



“D6.3.2 – Prototype and Evaluation of an Efficient Integrated Debugger in OpenModelica”

“Sub WP 6.3: Debugging and performance profiling of system models in operation”

“Work Package 6: Modeling and simulation services”

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This document: Evaluation of the Integrated Debugger

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Summary

The goal of this task is to investigate and evaluate the OpenModelica (OM) integrated debugger. The testing has been hampered by the fact that the algorithmic code debugger was not possible to run in OM version 1.9.6 under Windows 10. (This was working in the 1.9.3 release but is apparently temporarily out of order). The following conclusion were made from the test with the transformational debugger for equation models:

1. The debugger works well to find zero denominators that are parameters.
2. The debugger does not come into play automatically if the zero denominator is only a momentarily value, as the solver managed work around such time points in so far tested simulations. However, it catches the problem in the simulation output window (SOW), and gives a message that by clicking opens the TDW which displays the concerned equation. However, there is a risk that this is unnoticed as the solver continues and could generate a lot of consequential or other messages that could hide the zero denominator messages. It would be preferable if the SOW could aggregate messages of the same type into one, expandable, line, thereby giving a better overview of the all the types of messages the simulation has generated.
3. A zero denominator caused by structural model errors, like connection to not used connectors (this should not pass the model checking) the debugger points to the causing equation. One could not ask more of the transformational debugger, but the OM model check or model building could be made to prevent such mistakes.
4. At numerical problems causing long execution times the debugger points to the equations that has problems, but to understand the exact problem, plots of variables could be necessary – hence the result file should always be generated, regardless if the simulation is interrupted by solver or manually. This is not the case in the tested version for all the tests.

Glossary

OM	OpenModelica
PHF	Prescribed Heat Flow
SOW	Simulation Output Window
TDW	Transformational Debugger Window

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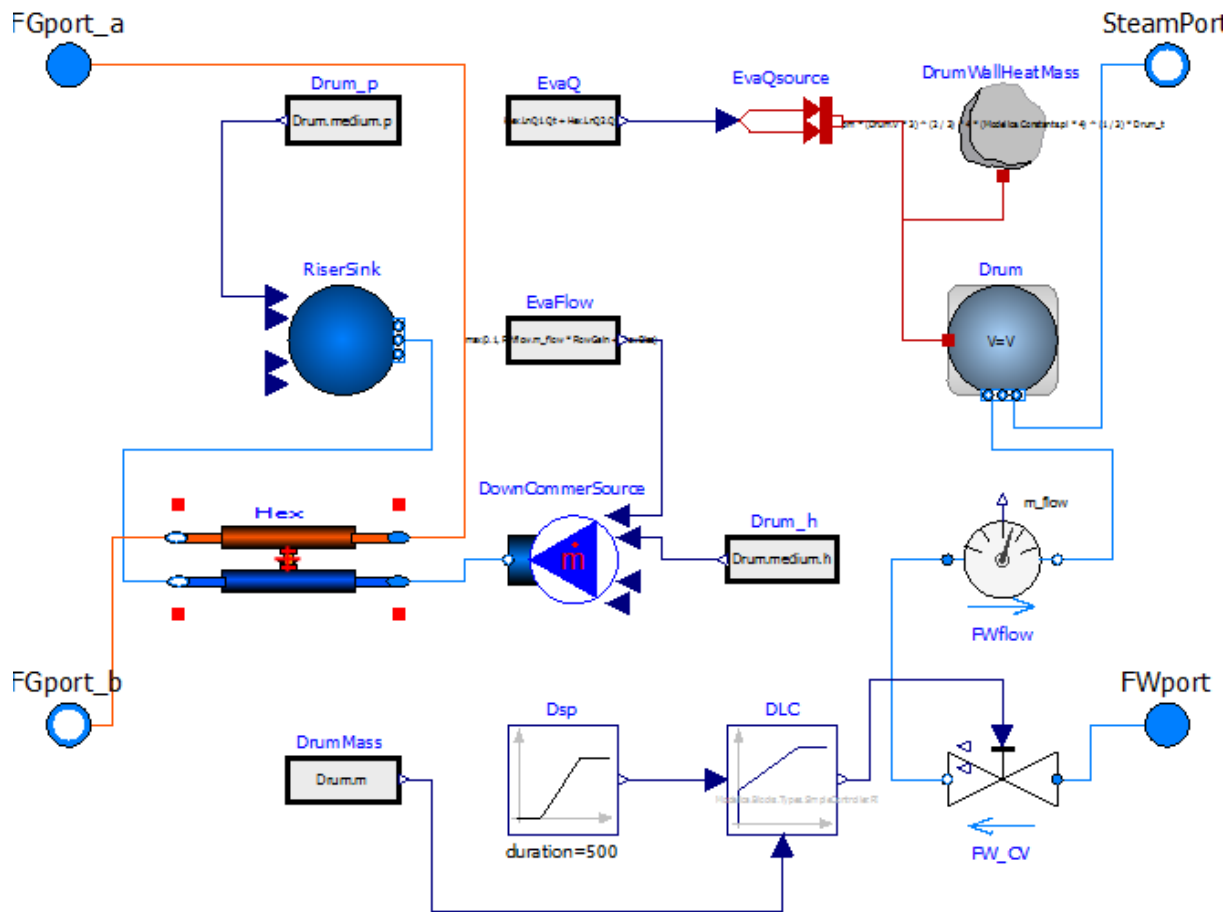


Figure 2. Evaporator model

The evaporator model has a drum model (Drum), a heat exchanger (Hex) and a level controller (DLC) that controls level by a control valve (FW_CV) . The level controller is no actual water level controller in length units (m), instead it controls the amount of water (kg) in the drum. The thermal capacity of the drum metals is represented of a heat capacity model (DrumWallHeatMass) but the insulation towards surroundings are assumed to be perfect, i.e. no heat losses to the outside of the drum.

This model has 809 equations.

The drum model is the volume model from the Fluid library manipulated to only let steam exit, i.e. always perfect separation.

The heat exchanger is as according to Figure 3.

