Passive Regenerative and Dissipative Snubber Cells for Isolated SEPIC Converters: Analysis, Design, and Comparison

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Abstract—An isolated converter such as SEPIC has high voltage stress on the main switch due to transformer leakage inductance. To solve this issue active or passive clamp action is necessary. The common passive solution based on an RCD snubber is simple but impractical when the value of the leakage inductance is significant. On the other hand, passive regenerative solutions generally compromise the isolation, making the search for a suitable snubber a challenge. In this paper, an effective passive regenerative snubber cell for isolated SEPIC converters operating in DCM or CCM is presented. It is intended to improve the converter efficiency by transferring the energy stored in the transformer leakage inductance to the output. The analysis is presented in detail for DCM and extended to CCM together with a practical design procedure. In order to compare with the RCD, the analysis and design of a conventional cell are presented as well. To validate the proposal and quantify its feasibility, experimental results are performed for both dissipative and regenerative snubbers on a 100 W, 100 V input and 50 V output voltage converter operating first in DCM and later in CCM.

Index Terms—Regenerative snubber, RCD snubber, SEPIC converter.

I. INTRODUCTION

SINGLE ended primary inductance converter (SEPIC) is one of the basic power electronic topologies. It can be used in a variety of applications, such as switched mode power supplies (SMPS) and power factor correction (PFC) units. Examples are well known in single-phase [1]–[3] or three-phase [4], [5] applications. This converter has some advantages when compared to other conventional topologies, such as the continuous low ripple current at the input for any operational mode. Moreover, the SEPIC can operate as a step-up or step-down converter and has the possibility to provide one or more isolated outputs.

Although, when isolation is required the voltage stress across the main switch, which is equal to the input voltage \( V_i \) plus the output voltage \( V_o \) referred to the transformer \( (T) \) primary side by a relation \( n \), becomes larger. This happens since the energy stored in the transformer leakage inductance has no path to circulate, causing voltage spikes across the main switch. Figure 1 (a) shows the isolated version of the SEPIC including the leakage inductance \( L_k \) and magnetizing inductance \( L_o \) referred to the transformer primary side.

Due to voltage spikes a snubber is required to prevent damage to the switch. Two approaches are commonly found in the literature, the passive dissipative or regenerative snubbers, and the active clamp circuits [6]–[9]. The last one typically provides zero voltage switching (ZVS), but the main drawback is the addition of one or more switches; which increases cost, compromises reliability and requires complex drivers. A more robust solution is the conventional dissipative resistor-capacitor-diode (RCD) snubber circuit, which can be placed directly across the switch or across the transformer primary side as depicted in Fig. 1 (b). The RCD snubber is composed of resistor \( R_{sn} \), capacitor \( C_{sn} \) and diode \( D_{sn} \). This is a cost effective solution but all the energy stored in the leakage is converted to heat, reducing the converter efficiency. Besides that, if a higher isolation level is required the leakage induc-
tance becomes relatively high, making the use of an RCD snubber impractical due to the high dissipation.

In order to cope with high stray inductances passive regenerative snubbers for SEPIC have been proposed such as presented in [10]–[13]. However, most of them are used in transformerless versions or their addition compromises the isolation. The SEPIC is a converter with an energy-storing transformer and for this reason energy regenerative snubber solutions as applicable for flybacks have been investigated as well [14]–[19]. Among these solutions the most popular is the Domb-Redl-Sokal snubber [14]. In the flyback situation the energy stored in the leakage inductance is first absorbed in the snubber capacitor and further returned to the power source through a snubber inductor. An improvement for this approach was proposed in [17] using a tertiary winding on the flyback transformer core, reducing the component count but maintaining the principle of operation. However, the SEPIC input has a current source characteristic due to the input inductor and therefore the previous solution cannot be directly applied. Although, with proper modification, the circuit can be implemented for the SEPIC converter as presented in [19]. Figure 1 (c) shows the application of this modified Domb-Redl-Sokal snubber applied to the isolated SEPIC, where the snubber inductor \(L_s\) can be coupled to the main transformer such as in [17]. The energy stored in the leakage in this situation is first recycled to the SEPIC decoupling capacitor \(C_i\) and after transferred to the output, rather than to the input source. Extra benefits of this solution, observed by simulation in [19], are the ZVS turn-on and zero current switching (ZCS) turn-on.

In this perspective, this paper proposes an alternative passive regenerative snubber especially suited for isolated SEPIC converters which combines the features of active snubbers, especially ZVS, and the robustness of passive snubber solutions. The proposed snubber cell is highlighted in Fig. 1 (d) and it is composed of capacitors \(C_{sa}\) and \(C_{sb}\) \((C_{sa} = C_{sb} = C_s)\), inductors \(L_{sa}\) and \(L_{sb}\) \((L_{sa} = L_{sb} = L_s)\) and diodes \(D_s\), \(D_{sa}\) and \(D_{sb}\). The introduction of this cell was first aimed at suppressing the voltage spike across the bridge leg of an isolated full-bridge boost topology [20], [21]. When applied to a SEPIC the behavior of the snubber cell is extended with extra operational stages [22], increasing the converter efficiency when compared to the SEPIC using the RCD snubber cell [23]. Additionally, \(L_{sa}\) and \(L_{sb}\) can be coupled, as illustrated by the dashed lines in Fig. 1 (d), reducing the required snubber inductance by a factor of two, and reducing the number of components in the circuit as well.

