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## ► To cite this version:

Yan-Fu Li, S. Valla, Enrico Zio. Reliability assessment of generic geared wind turbines by GTST-MLD model and Monte Carlo simulation. *Renewable Energy*, 2015, 83, pp.222-233. <10.1016/j.renene.2015.04.035>. <hal-01176996>

**HAL Id: hal-01176996**

**<https://hal.science/hal-01176996v1>**

Submitted on 16 Jul 2015

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# Reliability Assessment of Generic Geared Wind Turbines by GTST-MLD Model and Monte Carlo Simulation

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## **Abstract**

In the last decade, the installed capacity of wind turbines has increased far more than other renewable energy sources such as solar, biomass or geothermal. As for any energy equipment, reliability is the fundamental attribute that needs to be guaranteed. A number of studies have been carried out for wind turbine reliability assessment. Most of them model the wind turbine system as a whole, without investigating its interior structure and failure logic. In this paper, a modeling and simulation framework is proposed for the reliability assessment of generic geared wind turbine systems. It is based on a Goal Tree, Success Tree and Master Logic Diagram for modeling the relationships among components and functions in a wind turbine system, and the impact of factors and mechanisms influencing the failure of the components. The modeling framework is customized to represent the strength of the relationships and the uncertainty of the impact of failures of these components on other components and functions. The model is eventually integrated in a Monte Carlo simulation framework for the computation of the wind turbine system reliability. Finally, model validation is performed by comparing the simulation results with those obtained by a Bayesian network model developed for this purpose.

27 **Keywords:** reliability, wind turbine, goal tree, success tree, master logic diagram, Monte  
28 Carlo simulation

## 29 **1. Introduction**

30 In recent years, technological advances have led to the development of small-scale, user-  
31 friendly, easily installed renewable energy systems. These types of systems enable energy  
32 end-users to install renewable generators on-site, connect them to the distribution network  
33 and trade energy on the electricity market. The functionality of these systems is dependent on  
34 the functions provided by different components, whose reliability must be properly designed  
35 and availability carefully maintained [1-3].

36 Wind is a resource that can be used in excess without threatening to reduce its natural stock.  
37 In fact, wind can be found almost anywhere on Earth. Even though wind power systems are  
38 only used within a certain range of wind speeds, this type of energy production is quite  
39 efficient. Although the power outputs depend on wind speed, a wind turbine on land can  
40 often generate a certain percentage of its theoretical maximum energy output, e.g. 20% to 30%  
41 in the case of a onshore small wind turbine located in UK [4]. In addition, a wind turbine  
42 produces enough electricity in six to eight months to “pay back” the energy used to  
43 manufacture and install the equipment [5].

44 Wind turbine operation and maintenance represent an important part of the cost of wind  
45 power production. In fact, the share of operation and maintenance costs represents 20% to  
46 25% in the lifetime of a wind turbine. Actually, these costs are limited to 10% to 15% when  
47 the wind turbine is fairly new, but they increase to at least 20% to 35% by the end of its  
48 lifetime [6]. Modeling can help reduce these costs, as it provides information for the  
49 development of maintenance and repair policies.

50 The goal of the work presented in this paper is to develop a modeling and simulation  
51 framework to evaluate the reliability of a generic geared wind turbine system. The power law  
52 process [7] and exergy analysis [8] have been used in the past to model the wind turbine  
53 system as a whole. However, these reliability modeling frameworks fail to account for the  
54 complexity of the interior structure of the wind turbine system. For example, Guo et al. [9]  
55 assume that the failure of any subassembly leads directly to the failure of the wind turbine.  
56 However, in reality the failure logic of wind turbine systems is more elaborated because of its  
57 interior structure. For example, if the anemometer fails during the operation of the wind

58 turbine system, it can certainly affect the electronic control but there is uncertainty  
59 surrounding the extent to which this failure affects the performance of the wind turbine  
60 system. The system logic of the wind turbine is such that it can still produce electricity even  
61 though some of its components have failed, although possibly in a less efficient way. In the  
62 example stated above, the failure of the anemometer can lead to inaccurate readings of the  
63 wind speed, which leads to providing less reliable information on which to base the system  
64 adjustments.

65 In order to describe these conditions, a third state of degraded operation is introduced  
66 whereby the wind turbine system is performing its function but less efficiently. This is done  
67 to extend the common binary state description of system function (operating or failure).  
68 Actually, in practice, different minor failures of components could lead to various  
69 degradations, and correspondingly different performance levels. In this case, the state of  
70 degraded operation could be further discretized in levels of performance depending on the  
71 extent of the impact the components failures have on the wind turbine system. The transition  
72 dynamics would, then, be governed by the corresponding transition probabilities (see  
73 Section 4). To this day, however, it is difficult to quantify the impact of components failures  
74 on the wind turbine system in practice and, even more so, to obtain the related field data  
75 necessary to estimate the degradation model parameters. For this reason, we limit the  
76 description to the three states in this work, as discussed previously, which render the model  
77 feasible in the current situation. Furthermore, by neglecting the interior structure of the wind  
78 turbine system, the reliability models proposed in the literature do not consider the logic and  
79 functional relationships between the different components in the system. On the contrary, this  
80 is quite relevant to the electricity production function of the wind turbine. For example, if a  
81 sensor fails it can affect the electronic control which commands the system operation  
82 adjustments with respect to the signal measured by the sensor; in turn, the actuating hydraulic  
83 system controlled by the electronic control can fail and this can impact the functionality of  
84 the mechanical brake; failure of the mechanical brake to fulfill its function can lead to the  
85 failure of the low speed shaft of the turbine, and this can force the wind turbine system to a  
86 stop.

87 Reliability models focusing on specific components or subassemblies have been developed,  
88 including Miner's rule approach [10-12], neural networks [13], 3D finite element  
89 formulations [14,15], non-homogeneous Poisson processes [16] and Markov processes [17-

90 19]. They allow reliability assessment to be performed at the component/subassembly level  
91 but not at the wind turbine system level.

92 In the end, the wind turbine system has a certain logic complexity and the relationships  
93 within and between its subsystems must be considered and described for a proper evaluation  
94 of system reliability and availability. Approaches to do this can be function-oriented or  
95 object-oriented. Function-oriented approaches, such as structured analysis and design  
96 technique (SADT) [20] and multilevel flow modeling (MFM) [21], allow the system to be  
97 analysed according to goals and functions which are to be attained by all parts of the system  
98 in order to perform its function. On the other hand, object-oriented approaches such as the  
99 dynamic flowgraph methodology (DFM) [22] may be used to describe either the static or the  
100 dynamic structure of a system by defining the material elements and their interactions [23].

101 In this paper, the Goal Tree, Success Tree and Master Logic Diagram (GTST-MLD)  
102 framework is used to model a wind turbine system for its reliability evaluation. The Goal  
103 Tree, Success Tree (GTST) and Master Logic Diagram (MLD) is a relatively recent  
104 approach, which has the advantage of integrating both of these points of view and has proven  
105 to be a powerful hierarchic method to represent the system [24-29]. The framework provided  
106 allows the modeling of the relationships between components and functions in a wind turbine  
107 system, as well as the impact of factors and mechanisms influencing the failure of the  
108 components. The modeling framework is further customised to represent the strength of the  
109 relationships and the uncertainty of the impact of failures of these components on other  
110 components and functions. These aspects are eventually integrated in the simulation  
111 framework for the computation of the wind turbine system reliability. Finally, the model is  
112 validated by comparing the simulation results with those obtained by a Bayesian network  
113 developed for this purpose.

114 The rest of the paper is organised as follows. Section 2 presents background information on a  
115 generic geared wind turbine system architecture and the definition of its reliability. Section 3  
116 presents the GTST-MLD modeling framework and its customisation to the wind turbine  
117 system. Section 4 presents the simulation framework for the quantification of the model and  
118 the results obtained; also, a comparison is given with the results of a Bayesian network  
119 developed for this purpose. Finally, Section 5 offers the conclusions on the modeling  
120 framework proposed and recommendations for future work.

## 121 **2. Wind Turbine System Architecture and Reliability**

### 122 **2.1 Architecture of A Generic Geared Wind Turbine and Functionalities of Components**

123 A generic geared horizontal-axis wind turbine (HAWT) of Figure 1 is used as reference  
124 system for the model and simulation framework development presented in this work.  
125 Naturally, the framework can be extended to other types of system designs. For the  
126 comprehensiveness of the paper, we give a short description of the system hereafter.

