# Supplementary Materials concerning the manuscript

# Studying Physics, getting to know Python. RC circuit, simple experiments, coding and data analysis with Raspberry Pi

# Submitted to Computing in Science and Engineering, 2020

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# 1 Part list

- Raspberry Pi3 model B (www.raspberrypi.org)
  - Power supply
  - Micro SD card with Raspbian Operating System (some sellers provide the Operating System already loaded on the micro SD card).
  - (suggested) Case with opening for access to the GPIO contacts
  - Keyboard USB
  - Mouse USB
  - Display with HDMI port (we use a Samsung S24D330 Monitor 24" Full HD, 1920 x 1080)
  - HDMI cable
- Extension cable for the GPIO (Kuman)
- Solderless breadboard (Kuman)
- Jumpers (Kuman)
- LED
- $330 \Omega$  resistor
- MCP 3008 Analog to Digital Converter (on Amazon, DigiKey, Mouser)
- $1 \,\mathrm{k}\Omega$  resistor (3 pcs)
- $10 \,\mathrm{k}\Omega$  resistor
- 100 µF (electrolytic) capacitor

# 2 Experiment zero: turn a LED on and off

Lighting a Light Emitting Diode. A  $330\,\Omega$  resistor is connected in series to the diode in order to limit the current that flows from the RPi through the LED [1]. One terminal of the series is connected to a ground (GND) pin of the GPIO, the other terminal of the series is connected to the GPIO pin 17, a pin selectable for digital output. The LED has to be correctly polarized, connecting the shorter leg (the cathode) to the lower potential.

An individual GPIO pin can only safely provide  $16 \,\mathrm{mA}$  [2], [3]. If we use a maximum voltage of  $+3.3 \,\mathrm{V}$ , according to Ohm's law the minimum resistance connected between the high voltage pin and the ground pin should be  $R_{min} = +3.3 \,\mathrm{V}/16 \,\mathrm{mA} \simeq 206 \,\Omega$ . Moreover, the GPIO pins can provide all together a maximum current of  $50 \,\mathrm{mA}$ , distributed on all the pins [2], [4].

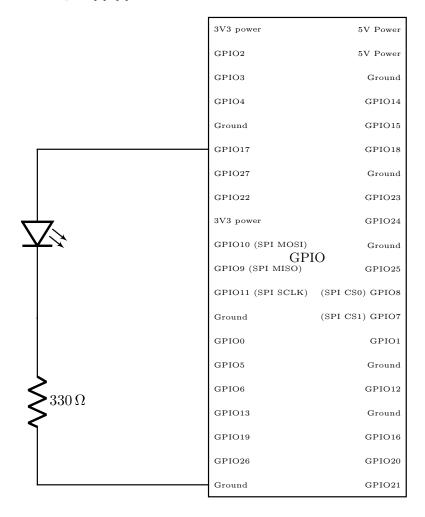


Figure S.1: Experiment Zero.

Listing 1: gpio\_switching.py

```
from gpiozero import LED
from time import sleep

led=LED(17)

while True:
   led.on()
   sleep(0.5)
   led.off()
   sleep(0.5)
```

Code from the examples in [5], [6].

# 3 Read analog signals: measure a constant voltage

# 3.1 Connecting the MCP 3008

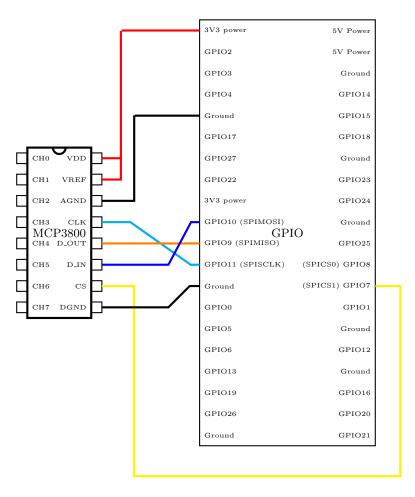


Figure S.2: Reading analog signals. Connections between the Raspberry Pi and the Analog to Digital Converter, the integrated circuit MCP3008.

#### 3.2 Reading analog signals

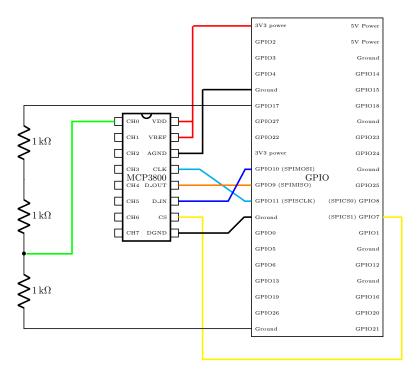


Figure S.3: Measuring on a voltage divider.

