

Heat Island Effect Literature Review Executive Summary

The heat island effect is a term that refers to increased ambient temperatures in both natural and urban environments due to land use changes. This effect is most prevalent in urban environments as a result of increased development such as converting vacant land into a shopping center. Limited empirical data exists regarding the heat island effect resulting from the installation of solar energy facilities. Most studies rely on models that produce varying results, with some even suggesting that solar energy facilities result in a cooling effect on local environments.¹

One of the few studies that collected empirical data regarding the heat island effect from solar energy facilities focused on a desert ecosystem in Arizona. The study monitored ambient temperatures for over one year using aspirated temperature probes (2.5 meters above the soil surface) at three nearby sites (within 1 km²) that included a solar energy facility, an urban parking lot, and a natural semiarid desert ecosystem. The study concluded that the average annual temperature within the solar arrays at the solar energy facility was 22.7°C + 0.5°C, while the nearby desert ecosystem was 20.3°C + 0.5°C, thus indicated a slight heat island effect.²

However, it should be noted that the study was limited in its scope in that it only measured ambient temperatures at the three locations, and not the transfer or attenuation of heat from one location to another. The study also indicates results would be different if conducted in an ecosystem comparable to the Project Site that is surrounded by dense vegetation, forested areas, varying topography, higher annual precipitation, and perennial wetlands, rather than a desert ecosystem. While the Project may induce a minimal heat island or slight cooling effect within the PV solar arrays, it is expected that this increase in ambient temperature would rapidly attenuate with distance from the PV solar arrays due to the surrounding environment (e.g., vegetation, topography, weather, wetlands).

Another model-based study found that slightly elevated temperatures within the solar field quickly dissipated and returned to ambient temperatures both above and at the perimeter of the solar array. It also found that on most days the solar array cooled completely at night, making a heat island effect even less likely.³

As stated above, the Project is currently being designed to allow for maximum setbacks (beyond 50 feet) from adjacent property owners, with the intent of achieving a minimum 250-foot setback from all Fawn Lake property lines. sPower is maintaining and/or installing vegetative buffers and berms that would further reduce heat emanating from the PV solar arrays through absorption; thereby preventing a heat island effect on neighboring properties. And lastly, sPower's operations and maintenance staff regularly work within operating solar arrays on existing solar energy facilities in desert regions and are never exposed to unsafe temperature levels.

¹ Masson, V., Bonhomme, M., Salagnac, J.-L., Briottet, X. & Lemonsu, A. Solar panels reduce both global warming and Urban Heat Island. *Frontiers in Environmental Science* 2, 14, doi: 10.3389/fenvs.2014.00014. (2014).

² Barron-Gafford, Greg, R., Minor, N., Allen, A., Cronin, A., Brooks, & M., Pavao-Zuckerman. The Photovoltaic Heat Island Effect: Larger solar power plants increase local temperatures. *Scientific Reports*, doi: 10.1038/srep35070. (2016).

³ Fthenakis, Vasilis & Yu, Yuanhao. (2013). Analysis of the potential for a heat island effect in large solar farms. Conference Record of the IEEE Photovoltaic Specialists Conference. 3362-3366. 10.1109/PVSC.2013.6745171.

Appendix: References Cited



Solar panels reduce both global warming and urban heat island

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The production of solar energy in cities is clearly a way to diminish our dependency to fossil fuels, and is a good way to mitigate global warming by lowering the emission of greenhouse gases. However, what are the impacts of solar panels locally? To evaluate their influence on urban weather, it is necessary to parameterize their effects within the surface schemes that are coupled to atmospheric models. The present paper presents a way to implement solar panels in the Town Energy Balance scheme, taking account of the energy production (for thermal and photovoltaic panels), the impact on the building below and feedback toward the urban micro-climate through radiative and convective fluxes. A scenario of large but realistic deployment of solar panels on the Paris metropolitan area is then simulated. It is shown that solar panels, by shading the roofs, slightly increases the need for domestic heating (3%). In summer, however, the solar panels reduce the energy needed for air-conditioning (by 12%) and also the Urban Heat Island (UHI): 0.2 K by day and up to 0.3 K at night. These impacts are larger than those found in previous works, because of the use of thermal panels (that are more efficient than photovoltaic panels) and the geographical position of Paris, which is relatively far from the sea. This means that it is not influenced by sea breezes, and hence that its UHI is stronger than for a coastal city of the same size. But this also means that local adaptation strategies aiming to decrease the UHI will have more potent effects. In summary, the deployment of solar panels is good both globally, to produce renewable energy (and hence to limit the warming of the climate) and locally, to decrease the UHI, especially in summer, when it can constitute a health threat.

Keywords: urban heat island, solar energy, solar panels, cities, adaptation to climate change

1. INTRODUCTION

Renewable energy is seen as a necessary step toward sustainable energy development, diminution of the use of fossil fuels and mitigation of climate change, as stated for example by Elliott (2000): "With concerns about Climate Change growing, the rapid development of renewable energy technologies looks increasingly important." However, the recent analysis of Nugent and Sovacool (2014) showed that, when their complete life-cycle is considered, renewable energies are not CO₂ sinks yet. Nevertheless their greenhouse gas emission rate per unit of energy produced is much less than for energy sources based on fossil fuels and slightly less than for nuclear power. They also "uncover best practices in wind and solar design and deployment that can better inform climate change mitigation efforts in the electricity sector." Elliott (2000) underlines that renewable energy deployment requires a new paradigm, of decentralized energy production and small production systems. The implementation of renewable energy will need social and institutional changes, even if technology for these systems already exists (Gross et al., 2003, while still needing improvements and further research Jader-Waldau, 2007). Funding, incentive policies and statutory obligations on electricity suppliers may be needed to develop renewable energy faster. Lund (2007) demonstrates that, in Denmark, a transition toward

100% of renewable energy production is possible. Sovacool and Ratan (2012) conclude that nine factors linked to policy, social and market aspects favor or limit the development of wind turbines and solar energy, and explain why renewable energy is growing fast in Denmark and Germany compared to India and the USA.

Sims et al. (2003) show that most renewable energies can, in certain circumstances, reduce cost as well as CO₂ emissions, except for solar power, which remains expensive. However, Hernandez et al. (2014) review the environmental impacts of utility-scale solar energy installations (solar farms), which are typically implemented in rural areas, and show that they have low environmental impacts relative to other energy systems, including other renewables. Furthermore, solar power is also one of the few renewable energy sources that can be implemented on a large scale within cities themselves. Arnette (2013) shows that, compared to solar farms, individual rooftop solar panels are a very cost-effective means of increasing renewable energy generation and decreasing greenhouse gas emissions. So they conclude that solar panel implementation on roofs should be part of a balanced approach to energy production. Here, we aim to evaluate the environmental impacts on the local climate, of implementing such a strategy at city scale.

The main impact of cities on the local weather is the Urban Heat Island (UHI). Cities are warmer than the surrounding countryside, and this can lead to a health crisis during heat waves, as was the case in Paris in 2003 with 15,000 premature deaths (Fouillet et al., 2006) or in Moscow with 11,000 premature deaths in 2010 (Porfiriev, 2014). It also has to be considered that, due to climate warming, the UHI impacts will become even larger than they are now (Lemonsu et al., 2013). Therefore, several strategies are being studied to reduce the UHI in summer. Gago et al. (2013) have reviewed several research works analyzing strategies to mitigate the UHI, including changes in green spaces, trees, albedo, pavement surfaces, vegetation, and building types and materials. Santamouris et al. (2011) have reviewed of several advanced cool materials systems usable to reduce the UHI. Such materials could be implemented on roofs in order to reflect more energy to the sky (high albedo, high emissivity) or to delay the heat transfer toward the inside the building (phase change materials). Masson et al. (2013) showed that changes in agricultural practices in the vicinity of Paris and the use of cool materials for roofs and pavement would decrease the UHI by 2 K and 1 K, respectively. However, the question of the ability of solar panels to contribute to the same goal is not addressed in these papers, and extremely few studies focus on, or even take into account, the effect of solar panels on the UHI.

It is thus necessary to analyze whether the two objectives of mitigating the global climate warming by increasing renewable energy production in cities, especially through solar panels, and of attenuating the UHI are compatible. Solar panels modify the nature of the rooftop and may thus influence the energy transfers to the atmosphere and the resulting UHI. The aim of this paper is then to evaluate the impact of solar panels, known to be good for global warming mitigation, on the local climate, especially the UHI.

2. SOLAR PANELS INTO THE URBAN CANOPY MODEL TEB

The objective of this section is to present how solar panels can be included in the Town Energy Balance (TEB, Masson, 2000) scheme, in terms of both energy production and interactions with the roofs below (shading, modification of the roof energy balance, etc.). The solar panels themselves can be either photovoltaic panels or thermal panels that heat water.

2.1. MODELING STRATEGY

The solar panel exchanges energy with the other components of the system. Very few parameterizations taking these exchanges into account exist in the literature. The level of detail depends strongly on the objectives of the authors. On the one hand, when looking at the building scale, it is possible to consider some implementation characteristics of the panels, as in Scherba et al. (2011), who modified the Energy+ software (software dedicated to building energetics) to improve its previous solar panel model (which only computed the energy production). Their solar panel model considers the tilting of the panels and associated sky-view factors. They then perform an analysis of the impact of several types of roofs on sensible heat fluxes toward the atmosphere, but are unable to link these fluxes to the UHI, which needs to take all the buildings of the entire city into account. On the other

hand, Taha (2013) studies the impact of solar panels on the whole urban area of Los Angeles. To do this, he uses the very simplified approach of effective albedo, which accounts for both the albedo and the solar conversion efficiency (linked to the energy produced). This approach estimates the impact on the UHI, but does not take account of the interactions with the urban canopy below (solar panel shadowing may lead to less cooling energy being used in buildings for example, leading to less waste heat outside).

In order to study the impact of solar panels implementations on the urban atmosphere and on the population and buildings, we need an approach that looks at both spatial scales: buildings and city. The TEB scheme is able to simulate the energy, water and momentum exchanges between cities and the atmosphere at a resolution as high as the urban block (say down to 100 m by 100 m). The energetics of buildings have also been included in TEB by Bueno et al. (2012) and Pigeon et al. (2014), to simulate the energy behavior of a typical building representative of the block. The focus is to keep the maximum of key processes, while making some approximations in the geometry that are pertinent at block scale (building shapes are averaged into road canyons, only one thermal zone is kept in the buildings, individual windows are averaged into a glazing fraction, etc.). Gardens and greenroofs modules have also been implemented (Lemonsu et al., 2012; DeMunck et al., 2013a). The modeling strategy chosen here for the implementation of solar panels is similar: key processes are kept while some geometrical assumptions are made to avoid unnecessary details of individual buildings.

In TEB, it is necessary to take account not only of the production of energy by the panels but also the influence of the panels on the underlying roofs. We must therefore calculate the complete energy balance of the panel to determine what is exchanged with the roof or the atmosphere. The TEB model will then be able to estimate the impact of solar panel implementation on the UHI at city scale, as well as the production of energy.

2.2. ENERGY BALANCE OF THE SOLAR PANEL

Geometrically, the solar panels are assumed to be horizontal when calculating the radiative heat exchange with the other elements: exchanges between the roof, the solar panels and the sky above are considered to be purely vertical (Figure 1). Note that we take the inclination of the panel into account to calculate the irradiance for power production.