127 With respect to its operation, the wind acts on the turbine blades as it does on an airplane  
128 wing. The shape of the blade causes the air pressure to be uneven around the blade. This is  
129 what makes the rotor hub spin at the center of the turbine. On the top of the nacelle – which is  
130 part of the structural parts and housing of the wind turbine – a wind vane connected to a  
131 controller ensures that the turbine is turned into the wind using the yaw drive in order to  
132 capture the most energy. Next to this wind vane is an anemometer which is also connected to  
133 the controller. Most wind turbines are only efficient over a certain range of wind speeds, e.g.  
134 4 to 25 m/s [30], dependent on the operating concept and the adopted generator technology.  
135 Therefore, the anemometer measures the wind speed and the controller acts on the pitch to  
136 turn the blades parallel to the wind direction if the wind speed is too low or too high. The  
137 blades are connected to a low-speed shaft, which turns around 18 rpm on average [30]. In  
138 order to generate electricity with the HAWT, the rotor shaft spins a series of gears in the  
139 gearbox to increase the rotation up to around 1800 rpm [30]. Note that the mentioned rotation  
140 speeds are applicable only to geared wind turbines. The high-speed shaft delivers mechanical  
141 energy from the gearbox to the generator; the generator, then, transforms the mechanical  
142 energy into electricity, which is sent to the grid via the electrical system. A vital subassembly  
143 in the wind turbine electrical system is the power converter: an electronic device that  
144 modifies electrical signals from one kind of level to another. Namely, this can be any of the  
145 following conversions: AC to AC, DC to DC, AC to DC, or DC to AC [31]. The electrical  
146 system also includes the control unit that it regulates the supply of the power to the grid and  
147 provides protection functions [37].

148 With respect to its logic structure, Figure 2 shows the system logic diagram for the HAWT.  
149 The components in grey rectangles represent the primary components: the blades, the rotor,  
150 the low-speed shaft, the gearbox, the high-speed shaft, the generator, the yaw system and the  
151 electrical system. The wind turbine cannot produce electricity or unable to fulfill the  
152 interconnection and the grid code requirements if any of these components have failed. Note  
153 that the logic diagram is developed mainly based on the generic WTG architecture defined by

154 the US Department of Energy as shown in Figure 1 [36] and the WTG decomposition scheme  
155 presented in Table II, taken from [7]. This is coming directly from the Windstats database,  
156 and provides failure information from each component of the WTGs used in Germany and  
157 Denmark. In this decomposition scheme, the WTG components are generic, i.e. no specific  
158 types or modes are considered. For example, the generator failure rate counts different types  
159 of generators ranging from doubly-fed induction generator to direct-drive synchronous  
160 generator. Following [7], the WTGs considered are of the capacities ranging from 100 kW to  
161 2.5 MW.

162 In this same figure, the secondary components are represented in a white oval: the hydraulic  
163 system, the electronic control, some sensors (anemometer and wind vane) and the mechanical  
164 brake. The wind turbine system can still produce electricity when some of these components  
165 have failed; however, the electricity production would be inefficient. For additional  
166 information, Table 1 presents all the components of the HAWT, their functionality, their  
167 classification and the factors and mechanisms influencing their roles. The influencing factors  
168 are also summarized in Figure 2. These factors can affect the goal function of wind  
169 production either directly (by affecting the primary components) or indirectly (by affecting  
170 secondary components which, then, can affect the primary components).

171 The relationships between the different types of components are represented by lines and  
172 arrows. First, primary components are connected by lines. These represent the fact that if one  
173 of them fails, then the wind turbine system no longer produces electricity and, as such, the  
174 system enters in a state of failure. Then, secondary components are connected by directional  
175 lines, either solid or dashed. In essence, an arrow going from one secondary component to  
176 another represents the fact that the failure of the initial component can affect the state of the  
177 other component. For example, the failure of the electronic control can affect the hydraulic  
178 system and the rotor. More specifically, the dashed lines represent potential relationships  
179 between sensors and components – either primary or secondary. In our model, only the  
180 anemometer and the wind vane were considered. However, depending on the wind turbine  
181 system, more sensors may exist. For example, accelerometers can be installed to measure the  
182 vibration created by a component like the low speed shaft, the gearbox, the high speed shaft  
183 or the generator [15].

## 184 **2.2 Reliability of the Wind Turbine System**

185 Reliability is an attribute of a component or system which describes the ability to perform the  
186 required function for a given amount of time and under specific conditions [32]. In practical  
187 reliability, availability and maintenance (RAM) evaluations, a component or system is often  
188 assumed to have only two states – ‘operating’ and ‘failure’ – and the underlying stochastic  
189 process of failure is described quantitatively by a power law process (PLP) characterized by  
190 the failure rate  $\lambda(t)$ , usually described as a combination of Weibull distribution that takes the  
191 shape of a bathtub curve [7].

192 However, in real components and systems, the process from operating to failure goes through  
193 multiple degradation states, and this should be taken into account in the models for reliability  
194 analysis. Looking at this from the system level, every component in the wind turbine system  
195 has a role that allows it to produce electricity in an efficient manner: if one component fails,  
196 then the wind turbine system does not have all the elements required to produce electricity at  
197 the planned level of performance. For this reason, three states for the wind turbine system are  
198 considered in the model developed in this work: normal operation, degraded operation and  
199 failure, denoted by ‘ $O_s$ ’, ‘ $D_s$ ’ and ‘ $F_s$ ’, respectively. If one of the primary components fails,  
200 the system enters in a state of failure; if at least one secondary component has failed, the  
201 system is in a state of degraded operation. In literature, multi-state modeling has been  
202 adopted for WTG reliability/adequacy assessment [38-39]. Most of them model the WTG as  
203 a whole without investigating its failure logic and the complexity of its interior structure.

204 Also, as discussed in Section 2.1, the failure of secondary components can affect the state of  
205 the primary components, which impacts the productivity of the wind turbine system. For  
206 example, if the hydraulic system fails due to an excessive fluid temperature it can directly  
207 impact the state of the mechanical brake, the yaw system and the rotor (cf. Figure 2). In turn,  
208 if the mechanical brake fails, it can affect the low speed shaft. Since the low speed shaft, the  
209 yaw system and the rotor are primary components, if one of them enters in a state of failure,  
210 then it can directly affect the efficient production of electricity by the wind turbine system.  
211 This is the assumed logic of operation, degradation and failure with respect to the wind  
212 turbine system.

213 As for the quantification of the model, the aim is to obtain the system state probability vector  
214 at time  $t$  [ $P(s = O_s, t), P(s = D_s, t), P(s = F_s, t)$ ], where  $s$  denotes the system state (normal  
215 operation, degraded operation and failure).

### 216 3. GTST-MLD Model of the Generic Geared Wind Turbine System

217 In this work, a GTST-MLD is originally used to model the wind turbine system. GTST can  
218 logically and hierarchically represent the functions, sub-functions and interactions among the  
219 different parts of the wind turbine system that enable it to produce electricity. The goal tree  
220 (GT) focuses on the qualities of the system while the success tree (ST) focuses on its parts.  
221 Incidentally, a dependency matrix can be used to display the underlying hierarchy of the  
222 MLD of the system [33]. The step-by-step process of developing such a model is presented in  
223 the following subsections.

#### 224 3.1. Goal Tree

225 The GT focuses on the qualities of the system. These are composed of its goals and functions.  
226 The top function of the GT is named the goal function. In essence, it describes the principal  
227 purpose of the system [23]. This function should be carefully defined according to the scope  
228 of interest. Then, the goal function is decomposed into sub-functions at increasing levels of  
229 detail. The realisation of specified combinations of these sub-functions – named global  
230 functions – ensures that the goal function is achieved. A main difference with a fault tree (FT)  
231 representation of the logic relationships is that the GT focuses on the functions of the system  
232 whereas the FT concentrates on its components.

233 As explained in Section 2, the goal function of the wind turbine system is to generate  
234 electricity and to send it to the grid. This goal function can be decomposed into the following  
235 four independent global functions, as illustrated in Figure 3.

- 236 - Capture the wind energy;
- 237 - Convert the wind energy into mechanical energy;
- 238 - Convert the mechanical energy into electrical energy; and
- 239 - Send the electrical energy to the grid.

240 These four global functions represent the four steps of the power generation process in  
241 physically unambiguous terms. In Figure 3, these functions are linked by AND logic. In fact,  
242 the goal function of producing electricity and sending it to the grid can only be fulfilled if all  
243 four steps are completed simultaneously. First, the energy needs to be captured; then, it must  
244 be converted into a manageable resource, which requires two steps in this system; finally, the  
245 energy must be sent to the consumers. The decomposition of functions of the GT is the  
246 starting point of the GTST-MLD and is therefore important to grasp since the rest of the  
247 model builds on this concept.

