

# Optical Design of a Solar Parabolic Thermal Concentrator Based on Trapezoidal Reflective Petals

Saša Pavlović\*, Darko Vasiljević<sup>+</sup>, Velimir Stefanović\*

\*Faculty of Mechanical Engineering University of Nis, Thermal Engineering Department

\*Aleksandra Medvedeva 14, 18000 Niš, Serbia,

saledoca@gmail.com, veljas@masfak.ni.ac.rs

<sup>+</sup>Institute of Physics, Photonics Center

Pregravica 118, 11080 Belgrade, Serbia

darko@ipb.ac.rs

**Abstract**— In this paper detailed optical of the solar parabolic dish concentrator is presented. The system has diameter  $D = 2800$  mm and focal length  $f = 1400$  mm. The parabolic dish of the solar system consists from 12 curvilinear trapezoidal reflective petals. The total flux on receiver and the distribution of irradiance for absorbed flux on center and periphery receiver are given. The goal of this paper is to present optical design of a low-tech solar concentrator that can be used as a potentially low-cost tool for laboratory-scale research on the medium-temperature thermal processes, cooling, industrial processes, polygeneration systems etc.

**Keywords**— Solar parabolic dish concentrator, Optical analysis, Solar energy, Solar radiation

## I. INTRODUCTION

The device which is used to transform solar energy to heat is referred to a solar collector. Solar thermal collectors have been widely used to concentrate solar radiation and convert it into medium-high temperature thermal processes. They can be designed as various devices including solar cooker [1], solar hydrogen production [2,3] and Dish Stirling system of harvest electricity [4,5]. The main types of concentrating collectors are: parabolic dish, parabolic trough, power tower, Fresnel collector with mirror or lens and stationary concentrating collectors. The ideal optical configuration for the solar parabolic thermal concentrator is a parabolic mirror. The parabolic mirror is very expensive to fabricate and its cost escalating rapidly with increase of aperture area. The parabolic mirror can be designed with large number of elementary components known as reflecting petals or facets. Usually reflecting petals are made from glass and their thickness is from 0.7 to 1.0 mm. Traditionally, the optical analysis of radiation concentrators has been carried out by means of computer ray-trace programs. Recently, an interesting analytical solution for the optical performance of parabolic dish reflectors with flat receivers was presented by O'Neill and Hudson [6]. Their method for calculating the optical performance is fast and accurate but assumes that the radiation source is a uniform disk. Imhamed M. Saleh Ali et al. [7] have presented study that aims to develop a 3-D static solar concentrator that can be used as low cost and low energy substitute. Their goal were to design solar concentrator for production of portable hot water in rural India. They used ray

tracing software for evaluation of the optical performance of a static 3-D Elliptical Hyperboloid Concentrator (EHC). Optimization of the concentrator profile and geometry is carried out to improve the overall performance of system. Kashika and Reddy [8] used satellite dish of 2.405 m in diameter with aluminium frame as a reflector to reduce the weight of the structure and cost of the solar system. In their solar system the average temperature of water vapor was 300°C, when the absorber was placed at the focal point. Cost of their system was US\$ 950. El Ouederni et al. [9] was testing parabolic concentrator of 2.2 m in diameter with reflecting coefficient 0.85. Average temperature in their system was 380°C. Y. Rafeeu and M.Z.Z. AbKadir [10] have presented simple exercise in designing, building and testing small laboratory scale parabolic concentrators. They made two dishes from acrylonitrile butadiene styrene and one from stainless steel. Three experimental models with various geometrical sizes and diameters were used to analyze the effect of geometry on a solar irradiation. Zhiqiang Liu et al. [11] presented a procedure to design a facet concentrator for a laboratory-scale research on medium – temperature thermal processes. The facet concentrator approximates a parabolic surface with a number of flat square facets supported by a parabolic frame and having two edges perpendicular to the concentrator axis. A 164 – facet concentrator will deliver up to 8.15 kW of radiative power over 15 cm radius disk located in the focal plane. Their system had average concentration ratio exceeding 100. A., Ahmed P., and Khan K. A. [12] presented two prototype parabolic dishes: the Shenandoah dish and the JPL Parabolic Dish Concentrator. The Shenandoah dish was designed to heat silicone oil in one pass to 400°C. The Shenandoah dish is 7 m parabolic reflecting dish formed from 21 aluminum petals covered with special reflective layer on one side. The second parabolic dish (JPL parabolic dish concentrator) has parabolic reflector surface with 12 m diameter. Rebecca Dunn et al. [13] investigated experimental evaluation of ammonia receiver geometries with a 9 m<sup>2</sup> dish concentrator. The 20 m<sup>2</sup> dish is mirrored with around 2000 flat mirror tile facets arranged in concentric rings on a parabolic fiber glass support structure. Size of mirror facets is from 5 cm to 10 cm. Glen Johnston et al. [14] analyzed optical performance of spherical reflecting elements for use with parabolic dish concentrators. This concentrator

