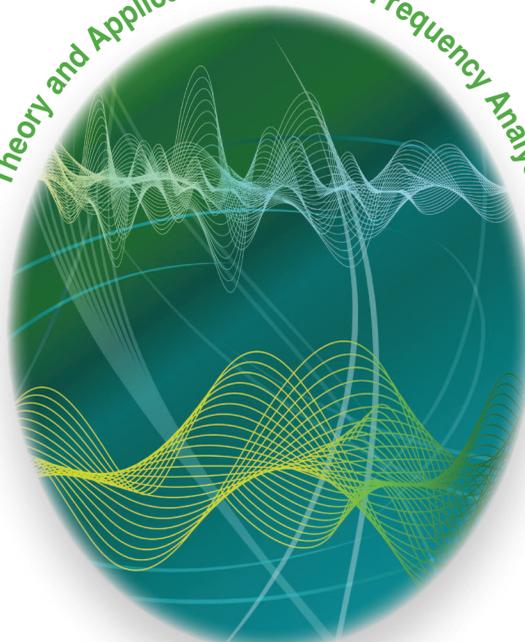


# Source Separation and Localization Using Time-Frequency Distributions

Theory and Applications of Time-Frequency Analysis



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[An overview]

In this article, we describe the role of time-frequency distributions (TFDs) in array processing. We particularly focus on quadratic TFDs (QTFDs). We demonstrate how these distributions can be properly integrated with the spatial dimension to enhance individual source signal recovery and angular estimation. The framework that

enables such integration is referred to as spatial TFD (STFD). We present the important milestones of STFDs that have been reached during the last 15 years. Most importantly, we show that array processing creates new perspectives of QTFDs and defines new roles to the autoterms and cross-terms in both problem formulation and solution. Multisensor configurations, in essence, establish a different paradigm and introduces new challenges that did not exist in a single-sensor time-frequency distribution.

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## INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Time-frequency (T-F) signal representations enable separations of nonstationary signals overlapping in both time and frequency domains where windowing- and filtering-based approaches fail to isolate the different signal components [1], [2]. Among numerous nonstationary signals that arise in many passive and sensing modalities, signals with instantaneous frequency (IF) laws, such as frequency modulated (FM) signals, have clear T-F signatures that are contiguous and highly localized. These two properties have led to important advances in nonstationary signal detection and classifications over the past four decades. Both parametric and nonparametric techniques play important roles in characterizing FM signals. Whereas the latter are mainly defined by QTFDs that have their roots in Wigner–Ville distributions [3], the former pursue the estimation of the order as well as the parameters of the FM polynomial phase signal (PPS). The advantages of QTFDs lie in their accommodation of multi-component signals, where each component in the signal can have a different IF. The PPS parameter estimation techniques avoid any bilinear operation and, as such, are not faced with the challenge of eliminating cross-terms that falsely point to signal power concentration regions when using QTFDs. In addition to QTFD and PPS estimation techniques, linear TFDs, such as the short-time Fourier transform (STFT) and wavelet transform, have also been successfully applied to analyze signals with IF characterizations [4].

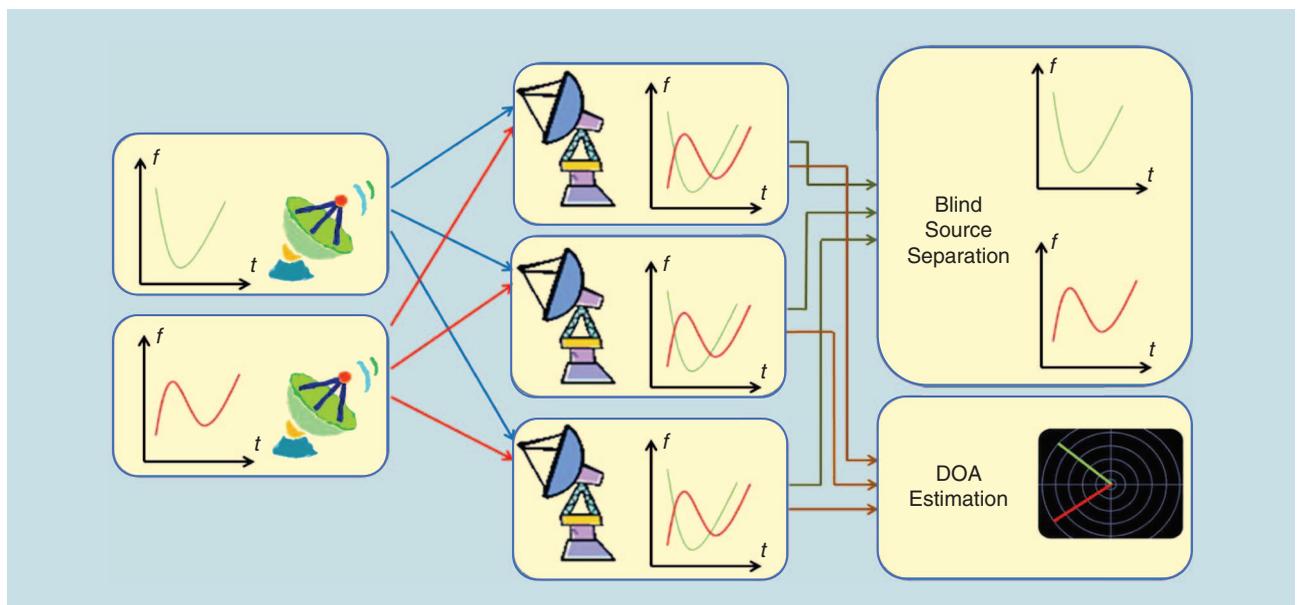
Similar to the T-F signature, the source spatial signature also reveals important information about the source. It enables source discrimination based on the respective angular position

**WE SHOW THAT ARRAY PROCESSING CREATES NEW PERSPECTIVES OF QTFDs AND DEFINES NEW ROLES TO THE AUTOTERMS AND CROSS-TERMS IN BOTH PROBLEM FORMULATION AND SOLUTION.**

as viewed from a receiver array. A source may be an emitter or a reflector of electromagnetic, acoustics, or ultrasound waves. Depending on the propagation environment, the source can be characterized solely by its bearings, i.e., directions-of-arrival

(DOA) or through a linear combination of its multipaths (see Figure 1). The former characterization is known as steering vectors in which the signal exhibits a phase progression across the different antennas as it traverses the array. In this case, the source spatial signature is characterized by its respective bearing angle that can be provided by DOA estimation techniques. The latter is often referred to as the “generalized” steering vector and establishes the notion of “mixing.” The mixing matrix depends on the corresponding source propagation channel and is a function of unknown array manifold. In this case, we cast the problem as blind source separation (BSS), which can be associated with sensors in either colocated or distributed configurations. The maturities of the two general areas of array processing and T-F analysis made the case for developing an integrated approach where the spatial and T-F signature estimations interplay to serve both problems. The result is an improved signal localization and separation using time, frequency, and space variables. We tend to refer to this area of research as nonstationary array processing. The importance of this area stems from the fact that nonstationary signals are encountered in various passive and active arrays using different sensing apparatuses.

