Abstract—This paper proposes a novel strategy for creating generative models of stochastic link responses starting from limited available data. Whereas state-of-the-art techniques, e.g., based on generalized polynomial chaos expansions, require a considerable amount of (expensive) input data, here we start from a small set of “training” responses. These responses are obtained either from simulations or measurements to construct a comprehensive stochastic model. Using this model, new response samples can be generated with a distribution as similar as possible to the real data distribution, for use in Monte Carlo-like analyses. The methodology first uses the standard Vector Fitting algorithm to fit the S-parameter data with rational functions having common poles. Then, a generative model for the residues is created by means of principal component analysis and kernel density estimation. An a posteriori selection of passive samples is performed on the generated data to ensure the new samples are physically consistent. The proposed modeling approach is applied to a commercial connector and to a set of differential striplines. Both are concatenated to produce the stochastic analysis of a complete link. Comparisons on the prediction of time-domain responses are also provided.

Index Terms—High-speed connectors and links, kernel density estimation (KDE), principal component analysis (PCA), statistical link analysis, stochastic modeling.

I. INTRODUCTION

THE large manufacturing tolerances in modern electronics have recently prompted a wide interest in stochastic modeling techniques that can accurately predict the effects of component variability during the early design phase. To this end, a large number of statistical samples need to be generated within a reasonable amount of time. While the Monte Carlo method is recognized to be in most cases prohibitive due to the high computational cost involved, alternative techniques were proposed based on the theoretical framework of the generalized polynomial chaos (gPC). These techniques allow collecting statistical information and/or generating a large number of samples at a smaller cost [1]–[7].

Although gPC was demonstrated to be effective in a number of practical applications, a limitation is that it requires sampling the stochastic problem at specific points of the design space. This is at times hard to achieve, for example, in the presence of a very large number of varying parameters or when these parameters or their distributions are unknown. In case only measured data can be obtained, efficient and sufficient sampling may even become completely intractable.

In this paper, an alternative, novel, and conceptually different black-box approach is put forward to address the problem of generating a large number of samples of the response of a stochastic linear and passive multiport device, starting from a limited set of actual responses. The latter can be obtained either by simulating the original device at a subset of points in the random space (possibly unknown to the model developer) or by measuring several manufactured devices. In this way, a model is constructed that does not depend on, or require the knowledge of, various input parameters or their distributions.

The proposed approach starts by collecting a small amount of S-parameter data (or any other frequency-domain representation), which is then transformed into a pole-residue form by means of the Vector Fitting (VF) algorithm [8]–[10]. Then, the distribution of the residue matrices is modeled by means of principal component analysis (PCA) [11]–[13] and kernel density estimation (KDE) [14]–[16]. This model enables generating new sample values for the residue matrices, yielding corresponding S-parameter responses via the VF model representation. It is essential that the new, generated samples are in good agreement with the “real data,” representing the underlying distribution of an arbitrarily large set of simulated or measured data of which the training samples are a subset. Moreover, particular care is taken in making sure that the generated samples still preserve all physical constraints of stability, causality, passivity, and reciprocity, as well as the existing relationships among the different S-parameters in a multiport device. The generated S-parameter samples are readily imported in any SPICE-type simulator to perform, e.g., statistical time-domain link simulations. The proposed technique can be applied to model a complete interconnect.
link, or possibly to different subblocks that are later combined together to form a complex link, thus allowing a Monte Carlo-like analysis with the desired level of modularity.

It is worth mentioning that this paper is based on the idea proposed in [17], where a generative model for the simple case of a pair of coupled microstrips was constructed. In this paper, however, the modeling framework is more carefully explained and generalized to arbitrary multiports. Moreover, the advocated technique is applied to a commercial connector footprint, an interconnect structure composed of four pairs of differential striplines, and a complete link consisting of two connector footprints and the striplines. Additionally, time-domain results are presented, validating the entire modeling framework and illustrating the appositeness of the technique for signal integrity aware design.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. In Section II, the problem is stated. The new modeling approach is outlined in Section III. A number of application examples and validations are provided in Section IV. Finally, the conclusions are drawn in Section V.

