Preliminary Results on 3D Channel Modeling: From Theory to Standardization

Abla Kammoun, Member, IEEE, Hajer Khanfir, Member, IEEE, Zwi Altman, Senior Member, IEEE, Mérouane Debbah, Senior Member, IEEE, and Mohamed Kamoun, Member, IEEE

Abstract—Three dimensional (3D) beamforming (also elevation beamforming) is now gaining interest among researchers in wireless communication. The reason can be attributed to its potential for enabling a variety of strategies such as sector or user specific elevation beamforming and cell-splitting. Since these techniques cannot be directly supported by current LTE releases, the 3GPP is now working on defining the required technical specifications. In particular, a large effort is currently being made to get accurate 3D channel models that support the elevation dimension. This step is necessary as it will evaluate the potential of 3D and full dimensional (FD) beamforming techniques to benefit from the richness of real channels. This work aims at presenting the on-going 3GPP study item “study on 3D-channel model for elevation beamforming and FD-MIMO studies for LTE” and positioning it with respect to previous standardization works.

Index Terms—3D beamforming, channel modeling, channel calibration, full dimensional MIMO.

I. INTRODUCTION

CHANNEL modeling is a fundamental step that allows performance evaluation of transmission techniques. While the behavior of the transmitter and the receiver are well understood, the channel, being intrinsically dependent on the surrounding environment, is much more difficult to analyze. This has triggered an increasing activity around channel modeling.

A close look to the evolution of the theory of channel modeling reveals that this field has often been influenced by aspects that were important for the technology available at the time. As a consequence, first channel models used to concentrate on the large scale fading (like Okumara-Hata [1], Lee’s model [2]), whereas the small scale fading is reduced to the Doppler effect caused by receiver mobility [3]. Soon after, with the emergence of wideband and multi-antenna technologies, it has been realized that small scale fading should account for the multiple reflections of the emitted signal as well as the spatial correlation between the antenna elements.

In parallel to these theoretical works, there has been a large interest in developing within the framework of wireless standards, reference channel models which serve to define conventional ways to generate channels. For companies, these channel models are of fundamental importance since they allow them to be calibrated to the same channel conditions, and as such to assess system-level and link-level performances of advanced signal processing techniques over real-like channels.

Like their counterparts developed in theoretical works, these channel models have evolved in such a way to address the challenges of wireless communication technologies. The first standardized models were developed in the framework of COST 207 actions [4] which had essentially served to the standardization of GSM. Several actions had been then proposed leading to important models like the COST 231 Walfish Ikegami and COST 231 Hata channel models [5] but it was only with the COST 259 that the spatial structure of the radio channel was taken into account [6]. This was a key step that paved the way towards the modeling of MIMO channels. In fact, influenced by COST actions, 3GPP Spatial Channel Model (SCM) [7], Extended SCM [8] Spatial Channel Model (SCME) and WINNER II [9] have emerged as low complexity alternatives to COST based channel models. While COST actions have continued through COST 273 and COST 2100 to adopt a universal involved concept, SCM and WINNER II introduce several simplifications in order to facilitate system-level simulations. The same simplified approach has been also taken into account in IMT-advanced standardization, strongly inspired by WINNER II and 3GPP2/SCM [10].

To further enhance performance, the actual trend is to exploit the channel’s degrees of freedom in the elevation direction. Given that most existing channel models are only two dimensional in that they assume that the wave propagates in the azimuth plane, a large effort in channel modeling has to be made in order to account for the impact of the channel component in the elevation direction. This results in what we refer to as 3D beamforming or Full Dimension MIMO (FD-MIMO). One way to exploit the additional degree of freedom of 3D channels is to adapt for each user the beam pattern in the vertical direction, thereby improving the signal strength at the receiver and at the same time reducing the interference to other users. Initial implementations of this technology support the potential of this technique for yielding significant gains in real indoor and outdoor deployments [11]. Encouraged by these preliminary results, an extensive research activity on

Manuscript received December 1, 2013; revised April 25, 2014; accepted May 25, 2014. Date of publication June 3, 2014; date of current version July 14, 2014. This work was supported by the French pôle de compétitivité SYSTEM@TIC within the project 4G in Vitro and by the ERC Grant 305123 MORE.

A. Kammoun is with the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, Thuwal 23955-6900, Saudi Arabia (e-mail: abla.kammoun@gmail.com).

H. Khanfir and Z. Altman are with Orange Labs, Paris 92130, France (e-mail: hajer.khanfir@orange.com; zwi.altman@orange.com).

M. Debbah is with the Alcatel-Lucent Chair on Flexible Radio, SUPELEC, Gif-sur-Yvette 91192, France (e-mail: merouane.debbah@supelec.fr).

M. Kamoun is with the Communicating Systems Laboratory, CEA-LIST, Gif-sur-Yvette 91191, France (e-mail: mohamed.kamoun@cea.fr).

Color versions of one or more of the figures in this paper are available online at http://ieeexplore.ieee.org.

Digital Object Identifier 10.1109/JSAC.2014.2328152
3D channel modeling is being carried out by both theoretical researchers and industrials. At the time of writing this paper, the TSG-RAN-WG1 of the 3GPP is working on defining next generation channel models in the frame of the study item on elevation beamforming [12]. The outcome of this study will be used for the evaluation of advanced antenna technologies such as 3D beamforming.

