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Life assessment using the finite element method of high-strength low-alloy steel samples exposed to low-cycle fatigue

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Abstract

In the paper, based on the results of experimental research on the behavior of samples in the form of round smooth test specimens (STS) made of high-strength low-alloy steel (HSLA), Nionikral 70 (NN-70), under conditions of low-cycle fatigue (LCF), a computational stress analysis was performed using numerical methods.

Experimental investigations of the behavior of the samples were performed with controlled and fully reversible deformation ($\Delta\varepsilon/2 = \text{const}$, $R\varepsilon = \varepsilon_{\min}/\varepsilon_{\max} = -1$), according to the ISO 12106:2003 (E) standard.

For computational analyses, the method of least squares (in the Excel program) and the finite element method (FEM) (in the SolidWorks program) were used. The behavior of HSLA steel during low cycle fatigue (LCF) simulation was analyzed in the Cosmos module of the SolidWorks program.

On the basis of the analysis of the results of the stress-deformation state and the determination of the life span through the isolines of the life span and comparison with the results of experimental tests, a graphic representation is given. Specific load cycles involving the entire round smooth test specimen ligament for a specific load in a wide range of LCF loads were analyzed.

The analyzes showed the justification of the effort to solve the life assessment of steel subjected to low cycle fatigue (LCF) numerically. The results of experimental tests and simulation tests also gave us important data on understanding the LCF behavior of HSLA steel NN-70.

Keywords HSLA, STS, LCF, Experiment, Excel, SolidWorks, FEM

1. UVOD

In the field of engineering structures and constructions, exposed to variable stresses (σ), two types of fatigue are distinguished [1], high cycle fatigue (HCF) (high number of cycles (N)

until failure) which is lower than the limit state σ_T and low cycle fatigue (LCF), with a low number of cycles to failure, but in the domain of plastic stresses.

Low-cycle fatigue of material means low-frequency material fatigue in which the appearance of microcracks and fractures occurs during repeated plastic strain with the number of cycles to failure $N=5 \times 10^4$ changes. Low-cycle fatigue is often referred to as statistical endurance under repeated static loads. The characteristics of the fatigue process during low-cycle fatigue differ from the

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characteristics of the fatigue process during high-cycle fatigue for the same load levels, so the assessment of the suitability of the material for long-term work must include two types of tests: high-cycle fatigue with high frequency (high frequency value) and low-cycle fatigue at lower frequency values.

Experiences have shown that the time of crack initiation is relatively short, so the life of the structure is usually determined according to the time of crack propagation, or more precisely, according to the time of propagation to the critical crack length.

High strength low alloy steels (HSLA) (Arctic steel [2]) were developed during the 1960s and 1970s to address the welding problems of conventional structural steels and the brittle fracture accidents caused by low temperatures [3]. For these constructions, the most commonly applied shaping procedure is joining by welding. The base material (BM) of high strength low alloy steels, intended for the construction of welded structures in addition to high strength, should have good plasticity, sufficient impact toughness, high resistance to brittle sheet metal, satisfactory machinability, good weldability, and the production process should be economical.

2. PROPERTIES OF HSLA STEEL NN-70

HSLA steel, NN-70 [4] is the Yugoslav version of the American steel HY-100. HSLA steels are generally being used for producing of ship and pressure equipment. The most significant component that influences steel selection is the suitable strength-to-weight proportion of HSLA steels compared with regular low-carbon steels. Ship structures are most commonly being produced by welding. For this reason high strength low-alloy (HSLA) steels, besides high strength as the main properties, should also have exceptional plasticity, adequate toughness and high resistance to brittle damage, as well as adequate workability and good welding performance [5-8].

Due to exposure to complex loading with constant cycles during exploitation, a basic understanding of material behavior and damage mechanisms under fatigue conditions is important. Tables 1 and 2 show the chemical composition and mechanical properties of HSLA steel NN-70 at room temperature [9-33].

