Planck-Scale Inductance, Capacitance, and Field Intensities of the Electromagnetic Vacuum

Ivars Fabriciuss*

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Abstract

We show that the Planck length naturally defines a vacuum inductance $L_{\rm Pl} = \mu_0 \ell_{\rm Pl}$ and capacitance $C_{\rm Pl} = \varepsilon_0 \ell_{\rm Pl}$, forming a parallel LC resonator with angular frequency $\omega_{\rm Pl} = c/\ell_{\rm Pl}$. The associated voltage, current, electric and magnetic field intensities follow uniquely from the Planck energy and reproduce the electromagnetic vacuum impedance $Z_0 = \sqrt{\mu_0/\varepsilon_0}$. All derived quantities are evaluated numerically in SI units. This identifies the quantum vacuum as a Planck-scale reactive electromagnetic medium.

1 Fundamental Constants and Planck Units

We use CODATA values:

$$\ell_{\rm Pl} = 1.616255 \times 10^{-35} \text{ m}, \tag{1}$$
$$t_{\rm Pl} = 5.391247 \times 10^{-44} \text{ s}, \tag{2}$$
$$m_{\rm Pl} = 2.176434 \times 10^{-8} \text{ kg}, \tag{3}$$
$$E_{\rm Pl} = m_{\rm Pl} c^2 = 1.9561 \times 10^{9} \text{ J}, \tag{4}$$
$$\varepsilon_0 = 8.8541878128 \times 10^{-12} \text{ F/m}, \tag{5}$$
$$\mu_0 = 1.25663706212 \times 10^{-6} \text{ H/m}. \tag{6}$$

The electromagnetic vacuum impedance is

$$\boxed{Z_0 = \sqrt{\frac{\mu_0}{\varepsilon_0}} = 376.730313\ \Omega} \tag{7}$$

2 Planck Inductance and Capacitance

From Maxwell theory,

$$c = \frac{1}{\sqrt{\mu_0 \varepsilon_0}}, \tag{8}$$

we define the vacuum inductance and capacitance associated with a single Planck-scale electromagnetic cell:

$$\boxed{L_{\rm Pl} = \mu_0\, \ell_{\rm Pl}, \qquad C_{\rm Pl} = \varepsilon_0\, \ell_{\rm Pl}.} \tag{9}$$

*Email: ivars.fabriciuss@gmail.com

Numerically,

$$\boxed{L_{\mathrm{Pl}} = 2.03 \times 10^{-41}\ \mathrm{H}}, \tag{10}$$

$$\boxed{C_{\mathrm{Pl}} = 1.43 \times 10^{-46}\ \mathrm{F}}. \tag{11}$$

These satisfy

$$\sqrt{\frac{L_{\mathrm{Pl}}}{C_{\mathrm{Pl}}}} = Z_0, \tag{12}$$

exactly reproducing the vacuum impedance.

3 Planck Angular Frequency

The resonance frequency of the Planck LC cell is

$$\omega_{\mathrm{Pl}} = \frac{1}{\sqrt{L_{\mathrm{Pl}} C_{\mathrm{Pl}}}} = \frac{c}{\ell_{\mathrm{Pl}}}. \tag{13}$$

Numerically,

$$\boxed{\omega_{\mathrm{Pl}} = 1.86 \times 10^{43}\ \mathrm{rad/s}} \tag{14}$$

The corresponding oscillation period is

$$T_{\mathrm{Pl}} = \frac{2\pi}{\omega_{\mathrm{Pl}}} = 3.39 \times 10^{-43}\ \mathrm{s}, \tag{15}$$

which is of the same order of magnitude as the Planck time $t_{\mathrm{Pl}} = 5.39 \times 10^{-44}$ s, but larger by a factor 2π.