Measuring the voltage on a resistor of a voltage divider. We use the pin GPIO17 for applying a 3.3 V tension to the series of three equal resistors, so that a 1.1 V voltage is expected between the two terminals of each resistor. We choose the resistor connected to GND and we connect the other terminal of the resistor to the channel CH0 of the ADC converter.

The following script **measure\_voltage.py** allows to read and print the voltage on one of the resistors of the series when the circuit is powered on and off, respectively. Since the values are transmitted from the MCP3008 to the RPi using the SPI protocol (Serial Peripheral Interface), the RPi configuration has to be previously modified in order to activate the SPI support [7], [8]<sup>1</sup>.

#### Listing 2: measure\_voltage.py

```
from gpiozero import LED, MCP3008
  from time import sleep
2
  power = LED(17)
  pot = MCP3008(0)
  Vdc = 3.3
6
  while True:
       power.on()
       print(pot.value * Vdc)
10
       sleep(1)
11
       power.off()
12
       print(pot.value * Vdc)
13
       sleep(1)
14
```

Code based on the example in [9].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>For activating the SPI support: Raspberry Menu, Preferences, Raspberry Pi Configuration, Interfaces, SPI: Enable.

# 4 Transient response of the RC circuit

#### 4.1 Wiring diagram

Measuring the voltage while charging and discharging the capacitor. One end of the RC series is connected to a GND pin of the GPIO, the other end is connected to the pin GPIO17. The maximum current drawn from the RPi to the circuit is  $I = V_{DC}/R = 33 \,\mu\text{A}$ , well below the recommended limit of 16 mA.

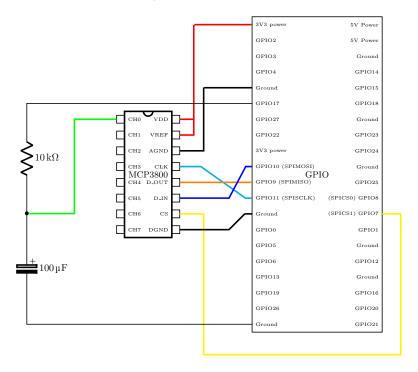


Figure S.4: RC circuit. Wiring diagram.

#### 4.2 Code

Listing 3: measure\_RCtransients.py

```
from gpiozero import LED, MCP3008
  from time import sleep, perf_counter
  import numpy as np
3
  power = LED(17)
  pot = MCP3008(0)
  sleep_time = 0.1
  exec_time = 40
  v_high_time = 20
  Vdc = 3.3
11
  outputFile='voltageLog.txt'
12
13
  def measurement(time_limit):
14
       while True:
15
           time = perf_counter() - start_time
16
           times.append(time)
           voltage = pot.value * Vdc
18
           voltages.append(voltage)
19
           if time > time_limit:
20
                break
21
           sleep(sleep_time)
22
23
  times = []
```

```
voltages = [ ]
26
   start_time = perf_counter()
27
   # charging
29
   t_limit = v_high_time
30
   power.on()
31
   measurement(t_limit)
33
   # discharging
34
   t_limit = exec_time
35
   power.off()
   measurement(t_limit)
37
38
   t = np.array(times)
39
   v = np.array(voltages)
41
  np.set_printoptions(precision = 20)
42
  np.savetxt(outputFile, np.column_stack((t, v)))
```

#### Listing 4: plot\_voltage.py

```
plot_voltage.py
1
2
  import numpy as np
  import matplotlib.pyplot as plt
  # read data from file
  t, v = np.loadtxt('voltageLog.txt', delimiter=' ', unpack = True)
  # plot of the experimental data
  plt.plot(t, v, 'o', color='blue', markersize = 3)
  plt.axhline(color = 'gray', zorder = -1)
plt.axvline(color = 'gray', zorder = -1)
  plt.xlabel('time $t$ (s)')
13
  plt.ylabel('voltage $V_C$ (V)')
14
  plt.text(27, 1.8, 'R = 10 k\Omega', '\n'+'C = 100 \Omega', '\nu$F')
  plt.savefig('plot_voltage.pdf')
17
  plt.show()
```

# 5 Analysis. Modelling the experimental data

From the original file containing the experimental data we extract two subsets of data: one corresponding to charging, one corresponding to the discharging.