In this article, we describe the role of TFD in array processing, which has wide applications in radar, communications, and satellite navigation. We focus on the class of signals where



**[FIG1]** Nonstationary array signal processing.

the IFs uniquely or dominantly define the signal T-F signatures. These signals are ubiquitous and can be biological or man-made. Combining the spatial and T-F signatures is achieved within a framework referred to as STFDs. This framework utilizes the signal local behavior and power localization for improving both signal-to-noise ratios (SNRs) and source discriminations prior to performing high-resolution direction finding and BSS. The STFD requires the computations of the QTFDs of the data received at each antenna, i.e., auto-QTFDs, as well as the cross-QTFDs between each pair of sensors. The STFD framework was originally applied to narrowband signals and then extended to wideband sources.

### CONCEPT OF SPATIAL TIME-FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTIONS

Consider an analytic signal vector  $\mathbf{z}(t)$  and define the spatial instantaneous autocorrelation function as

$$\mathbf{K}_{zz}(t, \tau) = \mathbf{z}(t + \frac{\tau}{2})\mathbf{z}^H(t - \frac{\tau}{2}), \quad (1)$$

where  $(\cdot)^H$  denotes conjugate transpose (Hermitian) operation. An analytic signal is a complex-valued signal that contains energy in the frequency domain only at positive frequencies. Such a signal is obtained from a real-valued signal thanks to the Hilbert transform. The smoothed spatial instantaneous autocorrelation function is defined as

$$\mathbf{Q}_{zz}(t, \tau) = G(t, \tau) \underset{i}{*} \mathbf{K}_{zz}(t, \tau), \quad (2)$$

where  $G(t, \tau)$  is some time-lag kernel. The time convolution operator  $\underset{i}{*}$  is applied to each entry of the matrix  $\mathbf{K}_{zz}(t, \tau)$ . The class of quadratic STFDs are then defined as

$$\mathbf{D}_{zz}(t, f) = \mathcal{F}_{\tau \rightarrow f} \{ \mathbf{Q}_{zz}(t, \tau) \}, \quad (3)$$

where the Fourier transform  $\mathcal{F}$  is applied to entry  $\tau$  of matrix  $\mathbf{Q}_{zz}(t, \tau)$ . The discrete time form equivalent to (3) and (2) leads to the following implementation of an STFD

$$\mathbf{D}_{zz}(n, k) = \mathcal{D}\mathcal{F}_{m \rightarrow k} \{ G(n, m) \underset{n}{*} \mathbf{K}_{zz}(n, m) \}, \quad (4)$$

which can also be expressed as

$$\mathbf{D}_{zz}(n, k) = \sum_{m,p=-M}^M G(p-n, m) \mathbf{z}(p+m) \mathbf{z}^H(p-m) e^{-j4\pi \frac{mk}{N}}, \quad (5)$$

where the discrete Fourier transform  $\mathcal{D}\mathcal{F}$  and the discrete time convolution operator  $\underset{n}{*}$  are applied to entry  $n$  of matrix  $G(n, m) \underset{n}{*} \mathbf{K}_{zz}(n, m)$  and matrix  $\mathbf{K}_{zz}(n, m)$ , respectively.  $N = 2M + 1$  is the signal length. Note that the diagonal elements of the STFD matrix are called *autoterms*, as they correspond to the quadratic terms associated with each component of the vector  $\mathbf{z}(n)$ . The off-diagonal elements are referred to as *cross-terms*, since they correspond to the bilinear transforms associated with two different components of this vector.

### STFD PROPERTIES

Consider a linear model for the vector signal  $\mathbf{z}(n)$

$$\mathbf{z}(n) = \mathbf{A}\mathbf{s}(n), \quad (6)$$

where  $\mathbf{A}$  is a  $K \times L$  matrix ( $K \geq L$ ) and  $\mathbf{s}(n)$  is an  $L \times 1$  vector referred to as the source signal vector. Under the above model, the STFDs take the following structure:

$$\mathbf{D}_{zz}(n, k) = \mathbf{A}\mathbf{D}_{ss}(n, k)\mathbf{A}^H, \quad (7)$$

where  $\mathbf{D}_{ss}(n, k)$  is the source TFD of vector  $\mathbf{s}(n)$ . Consider an  $L \times K$  matrix  $\mathbf{W}$ , referred to as a whitening matrix, such that  $\mathbf{W}\mathbf{A}$  is a unitary matrix and is denoted as  $\mathbf{U}$ . That is,

$$(\mathbf{W}\mathbf{A})(\mathbf{W}\mathbf{A})^H = \mathbf{U}\mathbf{U}^H = \mathbf{I}, \quad (8)$$

where  $\mathbf{I}$  denotes the identity matrix. Pre- and postmultiplying the STFD  $\mathbf{D}_{zz}(n, k)$  by  $\mathbf{W}$  leads to the whitened STFD, defined as

$$\underline{\mathbf{D}}_{zz}(n, k) = \mathbf{W}\mathbf{D}_{zz}(n, k)\mathbf{W}^H = \mathbf{U}\mathbf{D}_{ss}(n, k)\mathbf{U}^H, \quad (9)$$

where the second equality stems from the definition of  $\mathbf{W}$  and (7). Clearly, the whitening step leads to a linear model with a unitary mixing matrix. Note that the whitening matrix can be computed as an inverse square root of the data covariance matrix [1] or else obtained from the STFD matrices [2]. Note that while the computation of the whitening matrix from the covariance matrix assumes independent source signals, its computation from the STFD matrices does not require such assumption. The STFD structures in (7) and (9) permit the application of the powerful subspace techniques to solve a large class of problems such as channel estimation, BSS, and high-resolution DOA estimation [1], [5].

### STFD STRUCTURE IN NARROWBAND ARRAY SIGNAL PROCESSING

When considering  $L$  signals arriving at a  $K$ -element antenna array, the linear data model

$$\mathbf{z}(n) = \mathbf{A}\mathbf{s}(n) + \mathbf{n}(n) \quad (10)$$

is commonly assumed, where  $\mathbf{z}(n)$  is the  $K \times 1$  signal vector received at the array,  $\mathbf{s}(n)$  is the  $L \times 1$  source signal vector, matrix  $\mathbf{A} = [\mathbf{a}_1, \dots, \mathbf{a}_L]$  represents the propagation matrix,  $\mathbf{a}_i$  is the steering vector corresponding to the  $i$ th signal, and  $\mathbf{n}(n)$  is an additive noise vector whose entries are modeled generally as stationary, temporally and spatially white, zero mean random processes, and independent of the source signals. Under the above assumptions, the expectation of the TFD matrix between the source signal vector and the noise vector vanishes, i.e.,

$$E[\mathbf{D}_{sn}(n, k)] = 0, \quad (11)$$

and it follows

$$\tilde{\mathbf{D}}_{zz}(n, k) = \mathbf{A}\tilde{\mathbf{D}}_{ss}(n, k)\mathbf{A}^H + \sigma^2\mathbf{I}, \quad (12)$$

where  $\tilde{\mathbf{D}}_{zz}(n, k) = E[\mathbf{D}_{zz}(n, k)]$ ,  $\tilde{\mathbf{D}}_{ss}(n, k) = E[\mathbf{D}_{ss}(n, k)]$ , and  $\sigma^2$  denotes the noise power. Under the same assumptions, the data covariance matrix, commonly used in array signal processing, has the structure

$$\mathbf{R}_{zz} = \mathbf{A}\mathbf{R}_{ss}\mathbf{A}^H + \sigma^2\mathbf{I}, \quad (13)$$

where  $\mathbf{R}_{zz} = E[\mathbf{z}(n)\mathbf{z}^H(n)]$  and  $\mathbf{R}_{ss} = E[\mathbf{s}(n)\mathbf{s}^H(n)]$ . From relations (12) and (13), it is clear that the STFD and the covariance matrices exhibit the same eigenstructure. This structure is often exploited to estimate signal parameters through subspace-based techniques [6], [7].