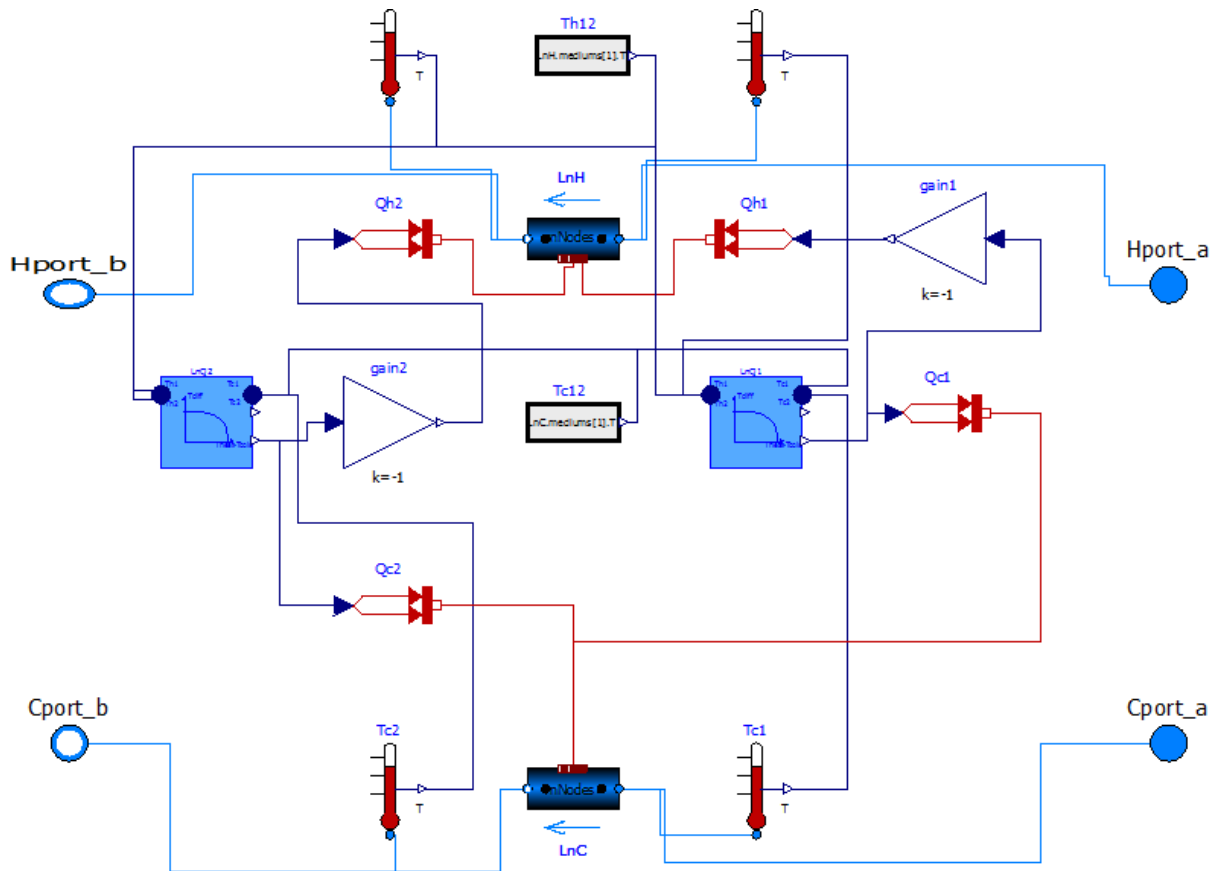


Figure 3. Heat exchanger

The heat exchanger has a pipe model (LnH) that corresponds to the flue gas channel and a pipe model (LnC) that corresponds to the pipe bundle carrying the water to be heated. The heat exchanger has parallel flows. In this simplified model the overall heat transfer coefficient ($J/m^2/K$) is a constant, i.e. it takes not configuration or medium properties into account. The driving temperature difference is calculated for respectively inlet and outlet sections of the pipe bundles (i.e. they configured with 2 nodes each) by the models LnQ1 and LnQ2. The temperatures are measured besides inlets and outlets for both pipe models also in the middle (Tc12 and Th12).

This model has 580 equations.

Finally, the heat calculation models LnQ1 and 2 are according to Figure 4 (all other model are from standard Modelica library)

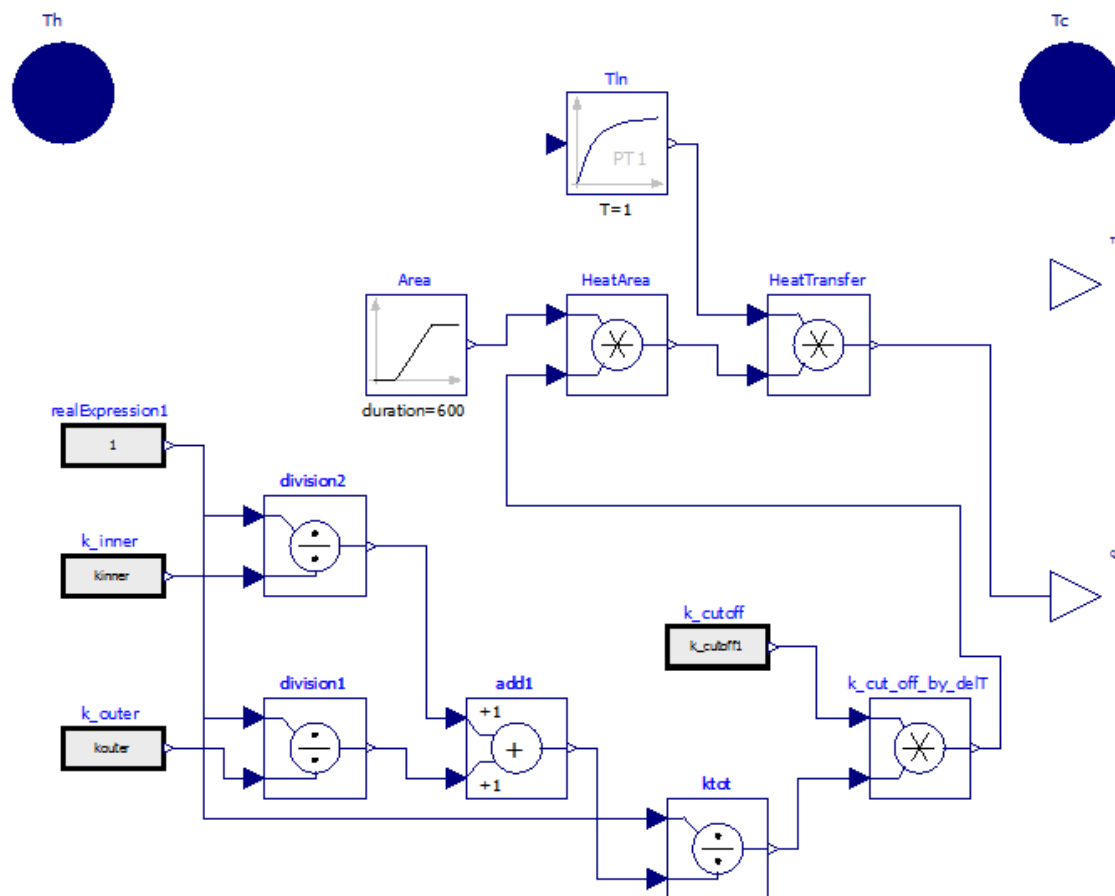


Figure 4 Heat transfer calculation model

The model has low pass filter with an input connected in the text layer where the logarithmic temperature difference from the connectors Th and Tc which both are connecting both inlet and outlet temperatures respectively medium side, is calculated. The output of the model is the calculated heat transfer (W). The overall heat transfer coefficient ktot is calculated from parameters representing the heat transfer coefficient from flue gas to metal, k_outer, and from metal to water, k_inner. In the present full size boiler model those parameters are replaced with connectors that provides more accurate values, based on medium and flow properties calculated in separate models. The heat transfer area is a ramp with selectable duration and height values, to be adopted to what's needed from initializing aspect (duration of suitable size respectively to the real heat transfer area).

This model contributes with 39 equations of the total of 1110.

3 Debugger tests

3.1 Activation of debugger

Debugger is activated by setting the flag « Launch transformational debugger ». After a successful simulation the output windows are containing following information (Figure 5).

