

# A Wideband Circularly Polarized Antenna with a Non-Uniform Metasurface Designed via Multi-Objective Bayesian Optimization

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**Abstract**—A non-uniform metasurface circularly polarized patch antenna is designed using a genuine multi-objective Bayesian optimization (MOBO) method. Instead of aggregating the performance metrics into a single weighted sum, a genuine MOBO approach is adopted to explore the performance trade-offs, where three important antenna performance metrics, input impedance bandwidth, axial ratio (AR) bandwidth, and gain at boresight, are considered as the optimizing targets. Starting from a reference antenna with a uniform metasurface, the non-uniform metasurface antenna is designed by tuning ten physical design parameters automatically. The optimized antenna achieves an operating bandwidth of 25.6% (3.75 GHz–4.85 GHz) with  $|S_{11}| < -10$  dB, axial ratio less than 3 dB, and a maximum realized gain of 7.15 dBic. Compared with the reference antenna, the optimized design realizes a 31% enhancement in operating bandwidth while keeping the identical size of  $1.12\lambda_0 \times 0.86\lambda_0 \times 0.069\lambda_0$  ( $\lambda_0$  is the free space wavelength at center frequency of 4.3 GHz). Good agreement between measurement and simulation results validates the optimization methodology.

**Index Terms**—Antenna, Microstrip Antenna, Metasurface, Circular Polarization, Multi-Objective Bayesian Optimization, 5G.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Circularly polarized (CP) antennas possess multiple distinct advantages as compared with the linearly polarized antennas, including reduced multipath interference, resilience to Faraday rotation effects of ionosphere, and mitigation of polarization mismatch loss. CP antennas have been applied in many wireless systems, including mobile communication [1], navigation, radar, Wi-Fi, and satellite systems. Among various types of CP antennas, single-fed microstrip CP antennas are indeed a popular solution for fulfilling the requirements of compact size, low profile, low fabrication cost, easy conformability, and simple configuration. However, single-fed microstrip CP antennas suffer from the inherent drawback of narrow bandwidths for both impedance and axial ratio (AR). Extensive research has been carried out to enhance the bandwidth of single-fed microstrip CP antennas, leading to the development of various approaches, including stacked patch

structures with an air gap [2], capacitive probe feed with thick substrates [3], L-shaped strip feeding and shorting-pin loading [4], and meandering probe feed [5]. However, these approaches often necessitate the use of a thick substrate, which undermines the low-profile benefit of microstrip antennas.

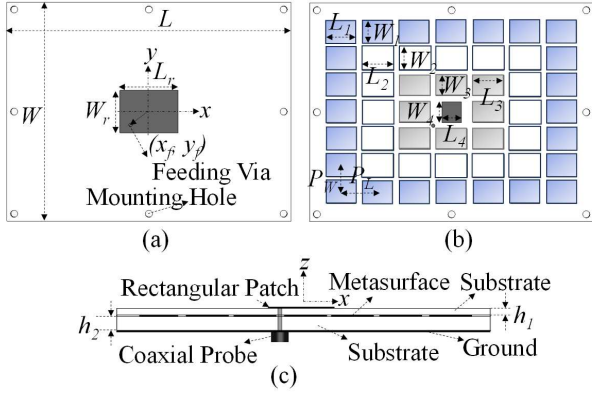
Metasurfaces have been widely applied to improve the performance of different types of antennas [6]. One effective approach to improve the bandwidth of a single-fed microstrip CP antenna and maintain low profile is to apply a metasurface as a reactive impedance substrate [7]. The second method is to use a metasurface as a superstrate on top of the radiating patch in a single-fed microstrip CP antenna [8]. Another configuration is to utilize a metasurface as the radiating component and feed the metasurface via slot structure on the ground [9]. To further enhance the bandwidth of the CP antennas, a non-uniform metasurface was designed as the superstrate in [10]. A non-uniform metasurface with rectangular patches was proposed as the radiating structure in a single-fed CP antenna [11].