The fitting function cannot reproduce discontinuous changes such those occurring at the time  $t_0$  at which the charging process sets in, and at the time  $t_1$  at which the discharging process starts. For this reason from the dataset concerning the charging process we excluded the early points at about 0.0 V, and from the dataset corresponding to the discharging process we excluded the voltage values equal to the  $V_{dc}$  plateau value.

#### 5.1 Curve fitting: charging process

Listing 5: curveFit\_charging.py

```
import numpy as np
   import matplotlib.pyplot as plt
   import matplotlib.gridspec as gridspec
   import scipy.optimize
6
   res = 3.3 / 1023
   inputFile = 'chargingProcessData.txt'
   # define fitting function
   def ChargeProcess(t, V0, t0, tau):
11
       return V0 * (1-np.exp(-(t-t0)/tau))
12
   # read the experimental data from file
13
   t, v = np.loadtxt(inputFile, delimiter = '', unpack = True)
15
   # assign the experimental uncertainty on Voltage values
16
   dv = np.ones(v.size) * res
17
18
   # initial guesses for fitting parameters
19
   VO_guess, tO_guess, tau_guess = 3., 0., 1.
20
21
   # fitting procedure
22
   nlfit, nlpcov = \
23
          scipy.optimize.curve_fit(ChargeProcess, t, v, \
24
                                     p0 = [V0_guess, t0_guess, tau_guess],
25
                                        sigma = dv, \
                                     bounds = (0, 100))
26
           # we apply bounds to the free parameters so that only positive
27
              values are allowed.
   # obtaining parameters from the best fit procedure
29
   VO, tO, tau = nlfit
30
31
   # obtaining uncertainties associated with fitting parameters
32
   dV0, dt0, dtau = \
33
        [np.sqrt(nlpcov[j, j]) for j in range(nlfit.size)]
34
35
   # create fitting function from fitted parameters
36
   t_fit = np.linspace(t.min(), t.max(), 128)
37
   v_fit = ChargeProcess(t_fit, V0, t0, tau)
38
   # residuals and reduced chi squared
40
   resids = v - ChargeProcess(t, V0, t0, tau)
41
   redchisqr = ((resids/dv)**2).sum()/float(t.size-3)
42
  ndf = t.size-3
   # where 3 is the number of free parameters
44
45
46
```

```
# create figure window to plot data
        fig = plt.figure(1, figsize = (8,8))
        gs = gridspec.GridSpec(2, 1, height_ratios = [6, 2])
        # plotting data and fit
51
       ax1 = fig.add_subplot(gs[0])
52
        ax1.plot(t_fit, v_fit)
53
       ax1.errorbar(t, v, yerr = dv, fmt = 'or', ecolor = 'black', markersize =
                 2)
        ax1.set_xlabel(' time (s)')
55
        ax1.set_ylabel('voltage $V_C$ (V)')
        ax1.text(0.5, 0.50, r'$V_0$ = {0:6.4f}$\pm${1:0.4f}'.format(V0, dV0),
57
                 transform = ax1.transAxes, fontsize = 14)
        ax1.text(0.5, 0.40, r'$\tau$ = {0:6.4f}$\pm${1:0.4f}'.format(tau, dtau),
58
                 transform = ax1.transAxes, fontsize=14)
        ax1.text(0.5, 0.30, r'$t_0$= {0:5.4f}$\pm${1:0.4f}'.format(t0, dt0),
                transform = ax1.transAxes, fontsize=14)
        ax1.text(0.5, 0.20, r'\$\chi_r^2\$ = \{0:0.1f\}, ndf = \{1\}'.format(redchisqr, final content of the content of the
60
                 ndf), transform = ax1.transAxes, fontsize=14)
61
       # plotting residuals
62
       ax2 = fig.add_subplot(gs[1])
63
       ax2.errorbar(t, resids, yerr = dv, ecolor = 'black', fmt = 'ro', markersize
                   = 2)
       ax2.axhline(color = 'gray', zorder = -1)
       ax2.set_xlabel('time (s)')
       ax2.set_ylabel('residuals (V)')
       plt.savefig('ChargingProcessDataAndFit.pdf')
68
       plt.show()
```

Code based on the examples in [10].

