

CALIBRATION NETWORK FOR AN ARRAY ANTENNA

TECHNOLOGICAL FIELD

The present invention is generally in the field of array antennas. More particularly, the present application is directed to a calibration network for a phased array antenna arrangement.

5 BACKGROUND

A phased array antenna is typically composed of two or more radiating/antenna elements (antennas) configured to provide an electrically steerable antenna arrangement that can be used to produce directive radiation patterns having a desired gain and/or enhanced sensitivity to radiation incoming from a particular direction. In order to obtain
10 optimal operation conditions (*e.g.*, desired radiation pattern with low side lobes) of the antenna array, the signal transmit/receive paths of each radiating element, from the signal source to the element, should be calibrated from time to time to cancel distortions present in the signal paths (*e.g.*, time delays, phase shifts, gain/attenuation). Calibration data generated during the calibration process is used to cancel/compensate for such
15 distortions by receiving/transmitting signals through the antenna array and thereby assuring that the radiated (transmitted/received) beam is properly formed and correctly directed. Particularly, the calibration data may be used to adjust the phase shift and/or gain of the transmit/receive paths of each radiating element in the array.

Some calibration techniques and equipment for phased array antennas from the
20 patent literature are described below.

European patent publication No. 0 127 337 describes a method for calibrating phase-shift in channels of a system having multiple signal-carrying channels. In this calibration method a reference signal applied as a test signal is supplied to an input of a selected one of the channels and a monotonically increasing phase-shift, in accordance
25 with a predetermined pattern of phase-shift, is introduced between the test signal and the reference signal, resulting in a frequency shift between the test signal and the reference signal. The reference signal is mixed with a sample of an output test signal obtained via an output of the selected channel to produce a beat frequency, an elapsed

time between a reference point of the pattern and a reference point of the beat-frequency signals is measured, and the starting phase-shift of the selected channel is then adjusted in response to the elapsed time.

US patent publication No. 5,977,930 describes a phased array antenna including
5 a number of waveguide radiators in a power supply system. A calibration network directly connected to the waveguide radiators is used for supplying a test pulse to the antenna array. Accurate calibration is obtained by processing any phase and amplitude errors arising in the waveguide radiators in a calibration algorithm.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

10 There is a need in the art for compact calibration arrangements whose geometrical shape/structure can be easily and rapidly adjusted to obtain electromagnetic coupling between electromagnetic couplers thereof and radiating/antenna elements of an array antenna. There is also a need in the art for techniques for generation of calibration
15 data that permit accurate tuning of the signal receive/transmit paths of radiating elements of array antenna arrangements, and cancellation of artifacts (*e.g.*, compensate errors resulting from manufacturing processes, element replacement, tolerances and component aging) introduced into the calibration data by the calibration arrangement.

Conventional calibration systems for array antennas usually utilize types of rigid and bulky waveguide systems or microstrips. Conventional calibration systems have
20 significant losses, have limited wavelength bands, provide poor signal-to-noise ratios, and also impose various limitations on the design and arrangement of the calibration system due to the wavelength dependence and polarization restrictions they impose (*i.e.*, requiring the antenna elements to be of a specific particular polarization).

Typically, electromagnetic couplers in calibrating infrastructures of such
25 conventional systems are mechanically attached to the antenna element and establish direct contact therewith, resulting in high coupling levels. In many cases such high coupling levels between the radiating elements and the electromagnetic couplers is undesirable, as it interferes with the overall performance of the radiating elements during signal transmission and reception (because the calibrating infrastructure behaves
30 like a coupled antenna).

The present invention is directed to a calibration technique for calibrating antenna arrays such as phased arrays. More specifically the present invention provides a

method and a system for calibration of an antenna array by using a calibration network including a manifold of transmission line(s) coupled to the antenna elements of the antenna array. Optionally, and in some embodiments preferably, a low level of coupling is employed between the radiating/antenna elements and the coupling sites of the calibration network, thereby substantially reducing, or eliminating, introduction of interferences in the operation of the antenna array by the calibration network.

The calibration system of the present invention includes a flexible/semi-rigid calibration system (calibration network) comprising a shielded transmission line (*e.g.*, a cable having a Faraday shield) with one or more coupling sites (electromagnetic couplers) arranged therealong and adapted for electromagnetic coupling the calibration network to one or more radiating elements (*e.g.*, antenna elements) of the antenna array. The shielded cable may be for example a coaxial cable such as flexible and/or semi rigid coaxial cable. This allows transmission/propagation of electric signals in a broadband of frequencies and in a polarization invariant manner, thus facilitating feed/reception of signals from a plurality of antenna elements which may be operational for radiating the electric signals (*i.e.*, transmitting/receiving electromagnetic waves corresponding to those signals) in various frequencies and/or with various polarizations. In some embodiments the coupling sites are formed at one or more sections along the length of the shielded cable, by exposing the shield of the cable at those sections so as to allow electromagnetic coupling between the cable and antenna elements that are placed adjacent to the coupling sites. Alternatively/or additionally, for the same purpose electromagnetic coupling module (*e.g.*, radiators) may be furnished on the cable at the coupling sites.

The shielded cable based calibration network/system of the present invention is substantially more compact and flexible than the waveguide/microstrip based solutions, its geometrical dimension and also the locations and dimensions of the coupling sites are generally independent of the wavelength/frequency band of the antenna array (which matches the wavelength/frequency of the calibration signals passed through the calibration network) and are independent of the polarization of the radiating elements to which it is electromagnetically coupled.

The flexibility/elasticity of the calibration network of the present invention which is formed with a flexible/semi-rigid cable, permits manually/instantaneously adjusting the shape of the calibration network (*e.g.*, during installation or before each

use) for placement of some, or all, of the coupling sites in the vicinity of some, or all, of the radiating elements of the array, thereby permitting the calibration network to communicate electromagnetic signals with the radiating elements of the array antenna. The calibration network may be therefore mounted in the vicinity of the radiating
5 elements (*e.g.*, near a signal input region thereof), without requiring direct contact/connection between the coupling sites and the radiating elements, and it may be used to provide a removable and shape-adjustable calibration network for any array antenna arrangement. Though the coupling sites of the calibration network may be placed in close adjacency (*i.e.*, contacting or almost contacting) the radiating elements,
10 in preferred embodiments the coupling sites are placed at some distance (*e.g.*, up to a few centimeters) from the radiating elements to obtain relatively low coupling levels, and thereby reduce, or eliminate, interferences in the performance of the radiating elements.