II. Goal Statement

The goal of this paper is as follows. A limited number of responses of a stochastic device, typically S-parameters and hereafter called the “training set,” is available from simulated or measured data. These responses differ from each other as the result of some (often unknown or ill-defined) source of variability. The samples are, therefore, understood to be different realizations of the same stochastic process.

From the training set, a generative statistical model is derived that can generate new S-parameter samples whose statistical properties resemble as closely as possible those of the original data. Moreover, the generated samples must preserve physical constraints (e.g., passivity), which constitute the relationships that exist among the different S-parameters of a multiport structure, for example, in a passive two-port structure, $|S_{11}|^2 + |S_{21}|^2 \leq 1$, where the equality holds for a lossless device. Therefore, the independent statistical modeling of $S_{11}$ and $S_{21}$ would yield unrealistic data sets. This crucial step was not addressed by previous approaches [18], [19], as each parameter was modeled independently and no discussion about physical consistency was provided.

To validate the proposed modeling, a large number of samples are obtained via numerical simulations. Only a small subset is then used to build the generative model. Finally, the new samples generated by the model are statistically compared against the full data set.

III. Generative Modeling Framework

A flowchart of the new modeling approach is shown in Fig. 1 and involves three main steps: VF, PCA, and KDE. Each step is discussed in Sections III-A–III-F.

A. Training Set

The training set consists of a limited set of distinct random samples of the device response. It can be generated via simulation, by varying the random parameters, or by measuring different fabricated samples of a given device. It is even possible to consider several measurements of the same sample, e.g., to model measurement uncertainty and/or poor reproducibility. The size of the training set plays, of course, an important role. However, as demonstrated in Section IV, accurate statistical models can be obtained with a few tens of training samples. In what follows, we use the term “sample” to refer to a single realization of the complete matrix characterization of the variable device in the frequency domain.

B. Vector Fitting

First of all, the training samples are converted into a pole-residue representation by means of the well-known VF algorithm [8]–[10]. This allows working with a compact number of frequency-independent model parameters.

By means of measurements or simulations, a limited set of $K$ training samples is available in the form of a generic frequency-domain response [S-parameter or resistance ($R$), inductance ($L$), conductance ($G$), and capacitance ($C$) (RLGC)-parameter, in this paper]. Each such response is characterized by a matrix $s_k(s), k = 1, \ldots, K$, different fabricated samples of a given device. It is even possible to consider several measurements of the same sample, e.g., to model measurement uncertainty and/or poor reproducibility. The size of the training set plays, of course, an important role. However, as demonstrated in Section IV, accurate statistical models can be obtained with a few tens of training samples. In what follows, we use the term “sample” to refer to a single realization of the complete matrix characterization of the variable device in the frequency domain.

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where \( s \) denotes the complex frequency. Through use of the VF algorithm, each \( S_k(s) \) is fit by a rational model as follows:

\[
S_k(s) \approx \sum_{i=1}^{N} \frac{R_{k,i}}{s-a_i} + D_k + E_k s, \quad k = 1, \ldots, K
\]  

(1)

where \( a_i \) and \( R_{k,i} \) are the poles and the corresponding residue matrices, respectively. The poles and the residues are real values or constitute complex conjugate pairs. For an \( n \)-port structure, the S-parameters, and consequently the residues, form an \( n \times n \) matrix. Moreover, for stable systems, all poles lie in the left-half complex plane (i.e., \( \text{Re}[a_i] < 0 \)).

