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# Investigation of cavitation and air entrainment during pilot injection in real-size multi-hole diesel nozzles

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## Abstract

This paper investigates the complex multiphase flow developing inside the micro-orifices of diesel injector nozzles during pilot injection. High speed micro-visualisations of a transparent serial production nozzle tip replica are used to record the multiphase flow inside the flow orifices as well as near-nozzle spray development. The physical processes taking place are explained with the aid of a three-phase homogeneous mixture model utilized in the context of Large Eddy Simulations. Phase-change due to cavitation is modelled with a Rayleigh-Plesset equation based model, while compressibility of all the phases is considered. Numerical simulations shed light on the interaction between the vortex flow, liquid inertia and cavitation formation that take place simultaneously with air entrainment from the surrounding environment into the injector's sac volume during the injection and the dwell

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time between successive injections. The experimentally observed flow phenomena are well captured by the simulation during all injection phases. In particular the compression of pre-existing air bubbles inside the injector's sac volume during the injector opening, cavitation vapor condensation and air suction after the needle closure are well reproduced.

*Keywords:* LES, Multiphase flow, Cavitation, Fuel Injection, Realistic nozzle tip visualisation

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## 1. Introduction

New European Real Driving Emission (RDE) driving cycle legislations require significant research efforts to develop emission compliant and efficient passenger car engines [1]. In this context, the so-called digital injection schemes, used to split the fuel injection into multiple small injections with close separation among them, are widely applied in modern diesel engines in order to obtain simultaneous reductions in noise and emissions without compromising engine performance and fuel consumption [2, 3]. Although the nozzle flow for static needle lift conditions has been extensively investigated (see selectively [4, 5, 6, 7]), not much work is available for the flow development during the dynamic operation of the injector, which plays a key influence on emissions [8, 9].

The digital injection schemes are often operated with fast injector needle opening and closing and with very small separation between injections; with typical dwell time of the order of  $50\mu s$ . This results in highly transient flow

## Nomenclature

$\alpha_{air}$	air volume fraction	[-]	$D$	injection hole diameter	[m]
$\alpha_{liq}$	liquid fuel volume fraction	[-]	$E$	total energy	[J/kg]
$\alpha_{nuc}$	nuclei content	[-]	$F_{vap}, F_{cond}$	empirical constants	[ $m^{-1}$ ]
$\alpha_{vap}$	vapor fuel volume fraction	[-]	$p$	pressure field	[Pa]
$\mathbf{v}$	velocity field	[m/s]	$R$	gas constant	[J/kg/K]
$\lambda_g$	Taylor length scale	[m]	$R_b$	bubble radius	[m]
$\mu$	viscosity	[Pa s]	$R_e, R_c$	evaporation/condensation rate	[ $kg/m^3/s$ ]
$\mu_t$	turbulent viscosity	[Pa s]	$Re$	Reynolds number	[-]
$\rho$	density	[ $kg/m^3$ ]	$T$	temperature	[K]
$\rho_{vap}, \rho_{air}$	vapour/air density	[ $kg/m^3$ ]	$y^+$	non-dimensional wall distance	[-]
$\sigma$	viscous stress tensor	[Pa]			
$\tau_t$	turbulent stresses	[Pa]			

16 and formation of massive cavitation inside the injection nozzle. In addition,  
 17 modern diesel engines are operated under high injection pressure ( $> 2500bar$ )  
 18 and utilise injectors with small injection hole diameters ( $90 - 120\mu m$ ); these  
 19 conditions pose significant difficulties in measuring and/or optically visual-  
 20 ising the processes occurring in both the injector nozzle and within the high  
 21 temperature combustion chamber. The majority of transparent real-size noz-  
 22 zle investigations featuring simplified single-hole geometries that generally  
 23 confirm the presence of geometric-induced cavitation [10, 11, 12]. The work  
 24 of [13, 14, 15], and the relevant early modelling work [16] were the first to

25 substitute one of the holes of a production nozzle with a quartz window of  
26 identical geometric characteristics and was an experimental breakthrough  
27 that provided valuable information on flow and cavitation structures inside  
28 such micro-channels under realistic operating conditions; further studies were  
29 reported in [17]. A step forward was realised in [18], where a 3-hole, real-  
30 size, fully transparent nozzle allowed for unobstructed optical access inside  
31 the sac volume. Vortex cavitation is dramatically enhanced by vapour or air  
32 already present inside the nozzle volume [19]. Moreover, [20] showed that  
33 the structure of a vortex core is significantly affected by entrained vapour  
34 bubbles. Similarly, [21] demonstrated possible fragmentation of the vortex  
35 core so as to increase the vorticity at the core centre. Finally, the strong in-  
36 teraction observed between vortex properties and bubble dynamics[22], the  
37 coupling of radial and axial growth of bubbles trapped in vortices [23] and  
38 the interaction between shear (or normal strain) flow and bubble volume  
39 change [24] form a tremendously complex flow field inside an injector noz-  
40 zle, where dynamic changes in the behaviour of vortices and vapour bubbles  
41 strongly affect the emerging fuel spray. Highly transient flow phenomena  
42 caused by the fast needle response times, give rise to formation of vortical  
43 structures and therefore, to string cavitation [25]. Transient effects have also  
44 been correlated to increased probability of surface erosion damage, which  
45 is attributed to both, geometric and string cavitation [26]. Cavitation in  
46 simplified nozzle replicas has been visualized even at pressures as high as  
47 2000bar, as shown in [27, 28]. Remarkably, in very recent studies, sonolu-

48 minescence from cavitation collapse observed in a simplified nozzle replica  
49 has been observed for the first time[29] and a neutron imaging technique has  
50 been developed overcoming the disadvantages of using materials transparent  
51 to visible light[30]. All aforementioned studies report data from one or just a  
52 few injection events. The group of the authors has reported in [31, 32, 33]] for  
53 the first time ensemble averaged images of cavitation developing in a real-size  
54 6-hole transparent tip nozzle for single and pilot-main split injections up to  
55 400bar. Data from these investigations are further reported here and utilized  
56 for validation of the newly developed models. Only the very recent work of  
57 [34] has extended the range of operating conditions (injection pressures up  
58 to 1000bar and back pressures up to 30bar) and geometrical features studied  
59 (hydro erosively ground inlet orifice) for long injections.

60     Given the limited information around the flow structure inside diesel  
61 injectors, fuel injection equipment manufacturers require robust predictive  
62 Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) tools, in order to understand the  
63 physical mechanisms taking place during injection. From a physical view-  
64 point, modelling of such flow conditions requires the fluid compressibility  
65 [35], mass transfer (cavitation, flash boiling, evaporation etc.) and heat  
66 transfer [36, 37, 38] to be taken into account, which increase the complexity  
67 as well as the computational cost of the simulations. Additionally, the fluid  
68 dynamic processes occur at high Reynolds number and therefore accounting  
69 for the effect of turbulence structures and vortex dynamics, is key in explain-  
70 ing how the spray is formed [39, 40, 41, 42]; this can only be resolved using

71 very fine computational grids and scale resolving simulations such as Large  
72 Eddy Simulation (LES).

