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Fast prototyping and Indirect Adaptive GPC temperature control of a class of passive HVAC

TAWEGOUM Rousseau
 Unité Propre EPHOR (Environnement de la Plante Horticole)
 Institut National d'Horticulture
 2, rue Le Nôtre 49045 ANGERS
 FRANCE

Abstract: - This study focuses firstly on the numerical investigation of an air conditioning unit prototype developed to guarantee a microclimate with controlled temperature and relative humidity set points for crop growth chambers. Numerical techniques based on Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) were implemented to analyze the flow characteristics of the mixed air produced by the device. Simulations disclose a non-linear relationship between the air flow rate and the aperture opening, and also show that the mixing zone was not perfect but could be improved by the addition of baffles. The promising results obtained from CFD were used to improve the automation of the device for potential application in closed greenhouses. Secondly, the indirect adaptive generalized predictive control strategy (IAGPC) with a decentralized architecture was used to control the temperature of the air conditioning unit. As the process involves time-varying, the use of a recursive estimation approach with a fixed forget factor was adopted to estimate in real time the system parameters, and to adapt simultaneously the GPC controller parameters. In order to achieve a local and global efficient performance, the proposed decentralized IAGPC architecture was applied to two principal subsystems, which compose the global unit. A significant real time experimental improvement in the system performance is observed on temperature control for a wide range of operating points.

Key-Words: numerical simulation, air flow distribution, time varying parameters, decentralized control, adaptive control.

1 Introduction

The energy consumption by the heating, by ventilation and by air conditioning equipment in the industrial buildings, constitutes 50% of the world energy consumption [1]. Among these buildings, one distinguishes horticultural greenhouses, which present an important branch of the agriculture sector [2], [3]. The optimal management of the greenhouse microclimate (temperature, moisture) is a dominating factor, on the one hand to deal with the market quantitative and qualitative requirements [4], [5] and on the other hand to ensure a possible better economic profitability for the farmers.

In general, air conditioning units used in crop growth chambers are often made up of elements of heating and cooling systems with a compression cycle [6], [7]. In addition to the energy cost and the high expenses of maintenance of this type of systems, they present also an ecological problem because of the pollutant emissions due to the used refrigerating gases. For those reasons, we have investigated an alternative system, which is

passive and does not use the more typical compression device or absorption-refrigeration cycle. The unit can also be helpful in investigation of relative humidity changes and the morphological responses of the plant (growth stoppage, floral transformation, delayed blossom-time, dormancy, etc...).

This paper proceeds as follows. The first part presents the system requirements. The second part focuses the numerical studies conducted based on partial differential equations models with the aim to better understand the mixing process and to forecast the device behaviour for a set of operating conditions. The last part proposes the synthesis of indirect adaptive generalized predictive control law based on differential equations models, with a decentralized architecture in order to manage the air conditioning temperature intended to produce a specific climate in growth chambers.

2 Problem Formulation

The micro-climate needed must be produced by a

Forchheimer model is assumed valid [10], [11]:

$$-\frac{\Delta p}{L} = \left(\frac{\mu}{\alpha} + \frac{C_2}{2} \|v\| \right) v_i \quad (4)$$

where Δp is the pressure drop, L is the thickness of the pads, α is a coefficient independent of the nature of the fluid but depending on the geometry of the medium. It has the dimension of a squared length and is called the specific permeability of the medium. C_2 is a dimensionless form-drag constant dependent on the nature of the porous medium and is called inertial factor, μ is the air dynamic viscosity, v_i are the velocity components,

3.1.3 Virtual tracer gas technique.

The species transport model without reaction was activated to solve the mixing problem. The governing equation was written as:

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t} (\rho C) + \nabla(\rho \vec{v} C) = -\nabla \vec{J} + S \quad (5)$$

with C , the concentration of the transported quantity, S , the mass source term of the considered species, \vec{J} , the diffusion flux. S was set to zero in the air mixing computation, and equal to the water source mass in the pads during humidification investigation.

