

MULTI-SOURCE, MULTI-LOAD SYSTEMS WITH A POWER EXTRACTOR**RELATED APPLICATIONS**

[0001] This application is related to co-pending U.S. Patent Applications: No. **11/849,242**, filed August 31, 2007, and entitled "Multi-Source, multi-Load Systems with a Power Extractor"; No. **11/774,562**, filed July 7, 2007, and entitled, "Power Extractor Detecting a Power Change"; No. **11/774,563**, filed July 7, 2007, and entitled, "Power Extractor with Control Loop"; No. **11/774,564**, filed July 7, 2007, and entitled, "System and Apparatuses with Multiple Power Extractors Coupled to Different Power Sources"; No. **11/774,565**, filed July 7, 2007, and entitled, "Power Extractor for Impedance Matching"; No. **11/774,566**, filed July 7, 2007, and entitled, "Power Extractor Detecting Power and Voltage Changes," and claims the benefit of priority of those applications. This application also claims the benefit of priority of U.S. Provisional patent application **60/888,486**, filed February 6, 2007, and entitled, "XPX Power Converter."

FIELD

[0002] Embodiments of the invention relate to electrical power, and more particularly to power transfer from one or multiple sources to one or multiple loads with a power extractor.

BACKGROUND

[0003] Traditional power transfer between a source and load involves static system configurations. The source and the load configurations are traditionally known prior to system design. System design is performed to attempt to maximize power transfer between the source and load. Traditional systems typically regulate the output by virtue of their static design principles, which results in consistent, regulated power transfer. Without proper design, traditional power transfer circuits are not well suited for many system applications.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0004] The following description includes discussion of figures having illustrations given by way of example of implementations of embodiments of the

invention. The drawings should be understood by way of example, and not by way of limitation. As used herein, references to one or more "embodiments" are to be understood as describing a particular feature, structure, or characteristic included in at least one implementation of the invention. Thus, phrases such as "in one embodiment" or "in an alternate embodiment" appearing herein describe various embodiments and implementations of the invention, and do not necessarily all refer to the same embodiment. However, they are also not necessarily mutually exclusive.

[0005] FIG. 1 illustrates a prior art system for charging a battery or providing power to another load using solar power.

[0006] FIG. 2 illustrates an array of power sources and power extractors to provide power to a load according to some embodiments of the inventions.

[0007] FIG. 3 illustrates a system including a power source, power extractor, and load configured according to some embodiments of the inventions.

[0008] FIG. 4 illustrates impedance matching characteristics of a power extractor as viewed from a power source according to various embodiments of the inventions.

[0009] FIG. 5 illustrates the impedance matching characteristics of a power extractor as viewed from a load according to various embodiments of the inventions.

[0010] FIGS. 6 and 7 each illustrate a system including a power source, power extractor, and load according to some embodiments of the inventions.

[0011] FIG. 8 illustrates details of some embodiments of the system of FIG. 7.

[0012] FIG. 9 illustrates power change examples in connection with a current-voltage (IV) curve and a power curve.

[0013] FIG. 10 is a table illustrating operational concepts for a power extractor according to various embodiments.

[0014] FIG. 11 illustrates two examples of a saw tooth wave and a switching control signal according to some embodiments.

[0015] FIGS. 12 and 13 are each a block diagram illustrating power slope detection circuitry according to some embodiments.

[0016] FIG. 14 is a block diagram illustrating an example of an integrator circuit that may be used in some embodiments.

[0017] FIG. 15 illustrates various connectors for connecting a power source and a load to a power extractor and/or a circuit board according to some embodiments.

[0018] FIG. 16 shows a circuit between a power source and a node according to some embodiments.

[0019] FIG. 17 shows a diode between a power source and a node according to some embodiments.

[0020] FIG. 18 illustrates an example of power transfer circuitry of FIG. 8.

[0021] FIGS. 19 - 22 each illustrate an example of power transfer circuitry according to some embodiments.

[0022] FIG. 23 illustrates a battery where the positive end of the battery is connected to ground.

[0023] FIG. 24 illustrates comparison circuitry that may be used in some embodiments.

[0024] FIG. 25 illustrates a system including a power source, power extractor, and load according to some embodiments.

[0025] FIG. 26 illustrates processor control in connection with a load according to some embodiments.

[0026] FIG. 27 illustrates two different battery loads connected to an output node by a switch according to some embodiments.

[0027] FIGS. 28 and 29 illustrate various details of a power extractor according to some embodiments.

[0028] FIG. 30 illustrates a power extractor coupled between one or more batteries and a load according to some embodiments.

[0029] FIG. 31 illustrates a parallel configuration of batteries and power extractors coupled to a load according to some embodiments.

[0030] FIG. 32 illustrates a side view of a integrated circuit including a photovoltaic power source and a power extractor according to some embodiments.

[0031] FIG. 33 illustrates a top view of the integrated circuit of FIG. 32.

[0032] FIG. 34 illustrates a group of the integrated circuits of FIG. 32 in an array.

[0033] FIGS. 35 - 37 each illustrate a group of PV cells or panels with corresponding power extractors according to some embodiments.

[0034] FIG. 38 illustrates parallel groups of serial power extractors with each group coupled to a power source according to some embodiments.

[0035] FIG. 39 illustrates parallel groups of power extractors with each power extractor coupled to a power source according to some embodiments.

[0036] FIG. 40 illustrates power extractors and transmission lines according to some embodiments.

[0037] FIGS. 41 and 42 illustrate a power extractor used in a device according to some embodiments.

[0038] FIG. 43 illustrates a system with a power extractor coupled between a regenerative generator and a battery according to some embodiments.

[0039] FIG. 44 illustrates a planar inductive device assembly using transformer clips.

[0040] FIG. 45 illustrates a system similar to that of FIG. 2 with a central processor to gather data from or provide signals to the power extractors according to some embodiments.

[0041] FIG. 46 illustrates a system with a power supply, power extractor, and central station to gather data from the power extractor or supply signals to the power extractor according to some embodiments.

[0042] FIG. 47 illustrates a system with multiple power sources, a power extractor, and multiple loads according to some embodiments.

[0043] FIG. 48 illustrates a wristwatch system with multiple power sources, a power extractor, and multiple loads according to some embodiments.

[0044] FIG. 49 illustrates a wireless router system with multiple power sources, a power extractor, and multiple loads according to some embodiments.

[0045] FIG. 50 illustrates a pacemaker system with multiple power sources, a power extractor, and a load according to some embodiments.

[0046] FIG. 51 illustrates a system with multiple power sources, a power extractor, and multiple AC loads according to some embodiments.

[0047] Descriptions of certain details and implementations follow, including a description of the figures, which may depict some or all of the embodiments described below, as well as discussing other potential embodiments or implementations of the inventive concepts presented herein. An overview of embodiments of the invention is provided below, followed by a more detailed description with reference to the drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0048] The following describes a power extractor for providing DC to DC or DC to AC power from one or more power sources to one or more loads. The power extractor is called a power "extractor" because it operates in a way to obtain more power from a power source than typically would be obtained by the source without the operation. In examples provided in this disclosure, the power extractor operates to obtain impedance matching between the power source and the combination of the power extractor and the load, and between the load and the combination of the power source and the power extractor. This is called universal impedance matching because it occurs both as seen from the power source and as seen from the load. This impedance matching allows the power source to provide a greater amount of power than it would without the impedance matching. In some embodiments, discussed below, the power extractor is a power extraction switching converter.

[0049] As described herein, the power extractor can be provided in any of a number of dynamically-adjusting applications. The systems can have one or more power sources, which may come on and offline, and one or more loads that likewise can come on and offline. Rather than having static configurations for transferring power, the power transferring can be applied dynamically and intelligently by the power extractor.

[0050] In some embodiments, the impedance matching occurs as a consequence of the power extractor seeking a maximum power. In some embodiments, the power extractor causes impedance matching by changing the duty cycle of switching circuitry coupled to power transfer circuitry of the power extractor to cause increases in power until a maximum power is achieved. The changes to the duty cycle are made in response to detected power changes. In some embodiments, the power change is detected continuously through analog circuitry, while in other embodiments the power change is detected continuously through digital circuitry. In some embodiments, the detected power change includes a power slope, such as an instantaneous power slope. When the detected power change is zero at a true power maximum (not merely a local zero change), the power transferred is at a magnitude (level or amount) that the power source provides a maximum power given conditions beyond the control of the power extractor. In some embodiments, maximum available power is typically very closely

approached. Actually achieving maximum available power is an example very closely approaching it. Examples of such conditions beyond the control of the power extractor that may apply for some power sources include environmental conditions (e.g., amount of sun light, temperature) and size of the power source (e.g., larger photovoltaic cells or larger number of cells may provide more power). If the power extractor's impedance is such that power is extracted at power at too high of a current or too high of a voltage or too low of a current or too low of a voltage, the power source will provide less than a maximum amount of power. The maximum amount of power will be obtained at a particular impedance. See FIGS. 9 and 10 and related discussion.

[0051] As used herein, a DC power source (called a power source herein), includes any source from which DC power might be generated and/or captured. Examples of DC power sources that may be used in accordance with embodiments of the invention include, but are not limited to, photovoltaic cells or panels, a battery or batteries, and sources that derive power through wind, water (e.g., hydro-electric), tidal forces, heat (e.g., thermal couple), hydrogen power generation, gas power generation, radioactive, mechanical deformation, piezo-electric, and motion (e.g., human motion such as walking, running, etc.). Power sources may include natural energy sources and man-made power sources, and may be stable (providing an essentially constant power but variable in magnitude) and unstable (providing power that varies over time). In some embodiments, the power sources include sub-power sources (e.g., a solar panel may multiple cells), while in other embodiments, the power source is unitary. A disadvantage of using sub-power sources is that they might have different impedances and a single power extractor may match with the combined impedance, which may be less optimal than having a separate power extractor for each power source. A "power source" may also be considered an "energy source."

[0052] FIG. 2 illustrates a system including power sources 32, 34, and 36 coupled to power extractors 42, 44, and 46, respectively. Power source 32 and power extractor 42 form a power unit 52 and may be physically separated as shown in FIG. 2 and adjacent as shown in other figures. Likewise, power sources 34 and 36 form power units 54 and 56. The output of power extractors 42, 44, and 46 are joined at a node N2 and cumulatively provide power to node N2. Load 64 is also joined to node N2. Load 64 may include a single load or sub-loads such as a battery (or batteries), an inverter

and/or another sub-load or other load. Nodes N1-1, N1-2, and N1-3 are between power sources 32, 34, and 36 and power extractors 42, 44, and 46. Power units 52, 54, and 56 form a power assembly 58. A power assembly may include more than three power units or merely two power units. A load line 62 is illustrated. Unidirectional protection devices (e.g., diodes) may be used to prevent backflow of current to the power sources, but they are not required.

[0053] FIG. 3 illustrates a system with a power source 32 having an output impedance Z_1 coupled through a conductor 60 and node N1 to power extractor 42. Power extractor 42 is referred to as an impedance matcher, because as discussed above, in at least one mode of operation, it matches impedances as discussed. In some embodiments, power extractor 42 may operate in different modes. For example, in an ordinary operating mode (called a first mode herein), power extractor 42 operates to impedance match so that a maximum available power is provided by the power source. When it is said that power extractor 42 "operates to impedance match so that a maximum available power is provided" it is understood that, in practice, perfect impedance matching is typically not obtained and an absolute maximum available power is typically not obtained from the power source. Nevertheless, power extractor 42 operates so as to seek perfect impedance matching or to approach perfect impedance matching under closed-loop control including power analysis circuitry 74 and described below. In some embodiments, under steady state conditions, perfect impedance matching may be very closely approached.

[0054] Likewise, when it is said that the power transfer circuitry is to transfer the power at a magnitude to cause a power source to provide a maximum power available given conditions beyond the control of the power extractor, it is understood the power source approaches the maximum power under the closed-loop control of the power extractor. In some embodiments, that maximum available power is approached very closely. The power extractor may be said to seek to operate in a way to cause the power source to provide a maximum available power. Approaching perfect impedance matching or maximum power does not mean constantly moving closer and closer to perfect matching or maximum power. Sometimes, changes in the input impedance cause the impedance matching to be closer to perfect (or optimal) impedance matching and sometimes changes in the input impedance (or changes in the power source impedance) cause the impedance to be further from perfect

matching, but overall the control loop causes a significant improvement in impedance matching compared to what it would be without the control loop. Likewise, with approaching maximum power.

[0055] In a protection mode (called a second mode herein), power extractor 42 operates to protect itself and/or load 64 and/or source 32. The protective mode may be entered into in response to a limiting condition. Examples of limiting conditions are excessive voltage, power, or current in the first node, power extractor, or second node; too little voltage, power, or current in the first node, power extractor, or second node; and a device limiting condition. In some embodiments, power extractor 42 detects only some of these limiting conditions to determine whether to enter a protection mode. There may be additional modes and there may be more than one type of ordinary operating mode and more than one type of protection mode. For example, in at least one mode, power source conservation may be more important than achieve maximum power. This may be the case, for example, if the power source is a battery (see the example of FIG. 41).

[0056] Power extractor 42 includes power transfer circuitry 72 of FIG. 3 between nodes N1 and N2 and provides output power to a load 64 through a node N2 and load line 62. For convenience of illustration, power extractor 42 is shown as partially overlapping nodes N1 and N2. However, nodes N1 and N2 may be considered as being at the boundary of power extractor 42, but note discussion of FIGS. 8 and 15. Load 64 has an input impedance Z_3 . Power extractor 42 includes power analysis circuitry 74 that analyzes the power and provides a switching circuitry control signal to control switching circuitry 78. Switching circuitry 78 operates to at least partially control the operation of power transfer circuitry 72. Power extractor 42 includes an input impedance of Z_2 and an output impedance of Z_2^* . When changes in power are detected, power analysis circuitry 74 responds by adjusting the timing (e.g., duty cycle) of switching circuitry 78. Switching circuitry 78 may also react in a manner that seeks to maximize energy transfer efficiency through, for example, changing a frequency of switching of switching circuitry 78.

[0057] FIGS. 4 and 5 illustrate the impedance matching characteristics of power extractor 42 of FIG. 3. In FIG. 4, power source 32 has impedance Z_1 , called a first impedance in FIG. 4. Power extractor 42 has input impedance Z_2 while load 64 has the impedance Z_3 . In FIG. 4, the combination of Z_2 and Z_3 is called a second

impedance. The impedance as seen by power source 32 when looking at the power extractor 42 is equal to its own impedance. In other words, power extractor 42 dynamically matches the impedance of power source 32 (i.e., $Z_1 = Z_2 + Z_3$) so that the first and second impedances equal each other.

