

Screening of compounds-based on intermediate adsorption equilibrium for electrocatalytic nitrate reduction to ammonia

Chaoqun Ma^{1,2}, Huaifang Zhang^{1,2}, Jing Xia^{3*}, Xiaojuan Zhu⁴, Kaiyu Qu⁴, Fukai Feng^{1,2}, Sumei Han^{1,2}, Caihong He^{1,2}, Xiao Ma^{1,2}, Gang Lin^{1,2}, Wenbin Cao¹, Xiangmin Meng³, Lijie Zhu⁵, An-Liang Wang^{4*}, Qipeng Lu^{1,2*}

¹School of Materials Science and Engineering, University of Science and Technology Beijing, Beijing 100083, China

²Shunde Innovation School, University of Science and Technology Beijing, Foshan 528399, China.

³Key Laboratory of Photochemical Conversion and Optoelectronic Materials, Technical Institute of Physics and Chemistry, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing, 100190, China.

⁴School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering, Shandong University, Jinan 250100, China.

⁵School of Instrument Science and Opto-Electronics Engineering, Beijing Information Science and Technology University, Beijing 100192, China.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail: qipeng@ustb.edu.cn (Q.L.); alwang@sdu.edu.cn (A-L.W.); xiajing@mail.ipc.ac.cn (J.X.).

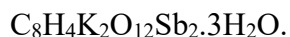
Methods.....	3
Reagents and chemicals.....	3
Preparation of CoSb IMCs/C and Co NPs/C.....	3
Material characterizations.....	4
Preparation of working electrode.....	5
Electrochemical measurements.	5
Determination of NO₃⁻-N concentration.	5
Determination of NH₄⁺-N concentration.....	5
Determination of NO₂⁻-N concentration.	6
Determination of N₂H₄-N concentration.....	7
Isotope labeling experiments.....	7
Calculational methods and details.....	7
Zn-NO₃⁻ battery measurements	8
Supplementary Figures	9
Supplementary Tables.....	50
Supplementary References.....	53

Methods

Reagents and chemicals. Chloride hexahydrate ($\text{Co}(\text{NO}_3)_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$, 99%), L-antimony potassium tartrate ($\text{C}_8\text{H}_4\text{K}_2\text{O}_{12}\text{Sb}_2 \cdot 3\text{H}_2\text{O}$, 99.5%), cyanamide (CH_2N_2 , 95%), deuterium oxide (D_2O), sodium hypochlorite (NaClO), sodium nitrate (NaNO_3), sodium nitrite (NaNO_2), sodium nitrate- ^{15}N ($\text{Na}^{15}\text{NO}_3$, 98.5%), ammonium- ^{15}N chloride ($^{15}\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$, 98.5%), sodium salicylate ($\text{C}_7\text{H}_6\text{O}_3\text{Na}$), nitroferricyanide (III) dihydrate ($\text{Na}_2\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_5\text{NO} \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$), sodium citrate dehydrate ($\text{C}_6\text{H}_5\text{Na}_3\text{O}_7 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$), para-(dimethylamino)benzaldehyde (p- $\text{C}_9\text{H}_{11}\text{NO}$), naphthylenediamine hydrochloride ($\text{C}_{12}\text{H}_{14}\text{N}_{22} \cdot 2\text{HCl}$), sulfanilamide ($\text{C}_6\text{H}_8\text{N}_2\text{O}_2\text{S}$), phosphoric acid (H_3PO_4) and maleic acid ($\text{C}_4\text{H}_4\text{O}_4$) were obtained from Shanghai Macklin Biochemical Co., Ltd. Ammonium chloride (NH_4Cl), hydrazine hydrate ($\text{N}_2\text{H}_4 \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O}$), hydrochloric acid (HCl), sulfuric acid (H_2SO_4) and potassium hydroxide (KOH) were purchased from Sinopharm Chemical Reagent Co., Ltd. Ketjen Black EC300J was afforded from Suzhou Sinero Technology Co., Ltd. Ethanol ($\text{C}_2\text{H}_5\text{OH}$) was purchased from Tianjin Fuyu Fine Chemical Co., Ltd. The deionized water (18.2 M Ω) was used in all experiments. All reagents and chemicals are used as received without further purification.

Synthesis of CoSb IMCs/C and Co NPs/C. In a typical synthesis method, a mixture of 29.1 mg $\text{Co}(\text{NO}_3)_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$, 33.4 mg $\text{C}_8\text{H}_4\text{K}_2\text{O}_{12}\text{Sb}_2 \cdot 3\text{H}_2\text{O}$, 150 mg CH_2N_2 and 64 mg of carbon support (i.e., Ketjen Black EC300J) was ground using an agate mortar and pestle. After being ground thoroughly, the mixture was transferred into the porcelain boat and heated in a tube furnace under an H_2/Ar atmosphere (5 vol.% H_2). After that, the sample was heated from room temperature to 900 °C with a rate of 5 °C min $^{-1}$ and maintained for 3 h before cooling down to room temperature. The prepared sample is named as CoSb IMCs/C.

Co NPs/C were prepared using the same method as CoSb IMCs/C, but without adding



Material characterizations. X-ray diffraction (XRD) patterns were collected using a Bruker D8 X-ray diffractometer operating at 40 kV and 40 mA with Cu K α radiation ($\lambda = 1.54 \text{ \AA}$). The microstructures and morphologies of the prepared samples were obtained by scanning electron microscopy (SEM, Hitachi S-4800) and Transmission electron microscopy (TEM, JEOL JEM-2100F). For atomic-level characterization of the prepared samples, aberration-corrected high-angle annular dark-field scanning transmission electron microscope (HAADF-STEM) and STEM energy-dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (STEM-EDS) elemental mapping images were performed on a JEOL ARM 300F (JEOL, Tokyo, Japan) operated at 300 kV equipped with a JEOL ETA corrector and an SDD-type EDS detector with the attainable energy resolution of 133 eV. X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) measurements were determined by a Thermo Scientific ESCALAB 250Xi spectrometer and all the binding energies were calibrated using the characteristic C 1s peak at 284.8 eV. The Brunauer-Emmett-Teller (BET) specific surface areas and pore size of the materials were measured on Micromeritics ASAP 2460 Surface Area and Porosimetry analyzer at 77 K. The Raman spectra were determined by Gamry Refence 3000+iRaman with a 532 nm laser. X-ray absorption near-edge structure (XANES) and extended X-ray absorption fine structure (EXAFS) spectra were acquired at the BL14W1 station of Shanghai Synchrotron Radiation Facility (SSRF), China. Inductive coupled plasma optical emission spectroscopy (ICP-OES) results were collected by an Agilent ICPOES730 system. The ultraviolet-visible (UV-Vis) adsorption spectra were obtained by a UV-1900 spectrophotometer. Online differential electrochemical mass spectrometry (DEMS) was carried out using a quadrupole mass spectrometer (QAS 100, PrismaPlus). ^1H nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) spectra were examined by a Bruker Avance 500 MHz spectrometer.

Preparation of working electrode. 5 mg catalyst samples, 50 μL of Nafion solution (5 wt%), and 950 μL isopropanol were uniformly mixed by an ultrasonic cell disruptor for 30 min to form a homogeneous black ink. Finally, 200 μL of the catalyst black ink was slowly loaded onto carbon paper (CP) with an area of 1 cm^2 and naturally dried (catalyst/CP loading: 1 mg cm^{-2}).

Electrochemical measurements. The electrochemical NO_3RR performance was examined by using an electrochemical workstation (CHI 660E) with a typical three-electrode system, using CoSb IMCs/CP, Ag/AgCl electrode and Pt wire as the working, reference and counter electrodes, respectively, in 0.1 M KOH with 500 ppm NO_3^- -N solution. The electrochemical NO_3RR tests were determined using an H-type cell and the anode and cathode were separated by Nafion 211 membrane. The Nafion 211 membrane underwent a pretreatment process, which involved incubation in 5 wt% H_2O_2 solution at $50\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ for 1 h, followed by treatment with 0.1 M H_2SO_4 at $50\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ for 1 h, and subsequently rinsed with deionized water for multiple times. All potentials were converted into a reversible hydrogen electrode (RHE) ($E_{\text{RHE}} = E_{\text{Ag/AgCl}} + 0.059 \times \text{pH} + 0.197\text{ V}$).

Determination of NO_3^- -N concentration. The concentration of NO_3^- -N was determined using a colorimetric method. In detail, 100 μL of electrolyte is extracted from the electrolytic cell and diluted to 10 mL, then 2 mL was removed and added to the centrifuge tube. Subsequently, 2.6 mL of 0.05 M H_2SO_4 was added to the above centrifuge tube. The mixed solution was kept for 30 min under mild conditions, and the UV-Vis absorption spectra were collected. The absorbance value (A) was calculated by using the formula: $A = A_{220\text{nm}} - 2A_{275\text{nm}}$. For calibration, various NO_3^- -N solutions with known concentrations were used for calibration ($y = 0.114x + 0.008$, $R^2 = 0.999$).

Determination of NH_4^+ -N concentration. The produced NH_4^+ -N was determined via the indophenol blue method¹. In detail, 100 μL of electrolyte was removed from the cathode electrolytic cell and

diluted to 10 mL, then 2 ml was removed and added to the centrifuge tube. Next, 2 ml of chromogenic agent solution containing 1.0 M NaOH, C₇H₆O₃Na and 5 wt% C₆H₅Na₃O₇·2H₂O, 1 ml of oxidizing agent solution containing 0.05 M NaClO, and 0.2 mL of 1 wt% Na₂[Fe (NO)(CN)₅]·2H₂O, were added to the above centrifuge tube. The mixed solution was kept for 1 h under mild conditions, and the concentration of NH₄⁺-N was calculated by the absorbance measured at λ=655 nm, using a standard curve ($y = 0.501x + 0.028$, $R^2=0.999$), measured with standard NH₄Cl solutions with known concentrations.

The NH₃ selectivity is calculated based on the following equation:

$$NH_3 \text{ selectivity} = \frac{c_{NH_3-N}}{\Delta c_{NO_3^- - N}} \times 100\%$$

where $\Delta c_{NO_3^- - N}$ is the concentration change of NO₃⁻-N before and after electrolysis in ppm, c_{NH_3-N} is the produced concentration of NH₃-N in ppm.

The NH₃ yield rate is calculated by the following equation:

$$NH_3 \text{ yield} = \frac{c_{NH_3} \times V}{t \times A}$$

where c_{NH_3} is the produced NH₃ concentration in ppm, V is the volume of the cathode electrolyte solution in L, t is the reduction time in h, A is the area of the carbon paper in cm².

The NH₃ Faradaic efficiency (FE) is calculated using the following equation:

$$FE = \frac{8 \times F \times c_{NH_3} \times V}{17 \times Q} \times 100\%$$

where F is the Faradaic constant (96485 C mol⁻¹), c_{NH_3} is the produced NH₃ concentration in ppm, V is the volume of the cathode electrolyte solution in L, Q is the total electric charge in C.

Determination of NO₂⁻-N concentration. The produced NO₂⁻-N was determined by the Griess reagent. Firstly, the Griess reagent was prepared by mixing 0.1g of C₁₂H₁₄N₂₂·2HCl, 1.0 g of C₆H₈N₂O₂S, 2.94 mL of H₃PO₄ and 50 mL of H₂O. To determine the concentration of NO₂⁻-N, 1 mL

electrolyte was added to the centrifuge tube and mixed with 2.0 mL H₂O and 1.0 mL color reagent. The mixed solution was kept for 10 min at room temperature and the concentration of NO₂⁻-N was calculated by the absorbance measured at $\lambda=540$ nm, using a standard curve ($y = 0.751x + 0.003$, $R^2=0.999$), a series of NaNO₂ solution with known concentrations were used for calibration.

Determination of N₂H₄-N concentration. The produced N₂H₄-N was determined through the Watt and Chrisp method². Firstly, a color reagent was prepared by mixing 3 g of p-C₉H₁₁NO, 15 mL of HCl and 150 mL of ethanol. To determine the concentration of N₂H₄-N, 5 mL of color reagent was added to 5 mL of the cathode electrolytic. The mixed solution was kept for 30 min under room temperature and the concentration of N₂H₄-N was calculated by the absorbance measured at $\lambda=455$ nm, using a standard curve ($y = 0.315x + 0.036$, $R^2=0.999$), various N₂H₄ solution with known concentrations were used for calibration.

Isotope labeling experiments. Isotope labeling experiments were conducted using Na¹⁵NO₃ as the N source to investigate the source of NH₃. The electrolyte containing ¹⁵NH₄⁺ was taken and the pH of the solution was adjusted to acidic by adding 0.1 M H₂SO₄. Subsequently, 50 μ L of D₂O containing 4.4 mg/mL C₄H₄O₄ was added to the acidified solution (500 μ L) for NMR testing. A calibration curve was generated using a standard ¹⁵NH₄⁺ solution, featuring a positive linear agreement between the peak area ratio value and ¹⁵NH₄⁺-¹⁵N concentration.

Calculational methods and details. DFT calculations were performed with the Vienna ab initio simulation package (5.4.4 VASP) to explore the NO₃RR catalytic mechanism of CoSb (101) and Co (111)³. The Perdew-Burke-Ernzerhof (PBE) functional⁴, projector augmented wave (PAW) method⁵, and generalized gradient approximation (GGA) were used to optimize all structures and investigate the ions-electrons interactions for the whole NO₃RR process. Additionally, the van der Waals

interaction was corrected by the DFT-D3 method^{6, 7}. All samples employed a cutoff energy of 500 eV and a 3×3×1 Monkhorst-Pack k-point mesh in the structure optimization process. The convergence criterions of 0.03 eV Å⁻¹ for force and 10⁻⁵ eV for total energy were chosen. And 15 Å vacuum layer was used along the z-direction to avoid vertical interactions between slabs. The reaction Gibbs free energy (ΔG) of each elementary reaction can be computed by the following equation:

$$\Delta G = \Delta E + \text{ZPE} - T\Delta S$$

where ΔE denotes the electronic energy difference, ZPE is the zero-point energy, ΔS refers to the entropy (S) change between products and reactants, and T presents the reaction temperature (298.15 K).

