

Techniques and technologies to board on the feasible Renewable and Sustainable Energy Systems

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Abstract

This paper is the editorial for the virtual special issue (VSI) of Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews (RSER) dedicated to the 16th Conference on Sustainable Development of Energy, Water and Environment Systems (SDEWES 2021) held from October 10 to 15, 2021 in Dubrovnik, Croatia. The VSI collected both high quality review papers and original research articles presented at the SDEWES Conference in 2021 belonging to the aims and scope of RSER. After a scrutinizing peer review process, 28 articles were accepted and published. These articles deal with techniques and technologies to board on the feasible Renewable and Sustainable Energy Systems. Many of them are multidisciplinary articles addressing almost all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and providing feasible solutions to the strongly needed decarbonization pathways.

Keywords: renewable and sustainable energy systems; energy technologies; energy modelling techniques; climate and energy policy; impact analysis.

1. Introduction

This editorial shows the continuation of the role played by RSER as dissemination platform for top-quality researches as done in 2020 [1], 2019 [2], 2018 [3] and 2017 [4] together with other high-ranked Journals such as Energy [5-9], Energy Conversion & Management [10-13] and Renewable Energy [14-16] to be considered with several frontend research published in those Journals outside the SDEWES Conferences as well as other high-ranked sources.

Twentyeight scientific articles published in the SDEWES 2021 Special Issue of Renewable & Sustainable Energy Reviews are described [17-44] dealing with techniques and technologies to board on the feasible Renewable and Sustainable Energy Systems, i.e. the core debate of the Conference on Sustainable Development of Energy, Water and Environment Systems held in Dubrovnik, Croatia (SDEWES 2021). Still with some restrictions derived from the COVID-19 pandemic a strong participation in hybrid mode occurred and a high-quality of scientific outcomes has kept looking at the papers published in this Special Issue and in the other Supporting Journals such as Energies [45], International Journal of Sustainable Energy Planning and Management [46], Optimization and Engineering [47], Sustainability [48] and many others.

This Editorial focusses on the advancements in techniques and technologies supporting the strategies designed to reach a fully sustainable system. The analysis is linked to cross-domains publications listed and commented here below. Section 2 presents the cutting edge techniques available to investigate the sustainable energy transition and Section 3 gives an overview of the cutting edge technologies that will take part to this transition.

2. Renewable and Sustainable energy cutting edge techniques

Energy Infrastructures are continuously mentioned as the ground of the transition [49] together with their impact on the natural environment [50] requiring new techniques to evaluate their actual need and how to harvest the renewable sources.

The first article is authored by Penalba et al. [17] presenting a novel data-driven forecasting technique for including the ocean warming effect and wave power variations within the Marine Renewable field [51]. This study belongs to recent advancements in the field of both machine learning and oceanic engineering concept allowing the efficient harvesting of Marine Renewables [52], conceptualization of advanced systems [53], elaboration of innovative hydro-driven

prototypes [54] and the possibility to create datasets for both best site selection [55] and policy making [56].

The second paper by Feijoo et al. [18] presents a new long-term energy planning model accounting for endogenous capacity investment, energy dispatch, Power-to-X, and demand response technologies. It includes optimization methods as recently investigated in literature [57,58] for minimizing the total capacity investment cost, throughout all technologies, and the operational cost faced by the system [59] to meet the energy demand. The inclusion of Power-To-X technologies [60] allows a degree of flexibility [61] together with higher penetration of renewables [62] and solution of balancing issues [63].

In the third paper, Kralik et al. [19] link the biomass potential with the sustainable land use by elaborating a land risk index for distinguish the perennial non-productive crops to the ones able to provide an energy contribution to the National sustainable energy system. Bioenergy is widely investigated for its renewable nature [64] and possibility to shift from fossil fuels dependency [65] but proper limitations must be considered as in [66] to determine the actual contribution to the energy transition without negatively impacting the land use [67].

