

Applications of Position Sensitive Detectors in Particle Physics and Pixel Detectors

Francisca Muñoz Sánchez

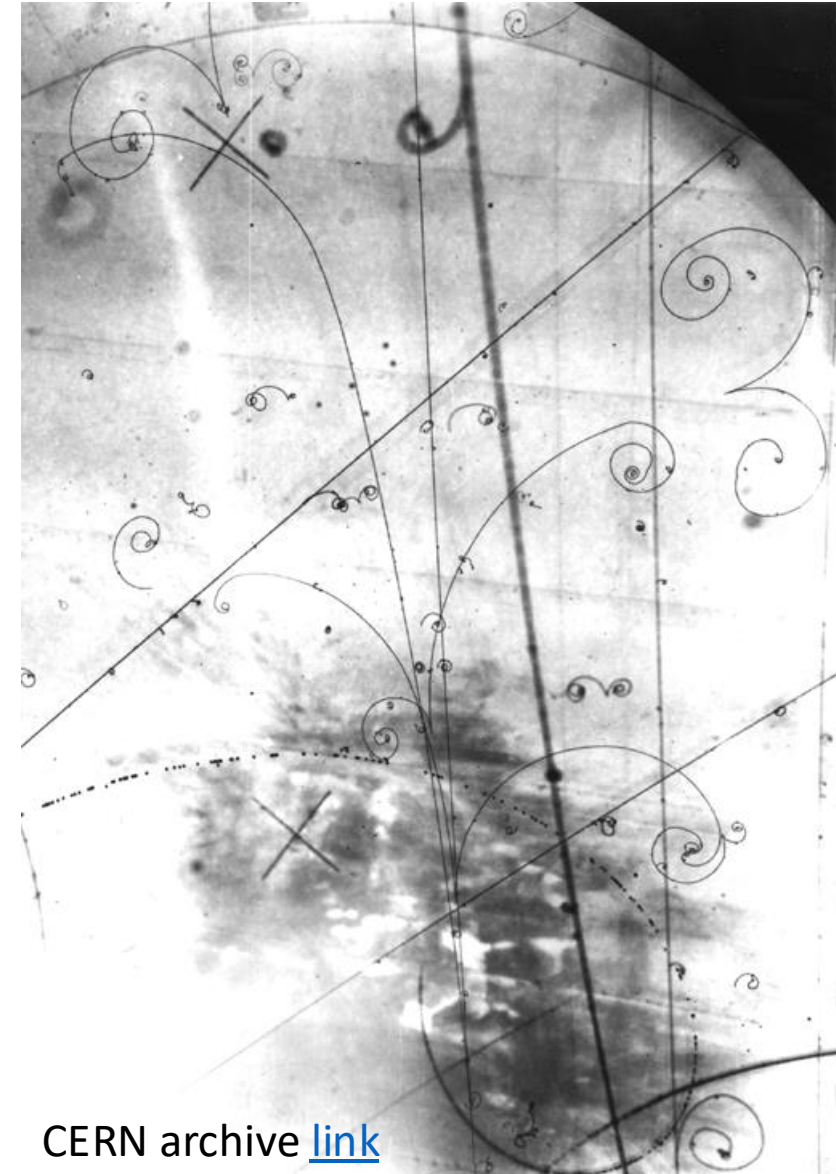
University of Manchester

The 14th International Conference on Position Sensitive Detectors

3rd September 2026, QMUL, London

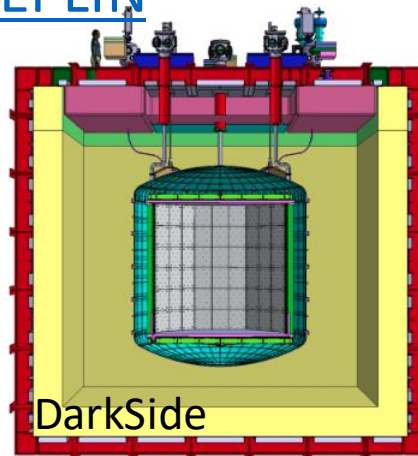
Position Sensitive Detectors in Particle Physics

- Are used to reconstruct particle tracks:
 - Identify the interacting particles
 - Measure the energy of the particle
- Different applications and different technologies:
 - Neutrino and dark matter detection:
 - Light detection
 - Time projection chambers: Noble liquids-gas
 - CCD
 - Colliders:
 - Gas/liquid detectors to cover big volumes
 - Photo detectors: Scintillating
 - Silicon detectors for tracking and vertexing close to the interaction point

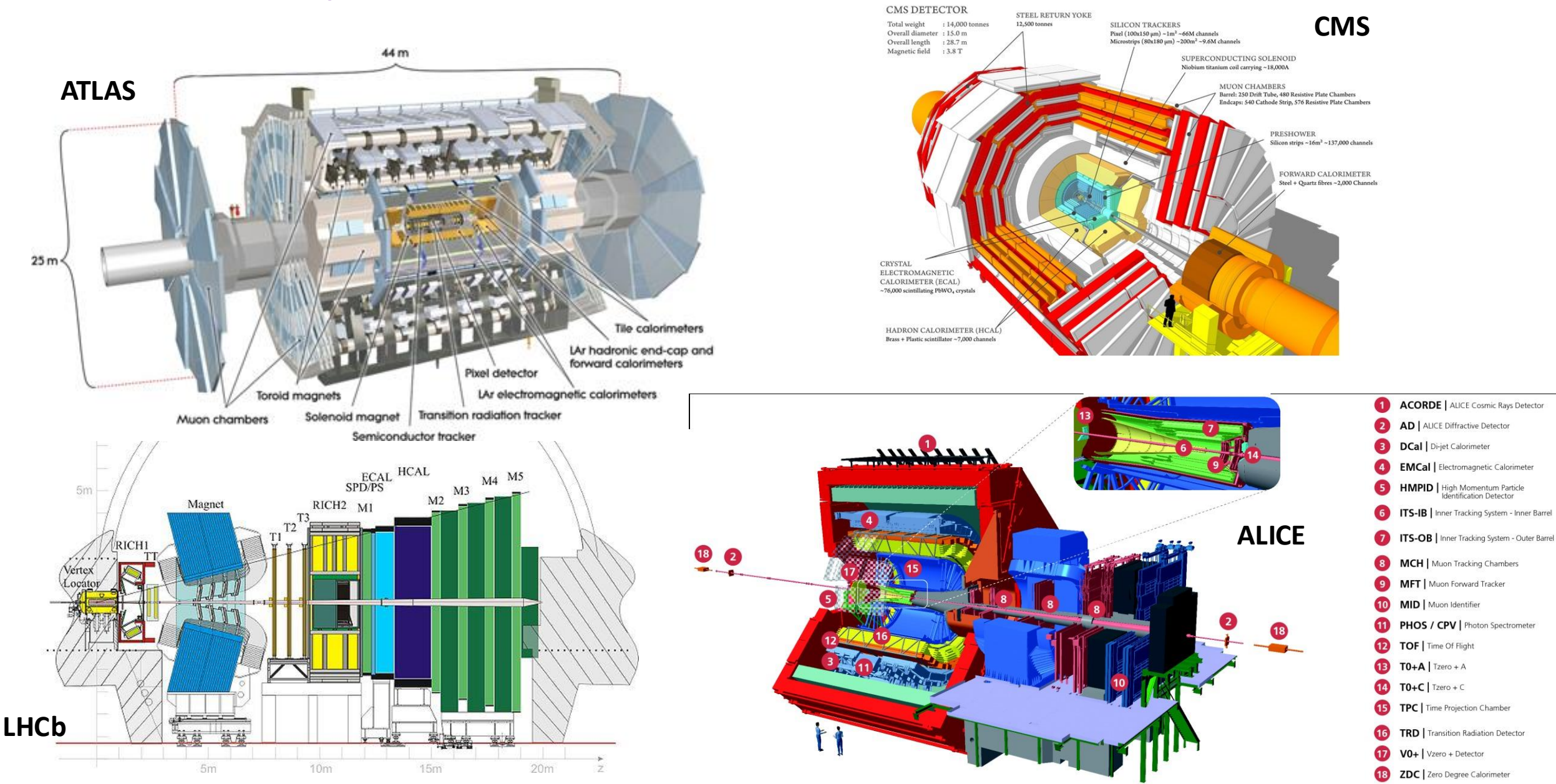


Neutrino, DM and Astroparticle detectors

- Cherenkov Light detection:
 - [Super-Kamiokande](#) (50k tons of water) and Huge PMTs
 - [Pierre Auger Observatory](#): 1600 tanks
- Time projection Chambers. Neutrino or dark matter particle interaction produce scintillation light, ionization or electroluminescence:
 - [Dune](#), [DarkSide](#)
 - [Xenon experiment](#), [LUX-ZEPLIN](#)
- Semiconductors for DM
 - Silicon CCDs in [Damic](#)
 - Ge in [SuperCDMS](#)