**Previous Surveys on Channel Modeling and Contributions:** Channel modeling has been the subject of many surveys. Without tackling multi-antenna modeling, [13] provides a good overview on propagation and large as well as small scale fading. On the other hand, [14] provides a comprehensive introduction to wireless channel modeling including propagation modeling and statistical description of channels. A detailed overview on propagation modeling with an exclusive summary of measurement parameterization as well as validation results has been presented in [15]. Very recently, the authors in [16] provide a complete coverage of recent MIMO channel propagation models as well as a description of the most recent signal processing techniques for single-cell/single-user as well as multi-user/multi-cell systems.

Building on these references, our objective in this work is to shed light on the current 3GPP activity around 3D beamforming and FD-MIMO, an aspect that has not been extensively covered to our knowledge. Our recent participation in 3GPP meetings [17], [18] has enabled us to enhance our understanding of the current industrial challenges as well as to deeply comprehend the standards’ vision for 3D beamforming. We think that our work contributes to cover new aspects that have not yet been investigated by a research publication. In particular, we adopt a constructive approach that starts from the basics of channel modeling to introduce in a second step standardized channels. We organize our paper as follows. We describe in Section II the modeling to introduce in a second step standardized channels.

We will also focus on the downlink channel between the base station (BS) and the user equipment (UE).

### A. SISO Channel Model

**Non-Time Dispersive Channels:** Non-time dispersive channels do not spread the channel in time. The channel can be viewed as a distortion that scales the emitted wave. Its impulse response at time \( t \) to a unit impulse \( \delta(\cdot) \) transmitted at time \( t - \tau \) is given by:

\[
h(t, \tau) = 10^{-\frac{\sigma_{SF} + PL}{10}} \delta(t - \tau) \exp[jk \cdot \vec{r}_{UE}(t)]
\]

Equation (2) reveals that because of the user mobility, the effective frequency is shifted by a \( f_D = \vec{k} \cdot \vec{v}_{UE}/c \). This phenomenon is referred to as the Doppler effect.

**Time-Dispersive Channel Models:** In time-dispersive channel models, the propagation delay cannot be neglected compared to the signal period. The received wave is therefore the sum of the contribution stemming from several paths. Each path corresponds to a single or several reflections of the incident wave [20], [21]. In this case the channel impulse response is obtained by summing the contribution of all possible paths.

\[
h(t, \tau) = 10^{-\frac{\sigma_{SF} + PL}{10}} \sum_{l=1}^{N_C} \alpha_l(t, \tau_l) \delta(t - \tau_l)
\]

where \( \alpha_l(t, \tau_l) \) and \( \tau_l \) represent respectively the additional attenuation and the delay corresponding to the \( t \)th path. Note that in this case, multipath propagation causes small-scale fading. The received power can suffer severe fading, and additional amount of power, known as fade margin, should be provided in order to enhance the system quality. These aspects are beyond the scope of this paper but the interested reader can refer to [22] and [23] for further details.

### B. MIMO Channel Models

As we have noted above, SISO channel models are fully characterized by the statistics of the delays, powers and phases corresponding to each path. However, this information becomes highly insufficient to capture the richness of MIMO channels.

1) **Double Directional MIMO Channel:** To describe MIMO channels, it can be useful to distinguish between the radio channel and the propagation channel which only depends on the environment and excludes as such the effect of antenna responses. This propagation channel is referred to as double-directional channel model [24], [25]. It does not depend on the
number of antennas at the receiver or the transmitter. Actually, it is a scalar or a $2 \times 2$ matrix if dual-polarization is considered.

In addition to the delays, the double directional model depends on the directions of departure and the directions of arrival. The double directional impulse function corresponding to the $\ell$th multipath component (MPC) is thus given by:

$$h_\ell(t, \tau, \Omega, \Psi) = \alpha_\ell \delta(\tau - \tau_\ell) \delta(\Omega - \Omega_\ell) \delta(\Psi - \Psi_\ell) \exp(jk_{\ell,t} \cdot \vec{r})$$  \hspace{1cm} (4)$$

where $\tau$ is the delay variable and $\Omega$, $\Psi$ stand for the spatial angles respectively at the transmitter and the receiver, i.e., $\Omega = (\phi, \theta)$ and $\Psi = (\varphi, \vartheta)$ where $\phi$ and $\varphi$ are the departure and arrival azimuth angles whereas $\theta$ and $\vartheta$ are the departure and arrival elevation angles (see Fig. 5).

Besides, $\alpha_\ell$ is the complex amplitude of the path $\ell$ whereas horizontal polarization refers to the polarization along $\vec{e}_\phi$ whereas horizontal polarization refers to the polarization along $\vec{e}_\theta$. In particular, a vertically oriented antenna elements delivers an electric field which is along $\vec{e}_\theta$ (see Fig. 1).