The fourth paper by Prades-Gil et al. [20] deals with an agile heating and cooling demand model to be included in the energy planning tools to viably foresee the energy demand of residential buildings and districts and the effects of climate change on their energy demand [68]. Built environment energy demand is actually investigated due to the impact on the energy sector [69] and its role in the electrification process of the heating and cooling demand [70] calling for more detailed datasets [71] and data-driven methods [72] to be assessed. This leads to a change in the building load profile [73] that is contemporary weather-dependent and use-dependent keeping the focus of research on the occupant behavior too [74]. Making energy consumption data analysis reliable (based on the consolidated statistical and physical principles) and transparent is also a prerequisite for the emergence of innovative services in the energy sector, such as the concept of energy-as-a-service (EaaS) [75].

In the fifth paper, Pastore et al. [21] combine different learning curves and different roadmaps for the installation of electrolysersto predict the progressive changes in the hydrogen economy under the framework of the Italian national energy plan. The deployment of hydrogen production technologies has become critical [76] for the effective decarbonization of some heavy industrial sectors [77], mobility applications [78], to further foster the installation of new renewable energy

plants dedicated to it [79] as well as reducing the curtailment of the existing ones [80] or providing grid balancing [81].

The sixth paper written by Salvia et al. [22] presents the collection, analysis, and comparison of data on climate emergency declarations and local climate plans (LCPs) at urban level, integrated with information on city membership in climate network. Partial responses to the climate issues have been done by local energy efficiency plans [82]. Their effectiveness is strongly linked to community awareness [83] that is subsequently diverse for cultural reasons [84] among the Countries. Indeed, generally lower ambition in terms of greenhouse gas emission reduction targets occurs when citizens are not driving the transition.

Masip et al. [23] authored the seventh paper of this Special Issue analyzing how the domestic hot water production and use in energy communities should be prioritized if the objective of the decision-maker is to reduce CO₂ emissions. Indeed, the huge number of publications in the Renewable Energy Community topic mainly deals with photovoltaics energy communities [85], eventually sharing the benefits to the participants [86], since they reach higher economic savings [87]. However, the combination of both PV and DHW could help reach the Fit for 55 package objectives for 2030 in terms of carbon emissions [88].

The eighth paper by Koltsaklis and Knappek [24] presents a model to co-optimize the energy and reserves markets, considering the penetration and participation of various flexibility providers in both markets. They highlight the higher performances with all the flexibility providers, especially in the ancillary services market, in terms of economic competitiveness, renewable energy curtailment, associated CO₂ emissions, and utilization of costly energy resources. Reserves are currently debated for the positive effects on the Grid in terms of frequency control [89] and for participation even to retailer by demand response tools [90].

The ninth paper is authored by Kilkis [25] dealing with the co-benefits for cities when a new 100% renewable energy scenario combines electrification with sector coupling in terms of decarbonization. Indeed, the most stringent emissions pathways put pressure on urban environments that already experiences higher energy demand due to urban heat island effect [91], changes due to electrification of buildings and mobility [92] as well as growing population and related issues on land use [93].

The tenth paper by Zhang et al. [26] aim at delivering a comprehensive review on crucial energy-saving strategies from greenhouse design to operational stage. An effective energy-saving method

for greenhouse design considers greenhouse structures, ventilation and lighting systems to efficiently guarantee performance. Simulating all those parameters requires the considerations of all the energy flows [94] and equipment characteristics for improving their efficiency [95] or identifying anomalies [96].

Piselli et al. [27] in the eleventh paper assessed how impactful are online information sources in engaging people increasing their awareness of associated benefits when taking part of an energy community analyzed through semantic network analysis and text mining. Engaging the stakeholders is impactful in Positive Energy Districts [97], in Urban Regeneration projects [98] up to Islands energy planning [99].

In the twelfth paper, Barone et al. [28] built an innovative physiological thermal comfort model for the human body thermal behaviour evaluation for assessing the dynamic variation of the physiological parameters and for characterizing the occupants' thermal sensation. It is a multi-node model for inclusion in building energy simulation with the aim to have the dynamic control of the building thermo-hygrometric parameters and of the corresponding heating and cooling demands. This balance is crucial for providing comfort services [100] accounting for the eventual barriers of the building features [101].

