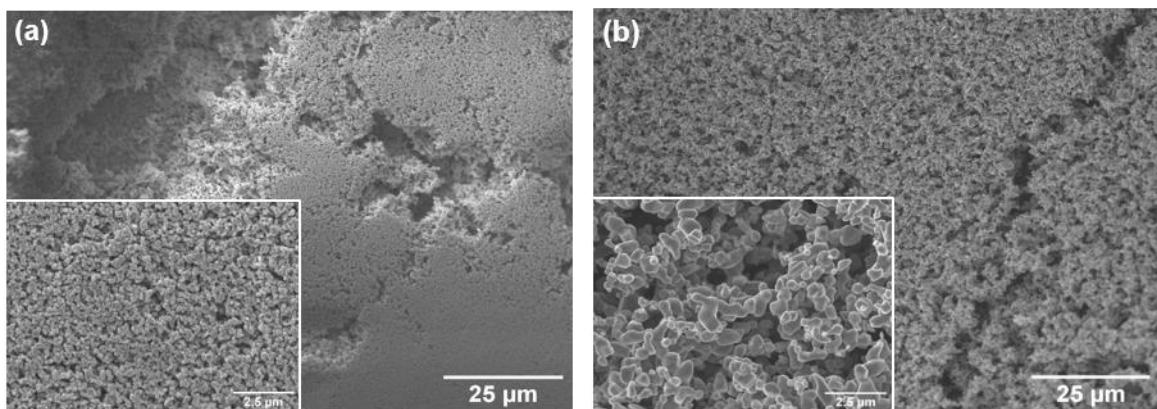


Figure S8. SEM images of crystalline (a) anatase and (b) rutile TiO_2 samples. The insets are the high magnification images of anatase and rutile TiO_2 .

S4.4. FAR on Ti_{an} at different anodization times

Table S14. Faradaic efficiencies and partial current densities of products detected from FAR electroreduction on Ti_{an} (anodized for 1, 2, 3 and 4 min). Experiments were conducted at -1.00 V vs RHE for 60 min in 0.1 M K₂SO₄ + 0.5 M HCOOH.

Anodization time/min		CH ₃ OH	H ₂	CH ₄	CH ₂ O	Total
1	FE(%)	4.7±1.1	87±1	0.6±0.1	0.08±0.01	92±2
	<i>j</i> (mA/cm ²)	-0.80±0.21	-11.8±0.5	-0.08±0.02	-0.011±0.002	-12.7±0.5
2	FE(%)	8.7±1.6	84±6	0.9±0.3	0.11±0.01	94±6
	<i>j</i> (mA/cm ²)	-1.42±0.16	-14±5	-0.16±0.06	-0.019±0.004	-16±5
3	FE(%)	12.6±1.8	77±3	1.4±0.3	0.14±0.04	91±4
	<i>j</i> (mA/cm ²)	-1.95±0.20	-12±2	-0.20±0.03	-0.019±0.001	-14±2
4	FE(%)	15.2±1.0	70±1	1.7±0.2	0.17±0.02	88±1
	<i>j</i> (mA/cm ²)	-2.00±0.10	-9.8±0.3	-0.23±0.02	-0.023±0.002	-12.0±0.3

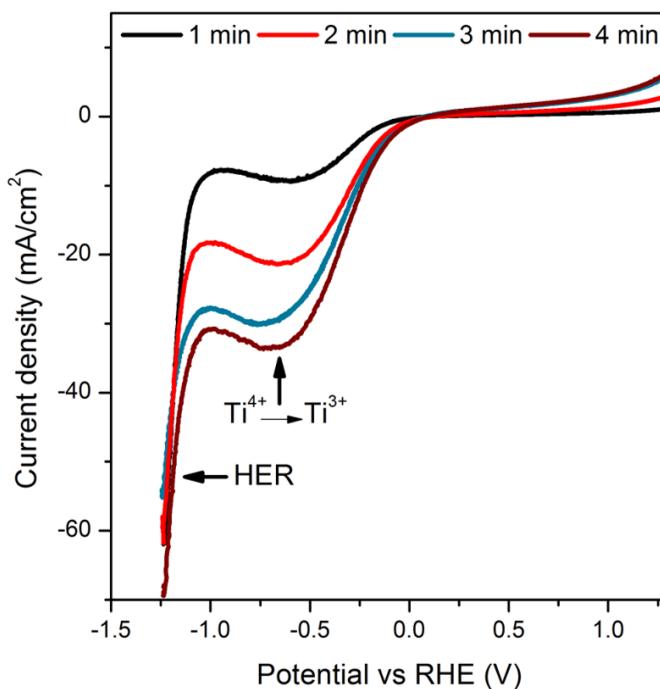


Figure S9. Linear sweep voltammograms of Ti_{an} (anodized for 1, 2, 3 and 4 min). The electrolyte used was 0.1 M K_2SO_4 + 0.5 M HCOOH (pH 2.6). The cathodic peak observed at -0.5 V vs RHE is assigned to the reduction of Ti^{4+} to Ti^{3+} , while the subsequent plunge in current at -1.25 V is assigned largely to the hydrogen evolution reaction.