### 248 **3.2. Success Tree**

249 The ST focuses on the physical aspects of the system and is developed from top to bottom,  
250 looking at all levels at which the system can be analysed. In essence, the physical elements  
251 collect all the components of the system necessary to achieve any of the functions present in  
252 the GT [23].

253 In the wind turbine system, the ST can be broken down into two sections. First, the  
254 component tree includes all the primary components of the wind turbine: the system cannot  
255 accomplish its goal function without all of these components correctly functioning. If any one  
256 of these components fails then the wind turbine system enters a state of failure. These  
257 components are the blades, the rotor, the low speed shaft, the gearbox, the high speed shaft,  
258 the generator, the structural parts and housing, the electrical system and the yaw system.  
259 These parts are considered as the main elements of the ST.

260 Then, the supporting tree includes all secondary components, which are required for the  
261 efficient production of electricity. If any one of these components fails, the wind turbine  
262 system enters a state of degraded operation rather than a state of failure. This state of  
263 degraded operation is introduced in order to define the wind turbine system state in which the  
264 goal function of producing electricity is still fulfilled but in an inefficient manner. These  
265 secondary components are the mechanical brake, the hydraulic system, the electronic control,  
266 the anemometer and the wind vane. These are considered as the supporting components of  
267 the system. Figure 4 presents the ST developed in this work.

268 The impacts of the failures of the secondary components onto the primary components are  
269 explained as follows. There are analyzed and quantified in the development of GTST-MLD  
270 in section 3.5.

- 271 - Mechanical brake: its failure can lead to the failure of the low speed shaft of the  
272 turbine, and this can force the wind turbine system to a stop.
- 273 - Hydraulic system: its failure can directly impact the state of the mechanical brake, the  
274 yaw system and the rotor. In turn, if the mechanical brake fails, it can affect the low  
275 speed shaft.
- 276 - Electronic control: it commands the system operation adjustments. Its failure can  
277 affect the hydraulic system.
- 278 - Wind vane: its failure can lead to inaccurate readings of the wind direction and, thus,  
279 affect the commands of the electronic control.
- 280 - Anemometer: its failure can lead to inaccurate readings of the wind speed and, thus,  
281 affect the commands of the electronic control.

282

### 283 **3.3. Faults and Failures**

284 Faults and failures are introduced as a third part of the system model to describe the  
285 dysfunctional aspects [23]. Defined by the IEC 61508 functional safety standards [34], a fault  
286 is an abnormal condition that may cause a reduction in, or loss of, the capacity of an entity to  
287 perform a required function; a failure is the termination of the ability of an entity to perform a  
288 required function – or in any way other than as required. In this work, all possible causes of  
289 failure of the system components are considered as failure-influencing factors. For example,  
290 influencing factors are the wear of the mechanical brake, the formation of cracks on the  
291 blades, the break of a toothed wheel in the gearbox, the random shocks on a sensor, and the  
292 eccentricity of the low speed shaft.

### 293 **3.4. Master Logic Diagram**

294 The master logic diagram (MLD) connects the GT and ST in a clear and logically ordered  
295 manner. As seen in Figure 5, a grid is formed and rectangular bars are placed at the  
296 intersection between connecting sub-parts of the ST and sub-functions of the GT: a  
297 rectangular bar represents the fact that the sub-part of the ST acts on the sub-function of the  
298 GT, or that the sub-function of the GT depends on the sub-part of the ST.

### 299 **3.5. Relationship Analysis of the GTST-MLD**

300 Figures 6 and 7 present the complete GTST-MLD modeling framework of the wind turbine  
301 system developed in this work. Dependence relationships using a black rectangle are stronger

302 than those using a grey one. For example, the failure of a blade will have a strong impact on  
303 the ability of the system to capture the wind energy. In fact, blades are vital in ensuring the  
304 capture of the wind energy since it is the primary contact between the wind and the wind  
305 turbine system.

306 In addition, uncertainty is represented by asterisks: the more uncertain the relationship is, the  
307 more asterisks are associated to it in the graphical representation. Using the same example,  
308 the relationship between the blades and the capturing of the wind energy is not ambiguous.  
309 Therefore, the relationship between the blades and the global function of capturing the wind  
310 energy is certain as well as strong and is represented by a black rectangle with one asterisk.

311 The reasoning behind the greyscale and asterisk assignments in the GTST-MLD developed in  
312 this work is that uncertainty is as important to define as relationship strength when modeling  
313 a complex system. In fact, these factors are fundamental in developing a reliability model for  
314 the wind turbine system.

315 Using the same logic, the following relationships are represented in Figure 6:

- 316 - The relationship between the rotor and the global function of capturing the wind  
317 energy is certain as well as strong.
- 318 - The relationship between the low-speed shaft and the global function of converting  
319 wind energy into mechanical energy is certain as well as strong.
- 320 - The relationship between the gearbox and the global function of converting wind  
321 energy into mechanical energy is certain as well as strong.
- 322 - The relationship between the high-speed shaft and the global function of converting  
323 wind energy into mechanical energy is certain as well as strong.
- 324 - The relationship between the generator and the global function of converting the  
325 mechanical energy into electrical energy is certain as well as strong.
- 326 - The relationship between the electrical system (and its back-up) and the global  
327 function of sending the electrical energy to the grid is certain as well as strong.
- 328 - The relationship between the structural parts / housing and all the global functions is  
329 of medium strength and highly uncertain.
- 330 - The relationship between the yaw system and the global function of capturing the  
331 wind energy is of medium strength and highly uncertain.

332 The following relationships are represented in Figure 7 between the Supporting Material  
333 Elements and the Main System (Figure 6):

- 334 - The relationship between the hydraulic system and the yaw system is of medium  
335 strength and yet certain.
- 336 - The relationship between the hydraulic system and the rotor is of medium strength  
337 and uncertain.
- 338 - The relationship between the mechanical brake and the low-speed shaft is of medium  
339 strength and uncertain.

340 The following relationships are represented in Figure 7 within the Supporting Material  
341 Elements:

- 342 - The relationship between the hydraulic system and the mechanical brake is of medium  
343 strength and certain.
- 344 - The relationship between the electronic control and the hydraulic system is of medium  
345 strength and certain.
- 346 - The relationship between the wind vane and the electronic control is of medium  
347 strength and uncertain.
- 348 - The relationship between the anemometer and the electronic control is of medium  
349 strength and uncertain.

350 The following relationships are represented in Figure 7 between the Faults and Failures  
351 (influencing factors) and the Supporting Material Elements:

- 352 - The relationship between the wear of the mechanical brake and the failure of the  
353 mechanical brake is of medium strength and uncertain.
- 354 - The relationship between random shock on the anemometer and the failure of the  
355 anemometer is strong and yet uncertain.
- 356 - The relationship between random shock on the wind vane and the failure of the wind  
357 vane is strong and yet uncertain.
- 358 - The relationship between wiring issues in the electronic control and the failure of the  
359 electronic control is of medium strength and uncertain.
- 360 - The relationship between overheating of the electronic control and the failure of the  
361 electronic control is of medium strength and uncertain.

- 362 - The relationship between high fluid temperature in the hydraulic system and the  
363 failure of the hydraulic system is of medium strength and uncertain.
- 364 - The relationship between aeration / cavitation in the hydraulic system and the failure  
365 of the hydraulic system is of medium strength and uncertain.
- 366 - The relationship between the loss of flow in the hydraulic system and the failure of  
367 the hydraulic system is of medium strength and uncertain.

368 The following relationships are represented in Figure 7 between the Faults and Failures  
369 (influencing factors) and the Main System (in Figure 6):

- 370 - The relationship between the eccentricity of the yaw shafts and the failure of the yaw  
371 system is of medium strength and uncertain.
- 372 - The relationship between crack formation and the failure of the yaw system is of  
373 medium strength and uncertain.
- 374 - The relationship between a break in teeth in the yaw wheel and the failure of the yaw  
375 system is of medium strength and uncertain.
- 376 - The relationship between a toothed wheel displacement in the yaw system and the  
377 failure of the yaw system is of medium strength and uncertain.
- 378 - The relationship between a random shock on the structural parts / housing and the  
379 failure of the structural parts / housing is of medium strength and uncertain.
- 380 - The relationship between crack formation on the structural parts / housing and the  
381 failure of the structural parts / housing is of medium strength and uncertain.
- 382 - The relationship between a wiring issue in the electrical system and the failure of the  
383 electrical system is of medium strength and uncertain.
- 384 - The relationship between a wiring issue in the generator unit and the failure of the  
385 generator is of medium strength and uncertain.
- 386 - The relationship between winding damage in the generator and the failure of the  
387 generator is of medium strength and uncertain.
- 388 - The relationship between the overheating of the generator and the failure of the  
389 generator is of medium strength and uncertain.
- 390 - The relationship between the wear of the high-speed shaft and the failure of the high-  
391 speed shaft is of medium strength and uncertain.
- 392 - The relationship between the eccentricity of high-speed shaft and the failure of the  
393 high-speed shaft is of medium strength and uncertain.

