Design of a Microreactor for Microwave Organic Synthesis through Microwave Heating Simulations

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Goal is to design a microreactor for a microwave unit in order to acheive:

- High-throughput organic synthesis, reaction screening
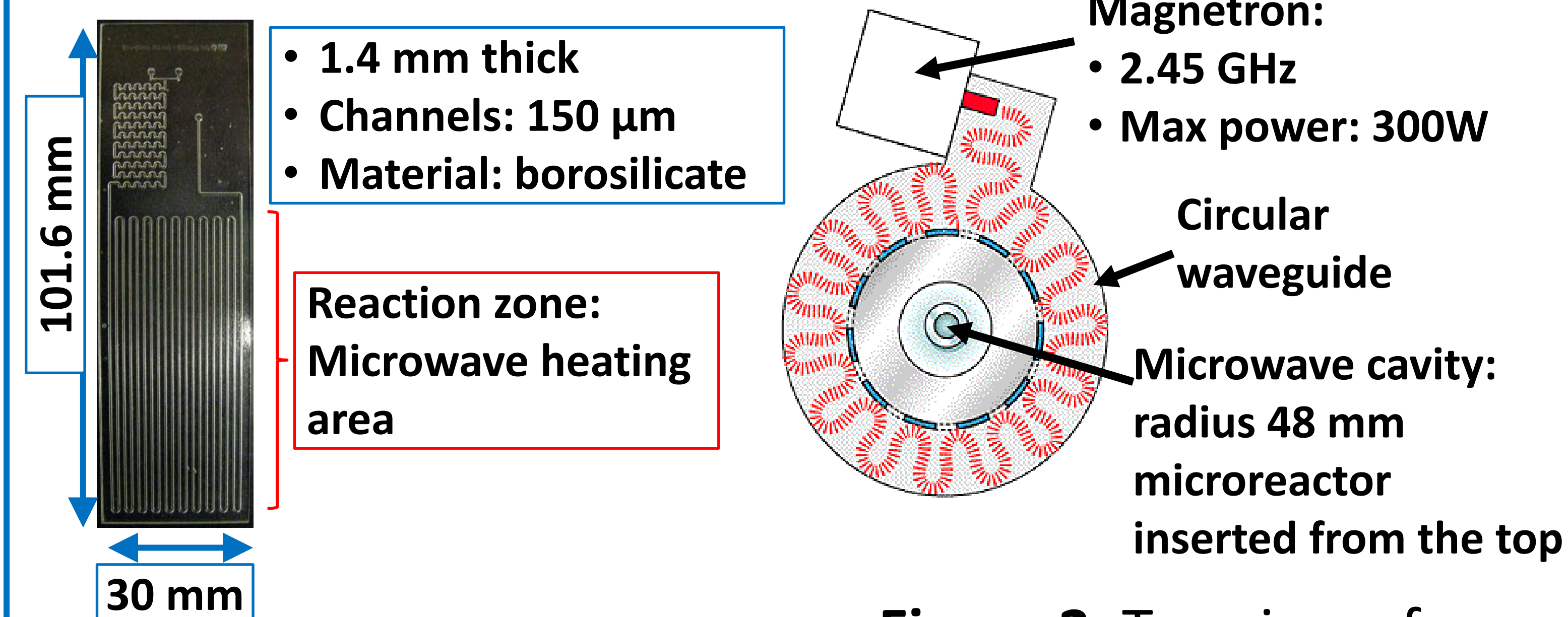- Kinetic modeling of microwave reactions

Original Design:

- 1.4 mm thick
- Channels: 150 μm
- Material: borosilicate

101.6 mm

Reaction zone: Microwave heating area

30 mm

Figure 1. Microreactor

Magnetron:
- 2.45 GHz
- Max power: 300W

Circular waveguide

Microwave cavity: radius 48 mm microreactor inserted from the top

Figure 2. Top view of microwave unit[1]

Heating Issues:

- Uneven temperature distribution across reactor; center of the reactor is hottest.
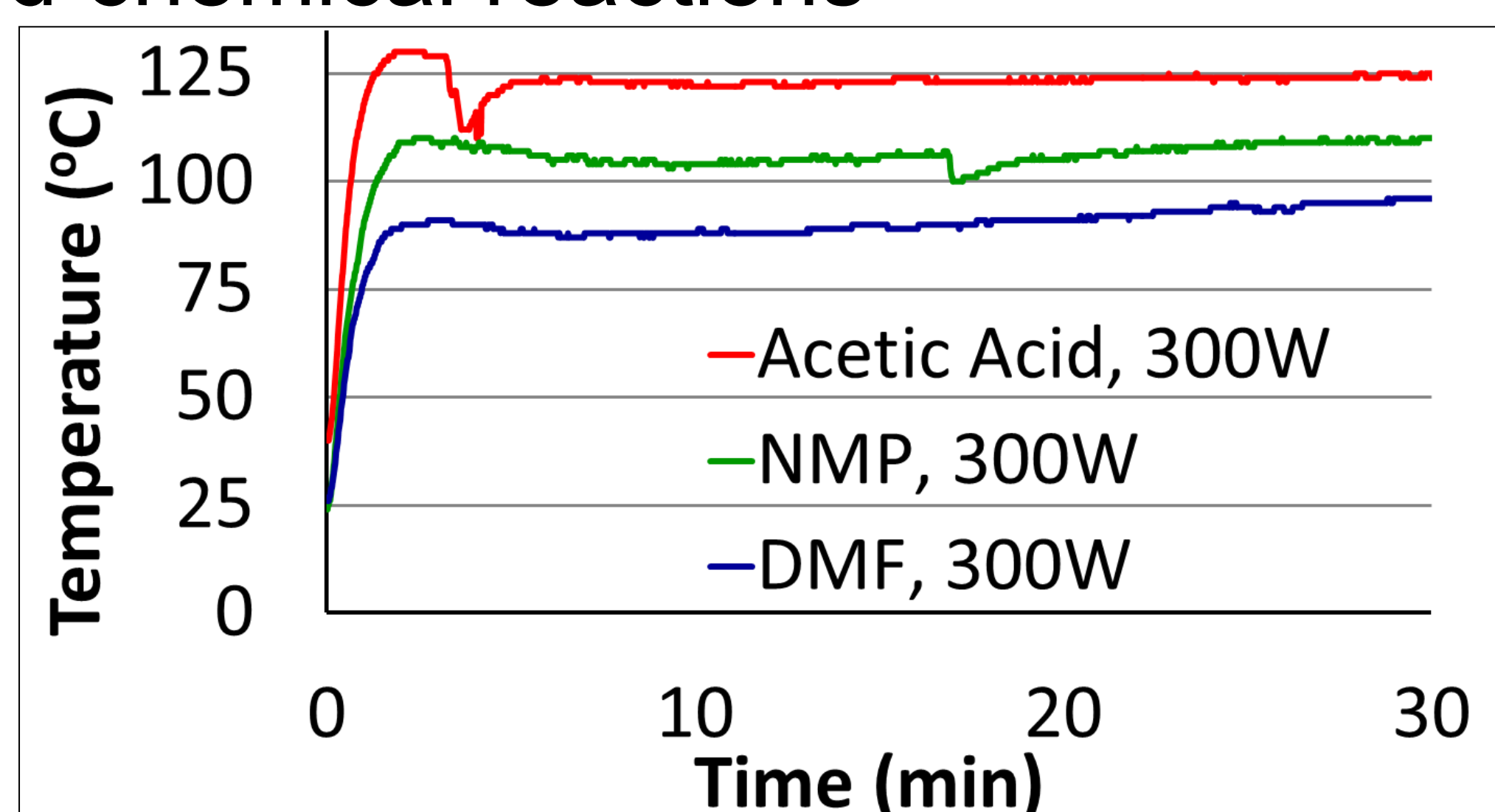- Maximum steady-state temperatures too low for desired chemical reactions

— Acetic Acid, 300W
— NMP, 300W
— DMF, 300W

Figure 3. Heating profile of the reactor surface center with different solvents (measured by fiber optic probe)

Computational Model:

- The RF module: microwave heating and electromagnetic waves physics

$$\nabla \times \mu_r^{-1}(\nabla \times \mathbf{E}) - k_o^2\left(\varepsilon_r - \frac{j\sigma}{\omega\varepsilon_o}\right)\mathbf{E} = \mathbf{0}$$

