Localization of Electromagnetic Interference Sources Using a Time Reversal Cavity

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Abstract — In this paper, we propose and implement a novel technique to locate Electromagnetic Interference (EMI) sources using the concept of time reversal cavity. We show in an intuitive manner that reflections from the surfaces of a cavity can emulate an infinite number of sensors in the Time Reversal (TR) method. In order to locate EMI sources, the equipment under test (EUT) is placed in a rectangular metallic cavity, of suitable dimensions according to the considered frequency band and the EUT size, equipped with a simple monopole or dipole antenna. We demonstrate that, by using only one sensor, we are able to locate EMI sources by taking advantage of the focusing properties of a time reversal cavity. The entropy criterion is applied to obtain the focusing time slice in which the maximum electric field determines the location of the EMI source. Both two- and three-dimensional numerical simulation schemes are deployed to demonstrate the ability of the proposed technique. The validity of numerical simulations is tested against frequency domain measurements. Compared to conventional EMI tests in anechoic chambers and scanning methods, the proposed technique represents a simpler and cost-effective test method requiring only one sensor (a monopole or dipole antenna).

Index Terms — Cavity, Electromagnetic Interference, Entropy Source Localization, Time Reversal.

I. INTRODUCTION

The dimensions of electronic circuit boards are becoming smaller and smaller to achieve larger bandwidths and higher data transfer speeds. This, in turn, is leading to an increase in the level of Electromagnetic Interference (EMI) from electronic circuit boards [1]. Anechoic, semi-anechoic (based on CISPR 22 and IEC 61000-6 standards) and reverberation chambers are used to measure the level of EMI radiation of EUTs. These tests are expensive, and they are associated with difficulties in terms of installation, operation, and maintenance. In addition, the localization of EMI sources cannot be performed via these test procedures.

Source localization techniques are used in many applications, such as, wireless communications [2], wireless sensor networks [3], radar [4], sonar [5], seismology [6], acoustics [7], industrial electronics [8]–[10], electromagnetic compatibility [11], and lightning [12]. Near-field electromagnetic scanning methods are the main tools to locate EMI sources (e.g. [13], [14]). However, the presence of evanescent waves at close distances may cause faulty reconstruction of the source. Moreover, the need for accessibility of all onboard locations and the positioning of the probe are also fundamental limitations of these methods. The Emission Source Microscopy (ESM) technique was proposed by Maheshwari et al. as a far-field scanning method to overcome the limitations of near-field scanning methods [15]. However, the ESM technique can only be applied to planar source structures and a scan must be performed over the plane of observation.

The time reversal method is a source localization algorithm with demonstrated ability to provide wave focusing in complex and heterogeneous media both in time and space [16], [17]. In the time reversal method, the radiation from the disturbance source is measured by one or several sensors which back-inject a time-reversed version of the measured waveform by flipping the signal in time. The back-injected signal focuses at the original disturbance source’s location by virtue of the time reversal symmetry of the wave equation [11]. The accuracy of the time reversal method is improved by multiple scattering in the location domain [18]. As a result, a great deal of attention has been given to the application of the TR method in reverberation chambers. In this respect, a theoretical model for Time Reversal Cavities (TRCs) was established for ultrasound by Cassereau and Fink [19], who found that TRCs can create focal spots with a limited number of sensors. Source reconstruction can be achieved in an acoustic cavity using only one transceiver [20]. In the following works by Fink and co-workers ([21], [22]), the focusing property of TRCs for electromagnetic waves was proven both experimentally and theoretically. TRCs have also been utilized to perform electromagnetic susceptibility (EMS) tests [23], [24].

In this paper, we propose a novel approach to localize EMI sources based on the time reversal process. The device under test (DUT) is placed inside a metallic cavity and a single dipole antenna is used to record the EMI, which is then used to localize the EMI source.

We investigate the application of the time reversal technique by going from the simple case of a 2D model to the more practical case of a 3D cavity, pointing out insights for each one of the studied cases. The organization of the paper is as follows.

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In 2D-FDTD simulations, two PMLs are used to model surfaces are considered as perfect electric conductor s (PEC) and the dielectric between them is air. To use the TR focusing property in the waveguide, we confine ourselves to the range of frequencies at which the cavity can be considered as electrically large, in other words when \( w \) is much greater than \( \lambda \) [26]. The location of the source and sensor are assumed arbitrary.