Table 1. Chemical composition (%wt) of NN-70 [9-33]

C	Si	Mn	P	S	Cr	Ni	Mo	V	Al	As	Sn
0.106	0.209	0.220	0.005	0.0172	1.2575	2.361	0.305	0.052	0.007	0.017	0.014
Cu	Ti	Nb	Ca	B	Pb	W	Sb	Ta	Co	N	C _{eq}
0.246	0.002	0.007	0.0003	0	0.0009	0.0109	0.007	0.0009	0.0189	0.0096	0.542

$$C_{eq} = C + Mn/6 + Si/24 + Ni/40 + Cr/5 + Mo/4 + V/14.$$

Table 2. Mechanical properties of NN-70 at room temperature, 20 °C, [9-33]

Microstructure	Tempered martensite + tempered bainite	
Ultimate tensile stress, R _m , MPa	854.8	
Yield stress, R _{p0.2} , MPa	813.4	
Modulus of elasticity, E, GPa	static	211.5
	dynamic, LCF	221.4
Percent elongation, A ₅ , %	18.4	
Impact toughness, J/cm ²	96.83	
Crack initiation energy, J/cm ²	39.60	
Crack propagation energy, J/cm ²	57.23	
Hardness	plate	245-269 HV30
	LCF specimen	252-262 HV10

3. LCF TESTING OF HSLA NN-70 SAMPLES

Tests of steel, NN-70, by low-cycle fatigue with half-amplitude of controlled deformation,

$\Delta\varepsilon/2=0.35 - 0.80$, were performed on 10 round smooth test specimens (STS), fig. 1a, made of sticks, 11x11x95 mm from steel plate NN-70, processed according to the drawing from fig. 1b.

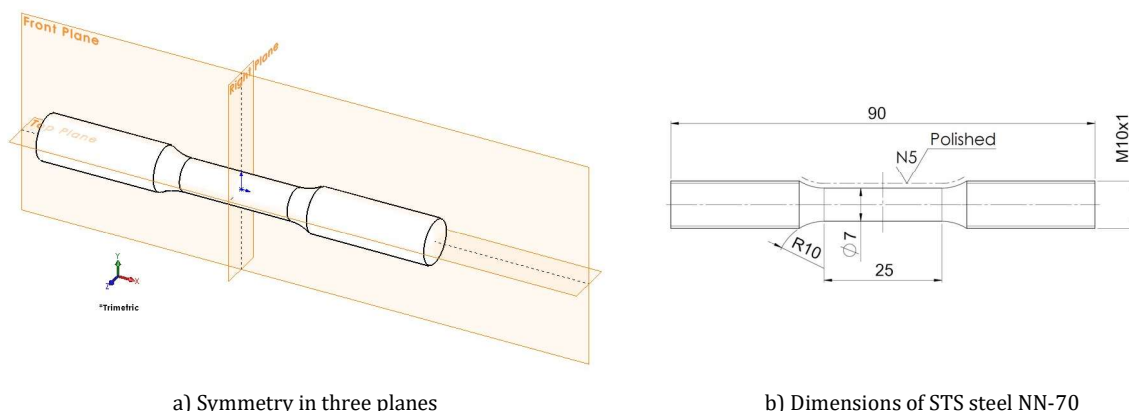


Fig. 1. Specimen for LCF test of steel NN-70 [9–33]

Low cycle fatigue test, in accordance with ISO 12106:2017 (E) [34], was performed on a universal servo-hydraulic MTS machine (rating 500 kN), in the Military Technical Institute in

Žarkovo [13, 21]. The test results of 4 specimens with controlled strain regimes shown in Table 3 were considered.

Table 3. Basic data on controlled strain regimes of LCF test NN-70 [21]

Specimen (Sp)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	$\Delta\epsilon/2$ [%]	$\Delta\epsilon/2$ [V]	$\Delta\epsilon/2$ [mm/mm]	Δl [mm]	$\Delta\epsilon$ [%]	T [s]	f [Hz]
	experiment	$\epsilon[\%] = \epsilon[V] \cdot 0.2$	1/100	3*25	1*2	experiment	1/6
09	0.35	1.75	0.0035	0.0875	0.70	4.30	0.2326
03	0.50	2.50	0.0050	0.1250	1.00	4.30	0.2326
06	0.60	3.00	0.0060	0.1500	1.20	4.30	0.2326
08	0.80	4.00	0.0080	0.2000	1.60	4.30	0.2326

4. PROCESSING OF TEST RESULTS IN THE EXCEL PROGRAM

Processing of test results was done in the EXCEL program [18, 19, 21, 30]. The results of that processing are shown in Tables 4 and 5 and in Fig. 2, 3 and 4.

