

PHOTOVOLTAICS System Design and Practice

HEINRICH HÄBERLIN

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PHOTOVOLTAICS

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SYSTEM DESIGN AND PRACTICE

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HE Translations, Leicester, UK



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To my wife Ruth and my children Andreas and Kathrin, who, while I was writing this book, weren't able to spend as much time with me as they would have liked – and to all those who want to see our society transition to sustainable and responsible electricity generation.

Contents

Foreword	xiii
Preface	xv
About the Author	xvii
Acknowledgements	xix
Note on the Examples and Costs	xxi
List of Symbols	xxiii
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Photovoltaics – What’s It All About?	1
1.2 Overview of this Book	10
1.3 A Brief Glossary of Key PV Terms	11
1.3.1 <i>Relevant Terminology Relating to Meteorology, Astronomy and Geometry</i>	11
1.3.2 <i>PV Terminology</i>	13
1.4 Recommended Guide Values for Estimating PV System Potential	14
1.4.1 <i>Solar Cell Efficiency η_{PV}</i>	14
1.4.2 <i>Solar Module Efficiency η_M</i>	14
1.4.3 <i>Energy Efficiency (Utilization Ratio, System Efficiency) η_E</i>	15
1.4.4 <i>Annual Energy Yield per Installed Kilowatt of Peak Installed Solar Generator Capacity</i>	15
1.4.5 <i>PV Installation Space Requirements</i>	17
1.4.6 <i>Cost per Installed Kilowatt of Peak Power</i>	17
1.4.7 <i>Feed-in Tariffs; Subsidies</i>	18
1.4.8 <i>Worldwide Solar Cell Production</i>	20
1.4.9 <i>Installed Peak Capacity</i>	21
1.4.10 <i>The Outlook for Solar Cell Production</i>	22
1.5 Examples	24
1.6 Bibliography	25
2 Key Properties of Solar Radiation	27
2.1 Sun and Earth	27
2.1.1 <i>Solar Declination</i>	27
2.1.2 <i>The Apparent Path of the Sun</i>	28
2.2 Extraterrestrial Radiation	31

2.3	Radiation on the Horizontal Plane of the Earth's Surface	32
2.3.1	<i>Irradiated Energy H on the Horizontal Plane of the Earth's Surface</i>	34
2.4	Simple Method for Calculating Solar Radiation on Inclined Surfaces	39
2.4.1	<i>Annual Global Irradiation Factors</i>	44
2.4.2	<i>Elementary Radiation Calculation Examples for Inclined Surfaces</i>	47
2.5	Radiation Calculation on Inclined Planes with Three-Component Model	49
2.5.1	<i>Components of Global Radiation on the Horizontal Plane</i>	49
2.5.2	<i>Radiation Reflected off the Ground</i>	50
2.5.3	<i>The Three Components of Radiation on Inclined Surfaces</i>	51
2.5.4	<i>Approximate Allowance for Shading by the Horizon</i>	54
2.5.5	<i>Effect of Horizon and Façade/Roof Edge Elevation on Diffuse Radiation (Sky and Reflected Radiation)</i>	58
2.5.6	<i>Total Energy Incident on Inclined Surfaces (Generic Case)</i>	62
2.5.7	<i>Retrospective Calculation of Irradiance Incident on Inclined Solar Generators, Using Global Radiation Readings on the Horizontal Plane</i>	63
2.5.8	<i>Examples of Radiation Calculations with the Three-Component Method</i>	64
2.6	Approximate Annual Energy Yield for Grid-Connected PV Systems	68
2.6.1	<i>Examples for Approximate Energy Yield Calculations</i>	69
2.7	Composition of Solar Radiation	69
2.8	Solar Radiation Measurement	71
2.8.1	<i>Pyranometers</i>	71
2.8.2	<i>Reference Cells</i>	71
2.8.3	<i>Pyranometer Versus Reference Cell Measurements</i>	73
2.9	Bibliography	76
3	Solar Cells: Their Design Engineering and Operating Principles	79
3.1	The Internal Photoelectric Effect in Semiconductors	79
3.2	A Brief Account of Semiconductor Theory	81
3.2.1	<i>Semiconductor Doping</i>	81
3.2.2	<i>The P–N Junction</i>	83
3.2.3	<i>Characteristic Curves of Semiconductor Diodes</i>	85
3.3	The Solar Cell: A Specialized Semiconductor Diode with a Large Barrier Layer that is Exposed to Light	86
3.3.1	<i>Structure of a Crystalline Silicon Solar Cell</i>	86
3.3.2	<i>Equivalent Circuit of a Solar Cell</i>	87
3.3.3	<i>Characteristic Curves of Solar Cells</i>	89
3.4	Solar Cell Efficiency	94
3.4.1	<i>Spectral Efficiency η_S (of Solar Cells with a Single Junction)</i>	94
3.4.2	<i>Theoretical Efficiency η_T (of Solar Cells with a Single Junction)</i>	97
3.4.3	<i>Practical Efficiency η_{PV} (at a Junction)</i>	100
3.4.4	<i>Efficiency Optimization Methods</i>	104
3.5	The Most Important Types of Solar Cells and the Attendant Manufacturing Methods	108
3.5.1	<i>Crystalline Silicon Solar Cells</i>	108
3.5.2	<i>Gallium Arsenide Solar Cells</i>	111
3.5.3	<i>Thin-Film Solar Cells</i>	114
3.5.4	<i>Dye Sensitized Solar Cell (DSSC; Photoelectrochemical Solar Cells, Grätzel Solar Cells)</i>	121
3.6	Bifacial Solar Cells	122
3.7	Examples	122
3.8	Bibliography	124

