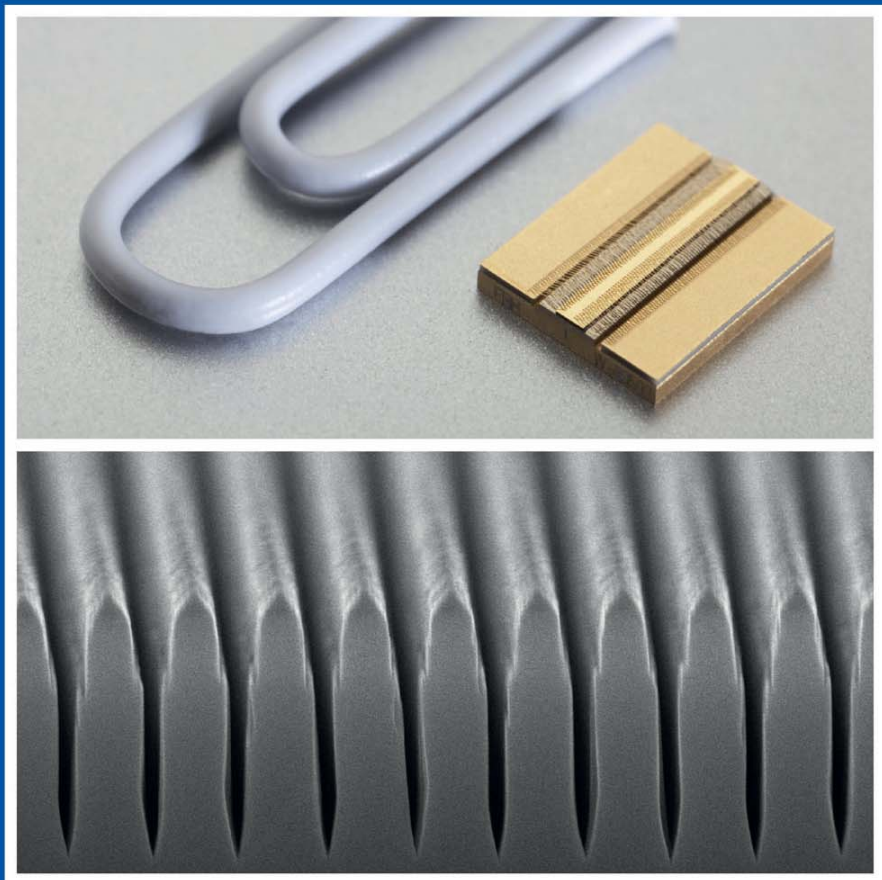


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Ferdinand-Braun-Institut,
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Investigation of monolithically integrated spectral stabilization in high-brightness broad area diode lasers









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Forschungsberichte aus dem Ferdinand-Braun-Institut, Leibniz-Institut für Höchstfrequenztechnik

Band 44

Jonathan Decker

Investigation of monolithically integrated spectral stabilization
in high-brightness broad area diode lasers

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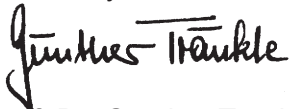
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Research-based ideas, developments, and concepts are the basis of scientific progress and competitiveness, expanding human knowledge and being expressed technologically as inventions. The resulting innovative products and services eventually find their way into public life.

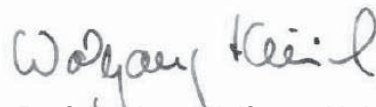
Accordingly, the “*Research Reports from the Ferdinand-Braun-Institut, Leibniz-Institut für Höchstfrequenztechnik*” series compile the institute’s latest research and developments. We would like to make our results broadly accessible and to stimulate further discussions, not least to enable as many of our developments as possible to enhance everyday life.

GaAs-based high-power broad area (BA) diode lasers with monolithically integrated wavelength stabilization are key components for pumping narrow absorption bands in solid-state lasers and for brightness scaling in direct diode laser systems. A promising technology for monolithic wavelength stabilization is the implementation of high-order distributed feedback (DFB) gratings that are directly etched into the surface of the epitaxial layer structure. So far, studies of high-power DFB-BA lasers with surface-etched gratings have been restricted to experimental proof-of-principal realizations while adequate simulation tools have not been available. Hence, this work encompasses the implementation of an adequate numerical model for the simulation of high-order surface-etched DFB gratings and a comprehensive experimental study of spectrally stabilized high-brightness DFB-BA lasers.

