

## Table of Contents

Summary	iv
Publications	viii
Acknowledgements	ix
Table of Contents	xi
List of Abbreviations and Symbols	xv
Introduction	17
Chapter 1: Literature Review	21
1.0 Steels for Dummies	21
1.1 Advanced High Strength Steels – From DP to Q&P	24
1.2 Quenching & Partitioning: the fundamentals	27
1.2.1 The concept behind Q&P	27
1.2.2 Austenitization	28
1.2.3 Quenching step – The optimum fraction of initial martensite	29
1.2.4 Partitioning of carbon	30
1.2.4.1 The Carbon Constrained Equilibrium or when does partitioning end?	30
1.2.4.2 The optimum QT selection methodology	33
1.2.4.3 Considering kinetics and mobile interface during partitioning – the evolutions of CCE	35
1.3 Importance of Chemistry	37
1.4 Competing reactions	39
1.4.1 Bainite formation	39
1.4.2 Carbide formation	42
1.4.3 Influence of the martensite substructure	43
1.4.4 Interface migration	44
1.5 Resulting microstructures	44
1.6 Mechanical properties of Q&P steels	46
1.7 Derivatives of the Q&P process	48
References	50

Chapter 2: On the relationship between the multiphase microstructure and the mechanical properties of a 0.2C Quenched and Partitioned steel 61

2.0	Introduction	61
2.1	Experimental procedures	62
2.2	Results	65
2.2.1	Bainitic and martensitic transformation	65
2.2.2	Austenite stabilization at room temperature	68
2.2.3	Other transformation products in the microstructure	69
2.2.4	Mechanical properties	72
2.3	Discussion	75
2.3.1	Microstructure development	75
2.3.2	Mechanical properties	78
2.4	Conclusions	80
	References	81

Chapter 3: Into the quenching and partitioning of a 0.2C steel: an in-situ synchrotron study 85

3.0	Introduction	85
3.1	Experimental procedures	86
3.2	Results	89
3.2.1	Initial quench to QT	90
3.2.2	Reheating from QT to the partitioning temperature of 400°C	93
3.2.3	Partitioning at 400°C	94
3.2.4	Final quench to room temperature	96
3.3	Discussion	97
3.3.1	Initial quench	98
3.3.2	Reheating step	99
3.3.3	Partitioning step	100
3.3.4	Final quench	102
3.3.5	Total carbon enrichment and mass balance	102
3.3.6	Final stress state of austenite at room temperature	104
3.4	Conclusions	105

References 105

Chapter 4: In-situ quantitative assessment of the role of silicon in a 0.2C Q&P steel 109

4.0 Introduction 109

4.1 Experimental procedures 110

4.2 Results 112

4.2.1 In-situ synchrotron characterization 112

4.2.1.1.1 Initial quench to QT 112

4.2.1.1.2 Reheating from QT to the partitioning temperature 114

4.2.1.1.3 Partitioning at 400°C 115

4.2.1.1.4 Final quench to room temperature 117

4.2.2 Microstructural characterization 118

4.3 Discussion 120

4.4 Conclusions 122

References 123

Chapter 5: The effect of prior ferrite formation on the microstructure evolution and resulting mechanical properties in Q&P steels 127

5.0 Introduction 127

5.1 Experimental procedures 128

5.2 Results 131

5.2.1 Bainitic and martensitic transformation 131

5.2.2 Austenite stabilization with Q&P 134

5.2.3 Phase quantification and resulting microstructures 136

5.2.4 Mechanical properties 138

5.3 Discussion 141

5.3.1 Phase transformations 142

5.3.2 Microstructure development 143

5.3.3 Mechanical behavior 145

5.4 Conclusions 147

References 147

Chapter 6: On the effect of Q&P processing on the stretch-flange-formability of 0.2C ultra-high strength steel sheets 151

6.0	Introduction	151
6.1	Experimental procedures	152
6.2	Results	155
6.2.1	Microstructure characterization	155
6.2.2	Nanoindentation	158
6.2.3	Tensile properties	162
6.2.4	Hole expansion tests	164
6.2.4.1	Hole expansion ratios	164
6.2.4.2	Crack examination	165
6.3	Discussion	166
6.4	Conclusions	170
	References	171
	Chapter 7: Conclusion and perspectives	175
7.0	Conclusions	175
7.1	Perspectives	176