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**DESIGN OF A FUEL CELL SYSTEM
FOR THE STATIONARY GENERATION
OF ENERGY**

M/990

**BY
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DESIGN OF A FUEL CELL SYSTEM FOR THE STATIONARY GENERATION OF ENERGY

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Summary

Through this project we will describe the fuel cell principles of operation and we will see the history of it. The efficiencies that can be obtained by a fuel cell will be examined too. The principles and various types of fuel cells will be exemplified. As the fuel cells use hydrogen or other gases for fuel, we will see how the hydrogen can be produced, stored and supplied to the cells, as well as how the other gases (like natural gas) are used.

In addition through this project we will see the accessories of a fuel cell plant and how they are used in order to take in advance the waste heat that the cells produced. A comparison of the cost of a certain Cypriot family house for heating and cooling by the commonly used means with the possibility of replacing them by a fuel cell plant, will be examined.

Finally we concluded that fuel cells are considered to be the most promising future technology for generating useful energy as they directly convert the chemical energy stored in a fuel into electricity and heat.

The main conclusion of this project is that the fuel cells can not be used at this moment for residential use in Cyprus. The cost is so high and interest will be vested only if a large plant of above the 1MW is installed to supply electricity and heat to a group of house (200 family houses). Also through this project we concluded that the fuel cell is not a renewable method of producing electricity but its importance is the upper higher efficiency that can be reached. Along the project we realized that the limitations are such so as the direct applicability of a fuel cell for residential use at the moment is not possible for any house any where in the world. Apparently the technological evolution of fuel cell and photovoltaic is directly related and if any time in the foreseeable future their cost is drastically reduced then a totally renewable stationary generation of energy will be a reality. The strict sense of the design aspect of the project has been materialized only in assessing the possible cost of an imaginary system otherwise the specifics would have been carried out in full detail. It must be stated that the breath and depth of the terminology, process identification, energy assessment, operational mechanism, relevant governing equations, cost and system specifics were not familiar to us so as a vast amount of time was invested in comprehending the above. Furthermore no single source of information was available and lots of information was obtained by direct contact with fuel cell companies abroad.

The author

Stavros Neos

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Now, when this project comes to its end, to my mind comes all the time I have spent to come up to this point, the difficulties I have faced and the pleasure of partial success when everything was set and done.

I would like to express my thanks to Hydrotherm Co Ltd. and Deksa Ltd. especially to Mr. Mavronicolas, who kindly helped me in order to evaluate the cost of the central heating and split units that I used for a given house.

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Finally, I believe that this is the best time to express my gratitude to the man that I was most helped by, not only for this project but also for other school subjects and life matters. I would like to express my sincere appreciation and say a big thanks to my supervisor Dr. Nicos Angastiniotis for the precious help he gave to me in order to carry out this project. During the three years that I have attended the HTI courses Dr. Angastiniotis has been the man that I could discuss my problems and concerns. He has been the man that discussed with me my school problems and my concerns about the future. Dr. Angastiniotis is not just a lecturer for me.

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The author.....

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Table of contents

ABBREVIATIONS: -----p. 1

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES: -----p. 2-5

INTRODUCTION: -----p. 6-8

CHAPTER ONE: Literature survey.

