

Performance Evaluation of an Autonomous Photovoltaic System for Recharging Electrical Vehicle Batteries

M. Benaouadj, A. Aboubou, M. Y. Ayad, M. Becherif and O. Akhrif

Abstract— This paper deals with the performance evaluation of an autonomous photovoltaic system for recharging (with electrical power produced by photovoltaic panels) Lithium-ion batteries for an electrical vehicle. In this system, the power flow control is performed via a DC-DC converter using a Maximum Power Point Tracking (MPPT) technique. The performance evaluation is according to two operation modes: under degraded and optimal conditions.

Index Terms —Autonomous photovoltaic system, DC-DC converter, Electrical vehicle, Lithium-ion battery, MPPT control.

I. INTRODUCTION

FOR the last two centuries, emissions of certainpolluting gases from human activities have intensified the phenomenon of green house effect leading to warmer temperatures on earth. Consequently, the international community has been mobilized to limit atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases with the goal of halving global emissions by 2050. Several solutions have been proposed by researchers and the Electrical Vehicle (EV) is one of the most promising alternatives for the transportation problem.

Unlike the conventional vehicles on road today which are major consumers of fossil fuels like gasoline, an EV is propelled by electricity which can be stored in rechargeable batteries. The EVs are becoming more attractive with the advancement of new battery technologies that have higher power and energy density and allow matching the requested autonomy and vehicle dynamics. Electrical vehicle batteries are recharged using either the grid (G2V: Grid to Vehicle) or using renewable energies in a stand-alone recharging point (H2V: Home to Vehicle).

A battery is a device which converts chemical energy directly into electricity. It is an electrochemical galvanic cell or a combination of such cells which is capable of storing chemical energy. The first battery was invented by Alessandro Volta in the form of a voltaic pile in the 1800's.

M. BENAOUADI, Laboratory of Energy Systems Modeling, Biskra University, (email: b-mahdii@hotmail.fr).

A. ABOUBOU, Laboratory of Energy Systems Modeling, Biskra University, (email: a.aboubou@mselab.org).

M. Y. AYAD, Industrial Hybrid Vehicle Applications, France, (email: ayadmy@gmail.com).

M. BECHERIF, FCLab FR CNRS 3539, FEMTO-ST UMR CNRS 6174, UTBM, France, (email: mohamed.becherif@utbm.fr).

O. AKHRIF, Department of Electrical Engineering, ETS, Canada, (email: ouassima.akhrif@etsmtl.ca).

II. BATTERIES TECHNOLOGIES AND RECHARGING TOPOLOGIES

Batteries can be classified as primary batteries, which once used, cannot be recharged again, and secondary batteries, which can be subjected to repeated use as they are capable of recharging by providing external electric current.

TABLE I
DIFFERENT BATTERIES TECHNOLOGIES [2]

	Lead-Acid	Ni-Cd	Ni-MH	Li-Ion	Li-Polymer
Specific Power [W/kg]	80-150	150-400	200-1000	500-4000	315
Cycle Life	500	1350	1350	1000	600

Batteries are more desirable for the use in vehicles, and in particular traction batteries are most commonly used by EV manufacturers. Traction batteries include Lead-Acid type, Nickel-Cadmium (Ni-Cd), Lithium-Ion (Li-Ion), Lithium-Polymer (Li-Polymer), Sodium-Nickel Chloride (Na-Ni-Cl), Nickel-Zinc (Ni-Zn).

Although some storage technologies could work for several applications, in the most part, they are not economically applicable to different functional categories. Their assessment must be done on the basis of several parameters which establish their applicability: power level (nominal, pulsed), energy storage level (at different charge and discharge rates), memory effect, power density, energy density, overall cycle efficiency, life-time (number of cycles and performance), operative characteristics, environmental impact, recycle opportunities, investment and maintaining costs. Table I summarizes some of the commonly used batteries and their properties [3-4].

Most of EV batteries need to incorporate onboard or offboard chargers allowing the battery recharging anywhere there is an electric outlet.

The onboard chargers are limited in output power because of size and weight restrictions dictated by the vehicle design.