- 394 - The relationship between the wear of the gearbox wheels and the failure of the  
395 gearbox is of medium strength and uncertain.
- 396 - The relationship between crack formation in the gearbox and the failure of the  
397 gearbox is of medium strength and uncertain.
- 398 - The relationship between the break in teeth of the gearbox wheels and the failure of  
399 the gearbox is of medium strength and uncertain.
- 400 - The relationship between toothed wheel displacement in the gearbox and the failure of  
401 the gearbox is of medium strength and uncertain.
- 402 - The relationship between the wear of the low-speed shaft and the failure of the low-  
403 speed shaft is of medium strength and uncertain.
- 404 - The relationship between the eccentricity of low-speed shaft and the failure of the  
405 low-speed shaft is of medium strength and uncertain.
- 406 - The relationship between random shock on the rotor and the failure of the rotor is of  
407 high strength and uncertain.
- 408 - The relationship between crack formation on the rotor and the failure of the rotor is of  
409 medium strength and uncertain.
- 410 - The relationship between a blade adjustment error in the rotor pitch and the failure of  
411 the rotor is of medium strength and uncertain.
- 412 - The relationship between random shock on the blades and the failure of the blades is  
413 of high strength and uncertain.
- 414 - The relationship between crack formation on the blades and the failure of the blades is  
415 of high strength and uncertain.

416 Based on the GTST-MLD, the relationships between system elements were analysed (i.e.  
417 influencing factors, supporting material elements, primary components and global functions).  
418 For this, the approach presented in Brissaud et al [23] was followed.

419 Let  $D_d$  represent an influencing factor  $d$  (fault or failure) that occurs, where  $d = 1, \dots, n_d$  and  
420  $n_d$  is the number of influencing factors. Let  $P_p$  represent a secondary component  $p$  that is in a  
421 state of failure, where  $p = 1, \dots, n_p$  and  $n_p$  is the number of secondary components. Let  $M_m$   
422 represent a primary component  $m$  that is in a state of failure, where  $m = 1, \dots, n_m$  and  $n_m$  is  
423 the number of primary components. Let  $F_f$  represent a global function  $f$  that fails to be  
424 delivered, where  $f = 1, \dots, n_f$  and  $n_f$  is the number of global functions that the system is  
425 intended to provide.

426 Relationships among system elements – which can be direct, indirect or total – are defined in  
 427 a relationship matrix  $AB$ . As a general notation, the direct relationship between an element  $a$   
 428 and an element  $b$  in the GTST-MLD hierarchy is indicated at row  $a$ , column  $b$  of the matrix,  
 429 with the following meaning:  $AB_{a,b}$  represents the fact that element  $A_a$  directly implies (i.e. by  
 430 itself, without the need of any other element) element  $B_b$ .

431 Following the approach in Brissaud et al [23], direct relationships are:  $DP_{d,p}$ , an occurrence of  
 432 fault or failure  $d$  directly implies a failed state of secondary component  $p$ ;  $DM_{d,m}$ , an  
 433 occurrence of fault or failure  $d$  directly implies a failed state of primary component  $m$ ;  $PM_{p,m}$ ,  
 434 a failed state of secondary component  $p$  directly implies a failed state of primary component  
 435  $m$ ;  $MF_{m,f}$ , a failed state of unit  $m$  directly implies a loss of global function  $f$ .

436 All these direct relationships are assumed to be independent. As a general notation, their  
 437 probabilities of occurrence are denoted  $P[AB_{a,b}]$ . Note that  $P[AB_{a,b}]$  can be interpreted as a  
 438 conditional probability: the probability that  $B_b$  occurs given that  $A_a$  has occurred. These  
 439 probabilities describe the uncertainty in the influence  $A_a$  can have on  $B_b$  (see Section 4.3).

440 Other relationships are indirect. For example, the occurrence of fault or failure  $d$  can directly  
 441 imply the failure state of secondary component  $p$  and the component  $p$  failure state can  
 442 directly imply the failure state of primary component  $m$ . Then, the occurrence of  $d$  can imply  
 443 the failure state of  $m$  through the failure of  $p$ . In general, indirect relationship events are  
 444 combinations of direct relationship events. In the developed GTST-MLD model, only direct  
 445 relationships are filled in. Then, the total relationships, which logically integrate both direct  
 446 and indirect relationships, are obtained by the logic expressions of Equations 1 and 2 below:

$$447 \quad DM_{tot,d,m} = DM_{d,m} \cup_p (DP_{d,p} \cap PM_{p,m}) \quad (\text{Eq. 1})$$

$$448 \quad DF_{tot,d,f} = \cup_m (DM_{tot,d,m} \cap MF_{m,f}) \quad (\text{Eq. 2})$$

449 where  $DM_{tot,d,m}$  represents an occurrence of fault or failure  $d$  (directly or indirectly) implying  
 450 a failed state of primary component  $m$ , and  $DF_{tot,d,f}$  represents an occurrence of fault or  
 451 failure  $d$  (directly or indirectly) implying a loss of global function  $f$ .

452 From the logic expressions (Eq. 1) and (Eq. 2), the system failure probability, (i.e. the  
 453 probability of failing to supply the global functions) can be computed:

$$454 \quad P[F_f] = P[\cup_d (D_d \cap DF_{tot,d,f})] \quad (\text{Eq. 3})$$

455 This probability can be evaluated by Monte Carlo simulation.

#### 456 **4. Simulation and Validation**

457 Monte Carlo simulation was used to generate time-dependent state probability results of the  
458 wind turbine system from the GTST-MLD. The annual failure frequencies of the wind  
459 turbine components in Figure 8 were used for the Monte Carlo simulation of the system  
460 failure behavior with respect to time, assuming exponential probability distributions:

$$461 \qquad F(t) = 1 - \exp(-\lambda t) \qquad \text{(Eq. 4)}$$

462 where  $\lambda$  is the transition rate in failures per year.

463 For those components whose failure depends on multiple influencing factors, a uniform  
464 distribution of the influencing factor occurrence has been assumed. In other words, if a  
465 component functional failure can be due to three direct influencing factors, to each of these  
466 factors is assigned an equal probability of occurrence equal to one-third of the functional  
467 failure probability of that specific component calculated with (Eq. 4). Furthermore, repairs  
468 were assumed as-good-as-new, i.e. after a repair the wind turbine system has the same time-  
469 dependent state probabilities as a newly installed wind turbine system.

470 The simulation of system evolution runs in two successive phases: initiation and propagation.

471 In the initiation phase, the simulation runs as follows:

- 472 1) Set time  $t$  after last repair, in years.
- 473 2) Generate a realisation of a uniform random variable,  $v_i$  in  $[0, 1]$
- 474 3) Compare the value of  $v_i$  with the annual probability of influencing factor occurrence,  $p_A$ ,
  - 475 a) If  $v_i < p_A$ , then the state of the influencing factor is set to “0”, meaning occurrence
  - 476 b) If  $v_i > p_A$ , then the state of the influencing factor is set to “1”, meaning no occurrence.

477 The propagation step of the simulation framework consists in answering the following  
478 questions through the GTST-MLD:

- 479 - If an influencing factor occurs, how does it affect the components on which it acts on  
480 (see Section 3)?
- 481 - If a component enters in a state of failure, how does it affect other components?

482 - If a component enters in a state of failure, how does it affect the system global  
483 functions?

484 This is done by introducing a probability of propagation,  $p_P$ , which represents the probability  
485 that the failure of one component will lead another component, or a global function, to enter a  
486 state of failure as well. This variable is introduced in order to quantify and model the  
487 relationships in the GTST-MLD and is essential to run the Monte Carlo simulation developed  
488 in this work. Furthermore, this variable is one of the factors that make the GTST-MLD  
489 appealing in that it can be updated when more accurate data are available.