The quantities \( D_k \) and \( E_k \) are real valued and describe the behavior of \( \overline{S}_k(s) \) for \( s \to 0 \) and \( s \to \infty \), respectively. They may be omitted in favor of a more homogeneous set of quantities to model. This might require to slightly increase the number of residues \( N \) in (1) in order to compensate for the reduced modeling power and still achieve a similar level of accuracy. Without loss of generality, matrices \( \overline{D}_k \) and \( \overline{E}_k \) are excluded from the formulation in the following discussion.

Note that a generative model could also be constructed from time-domain data, by using time domain VF [20].

Furthermore, all S-parameter samples are fit using a common pole set \( \{a_i\}_{i=1}^{N} \). An optimal set of common poles is obtained by fitting all the training samples at once, and this set of poles is later on also used to generate new samples with the statistical model. This avoids any issue with possible outliers appearing in the right half-plane and giving rise to unstable samples.

With the above-mentioned approach, the problem is reduced to building a generative model for the residue matrices only. Capturing the relationship between the different S-parameters requires simultaneous modeling of all residues (i.e., all residues of every S-parameter matrix element).

### C. Principal Component Analysis

For each training sample \( k \), a set of \( N \) residue matrices \( \overline{R}_{k,i} \) having dimensions \( n \times n \) are obtained. Fortunately, due to reciprocity, it suffices to model only the top triangular part of \( \overline{R}_{k,i} \), as the matrices are symmetrical. However, as this still means \( N(n+1)/2 \) possibly complex variables to be modeled, the dimensionality quickly becomes computationally prohibitive. Since the residues are real or pairwise complex conjugate, the total number of elements remains unchanged when they are reshaped into a vector of real quantities. Stacking these vectors for all \( K \) training samples yields a matrix \( \overline{X} \) of size \( K \times N(n+1)/2 \).

To alleviate this high dimensionality strain, a PCA [11]–[13] is performed. This dimensionality reduction technique projects the high-dimensional space spanned by the training set onto a lower-dimensional space with maximal conservation of variance. Before the actual PCA step, each variable is centered and rescaled to unit standard deviation. PCA then projects \( \overline{X} \) onto the sequentially orthogonalized eigenvectors of \( \overline{X}^T \overline{X} \) having the largest eigenvalues (i.e., with the largest variance along its direction, as \( \overline{X}^T \overline{X} \) is proportional to the covariance matrix of \( \overline{X} \)).

As the number of degrees of freedom is constrained by the size of the training set, \( K \), and one degree of freedom is lost in the centering, the projected space is at most \( (K-1) \)-dimensional, which is, in practice, much smaller than \( Nn(n+1)/2 \). Another effect of this projection is that the new variables are also linearly uncorrelated. After the PCA, the projected training samples are again scaled to unit variance to make the subsequent KDE numerically feasible, as the variances along different axes in the projected space can differ by many orders of magnitude, and KDE is ill-equipped to handle these differences.

### D. Kernel Density Estimation

Now that the dimensionality of the variables has been reduced to a more manageable size, the distribution of the elements in the projected space can be more efficiently estimated. Note that due to the nonlinear correlation between the residues, this distribution is, in general, not spherical. Therefore, it is estimated by means of a multivariate KDE [14]–[16]. The KDE is a nonparametric method that estimates a probability distribution by placing a “kernel” or elementary spherical distribution centered on each training point. The sum of these kernels at a particular point is then (up to a normalization factor) the total distribution estimate. One popular choice of such kernels is the Gaussian kernel. Fig. 2 shows a 1-D example of a kernel density estimate with Gaussian kernels. Other common kernels are Epanechnikov kernels, which are parabolic and have a finite support.

The difficulty of KDE lies in the estimation of its bandwidth. In the case of a (multivariate) Gaussian kernel, this is equivalent to finding the proper covariance matrix of the kernels. Most methods rely on the (estimated) minimization of the mean integrated squared error (MISE) or its asymptotic approximation (AMISE). For the results presented in Section IV, we use the AMISE-based approach detailed in [16].

