

1 **Combining topology and fractal dimension of fracture networks**  
2 **characterises structural domains in thrust limestones**

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21 **Highlights**

- 22 • A new method for characterising fractures in fold-and-thrust belt  
23 structural settings with complex fracture networks
- 24 • Fractal dimensions and topological features are combined to  
25 characterise fractures enabling distinction of structural domains
- 26 • Reduced time taken for data collection compared to traditional  
27 fracture sampling techniques
- 28 • Fore-thrusts and back-thrusts have higher fractal dimensions than  
29 pop-up structures
- 30 • Fore-thrusts have fewer longer fractures
- 31 • Back-thrusts have higher densities of interconnected fractures
- 32

## 33 **Abstract**

34 Fractures in limestones of the Palaeocene Lockhart Formation in the  
35 hanging wall of the Himalayan Main Boundary Thrust north of Islamabad  
36 are examined, and the data analysed using a combination of topology and  
37 fractal dimension to characterise fracture patterns and relate them to  
38 structural domains. Neither technique alone allows the recognition of the  
39 structural domains. However, when considered together for all the fractures  
40 within an area, fore-thrusts, pop-ups and back-thrusts can be recognised.  
41 The fractures are considered together, as the characteristics of the  
42 individual structural domains are characterised by the cumulative effect of  
43 all the different fractures. Fore- and back-thrusts have higher fractal  
44 dimensions than pop-up structures. The highest fractal dimensions of both  
45 types of thrusts occur immediately adjacent to and decrease away from the  
46 central pop-up structure. Topologically, fore-thrust domains have fewer  
47 fractures and fracture intersections (nodes), with a longer mean fracture  
48 trace length; back-thrust domains contain more nodes (hence also more  
49 tips, lines, and branches) resulting in higher fracture densities. Pop-up  
50 structure domains are characterised by a low fracture intensity. Using the  
51 combined analysis of both the topology and fractal dimension, we show that  
52 the fracture pattern characteristics are predictable, when related to the  
53 different structural settings identified within fold and thrust of the Lockhart  
54 Formation.

55

## 56 **1. Introduction**

57 Fracturing of a rock mass is the mechanical response to an applied stress  
58 (Ramsey, 1967; Brown, 2008), with the extent and characteristics of the  
59 resultant fracture network controlled by the mechanical properties of the  
60 rock mass and variations in the stress field. Understanding the properties  
61 and characteristics of the resultant fracture network is essential in many  
62 aspects of applied geoscience, from determining the stability of an

63 excavation (Hoek and Brown, 1980) to identifying fluid pathways and  
64 storage volumes for minerals (Cox, 2005) or hydrocarbons (Aydin, 2000).

65 Fracture systems are defined as geometrical arrays of linked and often  
66 interacting fractures within a rock mass (Rouleau and Gale, 1986; Odling  
67 *et al.*, 1999). Fracture systems have attracted much scientific attention and  
68 numerous methods have been proposed to characterise them, ranging from  
69 analysis of their kinematic behaviour, through shared and/or discrete  
70 geometry, to tectonic setting, as concisely and instructively summarised by  
71 Peacock and Sanderson (2018).

72 The geometric arrangements of fractures in a rock volume are typically  
73 viewed as either discrete objects in space (Barros-Galvis, *et al.*, 2015;  
74 Welch *et al.*, 2015), or topologically, that is to say, 'in relation to one  
75 another' (Long and Witherspoon, 1985; Laubach *et al.*, 2018), and/or in  
76 direct relation to causative mechanisms.

77 Studies that consider the spatial distribution of fractures as discrete objects  
78 provide valuable insights into the relationships between fractures and  
79 lithological characteristics of the fractured rock mass. For example, the  
80 spacing of fractures commonly varies with lithology or, more correctly, with  
81 differences in the mechanical properties of the lithology, such that  
82 competent lithologies display more widely-spaced fractures, for a given  
83 stress, compared to their less competent counterparts (Pollard and  
84 Fletcher, 2005; Ortega *et al.*, 2010; Hooker *et al.*, 2013). Fracture spacing  
85 also varies with bed thickness (Ladeira and Price, 1981) with thicker beds  
86 containing more widely-spaced fractures than their thinner equivalents, for  
87 a given stress. In folded strata, differences in the geometry of fracture  
88 patterns are related to variations in competence and bed thickness and a  
89 response to the complex strain distribution in fold systems. This results in  
90 a broad array of geometrical fracture characteristics associated with  
91 ductile/brittle-ductile fold deformation features (Cosgrove, 2015; Ferrill *et al.*,  
92 *et al.*, 2016).

93 By contrast, topological analysis of a fracture network characterises the  
94 connectivity of the constitutive fractures in that network, rather than the  
95 inherent properties of the individual fractures (Sanderson *et al.*, 2019). This  
96 approach has provided an improved understanding of the overall behaviour  
97 of the physical properties of the rock mass under consideration, particularly  
98 in terms of its strength, porosity, and permeability (Sanderson and Nixon,  
99 2015).

100 Approaches to fracture characterisation that establish a causative  
101 relationship between a particular fracture system and the mechanism  
102 responsible for its formation require observations that can indicate a  
103 temporal link between a fracture network and the proposed process (Long,  
104 *et al.*, 1996). Examples include studies of how fracture systems of different  
105 ages (established by geochemistry) link together to control mineralisation  
106 within Archean orogenic gold (Dziggel *et al.*, 2007) or recognition of  
107 mining-induced fractures and pre-existing geological discontinuities and  
108 how they interact to produce the rock mass around a mining stope  
109 (Grodner, 1999).

110 The task of relating a fracture system to a specific process is particularly  
111 challenging for rocks that have been subjected to multiple deformational  
112 events. For example, in fold-and-thrust belts deformation results from a  
113 combination of burial, changes in fluid pressure and composition, folding,  
114 thrusting, uplift and exhumation (Engelder *et al.*, 1985; English and  
115 Laubach, 2017). The distribution of fractures variously reflects the different  
116 failure responses to stresses of these events due to variations in mechanical  
117 properties of the rock mass (Wennberg *et al.*, 2006), that themselves  
118 evolve through time (Laubach *et al.*, 2009). Progressive folding can also  
119 result in multiple generations of opening-mode fractures (Cosgrove, 2015).  
120 Consequently, polyphase deformation in fold-and-thrust belts typically  
121 results in complex, sequential overlays of fracture networks with such high  
122 abundances and intricate patterns that they are not readily described by  
123 simple fold-fault-fracture geometries (Cosgrove, 2015), or by one-

124 dimensional descriptors (Watkins *et al.*, 2015; Laubach *et al.*, 2018).  
125 Fractures formed at the same time can have different orientations and  
126 mineral compositions and conversely fractures formed at different times  
127 can have the same orientations or mineralisation. To properly quantify the  
128 effects of the fracture networks on the rock mass, the whole fracture  
129 system must be considered rather than apparently discrete fracture sets in  
130 a fracture network (Peacock *et al.*, 2018).

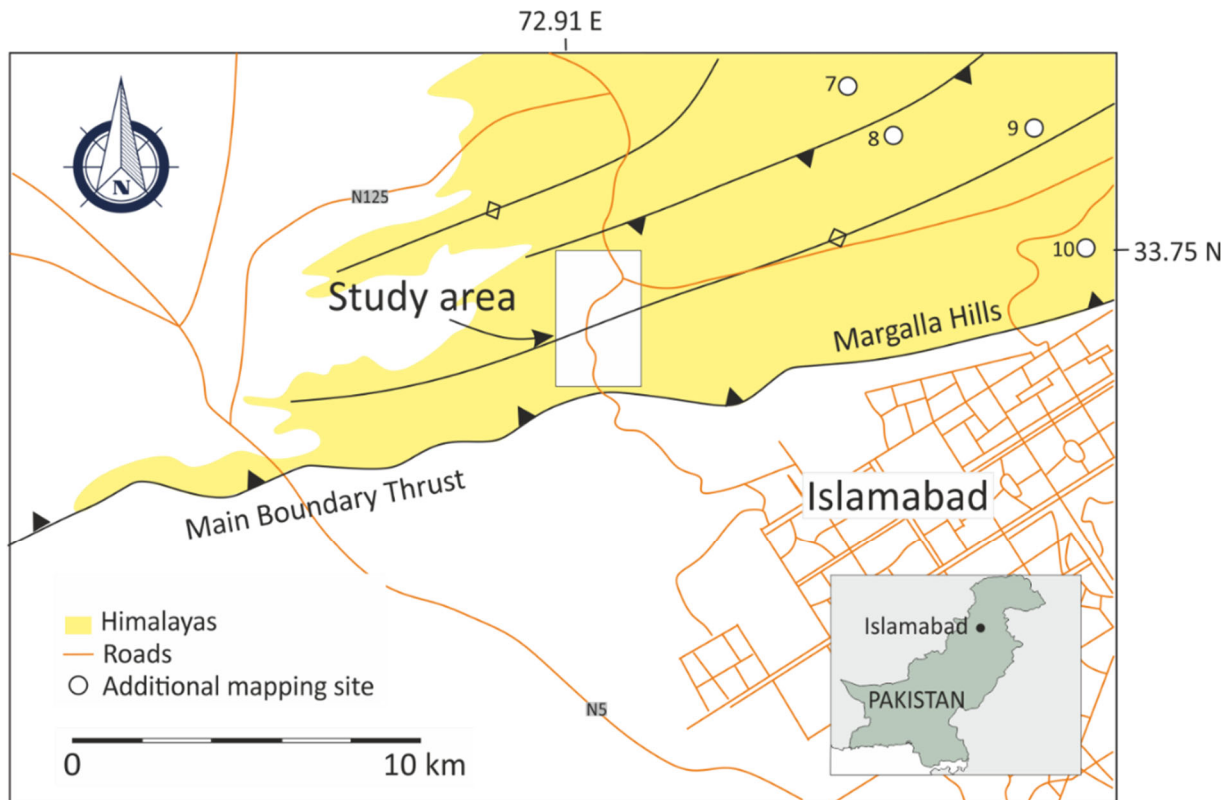
131 Here we present a novel approach to the challenges involved in developing  
132 an informative, and potentially predictive, characterisation of highly  
133 fractured rock. The individual constituent fracture types within the fracture  
134 system are not separated for analysis, but rather we consider how the  
135 cumulative effects can be used to discriminate different structural domains.  
136 This approach integrates discrete topological and spatial methods for  
137 characterising fractures and fracture networks by employing fractal  
138 dimension to provide a spatial context of the distribution of the constituent  
139 fractures, and then combining those data with analyses of the observed  
140 topological relationships and interconnectivity of the fracture networks. The  
141 approach provides a more robust assessment and analysis of the fractures  
142 observed within the rock mass and their characteristics than can be  
143 achieved from application of either method in isolation. As we consider all  
144 the topological and fractal data together, all the interactions between  
145 fractures, and their effects upon the characteristics of the rock mass are  
146 defined. Moreover, this approach dramatically reduces the time taken for  
147 data collection compared to traditional fracture sampling techniques and  
148 provides large amounts of unbiased data representative of fracture network  
149 characteristics over a wide range of fracture structural domains.

150 We apply this technique to examine the occurrence and distribution of  
151 fracturing in well-exposed in Palaeocene limestones within the frontal thrust  
152 sheets associated with the Main Boundary Thrust (MBT) of the Himalayan  
153 fold and thrust belt (Tariq *et al.*, 2017; Dasti *et al.*, 2018), in a region  
154 approximately 10 km north of Islamabad, NW Pakistan (Figure 1 and Figure

155 2). Here, in a single stratigraphic unit (the Lockhart Limestone) a complex  
156 sequence of fractures can be studied across fore-thrusts, back-thrusts, and  
157 pop-up structures that all occur above, and immediately to the north of the  
158 MBT. We recognise that there are multiple generations of fractures in the  
159 study area, but as the geomechanical properties of the rock mass must be  
160 the result of all fractures combined, we contend that it is important to  
161 consider all fractures collectively to understand differences in the  
162 cumulative distribution of fracture sets related to specific structures.  
163 Restricting the structural analysis to a single stratigraphic unit removes  
164 variation in fracture characteristics related to lithology.