S5. DFT calculations: tabulated data

S5.1. Adsorption energies

Tables S15a-d. Free energies of adsorption and their contributions for all the possible intermediates involved in the formic acid reduction to methanol at CUS sites. *H is also included. The ZPE, TS_{vib}, and the corresponding ΔG values obtained for the different adsorbates in this study on all the different surface models are listed. HCOOH_(l), protons and electrons were used as a reference for all the free energies. All values are in eV.

(a)

TiO ₂ (110)	ZPE	TS _{vib}	ΔG
*HCOOH	0.93	0.26	-0.44
*H ₂ COOH	1.26	0.19	1.27
*CHO	0.42	0.20	1.72
*HCOH	0.79	0.19	1.70
*H ₂ CO	0.78	0.21	-0.09
*CH	0.40	0.04	1.63
*H ₂ COH	1.16	0.14	1.13
*H ₃ CO	1.09	0.19	1.12
*O + CH ₃ OH _(l)	0.09	0.03	4.37
*H	0.28	0.04	0.09

(b)

TiO ₂ (120)-BT	ZPE	TS _{vib}	ΔG
*HCOOH	0.93	0.26	-0.29
*H ₂ COOH	1.26	0.19	1.21
*CHO	0.42	0.20	1.65
*HCOH	0.79	0.19	1.75
*H ₂ CO	0.78	0.21	-0.10
*CH	0.40	0.04	3.01
*H ₂ COH	1.16	0.14	1.29
*H ₃ CO	1.09	0.19	0.92
*O + CH ₃ OH _(l)	0.09	0.03	3.94
*H	0.28	0.04	-0.09

(c)

TiO ₂ (120)-CT	ZPE	TS _{vib}	ΔG
*HCOOH	0.93	0.26	-0.59
*H ₂ COOH	1.26	0.19	1.57
*CHO	0.42	0.20	1.69
*HCOH	0.79	0.19	1.76
*H ₂ CO	0.78	0.21	0.03
*CH	0.40	0.04	2.09
*H ₂ COH	1.16	0.14	1.49
*H ₃ CO	1.09	0.19	1.24
*O + CH ₃ OH _(l)	0.09	0.03	4.54
*H	0.28	0.04	-0.21

(d)

A-TiO ₂ (101)	ZPE	TS _{vib}	ΔG
*HCOOH	0.93	0.26	-0.64
*H ₂ COOH	1.26	0.19	1.89
*CHO	0.42	0.20	1.75
*HCOH	0.79	0.19	2.18
*H ₂ CO	0.78	0.21	0.04
*CH	0.40	0.04	1.77
*H ₂ COH	1.16	0.14	1.23
*H ₃ CO	1.09	0.19	1.51
*O + CH ₃ OH _(l)	0.09	0.03	4.97
*H	0.28	0.04	0.69

Tables S16a-d. Free energies of adsorption and their contributions for all the possible intermediates involved in the formic acid reduction to methanol at TOV sites. *H is also included. The ZPE, TS_{vib}, and the corresponding ΔG values obtained for the different adsorbates in this study on all the different surface models are listed. HCOOH_(l), protons and electrons were used as a reference for all the free energies. All values are in eV.

(a)

TiO ₂ (110)-O	ZPE	TS _{vib}	ΔG
*HCOOH	0.93	0.26	-0.03
*H ₂ COOH	1.26	0.19	-1.11
*CHO	0.42	0.20	0.62
*HCOH	0.79	0.19	1.06
*H ₂ CO	0.78	0.21	-0.99
*CH	0.40	0.04	1.91
*H ₂ COH	1.16	0.14	0.25
*H ₃ CO	1.09	0.19	-1.79
*O + CH ₃ OH _(l)	0.09	0.03	-1.64
*OH	0.35	0.09	-1.58
*H	0.28	0.04	0.16

(b)

TiO ₂ (120)-CT-O	ZPE	TS _{vib}	ΔG
*HCOOH	0.93	0.26	0.36
*H ₂ COOH	1.26	0.19	-0.92
*CHO	0.42	0.20	0.49
*HCOH	0.79	0.19	1.66
*H ₂ CO	0.78	0.21	0.23
*CH	0.40	0.04	2.56
*H ₂ COH	1.16	0.14	0.60
*H ₃ CO	1.09	0.19	-1.38
*O + CH ₃ OH _(l)	0.09	0.03	-0.93
*OH	0.35	0.09	-1.17
*H	0.28	0.04	0.56

(c)

