



THE UNIVERSITY
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“Simulation of fire spread in large compartments under different ventilation conditions”

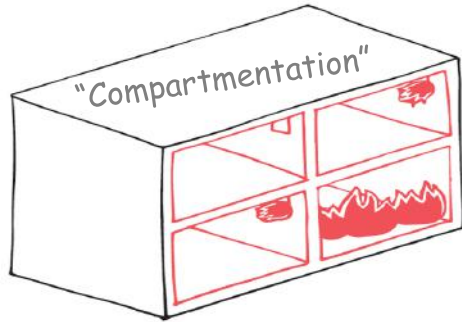
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Context – “compartmentation” vs. “Open-plan”



VS

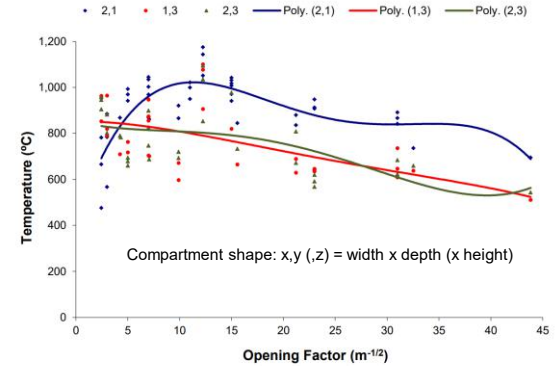
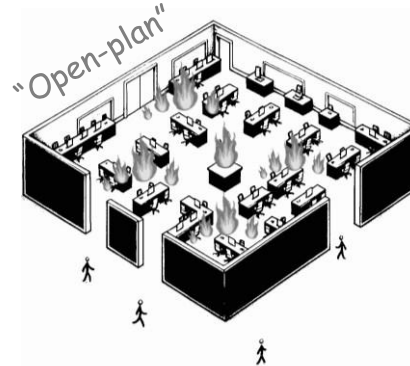
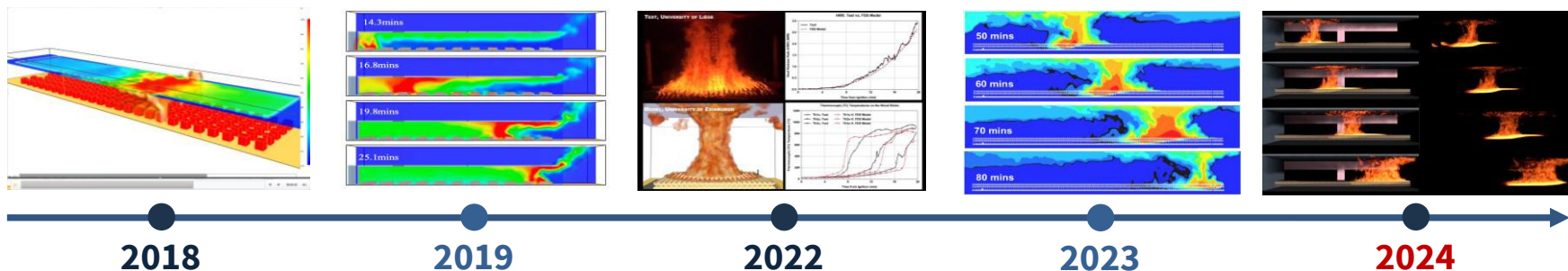


Figure 3-2: Average compartment ceiling temperature for the CIB Tests for crib configurations 2,1 - 1,3 and 2,3, together with their correspondent best-fit lines drawn as 4th grade polynomials.

Majdalani, A. (2015) Compartment fire analysis for contemporary architecture PhD thesis, School of Engineering, Uni Edinburgh era.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/9969

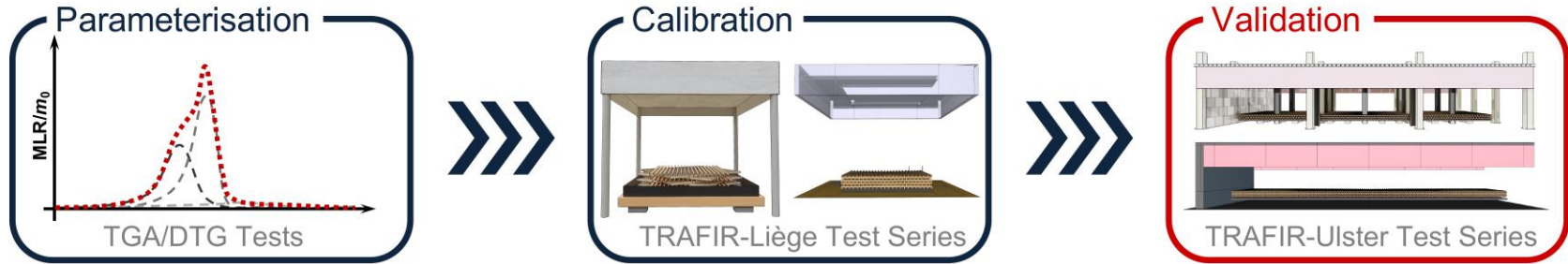
- > Modern buildings **favour “open-plan” design**
- > Classic compartment fire framework from fire tests in **small, near cubic** compartments
- > Fires in open-plan settings tend to **“travel”** across compartments
- > Characteristic **spatially and temporally** varying boundary condition
- > Fire dynamics **strongly influenced by ventilation**, spanning fuel-controlled & ventilation-controlled fires
- > Complex momentum/fuel bed control in former => **no simple theoretical treatments**

Numerical Simulators for Travelling Fires – Road Map



Charlier <i>et al.</i> , 2018	Dai <i>et al.</i> , 2019	Dai <i>et al.</i> , 2022	Dai <i>et al.</i> , 2023	Liu <i>et al.</i> , 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Hypothetical scenarios > No airflow through crib > Discrete boxes > Simple pyrolysis model > Ignition temperature > Prescribed HRRPUA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > BST/FRS 1993 Test > Under-ventilated fires > Discrete boxes > Simple pyrolysis model > Ignition temperature > Prescribed HRRPUA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > TRAFIR-Liège Test > Well-ventilated fires > Stick-by-stick > Simple pyrolysis model > Ignition temperature > Prescribed HRRPUA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > TRAFIR-Ulster Test > Well-ventilated fires > Stick-by-stick > Simple pyrolysis model > Ignition temperature > Prescribed HRRPUA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > TRAFIR-Ulster Test > Well-ventilated fires > Stick-by-stick > Detailed pyrolysis model > Arrhenius equations > Linked with exposure

Numerical Simulators for Travelling Fires – Workflow and Strategy



Fuel bed representation and fire growth modelling

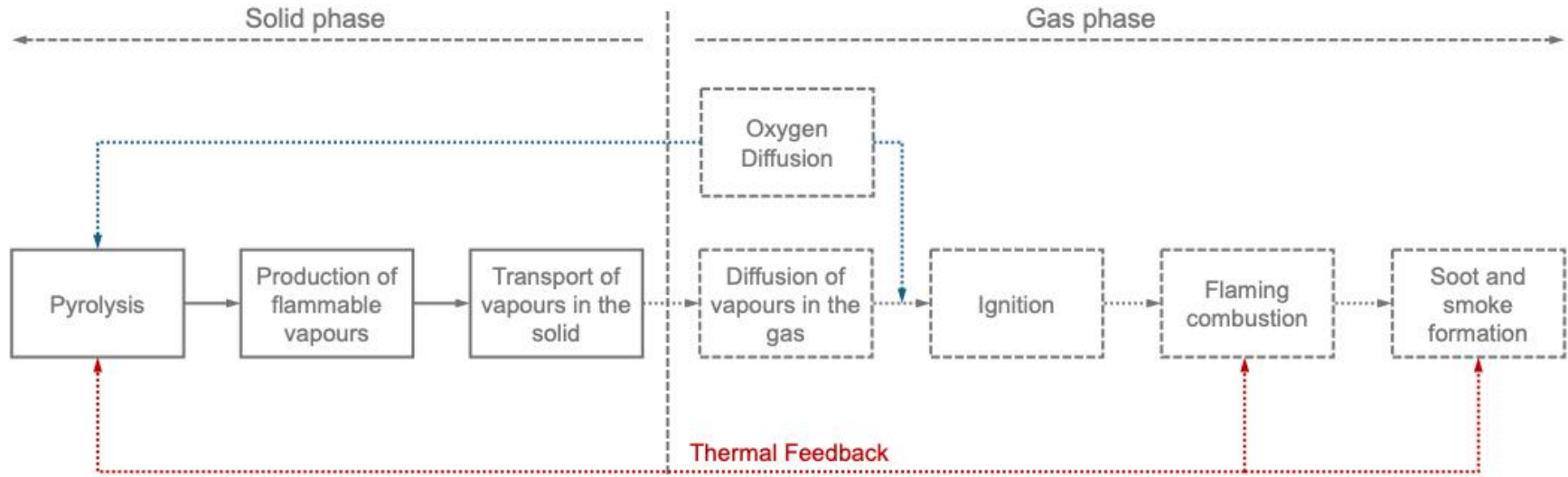
- > Discrete boxes Stick-by-stick
- > Simple pyrolysis Detailed (or complex) pyrolysis

Detailed pyrolysis

- > Fire spread post-ignition **burning rates are now linked to thermal environments**
- > Enhanced burning rates due to higher **thermal feedback**
- > Repeated Scaling Up exercise, starting with calibration for isolated crib,

>> then translated *predictively* for large compartments

Complex overlapping fire phenomena spanning gas/solid + coupling



Chosen modelling tool (numerical simulator)

Fire Dynamics Simulator (FDS) c/o NIST, v. 6.7.0

<https://pages.nist.gov/fds-smv/>

Key physical models

Detailed (or simple) pyrolysis models

Fixed radiative loss (0.35)

Model parameters determination

Parallel Reaction Schemes

Wood Component $i \rightarrow v_{char,i} Char + (1 - v_{char,i}) Volatiles$

where:

Wood Component i refers to cellulose and hemicellulose and lignin
 $v_{char,i}$ is the mass fraction of char produced by component i

Reaction rates:

Each Component i has Arrhenius dependence on temperature, proportional to normalised mass fractions of solid-phase reactants ($Y_{s,i}$):

$$R_i = Y_{s,i} A_i \exp\left(-\frac{E_i}{RT_s}\right) X_{O_2}^{n_{O_2,i}} ; Y_{s,i} = \left(\frac{m_{s,i}}{m_s(0)}\right)$$

where:

- A_i is the pre-exponential factor [s^{-1}]
- E_i is the activation energy of solid-phase reactant [$kJ mol^{-1}$]
- T_s is the solid temperature of reactant [K]
- X_{O_2} is oxygen volume fraction [-]
- $m_{s,i}$ is the mass of the reactant j [kg]
- $m_{s(0)}$ is the initial mass of wood aggregate [kg]

Table 1. Kinetic parameters for thermal decomposition of spruce used in the model.

	Parameter values (data bounds ^a) for first order reactions							
	$Y_{s,i}(0)$ (-)	Ref.	A_i^b (s^{-1})	Ref.	E_i^b ($kJ \cdot mol^{-1}$)	Ref.	v_{char} (-)	Ref.
Cell. ^c	0.422 (0.38-0.44)	[14-18]	8.18×10^{15} (10^{13} - 10^{15})/N ₂ (10^{16} - 10^{17})/Air	[14-17]	170 (186-236)/N ₂ (213-221)/Air	[14-17]	0.02 (0.06-0.13)	[18]
Hemi. ^c	0.230 (0.18-0.30)	[14-18]	2.51×10^6 (10^6)/N ₂ (10^7)/Air	[14-17]	88.5 (80-100)/N ₂ (100-105)/Air	[14-18]	0.15 (0.19-0.30)	[18]
Lign. ^c	0.180 (0.08-0.23)	[14-18]	4.50×10^1 (10^0 - 10^1)/N ₂ (10^3 - 10^7)/Air	[14-17]	55.0 (38-46)/N ₂ (66-121)/Air	[14-17]	0.37 (0.38-0.44)	[18]

^a Values in bracket are extracted from literature using identical reaction schemes with reaction orders set to unity for Norway spruce.
^b Kinetic constants (A_i and E_i) were carefully tuned within the pre-defined boundaries until all the key features associated fire spread at the crib scale has been successfully reproduced.
^c "Cell.", "Hemi.", and "Lign." abbreviate cellulose, hemicellulose and lignin, respectively.

Table 2. Thermo-physical properties for spruce and char used in the model.

	$\rho_{s,j}$ ($kg \cdot m^{-3}$)	$k_{s,j}$ ($W \cdot m^{-1} \cdot K^{-1}$)	$c_{s,j}$ ($kJ \cdot kg^{-1} \cdot K^{-1}$)	$\epsilon_{s,j}$ (-)	$H_{s,j}^f$ ($kJ \cdot kg^{-1}$)	$H_{c,j}^f$ ($MJ \cdot kg^{-1}$)
Virgin Wood ^a (Cell./Hemi./Lign.)	468	0.13	1.30	0.9	600/900/-1200	12/17/10
Char ^b	300	0.05 (20°C) 0.07 (380°C) 0.10 (800°C) 0.35 (1200°C)	0.66 (20°C) 1.05 (100°C) 1.25 (200°C) 1.45 (380°C) 1.70 (800°C)	0.95	n/a	n/a

^a Thermal properties for virgin spruce wood at ambient are kept the same with our previous publication [7].
^b Temperature-dependent specific heat and conductivities for spruce-derived char are extracted from [20,21,23] and emissivity from [22], density from [23].
^c Heat of Reaction $H_{r,j}$ and Heat of Combustion $H_{c,j}$ are extracted and adapted from [24] on the same wood species, to ensure that the weighted average values are in line with the literature.