4	Solar Modules and Solar Generators	127
4.1	Solar Modules	127
4.2	Potential Solar Cell Wiring Problems	138
4.2.1	<i>Characteristic Curves of Solar Cells in all Quadrants</i>	138
4.2.2	<i>Wiring Solar Cells in Series</i>	140
4.2.3	<i>Parallel-Connected Solar Cells</i>	147
4.3	Interconnection of Solar Modules and Solar Generators	149
4.3.1	<i>Series Connection of Solar Modules to a String</i>	149
4.3.2	<i>Parallel-Connected Solar Modules</i>	152
4.3.3	<i>Solar Generators with Parallel-Connected Series Strings</i>	152
4.3.4	<i>Solar Generators with Solar Module Matrixing</i>	159
4.4	Solar Generator Power Loss Resulting from Partial Shading and Mismatch Loss	160
4.4.1	<i>Power Loss Induced by Module Shading</i>	160
4.4.2	<i>Mismatch Loss Attributable to Manufacturing Tolerances</i>	163
4.4.3	<i>Mismatch Loss Attributable to String Inhomogeneity</i>	166
4.5	Solar Generator Structure	166
4.5.1	<i>Solar Generator Mounting Options</i>	166
4.5.2	<i>Mounting Systems</i>	176
4.5.3	<i>Electrical Integration of Solar Generators</i>	184
4.5.4	<i>DC Wiring Power Loss</i>	196
4.5.5	<i>Grounding Problems on the DC Side</i>	198
4.5.6	<i>Structure of Larger-Scale Solar Generators</i>	199
4.5.7	<i>Safety Protection Against Touch Voltage</i>	201
4.5.8	<i>Factors that Reduce Solar Generator Power Yield</i>	202
4.6	Examples	217
4.7	Bibliography	221
5	PV Energy Systems	223
5.1	Stand-alone PV Systems	223
5.1.1	<i>PV System Batteries</i>	225
5.1.2	<i>Structure of Stand-alone PV Systems</i>	242
5.1.3	<i>PV Installation Inverters</i>	248
5.1.4	<i>Stand-alone Installation DC Appliances</i>	258
5.1.5	<i>Stand-alone 230 V AC PV Installations</i>	259
5.1.6	<i>Stand-alone PV Installations with Integrated AC Power Busses</i>	259
5.2	Grid-Connected Systems	262
5.2.1	<i>Grid-Connected Operation</i>	262
5.2.2	<i>Design Engineering and Operating Principles of PV System Inverters</i>	266
5.2.3	<i>Standards and Regulations for Grid-Connected Inverters</i>	277
5.2.4	<i>Avoidance of Islanding and Stand-alone Operation in Grid Inverters</i>	288
5.2.5	<i>Operating Performance and Characteristics of PV Grid Inverters</i>	302
5.2.6	<i>Problems that Occur in Grid-Connected Systems and Possible Countermeasures</i>	347
5.2.7	<i>Regulation and Stability Problems in Grid Systems</i>	368
5.3	Bibliography	389
6	Protecting PV Installations Against Lightning	395
6.1	Probability of Direct Lightning Strikes	395
6.1.1	<i>Specimen Calculation for the Annual Number of Direct Lightning Strikes N_D</i>	397

6.2	Lightning Strikes: Guide Values; Main Effects	398
6.2.1	<i>Types of Lightning</i>	398
6.2.2	<i>Effects of Lightning</i>	399
6.2.3	<i>Lightning Protection Installation Classes and Efficiency</i>	399
6.2.4	<i>Use of Approximate Solutions for Lightning Protection Sizing</i>	399
6.3	Basic principles of Lightning Protection	400
6.3.1	<i>Internal and External Lightning Protection</i>	400
6.3.2	<i>Protection Zone Determination Using the Lightning Sphere Method</i>	400
6.3.3	<i>Protection Zone for Lightning Conductors and Lightning Rods</i>	401
6.3.4	<i>Lightning Protection Measures for Electricity Installations</i>	402
6.4	Shunting Lightning Current to a Series of Down-conductors	402
6.5	Potential Increases; Equipotential Bonding	404
6.5.1	<i>Equipotential Bonding Realization</i>	405
6.5.2	<i>Lightning Current in Conductors that are Incorporated into the Equipotential Bonding Installation</i>	405
6.5.3	<i>Lightning Protection Devices</i>	407
6.6	Lightning-Current-Induced Voltages and Current	408
6.6.1	<i>Mutual Inductance and Induced Voltages in a Rectangular Loop</i>	409
6.6.2	<i>Proximity Between Down-conductors and other Installations</i>	413
6.6.3	<i>Induced Current</i>	415
6.6.4	<i>Voltages in Lightning-Current-Conducting Cylinders</i>	429
6.7	PV Installation Lightning Protection Experiments	432
6.7.1	<i>Introduction</i>	432
6.7.2	<i>The Surge Current Generator</i>	432
6.7.3	<i>Test Apparatus for Solar Module Characteristic Curves</i>	433
6.7.4	<i>Solar Cell and Solar Module Damage Induced by Surge Current</i>	435
6.7.5	<i>Improving Module Immunity to Lightning Current</i>	439
6.7.6	<i>Mini-lightning Conductors for PV Installations</i>	440
6.7.7	<i>Measurement of Induced Voltage in Individual Modules</i>	440
6.7.8	<i>Voltage Induced in Wired Solar Generators</i>	450
6.7.9	<i>Conclusions Drawn from the Test Results</i>	458
6.8	Optimal Sizing of PV Installation Lightning Protection Devices	459
6.8.1	<i>Solar Module Mutual Inductance</i>	460
6.8.2	<i>Wiring Mutual Inductance</i>	461
6.8.3	<i>Specimen Calculation for M_S and v_{max} in a Whole String</i>	462
6.8.4	<i>Effects of Distant Lightning Strikes</i>	463
6.9	Recommendations for PV Installation Lightning Protection	470
6.9.1	<i>Possible Protective Measures</i>	470
6.9.2	<i>Protection Against Distant Lightning Strikes</i>	471
6.9.3	<i>Protection Against Both Distant and Nearby Strikes (up to about 20 m)</i>	475
6.9.4	<i>Protection Against Direct Lightning Strikes on PV Installations and Buildings</i>	476
6.9.5	<i>Lightning Protection for Large-Scale Ground-Based PV Installations</i>	479
6.9.6	<i>Lightning Protection for PV Installations on Flat Roofs</i>	480
6.9.7	<i>PV Installation Lightning Protection as Prescribed by Swiss Law</i>	481
6.10	Recap and Conclusions	484
6.11	Bibliography	485

