

# Python-based Equivalent Circuit Network (PyECN) Modelling Framework for Lithium-ion Batteries

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## Abstract

Lithium-ion batteries are now an essential part of future transportation and electricity networks. This has led to an increase in demand for accurate and fast models to support their development and deployment. Commercial codes can represent a barrier to entry for some, particularly academic research groups, and open-source modelling environments for physics-based models of batteries, such as PyBaMM have been developed in response to this. Equivalent circuit network (ECN) models are routinely used as a faster alternative to physics-based models, as they are easier and cheaper to parameterise, and are more suited for problems requiring a high level of discretisation, such as cell and system design and optimisation. However, there is no equivalent open-source code for this type of model. In response to this, the open-source Python package PyECN (*Python Equivalent Circuit Network*), developed at Electrochemical Science

& Engineering Group (ESE) in Imperial College London, provides a comprehensive modelling framework for Lithium-ion battery simulation. PyECN is able to simulate the electrical and thermal performances of cylindrical, prismatic and pouch cell form factors. The code package presented here should be of immediate interest to cell manufacturers, module and pack designers and battery researchers.

## 1. Introduction

The ability to correctly predict the multi-physics behaviour of lithium-ion batteries is critical for their safety, performance, cost and lifetime. There are multiple commercial software products that include battery models, e.g., STAR CCM+ [1], COMSOL [2], ANSYS [3], Simulink [4] etc. Most of those products provide graphical user interface (GUI) for user to create battery models in a convenient way. These software are also integrated within general modelling frameworks covering multi-disciplines. However, they still have some limitations. Firstly, access to ultimate control. The frameworks of those commercial software are usually black boxes which provide barriers for researchers who want to improve or add functionality rather than just use them as tools to solve engineering problems. Secondly, licensing can be a significant cost burden for battery research, particularly in academia.

In response, there are many professional coding frameworks established for academic battery research, some open source, such as PyBaMM [7], Dandelion [8], DUALFOIL [9], LIONSIMBA [10] and MSMD [11][12] etc. Those codes have played an important role in helping understand many aspects of the fundamentals and mechanisms for Lithium-ion battery. However, all of these codes solve electrochemical models with complex differential algebraic equations (DAE), and they are computationally expensive in nature. A significant number of fundamental parameters in the equations are also needed and they are not easily obtained. Most of those codes are based on 1D or 2D model assumptions, i.e., discretisation is sacrificed for lower computational cost. For a fully 3D model, the simulation of long-term degradation tests is unlikely to be

computationally affordable [13]. These codes therefore have limited applicability for complex battery engineering problems.

In this work, an equivalent circuit network (ECN) battery modelling framework PyECN (*Python Equivalent Circuit Network*) is created and coded in the open-source Python language. The package is capable of predicting the 3D electro-thermal behaviour of batteries of 3 different form factors: pouch, cylindrical and prismatic cells. The detailed internal structures are considered such as the metal can and tab configuration. Several models of different commercially available cells have been experimentally validated. To create a new cell model, the parametrisation is easy and affordable. As an example, the effect of the tab design and thermal management strategies on the battery performance is studied. The package is being made open source by us to speed up the development of new battery technologies for the benefit of all. The model and code package presented here should be of immediate interest to cell manufacturers, module and pack designers and battery researchers.

## 2. Overview of PyECN

PyECN solves the coupled equations of electro-thermal problems defined by Eq. (a-f). The equations are discretized by finite difference method. The schematic of the distributed ECN model for cylindrical cell and pouch cell (as examples) is shown in **Fig. 1**. In this modelling framework, the whole cell is distributed into coupled electrical and thermal ECN units. Within each ECN unit, current collector and electrodes are considered, and they have different electrical and thermal properties. For the electrical model in the electrode domain, the typical local ECN includes a voltage source  $E_s$

representing the Open Circuit Voltage (OCV), a series resistance  $R_0$  representing the instantaneous ohmic resistance, and a set of Resistor-Capacitor (RC) branches,  $R_i$  and  $C_i$  that capture the transient response. **Fig. 1** illustrates the set of three Resistor-Capacitor (RC) branches where resistor  $R_i$  & capacitor  $C_i$  represents  $R_1, R_2$  and  $R_3$  and  $C_1, C_2$ , and  $C_3$  respectively for  $i = 1, 2$  and  $3$ . According to Kirchhoff's voltage law, the terminal voltage  $\Delta\phi^{\text{El}}$  of the electrode pair unit is given by Eq. (a), where  $I_i$  is the branch current in the resistor  $R_i$  and  $I$  is the current in resistor  $R_0$ . For the current collector components, charge balance conservation is considered as in Eq. (b), where  $\sigma$  is the conductivity of the current collector and  $\phi^{\text{CC}}$  its local potential.

