## Contents

1 Introduction 1

2 Fundamental aspects of micromagnetism 7
  2.1 Energy terms 8
    2.1.1 Exchange energy 8
    2.1.2 Magnetostatic energy 9
    2.1.3 Zeeman energy 10
    2.1.4 Anisotropy energy 10
    2.1.5 Effective field 11
  2.2 Magnetic structures 12
    2.2.1 Characteristic lengths 12
    2.2.2 Domains and walls 13
    2.2.3 Magnetic vortices 15
    2.2.4 Bloch points 19
  2.3 Magnetization dynamics 20
    2.3.1 Landau-Lifshitz-Gilbert equation of motion 20
    2.3.2 Current-induced dynamics 22
  2.4 Range of validity of micromagnetic theory 24

3 Finite-element simulations 25
  3.1 Mesh generation 27
  3.2 Finite-element formulation 28
    3.2.1 Shape functions 28
    3.2.2 Differentiation 30
    3.2.3 Integration 31
  3.3 Computation of the effective fields 32
    3.3.1 Weak formulation and the exchange field 32
    3.3.2 Anisotropy 34
    3.3.3 Magnetostatic field 34
  3.4 Integration of the equation of motion 37
  3.5 Effect of a singularity 37

4 Vortex dynamics 41
  4.1 Steady state dynamics 42
    4.1.1 The Thiele equation 42
    4.1.2 Internal forces acting on a vortex 45
    4.1.3 External forces acting on a vortex 48
    4.1.4 Vortex motion 49
  4.2 Vortex core deformations 52
  4.3 Vortex-antivortex interactions 53
    4.3.1 Steady-state dynamics 54
    4.3.2 Annihilation 54
  4.4 Beyond the rigid body approximation 56
CONTENTS

5 Ultrafast vortex core reversal 57
  5.1 Experimental observation of the vortex core reversal 58
  5.2 Reversal triggered by unipolar field pulses 59
    5.2.1 Core reversal mechanism 60
    5.2.2 Evolution of the out-of-plane magnetization 60
  5.3 Switching field parameters 64
  5.4 Energy evolution 66
  5.5 Experimental observation of single-pulse induced core reversal 68
  5.6 Summary: The fastest field induced switching process 69

6 Ultrafast antivortex dynamics 71
  6.1 Antivortex preparation 72
  6.2 Field-induced dynamics 73
  6.3 Antivortex stability 73
  6.4 Experimental investigation 78
  6.5 Spin wave generation 80
  6.6 Summary 80

7 Current-induced vortex core reversal 83
  7.1 Vortex dynamics induced by a spin-polarized current 84
  7.2 Core reversal triggered by an alternating current 84
  7.3 Core reversal induced by short current pulses 86
  7.4 Summary: Resonant versus non-resonant switching 90

8 Energetic origin of the core switch 93
  8.1 Core switch triggered at resonance 94
    8.1.1 Energy evolution 94
    8.1.2 Variations with the applied current 96
  8.2 Energy evolution in response to short current pulses 99
  8.3 Energy thresholds as a function of intrinsic parameters of the vortex 100
  8.4 Energy thresholds in iron 102
  8.5 Summary: A local process driven by the exchange field 104

9 Stimulated vortex-antivortex pair production 107
  9.1 Pair production in a sample enclosing a vortex 108
    9.1.1 Pair production at a distance from the vortex core 108
    9.1.2 Pair production in the vicinity of the vortex core 110
  9.2 Pair production in a single-domain structure 112
  9.3 Current-induced pair production 114
  9.4 Summary 115

10 Conclusion 117

Bibliography 120

Publications 139

Acknowledgements 143