

The BLOOM program on stainless-steel at CROCUS

- Laboratory for
Reactor Physics
and Systems
Behaviour



Thomas Ligonnet,
V. Lamirand

**INDEN Consultancy
Meeting 2025**

**December 15th 2025
EPFL, Switzerland**

The HARVEST-X project

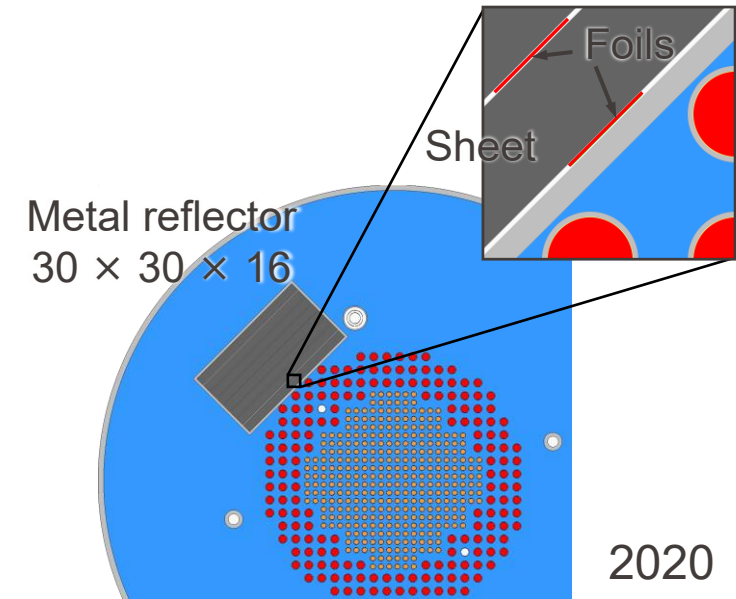
*Heuristic Assimilation, Reproduction, and Validation of Experiments for stainless **STeel** Cross sections*

The HARVEST-X project

*Heuristic Assimilation, Reproduction, and Validation of Experiments for stainless **STeel** Cross sections*

Analysis and assimilation of existing experimental data

- Results and **benchmarking of the PETALE** program
 - Ongoing for submission to ICSBEP (UC Berkeley+EPFL+LLNL)



The HARVEST-X project

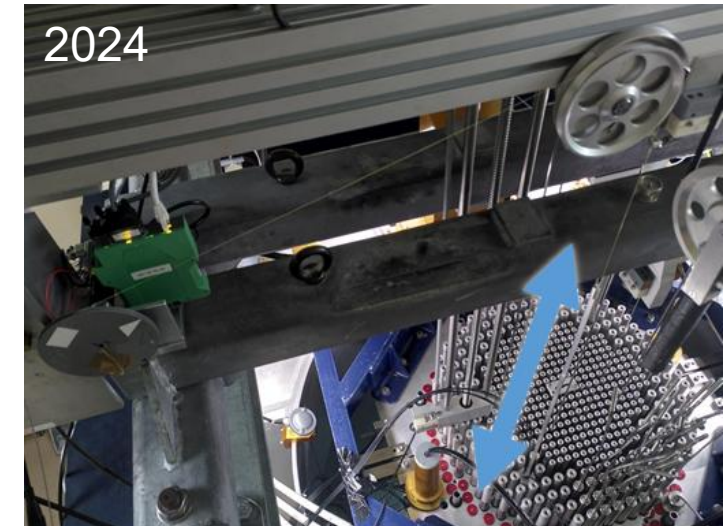
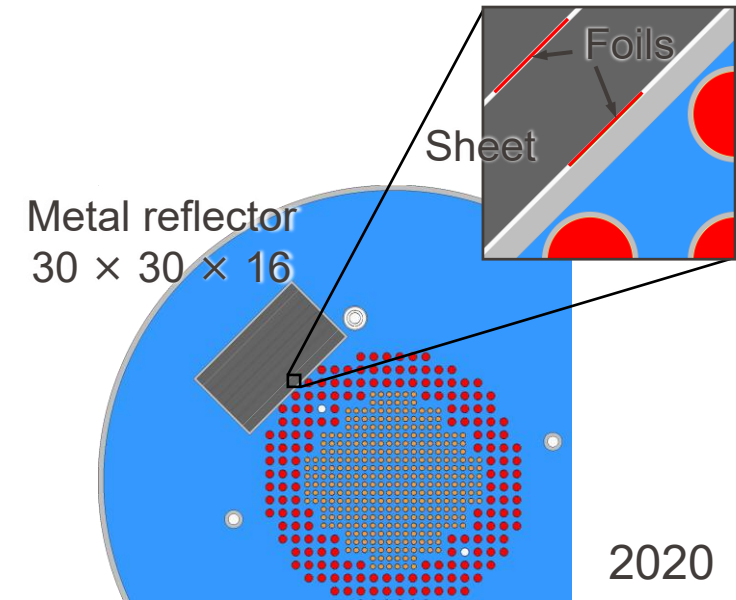
*Heuristic Assimilation, Reproduction, and Validation of Experiments for stainless **STeel** Cross sections*

Analysis and assimilation of existing experimental data

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Production and analysis of new complementary experimental results, allowing to tackle biases

- Reproduction with **other systems**
- Reproduction with **other methods**
 - **Pile-oscillation experiments in CROCUS: BLOOM**



The CROCUS reactor

Reactor type

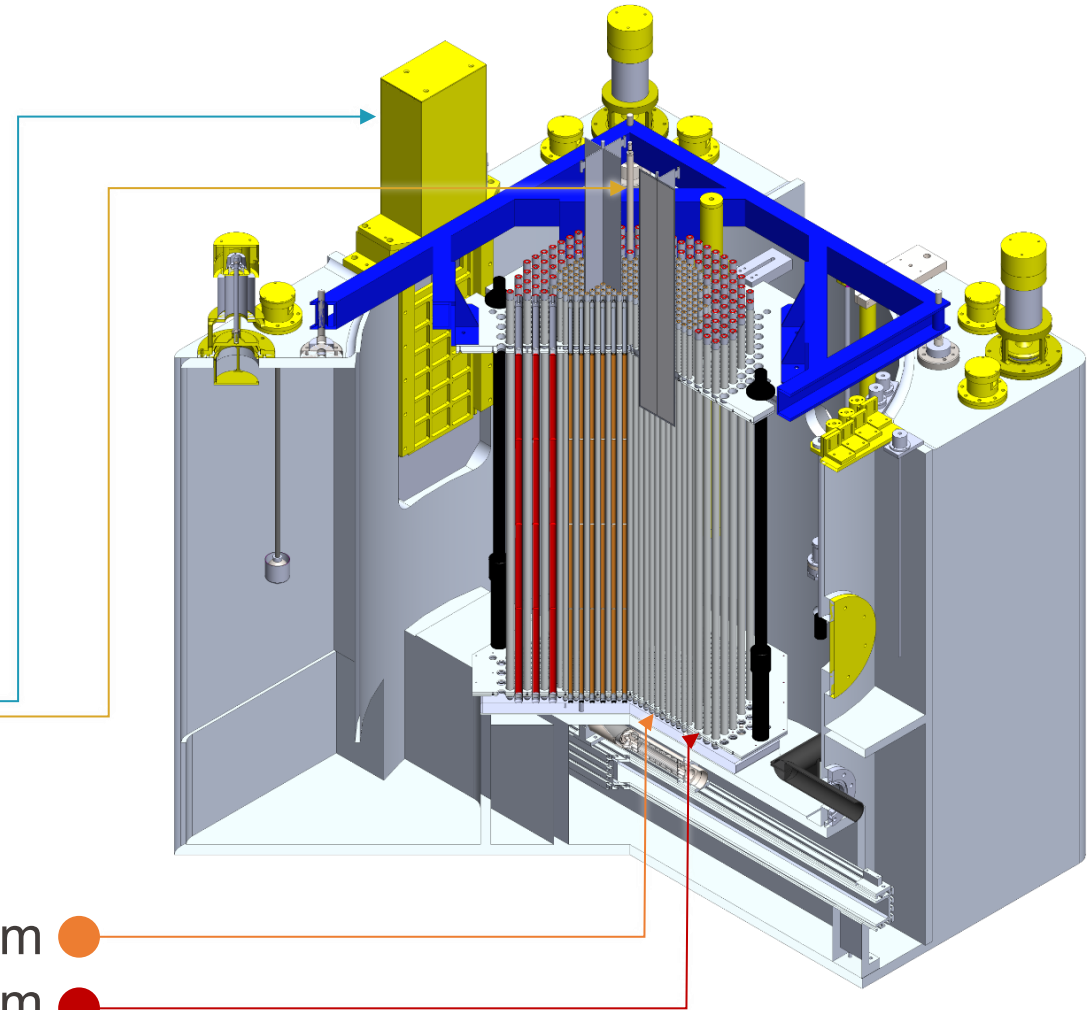
- LWR with partially submerged core
- Room T (controlled) and atmospheric P
- Forced water flow (160 l.min^{-1})

Operation

- 100 W (zero-power reactor)
- i.e. maximum $2.5 \times 10^9 \text{ cm}^{-2}.\text{s}^{-1}$
- Control: B_4C rods and spillway

Core

- $\varnothing 60 \text{ cm}/100 \text{ cm}$, 2-zone
- Inner: 336 UO_2 1.806 wt% 1.837 cm
- Outer: 176 U_{met} 0.947 wt% 2.917 cm

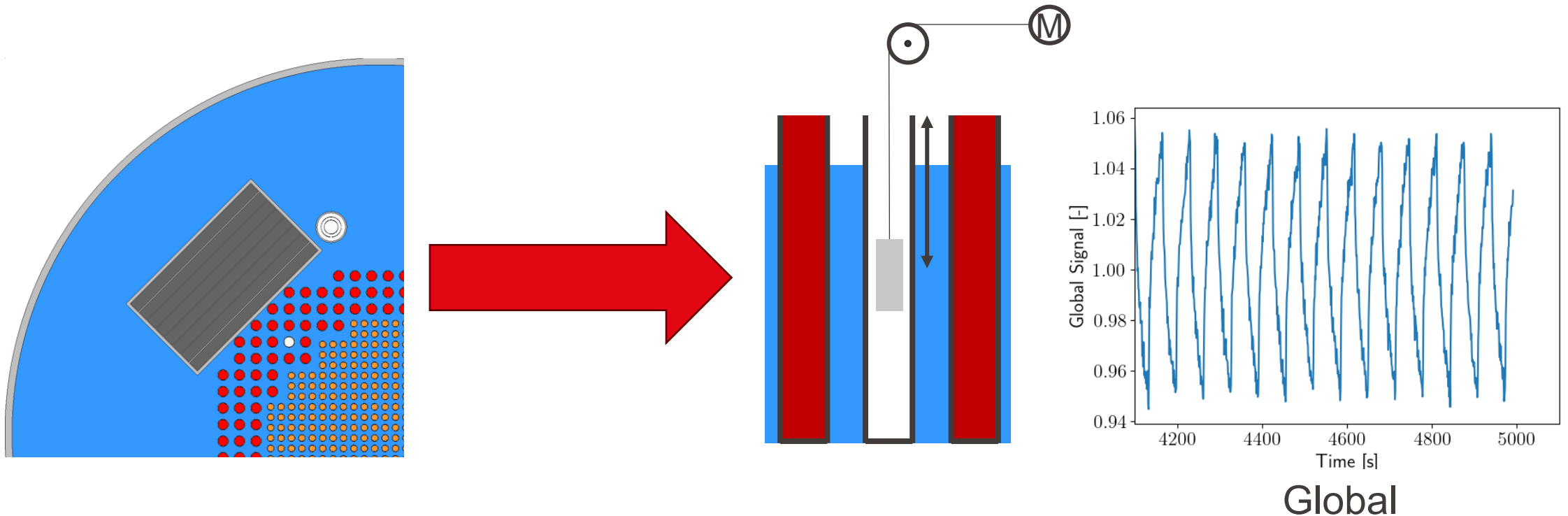


The BLOOM program in CROCUS



Reproduction of PETALE critical experiments

- Same materials/system/QoI **but** different method: pile oscillation (open loop)
- **Quantities of interest:**
 - Reactivity worth

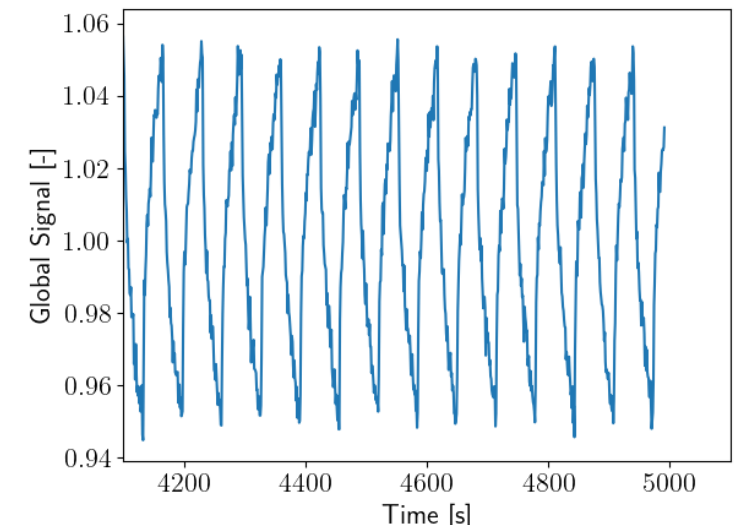


The BLOOM program in CROCUS



Reproduction of PETALE critical experiments

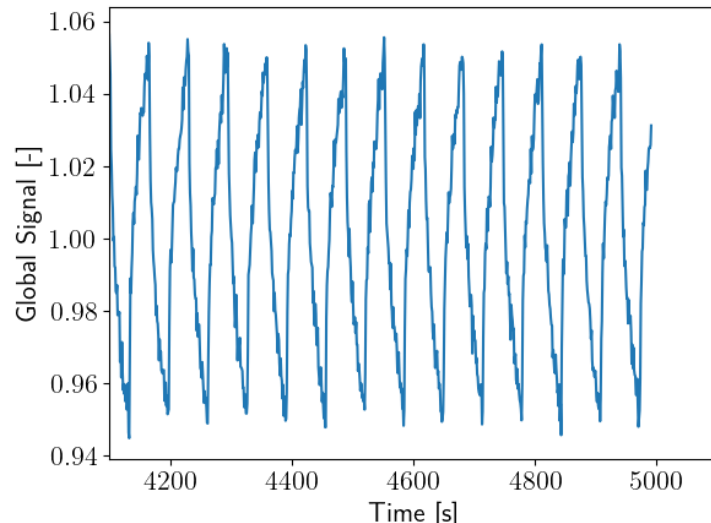
- Same materials/system/QoI **but** different method: pile oscillation (open loop)
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 - Reactivity worth



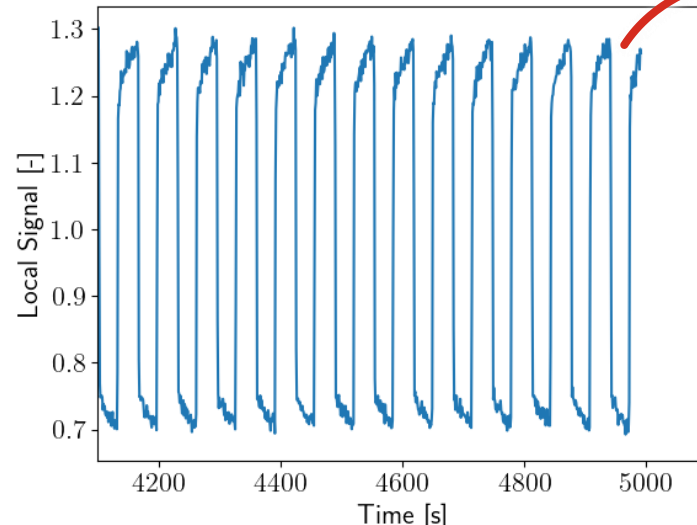
Global → Reactivity

Reproduction of PETALE critical experiments

- Same materials/system/QoI **but** different method: pile oscillation (open loop)
- **Quantities of interest:**
 - Reactivity worth
 - Local flux perturbation

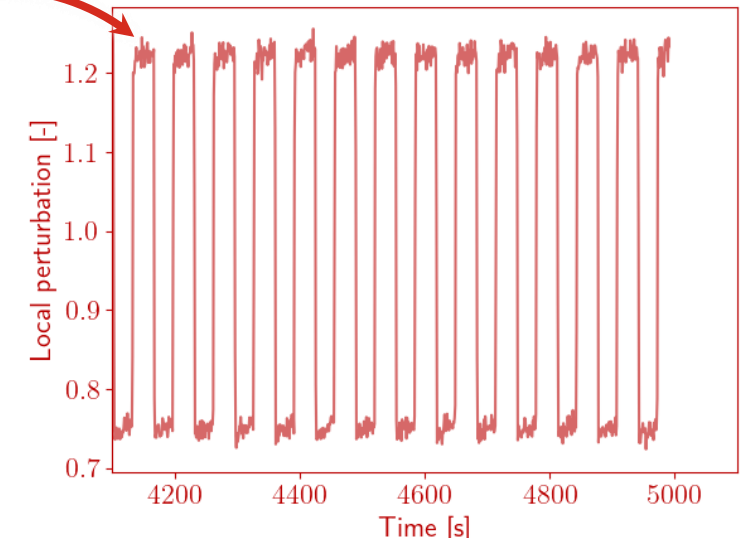


Global → **Reactivity**



Local signal

- Global



Local perturbation

The BLOOM program in CROCUS



Reproduction of PETALE critical experiments

- Same materials/system/QoI **but** different method: pile oscillation (open loop)
- **Quantities of interest:**
 - Reactivity worth
 - Local flux perturbation
 - Sample activation



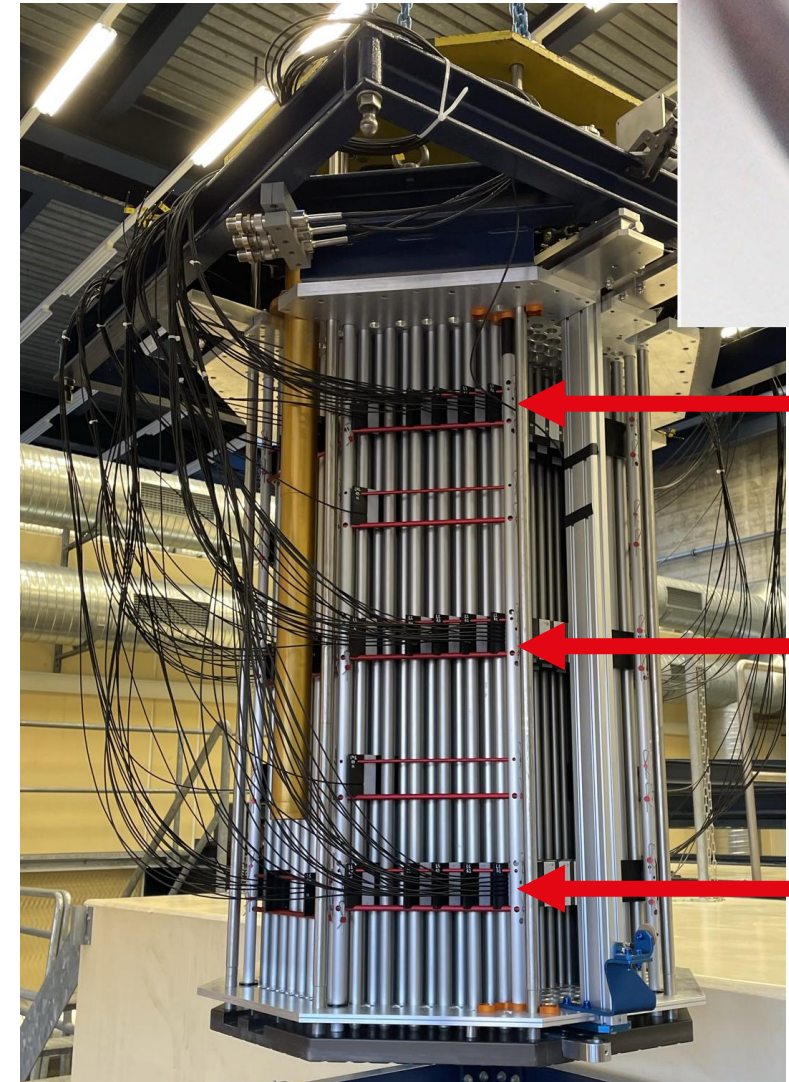
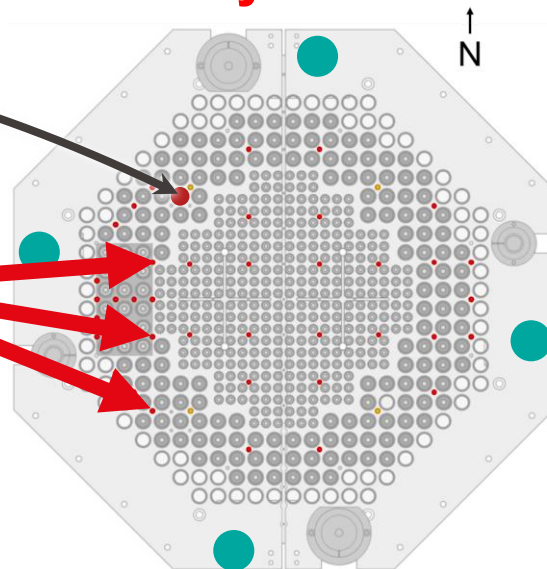
Global and distributed flux: SAFFRON array

