

## IMAGING OF SEPARATE SCATTERERS BY MEANS OF A MULTISCALING MULTIREGION INEXACT-NEWTON APPROACH

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**Abstract**—The integration of the Iterative Multi-Scaling Multi-Region (*IMSMR*) procedure and the Inexact-Newton method (*INM*) is proposed within the contrast-field formulation of the inverse scattering problem. Thanks to its features, such an implementation is expected to effectively deal with the reconstruction of separated objects. A selected set of numerical results is presented to assess the potentialities of the *IMSMR-INM* method also in comparison with previous *INM*-based inversions.

### 1. INTRODUCTION AND MOTIVATION

Non-invasive and non-destructive testing applications [1, 2] including biomedical imaging [3–5], subsurface prospecting [6], and material characterization [7] require fast and reliable microwave imaging techniques [8–10]. The development of inverse scattering methodologies comply-ing with these requirements is a challenging task because of (*I*) the ill-posedness/ill-conditioning and (*II*) the non-linearity of the associated inverse problems [11]. As for the “local minima” issue, which is due to the *non-linear* nature of the inverse problem and the limited amount of information coming from the scattering data [21], the use of global optimization techniques [12–15], alternative problem formulations (e.g., *Contrast Source*, *Born*, or *Rytov* formulations [16–18]), and multi-resolution strategies [19, 20] has been proposed. On

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the other hand, several direct and indirect regularization approaches have been developed to mitigate the *ill-posedness/ill-conditioning* of the inversion [22, 23].

A promising approach to simultaneously address the theoretical difficulties (I) and (II) has been recently introduced by integrating a regularization technique with a local-minima-mitigation approach [24, 25]. Indeed, the so-called Iterative Multi-Scaling Inexact-Newton method (*IMSINM*) approach exploits, on the one hand, the regularization features of the *INM* [23] and, on the other, the effectiveness of the multi-focusing scheme to achieve high resolutions while reducing or avoiding local minima [19, 20]. The reliability and the numerical efficiency of the arising methodology has been preliminary assessed in [24, 25]. Despite these good performances, only a single “focusing” region has been considered during the inversion [24, 25] and reduced performances are expected when dealing with separated scatterers.

The aim of this work is to extend the method in [24, 25] to effectively retrieve multiple non-connected objects. Towards this end, the approach in [20] is nested within the *INM* and, unlike [25], separated regions-of-interest are dealt with to yield an Iterative Multi-Scaling Multi-Region Inexact Newton method (*IMSMR-INM*, Section 2). Representative numerical results are then presented in Section 3 to point out the improvements achievable over the single-region implementation [24, 25].

## 2. OUTLINE OF THE *IMSMR-INM*

With reference to a two-dimensional *TM*-illuminated scenario, the following integral equations relate the scattered [ $E_v^{scatt}(\mathbf{r}) \triangleq E_v^{tot}(\mathbf{r}) - E_v^{inc}(\mathbf{r})$ ], the total [ $E_v^{tot}(\mathbf{r})$ ], and the incident [ $E_v^{inc}(\mathbf{r})$ ] fields to the dielectric properties of a set of unknown scatterers described by the contrast function distribution  $\tau(\mathbf{r}) = \varepsilon_r(\mathbf{r}) - 1$  [19] [ $\varepsilon_r(\mathbf{r})$  being the relative dielectric permittivity] and embedded in a free-space background,  $\varepsilon_0$  and  $\mu_0$  being its permittivity and permeability, respectively,

$$E_v^{scatt}(\mathbf{r}_m^v) = -k_0^2 \int_{\Omega} \tau(\mathbf{r}') E_v^{tot}(\mathbf{r}') G(\mathbf{r}_m^v/\mathbf{r}') d\mathbf{r}', \quad \mathbf{r}_m^v \in C \quad (1)$$

$$E_v^{inc}(\mathbf{r}) = E_v^{tot}(\mathbf{r}) + k^2 \int_{\Omega} \tau(\mathbf{r}') E_v^{tot}(\mathbf{r}') G(\mathbf{r}/\mathbf{r}') d\mathbf{r}', \quad \mathbf{r} \in \Omega \quad (2)$$

