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Author(s):
Carrillo-Nuñez, Hamilton; Stieger, Christian; Luisier, Mathieu; Schenk, Andreas

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Performance predictions of single-layer In-V double-gate $n$- and $p$-type field-effect transistors

Hamilton Carrillo-Nuñez, Christian Stieger, Mathieu Luisier, and Andreas Schenk

email: carrillhn@iis.ee.ethz.ch, Phone: +41 44 632 6093, Fax: +41 44 632 1194, ETH, 8092 Zürich, Switzerland

Abstract—Through ab-initio quantum transport simulations the logic performance of single-layer InAs, InN, InP, and InSb III-V compounds is analyzed in this paper for $n$- and $p$-type applications. The key findings are that (i) the low electron effective masses of all these materials lead to very similar and attractive ON-currents in $n$-type transistors, but cause a rapid deterioration of their sub-threshold swing as the gate length shrinks to 10 nm and below, (ii) the $p$-type devices show much smaller and scattered current values that are too low to eventually challenge Si FinFETs, and (iii) the density-of-states bottleneck effect strongly influences the behavior of the $n$-type devices.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade single-layer two-dimensional (2D) materials have emerged as new candidates to realize next-generation nanoscale logic switches. After the exfoliation of graphene [1] novel fabrications methods have made possible the discovery of alternative 2D materials such as hexagonal boron nitride (BN) [2], molybdenum disulfide (MoS$_2$) [3], and more recently phosphorene, i.e. single-layer black phosphorus [4]. The number of monolayer 2D crystals that have been isolated so far remains very low, thus leaving unexplored thousands of components with potentially exciting electrical, thermal, and/or optical properties.

In order to support the on-going experimental efforts computer simulations based on ab-initio methods, e.g. density-functional theory (DFT) [5], can be deployed to determine the stability of monolayer structures. Such studies have been applied to III-V compounds. Among them the family of InX ($X = N, P, As$, and Sb) has been predicted to exist at room temperature, either in a single-layer hexagonal honeycomb (InN) or buckled honeycomb (InAs, InP, and InSb) lattice, as illustrated in Fig. 1.

To date only material characterizations and electronic structure calculations have been reported for the aforementioned 2D materials [6]. With semiconductor-like band gaps in the range of 1.2 to 1.8 eV and small transport effective masses going from 0.07 to 0.13 $m_0$ the InX monolayers could find potential applications as future ultra-scaled transistors beyond Si FinFETs. This scenario has not been investigated so far. Here, we therefore go one step further and present the first ab-initio ballistic quantum transport simulations of single-layer $n$- and $p$-type double-gate field-effect transistors (FETs) with an InX channel. After a short summary of the modeling approach a detailed analysis of the device performance will be provided. While ON-current values larger than 5 mA/$\mu$m can be reached by all materials in the $n$-type configuration, the $p$-type results are more modest ($I_{ON}$ below 1.8 mA/$\mu$m) and the scaling of the gate length below 10 nm, even with a double-gate contact, does not appear as a reasonable option.

RESULTS

The $n$- and $p$-type device structures examined in this work are schematized in Fig. 1. They are double-gate field-effect transistors with single-layer InX as channel
materials, a nominal gate length $L_g=15$ nm, source and drain extensions of length $L_s=L_d=15$ nm with a doping concentration $N_A/D=2e13$ cm$^{-2}$, and two oxide layers of thickness $t_{ox}=3$ nm and relative permittivity $\epsilon_R=20$. A supply voltage of $V_{DD}=0.65$ V has been chosen to be in line with future technology nodes. The hexagonal buckled honeycomb lattice and the DFT bandstructures of the InX components, as obtained from VASP and maximally localized Wannier functions, are given in Figs. 1 and 2, respectively, together with the corresponding electron and hole effective masses at the conduction and valence band extrema. The InX monolayers have direct band gaps between the $\Gamma$ (CB) and $K$ (VB), except InN, for which $CB_{min}$ and $VB_{max}$ are at $\Gamma$.