490 Then, for the first question with respect to each influencing factor of a specific component the  
491 simulation proceeds as follows:

- 492 1) Generate a realisation of a uniform random variable,  $v_{P1}$  in  $[0, 1]$ .
- 493 2) If the state of the influencing factor is “0” (occurrence):
  - 494 a) If  $v_{P1} < p_P$ , then the state of the component is set to “0” (failed).
  - 495 b) If  $v_{P1} > p_P$ , then the state of the component is set to “2” (operating)

496 If the state of the specific component considered is “0” (failed), then, for the second question  
497 with respect to components related to the each other:

- 498 1) Generate a realisation of a uniform random variable,  $v_{P2}$  in  $[0, 1]$ .
  - 499 a) If  $v_{P2} < p_P$ , then the state of the related component is set to “0” (failed).
  - 500 b) If  $v_{P2} > p_P$ , then the state of the related component is set to “2” (operating)

501 Finally, with respect to the third question on the effects of component failures on the system  
502 global functions:

- 503 1) If the state of any primary component is “0” (failed):
  - 504 a) Generate a realisation of a uniform random variable,  $v_{P3}$  in  $[0, 1]$ .
    - 505 i) If  $v_{P3} < p_P$ , then the state of the associated global functions are set to “0”  
506 (unfulfilled).
    - 507 ii) If  $v_{P3} > p_P$ , then the state of the associated global functions are set to “2”  
508 (fulfilled).
- 509 2) If the state of all primary components is “2” (operating):
  - 510 a) If any secondary component is in state “0” (failed), then the state of the associated  
511 global functions is set to “1” (degraded).

512 Propagation needs to be carried out through each relationship defined in the GTST-MLD of  
513 the wind turbine system from the primary and secondary components to the global functions  
514 (see Section 3). Table 2 illustrates an example of propagation. As seen in the second line, the  
515 state of the component is set to “1” since the influencing factor occurs (“0”) but the random  
516 variable realisation is larger than the probability of propagation. Therefore, the associated  
517 global function is in a degraded state. On the other hand, as seen in the fourth line, the state of  
518 the associated global function is set to “0” since the influencing factor occurs (“0”) and the  
519 random variable generated is lower than the probability of propagation. Therefore, the  
520 component is in a state of failure – a state denoted by “0” in this work.

#### 521 **4.1. Relationship Strength and Data Uncertainty**

522 Defining relationship strength and data uncertainty is crucial for the quantitative reliability  
523 evaluation of the wind turbine system, in which failures can propagate from one component  
524 to another. In fact, the impact of a component failure on another component’s functionality  
525 can be more or less relevant and known with more or less certainty. For example, the impact  
526 of a blade failure on the global function of capturing the wind energy is very strong and  
527 certain; on the other hand, the impact of a wind vane failure on the electronic control is of  
528 medium level and not always certain. More specifically, the failure of the wind vane in a  
529 wind turbine system has an impact on the electronic control since the latter, then, would not  
530 have accurate wind direction readings to base its adjustments on; however, the wind turbine  
531 system could still function without the wind vane, which is the logic in defining the effect of  
532 such a component failure to be of medium value.

533 The impact of a component failure can be more or less important depending on different  
534 factors that are known (e.g. extreme change in wind direction) or unknown. This fact is  
535 accounted for by introducing an uncertainty description on the variable measuring the  
536 strength of the relationship, i.e. the probability of propagation of the failure from one  
537 component to another.

538 In the simulation framework proposed in this work, the uncertainty of the strength of  
539 relationship driving the failure propagation is implemented by generating realizations of the  
540 uncertain (random) variable ‘probability of propagation’, representing the strength of the  
541 relationship.

542 The values used in the particular simulation framework here proposed are presented in  
543 Table 3. Thus, for example, the probability of propagation representing a medium yet

544 uncertain relationship – like the one between the wind vane and the electronic control – is  
545 represented by a random variable uniformly distributed between 0.25 and 0.75.

## 546 **4.2. Results**

547 A total of 10,000 simulations of system behavior were run for different points in time.  
548 Figure 9 illustrates the state probabilities as a function of time. As can be expected, the  
549 probability of normal operation decreases with time and the probability of failure increases  
550 with time. A notable point is that the probability of the wind turbine system of being in a state  
551 of degraded operation seems to plateau around 0.2 after 1 year of installation.

## 552 **4.3. Validation by Bayesian Network**

553 Figure 10 shows a Bayesian network developed for the reliability analysis of the wind turbine  
554 system considered. It was developed using Microsoft Belief Networks. A Bayesian network  
555 is a probabilistic graphical model that represents the conditional dependencies of a set of  
556 random variables [35]. The nodes of the graph are random variables in the Bayesian sense –  
557 observable quantities, latent variables, unknown parameters or even hypotheses. In essence, a  
558 Bayesian network is an influence graph.

559 Bayesian networks allow for the direct computation of the probability that one event (or state)  
560 will lead to another. Even though it could seem like a simpler modeling solution for some  
561 applications, the conditional probabilities at each node of the Bayesian network must be  
562 computed for each possible scenario and entered in the network in order to compute the  
563 global state probabilities of the system. This makes it less appealing for the modeling of  
564 complex systems with multiple states that require many preliminary calculations that would  
565 need to be repeated for any update in the data. On the other hand, the GTST-MLD simulation  
566 framework developed in this work does not require these preliminary calculations and,  
567 therefore, makes it a flexible modeling tool for complex systems modeling.

568 In addition, the GTST-MLD developed in this work takes into account relationship strengths  
569 and uncertainty factors while keeping the presentation of the complex logic of the wind  
570 turbine system clear and unambiguous. As can be seen in Figure 10, a Bayesian network for  
571 such a system can be cluttered and the relationships between components can be unclear.

572 For the numerical comparison, the probabilities of occurrence of each influencing factor  
573 presented in Figure 8 were used as prior probabilities in the Bayesian network. Since the  
574 program used to develop the Bayesian network simulation did not allow for the generation of

575 random variables for the uncertain relationships as explained in Section 4.1, it was assumed  
576 that the probability of propagation used for uncertain relationships in the Bayesian network  
577 simulation was equivalent to the mean of the range defined in Table 3.

578 For example, with respect to the effect that the failure of the mechanical brake can have on  
579 the state of the low speed shaft, which is of medium value and uncertain, instead of  
580 generating realizations of a random variable uniformly distributed between the lower and  
581 upper bounds, respectively 0.25 and 0.75, as done in the GTST-MLD Monte Carlo  
582 simulation, the probability of such occurrence in the Bayesian network simulation is set to the  
583 mean value of the interval of variability, i.e. 0.5.

584 Table 4 reports the state probability values at one year, obtained with the Bayesian network  
585 and by Monte Carlo simulation. The absolute difference between the results is less than 2.4%,  
586 which is judged satisfactory given the slight differences in the assumption made in running  
587 the two models.

## 588 **5. Conclusion and Future Work**

589 In order to analyse the reliability of a generic geared wind turbine system, a novel GTST-  
590 MLD modeling framework was developed and quantified by Monte Carlo simulation. The  
591 developed framework allows for the representation of the relationships among all functional  
592 and material elements of the system in a systematic, clear and effective manner. The global  
593 functions that the wind turbine system must fulfill are connected to the components,  
594 supporting systems and influencing factors that can affect their state. A systematic and logic  
595 relationship analysis can then be performed to determine the direct effect of each influencing  
596 factor on each global function. Strength and uncertainty in the failure propagation  
597 relationships of the system components can be considered explicitly, which makes the  
598 developed model most appealing for a realistic representation and analysis of complex  
599 systems.

600 Then, quantification of the system functional reliability by Monte Carlo simulation becomes  
601 straightforward. In order to validate the numerical results obtained, a Bayesian network of  
602 the wind turbine system was used, and the results compared satisfactorily with those obtained  
603 by simulation.

604 In this study, a generic geared WTG model is considered for reliability assessment. The level  
605 of abstraction of the model achieves a balance between complexity and accuracy for a pilot

606 study of this kind. However, specific WTG components need to be considered in future  
607 works, from the practical point of view. For examples, the different types of generators, e.g.  
608 DFIG or SCIG, and the components of the electrical system, e.g. control unit and protection  
609 function/components, will be taken into account. This will be done in connection with the  
610 redefinition of the goal function(s) of WTGs, e.g. based on the relevant grid code. For  
611 example E. ON German grid code may be considered in the identification of the steady state  
612 operation goals. The grid code requirements are expected to significantly alter the  
613 classification of components. For example, the control unit will become a primary  
614 component. A failure in such unit of a DFIG may lead to severe stability problems and  
615 actions of protection devices.

