

Discrete bubble modeling of a wire-mesh bubble column reactor

Citation for published version (APA):

Jain, D., Kuipers, J. A. M., & Deen, N. G. (2013). Discrete bubble modeling of a wire-mesh bubble column reactor. In *Proceedings of the 9th European Conference of Chemical Engineering (ECCE9), 21-25 April 2013, The Hague, The Netherlands*

Document status and date:

Published: 01/01/2013

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of Record (includes final page, issue and volume numbers)

Please check the document version of this publication:

- A submitted manuscript is the version of the article upon submission and before peer-review. There can be important differences between the submitted version and the official published version of record. People interested in the research are advised to contact the author for the final version of the publication, or visit the DOI to the publisher's website.
- The final author version and the galley proof are versions of the publication after peer review.
- The final published version features the final layout of the paper including the volume, issue and page numbers.

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View abstract data

Abstract title DISCRETE BUBBLE MODELING OF A WIRE-MESH BUBBLE COLUMN REACTOR
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Reactors involving gas-liquid mass transfer are often facilitated with a solid catalyst phase for chemical reactions. Such arrangements are quite frequently found in industries involving hydrogenation, oxidation and Fischer-Tropsch synthesis. Conventionally, two reactor types are widely used in large scale production, slurry bubble column reactors and trickle bed reactors. Slurry bubble column reactors suffer from pronounced bubble coalescence at high solids fractions, which reduces the interfacial mass transfer area. Trickle bed reactors are limited by low gas throughput and poor heat removal characteristics. To overcome the aforementioned disadvantages, a novel reactor type, a micro-structured bubble column is proposed.

This reactor type consists of an array of static wire-meshes stacked inside the column at various heights. These wire meshes serve as catalyst carriers, facilitate the cutting of larger bubbles into smaller ones, and save the extra cost of an external filtration unit for catalyst particles. In recent studies it has also been observed that such arrangements may help in reducing liquid phase backmixing.

Detailed modeling of bubble column reactors has been successfully undertaken by Darmana et al. [1] using a Discrete bubble model (DBM) based on a Eulerian-Lagrangian framework. In this work we have extended the previous work by accounting for the presence of a solid phase (wires) and bubble cutting due to presence of wires. Drag closures for i) bubble swarms as proposed by Roghair et al. [2] and, ii) immersed cylindrical wires by Segers et al. [3] are included. The bubble break-up model of Lau et al. [4] is used to incorporate the effect of bubble break-up.

The simulation model was verified extensively before the effect of geometrical and physical parameters on the bubble size distribution was studied. Results show that the bubbles experience pronounced cutting due to the presence of the wires, leading to a higher specific gas-liquid interfacial area. An increase in mesh opening results in the reduction of bubble cutting. However, too small openings are not useful, as they lead to gas pocket formation below the mesh. Thus, an optimal opening depending on bubble sizes is necessary. Gas superficial velocity affects the bubble coalescence and break-up phenomena and hence is also an important factor in deciding about the mesh dimensions.

References:

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3. Segers, Q., Kuipers, J., & Deen, N. (2013). Immersed boundary method applied to single phase flow past crossing cylinders. *Chemical engineering science*, (submitted).
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Images