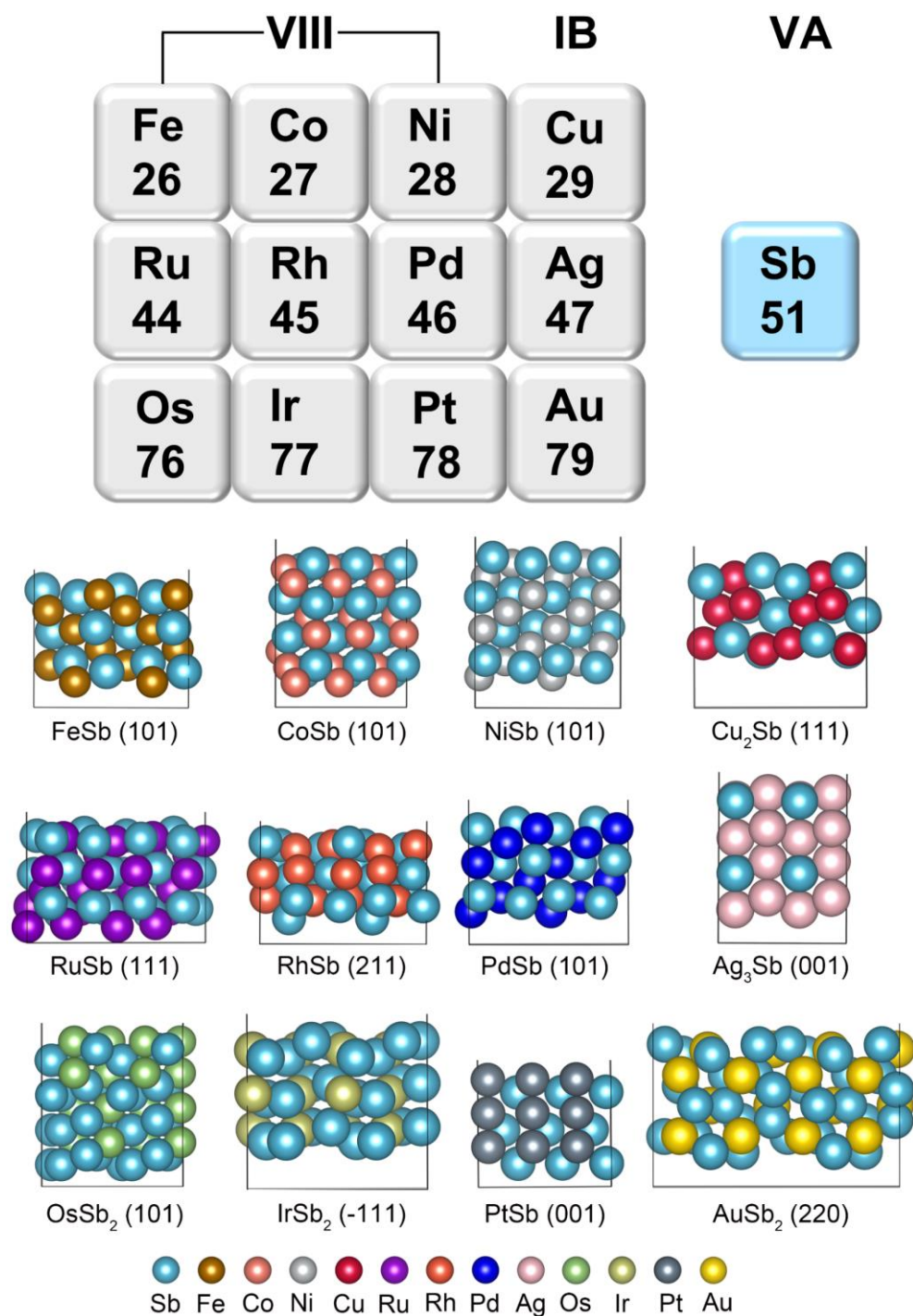
The adsorption energy (E_A) of NO₃⁻ was calculated based on the following equation:

$$E_A = E_{*NO_3} + E^* - E_{NO_3}$$

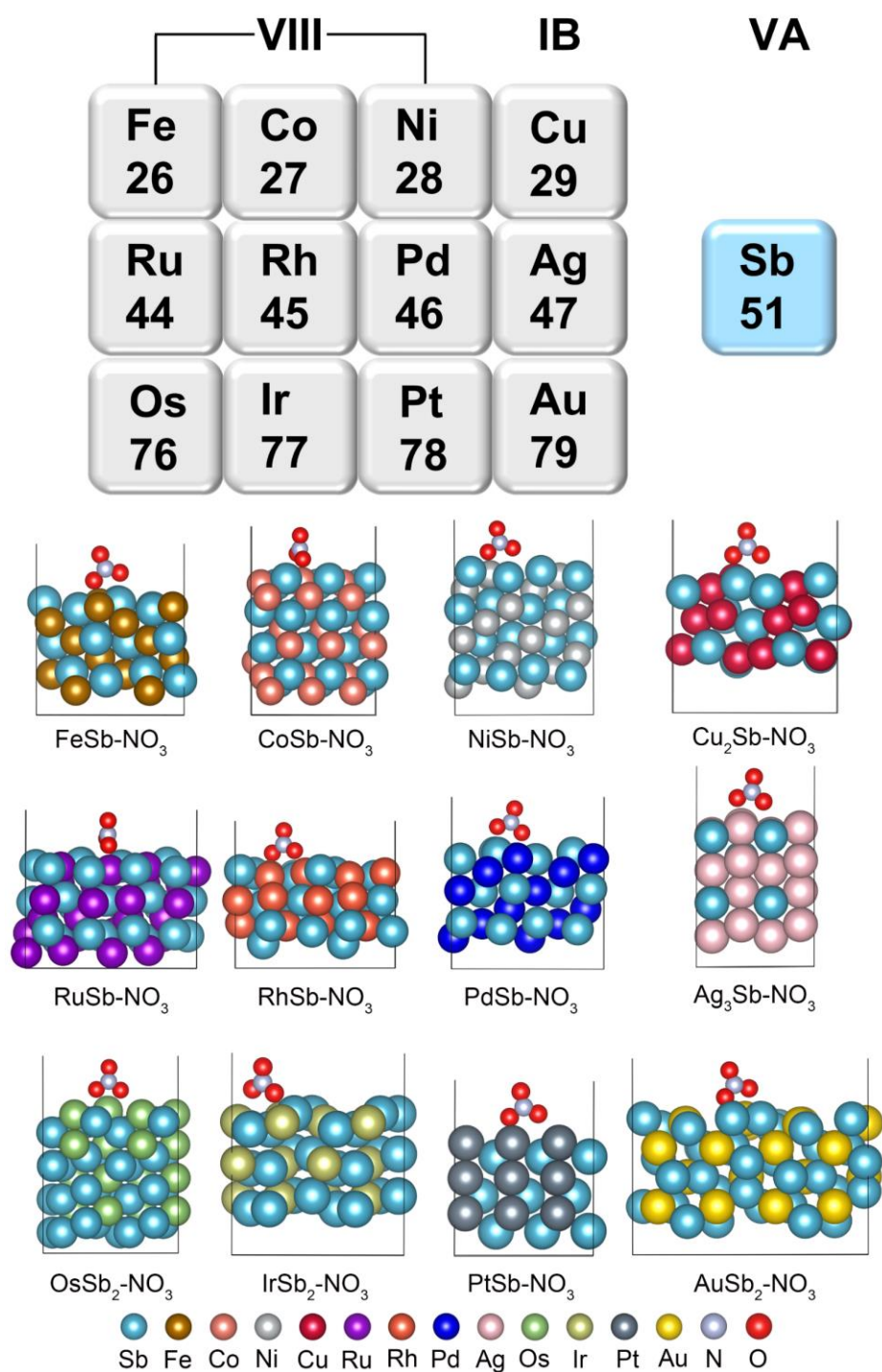
where E_{*NO_3} denotes the total energy of the adsorbed system, E^* is the energy of the slab, E_{NO_3} refers to the energy of a single NO₃ group.

Zn-NO₃⁻ battery measurements. The Zn-NO₃⁻ battery test was determined in an H-cell divided by a Nafion 211 membrane. The anode compartment contains 1 M KOH as the electrolyte, whereas the cathode compartment employs 1 M KOH with 0.1 M NaNO₃. A polished zinc plate (1 cm²) served as the anode, CoSb IMCs/C on carbon paper was used as the cathode.

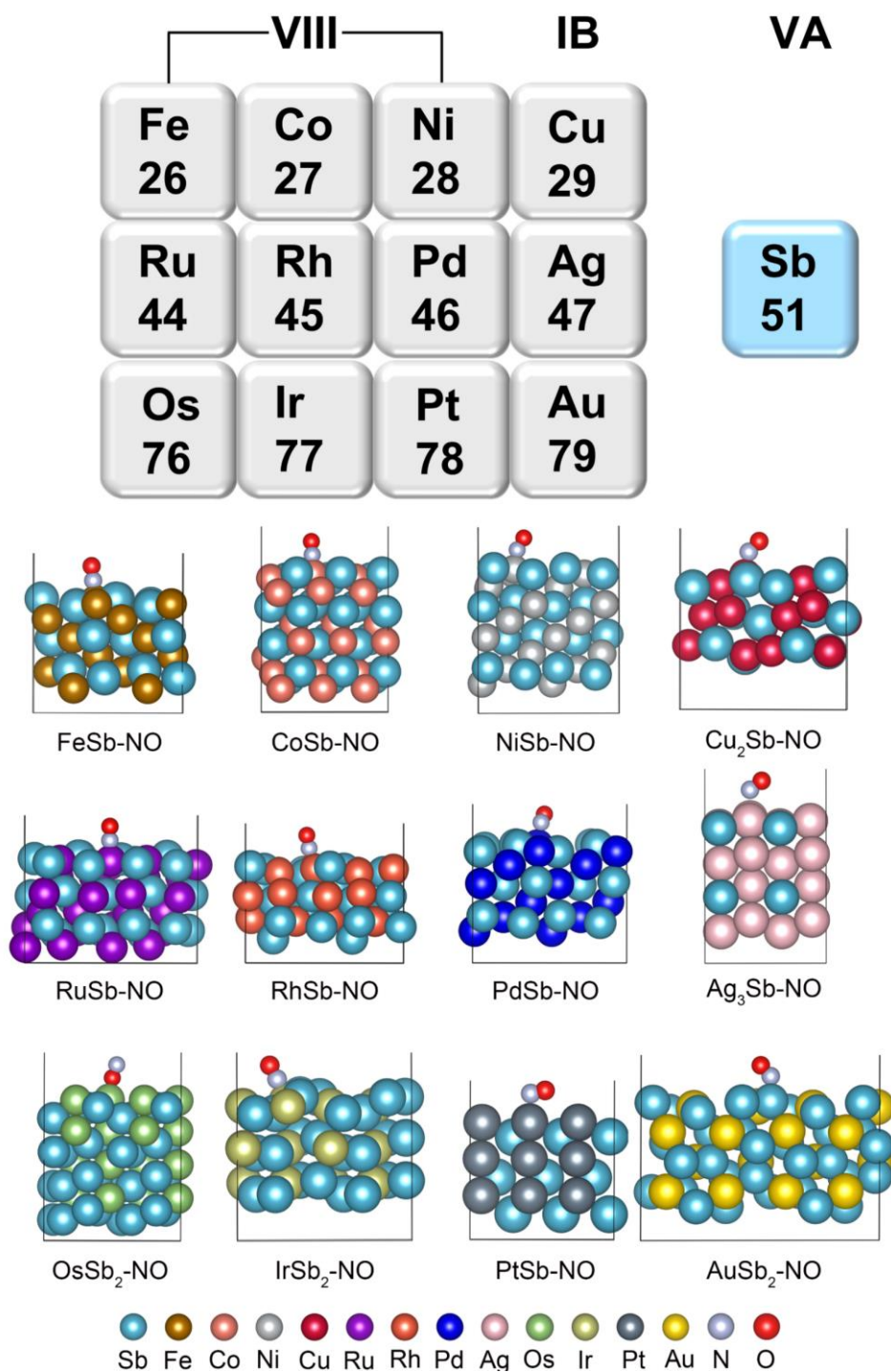
Supplementary Figures



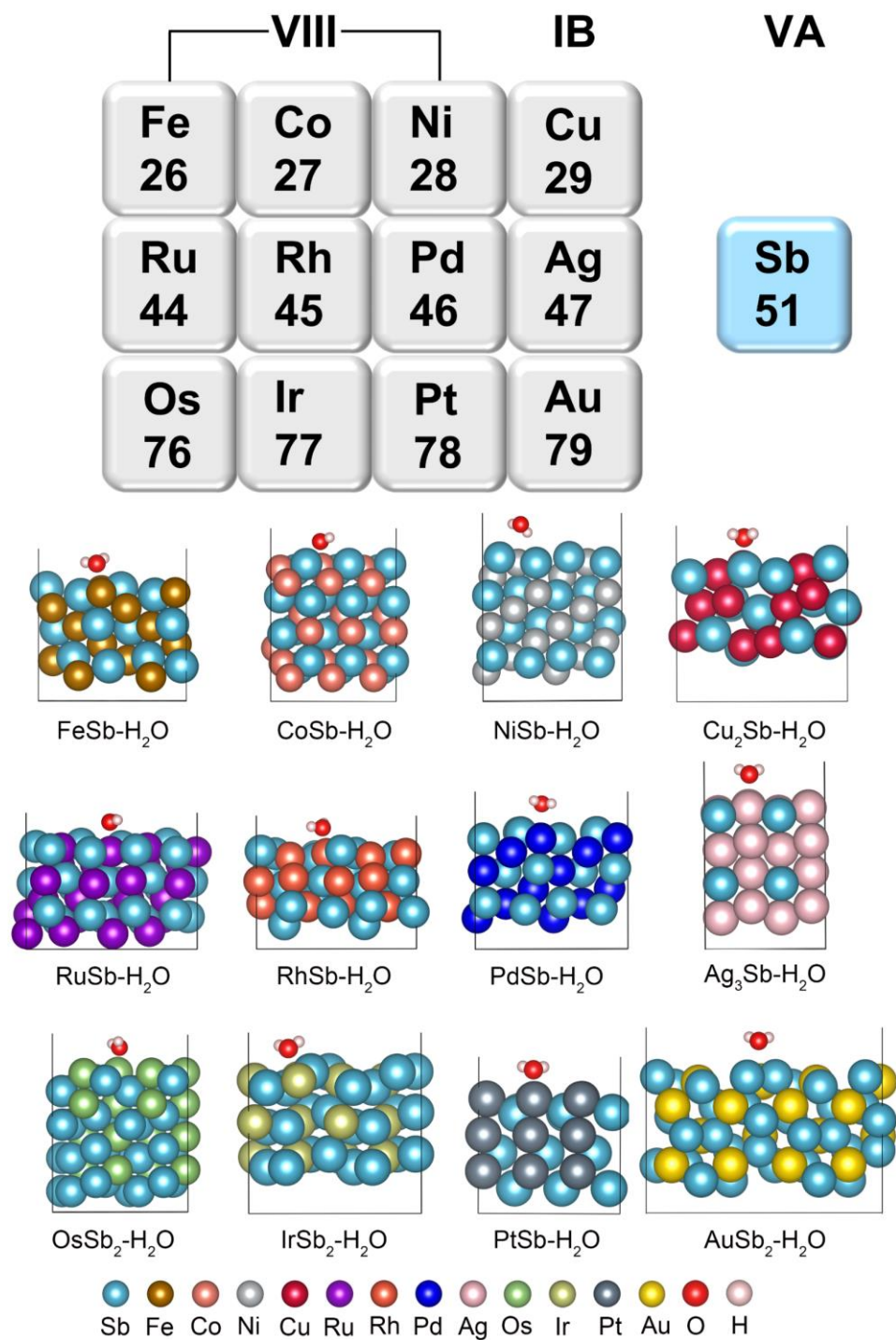
Supplementary Fig. 1 | Optimized structural models for Sb-based IMCs. Optimized structural models of hexagonal FeSb IMC, hexagonal CoSb IMC, hexagonal NiSb IMC, tetragonal Cu₂Sb IMC, orthorhombic RuSb IMC, orthorhombic RhSb IMC, hexagonal PdSb IMC, orthorhombic Ag₃Sb IMC, orthorhombic OsSb₂ IMC, monoclinic IrSb₂ IMC, hexagonal PtSb IMC, cubic AuSb₂ IMC.



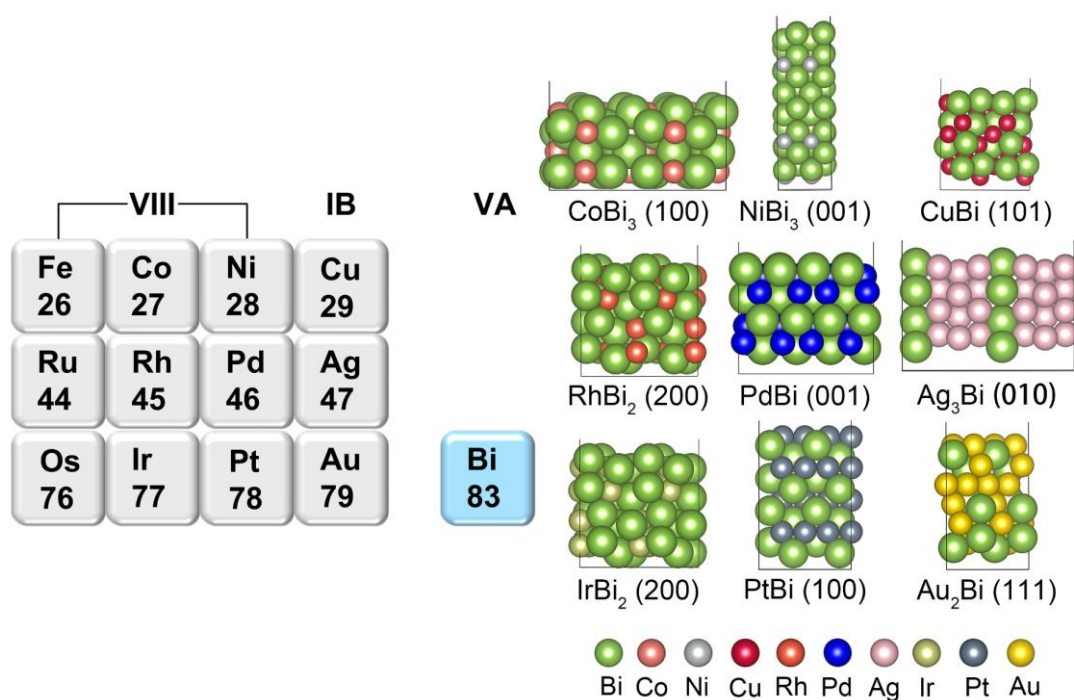
Supplementary Fig. 2 | Optimized structural models of *NO₃ intermediate on Sb-based IMCs.