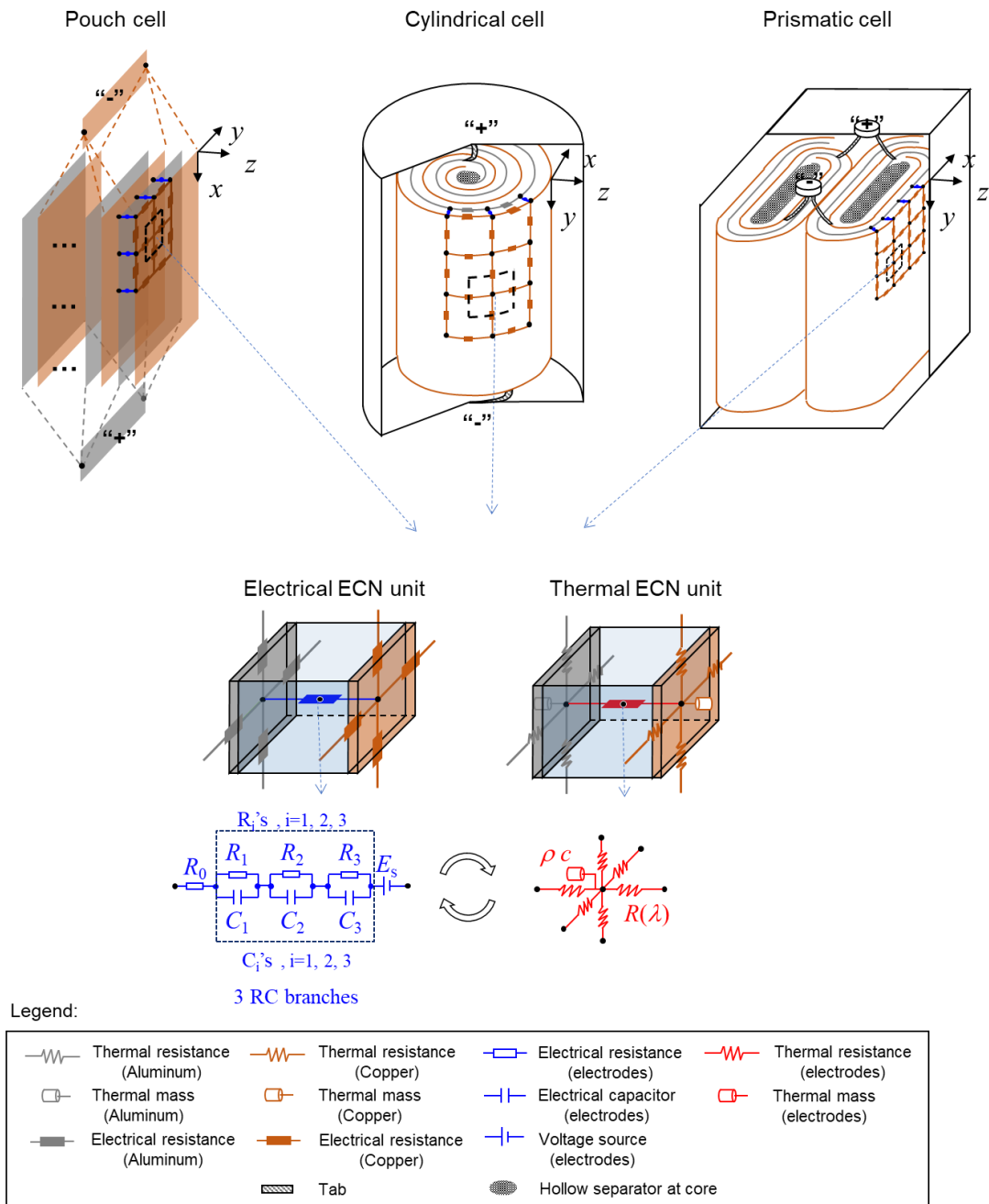
$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \Delta\phi^{\text{El}} = E_s - \sum_{i=1}^3 R_i I_i - R_0 I \quad (\text{a}) \\ \sigma \nabla \cdot (\nabla \phi^{\text{CC}}) = \sigma \frac{\partial^2 \phi^{\text{CC}}}{\partial x^2} + \sigma \frac{\partial^2 \phi^{\text{CC}}}{\partial y^2} = 0 \quad (\text{b}) \\ \rho c \frac{\partial T}{\partial t} = \lambda_x \frac{\partial^2 T}{\partial x^2} + \lambda_y \frac{\partial^2 T}{\partial y^2} + \lambda_z \frac{\partial^2 T}{\partial z^2} + q \quad (\text{c}) \\ Q_{\text{conv}} = h(T - T_{\text{amb}}) \quad (\text{d}) \\ q^{\text{El}} = \left( \sum_{i=1}^3 I_i^2 R_i + I^2 R_0 + IT \frac{dE_s}{dT} \right) / V^{\text{El}} \quad (\text{e}) \\ q^{\text{CC}} = \left( \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=1}^4 (I_i^{\text{CC}})^2 R_i^{\text{CC}} \right) / V^{\text{CC}} \quad (\text{f}) \end{array} \right.$$