## 165 **2. Regional Geological Setting**

166 The geology of the study area in the Potwar Basin of northern Pakistan,  
167 immediately adjacent to the capital city of Islamabad (**Error! Reference**  
168 **source not found.**), is dominated by sedimentary deposits and structural  
169 features associated with the collision of the Indian and Eurasian plates  
170 during the Himalayan Orogeny (Acharyya and Saha, 2018). Continual  
171 southwards-directed and décollement-related thrusting of the crust of the  
172 Indian Plate resulted in a variety of high-level fold and fault structures in  
173 the hanging walls of the major thrusts that crop out in northern Pakistan  
174 (Yeats and Hussain, 1987; Pivnik and Wells, 1996; Burg *et al.*, 2005). As  
175 one of these major thrusts, the MBT is a regional-scale structure that  
176 demarcates the southern limit of the Peshawar-Hazara Basin, transporting  
177 a Mesozoic-Tertiary marine sequence of the Indo-Pakistan Plate south-  
178 eastwards over the syn-tectonic molasse of the Murree Formation  
179 sediments (Iqbal and Bannert, 1998; Ghani *et al.*, 2018).



180

181 Figure 1: Location of the principal study area and additional mapping sites  
 182 (7 to 10) in the foothills of the Himalayas north of Islamabad, Pakistan.  
 183 Several tectonic structures are developed in the hanging wall strata of the  
 184 Main Boundary Thrust and they form the focus of this study.

185 Sediments ranging from Precambrian evaporite, through Permian and  
 186 Triassic siltstone-dominated sequences to successions of Jurassic  
 187 sandstone, shale and limestone are present locally, but do not crop out in  
 188 the study area and hence are not considered further. All analyses were  
 189 undertaken on limestone units of the Palaeocene Lockhart Formation  
 190 (Figure 2) which were deposited unconformably over Cretaceous fluvial and  
 191 marine sediments on the northern leading edge of the Indian Plate during  
 192 the closure of the Palaeo-Tethys Ocean (Chatterjee and Bajpal, 2016).  
 193 Strata of the Lockhart Formation comprise a series of stacked  
 194 foraminiferal–algal build-ups intercalated with argillaceous siltstone and  
 195 mudstone, all deposited in cyclical units on a low-energy shelfal carbonate  
 196 ramp, with the sediments recording many shallowing and shoaling events  
 197 from open marine to inner ramp conditions (Hanif *et al.*, 2014). The



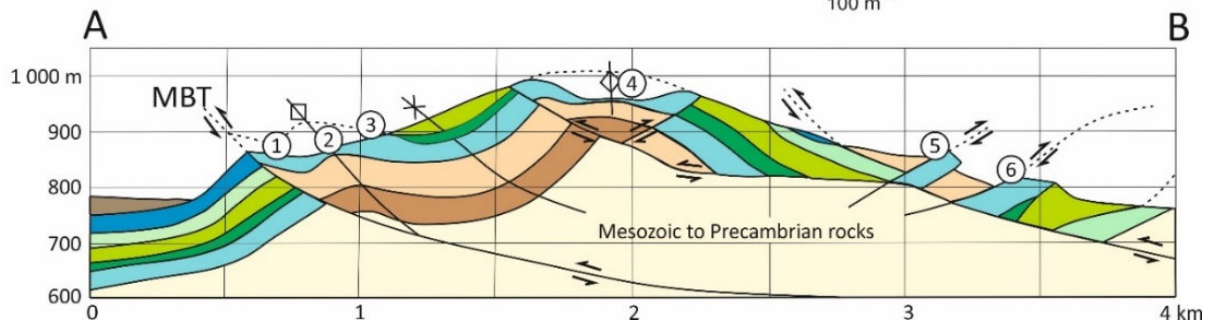
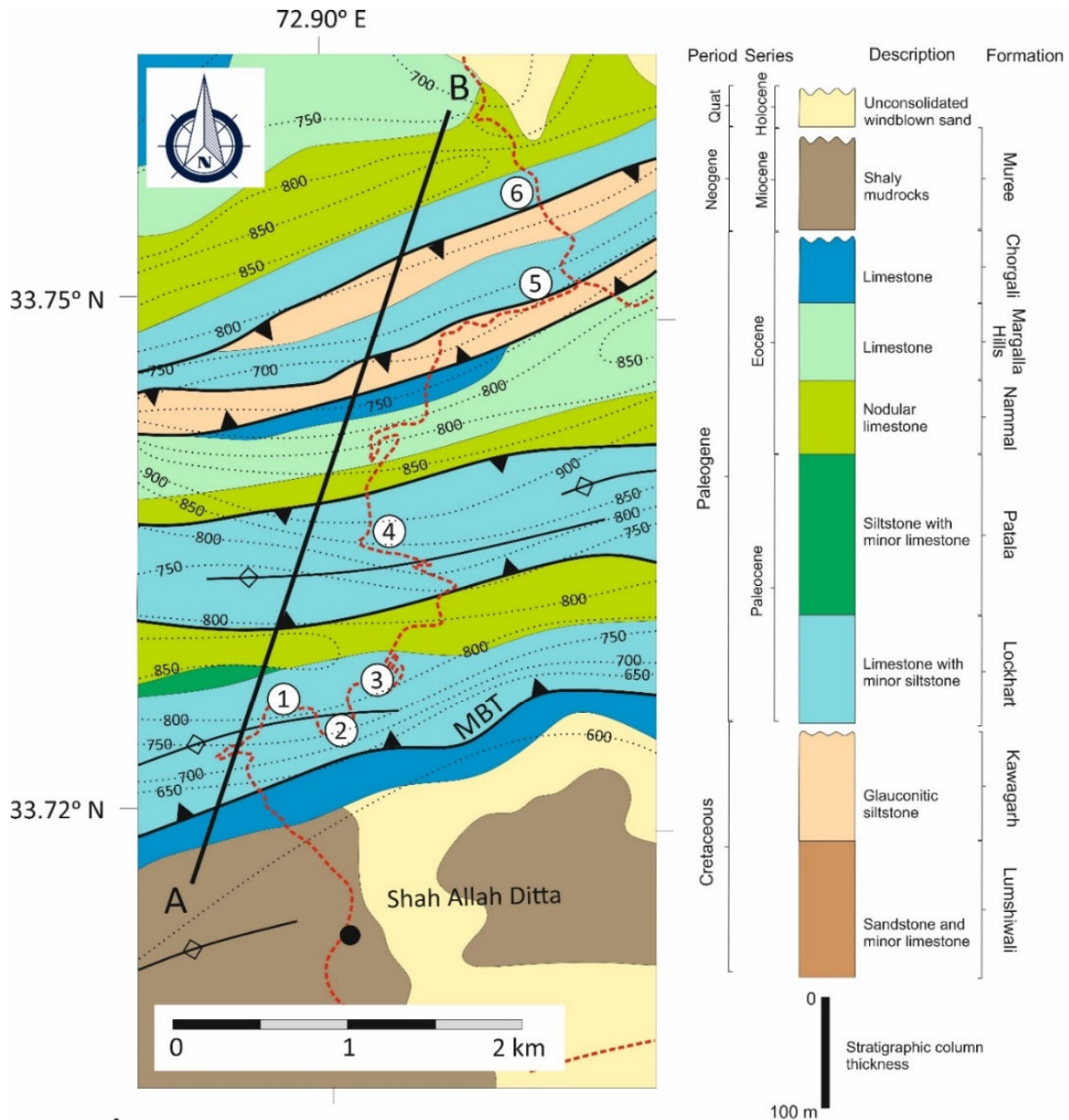
198 limestone units of the formation generally comprise lime-mudstone,  
199 argillaceous wackestone and, more rarely, packstone, all with little or no  
200 primary matrix porosity.

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202 Strata of the Lockhart Formation are overlain by siltstone and limestone of  
203 the late Palaeocene Patala Formation and the Eocene Nammal and Margalla  
204 Hill formations. This is a result of continued conformable deposition on a  
205 low-energy, shallow-marine shelf that shallows to a lagoonal and supratidal  
206 setting by the end of the Eocene Epoch (Hanif *et al.*, 2014; Wandrey *et al.*,  
207 2004).

208

209 Eocene strata are overlain unconformably across the whole of the Potwar  
210 Basin by Miocene fluvial sediments (Wandrey *et al.*, 2004) that record  
211 deposition of post-initial collision Himalayan molasse. Pleistocene and  
212 Holocene superficial deposits complete the depositional record and consist  
213 of windblown silt and sand, along with alluvial gravel adjacent to the active  
214 thrust scarps (Robert *et al.*, 1997).



215

216 Figure 2: Geology of the study area with the positions of the primary study  
 217 sites in the transect line indicated by numbers. Surface elevations in metres  
 218 above mean sea level are indicated by dotted lines on the map. Dotted lines  
 219 on the cross-section are projections of the strata. MBT = Main Boundary

220 Thrust. This dataset is augmented by further data from four sites 15 km  
221 northeast along strike (Figure 1). Geological map modified after Ali (2014)  
222 to conform with field mapping undertaken in this study. Interpretations of  
223 deeper levels on the cross section are from Williams *et al.* (1997). Vertical  
224 exaggeration: x2.

### 225 **3. Methodology**

#### 226 3.1 Nomenclature and site selection

227 The dataset used to test the method described in this study comprises field  
228 measurements of fractures in the limestone-dominated strata of the  
229 Lockhart Formation associated with the MBT in northern Pakistan. These  
230 strata display a spectrum of brittle geomechanical behaviours across a  
231 range of scales, within units of limestone with very low porosity,  
232 interbedded with units of argillaceous siltstone and mudstone. By  
233 restricting collection of fracture data to locations within the well-exposed  
234 Palaeocene Lockhart Formation only, we remove the effects of lithological  
235 variation upon the dataset. Furthermore, all of the fractures characterised  
236 are located within the hanging wall of the MBT (Robert *et al.*, 1997; Iqbal  
237 and Bannert, 1998), and all have been subjected to the same regional  
238 tectonic stress field. For clarity, fracture nomenclature and terminology  
239 adopted in this study are summarised in Table 1.

240

241 Table 1: Nomenclature and descriptive terminology as applied in this study.

Term	Meaning
Fracture	Sub-planar, brittle discontinuity separating the mechanical properties of a rock. It is very narrow in width relative to the other two dimensions. The term considers extension fractures (joints and veins) as well as shear fractures with negligible displacement sub-parallel to the fracture (Peacock <i>et al.</i> , 2018).

Fracture set and fracture system	A fracture set is a subsection of a fracture system within a rock mass with similar properties (Peacock <i>et al.</i> , 2018). Properties could include orientation, mineralisation, or genetic origin. The cumulative characteristics of a fracture system are formed by the interaction of different fracture sets that need to be considered together to define the rock mass characteristic
Rock mass	A matrix consisting of intact rock and associated fractures. The properties of a rock mass are a product of the intact rock and of the fractures (Bieniawski, 1973; Barton, <i>et al.</i> , 1974; Laubscher, 1977).
Nodes	Terminations and intersections of fractures used in the topological analysis of the fracture data (Sanderson and Nixon, 2015).
Measurement circle and box	A one metre diameter circle drawn on a scaled digital photograph of rock exposure and used to define the measurement area for topological analysis. A one metre wide square box is centred on the circle and used to generate the box-counting grids for determination of the fractal dimension.
Fractal dimension	A quantification of the self-similarity or scale invariance of a fracture network. There are numerous methods to quantify the fractal dimension but in this study, we employ the box-counting method (see Figure 6 and Figure 7).
Topology	Quantification of the arrangement of fractures and how they are connected, from which it is possible to derive the physical characteristics of fractures, including fracture density, fracture intensity, mean

	fracture trace length, and the number of fracture tips, lines, and branches.
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Six principal sites were chosen to examine the differences in fracture characteristics related to successive major structures (fore-thrust, pop-up, and back-thrust) of the Himalayan fold and thrust belt (Figure 2). To increase the geographical extent of the dataset, further data were acquired from four sites located along strike (and approximately 15 km northeast) of the major structural features observed in the primary transect line (Table 2), thereby expanding the significance of the analysed results and their interpretation. All sites lie within the Margalla Hills, approximately 10 km north of Islamabad, Pakistan (Figure 1). The brittle limestone and interbedded subordinate mudstone of the Lockhart Formation observed at all these sites are highly deformed and fractured. The study area is, as a whole, contained within a series of south-verging thrusts, north-verging back-thrusts, and associated folds and pop-up structures, all located within the hanging wall of the MBT (Tariq *et al.*, 2017; Dasti *et al.*, 2018).

