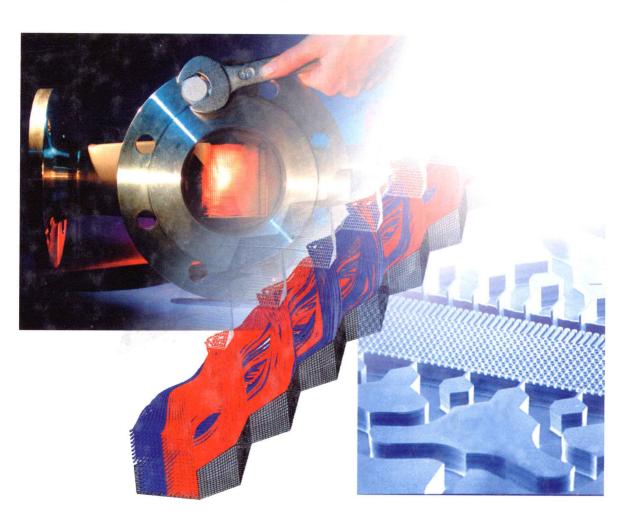
# Chemical Micro Process Engineering

Fundamentals, Modelling and Reactions



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#### Cover Illustration

Upper left: Production- and pilot-scale gas/ gas counter-flow heat exchanger comprising microstructured channel arrays. The device (including flanges about 36 kg heavy and 54 cm long), made of stainless steel, is designed for gas throughput in the range of m<sup>3</sup>/min at 100 mbar pressure drop for a power of about 10 kW. The internals consist of a stack of microstructured plates having multi-channel arrays of a channel width of 2 mm, depth of 250 μm, and length of 240 mm. Totaling, 6685 micro channels are operated in parallel in this device. The flange-type connection allows installation in large-scale industrial plants (IMM Mainz-Hechtsheim, Germany).

Center: CFD simulation of streamlines of a liquid flow in a caterpillar micro mixer. This device utilizes the split-recombine principle leading to distributive mixing. It is seen that by multiple repetition of this principle the entanglement of the streams increases (IMM Mainz-Hechtsheim, Germany).

Lower right: Cross-flow catalyst screening device with multiple short mini-fixed beds. The fixed-bed catalyst section is fed by bifurcation-channel flow architectures that serve for flow equipartition. This device is a typical example for the class of smart chip reactors, widely employed for analytical-chemistry, kinetic studies and process/catalyst screening purposes on a lab-scale level, and is fabricated using MEMS technology based on silicon micromachining (Courtesy K. S. Jensen, MIT Cambridge, USA).

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#### **Preface**

Carrying out chemical reactions in volumes as small as possible is *a priori* not a completely new idea. In the beginnings of chemical experimentation, dating back to the age of alchemy, chemical substances like sulphuric acid or ammonia were much more valuable than gold, and very small reaction vessels were used to economize on the precious materials. When analytical chemistry was established as a second, independent discipline, the desire to make do with ever less material was very strong in order to avoid consuming large portions of the product for analysis. Establishing increasingly sensitive analytical techniques has therefore been one of the most significant driving forces in analytics research.

The beginning of the industrial age saw a substantial increase in demand for basic materials and chemicals, and the chemical industry was established to satisfy these demands for high production volumes. The tall and impressive silhouettes of modern chemical plants dominate industrial estates, visible from afar as symbols for the vast capabilities and capacities of today's chemical industry. Without this industry and its equipment of enormous proportions, our economic wealth would be quite inconceivable.

Bearing all this in mind, what is the purpose of Chemical Micro Process Technology?

Conventionally, the development of chemical manufacturing processes takes place subsequently *via* a sequence of different intermediate stages. Approaching the final process design, the reaction volume is successively increased from laboratory scale to reaction vessel dimensions suitable for production outputs of several kilotons *per annum*. This procedure, known as "scale-up", is expensive and time-consuming. During the scale-up, new and previously unencountered problems often crop up and have to be solved. It may even occur that the complete development process has to be re-initiated in order to cirumvent severe obstacles. Furthermore, the developed industrial process is laid out for a specific, predefined throughput, a fact which constrains the later flexibility of production significantly.

The solution of these problems is based on a simple idea: the developed laboratory-scale process is used for manufacturing of a chemical product by parallelization of many small units. Although promising great advantages over scale-up, this procedure, denoted "numbering-up", is not trivial by far. It cannot be carried out in a simple way due to the tremendous technological effort necessary: a chemical plant with hundreds or even thousands of small-scaled vessels, stirrers, heaters, pumps,

etc. would be impractical. A new way of engineering and new technologies had to be developed to combine the advantages of lab-scale processing with the necessities associated with production-scale throughput. First steps into this direction have been taken, and despite some remaining throughput restrictions, first successes have become visible. Also, economical and ecological reasons create increasing demand for further steps in process intensification and sustainable development.