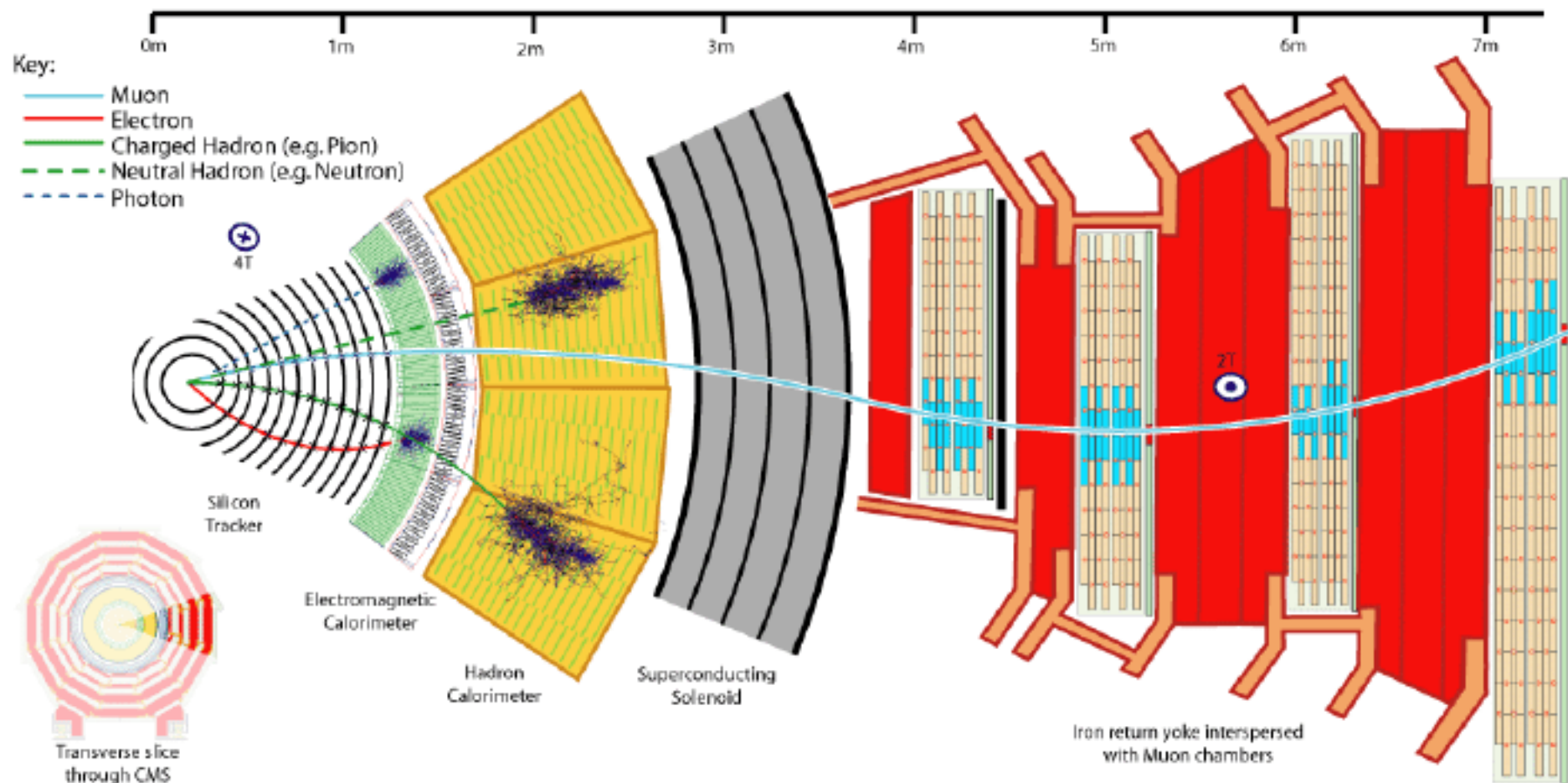


Collider experiments: onion structure



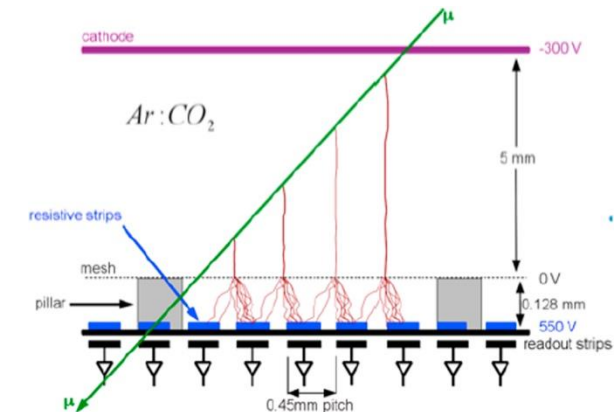
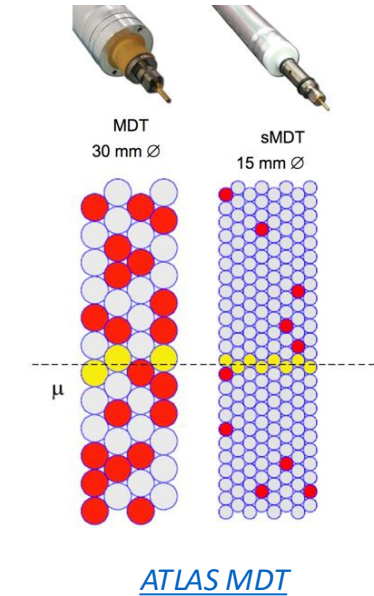
An example, CMS experiment

[CMS-PHO-GEN-2016-001](#)



Muon chambers: Ionisation

- Gas detectors can cover big volumes cost-effectively.
 - Monitored Drift Tubes (MDT)
 - 3 cm diameter gas cylinders with a central wire: 5000 V
 - Resistive Plate Chambers (RPCs)
 - Parallel planes with a ΔV and filled with gas
 - Thin Gap Chambers (TGCs)
 - Parallel 50 μm wires in gas
 - Micromegas: 800V
- High maintenance and high power

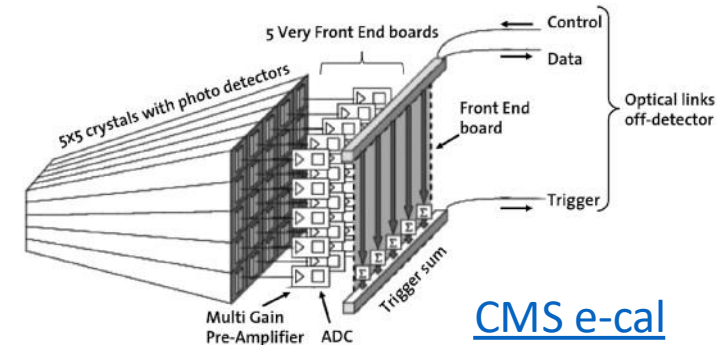
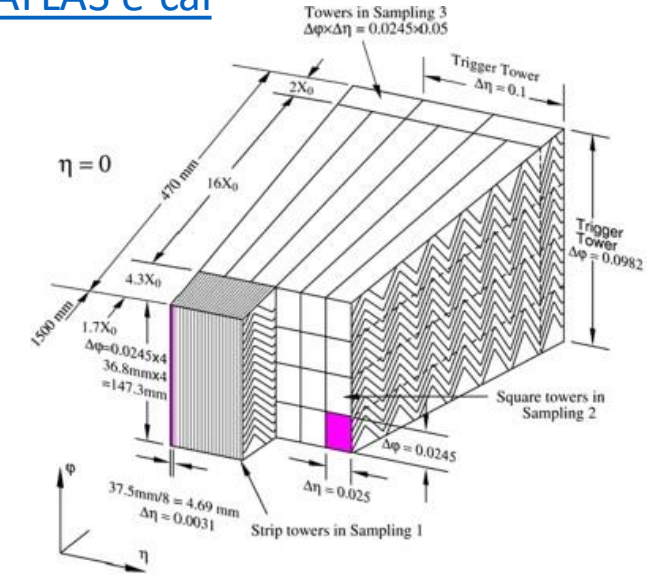
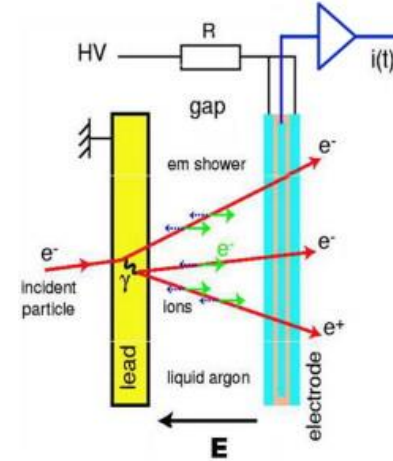


ATLAS Micromegas

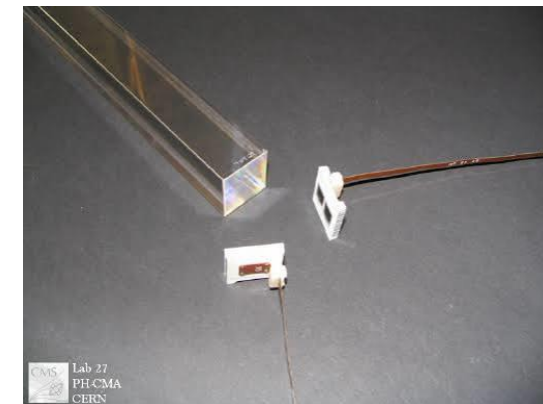
Calorimeters

- Designed to entirely stop particles and to measure their energy
- Measure total charge, ionisation or scintillation light
- They can be:
 - Electromagnetic:
 - LAr-ATLAS $\rightarrow$ collecting charge
 - lead tungstate (PbWO_4) scintillation crystals - CMS
 - Hadronic:
 - interleaved steel plates and plastic scintillator tiles - ATLAS
 - layers of dense brass/steel absorbers and plastic scintillators – CMS
- Position resolution in Calorimeters is becoming highly important for future colliders and application of machine learning algorithm

ATLAS e-cal



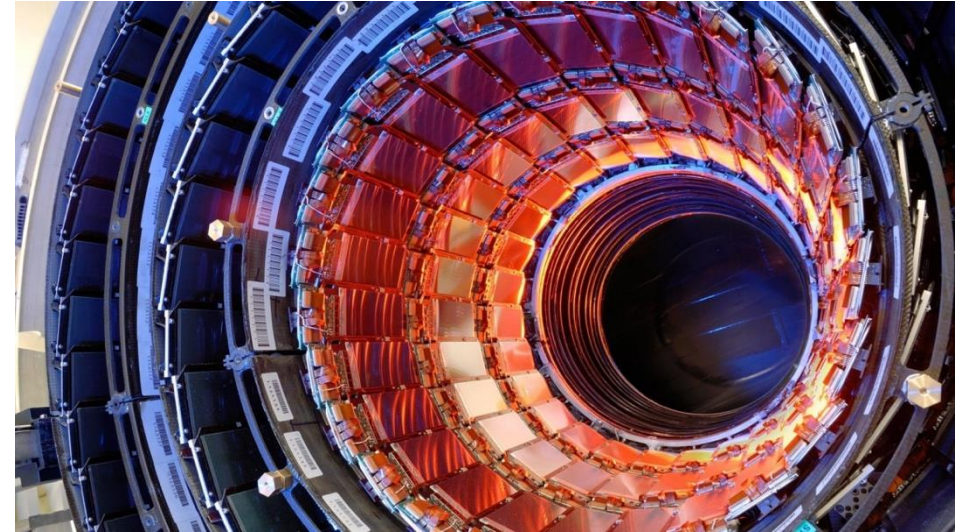
CMS e-cal



Trackers and pixel detectors

- Gas detector:
 - Straw tubes (ATLAS-TRT): $>1500\text{V}$
- Silicon strip detectors
 - Variable pitches depending on location
- Pixel detectors pitch
 - $100\mu\text{m} \times 150\mu\text{m}$: CMS
 - $400\mu\text{m} \times 50\mu\text{m}$: ATLAS