[0058] FIG. 5 illustrates that the impedance as seen by load 64 when looking at power extractor 42 is also equal to its own impedance. In FIG. 5, the first impedance is Z_1 and Z_2^* (the output impedance of power extractor 42) and the second impedance is Z_3 . Load 64 sees output impedance Z_2^* on power extractor 42. Thus, power extractor 42 also dynamically matches the impedance of the load (i.e., $Z_3 = Z_1 + Z_2^*$) so that the first and second impedances are matched. Given that the impedance of power extractor 42 is typically different (Z_2 or Z_2^*) depending whether the impedance is measured at N1 or N2, the impedances ($Z_2 + Z_3$) as seen by the power source and ($Z_1 + Z_2^*$) as seen by the load may be thought of as virtual impedances.

[0059] In some embodiments, whether power extractor 42 seeks to impedance match with power source 32 depends on whether load 64 can receive all the power that power source 32 can provide. If load 64 can receive more than source 32 can provide, then power extractor 42 seeks to have its input impedance match with the output impedance of power source 32, but does not necessarily seek to have its output impedance match with the input impedance of load 64. If load 64 can receive less than power source 32 can provide, then power extractor 42 may go into a mode (possibly a protection mode) in which it does not seek to have its input impedance match with the output impedance of power source 32, but may seek to match its output impedance with the input impedance of load 64. If load 64 can receive exactly or essentially exactly what source 32 can provide, then power extractor 42 may seek to have its input impedance match with the output impedance of power source 32 and its output impedance match with the input impedance of load 64. In other embodiments, power extractor 42 may operate different. Impedance matching at the output node (node N2 in FIG. 3) may occur when power extractors are connected together.

[0060] FIG. 6 illustrates a circuit 82 and a circuit 86 separated by a node N3 in power transfer circuitry 72. Impedances of circuits 82 and 86 may be coadjutive (rendering mutual aid) and are modulated so that the aggregate impedance of power extractor 42 and load 64 is matched to the output impedance of power source 32. In some embodiments and situations, the aggregate impedance of power source 32 and

power extractor 42 is matched to the input impedance of load 64. Power is continuously transferred from power source 32 through circuit 82. The duty cycle of S1 is dynamically adjusted to facilitate the virtual impedance matching to the power source 32. Once the impedances are matched, the power extracted from power source 32 is maximized. Likewise, power is continuously transferred from circuit 86 to load 64. The amount of power driven into load 64 is maximized when the impedance of circuit 86 is matched with the impedance of load 64. A control loop 70 includes power analysis circuitry 74 and switching control circuitry 80. In some embodiments, control loop 70 is partly implemented with software. Switch S1 is controlled by switching control circuitry 80. Power change analysis circuitry 74 detects changes in power from power source 32 at node N1 and communicates with switching control circuitry 80. Switching control circuitry 80 controls, for example, the duty cycle of S1 so as to increase power as described below.

[0061] FIG. 7 illustrates another power transfer circuitry configuration that may be used in some embodiments of the invention. In FIG. 7, power transfer circuitry 72 includes a circuit 84 between circuits 82 and 86, with node N3 between circuits 82 and 84 and node N4 between circuits 84 and 86. Switching control circuitry 80 provides a switching signal(s) to control switches S1 and S2. In some embodiments, the duty cycle of the switching signal to S1 is the inverse of the duty cycle of the switching signal to S2. In other embodiments, the switching signals to S1 and S2 are intentionally not inverses of each other. In some embodiments, there may be additional switches. Circuits 82, 84, and 86 may be coadjutive impedances and are modulated by switches S1 and S2 under the control of switching control circuitry 80 such that the aggregate impedance of power extractor 42 and load 64 matches the output impedance of power source 32, and the aggregate impedance of power source 32 and power extractor 42 matches the input impedance of load 64. When the impedance of power source 32 is matched with the combination of power extractor 42 and load 64, circuit 72 is able to extract maximum power from power source 32.

[0062] In some embodiments, circuit 84 transfers accumulated voltage potential from N3 to N4 without interrupting the flow of power from circuit 82 to circuit 86. Circuit 86 adapts its output impedance to facilitate impedance matching with load 64. The duty cycle of S2 is dynamically adjusted to cause the impedance matching between circuit 86 and load 64. Thus, circuit 86 is able to transfer maximum power

into load 64. While circuit 86 is transferring power to load 64, circuit 82 continues to match its impedance with the impedance of power source 32 allowing maximum power to be transferred from power source 32 through circuit 82. This process continues as S1 and S2 are alternately opened and closed according to the duty cycle of the switching signal. In some embodiments, the switch states of S1 and S2 are controlled by switching control circuitry 80 which receives the switching control signal from power change analysis circuitry 74 based on the changes in power available at N1. Alternatively, the power change detected can be a power change at a place other than node N1 such as node N2 or inside power extractor 42.

[0063] FIG. 8 illustrates details that are included in some embodiments of FIGS. 5 and 7, but other embodiments include different details. Referring to FIG. 8, power change analysis circuitry 74 includes power change detection circuitry 94 and other circuitry shown in other figures. Power transfer circuitry 72 includes circuits 82, 84, and 86. Circuits 82 and 84 include transformer T1 (including inductors L1 and L3) and transformer T2 (including inductors L2 and L4). Circuit 82 includes capacitors C1 and C2 and a node N5 separating C1 and C2 and connected to inductors L3 and L4. Power source is coupled to inductor L1 through conductor 60 of node N1, an interface connector 110, and a node N1*. As an example, connector 110 may be a plug receptacle (see also FIG. 15). If the impedance difference between N1, connector 110, and N1* are relatively small, then they may be considered one node. Otherwise, they may be considered more than one mode. Likewise with node N2*, connector 112, and node N2. Inductor L1 is between nodes N1* and N3, and inductor L2 is between nodes N4 and N2*.

[0064] Power change detection circuitry 94 detects a power change of power at node N1* and provides a switching control signal on conductor 98 to one input of comparison circuitry 80. In some embodiments, power change detection circuitry 94 detects a slope of the power change and may be called power slope detection circuitry 94 and provide a power slope indication signal (as shown in FIG. 8). In some embodiments, the power slope is an instantaneous power slope. Another input of comparison circuitry 106 receives a waveform such as a saw tooth wave from waveform generator circuit 102. Comparison circuitry 106 controls a duty cycle of switches S1 and S2. In some embodiments, S1 and S2 are not both open or both closed at the same time (with the possible exception of brief transitions when they are

switching). Waveform generator circuit 102 and comparison circuitry 106 are examples of circuitry in switching control circuitry 80.

[0065] When S1 is closed, electromagnetic fields change in T1 and T2 while the electrostatic potential across C1 and C2 is altered and energy from power source 32 is distributed electromagnetically into T1 and T2, while electrostatically in C1 and C2. When S1 opens, S2 closes and the magnetic flux in T1 begins to decrease. Thus, the energy stored in T1 flows through N3 to capacitors C1 and C2 of circuit 84, depositing some of the energy as an electrostatic field onto C1 and C2, and some of the energy into T2 of circuit 86 through node N5 and inductor L4. The residual flux in T2 also begins to decrease, transferring energy into the load 64 through N2. When S1 closes and S2 opens again, the magnetic flux in T1 begins to increase while the magnetic flux T2 also increases as it consumes some of the electrostatic energy that was previously stored onto C1 and C2. Thus energy stored in circuit 84 is discharged and transferred to T2 and load 64.

[0066] Multi-phase energy transfer combines two or more phased inputs to produce a resultant flux in a magnetic core equivalent to the angular bisector of the inputs. (Note: an angle bisector of an angle is known to be the locus of points equidistant from the two rays (half-lines) forming the angle.) In this embodiment of the power extractor, capacitors C1 and C2 are used to shift the phase of the current that is applied to the secondary winding of T1 and T2 (L3 and L4 respectively). Thus, multi-phased inputs are applied to the cores of T2 and T3. The summation of the multiphase inputs alter the electromotive force that present during the increase and reduction of flux in the transformers primary windings L1 and L3. The result is the neutralization (within the bandwidth of the operational frequency of the power extractor) of high frequency variations in the reactive component of the impedance that circuits 82 and 86 exhibit to the source and load respectively. Circuits 82 and 86 may be multiphase bisector energy transfer circuits to cause the multiphase bisector energy transfer and to interface with circuit 84.

[0067] Due to the dynamic properties of circuit 82, power source 32 "sees" an equivalent impedance at inductor L1 power extractor 42. Likewise, with inductor L2 and load 64. The input and output impedances of power extractor 42 are adjusted by controlling the duty cycle of S1 and S2. Optimal matching of impedances to the

power source 32 occurs when maximum power extraction from the power source is achieved.

[0068] Power slope detection circuitry 94, power change indication signal, and comparison circuitry 106 are part of a control loop that controls the duty cycle of switching circuitry 78 to achieve maximum power extraction (i.e., $\Delta P/\Delta V = 0$) from power source 32. The control loop may also control the switching frequency of switching circuitry 78 to influence the efficiency of power transfer through the power transfer circuitry 72. Merely as an example, the frequency may be in the range of 100 KHz to 250 KHz depending on saturation limits of inductors. However, in other embodiments, the frequencies may be substantially different. The size and other aspects of the inductors and associated cores and other components such as capacitors can be chosen to meet various criterion including a desired power transfer ability, efficiency, and available space. In some embodiments, the frequency can be changed by changing the frequency of the waveform from waveform generator circuit 102. Other figures show a control of circuit 102. In some embodiments, the frequency is controlled by a control loop as a function of whether an on-time rise of current is between a minimum and maximum current in a energy transfer circuit.

[0069] As used herein, the duty cycle of switching circuitry 78 is the ratio of the on-time of S1 to the total on-time of S1 and S2 (i.e., duty cycle = $S1/(S1+S2)$). The duty cycle could be defined by a different ratio associated with S1 and/or S2 in other embodiments. When the voltages of power source 32 and load 64 are equal and the duty cycle is 50%, there is zero power transfer through power extractor 42 in some embodiments. If the voltages of power source 32 and load 64 are different, a higher or lower duty cycle may cause zero power transfer through power extractor 42. In other words, a particular duty cycle of switching circuitry 78 is not tied to a particular direction or amount of power transfer through power transfer circuitry 72.

[0070] As noted, the power change can be continuously detected and the switching control signal (of FIGS. 7, 8, and 11) can be continuously updated. Using analog circuits is one way to perform continuous detection and updating. Using digital circuits (such as a processor) is another way to perform continuous detection and switching control signal updating. Even though the updating from some digital circuits may in some sense not be exactly continuous, it may be considered continuous when for all practical purposes it produces the same result as truly

continuous updating. As an example, the updating of the switching control signal is also considered continuous when the frequency of change is outside the control loop bandwidth. In some cases, the updating of the switching control signal also could be considered continuous when the frequency of change is within the control bandwidth. Merely as an example, in some implementations, the control loop bandwidth may be around 800 Hz. In other embodiments, the control loop bandwidth is higher than 800 Hz, and perhaps much higher than 800 Hz. In still other embodiments, the control loop bandwidth is lower than 800 Hz and depending on the desired implementation and performance may be lower than 400 Hz.

[0071] FIG. 9 illustrates an example of a typical current-voltage (I-V) curve and a power curve. Many power sources (e.g., a solar panel) produce a relatively constant current at different voltages. However, when the voltage reaches a certain threshold in these power sources, the current begins to drop quickly. The threshold voltage corresponds to a knee region in the I-V curve. The maximum power point ($P_{\max}$) also corresponds to the knee region in the I-V curve.

[0072] FIG. 10 is a table illustrating operational concepts for power extractor 42 according to various embodiments. Example (1), shown as arrow (1) on FIG. 9, shows that when power and voltage are both increasing, the operating point of the power extractor is on the left side of $P_{\max}$. When operating on the left side of $P_{\max}$, too much current is being drawn by power extractor 42 from power source 32 and, accordingly, power source 32 is providing less than a maximum available power from power source 32. The maximum available power is the most amount of power that could be achieved given environmental conditions and other conditions beyond the control of power extractor 42. In order to reduce current flow, the duty cycle of switching control circuitry 78 is decreased. This is also the case with example (2) in which arrow (2) shows that when power and voltage are both decreasing, there is also too much current and less than a maximum available power from power source 32. Conversely, when operating on the right side of $P_{\max}$ (examples (3) and (4)), too little current is being drawn by the power extractor and less than a maximum available power from power source 32. Thus, in order to increase the current flow, the duty cycle of switching control circuitry 89 is increased. FIGS. 9 and 10 illustrate a specification implementation under particular conditions. Other implementations may

operate differently and involve additional factors. In a different implementation, the current could be increased by decreasing the duty cycle.

[0073] Referring again to FIG. 9, if the power is at P_{max} for a length of time, then the power and voltage is neither increasing nor decreasing for that length of time. Accordingly, the duty cycle may remain the same. In some embodiments, the control loop includes mechanisms to prevent a local power maximum (local minimum slope) that is not a true maximum power from being interpreted as a power maximum so the duty cycle is not changed. One mechanism is the natural noise that will tend to cause control loop fluctuations resulting in the power change. Another mechanism is artificially induced control loop fluctuations that in some implementations may result in the duty cycle changing after a particular amount of time if the detection circuitry shows no change in power or voltage.

[0074] Power slope detection circuitry 94 creates the switching control signal in response to the situation of FIG. 10. FIG. 11 illustrates how comparison circuitry 106 compares the switching control signal with the saw tooth waveform. The duty cycle of switching control circuitry 78 changes as the area of the saw-tooth wave above the switching control signal changes. For example, the area of the saw-tooth wave above the switching control signal is smaller from time t_3 to t_4 than from time t_1 to t_2 . The smaller area above the switching control signal corresponds to a lower duty cycle. The smaller area above the switching control signal could correspond to a higher duty cycle in other embodiments. The voltages .5 V1 and .6 V1 are used for purposes of illustration and are not limiting. Additionally, in other embodiments, other waveforms (triangle, sine, etc.) could be used in place of the saw-tooth wave.

[0075] FIGS. 12 and 13 illustrate examples of power slope detection circuitry 94 that may be used in some embodiments of the invention. There are various other ways to implement the same or similar functions. In FIG. 12, a current measuring circuit 128 includes voltage measuring circuitry 130 internal to power slope detection circuitry 94 to measures the voltage across a small resistor R_s at N1 (or at another location) to determine the current ($I = V/R$). Although a small resistor R_s is shown, there are various other ways to measure current including through measuring a magnetic field. The voltage-level signal from N1 (i.e., V_{N1}) (or at another location) and the current-level signal from N1 (i.e., I_{N1}) (or at another location) are continuous signals. (In other embodiments, the voltage is deduced indirectly.) Multiplier 134

continuously multiplies the voltage and current at N1 to determine the power at N1 (PN1).