Among the global optimization methods, nature-inspired metaheuristic optimization methods such as genetic algorithms have long been applied in antenna design and optimization [12]. In recent years, there has been a growing application of Bayesian optimization (BO), another type of global optimization approach, in several studies focusing on the design and optimization of antennas [13–18]. Fundamentally different from the nature-inspired methods, BO is based on probabilistic modeling, utilizing a surrogate model to guide the search for the optimal solution by balancing exploration and exploitation of the search space. As a black-box global optimization approach, BO is particularly suitable to solve problems with complex physical models and expensive evaluation functions, which coincides with the cases of antenna designs with many design parameters.

Another important aspect of antenna design and optimization is that there are typically multiple conflicting objectives which may not be optimized at the same time without any compromise. To better facilitate the design trade-offs, genuine multi-objective (MO) optimization methods are essential to approximate the Pareto optimal set of such design problems. It has become a state-of-the-art technique in nature-inspired metaheuristic optimization methods, with many recent studies focusing on applying genuine MO approaches in antenna designs [19, 20]. Nonetheless, in the existing studies using BO for antenna designs, either single objective [13, 18]

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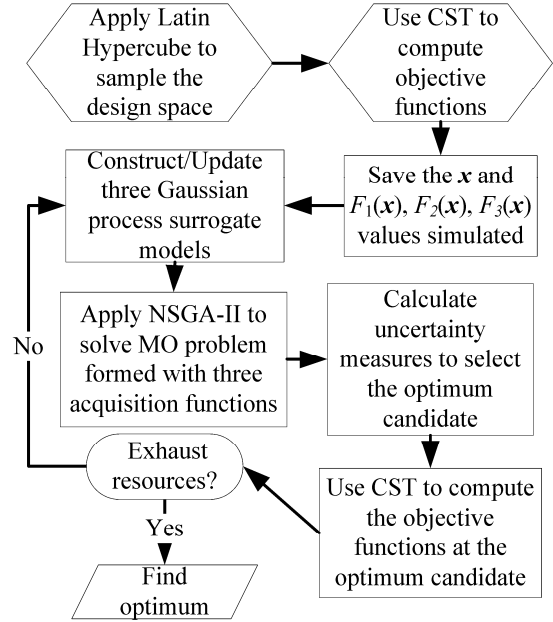
**Fig. 1.** Configurations of the non-uniform metasurface antenna: (a) top layer; (b) metasurface layer; (c) cross-sectional view.

was considered, or multiple objectives were aggregated into a single weighted sum [14–17], where the weighting coefficients are difficult to determine and can affect the optimization results significantly. In this sense, genuine multi-objective BO approaches are highly desirable to obtain the Pareto optimal set for antenna design and optimization. In this letter, a genuine multi-objective BO is applied to design and optimize a single-fed microstrip CP antenna with a non-uniform metasurface structure.

## II. NON-UNIFORM METASURFACE PATCH ANTENNA AND OBJECTIVE FUNCTIONS

The design in [21] is chosen as reference antenna, which consists of a rectangular patch radiator, a uniform  $7 \times 7$  patch metasurface, and a ground. Fig. 1 shows the non-uniform metasurface antenna that is designed with the same configuration and size as the reference antenna for fair comparison. In both antennas, the rectangular patch radiator is positioned on the upper layer of the top substrate with a thickness of  $h_1$ . The metasurface is placed on the top layer of the lower substrate, which has a specified thickness of  $h_2$ . Both the substrates are made of FR4 with  $\epsilon_r = 4.2$ ,  $\tan \delta = 0.022$ . The patch radiator is excited via a coaxial probe at the feeding position of  $(x_f, y_f)$ , through a feeding via with a diameter of 1 mm. The feeding position is fixed, and the size of the radiator is to be tuned, such that the relative feeding position on the radiator can be optimized. The drilled holes located near the edges of substrates are used for mounting and implementation purposes.