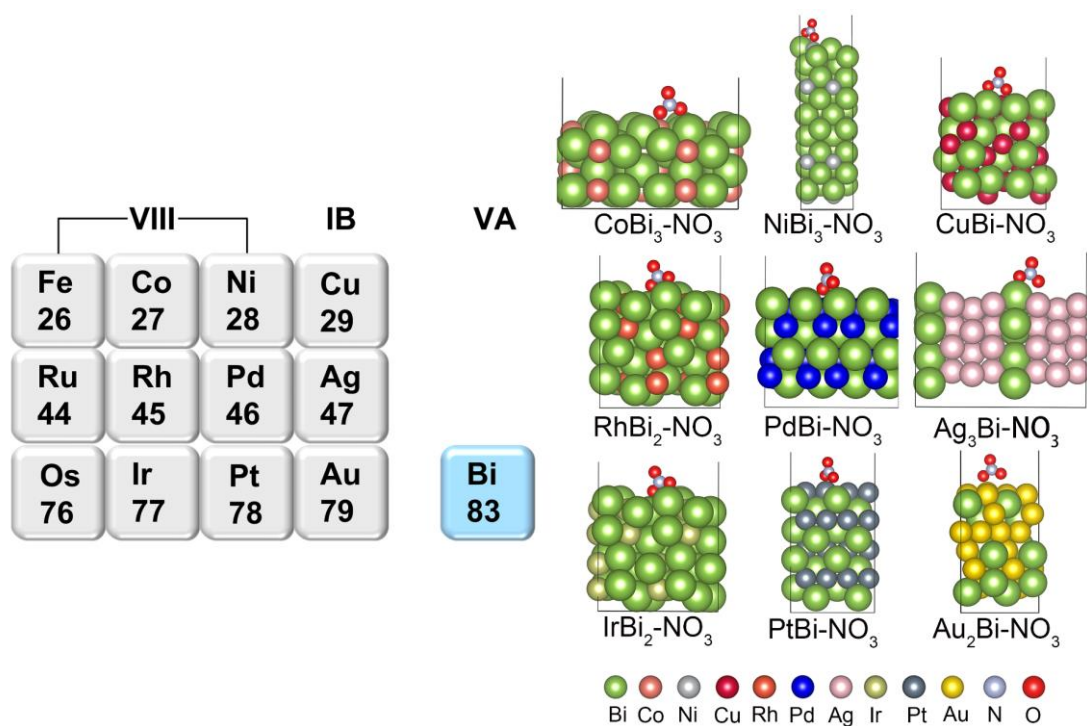
Supplementary Fig. 3 | Optimized structural models of *NO intermediate on Sb-based IMCs.



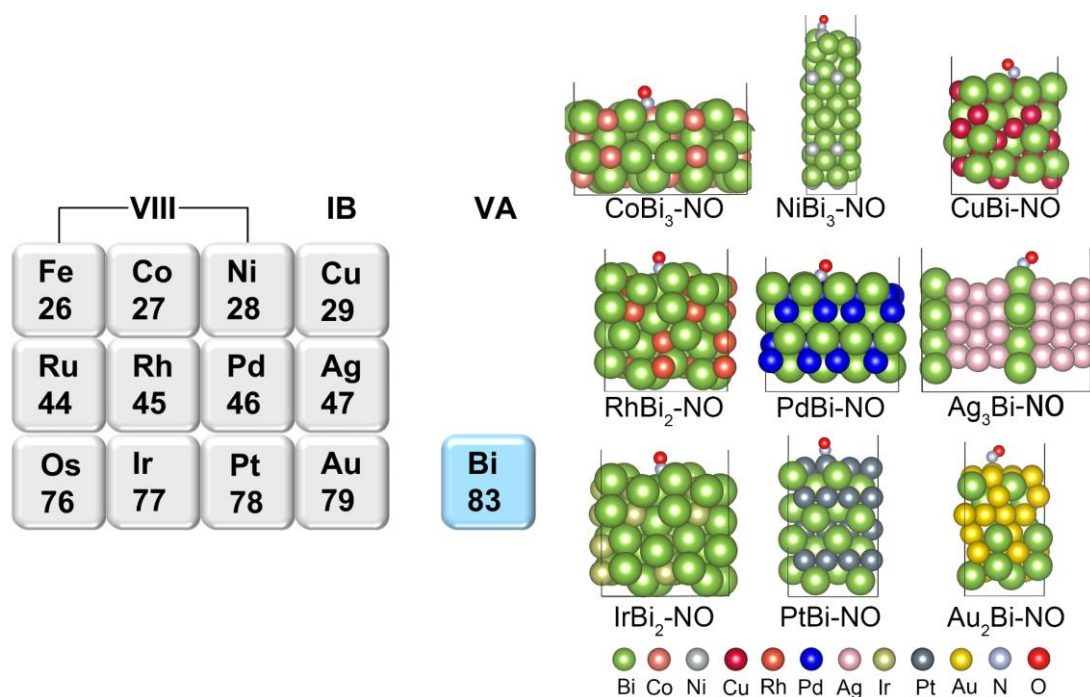
Supplementary Fig. 4 | Optimized structural models of *H₂O intermediate on Sb-based IMCs.



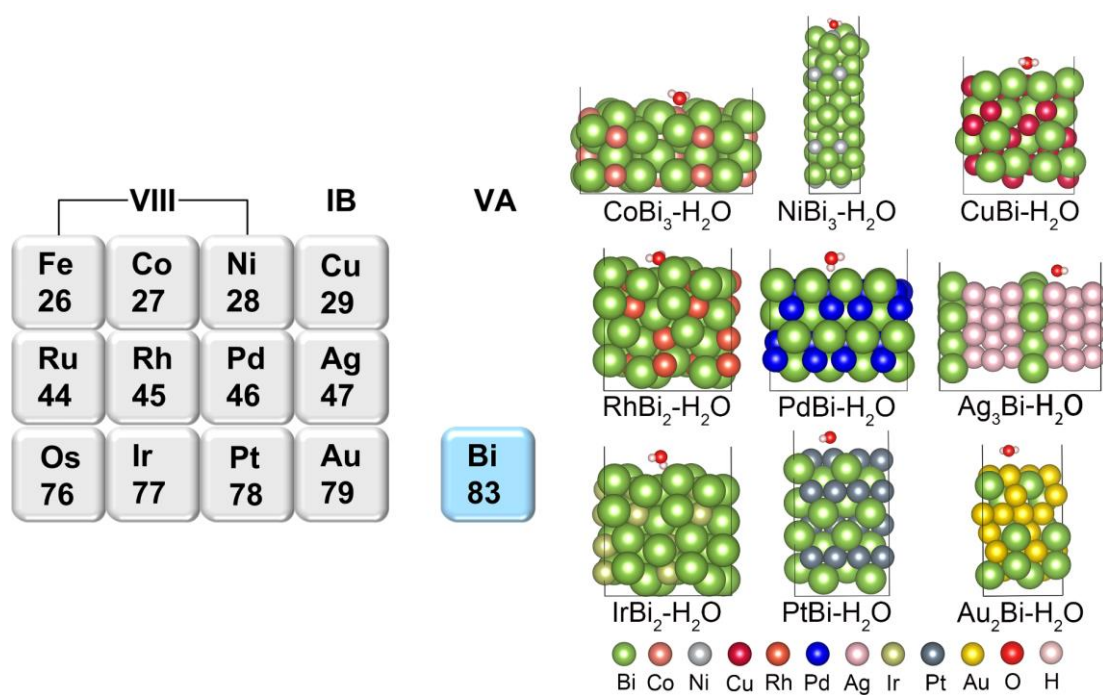
Supplementary Fig. 5 | Optimized structural models for Bi-based IMCs. Optimized structural models of orthorhombic CoBi₃ IMC, orthorhombic NiBi₃ IMC, hexagonal CuBi IMC, monoclinic RhBi₂ IMC, orthorhombic PdBi IMC, hexagonal Ag₃Bi IMC, monoclinic IrBi₂ IMC, hexagonal PtBi IMC and cubic Au₂Bi IMC. According to the phase diagram, there are no Fe-Bi, Ru-Bi and Os-Bi IMCs existing in the phase diagrams.



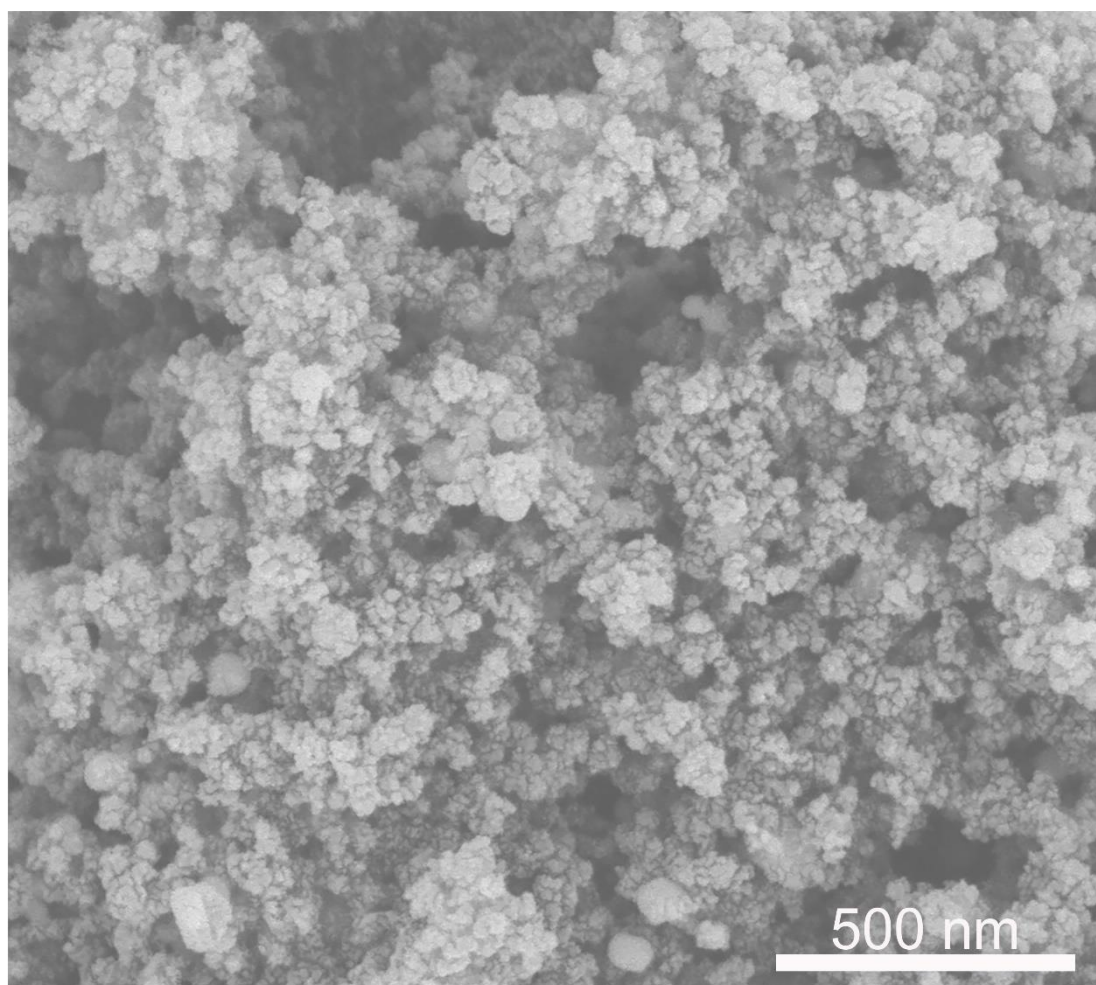
Supplementary Fig. 6 | Optimized structural models of $^*\text{NO}_3$ intermediate on Bi-based IMCs.



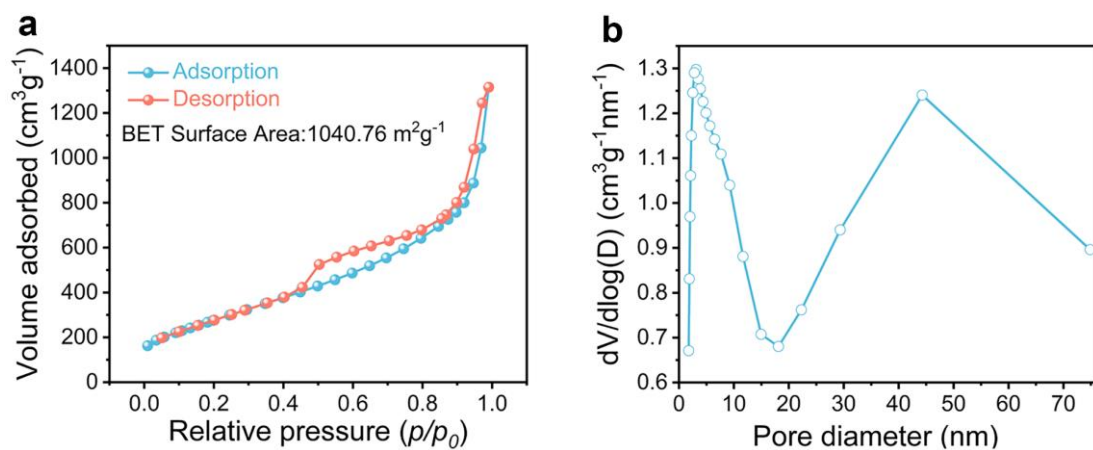
Supplementary Fig. 7 | Optimized structural models of *NO intermediate on Bi-based IMCs.



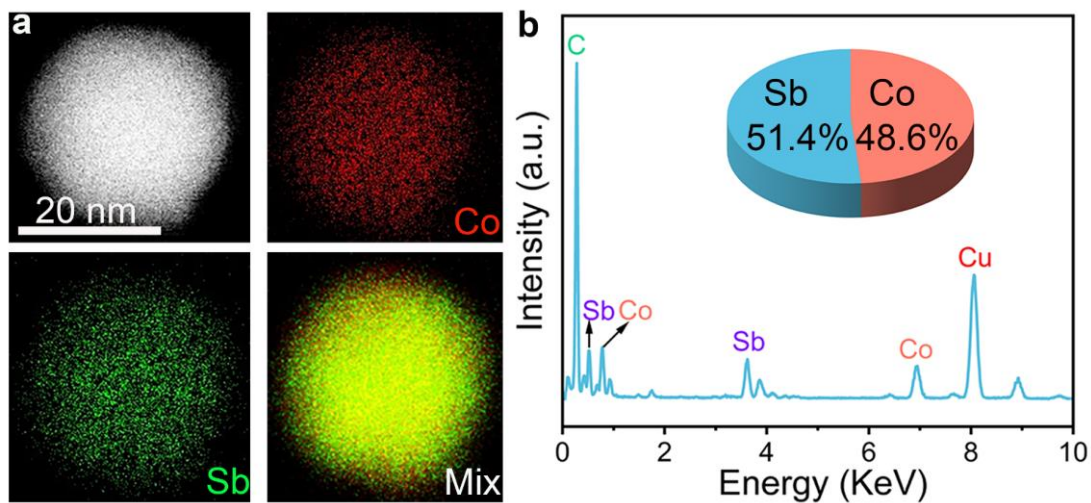
Supplementary Fig. 8 | Optimized structural models of $^*\text{H}_2\text{O}$ intermediate on Bi-based IMCs.



