

Electrostatics of the nanowire radial $p-i-n$ diode

V.L. Borblik

V. Lashkaryov Institute of Semiconductor Physics, NAS of Ukraine,
41, prospect Nauky, 03680 Kyiv, Ukraine
E-mail: borblik@isp.kiev.ua

Abstract. In this paper, the electrostatic theory of the nanowire radial core-shell $p-i-n$ homojunction has been considered. The carried out calculations show that, in contrast to planar $p-i-n$ diode, the built-in electric field of the nanowire radial $p-i-n$ diode proves to be inhomogeneous. This field reaches its maximum in the region of the i -layer adjoining to the core. When moving away the i -layer from the nanowire center, the degree of field inhomogeneity decays, and both edge values of the field in the i -layer reach eventually the magnitude, which takes place in analogous planar $p-i-n$ diode. This magnitude can be both higher and lower than the maximal field in the nanowire $p-i-n$ diode (depending on doping conditions). Simultaneously, the capacitance of the nanowire $p-i-n$ diode can both increase and decrease in its value, going, at the same time, to weak voltage dependence inherent to the planar $p-i-n$ diode.

Keywords: nanostructures, core-shells nanowire, radial $p-i-n$ junction, capacitance.

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1. Introduction

In the recent time, a great interest of the investigators is attracted to semiconductor nanowires, especially to the multilayer ones, whose layers are either doped in different ways or form a heterostructure. On the base of these objects, principally new constructions of the core-shell devices are created, which use both transverse (radial) transport of the current carriers (radial solar cells [1], radial photodiodes [2], radial light emitting devices [3]) and their longitudinal transport (field-effect transistor [4], high electron mobility transistor [5]).

Cylindrical symmetry inherent to these nanostructures introduces a number of peculiarities to their electrophysical properties. In particular, depletion widths of the radial $p-n$ junction depend on its radius in a rather nonstandard way: as radius of the $p-n$ junction decreases, depletion width of the core increases [6], but that of the shell, on the contrary, decreases [7, 8]. As a result, in the devices where the heterostructure $p-n$ junction is used, this fact results in changing the relative contribution to the device performance characteristics from different constituent materials. Namely, the lesser radius of the heterostructure $p-n$ junction, the larger is contribution from the core material.

In the radial $p-n$ junction, the dependence $1/C^2$ versus U (C is the barrier capacitance, U – applied voltage) proves to be nonlinear [6, 8]. Furthermore,

strong asymmetry in injection from the core to shell and from the shell to core appears [9].

These studies concern nanowire $p-n$ junction structures. At the same time, radial nanowire structures use often not $p-n$ but $p-i-n$ junctions [10-14]. In particular, this makes it possible to broaden the region of strong electric field in the junction, which is additional advantageous in materials with short minority carrier diffusion lengths [15]. Electrostatics of these structures was not studied so far. In this paper, electrostatics of the radial $p-i-n$ homojunction has been investigated theoretically.

2. Theory

Schematic view of the structure under consideration is presented in Fig. 1. Here r_p is the depletion region boundary in the core, r_n – depletion region boundary in the shell, and i -layer is located between r_1 and r_2 .

In the depletion approximation, we have Poisson's equations

$$\frac{1}{r} \frac{d}{dr}(rE) = \frac{qN_A}{\epsilon_S}, \quad r_p \leq r \leq r_1, \quad (1a)$$

$$\frac{1}{r} \frac{d}{dr}(rE) = 0, \quad r_1 \leq r \leq r_2, \quad (1b)$$

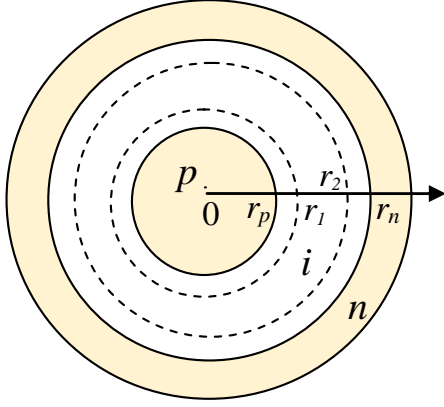


Fig. 1. Schematic view of the nanowire structure under consideration.

