

# $\Sigma\Delta$ Modulator for Digital Wireless Architecture: A review

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**Abstract**— This paper studies Sigma-Delta ( $\Sigma\Delta$ ) technique to embed a complex modulation scheme such as orthogonal frequency division multiplexing (OFDM) into a single ‘on’-‘off’ bit stream operating at the carrier frequency. The amplitude of the signal is related to the pulse widths and the phase to the pulse position. This paper concentrates on all digital upconverter structures of  $\Sigma\Delta$  modulator architecture. The binary nature of their output removes the need for analog components in the up-conversion chain. Their outputs can be used directly to drive the switch mode power amplifier (SMPA) for high efficiency operation.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Research in green communications is addressing energy efficiency of the telecommunications sector, to reduce the cost of emissions and the world’s carbon footprint. Software-defined Radio (SDR) is gaining popularity because digital circuits provide software controllable features such as coding/decoding, modulation/demodulation, filtering, mixing, and power control [1-3]. The trend in SDR is to push the digital part close to the antenna part to remove analog selection mechanisms. However, traditional SDR still requires some analog components such as analog-to-digital and digital-to-analog converters (ADC/DAC), up/down converters, RF selectivity and RF amplification.

Digital wireless transmission is related to all-digital transmitter design with fully digital components. To move towards all-digital wireless transmitters, the elimination of analog components is required. Various signal processing innovations are now being proposed by the research community to this end. If such a solution can be found then integration on to low cost digital *Silicon* Complementary Metal Oxide Semiconductor (Si CMOS) technology will produce major reduction in both size, cost and energy consumption.

A traditional wireless transmitter architecture is described in Fig. 1 (top). It consists of analog components such as ADC/DAC, filters, a modulator (Mod), and a local oscillator (LO). A new wireless transmitter architecture in Fig. 1 (bottom) has introduced the use of a digital  $\Sigma\Delta$  structure which replaces the analog components from the traditional transmitter architecture. Removal of the analog components also removes many analog problems, such as gain-phase imbalance and carrier leakage of the quadrature modulator, the need for an RF synthesiser and the need for wideband matching of the low-pass filters (LPF).

$\Sigma\Delta$  techniques are most well known for their use in ADC and DAC structures. These schemes are almost entirely based on the conversion of low-pass signals. The best known early application of  $\Sigma\Delta$  DACs was for the compact disc (CD) player [4]. Here the sample rate was increased to reduce the (quantisation) noise power spectral density which was shaped by a first order filter to further reduce the noise in the lower frequencies. In this way high fidelity signal reproduction was possible from DAC’s of reduced resolution.

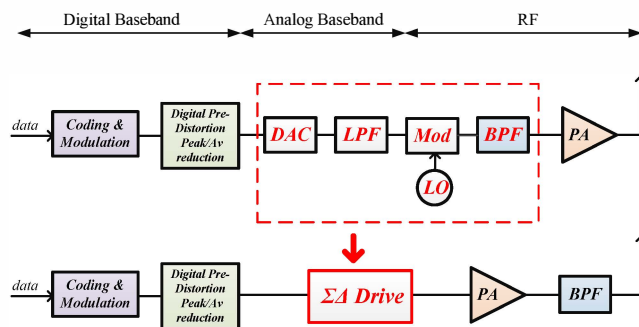


Figure 1.  $\Sigma\Delta$  structure can potentially replace the analog components of the traditional wireless architecture (top). A potential future wireless transmitter architecture (bottom).

The study of  $\Sigma\Delta$  modulator architecture is reviewed in this paper. Recent research is now applying  $\Sigma\Delta$  techniques to band-pass signals such as found in radio frequency transceivers [5]. There are a number of challenges to developing such schemes. First, the carrier frequency is of the same order as the sample rate; secondly the bandwidth, EVM and spectral mask of any transmitted RF signal must be met; and thirdly, any design must be realisable in today’s silicon technology. These three factors are all inter-related and form a complex trade-off between performance, complexity and energy consumption. This paper concentrates on all digital upconverter structures. The binary nature of their output removes the need for analog components in the up-conversion chain. Their outputs can be used directly to drive the SMPA (Class-S or Class-D) for high efficiency operation [6].

## II. BAND-PASS $\Sigma\Delta$ ARCHITECTURE

Band-pass  $\Sigma\Delta$  modulator is proposed as a possible solution suitable for RF digital transmitter design using SMPA. A band-pass  $\Sigma\Delta$  modulator generates a digital pulse

train and shapes the quantisation noise which is then fed to the switched amplifier.

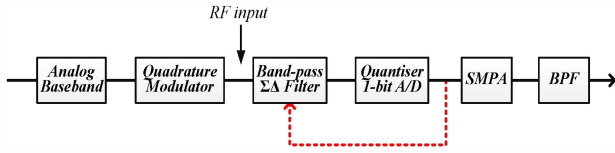


Figure 2. Band-pass  $\Sigma\Delta$  Architecture in [6].