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**Table 1: Component Classification**

<b>Component</b>	<b>Functionality</b>	<b>Component Type</b>	<b>Influencing Factors</b>
<b>Blades</b>	Captures the wind energy and converts it into mechanical energy	Primary	Crack formation Random shock
<b>Rotor</b>	Hub to which the blades are connected and angled. It also turns a low speed shaft inside the WT	Primary	Crack formation Random shock
<b>Low Speed Shaft</b>	Delivers mechanical energy from the rotor to the gearbox	Primary	Wear Eccentricity
<b>Gearbox</b>	Converts the low rotational speed from the rotor into high rotational speed to feed the generator	Primary	Wear Crack formation Toothed wheel displacement Break in teeth of wheel
<b>High Speed Shaft</b>	Delivers mechanical energy from the gearbox to the generator	Primary	Wear Eccentricity
<b>Generator</b>	Converts the mechanical energy into electrical energy	Primary	Wiring issue Winding damage Overheating
<b>Electrical System</b>	Delivers electrical energy to the grid	Primary	Wiring issue Overheating
<b>Structural Parts / Housing</b>	Protects the inner components of the WT from external factors	Primary	Crack formation Random shock
<b>Yaw System</b>	Turns the WT into the wind in order to capture the wind energy efficiently	Primary	Crack formation Break in teeth Eccentricity of shafts Toothed wheel displacement
<b>Mechanical Brake</b>	Locks the WT when needed (e.g. when the wind speed is too low)	Secondary	Wear
<b>Hydraulic System</b>	Controls some subunits of the WT (e.g. yaw system, mechanical brake, ...)	Secondary	High fluid temperature Aeration/Cavitation Loss of flow
<b>Electronic Control</b>	Centralises all the data received by the sensors and sends commands to some components	Secondary	Wiring issue Overheating
<b>Sensors</b>	Instruments that provide data on the external conditions and state of some components	Secondary	Random shock

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Table 2: Excerpt of Simulation Framework

Probability of the occurrence of the influencing factors	Influencing Factor 1st stage*	Probability of Propagation	Random Variable	State of Associated Global Function
Crack formation on blades	1	0.463	0.568	2
Random shock on blades	0	0.894	0.924	1
Crack formation on rotor	1	0.408	0.002	2
Blade adjustement error in rotor pitch	0	0.483	0.212	0
Random shock on rotor	1	0.836	0.940	2

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**Table 3: Conditional Probability Definition Considering Uncertainty**

Conditional Probability Definition			
Relationship	Probability	Intervals	
		Lower bound	Upper bound
Strong	1	0.75	1
Medium	0.5	0.25	0.75
None	0	0	0.25

\*                      \*\*\*                      \*\*\*

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**Table 4: Comparisons of state probabilities at year 1**

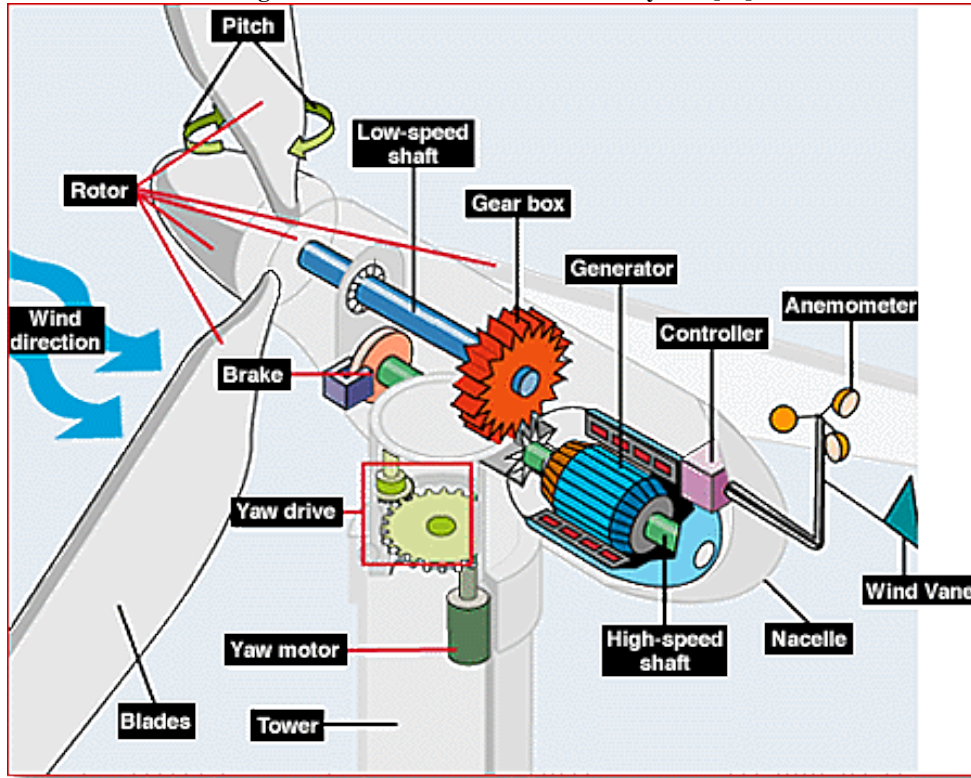
<b>State</b>	<b>GTST Simulation</b>	<b>Bayesian Network Simulation</b>	<b>Absolute Error</b>
<b>Normal Operation</b>	23.6%	22.9%	0.7%
<b>Degradation</b>	20.5%	22.9%	2.4%
<b>Failure</b>	55.9%	54.1%	1.8%

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Figure 1: Horizontal axis wind turbine system [36]



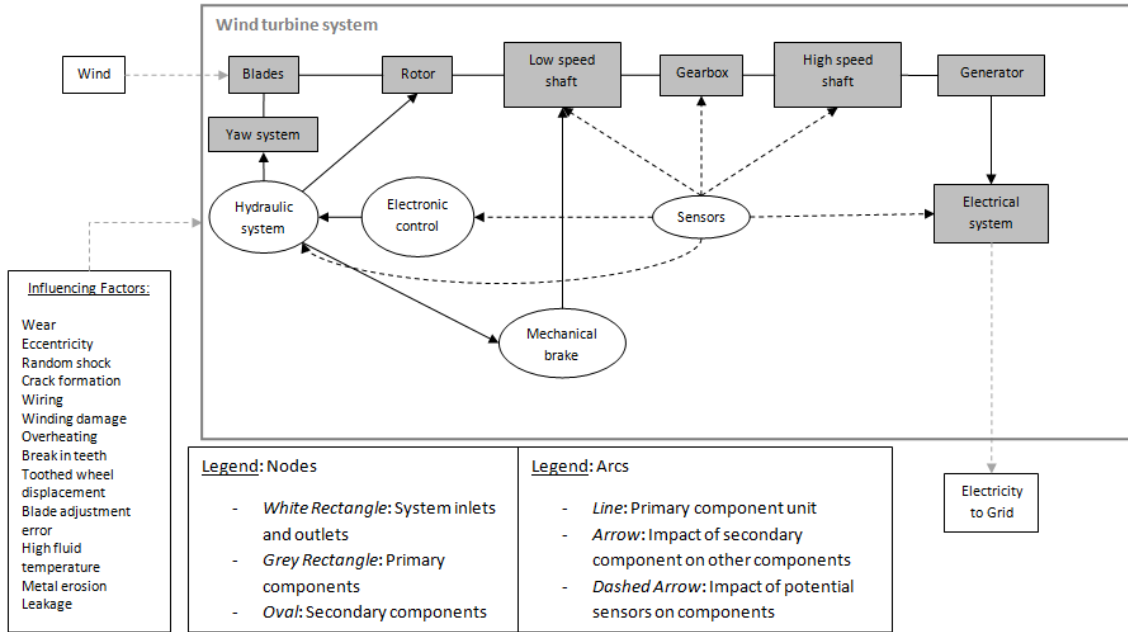
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**Figure 2: Wind Turbine System Diagram**



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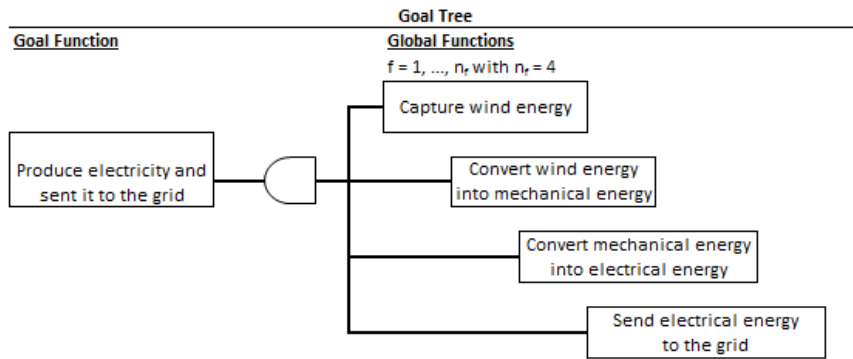
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Figure 3: GT of the Wind Turbine System



