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DESCRIPTION

[0001] The invention relates to an apparatus for performing a plasma chemical vapour deposition process, comprising a mainly cylindrical resonator being provided with an outer cylindrical wall enclosing a resonant cavity having a substantially rotational symmetric shape with respect to a cylindrical axis, the resonator further being provided with side wall portions bounding the resonant cavity in opposite cylindrical axis directions, wherein the apparatus further comprises a microwave guide having an end extending through the outer cylindrical wall into the resonant cavity. European patent publication EP 1 867 610 in the name of Draka Comteq B.V. discloses such an apparatus for manufacturing an optical fiber.

[0002] When applying high power microwave applicators for long lasting processes, problems may arise in terms of load matching due to internal reflections and sensitivity to arcing. If the load is not matched, the whole configuration may become too hot. Then, part of the microwave power may not reach the plasma. Additionally, other equipment, like an autotuner, may also become too hot, leading to malfunctioning or even breakage. Further, if the resonator, also called applicator, is sensitive to arcing, the applicator can not be used properly. During use, damage will then occur at some spots. The arcing process consumes a lot of power, which means that the plasma itself can fade or even switch off temporarily, which has negative consequences for any product that is made by the plasma process.

[0003] Related to the load matching issue, it is noted that radial inner rings bounding the cavity in radial directions are in practice too thin to apply a water cooling arrangement therein for cooling the rings.

[0004] It is noted that the American patent publication US 7 975 646 B2 discloses a device for depositing a coating on an internal surface of a container, of the type in which the deposition is carried out by means of a low-pressure plasma created inside the container by excitation of a precursor gas by microwave-type electromagnetic waves.

[0005] Further relevant prior art is disclosed in patent document JPS62-29054.

[0006] It is an object of the invention to provide an apparatus according to the preamble, wherein the load matching is improved while the sensitivity to arcing is not increased. Thereto, according to the invention, an apparatus as defined in claim 1 is provided, wherein the length of the resonant cavity in the cylindrical direction varies as a function of the radial distance to the cylindrical axis.

[0007] The invention is partly based on the insight that the cavity geometry can be amended to improve the load matching while simultaneously avoiding the occurrence of sharp edges that may induce arcing. By varying the length of the resonant cavity in the cylindrical direction, also mentioned the width of the cavity, as a function of the radial distance to the cylindrical axis, an improved load match can be obtained, while configuration enabling the electromagnetic

coupling between the microwave guide and the resonator can be maintained. According to an aspect of the invention, the shape of the cavity is thus amended without introducing additional sharp edges to improve matching and to eliminate any further chance of arcing.

[0008] The resonant cavity is in a cylindrical direction at least partially bounded by the surface of a cone having a longitudinal axis substantially coinciding with the cylindrical axis of the resonator and being tapered towards the opposite side surface of the cavity, so that both the matching and the minimal arcing conditions are met.

[0009] Further advantageous embodiments according to the invention are described in the following claims.

[0010] By way of example only, embodiments of the present invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying figures in which

Fig. 1 shows a schematic cross sectional side view of a first embodiment of an apparatus according to the invention;

Fig. 2a shows a schematic cross sectional side view of a second embodiment of an apparatus according to the invention;

Fig. 2b shows a schematic cross sectional side view of a third embodiment of an apparatus according to the invention;

Fig. 2c shows a schematic cross sectional side view of a fourth embodiment of an apparatus according to the invention;

Fig. 2d shows a schematic cross sectional side view of a fifth embodiment of an apparatus according to the disclosure; and

Fig. 2e shows a schematic cross sectional side view of a sixth embodiment of an apparatus according to the disclosure.

[0011] It is noted that the figures show merely preferred embodiments according to the invention. In the figures, the same reference numbers refer to equal or corresponding parts.

[0012] Figure 1 shows a schematic cross sectional side view of a first embodiment of an apparatus 1 according to the invention. The apparatus 1 comprises a mainly cylindrical resonator 2. The apparatus also comprises a microwave guide 3 for guiding microwaves to the resonator 2. The microwave guide 3 is preferably rectangular shaped so that an optimal interface between the guide 3 and the resonator 2 can be made. The apparatus can be used for performing a plasma chemical vapour deposition process.