TiO ₂ (120)-BT-O	ZPE	TS _{vib}	ΔG
*HCOOH	0.93	0.26	0.39
*H ₂ COOH	1.26	0.19	-0.50
*CHO	0.42	0.20	1.17
*HCOH	0.79	0.19	1.87
*H ₂ CO	0.78	0.21	0.49
*CH	0.40	0.04	2.74
*H ₂ COH	1.16	0.14	0.80
*H ₃ CO	1.09	0.19	-1.12
*O + CH ₃ OH _(l)	0.09	0.03	-0.82
*OH	0.35	0.09	-0.94
*H	0.28	0.04	0.80

(d)

A-TiO ₂ (101)-O	ZPE	TS _{vib}	ΔG
*HCOOH	0.93	0.26	-0.22
*H ₂ COOH	1.26	0.19	-0.32
*CHO	0.42	0.20	0.50
*HCOH	0.79	0.19	0.89
*H ₂ CO	0.78	0.21	0.30
*CH	0.40	0.04	1.83
*H ₂ COH	1.16	0.14	0.71
*H ₃ CO	1.09	0.19	-0.91
*O + CH ₃ OH _(l)	0.09	0.03	-1.35
*OH	0.35	0.09	-0.77
*H	0.28	0.04	1.10

S5.2. HER Suppression

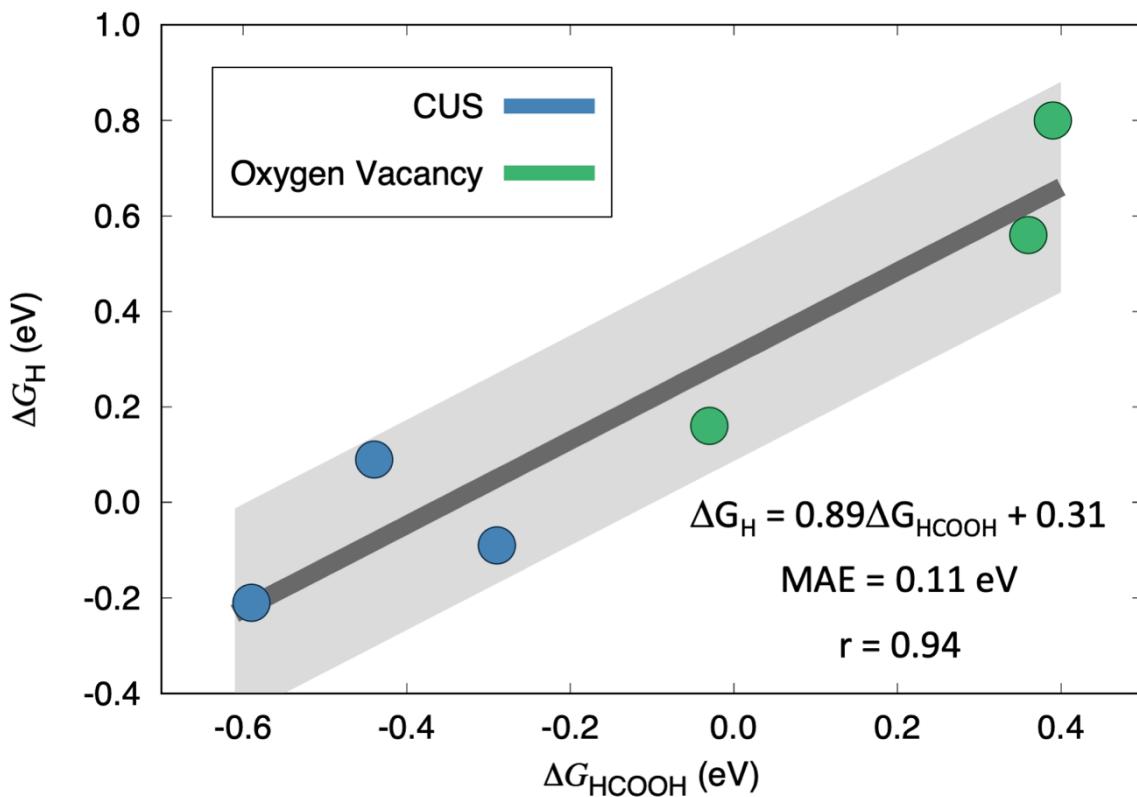


Figure S10. Adsorption-energy scaling relation for *HCOOH and *H. In dark gray we show the linear regression. A light gray zone of $\pm 2\text{MAE}$ (MAE: mean absolute error) is also shown. The equation, MAE, and Pearson regression coefficient (r) appear at the bottom. The data for CUS sites are shown in blue, while the data for the TOV sites are shown in green.