73     Recent LES including dynamic needle movement for the in-nozzle flow  
74 includes the work of Battistoni et al. [43] who simulated the start and end  
75 of injection for single hole nozzle using the cut cell cartesian method for  
76 modelling the boundary movement and a homogeneous relaxation model for  
77 cavitation phenomena. The work concludes that URANS predictions for the  
78 residual liquid back flow occur without fragmentation, while in LES liquid  
79 breaks up generating complex three dimensional structures. The URANS ap-  
80 proach predicted at the end of the injection an annular void region stemming  
81 from the needle seat, which then re-condenses as the pressure is recovered.  
82 This was not observed in LES, where regions of low pressure are produced  
83 even in areas detached from the needle seat. The predicted near spray region  
84 was also different as no ligaments were formed in URANS; instead diffusion  
85 disperses the liquid in the surrounding air even if integral values like sac  
86 pressure and liquid volume fraction were not greatly affected. Ligament for-  
87 mation and gas ingestion into the nozzle at the end of injection are predicted,  
88 as observed experimentally in Phase Contrast X-ray images (for additional  
89 Phase Contrast X-ray studies see for example [9, 44]). The start-of-injection  
90 simulation shows how gas is ejected first, and liquid fuel starts being in-  
91 jected with a delay. The main result of these analyses is that if the sac is  
92 initially filled with gas, the liquid exit is delayed several tens of  $\mu s$  after the  
93 start of needle movement, which is in good agreement with the experimen-

94 tal evidence. This delay is of the order of  $100\mu s$ , and it is compatible with  
95 the duration of the first slow rising part of the needle movement. Orley et  
96 al. [45] used the cut cell cartesian method to simulate with implicit LES, a  
97 barotropic homogeneous equilibrium model for cavitation and a fully com-  
98 pressible 3-phase flow model a complete 9-hole diesel injector. The focus of  
99 the work was on the vortical development of the flow and the assessment  
100 of erosion sensitive areas during the operation of the injector. After the in-  
101 jector closing, strong collapse events of vapor structures in the needle seat  
102 and the sac hole cause the formation of violent shock waves. The authors  
103 highlighted that a fully compressible description of the flow is essential to  
104 capture such phenomena. It was also concluded that despite steady needle  
105 simulations capturing the main flow features reasonably well, vapor creation  
106 during the closing phase of the needle valve requires information on the pre-  
107 viously developed flow; thus, reliable prediction of erosion-sensitive areas  
108 due to collapse events during and after the closing of the needle can only  
109 be predicted accurately by including the unsteady needle motion. Finally  
110 the work of Koukouvinis et al. [35] used a 2-phase dynamic needle approach  
111 based on a combination of layering and stretching algorithms together with  
112 a Rayleigh-Plesset based cavitation model with increased mass transfer, to  
113 compute the opening phase of two different injector designs; the findings  
114 have correlated the pressure peaks in the domain with areas that suffer from  
115 erosion. Whichever the chosen modelling approach may have been, previous  
116 studies have lacked validation [45], had indirect validation [35] or were not of

117 direct relevance to modern applications [43], since a single hole nozzle lacks  
118 the complex sac recirculation flow present in modern diesel injectors.

119 The current work, to the best of the authors knowledge, presents for  
120 the first time a successful 3-phase LES of a diesel pilot injection including  
121 the compressibility of the phases, cavitation effects and the needle valve  
122 movement of a real size 6 hole nozzle for which validation is performed against  
123 transparent nozzle tip visualisations. The need to employ LES derives from  
124 the need to predict the complex vortical flow and liquid structures inside the  
125 sac during and after injection; moreover, and as it is shown, replicating the  
126 observed phenomena requires the inclusion of compressibility effects.

127 The present paper is structured in the following way: first an overview  
128 on the experimental results is given for a diesel pilot injection visualization  
129 of a transparent nozzle tip. Then the numerical methodology employed is  
130 described in detail, followed by the comparison of the CFD results with the  
131 transparent nozzle visualisations for which good agreement is obtained and  
132 interpretation of the observed phenomena is provided.

## 133 **2. Experimentally observed multiphase phenomena**

134 The development of the 3-phase simulation methodology has been vali-  
135 dated against high speed visualisations of a transparent Delphi Technologies  
136 Diesel 6-hole nozzle tip manufactured by City, University of London. The  
137 metallic injector nozzle tip was substituted with a transparent acrylic tip.  
138 The design is a standard serial production geometry, i.e not just a multi-hole

139 nozzle, but a fully operational, serial production type. The detailed results  
140 and findings of that experimental campaign as well as the setup details were  
141 reported in [31, 32, 33] and will not be repeated here. The 6-hole transparent  
142 tip has holes with no taper (zero conicity) and a nominal diameter ( $D$ ) of  
143  $160\mu m$ . The electrical pulse activation width for a pilot injection was  $0.5ms$ .  
144 High speed cameras recorded the events at a frame rate of  $30000fps$ . An  
145 example of a pilot injection for a rail pressure of  $300bar$  into atmospheric  
146 conditions can be found in Figure 1. Given the image acquisition rate, the  
147 pilot injection including all major events after closing lasts for 24 frames.  
148 As discussed in [32, 33] air trapped in the sac after the end of the injection  
149 aggregates forming bubbles in the sac and occupying part of the hole. Prior  
150 to  $233.33\mu s$  after the electrical trigger, no change is observed and therefore  
151 images are not shown. Then the trapped bubble shows slight expansion due  
152 to the initial volume created by the needle as it starts lifting ( $300\mu s$  after  
153 the trigger) and subsequent compression ( $400\mu s$  after the trigger) highlight-  
154 ing the need to model air compressibility. This is followed by void coming  
155 from the seat passage and its advection into the hole ( $500\mu s$  after the trigger).  
156 Then, due to flow acceleration at the hole entrance, void structures are seen in  
157 the hole during the opening phase ( $600\mu s$  after the trigger). During the nee-  
158 dle closing phase, vapour increases substantially in the hole and void coming  
159 from the seat reappears ( $633.33\mu s$  after trigger). At the end of the injection,  
160 the sac gets full with bubbles and the spray greatly weakens ( $733.33\mu s$  after  
161 the trigger), followed by what seems to be air suction ( $766.66\mu s$  after the



Figure 1: Experimental results. Time sequence of a pilot injection transparent nozzle tip visualisation.

