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# DISCOVERING THE UNIVERSE ON A SHOESTRING BUDGET

Sigma Xi, Orange County Chapter

Jonathan Feng, Department of Physics and Astronomy

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HEISING-SIMONS  
FOUNDATION



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# THE DARK UNIVERSE

# THIS IS WATER

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- In 2005 David Foster Wallace gave a commencement speech, “This is Water,” which some consider one of the best ever. He began with a story:

Two young fish are swimming along and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way.

The older fish says,  
“Morning, boys.  
How’s the water?”

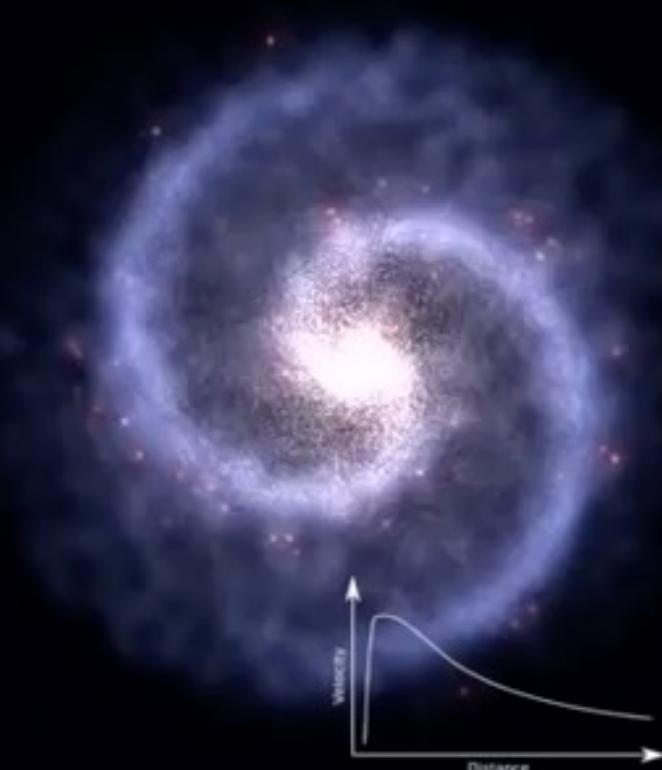
The two young fish swim on, and then one says, “What the hell is water?”



# THIS IS DARK MATTER

In fact, like fish, we are also surrounded by a sea of stuff that many of us don't even know is there. This stuff is dark matter.

We can see evidence of this when we observe rotating galaxies



What we expect



What we see

Credit: Paul Robinson

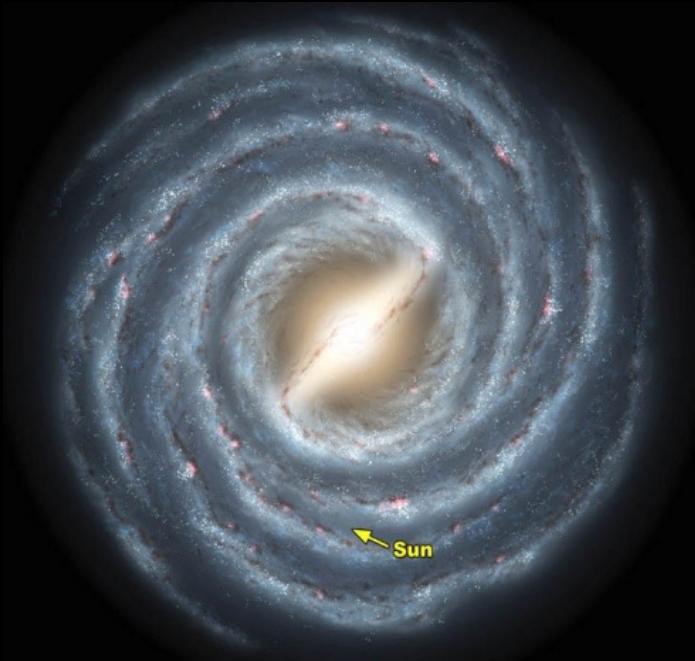
# GALACTIC ROTATION CURVES

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- The stars on the outskirts are traveling too fast to be held in their orbits by the gravitational pull of the visible matter. There must be more matter that we cannot see.
- This is the essential evidence for dark matter provided by Vera Rubin and others in the 1970s and 1980s.
- All galaxies ever observed exhibit this property, and we have now “seen” dark matter in many other ways.

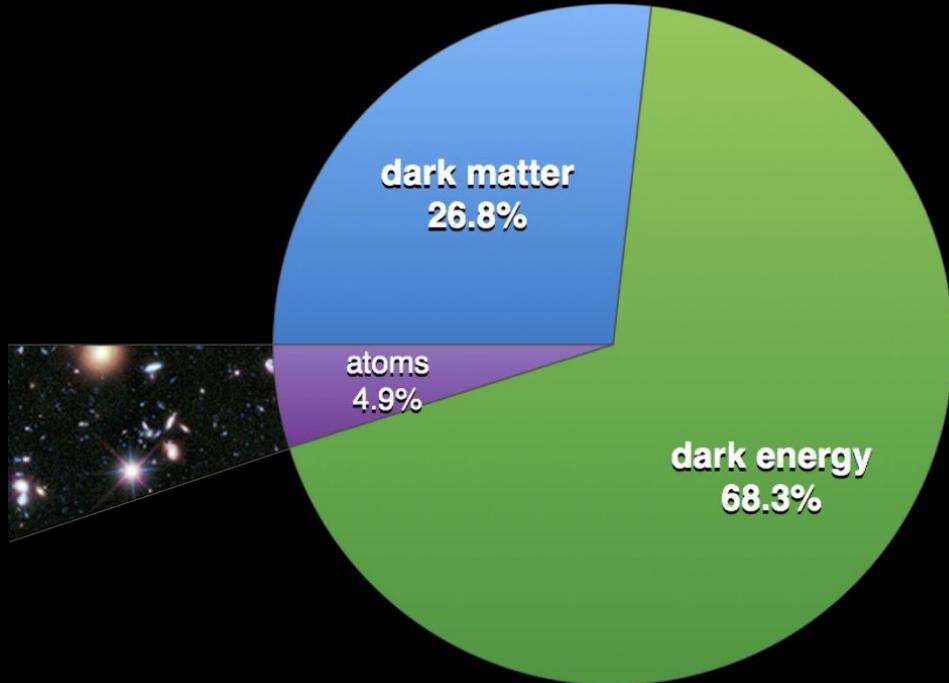
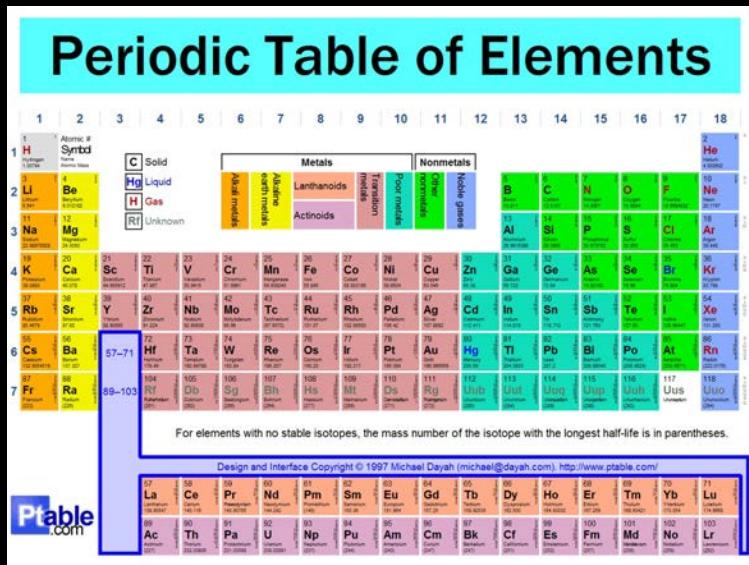


# ISLANDS IN A SEA OF DARK MATTER



- We now know that the stars we see are just islands in an ocean of invisible dark matter.
- And it is not just “out there”: in some common dark matter theories, here on Earth, every coffee cup-sized volume contains one dark matter particle traveling at  $10^{-3} c$  with a mass  $\sim 10^3 m_{\text{proton}}$ .

# THE UNIVERSE TODAY



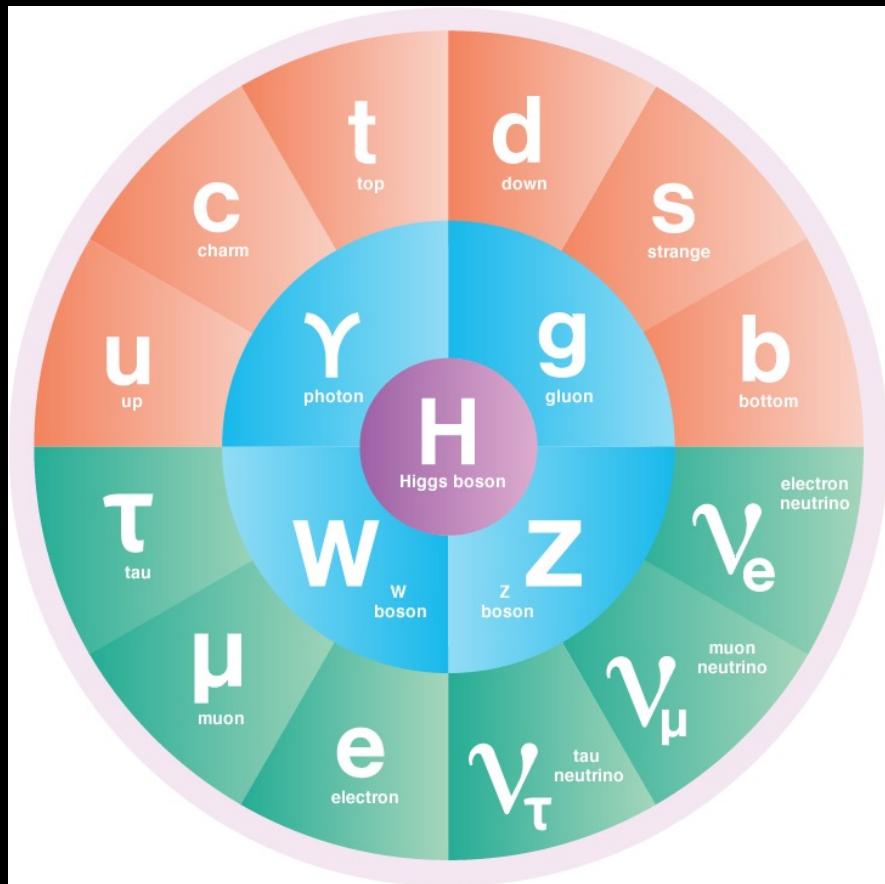
- We now know that the elements of the periodic table make up only 5% of the universe. 27% of the universe is dark matter, and 95% of the universe is still to be discovered.
- If we want to know where we came from, where we are going, and our place in the world, we need to find out what the dark universe is made of.

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# A BRIEF HISTORY OF PARTICLE PHYSICS

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF PARTICLE PHYSICS

- In the last century, we have been tremendously successful in discovering new particles and deepening our understanding of the laws of nature and the contents of the Universe.



# PARTICLE ACCELERATORS AND COLLIDERS



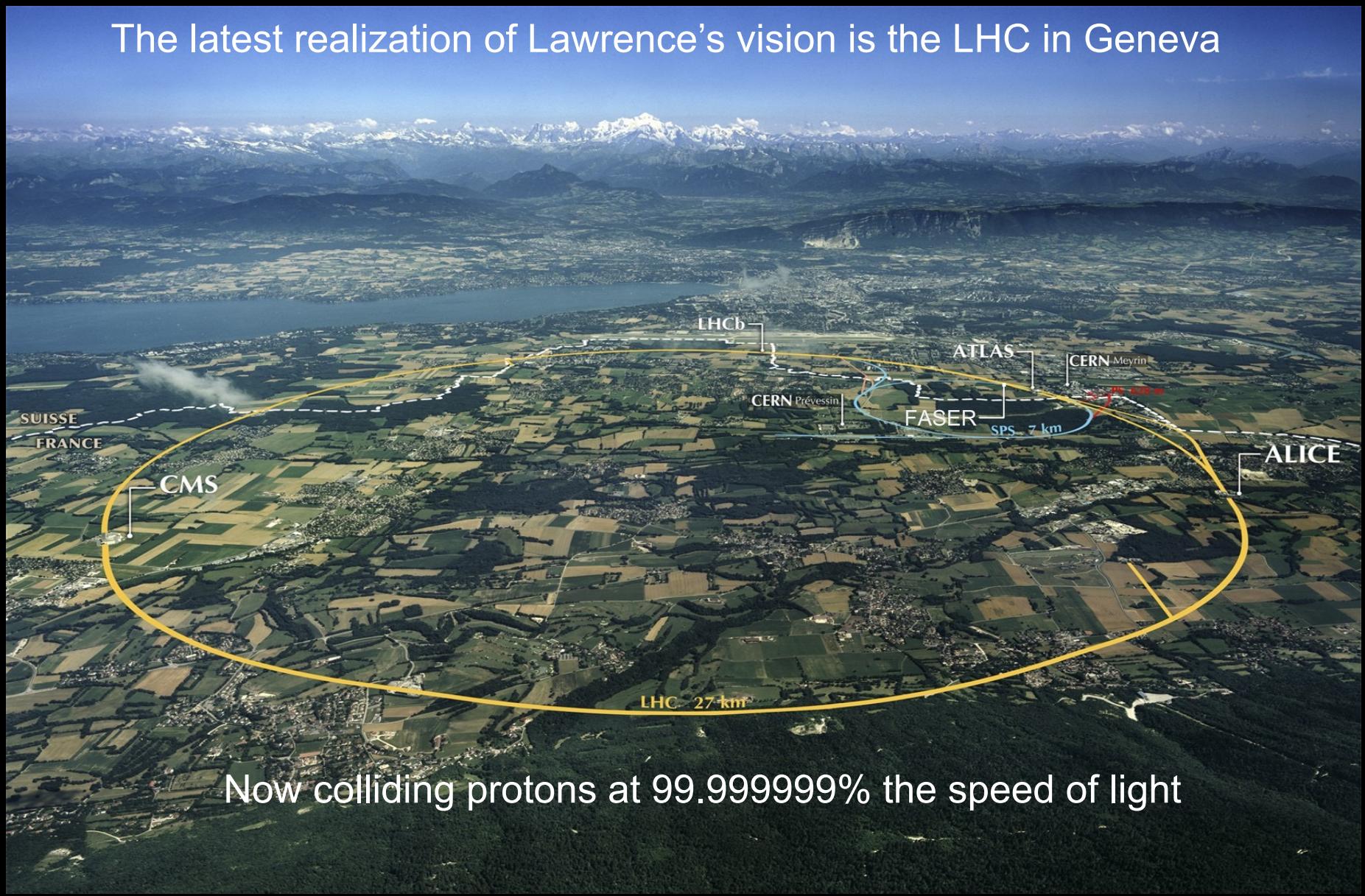
- In the 1930's, E. O. Lawrence made a cyclotron, which accelerated particles to higher velocities and energies.