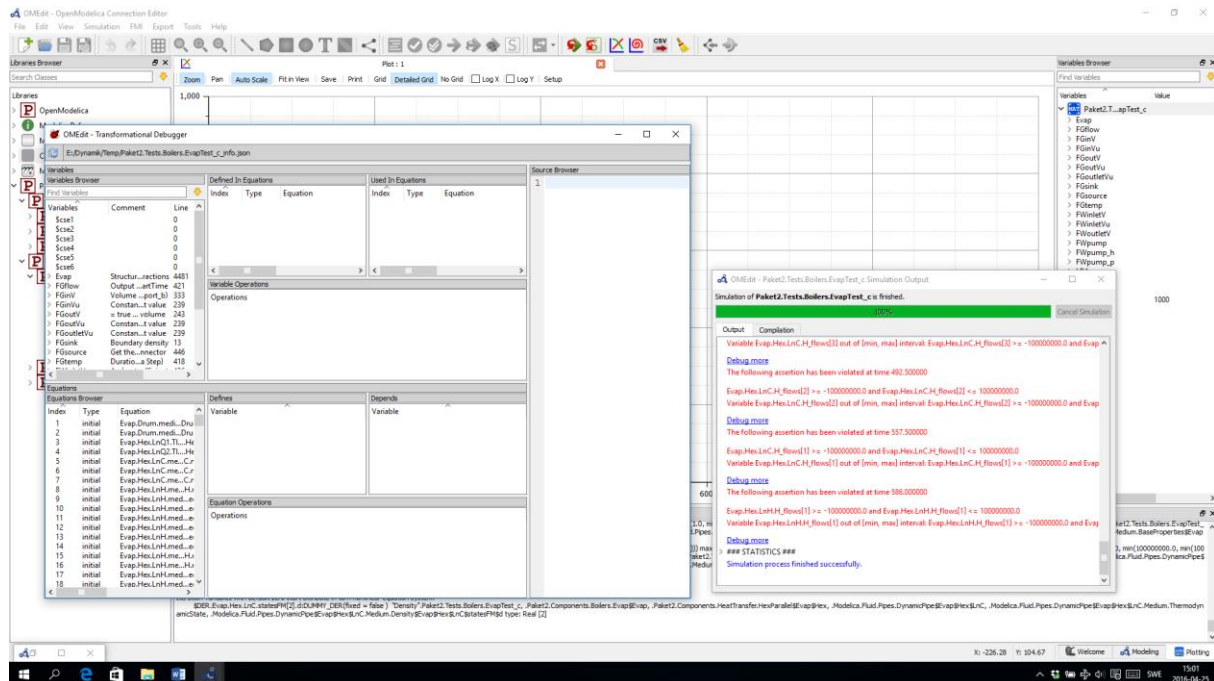


Figure 5 Information from OM with debugger activated at successful simulation

The Simulation Output window (SOW) contains assertion violation messages that are false, because the enthalpy flow H (W) has too narrow range in the Standard Modelica library. It ought to be at least 10 times as big. This violation has no influence on the simulation result (might there be an unnecessary delay?). The window shows with a green bar that 100 % of simulation is done and the blue text that it has been successful.

The debugger (transformational debugger window, TDW) shows all variables in the variable browsers window and all equations in the equation browser window, as found in the simulation code. All other frames in the debugger are empty.

3.2 Division by zero

3.2.1 By parameter setting

The test is done by setting parameter k_{inner} to zero.

The SOW displays following messages (Figure 6).

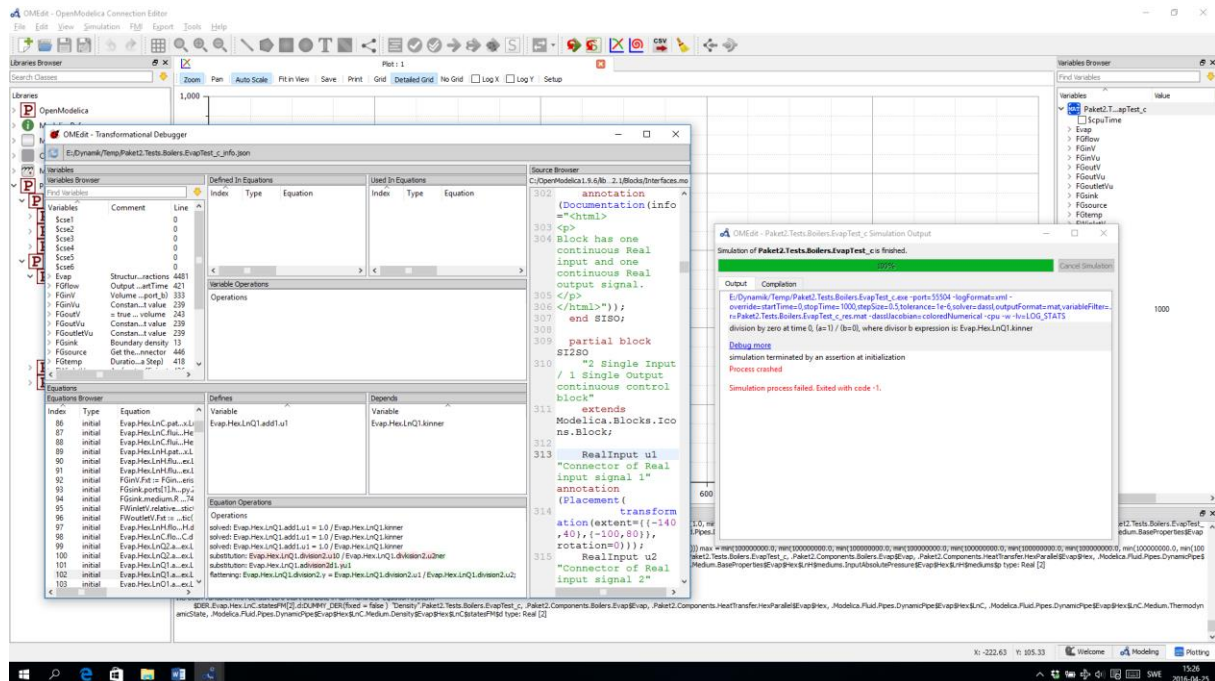


Figure 6 Division by zero by parameter setting

The Simulation Output window (SOW) gives the required information that simulation crashed at initialization due to an assertion that avoids division by zero and this is caused by $k_{inner}=0$.

The debugger window looks as before but after clicking debug more in the SOW it looks as in Figure 6.

The equation browser marks initial equation with index 102: $\text{Evap.Hex.LnQ1.add1.u1} := \text{DIVISION}(1.0, \text{Evap.Hex.LnQ1.kinner})$, which is the same information as in SOW.

The frame denoted Defines give the variable that becomes undefined by the zero division. The frame denoted Depends give the variable name $\text{Evap.Hex.LnQ1.kinner}$.

Conclusion

For this error the debugger gives all information necessary.

3.2.2 By time function

The k_{inner} variable is replaced by a time function that ramps it down to zero in 100 seconds. This results in a never ending (?) simulation where SOW gives the messages in Figure 7.

