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► To cite this version:

Guilherme Araujo Pimentel, Alain Vande Wouwer, Alain Rapaport, Jérôme Harmand. A simplified model of a submerged membrane bioreactor. 32. Benelux Meeting on Systems and Control, Mar 2013, Houffalize, Belgium. 1 p. hal-02807105

HAL Id: hal-02807105

<https://hal.inrae.fr/hal-02807105v1>

Submitted on 6 Jun 2020

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A simplified model of a submerged membrane bioreactor

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1 Introduction

Nowadays, there is a rich literature about mathematical modeling of membrane bioreactors (MBR), mostly based on a detailed physical description, including aeration, cake formation, filtration, fouling [1] and biological activity [2]. These models however contain a large number of parameters to estimate and are too complex for process control. In this connection, there are only a few proposals based on empirical approaches or artificial neural network models. The motivation of this study is to derive a simplified model of a submerged MBR based on first principles and to analyze its dynamical behavior.

2 Simplified Model

A simple bioreactor model (equation 1), assuming a single biomass at this preliminary stage, is coupled with a dynamic model representing the cake formation. Most authors agree on the fact that the most important factor is the cake resistance [3].

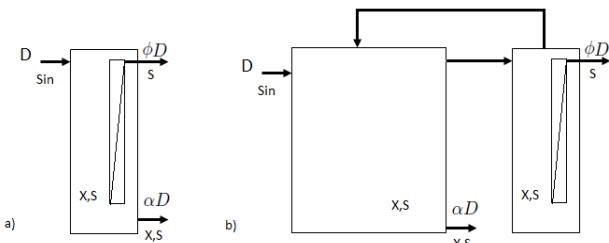


Figure 1: a)Simplified membrane bioreactor, $\phi = \frac{J(m(t))A}{V}$ is the permeate flux factor and α is the waste factor.
b)Different representation for the same model.

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \frac{dS}{dt} = -\frac{1}{Y} \mu(S)X + \frac{Q_{in}}{V} S_{in} - \frac{Q_{in}}{V} \alpha S - \frac{J(m(t))A}{V} S \\ \frac{dX}{dt} = (\mu(S) - \alpha \frac{Q_{in}}{V})X - \frac{J(m(t))A}{V} X + \beta \frac{J_{air}}{V} \frac{m^2}{K_{air} + m} \\ \frac{dm}{dt} = J(m(t))AX - \beta J_{air} \frac{m^2}{K_{air} + m} \end{array} \right. \quad (1)$$

3 Validation

Figure 2 shows the cake dynamics with and without air cross flow. As a first validation the proposed model has been compared to results of the GPS-X software [4] and to Li and Wang's model [1], implemented in *Matlab/Simulink*.

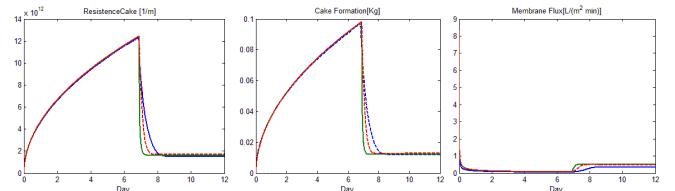


Figure 2: Comparison between the models. Red: Li Model, Blue: GPS-X model and Green: Proposed Model.

4 Acknowledgments

This paper presents research results of the Belgian Network DYSCO (Dynamical Systems, Control, and Optimization, funded by the Interuniversity Attraction Poles Programme and initiated by the Belgian State and Supagro-INRA INRIA 'MODEMIC' (Modeling and Optimisation of the Dynamics of Ecosystems with MICro-organisms), France.

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