where  $k_0 = \sqrt{\varepsilon_0 \mu_0}$ ,  $C$  is the measurement curve external to the investigation domain  $\Omega$  and where  $M$  measurement points  $\mathbf{r}_m^v$ ,  $m = 1, \dots, M$ , are located. Moreover,  $G_{2D}(\mathbf{r}/\mathbf{r}')$  is the 2D Green's

function [19] and the superscript  $v$  ( $v = 1, \dots, V$ ) identifies the  $v$ -th direction of incidence of the probing monochromatic wave whose time-dependence  $\exp(j2\pi ft)$  is assumed and omitted hereinafter. The objective of the reconstruction procedure is that of inverting (1) and (2) to find the unknown distributions of  $\tau(\mathbf{r})$  and  $E_v^{tot}(\mathbf{r})$  in  $\Omega$  starting from the knowledge of  $E_v^{inc}(\mathbf{r})$ ,  $\mathbf{r} \in \Omega$ , and  $E_v^{scatt}(\mathbf{r}_m)$ ,  $\mathbf{r}_m^v \in C$ .

To image effectively multiple objects, a generalization of the approach in [24] able to identify and zoom on different sub-regions of the domain is needed. Towards this end, Equations (1) and (2) are firstly rewritten in a more compact form as  $\mathbf{F}\{\mathbf{u}\} = \mathbf{d}$ , where  $\mathbf{u} \triangleq [\tau(\mathbf{r}); E_v^{tot}(\mathbf{r}), v = 1, \dots, V]^T$ ,  $\mathbf{d} \triangleq [E_v^{scatt}(\mathbf{r}_m^v), v = 1, \dots, V, m = 1, \dots, M; E_v^{inc}(\mathbf{r}_n), v = 1, \dots, V]^T$ , and  $\mathbf{F}$  is the Lipmann-Schwinger nonlinear scattering operator in (1) and (2) [24]. By partitioning at each step ( $s = 1, \dots, S$ ,  $s$  being the step index) of the multiscaling process the investigation domain into  $N$  ( $N$  being the number of degrees of freedom of the scattered field [21]) cells centered at  $\mathbf{r}_n^{(s)}$  ( $n = 1, \dots, N$ ) [26], the following algebraic nonlinear equation is then obtained

$$\mathbf{P}^{(s)} \left\{ \mathbf{u}^{(s)} \right\} = \mathbf{F}^{(s)} \left\{ \mathbf{u}^{(S)} \right\} - \mathbf{d}^{(s)} = 0 \quad (3)$$

where  $\mathbf{d}^{(s)} \triangleq [E_v^{scatt}(\mathbf{r}_m^v), v = 1, \dots, V, m = 1, \dots, M; E_v^{inc}(\mathbf{r}_n^{(s)}), v = 1, \dots, V, n = 1, \dots, N]^T$ ,  $\mathbf{u}^{(s)} \triangleq [\tau(r_n^{(s)}), n = 1, \dots, N; E_v^{tot}(\mathbf{r}_n^{(s)}), v = 1, \dots, V, n = 1, \dots, N]^T$ ,  $\mathbf{F}^{(s)}$  being the discretized version of  $\mathbf{F}$ .

To solve (3) also taking into account the multi-region distribution of the unknown scatterers, the following operations are repeated:

- *Clustering* — It is aimed at computing the number  $Q^{(s)}$  and the locations/sizes of the regions-of-interest (*RoIs*) where the scatterers have been estimated to lie and where the synthetic zoom will take place. Such a task is carried out by firstly binarizing the pixel representation of the estimated contrast profile by means of a thresholding procedure based on the “image” histogram-concavity analysis [20] and then applying a noise filtering. Finally, a “labeling” is performed to estimate the membership of each pixel either to the background or to one of the *RoIs* [20];
- *Retrieval* — It is devoted to retrieve the dielectric profiles in each of the  $Q^{(s)}$  *RoIs*. Towards this end, the following nested phases are iteratively performed by solving (3) in a regularized sense (according to the *IN* method) until the retrieved profile  $\mathbf{u}_I^{(s)}$  is found (“outer *IN* loop”,  $i = 1, \dots, I$ ):
  - Linearization*. A Taylor expansion of  $\mathbf{P}^{(s)}\{\mathbf{u}^{(s)}\}$  around to  $\mathbf{u}_i^{(s)}(\mathbf{u}_0^{(s)} = \mathbf{u}_I^{(s-1)})$  is computed and then truncated at the first

order to determine the linear approximation  $\mathbf{L}_i^{(s)}\{\mathbf{u}^{(s)}\}$  [24];

-*Update*. The guess solution is updated ( $\mathbf{u}_{i+1}^{(s)} \triangleq \mathbf{u}_i^{(s)} + \mathbf{h}_i^{(s)}$ ) by determining  $\mathbf{h}_i$ . Towards this end, the equation  $\mathbf{L}_i^{(s)}\{\mathbf{u}_i^{(s)} + \mathbf{h}_i^{(s)}\} = 0$  is iteratively solved through  $K$  steps of a truncated Landweber procedure [27] (“inner *IN* loop”);

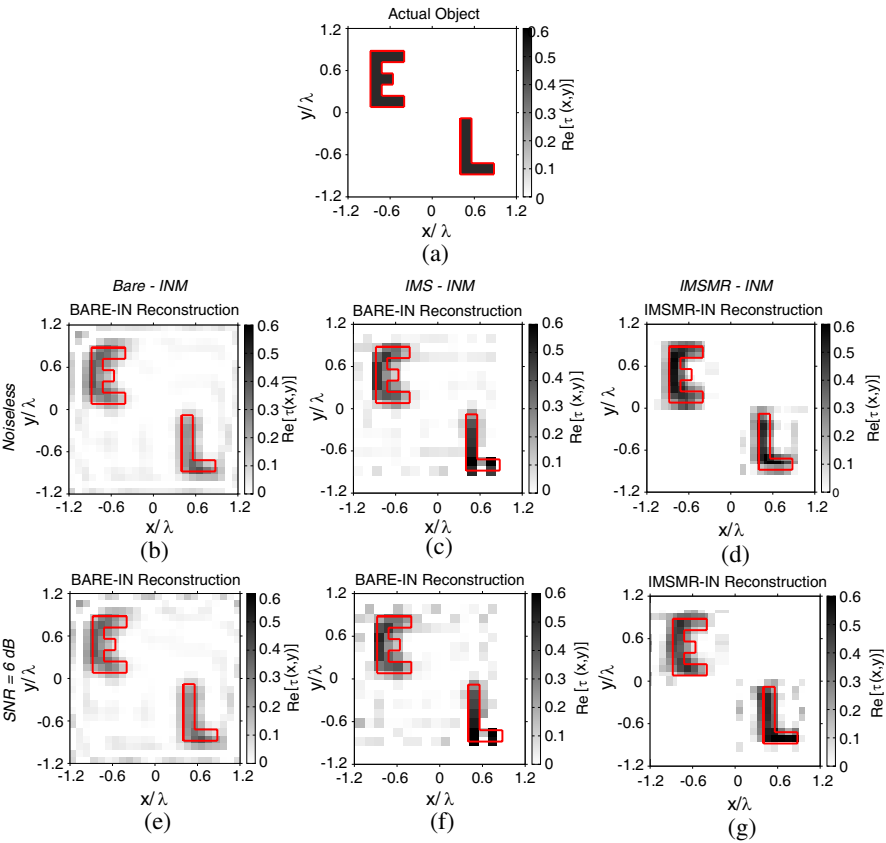
- *Termination* — It is aimed at assessing whether a “stationary” reconstruction is yielded in each region. More specifically, the multistep process is terminated ( $s = S_{opt}$ ) when (a) the number, the dimensions, and the locations of the *RoIs* are stationary [20] and (b) the qualitative reconstructions of the unknowns  $\mathbf{u}_I^{(s)}$  is accurate [23].