The present book is devoted to both the experimentally tested micro reactors and micro reaction systems described in current scientific literature as well as the corresponding processes. It will become apparent that many micro reactors at first sight "simply" consist of a multitude of parallel channels. However, a closer look reveals that the details of fluid dynamics or heat and mass transfer often determine their performance. For this reason, besides the description of the equipment and processes referred to above, this book contains a separate chapter on modeling and simulation of transport phenomena in micro reactors.

Using specific examples of gas-phase, gas/liquid and liquid-phase reactions, the advantages of microstructured reactors are highlighted in comparison to conventional equipment. At the same time, known problems are pointed out and some processes are listed for which micro reactors so far failed to show superior performance. Furthermore, the book is conceived as a compendium. Processes, microstructured reactors and chemical reactions are described in an integrated manner, providing in each case the relevant original citations. Equipped with the data given in this book, readers will be able to identify the most suitable reactor to successfully perform a given chemical reaction on the micro scale.

By now, Chemical Micro Process Technology has been established as an independent discipline, bringing forth over 1500 publications in the last few years, and an end is not foreseeable. The surge of scientific cognitions encouraged the authors to write this book, which should provide a deeper insight into this new and fascinating subject.

We are very grateful to those who helped this project become reality. In particular, we would like to mention K. Bouras, T. Hang, C. Mohrmann, and L. Widarto, who prepared electronic versions of many of the figures appearing in this book. We also wish to thank C. Mohrmann and L. Widarto for handling the copyright transfer formalities and T. Hang for taking pictures of some of IMM's micro devices. A special thanks goes to B. Knabe and R. Schenk for helping us with literature retrieval. Last but not least, we are indebted to K. S. Drese and F. Schönfeld for the thorough checking of parts of our manuscript.

Mainz, November 2003

The authors

# Contents

## Preface V

# List of Symbols and Abbreviations XXXI

1	A Multi-faceted, Hierarchic Analysis of Chemical Micro Process Technology 1
1.1	Micro-reactor Differentiation and Process Intensification 3
1.1.1	Structure or Being Structured? Miniature Casings and Micro Flow 3
1.1.2	Symmetry and Unit Cells 3
1.1.3	Process Design Dominates Equipment Manufacture and Choice 4
1.1.4	Micro-reactor and Chemical-micro-processing Differentiation 5
1.1.5	Numbering-up 6
1.1.5.1	Progressive Increase in Capacity by Addition of Modules 6
1.1.5.2	Internal vs. External Numbering-up: Scaling-out of Elements or
	Devices 7
1.1.5.3	Issues to be Solved; Problems to be Encountered 10
1.1.5.4	Limits of Mini- and Micro Plants for Scale-up 11
1.1.5.5	First Large-capacity Numbered-up Micro-flow Devices Reported 11
1.1.5.6	First Complete Test Station for Multiple-micro-reactor testing 12
1.1.6	Process Intensification 13
1.1.6.1	Definitions 13
1.1.6.2	Matching Fluidics to Physico-chemical Requirements of
	a Reaction 13
1.1.6.3	Relationship of and Difference between of PI and Micro-reaction
	Technology 14
1.1.6.4	Process Intensification Achieved by Use of Micro Reactors 15
1.1.7	The Multi-scale Concept 15
1.1.8	A Word of Caution on the Probability of a Deductive Analysis 17
1.1.9	Other Concepts Related to or Relevant for Chemical-Micro
	Processing 17
1.1.9.1	mTAS: Micro Total Analysis Systems 17
1.1.9.2	Green Chemistry 17
1.1.9.3	Sustainable Development and Technology Assessment 17
1194	Microfluidic Tectonics (uFT) 18