Section 1.1: The basic technology-----p. 9-23

Section 1.1.1: What is a fuel cell -----p. 9-10

Section 1.1.2: How a fuel cell works -----p. 10-12

Section 1.1.3: Fuel cell history-----p. 12-17

Section 1.1.4: Connecting cells in series-----p. 17-21

Section 1.1.5: Parts of fuel cell systems-----p. 22-23

Section 1.2: Fuel cell types-----p. 24-76

Section 1.2.1: Introduction to fuel cell types-----p. 24

Section 1.2.2: Proton Exchange Fuel Cell-----p. 25-39

Section 1.2.3: Alkaline Fuel Cell-----p. 40-47

Section 1.2.4: Direct Methanol Fuel Cell-----p. 48-52

Section 1.2.5: Medium and High Temperature Fuel Cell-----p. 53-76

Section 1.2.5.1: Phosphoric Acid Fuel Cell-----p. 59-62

Section 1.2.5.2: Molten Carbonate Fuel Cell-----p. 63-66

Section 1.2.5.3: Solid Oxide Fuel Cell-----p. 67-73

Section 1.2.6: Other types of fuel cells-----p. 74-76

Section 1.3: Fuel Cell fuelling-----p. 77-101

Section 1.3.1: Introduction to fuel cell fuelling-----p. 77-78

Section 1.3.2: Fuel Processing-----p. 79-85
Section 1.3.3: Fuel processing for stationary applications -----p. 86-88
Section 1.3.4: Fuel processing for mobile applications-----p. 89-90
Section 1.3.5: Electrolysis-----p. 91-94
Section 1.3.6: Biological production of hydrogen-----p. 95
Section 1.3.7: Storage of hydrogen-----p. 96-101

Section 1.4: Accessories of a fuel cell system-----p. 102-104
Section 1.4.1: Usefulness of the accessories-----p. 102-104

CHAPTER TWO: Useful Equations.

Section 2.1: The ideal fuel cell efficiency-----p. 105-113

Section 2.2: The ideal fuel cell voltage-----p. 114-115

Section 2.3: The actual fuel cell efficiency-----p. 116

Section 2.4: The actual fuel cell voltage-----p. 117

Section 2.5: The fuel cell irreversibilities and losses-----p. 118-121

CHAPTER THREE: General for fuel cells.

Section 3.1: Comparison of fuel cells with other commonly used methods---p.122-126

Section 3.2: Advantages of fuel cells-----p. 127-129

Section 3.3: Disadvantages of fuel cells-----p. 130

Section 3.4: Applications of fuel cells-----p. 131-133

CHAPTER FOUR: Cost analysis of a Cyprus house.

Section 4.1: Introduction-----p. 134

Section 4.2: Central heating cost-----p. 135-140

Section 4.2.1: Cost of installing and buying the central heating-----p. 135-137

Section 4.2.2: Cost of the fuel in 20 years-----p. 138-139

Section 4.2.3: Cost of maintenance-----p. 140

Section 4.2.4: Total cost of the central heating-----p. 140

Section 4.3: Split units cost-----p. 141-153

Section 4.3.1: Cost of the split units-----p. 141-143

Section 4.3.2: Cost of installation-----p. 143

Section 4.3.3: Piping/insulating/other expenses cost-----p. 144-148

Section 4.3.4: Cost of electricity in 20 years-----p. 148-152

Section 4.3.5: Cost of maintenance-----p. 153

Section 4.3.6: Total cost of split units-----p. 153

Section 4.4: Central heating and Split units cost-----p. 154

Section 4.5: Fuel cell plant cost-----p.154-156

CHAPTER FIVE: Conclusions.

Section 5.1: Why so much interest about fuel cells-----p.157-158

Section 5.2: Costs of fuel cell nowadays-----p. 158-159

Section 5.3: Fuel cells in Cyprus -----p.160

Section 5.4: The effect to the environment-----p. 161

Section 5.5: Future work-----p. 161-162

APPENDIX:

Appendix A: Useful equations for a fuel cell-----p. 163-164

Appendix B: Calculations-----p. 165-177

Appendix C: Objectives of the project-----p. 178

Appendix D: Advertisements of existing fuel cells-----p. 179-185

Appendix E: Demonstration Kit-----p. 186-196

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Books: -----p. 197

Web sides: -----p. 198

Abbreviations

AC	Alternative Current
AFC	Alkaline Fuel Cell
BOP	Balance of Plant
CHP	Combine heat and power
CPO	Catalytic Partial Oxidation
DC	Direct Current
DIR	Direct Internal Reforming
DMFC	Direct Methanol Fuel Cell
EMF	Electromotive Force
EV	Engine Vehicle
FCV	Fuel Cell Vehicle
GDE	Gas Diffusion Electrode
ICE	Internal Combustion Engine
IIR	Indirect Internal Reforming
MCFC	Molten Carbonate Fuel Cell
PAFC	Phosphoric Acid Fuel Cell
PEMFC	Proton Exchange Membrane Fuel Cell
PTFE	Polytetrafluoroethylene
YSZ	Yttria Stabilized Zirconia
ZAFC	Zinc/Air Fuel Cell

List of figures and tables

CHAPTER ONE: Literature survey

Section 1.1: The basic technology.

