THE FALL AND RISE OF FORWARD PHYSICS

Physics and Astronomy Colloquium, UC Davis

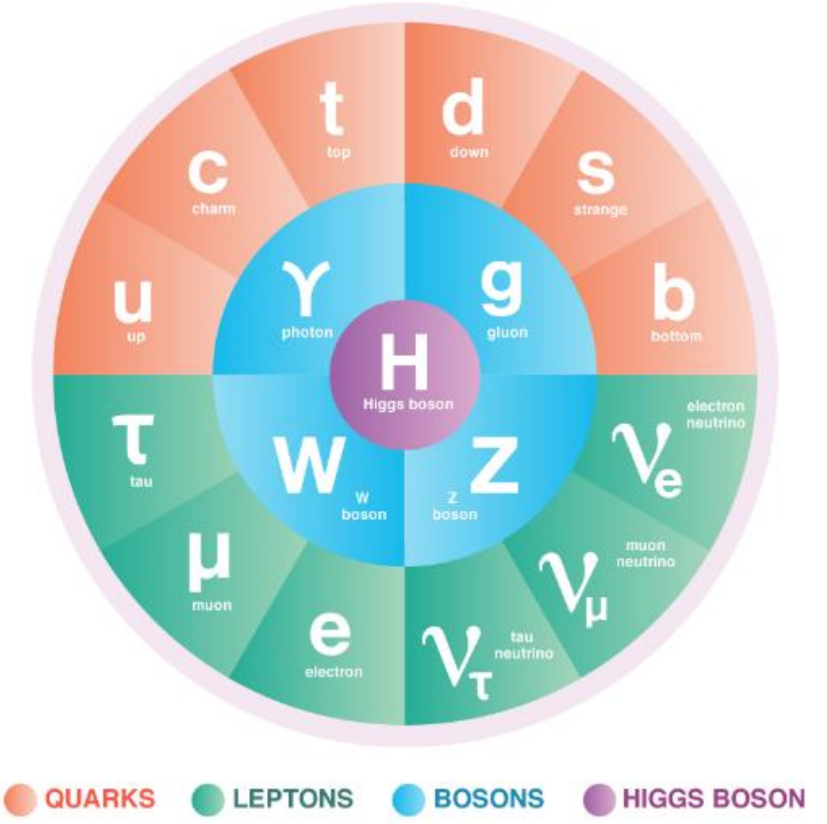
Jonathan Feng, UC Irvine, 21 April 2025

THE STANDARD MODEL OF PARTICLE PHYSICS

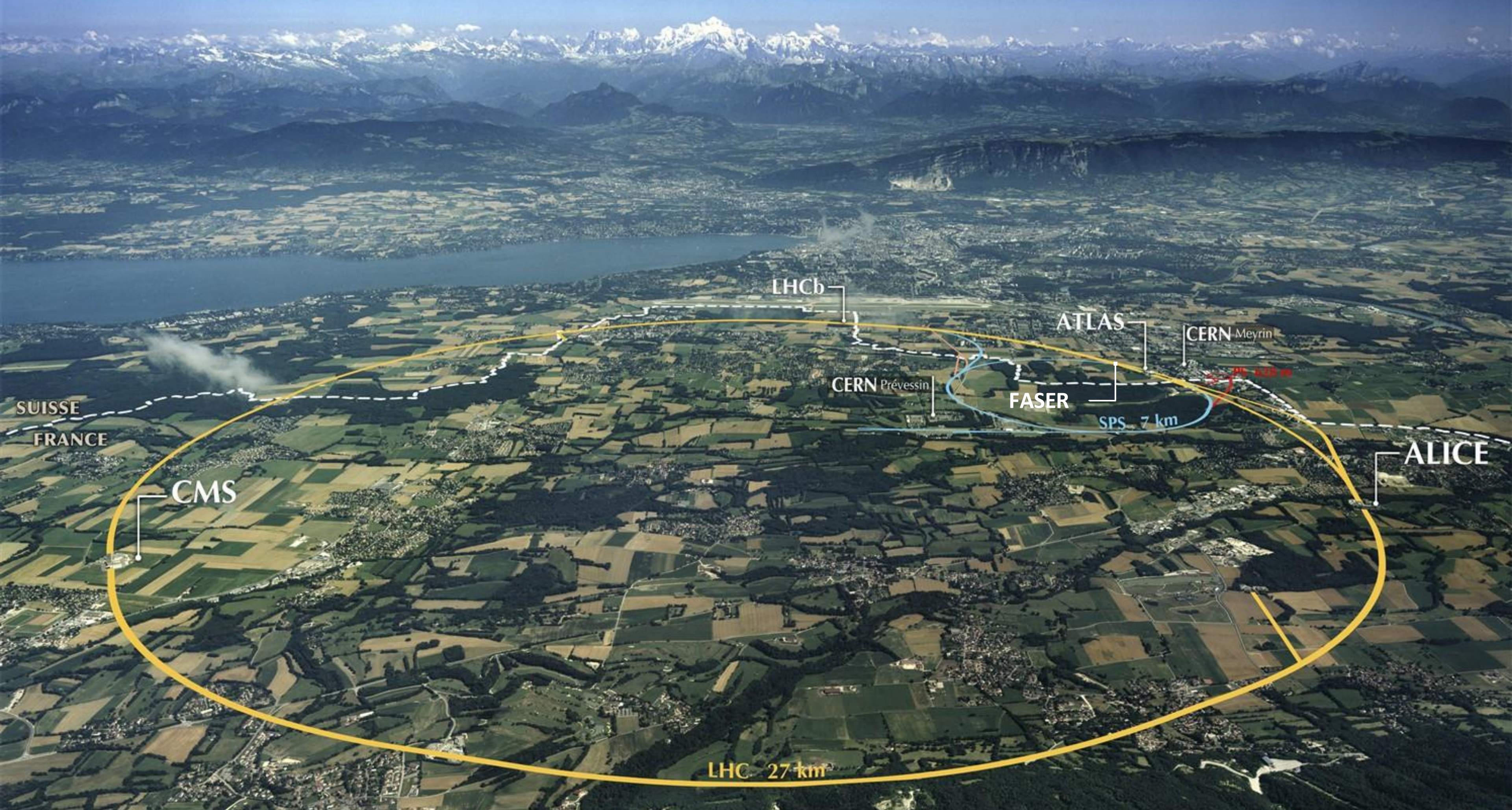
- The Standard Model is the reigning theory of fundamental particles and their interactions. The last particle predicted by the SM, the Higgs boson, was discovered at CERN in 2012.

- But the SM is not the last word, because many fundamental questions remain. For example:
  - Neutrino Masses: the SM predicts that neutrinos are massless, but they aren't.
  - Dark Matter: The particles of the SM make up only ~15% of the matter in the universe.

- These questions imply that there are more particles left to discover, and probably many more.



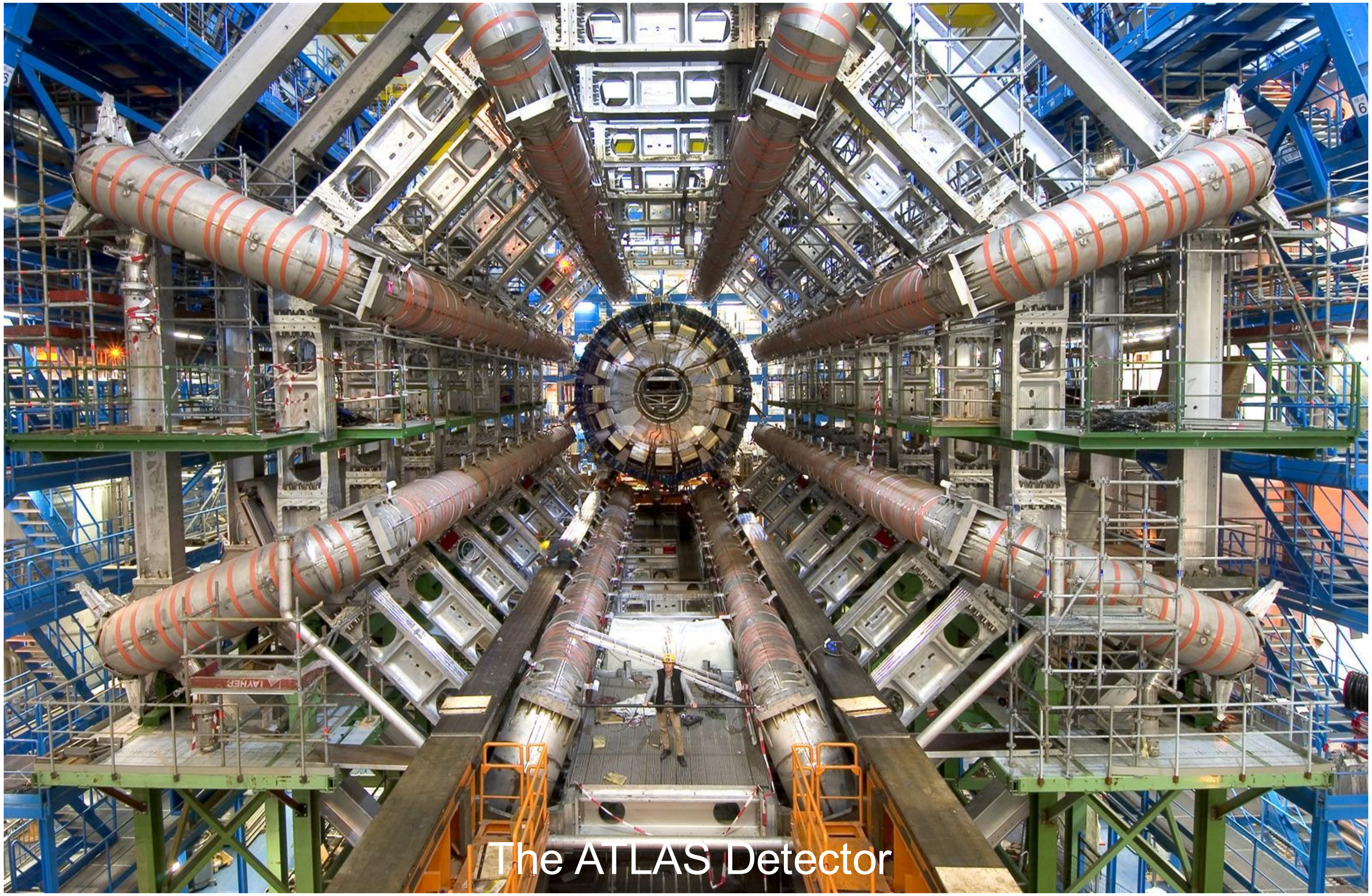
THE LARGE HADRON COLLIDER



Particle colliders have been key to progress for many decades. The state of the art is currently the LHC, which collides protons with protons at a center-of-mass energy of 13.6 TeV ($v \approx 0.9999999905\,c$).

LHC DETECTORS

The protons collide at 4 points, and each point is surrounded by a large detector to view the results of the collisions. These detectors cost billions of dollars and were constructed over decades by thousands of collaborators.