The thirteenth paper authored by Trafczynski et al. [29] highlights the crucial role played by the optimal scheduling of cleaning actions in a heat exchanger network. The optimization is based on reducing the operating cost and, subsequently, the economic aspects and potential for energy saving and pollution reduction. This is critical in district heating metering applications [102] as well as district cooling ones [103] accounting for changes in climatic conditions [104].

Tariq et al. [30] authored the fourteenth paper dealing with a suitable optimum system and fluid allocation based on hybrid deterministic decision-making technique under smart management accounting for exergy, reliability and environmental performance. It leads to more informed decision applicable to large scale such as Nations [105], Islands [106] or single energy systems [107].

In the fifteenth paper, Majidi Nezhad et al. [31] used the long-term Modern-Era Retrospective analysis for Research and Applications version 2 (MERRA-2) re-analysis dataset to identify possible locations of the Offshore Wind Turbine Generators (OWTGs) installations in the Iranian Islands. These types of datasets and techniques to apply on allow to investigate the climate

modifications [108] and, subsequently, the impact on energy consumption of the buildings [109] as well as the derived stresses on the Grid infrastructures [110].

Manfren et al. [32] in the sixteenth paper by decomposition and normalisation of building energy consumption data found that interpretable data-driven methods can help derive relevant insights to supplement the scalability of data-driven techniques and create more sophisticated systems of interconnected models. Interpretability is a key issue [111] especially when Machine Learning techniques are applied to the same problem [112] and for Facility Management purposes [113] since the identification of the main variable where to intervene allows the resolution of the alarm or the detected failure [114].

In the seventeenth paper, Zhang et al. [33] reviewed recent studies employing machine learning methods to predict occupancy behavior and patterns, with a focus on its related applications and benefits to building systems, improving energy efficiency, indoor air quality and thermal comfort. The workflow of a machine learning-based occupancy prediction model, including data collection, prediction, and validation has been discussed. Other techniques aim at directly estimating the occupants' perception [115] since there is still the avoidance of occupants in the design phase [116] but their impact on energy consumption is not negligible in the case of Net Zero or Positive Energy Buildings [117].

The eighteenth paper by Lund et al. [34] presents a strategy for achieving a fully decarbonized Danish energy system in 2045, considering transport and industry, and highlights the impact magnitude on the employment sector deriving from investing in the Danish economy decarbonization. The widely adopted EnergyPLAN tool [118] together with the recent extension like EPLANopt [119] and EPLANoptMAC [120] has been further enriched with the IndustryPLAN [121] for a detailed sector coupling.

3. Renewable and Sustainable energy cutting edge technologies

The advancement of technologies is one of the key topics of the SDEWES Conference Series.

Masera et al. [35] in the nineteenth paper investigated biodiesels produced from waste resources and inedible plant seed oils and their blends considering fuel properties, biodiesels standards, and engine test results. It was found that blends of animal fat biodiesels and vegetable oil biodiesels are likely to improve fuel properties and combustion characteristics. Furthermore, a more

comprehensive approach is taken when considering biomass conversion into valuable chemicals [122] rather than only to bioenergy options together with integrated model to analyze impact on nexus as water-energy [123] and climate-resources [124].

In the twentieth paper, Yung Yap et al. [36] reviewed the solar energy-powered battery electric vehicle charging stations and their future prospects including the diversification of supply by the hybrid integration of other renewable energy such as wind or biogas to mitigate the intermittency of solar energy and other drawbacks. Recently, diversification is investigated both from a supply point of view by integrating other renewables as wind [125] or bioenergy [126] and from a downstream point of view by incorporating other energy vectors like hydrogen [127].

The twenty first paper authored by Gkousis et al. [37] focused on the major environmental hotspots and the cause-effect relationships between the geo-technical parameters and these environmental impacts in deep geothermal energy extraction. It is linked to the general use of underground space and its socio-economic impacts in the cities [128] as well as the potential in terms of energy supply [129] to meet the loads [130].

Pustina et al. [38] in the twenty second paper presents a novel multi-layer control approach for offshore floating wind turbines to alleviate the vibratory loads while keeping the generator power output stable. The wind conditions could get extreme as downburst-like winds [131] and it should be properly addressed to keep in operation strategic infrastructures [132] and to monitor the urban environment as well [133].

