

¹ openpv/simshady: A Javascript Package for Photovoltaic Yield Estimation Based on 3D Meshes

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Authors of papers retain copyright and release the work under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License ([CC BY 4.0](#)). To meet global climate targets, solar photovoltaic (PV) capacity must expand significantly. Tripling renewable energy capacity by 2030 is essential to limit global warming to 1.5°C ([International Energy Agency, 2023](#)). The expansion of PV plays a crucial role, and PV systems offer an additional benefit: small-scale house-mounted PV systems enable public participation and legitimize the energy transition.

¹⁶ Statement of need

²² For calculating the yield of PV systems, various factors are important, including the location of the planned installation, local climate, surrounding objects such as houses or trees, and terrain. To provide accurate estimates of expected yields, simulation tools are essential in both research and practical PV system planning.

²⁶ For these reasons, a variety of software tools for simulating photovoltaic systems already exist ([Holmgren et al., 2018](#); [Jakica, 2018](#)). One widely used software is the Python package pvlib ([Anderson et al., 2023](#)), which offers a range of functionalities. However, the rather niche topic of shading simulation with 3D objects is not included in this package. Another Python-based software that enables irradiance modeling in two dimensions is pvfactors ([Anoma et al., 2017](#); [Pvfactors, 2022](#)).

³² Web-based tools for solar panel simulations, such as PVGIS, PVWatts, and RETScreen, provide an accessible means for non-technical individuals to estimate energy yields based on geographic location and building geometry ([Psomopoulos et al., 2015](#)). However, these tools lack the capability to perform shading simulations using 3D geometries.

³⁶ Package description

³⁷ openpv/simshady simulates the yield of photovoltaic (PV) systems by considering weather/climate data and shading from local 3D geometry. The model represents the environment

39 through a 3D scene setup, comprising primary objects for simulation (e.g., PV panels or target
 40 buildings) and surrounding objects that may cast shadows (e.g., neighboring buildings, trees).
 41 Weather and climate data are integrated using Global Horizontal Irradiance (GHI) and Direct
 42 Normal Irradiance (DNI) datasets, which are reconstructed to include directional irradiance
 43 information using the HEALPix framework (Górski et al., 2005; Zonca et al., 2019).

44 The simulation utilizes the Möller-Trumbore intersection algorithm (Möller & Trumbore, 1997)
 45 to determine if any shading objects obstruct the view between a sky pixel and the main
 46 simulation geometry. For each triangle in the simulation geometry, a shading mask is generated,
 47 indicating whether an object blocks the line of sight from the sky pixel to the triangle. The
 48 shading mask values range from 0 to 1, where 0 indicates that an object shades the triangle,
 49 1 signifies that there is no obstruction and the line of sight is perpendicular to the triangle,
 50 and values between 0 and 1 represent cases where there is no obstruction but the angle of
 51 incidence is not perpendicular. The aggregated radiance values from all sky dome pixels
 52 are then multiplied by the corresponding shading mask values and summed to calculate the
 53 total energy received by each triangle. This computation is fully parallelizable and has been
 54 implemented using WebGL, allowing for GPU acceleration.

55 The package finally returns a color coded Three.js mesh, as shown in Figure 1. Additionally,
 56 each triangle of the simulated buildings has its annual solar yield assigned as an attribute for
 57 further processing.



Figure 1: A simulated building with its solar yield, where dark purple represents low yields and light yellow represents high yields. The simulated shading from neighboring buildings is clearly visible.

58 The CLI tool

59 The simshady CLI is a thin wrapper around the core WebGL-based simulation engine that
 60 enables batch processing of photovoltaic-yield analyses on a headless server. It first parses
 61 a small set of required arguments (the simulation geometry and the irradiance data). The
 62 supplied geometry files, either JSON objects or Wavefront OBJ files, are handed to a headless
 63 Chromium instance launched via Puppeteer (Google Chrome Team, 2025).

64 Inside the browser context the full simshady package is injected, the scene is reconstructed, and
 65 the GPU-accelerated Möller-Trumbore ray-tracing routine is executed. When the calculation

⁶⁶ finishes, the CLI extracts the mesh data from the browser, writes binary artefacts (positions.bin,
⁶⁷ colors.bin, intensities.bin), a colour-coded OBJ file, a top-down snapshot, and the simulation
⁶⁸ results into the user-specified output directory.

⁶⁹ Conclusion

⁷⁰ The openpv/simshady package serves two primary purposes: it provides a solution for scientific
⁷¹ calculations of PV yield, while also facilitating science communication through interactive and
⁷² user-friendly simulations that can be run directly within a web browser. This eliminates the need
⁷³ for specialized software or programming knowledge, making it accessible to a broader range
⁷⁴ of users. Furthermore, by implementing the main algorithm in WebGL, the package achieves
⁷⁵ higher performance than a pure Javascript implementation, and it offers a JavaScript wrapper
⁷⁶ around PV simulation in WebGL. This is particularly beneficial because WebGL is a language
⁷⁷ that is not widely known among scientists, and thus can be challenging for them to implement
⁷⁸ their own code, making the openpv/simshady package a valuable tool for simplifying this
⁷⁹ process.

⁸⁰ Credit Authorship Statement

- ⁸¹ FK: Conceptualization, Software, Funding acquisition, Writing – original draft
- ⁸² MG: Conceptualization, Software, Funding acquisition, Writing – review & editing
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- ⁸⁴ ME: Software, Writing – review & editing
- ⁸⁵ KP: Conceptualization, Software, Funding acquisition, Writing – review & editing

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