[0076] Differentiator 136 provided a signal responsive to changes in power (ΔP) while processor 132 provides a signal responsive to changes in voltage (ΔV). In some embodiments, differentiator 136 measures the power slope. $\Delta P/\Delta V$ represents the slope power at node N1 (or the other location). Maximum power is achieved when $\Delta P/\Delta V = 0$. The slope of the power (or merely power change) can be determined in various ways. The power slope may be an instantaneous power slope determined through analog circuitry. Alternatively, a power slope or merely a power change can be detected through digital circuitry such as a processor by comparing samples. The processor could compare samples and determine a slope and a corresponding change in voltage (or a voltage slope). Alternatively, the processor could merely determine whether the power is increasing or decreasing and whether the corresponding voltage is increasing or decreasing. In some embodiments, differentiator 136 merely provides a magnitude of the power change (power slope) and in other embodiments, it provides both a magnitude and a direction. For example, the slope at point (1) in FIG. 9 is positive in direction while the slope at point (2) is negative in direction despite having a similar magnitude.

[0077] Power slope detection circuitry 94 includes voltage change detection circuitry 132, which may be a processor, application specific integrated circuit (ASIC), or other circuitry. Circuitry 132 may also perform scaling as discussed. In some embodiments, circuitry 94 detects a slope of voltage change and in other embodiments, and in other embodiments, it merely detects whether the voltage is increasing or decreasing. It may detect the change through analog or digital circuitry. In some embodiments, only the direction (i.e., not the magnitude) of the voltage change is relevant. Referring again to FIG. 9, example (1) involves an increasing voltage (positive) while example (2) involves a decreasing voltage (negative). Thus, in example (2) of FIG. 10, when differentiator 136 indicates a decrease in power, voltage change detection circuitry 132 indicates a decrease in voltage. When there is a decrease in voltage, controlled inverter 138 inverts the negative output of differentiator 136, which results in a positive number corresponding to the positive power slope at point (2). Thus, by combining the results of differentiator 136 and voltage change detection circuitry 132, power slope detection circuitry 94 can

determine whether to increase or decrease the current. As shown in FIG. 10, when the power slope is positive (examples (1) and (2)), the duty cycle of switching circuitry 78 is decreased; when the power slope is negative (examples (3) and (4)), the duty cycle is increased. In some embodiments, the output of controlled inverter 138 is scaled by a scalar (amplifier A1) 140, which puts the signal in a proper range to be compared with the waveform (as shown in FIG. 11). Further, in some embodiments, an integrator 144 may be used to act as a low pass filter and smooth out otherwise rapid changes.

[0078] In some embodiments, the switching control signal is dependent on the steepness of the power slope or amount of power change, and in other embodiments, the changes are incremental. In some embodiments, circuitry 94 does not model a power curve, it merely responds to detected voltage and current changes to move toward the maximum power, without being aware of where the maximum power on a curve. Indeed, it is not necessary to know what the power curve would look like. In other embodiments, circuitry 94 or other circuitry such as processor 172 in FIG. 25 models a power curve.

[0079] In some embodiments, the input (e.g., voltage and/or current) and the control loop may define the saturation limit for each of the inductors in power transfer circuitry 72. In other words, the saturation limit of each of the inductors may be independent of the power extractor output and switching frequency.

[0080] FIG. 13 shows how changes in voltage can be detected by analog detection circuitry 148 (e.g., differentiator, etc) in some embodiments. Additionally, an external current sensor 146 can measure the amount of current being transferred by the power extractor and communicate that information to power slope detection circuitry 94. Amplifier 140 can also be controlled by a processor, ASIC, or FPGA 150 based on various conditions including but not limited to weather conditions, and charge level of the load (e.g., battery).

[0081] FIG. 14 illustrates an example of the optional integrator 144 of FIGS. 12 and 13. Integrator 144 may be included in some embodiments of power slope detection circuitry 94 to dampen the switching control signal from power slope detection circuitry 94. Integrator 144 includes a resistor R1 at the input of an op amp 152 and a resistor R2 in parallel with a capacitor C. Charge stored in the capacitor is "bled off" by resistor R2. The bleeding off of charge by resistor R2 causes the output

of integrator 144 to be lower over time than the input (as received from power slope detection circuitry). This reduced output reduces the impact (i.e., dampens) of switching control signal on the duty cycle of switching circuitry 78.

[0082] There are various other ways to obtain the switching control signal. Examples include doing all the analysis in a processor. Other examples, involve considering the saturation levels of the inductors. An example is illustrated in connection with FIG. 28. A phase-locked loop (PLL) may be used to detect on and off times of switches S1 and S2. This information could be provided to the processor which may use the information for various purposes. Two phase related signals may be used in connection with controlling the duty cycle.

[0083] FIG. 15 shows several connectors (110, 112, 116, 118, 122, and 124) for connecting power source 32 and load 64 to power extractor 42 and/or a circuit board 156 as shown. Circuit board 156 may be in a housing 158. Circuit board 156 and housing 158 may be in a wide variety of forms including, for example, a stand alone box. Alternatively, circuit board 156 could be in a consumer electronics device (e.g., cell phone, personal data assistant (PDA)) or be a computer card in which case the load could be integrated in the housing as well, or in a variety of other implementations. As described below, in some implementations, the power source could be integrated with the housing. If the connector has a substantially different impedance than the surrounding nodes, then the different nodes (e.g., N1, N1*, N1**) can be considered separate nodes. If the connector has a relatively little impedance than the surrounding nodes, then the different nodes can be considered one node.

[0084] FIG. 16 shows that a circuit 160 can be included between power source 32 and node N1 in some embodiments. FIG. 17 shows that a diode 162 can be included between power source 32 and N1 in some embodiments.

[0085] FIG. 18 reproduces the power transfer circuitry of FIG. 8 for convenience of comparison with alternative power transfer circuitry illustrated in FIGS. 19-22. The values of the resistors, capacitors and inductors (such as R1, R2, C1, C2, C3, C4, L1, L2, L3, L4, L5, and L6) are not necessarily the same in FIGS. 18-22.

[0086] FIG. 23 illustrates a battery 164 of which the positive end of the battery is connected to ground. N2 represents the node at the output of power extractor 42. In some embodiments, a battery 164 is connected to N2 such that the negative end of battery 164 is tied to N2 and the positive end is tied to ground. Referring to FIGS. 7

and 8, one reason to have the arrangement of FIG. 23 is that, in some embodiments, the voltages at N4 and N3 have opposite polarities. For example, if the voltage at N3 and N4 are V_{N3} and V_{N4} , respectively, V_{N3} may be $-V_{N4}$. In other embodiments, battery 164 can be connected such that the positive end is tied to N2 and the negative end is tied to ground. Further, in some embodiments, the voltage at N4 and N3 are not opposite voltages.

[0087] FIG. 24 illustrates an example of comparison circuitry that may be used in some embodiments of the invention. Comparison circuitry 106 can be any circuitry used to compare power change indication signal 98 with a reference signal (e.g., a voltage reference, V_{ref}) in order to regulate the duty cycle of the switching circuitry.

[0088] FIG. 25 is similar to FIG. 8, but includes additional circuitry including a processor/ASIC/and/or field programmable gate array (FPGA) 172 (hereinafter processor 172), scaling circuitry 176, current sensors 184, 186, and 188. Processor 172 receives signals indicative of the sensed current as well as voltage of node N1*. Letters A and B show connections between current sensors 184 and 186 and processor 172. In some embodiments, processor 172 also gathers information and/or provides control to sub-loads inverter 64-1, battery 64-2, and/or other load 64-3 of load 64. The current information can be used to indicate such information as the rate, amount, and efficiency of power transfer. One reason to gather this information is for processor 172 to determine whether to be in the protection mode (such as the second mode) or the ordinary operating mode (such as the first mode). In a protection mode, there are various things processor 172 can do to provide the power extractor 42 or load 64. One option is to open switch S3. Another option is to open a switch S4 shown in FIG. 26. Another option is to provide a bias signal to scaling circuitry 176 which is combined in circuitry 178 with a power slope indication signal to create the switching control signal on conductor 98. For example, if the bias signal causes the switching control signal to be very high, the duty cycle would be low causing the current to be small. The regulation of power in the protection mode can be to completely shut off the power or merely to reduce the power. In the protection mode, the goal is no longer to maximize the power transferred. In some embodiments, the bias signal is asserted for purposes other than merely protection mode.

[0089] FIG. 26 illustrates a processor control line to control a switch, S4, which can be opened to shut off any power transfer from power extractor 42 to a load (e.g.,

inverter 64-1, battery 64-2, and/or other load 64-3). Processor 172 also controls the routing of power between different sub-loads (e.g., inverter 64-1, battery 64-2, or other load 64-3) in some embodiments. Furthermore, temperature sensors 192-1, 192-3, and 192-3 are shown as being connected to different loads. Based on the temperature (e.g., too much heat), the processor can cause switch S4 to open or close or otherwise regulate power, such as through the bias signal or opening switch S3. Power extractor 42 can operate in a protective mode based on any device limiting condition. Examples of device limiting conditions include one or more of the following: excessive heat, voltage, power, or current in N1, power extractor 42, and/or N2. There may be other device limiting conditions. The power extractor may sense the state of external switches such as dip switches or get updates through a memory (such as a flash memory) to determine load characteristics that may be considered in deciding whether to enter into a protective mode.

[0090] FIG. 27 illustrates two different battery loads, 64-1-1 and 64-1-2, connected to output node N2 by a switch, S5. This configuration illustrates the functional flexibility of power extractor 42 in various embodiments. Given both the source-side and load-side impedance matching characteristics, power extractor 42 automatically adapts to the load and provides power to the load. In other words, the output of power extractor 42 is power – the output voltage and the output current that comprise the power are not fixed. The output voltage and output current automatically adapt to the load, without reducing the power. In other words, power extractor 42 may operate independent of any voltage. Thus, the output power may be unregulated, with the exception of the protection mode.

[0091] For example, in some embodiments, power extractor 42 might extract 60 Watts of power from power source 32 to be transferred to battery 186-1. If battery 64-2-1 is a 12 Volt battery, then power extractor 42 might provide 5 A of current at 12 Volts to charge the battery. If battery 64-2-1 is switched to or swapped for a 15 Volt battery 64-2-2, then power extractor 42 will still provide 60 Watts of power to charge the battery in the form of 4 A of current at 15 Volts. While this example illustrates the adaptability/flexibility of power extractor 42, it should be noted that the output voltage from power extractor 42 may need to be slightly higher than the battery voltage in order to cause current to flow into the battery.

[0092] In the above example, and in some other embodiments, the power extractor feedback point may be based on output power transfer, rather than traditional systems where the feedback point is based on output voltage or current. Other embodiments operate differently.

[0093] FIG. 28 illustrates further detail of power extractor 42 according to other embodiments. Current sensors 222 and 224 provide signals indicative of the current through switches S1 and S2, which are summed in summer 202. Power may be related to the average current from summer 202. These may be provided to an integrator 206 to provide a signal indicative of the power, which is differentiated by differentiator 212 and amplified by amplifier 214. Voltage change (or voltage slope) may be considered as mentioned above.

[0094] FIG. 29 illustrates voltage regulators 232 and 236 which take unregulated voltage from power extractor 42 and provide a regulated voltage as needed (e.g., to power various circuits within power extractor 42). The unregulated power is provided to regulator 232 through a transformer T2 (inductors L5 and L6) and diode D1. The unregulated power is provided to regulator 236 through a transformer T4 (inductors L7 and L8) and diode D2.

[0095] Power extractor 42 may be used in transferring power from one or more batteries 272 to a load 64 which may include another battery. FIG. 30 illustrates a battery or batteries 272 as being the power source. A reason to use power extractor 42 with batteries as the source is that the batteries with lower power and a lower voltage can be used to charge other batteries including with a higher or lower voltage. Given that power extractor 42 extracts DC power in whatever form it is available (e.g., not at specific or fixed voltage or current) and outputs power in whatever form needed by the load (e.g., not at a specific or fixed voltage or current), power extractor 42 is flexible and adaptable – within safety or other reasonable limits, there are no restrictions as to what type of source and/or load can be connected to power extractor 42. For example, power extractor 42 can transfer the available power in a 9 Volt battery to charge a 15 Volt battery. In another example, power extractor 42 can transfer power from two 5 Volt batteries to a 12 Volt battery. The flexibility and adaptability of power extractor 42 is in contrast to traditional charge controllers and other power transfer systems where power transfer from input to output is a byproduct of output voltage regulation. FIG. 31 illustrates parallel power extractors 42 and 44

receiving power from battery power sources 276 and 278, respectively, and providing power to load 64.

[0096] FIG. 32 illustrates a side view of an integrated circuit chip (IC1) including a photovoltaic power source 284 and power extractor 286 fabricated onto a substrate 282 of IC1. Power extractor 286 may be the same as or somewhat different than power extractor 42. FIG. 33 shows a top view of IC1 including photovoltaic power source 284, power extractor 286, first and second nodes and a chip interface 288. There may be a diode between power extractor 286 and source 284. In practice, the layout could be somewhat different with photovoltaic power source 284 taking up more or less service area than is shown. Likewise, power extractor 286 could take up more or less area than is shown. FIG. 34 shows a plurality of IC chips IC1, IC2, ... IC25 similar to IC1 of FIGS. 32 and 33 joined by a frame 296. The integrated circuit may also contain various function circuitry in addition to the power extractor and the power source. FIG. 32 illustrates that the power extractor can be on a very smaller scale. Conversely, power extractor 42 may be on a very large scale, for example, in high power embodiments. FIG. 40 may be an example of such high power embodiments. For example, parts of the control loop such as power slope detection circuitry 94 may be up to a substantial distance from node N1. In some embodiments, the distance is less than one meter, and in other embodiments, it is more than one meter and it may be substantially more than one meter. Alternatively, the power slope detection circuitry and power transfer circuitry may be close together in the same container or housing. Optical coupling or magnetic coupling may be used in various places including between node N1 and the power change detector.

[0097] FIGS. 35, 36, and 37 illustrate different configurations for connecting one or more power extractors (power extractors 1, 2, and 3) to one or more photovoltaic (PV) sources according to various embodiments. For example, in FIG. 35, PV power sources (e.g., PV cells or PV panels) are directly connected together and to power extractors 1, 2 and 3, through connectors 320-1, 320-2, and 320-3, and 322-1 and 322-2, which may be glues, adhesives, mounting brackets, and/or other connectors in various embodiments. In FIG. 36, PV sources 1, 2, and 3 and power extractors 1, 2, and 3 are directly connected while the entire unit is supported by an external frame 320. In FIG. 37, PV sources are connected to each other and to power extractors 1, 2, and 3 via frame elements 330, 334-1, 334-2, 338-1, 338-2, and 228-3.