3.1.4 Boundary Conditions

The boundary conditions considered at the inlet circular section, of diameter 0,02m², were homogeneous velocities of 1,5 m s⁻¹, 2 m s⁻¹, 4 m s⁻¹ and 8 m s⁻¹ respectively, which were assumed to be normal to the section. The outlet section varied from 0,003 to 0,015 m², and the boundary conditions were outflow with zero output gradient. A classical wall function was imposed at the solid boundaries (wall). These were later considered as adiabatic. The turbulence parameters were determined specifying the turbulence length scale and the hydraulic diameter.

3.2 Simulation result and process design

Fig. 2 shows the contours of the velocity magnitude when pads are not included. One can observe the preference way of the air flow and its heterogeneous distribution. Next simulation demonstrates that the use of pads contributes to a reduction of the vortex and an improvement in homogeneity of the air distribution in the duct. The influence of the pads is significant, the main advantage being the accurate saturation of air leaving the pads.

Figure 3 shows the behaviour of the mixing zone in the original device. There is no migration of species in the mixing zone. The molecular diffusion seems to be much smaller than the

turbulent diffusion. When baffles were added downstream the unit, the mixing was much better as shown in Figure 4. More results can be found in [12].

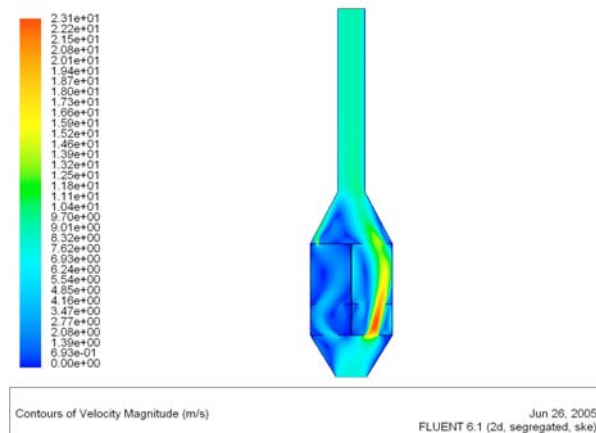


Fig. 2. Contours of velocity magnitude m s⁻¹ (inlet velocity 8 m s⁻¹, opening 10%-90%)

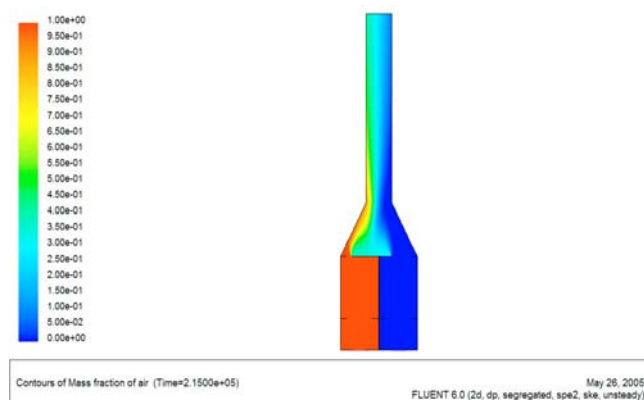


Fig. 3. Contours of mass fraction of air, inlet velocity 4 m s⁻¹, opening 20%-80%.

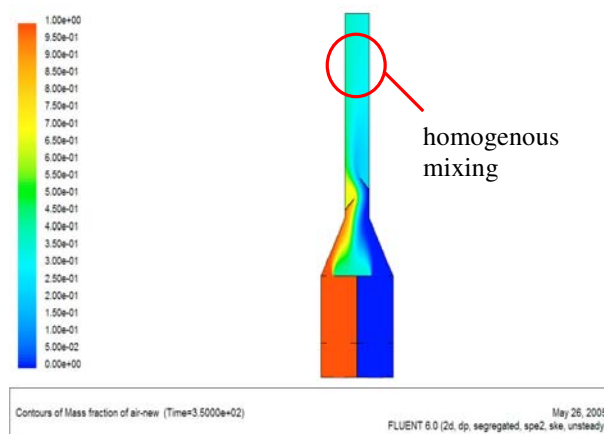


Fig. 4. Device with baffles : Contours of mass fraction of air, inlet velocity 4 m s⁻¹, opening 20%-80%.

The final form of the air conditioning device is

presented on figure 5.