→solve electric field

→heat source: $Q = \frac{1}{2}\omega\varepsilon_o\varepsilon''\mathbf{E}\cdot\mathbf{E}^*$

- Single-Phase Flow Module:

$$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{v} = 0$$

$$\rho\frac{D\mathbf{v}}{Dt} = \rho\mathbf{g} - \nabla P + \nabla \cdot \boldsymbol{\tau}$$

→velocity of air convection in waveguide

- Heat Transfer Module:

$$\rho C_p\left(\frac{\partial T}{\partial t} + \mathbf{v}\cdot\nabla T\right) = \nabla \cdot (k\nabla T) + Q$$

→solve for temperature

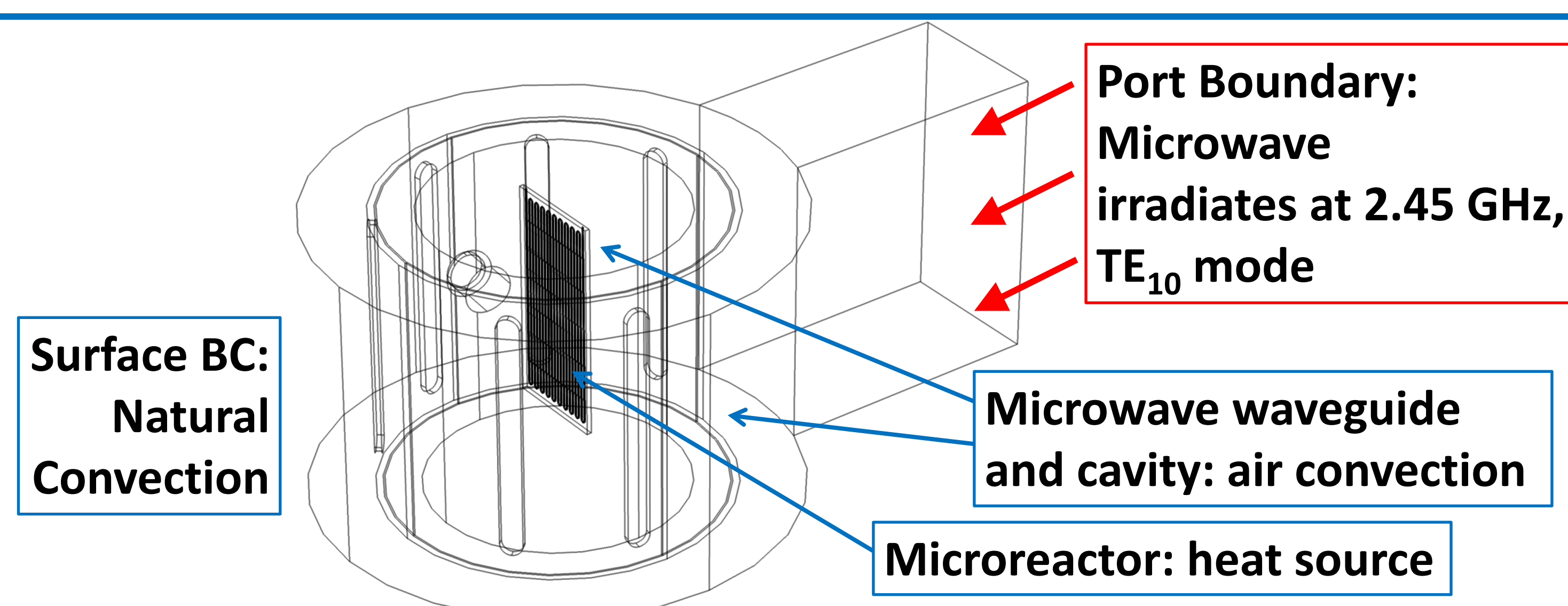## Figure 4

Port Boundary: Microwave irradiates at 2.45 GHz, TE_{10} mode

Surface BC: Natural Convection

Microwave waveguide and cavity: air convection

Microreactor: heat source

Figure 4. 3D geometry of computation model

Results:

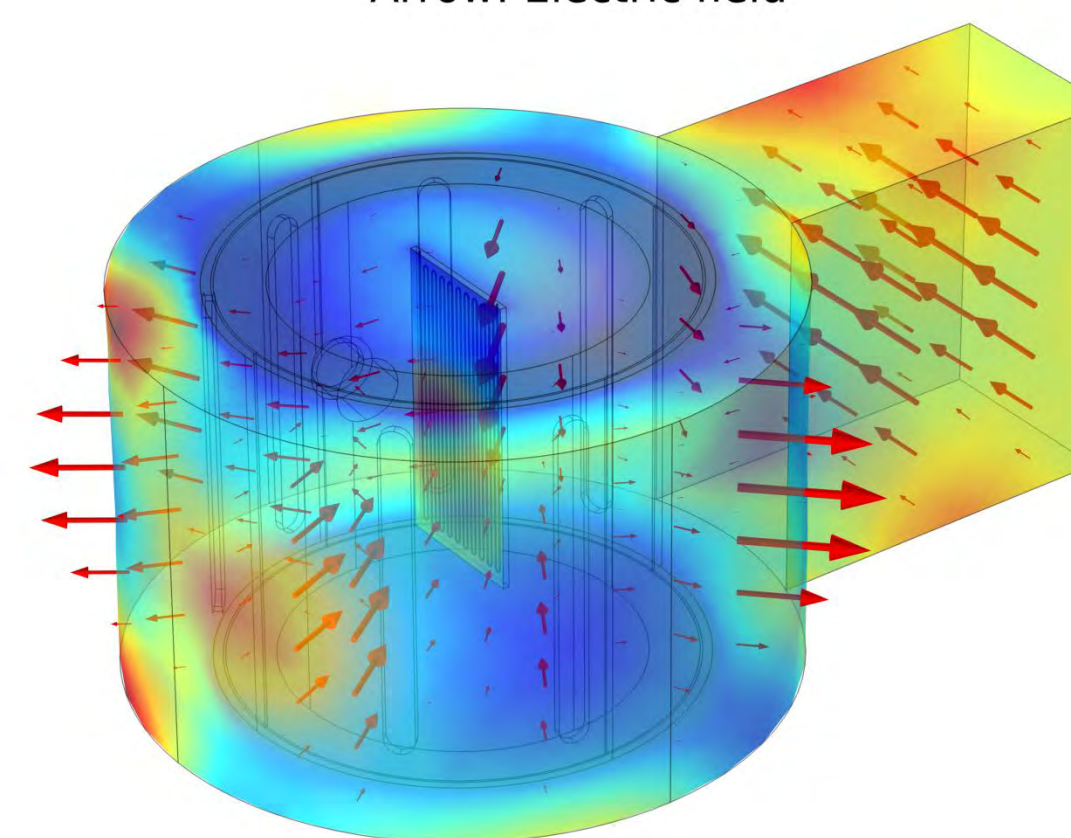Volume: Temperature (degC) Surface: Temperature (degC)
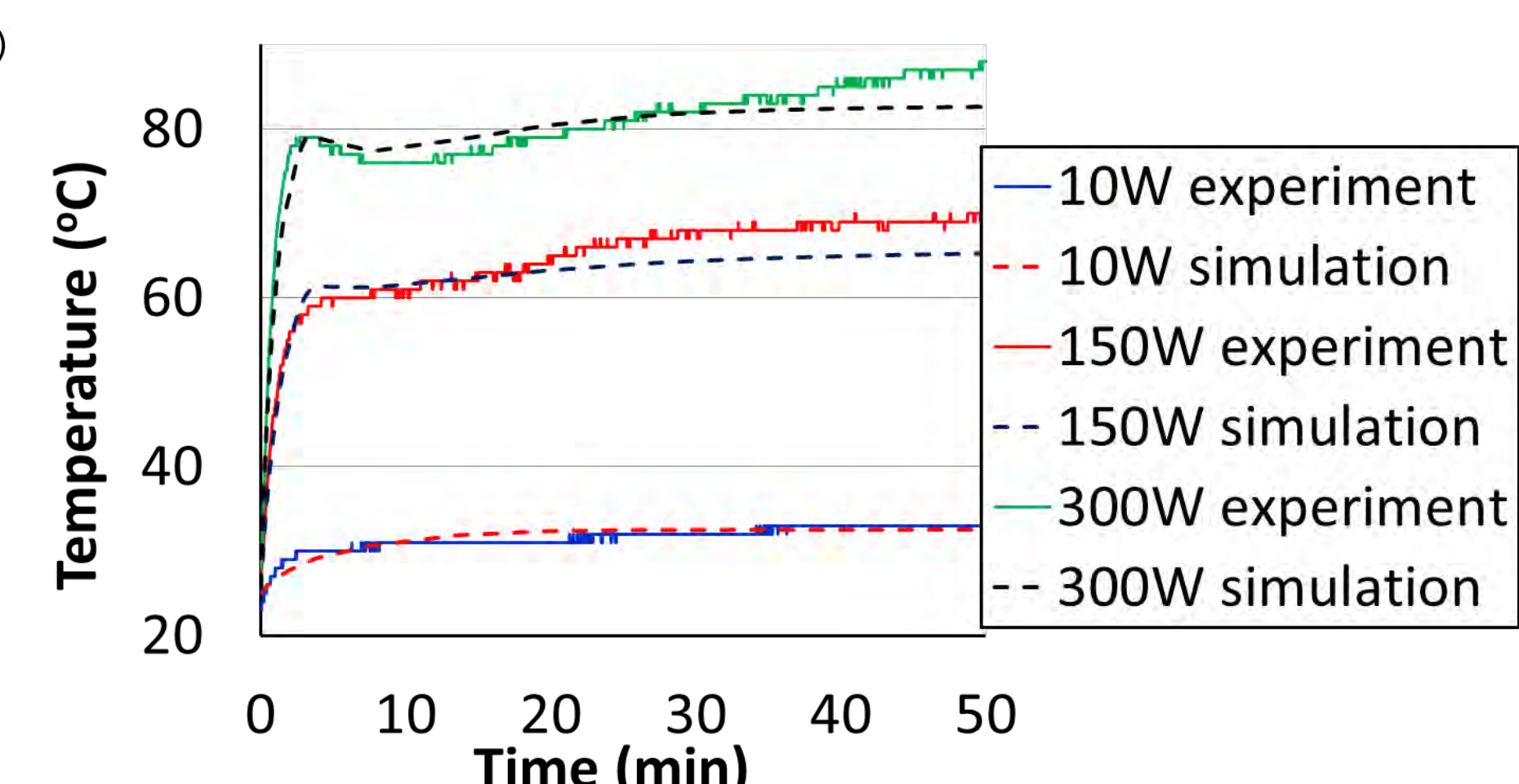Arrow: Electric field