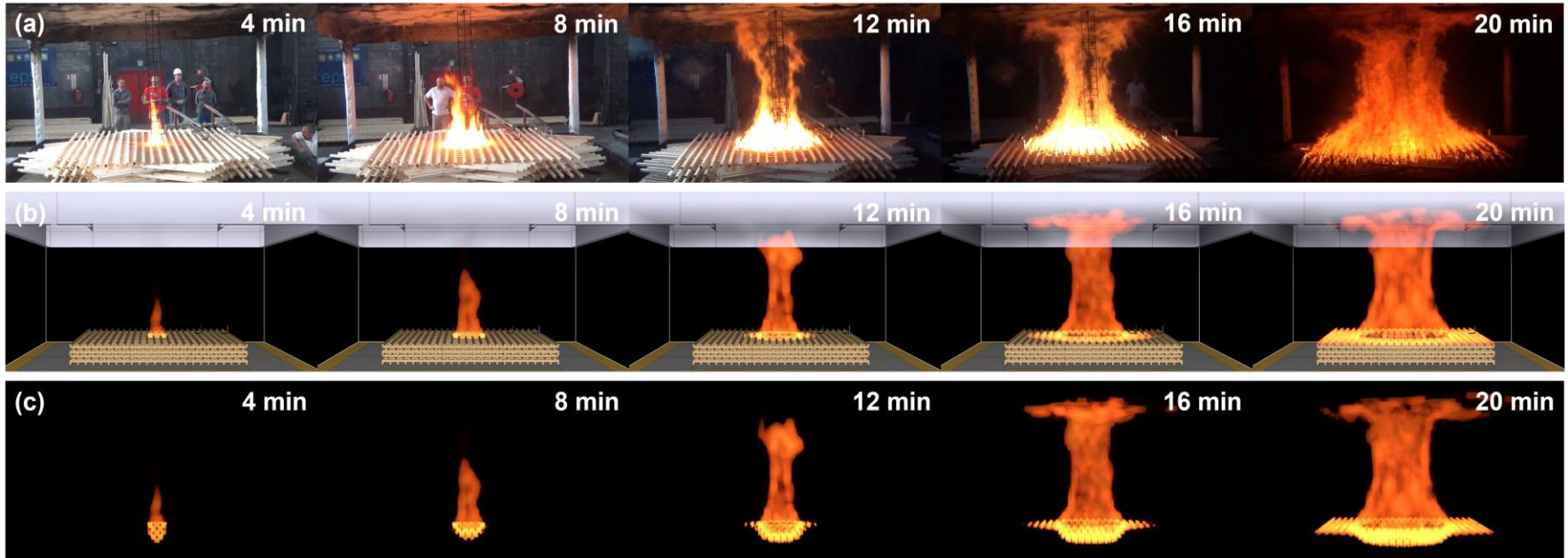


Fig 1 Comparisons of fire spread evolution between LB7 experiment and FDS model for a full-scale isolated wood crib fire test (Gamba *et al.*, 2020) at 4 min time intervals (test images provided by Uni Liège, model images rendered by PyroSim with 200 kW/m^3 as HRRPUV cut-off for colouring fires): a) test; b) model; c) model without obstructions

TRAFIR Ulster tests – test 1 “open ventilation conditions”*



TRAFIR Ulster Travelling Fire Test 1, (a) Skewed view, (b) Front view, figures adapted from Nadjai et al. [11].

* Nadjai, A., Alam, N., Charlier, M., Vassart, O., Dai, X., Franssen, J.-M. & Sjöström, J. (2020) “Travelling fire in full scale experimental building subjected to open ventilation conditions”, SiF 2020 – 11th Int. Conf. Structures in Fire, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia, 30 Nov – 2 Dec 2020 doi:[10.14264/987a305](https://doi.org/10.14264/987a305)

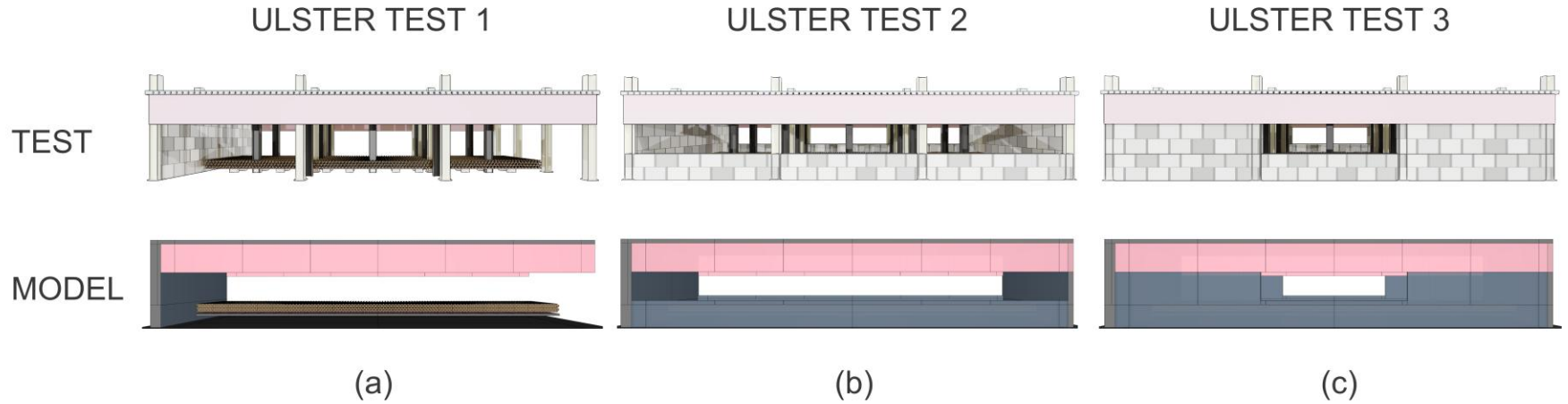
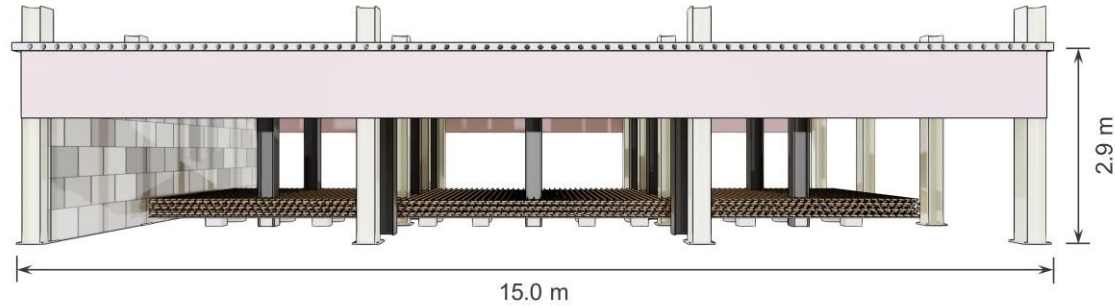
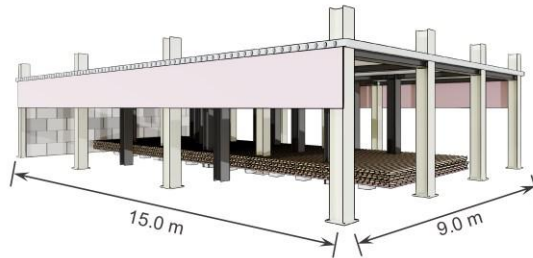


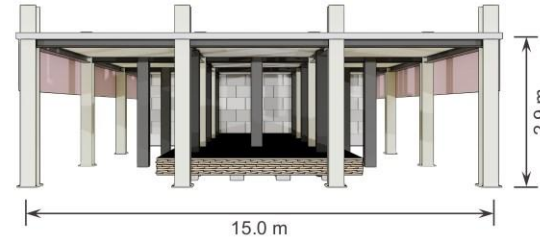
Fig 2 Comparisons of test and model set-up for TRAFIR Ulster Travelling Fire Test Series (Nadjai *et al.*, 2022):
a) test 1 (inverse opening factor: 1.6); b) test 2 (inverse opening factor: 8.1); c) test 3 (inverse opening factor: 26.4)



(a)

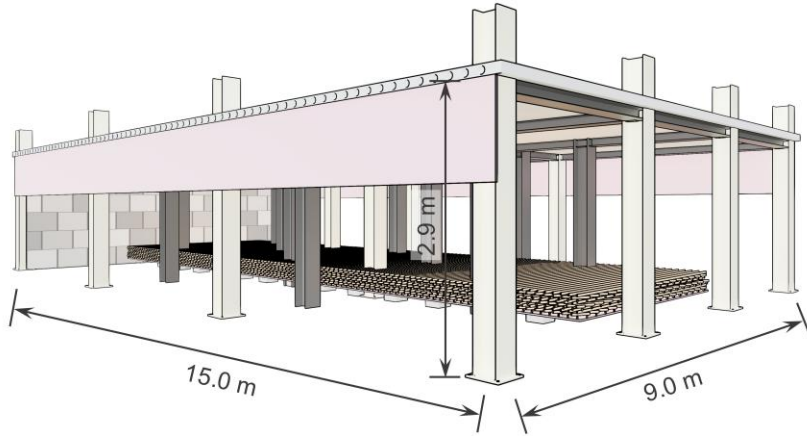


(b)

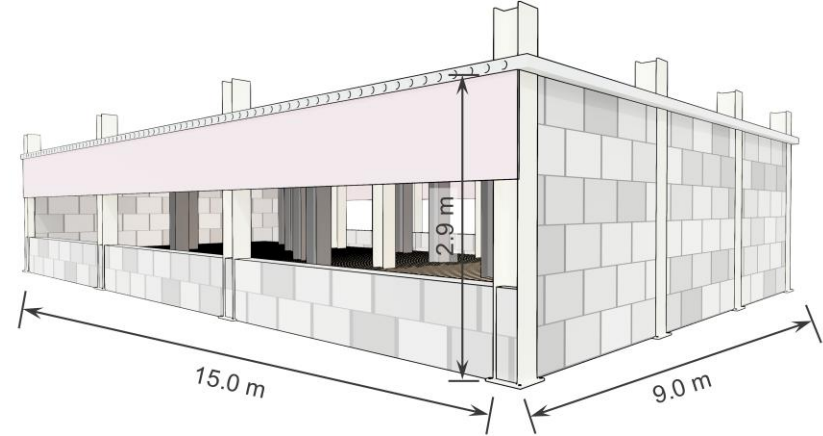


(c)

Fig 3 TRAFIR Ulster Travelling Fire Test 1 compartment with dimensions: a) front view; b) skewed view; c) side view.



