

PHOTOVOLTAIC POWER GENERATION MODELING

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ABSTRACT

The solar power is an interesting developing energy source that has different types of useful applications. The purpose of this paper was to present a model that can estimate the hourly energy produced by a solar module in different sunshine conditions. The output power of a solar module is mainly dependent on solar radiation, temperature of the solar cell, and the technical properties of the module. The most complex of these to estimate was the solar radiation and how it changes in real sky conditions and what is the real hourly average solar irradiation obtained by the module. To model the solar radiation in southern Finland area, measured hourly long term radiation and sunshine data was obtained from the Finnish Meteorological Institution. With these data a regression model for solar irradiation was constructed and used for the power generation model. The solar irradiation model manages to estimate the irradiation quite well especially for a horizontal surface. The power output model though can not be verified because lack of measured data of such device and therefore must be taken as a rough estimation.

INTRODUCTION

The rising concern on carbon dioxide emissions has affected the interest in different renewable and non-polluting energy sources like solar and wind energy. One of the main flaws in these energy sources is that they can not produce the amount of power that is wanted at the certain time because their power is dependent on factors we can not affect. It is only possible to estimate the approximate long term energy or a short time forecast with weather reports. When a consumer is considering buying solar modules, he wants to know how much he can realistically expect it to produce daily. Also consumers and the electric utilities might want to know the produced energy on hourly basis.

A solar module has a nominal power value on its nameplate but it is rare that the module would produce that high power rates at any time of day. The solar radiation received by the module is dependent mostly on the angle of incidence of the direct solar irradiance which varies during the day. Also it is very likely that the sun is behind clouds and therefore only some diffused radiation will be received by the module. This probability varies monthly and is essential when trying to construct a model to realistically estimate the power of solar module. In this paper it is presented how one type of hourly regression model is constructed from measured data and then applied to estimate produced solar power easily.

BASICS

Theoretical solar irradiance

There are many theoretical models for estimating the hourly clear sky solar irradiance but their complexity and results vary depending on e.g. the place of observation. These models usually estimate the three different types of radiation that constitute the total radiation: direct, diffuse, and reflected. The direct solar radiation is the one that comes straight from the sun and it is the most significant component of the total radiation. The diffuse radiation is the radiation that has scattered from the clouds and atmosphere thus even on cloudy days with no sunshine the receiver gets some radiation. The reflected radiation is reflected from nearby ground and other objects. Its amount is usually quite low and it is difficult to estimate right so that is why it has been omitted in this work. All the models use the information about the position of the sun relative to the location of the observer. These can easily be calculated but the differences arise when the models try to estimate how much the solar radiation attenuates in the atmosphere.

In this paper a model presented by Rigollier et al. [1] was chosen. It is relatively simple to use and it has only one variable that is not very easy to define. The model begins by calculating the position of the sun with the knowledge of the coordinates of the observer, and it needs a variable named Linke turbidity factor to estimate the solar irradiance. The Linke turbidity factor is a dimensionless coefficient that represents the clearness of the atmosphere. In summer time the factor is usually higher than in winter e.g. because of the amount of water vapour in the air. In this work the monthly average values for the Linke turbidity factor were obtained from the SoDa service [2] maintained by Armines / MINES ParisTech, Centre Energétique et Procédés (CEP) because of no better knowledge of such variable. These monthly averages were then interpolated to get daily values so the variable would be more continuous and would not dramatically change between months.

This theoretical model is good enough to roughly estimate the hourly solar radiation that is available on clear days, but as the most of the time, the sunshine is blocked by clouds. This model can not estimate these kinds of conditions and therefore measured data is essential to produce a useful model.

Power generation model

The power produced by a solar module is dependent mostly on solar radiation, temperature of the solar cell, and the technical properties of the modules that are for different crystalline silicon modules quite the same. In this paper it is assumed that the solar modules work on their maximum power point as they usually do when they are connected to an inverter. The low transmittance of the sun radiation on very high angles of incidence is also ignored.