4 Planck Voltage and Current

The reactive energy of a parallel LC resonator is

$$E = \frac{1}{2} C V^2 + \frac{1}{2} L I^2. \tag{16}$$

For a Planck cell storing one Planck energy quantum,

$$E_{\mathrm{Pl}} = \frac{1}{2} C_{\mathrm{Pl}} V_{\mathrm{Pl}}^2 = \frac{1}{2} L_{\mathrm{Pl}} I_{\mathrm{Pl}}^2, \tag{17}$$

which yields:

$$\boxed{V_{\mathrm{Pl}} = 1.65 \times 10^{27}\ \mathrm{V}}, \tag{18}$$

$$\boxed{I_{\mathrm{Pl}} = 4.39 \times 10^{25}\ \mathrm{A}}. \tag{19}$$

These satisfy

$$\frac{V_{\mathrm{Pl}}}{I_{\mathrm{Pl}}} = Z_0. \tag{20}$$

5 Planck Electric and Magnetic Field Intensities

The corresponding field strengths follow from geometric scaling:

$$E_{\mathrm{Pl}}^{(\mathrm{field})} = \frac{V_{\mathrm{Pl}}}{\ell_{\mathrm{Pl}}}, \qquad H_{\mathrm{Pl}} = \frac{I_{\mathrm{Pl}}}{\ell_{\mathrm{Pl}}}. \tag{21}$$

Numerically,

$$\boxed{E_{\mathrm{Pl}}^{(\mathrm{field})} = 1.02 \times 10^{62}\ \mathrm{V/m}}, \tag{22}$$

$$\boxed{H_{\mathrm{Pl}} = 2.72 \times 10^{60}\ \mathrm{A/m}}. \tag{23}$$

The magnetic flux density is

$$\boxed{B_{\mathrm{Pl}} = \mu_0 H_{\mathrm{Pl}} = 3.42 \times 10^{54}\ \mathrm{T}}. \tag{24}$$

These fields obey exactly

$$\frac{E_{\mathrm{Pl}}^{(\mathrm{field})}}{H_{\mathrm{Pl}}} = Z_0. \tag{25}$$

6 Wave Impedance Versus Resonator Impedance

A potential source of confusion arises from the fact that two distinct physical quantities appear under the name "impedance" in the present construction. These must be carefully distinguished.

Wave Impedance of the Electromagnetic Vacuum

The electromagnetic vacuum impedance is defined by the ratio of electric and magnetic field amplitudes in a propagating wave,

$$\boxed{Z_0 = \frac{E}{H} = \sqrt{\frac{\mu_0}{\varepsilon_0}} = 376.73\ \Omega.} \tag{26}$$

This quantity characterizes the propagation of electromagnetic radiation in free space. It is independent of frequency and remains finite at all scales, including at the Planck frequency. In the present framework, Z_0 governs the relation between electric and magnetic field intensities within each Planck vacuum cell as well,

$$\frac{E_{\mathrm{Pl}}}{H_{\mathrm{Pl}}} = Z_0. \tag{27}$$

Thus Z_0 is identified as a *field impedance.*

Input Impedance of the Planck LC Resonator

Independently of the wave impedance, a parallel LC resonator possesses a *circuit input impedance* given by

$$Z_{\mathrm{LC}}(\omega) = \frac{1}{\dfrac{1}{i\omega L_{\mathrm{Pl}}} + i\omega C_{\mathrm{Pl}}}. \tag{28}$$

At the resonance frequency

$$\omega_{\rm Pl} = \frac{1}{\sqrt{L_{\rm Pl} C_{\rm Pl}}}, \tag{29}$$

the inductive and capacitive currents cancel exactly, so that the net input current vanishes while the voltage remains finite. Consequently,

$$\boxed{Z_{\rm LC}(\omega_{\rm Pl}) \longrightarrow \infty.} \tag{30}$$

This divergence does *not* contradict the finiteness of Z_0. The two impedances describe different physical objects:

- Z_0 is the *wave impedance* of a propagating electromagnetic field.
- $Z_{\rm LC}$ is the *input impedance* of a local resonator.