3D array of MiMi detectors in CROCUS

- Developed by Fanny Vitullo during her PhD
- Array of 160 MiMi neutrons detectors
- Mapping of the core: 3 main axial layers
- **~240 kcps/W** over many detectors
 - Perfect for global signal measurement
 - Allows **testing the validity of PK assumption**

Oscillation channel

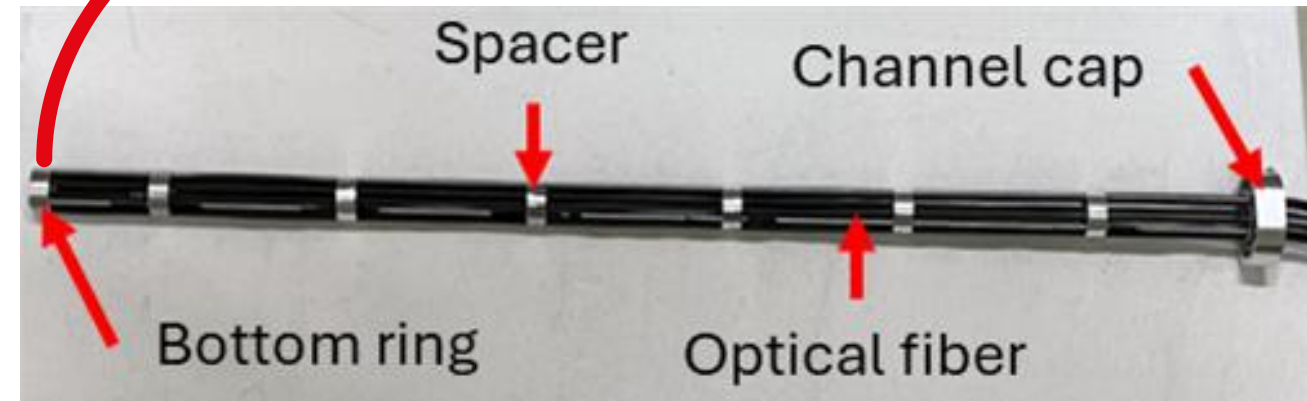
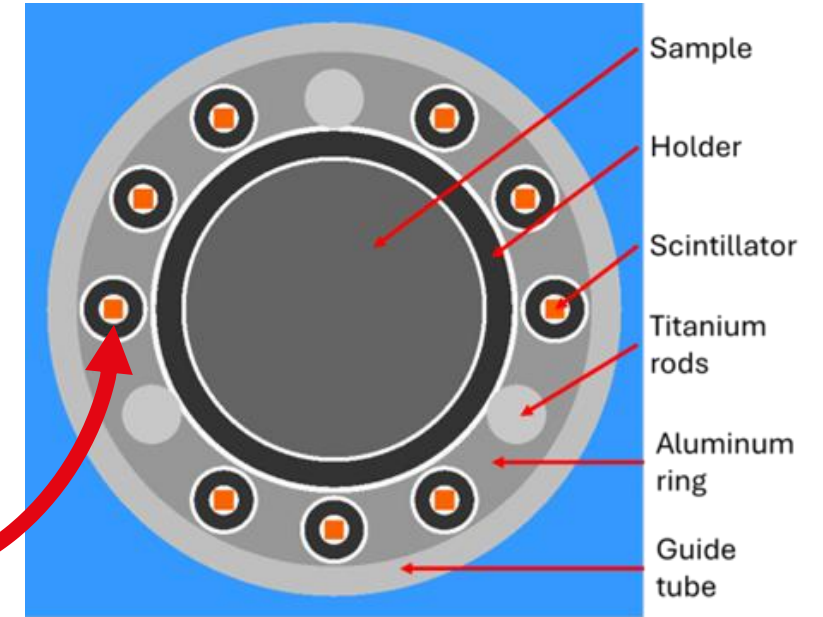
~50 per level



Local flux: instrumented channel

Global & **local** measurements

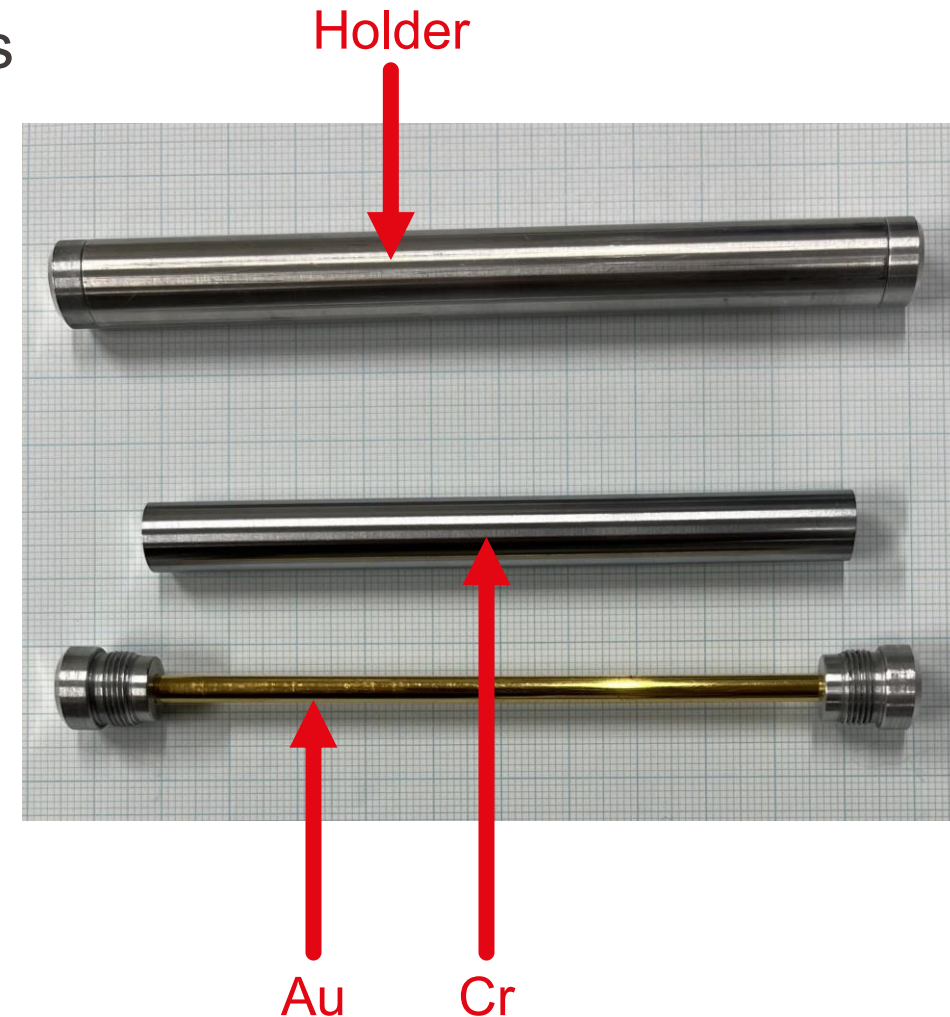
- Set in the control rod guide tube
 - Air filled
- Aluminum for rings and holder
 - With titanium rods for mechanical stability
- Instrumented with a ring of 9 MiMis
 - **~25 kcps/W for the local signal**
 - At 2.1 mm from sample surface
 - Placed at core mid-height
- Sample diameter up to 10.25 mm
 - Possibly up to 12 mm without a holder



Focus on stainless-steel related samples

- Reuse of **PETALE spares** for main components
 - Fe, Ni, Cr, 304L
- Additional minor alloying elements
 - C, Mn, Mo, Nb, Si, V, Zn
- Exotic alloying elements and other materials of interest
 - Al, Cu, Ta, Ti, W, Y
 - 304, 316, Incoloy-800, Incoloy-718
- Reference materials
 - **Au**, D_2O , H_2O , 6Li (solution), ^{10}B (solution)

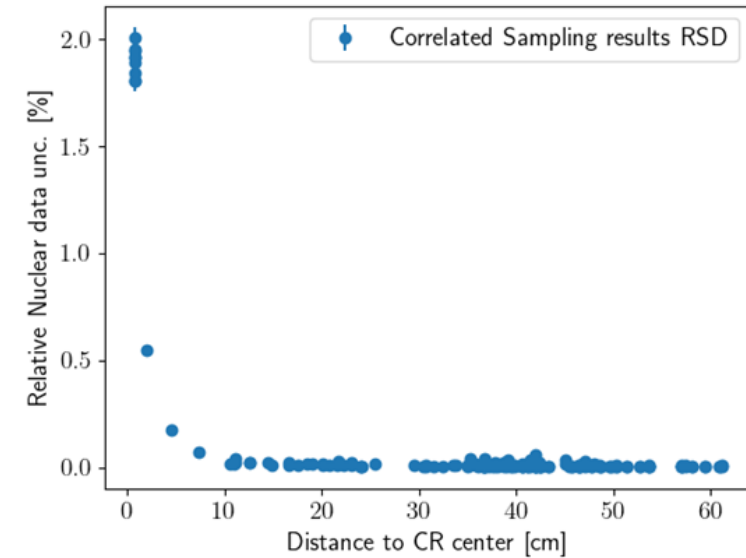
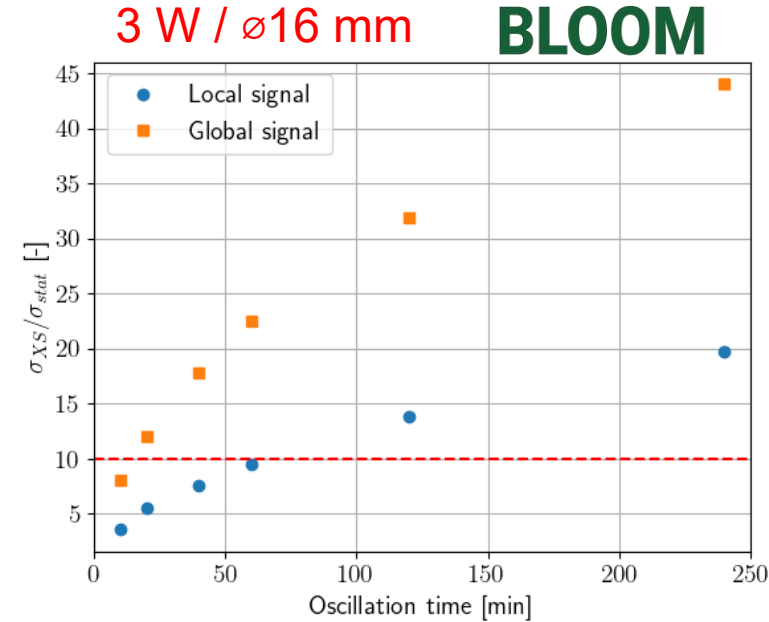
Totaling 25 materials and 40 samples



Design by uncertainty propagation

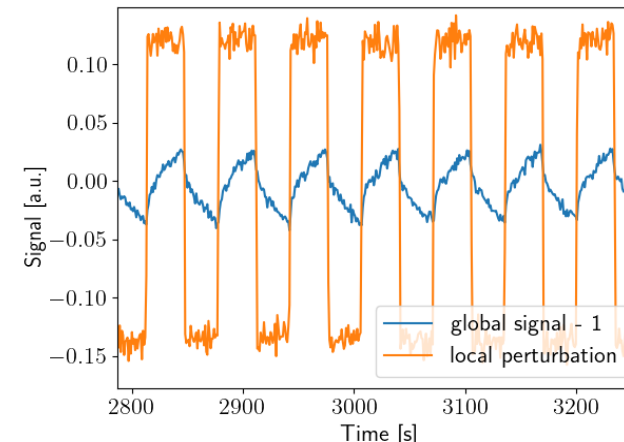


- Objective: factor 10 between Exp. and ND uncertainties
 - Iron sample
- Main limitations
 - Strict max power: 1.1 W
 - Sample diameter: $\varnothing 16$ mm/ $\varnothing 10$ mm with detector ring
- Design results
 - Averaged operation power: 0.9 W
 - Oscillation period: 64.8 s
 - Duration: 1h30
 - Minimum achievable uncertainty: 0.02 pcm
- Uncertainty estimates for iron (JEFF-3.3)
 - Local: $\sigma_{ND} = 1.9\%$ $\leftrightarrow$ $\sigma_{Exp} = 0.04\%$ ×50
 - Global: $\sigma_{ND} = 2.8\%$ $\leftrightarrow$ $\sigma_{Exp} = 0.25\%$ ×10

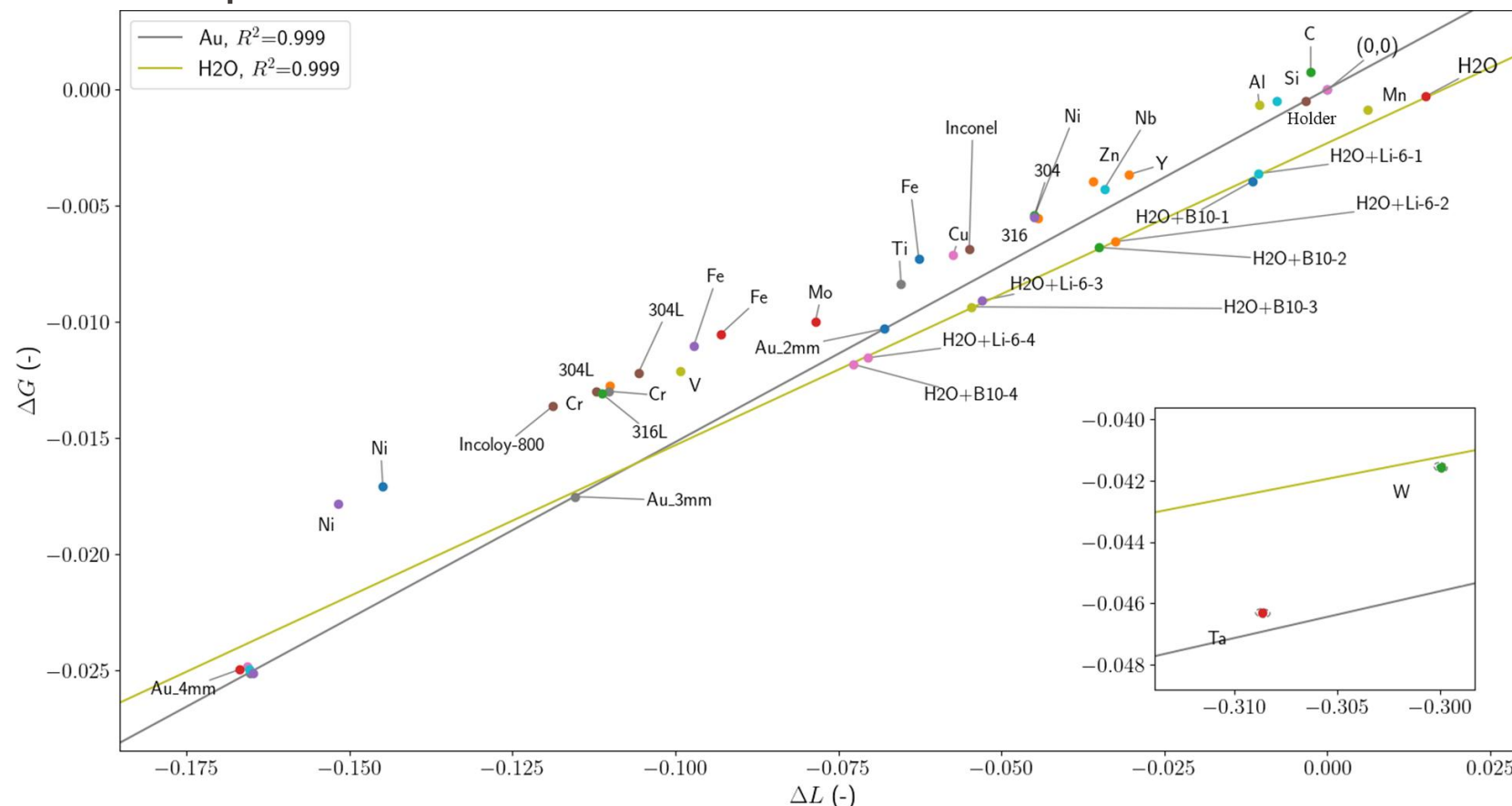


Global vs. Local

- 45 experiments
 - 1h30 of oscillation at ~0.9 W each
 - Mostly absorbers
- Global perturbation amplitude ΔG vs. local one ΔL ¹



25 materials
40 samples

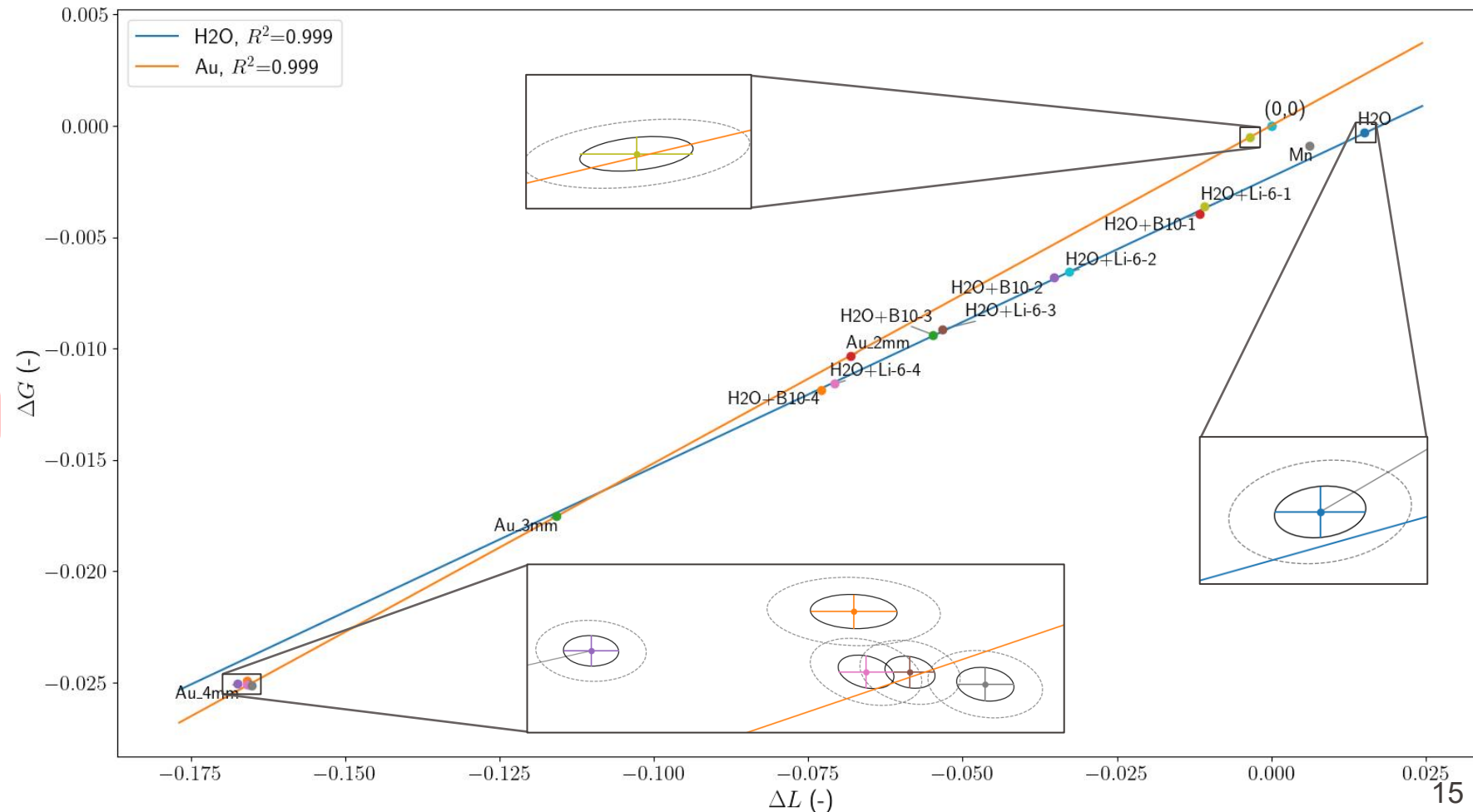


1. Geslot, Benoit, Adrien Gruel, Stéphane Bréaud, Pierre Leconte, and Patrick Blaise. "Innovative Hybrid Pile Oscillator Technique in the Minerve Reactor: Open Loop Versus Closed Loop." *IEEE Transactions on Nuclear Science* 65, no. 11 (November 2018): 2767–75. <https://doi.org/10.1109/TNS.2018.2874690>.