2) Radio Channel: The radio channel is obtained by incorporating the effect of the antennas. This can be modeled at the reception or the transmission side as a coherent sum over all directions (see Fig. 2). Let $N_T$ and $N_R$ denote the number of the transmitting and receiving antennas. The radio channel is a $N_R \times N_T$ matrix given by:

$$H(t, \tau) = \int \vec{g}_r(\Psi) h(t, \tau, \Omega, \Psi) \vec{g}_T(\Omega) \vec{a}_R(\Psi) \vec{a}_T(\Omega)^T d\Omega d\Psi$$  \hspace{1cm} (7)$$

where:

* $\vec{g}_r$ and $\vec{g}_T$ are the patterns of the receiving and transmitting antennas. When polarization is considered, $\vec{g}_r(\Psi)$ and $\vec{g}_T(\Omega)$ are $2 \times 1$ vectors whose entries represent the vertical and horizontal field patterns.

* Vectors $\vec{a}_R(\Psi)$ and $\vec{a}_T(\Omega)$ are the array responses of the transmitting and receiving antennas whose entries are given by:

$$[\vec{a}_R(\Psi)]_i = \exp\left(jk_{R,i} \cdot \vec{x}_{R,i}\right)$$  \hspace{1cm} (8)$$

$$[\vec{a}_T(\Omega)]_i = \exp\left(jk_{T,i} \cdot \vec{x}_{T,i}\right)$$  \hspace{1cm} (9)$$

where $\vec{x}_{R,i}$ is the location vector of the $i$th receiving antenna whereas $\vec{x}_{T,i}$ is that of the $i$th transmitting antenna. These location vectors are computed with respect to the global Cartesian coordinate system $(\vec{e}_x, \vec{e}_y, \vec{e}_z)$ (see Fig. 1).

Substituting $h(t, \tau, \Omega, \Psi)$ by its expression, the radio channel writes as:

$$H(t, \tau) = \sum_{\ell=1}^{N_C} \delta(\tau - \tau_\ell) \vec{g}_r(\Psi_\ell)^T \vec{a}_R(\Psi_\ell) \vec{a}_T(\Omega_\ell) \vec{g}_T(\Omega_\ell)^T d\Omega d\Psi$$  \hspace{1cm} (10)$$

Equation (10) is generic in that it encompasses several kind of channel models. In particular, if the spatial angle $\Omega$ or $\Psi$ are defined using only the azimuth, the channel is said to be two-dimensional (2D), whereas (3D) channels are obtained by accounting for both elevation and azimuth angles.
III. Standardized Channel Models

A. Generation of the Channel in System Level Approach Based Standards

Building on the theoretical framework of channel modeling, standards based on a system level approach rely on the same findings described by (10). In a similar way as above, the channel is composed of many propagation paths with different time delays, referred to as clusters. Each cluster is characterized by three quantities: the delay $\tau_n$, the spatial angle of departure $\Omega_n = (\theta_n, \phi_n)$ and the spatial angle of arrival $\Psi_n = (\vartheta_n, \varphi_n)$. However, the standardized channel models differ from those described in the previous section in that it is assumed that each cluster gives rise to $M_n$ resolvable paths which have the same delay as the original cluster. Moreover, each sub-path is characterized by its spatial angles $\Omega_{n,m} = (\theta_{n,m}, \phi_{n,m})$ and $\Psi_{n,m} = (\vartheta_{n,m}, \varphi_{n,m})$

\[
\begin{align*}
\theta_{n,m} &= \theta_n + c_\theta \alpha_m, \quad \phi_{n,m} = \phi_n + c_\phi \alpha_m \\
\vartheta_{n,m} &= \vartheta_n + c_\theta \alpha_m, \quad \varphi_{n,m} = \varphi_n + c_\varphi \alpha_m
\end{align*}
\]  

(11)

and $\alpha_m, m = 1, \ldots, M_n$ is a set of symmetric fixed values and $c_\theta, c_\phi, c_\varphi$ and $c_\varphi$ controls the spread inside the cluster $n$ (see Fig. 5).

The channel response corresponding to the $m$th path is thus given by:

\[
H_n(t) = \sqrt{10^{-PL(r,n,m)/10}} \sum_{m=1}^{M_n} P_{n,m} g_{R}(\varphi_{n,m}, \theta_{n,m})^T \alpha_{n,m} \\
\times \bar{g}_T(\phi_{n,m}, \theta_{n,m}) \bar{a}_R(\varphi_{n,m}, \theta_{n,m}) \\
\times \bar{a}_T(\phi_{n,m}, \theta_{n,m})^T \exp{\left(j \bar{k}_{r,n,m} \cdot \bar{v} t\right)}
\]

(12)

where $\bar{k}_{r,n,m}$ is the wave vector corresponding to the $m$th subpath, $P_{n,m}$ is the power of the $m$th subpath and

\[
\alpha_{n,m} = \begin{bmatrix}
\exp{\left(j \Phi_{n,m}^{VV}\right)} \\
\kappa_{n,m} \exp{\left(j \Phi_{n,m}^{HV}\right)} \\
\exp{\left(j \Phi_{n,m}^{HV}\right)}
\end{bmatrix}
\]

(13)

\(\kappa_{n,m}\) being the cross-polarization ratio and $\Phi_{n,m}^{HH}, \Phi_{n,m}^{HV}, \Phi_{n,m}^{HV}$, and $\Phi_{n,m}^{VV}$ being random phases. If the UE is on Line of sight (LOS) with respect to the cell, it is assumed that the first cluster contains the line-of-sight (LOS) contribution of the channel. In this case, the channel response is given by (14), shown at the bottom of the page, where

\[
\alpha_{LOS} = \begin{bmatrix}
\exp{\left(j \Phi_{LOS}^{VV}\right)} & 0 \\
0 & \exp{\left(j \Phi_{LOS}^{HH}\right)}
\end{bmatrix}
\]

\(k_{r,LOS}\) is the wave vector along the line-of-sight direction and $K$ is the Rice factor.