Figure 5. 3D view of result

— 10W experiment
- - 10W simulation
— 150W experiment
- - 150W simulation
— 300W experiment
- - 300W simulation

Figure 6. Temperature comparison of reactor surface center
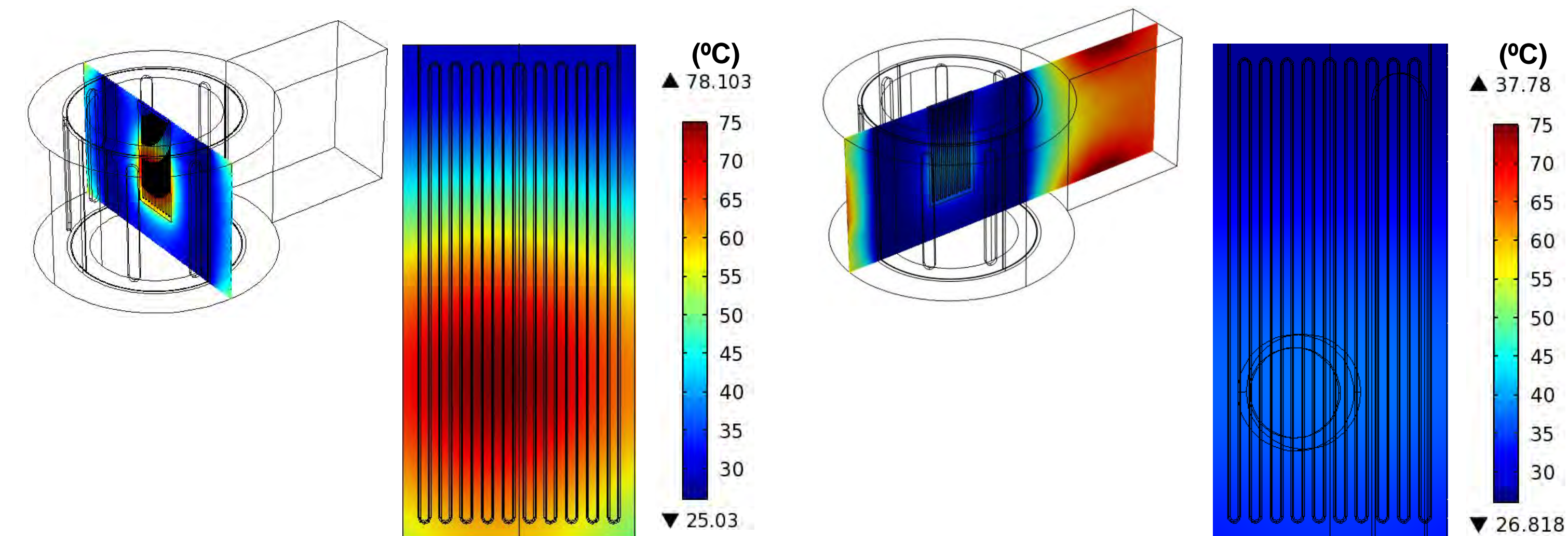