S6. Electrolysis of proposed FAR intermediates on Ti_{an}

Table S17. Data obtained from the electrocatalytic reduction of possible intermediates for FAR at various potentials using Ti_{an}, 3 min catalysts. Electrolysis were conducted for 60 min. The pH was adjusted to 2.6 using H₂SO₄ for CO, CO₂ and CH₂O experiments. After CH₂O reduction, we detected similar concentrations of CH₃OH and HCOOH. Thus, we conclude that CH₃OH and HCOOH is formed from the Cannizzaro disproportionation of CH₂O. Cannizzaro disproportionation likely occurs due to the higher local pH at the electrode during electrolysis.³ The current densities observed during CH₂O reduction were attributed to the hydrogen evolution reaction.

Experimental condition	Potential (V vs RHE)	Current density (mA/cm ²)	Methanol detected (μM)	Formate detected (μM)
5 mM CH₂O (nominal concentration added) in 0.1 M K₂SO₄	-0.95	-1.7	59±20	59±12
	-1.00	-1.9	84±19	93±10
	-1.05	-2.4	113±30	119±27
CO in 0.1 M K₂SO₄	-1.00	-2.1	N.D.	N.D.
CO₂ in 0.1 M K₂SO₄	-1.00	-2.6	N.D.	N.D.

N.D- Not detected.

Table S18. CH₂O concentrations measured using the chromotropic acid method before and after CH₂O electrolysis at various potentials using Ti_{an}, 3 min catalysts.

Experimental condition	Potential (V vs RHE)	[CH ₂ O] (mM)	
		Before electrolysis	After electrolysis
CH₂O in 0.1 M K₂SO₄ (pH 2.6)	-0.95	5.8± 0.5	5.6± 0.5
	-1.00	6.2± 0.2	6.0± 0.2
	-1.05	6.3± 0.3	5.9± 0.5

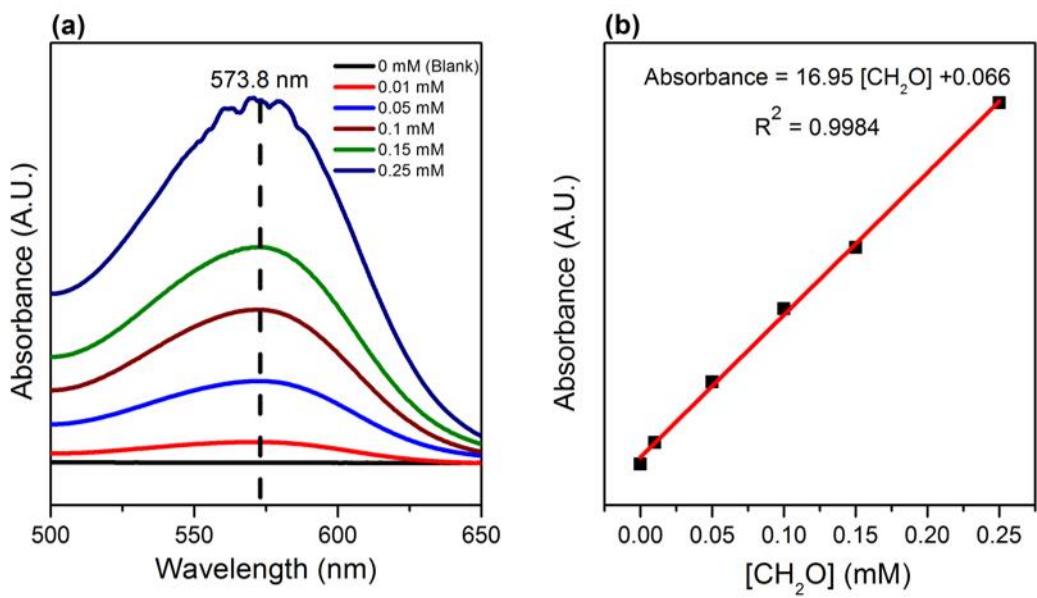
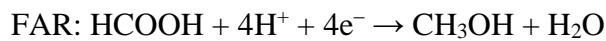


Figure S11. (a) UV-Vis spectra of various CH_2O concentrations measured using the chromotropic acid method. (b) Calibration plot of CH_2O concentrations.

S7. Experimental calculations

S7.1. Calculation of FAR equilibrium potential



Based on standard Gibbs free energies of formation at 25 °C and 1 atm,²⁴

$$\Delta G_{\text{CH}_3\text{OH (l)}} = -166.6 \text{ kJ/mol}$$

$$\Delta G_{\text{H}^+} = 0 \text{ kJ/mol}$$

$$\Delta G_{\text{H}_2\text{O (l)}} = -237.14 \text{ kJ/mol}$$

$$\Delta G_{\text{HCOOH (l)}} = -361.4 \text{ kJ/mol}$$

$$\Delta G_{\text{FAR}} = (-166.6 - 237.14) - (-361.4) = -42.3 \text{ kJ/mol}$$

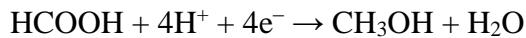
$\Delta G = -nFE^\circ$, where n is the number of electrons utilized for FAR (4 e⁻), F is the Faraday constant (96485 C/mol), and E^o is the thermodynamic potential for FAR

$$\therefore E^\circ = \frac{-42.3 \times 1000}{-(4 \times 96485)} = +0.11 \text{ V}$$