In the twenty third paper, Colarullo and Thakur [39] designed design a techno-economic analysis to assess the impact of the usage of Second-life Batteries for increasing the energy self-sufficiency of renewable energy communities. These latter ones have seen a strong increase in investigations in the last years [134] due to the establishment of incentive schemes promoting self-consumption [135] and the growing acceptability of hybrid systems [136] and poly-generation [137] to meet the energy needs.

The twenty fourth paper by Pažėraitė et al. [40] discussed the differences in the conceptual frameworks and quantitative outcomes of district heat markets in selected countries along with the

consequences of the different approaches concluding that competition among the generators, i.e. on the supply-side, contributes to the downward trend in heating prices. The hybridization of the waste heat of thermal power plants with renewables [138] and the consideration of district heating in a National Energy system roadmap [139] paved the way to valorize the heat and open its market [140] along with the proper instrumentation and models to measure it [141].

He et al. [41] in the twenty fifth paper found out that the spiral fins introduced into the combustor can be an effective means of improving the low power output of combustion based micro thermophotovoltaic systems from an engineering standpoint. Indeed, in the growing field of microelectromechanical systems micro-thermophotovoltaic system have shown a great potential [142] not having the possibility to rely on usual storage of normal size systems like lithium battery [143].

In the twenty sixth paper, Vidović et al. [42] reviewed the potentials for implementing of floating solar panels on lakes and water reservoirs with the aim to limit the solar insolation on water basins and to mitigate the evaporation of water. This technology scenario creates a kind of link between solar energy harvesting and the hydro reservoir protection [144] highlighting the need for accounting for the water scarcity and the effects on hydro power sector and the impact at National and European level [145]. Moreover, this is the opportunity to offer new surfaces to renewable energy harvesting without land use impact to achieve the decarbonization targets of the energy system [146].

The twenty seventh paper authored by Wang et al. [43] highlight evidence and physiological and psychological measures examining the presence of light's thermal effects during the daytime. The critical analysis of those features will promote the adoption of smart lighting technologies in sustainable and smart buildings. Lighting and its consumption [147] are often neglected in building performance simulation [148] but especially in office building where owners would comply with wellness standards [149], they become crucial to evaluate since they affect productivity of employees [150] as well as the integration of innovative technologies in the transparent surfaces [151].

Herrando et al. [44] in the twenty eighth and last paper of this Special Issue focused on the validation of a transient model of a solar hybrid pilot plant based on photovoltaic-thermal (PV-T) collectors integrated via thermal storage tanks with an air-to-water reversible heat pump (rev-HP). The results show that the integration of the thermal and electrical generation of the PV-T collectors with a high-performance rev-HP allows the solar PV-T system to be self-sufficient to satisfy the building energy demand. It leads to a feasible concept of Solar Buildings [152], where almost all the services are supplied by solar-driven equipment [153] in both newly designed buildings and partially for existing ones renovated according to enhance the self-consumption of local PV production [154]. At the same time, attention to circularity [155] drives the refurbishment towards solutions addressing multiple fields.

4. Conclusions

This editorial gave an overview of the techniques and technologies to board on the feasible Renewable and Sustainable Energy Systems discussed by the scientists actively contributing to the success and prestige of the Conference on Sustainable Development of Energy, Water and Environment Systems 2021 Edition. The wide areas of research dealt by the impactful contributions of the SDEWES attendees as well as the members of the whole scientific community publishing in the high-ranked SDEWES partner Journals such as RSER itself are the added value of this Special Issue. The advances in techniques to model, design and combine different solutions together with the consideration of cutting-edge technologies and their performance in contributing to the decarbonization of the energy systems are the key aspects discussed in this Editorial commenting the 28 articles with the established literature among the other Special Issues of SDEWES Conferences in the Partner Journals as well as top-ranked articles from the international community.

Acknowledgements

The Guest Editors are thankful to the RSER team for the realization of the Virtual Special Issue of Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews dedicated to the SDEWES 2021 Conference. The high-quality outcome would not be possible without the precious feedback received by the

attendees of the conferences and the reviewers who helped the authors to reach the standard required by RSER.

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