For the thermal model in the electrode component, the anode, cathode and separator are lumped into one bulk material (electrode pair) in each thermal ECN. The heat transfer equation for the electrode pair, and current collector materials are given by Eq. (c), where  $\rho$ ,  $c$ ,  $\lambda$  and are the mass density, heat capacity, thermal conductivity and temperature of the electrodes pair.  $\lambda_x$ ,  $\lambda_y$  and  $\lambda_z$  are the corresponding equivalent thermal conductivities in the three directions, and  $q$  is the heat source. For current collector domain, Eq. (c) is still applied with thermal properties of aluminum for positive current

collector foil or copper for negative one. For the metal can outside, the heat generation source is ignored, i.e., the  $q$  term in Eq. (c) is 0. The code accepts two types of thermal boundary conditions: convective boundary condition and Dirichlet-type fixed boundary condition. A convection boundary condition is imposed as Eq. (d), where  $Q_{\text{conv}}$  is the heat transferred due to convection,  $h$  is convective heat transfer coefficient,  $T$  is the temperature at the boundary and  $T_{\text{amb}}$  is the ambient temperature. Dirichlet-type temperature boundary condition have also been implemented, as well as combinations of convection and Dirichlet for each of the surfaces of the metal can.

The electrical model and thermal model are fully coupled, i.e., the electrical parameters (resistance, capacitance and OCV) are function of temperature, while heat generation from the electrical model contributes to the heat source of the thermal model. The overall heat source  $q^{\text{El}}$  for the electrode pair is the sum of reversible and irreversible heat as expressed in Eq. (e), where  $V^{\text{El}}$  is the electrode pair volume in each element. The heat source  $q^{\text{CC}}$  for current collector is written as Eq. (f), where  $I_i^{\text{CC}}$  and  $R_i^{\text{CC}}$  are the current and resistance in the aluminum or copper foil domains, as shown in **Fig. 1**, while  $V^{\text{CC}}$  is the current collector volume.

The ECN model describes a temporal and spatial evolution of various variables of interest such as current density and temperature, for a given load and thermal management choice.