[CMS tracker detector](#)



[The ATLAS SCT](#)

Tracking detectors

- Layers around the interaction point
- A track is the reconstructed trajectory of an ionising particle, connecting hits from different layers:
 - Pattern recognition is figuring out which hits go to what tracks
- Measure position and momentum of ionising particles
 - Position resolution. Distance between the real hit and the fitted track
 - Transverse momentum (P_t) From track curvature
 - Longitudinal (z_0) and transverse (R_0) track impact parameter resolution

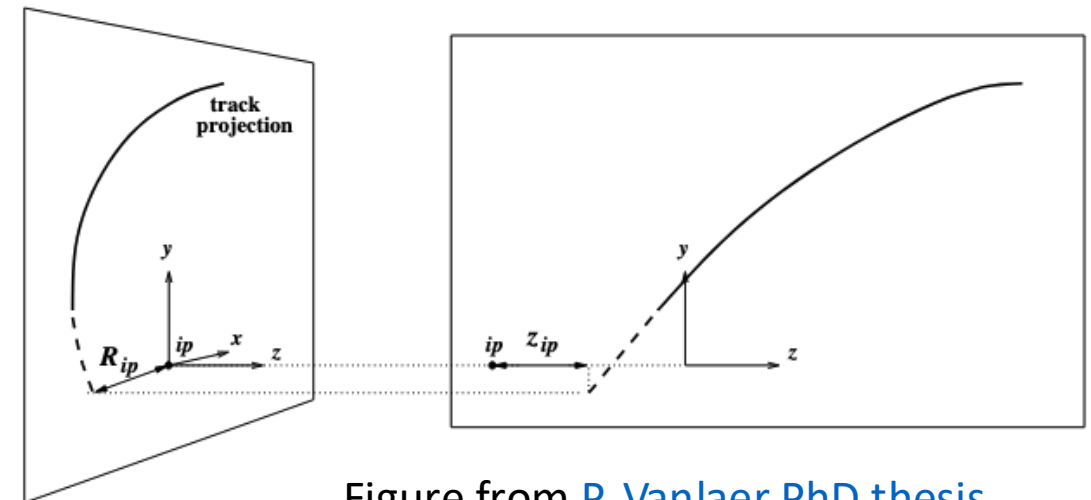
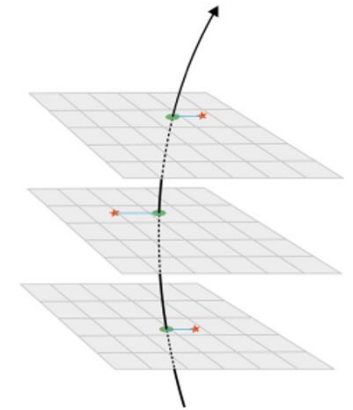
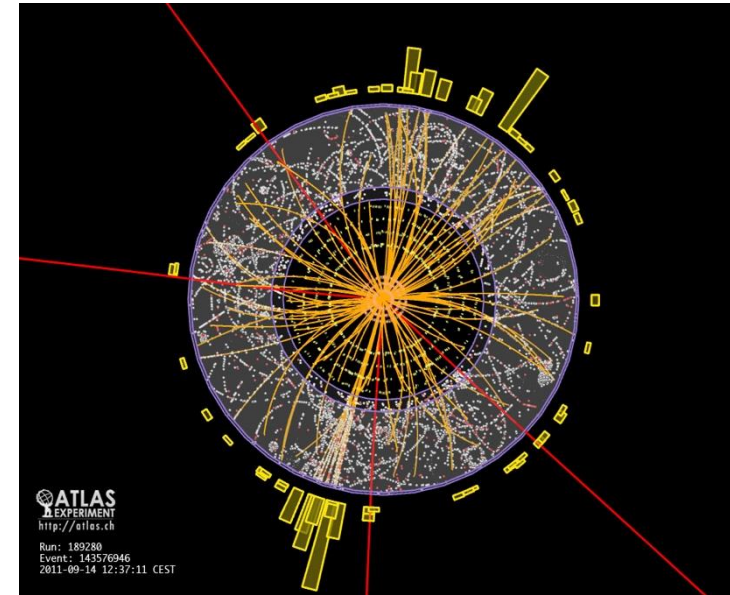
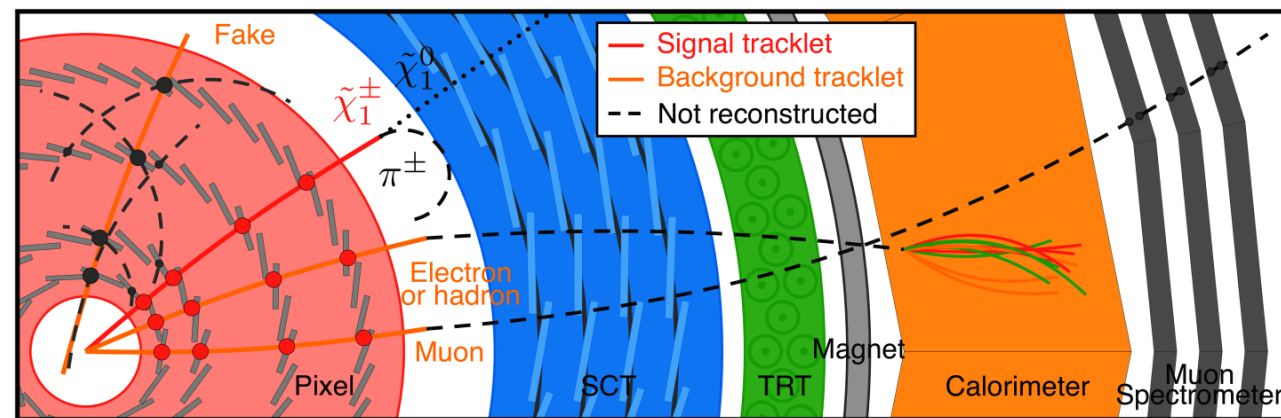
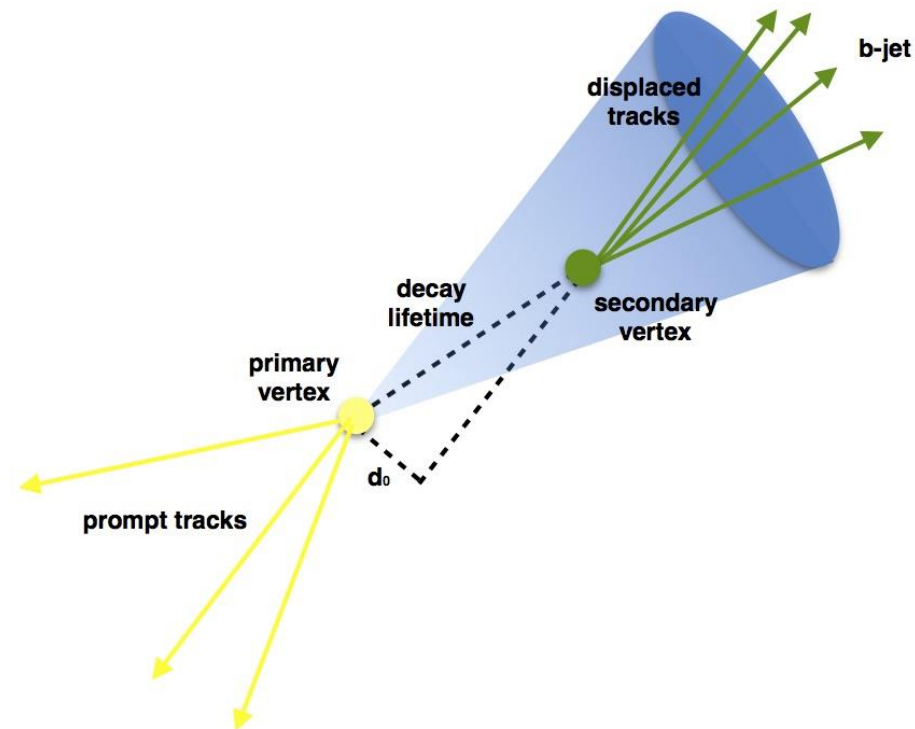


Figure from [P. Vanlaer PhD thesis](#)

Vertices and fake tracks

- Vertices
 - Primary: Location of the collisions
 - Secondary/tertiary
 - decay of particles with a lifetime (b, c-hadrons)
 - Scattering (interaction with matter)
- Fake tracks
 - Merging of two or more tracks
 - Mis-assigning some hits
 - Random combination
- Fakes can impact the reconstruction