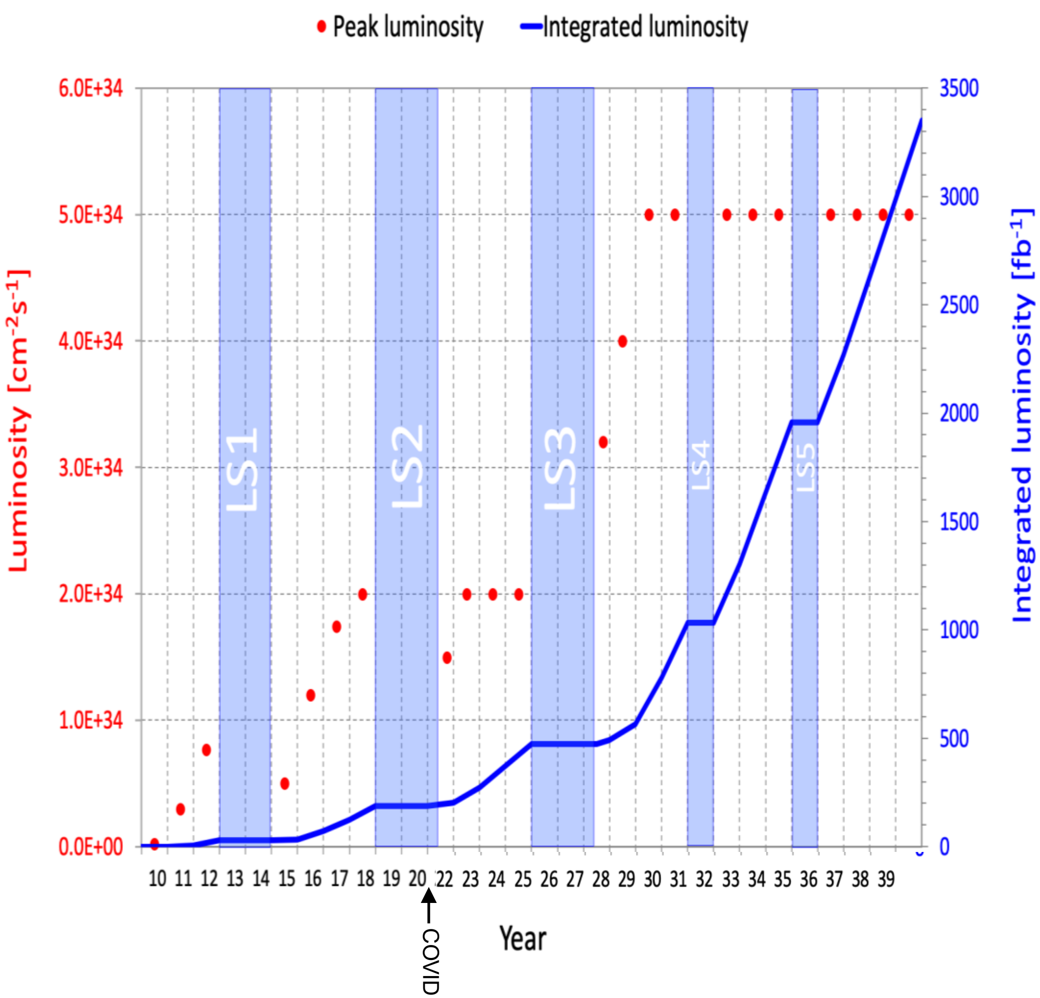

The ATLAS Detector

LIFETIME OF THE LHC

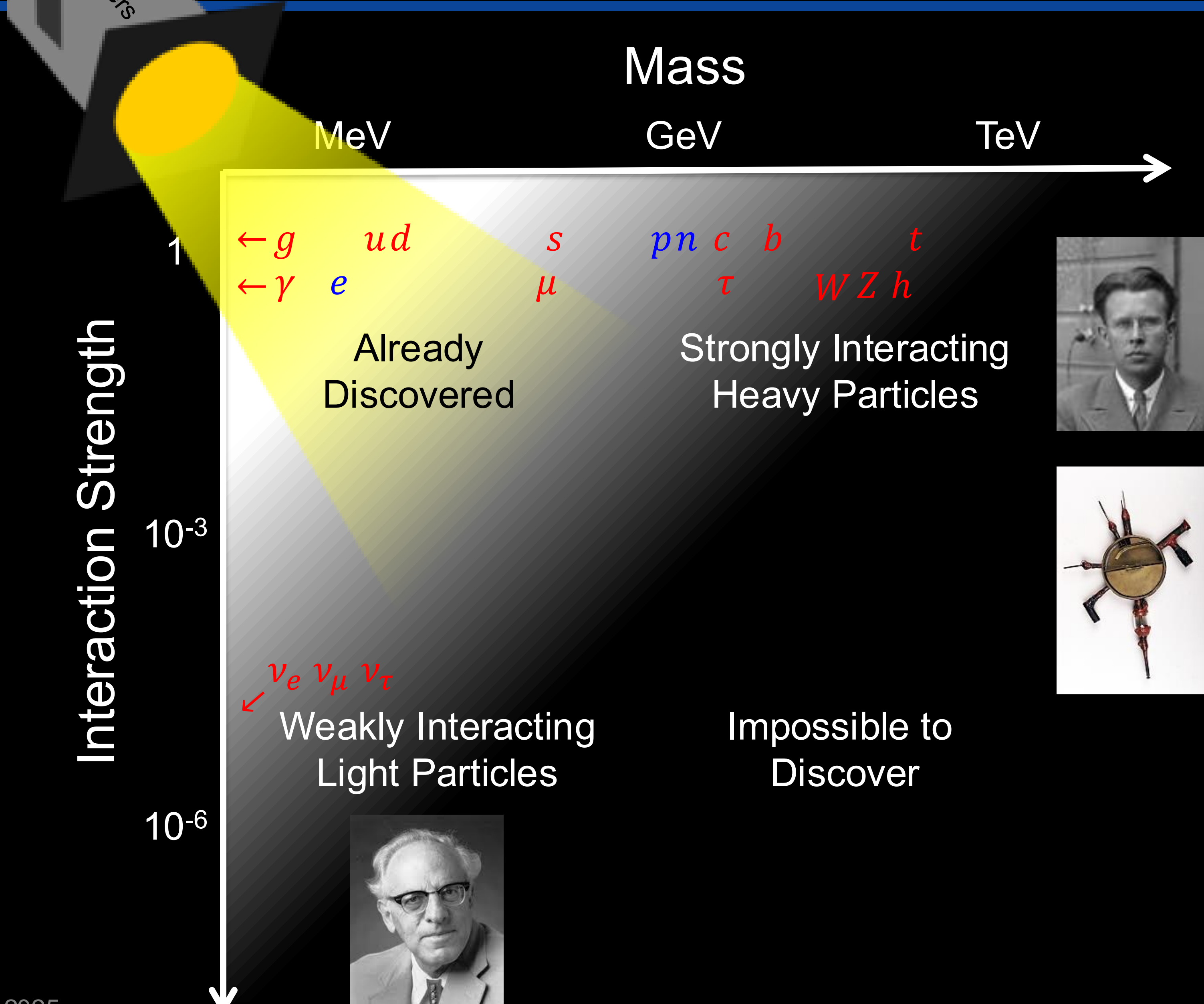
- The LHC became the future of particle colliders in 1993 when the US canceled the SSC, which was being built in Texas.

- The LHC started running in 2010 and is scheduled to run until the 2040s.
  - Middle-aged in terms of years
  - But a 4th grader in terms of integrated luminosity

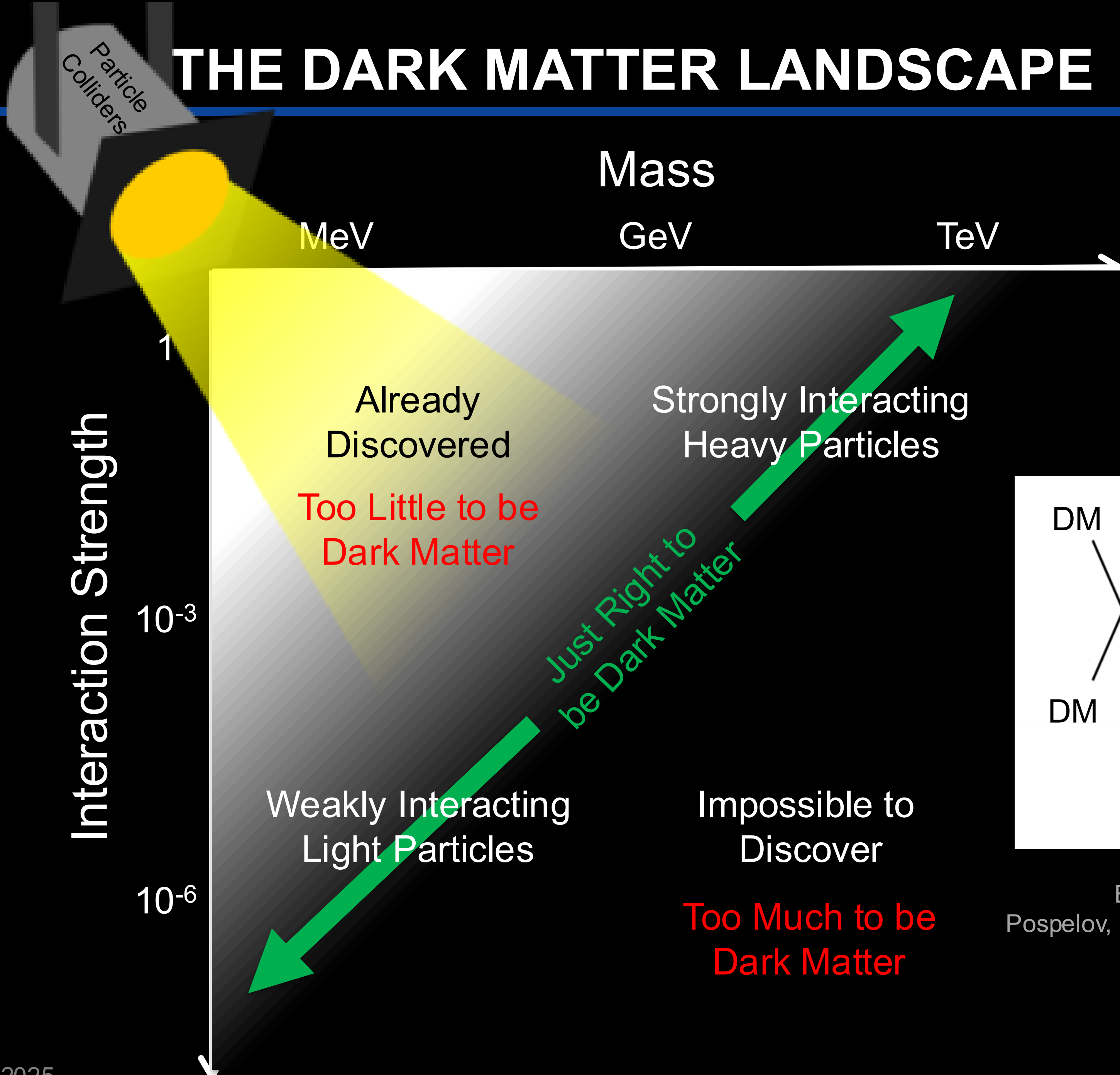
- Are we using the LHC to its full potential? What can we do to enhance its discovery prospects?

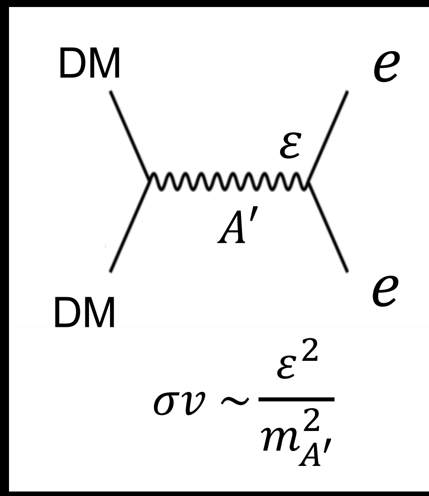


THE NEW PARTICLE LANDSCAPE



THE DARK MATTER LANDSCAPE





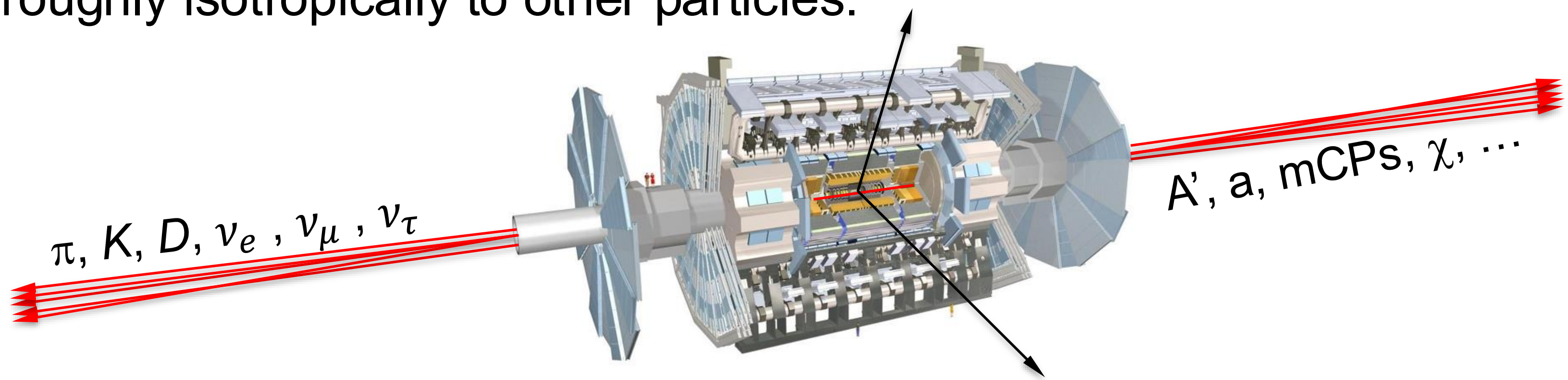
Boehm, Fayet (2003)
Pospelov, Ritz, Voloshin (2007)
Feng, Kumar (2008)

FORWARD PHYSICS

- In 2017, we realized that the large LHC detectors, while beautifully optimized to discover new heavy particles, are also almost optimally configured to miss new light particles.

  Feng, Galon, Kling, Trojanowski (2017)

- Heavy particles (*W*, *Z*, *t*, *h*, …) are produced at low velocity and decay roughly isotropically to other particles.



- But high-energy light particles are dominantly produced in the forward direction and escape through the blind spots of these large detectors.
  - This is true for all known light particles: pions, kaons, *D* mesons, all neutrinos.
  - It is also true for many proposed new particles, especially those motivated by neutrino mass and dark matter.

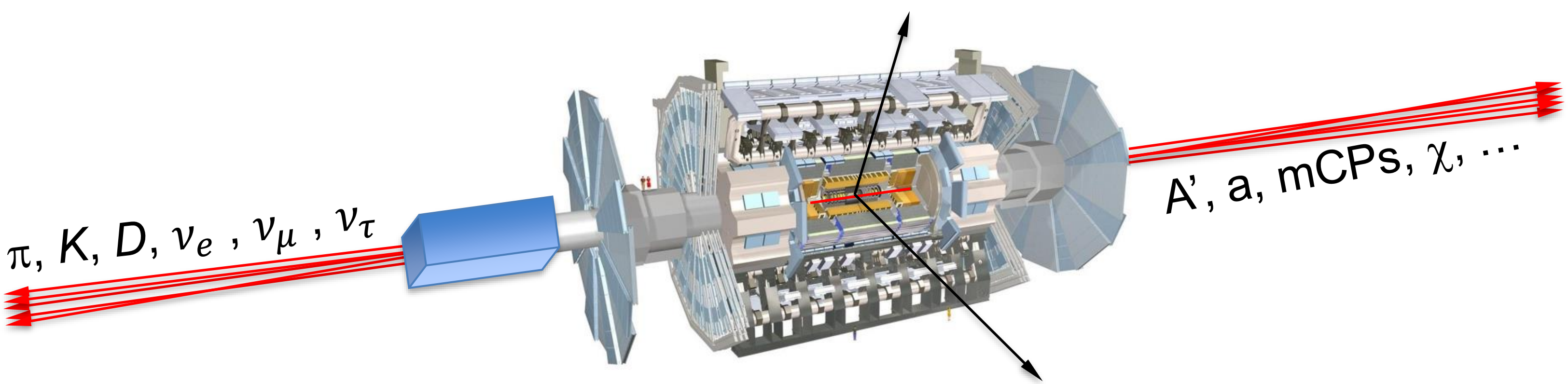
  De Rujula, Ruckl (1984)

- These blind spots are the Achilles heels of the large LHC detectors.