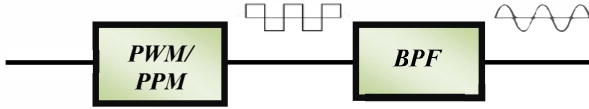


Figure 3. BPF for RF PWM/PPM output.

It is possible to avoid the analog processing by doing the up-conversion in DSP and replacing the band-pass  $\Sigma\Delta$  1-bit A/D with a band-pass  $\Sigma\Delta$  1-bit D/A as shown in Fig. 4 [7]. The DSP module generates the input signal as an  $I$  and  $Q$  baseband signal. The  $I$ - $Q$  baseband is interpolated to a higher sampling frequency before digital up-conversion. The up-conversion operation multiplies the  $I$ - $Q$  baseband signals with the pulse sequences of  $1,1,-1,-1,\dots$  and  $-1,1,1,-1,\dots$  respectively. The two signals are summed together and fed directly into the band-pass  $\Sigma\Delta$  modulator, which generates the digital data streams for the SMPA. The band-pass  $\Sigma\Delta$  transmitter architecture operates at a sampling frequency that is four times the RF carrier frequency. The high clock rate ( $f_{clock}$ ) will require substantial power consumption which reduces efficiency [8].

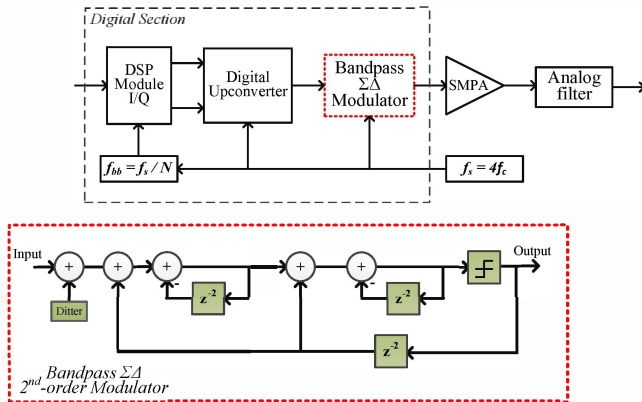


Figure 4. The band-pass  $\Sigma\Delta$  ( $2^{nd}$  order) architecture proposed in [7].

A digital method proposed in [9], implements the band-pass  $\Sigma\Delta$  technique using a combination of two low-pass  $\Sigma\Delta$  modulators and upconverters, Fig. 5. Each baseband  $I$  and  $Q$  signal has its own low-pass  $\Sigma\Delta$ . The three multiplexer units (Mux) implement a quadrature modulator that up-converts the quantised one bit  $\hat{I}$ - $\hat{Q}$  signals to RF at a carrier frequency  $f_c$ .

$$y_{RF}(n) = \hat{Q} \sin\left(2\pi n \frac{f_c}{f_{clock}}\right) + \hat{I} \cos\left(2\pi n \frac{f_c}{f_{clock}}\right) \quad (1)$$

when  $f_{clock} = 4f_c$  the above sequences become

$$\sin\left(2\pi n \frac{f_c}{f_{clock}}\right) = 0, 1, 0, -1, 0, 1, \dots \quad (2)$$

$$\cos\left(2\pi n \frac{f_c}{f_{clock}}\right) = 1, 0, -1, 0, 1, 0, \dots \quad (3)$$

The summation of the sequences is trivial and can be performed in a multiplexer (Mux), since one term is always 0.

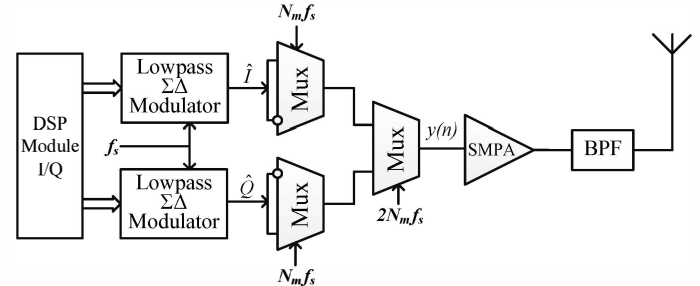


Figure 5. The band-pass  $\Sigma\Delta$  (two low-pass  $\Sigma\Delta$ s) architecture proposed in [9].

It is possible to generate RF signals with carrier frequency  $f_c > 1$  GHz using off-the-shelf multiplexer devices. However it is harder to achieve GHz sample rates ( $f_s$ ) for the DSP and  $\Sigma\Delta$  modulators without resorting to application-specific integrated circuit (ASIC) implementation [10]. The achievable bandwidth is proportional to sampling frequency  $f_s$ .

It is difficult to get high sampling rates on the  $\Sigma\Delta$  D/A's because of the feedback path. The filtering and quantisation must all be completed within the latency of one clock period. Frappé *et al.* [11] developed an ASIC using Borrow-Save arithmetic, non-exact quantisation and a multiphase-clock to complete all calculations of a  $3^{rd}$ -order  $\Sigma\Delta$  filter in 250 ps (pico second). A signal bandwidth of 50 MHz was obtained.