In the back-propagation step, one can solve two equivalent problems to find the focusing point, depicted, respectively, in Figs. 2a and 2b. In Fig. 2b, the dashed lines show the former locations of the PEC plates in the PPW, which are replaced based on image theory by equivalent sources placed at appropriate locations to account for the PEC. Note that the sensor in the forward time step in Fig. 1 has turned into a source for the back propagation in Fig. 2 and it is marked with a cross (X) in Fig. 2a. As shown in Fig. 2b, by applying image theory, the single-sensor cavity configuration is equivalent to an infinite number of sensors in free space. The image sources produce EM waves that can be considered as the reflections of the original signal from the surfaces of the PPW. All wave fronts will focus at the primary source location at a focusing time based on the TR concept. The time focusing slice is determined using the entropy criterion [25] that will be explained later. Equation (1) can be used to calculate the location of the image sources:

\[
Y_i = |y_0| + 2wi
\]  

(1)

where \( Y_i \) is the location of the image sources along the \( y \)-axis, \( y_0 \) is the location of the source inside the PPW, \( w \) is the length of the PPW, and \( i \) is an integer in the range of \((\infty, \infty)\).

B. Numerical Validation

In this section, numerical simulations are performed to...
demonstrate the concept of an infinite number of sensors in a PPW. Fig. 1 shows the geometry of the problem.

We assume a PPW structure with distance of \( w = 13 \) cm between the two plates. In our 2D-FDTD model, two Perfectly Matched Layers (PML) are used as boundary conditions to take into account the infinite length of the PPW along the \( x \) axis as shown in Fig. 1. Equally spaced cells are used to mesh the solution space. The dimension of each cell is \( 1 \times 1 \) mm\(^2\). The time step in this simulation is approximately 2.12 ps.

In the first step (forward time), a Gaussian pulse with a bandwidth of 15 GHz is used as the EMI source. The emitted field is recorded at the location of the sensor (see Fig. 1). The signal recorded by the sensor in the forward time is shown in Fig. 3. In the second step, the signal recorded by the sensor is time-reversed and back-injected into the PPW structure. At this point, we solve the back-propagation problem in two ways: 1) in the presence of the PPW structure and, 2) using image sources (as illustrated in Fig. 2b). In this second way, the PEC walls shown in Fig. 1 are removed and a number of image sources are placed according to Fig. 2b. The location of each image source is determined by (1). One can also see in a more intuitive way where the image sources need to be placed by noting that, while each one of the images helps satisfy the boundary conditions at one of the walls, it requires itself a new image with respect to the other wall. This process repeats indefinitely, with each successive image requiring a new image. Since each new image is farther from the walls than the previous one, and since the fields from the new image decrease very rapidly, the process of adding new images can be truncated with a bound error.

The signal obtained in the forward time is time reversed and back injected from each individual image source. The onset times for all the image sources are the same. The constructive interference of the waves from the image sources will lead to the focusing of the wave at the primary source location. Increasing the number of image sources leads to a better estimation of the source location. Both approaches are implemented using 2D-FDTD simulations.

The entropy values over time can be calculated by (2).

\[
R(E_z^n) = \left[ \frac{\sum_{j,k} (E_z^n(j,k))^2}{\sum_{j,k} (E_z^n(j,k))^4} \right]^2 \tag{2}
\]

Fig. 4 and Fig. 5 show the simulation results using the two equivalent problems described in Section II-A, respectively. As shown in Fig. 4, the electric field focuses at the primary source location with an accuracy better than the mesh cell length (1 mm) in the optimal time slice obtained using the entropy criterion. The reason for this focusing is the many reflections from the PPW surfaces.