S7.2. Turnover frequency for CH₃OH production

The average turnover frequency (TOF) for formation of CH₃OH from TOVs was determined using the following formula:

$$\text{TOF} = \frac{\text{No of moles of CH}_3\text{OH formed}}{(\text{No of moles of TOVs}) \times (\text{Time of reaction})}$$



For FAR on a Ti_{an, 3 min} catalyst (area = 0.785 cm²) in 60 min (3600 s) at -1.0 V vs. RHE, $j_{\text{CH}_3\text{OH}} = -1.95 \text{ mA/cm}^2$ (Table S14):

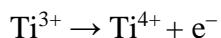
$$\text{Charge} = \frac{1.95 \times 0.785 \times 3600}{1000} = 5.51 \text{ C}$$

$$\text{No of moles of electrons for FAR} = \frac{5.51}{96485} = 5.71 \times 10^{-5} \text{ mol}$$

4 moles of electrons are used to reduce 1 mole of CH₃OH

$$\therefore \text{No of moles of CH}_3\text{OH} = \frac{5.71 \times 10^{-5}}{4} = 1.43 \times 10^{-5} \text{ mol}$$

The population of TOVs was estimated using the charge densities measured from CV.



For a Ti_{an, 3 min} catalyst, oxidation peak charge density = 0.575 C/cm² (Table S12)

$$\text{No of moles of electrons for TOVs oxidation} = \frac{0.575 \times 0.785}{96485} = 4.678 \times 10^{-6} \text{ mol}$$

$$\therefore \text{No of moles of TOVs} = 4.678 \times 10^{-6} \text{ mol}$$

$$\text{Average TOF} = \frac{1.43 \times 10^{-5}}{(4.678 \times 10^{-6}) \times 3600} = 8.5 \times 10^{-4} \text{ s}^{-1}$$

S7.3. Cannizzaro disproportionation of CH₂O to CH₃OH and HCOOH

CH₂O is proposed to undergo Cannizzaro disproportionation: $2\text{CH}_2\text{O} + \text{OH}^- \rightarrow \text{HCOO}^- + \text{CH}_3\text{OH}$

Cannizzaro disproportionation of CH₂O is known to occur at pH 3, which is close to our experimental conditions (pH 2.6).³ HCOO⁻ is protonated to HCOOH at pH 2.6.

For CH₂O electrolysis at -1.00 V vs RHE:

Concentration of CH₂O ([CH₂O]) before electrolysis = 6.2 mM, [CH₂O] after electrolysis = 6.0 mM

Difference in [CH₂O] after electrolysis = 0.2 mM

[HCOOH] before electrolysis (background signal) = 28 μM

[HCOOH] after electrolysis = 121 μM

Difference in [HCOOH] after electrolysis = 93 μM

[CH₃OH] before electrolysis (background signal) = 59 μM

[CH₃OH] after electrolysis = 142 μM

Difference in [CH₃OH] after electrolysis = 84 μM

Sum of CH₃OH and HCOOH concentrations = 93 + 84 = 177 μM (~ 0.2 mM)

The volumes of solutions analyzed using HPLC and HS-GC are the same (1 mL).

Due to an almost 1:1 molar ratio of CH₃OH and HCOOH, it is likely that CH₃OH is formed from the Cannizzaro disproportionation of CH₂O.

S8. Catalytic pathways and computed optimized geometries

The first hydrogenation of $^*\text{HCOOH}$ can result in the formation of three different intermediates: $^*\text{H}_2\text{COOH}$, $^*\text{CHO} + \text{H}_2\text{O}$, and $^*\text{HCOHOH}$. The free-energy diagrams (Figures S12-S19) show that $^*\text{H}_2\text{COOH}$ is more stable than $^*\text{CHO} + \text{H}_2\text{O}$ in all the studied surfaces, both with and without TOVs. $^*\text{HCOHOH}$ was not included in the diagrams since we did not find any adsorption minimum for this intermediate on any of the model surfaces. In fact, we observed that $^*\text{HCOHOH}$ generally decomposes into $^*\text{H}$ and desorbed formic acid.

In Figures S12-S19 we provide the catalytic pathways inspected in this study, based on the energies reported in Tables S15-S16.

