

## A design approach for integrating thermoelectric devices using topology optimization - DTU Orbit (08/11/2017)

### A design approach for integrating thermoelectric devices using topology optimization

Efficient operation of thermoelectric devices strongly relies on the thermal integration into the energy conversion system in which they operate. Effective thermal integration reduces the temperature differences between the thermoelectric module and its thermal reservoirs, allowing the system to operate more efficiently. This work proposes and experimentally demonstrates a topology optimization approach as a design tool for efficient integration of thermoelectric modules into systems with specific design constraints. The approach allows thermal layout optimization of thermoelectric systems for different operating conditions and objective functions, such as temperature span, efficiency, and power recovery rate. As a specific application, the integration of a thermoelectric cooler into the electronics section of a downhole oil well intervention tool is investigated, with the objective of minimizing the temperature of the cooled electronics. Several challenges are addressed: ensuring effective heat transfer from the load, minimizing the thermal resistances within the integrated system, maximizing the thermal protection of the cooled zone, and enhancing the conduction of the rejected heat to the oil well. The design method incorporates temperature dependent properties of the thermoelectric device and other materials. The 3D topology optimization model developed in this work was used to design a thermoelectric system, complete with insulation and heat sink, that was produced and tested. Good agreement between experimental results and model forecasts was obtained and the system was able to maintain the load at more than 33 K below the oil well temperature. Results of this study support topology optimization as a powerful design tool for thermal design of thermoelectric systems.

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