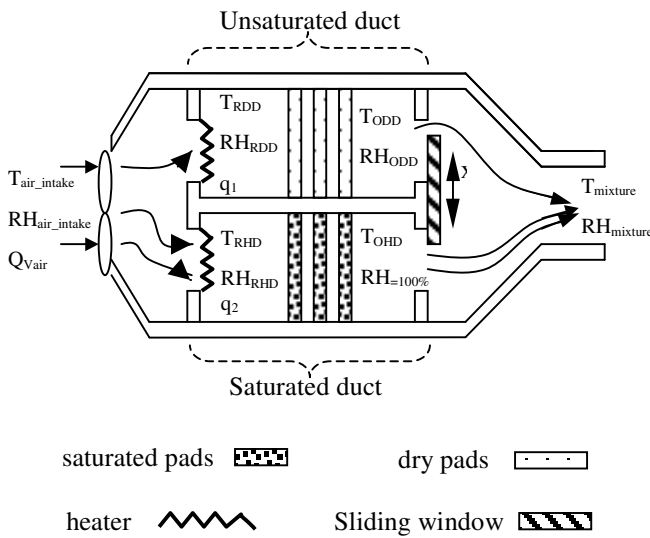


Fig. 5 Cross section view of the air-conditioning unit

The unit is composed of two flows: a non-saturated flow (or dry duct) and a saturated flow (or humidified duct) [12]. As shown in "Figure 5", in the saturated air flow, fresh air is saturated in humidity after being heated by a coil resistor. Saturation operates at constant [13]. The saturation unit consists of a closed system, including a pump, a water tank and cross-corrugated cellulosic pads of the type used in cooling. The suction pump carries water from the tank to the top of the pads. Once a steady state of saturation is reached, the pads contain a constant mass of water with a given water output and a given temperature. In the unsaturated air flow, fresh air is only heated by another resistor coil. Dry pads are included to provide pressure drop balance. The low speed of the air and of the water through the pads reduces the difference of pressure drop between the two streams.

The proportional mixing of the two air flows is carried out by an aperture operated by a DC motor. Assuming that the two air flows are well mixed, a local climate can be easily produced in the growth chamber. A complete physical model of the device is presented in [14]. As the system is nonlinear and time varying parameters, an adaptive predictive approach was used to control the temperature.

4 Indirect Adaptive GPC temperature control

4.1- Indirect Adaptive GPC theory

Considering the complexity of the air conditioning model, the decentralized control architecture was selected to carry out the thermodynamic objective described by the psychometric diagram (Figure 1). The aim of the thermodynamic strategy is to guarantee the same temperature set point for each duct. Since the steady state temperatures in the dry and humidified ducts are obtained, the set point temperature will be guaranteed for an air mixture as shown in fig. 5. In order to validate the feasibility of this thermodynamic strategy by the air conditioning unit, we are first focused on the control of different temperatures of each sub-system in spite of air intake variation and variable operating conditions Figure 6.

The predictive control algorithms based on generalized predictive control or even long range predictive control strategies have proved to be efficient, flexible and successful for industrial applications [15], [16], [17], [18], [19], [20], [21]. This strategy is associated with the recursive estimation algorithm in order to get better performance in both tracking and regulation problems.

The dynamic of conditioning unit can be described around an operating point by the following CARIMA equation :

$$A(q^{-1})\Delta y(k) = B(q^{-1})\Delta u(k-d) + C(q^{-1})\varepsilon(k) \quad (6)$$

$y(k)$ is the system output, $u(k)$ the system input, $\varepsilon(k)$ the uncorrelated random sequence, $\Delta(q^{-1}) = 1 - q^{-1}$ the difference operator, $A(q^{-1}), B(q^{-1}), C(q^{-1})$ are polynomials with n_a, n_b and n_c degree respectively.

The predictive output vector can be formulated as

$$\hat{y}(k+j) = G_j(q^{-1})\Delta u(k+j-1) + \ell_j \quad (7)$$

where: $\ell_j = F_j(q^{-1})y(k) + H_j(q^{-1})\Delta u(k-1)$

Where: F_j, E_j, G_j, H_j are obtained by a recursive calculation of Diophantine equations proposed by [22], [23].

The controller design is based on the minimization of the following cost function :

$$J(k) = \sum_{j=N_1}^{N_2} \left(w(k+j) - \hat{y}(k+j) \right)^2 + \lambda \sum_{j=1}^{N_u} (\Delta u(k+j-1))^2 \quad (8)$$

where: $\Delta u_j(k+j) = 0$, for $j \geq N_u$.