The estimation of power generated from a solar module is done with a simple equation that uses the standard test conditions (STC) and normal operating cell temperature (NOCT) values provided by the manufacturer. Mattei et al. [3] have presented the equation of solar module efficiency in a form of

$$\eta = \eta_{STC}(1 - \beta_P(T_c - T_{STC}) + \gamma \log G) \quad (1)$$

where η_{STC} is the solar cell efficiency in STC, T_c the solar cell temperature, β_P solar cell power temperature coefficient and G the solar irradiance. Mattei et al. say the equation is mostly used with $\gamma=0$ and this is also done here. The solar cell temperature can be estimated with equation

$$T_c = T_a + (T_{NOCT} - 20^\circ\text{C}) \frac{G}{800\text{W/m}^2} \quad (2)$$

where T_a is the ambient temperature. Because we are usually more interested in power, the equation 1 is changed to give power instead of efficiency

$$P = \frac{G}{1000\text{W/m}^2} P_{STC} (1 - \beta_P (T_c - T_{STC})) \quad (3)$$

where P_{STC} is the nominal power of the solar module.

OBSERVATION DATA AND THE MODEL

To be able to produce a model that would rather realistically estimate the solar irradiation, large amounts of observation data from the Finnish Meteorological Institution were obtained. [4] Observation data were mostly hourly for global and diffuse solar irradiation, sunshine hours, and temperature and they were measured at the Helsinki-Vantaa airport (60° 19' N, 24° 57' E, 53 m above sea level) between 1st January 1981 and 10th July 2011.

The solar irradiation model was decided to be produced using the theoretical solar irradiance values and the measured sunshine hour values. First the theoretical values were calculated with the model of Rigollier et al. as previously presented. The Linke turbidity values were taken from the SoDa service Linke turbidity maps with the coordinates of the observation site. These monthly average values were then interpolated to get a ninth degree polynomial fitting for daily values. The regression model of the solar irradiation was fitted to the measured data with the tilt angles of 0°, 42° and 90° from the horizontal surface. Because the measured direct and diffuse irradiation data were for horizontal surface, they were manipulated to correspond with tilted measurements by following two equations [5]:

$$H_{b,T} = H_{b,H} \frac{\cos \theta_i}{\sin \alpha_s} \quad (4)$$

and

$$H_{d,T} = H_{d,H} \frac{1 + \cos \beta}{2} \quad (5)$$

In the former equation for tilted direct irradiation, θ_i is the angle of incidence and α_s the sun altitude. In the latter equation for tilted diffuse irradiation, β is the tilt angle of the surface.

Naturally this method does increase the inaccuracy of the tilted surface model and must be noted when used. The Figures 1-3 show how the regression models follow the measured data in the case of horizontal, 42° tilted and vertical surface when the sunshine conditions vary.

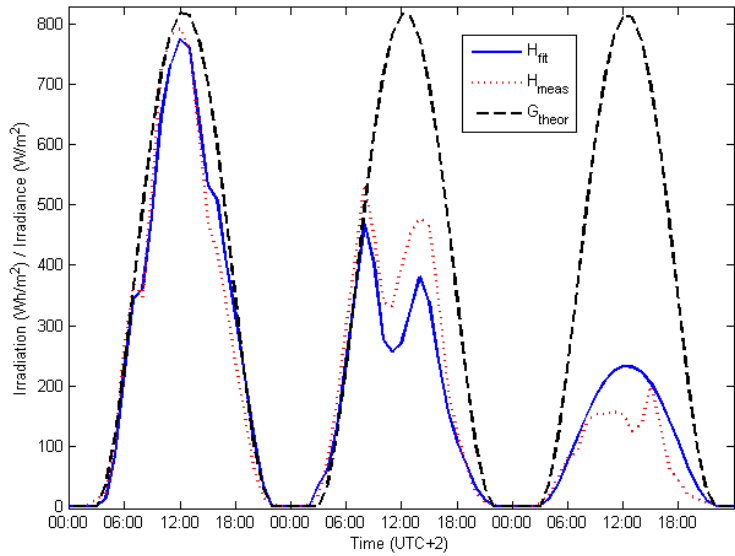


Figure 1: Solar irradiation and irradiance on horizontal surface in July 2003.