Proportionality for H₂O and Au references

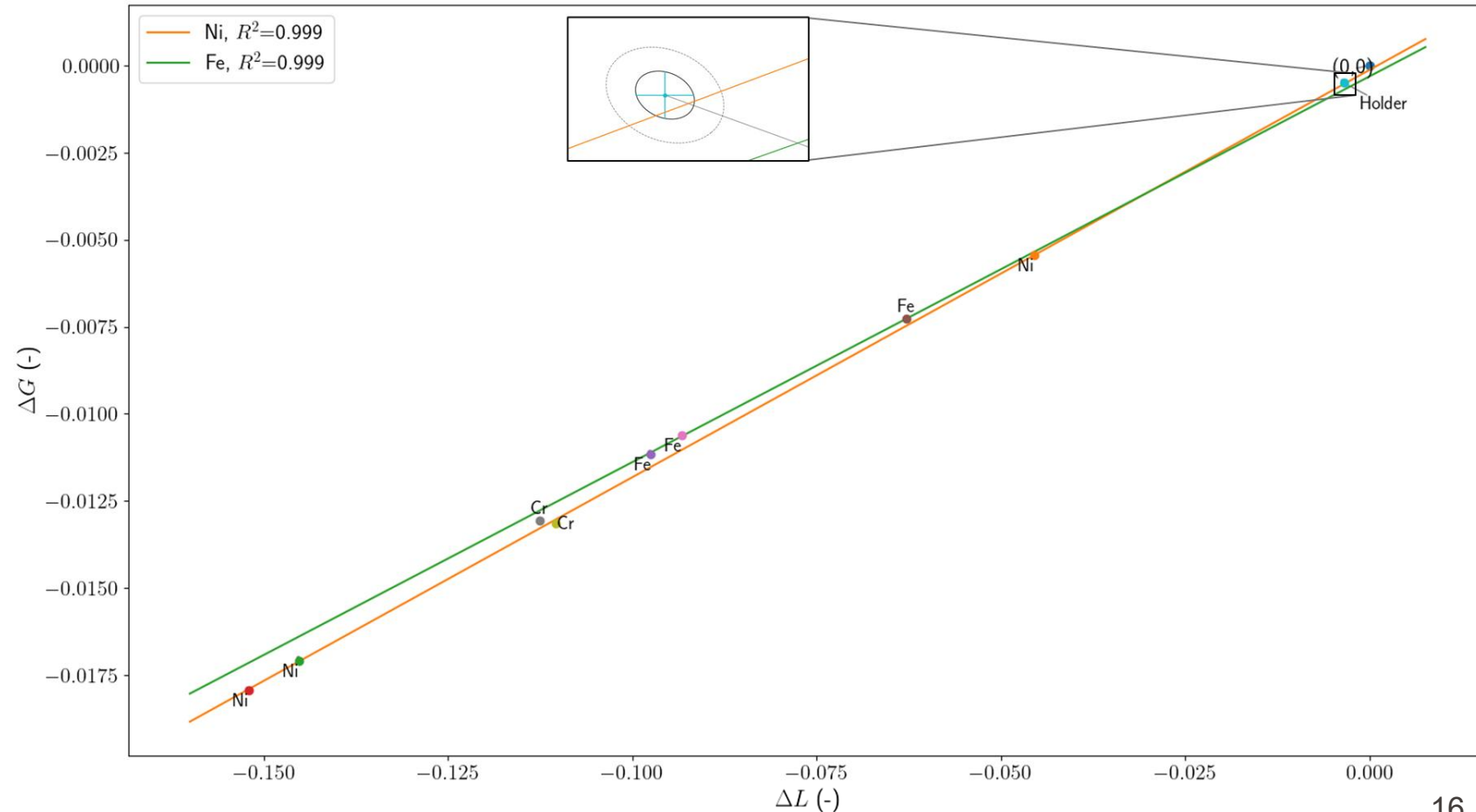
- Reproduction of past reference experiments
- A Linear relationship is observed between the perturbation
 - 8 samples with different concentrations of ¹⁰B or ⁶Li
 - 3 gold samples with different diameters

**METHOD
VALIDATED**



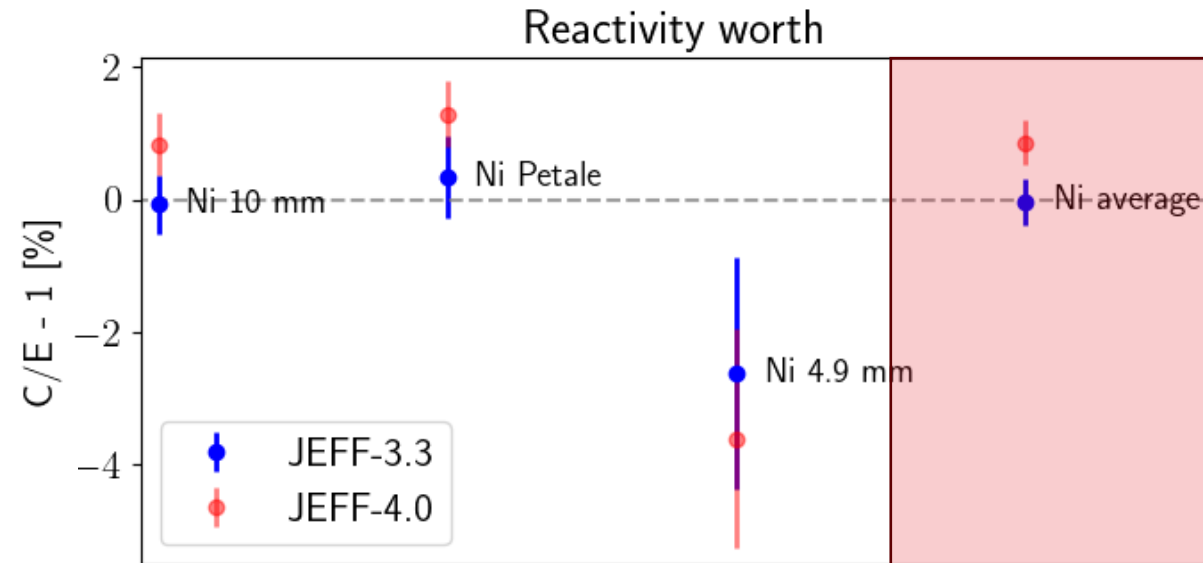
Proportionality for Fe and Ni samples

- Linear behaviour also observed for other elements
 - Nickel sample in agreement with the empty sample
 - Iron sample at four experimental standard deviation
 - Fitting uncertainty increased by the closeness in space



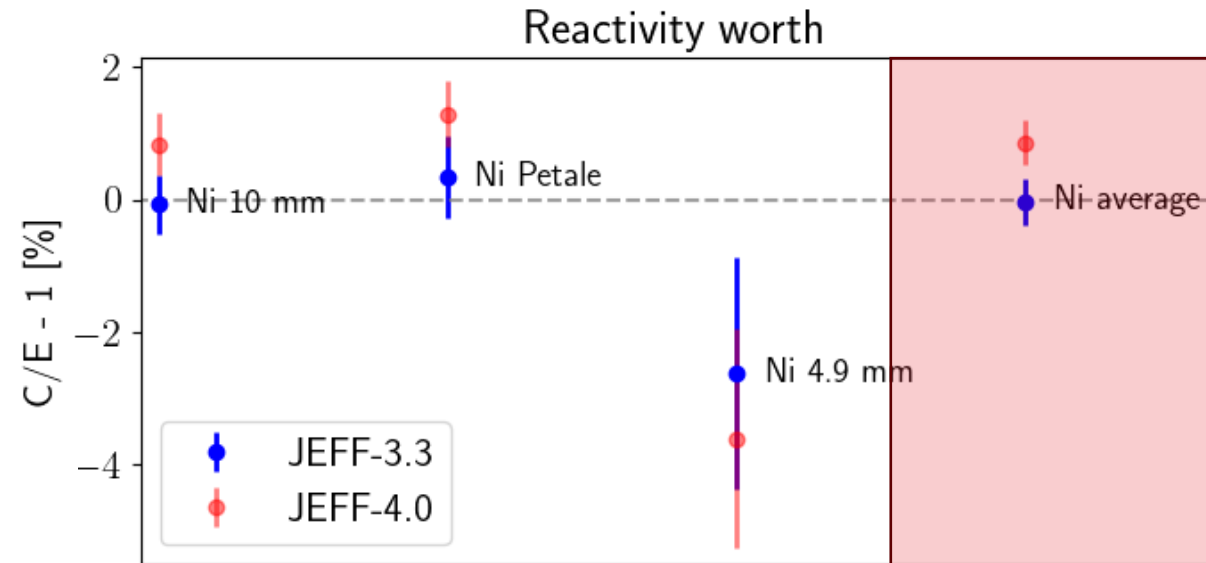
How-to: results presentation

- Full model XS changed
 - Blue: JEFF-3.3
 - Red: JEFF-4.0
- Measurement uncertainties:
 - ~0.02 pcm
- Black Body Exact Perturbation sim.
 - Uncertainty 0.04 pcm
 - ~30h on a large workstation
- Inverse Variance weighted average



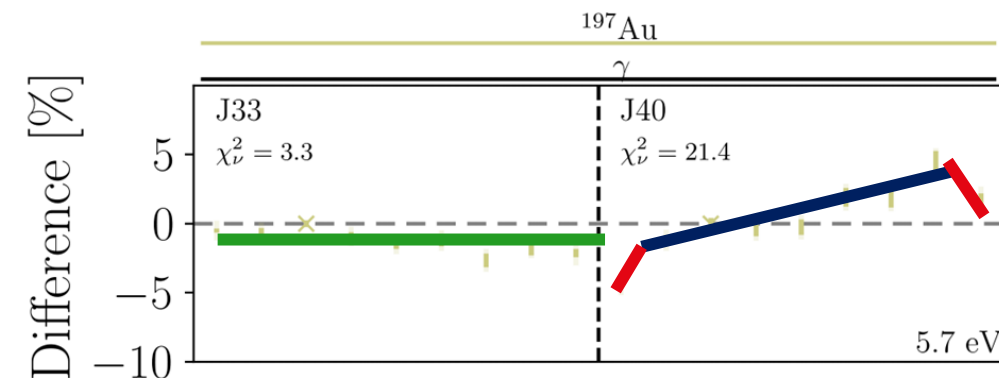
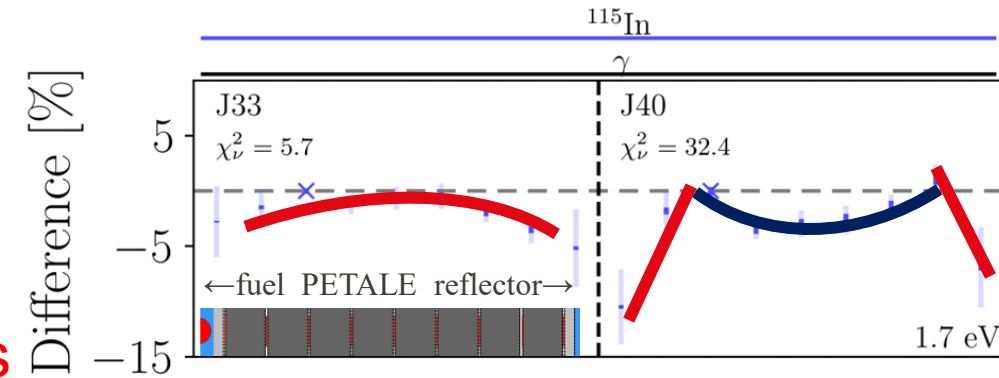
C/E for nickel pile-oscillation experiments

- Nickel C/E seems to degrade
 - C/E Increase of +1 %
 - From agreement to disagreements
 - Degradation of Ni was also observed with PETALE non-threshold



C/E for nickel transmission experiments

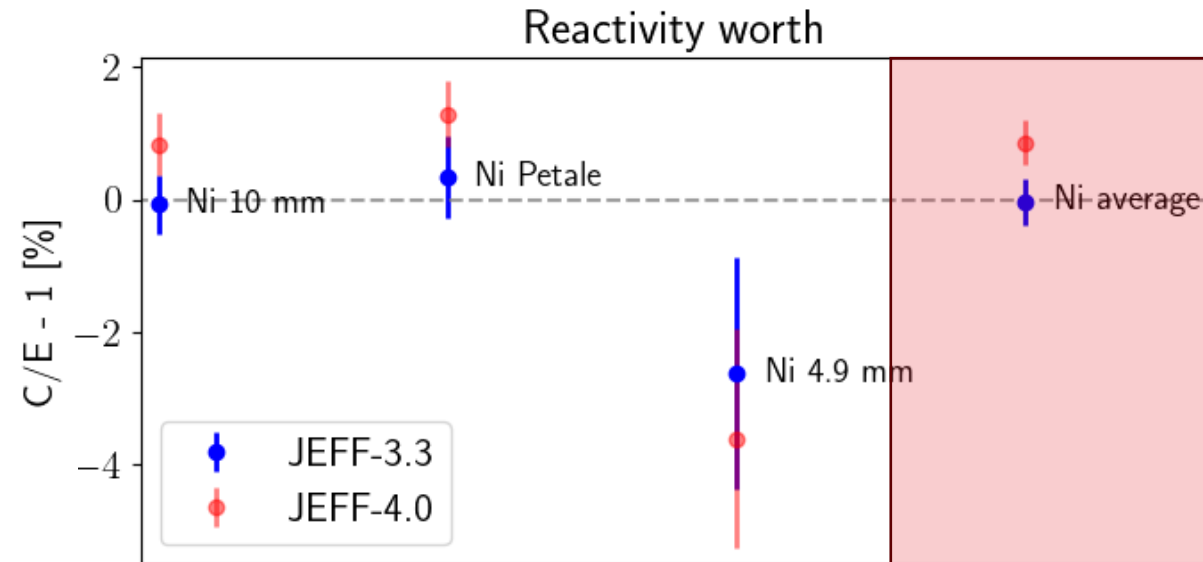
- Magnified drops at the reflector edges
- Gradual increase with depth



Ni

C/E for nickel pile-oscillation experiments

- Nickel C/E seems to degrade
 - C/E Increase of +1 %
 - From agreement to disagreements
 - Degradation of Ni was also observed with PETALE non-threshold



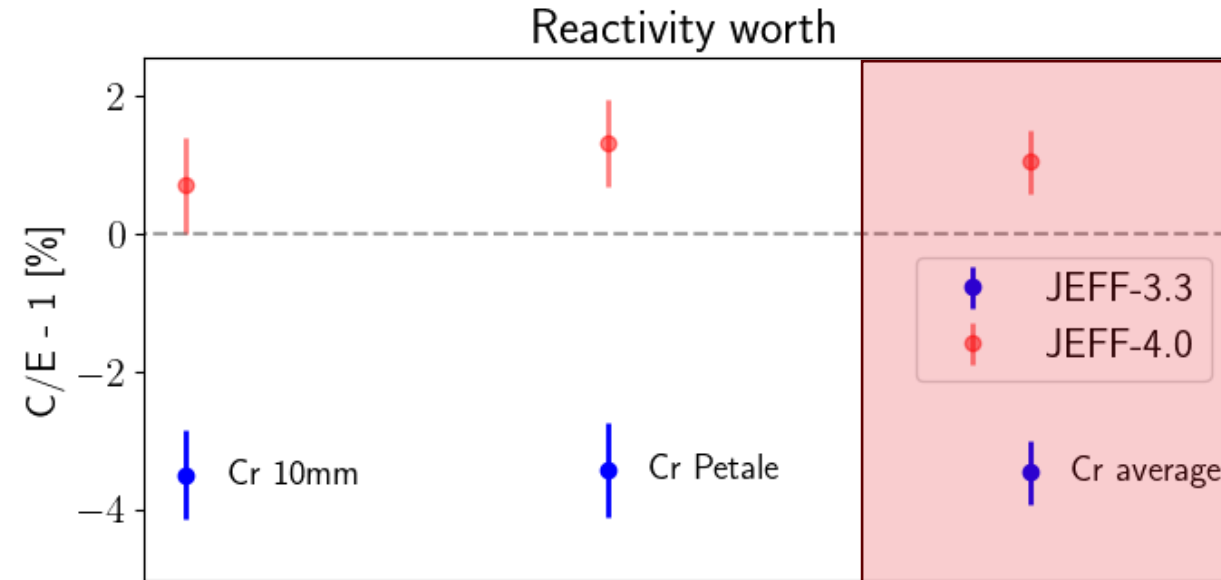
Ni

PETALE: degradation in thermal, same with fast

→ BLOOM: slight degradation

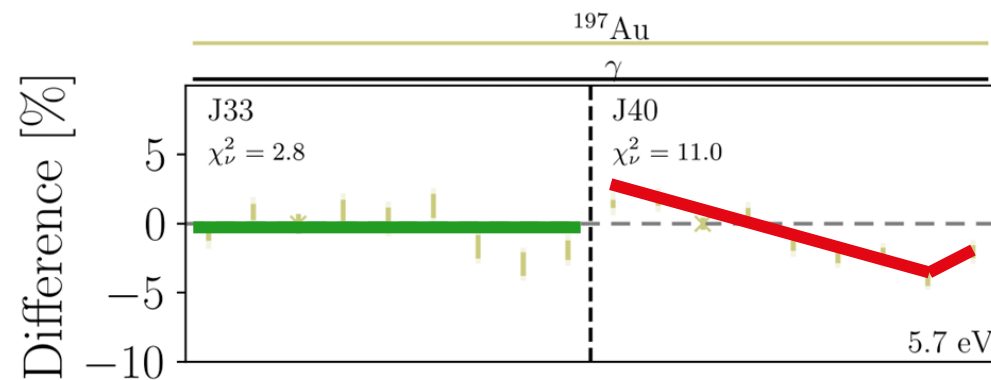
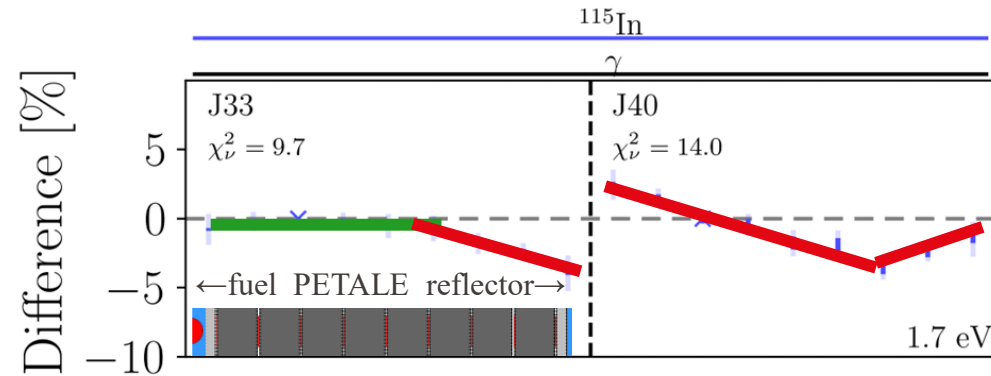
C/E for chromium pile-oscillation experiments

- Clear improvement of the C/Es
 - From -3.5 % to +1 %
 - ~ 2 sigma distance from experiments with JEFF-4.0
 - Unlike PETALE results
 - Degradation of non-threshold dosimeters