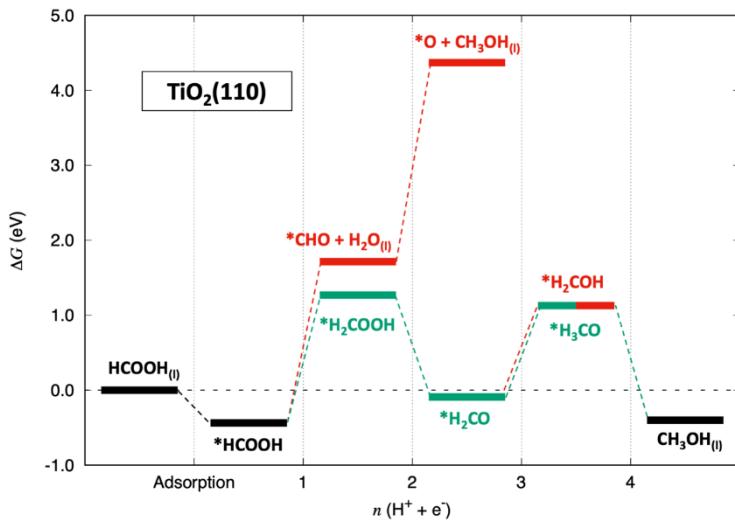
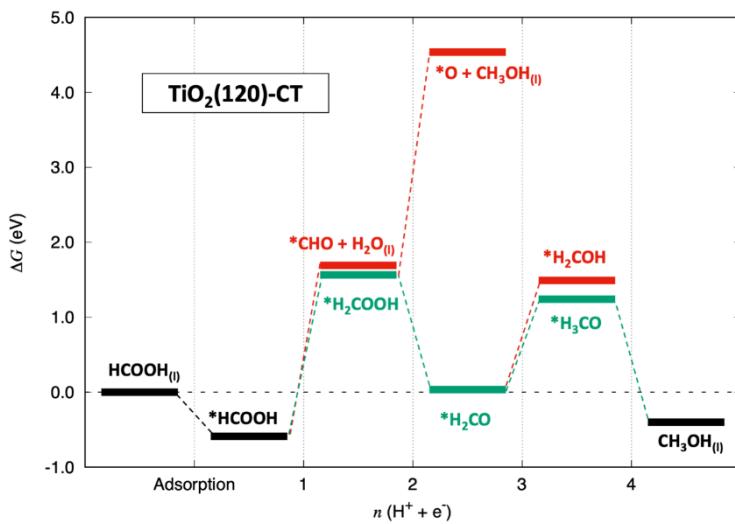
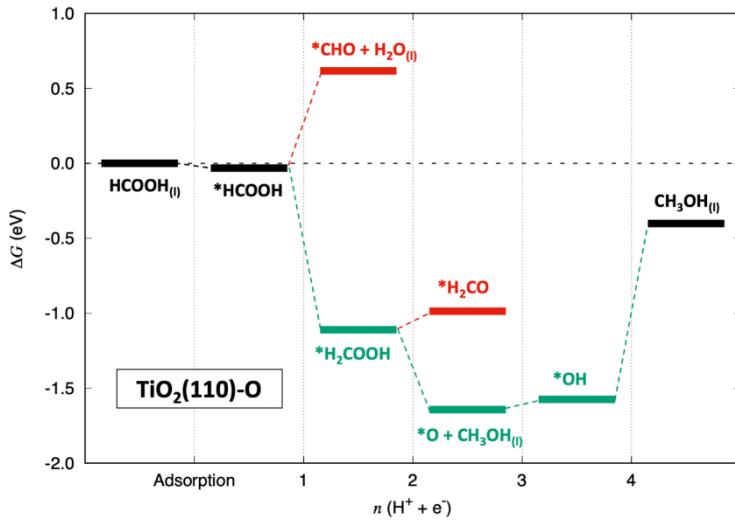


Figure S12. FAR pathways on $\text{TiO}_2(110)$ sites. Species common to several pathways are shown in black, the most favorable species in green, and least favorable species in red.



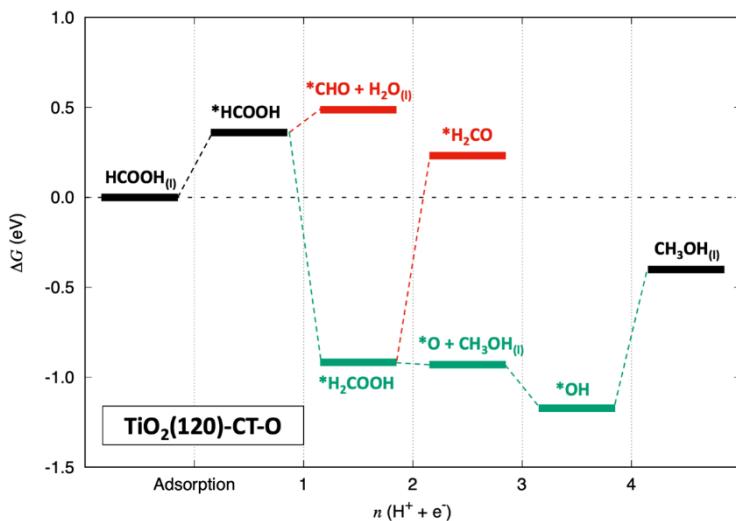


Figure S15. FAR pathways on TiO₂(120)-CT-O sites. Species common to several pathways are shown in black, the most favorable species in green, and least favorable species in red.