### III. POLAR $\Sigma\Delta$ ARCHITECTURE

Polar  $\Sigma\Delta$  techniques operate on the polar (amplitude  $A(t)$  and phase  $\Phi(t)$ ) signals rather than the more normal  $I$ - $Q$  representation. The polar  $\Sigma\Delta$  structure was proposed in [12-15] where the aim was to reduce the switching activity and also to eliminate the need for analog components.

Fig. 6 shows a polar  $\Sigma\Delta$  architecture consisting of a low-pass 1-bit  $\Sigma\Delta$  modulator using a phase modulated clock and a gated PA [15]. The envelope input signal  $A(t)$  represents the average value of the 'on'-'off' period of the square wave signal at the output of the low-pass  $\Sigma\Delta$  modulator. The phase information is represented by the zero-crossing timing of the RF carrier. The PA is operated in saturated mode (for best performance with a Class-C structure [16]), and the input waveforms are square waves. This scheme implements burst-mode modulation where the  $\Sigma\Delta$  modulator switches the square wave RF input signal 'on' or 'off' [15].

Keyzer *et al.* in [13], the architecture consists of the two  $\Sigma\Delta$  modulators (each modulator generates a pulse train representing the phase and amplitude signals respectively), followed by up-conversion blocks to perform PWM and PPM generation, Fig. 7. The amplitude is quantised into three

levels and the phase is quantised into eight levels. A digital pulse delay modulator acts on an input periodic pulse train with period of  $f_c$  and pulse width  $\frac{1}{8f_c}$  to produce an output phase modulated pulse train. This is then followed by a pulse expander to change the phase width. The structure limits the number of pulses per period to one and there is often no switching pulse when the input signal is small. Therefore, it should have good efficiency; however there is a bandwidth penalty.

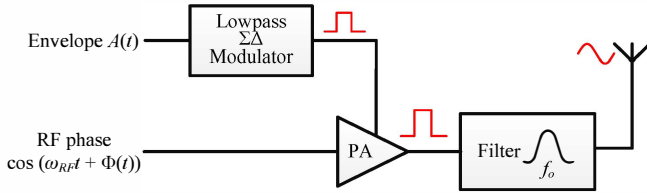


Figure 6. The polar  $\Sigma\Delta$  based burst-mode architecture proposed in [15].

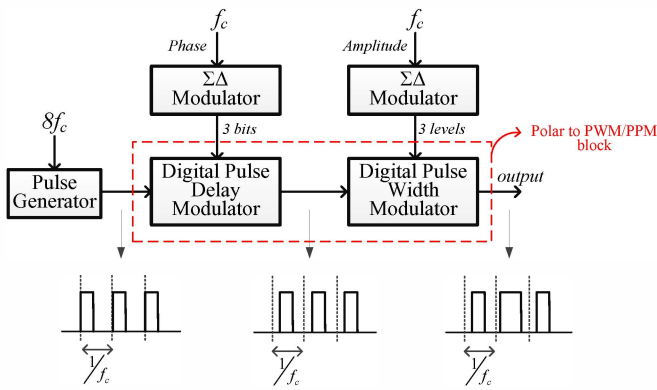


Figure 7. The polar  $\Sigma\Delta$  architecture proposed in [13].

Bassoo *et al.* in [14] investigated the polar  $\Sigma\Delta$  structure which is shown in Fig. 8. The input signal of  $I$ - $Q$  complex baseband is converted to polar representations,  $R = \sqrt{I^2 + Q^2}$  and  $\theta = \tan^{-1}(\frac{Q}{I})$ . Low-pass  $\Sigma\Delta$ 's are used to independently quantise the  $R$  (amplitude) and the  $\theta$  (phase) signals respectively. The  $R$  value is quantized into 4 distinct levels while  $\theta$  is quantized to 16 levels uniformly distributed between 0 to  $2\pi$ . The output of these quantisers is fed back to their appropriate  $\Sigma\Delta$  filter. The quantized signal is also passed through to a 'Polar to PWM/PPM' block converter to generate the appropriate pulse waveform. The pulse train output of the 'Polar to PWM/PPM' block feeds to the SMPA and BPF.

Normally, the  $\Sigma\Delta$  filters update the pulse width and position every whole number of cycles of the carrier frequency (or half cycles if a bridge amplifier is used). The  $\Sigma\Delta$  filters for the phase signal must be modified to handle the phase wrap-around. The polar components have a wider bandwidth than the  $I$ - $Q$  components, and this limits the modulation bandwidth of this structure hence the effective oversampling rate is reduced. Besides that, the conversion process of  $I$ - $Q$  complex baseband from Cartesian format to

polar format is a nonlinear process which causes some of the quantisation noise to fold back into the band of interest and hence it cannot be filtered out [17].