C/E for chromium transmission experiments

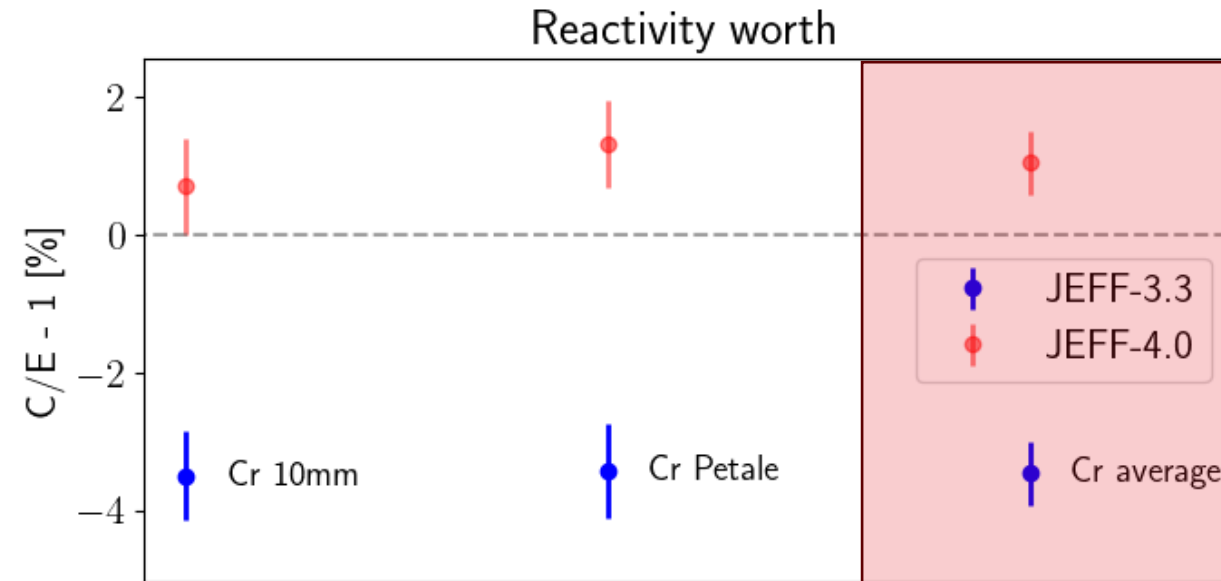
- A trend appeared in the near thermal range for chromium
 - Visible with both experiments
 - Degraded χ^2_v



C/E for chromium pile-oscillation experiments

- Clear improvement of the C/Es

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Ni

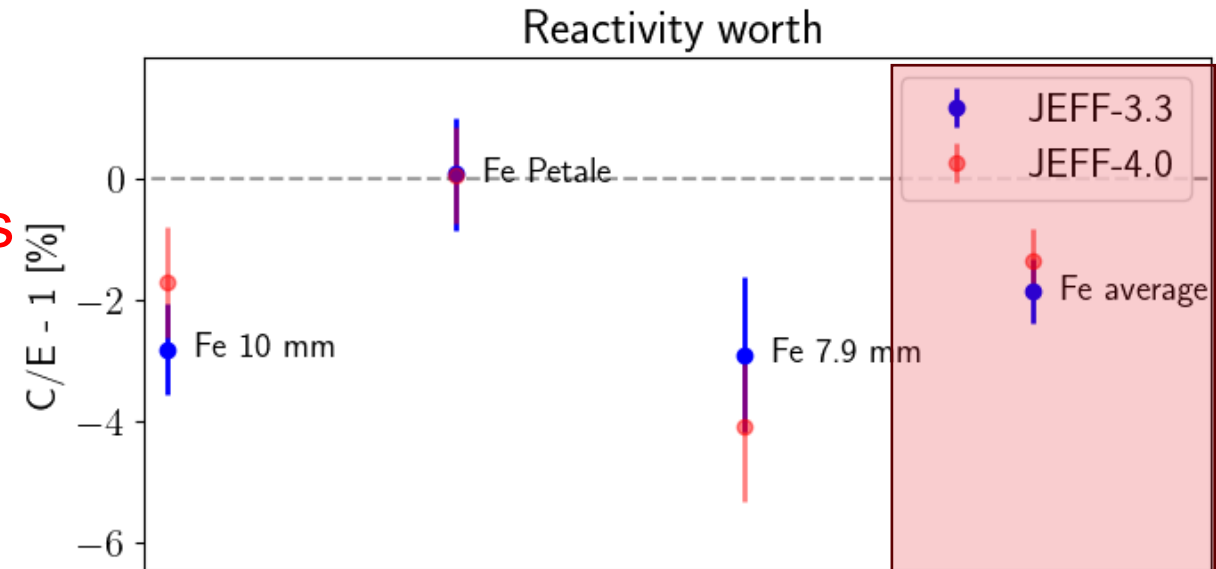
Cr

PETALE: slightly better @2 MeV, worse for non-threshold

→ BLOOM: Clear improvement

C/E for iron pile-oscillation experiments

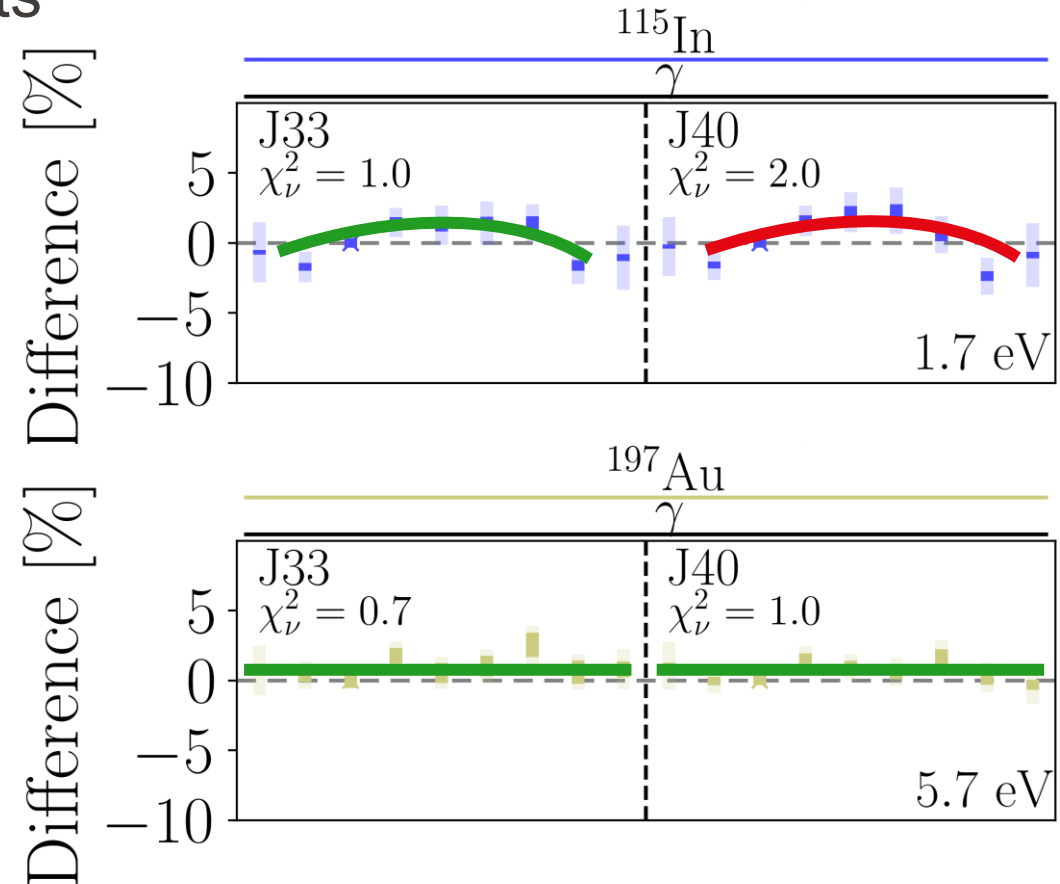
- **No statistically significant differences**
 - Similar to PETALE non-threshold
 - Averaged results at $>2\sigma$ from 0
 - Close to JEFF-3.1.1 in MAESTRO
 - $0.3 \pm 1.2 \text{ \%}$ *
 - Smaller uncertainties needed (sim.)



Ni	Cr	Fe
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C/E for iron transmission experiments

- $^{115}\text{In}(n,g)$ is slightly less consistent
 - χ^2_ν from 1.0 to 2.0
- $^{197}\text{Au}(n,g)$ in agreement with the experimental data
 - Flat C/E

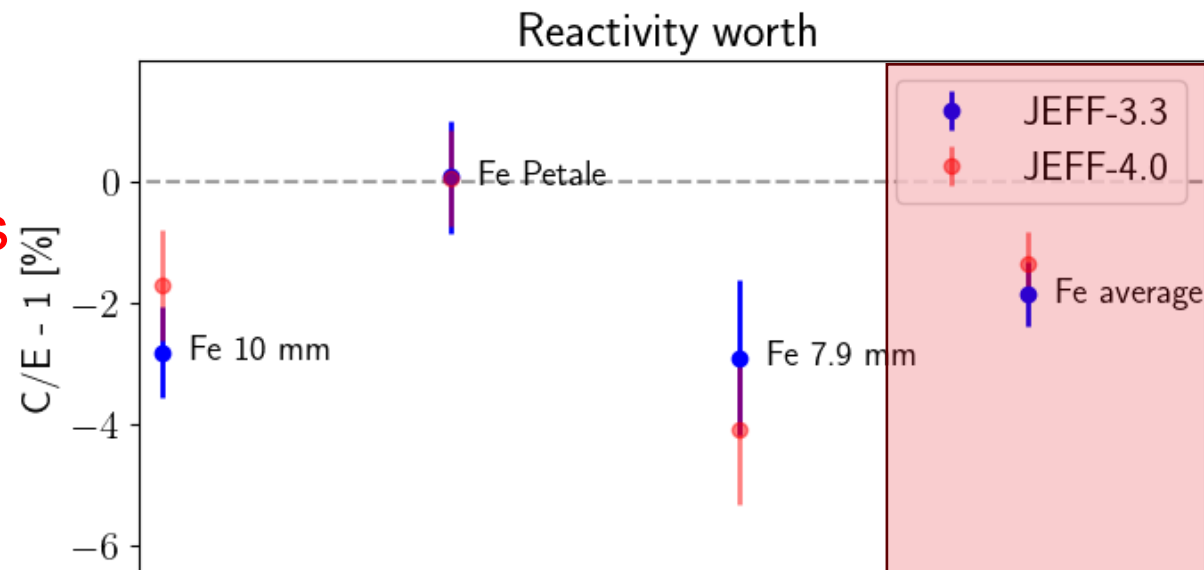


Fe

C/E for iron pile-oscillation experiments

- **No statistically significant differences**

- Similar to PETALE non-threshold
- Averaged results at $>2\sigma$ from 0
- Close to JEFF-3.1.1 in MAESTRO
 - $0.3 \pm 1.2 \%$
- Smaller uncertainties needed (sim.)



Ni

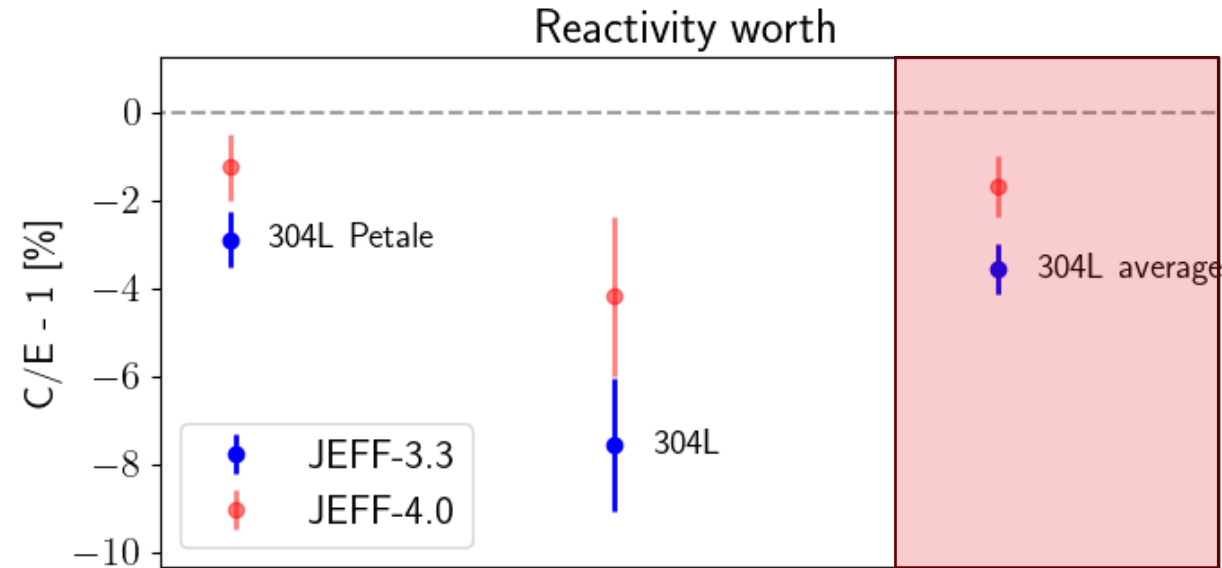
Cr

Fe

PETALE: clear improvement @2 & 3.6 MeV,
slight degradation above, **status quo below**
→ **BLOOM: Status quo**

C/E for 304L pile-oscillation experiments

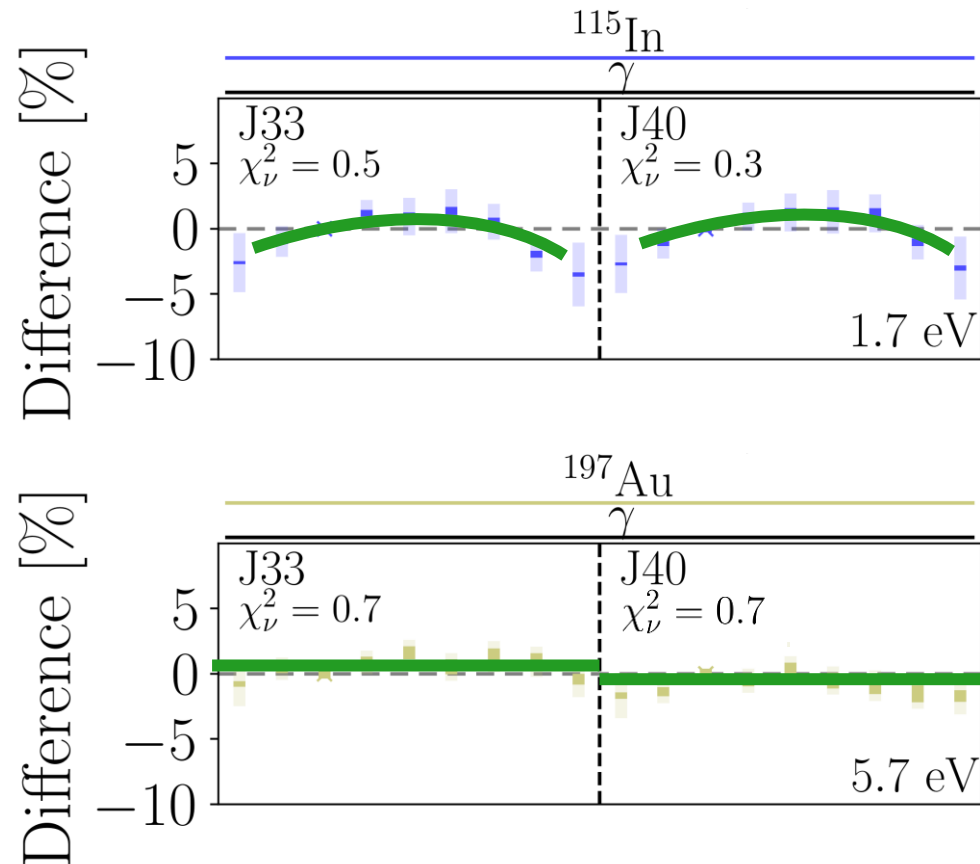
- **Clear improvement of C/Es**
 - Rightfully driven by Cr...
 - ...and wrongfully by the Ni
 - JEFF-4.0 close to the iron results



Ni	Cr	Fe	304L
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C/E for 304L transmission experiments

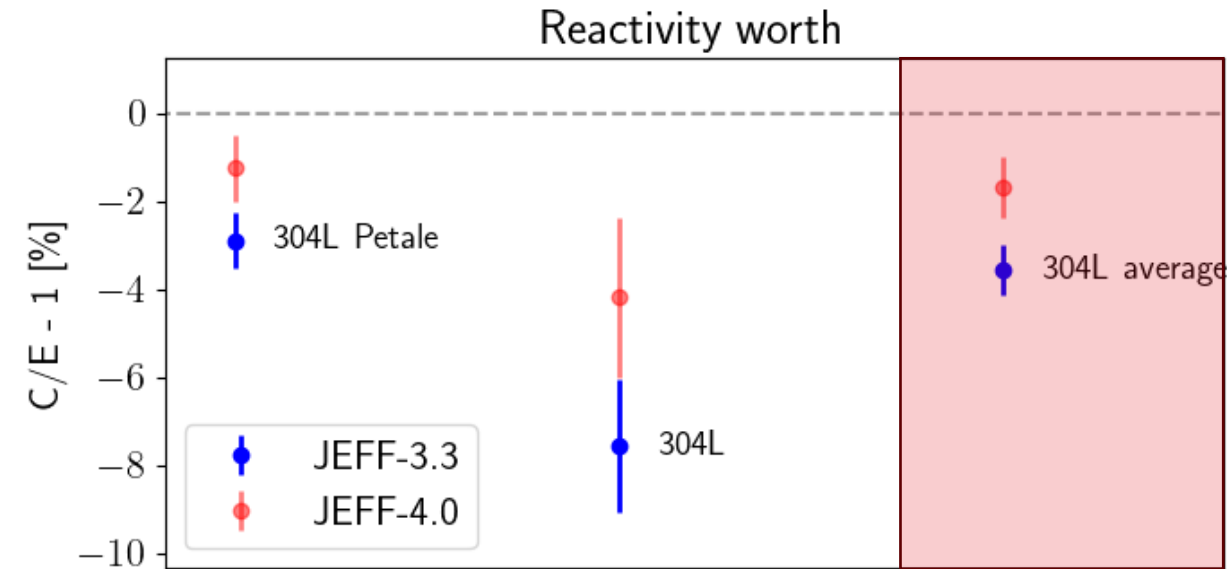
- Both evaluations are in agreement with the experiments
 - Flat C/E
 - χ^2_ν also in agreement



304L

C/E for 304L pile-oscillation experiments

- **Clear improvement of C/Es**
 - Rightfully driven by Cr...
 - ...and wrongfully by the Ni
 - JEFF-4.0 close to the iron results

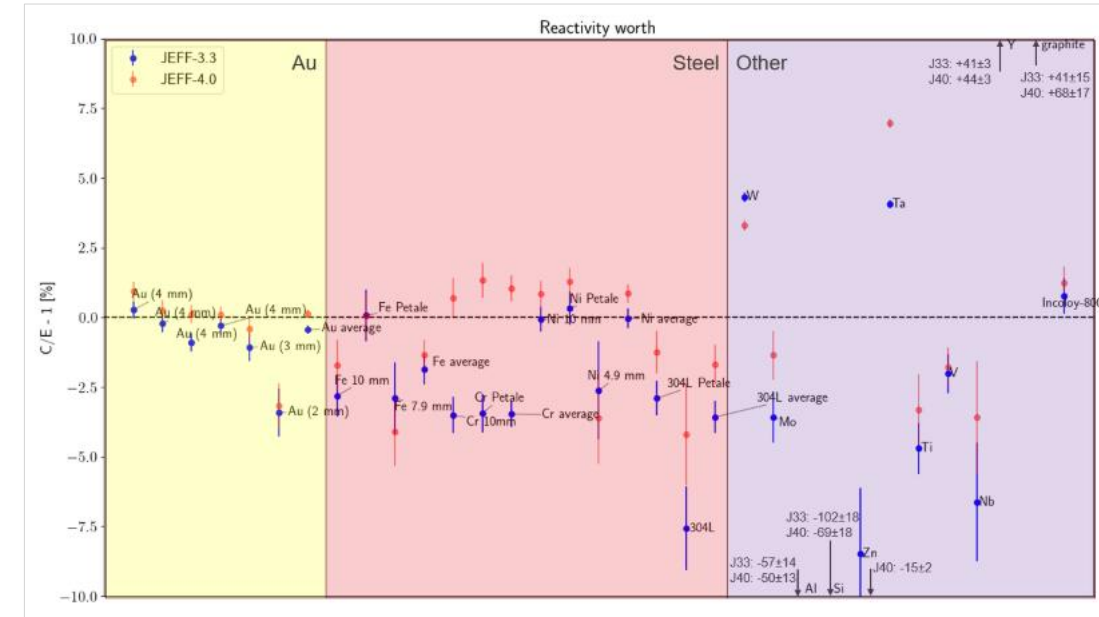


Ni	Cr	Fe	304L
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PETALE: Clear improvement @2 & 3.6 MeV, slight improvement above, **status quo below**
➔ **BLOOM: Improvement**