(a)



(b)

Fig 4 Comparisons of model set-up for TRAFIR Ulster Travelling Fire Test Series (Nadjai *et al.*, 2022):
a) test 1 (inverse opening factor: 1.6 – well ventilated); b) test 2 (inverse opening factor: 8.1 - transitional)

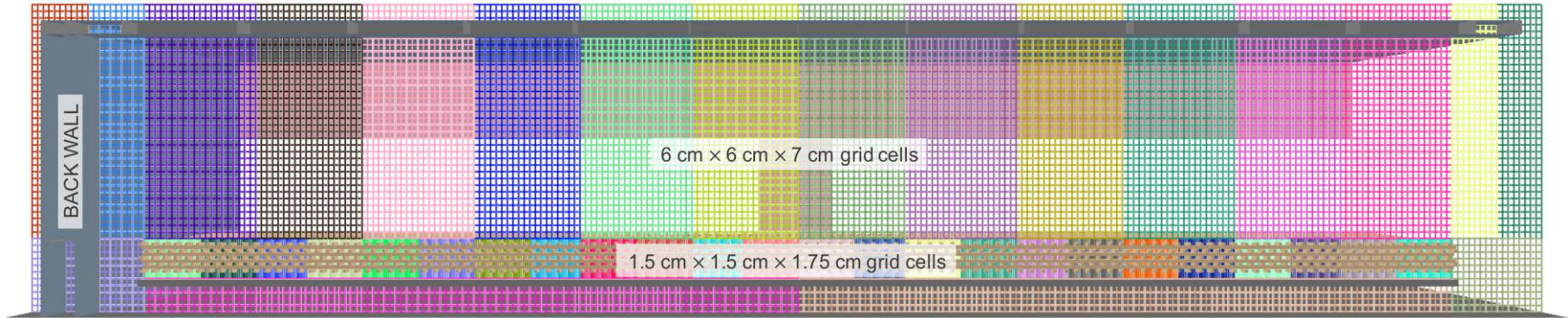
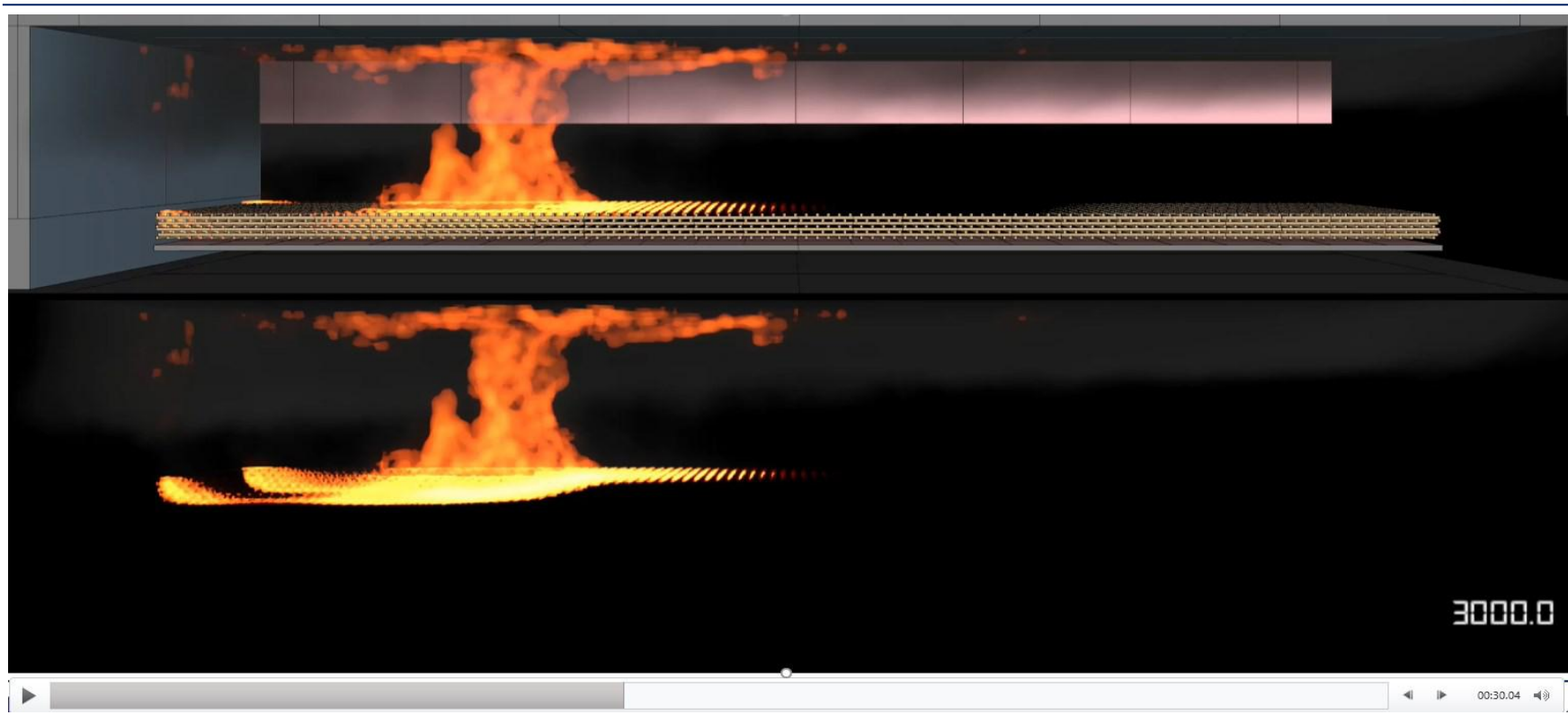


Fig 5 Grid resolution of the scaled-up model: 1.5 cm × 1.5 cm × 1.75 cm per cell inside the crib, 6.0 cm × 6.0 cm × 7.0 cm above the crib, 8.3M cells in total running on 248 cores; mesh boundary positioned 4 cells above the crib surface.





(a)

(b)

(c)

Fig 6 Comparisons of fire spread evolutions between test and model for Ulster Travelling Fire Test 1 at 10 min time intervals (test videos c/o Ulster University, model images rendered by PyroSim with 200 kW/m³ as HRRPUV cut-off for colouring fires):

- a) test footage;
- b) FDS model prediction;
- c) model without obstructions (obstructions hidden to show fire spread on and inside wood cribs).

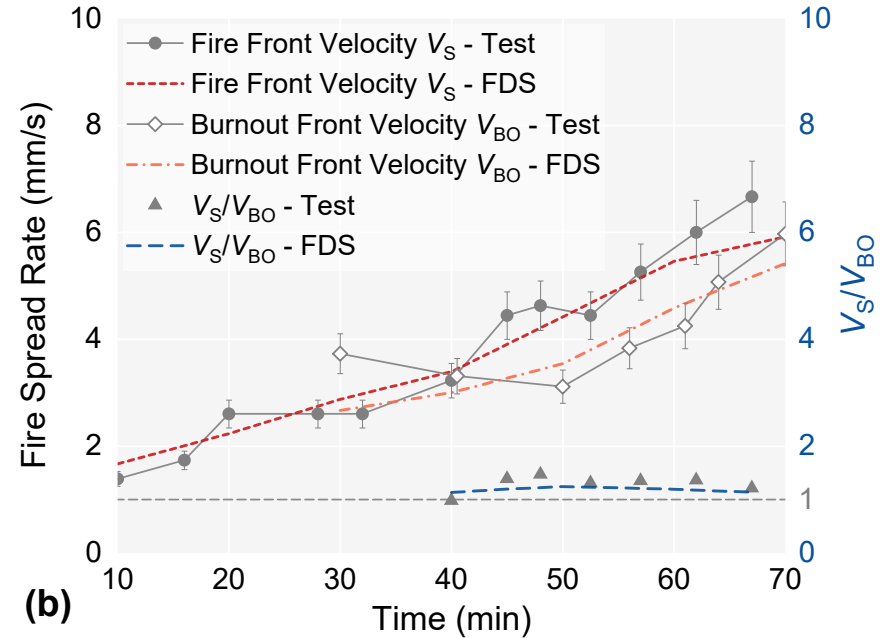
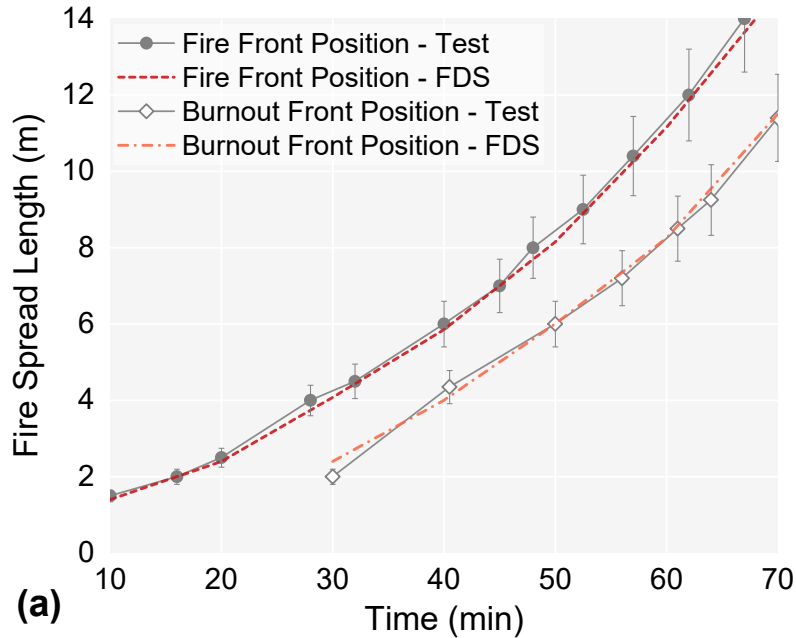


Fig 7 Comparisons of fire spread between test and model at compartment centreline along fire trajectory: a) fire spread length b) fire spread rates and ratio of fire spread rates at fire front to burnout front (V_S/V_{BO}).

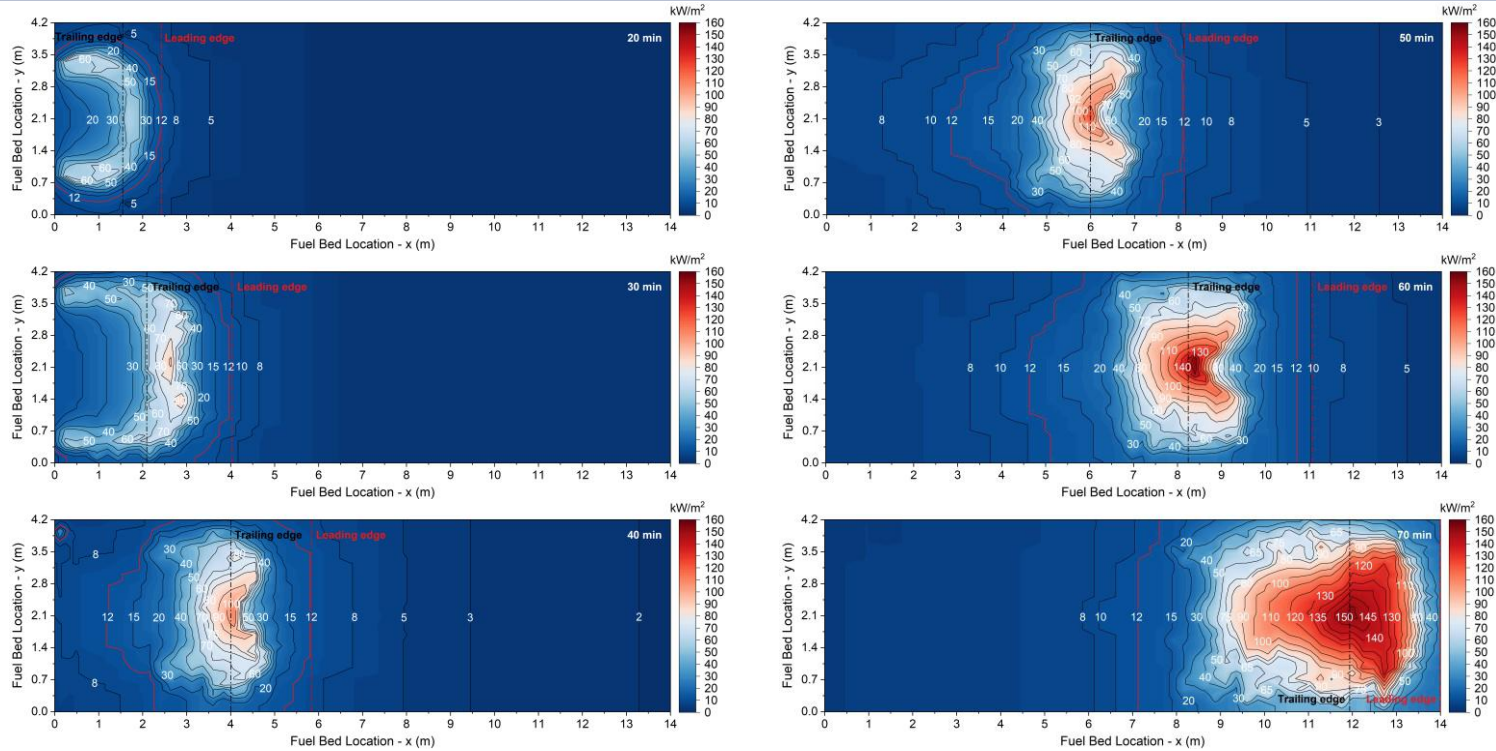


Fig 8 Evolution of **incident heat fluxes** on fuel bed top layer at 10 min time intervals (heat fluxes in kW/m²)