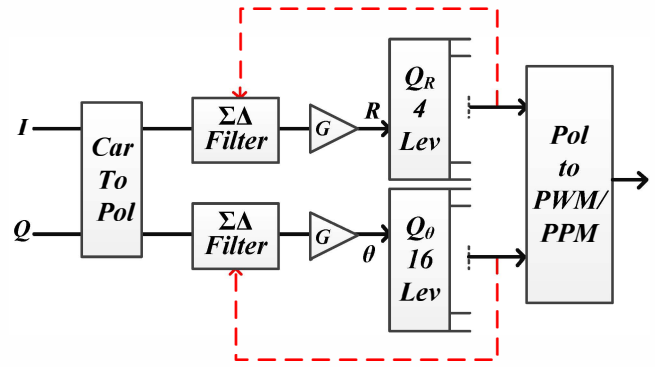


Figure 8. Polar  $\Sigma\Delta$  Architecture proposed in [14].

Another problem is unwanted spectral components which arise when baseband polar signals are upconverted to RF using PWM/PPM techniques. The 'Polar to PWM/PPM' block upconverts the signal to RF with quantised amplitude and phase. The amplitude of the RF is controlled by the pulse width and the phase of the RF is controlled by the pulse position. In the PPM process, a change in phase is represented by a change in position and the pulse edge must occur on the digital timing grid. This process eventually leads to amplitude modulation (AM) as a pulse is swallowed whenever there is a change in quantisation level. Recently, Bassoo *et al.* in [14] has established that the dominant distortions are the image and harmonic components generated in the PPM circuit ('Polar to PWM/PPM' block).

#### IV. CARTESIAN $\Sigma\Delta$ ARCHITECTURE

The authors in [18, 19] realised that Cartesian  $\Sigma\Delta$  upconverters are an improvement over the polar  $\Sigma\Delta$  modulator in [14], with regard to solving the bandwidth expansion problems and reducing switching activity. Fig. 9 shows the comparison plot between polar and Cartesian  $\Sigma\Delta$ s using an OFDM signal. The output spectrum and ACP versus signal level are compared. The Cartesian  $\Sigma\Delta$  has better noise shaping with a better null around the band of interest and lesser noise than the polar  $\Sigma\Delta$  (Fig. 10(a)). Fig. 10(b) shows the Cartesian  $\Sigma\Delta$  has at least 10 dB less ACP, over a wide dynamic range of input signal levels, compared to the polar  $\Sigma\Delta$ .

The proposed Cartesian  $\Sigma\Delta$  structure can be seen in Fig. 10. It consists of MOD2 low-pass  $\Sigma\Delta$ s [4] for the Cartesian  $I$  and  $Q$  input signals. After  $\Sigma\Delta$ -filtering, the  $I$  and  $Q$  signals are then converted to polar co-ordinates  $[R, \theta]$  and separately quantised in the  $Q_R$  and  $Q_\theta$  blocks resulting into  $[\hat{R}, \hat{\theta}]$ . The Gain block (normally set to  $G \leq 1$ ) works to improve efficiency (by reducing the number of switching edges) at the expense of a degraded spectrum [20]. The output of the quantisers is converted back to Cartesian co-ordinates,  $[\hat{I}, \hat{Q}]$  (removing bandwidth expansion [20]) and fed as feedback to the  $\Sigma\Delta$  filters. The outputs of both quantisers are also

upconverted to RF using PWM/PPM techniques in the ‘Polar to PWM/PPM’ block.

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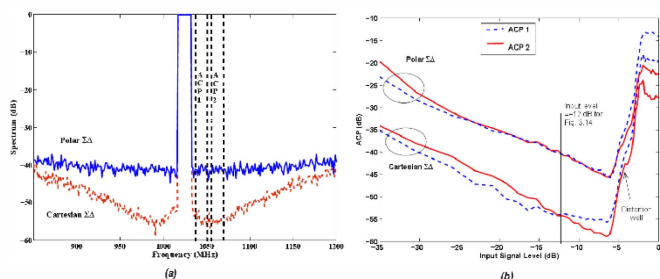


Figure 9. (a) Normalized spectrum of OFDM and (b) ACP for Cartesian  $\Sigma\Delta$  and polar  $\Sigma\Delta$  modulator [18].

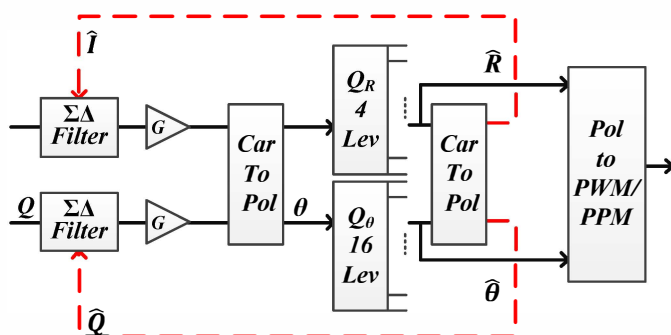


Figure 10. Cartesian  $\Sigma\Delta$  Architecture [21].  $\Sigma\Delta$  filtering is in Cartesian with quantisation in polar.

The proposed quantiser used an even quantisation technique where the three-level-waveform at the output is based on pulses with an even number of clock periods [18, 21, 22]. The quantised amplitudes,  $\hat{R}$ , of the RF signal are calculated by changing the pulse widths in increments of two clock periods. However, this leads to a potential coarse quantisation at low signal levels, as the minimum pulse width in the even quantisation scheme is two clock periods.