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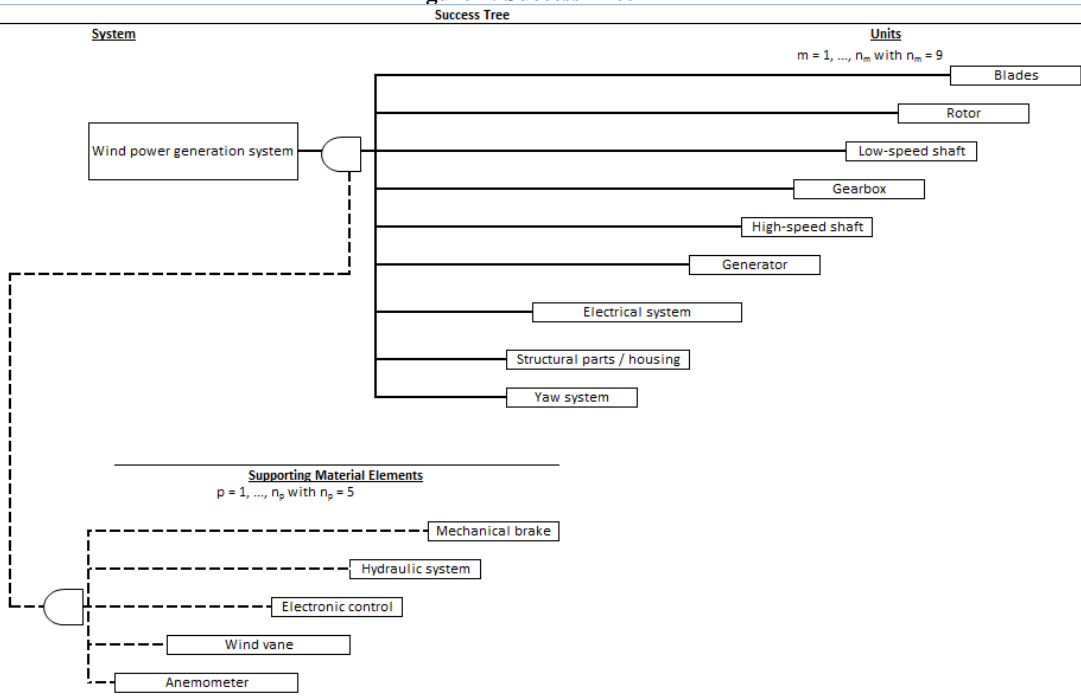
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Figure 4: Success Tree



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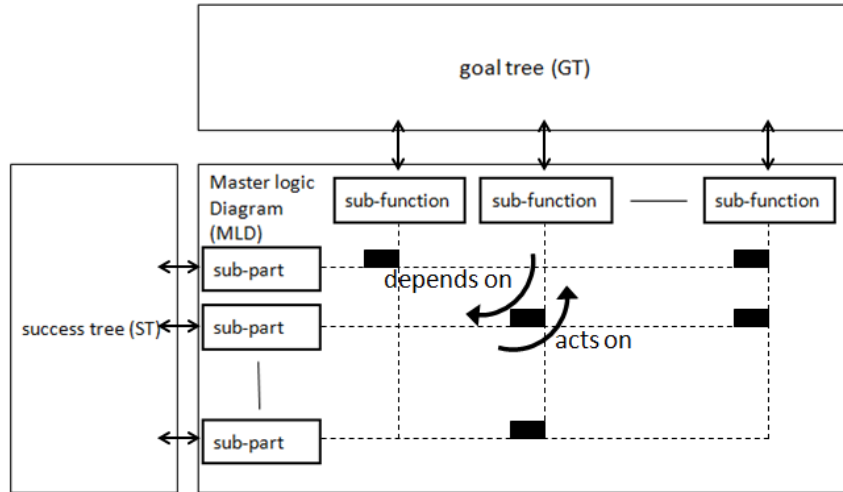
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Figure 5: Goal Tree - Success Tree - Master Logic Diagram Representation [34]



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Figure 6: GTST-MLD Applied to Wind Turbines (PART 1 of 2)

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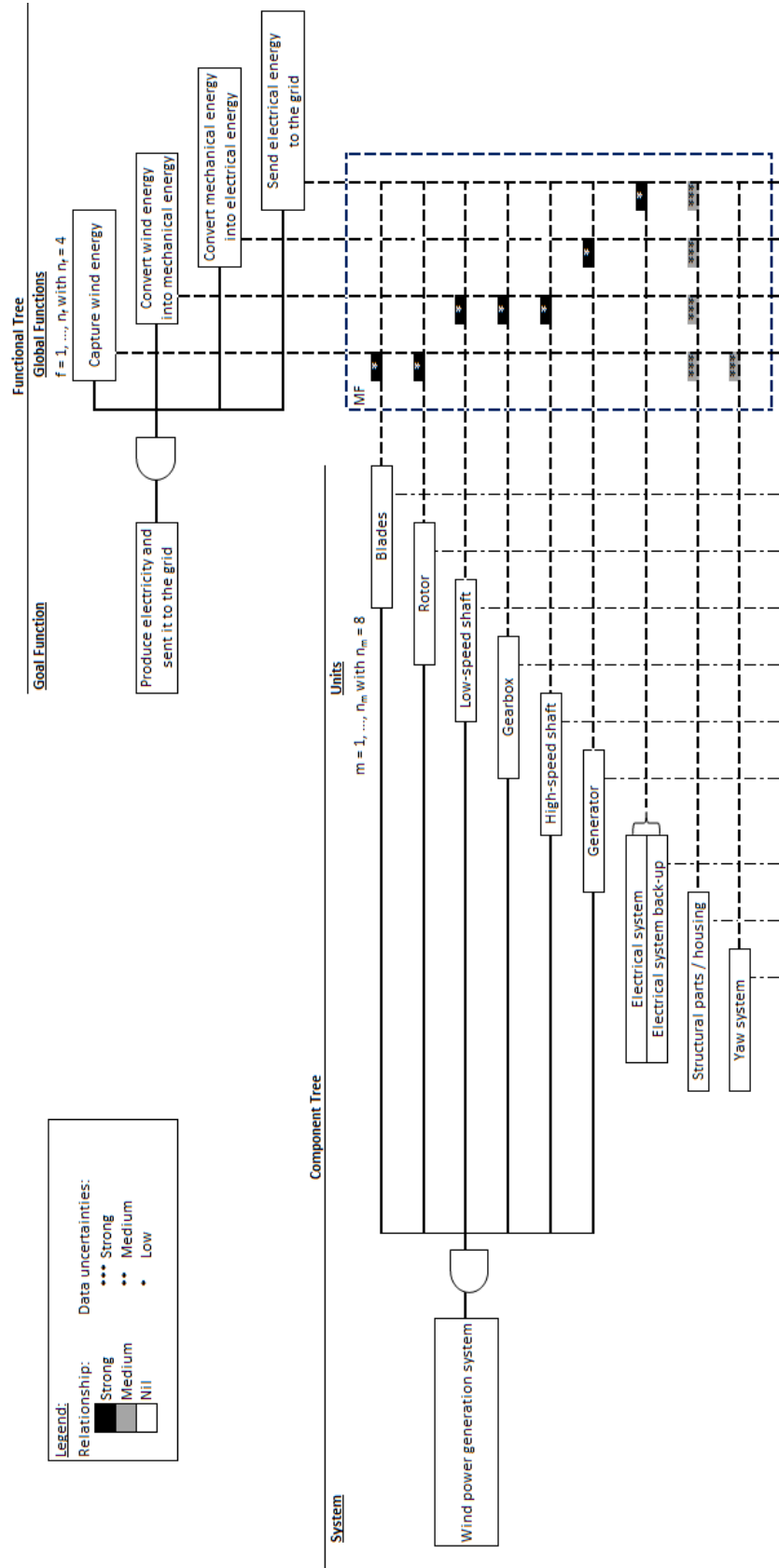
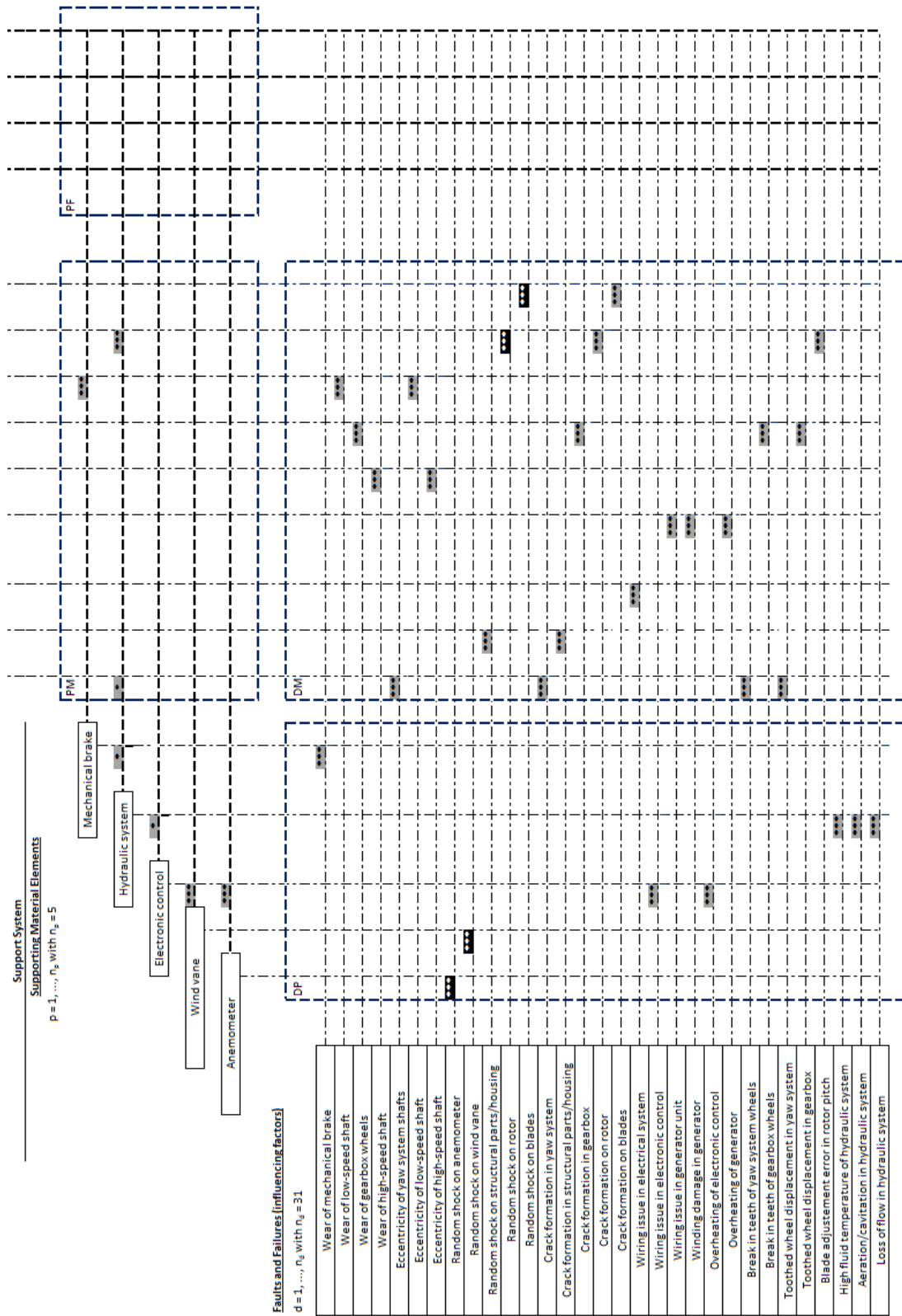