162 trigger). Finally, a bubbly mixture is observed floating in the sac as well as  
 163 an oscillatory movement of the air in the hole ( $1000\mu s$  after the trigger). An  
 164 important input for nozzle flow moving needle simulations is the needle lift  
 165 profile which was extracted from the images [31, 32, 33].

### 166 3. Modelling approach

167 The simulations are computed using the commercial CFD code ANSYS  
168 Fluent [46]. The nozzle flow is solved using a homogeneous, three-phase  
169 mixture model (liquid fuel, vapour fuel and air) where all phases share same  
170 velocity, pressure and temperature. The code is supplemented with user  
171 defined functions (UDFs) for implementation of the thermo-hydraulic prop-  
172 erties of diesel and the needle movement.

#### 173 3.1. Multiphase model

174 The properties appearing in the transport equations are determined by  
175 the presence of the component phases in each control volume. Defining  $\alpha_{liq}$ ,  
176  $\alpha_{vap}$ ,  $\alpha_{air}$  as the volume fraction of liquid fuel, air and vapour fuel in a cell,  
177 respectively, the density in each cell is given by:  $\rho = \alpha_{liq}\rho_{liq} + \alpha_{vap}\rho_{vap} +$   
178  $\alpha_{air}\rho_{air}$ .

179 All other properties (e.g. viscosity) are computed in this manner. Ob-  
180 viously, the volume constraint  $\alpha_{liq} + \alpha_{air} + \alpha_{vap} = 1$ , in each cell must be  
181 respected. The solved equations consist of the continuity, momentum and  
182 energy of the mixture, and the mass conservation equations for the vapor  
183 and the air:

$$\frac{\partial \rho}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot (\rho \mathbf{v}) = 0 \quad (1)$$

$$\frac{\partial \rho \mathbf{v}}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot (\rho \mathbf{v} \mathbf{v}) = -\nabla p + \nabla \cdot \sigma \quad (2)$$

$$\frac{\partial \rho E}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot (\mathbf{v}(\rho E + p)) = \nabla \cdot (k_{eff} \nabla T) + \sigma \cdot \mathbf{v} \quad (3)$$

$$\frac{\partial \alpha_{vap} \rho_{vap}}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot (\alpha_{vap} \rho_{vap} \mathbf{v}) = R_e - R_c \quad (4)$$

$$\frac{\partial \alpha_{air} \rho_{air}}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot (\alpha_{air} \rho_{air} \mathbf{v}) = 0 \quad (5)$$

184 The source terms  $R_e$  and  $R_c$  represent the mass transfer between liquid  
 185 and vapour phase due to cavitation. The effective viscous stress tensor is  
 186 defined as  $\sigma = \tau + \tau_t = \mu(\nabla v + (\nabla v)^T) + \tau_t$ ,

187 where  $\mu$  is the viscosity of the mixture and  $\tau_t$  are the turbulent stresses  
 188 defined per the turbulence model being used. The energy is computed as the  
 189 mass average for each phase and the internal energy of each phase is based  
 190 on the local thermodynamic conditions of that phase [37].

191 The source terms appearing in the vapour volume fraction transport equa-  
 192 tion ( $R_e - R_c$ ) represent the mass transfer between fuel liquid and vapour  
 193 phases due to cavitation bubble expansion and collapse respectively. The  
 194 calculation of these values is based on the Rayleigh-Plesset equation describ-  
 195 ing bubble expansion and collapse [47], and its magnitude is based on the  
 196 Zwart-Gerber-Belamri cavitation model [48] which reads as:

$$R_e = F_{vap} \frac{(3\alpha_{nuc}(1 - \alpha_{vap})\rho_{vap})}{R_b} \sqrt{\frac{2 \max((p_{vap} - p), 0)}{3 \rho_{liq}}} \quad (6)$$

$$R_c = F_{cond} \frac{(3\alpha_{vap}\rho_{vap})}{R_b} \sqrt{\frac{2 \max((p - p_{vap}), 0)}{3 \rho_{liq}}} \quad (7)$$

197  $F_{vap}$  and  $F_{cond}$  are empirical calibration coefficients,  $\alpha_{nuc}$  is the volume  
 198 fraction associated with the nuclei contained in the liquid and  $R_b$  the assumed  
 199 bubble radius and  $p_{vap}$  is the vapour pressure. According to [48], values of  
 200  $R_b = 10^{-6}m$ ,  $\alpha_{nuc} = 5 \times 10^{-4}$ ,  $F_{vap} = 50$ ,  $F_{cond} = 0.01$  give reasonable re-  
 201 sults in a wide range of flows. Nevertheless, as discussed in [49] the mass  
 202 transfer magnitude for these values could be insufficient creating areas of  
 203 unrealistic liquid tension and not reproducing correctly the Rayleigh-Plesset  
 204 bubble collapse, the suggested solution is to increase the empirical calibra-  
 205 tion coefficients several orders of magnitude to approximate the model to  
 206 a Homogeneous Equilibrium Model (HEM). However, within this work the  
 207 original coefficients published in [48] were used.

### 208 3.2. Turbulence model

209 The target when using LES is to capture the large scales that are depen-  
 210 dent of the physical domain simulated while modelling the sub-grid turbulent  
 211 scales. This is achieved by filtering of the Navier-Stokes equations using a  
 212 spatial low-pass filter determined by the cell size of the computational domain  
 213 used. This operation leaves the flow equations unchanged, but transforms  
 214 the equations into equations for the filtered magnitudes [50]. During this  
 215 operation terms in the equations appear representing the sub grid scale con-  
 216 tributions to the equations of motions and have to be modelled. The closure

217 of the model requires calculating a suitable sub grid turbulent dissipation  
218 (viscosity)  $\mu_t$ . For such purpose, the Wall-Adapting Local Eddy-Viscosity  
219 (WALE) model is chosen [51]. This model is capable of correctly reproduc-  
220 ing the correct turbulence wall behaviour ( $\mu_t \sim o(y^3)$ ) and becomes 0 at  
221  $y = 0$ , being  $y$  the normal distance to the wall. Another advantage is that  
222 it returns a zero turbulent viscosity for laminar shear flows which allows  
223 the correct treatment of laminar zones in the domain, this is necessary for  
224 modelling the start of injection when flow velocities are low.