**Fig. 1.** Schematic of the ECN model for pouch cell, cylindrical cell, and prismatic cell.

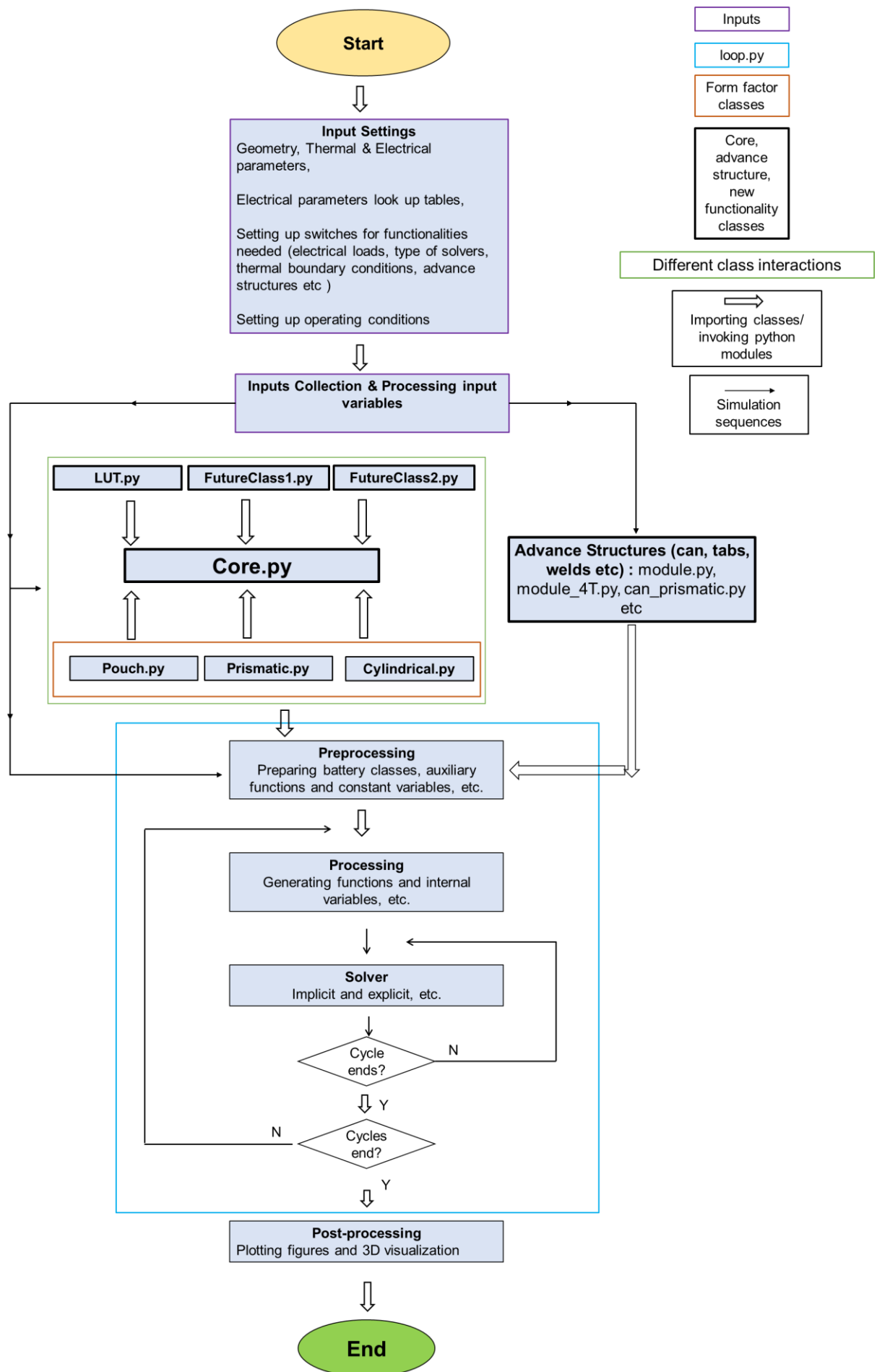


Fig. 2. Flow chart of the PyECN code.

The workflow of PyECN is illustrated in **Fig. 2**. PyECN package is composed of multiple modules. The inputs such as cell capacity, cell geometry, electrode thickness, number of layers/stacks and other electrical and thermal parameters is set in excel workbook (*inputs.xlsx*) and then imported in the python file *inputs\_general.py* module. The necessary lookup tables such as  $R_i$ 's &  $C_i$ 's (as a function of SoC, temperature), entropic coefficient ( $\frac{dE_s}{dT}$ ) (as a function of SoC) and the experimental data used for comparison with modelling results is also imported into *inputs\_general.py* module. The *input\_general.py* module processes all the inputs and make them ready to be used in *inputs\_advance\_structure.py*, *loop.py* and other various modules/classes. The default settings for all three form factors (pouch, cylindrical, prismatic) and corresponding available cells regarding the discretization, thermal boundary conditions for can, tabs etc. is also done in *inputs\_general.py*. The settings related to advance structure classes (*module.py* & *module\_4T.py*) is done in *inputs\_advance\_structure.py* module. The basic operating conditions for simulation such as  $C_{rate}$ , initial SoC, cooling temperature, ambient temperature, cutoff voltages, charge-discharge mode etc. is set in *inputs\_operating\_conditions.py* module. The functionalities required (ECN method for solving, type of coupling between electrical & thermal model, form factor & cell considered for simulation, solvers required, plotting & visualization method used etc.) by the users are set in *functionalities.py* module. All these modules related to setting up the inputs are then collected in *inputs\_collection.py* and imported as the keyword '*ip*'. This is done to import the inputs from various input modules with one common keyword i.e., '*ip*' so that they can be easily called & utilize wherever needed.