$$\frac{1}{r} \frac{d}{dr}(rE) = -\frac{qN_D}{\epsilon_S}, \quad r_2 \leq r \leq r_n, \quad (1c)$$

where q is the electron charge, ϵ_S – dielectric constant of the semiconductor, N_A and N_D are the concentrations of acceptors and donors, respectively. Solution of these equations gives the electric field distribution in the structure

$$E = -\frac{qN_A}{2\epsilon_S} \frac{r^2 - r_p^2}{r}, \quad r_p \leq r \leq r_1, \quad (2a)$$

$$E = \frac{A}{r}, \quad r_1 \leq r \leq r_2, \quad (2b)$$

$$E = \frac{qN_D}{2\epsilon_S} \frac{r^2 - r_n^2}{r}, \quad r_2 \leq r \leq r_n, \quad (2c)$$

where A is the integration constant.

Matching the electric fields at r_1 and r_2 , we obtain

$$A = -\frac{qN_A}{2\epsilon_S} (r_1^2 - r_p^2) = \frac{qN_D}{2\epsilon_S} (r_2^2 - r_n^2), \quad (3)$$

whence it follows

$$N_A (r_1^2 - r_p^2) = N_D (r_2^2 - r_n^2). \quad (4)$$

The second integration of Eq. (2) gives the potentials

$$V(r) = \frac{qN_A}{2\epsilon_S} \left(\frac{r^2 - r_p^2}{2} + r_p^2 \ln\left(\frac{r_p}{r}\right) \right), \quad r_p \leq r \leq r_1, \quad (5a)$$

$$V(r) = -A(\ln(r) + \text{const}), \quad r_1 \leq r \leq r_2, \quad (5b)$$

$$V(r) = -\frac{qN_D}{2\epsilon_S} \left(\frac{r^2 - r_n^2}{2} + r_n^2 \ln\left(\frac{r_n}{r}\right) \right) + V_{bi}, \quad r_2 \leq r \leq r_n, \quad (5c)$$

where the following boundary conditions are used

$$V(r_p) = 0, \quad V(r_n) = V_{bi}, \quad (6)$$

V_{bi} is the built-in potential of the junction. Matching of the potentials at $r = r_1$ and $r = r_2$ allows us to exclude const and obtain equation

$$\frac{qN_A}{2\epsilon_S} r_p^2 \ln\left(\frac{r_p}{r_1}\right) + \frac{qN_D}{2\epsilon_S} r_n^2 \ln\left(\frac{r_n}{r_2}\right) - A \ln\left(\frac{r_2}{r_1}\right) = V_{bi}. \quad (7)$$

Equations (4) and (7) have to be solved jointly in order to obtain r_p and r_n . All the rest quantities are expressed through them.

The barrier capacitance $C = \frac{dQ_p}{dU}$, where Q_p is the electric charge concentrated in the depleted p -region of the junction. This charge is given by

$$Q_p = qN_A \pi (r_1^2 - r_p^2) L \quad (8)$$

where r_p is voltage-dependent and L is length of the nanowire. Inasmuch as

$$\frac{dr_p}{dU} = \frac{\epsilon_S}{qN_A r_p} \frac{1}{\ln(r_n/r_p)}, \quad (9)$$

the capacitance per unit area of the p - i - n junction is

$$C = \frac{\epsilon_S}{r_1} \frac{1}{\ln(r_n/r_p)}. \quad (10)$$

3. Numerical results

For numerical solution of Eqs. (4) and (7), the parameters of silicon at room temperature have been chosen. Three doping situations have been considered: $N_A = N_D$, $N_A \gg N_D$, and $N_A \ll N_D$. The calculation results for the electric field distribution in the structure are presented in Fig. 2. The characteristic feature of these distributions is inhomogeneity of the field in the i -layer, which sharply differs from the case of planar p - i - n diode, where electric field in the i -layer is homogeneous [16]. The field inhomogeneity is especially strong when $N_A = N_D$ or $N_A \gg N_D$ and diminishes with thickening of the i -layer. In any case, the electric field is maximal near the nanowire core.