Most standardized channels like SCM [7], SCME [8], WINNER [9] and ITU [10] are based on the model described by (14). It is thus no surprise that these models share almost the same procedure for generating the channel. Unlike the COST family of channel models, WINNER, ITU, SCM and SCME follow a system level approach, in which without being physically positioned, clusters are described through statistical parameters, known as large scale parameters. These latter are random correlated variables drawn from given distributions, and are specific for each user. They serve to generate powers, delays and angles of each path, which are often referred to as small scale parameters in that they describe the channel at a microscopic level.

The generation of the channel in system level approach based standards follows the following steps illustrated in Fig. 3.

While system level approach based channels follow the same philosophy, they differentiate in the way the slow fading and the small scale parameters are generated. The reason is that these channels support different frequencies and are tuned using different measurement campaigns. Hereafter, we illustrate the main principal differences between these models.

- Number of scenarios: SCM was dedicated originally to outdoor channel models. It defines three scenarios which are urban micro, urban macro and suburban macro. SCME keeps the same number of scenarios but WINNER II and ITU extend the channel to more scenarios (5 channels for ITU and 17 scenarios for WINNER II).
- Frequency range: Channel models depend on the frequency through the pathloss. While the SCM channel model is adjusted for frequencies of 1.9 GHz, SCME, ITU and WINNER II, support a range of frequency of 2–6 GHz.
- Bandwidth and number of clusters: The SCM channel was targeted to up to 5 MHz RF bandwidth. Thus, only 6 clusters with different delays were found to be sufficient.

Note that (14) encompasses the non-line-of-sight (NLOS) case by taking $K = 0$. 

\[
H_n(t) = \sqrt{10^{-PL(r,n,m)/10}} \left( \sum_{m=1}^{M_n} P_{n,m} g_{R}(\varphi_{n,m}, \theta_{n,m})^T \alpha_{n,m} g_T(\phi_{n,m}, \theta_{n,m}) \bar{a}_R(\varphi_{n,m}, \theta_{n,m}) \bar{a}_T(\phi_{n,m}, \theta_{n,m})^T \right. \\
\left. \times \exp{\left(j \bar{k}_{r,n,m} \cdot \bar{v} t\right)} + \delta(n-1) \sqrt{\frac{K}{K+1}} g_{R}(\varphi_{LOS}, \theta_{LOS}) \alpha_{LOS} g_T(\phi_{LOS}, \theta_{LOS}) \right. \\
\left. \times \bar{a}_R(\phi_{LOS}, \theta_{LOS}) \bar{a}_T(\phi_{LOS}, \theta_{LOS})^T \exp{\left(j \bar{k}_{r,LOS} \cdot \bar{v}\right)} \right)
\]  

(14)
SCME which is an extension of SCM to bandwidths up to 100 MHz modifies the number of effective clusters by subdividing each cluster to 3 or 4 sub-clusters with different delays, while keeping the same number of multi-path components. In WINNER II and ITU, the number of clusters is increased and depends on the scenario, whereas the two strongest clusters are subdivided using almost the same technique proposed in SCME.

- Propagation mode: In SCM, the LOS propagation mode is defined only in the urban micro scenario, whereas only the NLOS is considered for the other scenarios. On the other hand, WINNER II defines for some specific scenarios a third propagation mode namely the obstructed-line-of-sight (OLOS) to describe the situation where the LOS direction is obstructed but still remains dominant. Moreover, it usually supports both propagation mode (LOS and NLOS) except for some scenarios where only the LOS or the NLOS is allowed. On the contrary, ITU always supports LOS and NLOS propagation modes for its five scenarios. It also defines a third propagation mode in the UMI scenario namely the outdoor to indoor propagation mode which serves to describe the situation where the UE is inside a building. This is to be compared with WINNER II which defines a fully-fledged scenario [9] (scenario B4) to account for the outdoor to indoor link.

- 2D vs. 3D channel models: Almost all the system level approach based standards are 2 dimensional. This implies that all the waves are in the azimuth plane (plane parallel to the ground). The unique 3D standard based on the system level approach is WINNER+ [27] which is an extension of WINNER II to the three dimensional case. The difference between two and three dimensional models is illustrated in Figs. 4 and 5.
  - Large scale parameters: Large scale parameters describe the channel at a macroscopic level in that they control the distributions of small scale parameters. They are random correlated variables that are generated for each link between a UE and a site (see Section IV-B). In 3GPP SCM, three large scale parameters are considered which are the delay spread, the departure azimuth angular spread and the shadow fading. To these large scale parameters, WINNER II and ITU add the arrival azimuth spreads and the Rician factor, thereby increasing the number of large scale parameters to 5. By considering elevation, WINNER+ accounts for 7 large scale parameters which include the departure and arrival elevation spreads.