The intrinsic transfer characteristics of the monolayer InSb $n$- and $p$-FET are plotted in Fig. 3 on a linear and logarithmic scale. The effect of the contact resistances has not been taken into account in these simulations. It is expected to significantly reduce the extracted currents. Consequently, the computed ON-currents should be much larger than 1 mA/$\mu$m, the typical Si FinFET value [13], to be competitive with this architecture. This is the case of single-layer InSb, which offers the best compromise between high $n$- and $p$-type performance although a strong asymmetry exists between them: the $I_{ON}$ of the $n$-FET exceeds that of the $p$-FET by a factor of 2.5 (4.8 vs. 1.8 mA/$\mu$m), but also that of Si FinFETs by a factor of $\sim$3. A careful inspection of the electron $m_e$ and hole $m_h$ effective masses in Table II explains this imbalance, $m_e$ being $\sim$9 times smaller than $m_h$.

The ON-current of 2-D InSb $n$-FETs certainly benefits from the underlying low electron transport effective mass, but the latter has a negative impact on the scalability of such devices because it contributes to a drastic increase of source-to-drain ($S$-$D$) tunneling. This effect can be clearly seen in Fig. 3(c): the OFF current rapidly increases as the gate length $L_g$ goes down from 15 to 5 nm.

Fig. 4 reports the $I_d-V_{gs}$ of the $n$- and $p$-type double-gate transistor with an InAs, InN, and InP channel and summarizes their ON-current and sub-threshold swing at $L_g=15$ nm. Note that the simulations of the $p$-FETs did not converge as well as their $n$-FET counterparts, explaining the larger noise in the $I$-$V$ characteristics. Three important facts should be highlighted here: (i) the $n$-type ON-currents are almost identical with $\leq 10\%$ deviations, much less than for the electron effective masses ($50\%$ difference between InSb and InN), (ii) the $p$-FETs see much larger ON-current discrepancies of roughly 40% between InP and InSb, and (iii) the sub-threshold swings at $L_g=15$ nm remain close to their ideal 60 mV/dec value due to limited $S$-$D$ tunneling.

To understand the homogeneity (variability) in the $n$-$($p$)$FET ON-currents it is useful to inspect the charge density at the top-of-the-potential-barrier (ToB) in all simulated devices. These quantities are illustrated in Fig. 5, where the extraction method is also described. It can be observed that the slope of the electron concentration at the ToB, which is proportional to the gate capacitance, differs from one channel material to the other. The one with the largest effective mass (InN) has the steepest slope. This finding definitively indicates that the $n$-type switches operate close to their quantum capacitance limit so that the density-of-states (DOS) bottleneck plays a major role and compensates for the higher injection velocity of materials with a smaller effective mass, see Fig. 6(a) for the velocity and ToB charge results. This is not the case of the $p$-FETs, where the slope of the hole density at the ToB does not vary much from one monolayer to the other. Hence, the ON-current is inversely proportional to the hole effective mass and is not influence by the DOS bottleneck.

Finally, the scalability of the InX $n$- and $p$-type transistors is studied in Fig. 6(b-c). To do that, the gate length of all devices has been reduced from 15 to 10 and then 5 nm before the sub-threshold swing $SS$ has been extracted. As mentioned above, at $L_g=15$ nm, the double-gate configuration provides an excellent electrostatic integrity and allows for a quasi-ideal behavior. When $L_g$ reaches 10 nm, $SS$ slightly increases to $\sim$80 mV/dec, which remains an acceptable value. In the shortest structures, the inflation of $SS$ becomes so large that no proper switching operation is possible.

**CONCLUSION**

Transistors with a 2-D InX channel have been simulated with a fully ab-initio device modeling approach. It has been shown that the $n$-type transistor could reach ON-currents as high as 5 mA/$\mu$m, about 5× more than Si FinFETs, if the effect of the contact resistances is neglected. Nevertheless, this great advantage over Si that neither idealized single-layer MoS$_2$ [14] nor black phosphorus [15] could achieve might not be sufficient to justify the replacement of Si by 2-D InX.