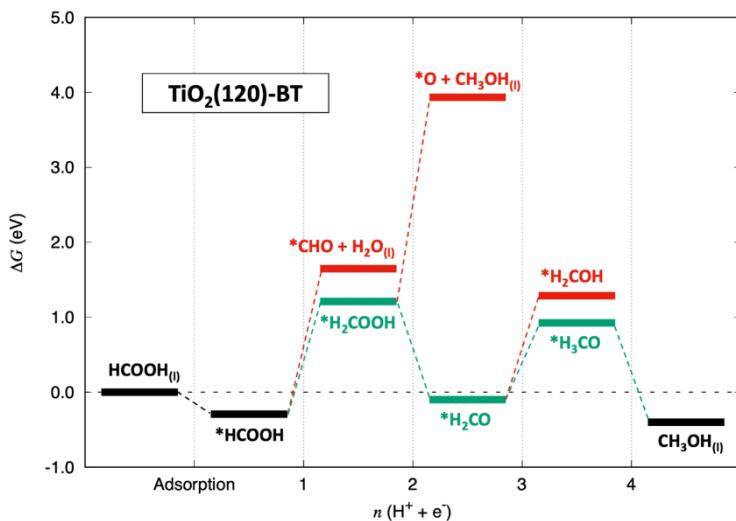


Figure S16. FAR pathways on TiO₂(120)-BT sites. Species common to several pathways are shown in black, the most favorable species in green, and least favorable species in red.

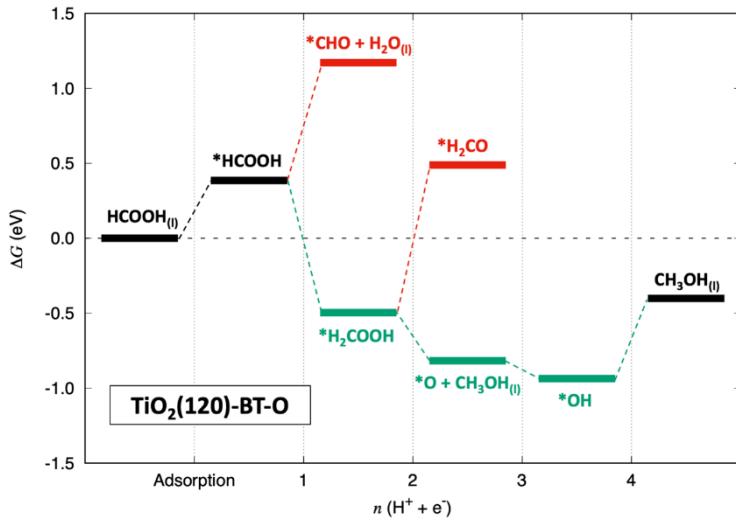


Figure S17. FAR pathways on TiO₂(120)-BT-O sites. Species common to several pathways are shown in black, the most favorable species in green, and least favorable species in red.

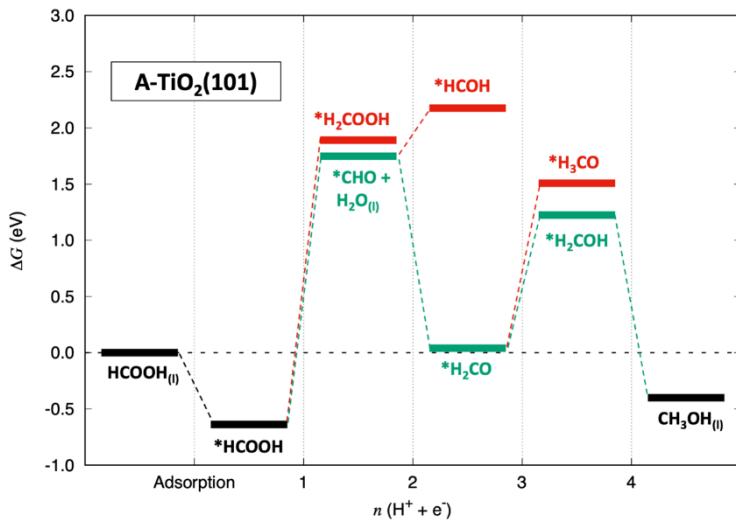


Figure S18. FAR pathways on A-TiO₂(101) sites. Species common to several pathways are shown in black, the most favorable species in green, and least favorable species in red.