Furthermore, while reducing the bandwidth expansion, the Cartesian  $\Sigma\Delta$  model may still cause unwanted spectral components due to the ‘Polar to PWM/PPM’ block. The most relevant work to the aims of the proposed research was presented in [21]. It showed that in a single carrier environment, an increase in offset frequency increases the unwanted spectral components. The image and 3<sup>rd</sup> order harmonic components are the dominant distortions. The PPM block was shown to be responsible for these distortions, but no solutions were proposed.

V. CONCLUSION

RF up-conversion using  $\Sigma\Delta$  techniques is a potential replacement to traditional techniques using analog circuits. The all-digital output creates a number of noise and distortion products. Techniques to address these problems have been discussed.

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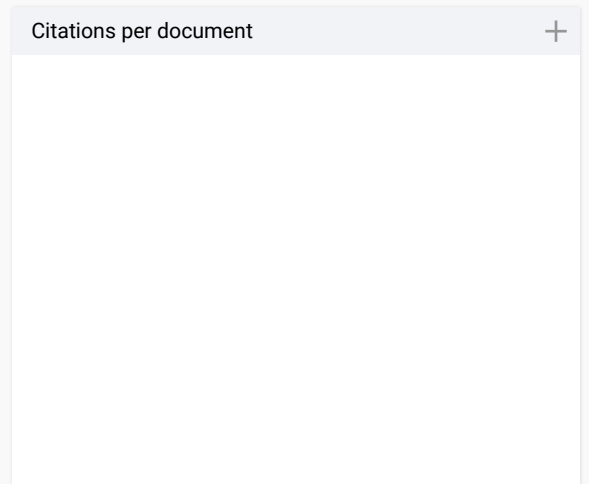
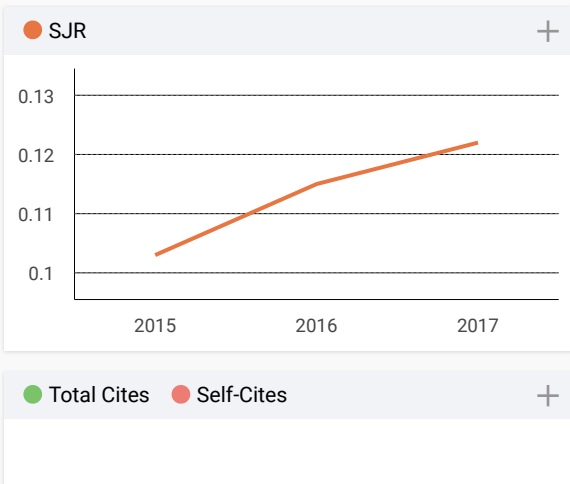
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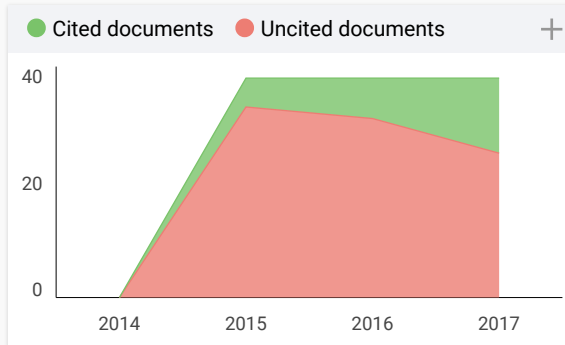
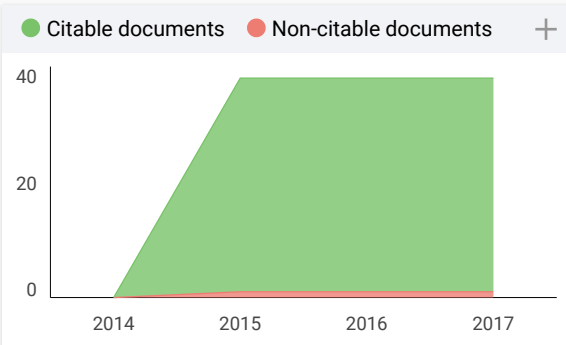
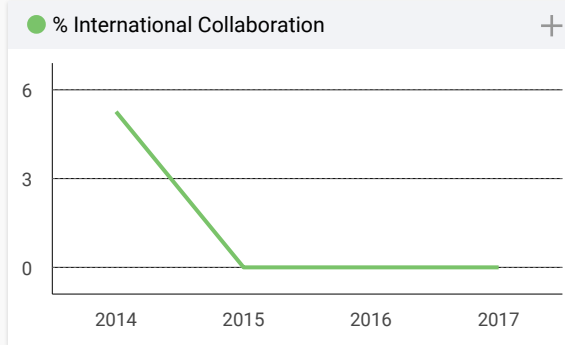
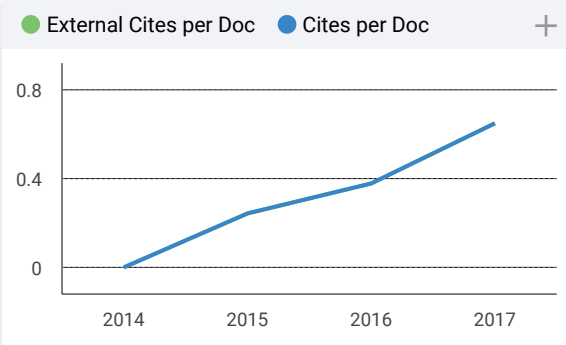
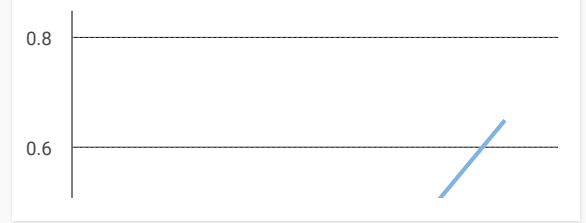
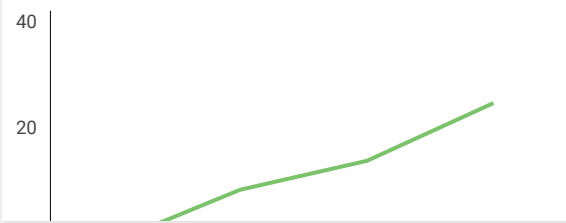
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- Smart electrical panel installation** 

