

Identification of Multi-Microgrid Clusters Using Terminal Spectral Clustering Algorithm

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Abstract: In response to the increasing impact of extreme weather on power distribution networks (PDNs), prioritizing resilience is imperative. This study introduces an innovative k-means spectral clustering algorithm to define the boundaries of microgrids (MGs) within a multi-microgrid (MMG) system. The aim is to improve reliability by clustering PDNs into resilient MGs. The power systems are modeled with nodes representing buses, and connections are represented as edges. The analysis involves computing the adjacency matrix, degree matrix, Laplacian matrix, and applying k-means clustering to group buses based on terminal point features. Silhouette coefficients (SC) are calculated to assess the quality of the clustering. The proposed method is tested on three IEEE distribution systems: IEEE 33, 69, and 118 bus systems. Findings reveal distinct clusters within each system with SC values above 0.68, particularly emphasizing the significance of terminal points as the basis for assisting power engineers in decision-making for predetermined grid partitioning.

Keywords: multi-microgrid, Silhouette coefficients, spectral clustering algorithm, terminal points

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Motivation and Incitement

Weather events are a significant cause of power supply outages, as well as reliability and resiliency issues. In recent years, the global community has witnessed numerous extreme weather events, resulting in power outages, blackouts, and economic losses totaling billions of dollars. Hurricane Sandy in 2012 in the Eastern United States caused power outages for approximately 8,100,000 consumers. Likewise, the 2014 typhoon Rammasun in the Luzon region of the Philippines affected 13,000,000 customers, and the Blyth Tornado in 2016 impacted around 1,700,000 people in South Australia [1]. The February 2021 Texas outage demonstrated the profound impact a severe winter storm can have on a society, causing \$195 billion in collateral damage and leaving nearly 4.5 million homes without electrical power [2].

Due to the increasing frequency and intensity of catastrophic events, ensuring the resilience of the power distribution networks (PDNs) has become a critical priority. About 90% of power outages caused by hurricanes occur in distribution networks. After catastrophic events, certain remote areas may experience power outages. Conventional load restoration techniques [3-6], which involve grid reconfiguration and require energization from the utility, may not ensure uninterrupted power supply following catastrophic events, potentially leading to prolonged outages for some users [7-8].

A microgrid (MG) consists of distributed energy resources (DERs) like solar panels, wind turbines, and interconnected loads that have distinct electrical boundaries. It is a locally regulated, independent system that is connected to the electrical grid. This is one method

of protecting crucial loads (CLs). By enabling connections and disconnections from the grid, the MG allows operation in both grid-connected and islanded modes [9]. However, microgrids have the potential to operate beyond individual units, leading to the field of research known as multimicrogrids (MMGs). MMGs offer enhanced reliability, power quality, and flexibility for managing renewable energy sources (RESs). However, efficient implementation necessitates an innovative approach to their formation and management.

1.2 Clustering Power Distribution Network to Multiple Microgrids

Several methodologies have been proposed for clustering PDNs, as documented in Table 1. Studies referenced in $[10-11]$, $[12-13]$, and $[14]$ identify the optimal ESD location, the optimal sectionalizing switch location, and the optimal power utilization as fundamental criteria for partitioning the distribution network.

Study [15] classifies the distribution system into partitions that can function as MGs using the k-means optimization method, determined by selecting the k-means with the maximum Silhouette score through the evaluation of the Silhouette approach. Additionally, [16] and [17] propose spectral clustering techniques that use dynamic weights of the lowest cost and line apparent power, respectively, to transform traditional systems into clusters of MMGs. The graph partitioning approach in [18] uses line susceptance as the weight during the clustering process.