B. Antenna Configuration

To make it easier for the reader to understand the use of the 3D beamforming technique in practice, we shall introduce in this section the antenna configuration that is being proposed in current standardization works. In LTE, the radio resource is organized on the basis of antenna ports. Each antenna port is mapped to a group of physical antenna elements which carry the same signal. As a consequence, each antenna port is viewed as a single antenna at the receiver side. In LTE, these antenna ports are used to support different transmission modes [28].
For instance, in transmission mode 7 (TM7), antenna port 5 is used to transmit only one stream, a configuration which is often referred to as single layer transmission. This antenna port is mapped to more than one antenna element. The signal is fed to each of the antenna elements with a corresponding weight in order to focus the wavefront in the direction of the transmitting antenna port and the receiver side. For that, in (14) it is the antenna port pattern that should be used and not the transmitting antenna port.

In theory, the antenna port pattern depends on the number of antenna elements, their patterns, as well as their relative positions. To enable an abstraction of the role played by the antenna elements to perform the downtilt, ITU channel model approximates the pattern of each antenna port by a narrow beam in the elevation plane with \( \theta_{3\text{dB}} = 15^\circ \). In fact the combined pattern considered in ITU is given by:

\[
A_P(\phi, \theta) = G_P,_{\text{max}} - \min \left\{ - (A_H(\phi) + A_V(\theta)), A_m \right\},
\]

\[
A_m = 20 \text{ dB}, \quad G_P,_{\text{max}} = 17 \text{ dBi}
\]  

where

\[
A_H(\phi) = - \min \left[ 12 \left( \frac{\phi}{\phi_{3\text{dB}}} \right)^2, A_m \right], \quad \phi_{3\text{dB}} = 70^\circ
\]  

\[
A_V(\theta) = - \min \left[ 12 \left( \frac{\theta - \theta_{\text{tilt}}}{\theta_{3\text{dB}}} \right)^2, A_m \right], \quad \theta_{3\text{dB}} = 15^\circ
\]

where \( \theta_{\text{tilt}} \) is the electrical tilt angle. This approach despite its simplicity poses a problem when dual-polarized channels are used. In fact, while standards provide the expression of the global pattern at each antenna port, they do not show how one can deduce the horizontal and vertical field patterns. To circumvent this difficulty, the document 3GPP 36.814 [29, Section A.2.1.6.1, p. 79] proposes to model the polarization as angle independent in both azimuth and elevation. Recall that in the case of dual-polarized channels, each antenna port is composed of cross-polarized antenna elements that are slanted in the plane perpendicular to the boresight (direction of the maximum gain) by a slant angle \( \alpha \).

If \( A(\phi, \theta) \) denotes the global pattern of the transmitting antenna port when each element is vertically polarized, then after slanting each antenna element by a slant angle \( \alpha \) in the plane perpendicular to the boresight, the global pattern along horizontal and vertical polarizations is approximated according to the document 3GPP 36.814 by:

\[
g_T(\phi, \theta) = \left[ \sqrt{A(\phi, \theta)}_{\text{lin}} \cos \alpha, \quad \sqrt{A(\phi, \theta)}_{\text{lin}} \sin \alpha \right]
\]  

Obviously, such an approximation does not hold in practice. It is only valid at the boresight direction. To determine the right decomposition of the antenna pattern on the vertical and horizontal polarizations, one has to know exactly the exact structure of the antenna port, i.e., the exact number of antenna elements, as well as their relative positions. This information was missing, because the adopted strategy was to rely on the channel with each transmitting antenna port rather than that with each transmitting antenna element. [30].

### IV. Future 3GPP Channel Model

#### A. 3D Beamforming

At the time of the writing of this paper, the TSG-RAN-WG1 is investigating the use of 3D beamforming for next generation systems. In order to enable optimization of this technique, the channel between antenna elements rather than that between antenna ports is considered. It is also assumed that antennas are arranged in a 2D array where each column contains \( M \) antenna elements. There are exactly \( K \) antenna elements per antenna port with a pattern \( A_E \) given by:

\[
A_E(\phi, \theta) = G_E,_{\text{max}} - \min \left\{ - (A_H(\phi) + A_V(\theta)), A_m \right\},
\]

\[
A_m = 30 \text{ dB}, \quad G_E,_{\text{max}} = 8 \text{ dBi}
\]  

where

\[
A_H(\phi) = - \min \left[ 12 \left( \frac{\phi}{\phi_{3\text{dB}}} \right)^2, A_m \right], \quad \phi_{3\text{dB}} = 65^\circ
\]  

\[
A_V(\theta) = - \min \left[ 12 \left( \frac{\theta - \theta_{\text{tilt}}}{\theta_{3\text{dB}}} \right)^2, SLAV \right], \quad SLAV = 30, \quad \theta_{3\text{dB}} = 65^\circ
\]

Two cases are considered by the 3GPP group TSG-RAN-WG1, either choosing \( K = 1 \) in which case the number of antenna ports per column will be equal to \( M \) or setting \( K = M \), in which case, each column will correspond to one port with
KAMMOUN et al.: PRELIMINARY RESULTS ON 3D CHANNEL MODELING 1225

Fig. 7. $K = M$.