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gap material. The macroscopic dielectric constant of HfO$_2$ is 13$	imes$10$^{-13}$ cm$^{-2}$ ($N_{A}=2	imes10^{13}$ cm$^{-2}$) in the n-type (p-type) conduction. The equivalent oxide thickness of all transistors is equal to EOT=0.58 nm (3 nm of HfO$_2$ with $s_{\text{high}-\text{low}}=20$). In all devices the out-of-plane direction is assumed periodic and is modeled via 15 momentum points. (b) Top and side views of the atomic structure of a buckled honeycomb structure alternating atoms in two different parallels planes. The buckling $\Delta$ is the distance between these two planes. The lattice vectors for each structure are given with $|\mathbf{a}_1|=|\mathbf{a}_2|=a$. (c) Summary of the structural parameters for each of the InX materials.

![Fig. 1. (a) Schematic view of the single-layer, double-gate, n- and p-type field-effect transistors with a 2-D InX channel considered in this work. The gate length is originally set to $L_g=15$ nm, while the source and drain regions extend over $L_s=L_d=15$ nm and are doped with a donor (acceptor) concentration $N_{D}=2\times10^{13}$ cm$^{-2}$ ($N_{A}=2\times10^{13}$ cm$^{-2}$) in the n-type (p-type) conduction. The equivalent oxide thickness of all transistors is equal to EOT=0.58 nm (3 nm of HfO$_2$ with $s_{\text{high}-\text{low}}=20$). In all devices the out-of-plane direction is assumed periodic and is modeled via 15 momentum points. (b) Top and side views of the atomic structure of a buckled honeycomb structure alternating atoms in two different parallels planes. The buckling $\Delta$ is the distance between these two planes. The lattice vectors for each structure are given with $|\mathbf{a}_1|=|\mathbf{a}_2|=a$. (c) Summary of the structural parameters for each of the InX materials.](image1)

![Fig. 2. Electronic bandstructure as calculated with the VASP tool (red lines) [8] and as obtained after a transformation into the maximally localized Wannier function basis used in quantum transport simulations (blue circles). The results for (a) InN, (b) InP, (c) InAs, and (d) InSb are shown. (e) Summary of the InX material parameters extracted from the bandstructures (a)-(d): electron (hole) effective mass $m_e$ ($m_h$), indirect band-gap energy $E_{g,\Gamma K}$, and the energy difference $\Delta E_{\Gamma K}$ between the valence band edges at the symmetry points $\Gamma$ and $K$. Only in case of InN $\Delta E_{\Gamma K}<0$ meaning that it is a direct band gap material. The macroscopic dielectric constant $\varepsilon$ are taken from Ref. [6].](image2)

![Fig. 3. Transfer characteristics $I_D$-$V_{DS}$ at $V_{GS}=V_{DS}=0.65$ V through a 2D monolayer InSb p-type FET with $L_g=15$ nm. The OFF-current is set to 0.1 $\mu$A/mm, while the ON-current is extracted at $I_{ON}=I_D$ at $V_{GS}=V_{DS}=V_{DD}$. A linear and logarithmic scale are provided. (b) Same as (a), but for the n-type configuration. (c) Comparison of the transfer characteristics of 2D InSb n-type FETs with different gate lengths ranging from $L_g=5$ to 15 nm. The shorter $L_g$ the higher is the current at $V_{GS}=0$ V, increasing the source-to-drain tunneling leakage current and deteriorating the sub-threshold swing of the device.](image3)
to the other. Hence, the ON-current is inversely proportional to the hole effective mass and is not influenced by the DOS bottleneck.

This finding definitively indicates that the density of states (DOS) bottleneck plays a major role and compensates for the higher injection velocity of materials with a smaller effective mass for the n-type switches. In the case of the p-type switches, where the slope of the hole density at the ToB does not vary much from one monolayer to the other, hence, the ON-current is inversely proportional to the hole effective mass and is not influenced by the DOS bottleneck.

The position $x_{\text{ToB}}$ and electron density $n(x_{\text{ToB}})$ at the top-of-barrier (ToB) are schematically marked by vertical and horizontal dashed-lines, respectively. Sub-threshold swing remains close to their ideal 60 mV/dec value due to limited S-to-D tunneling. The most important facts should be highlighted: (i) the n-type ON-currents are almost identical with <10% deviations, much less than for the electron effective masses (50% difference between InSb and InN), (ii) the p-type FETs see much larger ON-current discrepancies of roughly 40% between InP and InSb, and (iii) the sub-threshold swing remains close to their ideal 60 mV/dec value due to limited S-to-D tunneling.

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