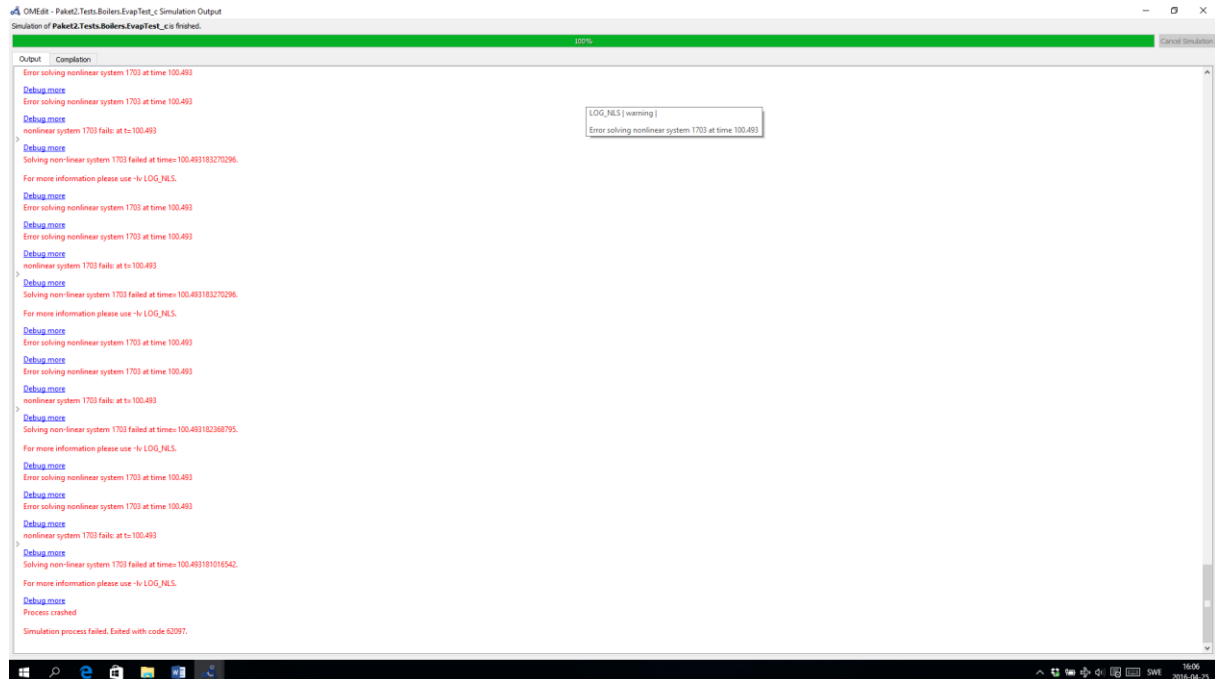


Figure 7 SOW after manual interruption of simulation that has ramp that gives division by zero

The solver manages to pass the 100 s time point where kinner is zero and a division by zero occurs. No plots are available but the ramp proceeds to negative values for kinner. The solver has skipped the exact 100 s time point, but then continued into other problems, due to the negative kinner value. On the passage it has however produced two messages about zero division at time 100 when they occurred. In the case of the user being unaware of the division problem, the large amount of output in SOW hides those messages. Scanning through the SOW window they are found and clicking them gives the TDW appearance according to Figure 8.

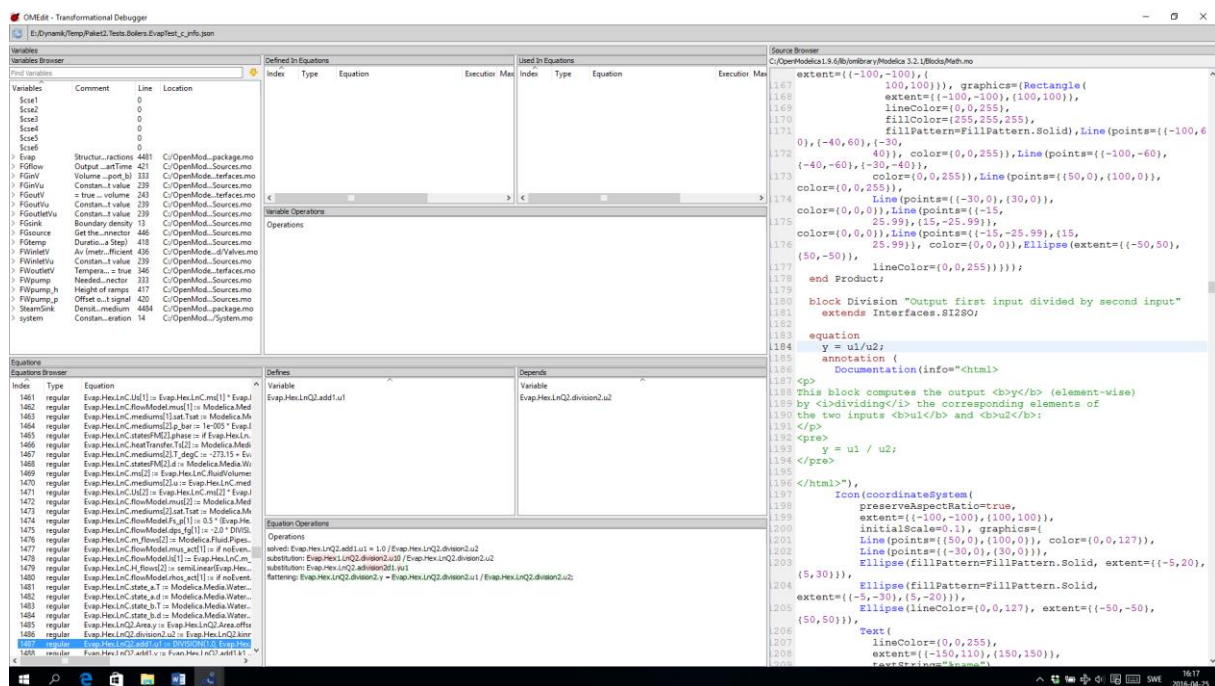


Figure 8 TDW at ramp to zero of denominator

Again this is an exact pointer to the error.

A problem is that without this knowledge the risk that the user will miss the division by zero due to the massive output of messages concerning a consecutive problem (Figure 7). An estimation is that the messages from time 100 to 100.493 are about 50 and seemed not to cease or automatically interrupt simulation, not at least within authors frame of patience. After manual interruption there are no stored variables to plot. Clicking the latest Debug More message gives a pointer into TDW to equation with index 1703, and a message, in the Defines frame, that derivatives of drum pressure and enthalpy and water pipes outlet volumes enthalpy is calculated. Equation 1703 has order 28, i.e. it consists of 28 other nonlinear equations with indexes ranging from 1675 to 1702. Clicking on of them changes the TDW (Figure 9).