7	Normalized Representation of Energy and Power of PV Systems	487
7.1	Introduction	487
7.2	Normalized Yields, Losses and Performance Ratio	487
7.2.1	<i>Normalized Yields</i>	487
7.2.2	<i>Definition of Normalized Losses</i>	490
7.2.3	<i>Performance Ratio</i>	490
7.2.4	<i>New Normalized Values of Merit</i>	491
7.3	Normalized Diagrams for Yields and Losses	491
7.3.1	<i>Normalized Monthly and Annual Statistics</i>	491
7.3.2	<i>Normalized Daily Statistics Broken Down by Hours</i>	495
7.4	Normalized PV Installation Power Output	495
7.4.1	<i>Normalized Daily Diagram with Instantaneous Values</i>	496
7.4.2	<i>Derivation of Daily Energy Yield from Normalized Instantaneous Values</i>	497
7.4.3	<i>Definition of the Correction Factors k_G, k_T and of efficiency η_1</i>	497
7.4.4	<i>Assessment Methods Using Normalized Daily Diagrams</i>	497
7.4.5	<i>Specimen Normalized Daily Diagrams</i>	498
7.5	Anomaly Detection Using Various Types of Diagrams	502
7.6	Recap and Conclusions	506
7.7	Bibliography	506
8	PV Installation Sizing	507
8.1	Principal of and Baseline Values for Yield Calculations	507
8.1.1	<i>Insolation Calculations</i>	508
8.1.2	<i>Determination of the Temperature Correction Factor k_T</i>	508
8.1.3	<i>Defining the Solar Generator Correction Factor k_G</i>	513
8.2	Energy Yield Calculation for Grid-Connected Systems	523
8.2.1	<i>Examples of Grid-Connected System Energy Yield</i>	525
8.3	Sizing PV Installations that Integrate a Battery Bank	533
8.3.1	<i>Determination of Mean Daily Appliance Power Consumption</i>	533
8.3.2	<i>Requisite Battery Capacity K</i>	534
8.3.3	<i>Solar Generator Sizing</i>	535
8.3.4	<i>Stand-alone System Sizing Tables</i>	538
8.3.5	<i>Sizing Exercises for Stand-alone Installations</i>	541
8.4	Insolation Calculation Freeware	549
8.4.1	<i>PVGIS Solar Irradiation Data</i>	550
8.4.2	<i>The European Satel-Light Insolation Database</i>	550
8.5	Simulation Software	550
8.6	Bibliography	551
9	The Economics of Solar Power	553
9.1	How Much Does Solar Energy Cost?	553
9.1.1	<i>Examples of More Exact Energy Price Calculations</i>	555
9.1.2	<i>Comparison of PV and Conventional Electricity Costs</i>	557
9.1.3	<i>PV Electricity Pump Storage System Costs</i>	560
9.1.4	<i>PV Electricity Battery Storage Costs</i>	562
9.2	Grey Energy; Energy Payback Time; Yield Factor	562
9.3	Bibliography	566
10	Performance Characteristics of Selected PV Installations	569
10.1	Energy Yield Data and Other Aspects of Selected PV Installations	569
10.1.1	<i>Gfeller PV Installation in Burgdorf, Switzerland</i>	569
10.1.2	<i>Mont Soleil PV Installation in the Jura Mountains (Elevation 1270 m)</i>	572