[0098] FIGS. 38 and 39 illustrate various configurations for connecting multiple power sources and multiple power extractors according to various embodiments. For example, FIG. 38 shows power extractors PE11, PE12, and PE13 in series to increase voltage from a power source S1. Parallel power extractors PE21, PE22, and PE23 in series with power source PS2, and PE31, PE32, and PE33 in series power source PS3 are combined to increase current. FIG. 39 is similar, but each power extractor is coupled to a power source (PS11 to PE11, PS12 to PE12, PS13 to PE13, PS21 to PE21, PS22 to PE22, and PS23 to PE23).

[0099] FIG. 40 illustrates the placement of power extractors in one or more transmission lines. Of course, the magnitude of the power that may be transferred through power extractors 1, 2, and 3 in FIG. 40 is far greater than may be transferred in the integrated circuit of FIGS. 32-34.

[00100] The power extractor of the invention may be used in connection with many different types of devices. For example, FIG. 41 illustrates the use of a power extractor 358 in a device 350 such as a pacemaker. A pacemaker device is used in this example by way of illustration only; other types of devices may be similarly be used in other embodiments. Power extractor 358 extracts power from battery or batteries 354 for power for a load 312 (e.g., the pacemaker itself). Power extractor 358 includes a processor/ASIC/or other circuitry 360 to determine battery usage and/or battery life in the pacemaker. The information can be communicated through an antenna 366. Based on that information, a doctor or technician or other person can send control information to processor 360 to bias the power extractor such that battery power is conserved, optimized, etc. in device 302 as desired. That is, it is not necessarily desirable to use the battery with the most power, but rather conservation of power may be more desirable. The bias signal of FIG. 25 may be useful for helping with battery conservation.

[00101] FIG. 42 illustrates the use of a power extractor 388 in another device 382, such as a cell phone. Again, a cell phone is used by way of example and illustration; other devices may incorporate a power extractor in similar fashion. Power extractor 388 is included in device 382 to extract power from a power source 384. Example sources of power can include light (including solar) power, heat (e.g., body heat), energy from motion (e.g., walking, running, general body movement, etc.), wind, battery, converting infrared to electrical energy, etc. Any electrical power that can be

generated by power source 384 can be extracted by power extractor 388 and transferred to load 392 to power device 382. Processor 390 may be used control a desirable mode, for example, getting the maximum power out of a solar cell or thermal couple power source, or trying to converse battery power when the battery gets low. The device could have a combination of power sources. Thus, in some embodiments, power extractor 388 can be used to charge, either partially or fully, a cell phone battery without having to plug device 382 into a traditional electrical outlet.

[00102] As another example, FIG. 43 illustrates a vehicle wheel 404 with a regenerative brake generator 408 which provides power to power extractor 418 to charge a battery 418. Power extractor 418 may seek to get the maximum power out of generator 408.

[00103] FIG. 44 illustrates transformer clips 512-1, 512-2, 512-3, and 512-4 that may be used to provide cooling for planar inductive devices such planar inductance coils or planar transformers including I-cores 514-1, 514-2, 514-3 and 514-4 and E-cores 518-1, 518-2, 518-3, and 518-4 supported by a printed circuit board (PCB) fabrication 520 placed in a chassis 522. Chassis 522 may be attached on a backside of a solar cell, solar panel, or other power source. Clips 512 may be made of aluminum, copper, or some other thermally conductive material. A thermal heat paste or other heat conductor may be used to help with heat conduction. Of course, the system of FIG. 44 is not be used in many embodiments.

[00104] FIG. 45 is similar to FIG. 2 except that a processor 484 communicates with power extractors 42, 44, and 46. The communication may be in just one or in both directions. Examples of the data or other information communicated are provided in connection with FIG. 46. Memory 488 can hold data for future analysis.

[00105] FIG. 46 illustrates a system with a power source 550 to provide power to a power extractor switching converter (PESC) 552 which may be the same as power extractor 42. In addition to controlling PESC functions, a processor (such as a microprocessor or digital signal processor) in PESC 552 may collect statistical information about all stages of the power conversion and communicates real time telemetry, power statistical data, and energy statistical data to a central station and also receives real time data power control algorithms, administrative information, sensor management commands, and new software images from the central station.

The gathered information (including one or more of the following: status, statistics, power extractor configuration, GPS (global positioning system) information, and environmental information) is provided by the processor in PESC 552 to a processor in a central station 564 through wired or wireless (560) communication. Processor 484 and memory 488 of FIG. 45 are examples of components of central station 564. A communication subsystem (for example, Ethernet) allows the communication between the processor and the central station 564. The processor in PESC 552 may include input line side DC voltage and current sensors, power stage output voltage and current sensors, output side DC signal sensing and output line side DC sensors.

[00106] Various additional components may be used in the above-illustrated components. For example, a fuse and blocking diode may be placed in parallel with a load. If the fuse is blown because the diode is forward biased, it may be used to provide information that there was excessive current or voltage. The information may be of immediate use to place the system in a protective mode or it may be of use for later diagnostic information. A fuse may also be in series between the extractor and the load.

[00107] In some embodiments, circuitry such as a thermocouple device may be used to recapture heat from the power extractor and create power from it.

[00108] In some embodiments, the power may be delivered in discrete packets.

[00109] FIG. 47 illustrates a system with multiple power sources, a power extractor, and multiple loads according to some embodiments. System 600 provides a general use case scenario for power extractor 630. Power extractor 630 is an example of a power extractor according to any embodiment described herein. There may be one or more power sources 612-614 coupled to power extractor 630. Note that different power sources may require different coupling hardware. Input coupling hardware 620 includes interface circuits that couple the input power sources to power extractor 630. In some embodiments, interface circuit 622 is different from interface circuit 624. However, they may be the same.

[00110] Power sources 612-614 may be any type of DC power source (referred to as a power source or an energy source). Examples of DC power sources that may be used in accordance with embodiments of the invention include, but are not limited to, photovoltaic cells or panels, a battery or batteries, and sources that derive power through wind, water (e.g., hydro-electric), tidal forces, heat (e.g., thermal couple),

hydrogen power generation, gas power generation, radioactive, mechanical deformation, piezo-electric, and motion (e.g., human motion such as walking, running, etc.). Power sources may include natural energy sources and man-made power sources, and may be stable (providing an essentially constant power but variable in magnitude) and unstable (providing power that varies over time). Input coupling hardware 620 may be considered to include the entire interface (e.g., from the cable/wire/trace to the connector/pin to the circuitry), or simply include the interface circuitry. The interface circuitry may include any type of discrete components (e.g., resistors, capacitors, inductors/transformers, diodes, etc.) as is described herein, and as may otherwise be known in the art.

[00111] Additionally, in some embodiments, input coupling hardware 620 includes switches (e.g., power field effect transistors (FETs)) or other similar mechanisms that enable one or more power sources to be selectively disconnected or decoupled from power extractor 630. The coupling and decoupling of power sources can be performed, for example, via control signals from a management portion of the power extractor.

[00112] Similar to the input side, either power extractor 630 includes, or else there is coupled to power extractor 630 in system 600, output coupling hardware 640. Output coupling hardware 640 includes interface elements 642-644. There may be a one-to-one relationship between interface elements 642-644 and loads 652-654, but such a relationship is not strictly necessary. One or more loads can be coupled via the same output coupling hardware. A similar configuration can exist in input coupling hardware 620 - the relationship of elements to sources may be one-to-one, or some other ratio. With a ratio other than one-to-one, there may be restrictions on selectively bringing individual sources or loads on- and off-line. Such restrictions could result in reduced efficiency (from an ideal otherwise potentially achievable) in impedance matching, though group matching may not necessarily be less efficient. Thus, loads and/or sources may be handled as groups, which can then be brought online or offline as a group, and impedance matched as a group.

[00113] Loads 652-654 may also be selectively coupled to power extractor 630 via output coupling hardware 640. One or more loads may be coupled or decoupled via a control signal in accordance with a management strategy. Power transfer manager 634 generally represents any type of power transfer management circuit, and may include

one or more processing circuitry elements, such as microprocessors, field programmable gate arrays (FPGA), application specific integrated circuits (ASIC), programmable logic arrays (PLAs), microcontrollers, etc. Management of the power transfer is performed by power transfer manager 634, which can be considered to operate according to a power transfer management strategy. Such a strategy controls how power will be transferred, or how power transfer manager 634 will operate to manage power transfer. Operation to manage power transfer may include setting output lines to an active or inactive state (e.g., toggling a microprocessor I/O pin), or otherwise sending configuration controls to other circuits.

[00114] Power transfer manager 634 monitors the input power for power changes to determine how to control the operation of power transfer circuitry 632. Power transfer circuitry 632 is described above, and generally enables power extractor 630 to convert power from the sources into power to deliver to the loads. Note that with the ability to selectively couple and decouple sources and loads, power transfer manager 634 may include logic to adjust the power transfer according to any of a number of power transfer scenarios. Such ability enables dynamic system configuration changes while power extractor 630 maintains transfer efficiency. Power transfer manager 634 and power extractor 630 can dynamically and continuously adjust to system configurations, as well as continuously monitoring input and/or output power curves. The logic will account for the needs of the load(s), and the input of the source(s). In some embodiments, the needs of the loads can be determined by monitoring hardware. A simpler method is to include power profiles of the intended loads, which informs power transfer manager 634 how to control the output for particular loads. Power transfer manager 634 can identify which loads are present, and thus which profiles are applicable, based on load detection/monitoring, and/or via indication of a load by an external source (e.g., the load itself sends a signal such as triggering a load pin on a microprocessor, or a system management entity indicates which loads are present, etc.).

[00115] One inefficiency of traditional systems is the "always on" aspect to the switching supplies. That is, traditional power transfer technology consumed power even when the loads did not require power, and/or even when a source was not available. That is, some part of the power transfer circuitry was always consuming power. In some embodiments, power transfer manager 634 can automatically turn

power extractor 630 on and off based on the presence of power and/or load. That is, for example, power transfer manager 634 may automatically enter a sleep state if the input power drops below a threshold (e.g., 1.0mA at 5V). When the power is above the threshold, power transfer manager 634 may determine whether any loads are or should be connected. In the absence of source and/or load, power transfer manager 634 may not provide control signals, which results in no power transfer, or may produce signals to deactivate active circuitry. Power transfer manager 634 can be sophisticated and also or alternatively include a timer mechanism that enables the system to wake up after a period of time (e.g., 5 minutes) to re-check on the status of the system.

[00116] In some embodiments, the concepts of power management as embodied by power transfer manager 634 may be considered to include multiple aspects. For example, power management may include business rules and control, where each rule may control a different aspect of power control, or control the same power control aspect in a different manner. Business rules and control may be implemented as hardware, software, or some combination. The business rules may be broken down into planning rules, which are strategic rules that may look at impedance matching or monitor the power curve. Organizational rules may be tactical rules that determine how to deal with the multiple inputs and multiple outputs. The rules may provide and/or implement parameters that provide the particular functionality of power extractor 630. The control can implement actions or put into effect the business rules. For example, in some embodiments, impedance matching may match only a single power source. Selective matching would be performed for the input source that makes the most sense to match.

[00117] In some embodiments, determining how to transfer power to the loads or determining a power transfer strategy includes determining or identifying and selecting power distribution rules. The power transfer then occurs in accordance with the selected power distribution rule. Power distribution rules can be simple or complex, and may be generally classified as follows.

[00118] Hierarchical rules result in a simple precedence of one load over another. As source power fluctuates up and down, the power transferred to the loads may be to give preferential treatment to one load over the other. An example may be to favor the

operational circuitry of a mission-critical device, while giving lower preference to a recharging one of several backup batteries.

[00119] Round robin rules institute a schedule for distributing power. For example, power can be distributed to one load for a period of time, then to another, then to another. Thus, all loads would receive some portion of distributed power in a given period of time. Allocation-based rules may institute fixed allocations for each load. For example, a system may allocate 80% of all distributed power to charging a main battery, leaving 20% for one or more other loads.

[00120] Time based rules allow the distribution of power to be based on the time of day, or time of week. For example, a system can be programmed with a sunrise/sunset schedule and have logic to determine peak sun hours. Thus, power may be expected to be at a peak from a solar panel at particular times of day. Based on the time of day, the system may distribute power according to one strategy or another. In another scenario, a system may have historical data that indicates peak load use. Power may be distributed at certain times of day according to the expected use. Note that as described below, peak input power and peak load may be actively determined and dynamically accounted for. Time based rules may then act as a framework for other rules to be applied. For example, during certain times of day, a round robin may be used, while a demand based strategy is employed at other times of day.

[00121] Functionality based rules enable the system to allocate power according to the load's functionality or purpose in the system. For example, in a pacemaker, the functional circuitry can be given priority over battery charging. Similarly, navigational equipment may be given a preferential treatment over cabin lights in an aircraft. Demand based rules can adjust the power transfer to be commensurate to demand of the loads. Demand based rules may require the addition of detection circuitry (not shown) in output coupling hardware 640. In some embodiments, power extractor 630 includes load balancing logic (hardware and/or software) to implement demand based rules. In some embodiments, command based rules can also be applied. That is, a central station or other control entity can provide a rule for how power should be distributed, which may override any other rules or conditions already in the system.

[00122] As already suggested, the power distribution rules can be applied consistently, or may be adjusted for any of a number of scenarios (change in demand, time of day, number/strength of power sources, etc.).

[00123] Power transfer manager 634 may include or have associated impedance control 635. Impedance control 635 may refer to hardware and software that matches the impedance of input coupling hardware 620 and/or output coupling hardware 640 with associated sources or loads, respectively. Techniques for impedance matching are described above, and will not be repeated here.

[00124] In some embodiments, power extractor 630 includes presentation logic 636. Presentation logic 636 may include hardware and software to generate status output and potentially user interface functionality for power extractor 630 or system 600. In some embodiments, presentation logic 636 is coupled to power extractor 630, and is not necessarily part of power extractor 630. In such implementations, the block presentation logic 636 may represent the coupling components to connect power extractor 630 to the presentation logic. Presentation logic 636 may provide operational status 662 to an entity outside power extractor 630. Examples include a heartbeat signal, or more detailed information about parameters and operations passed to other hardware. Presentation logic 636 may include display control capabilities that allow system 600 to generate textual and/or graphical representations to present to a user. In some embodiments, presentation logic 636 may include messages that indicate information on how to operate the system. For example, in a system reliant on solar power sources, presentation logic 636 may indicate that the user should find a light source to prevent shutdown of the machine due to loss of power. The skilled reader will understand that many other similar applications are possible.