- The first cyclotron was small, but soon, bigger accelerators led to higher energies, which allowed heavier particles to be produced and discovered.

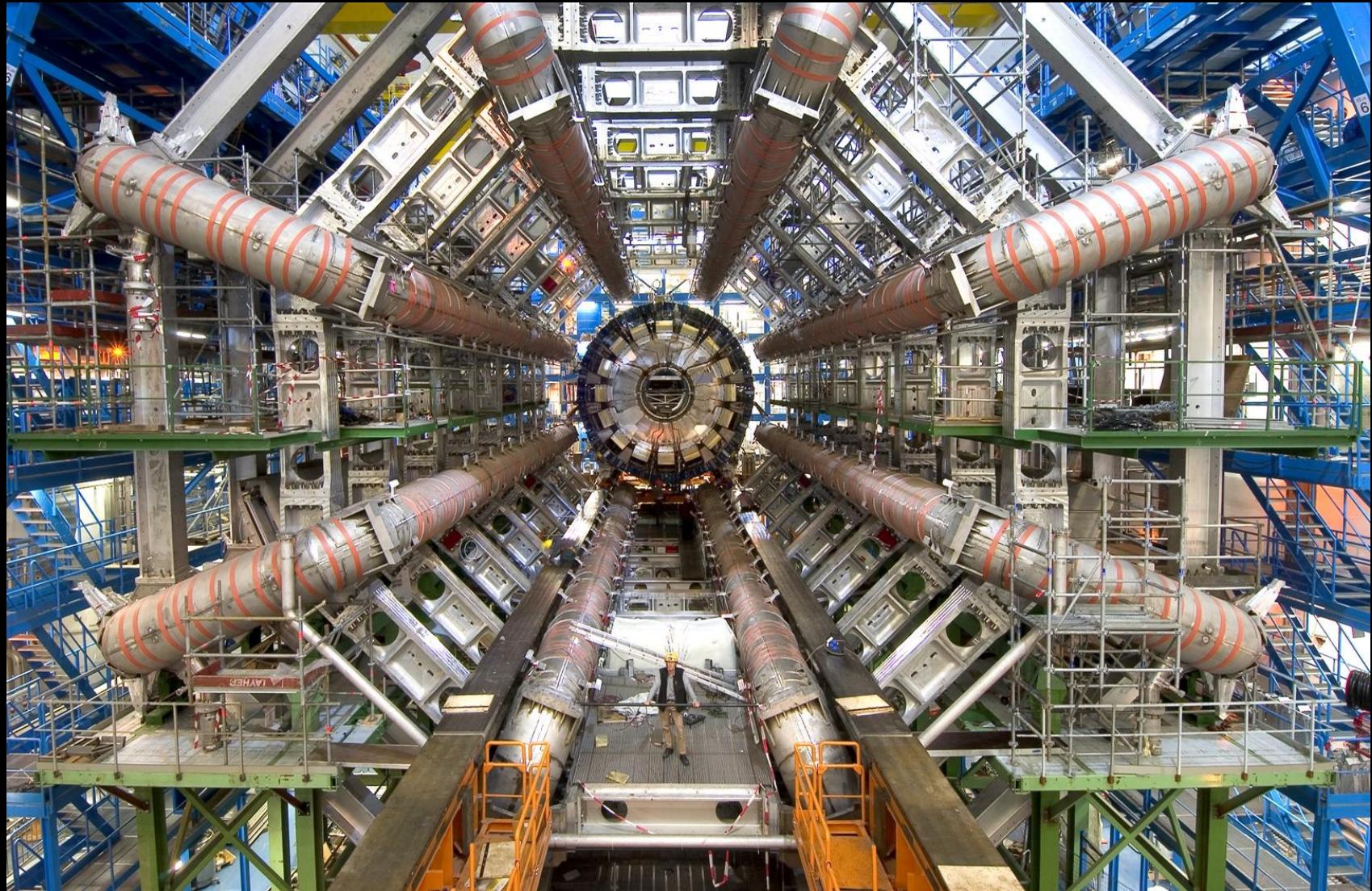
# THE LARGE HADRON COLLIDER

The latest realization of Lawrence's vision is the LHC in Geneva



# THE ATLAS DETECTOR

One of several giant detectors that observe particle collisions at the LHC



# HOW BIG IS BIG SCIENCE?

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- Size: Big. Colliders the size of cities, detectors the size of buildings.
- Timescale: Long. The LHC was conceived in the 1980's. It was constructed from 1998-2008, and has been running since 2008, with periodic shutdowns to upgrade and fix equipment.
- Budget: Expensive. The cost of constructing the LHC and the various experiments was roughly \$10 billion. The operations budget of CERN, the host laboratory, is about \$1 billion per year, or roughly 1 coffee per year per EU citizen.
- People: Many.

# A RECENT CMS AUTHOR LIST

95

## D The CMS Collaboration

### Yerevan Physics Institute, Yerevan, Armenia

A.M. Sirunyan, A. Tumasyan

### Institut für Hochenergiephysik, Wien, Austria

W. Adam, F. Ambrogi, E. Asilar, T. Bergauer, J. Brandstetter, M. Dragicevic, J. Erö, A. Escalante Del Valle, M. Flechl, R. Frühwirth<sup>1</sup>, V.M. Ghete, J. Hrubec, M. Jeitler<sup>1</sup>, N. Krammer, I. Krätschmer, D. Liko, T. Madlener, I. Mikulec, N. Rad, H. Rohringer, J. Schieck<sup>1</sup>, R. Schöfbeck, M. Spanring, D. Spitzbart, W. Waltenberger, J. Wittmann, C.-E. Wulz<sup>1</sup>, M. Zarucki

### Institute for Nuclear Problems, Minsk, Belarus

V. Chekhovsky, V. Mossolov, J. Suarez Gonzalez

### Universiteit Antwerpen, Antwerpen, Belgium

E.A. De Wolf, D. Di Croce, X. Janssen, J. Lauwers, A. Lelek, M. Pieters, H. Van Haevermaet, P. Van Mechelen, N. Van Remortel

### Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussel, Belgium

F. Blekman, J. D'Hondt, J. De Clercq, K. Deroover, G. Flouris, D. Lontkovskyi, S. Lowette, I. Marchesini, S. Moortgat, L. Moreels, Q. Python, K. Skovpen, S. Tavernier, W. Van Doninck, P. Van Mulders, I. Van Parijs

### Université Libre de Bruxelles, Bruxelles, Belgium

D. Beghin, B. Bilin, H. Brun, B. Clerbaux, G. De Lentdecker, H. Delannoy, B. Dorney, G. Fasanella, L. Favart, A. Grebenyuk, A.K. Kalsi, J. Luetic, A. Popov<sup>2</sup>, N. Postiau, E. Starling, L. Thomas, C. Vander Velde, P. Vanlaer, D. Vannerom, Q. Wang

### Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium

T. Cornelis, D. Dobur, A. Fagot, M. Gul, I. Khvastunov<sup>3</sup>, C. Roskas, D. Trocino, M. Tytgat, W. Verbeke, B. Vermassen, M. Vit, N. Zaganidis

### Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

O. Bondu, G. Bruno, C. Caputo, P. David, C. Delaere, M. Delcourt, A. Giannanco, G. Krintiras, V. Lemaître, A. Magitteri, K. Piotrkowski, A. Saggio, M. Vidal Marono, P. Vischia, J. Zobec

### Centro Brasileiro de Pesquisas Físicas, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

F.L. Alves, G.A. Alves, J. Correia Silva, C. Hensel, A. Moraes, M.E. Pol, P. Rebello Teles

### Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

E. Belchior Batista Das Chagas, W. Carvalho, J. Chinellato<sup>4</sup>, E. Coelho, E.M. Da Costa, G.G. Da Silveira<sup>5</sup>, D. De Jesus Damiao, C. De Oliveira Martins, S. Fonseca De Souza, L.M. Huertas Guativa, H. Malbouisson, D. Matos Figueiredo, M. Melo De Almeida, C. Mora Herrera, L. Mundim, H. Nogima, W.L. Prado Da Silva, L.J. Sanchez Rosas, A. Santoro, A. Szajdjer, M. Thiel, E.J. Tonelli Manganote<sup>4</sup>, F. Torres Da Silva De Araujo, A. Vilela Pereira

### Universidade Estadual Paulista<sup>a</sup>, Universidade Federal do ABC<sup>b</sup>, São Paulo, Brazil

S. Aluja<sup>a</sup>, C.A. Bernardes<sup>a</sup>, L. Calligaris<sup>a</sup>, T.R. Fernandez Perez Tomei<sup>a</sup>, E.M. Gregores<sup>b</sup>, P.G. Mercadante<sup>b</sup>, S.F. Novaes<sup>a</sup>, SandraS. Padula<sup>a</sup>

### Institute for Nuclear Research and Nuclear Energy, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, Bulgaria

A. Aleksandrov, R. Hadjiiska, P. Iaydjiev, A. Marinov, M. Misheva, M. Rodozov, M. Shopova, G. Sultanov

# A RECENT CMS AUTHOR LIST (CONTINUED)

96

**University of Sofia, Sofia, Bulgaria**  
A. Dimitrov, L. Litov, B. Pavlov, P. Petkov

**Beihang University, Beijing, China**  
W. Fang<sup>6</sup>, X. Gao<sup>6</sup>, L. Yuan<sup>7</sup>

**Institute of High Energy Physics, Beijing, China**  
M. Ahmad, J.G. Bian, G.M. Chen, H.S. Chen, M. Chen, Y. Chen, C.H. Jiang, D. Leggat, H. Liao, Z. Liu, S.M. Shaheen<sup>7</sup>, A. Spiezia, J. Tao, E. Yazgan, H. Zhang, S. Zhang<sup>7</sup>, J. Zhao

**State Key Laboratory of Nuclear Physics and Technology, Peking University, Beijing, China**  
Y. Ban, G. Chen, A. Levin, J. Li, L. Li, Q. Li, Y. Mao, S.J. Qian, D. Wang

**Tsinghua University, Beijing, China**  
Y. Wang

**Universidad de Los Andes, Bogota, Colombia**  
C. Avila, A. Cabrera, C.A. Carrillo Montoya, L.F. Chaparro Sierra, C. Florez, C.F. González Hernández, M.A. Segura Delgado

**Universidad de Antioquia, Medellin, Colombia**  
J.D. Ruiz Alvarez

**University of Split, Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture, Split, Croatia**  
N. Godinovic, D. Lelas, I. Puljak, T. Sculac

**University of Split, Faculty of Science, Split, Croatia**  
Z. Antunovic, M. Kovac

**Institute Rudjer Boskovic, Zagreb, Croatia**

V. Brigljevic, D. Ferencek, K. Kadija, B. Mesic, M. Roguljic, A. Starodumov<sup>8</sup>, T. Susa

**University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus**

M.W. Ather, A. Attikis, M. Kolosova, G. Mavromanolakis, J. Mousa, C. Nicolaou, F. Ptochos, P.A. Razis, H. Rykaczewski

**Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic**  
M. Finger<sup>9</sup>, M. Finger Jr.<sup>9</sup>

**Escuela Politecnica Nacional, Quito, Ecuador**  
E. Ayala

**Universidad San Francisco de Quito, Quito, Ecuador**  
E. Carrera Jarrin

**Academy of Scientific Research and Technology of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Egyptian Network of High Energy Physics, Cairo, Egypt**  
H. Abdalla<sup>10</sup>, M.A. Mahmoud<sup>11,12</sup>, A. Mohamed<sup>13</sup>