We wish you an informative and inspiring reading



Prof. Dr. Günther Tränkle
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Investigation of monolithically integrated spectral stabilization in high-brightness broad area diode lasers

Von Fakultät IV für Elektrotechnik und Informatik
der Technischen Universität Berlin
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Doktors der Naturwissenschaften (Dr. rer. nat.)
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für Benjamin, Sara und Senta



Abstract

Spectrally stabilized high-power diode lasers are key components for pumping narrow absorption bands in solid state and fiber lasers, and for power scaling in direct diode laser systems via dense spectral beam combining (DSBC). Although spectral stabilization can be achieved by external feedback, a monolithic approach can significantly reduce setup size, cost and complexity. So far the market for monolithically integrated spectrally stabilized high-power diode lasers is dominated by distributed feedback broad area (DFB-BA) lasers, that are stabilized by low order Bragg gratings, which are integrated via buried overgrowth techniques. Such DFB-BA lasers have been extensively investigated regarding their limitations in output power and conversion efficiency, partly because a solid theoretical background is given by the coupled mode theory (CMT). A promising alternative to the low-order buried gratings are high-order gratings that are directly etched into the surface of the laser so that an interruption of the epitaxial growth is avoided. However, prior to this work, studies of such high-power DFB-BA lasers with surface etched gratings were restricted to experimental proof-of-principal realizations with relatively poor beam quality. Nevertheless, many industrial applications require DFB-BA lasers with the highest possible brightness, i.e. high output power at lowest possible slow-axis beam parameter product (BPP_{lat}). Furthermore, adequate simulation tools were not available, as surface etched gratings introduce a high contrast in the refractive index profile and cannot be calculated directly within CMT.

This work focuses on developing high-brightness DFB-BA lasers realized with high-order surface etched gratings. Specifically, five-emitter-arrays of DFB-BA lasers are designed for the use in a setup for high-brightness DSBC, where each emitter lases at a unique wavelength with a channel spacing of $\Delta\lambda_{CS} = 2.0 - 2.5$ nm around the central wavelength of $\lambda = 975$ nm at $BPP_{lat} \leq 2.0$ mm×mrad. The development of these lasers is divided into three steps: First, the design and experimental study of high-brightness Fabry-Pérot (FP) diode lasers, that operate with $BPP_{lat} \leq 2.0$ mm×mrad and are suitable for the integration of surface etched gratings. Second, the implementation of an adequate numerical model for the simulation of high-order surface etched DFB gratings. And finally, the design and experimental study of spectrally stabilized high-brightness DFB-BA lasers within several process iterations.

For the identification of high-brightness diode laser designs an experimental study of spectrally unstabilized FP-BA lasers with narrow contact stripe width ($W = 30$ μm) and 6 mm long cavities (FP-NBA) is carried out for three different epitaxial layer structures with varying p-side waveguide layer thickness. It is found that FP-NBA lasers with the thinnest p-waveguide thicknesses ~ 200 nm (EDAS) deliver the highest output power ($P = 7$ W) and efficiency ($\eta_E = 56\%$) at $BPP_{lat} \leq 2$ mm×mrad.

For the simulation of high-order surface etched DFB gratings an existing simulation method based on CMT is used as starting point and extended to gratings with high index contrast, by using

the bidirectional eigenmode expansion and propagation method. The results obtained by this simulation procedure indicate that the most influential parameter regarding output power and conversion efficiency is the residual layer thickness d_{res} between the groove-tip and the quantum well (QW): Both, the coupling coefficient κ and the radiation loss α_{rad} of surface etched gratings increase most rapidly with decreasing d_{res} once the groove tip enters the p-side waveguide, as the overlap of groove and electric field intensity increases abruptly at the transition from p-side cladding to p-side waveguide, degrading the slope efficiency. Two fundamental limitations for DFB-NBA lasers can be deduced from these results: First, for EDAS epitaxial layer structures the grating must be etched closer than $d_{res} \leq 75$ nm to the quantum well, complicating the fabrication without risking QW-damage. Second, as DFB-NBA lasers with highest output power and efficiency require weak κ ($0.2 \leq \kappa L$) and lowest possible α_{rad} , the process window for d_{res} is typically within the range of ~ 100 nm, limiting the yield in high-volume production with current dry etching methods.