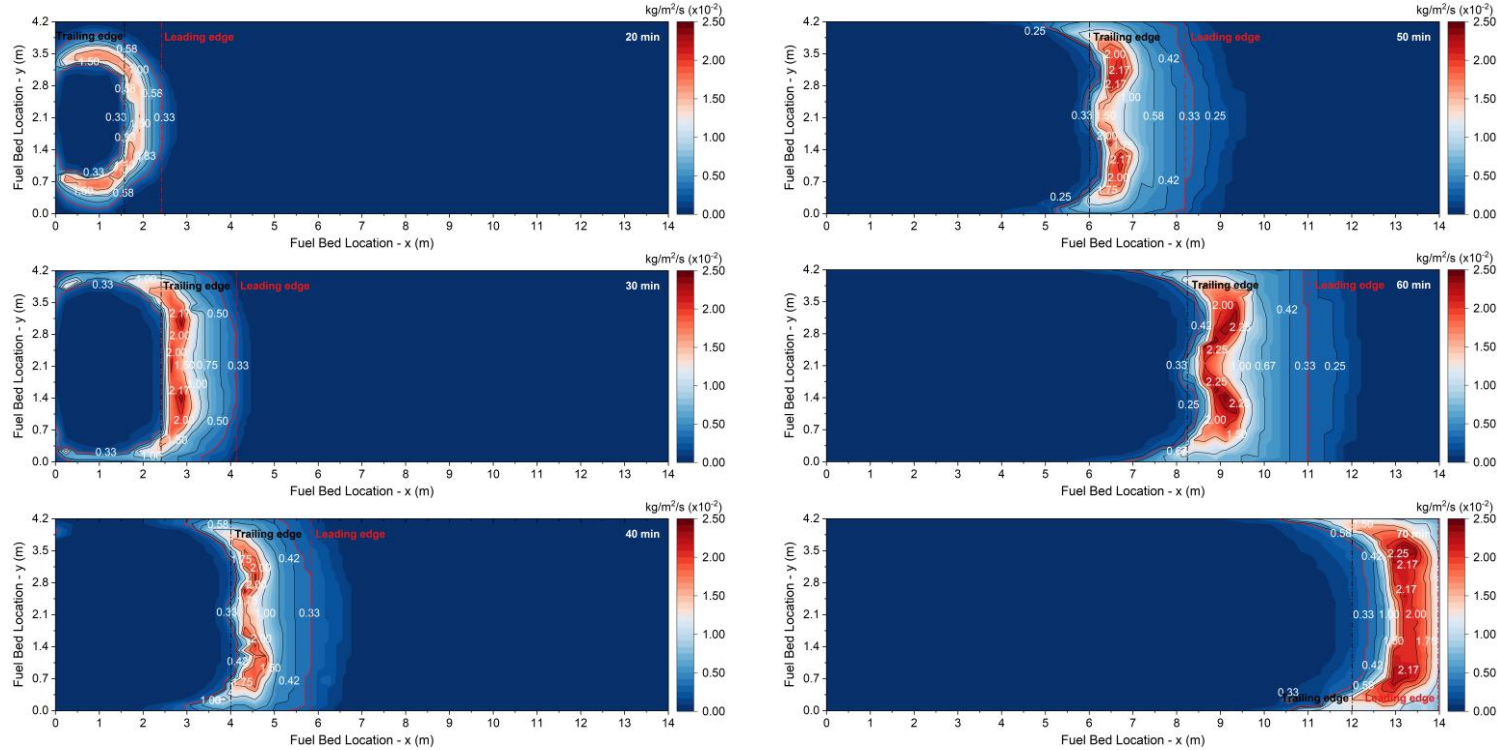


Fig 9 Evolution of instantaneous **fuel burning rates** of top layer at 10 min time intervals (burning rates in $\text{kg/m}^2/\text{s}$)

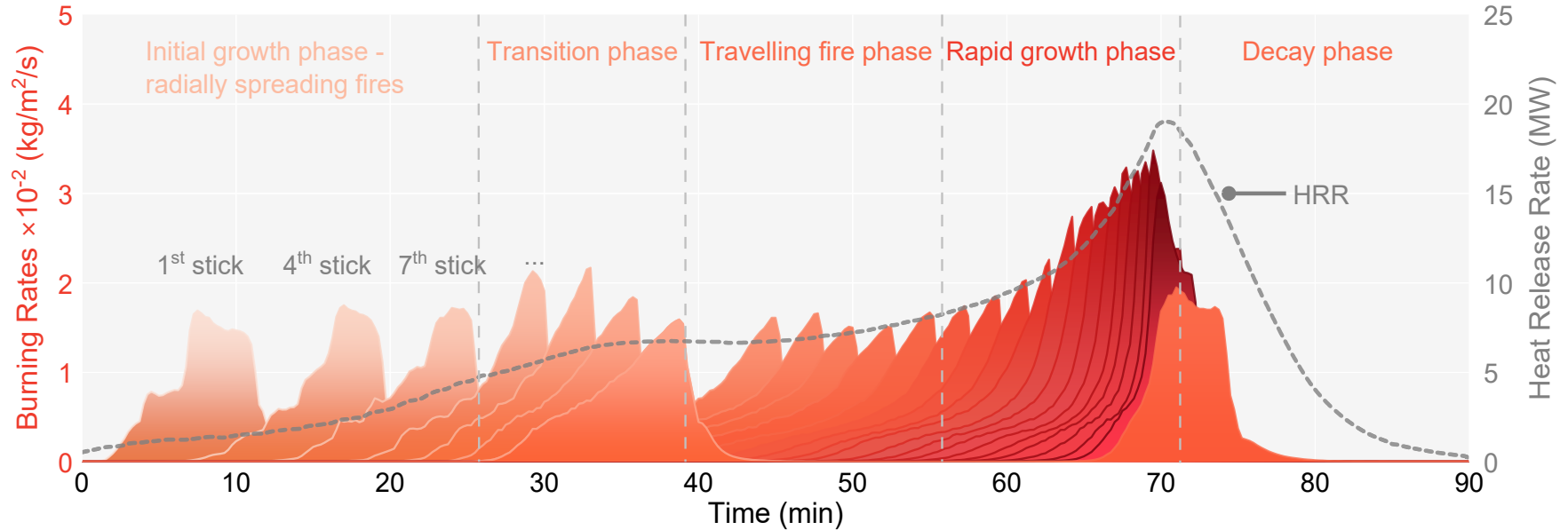


Fig 10 HRR evolution and instantaneous burning rates every 4 sticks along compartment centreline on fuel bed top layer

Some Aspects of the Growth and Spread of Fire in the Open

P. H. THOMAS

Ministry of Technology and Fire Offices' Committee Joint Fire Research Organization

FIRE SPREAD IN EXPERIMENTAL FUEL BEDS, SPREAD IN STILL AIR

It is comparatively recently that attempts have been made to study the spread of fire in laboratory conditions. A large number of experiments in which fire spread through a crib of wood have been conducted by Fons *et al.* (1962) and after his death by Byram *et al.* (1964) in 'Project Fire Model'. They burnt cribs constructed of layers of wood sticks parallel to each other, spaced horizontally a fixed distance apart, each alternate layer having the sticks running at right angles to the layer beneath. Thomas and Simms (1964) and Thomas, Simms, and Wraight (1964) have briefly reported a correlation of such data, with parameters which can be used for other types of fuel beds:

σ is the surface per unit of fuel bed volume

λ is the volume of voids/surface of solid.

From these definitions it follows that the porosity (the volume of voids per unit of volume) is given by

$$\epsilon = \frac{\sigma\lambda}{1+\sigma\lambda}$$

and for a crib of sticks of size a separated horizontally by a distance s (i.e. $s+a$ between centres).

$$\sigma = 4/a \quad \text{and} \quad \lambda = s/4.$$

* Thomas, P.H. (1965) "Some aspects of the growth and spread of fire in the open", Fire Research Note No. 552 <https://publications.iafss.org/publications/frn/552/-1>

Equation (13) gives the rate of spread for thin fuels while equations (13) and (15) to (17) give that for thick fuels namely:

$$R \doteq \left(\frac{\dot{Q}_n^*}{2\theta_i} \right)^2 \frac{(1+\sigma\lambda)}{K\rho_a c_w \sigma}.$$

where \dot{Q}_n^* is the net forward flux allowing for cooling losses

c_w is the effective specific heat of the moist wood

θ_i is the temperature rise causing ignition in the presence of flame, taken here as 300° C (Simms, 1963),

and ρ_a is the mass of wood heated to ignition per unit volume of fuel bed.

K is the thermal conductivity

The more detailed theory (Thomas and Simms, 1964) allowing for cooling within the fuel bed gives this as the correct result with

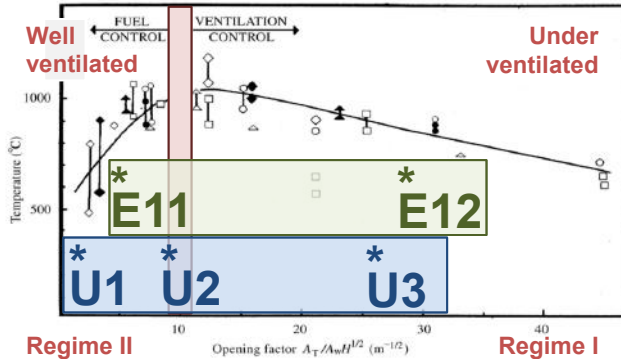
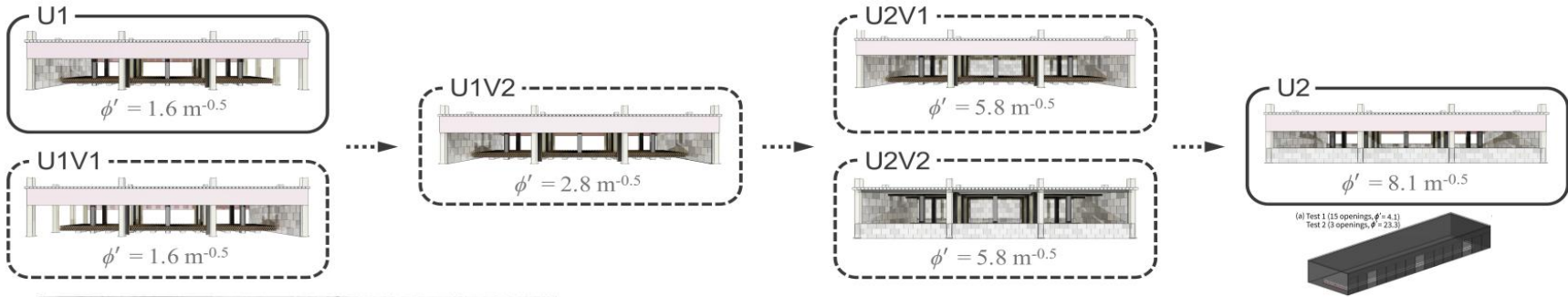
$$\dot{Q}_n^* = \dot{Q}^* - 2.67 H\theta_i,$$

where \dot{Q}^* is the gross heat transfer flux and H the cooling coefficient. Moreover, the fuller treatment can be used to calculate the theoretical value of R over the range of stick sizes between thick and thin fuels. The calculations express $R\rho_w c_w/H$ as a function of $H/K\sigma$ and $\dot{Q}^*/H\theta_i$ or any combination of these. Byram *et al.*'s experimental data (excluding those for which $\lambda < 0.8$ cm, which are referred to below), and those of Fons *et al.* are shown in Fig. 7. Both sets are for white fir (*Abies concolor*). The best value of $\dot{Q}^*/H\theta_i$ found by fitting a theoretical line through the data gives a value for \dot{Q}^* of about 6–8 W/cm² according to the choice of H . This value for the gross heat transfer is typical of radiation from a highly emissive burning zone at about 800° C.

Inverse Opening Factor

Smallest

Largest



ULSTER (TRAFIR)	IOF (m ^{-0.5})	ETFT (RFSDTB)	IOF (m ^{-0.5})
Well ventilated (U1)	1.6		
Transitional (U2)	8.1	ETFT unrestricted (E11)	5.0
Under ventilated (U3)	26.4	ETFT restricted (E12)	28.5

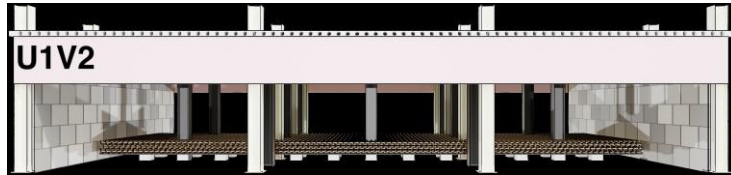
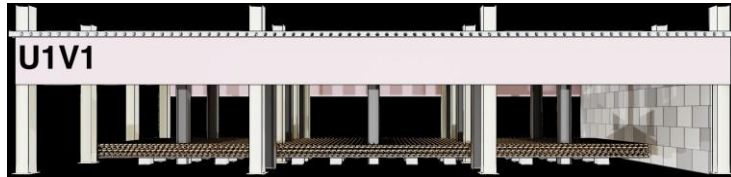
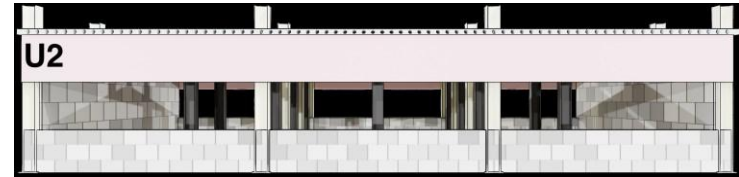
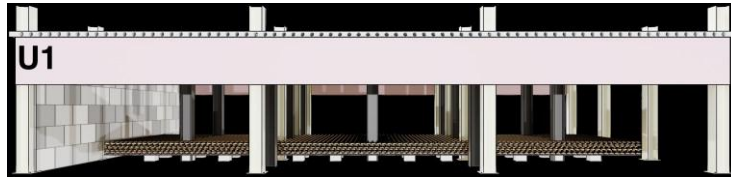






Fig 11 Parametric study on opening factors and areas extended from Ulster TRAFIR Tests 1 and 2 (U1, U2)

Variant	Opening area (m ²)	IOF (m ^{-0.5})	Parameter studied
U1	15x2x2 + 9x3 = 82.2	1.6	Baseline well ventilated
U1V1	82.2	1.6	End wall by fire/distant
U1V2	57.2	2.8	Two end walls
U2	15x1x2 = 30.0	8.1	Baseline transitional
U2V1	30.0	5.8	Full side wall/open wall
U2V2	30.0	5.8	Downstand v upstand
ETFT 11	17.8x1.5 = 24.8	5.0	Baseline well ventilated
ETFT 12	(3x1.1)x1.5 = 5.0	28.5	Baseline underventilated

Table 1. Summary of compartment configurations used for parametric studies.