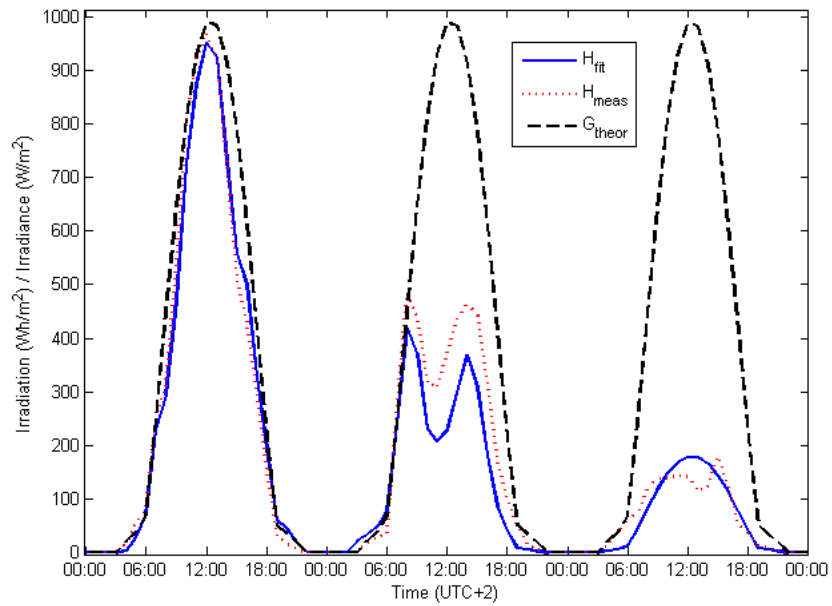


Figure 2: Solar irradiation and irradiance on 42° tilted surface in July 2003.

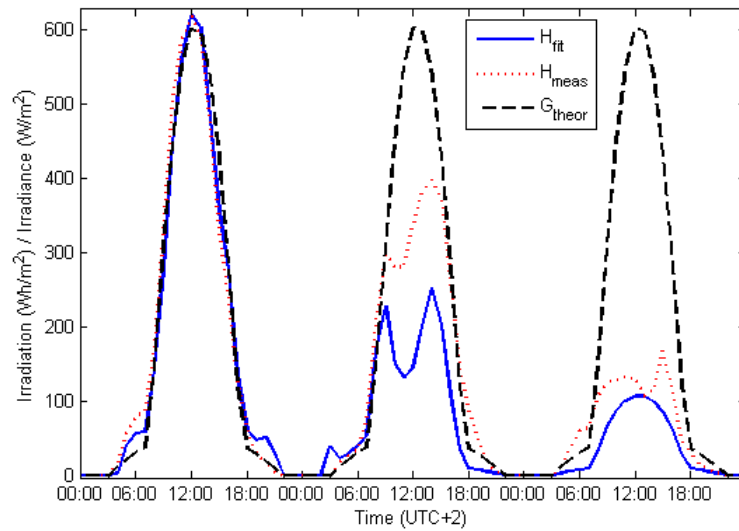


Figure 3: Solar irradiation and irradiance on vertical surface in July 2003.

The measured data of sunshine hours were also interesting because it shows quite well how the probabilities of clouds affect the solar irradiation during a year. For each month, a distribution of sunshine hour values was calculated. From the measured data, the sunshine hour values were taken into account only when the theoretical model suggested that the center of the sun is above horizon. In every month the most probable sunshine hour values are 0 and 1 and all the other values are quite uniformly distributed between them. For example this can be seen from the distribution of daytime sunshine hours in August in Figure 4. From these monthly distributions, an average value for each month could be calculated and these are presented in Table 1.

With the mean sunshine values for each month, irradiation of the whole year was calculated and it was noticed that the approximately the same energy result would be achieved if a sunshine hour value of 0.437 was used for every month. This naturally gives too optimistic solar energy values for winter months and too pessimistic for the summer. These average sunshine hour values give a solar irradiance 985 kWh/m^2 for a whole year. When comparing this value to the measured year energies, it can be noticed that it is on average 3.6 % higher than the measured year energies in the case of a horizontal surface. The Figure 5 shows the daily irradiation values of one year with different tilt angles and sunshine hour values.