DETECTING FORWARD PARTICLES

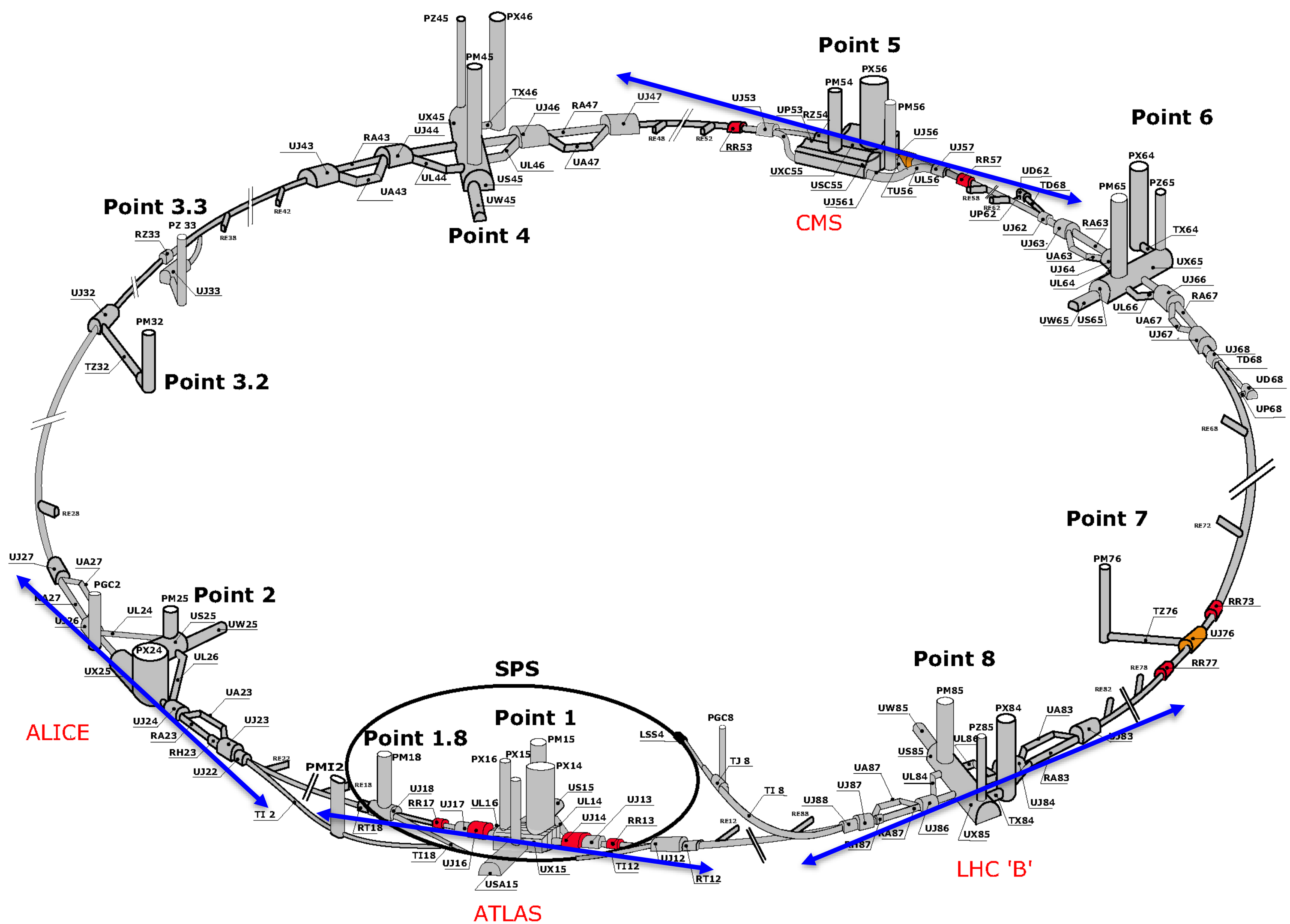
- To capture the enormous forward flux, we need to detect particles that are produced in the forward direction along the beamline.

- Problem: we can't just put the detector there, because it will block the protons from coming in.



- Solution: the LHC is a circular collider! If we go far enough away, the LHC proton beam will be bent away, while all the light, weakly-interacting particles we are looking for will go straight.

MAP OF LHC


Point 1
Point 1.8
Point 2
Point 3.2
Point 3.3
Point 4
Point 5
Point 6
Point 7
Point 8
SPS
CMS
ATLAS
ALICE
LHC 'B'
PZ45
PX46
PM45
PX56
PM54
PM56
PX64
PM65
PZ65
PM76
PM85
PX84
PZ85
PM25
PX24
PM32
PM18
PX16
PX15
PX14
PM15
PGC2
PGC8
PMI2
UX45
UXC55
USC55
UX65
UX85
UX25
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USA15
TI 2
TI 8
TI12
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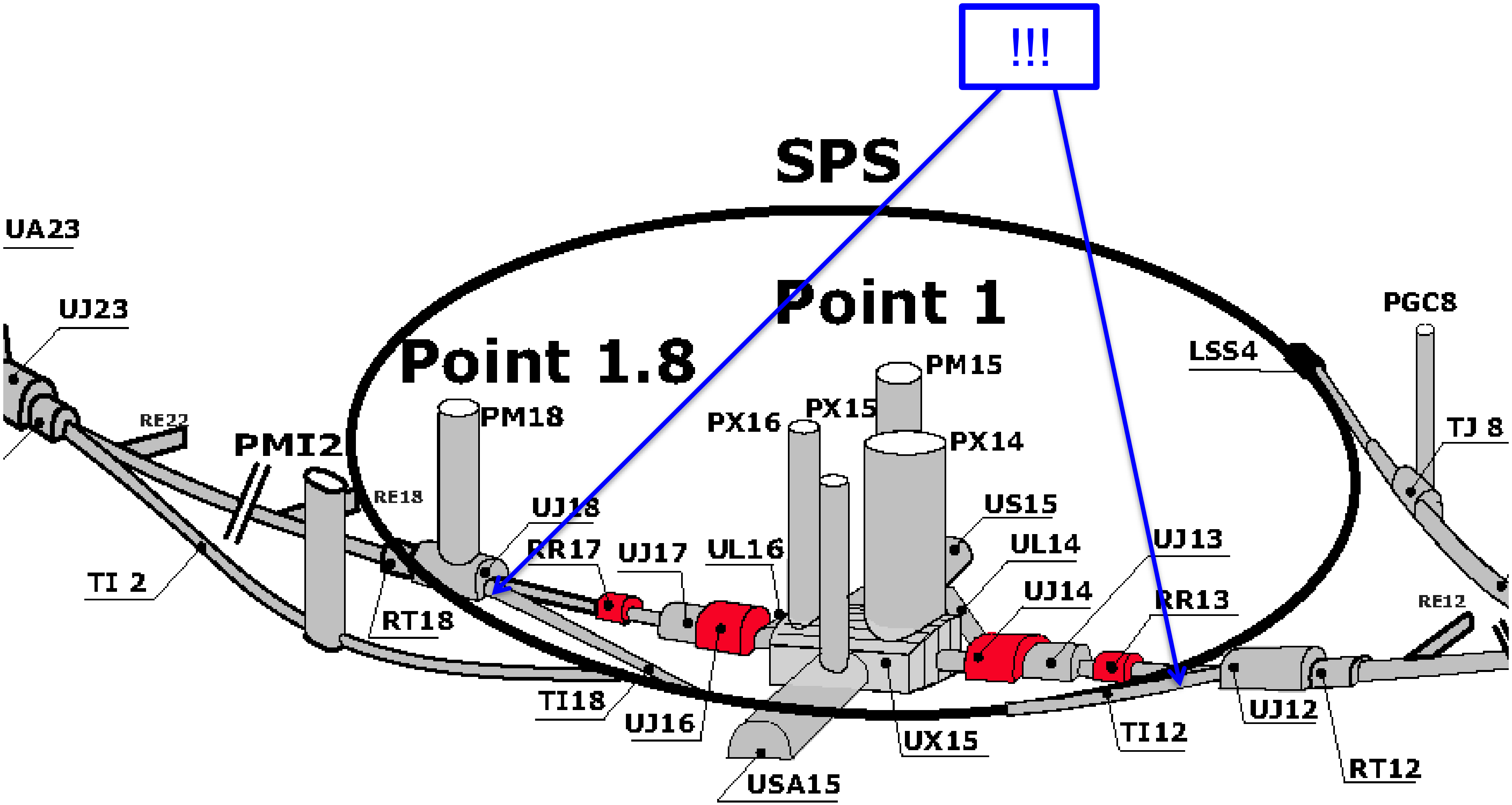
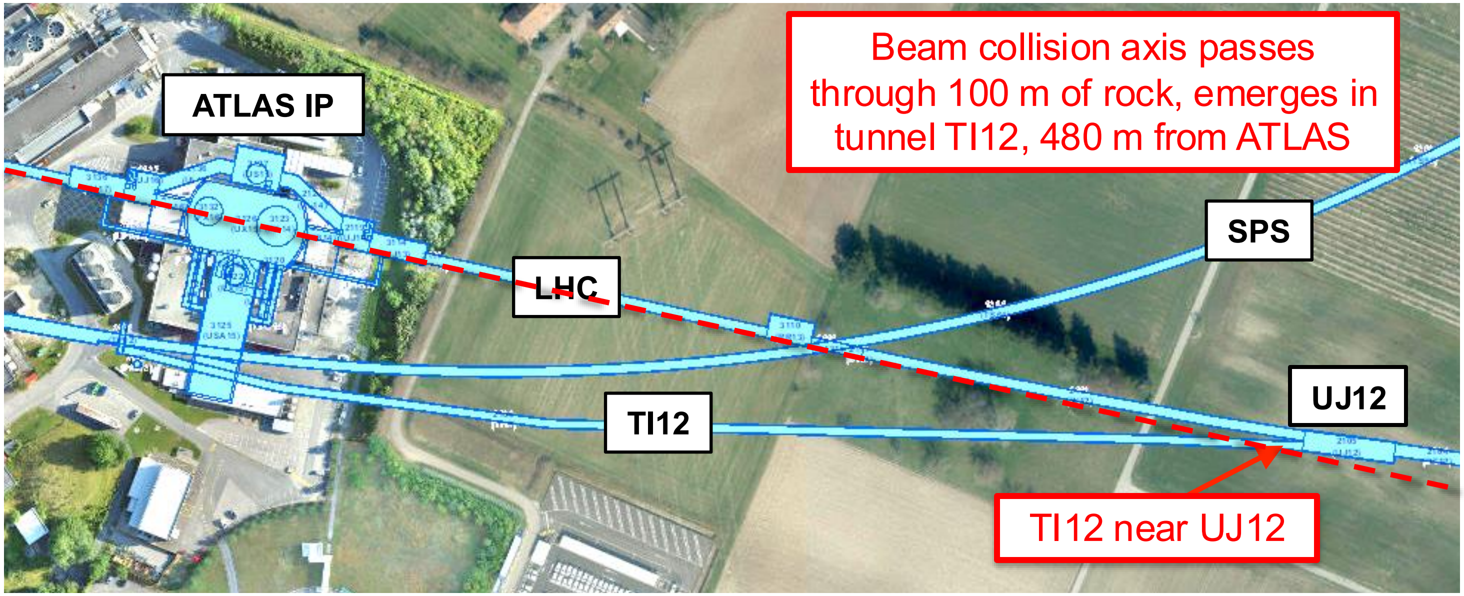
RT12
RT18
LSS4