Table 4. Characteristic processed test data of LCF steel NN-70 [29, 30]

LCF NN-70, ISO 12106/03 [34]		Stabilization regions		Characteristic cycles of stabilization			
Sp	$\Delta\epsilon/2$, %	y=F, kN; x=N	R ²	N _{bs}	N _{es}	N _f	N _s = N _f /2
09	0.35	F=-0.0002N+24.30	0.95	812	6740	8329	4165
03	0.50	F=-0.0022N+28.57	0.97	256	1271	1402	701
06	0.60	F=-0.0057N+29.66	0.94	127	415	501	251
08	0.80	F=-0.0162N+30.83	0.94	50	165	207	104

N_{bs} – The beginning of stabilization; N_{es} – End of stabilization; N_f – Cycle of failure; N_s – Characteristic stabilization cycle

Table 5. Data of characteristic stabilized hysteresis, N_s, of HSLA steel NN-70 [29, 30]

Sp	y=mx-b; y=F, kN; x= $\Delta\epsilon_p/2$ F=0; $\Delta\epsilon_p/2=b/m$ $\Delta\epsilon_e/2=\Delta\epsilon/2-\Delta\epsilon_p/2$	N _s	$\Delta\epsilon/2$	$\Delta\epsilon_p/2$	$\Delta\epsilon_e/2$	σ_{max} , MPa	σ_{min} , MPa	$\Delta\sigma/2$, MPa
09	$\Delta\epsilon_p/2=(3.04/61.38)/100$	4165	0.0035	0.000495	0.003005	608.14	-689.48	648.81
03	$\Delta\epsilon_p/2=(18.74/109.15)/100$	701	0.0050	0.001717	0.003283	702.84	-707.19	705.01
06	$\Delta\epsilon_p/2=(16.93/76.92)/100$	251	0.0060	0.002201	0.003799	736.15	-698.00	717.07
08	$\Delta\epsilon_p/2=(27.97/65.04)/100$	104	0.0080	0.004301	0.003699	761.87	-709.04	735.46