258 Table 2: Locations and structural styles of the sites examined in the  
 259 Lockhart Formation. Sites 7 to 10 are additional supporting sites located  
 260 along strike from the main transect line formed from sites 1 to 6 (see Figure  
 261 1 and Figure 2).

Site	Latitude (° N)	Longitude (° E)	Structure
1	33.724	72.917	Fore-thrust with trailing anticline
2	33.723	72.921	Fore-thrust with trailing anticline
3	33.726	72.926	Fore-thrust with trailing syncline
4	33.733	72.922	Pop-up anticline
5	33.745	72.934	Back-thrust
6	33.750	72.933	Back-thrust
7	33.799	73.074	Back-thrust
8	33.781	73.063	Back-thrust
9	33.778	73.079	Pop-up anticline
10	33.779	73.060	Fore-thrust

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263 Outcrop-scale geological data captured from each site (Table 2 and  
 264 Figure 2) include the lithologies present, bedding thickness, and the types  
 265 of sedimentary features preserved. All exert a significant role in defining  
 266 rock mass behaviour and will thus influence the structures developed during  
 267 deformation (Ortega *et al.*, 2010; Hooker *et al.*, 2013; Procter and  
 268 Sanderson, 2018).

269 Individual fractures have lateral extents on the scale of centimetres to  
 270 millimetres and vary in type and orientation within a small area (Figure 3);  
 271 characterising each individual fracture is therefore inappropriate at the  
 272 outcrop scale in these strata. Moreover, the wide range of fracture strikes

273 at any one measurement site means that the one-dimensional scanline  
274 technique (Guerriero *et al.*, 2010) will have a strong bias as fractures that  
275 are sub-parallel to the scanline are less likely to be intersected by it. For  
276 such inherently two-dimensional patterns, techniques of rectangular or  
277 circular window mapping (Mauldon *et al.*, 2001; Watkins *et al.*, 2015) are  
278 preferable. A significant advantage of these techniques is the opportunity  
279 to derive topological information from these observations (Mauldon *et al.*,  
280 2001; Sanderson and Nixon, 2015).

281 Fractures of similar orientation, thickness, and type, which may represent  
282 a fracture set, vary in abundance across the study sites, and may not  
283 necessarily correspond to the same structural event (Laubach *et al.*, 2010).  
284 The presence of earlier fractures will affect subsequent deformation, as high  
285 compressive stresses are required for the fracture tip to propagate through  
286 a pre-existing discontinuity (Renshaw and Pollard, 1994) and the original  
287 fracture orientation and aperture distribution are rarely preserved in later  
288 fractures (Long *et al.*, 1996). Because of this, it is not always possible to  
289 recognise a fracture set based on their orientation and hence relative ages  
290 of the fractures. To correctly define the rock mass characteristics, we  
291 measure the characteristics of all of the fractures together.

292 At each sampling location a circle of 1 m in diameter was marked onto the  
293 outcrop and captured through a minimum of four high-resolution digital  
294 photographs taken to cover a 1 m by 1 m square centred upon the  
295 measurement circle. Several circular windows were mapped at each  
296 sampling site, on surfaces oriented both parallel to and perpendicular to  
297 bedding, and on surfaces created by road-excavations at oblique angles to  
298 bedding (Table 3). Analyses of the fracture characteristics at each of the  
299 sampling sites are based on the combined data of all the circular windows,  
300 thereby reducing orientation bias.

301 Table 3: Number of circular windows and their orientations relative to  
302 bedding at the measurement sites along the transect.

Site	Mapping points			
	Parallel	Perpendicular	Oblique	Total
1	3	2	1	6
2	1	1	2	4
3	-	2	-	2
4	1	1	-	2
5	1	-	2	3
6	1	1	1	3
Total	7	7	6	20

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### 305 *3.1 Determination of topological characteristics*

306 Topology describes the way in which constituent parts of a system are  
307 arranged, interrelated, and connected. The arrangement of components  
308 within a geometrical system – in this case, a fracture network – can be  
309 defined in terms of topology, and an analysis of that arrangement can  
310 provide critical information on network pathways. For example, a high  
311 number of cross-cutting fractures suggests interlinked networks with  
312 continuous pathways between them. The topological characteristics of a  
313 fracture network can be determined at any scale (Sanderson and Nixon,  
314 2015).

315 The types of intersections (termed 'nodes') between fracture traces present  
316 within the measurement circles at each of the sites in this study were  
317 characterised. The types of nodes are defined as follows (Mauldon *et al.*,  
318 2001; Sanderson and Nixon, 2015), and are identified in all subsequent  
319 diagrams by the colour and shape indicated in parenthesis (Figure 3):



- X nodes (red star) – intersections of fracture traces that cross each other and continue,
- Y nodes (green triangles) – termination of one fracture trace against another fracture trace,
- I nodes (blue circles) – termination of a fracture trace within the rock mass contained within in the circle,
- E nodes (yellow squares) - intersections of fracture traces with the edge of the circle where the traces continue out with the circle.

The nodes separate fracture traces into segments known as branches. X nodes have four branches, Y nodes have three, and I and E nodes have one branch each (Figure 4).

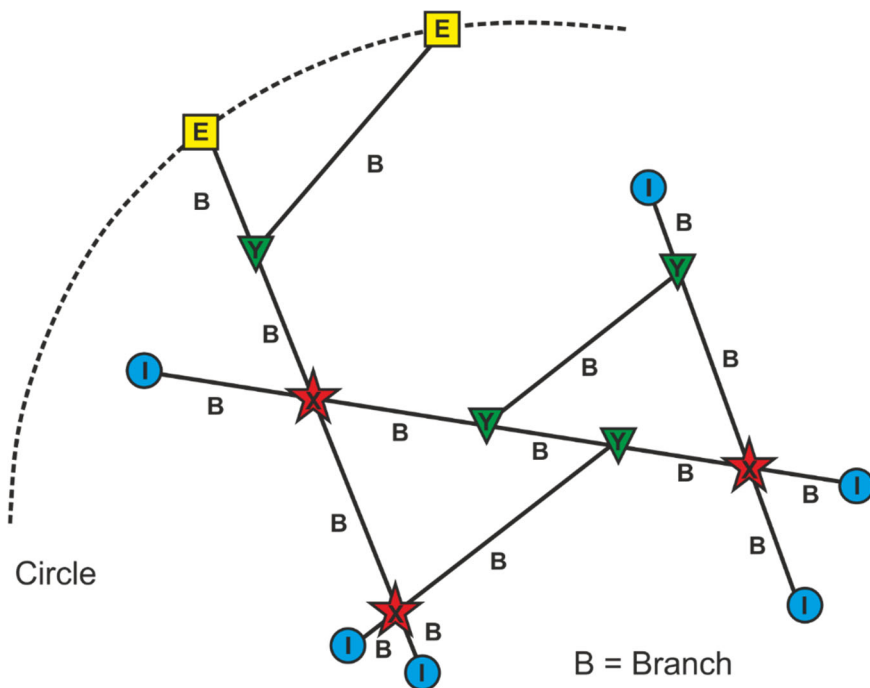


Figure 4: Node types of intersecting fracture traces as defined by Sanderson and Nixon (2015). Fracture branches are labelled "B". Every X (red star) node has four branches, every Y (green triangle) node has three branches and every I (blue circle) or E (yellow square) node has one branch.

By counting the quantity and types of the nodes in the various measurement circles we were able to determine the topological

339 characteristics of the fracture network from the following the methodology  
 340 of Sanderson and Nixon, (2015). The number of fracture trace terminations  
 341 within the circle is the sum of the number of I-nodes ( $N_I$ ) and the number  
 342 of Y-nodes ( $N_Y$ ). The number of fracture traces contained within the circle  
 343 ( $N_L$ ) is half of the number of terminations as each trace is terminated at  
 344 each end by either an I- or Y-node. Consequently:

$$345 \quad N_L = \frac{1}{2}(N_I + N_Y)$$

346 As each fracture branch (Figure 4) has two nodes, with an I-node forming  
 347 one termination of a branch, a Y-node terminating three branches and an  
 348 X-node terminating four branches, the number of branches ( $N_B$ ) may be  
 349 calculated from:

$$350 \quad N_B = \frac{1}{2}(N_I + 3N_Y + 4N_X)$$

351 The number of connections per line is a measure of fracture connectivity  
 352 ( $F_c$ ) that describes the degree of interlinking of the fractures. It is defined  
 353 by:

$$354 \quad F_c = \frac{4(N_X + N_Y)}{N_Y + N_I}$$

355 The parameters of fracture intensity, density and mean trace length are  
 356 derived from the nodes with the following relationships (Mauldon *et al.*,  
 357 2001):

- 360 • Fracture Intensity, ( $F_I$ ) is a comparative measure of the number of  
 361 edge-nodes ( $N_E$ ), within a measurement circle (of radius  $r$ ) and is  
 362 defined by:

$$363 \quad F_I = \frac{N_E}{4r}$$

- 364 • Fracture Density ( $F_D$ ) represents the number of fractures per unit  
 365 area. As a fracture is terminated inside a measurement circle of  
 366 radius  $r$  by either a Y or an I node, the density is given by:

- 367 •
- 368 •
- 369 
$$F_D = (N_Y + N_I)/2\pi r^2$$

- 370 • The Mean Trace Length (*MTL*) provides an estimate of the average  
 371 fracture trace length as it considers the number of fractures that are  
 372 contained within the measurement circle of radius *r* and the number  
 373 that transect it. It is derived from multiplying Intensity by area and  
 374 dividing by number of lines:

$$MTL = \frac{\frac{N_E}{N_Y + N_I} \pi r}{2}$$

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 377 Topological analysis of all the fractures was undertaken in a measurement  
 378 circle and all the nodes, including those formed between different fracture  
 379 sets, were accounted for at the same time to define the true topological  
 380 characteristics. Table 4 and Figure 5 demonstrate that not considering all  
 381 the nodes in a single measurement will result in an under-accounting of the  
 382 intersecting “x” and “y” nodes, an over-accounting of the number of “i”  
 383 nodes and an under-estimate of the total number of nodes. This will affect  
 384 the calculation of the topological characteristics.

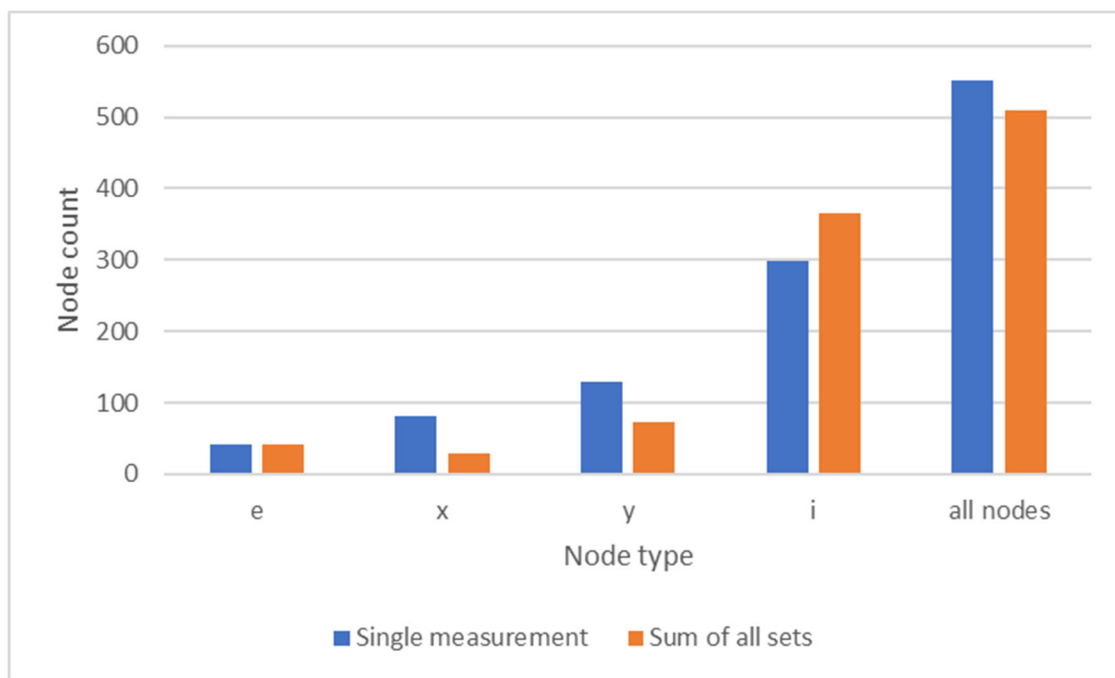
385  
 386 Table 4: Number of nodes measured when considering all fracture sets  
 387 together in a single measurement compared to summing the number of  
 388 nodes of individual fracture sets from Site 3. The number of “e” is the same,  
 389 “x” and “y” nodes are more common in the former and “i” in the latter. This  
 390 indicates a greater number of intersections are present when all fractures  
 391 are considered together. The ratio of nodes changes, altering the  
 392 topological characteristics.