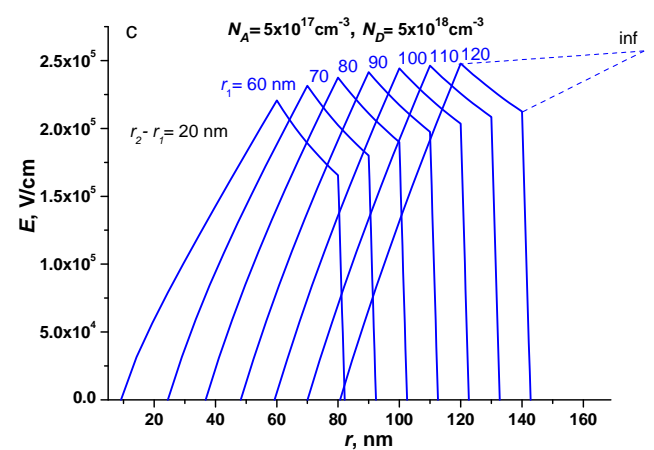
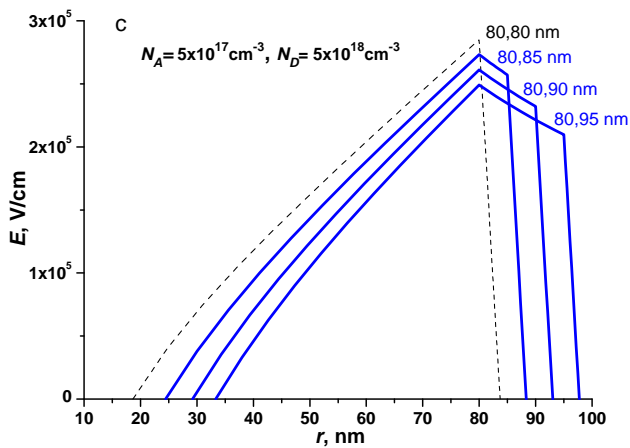
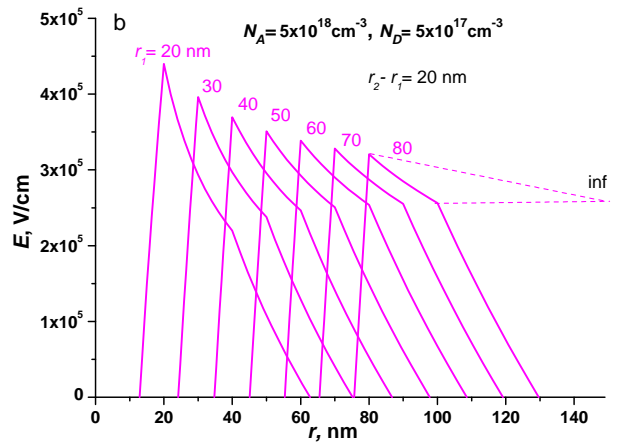
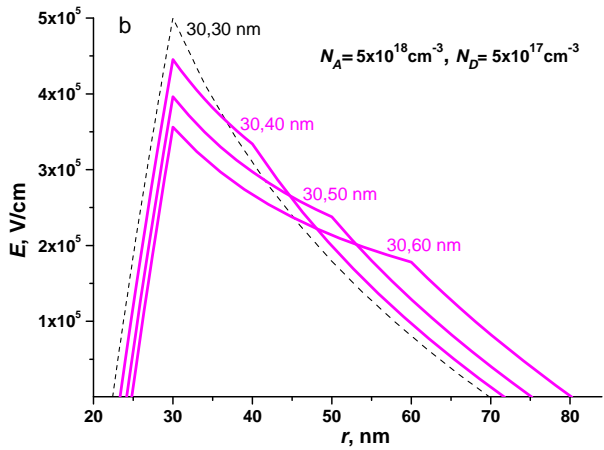
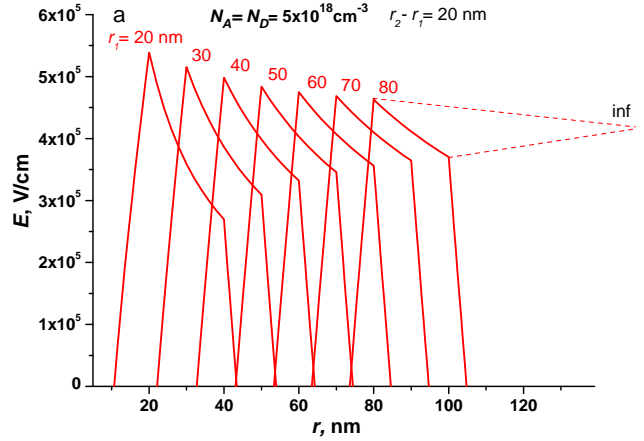
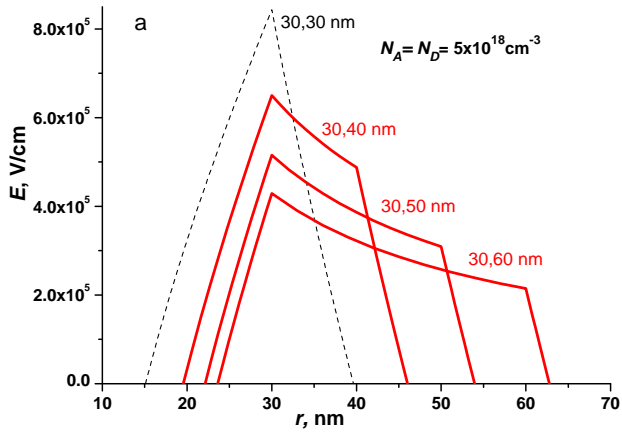