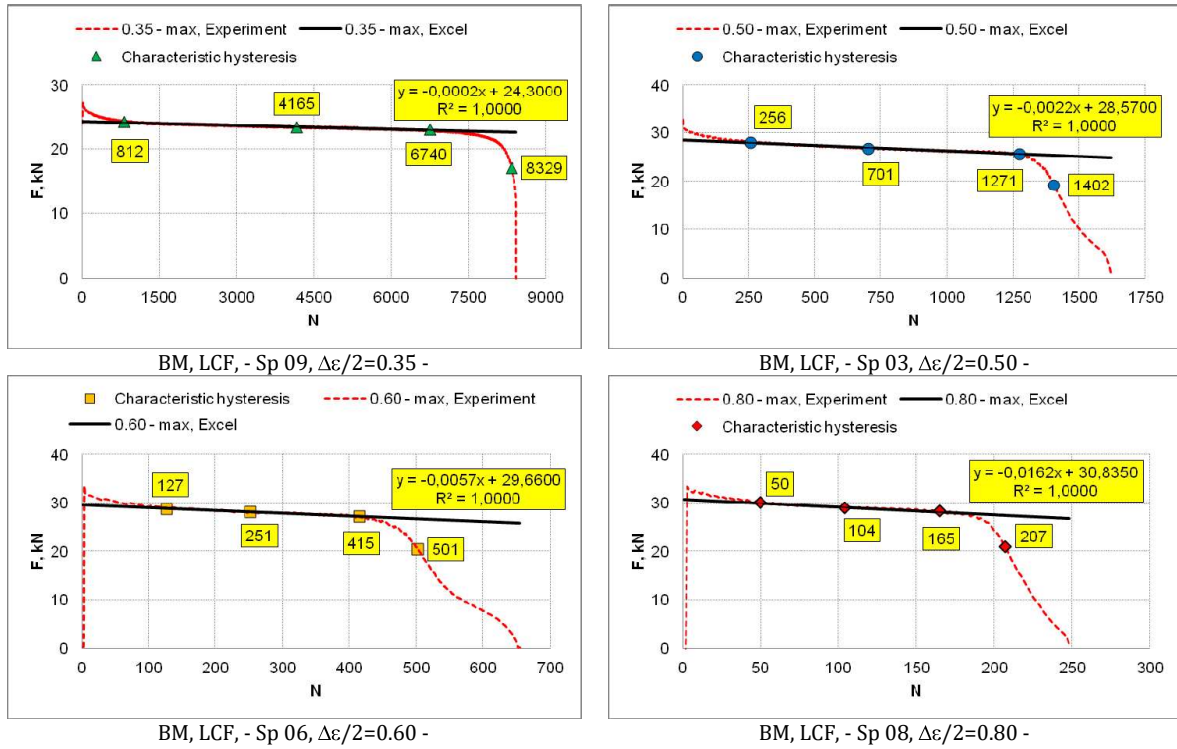


Fig. 2. Graphical results of LCF test of NN-70 steel specimens [29, 30]

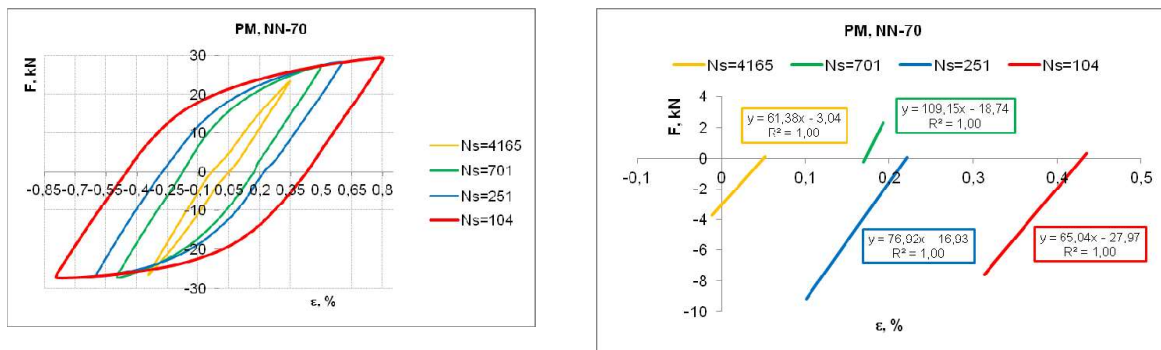


Fig. 3. Graphic view of processed stabilized hysteresis, N_s , LCF testing of HSLA steel NN-70 [29, 30]

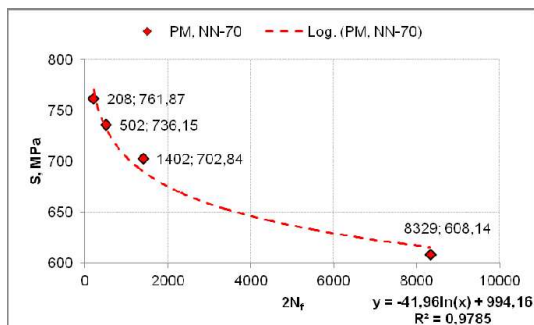
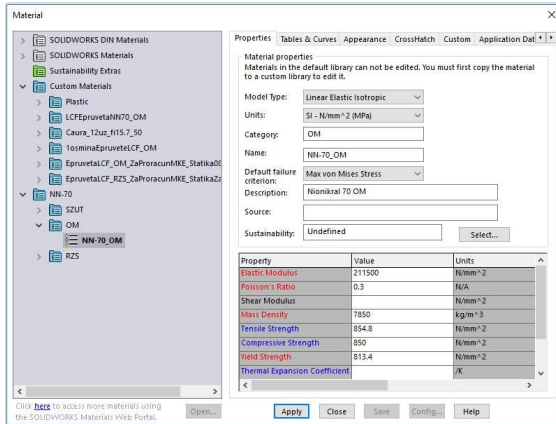