The proposed snubber has more passive components in comparison to [19] and it seems to be an extended version of that approach. However, the energy from the leakage is first stored in the snubber capacitors and then transferred to the output. This means that the decoupling capacitor is not part of the snubber circuit anymore and do not need to be fully allocated in an internal loop inside the snubber (see Fig. 1 (c)). As a consequence \(C_i\) can still be split in two parts for symmetry, voltage stress reduction, and extra galvanic isolation purposes. Inductors \(L_{sa}\) and \(L_{sb}\) might be coupled to the main transformer although the study to prove this assumption is not performed in this paper. However, the idea to keep the snubber circuit independent for the converter circuit is preferable in some situations. Besides that, until now there has not been available a detailed analysis of the snubber circuit operation in [19] when applied to SEPIC and neither a complete description of practical design procedures.

The operational principle of both RCD and regenerative snubbers are analyzed in detail based on the discontinuous conduction mode (DCM) operation of the SEPIC. For continuous conduction mode (CCM) the analysis is similar and the design snubber equations obtained for DCM can be also applied by making the proper considerations with respect to the new current stress situation, as shown in this paper. Design guidelines are given for a converter specification using both snubbers. Finally, to validate the method, experimental results are shown for DCM and CCM operation using both snubbers for the sake of comparison.

## II. REVIEW OF THE SEPIC

The dc-dc SEPIC can operate in CCM or DCM. The operation in CCM is detailed in [1] and this mode has two operational stages. When operating in DCM a third stage appears as described in [2] and [24]. Figure 2 shows the three simplified equivalent circuits of the ideal SEPIC in DCM. In CCM only the first two equivalent circuits shown in Fig. 2 exist. Figure 3 (a) and (b) and Fig. 4 (a) and (b) illustrate the main current and voltage waveforms for CCM and DCM operation.

![Fig. 2. SEPIC equivalent circuits for first (a) and second (b) operational stages in CCM. Third operational stage (c) valid only for DCM.](image)

![Fig. 3. Main current (a) and voltage (b) waveforms for CCM operation.](image)
Fig. 4. Main current (a) and voltage (b) waveforms for DCM operation.

Based on the operational stages and waveforms, the time intervals that represent the duration of each stage are given by

$$\Delta t_1 = \frac{\delta}{f_s} \quad \text{valid for both modes}, \tag{1}$$

$$\Delta t_2 = \begin{cases} \frac{1}{f_s} & \text{if CCM} \\ \frac{1}{nV_o f_s} & \text{if DCM} \end{cases} \tag{2}$$

and

$$\Delta t_3 = \frac{(1-\delta)nV_o - \delta V_i}{nV_o f_s} \quad \text{valid for DCM only}, \tag{3}$$

where $\delta$ is the duty-cycle and $f_s$ is the switching frequency. For DCM operation the peak currents in the input inductance $L_i$, and in the output inductance $L_o$ are found to be

$$I_{Li,\text{max}} = \frac{\delta V_i}{2nV_o L_i L_o f_s} \tag{4}$$

and

$$I_{Lo,\text{max}} = \frac{\delta V_i}{2nV_o L_i L_o f_s} \tag{5}$$

For CCM operation, including the load current $I_o$, these variables are given by

$$I_{Li,\text{max}} = \frac{V_i \delta}{2L_i f_s} + \frac{I_o \delta}{n(1-\delta)} \tag{6}$$

and

$$I_{Lo,\text{max}} = \frac{V_i \delta}{2L_o f_s} + \frac{I_o}{n} \tag{7}$$

For further analysis of the snubber, two important relations must be derived. The first is the maximum voltage across the switch $S$, that for both modes is given by

$$V_T = V_i + nV_o. \tag{8}$$

The second is the maximum current through $S$, which for DCM is written as

$$I_{T,\text{DCM}} = I_{Li,\text{max}} + I_{Lo,\text{max}} = \frac{\delta V_i}{L_{eq} f_s}, \tag{9}$$

whereas for CCM it is given by

$$I_{T,\text{CCM}} = I_{Li,\text{max}} + I_{Lo,\text{max}} = \frac{V_i \delta}{2L_{eq} f_s} + \frac{I_o}{n(1-\delta)}. \tag{10}$$

For both DCM and CCM, $L_{eq}$ is the equivalent inductance of the converter, equal to the parallel combination of $L_i$ and $L_o$, as

$$L_{eq} = \frac{L_i L_o}{L_i + L_o}. \tag{11}$$

The converter gain (relation between the input voltage and output voltage $V_o$) is equal to

$$G = \frac{V_o}{V_i} = \begin{cases} \frac{\delta}{1-\delta} \frac{R_o}{2L_{eq} f_s} & \text{if CCM} \\ \frac{\delta}{1-\delta} \frac{R_o}{2L_{eq} f_s} & \text{if DCM} \end{cases} \tag{12}$$

where $R_o$ represents the output load resistance.

When including a transformer in the circuit, the output inductance becomes equal to the magnetizing inductance. Additionally, a leakage inductance is added between the decoupling capacitor $C_i$ and the transformer. The energy stored in this leakage causes an overvoltage across $S$, every time it is switched OFF. For this reason, a snubber circuit must be included. The next two sections present the analysis of the conventional RCD snubber and the proposed regenerative snubber cells applied to the isolated SEPIC. This analysis is performed for the converter operating in DCM and extended to CCM operation.

