Deterministic control of radiative processes by shaping the mode field

Citation for published version (APA):

DOI:
10.1063/1.5026803

Document status and date:
Published: 16/04/2018

Document Version:
Publisher’s PDF, also known as Version of Record (includes final page, issue and volume numbers)

Please check the document version of this publication:

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Download date: 15. Sep. 2019
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D. Pellegrino, F. Pagliano, A. Genco, M. Petruzzella, F. W. van Otten, and A. Fiore

Citation: Appl. Phys. Lett. 112, 161110 (2018); doi: 10.1063/1.5026803
View online: https://doi.org/10.1063/1.5026803
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Deterministic control of radiative processes by shaping the mode field

D. Pellegrino,1,a) F. Pagliano,1,2 A. Genco,1 M. Petruzzella,1,2 F. W. van Otten,1 and A. Fiore1
1Department of Applied Physics and Institute for Photonic Integration, Eindhoven University of Technology, Postbus 513, Eindhoven 5600 MB, The Netherlands
2nanoPHAB, Groene Loper 19, Postbus 513, Eindhoven 5612 AP, The Netherlands

(Received 23 February 2018; accepted 9 April 2018; published online 20 April 2018)

Quantum emitters (QEs) interacting with confined electromagnetic fields inside optical cavities represent a versatile system able to provide single-photons on-demand, which are crucial resources in photonic quantum simulators,1 optical quantum computers,2 and quantum networks.3 Solid-state versions of the system—e.g., quantum dots (QDs) in photonic crystal cavities (PCCs)—ensure a good degree of scalability as they are easily integrated with photonic structures with complex functionality.4 Indeed, spontaneously emitted single-photons can be efficiently extracted from a nanocavity mode interacting with one exciton,5,6 while integrated beam-splitters and phase shifters can provide the photon routing inside the chip.7 The small size and high radiative rates achievable in PCCs, while potentially advantageous, also pose practical challenges in their application. In particular, achieving a full control of radiative processes, as realized in microwave cavity quantum electrodynamics (c-QED) systems,8 is difficult in PCCs due to their sub-micrometer size. Previous approaches to the dynamic control of c-QED, including the modulation of the cavity-emitter detuning9,10 and the tuning of the mode properties,11 were also associated with a phase modulation of the produced photons (chirp), which has negative effects on the application in quantum networks12 and classical communication systems.13

The parameter that quantifies the interaction between a QE and a target cavity mode within the dipole approximation is the emitter-photon coupling rate $g$, defined as14

$$g = \frac{\bar{d} \cdot \vec{E}(\vec{r}_{em})}{\hbar}, \quad (1)$$

where $\bar{d}$ represents the dipole moment of the transition and $\vec{E}(\vec{r}_{em})$ is the electric field per photon that the emitter experiences at its position $\vec{r}_{em}$. As $g$ explicitly appears in the expressions for the period of Rabi oscillations and the spontaneous emission (SE) rate, it represents the fundamental parameter underlying all emission processes. However, in single nanocavities, the rate $g$ is challenging to control since it depends on static quantities as in Eq. (1).

Coupled optical modes (or supermodes15–23) originated by the interaction of multiple cavities offer a way to non-locally control the field amplitude $E(\vec{r})$ in one resonator by acting on the others, effectively changing the rate $g$ via Eq. (1). The proof of principle of this approach has been reported in Ref. 11, where the ultrafast control of the SE rate has been achieved in a two-cavity system. However, a limited $g$ tunability (up to a factor $\sqrt{2}$) and the aforementioned chirp limit the field modulation when using two cavities.11 An approach to overcome these limitations, recently proposed in Ref. 20, relies on an array of three coupled cavities, where an antisymmetric detuning of the outer cavities produces a large change in the field of the supermode inside the third (target) resonator without changing its frequency.21–23 Such a system allows the control of the single-photon temporal waveform and the Rabi oscillations in real time, with a modulation speed that solely depends on the detuning technique.20

Here, we experimentally implement this concept and demonstrate the full control of the SE of an ensemble of semiconductor quantum dots (QDs) integrated within three coupled cavities. By exploiting the supermodes of the system, we are able to deterministically tailor the mode field experienced by the emitters inside a target cavity, modulating the SE rate from the uncoupled limit to full inhibition.