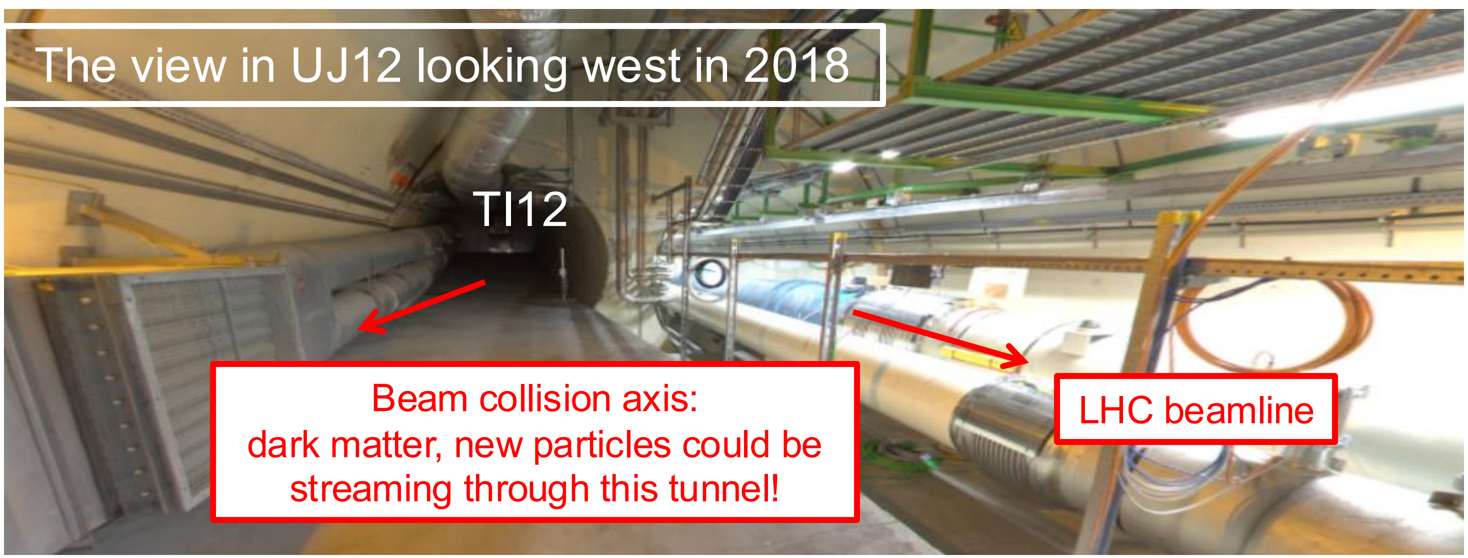
MAP OF LHC



ATLAS

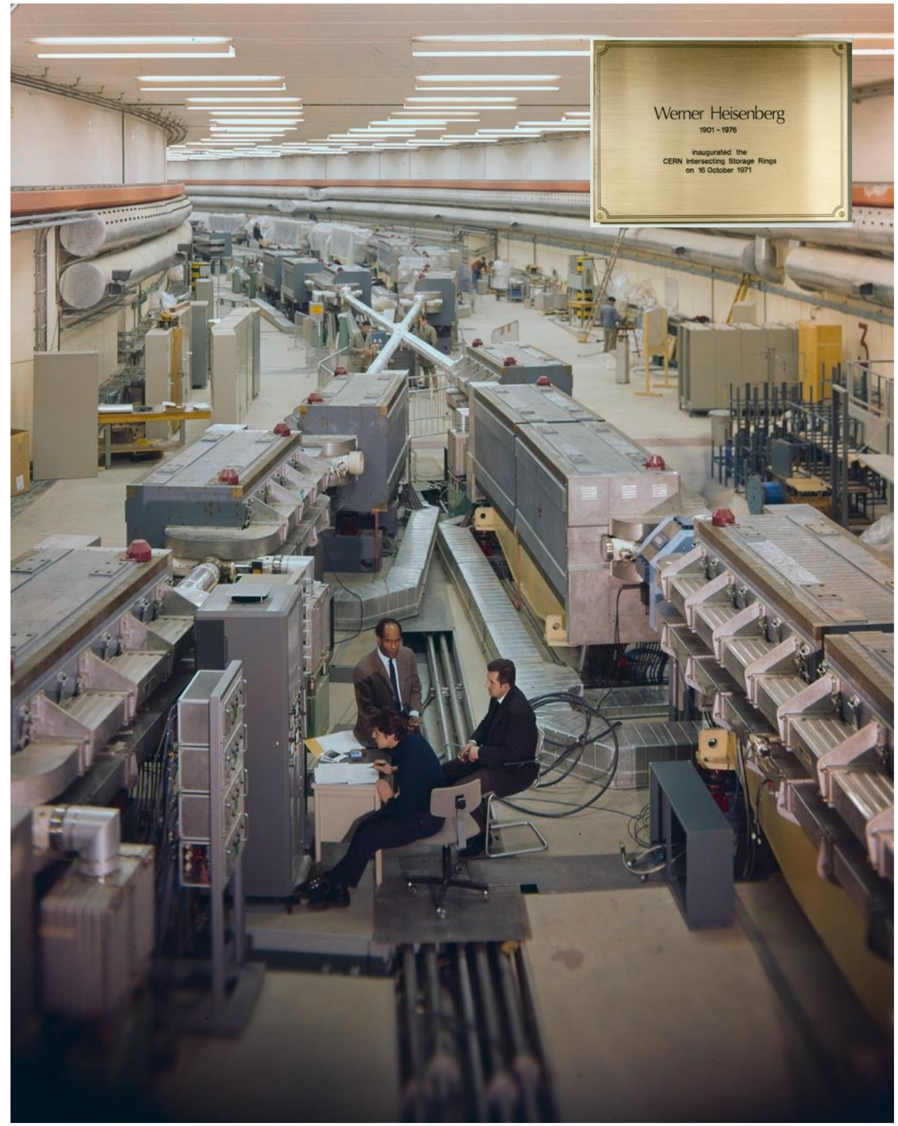
THE FORWARD REGION





HISTORY: THE FALL OF FORWARD PHYSICS

- Is it really possible that a collider is making new particles, and we are missing them simply because we are looking in the wrong place?
- Yes. In fact, it happened before at CERN.
- In 1971, the first hadron collider, CERN's Intersecting Storage Rings (ISR), began operation.
- It had a circumference of ~1 km, collided protons with protons at center-of-mass energy 30 GeV.



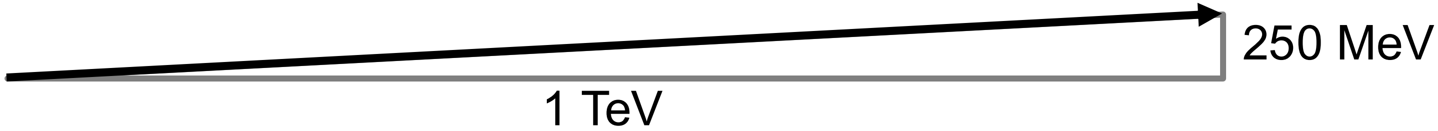
HISTORY: THE FALL OF FORWARD PHYSICS

- During the ISR's 50th anniversary, there were many fascinating articles and talks by eminent physicists
  - "Enormous impact on accelerator physics, but sadly little effect on particle physics." – Steve Myers, talk at "The 50th Anniversary of Hadron Colliders at CERN," October 2021.
  - "There was initially a broad belief that physics action would be in the forward directions at a hadron collider…. It is easy to say after the fact, still with regrets, that with an earlier availability of more complete… experiments at the ISR, CERN would not have been left as a spectator during the famous November revolution of 1974 with the J/ψ discoveries at Brookhaven and SLAC ." – Lyn Evans and Peter Jenni, "Discovery Machines," CERN Courier (2021).
- Bottom line: The collider was creating charm quarks, but, based on theoretical prejudice, experimentalists focused on the forward region and so missed them.
- Since that time, forward physics at colliders has been almost completely ignored for new particle searches.
- But are we making the same mistake now (in reverse)? And could there be another November revolution waiting for us in the forward direction?

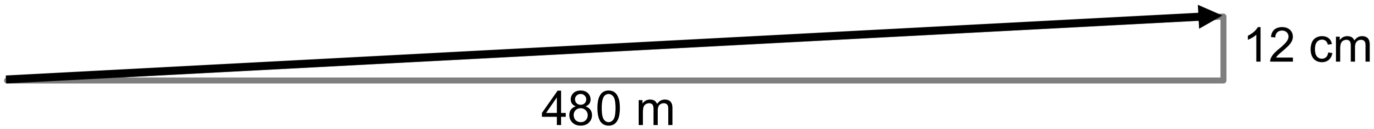
FASER

HOW BIG DOES THE DETECTOR HAVE TO BE?

- Momentum:

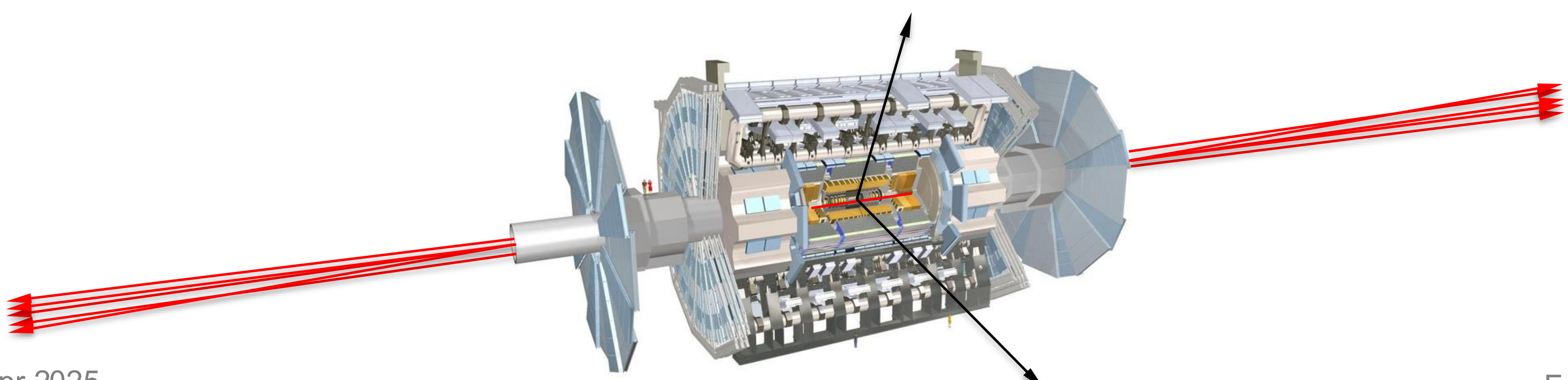


- Space:



- The opening angle is 0.2 mrad (the moon is 7 mrad). Even 480 m away, most of the signal passes through an 8.5” x 11” (A4) sheet of paper.

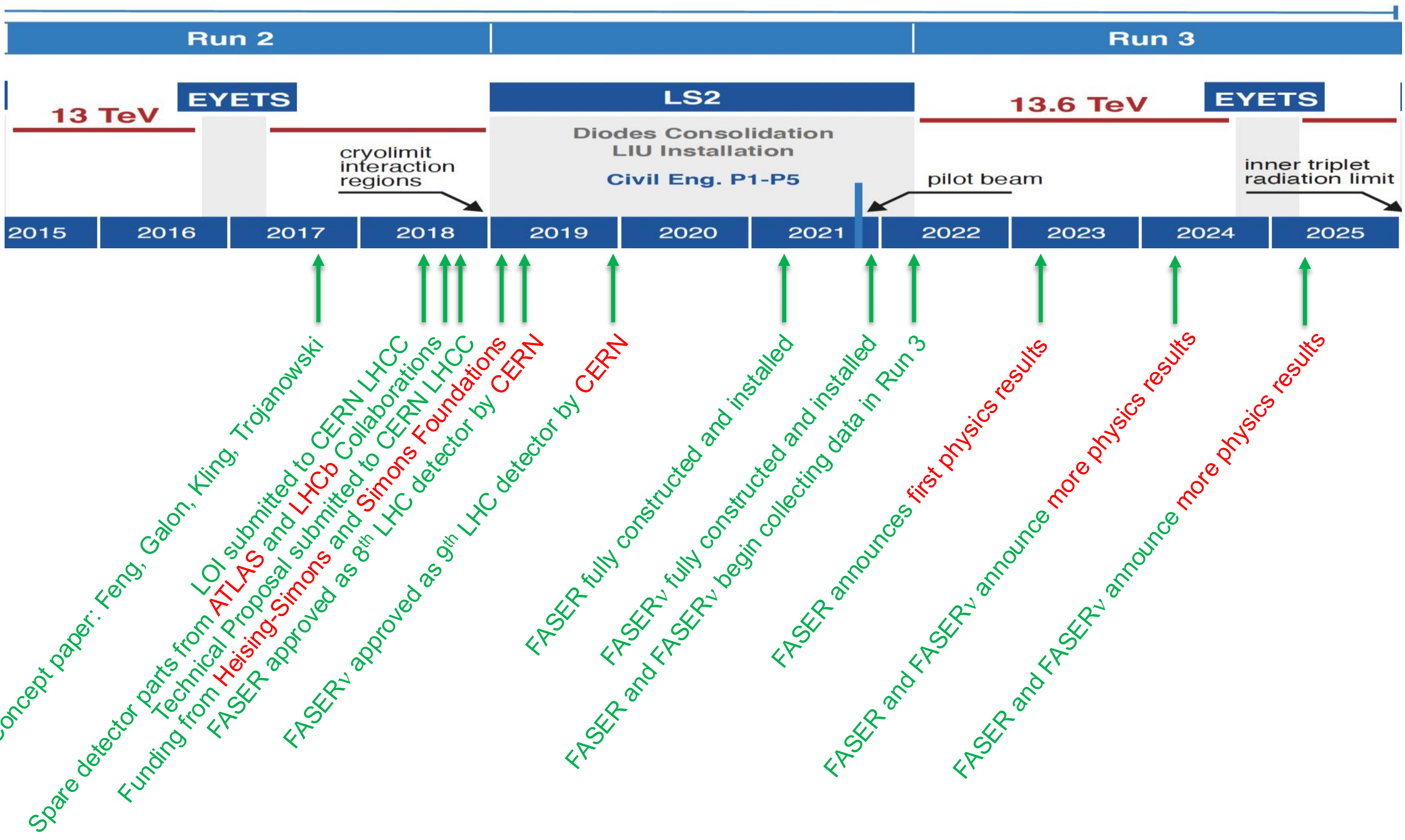
- Neutrinos and many new particles are therefore much more collimated than shown below, motivating a relatively small, fast, and inexpensive experiment at the LHC: the ForwArd Search ExpeRiment (FASER).



INITIAL REACTION

- FASER was initially proposed in a paper I wrote with 3 fantastic postdocs at UCI in August 2017.
- In November 2017, I gave a talk at the ICFA Seminar, the triennial gathering of the world's lab directors. At a coffee break, I asked Freddy Bordry, then CERN's Director for Accelerators and Technology, what he thought.
- His response?

FASER AND FASERν TIMELINE



FASER COLLABORATION

107 collaborators, 27 institutions, 11 countries

CERN

UNIVERSITÉ DE GENÈVE

KYUSHU UNIVERSITY

UC IRVINE

UNIVERSITÄT BERN

Technion Israel Institute of Technology

NAGOYA UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

UNIVERSITÄT BONN

CHIBA UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

DESY.