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		Node type	e	x	y	i	all
Single measurement		Unmineralised	19	48	71	97	235
		Mineralised	23	33	58	202	316
		Total	42	81	129	299	551
Set 1	> 25 cm	Unmineralised	8	0	6	14	28
		Mineralised	7	3	9	36	55
		Total	15	3	15	50	83
Set 2		Unmineralised	10	2	6	58	76

	10 - 25 cm	Mineralised	4	3	10	51	68
		Total	14	5	16	109	144
Set 3	< 10 cm	Unmineralised	1	17	17	110	145
		Mineralised	12	4	25	97	138
		Total	13	21	42	207	283
Sum of sets		Unmineralised	19	19	29	182	249
		Mineralised	23	10	44	184	261
		Total	42	29	73	366	510

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396 Figure 5: Number of different types of nodes present at Site 3, according  
 397 to measurement type. The ratios and total number of nodes is different if  
 398 all fractures are considered in a single measurement.

399

### 400 3.2 Determination of fractal dimensions

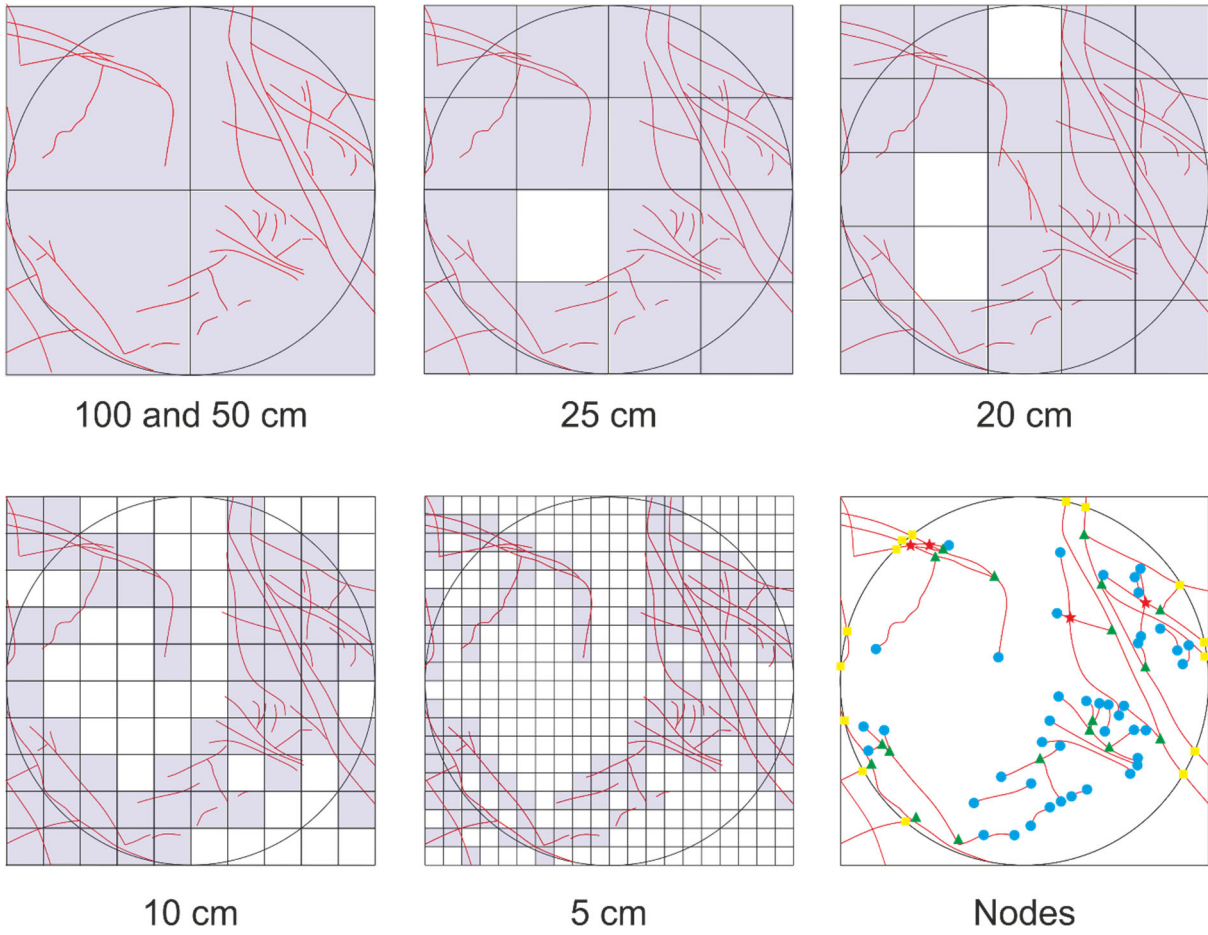
401 Complex scale-independent shapes can be quantified relative to the spatial  
 402 dimension (1D, 2D or 3D) in which they are observed. The intermediate  
 403 dimensions are referred to as fractal dimensions and have values between  
 404 the dimensions of the objects and the dimensions in which the objects are  
 405 observed. In this work, fractal dimensions are between one (the dimension  
 406 of a fracture line) and two (the dimensions of the measurement surface).

407 In this study, fractal dimensions are calculated using a scale-independent  
408 box-counting method as defined by Mandelbrot (1967) and employed by  
409 many authors to characterise fractures (e.g. Cahn, 1989; Kagan, 1991;  
410 Odling, 1994; Berntson and Stoll, 1997; Libicki and Ben-Zion, 2005; Zhang,  
411 2020). Other methods for the calculation of fractal dimensions, such as the  
412 probability-density (Nykamp, 2020) or pair correlation functions (Satoh,  
413 2003), which compare the number of points closer together than a specific  
414 distance with the total number of points, may also be employed.  
415 Importantly, the fractal dimension calculated using the box counting and  
416 the pair correlation methods have the same average values (Mou and  
417 Wang, 2016). The point analysis methods are typically utilised where there  
418 is uncertainty in the validity of the much simpler and more widely  
419 recognised box-counting methods.

420 1 m-by-1 m measurement squares with grids of different box-sizes are  
421 placed over the 1 m diameter topology measurement circles, and the  
422 number of boxes containing fracture traces counted (Figure 5). Following  
423 the methodology of Walsh and Watterson (1993), the measurement  
424 squares do not extend beyond the edge of the fractured portion of the rock.  
425 Although the box counting squares do not cover the same areas as the 1  
426 m diameter topological measurement circles, the squares are centred on  
427 the circles and the same size squares are analysed for the different box  
428 sizes, thus providing comparable data.

429 The slope of the log-log plot of the inverse of the box length versus the  
430 number of boxes containing fractures at each box size (Figure 7) is defined  
431 as the box-counting fractal dimension (Foroutan-pour *et al.*, 1999). Trend  
432 lines with correlation coefficients of at least 0.98 are generally considered  
433 to be representative of the fractal dimension (Liang *et al.*, 2012; Zhihui *et*  
434 *al.*, 2013). A slightly lower minimum correlation coefficient of 0.95 was  
435 considered acceptable in this study, given the comparatively smaller scale  
436 range of box sizes used (Figure 7).

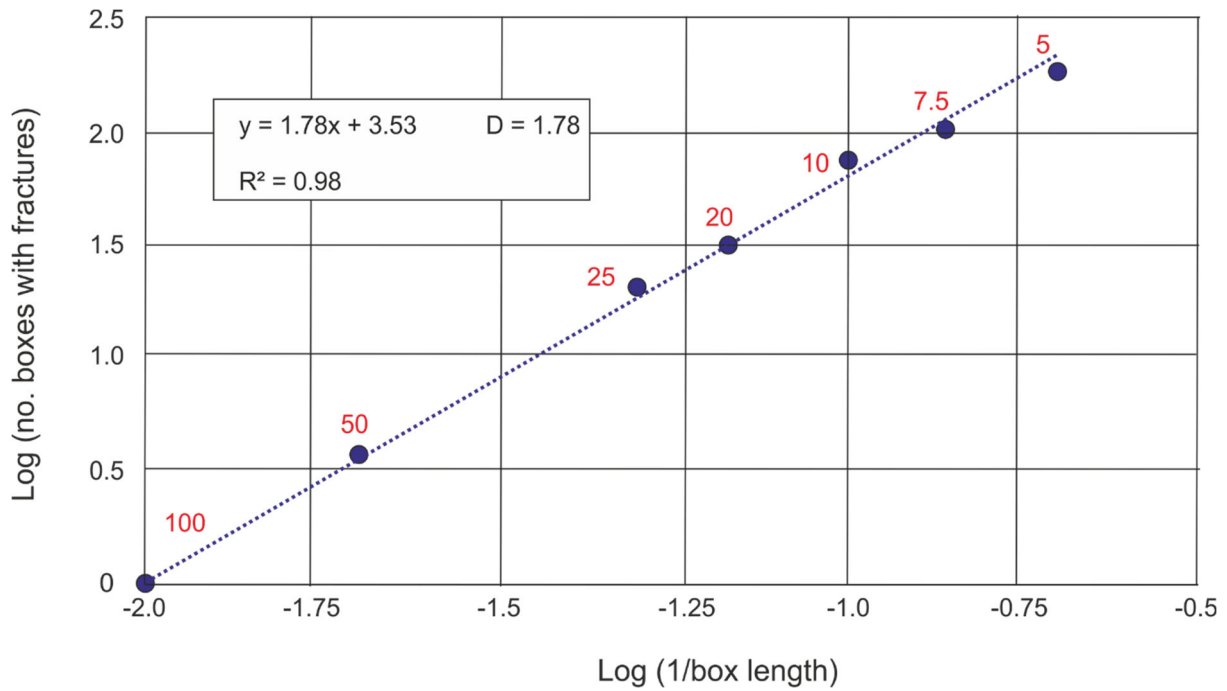
437



438  
439

440 Figure 6: Box counting grids (grid size indicated beneath each circle) are  
 441 placed over a measurement circle and only boxes that contain a fracture  
 442 trace are summed (shaded boxes) and used to determine the box-counting  
 443 fractal dimension. The associated topological node data are also shown (see  
 444 Figure 4 for description of node symbol colours and shapes). Nodes outside  
 445 of the circle are not considered in the topological analysis.

446



447

448 Figure 7: Log-log plot of data from Site 4. The gradient of the best-fit trend-  
 449 line is the fractal dimension of these data. Red numbers indicate box side  
 450 length in centimetres.

451 If the box sizes are too large or too small then the gradient of the trend-  
 452 line may form a plateau at either end of the plot (Walsh and Watterson,  
 453 1993). No significant changes in the gradient of the trend-lines were  
 454 observed for all sites in this study. Thus, the box size distribution of  
 455 between 5 cm and 1 m is considered appropriate for these lithologies in this  
 456 context.