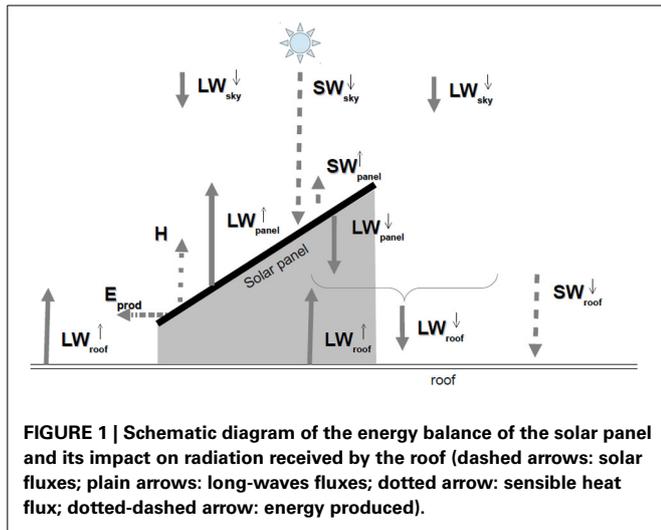
The energy balance equation of the solar panel is written:

$$SW_{sky}^{\downarrow} + LW_{sky}^{\downarrow} + LW_{roof}^{\uparrow} = SW_{panel}^{\uparrow} + LW_{panel}^{\uparrow} + LW_{panel}^{\downarrow} + H + E_{prod} \quad (1)$$

The terms on the left hand side are incoming energy to the solar panel:

SW_{sky}^{\downarrow} is the incoming Short-Wave radiation from the sun. It can be diffuse or direct, and is considered as forcing data for TEB.

LW_{sky}^{\downarrow} is the incoming Long-Wave radiation from the atmosphere. It is diffuse and is also used as forcing data for TEB.



LW_{roof}^{\uparrow} is the Long-Wave radiation coming up from the roof and being intercepted by the solar panel. It is computed by TEB from the roof emissivity and surface temperature and the long-wave radiation received by the roof:

$$LW_{roof}^{\uparrow} = \epsilon_{roof} \sigma T_{roof}^4 + (1 - \epsilon_{roof}) LW_{roof}^{\downarrow} \quad (2)$$

The terms on the right hand side of Equation (1) are outgoing energy from the panel:

SW_{panel}^{\uparrow} is the solar radiation reflected by the solar panel. It is classically parameterized using the albedo of the solar panel (α_{panel}): $SW_{panel}^{\uparrow} = \alpha_{panel} SW_{panel}^{\downarrow}$. It is also assumed to go back to the sky (we neglect the effect of the inclination of the solar panel on the direction of the reflected light). According to Taha (2013), the value of the albedo of the solar panel ranges from 0.06 to 0.1. We performed measurements of the albedo for a sample of solar panel (under several inclinations) by integrating the hemispheric directional reflectance measured with a goniometer (see section 2.4 for details). From our measurements, the value of 0.11 is used for α_{panel} in the present paper.

LW_{panel}^{\uparrow} is the long-wave radiation emitted (and reflected) by the solar panel to the sky. It depends on the surface temperature of the solar panel, which is estimated following the ISPRA center method:

$$T_{panel} = T_{air} + k_T Irr \quad (3)$$

where T_{air} is the air temperature, Irr is the irradiance received by the solar panel (cf section 2.5) and k_T is a constant coefficient equal to $0.05 \text{ K}/(\text{Wm}^{-2})$. In this formulation, the nocturnal dependency of the panel surface temperature on the sky temperature proposed by Scherba et al. (2011) is not used. It would be an improvement to be considered in the future. Also using

the emissivity of the solar panel ϵ_{panel} , equal to 0.93 in our measurements (cf section 2.4), the upward long-wave radiation from the solar panel can be written:

$$LW_{panel}^{\uparrow} = \epsilon_{panel} \sigma T_{panel}^4 + (1 - \epsilon_{panel}) LW_{sky}^{\downarrow} \quad (4)$$

LW_{panel}^{\downarrow} is the long-wave radiation emitted by the solar panel to the roof (downwards). It is computed under the hypothesis that the temperature of the downward face of the solar panel is always approximately equal to the air temperature. This is probably a limitation of our model during daytime. However, even if the temperature of the downwards face of the solar panel is underestimated (due to the warming of the solar panel and the heat diffusion inside it), this temperature will still be higher than the sky temperature. So, from the point of view of the roof below the solar panel, the incoming radiation will be higher. This captures at least the first order of an effect of the solar panel on the roof. Given the uncertainties, we also neglect the dependency in emissivity for this face of the panel. This gives:

$$LW_{panel}^{\downarrow} = \sigma T_{air}^4 \quad (5)$$

E_{prod} is the energy produced by the panel. It depends of the nature (thermal or photovoltaic) and characteristics of the panel, the irradiance on the panel, the inclination of the panel (not taken into account in the other terms), and the air temperature. Details are given in sections 2.5, 2.6 for PV and thermal panels, respectively.

H is the sensible heat flux from the solar panel to the atmosphere. We assume that the solar panel is thin, has no significant thermal mass and hence is in quasi-equilibrium. This means that the sensible heat flux, the only term that is not parameterized, is taken to be equal to the residue of the solar panel energy budget. Besides the fact that it is difficult to have a parameterization of this term, this ensures conservation of energy balance.

2.3. MODIFICATION OF THE ENERGY BALANCE OF THE ROOF

For the energy balance of the roof, the most important key parameter will, of course, be the proportion of roof area occupied by the solar panels. As mentioned above, we only consider the projection of the panels onto the horizontal surface (it would be absurd to make accurate calculations taking the inclination of the panels into account—except as noted above for production—when it is already assumed in TEB that all roofs are flat). The fraction of the roof covered by solar panels is noted f_{panel} .

The following simplifying assumptions are made:

- An average temperature is still calculated for the roof, without distinguishing between the parts of the roof under or beside the panel. This is reasonable, in particular for flat roofs with inclined panels, because the shadows cast by the panels can modify the radiative contribution to the roof beside as well as below the panels.

- The coefficient for heat transfer from the roof to the sensible heat flux is not changed (it is already in a heterogeneous environment with a roughness length of 5 cm).
- The effect of humidity on panels is neglected: the water interception reservoir treating rainwater and evaporation concerns the whole surface of the roof.
- The effect of solar panels on snow is neglected. The snow mantle, if any, accumulates uniformly on the roof. Note that snow might change the energy produced by the solar panel (but this is not taken into account yet).

These assumptions allow us to change only the radiative contributions to the energy balance of the roof. Assuming that the surface area of the shadows is equal to the surface area of the solar panels, the incoming solar radiation on the roof is:

$$SW_{roof}^{\downarrow} = (1 - f_{panel})SW_{sky}^{\downarrow} \quad (6)$$

The long-wave incoming radiation on the roof is modified by the long-wave radiation emitted downwards by the solar panels:

$$LW_{roof}^{\downarrow} = (1 - f_{panel})LW_{sky}^{\downarrow} + f_{panel}LW_{panel}^{\downarrow} \quad (7)$$

This way of implementing the interactions between solar panels and the roof below allows the considerations of the way the roof is built to be separated from the question of whether there are solar panels on it or not. For example, although it is not the case in this paper, it is possible to have greenroofs with or without solar panels. If there are solar panels, the vegetation of the greenroof will simply be more in the shade and receive slightly more infrared radiation.

2.4. RADIATIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF SOLAR PANELS

To establish the energy balance of the equivalent urban canyon, the TEB model needs the albedo (integrated between 0.4 and 2.5 μm) and the emissivity in the thermal infrared (integrated between 5 and 12 μm) for the following main areas: road, roofs, facades, glazing. The French Center for Aerospace Research (ONERA) laboratory maintains a current database of optical properties of urban materials. Specific measurements were made for emerging materials: rough white paints, photovoltaic solar panels, metal cladding, and glass (including low emissivity). The measurements for large samples of materials, e.g., for solar panels, were made using a goniometer (Figure 2, left).

The measurement process is fully automated in the 0.4–2.5 μm spectral domain. The position measurements acquired by the detector are regular in azimuth (0–180° range) and zenith (0–60° range) with an angular accuracy of 1°, except for the region of specular reflection, which is meshed more precisely.

The reflectance is measured with reference to a reflectance reference (Spectralon). Thereafter, the reflectance of the solar panel placed in the center of the goniometer is acquired for all recorded positions of the detector and the light source. The reference measurement is repeated at the end of the process.

The albedo of the solar panels is then computed by integrating the radiance in all directions over the entire spectral range.



It typically varies from 11 to 16% depending on the position of the sun and the sensor inclination. When the panel is favorably oriented relative to the sun (and hence when the incoming radiation per square meter of panel is the largest), as is usually implemented, the albedo is in the low range, and equal to about 11%.

The emissivity was measured using a SOC 400T apparatus (Figure 2, right). It measures the directional hemispheric reflectance for wavelengths between 2.5 and 20 μm. The resulting emissivity was 0.93 for solar panels.

2.5. ENERGY PRODUCED BY PHOTOVOLTAIC PANELS

In TEB, two different types of solar panels: thermal and photovoltaic (PV) are considered. The aim of thermal solar panels is to warm the water necessary for the occupants of the building. They are much more efficient (in terms of energy produced) than photovoltaic panels, but only produce heat, not electricity.

For PV panels, the energy produced is usually parameterized as:

$$E_{PV\ prod} = Eff_{PV} \times Irr \times R(T_{panel}) \quad (W/m^2 \text{ of solar panel}) \quad (8)$$

where Eff_{PV} is the conversion efficiency of the PV panel and $R(T_{panel})$ a coefficient to reproduce the fact that solar panels are most efficient at 25°C and present a decrease in efficiency for warmer panel temperatures. The efficiency coefficient varies from 5% to 19% (Taha, 2013), with values as high as 30% possible in the far future (Nemet, 2009). In France, most PV panels use the usual crystalline silicon (xSi) technology (Leloux et al., 2012), for which the efficiency is approximately $Eff_{PV} = 14\%$. To relate the irradiance received by the panel (possibly tilted) to the incident radiation on a horizontal surface (SW_{sky}^{\downarrow}), it is possible either to perform geometric calculations on the relative position of the sun and panels or to apply *a priori* correction factors. This second, simpler approach is chosen here, and the coefficient of the French thermal Regulations of 2005 is used:

$$Irr = FT \times SW_{sky}^{\downarrow} \quad (W/m^2 \text{ of solar panel}) \quad (9)$$

The correction factor FT is typically 1.11 on annual average for a South facing panel in Paris. Assuming that solar panels are placed fairly optimally, i.e., with an approximately 30° tilt and oriented between South-East and South-West (as is usually the case in

France, Leloux et al., 2012), we can estimate that the coefficient FT is equal to $FT = 1.10$ in France. The temperature dependent coefficient can be written as:

$$R(T_{panel}) = \min \{1; 1 - 0.005 \times (T_{panel} - 298.15)\} \quad (10)$$

Finally, the production of the PV panels is parameterized, also using the relationship between panel temperature and irradiance, as:

$$E_{PV\ prod} = Eff_{PV} \times FT \times SW_{sky}^{\downarrow} \times \min \left\{ 1; 1 - 0.005 \times (T_{air} + k_T FT \times SW_{sky}^{\downarrow} - 298.15) \right\} \quad (W/m^2 \text{ of solar panel}) \quad (11)$$