To show that the multiple reflections from the PPW surfaces are equivalent to an infinite number of sensors, the electric field distribution corresponding to the second problem (described in Fig. 2b) is depicted in Fig. 5. The two closely spaced red dashed lines in Figs. 5a and 5b show the position of the parallel plates in the PPW. In the figure, the black cross (\( \times \)) between the plates as well as the black crosses above and below the waveguide represent the estimated source locations. The red circles (O) inside the waveguide mark the position of the actual source.
This shows that the concept of infinite number of images is equivalent to many reflections from the surfaces of the PPW structures. As it can be seen, both methods can detect the exact location of the source. It should be noted that, in the second problem, the first 80 image sources were considered. Crosses (×) show the maximum value of the electric field power at the optimum time slice. As expected, the number of candidate points for the source location is more than one. However, only one of the points is between the PPW plates and it is thus recognized as the correct source location. Other fictitious source locations are repeated periodically above and below the PPW. These locations are only mathematical solutions resulting from the use of images and they are disregarded.

The above-mentioned idea can be easily extended from an ideal infinite PPW structure to a real 3-dimensional cavity. In this case, the sensors are periodically repeated in the three-dimensional space. As we will see, as in the PPW simulation, multiple candidate source locations are found in the 3D cavity problem and only the actual location is confined between the cavity walls.

III. ABILITY OF TRCS TO LOCATE EMI SOURCES IN 2D PROBLEMS

In this section, we apply the time reversal method to a one-sensor cavity configuration in a 2D problem using the entropy criterion [12], [25]. Using a 2D-FDTD simulation, we evaluate the ability of the proposed method to locate EMI sources using a single sensor in 2D problems. We consider two cases: a full cavity and a partially open cavity and we apply in each one the TRC concept to locate EMI sources in them.

1) Full Cavity

The geometry of the problem, including a 2D rectangular cavity (25×13 cm²), one source, and one sensor is shown in Fig. 6. In the forward time step, a Gaussian pulse with a bandwidth of 15 GHz is used as the source and the field at the location of the sensor is recorded. The sensor and source positions are, respectively, (0.035 m, +0.04 m) and (-0.025 m, 0.115 m). The origin and the axes of the selected coordinate system can be seen in Fig. 6. The signal recorded by the sensor in the forward time is shown in Fig. 7. In the second step, the signal recorded at the sensor location is time-reversed and back-injected into the medium. In order to obtain the proper focusing in time and space, we utilize the local minimum entropy criterion as suggested by [12] and [28] and we apply it to our 2D simulations. The formula to obtain the entropy is given in Equation (2). The plot of the entropy over time is depicted in Fig. 8.

A discussion on the selection of the proper time slice from the entropy criterion is in order. The minimum entropy criterion was originally applied in image processing to determine spots in an image [25]. In our case, this criterion is used to locate focal spots. With reference to the entropy curve in Fig. 8, the first minimum at $t=0$ corresponds to the launch of the back-propagation at the sensor. Since we have direct knowledge of the sensor location, we can neglect that particular focal spot. The following minima correspond to focal spots resulting from multiple reflections, and the global minimum (apart from the first one, which we have already disregarded) corresponds to the instant at which the back-propagated waves focus back to the source. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first time that the entropy criterion is used for a cavity structure and that it is shown that the global minimum, excluding the beginning of the signal, represents the location of the true source. Once the proper time slice has been found using (2), we search the location domain for the maximum electric field at that time slice.
to locate the source. Fig. 9 shows the distribution of the electric field peak power inside the cavity at the focusing time slice. As it can be seen, the location of the source is obtained with an excellent accuracy (less than 2 mm).

2) Partially Open Cavity

To further investigate the focusing property of TRCs, we now open the left side of the cavity presented in Fig. 6 and we perform the time reversal process as done for the full cavity. If the image theory method is employed, the multiple images of the sensor repeat only in the y-direction. Therefore, we would expect the quality of the TRC decrease. By applying the time reversal process and using the entropy criterion, the source location can be estimated as shown in Fig. 10. It can be seen that the partially open cavity can still provide accurate results. However, comparing Fig. 9 and Fig. 10, it can be seen that the partially open cavity results in a more diffused focal spot along the $x$-axis. This is essentially because, in this case, the multiple images of the sensor repeat only in the y-direction. However, the accuracy is less than 2 mm, not different from the one obtained in the previous case.

Summarizing the results obtained with the simulations presented in the previous sections, an EMI source can be readily and accurately localized using the concept of TRCs in the presented 2D-problems.

IV. APPLICATION OF TRCS TO LOCATE EMI SOURCES IN 3D PROBLEMS

In the next sections, we investigate the application of the technique to a realistic 3D problem. We utilize the CST-MWS commercial software, which is based on the finite integration technique in the time domain, to simulate the 3D EMI source localization scenarios.

