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Electromagnetic characterization of chiral auxetic metamaterials for **EMC** applications

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ABSTRACT

A new class of auxetic materials, a hexachiral honeycomb structure with good mechanical properties, is 18 investigated through computer simulation and measurement. The electromagnetic properties for shielding 19 applications are taken into account. This new material shows some interesting EMC properties (e.g. -40 dB 20 transmittance at 2.4 GHz) and promises better performance using different insertion techniques. 21© 2009 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved. 22

1. Introduction

In the past years, an increasing amount of effort has been invested 29in the development of new materials, with good mechanical properties, low weight and low cost. In particular auxetic materials 30 benefit from their negative Poisson's ratio [1] and are investigated closely in the last decade [2–4]. In the same time, we witness an increase in the electromagnetic pollution of the spectrum especially in 33 the free bands (2.4 GHz). Coding techniques have been developed to 34 ensure the "peaceful" coexistence of multiple emitter/receiver pairs in 36 the same frequency band. In some cases, these techniques are not sufficient, especially when good shielding for an enclosure is imperative (aeronautics [5], medicine etc.). A natural step forward is to investigate the electromagnetic properties of these materials, in order to provide good electromagnetic shielding. 40

Electromagnetic metamaterials are defined [6] as artificial effectively homogeneous electromagnetic structures with unusual properties not readily available in nature. An effectively homogeneous 43 structure is a structure whose structural average cell size p is much 44 smaller than the guided wavelength λ_g . ie. The average cell size 45should be at least smaller than a quarter of wavelength,

$$p < \frac{\lambda_g}{4}.$$
 (1)

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The condition (1) is known as the effective-homogeneity limit or effective-homogeneity condition, and ensures that refractive phenomena will dominate over scattering/diffraction phenomena when a wave propagates inside the medium.

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The chiral panels under test are specific metamaterials. Chirality is 53 defined by geometry [7]. An object is called chiral if it cannot be 54superimposed on its mirror image by translations and rotations. It's 55shown in [8–10] that in the isotropic composite chiral media 56consisting of chiral microstructures, the constitutive relations in the 57 frequency domain valid for time harmonic electromagnetic fields can 58 have the form: 59

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$$\mathbf{D} = \varepsilon_{\mathbf{c}} \mathbf{E} + j \boldsymbol{\xi}_{\mathbf{c}} H \tag{2}$$

$$\mathbf{H} = j\xi_{\rm c}\mathbf{E} + \mathbf{B}/\mu_{\rm c} \tag{3}$$

where $\varepsilon_{\rm c}$ and $\mu_{\rm c}$ represent the permittivity and permeability, and $\xi_{\rm c}$, 63 the chirality admittance, which is a measure of the handedness of the 64 medium. 65

2. Computer simulation

The structure used in tests was a fiber reinforced polymer [11] 68 prototype, developed in the framework of the CHISMACOMB (CHIral 69 SMArt honeyCOMB) FP6-EU-013641 project [12], by Italcompany 70(Fig. 1). The structure is a hexachiral honeycomb, each of the equally 71 spaced cylinders being connected to his 6 neighbors by ligaments. 72

In order to limit the dimensions of the model, the periodicity of the 73 structure has been investigated. While the intrinsic unit cell for this 74 structure will contain only one cylinder and half of every surrounding 75 ligament, numerical electromagnetic computation demands a rect-76 angular unit cell. The rectangular unit cell is showed in Fig. 2, the 77 length and width being equal to $2 \cdot L(x \text{ direction})$ and $L \cdot \sqrt{3} \cdot (y \text{ direction})$ 78 direction) respectively (where L is the cylinder separation). The 79 typical dimensions used in tests are shown in Table 1. 80

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Fig. 1. Hexachiral honeycomb

We investigate the interaction between a plane wave and an 81 infinitely large sheet of auxetic material, at normal incidence. The 82 boundary conditions are set to electric wall (x direction walls) and 83 magnetic wall (y direction walls) in order to force the symmetry 84 needed (plane wave) for the electromagnetic fields [13]. An input 85 wave port is placed at some distance from the structure; the second 86 (exit) wave port is added only when losses inside the structure are 87 taken into account. 88

89 The results of the simulation show the S parameters for the 90 structure. The typical shielding parameters reflectance, transmittance and absorption are related to the S parameters by the following 91 92equations [14].

$$R = |S_{11}|^2 \tag{4}$$

96

 $T = |S_{21}|^2$

 $A = 1 - R - T = 1 - |S_{11}|^2 - |S_{21}|^2$

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99 2.2. Accuracy of the results