### ADVANTAGES OF STFDs OVER COVARIANCE MATRIX

STFD-based methods can handle signals corrupted by interference occupying the same frequency band and/or the same time segment but with different T-F signatures, improving signal selectivity over approaches using the covariance matrix. In addition, the effect of spreading the noise power while localizing the source signal power in the T-F plane increases the effective SNR and provides robustness with respect to noise. Quantitative evaluation of such improvement can be found in [2]. If one selects the kernel  $G(n, m)$  in (4) so that the corresponding TFD satisfies the marginal condition ([3], Sec. 6.1), then we obtain

$$\sum_k \tilde{\mathbf{D}}_{zz}(n, k) = E[\mathbf{z}(n)\mathbf{z}^H(n)] = \mathbf{R}_{zz}. \quad (14)$$

Therefore,  $\mathbf{R}_{zz}$  is a low-dimension representation of  $\tilde{\mathbf{D}}_{zz}(n, k)$ . In fact, this is the reason that the STFD-based methods offer better performance, such as signal selectivity, interference

suppression and high resolution, than conventional covariance matrix-based approaches.

### OTHER SPATIAL TIME FREQUENCY REPRESENTATIONS

A similar STFD framework can be provided using linear transforms, such as the STFT and wavelet transform, leading to the following spatial STFT

$$\mathbf{S}_z(n, k) = \mathcal{D}\mathcal{F}_{m-k}\{h(m-n)z(m)\}, \quad (15)$$

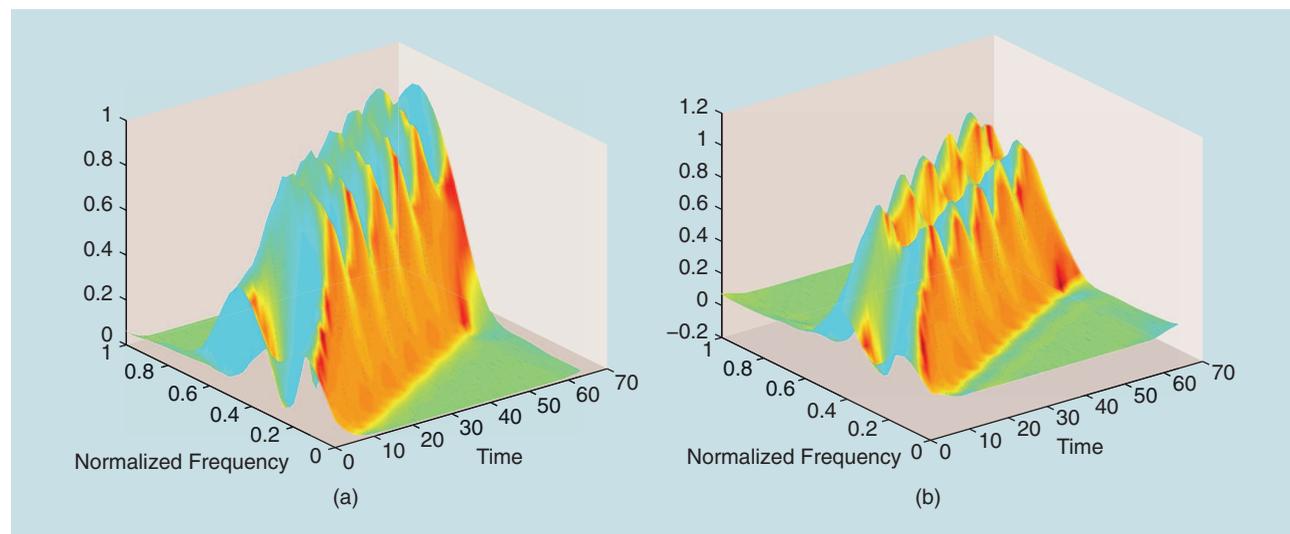
where  $h(n)$  is a windowing function. Under the linear model (6), the spatial STFT retains the same structure but with higher dimensionality

$$\mathbf{S}_z(n, k) = \mathbf{A}\mathbf{S}_s(n, k). \quad (16)$$

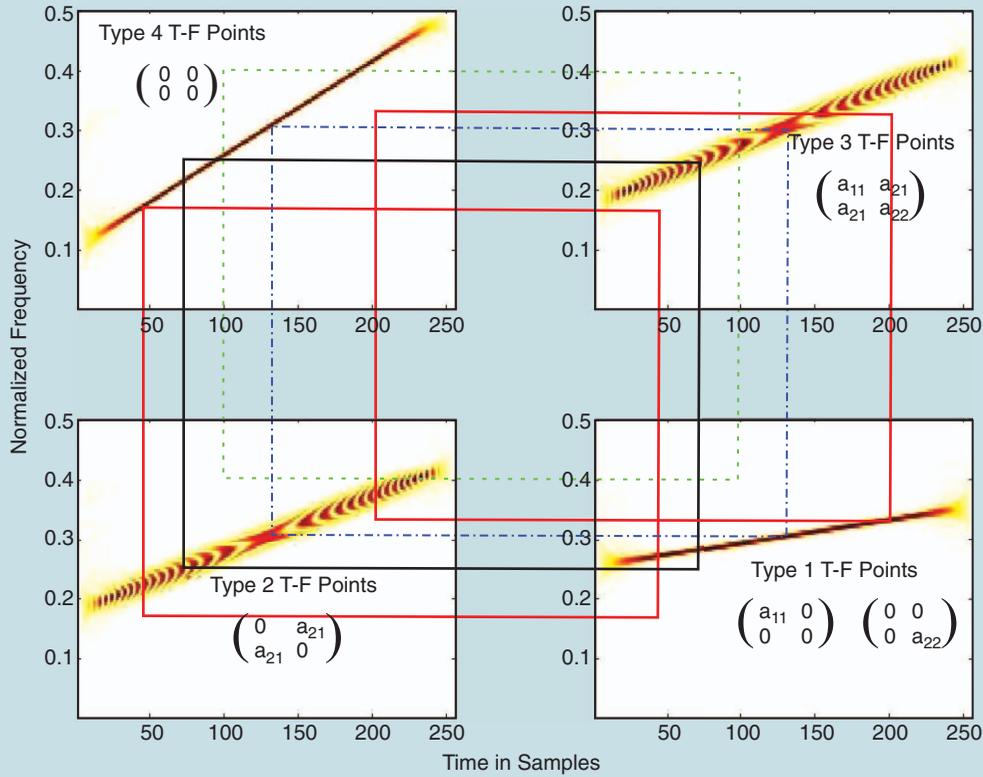
These transforms tradeoff temporal and spectral resolutions, and their squared magnitudes are already considered within the STFD framework. Moreover, multiresolution analyzes are not most effective for signals characterized by their IF laws. Figure 2(a) illustrates the discrimination problem between two closely spaced chirp signals when dealing with the STFT. In contrast, in Figure 2(b), the use of a QTFD allows the two signals to be resolved. Therefore, the STFD, incorporating QTFD, enables source separation and thus estimation of the respective DOAs. In practice, T-F discrimination is generally performed through T-F point selection procedures, as discussed in the next section.

