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Mission Profile-Oriented Control for Reliability and Lifetime of Photovoltaic Inverters

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Abstract—With the aim to increase the competitiveness of solar energy, the high reliability of Photovoltaic (PV) inverters is demanded. In PV applications, the inverter reliability and lifetime are strongly affected by the operating condition that is referred to as the mission profile (i.e., solar irradiance and ambient temperature). Since the mission profile of PV systems is location-dependent, the inverter reliability performance and lifetime can vary considerably in practice. That is, from the reliability perspective, PV inverters with the same design metrics (e.g., component selection) may become over- or under-designed under different mission profiles. This will increase the overall system cost, e.g., initial cost for over-designed cases and maintenance cost for under-designed cases, which should be avoided. This paper thus explores the possibility to adapt the control strategies of PV inverters to the corresponding mission profiles. With this, similar reliability targets (e.g., component lifetime) can be achieved even under different mission profiles. Case studies have been carried out on PV systems installed in Denmark and Arizona, where the lifetime and the energy yield are evaluated. The results reveal that the inverter reliability can be improved by selecting a proper control strategy according to the mission profile.

Index Terms—PV inverters, lifetime, reliability, mission profile, control, power device, capacitor.

I. INTRODUCTION

There is a strong demand to further reduce the cost of PV energy, in order to increase its competitiveness and enable more harvesting of the renewable energy [1]. For instance, the U.S. Department of Energy has set a target to reduce the cost of PV energy from 0.18 USD/kWh (in 2016) to 0.05 USD/kWh by 2030 (for residential PV systems in the USA) [2]. The similar cost reduction tendency is also expected in other countries globally [3]–[5]. In order to achieve this target, PV systems should be improved in several aspects. Among those, enhancing the reliability and lifetime of PV inverters has high potential for a significant cost reduction [5]. The field experience has shown that the PV inverter failure contributes to a large portion of the unexpected operating and maintenance cost [6]–[9]. This may negatively affect the

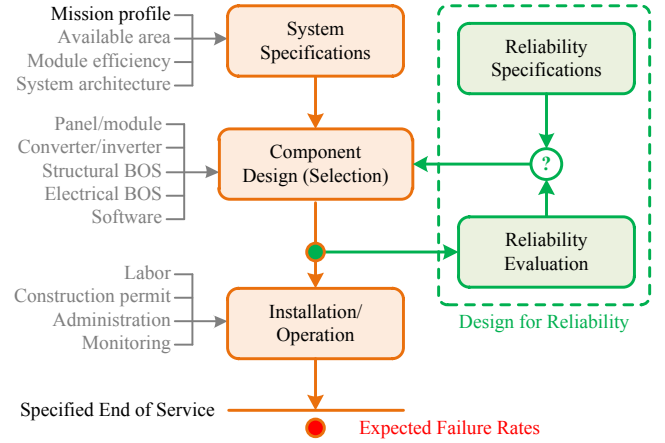


Fig. 1. Diagram of the Design for Reliability (DfR) approach applied to the design of power electronics in PV systems (BOS: Balance of System) [14].

overall cost of energy in addition to the energy production loss during the inverter downtime periods. Thus, avoiding PV inverter replacements during the entire lifespan of PV power plants (e.g., 20 years) is one of the keys to the cost reduction of PV systems [10].

Accordingly, the reliability engineering approach has recently been more involved in the design phase of PV inverters (in general, power electronic systems) [11]–[15]. This is normally referred to as a Design for Reliability (DfR) approach, as it is illustrated in Fig. 1. Following the DfR approach, the reliability specification (e.g., the lifetime target) is defined and it should be fulfilled during the design phase. In this respect, the lifetime prediction tool plays an important role in assessing the reliability of the designed inverter under given operating conditions (e.g., the mission profile of the installation site).

In the prior-art research, it is suggested that the reliability and lifetime of power electronic systems (e.g., PV inverters) are strongly affected by the operating conditions [16]–[22], referred to as mission profiles. Thus, the mission profile is usually required as an input of the DfR process as shown in Fig. 1. For PV applications, the solar irradiance and the ambient temperature are normally considered as the components of a mission profile, as they determine the PV power production (i.e., the PV inverter loading). Since the solar irradiance and ambient temperature are location-dependent (due to the climate condition of the installation site), the mission profile can vary significantly, and thus the reliability

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of PV inverters [19]–[22]. From the design perspective, this is a challenge for the DfR approach, where the concept of “one design fits all” is difficult to be achieved. For instance, if the PV inverter is designed to achieve the lifetime of 20 years under cold climate conditions (e.g., low average solar irradiance level), there is a high risk that the same inverter design (e.g., component selection and cooling system design) will not fulfill the reliability target when it is installed in a hot climate region (e.g., high average solar irradiance level). On the other hand, the PV inverter designed with respect to the hot climate condition with strong average solar irradiance and high ambient temperature will be considered as an over-designed case for other installation sites with cold climate conditions. This is not preferable in the DfR concept, as it will increase the overall system cost, e.g., initial cost for over-designed cases and maintenance cost for under-designed cases. Moreover, applying different inverter designs according to installation sites is impractical with respect to the cost.

Actually, the inverter control strategies can affect the reliability and lifetime performances in addition to the mission profile. However, with the conventional Maximum Power Point Tracking (MPPT) operation, the loading of the PV inverters will be dictated by the available power production of the PV arrays. In that case, the PV power variations (reflecting mission profile characteristics) can induce thermal fluctuations on the inverters. In contrast, a Power Limiting Control (PLC) scheme, which limits the maximum feed-in power to a certain level, can smooth the temperature variations and lower the thermal loading to some extent [23]–[25]. This control strategy has initially been introduced to mitigate the overloading issue due to peak power generation of the PV systems [26], [27]. However, this operation also contributes to improved lifetime, which can also be seen in smart de-rating control strategies [28]–[30]. This opens a direction to enhance the reliability and lifetime of PV inverters through a proper control, where the mission profiles are considered in the control design. The concept of adapting the control strategy according to the mission profile for the PV inverter reliability enhancement has been briefly discussed in [31].