### III. RCD SNUBBER PRINCIPLE OF OPERATION

The addition of the RCD circuit adds an extra operational stage to the conventional DCM SEPIC, that happens after switch $S$ is commanded to turn-off. At this moment snubber diode $D_{sn}$ starts conducting the current circulating in the leakage inductance $L_k$ transferring its energy to the snubber capacitor $C_{sn}$. $D_{sn}$ also creates a path for the current circulating in $L_i$, which is a drawback for this snubber circuit since it discharges part of the input inductor energy. Because of this action, output diode $D$ instead of assumes the current $nI_T$ as in the ideal situation, its current grows following the relation

$$i_D = n(i_{Lo} - i_{Lk}) \tag{13}$$

Considering these operation and assuming that $C_{sn}$ is large enough keeping voltage $v_{C_{sn}}$ unchanged during one switching period ($T_s$), the simplified equivalent circuit during this stage can be drawn as illustrated in Fig. 5 (a), where $C_{sn}$ is replaced by the voltage source $V_{C_{sn}}$. The key waveforms are depicted in Fig. 5 (b), where an extra stage is added compared to the conventional DCM SEPIC; first, third and fourth stages have the same equivalent circuits as presented in Fig. 2 (a), (b) and (c), respectively.

The duration of the second stage is much shorter than the other stages, therefore the snubber impact on the converters gain, and on the currents through the main components, can be neglected. The time of the second stage is obtained by solving the equivalent circuit and it is found to be

$$\Delta t_{sn} = \frac{L_i L_k (I_{Li,\text{max}} + I_{Lo,\text{max}})}{V_{C_{sn}} (L_i + L_k) - nV_o L_i}. \tag{14}$$
The average value of the current through the snubber is equal to

\[ I_{sn} = \frac{(I_{Li,max} + I_{Lo,max}) \Delta t_{sn}}{2T_s}. \]  

(15)

Hence, the power transferred to the snubber is represented by

\[ P_{sn} = V_{Csn} I_{sn} = \frac{V_{Csn} L_i L_k (I_{Li,max} + I_{Lo,max})^2}{2T_s [V_{Csn} (L_i + L_k) - n V_o L_i]}. \]

(16)

As the input inductance is much larger than the leakage, equation (16) can be reduced and rearranged as

\[ P_{sn} = \frac{1}{2} L_k I^2 f_{s} \left( \frac{1}{1 - \frac{n V_o}{V_{Csn}}} \right). \]

(17)

where \( I_T \) is given in (9). The maximum power dissipated in the snubber is therefore larger when a smaller \( V_{Csn} \) is selected, which means that not only the energy stored in \( L_k \) is dissipated. The value of the snubber capacitor voltage \( V_{Csn} \) determines the maximum voltage across \( S \) according to

\[ V_{S,max} = V_i + V_{Csn}. \]

(18)

When all the energy in \( L_k \) is transferred to the snubber and \( i_{L,k} = i_{L,i} \), the snubber diode blocks and the output diode assumes the maximum current, starting the third stage. The energy transferred to the snubber is dissipated in the snubber resistor \( R_{sn} \) during the next three stages.

A. RCD snubber design guidelines for DCM and CCM

The voltage ripple across the snubber capacitor can be represented by

\[ \Delta V_{Csn} = \frac{I_T \Delta t_{sn}}{2C_{sn}}. \]

(19)

Then, by applying (14) and (18) in (19), and assuming \( L_i \gg L_k \), an expression to obtain the value of \( C_{sn} \) can be derived as

\[ C_{sn} = \frac{L_k I^2_f}{2 \Delta V_{Csn} (V_{S,max} - V_T)}, \]

(20)

where \( V_T \) is equal to (8). After the maximum voltage allowed across \( S (V_{S,max}) \) is defined by the designer, \( C_{sn} \) is calculated using a value for \( \Delta V_{Csn} \) between 5% and 10% of the required \( V_{Csn} \). This is reasonable to keep the assumption that \( V_{Csn} \) is constant during the switching period. Hence, the snubber resistor is calculated by using

\[ R_{sn} = \frac{V_{Csn}^2}{P_{sn}} = \frac{2 V_{Csn} (V_{Csn} - n V_o)}{L_k f_s I^2_f T_s}. \]

(21)

This resistor should be chosen with sufficient power rating based on the power loss, equation (17), and the required value of \( V_{Csn} \) given by

\[ V_{Csn} = V_{S,max} - V_i. \]

(22)

For CCM operation the presented criteria remains the same but the current \( I_T \) in equations (20) and (21) is replaced by the CCM relation as given in (10).

IV. PROPOSED SNUBBER PRINCIPLE OF OPERATION

When the proposed snubber circuit is added to the DCM SEPIC, as illustrated in Fig. 1 (c), seven stages can be identified as depicted in Fig. 6. The key waveforms, used to analyze the principle of operation, are shown in Fig. 7. For the analysis it is assumed that capacitors \( C_i \) and \( C_o \) are large enough to neglect the voltage ripple across them. The values of the passive components in each leg of the snubber cell are equal. However, in practice deviations can exist, which causes small changes in the waveforms but do not compromise the principle of operation. The snubber inductors are not coupled for the analysis.