The software tool used for the electromagnetic simulation was CST 100 Microwave Studio 2006, which is capable to perform both FDFD 101 (frequency domain) and FDTD (time domain) simulations. In order to 102 verify the boundary conditions setup a three layer Jaumann 103 microwave absorber was investigated in the same test setup. The 104 results in Fig. 3 were found to be identical to those mentioned in [15]. 105 106For the hexachiral structure under test, the auxetic layer is illuminated with a plane wave, coming from the z direction, with 107 normal incidence to the material. The polarization of the plane wave 108 in the material is imposed by the electric/magnetic wall boundary 109



Fig. 2. Rectangular unit cell and notations used for dimensions.

Table 1			
T	41.000	 	

Typical differsions.		11.0
Parameter	Value	t1.2 t1.3
D	18.58 mm	t1.4
h	19.75 mm	t1.5
L	24.72 mm	t1.6
g	3.3 mm	t1.7
ε	2.5 (4)	t1.8
$\tan \delta$	0 (0.1–0.5)	t1.9

conditions, and for correct calculations we expect the electromagnetic 110 fields inside the structure to follow the characteristics of the incident 111 wave. As in Fig. 4, we find that inside the hexachiral honeycomb, the 112 electric field will have only E_x component, whereas the magnetic field 113 shows only H_v component. 114

The final test was the comparison between the FDTD and FDFD 115 analysis results for the same structure. The two computation methods 116 are not related, even the mesh is different in this case (hexahedral 117 with Perfect Boundary Approximation[®] – PBA for FDTD and 118 tetrahedral for the frequency domain solver). The results are found 119 to be essentially the same (see Fig. 5). 120

The difference between the two curves is maximum ± 1 dB in the 121 $1 \div 10 \text{ GHz}$ range, except the frequencies around the reflection 122annulment, where a slight variation of the zero's frequency is 123 detected (0.1 GHz, meaning a 1.8% difference between the two 124minima) around 5.8 GHz. The two solvers are independent even if 125they belong to the same software suite, so we can estimate a $\pm 2 \text{ dB}$ 126 general error coupled with a $\pm 2\%$ peak detection error for the rest of 127the simulations. 128

2.3.1. Frequency domain analysis

(6)

The CST Microwave Studio frequency domain solver solves the 131 problem for a single frequency at a time, and for a number of 132adaptively chosen frequency samples in the course of a frequency 133sweep. For each frequency sample, the linear equation system will be 134 solved by an iterative (e.g. conjugate gradient) or sparse direct solver. 135

Results obtained through frequency domain analysis are plotted in 136Fig. 6. Seven adaptive passes were performed, the number of mesh 137 cells increasing from 2145 to 149,328. As we see, from the 5th pass, no 138 noticeable difference between the results is found, so in this case we 139 have a good convergence to a solution. 140

2.3.2. Time domain analysis

The CST Microwave Studio time domain solver calculates the 142 development of fields through time at discrete locations and at 143 discrete time samples. It calculates the transmission of energy 144 between various ports and/or open space of the investigated 145structure. 146

The fields are calculated step by step through time by the so called 147 "Leap Frog" updating scheme. It is proven that this method remains 148 stable if the step width for the integration does not overcome a known 149limit. This value of the maximum usable time step is directly related to 150the minimum mesh step width used in the discretization of the 151structure. So, the denser the chosen grid, the smaller the usable time 152step width. 153

Results obtained through FDTD analysis are plotted in Fig. 7. Ten 154adaptive passes were performed, the number of mesh cells increasing 155from 2145 to 338,496. In this case, from the 5th pass, it is clear that a 156solution cannot be found, all values being annulled (up to a small 157value $\sim 10^{-5}$ which can be attributed to round off errors). This 158 convergence problem was corrected in CST Microwave Studio 2006B 159 (service pack 3) but at the time we wrote this paper CST Microwave 160 Studio 2006 was used. 161

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t1.1

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Both analyses (frequency and time domain) were performed with hexahedral meshing, the CST proprietary technology Perfect Boundary Approximation[®] (PBA) is used for the spatial discretization of the structure. The simulated structure and the electromagnetic fields are mapped to hexagonal mesh. PBA allows a very good approximation of even curved surfaces within the cubic mesh cells [16].

168 2.4. Computational efficiency

As Figs. 6 and 7 show, at a glance, the frequency domain solver
offers better results so it would be the solver to choose in this case.
However computational efficiency is to be taken into account in order
to have real time solutions.