10.1.3	<i>Jungfraujoch PV Installation (Elevation: 3454 m)</i>	579
10.1.4	<i>Birg PV Installation (Elevation: 2670 m)</i>	585
10.1.5	<i>Stade de Suisse PV Installation in Bern</i>	588
10.1.6	<i>Newtech PV Installation with Thin-Film Solar Cell Modules</i>	592
10.1.7	<i>Neue Messe PV Installation in Munich, Germany</i>	600
10.1.8	<i>Leipziger Land PV Installation</i>	603
10.1.9	<i>Borna PV Installation with Biaxial Solar Trackers</i>	607
10.1.10	<i>Erlasee Solar Park with Biaxial Solar Trackers</i>	607
10.1.11	<i>Guadix PV Installation in Southern Spain, with Biaxial Solar Trackers</i>	609
10.1.12	<i>Biaxial Solar Tracker ENEA PV Installation near Naples, Italy</i>	609
10.1.13	<i>PV Installation in Mudgee, Australia</i>	611
10.1.14	<i>PV Installation in Springerville, Arizona</i>	612
10.2	Long-Term Comparison of Four Swiss PV Installations	614
10.3	Long-Term Energy Yield of the Burgdorf Installation	617
10.4	Mean PV Installation Energy Yield in Germany	619
10.5	Bibliography	620
11	In Conclusion . . .	623
Appendix A: Calculation Tables and Insolation Data		633
A1	Insolation Calculation Tables	633
A1.1	<i>Basic Insolation Calculation</i>	633
A1.2	<i>Insolation Calculation Using the Three-Component Model</i>	633
A2	Aggregate Monthly Horizontal Global Insolation	634
A3	Global Insolation for Various Reference Locations	634
A4	R_B Factors for Insolation Calculations Using the Three-Component Model	648
A5	Shading Diagrams for Various Latitudes	673
A6	Energy Yield Calculation Tables	676
A6.1	<i>Energy Yield Calculation Tables for Grid-Connected Systems</i>	677
A6.2	<i>Stand-alone Installation Sizing Tables</i>	679
A7	k_T and k_G Figures for Energy Yield Calculations	681
A7.1	<i>k_T Figures for Various Reference Stations</i>	682
A7.2	<i>k_G Figures for Various Reference Stations</i>	682
A8	Insolation and Energy Yield Calculation Maps	683
A8.1	<i>Specimen Polar Shading Diagram</i>	683
A8.2	<i>Insolation Maps</i>	683
A8.3	<i>Maps for Estimates of Annual PV Energy Yield in Europe and Environs</i>	689
Appendix B: Links; Books; Acronyms; etc.		691
B1	Links to PV Web Sites	691
B1.1	<i>Organizations</i>	691
B1.2	<i>Government Organizations</i>	692
B1.3	<i>Research Organizations</i>	692
B1.4	<i>Specialized Journals</i>	692
B2	Books on Photovoltaics and Related Areas	693
B3	Acronyms	695
B4	Prefixes for Decimal Fractions and Metric Multiples	696
B5	Conversion Factors	696
B6	Key Physical Constants	696
Index		697

Foreword

Energy and the concerns it raises for individuals, society at large and the environment, is a more burning issue today than ever before. Evolutions such as climate change, energy security issues, energy market deregulation, energy price fluctuations and the like have made energy the centre of a multi-faceted debate where the need for sustainable energy and improved energy efficiency are taking centre stage as never before. The European Commission's objectives for 2020 in this regard are both courageous and pioneering.

The Stern Report issued by the British government in 2006 noted that global warming and its worldwide economic repercussions constitute the widest-ranging failure of free market mechanisms that the world has ever seen. This report also quantified the economic costs of this evolution. The 'business as usual' attitude that unfortunately still prevails in the business and political communities is going to cost us dearly; and the longer we wait to act, the higher the cost will be. A growing number of politicians, business leaders, and consumers have come to the realization that action must be taken, and that such action will not come cheap.

The timing of this book's publication could not be better. Admittedly photovoltaics is no magic bullet solution for the myriad problems we face but photovoltaics is one of the key technologies that will bring us closest to a sustainable energy supply in the foreseeable and distant future. Many technical and other obstacles remain to be surmounted before photovoltaics can do this, however, the undeniable fact of the matter is that photovoltaics is now the subject of feverish and rapid worldwide development on an industrial scale. The annual growth rates of upwards of 40 percent registered by the photovoltaics industry are all the more remarkable in light of the recent financial crisis, not to mention past economic recessions.

The term photovoltaics is often associated primarily with solar cells and solar modules. As these are the core elements of photovoltaic technology, this mindset makes perfect sense. However, it does not go far enough when it comes to characterizing the energy production of a solar power installation. Only if we regard photovoltaics as an energy system can we begin to make accurate statements concerning its contribution to the energy supply. Moreover, regarding a phenomenon as a system often allows us to connect the dots between theory and practice, paradigm and experience.

As growing numbers of PV installations are put into operation, questions are increasingly being raised concerning their quality and reliability. Only a PV installation that works properly can genuinely contribute to the energy supply. Hence such issues are looming ever larger worldwide. One of the great virtues of the present book is that it places tremendous emphasis on the system related aspects of photovoltaics.

Over the course of his many years of research on the system related aspects of photovoltaics, Prof. Häberlin has accumulated unparalleled experience that is richly detailed in his numerous publications on the subject. He has now made this experience available to a wider public, via this book, which in using its author's experience as a springboard, provides a wealth of insights and highly practical information concerning the design and operation of PV installations. In so doing, this book also addresses an increasingly pressing problem, namely that rapid growth in the photovoltaics industry and other renewable energy sectors will increase the need for qualified individuals in this domain. Thus education and training are a matter of growing importance in this regard.