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---

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Cited by: Papers (6)
- Abstract** **HTML**  
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- Photovoltaic module and maximum power point tracking modelling using Adaptive Neuro-Fuzzy Inference System** 

















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Mauridhi Hery Purnomo  
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Year: 2014
- 
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- Yusran  
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Cited by: Papers (3)
- ▼ **Abstract** **HTML**  
- Electrical network power quality improvement through distributed generation optimum placement based on Breeder Genetic Algorithm method 
- Yusran  
2014 Makassar International Conference on Electrical Engineering and Informatics (MICEEI)  
Year: 2014
- 
- Value assessment of power generation project by UNPV method considering scale effects** 
- Yuta Ide; Hajime Miyauchi; Tetsuya Misawa  
Publication Year: 2014 , Page(s): 23 - 27  
Cited by: Papers (4)
- ▼ **Abstract** **HTML**  
- Value assessment of power generation project by UNPV method considering scale effects 
- Yuta Ide; Hajime Miyauchi; Tetsuya Misawa  
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Year: 2014
- 
- Three-phase inverter using microcontroller for speed control application on induction motor** 
- Faizal Arya Samman; Tajuddin Waris; Tiara Dwi Anugerah;  
Muhammad Nuralim Zain Mide  
Publication Year: 2014 , Page(s): 28 - 32  
Cited by: Papers (2)
- ▼ **Abstract** **HTML**  
- Three-phase inverter using microcontroller for speed control application on induction motor 
- Faizal Arya Samman; Tajuddin Waris; Tiara Dwi Anugerah;  
Muhammad Nuralim Zain Mide  
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Year: 2014


Publication Year: 2014 , Page(s): 33 - 36

- Abstract** **HTML**  
- Performance analysis of interconnection sistem of SulselBarTeng using unified power flow controller (UPFC)** 
- Indra Jaya; Zahir Zainuddin; Upa S Yustinus  
 2014 Makassar International Conference on Electrical Engineering and Informatics (MICEEI)  
 Year: 2014
- 
- Vegetable oil based biodiesel feedstock potential in Indonesia** 
- Fitriyanti Mayasari; Rinaldy Dalimi  
 Publication Year: 2014 , Page(s): 37 - 41  
 Cited by: Papers (3)
- Abstract** **HTML**  
- Vegetable oil based biodiesel feedstock potential in Indonesia** 
- Fitriyanti Mayasari; Rinaldy Dalimi  
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 Year: 2014
- 
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- Merna Baharuddin; Elyas Palantei; Martina Pineng  
 Publication Year: 2014 , Page(s): 42 - 45
- Abstract** **HTML**  
- An experimental evaluations of nanosatellite transmitter and receiver systems for telemetry application** 
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- 
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 Publication Year: 2014 , Page(s): 46 - 49  
 Cited by: Papers (1)
- Abstract** **HTML**  
- Convex optimization approach for stroke detection in microwave head imaging** 
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- 
- Antenna design for femtocell LTE at frequency 2.3 – 2.4 GHz** 
- Sarah Karimah; Fitri Yuli Zulkifli; Basari; Eko Tjipto Rahardjo  
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 Cited by: Papers (2)


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- Elyas Palantei; Ashadi Amir; Wardi; Intan Sari Areni; Dewiani; Sukriyah Buwarda
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**Abstract**   [HTML](#)      


