A rectangular cavity with copper walls was considered with dimensions of $25 \times 13 \times 17.4$ cm$^3$. Note that the cross-section of the real cavity is exactly equal to that of the 2D cases studied before. In order to validate our simulation procedure in CST-MWS, we compare in Section IV-1 the transfer function (scattering parameter) of our problem obtained by simulation with CST with the same transfer function obtained via measurement. The verification of the transfer function validates the simulation procedure for both, the forward and backward time phases by virtue of the reciprocity theorem.

In sections IV-2 and IV-3, respectively, the EMI source localization problem is solved for a simple monopole EMI source and a large microstrip printed circuit board (PCB) with a total of 24 elements.

1) Verification of the Simulation Scheme

In this subsection, we present experimental and simulation results obtained with the real cavity that will be used in the rest of the cases to be presented. The frequency response of the cavity is measured using a Vector Network Analyzer (VNA) and also calculated by simulation using a simple model in CST-MWS. We verify our simulation scheme by comparing these two results. Our test setup includes a rectangular cavity, two monopole antennas with a length of 5.7 cm mounted on a wall of the cavity, and a 9 kHz to 3 GHz VNA.

A picture of the experimental setup is depicted in Fig. 11.

Fig. 10. Distribution of electric field power at the focusing time slice in the partially open cavity. The red circle and the black cross represent the actual and the estimated locations of the source, respectively.

Fig. 11. Experimental Setup. a) A picture of the considered cavity. b) Picture of the interior part of the cavity’s top panel including the monopole antennas.

![Fig. 12. Comparison between experimental data and simulation results for $S_{21}$.](image1)

![Fig. 12. Comparison between experimental data and simulation results for $S_{21}$.](image2)
The first antenna is considered as an EMI source and the second antenna acts as a probe. In this example, as can be seen in Fig. 11b, the EMI source and probe are attached to the cavity. Note that, although we perform our validation test in the frequency domain, the same results are expected in the time domain by applying the inverse Fourier transform. Fig. 12 shows a comparison of the experimentally obtained $S_{21}$ scattering parameter versus CST-MWS simulations. The observed results show agreement between the CST-MWS and the VNA results for the transfer function (Fourier transform of the impulse response) from the source to the sensor in the linear, time-invariant cavity. This lends support to the CST-MWS simulations for validation of the realistic cavity. In other words, this verification shows that the impulse response of the time-invariant linear system simulated by CST-MWS and the measurement using VNA are in good agreement. We can therefore use the CST-MWS simulation results for the forward and backward steps.

2) EMI Source Localization in 3D Cavity for Simple Monopole Antenna

In this section, we assume a monopole antenna as the EMI source at point (-0.16, 0.0, 0.0) m, and a monopole antenna as a probe at (-0.10, 0.0, 0.0) m in the assumed cavity. In the following simulations, the excitation source is a Gaussian pulse with 10 GHz bandwidth. The length of the monopole antennas is 5.7 mm.

The TR process as described in Section II is applied. The distribution of the electric field power density is calculated by way of CST-MWS and it is depicted in Fig. 13. This figure shows the distribution of the electric field power at the focusing time slice for (a) the x-z plane, (b) the y-z plane, and (c) the x-y plane. The black cross represents the actual location of the source. As we can see in Fig. 13a, the error in finding the location of the source in the x-z plane is one mesh-cell (2 mm). In the other planes, the error is zero. The simulation shows that the proposed method can be used to find with high accuracy (2 mm) the location of the source using only one probe antenna. Our analysis also shows that the method is robust to changes in the respective polarizations of the dipole antennas. Fig. 14 shows the distribution of the electric field power when the orientation of the first antenna is set to 45 degrees relative to the z-axis. As can be seen, the method is still able to accurately locate the source (the location error is again one mesh-cell, 2mm). Comparing Fig. 13c and 14 reveals that the polarization of the source does not affect the performance of the proposed method in the studied case. If the polarization of the receiving antenna is at right angles to the source polarization, it is obvious that no signal can be recorded by the receiving antenna. To overcome this problem one can perform the measurement in all three possible polarizations.