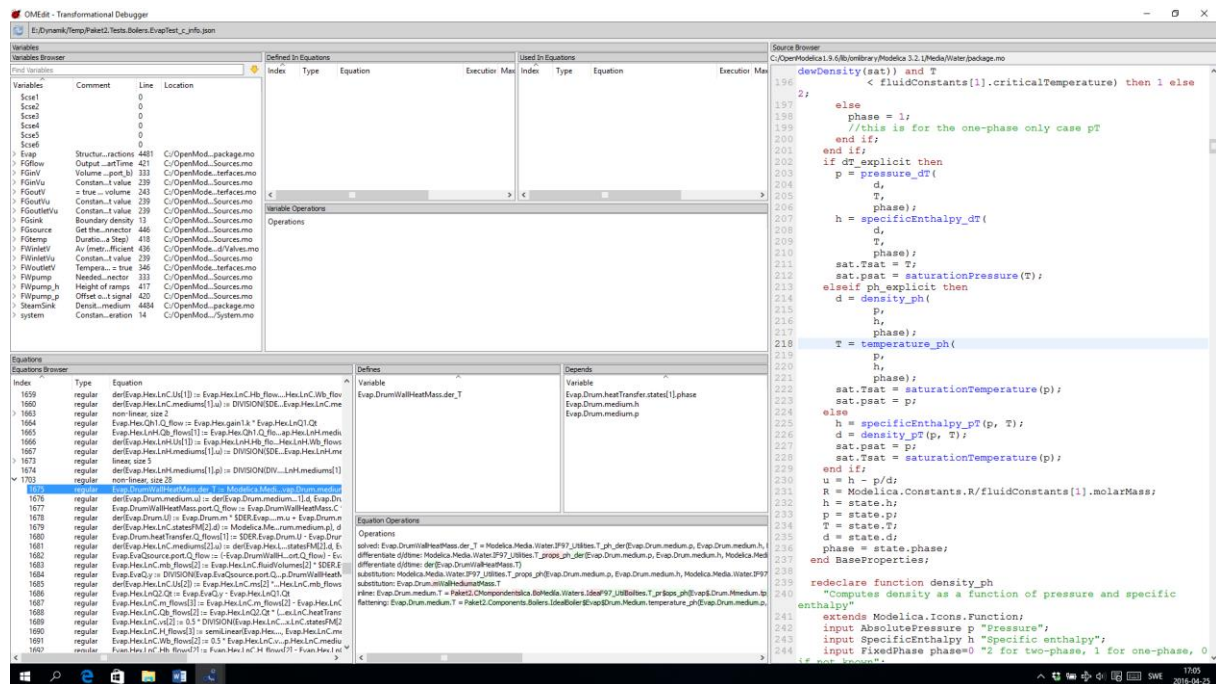


Figure 9 TDW after clicking one of the equations pointed out by SOW

Each subordinate equation to 1703, starting with 1675 gives the defined variables and its dependencies and transformations made from original source file and the source browser points to its corresponding equation. Could this case be helped by this information? We are now searching for a link between the implanted error (negative heat transfer coefficient) and the messages and source code lines found by the debugger. A problem is definitely that there are no plots available so no values could be used for tracing the error. Characteristic for most the 28 equations pointed out is that they concern the medium properties of the drum and the Hex water pipes. Those equations are not written by author and thereby less interesting for corrective actions. Equations 1697 to 1702 are from the LnQ2 models that calculates the heat transfer. But without values there is little information to continue with.

Looking at SOW it recommends to use LOG-NLS.Setting. This flag in the simulation set up menu gives the following output from SOW (Figure 10)

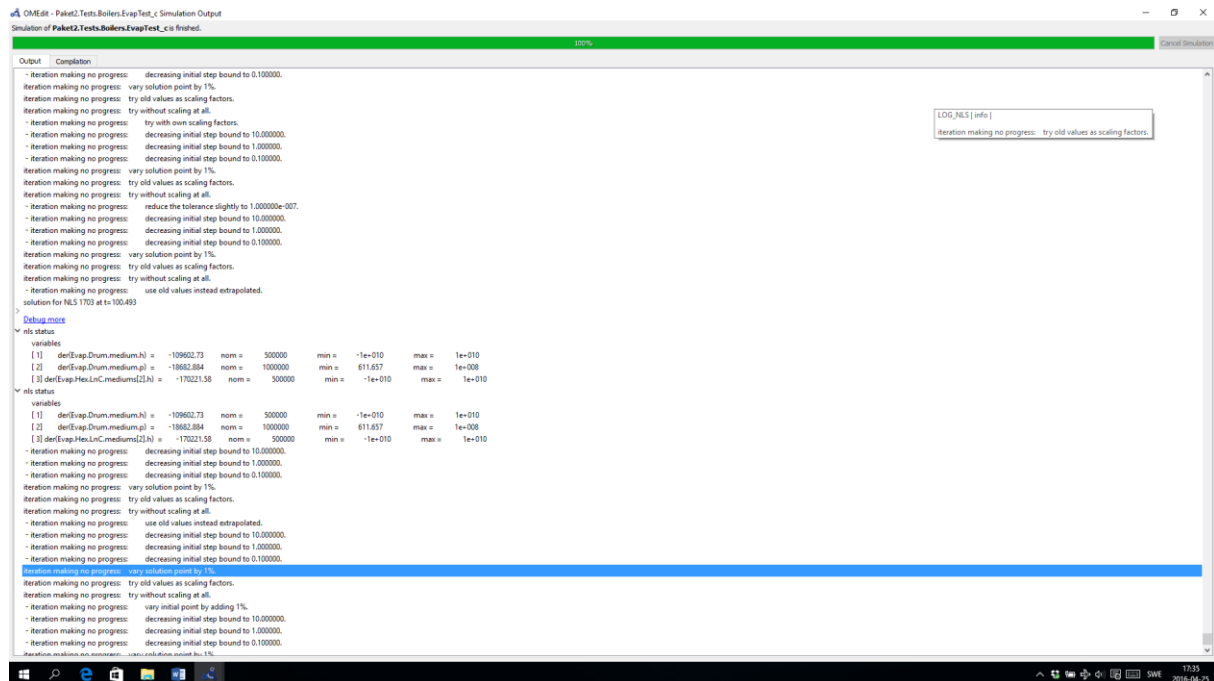


Figure 10 The SOW after activating logging of None Linear Solutions (log_NLS)

Displaying the last nls status shows negative values of drum pressure and enthalpy. Those values should never become negative in this process. Negative values of those should render an automatic crash of simulation and a saving of all variables to the result file (.mat) - at least as the pressure should not be below 611 pa. However, it seems like the solver tries to find a solution (that will bring acceptable numerical errors in the solution) with a stamina that is unacceptably time consuming. Those negative values shows that the drum has totally wrong working conditions. But what has caused those unphysical conditions? All the repeated messages about the drum conditions are of little value as there are no result file to examine. For this case it is how ever not that many messages to scan through, so the chance of discovering the zero division messages at 100 s are good.

In case there is a permanent zero denominator after a certain time point then the debugger points directly to the causing equation.

Conclusion

For a ramped denominator passing zero, the debugger is not optimal in case the solver manages to pass the critical point and that consecutive errors then hides the information from the user. A solution would be the option to let the user decide if division by zero should be accepted or not, i.e. the solver should then interrupt and save when any denominator having a passage of zero.

Another proposal is if the SOW could discriminate or summarize the messages and just display one of each type at the top level and if user likes, he could brows each type to see how many and when they have occurred.

Just for interest the simulation is repeated up to 100.49 s to see how the process looks at the kinner zero passage. The process shows a flue gas outlet temperature that goes bananas and suddenly becomes the highest temperature in the process, and a natural thing is then to investigate the heat transfer calculation, i.e. it's a highly recommendable feature to have a result file available as soon as any progress in simulation has been achieved.

3.2.3 Division by zero due to mismatch in parameter settings

By deselection of the heat transfer use in the LnC pipe in the Hex model (Figure 3) the test model still checks OK, but now with only 1106 equations instead of 1110. Simulation gives following SOW and TDW (Figure 11).

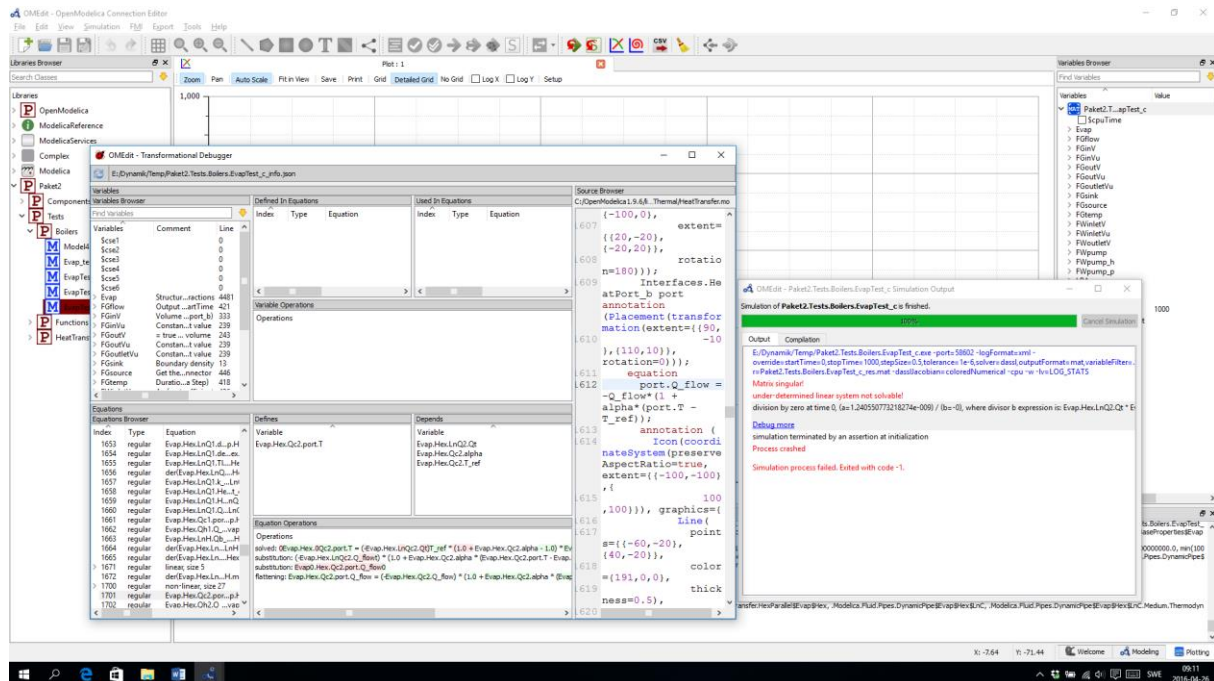


Figure 11 Outputs after no use of heat transfer specified but corresponding heat transfer connectors any way connected