A first thing to consider is the time needed to perform the computations. Fig. 8 shows the time elapsed to the achievement of the solution. For the reference, all previous computations were made on an IBM compatible computer, with Intel Core2 E6400@2.13 GHz processor, 2 GB RAM, only one of the two separate processing cores being used by the solver.

The first thing to consider is the tremendous difference between the two solvers. The 7th pass frequency solver used 152,068 s (e.g. 42 h, 11 m, and 53 s) to achieve the solution whereas the 10th pass time domain solver only needed 91 s. When multiple analyses are to be performed (parametric studies in this paper involved more than 200 different analyses) the time consumed has a critical importance. Another important parameter is the number of mesh cell used for

the discretization of the structure. This number closely relates with

the amount of memory used in computations. As mentioned before 187 the number of mesh cells was 338,496 for the FDTD solver 10th pass, 188 and only 149,328 for the FDFD solver 7th pass. 189

However it's not only the mesh cells number who decides the memory occupation. Every algorithm has its own memory consumption particularities. The time domain algorithm is more memory efficient (even at 2 times more mesh cells, less memory is used e.g. 97 MB vs. 865 MB).

2.5. Parametric analysis

Parametric studies investigated the effect of the dimensions (*L*, *D*, 196 *h*, and g) and material properties (ε , σ , and tan δ). Figs. 9 and 10 show 197 the influence of *D*, *g*, *L*, and *h* (in this order) for the lossless dielectric 198 over the reflection coefficient (*S*₁₁), and Figs. 11 and 12 show the 199 influence of ε , σ , and tan δ over reflection coefficient (*S*₁₁) or over the transmission coefficient (*S*₂₁) when losses are taken into account (σ_{λ} 201 and tan δ). 202

Analysis shows that the chiral structure has almost identical 203 properties (Figs. 9–11) with an equivalent homogeneous dielectric 204 layer, so the mechanical and thermal advantages provided by the structure do not affect the electromagnetic properties in the bandwidth considered (0.1–10 GHz). 207

An interesting conclusion is the almost undetectable influence of the 208 cylinder diameter (D) and cylinder separation (L) over the shielding 209 properties, meaning that those parameters can be chosen strictly from 210 mechanical and thermal considerations. Other parameters offer the 211





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expected results, e.g. lower transmission with greater losses (tan δ), increased ligament thickness (g) and the variation of the frequency of the reflection zeros with layer's height (*h*).

For a chiral layer (of thickness *d*), positioned on an ideally conducting surface, the reflection coefficient for normally incident plane waves is [7]:

$$R = \frac{\eta_{\rm M} - \eta_0}{\eta_{\rm M} + \eta_0} = \frac{Z_{\rm M} - Z_0}{Z_{\rm M} + Z_0} \tag{7}$$

where Z_M is the input impedance at the layer boundary (sometimes called the surface impedance), given by

$$Z_{\rm M} = -j \sqrt{\frac{\mu_{\rm c}}{\epsilon_{\rm c}}} \tan(d\omega \sqrt{\epsilon_{\rm c} \mu_{\rm c}}).$$

In this equation $\epsilon_{\rm c}$ and $\mu_{\rm c}$ represent the usual permittivity and 223permeability in the formalism given by Eqs. (2) and (3). In Eq. (8) 224 there is no dependence of the reflection coefficient on the chirality 225parameter, ξ_c so the results we obtain verify the existing theory. Only 226 normal incidence on chiral media was considered, the case of oblique 227incidence [17] could show some influence of the microscopic 228structure, and must be studied further. The microscopic chirality of 229potential inclusions affects the values of the permittivity and 230permeability in Eq. (8), which then define the reflective properties, 231 so the sparse structure of typical chiral materials offers good energy 232dissipation (always a "plus" for an energy absorber) and easy access 233for eventual FSS (Frequency Selective Surfaces) insertions inside the 234 material in order to obtain better electromagnetic absorption. An 235 analysis of the effective electromagnetic properties of other types of 236 honeycomb composites is made in [18], as long as the effective-237homogeneity condition (1) applies. However in [18] only the 238

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(8)