In some embodiments the calibration network is implemented using a bendable
15 shielded cable comprising one or more coupling sites along its length, each configured to couple/convert a predetermined fraction of the signals propagating therethrough to/from electromagnetic radiation radiating between a respective antennal element of the antenna array and the coupling site. This implementation of the calibration network by an elastic or flexible/semi-rigid shielded cable permits easily bending and twisting the
20 calibration network line to properly shape it for passage adjacent (*i.e.*, contacting or almost contacting) to the at least some, or all, radiating elements of the array antenna. Optionally, and in some embodiments preferably, the coupling sites of the calibration network do not contact the radiating elements to which they are coupled, by placing them at some distance (*e.g.*, of one or more centimeters), to thereby provide low
25 coupling levels therebetween.

As indicated above, the shielded transmission line may be a coaxial cable having a central conductor covered/enclosed by one or more dielectric layers, one or more shielding layers made from electrically conducting material (*e.g.*, made from bare/tinned braided copper wires, a conductive foil tape such as aluminum, a
30 corrugated/smooth solid copper or aluminum tube outer conductor, or any combination thereof) covering (enclosing/wrapping) the central conductor and dielectric layer(s). Optionally the cable also includes an electrically insulating jacket (*e.g.*, made of PVC) covering the one or more shielding layers. The signal transmitting line (shielded cable)

of the calibration network comprises a plurality of couplers formed at certain coupling sites along the signal transmitting line, each coupler positioned to be adjacent to at least one radiating element of the array antenna. In possible embodiments two or more couplers are formed at each coupling site to communicate electromagnetic signals with
5 a corresponding number of two or more adjacently located antenna elements of the array.

In use, an end portion of the signal transmitting line (*e.g.*, of the coaxial cable) serving as signal input/output terminal/port of the calibration network (*e.g.*, furnished with a suitable connector), is connected to a transmitter and/or receiver (generally
10 transceiver) adapted for transmitting and/or receiving electromagnetic signals through the calibration network. A matched load may be connected to another end of the signal transmitting line to absorb residuals of the electric signals which propagate through the shielded cable and not radiating via the coupling site, thereby preventing signal reflections within the cable.

15 The geometrical dimensions of each coupler/coupling site may be adjusted (a priori selected) according to a radiation pattern/profile to be emitted through it. In some embodiments the geometrical sizes of the couplers are also adjusted/selected according to their distances from the signal input/output terminal and the gain attenuation of signal propagating between them and the terminal in order to provide that a desired
20 level/intensity of electromagnetic signals (*e.g.*, as per system requirements) are emitted through them in response to supply of electric signal by the transceiver via the input/output terminal and vice-versa. In other words, the couplers are configured such that the electric couplings between each of them and the input/output terminal are of a desired (or of the same order of) magnitude (not necessarily equal) so as to enable
25 calibration of antenna elements coupled to different coupling sites with somewhat predefined calibration sensitivity.

Accordingly, the electromagnetic coupling obtained between each coupler of the calibration network to a radiating element of the array antenna can be adjusted by properly setting the geometrical dimensions of the coupler.

30 In some embodiments, the couplers are preferably implemented by apertures formed in the shielding layer(s) of the signal transmitting line at each coupling site of the calibration network, and the geometrical dimensions (*e.g.*, size and/or shape) of each aperture may be adjusted to provide a predetermined radiation profile/pattern through

the apertures of the calibration network. For instance, a length and/or width of each aperture may be adjusted according to a distance of the aperture from the input/output terminal of the calibration network, and/or according to geometrical properties of other apertures of the calibration network *e.g.*, the geometrical dimensions of the apertures
5 may be determined by means of a computerized simulation.

The geometrical properties of one or more apertures of the calibration network may be further adjusted to supply electromagnetic radiation to a number of adjacently located radiating elements of the array antenna. By way of example, the width of each aperture may be adjusted to define a certain angle of radiation (relative to the center of
10 the cable) suitable for radiating an adjacently located radiating element with desired radiation patterns (*e.g.*, having a determined intensity and/or direction). Alternatively or additionally, the angle of radiation may be adjusted according to the geometrical dimensions of the adjacently located radiating elements to guarantee that determined radiation patterns are supplied to it.

15 In some embodiments a single coupling site may comprise a certain number of couplers (apertures) circumferentially arranged thereabout. For example, several apertures may be circumferentially arranged at a certain coupling site by properly adjusting the angle of radiation and length of each aperture. Accordingly the apertures of the calibration network may be set to provide angles of radiation in the range of 1° to
20 5°, 1° to 180° degrees, or, in some possible embodiments, up to 360°.

One inventive aspect of the present application relates to a calibration network for an antenna array, comprising a shielded signal transmission line having an electrically conducting wire coaxially passing along an electrically conductive shielding sleeve electrically insulated therefrom. The shielded signal transmission line is
25 configured and operable to propagate signals along its length and comprises one or more electromagnetic coupling sites spaced-apart along its length and adapted for coupling said calibration network with a certain number of antenna elements of an antenna array. Each electromagnetic coupling site comprises at least one aperture formed in said electrically conductive shield of the signal transmission line for
30 electromagnetic coupling between the signal transmission line and the radiating elements.

In some applications the shielded signal transmission line is a bendable coaxial structure (*e.g.*, coaxial cable) allowing adjusting the shape of the calibration network to

position the electromagnetic coupling sites adjacent the antenna elements to be thereby electromagnetically coupled therewith. Optionally, at least one of the electromagnetic coupling sites comprises more than one aperture arranged about a circumference of a portion of the signal transmission line length.

5 Properties of the electromagnetic coupling sites may be configured to electromagnetically couple a predetermined fraction of a signal passing along the shielded transmission line to their respective antenna elements via the apertures. For example, and without being limiting, at least one of a distance between at least some of the electromagnetic coupling sites and sizes of at least some of the electromagnetic
10 coupling sites is selected to adjust magnitudes of the fractions of the coupled signals. This may be achieved, for instance, by increasing geometrical dimensions or sizes of at least some of the apertures according to a distance of the coupling site from an end portion of the signal transmission line serving as a signal input/output terminal.

The calibration network may comprise a matched load coupled to the signal
15 transmission line.

Another inventive aspect of present application relates to a calibration system comprising the calibration network according to any one of the embodiments described hereinabove or hereinbelow. In some embodiments the system comprises a calibration transceiver module connected to an input/output terminal of the calibration network and
20 adapted to transmit and/or receive calibration signals propagating via the calibration network so as to electrically couple the signals with antenna elements of an antenna array that are located adjacent to the coupling sites of the calibration network. A reference data module may be used to store referenced data indicative of propagation parameters of the calibration network in between the input/output terminal and the
25 antenna elements. The calibration system may use a processing module connectable to respective transmit/receive (TR) modules of the antenna elements of the antenna array, and to the calibration transceiver module, to determine one or more parameters of signal paths associated with the antenna elements.