References [19] and [20] utilize the count of generators to establish number of clusters, with [19] adopting the density-based spatial clustering of applications with noise (DBSCAN) approach and [20] employing a mixed-integer linear programming (MILP) model as a different approach. In [21], the number of clusters is determined using constrained spectral clustering algorithm considering both the 'Must-Link' (ML) constraint and a minimum cut cost constraint. Meanwhile, the k-medoids spectral clustering algorithm used in [18] identifies suitable nodes for isolation but requires predefining the number of clusters. Reference [22] utilizes a hierarchical spectral clustering for determining clusters boundaries, allowing the adjustment of the number of clusters formed based on stakeholders' prior knowledge. However, this leaves the determination of the optimal number of clusters unspecified, lacking a specific criterion.

Despite extensive research into methods on establishing clusters within the distribution network, certain aspects of this process remain unaddressed in existing literature. Notably absent is a discussion on the predetermination of microgrid boundaries, especially concerning the optimal number of clusters (*k*) and their alignment with network topological characteristics. In contrast, this paper aims to bridge this gap by proposing an innovative approach for determining MG boundaries during the design phase.

Utilizing the k-means clustering algorithm, our method introduces an innovative *k* selection technique based on total number of terminal points and Silhouette global coefficient. Additionally, the resulting cluster structure is improved through the incorporation of bi-layered filter approach.

Terminal points in a power grid are critical due to the potential of significant consequences resulting from disturbances at these points, which make them vulnerable as they are the farthest points with only one connection. Examining the clustering of terminal points assists in identifying network areas requiring special attention for resilience planning.

Unlike restoration and reconfiguration methods that address operations after an event, this study proposes preplanning microgrid boundaries to optimize the utilization of DERs within those boundaries. This not only enhances energy efficiency and sustainability but also lays the groundwork for improved microgrid performance. Predefined microgrid boundaries enable efficient load distribution and minimize the need for extensive reconfiguration during outages, ultimately reducing grid congestion and facilitating faster response times.

Ref.		13	16	11	18	19	17	20	21	22	Proposed
Year		2019	2019	2020	2022	2022	2023	2023	2023	2023	approach
MMG partitioning	Optimum sectionalizing switch location	\checkmark									
method	Improved spectral clustering		\checkmark								
	Optimum ESD location	$\overline{}$		✓		\overline{a}		\overline{a}		$\overline{}$	
	Line susceptance with k-mediod spectral clustering				✓						
	DBSCAN spatial clustering					✓					
	Apparent power weighted graph partitioning approach										
	Constrained MILP	$\overline{}$						\checkmark		$\overline{}$	
	Constrained spectral clustering algorithm	$\overline{}$							✓		
	Hierarchical spectral clustering									✓	
	Terminal spectral clustering algorithm									\overline{a}	✓
Type of weights	Static				✓					\checkmark	✓
	Dynamic		\checkmark				✓		✓	✓	

Table 1. Comparison of the proposed method to other comparable works in the field of MMG partitioning

2. FORMATION OF MICROGRIDS WITH BOUNDARIES

2.1 Terminal Spectral Clustering Algorithm

Spectral graph analysis has been employed to tackle challenges related to microgrids formation [23-28] and assess the stability of power networks [24]. The electricity grid can be intentionally clustered into smaller grids when there is an increasing risk of a cascade failure. Clustering the grid into separate, stable microgrids allows for the implementation of a complex procedure known as islanding, which helps mitigate the impact of cascading sequences on the electricity grid [28-30].

Proposed Active Distribution Network with Clusters of Multiple Microgrids

Figure 1. Proposed concept to partition existing distribution network to clusters of MMGs

This paper proposes a clustering approach [18] based on the terminal spectral clustering algorithm. The concept of the proposed methodology is presented in Figure 1. With this clustering method, the adjacency matrix (W) displays the connections between buses in a graph as binary relationships, as seen below:

$$
W[i,j] = W[j,i]
$$

=
$$
\begin{cases} 1, & if \text{ bus } i \text{ and } j \text{ is connected} \\ 0, & otherwise \end{cases}
$$
 (1)

In this case, if bus i is connected to bus j , the element $W[i,j]$ represents the connection weight ij , or 0 if there is no direct connection. The weights of the existing connections between different buses are indicated by the non-null elements of the adjacency matrix, a $N \times N$ symmetric matrix.