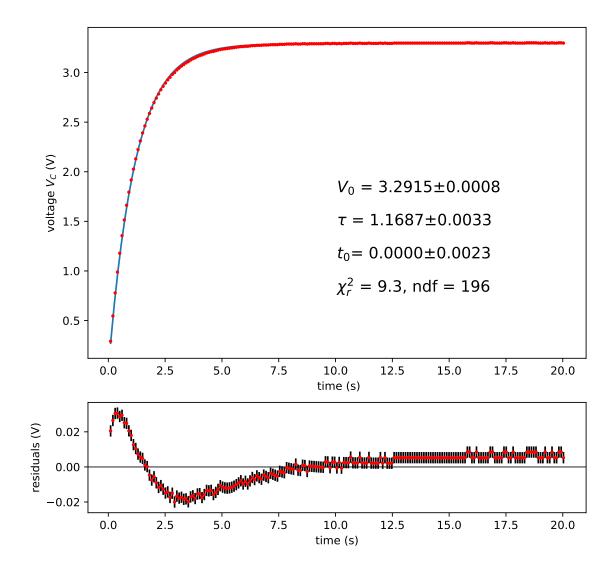


Figure S.5: *Upper panel*. Experimental values (dots) of the voltage on the capacitor in an RC circuit during the charging process measured as a fuction of time and best fit (solid line). *Lower panel*. Plot of the residuals (experimental value *minus* computed value) versus time. Error bars are plotted assuming that the uncertainty on the voltage measurements is equal to the voltage resolution.

#### 5.2 Curve fitting: discharging process

Listing 6: curveFit\_discharging.py

```
import numpy as np
   import matplotlib.pyplot as plt
  import matplotlib.gridspec as gridspec
  import scipy.optimize
   Vdc = 3.293551538837322212
   res = 3.3 / 1023
   inputFile = 'DischargeProcessData.txt'
   # define fitting function
10
   def DischargeProcess(t, t0, tau):
11
       return Vdc * (np.exp(-(t-t0)/tau))
12
13
   # read the experimental data from file
14
   t, v = np.loadtxt(inputFile, delimiter = '', unpack = True)
15
16
   # assign the experimental uncertainty on Voltage values
17
   dv = np.ones(v.size) * res
18
19
   # initial guesses for fitting parameters
20
   t0_guess, tau_guess = 20, 1
21
22
   # fitting procedure
23
   nlfit, nlpcov = \
24
          scipy.optimize.curve_fit(DischargeProcess, t, v, \
25
                                    p0 = [t0_guess, tau_guess], sigma = dv,\
                                    bounds = (0, 100)
27
28
   # obtaining parameters from the best fit procedure
29
  t0, tau = nlfit
30
31
   # obtaining uncertainties associated with fitting parameters
32
   dt0, dtau = \
33
        [np.sqrt(nlpcov[j, j]) for j in range(nlfit.size)]
34
35
   # create fitting function from fitted parameters
36
  t_{fit} = np.linspace(t.min(), t.max(), 128)
37
38
   v_fit = DischargeProcess(t_fit, t0, tau)
39
   # residuals and reduced chi squared
40
  resids = v - DischargeProcess(t, t0, tau)
  redchisqr = ((resids/dv)**2).sum()/float(t.size-2)
  ndf = t.size - 2
43
  # where 2 is the number of free parameters
44
   # create figure window to plot data
46
   fig = plt.figure(1, figsize = (8,8))
47
   gs = gridspec.GridSpec(2, 1, height_ratios = [6, 2])
48
  # plotting data and fit
50
  ax1 = fig.add_subplot(gs[0])
51
  ax1.plot(t_fit, v_fit)
52
  ax1.errorbar(t, v, yerr = dv, fmt = 'or', ecolor = 'black', markersize =
  ax1.set_xlabel(' time (s)')
ax1.set_ylabel('voltage $V_C$ (V)')
```

```
ax1.text(0.6, 0.80, r'$\tau$ = {0:6.4f}$\pm${1:0.4f}'.format(tau, dtau),
                       transform = ax1.transAxes, fontsize = 14)
           ax1.text(0.6, 0.70, r'$t_0$= {0:5.4f}$\pm${1:0.4f}'.format(t0, dt0),
                       transform = ax1.transAxes, fontsize = 14)
           ax1.text(0.6, 0.60, r'\$\chi_r^2\$ = \{0:0.1f\}, ndf = \{1\}'.format(redchisqr, final text(0.6, 0.60), r'$\chi_r^2$ = \{0:0.1f}, ndf = \{1\}'.format(redchisqr, final text(0.6, 0.60), r'$\chi_r^2$ = \{0:0.1f}, ndf = \{1\}'.format(redchisqr, final text(0.6, 0.60), r'$\chi_r^2$ = \{0:0.1f}, ndf = \{1\}'.format(redchisqr, final text(0.6, 0.60), r'$\chi_r^2$ = \{0:0.1f}, ndf = \{1\}'.format(redchisqr, final text(0.6, 0.60), r'$\chi_r^2$ = \{0:0.1f}, ndf = \{1\}'.format(redchisqr, final text(0.6, 0.60), r'$\chi_r^2$ = \{0:0.1f}, ndf = \{1\}'.format(redchisqr, final text(0.6, 0.60), r'$\chi_r^2$ = \{0:0.1f}, ndf = \{1\}'.format(redchisqr, final text(0.6, 0.60), r'$\chi_r^2$ = \{0:0.1f}, ndf = \{1\}'.format(redchisqr, final text(0.6, 0.60), r'$\chi_r^2$ = \{0:0.1f}, ndf = \{1\}'.format(redchisqr, final text(0.6, 0.60), r'$\chi_r^2$ = \{0:0.1f}, ndf = \{1\}'.format(redchisqr, final text(0.6, 0.60), r'$\chi_r^2$ = \{0:0.1f}, ndf = \{1\}'.format(redchisqr, final text(0.6, 0.60), r'$\chi_r^2$ = \{0:0.1f}, ndf = \{1\}'.format(redchisqr, final text(0.6, 0.60), r'$\chi_r^2$ = \{0:0.1f}, ndf = \{1\}'.format(redchisqr, final text(0.6, 0.60), r'$\chi_r^2$ = \{0:0.1f}, ndf = \{1\}'.format(redchisqr, final text(0.6, 0.60), r'$\chi_r^2$ = \{0:0.1f}, ndf = \{1\}'.format(redchisqr, final text(0.6, 0.60), r'$\chi_r^2$ = \{0:0.1f}, ndf = \{1\}'.format(redchisqr, final text(0.6, 0.60), r'$\chi_r^2$ = \{0:0.1f}, ndf = \{1\}'.format(0.6, 0.60), r'$\chi_r^2$ = \{1\}'.for
58
                        ndf), transform = ax1.transAxes, fontsize = 14)
59
           # plotting residuals
           ax2 = fig.add_subplot(gs[1])
61
           ax2.errorbar(t, resids, yerr = dv, ecolor = 'black', fmt = 'ro', markersize
62
                             = 2)
           ax2.axhline(color = 'gray', zorder = -1)
           ax2.set_xlabel('time (s)')
64
           ax2.set_ylabel('residuals (V)')
65
          plt.savefig('DischargingDataAndFit.pdf')
       plt.show()
```