For example, and without being limiting, the processing module may be
30 configured and operable to operate the calibration transceiver and at least one of said TR modules associated with at least one antenna element to transmit and receive therebetween calibration signals propagating along a calibration signal path. The calibration signal path may comprise the TR module of the antenna element, the

antenna element, and a portion of the transmission line extending in between the antenna element and the input/output terminal, to thereby enable determining one or more propagation parameters of the calibration signal path. The processing module may then utilize the one or more parameters of the calibration signal path and the reference
5 data to determine one or more parameters (*e.g.*, a gain attenuation of the signal path, phase delay via said signal path, and suchlike) of a signal path of the antenna element. The signal path of the antenna element may comprise the TR module of the antenna element and the antenna element.

Yet another inventive aspect of present application relates to an antenna system
10 comprising an antenna array comprising an arrangement of a plurality of antenna elements, and a calibration network according to any one of the embodiments described hereinabove or hereinbelow. The transmission line of the calibration network may be arranged such that its coupling sites are positioned adjacent to the antenna elements to be thereby electromagnetically coupled therebetween. Optionally, and in some
15 embodiments preferably, the coupling sites of the calibration network are spaced apart from their respective radiating elements so as to obtain a desired level of electromagnetic coupling therebetween. For example, and without being limiting, the distance between the coupling sites and their respective radiating elements is adjusted to provide a low level of signal coupling therebetween.

20 In some applications the antenna system comprises a calibration system according to any one of the embodiments described hereinabove and hereinbelow.

Another inventive aspect of the present application relates to a method of calibrating signal paths of antenna elements of an antenna array. The method comprises providing a calibration network comprising a shielded signal transmission line having
25 an end portion serving as a signal input/output terminal for transmitting and/or receiving signals propagating through the transmission line and a plurality of electromagnetic coupling sites respectively arranged adjacent to the antenna elements so as to provide electromagnetic coupling between the transmission line and the antenna elements, providing reference data indicative of propagation parameters of the calibration network
30 in between the input/output terminal and the antenna elements, and determining propagation parameters of a signal path of at least one antenna element of the antenna array.

Determining of the propagation parameters of at least one antenna element of the antenna array may comprise transmitting a calibration signal to propagate along a calibration signal path (*e.g.*, comprising the antenna element, a portion of the shielded transmission line in between a coupling site coupled to the antenna element and the input/output terminal, and a transmit/receive (TR) module coupled with the antenna element. The transmitted signal is then detected for determining one or more propagation parameters of the calibration signal path. The propagation parameters of the calibration signal path and the propagation parameters of the calibration network indicated by the reference data can be then used to determine one or more signal path parameters of the antenna element, thereby enabling *in-situ* calibration of antenna elements of the antenna array.

The reference data may include propagation parameters of the calibration network indicative of at least one of phase shifts and gain attenuations associated with propagation of signals in between said input/output terminal of the signal transmission line and the antenna element, of the one or more propagation parameters of the calibration signal path including at least one of a propagation phase delay and propagation gain attenuation along the calibration signal path. The determining of the one or more signal path parameters of the antenna element may thus include processing the one or more propagation parameters of the calibration signal path and the propagation parameters of the calibration network to determine at least one of a phase shift and a gain attenuation associated with transmission and/or reception of a signal via the antenna element and the TR module coupled thereto.

The provision of the reference data may comprise determining data indicative of the propagation parameters of the calibration network in between the input/output terminal and the antenna elements. This may be carried out by transmitting a test signal to propagate along a first path that comprises a transmit/receive (TR) module associated with the antenna element of the array, and at least a portion of the calibration network in between a coupling site thereof coupled to the antenna element and the input/output terminal. The transmitted test signal is then measured to generate data indicative of propagation parameters thereof. A probe signal is transmitted to propagate along a second path comprising said antenna element and the TR module associated with the antenna element, and the transmitted probe signal is then measured to generate data indicative of propagation parameters thereof. The data of the propagation parameters of

the test and the probe signals is processed to determine propagation parameters of the calibration network in between the input/output terminal and the antenna element.

The method may be adapted to separately calibrate transmit and receive paths of the antenna element. For example, in the calibration of the receive path, the calibration
5 signal may be injected to the signal path via the input/output terminal and received by the TR module of the antenna element, and in calibration of the transmit path, the calibration signal may be injected to the signal path by the TR module of the antenna element and received at the input/output terminal.

In some embodiments the signal transmission line of the calibration network
10 comprises a coaxial transmission line having an electrically conducting wire coaxially passing within an electrically conductive shielding sleeve electrically insulated therefrom, and the coaxial transmission line is bent for passing adjacent to each antenna element of the array antenna, such that apertures formed in the shielding sleeve of the coaxial transmission line serving as coupling sites, are located in the vicinity of the
15 antenna elements, thereby electromagnetically coupling between the coaxial transmission line and the antenna elements.

The method may comprise forming two or more apertures in at least one of the coupling sites. For example, and without being limiting, the two or more apertures in the at least one coupling site may be distributed about a circumference of the coaxial
20 transmission line.

The method may comprise adjusting geometrical dimensions of at least some of the apertures to guarantee coupling of a predetermined fraction of a signal passing in the coaxial transmission line through them. Additionally, a distance between at least some of the coupling sites may be adjusted/selected to guarantee coupling of a predetermined
25 fraction of a signal passing in the coaxial transmission line through them. Furthermore, a distance between at least one of the coupling sites and its respective radiating element may be adjusted to provide a predetermined level of signal coupling therebetween.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In order to understand the invention and to see how it may be carried out in
30 practice, embodiments will now be described, by way of non-limiting example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings. Features shown in the drawings are meant to be illustrative of only some embodiments of the invention, unless otherwise

implicitly indicated. In the drawings like reference numerals are used to indicate corresponding parts, and in which:

Fig. 1 schematically illustrates a calibration network according to some possible embodiments;

5 **Figs. 2A to 2E** exemplify possible embodiments of the coupling sites of the calibration network according to some possible embodiments, wherein **Fig. 2A** demonstrates possible implementations of coupling sites along a signal transmitting line of the calibration network, **Fig. 2B** is a cross-sectional view of a coupling site implemented in the form of a slender aperture, **Fig. 2C** is a cross-sectional view of a
10 coupling site comprising a plurality of circumferentially distributed spaced-apart slender apertures, **Fig. 2D** is a cross-sectional view of a coupling site implemented in the form of an angled aperture, and **Fig. 2E** shows a longitudinal-section view of a signal transmitting line of a calibration network comprising a plurality of apertures distributed along the length of the cable and having certain geometrical sizes;