Fig. 8. $K = 1$.

the same polarization (see Figs. 7 and 8). Note that, if cross-polarized elements were used, each column would correspond to two ports (one port per polarization). The channel with a given antenna port is a weighted sum of channels with the $K$ antenna elements inside it. More formally, the channel between the $u$th receiving antenna and the $s$th antenna port corresponding to the $n$th path is given by:

$$[H_n]_{s,u} = \sum_{k \in \text{port } s} \omega_k [H_n]_{k,u} \tag{22}$$

where the sum above is performed over all antenna elements in port $s$ and $H_n$ is computed by using in (14) the field patterns of one antenna element. This field pattern could be easily retrieved by determining the coordinate transformation between the local and the global spherical coordinate system [31].

The objective of the channel representation based on the antenna elements is two folds: First it enables to take into account the pattern of side lobes, an effect which has been discarded by the channel representation in ITU [10] and 3GPP 36.814 [29]. Second, it allows more flexibility, the channel being linearly dependent on the weights $\omega_k$. We can also add a third advantage which is the possibility of providing accurate expressions for the vertical and horizontal field patterns. This has been the subject of our contribution [31] which was prepared for meeting RAN1#74 but only off-line submitted. In meeting #75, the same polarization model was proposed by NSN, Nokia [32], Qualcomm [33] and Fraunhofer [34] and was recently adopted in the last version of the TR36.873 [35].

B. System Level Simulations

The new channel model that is now being prepared by 3GPP will serve to perform system level simulations. A network of 19 sites is considered, where each site is composed of tri-sector base stations (see Fig. 9). Each base station is equipped with a 2D antenna array structure composed of $M$ rows and $N$ columns. The TSG-RAN-WG1 is considering the scenario of Urban-Micro (UMi) and Urban-Macro (UMa) as well as an additional scenario describing Urban-Macro environments with high-rise buildings (UMA-H). Measurement campaigns are currently being performed in order to tune the large scale parameters, as well as, the slow fading. An important progress has been made. An agreement has been already reached for the slow fading parameters. Also, the tuning of the large scale parameters is at a final stage. The document [36] contains all the decisions as well as some of the few remaining issues.

For the reader convenience, we summarize in the next section the new properties which make the difference with previous channel models.

1) Major Changes From 2D to 3D:

a) 3D UE dropping: In previous standardized channel models, all the UE are assumed to have a height of 1.5 m. With such UE dropping, the elevation of the LOS direction depends on the distance between the BS and the UE: the closest is the UE to the BS, the largest is the elevation corresponding to the LOS direction. As such, users
undergoing similar slow fading channel conditions will show almost the same elevation in the LOS direction, making it difficult to perform vertical separation. In light of this consideration, the TSG-RAN WG1 is working on 3D UE Dropping. With this new dropping, each user is outdoors in only 20% of the cases, in which situation its height is set to 1.5 m. If it is indoors, then it is inside a building of $x$ floors where $x$ is a random variable uniformly chosen from the set $\{4, 5, 6, 7, 8\}$. Finally, the UE floor $n_{FL}$ is uniformly randomly selected from the set $\{1, \ldots, x\}$ while the UE height is given by $h_{UE} = 3(n_{FL} - 1) + 1.5$.

b) Outdoor to indoor users for UMa and UMi: In the ITU channel, the outdoor-to-indoor connection is a propagation mode specific to the Urban-Microcell scenario which was proposed to support UEs inside buildings. The 3GPP new channel model will extend this propagation mode to the UMa since this scenario will consider also indoor users.

c) High rise scenario: High rise scenario is an optional scenario proposed by CMCC [37] in meeting RAN1#74 to describe the channel of UEs in very high floors (above 20). To cover these users, a possible way is to deploy indoor distributed antenna systems, an alternative which has been already deployed in high office buildings. Unfortunately, this solution cannot be always applied for high residence buildings. In this case, the use of uptilt beams can be proposed.

d) New expression for the path-loss: It is well known that, in addition to the frequency and the distance with the UE, the path loss depends also on the heights of transmitting and receiving antennas [38]. A correction factor should be thus introduced in order to account for these dependencies. Based on measurements, the TSG-RAN-WG1 modifies the pathloss expressions of the ITU channel model in order to account for the impact of the UE height in NLOS conditions. Moreover, a 3D distance instead of 2D distance is now used in the path-loss expression.

e) Distance dependent large scale parameters: Very recently, based on measurements, NSN, Nokia proposes to model the elevation spreads as log-normal random variables whose parameters depend on the 2D distance for UMa scenarios and on both the 2D distance and the mobile height for UMi scenarios, [39]. This model has just been approved in meeting RAN1#75.

f) UE Attachment Policy: In system level simulators, the determination of the serving cell for each UE is based on a metric known as RSRP (Reference Signal Received Power). Currently, the computation of the RSRP is based solely on the slow fading parameters (Pathloss + shadow fading). More details about the computation of the RSRP in this case is given in Section II-A) dealing with phase 1 calibration. For phase 2 and phase 3 calibrations, it has just been agreed in meeting RAN1#75 to account also for fast fading [40]. This method should be more accurate, since unlike the azimuth angles, the elevation angles are modeled as random variables whose mean is shifted by a constant angle from the LOS direction.