The output power of an off board charger is limited by the capacity of battery to accept the charge. Although these chargers are outside of the vehicle (lighter weight) and have high power (less time to recharge the batteries), adaptability to charge at different places is limited [5].

In this work, authors are interested to replace discharged Lithium-ion batteries by other batteries that can be recharged from the daily produced photovoltaic energy.

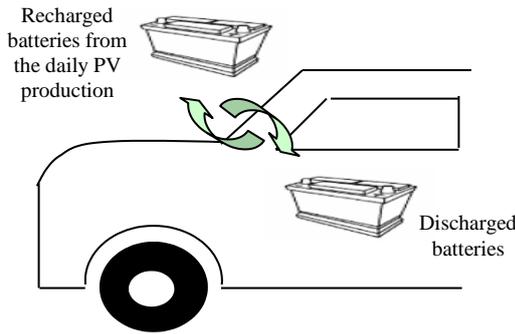


Fig. 1 Substitution batteries possibility

The objective of this work is to realize, via simulation, a performance evaluation study in order to assess the capability of an autonomous photovoltaic system to recharge discharged batteries under different conditions.

III. STRUCTURE OF THE AUTONOMOUS PHOTOVOLTAIC SYSTEM

Fig.2 shows, in block diagram, the autonomous photovoltaic system composed of:

- A photovoltaic source, consisting of several photovoltaic panels, one panel provides a maximum power of 38.39W, a voltage of 17.45V and a current of 2.2A.
- A DC-DC buck converter with a Maximum Power Point (MPPT) control allowing the photovoltaic source to operate under the maximum available power.
- Lithium-ion batteries which are the main source assuring the vehicle traction.

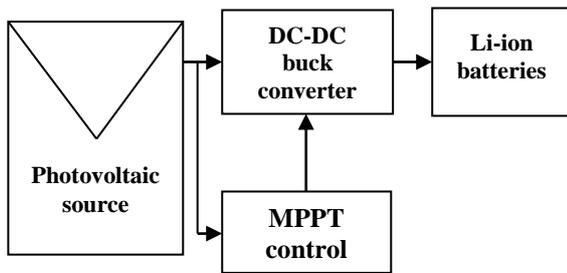


Fig.2 Block diagram of the photovoltaic system

IV. MODELING AND SIZING

For testing electrical vehicles, driving cycles have been normalized. European light-duty vehicles have to face the New European Driving Cycle (NEDC) which represents the typical usage of a small car in Europe. The NEDC consists of repeated urban cycles (called ECE-15 driving cycle) and an Extra-Urban driving cycle.

Fig.3 shows the ECE-15 cycle with the speed and the power demand of a small electric vehicle following a flat road. Sudden power changes are caused by the speed change. In this example, the vehicle peak power reaches about 50kW.

Considering the 1200 seconds of the NEDC vehicle simulation, the Lithium-ion batteries power is of 50kW and

the energy demand is about 16.67kWh. A safe margin of 10% gives a total of 18.34kWh.

From the photovoltaic source production, this amount of energy needs to be stored in the embarked storage device.

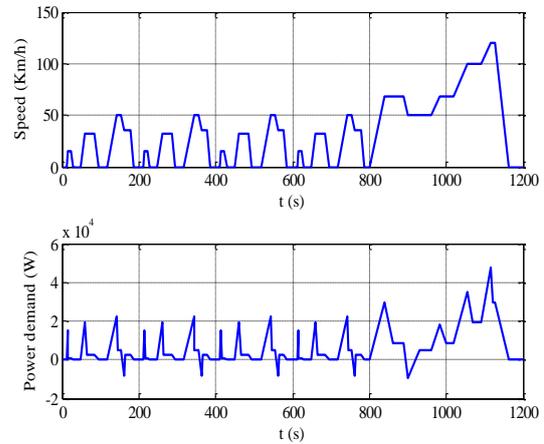


Fig. 3 ECE-15 driving cycle

A. The photovoltaic source

The mathematical model associated with a cell is deduced from that of a diode PN junction. It consists in the addition of the photovoltaic (PV) current I_{ph} (which is proportional to the illumination), and a term modeling the internal phenomena. The current I at the output of the cell is then written as:

$$I = I_{ph} - I_{0d} \left(e^{\frac{q(U+R_s I)}{kT}} - 1 \right) - \frac{U+R_s I}{R_{sh}} \quad (1)$$