**National Institute of Chemical Physics and Biophysics, Tallinn, Estonia**  
S. Bhowmik, A. Carvalho Antunes De Oliveira, R.K. Dewanjee, K. Ehataht, M. Kadastik, M. Raidal, C. Veelken

**Department of Physics, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland**  
P. Eerola, H. Kirschenmann, J. Pekkanen, M. Voutilainen

97

**Helsinki Institute of Physics, Helsinki, Finland**

J. Havukainen, J.K. Heikkilä, T. Järvinen, V. Karimäki, R. Kinnunen, T. Lampén, K. Lassila-Perini, S. Laurila, S. Lehti, T. Lindén, P. Luukka, T. Mäenpää, H. Siikonen, E. Tuominen, J. Tuominiemi

**Lappeenranta University of Technology, Lappeenranta, Finland**  
T. Tuuva

**IRFU, CEA, Université Paris-Saclay, Gif-sur-Yvette, France**

M. Besancon, F. Couderc, M. Dejardin, D. Denegri, J.L. Faure, F. Ferri, S. Ganjour, A. Givernaud, P. Gras, G. Hamel de Monchenault, P. Jarry, C. Leloup, E. Locci, J. Malcles, J. Rander, A. Rosowsky, M.Ö. Sahin, A. Savoy-Navarro<sup>14</sup>, M. Titov

**Laboratoire Leprince-Ringuet, Ecole polytechnique, CNRS/IN2P3, Université Paris-Saclay, Palaiseau, France**

C. Amendola, F. Beaudette, P. Busson, C. Charlot, B. Diab, R. Granier de Cassagnac, I. Kucher, A. Lobanova, J. Martin Blanco, C. Martin Perez, M. Nguyen, C. Ochando, G. Ortona, P. Paganini, J. Rembser, R. Salerno, J.B. Sauvan, Y. Sirois, A.G. Stahl Leiton, A. Zabi, A. Zghiche

**Université de Strasbourg, CNRS, IPHC UMR 7178, Strasbourg, France**

J.-L. Agram<sup>15</sup>, J. Andrea, D. Bloch, G. Bourgaite, J.-M. Brom, E.C. Chabert, V. Cherepanov, C. Collard, E. Conte<sup>15</sup>, J.-C. Fontaine<sup>15</sup>, D. Gelé, U. Goerlach, M. Jansová, A.-C. Le Bihan, N. Tonon, P. Van Hove

**Centre de Calcul de l'Institut National de Physique Nucléaire et de Physique des Particules, CNRS/IN2P3, Villeurbanne, France**  
S. Gadrat

**Université de Lyon, Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1, CNRS-IN2P3, Institut de Physique Nucléaire de Lyon, Villeurbanne, France**

S. Beauceron, C. Bernet, G. Boudoul, N. Chanon, R. Chierici, D. Contardo, P. Depasse, H. El Mamouni, J. Fay, S. Gascon, M. Gouzevitch, G. Grenier, B. Ille, F. Lagarde, I.B. Laktineh, H. Lattaud, M. Lethuillier, L. Mirabito, S. Perries, V. Sordini, G. Touquet, M. Vander Donckt, S. Viret

**Georgian Technical University, Tbilisi, Georgia**  
A. Khvedelidze<sup>9</sup>

**Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi, Georgia**  
Z. Tsamalaidze<sup>9</sup>

**RWTH Aachen University, I. Physikalisches Institut, Aachen, Germany**

C. Autermann, L. Feld, M.K. Kiesel, K. Klein, M. Lipinski, M. Preuten, M.P. Rauch, C. Schomakers, J. Schulz, M. Teroerde, B. Wittmer

**RWTH Aachen University, III. Physikalisches Institut A, Aachen, Germany**

A. Albert, M. Erdmann, S. Erdweg, T. Esch, R. Fischer, S. Ghosh, T. Hebbeker, C. Heidemann, K. Hoepfner, H. Keller, L. Mastrolozzo, M. Merschmeyer, A. Meyer, P. Millet, S. Mukherjee, A. Novak, T. Pook, A. Pozdnyakov, M. Radziej, H. Reithler, M. Rieger, A. Schmidt, A. Sharma, D. Teyssier, S. Thür

**RWTH Aachen University, III. Physikalisches Institut B, Aachen, Germany**

G. Flügge, O. Hluschchenko, T. Kress, T. Müller, A. Nehrkorn, A. Nowack, C. Pistone, O. Pooth, D. Roy, H. Sert, A. Stahl<sup>16</sup>

# A RECENT CMS AUTHOR LIST (CONTINUED)

98

## Deutsches Elektronen-Synchrotron, Hamburg, Germany

M. Aldaya Martin, T. Arndt, C. Awusatangtrakuldee, I. Babounikau, H. Bakhsiansohi, K. Beernaert, O. Behnke, U. Behrens, A. Bermudez Martinez, D. Bertsche, A.A. Bin Amuar, K. Borras<sup>17</sup>, V. Botta, A. Campbell, P. Connor, C. Contreras-Campana, V. Danilov, A. De Wit, M.M. Defranchis, C. Diez Pardo, D. Dominguez Damiani, G. Eckerlin, T. Eichhorn, A. Elwood, E. Eren, E. Gallo<sup>18</sup>, A. Geiser, J.M. Grados Luyando, A. Grohsjean, M. Guthoff, M. Haranko, A. Harb, N.Z. Jomhari, H. Jung, M. Kasemann, J. Keaveney, C. Kleinwort, J. Knolle, D. Krücker, W. Lange, T. Lenz, J. Leonard, K. Lipka, W. Lohmann<sup>19</sup>, R. Mankel, L.-A. Melzer-Pellmann, A.B. Meyer, M. Meyer, M. Missiroli, G. Mittag, J. Minich, V. Myronenko, S.K. Pfitsch, D. Pitzl, A. Raspereza, A. Saibel, M. Savitsky, P. Saxena, P. Schütze, C. Schwanenberger, R. Shevchenko, A. Singh, H. Tholen, O. Turkot, A. Vagnerini, M. Van De Klundert, G.P. Van Onsem, R. Walsh, Y. Wen, K. Wichmann, C. Wissing, O. Zenaiev

## University of Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany

R. Aggleton, S. Bain, L. Benato, A. Benecke, V. Blobel, T. Dreyer, A. Ebrahimi, E. Garutti, D. Gonzalez, P. Gunnellini, J. Haller, A. Hinzenmann, A. Karavdina, C. Kasiczka, R. Klanner, R. Kogler, N. Kovalevskii, S. Kurz, K. Kutzner, J. Lange, D. Marconi, J. Multhaup, M. Niedziela, C.E.N. Niemeyer, D. Novatschin, A. Perieana, A. Reimers, O. Rieger, C. Scharf, P. Schleper, S. Schumann, J. Schwandt, J. Sonneveld, H. Stadie, G. Steinbrück, F.M. Stober, M. Stöver, B. Vormwald, I. Zoi

## Karlsruher Institut fuer Technologie, Karlsruhe, Germany

M. Akbiyik, C. Barth, M. Baselga, S. Baur, T. Berger, E. Butz, R. Casprt, T. Chwalek, W. De Boer, A. Dierlamm, K. El Morabit, N. Faltermann, M. Giffels, M.A. Harrendorf, F. Hartmann<sup>16</sup>, U. Husemann, I. Itakow<sup>2</sup>, S. Kudella, S. Mitra, M.U. Mozer, Th. Müller, M. Musich, G. Quast, K. Rabbertz, M. Schröder, I. Shvetsov, H.J. Simonis, R. Ulrich, M. Weber, C. Wöhmann, R. Wolf

## Institute of Nuclear and Particle Physics (INPP), NCSR Demokritos, Aghia Paraskevi, Greece

G. Anagnostou, G. Daskalakis, T. Geralis, K. Kyrikakis, D. Loukas, G. Paspalaki

## National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens, Greece

A. Agapitos, G. Karathanasis, P. Kontaxakis, I. Papagiouli, I. Papavergou, N. Saoulidou, K. Velidis

## National Technical University of Athens, Athens, Greece

G. Bakas, K. Kousouris, I. Papakivopoulos, G. Tsipolitis

## University of Ioannina, Ioannina, Greece

I. Evangelou, C. Foudas, P. Giannios, P. Katsoulis, P. Kokkas, S. Mallios, K. Manitara, N. Manhos, I. Papadopoulos, E. Parasidas, J. Strologas, F.A. Triantis, D. Tsitsiris

## MTA-ELTE Lendület CMS Particle and Nuclear Physics Group, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary

M. Bartók<sup>20</sup>, M. Csanad, N. Filipovic, P. Major, K. Mandal, A. Mehta, M.I. Nagy, G. Pasztor, O. Surányi, G.L. Veres

## Wigner Research Centre for Physics, Budapest, Hungary

G. Benze, C. Hajdu, D. Horváth<sup>21</sup>, A. Hunyadi, F. Sikler, T.A. Vámi, V. Veszpremi, G. Vesztergombi

## Institute of Nuclear Research ATOMKI, Debrecen, Hungary

N. Beni, S. Czellar, J. Karancsi<sup>20</sup>, A. Makovec, J. Molnar, Z. Szillasi

## INFN Sezione di Bologna <sup>a</sup>, Università di Bologna <sup>b</sup>, Bologna, Italy

G. Abbiendi<sup>a</sup>, C. Battilana<sup>a,b</sup>, D. Bonacorsi<sup>a,b</sup>, L. Borgonovi<sup>a,b</sup>, S. Braibant-Giacomelli<sup>a,b</sup>, R. Campanini<sup>a,b</sup>, P. Capiluppi<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Castro<sup>a,b</sup>, F.R. Cavallo<sup>a</sup>, S.S. Chhibra<sup>a,b</sup>, G. Codispoti<sup>a,b</sup>, M. Cuffiani<sup>a,b</sup>, G.M. Dallavalle<sup>a</sup>, F. Fabriti<sup>a</sup>, A. Fanfani<sup>a,b</sup>, E. Fontanini<sup>a</sup>, P. Giacomelli<sup>a</sup>, C. Grandi<sup>a</sup>, L. Guiducci<sup>a,b</sup>, F. Iemmeli<sup>a</sup>, S. Lo Meo<sup>a,b</sup>, S. Marcellini<sup>a</sup>, G. Masetti<sup>a</sup>, A. Montanari<sup>a</sup>, F.L. Navarrini<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Perrotta<sup>a</sup>, F. Primavera<sup>a,b</sup>, A.M. Rossi<sup>a,b</sup>, T. Rovere<sup>a,b</sup>, G.P. Siroli<sup>a,b</sup>, N. Tosi<sup>a</sup>

## INFN Sezione di Catania <sup>a</sup>, Università di Catania <sup>b</sup>, Catania, Italy

S. Albergu<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Di Mattia<sup>a</sup>, R. Potenza<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Tricomi<sup>a,b</sup>, C. Tuve<sup>a,b</sup>

## INFN Sezione di Firenze <sup>a</sup>, Università di Firenze <sup>b</sup>, Firenze, Italy

G. Bagargiu<sup>a</sup>, K. Chatterjee<sup>a,b</sup>, V. Ciulli<sup>a,b</sup>, C. Civinini<sup>a</sup>, R. D'Alessandro<sup>a,b</sup>, E. Focardi<sup>a,b</sup>, G. Latino, P. Lenzi<sup>a,b</sup>, M. Meschini<sup>a</sup>, S. Paoletti<sup>a</sup>, L. Russo<sup>a,b</sup>, G. Sguazzoni<sup>a</sup>, D. Strom<sup>a</sup>, L. Villani<sup>a</sup>

## INFN Laboratori Nazionali di Frascati, Frascati, Italy

L. Benassi, S. Bianco, F. Fabbri, D. Piccolo

## INFN Sezione di Genova <sup>a</sup>, Università di Genova <sup>b</sup>, Genova, Italy

F. Ferro<sup>a</sup>, R. Mulari<sup>a,b</sup>, E. Robutti<sup>a</sup>, S. Tosi<sup>a,b</sup>

## INFN Sezione di Milano-Bicocca <sup>a</sup>, Università di Milano-Bicocca <sup>b</sup>, Milano, Italy

A. Benaglia<sup>a</sup>, A. Beschi<sup>a</sup>, F. Brivio<sup>a,b</sup>, V. Cirillo<sup>a,b</sup>, S. Di Guida<sup>a,b</sup>, M.E. Dinardo<sup>a,b</sup>, S. Fiorendi<sup>a,b</sup>, S. Gennari<sup>a</sup>, A. Ghezzi<sup>a</sup>, P. Govoni<sup>a,b</sup>, M. Malberni<sup>a</sup>, S. Malvezzi<sup>a</sup>, D. Menascu<sup>a</sup>, F. Monti, L. Moroni<sup>a</sup>, M. Paganini<sup>a</sup>, D. Pedrini<sup>a</sup>, S. Ragazzi<sup>a,b</sup>, T. Tabarelli de Fatis<sup>a,b</sup>, D. Zullo<sup>a,b</sup>