2.6. ENERGY PRODUCED BY THERMAL SOLAR PANELS

The amount of energy produced by solar thermal panels is usually defined on an annual basis (Philibert, 2006). This can partly be justified by the fact that the limitation of energy production is not linked solely to the available sunlight but also to the objective in terms of quantity of water heated (there is no point in heating water beyond the set-point, typically 60°C for hot water, nor for more people than those actually occupying the building, 32l per person). From French regulations, for one person, the annual production with thermal solar panels is:

$$\int_{year} E_{ther\ prod} = \frac{1}{2} \times 1.16 \times 32\Delta T \quad (kWh/year/person) \quad (12)$$

where ΔT is the temperature difference between cold and hot water (typically 45 K in France). The factor $\frac{1}{2}$ comes from an adjustment to account for the fact that only a part of the need for warm water can be covered by solar energy. This factor can vary depending on location, climate (frequency of presence of clouds), seasonality (less sun radiation in winter) and technical features of the installation (ADEME, 2002). A typical value of $\frac{1}{2}$ is taken here. Furthermore, it is considered that this per capita energy requirement can be satisfied by 1 m² of thermal panel. So, the power averaged over the year would be:

$$\langle E_{ther\ prod} \rangle = \frac{1}{2} \times 1.16 \times 32\Delta T \times 1000/24/365 \quad (W/m^2 \text{ of solar panel}) \quad (13)$$

Here, in order to better take the variability in production due to solar irradiation into account, instead of an annual mean computation, instantaneous production is considered in connection with the daily need for warm water. This mimics the fact that the water is heated during the day and stored until it is used during the next 24 h. So, using the regulation information above, the target energy production for 1 day can be defined as:

$$E_{ther\ target} = 1.16 \times 32\Delta T \times 1000/365 \times 3600 \quad (J/m^2 \text{ of solar panel}) \quad (14)$$

The $\frac{1}{2}$ factor has disappeared here because we consider ideal heating (i.e., sunny) conditions for the definition of the target. The production of the thermal panel is then computed in three steps:

1. The instantaneous production is defined as $E_{ther\ prod} = Eff_{ther} \times Irr$ (W/m² of solar panel) where Eff_{ther} is the efficiency coefficient of the thermal panel and Irr the irradiance received by the panel. The efficiency of new thermal solar panels typically ranges between 0.70 and 0.80. However, in real conditions of use, especially in cities, dirt and dust on the panel reduce its energy production. Elminir et al. (2006) found a decrease of between 6% and 20% in the output power due to dust (17.4% for a 45° tilt angle of the solar panel). A similar effect of dirt had already been found by Garg (1974), with attenuation of 10–20% for tilt angles between 45° and 30°. Therefore, in the present study Eff_{ther} was set to 0.60.
2. The total amount of energy produced is summed from midnight the previous night to the current time t : $\int_{midnight}^t E_{ther\ prod} dt$ (J/m² of panel).
3. If the quantity of energy produced since midnight reaches the target $E_{ther\ target}$, then any additional production during the same day is wasted and further energy production is set to zero.

To summarize, for solar thermal panels, the production is parameterized as:

$$\begin{cases} \text{if } \int_{midnight}^t E_{ther\ prod} dt < E_{ther\ target} \\ \qquad \qquad \qquad \text{then } E_{ther\ prod} = Eff_{ther} \times Irr \\ \text{if } \int_{midnight}^t E_{ther\ prod} dt = E_{ther\ target} \\ \qquad \qquad \qquad \text{then } E_{ther\ prod} = 0 \end{cases} \quad (15)$$

2.7. HYPOTHESES ON TYPES OF SOLAR PANELS

As the model is able to consider both thermal and PV solar panels, it is now necessary to define some hypotheses on the use of each type of panel. This is, of course, a scenario-dependent element, in the sense that it can be modified for each study. For example, Taha (2013) only studied the implementation of PV panels in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. The interest of also considering the deployment of thermal solar panels in this paper is that this energy production technology is less greenhouse gas emissive per unit of energy produced (considering its whole life-cycle) than PV (Nugent and Sovacool, 2014). Here, it will thus be supposed that both types of panels are possible. The main hypotheses are:

- On residential buildings and houses, the priority is given to thermal solar panels, which are more efficient. The thermal production is of course limited by the area of panels on the roof but it is also limited by the population in the building: it is not necessary to heat more water than required by the number of people who are going to use it. Therefore, once the necessary area of thermal solar panels is reached, the remaining space

allocated for solar panels on the roof will be devoted to PV panels.

- On other types of buildings (offices, commercial, industrial, etc...) only PV panels will be installed.

The total fraction of the building's roof where solar panels (any type) can be installed is noted f_{panel} (this quantity is also scenario dependent). It is then necessary to define what proportion of the roof area is required for thermal panels, and how much area remains available for PV panels. In France, in residential buildings, the density is typically 1 occupant per 30 m² of floor area¹. Furthermore, as mentioned above, 1 m² of thermal panel is needed per capita. This means 1 m² of panel per 30 m² of floor area. For single story accommodation, 1/30 of the roof is then equipped with thermal panels, and ($f_{panel} - 1/30$) by PV panels. If the building has two stories, thermal panels will occupy 2/30 of the roof area, and so on.

So if N_{floor} is the number of floors of the building (variable calculated in TEB), the proportions of thermal panels ($f_{ther panel}$) and PV panels ($f_{phot panel}$) are calculated as:

$$f_{ther panel} = \min(N_{floor}/30; f_{panel}) \quad (16)$$

$$f_{PV panel} = \max(f_{panel} - f_{ther panel}; 0) \quad (17)$$

The total production of the solar panels on the roofs can then be written:

$$E_{prod} = (f_{ther panel} E_{ther prod} + f_{phot panel} E_{phot prod}) / f_{panel} \quad (W/m^2 \text{ of solar panel}) \quad (18)$$

This is this quantity that is involved in the energy balance of the panel (section 2.2).

3. IMPACT OF SOLAR PANELS ON PARIS URBAN HEAT ISLAND

3.1. SIMULATION CONFIGURATION AND SCENARIOS

We are now able to simulate the impact of the implantation of solar panels in a city on the UHI. The simulations are performed on the Paris metropolitan area, with TEB, coupled with the vegetation scheme ISBA (Noilhan and Planton, 1989) for rural areas, within the SURFEX modeling software (Masson et al., 2013b). The simulation domain is 100 km by 100 km, with a resolution of 1 km. At such a resolution, only the main characteristics of the buildings within the blocks in the grid mesh are kept. Geometric parameters are averaged in order to conserve the surface areas (for walls, roofs, gardens, roads, water, rural areas), while a majority rule applies for the architectural characteristics of buildings (age, materials, equipment) and the use to which they are put (residential, offices, commercial or industrial). These urban data are provided by a database at 250 m resolution (Figure 3 of Masson et al., 2014), which contains block types as well as 60 urban indicators. Some parameters needed by TEB, such as albedos, thermal characteristics or equipment within

buildings, are deduced for each 1-km-by-1-km grid mesh from urban block types and from the use and age of the majority of buildings. Countryside parameters, such as land use and vegetation characteristics are deduced from the ecolimap database at 1 km resolution (Masson et al., 2003). The methodology presented in Masson et al. (2014), based on a simplified Urban Boundary Layer generator (Bueno et al., 2013; Le Bras, 2014) is chosen, in order to be able to perform a simulation over an entire year. The chosen year of study is 2003, because it demonstrates the impact the solar panels would have during a heat wave.

Some hypotheses have to be made on the proportions of roofs equipped with solar panels. Hypotheses similar to those presented as "reasonably high deployment" in Taha (2013) are taken. On sloping roofs, typically on domestic houses but also old Hausmannian buildings in the historical core of Paris, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the part of the roof oriented between South-East and South-West (after Leloux et al., 2012) is assumed to be covered by solar panels (thermal or PV, or a mix of the two). This corresponds to approximately 19% of the roof being covered. On flat roofs, however, more space is available, and solar panels are taken to be installed on 50% of each roof.

Current albedos of roofing prior to the implementation of solar panels are estimated for each type of building from an architectural analysis. Historical Hausmannian buildings in the very center of Paris are roofed with zinc on top of wood, so their albedo is very high, set to 0.6. In this regard, the solar panels, even maybe thermal ones, would decrease the albedo of the city there, and might tend to increase the UHI. However, only a small proportion of this type of buildings is eligible for solar panels (19% of roofs in our hypothesis), and the spatial coverage of this type of old city blocks is limited (see Figure 3 of Masson et al., 2014). Except for the most recent industrial buildings (built after 1975), for which roof albedo is 0.5 and which, again do not cover a significant part of the metropolitan area, roof albedo for most buildings is estimated as 0.2 (e.g., tiles for houses and old industrial buildings or gray concrete roofs for collective buildings). Therefore, the impact of solar panels on historical or industrial buildings is probably counterbalanced by the other parts of the urban area, where solar panels will probably reduce the amount of solar radiation absorbed by the buildings (due to the reflection and conversion into energy by the solar panels).

Two simulations are run: one is the reference simulation corresponding to Paris in its actual state (without many solar panels) and the second is the one with the reasonably high deployment of solar panels. A comparison of the two simulations will assess the effect of the solar panels on the urban area.

3.2. RESULTS FOR ENERGY PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

The impacts of solar panels are discussed in terms of energy production, of course, but also impact on energy consumption and, in the next section, on the UHI and thermal comfort. At the city scale, the production by thermal solar panels is larger than by PV. This comes both from the fact that their deployment is favored for domestic buildings and from their much higher efficiency (the former being linked to the latter). It should nevertheless be noted that, from April to August, production by thermal solar

¹http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/document.asp?ref_id=ip1396

panels saturates (enough hot water is produced), so their real efficiency decreases. Over the entire year, on average for the whole city, the thermal solar panels would produce approximately 265 MJ/year/m² of building and the PV panels 113 MJ/year/m² of building. This would cover an equivalent of 28% of the energy consumption for domestic heating and air-conditioning.

The solar panels also slightly modify the energy consumption of the buildings. During winter, the solar panels could induce a decrease of the energy consumption due to more infra-red energy reaching the roof, or increase it by reducing the amount of solar radiation received or by their effect on the UHI. Overall, the domestic heating demand increases by 3% per year in our scenario. During summer the need for air-conditioning will probably decrease, thanks to the shading of the roofs and the cooling induced in the urban climate (see below). The comparison between the two simulations indicates that the air-conditioning energy demand decreases by 12%. Because the energy consumption for air-conditioning is low compared to that for domestic heating, the balance between the loss in energy in winter and the gain in summer induces an increase of total energy consumption by buildings of 1%. However, in the future, when climate warming induces milder winters and hotter summers, insulation will (hopefully) be better and air-conditioning equipment, currently not widely installed in France, will (probably) take on greater importance so this balance may change. Then, massive installation of solar panels may even be beneficial for energy consumption.