### 3. NUMERICAL RESULTS

The potentialities and limitations of the *IMSMR-INM* are assessed against synthetically-generated data. More specifically, the so-called “*E-L*” has been taken into account. It is composed by two homogeneous dielectric objects [Fig. 1(a)] belonging to a square investigation domain of side  $\ell = 24\lambda$  illuminated by  $V = 2.4$  *TM* plane waves impinging from the angular directions  $\vartheta_v = 2\pi(v - 1)/V$ ,  $v = 1, \dots, V$ . The scattered field has been synthetically computed through the Richmond method [26] at  $M = 360$  positions uniformly distributed on the circular measurement region  $C$  of radius  $\rho = 18\lambda$ . The *Bare-INM*, the *IMS-INM*, and the *IMSMR-INM* inversions have been carried out by setting  $K = I = 60$  and choosing the maximum number of multi-focusing steps equal to  $S = 5$ .

By considering weak scatterers ( $\tau = 0.5$ ) and noiseless data, the results from the different *INM*-based approaches are shown in Figs. 1(b)–1(d). Although both the *Bare-INM* and the *IMS-INM* allow one to identify the presence and the positions of two different objects, the reconstruction accuracy as well as the capability to avoid artifacts of the *IMSMR-INM* turn out to be significantly enhanced. This is quantitatively confirmed by the values of the error figures in

Table 1 and defined as  $\xi_\alpha = \frac{1}{N_\alpha} \sum_{n=1}^{N_\alpha} |\tilde{\tau}(\mathbf{r}_n) - \tau(\mathbf{r}_n)|/|\tau(\mathbf{r}_n) + 1|$  ( $\alpha = tot, ext, int$ ) where  $N_\alpha$  is the number of discretization domain of the whole investigation domain ( $\alpha = tot$ ), within the scatterer ( $\alpha = int$ ) or in the background region ( $\alpha = ext$ ). Moreover,  $\tilde{\tau}$  and  $\tau$  stand for the retrieved contrast and the actual one, respectively. As it can be noticed (Table 1), the *IMSMR-INM* yields a total error of about 47% of that from the *Bare-INM* and approximately 69% of that



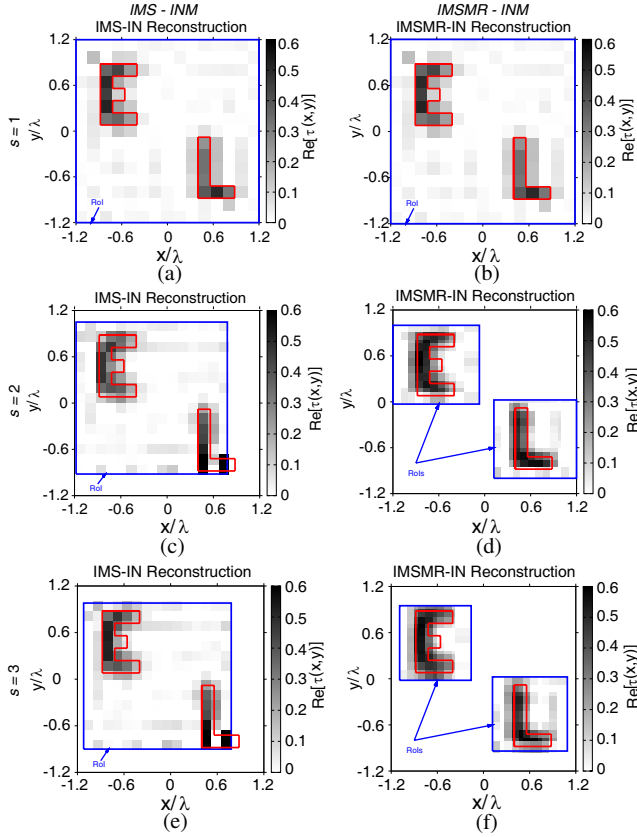
**Figure 1.**  $[\tau = 0.5]$ -Actual distribution (a) Reconstructed profile with (b)(e) the *Bare-INM*, (c)(f) the *IMS-INM*, and (d)(g) the *IMSMR-INM* in correspondence with (b)(c)(d) noiseless data and (e)(f)(g) noisy data ( $\text{SNR} = 6 \text{ dB}$ ).