## INFN Sezione di Napoli <sup>a</sup>, Università di Napoli 'Federico II' <sup>b</sup>, Napoli, Italy, Università della Basilicata <sup>c</sup>, Potenza, Italy, Università G. Marconi <sup>d</sup>, Roma, Italy

S. Buontempo<sup>a</sup>, N. Cavalli<sup>a</sup>, A. De Iorio<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Di Crescenzo<sup>a</sup>, F. Fabozzi<sup>a,c</sup>, F. Fienga<sup>a</sup>, G. Galati<sup>a</sup>, A.O.M. Iorio<sup>a,b</sup>, L. Lista<sup>a</sup>, S. Micali<sup>a,d</sup>, P. Paolucci<sup>a,b</sup>, C. Sciacca<sup>a,b</sup>, E. Voevodina<sup>a,b</sup>

## INFN Sezione di Padova <sup>a</sup>, Università di Padova <sup>b</sup>, Padova, Italy, Università di Trento <sup>c</sup>, Trento, Italy

P. Azzurri<sup>a</sup>, N. Bacchetta<sup>a</sup>, D. Bisello<sup>a</sup>, A. Boletti<sup>a</sup>, B. Bragagnolo, R. Carlini<sup>a,b</sup>, P. Checchia<sup>a</sup>, M. Dall'Osso<sup>a,b</sup>, P. De Castro, Mazzano<sup>a</sup>, T. Dorigo<sup>a</sup>, U. Dosselli<sup>a</sup>, F. Gasparini<sup>a</sup>, U. Gasparini<sup>a</sup>, A. Gozzelino<sup>a</sup>, S.Y. Hob, S. Lacaprara<sup>a</sup>, P. Lujan, M. Margoni<sup>a,b</sup>, A.T. Merello<sup>a</sup>, J. Pazzini<sup>a,b</sup>, M. Presilla<sup>a</sup>, P. Ronchese<sup>a,b</sup>, R. Rossi<sup>a,b</sup>, F. Simonetti<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Tiko, E. Torassa<sup>a</sup>, M. Tosio<sup>a,b</sup>, M. Zanetti<sup>a,b</sup>, P. Zotto<sup>a,b</sup>, G. Zumerle<sup>a</sup>

## INFN Sezione di Pavia <sup>a</sup>, Università di Pavia <sup>b</sup>, Pavia, Italy

A. Braghieri<sup>a</sup>, A. Maganni<sup>a</sup>, P. Montagna<sup>a,b</sup>, S.P. Ratti<sup>a,b</sup>, V. Re<sup>a</sup>, M. Ressegotti<sup>a,b</sup>, C. Riccardi<sup>a,b</sup>, P. Salvini<sup>a</sup>, I. Vali<sup>a</sup>, P. Vitali<sup>a</sup>

## INFN Sezione di Perugia <sup>a</sup>, Università di Perugia <sup>b</sup>, Perugia, Italy

M. Biasini<sup>a,b</sup>, G.M. Bilei<sup>a</sup>, C. Cecchi<sup>a,b</sup>, D. Ciangottini<sup>a,b</sup>, L. Fanò<sup>a</sup>, P. Lariccia<sup>a,b</sup>, R. Leonardi<sup>a,b</sup>, E. Manoni<sup>a</sup>, G. Mantovani<sup>a,b</sup>, V. Marini<sup>a,b</sup>, M. Menichelli<sup>a</sup>, V. Rossi<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Santoccia<sup>a,b</sup>, D. Spiga<sup>a</sup>

## INFN Sezione di Pisa <sup>a</sup>, Università di Pisa <sup>b</sup>, Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa <sup>c</sup>, Pisa, Italy

K. Androssov<sup>a</sup>, P. Azzurri<sup>a</sup>, G. Bagliesi<sup>a</sup>, L. Bianchini<sup>a</sup>, T. Boccali<sup>a</sup>, L. Borrelli, R. Castaldi<sup>a</sup>,

M.A. Ciocci<sup>a,b</sup>, R. Dell'Orso<sup>a</sup>, G. Fedri<sup>a</sup>, F. Fiori<sup>a,b</sup>, U. Dosselli<sup>a</sup>, F. Gasparini<sup>a</sup>,

F. Ligabue<sup>a,c</sup>, E. Manca<sup>a,c</sup>, G. Mandorla<sup>a,c</sup>, A. Messineo<sup>a,b</sup>, F. Pallà<sup>a</sup>, A. Rizzi<sup>a,b</sup>, G. Rolandi<sup>a</sup>,

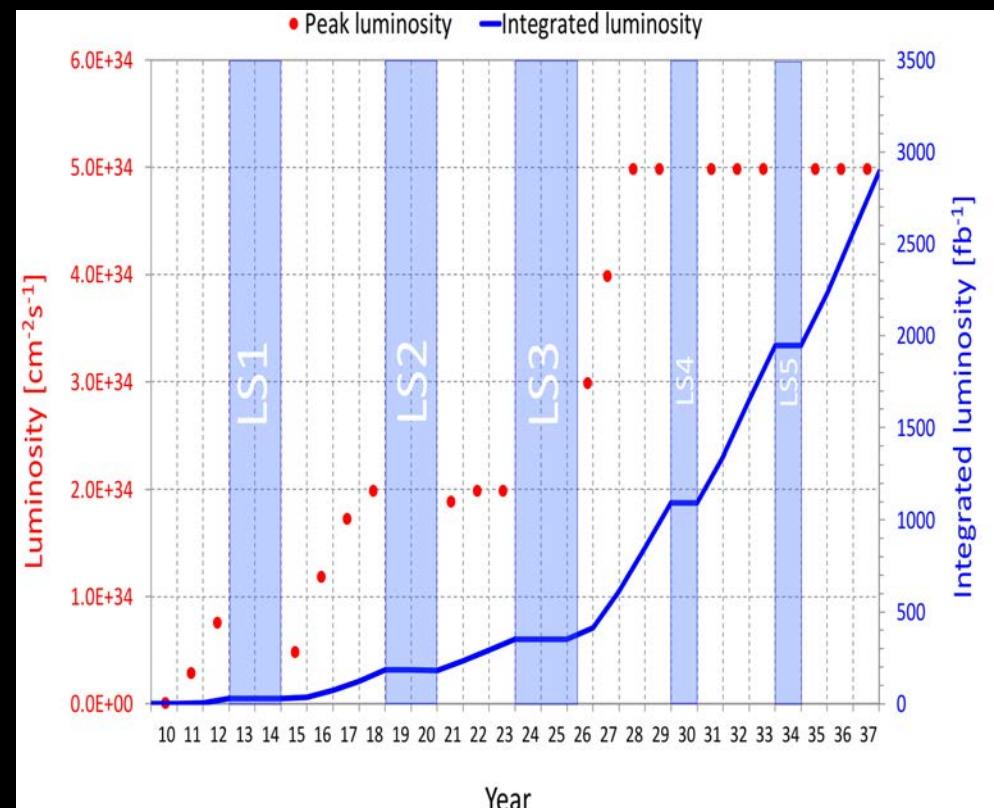
A. Scribano<sup>a</sup>, P. Spagnolo<sup>a</sup>, R. Tenchini<sup>a</sup>, G. Tonelli<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Venturi<sup>a</sup>, P.G. Verdini<sup>a</sup>





# LHC: CURRENT STATUS

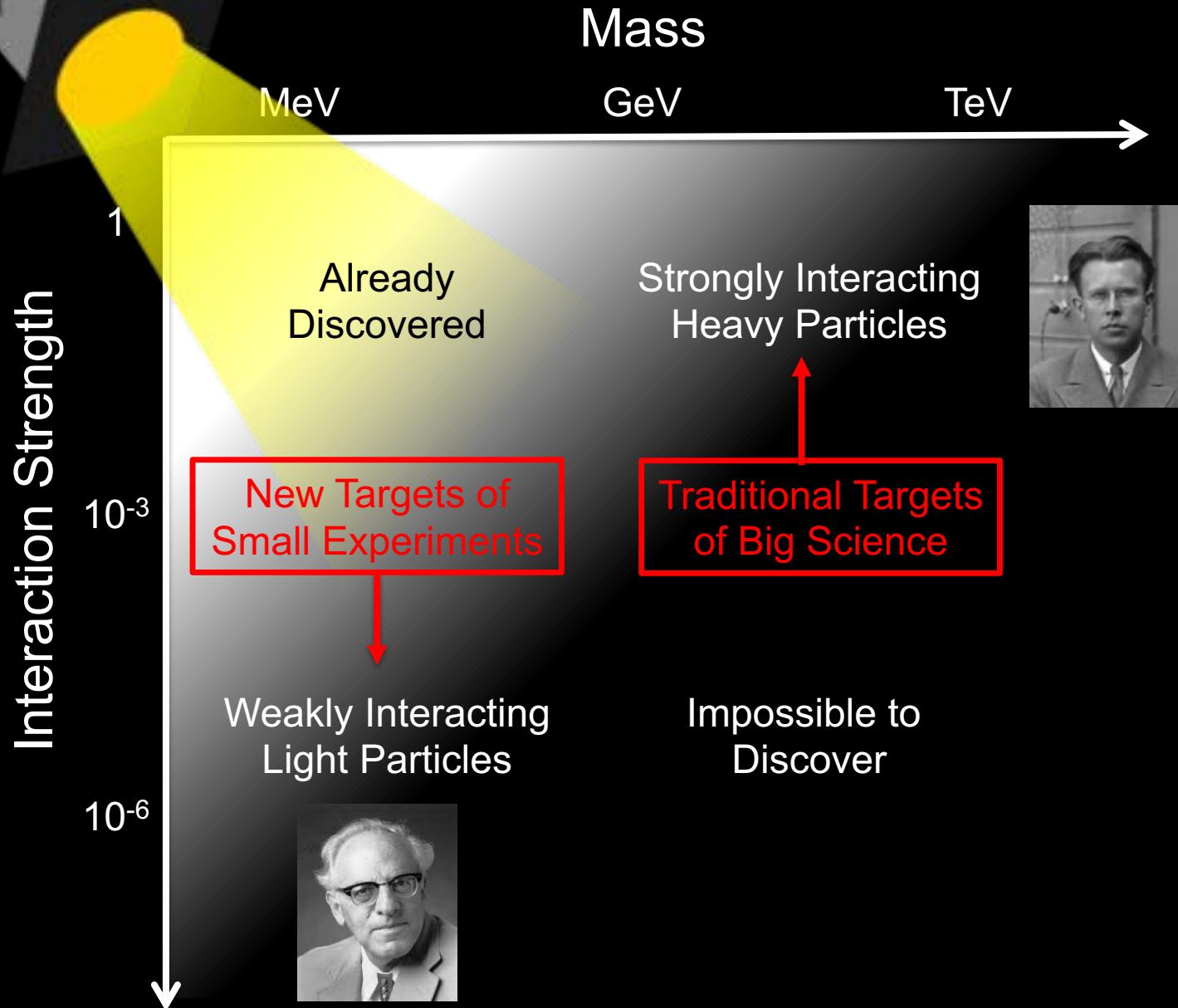
- The discovery of the Higgs boson in 2012 completed the standard model of particle physics, an amazing achievement.
- So far there has been no other evidence for new particles.
- The LHC is currently in Long Shutdown 2, but will start up again in July 2022 and run till  $\sim$ 2037. Will we find new particles then?
- What other approaches can enhance the prospects for discovering new particles?



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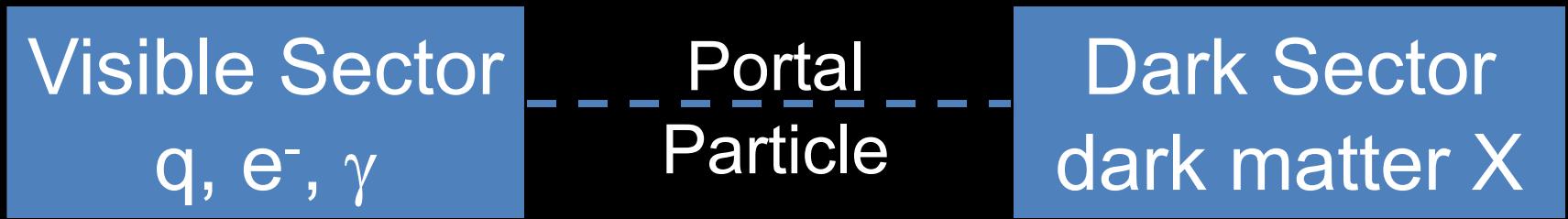
# **BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD**