In the preprocessing stage in *loop.py* module, the core battery class i.e., *core.py* and other required classes such as *module.py*, *module\_4T.py* and classes related to the external thermal entity (e.g., *can\_prismatic.py* module for prismatic cell casing) are invoked according to the user choice. The auxiliary functions and variables which will remain unchanged in the entire simulation are generated here before the loop iteration. This manipulation will accelerate the simulation speed.

Core battery class module *core.py* is the class which has functions shared by all three form factor battery classes (*cylindrical.py*, *pouch.py*, *prismatic.py* i.e., classes for cylindrical cell, pouch cell, and prismatic cell respectively). *LUT.py* is used for reading all the necessary look up tables and imported into *core.py* module. All developed new future classes should also be imported into *core.py* module.

Finally, the solutions of the equations are output by the solver. The code provides both explicit solver and implicit solver. Both solvers are self-coded and the implicit one uses the `scipy.sparse.linalg.spsolve` function from the python Scipy package. There are two iteration loops. The first loop is for single test profile, e.g., the constant current discharge or drive cycle simulation will be executed within this loop. Simulation involving cycling will be executed by the second iteration loop. After the simulation, the results will be post-processed to make plots and 3D visualization according to the user inputs.

### **3. Usage example**

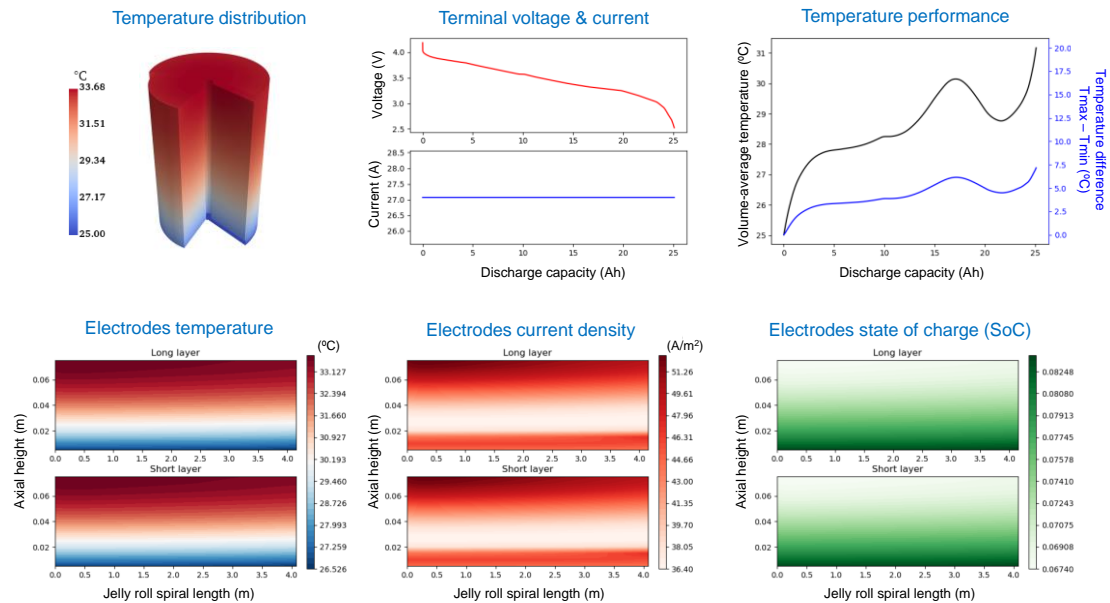
#### **3.1 Simulation of 4680 cylindrical cell with tabless design.**

To show the flexibility of PyECN on considering the internal structure, the 4680

cylindrical cell with tabless design is simulated. For the electrical tab configuration, the positive and negative current collectors at top/base sides are folded to make plane connections with the plane terminals (metal can top/base sides). The cell model is set to discharge at 1C constant current, with the cut-off voltage of 2.5 V at end of discharge. The cooling temperature of 25 °C is applied on the base of the metal can. All the other surfaces including the top surface and side surface are thermally insulated. In the majority of previous cylindrical cell models [12][14][15], the thermal boundary conditions are applied directly on jellyroll models for model simplification. The setup model here is able to capture the internal thermal pathway which significantly affects the temperature performance [6]. The electrical parameters and for this 4680 cell are from a parameterized commercial 2170 cylindrical cell (LG M50T 5 Ah) [6] scaled by the electrode plate area. The rated capacity for this 4680 cell is 27.07 Ah. The thermal properties (thermal conductivity, mass density and heat capacity) are also taken from the commercial cell [6].