In this paper, which is an extension of the authors’ previous work in [31], a comprehensive analysis of the PLC being applied to the mission profile-oriented control for reliability and lifetime of PV inverters is provided. This includes the detailed implementation of the control algorithm as well as the impact of the proposed control strategy on the thermal stress and eventually the reliability of the components in PV inverters. The proposed strategy is applied to 6-kW single-phase PV inverters, as described in Section II. In Section III, the lifetime evaluation of PV inverters is presented, where two mission profiles in Denmark and Arizona are used. The results in Section IV demonstrate that the same reliability target (e.g., the lifetime target of 20 years) can be achieved under both mission profiles with the PLC strategy, where the design guidelines are provided in Section V. Finally, concluding remarks are provided in Section VI.

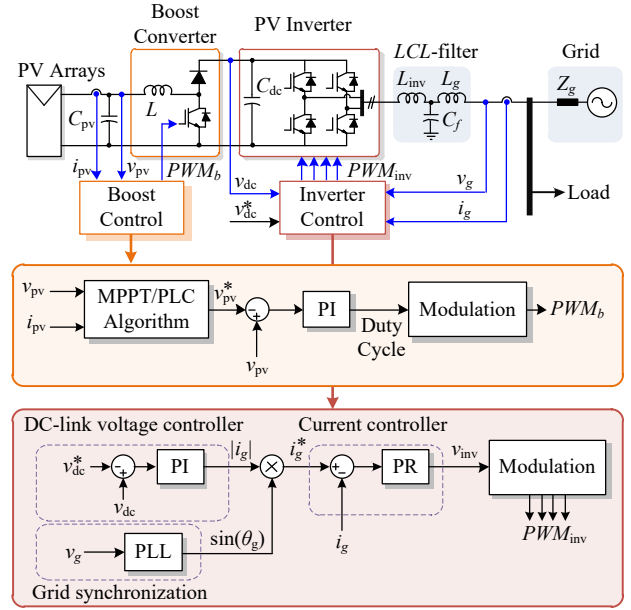


Fig. 2. System configuration and control structure of a two-stage single-phase grid-connected PV system (MPPT: Maximum Power Point Tracking, PLC: Power Limiting Control, PI: Proportional Integral, PR: Proportional Resonant, PLL: Phase-Locked Loop, PWM: Pulse Width Modulation).

TABLE I
PARAMETERS OF THE TWO-STAGE SINGLE-PHASE PV SYSTEM (FIG. 2).

PV inverter rated power	6 kW
Boost converter inductor	$L = 1.8 \text{ mH}$
DC-link total capacitance	$C_{dc} = 1100 \text{ } \mu\text{F}$
LCL-filter	$L_{inv} = 4.8 \text{ mH}$, $L_g = 2 \text{ mH}$, $C_f = 4.3 \text{ } \mu\text{F}$
Switching frequencies	Boost converter: $f_b = 16 \text{ kHz}$, PV inverter: $f_{inv} = 8 \text{ kHz}$
DC-link reference voltage	$v_{dc}^* = 450 \text{ V}$
Grid nominal voltage (RMS)	$V_g = 230 \text{ V}$
Grid nominal frequency	$\omega_0 = 2\pi \times 50 \text{ rad/s}$

II. SINGLE-PHASE GRID-CONNECTED PV INVERTERS

A. System Description

The system configuration and control structure of a single-phase grid-connected PV system are shown in Fig. 2 and its parameters are given in Table I. Here, a dc-dc converter is employed to step up the PV array voltage v_{pv} to match the minimum required dc-link voltage and also provide the control of PV power extraction [32]. This is normally achieved through the regulation of the PV voltage, whose reference (v_{pv}^*) is determined by a Maximum Power Point Tracking (MPPT) algorithm. The PLC strategy can also be implemented in the control of the dc-dc converter, instead of the MPPT algorithm, to limit the PV power extraction to a certain level (below the maximum available power) [33], [34]. The extracted power is then delivered to a full-bridge dc-ac inverter (PV inverter), which provides the grid-integration control including the current control and the grid synchronization [35].

Regarding the power components, IGBT devices from [36] are used. The cooling system (e.g., heat sink sizing) is de-

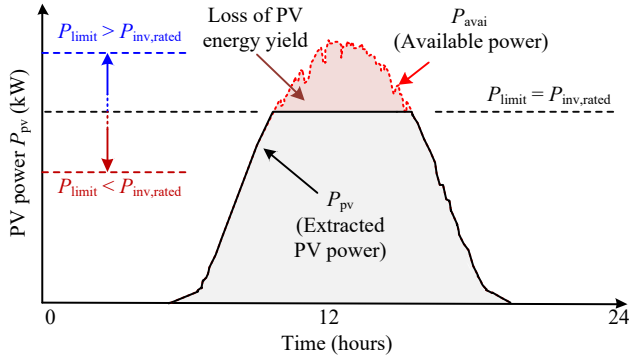


Fig. 3. PV power extraction with the Power-Limiting Control (PLC) strategy (P_{avai} : available PV power, P_{pv} : extracted PV power, P_{limit} : power-limit level, $P_{inv,rated}$: PV inverter rated power).