# THE NEW PARTICLE LANDSCAPE



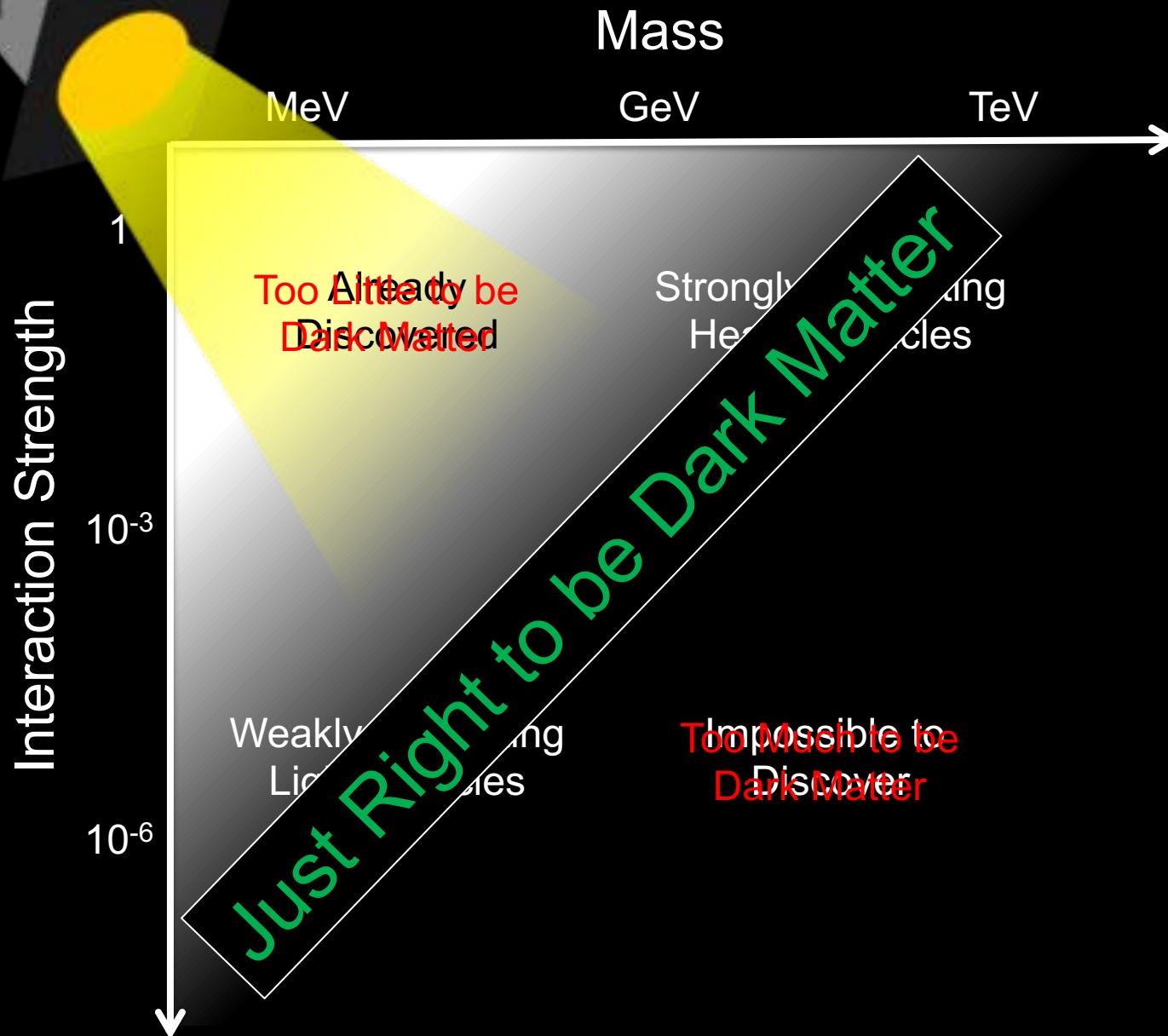
# DARK SECTORS

- The case for weakly-interacting, light particles has been bolstered recently by the realization that dark matter might not be an isolated particle, but rather part of a dark sector, which contains also other particles and forces.
- With dark sectors, there are generically portal particles that mediate between the visible and dark sectors.



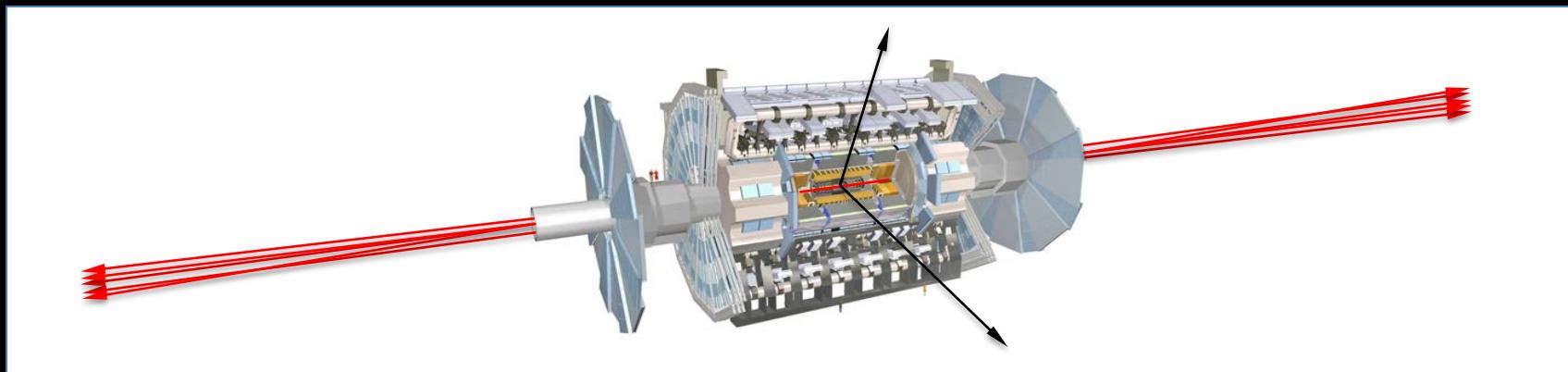
- Portal particles are not the dark matter, but they may provide our first glimpse of dark matter, and they are generically weakly-interacting, light particles.

# THE NEW PARTICLE LANDSCAPE



# WEAKLY-INTERACTING, LIGHT PARTICLES

- What are their properties? Assume an interaction strength of  $\sim 10^{-5}$  and a mass between MeV (the electron's) and GeV (the proton's).
  - They are not bent by electric and magnetic fields
  - They do not interact in matter
  - They do decay, for example, to electrons and positrons, but only after traveling hundreds of meters.
  - They are mainly produced in glancing collisions at the LHC
- This is a nightmare for existing detectors at the LHC !



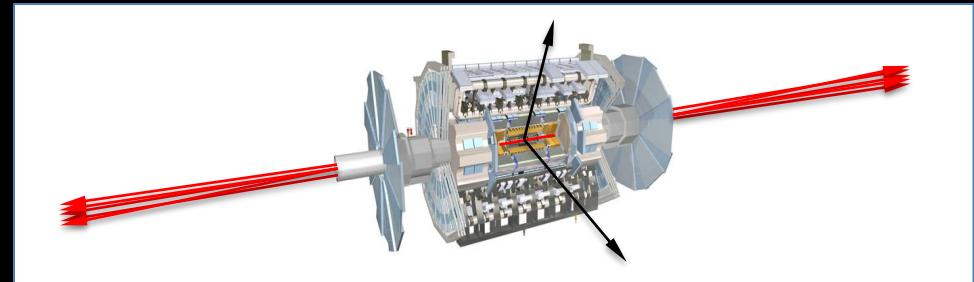
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# FASER

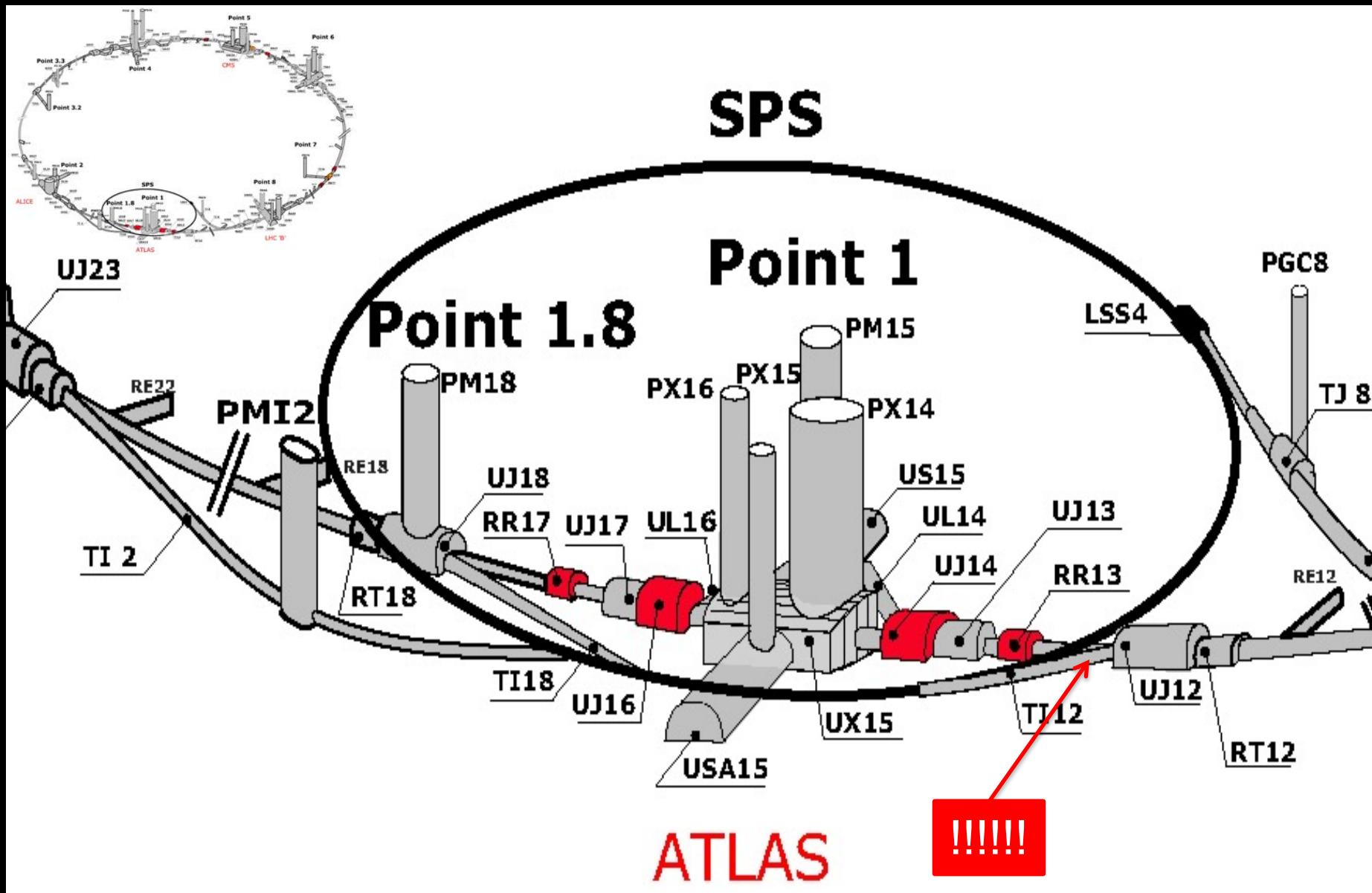
# THE BASIC IDEA

- Can we cover the “blind spot” of existing detectors? A detector on the beamline would block the proton beams.
- However, our target particles do not interact; they travel straight. We can therefore place the detector on the “line of sight,” a few 100 m away, after the LHC curves. Other particles will get stuck in the rock and concrete, but our signal will pass right through.
- After hundreds of meters, the particles will decay, and we can look for their decay products, e.g., electrons and positrons.
- The new particles are extremely collimated. Even after hundreds of meters, they are still within  $\sim$ 10 to 100 cm apart.
- These considerations motivate a small, inexpensive experiment placed in the very forward region of ATLAS or CMS, a few 100m downstream.