The simulation results from the PyECN code are shown in **Fig. 3**. The internal temperature distribution at any time step could be traced. **Fig. 3** shows the internal temperature distribution at end of discharge, visualized using the Mayavi Python package. The terminal voltage, the volume-average temperature rise and temperature difference between the maximum and minimum for the discharge process are shown. The electrodes temperature, current density and state of charge (SoC) are also shown in jellyroll unwound view. It is visible that the jellyroll top is hotter than the bottom for this base cooling scheme, so that the jellyroll top is discharged more than the bottom as the

resistance is low at high temperature for this cell. The SoC for the jellyroll bottom is higher than the top. The current density for both jellyroll top and bottom edge are higher than the middle, this is because the resistance for top area with high temperature and the bottom area with high SoC are lower than the middle area.

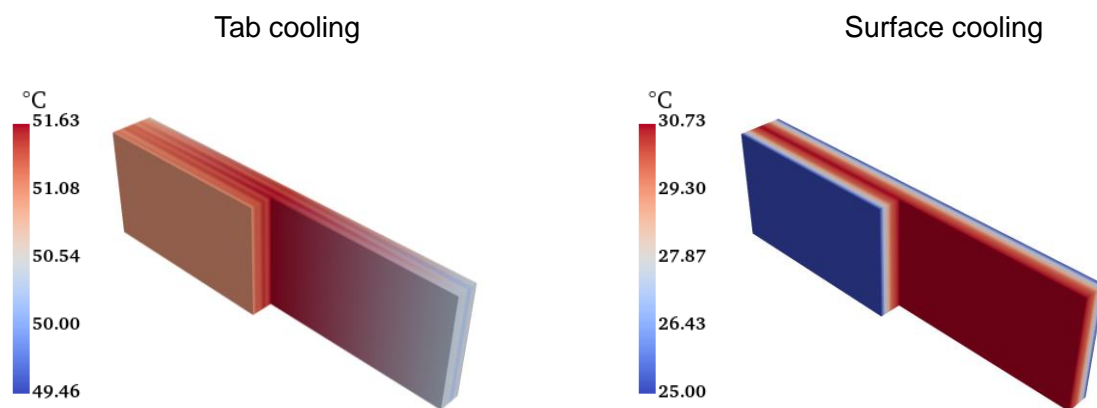


**Fig. 3.** PyECN simulation results of 4680 tabless cylindrical cell under base cooling scenario for 1C constant current discharge process.

### 3.2 Simulation of pouch cell under different thermal management schemes

The simulation was performed for a commercial pouch cell (Kokam 5 Ah, model: SLPB1543140H5) using PyECN. Tab cooling and surface cooling scenarios are two typical thermal management approach for pouch cell. In the simulation, both scenarios were applied for the pouch cell. The cell is discharged at 6C constant current as this power cell was designed for high C rate load. The temperature distribution at end of discharge (after 600 s of discharge) is shown in **Fig. 4**. It is clearly visible that the volume-average temperature in the tab cooling scenario is much higher than that in

surface cooling scenario. The thermal gradient in the surface-cooled cell is more obvious than that in the tab-cooled cell. The volume-average temperature and thermal gradient behaviour for the two cells reproduces the experimental findings [16] and simulation results [17]. The PyECN is capable of capturing the thermal performance of this pouch cell under different thermal management strategies.