**Table 1.**  $[\tau = 0.5]$ -Error and computational indexes.

Method	Noiseless				SNR = 6 dB			
	$\xi_{tot}$	$\xi_{int}$	$\xi_{ext}$	$\Delta t$ [s]	$\xi_{tot}$	$\xi_{int}$	$\xi_{ext}$	$\Delta t$ [s]
Bare	$6.34 \times 10^{-2}$	$1.63 \times 10^{-1}$	$5.44 \times 10^{-2}$	$5.40 \times 10^3$	$6.90 \times 10^{-2}$	$1.64 \times 10^{-1}$	$6.04 \times 10^{-2}$	$5.03 \times 10^3$
IMS-INM	$4.33 \times 10^{-2}$	$1.28 \times 10^{-1}$	$3.57 \times 10^{-2}$	$1.38 \times 10^3$	$5.65 \times 10^{-2}$	$1.38 \times 10^{-1}$	$4.88 \times 10^{-2}$	$1.33 \times 10^3$
IMSMR-INM	$3.01 \times 10^{-2}$	$1.00 \times 10^{-1}$	$2.37 \times 10^{-2}$	$1.28 \times 10^3$	$4.66 \times 10^{-2}$	$1.31 \times 10^{-1}$	$3.89 \times 10^{-2}$	$1.30 \times 10^3$

with the *IMS-INM* (i.e.,  $\xi_{tot}^{Bare} = 6.34 \times 10^{-2}$ ,  $\xi_{tot}^{IMS} = 4.33 \times 10^{-2}$ ,  $\xi_{tot}^{IMSMR} = 3.01 \times 10^{-2}$ ). Similar conclusions hold true for the internal ( $\frac{\xi_{int}^{IMSMR}}{\xi_{int}^{Bare}} = 0.61$ ,  $\frac{\xi_{int}^{IMSMR}}{\xi_{int}^{IMS}} = 0.78$ ) and the external ( $\frac{\xi_{ext}^{IMSMR}}{\xi_{ext}^{Bare}} = 0.43$ ,  $\frac{\xi_{ext}^{IMSMR}}{\xi_{ext}^{IMS}} = 0.92$ ) indexes, as well. For completeness, Fig. 2 and Table 2 give the evolution of the reconstructions and of the error metrics at different steps of the multi-resolution implementations of the *INM*, respectively.

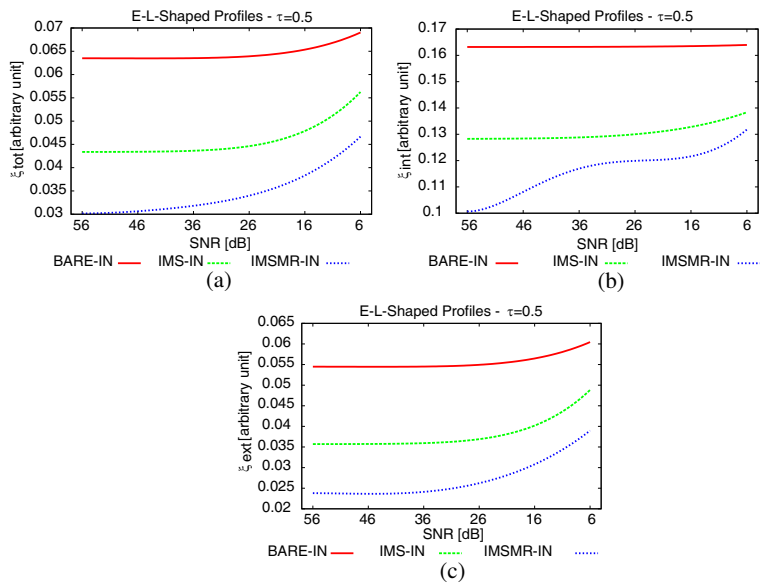
As far as the robustness to the data noise is concerned, inversions of blurred data have been successively analyzed. The noise, which