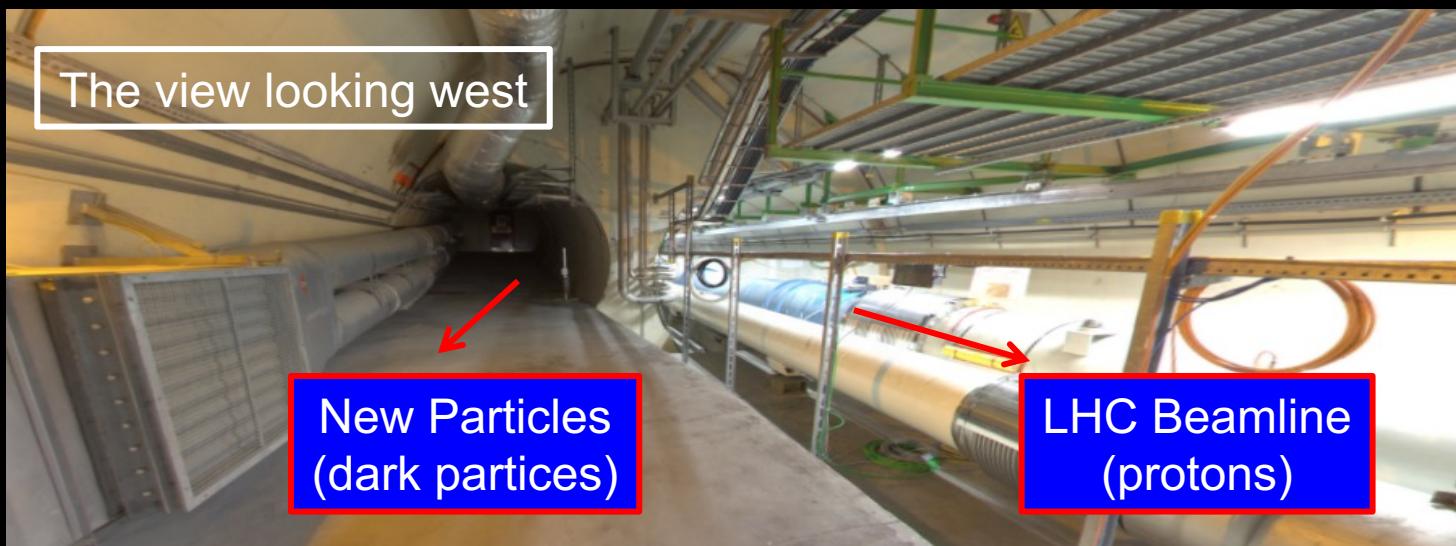
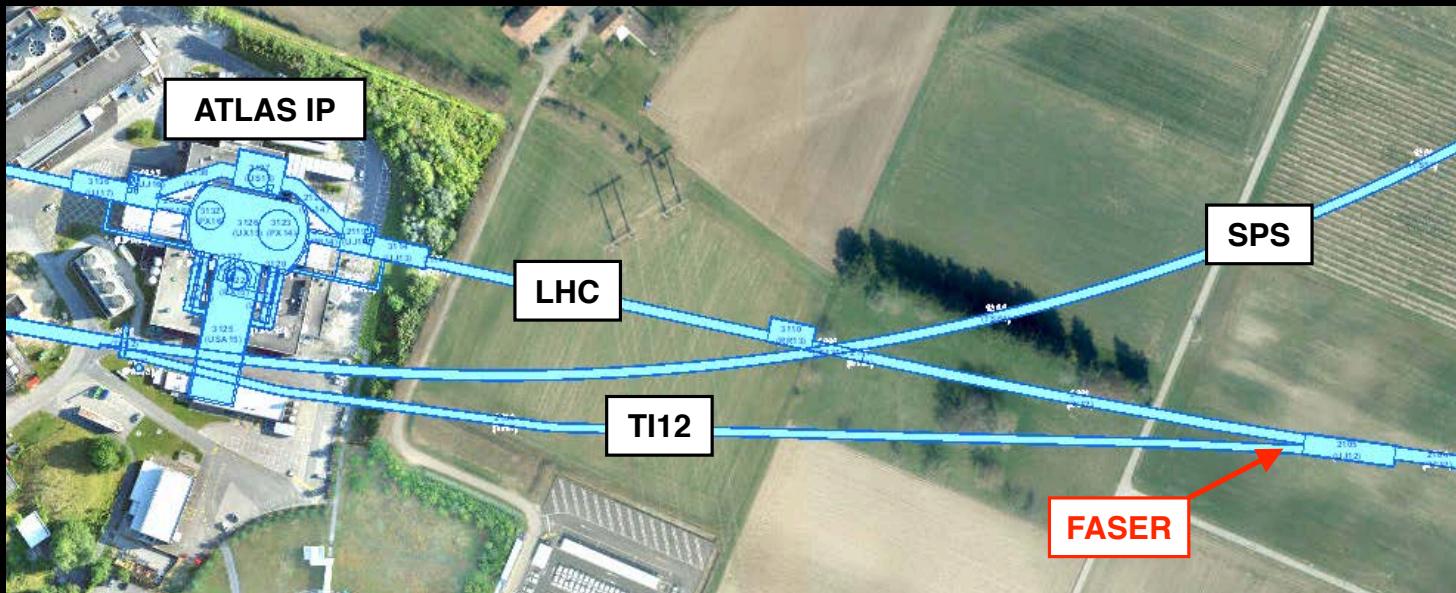
Feng, Galon, Kling, Trojanowski (2017)



# LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

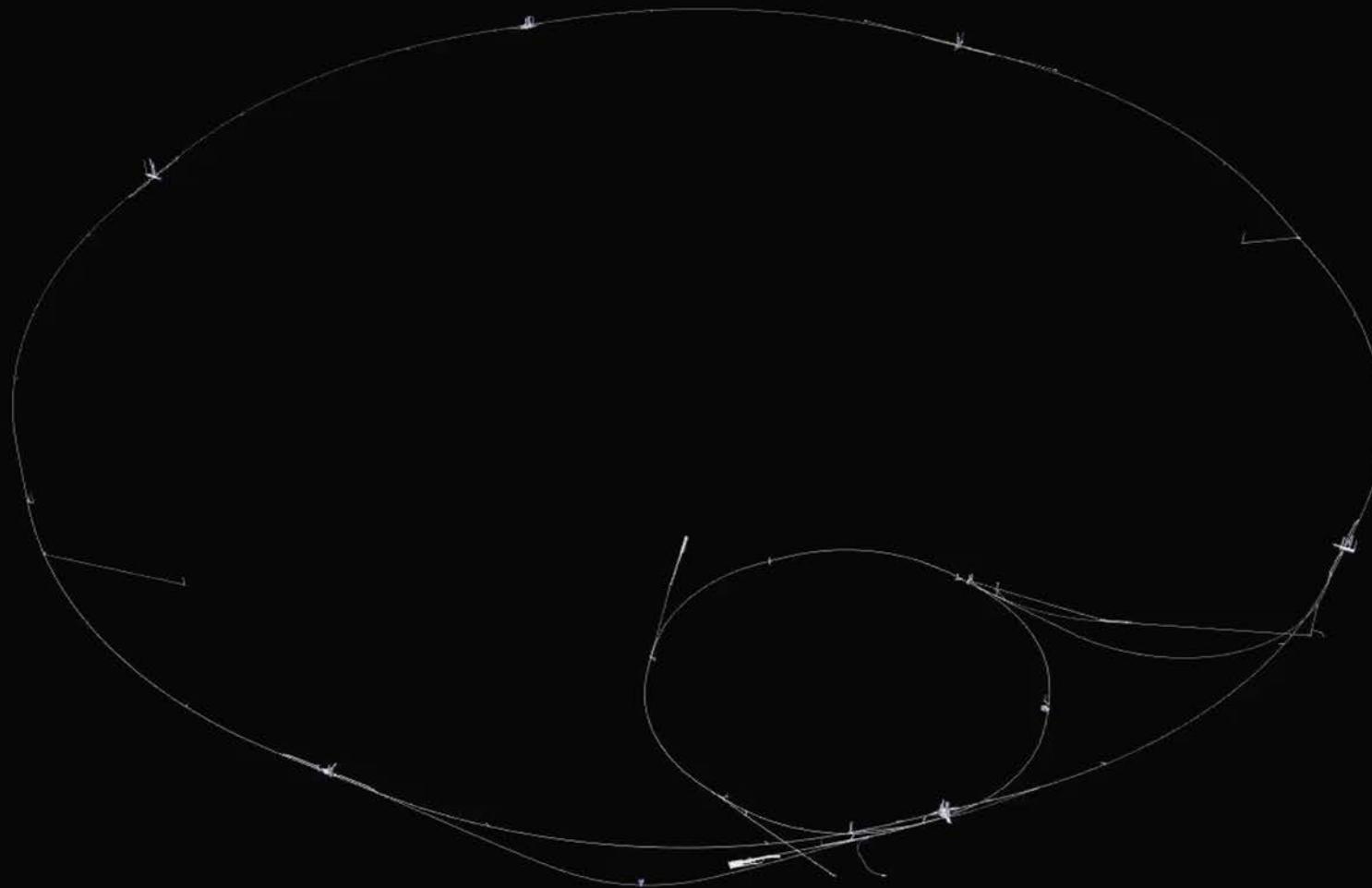


# LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION



# PARTICLE PATH FROM ATLAS TO FASER

Dougherty, CERN Integration (2019)



# FORWARD SEARCH EXPERIMENT



- “The acronym recalls another marvelous instrument that harnessed highly collimated particles and was used to explore strange new worlds.”

Feng, Galon, Kling, Trojanowski (2017)



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# FASER CONSTRUCTION

# FASER TIMELINE

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- September 2017: First theory paper
- November 2017: Support from the two most famous living physicists

# FASER ON BIG BANG THEORY



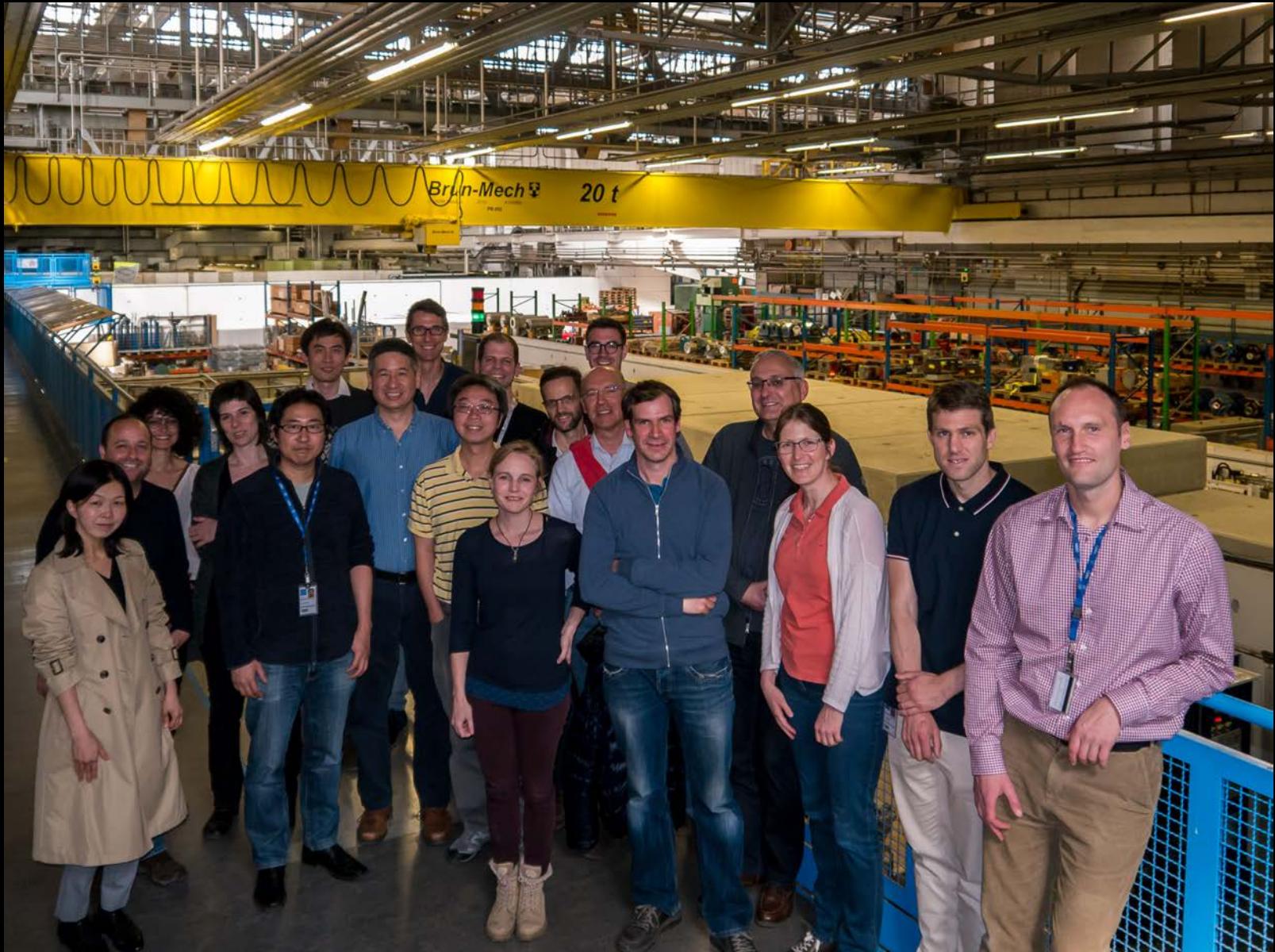
Season 11, Episode 9, “The Bitcoin Entanglement” (November 2017)