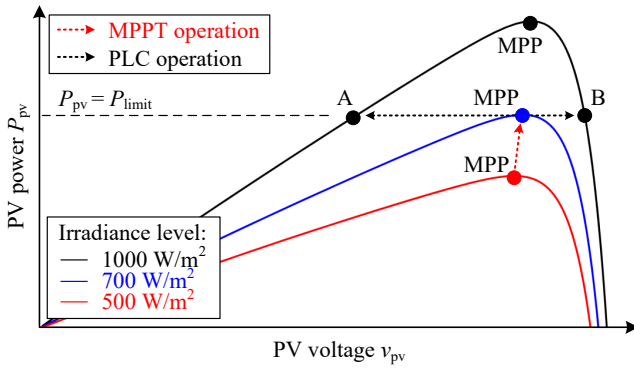


Fig. 4. Operational principle of the PV system with the Power-Limiting Control (PLC) strategy, e.g., the operating point of the PV array is regulated at A or B in order to limit the extracted PV power at $P_{pv} = P_{limit}$.

signed to ensure that the power device maximum junction temperature is 100 °C at 120% of the rated power (i.e., 7.2 kW). This ensures a sufficient robustness margin in terms of thermal design. The required dc-link capacitance of the inverter is 1100 μ F following the recommendation in [37]. This is realized by connecting two capacitors (2200 μ F/350 V) from [38] in series in order to fulfill the voltage requirement.

B. Power-Limiting Control (PLC) Strategy

Instead of always tracking the Maximum Power Point (MPP), the PV output power P_{pv} can be limited to a certain level P_{limit} below the available PV power P_{avai} , as demonstrated in Fig. 3. This operation is called the PLC in the literature, where the PV output power can be summarized as

$$P_{pv} = \begin{cases} P_{avai}, & \text{when } P_{avai} \leq P_{limit} \\ P_{limit}, & \text{when } P_{avai} > P_{limit} \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

where P_{pv} is the PV output power, P_{avai} is the maximum available power (according to the MPPT operation) and P_{limit} is the power-limit level. In order to realize the PLC operation, the operating voltage of the PV array needs to be regulated below the MPP when the available PV power is higher than

the power-limit level (i.e., $P_{avai} > P_{limit}$) according to (2), as it is also demonstrated in Fig. 4.

$$v_{pv}^* = \begin{cases} v_{MPPT}, & \text{when } P_{pv} \leq P_{limit} \\ v_{pv} - v_{step}, & \text{when } P_{pv} > P_{limit} \end{cases} \quad (2)$$

where v_{MPPT} is the reference voltage from the MPPT algorithm (i.e., P&O MPPT) and v_{step} is the perturbation step size.

The PLC operation is normally required when the available PV power becomes higher than the PV inverter rated power $P_{inv,rated}$ [33]. This situation usually occurs in the PV system with over-sized PV arrays (i.e., the PV array is intentionally designed to have higher rated power than the inverter in order to gain more energy under the low solar irradiance condition) [39]. Another incident is due to the solar irradiance reflection from the cloud, resulting in the solar irradiance level higher than 1000 W/m². Conventionally, the power-limit level is selected as the inverter rated power (i.e., $P_{limit} = P_{inv,rated}$) to ensure the safety of the inverter [39]. However, it should be pointed out that the PLC strategy is capable of flexibly regulating the extracted PV power at any power level below the available power P_{avai} (i.e., $0 \leq P_{pv} < P_{avai}$), as it is illustrated in Fig. 3. This flexible power controllability is suitable to be employed in the mission profile-oriented control strategy, which will be analyzed in this paper. In fact, the PV inverter rarely operates at its rated power. Thus, the amount of lost energy due to the PLC operation is in general relatively small, while the peak-power and thus loading of the PV inverter can be reduced significantly, which benefits both the PV inverter reliability and the grid congestion. For more details regarding the design and implementation of the PLC strategy, the readers are suggested to follow the reference [33].

III. RELIABILITY ASSESSMENT OF PV INVERTERS

In order to assess the reliability of PV inverters, several modeling steps are required, as it is illustrated in Fig. 5. In general, two main reliability evaluation processes are involved:

- Mission profile translation into the thermal stress profile
- Damage calculation of the components

This procedure has been comprehensively explained in [14] and [15], which will be discussed briefly in the following. The mission profiles in Denmark and Arizona will be applied. The lifetime of the components in the PV inverter will be evaluated, where the lifetime of power devices and capacitors are considered as a reliability target.

A. Mission Profile translation into Thermal Stress Profile

The mission profile is important in the reliability assessment and lifetime prediction of PV inverters. Thus, it is usually considered during the reliability evaluation process as it is illustrated in Fig. 5. From the mission profile (i.e., the solar irradiance and ambient temperature), the PV inverter loading (e.g., power losses of the components) is determined from the PV panel model and the control strategy together with the loss model of the components. Then, the power losses are applied to the thermal models of the components (e.g., power devices and capacitors) to obtain the thermal loading during the operation, which is required for the lifetime model.

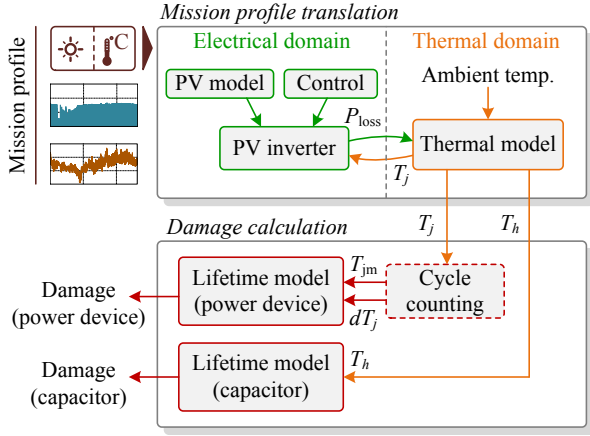


Fig. 5. Reliability assessment of PV inverters based on mission profiles [14].