I would like to on one hand express my gratitude to Prof. Häberlin for having written this book, and on the other congratulate him on his willingness to share his photovoltaics expertise with a wider audience via this book, which I feel will make a significant contribution to the advancement of photovoltaic technology. I am confident that this richly detailed and very complete book will enable numerous photovoltaics engineers, researchers and other professionals to gain greater insight into photovoltaics, and particularly into the practical aspects of this intriguing field.

Stefan Nowak, Ph.D.
*Chairman of the International Energy Agency Photovoltaics Power Systems
Programme (IEA PVPS)
St. Ursen, Switzerland*

Preface

The PV industry has experienced an exponential growth since the appearance of the first edition of this book in German in 2007 and ever-larger PV installations are being realized in an ever-growing number of countries. The tremendous interest shown in the first edition of this book, as well as the extensive positive feedback it elicited, show that photovoltaics, which is discussed comprehensively and in all its complexity in this book, is a topic of tremendous importance nowadays.

Therefore the second edition published also in German in 2010 goes into even greater depth on a number of matters and also explores some aspects of and insights into photovoltaics that were not contained in the first edition. For this second edition, I have extensively revised, updated and expanded the material from the first edition in such a way that, using the information in this book, designers can make very close sizing and yield estimates for PV installations at any site worldwide between 40 °S and 60 °N. In addition to updating my own extremely extensive PV installation monitoring data, I have also included energy yield figures from other countries, thanks to the generosity of the relevant operators who kindly provided data concerning their installations.

Considering the success of the two German books and the expressed interest also from many English speaking PV engineers, it was decided to translate this book into English to make my extended PV experience available also to them. The present book is an exact translation into English of the extended second German edition published in 2010.

Since the finalisation of the German book and the translation, prices for PV modules have considerably dropped further especially in 2011. For large quantities of crystalline modules prices of 1 € per Wp or even somewhat less were offered in autumn 2011, i.e. even less than the lowest values indicated in the book. Therefore the price of PV electricity is now already very close to competitiveness with conventional electricity in many countries.

Heinrich Häberlin
Ersigen
October 2011

About the Author



After earning a Masters degree in electrical engineering from ETH Zurich, Heinrich Häberlin became a staff researcher at the ETH Microwave Lab. During this time he developed hardware, software and numerous learning applications for a computerized teaching and learning system that was used at ETH until 1988. He earned a doctorate in 1978, based on the thesis he wrote concerning this system.

From 1979 to 1980, Dr. Häberlin headed a team at the Zellweger Company that worked on the development of hardware and software for microprocessor-based control of a complex short-wave radio system.

In late 1980 he was appointed a professor to the engineering school in Burgdorf, Switzerland, where from 1980 to 1988 besides electrical engineering he also taught computer science.

Prof. Häberlin has been actively involved in photovoltaics since 1987. In 1988 he established the Bern University of Applied Sciences Photovoltaics Lab, where he and his staff mainly investigate the behaviour of grid-connected systems. Since 1989 he has also been operating his own PV installation. In 1988 he began testing various PV inverters and in 1990 he initiated a series of lab experiments concerning PV installation lightning protection. Prof. Häberlin's PV Lab has, since 1992, also been continuously monitoring more than 70 PV installations, mainly under the auspices of research projects commissioned by Switzerland's Federal Office for Energy. His lab also carries out specialized measurements of PV installation components for the relevant manufacturers and also works on various EU projects.

Prof. Häberlin has been teaching photovoltaics at Bern University of Applied Sciences since 1989. He is a member of Electrosuisse, ETG, the Swiss TK82 panel of experts on PV installations, and the IEC's International Photovoltaics Standards Committee TC82.

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Heinrich Häberlin

Ersigen

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Note on the Examples and Costs

Many of the chapters in this book contain examples whose numbers were in many cases calculated using spreadsheet programs that round off the exact numbers that were originally input. On the other hand, for reasons of space many of the numbers in the tables in Appendix A have been rounded off to two decimal places. Hence, when used for actual calculations, these rounded-off numbers may under certain circumstances differ slightly from the counterpart numbers indicated in the examples.

In several sections of this book, costs of PV modules or PV systems or feed-in tariffs are given in euros. In some cases or examples, especially where the situation in Switzerland is discussed, costs in Swiss francs (SFr) are expressed as their equivalent in euros (€). The exchange rate used in this case was the exchange rate during the finalization of the German book, i.e. 1 Swiss franc is equivalent to about 0.67 euros. Due to the problems on the financial markets, there were extreme variations of this exchange rate in 2010 and 2011 (variation between about 1 SFr \approx 0.67 € and 1 SFr \approx 1 €). For actual values in Swiss francs the actual exchange rate has to be used.