The degree matrix *(D)* is a diagonal matrix in which the number of connections of bus *i* is represented by each diagonal element *D[i,j]*. It is formed based on the adjacency matrix, as shown in Equation (2).

$$
D[i,j] = \sum W[i,:] \tag{2}
$$

The distinction between the degree matrix and the adjacency matrix is explained in the definition of the Laplacian matrix *(L)* in Equation (3). The Laplacian matrix aids in understanding the local structure of the graph.

$$
L = D - W \tag{3}
$$

The connection described in Equation (4) can be determined by calculating the eigenvalues *(λ)* and eigenvectors *(v)* of the Laplacian matrix. The eigenvalues and associated eigenvectors produced by this process guide the spectral embedding procedure.

$$
L \times v = \lambda \times v \tag{4}
$$

In spectral embedding, the initial eigenvectors with the lowest eigenvalues are selected. By using these eigenvectors, a new matrix *X* is created, in which a bus is

represented by each row and a feature generated from the eigenvectors is represented by each column.

The spectral embedding matrix *X* undergoes k-means clustering to group buses into clusters. The cluster number *(k)* was determined by considering the properties of the terminal points; the total number of buses with only one connection forms the basis for the clustering process. Figure 2 illustrates the overall proposed MMG clustering process.

2.2 Clustering Evaluation

To validate the clustering outcome, the Silhouette Coefficient (SC) [15] is utilized as a quality assessment metric. The formula for SC for a single data point is as follows:

$$
s(i) = \frac{b(i) - a(i)}{\max\{a(i), b(i)\}}
$$
 (5)

where $s(i)$ is the SC for data point *i*, $a(i)$ is the average distance from the *i-th* data point to other data points in the same cluster (cohesion), and *b(i)* is the smallest average distance from the *i-th* data point to data points in a different cluster (separation).

Equation (6) represents the average silhouette score for cluster *c*, while equation (7) formulates the overall average silhouette score for the entire set of data points.

$$
AvgSC(c) = \frac{\sum s(i)}{number\ of\ i\ in\ cluster\ c}
$$
 (6)

$$
OverallAvgSC = \frac{\sum s(i)}{total\ number\ of\ i} \tag{7}
$$

The interpretations of the interval coefficient, as shown in Table 2, can be used to evaluate the results of SC interpretation.

Table 2. Interpretation of silhouette coefficient

Type	Interval silhouette coefficient	Interpretation
	$0.71 - 1.0$	Robust structure

Figure 2. Terminal spectral clustering algorithm process

Figure 3. IEEE 33-bus test system

Figure 4. IEEE 69-bus test system

Figure 5. IEEE 118-bus test system

3. CASE STUDY

Three test systems [31-34] were used to evaluate the performance of the proposed algorithm. The line and bus data for the three test systems can be found in Appendices A to F. Test systems with different sizes were chosen to verify the computational efficiency of the proposed algorithm and its applicability to standard grid systems. Figures 3 to 5 show the initial conditions of the test systems.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section evaluates the efficacy of the proposed method by applying it to the IEEE 33-bus, IEEE 69-bus, and IEEE 118-bus test systems. MATLAB is utilized to simulate the

clustering process. As outlined subsequently, a new kmeans spectral clustering technique is tested on each of the mentioned systems, resulting in a clustering solution.

4.1 IEEE 33 bus test case

The effectiveness of the proposed methodology is demonstrated through its application to the IEEE 33 bus system, where the spectral clustering algorithm efficiently determines the partitioning based on identified terminal point numbers. As shown in Figure 6, buses 1, 18, 22, 25, and 33 are identified as terminal points, distinguished by their degree value of one. Consequently, this yields a comprehensive clustering outcome, indicating a total of five distinct clusters within the IEEE 33 bus system.