$w(k+j)$ are the set points values at time $k+j$, $\hat{y}(k+j)$ the output prediction at time $k+j$, N_1 the minimum prediction horizon, N_2 the maximum prediction horizon, N_u the control horizon, λ the control-weighting factor.

The control law is therefore given by

$$\Delta U_{opt} = [G^T G + \lambda I]^{-1} G^T (W - L) \quad (9)$$

With G is a $(N_2 - N_1 + 1) \times N_u$ matrix. Only the first control value is finally applied to the system according to the receding horizon strategy:

$$u_{opt}(k) = u_{opt}(k-1) + \bar{G}(W - L) \quad (10)$$

where, \bar{G} is the first line of matrix $[G^T G + \lambda I]^{-1} G^T$.

The adaptive controller is obtained by simply invoking the certainty equivalence principle, which consists of replacing the process model parameters by their estimates when deriving the control law. To estimate the parameters of the model given by (6), and RLS parameter adaptation algorithm with fixed forgetting factors chosen to provide a better adaptation alternance was used [24].

4.2 Application to the process

The dry duct temperature discrete model:

$$\frac{T_{ODD}(k)}{U_{DD}(k)} = \frac{q^{-1}(b_{11}(k) + b_{12}(k)q^{-1})}{1 + a_{11}(k)q^{-1} + a_{12}(k)q^{-2} + a_{13}(k)q^{-3}} \quad (11)$$

The humid duct temperature discrete model:

$$\frac{T_{OHD}(k)}{U_{HD}(k)} = \frac{q^{-1}(b_{21}(k) + b_{22}(k)q^{-1})}{1 + a_{21}(k)q^{-1} + a_{22}(k)q^{-2} + a_{23}(k)q^{-3}} \quad (12)$$

The recursive identification and GPC code developed with Matlab® software were connected to the industrial automation via a local area network managed by interface developed with Delphi® software. A set of electronic units was used to apply heating voltage on the resistors or to control the DC motor and thus, the window opening rate. Measurements were carried out using Pt100 sensors for temperature and encoder sensors for window position. A sampling interval of

$T_e = 30$ seconds was chosen to satisfy the predominant time constant, and data acquisition time about twelve hours. The operating point (aperture opening) values interval is $x \in [0\%, 100\%]$. More results can be found in [25].

In general, good control performance is shown, by the IAGPC for different set points values. The temperature ducts are closed to the set points Figure 6, Figure 8. The figures show in general, an efficient disturbance rejection. These disturbances caused by the intake air temperature are eliminated by the integral action existing in the CARIMA basic model.

The control strategy robustness is also observed, through some temperature overshoots rejection. This type of disturbance is caused by the aperture commutation (operating point system variations) which affects in reality the air rate flow variation. At 700th sampling time in Figure 8, the overshoots presented by the air temperature response of the humid duct, result from the abruptly aperture opening commutation, which introduces a parametric error estimation and by consequence instantaneous closed loop instability between the 800th and the 900th sampling time. These can be explained by the non-persistence of the control signal in steady state, causing the cross-correlation of the covariance matrix vectors, which leads the estimator divergence.

In the Figure 10, the air temperature fluctuations do not appear between the 800 th and the 900 th sample time, such as in Figure 8, because during this time window, the humid duct was almost closed ($10\% < x\% < 18\%$), and thus, its contribution to the air mixing was reduced.