consist of 54 triangular mirrors. The effective rim angle for the dish is  $46^\circ$ . The 54 units are composed of nine separate panel shapes, each of shapes is duplicated six times. The focal length of system is 13.1 m. They compared the optical performances and manufacturing feasibility of collectors having such a combination of surfaces.

The decision to make solar parabolic concentrator with 12 petals is based on large number of design concepts that are realized in the world. This concept already proved useful in solar techniques, especially in production of heat and electrical energy as well as in trigeneration and polygeneration systems.

The basic idea behind this research is to start with primary concept of solar parabolic concentrator which will generate from 10 to 25 kW in polygeneration systems. Only with employment of parabolic concentrating systems it is possible to obtain high temperatures in range from  $200^\circ\text{C}$  to  $800^\circ\text{C}$  and high thermal efficiency.

## II. OPTICAL DESIGN OF THE SOLAR PARABOLIC THERMAL CONCENTRATOR

The optical design of the solar parabolic thermal concentrator, and operation are presented. Optical design is based on parabolic dish with 12 curvilinear trapezoidal petals. Solar dish concentrators are generally concentrators that concentrate solar energy in a small area known as focal point. Dimensions of reflecting surfaces in solar dish concentrator are determined by desired power at maximum levels of insolation and efficiency of collector conversion. Mathematical representation of parabolic concentrator is paraboloid that can be represented as a surface obtained by rotating parabola around axis which is shown on Fig. 1.

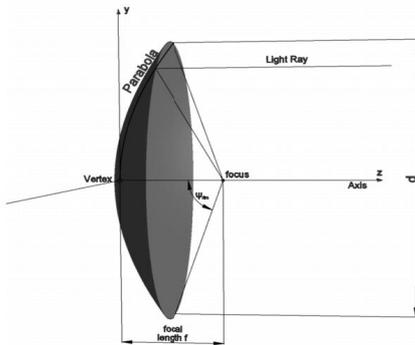


Fig.1 Idealshape of Parabolic Solar Concentrator

Mathematical equations for the parabolic dish solar concentrator (Fig.1) in Cartesian and cylindrical coordinate systems is defined as:

$$x^2 + y^2 = 4fz \quad z = r^2/4f \quad (1)$$

where  $x$  and  $y$  are coordinates in aperture plane and  $z$  is distance from vertex measured along the line parallel with the paraboloid axis of symmetry;  $f$  is focal length of paraboloid i.e. distance from the vertex to the focus along the paraboloid axis of symmetry. The relationship between the focal length and the diameter of parabolic dish is known as the relative aperture and it defines shape of the paraboloid and

position of focal point. The shape of paraboloid can be also defined by rim angle  $\psi_{rim}$ . Usually paraboloids that are used in solar collectors have rim angles from 10 degrees up to 90 degrees. The relationship between the relative aperture and the rim angle is given by:

$$f/D = \frac{1}{4 \tan(\psi_{rim}^2)} \quad (2)$$

The paraboloid with small rim angles have the focal point and receiver at large distance from the surface of concentrator. The paraboloid with rim angle smaller than  $50^\circ$  is used for cavity receivers while paraboloids with large rim angles are most appropriate for the external volumetric receivers (central receiver solar systems).