[00125] In some embodiments, information is exchanged with an entity that is separate from system 600. Such an entity may be a management entity or central station, or some other entity. Transceiver 638 provides power extractor 630 with the ability to transmit and receive information. Transceiver 638 may transmit telemetry, which indicates operational status 662, such as where system 600 is located, what version of hardware/software is present, what memory is available, what configuration is currently on the system, how much battery power is left, etc. Transceiver 638 may receive algorithms, configuration parameters, power profiles, updated firmware, or other control information. Transceiver 638 may communicate

via wired or wireless links, over networks or to single devices, and potentially provide secure communication.

[00126] Interface 660 is intended to represent a default interface that may couple power extractor 630 with any type of local circuitry, user input mechanisms, or other interface not explicitly discussed herein.

[00127] FIG. 48 illustrates a wristwatch system with multiple power sources, a power extractor, and multiple loads according to some embodiments. Watch 700 represents a wristwatch that has two power sources, solar source 712 and thermal source 714. Solar source 712 may include solar panels on the face or body of the watch. When worn, the solar cells will provide power from ambient light. Thermal source 714 may be located on a distal side of the watch. Thus, when worn, the thermal source will be next to the wearer's arm and can generate energy from heat given off by the wearer. Neither source is a stable power source. There will not always be light present, and the wearer may take off the watch and thus remove the heat source (assuming "room temperature" heat is not a sufficient heat source).

[00128] Power extractor 720 receives power from both sources 712 and 714, which can then be transferred to multiple loads. In watch 700, one load is watch mechanism 730. The other load is battery 740. Watch mechanism 730 represents the inner mechanisms that allow the watch to keep time, calculate dates, perform stopwatch functions, store data, generate a display, move hands, or whatever other functionality is available from watch 700. Battery 740 is a rechargeable battery, and hence is a load. Power extractor 720 provides power to watch mechanism 730 from one or both of the power sources, when the power sources are available. At times when neither power source 712 nor 714 is available, battery 740 powers watch mechanism 730.

[00129] In some embodiments, watch mechanism 730 is a higher priority load than battery 740. That is, power extractor 720 first provides power to watch mechanism 730 before charging battery 740. In certain operating conditions, power sources 712-714 will provide more power than needed to operate watch mechanism 730, and power extractor 720 will charge battery 740. In an implementation where impedance matching is performed, power extractor 720 may select to impedance match to only a single load. In some embodiments, the highest priority available load will be impedance matched, and other loads will not be matched.

[00130] In some embodiments, power extractor 720 impedance matches to power sources 712-714. Power extractor 720 may only match a single source. In such an implementation, power extractor 720 may select to match impedance to the source with the greatest power input.

[00131] Both battery 740 and watch mechanism 730 will have associated power profiles. Along a similar line, both solar source 712 and thermal source 714 will have input power capacity. Consider that solar source 712 provides 0.3W of power in good light conditions, and thermal source 714 provides 0.1W for a total of 0.4W. If watch mechanism 730 only requires 0.3W of power, power extractor 720 may elect to turn off the connection to thermal source 714 when battery 740 does not require charging (e.g., its power level is greater than a threshold). In lower light levels perhaps solar source 712 drops to 0.25W. Thus, power extractor 720 will connect thermal source 714 to make up the difference. If the combined sources fail to meet the needs of the watch mechanism, power extractor can choose to have the battery run the watch mechanism, and channel all input power to charging the battery. The flexibility of power extractor 720 provides the ability to apply power any of a number of different scenarios.

[00132] In furtherance of the discussion of rules above, in some embodiments, watch 700 includes a dynamic power distribution strategy. For example, a dynamic hierarchy may be used. Such an implementation could operate as follows: when neither source 712 nor source 714 is available, run the watch off battery 740; when the thermal source is available, run watch mechanism 730 off thermal source 714; when solar source 712 and thermal source 714 are both active, run watch mechanism 730 off the thermal source, and charge battery 740 with solar source 712. Other scenarios could be employed.

[00133] FIG. 49 illustrates a wireless router system with multiple power sources, a power extractor, and multiple loads according to some embodiments. System 800 illustrates wireless router 810 with power extractor 812 coupled to two power sources, wind turbine 832, and solar panel 834. Power extractor 812 selectively transfers power from power sources 832-834 to the circuitry of wireless route 810, such as routing circuitry 814, and to battery 816. Routing circuitry represents the functional circuitry of wireless router 810. Functional circuitry converts power into useful work.

Specifically, wireless router 810 provides networking functionality to wireless communication devices.

[00134] Consider that power extractor 812 includes a power profile for routing circuitry 814. A power profile as described herein can be a dynamic profile. That is, the power profile may be dependent upon certain conditions. For example, wireless router 810 may be more frequently accessed at peak daytime hours, or in the evenings, for example. During the middle of the night, or in the middle of the day, there may be much less demand for routing services. Thus, the profile may specify business rules to use that vary with the time of day and/or the activity of the device. In an implementation where load priorities are established, the priorities may be switched under certain circumstances.

[00135] For example, if wireless router 810 experiences less traffic during high sunlight times when the most efficient use of solar panel 834 could take place, the priority may be to use solar panel 834 to charge battery 816. In some embodiments, battery 816 includes multiple battery technologies. A power profile for battery 816 may include rules that indicate how power extractor should transfer power to the components of the battery, which may each be considered separate loads. For example, peak sun hours may be better for charging a lead-acid battery (e.g., a main battery), and off-peak hours be better for charging a Ni-Cad battery (e.g., a backup battery).

[00136] System 800 thus illustrates the use of various sources and various loads. At least one of the loads may be complex, or consist of multiple loads. Also illustrated is the concept of complex power profiles. Additionally, in some embodiments, wireless router 810 includes telemetry 818, which represents data about the operational status of wireless router 810. Communication controller 820 may be employed to communicate telemetry 818 to a remote or separate entity. Communication controller 820 may also receive data from the separate entity. Communication controller 820 may operate via wireless transceiver 822 and/or wired connection 824. Wireless and wired communication technologies are common, and understood by those skilled in the art. Any suitable communication medium and technology can be employed.

[00137] FIG. 50 illustrates a pacemaker system with multiple power sources, a power extractor, and a load according to some embodiments. Pacemaker 910 illustrates a system with multiple power sources and a single load. Any combination

of numbers of sources and loads can be used, depending on what makes sense for a given application.

[00138] Pacemaker 910 includes power extractor 912, coupled to two power sources, battery 922 and thermal coupling 924. Business rules may indicate to use thermal coupling 924 as much as possible, or use it constantly to trickle charge battery 922 constantly, or some other scenario. Power extractor 912 transfers power from one or both sources to operational circuitry 914, which performs the functionality of pacemaker 910.

[00139] Pacemaker 910 includes operation parameters 916, which represents data that indicates the state of the pacemaker, which may include critical information about how the machine is operating, and whether it is effective, whether it needs service, etc. Operation parameters 916 may also include information (e.g., configuration, rules) related to the operation of power extractor 912. Thus, power extractor 912 may obtain data from operation parameters 916 for execution. In some embodiments, such information is transmitted or received via a passive wireless communications system (e.g., radio frequency identifier (RFID) technology).

[00140] Pacemaker 910 includes RFID communication integrated circuit (comm IC) 930. IC 930 controls antenna 932, including generating messages to be sent via antenna 932, and receiving and processing signals received via antenna 932. Typical operation of a circuit such as shown with RFID communication IC 930 and antenna 932 would be as follows. An electro-magnetic (EM) wave is generated in close proximity to pacemaker 910 (e.g., inches or feet). The EM wave impinges antenna 932, which then generates charge and creates energy potential. IC 930 stores the energy potential (e.g., in a capacitor) and draws on the potential to power the IC. The IC then generates a message from operation parameters 916 and transmits the message. In the receive case, IC 930 receives and processes a message and stores one or more items in operation parameters 916 for use by power extractor 912.

[00141] FIG. 51 illustrates a system with multiple power sources, a power extractor, and multiple AC loads according to some embodiments. System 1000 represents a power transfer system having an inverter. As understood in the art, an inverter is an electronic device or system that produces alternating current (AC) from direct current (DC). Generally the DC to AC conversion is accomplished as a conversion of square-wave DC current to sinusoidal AC current. The inverter is

generally the critical component in traditional photovoltaic (PV) and other renewable energy systems seeing it is responsible for the control of electricity flow between these energy systems and various electrical loads. The inverter performs the conversion of the variable DC source to a clean 50-60 Hz sinusoidal alternating current (AC). Inverters also perform maximum power point tracking (MPPT) ostensibly to keep power generation as efficient as possible. An inverter as described herein may also have a communications interface to a central station for the transmission of statistics and alerts.

[00142] As illustrated, power extractor 1022 may be a component of inverter 1020. That is, the inverter system may include a power extractor as the power transfer element. System 1000 includes one or more DC sources 1012-1014, which can be dynamically coupled and decoupled to power extractor 1022 to provide the DC current. The operation of power extractor 1022 may be identical to embodiments already described herein. The difference in system 1000 over what is previously described is that the consumer of the output of power extractor 1022 is inversion circuitry 1024. One or multiple AC loads 1042-1044 may be selectively, dynamically coupled and decoupled to inverter 1020 to receive power from inversion circuitry 1024.

[00143] Inversion circuitry 1024 generally converts the efficiently-transferred output power of power extractor 1022 and converts and filters the power in an efficient manner. The result is an inverter of much higher efficiency than systems implemented with traditional technologies. Discussions above with regards to power distribution strategy, distributing power to one or more loads, etc., applies equally well to system 1000 as it does to the embodiments mentioned above. The difference is that the loads consume AC power rather than DC power. Similar issues of monitoring output power will be applied in inversion circuitry 1024 as are performed in power extractor 1022. The mechanisms for monitoring the power output may be different in inversion circuitry 1024 than that of power extractor 1022.

[00144] Inversion circuitry 1024 is an algorithmically operated non-linear current mode power converter. Inverter 1020, via inversion circuitry 1024, uses a geometric structure or topology to perform its current switching from output provided by power extractor 1022. The current switching topology technology converts DC power into AC power under microprocessor control. The microprocessor may be a separate

microprocessor than what may be employed in power extractor 1022. The load requirements of AC loads 1042-1044 for voltage, frequency, and/or phase may be sensed under software control and thereby implemented to a desired voltage, frequency, and/or phase. Alternatively, or additionally (for example, as an override), the load requirements for voltage, frequency, and/or phase may be configuration controlled.

[00145] Load monitor 1026 represents one or more components, whether hardware, software, or a combination (e.g., hardware with installed firmware control), which monitors the output of inversion circuitry 1024 for voltage (V), frequency (FREQ), and/or phase. Based on what is detected, and/or based on rules or external input, load monitor 1026 can provide configuration to inversion circuitry 1024. Note that even when load monitor 1026 is implemented in hardware, its input into inversion circuitry 1024 can be considered "software control" if input into a microprocessor of inversion circuitry 1024. Load monitor 1026 may also include a communication connection (not shown) to, for example, a central station that sends configuration parameters that are passed to inversion circuitry 1024.

[00146] Additionally, or alternatively, to load monitor 1026, inverter 1020 may include more "manual" configuration mechanisms. Such configuration mechanisms may include switches (for example, commonly used configuration "DIP" (dual in-line package) switches. Other switches or comparable mechanisms could also be used. DIP switches typically have a row of sliders or rockers (or even screw-type rotational mechanisms) that can be set to one or another position. Each switch position may configure a different item, or the composite of all the switch positions can provide a binary "number" input to a microprocessor. Frequency selection 1032 represents a configuration mechanism to set the output frequency of inverter 1020. Voltage selection 1034 can be used to select the output voltage of inverter 1020. Phase selection 1036 can be used to select the output phase of inverter 1020. The use of frequency selection 1032, voltage selection 1034, and phase selection 1036 can enable inverter 1020 to operate correctly even in cases where voltage, frequency, or phase information is provided incorrectly from a grid on which inverter 1020 operates.

[00147] In one embodiment, as disclosed herein is an apparatus comprising: a first node and a second node; and a power extractor to transfer power between the first and second nodes, wherein when the power extractor operates in a first mode, the power

extractor is operated such that a magnitude of the power transferred is at least partially dependent on a continuously detected power change, and wherein voltage and current at the first and second nodes are unregulated. The detected power change may include an instantaneous power slope. The magnitude of the power transferred may also be dependent on voltage change concurrent with the continuously detected power change.

[00148] In one embodiment, the apparatus further includes a power source coupled to the first node and wherein the power extractor is to transfer power at a magnitude that causes the power source to approach providing a maximum power available given conditions beyond the control of the power extractor, and the magnitude of the power transferred is partially dependent on the maximum power available. In one embodiment, the power extractor is to transfer a maximum of the power provided by the power source given inefficiencies of the power extractor. In one embodiment, the power extractor may not typically actually achieve having an absolute maximum power from the power source given the conditions beyond the control of the power extractor, and may not typically actually achieve transferring an absolute maximum of the power provided by the power source given inefficiencies of the power extractor.

[00149] In one embodiment, the power change is a change of power in the one of the following: the first node, the second node, or internal to the power extractor. At times the power extractor may operate in a second mode which is a protective mode in which the power transfer is regulated in response to at least one detected limiting condition.

[00150] In one embodiment, under some conditions, the regulation involves preventing the power transfer altogether and under other conditions, the regulation involves reducing the power transfer below an otherwise available amount. In one embodiment, at least one detected limiting condition includes one or more of the following: excessive voltage, power, or current in the first node, power extractor, or second node; too little voltage, power, or current in the first node, power extractor, or second node; and a device limiting condition. In one embodiment, the apparatus further includes a temperature sensor to sense a temperature of a load coupled to the second node, wherein an excessive sensed temperature is an example of a device limiting condition.

[00151] In one embodiment, when the power extractor operates in the first mode, the magnitude of the power transferred is partially dependent on a value of a bias signal. In one embodiment, the power extractor adaptively matches impedances between a power source and a combination of the power extractor and a load.

[00152] In one embodiment, the power extractor includes a first energy transfer circuit connected to the first node to continuously transfer energy, a second energy transfer circuit connected to the second node to continuously transfer energy, and an intermediate energy transfer circuit connected between the first and second energy transfer circuits to discontinuously transfer energy between the first and second energy transfer circuits. In one embodiment, the first and second energy transfer circuits may be multiphase bisector energy transfer circuits to cause the multiphase bisector energy transfer and to interface with the discontinuous intermediate energy transfer circuit. In one embodiment, the power extractor includes switching circuitry to modulate voltages at a third node between the first and intermediate energy transfer circuits, and at a fourth node between the intermediate and second energy transfer circuits. In one embodiment, the frequency of operation of the switching circuitry may be dynamically adjusted to maximize efficiency of power transfer between the first and second nodes. In one embodiment, the first and second energy transfer circuits each include an inductor and the intermediate energy transfer circuit may include capacitors. In one embodiment, the first, second, and intermediate energy transfer circuits each include at least one capacitor.