Candidates for comparisons	Opening Area (A_o) [m ²]	Opening Factor (ϕ^*) [m ^{-0.5}]	Main Variables	Objectives
	82.2	1.6	Opening locations	The role of end walls
	82.2 (U1) 57.0 (U1V2)	1.6 (U1) 2.8 (U1V2)	Opening areas	The role of opening areas under well-ventilated conditions
	57.0 (U1V2) 30.0 (U2)	2.8 (U1V2) 8.1 (U2)	Opening areas	The role of opening areas
	30.0	8.1 (U2) 5.8 (U2V1)	Opening factors	The role of opening factors
	30.0	5.8	Downstand /upstand	The role of downstand and upstand

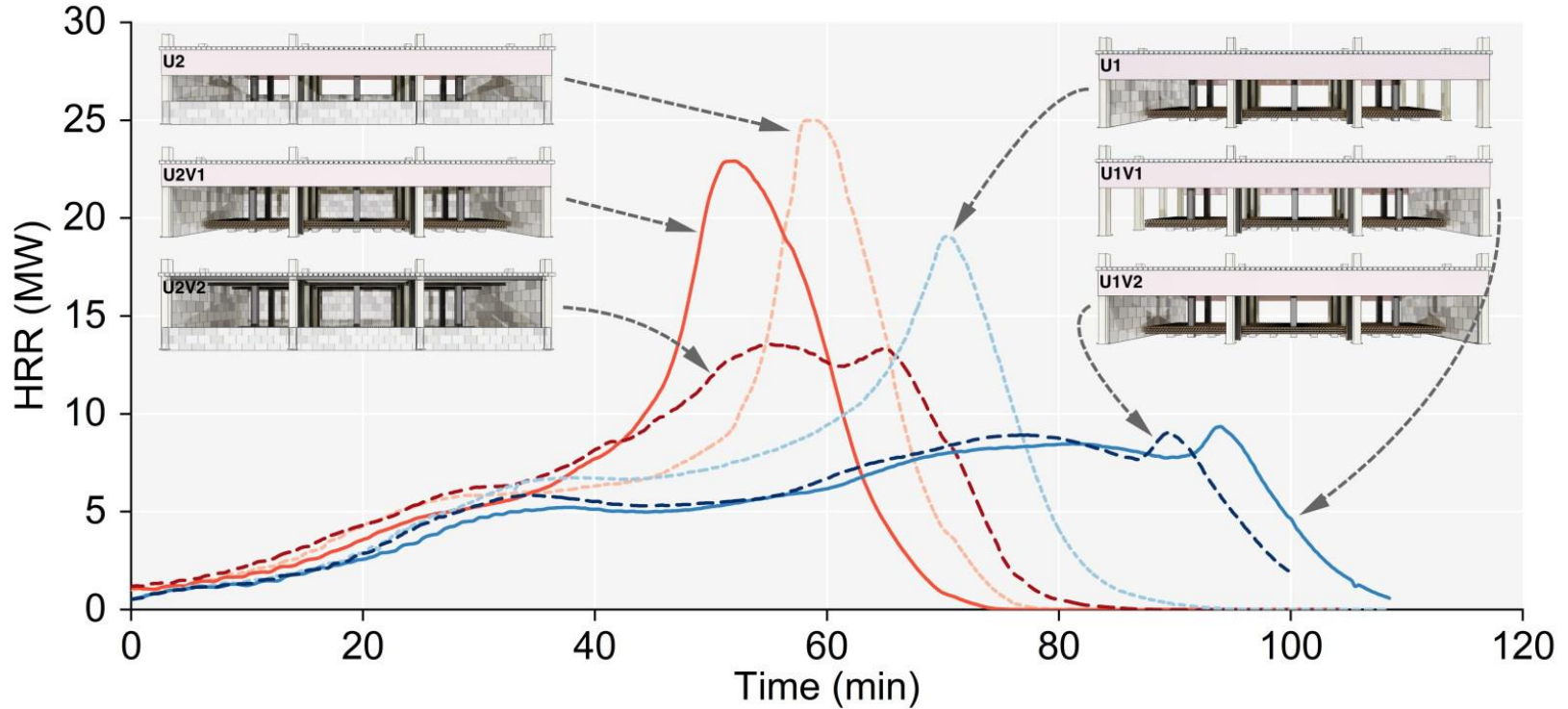


Fig 12 Comparison of heat release rate evolutions for 6 parametric study scenarios

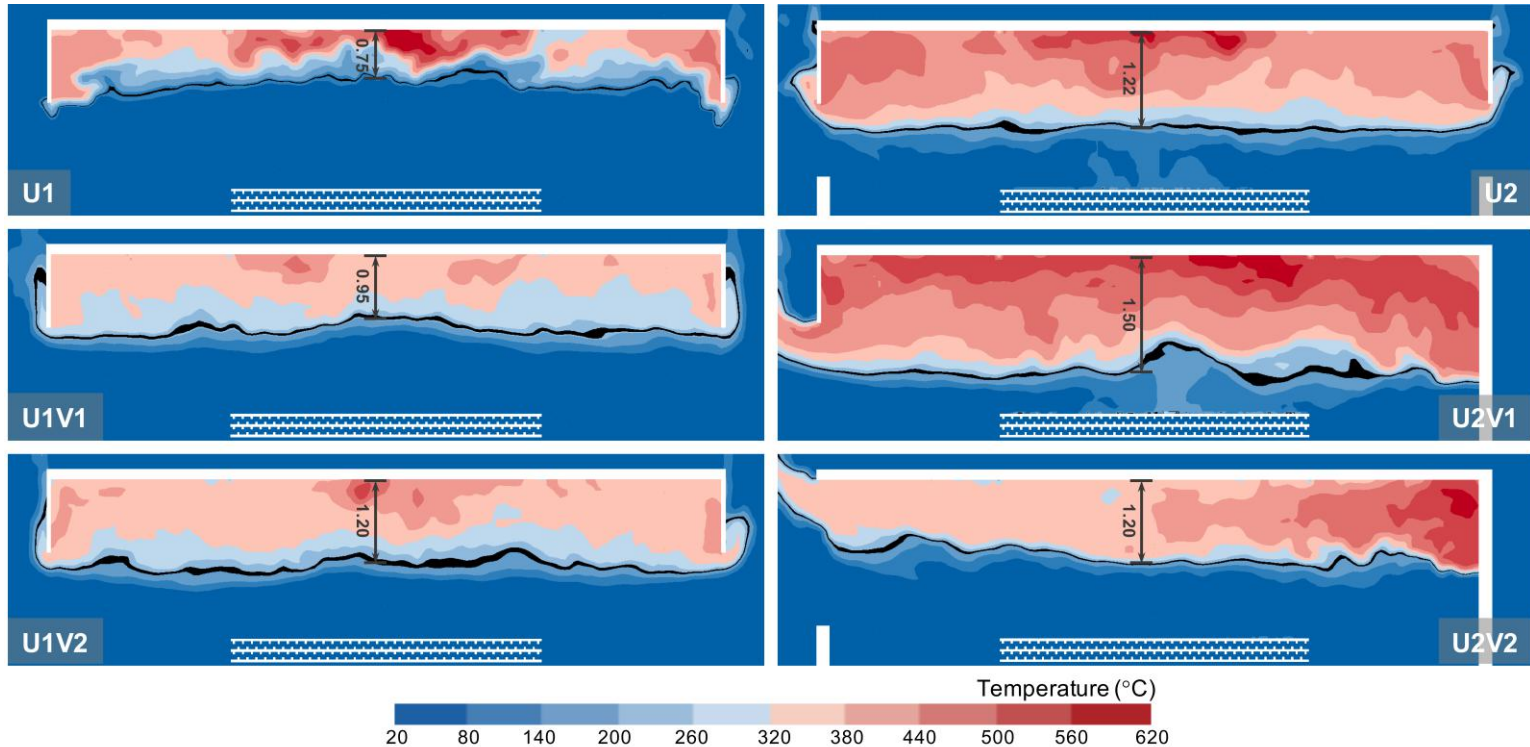


Fig 13 Comparison of “far field” smoke layer development (demarcated by 200°C contour) for 6 parametric study scenarios

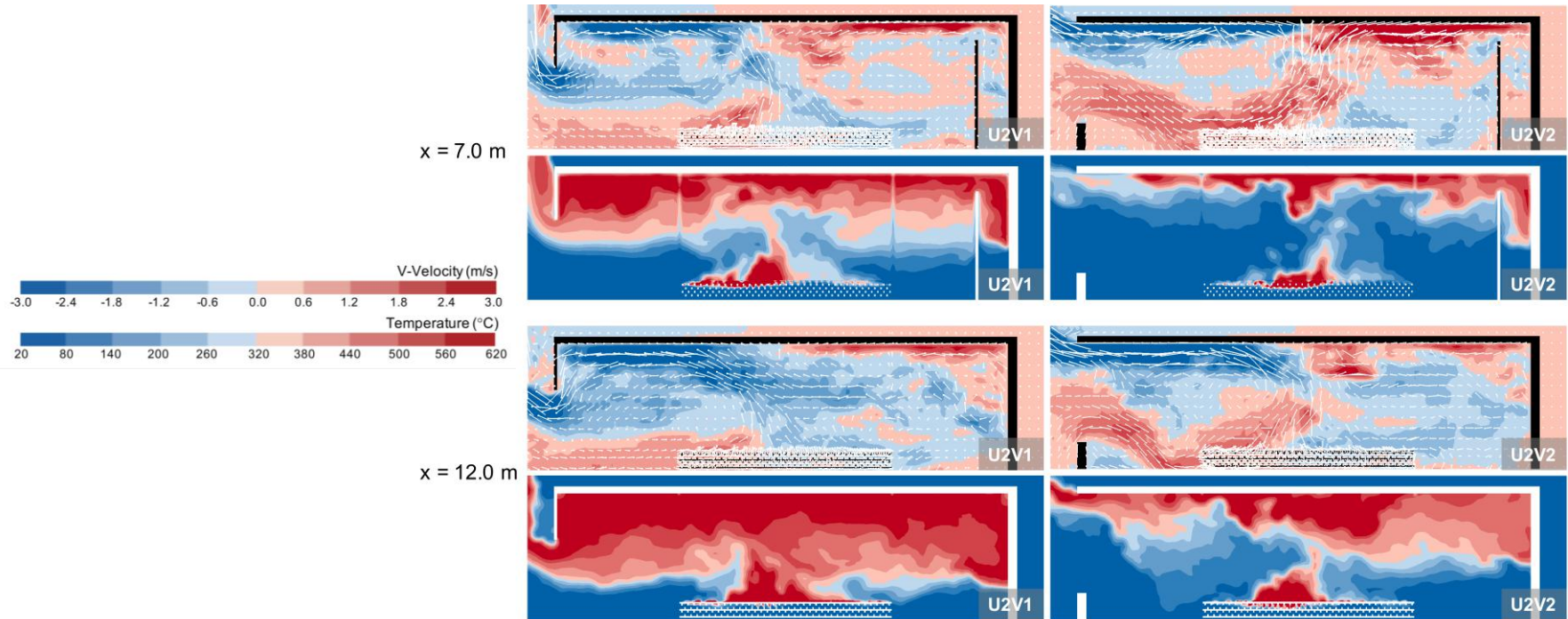


Fig 14 Comparison of “far field” smoke layer temperature and flow development for the U2 variants (downstand/upstand)