The simulation crashes at initialization due to division with zero where denominator is involving variables Q_t and α . A check of the model reveals that α is the heat transfer coefficient to surroundings and is deliberately zero. I.e. this model is impossible to run although it checks OK. The debugger points to an equation 1258. Marking that equation points to a source code line 1612 where the Modelica standard library (MSL) component PrescribedHeatFlow (PHF) equals the heat ports heat flow (Q_{Flow}) to the connector input Q_{Flow} (the prescribed flow). This equation contains also a dependence on α , but with $\alpha=0$ the equation should be OK: $port.Q_{Flow} = -Q_{Flow}$. The PHF model calculates its internal temperature in order to be able to have the prescribed heat flow by this equation (index 1258). This temperature should be the same as the connected pipes temperature as there is no thermal resistance in the connection itself so why is it calculated in this way? One could not be sure that any user would understand that this equation is unexpected and caused by a wrong parameter setting in the pipe model. It would have been better if there were a consistency check between connectors and there use in the program. One way would be not to show the connector unless it is activated, or give an error message if it is anyway connected. Could the variables browser shed some light over the problem? The variables browser is presented in Figure 12, after the port temperature has been clicked.

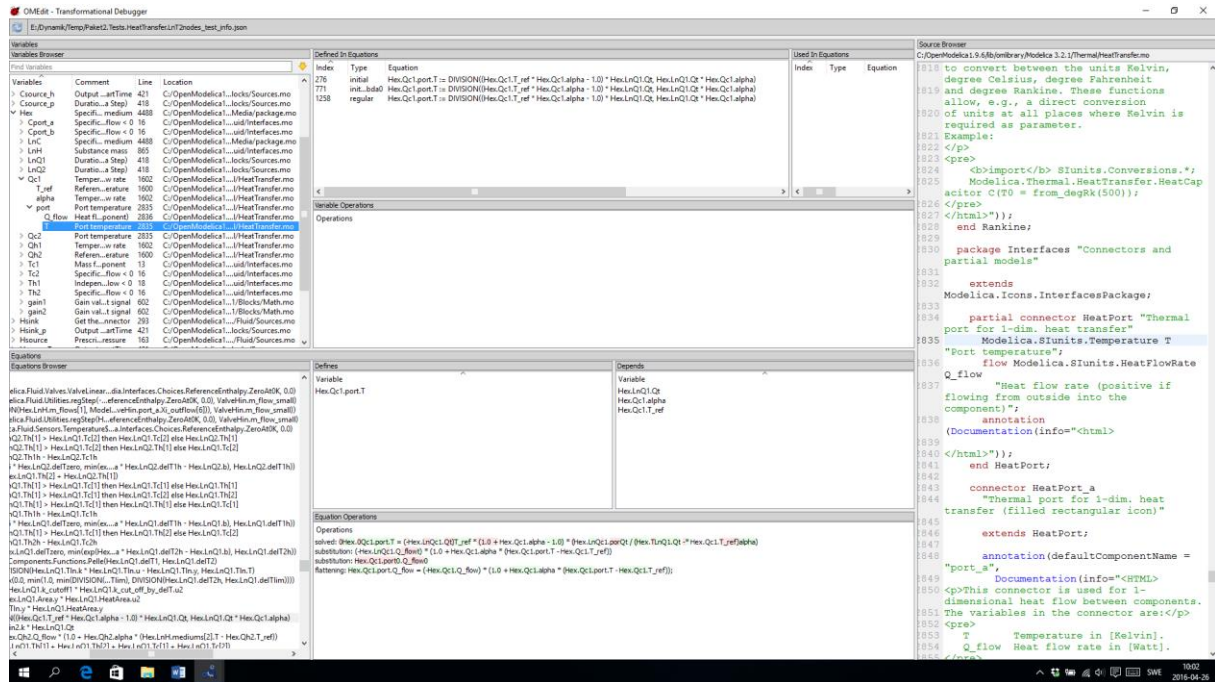


Figure 12 Information form variables browser

It gives the same information added with the initial equations. A question is why is not the debugger pointing to the initial equations indexes 276 and 771, as the SOW tells that the error appeared at initialization?

For comparison with the correct programmed model one could plot the PHF temperature and the pipe temperature and see that they are the same (Figure 13)

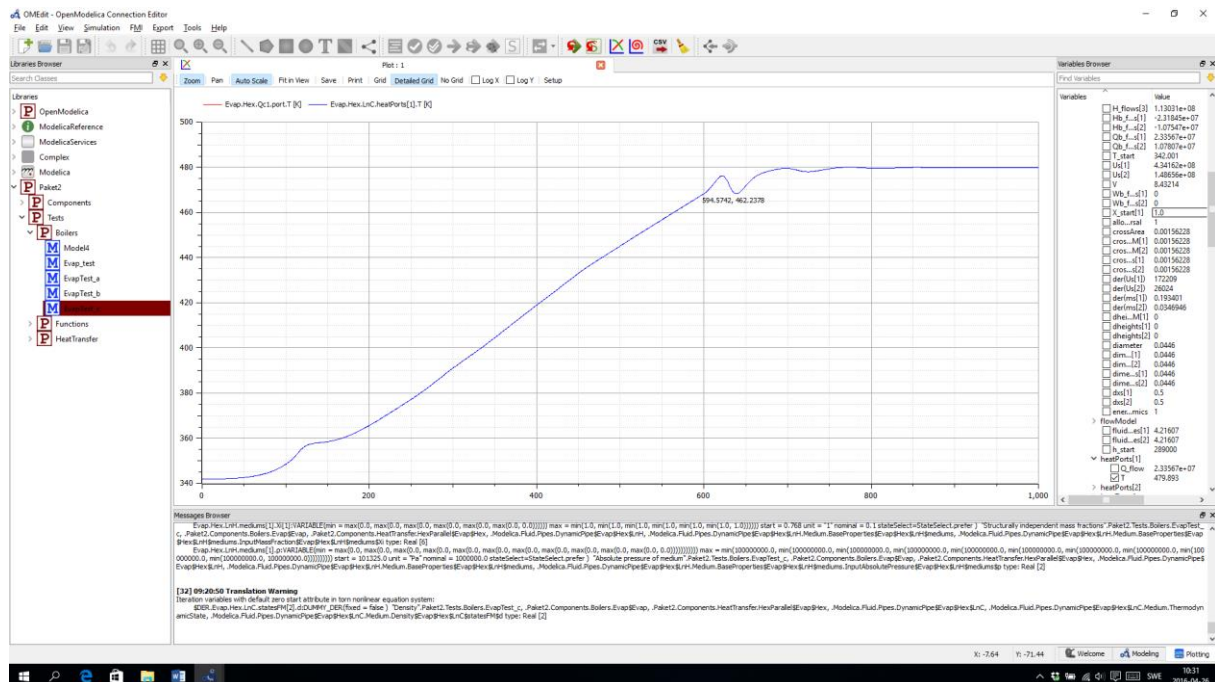


Figure 13 Plotting of the temperatures when model is correct

Checking the variables browser now reveals that the port temperature is no longer to be found (Figure 14)

