



HAL
open science

Restoring lost communication between in vitro neuronal assemblies

Stefano Buccelli, Jacopo Tessadori, Laura Martines, Yannick B Bornat, Timothée Levi, Alberto Averna, Francesco Difato, Ilaria Colombi, Mariateresa Tedesco, Paolo Massobrio, et al.

► To cite this version:

Stefano Buccelli, Jacopo Tessadori, Laura Martines, Yannick B Bornat, Timothée Levi, et al.. Restoring lost communication between in vitro neuronal assemblies. IEEE-NER conference, May 2017, Shanghai, China. hal-01567498

HAL Id: hal-01567498

<https://hal.science/hal-01567498v1>

Submitted on 24 Jul 2017

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Restoring lost communication between in vitro neuronal assemblies

Stefano Buccelli, *member EMBS*, Jacopo Tessadori, Laura Martines, Yannick Bornat, *member IEEE*, Timothée Levi, *member IEEE*, Alberto Averna, Francesco Difato, Ilaria Colombi, *member EMBS*, Mariateresa Tedesco, Paolo Massobrio, *member IEEE*, Valentina Pasquale, *member EMBS*, and Michela Chiappalone, *member EMBS*

Abstract — Neural stimulators and implantable systems represent one of the most promising technologies to reduce neurological impairments. Here we present a promising prosthesis prototype capable to restore the communication between damaged *in vitro* neuronal circuitries.

I. INTRODUCTION

Enhancing recovery of cognitive and motor functions after localized brain injuries is widely recognized as a priority in healthcare. Millions of people worldwide are affected, and this number is likely to increase in coming years [1]. Moreover, the frequent lack of complete recovery makes a desirable goal the development of novel technologies and therapeutic strategies aiming at improving quality of life of affected patients when standard pharmacological treatments and/or physical rehabilitation therapies are not enough [2].

A new hope was provided by engineering studies in the field of neural interfaces [3]. Here we realized an in vitro proof-of-concept for next generation brain-prostheses aimed at restoring lost communications among neuronal populations by providing an artificial link between two previously connected assemblies.

II. METHODS

The biological element used in this study is constituted by dissociated cortical rat neurons plated over a 60-channel Micro-Electrode Array (MEA) device. We used engineered neuronal networks constituted by two isolated modules linked through long-range axonal connections. These networks were able to exhibit synchronized activity events involving both modules named Network Bursts (NB). During experiments we

*Research supported by European Commission, ICT-FET FP7/2007-2013, FET Young Explorers, grant agreement N° 284772 BRAIN BOW (www.brainbowproject.eu).

S. B. is with NBT, Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia, Genova, 16163, Italy (e-mail: stefano.buccelli@iit.it); J. T. is with ADVR, Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia, Genova, 16163, Italy (e-mail: jacopo.tessadori@iit.it); L. M. is with the NBT, Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia, Genova, 16163, Italy (e-mail: martines.laura@gmail.com); Y. B. is with IMS Lab, University of Bordeaux, Bordeaux, 33400, France (e-mail: yannick.bornat@ims-bordeaux.fr); T. L. is with IMS Lab, University of Bordeaux, 33400, France (e-mail: timothee.levi@u-bordeaux.fr); A. A. is with NBT, Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia, Genova, 16163, Italy (e-mail: alberto.averna@iit.it); F. D. is with NBT, Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia, Genova, 16163, Italy (e-mail: francesco.difato@iit.it); I. C. is with NBT, Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia, Genova, 16163, Italy (e-mail: ilaria.colombi@iit.it); M. T. is with DIBRIS, University of Genova, 16145, (email: brunella.tedesco@unige.it); P. M. is with DIBRIS, University of Genova, 16145, Italy (email: paolo.massobrio@unige.it); V. P. is with NBT, Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia, Genova, 16163, Italy (e-mail: valentina.pasquale@iit.it); M. C. is with NBT, Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia, Genova, 16163, Italy (corresponding author, phone: +39 010 71781; fax: +39 010 71781 230; e-mail: michela.chiappalone@iit.it)

performed a focused laser ablation to cut the connections between modules to mimic a traumatic brain injury. A neuromorphic board based on Field Programmable Gate Array was specifically designed to perform real-time event detection (e.g. NB detection) and trigger electrical stimulation to one or more electrodes in a closed-loop fashion (i.e. ‘bridging’ modality).

III. RESULTS

A low-frequency regular stimulation (0.2 Hz) was delivered to an electrode belonging to one of the two modules and the response propagated to both modules. After a focal lesion, the two modules resulted both anatomically and functionally disconnected. We then performed two kinds of ‘reconnection’ strategies: unidirectional (i) and bidirectional (ii) bridging.

In case of protocol (i), a low frequency regular stimulation (0.2 Hz) was delivered to the first module and a bridging from the first to the second module was performed. The post-stimulus time histogram upon regular stimulation confirmed that the directed communication from the stimulated module to the other one was restored. The aim of protocol (ii) was to offer an artificial communication channel between the disconnected modules without imposing any preferred direction. The cross correlation between the activity of the two modules confirmed the partial restoration of the communication between the disconnected modules.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Our neuromorphic board is able to put in uni- and bidirectional communication two previously connected and then disconnected neuronal networks. The developed communication protocol can be seen as an interesting starting point towards the development of a stand-alone neuroprosthetic device able to restore communication between disconnected brain regions.

REFERENCES

- [1] Langlois, J.A., W. Rutland-Brown, and M.M. Wald, *The epidemiology and impact of traumatic brain injury: a brief overview*. *J Head Trauma Rehabil*, 2006. **21**(5): p. 375-8.
- [2] Soekadar, S. R., N. Birbaumer, M. W. Slutzky, and L. G. Cohen, *Brain-machine interfaces in neurorehabilitation of stroke*. *Neurobiol Dis*, 2015. **83**: p. 172-9.
- [3] Guggenmos, D. J., M. Azin, S. Barbay, J. D. Mahnken, C. Dunham, P. Mohseni, and R. J. Nudo, *Restoration of function after brain damage using a neural prosthesis*. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A*, 2013. **110**(52): p. 21177-82.