INFN

ISS

International laboratory covered by a cooperation agreement with CERN

清華大學 Tsinghua University

ROYAL HOLLOWAY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI NAPOLI FEDERICO II

מכון ויצמן למדע WEIZMANN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE

ZHENGZHOU UNIVERSITY

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (KOSEN), NIIHAMA COLLEGE

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

ETH zürich

Nikhef

UKRI Science and Technology Facilities Council Rutherford Appleton Laboratory

MANCHESTER 1824 The University of Manchester

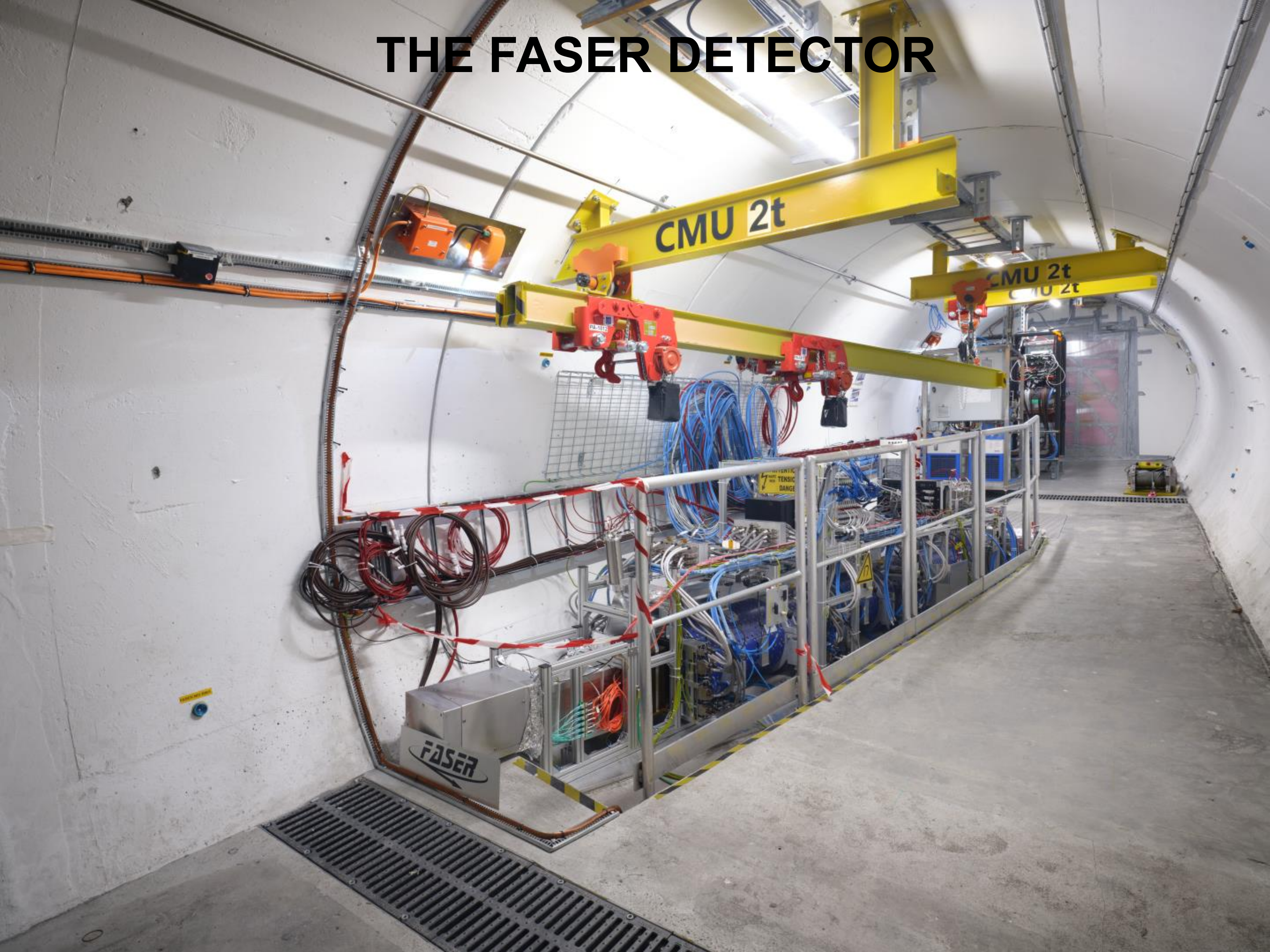
PREPARATION OF THE FASER LOCATION

- The nominal beam collision axis was located to mm accuracy by the CERN survey department. (In fact, it moves around by several cm, depending on the beam crossing angle and orientation.) To place FASER on this axis, a trench was required to lower the floor by 46 cm.

- The trench was completed by an Italian firm just hours before COVID shut down CERN in March 2020.

FASER AND THE LHC

THE FASER DETECTOR

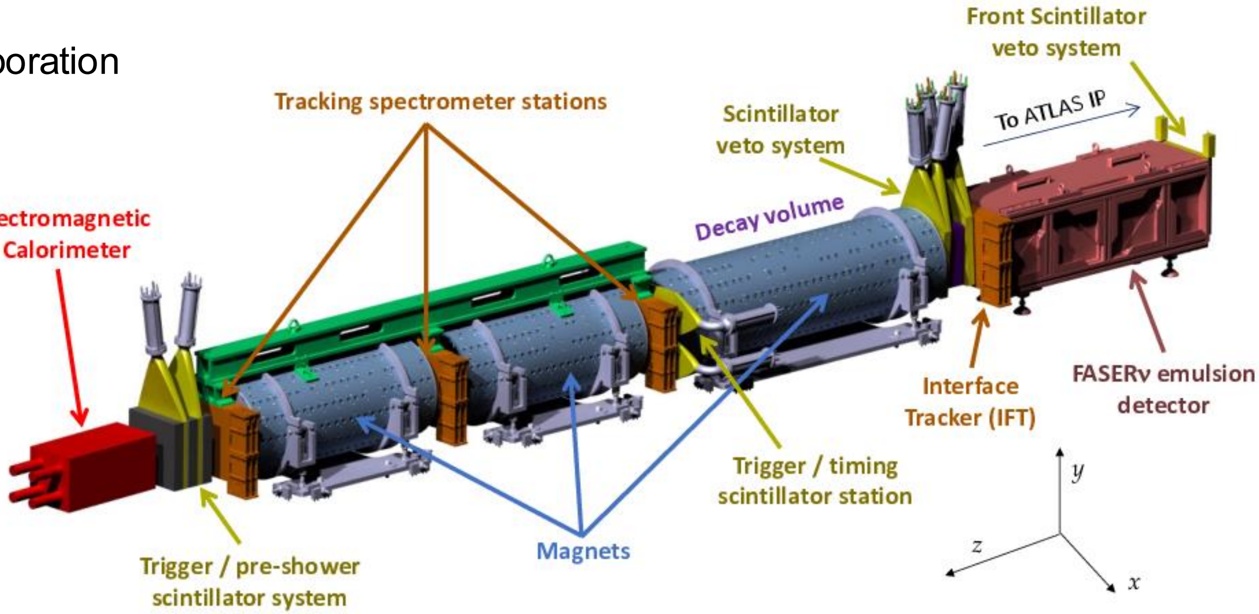


THE FASER DETECTOR

- Design challenges: small (no room), low maintenance (no access), fast (no time).
  - Size: Total length ~ 5 m, decay volume: R = 10 cm, L = 1.5 m.
  - Magnets: 3 permanent dipoles (Halbach design), 0.57 T, deflect charged particles in y.
  - Tracker: composed of 4 stations x 3 layers x 8 mod. = 96 ATLAS SCT modules.
  - Calorimeter: composed of 2 x 2 LHCb ECAL modules.
  - Scintillators: 4 stations, each 1-2 cm thick, >99.999% efficient. 4-layer veto ~ $(10^{-5})^4 \sim 10^{-20}$.
  - FASERν: 770 interleaved sheets of tungsten + emulsion. 1 m long, 1.1 ton total mass. Micron-level spatial resolution, but no timing. Becomes over-exposed from muons, must be replaced after ~30 fb^{-1}.

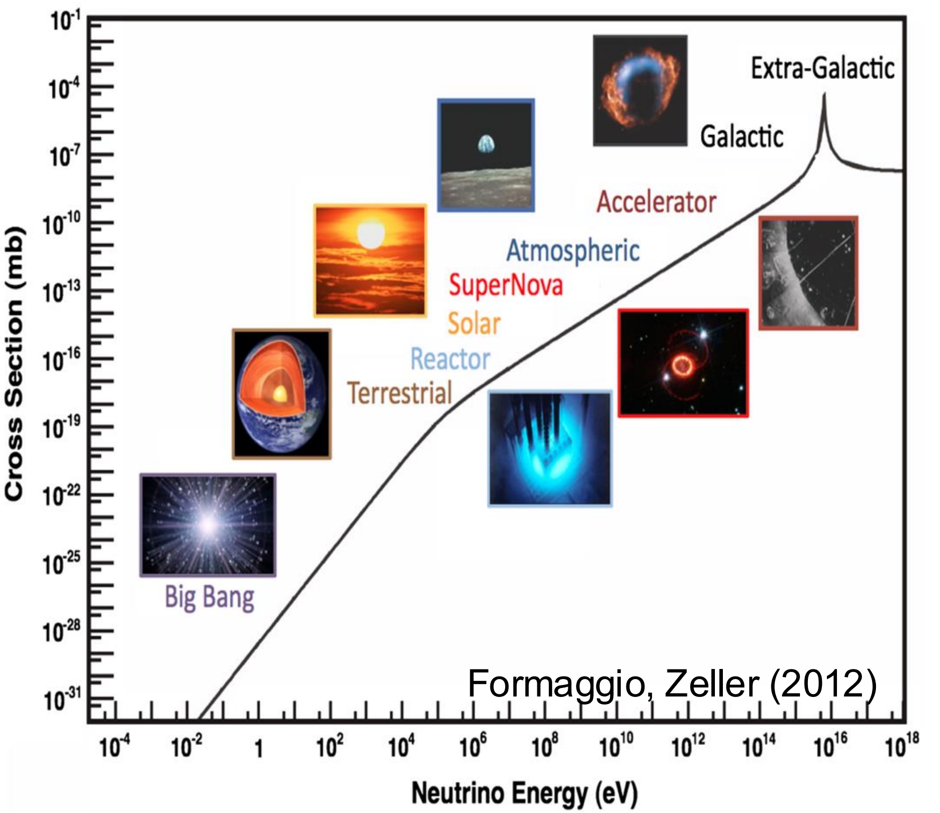
- The experimental environment: 88 m underground, shielded from ATLAS by 100 m of rock → extremely quiet. Trigger on everything, ~kHz trigger rate dominated by muons from ATLAS.

FASER Collaboration
(2207.11427)



COLLIDER NEUTRINOS

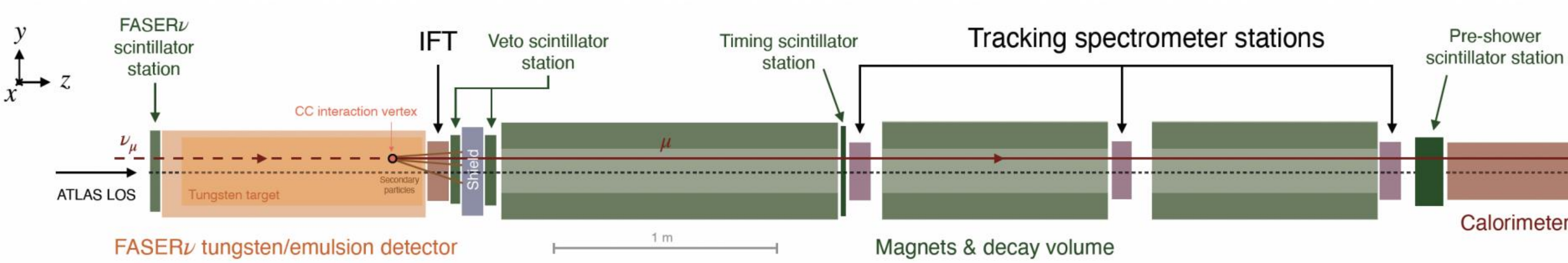
- Neutrinos are the least understood of all known particles, and the only ones with confirmed BSM properties.
- They have been discovered from many sources, each time with stunning implications for particle physics, astrophysics, and cosmology.



- But before FASER, neutrinos produced at a particle collider had never been directly observed.
  - Conventional wisdom: neutrinos interact very weakly so cannot be detected.
  - The reality: the highest energy ones, which are most likely to interact, pass through the blind spots of existing detectors.

COLLIDER NEUTRINO SEARCH

- Neutrinos produced at the ATLAS IP travel 480 m and pass through FASERν. Occasionally, they can interact through $\nu_\mu N \to \mu X$, producing a high-energy muon, which travels through the rest of the detector.