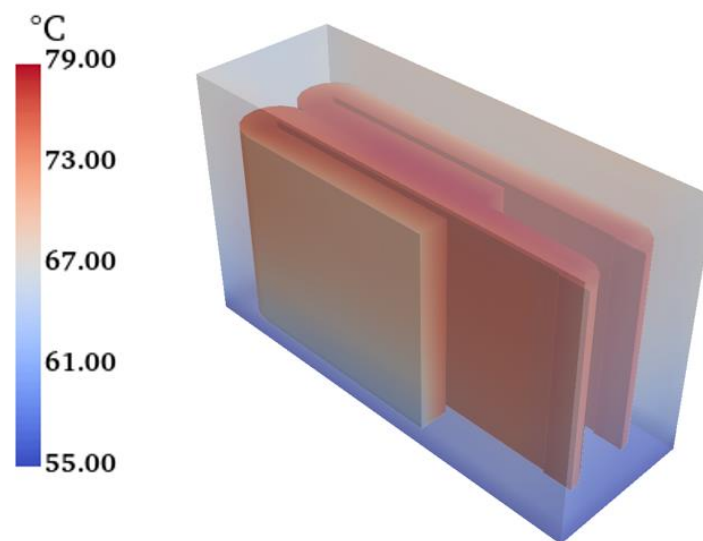
**Fig. 4.** PyECN simulation results of pouch cell at end of 6C constant current discharge. A part of the cell is cut away for the visualization of the internal temperature.

### 3.3 Simulation of cell with complicated structures

#### 3.3.1 Prismatic cell with dual jellyroll:

A custom prismatic cell with dual jellyroll inside and a metal can outside is simulated as an example. The cell model is formed by invoking the prismatic jellyroll class (prismatic.py, module.py & module\_4T.py) and the metal can class (can\_prismatic.py). The dual jellyrolls are electrically connected in parallel. For the metal can only the thermal model is enabled for this simulation case. The heat transfer between the dual jellyrolls and metal can so that the thermal management applied on the metal can will affect the thermal behaviors of the cell. The cell is discharged at 1C constant current

discharge under base cooling thermal condition. The temperature distribution of the dual jellyrolls and the metal can is shown in **Fig. 5** for the end of discharge (after 3600 s of discharge). The electrical parameters of this custom cell are generated by scaling the parameterized LG M50T commercial cell with the electrode plate area, assuming the prismatic cell is a larger version of the LG M50T cell. The rated capacity is 110 Ah for this prismatic cell.



**Fig. 5.** PyECN simulation results of pouch cell at end of 1C constant current discharge. A part of the jellyroll for prismatic cell is cut away for the visualization of the internal temperature.

### 3.3.2 Pouch cell with welding lines and tab lines:

Another example is demonstrated on a pouch cell with welding lines and tab lines. The cell tab and weld design could significantly affect the heat rejection rate [18][19][20][21]. This example model is focused on the pouch cell with delicate weld and tab structures. In this model, the pouch cell is thermally connected with the welding lines for both positive and negative side. The two welding lines are thermally connected

with the two tabs at both sides, where the active cooling is applied. A 1C constant current discharge case is simulated for the pouch cell whose surfaces are in convection. The temperature behavior for the cell is shown in **Fig. 6** . The electrical parameters of the pouch cell are generated by scaling the parameterized PowerUp cell by the electrode plate area. The rated capacity is 4.4 Ah for this pouch cell.



**Fig. 6.** PyECN simulation results of pouch cell at end of 1C constant current discharge. A part of the stack for pouch cell is cut away for the visualization of the internal temperature.

#### 4. Availability

PyECN package will be available on Github with instructions soon. Future updates will be made available as they are developed, and we would welcome additional creators who want to help to get in touch. The current version requires Python 3.7 or above. The PyECN uses other Python packages such as: Numpy, Scipy, Pandas, Math, Matplotlib, Mayavi, VTK, PyQt5, Imageio etc.

#### 5. Conclusions

The ability to predict the internal states of Lithium-ion batteries is critical for

battery development to improve safety, performance, cost and lifetime. PyECN package is a modelling framework created for Lithium-ion battery research and engineering applications. It has been demonstrated that the PyECN is able to model Lithium-ion batteries of 3 different form factors: pouch, cylindrical and prismatic cells. The PyECN is based on distributed equivalent circuit network model, which offers an excellent balance between functionality and computational cost. This PyECN package has the following key features simultaneously:

- Ease of parametrization (both for electrical and thermal models)
- 3D distribution with custom meshing
- Electro-thermal fully coupling.
- Ability to consider detailed internal and external structures.
- Ability to model multi-cell system.
- Consideration of different components (electrodes and current collectors)
- Open source
- Open framework for adding more physics.