[0013] The resonator 2 is provided with an outer cylindrical wall 4 enclosing a resonant cavity

5. The cavity has a substantially rotational symmetric shape with respect to a cylindrical axis C. The resonator 2 is further provided with side wall portions 6a,b bounding the resonant cavity 5 in opposite cylindrical axis directions C1, C2.

[0014] The microwave guide 3 has an end 7 extending through the outer cylindrical wall 4 into the resonant cavity 5. In the shown embodiment, the resonator 2 further includes an inner cylindrical wall 8 bounding the resonance cavity 5 in a radial direction R towards the cylindrical axis C. In fact, the cavity 5 is thus annular shaped. The inner cylindrical wall 8 has a slit 9 extending in a circumferential direction Ci around the cylindrical axis C. By providing the slit 9, microwave energy may enter, from the resonance cavity 5, into a tubular inner space 10 surrounded by the resonator 2.

[0015] In the shown embodiment, a substrate tube 11 has been inserted in the tubular inner space 10.

[0016] During operation of the apparatus, microwaves W generated by a microwave generator, such as a magnetron or klystron (not shown), are injected into a second end (also not shown) of the microwave guide 3, also called waveguide, and then guided through the waveguide 3 towards the resonator 2. It is noted that the microwaves may enter the waveguide 3 also in another manner, e.g. via an assembly of additional waveguides. In the resonance cavity 5 microwave energy accumulates and generates a plasma for the purpose of carrying out a plasma chemical vapour deposition (PCVD) process. In the resonance cavity 5 microwave energy entering the cavity from the microwave guide 3 feeds a plasma that is generated inside the substrate tube 11. By conditioning proper gas flows and reciprocating the resonator 2 over the length of the substrate tube 11, glass material is deposited on the inner surface 11a of the substrate tube 11, thereby providing a tube with multiple glass layers deposited on the inside. Such a tube can be contracted to form a solid preform or core rod, which can be further processed for manufacturing a glass fiber.

[0017] In order to reduce the sensitivity to arcing, sharp outer edges in the design of the resonator are avoided. A first outer edge is often encountered at the interface between the waveguide 3 and the cavity 5. In the shown embodiment, the width of the cavity, i.e. the internal distance along the cylindrical axis C, mainly equals the corresponding size of the waveguide 3, e.g. a standard measure of 3.4 inch, 86.38 mm, thereby avoiding one outer edge. The difference in width of the cavity 5 and the largest side of the waveguide 3 is preferably small, i.e. smaller than 10 mm, more preferably smaller than 5mm, and preferably smaller than 1 mm, especially when using power levels above 6 kW. The arcing effect of the other outer edge in the interface can be minimized by rounding the edge.

[0018] The output of the cylindrical resonator 2 is typically a slit 9, which in itself is a (radially) small radial waveguide. In principle, the slit 9 can be as wide as the cavity 5 itself or smaller, even down to a few millimeters. The resonator slit 9 forms a radial waveguide extending between the cavity 5 and the inner side of the resonator 2, i.e. the tubular inner space 10.

[0019] The resonator 2 includes an annular element 12 defining at least partially a side surface of the cavity 5 in a cylindrical direction C1. In the shown embodiment, the annular element 12 is shaped as a (truncated) cone such that the cone surface 12a has a longitudinal axis substantially coinciding with the cylindrical axis C of the resonator 2 and being tapered towards the opposite side surface of the cavity 5, in the opposite cylindrical direction C2. In other words, the cone 12 is tapered towards the slit 9, so that an inner side surface of the cavity 5 is at least partially shaped as a cone surface. Apparently, the annular element 12 can also be located on the opposite side surface of the cavity 5.