# FASER TIMELINE

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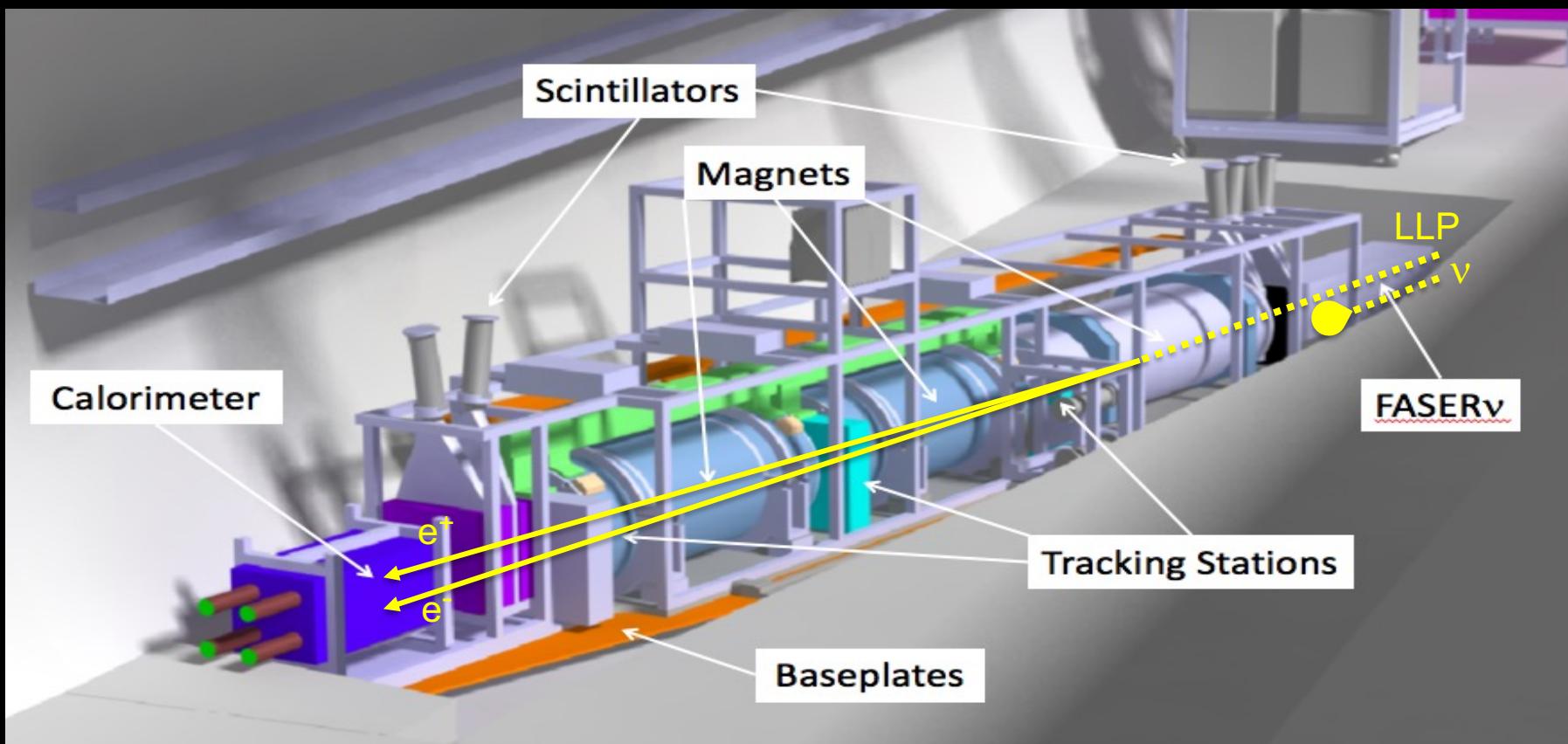
- September 2017: First theory paper
- November 2017: Support from the two most famous living physicists
- July 2018: Submitted LOI to CERN LHCC
- October 2018: Approval from ATLAS SCT and LHCb Collaborations for use of spare detector modules
- November 2018: Submitted Technical Proposal to LHCC
- November 2018 – January 2019: Experiment funded by \$1M grants from the Heising-Simons and Simons Foundations
- March 2019: FASER fully approved by CERN LHCC and Research Board along with support for infrastructure costs
- April 2019: 1<sup>st</sup> FASER Collaboration Meeting
- May 2020: Install FASER in tunnel before cool down in Long Shutdown 2, begin commissioning detector, begin collecting data in April 2021

# FIRST FASER COLLABORATION MEETING



# THE FASER DETECTOR

- 1m x 1m x 5m, composed of magnets, trackers, calorimeters, chillers, power supplies, and data acquisition electronics.
- The signal: nothing incoming and 2 ~TeV, opposite-sign charged tracks pointing back to ATLAS through 100 m of rock and concrete.



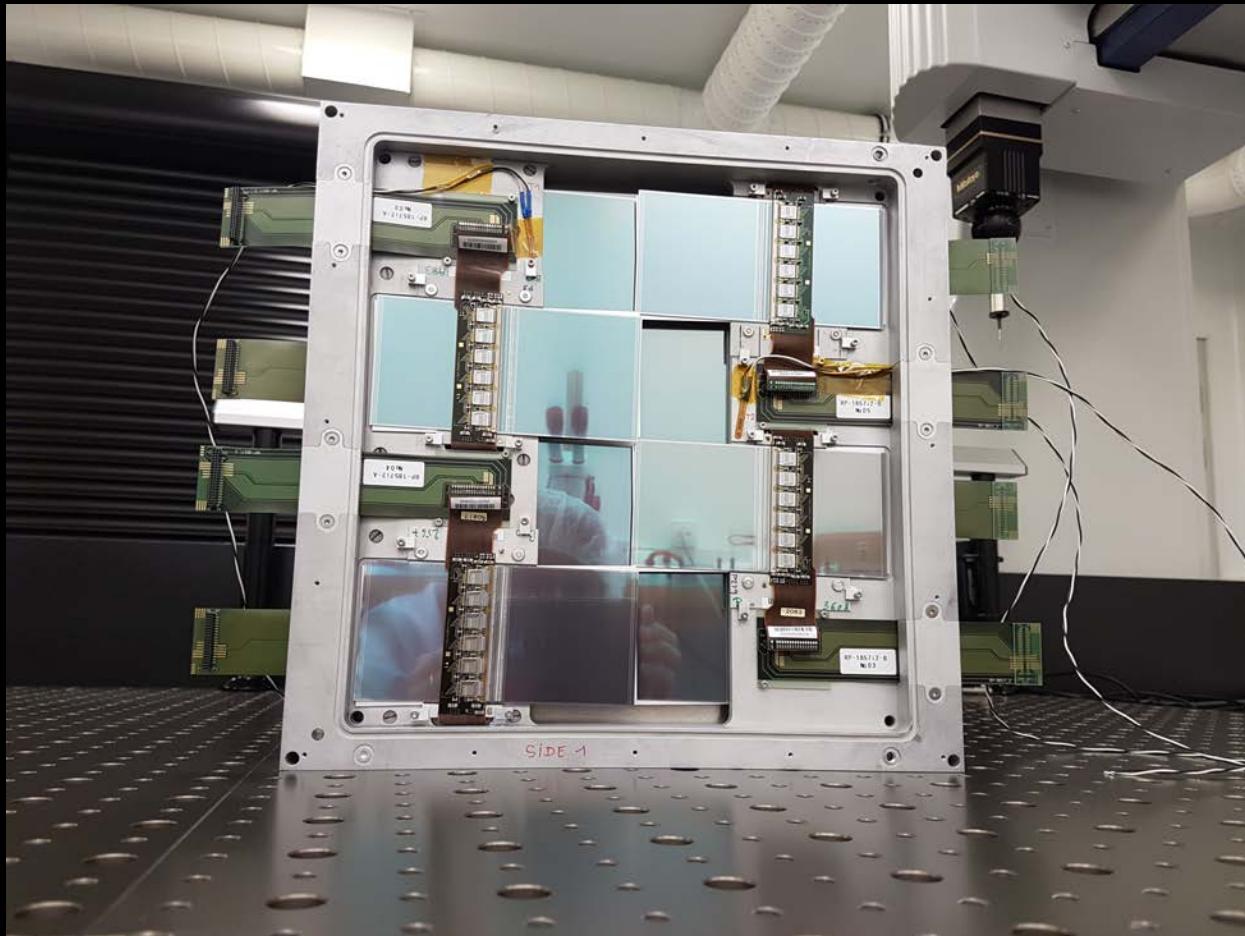
# PREPARING THE TUNNEL

- In TI12, unused ventilation ducts, cables, etc. had to be removed to prepare for FASER trench excavation and installation.



# TRACKER

- The FASER tracker is composed of spare modules from ATLAS. About 350 spares were prepared by ATLAS. They were not needed, and the ATLAS SCT collaboration generously allowed us to use 120 of them. 12 Tracking layers detect charged particles with  $\sim 100 \mu\text{m}$  spatial resolution.



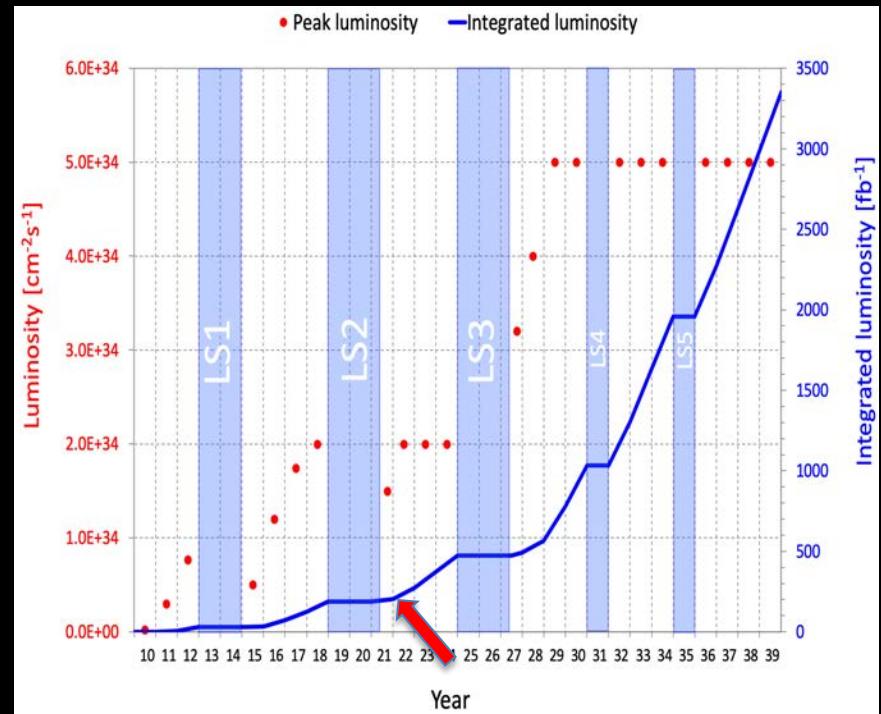
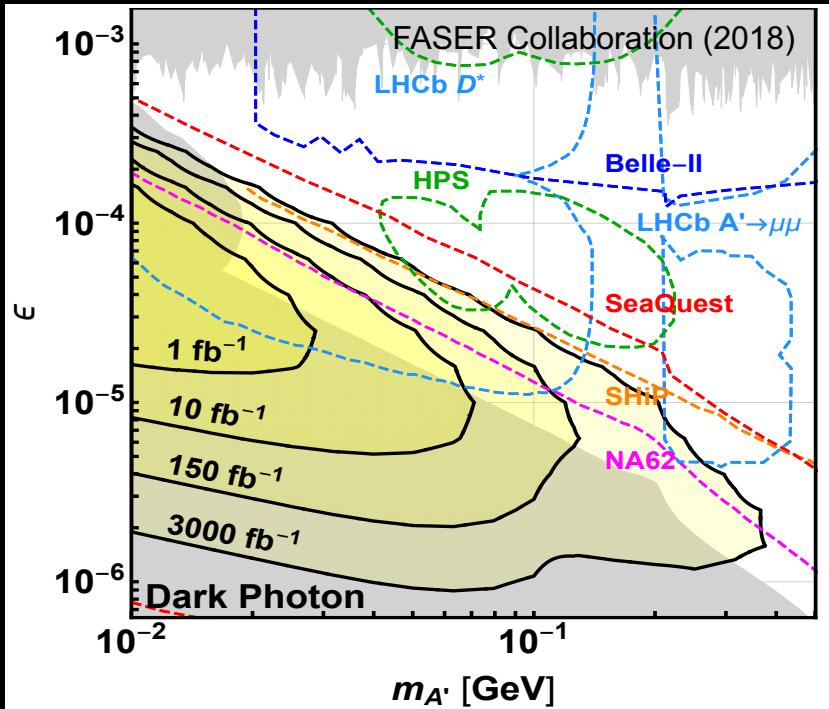
# FASER INSTALLED IN TI12



# FASER INSTALLED IN TI12



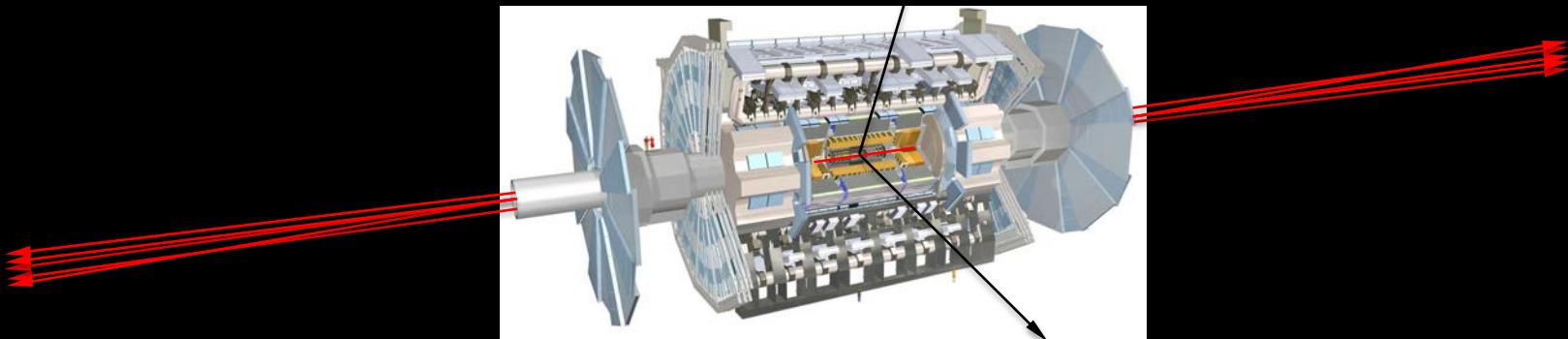
# DARK PHOTON SENSITIVITY REACH



- FASER probes new parameter space with just the first week of data.
- If operating through 2037, FASER's sensitivity will be extended by factor of 3000 – could detect as many as 10,000 dark photons.
- Possible upgrade in 2028 will extend FASER's sensitivity by factor of  $\sim 10^6$  – could detect as many as 3,000,000 dark photons.