The geometric concentration ratio can be defined as the area of the collector aperture  $A_{app}$  divided by the surface area of the receiver  $A_{rec}$  and can be calculated by eq.3.

$$CR_g = (\sin^2 \theta_a)^{-1} = A_c A_r^{-1} = A_{app} / A_{rec} \quad (3)$$

The designed solar parabolic concentrator has geometric concentration ratio  $CR = 13615$

Flux concentrating ratio can be defined as ratio of flux concentrated in a point  $I$  to incident solar flux  $I_{b,n}$ :

$$CR_{flux} = \frac{I}{I_{b,n}} \quad (4)$$

### A. Design Description of Solar Parabolic Concentrator

Mechanical design of the solar parabolic concentrator is done in 3D design software CATIA, Dassault Systems, USA. Parabolic shape of solar concentrator is obtained by entering  $x$  and  $y$  coordinates for selected points. For calculation of necessary points that define parabola public domain software Parabola Calculator 2.0 [15] is used. The calculated coordinates ( $x$  and  $y$ ) for designed parabola are shown in Table 1.

TABLE I COORDINATES OF DESIGNED PARABOLA

X(cm)	-140.0	-116.6	-93.33	-70.00	-46.67	-23.33	0.0
Y(cm)	35	24.31	15.56	8.75	3.89	0.97	0.0
X(cm)	23.33	46.67	70.00	93.33	116.67	140	-
Y(cm)	0.97	3.83	8.75	15.56	24.31	35.00	-

Geometrical model of solar parabolic concentrator is parametrically designed from calculated coordinates and it is shown on Fig. 2. Selected model of solar dish concentrator with 12 petals requires very precise definition of parameters during geometrical modelling of system. Results obtained by optical analysis of solar concentration system are very much dependent on the selected method of the CAD model generation.

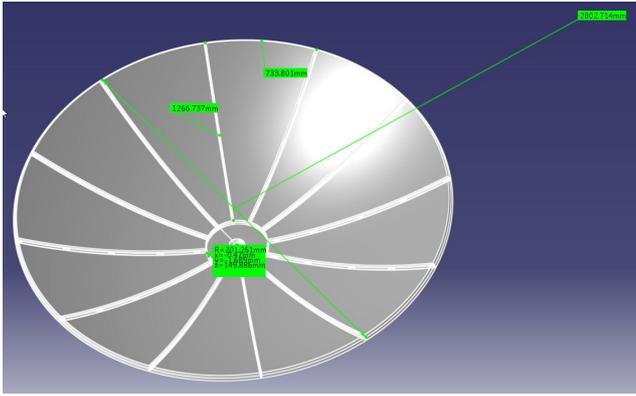


Fig.2 CAD model of solar parabolic concentrator with dimensions

A truncated paraboloid of revolution (circular paraboloid) is obtained by rotating the parabola segment about its axis [Fig. 3]. Consider a concentrator consisting of 12 trapezoidal reflective petals of identical non-overlapping trapezoidal segments. 3D model of trapezoidal reflective petal of solar parabolic concentrator is presented on Fig. 4.

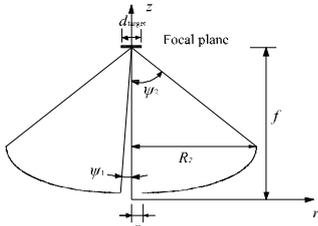


Fig.3 Schematic of truncated parabola



Fig.4 Trapezoidal reflective petal of solar parabolic concentrator

Detailed design parameters of solar parabolic concentrator is given in Table II.