BLOOM Library Comparison Results

- $\Delta\rho$: 0.2 to 24 pcm
- Constant uncertainties
 - Regardless of the sample
- Clear Improvements:
 - W
 - Mo
- Small improvement:
 - Si
- Clear degradation:
 - Ta
 - Zn



Conclusion

- The BLOOM program was performed at the end of 2024
 - 40 experiments
 - Focusing on stainless steel
 - measurement uncertainties ~ 0.02 pcm
- Analysis status
 - First analysis performed as part of my thesis
 - Modelling and simulation with Black Body Exact Perturbation
 - Current uncertainties: ~ 0.04 pcm
- Stainless steel results
 - Chromium shows a clear improvement
 - Nickel degrades slightly
 - Iron is untouched
 - 304L Improves

Outlook

HARVEST-X

- PETALE ICSBEP benchmarking
 - targeting acceptance in April 2028
- New transmission experiments
 - GRAPE: accelerator-based source
 - GODIVA-IV

BLOOM

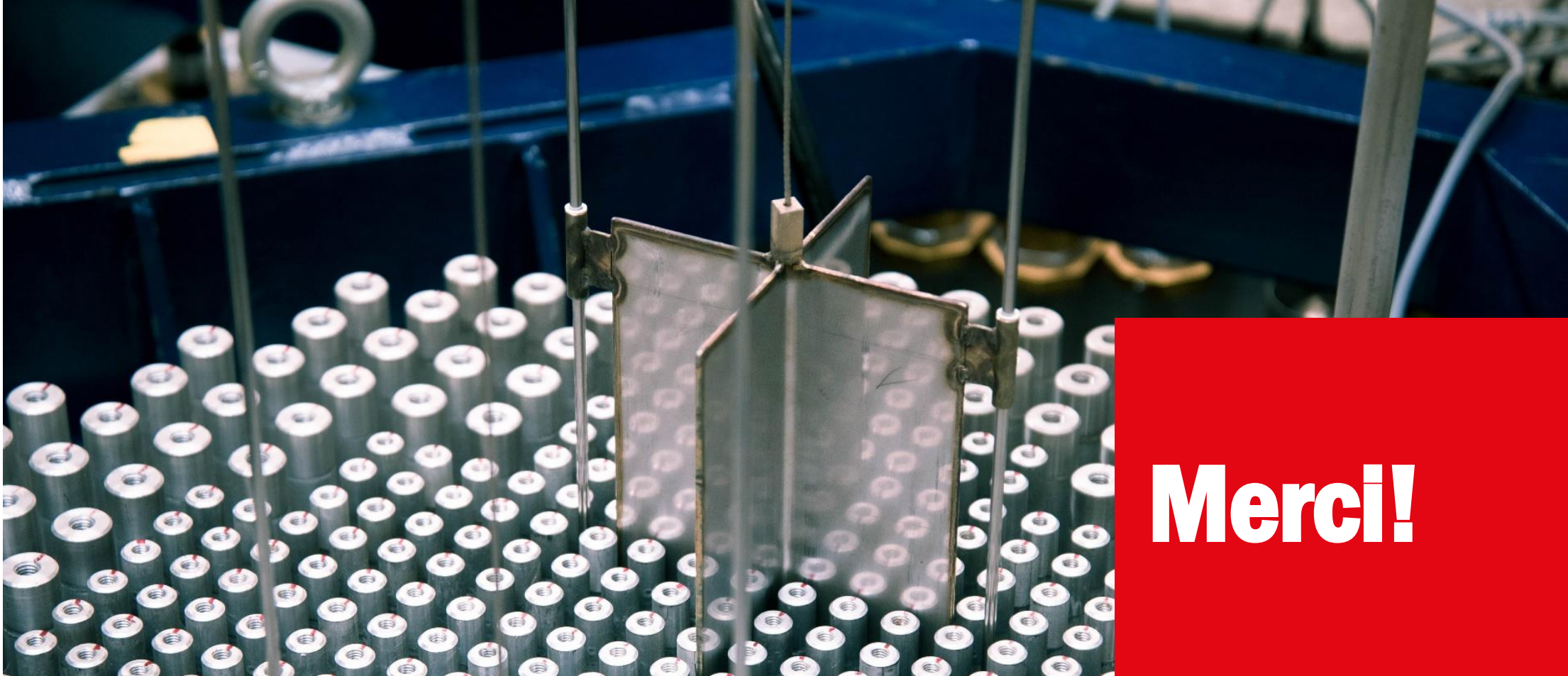
- Finalization of analysis and benchmarking
 - Developments for the interpretation of local signals
 - Proposal submitted
- Expansion of the program to non-structural material, e.g., fissile samples
 - Higher power irradiations for higher precision
 - Feedback on isotopes of the high-priority list
 - Test data for highly needed materials, e.g., **HALEU**, using only small quantities!

Merci!

Thomas Ligonnet

INDEN Consultancy meeting 2025

Vienna, Austria



Merci!

Public PhD Defense
Analysis and Reproduction of Stainless-steel Integral Experiments
Towards Nuclear Data Assimilation

19.12.2025 at 13:30 GMT+1

Zoom: 625 1741 8008

Point kinetics testing

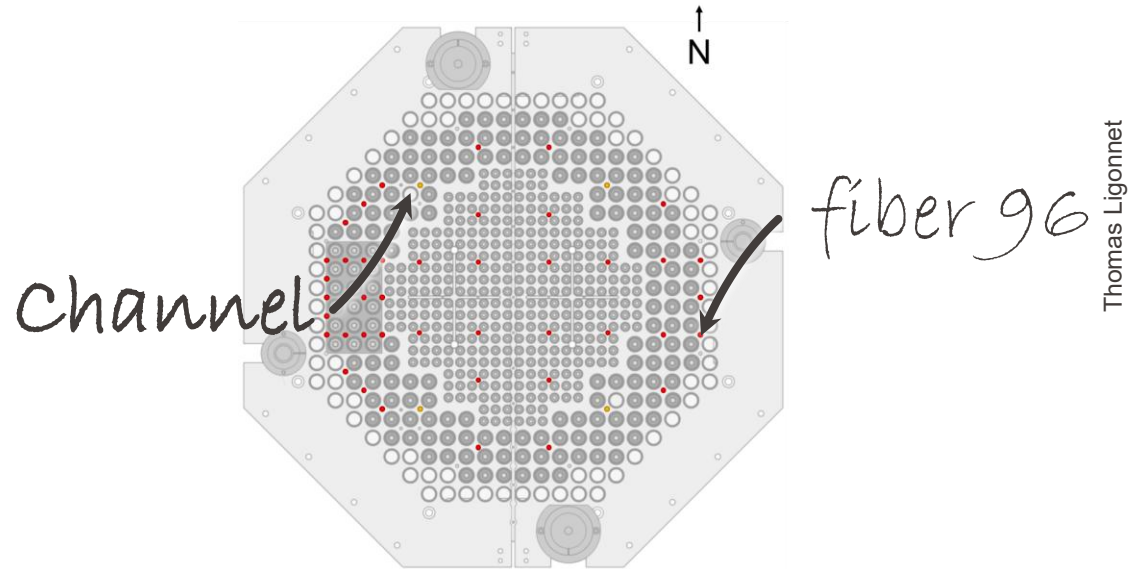
Flux redistribution verification:

- Would imply a correction factor for global
- Computation of the spectral power ratio¹
 - Using 1st harmonic of CPSD
 - Comparison with core center fiber n° 96

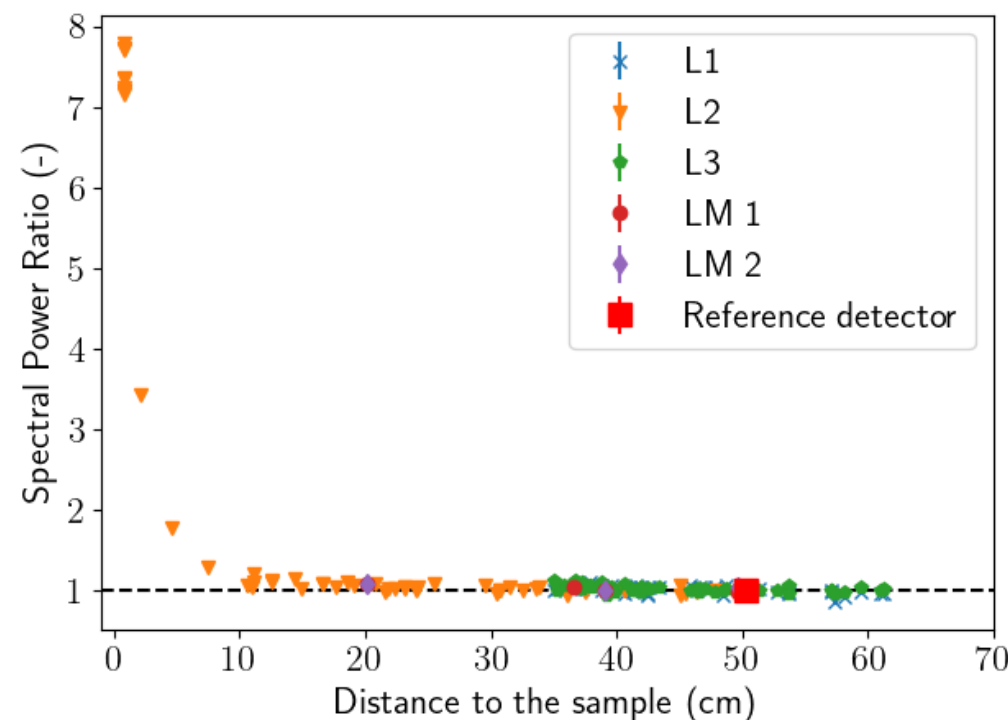
$$SPR_{i,77} \equiv \frac{\sqrt{P_{i,i}}}{\sqrt{P_{77,77}}} = \frac{1}{M} \sum_j^M \frac{P_{i,j}}{P_{j,77}}$$

- Local amplitude effect clearly visible
 - Dissipate at 15 cm
- No significant flux redistribution

➡ No correction required!

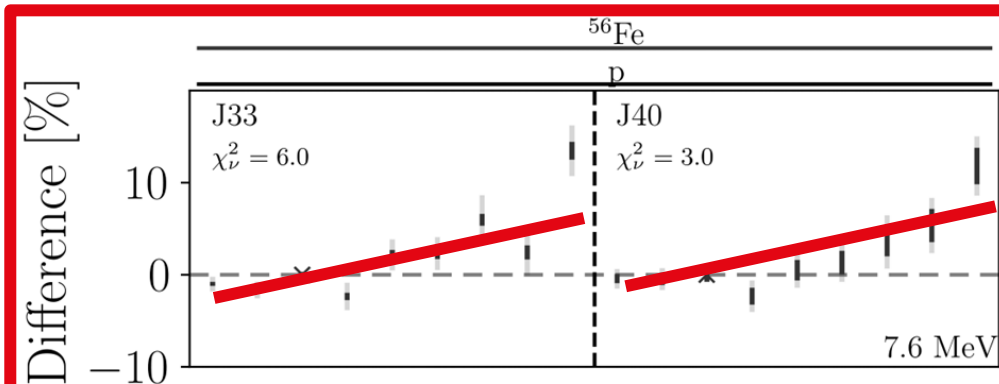
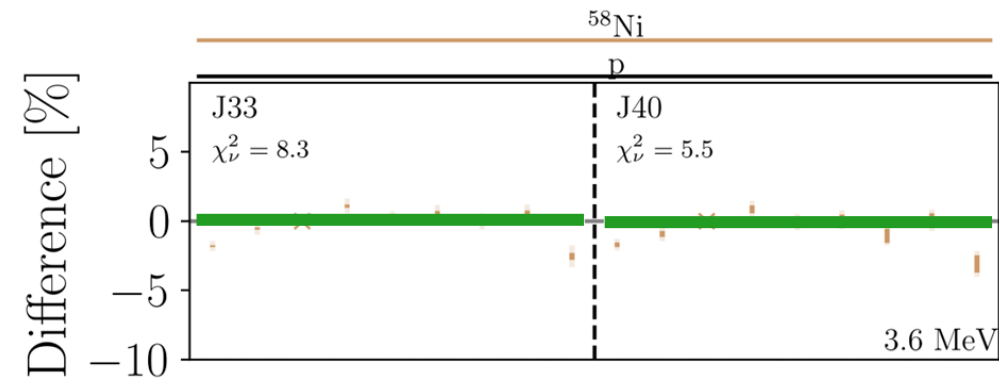
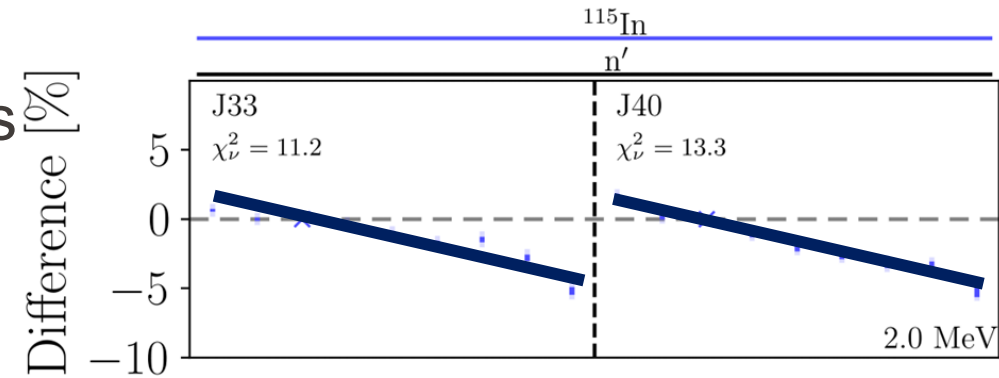


Thomas Ligonnet



C/E for nickel transmission experiments

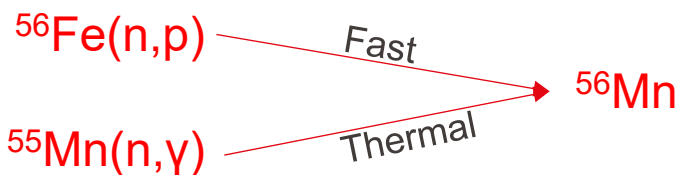
- Globally: change in trend
- JEFF-4.0 similar to JEFF-3.3



Ni

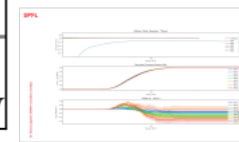
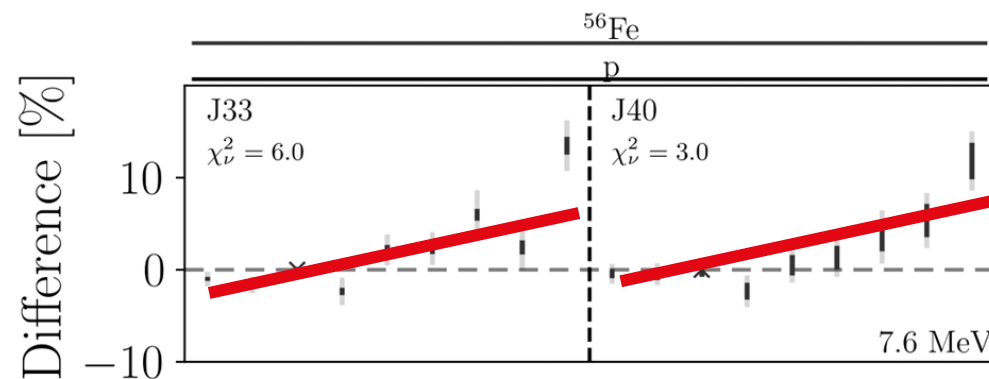
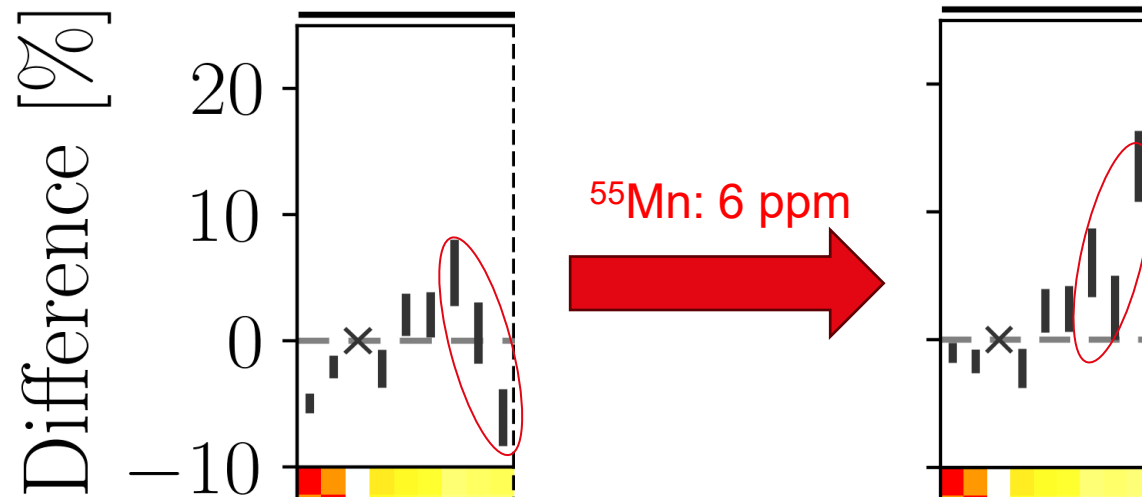
C/E for nickel transmission experiments

- ^{55}Mn impurities in iron dosimeters



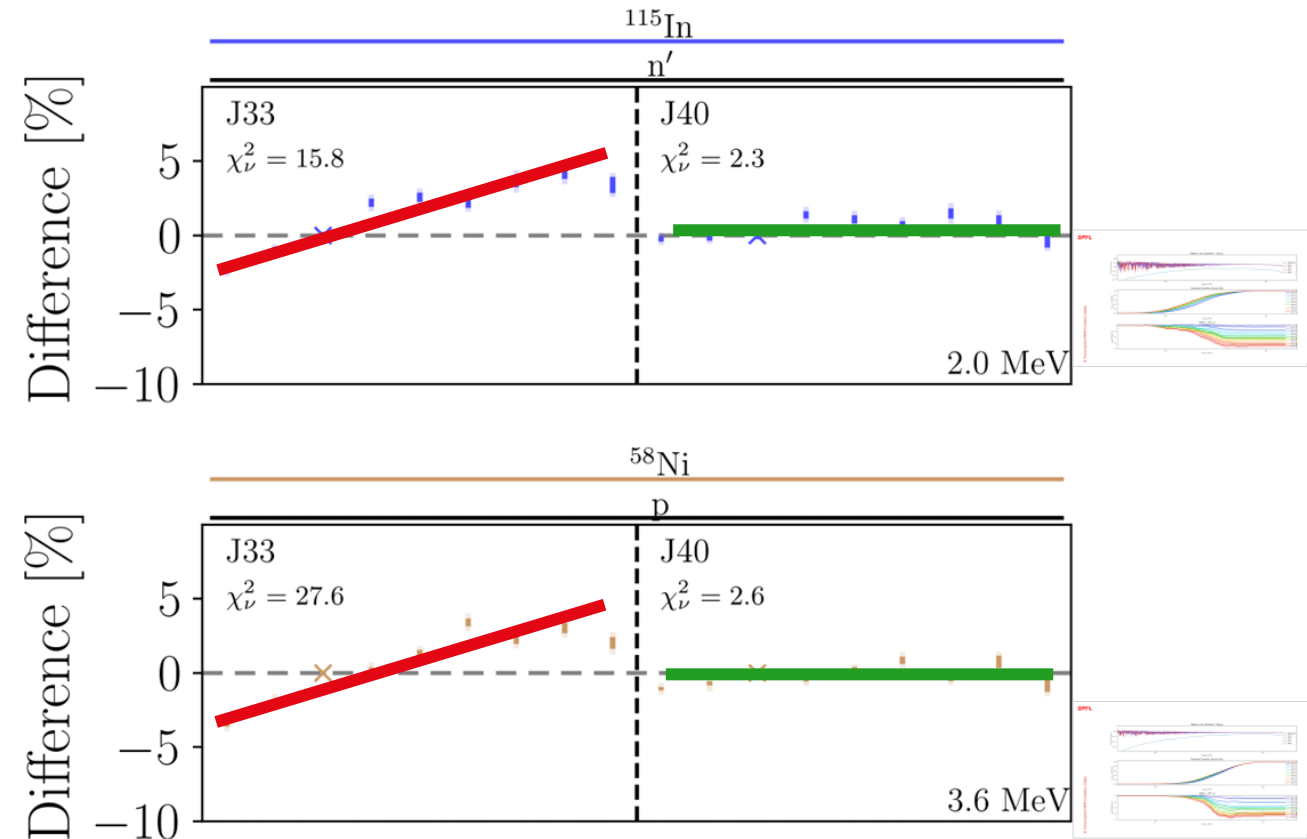
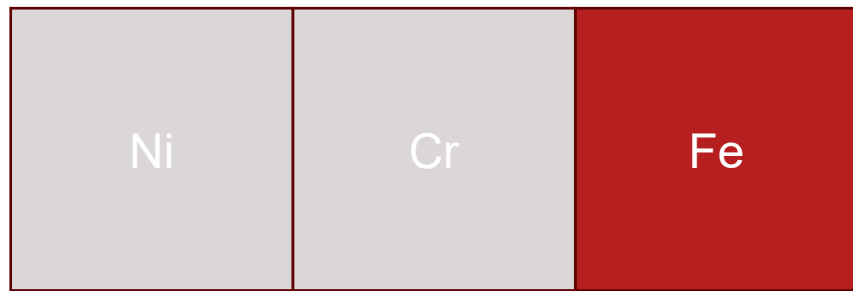
- ~6 ppm, but up to 20 % of the activity