[0020] By providing the annular element 12, the length l of the resonant cavity 5 in the cylindrical direction C1 varies as a function of the radial distance r to the cylindrical axis C. In particular, in a certain range of the radial distance r , the cylindrical length l of the cavity 5 increases as a function of increasing radial distance r with respect to the cylindrical axis C. The physical effect of the annular element is that the resonator can be more properly matched with the plasma while sharp edges in the cavity 5 can be avoided, thereby lowering the chance of arcing. Therefore, the surface 12a of the annular element 12 facing the cavity 5 is preferably smooth and the surface ends fit smoothly to the further inner surface of the cavity 5. Further, cooling properties of the resonator increase.

[0021] In the shown embodiment, the cavity 5 is basically rectangular shaped, in a cross sectional view, having a height H in the radial direction R and a length between the side wall surfaces in the cylindrical direction C1. The truncated cone 12 fits in a corner of the rectangle so that a right angle 13a of the cavity's inner surface 13 is replaced by two obtuse angles 13b, c. Further, the cone's surface 12a is preferably flat, but may alternatively include smooth deviations, such as a corrugated area and/or curved sections.

[0022] The annular element 12 may be formed as a separate element that is located in the resonator 2. The annular element 12 can be fixedly attached to the resonator. Further, the annular element 12 can be integrally formed with further parts of the resonator 2, e.g. with a side wall portion 6 and/or with the inner cylindrical wall 8, to form the cavity 5.

[0023] In order not to hamper the introduction of plasma from the cavity 5 into the tubular inner space 10, the slit 9 is not covered by the annular element 12. Thus, an obstruction to the introduction of microwaves into the tubular inner space 10 and the substrate tube 11 is counteracted. In particular, the inner cylindrical wall 8 directly adjacent to the slit 9 forms part of the cavity's inner surface 13. In the shown embodiment, the radial inner surface of the cavity is substantially parallel to the cylindrical axis C in a region 26 adjacent to the slit 9 up to a certain distance. However, the inner facing surface 12a of the annular element 12 may extend up to the edge 25 of the slit 9.

[0024] Preferably, the annular element 12 fills a part of a volume bounded in the radial direction R between the inner cylindrical wall 8 and the outer cylindrical wall 4 and in a cylindrical direction C1 between a side wall portion 6b and the slit edge 25, wherein the volume part that is filled by the annular element 12 is in a range of circa 10% to circa 95%. In the

shown embodiment, the annular element 12 is located at the right hand side of the slit edge 25 at the right hand side of the slit 9. The volume has in the cross sectional view a length L in the cylindrical direction C1 and a height H in the radial direction R. The annular element 12 is placed at the inner cylindrical wall 8 and the right hand side wall portion 6b.

[0025] If the annular element 12 would be designed to cover more than 95% of said volume at the right or left to the slit, the incident microwaves W might be hindered. Otherwise, if the annular element 12 would be designed to cover less than 10% of said volume, the effect of the annular element 12 is minimal.

[0026] Advantageously, the side surface 13 of the cavity extends, at a longitudinal end E of the cavity 5, substantially perpendicular with respect to the cylindrical axis C, preferably along a distance d of at least circa 1 mm, preferably near the outer cylindrical wall 4, so that the annular element 12 fits well in the resonator 2, and construction problems during the manufacturing process of the resonator 2 are counteracted.

[0027] The resonator may include further modules accommodating the components described above. Further, the cavity's inner surface is at least partly electrically conductive. Therefore, the walls are preferably made from metallic material such as steel.

[0028] Figures 2a-c show a schematic cross sectional side view of a second, third, fourth and fifth embodiment, respectively, of an apparatus according to the invention.

[0029] Figure 2a shows in a more simplified form a cavity's configuration that is almost similar to the apparatus shown in Fig. 1. The annular shaped cavity 5 is surrounded, when seen in a cross sectional view, by an outer cylindrical wall 4, two side wall portions 6a,b and an inner cylindrical wall 8 provided with a slit 9. Compared to the configuration shown in Fig. 1, the annular element 12 is now placed against the opposite side wall portion 6a.

[0030] In Fig. 2b, the annular element 12 occupies a smaller percentage of the volume bounded between the inner cylindrical wall 8, the outer cylindrical wall 4, a side wall portion 6a and the slit 9.

