

NANOWIRE WEEK 2022
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**Book of Abstract
Oral Sessions**

- Th.12 **Böckle Raphael**
Bias-Switchable Photoconductance in a Nanoscale Ge Photodetector Operated in the Negative Differential Resistance Regime
 TU Wien, Austria p.88
- Th.13 **Ciostek Czcibor**
Periodic magnetoconductance oscillations in core–multishell HgTe nanowires
 University of Wuerzburg, Germany p.89
- Th.14 **Daudin Bruno**
Heterogeneous electrical dopant distribution in GaN nanowires
 CEA Grenoble, France p.90
- Th.15 **Fust Sergej**
*Transport properties of novel InAs-*AlSb* core-shell nanowire FETs*
 Walter Schottky Institut, Germany p.91
- Th.16 **van de Sande Vince**
Towards gate-tunable topological crystalline insulator devices based on PbSnTe nanowires
 Eindhoven Univ. Technology, Netherlands p.92
- Th.17 **De Carlo Ivan**
Nb nanostripes-based devices for the visualization of the 2D \u2013 1D crossover in low temperature superconductors
 Politecnico di Torino, Italy p.93
- Th.18 **Debbarma Rousan**
Effects of parity and symmetry on the Aharonov-Bohm phase of a quantum ring
 Politecnico di Torino, Italy p.94
- Th.19 **Grove-Rasmussen Kasper**
Towards quantum dot-superconducting island chains in Al/InAs nanowires
 University of Copenhagen, Denmark p.95
- Th.20 **Sestoft Joachim E.**
Cross-sectioned nanowires: a scalable platform for nanocrystal-based quantum electronics
 University of Copenhagen, Denmark p.96
- Th.21 **Spies Maria**
Investigation of superconductor-semiconductor hybrid structures in the Al-InAs system fabricated with the solid-state diffusion technique
 Nanoscience Institute CNR, Italy p.97

Bias-Switchable Photoconductance in a Nanoscale Ge Photodetector Operated in the Negative Differential Resistance Regime

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Group-IV based nanodevices are an active area of research for CMOS-compatible photonic components in the visible and near-infrared region, covering the C-band optical communication range. Especially, nanowires (NWs) have gained significant interest, due to their inherent nanocylinder resonator shape, allowing light trapping in circulating orbits by multiple total internal reflections from the periphery. Importantly, leaky resonant modes in NWs provide an antenna functionality that enhances their performance, especially when embedded in metal-semiconductor heterostructures.

Here, we advance a fundamental step beyond those concepts and demonstrate a Ge NW photodetector with switchable photo-conductance, effective dark-current suppression and remarkably high polarization sensitivity. In particular, our highly sensitive Ge NW photodetector is capable of suppressing the dark current by a paramount factor of 100 by unprecedentedly using the negative differential resistance (NDR) electronic transport regime,[1] significantly enhancing the performance of Ge photodetectors. Most notably, the NDR regime further enables a bias-switchable positive (PPC) and negative (NPC) photo-conductance with relative symmetric photoconductive gains of $g_{NPC} = -1.7 \times 10^5$ and $g_{PPC} = 4.4 \times 10^5$ at $\lambda = 532$ nm.[2] Further, investigating the polarization sensitivity in the valley region of the NDR, the Ge photodetector revealed a remarkably high TM/TE ratio of 33. Importantly, utilizing our Al-Ge-Al heterostructures with reliable and reproducible contacts as an advanced material system with full CMOS compatibility for photonic applications, the proposed bias-switchable Ge photodetector platform may pave the way for innovative optoelectronic devices including compact light tunable memories, or light effect transistors.

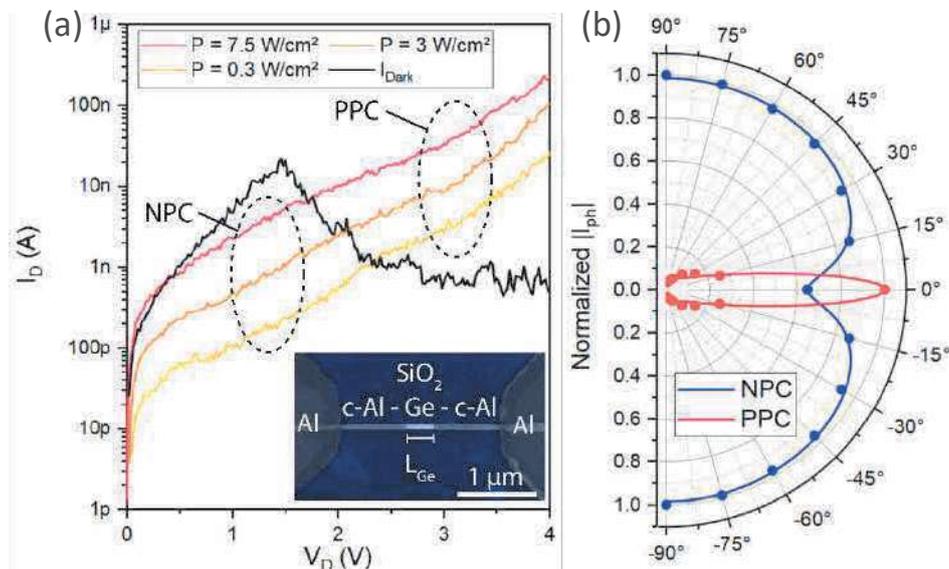


Figure 1 (a) Semi-logarithmic I/V characteristic without illumination (black) and for laser excitation at $\lambda = 532$ nm. The inset shows a false-color SEM image of the used Al-Ge-Al NW heterostructure. (b) Angle-dependent photocurrent for both PPC (red) and NPC (blue) in polar representation.

[1] R. Böckle, M. Sistani, K. Eysin, M. G. Bartmann, M. A. Luong, M. I. den Hertog, A. Lugstein, and W. M. Weber, *Advanced Electronic Materials* **7**, 2001178 (2021).

[2] M. Sistani, R. Böckle, M. G. Bartmann, A. Lugstein, and W. M. Weber, *ACS Photonics* **8** (12), 3469-3475 (2021).