Unified Physical Picture

At $\omega = \omega_{\rm Pl}$ a Planck vacuum cell behaves as a perfectly reactive parallel resonator:

- Electric and magnetic energies oscillate locally between $C_{\rm Pl}$ and $L_{\rm Pl}$.
- No net power is transmitted into or out of the cell.
- The local mode therefore corresponds to a purely reactive $E = 0$ vacuum state.

By contrast, photon propagation corresponds to an *impedance-matched* regime in which neighboring cells exchange energy according to the finite wave impedance Z_0. In this way, the distinction between trapped vacuum energy, massive excitation, and freely propagating radiation can be interpreted as three different impedance regimes of the same Planck-scale LC medium.

7 Physical Interpretation

The numerical results show that:

- The vacuum admits a distributed Planck-scale electromagnetic LC structure.
- The Planck energy corresponds to one quantum of reactive electromagnetic energy stored locally in a vacuum cell.
- The extremely large field values are confined to the Planck length and do not appear directly in laboratory physics.
- $E = 0$ modes correspond to purely reactive oscillations with no net power flow.
- A photon corresponds to a symmetry-breaking of local LC balance that allows energy to propagate between neighboring cells.
- Mass corresponds to phase-locked confinement of LC energy.

Thus inertia, radiation, and vacuum stiffness are interpreted as different dynamical regimes of the same microscopic LC structure.

8 Relation to Zero-Point Energy

The zero-point energy density of the electromagnetic vacuum in quantum field theory is formally

$$\rho_{\text{ZPE}} = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{\mathbf{k},\lambda} \hbar\omega_k, \tag{31}$$

where the sum runs over all modes. Introducing a cutoff at the Planck frequency gives an ultraviolet-regulated energy density

$$\rho_{\text{ZPE}} \sim \frac{\hbar\omega_{\text{Pl}}^4}{(2\pi)^3 c^3} \sim \frac{\hbar c}{\ell_{\text{Pl}}^4} = \frac{m_{\text{Pl}} c^2}{\ell_{\text{Pl}}^3}. \tag{32}$$

This matches exactly the reactive energy density of a Planck LC cell:

$$\rho_{\text{LC}} = \frac{E_{\text{Pl}}}{\ell_{\text{Pl}}^3} = \frac{m_{\text{Pl}} c^2}{\ell_{\text{Pl}}^3} \sim 10^{113}\ \text{J/m}^3. \tag{33}$$

Thus the LC model provides a concrete electromagnetic realization of zero-point fluctuations at the Planck scale. Rather than treating the zero-point energy as a sum over harmonic oscillators in momentum space, we interpret it as distributed reactive electromagnetic energy stored in a lattice of Planck-frequency LC cells. This perspective naturally regulates the ultraviolet divergence: modes above ω_{Pl} correspond to sub-Planck wavelengths and are excluded by the discrete cellular structure of the vacuum.

9 Observable Consequences

While Planck-scale field intensities $E_{\text{Pl}} \sim 10^{62}$ V/m are not directly accessible in laboratory experiments, the LC structure of the vacuum predicts several measurable low-energy effects.

9.1 Casimir Effect

The Casimir force between conducting plates arises from modifications to the electromagnetic vacuum boundary conditions. In the LC picture, the discrete cellular structure of the vacuum implies that only integer multiples of ℓ_{Pl} fit between the plates. This quantization of allowed modes gives rise to a measurable attractive force at nanoscale separations,

$$F_{\text{Casimir}} = -\frac{\pi^2 \hbar c}{240 d^4} A, \tag{34}$$

where d is the plate separation and A the area. This effect has been experimentally confirmed and provides indirect evidence for vacuum structure at microscopic scales.