2) Calibration Process: Companies and organizations involved in channel standardization conduct measurements campaigns in order to tune the channel system parameters. Once an agreement is reached, companies implement the channel in their own simulation tools, which are not publicly available. Although being based on the same channel model, companies come in general to different system performances. The reason can be attributed to either a mismatch on scheduling algorithms which are not standardized, or to some errors in the code, a problem which is likely to often occur given the high complexity of the simulation procedure. To exclude the second reason, channel calibration is often performed. For calibrations that do not consider a transmission scheme, most of the companies have to get similar results. The TSG-RAN WG1 considers three calibration phases. We present hereafter these calibrations as well as the obtained so far results.

a) Phase 1 Calibration: Phase 1 calibration relies only on the slow fading parameters. The objective of this phase is to compute the empirical cumulative distribution function (CDF) of two metrics referred to as coupling gain and geometry factor. The coupling gain measures the difference between the received signal and the transmitted signal along the line-of-sight direction. On the other hand, the geometry factor measures the signal to interference ratio with respect to the serving cell. At the time of the writing of the paper, TSG-RAN WG1 has just finished the calibration phase 1. We will present in this section our results which comply with those obtained so far by the 3GPP TSG-RAN-WG1. But, before that, we detail hereafter for the reader convenience the procedure that has been followed to achieve the phase 1 calibration.

After performing UE dropping, this phase consists in computing for each UE $m$ and site $k$ the following quantities:

- The LOS direction characterized by a spatial angle $\Omega_{k,m} = (\phi_{LOS,k,m}, \theta_{LOS,k,m})$ and $\Psi_k = (\varphi_{LOS,k,m}, \theta_{LOS,k,m})$ with respect to the $k$th cell,
- For each cell $i$ in the site $(i = 1, 2, 3)$, compute the antenna gain at the transmitter and the receiver $G_T(\phi_{LOS,k,m,i}, \theta_{LOS,k,m,i})$ and $G_R(\varphi_{LOS,k,m,i}, \theta_{LOS,k,m,i})$ in dB,
- Compute the pathloss $PL_{k,m}$ and shadow-fading $\sigma_{SF,k,m}$ between the UE and cell $k$,
- Define for the user, the $RSRP_{k,m,i}$ (Reference Signal Received Power)

$$RSRP_{k,m,i} = P_{TX} + G_T(\phi_{LOS,k,m,i}, \theta_{LOS,k,m,i}) + G_R(\phi_{LOS,k,m,i}, \theta_{LOS,k,m,i}) - PL_{k,m}(\text{dB}) - \sigma_{SF,k,m}(\text{dB})$$ \hspace{1cm} (23)$$

where $P_{TX}$ is the transmitted power in dB.
- Determine the index $\bar{k}_m$ and $\bar{i}_m$ of the best serving cell which maximizes the RSRP.
- The coupling gain for the UE $m$ is defined as:

$$CL_m = RSRP_{\bar{k}_m, \bar{i}_m} - P_{TX}$$ \hspace{1cm} (24)$$
The geometry factor for the UE $m$ is given by:

$$GF = RSRP_{\tau_m, \tau_m,m} - \sum_{(k,i) \neq (\tau_m, \tau_m)} RSRP_{k,i,m}. \quad (25)$$

We present in Figs. 10 and 11 the obtained results of the geometry factor for the UMa scenario when the vertical spacing is equal to $0.5\lambda$ and $0.8\lambda$. These results comply with those obtained by majority of the companies participating in the calibration process. Note that for $d_v = 0.5\lambda$ the downtilt of 12 degree achieves the best performance. This is to be compared to the case where $d_v = 0.8\lambda$ for which the best downtilt value is given by 9 degree. In this case, the reduction of inter-cell interference for high downtilt angles (12 degree) cannot compensate the degradation in coupling gain which is amplified by the fact that the beam is narrower. Finally, for sake of comparison with respect to the previous ITU 2D channel model, we superpose in Fig. 12 the geometry factor obtained for the 3D channel when $d_v = 0.5\lambda$ with that of the ITU-2D channel model [10]. Note that the 3D-3GPP channel model achieve better performance in terms of geometry factor. This result is not surprising since the 3D channel model employ a 3D UE dropping and as such UEs in higher floors undergo lower interference from other cells. The implementation of future 3D and FD MIMO techniques over 3D channels should allow to evaluate in a more accurate way their real performances.

b) Phase 2 and Phase 3 Calibrations: Phase 2 and Phase 3 calibrations are now being conducted by the TSG-RAN-WG1. As we mentioned above, for phase 2 and 3 calibrations, the computation of the RSRP takes into account the fast fading. For each $m$ UE and site $k$, large scale parameters describing the distribution of the azimuth and elevation angles are generated. With these large scale parameters on hand, small scale parameters including azimuth and elevation angles, powers and delays are generated for each UE and cells. Note that the links between a UE and cells in the same site share the same large scale parameters but different small scale parameters. Unlike phase 1 calibration, the RSRP for all the link is computed based on the fast fading in addition to the slow fading. The UE is then associated to the base station which delivers the highest RSRP.

