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Hall Magnetocapacitance in Two-Dimensional Electron Systems

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The magnetocapacitance of a two-dimensional electron system (2DES) is investigated experimentally, both under the and away from quantum Hall conditions, at frequencies between 1 kHz and 100 MHz. The nature of the capacitive signal in a bounded 2DES is determined by a resistive cutoff frequency $1/\tau \approx \sigma_{xx}$, the longitudinal magnetoconductivity. A new response mechanism is reported for angular frequencies $\omega > 1/\tau$, which is controlled by the transverse or Hall conductivity $\sigma_{xy}$ and the boundaries of the sample. The mechanism is also found at frequencies far below those of the edge magnetoplasma resonances and away from the quantum Hall regime.

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The spatial dependence of the electrical properties, and, in particular, the role of the sample edges, remains one of the major issues of present-day research of two-dimensional electron systems (2DES) in the quantum Hall (QH) state [1]. A large number of experiments, employing finite-frequency methods, has recently been reported on qualitative and quantitative investigations on the current or charge distributions. Inductive techniques have been used to investigate Hall currents in the bulk of the sample [2]. Magnetocapacitance data have yielded evidence for quantum edge channels [3], but on the other hand display properties that are clearly of classical origin though they would be more readily understood in terms of quantum channels [4,5]. Such techniques have also been applied to test theories for composite fermions in the fractional QH effect regime [6] or to study as yet poorly understood phenomena associated with in-plane tunneling of electrons [7]. Of particular importance are direct imaging techniques of various kinds [8,9]. Very recently, novel high-resolution scanning probe imaging techniques have been developed, some of which depend basically on ac techniques [10,11]. Low-frequency (100 kHz) ac measurements give quite different results from dc methods and are the key to imaging mobile charges [11].

Despite its increasing use, a thorough understanding of magnetocapacitance, or more generally finite-frequency properties, is still lacking. Traditionally, (magneto)capacitance is used to obtain information on the density of states and, in particular, the role of the sample edges, remains one of the major issues of present-day research of two-dimensional electron systems (2DES) in the quantum Hall (QH) state [1]. A large number of experiments, employing finite-frequency methods, has recently been reported on qualitative and quantitative investigations on the current or charge distributions. Inductive techniques have been used to investigate Hall currents in the bulk of the sample [2]. Magnetocapacitance data have yielded evidence for quantum edge channels [3], but on the other hand display properties that are clearly of classical origin though they would be more readily understood in terms of quantum channels [4,5]. Such techniques have also been applied to test theories for composite fermions in the fractional QH effect regime [6] or to study as yet poorly understood phenomena associated with in-plane tunneling of electrons [7]. Of particular importance are direct imaging techniques of various kinds [8,9]. Very recently, novel high-resolution scanning probe imaging techniques have been developed, some of which depend basically on ac techniques [10,11]. Low-frequency (100 kHz) ac measurements give quite different results from dc methods and are the key to imaging mobile charges [11].

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for $\omega \tau \gg 1$ both at and outside the QH regions, for the real, smooth density profile of the 2DES near the sample boundary. No explicit appeal to metallic edge channels is required.

The samples are obtained from a modulation-doped GaAs-AlGaAs heterostructure with 2DES density $n = 1.6 \times 10^{15} \text{m}^{-2}$ and mobility $\mu = 80 \text{m}^2/\text{Vs}$. Two $10 \times 10 \text{mm}^2$ samples were cleaved from this wafer. One was not further treated and coupled along opposite sides to two pieces of center conductor wire out of a coaxial cable, which serve as excitation and detection electrodes similar as in Ref. [16] (see inset in Fig. 1a). A $7 \times 7 \text{mm}^2$ mesa was etched out of the other and two Al strips were deposited along opposite sides on the remaining GaAs substrate to serve as excitation and detection electrodes. A small ($0.3 \times 0.3 \text{mm}^2$) Ohmic contact was made in the center of this second sample, which is connected to ground (see inset in Fig. 1b). The rms excitation voltage $V$ was 10 mV. At low frequencies ($<100 \text{kHz}$), the in- and out-of-phase components of the current $I$ induced in the detection electrode were measured using a current preamplifier and lock-in detector. At higher frequencies, an rf spectrometer was used as receiver with a 50 $\Omega$ input impedance, much smaller than $1/\omega C$, where $C \sim 10^{-12} \text{F}$ is the coupling capacitance, so that effectively the current amplitude is measured in this case. All experiments were done at a temperature of 1.5 K, where $\sigma_{xx}$ is typically $3 \times 10^{-6} \Omega^{-1}$ at 5 T, falling to below $10^{-8} \Omega^{-1}$ at $\nu = \hbar/n e B = 2$ (e elementary charge, $B$ magnetic field, and $h$ Planck constant).

![Figure 1](image)

FIG. 1. (a) The experimental capacitive response normalized to the zero-field signal, at four frequencies. Inset: Experimental arrangement. The resonance at 63 MHz coincides with the $\nu = 2$ QH plateau. (b) Upper four curves: The experimental capacitive response at four frequencies with the center contact grounded. Inset: Experimental arrangement. For this sample, the resonance at 55 MHz coincides with the $\nu = 2$ QH plateau. Lowest curve: The current through the center contact at 10 kHz.