3) EMI Source Localization in 3D Cavity for microstrip Board

In this subsection, we study the case of a microstrip printed circuit board (PCB) with multiple elements placed inside the
model of the cavity. We demonstrate that the proposed time reversal technique can detect and locate the PCB emitting element with very good accuracy.

The PCB considered as the device under test (DUT) has 24 unit cells. It needs to be diagnosed by locating an EMI source on it. Each unit cell of our PCB is a simple microstrip board. A schematic of each unit cell is shown in Fig. 15. The size of the microstrip patch is $7.90 \times 5.69 \text{ mm}^2$. The thickness of the substrate is 1.5 mm and its relative permittivity is 2.1. A 50 $\Omega$ coaxial feed is used to excite the microstrip board and it is placed at 1.2 mm off-axis from the center of the patch as shown in Fig. 15. A plot of the reflection loss as a function of frequency for the unit cell (microstrip) can be seen in Fig. 16. As can be seen in that figure, the reflection loss of the microstrip antenna in a narrow frequency band around 15 GHz is lower than -10 dB, which means that the microstrip antenna does not radiate efficiently at 10 GHz compared to 15 GHz. This allows us to test the proposed method in frequency ranges at which the EMI source does not radiate efficiently. It is obvious that in the case of more efficient radiation, the proposed method can work better.

![Reflection loss of the considered microstrip board.](image1)

![Assumed printed circuit board with its 24 unit cells. The front left board, excited with a Gaussian pulse, is the EMI source to be located.](image2)

![Distribution of the electric field power at the focusing time slice. The bandwidth of the EMI source is 5 GHz. The black cross represents the actual location of the source, (a) x-z plane, (b) y-z plane, and (c) x-y plane.](image3)

![Distribution of the electric field power in the x-y plane at the focusing time slice. The bandwidth of the EMI source is 5 GHz. The black cross represents the actual location of the source.](image4)
Fig. 18 shows the distribution of the electric field power in the x-z plane at the focusing time slice when the EMI source is excited by a Gaussian pulse with a bandwidth of 5 GHz. As it can be seen, the proposed method can detect the emitting unit cell. Considering the exact location of the coaxial feed point (center of the feed), the proposed method yields a location estimation error of 7.5 mm.

Fig. 19 shows the distribution of the electric field power at the focusing time slice when the EMI source is excited by a Gaussian pulse with a bandwidth of 10 GHz. As it can be seen, the proposed method is again able to detect the emitting unit cell. Considering again the coaxial feed exact location point (center of the feed), the proposed method yields an accuracy of 3.3 mm. As expected, by increasing the EMI source radiation bandwidth, the accuracy of this method is improved thanks to the better focusing properties of TRCs at higher frequencies.

V. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we proposed a novel method to detect and locate EMI sources by exploiting the spatial and temporal focusing properties of Time Reversal. We proposed to insert the device under test in a full metallic cavity to use its rich multipath environment to achieve a high focusing effect. We proposed a new perspective based on image theory to show that Time Reversal Cavities (TRCs) can provide highly focused images of sources with a single sensor since the electromagnetic behavior of the single sensor within a cavity is equivalent to that of an infinite number of sensors in free space. This new insight was tested via numerical FDTD simulations. Furthermore, as a proof of concept, 2D numerical simulations were used to demonstrate the ability of TRCs to locate EMI sources. The minimum entropy criterion was used in the time reversal process to obtain the focusing time. We showed that EMI sources can be located using only a single sensor. The proposed EMI source localization method does not need any form of scanning compared to former conventional near-field and far-field probing schemes and it can overcome their difficulties in this respect.

We validated our simulation procedure by comparing the cavity’s source-to-sensor transfer function obtained from simulations against the same parameter obtained via measurements. The frequency response of the cavity was measured using a Vector Network Analyzer (VNA) and it was calculated by simulation using a simple model in CST-MWS.

Finally, we used a realistic 3D scenario with the presence of a large board including microstrip patches and we showed that the location of an EMI source can be successfully identified. The performance of the method was tested against changes in polarization of the source and low efficiency radiation of the EMI sources. The proposed technique is much simpler and cost effective than EMI tests in anechoic chambers or other near field or far field scanning methods.

REFERENCES

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