Componies	
1.1.9.5	Compact Flow-through Turbulent Reactors, also Termed Microreactor (MR) Technology 18
1.1.9.6	Supramolecular Aggregates, Also Termed Micro Reactors 19
1.1.10	Some Historical Information on Micro-reactor Evolution 21
	Micro-reactor Consortia/Forums 22
	The Laboratory on a Chip Consortium (UK) 22
	MicroChemTec and IPmVT (D) 22
	NeSSI (USA) 23
	Micro Chemical Process Technology, MCPT (J) 23
	CPAC Micro-reactor Initiative (USA) 24
1.2	Consequences of Chemical Micro Processing 25
1.2.1	Limits of Outlining Top-down Impacts for Micro Reactors 25
1.2.2	Categories of 'Micro-reactor Fundaments and Impacts' 25
1.2.3	Comprehensive Reviews and Essays 26
1.2.4	Reviews and Essays on Physical Fundaments and the Impact on
	Chemical Engineering and Process Engineering 27
1.2.5	Reviews and Essays on the Impact on Process Results, Society/Ecology
	and the Economy 27
1.2.6	Reviews and Essays on Application Topics and Microfabrication 27
1.2.7	Reviews and Essays on Institutional Work 28
1.3	Physical and Chemical Fundaments 28
1.3.1	Size Reduction of Process Equipment 28
1.3.2	Scaling Effects Due to Size Reduction: Hydrodynamics 29
1.3.3	Chemical Fundaments 31
1.4	Impact on Chemical Engineering 32
1.4.1	Basic Requirements on Chemical Engineering from an Industrial
	Perspective 32
1.4.2	Top-down and Bottom-up Descriptions 32
1.4.3	A Top-down Description of Chemical Engineering Impacts 32
1.4.3.1	A Case Study on Gas-phase Reactions 33
1.4.3.2	Energy Gain from Microstructuring 33
1.4.3.3	Residence-time Distributions 36
1.4.3.4	Heat Transfer: Safety in Operation 37
1.4.3.5	Potential for Size Reduction 40
1.4.3.6	Proposing a Methodology for Micro-reactor Dimensioning and Layout 42
1.4.4	A Bottom-up Description of Chemical Engineering Impacts 45
1.4.4.1	Mixing 45
1.4.4.2	Heat Transfer 48
1.4.4.3	Microfluidics 49
1.4.5	Fouling 50
1.5	Impact on Process Engineering 51
1.5.1	Laboratory-scale Processing 51
1.5.1.1	Provision of a Multitude of Innovative Reactor Designs 51
1.5.1.2	Quality of Information – More Accurate and In-depth 51
1.5.1.3	Quantity of Information – Speed of Experimentation 51

1.5.1.4	Shrinkage of Total System 52
1.5.1.5	Integratability of Sensing and Other Functions 52
1.5.2	Industrial Process Development and Optimization 53
1.5.2.1	Information on Industrial Large-scale Chemical Manufacture:
	Time to Market 53
1.5.2.2	Pharmaceutical and Organic Synthesis Process Development 54
1.5.2.3	Approval by Public Authorities 55
1.5.3	Pilot-stage Processing and Centralized Production 55
1.5.3.1	Production as a Challenge for Micro Reactors 55
1.5.3.2	Micro Reactors as Information Tools for Large-scale Production 56
1.5.3.3	Micro Reactors for Specialty-chemicals Production 56
1.5.3,4	Intensification of Transport – Reduction of Equipment Size 58
1.5.4	Distributed, On-Site Production 59
1.5.4.1	An Existing Distributed Small-scale Plant for Phosgene Synthesis 59
1.5.4.2	Distributed Manufacturing – A Conceptual Study of Future Scenarios 59
1.5.4.3	Central Role of Control Systems and Process Models 61
1.5.4.4	Off-shore Gas Liquefaction 61
1.5.4.5	Energy Generation and Environmental Restoration 61
1.5.4.6	Desk-top Pharmacies, Home Factories and More 62
1.5.4.7	Production of Chemical Weapons? 63
1.5.4.8	Standardization 63
1.5.5	The Shape of Future Plants/Plant Construction 63
1.5.5.1	The Outer Shape of Future Chemical Manufacture Plants 63
1.5.5.2	Today's Shape of Micro-reactor Bench-scale Plants:
	Monolith vs. Hybrid/Multi-scale? Specialty vs. Multi-purpose? 65
1.5.5.3	Methodology of Micro/Mini-plant Conception 66
1.5.5.4	Highly Integrated Systems 66
1.6	Impact on Process Results 66
1.6.1	Selection Criteria for Chemical Reactions for Micro Reactors 66
1.6.2	Conversion, Selectivity, Yield 67
1.6.2.1	Conversion 67
1.6.2.2	Selectivity 67
1.6.2.3	Yield 69
1.6.3	Reaction Time – Reaction Rate 69
1.6.3.1	Reaction Time 69
1.6.3.2	Reaction Rate 70
1.6.4	Space–Time Yield 70
1.6.5	Isomerism 71
1.6.5.1	Cis-Trans Isomerism of Double Bonds 71
1.6.5.2	Regioisomerism in Condensed Aromatics 72
1.6.5.3	Regioisomerism in Aromatics with One Substituent 72
1.6.5.4	Keto–Enol Isomerism 72
1.6.6	Optical Purity 73
1.6.6.1	Enantiomeric Excess (ee) 73
1.6.6.2	Racemization 73