Therefore, DFB-NBA lasers with surface etched gratings are integrated into epitaxial layer structures with wide p-waveguide layers (> 750 nm) within three experimental iterations. Within this work, DFB-NBA lasers with surface etched gratings are designed using the developed simulation tool. They are successfully realized via reactive ion etching (RIE) in combination with either I-line stepper or electron beam lithography. In both cases, thermal and electrical resistance are only marginally affected by the integration of the grating. Furthermore, no influence of the gratings on the reliability was observed. Optimized DFB-NBA lasers with 80^{th} order surface etched gratings operate with a spectral linewidth of $\Delta\lambda_{95\%} = 0.7$ nm (95% power content) at $P = 6$ W output power. They operate with slightly improved beam quality ($BPP_{lat} = 1.8$ mm×mrad) and comparable conversion efficiency ($\eta_E \sim 50\%$) like FP-NBA lasers with the same epitaxial design. However, the performance is below that of state of the art FP-NBA lasers based on EDAS epitaxial layer structures. In addition, it is found that the grating order $N = 80$ is too high to suppress simultaneous lasing in two Bragg orders for all wavelength-channels on the five-emitter-array. Optimized DFB-NBA lasers with (reduced) 40^{th} order gratings achieve $P = 5.8$ W output power with $BPP_{lat} = 1.8$ mm×mrad and $\Delta\lambda_{95\%} \leq 1.0$ nm for each wavelength-channel. They achieve a peak conversion efficiency of $\eta_E = 56\%$ marking a new record for DFB-BA lasers with surface etched gratings.

The experimental results, in particular the measured slope efficiency of DFB-NBA lasers and its dependency on d_{res} , are in good qualitative and quantitative agreement with the theoretical findings from the developed simulation procedure. The achieved performance of DFB-NBA laser arrays with high-order surface etched gratings make them attractive sources for DSBC.

Kurzzusammenfassung

Wellenlängenstabilisierte Hochleistungslaserdioden sind Schlüsselkomponenten für das optische Pumpen von schmalen Absorptionsbanden in Festkörper- und Faserlasern, und für die Leistungsskalierung in direkten Hochleistungsdiodenlasersystemen mittels dichtem spektralen Multiplexings (DSBC). Obwohl Wellenlängenstabilisierung auch durch externe Rückkopplung erreicht werden kann, sind monolithische Ansätze vorteilhaft, da sie die Größe, Kosten, und Komplexität des Lasers deutlich reduzieren. Heutzutage wird der Markt für spektral stabilisierte Hochleistungslaserdioden von *Distribute Feedback*-Breitstreifenlasern (DFB-BA Laser) mit epitaktisch überwachsenen Gittern niedriger Ordnung dominiert. Die Beschränkung solcher DFB-BA Laser bezüglich Ausgangsleistung und Effizienz wurden bereits ausführlich untersucht, auch weil der theoretische Hintergrund dieser Laser gut mittels der *Coupled Mode Theory* (CMT) beschrieben werden kann. Eine vielversprechende Alternative zu epitaktisch überwachsenen Gittern sind Oberflächengitter hoher Ordnung, wobei die Gitter direkt in die Laseroberfläche geätzt werden, sodass eine Unterbrechung im epitaktischen Wachstum vermieden wird. Allerdings beschränkten sich zu Beginn dieser Arbeit die Untersuchungen zu solchen DFB-BA Lasern hoher Ausgangsleistung auf Machbarkeitsdemonstrationen von Laserdioden geringer Strahlqualität und -dichte. Nichtsdestotrotz benötigen viele industrielle Anwendungen DFB-BA Laser mit höchstmöglicher Leistungsdichte, also eine hohe Ausgangsleistung bei kleinstmöglichem lateralen Strahlparameterprodukt BPP_{lat} . Außerdem waren zu diesem Zeitpunkt keine adäquaten Simulationsmethoden für DFB-BA Laser mit Oberflächengittern verfügbar, da Oberflächengitter hohe Brechungsindexsprünge in den Halbleiter einbringen und somit nicht direkt mit der CMT beschrieben werden können.

Das Hauptziel dieser Doktorarbeit ist daher die Entwicklung von wellenlängenstabilisierten DFB-BA Hochleistungslasern hoher Strahldichte mit Oberflächengittern. Insbesondere werden Laserbarren aus fünf DFB-BA Lasern für die Verwendung in DSBC-Systemen entworfen, bei denen jeder Laser auf einer eigenen Wellenlänge mit einem Kanalabstand von $\Delta\lambda_{CS} = 2.5$ nm um eine Zentralwellenlänge von $\lambda = 975$ nm herum emittiert und ein $BPP_{lat} \leq 2$ mm×mrad aufweist. Die Entwicklung dieser Laserdioden wurde in drei Schritte unterteilt: Erstens die experimentelle Untersuchung von schmalen Fabry-Pérot-Breitstreifenlasern, die einen Betrieb mit geringem lateralem Strahlparameterprodukt ($BPP_{lat} \leq 2.0$ mm×mrad), sowie die Integration von Oberflächengittern ermöglichen. Zweitens die Implementierung einer adäquaten Simulationsmethode für DFB-BA Lasern mit Oberflächengittern. Und drittens der Entwurf und die experimentelle Untersuchung von DFB-BA Lasern mit integrierten Oberflächengittern in mehreren Prozessiterationen.