For phase 2 calibration, companies should give CDF curves for the azimuth and elevation angular spreads as well as for the delay spread. To calibrate the channel generation procedure, CDF of the first and second largest eigenvalues of the channel should also be presented [40].

Finally for phase 3 calibration, a transmission scheme will be considered, and the system level performances will be expressed in terms cell coverage, cell edge throughput and spectrum efficiency, [41].

V. CONCLUSION

Channel modeling is sparking increasing interest from both academia and industry. A number of different approaches in standards and theory have arisen. Nevertheless, few works have considered to establish a common thread between them. This
has been in particular the objective of our work. After a brief overview of the theoretical basics of channel modeling, we have presented some of the most used standardized channel models, with a special focus on their different and common properties. A close inspection of these models reveals that they have evolved towards a higher complexity as they should satisfy more stringent requirements. With the emergence of a growing interest for elevation beamforming, a large effort is now being devoted to produce accurate 3D channel models. This will enable in future a fair evaluation of 3D beamforming techniques. The 3GPP TSG-RAN-WG1 group is now working on producing 3D channel models that will be of fundamental practical use. Several new strategies have been agreed so far within the 3GPP. These aspects being unknown, we presented in this paper a brief overview of the main features of the proposed channel and conducted some simulations in order to compare its performance with that of the 2D standard channel model.

REFERENCES


[14] Abla Kammoun (M’10) was born in Sfax, Tunisia. She received the Engineer- ing degree in signals and systems from Tunisia Polytechnic School, La Marsa, Tunisia, and the Master’s and Ph.D. degrees in digital communications from Telecom ParisTech (formerly Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Télécommunications), Paris, France. From June 2010 to April 2012, she was a Postdoctoral Researcher with the TSI Department, Telecom ParisTech. She then worked with the Alcatel-Lucent Chair on Flexible Radio, SUPELEC, until December 2013. She is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow at King Abdullah University of Science and Technology University, Thuwal, Saudi Arabia. Her research interests include performance analysis, random matrix theory, and semi-blind channel estimation.


Hajer Khanfir received the B.S. degree in communication technologies from the Higher School of Communications of Tunis, Ariana, Tunisia, in 1996, the M.S. degree from the Ecole Nationale d’Ingénieurs de Tunis, Tunis, Tunisia, in 2002, and the Ph.D. degree from the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers of Paris, Paris, France, in 2009. She worked for seven years at Tunisie Telecom as a Wireless Network Engineer. In 2009, she joined Orange Labs, Paris, France, where she is currently working on various PHY and PHY-MAC in 4G mobile radio techniques and is also a 3GPP standardization delegate.

Zwi Altman (SM’10) received the B.Sc. and M.Sc. degrees from the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, Haifa, Israel, in 1986 and 1989 respectively, and the Ph.D. degree from the National Polytechnic Institute of Toulouse, Toulouse, France, in 1994. From 1994 to 1996, he was a Postdoctoral Research Fellow with the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, IL, USA. He joined Orange Labs, Paris, France, in 1996, where he is currently a Senior Research Expert involved in various projects on network planning and optimization, automatic cell planning, self-organizing networks, autononics, and performance evaluation.

Mérouane Debbah (SM’08) received the M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees from the École Normale Supérieure de Cachan, Cachan, France. He was with Motorola Labs, Saclay, France, from 1999–2002 and the Vienna Research Center for Telecommunications, Vienna, Austria, until 2003. He then joined the Mobile Communications Department, Institut Eurecom, Sophia Antipolis, France, where he was an Assistant Professor until 2007. He is now a Full Professor with SUPELEC, Gif-sur-Yvette, France, holder of the Alcatel-Lucent Chair on Flexible Radio and a recipient of the ERC grant MORE (Advanced Mathematical Tools for Complex Network Engineering). His research interests are in information theory, signal processing, and wireless communications. Dr. Debbah is a Senior Area Editor of the IEEE Transactions on Signal Processing and an Associate Editor-in-Chief of the journal Random Matrix: Theory and Applications. He received the “Mario Boella” Award in 2005, the General Symposium IEEE GLOBECOM Best Paper Award in 2007, the Wi-Opt Best Paper Award in 2009, the Newcom++ Best Paper Award in 2010, the WUN CogCom Best Paper Award in 2012 and 2013, the WCNC Best Paper Award in 2014, as well as the Valuetools 2007, Valuetools 2008, CrownCom 2009, and Valuetools 2012 Best Student Paper Awards. He received the IEEE Glavieux Prize Award in 2011 and the Qualcomm Innovation Prize Award in 2012. He is a WWRF Fellow and a member of the Academic Senate of Paris-Saclay.

Mohamed Kamoun (M’09) received the Engineering degree from the Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Techniques Avancées, Paris, France, in 2001, the Master’s degree in semi-conductor physics from the Université Paris Sud, Orsay, France, in 2001, the Master’s degree in digital communication from the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Télécommunications, Paris, in 2002, and the Ph.D. degree from the Université Paris Sud in 2006. From 2002 to 2008, he was with Motorola Laboratories, Paris. Since 2009, he has been a Researcher with the Communicating Systems Laboratory, CEA-List, Gif-sur-Yvette, France. His research interests include cooperative communications, network coding, and next generation cellular networks.