A. First stage \((t_0 < t \leq t_1)\)

The operation starts when \( S \) is commanded to turn ON. The voltage across \( C_i \) is constant and equal to the input voltage \( V_i \) charging both the magnetizing inductance \( L_o \) and leakage inductance \( L_k \). The input inductor \( L_i \) is charged through \( S \). The voltages across \( C_{sa} \) and \( C_{sb} \) are positive, making diodes \( D_{sa} \) and \( D_{sb} \) conduct, charging inductors \( L_{sa} \) and \( L_{sb} \). The output diode \( D \) is blocked and the load is maintained by the output capacitor \( C_o \). The current paths are illustrated in Fig. 6 (a). The time interval during this stage is given by

\[ t_{01} = \sqrt{L_s C_s} \left[ \frac{\pi}{2} - \arcsin \left( \frac{I_{L,s0}}{\sqrt{\frac{V_{C,s0}^2}{2 C_s} + I_{L,s0}^2}} \right) \right], \]

(23)

with \( V_{C,s0} \) and \( I_{L,s0} \) representing the initial values of the voltage across the snubber capacitor and current through the snubber inductor.

The voltage across \( C_{sa} = C_{sb} = C_s \) during this time is represented by

\[ v_{C,s01}(t) = V_{C,s0} \cos (\omega_1 t) - I_{L,s0} \sin (\omega_1 t), \]

(24)
while the current through \( L_{s1} = L_{s2} = L_s \) is found to be

\[
i_{L,s01}(t) = \frac{V_{Cs0}}{Z_1} \sin(\omega_1 t) + I_{L,s0} \cos(\omega_1 t),
\]

where the resonance frequency \( \omega_1 \) and impedance \( Z_1 \) are calculated by

\[
\omega_1 = \frac{1}{\sqrt{L_s C_s}},
\]

and

\[
Z_1 = \sqrt{\frac{L_s}{C_s}}.
\]

B. Second stage \((t_1 < t \leq t_2)\)

When all the energy stored in the snubber capacitors is transferred to the snubber inductors, the diode \( D_s \) starts conducting keeping the currents \( i_{L,s1} \) and \( i_{L,s2} \) in freewheeling through the switch as Fig. 6 (b) shows. The time duration in the second stage is

\[
t_{12} = \Delta t_1 - t_{01},
\]

where \( \Delta t_1 \) is the same time for the ideal converter as in equation (1). The final values of \( v_{Cs} \) and \( i_{L,s} \) in \( t = t_{12} \) are

\[
V_{Cs2} = V_{Cs1} = 0,
\]

and

\[
I_{L,s2} = I_{L,s1} = I_{L,s,max}.
\]
C. Third stage \( (t_2 < t \leq t_3) \)

In the end of the second stage, \( S \) is switched OFF, starting the third stage. As the current through the leakage inductance can not change instantaneously, it charges \( C_s \) and \( C_{sb} \) through \( D_s \). This also creates a path for the currents through \( L_i \), \( L_{sa} \) and \( L_{sb} \). The voltages across the snubber capacitors start to grow while the voltage across the output diode \((v_D)\) decreases. Figure 6 (c) represents the equivalent circuit for this stage. The time stage duration is

\[
t_{23} = \frac{C_s V_T}{2(I_T + I_{L,s,\text{max}})},
\]

where the voltage \( V_T \) and current \( I_T \) are calculated using expressions (8) and (9). As \( I_T \) can be considered constant, the voltage across \( C_s \) grows linearly in a short time and can be expressed by

\[
v_{C,s_{23}}(t) = \frac{(I_T + I_{L,s,\text{max}})}{C_s} t.
\]

In the same way, current through \( L_s \) is given as

\[
i_{L,s_{23}}(t) = I_{L,s,\text{max}} - \frac{V_T}{4L_s} t.
\]

In \( t = t_{23} \) the final values of \( v_{C,s} \) and \( I_{L,s} \) are found to be

\[
V_{C,s3} = \frac{V_T}{2},
\]

and

\[
I_{L,s3} = I_{L,s,\text{max}} - \frac{C_s V_T^2}{8L_s (I_T + I_{L,s,\text{max}})}.
\]

D. Fourth stage \( (t_3 < t \leq t_4) \)

In the moment \( v_{C,s} \) reaches \( V_T/2 \), \( v_D \) becomes equal to zero and \( D \) starts to conduct, initiating the fourth stage. During this stage, Fig. 6 (d), the voltage across \( C_s \) continues to rise until all the energy stored in \( L_k \) is transferred, blocking \( D_s \) and starting the next stage. The time interval is defined as

\[
t_{34} = \frac{\pi}{2} \sqrt{\frac{L_k C_s}{2}}.
\]

The evolution of \( v_{C,s} \) and \( i_{L,s} \) is represented by

\[
v_{C,s_{34}}(t) = V_{C,s3} + Z_2 (I_T + I_{L,s3}) \sin (\omega_2 t),
\]

and

\[
i_{L,s_{34}}(t) = I_{L,s3} - \frac{1}{L_s} \int_0^t v_{C,s4}(t) \, dt,
\]

where the resonance frequency \( \omega_2 \) and impedance \( Z_2 \) are calculated by

\[
\omega_2 = \sqrt{\frac{2}{L_k C_s}},
\]

and

\[
Z_2 = \sqrt{\frac{L_k}{2C_s}}.
\]