Fig. 2. Electric field distribution in the nanowire *p-i-n* diode at $N_A = N_D$ (a), $N_A \gg N_D$ (b), and $N_A \ll N_D$ (c); numbers near the curves are radial coordinates of the *i*-layer showing its extent, dashed lines show the magnitude of the field in the *i*-layer goes to zero (planar diode).

Fig. 3. Electric field distribution in the nanowire *p-i-n* diode depending on radial position of the *i*-layer at $N_A = N_D$ (a), $N_A \gg N_D$ (b), and $N_A \ll N_D$ (c); dashed lines show the magnitude of the field in the *i*-layer goes to zero (planar diode).

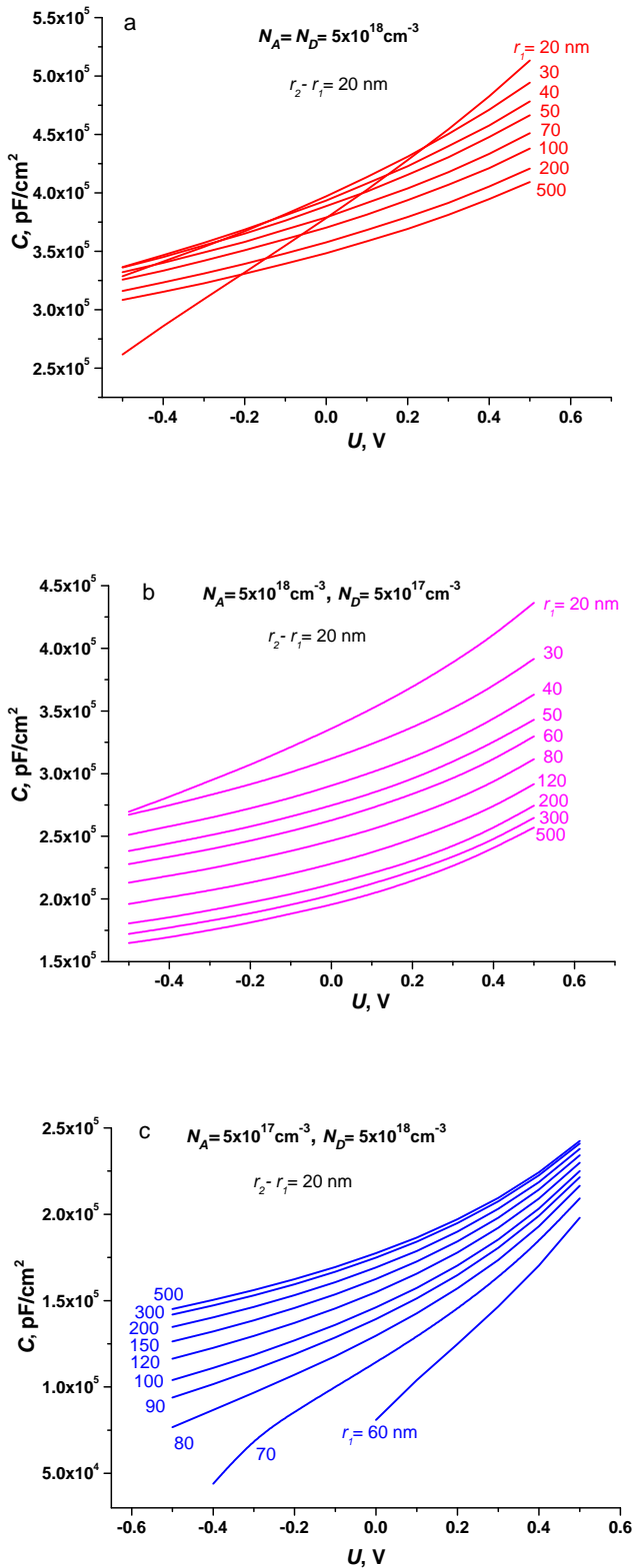


Fig. 4. Voltage dependences of the nanowire *p-i-n* diode capacitance at $N_A = N_D$ (a), $N_A \gg N_D$ (b), and $N_A \ll N_D$ (c) as a function of the distance between the *i*-layer and the nanowire center.

It is of interest to study dependence of the electric field distributions on radial position of the *i*-layer in this nanowire. Fig. 3 represents such dependences for three doping situations at the same thickness of the *i*-layer equal to 20 nm. It is seen that, as the *i*-layer moves away from a center of the nanowire, inhomogeneity of the electric field distribution becomes more and more weak, *i.e.*, the field goes to homogeneous one inherent to planar *p-i-n* diodes.

The dash lines in these figures demonstrate asymptotical confluence of both edge values of the field in the *i*-layer, when r_1 goes to infinity, *i.e.*, the nanowire curvature becomes ignorable. It is seen also that the maximum electric field in the *i*-layer of nanowire proves to be higher than that in an analogous planar diode at $N_A = N_D$ and $N_A \gg N_D$ and, on the contrary, is lower at $N_A \ll N_D$.

Fig. 4 represents the voltage dependences of the nanowire *p-i-n* diode capacitance given by the formula (10) for three doping combinations as a function of the distance between the *i*-layer and center of the nanowire at the same value of the *i*-layer thickness equal to 20 nm.