15 **Figs. 3A and 3B** schematically illustrate exemplary deployments of calibration networks according to some possible embodiments, wherein **Fig. 3A** demonstrates a serpentine arrangement of the calibration network and **Fig. 3B** demonstrates a spiral arrangement of the calibration network;

Figs. 4A and 4B schematically illustrate an exemplary deployment of a
20 calibration network according to some possible embodiments having two couplers at each coupling site, where **Fig. 4A** demonstrates use of the calibration network with an antenna array having two adjacent radiating elements having different polarizations at each coupling site, and **Fig. 4B** is a cross-sectional view of the signal transmitting line of the calibration network at one of the coupling sites;

25 **Fig. 5** shows a cross sectional view of a coupling site of the calibration network according to some possible embodiments adapted to communicate electromagnetic signals with a plurality of radiating elements;

Fig. 6 schematically illustrates a possible calibration network arrangement according to a possible embodiment for an array antenna comprising one or more cells
30 of radiating elements;

Fig. 7 is a flowchart schematically illustrating a method of installing a calibration network according to some possible embodiments;

Figs. 8A to 8D are block diagrams exemplifying calibration of signal paths of an array antenna according to some possible embodiments, wherein **Figs. 8A and 8B** exemplify determination of calibration data of receive and transmit paths respectively, **Fig. 8C** demonstrates a possible system for determining the calibration data of the receive and transmit paths, and **Fig. 8D** demonstrates using the calibration data for calibration of the array antenna;

Fig. 9 is a flowchart exemplifying a procedure for determining the calibration data according to possible embodiments; and

Figs. 10A and 10B are flowcharts illustrating use of the calibration network and the calibration data according to possible embodiments for calibrating the array antenna.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS

The various embodiments of the present invention are described below with reference to the drawings, which are to be considered in all aspects as illustrative only and not restrictive in any manner. Elements illustrated in the drawings are not necessarily to scale, emphasis instead being placed upon clearly illustrating the principles of the invention. This invention may be provided in other specific forms and embodiments without departing from the essential characteristics described herein.

Fig. 1 schematically illustrates a calibration network structure **10** according to some possible embodiments. The calibration network **10** is preferably a bendable structure that can be easily bent and twisted to assume a desired three-dimensional shape, and comprises one or more couplers **16** positioned along the calibration network **10**. As exemplified in **Fig. 1**, the shape of the calibration network **10** and/or the locations of the couplers **16** may be conveniently adjusted in two-dimensional, or three-dimensional, space, according to locations of radiating (antenna) elements **12** of the array antenna **13**.

A transceiver (T/R) **11** may be coupled to an input terminal **11i** at one end of the calibration network **10** for supplying electromagnetic signals to the calibration network **10**. In possible embodiments a matched load **17** is coupled at the other end **17d** of the calibration network **10** to prevent signal reflections.

Fig. 2A schematically illustrates a possible embodiment of a calibration network **14'** implemented using a signal transmitting line (*e.g.*, shielded cable) **18** having a central electrically conducting wire **14c** concentrically passing along an electrically

conducting shielding sleeve 14s. The calibration network 14' comprises couplers 16a, 16b, 16c and 16d (collectively referred to as couplers 16), implemented by apertures formed in the shielding sleeve 14s of the cable 18 at a number of spaced-apart coupling sites 19a, 19b, 19c and 19d (collectively referred to as coupling sites 19), along the
5 signal transmitting line 18. In this non-limiting example the couplers 16 formed at coupling sites 19 are of different geometrical shapes and arrangements.

In possible embodiments a coupling site 19 of the calibration network 10 may include a coupler 16 in the form of an aperture in the shielding structure 14s of the cable 18 having predetermined geometrical dimensions suitable for producing a desired
10 pattern/profile of electromagnetic radiation therethrough. For example, and without being limiting, a single coupler 16b may be formed in the coupling site 19b by an aperture having a certain length L_b and width W_b configured to provide the desired radiation pattern through the aperture.

Fig. 2B shows a cross-sectional view of the signal transmitting line 18 (e.g.,
15 coaxial cable) at the coupling site 19b in which the coupler 16b is formed. As exemplified in Fig. 2B, the cable 18 may comprise one or more dielectric layers 14n disposed between the central wire 14c and the concentric shielding sleeve 14s of the cable 18, and one or more electrically insulating jackets 14i covering the shielding sleeve 14s of the cable 18. Fig. 2B further demonstrates an angle of radiation α from the
20 coupler 16b defined by the width W_b of its aperture.

Referring back to Fig. 2A, the coupler 16d is implemented by an aperture of different geometrical dimensions having a smaller length L_d , but a greater width W_d configured to provide the desired radiation pattern at coupling site 19d. For instance, as exemplified in Fig. 2D, the coupler 16d may be implemented by a circumferential
25 aperture having a 180° angle. As another non-limiting example, a coupler 16a can be formed by an aperture having a certain length L_a by completely (or almost completely) removing the shielding sleeve 14s at the coupling site 19a (i.e., by forming a circumferential aperture of about, or exactly, 360°), to thereby provide radiation of electromagnetic radiation in all radial directions.

30 The cable 18 may also include coupling sites 19 comprising a plurality of couplers 16c implemented by angularly spaced apertures circumferentially distributed over the shielding structure 14s. As seen in Fig. 2C, coupling site 19c comprises four couplers 16c, each having predetermined length L_c and width W_c . In this non-limiting

example the couplers **16c** are evenly distributed about the circumference of the cable **18** with a 90° angular displacement between each pair of adjacently located couplers **16c**. Of course, the number of couplers **16c** formed in the coupling site **19c** may be greater or smaller than that exemplified in **Fig. 2C**, by properly adjusting the lengths and/or
5 widths of the couplers **16c**.

Although the apertures of the couplers **16** exemplified in **Fig. 2A** are of rectangular shape, it should be clear that any other geometrical shape may be used without departing from the scope and spirit of the present invention. For example, and without being limiting, the shape of at least some of the apertures may be square,
10 circular, elliptical, triangular, polygonal, or any combination thereof.