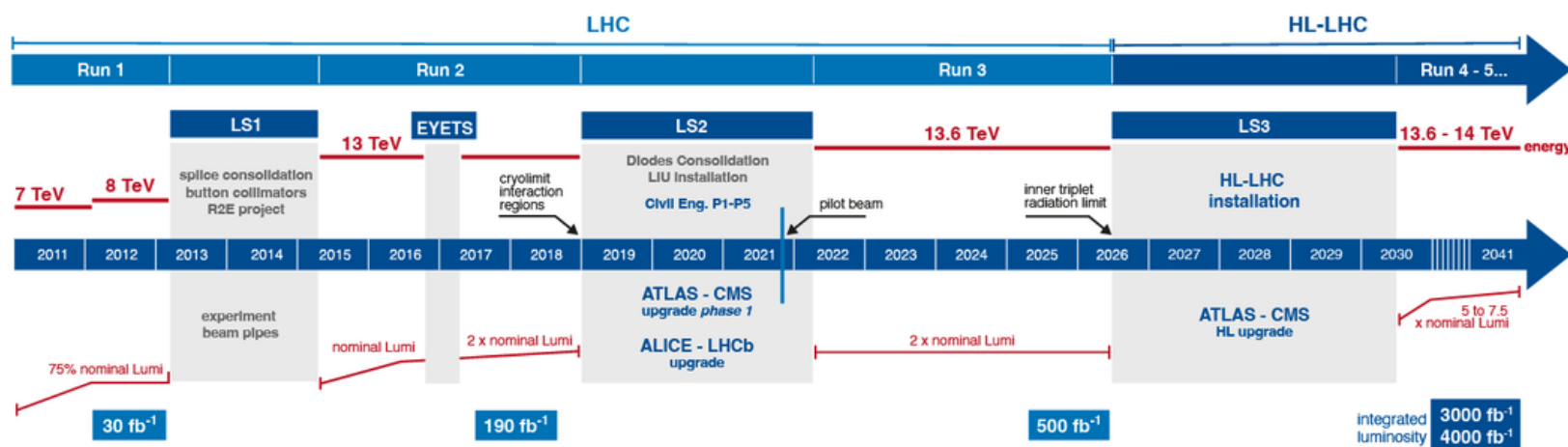
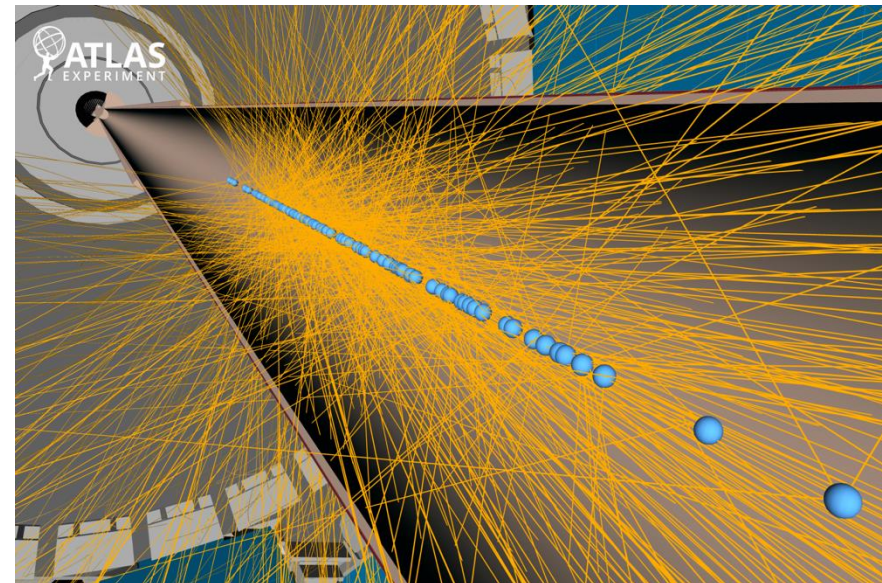


[Moriond conference 2021](#)

The LHC upgrade: HiLumi LHC

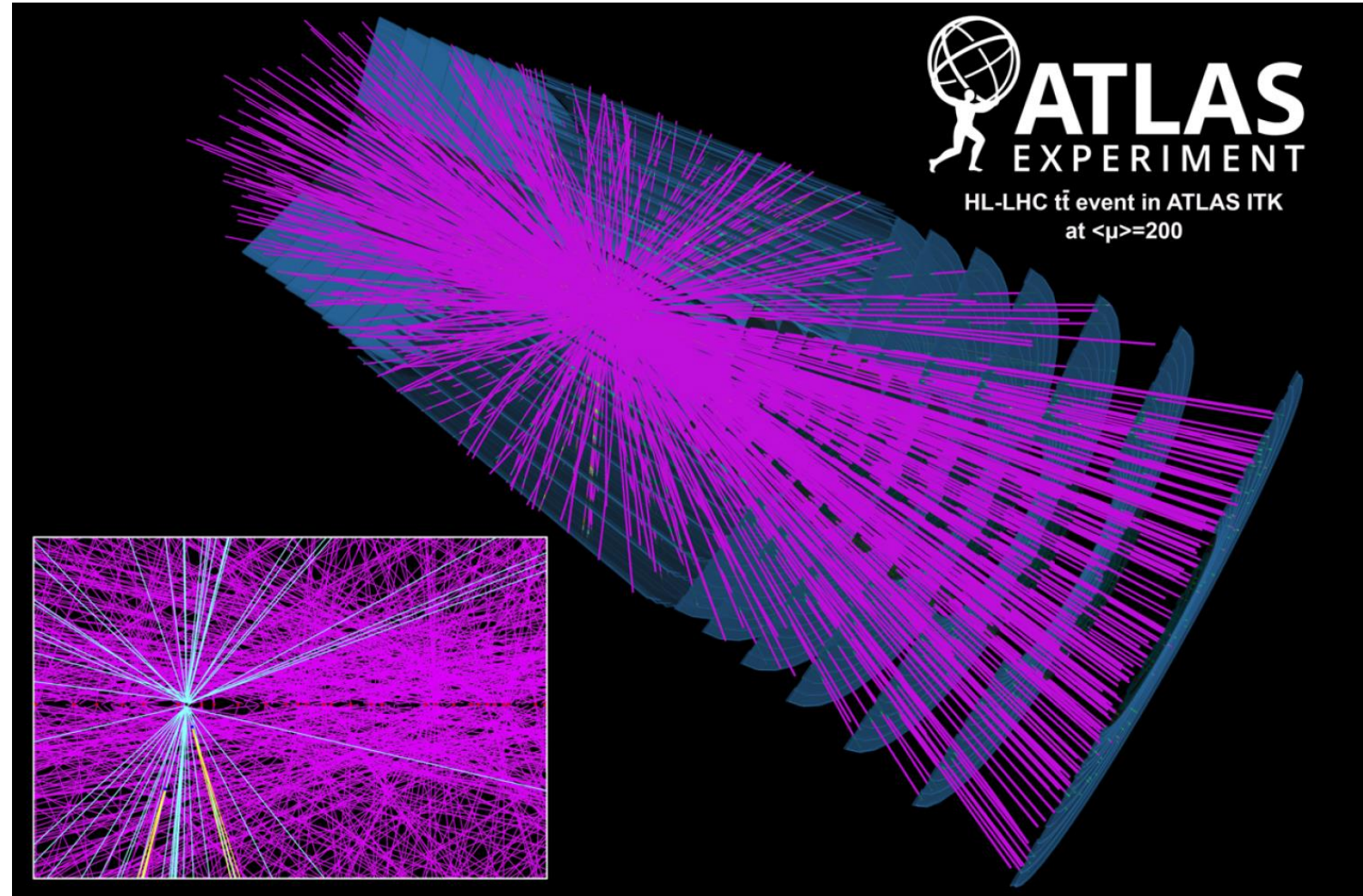
HiLumi

- Produce 380 millions of Higgs bosons
- Luminosity Increase:
 - $L \sim 7 \times 10^{34} \text{ cm}^{-2}\text{s}^{-1}$
 - $L_{\text{int}} \sim 4000 \text{ fb}^{-1}$.
- 200 pile up events ($\sim 3.3 \times \text{LHC}$)
- Radiation fluence:
 - $\phi_{\text{HL-LHC}} \sim 10 \times \phi_{\text{LHC}} = 2 \times 10^{16} \text{ n}_{\text{eq}}/\text{cm}^2$.



Tracker and pixel detectors at HiLumi

- Extremely high density of Tracks and vertices
- 4D detection
 - Space granularity
 - Time granularity
 - Adding timing layers
- Higher granularity, closer to the IP



Francisca Munoz Sanchez

Time resolution

- Longitudinal (z_0) and transverse (R_0) track impact parameter resolution
- Collisions (interactions) spread in time (180 ps) can help to reduce the pile-up
- Achieving time resolution ~ 30 ps allows going from $\mu \sim 200$ to 40
- Impact on the physics analysis
- Factor 5 to 10x improvement on vertex merging rate
- Factor 3 to 5x reduction of false positive on track to vertex association
- Timing information:
 - Per Track $\rightarrow$ 1 timing layer (HL-LHC)

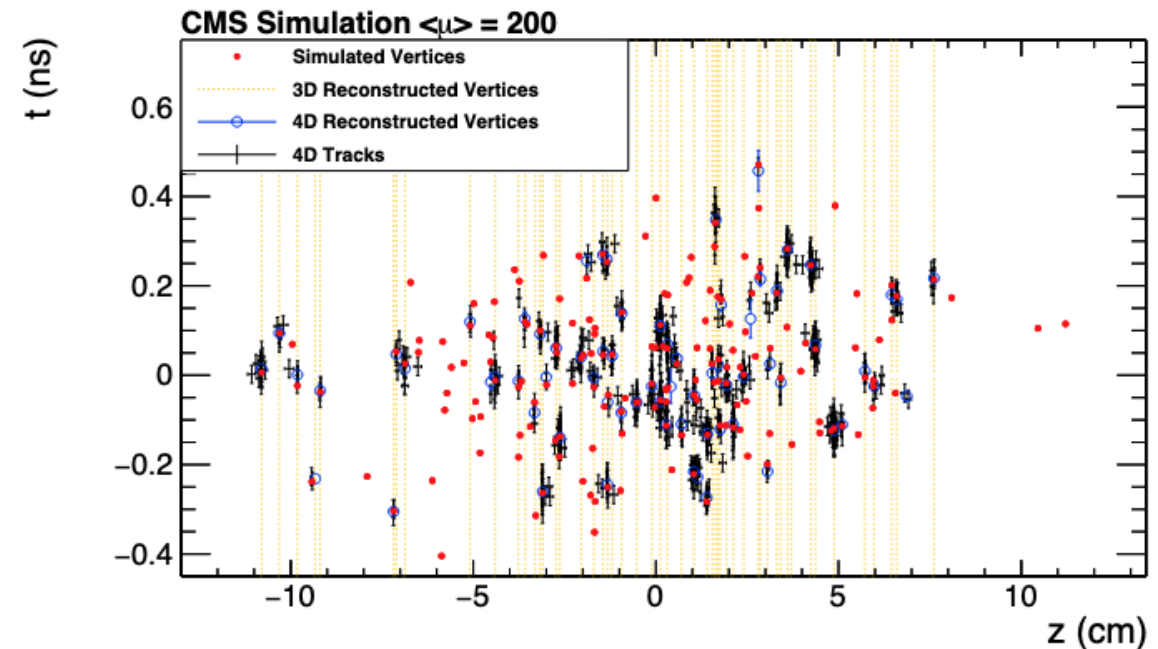
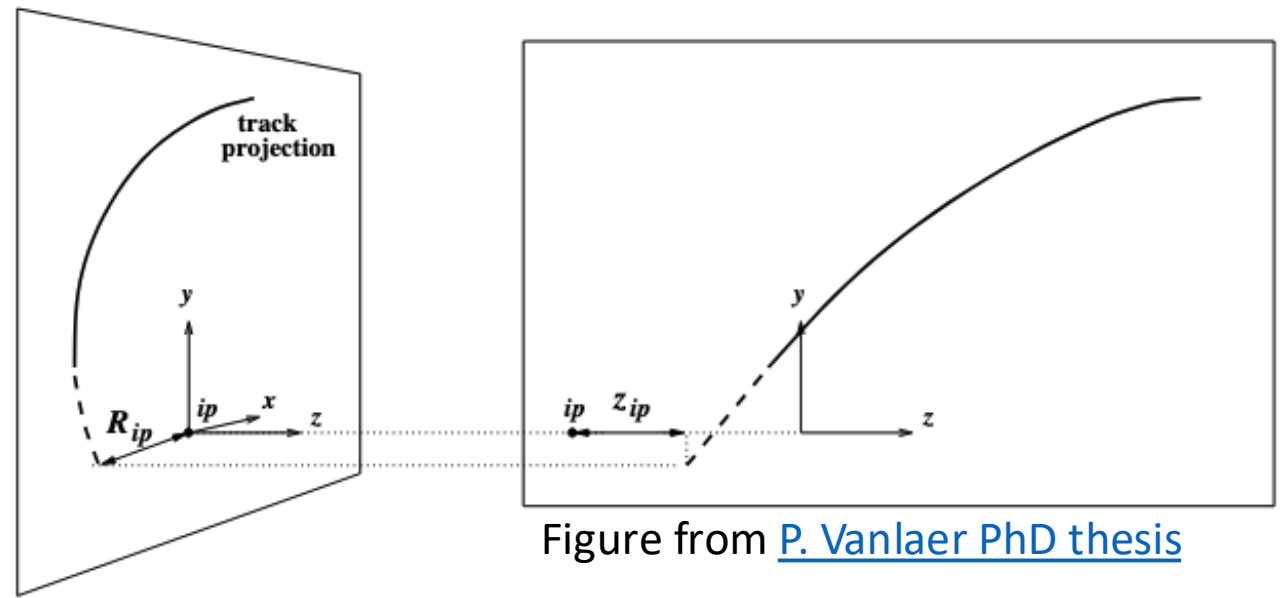
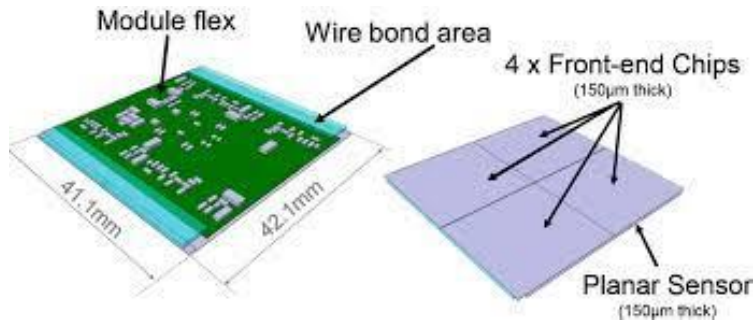