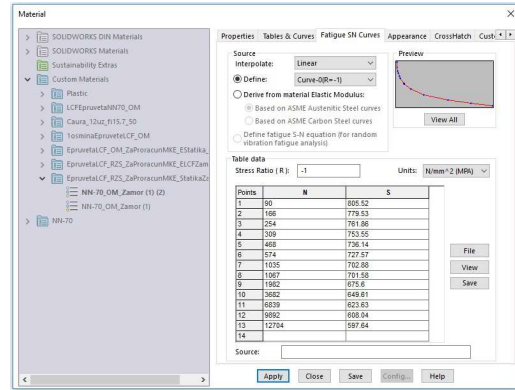
Fig. 4. Dependence $S(\sigma)-2N_f$ obtained in EXCEL by the method of least squares [29, 30]

5. PREPARATION FOR STATIC AND FATIGUE CALCULATION OF FEM IN SOLIDWORKS

Data from Table 2 and data obtained by processing the results of the LCF test into the EXCEL program, Fig. 4, were used for the static and fatigue calculation of the FEM of the BM specimen model in the Cosmos module of the SolidWorks parametric program, and their input is shown in Fig. 5. Initial data on the model, boundary conditions and finite element mesh are shown in Fig. 6.

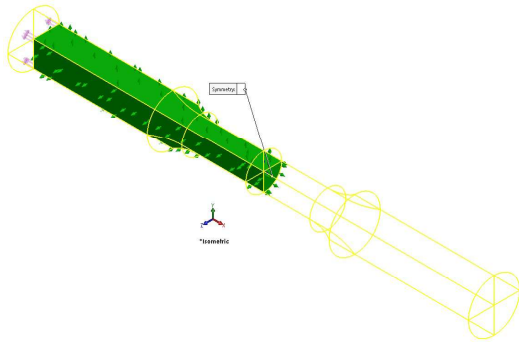


a) Input data for static calculation

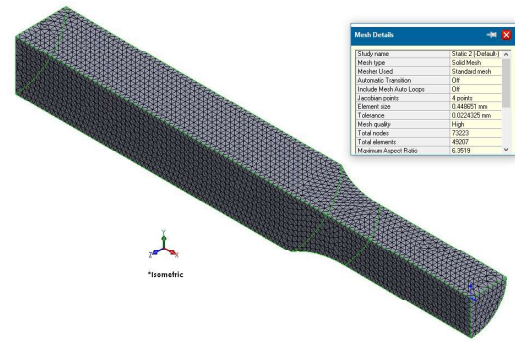


b) Input data for LCF

Fig. 5. Data for FEM calculation static and dynamic behaviour of HSLA steel NN-70



Boundary conditions part of BM specimen



Finite element mesh BM specimen

Fig. 6. Initial data on models, boundary conditions and finite element mesh of NN-70 specimen

6. RESULTS OF STATIC AND FATIGUE CALCULATION OF FEM IN SOLIDWORKS

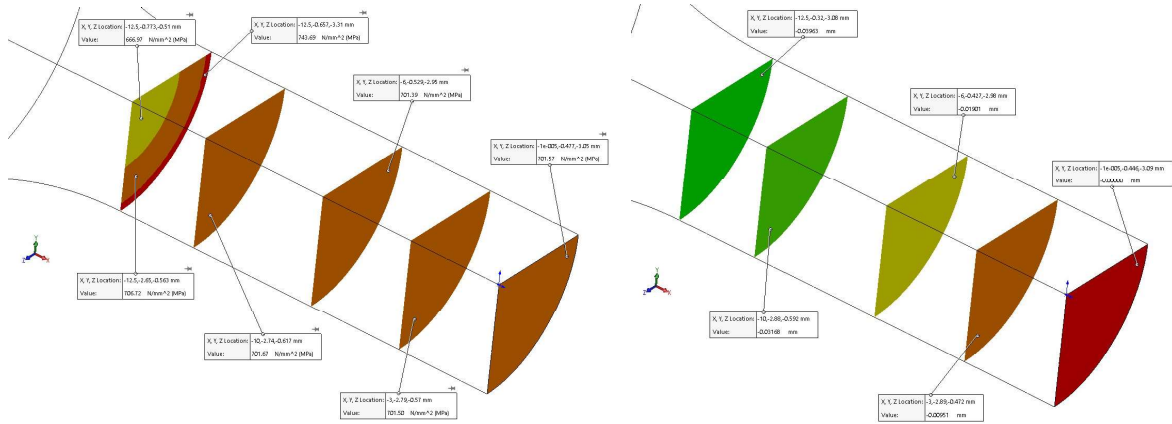
An illustration of the results of the static calculation for a load of 27 kN is shown in Fig. 7 and Table 6.