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10 IS11| [dB] (Pass 3) S111 [dB] (Pass 1) IS11I [dB] (Pass 2) 10 10 0 0 0 -10 -10 -10 -20 -20 -20 -30 -30 -30 -40 -40 -40 -50 -50 -50 GH7 GHz GH: -60 -60 -60 0 2 4 6 8 10 0 2 4 6 8 10 0 2 4 6 8 10 10 |S11| [dB] (Pass 6) 10 IS11| [dB] (Pass 5) IS11I [dB] (Pass 4) 10 0 0 0 -10 -10 -10 -20 -20 -20 -30 -30 -30 -40 -40 -40 GHz -50 -50 GHz -50 GH₂ -60 -60 -60 0 2 4 6 8 10 0 2 4 6 8 10 0 2 4 6 8 10 10 IS11I [dB] (Pass 7) 10 IS11I [dB] (Pass 9) 10 |S11| [dB] (Pass 8) 0 0 0 -10 -10 -10 -20 -20 -20 -30 -30 -30 -40 -40 -40 -50 GHz -50 GHz -50 GHz -60 -60 -60 0 2 4 6 8 10 0 2 4 6 8 10 0 6 8 10 2 4



(9)

dependence of the effective electrical permittivity on the fill factor 239(density of the structure) was considered. 240

Figs. 9–11 show that for the lossless chiral layer we have a typical 241 half-wave reflectionless slab [19]. We obtain zeroes for the reflection 242 coefficient at the frequencies which verify the condition: 243

$$h = k \cdot rac{\lambda_{\mathrm{g}}}{2} = rac{k}{2} \cdot rac{c}{f\sqrt{\epsilon_{\mathrm{eff}}}}$$

where *k* must be an integer and λ_g is the guided wavelength, inside 245 the equivalent homogeneous dielectric slab. 246

This behavior offers interesting electromagnetic applications, as 247 radar invisibility or building wall transparency. As an example we can 248imagine a situation where for an internal wireless network we must 249minimize the multiple reflections which can occur inside the building. 250

Eq. (9) offers the possibility to use the results in Fig. 10 to 251investigate the variation of the effective electrical permittivity on 252the frequency. Every value for layer's height (h) generate at least 253two minima of the reflectivity in the bandwidth considered, 254

160,000

140.000

120,000 100,000 Solvertime [s] (Frequency)

corresponding to k = 1, k = 2 in Eq. (9). We can compute the effective 255electrical permittivity with Eq. (10). 256

$$E_{\rm eff}(f_{\min,k}) = \left(\frac{k \cdot c}{2f_{\min,k}} \cdot h\right)^2 \tag{10}$$

The effective electrical permittivity increases linearly with the 259frequency, as the electromagnetic field is confined inside the dielectric 260 at higher frequency. The results in Fig. 10 on which Fig. 13 is based are 261obtained for $\varepsilon = 2.5$ for the base material. In this case we find the 262effective permittivity ranging from 1.61 to 2.1, depending on the 263frequency. Also as the frequency increases we notice slight variations 264from the predicted linear increase, as the chirality of the structure 265becomes more and more evident. 266

The effects of the chirality appear as we increase the frequency, the 267electrical permittivity and the cylinder separation. In the typical 268situation (Table 1) Eq. (1) gives a frequency limit of about 2.37 GHz. 269 Close inspection of the results (especially Fig. 11 where D and g 270

10

Solvertime [s] (FDTD)





100

80

60

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Fig. 9. Internal cylinder diameter (D - left) and ligament thickness (g - right) influence over S_{11} .

parameters have no influence over the chiral behavior) shows that 271obvious effects of the microscopic chiral structure are visible at 8 GHz. 272 273Condition (1) can be expressed in terms of visible influence as:

$$L \cdot f \cdot \sqrt{\varepsilon_{\text{eff}}} \approx \frac{3c}{4}.$$
 (11)

275

The other results verify this relationship. Increase of ε from 2.5 to 10 276277(Fig. 11a) lowers the frequency of appearance of chiral effects from 8 GHz to 4 GHz (the square root of the permittivity factor of 4). Increase 278of *L* to 40 mm (Fig. 10a) shows the same effect starting from 5 GHz. 279

We can conclude that regarding the hexachiral honeycomb, 280 chirality influence becomes obvious when relation (11) applies, but 281 while visible, this influence does not affect the macroscopic behavior 282 of the panel under test. The hexachiral panel behaves as a 283homogeneous dielectric, with a different effective electrical permit-284 tivity (Fig. 13), thus different methods to increase the microwave 285shielding capability must be applied in order to obtain an EMC capable 286 material. Insertion of FSS or inclusion of the panels in Salisbury screen 287configuration could offer this result. For the measurement section of 288 this paper we will focus on a simpler configuration, which consists in 289the deposition of two aluminum foils on both sides of the panel. The 290 selected method has the advantage to have a minimal influence over 291



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the mechanical properties of the panel (which are a key element in the CHISMACOMB Project [12]).