Figure from L. Gray "[4 Dimensional trackers](#)"
contribution to Connecting the Dots workshop 2017

Pixel detectors developments.

- Pixel detectors are in the innermost layers:
 - Smaller areas to cover up and higher resolution requested
 - Pixel detectors are more expensive
- The developments have been/will be on:
 - Thinning sensors
 - Smaller pixel size
 - Interconnection yield (bump bonding)
 - Getting closer to the beam pipe
 - Bigger area ROC (and thinner)
 - fast
 - Radiation Hardness

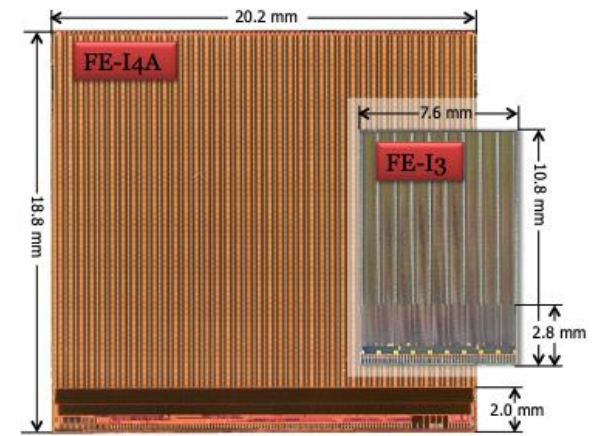
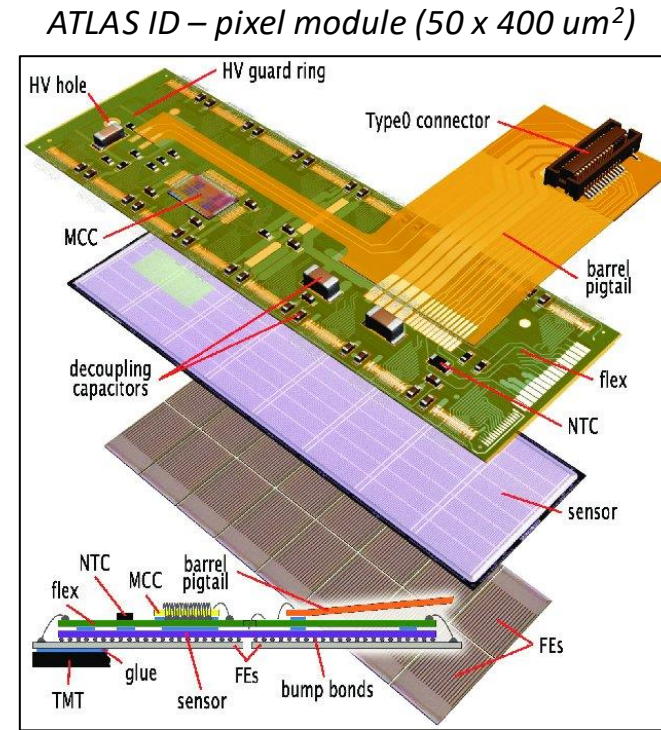


ATLAS ITk – QUAD module ($50 \times 50 \mu\text{m}^2$)
Triplet ($25 \times 100 \mu\text{m}^2$)



ATLAS IBL – pixel dual- module
($50 \times 250 \mu\text{m}^2$)

fmunoz@cern.ch



Summary

- Particle physics needs position sensitive detectors for many different applications compromising:
 - Volume vs cost
 - Coverage and hermeticity vs services
 - Resolution vs cost and services
 - Mass vs resolution
 - Cost vs Power
 - And all possible combinations
- Pixel detectors starting a new Era: FCC
 - High granularity ($\sigma < 10 \mu\text{m}$)
 - Extremely Low mass
 - 40 μm thickness sensors
 - optical data
 - Monolithic
 - Timing layers ($\sim 30 \text{ ps}$)
 - Radiation hardness (most important for hadron)



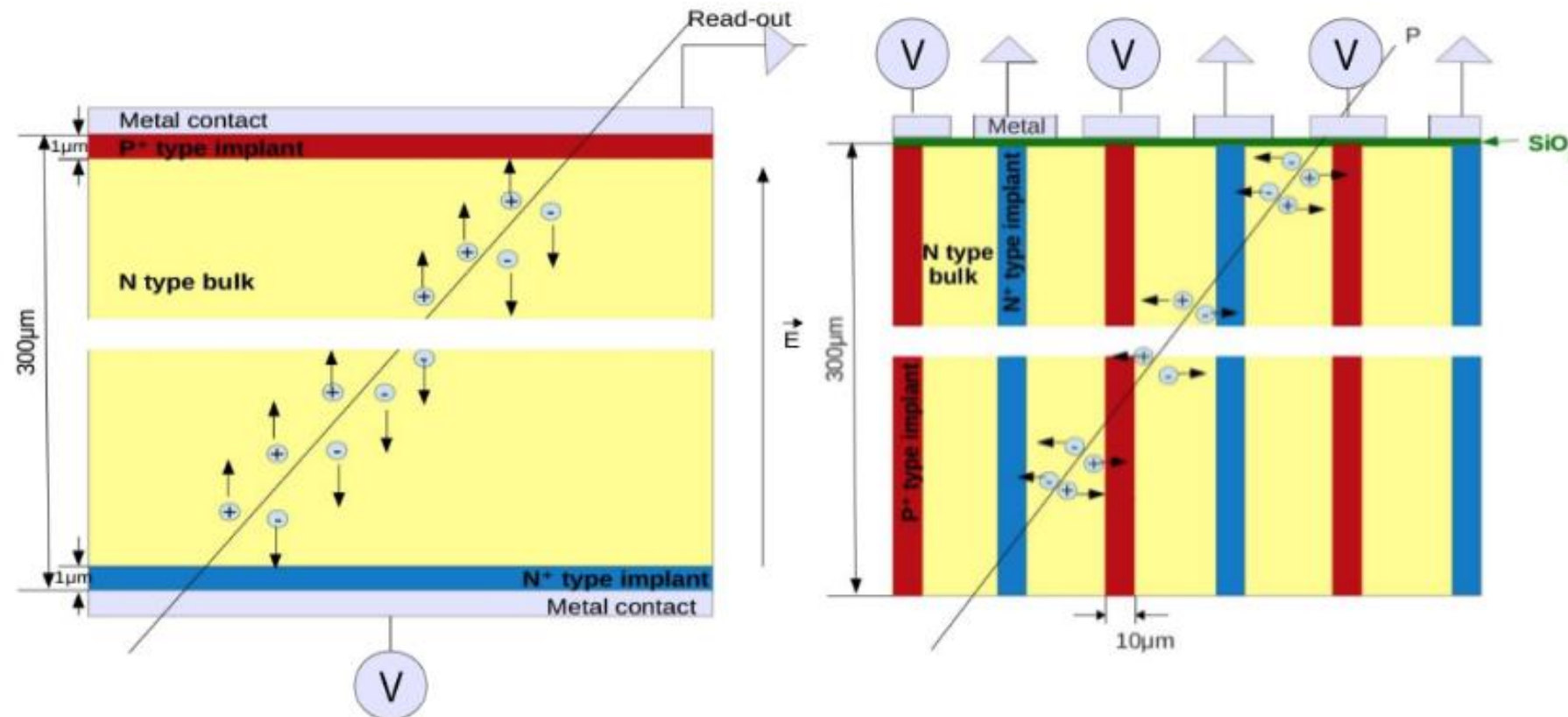
A. Macchiolo talk: ["Future directions for pixel detectors: timing and pixel size performance"](#)

Thank you very much for
your attention.
Questions?