### TIME-FREQUENCY POINT SELECTION

The advantages of T-F-based BSS and DOA estimation can only be materialized if appropriate T-F points are selected in the formulation of the STFD matrices.



**[FIG2]** (a) The square modulus of the STFT of two closely spaced chirps. (b) The QTFD of two closely spaced chirps as used in an STFD framework.



**[FIG3]** The real part of  $\mathbf{D}_{ss}(n, k)$  when the PWVD is used for two LFM signals. T-F point types: source autoterms only (red squares), source cross-terms only (black square), both source cross-terms and autoterms (blue square), and neither source cross-terms nor source autoterms (green square).

### TIME-FREQUENCY POINT PROPERTIES

The STFD framework assumes the T-F signatures of the source signals are sufficiently different to satisfy one or two of the following conditions:

- 1) There exist T-F points  $(n_l, k_l)$  that correspond to individual source autoterms. In other words, if  $D_{s_l s_j}(n, k) = (\mathbf{D}_{ss}(n, k))_{ij}$ , then

$$D_{s_l s_j}(n_l, k_l) = \delta_{ij} D_{i,j,l} \quad (17)$$

and, for each of the  $L$  sources  $i$ , there is at least an  $l$ th T-F point, such that  $D_{i,i,l} \neq 0$ .  $\delta_{i,j}$  is the Kronecker delta, i.e.,  $\delta_{i,j} = 0$  if  $i \neq j$  and one otherwise.  $D_{i,j,l}$  ( $D_{i,i,l}$ ) is the value of the QTFD between the sources  $s_i$  and  $s_j$  (or  $s_i$ ) at the T-F point  $(n_l, k_l)$ .

- 2) There exist T-F points  $(n_l, k_l)$  that correspond to cross-terms. That is,

$$D_{s_l s_j}(n_l, k_l) = (1 - \delta_{ij}) D_{i,j,l}. \quad (18)$$

The above two assumptions imply that, in the STFD framework, the source T-F signatures should not be strongly overlapping. The “sufficiently” different signatures represent the “known” discriminating property about the sources required for applications of blind methods.

### TIME-FREQUENCY POINT CATEGORIZATION

Figure 3 shows the real part of the source STFD matrix

$$\mathbf{D}_{ss}(n, k) = \begin{pmatrix} D_{s_1 s_1}(n, k) & D_{s_1 s_2}(n, k) \\ D_{s_2 s_1}(n, k) & D_{s_2 s_2}(n, k) \end{pmatrix}$$

when the pseudo-Wigner–Ville distribution (PWVD) is used with a Hamming window of size 65. In this example, the two signals of interest,  $s_1(n)$  and  $s_2(n)$ , are linear FM [(LFM), or chirp] signals. They cross at T-F point (128, 0.3). The time scale is  $[0, 255]$  and the frequency scale is given in normalized frequency (limited to  $[0, 0.5]$ , which corresponds to the first 128 frequencies obtained by discrete Fourier transform divided by 256). As observed in Figure 3, the following four types of T-F points are observed.

- *Type 1:* T-F points that correspond to source autoterms only. For those points, the source TFD matrix is a rank-one diagonal matrix. The rank-one diagonal matrix is the “only” possibility of diagonal matrix due to the “middle-point” rule that defines the cross-terms geometry [3].
- *Type 2:* T-F points that correspond to source cross-terms only. For those points, the source TFD matrix is off-diagonal. (A matrix is said to be off-diagonal if its diagonal entries are zeros.)

■ *Type 3*: T-F points that correspond to both source cross- and autoterms. For those points, the source TFD matrix does not exhibit an algebraic structure that could be directly exploited.

■ *Type 4*: T-F points where there are neither source cross-terms nor source autoterms.

The diagonal and off-diagonal structures of Types 1 and 2 are generally distorted when the sources are mixed. Only Types 1 and 2 are of interest to the DOA estimation and BSS problems. The others should be discarded since they do not play any role in either problem. Type 4 points can be removed by applying appropriate thresholding. It is difficult to do the same for Type 3. When using a QTFD with reduced interferences (such as spectrogram, smoothed PWVD (SPWVD) [3], or based on particular kernels like in [8]), Type 2 points will assume small or zero values. However, Type 3 points will persist, in particular, when the sources have overlapping signatures. With reduced interference distribution, it becomes easier to select Type 1 points, but often at the expense of autoterms localization (see Figure 2). Disjoint sources eliminate a great majority of Type 3 points and facilitate the automatic selection of Type 1 and 2 points. Such property has been exploited in linear T-F-based approaches (principle of the degenerate unmixing estimation technique (DUET) algorithm [9]). Sophisticated time-frequency point selection procedures are generally required, as discussed in the next section. Despite the relative effectiveness of these procedures, cross-terms remain undesirable and discouraged when they extensively clutter the T-F domain.

#### TIME-FREQUENCY POINT SELECTION PROCEDURES

Due to (7) and (9) and the fact that in Type 1 (respectively Type 2) points,  $\mathbf{D}_{ss}(n, k)$  have a very particular algebraic structure (rank-one diagonal matrix, respectively off-diagonal matrix), a natural way to tackle the BSS or DOA problems will be to use matrix decomposition algorithms, which happens to be a rather classical approach in BSS. Yet, the problem of the automatic T-F points selection, in the general case, is not simple. Several T-F point selection procedures have been suggested, some of which operate in a whitened context, while others do not require such preprocessing. In [10], an exhaustive panorama of all existing detectors is provided and these detectors are compared on synthetic signals involving multi-components correlated sources. In a whitened context, some procedures utilize matrix trace invariance under unitary transform, making it possible to decide on the presence of source autoterms. One procedure states that [11] for Type 2 points, select STFD matrices that verify

$$\frac{\text{trace}\{\mathbf{D}_{zz}(n, k)\}}{\|\mathbf{D}_{zz}(n, k)\|} < \varepsilon, \quad (19)$$

where  $\text{trace}\{\cdot\}$  denotes matrix trace,  $\|\cdot\|$  Frobenius norm and  $\varepsilon$  is a small user-defined positive scalar [in the section “Time-Frequency Source Separation,” these matrices will be denoted by  $(\cdot)^a$ ]. For Type 1 points, select STFD matrices that verify

$$\frac{\text{trace}\{\mathbf{D}_{zz}(n, k)\}}{\|\mathbf{D}_{zz}(n, k)\|} > \varepsilon \quad (20)$$

[in the section “Time-Frequency Source Separation,” these matrices will be denoted by  $(\cdot)^a$ ]. There is a potential problem with the above detector concerning the selection of Type 1 points. If a non-negligible value of the trace qualifies the presence of source autoterms, it does not necessarily mean the absence of source cross-terms. In essence, some of the selected T-F points could be

Type 3 points. This problem is addressed in [10] where, under the assumption that the STFD exhibits a Hermitian symmetry, the real-value property of the autoterms and the complex-value property of the cross-terms are exploited. A follow-up work accounted for the fact that cross-terms can take real values.