### 225 3.3. *Fluid properties*

226 High injection pressures and low lifts cause high injection speed velocities  
227 and important transient heating effects making an incompressible approach  
228 unjustifiable [36, 37, 35]. Even if for the transparent nozzle tip testing con-  
229 ditions the pressure is lower than engine conditions, the diesel liquid phase  
230 is modelled as a compressible liquid based on the measurements made for  
231 the calibration oil Normafluid ISO4113. This is the usual fuel for testing  
232 and calibrating diesel fuel injection systems in laboratory at an industrial  
233 level. All diesel properties that follow are taken from [52, 53], where de-  
234 tails on how the measurement methodology, range of validity, method for  
235 fitting the coefficients and their values can be found. (see Figure 2 for plots  
236 of the density and viscosity values for different pressures and temperatures)  
237 These properties were implemented into ANSYS Fluent following the avail-  
238 able User-Defined-Real-Gas-Model (UDRGM) functionality as in [37]. As

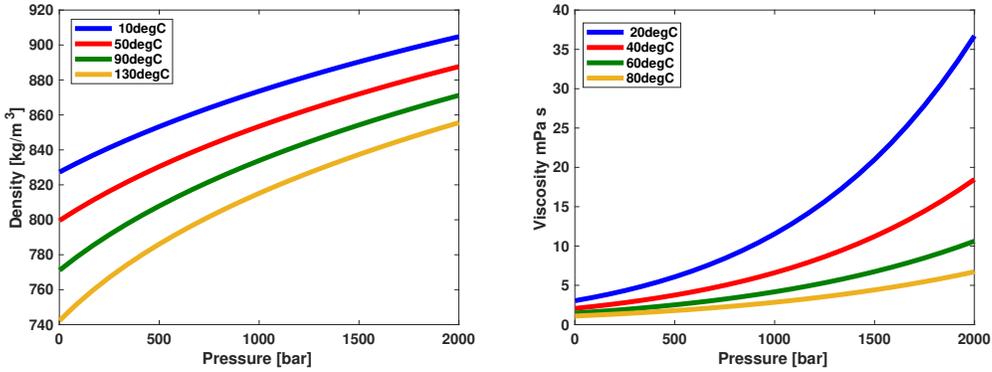


Figure 2: Diesel fuel properties implemented. Density (left) and viscosity (right) diesel fuel properties used.

239 mentioned in the experimental results section, air compressibility effects are  
 240 observed during the sac filling event and therefore the air density is modelled  
 241 as an ideal gas with equation of state  $p = \rho RT$ .

#### 242 3.4. Moving mesh methodology. Mesh generation and boundary conditions.

243 Modelling the dynamic movement of the needle is inherently difficult. At  
 244 low lifts the cells in the seat are squeezed into very small gaps deteriorating  
 245 their quality, which can have an impact on the robustness and accuracy of the  
 246 simulation. Moreover, the contact between walls is not trivial to model since  
 247 the continuity of the mesh is broken. Recent advances have been reported  
 248 in [54] where the immersed boundary method has allowed simulations to  
 249 be performed even at zero needle lift; however, this method has not been  
 250 adopted here and as a compromise, the closed needle is modelled using the  
 251 seat surface as a wall when the needle lift is below  $1\mu m$ .

252 The approach followed is based on an interpolation approach between two

253 topologically identical meshes (key-grids) with the same number of cells and  
254 was already employed by the authors in [55]. The initial mesh has a  $1\mu m$   
255 lift and the high lift mesh is based on the maximum lift reached for the pilot  
256 injection  $36\mu m$ . Based on the node position of this two meshes any interme-  
257 diate lift is achieved by linear interpolation between the node position of the  
258 two key-grids. Another difficulty associated is the loss of resolution in the  
259 seat passage as the needle reaches high lifts, this requires interpolating the  
260 results into another pair of key-grids such as in [37]. For the pilot injection  
261 cases considered here, this was not needed due to the relatively low lift at-  
262 tained ( $36\mu m$ ). Moreover, in order to save computational resources, just a  
263  $60^\circ$  sector is model (one hole) based on the nominal (target) geometry. Figure  
264 3 (left) shows the computational domain, consisting of different surfaces; the  
265 hole, housing, needle, seat inlet and side surfaces. Additionally, a 2mm long  
266 conical discharge volume is added in order to move away the outlet boundary  
267 condition from the areas of interest. The computational mesh used for the  
268 LES flow simulation is a fully hexahedral mesh.

269 The LES settings are adapted from the basis of the previous successful  
270 studies on diesel [39, 40, 41, 42] and gasoline [55, 56] direct injection and  
271 primary breakup simulations. In order to choose the appropriate filter/mesh  
272 size for the LES, the Taylor micro-scales ( $\lambda_g$ ) have been estimated. This  
273 length scale is the intermediate length scale at which fluid viscosity signif-  
274 icantly affects the dynamics of turbulent eddies in the flow [57]. For the  
275 flow inside the transparent tip, the Reynolds number based on the nozzle

276 hole diameter, outlet pressure and inlet temperature can be estimated to be  
 277  $Re = \frac{(\rho VD)}{\mu} \sim 13000$ . The Taylor micro-scales can then be approximated by  
 278 [50]:  $\lambda_g = \sqrt{\frac{10D}{Re}} = 4.4\mu m$ . However, in order to resolve the smallest eddies  
 279 close to the wall, the non-dimensional wall distance based on the friction  
 280 velocity has to be of the order of 1 ( $y^+ \sim 1$ ) [50]. Therefore, additional  
 281 refinement close to the walls is needed. An estimate of this value based on  
 282 the turbulent boundary layer theory yields a cell wall distance of  $\sim 0.2\mu m$ .  
 283 In order to reach a value of  $\sim 5\mu m$  in the bulk flow without increasing in  
 284 excess the number of cells, a cell growth ratio of 1.1 was applied in the wall.  
 285 Under these constraints, a  $\sim 5M$  element mesh was produced, with a vol-  
 286 ume change between neighbouring cells below 3, minimum cell angle of  $27^\circ$   
 287 and  $3D$  determinant (normalized triple product of the vectors starting from  
 288 each cell node) above 0.6 for both key-grids. Special care was taken to re-  
 289 fine the needle seat area in the stream-wise direction in order not to exceed  
 290 for low lifts aspect ratios of 100 in the direction of the bulk flow. Figure 3  
 291 (right) depicts the two meshes needed for the interpolation method, and a  
 292 front view of the mesh showing the additional refinement in the seat area.  
 293 A pressure boundary conditions was applied to the inlet of the domain. The  
 294 pressure at the injector entrance in the high-pressure pipe was taken from  
 295 the experimentally recorded values for every individual injection event. Dur-  
 296 ing the opening phase, pressure decreases at the injector entrance due to the  
 297 increasing flow through it. At the end of the injection an over pressure is  
 298 observed due to the water hammer effect after needle closing. The pressure