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- Elyas Palantei; Ashadi Amir; Wardi; Intan Sari Areni; Dewiani; Sukriyah Buwarda
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- Utilization of HF electromagnetic waves availability for charging mobile communication device** 
- Intan Sari Areni; Asmah Akhriana; Elyas Palantei; Sukriyah Buwarda
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Year: 2014
- 
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A.Asmi Pratiwi; Intan Sari Areni; Elyas Palantei; Dewiani  
Publication Year: 2014 , Page(s): 74 - 77  
Cited by: Papers (2)
- Abstract** **HTML**  
- Ultra Wide Band (UWB) antenna design for fetal monitoring**   
A.Asmi Pratiwi; Intan Sari Areni; Elyas Palantei; Dewiani  
2014 Makassar International Conference on Electrical Engineering and Informatics (MICEEI)  
Year: 2014
- 
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Andy Maulana Hidayat; I Wayan Mustika; Selo Sulisty  
Publication Year: 2014 , Page(s): 78 - 82  
Cited by: Papers (2)
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- Implementation of Wireless Sensor Network to reduce cashier queue**   
Andy Maulana Hidayat; I Wayan Mustika; Selo Sulisty  
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Year: 2014
- 
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Sirmayanti Sirmayanti; Mike Faulkner  
Publication Year: 2014 , Page(s): 83 - 87
- Abstract** **HTML**  
- $\Sigma\Delta$  modulator for digital wireless architecture: A review**   
Sirmayanti Sirmayanti; Mike Faulkner  
2014 Makassar International Conference on Electrical Engineering and Informatics (MICEEI)  
Year: 2014
- 
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Muhammad Mimsyad; Abdullah Bazergan; Yuliana Rauf  
Publication Year: 2014 , Page(s): 88 - 91
- Abstract** **HTML**  
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Muhammad Mimsyad; Abdullah Bazergan; Yuliana Rauf  
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 Faizal Arya Samman  
 Publication Year: 2014 , Page(s): 92 - 96  
 Cited by: Papers (1)
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 Nian Xing; Qiu Chun  
 Publication Year: 2014 , Page(s): 97 - 102
  - Abstract**    [HTML](#)
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## CONTENTS

MICEEI2014_PEF01	Syafaruddin	Problem-Solving Mismatching Losses of Photovoltaic (PV) System under Partially Shaded Conditions	1
MICEEI2014_PEF04	Ansar Suyuti, Ikhlas Kitta, Zaenab Muslimin, Fitriyanti Mayasari	Smart Electrical Panel Installation	5
MICEEI2014_PEF05	Novie Ayub Windarko, Ony Asrarul Qudsi, Anang Tjahjono, Dimas Okky A. and Mauridhi Hery Purnomo	Optimized PI Constant for Current Controller of Grid Connected Inverter with LCL Filter Using Genetic Algorithm	9
MICEEI2014_PEF06	Anang Tjahjono, Ony Asraul Qudsi, Novie Ayub Windarko  Dimas Okky Anggriawan, Ardyono Priyadi, Mauridhi Hery Purnomo	Photovoltaic Module and Maximum Power Point Tracking Modelling Using Adaptive Neuro-Fuzzy Inference System	14
MICEEI2014_PEF07	Yusran	Electrical Network Power Quality Improvement Through Distributed Generation Optimum Placement Based on Breeder Genetic Algorithm Method	20
MICEEI2014_PEF10	Yuta Ide, Hajime Miyauchi, and Tetsuya Misawa	Value Assessment of Power Generation Project by UNPV Method Considering Scale Effects	23
MICEEI2014_PEF11	Faizal Arya Samman, Tajuddin Waris, Tiara Dwi Anugrah and Muhammad Nuralim Zain Mide	Three Phase Inverter using Microcontroller for Speed Control Application on Induction Motor	28
MICEEI2014_PEF12	Indra Jaya, Zahir Zainuddin and Yustinus Upa S	Performance Analysis of Interconnection Sistem of Sulselbarteng Using Unified Power Flow Controller (UPFC)	33
MICEEI2014_PEF13	Fitriyanti Mayasari and Rinaldy Dalimi	Vegetable Oil Based Biodiesek Feedstock Potential in Indonesia	37

MICEEI2014_TEF03	Merna Baharuddin, Elyas Palantei, and Martina Pineng	An Experimental Evaluations of Nanosatellite Transmitter and Receiver Systems for Telemetry  Application	42
MICEEI2014_TEF06	U.T. Ahmed, A.T. Mobashsher, A.M. Abbosh	Convex Optimization Approach for Stroke Detection in Microwave Head Imaging	46
MICEEI2014_TEF07	Sarah Karimah, Fitri Yuli Zulkifli	Array Antenna Design for Femtocell LTE at Frequency 2.3 – 2.4 GHz	50
MICEEI2014_TEF08	Firdaus, Eko Nugroho, and Alvin Sahroni	ZigBee and Wifi Network Interface on Wireless Sensor Network	54
MICEEI2014_TEF10	Anna Syahrani, Gusti Agung Ayu Putri, Azkario Rizky Pratama, Guntur Dharma Putra, Warsun Najib, Widyawan	WSAN-based Energy Efficient System in Building: a Monitoring and Scheduling	59
MICEEI2014_TEF11	Elyas Palantei, Ashadi Amir, Wardi, Intan Sari Areni, Dewiani, and Sukriyah Buwarda	High Gain CP Antenna for Mobile Satellite Communications Numerically Evaluated under Various Packaging Materials	65
MICEEI2014_TEF12	Intan Sari Areni Asmah Akhriana, Elyas Palantei and Sukriyah Buwarda	Utilization of HF Electromagnetic Waves Availability for Charging Mobile Communication Device	69
MICEEI2014_TEF15	Asmi Pratiwi, Intan Sari Areni, Elyas Palantei and Dewiani	Ultra Wideband Antenna Design for Fetal Monitoring	74
MICEEI2014_TEF17	Andy Maulana Hidayat, I Wayan Mustika and Selo Sulistyo	Implementation of Wireless Sensor Network to Reduce Cashie Queue	78