Figure 7. Reactor surface temperature varies with position
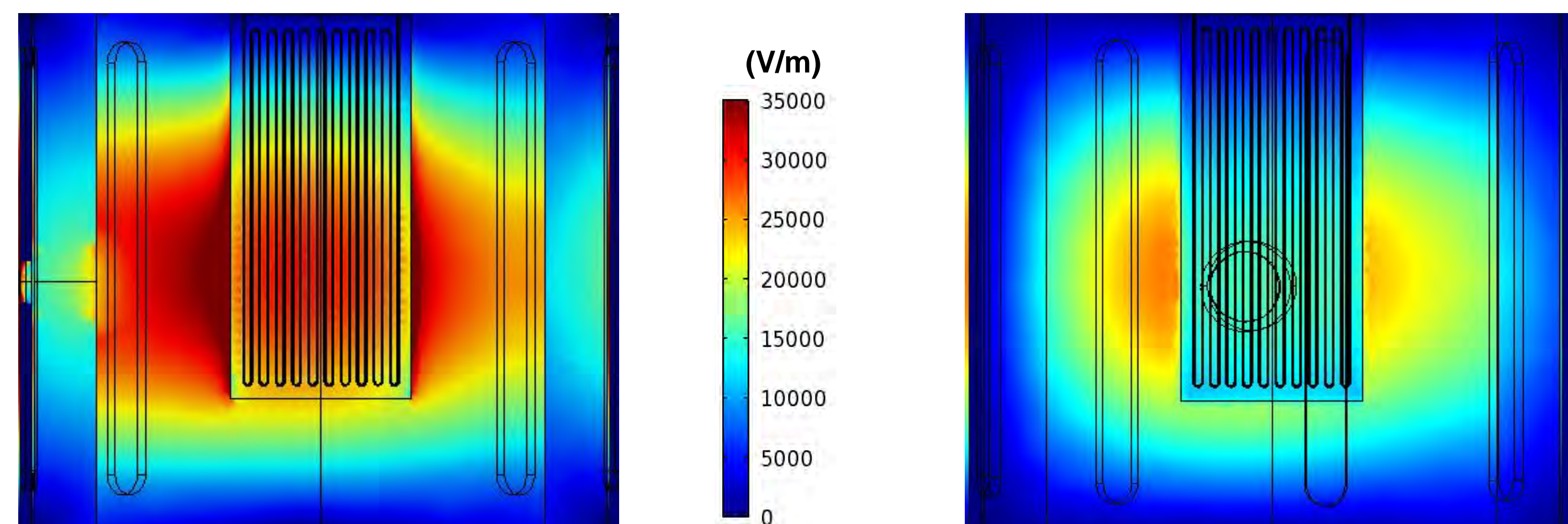