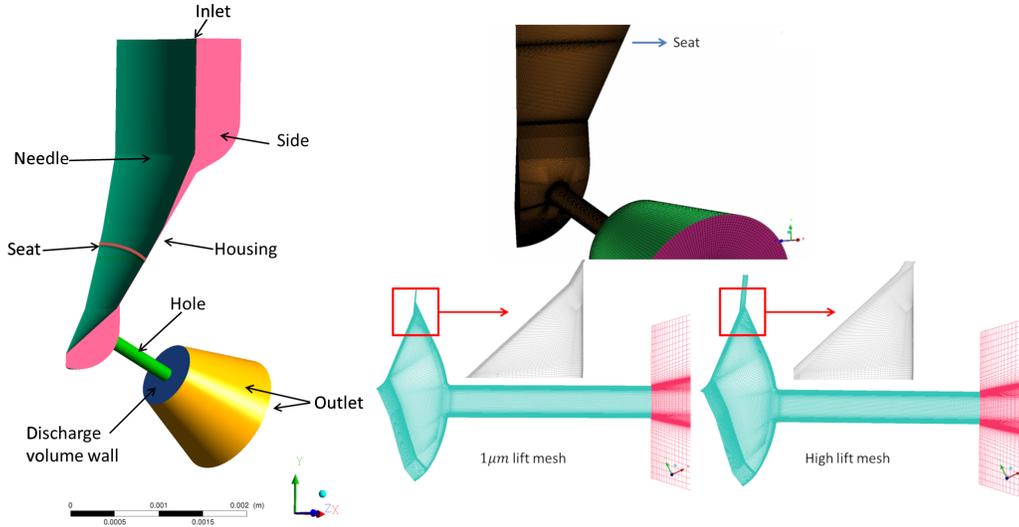


Figure 3: Geometrical model and mesh. Domain simulated and boundary conditions (left). Mesh showing seat refinement (right-top) and mesh cross section for both high and low lift meshes (right-bottom).

299 at the entrance of the injector was provided in [31]. A temperature of  $300K$   
 300 was chosen for the flow entering the domain and an air mass fraction value  
 301 of  $2 \times 10^{-5}$  was imposed to take into account the possible dissolved air since  
 302 it is a typical value for fuel or water exposed to ambient pressure [58]. The  
 303 non-slip boundary conditions was applied to the non-moving wall (housing,  
 304 hole, discharge volume wall, and, seat surface below  $0.1\mu m$ ) as well as to the  
 305 needle according to the motion profile resulting from the needle lift profile  
 306 extracted from the images [31]. Periodic boundary condition have been ap-  
 307 plied to the side surfaces. And fixed pressure outlet was applied to the outlet  
 308 surfaces, with pressure 1bar and  $300K$  and air volume fraction prescribed as  
 309 1 in the case of back-flow.

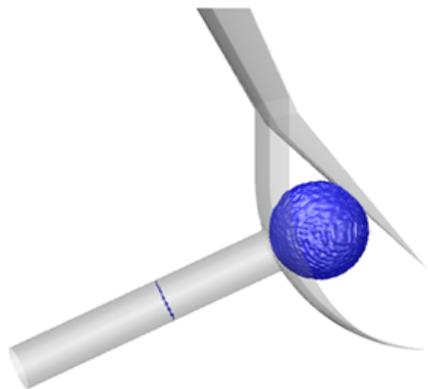


Figure 4: Initial simulation instant. Iso-surface of 0.5 liquid volume fraction and a mid-plane for the initial instant.

310 The experimental images of the transparent nozzle show trapped air bub-  
311 bles inside the injector before the start of injection. The mechanism behind  
312 the appearance of this bubble is not straight forward to derive from the ex-  
313 perimental images. Regardless, the LES nozzle flow simulation is initialised  
314 in qualitatively similar way; half of the hole is filled with air and an air  
315 spherical bubble is included in the sac (see Figure 4).

316 The computational domain above the seat surface is initialised at the  
317 pressure corresponding to that instant. Below the seat, the simulation is  
318 initialised at a pressure of  $1bar$ . All the domain is initialised at a temperature  
319 of  $300K$  and with zero velocity. For the closing phase the movement of  
320 the needle is stopped when it reaches  $1\mu m$  however the seat surface is not  
321 switched from interior to wall until the needle lift profile reaches  $0.1\mu m$ .

322 The solver used is segregated and pressure-based. The pressure-velocity  
323 coupling is achieved using the SIMPLEC algorithm [59]. The continuity

324 equation was discretised using a second order upwind scheme [60] while for  
325 the momentum equation a bounded central differencing scheme based on the  
326 normalized variable diagram (NVD) approach together with the convection  
327 boundedness criterion (CBC) [61] was used. The bounded central differenc-  
328 ing scheme is a composite NVD-scheme that consists of a pure central dif-  
329 ferencing, a blended scheme of the central differencing and the second-order  
330 upwind scheme, and the first-order upwind scheme. The first-order scheme is  
331 used only when the CBC is violated. This scheme has small numerical dissi-  
332 pation and sufficient numerical stability for industrial LES simulations [62].  
333 Discretisation of the volume fraction equations was done with the quadratic  
334 upstream interpolation for convective kinetics (QUICK) scheme (in order to  
335 capture the high density ratios) [60], pressure interpolation with the body  
336 force weighted scheme [46] and the temperature equation was discretised with  
337 a first order upwind scheme. Finally the calculation of gradients was done  
338 using the Least Squares Cell-Based method.

339 The used solver is pressure-based and therefore the simulation stability  
340 is not limited by the acoustic wave propagation time scale. However, tem-  
341 poral resolution for LES requires minimum diffusion for the advection of the  
342 turbulent eddies. Therefore, an adaptive time step method is employed to en-  
343 sure the advection CFL number stays below 1 throughout the computational  
344 domain.

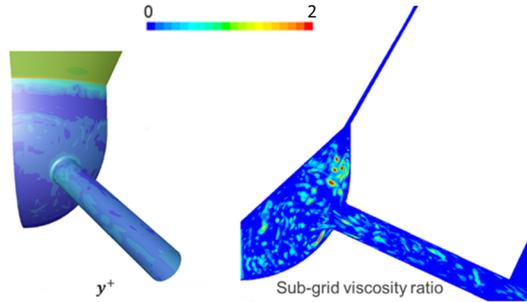


Figure 5: Mesh resolution evaluation.  $y^+$  contours on the nozzle wall (left) and sub-grid viscosity ratio (right) for highest needle lift during the pilot injection.

### 345 3.5. LES mesh quality evaluation

346 The instantaneous fields of sub-grid viscosity ratio and  $y^+$  for a char-  
 347 acteristic moment at the highest lift ( $t = 0.608ms$ ) are shown in Figure 5.  
 348 Based on the  $y^+$  the boundary layer resolution can be assessed; this value  
 349 only exceeded 1 in areas above the seat and gradually transitions to val-  
 350 ues well under 1 ensuring a good wall shear resolution for the small eddies  
 351 near the walls. Spatial resolution can be evaluated from the sub-grid viscos-  
 352 ity ratio, which is defined as the sub-grid scale viscosity introduced by the  
 353 WALE model divided by the molecular viscosity. Its value is mostly under  
 354 1 throughout the domain peaking at values of around 2 in the separation  
 355 region that occurs at the entrance of the sac due, confirming the suitability  
 356 of the mesh.