Another approach for Type 1 points identifies rank-one matrices [12]. More recently, a detector based on the use of the Hough transform has been suggested [8].

In a nonwhitened context, most procedures take advantage of the fact that the source TFD is a diagonal rank-one matrix at an autoterm T-F point of a single source. One way to check whether a matrix is rank one is to use a singular value decomposition (SVD). For example, it is stated in [13] that for Type 1 points, select STFD matrices that verify

$$\begin{cases} C(n, k) = \frac{\lambda_1(n, k)}{\sum_{k=1}^K \lambda_k(n, k)} > 1 - \varepsilon, \\ \sum_{i=1}^K \lambda_i(n, k) > \varepsilon', \end{cases} \quad (21)$$

where  $\lambda_i(n, k)$ ,  $i = 1, \dots, K$ , are the singular values of the STFD matrix  $\mathbf{D}_{zz}(n, k)$ . The latter are sorted in a decreasing order. The parameters  $\varepsilon$  and  $\varepsilon'$  are some small positive user-defined scalars. Another procedure was proposed in [14] for “quasi-disjoint” sources. In [10], a slight modification was suggested to cast off the “quasi-disjoint” assumption. In a noisy environment, the selection of T-F points of peak power (Type 1 and Type 2 T-F points) may become challenging when the signals are highly corrupted by noise. The spatial diversity, embedded in the STFD matrix, can reduce noise and enhance the T-F signatures of the signals of interest. This is achieved by averaging the TFDs over all receiver sensors [15], [16]. In [17] and [18], noise is considered within the Neyman–Pearson framework. The best T-F point selection method would depend on the data, but focusing on Type 1 points by searching of rank-one matrices is likely to give the desired performance.

**THE ADVANTAGES OF T-F-BASED BSS AND DOA ESTIMATION CAN ONLY BE MATERIALIZED IF APPROPRIATE T-F POINTS ARE SELECTED IN THE FORMULATION OF THE STFD MATRICES.**

## TIME-FREQUENCY DOA ESTIMATION

The advantages of using STFD for DOA estimation stem from the fact that T-F point selection, as discussed previously, permits DOA estimation to be performed using STFDs for one or a few signal arrivals with specific T-F signatures [2]. This means that direction finding can be performed with the number of array sensors smaller than the number of impinging signals. In essence, separate STFDs can be constructed, each corresponding to one source, to perform individual DOA estimation. This would require, however, DOA estimation to be repeated for each signal. By selecting T-F points with high signal power, the overall SNR can be improved. This improvement over standard covariance matrix counterparts is more pronounced when the input SNR is low. The offerings of the STFD-based approach extend to all DOA estimations based on second-order statistics, and have been utilized to develop T-F-based methods underlying, e.g., multiple signal classification (MUSIC) and maximum likelihood (ML) [6], [5]. The spatial quadratic distribution can be extended to joint-variable domain distributions, such as the spatial ambiguity function (SAF) [19]. The SAF have different features from STFD, e.g., the signal autoterms are positioned at and around the origin, making it easier to avoid cross-terms in matrix constructions. While STFD-based DOA estimation was first developed and examined using the narrowband signal model, it was thereafter considered for wideband signal platforms [20], [21]. For signals whose IFs can be modeled and finitely parameterized, proper linear transformations provide effective alternatives to STFD-based techniques. For example, FM signals can be made stationary so that the resulting sinusoids can be effectively processed by filtering to achieve source discrimination and noise mitigation prior to performing DOA estimation [22].

## TIME-FREQUENCY MUSIC

To describe conventional MUSIC, we denote  $\hat{\mathbf{R}}_{zz}$  as the estimated covariance matrix of data vector  $\mathbf{z}(n)$ , and  $\hat{\mathbf{G}}$  as the noise subspace of  $\hat{\mathbf{R}}_{zz}$ . We use  $\hat{\cdot}$  to emphasize that the results are estimated. The MUSIC technique estimates the DOAs by determining the  $L$  values of  $\theta$  for which the following spatial spectrum is maximized:

$$f_{\text{MU}}(\theta) = [\mathbf{a}^H(\theta) \hat{\mathbf{G}} \hat{\mathbf{G}}^H \mathbf{a}(\theta)]^{-1}, \quad (22)$$

where  $\mathbf{a}(\theta)$  is the steering vector corresponding to  $\theta$ . Similarly, for T-F-MUSIC, which selects T-F regions belonging to  $L_0$  signals ( $L_0 \leq L$ ), we denote  $\mathbf{G}^{\text{tf}}$  as the noise subspace of the STFD matrix  $\hat{\mathbf{D}}_{zz}$ . The noise subspace  $\hat{\mathbf{G}}^{\text{tf}}$  can be obtained based on multiple selected T-F points and by using either joint block-diagonalization (JBD) [6] or T-F averaging [2]. For  $Q$ -selected T-F points  $\mathbf{D}_{zz}(n_l, k_l)$ ,  $l = 1, \dots, Q$ , the JBD provides  $\mathbf{U} = [\mathbf{u}_1, \dots, \mathbf{u}_K]$

$$\hat{\mathbf{U}} = \arg \max_{\mathbf{U}} \sum_{l=1}^Q \sum_{i,p=1}^K |\mathbf{u}_i^H \mathbf{D}_{zz}(n_l, k_l) \mathbf{u}_p|^2. \quad (23)$$

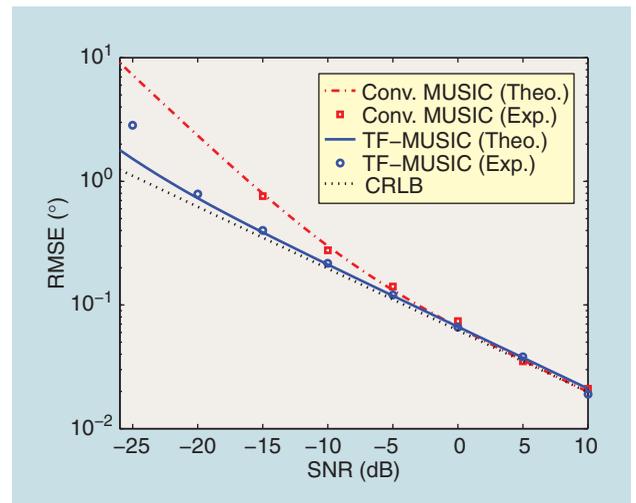
The matrix  $\hat{\mathbf{U}}$  is then partitioned into the estimated signal and noise subspaces. The T-F averaging, on the other hand, is a much simpler alternative that provides the eigenmatrix of  $\mathbf{D}_{zz}(n_l, k_l)$ ,  $l = 1, \dots, Q$ , through eigendecomposition of  $\hat{\mathbf{D}} = \sum_{l=1}^Q \mathbf{D}_{zz}(n_l, k_l)$ . Once the noise subspace is obtained, the DOAs are determined by locating the  $L_0$  peaks of the spatial spectrum

$$f_{\text{MU}}^{\text{tf}}(\theta) = [\mathbf{a}^H(\theta) \hat{\mathbf{G}}^{\text{tf}} (\hat{\mathbf{G}}^{\text{tf}})^H \mathbf{a}(\theta)]^{-1}. \quad (24)$$