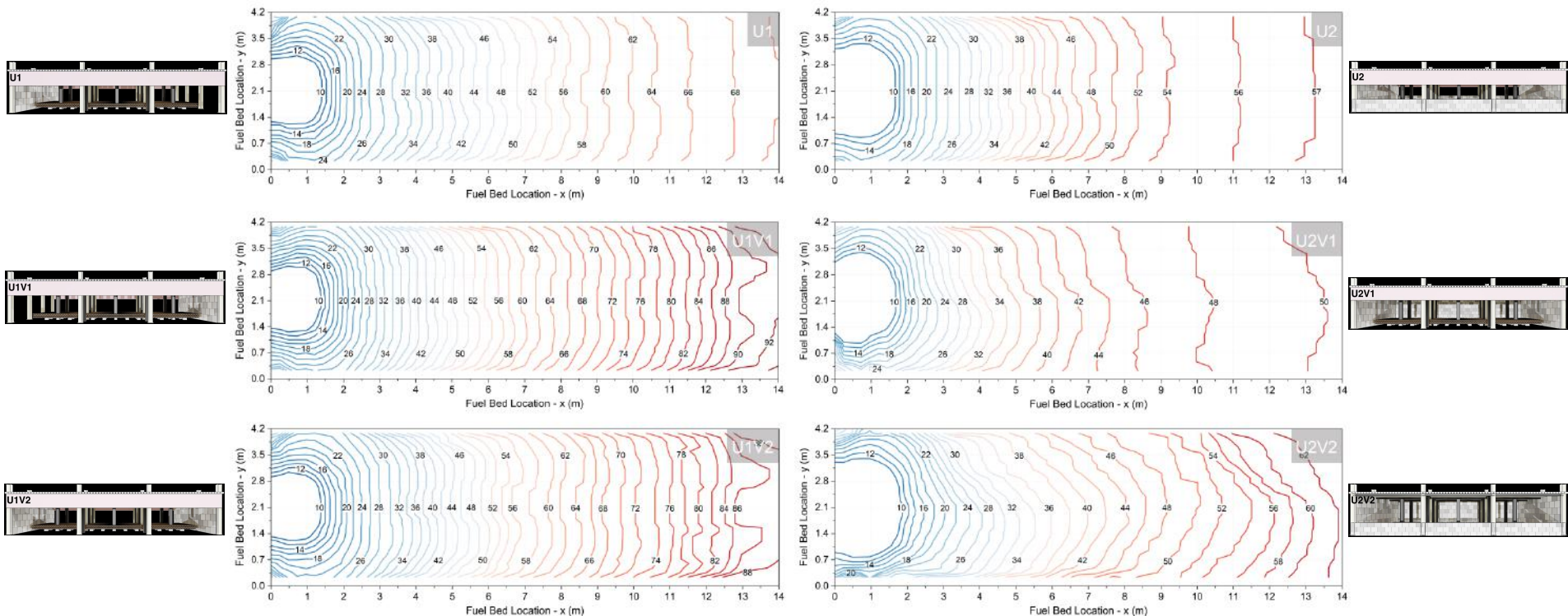


Fig 15 Comparison of fire progression (fire front contours) in plan for 6 parametric study scenarios

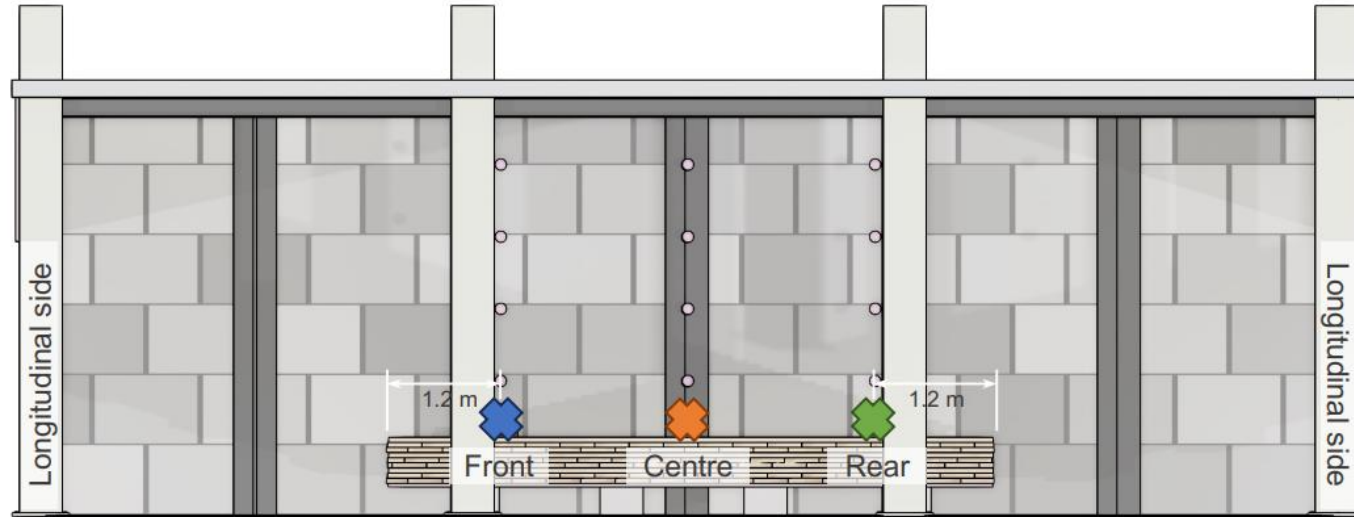


Fig 16 Locations of “front”, “centre” & “rear” longitudinal lines on fuel bed surface in right-side view of U1 compartment

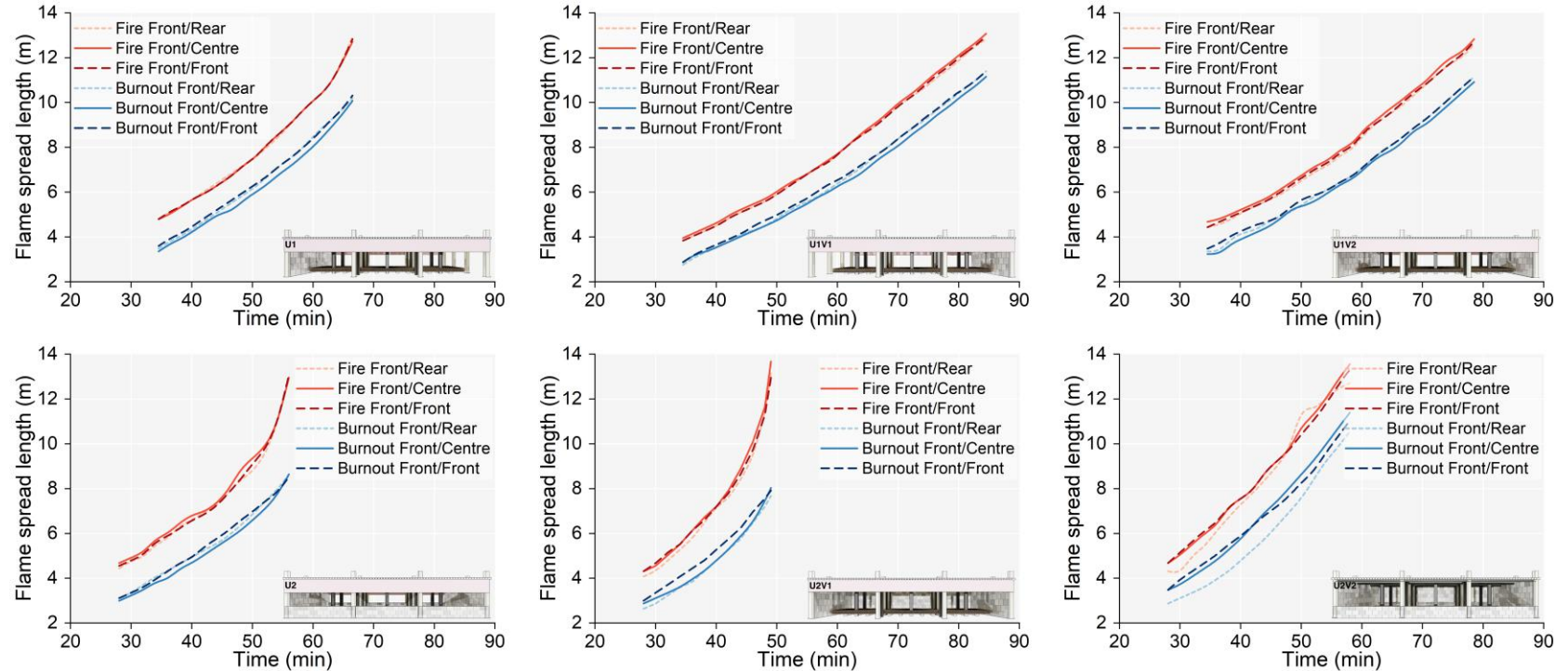


Fig 17 Comparison of fire progression (fire front/burnout front locations across depth) for 6 parametric study scenarios

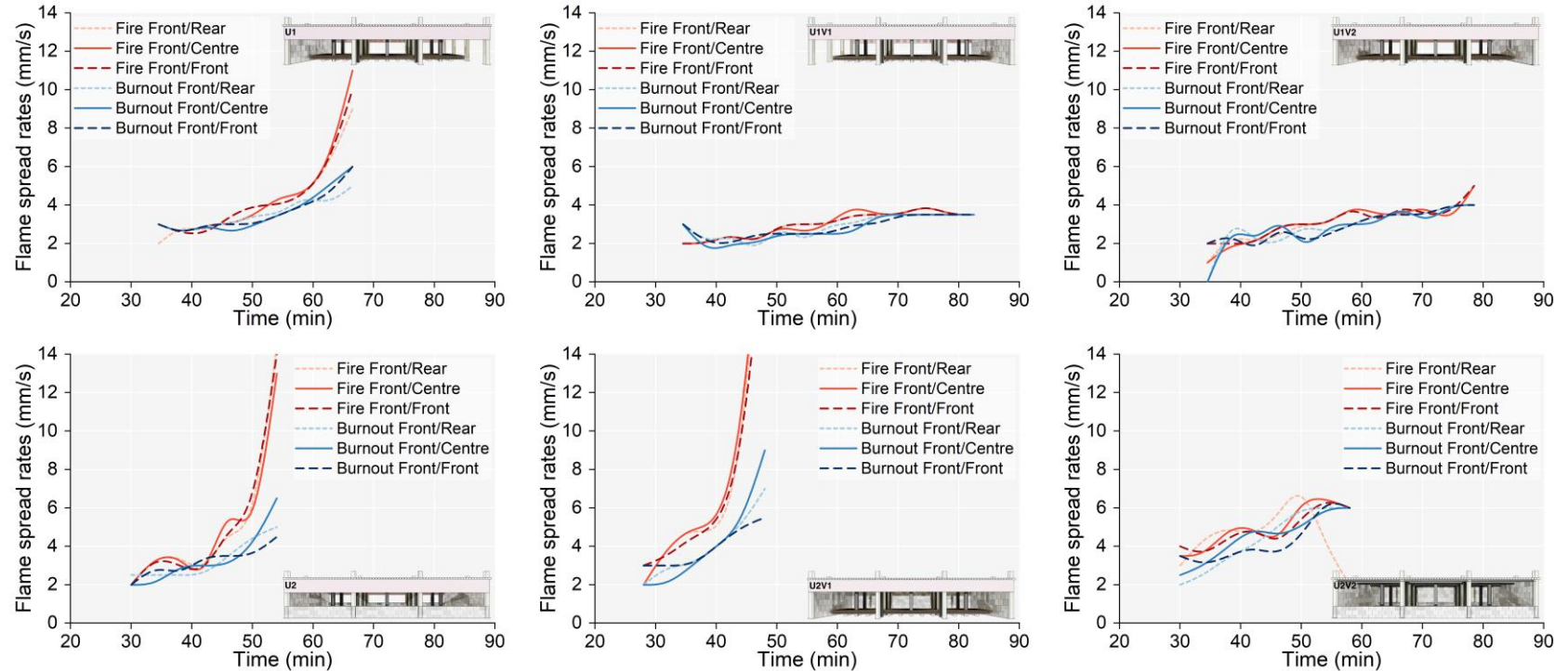


Fig 18 Comparison of fire progression rates (fire front/burnout front locations across depth) for 6 parametric study scenarios

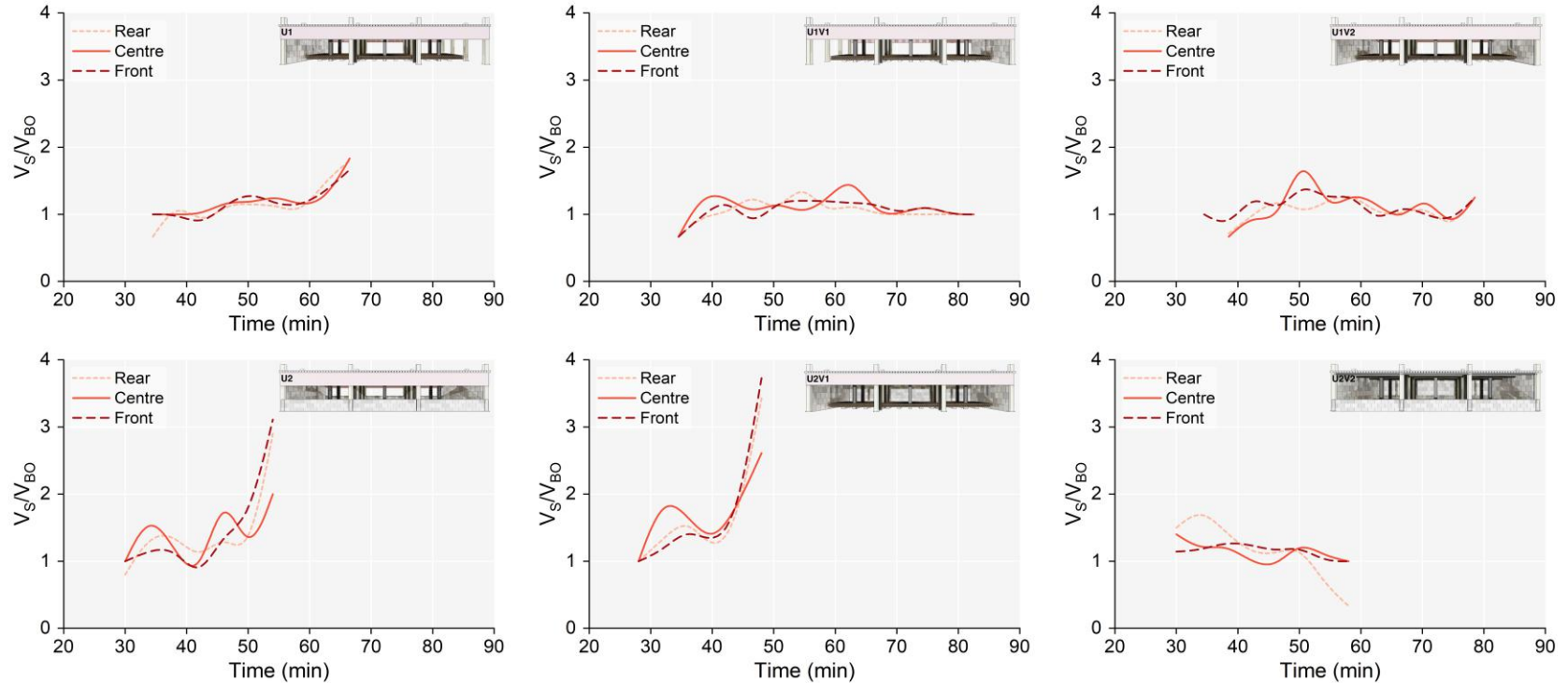


Fig 19 Comparison of fire spread velocity ratios fire (V_s front/ V_{bo} burnout front) for 6 parametric study scenarios