Backup

Devices structures

- Electrode position: Planar vs 3D (surface or embedded)
 - 3D sensors were proposed by S. Parker in 1997 [4]
 - They can be strip or pixel sensors



3D structures characteristics

- In 3D devices, distance between electrodes no more limited by the sensor thickness.
- Full depletion voltage now is given by the coaxial approximation [11]:

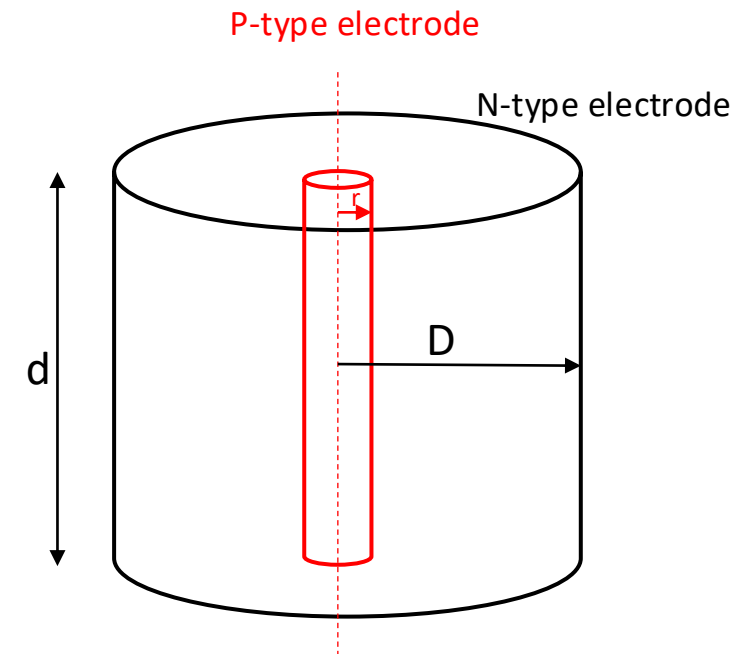
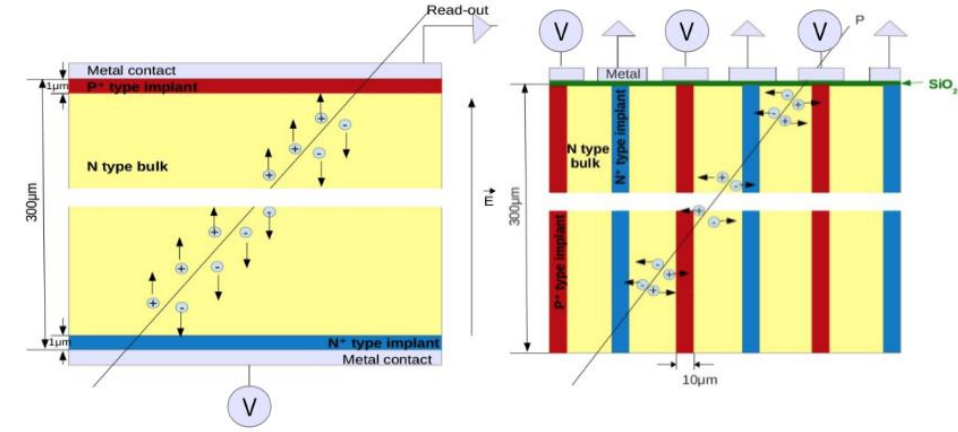
$$V_{FD} = \frac{qN_{eff}}{2\epsilon_0\epsilon_{Si}} \left(D^2 \left[\ln\left(\frac{D}{r} - 0.5\right) \right] + 0.5r^2 \right)$$

D = Electrode distance
r = column radii

- Smaller V_{FD}
- Shorter distances to travel for carriers
- Input capacitance is higher than in planar → challenging for ROC

$$C = \frac{2\pi\epsilon_0 d}{\ln\left(\frac{D}{r}\right)}$$

- short collection distances, fast collection times and low depletion voltages



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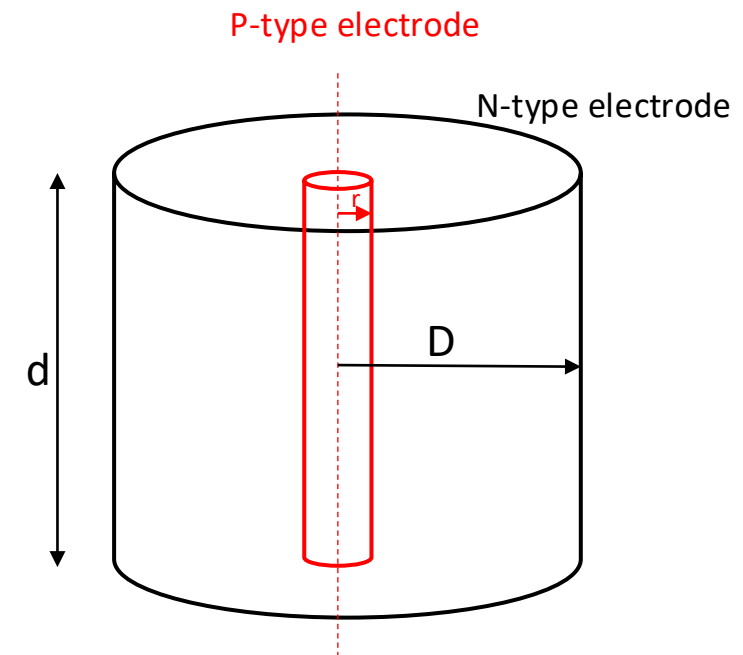
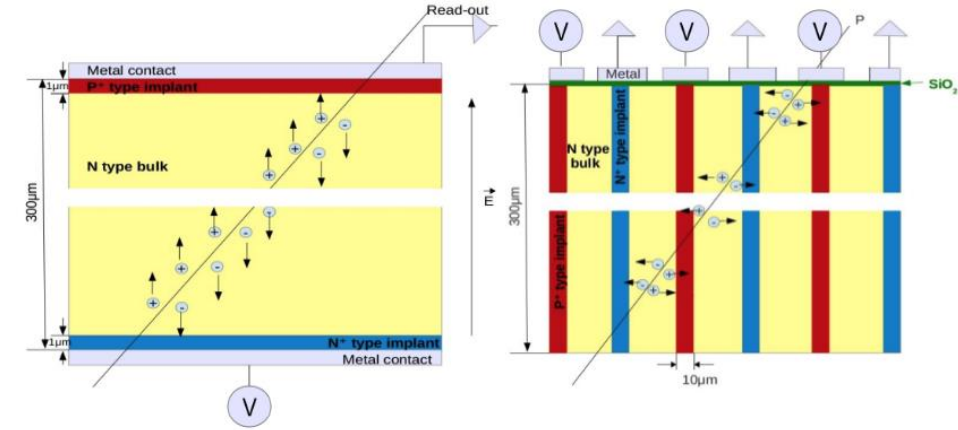
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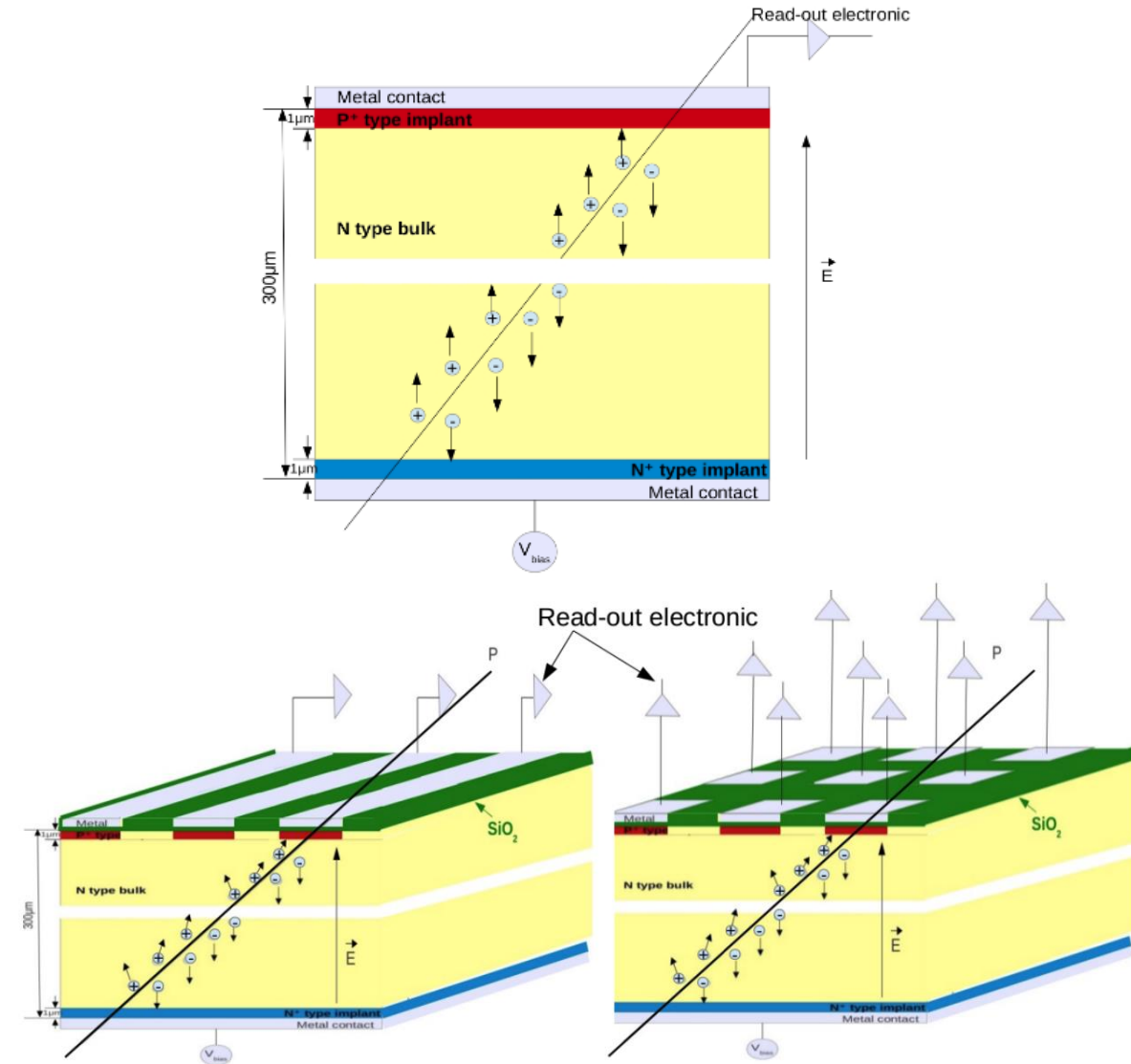
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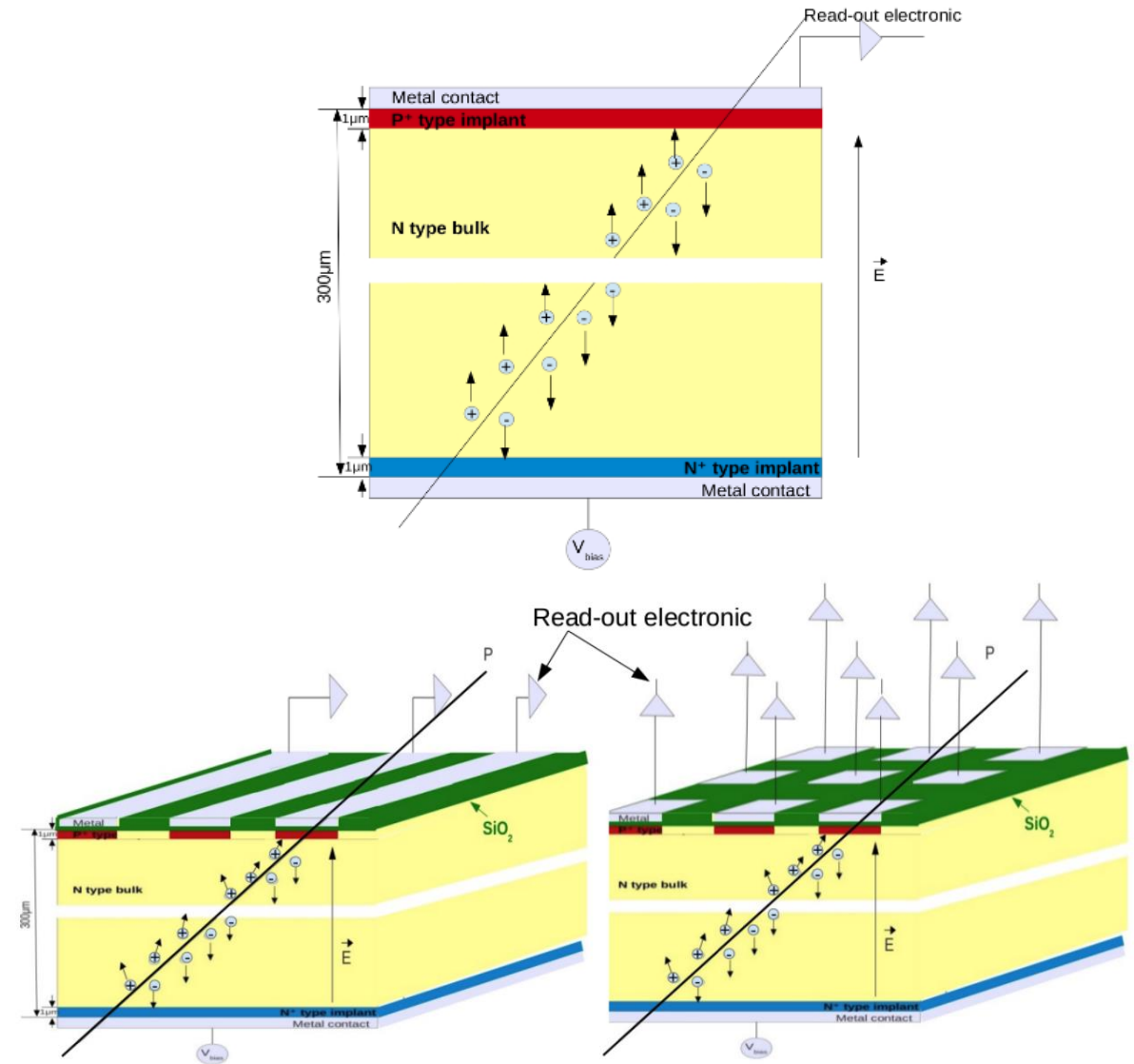
Position resolution