[00153] In one embodiment, the power extractor includes switching circuitry with a duty cycle that is at least partially dependent on the detected power change and the magnitude of the transferred power is at least partially dependent on the duty cycle.

[00154] In one embodiment, the power extractor includes: power transfer circuitry to transfer the power between the first and second nodes; analysis circuitry to provide a switching control signal; and switching circuitry to control a magnitude of the transferred power in response to the switching control signal. In one embodiment, the analysis circuitry includes power change detection circuitry to continuously determine the power change and provide a power change indication signal indicative of the power change, and the switching control signal is the same as the power change indication signal. In one embodiment, the analysis circuitry further includes: power change detection circuitry to determine the power change and provide a power change

indication signal indicative of the power change; processing circuitry to create a bias signal in at least one mode of operation; scaling circuitry to scale the bias signal; and combining circuitry to combine the scaled bias signal with the power change indication signal to create the switching control signal in the at least one mode of operation.

[00155] In one embodiment, the power extractor is a switching converter. In one embodiment, the apparatus further includes a power source coupled to the first node, wherein the power source includes at least one of the following types of power sources: photovoltaic, wind power, a hydrogen power generator, a battery, piezo-electric, hydro-electric, thermal couple, mechanical deformation, and other stable power sources, and other unstable power sources.

[00156] In one embodiment, as disclosed herein is an apparatus comprising: a first node and a second node; and a power extractor to transfer power between the first and second nodes, wherein the power extractor is to transfer power between the first and second nodes, but does not regulate input voltage or input current at the first node and does not regulate output voltage or output current at the second node, wherein the power extractor includes protection circuitry to regulate power transfer between the first and second node in response to an indication of a limiting condition.

[00157] In one embodiment, the power extractor includes power change detection circuitry to power changes and a magnitude of the power transferred may be at least partially dependent on the detected power changes. In one embodiment, the magnitude of the power transferred may also be dependent on voltage changes concurrent with the continuously detected power changes. In one embodiment, the apparatus further includes a power source coupled to the first node, where the power extractor is to transfer power at a magnitude that causes the power source to approach providing a maximum power available given conditions beyond the control of the power extractor, and the magnitude of the power transferred is partially dependent on the maximum power available. In one embodiment, the power extractor operates to transfer a maximum of the power provided by the power source given inefficiencies of the power extractor, where the power extractor typically does not actually achieve having an absolute maximum power from the power source given the conditions beyond the control of the power extractor, and typically does not actually achieve transferring an absolute maximum of the power provided by the power source given

inefficiencies of the power extractor. In one embodiment, the power extractor operates in different modes, where in a first mode that power extractor is to transfer a maximum available power but does not regulate input voltage or input current at the first node and does not regulate output voltage or output current at the second node, and in a second mode which is a protective mode in which the power transfer is regulated in response to at least one detected limiting condition and one or more of the input voltage, input current, output voltage, or output current may be regulated.

[00158] In one embodiment, as disclosed herein is an apparatus comprising: a first node and a second node; and a switching converter to transfer power between the first and second nodes, wherein the switching converter is sensitive to changes in power as it is transferred between first and second nodes, and the switching converter continuously operates to seek a maximum power through detecting power slopes and changing the power transferred so that the power slope approaches zero.

[00159] In one embodiment, a magnitude of the power transferred is at least partially dependent on the detected power slopes and on voltage changes concurrent with the detected power slopes. In one embodiment, the apparatus further includes a power source coupled to the first node, where the switching converter is a power extractor to transfer power at a magnitude that causes the power source to approach providing a maximum power available given conditions beyond the control of the switching converter, and the magnitude of the power transferred is partially dependent on the maximum power available. In one embodiment, the switching converter operates in different modes, and where in a first mode that switching converter is to approach transferring a maximum available power but does not regulate input voltage or input current at the first node and does not regulate output voltage or output current at the second node, and in a second mode which is a protective mode in which the power transfer is regulated in response to at least one detected limiting condition and one or more of the input voltage, input current, output voltage, or output current may be regulated.

[00160] In one embodiment, as disclosed herein is a system comprising: a power source coupled to a first node; a load coupled to a second node; a power extractor to transfer power between the first and second nodes, wherein when the power extractor operates in a first mode, the power extractor is operated such that a magnitude of the power transferred is at least partially dependent on continuously detected power

changes, and wherein voltage and current at the first and second nodes are unregulated.

[00161] In one embodiment, the power extractor may include a processor to detect the changes and to do statistical analysis of data gathered. In one embodiment, the power source includes sub-power sources and the load includes sub-loads. In one embodiment, the system further includes power sources and additional power extractors, and may further include a central station to receive information from the power extractors.

[00162] In one embodiment, as disclosed herein is an apparatus comprising: a first node and a second node; and a power extractor including: switching circuitry; a control loop to control switching of the switching circuitry; and power transfer circuitry to transfer power between the first and second nodes under control of the switching circuitry, and wherein when the power extractor operates in a first mode, the control loop controls the switching circuitry to cause the power transfer circuitry to transfer the power at a magnitude to cause a power source to approach providing a maximum power available given conditions beyond the control of the power extractor.

[00163] In one embodiment, the control loop includes power change analysis circuitry to detect power changes and provide switching control signals in response thereto, and in the first mode, the control loop controls the switching circuitry in response to the switching control signal. In one embodiment, the control loop further includes comparison circuitry to compare the switching control signal with a reference voltage and to provide a switching signal to control a duty cycle of the switching in response thereto. In one embodiment, the power change analysis circuitry includes power slope detection circuitry to detect a power slope of the power changes. In one embodiment, the power slope detection circuitry further detects an instantaneous power slope. In one embodiment, the control loop includes circuitry to detect voltage changes corresponding to the power changes and the control loop considers both the power changes and the voltage changes in determining the switching control signal. In one embodiment, the power changes may be changes of power in the one of the following: the first node, the second node, or internal to the power extractor.

[00164] In one embodiment, the control loop controls a frequency of the switching circuitry and the frequency influences efficiency of the power transfer circuitry. In one embodiment, the power extractor is a switching converter and the control loop controls a duty cycle of the switching circuitry. In one embodiment, the power source is part of the apparatus, where in another the power source is outside the apparatus. In one embodiment, the apparatus further includes a first connector and a first additional node between the first node and the power extractor, and a second connector and a second additional node between the second node and a load coupled to the second node. In the embodiment, the power extractor is to transfer a maximum of the power provided by the power source given inefficiencies of the power extractor.

[00165] In one embodiment, at times the power extractor operates in a second mode which is a protective mode in which the power transfer is regulated in response to at least one detected limiting condition. In one embodiment, under some conditions, the regulation involves preventing the power transfer altogether and under other conditions, the regulation involves reducing the power transfer below an otherwise available amount. In one embodiment, the control loop may include a processor that generates a bias signal, and when the power extractor operates in the second mode, the magnitude of the power transferred is at least partially dependent on a value of the bias signal. In one embodiment, the control loop includes a processor that generates a bias signal, and when the power extractor operates in the first mode, the magnitude of the power transferred is partially dependent on a value of the bias signal.

[00166] In one embodiment, the power transfer circuitry includes a first energy transfer circuit connected to the first node to continuously transfer energy, a second energy transfer circuit connected to the second node to continuously transfer energy, and an intermediate energy transfer circuit connected between the first and second energy transfer circuits to discontinuously transfer energy between the first and second energy transfer circuits. In one embodiment, the switching circuitry is to modulate voltages at a third node between the first and intermediate energy transfer circuits, and at a fourth node between the intermediate and second energy transfer circuits.

[00167] In one embodiment, during the first mode of operation, the magnitude of the power transfer is typically such that the power source provides very close to a

maximum available power. In one embodiment, the switching circuitry, control loop, and power transfer circuitry are supported by a printed circuit board that is enclosed in a housing.

[00168] In one embodiment, as disclosed herein is an apparatus comprising: a first node and a second node; and a power extractor including: switching circuitry; a control loop to control switching of the switching circuitry; and power transfer circuitry to transfer power between the first and second nodes under control of the switching circuitry, and wherein when the power extractor operates in a first mode, the control loop controls the switching circuitry to seek to cause the power transfer circuitry to transfer the power at a magnitude to cause a power source to provide a maximum power available given conditions beyond the control of the power extractor.

[00169] In one embodiment, the control loop includes power change analysis circuitry to detect power changes and provide a switching control signal in response thereto, and wherein in the first mode, the control loop controls the switching circuitry in response to the switching control signal. In one embodiment, the control loop further includes comparison circuitry to compare the switching control signal with a reference voltage and to provide a switching signal to control a duty cycle of the switching in response thereto. In one embodiment, the power change analysis circuitry includes power slope detection circuitry to detect a power slope of the power changes. In one embodiment, the power slope detection circuitry is to detect an instantaneous power slope. In one embodiment, the control loop includes circuitry to detect a voltage changes corresponding to the power changes and the control loop considers both the power changes and the voltage changes in determining the switching control signal.

[00170] In one embodiment, as disclosed herein is a system comprising: a first node and a second node; power transfer circuitry to transfer power between the first and second nodes; switching circuitry to control power transfer between the first and second nodes, and a control loop including circuitry to detect power changes and to control a duty cycle of the switching circuitry in response to the detected power changes to thereby control the power transfer circuitry.

[00171] In one embodiment, the circuitry to detect power changes is at distance of more than one meter from the power transfer circuitry. In one embodiment, the

circuitry to detect power changes and the power transfer circuitry are in a common container. In one embodiment, the power changes are determined through measurement of signals in at least one of following positions: in the first node, in the power transfer circuitry, or in the second node. In one embodiment, the control loop includes a signal generator to generate a signal to be used in the controlling of the duty cycle. In one embodiment, the system further includes a power source coupled to the first node. In one embodiment, the system further includes a load coupled to the second node. In one embodiment, the power transfer circuitry includes a first energy transfer circuit connected to the first node to continuously transfer energy, a second energy transfer circuit connected to the second node to continuously transfer energy, and an intermediate energy transfer circuit connected between the first and second energy transfer circuits to discontinuously transfer energy between the first and second energy transfer circuits. In one embodiment, the switching circuitry is to modulate voltages at a third node between the first and intermediate energy transfer circuits, and at a fourth node between the intermediate and second energy transfer circuits.

[00172] In one embodiment, as disclosed herein is a method comprising: transferring power at a first node through power transfer circuitry to a second node; detecting power changes; in a first mode of operation, creating a switching control signal in response to the detected power changes; generating a switching signal to control switches in response to the switching control signal; and modulating the power transfer circuitry through opening and closing of the switches.

[00173] In one embodiment, the switching signal is created by comparing the switching control signal with a reference signal. In one embodiment, the method further includes generating a bias signal that is used in creating the switching control signal. In one embodiment, the bias signal is used in creating the switching control signal in the first mode and in a protection mode. In one embodiment, the modulating of the power transfer circuitry is power provided from a power supply coupled to the first node approaches a maximum available amount given conditions beyond the control of the power transfer circuitry.

[00174] In one embodiment, as disclosed herein is an apparatus comprising: a first node and a second node; a photovoltaic power source; and a power extractor to transfer power from the photovoltaic power source between the first and second

nodes, wherein the power extractor, the first node, the power source, and the second node are each part of a single integrated circuit.

[00175] In one embodiment, the power extractor seeks to match an input impedance of the power extractor with an output impedance of the power source. In one embodiment, the power extractor is operated to seek to transfer a magnitude of power from a power source such that the power source provides a maximum available power given conditions beyond the control of the power extractor. In one embodiment, the apparatus further includes a third node and a fourth node; a second photovoltaic power source; and a second power extractor to transfer power from the second photovoltaic power source between the third and fourth nodes, wherein the power extractor, the third node, the power source, and the fourth node are each part of a second single integrated circuit, wherein the second and fourth nodes are joined to each other.

[00176] In one embodiment, as disclosed herein is an apparatus comprising: a first node, a second node, a third node, and a fourth node; and a first power extractor to transfer first power between the first and second nodes including providing a first current to the second node, and wherein the first power extractor includes first power change analysis circuitry to detect first power changes, and wherein the first power extractor transfers the first power at magnitudes that are at least partially dependent on the detected first power changes; and a second power extractor to transfer second power between the third and fourth nodes including providing a second current to the fourth node, and wherein the second power extractor includes second power change analysis circuitry to detect second power changes, and wherein the second power extractor transfers the second power at magnitudes that are at least partially dependent on the detected second power changes.

[00177] In one embodiment, a first load is coupled to the second node and the second node is coupled to the fourth node. In one embodiment, the second and fourth nodes are connected to each other, and a load is coupled to the first and fourth nodes. In one embodiment, the apparatus further includes a first power source coupled to the first node and a second power source coupled to the third node. In one embodiment, the apparatus further includes a frame to hold the first and second power sources and the first and second power extractors. In one embodiment, the first power source is adjacent to the first power extractor and the second power source is adjacent to the

second power extractor. In one embodiment, the first power extractor is operated so that in at least one mode, the first power extractor seeks to impedance match with the first power source, the second power extractor is operated so that in at least one mode, the second power extractor seeks to impedance match with the second power source.

[00178] In one embodiment, the apparatus further includes a central station to obtain information from the first and second power extractors. In one embodiment, the central station is also to provide information to the first and second power extractors.

[00179] In one embodiment, as disclosed herein is a system comprising: a first power source and a second power source; a first node, a second node, and a third node; a first power extractor coupled to the first power source through the first node to transfer power from first power source through the first node to the second node; and a second power extractor coupled to the second power source through the third node to transfer power from second power source through the third node to the second node, wherein a first current from the first power extractor is combined with a second current from the second power extractor at the third node.

[00180] In one embodiment, the system further includes a load at the second node to received the combined first and second currents. In one embodiment, the system further includes a frame to which the first and second power sources are rigidly coupled. In one embodiment, the system further includes a frame to which the first and second power sources and the first and second power extractors are rigidly coupled.

