

Oliver G. Schmidt
Editor

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Lateral Alignment of Epitaxial Quantum Dots

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Lateral Alignment of Epitaxial

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Introduction

The unique success story of semiconductor physics and technology relies on the ability to highly integrate micro- and nanometer sized functional units on a single chip. Within the last years epitaxial quantum dots have become such functional units and moved to the forefront of cutting edge research to study the exciting physics of single quantum structures and to fathom their tremendous potential for device applications.

Quantum dots constitute a natural template to construct refined artificial matter, such as artificial atoms, molecules and possibly artificial crystals with entirely new electronic and optical properties. However, the full advantage of their unique properties can be exploited, only, if a controlled positioning or growth of the quantum dots inside a more complex device structure or a precise coupling between the quantum dots and a macroscopic periphery can be achieved. The prime task of this book is to review recent techniques, which allow the controlled positioning and lateral alignment of quantum dots on standard substrate surfaces.

The alignment techniques range from pure self-ordering mechanisms to advanced quantum dot growth on patterned substrates. In the former case, growth conditions, substrate orientations and layer sequences are optimized to achieve a high degree of lateral ordering. In the latter case, the nucleation centers of the quantum dots are defined by appropriate pre-patterning of the substrate surfaces. This approach allows for an absolute positioning of the quantum dots relative to marker structures, which are necessary to define a device at the position of the quantum dot in subsequent processing steps.

While this book clearly documents the great advance made in controlling the spatial position of quantum dots, there remain huge challenges that need rigorous tackling in future years. One of the biggest problems is the non-resonant energy spectrum of quantum dot ensembles, even if they are located in an apparently perfectly ordered array. The reason is that each quantum dot is slightly different in size, shape and composition and therefore emits a photon with a different energy. The question of “How identical are nanostructures and can we create identical nanostructures?” addresses many fields of today’s integrative nanotechnologies and is not inherent to quantum dots. For quantum dots, a solution might be a self-limiting growth mechanism or the manipulation of individual quantum dots after growth.

Part I of this book concentrates on the lateral self-alignment of epitaxial quantum dots. This self-alignment is realized by choosing appropriate growth conditions and special substrate surfaces. The self-alignment on a short range scale is exploited to create compact lateral quantum dot molecules. By stacking multiple quantum dot layers pronounced lateral ordering on a medium range scale is accomplished. The underlying growth mechanisms governing these phenomena are described and reviewed in detail in the first part of the book.

In the second Part the aim is to control the absolute lateral position of quantum dots on a long-range scale. Such long-range ordered quantum dot arrays might be useful for a high integration of single quantum dot devices, or to realize one, two, and three dimensional quantum dot crystals. Part II demonstrates that such artificial crystals can be created with high structural integrity and excellent optical quality. However, at the present stage the distances between quantum dots are too large as to observe new electronic band structures.

My gratitude goes to all authors having composed the 26 chapters of this book. It took more than two years to put together this work, but I am sure the effort was worthwhile and the book will serve as a helpful platform to understand the many fundamental questions of quantum dot growth as well as to further our efforts to eventually integrate single quantum dots on a single chip.

Oliver G. Schmidt

Contents

Part I Lateral Self-Alignment

I.1 General

1 Physical Mechanisms of Self-Organized Formation of Quantum Dots

V. Shchukin, D. Bimberg 5

2 Routes Toward Lateral Self-Organization of Quantum Dots: the Model System SiGe on Si(001)

C. Teichert, M.G. Lagally 49

I.2 Compact Lateral Quantum Dot Configurations

3 Short-Range Lateral Ordering of GeSi Quantum Dots Due to Elastic Interactions

J.A. Floro, R. Hull, J.L. Gray 79

4 Hierarchical Self-Assembly of Lateral Quantum-Dot Molecules Around Nanoholes

A. Rastelli, R. Songmuang, S. Kiravittaya, O.G. Schmidt 103

I.3 Ordering in Single Layers

5 Energetics and Kinetics of Self-Organized Structure Formation in Solution Growth – the SiGe/Si System

S.H. Christiansen, M. Schmidbauer, H. Wawra, R. Schneider, W. Neumann, H.P. Strunk 127