An illustration of the results of the FEM fatigue test simulation is shown in Fig. 8-10.

Table 6. Results of static calculation and simulation of LCF fatigue FEM in SolidWorks, specimen of steel NN-70

Testing specimen, cross section = 38.5 mm ²					FEM				
	LCF, experiment		Excel	F, kN	S _{Nf} , MPa	N _{FEM} , fracture in BM	S _{NFEM} , max, MPa		
	Δε/2	N _f					von Mises	Normal	
BM, NN-70	0.80	208	N _f = e ^{(994.15 - S_{Nf})/41.96}	90	31.00	805.52	91	872.08	898.71
				166	30.00	779.53	166	843.94	869.72
				254	29.32	761.87	254	824.81	850.01
				309	29.00	753.55	309	815.81	840.73
				468	28.33	736.15	468	796.96	821.31
				574	28.00	727.57	573	787.68	811.74
	0.50	1402		1035	27.05	702.84	1034	760.96	784.20
				1067	27.00	701.58	1065	759.55	782.75
				1982	26.00	675.60	1979	731.42	753.76
				3682	25.00	649.61	3676	703.29	724.77
				6839	24.00	623.63	6829	675.16	695.78
				9892	23.40	608.14	9876	658.28	678.38
			12704	23.00	597.64	12681	647.02	666.79	

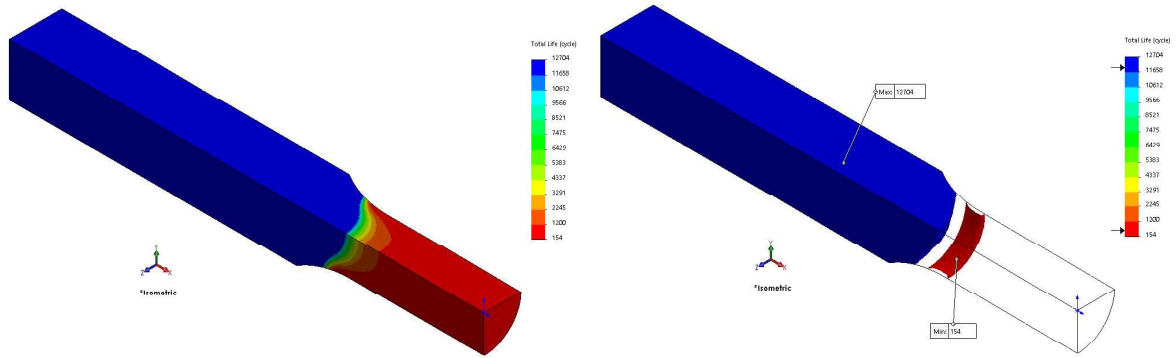
S_{Nf} = -41,96ln(N_f) + 994,15 (from formula in Fig. 4)



Values of normal stresses in sections along the x-axis, 0, 3, 6, 10 and 12.5 mm, BM Sp of HSLA steel NN-70

Elongation values in x-axis sections, 0, 3, 6, 10 and 12.5 mm BM Sp of HSLA steel NN-70