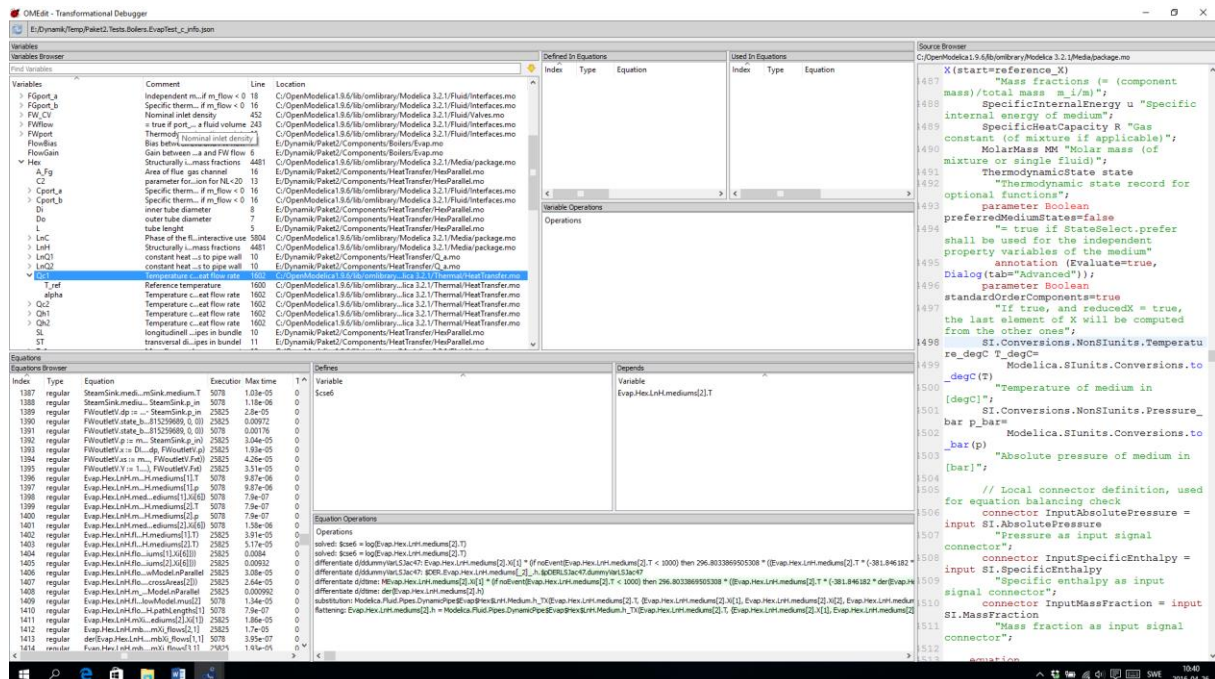


Figure 14 Variables browser for the correct model

This variable has been eliminated by the solver, but is still a part of the result file.

Conclusion

For this error the debugger gives not a clear pointer to the problem. It is helpful by pointing to an equation that should not be there, and giving the message that at initialization a division by zero occurred in that equation. It's an open question how many users that would have been helped by this information. But for sure the debugger puts focus on the heat transfer to the pipe, and then it is very likely that the users note that the parameter use_HeatTransfer is wrongly false. It is the authors recommendation that the OM is changed so that connection of none activated connectors becomes impossible.

3.3 Errors in the logarithmic temperature difference calculation

3.3.1 Motivation

Errors in the logarithmic temperature difference calculation should be treated the same way as the division by zero. Interesting is however, if the solver also for this types of errors manage to pass the critical point as their time duration could be expected to be very short. Basically this investigation is more an investigation of the solver and not the debugger but the debugger will be activated and therefore also this investigation is a part of the report.

3.3.2 Temperature differences passing zero

This test is achieved by removing the numerical fences that prevents zero passage. Unfortunately, it turns out that there are no passages that passes $\Delta T = 0$ for the case simulated, and the test needs further work to be carried out, and therefore postponed and not published in this issue of the report. This is unexpected and errors might have occurred at the transition from Dymola to OM.

3.3.3 Temperature differences at outlet and inlet passing equal values

This is happening without any numerical problems, i.e. the solver skips the critical time where they are

equal or happens to avoid it without any actions. No further action for this issue of the report.

3.4 Boiling in evaporator

3.4.1 Motivation

This test is to see how debugger treats situations where solver gets stuck due to conditions in the process that forces solver to take very small steps in order to fulfil error tolerance requirement (10^{-6}).

3.4.2 Result

This was caused already in chapter 3.2.2 and no additional test is necessary.

3.5 Bad initial values or bad simulation boundaries

3.5.1 Motivation

The debugger support, if any, is to be investigated for this type of problems where simulation runs into numerical problems.

3.5.2 Too high backpressure

By increasing the back pressure from the steam pipes to exceed drum pressure, and thus preventing steam flow out of the drum following output is received (Figure 15).

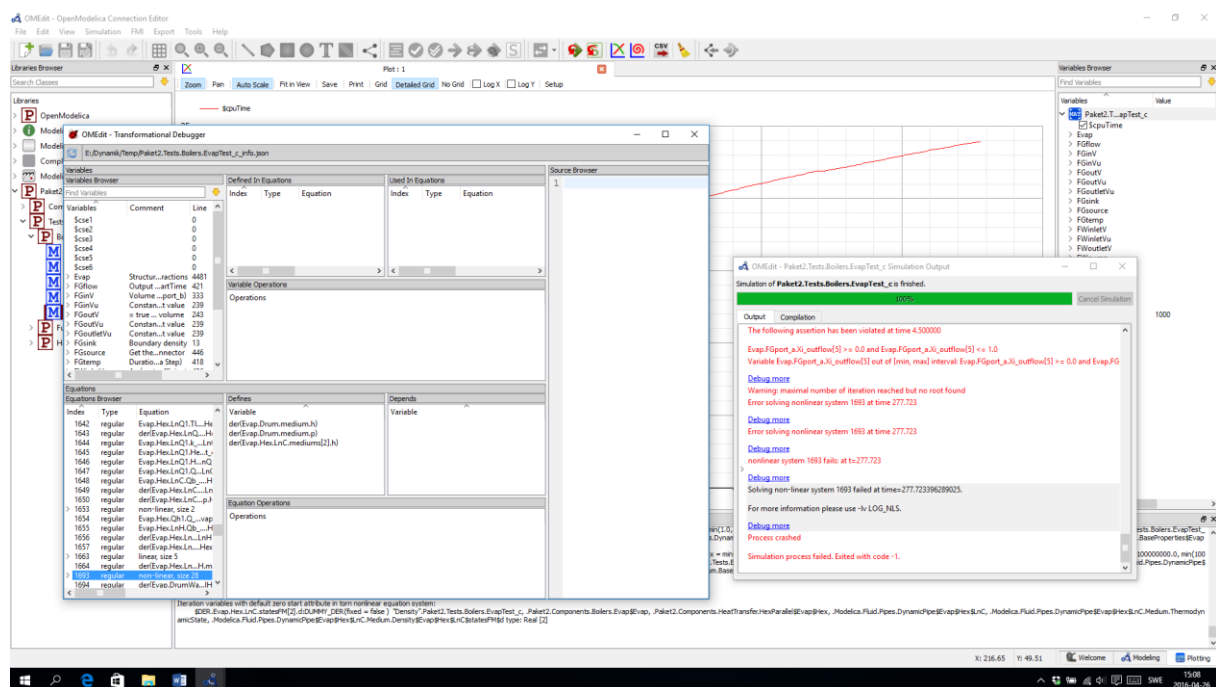


Figure 15 Output windows at too high back pressure

The simulation terminates at 277.7 s. The result file is written, i.e. it is possible to plot. The plotting reveals that the simulation crash is probably due to that the drum gets filled with water. The TDW points at the drum. The SOW recommends to log NLS. Doing this gives a not responding OM. Restart gives a runtime error (Figure 16 Unexpected outcome at repeat of simulation with log_NLS activated)