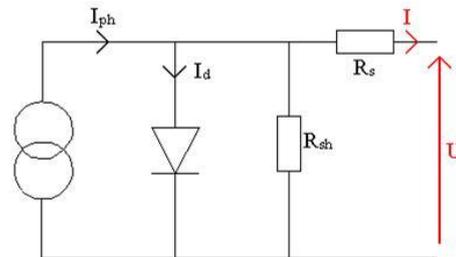


Fig. 4 Equivalent circuit of a photovoltaic cell

The diode models the behavior of the cell in the dark. The current I_{ph} models the current generated by illumination. Finally, the two resistors model the internal losses:

- The serial resistance R_s models the Ohmic losses of material.
- The shunt resistance R_{sh} models the stray currents passing through the cell.

As the shunt resistor is much higher than the series resistance, one can neglect the current deflected in R_{sh} . It follows:

$$I = I_{ph} - I_{0d} \left(e^{\frac{q(U+R_s I)}{kT}} - 1 \right) - \frac{U}{R_{sh}} \quad (2)$$

As the shunt resistance is much higher than the series resistance, one can neglect the current deflected in R_{sh} .

$$I = I_{ph} - I_{0d} \left(e^{\frac{q(U+R_s I)}{kT}} - 1 \right) \quad (3)$$

The simplified equivalent circuit is represented in Fig.5.

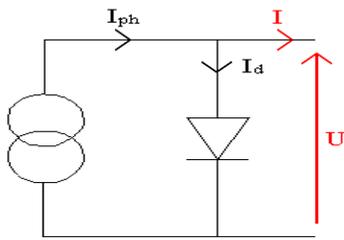


Fig. 5 Simplified equivalent circuit of a photovoltaic cell

Properties of the selected PV panel are given in Table II.

TABLE II
THE AEG-40 PV PANEL CHARACTERISTICS

Max power [W]	Optimal voltage [V]	Optimal current [A]	Efficiency [%]
38.39	22.2	2.2	10

Fig. 6 shows the current-voltage and power-voltage characteristics of the AEG-40 PV panel for different illuminations. Points in red stars on each curve power-voltage correspond to the value of the optimum power point. Every operating point defined on the power-voltage characteristic by the couple "maximum voltage/maximum power" is used to position the panel at its maximum power.

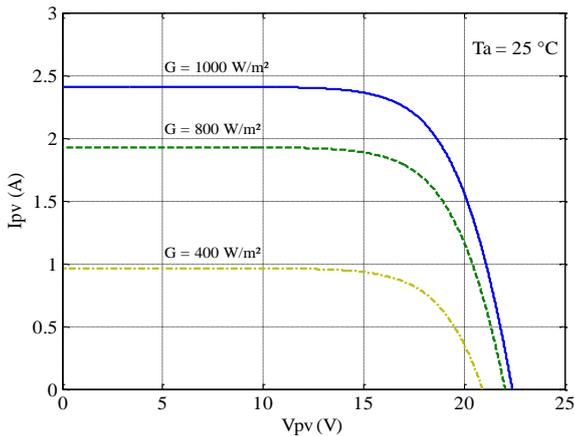


Fig.6 Effect of illumination on the characteristic current-voltage

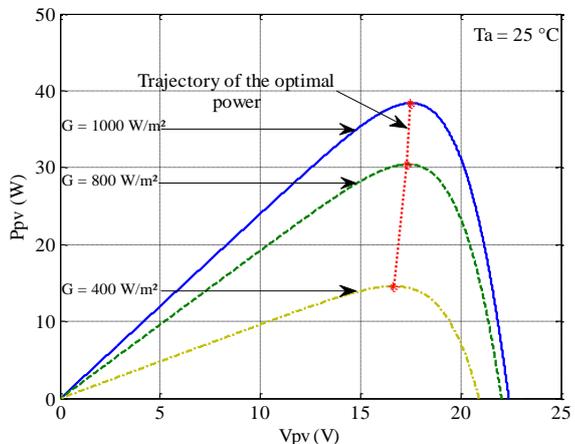


Fig.7 Effect of illumination on the characteristic power-voltage

Note that the current and voltage supplied by the panel are proportional to illumination.