Standard resistivity data ($\rho_{xx}$ and $\rho_{xy}$) were obtained from a third conventional Hall bar sample from the same wafer.

A set of data for sample 1 for four frequencies is shown in Fig. 1a. At the lowest frequency (10 kHz), the signal is nearly field independent, but a broad shallow ($\sim 10\%$) minimum around 1 T is clearly visible in addition to a shallow dip at $\nu = 2$ (3.3 T). The evolution of the pattern when the frequency is increased is shown by the next three traces, which are characterized by the persistent broad minimum, followed by a series of relatively weak (10%) Shubnikov–de Haas oscillations and a peak, which precedes a cutoff of the signal at higher fields. The data of the traces at 53, 63, and 80 MHz are similar to those reported previously [16,17]. The main peak corresponds to an edge magnetoplasmon (EMP) resonance which is identified by the $1/B$ dependence of the resonant frequency [17]. EMP’s [18] are a manifestation of the Hall effect, with charge excitations localized over a distance $\ell$ near the boundary of the sample and wave velocity proportional to the Hall conductivity $\sigma_{xy} \propto 1/B$. The damping of EMP’s is determined by $\sigma_{xx}$. For the 63 MHz trace, the frequency is chosen such that the EMP resonance coincides with the center of the QH region at $\nu = 2$. At the other frequencies the resonance occurs outside a QH region, resulting in a much broader resonance. The termination of the magnetocapacitive coupling by the $\sigma_{xy}$-controlled EMP resonance suggests that the coupling is a result of the Hall effect. At zero field there is obviously no Hall effect, so then the coupling across the 2DES is purely resistive. As a result, it is expected that there is a gradual transition from purely resistive $\sigma_{xx}$ coupling at low fields to Hall $\sigma_{xy}$ coupling at high fields. The resistive coupling decreases with field because of the decrease of $\sigma_{xx}$ with field, as has previously been described in the resistive plate model [13]. The Hall coupling becomes more important at higher fields as then $\sigma_{xy} \gg \sigma_{xx}$. The minimum near 1 T marks the crossover between the two mechanisms.

A direct proof for the different response mechanisms is obtained by the use of sample 2 (Fig. 1b). The grounded central contact shorts out the bulk contribution, by keeping the central part of the sample at ground potential. At low frequencies, a transmission signal is observed only at the QH regions where $\sigma_{xx} \to 0$. When the frequency is increased, a signal appears also in between the QH regions. At high frequencies, the transmission is very similar to Fig. 1a, except at very low magnetic fields. This directly confirms the crossover from bulk to edge conduction. At low frequencies, the current through the central contact was also measured: see bottom trace in Fig. 1b. The magnetic field dependence is complementary to that of the capacitive detector in the upper trace. The capacitive response is determined by two length scales. The first is a length $\ell = \sigma_{xx}/e\hbar B \omega$ [18,19] transverse to the edge, which corresponds to the distance over which charge penetrates the sample in a direction perpendicular to the edge in a time $1/\omega$. The second is the EMP wavelength...
along the edge, given by $\lambda = \sigma_{xy}/\varepsilon_0 \varepsilon_r \omega$ [18] (apart from a factor of order unity). Capacitive coupling occurs (i) via $\sigma_{xx}$ for $\ell \gg W$ (the sample size) and (ii) via $\sigma_{xy}$ for $\ell \ll W \ll \lambda$. A quantitative estimate for $\ell$ may be obtained from Fig. 1b for fields outside the QH regions. The frequency of 1 MHz, which clearly marks a transition regime, together with the experimental value for $\sigma_{xx}$ near 5 T and an average $\varepsilon_r = 5$, yields a value $\ell \sim 6$ mm, indeed in the order of the sample dimension $W$. Values found for $\ell$ in the domain of EMP studies are in the order of 1 $\mu$m [20]. In the QH region with $\nu = 2$ ($\sigma_{xx} \ll 10^{-8} \Omega^{-1}$) we estimate that $\ell \ll 3$ mm at 10 kHz, consistent with the edge mode coupling. We have discussed these effects in the context of magnetocapacitance, but they are intrinsic to the sample and would also be observed for Ohmic contacts. In the domain of EMP’s, the equivalence of Ohmic or capacitive contacts was recently explicitly demonstrated [21].

In previous works on resistive coupling [13,15], it has been very helpful to visualize the physical concepts in terms of a series $C$-$R$-$C$ electrical circuit, with $R$ proportional to $1/\sigma_{xx}$. In Fig. 2, it is shown that also the basic features of the present data can be recovered by the circuit by adding an additional branch parallel to $R$ as shown in the insets in Figs. 2c and 2d. The parallel branch consists of a (field dependent) inductance $L(B)$ to incorporate a circuit resonance (frequency $\sqrt{2}/LC$) to simulate the EMP resonance. Guided by the theory for EMP damping, the resistor $R_1$ in series with $L$ should be proportional to $\sigma_{xx}$. It should, however, diverge when $B \to 0$, because the Hall effect should be switched off there. The ground contact of Fig. 1b can be incorporated by splitting the resistor $R$ as in the inset in Fig. 2d. This model is very useful in understanding the experimental response, though no universal $R(B)$ and $R_1(B)$ dependence will fit all the data. A typical example corresponding to the configurations of Figs. 1a and 1b is shown in Figs. 2c and 2d, respectively, that employ models $R(B)$ and $R_1(B)$ displayed in Fig. 2b. The experimental $\sigma_{xx}$ trace is given in Fig. 2a.