[00181] In one embodiment, the first power extractor is positioned adjacent to the first power source, and the second power extractor is positioned adjacent to the second power source. In one embodiment, an amount of power provided by the first power extractor depends at least in part on characteristics of the first power source, and an amount of power provided by the second power extractor depends at least in part on characteristics of the second power source. In one embodiment, the first and second power extractors selectively transfer power from the first and second power sources, and at times the first and second power extractors do not transfer power from the first and second power sources. In one embodiment, the system further includes additional power extractors to provide current to the second node from additional power sources. In one embodiment, the power source includes at least one of the

following: photovoltaic, wind power, a hydrogen power generator, a battery, piezo-electric, hydro-electric, thermocouple power sources and other stable variable power sources, and other unstable power sources.

[00182] In one embodiment, the system further includes a central station to obtain information from the first and second power extractors. In one embodiment, the central station is also to provide information to the first and second power extractors.

[00183] In one embodiment, as disclosed herein is a system comprising: a node; a group of power sources arranged in a frame; and a group of power extractors to each provide electrical power from only one of the power sources to the node.

[00184] In one embodiment, the power extractors are each positioned adjacent to one of the power sources. In one embodiment, the power sources are photovoltaic power sources. In one embodiment, the photovoltaic power sources are panels each including multiple photovoltaic cells. In one embodiment, the photovoltaic power sources are each a single photovoltaic cell.

[00185] In one embodiment, the system further includes additional power sources arranged in the frame, and additional power extractors electrically coupled between ones of the additional power sources, respectively, and the node, wherein the additional power extractors are each positioned adjacent to one of the additional power sources. In one embodiment, the power extractors and corresponding ones of the power sources are separated by a portion of the frame. In one embodiment, the power extractors and corresponding power sources are joined together. In one embodiment, the power extractors and corresponding power sources are joined together through an adhesive material.

[00186] In one embodiment, the system further includes a central station to obtain information from the first and second power extractors. In one embodiment, the central station is also to provide information to the first and second power extractors.

[00187] In one embodiment, as disclosed herein is a system including: first, second, and third nodes; a power source to provide power to the first node; a first power extractor to transfer power from the first node to the second node; and a second power extractor to transfer power from the second node to the third node and increase the voltage of the power at the second node.

[00188] In one embodiment, the power source is a photovoltaic cell. In one embodiment, the system further includes a transmission line between the second and

third nodes. In one embodiment, the system further includes: fourth and fifth nodes; a second power source to provide power to the fourth node; a third power extractor to transfer power from the fourth node to the fifth node; and a fourth power extractor to transfer power from the fifth node to the third node and increase the voltage of the power at the fifth node. In one embodiment, the first and second power extractors provide impedance matching. In one embodiment, the system further includes a central station to obtain information from the first and second power extractors.

[00189] In one embodiment, as disclosed herein is a system comprising: an energy source that provides an unregulated source voltage and source current; a load; a power extractor to transfer power between the energy source and the load, wherein the power extractor transfers power with a magnitude at least partially dependent on a continuously detected power change, and wherein power extractor output voltage and output current are unregulated.

[00190] In one embodiment, the energy source includes at least one of a stable energy source or an unstable energy source. In one embodiment, the energy source includes one or more of a solar power source, a tidal power source, a piezoelectric power source, a wind power source, a mechanical power source, a thermally coupled heat source, a fuel cell, a battery, or a kinetic energy coupling.

[00191] In one embodiment, the energy source is a first energy source, and the system further includes a second energy source that provides an unregulated source voltage and source current. In one embodiment, the second energy source is a different type of energy source than the first energy source. In one embodiment, the system further includes logic to dynamically select to transfer power from zero or more of the first and second energy sources. In one embodiment, the logic dynamically selects to transfer power from the first and/or the second energy sources based at least in part on a power profile of the load. In one embodiment, the logic dynamically adjusts the magnitude of power transferred from the first and/or the second energy sources based at least in part on a power profile of the load.

[00192] In one embodiment, the load comprises one or more of an energy storage element or a component that converts power into useful work. In one embodiment, the load comprises one or more batteries. In one embodiment, the battery is one of a lead-acid battery, a nickel-metal hydride battery, a lithium ion battery, a lithium ion polymer battery, or a nickel-cadmium battery. In one embodiment, the load comprises

one of a capacitor, a supercapacitor, or a fuel cell. In one embodiment, the power extractor further dynamically matches impedance of the energy source. In one embodiment, the power extractor further dynamically matches impedance of the load. In one embodiment, the system further includes an energy source detection circuit to identify possible energy sources coupled to the power extractor.

[00193] In one embodiment, the system further includes processing circuitry coupled with the power extractor to manage the transfer of power from the energy source to the load. In one embodiment, the processing circuitry comprises one of a microprocessor, a field programmable gate array (FPGA), and an application specific integrated circuit (ASIC). In one embodiment, the system further includes presentation circuitry that displays the operational status of the power extractor. In one embodiment, the presentation circuitry further provides operation suggestions for the system based on the operational status of the power extractor. In one embodiment, the system further includes a transceiver for communication with a central station, the communication including transmission of telemetry and reception of configuration management information.

[00194] In one embodiment, the system further includes an inverter to receive the power extractor supplied direct current and generate a sinusoidal alternating current from the direct current. In one embodiment, the inverter senses an output frequency requirement of the load, and generates the alternating current with a frequency in Hertz based on the output frequency requirement of the load. In one embodiment, the inverter generates the alternating current with a frequency in Hertz based on one or more of a software control parameter or a switch configuration. In one embodiment, the inverter provides the sinusoidal alternating current at a voltage. In one embodiment, the inverter senses an output voltage requirement of the load, and generates the alternating current with the output voltage based on the output voltage requirement of the load. In one embodiment, the inverter generates the alternating current at the voltage based on one or more of a software control parameter or a switch configuration. In one embodiment, the inverter provides the sinusoidal alternating current at a voltage and at one or more phases. In one embodiment, the inverter senses a phase requirement of the load, and generates the alternating current at the voltage with the phase based on the phase requirement of the load. In one

embodiment, the inverter generates the alternating current at the phase based on one or more of a software control parameter or a switch configuration.

[00195] In one embodiment, as disclosed herein is an apparatus comprising: input coupling hardware having interface hardware to selectively couple to one or more unregulated energy sources that each provides input power at a source current at a source voltage; output coupling hardware having interface hardware to selectively couple to one or more loads to provide an unregulated output power to the loads as an output current at an output voltage; or as an output voltage at an output current; or in combination; and power transfer circuitry to receive the input power, continuously detect a power change, and provide the output power with a magnitude at least partially dependent on the continuously detected power change.

[00196] In one embodiment, the input coupling hardware has interface hardware to selectively couple energy sources that provide at least one of different source current or different source voltage. In one embodiment, the power transfer circuitry provides the output power with at least one of different output current or different output voltage to different loads. In one embodiment, the apparatus further includes a power transfer manager having load profiles, the load profiles indicating an output voltage and output current for each load, where the power transfer circuitry provide the output power in accordance with the load profile of the load. In one embodiment, the apparatus further includes a transceiver to communicate with a remote management entity, including sending status information and receiving configuration information. In one embodiment, the apparatus further includes an impedance controller to dynamically control the impedance of the input coupling hardware and the output coupling hardware to match the impedance of an energy source or a load, respectively.

[00197] In one embodiment, as disclosed herein is a method in a power transfer system, comprising: receiving from a power source an unregulated source current at a source voltage; identifying one or more loads; determining a power transfer management strategy to transfer power from the power source to the one or more loads; and transferring power in accordance with the determined strategy, including transferring an unregulated output power with a magnitude at least partially dependent on a continuously detected power change.

[00198] In one embodiment, receiving the unregulated source current at the source voltage further includes: detecting one or more power sources; and selectively coupling and decoupling power sources to manage input power to power transfer circuitry; wherein the power management logic dynamically adjusts the magnitude of power transferred from one or more power sources based at least in part on a power profile of the loads.

[00199] In one embodiment, determining the power transfer management strategy further includes determining a power consumption of a load. In one embodiment, determining the power consumption of the load further includes obtaining a power profile of the load. In one embodiment, determining the power transfer management strategy further includes determining a power distribution rule; wherein transferring power comprises preferentially providing power to loads based on the determined power distribution rule. In one embodiment, transferring power further includes: detecting one or more loads; and selectively coupling and decoupling loads to manage output power to the loads; and wherein the power management logic dynamically adjusts the magnitude of power transferred to the one or more loads based at least in part on a power profile of the loads. In one embodiment, the method further includes communicating to a remote management entity information related to an operational status of the power transfer system. In one embodiment, the method further includes receiving from a remote management entity information related to application of the power transfer management strategy.

[00200] In one embodiment, as disclosed herein is an apparatus comprising: a first node and a second node; and a power extractor to transfer power between the first and second nodes, wherein the power extractor includes detection circuitry to detect power changes, and wherein in a first mode of operation, the power extractor is to be operated such that an input impedance of the power extractor is dynamically changed in response to the detected power changes to approach matching a first impedance outside the power extractor including an impedance of a power source coupled to the first node.

[00201] In one embodiment, the input impedance of the power extractor equals the combined impedance of the power extractor and a load coupled to the second node as viewed from the first node. In one embodiment, in the first mode of operation, the power extractor is to be operated such that an output impedance of the power

extractor is dynamically changed in response to the detected power changes so that under some load conditions the output impedance of the power extractor approaches matching a second impedance outside the power extractor including an impedance of the load coupled to the second node. In one embodiment, the output impedance of the power extractor equals the combined impedance of the power extractor and the power source as viewed from the second node. In one embodiment, the power extractor and the load are each outside the apparatus. In one embodiment, the apparatus further includes a first connector between the power supply and the power extractor, and a second connector between the power extractor and the load, and wherein the first impedance includes an impedance of the first connector and the second impedance include an impedance of the second connector. In one embodiment, the impedances the first and second connectors are insignificant.

[00202] In one embodiment, in practice the input impedance typically does not precisely match with the impedance of the power supply, and the output impedance typically does not precisely match the impedance of the load, but the dynamic changes lead toward close matching of the impedances. In one embodiment, when the power changes are zero and the power is at a global power maximum, the input and first impedances are essentially matched resulting in the power source providing a maximum power available given conditions beyond the control of the power extractor. In one embodiment, the power extractor includes circuitry to prevent the power from staying at a local power maximum at which one of the power changes is zero. In one embodiment, the power extractors at times operates in a second mode of operation, which is a protection mode in which the impedances are not matched. In one embodiment, the impedances are matched without regard to voltage or current of a power source at the first node and without regard to voltage or current of a load coupled to the second node, within certain parameters.

[00203] In one embodiment, the detected power changes include a continuously detected instantaneous power slope. In one embodiment, the power extractor includes a first energy transfer circuit connected to first node to continuously transfer energy, a second energy transfer circuit connected to second node to continuously transfer energy, and an intermediate energy transfer circuit connected between the first and second energy transfer circuits to discontinuously transfer energy between the first and second energy transfer circuits. In one embodiment, the first energy transfer

circuit matches the input impedance of the power extractor with the first impedance. In one embodiment, the second energy transfer circuit matches an output impedance of the power extractor with a second impedance including a load coupled to the second node. In one embodiment, the power extractor includes switching circuitry to modulate voltages at a third node between the first and intermediate energy transfer circuits, and at a fourth node between the intermediate and second energy transfer circuits. In one embodiment, the power extractor includes switching circuitry with a duty cycle that is at least partially dependent on the detected power changes and a magnitude of the transferred power is at least partially dependent on the duty cycle. In one embodiment, the frequency of the switching circuits also controls efficiency of power transfer and thereby effects the amount of power transferred to the second node.

[00204] In one embodiment, as disclosed herein is an apparatus comprising: an input port and an output port; power transfer circuitry to transfer power between the input and output ports; and power change detection circuitry to continuously detect power changes, and wherein the apparatus is operated so as to seek having an input impedance of the power transfer circuitry match a first impedance outside the power transfer circuitry, wherein the first impedance includes an impedance of a power source.

[00205] In one embodiment, the input impedance of the power transfer circuitry equals the combined impedance of the power transfer circuitry and a load coupled to the output port as viewed from the input port. In one embodiment, the power source and the power load are outside of the apparatus. In one embodiment, the power source and the power load are part of the apparatus. In one embodiment, the power source is part of the apparatus. In one embodiment, the apparatus further includes a first connector between the power supply and the power transfer circuitry, and wherein the first impedance includes an impedance of the first connector.

[00206] In one embodiment, in practice the input impedance typically does not precisely match with the first impedance. In one embodiment, the power transfer circuitry is operated to transfer power at a magnitude to cause the power source to approach providing a maximum power available given conditions beyond the control of the apparatus. In one embodiment, a load is coupled to the second port and the apparatus is operated so that under some load conditions the power transfer circuitry

has an output impedance that seeks matching a second impedance outside the power transfer circuitry, wherein the second impedance includes an impedance of the load. In one embodiment, the power transfer circuitry includes a first energy transfer circuit connected to input node to continuously transfer energy, a second energy transfer circuit connected to second node to continuously transfer energy, and an intermediate energy transfer circuit connected between the first and second energy transfer circuits to discontinuously transfer energy between the first and second energy transfer circuits.

[00207] In one embodiment, as disclosed herein is an apparatus comprising: a first node and a second node; and a power extractor to transfer power between the first and second nodes, wherein the power extractor includes detection circuitry to detect power changes, and wherein in a first mode of operation, the power extractor is to be operated such that input and output impedances of the power extractor between first and second nodes are dynamically changed in response to the detected power changes to seek matching the input impedance of the power extractor with a first impedance including an impedance of a power source coupled to the first node.

[00208] In one embodiment, the power extractor is to approach matching the output impedance of the power extractor with a second impedance including an impedance of a load coupled to the second node. In one embodiment, the input impedance of the power extractor equals the combined impedance of the power extractor and the load as viewed from the first node, and the output impedance of the power extractor equals the combined impedance of the power extractor and the power supply as viewed from the second node.

[00209] In one embodiment, as disclosed herein is a system comprising: a power source coupled to a first node, and a load coupled to the second node; and a power extractor to transfer power between the first and second nodes, wherein the power extractor includes detection circuitry to detect power changes, and wherein in a first mode of operation, the power extractor is to be operated such that an input impedance of the power extractor is dynamically changed in response to the detected power changes to approach matching a first impedance including an impedance of the power source.

[00210] In one embodiment, under some load conditions, an output impedance of the power extractor is dynamically changed in response to the detected power changes

to approach matching a second impedance including an impedance of the load. In one embodiment, the input impedance of the power extractor equals the combined impedance of the power extractor and the load as viewed from the first node, and the output impedance of the power extractor equals the combined impedance of the power extractor and the power supply as viewed from the second node. In one embodiment, in practice the input impedance typically does not precisely match with the impedance of the power supply, and the output impedance typically does not precisely match the impedance of the load, but the dynamic changes lead toward very close matching of the impedances.