Figure 6. Degree matrix of IEEE 33 bus system

Figure 7. Average Silhouette score per cluster for IEEE 33 bus system

Figure 7 illustrates the average Silhouette score for each cluster, serving as a quantitative metric of clustering efficacy. Cluster 2 stands out with the highest score of 0.8481, indicating a well-defined and internally cohesive structure. Cluster 5 has the lowest score of 0.5934, suggesting a lower level of intra-cluster cohesion. The overall average Silhouette score of 0.68911 confirms the presence of a satisfactory clustering pattern.

Notably, the cluster with the highest Silhouette score shows a compact structure with minimal inter-node distances, emphasizing the cohesiveness within. Conversely, the cluster with the lowest score, particularly

around bus 2, reveals a more branched and potentially disparate arrangement.

To facilitate the practical implementation of the proposed MMG partitioning strategy, detailed information on the composition of each cluster is provided in Tables 3 and 4. These tables offer a comprehensive breakdown, with Table 3 detailing the specific buses within each cluster and Table 4 focusing on the locations of sectionalizing switches. Additionally, Figure 8 visually presents the modified IEEE 33 bus system, illustrating the identified clusters with total load of each cluster.

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Figure 8. Proposed MMG formation of IEEE 33 bus test system

4.2 IEEE 69 bus test case

In the second test case with the IEEE 69 bus system, Figure 9 demonstrates that buses 1, 27, 35, 46, 50, 52, 65, 67, and 69 serve as terminal points resulting in a total of nine distinct clusters.

Figure 9. Degree matrix of IEEE 69 bus system

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Figure 10. Average Silhouette score per cluster for IEEE 69 bus system

Figure 10 illustrates the average Silhouette score for each cluster, providing a quantitative measure of how effectively the clusters are formed. Cluster 7 stands out with the highest score of 0.8490, signifying a well-defined and internally cohesive structure. In contrast, Cluster 3, with the lowest score of 0.5904, indicates a lower level of intra-cluster cohesion. The overall average Silhouette score of 0.69507 confirms the existence of a recognizable

clustering pattern. The composition of each cluster is further elaborated on in Tables 5 and 6. Table 5 details bus locations, while Table 6 pinpoints the placement of sectionalizing switches within each cluster. Examining Table 5 and Figure 11, it is evident that the cluster with the lowest score exhibits a greater number of buses, while the cluster with the highest score displays a smaller number of buses.

Clusters	Bus index			
Microgrid 1	41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46			
Microgrid 2	14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21			
Microgrid 3	7, 8, 9, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59			
Microgrid 4	1, 2, 3, 4, 28, 29, 5, 6, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40			
Microgrid 5	30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35			
Microgrid 6	60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65			
Microgrid 7	10, 11, 12, 13, 66, 67, 68, 69			
Microgrid 8	47, 48, 49, 50			
Microgrid 9	22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27			

Table 6. Sectionalizing switch location of the IEEE 69 bus test system

Figure 11. Proposed MMG formation of IEEE 69 bus test system

4.3 IEEE 118 bus test case

Buses 3, 9, 17, 27, 43, 52, 60, 62, 77, 84, 88, 96, 99, 112, 117, and 118 are recognised as terminal points in the third test scenario, which involves the IEEE 118 bus system. Each of these buses is represented by a degree value of one in Figure 12. As a result, the IEEE 118 bus system is proposed to have 16 different clusters.

Figure 13 shows that Cluster 10 has the highest score of 0.8694, suggesting a well-defined and internally consistent structure. Cluster 3, however, has the lowest intra-cluster cohesion score of 0.3547, indicating a weak structure that

falls below the desired threshold of 0.51 as interpreted in Table 2.

To improve the cluster structure and ensure all clusters have a score above 0.50, a bi-layered filter approach is introduced (see Figure 2). The first filter selects the robust clusters (SC above 0.7) that connected to weak clusters (SC below 0.51). In the second filter, only connected clusters with a bus count less than or equal to 5 are considered. The connected cluster fulfilling both criteria (high SC and low bus count) is then selected for merging with the weak cluster. In this case, cluster 7 with an SC of 0.8614 and 5 buses is chosen for merging with cluster 3. The merged cluster has a resulting SC value of 0.5439.