TABLE II DESIGN PARAMETERS OF SOLAR PARABOLIC CONCENTRATOR

Parameters	Numerical value	Unit
Aperture radius $R_1$	1.4	[m]
Radius of smaller hole $R_2$	0.025	[m]
Ideal area of the concentrator $A_{idel}$	6.208	[m <sup>2</sup> ]
The cross section of the opening parabola $A_{proj}$	6.154	[m <sup>2</sup> ]
A sheltered area of the concentrator $A_{shadow}$	0.000452	[m <sup>2</sup> ]
The effective area of the concentrator $A_{ef}=A_{proj}-A_{shadow}$	6.1535	[m <sup>2</sup> ]
Receiver diameter	0.024	[m]
Shape of receiver	Flat circular disc	-
Depth of the concentrator	0.35	[m]
Focal length	1.4	[m]
$\psi_1$	10	[°]
$\psi_2$	45	[°]

Receiver - absorber is placed in focal area where reflected radiation from solar concentrator is collected. In the process of designing parabolic solar concentrators one always seek for the minimum size of the receiver. With small receiver size one can reduce heat losses as well as cost of whole system. Also small receiver size provide increase of absorbed flux on the surface of receiver. This is the way of obtaining greater efficiency in conversion of solar radiation to heat. In our

system receiver - absorber is cylindrical disk with diameter of 24 mm. It is shown on Fig. 4.

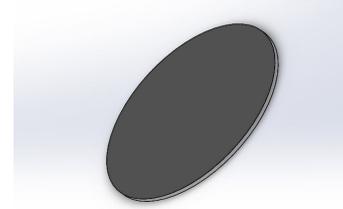


Fig.4 Solar receiver - flat circular disc

In this paper only optical properties of receiver are analysed. In our further research we plan to model all necessary details of receiver's geometry which are important for conversion of solar energy into heat of fluid that is used for transfer energy.

### III. OPTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SOLAR PARABOLIC THERMAL CONCENTRATOR

For optical analysis of solar parabolic thermal concentrator software TracePro, Lamda Research Corporation, USA is used. First step was importing 3D model designed in CATIA. In TracePro all material properties are assigned. 12 trapezoidal reflective petals are defined as standard mirrors with reflective coating. Reflection coefficient was 95%. Receiver was cylinder with diameter 24 mm placed on 1400 mm from vertex of parabolic dish. Absorbing surface was defined as perfect absorber. After definition of geometry of solar parabolic concentrator radiation source was defined. Radiation source was circular with diameter same as diameter of parabolic dish (2800 mm). Radiation source was placed 2000 mm from vertex of parabolic dish and had circular grid pattern for generating 119401 rays for Monte Carlo ray tracing. Spatial profile of generated rays was uniform and angular profile was solar radiation. Input parameter for optical analysis is solar irradiance 800 W/m<sup>2</sup>. Experiential value for solar irradiation for town of Niš in Serbia is between 750 W/m<sup>2</sup> and 900 W/m<sup>2</sup>. Optical system for solar parabolic concentrator with traced rays is given in Fig. 5.

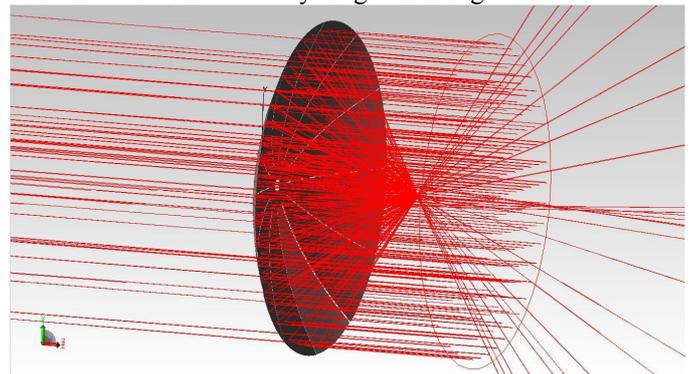


Fig.5 Optical system of solar parabolic concentrator with traced rays

Optical analysis is done by generating and calculating Monte Carlo ray trace for 119401 ray. From all emitted rays only 103029 rays reached absorber surface which is 82% rays of emitted rays are absorbed on receiver. Calculated irradiance for absorbed rays on receiver is from  $8.66 \cdot 10^{-6}$  W/m<sup>2</sup> to

$3.45 \cdot 10^7 \text{ W/m}^2$ . Total calculated flux on receiver was 4031 W. On Fig. 6 is shown total irradiance map for absorbed flux on receiver.