457

#### 458 **4. Fracture characteristics of the study sites**

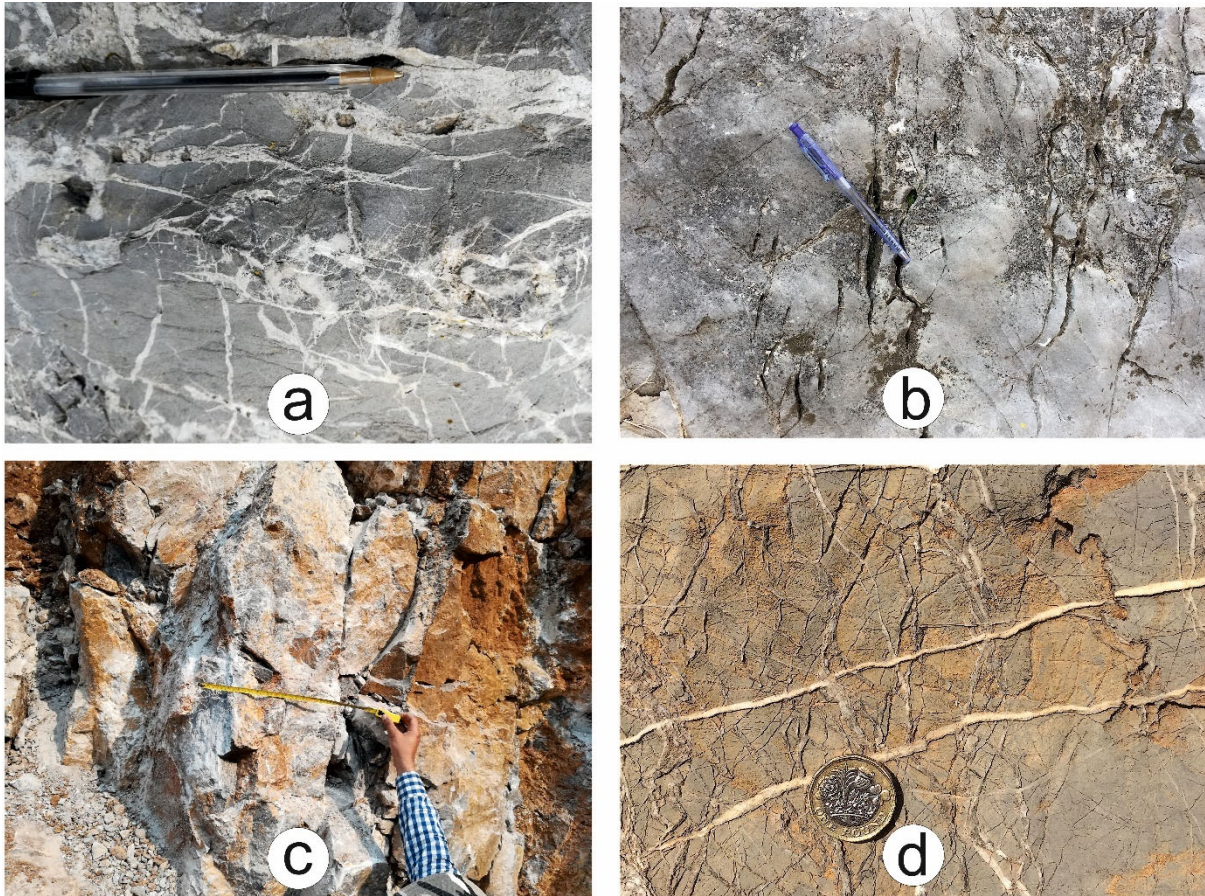
459 Four principal fracture types are observed in the limestone rocks examined  
 460 in this study (Figure 3):

- 461 (a) Explosive, hydro-fracture-type calcite-filled veins without any
- 462 dominant orientation trends,
- 463 (b) unmineralised clusters of sub-parallel fractures,



- 464 (c) clay- or gouge-filled shear fractures typically oriented parallel to  
465 bedding or with multiple cross-cutting relationships close to folds  
466 and thrusts,  
467 (d) sub-parallel, calcite-filled veins that increase in abundance with  
468 proximity to thrusts of large displacement.

469



470

471 Figure 3: Principal fracture types of this study. (a) explosive hydro-  
472 fractures, (b) unmineralised clusters of sub-parallel extension fractures, (c)  
473 clay / gouge filled shear fractures, (d) sub-parallel calcite-filled veins. These  
474 principal fracture types can occur individually or combine as pairs, or as  
475 fracture systems of three or four different principal types.

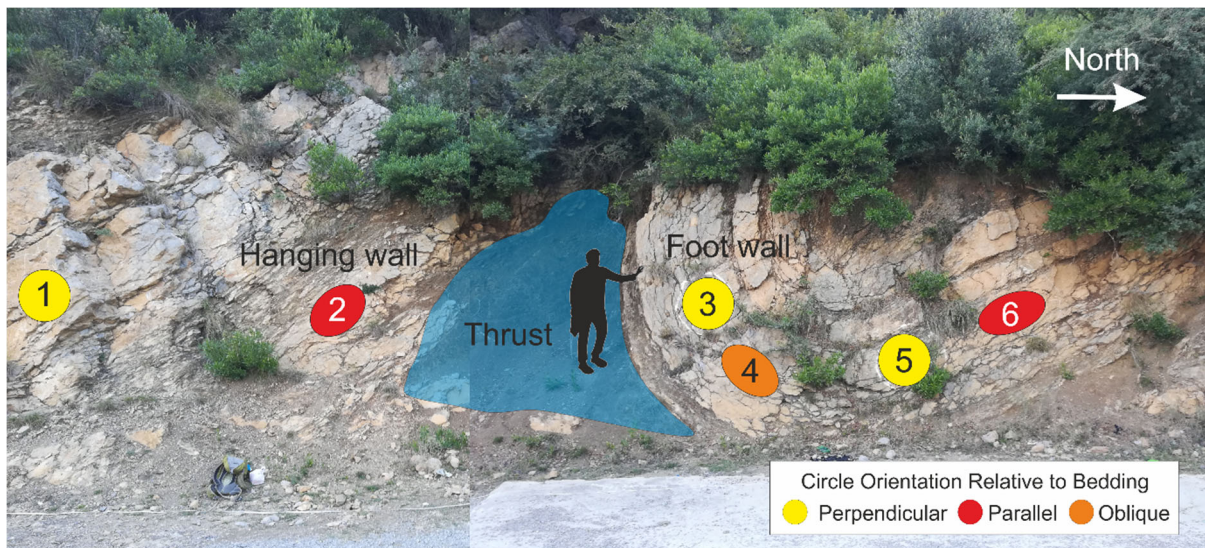
476 These principal fracture types are present at all sites studied and occur  
477 individually or combine as pairs, or as fracture systems of three or four  
478 different principal types.

479



480 **4.1. Characteristics of total fracture sets**

481 Site 1 is located 500 m north of the Himalayan MBT (Figure 2). The site  
482 consists of tightly folded limestone units of the Lockhart Formation (Figure  
483 8). A highly deformed shaly siltstone unit, with centimetre-thick,  
484 structurally induced laminations, forms a decollement surface over the  
485 tightly folded 0.4 m thick limestone beds.



486

487 Figure 8: Site 1 - tightly folded limestone units (circles 3, 4, 5 and 6) and  
488 siltstone with limestone (circles 1 and 2) overthrust northwards. The  
489 measurement circles, with their associated box-counting squares, are in  
490 different orientations relative to bedding (see also Table 3).

491 Although there is little difference in the total number of nodes measured in  
492 each of six circles placed across the structure at Site 1 (Figure 8) the  
493 proportions of different types of nodes vary between circles relative to their  
494 orientation and distance from the thrust as displayed in Appendix 1 which  
495 also details these characteristics for all the mapping sites. In the hanging  
496 wall of the thrust at Site 1 (Circle 1), there are very few X nodes formed  
497 from cross-cutting fracture traces, but equal numbers of Y and I nodes  
498 formed from fracture terminations. Towards the thrust (Circle 2) E, X and  
499 Y nodes increase in proportion relative to I nodes. In the footwall of the  
500 thrust (Circles 3 to 6) the measurement circles have similar numbers of  
501 nodes to each other and further from the thrust, the fractures display a

502 progressive increase in connectivity but decrease in fracture density. The  
503 fractal dimension is 1.88 at this site.

504 Site 2 is only 400 m away from Site 1 (Figure 2), but the structural geology  
505 is significantly different. Interbedded limestone and shaly siltstone of the  
506 Lockhart Formation are folded into a tight, upright anticline with a  
507 wavelength of approximately 20 m and an amplitude of approximately  
508 60 m. The sedimentary succession consists of beds of argillaceous  
509 limestone, each on average 20 cm thick, combining to form 60 cm thick  
510 units bounded by centimetre-thick laminated mudstone units, younging  
511 into alternating packstone and dark-grey wackestone beds, each  
512 approximately 10 cm thick. The strongly laminated wackestone has a high  
513 fracture intensity, but a low number of branches due to bedding-parallel  
514 failure along the thin shaly units. The lack of cross-cutting fractures reduces  
515 the connectivity of fracture network. Due to the interlayered nature of the  
516 limestone and mudstone lithologies, the site displays a wide range in fractal  
517 dimensions of between 1.72 and 1.92. Although some of the thinner  
518 limestone units have fractal dimensions of greater than 1.8, most of the  
519 rock mass deformation has deformed through shearing along bedding  
520 planes, reducing the fractal dimension. This fracture pattern also results in  
521 a lower fracture density as much of the applied stress is accommodated by  
522 shearing, rather than by the development of additional fractures.

523 Site 3 is located in a succession of 1.5 m thick limestone beds of the  
524 Lockhart Formation. The presence of a single, large, through-going fracture  
525 results in a high degree of connectivity, and a high fractal dimension of  
526 1.97 (virtually a 2D plane). In contrast to this, numerous fractures that are  
527 less than 1 mm wide have high intensity but low connectivity. The abundant  
528 small fractures also cause a low overall mean trace length for the site.

529 Site 4 is situated in a relatively undeformed pop-up anticline bounded  
530 between sets of fore-thrusts and back-thrusts (Figure 2). The limestone  
531 units of the Lockhart Formation at this site consist of packstone beds –  
532 approximately 30 cm thick – dipping 14 degrees towards the south-south-

533 west. The topological characteristics and the fractal dimension of the  
534 bedding-plane parallel fractures closely match those of the bedding-  
535 perpendicular fractures.

536 The broad, easily accessible back-thrust thrust surface formed on an  
537 approximately 1 m thick limestone bed at Site 5 has prominent calcite veins  
538 developed both parallel to and perpendicularly to the thrust on the exposed  
539 surface. The dominant thrust-parallel calcite-filled fractures and thicker  
540 thrust-perpendicular fractures (that are also therefore parallel to the fault  
541 propagation fold axis) are more widely spaced and the mean trace length  
542 is approximately half that of the sites in the fore-thrust. Small, millimetre-  
543 thick, calcite-filled fractures with short trace lengths of up to 5 cm are  
544 common throughout in a variety of different orientations resulting in a large  
545 number of nodes. The different topological and fractal details of these  
546 elements are combined to define the general rock mass behaviour of the  
547 back-thrust. The observed fractures have the highest number of branches  
548 (264) and highest fracture intensity (20.7) and density (37.9) of all the  
549 measurement sites. They are also characterised by a shorter mean trace  
550 length (14) than Sites 1,2,3, and 10 in the fore-thrust. Due to the high  
551 degree of fracturing, the site has a high fractal dimension of 1.93.

552 Site 6 is the most northerly mapping location and hence furthest from the  
553 MBT. This site is dominated by limestone beds approximately 1 m thick,  
554 with irregular centimetre-thick argillaceous siltstone partings that are  
555 highly sheared. Several classic thrust structures are evident, including  
556 relatively undeformed footwall strata immediately beneath the thrust  
557 plane.

558 The thrust fault and the associated fault propagation fold zone at Site 6 are  
559 both highly fractured. The footwall to the thrust comprises a foraminiferal  
560 packstone that is typical of the upper stratigraphy of the Lockhart  
561 Formation, which is only weakly deformed with discontinuous, variably  
562 oriented, thin (1 mm or less) calcite-filled fractures. Thrust-parallel  
563 fractures are present, none of which are mineralised, and there are very

564 few brittle tensile fractures associated with the thrust-related folding.  
565 However, the rock mass within the fault propagation fold area is highly  
566 fractured, iron oxide-rich bedding-parallel thrust surfaces and steeply  
567 dipping fault propagation fold fracture planes. The limestone fragments  
568 between these fractures all contain abundant scattered, millimetre-wide,  
569 calcite-filled fractures.