FASER Collaboration (2303.14185, PRL)

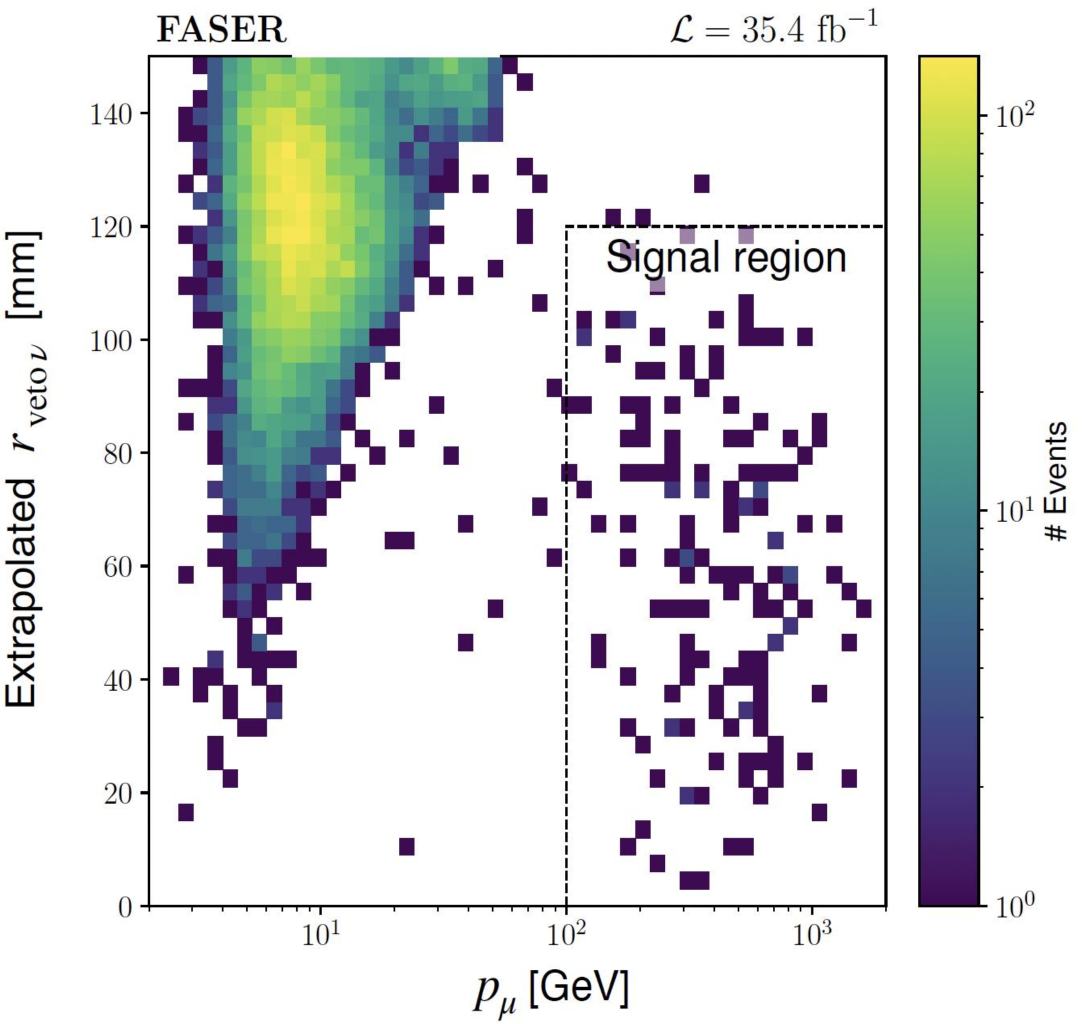
- The signal is no charged particle passing through the upstream veto scintillators, hits in the downstream scintillators, and a single charged track, >100 GeV, in the central region of downstream trackers.

- Backgrounds are extremely suppressed by the fact that we are shielded from ATLAS by 100 m of rock and concrete, $\lesssim$ 1 background event.

- Expect 151 ± 41 events from simulations, with the large uncertainty arising from the poorly understood flux of forward hadrons.

COLLIDER NEUTRINO RESULTS

- After unblinding, we found 153 signal events.
- 1st direct detection of collider neutrinos.
  - Signal significance of ~16σ
  - Muon charge → ν and $\bar{\nu}$
  - These include the highest energy ν and $\bar{\nu}$ interactions ever observed from a human source
- Following the FASER observation, SND@LHC, a complementary experiment in the "other" forward direction, discovered an additional 8 neutrinos.



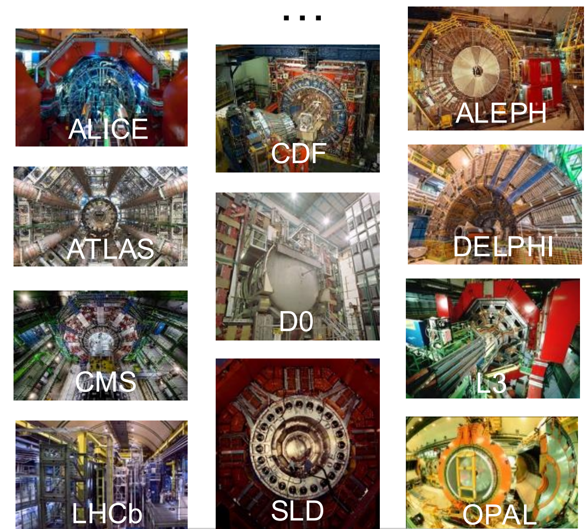
FASER Collaboration (2303.14185, PRL)

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

FASER

“Tabletop,” 18 months,
~$1M

153 neutrinos



All previous
collider detectors

Building-size, decades,
~$1B

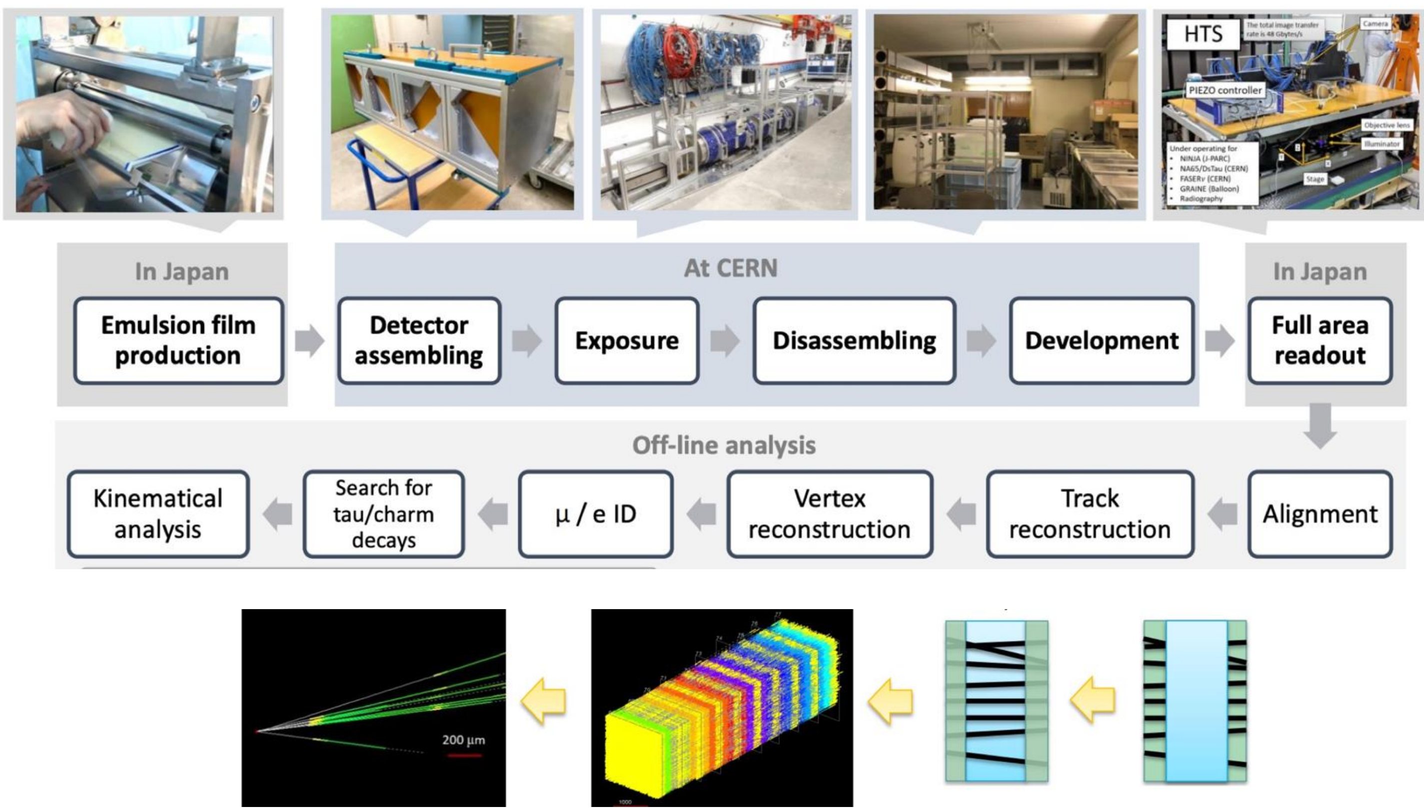
0 neutrinos

16σ discovery, opening a new window
at the high energy frontier

DISCOVERY OF COLLIDER NEUTRINOS

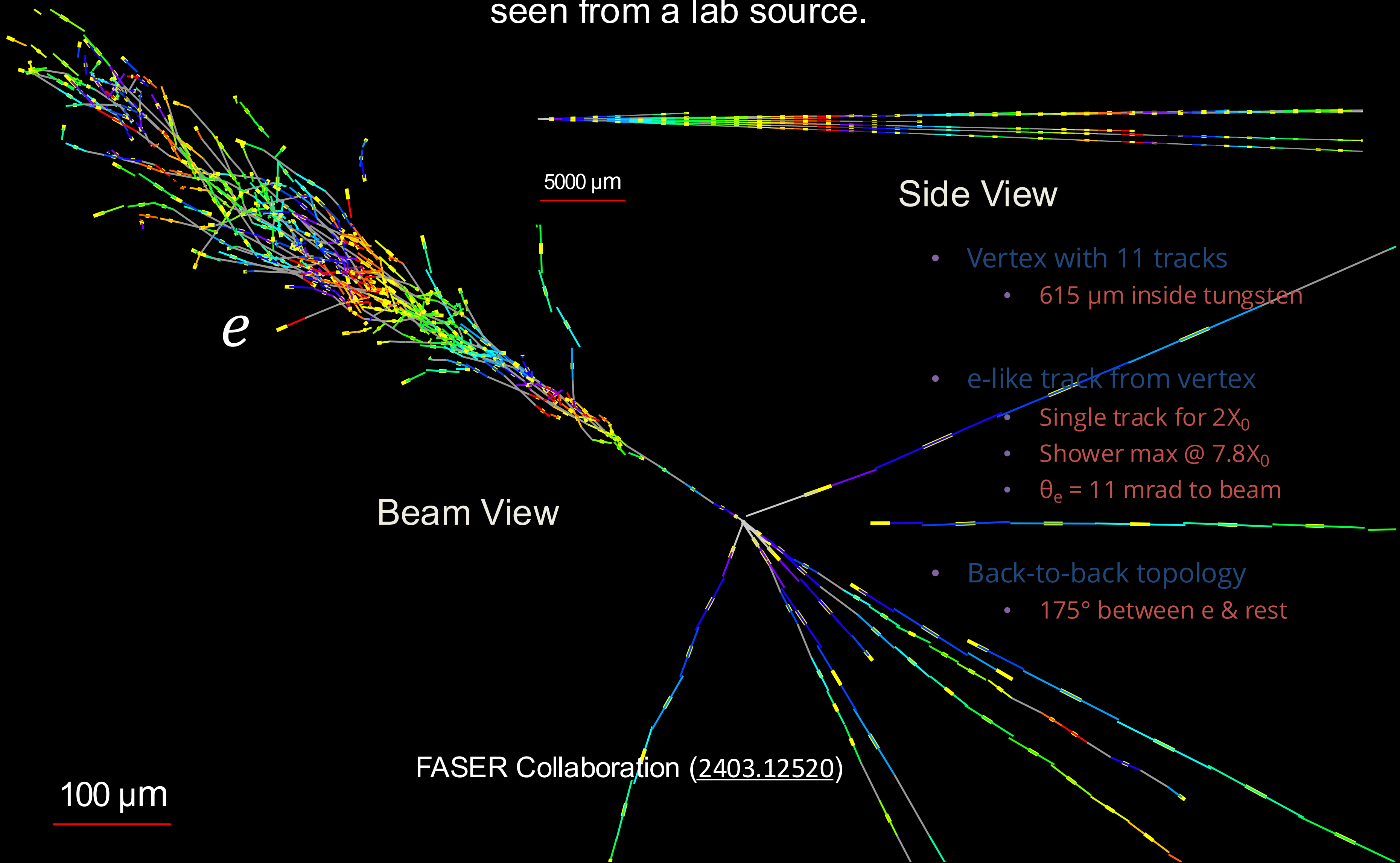
NEUTRINOS IN FASERν

- At the front of FASER is FASERν, a 1.1-ton block of interleaved tungsten and emulsion plates. The first neutrino analysis treated this as a big block of matter, but the emulsion provides far more detailed information.
- Emulsion is essentially old-fashioned photographic film, has unmatched spatial resolution (~0.5 microns).



NEUTRINOS IN FASERν

With the emulsion, we have now observed the first collider electron neutrinos, including the "Pika-ν" event, the highest energy (1.5 TeV) electron neutrino ever seen from a lab source.