Figure 12. Degree matrix of 118 bus system

Figure 13. Average Silhouette score per cluster for IEEE 118 bus system

Figure 14. Improved average Silhouette score per cluster for IEEE 118 bus system

Figure 14 shows that the average Silhouette score for the IEEE 118 bus system is now above 0.51 for all clusters, indicating a satisfactory structure after the improvement

process. The resulting clustering pattern with 15 clusters has an overall average Silhouette score of 0.69339.

Clusters	Bus index
Microgrid 1	38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43
Microgrid 2	89, 90, 91, 97, 98, 99
Microgrid 3	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 63
Microgrid 4	85, 86, 87, 88
Microgrid 5	92, 93, 94, 95, 96
Microgrid 6	64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 78, 79
Microgrid 7	45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52
Microgrid 8	73, 74, 75, 76, 77
Microgrid 9	20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27
Microgrid 10	28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 44, 53, 61, 62
Microgrid 11	108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 118
Microgrid 12	80, 81, 82, 83, 84
Microgrid 13	113, 114, 115, 116, 117

Table 7. Network partitioning results for each cluster of the IEEE 118 bus test system

Microgrid 14	\vert 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60			
Microgrid 15	100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107			

Table 8. Sectionalizing switch location of the IEEE 118 bus test system

Figure 15. Proposed MMG formation of IEEE 118 bus test system

Supporting the practical application of this MMG partitioning strategy, Tables 7 and 8 provide a detailed breakdown of each cluster's composition. Specifically, Table 7 details the buses belonging to each cluster, and Table 8 focuses on the locations of sectionalizing switches. As seen in Figure 15, the cluster with the lowest score has six branches, whereas the cluster with the greatest score has only one branch.

Table 9 summarizes the required time to execute the proposed method using MATLAB R2020a for each of the test systems. The simulation is performed using a laptop equipped with Windows 11, AMD Ryzen 5 5600H 3.30 GHz processor and 16 GB RAM.

Table 9. Computational time required for the proposed methodology

Category	Power system	Time(s)
Small	IEEE 33-bus test system	0.045
Medium	IEEE 69-bus test system	0.052
Large	IEEE 118-bus test system	0.111

5. CONCLUSION

This paper presents an innovative approach to improve the resilience of PDNs in the face of increasing challenges caused by extreme weather events. The approach involves establishing the boundaries of MGs in MMG system by utilising k-means spectral clustering algorithm. This technique efficiently groups buses based on terminal point features, whereas the problem formulation involves an extensive modeling of power systems, incorporating nodes and connections through adjacency matrices, degree matrices, and Laplacian matrices.

Assessments of the clustering results are performed using Silhouette coefficients. The findings obtained from evaluating the proposed method on IEEE 33, 69, and 118 bus systems demonstrate the presence of distinct clusters within each system, with overall average Silhouette score consistently exceeding 0.68. The visualisation of clustering results emphasises the efficacy of the method, demonstrating strong physical connections between buses inside each cluster and the absence of isolated buses without any physical connections. The importance of terminal points as a basic element for decision-making in grid partitioning has been demonstrated by these findings.

By prioritising terminal points in clustering, the findings of this paper can assist decision-makers and power engineers in optimising grid partitioning thereby improving the resilience of PDNs. Overall, this finding holds significant potential in minimising the impact of severe infrastructure disruptions in PDNs caused by extreme weather events.

While this work establishes the groundwork for MMG formation by defining MG boundaries, future studies will explore incorporating DERs and islanding constraints for a more practical implementation. This may involve optimizing DER sizing and developing operational strategies for MMG in both grid-connected and islanded states.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A IEEE 33 Line Data

Appendix B IEEE 33 Bus Data

Appendix B (continued)

Appendix C IEEE 69 Line Data

Appendix C (continued)

Appendix D IEEE 69 Bus Data

Appendix E IEEE 118 Line Data

Appendix E (continued)

Appendix F IEEE 118 Bus Data

Appendix F (continued)

Appendix F (continued)