X	Contents

1.6.7	Reaction Mechanism 73
1.6.7.1	Preferring One Mechanism Among a Multitude 73
1.6.7.2	Tuning Bulk Reactions to Surface Control 74
1.6.8	Experimental Protocols 74
1.6.8.1	Residence Time 74
1.6.8.2	Reaction Temperature 74
1.6.8.3	Type of Reactants and Auxiliary Agents 75
1.6.9	Safety Profits 75
1.6.9.1	Share of Safety-relevant Industrial Processes 75
1.6.9.2	Safe Micro-reactor Operations in the Explosive Regime or for
	Otherwise Hazardous Processes 76
1.6.10	New Process Regimes 76
	Essentially Novel Processes 77
	Known Processes that Become Entirely Better or Otherwise Different 77
	Processes Known, but not Used for Safety Reasons 77
1.7	Impact on Society and Ecology 79
1.7.1	The 'Control Circuit' for Chemical Micro Processing 79
1.7.2	Social Acceptance via Education and Awareness 81
1.7.3	Ecologic Acceptance via Environmental Acceptability 81
1.7.4	Environmental Restoration 83
1.7.5	The Micro-reactor Echo in Trade Press and Journal Cover Stories 83
1.7.6	The Micro-reactor Echo in Newspaper Press and Magazines 90
1.8	Impact on Economy 91
1.8.1	Market Development/Commercial Implementation 91
1.8.1.1	A Historical Description of the Interplay between Technology Push and
	Market Pull 91
1.8.1.2	PAMIR – A Market Study Giving First Insight 93
1.8.1.3	Market Evaluation 94
1.8.1.4	Start-up Companies and User–Supplier Platforms 95
1.8.2	Device Fabrication and Quality Control 96
1.8.2.1	Cost Estimation from Mass-manufacture Scenarios for Chip-based
	Microfabrication 96
1.8.2.2	Quality Control 96
1.8.3	Cost Savings for the Chemical Industry 96
1.9	Application Fields and Markets for Micro Reactors 97
1.9.1	Transportation/Energy 97
1.9.1.1	How Far is the Development? A Critical Review 98
1.9.2	Petrochemistry 98
1.9.2.1	How Far is the Development? A Critical Review 98
1.9.3	Catalyst Discovery and Optimization via High-throughput Screening 99
1.9.3.1	How Far is the Development? A Critical Review 99
1.9.4	Bulk Chemicals and Commodities 100
1.9.4.1	How Far is the Development? A Critical Review 100
1.9.5	Fine Chemicals and Functional Chemicals 100
1.9.5.1	Fine Chemicals – Drivers and Trends 100

1.9.5.2	Fine Chemicals – State of the Art of Micro-reactor Use 102
1.9.5.3	Functional Chemicals 103
1.9.5.4	How far is the Development? A Critical Review 103
1.9.6	Cosmetics and Foods 104
1.9.6.1	How Far is the Development? A Critical Review 104
1.9.7	Extra-terrestrial Processing 104
1.9.7.1	How Far is the Development? A Critical Review 105
1.9.8	Chemical Analysis, Analyte Separation, Assays and Further Diverse
	Applications in the Bio Field 105
1.9.8.1	How Far is the Development? A Critical Review 105
	References 106
2	Modeling and Simulation of Micro Reactors 125
2.1	Introduction 125
2.2	Flow Phenomena on the Micro Scale 127
2.2.1	
2.2.1.1	Slip Flow Regime 129
2.2.1.2	Transition Flow and Free Molecular Flow 131
2.2.2	Liquid Flows 136
2.2.2.1	Boundary Slip of Liquids 138
2.2.2.2	Electric Double Layers 139
2.2.2.3	Nano Flows 141
2.2.3	Multiphase Flows 142
2.2.3.1	Phase Transitions in Confined Spaces 143
2.2.3.2	Wetting and Spreading Phenomena 144
2.3	Methods of Computational Fluid Dynamics 146
2.3.1	Fundamentals of the Finite-volume Method 149
2.3.2	Solution of the Navier–Stokes Equation 156
2.3.3	Computational Grids 161
2.3.4	Solution Methods for Linear Algebraic Systems 165
2.4	Flow Distributions 169
2.4.1	Flow in Rectangular Channels 170
2.4.2	Generalized Channel Cross-Sections 171
2.4.3	Periodic and Curved Channel Geometries 172
2.4.4	Multichannel Flow Domains 176
2.5	Heat Transfer 182
2.5.1	Fundamental Equations of Heat Transport 182
2.5.2	Heat Transfer in Rectangular Channels 184
2.5.3	Generalized Channel Cross-sections 185
2.5.4	Periodic Channel Geometries 185
2.5.5	Viscous Heating 188
2.5.6	Micro Heat Exchangers 189
2.5.7	Thermal Optimization of Micro reactors 196
2.6	Mass Transfer and Mixing 197
2.6.1	Transport Equation for Species Concentration 198