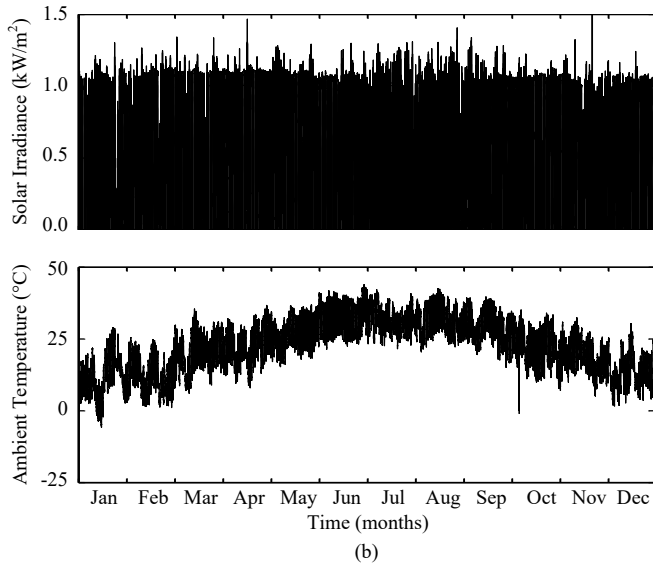
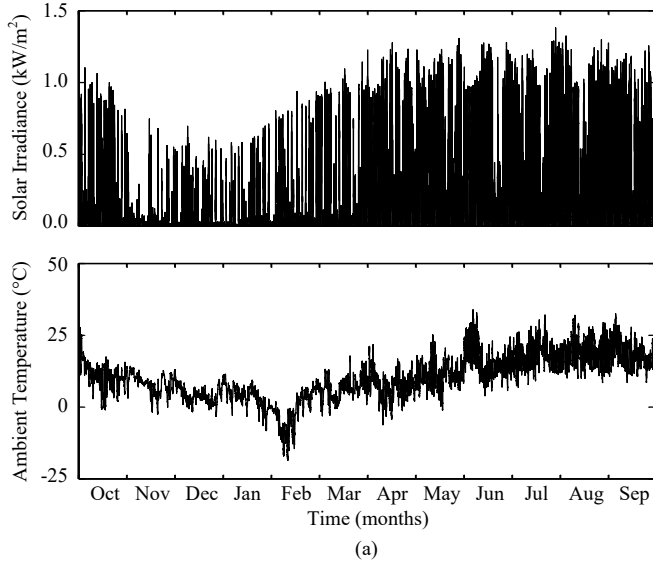


Fig. 6. Yearly mission profiles (i.e., irradiance and ambient temperature with a sampling rate of 5 mins per sample) in: (a) Denmark and (b) Arizona.

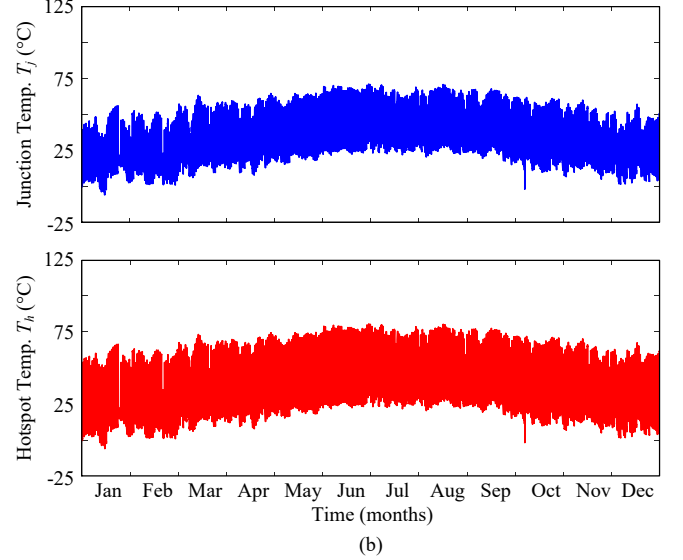
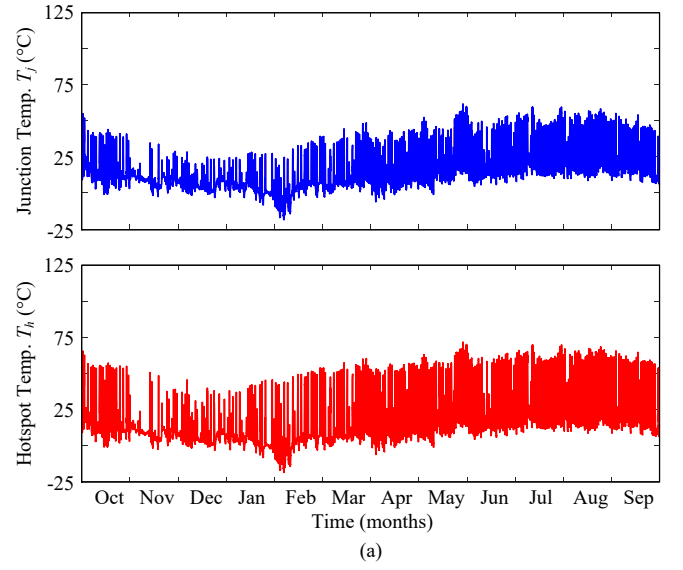


Fig. 7. Thermal stress in the power device and capacitor of the PV inverter under one-year mission profile in: (a) Denmark and (b) Arizona.

The mission profiles recorded in Denmark and Arizona are used in this study, as shown in Fig. 6. It can be seen from the mission profiles that the average solar irradiance level in Arizona is constantly high through the year, while the average solar irradiance level in Denmark is relatively low through November to February. The same trend can also be seen in the ambient temperature profile. The mission profiles in Denmark and Arizona represent the installation site in a cold and hot climate condition, respectively. It can be expected from the mission profile that the PV power production of the PV system in Arizona will be higher than that in Denmark.

When translating the mission profile into the inverter loading (following Fig. 5), it can be seen from the thermal stress profiles in Fig. 7 that the PV inverter installed in Arizona experiences a higher thermal loading during the operation. In that case, the reliability-critical components in the system (e.g., power devices and capacitors) will be subjected to higher

TABLE II
PARAMETERS OF THE LIFETIME MODEL OF AN IGBT MODULE [42].