### E. Generative Statistical Model

Generating new samples is now straightforward. To sample from the kernel density estimate, it suffices to pick one training sample (with equal probability for each training sample), and then draw a sample from the kernel distribution centered on
that training point. The newly generated samples are then rescaled, projected back into the full residue space, followed by a rescaling and a final offset. This reverses the transformations discussed in Section III-C, yielding \( N \) possibly complex \( n \times n \) matrices for each new sample. Finally, using the same common poles that were used to fit the training data, new S-parameters are created using the rational VF model (1).

**F. Passivity Selection**

Some of these generated samples may violate the physical constraint of passivity and must, therefore, be rejected. If passivity were enforced as in [21]–[23], the distribution of the generated samples would be biased toward samples that are near the passivity boundary. Therefore, we opt to simply reject nonpassive samples \textit{a posteriori}, and keep generating new samples until the desired amount is reached (see Fig. 1). The passivity of the newly generated S-parameters also implies their causality.

**IV. APPLICATION EXAMPLES AND NUMERICAL RESULTS**

In this section, the proposed methodology is demonstrated on some meaningful examples. A set of differential striplines is considered first. Second, a commercial connector footprint is modeled. In a third example, the models from the previous examples are cascaded to form a realistic interconnect link. Finally, the time-domain behavior of the link is evaluated.

**A. Stripline Interconnect**

A stripline interconnect consisting of four differential pairs, with cross section shown in Fig. 3, is considered. A set of 1000 per-unit-length (p.u.l.) RLGC parameters (from 0 to 20 GHz) were generated with an accurate field solver [24] where the relative permittivity \( \varepsilon_r \) of the substrate was varied according to a Gaussian distribution with a standard deviation of 5% of the mean value of 3.5. \( K = 50 \) of these samples are used to train the model, while the other 950 will merely serve as a validation for the generated samples. In this example, the method described in Section III is applied to the p.u.l. RLGC parameters directly. This has the advantage of eliminating the distributed effect due to the line length from the VF model. As VF can also accommodate real variables, the proposed method remains unaltered, apart from a conversion from p.u.l. parameters to S-parameters, where a line length of 50 mm was assumed, and a relaxation of the stability enforcement. Fig. 4 shows the training set (red), the samples generated by the model (blue), and the validation set (green) for both the p.u.l. conductance \( G_{1,1} \) and the p.u.l. capacitance \( C_{1,1} \) of the leftmost stripline. As only the relative permittivity is varied, the \( R \) and \( L \) parameters are not affected by the variability and are, therefore, the same for all samples.

The distribution of the generated set of \( G \) and \( C \) parameters is visually very similar to that of the validation set. This similarity is more objectively apparent in Fig. 5, where

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**Fig. 3.** Cross section of the differential stripline. The lines have a length of 5 cm. Above each conductor pair, the corresponding differential port numbers are shown (near-end/far-end).

**Fig. 4.** Modeling of the p.u.l. conductance \( G_{1,1} \) and the p.u.l. capacitance \( C_{1,1} \) of the utmost left stripline. 190 out of the 950 validation samples are shown in the background in green. 200 out of the 1000 generated samples are plotted in blue, and 10 out of the 50 training samples are shown in red on top. The black lines highlight the extreme values of the validation set (but not necessarily the boundaries of the underlying distribution).

**Fig. 5.** CDF of the training (red curve), generated (blue curve), and validation (green curve) sets for the \( C_{1,1} \)-parameter.
Fig. 6. Magnitude and phase of the reflection ($S_{D1D1}$) S-parameters for the stripline example. Colors are as in Fig. 4.

Fig. 7. Magnitude and phase of the transmission ($S_{D5D1}$) S-parameters for the stripline example. Colors are as in Fig. 4.

Fig. 8. Magnitude and phase of the mode conversion ($S_{C5D1}$) S-parameters for the stripline example. Colors are as in Fig. 4.