# COLLIDER NEUTRINOS

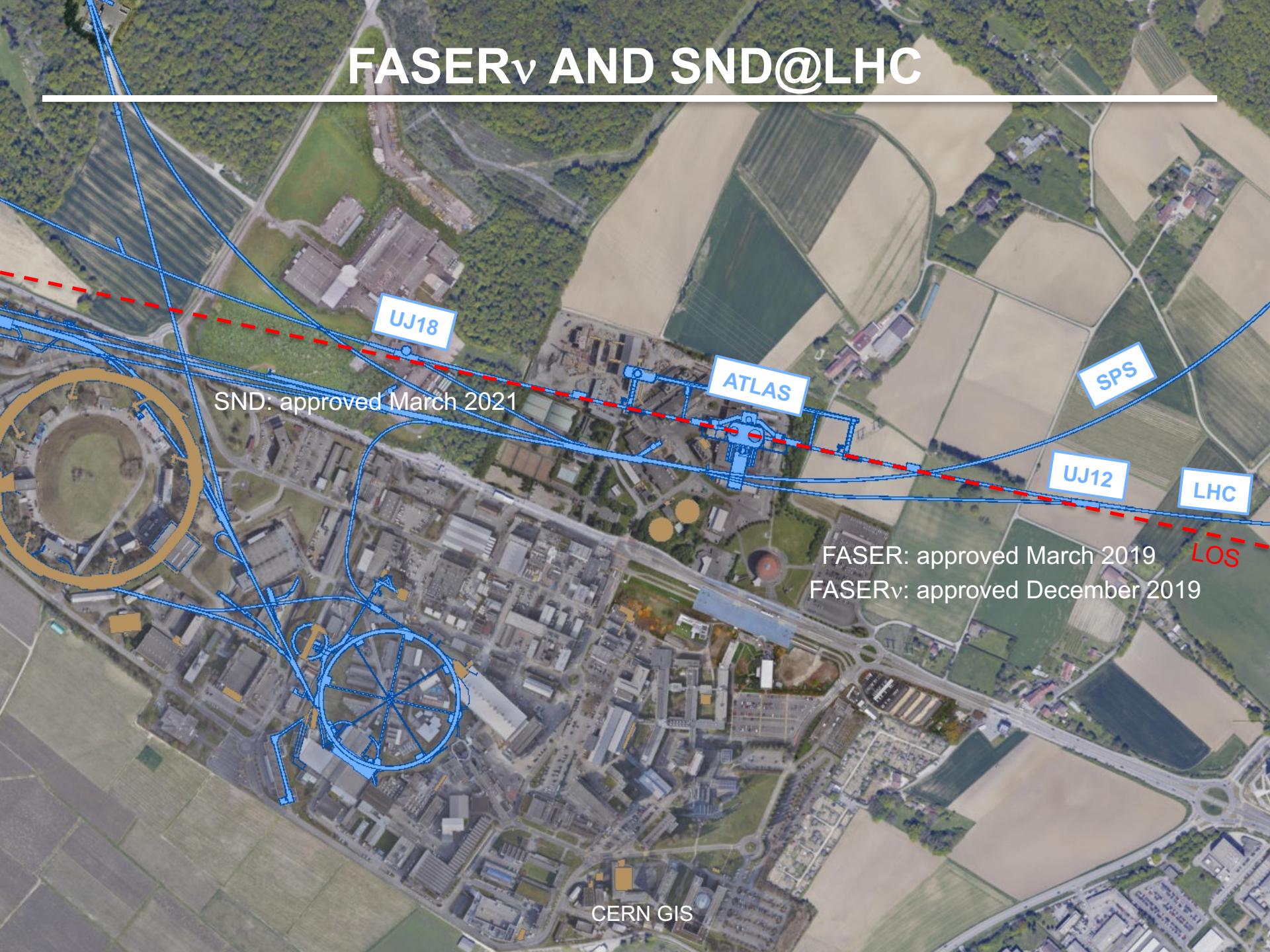
- In addition to the possibility of hypothetical new light, weakly-interacting particles, there are also known light, weakly-interacting particles: **neutrinos**
- The high-energy ones, which interact most strongly, are overwhelmingly produced in the far forward direction. **Before May 2021, no candidate collider neutrino had ever been detected.**



- If they can be detected, there is a fascinating new world of LHC neutrinos that can be explored.
  - The neutrino energies are  $\sim$ TeV, highest human-made energies ever.
  - All flavors are produced ( $\pi \rightarrow \nu_\mu$ ,  $K \rightarrow \nu_e$ ,  $D \rightarrow \nu_\tau$ ) and both neutrinos and anti-neutrinos.

De Rujula, Ruckl (1984); Winter (1990); Vannucci (1993)

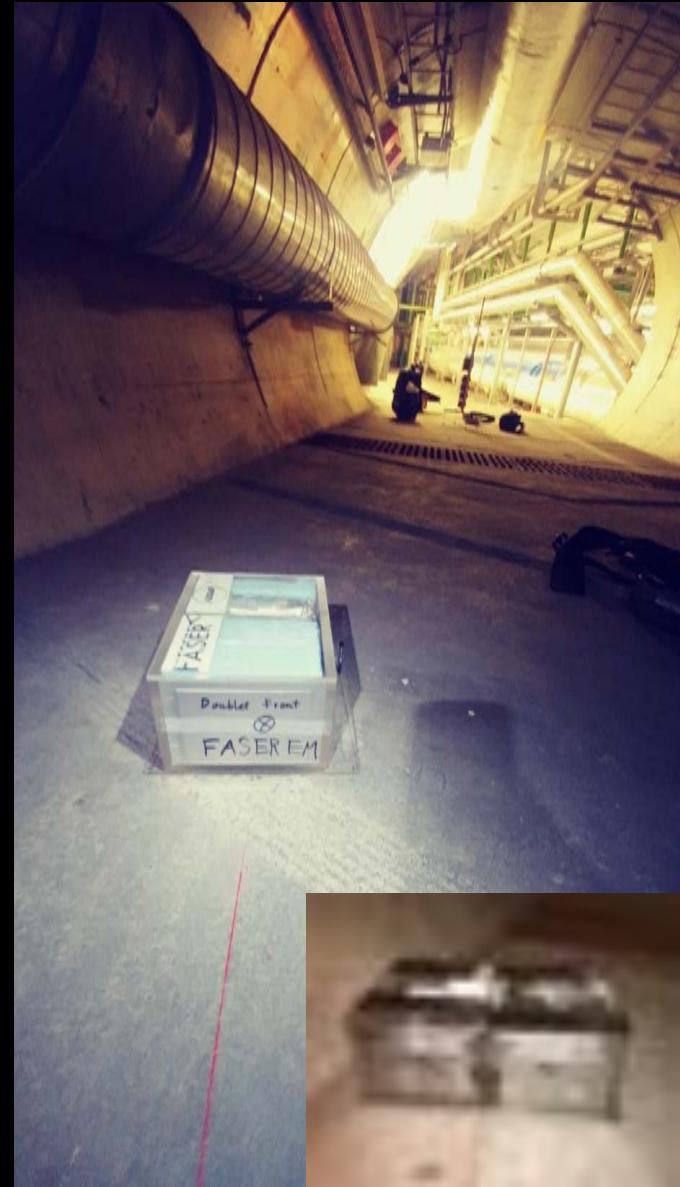
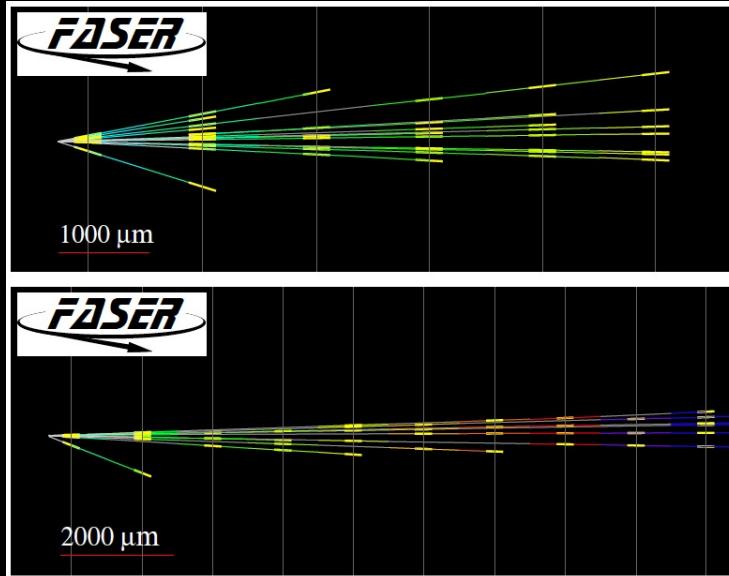
# FASER $\nu$ AND SND@LHC



# FIRST COLLIDER NEUTRINOS

- In 2018 a FASER pilot emulsion detector with 11 kg fiducial mass collected  $12.2 \text{ fb}^{-1}$  on the beam collision axis (installed and removed during Technical Stops).
- In May 2021, the FASER Collaboration announced the direct detection of 6 candidate neutrinos above 12 expected neutral hadron background events ( $2.7\sigma$ ).

- Not the  $5\sigma$  discovery of collider neutrinos, but a sign of things to come.

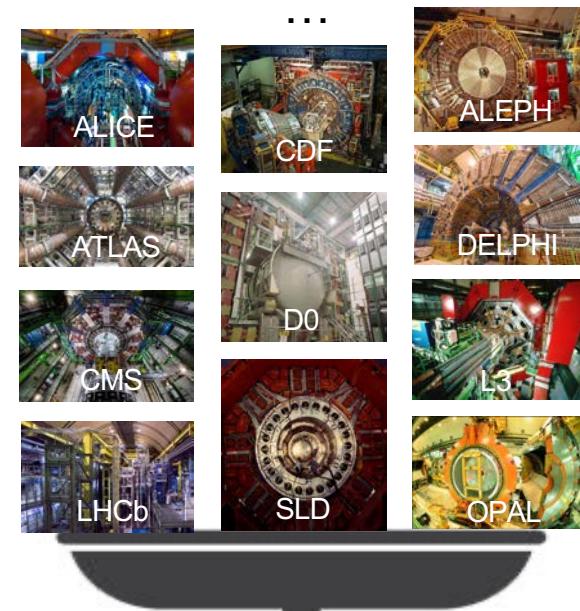


# LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

FASER Pilot Detector

Suitcase-size, 4 weeks  
\$0 (recycled parts)

6 candidate neutrinos



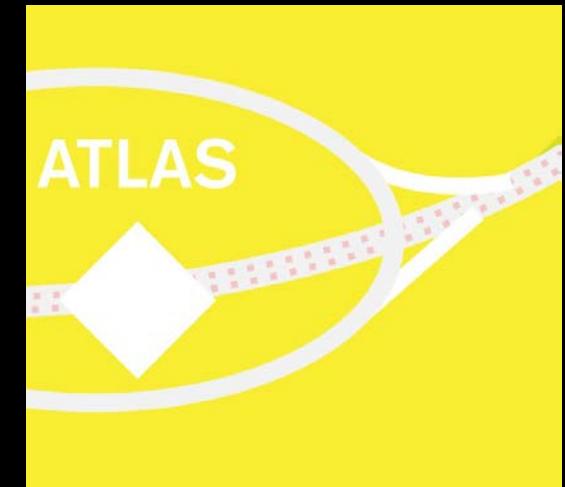
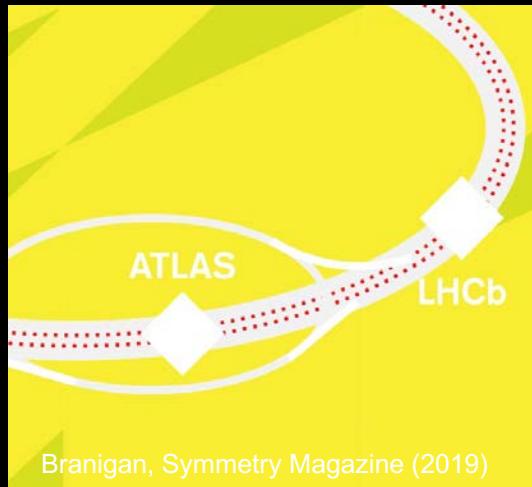
All previous  
collider detectors

Building-size, decades  
~\$ $10^9$

0 candidate neutrinos

# CONCLUSIONS

- 95% of the universe is waiting to be discovered.
- Relatively fast, small, cheap experiments can provide world-leading sensitivities and perhaps, our first glimpse of the dark universe.
- FASER: 18 months from theory paper to beginning of construction, fits on a tabletop, ~\$2M for all hardware. Data-taking begins in July 2022 with neutrino measurements and discovery prospects for new particles.



- More info: <https://twiki.cern.ch/twiki/bin/viewauth/FASER/WebHome>.