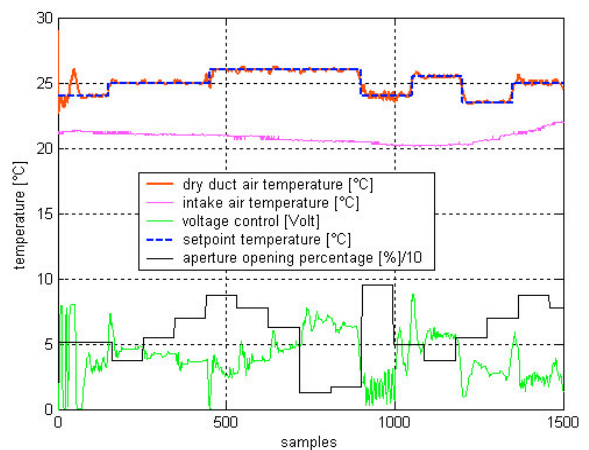


Fig. 6. IAGPC of the air dry duct temperature

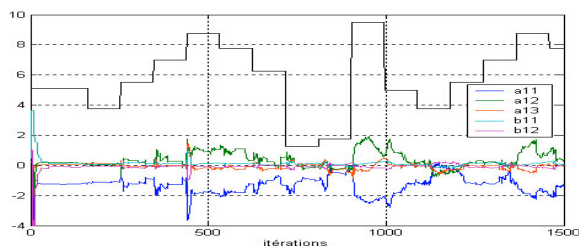


Fig. 7. Dry duct model estimated parameters

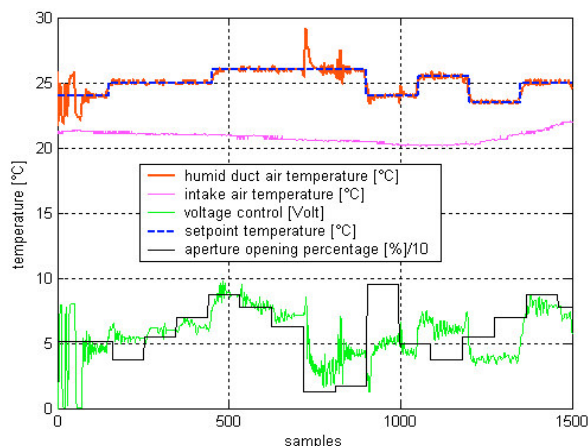


Fig. 8. IAGPC of the air humid duct temperature

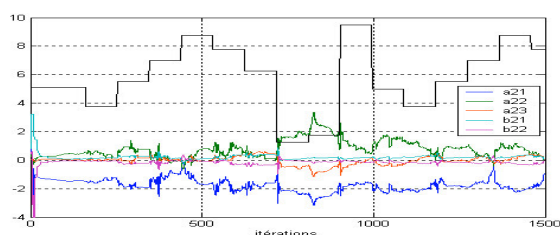


Fig. 9. Humid duct model estimated parameters

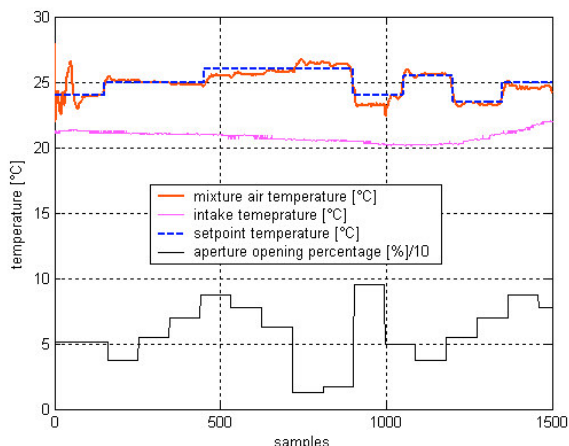


Fig. 10. IAGPC of the air mixture duct temperature

To sum up, the air mixture temperature set points are guaranteed indirectly as consequence to the

accuracy of the two temperatures at the upstream ducts “Figure 9”, with an accepted accuracy, showing the feasibility of the proposed humid air thermodynamic strategy.

5 Conclusion

A CFD software was developed to investigate airflow velocity, pressure and temperature fields, through an air-conditioning unit. Different configurations were tested and compared to experimental values. The results obtained describe and validate the nonlinear relationship between the airflow rate and the aperture opening, and the independence of this relationship to air inlet velocity values. Simulations also show that adding baffles downstream the unit enhanced the air mixing process. These results provide significant information on sensor locations in order to assess the real behaviour of the mixing. Ongoing studies are being conducted in order to understand the transient behaviour during set point modification and to improve the shape of the mixing zone using the shape optimization theory.

Concerning the control aspect, the proposed IAGPC provides, an accepted robustness in spite of the parametric variation and the operating point changes. The relative humidity and the temperature control improvement will be brought by imposing the constraints on both outputs and input control. Taking into account a supervision stage on the local controllers is in study, to enhance the control performance.

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