Parameter	Value	Experimental condition
A	3.4368×10^{14}	
α	-4.923	$64 \text{ K} \leq \Delta T_j \leq 113 \text{ K}$
β_1	-9.012×10^{-3}	
β_0	1.942	$0.19 \leq ar \leq 0.42$
C	1.434	
γ	-1.208	$0.07 \text{ s} \leq t_{on} \leq 63 \text{ s}$
f_d	1	
E_a	0.06606 eV	$32.5 \text{ }^\circ\text{C} \leq T_j \leq 122 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$
k_B	$8.6173324 \times 10^{-5} \text{ eV/K}$	

thermal stresses than those in Denmark. Consequently, the reliability and lifetime of the PV inverter under the two installation sites can differ considerably, which will be demonstrated in the following.

B. Damage Calculation

For the power devices and capacitors, the main cause of component wear-out failures is related to the thermal stress. In the case of power devices (e.g., IGBT), the thermal cycling is one of the main stress factors that cause bond-wire lift-off and solder fatigue after a number of thermal cycles [40], [41]. The number of cycle to failure N_f can be expressed as

$$N_f = A \times (\Delta T_j)^\alpha \times (ar)^{\beta_1 \Delta T_j + \beta_0} \times \left[\frac{C + (t_{on})^\gamma}{C + 1} \right] \times \exp\left(\frac{E_a}{k_B \times T_{jm}}\right) \times f_d \quad (3)$$

which is the lifetime model for IGBT devices [42]. In (3), the thermal cycle amplitude ΔT_j , the mean junction temperature T_{jm} , and cycle period t_{on} are the stress levels obtained from the cycle counting algorithm, and the other parameters are given in Table II.

Normally, it is assumed that the contribution of each thermal cycle to the failure of power device is accumulated linearly and independently during operation following the Miner's rule. This can be further represented as the accumulated damage AD :

$$AD = \sum_i \frac{n_i}{N_{fi}} \quad (4)$$

where n_i is the number of cycles at a certain stress level (T_{jm} , ΔT_j , and t_{on}), and N_{fi} is the number of cycles to failure calculated from (3) at that stress condition. When the damage is accumulated to unity (i.e., $AD = 1$), the power device is considered to reach its end-of-life. It has been validated experimentally in [43] and [44] that the accuracy of this reliability evaluation approach is acceptable in most cases.

The dc-link capacitor is another lifetime-limiting component in the PV inverter, where the hotspot temperature T_h is the main stress factor. The lifetime model of the aluminum electrolytic capacitor is given as

$$L_f = L_m \times \left(4.3 - 3.3 \frac{V_{op}}{V_{rated}} \right) \times 2^{\left(\frac{T_m - T_h}{10} \right)} \quad (5)$$

in which L_f is the time-to-failure under the thermal stress level of T_h and the voltage stress level of V_{op} [45], and the other parameters are given in Table III [38].

TABLE III
PARAMETERS OF THE LIFETIME MODEL OF A CAPACITOR [38].

Parameter	Symbol	Value
Rated lifetime (at V_{rated} and T_m)	L_m	3000 hours
Rated operating voltage	V_{rated}	350 V
Rated operating temperature	T_m	105°C

TABLE IV
LIFETIME EVALUATION WITH THE MPPT CONTROL STRATEGY (CONVENTIONAL DESIGN).

Installation site	Lifetime of power device	Lifetime of capacitor
Denmark	33 years	66 years
Arizona	9 years	15 years

Then, the Miner's rule can also be applied to calculate the lifetime of the capacitor as

$$AD = \sum_i \frac{l_i}{L_{fi}} \quad (6)$$

where l_i is the operating time for a set of T_h and V_{op} (e.g., the mission profile time resolution) and L_{fi} is the time-to-failure calculated from (5) at that specific stress condition.

C. Case Study (Conventional MPPT Control Strategy)

Following the reliability assessment method in Fig. 5, the damage occurred in the power device and capacitor during the operation can be calculated and used as a reliability metric. For instance, the operation with high AD indicates low reliability and a high failure rate of the component. In this case study, the MPPT operation is applied to demonstrate the mission profile-dependency of the PV inverter reliability. For the installation site in Denmark, the rated power of the installed PV arrays is 8.4 kW, which is 1.4 times higher than the PV inverter rated power. In this case, the PV arrays are over-sized, which is practical for the installation site with relatively low solar irradiance conditions [39]. However, the same inverter design (i.e., 6 kW) is applied for both installation sites.

By applying the mission profiles in Fig. 6, the corresponding damage of the component in the PV inverter installed in Denmark and Arizona can be obtained, as shown in Fig. 8(a) and (b), respectively. For the mission profile in Denmark, it can be seen in Fig. 8(a) that only small damage occurs in the power device and capacitor of the inverter during winter (e.g., November to February) due to low solar irradiance conditions. In fact, most of the damage occurs from April to August. The AD over one year of the power device and capacitor in the PV inverter is $AD = 3.02 \times 10^{-2}$ per year and $AD = 1.51 \times 10^{-2}$ per year, respectively. This corresponds to the component lifetime of 33 years for the power device and 66 years for the capacitor. Accordingly, the reliability target (i.e., the component lifetime of 20 years) is fulfilled with the designed inverter under the mission profile in Denmark.