<u>Fig. 1.1.1:</u> Cathode-electrolyte-anode construction-----	p. 9
<u>Fig. 1.1.2:</u> How a fuel cell works-----	p. 10
<u>Fig. 1.1.3:</u> Grove’s “Gas battery”. Grove’s “Gas chain”-----	p. 14
<u>Fig. 1.1.4:</u> Bacon’s laboratory-----	p. 15
<u>Fig. 1.1.5:</u> NASA space shuttle orbiter fuel cell-----	p. 16
<u>Fig. 1.1.6:</u> Bipolar plate-----	p. 17
<u>Fig. 1.1.7:</u> Single cell connection-----	p. 18
<u>Fig. 1.1.8:</u> A three cell stack-----	p. 19
<u>Fig. 1.1.9:</u> An electrodes/electrolyte assembly with edge sealing gasket-----	p. 20
<u>Fig. 1.1.10:</u> External manifolding-----	p. 21
<u>Fig. 1.1.11:</u> Internal manifolding-----	p. 21
<u>Fig. 1.1.12:</u> 100 KW CHP fuel cell-----	p. 22
<u>Fig. 1.1.13:</u> A 75KW fuel cell-----	p. 23

Section 1.2: Fuel cell types.

<u>Table 1.2.1:</u> Data of different types of fuel cell-----	p. 24
<u>Fig. 1.2.1:</u> Structure of sulponated fluoroethylene-----	p. 26
<u>Fig. 1.2.2:</u> Hydrated regions around the clusters of sulponated side chain-----	p. 27
<u>Fig. 1.2.3:</u> Structure of carbon supported catalyst-----	p. 28
<u>Fig. 1.2.4:</u> A fuel cell electrode/electrolyte-----	p. 29
<u>Fig. 1.2.5:</u> Fuel cell electrode/electrolyte assembly-----	p. 30
<u>Fig. 1.2.6:</u> The water movement-----	p. 31
<u>Fig. 1.2.7:</u> Fuel cell stack with holes in the bipolar plates for cooling purpose-----	p. 33
<u>Fig. 1.2.8:</u> Flow field patterns-----	p.36
<u>Fig. 1.2.9:</u> A method of connecting fuel cells-----	p. 37
<u>Fig. 1.2.10:</u> A method of connecting fuel cells-----	p. 37
<u>Fig. 1.2.11:</u> 2KW fuel cell system-----	p. 38
<u>Fig. 1.2.12:</u> System diagram of the 2KW fuel cell system-----	p. 39

<u>Fig. 1.2.13:</u> Sankey diagram of the 2KW fuel cell system-----	p. 39
<u>Fig. 1.2.14:</u> 1.5KW fuel cell from the Apollo space craft-----	p. 41
<u>Fig. 1.2.15:</u> A rolled electrode-----	p. 42
<u>Fig. 1.2.16:</u> A complex series/parallel structure circuit-----	p. 43
<u>Fig. 1.2.17:</u> Diagram of an AFC with mobile electrolyte-----	p. 44
<u>Fig. 1.2.18:</u> Diagram of an AFC with static electrolyte-----	p. 46
<u>Fig. 1.2.19:</u> The stages of the oxidation of methanol-----	p. 49
<u>Fig. 1.2.20:</u> Diagram of the main components of a DMFC-----	p. 50
<u>Table 1.2.2:</u> Energy density comparison-----	p. 51
<u>Fig. 1.2.21:</u> SOFC/steam turbine combined cycle-----	p. 54
<u>Fig. 1.2.22:</u> Efficiency limits for a fuel cell/turbine combined cycle-----	p. 58
<u>Fig. 1.2.23:</u> Cell interconnections made from ribbed substrates-----	p. 61
<u>Fig. 1.2.24:</u> CO ₂ supply to the cathode of a MCFC-----	p. 64
<u>Table 1.2.3:</u> Values of Δg_f and E for hydrogen and carbon monoxide fuel cell at 650 °C-----	p. 65
<u>Fig. 1.2.25:</u> End view of tubular type SOFC-----	p. 69
<u>Fig. 1.2.26:</u> Tubular type operation diagram-----	p. 70
<u>Fig. 1.2.27:</u> Tubular type SOFC-----	p. 70
<u>Fig. 1.2.28:</u> Ring type SOFC with metal cell interconnections-----	p. 71
<u>Fig. 1.2.29:</u> 300KW SOFC-----	p. 72
<u>Fig. 1.2.30:</u> The diagram of the 300KW SOFC-----	p. 73
<u>Table 1.2.4:</u> Performance table of the 300KW SOFC-----	p. 73
<u>Fig. 1.2.31:</u> The solar hydrogen cycle-----	p. 74