294 **3. Measurements**

295 3.1. Measurements detail

Measurements were performed using an Agilent E7405A EMC spectrum analyzer (frequency domain: 250 kHz to 40 GHz), Agilent



Fig. 14. Sample measurement technique.

E8257 PSG Analog Signal Generator (frequency domain: 9 kHz to 298 26.5 GHz), and two ETS Lindgren 3115 horn antennas (frequency 299 domain: 1 GHz–18 GHz) in the free-space transmission measurement 300 method (Fig. 14). Transmission simulations (Fig. 12) show that losses 301 inserted by the intrinsic panel are in the 3–4 dB range (tan δ for the 302 base material is around 0.01). So the intrinsic panel, equivalent from 303 the macroscopic point of view with a homogeneous dielectric, is not 304 suited alone for EMC applications. 305

In order to investigate possible microwave shielding applications, two 0.5 mm thick aluminum foils were placed on both side of the layer (Fig. 14), and the bandwidth investigated was around the free ISM band at 2.4 GHz (e.g. 1.5-3 GHz) in connection with wireless, Bluetooth or DECT telephony applications. Multiple measurements were performed with different power levels at the generator (0 dBm, -10 dBm, and -20 dBm) and were repeated seven times [20]. 300

In order to eliminate the incertitude introduced by the quite 313 irregular frequency characteristics of the antennas, for every frequen-314 cy point, two distinct measurements were made: the first, or the 315 reference measurement, without the probe inserted between anten-316 nas and the second, or the sample measurement, was repeated seven 317 times with the corresponding measured sample between antennas. 318 The value of interest will be the difference between the two 319 measurements, as the supplemental attenuation induced by the 320measured sample, hence the electromagnetic shielding capability of 321 the chiral layer with aluminum foils. 322



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Table 2

t2.1

Measurement results and errors.

2.2 2.3	Frequency [GHz]	1.5	2	2.2	2.4	2.6	2.8	3
2.4	Transmittance [dB]	-43.97	-42.39	- 48.45	- 39.69	-47.96	- 52.60	-49.51
2.5	Standard Deviation	0.65	1.89	0.90	0.63	1.60	2.87	2.27
2.6	Range [dB]	1.98	4.97	2.36	1.59	4.71	7.38	6.19
2.7	Meas. count	6	6	7	7	7	6	6

3.2. Measurement results

323

The transmittance computed from the measured transmitted power and the generator power level is plotted in Fig. 15. The measured values show good repetitive values. The transmittance at 2.4 GHz (the free bandwidth of interest) has an interesting value of -40 dB transmission (Fig. 15, Table 2) which denotes that the structure under test can clearly be used as a microwave absorber, this values being typical for a good microwave absorber [15].

331 Table 2 shows the statistical data for the measured values. Measurements below 1.5 GHz were omitted as the frequency range 332 333 of the antennas makes them uncertain. Statistical analysis shows a 334 measurement error ranging from 0.9 dB to 2.9 dB in higher frequencies. This precision is enough to characterize the shielding properties 335 of the chiral panel between the two aluminum foils but certainly will 336 not be sufficient to investigate the transmission characteristics of the 337 simple panel (3-4 dB in the 1.5-3 GHz - Fig. 12). While better 338 methods exists, as the coaxial holder method, which imply a sample 339 inserted inside a waveguide, the geometrical size of the structure 340 (mainly *L*) will impose a very large guide in order to include several 341 342 cells. The limited bandwidth of such a waveguide (for example WR 343 770 in USA standard) will make any attempt to find accurate 344 information useless.

345 4. Conclusions

The evaluation of the intrinsic electromagnetic properties of an 346 auxetic material was made. We used CST Microwave Studio, for his 347 capability to perform both frequency and time domain simulations. 348 Particular boundary conditions (electric/magnetic walls) were used 349 to force the electromagnetic field inside the structure to be the same 350 as with an incident plane wave. The stability and efficiency analyses 351of both simulation methods were performed, showing the optimum 352 compromise between speed and accuracy. More than 200 different 353 354structures were then analyzed in order to obtain a complete 355 characterization of the intrinsic proprieties of the chiral metamaterial under test. The results show that the performance of the 356hexachiral structure is equivalent to a homogeneous dielectric layer, 357 some of the properties being influenced by the specific geometry of 358 359the structure.

Measurements were performed in some typical microwave absorber configurations and the results show good electromagnetic shielding capacities. The same structure which offers good mechanical and thermal behaviors [21] gives access to some improvement techniques. This work will be followed by the investigation of the possibility to improve these electromagnetic properties through the use of insertions, metallization etc.

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