3.3. RESULTS ON URBAN HEAT ISLAND

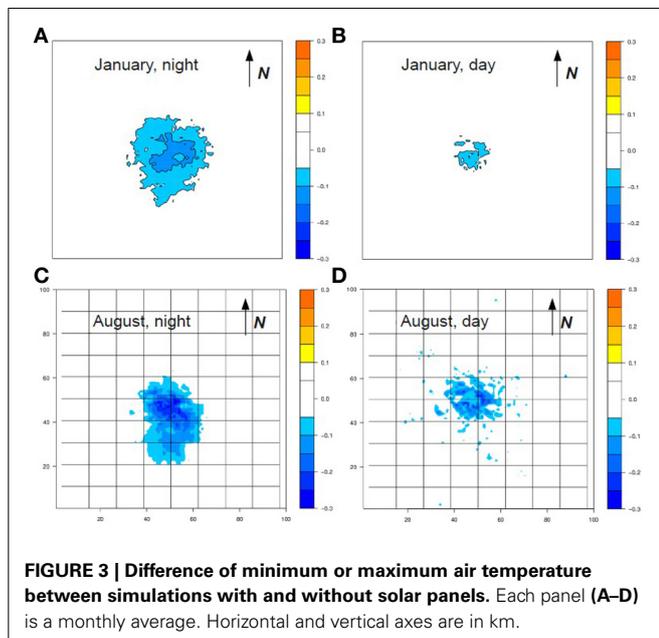
The deployment of solar panels in the Paris metropolitan area would not be neutral in terms of urban climate. **Figure 3** presents the difference in the daily minimum and maximum air temperature between the two simulations (for two contrasting months: January and August). In wintertime, when the sun is low, the

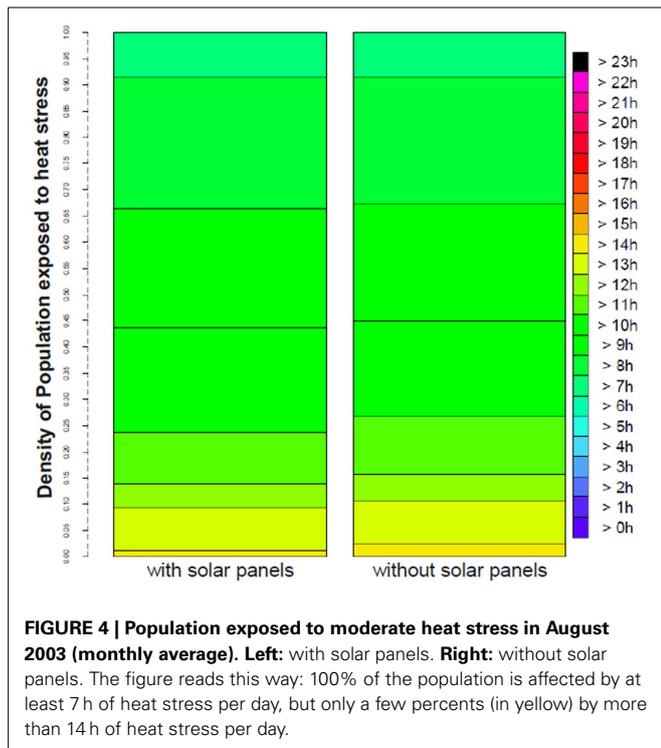
impact of the solar panels on the air temperature is relatively small. Their implementation reduces the maximum air temperature by approximately 0.05 K in the city center and the UHI by more than 0.1 K in Paris and its dense suburbs, and by 0.05 K on the whole metropolitan area. However, we have seen that this is large enough to have a noticeable (if limited) influence on energy consumption for domestic heating.

During the month of August, in the first half of which the famous 2003 heat wave occurred, the impacts of solar panels on air temperature would be larger. In daytime, the presence of solar panels would decrease the air temperature by more than 0.2 K, especially in the dense suburbs, where the density of solar panels is the highest, due to both the high density of building and the fact that unlike the Haussmanian buildings of the city center, the suburban apartment and commercial buildings are flat roofed. This cooling value is consistent with, even though larger than, the value of 0.05 K found for the July 2005 heat wave episode in the Los Angeles area reported by Taha (2013) for present PV panels. When the efficiency of PV panels is improved (up to 30%), Taha (2013) predicts that the cooling will reach 0.15 K. There are two possible explanations for the fact that more intense cooling is simulated for Paris. First, the presence of the sea breeze in Los Angeles could limit local cooling due to solar panels in the city while extending the area of cooling by advection of the (slightly) cooler air. This can explain why a large portion of the metropolitan area of Los Angeles is impacted by the solar panels in these simulations. Second, only PV panels were simulated by Taha (2013). The efficiency of these panels was assumed to be relatively high (20%), larger than the value used in the present study, but much smaller than the efficiency of thermal solar panels (60%). As we investigate a scenario with deployment of both types of solar panels here, the absorption of energy is larger than for PV alone.

At night, the impact of the solar panels is quite strong, even larger than during daytime, with cooling reaching 0.3 K. To the authors' knowledge, this effect is not investigated in the literature. This increased cooling at night is due to a combination of several urban micro-climate processes. First, the heat storage within the buildings is reduced in presence of solar panels, especially thermal ones, because they intercept the solar radiation. The implementation of solar panels as a separate element of the urban surface energy balance system, as done here, allows a fine description of their impact on the underlying building energetics. Second, at night, the urban boundary layer is much thinner than during the day (typically 200 m high instead of 1500 m high in summer). So any modification of the surface energy balance will have up to 10 times more influence on the air temperature at night. Such a counter-intuitive phenomenon was found by DeMunck et al. (2013b) for air-conditioning, which was shown to have more impact at night than in the day (although the heat release itself was, of course, larger in daytime). Here too, while the solar panels primarily modify the daytime processes (by absorption and transformation of the solar radiation into thermal or electrical energy), the influence on air temperature is larger at night, due to the urban fabric and the boundary layer structure.

This cooling effect, though relatively small, can improve the thermal comfort of the inhabitants. For example, it reduces the number of people exposed to any given intensity (e.g., 2 K) of the





UHI by 4% ($\pm 0.5\%$) of the total population of the metropolitan area. The thermal comfort can also be evaluated by considering more environmental parameters, such as the wind, radiation and humidity, that all have an influence on human physiology. The Universal Thermal Climate Index, UTCI (www.utci.org/), is such an indicator. **Figure 4** shows the proportion of the population of the urban area that is under moderate heat stress when outside (in shade). It displays the number of hours per day that a person spends in this or any stronger level of stress. Solar panels, probably by their effect of temperature, decrease the level on thermal stress of the population. For example, while 17% of the total population is affected by heat stress for more than half a day (12 h) in the present city, the implementation of solar panels would reduce this number to 13%. While this difference seems small, it still represents a large number of people. On average, approximately 15 min of comfort is gained for outdoor conditions. This slight improvement in exposure to heat stress, although unplanned (solar panels are primarily implemented for energy production), can add to larger ones, specifically aimed at urban climate cooling, such as greening of the city.

4. DISCUSSION

Solar panels absorb solar energy to produce energy usable in buildings, either directly in the form of heat (typically to warm water) or as electricity. However, in doing so, they modify the energy balance of the urban surface in contact with the atmosphere, and so possibly influence the urban micro-climate. They also change the radiation received by the roof, and hence the building energy balance. The present paper presents a way to include solar panels in the TEB scheme. This parameterization simulates their production in a relatively precise way, as it depends

on the evolving meteorological conditions, rather than simply using a rule of thumb annual production as is often done in building design. The panels also influence the building energetics and the heat fluxes (radiative and convective) to the atmosphere. Thus, it is possible to evaluate the influence of solar panels implementation strategies on the UHI.

A scenario of large but realistic deployment of solar panels in the Paris metropolitan area has been simulated. A comparison with the reference, present-day city without (many) solar panels, enables the impact of this scenario to be estimated. Unlike work previously reported in the literature, the present study implemented both thermal and PV solar panels in the model. This allowed realistic scenarios to be simulated, where thermal panels are introduced first. It is shown that solar panels, by shading of the roof, slightly increase the need for domestic heating (3%). With future improvements in insulation, this impact will probably be less significant. In summer, however, the solar panels reduce the energy needed for air-conditioning (by 12%), thanks to the shading of the roof. They also lead to a reduction of the UHI.

During summer, when sunlight is strong, the deployment of solar panels can reduce the temperature by 0.2 K. At night, a simplistic analysis would suggest that the solar panels have no effect (as there is no sunlight). However, the physical simulation performed here shows that the presence of solar panels leads to a mitigation of up to 0.3 K of the UHI at night (so more than during the day). This counter-intuitive result is due to the interaction between the urban surface energy balance (the evolution of which has been modified by solar panels) and the night-time structure of the atmospheric layer above the city. These impacts are larger than those found in previous works, because of the use of thermal panels (that are more efficient than PV panels) and due to the geographical position of Paris, which is relatively far from the sea. This means that it is not influenced by sea breezes, and hence that its UHI is stronger than for a coastal city of the same size. But it also means that local adaptation strategies aiming at decreasing the UHI will have more potent effects.

In addition to these theoretical results, some practical issues have to be taken into consideration in order to better inform decision makers. Installing PV panels or thermal solar collectors on roofs of existing buildings will change the visual appearance of the urban areas concerned. This change may be a difficult issue in towns like Paris, where the tourist industry is important, and installation will probably not be accepted on all potential surfaces. Moreover, the outdoor urban environment is highly polluted and dirt deposits on panel and collector surfaces will inevitably decrease the effectiveness of solar equipment. Regular cleaning could be a way to limit this impact but the consequences of this maintenance activity need to be evaluated (e.g., access paths, security equipment, manpower). Fire risk may also be an issue for PV panels: a series of cases were recorded for newly equipped buildings in Europe in 2013. The products implicated were withdrawn from the market but this situation calls for a rigorous selection of products and contractors as well as for a maintenance plan of the installations. The above mentioned issues require further investigation in the perspective of an economic evaluation taking both positive and negative externalities into account.

To sum up, the deployment of solar panels is good both for producing energy (and hence contributing to a decrease of greenhouse gas emissions) and for decreasing the UHI, especially in summer, when it can be a threat to health. In future climate conditions, solar panels would also help to decrease the demand of air-conditioning. Future work will focus on studying urban adaptation strategies in the long term (as far as the end of the twenty-first century) taking a large panel of possible planning options into consideration, such as city greening, improved insulation, changes in occupants' behavior, different forms of urban expansion and the deployment of renewable energy systems.

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The Photovoltaic Heat Island Effect: Larger solar power plants increase local temperatures

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While photovoltaic (PV) renewable energy production has surged, concerns remain about whether or not PV power plants induce a “heat island” (PVHI) effect, much like the increase in ambient temperatures relative to wildlands generates an Urban Heat Island effect in cities. Transitions to PV plants alter the way that incoming energy is reflected back to the atmosphere or absorbed, stored, and reradiated because PV plants change the albedo, vegetation, and structure of the terrain. Prior work on the PVHI has been mostly theoretical or based upon simulated models. Furthermore, past empirical work has been limited in scope to a single biome. Because there are still large uncertainties surrounding the potential for a PHVI effect, we examined the PVHI empirically with experiments that spanned three biomes. We found temperatures over a PV plant were regularly 3–4 °C warmer than wildlands at night, which is in direct contrast to other studies based on models that suggested that PV systems should decrease ambient temperatures. Deducing the underlying cause and scale of the PVHI effect and identifying mitigation strategies are key in supporting decision-making regarding PV development, particularly in semiarid landscapes, which are among the most likely for large-scale PV installations.