Table 1: The probabilities of no sunshine $t_{ssh}=0$ and constant direct sunshine $t_{ssh}=1$ for each month, and the monthly weighted mean value of sunshine hour.

Month	$t_{ssh}=0$	$t_{ssh}=1$	Mean value of t_{ssh}
January	70.3 %	7.9 %	0.179
February	54.9 %	15.7 %	0.297
March	46.7 %	20.4 %	0.366
April	34.3 %	23.9 %	0.452
May	24.7 %	27.2 %	0.518
June	26.3 %	22.4 %	0.490
July	21.7 %	23.0 %	0.526
August	25.2 %	16.4 %	0.456
September	35.8 %	13.4 %	0.375
October	53.1 %	11.2 %	0.273
November	71.5 %	6.9 %	0.165
December	75.2 %	5.6 %	0.142

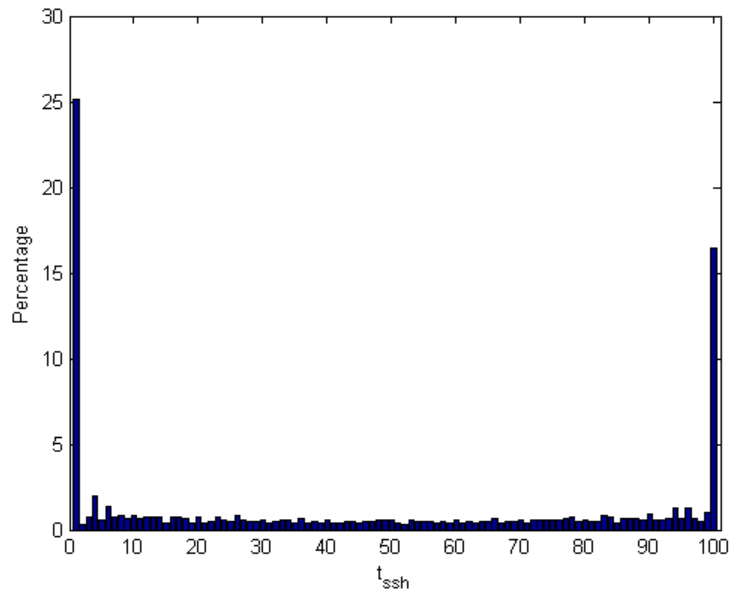


Figure 4: Distribution of daytime sunshine hours in August.

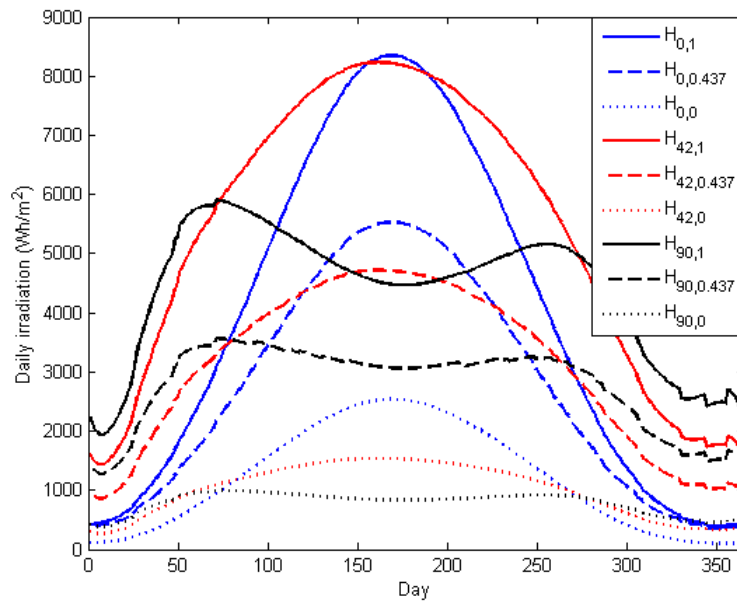


Figure 5: Daily irradiation with different tilt angles and sunshine hours.