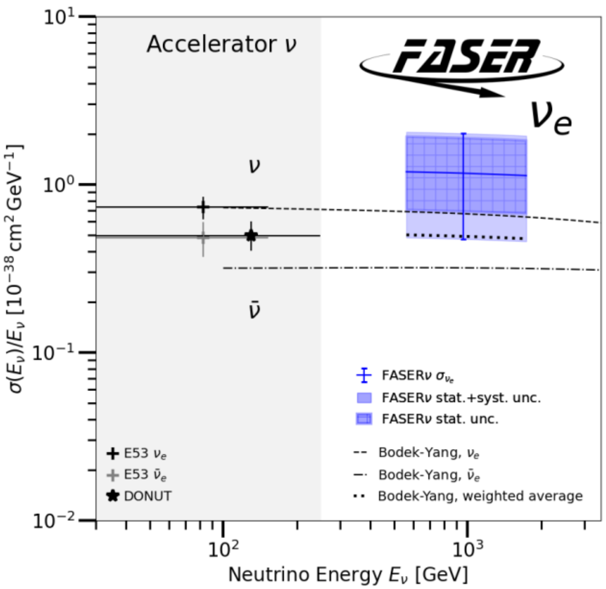
- Vertex with 11 tracks
  - 615 μm inside tungsten
- e-like track from vertex
  - Single track for $2X_0$
  - Shower max @ $7.8X_0$
  - θ_e = 11 mrad to beam
- Back-to-back topology
  - 175° between e & rest

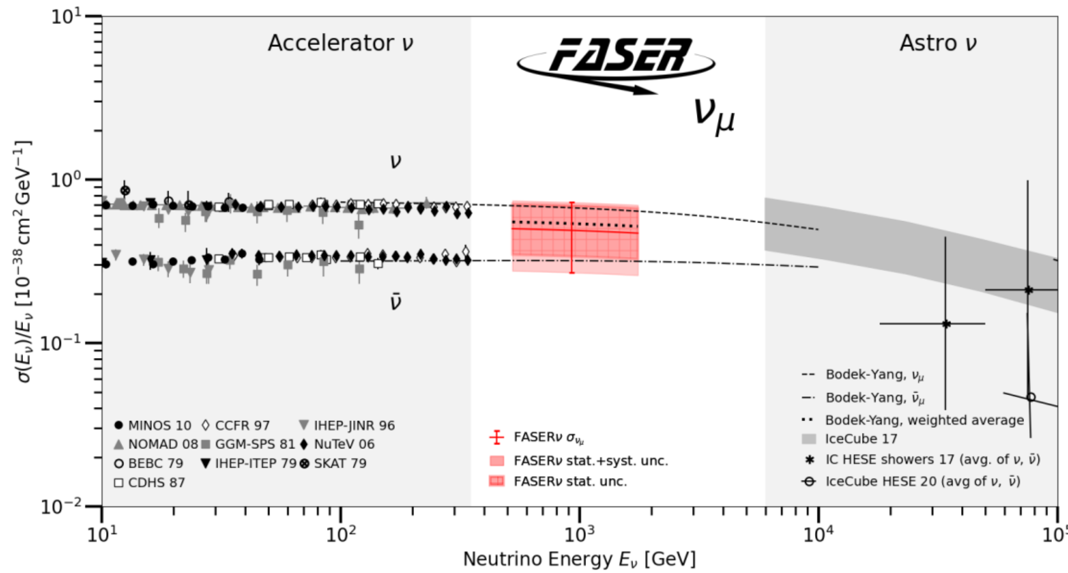
FASER Collaboration (2403.12520)

TEV NEUTRINO CROSS SECTIONS

- After these discoveries, we have moved on to studies, including the first measurement of neutrino cross sections at TeV energies.

- Results are consistent with SM DIS predictions.



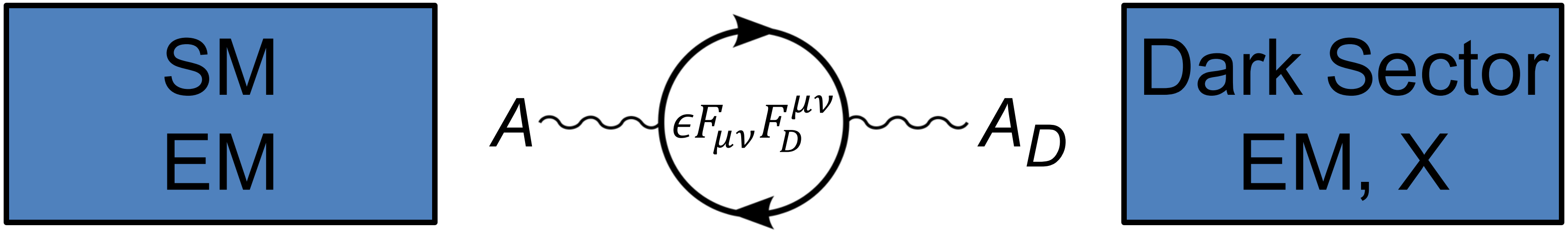


FASER Collaboration (2403.12520, included in PRL's Collection of 2024)

- These measurements use only 1.7% of the data collected in 2022 and 2023. We now have energy-dependent cross sections (2412.03186), and there is much more to come; triple the world's supply of tau neutrinos, discover the first anti-tau neutrino (the last SM particle – it's not the Higgs!), look for BSM physics, …

NEW PARTICLE SEARCHES

- FASER can also look for new light and weakly-interacting particles.
- For example: suppose there is a dark sector that contains dark matter X and also a dark force: dark electromagnetism.



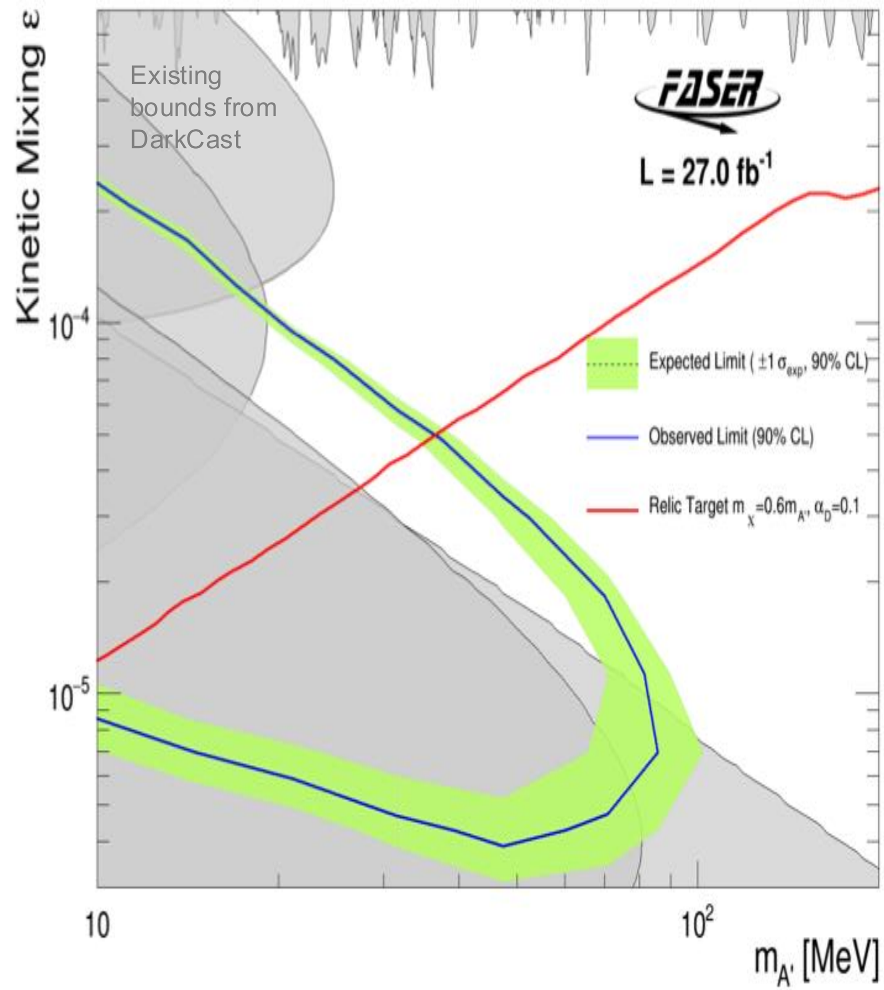
- The result? Dark photons A' , like photons, but with mass $m_{A'}$, couplings suppressed by ϵ.

Holdom (1986)

- For low ϵ, dark photons are long-lived particles (LLPs), can be produced in ATLAS, pass through rock and magnetic fields unhindered, and then decay through $A' \to e^+e^-$ in FASER.

DARK PHOTON RESULTS

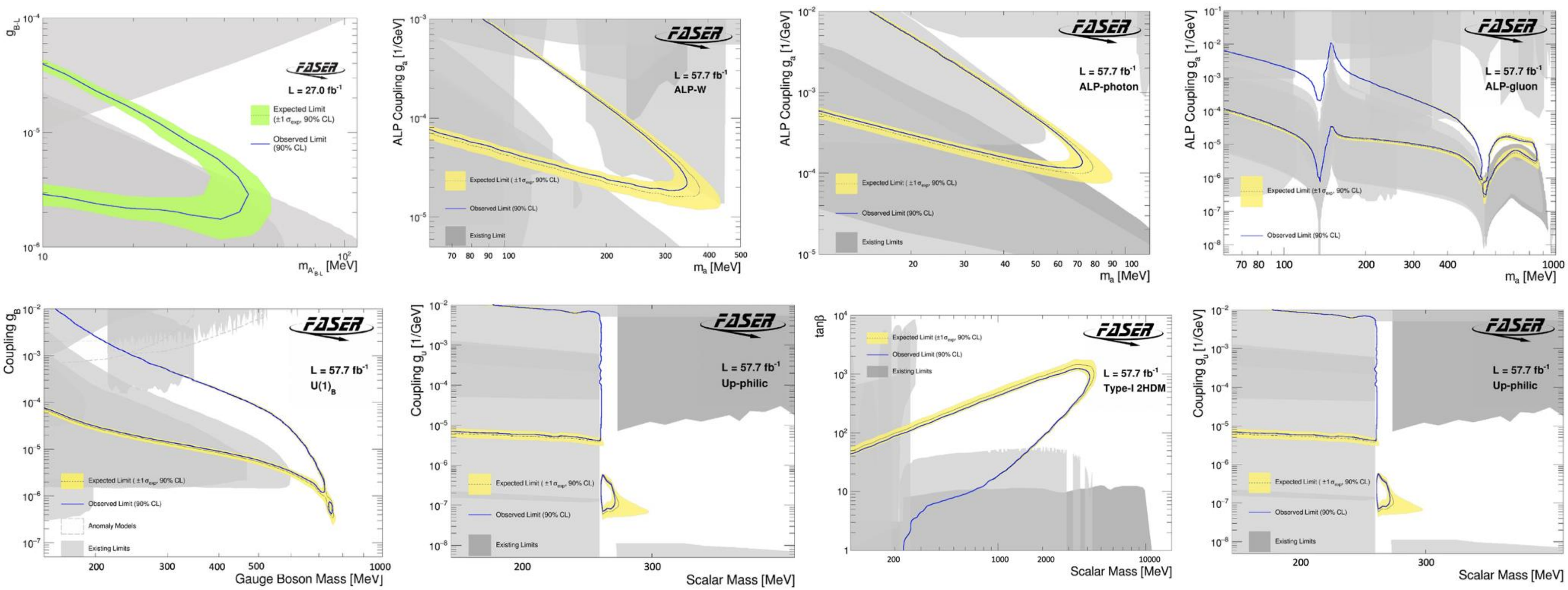
- After unblinding, no events seen, FASER sets limits on previously unexplored parameter space.
- First new probe of the parameter space favored by dark matter from low coupling since the 1990's.
- Prospects for the future
  - Background-free analysis
  - Started probing new parameter space in the first day of running
  - Ended up ~100 times more sensitive than previous experiments
  - Improvements in analysis and 40 times more data to come



FASER Collaboration (2308.05587, PLB)

MORE SEARCH RESULTS

- We are now looking for many other new particles: other new force carriers ($U(1)_{B-L}$, $U(1)_B$, protophobic), axion-like particles with photon, W, gluon couplings, up-philic scalars, two Higgs doublet models, sterile neutrinos, dark matter, light neutralinos, quirks, etc., all with world-leading sensitivities.
- FASER is approved to run through 2033, with improvements from the High-Luminosity LHC, and a high-resolution pre-shower detector and other upgrades.