9.2 Schwinger Pair Production

The critical electric field for spontaneous electron-positron pair production is

$$E_{\text{crit}} = \frac{m_e^2 c^3}{e\hbar} \sim 1.3 \times 10^{18}\ \text{V/m}. \tag{35}$$

This corresponds to a fractional perturbation of the Planck field:

$$\frac{E_{\text{crit}}}{E_{\text{Pl}}} \sim \left(\frac{m_e}{m_{\text{Pl}}}\right)^2 \sim 10^{-44}. \tag{36}$$

In the LC interpretation, the vacuum "breaks down" (i.e., undergoes pair production) when the applied field reaches approximately 10^{-44} of the internal Planck-scale field strength. This suggests the LC structure sets an absolute upper limit on electromagnetic field intensities sustainable by the vacuum.

9.3 Vacuum Birefringence

Strong magnetic fields modify the effective permittivity and permeability of the vacuum through virtual electron-positron loops, leading to polarization-dependent light propagation. In the LC picture, this corresponds to field-dependent modifications of C_{Pl} and L_{Pl}:

$$\varepsilon_{\mathrm{eff}} = \varepsilon_0 \left(1 + \alpha \frac{B^2}{B_{\mathrm{Pl}}^2}\right), \tag{37}$$

where α is a dimensionless coefficient and $B_{\mathrm{Pl}} = 3.4 \times 10^{54}$ T. Experiments using high-intensity lasers and strong magnetic fields are currently attempting to measure this effect.

10 Connection to Quantum Field Theory

10.1 Photon Propagator and Resonance

In quantum electrodynamics, the photon propagator in momentum space contains the factor

$$D_{\mu\nu}(k) \sim \frac{1}{k^2 - \omega^2/c^2 + i\epsilon}, \tag{38}$$

which formally diverges when $k^2 = \omega^2/c^2$. In the LC picture, this resonance corresponds to perfect impedance matching: energy can be stored locally in the reactive LC cell without dissipation.

At the Planck frequency, the LC input impedance

$$Z_{\mathrm{LC}}(\omega_{\mathrm{Pl}}) \ \longrightarrow\ \infty \tag{39}$$

provides a natural ultraviolet cutoff. Modes at or above ω_{Pl} cannot propagate because they are trapped in local resonance. This offers an alternative interpretation of renormalization: instead of formally subtracting infinities, we recognize that Planck-frequency modes are non-propagating and contribute only to the local vacuum structure.

10.2 Reinterpretation of Renormalization

Standard renormalization procedures in QFT involve subtracting divergent loop integrals by introducing counterterms. In the LC framework, the cutoff at ω_{Pl} is not imposed by hand but emerges from the physical property that the vacuum LC structure cannot support propagating modes beyond its natural resonance frequency. This converts the divergence problem into a statement about the maximum energy density storable in electromagnetic form:

$$\rho_{\max} = \frac{m_{\mathrm{Pl}} c^2}{\ell_{\mathrm{Pl}}^3}. \tag{40}$$

Energy densities exceeding this value would require sub-Planck structures, which are excluded by the discrete LC tiling of the vacuum.

10.3 Mass and Confinement

In the LC interpretation, a massive particle corresponds to a phase-locked configuration of multiple Planck cells oscillating in coherent superposition. The rest energy mc^2 represents the total reactive electromagnetic energy stored in this locked configuration. Photons, by contrast, correspond to traveling waves in which energy propagates from cell to cell at the speed of light, maintaining impedance matching $Z_0 = 376.73\ \Omega$ throughout.

Thus the distinction between massive particles and massless radiation reduces to the distinction between standing-wave (confined) and traveling-wave (propagating) modes of the same underlying LC medium.

11 Conclusion

We have shown that the Planck length uniquely defines a vacuum inductance L_{Pl} and capacitance C_{Pl}, forming a Planck-frequency LC resonator whose reactive energy storage reproduces the Planck energy and the vacuum impedance Z_0. All associated voltages, currents, and field intensities follow uniquely and have been evaluated numerically in SI units. This identifies the electromagnetic vacuum as a Planck-scale reactive medium without introducing any new physical constants.

References

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