[0031] Fig. 2c shows a cavity's configuration including a pair of annular elements 12a,b placed at opposite sides with respect to the slit 9.

[0032] In Fig. 2d and 2e, the resonator is provided without the inner cylindrical wall 8. Here, the annular elements 12 are formed as a pair of rounded rings 15a, b placed next to the opposite side wall portions 6a,b, see Fig. 2d, or as a single rounded ring 15c placed next to a side wall portion 6a, see Fig. 2e.

[0033] It is noted that the annular element is preferably symmetric with respect to the cylindrical axis C of the resonator 2. However, in principle, the geometry might deviate, e.g. by providing an annular segment that does not entirely enclose the tubular inner space 10, but

merely a circumferential part thereof.

[0034] It is also noted that a specific shape of the annular element is not related to the aspect whether an inner cylindrical wall is applied, or not.

[0035] It is further noted that the annular element that is arranged in the resonator can be optimized for a specific application. Alternatively, the resonator can be formed on a modular basis, so that a specific annular elements from a range of annular elements can be selected that is suitable for a specific use of the resonator, thereby rendering the apparatus configurable for a wide variety of applications.

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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Patent documents cited in the description

- [EP1867610A \[0001\]](#)
- [US7975646B2 \[0004\]](#)
- [JPS6229054B \[0005\]](#)

P A T E N T K R A V

1. Indretning (1) til udførelse af en kemisk plasmapådamningsproces, omfattende en cylindrisk resonator (2), som er forsynet med en ydre cylindrisk væg (4),
5 som indeslutter et resonanshulrum (5) med en i det væsentlige rotations-symmetrisk form i forhold til en cylindrisk akse (C), hvor resonatoren (2) endvidere er forsynet med sidevægpartier (6a, b), som afgrænser resonanshulrummet (5) i modsatte cylindriske akseretninger (C1, C2), hvor indretningen endvidere omfatter et mikrobølgestyr (3) med en ende, som strækker sig gennem den ydre cylindriske
10 væg (4) ind i resonanshulrummet (5), hvor længden af resonanshulrummet (5) i den cylindriske retning (C1, C2) varierer som en funktion af den radiale afstand (r) til den cylindriske akse (C), **kendetegnet ved, at** resonatoren (2) omfatter et ringformet element (12), som definerer mindst delvis en sideflade af hulrummet (5) i en cylindrisk retning (C1, C2), hvor resonanshulrummet (5) i en cylindrisk retning (C1, C2) er mindst delvis afgrænset af overfladen af en kegle med en længdeakse, som er i det væsentlige sammenfaldende med resonatorens (2) cylindriske akse (C) og tilspidses mod den modsatte sideflade af hulrummet (5).
2. Indretning ifølge krav 1, hvor hulrummets cylindriske længde i et vist område
20 tiltager som en funktion af tiltagende radial afstand i forhold til den cylindriske akse.
3. Indretning ifølge et hvilket som helst af de foregående krav, hvor resonatoren endvidere er forsynet med en indre cylindrisk væg, som afgrænser resonanshulrummet i en radial retning mod den cylindriske akse, og hvor den indre cylindriske væg har en spalte, om strækker sig i en omkredsretning omkring den cylindriske akse.
25
4. Indretning ifølge et hvilket som helst af de foregående krav, hvor det ringformede element er integreret i et sidevægparti og/eller den indre cylindriske væg
30 i resonatoren.

5. Indretning ifølge et hvilket som helst af de foregående krav, hvor sidefladen af hulrummet ved en langsgående ende af hulrummet strækker sig i det væsentlige vinkelret i forhold til den cylindriske akse.
- 5 6. Indretning ifølge krav 5, hvor sidefladen af hulrummet strækker sig langs en afstand på mindst cirka 1 mm.
- 10 7. Indretning ifølge et hvilket som helst af de foregående krav 3-6, hvor det ringformede element fylder en del af et volumen, som er afgrænset i den radiale retning mellem den indre cylindriske væg og den ydre cylindriske væg og i en cylindriske retning mellem et sidevægparti og spalteenden, hvor volumendelen, som er fyldt med det ringformede element, er i et område på cirka 10% til cirka 95%.
- 15 8. Indretning ifølge et hvilket som helst af de foregående krav, som endvidere omfatter en mikrobølgegenerator, som er forbundet med en anden ende af mikrobølgestyret.