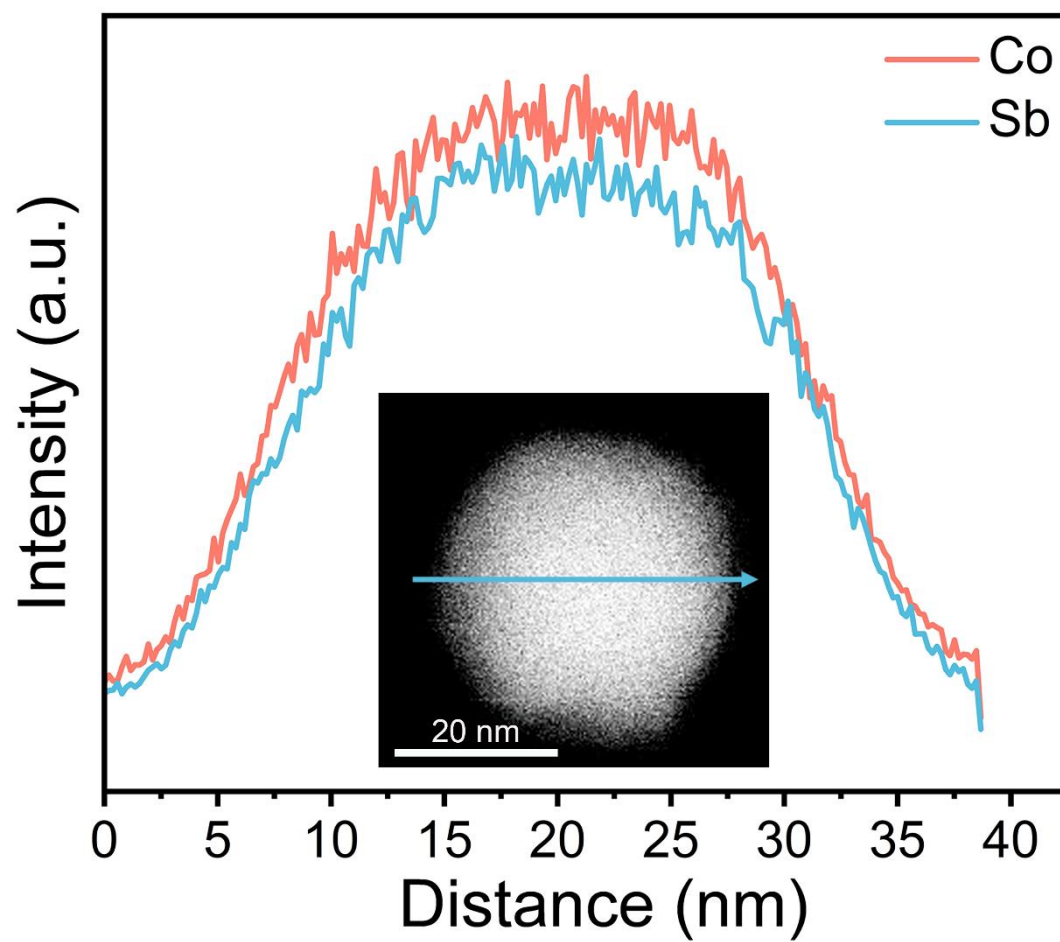
Supplementary Fig. 9 | SEM image of the as-prepared CoSb IMCs/C.



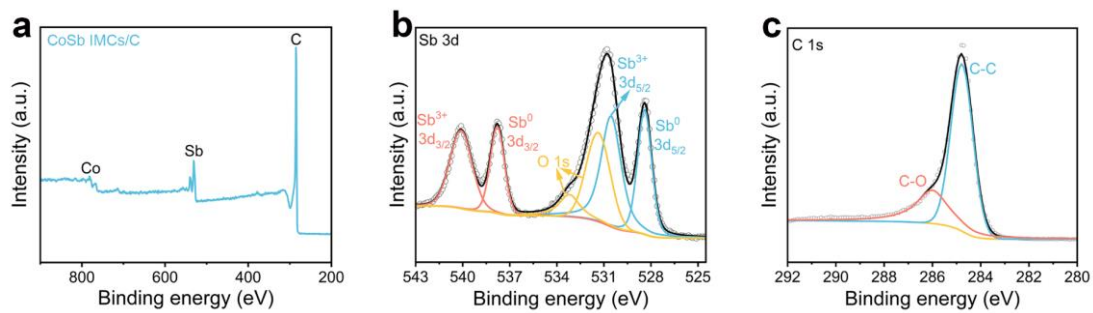
Supplementary Fig. 10 | BET analysis of CoSb IMCs/C. a N_2 adsorption-desorption isotherms. **b** The corresponding pore size distribution curve of CoSb IMCs/C.



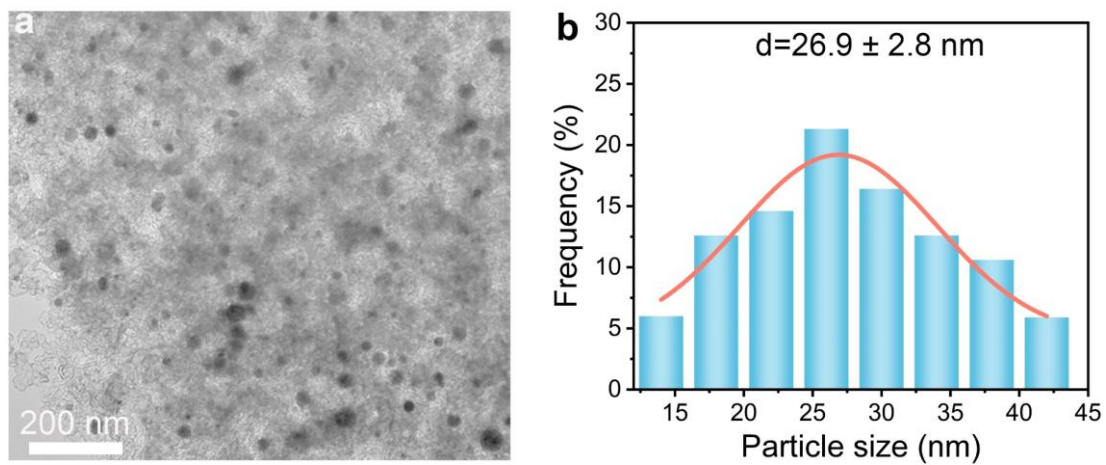
Supplementary Fig. 11 | EDX elemental mapping images and spectrum of CoSb IMCs/C. a HAADF-STEM image and the corresponding EDX elemental mapping images of an individual CoSb IMC. **b** EDX spectrum recorded from an individual CoSb IMC.



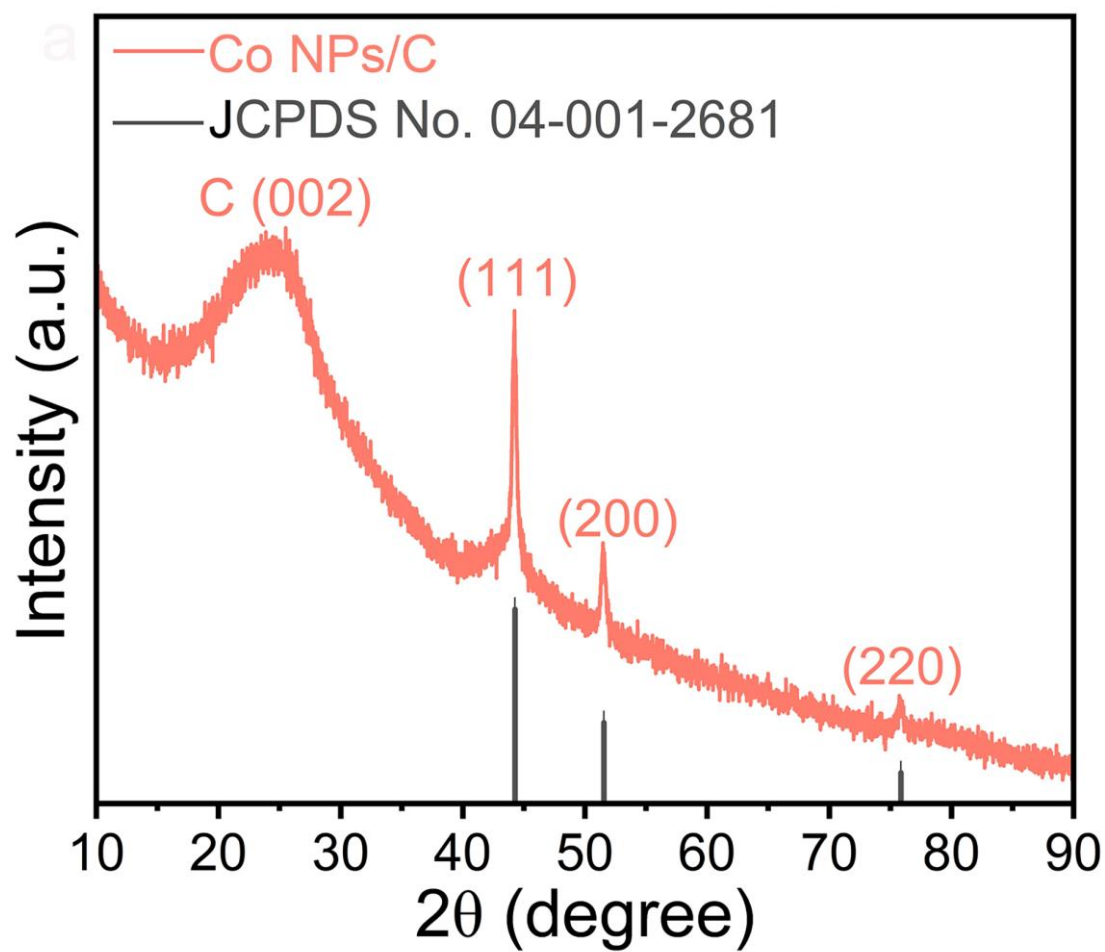
Supplementary Fig. 12 | EDX line scan profile recorded from an individual CoSb IMC.



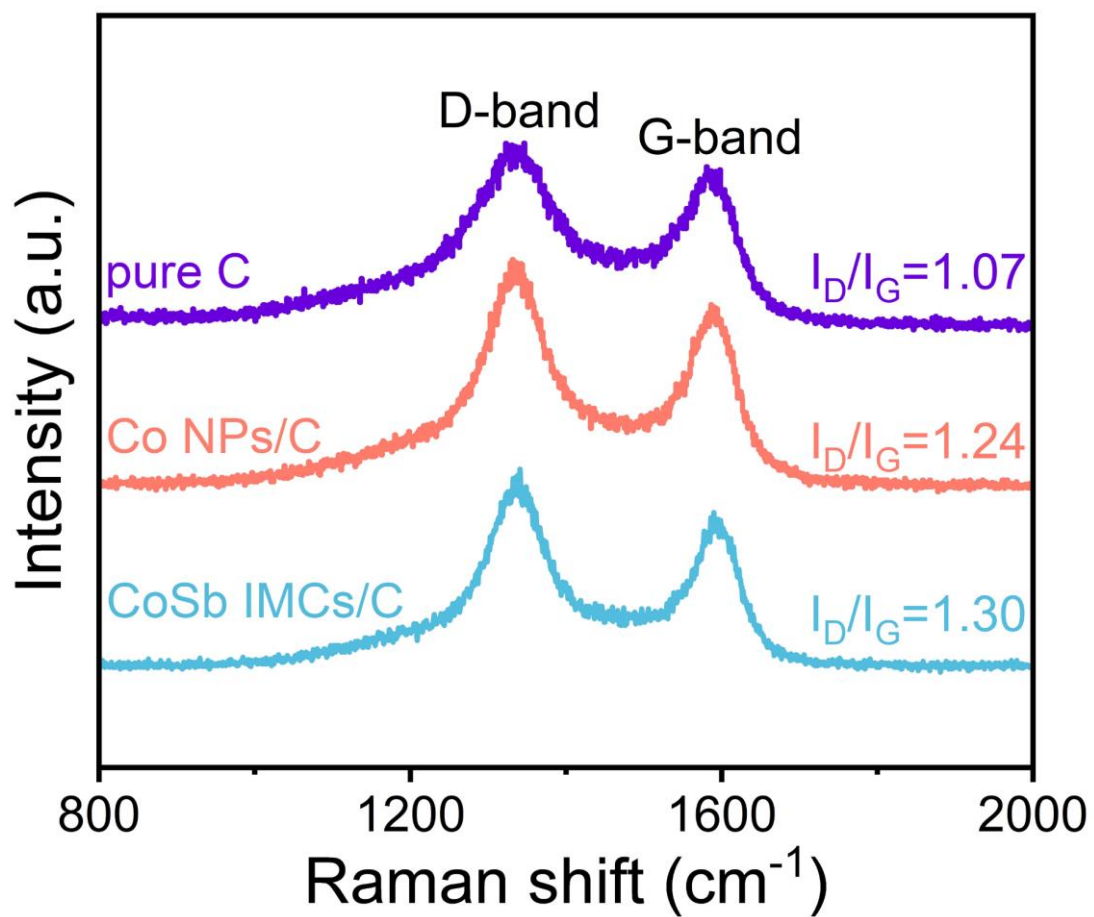
Supplementary Fig. 13 | XPS analyses of CoSb IMCs/C. a XPS survey spectrum. **b, c** High-resolution XPS spectra of Sb 3d (**b**), and C 1s (**c**) in CoSb IMCs/C.



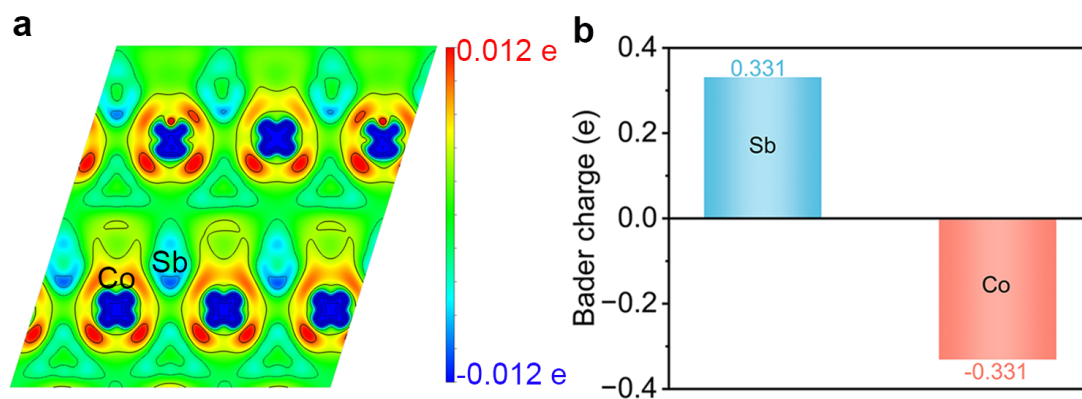
Supplementary Fig. 14 | TEM image and measured average particle size of Co NPs/C. a TEM image. **b** The corresponding particle size distribution histogram.



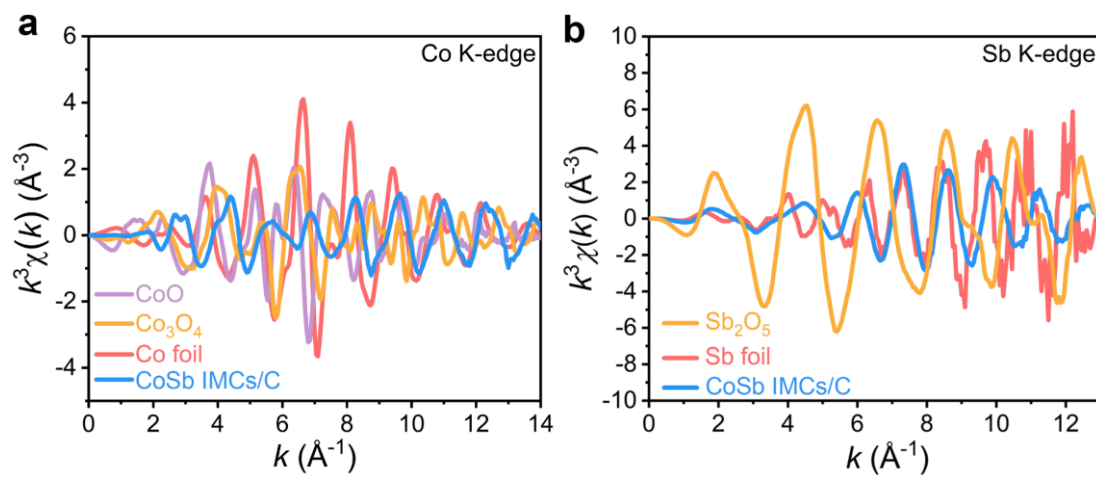
Supplementary Fig. 15 | XRD pattern of Co NPs/C.