570 The average fractal dimension of circular measurement windows from the  
571 thrust footwall at Site 6 is 1.56. In the thrust hanging wall, the bedding-  
572 and thrust-parallel fractures are better connected than the thin calcite-  
573 cemented tensile fractures that display the highest number of tips, lines  
574 and branches, and a high dimension of 1.92. When the measurements of  
575 the folded hanging wall and thrust-plane itself are included, the dimension  
576 increases from 1.56 to 1.80, which reflects the variability that occurs when  
577 considering different parts of a geological structure. This variation accounts  
578 for the overlap between the groupings based on the larger scale  
579 descriptions of a geological structure, such as "fore-thrust", when individual  
580 portions of a specific structure display different fractal properties. Despite  
581 there being a high number of fracture intersections in the footwall (524 in  
582 total), there are very few edge intersections (only 4%) and cross-cutting  
583 fractures (7%). Moreover, 55% of the fractures do not terminate against  
584 another fracture.

585 The Lockhart Formation is well exposed in the back-thrust at both Site 7  
586 and Site 8 along strike from sites 5 and 6. The rocks of these sites consist  
587 of highly fractured metre-thick, grey foraminiferal packstone that is less  
588 intensely fractured than the other back-thrust sites resulting in lower fractal  
589 dimensions (1.82 and 1.83).

590 The flat dipping centimetre thick mudstone beds of Site 9, exposed in a  
591 river valley that runs perpendicular to the regional strike, have few  
592 fractures and the lowest fractal dimension (1.76). This is due to a  
593 combination of the stratigraphy (thinly bedded strata) and structural

594 setting (in a pop-up zone), with the limited applied stresses being released  
595 by bedding parallel shearing.

596 At Site 10, the Lockhart Formation has been folded into an anticline with a  
597 wavelength of approximately 10 m and an amplitude of 25 m. Flexural flow  
598 has been facilitated by centimetre-thick mudstone-limestone layers,  
599 reducing the number of fractures on the interbedded light-grey coloured  
600 0.5 m thick limestone beds in this fore-thrust setting.

601

602

### 603 **5. Analysis of fractal and topological characteristics**

604 In order to understand how the fracture networks vary spatially across the  
605 fold and thrust belt, the measured topological parameters and fractal  
606 dimensions are cross-correlated. The data employed to undertake this  
607 analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

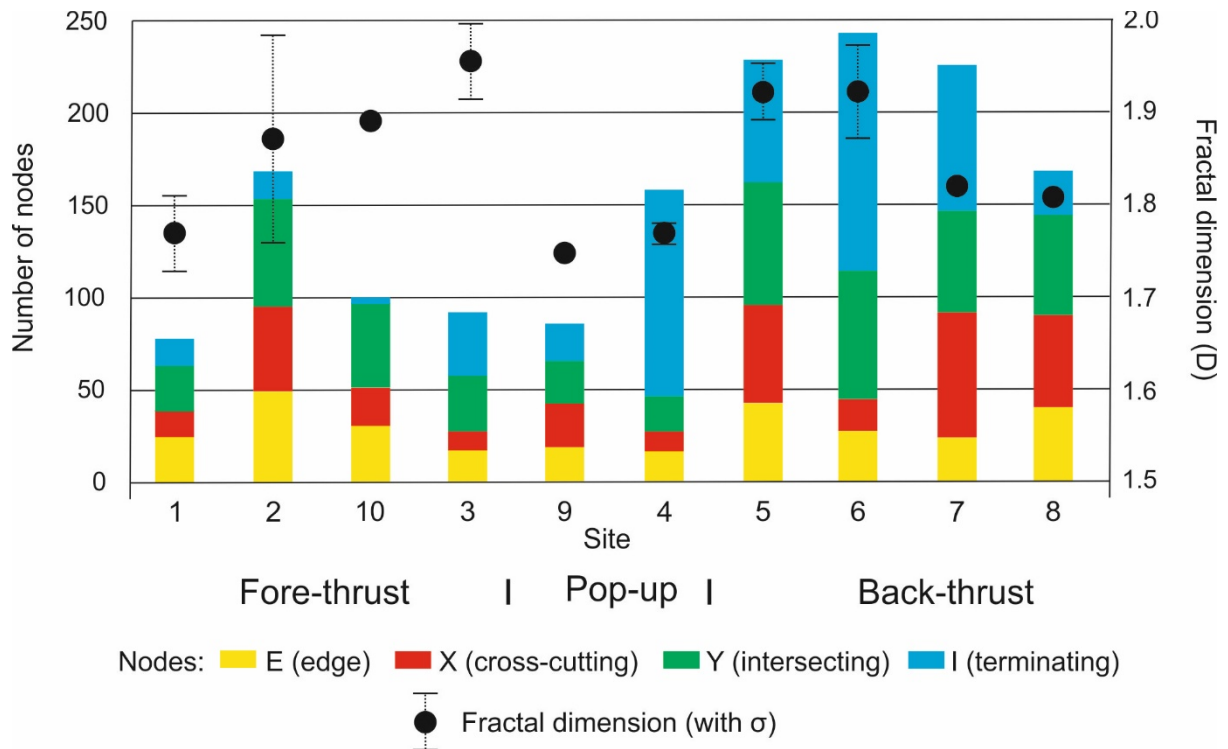
608 Sites 1 to 6 are described in detail above as they provide an ideally oriented  
609 distribution of successive structural domains from a fore-thrust, through a  
610 pop-up to a back-thrust and the associated fracture patterns. Additional  
611 data from four supplementary sites located along strike from the main  
612 transect (Figure 1) have been included to confirm the characterisation of  
613 the fracture pattern in different structural domains by using this  
614 combination of the topological and fractal characteristics (see Figure 9).

615 When the average fractal dimension and the average total number of nodes  
616 of each type in the fracture network at each of the sites are examined,  
617 characteristic values are apparent. The fore-thrust and pop-up structures  
618 have lower total numbers of nodes than the back-thrusts, and the pop-up  
619 has the lowest fractal dimension whilst the fractal dimension is higher in  
620 both the fore-thrust and back-thrust (Figure 9).

621 By plotting, not just the average, but also the range of these values, cross-  
622 plot correlations between fractal dimensions and total number of nodes

623 may be drawn (Figure 10) showing the trends in the changes in the  
 624 characteristics of the fracture system.

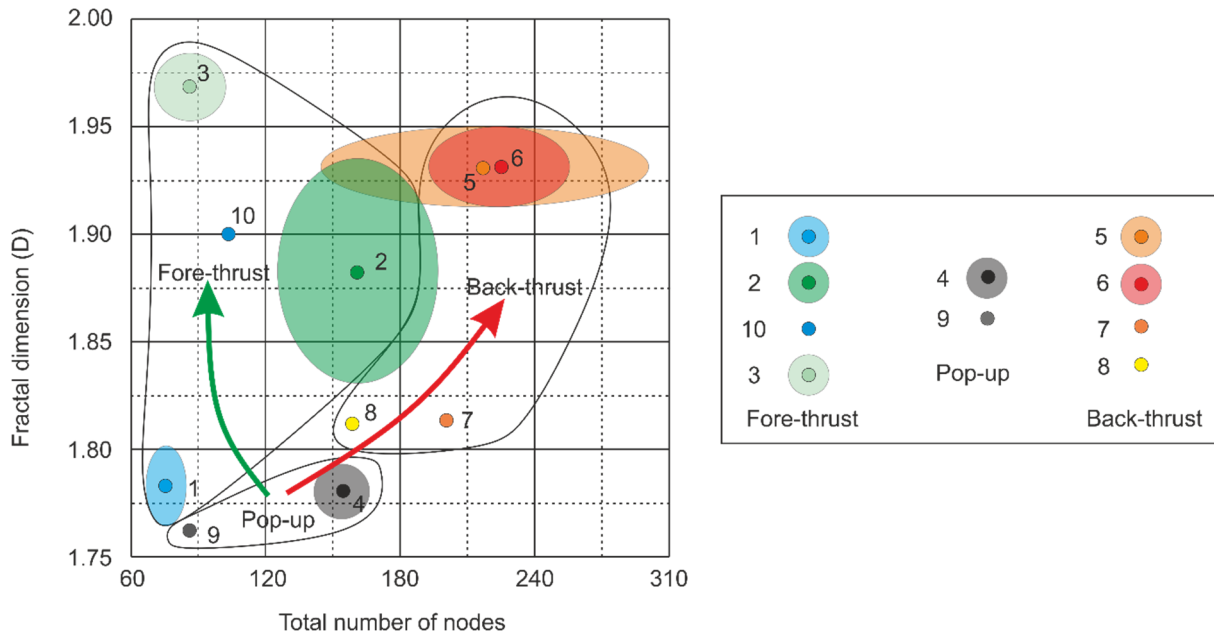
625



626

627 Figure 9: Average number of nodes and fractal dimensions at each site,  
 628 grouped according to structural domain. Note the greater number of nodes  
 629 and proportion of I nodes at sites in the back-thrust structural domain. The  
 630 fractal dimension is lowest in sites within the pop-up structural domain.

631

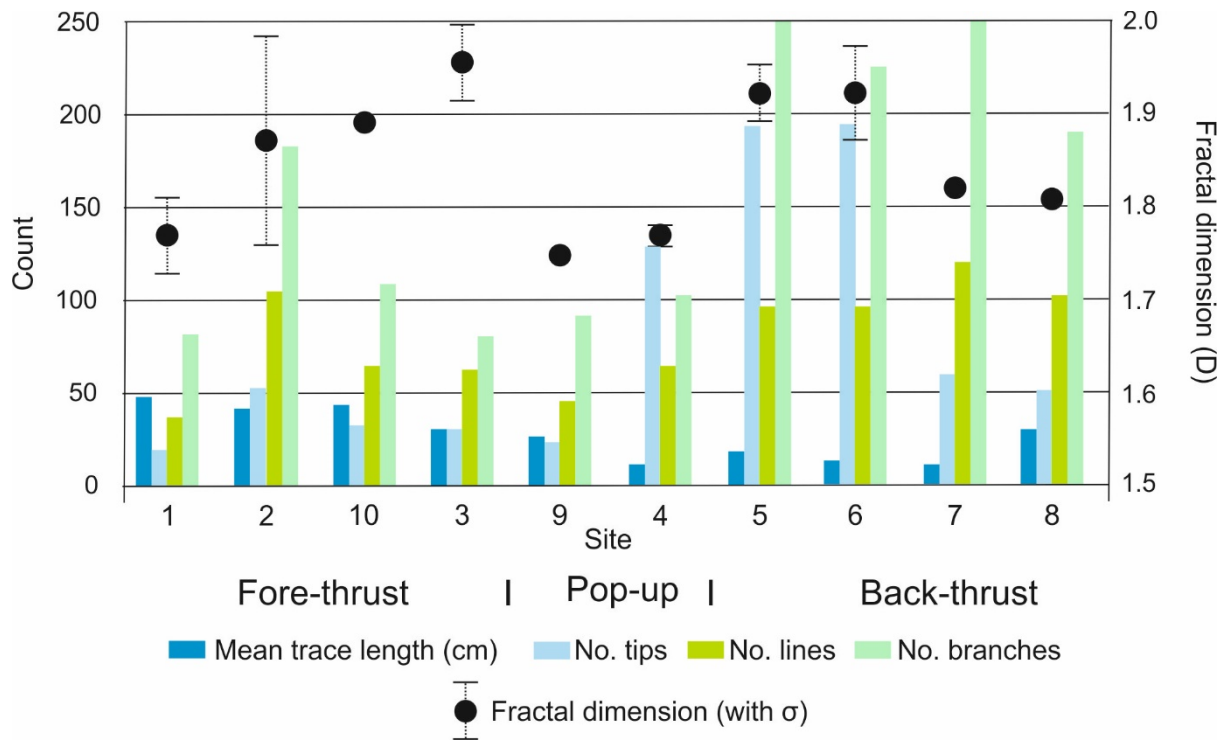


632

633 Figure 10: Average total number of nodes vs. average fractal dimension of  
 634 the various sites in the different structural domains. The average values of  
 635 datasets from each site are indicated by small bold circles and the standard  
 636 deviations of the datasets are indicated by the more transparent ellipses of  
 637 the same colour. Bold circles with no ellipses represent sites with a single  
 638 measurement circle. Trends in the number of nodes and fractal dimension  
 639 from the pop-up to the fore-thrust and back-thrusts are shown by the green  
 640 and red arrows, respectively.