The photovoltaic source sizing is considered for the region of Biskra (South-East of Algiers/Algeria), which receives a daily solar energy of 3234 Wh/m²/day (worse case: month of December) [6].

TABLE III
THE PHOTOVOLTAIC SOURCE SIZING

Daily produced energy [kWh/jd]	Total surface of the photovoltaic panels [m ²]	Number of PV panels
30.56	94.5	248

B. The storage system

Many electrical equivalent circuits of battery are found in literature [7-8]. Batteries are presented with an overview of some much utilized circuits to model the steady and transient behaviour. The Thevenin's circuit is one of the most basic circuits used to study the transient behaviour of battery. This model is shown in figure 8.

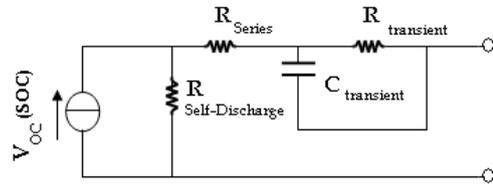


Fig. 8 Thevenin's model [9]

It uses a series resistor (R_{series}) and a RC parallel network ($R_{transient}$ and $C_{transient}$) to predict the response of the battery to transient load events at a particular state of charge (SOC) by assuming a constant open circuit voltage: V_{oc} (SOC) [9].

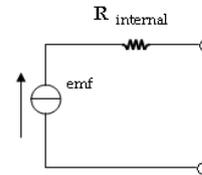


Fig. 9 Circuit showing battery emf and internal resistance $R_{internal}$ [9]

Characteristics of the Lithium-ion batteries are summarized in Table IV.

TABLE IV
THE LITHIUM-ION BATTERIES CHARACTERISTICS

Rated Voltage [V]	Rated capacity [kWh]	Depth of discharge [%]
216	18.34	90

C. The MPPT control

In this work, the incremental conductance method [10] is chosen to search the maximum power point since it can be adapted to the unstable weather conditions and does not present a risk of divergence from the maximum power point.

Fig. 10 shows the principle of the incremental conductance algorithm.

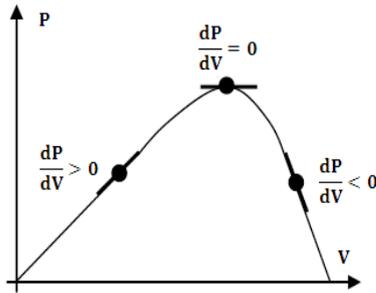


Fig.10 dP/dV searching principle

Consider the notations V, I, P as variables related to the PV panel. The maximum power is achieved when:

$$\frac{dP}{dV} = 0 \tag{4}$$

To the left of this point, dP/dV is positive; to the right, dP/dV is negative. Since $P = I.V$, differential calculus gives: $dP = V.dI + I.dV$. In the maximum power point:

$$\frac{I}{V} + \frac{dP}{dV} = 0 \tag{5}$$

From measurements of $I(t_2), I(t_1), V(t_2), V(t_1)$ and assuming that: $dI \approx \Delta I = I(t_2) - I(t_1)$ and $dV \approx \Delta V = V(t_2) - V(t_1)$, the quantity $(I/V) + (dI/dV)$ can be calculated and the direction of maximum power point deduced. The convergence direction is therefore always known.

D. The supervision system

To regulate charging process of the storage element from the PV source daily production, a supervision system based on the batteries voltages is used, and allows disconnecting batteries after a threshold voltage of 234V corresponding to the full charge voltage. Recharge begins from a threshold voltage of 201.6V corresponding to the voltage when they reach the depth of discharge.

The principle of the supervision system can be represented in figure 11.