## 357 4. Results and discussion

358 The evolution of the volume fraction inside the nozzle for the different  
 359 phases is shown in Figure 6. Additionally, the imposed needle lift extracted

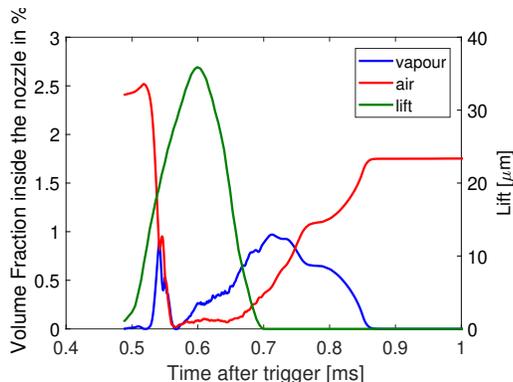


Figure 6: Integral results. Volume of vapour and air inside the nozzle and needle lift against time.

360 from the image sequence shown in Figure 1 is shown as well. The simulation  
 361 is started at the physical time  $0.4874ms$  coincident with a lift of  $1\mu m$  for  
 362 the imposed profile. During the opening phase it follows from this plot that  
 363 initially there is air present inside the nozzle. This air is evacuated out of  
 364 the nozzle while cavitation is generated showing a peak between  $0.5ms$  and  
 365  $0.6ms$  and decreases. As the injection transitions towards the closing phase  
 366 the amount of vapour increases, showing a peak just after the needle closes,  
 367 while the amount of air continually increases by a process of air suction as it  
 368 will be shown in the following section.

369 A comparison between the transparent nozzle tip images and the simula-  
 370 tion results at the start of the injection is shown in Figure 7. In particular,  
 371 a snapshot of the predicted liquid volume iso-surface of 50 at  $t = 0.532ms$   
 372 is shown. At the early stages of the injection the simulation reproduces the  
 373 compression of the air bubble inside the sac volume. The compression is  
 374 caused by the pressure build up in the sac, showing the need for modelling

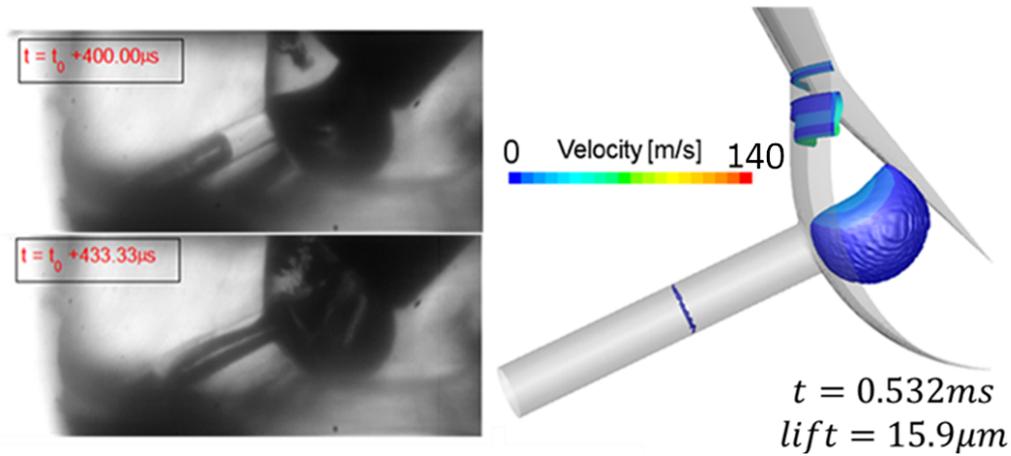


Figure 7: Start of injection results. Experimental visualisations (left), 50% liquid volume fraction iso-surface coloured by velocity magnitude (right).

375 the compressibility of the air. This is quickly followed by cavitation coming  
 376 at the needle seat passage, due to flow separation and shear in this area.

377 Sample simulation results and the transparent nozzle tip images for the  
 378 needle opening phase are shown in Figure 8. The CFD results indicate that  
 379 cavitation produced at the sac entrance is transported directly into the hole.  
 380 Simultaneously, the air bubble is further compressed and is pushed to recir-  
 381 culate parallel to the needle in the direction of the needle motion. Similarly  
 382 to the experimental images, the air bubble is seen breaking down and mix-  
 383 ing with any remaining cavitation into a fine bubbly mixture which is then  
 384 advected into the hole.

385 As the needle lift increases and the flow further develops, the simulation  
 386 indicates that air disappears from the sac volume, as seen in Figure 9. This  
 387 is attributed to a combination of two effects. Firstly, the sac pressure build

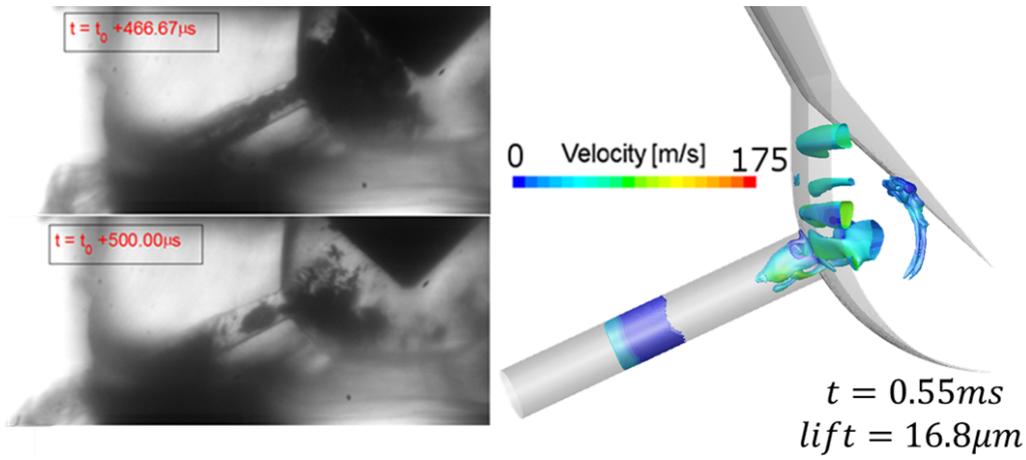


Figure 8: Needle opening phase results. Experimental visualisations (left), 50% liquid volume fraction iso-surface coloured by velocity magnitude (right).

388 up causes the air to be compressed, reducing its volume fraction. Secondly,  
 389 as the air is trapped within the recirculation zone developing inside the sac  
 390 volume, it enters into the injection hole, where it expands due to the local  
 391 pressure drop at its entrance. This contributes to the void areas observed  
 392 and suggests that the void observed experimentally is a combination of air  
 393 and fuel vapour. In addition, part of the void visible in the simulation can  
 394 be attributed to geometrical cavitation developed at the hole inlet upper lip  
 395 which can also be seen from the experimental images.