**Figure 2.**  $[\tau = 0.5, \text{Noiseless data}]$ -Evolution of the reconstruction at different steps [(a)(b)  $s = 1$ , (c)(d)  $s = 2$ , (e)(f)  $s = S_{opt} = 3$ ] of the multi-resolution implementations of the *INM*: (a)(c)(e) *IMS-INM* and (b)(d)(f) *IMSMR-INM*.

**Table 2.**  $[\tau = 0.5, \text{Noiseless Data}]$ -Error indexes at different steps of the multi-focusing procedures.

	<i>IMS- INM</i>			<i>IMSMR- INM</i>		
<i>S</i>	$\xi_{tot}$	$\xi_{int}$	$\xi_{ext}$	$\xi_{tot}$	$\xi_{int}$	$\xi_{ext}$
1	$4.71 \times 10^{-2}$	$1.82 \times 10^{-1}$	$3.48 \times 10^{-2}$	$4.34 \times 10^{-2}$	$1.02 \times 10^{-1}$	$3.80 \times 10^{-2}$
2	$4.68 \times 10^{-2}$	$1.42 \times 10^{-1}$	$3.82 \times 10^{-2}$	$3.45 \times 10^{-2}$	$0.98 \times 10^{-1}$	$2.94 \times 10^{-2}$
3	$4.33 \times 10^{-2}$	$1.28 \times 10^{-1}$	$3.57 \times 10^{-2}$	$3.01 \times 10^{-2}$	$1.00 \times 10^{-1}$	$2.37 \times 10^{-2}$



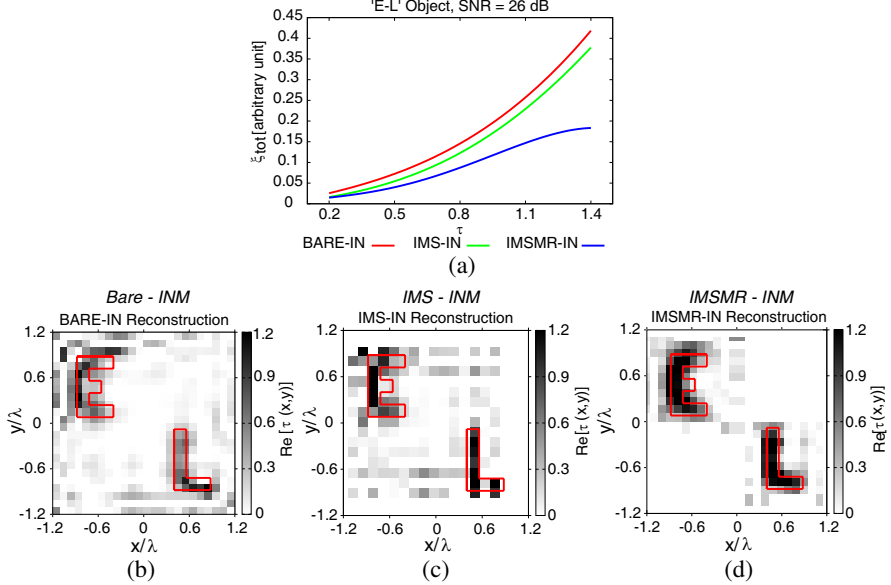
**Figure 3.**  $[\tau = 0.5]$ -Behavior of the error figures vs.  $SNR$ : (a)  $\xi_{tot}$ , (b)  $\xi_{int}$ , and (c)  $\xi_{ext}$ .