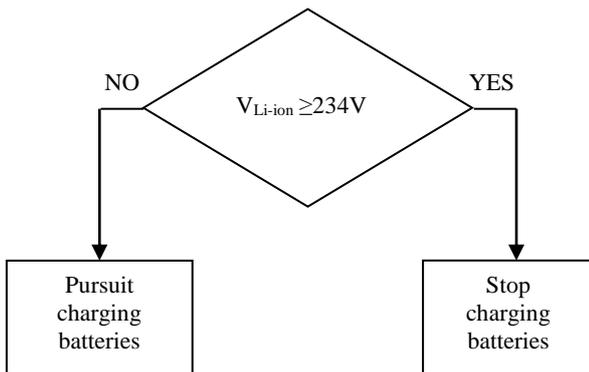


Fig.11 Principle of the supervision system

V. SIMULATION RESULTS USING MATLAB

A. Efficiency of the incremental conductance method

The efficiency of an MPPT algorithm is judged by both its ability to track the maximum power, and its robustness in disturbed conditions. To test the chosen method, a series of tests with a significant variation in the illumination for about ten hours are conducted.

The average yield η_{mppt} iscalculated fromthe average effective power P_{pvav} and maximum power P_{mpp} can be providedby the PVsource. It is given by [11-12]:

$$\eta_{mppt} = \frac{P_{pvav}}{P_{mpp}} \times 100\% \tag{6}$$

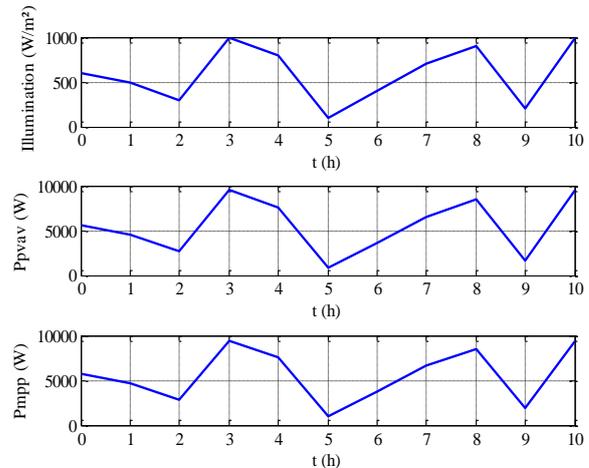


Fig.12 The MPPT test

With the MPPT algorithm used in this work, an efficiency of 98.63% is achieved despite the sudden change of illumination (from 800W/m² to 100W/m²during one hour).

B. Recharging of the Lithium-ion batteries from the daily produced photovoltaic energy

Two illumination profiles are considered for the region of Biskra: under degraded conditions (month of December, figure 13), and under optimal conditions (month of August, figure 15). The daily profiles are obtained using measured data at regular intervals (one hour) throughout a day with a clear sky.

- Profile 1: Under degraded conditions: month of December

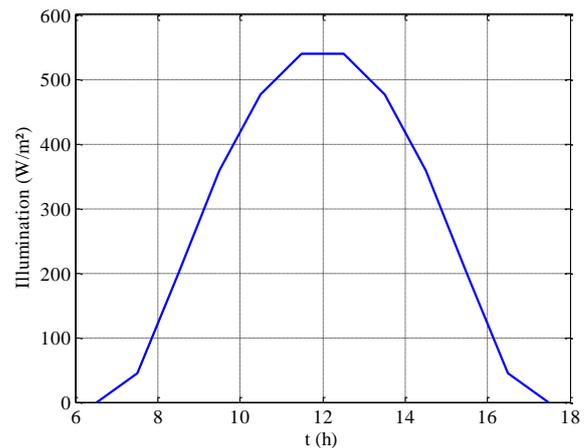


Fig.13 Illumination profile under degraded conditions

The obtained results are presented in figure 14. Fig. 14 presents the Lithium-ion batteries voltage (V_{Li-ion}) and state of charge (SOC_{Li-ion}). Batteries have an initial SOC_{Li-ion} of 10%. In degraded conditions, it reaches a final SOC_{Li-ion} of 83.07% during six hours. The charging process is accepted: batteries voltage is within the interval [201.6, 234V].