The central electrically conducting wire **14c** of the signal transmitting line **18** may be fabricated from any suitable flexible/bendable (or elastic) electrically conducting material, such as, but not limited to, copper, aluminum, gold, steel, silver, or a combination thereof (*e.g.*, StCuAg), having a diameter of about 0.2 to 2 mm,
15 preferably about 0.29 to 1.63 mm. For example, and without being limiting, the central electrically conducting wire **14c** may be implemented by a stranded wire or by a solid wire.

The dielectric layers **14n** surrounding the central electrically conducting wire **14c** may be prepared from any suitable flexible/elastic electrically insulating material, such as, but not limited to, PTFE. The shielding sleeve **14s** may be fabricated from
20 electrically conducting materials suitable for production of flexible/elastic foils or wire braids, for example, and not limited to, aluminum. The diameter of the shielding sleeve **14s** may generally be in the range of 1.1 to 7 mm, preferably about 1.19 to 6.35 mm, and its thickness about 0.1 to 2 mm, preferably 0.15 to 1.04 mm. The optional
25 electrically insulating jackets **14i** covering the shielding sleeve **14s** may be prepared from any suitable flexible/elastic electrically insulating material. The signal transmitting line **18** may be manufactured by employing the cable production technique known in the industry, for example, as used in coaxial cable production.

Fig. 2E depicts a calibration network **24n** for an antenna array **12e**. Calibration
30 network **24n** comprises a shielded signal transmission line **24** having an electrically conducting wire **14c** coaxially passing along an electrically conductive shielding sleeve **14s** electrically insulated therefrom. The shielded signal transmission line **24** is configured and operable to propagate electromagnetic signals along its length and

comprises one or more electromagnetic coupling sites **29** spaced-apart along its length and adapted for coupling said calibration network **24n** with a certain number of antenna elements **12** of antenna array **12e**. As seen, each electromagnetic coupling site **29** comprises at least one aperture **26** formed in said electrically conductive shield **14s** of the signal transmission line **24** for electromagnetic coupling between said signal transmission line **24** and said radiating elements **12**. The calibration network **24n** may be spaced apart from it respective radiating element **12** to form a predefined air gap **g** therebetween, and thereby provide for substantially low coupling levels between the calibration network **24n** and the radiating elements **12**. Such low coupling levels prevent introductions of interferences by the calibration network **24n** during operation of the radiating elements **12**.

In some embodiments it is required to provide the same, or somewhat different, radiation pattern(s) from the plurality of couplers distributed along the signal transmitting line. **Fig. 2E** shows a longitudinal-section view of the calibration network **24n** comprising the couplers **26a**, **26b**, **26c**..., (collectively referenced by reference numeral **26**) positioned spaced-apart along the signal transmitting line **24** of the calibration network. In this non-limiting example the apertures of couplers **26** located closer to the signal source **11** have smaller geometrical sizes, and sizes of the apertures located closer to the matched load **17** have greater geometrical sizes. For instance, the width of each coupler **26** may be substantially the same and the length of each coupler **26** is adjusted to provide a desired radiation pattern therefrom by adjusting the length of its aperture according to its distance (*i.e.*, signal transmitting line **24**) from the signal source **11**.

As seen, the apertures of the various couplers exemplified in **Figs. 2B to 2E** may also pass through the electrically insulating jacket **14i**, and their formation may also involve partial (or entire) removal of the dielectric layers **14n** at the respective coupling site. In some possible embodiments, the installation of the calibration network comprises installing the signal transmitting line **18** to pass in the vicinity of some, or all, of the radiating elements **12**, and thereafter creating the couplers **16** by forming respective apertures in the shielding sleeve **14s**, and connecting the matched load **17** to the end of the cable **18**. Though the apertures formed in the cable **18** for the couplers **16** may have substantially the same geometrical sizes, in some embodiments the geometrical dimensions of each aperture are determined according to its distance

(measure along the cable) from the signal source and/or its distance from other couplers 16 to obtain a desired radiation pattern therefrom. Optionally, and in some embodiments preferably, the apertures of the couplers are formed near a signal input region of the radiating elements.

5 As exemplified hereinabove, the calibration network 14 of the present invention may be implemented using flexible/semi-rigid shielded cable lines (*e.g.*, coaxial cables) comprising one or more couplers 16. Thus, the shielded cable lines of the calibration network 14 may be bent and twisted to form a two/three-dimensional shape suitable for positioning the couplers 16 in the vicinity of radiating elements 12 of an array antenna
10 13. **Figs. 3A and 3B** schematically illustrate possible arrangements of a calibration network 14 designed for calibration of an antenna array 13 comprising a two dimensional array of radiating elements 12.

Fig. 3A demonstrates a serpentine arrangement of the calibration network 14 wherein the signal transmitting line of the calibration network is passed along the rows
15 r1, r2, r3,..., of the array 13 in a zigzag pattern such that at least one coupler 16 is positioned in the vicinity of at least one of the radiating elements 12 of the array 13. In this non-limiting example an array antenna 13 comprising four rows and four columns is demonstrated. A similar zigzag arrangement of the calibration network 14 may be constructed by passing the signal transmitting lines of the calibration network 14 along
20 the columns c1, c2, c3,..., of the array 13.

Fig. 3B demonstrates another possible arrangement of the calibration network 14, wherein the signal transmitting lines form a spiral pattern arranged such that at least one coupler 16 is positioned in the vicinity of at least one of the radiating elements 12 of the array 13. As will be recognized by those versed in the field of the invention, the
25 calibration network of the present invention may be arranged in various different ways, forming patterns that are different from the zigzag and spiral patterns demonstrated in **Figs. 3A and 3B**, and providing that at least one coupler of the calibration network is positioned in the vicinity of at least one of the radiating elements of the array.

Fig. 4A schematically illustrates another possible calibration network
30 configuration 20 according to possible embodiments, wherein the calibration network 14a is configured to feed two adjacently located radiating elements, 12x and 12y, having different polarizations. In this non-limiting example each coupling site 19g is positioned/formed in the vicinity of two adjacently located radiating elements, 12x and

12y. As seen in the cross-sectional view shown in **Fig. 4B**, each coupling site **19g** includes respective two couplers, **16x** and **16y**. The couplers, **16x** and **16y**, are configured to emit radiation in the direction of radiating elements, **12x** and **12y**, respectively. As exemplified in **Fig. 4A**, the configuration of the calibration network is
5 independent of the polarity of the radiating elements **12x** and **12y** coupled to its coupling sites, and the coupling sites **19g** may be formed in locations along the signal transmitting line that correspond to the locations of the radiating elements of the array antenna (*e.g.*, at opposing sides of the shielded cable *i.e.*, with angular displacement of about 180°), independent of either the cable's orientation and of the wavelength of
10 electromagnetic signals passing through it.