Electricity production from large-scale photovoltaic (PV) installations has increased exponentially in recent decades^{1–3}. This proliferation in renewable energy portfolios and PV powerplants demonstrate an increase in the acceptance and cost-effectiveness of this technology^{4,5}. Corresponding with this upsurge in installation has been an increase in the assessment of the impacts of utility-scale PV^{4,6–8}, including those on the efficacy of PV to offset energy needs^{9,10}. A growing concern that remains understudied is whether or not PV installations cause a “heat island” (PVHI) effect that warms surrounding areas, thereby potentially influencing wildlife habitat, ecosystem function in wildlands, and human health and even home values in residential areas¹¹. As with the Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect, large PV power plants induce a landscape change that reduces albedo so that the modified landscape is darker and, therefore, less reflective. Lowering the terrestrial albedo from ~20% in natural deserts¹² to ~5% over PV panels¹³ alters the energy balance of absorption, storage, and release of short- and longwave radiation^{14,15}. However, several differences between the UHI and potential PVHI effects confound a simple comparison and produce competing hypotheses about whether or not large-scale PV installations will create a heat island effect. These include: (i) PV installations shade a portion of the ground and therefore could reduce heat absorption in surface soils¹⁶, (ii) PV panels are thin and have little heat capacity per unit area but PV modules emit thermal radiation both up and down, and this is particularly significant during the day when PV modules are often 20 °C warmer than ambient temperatures, (iii) vegetation is usually removed from PV power plants, reducing the amount of cooling due to transpiration¹⁴, (iv) electric power removes energy from PV power plants, and (v) PV panels reflect and absorb upwelling longwave radiation, and thus can prevent the soil from cooling as much as it might under a dark sky at night.

Public concerns over a PVHI effect have, in some cases, led to resistance to large-scale solar development. By some estimates, nearly half of recently proposed energy projects have been delayed or abandoned due to local opposition¹¹. Yet, there is a remarkable lack of data as to whether or not the PVHI effect is real or simply an issue

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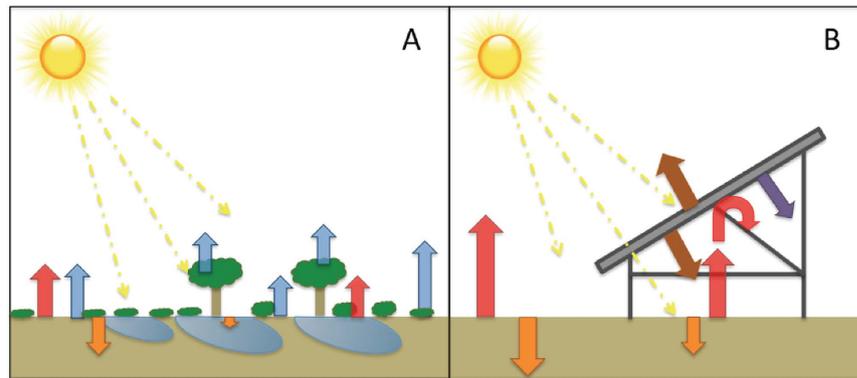


Figure 1. Illustration of midday energy exchange. Assuming equal rates of incoming energy from the sun, a transition from (A) a vegetated ecosystem to (B) a photovoltaic (PV) power plant installation will significantly alter the energy flux dynamics of the area. Within natural ecosystems, vegetation reduces heat capture and storage in soils (orange arrows), and infiltrated water and vegetation release heat-dissipating latent energy fluxes in the transition of water-to-water vapor to the atmosphere through evapotranspiration (blue arrows). These latent heat fluxes are dramatically reduced in typical PV installations, leading to greater sensible heat fluxes (red arrows). Energy re-radiation from PV panels (brown arrow) and energy transferred to electricity (purple arrow) are also shown.

associated with perceptions of environmental change caused by the installations that lead to “not in my backyard” (NIMBY) thinking. Some models have suggested that PV systems can actually cause a cooling effect on the local environment, depending on the efficiency and placement of the PV panels^{17,18}. But these studies are limited in their applicability when evaluating large-scale PV installations because they consider changes in albedo and energy exchange within an urban environment (rather than a natural ecosystem) or in European locations that are not representative of semiarid energy dynamics where large-scale PV installations are concentrated^{10,19}. Most previous research, then, is based on untested theory and numerical modeling. Therefore, the potential for a PVHI effect must be examined with empirical data obtained through rigorous experimental terms.

The significance of a PVHI effect depends on energy balance. Incoming solar energy typically is either reflected back to the atmosphere or absorbed, stored, and later re-radiated in the form of latent or sensible heat (Fig. 1)^{20,21}. Within natural ecosystems, vegetation reduces heat gain and storage in soils by creating surface shading, though the degree of shading varies among plant types²². Energy absorbed by vegetation and surface soils can be released as latent heat in the transition of liquid water to water vapor to the atmosphere through evapotranspiration – the combined water loss from soils (evaporation) and vegetation (transpiration). This heat-dissipating latent energy exchange is dramatically reduced in a typical PV installation (Fig. 1 transition from A-to-B), potentially leading to greater heat absorption by soils in PV installations. This increased absorption, in turn, could increase soil temperatures and lead to greater sensible heat efflux from the soil in the form of radiation and convection. Additionally, PV panel surfaces absorb more solar insolation due to a decreased albedo^{13,23,24}. PV panels will re-radiate most of this energy as longwave sensible heat and convert a lesser amount (~20%) of this energy into usable electricity. PV panels also allow some light energy to pass, which, again, in unvegetated soils will lead to greater heat absorption. This increased absorption could lead to greater sensible heat efflux from the soil that may be trapped under the PV panels. A PVHI effect would be the result of a detectable increase in sensible heat flux (atmospheric warming) resulting from an alteration in the balance of incoming and outgoing energy fluxes due to landscape transformation. Developing a full thermal model is challenging^{17,18,25}, and there are large uncertainties surrounding multiple terms including variations in albedo, cloud cover, seasonality in advection, and panel efficiency, which itself is dynamic and impacted by the local environment. These uncertainties are compounded by the lack of empirical data.

We addressed the paucity of direct quantification of a PVHI effect by simultaneously monitoring three sites that represent a natural desert ecosystem, the traditional built environment (parking lot surrounded by commercial buildings), and a PV power plant. We define a PVHI effect as the difference in ambient air temperature between the PV power plant and the desert landscape. Similarly, UHI is defined as the difference in temperature between the built environment and the desert. We reduced confounding effects of variability in local incoming energy, temperature, and precipitation by utilizing sites contained within a 1 km area.

At each site, we monitored air temperature continuously for over one year using aspirated temperature probes 2.5 m above the soil surface. Average annual temperature was 22.7 ± 0.5 °C in the PV installation, while the nearby desert ecosystem was only 20.3 ± 0.5 °C, indicating a PVHI effect. Temperature differences between areas varied significantly depending on time of day and month of the year (Fig. 2), but the PV installation was always greater than or equal in temperature to other sites. As is the case with the UHI effect in dryland regions, the PVHI effect delayed the cooling of ambient temperatures in the evening, yielding the most significant difference in overnight temperatures across all seasons. Annual average midnight temperatures were 19.3 ± 0.6 °C in the PV installation, while the nearby desert ecosystem was only 15.8 ± 0.6 °C. This PVHI effect was more significant in terms of actual degrees of warming ($+3.5$ °C) in warm months (Spring and Summer; Fig. 3, right).

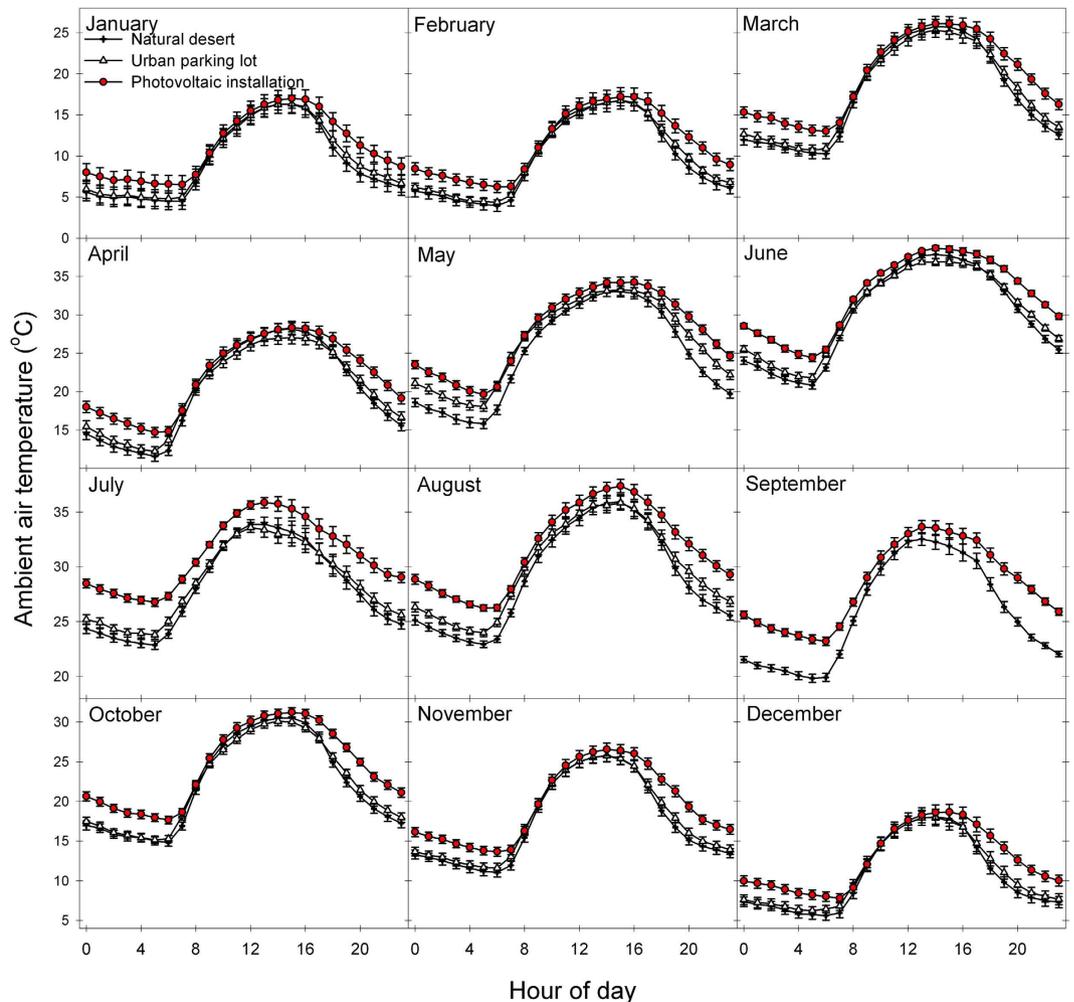


Figure 2. Average monthly ambient temperatures throughout a 24-hour period provide evidence of a photovoltaic heat island (PVHI) effect.

In both PVHI and UHI scenarios, the greater amount of exposed ground surfaces compared to natural systems absorbs a larger proportion of high-energy, shortwave solar radiation during the day. Combined with minimal rates of heat-dissipating transpiration from vegetation, a proportionally higher amount of stored energy is reradiated as longwave radiation during the night in the form of sensible heat (Fig. 1)¹⁵. Because PV installations introduce shading with a material that, itself, should not store much incoming radiation, one might hypothesize that the effect of a PVHI effect would be lesser than that of a UHI. Here, we found that the difference in evening ambient air temperature was consistently greater between the PV installation and the desert site than between the parking lot (UHI) and the desert site (Fig. 3). The PVHI effect caused ambient temperature to regularly approach or be in excess of 4 °C warmer than the natural desert in the evenings, essentially doubling the temperature increase due to UHI measured here. This more significant warming under the PVHI than the UHI may be due to heat trapping of re-radiated sensible heat flux under PV arrays at night. Daytime differences from the natural ecosystem were similar between the PV installation and urban parking lot areas, with the exception of the Spring and Summer months, when the PVHI effect was significantly greater than UHI in the day. During these warm seasons, average midnight temperatures were 25.5 ± 0.5 °C in the PV installation and 23.2 ± 0.5 °C in the parking lot, while the nearby desert ecosystem was only 21.4 ± 0.5 °C.