XII	Contents	
•	2.6.2	Special Numerical Methods for Convection-Dominated Problems 198
	2.6.3	Mixing Channels 200
	2.6.4	Estimation of Mixing Efficiency by Flow-field Mapping 206
	2.6.5	Multilamination Mixers 207
	2.6.6	Active Micro Mixing 209
	2.6.7	Hydrodynamic Dispersion 214
	2.7	Chemical Kinetics 218
	2.7.1	Kinetic Models 218
	2.7.2	Numerical Methods for Reacting Flows 220
	2.7.3	Reacting Channel Flows 222
	2.7.4	Heat-exchanger Reactors 224
	2.7.5	Periodic Processing 228
	2.8	Free Surface Flow 230
	2.8.1	Computational Modeling of Free Surface Flows 231
	2.8.2	Micro Flows of Droplets and Bubbles 236
	2.9	Transport in Porous Media 240
	2.9.1	Morphology of Porous Media 241
	2.9.2	Volume-averaged Transport Equations 242
	2.9.3	Computation of Transport Coefficients 244
	2.9.4	Reaction-diffusion Dynamics inside Pores 247
		References 249
	3	Gas-phase Reactions 257
	3.1	Catalyst Coating in Micro Channels: Techniques and Analytical
		Characterization 258
	3.2	Micro Reactors for Gas-phase Reactions 261
	3.2.1	Housing-encased Single-platelet and Multi-platelet Stack Micro
		Reactors 261
	3.2.1.1	Reactor 1 [R 1]: Reactor Module with Different Multi-channel Micro
		Reactors 262
	3.2.1.2	Reactor 2 [R 2]: Steel Multi-plate-stack Reactor with Micro Mixer 263
	3.2.1.3	Reactor 3 [R 3]: Modular Multi-plate-stack Reactor 264
	3.2.1.4	• •
	3.2.1.5 3.2.1.6	Reactor 5 [R 5]: Cross-flow Multi-Plate Stack Micro Reactor 268  Reactor 6 [R 6]: Counter-flow Multi-plate Stack Micro Reactor 270
	3.2.1.0	Reactor 7 [R 7]: Multi-Plate Stack Micro Reactor in Heatable Holding
	3.2.1./	Unit 272
	3.2.1.8	Reactor 8 [R 8]: Ceramic Platelet Micro Reactor 273
	3.2.1.9	Reactor 9 [R 9]: Micro Heat Transfer Module 274
	3.2.2	Chip Micro Reactors 275
	3.2.2.1	Reactor 10 [R 10]: Catalyst Membrane Si-chip Micro Reactor with
		Sensing and Heating Functions 276
	3.2.2.2	Reactor 11 [R 11]: Single-channel Chip Reactor 278
	3.2.2.3	Reactor 12 [R 12]: Multi-channel–One-plate Chip Reactor 278
		Reactor 13 [R 13]: Micro-strip Electrode Reactor 279