Ni



C/E for iron transmission experiments

- Improvement of the results
 - Both around 2 MeV and 3.6 MeV
 - The previous trend is flattened

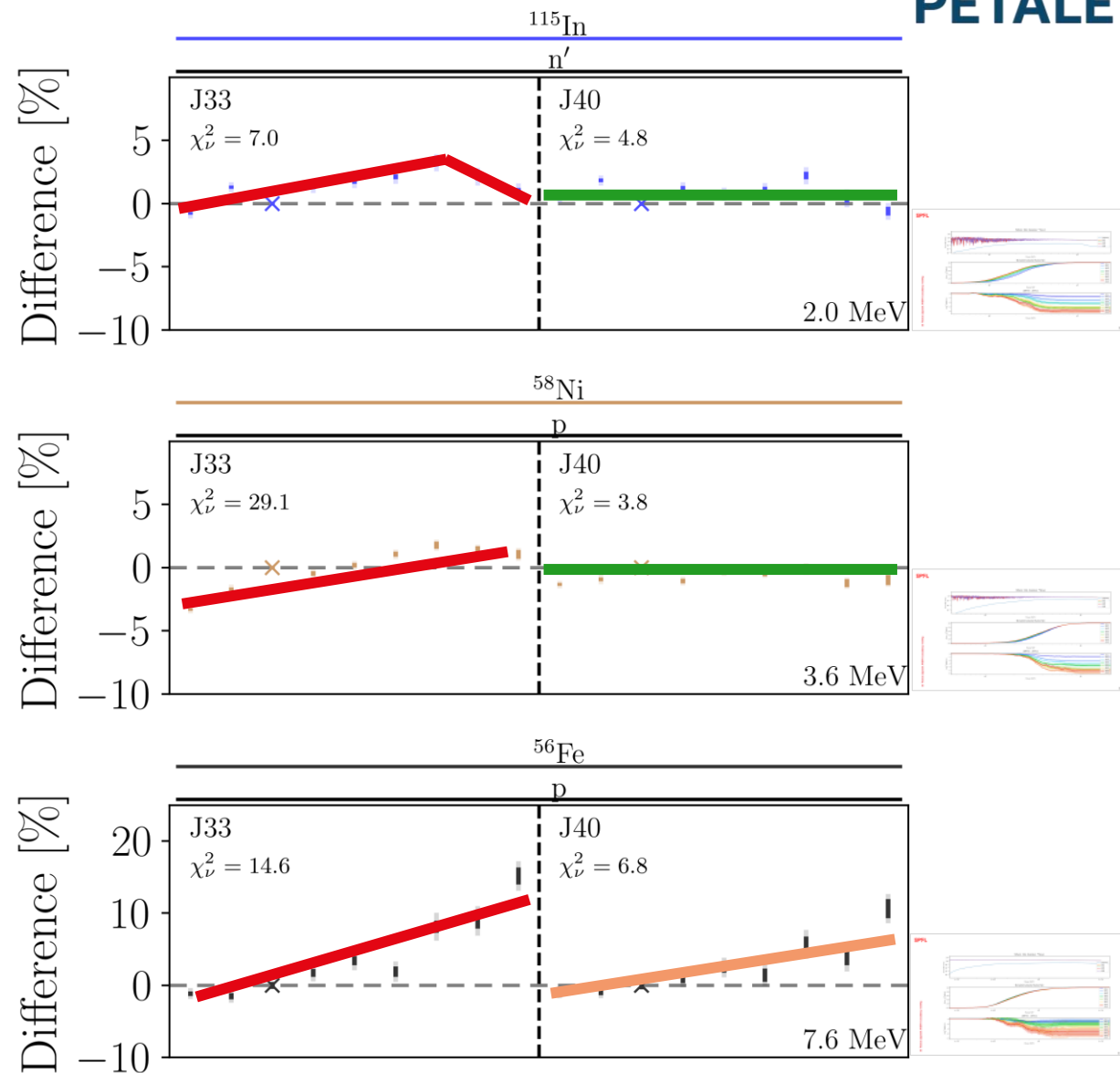


C/E for 304L transmission experiments

■ Previous trends flattened

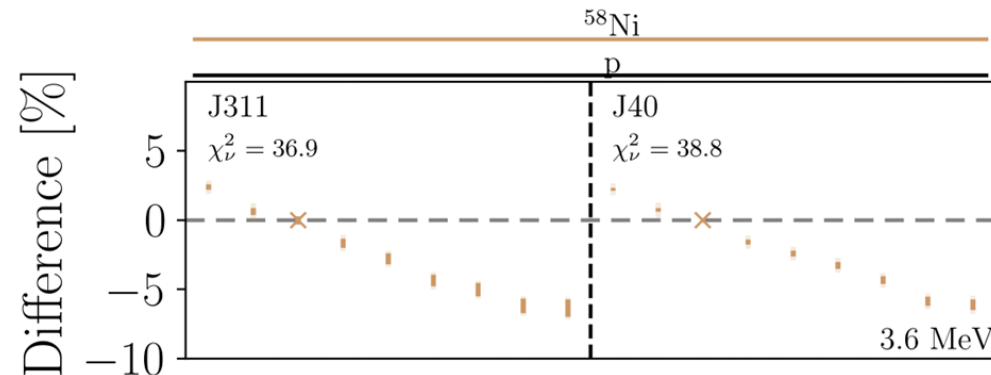
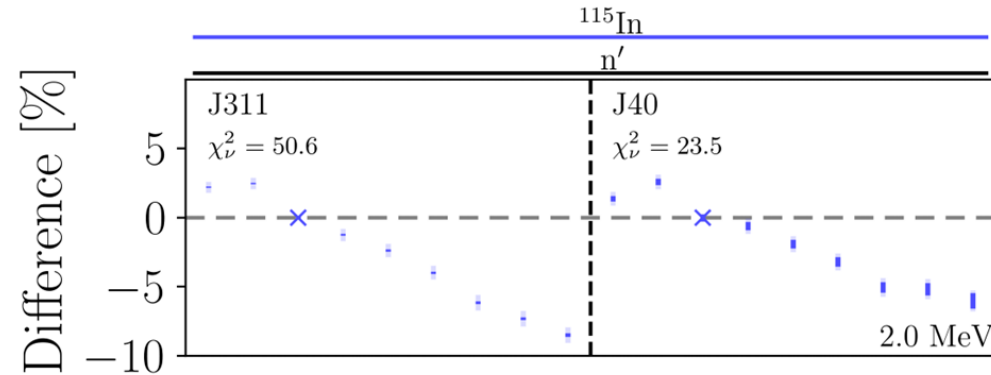
- Especially for $^{115}\text{In}(n,n')$ and $^{58}\text{Ni}(n,p)$
- Slightly better at higher energy
 - $^{56}\text{Fe}(n,p)$: Suspected compensation from Cr

Ni	Cr	Fe	304L
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C/E for chromium transmission experiments

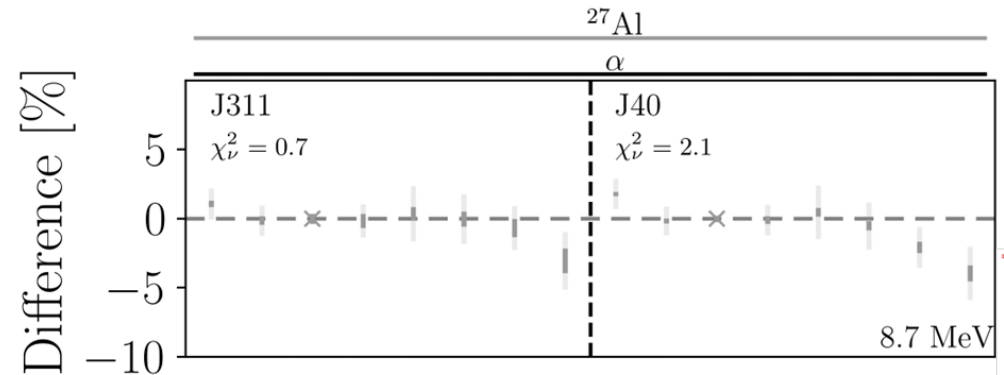
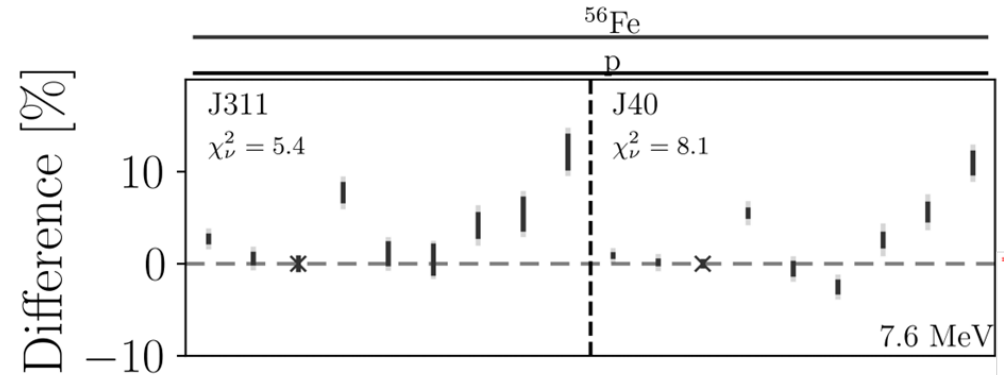
- The discrepancies around 2 MeV are reduced with JEFF-4.0
 - A clear trend is still visible
- The Ni dosimeter trend is preserved
 - But the activation spectrum is different



Cr

C/E for chromium transmission experiments

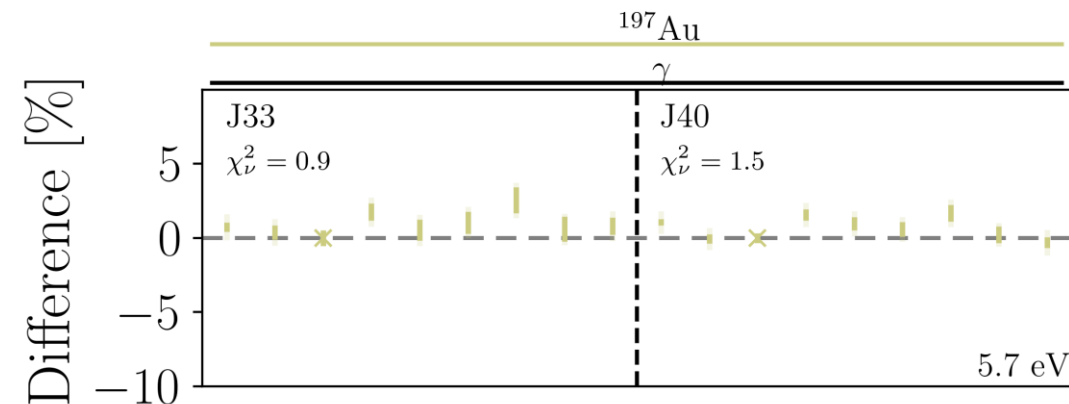
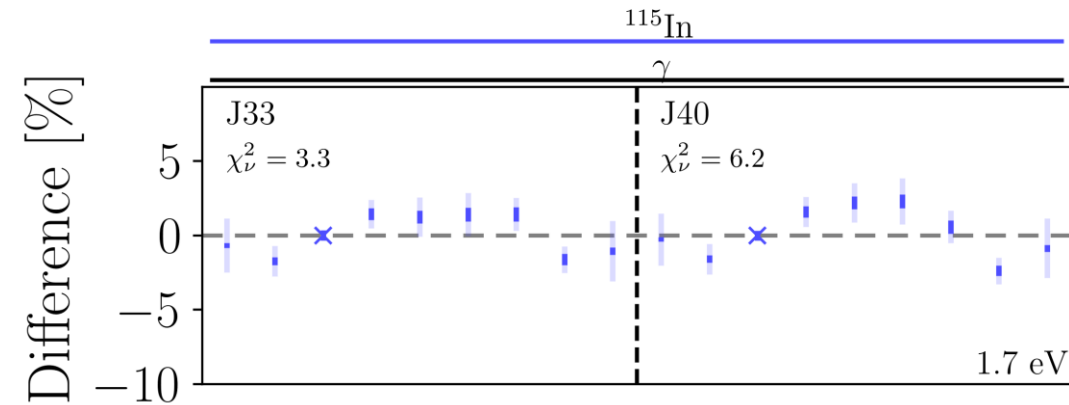
- The trends at higher energy
 - No significant differences are between evaluations
 - Small differences could be from the calculation statistics



Cr

C/E for iron transmission experiments

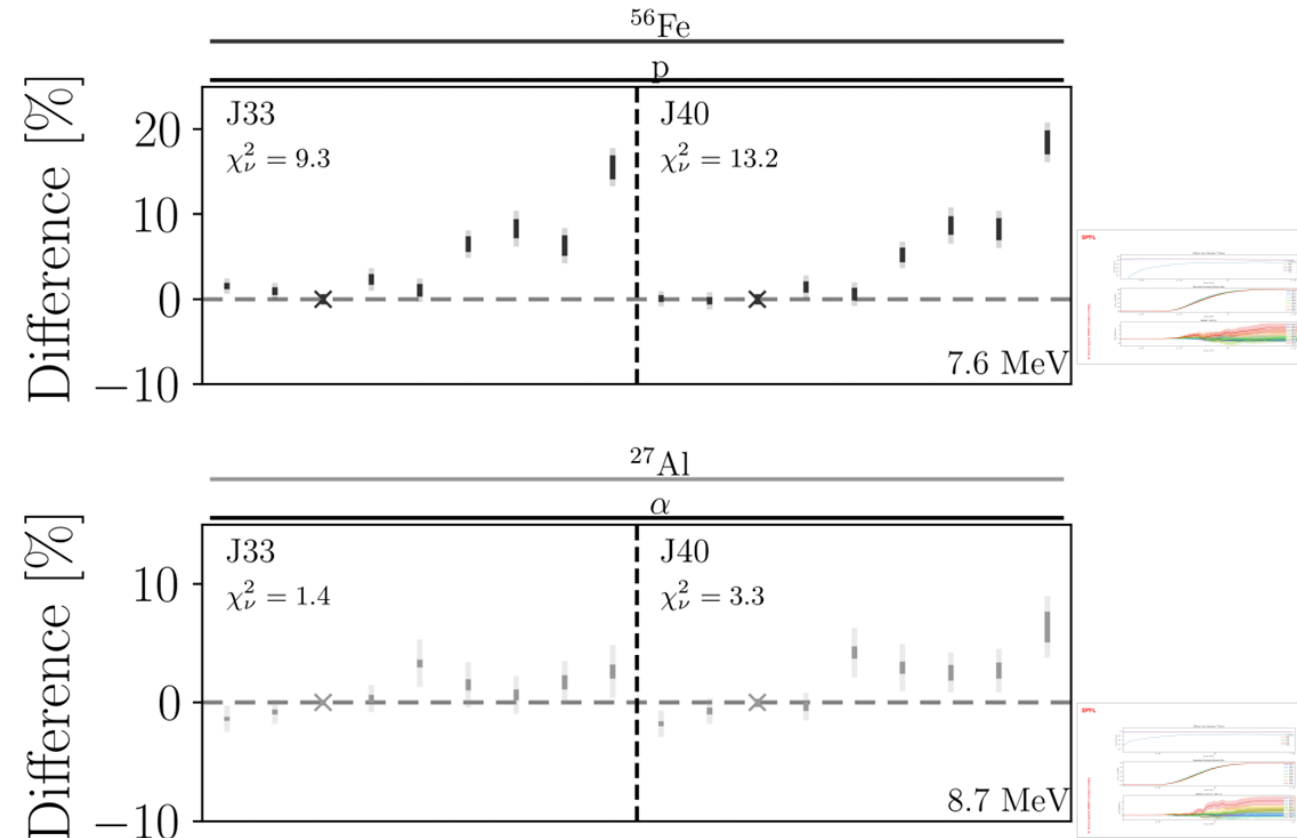
- $^{115}\text{In}(n,g)$ is slightly less consistent
 - χ^2_ν from 3.3 to 6.1
- $^{197}\text{Au}(n,g)$ in agreement with the experimental data
 - Flat C/E



Fe

C/E for iron transmission experiments

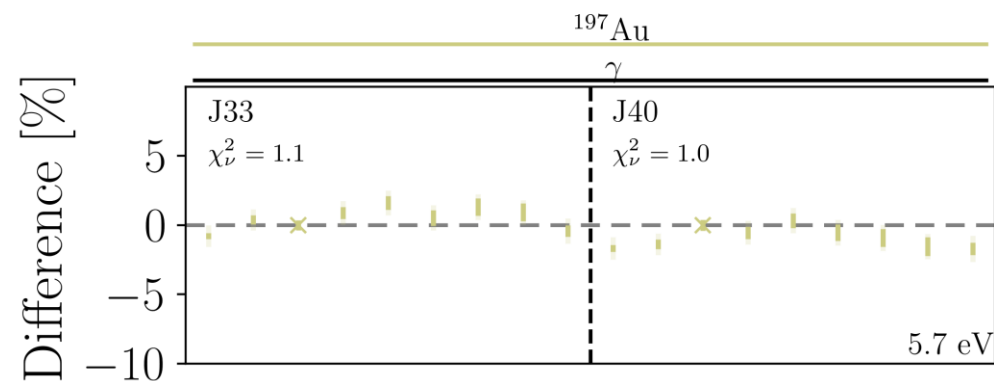
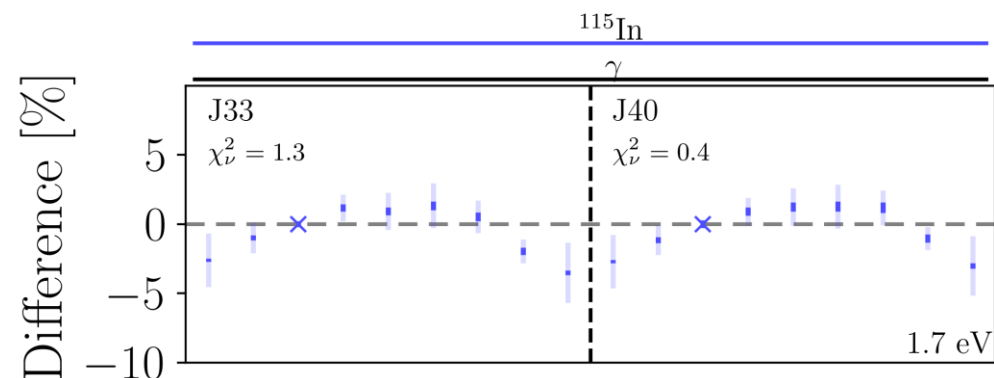
- Degradation at higher energy
 - Slight increase in trend
 - Statistically significant