Applying equation (38) in (39) and (40), the voltage value across \( C_s \) and current through \( L_s \) in \( t = t_{34} \) become

\[
V_{C,s4} = \frac{V_T}{2} + Z_2 (I_T + I_{L,s3})
\]

and

\[
I_{L,s4} = I_{L,s3} - \left[ \frac{V_T \sqrt{2L_k C_s} + 4L_k (I_T + I_{L,s3})}{8L_s} \right].
\]

The sum of \( v_{C,sa} \) and \( v_{C,SB} \), or twice \( V_{C,s4} \), defines the maximum voltage stress across the switch \( S \),

\[
V_{S,\text{max}} = 2V_{C,s4} = V_T + 2Z_2 (I_T + I_{L,s3}).
\]

E. Fifth stage \( (t_4 < t \leq t_5) \)

When all the energy stored in \( L_k \) is transferred to the snubber \( D_k \) blocks starting the fifth stage, which is illustrated by the circuit depicted in Fig. 6 (e). The output diode assumes the current in \( L_i \) and \( L_o \) plus the current of \( L_{sa} \) and \( L_{sb} \) respecting the transformer relation as

\[
I_{D,\text{max}} = n (I_T + 2I_{L,s4}).
\]

As \( D_{sa} \) and \( D_{sb} \) are conducting, \( v_S \) drops instantaneously to \( V_T \), while \( C_s \) discharges during the time interval

\[
t_{45} = \frac{\theta}{\omega_1},
\]

where \( 0 < \theta < \pi \) is given by

\[
\theta = \arctan \left( \frac{Z_1 I_{L,s4}}{V_T - V_{C,s4}} \right).
\]

During any time in this interval the voltage across \( C_s \) is represented by

\[
v_{C,s{45}}(t) = V_T - (V_T - V_{C,s4}) \cos (\omega_1 t) - Z_1 I_{L,s4} \sin (\omega_1 t),
\]

while the current through \( L_s \) is

\[
i_{L,s{45}}(t) = \frac{V_T}{Z_1} \sin (\omega_1 t) - I_{L,s4} \cos (\omega_1 t).
\]

In the end of the fifth period all the energy from the leakage inductance, temporarily stored in the snubber circuit, is transfered to the output. The remaining energy in \( L_s \) is transfered to \( C_s \) (tank circuit). Then, \( V_{C,s5} = v_{Cs}(t_{45}) \) and \( I_{L,s5} = 0 \).

F. Sixth stage \( (t_5 < t \leq t_6) \)

As \( i_{L,sa} = i_{L,sb} = 0 \), \( D_{sa} \) and \( D_{sb} \) block while \( C_s \) remains charged with the voltage \( V_{C,s5} \), starting the sixth stage. As seen in Fig. 6 (f), the snubber is not conducting in this interval. In this stage the normal SEPIC operation remains until all the energy stored in the input and magnetizing inductances is transfered to the output. The time interval is then represented by

\[
t_{56} = \Delta t_2 - (t_{23} + t_{34} + t_{45}),
\]

where \( \Delta t_2 \) is calculated using equation (2). The final values of the snubber capacitor voltages and snubber inductor currents are \( V_{C,s6} = V_{C,s5} \) and \( I_{L,s6} = I_{L,s5} = 0 \).
The voltage across $C_s$ and the current through $L_s$ during this interval are given by

$$v_{C_s67}(t) = V_i - (V_i - V_{C_s6}) \cos(\omega_3 t), \quad (52)$$

and

$$i_{L_s67}(t) = \frac{V_{C_s6} - V_i}{Z_3} \sin(\omega_3 t), \quad (53)$$

where the resonance frequency $\omega_3$ and impedance $Z_3$ are

$$\omega_3 = \frac{1}{\sqrt{L_{eq2} C_s}}, \quad (54)$$

and

$$Z_3 = \sqrt{\frac{L_{eq2}}{C_s}}. \quad (55)$$

The parameter $L_{eq2}$ represents the equivalent inductance of the series combination of $L_s$, $L_o$ and $L_k$ as

$$L_{eq2} = L_s + 2(L_o + L_k). \quad (56)$$

After the interval $t_{67}$ the final value of $v_{C_s}$ and $i_{L_s}$ are

$$V_{C_s7} = v_{C_s67}(\Delta t_3) = V_{C_s6}, \quad (57)$$

and

$$I_{L_s7} = i_{L_s67}(\Delta t_3) = I_{L_s6}. \quad (58)$$

The peculiarity of this stage is that for maximum power transfer (worst scenario) $\Delta t_3$ is too short, making the variations of $v_{C_s}$ and $i_{L_s}$ too small that can be neglected. This fact makes $V_{C_s7} = V_{C_s5}$ and $I_{L_s7} = 0.0$. In the other hand, for small power processing, when $t_{67}$ is larger than $\pi/\omega_3$, the current in $L_s$ completes half cycle of the resonance period. As $D_{sa}$ and $D_{sb}$ do not conduct negative currents, the final value of $i_{L_s}$, in this situation, is zero while $v_{C_s7}$ is calculated by

$$V_{C_s7} = 2V_i - V_{C_s5} = V_{C_s0}. \quad (59)$$

The final values of $V_S$, $i_{L_i}$ and $i_{L_o}$ in this condition return to the initial values in the stage that are

$$V_{S7} = V_{S6} = V_i, \quad (60)$$

and

$$I_{L_i,\text{min}} = -I_{L_o,\text{min}} = \frac{\delta^2 V_i (nV_o L_i - L_o V_i)}{2nV_o f_L L_i L_o}. \quad (61)$$

If this situation occurs, an eighth stage starts where the snubber circuit is not conducting as represented by the equivalent circuit shown in Fig. 8.