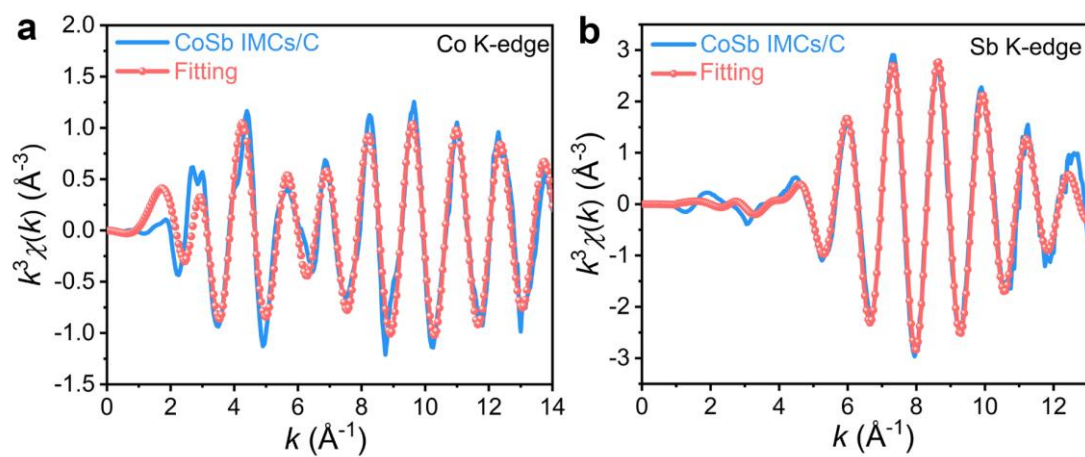
Supplementary Fig. 16 | Raman spectra of CoSb IMCs/C, Co NPs/C and pure carbon.



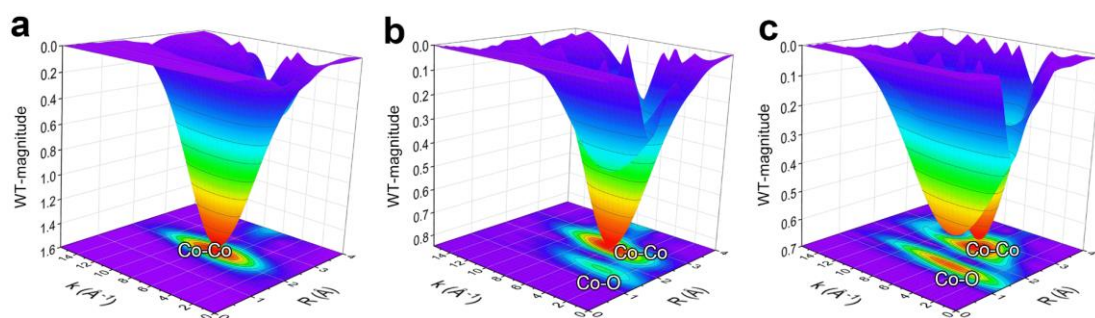
Supplementary Fig. 17 | The electronic distribution of CoSb IMCs. a, b The 2D charge density difference map (a) and the corresponding Bader charge (b) of CoSb (101).



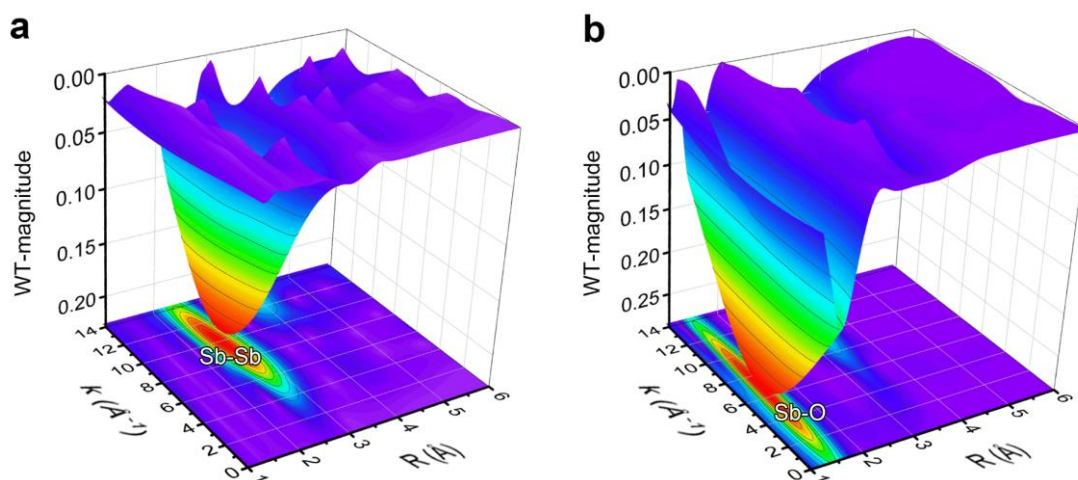
Supplementary Fig. 18 | Fourier-transformed EXAFS spectra. **a** Fourier-transformed EXAFS spectra at Co K-edge for CoO, Co₃O₄, Co foil and CoSb IMCs/C. **b** Fourier-transformed EXAFS spectra at Sb K-edge for Sb₂O₅, Sb foil and CoSb IMCs/C.



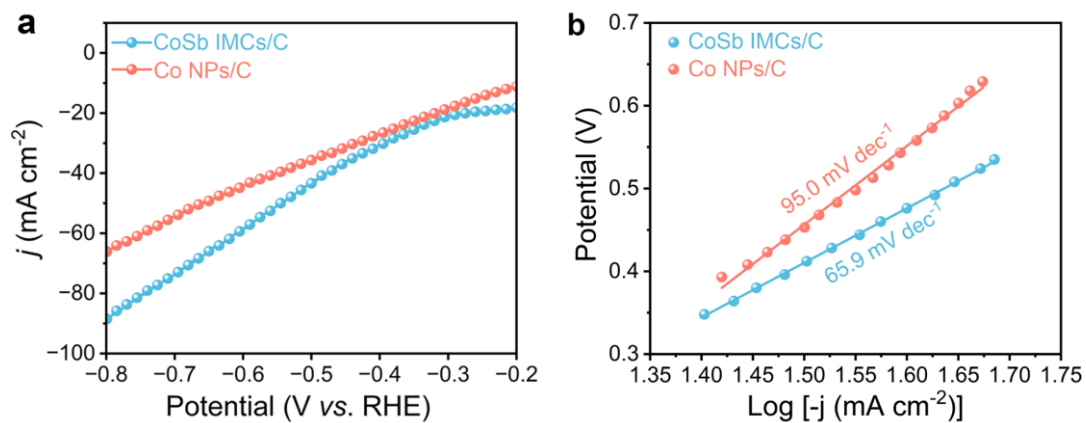
Supplementary Fig. 19 | EXAFS fitting curves. a, b EXAFS fitting curves at Co K-edge (**a**) and Sb K-edge (**b**) of CoSb IMCs/C in k-space.



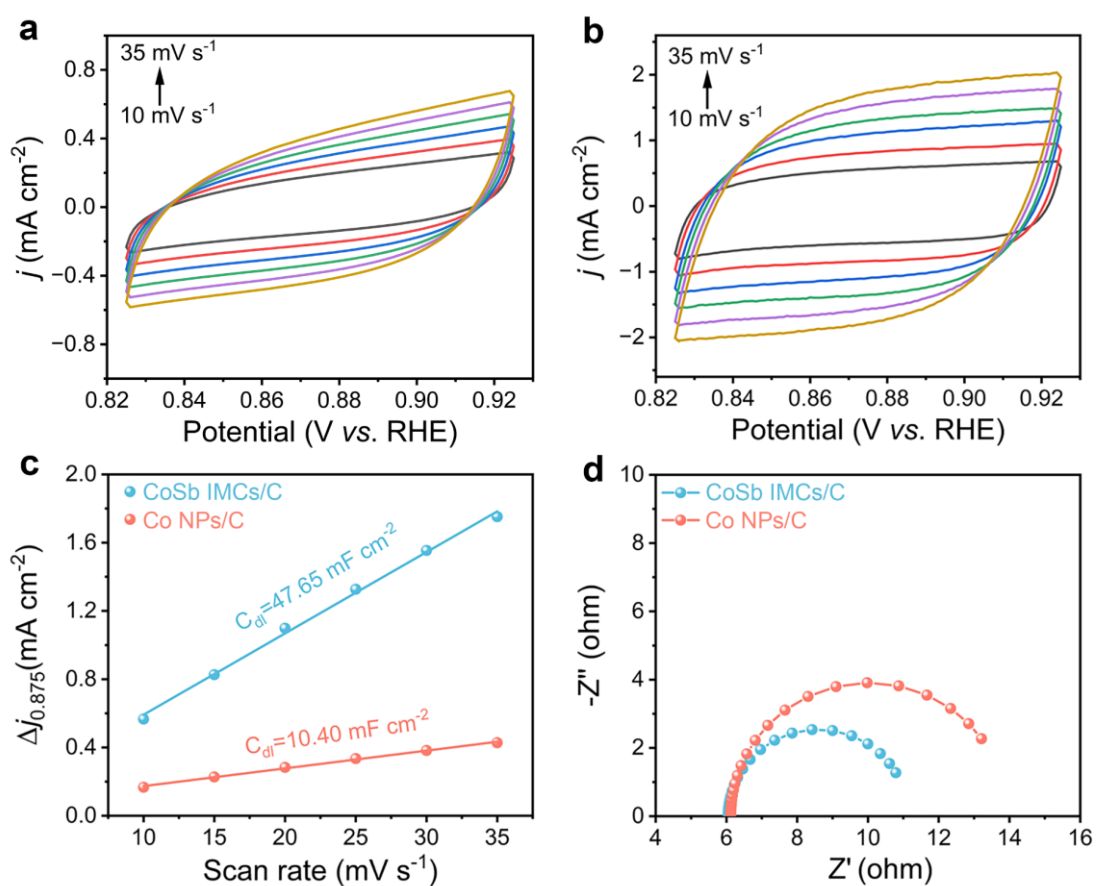
Supplementary Fig. 20 | WT -EXAFS spectra. a-c WT-EXAFS spectra at Co K-edge for Co foil (a), CoO (b) and Co₃O₄ (c).



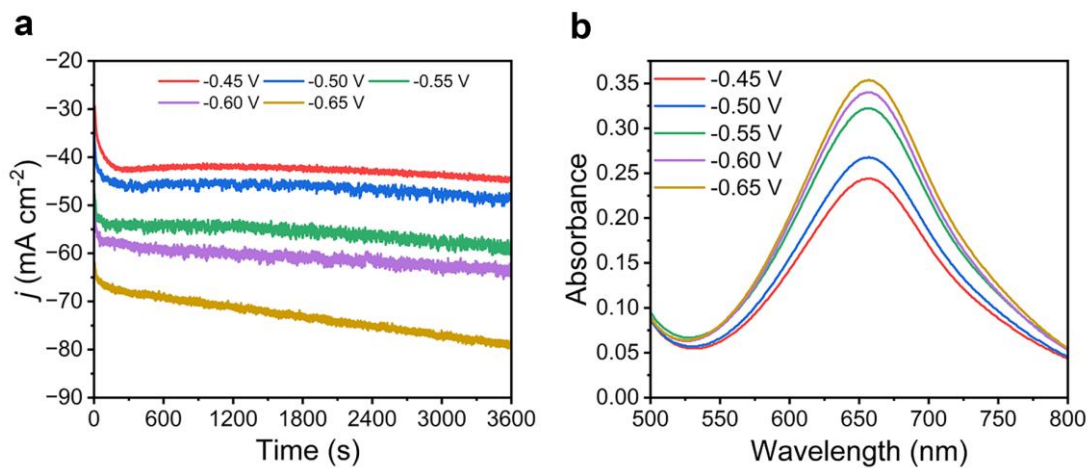
Supplementary Fig. 21 | WT-EXAFS spectra. a, b WT-EXAFS spectra at Sb K-edge of Sb foil (**a**) and Sb₂O₅ (**b**).



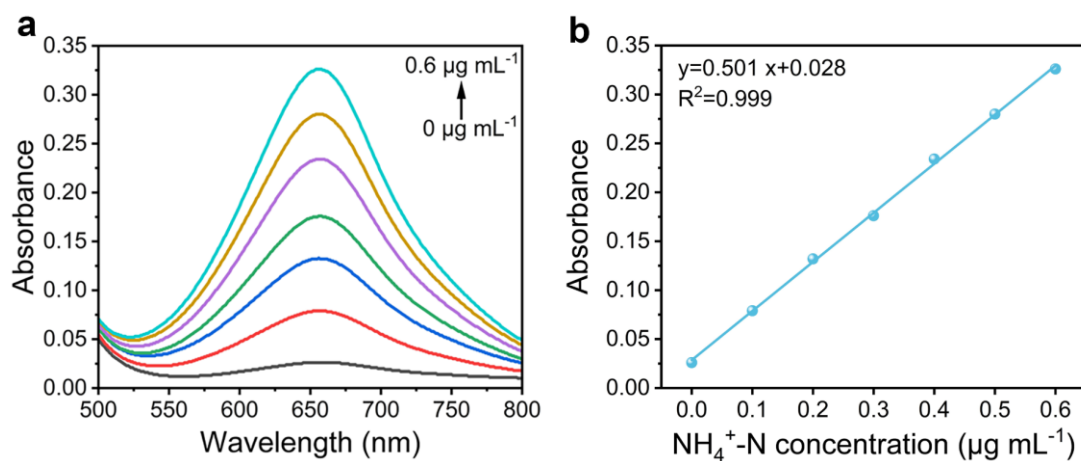
Supplementary Fig. 22 | Linear sweep voltammetry (LSV) curves and Tafel plots of Co NPs/C and CoSb IMCs/C. a LSV curves of Co NPs/C and CoSb IMCs/C in 0.1 M KOH with 500 ppm NO₃⁻-N. **b** The corresponding Tafel plots.



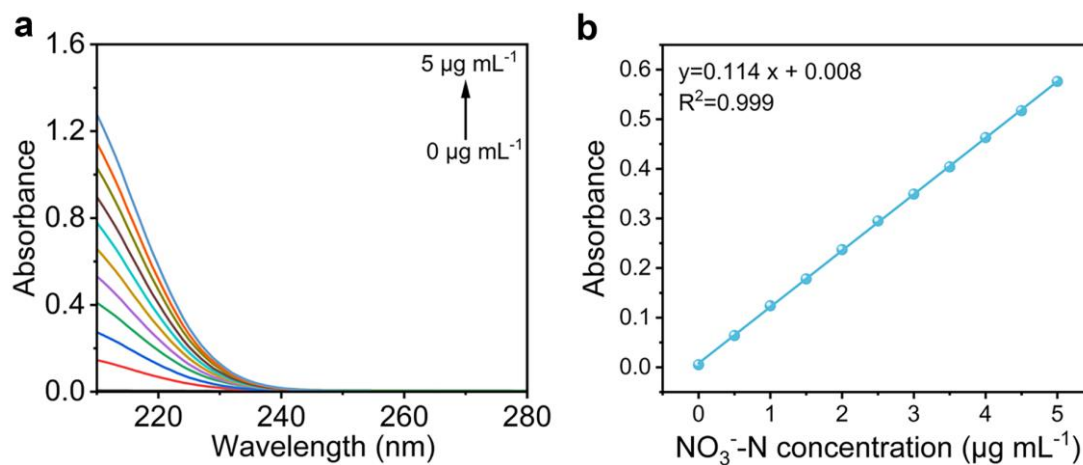
Supplementary Fig. 23 | Electrochemically active surface areas (ECSAs) and electrochemical impedance spectroscopy (EIS) curves of CoSb IMCs/C and Co NPs/C. a, b Cyclic voltammetry curves of Co NPs/C (**a**) and CoSb IMCs/C (**b**) with scan rates from 10 to 35 mV s⁻¹ in 0.1 M KOH solution. **c** Calculated C_{dl} values of CoSb IMCs/C and Co NPs/C. **d** Nyquist plots of CoSb IMCs/C and Co NPs/C.