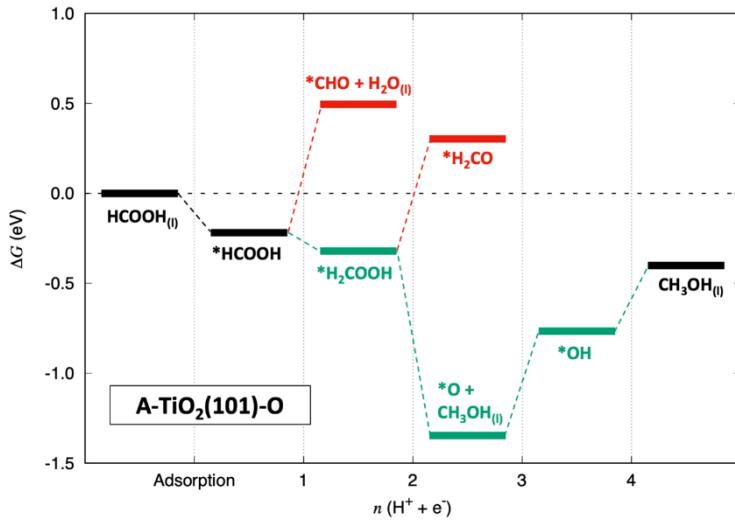


Figure S19. FAR pathways on A-TiO₂(101)-O sites. Species common to several pathways are shown in black, the most favorable species in green, and least favorable species in red.

The coordinates of the optimized geometries for each slab model used in this work are provided in the following pages in the VASP POSCAR format.

0.2579398776152889	0.5000000000000000	0.4792606789195057	T T T	0.1921070460591643	0.3333333429999996	0.5785403126817833	T T T
0.5688495039999992	0.0000000000000000	0.0644880760000035	F F F	0.1921070460591643	0.6666666870000029	0.5785403126817833	T T T
0.5688495039999992	0.5000000000000000	0.0644880760000035	F F F	0.8000000119999982	0.0000000000000000	0.1449909509999969	F F F
0.7065483929999985	0.0000000000000000	0.1934642049999979	F F F	0.8000000119999982	0.333333429999996	0.1449909509999969	F F F
0.7065483929999985	0.5000000000000000	0.1934642049999979	F F F	0.7962796961005532	-0.0000000000000000	0.5031368076207411	T T T
0.8427172899937754	0.0000000000000000	0.323335407680694	T T T	0.7962796961005532	0.333333429999996	0.5031368076207411	T T T
0.8427172899937754	0.5000000000000000	0.323335407680694	T T T	0.7962796961005532	0.6666666870000029	0.5031368076207411	T T T
0.9846613629010829	0.0000000000000000	0.4557106602606070	T T T	0.6000000239999963	0.0000000000000000	0.289819020000010	F F F
0.9846613629010829	0.5000000000000000	0.4557106602606070	T T T	0.6000000239999963	0.333333429999996	0.289819020000010	F F F
0.3532741960000100	0.2500000000000000	0.096732101999972	F F F	0.6000000239999963	0.6666666870000029	0.289819020000010	F F F
0.3532741960000100	0.7500000000000000	0.096732101999972	F F F	0.4044382593574338	0.0000000000000000	0.4395090649306257	T T T
0.4909731449999981	0.2500000000000000	0.2257082460000035	F F F	0.4044382593574338	0.333333429999996	0.4395090649306257	T T T
0.4909731449999981	0.7500000000000000	0.2257082460000035	F F F	0.4044382593574338	0.6666666870000029	0.4395090649306257	T T T
0.6244523871549229	0.2500000000000000	0.3529934158325181	T T T	0.1020937633327484	0.166666671999981	0.4710231122834402	T T T
0.7579398186152878	0.2500000000000000	0.4792606789195057	T T T	0.1020937633327484	0.5000000000000000	0.4710231122834402	T T T
0.7579398186152878	0.7500000000000000	0.4792606789195057	T T T	0.1020937633327484	0.833333312999971	0.4710231122834402	T T T
0.0688499999999976	0.2500000000000000	0.0644899999999993	F F F	0.3000000119999982	0.166666671999981	0.3262296320000004	F F F
0.0688499999999976	0.7500000000000000	0.0644899999999993	F F F	0.3000000119999982	0.5000000000000000	0.3262296320000004	F F F
0.1745316089999989	0.2500000000000000	0.1234669910000008	F F F	0.3000000119999982	0.833333312999971	0.3262296320000004	F F F
0.1745316089999989	0.7500000000000000	0.1234669910000008	F F F	0.8999999755999996	0.166666671999981	0.2537341709999978	F F F
0.3122305269999970	0.2500000000000000	0.252443135000000	F F F	0.8999999755999996	0.5000000000000000	0.2537341709999978	F F F
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TiO₂(120)-BT

1.0000000000000000
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Ti O

39 78

Selective dynamics

Direct

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