Code based on the examples in [10].

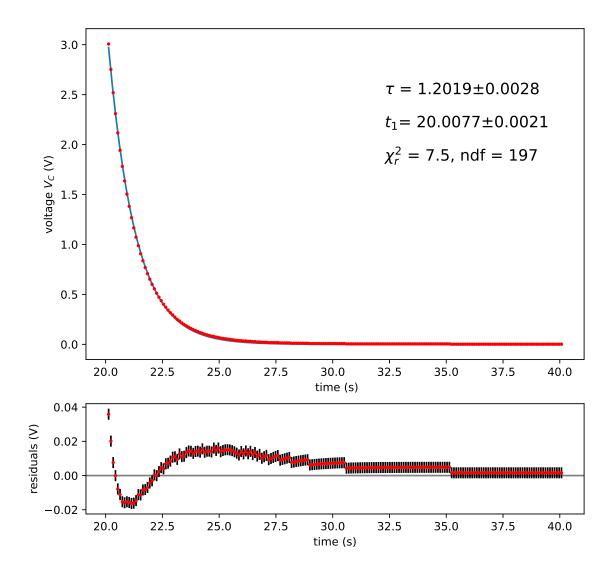


Figure S.6: Upper panel. Voltage on the capacitor in an RC circuit during the discharging. The solid line represents the best fit of the model equation  $V_C(t) = V_0 \exp[-(t-t_1)/\tau]$  to the experimental data. Lower panel. Plot of the residuals.