Fig. 9. 3-D rendering of the commercial connector footprint in a multilayered printed circuit board. The first image is a side view, and the second is a top view detailing some of its dimensions. The nominal pad diameter of each conductor is $900 \, \mu m$, and their nominal drilled diameter is $600 \, \mu m$.

B. Connector Footprint

As a second example, the S-parameters of a commercial 16-port connector footprint, shown in Fig. 9, are considered. For this example, 450 S-parameter matrices were simulated by varying 40 geometrical parameters. Only 50 of these samples were used to train the proposed model. The model was then used to generate another set of 450 samples. Note that the gPC-based approaches would have difficulty coping with the large amount of independently varying parameters.

Figs. 10–12 portray the validation, generated, and training samples for some of the S-parameter elements.
Fig. 10. Magnitude and phase of the reflection ($S_{D1D1}$) S-parameters for the commercial connector footprint. Colors are as in Fig. 4.

Fig. 11. Magnitude and phase of the transmission ($S_{D5D1}$) S-parameters for the commercial connector footprint. Colors are as in Fig. 4.

From Figs. 10–12, a good correspondence between the validation samples and the generated samples is apparent. To provide a more quantitative assessment, Fig. 13 shows the cdf of $S_{C5D1}$ at a frequency of 17.5 GHz for each of the S-parameter sets.

C. Cascaded Interconnect Link

In the third example, the viability of the proposed modeling approach is further ascertained by considering a cascade connection (connector–stripline–connector) of the components modeled in the two previous examples (see Fig. 14). Thereto, for each simulated stripline S-parameter sample, two footprint S-parameter samples are chosen at random and cascaded at either end of the stripline. The same is done for the generated S-parameter samples of the footprint and stripline examples. In Figs. 15–17, the simulated (validation) and generated sets are superposed and appear to be in excellent agreement, despite the rather complex behavior of the S-parameters.
The cdf at a single frequency, given in Fig. 18, confirms the
good agreement between the two distributions.

As can be seen from Figs. 15–18, the variability has
a nonnegligible impact on the performance of the link.
Whereas the return loss (Fig. 15) remains below $-10$ dB
from dc up to about 12 GHz, for higher frequencies, the
reflection may become quite high for certain link realizations. Consequently, there will be a poor transmission. As observed

from Fig. 16, the insertion loss at 20 GHz ranges between
3 and 7 dB, depending on the sample. The mode conversion
(Figs. 17 and 18) also exhibits a large variation of more than
10 dB, but fortunately, it remains rather low in the entire
frequency range.

D. Time Domain Analysis

In a final example, the behavior of the generated samples
in the time domain is explored. For this purpose, both the
validation and the generated samples from the cascade exam-
ple were used to predict the voltage response at each port
when the leftmost pair is excited with a differential voltage
step. The voltage step has an amplitude of 1 V and a rise
time of 250 ps, and it is produced by a generator with an
internal resistance of 50 $\Omega$. The resulting voltage responses at
the input and through-connection differential ports are shown
in Fig. 19. Fig. 20 provides a comparison between the cdfs of
the generated and validation sets for the through-connection
Fig. 19. Step voltage response at ports $D1$ (reflection) and $D5$ (transmission) for the cascade example. Colors are as in Fig. 15.

Fig. 20. CDF of the validation (green curve) and generated (blue curve) sets for the voltage at port $D5$ at 11.0 ns. The shapes of the distributions clearly match, albeit with a slight discrepancy in the lower voltage tail.

As a last verification of the generated samples’ validity, the height and the width of an eye diagram are calculated for each sample. To this end, a single 1-Gb/s pseudorandom bit sequence with the rise/fall times of 125 ps was applied to the differential port $D1$ and used to construct the eye diagram at port $D5$. An example of such an eye diagram is given in Fig. 21. The height and the width of each eye diagram were calculated, and they are compared in Fig. 22, showing that the eye diagram features obtained from the generated S-parameters match those of a large set of simulated S-parameters.