List of Symbols

Symbol	Name	Metric
a	Depreciation rate	%
a_A	Battery depreciation rate	%
a_E	Depreciation rate for electronic installations	%
A_G	Total surface area of a solar generator field (aggregate module surface area)	
a_G	Solar generator depreciation rate	%
A_L	Space required for a ground-based or rooftop solar generator field	m ²
AM	Air mass number	—
a_{MB}	Relative number of shaded modules per string	—
a_{MM}	Relative number of modules per string that exhibit power loss	—
A_Z	Solar cell surface area	m ²
C	Battery capacity	F
C	Capacitance	F
C_E	Solar generator earthing capacitance	F
CF	Capacity factor	—
c_T	Temperature coefficient for a solar generator's MPP output	K ⁻¹
di/dt_{\max}	Maximum current curve in a lightning leader stroke	kA/ μ s
d_V	Relative voltage rise at the grid link point	—
e	Electron charge (scope of an electron or proton charge) ($e = 1.602 \cdot 10^{-19}$ A s)	A s
e	Basis for natural logarithms: $e = 2.718\ 281\ 828$	—
E	Energy (in general)	kWh, MJ
e_A	PV installation surface-related grey energy	kWh/m ² MJ/m ²
E_{AC}	PV installation AC power output	kWh
E_D	Mean daily DC power used by a stand-alone installation	Wh/d
E_{DC}	PV installation DC power output	kWh
E_{DC-S}	Mean DC power output per day and string for a stand-alone installation with MPT	Wh/d
EF	Yield factor = L/ERZ	—
E_G	Band gap energy (usually expressed in eV; 1 eV = $1.602 \cdot 10^{-19}$ J)	eV
E_H	Mean daily energy yield of a hybrid generator	Wh/d
E_L	Total energy produced by a PV installation during its service life	kWh, MJ
e_P	Peak-power-related grey energy in PV installations	kWh/W, MJ/W
ERZ	Energy payback time (time needed to produce grey energy)	a
f	Frequency	Hz
FF	Filling factor for a solar cell, solar module or solar generator	—
FF_i	Idealized filling factor	—

G	Global irradiance (power/surface), usually indicated for the horizontal plane	W/m^2
G_B	Direct beam irradiance, usually indicated for the horizontal plane	W/m^2
G_D	Diffuse irradiance, usually indicated for the horizontal plane	W/m^2
GE	Grey energy	kWh, MJ
G_{ex}	Extraterrestrial irradiance	W/m^2
G_G	Global irradiance on the solar generator plane	W/m^2
G_o, G_{STC}	Irradiance under STC: $G_o = 1 \text{ kW/m}^2$	W/m^2
H	Total irradiation (energy/area), usually indicated for the horizontal plane	$kWh/m^2 \text{ (MJ/m}^2\text{)}$
H_B	Total irradiation; direct beam irradiation (usually indicated for the horizontal plane)	$kWh/m^2 \text{ (MJ/m}^2\text{)}$
H_D	Total irradiation; diffuse irradiation (usually indicated for the horizontal plane)	$kWh/m^2 \text{ (MJ/m}^2\text{)}$
H_{ex}	Total extraterrestrial irradiation on a plane parallel to the horizontal plane outside of the Earth's atmosphere	$kWh/m^2 \text{ (MJ/m}^2\text{)}$
H_G	Total irradiation, irradiation on the solar generator plane (energy/area)	$kWh/m^2 \text{ (MJ/m}^2\text{)}$
I	Electric current (general)	A
i_A	Lightning current in a down-conductor	A
i_{Amax}	Peak lightning current in a down-conductor	A
I_{Dceff}	Figure for the DC input current of a stand-alone inverter	A
I_F	Passband current	A
I_L	Charging current	A
i_{max}	Peak lightning current voltage	A
I_{MPP}	MPP current	A
I_{PV}	Solar generator current	A
I_R	Solar module reverse current (= passband current in a solar cell diode)	A
I_S	Saturation current of a diode or solar cell	A
I_{SC}	Short-circuit current of a solar cell, solar module or solar generator	A
I_{SC-STC}	Short-circuit current under STC	A
I_{SN}	Nominal string fuse voltage	A
i_{So}	Short-circuit current induced by lightning current in a conductor loop	A
i_{Smax}	Peak induced short-circuit current in a conductor loop	A
i_V	Displacement current induced in a PV installation by a distant lightning strike	A
i_V	Varistor current induced by lightning current	A
$I_{V8/20}$	Requisite nominal varistor current (for an 8/20 μs waveform)	A
J_{max}	Peak current density	A/m^2
J_S	Saturation current density	A/m^2
k	Boltzmann's constant = $1.38 \cdot 10^{-23} \text{ J/K}$	J/K
K_A	Battery costs for stand-alone installations	euros
k_B	Annual operating costs	euros/year
k_B	Shading correction factor (1 for no shading, 0 for full shading)	—
k_C	Proportion of lightning current in a down-conductor	—
K_E	Costs for electronic components such as inverters	euros
k_G	Solar generator correction factor	—
K_G	Costs attributable to a solar generator, site modification, wiring, and so on	euros