The results presented here demonstrate that the PVHI effect is real and can significantly increase temperatures over PV power plant installations relative to nearby wildlands. More detailed measurements of the underlying causes of the PVHI effect, potential mitigation strategies, and the relative influence of PVHI in the context of the intrinsic carbon offsets from the use of this renewable energy are needed. Thus, we raise several new questions and highlight critical unknowns requiring future research.

What is the physical basis of land transformations that might cause a PVHI?

We hypothesize that the PVHI effect results from the effective transition in how energy moves in and out of a PV installation versus a natural ecosystem. However, measuring the individual components of an energy flux model remains a necessary task. These measurements are difficult and expensive but, nevertheless, are indispensable in identifying the relative influence of multiple potential drivers of the PVHI effect found here. Environmental

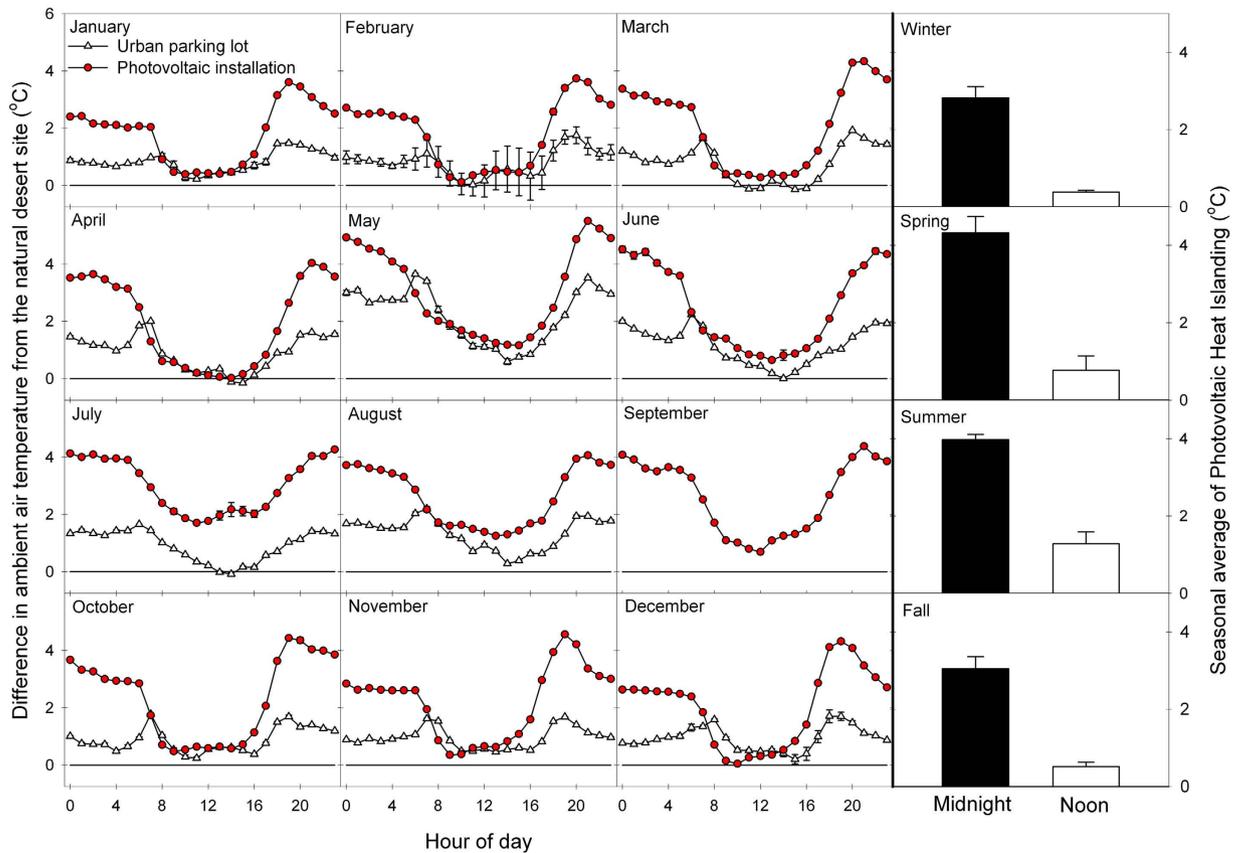


Figure 3. (Left) Average monthly levels of Photovoltaic Heat Islanding (ambient temperature difference between PV installation and desert) and Urban Heat Islanding (ambient temperature difference between the urban parking lot and the desert). (Right) Average night and day temperatures for four seasonal periods, illustrating a significant PVHI effect across all seasons, with the greatest influence on ambient temperatures at night.

conditions that determine patterns of ecosystem carbon, energy, and water dynamics are driven by the means through which incoming energy is reflected or absorbed. Because we lack fundamental knowledge of the changes in surface energy fluxes and microclimates of ecosystems undergoing this land use change, we have little ability to predict the implications in terms of carbon or water cycling^{4,8}.

What are the physical implications of a PVHI, and how do they vary by region?

The size of an UHI is determined by properties of the city, including total population^{26–28}, spatial extent, and the geographic location of that city^{29–31}. We should, similarly, consider the spatial scale and geographic position of a PV installation when considering the presence and importance of the PVHI effect. Remote sensing could be coupled with ground-based measurements to determine the lateral and vertical extent of the PVHI effect. We could then determine if the size of the PVHI effect scales with some measure of the power plant (for example, panel density or spatial footprint) and whether or not a PVHI effect reaches surrounding areas like wildlands and neighborhoods. Given that different regions around the globe each have distinct background levels of vegetative ground cover and thermodynamic patterns of latent and sensible heat exchange, it is possible that a transition from a natural wildland to a typical PV power plant will have different outcomes than demonstrated here. The paucity in data on the physical effects of this important and growing land use and land cover change warrants more studies from representative ecosystems.

What are the human implications of a PVHI, and how might we mitigate these effects?

With the growing popularity of renewable energy production, the boundaries between residential areas and larger-scale PV installations are decreasing. In fact, closer proximity with residential areas is leading to increased calls for zoning and city planning codes for larger PV installations^{32,33}, and PVHI-based concerns over potential reductions in real estate value or health issues tied to Human Thermal Comfort (HTC)³⁴. Mitigation of a PVHI effect through targeted revegetation could have synergistic effects in easing ecosystem degradation associated with development of a utility scale PV site and increasing the collective ecosystem services associated with an area⁴. But what are the best mitigation measures? What tradeoffs exist in terms of various means of revegetating degraded PV installations? Can other albedo modifications be used to moderate the severity of the PVHI?



Figure 4. Experimental sites. Monitoring a (1) natural semiarid desert ecosystem, (2) solar (PV) photovoltaic installation, and (3) an “urban” parking lot – the typical source of urban heat islanding – within a 1 km² area enabled relative control for the incoming solar energy, allowing us to quantify variation in the localized temperature of these three environments over a year-long time period. The Google Earth image shows the University of Arizona’s Science and Technology Park’s Solar Zone.

To fully contextualize these findings in terms of global warming, one needs to consider the relative significance of the (globally averaged) decrease in albedo due to PV power plants and their associated warming from the PVHI against the carbon dioxide emission reductions associated with PV power plants. The data presented here represents the first experimental and empirical examination of the presence of a heat island effect associated with PV power plants. An integrated approach to the physical and social dimensions of the PVHI is key in supporting decision-making regarding PV development.

Methods

Site Description. We simultaneously monitored a suite of sites that represent the traditional built urban environment (a parking lot) and the transformation from a natural system (undeveloped desert) to a 1 MW PV power plant (Fig. 4; Map data: Google). To minimize confounding effects of variability in local incoming energy, temperature, and precipitation, we identified sites within a 1 km area. All sites were within the boundaries of the University of Arizona Science and Technology Park Solar Zone (32.092150°N, 110.808764°W; elevation: 888 m ASL). Within a 200 m diameter of the semiarid desert site’s environmental monitoring station, the area is composed of a sparse mix of semiarid grasses (*Sporobolus wrightii*, *Eragrostis lehmanniana*, and *Muhlenbergia porteri*), cacti (*Opuntia* spp. and *Ferocactus* spp.), and occasional woody shrubs including creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*), whitethorn acacia (*Acacia constricta*), and velvet mesquite (*Prosopis velutina*). The remaining area is bare soil. These species commonly co-occur on low elevation desert bajadas, creosote bush flats, and semiarid grasslands. The photovoltaic installation was put in place in early 2011, three full years prior when we initiated monitoring at the site. We maintained the measurement installations for one full year to capture seasonal variation due to sun angle and extremes associated with hot and cold periods. Panels rest on a single-axis tracker system that pivot east-to-west throughout the day. A parking lot with associated building served as our “urban” site and is of comparable spatial scale as our PV site.

Monitoring Equipment & Variables Monitored. Ambient air temperature (°C) was measured with a shaded, aspirated temperature probe 2.5 m above the soil surface (Vaisala HMP60, Vaisala, Helsinki, Finland in the desert and Microdaq U23, Onset, Bourne, MA in the parking lot). Temperature probes were cross-validated for precision (closeness of temperature readings across all probes) at the onset of the experiment. Measurements of temperature were recorded at 30-minute intervals throughout a 24-hour day. Data were recorded on a data-logger (CR1000, Campbell Scientific, Logan, Utah or Microstation, Onset, Bourne, MA). Data from this

instrument array is shown for a yearlong period from April 2014 through March 2015. Data from the parking lot was lost for September 2014 because of power supply issues with the datalogger.

Statistical analysis. Monthly averages of hourly (on-the-hour) data were used to compare across the natural semiarid desert, urban, and PV sites. A Photovoltaic Heat Island (PVHI) effect was calculated as differences in these hourly averages between the PV site and the natural desert site, and estimates of Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect was calculated as differences in hourly averages between the urban parking lot site and the natural desert site. We used midnight and noon values to examine maximum and minimum, respectively, differences in temperatures among the three measurement sites and to test for significance of heat islanding at these times. Comparisons among the sites were made using Tukey's honestly significant difference (HSD) test³⁵. Standard errors to calculate HSD were made using pooled midnight and noon values across seasonal periods of winter (January-March), spring (April-June), summer (July-September), and fall (October-December). Seasonal analyses allowed us to identify variation throughout a yearlong period and relate patterns of PVHI or UHI effects with seasons of high or low average temperature to examine correlations between background environmental parameters and localized heat islanding.

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Author Contributions

G.A.B.-G., R.L.M. and N.A.A. established research sites and installed monitoring equipment. G.A.B.-G. directed research and R.L.M. conducted most site maintenance. G.A.B.-G., N.A.A., A.D.C. and M.A.P.-Z. led efforts to secure funding for the research. All authors discussed the results and contributed to the manuscript.