is characterized by a signal-to-noise ratio value,  $SNR$ , has been modeled by adding to the scattered field samples in  $C$  [i.e.,  $E_v^{scatt}(\mathbf{r}_m^v)$ ] randomly distributed values get from a Gaussian distribution. The plots of  $\xi_{tot}$  tot as a function of SNR [Fig. 3(a)] show that the accuracy of the *IMSMR-INM* degrades more significantly than that of the *INM* and the *IMS-INM* mainly for the worsening of the “external error” [Fig. 3(c)–Table 1]. This latter suggests that, as expected, some difficulties arise in estimating the extensions of

the different and separate *RoIs* when heavy noisy conditions verify. On the other hand, it cannot be neglected that the performances of the *MR* approach still overcome those from the other *INM* implementations as pictorially show in Figs. 1(e)–1(g) ( $SNR = 6$  dB) even though the inversion improvement ( $\varsigma_o^{A-B} \triangleq (\xi_{tot\downarrow o}^A - \xi_{tot\downarrow o}^B) / \xi_{tot\downarrow o}^B$ ) reduces from  $\varsigma_{SNR=\infty}^{IMSMR-IMS} = 50\%$  ( $\varsigma_{SNR=\infty}^{IMSMR-Bare} = 116\%$ ) down to  $\varsigma_{SNR=26}^{IMSMR-IMS} = 34.6\%$  ( $\varsigma_{SNR=26}^{IMSMR-Bare} = 95.5\%$ ) and  $\varsigma_{SNR=6}^{IMSMR-IMS} = 20.5\%$  ( $\varsigma_{SNR=6}^{IMSMR-Bare} = 47.9\%$ ).

With reference to the computational costs, the inversion time  $\Delta t^{(1)}$  of the *MR* technique is close to that of the *IMS-INM* ( $\Delta t^{IMSMR} / \Delta t^{IMS} \approx 0.95$ -Table 1), while it is significantly shorter than that of the *INM* ( $\Delta t^{IMSMR} / \Delta t^{Bare} \approx 0.24$ -Table 1). As a matter of fact, a problem of the same size of the *IMS-INM* is solved at each step since the discretizations  $N_{IMS}$  and  $N_{IMSMR}$  only depend on the information available in the scattering data [21], while  $N_{INM}$  turns out to be larger because of the required fine resolution in  $\Omega$  equal to that reached by the multiresolution procedures in the *RoIs* at  $S_{opt}$ .

To provide some more insights on the potentialities of the *MR* implementation, an analysis of the inversion accuracy versus the



**Figure 4.** [ $SNR = 26$  dB] (a) Behavior of  $\xi_{tot}$  vs.  $\tau$ . Reconstructions with (a) the *Bare-INM*, (b) the *IMS-INM*, and (c) the *IMSMR-INM* when  $\tau = 1.1$ .



dielectric properties of the scatterers has been carried out, as well. The actual contrast  $\tau$  has been varied within the range  $\tau \in [0.2, 1.4]$  and the scattered data have been blurred with a noise of  $SNR = 26$  dB. The plots of the total reconstruction error as a function of the scatterers' contrast [Fig. 4(a)] indicate that: (a) the accuracy decreases for increasing contrasts whatever the *INM*-based method, (b) similar performances are yielded for low contrasts (e.g.,  $\zeta_{\tau=0.2}^{IMSMR-IMS} = 91.4\%$ ), while (c) stronger scatterers are more carefully retrieved with the *IMSMR-INM* (e.g.,  $\zeta_{\tau=1.1}^{IMSMR-IMS} = 71.6\%$ ) as also visually confirmed by the reconstructions in Figs. 4(b)–4(d) ( $\tau = 1.1$ ).

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND REMARKS

The retrieval of multiple separate scatterers in free space has been performed through an innovative version of the *IMS-INM*. Selected numerical results have been presented to assess the features, the potentialities, and limitations of the *IMSMR-INM* also in comparison with previous *INM* implementations. Future works will be aimed at further assessing the reliability of such an approach also against experimental data. An extension to three-dimensional problems is at present under investigation, as well.

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