For the PV inverter installed in Arizona, the damage in the power device and capacitor is relatively high through the entire year, as it is shown in Fig. 8(b), which reflects the mission profile characteristics. In that case, a one-year

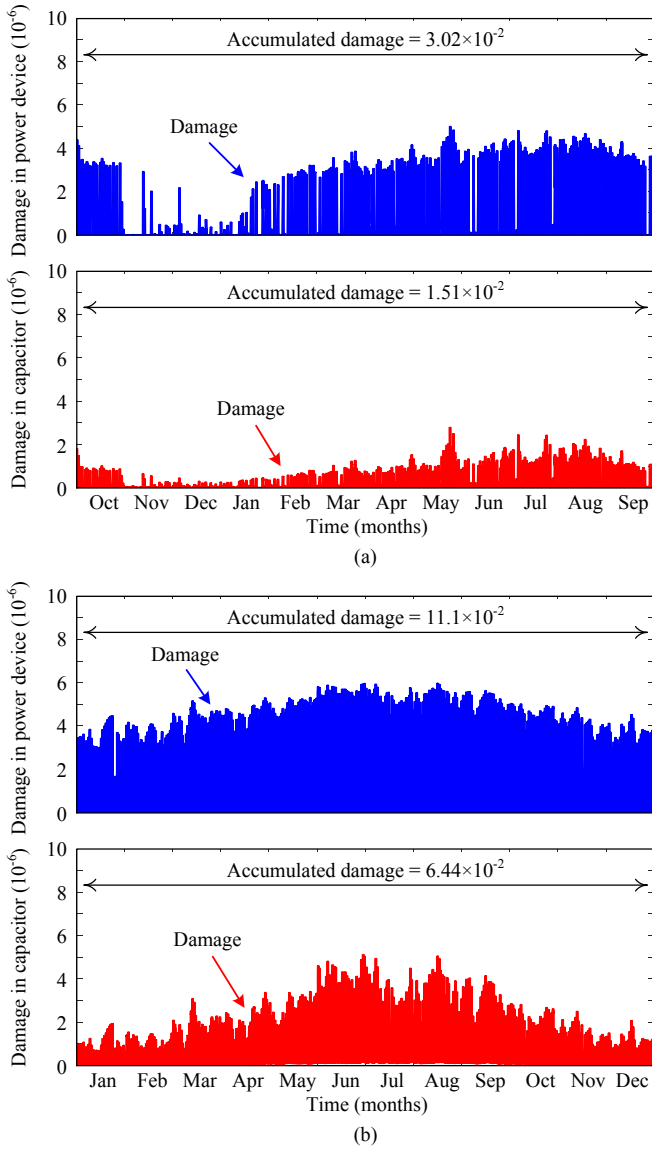


Fig. 8. Damage in the power device and capacitor of the PV inverter under one-year mission profile in: (a) Denmark and (b) Arizona.

operation under the Arizona mission profile contributes to the damage of $AD = 11.1 \times 10^{-2}$ per year for the power device and $AD = 6.44 \times 10^{-2}$ per year for the capacitor. Thus, the power device is expected to fail after 9 years, while it is 15 years for the capacitor, as summarized in Table IV. In this case, the reliability target (i.e., the component lifetime of 20 years) is not fulfilled for the given inverter design.

IV. MISSION PROFILE-ORIENTED CONTROL STRATEGY

As shown previously, the designed PV inverter in Arizona cannot fulfill the reliability target, while it is considered to be over-designed when installed in Denmark. In the following, the PLC strategy is applied to reshape the inverter reliability according to the mission profile.

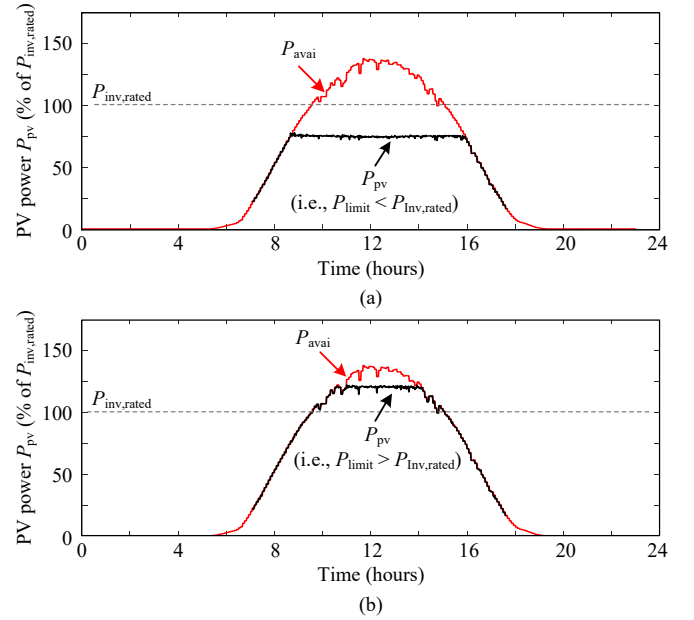


Fig. 9. Power extraction (experimental tests) from a PV inverter with the PLC strategy: (a) $P_{\text{limit}} < P_{\text{inv,rated}}$ and (b) $P_{\text{limit}} > P_{\text{inv,rated}}$ ($P_{\text{inv,rated}}$: PV inverter rated power, P_{avai} : available PV power, P_{limit} : power-limit level).

A. Control for Reliability

As discussed in Section II, the PLC strategy can be employed to flexibly regulate the extracted PV power (i.e., PV inverter loading) during the operation. However, there is always a trade-off between the PV inverter reliability improvement and the PV energy yield, which needs to be considered when applying the PLC strategy. For instance, decreasing the power-limit level of the PLC strategy below the PV inverter rated power (i.e., $P_{\text{limit}} < P_{\text{inv,rated}}$) will reduce the peak-load of the PV inverter during the operation. This operating condition is demonstrated experimentally in Fig. 9(a), where the power-limit level is kept at 75 % of the PV inverter rated power. By decreasing the power-limit level below the PV inverter rated power, the PV inverter reliability can be improved, as the thermal stress of the components will be reduced [23]. However, the energy yield will also be reduced due to the power curtailment, which is the trade-off of this operation.