#### Listing 7: plot\_voltage\_and\_fit.py

```
import numpy as np
   import matplotlib.pyplot as plt
   # define fitting function
4
  def ChargeProcess(t, V0, t0, tau):
       return V0 * (1-np.exp(-(t-t0)/tau))
   # define fitting function
   def DischargeProcess(t, V0, t0, tau):
       return VO * (np.exp(-(t-t0)/tau))
10
11
12
   # read data from file
13
  t, v = np.loadtxt('voltageLog.txt', delimiter=' ', unpack = True)
14
15
   # plot of the experimental data
16
  plt.plot(t, v, 'o', color='blue', markersize = 3)
17
  plt.axhline(color = 'gray', zorder = -1)
  plt.axvline(color = 'gray', zorder = -1)
19
  plt.xlabel('time $t$ (s)')
20
  plt.ylabel('voltage $V_C$ (V)')
  plt.text(27, 1.8, 'R = 10 k$\Omega$'+'\n'+'C = 100 $\mu$F')
22
23
  # model curve for the charge process
24
  t_fit_charge = np.linspace(0, 20, 128)
  V0, t0, tau = 3.2915, 0, 1.1687
  v_fit_charge = ChargeProcess(t_fit_charge, V0, t0, tau)
27
  plt.plot(t_fit_charge, v_fit_charge, color='green')
28
  #plt.draw()
29
30
31
  # model curve for the discharge process
  t_fit_discharge = np.linspace(20.01, 40, 128)
  V0, t0, tau = 3.3, 20.0053, 1.2019
34
  v_fit_discharge = DischargeProcess(t_fit_discharge, V0, t0, tau)
35
  plt.plot(t_fit_discharge, v_fit_discharge, color='green')
36
   #plt.draw()
37
38
39
  plt.savefig('plot_voltage_and_fit.pdf')
  #plt.draw()
41
  plt.show()
```

# 5.3 Semilog plots

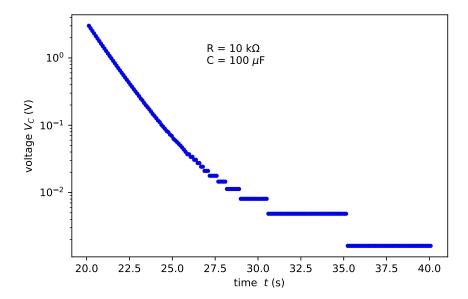


Figure S.7: Semilogarithmic plot of the voltage on the capacitor in the RC circuit studied while discharging the capacitor.

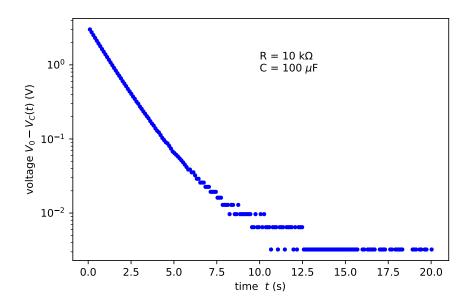


Figure S.8: Semilogarithmic plot of the difference  $[V_0 - V_C(t)]$  versus time during the charging of the capacitor in the RC circuit studied.

# 6 Insights

#### 6.1 Measurement rate

Listing 8: rate\_analysis.py

```
import numpy as np
   import matplotlib.pyplot as plt
  inputDataFile = 'ChargeProcessDataZeroSleepOneSecond.txt'
   outputDataFile = 'timeLapsesChargeProcessOneSecond.txt'
   outParFile = 'ChargeDeltatParamsOneSecond.txt'
   # read data from the file
  t = np.loadtxt(inputDataFile, delimiter = ' ', usecols=(0), unpack = True)
10
   # compute time lapses
11
   delta_t = np.diff(t)
12
   t_{prime} = t[:-1] + (delta_t/2)
13
14
  # save the results as text
15
  np.set_printoptions(precision = 20)
  np.savetxt(outputDataFile, np.column_stack((t_prime, delta_t)))
17
18
   # statistical analysis on time lapses
19
  dt_mean = np.mean(delta_t, dtype = np.float64)
   dt_min = np.min(delta_t)
21
   dt_max = np.max(delta_t)
22
  dt_std = np.std(delta_t, dtype = np.float64)
23
  print('Delta t mean value = ', dt_mean)
25
  print('Delta t minimum = ', dt_min)
  print('Delta t mean value = ', dt_mean)
27
   print('Delta t maximum = ', dt_max)
   # write the results of the statistical analysis to a text file
30
  fout = open(outParFile, 'w')
31
  fout.write('Statistical analysis on times from the file: \n')
  fout.write(outputDataFile + '\n' + '\n')
33
  fout.write('Delta_t mean value = ' + str(dt_mean) + '\n')
34
  fout.write('Delta_t minimum = ' + str(dt_min) + '\n')
  fout.write('Delta_t maximum = ' + str(dt_max) + '\n')
36
  fout.write('Delta_t standard deviation = ' + str(dt_std))
37
  fout.close()
38
39
  # plot of Delta_t vs- t
41
  plt.plot(t_prime, delta_t*1e6, 'o', color = 'blue', markersize = 1)
42
  plt.xlabel('time $t$ (s)')
  plt.ylabel('time lapses $\Delta t$ ($\mu$s)')
44
  plt.tight_layout()
45
  |plt.ylim(140, 360)
47 | # save the plot to a file
48 | plt.savefig('rate_analysis_zeroSleepOneSecond.pdf')
  #plt.draw()
49
  plt.show()
```