396 The only two experimental frames available for the needle closing phase  
 397 together with the simulation results are shown in Figure 10 (top). As the  
 398 needle valve moves into the closing phase, the amount of void in the hole  
 399 increases. This is in agreement with the simulation results from Figure 6,  
 400 where volume content as a percentage of the injector volume of both air

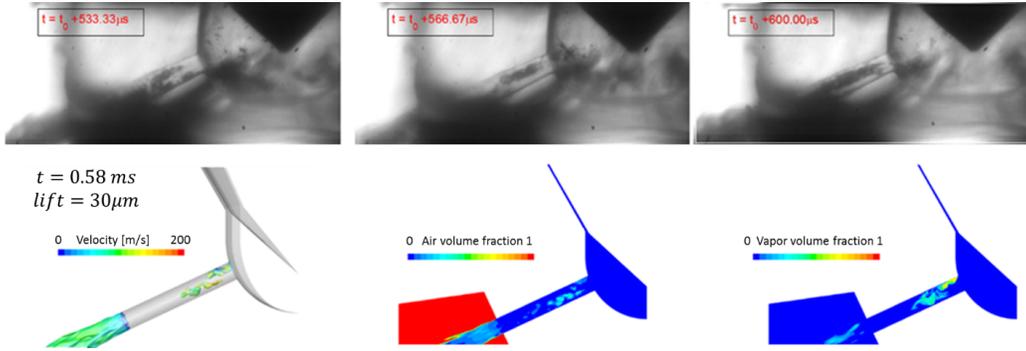


Figure 9: Results as flow further develops during the opening phase. Experimental visualisations for three time instances (top), 50% liquid volume fraction iso-surface coloured by velocity magnitude (bottom-left), air volume fraction contours (bottom-centre) and vapour volume fraction contours (bottom-right).

401 and vapour are plotted against time, it follows that these quantities increase  
 402 during the needle closing phase. This void in the simulation has two sources,  
 403 one from the unstable vortical flow from the sac coming into the hole and  
 404 another due to geometrical cavitation in the hole inlet corner. Regarding the  
 405 experimental results at very low lifts ( $lift = 6\mu m$ ), a bubbly mixture appears  
 406 in the sac and bubbles of size of the order of the hole diameter appear in  
 407 the hole. At very low lifts ( $lift = 6\mu m$ ), the simulation model predicts  
 408 high velocities in the hole; however, since the flow coming from the seat is  
 409 throttled, pressure loss in the sac is occurring and a void structure appears in  
 410 front of the hole. The bubbly mixture in the sac volume correlates to the void  
 411 structure created in front of the hole, which is predicted to be composed of a  
 412 mixture of fuel vapour and expanded air. On the other hand, the visualised  
 413 bubbles inside the hole correlate to the big amount of cavitation computed  
 414 in the hole.

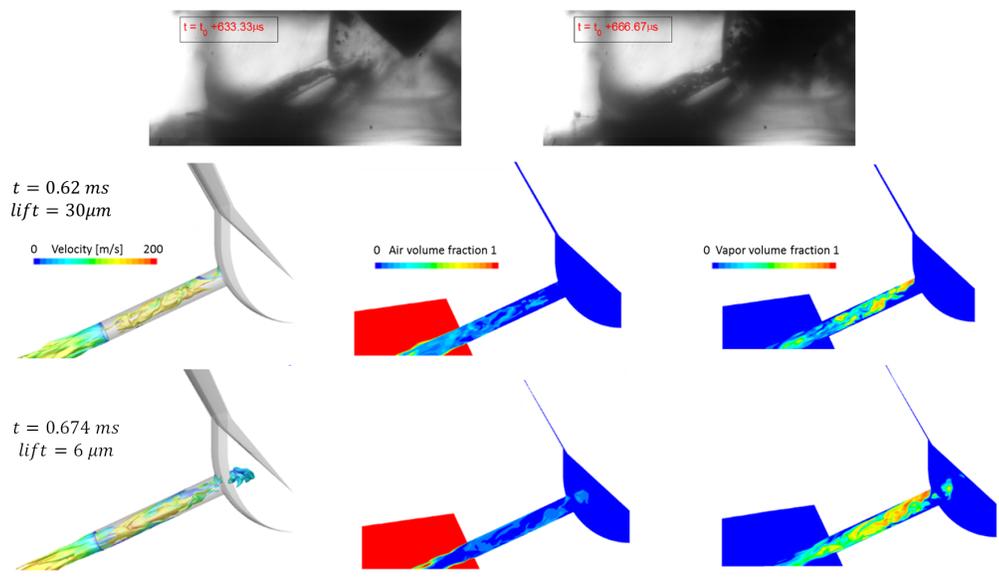


Figure 10: Needle closing results. Experimental visualisations for two time instants (top). Simulation results (center and bottom). For the simulation results 50% liquid volume fraction iso-surface coloured by velocity magnitude (left), air volume fraction contours (center) and vapour volume fraction contours (right) are presented.

415 A time sequence of the pressure field is presented in Figure 11. Before the  
416 needle valve closes, the predicted sac pressure is still higher than the ambient  
417 pressure ( $t = 0.674ms$ ), but immediately after the needle valve closing ( $t =$   
418  $0.698ms$ ) a pressure wave is generated that travels towards the sac volume;  
419 this leaves the sac pressure below the ambient pressure ( $t = 0.77ms$ ). In  
420 agreement with Figure 6, where air volume fraction inside the nozzle is seen  
421 to increase after needle closing, this induces the spray to weaken and air to  
422 be sucked back from the ambient into the nozzle until the sac pressure is  
423 balanced with the exterior pressure ( $t = 1ms$ ).

424 Evidence is also provided in Figure 12, which shows a time sequence  
425 of air and vapour volume fraction fields. It clearly depicts the weakening  
426 flow momentum in the injection hole ( $t = 0.698ms$ ) leading to air suction  
427 ( $t = 77ms$ ). Finally, due to the pressure balancing with the ambient pressure,  
428 vapour completely disappears ( $t = 1ms$ ), indicating that shortly after the  
429 needle closing only liquid and air remain inside the sac volume.