The system is sketched in Fig. 1(a). A QE represented as a two-level system is weakly coupled to the mode of the target cavity (frequency $\nu_t$, loss rate $\kappa_t$) at a rate $g_t$, and spontaneously emits photons into this mode at a rate $\Gamma_t = 4g_t^2/\kappa_t$,24 when the cavity is isolated. Two tuneable cavities (loss rates $\kappa_1, \kappa_2$) are then side-coupled to the target cavity at a rate $\eta$, which is large enough so that the cavities are strongly coupled. Here, we specifically assume that $\eta > \kappa_t, \kappa_1, \kappa_2, \gamma_{em}$ (where $\gamma_{em}$ is the emitter’s spectral linewidth) so that the supermodes are spectrally well separated and the emission into a single mode can be identified. The resonance frequencies of the lateral cavities are blue-shifted and red-shifted.
with respect to $\nu_1$ by a quantity $\Delta$, which represents the controllable parameter of the system.

According to the coupled mode theory (CMT),

three supermodes emerge from such an interaction [Fig. 1(b)]. For large detuning ($|\Delta/\eta| \gg 1$), the cavities are decoupled and the field of the central supermode is localized in the target cavity [Fig. 1(b)-top]. As the detuning $\Delta$ decreases, the resonators couple and the electromagnetic field of this central supermode tends to delocalize in the lateral cavities. At zero detuning, the strong cavity-cavity interaction results in a three-mode anticrossing that leaves the central supermode wavelength [Fig. 1(b), red curve] unaltered. The QEs coupled with this mode experience a detuning-dependent field amplitude $E(\Delta)$ that can be expressed in terms of the uncoupled-cavity modes of the target, left, and right cavities $E_l(\tilde{r}_m)$, $E_\ell(\tilde{r}_m)$, $E_r(\tilde{r}_m)$ as $E(\Delta) = \alpha_l(\Delta) E_l(\tilde{r}_m) + \alpha_\ell(\Delta) E_\ell(\tilde{r}_m) + \alpha_r(\Delta) E_r(\tilde{r}_m)$, where $\alpha_{l,\ell,r}(\Delta)$ quantify the weight of the original modes in the central supermode.

In the uncoupled limit [Fig. 1(c), $|\Delta/\eta| \ll 1$, $|\alpha_l(\Delta)| = 1$, and the SE rate of the QE into the coupled mode becomes $\Gamma(\Delta) = 4g^2(\Delta)/\kappa(\Delta)$, where $\kappa(\Delta)$ represents the loss rate of the supermode, given by $\kappa(\Delta) = \kappa_l \cdot |\alpha_l(\Delta)|^2 + \kappa_\ell \cdot |\alpha_\ell(\Delta)|^2 + \kappa_r \cdot |\alpha_r(\Delta)|^2$.  

\[
\Delta/\eta = 3.08, \quad |E_{\text{norm}}|, \quad \Delta/\eta = 0
\]

![Diagram](image_url)
evanescent fields of the L100 modes penetrating into the L3 resonator [Fig. 2(b)-right]. At the center of the latter cavity, the residual field is \( \approx 2.5 \times 10^{-4} \) times the field at large detuning \( (\Delta n = 3.08) \), and this ratio can be further decreased by engineering the intercavity distance.

The fabricated sample consists of a 220 nm-thick GaAs membrane with one layer of self-assembled QDs (an areal density of 200 dots/\( \mu m^2 \), ground-state emission at 1200 nm at 77 K) embedded in its center. The fabrication of the device involves a dry etching of the PhC holes in the GaAs membrane and wet etching of the underlying 1.5 \( \mu m \)-thick \( Al_{0.3}Ga_{0.7}As \) sacrificial layer.\(^{31}\)