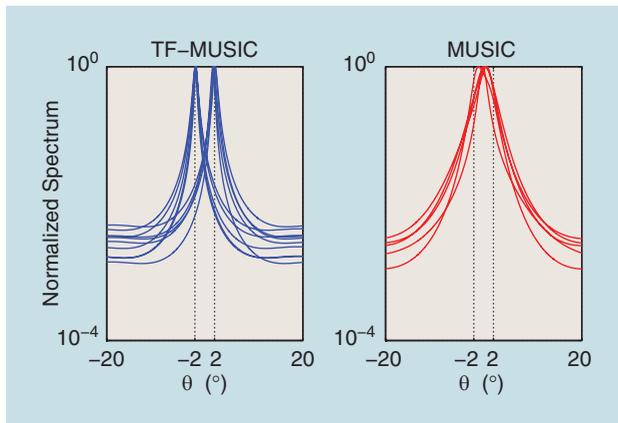
In [2], the variance of the estimated DOA is analytically examined using LFM signals as examples. Next, we demonstrate the advantages of T-F-MUSIC, as compared to conventional MUSIC. The IF laws of the LFM signals are assumed to be perfectly known.

## Example

Consider a uniform linear array of eight sensors with an interelement spacing of a half wavelength, and an observation period of 1,024 samples [2]. Two LFM signals are emitted from two sources positioned at angles  $\theta_1$  and  $\theta_2$ . The start and end frequencies of the signal source at  $\theta_1$  are  $f_{s1} = 0$  and  $f_{e1} = 0.5$ , whereas the corresponding two frequencies for the other source at  $\theta_2$  are  $f_{s2} = 0.5$  and  $f_{e2} = 0$ , respectively. PWVD with rectangular window of size  $H = 129$  is used to compute the TFD, and T-F averaging is used to compute the noise subspace. Figure 4 displays the root-mean-square error (RMSE) of the estimated DOA  $\hat{\theta}_1$  versus SNR for conventional MUSIC, TF-MUSIC, and the Cramer-Rao lower bound (CRLB), where  $(\theta_1, \theta_2) = (-10^\circ, 10^\circ)$ . Both signals were selected when performing TF-MUSIC ( $L_0 = L = 2$ ). The results were averaged over 100 independent Monte Carlo runs. The advantages of T-F-MUSIC in low SNR cases are evident from this figure. The deviation of the simulation results from the theoretical results for low SNR is because only the lowest coefficient order of the perturbation expansion is used in deriving the theoretical results [2]. Figure 5 shows examples of the estimated spatial spectrum based on T-F-MUSIC and the conventional



[FIG4] The RMSE of DOA estimation versus input SNR.



**[FIG5]** The spatial spectra of MUSIC and TF-MUSIC for closely spaced signals.

MUSIC where the angle separation is small ( $\theta_1 = -2.5^\circ$ ,  $\theta_2 = 2.5^\circ$ ). The input SNR is  $-5$  dB. The T-F-MUSIC algorithm is performed separately for two sets of T-F points, each belonging to one source (i.e.,  $L_0 = 1$  in each T-F-MUSIC operation). It is evident that the two signals are resolved by the TF-MUSIC whereas the conventional MUSIC fails.

#### TIME-FREQUENCY MAXIMUM LIKELIHOOD METHOD

Consider array observations  $\mathbf{z}(1), \mathbf{z}(2), \dots, \mathbf{z}(N)$ , as described in (10), where the mixing matrix  $\mathbf{A}(\theta)$  is represented as a function of the DOAs  $\theta$ . For conventional ML methods, the log-likelihood function, after omitting the constant terms, is given by

$$\mathcal{L}(\theta) = -\frac{1}{\sigma_n^2} \sum_{i=1}^N [\mathbf{z}(n) - \mathbf{A}(\theta)s(n)]^H [\mathbf{z}(n) - \mathbf{A}(\theta)s(n)]. \quad (25)$$

The ML estimate of  $\theta$  is obtained as the following minimizer:

$$\hat{\theta} = \arg \min_{\theta} \text{trace} \left\{ [\mathbf{I} - \mathbf{A}(\theta)(\mathbf{A}^H(\theta)\mathbf{A}(\theta))^{-1}\mathbf{A}^H(\theta)] \hat{\mathbf{R}}_{zz} \right\}. \quad (26)$$

We now consider the T-F-ML method. We select  $L_0 \leq L$  signals in the T-F domain. The T-F-ML estimate of  $\theta_0$ , i.e., the DOAs of the selected  $L_0$  signal arrivals, is obtained as the following minimizer, which replaces  $\hat{\mathbf{R}}_{zz}$  in (26) by  $\hat{\mathbf{D}}_{zz}$  [5],

$$\hat{\theta}_0 = \arg \min_{\theta_0} \text{trace} \left\{ [\mathbf{I} - \mathbf{A}(\theta_0)(\mathbf{A}^H(\theta_0)\mathbf{A}(\theta_0))^{-1}\mathbf{A}^H(\theta_0)] \hat{\mathbf{D}}_{zz} \right\}. \quad (27)$$

Similar to TF-MUSIC, signal localization in the T-F domain enables us to select fewer signal arrivals and thus improves the DOA estimates, particularly when the signals are closely spaced. In addition, because ML performs multidimensional search, selection of fewer sources also reduces the dimension of the search space for significant reduction of the computational complexity.

In [5], an example is given to show that the T-F-ML can estimate the respective DOAs of two closely spaced coherent sources (identical sinusoidal frequencies with a constant phase

difference), whereas T-F-MUSIC fail to separate these two coherent sources.

#### DOA ESTIMATION OF WIDEBAND NONSTATIONARY SIGNALS

DOA estimation for wideband signals, for which the steering vector is frequency dependent, is different from the narrowband signal counterpart. Conventionally, wideband signals are decomposed into a set of narrowband signal components using the Fourier transform. The resulting narrowband signals can then be processed either incoherently or coherently. Coherent processing techniques align the phases of the narrowband signals before they are combined. An effective and commonly used technique is the coherent signal-subspace processing, which uses a set of focusing matrices to map the steering vector at each frequency into that at a reference frequency prior to coherent combining. The incoherent processing techniques, on the other hand, avoid phase alignment. For example, the output power of narrowband Capon beamformers can be combined using the arithmetic or geometric averaging operation. Generally, the coherent techniques are often preferred due to the superior performance compared to the incoherent counterparts.

T-F analysis provides a convenient platform to apply coherent signal-subspace for LFM signals and other nonstationary signals with clear IF laws. Because LFM signals are instantaneous narrowband, focusing matrices can be easily applied to T-F points, and the decomposition of the LFM signals into a spectrum of frequency bins is inherently performed in the T-F analysis. By assuming that the wideband signals are separable in the T-F domain and their IFs do not rapidly change, [20] uses a sufficiently short sliding window to construct the STFD matrices so as to preserve the narrowband structure of the array manifold. The focusing matrices are then applied to the STFD matrices at selected T-F points corresponding to the source T-F signatures. In [21], the wideband DOA estimation problem is considered in the ambiguity domain for LFM signals with known chirp rates. This method utilizes the fact that the auto-ambiguity function of an LFM signal yields a phase progression that is proportional to the chirp rate and the DOA-dependent delay but is independent of the initial delay and frequency of the LFM signal. As such, the DOAs can be obtained because the LFM parameters are known a priori.