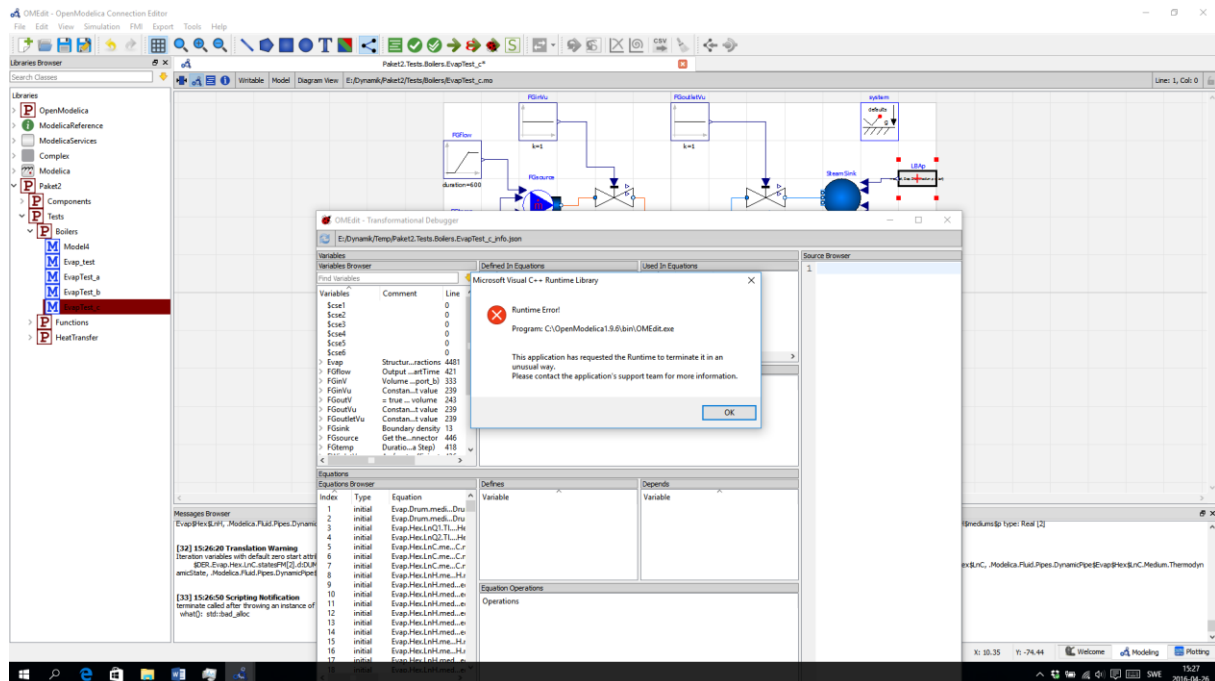


Figure 16 Unexpected outcome at repeat of simulation with log_NLS activated

A restart and simulation again without LOG_NLS activated gives the same result as in Figure 15. The plotting of the Drum parameter mass shows that drum gets filled as it has no outlet (Figure 17).

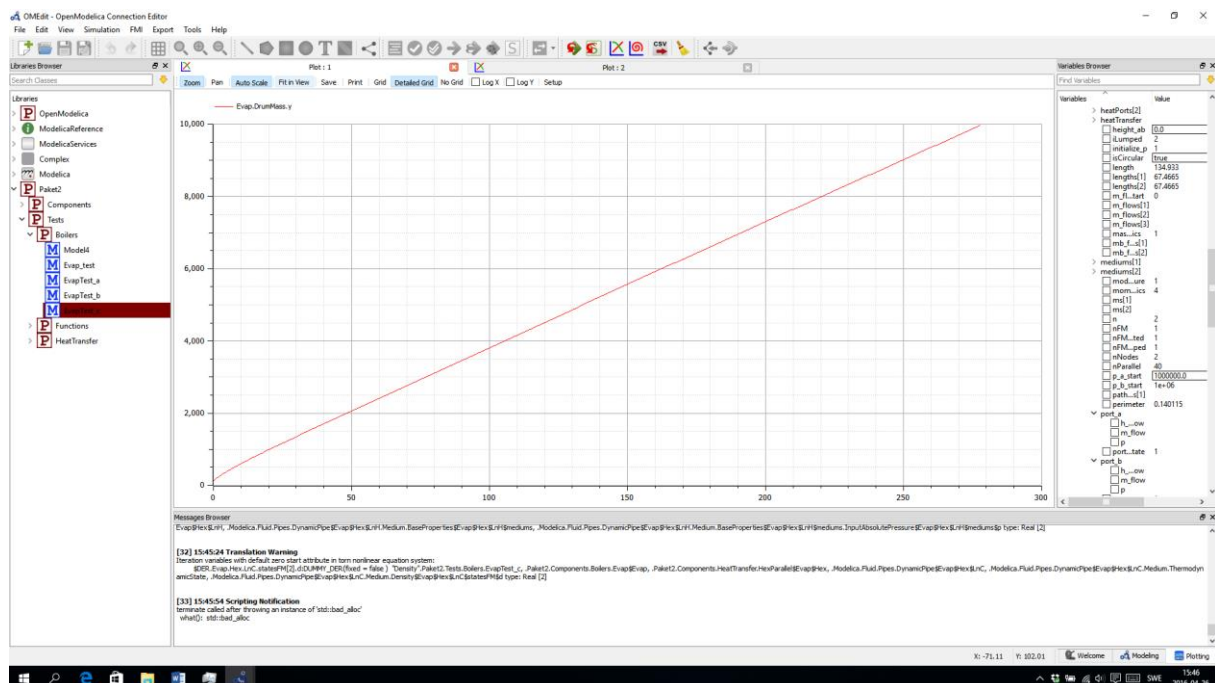


Figure 17 Plot of drum mass at blocked drum outlet

Conclusion

The debugger test failed here on OM problem with handling LOG_NLS. However, at this error the result file was generated and provides a tool for debugging. On the other hand, LOG_NLS is not a part of the debugger. The debugger information for this type of failure is not sufficient to remedy the problem directly, although it points at the drum as a probable cause. Eventually the recommended

logging of NLS could have given the direct cause of crash. From OM user point of view, the plotting after crash is very valuable, and it reveals that the drum gets filled from the LBA system (no check valves in this test model), which calls for corrective actions regardless of the what caused the actual solver crash.

4 Constraint

The basic property of the debugger is at numerical problems and violation of assertions like numerical ranges that a certain variable is expected never to exceed. Then the debugger points out the equation causing the problem. In this report only small models have been tested, that shows that the debugger works. To really evaluate the benefits of the debugger, but also its functionality, it should be applied to larger models.