Section 1.3: Fuel cell fuelling.

<u>Table 1.3.1:</u> Properties of fuels considered for fuel cells-----	p. 77
<u>Fig. 1.3.1:</u> Different way that hydrogen can be supplied to fuel cells-----	p. 78
<u>Table 1.3.2:</u> Naphtha reforming a different temperatures-----	p. 80
<u>Fig. 1.3.2:</u> Direct and indirect reforming-----	p. 83
<u>Fig. 1.3.3:</u> Diagram of a fuel processing system for PAFC-----	p. 86
<u>Fig. 1.3.4:</u> Diagram of a fuel processing system for a Ballard 250KW PEMFC-----	p. 88
<u>Fig. 1.3.5:</u> The NeCar3 experimental vehicle-----	p. 89
<u>Table 1.3.3:</u> Characteristic of the methanol processor for NeCar3-----	p. 90

<u>Fig. 1.3.6:</u> Electrolysis input and output energies for 1 mole of water-----	p. 92
<u>Table 1.3.4:</u> Data of the reactants and products-----	p. 92
<u>Fig. 1.3.7:</u> The Hindenburg disaster-----	p. 96
<u>Table 1.3.5:</u> Properties relevant to safety for hydrogen, methane and propane-----	p. 97
<u>Table 1.3.6:</u> Comparative data for two cylinders-----	p. 97
<u>Fig. 1.3.8:</u> Refueling with LH2 (Liquid cryogenic hydrogen)-----	p. 99
<u>Fig. 1.3.9:</u> Small metal hydride hydrogen store-----	p. 100
<u>Table 1.3.7:</u> Comparison of the methods used for storing hydrogen-----	p. 101

Section 1.4: Accessories of a fuel cell system.

<u>Fig. 1.4.1:</u> A compressor-----	p. 102
--------------------------------------	--------

CHAPTER TWO: Useful equations.

Section 2.1: The ideal fuel cell efficiency.

<u>Fig. 2.1.1:</u> Fuel cell input output energies-----	p. 105
<u>Fig. 2.1.2:</u> Fuel cell input output energies for 1 mole H ₂ and ½ mole O ₂ -----	p. 107
<u>Table 2.1.1:</u> Data of the reactants and products-----	p. 108
<u>Table 2.1.2:</u> Δg _f for the reaction H ₂ + ½O ₂ => H ₂ O at various temperatures-----	p. 111
<u>Fig. 2.1.3:</u> Efficiency limits of fuel cell and heat engine Vs temperature-----	p. 112

Section 2.5: The fuel cell irreversibilities and losses.

<u>Fig. 2.5.1:</u> The voltage for a low temperature fuel cell-----	p. 118
<u>Fig. 2.5.2:</u> The voltage of a high temperature fuel cell-----	p. 119

CHAPTER THREE: General for fuel cell.

Section 3.1: Comparison of fuel cells with other commonly used methods.

<u>Fig. 3.1.1:</u> Solar electric power station/nuclear power plant/hydroelectric dam/wind turbine-----	p. 124
<u>Fig. 3.1.2:</u> A hydrogen fuel cell car-----	p. 126

Section 3.2: Advantages of a fuel cell.

Fig. 3.2.1: The pollution by burning fossil fuels-----p. 128

Section 3.4: Applications of the fuel cells.