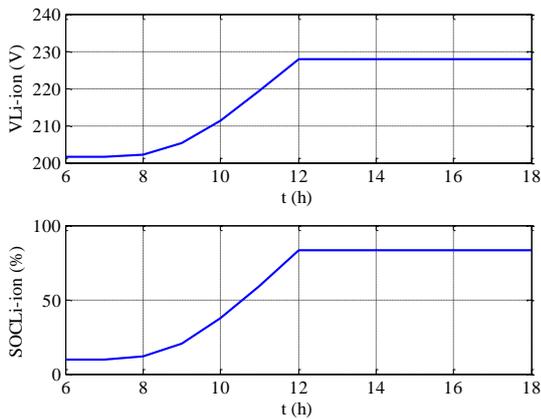


Fig. 14 Batteries voltage and state of charge

- Profile 2: Under optimal conditions: month of August

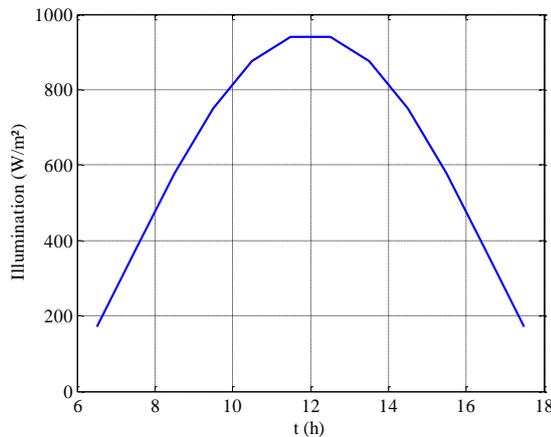


Fig. 15 Illumination profile under optimal conditions

The obtained results are presented in figure 16.

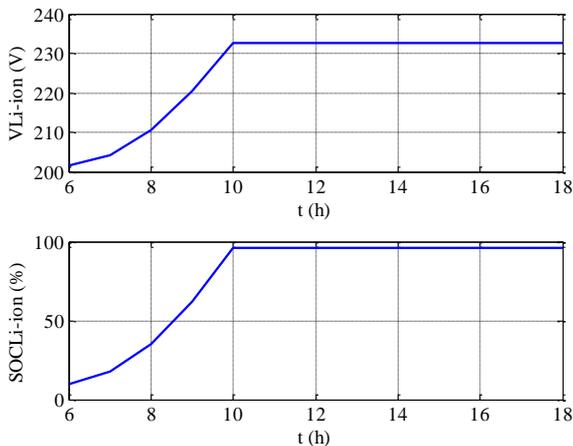


Fig. 16 Batteries voltage and state of charge

Fig. 16 presents the Lithium-ion batteries voltage (V_{Li-ion}) and state of charge (SOC_{Li-ion}). Batteries have an initial SOC_{Li-ion} of 10%. In optimal conditions, it reaches a final SOC_{Li-ion} of 96.09% during four hours. The charging process accepted: batteries voltage is within the interval [201.6, 234V].

VI. CONCLUSION

In this paper, design and performance evaluation of an autonomous photovoltaic system used to recharge Lithium-ion batteries of an electric vehicle are given.

Using a DC-DC buck converter with a Maximum Power Point Tracking (MPPT) control allows to operate the photovoltaic source to produce continuously the maximum available power. During a day of system operation, Lithium-ion batteries are recharged at 83.07% in six hours (day of the month of December), and at 96.09% in four hours (day of the month of August).

From different results, it is concluded that:

- The Lithium-ion batteries charging process is provided by the supervision system,
- The model of the PV source is accurate and reflects the variation of illumination and temperature,
- The MPPT algorithm tracks the maximum of power point even under disturbed conditions,
- Higher is the illumination power, greater is the batteries state of charge and consequently smaller is the recharge time.
- The autonomous photovoltaic system is capable to recharge discharged batteries even during unfavourable environmental conditions. Therefore, the vehicle traction is guaranteed.

