Three-Dimensional Silicon Photonic Crystals

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Abstract
In this work, we report the realization of a series of silicon 3D photonic crystals operating in the infrared (IR), mid-IR and most importantly the near-IR ($\lambda=1-2\mu$m) wavelengths. The structure maintains its crystal symmetry throughout the entire 6-inches wafer and holds a complete photonic bandgap.

Sandia is a multiprogram laboratory operated by Sandia Corporation, a Lockheed Martin Company, for the United States Department of Energy under Contract DE-AC04-94AL85000.

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A three-dimensional (3D) photonic crystal is an optical analogous of a semiconductor that is useful for controlling and manipulating the flow of light on a semiconductor chip. The realization of high efficiency sub-\(\mu\)A edge-emitting-lasers \cite{1}, high speed tera-Hertz optical switches and the routing of optical signal in all three-dimensions are but a few benifits of 3D photonic crystals.

In this work \cite{2}, we report the realization of a series of silicon 3D photonic crystals operating in the infrared (IR), mid-IR and most importantly the near-IR (\(\lambda=1-2\mu\)m) wavelengths. The structure maintains its crystal symmetry throughout the entire 6-inches wafer and holds a complete photonic bandgap. This demonstration opens the door for si-based photonic crystal devices that is compatible with the well-developed Si microelectronics processes and is suitable for the large-scale photonic integration.

Our approach takes advantage of two recent breakthroughs. Firstly, a layer-stacking scheme is adopt to construct a 3D crystal for its design simplicity \cite{3-5}. Secondly, a planarization process call Chemical-Mechanical-Polishing is recognized to be the key process for repetitive fabrication of layer structures that constitute the topology of a 3D photonic crystal. With these new approaches, silicon photonic crystal structures were sucessfully fabricated. A scanning-electron-microscopy image of such a layer-by-layer 3D photonic crystal built on silicon substrate is shown in Fig.1(a). The structure has a diamond lattice symmetry.

The transmission spectrum of light propagating along the <001> direction of the 3D crystal, i.e. normal to the substrate, is shown in Fig.1(b) for both near-IR and IR photonic crystals. In the top panel, a strong transmittance dip is observed at \(\lambda=1.35\) to 1.95\(\mu\)m for the near-IR crystal, suggesting the existence of a photonic bandgap in the optical \(\lambda\). In the bottom panel, a similar transmission dip was observed at wavelengths \(\lambda=10-14.5\mu\)m for the IR photonic crystal.

Experimental results taken from a 3-D single mode cavity (with a modal volume of \(\sim1\lambda^3\)), thermal emissivity data and the modified spontaneous emission spectrum will also be described.

References:
\cite{2} Lin, S.Y. et al, \emph{Nature} 394, 251-253 (1998).
\cite{3} Ho, K.M. et al, \emph{Solid State Comm.} 89, 413 (1994).
\cite{5} Sozuer, H.S. et al, \emph{J. Modern Optics} 41, 231 (1994).
1.2
1.5
1.8
2.1
2.4

Wavelength (μm)

Layer

Infrared Crystal

Transmittance (%)

Wavelength (μm)

4 Layer Optical Crystal

Transmittance (%)

Wavelength (μm)

4 Layer Infrared Crystal

Transmittance (%)

Wavelength (μm)
Fig. 1 A SEM image of a 5-layer infrared 3D photonic crystal.

Fig. 2 (a) Transmission spectrum taken from an optical 3D photonic crystal; 2 (b) spectrum taken from an infrared 3D photonic crystal.