The introduction of non-periodicity greatly expands the design space. The  $7 \times 7$  non-periodic metasurface structure includes a minimum of 98 design parameters, taking into account the length and width of each of the 49 patches. Even with the aid of Bayesian optimization, the computation cost involved is prohibitive. To overcome this challenge, the non-uniform metasurface is designed to be a concentric rectangular array with the same periodicities in  $x$ - and  $y$ - directions as the reference one. As shown in Fig. 1 (b), the patches along each concentric ring are of the same size and colored with the same



**Fig. 2.** Flowchart of the BO implementation.

shade. The corresponding sizes are  $(L_1, W_1)$ ,  $(L_2, W_2)$ ,  $(L_3, W_3)$ ,  $(L_4, W_4)$  from outermost rectangular ring to the innermost single patch, respectively.

The introduction of non-periodicity in the metasurface structure enables the excitation of multiple resonances, leading to a wide bandwidth. The non-uniform metasurface can be designed via altering the length  $L_i$  and width  $W_i$  along each concentric ring. Together with the size of the microstrip radiator  $(L_r, W_r)$ , the vector of 10 design variables is expressed as  $\mathbf{x} = [L_1, W_1, L_2, W_2, L_3, W_3, L_4, W_4, L_r, W_r]$ . Note that the coordinates of the patch centers are fixed, and not considered as the design variables here, the inclusion of which will be a more general case to be studied in future.

The first objective in this case is to maximize the fractional bandwidth with reflection coefficient less than -10 dB within the desired frequency range of 3–5 GHz, which covers the operating bandwidth of the reference antenna. The second objective is to maximize the CP bandwidth with an axial ratio less than 3 dB in the targeted frequency range. In addition to the aforementioned considerations, another essential performance metric to be taken into account is the boresight realized gain across the frequency range. The design of the non-uniform metasurface antenna can be formulated as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{minimize } F_1(\mathbf{x}), F_2(\mathbf{x}), F_3(\mathbf{x}) \\ & \text{s.t. } \mathbf{x}^l \leq \mathbf{x} \leq \mathbf{x}^u, \end{aligned} \quad (1)$$

where

$$\begin{aligned} F_1(\mathbf{x}) &= \frac{1}{m} \sum_{i=1}^m \max[S_{11}(\mathbf{x}, f_i) + 10, 0], \\ F_2(\mathbf{x}) &= \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \max[AR(\mathbf{x}, f_i) - 3, 0], \\ F_3(\mathbf{x}) &= \frac{1}{p} \sum_{i=1}^p \max[10 - RG(\mathbf{x}, f_i), 0], \end{aligned}$$

with  $F_1(\mathbf{x})$ ,  $F_2(\mathbf{x})$ , and  $F_3(\mathbf{x})$  as the three objective functions of real value,  $\mathbf{x}^l$  and  $\mathbf{x}^u$  represent the lower and upper bounds, respectively, of the design variables,  $m$ ,  $n$ , and  $p$  are the number

TABLE I  
GEOMETRIC DIMENSIONS OF THE OPTIMIZED ANTENNA  
(IN MM)

$L$	$W$	$L_r$	$W_r$	$x_f$	$y_f$	$L_1$	$W_1$	$h_1$
78.0	60.0	16.0	11.6	-5.1	-3.7	8.0	6.1	1.6
$L_2$	$W_2$	$L_3$	$W_3$	$L_4$	$W_4$	$P_W$	$P_L$	$h_2$
8.7	6.4	8.6	5.7	5.3	5.8	10.1	7.35	3.2

of sampling points in the desired frequency range for reflection coefficient, axial ratio and realized gain, respectively.