The simulations confirm that the broad minimum near 1 T in the rf signal comes from the crossover between bulk (i.e., $R$-branch) and edge (i.e., $R_1$-$L$-branch) contributions. The two configurations differ basically at low fields only, where the ground in the resistive path shorts the signal. For the experimental data, this implies that the edge contribution is well developed by 1 T at rf frequencies. Finally, at the frequency of 80 MHz, the (very broad) circuit resonance occurs at 2.6 T, outside the QH region. Nevertheless, the peak of the signal occurs near the minimum in $\sigma_{xx}$, just as in the data.

An explicit demonstration of the existence of two coupling paths is provided by the phase behavior of the signal at intermediate frequencies, which has a very complex field dependence; an example is shown in Fig. 3a. A circuit representation is now invaluable for a qualitative understanding. Figure 3b shows that the data can be nicely represented by the two-branch circuit, with a proper adjustment of the parameters (see inset). The zero crossing of the in-phase signal basically marks the crossover from the dominance of one branch to the other and occurs when all impedances $R, R_1$, and $1/\omega C$ are comparable.

Away from the QH regions at low frequencies, the characteristic length $\ell \gg W$. Consequently, as is also clear experimentally, Figs. 1b and 3, bulk resistive coupling is also important here. On the other hand, the broad minimum near 1 T in Fig. 1a was interpreted as a manifestation of the $\sigma_{xy}$ coupling mechanism. At low frequencies, outside the QH regions, the two channels are coupled and no longer act independently.

At sufficiently low temperatures, at the QH regions, $\sigma_{xx}$ vanishes, and so would $\ell$. However, as is known from

![FIG. 2.](image)

(a) Experimental $\sigma_{xx}$ data (converted from measured resistivities). (b) Modeled $1/R(B)$ and $R_1(B)$ dependencies, to generate the circuit [see insets in (c) and (d)] current $I$, normalized to zero field or with $R = 0$, for (c) corresponding to the case without (compare Fig. 1) and (d) with (compare Fig. 2) center contact. $L(B)$ is such that the (very broad) circuit resonance $\omega = (2/LC)^{1/2}$ occurs at 2.6 T.

![FIG. 3.](image)

(a) Experimental in- and out of phase response (dashed and solid lines, respectively) of the configuration with grounded center contact at 40 kHz. (b) Normalized in- and out of phase response (dashed and solid lines, respectively) of the circuit shown in the inset. Circuit parameters: $C = 2 \times 10^{-12}$ F, $\omega/2\pi = 40$ kHz: $R_1(B)$ and $R(B)$: see inset. Note that no inductance has been used, as its impedance is negligible at low frequencies.
analysis of EMP excitations the shape of the density profile near the edge is extremely important [15,18,22]. When $\ell$ as defined above becomes smaller than the length $\xi$ over which the equilibrium charge density decays to zero at the edge (i.e., when $\omega \tau \gg 1$), $\ell$ must be replaced by $\xi$ [15,18]. The length $\xi$ is of the order of the lateral depletion length (1 to 10 $\mu$m) and is (practically) independent of $\sigma_{xx}$ or $\sigma_{xy}$, and so of $B$. The residual capacitance at the QH regions observed in the experiments of Takaoka et al. [3] was taken as evidence for the existence of edge channels, whose total width is also of the order of the lateral depletion length [23]. It is important to note that such a finite residual capacitance is expected from an entirely classical analysis as well. The situation is analogous to the classical or quantum approaches of the high-frequency EMP [20].

To our knowledge a residual capacitance under non-QH conditions has not yet been observed.

From an electro-optic imaging technique employing a 5 kHz sample potential modulation a penetration length of order 100 $\mu$m was observed [9]. This length was associated with a surprisingly large and unexplained edge channel width. Possibly, this length might correspond to the classical length $\ell$ discussed in the present work ($\ell \sim 100 \mu$m for $\sigma_{xx} \sim 10^{-10} \Omega^{-1}$ at 5 kHz).

In conclusion, it is shown that capacitive coupling via a 2DES can occur through the Hall effect. The coupling persists, even if $\sigma_{xx}$ is zero, provided that there is a smooth density profile near the edge, which for real systems must always be the case. The underlying principles are the same that are responsible for edge magnetoplasmons, which propagate better the smaller $\sigma_{xx}$. All observations can be understood from the local conductivities alone, without explicitly appealing to additional quantum mechanical concepts such as quantized energy levels, quantum Hall effect, or edge channels.

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