k_I	Total harmonic current distortion	—
K_J	Total annual PV installation operating costs	euros/year
k_{MR}	Correction factor for deriving M_{Mi} from M_{MR} for a module frame	—
K_N	Usable battery capacity	Ah
K_S	Cost savings for roof tiles and the like for PV installations that are integrated into buildings	euros
k_T	Temperature correction factor	—
K_x	Battery discharge capacity expressed as x number of hours ($K_x = f(x)$)	Ah
L	Inductance (in general)	H
L	Installation lifetime (in years)	a
L_C	Capture losses	h/d
L_{CM}	Miscellaneous capture losses	h/d
l_{CM}	Standardized miscellaneous non-capture losses: $l_{CM} = y_T - y_A$	—
L_{CT}	Thermal capture losses	h/d
l_{CT}	Standardized thermal capture losses: $l_{CT} = y_R - y_T$	—
L_S	Conductor loop inductance	H
l_S	Standardized system capture losses: $l_S = y_A - y_F$	—
L_S, L_{BOS}	Balance of system losses	h/d
M	Mutual inductance (in general)	H
M_i	Effective mutual inductance, based on total lightning current i	H
M_{Mi}	Effective mutual inductance of a module (based on total lightning current i)	H
M_{MR}	Module frame mutual inductance (based on $i_A = k_C \cdot i$)	H
n_{AP}	Number of parallel-connected batteries	—
n_{AS}	Number of series-connected batteries	—
N_D	Mean annual number of direct lightning strikes	—
N_g	Number of lightning strikes per square kilometre and year	—
n_I	Inverter efficiency (energy efficiency)	—
n_{MP}	Number of parallel-connected modules in a solar generator	—
n_{MS}	Number of series-connected modules in a string	—
n_{MSB}	Number of shaded modules per string	—
n_{MSM}	Number of modules per string that exhibit power loss	—
n_{SP}	Number of parallel-connected strings in a solar generator	—
n_{VZ}	Full-cycle service life of a battery	—
n_Z	Number of series-connected cells	—
n_{ZP}	Number of parallel-connected strings in a solar module	—
P	Effective power	W
p	Interest rate that is to be applied to depreciation	%
P_A	Solar generator DC power output	W
P_{A0}	Effective (measured) peak solar generator output under STC	W
P_{AC}	AC-side output	W
P_{AC1}	Maximum connectable single-phase nominal inverter output	W
P_{AC3}	Maximum connectable triphase nominal inverter output	W
P_{ACn}	AC-side nominal output of an inverter or a PV installation	W
P_{DC}	DC-side output	W
P_{DCn}	DC-side nominal inverter output	W
PF	Packing factor	—
P_{Go}	Nominal solar generator peak output under STC (aggregate P_{Mo})	W
P_{GoT}	Temperature-corrected nominal solar generator peak output	W
P_{max}	Maximum output (equates to P_{MPP} under STC)	W
P_{Mo}	Nominal module output under STC, according to the vendor's data	W

P_{MPP}	MPP of a solar cell, solar module or solar generator	W
P_{use}	PV installation output power	W
PR	Performance ratio = Y_F/Y_R	—
pr	Instantaneous performance ratio = y_F/y_R	—
PR_a	Annual performance ratio	—
P_{VTZ}	Maximum allowable area-specific solar cell power loss	W/m ²
Q	Wattless power (> 0 when inductive)	var
Q_D	Mean daily load consumption for a stand-alone installation	Ah/d
Q_H	Mean daily hybrid solar generator charge for a stand-alone installation	Ah/d
Q_L	Lightning current charge (up to a few hundred milliseconds)	A s
Q_L	Mean daily charge consumption (> Q_D) for a stand-alone installation	Ah/d
Q_{PV}	Mean daily charge provided by a solar generator	Ah/d
Q_S	Lightning current charge (surge current of less than 1 ms duration)	As
Q_S	Mean daily string charge for a stand-alone installation	Ah/d
R	Resistance (in general); real component of a complex impedance \underline{Z}	Ω
R_{1L}	Real component of complex single-phase impedance in a conductor between a transformer and grid link point (for inverter connection purposes)	Ω
R_{1N}	Real component of complex single-phase grid impedance (ohmic component)	Ω
R_{1S}	Real component of complex single-phase interconnecting line impedance (with impedance \underline{Z}_S) between a grid link point and inverter	Ω
R_{3L}	Real component of complex triphase impedance in a conductor between a transformer and grid link point (for inverter connection purposes)	Ω
R_{3N}	Real component of complex triphase grid impedance (ohmic component)	Ω
R_{3S}	Real component of complex triphase interconnecting line impedance (with impedance \underline{Z}_S) between a grid link point and inverter	Ω
$R(\beta,\gamma)$	Global radiation factor = H_G/H	—
$R_a(\beta,\gamma)$	Annual global radiation factor = H_{Gd}/H_a (ratio of annual irradiance figures)	—
R_B	Direct beam radiation factor = H_{GB}/H_B (as in the tables in Section A4)	—
r_B	Lightning sphere radius	m
R_D	Diffuse radiation factor = H_{GD}/H_D	—
R_D	Ground resistance of a grounding installation	Ω
R_i	Inner resistance of a battery or the like	Ω
R_L	Power lead resistance (real component of \underline{Z}_L)	Ω
R_M	Shielding resistance; resistance in the cladding of a shielded conductor	Ω
R_N	Inner grid resistance (real component of \underline{Z}_N)	Ω
R_P	Parallel resistance	Ω
R_R	Frame reduction factor	—
R_S	Series resistance of a solar cell or conductor loop	Ω
R_T	Medium-voltage transformer resistance (real component of \underline{Z}_T)	Ω