With the regression model for the hourly solar irradiation, only the outside temperature and few solar module parameters had still to be defined. An average temperature for each hour of a year was calculated from the observation data. The temperature data was measured every 3 hours till the year 2001 and the missing temperature data were replaced with the previous value. Because the cell temperature will most probably not change very fast, a moving average of 3 from the average hourly temperatures were taken. The needed parameters of the power equation were chosen to be quite typical values found from the technical information of the manufacturers. The normal operating cell temperature was chosen to be 47 °C and the power temperature coefficient 0.45 %/°C. The standard test condition temperature is 25 °C.

The power values were calculated for three different tilt angles and with three different sunshine values. The tilt angles were horizontal 0°, 42° and vertical 90°. The sunshine hours were 0, 1, and the average for each month. The Figures 6-8 show how the monthly energy varies in different months on average and in a case where there would be no clouds for a whole month. The Figure 9 shows yearly energy of a solar module with different tilt angles and with a sunshine hour value of 1 and with the monthly average values. The Figure 10 shows the comparison of average yearly and monthly energies to the nominal energy of the solar module.

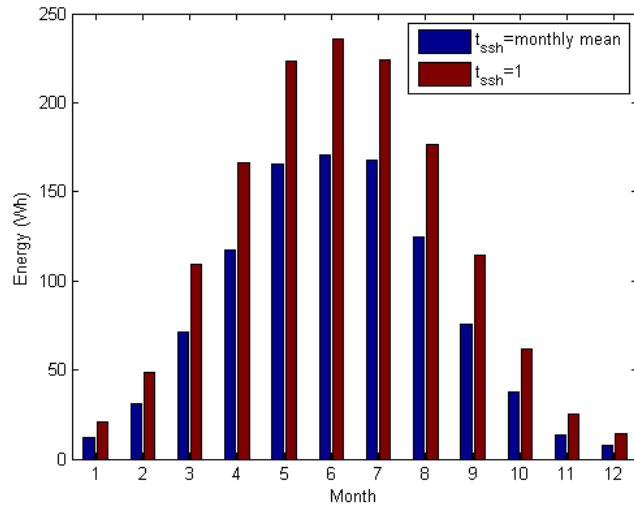


Figure 6: Monthly energy with tilt angle of 0° and nominal power of 1 W in different months.

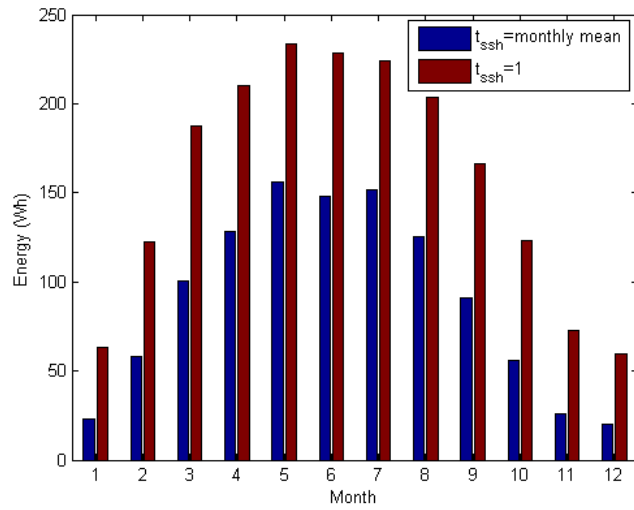


Figure 7: Monthly energy with tilt angle of 42° and nominal power of 1 W in different months.

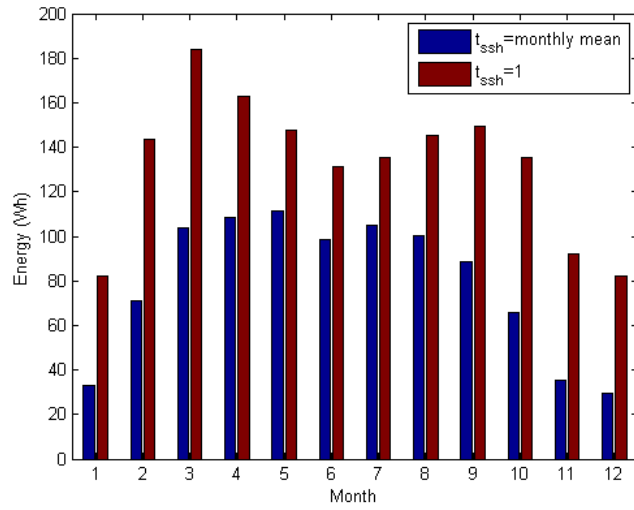


Figure 8: Monthly energy with tilt angle of 90° and nominal power of 1 W in different months.