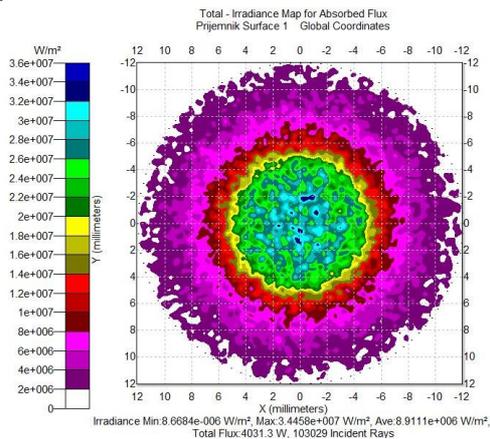


Fig.6 Irradiance map for absorbed flux on receiver

From Fig. 6 one can see that calculated values for total irradiance are in compliance with theoretically values. In the center of receiver irradiance is from  $3.45 \cdot 10^7 \text{ W/m}^2$  to  $2 \cdot 10^7 \text{ W/m}^2$  and at the periphery of receiver irradiance is from  $8 \cdot 10^6 \text{ W/m}^2$  to  $2 \cdot 10^6 \text{ W/m}^2$ .

Irradiance diagram at the center of receiver is given at Fig. 7.

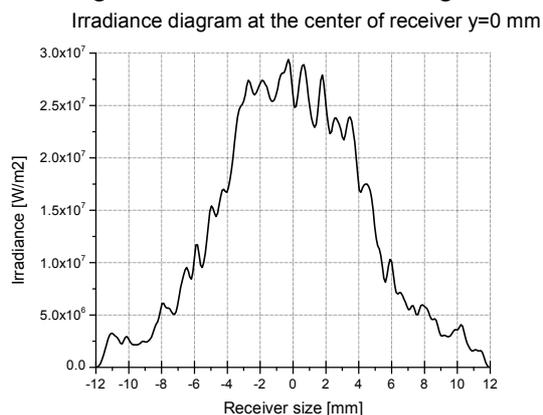


Fig.7 Irradiance diagram at the center of receiver

From Fig. 7 one can see that peak irradiance is in the circle with diameter 8 mm (from -4 mm to 4 mm). Very good irradiance is in the circle with diameter 16 mm. Irradiance diagram at the periphery of receiver is given at Fig. 8.

Irradiance diagram at the periphery of receiver y=8 mm

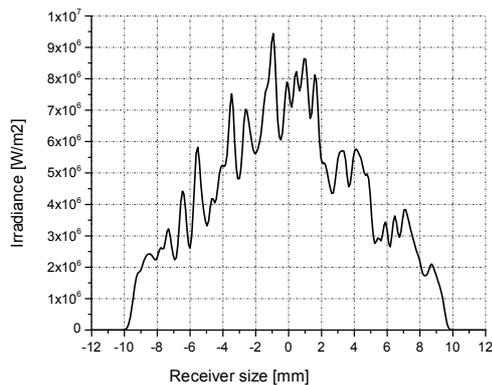


Fig.8 Irradiance diagram at the periphery of receiver

From Fig. 8 one can see that irradiance diagram at periphery of receiver is still rather good with peak values of irradiance in the circle diameter 4 mm. Very good values of irradiance is in the circle with diameter 16 mm. From Fig. 7 and 8 one can see that irradiance has very good values in the circle with diameter 16 mm for center and periphery and that only peak values change from center to periphery.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

This paper presents optical analysis of the solar parabolic concentrator using the ray - tracing software TracePro. One can see that results obtained from optical design of solar parabolic concentrator are satisfactory. Total flux in focal area is good. Irradiance distribution for absorbed flux is relatively uniform for small area for absorber. As a next step various analysis and simulations of the model are planned. Among others are variation of number of petals, size of petals, shape of petals. In future development of optimization method is planned. This optimization method will make it possible to find optimal geometrical and optical parameters of the various types of solar parabolic dish concentrators as well as geometrical, optical and thermal parameters of receivers - absorbers.

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