641 Figure 11 and Figure 12 show the variations in the fractal dimensions and  
 642 topology of the different structural domains. The longer mean trace length  
 643 in the fore-thrust and greater number of branches and higher fracture  
 644 density in the back-thrust are evident on these graphs, as is the low fractal  
 645 dimension of the pop-up structure.

646



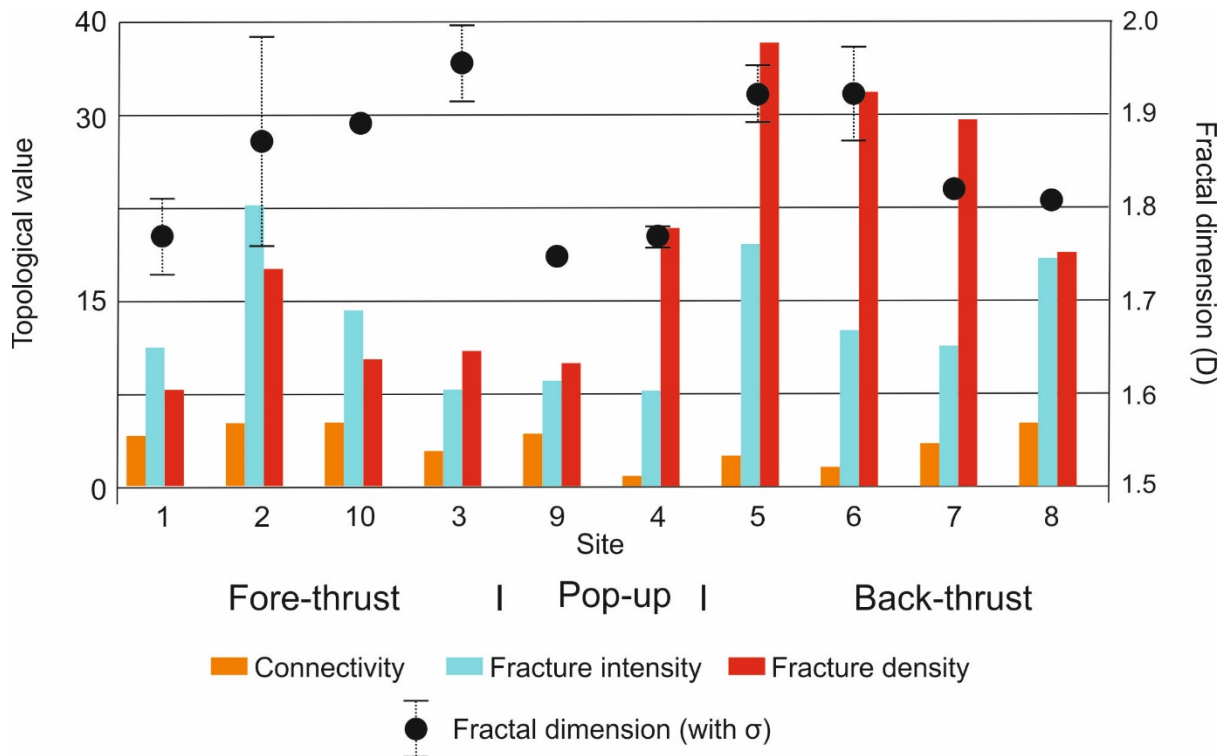
647

648 Figure 11: Fracture characteristics (mean trace length, number of tips,  
 649 lines, and branches) derived from the analysis of topological data and  
 650 fractal dimensions for different sites.

651 The differences in the fractal dimension and fracture characteristics derived  
 652 from the topology of the different structural domains are best shown by  
 653 comparing them against each other graphically. The basic topological  
 654 parameters of the number of tips, lines and branches are inputs into the  
 655 fracture density, connectivity, intensity, and mean trace length which are  
 656 plotted against the fractal dimensions to illustrate these relationships with  
 657 the fractal dimension for the different structural settings in this study  
 658 (Figure 13).

659





660

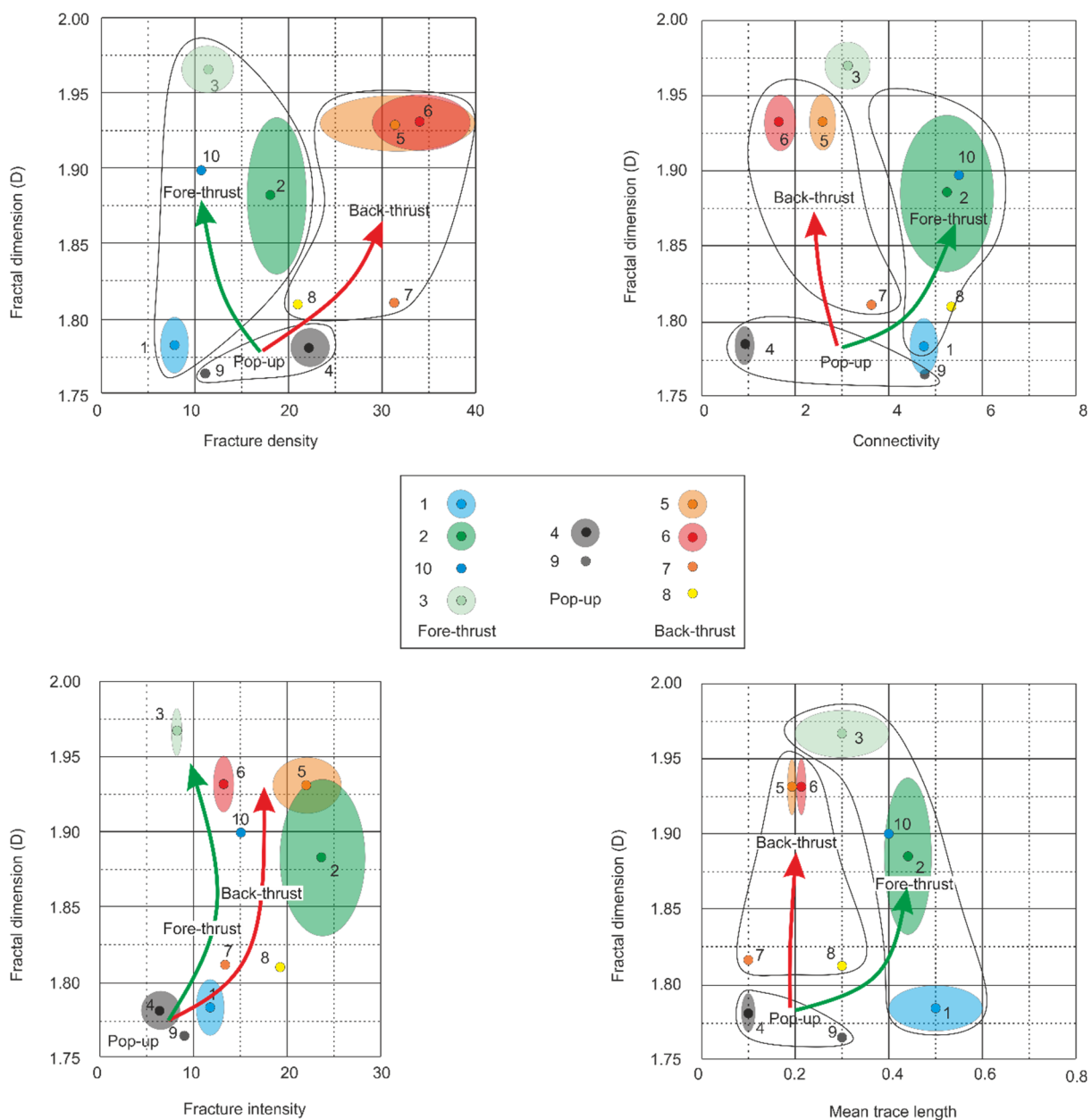
661 Figure 12: Fracture characteristics (connectivity, fracture intensity and  
 662 fracture density) derived from the analysis of topological data and fractal  
 663 dimensions for different sites.

664

665 When the average and range of topologically derived fracture  
 666 characteristics and fractal dimensions are considered in different structural  
 667 domains, distinct relationships are apparent (Figure 13 and Table 5). Fore-  
 668 thrusts are characterised by fewer, longer, well-connected fractures and  
 669 back-thrusts contain a higher number of fractures with more tips, lines, and  
 670 branches but these are not as well interconnected. The highest fractal  
 671 dimensions of the fore-thrust and back-thrust are immediately adjacent to  
 672 the pop-up zone (Figures 10 and 11). As the pop-up zone (sites 4 and 9)  
 673 between the fore-thrust and back-thrust has a lower fractal dimension and  
 674 also displays the lowest connectivity, fracture intensity and mean trace  
 675 length indicating that it is the least disturbed structural domain and can  
 676 thus be used as the starting point from which the characteristics of the fore-  
 677 and back-thrusts evolve and are superimposed (Figure 13).

678 The higher fracture density and lower connectivity and mean trace length  
 679 apparent in the topological data of the back-thrusts (Sites 5, 6, 7 and 8) is  
 680 due to the predominance of small, shorter fractures. The fore-thrusts (Sites  
 681 1, 2, 3 and 10) display more, longer fractures with an associated increase  
 682 in connectivity (Figure 13). Like the fractal dimension, the fracture intensity  
 683 increases in both the fore-thrust and back-thrusts (Figure 13).

684



685

686 Figure 13: Fractal dimension (D) compared to fracture characteristics  
 687 derived from topological analysis of data from different structural domains.

688 Average values of datasets from each site are indicated by bold circles and  
 689 the standard deviations of the datasets are indicated by the more  
 690 transparent ellipses of the same colour. Trends in the number of nodes and  
 691 fractal dimension from the pop-up to the fore-thrust and back-thrusts are  
 692 shown by the green and red arrows, respectively. There is good correlation  
 693 between structural domain, fractal dimension and density, connectivity,  
 694 and mean trace length. The correlation is poor when considering fracture  
 695 intensity. It should be noted the reversed position of the fore-thrust and  
 696 back-thrust locations within the graphs of fracture density as opposed to  
 697 connectivity and mean trace length is due to the quantifiably different  
 698 changes of these topological parameters in the two locations.

699 Table 5: Summary of topological and fractal characteristics. Back-thrusts  
 700 have the highest average node count for each type, resulting in higher  
 701 fracture density and number of tips, lines and branches compared to fore-  
 702 thrusts but both domains have a similar range of fractal dimensions.

703

Structure	Characteristic
Fore-thrust	Fewer I nodes
	Lower total number of nodes
	Longer mean trace length
	D lower further from pop-up
Pop-up	Few E nodes
	Low fracture intensity
	Low number of lines
	Low number of tips
	Low number of branches
	Lowest D
Back-thrust	More nodes of all types
	Higher fracture density
	More tips
	More lines

	More branches
	D lower further from pop-up

704

705

706 As the fractal dimension is a measure of the distribution of a feature, in this  
707 case fractures, the similar range of values present in this work implies the  
708 rock mass deformed in a similar manner. However, the different fracture  
709 characteristics derived from the topological values indicate that the stress  
710 is accommodated differently in the fore-thrust and back-thrust setting.  
711 Intuitively, it is expected that fracture networks in the fore-thrust will have  
712 more extended fractures (greater mean trace length), due to extended  
713 periods of movement on the thrust sheets compared to back-thrust  
714 settings, where fracture networks are more irregular with higher fracture  
715 density, as a result of late-stage layer-parallel shortening.

716

717 The data presented here suggest that fore-thrusts are dominated by fewer  
718 but longer fractures that are the product of flexural flow, whereas the back-  
719 thrust appear to be dominated by tangential longitudinal failure. The low  
720 fractal dimension of the pop-up structure and the accompanying highest  
721 fractal dimension in the fore-thrusts and back-thrusts immediately adjacent  
722 to it shows that the fractal dimension can be used as an indicator of the  
723 proximity of change to a different structural domain.

724

## 725 **6. Discussion**

### 726 **6.1. Significance of the cumulative effect of fractures**

727 The methodology presented here is novel in that it quantifies the total rock  
728 mass of the limestone, including the fracture system within it, in a single  
729 set of measurements collected simultaneously on the fracture system. This  
730 approach not only enables efficient collection of data, dramatically reducing  
731 the time taken for data collection, but more importantly, it provides data  
732 that characterise the cumulative effects of the fractures, which may have  
733 resulted from multiple strength hardening or weakening processes, and  
734 their impact on the subsequent rock failure response (Laubach *et al.*, 2009;  
735 Corradetti *et al.*, 2015).