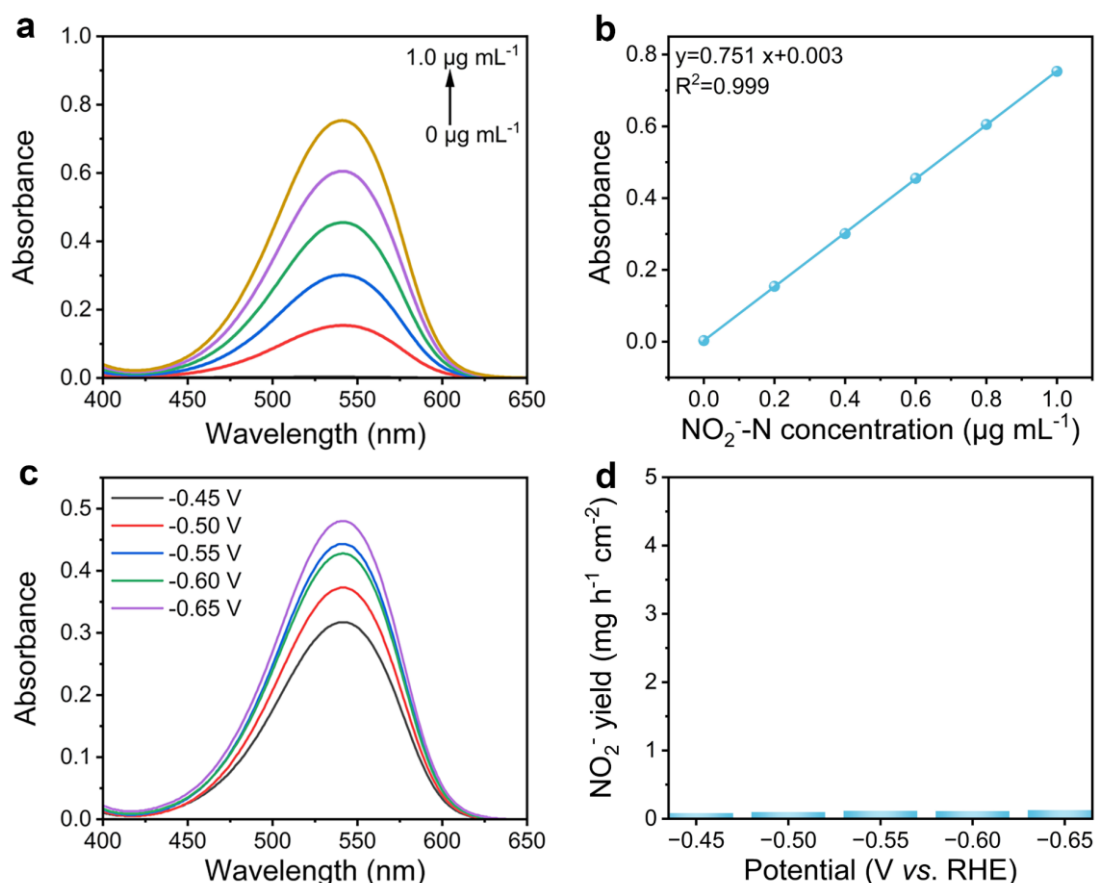
Supplementary Fig. 24 | Chronoamperometric (j - t) curves and UV-Vis spectra for quantification of NH_3 concentration. a, b The j - t curves (a) and UV-Vis absorption spectra (b) of CoSb IMCs/C at various potentials.



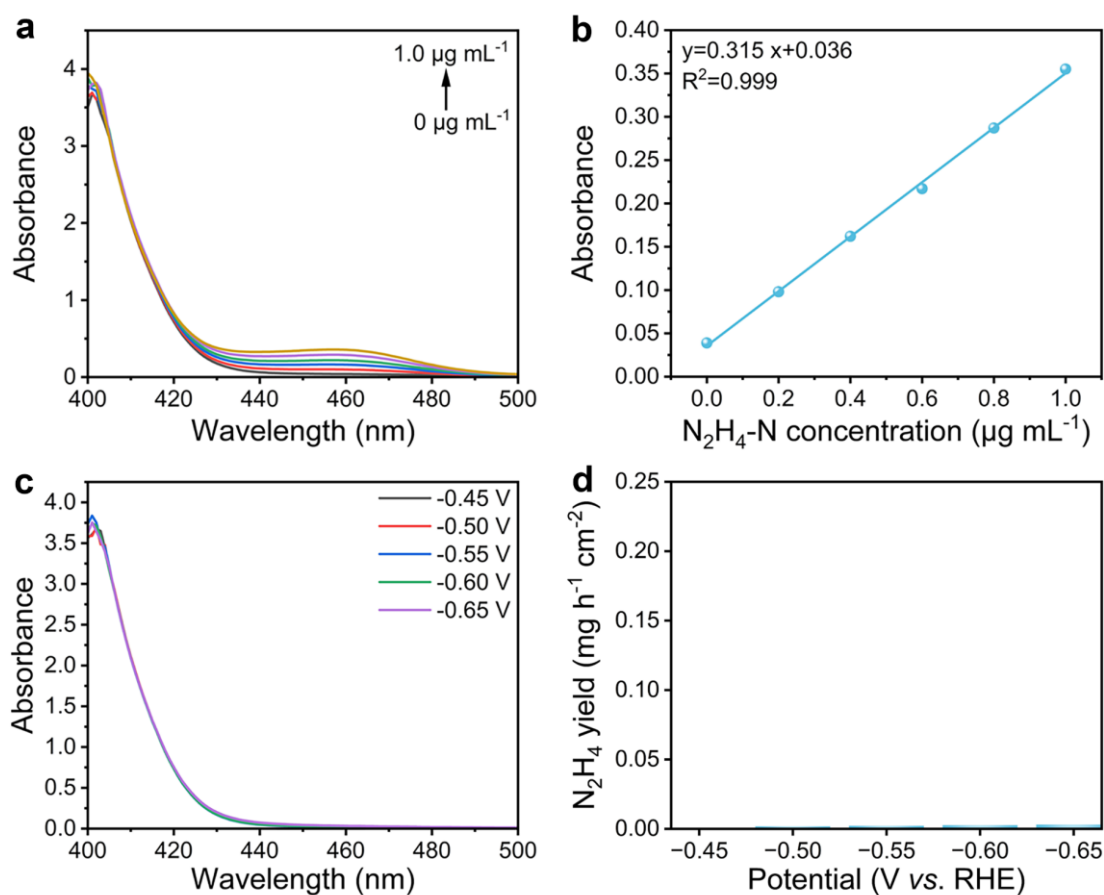
Supplementary Fig. 25 | The UV-Vis calibration curves of $\text{NH}_4^+\text{-N}$ with different concentrations of NH_4Cl solutions as standards. a UV-Vis absorption spectra of $\text{NH}_4^+\text{-N}$ solution with a series of concentrations in 0.1 M KOH solution. **b** Calibration curve used for calculation of $\text{NH}_4^+\text{-N}$ concentrations.



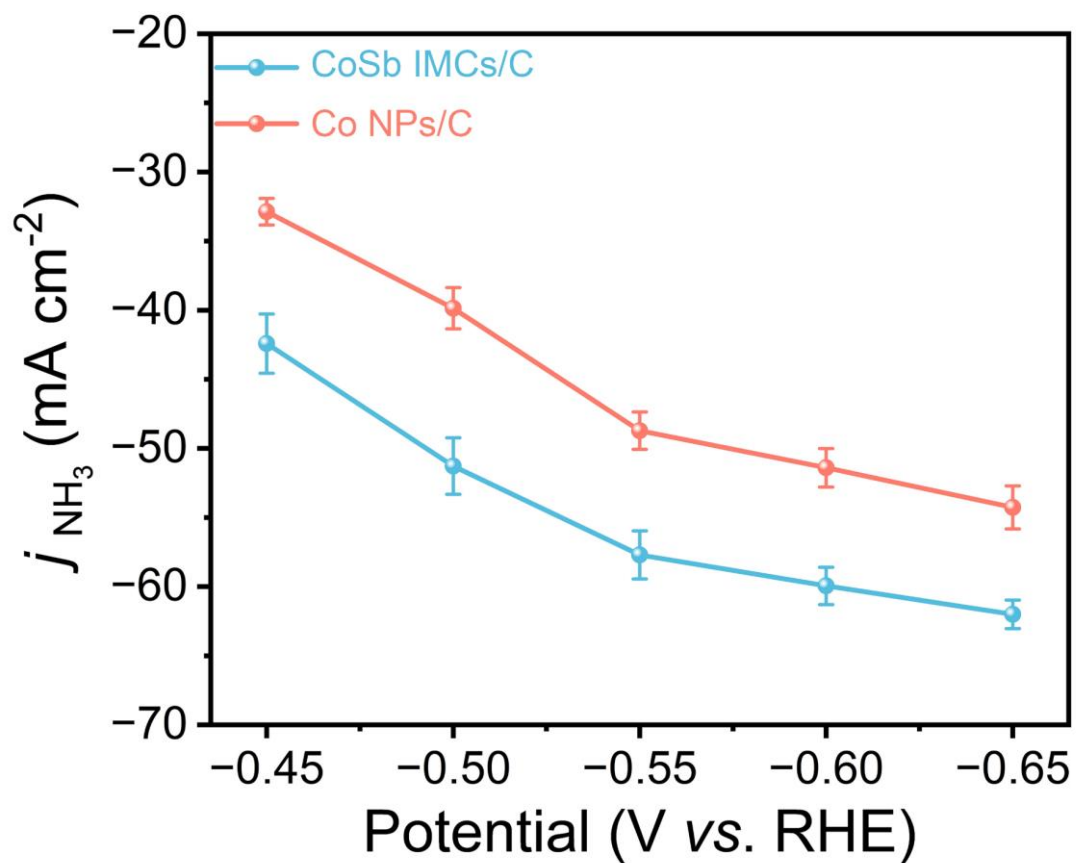
Supplementary Fig. 26 | The UV-vis calibration curves of NO_3^- -N by using different concentrations of NaNO_3 solutions as standards. a UV-Vis absorption spectra of acidified NO_3^- -N solution with various concentrations. **b** Calibration curve used for calculation of NO_3^- -N concentrations.



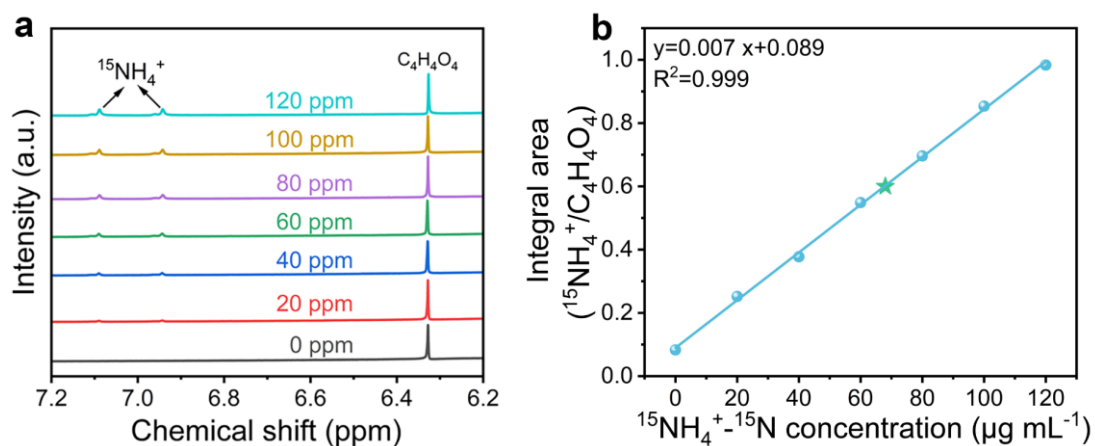
Supplementary Fig. 27 | The UV-vis calibration curves of NO_2^- -N by using different concentrations of NaNO_2 solutions as standards and quantification of NO_2^- yield. **a UV-Vis absorption spectra of NO_2^- -N solution with different concentrations. **b** Calibration curve used for calculation of NO_2^- -N concentrations. **c**, **d** UV-Vis absorption spectra (**c**) and the corresponding NO_2^- yield rates (**d**) at various potentials catalyzed by CoSb IMCs/C.**



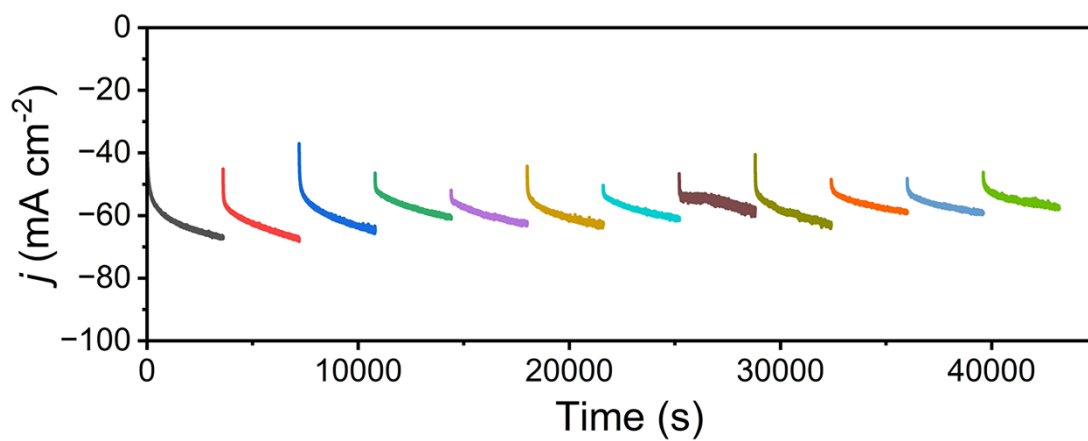
Supplementary Fig. 28 | The UV-vis calibration curves of $\text{N}_2\text{H}_4\text{-N}$ by using different concentrations of N_2H_4 solutions as standards and quantification of N_2H_4 yield. **a UV-Vis absorption spectra of $\text{N}_2\text{H}_4\text{-N}$ solution with different concentrations. **b** Calibration curve used for calculation of $\text{N}_2\text{H}_4\text{-N}$ concentrations. **c**, **d** UV-Vis absorption spectra (**c**) and the corresponding N_2H_4 yield rates (**d**) at various potentials catalyzed by CoSb IMCs/C.**



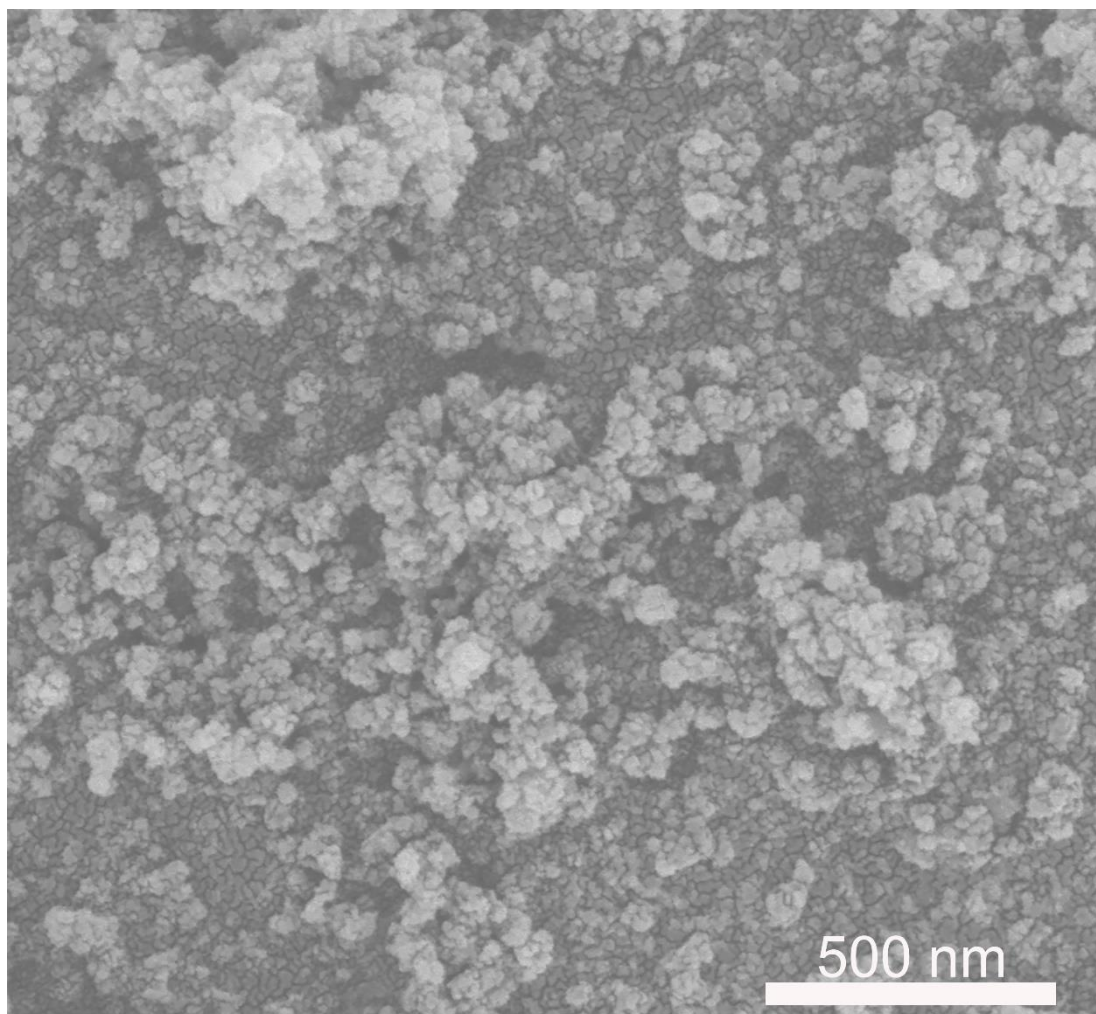
Supplementary Fig. 29 | Comparison of the NH_3 partial current density over CoSb IMCs/C and Co NPs/C at -0.55 V.