In the first part of the experiment, the light emission spectra from QDs are analysed by means of a confocal micro-photoluminescence setup, which has been modified to allow the presence of the detuning spots \( (\lambda = 640 \text{ nm, } P_{\text{max}} \approx 6 \text{ mW}) \) on the sample. The tuning range achievable with these spots is approximately 0.3 THz/mW. The QDs are non-resonantly excited by a different laser \( (\lambda = 780 \text{ nm, spot diameter} \approx 2 \mu m) \) through a microscope objective and the resulting photoluminescence (PL) is analysed with a spectrometer (focal length 1 m) combined with an InGaAs detector array. All measurements are performed at 77 K to limit the impact of the QD homogeneous broadening, which reduces the emission into the cavity mode due to poor cavity-emitter spectral overlap.\(^{32}\)

In the experiment, the powers of the detuning lasers were chosen to bias values \( P_1 \) and \( P_r \) in order to initially set the L100 resonances at two frequencies, \( \nu_{g1} \) and \( \nu_{g2} \), close to the situation of opposite detuning with respect to the L3 one. In this nearly uncoupled condition, the measured linewidths provide the loss rates of the uncoupled cavities: \( \kappa_1 = 0.047 \text{ THz, } \kappa_r = 0.053 \text{ THz, and } \kappa_t = 0.034 \text{ THz} \). Then, for the \( n \)-th acquired spectra, \( P_1 \) and \( P_r \) were increased (decreased) by the same amount \( \Delta P \) from their respective bias point, so that \( P_1 = P_1 + n \Delta P \) and \( P_r = P_r - n \Delta P \).

Figure 3(a) shows a PL color-map obtained by collecting several spectra at different powers \( P_1 \) and \( P_r \), where \( P_1 \) is shown on the left axis. Seven peaks are present in the considered spectral region, and we interpret the three central peaks (labelled with 1, 2, and 3) as the supermodes of the coupled L100-L3-L100 system, since they anti-cross at zero detuning as expected. The other four lateral modes are L100 resonances that cross at zero detuning, showing that the \( n \)-th acquired spectra, \( P_1 \) and \( P_r \) were increased (decreased) by the same amount \( \Delta P \) from their respective bias point, so that \( P_1 = P_1 + n \Delta P \) and \( P_r = P_r - n \Delta P \).

At the anti-crossing point, the peculiar feature of the three-cavity system, the dark mode, is observed as a disappearance of the central PL peak, shown in more detail in Fig. 3(b) (red dots). The same anticrossing behaviour is observed when collecting the PL from one of the lateral cavities, but in this case, as expected, the central supermode does not become dark at resonance [Fig. 3(b), blue dots]. The presence of the dark state in such systems has been observed via transmission measurements in microring-based devices with controllable intercavity coupling.\(^{33}\) and via near-field spectroscopy in two-dimensional PCs.\(^{21}\) Our measurement proves that the dependence of the mode field on the detuning can be used to tailor the light-matter interaction in the target cavity.

As expected, the frequency of the central supermode is nearly unaffected through the entire tuning range. The small dispersive behaviour around the anticrossing point can be explained by small asymmetries in the intercavity coupling due to fabrication imperfection and in the aforementioned difference in the tuning rates. In particular, the experimental coupling rates \( \eta_1 \) and \( \eta_2 \) that characterize the L3-L100 interactions, obtained from two-mode anticrossing measurements when the mode of the other L100 cavity is detuned away from the interaction, are equal to \( \eta_1 = (0.046 \pm 0.001) \text{ THz} \) and \( \eta_2 = (0.053 \pm 0.001) \text{ THz} \). However, this dispersive behaviour of the central mode, which is potentially detrimental for applications that require dispersion-free resonances, can be compensated by properly changing the values of the detuning slopes \( \Delta \nu_{1/2}/\Delta P \).

The black dashed lines in Fig. 3(a) represent the supermode frequencies calculated with CMT analysis (right y-axis), which well reproduce the measured spectra when the experimental asymmetric coupling and detuning rates are taken into account.
Although the PL data in Fig. 3 clearly shows the suppression of SE in the dark mode, it is not trivial to relate the changes in the PL intensity to the rate $g(\Delta)$. Indeed, the measured PL intensity is not only related to $g(\Delta)$, but also depends on the collection efficiency, which changes with the detuning due to field variations. Therefore, extracting the SE rate from the QD decay rates is required to quantify the changes in $g(\Delta)$.