3.2.2.5	Reactor 14 [R 14]: Self-heating Chip Micro Reactor 280
3.2.2.6	Reactor 15 [R 15]: Modular Multi-functional Chip Reaction System 281
3.2.3	Mini Fixed-bed Micro Reactors 281
3.2.3.1	Reactor 16 [R 16]: Wide Fixed-bed Reactor with Retainer Structures,
	Pressure-drop Channels and Bifurcation-cascade Feed/Withdrawal 282
3.2.3.2	Reactor 17 [R 17]: Mini Packed-bed Reactor 283
3.2.4	Thin-wire and mGauze Micro Reactors 285
3.2.4.1	Reactor 18 [R 18]: Modular Integrated 3D System with Electrically
	Heated µGauze 285
3.2.4.2	Reactor 19 [R 19]: Catalyst-wire-in-channel Micro Reactor 287
3.2.5	Thin-membrane Micro Reactors 288
3.2.5.1	Reactor 20 [R 20]: Permeable-separation Membrane Chip Reactor 288
3.2.6	Micro Reactors without Micro Channel Guidance –
	Alternative Concepts 289
3.2.6.1	Reactor 21 [R 21]: Filamentous Catalytic-bed Membrane Reactor 289
3.2.6.2	Reactor 22 [R 22]: Various Other Reactor Designs 290
3.3	Oxidations 291
3.3.1	Drivers for Performing Oxidations in Micro Reactors 291
3.3.2	Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for Oxidations 292
3.3.3	Oxidation of Ammonia 293
3.3.3.1	Drivers for Performing the Oxidation of Ammonia 293
3.3.3.2	Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for the Oxidation of Ammonia 293
3.3.3.3	Typical Results 294
3.3.4	Oxidation of Ethylene – Ethylene Oxide Formation 299
3.3.4.1	Drivers for Performing Ethylene Oxide Formation 299
3.3.4.2	Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for Ethylene Oxide Formation 299
3.3.4.3	Typical Results 300
3.3.5	Oxidation of 1-Butene – Maleic Anhydride Formation 309
3.3.5.1	Drivers for Performing Maleic Anhydride Formation in Micro
	Reactors 309
3.3.5.2	Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for Maleic Anhydride Formation 309
3.3.5.3	Typical Results 309
3.3.6	Oxidation of Methanol - Formaldehyde Formation 311
3.3.6.1	Drivers for Performing Formaldehyde Synthesis in Micro Reactors 311
3.3.6.2	Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for Formaldehyde Synthesis 312
3.3.6.3	
3.3.7	Oxidation of Derivatized Alcohols – Derivatized Aldehyde
	Formation 314
3.3.7.1	Drivers for Performing Derivatized Aldehyde Synthesis in Micro
	Reactors 314
3.3.7.2	Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for Derivatized Aldehyde
	Synthesis 314
3.3.7.3	Typical Results 315
3.3.8	Oxidation of Propene to Acrolein 316
3.3.8.1	Drivers for Performing the Oxidation of Propene to Acrolein 316

XIV	Contents	
	3.3.8.2	Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for the Oxidation of Propene to Acrolein 316
	3.3.8.3	Typical Results 317
	3.3.9	Oxidation of Isoprene – Citraconic Anhydride Formation 318
	3.3.9.1	Drivers for Performing Citraconic Anhydride Formation 318
	3.3.9.2	Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for Citraconic Anhydride Formation 318
	3.3.9.3	Typical Results 318
	3.3.10	Partial Oxidation of Methane – Syngas Generation 322
		Drivers for Performing Syngas Generation 322
		Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for Syngas Formation 323
		Typical Results 323
		Oxidation of Carbon Monoxide to Carbon Dioxide 327
	3.3.11.1	Drivers for Performing the Oxidation of Carbon Monoxide to Carbon Dioxide 327
	3.3.11.2	Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for the Oxidation of Carbon Monoxide to Carbon Dioxide 327
	3.3.11.3	Typical Results 327
	3.3.12	Andrussov Process 329
	3.3.12.1	Drivers for Performing the Andrussov Process 329
	3.3.12.2	Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for the Andrussov Process 329
	3.3.12.3	Typical Results 330
	3.3.13	Hydrogen/Oxygen Reaction 332
	3.3.13.1	Drivers for Performing the Hydrogen/Oxygen Reaction 332
	3.3.13.2	Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for the Hydrogen/Oxygen Reaction 332
	3.3.13.3	Typical Results 333
	3.3.14	Oxidation of Formamides – Synthesis of Methyl Isocyanate 339
	3.3.14.1	Drivers for Performing the Synthesis of Methyl Isocyanate 339
	3.3.14.2	Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for the Synthesis of Methyl Isocyanate 340
	3.3.14.3	Typical Results 340
	3.4	Hydrogenations 340
	3.4.1	Cyclohexene Hydrogenation and Dehydrogenation 340
	3.4.1.1	Drivers for Performing the Cyclohexene Hydrogenation and Dehydrogenation 340
	3.4.1.2	Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for Cyclohexene Hydrogenation and Dehydrogenation 340
	3.4.1.3	Typical Results 341
	3.4.2	Hydrogenation of <i>c,t,t</i> -1,5,9-Cyclododecatriene to Cyclododecene 346
	3.4.2.1	Drivers for Performing the Hydrogenation of <i>c,t,t</i> -1,5,9-Cyclododecatriene to Cyclododecene 346
	3.4.2.2	Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for the Hydrogenation of <i>c,t,t</i> -1,5,9-Cyclododecatriene to Cyclododecene 346
	3.4.2.3	Typical Results 347