The variability observed from the frequency-domain results of Section IV-C is, of course, also noticeable in the time domain. For example, from Fig. 19, it becomes clear that the reflection mismatch at port $D1$ leads to over- or undershoot. From Fig. 22, it is evident that there is considerable variation of the eye height and width. Together with the voltage waveform $V_{DS}$ (Figs. 19 and 20), it becomes apparent that the link’s variability has a nonnegligible impact on potential jitter issues.

Fig. 21. Example of a constructed eye diagram for one of the validation samples.

Fig. 22. Distribution of height and width of eye diagrams of the validation (green dots) and generated (blue dots) sets.

E. Training Set Size

So far, a training set size of 50 samples has been used to build the model. One may wonder what the optimal number of training samples might be. On the one hand, there should be as few as possible in order to minimize the amount of effort that goes into simulating or measuring the training set. On the other hand, the more training samples are available, the better the model can approximate the real data distribution. This tradeoff depends on the complexity of the device being modeled.

In order to quantify this tradeoff, we introduce a measure called energy distance. This measure quantifies the distance between two empirical probability distributions and is defined as

$$ E_{n,m}(X, Y) = \frac{2}{nm} \sum_{i=1}^{n} \sum_{j=1}^{m} \|x_i - y_j\| - \frac{1}{n^2} \sum_{i=1}^{n} \sum_{j=1}^{n} \|x_i - x_j\| $$

$$ - \frac{1}{m^2} \sum_{i=1}^{m} \sum_{j=1}^{m} \|y_i - y_j\| $$

where $X$ and $Y$ are the vectors of lengths $n$ and $m$, respectively, collecting all samples in each respective empirical probability distribution function. It can be shown that $E_{n,m}(X, Y) \geq 0$, where the equality holds only if the two distributions perfectly coincide.

Fig. 23 shows an averaged energy distance for the cascade example in the function of the training set size. This averaging occurs over frequency points, S-parameter matrix elements, and 12 random training set selections from the complete validation sets of the stripline and footprint examples.
The error bars show the estimated mean error arising from the 12 different training sets. In Fig. 23, we can see a rapid decrease in both energy distance mean and error, followed by a slight stagnation. As this stagnation sets in around a training set size of 50, we can conclude that—even for such a relatively complex cascade example—a training set size of 50 is sufficient to provide an accurate approximation.

V. CONCLUSION

In this paper, a novel method is proposed that allows a designer to generate a large set of S-parameter realizations from a small training set of simulated or measured stochastic S-parameters. This method operates by fitting the S-parameters with a rational model in a partial-fraction form using the VF technique using a common pole set. For each training sample, the residue matrices corresponding to each pole are identified. This training set of residues is then reduced by means of PCA, and finally, its distribution is modeled by a KDE. The generation of new samples is achieved by drawing from the KDE, projecting back to the full residue space using the inverse PCA, and finally reconstructing the S-parameters using the rational VF model with common poles. A postprocessing passivity selection ensures the physical consistency of the generated samples.

The validity and the aptness of the generated S-parameters are verified in four application examples. The first application is a 16-port differential stripline interconnect that is modeled using its RLGC-parameters. The second example considers a commercial connector footprint. As a third verification, the S-parameters of an interconnect link (cascade of the striplines and connector footprint) are compared with their simulated counterparts. Finally, the generated samples are used to perform time-domain analyses by computing both step voltage responses and eye diagrams. For each of these examples, a very good agreement between the distributions of simulated and generated S-parameters is observed.

One of the goals of our future research is to obtain a validation based on measured instead of simulated data. The measurement validation for the connector example requires a costly time investment as S-parameter measurements for such a multiport device are very painstaking. Nonetheless, as the initial VF step of the model based on a measured training set will produce similar residue distributions, we expect that the proposed methodology will also prove useful for measured data.