Zur Identifizierung von Laserdiodendesigns hoher Strahldichte wird eine experimentelle Untersuchung an Fabry-Pérot-Breitstreifenlasern mit $W = 30$ µm breiten und $L = 6$ mm langen Kontaktstreifen (FP-NBA Laser) für drei unterschiedliche Vertikalstrukturen mit unterschiedlich dicken p-seitigen Wellenleitern durchgeführt. Aus den Messungen ergibt sich, dass FP-NBA Laser mit

den dünnsten p-seitigen Wellenleitern im Bereich von ~ 200 nm (EDAS) die höchste Ausgangsleistung ($P = 7$ W) und Effizienz ($\eta_E = 56\%$) bei einem $BPP_{lat} \leq 2$ mm $\times$ mrاد erreichen.

Für die Simulation von DFB-BA Lasern mit Oberflächengittern hoher Ordnung wird eine bereits existierende, auf CMT basierende Methode auf Gitter mit hohen Brechungsindexsprüngen mittels einer bidirektionalen Eingenmodenexpansions- und Propagationsmethode erweitert. Mit dieser Simulationsmethode konnte gezeigt werden, dass die Restschichtdicke zwischen Quantentrog (QW) und Gitterstegspitze d_{res} den mit Abstand größten Einfluss auf Ausgangsleistung und Effizienz von DFB-BA Laser hat. Sowohl der Koppelkoeffizient κ , als auch die Strahlungsverluste α_{rad} von Oberflächengittern steigen mit sinkender Restschichtdicke zwischen Quantentrog (QW) und Gitterstegspitze d_{res} stark an, insbesondere sobald die Gitterspitze in den p-seitigen Wellenleiter eindringt, da die Überschneidung der Gitterstege mit der elektrischen Feldverteilung am Übergang von p-Mantelschicht zu p-Wellenleiter stark ansteigt. Dies führt zu einer unmittelbaren Verschlechterung der Steigungseffizienz. Aus dieser Erkenntnis lassen sich zwei grundsätzliche Einschränkungen für DFB-BA Lasern mit Oberflächengittern ableiten: Erstens müssen in EDAS-Vertikalstrukturen die Gitter näher als $d_{res} \leq 75$ nm an den QW heran geätzt werden, was eine Herstellung extrem erschwert. Zweitens ist das Prozessfenster für die Gitterätzung auf ~ 100 nm beschränkt, da DFB-NBA Laser mit hoher Steigungseffizienz ein schwaches κ ($0.2 \leq \kappa L$) und möglichst geringe α_{rad} benötigen. Dieser Umstand begrenzt bei den derzeitigen genutzten Trockenätzverfahren die Prozessausbeute in der Massenproduktion.

In dieser Arbeit werden daher für die DFB-NBA Laser die Oberflächengitter in Vertikalstrukturen mit dickem p-seitigen Wellenleiter (> 750 nm) integriert und in drei Prozessiterationen untersucht. Diese DFB-NBA Laser wurden mit zwei unterschiedlichen Verfahren hergestellt: Der I-Linien Stepper Lithographie und der Elektronenstrahlolithographie, jeweils in Verbindung mit dem reaktivem Ionenätzen (RIE). Bei beiden Fertigungsverfahren wurden keine signifikanten gitterinduzierten Veränderungen im thermischen und elektrischen Widerstand festgestellt. Darüber hinaus konnte im Rahmen der Untersuchungen kein Einfluss der Gitter auf die Lebensdauer der Laser gemessen werden. Optimierte DFB-NBA Laser mit Oberflächengittern 80^{ter}-Ordnung emittieren mit einer spektralen Breite von 0.7 nm (95% Leistungseinschluss) bei $P = 6$ W Ausgangsleistung. Sie emittieren mit leicht verbesserter Strahlqualität ($BPP_{lat} = 1.8$ mm $\times$ mrاد) und vergleichbarer Effizienz ($\eta_E \sim 50\%$), wie FP-NBA Lasern mit gleicher Vertikalstruktur. Jedoch ist die Leistungsfähigkeit schlechter als bei EDAS basierten FP-NBA Lasern vom Stand der Technik. Außerdem ist die Gitterordnung $N = 80$ zu hoch um die Wellenlängenstabilisierung auch auf einem Fünf-Emitter-Laserbarren zu erreichen. Optimierte DFB-NBA Laser mit Oberflächengittern (reduzierter) 40^{ter}-Ordnung emittieren mit einer spektralen Breite von ≤ 1.0 nm für jeden Wellenlängenkanal und erreichen eine Ausgangsleistung von $P = 5.8$ W. Darüber hinaus erreichen diese DFB-NBA Laser eine Spitzeneffizienz von $\eta_E = 56\%$, und damit einen neuen Bestwert für DFB-BA Laser mit Oberflächengittern.