DRAWINGS

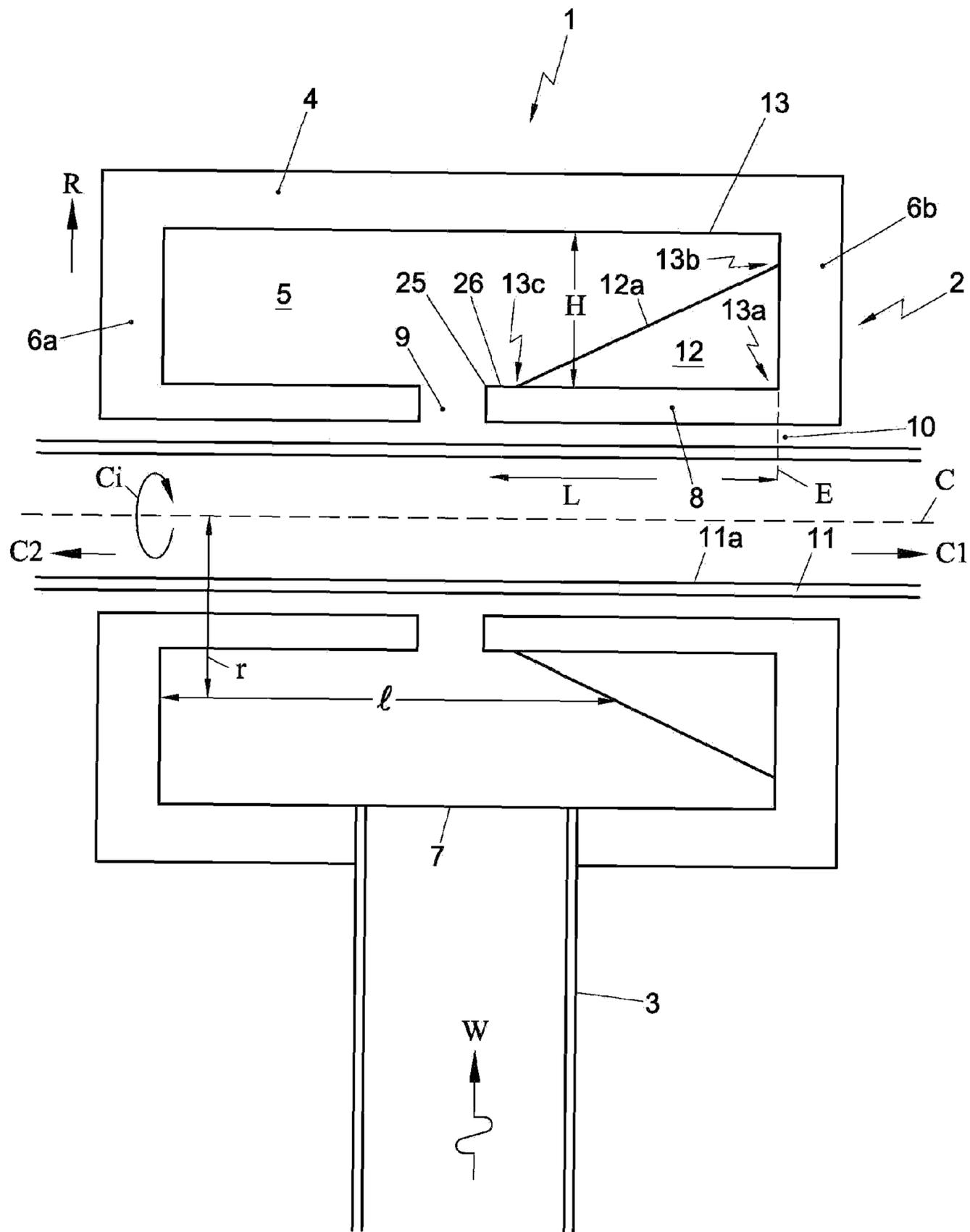


Fig. 1

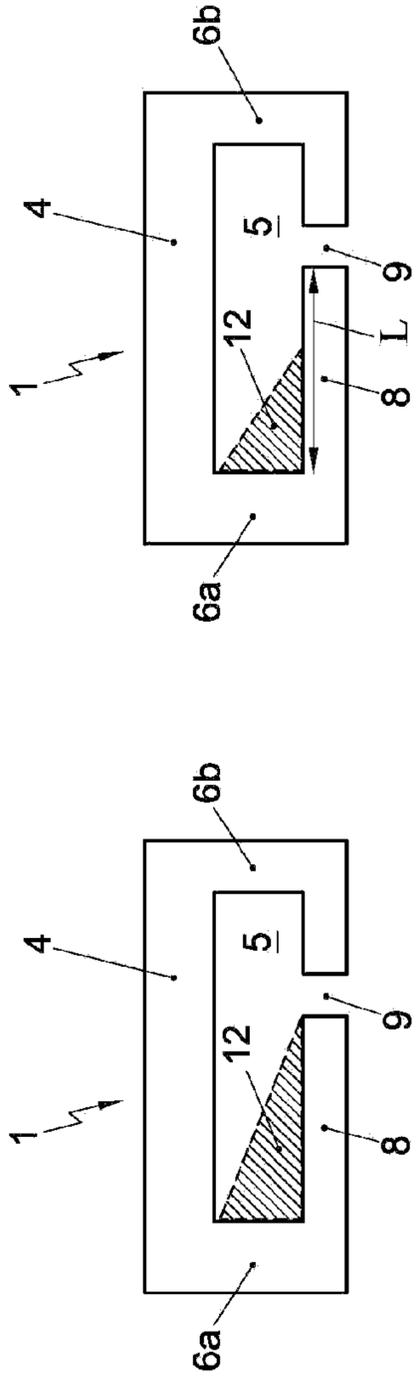