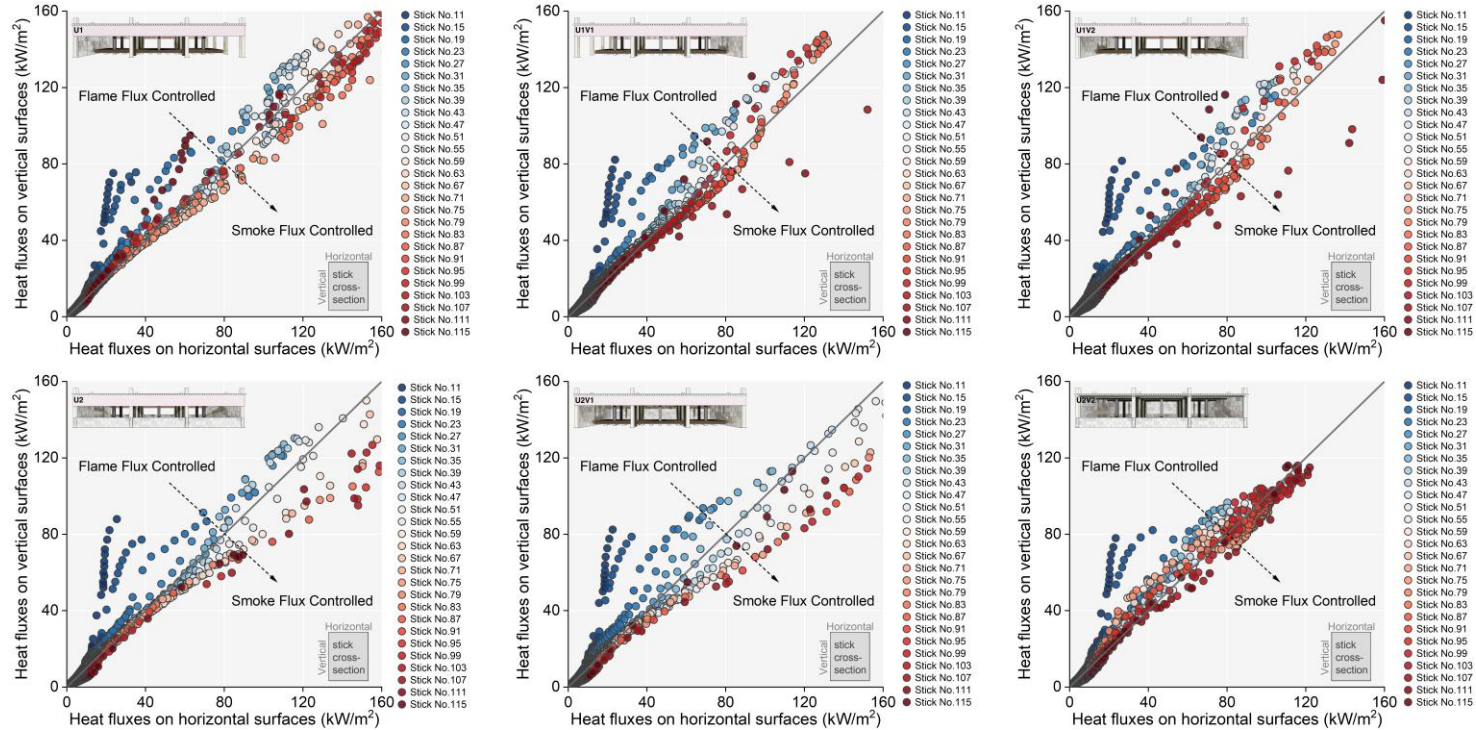


Fig 20 Comparison of heat flux ratios (vertical v horizontal) for 6 parametric study scenarios



(a) Fig 21 Comparisons of fire spread between test and model at compartment centreline along fire trajectory every 10 mins: **(b)**
a) Ulster TRAFIR test 1 (well ventilated IOF=1.6 m^{-0.5}) b) Ulster TRAFIR test 2 (transitional IOF=8.1 m^{-0.5})



Fig 22 Comparisons of fire spread between test and model at Ulster compartment centreline at 50 mins: a) test 1 b) test 2

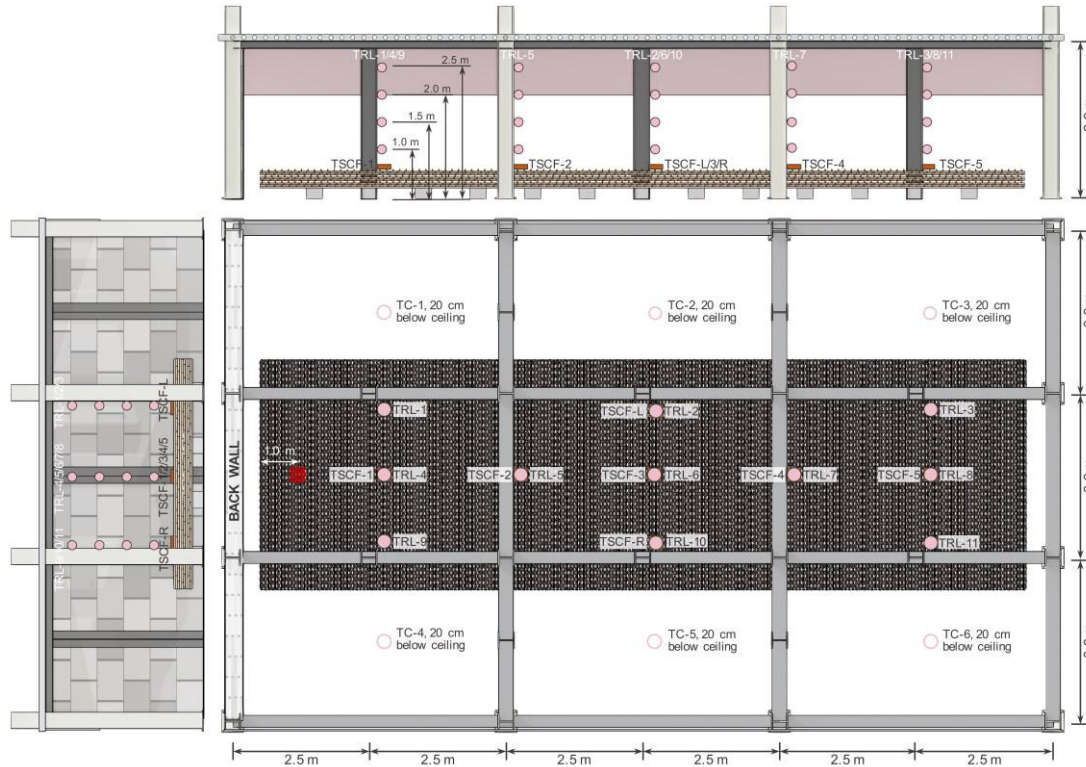


Fig 23 Instrumentation positions implemented in Ulster test and model:

a) position of thermocouple trees (TRLs) in elevation view;

b) position of thermocouples (TCs and TRLs) and Thin-Skin Calorimeters (TSCs) in plan view (TSCs were all placed on top of fuel bed level, TC 1-6 were placed 20 cm below ceiling, TRL 1-11 are thermocouple trees placed directly above the wood cribs, igniter is shown as red square 1 m away from back wall)

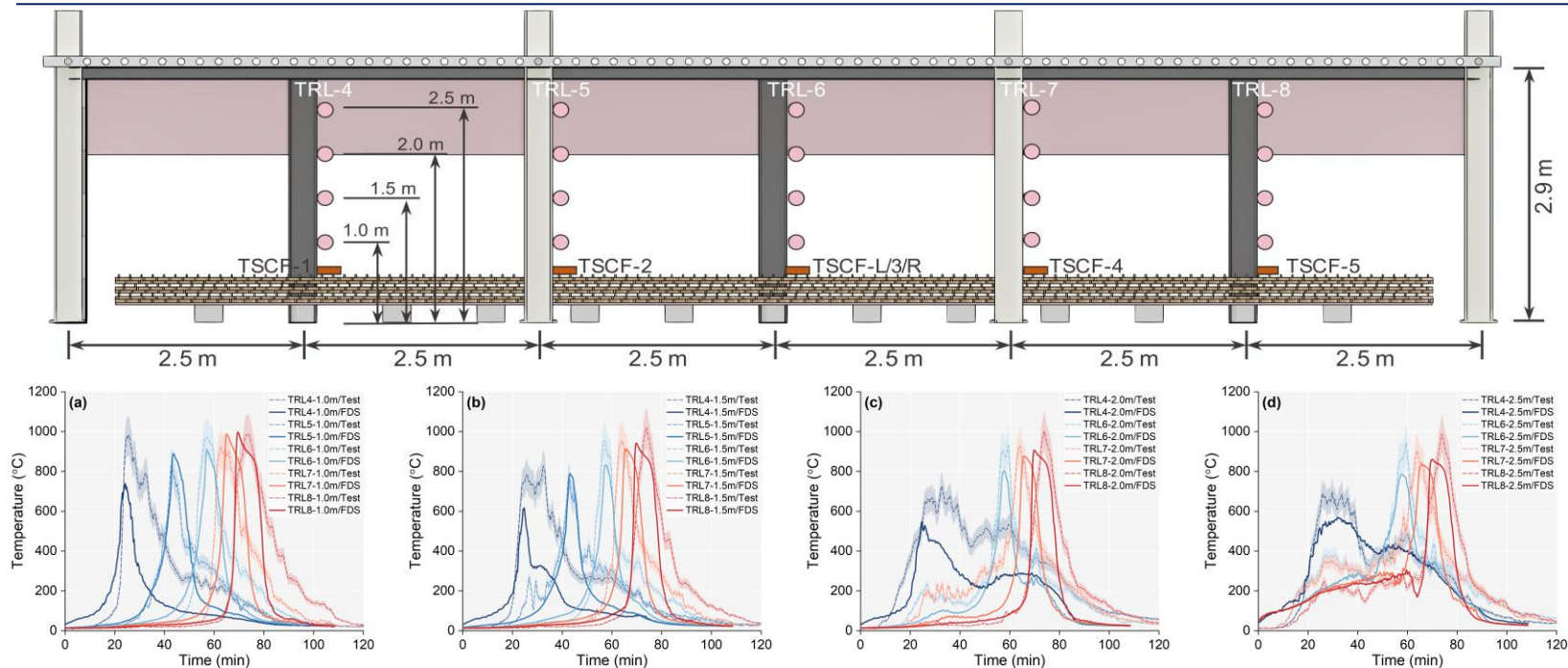


Fig 24 Ulster **Test 1**: Comparison of thermocouple temperatures at compartment centreline along fire trajectory, TRL 4-8 (NB TRL5-2.0 m and 2.5 m malfunctioned due to overheating during data acquisition)

