

Malte Huck

Optical and Electrical Properties of Single Self-Assembled Quantum Dots in Lateral Electric Fields

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Das Wetter war stürmisch; der Himmel dicht bewölkt; die Dunkelheit . . . undurchdringlich . . . Durch ein solches Laublabyrinth, und in völliger Finsternis, mußten die Falter sich einen Weg suchen, um ans Ziel ihrer Wallfahrt zu gelangen.

Kein Käuzchen würde es unter diesen Umständen wagen, die Höhlung seines Ölbaums zu verlassen. Der Schmetterling . . . zieht ohne Zögern seine Bahn . . . So geschickt lenkt er seinen verschlungenen Flug, dass er, allen Hindernissen zum Trotz, in einem Zustand vollkommener Frische anlangt, die großen Schwingen ganz unversehrt . . . Die Dunkelheit ist Licht genug . . .

J. H. Fabre

Contents

1	Motivation: Entangled Photons	1
1.1	Entangled States	2
1.2	The Quantum Dot 2X–1X Cascade as Entangled Photon Source	4
1.3	Summary and Conclusions	7
2	Semiconductor Quantum Dots: Artificial Atoms	9
2.1	Motivation	11
2.2	Low-Dimensional Semiconductor Nanostructures	14
2.3	MBE Growth of Self-Assembled InGaAs Quantum Dots	16
2.3.1	Molecular Beam Epitaxy	16
2.3.2	Stranski-Krastanov Growth Mode	18
2.3.3	Sample Design	20
2.4	Energetic Structure of Single Quantum Dots	21
2.5	Optical Properties	24
2.5.1	Micro-Photoluminescence Setup	25
2.5.2	Optical Excitation of Electron–Hole Pairs	28
2.5.3	From High to Low Quantum Dot Density Material	32
2.5.4	Photoluminescence of Few Particle States	35
2.5.5	Line Identification	38
2.5.6	Initially Charged Quantum Dots	40



2.6	Summary and Conclusions	42
3	Fabrication and Characterization of Lateral Electric Field Devices	43
3.1	Fabrication	45
3.2	Electric Field Simulation	48
3.3	Electrical Characterization and Photocurrent Measurements	50
3.3.1	Electric Field Activated Carrier Loss Mechanisms	51
3.3.2	Temperature Dependence	56
3.3.3	Energy Dependence	61
3.3.4	Power Dependence — Responsivity	64
3.3.5	Field Dependent Photoluminescence Quenching	67
3.4	Summary and Conclusions	70
4	Independent Control of Few Exciton States in Single Quantum Dots	73
4.1	Motivation	75
4.2	The Quantum Confined Stark Effect	76
4.3	Electric Field Dependent Micro-Photoluminescence — Overview	80
4.4	Stark Shifts of Single Lines	87
4.5	Screening Mechanism	90
4.6	Determination of the Polarizability	92
4.7	Peak Broadening and Lifetime Measurements	95
4.8	Summary and Conclusions	100
5	Outlook	103

List of Figures

1.1	Quantum Dot Biexciton–Exciton Energy Cascade	5
2.1	Overview of Different Types of Quantum Dots	12
2.2	Low Dimensional Nanostructures — DOS	15
2.3	MBE Chamber	17
2.4	Different Heteroepitaxy Growth Modes	19
2.5	TEM and AFM Picture of Self-Assembled Quantum Dots	20
2.6	Quantum Dot Sample Design	21
2.7	Energetic Band Structure of a Self-Assembled Quantum Dot	22
2.8	Micro-Photoluminescence Setup	26
2.9	Power-Dependent QD Ensemble PL	30
2.10	Excitation Modes	31
2.11	Unrotated Growth — PL and AFM Wafer Mapping	33
2.12	PL Spectra and Sketch of Different Excitonic States in a QD	37
2.13	Power Dependent PL and Poisson Statistics	39
2.14	PL Spectrum of a Charged Quantum Dot	41
3.1	Schottky Diode Fabrication Steps	45
3.2	Original Mask File and Microscope Images	47
3.3	Field Distribution in Cross Section	49
3.4	Electric Field in the Quantum Dot Layer	50



3.5	Electric Field Activated Carrier Loss Mechanisms	51
3.6	Electron Drift Velocity as a Function of the Electric Field	54
3.7	Dark Temperature Dependent Field–Current Characteristics	57
3.8	Modified Arrhenius Plots	59
3.9	Thermal Activation of Charge Carriers — Energetic Structure	60
3.10	Energy Dependent Field-Current Characteristics	62
3.11	Excitation Power Dependent Photocurrent — Responsivity	65
3.12	Field Dependent Photoluminescence <i>versus</i> Photocurrent	68
4.1	Field Dependent PL on Two Lines	75
4.2	Lateral and Vertical Electric Field Applied to a Quantum Dot	77
4.3	Quantum Confined Stark Effect	79
4.4	Field Dependent μ -PL — Overview	81
4.5	Charge Carrier Capture in Initially Charged QDs	84
4.6	Power Dependent PL on a Quantum Dot in Electric Field	85
4.7	Field Dependent Single QD PL <i>versus</i> Simulation	88
4.8	Screening Mechanism	91
4.9	Determination of the Polarizability	93
4.10	PL Intensity, Peak Width and Lifetime Measurements	96
4.11	Lorentzian <i>versus</i> Gaussian Fit Function	101
5.1	Cross-Correlation Measurement between $2X^0$ and $1X^0$	105

When I hear of Schrödinger's cat,
I reach for my gun.