As it follows from these figures, the capacitance of the nanowire *p-i-n* diode decreases with moving away the *i*-layer from the nanowire center at $N_A = N_D$ and $N_A \gg N_D$ and, on the contrary, increases at $N_A \ll N_D$. In any case, the voltage dependence of the capacitance diminishes as it has to be in planar *p-i-n* diode [16].

4. Conclusions

Being used as solar cells or photodiodes, the nanowire radial *p-i-n* diodes have certain advantages as compared with the planar analogs. In particular, at $N_{core} = N_{shell}$ or $N_{core} \gg N_{shell}$, the maximal built-in electric field in the *i*-layer proves to be higher than that in planar *p-i-n* diode under other equal conditions. But one has to keep in mind that the highest electric field is localized in the region of the *i*-layer adjoining to the core. It should be also noted that the capacitance of the nanowire *p-i-n* diode can be both larger and smaller than that of its planar analog at the same parameter values.

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Authors and CV



Dr. Vitalii L. Borblik graduated from Kiev State University in 1968. He received his PhD in physics and mathematics from the Institute of Semiconductors in Kiev (National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine) in 1978. At present, he is senior scientific researcher in the Department of Electric and Galvanomagnetic Properties of Semiconductors at the V. Lashkaryov Institute of Semiconductor Physics. His researches include electron transport in semiconductor heterostructures, dynamical concentration lattices in bipolar semiconductor plasma, injection and exclusion phenomena in semiconductor devices and physics of the diode temperature sensors. Recent scientific interests of V.L. Borblik are electric and optic properties of nanostructured materials. ORSiD 0000-0002-8224-9170