R_V	Equivalent (linearized) resistance in a varistor replacement source	Ω
S	Apparent output	VA
S_{1KV}	Single-phase grid short-circuit current at the grid link point	VA
SF	Voltage factor	—
S_{KV}	Triphase grid short-circuit current at the grid link point	VA
s_{min}	Minimum safety gap for hazardous proximities	m
S_{WR}	Apparent triphase output of an inverter	VA
T	Absolute temperature	K
T_C	Cell temperature (variant of T_Z)	$^{\circ}\text{C}$
T_o, T_{STC}	Reference STC temperature (25°C)	$^{\circ}\text{C}$
T_U	Ambient temperature	$^{\circ}\text{C}$
t_V	AC full-load hours (installation full load P_{ACn})	h
t_{Vb}	AC full-load hours for a PV installation whose power limitation is $P_{AC-Grenz} < P_{ACmax}$	h
t_{Vm}	AC full load hours for a PV installation based on the installation's peak AC output P_{ACmax} (normally P_{ACmax} differs from P_{ACn})	h
t_{Vo}	PV installation full-load hours, including peak output P_{Go} (under STC)	h
T_Z	Cell temperature	$^{\circ}\text{C}$
t_Z	Battery depth of discharge	—
T_{ZG}	Irradiance-weighted cell and module temperature	$^{\circ}\text{C}$
V	Voltage (in general)	V
V_{1N}	Grid phase voltage for a replacement source under open-circuit conditions	V
V_{1V}	Phase voltage at the grid link point	V
V_{1WR}	Phase voltage at the inverter connection point	V
V_{BA}	Bypass diode voltage under avalanche conditions	V
V_G	Battery charge limiting voltage (gassing voltage)	V
V_L	Battery charging voltage; output voltage of an MPT charge controller	V
V_M	Peak voltage induced by lightning current in a module	V
v_{max}	Maximum induced voltage	V
V_{MPP}	MPP voltage	V
$V_{MPPA-STC}$	PV installation or solar generator MPP voltage under STC	V
V_N	Concatenated grid voltage for a replacement source under open-circuit conditions	V
V_{OC}	Open-circuit voltage of a solar cell, solar module or solar generator	V
$V_{OCA-STC}$	Open-circuit PV installation voltage under STC	V
V_{Ph}	Theoretical photovoltage = E_G/e	V
V_{PV}	Solar generator voltage	V
V_R	Inverse voltage	V
V_{RRM}	Diode inverse voltage	V
V_S	PV installation system voltage	V
V_S	Peak voltage induced by lightning current in a string	V
V_V	Concatenated voltage at the grid link point	V
V_V	Equivalent (linearized) voltage in a varistor replacement source	V
V_V	Peak voltage induced by lightning current in wiring	V
V_{VDC}	Varistor DC operating voltage specified by the vendor	V
V_{WR}	Concatenated voltage at the inverter connection point	V
V_{max}	Peak potential increase relative to remote ground	V

X	Reactance (in general); imaginary component of an impedance \underline{Z}	Ω
X_{1L}	Imaginary component of complex single-phase impedance in a conductor between a transformer and grid link point (for inverter connection purposes)	Ω
X_{1N}	Imaginary component of complex single-phase grid impedance (reactance)	Ω
X_{1S}	Imaginary component of complex single-phase interconnecting line impedance (with impedance \underline{Z}_S) between a grid link point and inverter	Ω
X_{3L}	Imaginary component of complex triphase impedance in a conductor between a transformer and grid link point (for inverter connection purposes)	Ω
X_{3N}	Imaginary component of complex triphase grid impedance (reactance)	Ω
X_{3S}	Imaginary component of complex triphase interconnecting line impedance (with impedance \underline{Z}_S) between a grid link point and inverter	Ω
X_L	Power lead reactance (imaginary component of \underline{Z}_L)	Ω
X_N	Grid reactance (imaginary component of \underline{Z}_N)	Ω
X_T	Medium-voltage transformer reactance (imaginary component of \underline{Z}_T)	Ω
Y_A	Array yield, i.e. full-load P_{Go} hours	h/d
y_A	Standardized solar generator power = P_A/P_{Go}	—
Y_F	Final yield, i.e. full-load P_{Go} hours	h/d
y_F	Standardized output power = P_{use}/P_{Go}	—
Y_{Fa}	Specific annual energy yield	kWh/kWp and h/a
Y_R	Reference yield, i.e. full-load solar hours	h/d
y_R	Standardized irradiance = G_G/G_o	—
Y_T	Temperature-corrected reference yield	h/d
y_T	Temperature-corrected standardized irradiance = $y_R \cdot P_{GoT}/P_{Go}$	—
\underline{Z}	Complex impedance $\underline{Z} = R + jX$ (in general)	Ω
\underline{Z}	Impedance amount (AC resistance)	Ω
\underline{Z}_{1L}	Complex single-phase line impedance at the transformer grid link point	Ω
\underline{Z}_{1N}	Complex single-phase grid impedance	Ω
\underline{Z}_{3L}	Complex triphase line impedance at the transformer grid link point	Ω
\underline{Z}_{3N}	Complex triphase grid impedance	Ω
\underline{Z}_L	Complex power lead impedance	Ω
\underline{Z}_N	Complex grid impedance	Ω
\underline{Z}_S	Complex grid impedance in the inverter interconnecting line	Ω
\underline{Z}_T	Complex medium-voltage transformer impedance	Ω
Z_W	DC cable wave impedance	Ω
ΔV_V	Voltage rise at the grid link point	V
ΔV_{WR}	Voltage rise at the inverter connection point	V
α	Lightning protection angle	°
β	Solar generator angle of incidence	°
γ	Solar generator azimuth	°
δ	Solar declination	°
η_{Ah}	Battery ampere-hour efficiency	—
η_E	PV installation energy efficiency	—