Figure 7: GTST-MLD Applied to Wind Turbines (PART 2 of 2)

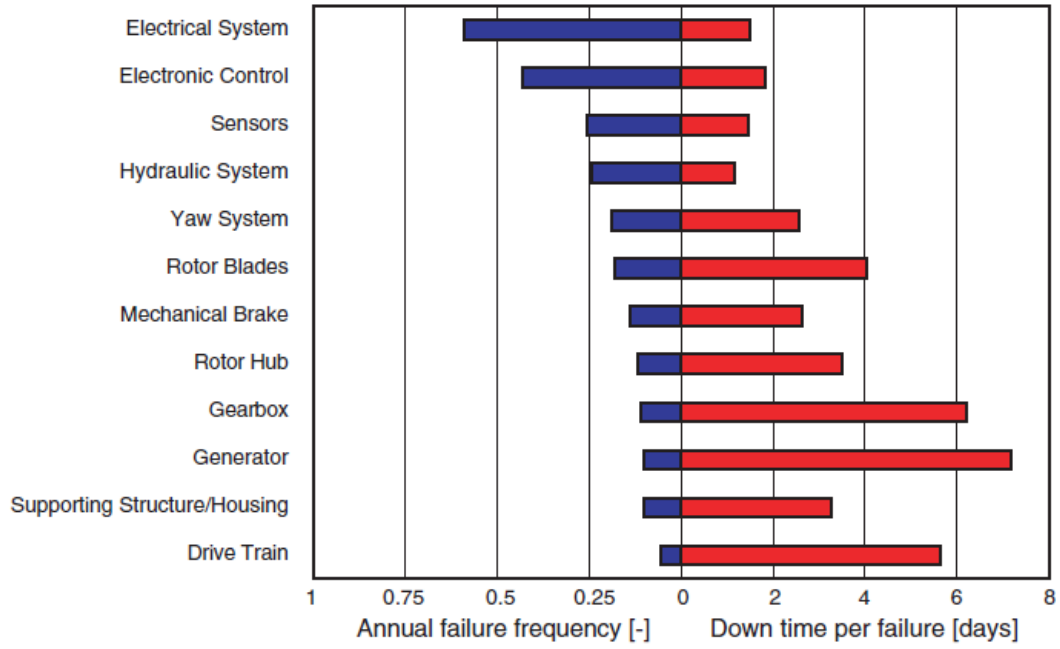


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Figure 8: Annual Failure Frequencies and Down Time per Failure of Wind Turbine Components [40]



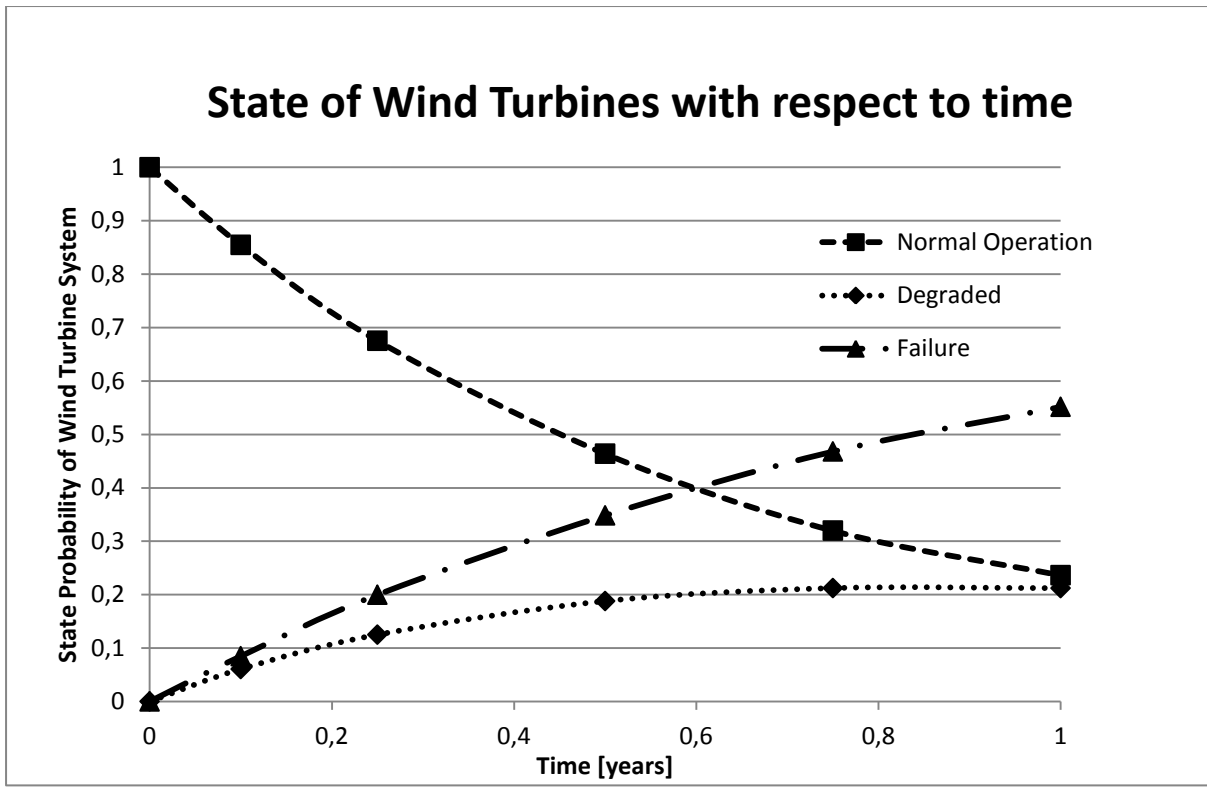
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Figure 9: State Probabilities of the Wind Turbine System over Time



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