The statistical analysis of a set of results, chosen as example, suggests that the minimum time lapse is of  $161\,\mu\text{s}$ , the average value is  $167\,\mu\text{s}$  with a standard deviation of  $9\,\mu\text{s}$ . The values of the time lapses as a function of time are shown as a scatter plot in the following figure.

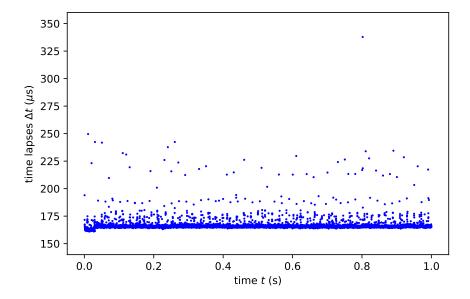


Figure S.9: Time lapses between two subsequent voltage measurements obtained if the code measure\_RCtransients.py is modified commenting the sleep() command. In this condition the mean value of time lapses is approximately 170 µs.

#### 6.2 Acquisition based on the spidev module

Listing 9: measure\_voltage\_SPI.py

```
from gpiozero import LED
   from time import sleep, perf_counter
   import spidev
   import numpy as np
   power = LED(17)
   # open SPI bus
   spi = spidev.SpiDev()
   spi.open(0,0)
   spi.max_speed_hz = 1000000
11
12
   # read the data corresponding to a selected channel
13
   # of the ADC MCP3008
14
   def ReadChannel(channel):
15
       adc = spi.xfer2([1, (8 + channel) << 4, 0])
16
       data = ((adc[1]\&3) << 8) + adc[2]
17
       return data
19
   # convert data to voltage
20
   def ConvertVolts(data):
21
       volts = (data * 3.3)/float(1023)
22
       return volts
23
24
   # define channel
25
   voltage_channel = 0
27
   # function to perform the measurements
28
   def measurement(time_limit):
29
       while True:
30
            # read the time
31
           time = perf_counter() - start_time
32
           times.append(time)
33
           # read the voltage
34
           voltage_level = ReadChannel(voltage_channel)
35
           voltage_value = ConvertVolts(voltage_level)
36
           voltages.append(voltage_value)
37
38
           if time > time_limit:
                break
39
           sleep(sleep_time)
40
41
   sleep_time = 0.1
43
   exec_time = 40
44
   v_high_time = 20
   outputFile = 'VoltageSPI-Log.txt'
46
47
   times = []
48
   voltages = [ ]
50
   start_time = perf_counter()
51
52
   # charging the capacitor
   t_limit = v_high_time
54
   power.on()
55
   measurement(t_limit)
```

```
discharging the capacitor
    _limit = exec_time
59
  power.off()
60
  measurement(t_limit)
61
62
63
       np.array(times)
64
       np.array(voltages)
66
  np.set_printoptions(precision = 20)
67
  np.savetxt(outputFile, np.column_stack((t, v)))
68
```

Code based on the example in [7].

The statistic analysis on the time lapses from a sample data set indicates that the minimum time lapse is of about 50  $\mu$ s, the average value is 54  $\mu$ s, and the standard deviation is 12  $\mu$ s. See the scatter plot of the data in Fig.S.10 as well as an histogram of the time lapses concerning a larger data set in Fig.S.11. For comparison, considering that the MCP3008 could work at an acquisition rate of 75 ksps (when  $V_{DC}=2.7\,\mathrm{V}$ ) [11], this would correspond to time lapses of 13.3  $\mu$ s.

Summarizing, the acquisition rate depends not only on the sampling rate of the ADC, but also on the software used for controlling the MCP3008 chip through the GPIO. Aiming to achieve better performances is convenient to exploit the **spidev** library rather than the **gpiozero** module. Comparative tests on all the experiments carried out using the two different modules can be instructive. In particular, it can be verified whether the minimum detectable voltage corresponds to zero. Moreover, it should be considered that Python on RPi runs under a multitasking operating system so that other processes may gain priority over the CPU while the acquisition managed through the Python code would be slowed down. Faster execution and better timing could be achieved using C codes [12], [13]. However, Python is simpler if compared to C, it is readily available on the RPi, and the acquisition rate achieved with the settings described in this work can be suitable to carry out educational projects.