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BIOGRAPHIES

M. BENAOUADJ was born in Souk Ahras, Algeria. He obtained the engineering degree (2009) in Electrical Engineering from Souk-Ahras University and Magister degree (2012) in Energy Control and Management from El-Oued University, Algeria. His research interests Electrical Vehicle, Renewables Energies systems, Control and Energy management.

Currently, he is a Ph.D student and with the MES Laboratory, University of Biskra, Algeria.



Abdennacer ABOUBOU was born in Aures, Algeria in 1962; He is graduated from the University of Annaba in 1985. He received the MSc degree in electrical machines from University of Annaba, 1988. In 2002, he joined the Laboratory of Modelisation of Energetic System of University of Biskra, Algeria. He received the Ph.D degree from the Electrotechnic department of Biskra in Electrical Machines, in 2005.

He teaches courses on Power System and leads researches on Embedded Systems, Energetic Macroscopic Representation and Wind Power system, in the MES Laboratory. His research interests are in System modeling, diagnosis and fault detection, and Energy management in Renewables Energies.



Mohamed-Yacine AYAD obtained the PhD degrees in Electrical Engineering from Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Electricité et de Mécanique of Institut National Polytechnique de Lorraine (ENSEM-INPL), France in 2004.

From 2004 to 2007, he has been working as research assistant in the University of Technology of Belfort-Montbéliard. Since 2007, he works as R&D in Hybrid Vehicle Industrial Applications.

His main research is in the field of power electronics, modelling, nonlinear control and energy management in embedded, smart Grid, and micro grid systems application using battery, supercapacitor, fuel cell and Photovoltaic sources.

Dr. AYAD is the co-author of chapters in four books and more than sixty international conference papers and peer-reviewed publications. He is member of renewable Energy Algerian project.



M. BECHERIF obtained his BSc in Automatic Control from the National Polytechnic School of Algeria, DEA (Diplôme des Etudes Approfondies) in Electrical Engineering and the PhD in Automatic Control from University of Paris Sud-Supélec (LSS & LGEP-CNRS), France in 1999, 2001 and 2004 respectively. He was a Lecturer in University of Paris Sud, France from 2004 to 2005. Then, he joined the University of Technology of Belfort-Montbéliard, France since 2005 as an assistant professor and is an Associate

Professor (HDR) since 2011.

Currently he is in the FCLab FR CNRS 3539 and with Femto-ST UMR 6174 CNRS, France. His research interests are in the fields of modelling, nonlinear control and energy management of hybrid and renewable systems, with special emphasis on applications.

He is the Chairman of the CNRS scientific axis on the "Hydrogen storage and renewable energies" in FCLab. He was/is a scientific co-responsible or partner in different European Projects FP7, French and international projects. Dr. Becherif was an invited Professor in the Université de Trois Rivières Canada. He is an international expert evaluator in energy project for the Czech Science Foundation, Czech Republic.

Dr. Becherif is the co-author of chapters in 6 books, 8 Keynote Speeches, 33 peer-reviewed journal papers and more than 120 conference papers.



O. AKHRIF obtained her 'Diplôme d'Ingénieur d'État' in Automatic Control at École Mohammadia d'Ingénieurs, Rabat, Morocco, her M.Sc (87') and Ph.D (89') in Electrical Engineering, Control Systems at University of Maryland, College Park, USA, under a Fulbright Scholarship. In 1990-91, she was a Visiting Assistant professor at Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, USA. In 1992, she joined the "École de Technologie Supérieure" in Montréal, Canada, where she is, since 1998, a Full

Professor in the Electrical Engineering Department. Her research interests are bifurcation analysis, nonlinear geometric control, and nonlinear adaptive control with applications to two different domains. The first covers electric drives, power systems and renewable energy applications while the second covers autopilot design and flight control systems for fixed and rotary wing aerial vehicles.

She is a member of GREPCI (Groupe de Recherche en Électronique de Puissance et Commande Industrielle <http://www.etsmtl.ca/Unites-de-recherche/GREPCI/>) which she directed from 2004 to 2010. She is currently the Associate Director of AéroÉTS (<http://aeroets.etsmtl.ca/>) and the director of the Masters program in Aerospace Engineering at ÉTS.