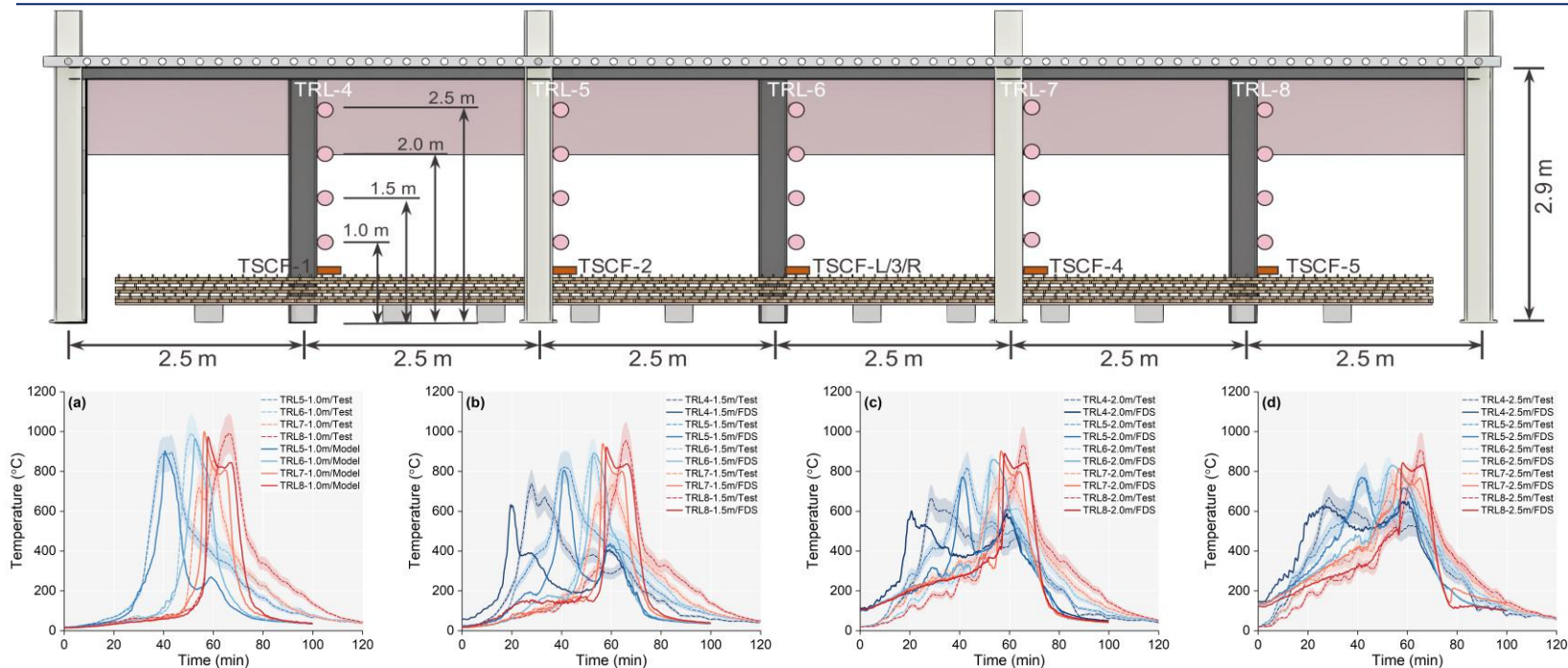


Fig 25 Ulster **Test 2**: Comparison of thermocouple temperatures at compartment centreline along fire trajectory, TRL 4-8

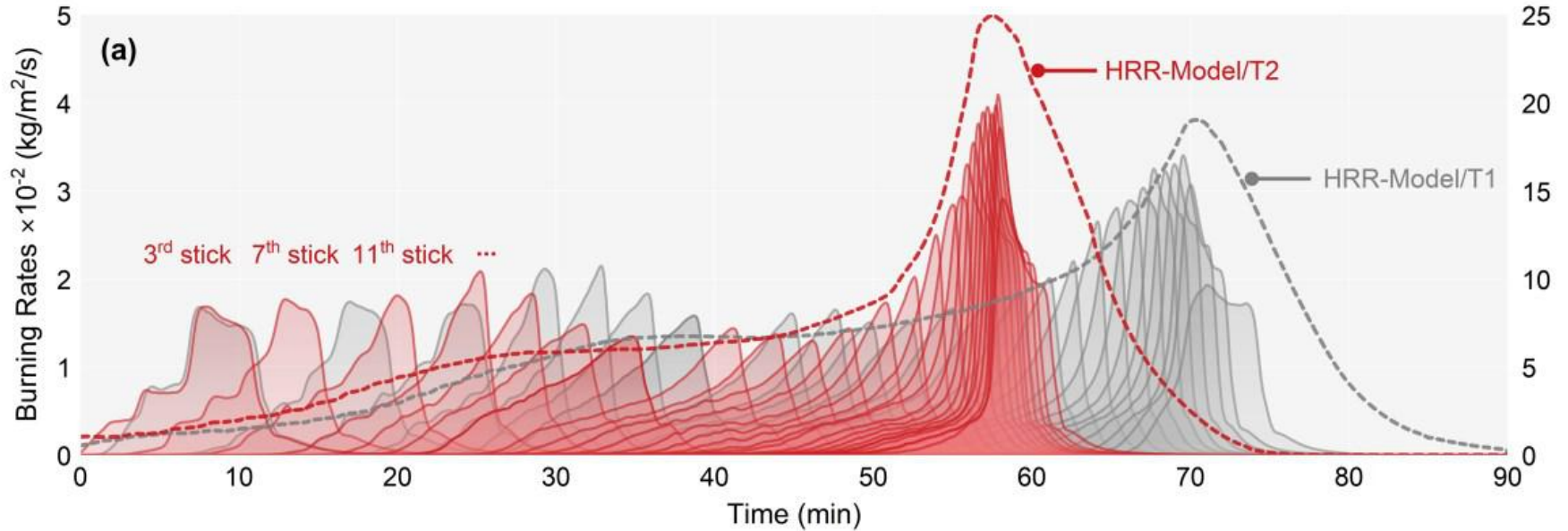


Fig 26 HRR evolution and instantaneous burning rates every 4 sticks along compartment centreline on fuel bed top layer

Conclusions (1)

- > Building on previous work which has demonstrated the possibility of **applying a detailed pyrolysis model** to predict fire spread at both lab- and compartment-scales, via a numerical simulator that provides enhanced representations of wood cribs fuel bed geometry on a detailed “**stick-by-stick**” basis and integrates **condensed-phase pyrolysis processes via multiple parallel reaction pathways**.
- > Compared to approaches which consider fire spread primarily in terms of ignition to a new fuel surface, results **relate burning rates to the local fire environment** to gain better understanding of the drivers of fire spread.
- > “Numerical simulator” **gives insights into fire science phenomena:**
 - a) Captures **progression of ignition and burning rates** on each surface of each wood stick
 - b) Demonstrates evolving fuel surface boundary condition arising from **fire plume and hot smoke layer** above it
 - c) Demonstrates evolution of **surface and in-depth burning** within crib as fire progresses in different regimes
- > Validation extends to inversion opening factor range 1.6 to 8.1 m^{-0.5}, within the fuel-controlled regime; this opens up new avenues for **performing experiments virtually** within a similar range, enabling the exploration of fire dynamics in ways that would be **impossible or impractical to address through physical tests alone**.

Conclusions (2)

- > Parametric studies in the well-ventilated regime clarifies factors influencing **fire spread and thermal severities**:
- a) **restriction of ventilation tends to supports heat retention** and enhances fire spread via pre-heating, resulting in more rapid transition to growing and greater thermal severities;
 - b) **proximity of initial fire to solid boundaries supports more rapid spread** away from igniter;
 - c) by contrast, **burning in vicinity of solid boundaries tends to be suppressed** due to lack of oxygen;
 - d) **arrangement of openings can have a big impact on fire development** due to differences in smoke layer evolution;
 - e) an extreme example is replacing a downstand with an upstand, and consequent reduced thermal severities;
 - f) **complex trade offs between layer depth and energy release rates** via local limits on oxygen

Hence an overall recognition that:

- **opening factors and/or areas on their own are poor determinants** of fire spread drivers (Thomas said!)
- **a clear gain associated with CFD-based numerical simulators**
 - detailed exploration of fire behaviours, potential for **unravelling fire spread mechanisms**
 - see our Interflam and forthcoming IAFSS papers...

Limitations and further work

- > Further study needed of model predictions for **more enclosed scenarios** (higher inverse opening factors):
 - a) higher sensitivity to uncertain thermal properties of compartment linings;
 - b) **extinction models are required for underventilated conditions** and remain highly uncertain;
 - c) **soot yields rise strongly when underventilated** and FDS uses a conserved scalar which will be unrepresentative.
- > All of the same considerations apply for applications with **timber-lined compartments**:
 - a) prediction of time to ignition might be possible using the same detailed pyrolysis model, and variants for other woods;
 - b) the subsequent enhanced heat release rates typically lead directly to the conditions mentioned above;
 - c) **great care needed in exercising such models, and challenges in “validation” given the complexities**;
 - d) moreover, the inability to represent the heat transfer from glowing embers becomes a more dominant issue.
- > **Ultimately provide input to analytical models for structural fire engineering**:
 - a) parallel research stream on sensitivities of structural performance;
 - b) significance of concrete/composite slab on structural fire performance

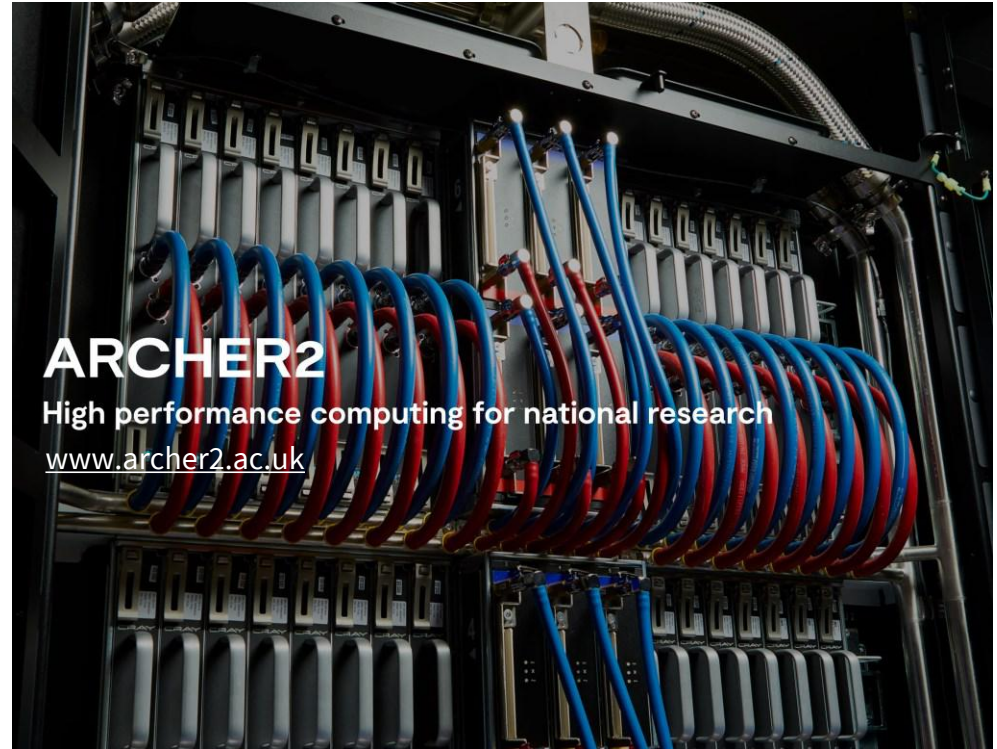
(Dr Xu Dai @Uni Liverpool, Dr Zhuojun Nan @TU Delft, etc.)

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ARCHER2 

This work used ARCHER2 via EPSRC Access to HPC

- > Earlier work UKCTRF <https://www.ukctrf.com/>
- > UK National Supercomputing Service
- > UK's **most powerful** supercomputer
- > Peak performance **28 PFLOP/s**
- > Equalling **250,000** modern laptops
- > **5,860** compute nodes
- > **748,544** CPU cores (128 cores per node)
- > Housed @ **EPCC**



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Cirrus 
Powered by epcc

This work used Cirrus UK National Tier-2 HPC Service via
Scottish Academics Access scheme

- > UKRI's EPSRC Tier-2 HPC
- > **368** high-mem compute nodes
- > **13,250** CPU cores (36 cores per node)
- > **4** Nvidia Tesla V100-SXM2-16GB GPUs
- > Housed @ EPCC
- > Funded by UKRI's EPSRC



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Characterisation of TRAvelling FIRes in large compartments

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(1/07/2017 → 31/12/2020)

> Testing

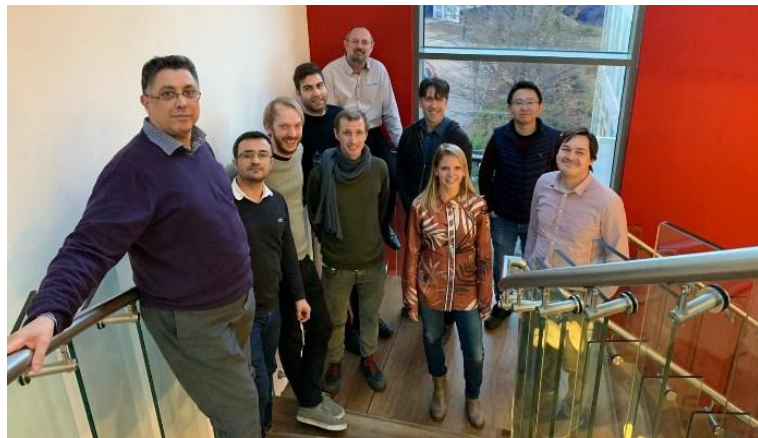
Isolated elements & simplified fire progression, full-scale large compartment

> Modelling

Simplified analytical/phenomenological models and CFD

<https://www.researchgate.net/project/TRAFIR-Characterization-of-TRAvelling-FIRes-in-large-compartments>

Project partners:



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Q&A