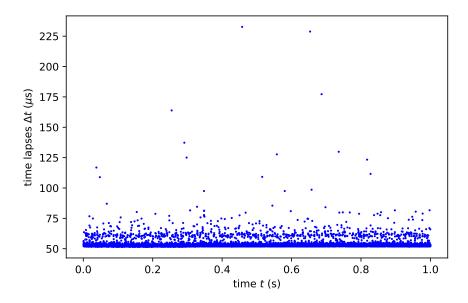


Figure S.10: Time lapses between two subsequent voltage measurements obtained when the code measure\_voltage\_SPI.py is used for the experiment, commenting the sleep() instruction. The mean value of the time lapses is of about 55 µs. The distribution of the time lapses acquired during a longer time interval is shown in Fig.S.11 as a histogram.

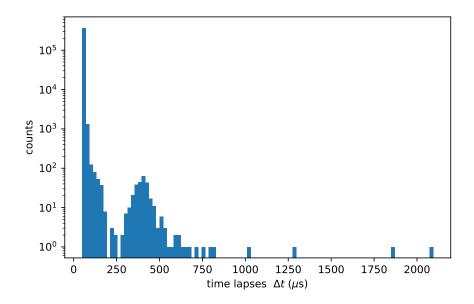


Figure S.11: Distribution of the time lapses  $\Delta t$  during the voltage measurements performed with the code measure\_voltage\_SPI.py where the sleep() instruction is commented (371737 data points, 100 bins). The data are acquired in a time interval of 20 s.

#### Listing 10: histoTimeLapsesCharging.py

```
import numpy as np
  import matplotlib.pyplot as plt
2
  DataFile='timeLapsesChargeProcess.txt'
4
  OutputFile='histoLapsesCharging.pdf'
5
  bins=100
6
  # read data from file
  t, Delta_t = np.loadtxt(DataFile, delimiter=' ', unpack = True)
  # plot
10
  plt.hist(Delta_t*1e6, bins, log = True)
                            $\Delta t$ ($\mu$s)')
  plt.xlabel('time lapses
12
  plt.ylabel('counts')
13
  plt.tight_layout()
14
  plt.savefig(OutputFile)
  plt.show()
```

#### 6.3 Optimized acquisition rate

Since the voltage varies rapidly when charging and discharging begin, it can be useful to impose a faster acquisition rate during the early steps of the process. To this aim the following code can be used for the measurements.

Listing 11: log\_spacedTimes.py

```
from gpiozero import LED
   from time import sleep, perf_counter
   import spidev
   import numpy as np
   power = LED(17)
   # open SPI bus
   spi = spidev.SpiDev()
   spi.open(0,0)
10
   spi.max_speed_hz = 1000000
11
12
   # read the data corresponding to a selected channel
13
   # of the ADC MCP3008
14
   def ReadChannel(channel):
15
       adc = spi.xfer2([1, (8 + channel) << 4, 0])
16
       data = ((adc[1]\&3) << 8) + adc[2]
17
       return data
18
19
   # convert data to voltage
20
   def ConvertVolts(data):
21
       volts = (data * 3.3)/float(1023)
22
       return volts
23
24
   # define channel
25
   voltage_channel = 0
26
27
   # function to perform the measurements
28
   def measurement():
29
       for time_lapse in lapses:
30
            # read the time
31
           time = perf_counter() - start_time
32
           times.append(time)
33
           # read the voltage
34
35
           voltage_level = ReadChannel(voltage_channel)
           voltage_value = ConvertVolts(voltage_level)
36
           voltages.append(voltage_value)
37
           sleep(time_lapse)
39
40
41
   times = []
   voltages = [ ]
43
44
   outputFile = 'VoltageSPI-LogSpaced.txt'
45
   Delta_t_min = 50e-6
   v_high_time = 20
47
   points = 1000
48
49
   start = np.log10(Delta_t_min)
   stop = np.log10(v_high_time)
51
   spots = np.logspace(start, stop, points)
52
   lapses = np.diff(spots)
53
54
```

```
start_time = perf_counter()
56
  # charging the capacitor
57
  power.on()
58
  measurement()
59
60
  # discharging the capacitor
61
  power.off()
  measurement()
63
64
65
  t = np.array(times)
66
  v = np.array(voltages)
67
68
  np.set_printoptions(precision = 20)
69
  np.savetxt(outputFile, np.column_stack((t, v)))
```

#### References and Notes

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