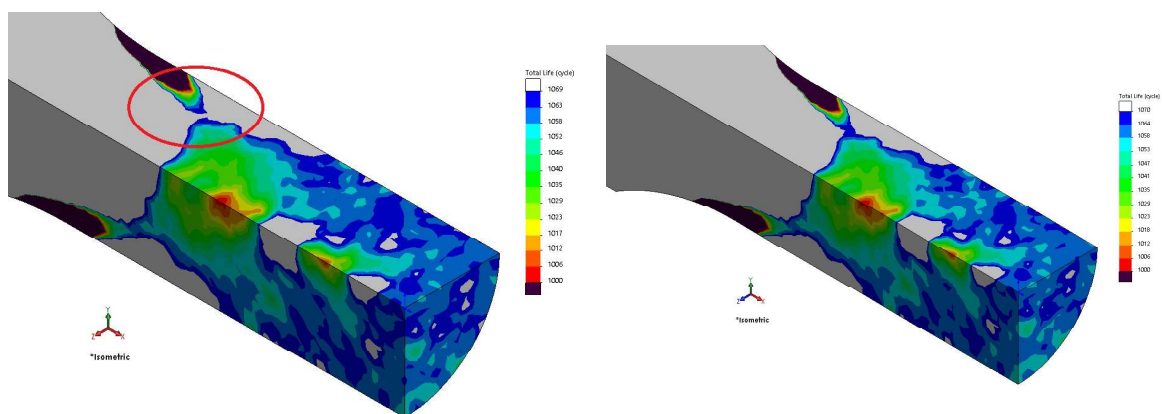
Fig. 7. Results of static calculation of FEM specimen for load 27 kN, HSLA steel of NN-70 (see Table 6)



Isolines of life, BM

Isolines of life, BM, Min i Max

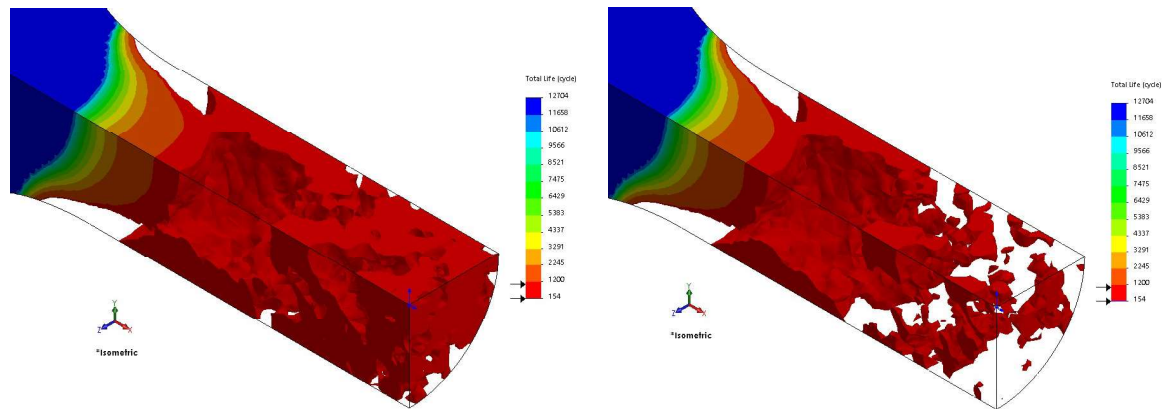
Fig. 8. Isolines of lifetime by section of STS HSLA steel NN-70 for a load of 27 kN



The cycle preceding the breaking cycle, 1069

The cycle of fracture, 1070

Fig. 9. Determination of the failure cycle of STS BM steel NN-70 by reading isosurfaces for a load of 27 kN (see table 6)



Five cycles before breaking, 1060
 The cycle of fracture, 1065
Fig. 10. Determining the failure cycle of STS BM steel NN-70 by reading isovolumes for a load of 27kN (see table 6)

In the case of FEM static calculation, the SolidWorks program, in addition to the analysis of the distribution of von Mises stresses, enables the analysis of the results of the calculation of normal stresses (Table 6) as well as the analysis of strains and elongations. The fatigue calculation, in addition to the min and max number of iso-sections of the life cycle, also gives us the percentage of damage to a specific section of the test specimen. The methodology for determining the number of cycles for a round smooth test specimen in which the parts of the test tube separate, i.e. break, for a certain load is shown in Fig. 9 and 10, and the results of the applied methodology are shown in Table 6. Iso-section (surface or volume) of the life cycle that covers the entire

ligament of the test specimen, and it is located between the min and max number of cycles of the life cycle, which is the cycle in which the fracture of the test specimen occurs.

7. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

By processing the results of the LCF test and calculations in the EXCEL programs, using the least squares method and SolidWorks program using the finite element method, we obtained the necessary data for determining:

1. Cyclic stress-strain curve (1), Table 7 and Fig. 11,
2. Fatigue life curve (2) and transition fatigue life (3), N_{FR} , Table 8 and Fig. 12.