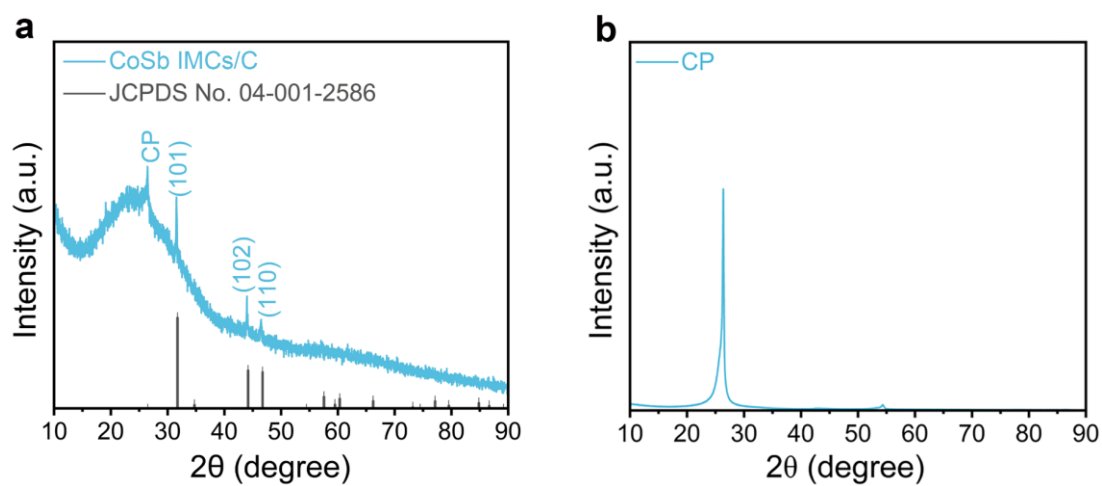
Supplementary Fig. 30 | The ^1H NMR calibration curves of $^{15}\text{NH}_4^+$ using different concentrations of $^{15}\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$ solutions with $\text{C}_4\text{H}_4\text{O}_4$ as standards. **a ^1H NMR spectra of standard $^{15}\text{NH}_4^+$ solutions with different concentrations. **b** The standard curve is used for the determination of $^{15}\text{NH}_4^+ - ^{15}\text{N}$ concentration.**



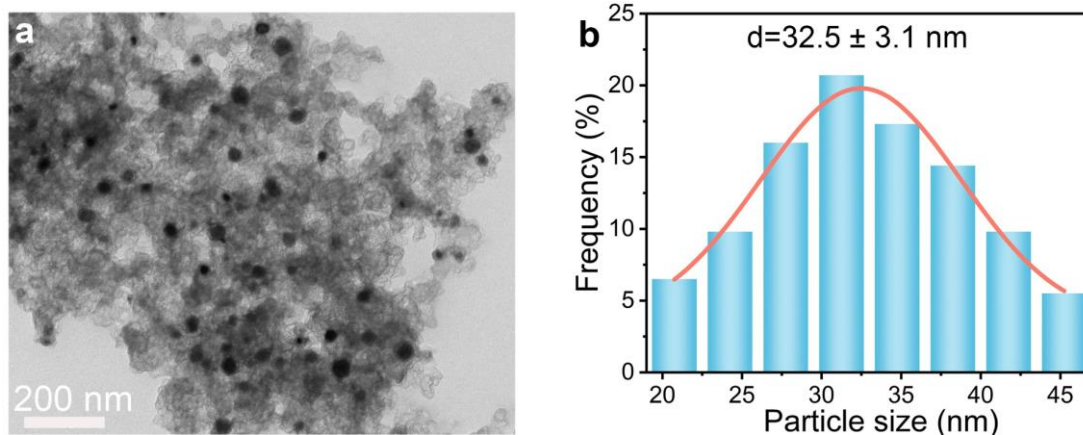
Supplementary Fig. 31 | Time-dependent current density curves for 12 consecutive cycles over CoSb IMCs/C for NO_3RR at -0.55 V .



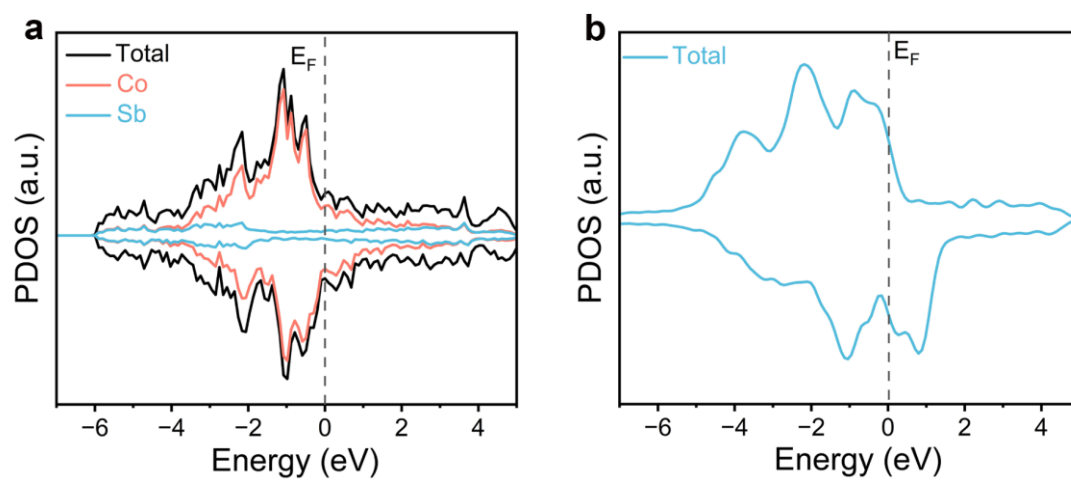
Supplementary Fig. 32 | SEM image of CoSb IMCs/C after the NO₃RR stability tests in 0.1 M KOH.



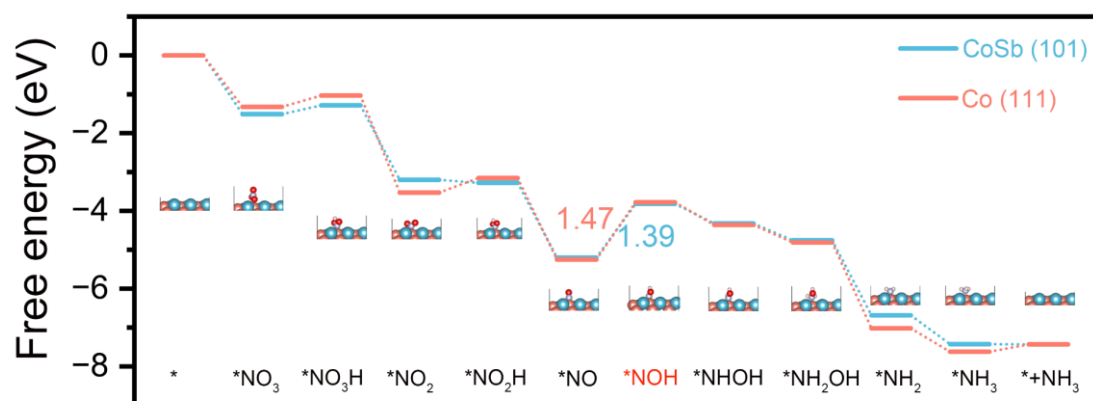
Supplementary Fig. 33 | XRD patterns. a, b XRD pattern of CoSb IMCs/C after the stability tests **(a)** and pure CP **(b)**.



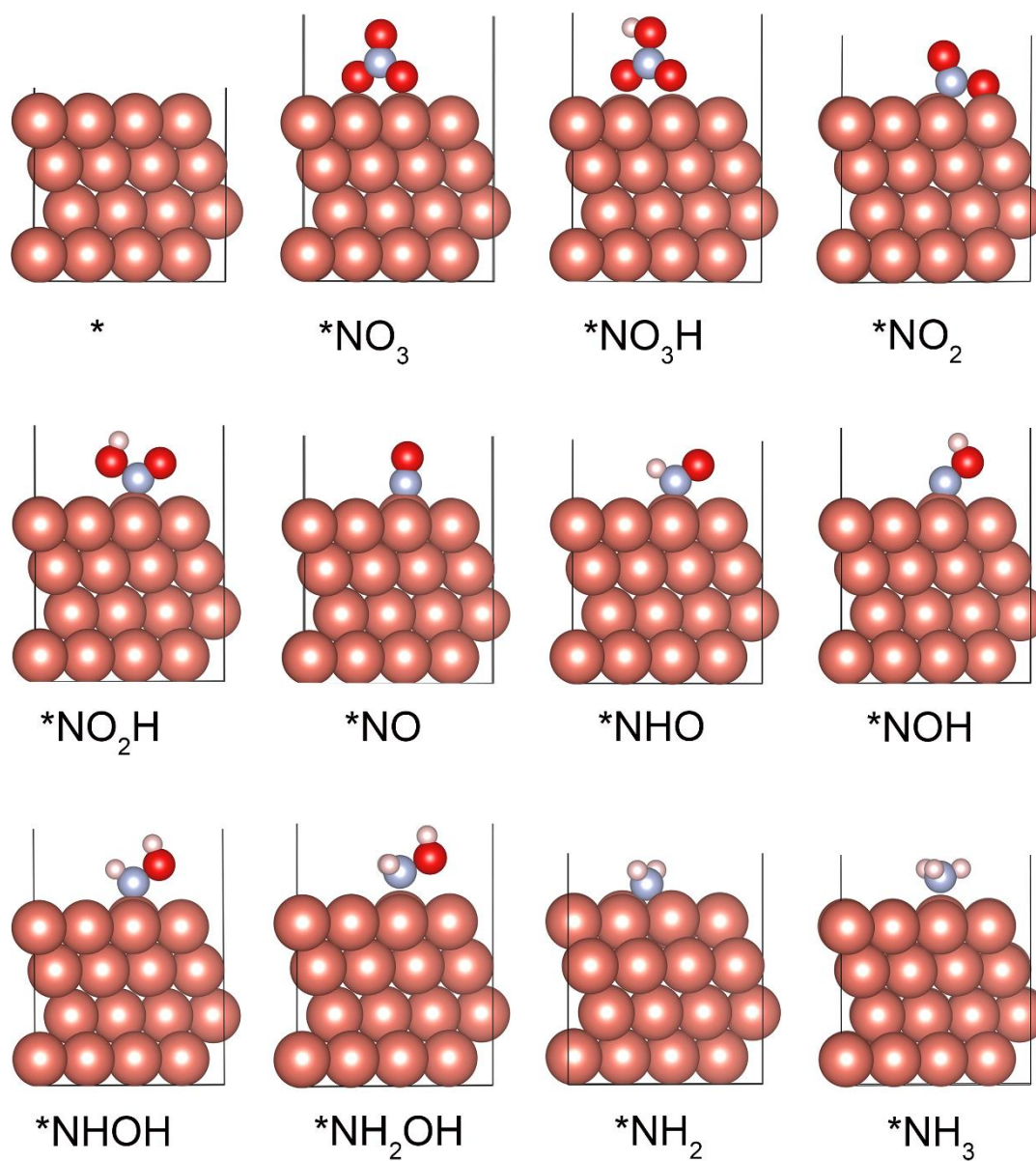
Supplementary Fig. 34 | Morphology characterizations of CoSb IMCs/C after the long-term stability tests. a TEM image of CoSb IMCs/C after the NO₃RR stability tests in 0.1 M KOH. **b** The corresponding particle size distribution histogram.



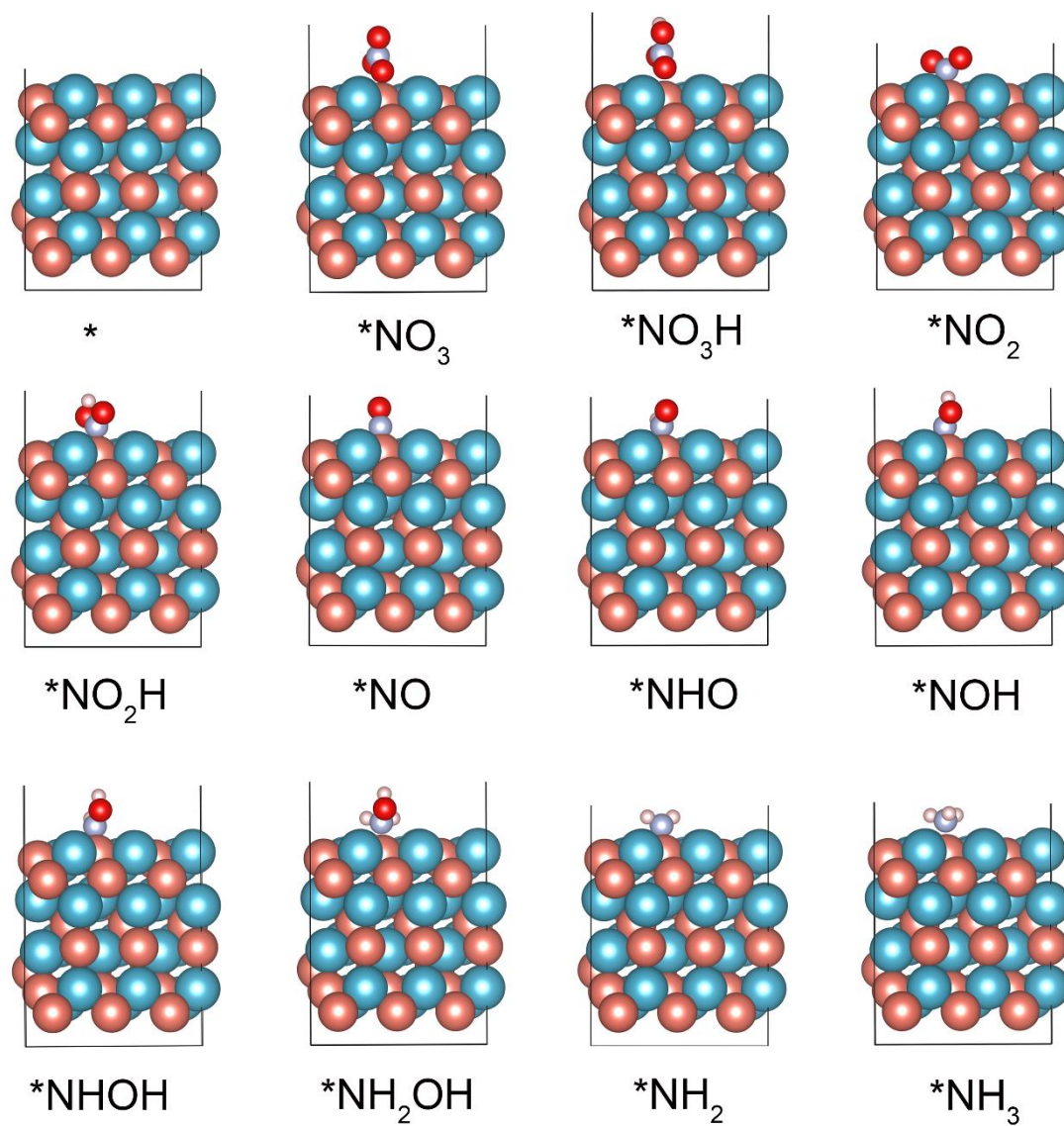
Supplementary Fig. 35 | Electronic structures. a, b The PDOS plots of CoSb (101) (a) and Co (111) (b).