Fig. 3.4.1: DaimlerChrysler unveiled the first drivable, zero emission fuel cell-----p. 131

Fig. 3.4.2: A fuel cell bicycle-----p. 132

Fig. 3.4.3: The debut of the first fuel cell bus in Vancouver-----p. 132

Fig. 3.4.4: Ballard’s 250KW stationary generators-----p. 133

CHAPTER FOUR: Cost analysis of a Cyprus house.

Section 4.2: Central heating cost.

Table 4.2.1: DELAVAN table-----p. 138

Section 4.3: Split unit cost.

Table 4.3.1: Piping cost-----p. 144

Table 4.3.2: Kaimann insulating materials-----p. 147

Table 4.3.3: Input power for the split units-----p. 151

Introduction

Several National Laboratories, Academic Institutions and manufacturing companies of fuel cells are working closely with industry affiliates to overcome critical technical barriers to fuel cell development. These barriers include the development of low cost, high performance and efficiency fuel processing technology.

The fuel cell is a device that converts the chemical energy of a fuel into usable electricity and heat without combustion as an intermediate step. Fuel cells are similar to batteries in that both produce a DC current by means of an electrochemical process and are the reverse action of that which takes place in an electrolyser. In a fuel cell two electrodes, an anode and a cathode, are separated by an electrolyte. The reactants gases are stored externally and the fuel cell can operate as the reactants gases are supplied to it. At the anode, hydrogen atoms are split by a catalyst into hydrogen ions (protons) and electrons. The hydrogen ions then travel through the electrolyte to the cathode. Simultaneously, the electrons move through an external circuit to a load and then to the cathode. There the oxygen, hydrogen ions and electrons combine to form water. Fuel cells are combined into groups called stacks to achieve a useful voltage and power output.

The engineers are trying to develop a fuel cell that can compete the traditional methods of producing electricity. That's why there are so many types of fuel cells at the present. The most widely used are:

- Proton Exchange Membrane Fuel Cell
- Alkaline Fuel Cell
- Direct Methanol Fuel Cell

- Phosphoric Acid Fuel Cell
- Molten Carbonate Fuel Cell
- Solid Oxide Fuel Cell

The main different of them is the type of electrolyte that they use.

The so great interest of the engineers for the fuel cell technology is due to the advantages of it. Fuel cells are high modular and scalable, with no moving parts, which make them inherently, quiet and virtually maintenance free. Fuel cells have the lowest emissions of any hydrocarbon fueled generation technology, and only the photovoltaics are cleaner. The only significant substances that any operating fuel cell produces are water and carbon dioxide. The main reason that engineers interest a lot about the fuel cell technology is the high efficiencies that can be achieved by fuel cells. The ideal fuel cell efficiency is much greater than of the Carnot limit of a heat engine. Also the engineers have the opportunity to take in advance the heat that is rejected to the environment, especially at high temperature fuel cells.

Fuel cells operate best on pure hydrogen, especially the low temperature fuel cells. Therefore there is the need to produce the hydrogen. The two primary types of producing hydrogen are the steam reforming and partial oxidation reforming. Steam reformers have higher efficiencies but partial oxidation reformers are simpler. The low temperature fuel cells required pure hydrogen to run effectively, impurities in the reformer product gas stream must be removed. This can be achieved with water gas shift reactors.

Nowadays many companies proceed to the stage of producing and selling fuel cells. But almost all of them don't have the ability to meet any customer need for residential use. They sell demonstration packages or the fuel cells that are available, are just in the testing stage or are produced only for a certain target in order to investigate them. For high temperature fuel cells (large stationary fuel cells) the above is not valid. An example is the Fuel Cell Energy Inc. and UTC Fuel Cell. FCE has built a factory capable of manufacturing 50MW of fuel cells per year and has already taken 12MW of orders for its DFC 300A (MCFC). It already has installed about 30 of the units worldwide and expects to double that number over the next few years. UTC Fuel Cells has had a 200kW phosphoric acid fuel cell on the market for over 10 years and has deployed more than 200 systems in 19 countries.

Through this project will examine in detail the operation principles, the efficiencies, the types, the thermodynamic point of view of fuel cells, what fuels are used, how can be produced-stored and supplied to a fuel cell. We will examine also the possibility of using a fuel cell for residential use in Cyprus, the advantages and disadvantages of them and the why are considered to be the most promising future technology of producing electricity.