Stephen Hawking

CHAPTER 1

Motivation: Entangled Photons

In this thesis we investigate the optical properties of self-assembled quantum dots exposed to a lateral electric field. As a result of the electric field the wave functions of electrons and holes inside the quantum dot are manipulated, which makes it possible to tune their energy levels and control the optical properties of the system. The possibility of tuning the emission energy of different few particle states using this method makes this system very promising for the use of a source of polarization entangled photons as discussed in the following sections.

In Section [1.1](#) the concept of entangled states is introduced together with a brief historical overview. The possibility of using the exciton–biexciton cascade of a self-assembled quantum dot for the generation of entangled photon pairs is presented in Section [1.2](#).



1.1 Entangled States

The concept of *entanglement* deemed to be one of the most fascinating and impressive phenomena in modern quantum physics. Parts of it are well-known far beyond the borders of the physics world, for example discussions about the state of health of Schrödinger's cat [Sch35] are not only led by physicists.

The history of entanglement began in 1935 when two pioneering papers were published. First, Einstein, Podolsky and Rosen wrote their famous "EPR" paper raising the question: "*Can Quantum-Mechanical Description of Physical Reality Be Considered Complete?*" [Ein35] The paper discusses the properties of an entangled two-particle system formed from a radioactive decay. Soon afterward, Schrödinger published the paper on his famous cat paradox, where the word entanglement (German: "Verschränkung") was mentioned for the first time to describe the physical properties, as explained in the following [Sch35].

We introduce the concept of entanglement on the basis of a quantum correlated photon pair. As polarization basis we chose horizontal and vertical polarization and designate the polarization states $|\uparrow\rangle$ and $|\leftrightarrow\rangle$. These polarizations can experimentally be determined by using a polarization filter orientated in the right direction (horizontal or vertical) followed by a single-photon detector.

A basic requirement to achieve entanglement is a photon source that generates *correlated photon pairs*. Such photon pairs have the following properties:

1. The polarization of either photon 1 or photon 2 measured independently of the other is random. That means by just looking at for example photon 1, the probabilities of measuring the polarizations $|\uparrow\rangle$ and $|\leftrightarrow\rangle$ are the same and equal to $\frac{1}{2}$.
2. The polarizations of the photon pair are perfectly correlated. That means in the case of positive correlation that for both photons the polarization is either $|\uparrow\rangle$ or $|\leftrightarrow\rangle$. In the case of negative correlation, the polarization of one of the photons is $|\uparrow\rangle$ while the polarization of the other one has to be $|\leftrightarrow\rangle$.

The two particles are said to be in an entangled state if their wave function cannot be factorized into a product of the two individual particles. For the correlated photon pair, the wave function in the case of perfect positive correlation has to be written in the form:

$$|\Psi^\pm\rangle = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} (|\uparrow_1, \uparrow_2\rangle \pm |\leftrightarrow_1, \leftrightarrow_2\rangle) \quad (1.1)$$

and in the case of perfect negative correlation it has to be written in the form:

$$|\Psi^\pm\rangle = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} (|\uparrow_1, \leftrightarrow_2\rangle \pm |\leftrightarrow_1, \uparrow_2\rangle). \quad (1.2)$$

The subscripts 1 and 2 refer to the individual photons.

Consequently, entanglement leads to the fact that the quantum states (in this case the polarization) of the two photons no longer can be regarded as being independent from each other. Their quantum states are said to be *entangled*. The measurement of the polarization of photon 1 simultaneously determines the polarization of photon 2, even if the system is spatially separated.

This behavior appears surprising because at first glance, it seems to violate the rule that no information can be transmitted faster than the speed of light. In fact, this *no communication theorem* [Per04] is not violated since no information can be transmitted with a measurement like this. As defined by the first condition for correlated photon pairs, the measurement of either $|\uparrow\rangle$ or $|\leftrightarrow\rangle$ can not be enforced and has to be random, which makes it impossible to generate information and process it with such an EPR pair.

The “EPR paradox” as this phenomenon is often referred to, immediately raises another question: Does the polarization measurement of the first photon really determine the polarization of the second one, or is there a *hidden variable* that determines the polarizations of the particles from the beginning on? To answer that question, John Bell set up an equation in 1946, which is referred to as *Bell’s inequality* [Bel64]. The violation of this inequality would prove the absence of hidden variables and support the quantum mechanical point of view as explained above. Actually, three experiments could prove the violation of Bell’s inequality between 1981 and 1982 [Asp81, Asp82b, Asp82a]. These experiments were a fundamental step toward modern quantum theory, since they