Fig. 5 shows a cross sectional view of the coupling site **19a** shown in **Fig. 2A** adapted to feed a plurality of radiating elements **12**. The coupler **16a** in this specific and non-limiting example is implemented by a circumferential aperture of about (or exactly) 360°, configured to communicate electromagnetic signals therethrough in radial
15 directions relative to the central conductor **14c**. The length (L_a) of the aperture may be adjusted so as to guarantee a desired level/intensity of coupling with the radiating elements **12**.

Fig. 6 schematically illustrates a calibration network arrangement for an array antenna **30** comprising one or more cells c_{ij} ($i > 0$ and $j > 0$ are positive integers), each
20 comprising a number of radiating elements a_p ($p > 0$ a positive integers) according to some possible embodiments. In this specific and non-limiting example array antenna **30** comprises nine cells c_{ij} , the radiating elements a_p are arranged in three rows ($1 \leq i \leq 3$) and three columns ($1 \leq j \leq 3$) matrix structure, and each cell c_{ij} is square shaped and comprises four radiating elements, a_p each being attached to, or embedded into, one of the side
25 walls of the cell. A calibration network **14** is installed in each cell c_{ij} such that a coupler **16** thereof is positioned in the vicinity of at least one of the radiating elements a_p of the cell. In operation, a transceiver (**11**) is connected to input/output terminal **11i** of each calibration network **14**, and a matched load **17** is connected to the other end of the calibration network **14**. Optionally, and in some embodiments preferably, the input
30 terminals of the calibration network **14** of some, or all, of the cells c_{ij} are coupled to the same signal source **11**.

It is noted that the signal transmitting line based implementation of the calibration networks described herein provides calibration networks having very low

energy losses, as compared to conventional waveguide based calibration networks (*e.g.*, microstrips).

Fig. 7 shows a flowchart 60 schematically illustrating a method of installing a calibration network (14) according to some possible embodiments. The installation may start by arranging the radiating elements of an array antenna in step 61 to provide a two-dimensional, or three-dimensional, array antenna. In step 62, a signal transmitting line is installed in, or adjacent, the antenna array, such that the cable is passed adjacent to at least one, or all, of the radiating elements of the array. Next, in step 63, portions of the cable passing near radiating elements of the array are defined as coupling sites and at least one coupler is formed in each one of said coupling sites. As exemplified hereinabove, one or more couplers may be formed in each coupling site by forming apertures on the circumference of the cable, each aperture facing at least one radiating element of the array, such that the signals radiated therefrom are directed towards the radiating element.

The shape and/or size of the apertures may be adjusted in step 64 to guarantee a desirable level of coupling with the at least one radiating element facing it. As explained hereinabove, the geometrical dimensions of each aperture may be adjusted according to its electrical distance from the input terminal of the cable and/or according to the geometrical dimensions of the other apertures formed in the cable. Finally, in step 65 a transceiver is connected to the input terminal 11i of the calibration network, and if needed, in step 66 a matched load is connected to the other end of the shielded cable.

Figs. 8A to 8D are block diagrams demonstrating use of the calibration network for generation of calibration data for signal paths of an array antenna. The bold arrowed lines in Figs. 8A to 8D represent signals passing through the signal receive/transmit paths of the array antenna system, and the dashed arrowed lines represent signals radiated towards/from the radiating elements of the array antenna *e.g.*, through air. The generation of calibration data as demonstrated in Fig. 8A to 8D, is typically carried out for a specific frequency, or predetermined frequency range, in which the array antenna operates.

Steps 91-93 in Fig. 9 demonstrate generation of calibration data for the receive path of the array antenna, as schematically illustrated in Fig. 8A. In step 91 a test signal (S_{inject}) is injected into each receive path of the radiating elements of the array antenna through the calibration network 14, and the signal received in each radiating element

is measured by a respective transceiver module 32 coupled to it. The signal injected into the receive paths of the radiating elements is measured by the transceiver modules 32, and is used to determine phase and amplitude data for each receive path. The phase and amplitude data is used to construct an inject receive path matrix ($A_{inject}^{(R)}$) for the receive
5 path of the array antenna.

Additional calibration data is collected in step 92 by radiating probe signals S_{probe} (shown by dashed arrowed line, *e.g.*, by test antenna 35 shown in Fig. 8C) over each radiating element of the array 13, and measuring by the transceiver modules 32 receive path probe signals received by each radiating element. Preferably, step 92 is
10 separately carried out for each radiating element of the array (one at a time) in order to prevent cross talk artifacts in the receive paths measurements. Phase and amplitude of the probe signal measured through the receive path of each radiating element is used to construct a probe receive path matrix ($A_{probe}^{(R)}$) for the signal receive path of the array antenna. In step 93 the data collected responsive to the inject and probe signals is used
15 to generate reference data matrix ($A_{ref}^{(R)}$) for calibration of the receive path of the array antenna by subtracting one signal receive path matrix from the other *e.g.*,
$$A_{ref}^{(R)} = A_{inject}^{(R)} - A_{probe}^{(R)}.$$

Steps 94-96 in Fig. 9 demonstrate generation of calibration data for the transmit path of the array antenna, as schematically illustrated in Fig. 8B. In step 94 a test signal
20 (S_{inject}) is injected into the transmit path of each radiating element of the array antenna 13 by its respective transceiver module 32 and a responsive inject signal is measured through the calibration network 14. The test signal injected into each transmit path is preferably multiplexed such that the test signal is injected into the transmit path of only one radiating element at a time. The phase and amplitude of the signal measured
25 through the calibration network for each radiating element is used to construct an inject transmit path matrix ($A_{inject}^{(T)}$) for the signal transmit path of the array antenna.

In step 95 additional calibration data is collected by feeding a probe signal S_{probe} to each radiating element of the array 13 and measuring the signals transmitted by each radiating element (*e.g.*, by test antenna 35 shown in Fig. 8C). The phase and amplitude
30 of the signal transmitted from each radiating element is then determined and used to construct a probe transmit path matrix ($A_{probe}^{(T)}$) for the signal transmit path of the array

antenna. In step 96 the data collected for the inject and probe signals is used to generate reference data matrix ($A_{ref}^{(T)}$) for calibration of the transmit path of the array antenna by subtracting one transmit path matrix from the other *e.g.*, $A_{ref}^{(T)} = A_{inject}^{(T)} - A_{probe}^{(T)}$.