Additional Information

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Analysis of the Potential for a Heat Island Effect in Large Solar Farms

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Abstract — Large-scale solar power plants are being built at a rapid rate, and are setting up to use hundreds of thousands of acres of land surface. The thermal energy flows to the environment related to the operation of such facilities have not, so far, been addressed comprehensively. We are developing rigorous computational fluid dynamics (CFD) simulation capabilities for modeling the air velocity, turbulence, and energy flow fields induced by large solar PV farms to answer questions pertaining to potential impacts of solar farms on local microclimate. Using the CFD codes Ansys CFX and Fluent, we conducted detailed 3-D simulations of a 1 MW section of a solar farm in North America and compared the results with recorded wind and temperature field data from the whole solar farm. Both the field data and the simulations show that the annual average of air temperatures in the center of PV field can reach up to 1.9°C above the ambient temperature, and that this thermal energy completely dissipates to the environment at heights of 5 to 18 m. The data also show a prompt dissipation of thermal energy with distance from the solar farm, with the air temperatures approaching (within 0.3°C) the ambient at about 300 m away of the perimeter of the solar farm. Analysis of 18 months of detailed data showed that in most days, the solar array was completely cooled at night, and, thus, it is unlikely that a heat island effect could occur. Work is in progress to approximate the flow fields in the solar farm with 2-D simulations and detail the temperature and wind profiles of the whole utility scale PV plant and the surrounding region. The results from these simulations can be extrapolated to assess potential local impacts from a number of solar farms reflecting various scenarios of large PV penetration into regional and global grids.

Index Terms – PV, climate change, heat island, fluid dynamics

I. INTRODUCTION

Solar farms in the capacity range of 50MW to 500 MW are being proliferating in North America and other parts of the world and those occupy land in the range from 275 to 4000 acres. The environmental impacts from the installation and operation phases of large solar farms deserve comprehensive research and understanding. Turney and Fthenakis [1] investigated 32 categories of impacts from the life-stages of solar farms and were able to categorize such impacts as either beneficial or neutral, with the exception of the “local climate” effects for which they concluded that research and observation are needed. PV panels convert most of the incident solar radiation into heat and can alter the air-flow and temperature profiles near the panels. Such changes, may subsequently affect the thermal environment of near-by populations of humans and other species. Nemet [2] investigated the effect on

global climate due to albedo change from widespread installation of solar panels and found this to be small compared to benefits from the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. However, Nemet did not consider local microclimates and his analytical results have not been verified with any field data. Donovan [3] assumed that the albedo of ground-mounted PV panels is similar to that of underlying grassland and, using simple calculations, postulated that the heat island effect from installing PV on grassy land would be negligible. Yutaka [4] investigated the potential for large scale of roof-top PV installations in Tokyo to alter the heat island effect of the city and found this to be negligible if PV systems are installed on black roofs.

In our study we aim in comprehensively addressing the issue by modeling the air and energy flows around a solar farm and comparing those with measured wind and temperature data.

II. FIELD DATA DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Detailed measurements of temperature, wind speed, wind direction, solar irradiance, relative humidity, and rain fall were recorded at a large solar farm in North America. Fig. 1 shows an aerial photograph of the solar farm and the locations where the field measurements are taken.

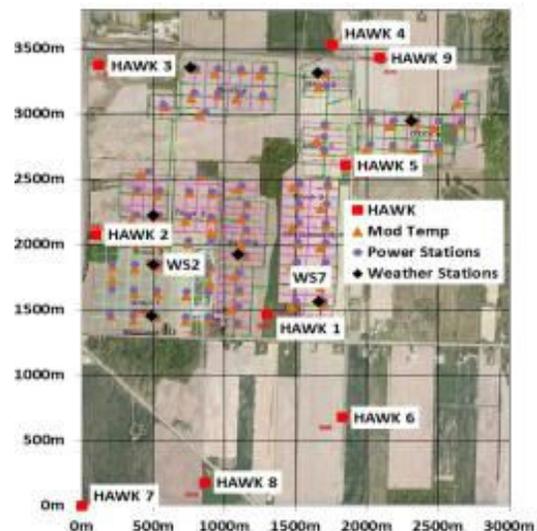


Fig. 1. A picture of the solar farm indicating the locations of the monitoring stations

The field data are obtained from 17 monitoring stations within and around the solar farm, including 8 weather stations (WS) and 9 Hawk stations (HK), all at 2.5 m heights off the ground. There also 80 module temperature (MT) sensors at the back-side of the modules close to each of the corresponding power stations. The WS and MT provide data at 1-min intervals, while the Hawk provides data every 30 minutes. The WS and MT data cover a period of one year from October 2010 to September 2011, while the Hawk data cover a period of 18 months from March 2010 through August 2011.

Hawk stations 3, 6, 7, 8 and 9 are outside the solar farm and were used as reference points indicating ambient conditions. The measurements from Hawk 3, 6, 8 and 9 agree very well confirming that their distances from the perimeter of the solar farm are sufficient for them to be unaffected by the thermal mass of the PV system; Hawk 7 shows higher temperatures likely due to a calibration inaccuracy. In our comparative data analysis we use Hawk 6 as a reference point and, since the prevailing winds are from the south, we selected the section around WS7 as the field for our CFD simulations. Figures 2 to 7 show the difference between the temperatures in Hawk 6 and those in the weather stations WS2 and WS7 within the field, and Hawks 1, 2, 4 and 5 around the solar field.

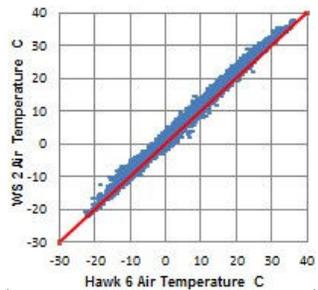


Fig. 2. Air temp WS2 vs. Hawk 6

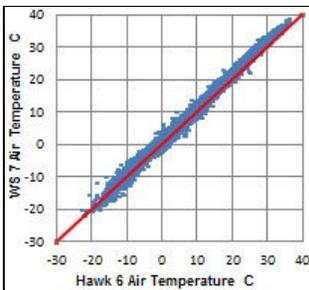


Fig. 3. Air temp WS7 vs. Hawk6

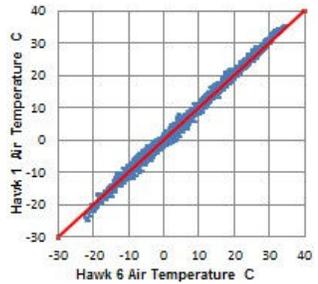


Fig. 4. Air temp Hawk 1 vs. 6

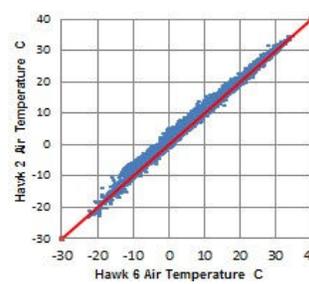


Fig. 5. Air temp Hawk 2 vs. 6

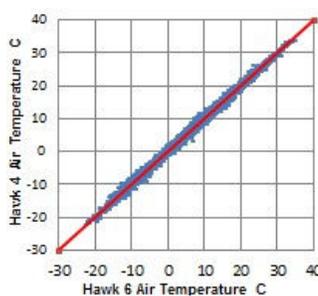


Fig. 6. Air temp Hawk 4 vs. 6

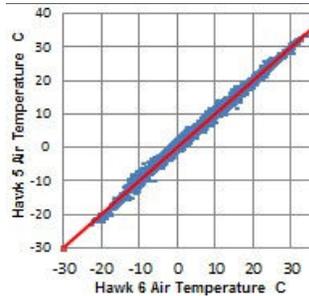


Fig. 7. Air temp Hawk 5 vs. 6

These figures and Table 1 show that with the exception of Hawk 4, the closer the proximity to solar farm the higher the temperature difference from the ambient (indicated by Hawk 6). The relative high temperatures recorded at Hawk 4, and also the relative low temperatures at Hawks 1 and 5 are explained by the prevailing wind direction, which for the time period used in our analysis (8/14/2010-3/14/2011) was Southerly (158°-202°). Hawk 4 is downwind of the solar farm, whereas Hawks 1 and 5 are upwind; the downwind station “feels” more the effect of the heat generated at the solar farm than the ones upwind.

Fig. 8 shows the decline in air temperature as a function of distance to solar farm perimeter. Distances for WS2 and WS7 are negative since they are located inside the solar farm site. WS2 is further into the solar farm and this is reflected in its higher temperature difference than WS7.

TABLE I

DIFFERENCE OF AIR TEMPERATURE (@2.5 M HEIGHTS) BETWEEN THE LISTED WEATHER AND HAWK STATIONS AND THE AMBIENT

Met Station	WS2	WS7	HK1	HK2	HK3	HK4	HK5	HK9
Temp Difference from H6 (°C)	1.878	1.468	0.488	1.292	0.292	0.609	0.664	0.289
Distance to solar farm perimeter (m)	-440	-100	100	10	450	210	20	300

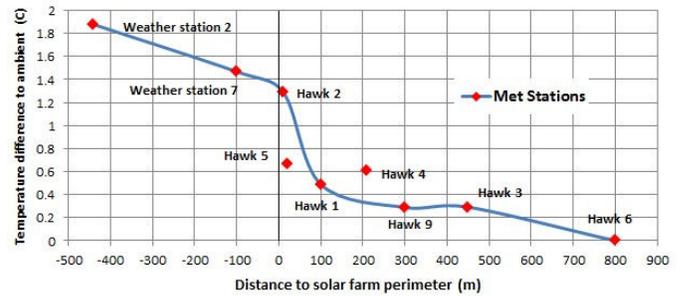


Fig. 8. Air temperature difference as a function of distance from the perimeter of the solar farm. Negative distances indicate locations within the solar farm.

We also examined in detail the temperature differences between the modules and the surrounding air. These vary throughout the year but the module temperatures are consistently higher than those of the surrounding air during the day, whereas at night the modules cool to temperatures below ambient; an example is shown in Fig. 9. Thus, this PV solar farm did not induce a day-after-day increase in ambient temperature, and therefore, adverse micro-climate changes from a potential PV plant are not a concern.

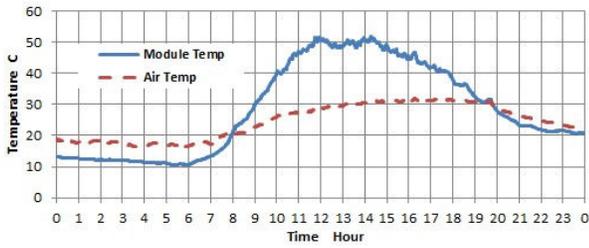


Fig. 9. Comparison of module temperature and air temperature 2.5 m off the ground on a sunny day (July 1, 2011)

III. CFD MODEL DEVELOPMENT

In preliminary simulations we tested the Ansys CFX and FLUENT computational fluid dynamics codes (CFD) and decided to use FLUENT in detailed simulations. FLUENT offers several turbulence schemes including multiple variations of the $k-\epsilon$ models, as well as $k-\omega$ models, and Reynolds stress turbulence models. We used the standard, renormalized-group (RNG), and realizable $k-\epsilon$ turbulence closure scheme as it is the most commonly used model in street canyon flow and thermal stratification studies [5]. FLUENT incorporates the P-1 radiation model which affords detailed radiation transfer between the solar arrays, the ground and the ambient air; it also incorporates standard free convection and wind-forced convection models. Our choice of solver was the pressure-based algorithm SIMPLE which uses a relationship between velocity and pressure corrections to enforce mass conservation and obtain the pressure field. We conducted both three-dimensional (3-D) and 2-D simulations.