### III. MULTI-OBJECTIVE BAYESIAN OPTIMIZATION AND DESIGN FLOW

Multi-objective (MO) Bayesian optimization with an uncertainty-aware search framework called UseMO [22] is employed to effectively address the design and optimization problem of non-uniform metasurface antenna described in Section II. The primary objective of USeMO is to identify the Pareto optimal set of solutions while simultaneously enhancing computational efficiency. A solution is considered Pareto optimal if it cannot be further enhanced in one objective without sacrificing another objective. The main idea of UseMO is to build multiple cheap suggorate statistical models of the real complex functions (in this case the computationally expensive electromagnetic simulations) for each of the objectives, and the corresponding acquisition functions can leverage on the existing ones in single-objective BO. The resulting MO problem is then solved using cheap MO solvers like NSGA-II [23], leading to a list of promising candidate sampling points. The candidate with maximum uncertainty is then identified via an uncertainty measure. The detailed formulations and theoretical analysis can be found in [22] and will not be covered here because of the scope of this work. The application of the UseMO on the design and optimization of the non-uniform metasurface antenna will be illustrated in detail below. Fig. 2 shows a chart of our design flow.

To begin with, the Latin Hypercube method is utilized to obtain 400 sampling points within the design space. The size of sampling data should be positively correlated with the number of design parameters as well as the number of design objectives. The number is determined based on the authors' experience and information from previous studies [13-18]. Each sample consists of 10 dimensions, namely, the vector  $\mathbf{x}$  of 10 design variables as defined in Section II. The 10 variables vary in the ranges of:  $2 \leq L_1, L_2 \leq 10.1, 2 \leq W_1, W_2 \leq 7.35, 2 \leq L_3, L_4 \leq 9, 2 \leq W_3, W_4 \leq 6, 8.82 \leq W_r \leq 20, 11.5 \leq L_r \leq 25$ . The ranges are set in such a way that the patches in the outer two rings can overlap with each other, but the innermost patch and the third ring will not overlap with each other, such that the feeding via is not connecting to the patches on the metasurface. Each of the 400 design vectors, denoted as  $\mathbf{x}$ , is simulated using CST [24] to determine the respective reflection coefficients, axial ratios, and realized gains to calculate the three objective functions  $F_1(\mathbf{x}), F_2(\mathbf{x}),$  and  $F_3(\mathbf{x})$  as defined in (1). The 400 pairs of  $\mathbf{x}$  and  $F_1(\mathbf{x}), F_2(\mathbf{x}), F_3(\mathbf{x})$  obtained from the simulations of sample points are subsequently saved as the prior data and utilized to construct

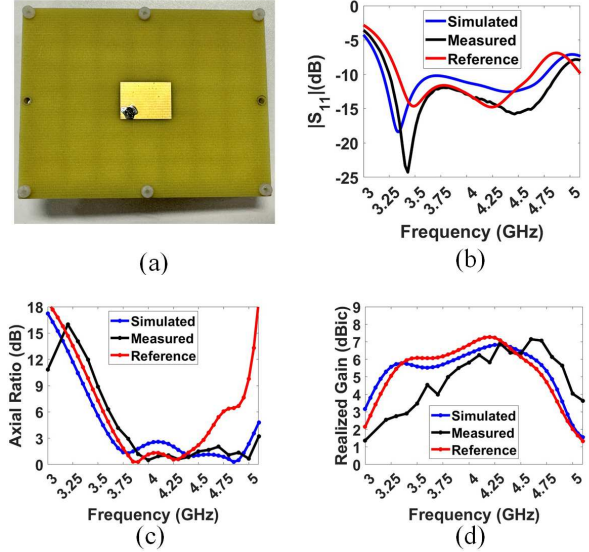


Fig. 3. Performance comparison with reference antenna [21]: (a) antenna prototype; (b)  $|S_{11}|$ ; (c) axial ratio; and (d) boresight realized gain.