## 430 5. Conclusions

431 This paper presents an investigation of cavitation and air interaction dur-  
432 ing a diesel pilot injection of a standard serial production six-hole geometry.  
433 The focus was to understand the complex interaction between the needle mo-  
434 tion, cavitation formation and development, and gas suction. The strategy  
435 followed has been to use high speed visualisations of a transparent nozzle tip  
436 to record the multiphase phenomena and to use CFD to explain the physics

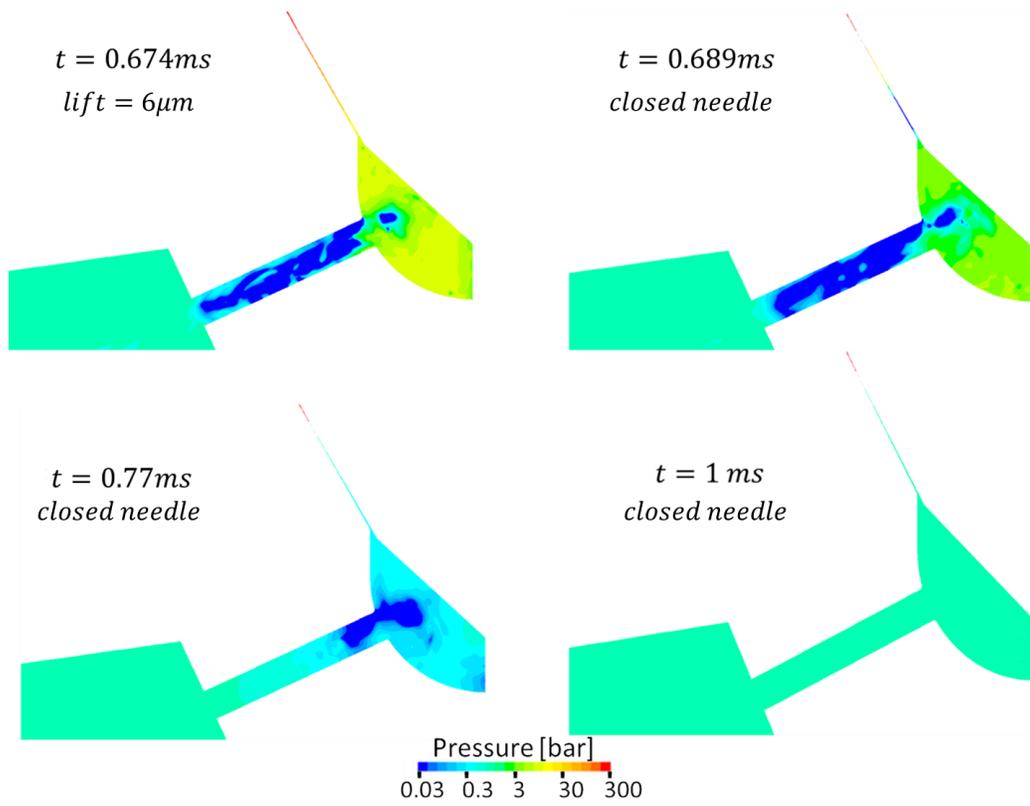


Figure 11: Pressure field time sequence. Notice that logarithmic scale has been used.

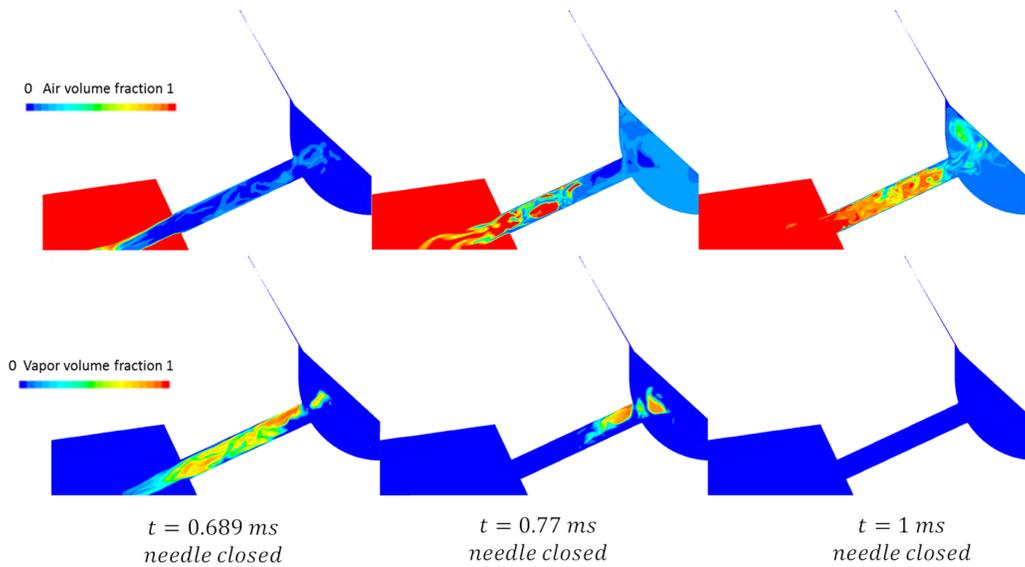


Figure 12: After needle closing results. Time sequence for air (top) and vapour (bottom) volume fraction fields.

437 behind the observations. The CFD methodology includes LES turbulence  
 438 modelling, the needle valve boundary movement, cavitation effects through  
 439 a Rayleigh-Plesset based cavitation model, and the compressibility of air  
 440 and fuel. Starting from a flow field initialised according to the experimental  
 441 observations (with an air bubble in the sac and a big portion of the hole  
 442 filled with air), the main flow features observed are replicated by the simu-  
 443 lations. In particular the following phenomena experimentally noticed have  
 444 been explained and reproduced:

- 445 • The compression of the initial air bubble due to sac pressure build  
 446 up. The inclusion of air compressibility in the simulation can be very  
 447 relevant even for modest injection pressures in order to replicate the  
 448 air compression in the sac at the start of the injection as well as the

- 449 air expansion in the injection hole and sac.
- 450 • The appearance of cavitation stemming from the sac entry at the start  
451 of the injection, due to flow separation and shear.
  - 452 • The sac flow recirculation in the sac and flow patterns inside the hole.  
453 One part of the void observed in the simulation can be attributed to  
454 cavitation both geometrical (developed at the hole inlet upper lip) and  
455 vortical (due to complex flow structure coming from the sac). Further-  
456 more, the initial air inside the nozzle expands in the hole contributing  
457 to the void areas observed. This shows that the void observed experi-  
458 mentally is a combination of both air and fuel vapour.
  - 459 • An increase of void inside the hole and in the sac during the needle  
460 valve closing. The underlying reason being the flow throttling, since  
461 liquid momentum is still high but flow passage very restricted.
  - 462 • The air suction after the needle closing. The closure of the valve creates  
463 an expansion wave that leaves the sac pressure below the ambient. This  
464 induces vapour creation and air expansion in the sac and consequently  
465 air is sucked from the ambient into the nozzle. When the pressure in  
466 the sac is recovered, all vapour collapses. Therefore it is shown that  
467 the remaining foam at the end of the injection consists of a liquid and  
468 air mixture.

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