A 3-D model was built of four fields each covering an area of 93-meters by 73-meters (Fig. 10). Each field contains 23 linear arrays of 73-meter length and 1.8-meter width. Each array has 180 modules of 10.5% rated efficiency, placed facing south at a 25-degree angle from horizontal, with their bottom raised 0.5 m from the ground and their top reaching a height of 1.3 m. Each array was modeled as a single 73 m \times 1.8 m \times 1 cm rectangular. The arrays are spaced 4 meters apart and the roads between the fields are 8 m. Fig. 10 shows the simulated temperatures on the arrays at 14:00 pm on 7/1/2011, when the irradiance was 966 W/m². As shown, the highest average temperatures occur on the last array (array 46). Temperature on the front edge (array 1) is lower than in the center (array 23). Also, temperature on array 24 is lower than array 23, which is apparently caused by the cooling induced by the road space between two fields, and the magnitude of the temperature difference between arrays 24 and 46 is lower than that between arrays 1 and 23, as higher temperature differences from the ambient, result in more efficient cooling.

TABLE II
MODULES TEMPERATURE

Arrays	1	23	24	46
Temperature °C	46.1	56.4	53.1	57.8

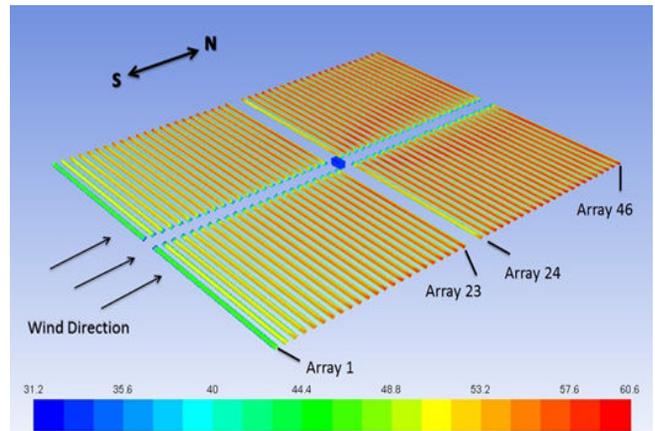
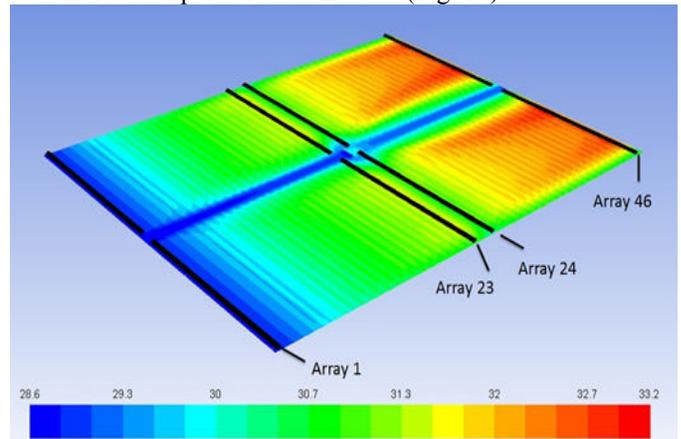
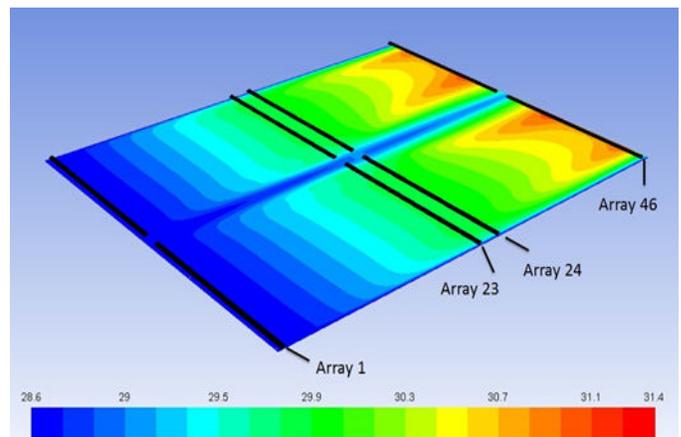


Fig. 10. Module temperatures from 3-D simulations of air flows and thermal exchange during a sunny day

Our simulations also showed that the air temperatures above the arrays at a height of 2.5 m ranged from 28.6 to 31.1 ; the ambient temperature was 28.6 (Fig. 11).



(a)



(b)

Fig. 11 Air temperatures from 3-D simulations during a sunny day. a) Air temperatures at a height of 1.5 m; b) air temperatures at a height of 2.5 m.

TABLE III
AIR TEMPERATURE

Temperature	Ambient (°C)	Low (°C)	High (°C)	Average (°C)
2.5m height	28.6	28.6	31.1	30.1
1.5m height	28.6	28.6	33.2	30.8

These simulations show a profound cooling effect with increasing height from the ground. It is shown that the temperatures on the back surface of solar panels is up to 30°C warmer than the ambient temperature, but the air above the arrays is only up to 2.5°C higher than the ambient (i.e., 31.1°C). Also the road between the fields allows for cooling, which is more evident at the temperatures 1.5 m off the ground (Fig. 11a). The simulations show that heat build-up at the power station in the middle of the fields has a negligible effect on the temperature flow fields; it was estimated that a power station adds only about 0.4% to the heat generated by the corresponding modules.

The 3-D model showed that the temperature and air velocity fields within each field of the solar farm were symmetrical along the cross-wind axis; therefore a 2-D model of the downwind and the vertical dimensions was deemed to be sufficiently accurate. A 2-D model reduced the computational requirements and allowed for running simulations for several subsequent days using actual 30-min solar irradiance and wind input data. We tested the numerical results for three layers of different mesh sizes and determined that the following mesh sizes retain sufficient detail for an accurate representation of the field data: a) Top layer: 2m by 1m, b) Middle layer: 1.5m by 0.6m, c) Bottom layer: 1m by 0.4m. According to these mesh specifications, a simulation of 92 arrays (length of 388m, height 9m), required a total of 13600 cells. Figures 12-15 show comparisons of the modeled and measured module and air temperatures.

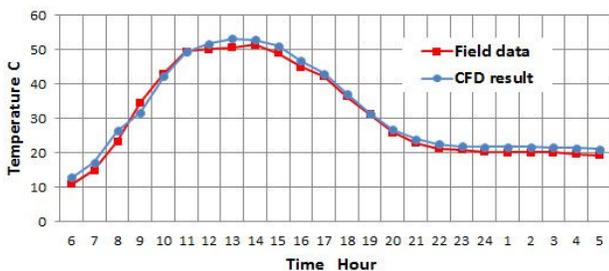


Fig. 12. Comparisons of field and modeled module temperatures; a sunny summer day (7/1/2011); 2-D simulations.

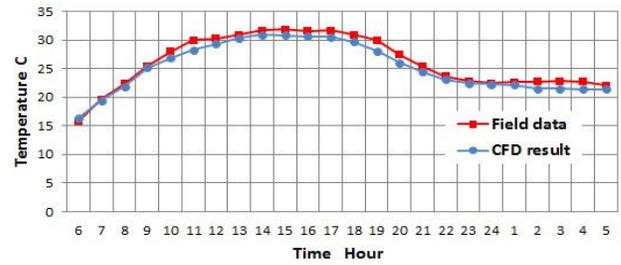


Fig. 13. Comparisons of field and modeled air temperatures at a height of 2.5 m; a sunny summer day (7/1/2011); 2-D simulations.

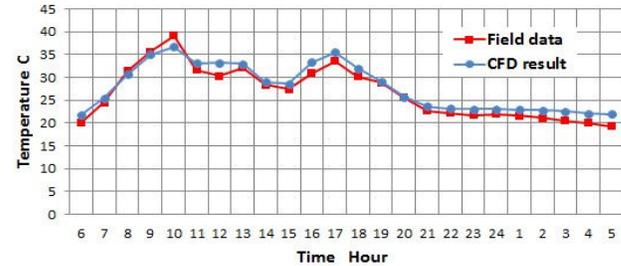


Fig. 14. Comparisons of field and modeled module temperatures; a cloudy summer day (7/11/2011); 2-D simulations.

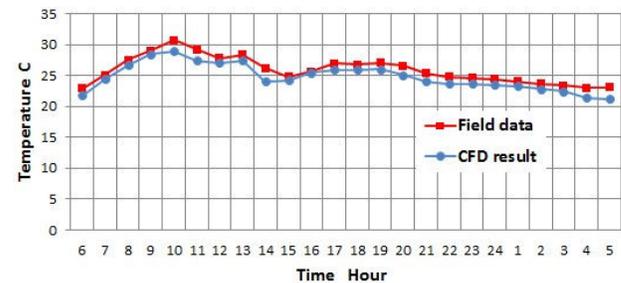
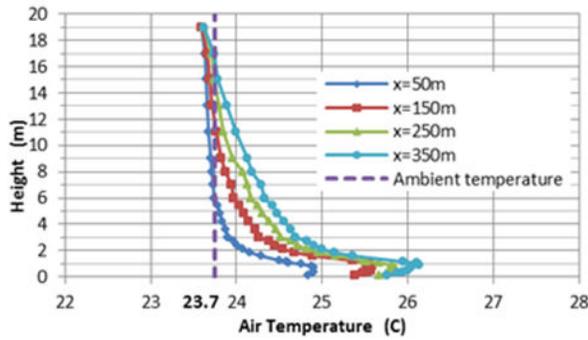
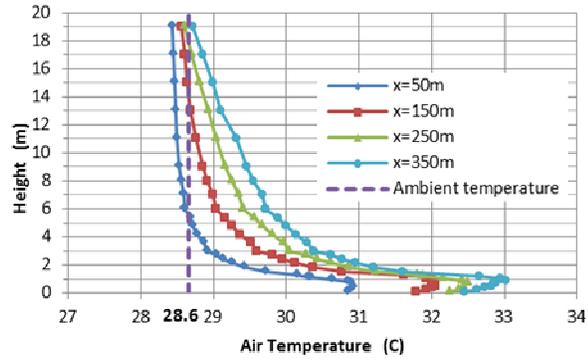


Fig. 15. Comparisons of field and modeled air temperatures at a height of 2.5 m; a cloudy summer day (7/11/2011); 2-D simulations.

Figures 16a and 16b show the air temperature as a function of height at different downwind distances in the morning and afternoon during a sunny summer day. At 9 am (irradiance 500 W/m², wind speed 1.6 m/s, inlet ambient temperature 23.7°C), the heat from the solar array is dissipated at heights of 5-15m, whereas at 2 pm (irradiance 966 W/m², wind speed 2.8m/s, inlet ambient temperature 28.6°C, the temperature of the panels has reached the daily peak, and the thermal energy takes up to 18 m to dissipate.



(a) 9:00 am



(b) 2:00 pm

Fig. 16 Air temperatures within the solar farm, as a function of height at different downwind distances. From 2-D simulations during a sunny summer day (7/1/2011) at 9 am and 2 pm.

IV. CONCLUSION

The field data and our simulations show that the annual average of air temperatures at 2.5 m of the ground in the center of simulated solar farm section is 1.9 °C higher than the

ambient and that it declines to the ambient temperature at 5 to 18 m heights. The field data also show a clear decline of air temperatures as a function of distance from the perimeter of the solar farm, with the temperatures approaching the ambient temperature (within 0.3 °C), at about 300 m away. Analysis of 18 months of detailed data showed that in most days, the solar array was completely cooled at night, and, thus, it is unlikely that a heat island effect could occur.

Our simulations also show that the access roads between solar fields allow for substantial cooling, and therefore, increase of the size of the solar farm may not affect the temperature of the surroundings. Simulations of large (e.g., 1 million m²) solar fields are needed to test this hypothesis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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