Fe

C/E for 304L transmission experiments

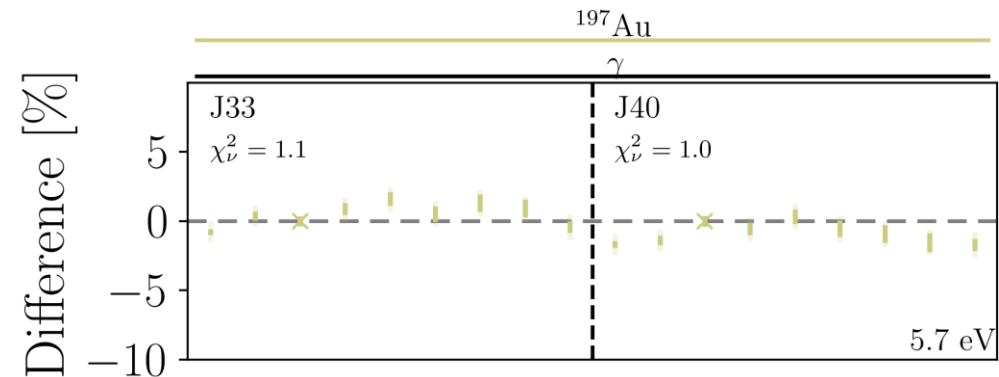
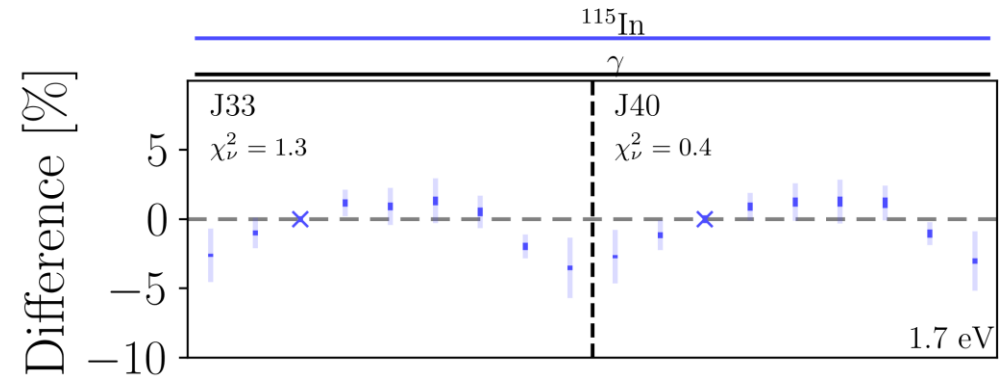
- Both evaluations are in agreement with the experiments
 - Flat C/E
 - χ^2_ν also in agreement



304L

C/E for 304L transmission experiments

- Both evaluations are in agreement with the experiments
 - Flat C/E
 - χ^2_ν also in agreement



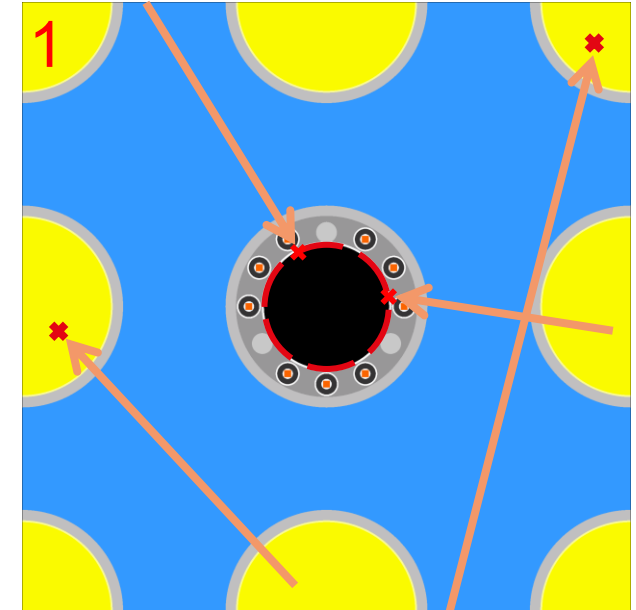
304L

Black body exact perturbation

- Derived from the exact perturbation theory¹
- Reactivity worth of a sample against a perfect absorber (black body)

Calculation with Serpent in 2 parts

1. Generation of sources with a black body
 - Only done once
 - Material set as “outside”
 - Surface Tracking **only!**
 - Outputs:
 - Fission source
 - All neutrons entering the black body (>1M)
 - W The sum of their weight
 - k_{BB} the simulation k-effective
 - N the total number of histories



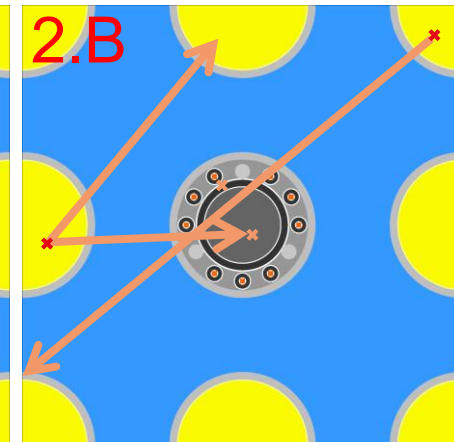
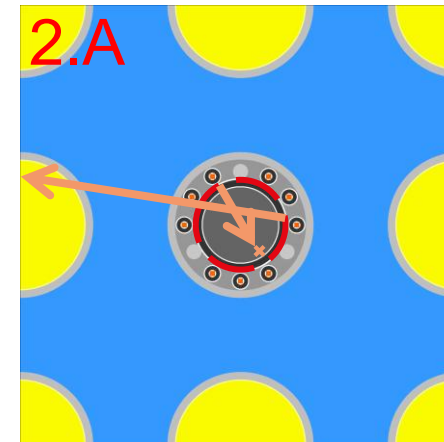
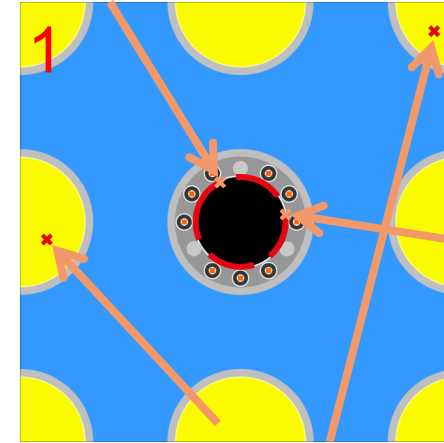
1. G. Truchet, P. Leconte. Small sample reactivity worths calculation exact perturbation theory and Monte Carlo transport. M&C2019, Aug 2019, Portland, United States.

Black body exact perturbation

- Derived from the exact perturbation theory
- Reactivity worth of a sample against a perfect absorber (black body)

Calculation with Serpent in 2 parts

1. Generation of sources with a black body
 - Common to all samples
2. K-eigenvalue simulations with the sample
 - One simulation *A* with the black body record as the initial source
 - One simulation *B* with the black body fission source as the initial source
 - Record the cycle-wise k_{eff} of **all** cycles
 - 30 cycles
 - > 5M neutrons per cycle (5 times the source)



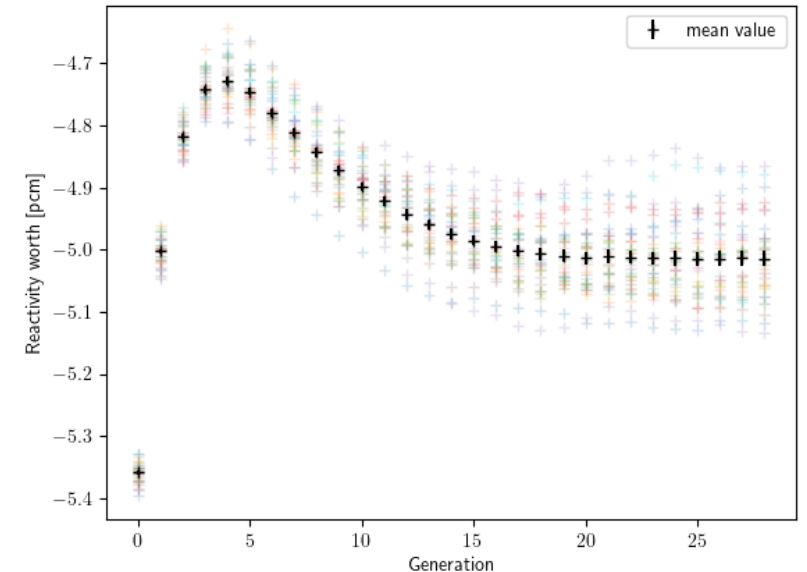
Black body exact perturbation

- Derived from the exact perturbation theory
- Reactivity worth of a sample against a perfect absorber (black body)

$$\Delta\rho_{S-BB} = \frac{W \prod_{i=1}^{30} k_{eff,i}^A}{N k_{BB} \prod_{i=1}^{30} k_{eff,i}^B}$$

- Sample reactivity worth:
 - Difference with a sample of air
 - Common to all cases
- Uncertainties by repetition with different seeds
 - 64 instances
 - ~0.05 pcm on the reactivity worth

$$\Delta\rho_{S-Air} = \Delta\rho_{S-BB} - \Delta\rho_{Air-BB}$$

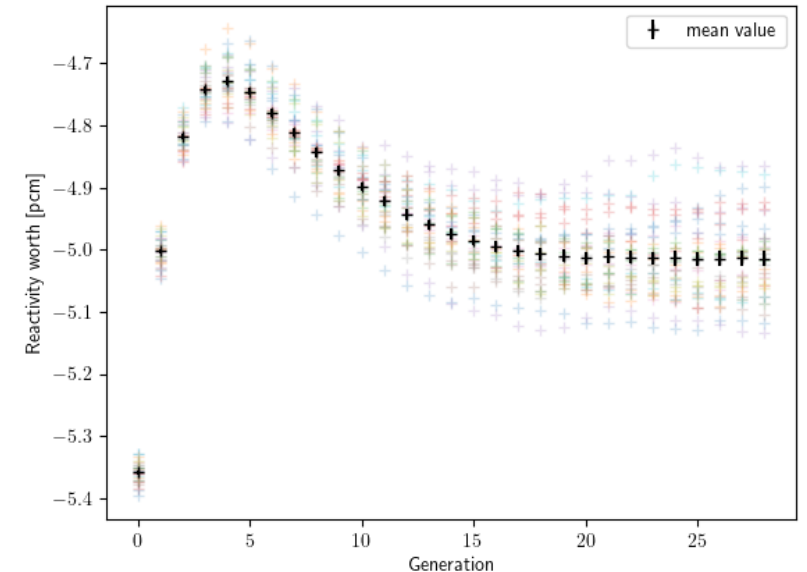


Verification against the standard method

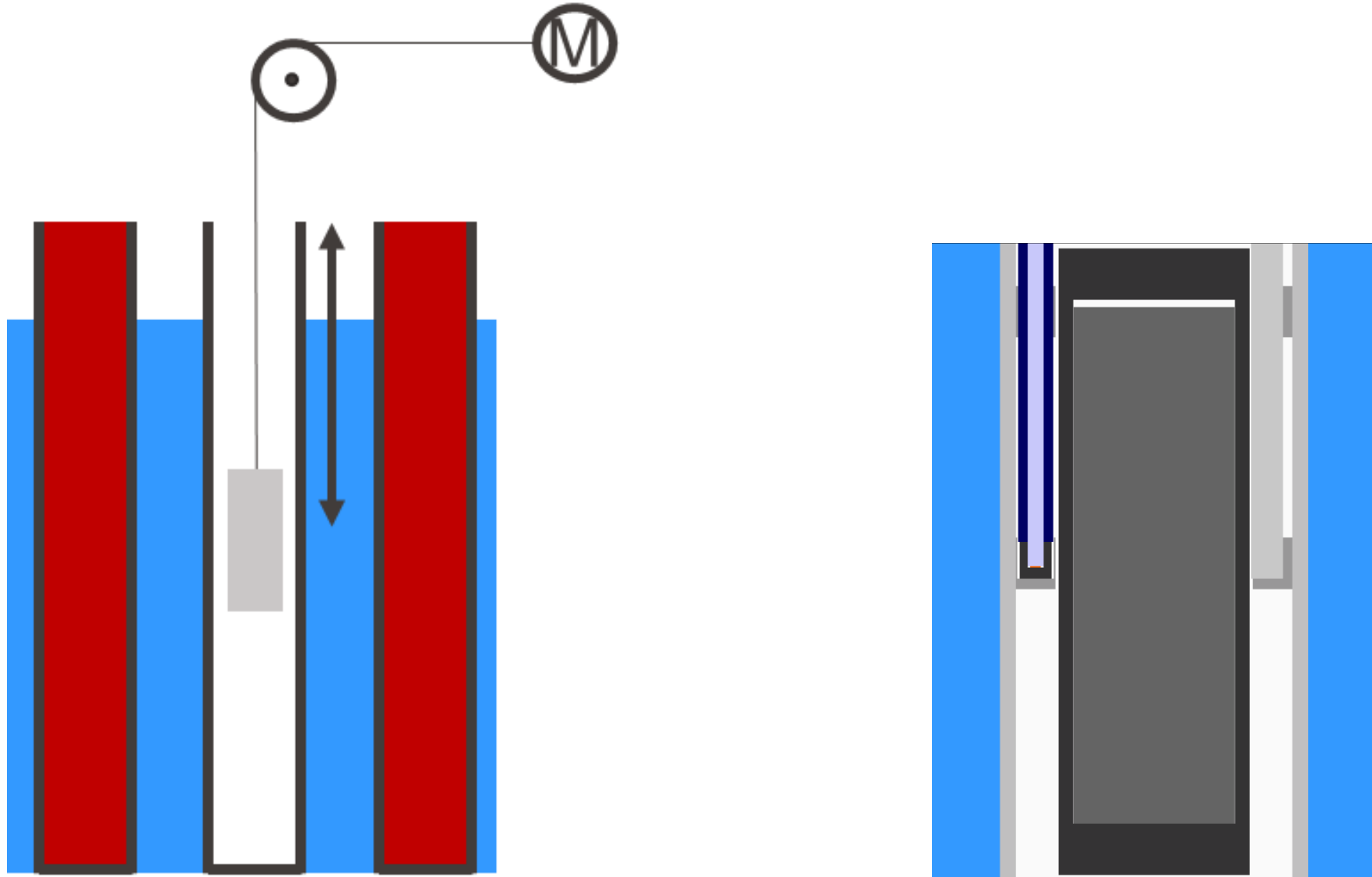
- Reactivity worth iron sample JEFF-3.3
 - k-eigenvalue: 5.6 ± 0.5 ppm
 - Week-long simulations
 - BBEP: 5.45 ± 0.05 ppm
 - ~25 h each reactor configuration

$$\Delta\rho_{S-BB} = \frac{W \prod_{i=1}^{30} k_{eff,i}^A}{N k_{BB} \prod_{i=1}^{30} k_{eff,i}^B}$$

$$\Delta\rho_{S-Air} = \Delta\rho_{S-BB} - \Delta\rho_{Air-BB}$$



Model profile BLOOM



Point kinetics testing

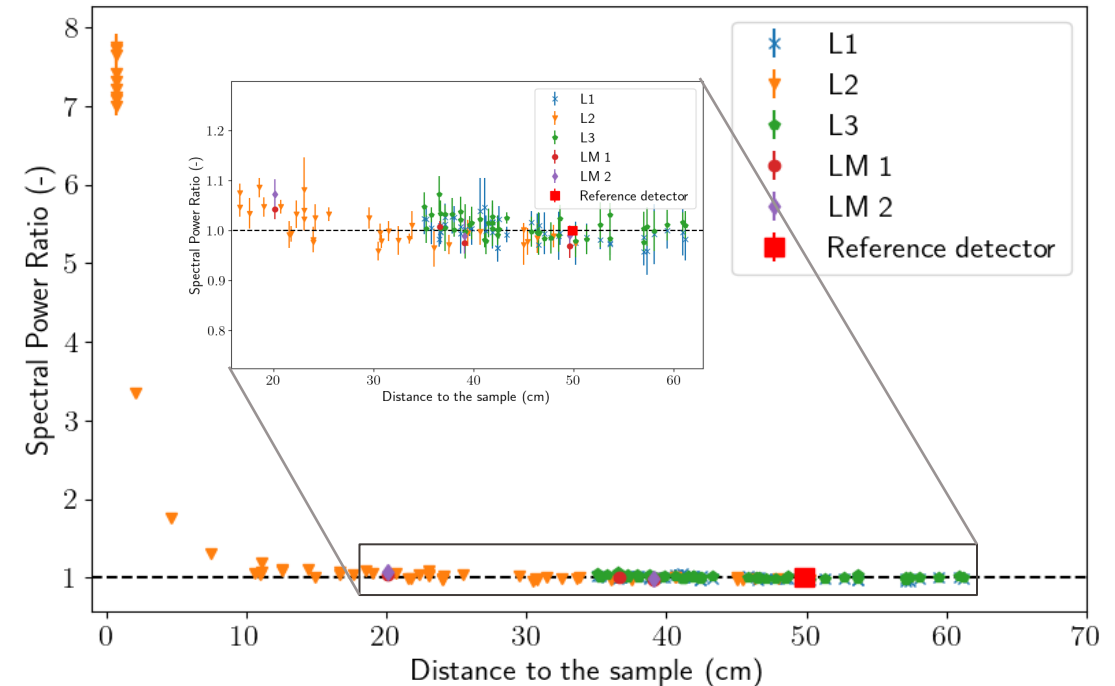
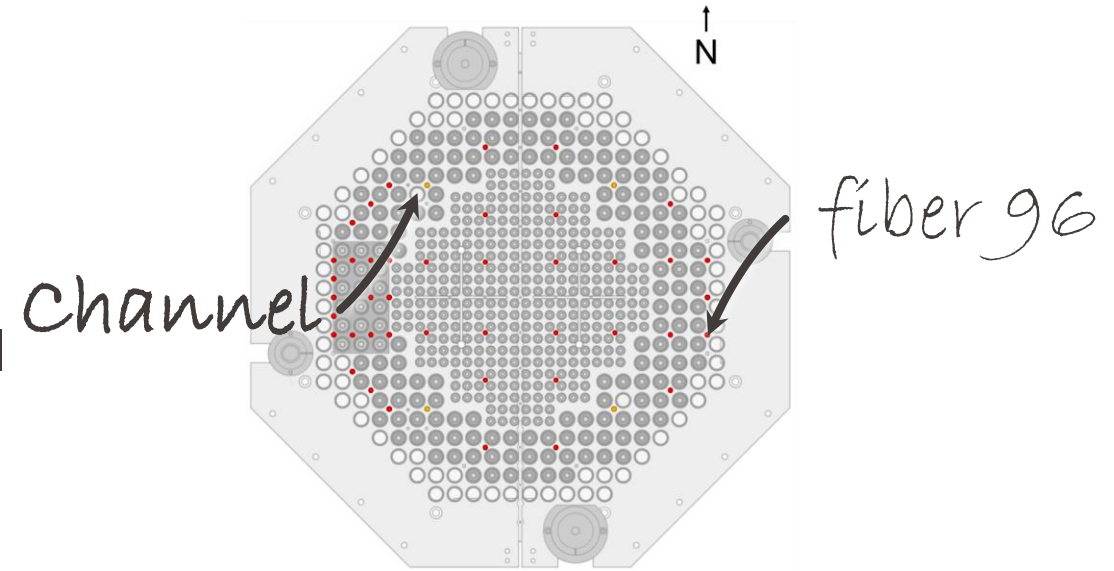
Flux redistribution verification:

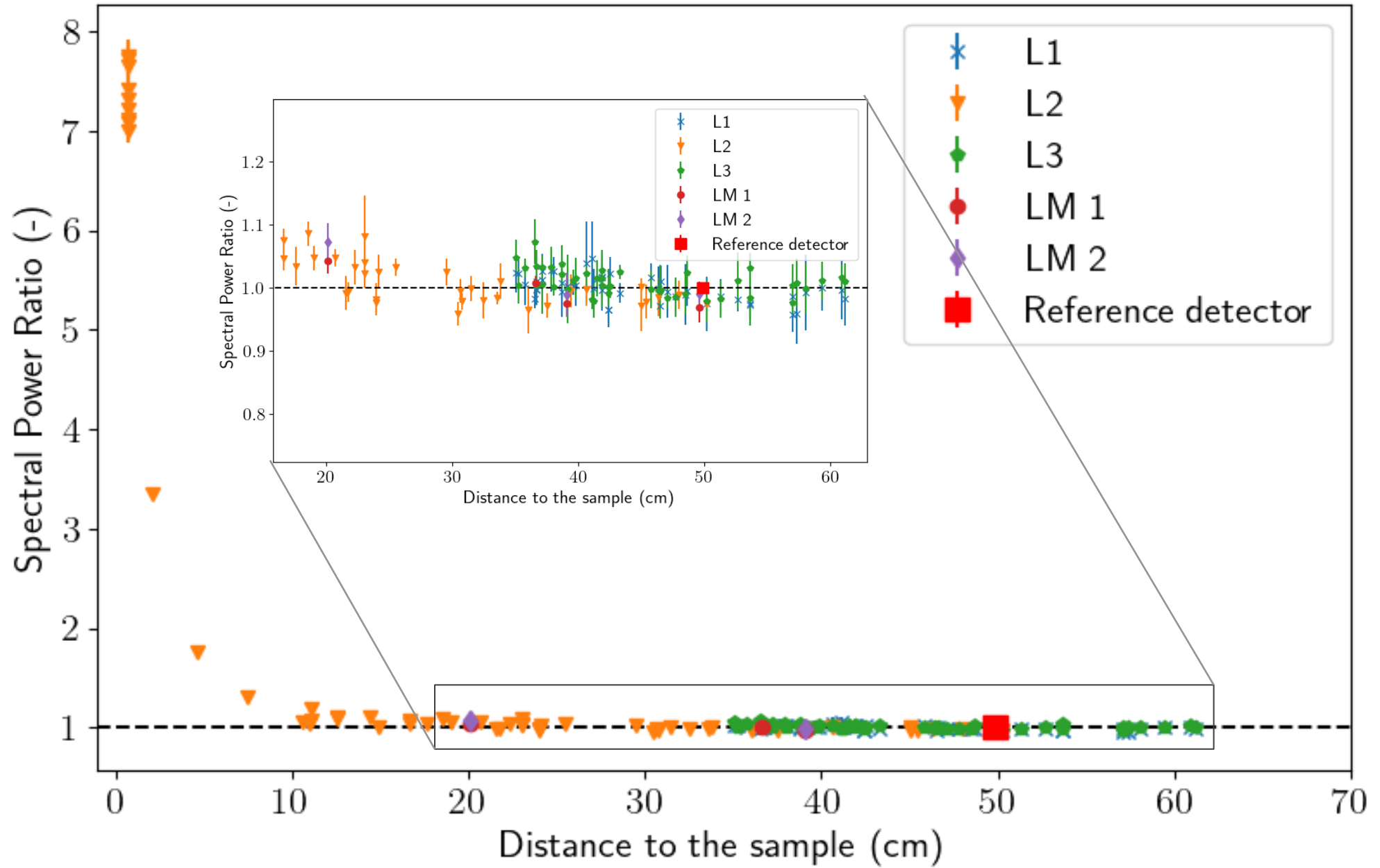
- Would imply a correction factor for global
- Computation of the spectral power ratio¹
 - Using 1st harmonic of CPSD
 - Comparison with core center fiber n° 96

$$SPR_{i,77} \equiv \frac{\sqrt{P_{i,i}}}{\sqrt{P_{77,77}}} = \frac{1}{M} \sum_j^M \frac{P_{i,j}}{P_{j,77}}$$

- Local amplitude effect clearly visible
 - Dissipate at 15 cm
- No significant flux redistribution

➡ No correction required!