Die experimentellen Ergebnisse in dieser Arbeit, insbesondere die gemessenen Steigungseffizienzen von DFB-NBA Lasern, sind in guter qualitativer und quantitativer Übereinstimmung mit den Ergebnissen der Simulationsmethode. Die erzielte Leistungsfähigkeit von DFB-NBA Laserbarren mit Oberflächengittern hoher Ordnung macht diese zu attraktiven Laserquellen für DSBC.

List of Publications

The following contributions have been published within the context of this thesis.

Articles

J. Decker, P. Crump, J. Fricke, A. Maassdorf, G. Erbert, and G. Tränkle, "Narrow stripe broad area lasers with high order distributed feedback surface gratings". *IEEE Photonics Technology Letters*, vol. 26(8) pages 829–832, 2014.

H. Wenzel, J. Fricke, J. Decker, P. Crump, and G. Erbert, "High-power distributed feedback lasers with surface gratings: Theory and experiment". *IEEE Journal of Selected Topics in Quantum Electronics*, vol. 21(6), pp. 352–358, 2015.

J. Decker, P. Crump, J. Fricke, A. Maassdorf, M. Traub, U. Witte, T. Brand, A. Unger, G. Erbert, and G. Tränkle. "25-W monolithic spectrally stabilized 975-nm minibars for dense spectral beam combining". *IEEE Photonics Technology Letters*, vol. 27(15), pp. 1675–1678, 2015.

Conference Contributions

J. Fricke, P. Crump, J. Decker, H. Wenzel, A. Maassdorf, G. Erbert and G. Tränkle, "High-Brilliance Diode Lasers with Monolithically-Integrated Surface Gratings as Sources for Spectral Beam Combining". *Photonex 2013, High Power Diode Lasers and Systems Conference, Coventry, UK, Oct 16-17*, pp. 2-3, 2013.

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P. Crump, J. Decker, M. Winterfeldt, J. Fricke, A. Maassdorf, G. Erbert and G. Tränkle, "Development of high-power diode lasers with beam parameter product below 2 mm×mrad within the BRIDLE project". *Proc. SPIE 9348, Photonics West, San Francisco, USA, Feb. 07-12*, pp. 93480D, 2015.

J. Decker, P. Crump, J. Fricke, A. Maassdorf, G. Erbert, and G. Tränkle "High brightness narrow-stripe broad-area lasers with 7 W optical output at 910, 935 & 970 nm for coarse spectral beam combining". *Conf. on Lasers and Electro-Optics (CLEO), 2015, Munich, Germany, Jun. 21-25*, pp. cb-5.4-wed, 2015.

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P. Crump, M. Winterfeldt, J. Decker, M. Ekterai, J. Fricke, S. Knigge, A. Maaßdorf, G. Erbert, "Novel approaches to increasing the brightness of broad area lasers". *Proc. SPIE 9767, Photonics West, San Francisco, USA, Feb. 13-18*, pp. 97671L, 2016.

J. Decker, J. Fricke, A. Maassdorf, G. Erbert, and P. Crump, "High power surface-grating stabilized narrow-stripe broad area lasers with beam parameter product $< 2 \text{ mm} \times \text{mrad}$ ". *Conference on Lasers and Electro-Optics (CLEO)*, 2016, pp. 1–2. IEEE, 2016.

J. Decker, J. Fricke, A. Maaßdorf, G. Erbert, G. Tränkle, and P. Crump, "Non-Uniform DFB-Surface-Etched Gratings for Enhanced Performance High Power, High Brightness Broad Area Lasers". *Proc. SPIE 10086, Photonics West, San Francisco, USA, Jan 28 - Feb 02*, pp. 100860R, 2017.

Applied Patents

WO 2016/131910 and DE 10 2015 203 113 A1

Laserdiode mit verbesserten elektrischen Leiteigenschaften

P. Crump, J. Decker, G. Erbert, J. Fricke

date of disclosure: 25.08.2016

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Laserdiode mit verteilter Rückkopplung und Verfahren zur Herstellung

J. Decker, J. Fricke, P. Crump, G. Erbert

date of disclosure: 05.01.2017

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JOHANNES VON SALISBURY AUS METALOGICON (3,4,46-50)

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