[00211] In one embodiment, as disclosed herein is an apparatus comprising: a first node and a second node; and a power extractor to provide power between the first and second nodes, wherein the power extractor is to be operated such that an impedance of the power extractor is dynamically changed for the purpose of matching impedances to achieve maximum power output of a power source outside the apparatus that is coupled to the first node given conditions beyond the control of the power extractor.

[00212] In one embodiment, the impedance of the power extractor equals the combined impedance of the power extractor and the load as viewed from the first node. In one embodiment, in practice the input impedance typically does not precisely match with the impedance of the power supply.

[00213] In one embodiment, as disclosed herein is an apparatus comprising: a first node and a second node; and a power extractor to provide power between the first and second nodes, wherein the power extractor is to be operated to dynamically match a first impedance of a power source outside of the apparatus coupled to the first node with a second impedance of a load coupled to the second node even as the first impedance changes and even as the second impedance changes.

[00214] In one embodiment, the power source and load are each part of the apparatus. In one embodiment, the power source and load are each outside of the apparatus.

[00215] In one embodiment, as disclosed herein is an apparatus comprising: a first node and a second node; and a power extractor including: power transfer circuitry to transfer power having a current between the first and second nodes; and power change analysis circuitry to detect a power change and a voltage change and to at least

partially control a magnitude of the power being transferred in response to the detected power change and voltage change.

[00216] In one embodiment, the power extractor further includes: switching circuitry to control the power transfer circuitry; and switching control circuitry to control a duty cycle of the switching circuitry; and wherein the power change analysis circuitry operates in different modes and wherein in an ordinary operating mode, under some conditions, the power analysis circuitry causes the power transfer circuitry to decrease the duty cycle if the power change and voltage change are both increasing or both decreasing, and to increase the duty cycle of the power transferred if the power change is decreasing and the voltage change is increasing or the power change is increasing and the voltage change is decreasing. In one embodiment, the power transfer circuitry includes a first energy transfer circuit connected to the first node to continuously transfer energy, a second energy transfer circuit connected to the second node to continuously transfer energy, and an intermediate energy transfer circuit connected between the first and second energy transfer circuits to discontinuously transfer energy between the first and second energy transfer circuits. In one embodiment, the switching circuitry is to modulate voltages at a third node between the first and intermediate energy transfer circuits, and at a fourth node between the intermediate and second energy transfer circuits. In one embodiment, a frequency of operation of the switching circuitry is dynamically adjusted to maximize efficiency of power transfer between the first and second nodes. In one embodiment, the first and second energy transfer circuits each includes an inductor and the intermediate energy transfer circuit includes capacitors. In one embodiment, the first, second, and intermediate energy transfer circuits each include at least one capacitor.

[00217] In one embodiment, the power extractor further includes: switching circuitry to control the power transfer circuitry; and switching control circuitry to control a duty cycle of the switching circuitry; and wherein the power change analysis circuitry operates in different modes and wherein in an ordinary operating mode, under some conditions, the power analysis circuitry causes the power transfer circuitry to increase the duty cycle if the power change and voltage change are both increasing or both decreasing, and to decrease the duty cycle of the power transferred if the power change is decreasing and the voltage change is increasing or the power

change is increasing and the voltage change is decreasing. In one embodiment, the power transfer circuitry includes a first energy transfer circuit connected to the first node to continuously transfer energy, a second energy transfer circuit connected to the second node to continuously transfer energy, and an intermediate energy transfer circuit connected between the first and second energy transfer circuits to discontinuously transfer energy between the first and second energy transfer circuits. In one embodiment, the switching circuitry is to modulate voltages at a third node between the first and intermediate energy transfer circuits, and at a fourth node between the intermediate and second energy transfer circuits. In one embodiment, the first and second energy transfer circuits each includes an inductor and the intermediate energy transfer circuit includes capacitors. In one embodiment, the first, second, and intermediate energy transfer circuits each include at least one capacitor.

[00218] In one embodiment, the power analysis circuitry operates in different modes and wherein in an ordinary operating mode, the power analysis circuitry at least partially controls the magnitude of the current in response to the detected power change and voltage change, and in at least one other mode, the power analysis circuitry at least partially controls the magnitude of the current in response to at least one different factor.

[00219] In one embodiment, the apparatus further includes switching circuitry to interact with the power transfer circuitry and wherein the power analysis circuitry controls a duty cycle of the switching circuitry to at least partially control the magnitude of the current. In one embodiment, the power analysis circuitry also controls a frequency of the switching circuitry to at least partially control the magnitude of the current. In one embodiment, the apparatus further includes a power source to provide power to the first node and power analysis circuitry seeks to control the switching circuitry to maximize power transfer through the power transfer circuitry given conditions beyond the control of the power analysis circuitry and given inefficiencies of the apparatus. In one embodiment, the power source is a photovoltaic power source and one of the conditions beyond the control of the power analysis circuitry is an amount of sunlight on the power source. In one embodiment, there is at least one intermediate node between the power supply and the first node.

[00220] In one embodiment, the apparatus further includes a load coupled to the second node. In one embodiment, the power change analysis circuitry is to detect a

power slope and a voltage slope. In one embodiment, the power extractor operates to seek to match an input impedance of the power transfer circuitry with an output impedance of a power source.

[00221] In one embodiment, as disclosed herein is an apparatus comprising: a first node and a second node; and power transfer circuitry to transfer power having a current between the first and second nodes; and power analysis circuitry to detect a power change and to increase the current as long as the power change show an increase in power and to decrease the current as long as the power change shows a decrease in power. In one embodiment, the power analysis circuitry includes circuitry to smooth out sudden changes in the power change.

[00222] In one embodiment, as disclosed herein is an apparatus comprising: a first node and a second node; and a power extractor including: switching circuitry; power transfer circuitry to transfer power having a current between the first and second nodes, wherein a magnitude of the current is at least partly responsive to a duty cycle of the switching circuitry; and power analysis circuitry to detect a power change of the power and a voltage change and control the duty cycle responsive to the detected power change and voltage change.

[00223] In one embodiment, the power analysis circuitry operates in different modes and wherein in an ordinary operating mode, under some conditions, the power analysis circuitry causes the power transfer circuitry to decrease the current transferred if the power change and voltage change are both increasing or both decreasing, and to increase the current if the power change is decreasing and the voltage change is increasing or the power change is increasing and the voltage change is decreasing. In one embodiment, the power analysis circuitry also controls a frequency of the switching circuitry to at least partially control the magnitude of the current. In one embodiment, the apparatus further includes a source coupled to the first node and load coupled to the second node.

[00224] In one embodiment, the power extractor operates in different modes and in an ordinary operating mode, the power analysis circuitry controls the duty cycle responsive to the detected power change and voltage change, and in another mode, which is protective mode, the power analysis circuitry controls the duty cycle responsive to at least one different factor. In one embodiment, the at least one different factor includes detection of at least one limiting condition. In one

embodiment, the limiting condition includes any one or more of the following: excessive voltage, power, or current in the first node, power extractor, or second node; too little voltage, power, or current in the first node, power extractor, or second node; and a device limiting condition.

[00225] The background section of this disclosure provides various detailed information which is believed to be correct, but which may inadvertently include some errors. These errors, if they exist, would in no way detract from the inventions described and claimed herein. The Detailed Description section may also include some inadvertent errors which would not detract from the invention. Further, the Detailed Description section includes some theoretical explanations of the operation of the illustrated power extractor. It is believed that these theoretical explanations are correct, but if they are partially incorrect that would not detract from what is an enabling disclosure or detract from the inventions described and claimed.

[00226] It will be appreciated that the figures include block diagrams and schematic representations that may be implemented in a variety of ways and that actual implementations may include various additional components and conductors.

[00227] As used herein, the term "embodiment" refers to an implementation of some aspect of the inventions. Reference in the specification to "an embodiment," "one embodiment," "some embodiments," or "other embodiments" means that a particular feature, circuitry, or characteristic is included in at least some embodiments, but not necessarily all embodiments. Different references to "some embodiments" do not necessarily refer to the same "some embodiments."

[00228] When it is said the element "A" is coupled to element "B," element A may be directly coupled to element B or be indirectly coupled through, for example, element C. When the specification or claims state that a component, feature, circuit, structure, process, or characteristic A is in response to a component, feature, circuit, structure, process, or characteristic B, it merely means that A is at least partially responsive to B (but may also be responsive to C, or B and C at the same time). That is, when it is said A is in response to B, A could be in response to B and C at the same time. Likewise, when it is said that A causes B, A is at least a partial cause of B, but there could be other causes of B either separately or in combination with A.

[00229] If the specification states a component, feature, structure, circuitry, or characteristic "may", "might", or "could" be included, that particular component,

feature, circuitry, or characteristic is not required to be included. If the specification or claim refers to "a" structure, that does not mean there is only one of the structure.

[00230] Besides what is described herein, various modifications may be made to the disclosed embodiments and implementations of the invention without departing from their scope. Therefore, the illustrations and examples herein should be construed in an illustrative, and not a restrictive sense. The scope of the invention should be measured by reference to the claims that follow.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus comprising:
a first node and a second node; and
a power extractor to transfer power between the first and second nodes,
wherein when the power extractor operates in a first mode, the power extractor is operated such that a magnitude of the power transferred is at least partially dependent on a continuously detected power change, and wherein voltage and current at the first and second nodes are unregulated.
2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the detected power change includes an instantaneous power slope.
3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the power extractor adaptively matches impedances between a power source and a combination of the power extractor and a load.
4. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the power extractor includes a first energy transfer circuit connected to the first node to continuously transfer energy, a second energy transfer circuit connected to the second node to continuously transfer energy, and an intermediate energy transfer circuit connected between the first and second energy transfer circuits to discontinuously transfer energy between the first and second energy transfer circuits.
5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the power extractor includes switching circuitry with a duty cycle that is at least partially dependent on the detected power change and the magnitude of the transferred power is at least partially dependent on the duty cycle.
6. An apparatus comprising:
a first node and a second node; and
a power extractor including:
switching circuitry;

a control loop to control switching of the switching circuitry; and
power transfer circuitry to transfer power between the first and second nodes under control of the switching circuitry, and wherein when the power extractor operates in a first mode, the control loop controls the switching circuitry to cause the power transfer circuitry to transfer the power at a magnitude to cause a power source to approach providing a maximum power available given conditions beyond the control of the power extractor.

7. A system comprising:
a first node and a second node;
power transfer circuitry to transfer power between the first and second nodes;
switching circuitry to control power transfer between the first and second nodes, and
a control loop including circuitry to detect power changes and to control a duty cycle of the switching circuitry in response to the detected power changes to thereby control the power transfer circuitry.

8. A method comprising:
transferring power at a first node through power transfer circuitry to a second node;
detecting power changes;
in a first mode of operation, creating a switching control signal in response to the detected power changes;
generating a switching signal to control switches in response to the switching control signal; and
modulating the power transfer circuitry through opening and closing of the switches.

9. An apparatus comprising:
a first node and a second node;
a photovoltaic power source; and

a power extractor to transfer power from the photovoltaic power source between the first and second nodes, wherein the power extractor, the first node, the power source, and the second node are each part of a single integrated circuit.

10. The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the power extractor seeks to match an input impedance of the power extractor with an output impedance of the power source.

11. An apparatus comprising:

a first node, a second node, a third node, and a fourth node; and

a first power extractor to transfer first power between the first and second nodes including providing a first current to the second node, and wherein the first power extractor includes first power change analysis circuitry to detect first power changes, and wherein the first power extractor transfers the first power at magnitudes that are at least partially dependent on the detected first power changes; and

a second power extractor to transfer second power between the third and fourth nodes including providing a second current to the fourth node, and wherein the second power extractor includes second power change analysis circuitry to detect second power changes, and wherein the second power extractor transfers the second power at magnitudes that are at least partially dependent on the detected second power changes.

12. A system comprising:

an energy source that provides an unregulated source voltage and source current;

a load;

a power extractor to transfer power between the energy source and the load, wherein the power extractor transfers power with a magnitude at least partially dependent on a continuously detected power change, and wherein power extractor output voltage and output current are unregulated.

13. The system of claim 12, wherein the energy source is a first energy source, further comprising:

a second energy source that provides an unregulated source voltage and source current; and

logic to dynamically select to transfer power from zero or more of the first and second energy sources;

wherein the logic dynamically adjusts the magnitude of power transferred from the first and/or the second energy sources based at least in part on a power profile of the load.

14. The system of claim 12, wherein the power extractor further dynamically matches impedance of the energy source and/or impedance of the load.

15. The system of claim 12, further comprising:

an inverter to receive the power extractor supplied direct current and generate a sinusoidal alternating current from the direct current.

16. A method in a power transfer system, comprising:

receiving from a power source an unregulated source current at a source voltage;

identifying one or more loads;

determining a power transfer management strategy to transfer power from the power source to the one or more loads; and

transferring power in accordance with the determined strategy, including transferring an unregulated output power with a magnitude at least partially dependent on a continuously detected power change.

17. An apparatus comprising:

a first node and a second node; and

a power extractor to transfer power between the first and second nodes,

wherein the power extractor includes detection circuitry to detect power changes, and wherein in a first mode of operation, the power extractor is to be operated such that an input impedance of the power extractor is dynamically changed in response to the detected power changes to approach matching a first impedance

outside the power extractor including an impedance of a power source coupled to the first node.

18. An apparatus comprising:
a first node and a second node; and
a power extractor to transfer power between the first and second nodes,
wherein the power extractor includes detection circuitry to detect power changes, and wherein in a first mode of operation, the power extractor is to be operated such that input and output impedances of the power extractor between first and second nodes are dynamically changed in response to the detected power changes to seek matching the input impedance of the power extractor with a first impedance including an impedance of a power source coupled to the first node.

19. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the power extractor is to approach matching the output impedance of the power extractor with a second impedance including an impedance of a load coupled to the second node.

20. An apparatus comprising:
a first node and a second node; and
a power extractor including:
power transfer circuitry to transfer power having a current between the first and second nodes; and
power change analysis circuitry to detect a power change and a voltage change and to at least partially control a magnitude of the power being transferred in response to the detected power change and voltage change.

21. The apparatus of claim 20, wherein the power extractor further includes:
switching circuitry to control the power transfer circuitry; and
switching control circuitry to control a duty cycle of the switching circuitry;
and
wherein the power change analysis circuitry operates in different modes and wherein in an ordinary operating mode, under some conditions, the power analysis circuitry causes the power transfer circuitry to decrease the duty cycle if the power

change and voltage change are both increasing or both decreasing, and to increase the duty cycle of the power transferred if the power change is decreasing and the voltage change is increasing or the power change is increasing and the voltage change is decreasing.