3.4.3	Hydrogenation of 1,5-Cyclooctadiene to Cyclooctene 349
3.4.3.1	Drivers for Performing the Hydrogenation of 1,5-Cyclooctadiene to
	Cyclooctene 349
3.4.3.2	Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for the Hydrogenation of
	1,5-Cyclooctadiene to Cyclooctene 349
3.4.3.3	Typical Results 350
3.4.4	Hydrogenation of Benzene 351
3.4.4.1	Drivers for Performing the Hydrogenation of Benzene 351
3.4.4.2	Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for the the Hydrogenation of
	Benzene 351
3.4.4.3	Typical Results 351
3.5	Dehydrogenations 352
3.5.1	Non-oxidative Dehydrogenation of Propane to Propene 352
3.5.1.1	Drivers for Performing the Non-oxidative Dehydrogenation of Propane
	to Propene 352
3.5.1.2	Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for the Non-oxidative
	Dehydrogenation of Propane to Propene 353
3.5.1.3	Typical Results 353
3.5.2	Oxidative Dehydrogenation of Propane to Propene 355
3.5.2.1	Drivers for Performing the Oxidative Dehydrogenation of Propane to
	Propene 355
3.5.2.2	Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for the Oxidative Dehydrogenation
	of Propane to Propene 355
3.5.2.3	Typical Results 355
3.5.3	Dehydrogenation of Cyclohexane to Benzol 358
3.5.3.1	Drivers for Performing the Dehydrogenation of Cyclohexane 358
3.5.3.2	Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for the Dehydrogenation of
	Cyclohexane 358
3.5,3.3	Typical Results 358
3.6	Substitutions 358
3.6.1	Chlorination of Alkanes 358
3.6.1.1	Drivers for Performing the Chlorination of Alkanes 358
3.6.1.2	Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for the Chlorination of Alkanes 35
3.6.1.3	Typical Results 359
3.7	Eliminations 360
3.7.1	Dehydration of 2-Propanol to Propene 360
3.7.1.1	Drivers for Performing the Dehydration of 2-Propanol to Propene 361
3.7.1.2	Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for the Dehydration of 2-Propanol
	to Propene 361
3.7.1.3	Typical Results 361
3.8	Additions and Coupling Reactions 364
3.8.1	Phosgene Formation 364
3.8.1.1	Drivers for Performing Phosgene Formation 364
3.8.1.2	Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for Phosgene Formation 364
3.8.1.3	Typical Results 365

١	202	O ' Le' Co al' and Mallana 100
	3.8.2	Oxidative Coupling of Methane 366
	3.8.2.1	Drivers for Performing the Oxidative Coupling of Methane 366
	3.8.2.2	Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for the Oxidative Coupling of
		Methane 367
	3.8.2.3	Typical Results 367
		References 368
		Marid and Marid Wissid whose Posstions 270
	4	<b>Liquid- and Liquid/Liquid-phase Reactions</b> 379 Micro Reactors for Liquid-phase and Liquid/Liquid-phase Reactions 379
	4.1	Tube Micro Reactors 379
	4.1.1	
	4.1.1.1	
	4.1.1.2	Packed-bed Tube or Capillary Micro Reactors 380
	4.1.2.1	Reactor 2 [R 2]: Packed-bed Capillary Micro fFow Reactor 380
	4.1.2.2	Reactor 3 [R 3]: Porous-polymer Rod in Tube Micro Reactor 381
	4.1.3	Chip Micro-reactor devices 382
	4.1.3.1	Reactor 4 [R 4]: Chip Reactor with Micro-channel Mixing Tee(s) 382
	4.1.3.2	Reactor 5 [R 5]: Chip Micro Reactor with Multiple Vertical Injections in a Main Channel 384
	4.1.3.3	Reactor 6 [R 6]: Chip Micro Reactor with Multiple Micro Channel—
	7.1.3.3	Mixing Tees 386
	4.1.3.4	Reactor 7 [R 7]: Chip Micro Reactor with Z-type Flow Configuration 386
	4.1.3.5	Reactor [R 8]: Chip Micro Reactor with Extended Serpentine Path and
	т,1.5.5	Ports for Two-step Processing 387
	4.1.3.6	Reactor 9 [R 9]: Chip System with Triangular Interdigital Micro Mixer-
		Reaction Channel 387
	4.1.3.7	Reactor 10 [R 10]: 2 × 2 Parallel Channel Chip Reactor 389
	4.1.3.8	Reactor 11 [R 11]: Bifurcation-distributive Chip Micro Mixer 390
	4.1.3.9	Reactor 12 [R 12]: Micro Y-Piece Micro-channel Chip Reactor 391
		Reactor 13 [R 13]: Triple Feed Continuous Multi-phase Chip Reactor 391
	4.1.3.11	Reactor 14 [R 14]: Chip with Bi-/Tri-layer Flow Configuration Using
		Y-type Contact 392
	4.1.3.12	Reactor 15 [R 15]: Single-channel Chip Micro Reactor 392
	4.1.4	Chip-Tube Micro Reactors 393
	4.1.4.1	Reactor 16 [R 16]: Liquid-Liquid Micro Chip Distributor-Tube Reactor 393
	4.1.4.5	Reactor 17 [R 17]: Fork-like Chip Micro Mixer–Tube Reactor 395
	4.1.5	3-D Microfab Reactor Devices 396
	4.1.5.1	Reactor 18 [R 18]: Interdigital Micro Mixers 396
	4.1.6	3-D Microfab Mixer–Tube Reactors 399
	4.1.6.1	Reactor 19 [R 19]: Slit-Type Interdigital Micro Mixer-Tube Reactor 399
	4.1.6.2	Reactor 20 [R 20]: Triangular Interdigital Micro Mixer–Tube Reactor 400
	4.1.6.3	Reactor 21 [R 21]: Caterpillar Mini Mixer–Tube Reactor 401
	4.1.6.4	Reactor 22 [R 22]: [Separation-layer Micro Mixer; Tube] – Reaction
		System 402
	4.1.6.5	Reactor 23 [R 23]: [Impinging-jet Micro Mixer; Tube] – Reaction
		System 403