The cylindrical cell model constructed using the PyECN has been experimentally validated in our previous work [6]. The PyECN package presented here is expected to be an efficient tool for battery design and control. More functionalities are being developed.

## Acknowledgements

This work was generously supported by the EPSRC Faraday Institution Multi-Scale Modelling project (EP/S003053/1, grant number FIRG003), the Innovate UK WIZer project (grant number 104427) and the EPSRC CASE (grant number EP/R513052/1) award by Williams Advanced Engineering.

## Credit statement

**Shen Li**: Conceptualisation, Methodology: Creator and lead developer of PyECN, Writing and Review, **Sunil Rawat**: Contributor of PyECN, Discussion, Writing and Review, **Tao Zhu**: Contributor of PyECN, Discussion, Writing and Review, **Gregory J Offer**: Conceptualisation, Funding Acquisition, Supervision, Writing – Review & Editing, **Monica Marinescu**: Conceptualisation, Funding Acquisition, Supervision, Writing – Review & Editing,

## Nomenclature

### *Abbreviations Description*

C	C-rate
conv	Convection
DAE	Differential algebraic equations
ECN	Equivalent Circuit Network
Eq.	Equation
OCV	Open Circuit Voltage
RC	Resistor-Capacitor
SoC	State of Charge

Latin symbols Unit Description

<b>Symbols</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Description</b>
$c$	$\text{J}\cdot\text{kg}^{-1}\cdot\text{K}^{-1}$	Specific heat capacity
$C_i$	F	Branch capacitance of one electrical ECN element
$E_s$	V	Voltage source i.e. Open Circuit Voltage (OCV)
$h$	$\text{W}\cdot\text{m}^{-2}\cdot\text{K}^{-1}$	Convective heat transfer coefficient
$I$	A	Total current for electrodes in an electrical ECN element i.e. current in the resistor $R_0$
$I_i$	A	Branch current for electrodes in an electrical ECN element i.e. current in the resistor $R_i$
$I_i^{\text{CC}}$	A	Constituent current for current collector in an ECN element
$q$	$\text{W}\cdot\text{m}^{-3}$	Heat source in a thermal ECN element per unit volume
$q^{\text{CC}}$	$\text{W}\cdot\text{m}^{-3}$	Overall current collector heat generation rate per unit volume
$q^{\text{El}}$	$\text{W}\cdot\text{m}^{-3}$	Overall electrode heat generation rate per unit volume
$Q_{\text{conv}}$	$\text{W}\cdot\text{m}^{-2}$	Heat transferred due to convection
$R_0$	$\Omega$	Series resistance of one electrical ECN element
$R_i$	$\Omega$	Branch resistance of one electrical ECN element
$R_i^{\text{CC}}$	$\Omega$	Current collector resistance in aluminium or copper foil domains
$t$	s	Time
$T$	K	Temperature of unit volume
$T_{\text{ambient}}$	K	Ambient temperature for convective heat transfer
$V^{\text{CC}}$	$\text{m}^3$	Current collector foil volume

$V^{El}$	$m^3$	Volume of electrodes pair in each ECN unit
$x$	$m$	Spatial coordinate along angular direction (Prismatic & Cylindrical) or longest side of stack (Pouch)
$y$	$m$	Spatial coordinate along axial direction (Prismatic & Cylindrical) or shortest side of stack (Pouch)
$z$	$m$	Spatial coordinate along radial direction (Prismatic & Cylindrical) Or across the stack thickness (Pouch)

#### Greek symbols Unit Description

$\varphi^{CC}$	V	Electric potential of current collector
$\varphi^{El}$	V	Terminal voltage of electrodes pair unit
$\lambda$	$W \cdot m^{-1} \cdot K^{-1}$	Thermal conductivity
$\lambda_x$	$W \cdot m^{-1} \cdot K^{-1}$	Thermal conductivity in $x$ direction
$\lambda_y$	$W \cdot m^{-1} \cdot K^{-1}$	Thermal conductivity in $y$ direction
$\lambda_z$	$W \cdot m^{-1} \cdot K^{-1}$	Thermal conductivity in $z$ direction
$\rho$	$kg \cdot m^{-3}$	Mass density
$\sigma$	$S \cdot m^{-1}$	Electrical conductivity of current collector

#### *Subscripts Description*

CC	Current collector
conv	Heat convection
Al	Aluminum foil

Cu	Copper foil
El	Electrodes including anode, cathode and separator

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