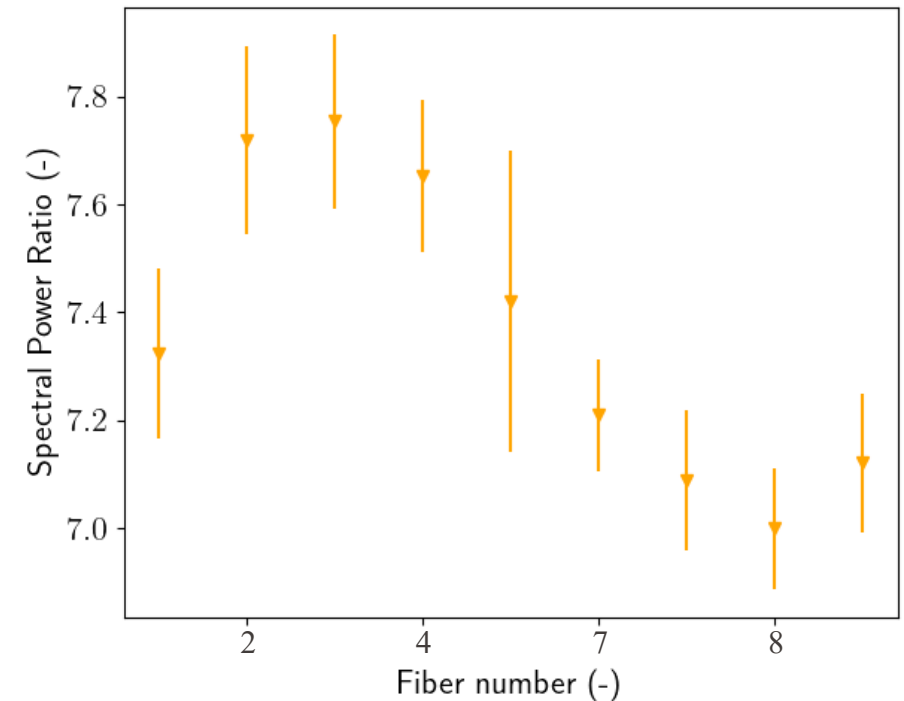
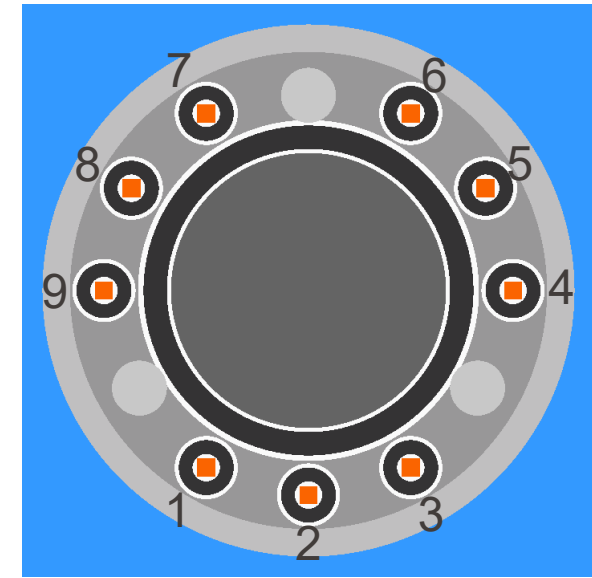


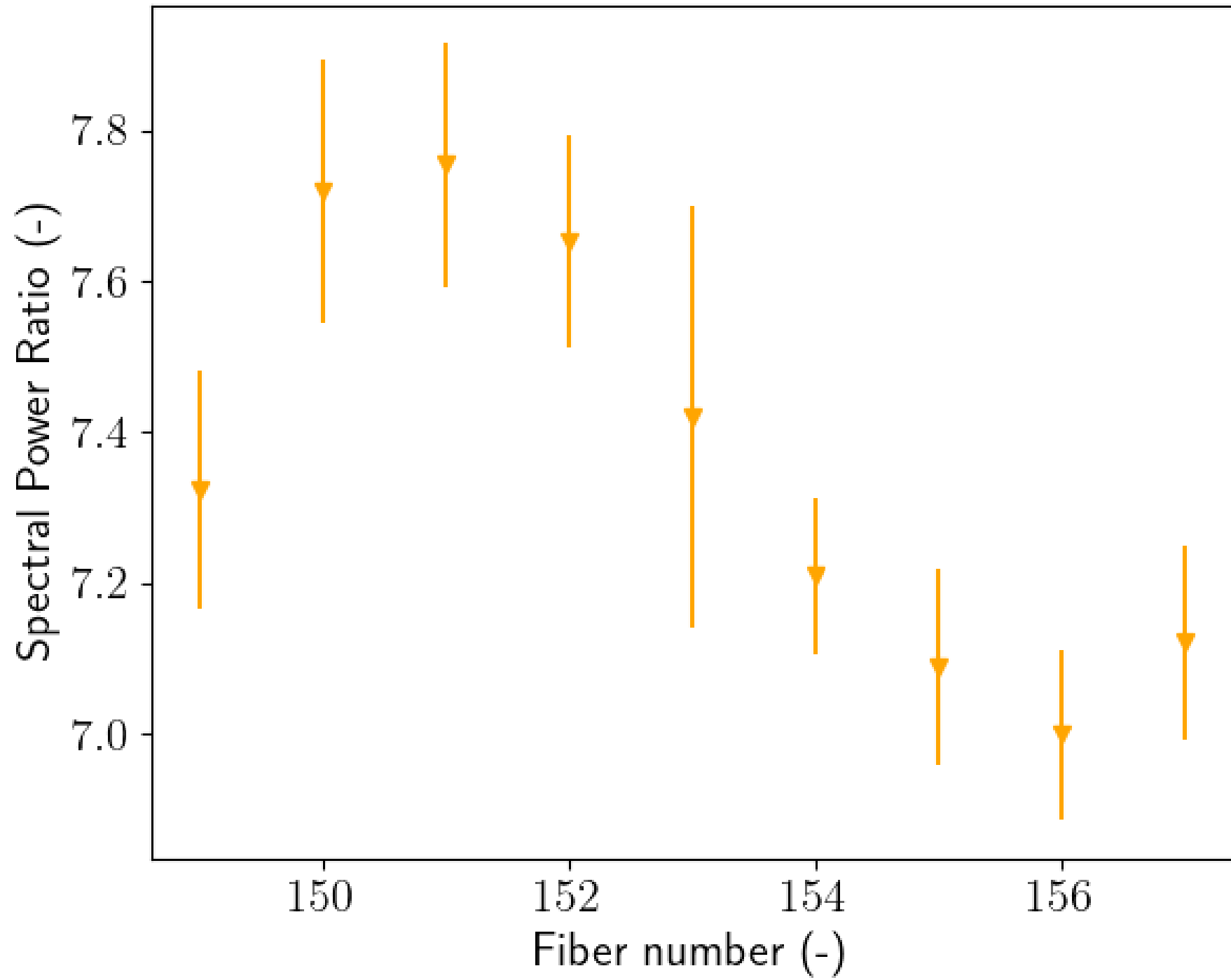


Angular distribution the ΔL

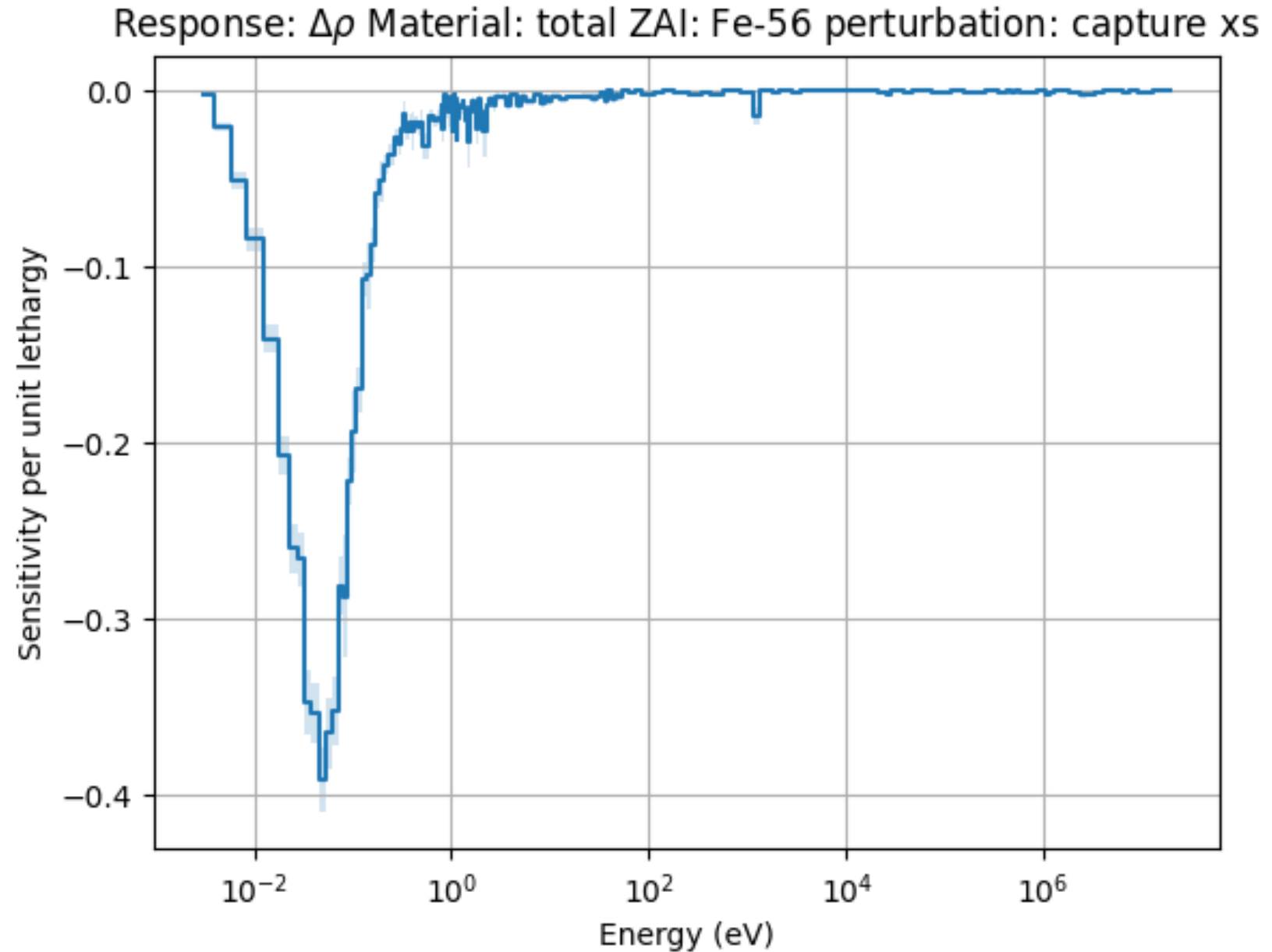
Angular distribution of the local detectors observed

- SPRs significantly different
- Measured with the gold sample
- Highly correlated uncertainties
 - $\sim 95\%$
- Flux gradient in the channel was already measured
- Further investigation would be interesting while treating local signals in more details





Sensitivity iron



Reference MAESTRO

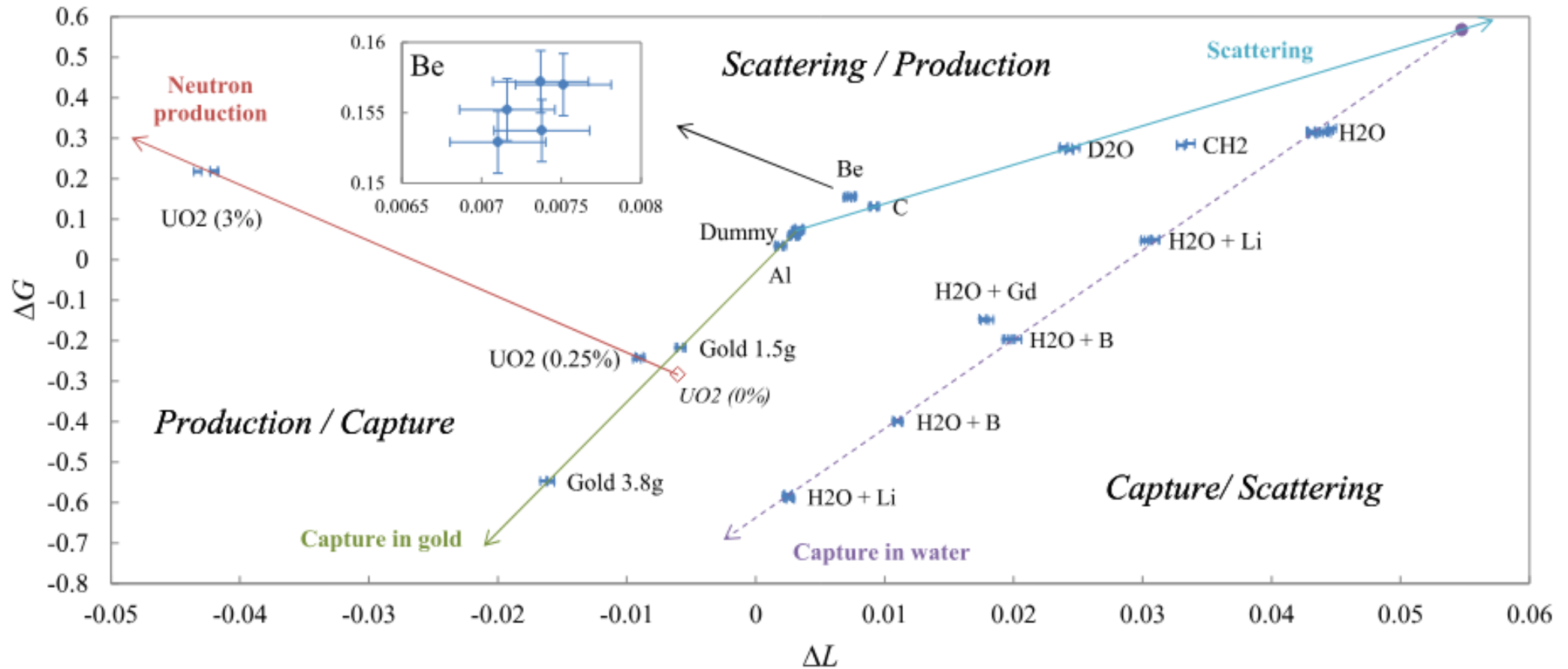
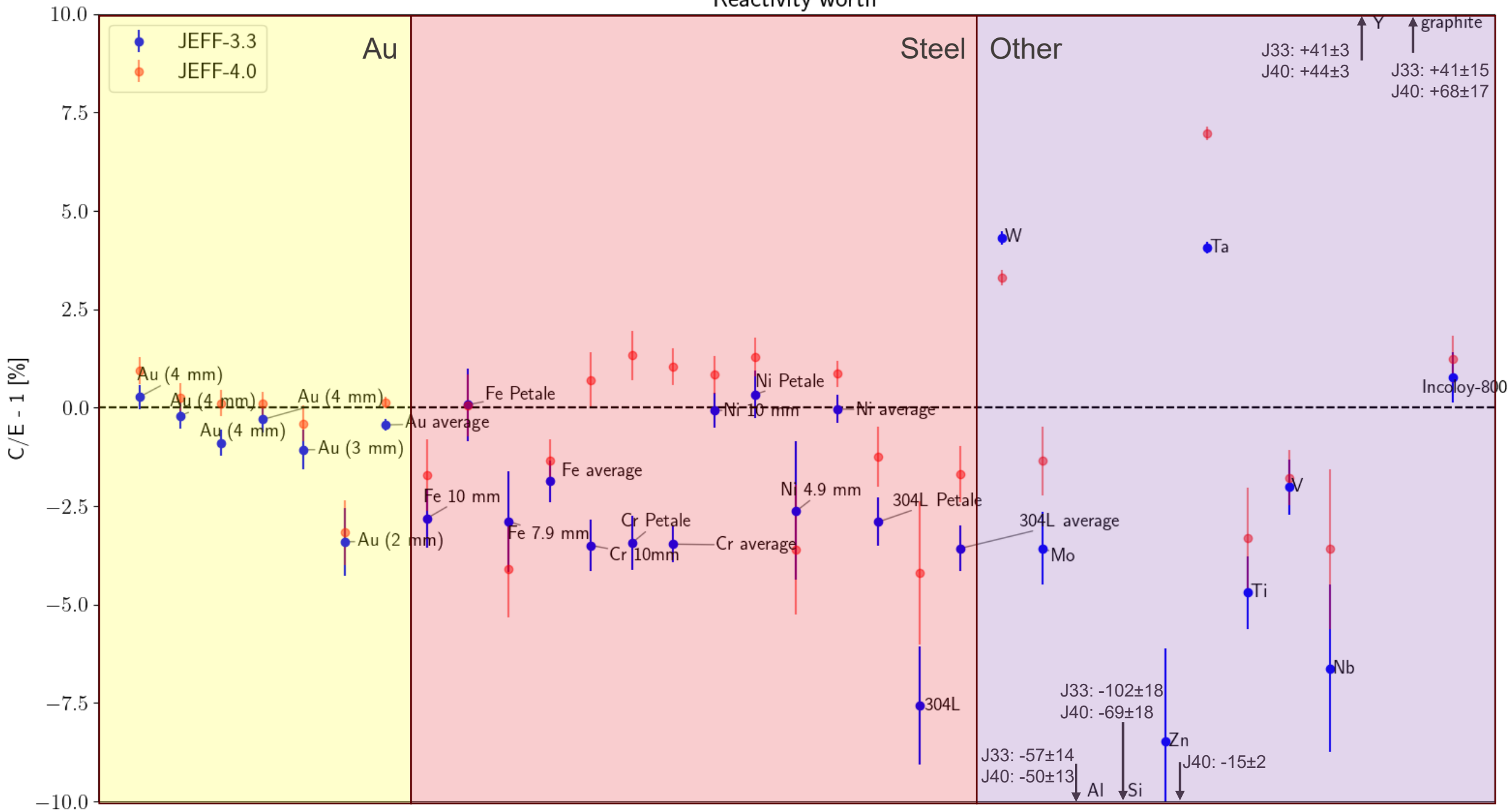


Fig. 5. CLO results in the $(\Delta G$ and $\Delta L)$ plane. Points include associated uncertainties. A closer view of Beryllium sample shows the error bars more clearly.

Reactivity worth



Reactivity worth