The receive and transmit path reference matrices obtained in this way for the array antenna reflects the phase and gain distortions which are introduced by the calibration network, while the contribution of the other elements in the signal paths (*e.g.*, receivers, transmitters, electrical conductors, etc.) is cancelled out. In step 99, the receive and transmit paths reference matrices are used to calibrate the array antenna, as will be explained infra with reference to **Figs. 10A and 10B**.

Fig. 8C demonstrates a system 30 usable for determining calibration data of the receive and transmit paths of the array antenna 13. System 30 comprises the transceiver modules 32 of the receive and transmit paths and the calibration network 14, which are coupled to the radiating elements of array antenna 13, as also shown in **Figs. 8A and 8B**, and a test antenna 35 electromagnetically coupled to the antenna array 13. System 30 also comprises a transceiver module 31 for communicating electromagnetic signals with the calibration network 14, a transceiver module 36 for communicating electromagnetic signals with the test antenna 35, and a control unit 33 for controlling the operation of the transceiver modules and communicating data with them. The test antenna 35 may be implemented by an array antenna having the same arrangement of radiating elements as of the array antenna 13, such that when placed one in front of the other, each radiating element of the test antenna 35 is positioned in front of a corresponding radiating element of the array antenna 13.

Fig. 8D schematically illustrates use of the reference data matrices $A_{ref}^{(R)}$ and $A_{ref}^{(T)}$ for calibrating receive and transmit paths of the array antenna, according to some possible embodiments, as also demonstrated in **Figs. 10A and 10B**. The setup illustrated in **Fig. 8C** may be used to determine the reference calibration data for the receive and transmit paths of the array antenna in 'sterile' conditions (*e.g.*, laboratory), before operational use thereof, and the setup illustrated in **Fig. 8D** is suitable for generating calibration data for the array antenna when being in operational use.

Figs. 10A and 10B schematically illustrate a method of calibrating signal paths of antenna elements of an antenna array. In this example the calibration is carried out using a calibration network as described hereinabove, which comprises a shielded signal

transmission line having an end portion serving as a signal input/output terminal for transmitting and/or receiving signals propagating through the transmission line and a plurality of electromagnetic coupling sites respectively arranged adjacent to said antenna elements so as to provide electromagnetic coupling between said transmission
5 line and the antenna elements. In this technique, calibration data is generated (steps 73 and 78) using reference data indicative of propagation parameters of the calibration network in between said input/output terminal and said antenna elements, thereby enabling *in-situ* calibration of antenna elements of the antenna array.

The method generally comprises determining propagation parameters of a signal
10 path of at least one antenna element of the antenna array by transmitting a calibration signal (in steps 71 and 76) to propagate along a calibration signal path comprising said antenna element, a portion of said shielded transmission line in between a coupling site coupled to said antenna element and said input/output terminal, and a transmit/receive (TR) module coupled with said antenna element, detecting said transmitted signal (in
15 steps 72 and 77) and determining one or more propagation parameters of the calibration signal path, and determining one or more signal path parameters of said antenna element based on said propagation parameters of the calibration signal path and the propagation parameters of the calibration network indicated by said reference data.

With reference to flowchart 70 of Fig. 10A, receive path calibration is
20 commenced in step 71 by injecting a test signal (*e.g.*, by the transceiver module 31) through the calibration network 14 onto the radiating elements of the array antenna 13. The electromagnetic radiation of the test signal supplied to the calibration network is emitted through the electromagnetic couplers of the calibration network onto the radiating elements of the antenna array, and in step 72 the transceiver modules 32 of the
25 radiating elements are used to measure the signal received by each radiating element of the array antenna 13. In step 73 the measured signals are processed to determine gain and phase shift data for the receive path of each radiating element of the array antenna. The receive path gain and phase shift data may be used to construct a receive path test signal matrix $A_{test}^{(R)}$. The receive path calibration data is then determined using the
30 receive path reference data $A_{ref}^{(R)}$ to remove from the gain and phase shift data determined for the receive path distortions introduced into the measurements by the calibration network *e.g.*, $A_{calib}^{(R)} = A_{test}^{(R)} - A_{ref}^{(R)}$.

With reference to flowchart 75 of Fig. 10B, transmit path calibration is commenced in step 76 by supplying to the radiating elements 13 of the array antenna a probe signal via their respective transceiver modules 32. Electromagnetic radiation emitted by each radiating element of the array antenna 13 in response to the probe signal is received in the calibration network through the electromagnetic couplers, and in step 77 the signals received through the calibration network 14 are measured (*e.g.*, by the transceiver module 31). Steps 76 and 77 are preferably carried out separately for each radiating element to allow accurate measurement of transmit path signals for each radiating element of the array. In step 78 the signals measured for each transmit path are processed and transmit path gain and phase shift data are determined for the transmit path of each radiating element of the array antenna. The transmit path gain and phase shift data may be used to construct a transmit path test signal matrix $A_{test}^{(T)}$. The transmit path calibration data is then determined using the transmit path reference data $A_{ref}^{(T)}$ to remove from the gain and phase shift data determined for the transmit path distortions introduced into the measurements by the calibration network *e.g.*, $A_{calib}^{(T)} = A_{test}^{(T)} - A_{ref}^{(T)}$.

As described hereinabove and shown in the associated Figs., the present invention provides an elastic/flexible feed signal calibration network usable for feeding electromagnetic signals to radiating elements of an array antenna, and related methods for constructing and using the same. While particular embodiments of the invention have been described, it will be understood, however, that the invention is not limited thereto, since modifications may be made by those skilled in the art, particularly in light of the foregoing teachings. As will be appreciated by the skilled person, the invention can be carried out in a great variety of ways, employing more than one technique from those described above, all without exceeding the scope of the invention.

CLAIMS:

1. A calibration network for an antenna array, comprising a shielded signal transmission line having an electrically conducting wire coaxially passing along an electrically conductive shielding sleeve electrically insulated therefrom, characterized in that said shielded signal transmission line is configured and operable to propagate signals along its length and comprises one or more electromagnetic coupling sites spaced-apart along its length and adapted for coupling said calibration network with a certain number of antenna elements of an antenna array, each electromagnetic coupling site comprises at least one aperture formed in said electrically conductive shielding sleeve of the shielded signal transmission line for electromagnetic coupling between said shielded signal transmission line and said antenna elements.
2. The calibration network of Claim 1 wherein the shielded signal transmission line is a bendable coaxial structure allowing adjusting the shape of the calibration network to position the electromagnetic coupling sites adjacent the antenna elements to be thereby electromagnetically coupled therewith.
3. The calibration network of Claim 1 or 2 wherein at least one of the electromagnetic coupling sites comprises more than one aperture arranged about a circumference of a portion of the shielded signal transmission line length.
4. The calibration network of any one of the preceding claims wherein properties of the electromagnetic coupling sites are configured to electromagnetically couple a predetermined fraction of a signal passing along the shielded signal transmission line to their respective antenna elements via the apertures.
5. The calibration network of claim 4 wherein the electromagnetic coupling sites are configured according to at least one of the following: at least one of a distance between at least some of the electromagnetic coupling sites and sizes of at least some of the electromagnetic coupling sites is selected to adjust magnitudes of the fractions of the coupled signals; and geometrical dimensions or sizes of at least some of the apertures

are increased according to a distance of the coupling sites from an end portion of the shielded signal transmission line serving as a signal input/output terminal.