The decay dynamics of the QDs are measured via a time-correlated single-photon counting (TCSPC) experiment by using a pulsed laser (376 nm, a repetition rate of 80 MHz, a pulse width of 70 ps, and average power of 1 µW) as excitation and a superconducting single-photon detector (SSPD). The PL signal was filtered at the central supermode frequency by using grating of the spectrometer as a filter (full-width half-maximum $\approx 0.02$ THz).

Figure 4(a) shows a comparison of the relevant decay curves. Away from photonic structures, the QDs are characterized by a radiative decay $\tau_{\text{bulk}} = (0.89\pm0.02)$ ns, similar to previously reported values of InAs QDs emitting at 1300 nm. The emission into the leaky modes of the photonic crystal (black curve), measured away from the cavity, has a decay time $\tau_{\text{leaky}} = (2.45\pm0.10)$ ns. The decay time $\tau_{-0.28}$ THz $= (0.61\pm0.02)$ ns of the QDs in the target cavity for large detunings (green curve) shows an increase in the photon emission rate that indicates a Purcell-enhanced emission. As the detuning is reduced, the SE rate decreases as expected. The data corresponding to $\Delta = -0.08$ THz (blue curve) display a decay time $\tau_{-0.08}$ GHz $= (1.14\pm0.03)$ ns that is longer than $\tau_{\text{bulk}}$, which indicates inhibition of light-matter interaction. Around zero detuning, the reduced PL intensity shown in Fig. 3(a) together with the residual PL collected from the lateral cavities, makes the measurement of the QD emission rate into the central supermode impossible. Indeed, the PL collected from the lateral cavities becomes dominant with respect to the reduced PL intensity produced by the QDs inside the L3 resonator around $\Delta = 0$.

To confirm that the observed change in radiative lifetime is related to field tuning, several curves are measured at different detunings, and the SE rates in the cavity mode are derived from the decay times $\tau_a$ as $\Gamma(\Delta) = 1/\tau_a - 1/\tau_{\text{leaky}}$. The obtained values [Fig. 4(b)] are fitted with the relation $\Gamma(\Delta) = 4g^2(\Delta)/\kappa(\Delta)$. Here, we set $g(\Delta) = g_t\chi(\Delta)$ and calculate the $\chi(\Delta)$ and $\kappa(\Delta)$ values with the CMT model with the experimental loss, coupling, and detuning rates obtained from the spectra in Fig. 3(a), so that $g_t$ represents the only free parameter. The good agreement between the data and the fit in Fig. 4(b) indicates that the emitter-cavity interaction rate can be tuned between the uncoupled cavity limit, $g_t = 3.65$ GHz, and a minimum value close to zero. The interaction rate at resonance can only be due to the residual field at zero detuning (which produces a coupling estimated as $\approx 2.5 \times 10^{-4} g_t$), and to imperfect experimental control of the detuning. From the calculated $\chi(\Delta)$ dependence, we estimate that a control of the detuning within $\Delta_{\text{max}} = 0.001$ THz is for example needed to keep $g < 10^{-5} g_t$. The detuning can be monitored by fitting the PL peaks from the lateral cavities and its control is ultimately limited by the signal-to-noise ratio of this measurement and the stability of the pump laser.

In conclusion, we demonstrated a mode field modulation in a three-cavity system that allows complete control of the light-matter interaction inside the target resonator. Spectral- and temporal-resolved analysis of the PL showed controllable tuning of the emitter-photon coupling rate $g$, while the dispersion-free nature of the dark mode prevents frequency variations of the emitted photons. Combined with ultrafast tuning techniques, these features open the way to the control of Rabi oscillations in real time and to the shaping of the temporal waveform of single photons in the $\approx 100$ ps timescale. An additional exciting perspective is the control of the cavity-emitter dynamics around the exceptional point.

This work is part of the research programme of the Foundation for Fundamental Research on Matter (FOM), which is part of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). D.P. and A.F. acknowledge E. Verhaegen and M. Cotrufo for the useful discussions and S. Birindelli for the help in setting up the experiment. A.G. acknowledges funding from the University of Salento (Dipartimento di Matematica e Fisica “Ennio De Giorgi,” Lecce, Italy) and the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union.