On the other hand, more PV energy can be gained by allowing the power-limit level to be higher than the PV inverter rated power (i.e., $P_{\text{limit}} > P_{\text{inv,rated}}$). This operation is applicable in the case of over-sized PV systems, where the PV arrays are installed with the rated power higher than that of the PV inverter. An example of the operation with increasing the power-limit level is demonstrated in Fig. 9(b). In this case, the power-limit level is chosen as 120 % of the PV inverter rated power (which is still within the safe operating area of the components). It can be seen from the results in Fig. 9(b) that the PV energy yield during midday, e.g., 10:00-16:00, is increased due to the increased power-limit level. However, the PV inverter loading will also increase, which may decrease the PV inverter reliability.

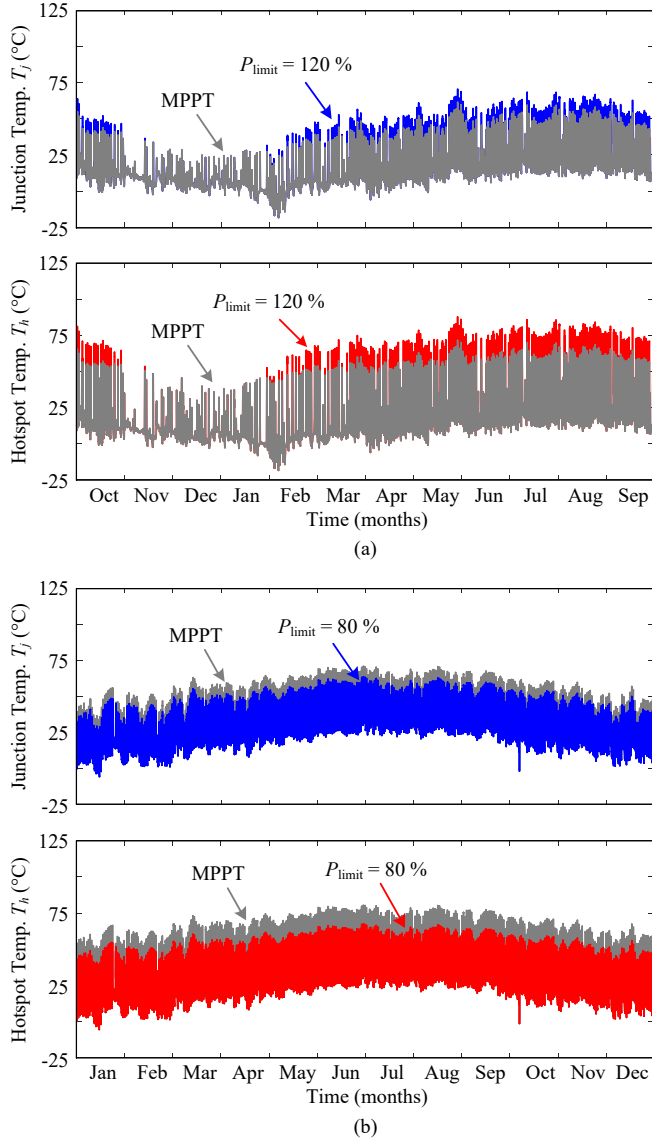


Fig. 10. Thermal stress in the power device and capacitor of the PV inverter operating with the PLC strategy under one-year mission profile in: (a) Denmark (i.e., $P_{\text{limit}} = 120\%$) and (b) Arizona (i.e., $P_{\text{limit}} = 80\%$).

B. Thermal Stress Analysis

In order to demonstrate the impact of the proposed mission profile-oriented control strategy on the long-term operation of the PV inverter, the PLC strategy is applied to the PV inverter considering the two mission profiles in Denmark and Arizona (see Fig. 6). The thermal stress profile of the components in the PV inverter (i.e., power devices and capacitors) during one-year operation is considered and compared with the conventional design solution (i.e., only the MPPT operation).

In Fig. 10(a), the PLC strategy is applied to the mission profile in Denmark with the power-limit being 120 % of the PV inverter rated power (since the PV inverter has been previously considered to be over-designed). It can be seen from the results that the thermal stress level of both the power device and the capacitor is increased compared to the system with only the conventional MPPT operation. However, the increased

thermal stress level is still well below the maximum limit of the component (i.e., 150 °C for the power device [36] and 105 °C for the capacitor [38]). On the other hand, the PLC strategy is also applied to the PV inverter installed in Arizona, where the power-limit level of 80 % of the PV inverter rated power is applied in order to improve the reliability. It can be seen from the results in Fig. 10(b) that the thermal stress level of the power device and capacitor is decreased considerably with the PLC strategy compared to the case only with the conventional MPPT operation.

V. DESIGN GUIDELINES

In this section, design guidelines regarding the selection of power-limit level for a certain mission profile will be provided. The lifetime target of the PV inverter and the PV energy yield are the main design considerations.

A. Lifetime Evaluation

Since the PV inverter installed in Denmark is considered to be an over-designed case compared to the lifetime target of 20 years, the power-limit level should be increased for the mission profile in Denmark. In that case, more energy can be gained with a reduced margin in terms of reliability performance (e.g., lower component lifetime). Notably, the power-limit can be increased up to 120 % of the inverter rated power, following the design in Section II in order to ensure that the components still operate within the safe operating area (according to [36] and [38]). The lifetime of the power device and capacitor of the PV inverter installed in Denmark under different power-limit levels are demonstrated in Fig. 11(a). From the result, it can be seen that the power-limit should not be increased to more than 108.5 % of the inverter rated power, which is the case when the lifetime target of 20 years is marginally fulfilled for the power device.

In contrast, the PV inverter in Arizona should operate with a reduced power-limit level to improve the reliability, since the pre-designed inverter cannot achieve the reliability target. The evaluation results in Fig. 11(b) show that the power device lifetime of 20 years can be achieved, if the power-limit level is kept at 87.5 % of the inverter rated power. By further decreasing the power-limit below 87.5 % of the inverter rated power, the component lifetime can be further increased but it will also result in more energy losses. This is not preferable from the cost-of-energy point of view.