- Position resolution is given by the size of the electrode (to first order):
 - Electrode size is also limited by:
 - Wafer size
 - Electronics bonding (interconnection technique)
 - Electrodes are segmented into strips or pixels ('strixels' also exist)
 - Sensors remains 100% efficient despite the gaps (field lines remain parallel until near the surface) provided:
 - $V_{\text{bias}} > V_{\text{FD}}$
 - Un-irradiated sensors
 - Connection to the readout electronics



Position resolution in semiconductors

- Position resolution is given by the size of the electrode (to first order):
 - Electrode size is also limited by:
 - Wafer size
 - Electronics bonding (interconnection technique)
 - Electrodes are segmented into strips or pixels ('strixels' also exist)
 - Sensors remains 100% efficient despite the gaps (field lines remain parallel until near the surface) provided:
 - $V_{\text{bias}} > V_{\text{FD}}$
 - Un-irradiated sensors
 - Segmentation in the junction side or the ohmic side



Position resolution

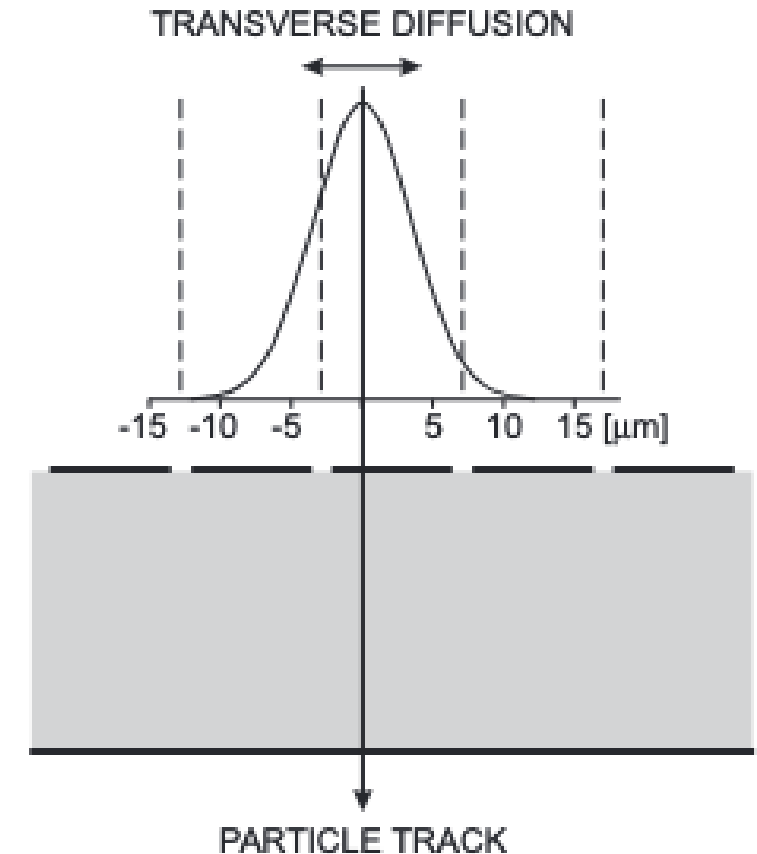
- Position resolution:
 - Diode $\rightarrow$ Pitch 'p'
 - Strip or pixel detector. Tracks randomly aligned with the strip, the difference between the measured and the real position have a gaussian distribution with the standard deviation:

$$\sigma^2 = \int_{-p/2}^{p/2} \frac{x^2}{p} dx = \frac{p^2}{12},$$

- Transverse diffusion (the phenomenon), thermal spread of the charges with an RMS width $\sigma^2 = 2Dt$:
 - D is the diffusion constant, proportional to the carrier's mobility ($=kT\mu/e$)
 - Using the average field approximation: $E = V/d$
 - t is the collection time, inversely proportional to the mobility $t \sim d/v = d/(\mu E) = d^2/(\mu V)$
 - The transverse diffusion is independent of the carrier

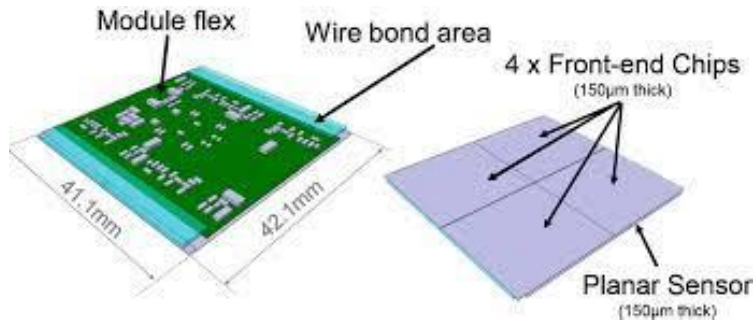
$$\sigma_y = \sqrt{2Dt} \approx \sqrt{2 \frac{kT}{e} \frac{d^2}{V_b}}$$

- Charge sharing between electrodes (the effect).



Pixel detectors developments.