three probabilistic Gaussian process surrogate models  $\widehat{F}_1(\mathbf{x}), \widehat{F}_2(\mathbf{x}),$  and  $\widehat{F}_3(\mathbf{x})$  with

$$\widehat{F}(\mathbf{x}) \sim \text{GP}(\mu(\mathbf{x}), k(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x}')), \quad (2)$$

where  $\widehat{F}(\mathbf{x})$  is the surrogate objective function,  $\mu(\mathbf{x})$  and  $k(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x}')$  are the mean and covariance functions. In this work, scaled absolute exponential kernel is chosen as the covariance function:

$$k(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x}') = s^2 \exp\left(-\frac{\|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}'\|}{l}\right), \quad (3)$$

where  $s^2$  and  $l$  are the scale and length-scale hyperparameters. The scikit-learn library in Python [25] is employed to fit the three Gaussian process models. The default values of the scale and length-scale hyperparameters are both set as 1, with the ranges of  $(10^{-3}, 10^3)$  and  $(10^{-6}, 10^6)$  as the bounds in hyperparameter tuning, respectively.

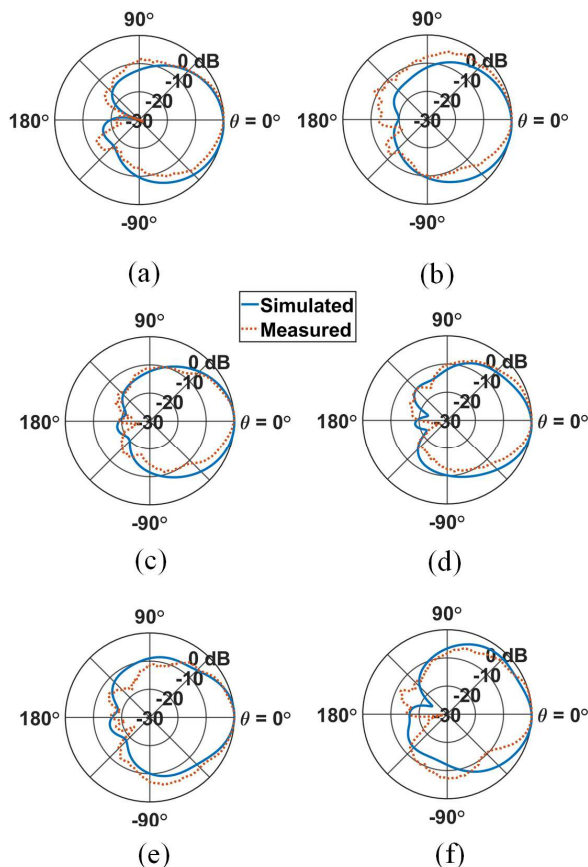
When the iteration begins, three acquisition functions  $\text{AF}_1(\mathbf{x}), \text{AF}_2(\mathbf{x}),$  and  $\text{AF}_3(\mathbf{x})$  are constructed for each of the suggorate models, corresponding to each of the three objective functions in Section II. Common acquisition functions utilized in the optimization process include upper confidence bound (UCB), expected probability of improvement, and probability of improvement [22]. The UCB acquisition function used is in the form of

$$\text{AF}(\mathbf{x}) = \mu(\mathbf{x}) + \beta_t^{1/2} \sigma(\mathbf{x}), \quad (4)$$

where  $\mu(\mathbf{x})$  and  $\sigma(\mathbf{x})$  are the mean and variance functions,  $\beta_t$  is the coefficient that finds the tradeoff between exploitation and exploration at iteration  $t$ . The adaptive  $\beta_t$  dependent on the iteration number is

$$\beta_t = \log(t^2 2\pi^2 / 0.3) + 0.125d \log(t^2) \quad (5)$$

where  $d$  is the dimension of input vector (10 in this case) [22]. NSGA-II is applied to solve the multi-objective optimization problem with the three acquisition functions as the objectives [22], [26].



**Fig. 4.** Simulated and measured radiation patterns of the optimized antenna: (a)  $xz$ -plane and (b)  $yz$ -plane at 3.8 GHz; (c)  $xz$ -plane and (d)  $yz$ -plane at 4.3 GHz; (e)  $xz$ -plane and (f)  $yz$ -plane at 4.8 GHz.