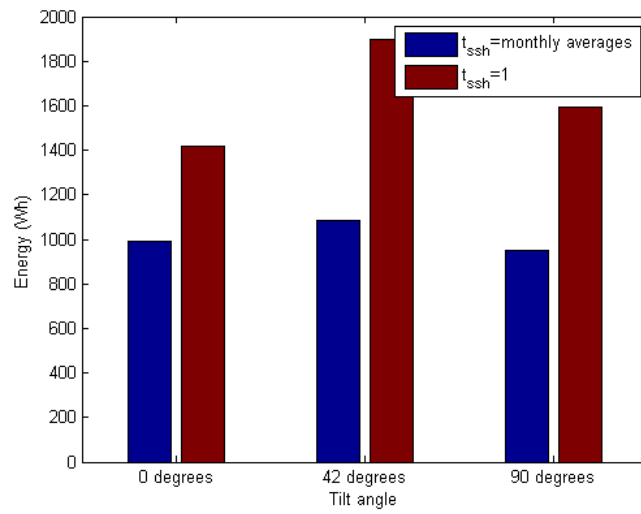


Figure 9: Yearly energy obtained with 1 W module with different tilt angles.

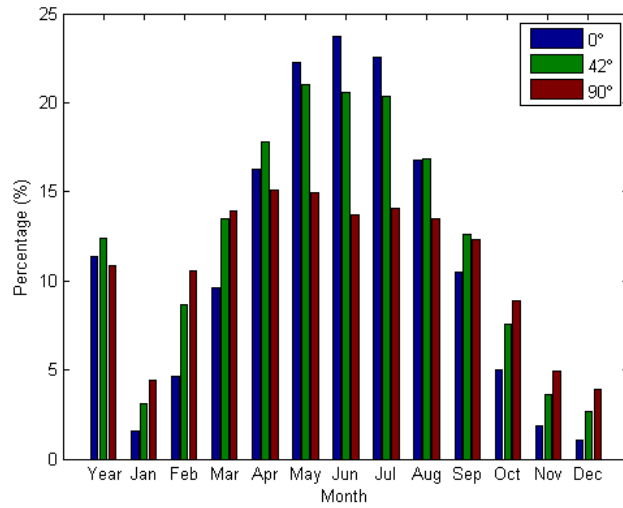


Figure 10: Average solar module energies compared to the nominal energy of the module.

To be easily able to estimate the average hourly power produced by solar modules, monthly average hours were calculated. The values of an hour are presented as a value of p_{index} which can then be applied to an equation

$$P_h = \eta_{\text{eff}} P_{\text{STC}} \frac{p_{\text{index}}}{1000} \quad (6)$$

where η_{eff} is the inverter efficiency. The values of p_{index} are presented in Tables 2-10 in Appendix A for different sunshine hour and tilt angle values and they are presented in the normal time of Finland (UTC+2).

CONCLUSIONS

This paper presented a method to estimate the hourly solar irradiance and solar module power in southern Finland. The model used the measured observation data of the Finnish Meteorological Institute to produce a model for global irradiation with different sunshine hour values. The solar irradiation model gives quite good estimates at least for the horizontal surface as could previously be seen. The power output model on the other hand probably has some weaknesses because of its simplicity. It does not take into account for example the low transmittance of solar radiation on great angles of incidence and the cooling effect of wind. Also when the module is installed e.g. on roof, the cell temperature will increase compared to the situation where it is mounted and airflow can go under it. The lack of measured solar module power data prevents us from verifying the final results.