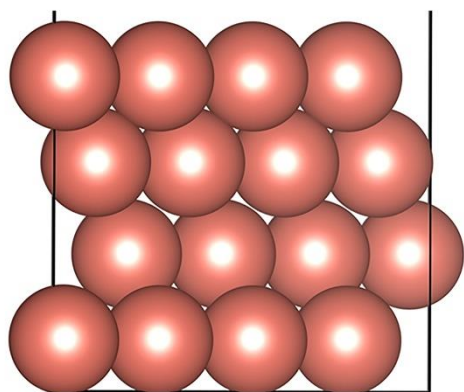
Supplementary Fig. 36 | Gibbs free energy diagrams for electrocatalytic NO₃RR pathways on Co (111) and CoSb (101) surfaces.



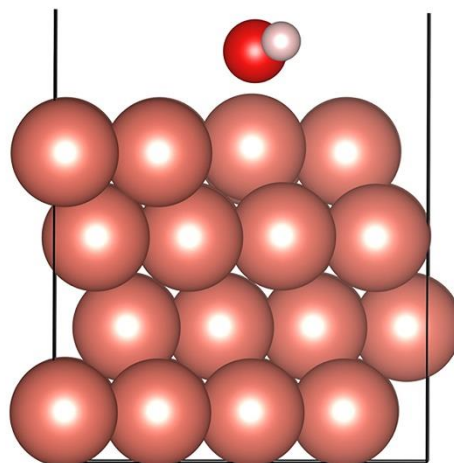
Supplementary Fig. 37 | Optimized structural models of reaction intermediates for NO₃RR on Co (111).



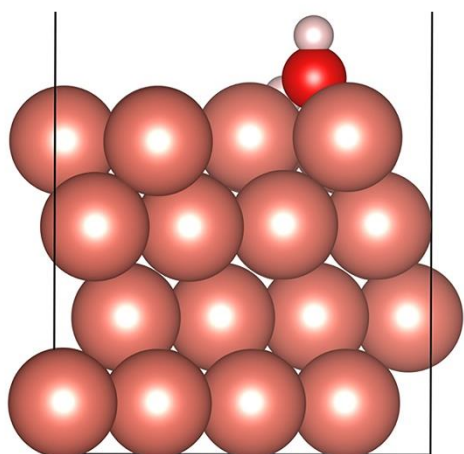
Supplementary Fig. 38 | Optimized structural models of reaction intermediates for NO₃RR on CoSb (101).



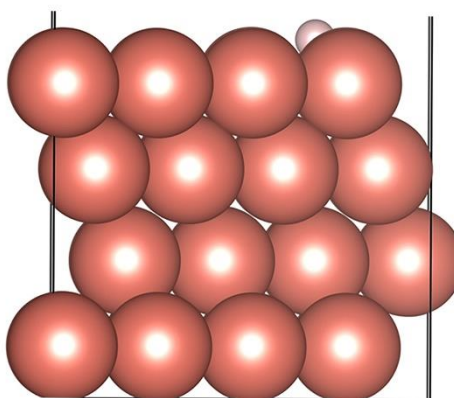
*



*H₂O

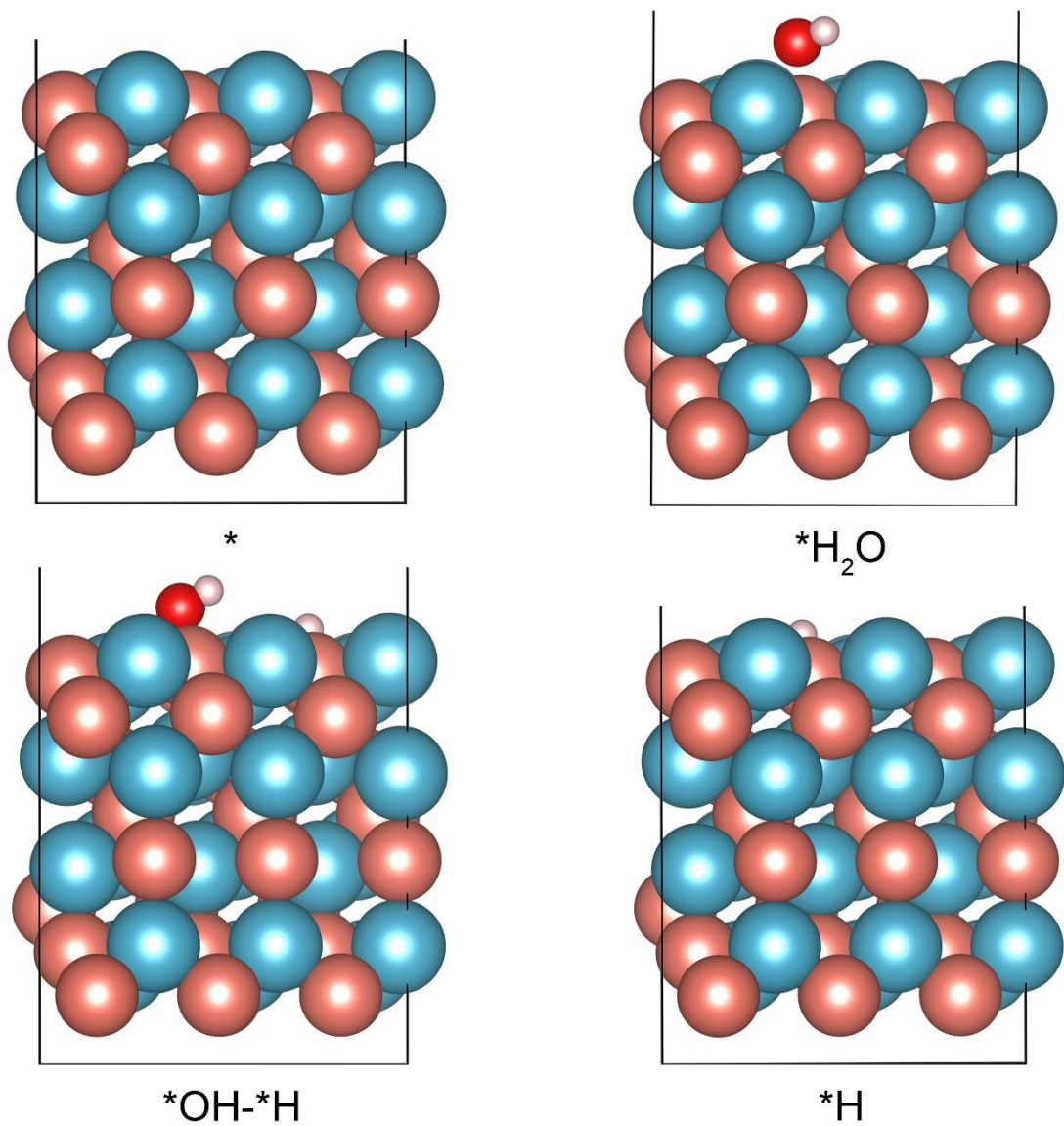


*OH-*H

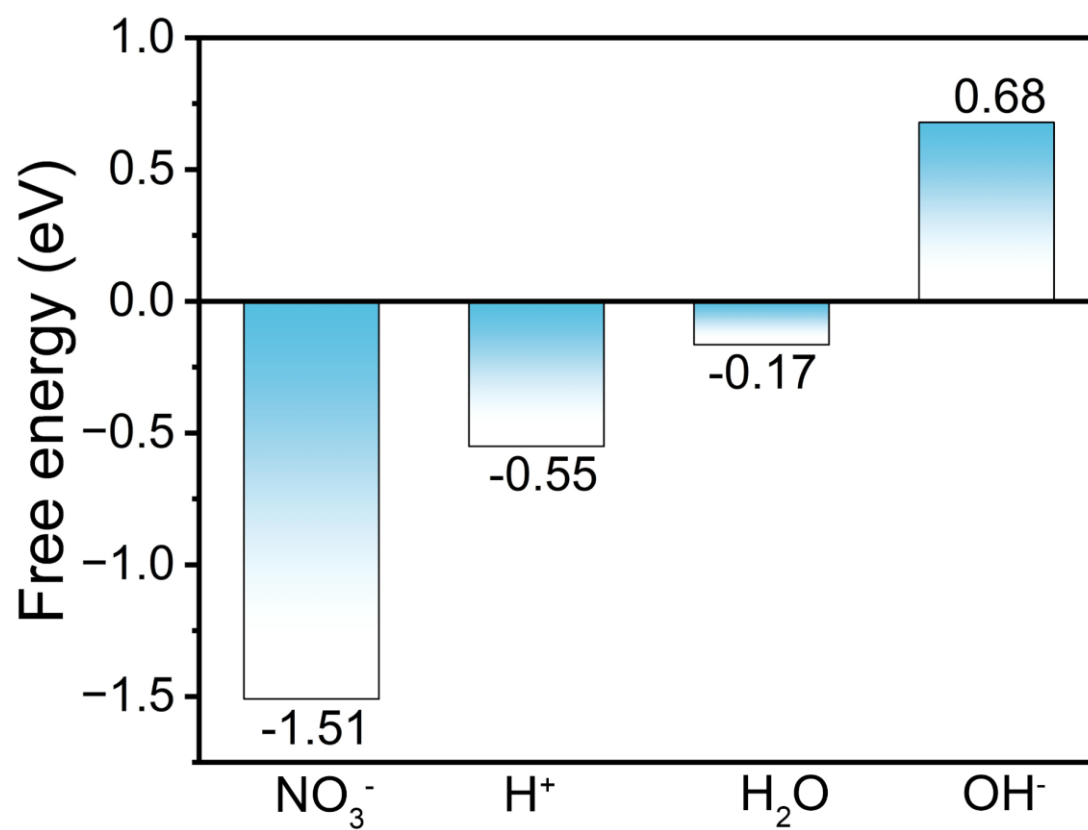


*H

Supplementary Fig. 39 | Optimized structural models in water dissociation and hydrogen formation processes on Co (111).



Supplementary Fig. 40 | Optimized structural models in water dissociation and hydrogen formation processes on CoSb (101).



Supplementary Fig. 41 | The adsorption free energy of NO_3^- , H^+ , H_2O and OH^- over CoSb (101) .

Supplementary Tables

Supplementary Table 1 | ICP-OES results of CoSb IMCs/C and Co NPs/C.

Catalysts	Co (wt.%)	Sb (wt.%)	Co/Sb (at.%)
CoSb IMC/C	10.21	20.37	50.88:49.12
Co NPs/C	10.23	N/A	N/A

Supplementary Table 2 | EXAFS fitting at the Co and Sb K-edges for CoSb IMCs/C.

Sample	Path	CN	R (Å)	σ^2 ($10^{-3}\text{\AA}^2$)	ΔE_0 (eV)	R factor (%)
Co K-edge	Co-Sb	6.0 ± 0.2	2.53 ± 0.01	3.2	-0.9 ± 0.6	0.005
	Co-O/C	3.8 ± 0.8	2.02 ± 0.02	21.1	-0.9 ± 0.6	
Sb K-edge	Sb-Co	5.8 ± 0.2	2.73 ± 0.02	4.8	14.2 ± 2.2	0.018

CN is the coordination number; R is the interatomic distance (the bond length between central atoms and surrounding coordination atoms); σ^2 is the Debye-Waller factor (a measure of thermal and static disorder in absorber-scatter distances); ΔE_0 is the edge-energy shift (the difference between the zero kinetic energy value of the sample and that of the theoretical model). R factor is used to value the goodness of the fitting.

Supplementary Table 3 | Comparison of catalytic performance of CoSb IMCs/C with recently reported NO₃RR electrocatalysts

Catalyst	Electrolyte	NH ₃ yield	NH ₃ FE	Ref.
CoSb IMCs/C	0.1 M KOH 500 ppm NO₃⁻-N	4.92 mg h⁻¹ cm⁻²	96.3%	This work
O-Cu-PTCDA	0.1 M PBS 500 ppm NO ₃ ⁻	0.44 mg h ⁻¹ cm ⁻²	85.9%	<i>Nat. Energy</i> 2022 , 5, 605
Cu-N-C SAC	0.1 M KOH 1400 ppm NO ₃ ⁻ -N	4.50 mg h ⁻¹ cm ⁻²	84.7%	<i>J.Am.Chem.Soc.</i> 2022 , 144, 12062
Fe/Ni ₂ P	0.2 M K ₂ SO ₄ 700 ppm NO ₃ ⁻ -N	4.17 mg h ⁻¹ cm ⁻²	94.3%	<i>Adv Energy Mater.</i> 2022 , 12, 2103872
Ru ₁ Cu ₁₀ /rGO	1 M KOH 1400 ppm NO ₃ ⁻ -N	6.46 mg h ⁻¹ cm ⁻²	98%	<i>Adv. Mater.</i> 2023 , 35, 2202952
TiO _{2-x}	0.5 M Na ₂ SO ₄ 50 ppm NO ₃ ⁻	0.76 mg h ⁻¹ cm ⁻²	85.0%	<i>ACS Catal.</i> 2020 , 10, 3533-3540
Cu/Cu ₂ O NWAs	0.5 M Na ₂ SO ₄ 200 ppm NO ₃ ⁻ -N	4.16 mg h ⁻¹ cm ⁻²	95.8%	<i>Angew. Chem. Int. Ed.</i> 2020 , 59, 5350
NiPr-TPA-COF	0.5 M K ₂ SO ₄ 1400 ppm NO ₃ ⁻ -N	2.50 mg h ⁻¹ cm ⁻²	90%	<i>Energy Environ. Sci.</i> 2023 , 16, 201
PR-CuNC	0.1 M KOH 1400 ppm NO ₃ ⁻ -N	3.74 mg h ⁻¹ cm ⁻²	94.6%	<i>Appl. Catal. B</i> 2024 , 340,123228
Pd/TiO ₂	0.5 M NaOH 3500 ppm NO ₃ ⁻ -N	1.12 mg h ⁻¹ cm ⁻²	92.0%	<i>Energy Environ Sci.</i> 2021 , 14, 3938
CoNi-V _p -1.0	0.5 M Na ₂ SO ₄ 50 ppm NO ₃ ⁻ -N	1.66 mg h ⁻¹ cm ⁻²	84.3%	<i>Appl. Catal. B</i> 2023 , 330, 1226271
CoMn ₂ O ₄ /NC	0.1 M Na ₂ SO ₄ 1400 ppm NO ₃ ⁻ -N	1.04 mg h ⁻¹ cm ⁻²	92.4%	<i>Appl. Catal. B</i> 2023 , 322,122090
Co-Fe@Fe ₂ O ₃	0.1 M Na ₂ SO ₄ 500 ppm NO ₃ ⁻ -N	0.88 mg h ⁻¹ cm ⁻²	85.2%	<i>Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA.</i> 2022 , 119, e2115504119
Co-CNP	0.02 M Na ₂ SO ₄ 100 ppm NO ₃ ⁻ -N	0.43 mg h ⁻¹ cm ⁻²	92.0%	<i>Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA.</i> 2022 , 119, e2123450119
Fe ₂ TiO ₅	PBS 140 ppm NO ₃ ⁻ -N	12.41 mg h ⁻¹ mg ⁻¹	87.6%	<i>Angew. Chem. Int. Ed</i> 2023 , 62, e2022157

Supplementary References

1. Zhu, D., Zhang, L., Ruther, R.E., and Hamers, R.J. Photo-illuminated diamond as a solid-state source of solvated electrons in water for nitrogen reduction. *Nat. Mater.* **12**, 836-841 (2013).
2. Watt, G.W. and Chrisp, J.D. Spectrophotometric method for determination of hydrazine. *Anal Chem.* **24**, 2006-2008 (1952).
3. Kresse G., Furthmüller J. Efficient iterative schemes for ab initio total-energy calculations using a plane-wave basis set. *Phys. Rev. B* **54**, 11169-11186 (1996).
4. Perdew J. P., Burke K., Ernzerhof M. Generalized gradient approximation made simple. *Phys. Rev. Lett.* **77**, 3865-3868 (1996).
5. Blöchl P. E. Projector augmented-wave method. *Phys. Rev. B* **50**, 17953-17979 (1994).
6. Klimeš J., Bowler D. R., Michaelides A. Van der Waals density functionals applied to solids. *Phys. Rev. B* **83**, 195131 (2011).
7. Grimme S., Antony J., Ehrlich S., Krieg H. A consistent and accurate ab initio parametrization of density functional dispersion correction (DFT-D) for the 94 elements H-Pu. *J. Chem. Phys.* **132**, 154104 (2010).