6. The calibration network of any one of the preceding claims comprising a
5 matched load coupled to the shielded signal transmission line.

7. A calibration system comprising a calibration network according to any one of
claims 1 to 6, the system comprising a calibration transceiver module connected to an
input/output terminal of said calibration network and adapted to transmit and/or receive
10 calibration signals propagating via said calibration network so as to electrically couple
said signals with antenna elements of an antenna array that are located adjacent to the
coupling sites of said calibration network; a reference data module adapted to store
referenced data indicative of propagation parameters of said calibration network in
between said input/output terminal and said antenna elements; and a processing module
15 connectable to respective transmit/receive (TR) modules of said antenna elements of the
antenna array, and to said calibration transceiver module and adapted to carry out the
following:

- operate said calibration transceiver and at least one of said TR modules
associated with at least one antenna element to transmit and receive therebetween
20 calibration signals propagating along a calibration signal path comprising: said TR
module of the antenna element, said antenna element, and a portion of said shielded
signal transmission line extending in between said antenna element and said
input/output terminal; and thereby determine one or more propagation parameters of
said calibration signal path; and
- 25 - utilize said one or more parameters of the calibration signal path and said
reference data to determine one or more parameters of a signal path of said antenna
element, which comprises said TR module of the antenna element and said antenna
element.

30 8. An antenna system comprising:
an antenna array comprising an arrangement of a plurality of antenna elements;
and

a calibration network according to any one of claims 1 to 6 wherein said shielded signal transmission line of the calibration network is arranged such that the coupling sites thereof are adjacent to said antenna elements thereby electromagnetically coupled therewith.

5

9. The antenna system of claim 8 wherein the coupling sites of the calibration network are spaced apart from their respective antenna elements so as to obtain a predetermined level of electromagnetic coupling therebetween, and wherein the system comprises a calibration system according to claim 7.

10

10. A method of calibrating signal paths of antenna elements of an antenna array, the method comprising:

providing a calibration network comprising a shielded signal transmission line having an end portion serving as a signal input/output terminal for transmitting and/or receiving signals propagating through the shielded signal transmission line and a plurality of electromagnetic coupling sites respectively arranged adjacent to said antenna elements, each of said plurality of electromagnetic coupling sites comprises at least one aperture formed in an electrically conductive shielding sleeve of said shielded signal transmission line so as to provide electromagnetic coupling between said shielded signal transmission line and the antenna elements;

20

providing reference data indicative of propagation parameters of said calibration network in between said input/output terminal and said antenna elements; and

determining propagation parameters of signal path of at least one antenna element of the antenna array by carrying out the following:

25

- transmitting a calibration signal to propagate along a calibration signal path comprising said antenna element, a portion of said shielded transmission line in between an electromagnetic coupling site coupled to said antenna element and said input/output terminal, and a transmit/receive (TR) module coupled with said antenna element;

- detecting said transmitted signal and determining one or more propagation parameters of the calibration signal path;

30

- determining one or more signal path parameters of said antenna element based on said propagation parameters of the calibration signal path and the propagation parameters of the calibration network indicated by said reference data;

thereby enabling in-situ calibration of antenna elements of the antenna array.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein said reference data includes propagation parameters of the calibration network indicative of at least one of phase shifts and gain attenuations associated with propagation of signal in between said input/output terminal of the shielded signal transmission line and said antenna element; said one or more propagation parameters of the calibration signal path include at least one of a propagation phase delay and propagation gain attenuation along said calibration signal path; and said determining of the one or more signal path parameters of the antenna element includes processing said one or more propagation parameters of the calibration signal path and said propagation parameters of the calibration network to determine at least one of a phase shift and a gain attenuation associated with transmission and/or reception of a signal via said antenna element and the TR module coupled thereto.
12. The method of claim 10 or 11 wherein said providing of the reference data comprises determining data indicative of said propagation parameters of said calibration network in between said input/output terminal and said antenna elements by carrying out the following:
- transmitting a test signal to propagate along a first path comprising a transmit/receive (TR) module associated with an antenna element of said array; and at least a portion of the calibration network in between a coupling site thereof coupled to said antenna element and said input/output terminal; and measuring the transmitted test signal to generate data indicative of propagation parameters thereof;
 - transmitting a probe signal to propagate along a second path comprising said antenna element and the TR module associated with the antenna element; and measuring the transmitted probe signal to generate data indicative of propagation parameters thereof;
 - processing the data of the propagation parameters of the test and the probe signals and determining propagation parameters of said calibration network in between said input/output terminal and said antenna element.
13. The method of any one of claims 10 to 12 adapted to separately calibrate transmit and receive paths of said antenna element, wherein:

in calibration of said receive path, said calibration signal is injected to said signal path via said input/output terminal and received by said TR module of said antenna element; and

5 in calibration of said transmit path, said calibration signal is injected to said signal path by said TR module of said antenna element and received at said input/output terminal.

14. The method of any one of claims 10 to 13 wherein said shielded signal transmission line of the calibration network comprises a coaxial transmission line
10 having an electrically conducting wire coaxially passing within an electrically conductive shielding sleeve electrically insulated therefrom, and wherein said coaxial transmission line is bent for passing adjacent to each antenna element of the array antenna, such that apertures formed in the shielding sleeve of the coaxial transmission line serving as coupling sites are located in the vicinity of the antenna elements thereby
15 electromagnetically coupling between said coaxial transmission line and said antenna elements.

15. The method of claim 14 comprising at least one of the following: adjusting geometrical dimensions of at least some of the apertures to guarantee coupling of a
20 predetermined fraction of a signal passing in the coaxial transmission line through them; adjusting a distance between at least some of the coupling sites to guarantee coupling of a predetermined fraction of a signal passing in the coaxial transmission line through them; and adjusting a distance between at least one of the coupling sites and its respective radiating element to provide a predetermined level of signal coupling
25 therebetween.