B. PV Energy Yield

As a trade-off of the PLC strategy, the energy yield has to be considered together with the reliability improvement. The relative increase/decrease in the PV energy yield (compared to the case only with the MPPT operation) with different power-limit levels is evaluated and shown in Fig. 12. For the mission profile in Denmark, more PV energy can be extracted by increasing the power-limit level above the inverter rated power. By increasing the power-limit level to 108.5 % of the inverter rated power (i.e., when the obtained lifetime is 20 years), the energy yield is increased by 2.74 %. For the case of the PV

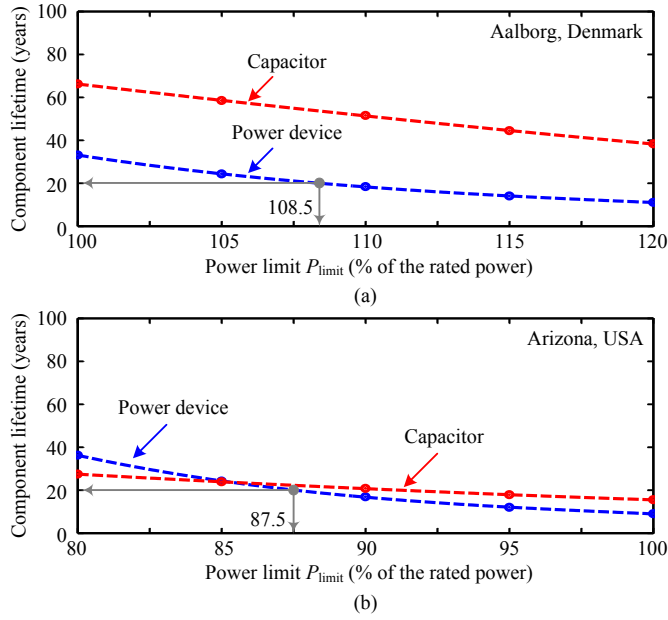


Fig. 11. Lifetime of power device and capacitor with different power-limit levels under one-year mission profile in: (a) Denmark and (b) Arizona.

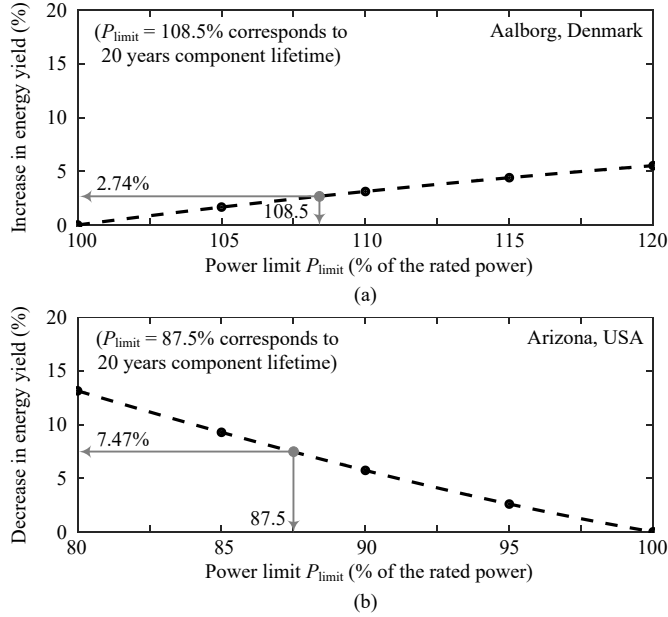


Fig. 12. Impact on the energy yield of the PV inverter with different power-limit levels under one-year mission profile in: (a) Denmark and (b) Arizona.

inverter installed in Arizona, the power-limit level should be decreased to 87.5 % of the inverter rated power considering the inverter lifetime. However, it is worth to mention that setting the power-limit level as 87.5 % of the rated power does not result in 12.5 % of energy losses. This is due to the fact that the PV inverter rarely operates at its rated power. Therefore, only 7.47 % of the energy yield needs to be curtailed to achieve a lifetime target of 20 years. The design results of the power-limit level for different mission profiles are summarized in Table V.

TABLE V
DESIGN RESULTS OF THE MISSION PROFILE-ORIENTED CONTROL STRATEGY.

Mission Profile	Control Strategy	Lifetime	Energy Yield
Denmark	MPPT ($P_{\text{limit}} = 100\%$)	33 years	100 %
	PLC ($P_{\text{limit}} = 108.5\%$)	20 years	102.74 %
Arizona	MPPT ($P_{\text{limit}} = 100\%$)	9 years	100%
	PLC ($P_{\text{limit}} = 87.5\%$)	20 years	92.53 %

The above results suggest that the PLC strategy can offer a degree of freedom to re-shape the reliability performance of the PV inverter for different mission profiles. Thus, it can potentially be employed to minimize the overall cost of solar energy. The trade-off between the reliability and energy yield should be further justified considering the overall cost of energy (including the repair and maintenance cost). For instance, the multi-objective optimization problem to minimize the life-cycle cost of the overall PV system should be used to determine the optimal power-limit level (e.g., depending on the aging level, temperature condition) for each mission profile based on the provided design flow, which is an interesting aspect for the future research.

VI. CONCLUSION

In this paper, a mission profile-oriented control strategy for PV inverters has been presented. The control strategy is based on the power-limiting control scheme, which has been adaptively applied according to the mission profile characteristic. A case study of the mission profiles in Denmark and Arizona has been carried out, where the reliability target is specified as the component lifetime of 20 years. For the Denmark case, where the inverter is over-designed, the energy yield can be increased up to 2.74 % by allowing the PV inverter to operate slightly above the rated power. In contrast, the PV inverter installed in Arizona cannot fulfill the lifetime target only with the conventional MPPT control, when the same inverter design of the Denmark case is adopted. However, by limiting the feed-in power at 87.5 % of the designed inverter rated power, the power device lifetime can be prolonged to 20 years with the compromise of 7.47 % reduction in the energy yield.

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