Table 7. Data for Cyclic stress-strain curve (1) of HSLA steel NN-70

$\Delta \varepsilon = \frac{\Delta \sigma}{E} + 2 \left(\frac{\Delta \sigma}{2K'} \right)^{\frac{1}{n'}} \quad (1)$	Method	n'	K' , MPa	E , MPa, (determined from cycle $N_{1/4}$)
	Standard [34]	0.047	946.2	221378 (221.4 GPa)

Table 8. Data for fatigue life curve (2) and transition fatigue life (3) of HSLA steel NN-70

$\frac{\Delta \varepsilon}{2} = \frac{\sigma'_f}{E} N_f^b + \varepsilon'_f N_f^c \quad (2)$	Method	elastic part			plastic part		N_{FR}
		E , MPa	σ'_f , MPa	b	ε'_f	c	
$N_{FR} = \left(\frac{\varepsilon'_f \cdot E}{\sigma'_f} \right)^{\frac{1}{b-c}} \quad (3)$	Standard [34]	221378	1153.8	-0.060	0.1045	-0.594	274

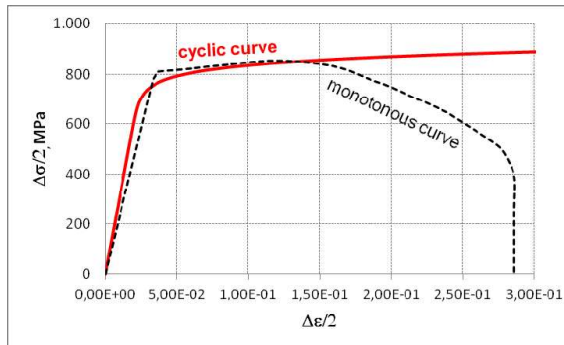


Fig. 11. Cyclic stress-strain curve (1) of HSLA steel NN-70

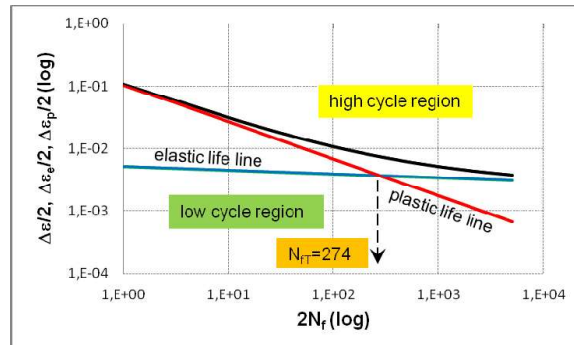


Fig. 12. Fatigue life curve (2) and transition fatigue life (3) of HSLA steel NN-70

8. CONCLUSION

The paper presents the results of the fatigue test (LCF) on a round smooth test specimen, for base metal of HSLA steel NN-70, which was used as input data for the low-cycle fatigue simulation on those test specimens and the FEM calculation in SolidWorks with the aim of obtaining comparative results of the lifetime assessment by testing and FEM calculation.

The methodology for determining the number of cycles during which the parts of the test specimen separate (specimen fracture) applied in this paper enables the calculation, FEM, of the fracture cycle to be determined on other elements made of base metal of HSLA steel NN-70 exposed to low cycle fatigue load (LCF).

As one of the very interesting and promising directions of future research, the application of the presented methodologies is imposed in order to define the size of the fatigue crack, as the main parameter for characterizing the existence of fatigue, under conditions of variable loading, in order to determine the fatigue life, cycle to failure, and assess the resistance of the material to the crack initiation, the development of which can also be followed by NDT methods.

The stabilization area during LCF test of all samples of base metal of HSLA steel NN-70 shows a high degree of agreement with the general equation of the straight line, $y (F \text{ or } \sigma) = m \times (N) + b$, whose coefficients m and b can be determined by linearization and show the weakening of base metal of HSLA steel NN-70.

The obtained results represent a practical contribution to the assessment of the behavior of high strength low-alloy NN-70 under LCF operating conditions.

Acknowledgement

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