REFERENCES


Danilo De Zutter (’00) was born in 1953. He received the M.Sc. degree in electrical engineering and the Ph.D. degree from Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium, in 1976 and 1981, respectively. He completed a thesis leading to a degree equivalent to the French Aggrégation or the German Habilitation in 1984.

From 2004 to 2008, he served as the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering with Ghent University, and is currently the Head of the Department of Information Technology and a Full Professor of electromagnetics. As an author or co-author, he has contributed to more than 200 international journal papers (cited in the Web of Science) and 200 papers in conference proceedings. His current research interests include the circuit and electromagnetic modeling of high-speed and high-frequency interconnections and packaging, on electromagnetic compatibility and the numerical solutions of Maxwell’s equations.

Prof. De Zutter was an Associate Editor of the IEEE TRANSACTIONS ON MICROWAVE THEORY AND TECHNIQUES.

Jan De Geest (M’03) received the master’s degree in electrical engineering from Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium, in 1994, the Degree in supplementary studies in aerospace techniques from the University of Brussels, Brussels, Belgium, in 1995, and the Ph.D. degree in electrical engineering from Ghent University in 2000.

From 1995 to 1999, he was a Research Assistant with the Department of Information Technology, Ghent University. Since 2000, he has been with Amphenol-ICC, Singapore, where he is currently a Senior Staff Research and Development Signal Integrity Engineer. His current research interests include the design, modeling, characterization, and optimization of high-speed connectors and interconnection links.

Dirk Deschrijver (M’07–SM’13) received the bachelor’s (kandidaat) and master’s (licentiaat) degrees in computer science and the Ph.D. degree from the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science, University of Antwerp, Antwerp, Belgium, in 2001, 2003, and 2007, respectively, and the Ph.D. degree in engineering from Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium, in 2012.

In 2005, he was a Marie Curie Fellow with the Scientific Computing Group, Eindhoven University of Technology, Eindhoven, The Netherlands. In 2006 and 2008, he was also a Visiting Researcher with SINTEF Energy Research, Trondheim, Norway, and the University of L’Aquila, L’Aquila, Italy. From 2008 to 2014, he was an FWO Post-Doctoral Research Fellow with the IDLab Research Group, Department of Information Technology, Ghent University. Since 2014, he has been a Senior Researcher with iMinds/imec, Ghent. Since 2016, he has been an Associate Professor with the IDLab Research Group, Ghent University, where he has been involved in data analytics, machine learning, and surrogate modeling algorithms. His current research interests include the macromodeling of high-speed and high-frequency interconnects, signal integrity, and electromagnetic compatibility.

Paolo Manfredi (S’10–M’14) received the M.Sc. degree in electronic engineering from the Politecnico di Torino, Turin, Italy, in 2009, and the Ph.D. degree in information and communication technology from the Scuola Interpolitecnica di Dottorato, Politecnico di Torino, in 2013.

From 2013 to 2014, he was a Post-Doctoral Researcher with the EMC Group, Politecnico di Torino. From 2014 to 2017, he was a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow with the Research Foundation–Flanders with the Electromagnetics Group, Department of Information Technology, Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium. He is currently an Assistant Professor with the EMC Group, Department of Electronics and Telecommunications, Politecnico di Torino. His current research interests include the several aspects of circuit and interconnect modeling and simulation, including statistical and worst-case analysis, signal integrity, and electromagnetic compatibility.

Dr. Manfredi received the Best Paper Award at the 2016 IEEE Electrical Design of Advanced Packaging and Systems Symposium, the Best Oral Paper Award and the Best Student Paper Award at the 22nd and 19th IEEE Conference on Electrical Performance of Electronic Packaging and Systems, respectively, the Young Scientist Award at the XXX International Union of Radio Science General Assembly and Scientific Symposium, and an Honorable Mention at the 2011 IEEE Microwave Theory and Techniques Society International Microwave Symposium.