![Fig. 8. Eighth equivalent circuit.](image)

## V. REGENERATIVE SNUBBER DESIGN CRITERIA

The equations presented in the previous section describe the snubber principle of operation. A straight way to design its components is by following sequential steps in a recursive cycle. However, this is an impractical process and simplified equations are always useful, even if the outcomes provide only approximations. In this perspective two extra equations would be helpful. The first one should estimate the minimum value of the snubber capacitor for a desired peak switch voltage. And the second giving the snubber inductor values in order to satisfy the operational principle and to minimize the losses caused by the snubber addition.

### A. Snubber capacitor value

The maximum voltage across $S$ is defined by equation (45). For larger values of $C_s$ the value of $I_{L,s3}$ in (37) and the second term in (45) become smaller, reducing the voltage stress in $S$. Therefore, the maximum voltage across $S$ can be simplified as

$$V_{S,\text{max}} = V_T + 2Z_2 I_T. \quad (62)$$

Substituting (42) in (62) gives an approximate expression to calculate $C_s$ for a desired $V_{S,\text{max}}$ as

$$C_s = \frac{2L_s I_T^2}{(V_{S,\text{max}} - V_T)^2}. \quad (63)$$

The maximum voltage is determined by the designer and must be larger than $V_T$ and smaller than the maximum voltage allowed for the chosen semiconductor. The ideal snubber capacitor could be selected for $V_{S,\text{max}} = V_T$, although the result would be a large $C_s$ value. Doing so, it increases the time intervals to transfer the energy stored in the leakage to $C_s$ and later to the output. This time has a direct influence in the converter characteristics, and, in order not to affect the gain it must remain as short as possible. Then, it is recommended to keep the clamp voltage as high as possible or make adjustments in the converter design, taking into account the gain loss caused by the snubber presence.

### B. Snubber inductor value

Considering the maximum power transfer, the current through $L_s$ in the beginning of the first stage is approximately zero. The voltage $V_{C,s0}$ is equal to $V_{C,s5}$, and for simplification,
can be approximated by $V_T/2$. Then, the maximum current $I_{Ls,max}$ can be written as

$$I_{Ls,max} \approx \frac{V_T}{2Z_s}, \quad (64)$$

To match the assumption made in equation (63), that $I_{Ls,max}$ is neglected, this current must be significantly smaller than $I_T$. Then, taking this aspect into account and substituting equation (27) in (64), a minimum value for $L_s$ is calculated as

$$L_{s,min} > \frac{C_s V_T^2}{4k^2 I_T^2}, \quad (65)$$

where $k$ represents the percentage of $I_T$ and it is recommended to be between 10% and 20% ($0.1 < k \leq 0.2$).

Now, once the minimum value is defined, the designer has the freedom to choose a value for $L_s$. The value of $L_s$ has a direct impact on the conduction losses as it increases the current through the semiconductors. Although, after a certain value the effect is not relevant anymore. A maximum value is calculated in order to keep the principle of operation unchanged. Again, by analyzing the first stage, it can be noticed that the maximum value of $L_s$ should be chosen such that the time $t_{01}$ is smaller than $\Delta t_1$. Using the previous assumption that $I_{Ls0} = 0$, $t_{01}$ is written as

$$t_{01} = \frac{\pi}{2} \sqrt{L_s C_s}. \quad (66)$$

Hence, the upper limit for $L_s$ is found to be

$$L_{s,max} < \frac{4\delta^2}{C_s \pi^2 f_s^2}. \quad (67)$$

### C. CCM consideration

The analysis in DCM using the regenerative snubber uses the parameter $I_T$ for DCM, equation (9). The main difference when operating in CCM is the absence of the seventh stage, since $\Delta t_3 = 0$. Hence, knowing that the design criteria for DCM already neglects the seventh stage, though the same expressions for DCM can be used to define the snubber for CCM operation. The only necessary modification is to change current $I_T$ in equations (63) and (65) for the CCM current relation given by (10).

### D. Considerations on losses

Despite the fact that the proposed snubber recovers the energy stored in the leakage inductance, its addition to the circuit causes an increment in the conduction losses when compared to the converter without snubber. Besides, losses in the snubber components, mainly in the inductors, must also be taken into account. For this reason a good design and component choice is necessary. Contrary to the RCD losses calculation, the complete losses analyses for the regenerative snubber is too cumbersome since the expressions to calculate the rms values of the currents through the components must be derived and this goes over the scope of this paper. Although, this process can be done by simulation in order to estimate the losses if necessary. However, the impact of losses is essentially caused by the snubber inductor choice. For instance, if $L_s$ is dimensioned to have a value close to the limit, equation (67), the rms value of the currents through $S$ and $D$ become close to the ideal values, minimizing the conduction losses. In Fig. 9 this example is graphically proved by comparing the commutation current

$$i_c = i_S + \frac{i_D}{n} \quad (68)$$

with the idealized commutation current for two different values of $L_s$. It is clear that for a large value of $L_s$, Fig. 9 (b), the rms value of the commutation current is close to the ideal one, reducing the conduction losses. Although, a compromise between losses and the volume of $L_s$ is necessary. Nevertheless, with a good design, an improvement in efficiency is expected when using the regenerative snubber instead of the RCD one.