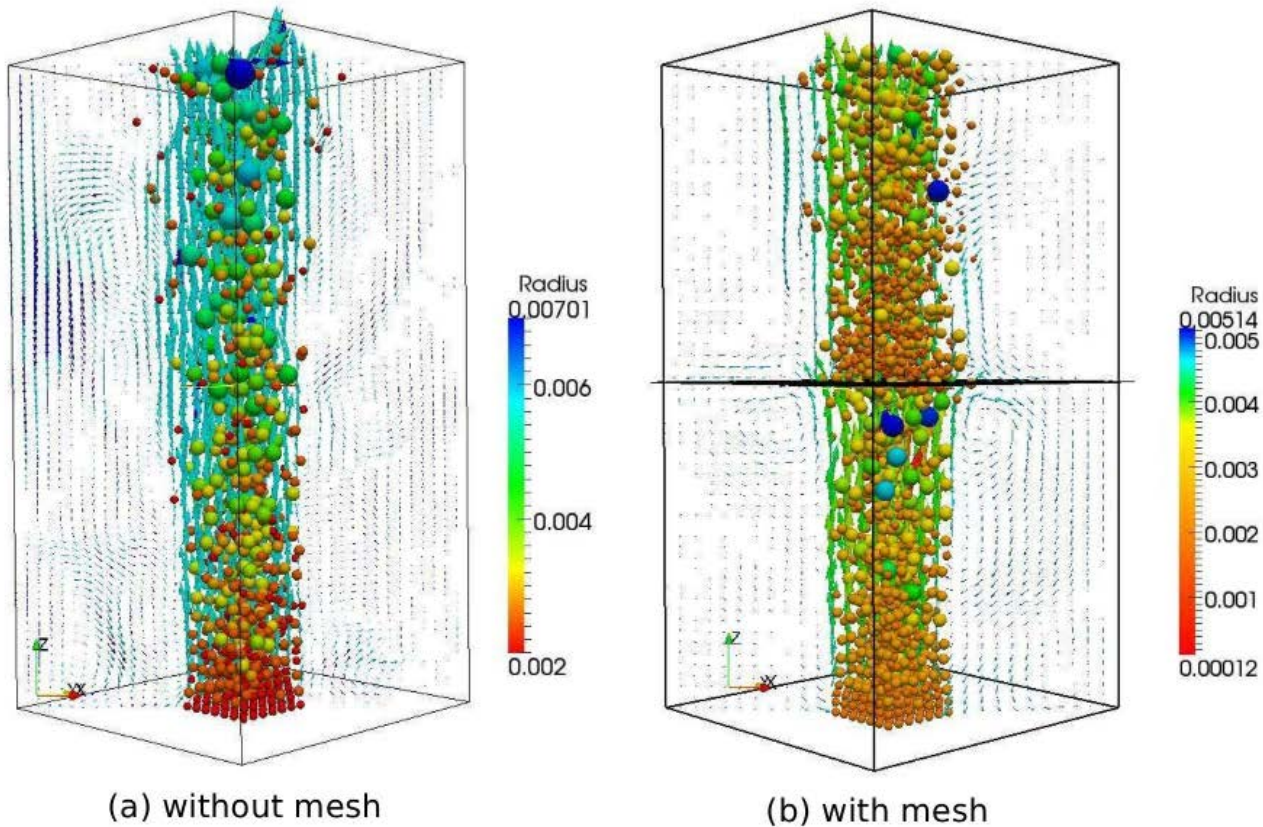


Figure 1: Instantaneous liquid velocity vectors in a square bubble column a) without mesh, b) with mesh inside the column. Less backmixing is observed with mesh, as separate liquid circulation patterns are visible above and below mesh.

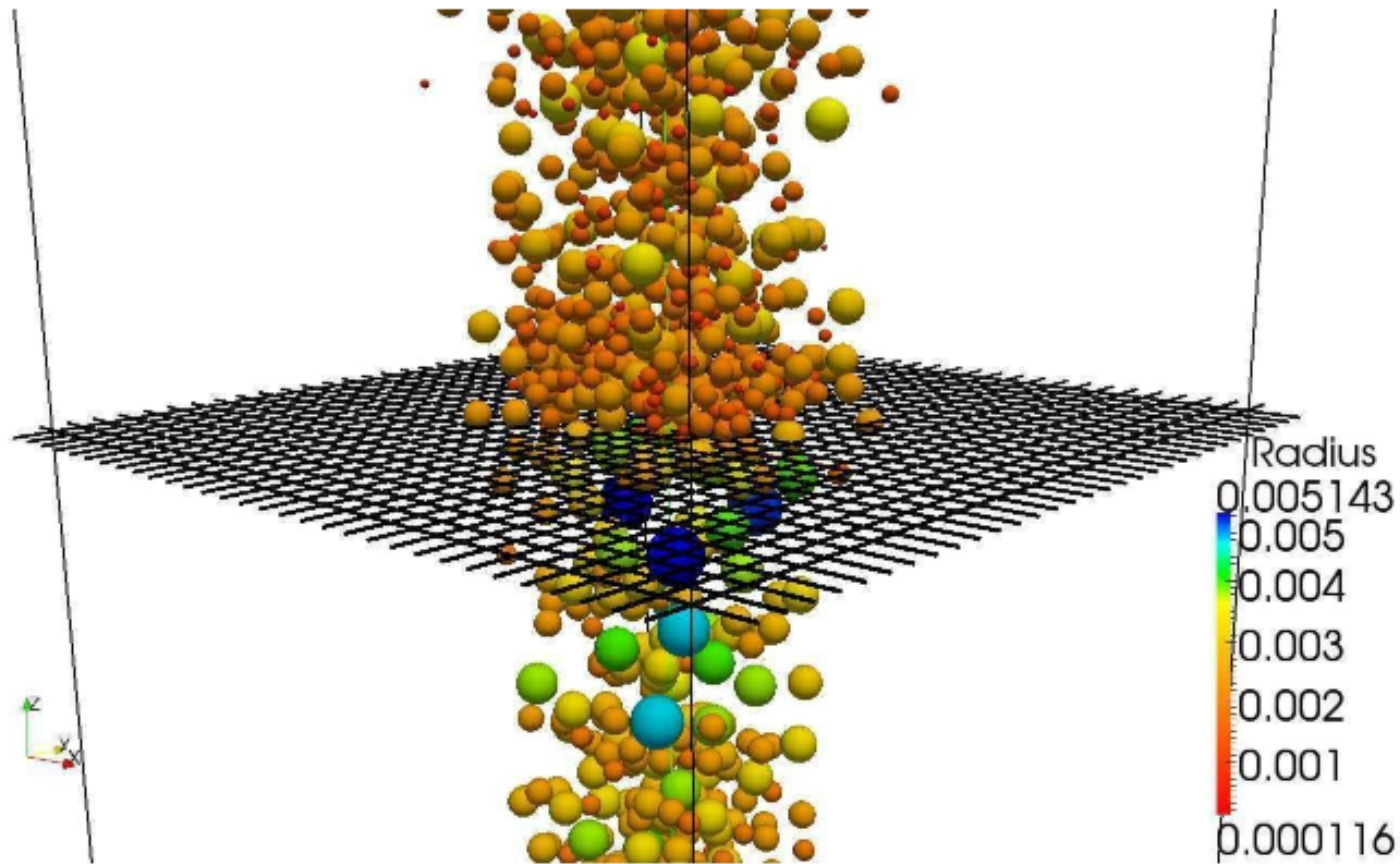


Figure 2: Close-up of bubble cutting through the wire-mesh. As the bigger bubbles pass through the mesh, they are cut in smaller ones by the wires.

Cutting of bubbles through wire-mesh