- 3-D Microfab Micro Mixer-Micro Heat Exchangers 404 4.1.7
- 4.1.7.1 Reactor 24 [R 24]: System with Series of Micro Mixers-Cross-Flow Reactor Modules 404
- 4.1.8 2-D Integrated Total Systems with Micro Mixing and Micro Heat Exchange Functions 405
- Reactor 25 [R 25]: CPC Micro Reaction System CYTOS™ 405 4.1.8.1
- 4.1.8.2 Reactor 26 [R 26]: Chip Micro Reaction System with Parallel Mixer-Reaction Channels 406
- Reactor 27 [R 27]: [Bi-layer Contactor; High-aspect-ratio Heat 4.1.8.3 Exchanger | - Reaction System 407
- Reactor 28 [R 28]: Multi-channel Integrated Mixer-Heat Exchanger 409 4.1.8.4
- Electrochemical Micro Reactors 410 4.1.9
- Reactor 29 [R 29]: Multi-sectioned Electrochemical Micro Reactor 410 4.1.9.1
- 4.1.9.2 Reactor 30 [R 30]: Electrochemical Diaphragm Micro Flow Cell 411
- Reactor 31 [R 31]: Electrochemical Capillary Micro Flow Reactor 411 4.1.9.3
- Reactor 32 [R 32]: Electrochemical Sheet Micro Flow Reactor 412 4.1.9.4
- Reactor 33 [R 33]: Electrochemical Plate-to-Plate Micro Flow Reactor 413 4.1.9.5
- Reactor 34 [R 34]: Ceramic Micro Reactor with Interdigitated 4.1.9.6 Electrodes 414
- Photochemical Micro Reactors 416 4.1.10
- Complete Parallel-synthesis Apparatus 417 4.1.11
- Aliphatic Nucleophilic Substitution 418 4.2
- Hydroxydehalogenation Hydrolysis of Chlorides and Acid Chlorides 418 4.2.1
- Drivers for Performing Chloride Hydrolysis in Micro Reactors 418 4.2.1.1
- 4.2.1.2 Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for Chloride Hydrolysis 418
- 4.2.1.3 Chloride Hydrolysis Investigated in Micro Reactors 419
- 4.2.1.3 Experimental Protocols 419
- 4.2.1.4 Typical Results 420
- Cyanodehalogenation Preparation of Nitriles 421 4.2.2
- 4.2.2.1 Drivers for Performing Preparation of Nitriles in Micro Reactors 421
- 4.2.2.2 Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for Preparation of Nitriles 422
- 4.2.2.3 Preparation of Nitriles Investigated in Micro Reactors 422
- 4.2.2.4 Experimental Protocols 422
- 4.2.2.5 Typical Results 422
- Thiocyanatodehydrogenation Thiocyanation 422 4.2.3
- Drivers for Performing Thiocyanation in Micro Reactors 422 4.2.3.1
- Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for Thiocyanation 422 4.2.3.2
- 4.2.3.3 Thiocyanation Investigated in Micro Reactors 422
- 4.2.3.4 Experimental Protocols 423
- 4.2.3.5 Typical Results 423
- 4.2.4 Azidodehalogenation - Formation of Azides 423
- Drivers for Performing Azide Substitutions in Micro Reactors 423 4.2.4.1
- Beneficial Micro Reactor Properties for Azide Substitutions 423 4.2.4.2
- 4.2.4.3 Azide Substitutions Investigated in Micro Reactors 423
- Experimental Protocols 423 4.2.4.4