

Some suggest it's time to rethink which direction we point our solar panels

October 10 2014, by Bob Yirka



Recently, the *New York Times* newspaper ran an article questioning the logic of tacking solar panels onto rooftops facing south (instead of say, north, east or west). The thinking has gone, they report, that doing so will allow for collecting the most energy over a whole day—for panels that don't move to follow the sun of course. As the sun comes up in the east, some of that light can hit a southern facing panel. Over the course of the



day, as the sun rises and then falls, some degree of sunlight will continue to hit the panel, providing the most amount of electricity over the course of a day. But now, some have begun to question that logic and the way solar energy is used in conjunction with the grid.

At the heart of the matter is how energy collected by <u>solar panels</u> on homes and other buildings is used by the <u>grid</u>. If a homeowner "makes" more <u>electricity</u> than is used, for example, than the surplus is sent back to the grid for others to use and the homeowner gets paid for it at the same rate as is paid for electricity coming up (despite not having the same capital and operating costs). But now, some are suggesting that the whole approach be modified. If the idea is to establish the best possible grid, it would make far more sense for homeowners to have their panels facing west, because late afternoon and early evening is when homeowners are home using their lights, air conditioners, television, etc.

In other words, if the goal is to help the grid, it would be far better to send the grid the most power when it is needed the most. That's just one issue. Another is the way that solar power sold back to the grid causes problems for utilities, as does adding wind power or natural gas power for that matter. That's because such renewable sources can offer energy at a cheaper cost, but only during the hours when it's available. Thus, if they undercut coal or <u>nuclear power plants</u>, then people start to question why such antiquated sources continue to exist. And that reason of course is because they offer full power all the time, but don't get paid extra for that level of service.

One tiny little factor being overlooked in this discussion seems to be the possibility that the grid may at some point, cease to exist altogether. What if technology comes through for us and we all wind up making our own electricity? Wouldn't that sort of make the argument for pointing our panels, south, rather moot?



More information: <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2014/10/08/bus.com/2

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