- Pixel detectors are in the innermost layers:
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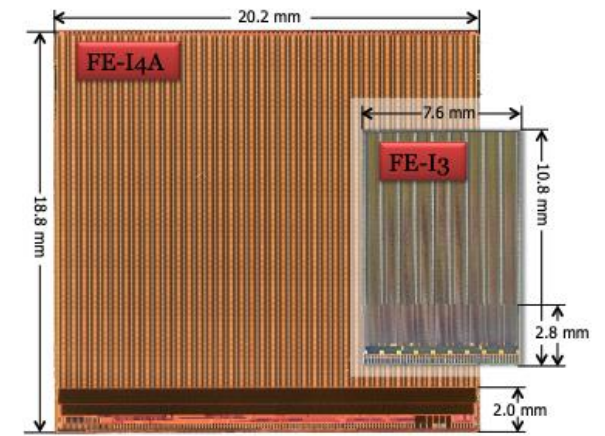
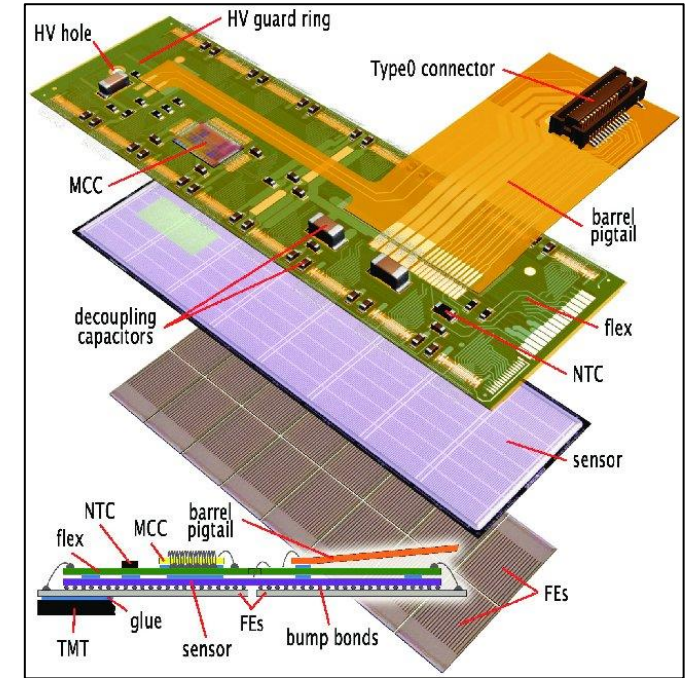
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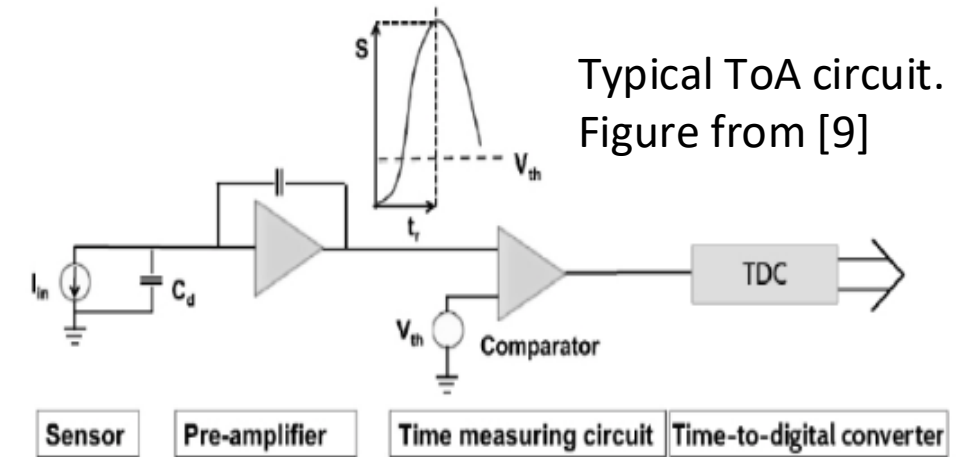
ATLAS ID – pixel module ($50 \times 400 \mu\text{m}^2$)



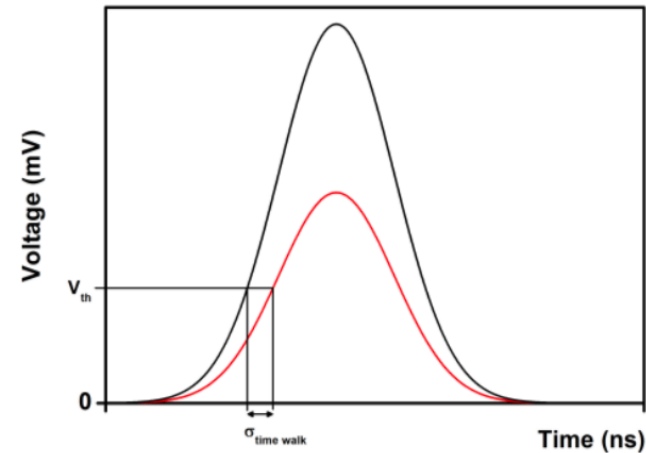
Time resolution

- All the components that change the shape of the signal introduce uncertainties
- Time resolution is:

$$\sigma_t^2 = \sigma_{time\ walk}^2 + \sigma_{Landau\ noise}^2 + \sigma_{jitter}^2 + \sigma_{distortion}^2 + \sigma_{TDC}^2$$



Typical ToA circuit.
Figure from [9]



$\sigma_{Landau\ noise}$: Variations on the energy deposited. Thinned sensors $\rightarrow$ smaller variations

σ_{jitter} : Uncertainties on the Time of Arrival (ToA) for constant pulses. Signal level is modulated by noise, the time of threshold varies accordingly.

$\sigma_{distortion}$: due to the sensor geometry, field as homogeneous as possible

σ_{TDC} : time info is digitized into a bin of width Δt . $\sigma_{TDC} = \Delta t / \sqrt{12}$

$$\sigma_t = \frac{\sigma_n}{(dV/dt)_{V_{th}}} \approx \frac{1}{S/N} t_r$$

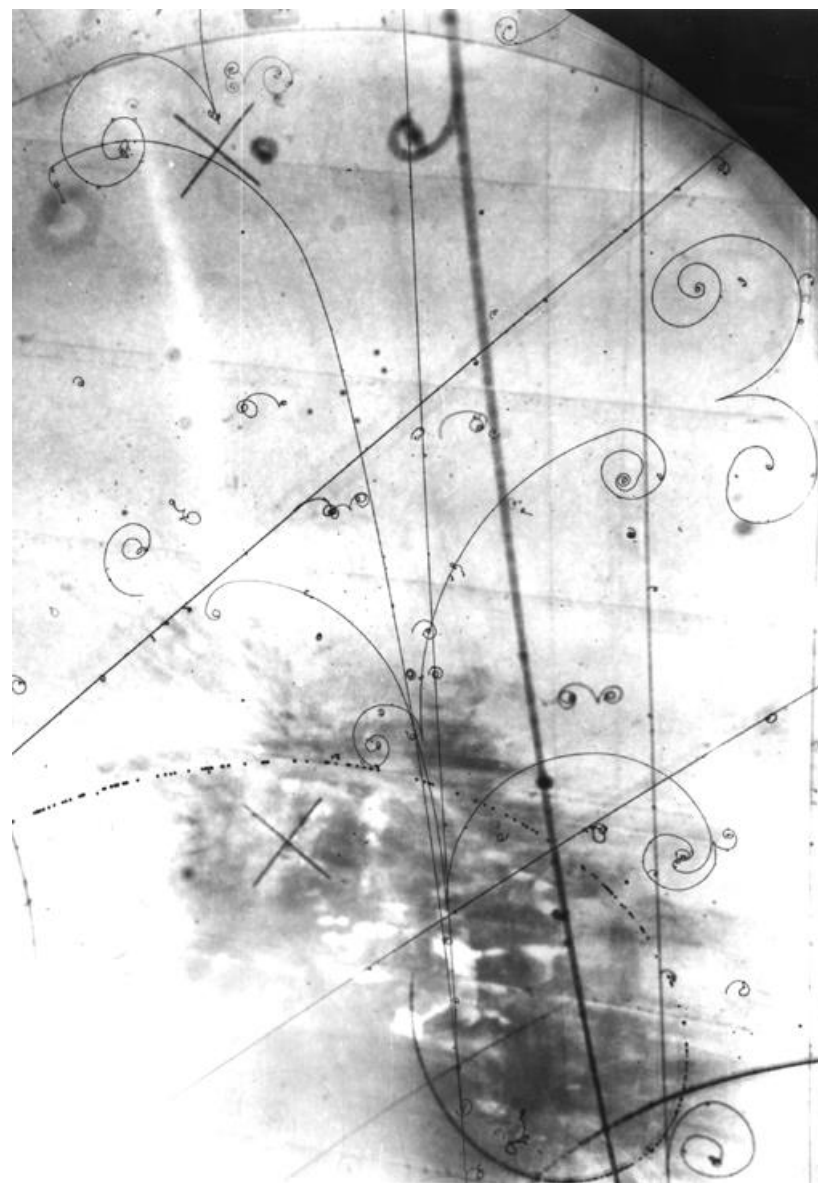
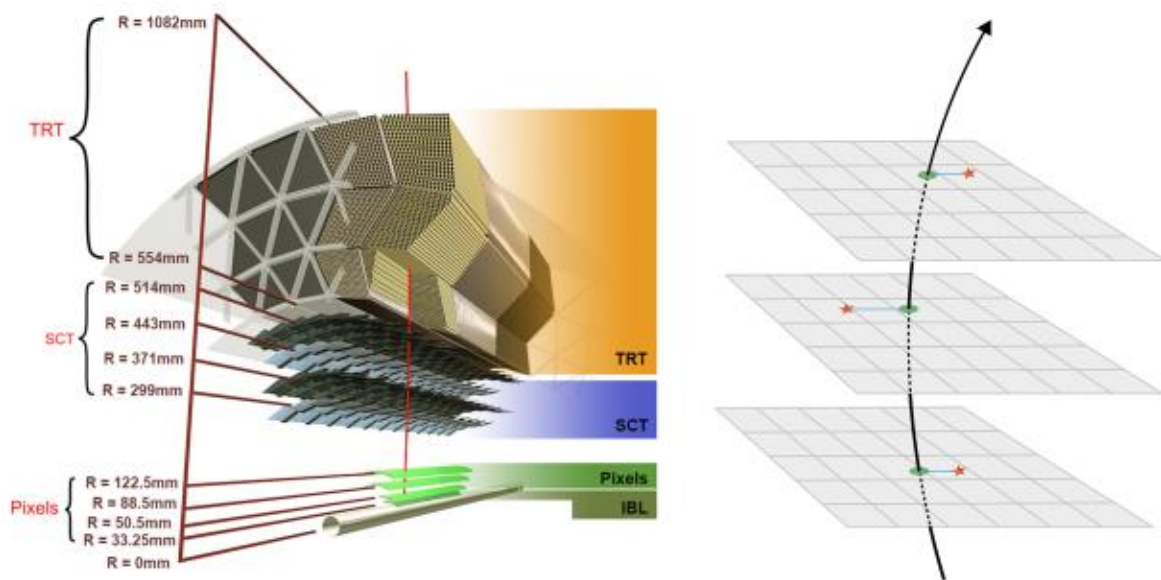
$$\sigma_{time\ walk} = [t_d]_{RMS} = \left[\frac{V_{th}}{S/t_{rise}} \right]_{RMS} \propto \left[\frac{N \cdot \sigma_N}{dV/dt} \right]_{RMS}$$

Position Sensitive detectors in Particle Physics

- Particle interaction with matter:
 - Ionisation by charged particles:
 - Detect charge in electrodes
 - Excitation of electrons and de-excitation emitting light
 - Detect photons with light detector
 - Tiny neutral interactions:
 - Detect Phonons with cryo-technologies

Position Resolution

- Distance between the real hit and the fitted track



CERN archive [link](#)