![Fig. 9. Commutation currents for a small (a) and large (b) values of $L_s$, both compared to the ideal commutation current represented by the dashed lines.](image-url)

Commutation losses are not analyzed into details in this study. Although, the proposed snubber helps to reduce these losses since it provides ZVS such as the solution in [19].

### VI. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

In order to validate the proposed snubber concept, a converter prototype was built as shown in Fig. 10 (a). The converter was first designed to operate in DCM. Later the operation for CCM was achieved by replacing the input and magnetizing inductors. The regenerative snubber cell is highlighted in Fig. 10 (a) and it can be replaced by the RCD snubber cell shown in Fig. 10 (b) or by the regenerative snubber with coupled inductors depicted in Fig. 10 (c). Table I shows the converter specifications while Table II summarizes the main designed parameters for both DCM and CCM. For the switch $S$ a 600 V MOSFET has been used and the maximum voltage to design the snubber components was specified in $V_{S,max} = 400$ V. Components’ part number are shown in Table III.

Both snubbers (regenerative and RCD) in DCM and CCM were designed according to the guidelines, specification, and obtained converter parameters. The calculated duty cycle for nominal power is $\delta = 0.477$ for DCM and $\delta = 0.5$ for CCM. The snubbers designed parameters are provided in Table II as well. The experimental results summarized in this section were obtained in open loop for both operational modes and snubber options.

#### A. DCM operation with proposed regenerative snubber

The first experimental result, which validates the operational modes and proposed regenerative snubber principle of operation, is presented in Fig. 11. It shows the voltage across the
switch $S$, the currents through $S$, and the output diode $D$. It is possible to see the moments where the energy from the leakage inductance is temporarily stored in the snubber and posteriorly transferred to the output. This confirms the goal of the proposed snubber cell.

Figure 12 (a) depicts again the voltage across the switch $S$ together with the current through it, but on a different time scale. The maximum value of the voltage $v_S$ agrees with the theoretical expectation ($\approx 400$ V). The small difference between the theoretical and experimental values is due to the practical implementation of the components. The theoretical value of $C_s$ according to equation (63) would be equal to approximately 8.7 nF, although a commercial value of 10 nF capacitor have been selected. Hence, rearranging equation (63), the expected maximum voltage across $S$ is recalculated by

$$V_{S,\text{max}} = V_T + I_T \sqrt{\frac{2L_k}{C_s}}. \quad (69)$$

Figure 12 (b) presents a close-up view of the switch turn-off process, where is possible to visualize the ZVS feature, while Fig. 12 (c) shows the current and voltage in the output diode. The current through $L_i$, the same as the input current, together with the current through the transformer primary side is depicted in Fig. 12 (d). The peaks are in agreement with the analytical maximum values.

The current through the snubber inductor together with the voltage across the snubber capacitor can be found in Fig. 13 (a). The results are in agreement with the principle of operation and match the simulated values presented in [22]. As mentioned, for light loads the seventh stage is more evident since the discontinuous time of the converter is larger. The eighth stage occurs after the current through $L_s$ completes a half cycle of the resonant tank circuit. This expected behavior is spotted in the experimental result presented in Fig. 13 (b) which shows again the current through the snubber inductor together with the voltage across the snubber capacitor, but for light load.

One advantage of the proposed snubber is the possibility, due to the symmetry, to couple the snubber inductors. By doing...
so, the equivalent snubber inductance is found to be

$$L_{s,coupled} = \frac{L_s}{2}. \quad (70)$$

Within this possibility the number of components is reduced, however the necessary magnetic volume and snubber losses remain the same. Figure 13 (c) shows the current through $S$, the current through one of the coupled snubber inductors together with the voltage across the snubber capacitor. In this situation the coupled inductance value is equal to 160 μH. As can be visualized in the current, the transition from the first to the second stage is slightly different from the theory due to the coupling non-idealities. Nevertheless, the result is still in agreement, and validates the possibility to use coupled inductors.

The input and output voltages and currents are presented in Fig. 13 (d) in order to demonstrate the expected operation of the DCM SEPIC converter and maximum power transfer.

### B. DCM operation with RCD snubber

Figure 14 presents a set of experimental results using the RCD snubber. In Fig. 14 (a) it is possible to see the voltage across the switch $S$ together with the current through it. The maximum value of the voltage $v_S$ agrees with the theoretical value ($\approx 400$ V). A detailed view of the switch turn-off process is depicted in Fig. 14 (b). Figure 14 (c) shows the current and voltage in the output diode while the voltage across the snubber capacitor can be seen in Fig. 14 (d). The results are in accordance with the principle of operation, although small differences in the switch maximum voltage and snubber capacitor voltage values are present. These deviations are due to the simplifications made in the analysis and also because the commercial values of the components are different from the calculated ones.