Simon De Ridder (S’16) was born in 1992. He received the bachelor’s and master’s degrees in physics and astronomy from Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium, in 2013 and 2015, respectively, where he is currently pursuing the Ph.D. degree in electrical engineering with the Department of Information Technology.

His current research interests include the stochastic modeling of electrical systems and machine learning applications.

Dirk Deschrijver (M’07–SM’13) received the bachelor’s (kandidaat) and master’s (licentiaat) degrees in computer science and the Ph.D. degree from the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science, University of Antwerp, Antwerp, Belgium, in 2001, 2003, and 2007, respectively, and the Ph.D. degree in engineering from Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium, in 2012.

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Paolo Manfredi (S’10–M’14) received the M.Sc. degree in electronic engineering from the Politecnico di Torino, Turin, Italy, in 2009, and the Ph.D. degree in information and communication technology from the Scuola Interpolitecnica di Dottorato, Politecnico di Torino, in 2013.

From 2013 to 2014, he was a Post-Doctoral Researcher with the EMC Group, Politecnico di Torino. From 2014 to 2017, he was a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow with the Research Foundation–Flanders with the Electromagnetics Group, Department of Information Technology, Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium. He is currently an Assistant Professor with the EMC Group, Department of Electronics and Telecommunications, Politecnico di Torino. His current research interests include the several aspects of circuit and interconnect modeling and simulation, including statistical and worst-case analysis, signal integrity, and electromagnetic compatibility.

Dr. Manfredi received the Best Paper Award at the 2016 IEEE Electrical Design of Advanced Packaging and Systems Symposium, the Best Oral Paper Award and the Best Student Paper Award at the 22nd and 19th IEEE Conference on Electrical Performance of Electronic Packaging and Systems, respectively, the Young Scientist Award at the XXX International Union of Radio Science General Assembly and Scientific Symposium, and an Honorable Mention at the 2011 IEEE Microwave Theory and Techniques Society International Microwave Symposium.
Tom Dhaene (SM’05) received the Ph.D. degree in electrotechnical engineering from Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium, in 1993.

From 1989 to 1993, he was a Research Assistant with the Department of Information Technology, Ghent University. In 1993, he was with EDA Company Alphabit (currently part of Keysight Technologies), Ghent. He was one of the key developers of the planar EM simulator ADS momentum. Since 2007, he has been a Full Professor with the Department of Information Technology, Ghent University/imec, Ghent. He has authored or co-authored over 300 peer-reviewed papers and abstracts in international conference proceedings, journals, and books. He is the holder of five U.S. patents. His current research interests include the different aspects of full-wave electromagnetic circuit modeling, transient simulation, and time-domain characterization of high-frequency and high-speed interconnections.

Dries Vande Ginste (SM’12) received the M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in electrical engineering from Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium, in 2000 and 2005, respectively.

In 2004, he was a Visiting Scientist with the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, IL, USA. In 2011, he was a Visiting Professor with the EMC Group, Dipartimento di Elettronica, Politecnico di Torino, Turin, Italy. He is currently an Associate Professor with the Department of Information Technology, Ghent University, and a Guest Professor at imec, Ghent. He has authored or co-authored over 150 papers in international journals and in conference proceedings. His current research interests include computational electromagnetics, electromagnetic compatibility, signal and power integrity, and antenna design.

Dr. Vande Ginste was awarded the International Union of Radio Science (URSI) Young Scientist Award at the 2011 URSI General Assembly and Scientific Symposium, the Best Poster Paper Award at the 2012 IEEE Electrical Design of Advanced Packaging and Systems Symposium (EDAPS), the Best Paper Award at the 2013 IEEE Workshop on Signal and Power Integrity, the Best Paper Award at the 2013 IEEE International Conference on Electrical Performance of Electronic Packaging and Systems, and the Best Paper Award at the 2016 IEEE EDAPS. He served as the Co-Chair of the 2014 IEEE Workshop on Signal and Power Integrity.