

Microstructure Evolution during Thermomechanical Multi-Step Processing of Extruded Aluminum Profiles

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Abstract

Extruded aluminum profiles are widely used structural components in miscellaneous applications of the lightweight design. The conventional metal extrusion is utilized to manufacture straight profile sections with a constant cross section which exhibit homogeneous mechanical properties in the semi-finished profile. In order to meet the demands of specific mechanical properties and to introduce additional functional elements in the geometry of the profile, subsequent forming processes are required. Utilization of electromagnetic forming subsequent to hot aluminum extrusion to manufacture functionally graded extrusion profiles is an innovative forming technology introduced recently by Jäger et al. (2011).

The large deformations, intermediate to very extreme strain rates and elevated temperatures, which characterize the process chain of hot extrusion and subsequent electromagnetic compression, lead to a complex development in the microstructure which is linked to the mechanical properties of the material. The evolution of the microstructure during thermomechanical multi-processing of extruded aluminum profiles has not been investigated explicitly. The main aim of this research was to investigate the effect of thermomechanical processing conditions on the microstructure evolution for a wide range of plastic strain rates.

First, the microstructural evolution during the hot direct extrusion of aluminum alloy EN AW-6082 was investigated. A novel experimental approach was introduced, which preserves the dynamic evolution of grains by avoiding secondary recrystallization. Here, the dynamic grain structure evolution of a single material point was characterized by monitoring its migration along the flow line during extrusion. The resulting microstructure was related to the deformation history, which was calculated by finite element analysis. The finite element simulations of the extrusion process were performed by utilizing a constitutive setting, which accounts for the microstructural mechanisms like strain hardening and thermal softening. The corresponding model parameters were determined based on the experimental observations. Process simulation was validated by experimentally obtained material flow lines and ram force.

In order to perform numerical analyses and to predict material deformation during electromagnetic forming process, dynamic flow stress behaviour of the material was determined by performing drop-weight and split Hopkinson pressure bar tests. Based on the experimentally obtained dynamic response of the material, a flow stress model and the corresponding material parameters were presented. The effects of very high strain rates and temperatures on the microstructural evolution under impulse loading conditions were analysed and modelled.

In order to predict the final microstructure of the thermomechanically processed material, the entire process chain was simulated based on the proposed dynamic recrystallization model.

Zusammenfassung

Stranggepresste Aluminiumprofile sind weitverwendete Strukturbauteile für zahlreiche Anwendungen im Leichtbau. Konventionell ist das Verfahren gerade Halbzeuge herzustellen, die über den Querschnitt und die Länge möglichst homogene mechanische Eigenschaften aufweisen. Zur Gewährleistung spezifischer mechanischer Eigenschaften sowie zur Einführung zusätzlicher funktionaler Strukturelemente in der Profilgeometrie sind weiterverarbeitende Umformprozesse erforderlich. Die Anwendung elektromagnetischer Umformung kombiniert mit Strangpressen zur Herstellung von funktional gradierten Bauteilen ist eine innovative Umformtechnologie, die von Jäger et al. (2011) bereits entwickelt wurde.

Große plastische Verformungen, mittlere bis zu sehr hohe Dehnraten und sehr hohe Temperaturen, die die Prozesskette der Strangpressen und der elektromagnetischen Rohrkompression charakterisieren, führen zu einer sehr komplexen Gefügeentwicklung, die mit mechanischen Eigenschaften des Werkstoffes verbunden ist. Die Entwicklung der Mikrostruktur während der thermo-mechanischen Weiterverarbeitung von stranggepressten Aluminiumprofilen wurde bisher nicht untersucht. Ziel dieser Arbeit ist es, den Einfluss thermo-mechanischer Prozessbedingungen über ein breites Spektrum der plastischen Dehnraten zu untersuchen.

Zunächst wurde die Mikrostrukturentwicklung während des Strangpressens der Aluminiumlegierung EN AW-6082 untersucht. Ein neuartiger experimenteller Ansatz wurde vorgestellt, bei dem die dynamische Entwicklung der Gefüge durch Vermeidung von statischer Rekristallisation erhalten bleibt. Die dynamische Rekristallisation eines Materialpunktes wurde dabei durch Analysieren der Verformung entlang der Fliesslinie während des Strangpressens charakterisiert. Zudem wurde der Einfluss der Umformhistorie auf die resultierende Mikrostruktur ermittelt, die mittels FEM berechnet wurde. Die Prozesssimulation wurde anhand der Experimente validiert.

Zur numerischen Simulation der elektromagnetischen Umformung wurde die dynamische Fliessspannung des Materials mit Hilfe der Fallhammer- und Split-Hopkinson-Versuche ermittelt. Auf Basis von experimentell ermittelten dynamischen Verhalten des Werkstoffes wurden ein Fliessspannungsmodell und die dazugehörigen Materialkennwerte dargestellt. Die Einflüsse von sehr hohen Dehnraten und Temperaturen auf die Mikrostrukturentwicklung beim Hochgeschwindigkeitsumformen wurden analysiert und modelliert.

Um die endgültige Mikrostruktur des thermo-mechanisch verarbeitenden Werkstoffes vorhersagen zu können, wurde basierend auf dem vorgestellten Mikrostrukturmodell die Prozesskette (Strangpressen und elektromagnetische Rohrkompression) ganzheitlich simuliert.

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