In order to find the exact values or make the results to be closer to the specifications the voltage $V_{C,sn}$ must be recalculated after choosing $R_{sn}$ by

$$V_{C,sn} = \frac{nV_o}{2} + \frac{1}{2} \sqrt{2R_{sn} L_k f_s I_T^2 + n^2 V_o^2}. \quad (71)$$

With the new value of $V_{C,sn}$, the actual dissipated power is calculated using (17) while the $\Delta V_{C,sn}$ using the chosen $C_{sn}$ is re-obtained with (19). Then, the maximum voltage across $S$ is given by

$$V_{S,max} = V_i + V_{C,sn} + \frac{\Delta V_{C,sn}}{2}. \quad (72)$$
Fig. 15. Experimental results in CCM for nominal power with regenerative snubber: (a) Current (1 A/div) through and voltage (200 V/div) across the switch $S$. (b) Turn-off detail of the current (1 A/div) through and voltage (200 V/div) across the switch $S$. (c) Current through (2 A/div) and reverse voltage (100 V/div) across the output diode $D$. (d) Current through the input inductor (500 mA/div) and current through the capacitor $C_i$ (transformer primary side) (5 A/div). (e) Current through one snubber inductor (200 mA/div) and voltage across one snubber capacitor (100 V/div). (f) Input and output currents (1 A/div) together with input and output voltages (50 V/div).

C. CCM operation with proposed regenerative snubber

When the SEPIC is operating in CCM using the regenerative snubber, the seventh stage does not exist. However, the derived equations used for DCM to design the snubber components remain the same. The difference is the current $I_T$, that is calculated using equation (10) for CCM. Figure 15 summarizes the main experimental results for the CCM SEPIC with regenerative snubber. In Fig. 15 (a) switch voltage and current are presented with a turn-off detail shown in Fig. 15 (b). The output diode voltage and current are shown in Fig. 15 (c). In this result is noticeable that the snubber action and the conclusion are the same as for DCM. Figure 15 (d) presents the input inductor current and current through the transformer primary side while Fig. 15 (e) shows the current through one snubber inductor and voltage across on snubber capacitor (100 V/div). (f) Input and output currents (1 A/div) together with input and output voltages (50 V/div).

D. CCM operation with RCD snubber

As for DCM, the converter operating in CCM was tested using the RCD snubber in order to compare the results with the regenerative cell. The main waveforms are presented in Fig. 16. The snubber design for CCM is the same as for DCM but, once again, applying the CCM corresponding $I_T$ current from (10). The voltage across $S$ is clamped around the same value as with the regenerative snubber, as can be noticed in Fig. 16 (a) with a detail in Fig. 16 (b). Figure 16 (c) presents the output diode current and voltage while Fig. 16 (d) shows and snubber capacitor voltage. the same conclusions as for DCM can drawn for the CCM operation.

E. Efficiency comparison

The efficiency curves ($\eta$ vs $P_o$) for different loads and conditions are given in the plot depicted in Fig. 17. Figure 17 (a) shows the comparison of the converter efficiency in DCM between an RCD and the proposed regenerative snubber. The values are satisfactory to validate the use of the proposed snubber and an improvement around 3% in efficiency is obtained using the regenerative cell. For low loads the efficiency improvement is about 5%.

In Fig. 17 (b) the converter efficiency in DCM using the regenerative snubber is presented for two different snubber inductor values (220 $\mu$H and 470 $\mu$H), and for a coupled inductor. It is clear that for larger values of $L_s$, the efficiency is improved since the rms value of the currents through $S$ and $D$ reduces, as expected (see Fig. 9). By using the coupled inductor the efficiency is slightly better when compared to $L_s = 220 \mu H$, but as in this case the coupled inductor $L_{s,coupled} = 160 \mu H$ it could only be compared with separated inductors of $L_s = 320 \mu H$. However, the main advantage for coupling is the reduction of the magnetic parts.

The last efficiency curve, Fig. 17 (c) shows the same comparison as in Fig. 17 (a), but for the CCM operation. The results are also better when the regenerative snubber is used (around 2%). The improvement is smaller than for DCM because the converter was first developed and optimized for this mode and later adapted for CCM. Nevertheless, the use
of the proposed regenerative snubber cell for CCM is also validated and can be an option.

VII. CONCLUSION

A regenerative snubber, as applied to SEPIC converters in both operational modes, is presented and compared to a dissipative snubber (RCD). The complete qualitative analysis is given for DCM and extended to CCM operation. Based on a specification example the snubber cells were designed and experimentally tested in order to prove the concept. Additionally, the results are compared with RCD snubber to validated the efficiency improvements. Analytical descriptions and design guidelines are presented for both snubbers. All the results are in quite good agreement with the expectations, proving the concept and the design methodology of the RCD and regenerative snubbers. The improvement in the converter efficiency when operating in nominal power is around 3% for DCM and 2% for CCM when compared to an RCD snubber. For applications with larger leakage inductances, such as isolated high voltage supplies, the proposed snubber is expected to provide even more efficiency improvement. The snubbers inductors can also be coupled, as experimentally demonstrated, reducing the component count and it may bring extra advantages. This should be investigated in a further work. Therefore this regenerative snubber is an attractive solution for improving the efficiency of isolated SEPICs.

REFERENCES


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