#### TIME-FREQUENCY SOURCE SEPARATION

A BSS problem consists of recovering the original waveforms of the source signals without any knowledge of their linear mixture. Two types of inherent indeterminacy exist in a BSS problem, i.e., source signals can only be identified up to a fixed permutation and some complex factors [23]. When the spectral content of the source signals is time-varying, one can exploit the powerful tool of the STFDs to separate and recover the incoming signals. In this context, the BSS problem can be regarded as signal synthesis from the T-F plane with the incorporation of the spatial diversity provided by the antennas. In

contrast to conventional BSS approaches, the STFDs-based signal separation techniques allow separation of correlated Gaussian sources with identical spectral shape, provided that the sources have different T-F signatures.

Herein, the multi-antenna signal  $z(n)$  is assumed to be non-stationary and to obey the linear model (6). The problem under consideration consists of identifying the matrix  $\mathbf{A}$  and/or recover the source signals  $s(n)$  up to a fixed permutation and some complex factors. By selecting autoterm points, the whitened auto STFDs have the structure

$$\underline{\mathbf{D}}_{zz}^a(n, k) = \mathbf{U} \mathbf{D}_{ss}^a(n, k) \mathbf{U}^H \quad (28)$$

with  $\mathbf{D}_{ss}^a(n, k)$  denoting a diagonal matrix. The missing unitary matrix  $\mathbf{U}$  can be retrieved up to permutation and phase shifts by joint diagonalization (JD) of a combined set  $\{\underline{\mathbf{D}}_{zz}^a(n_l, k_l) \mid l = 1, \dots, P\}$  of  $P$  auto STFDs. The incorporation of several autoterm points in the JD reduces the likelihood of having degenerate eigenvalues and increases robustness to a possible additive noise. The above JD is defined as the maximization of the criterion

$$C_{\text{JD}}(\mathbf{V}) \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \sum_{l=1}^P \sum_{i=1}^L |\mathbf{v}_i^H \underline{\mathbf{D}}_{zz}^a(n_l, k_l) \mathbf{v}_i|^2 \quad (29)$$

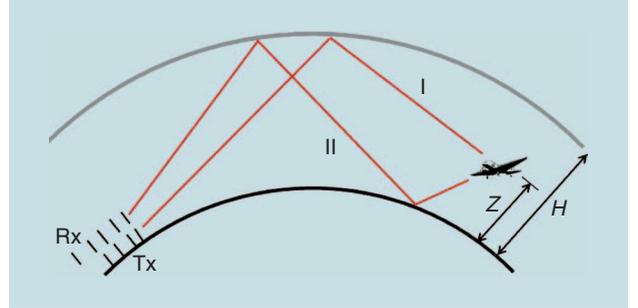
over the set of unitary matrices  $\mathbf{V} = [\mathbf{v}_1, \dots, \mathbf{v}_L]$ . The selection of cross-term points leads to the whitened cross STFD,

$$\underline{\mathbf{D}}_{zz}^c(n, k) = \mathbf{U} \mathbf{D}_{ss}^c(n, k) \mathbf{U}^H \quad (30)$$

with  $\mathbf{D}_{ss}^c(n, k)$  an off-diagonal matrix. The unitary matrix  $\mathbf{U}$  is found up to permutation and phase shifts by joint off-diagonalization (JOD) of a combined set of  $Q$  cross STFDs,  $\{\underline{\mathbf{D}}_{zz}^c(n_l, k_l) \mid l = 1, \dots, Q\}$ . The JOD is defined as the maximization of the criterion

$$C_{\text{JOD}}(\mathbf{V}) \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} - \sum_{l=1}^Q \sum_{i=1}^L |\mathbf{v}_i^H \underline{\mathbf{D}}_{zz}^c(n_l, k_l) \mathbf{v}_i|^2 \quad (31)$$

over the set of unitary matrices  $\mathbf{V} = [\mathbf{v}_1, \dots, \mathbf{v}_L]$ . The unitary matrix  $\mathbf{U}$  can also be found up to permutation and phase shifts by a combined JD/JOD of the two sets  $\{\underline{\mathbf{D}}_{zz}^a(n_l, k_l) \mid l = 1, \dots, P\}$  and  $\{\underline{\mathbf{D}}_{zz}^c(n_l, k_l) \mid l = 1, \dots, Q\}$ . Note that with the introduction of the STFD framework and with the goal of source separation, cross-terms in the T-F plane are no longer undesirable components, as in the case of single-sensor processing, indicating false manifestation of energy. Rather, cross-terms and autoterms assume equal roles in multisensor signal processing. Once the unitary matrix  $\mathbf{U}$  is determined from either the JD, the JOD, or the combined JD/JOD, an estimate of the mixing matrix  $\mathbf{A}$  can be computed by the product  $\mathbf{W}^\# \mathbf{U}$ , where  $\mathbf{W}$  is the whitening matrix and  $(\cdot)^\#$  denotes the pseudo-inverse operator. An estimate of the source signals  $s(n)$  can then be obtained from the product  $\mathbf{A}^\# \mathbf{z}(n)$ . BSS can also be performed by exploiting directly the auto- or cross-STFDs (7) without relying on the whitening step [10], [13], [24]. Note that the latter usually establishes a bound on the reachable performance.



**[FIG6]** A micromultipath propagation in an over-the-horizon radar system.

One of the most important contributions of the STFD framework to BSS problems is enabling solutions of the underdetermined problem where there are more sources than sensors (i.e.,  $L > K$ ). Herein, for the resolution of the underdetermined problem, we review a STFD-based BSS method [14]. We start by selecting autoterm points where only one source exists. The corresponding STFD then has the following form:

$$\mathbf{D}_{zz}(n, k) = D_{s_i s_i}(n, k) \mathbf{a}_i \mathbf{a}_i^H, \quad (n, k) \in \Omega_i, \quad (32)$$

where  $\Omega_i$  denotes the T-F support of the  $i$ th source. The main idea of this algorithm is to cluster together the autoterm points associated with the same principal eigenvector of  $\mathbf{D}_{zz}(n, k)$  representing a particular source signal. Once the clustering and classification of the autoterms is performed, the estimates of the source signals are obtained from the selected autoterms using a T-F synthesis algorithm [25]. Note that the missing autoterms in the classification, often due to intersection points, are automatically interpolated in the synthesis process. An advanced clustering technique of the above autoterms based on Gap statistics is proposed in [26]. Note that a byproduct of the above clustering procedures in the STFD framework is the estimation of the source number.

## APPLICATIONS

Array processing for source separation and localization is important in a wide variety of applications. Conventional array signal processing algorithms assume stationary signals and mainly call for the covariance matrix estimation of the data vectors. In contrast, T-F-based array processing techniques, as discussed above, exploit signal nonstationarity and, as a result, offer improved source separation and localization capabilities for use in many applications, such as wireless communications, navigation, radar, sonar, underwater communications, and biomedical systems. Some application examples are discussed below.