6 Ge Quantum Dot Self-Alignment on Vicinal Substrates

I. Berbezier, A. Ronda, A. Karmous 195

7 Lateral Arrangement of Ge Self-Assembled Quantum Dots on a Partially Relaxed $\text{Si}_x\text{Ge}_{1-x}$ Buffer Layer

H.-j. Kim, Y.-H. Xie, K.L. Wang 209

8 Ordering of Wires and Self-Assembled Dots on Vicinal Si and GaAs (110) Cleavage Planes	
<i>G. Abstreiter, D. Schuh</i>	229

I.4 Ordering by Layer Stacking

9 Stacking and Ordering in Self-Organized Quantum Dot Multilayer Structures	
<i>G. Springholz, V. Holy</i>	247
10 Self-Organized Anisotropic Strain Engineering for Lateral Quantum Dot Ordering	
<i>R. Nötzel</i>	305
11 Towards Quantum Dot Crystals via Multilayer Stacking on Different Indexed Surfaces	
<i>Z.M. Wang, G.J. Salamo</i>	325

Part II Forced Alignment

II.5 Growth on Shallow Modulated Surfaces

II.5.1 SiGe Islands

12 One-, Two-, and Three-Dimensionally Ordered GeSi Islands Grown on Prepatterned Si (001) Substrates	
<i>Z. Zhong, G. Bauer, O.G. Schmidt</i>	353
13 Ordered SiGe Island Arrays: Long Range Material Distribution and Possible Device Applications	
<i>G.S. Kar, S. Kiravittaya, M. Stoffel, O.G. Schmidt</i>	373
14 Nanoscale Lateral Control of Ge Quantum Dot Nucleation Sites on Si(001) Using Focused Ion Beam Implantation	
<i>A. Portavoce, R. Hull, F.M. Ross</i>	397
15 Ge Nanodroplets Self-Assembly on Focused Ion Beam Patterned Substrates	
<i>I. Berbezier, A. Karmous, A. Ronda</i>	429
16 Metallization and Oxidation Templating of Surfaces for Directed Island Assembly	
<i>O.D. Dubon, J.T. Robinson, K.M. Itoh</i>	441

II.5.2 InGaAs/GaAs Quantum Dots

17 Site Control and Selective-Area Growth Techniques of InAs Quantum Dots with High Density and High Uniformity

K. Asakawa, S. Kohmoto, S. Ohkouchi, Y. Nakamura 463

18 In(Ga)As Quantum Dot Crystals on Patterned GaAs(001) Substrates

S. Kiravittaya, H. Heidemeyer, O.G. Schmidt..... 489

II.6 Growth on Surface Modulations of High Amplitude

II.6.1 SiGe Islands

19 Directed Arrangement of Ge Quantum Dots on Si Mesas by Selective Epitaxial Growth

K.L. Wang, H.-j. Kim 517

20 Directed Self-Assembly of Quantum Dots by Local-Chemical-Potential Control via Strain Engineering on Patterned Substrates

H. Wang, F. Liu, M. Lagally 525

21 Structural and Luminescence Properties of Ordered Ge Islands on Patterned Substrates

L. Vescan, T. Stoica, E. Sutter 543

22 Formation of Si and Ge Nanostructures at Given Positions by Using Surface Microscopy and Ultrathin SiO₂ Film Technology

M. Ichikawa, A. Shklyaeu 569

II.6.2 III-V Quantum Dots

23 Pyramidal Quantum Dots Grown by Organometallic Chemical Vapor Deposition on Patterned Substrates

E. Kapon 591

24 Large-Scale Integration of Quantum Dot Devices on MBE-Based Quantum Wire Networks

H. Hasegawa, T. Sato, S. Kasai..... 639

**25 GaAs and InGaAs Position-Controlled Quantum Dots
Fabricated by Selective-Area Metalloorganic Vapor
Phase Epitaxy**
T. Fukui, J. Motohisa 665

**26 Spatial InAs Quantum Dot Positioning in GaAs Microdisk
and Posts**
G.S. Solomon, Z. Xie..... 691

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