MICEEI2014_TEF18	Sirmayanti Sirmayanti, Mike Faulkner	$\Sigma\Delta$ Modulator for Digital Wireless Architecture : A review	83
MICEEI2014_TEF19	Muhammad Mimsyad, Abdullah Bazergan and Yuliana Rauf	Study of Performance Analysis of Ka-Band Satelite Communication Link in Makassar	88
MICEEI2014_CCCEF01	Faizal Arya Samman	Network-on-Chip with an Arbitration Control for Balancing Throughputs in Multiprocessor Applications	92
MICEEI2014_CCCEF02	Nian Xing and Qiu Chun	Pad Design for a Move-and-Charge System for Electric Vehicles	97
MICEEI2014_CCCEF03	Anang Tjahjono Ardyono Priyadi, Mauridhi Hery Purnomo, and Margo Pujiantara	Overcurrent Relay Characteristic Curve Modeling Using Adaptive Neuro Fuzzy Inference System	103
MICEEI2014_CCCEF04	Bambang Sugiarto	The Use of Fuzzy Logic for Data Classification in Sensor Node on Wireless Sensor and Actuator Network (WSAN) System	109
MICEEI2014_IEF01	Zulkifli Tahir, Andani Ahmad, Nur Indha M, Anugrahyani, Burhanuddin Mohd Aboobaidar, Shinya Kobayashi	Using Genetic Algorithm to Bridge Decision Making Grid Data Gaps in Small and Medium Industries	114
MICEEI2014_IEF02	Kurnianingsih <sup>1, 2</sup> , Lukito Edi Nugroho <sup>1</sup> , Widyawan <sup>1</sup> , Lutfan Lazuardi <sup>3</sup> , Ridi Ferdiana <sup>1</sup> , Selo <sup>1</sup>	Perspectives of Human Centered Design and Interoperability in Ubiquitous Home Care for Elderly People	118
MICEEI2014_IEF03	Endra Oey	Projection Matrix Design for Compressive Sensing	124
MICEEI2014_IEF04	Dewiani Djamaluddin, Tantri Indrabulan, Andani Achmad,	The Simulation of Vehicle Counting System for Traffic Surveillance using VIOLA-JONES Method	130

MICEEI2014_IEF05	Indrabayu, Sitti Wetenriajeng Arkham Zahri Rakhman, Kurnianingsih, Lukito Edi Nugroho, Widyawan	u-FAST: Ubiquitous Fall Detection and Alert System for Elderly People in Smart Home Environment	136
MICEEI2014_IEF08	Satoshi Kuboi, Kensuke Baba, Shigeru Takano, and Kazuaki Murakami	Approximate String Matching for Large-scale Event Processing	141
MICEEI2014_IEF09	Syafruddin Syarif,Zulfajri B. Hasanuddin, Muhammad Tola, Suryani	Syaritar Intelligent System for the Detection of Illegal Logging in the River Basin Jeneberang	145
MICEEI2014_IEF10	I Md. Dendi Maysanjaya, Hanung Adi Nugroho, Noor Akhmad Setiawan	Classification Fetus Gender On Ultrasound Image Using Learning Vector Quantization (LVQ)	150
MICEEI2014_IEF12	Amil Ahmad Ilham, Indrabayu, Rezkiana Hasanuddin, Deasy Mutiara Putri	Wavelet Analysis for Identification of Lung Abnormalities using Artificial Neural Network	156
MICEEI2014_IEF13	A.Ejah Umraeni Salam, Muh Tola, Mary Selintung, Farouk Maricar	A Leakage Detection System on the Water Pipe Network through Support Vector Machine Method	161
MICEEI2014_IEF15	Purnawansyah and Haviluddin	Comparing Performance of Backpropagation and RBF Neural Network Models for Predicting Daily Network Traffic	166
MICEEI2014_IEF17	Indrabayu, Intan Sari Areni, Novy NRA Mokobombang and Sitti Wetenriajeng Sidehabi	A Fuzzy Logic Approach for Timely Adaptive Traffic Light Light Based on Traffic Load	170
MICEEI2014_IEF19	Dharma Surya Pradana, Ridi Ferdiana	Mobile Applications Rating Assesments Based on Users Experience Perception	175
MICEEI2014_IEF21	Christhine Putri Batara Randa, Adhistya Erna Permanasari	Develop Expert System Diagnosis of Personality Disorders	180

MICEEI2014\_IEF22

Imelda Purba,  
Adhistya Erna  
Permanasari, Noor  
Akhmad Setiawan

Optimization of Neural Network Using  
Genetic Algorithm in Forecasting Third  
Party Funds Bank

184