736

737 This is important, because from a geomechanical perspective, the  
738 behaviour of the rock mass is the sum of all its constituent inhomogeneities,  
739 including both lithological variation and all fracture sets. In each structural  
740 domain there is a general brittle failure pattern due to the stress-path that  
741 the rock mass has undergone (Everall and Sanislav, 2018). This will impact  
742 on subsequent fracture patterns. For example, it is necessary to carefully  
743 consider pre-existing fractures, possibly unrelated to folding, to build more  
744 realistic conceptual fold–fracture models (Lacombe *et al.*, 2011). This  
745 cumulative effect on the rock mass is especially relevant in successions  
746 when deformation is progressive, with successive fracture sets reflecting  
747 the rock response to cumulative strain. The formation of one fracture set  
748 controls the initiation or arrest of subsequent sets in an evolving stress  
749 regime by providing new stress concentrators and barriers for the  
750 deforming system. Consequently, it is not surprising that the occurrence of  
751 multiple sets of fractures is the rule rather than the exception in many fold  
752 and thrust belts (Salvini and Storti, 2001; Florez-Niño *et al.*, 2005; Iñigo  
753 *et al.*, 2012; Corradetti *et al.*, 2015; Burberry *et al.*, 2019). The combined  
754 effect of all the fracture systems therefore needs to be considered in a  
755 structural fracture analysis.

756

757 Fracture sets may form by sequential events and infilling, with earlier  
758 discontinuities acting as mechanical boundaries (Bai and Pollard, 2000).  
759 However, not all fractures of a particular set terminate on fractures of a set  
760 that was developed immediately prior to it, making it difficult to recognise  
761 fracture sets and hence define the mathematical laws that describe the  
762 distribution of each fracture set (Guerrero *et al.*, 2010). We do not attempt  
763 to discriminate between the different fractures, as characteristics such as  
764 composition, orientation or termination relationships & styles may not be  
765 unique to a set of fractures formed in response to one single deformation  
766 event. Rather, by considering the numbers of all the different types nodes  
767 and the fractal dimension of all the fractures together, one can be confident  
768 that all the various discontinuity constituents of the rock mass are  
769 included.

770

771 In the case of the data set from the Lockhart Formation limestone  
772 associated with the MBF, it is apparent that the standard deviation of the  
773 number of nodes of different fracture sets is significantly lower than the  
774 standard deviation of a group of all of the nodes of a fracture network. This  
775 provides quantitative evidence that only analysis of all fractures within the  
776 deformed rock volume is representative of the true complexity of the  
777 system and therefore mostly likely to be able to characterise specific  
778 structural domains.

779

## 780 **6.2. Recognition of structural domains from fracture analysis**

781 In our examination of the Lockhart Formation in the hanging wall of the  
782 MBF we demonstrate that the characteristics of the fracture systems in  
783 different structural domains can be recognised when all the fracture data  
784 are considered together. Fracture systems developed in both fore-thrusts  
785 and back-thrust settings have higher fractal dimensions than those in a  
786 pop-up structure. Hydro-fractures are present throughout all structural

787 domains and do not vary in abundance relative to the structural regime.  
788 They probably represent slightly earlier phases of brittle deformation  
789 caused by initial thrusting and uplift events that promoted reductions in the  
790 confining stresses. Continued deformation allowed the other principal  
791 fracture types to develop with the longer calcite fractures and shear  
792 fractures forming close to thrusts. The unmineralised extension fractures  
793 and sometimes the shear fractures are associated with folds. As different  
794 fracture types formed contemporaneously, there is a complex interaction  
795 and overlap of all of the fracture types in this active fold and thrust belt  
796 which may not be easily resolved. Topologically, fracture networks in the  
797 fore-thrust setting are characterised by fewer nodes and a longer mean  
798 trace length, hence a lower density, but higher connectivity. By contrast,  
799 the topological characteristics of the back-thrust setting are dominated by  
800 more nodes producing a higher fracture density and lower mean trace  
801 length and higher intensity. The pop-up zone has an overall low fracture  
802 intensity.

803

804 By adopting an approach that considers both spatial and topological  
805 properties of fractures a relationship between fracture network parameters  
806 to structural domain is apparent. It is only by combining and comparing the  
807 two data types that the characterisation of structural styles become  
808 apparent. Moreover, the distinction of structural domains with fracture  
809 systems that are a result of the cumulative effects of multiple fracturing  
810 events is enhanced when all the constituent fracture sets that define the  
811 true characteristics of the rock mass are considered together.

812

## 813 **7. Conclusions**

814 A new approach of combining independently derived topological and fractal  
815 analyses of fracture networks has been developed to quantify the  
816 characteristics of highly deformed limestone in the Himalayan fold and  
817 thrust belt. This technique is employed to define the characteristics of

818 complex, heterogenous fracturing in various structural settings within the  
819 hanging wall of the Himalayan Main Boundary Thrust north of Islamabad,  
820 Pakistan which has applicability to a wide variety of fracture networks in  
821 different tectonic settings. Moreover, this approach dramatically reduces  
822 the time taken for data collection and provides large amounts of unbiased  
823 data representative of fracture network characteristics.

824 By examining the topological characteristics and fractal dimension of all the  
825 fractures together it is possible to distinguish and quantify the fracture  
826 system of an area based on empirical evidence and use this to define  
827 specific structural domains. In general, the fracture systems developed in  
828 both fore-thrusts and back-thrust settings have higher fractal dimensions  
829 than those in a pop-up structure. The fractal dimension of both thrust types  
830 decreases away from the central pop-up zone. Topologically, the fracture  
831 networks in the fore-thrust setting have on average, fewer nodes and a  
832 longer mean trace length and hence a lower density, but higher  
833 connectivity. By contrast, the topological characteristics of the back-thrusts  
834 setting are dominated by more nodes producing a higher fracture density  
835 and lower mean trace length and higher intensity. The pop-up zone has a  
836 low fracture intensity.

837 This method represents a first attempt to relate fracture network  
838 parameters to structural style by adopting a combined approach that looks  
839 at both spatial and topological properties. It is only by combining and  
840 comparing the two data types that the characterisation of structural styles  
841 become apparent.

842 As a fracture system is not simply the sum of the sets of fractures, but also  
843 the interactions between them, we have developed a methodology that  
844 rapidly establishes the attributes of the overall rock mass. By combining  
845 the topological and fractal characteristics of the fractures into a single  
846 group, it avoids problems associated with the mis-identification and  
847 grouping of fractures that are not spatially or temporally related and  
848 thereby wholly representative of the rock mass in question. Through



849 quantifying the cumulative characteristics of all the fractures in a single set  
850 of measurements, we can recognise different structural domains.

851 The utilisation of the methodology established in this study should be  
852 applicable to comparable lithologies in fold and thrust belts and a variety  
853 of different structural settings across a range of scales worldwide. This  
854 could be readily tested by using the same analytical techniques presented  
855 in this work, in either outcrop or subsurface settings.

856

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867

868 **9. References**

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1144 Appendix 1: Topological and fractal information of each measurement point at the various measurement sites.

Site	Structure	Circle	Orientation relative to bedding	Lst bed thick (m)	Shale bed thick (m)	% lst	e (edge)	x (cross cutting)	y (intersecting)	i (terminating)	Total	Connectivity	Fracture intensity	Fracture density	Mean trace length	No. tips	No. lines	No. branches	D
1	Fore-thrust	1	Perpendicular	1.55	0.05	85%	25	5	26	5	61	4.00	12.50	5.73	0.69	16	31	52	1.80
		2	Parallel	1.25	0.11	90%	34	24	21	30	109	3.53	17.00	11.94	0.45	26	51	95	1.84
		3	Perpendicular	1.22	0.09	80%	14	11	27	18	70	3.38	7.00	8.91	0.25	23	45	72	1.77
		4	Oblique	1.28	0.13	80%	21	10	30	14	76	3.64	10.50	8.59	0.39	22	44	72	1.76
		5	Perpendicular	1.47	0.22	80%	20	17	21	8	66	5.24	10.00	7.32	0.43	15	29	135	1.78
		6	Parallel	1.65	0.14	80%	28	19	16	8	71	5.83	14.00	6.84	0.65	12	24	66	1.72
		Ave		1.41	0.11	80%	24	14	24	14	76	4.27	11.83	8.22	0.48	19	37	82	1.78
		SD		0.16	0.04	4%	6	6	5	8	25	0.93	3.17	1.97	0.15	5	10	27	0.04
2	Fore-thrust	1	Parallel	0	0.25	15%	19	7	33	20	79	3.02	9.50	9.55	0.32	27	53	74	1.72
		2	Oblique	0.9	0.40	20%	42	22	46	5	115	5.33	21.00	11.62	0.58	34	68	116	1.96
		3	Perpendicular	0.55	0.33	35%	64	85	72	14	235	7.30	32.00	27.22	0.37	79	157	285	1.93
		4	Oblique	0.4	0.24	40%	67	65	78	19	229	5.90	33.50	25.78	0.41	72	143	257	1.92
		Ave		0.46	0.29	28%	48	45	57	15	165	5.39	24.00	18.54	0.42	53	105	183	1.88
		SD		0.07	0.12	10%	22	36	21	7	86	1.54	9.66	8.01	0.10	23	45	90	0.11
3	Fore-thrust	1	Perpendicular	1.45	0	100%	17	16	31	62	126	2.02	8.50	17.35	0.16	47	93	110	1.99
		2	Perpendicular	1.33	0	100%	16	4	28	4	52	4.00	8.00	5.73	0.44	16	32	52	1.95
		Ave		1.39	0	100%	17	10	30	33	90	3.01	8.25	11.54	0.30	31	63	81	1.97
		SD		0.06	0	0%	1	6	2	29	38	0.99	0.25	5.81	0.14	15	31	29	0.03
4	Pop-up	1	Perpendicular	0.31	0	100%	20	14	23	110	167	1.11	10.00	23.40	0.14	133	67	118	1.78
		2	Parallel	0.33	0	100%	14	5	15	110	144	0.64	7.00	20.69	0.11	125	63	88	1.77
		Ave		0.31	0	100%	17	10	19	110	156	0.88	8.50	22.04	0.12	129	65	103	1.78
		SD		0.01	0	0%	4	6	6	0	16	0.33	2.12	1.91	0.02	6	3	21	0.01
5	Back-thrust	1	Parallel	1.55	0.05	0%	55	64	114	181	414	2.41	27.50	57.14	0.15	295	148	390	1.93
		2	Oblique	1.40	0.05	0%	30	43	34	6	113	2.54	17.50	36.76	0.15	186	93	256	1.96
		3	Oblique	1.35	0.05	0%	42	48	46	14	150	2.89	17.00	19.74	0.27	101	51	147	1.91
		Ave		1.43	0.05	0%	42	52	65	67	226	2.61	20.67	37.88	0.19	194	97	264	1.93
		SD		0.05	0	0%	13	11	43	99	166	0.25	5.92	18.73	0.07	97	49	122	0.03
6	Back-thrust	1	Parallel	1.25	0	100%	24	18	29	132	203	1.17	12.00	28.49	0.13	161	81	225	1.87
		2	Oblique	0.95	0.02	80%	29	27	125	159	340	2.14	14.50	49.50	0.09	284	142	321	1.97
		3	Perpendicular	1.00	0.02	95%	27	6	51	88	172	1.64	13.50	23.08	0.19	139	70	133	1.95
		Ave		1.07	0.02	92%	27	17	68	126	238	1.65	13.33	33.69	0.14	195	97	226	1.93
		SD		0.16	0	10%	3	11	50	36	100	0.40	1.03	11.40	0.04	64	32	77	0.05
7	Back-thrust	1	Parallel	1.1	0	100%	24	66	55	76	221	3.69	12.00	31.35	0.12	61	121	253	1.83
8	Back-thrust	1	Parallel	0.9	0.01	95%	39	50	53	23	165	5.42	19.50	20.05	0.31	52	103	191	1.82
9	Pop-up	1	Parallel	0.5	0	100%	18	24	23	19	84	4.48	9.00	10.50	0.27	24	47	92	1.76
10	Fore-thrust	1	Parallel	0.4	0	100%	30	20	45	3	98	5.42	15.00	10.82	0.44	33	65	109	1.90