Figure 8. Electric field in cavity along reactor surfaces at the two positions shown in Figure 7
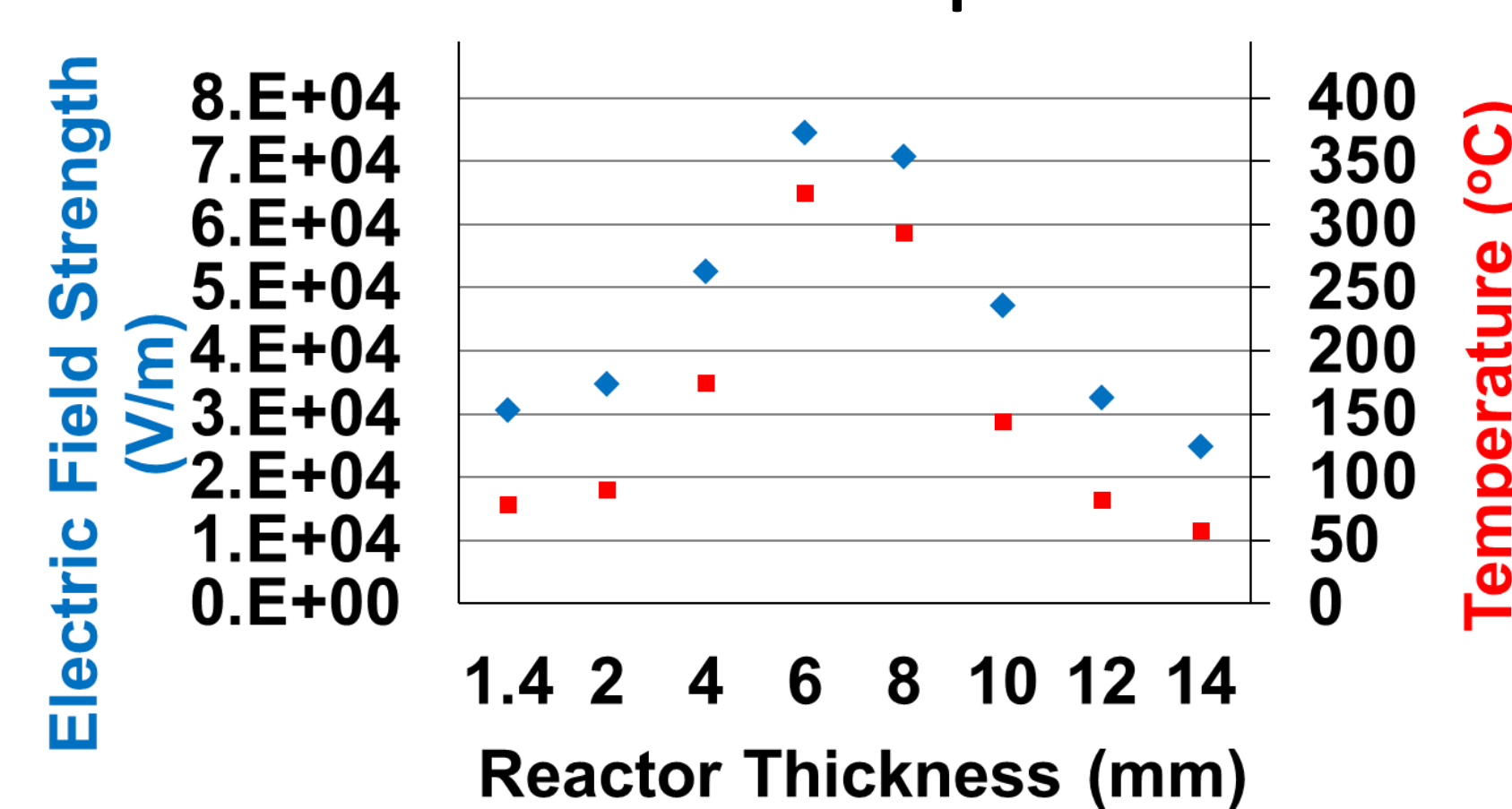

Figure 9. Electric field also varies with size of the reactor → used to improve design

Conclusion:
The simulation results match the measurements and uneven temperature distribution. The heating issues were caused by low electric field strength, which varies with the size and position of the reactor. A higher electric field strength could be induced by redesigning the reactor thickness.