Next, the uncertainty measures of the resulting list of candidate points obtained from NSGA-II are calculated as the volume of the confidence bounds of the statistical models [22]. The candidate point with the maximum uncertainty is then sent to CST for simulation with the results utilized to calculate the corresponding objective functions. The new pair of design variables  $x$  along with the corresponding objective values  $F_1(x)$ ,  $F_2(x)$ , and  $F_3(x)$  is then used to update the Gaussian process models. Furthermore, Like the previous applications [14, 17-18], the stopping criterion is set to be the predefined resource constraints. A predefined value of 1500 is assigned as the maximum number of iterations for the optimization process. Upon reaching the maximum number of iterations, all simulated results are collected, enabling the extraction of the optimal designs. The total computation time is 197.78 hours including the simulation time of the 400 prior data samples.

#### IV. SIMULATION AND MEASUREMENT RESULTS

The approximated Pareto optimal set of solution can be retrieved after the optimization completes. One optimal design is selected with the maximum operating bandwidth, which is the overlap between impedance and AR bandwidth, among all the designs that have a smaller-than 3dB variation in boresight

gain across its bandwidth. The geometric dimensions of the optimized antenna are listed in Table I.

The antenna prototype as shown in Fig. 3(a) is measured in a full anechoic chamber. The measured results are compared with the simulated results. The reference in [21] is simulated as well for comparison. In Fig. 3(b), the optimized design achieves the measured impedance bandwidth of 3.25–4.85 GHz with  $|S_{11}| < -10$ dB, or fractional bandwidth of 39.5%. In [21], the reference antenna was measured with a VSWR  $\leq 2$  bandwidth of 34.2% (3.4 GHz–4.85 GHz). Fig. 3(c) shows that the measured 3-dB AR bandwidth of the optimized antenna ranges from 3.75 GHz to 5.05 GHz, achieving a fractional bandwidth of 29.5%, whereas the reference antenna in [21] only has a 3-dB AR bandwidth of 19.5% (3.7 GHz–4.5 GHz). Considering the overlap of impedance and AR bandwidth, the operating bandwidth of the optimized non-uniform metasurface antenna spans from 3.75 GHz to 4.85 GHz, or 25.6%, while the operating bandwidth of the reference design is 19.5% (3.7 GHz–4.5 GHz). Thus, the operating bandwidth of the optimized non-uniform design has a 31% enlargement as compared with that of the reference antenna.

Fig. 3(d) compares the simulated and measured realized gain of the prototype at boresight direction. The maximum realized gain of the optimized non-uniform antenna is 7.15 dBic, which is slightly less than that of the reference antenna (7.4 dBic) [21]. It is observed that the measured results are slightly shifted to higher frequency as compared with the simulated ones. The small discrepancies can be attributed to fabrication and assembly error.

To further examine the performance of the optimized antenna, Fig. 4 plots its radiation patterns at three frequencies, namely, the lower band edge, center frequency, and higher band edge across the operating bandwidth. The normalized measured and simulated radiation patterns are compared against each other in both  $xz$ - and  $yz$ - planes, with good agreement observed.

#### V. CONCLUSION

A wideband circularly polarized antenna with a non-uniform metasurface has been designed and optimized using a state-of-the-art genuine multi-objective Bayesian optimization approach. By properly exciting multiple resonances, the non-uniform antenna achieves a significant increment of 31% in operating bandwidth as compared with the periodic reference antenna, while still maintaining the low-profile feature as a single-fed microstrip antenna. As the non-uniformity prohibitively increases the design space, a concentric rectangular array configuration has been used in designing the metasurface to reduce the number of design variables. The genuine multi-objective Bayesian optimization approach is desired to explore the performance trade-offs and approximate the Pareto optimal set. The designed wideband circularly polarized antenna can be applied across various domains and applications, including satellite systems and sub-6GHz 5G New Radio.

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