In wireless communications, FM signal representations can be used for pulse shaping in single- or multiuser communications. In the latter, multiple sets of FM waveforms are designed to have distinct IF laws so as to achieve low correlations among different waveforms. Array signal processing improves the separability of FM signals impinging from different directions or, in the situation of multipath propagation, with different channel

coefficients. FM signals are also used as smart jamming sources. In particular, for FM jammers encountered in direct-sequence spread-spectrum (DS/SS) communications and GPS, T-F-based techniques enable improved DOA estimation of the jammers and thereby facilitate their mitigation [27].

In radar applications, LFM signals are commonly used as sensing waveforms, whereas target Doppler signatures demonstrate nonstationarity over the slow time samples. Therefore, T-F-based source separation and localization are critical means to handle such signals, particularly when the signals are noisy. Two examples are as follows:

- In [28], the STFD-based BSS technique [1] is applied to ground penetration radar for the detection of permafrost interface. Because of the shallow depth, the response from the targets (permafrost) and the clutter from ground surface overlap in the time domain and cannot be separated by simple gating. Spatial filtering is difficult to be applied as well for clutter suppression because the medium is not homogeneous. BSS is considered effective for the separation of target response from ground surface clutter. The nonstationarity of the target response comes from the fact that the response is a superposition of many permafrost scatterers that have different arrival time and different frequencies. The measurement data are collected in multiple positions, yielding a synthetic array aperture. As such, the STFD platform is very suited in this problem to exploit the distinguished in time, frequency, and space for effective separation of the permafrost surface response from ground surface clutter. Enhanced identification of permafrost surface is achieved from the separated permafrost response signal.

- A practical and tangible method for providing the altitude information in over-the-horizon radar system is based on micromultipath model that makes use of multipath returns due to the ocean or ground reflections local to the target [29]. As shown in Figure 6, one path from the target is reflected only by the ionosphere, whereas the other is reflected by the earth surface and the ionosphere. The two paths have different Doppler frequencies when a target maneuvers with an elevation-direction component. As such, the observed multipath received signal corresponding to a maneuvering target becomes a multicomponent FM signals with very close IF and angular separations. DOA estimation is possible only after separating the two paths exploiting their difference in the TFD, as each individual signal is converted into a stationary signal and properly filtered [22]. The resolved DOA estimates of the two paths yield accurate estimation of the target altitude.

In an underwater environment, LFM signals are also commonly used in active sonar systems, whereas mammals like dolphins rely heavily on sound production and reception to navigate, communicate, hunt, and avoid predators in dark or limited-vision

waters. In addition, continuous-wave (CW) and narrowband signals are usually distorted due to nonlinear propagation. As such, T-F-based array signal processing can play an important role for the separation and localization of emitters. In [30], the T-F-MUSIC technique is used in an array of multiple hydrophones to produce passive acoustic oceanic tomography.

The ubiquitous use of multiple sensors, whether in colocated or in distributed architectures, in radar, acoustic, and biomedical application areas, will continue to invite STFDs to play a role in array signal processing of nonstationary signals. Signals that are instantaneously narrowband are locally sparse by the virtue of their T-F power localizations. As such, compressive sensing theory and sparse signal reconstruction can prove effective in achieving source separation and direction finding using significantly reduced number of observations.

The choice of applying linear T-F transforms versus quadratic or higher-order TFDs in conjunction with array processing will remain

to be application specific. It will be influenced by the underlying physical model and prior knowledge of signal characteristics.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this article, we presented a review of the spatial time-frequency distributions that constitute an effective framework that enables the integration of T-F analysis and array signal processing. Its objective is to use the signal power localization properties in the T-F domain to enhance the attributes of multisensor receivers, especially for direction finding and source separation of far field nonstationary sources. The key is to permit linear problem formulation where the sensor data are expressed in terms of the source time-frequency signatures. In so doing, SNR enhancement and source discrimination can be exploited prior to performing subspace decomposition and source signal recovery. The article discussed challenges and approaches for the selection of T-F points along the T-F signatures as well as at cross-terms. It was emphasized that the T-F and spatial degrees of freedom can interplay and be exploited to enhance their respective domain source characterization. With progress in sensing technology driving lower cost and higher efficiency sensors and with nonstationarity underlying many signal and propagation channel characteristics in emerging applications, it is expected that the STFD framework and others combining power localizations in space, time, and frequency will play a stronger role in signal analysis and sensor data processing.

## AUTHORS

*Adel Belouchrani* (adel.belouchrani@enp.edu.dz) received his engineering degree in 1991 from Ecole Nationale Polytechnique, Algiers, Algeria, and his Ph.D. degree in 1995 from Telecom Paris, France. He was with the Electrical Engineering and Computer Sciences Department, University of California, Berkeley, from 1995 to 1996 and with the Department of Electrical and Computer

**ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STFD FRAMEWORK TO BSS AND DOA ESTIMATION PROBLEMS IS ENABLING SOLUTIONS OF THE UNDERDETERMINED PROBLEM WHERE THERE ARE MORE SOURCES THAN SENSORS.**

Engineering, Villanova University, from 1996 to 1997. Since 1998, he has been with the Electrical Engineering Department at Ecole Nationale Polytechnique, Algiers, where he is currently a full professor. His research interests are in statistical signal processing, (blind) array signal processing, and T-F analysis with applications in biomedical and communications.

**Moeness G. Amin** (moeness.amin@villanova.edu) received his Ph.D. degree in 1984 from the University of Colorado. He has been on the faculty of the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Villanova University since 1985. In 2002, he became the director of the Center for Advanced Communications, College of Engineering. He has over 600 journal and conference publications in the areas of wireless communications, T-F analysis, smart antennas, waveform design and diversity, interference cancellation in broadband communication platforms, antijam GPS, direction finding, channel diversity and equalization, ultrasound imaging, and radar signal processing. He has received seven paper awards.

**Nadège Thirion-Moreau** (thirion@univ-tln.fr) received her Dipl.-Physics degree from Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Physique de Grenoble in 1992, and her M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees in signal processing from the Institut National Polytechnique de Grenoble, France, in 1992 and 1995, respectively. She is currently a professor in the Telecommunications Department of the Institut des Sciences de l'Ingénieur de Toulon et du Var de l'Université du Sud Toulon Var. Her research interests include deterministic and statistical signal processing, time-frequency distributions, adaptive methods, optimization, blind techniques (identification, source separation, multidimensional deconvolution), joint decompositions of matrix sets, tensor decompositions with application in radar teledetection, maritime surveillance, environmental data analysis and monitoring, and fluorescence spectroscopy. She is an associate editor for the French review *Traitement du Signal*.

**Yimin D. Zhang** (yimin.zhang@villanova.edu) received his Ph.D. degree from the University of Tsukuba, Japan, in 1988. After working at academia and industries in China and Japan, he joined Villanova University in 1998, where he is currently a research professor with the Center for Advanced Communications and the director of the Wireless Communications and Positioning Laboratory. He has more than 200 publications in the general areas of array signal processing for communications and radar systems, including wireless networks, T-F analysis, source localization, target tracking, radio-frequency identification, and image processing. He is an associate editor of *IEEE Transactions on Signal Processing*.

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