Fig. 2B

Fig. 2A

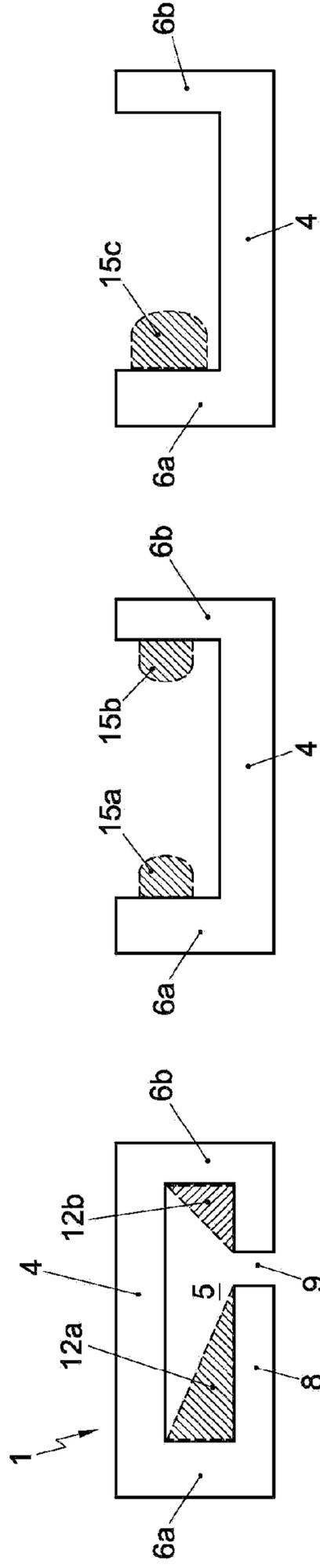


Fig. 2D

Fig. 2E

Fig. 2C