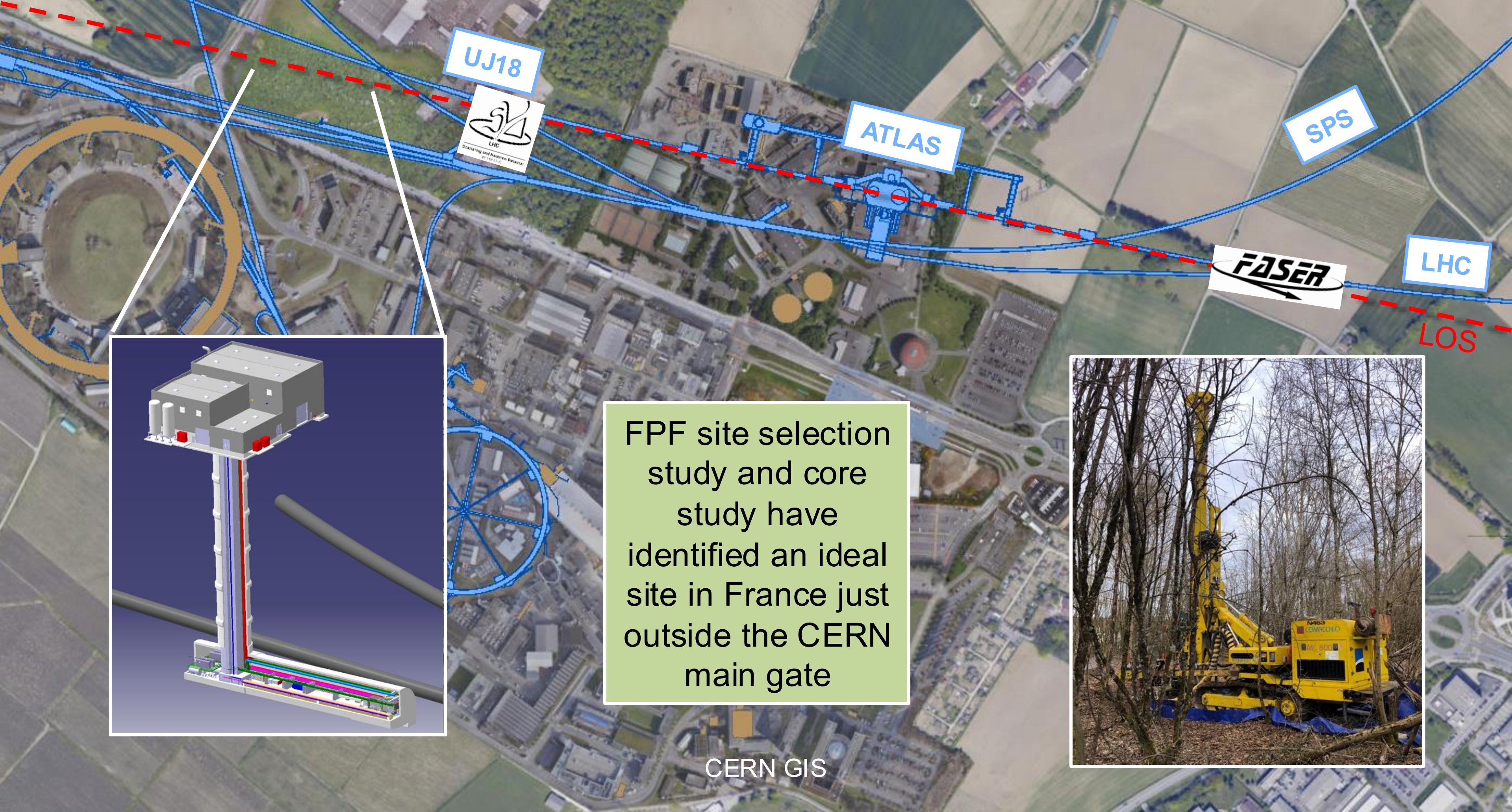
FASER Collaboration (2308.05587, PLB; 2410.10363)

FPF

Forward Physics Facility

FORWARD PHYSICS FACILITY

- Following the results of FASER and SND@LHC, CERN is considering the possibility of creating a dedicated Forward Physics Facility to house far-forward experiments for the rest of the LHC era until the 2040s.



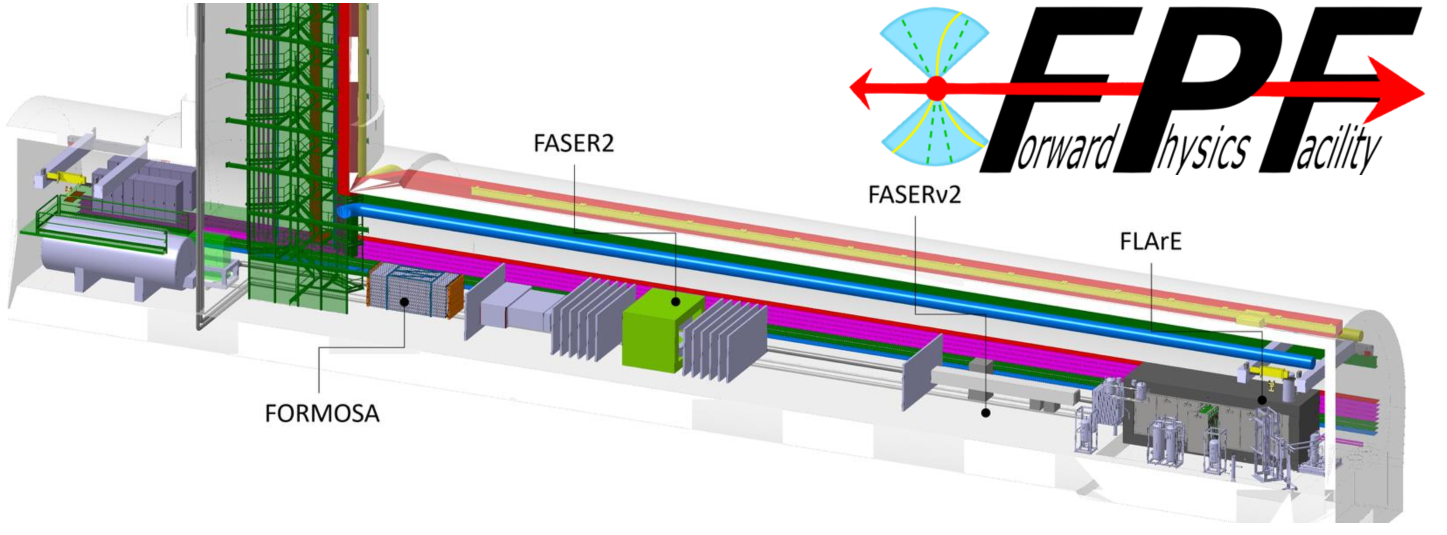
FPF site selection study and core study have identified an ideal site in France just outside the CERN main gate

CERN GIS

THE FPF AND ITS EXPERIMENTS

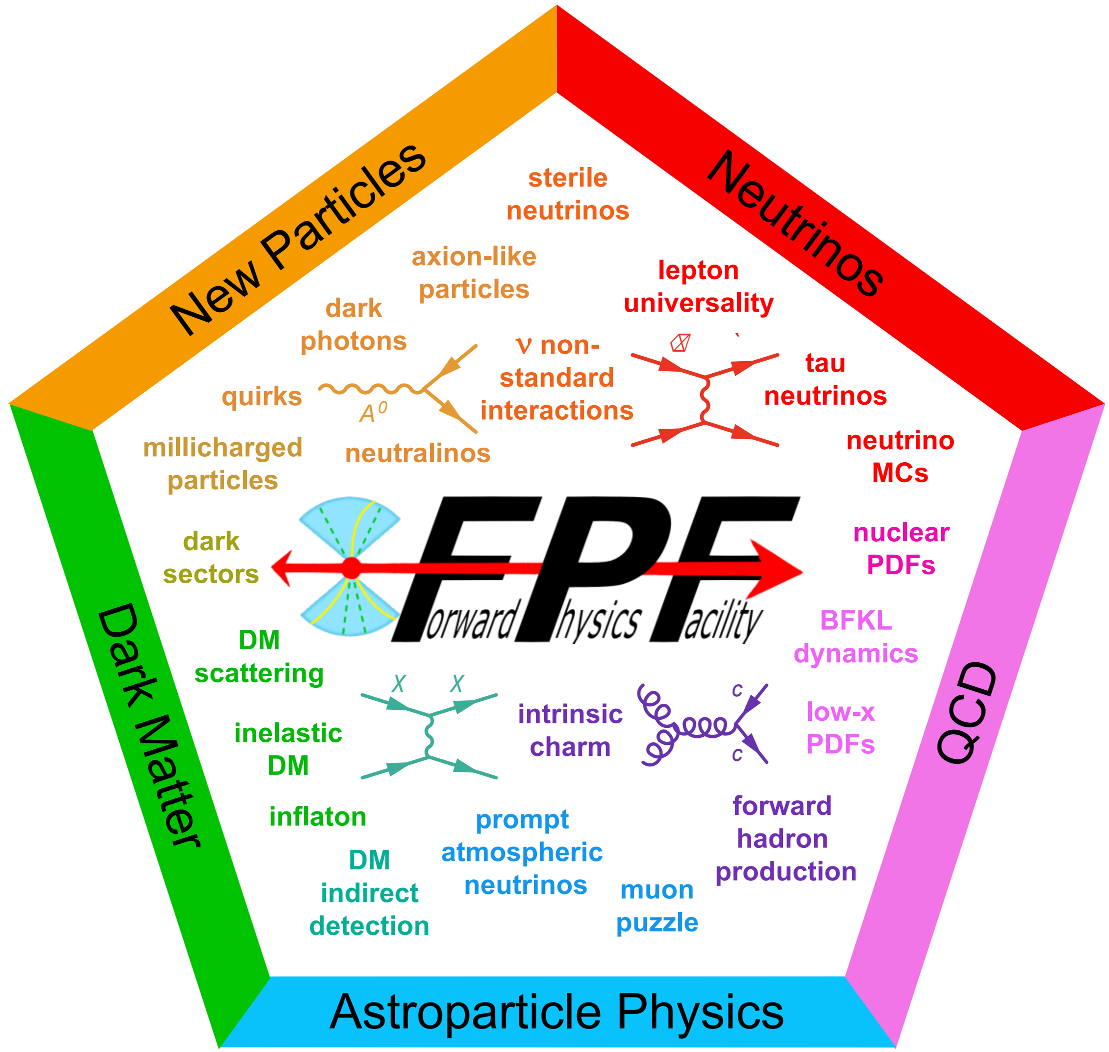
- At present there are 4 experiments being designed for the FPF
  - FASER2: magnetized spectrometer for BSM searches
  - FASERν2: emulsion-based neutrino detector
  - FLArE: LArTPC neutrino detector
  - FORMOSA: scintillator array for BSM searches (successor to milliQan)

- With strong support from CERN, the Facility has been designed in detail. Estimated (Class 4) cost is 35 MCHF for Facility, core costs of the experiments vary from 2 to 15 MCHF.



PHYSICS AT THE FPF

- The FPF at the HL-LHC will have many unique capabilities:
  - New physics in neutrino properties: neutrino blind → neutrino factory: 10^6 neutrinos (1000 per day!) at the highest human-made energies ever.
  - New particles:10,000 more powerful than current experiments, enhancement of conventional LHC searches, and many searches for particles that cannot be found anywhere else.



UNIQUE DISCOVERY OPPORTUNTIES

- FPF experiments have the potential to discovery BSM physics that cannot be seen anywhere else. One of many examples: Millicharged particles.

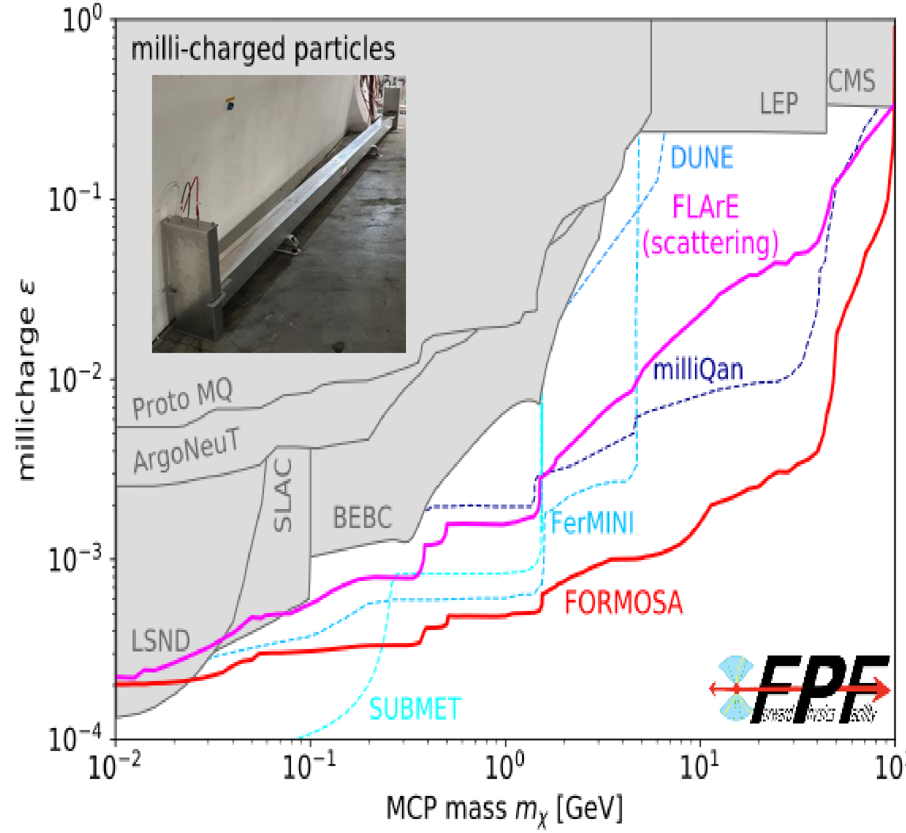
- Since the Millikan oil drop experiment: are the charges of all particles integer multiples of e? In fact, milli-charged particles are now well motivated by theories of dark matter and dark sectors.

- The state-of-the art currently is the cleverly named milliQan experiment near CMS at the LHC.

  Matthew Citron and collaborators

- But milliQan's sensitivity can be greatly enhanced simply by moving it to the forward region, a detector idea called FORMOSA.

- Currently being investigated with the FORMOSA Demonstrator behind FASER.



Foroughi-Abari, Kling, Tsai (2020)

QUIRKS

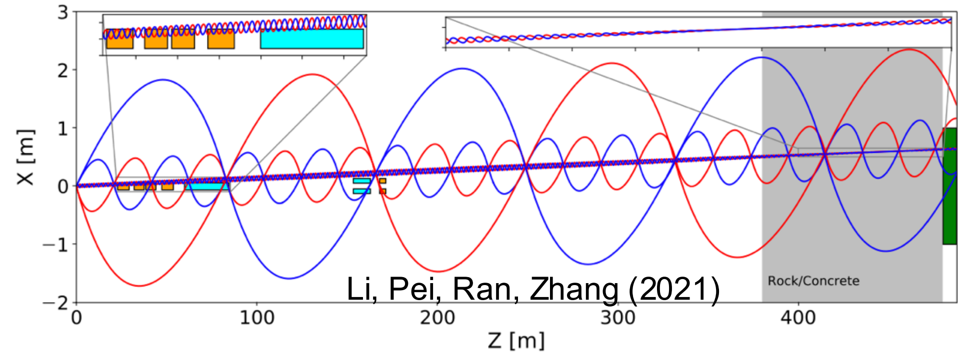
- Supposed there are new charged particles that are also charged under a new strong force: quirks.

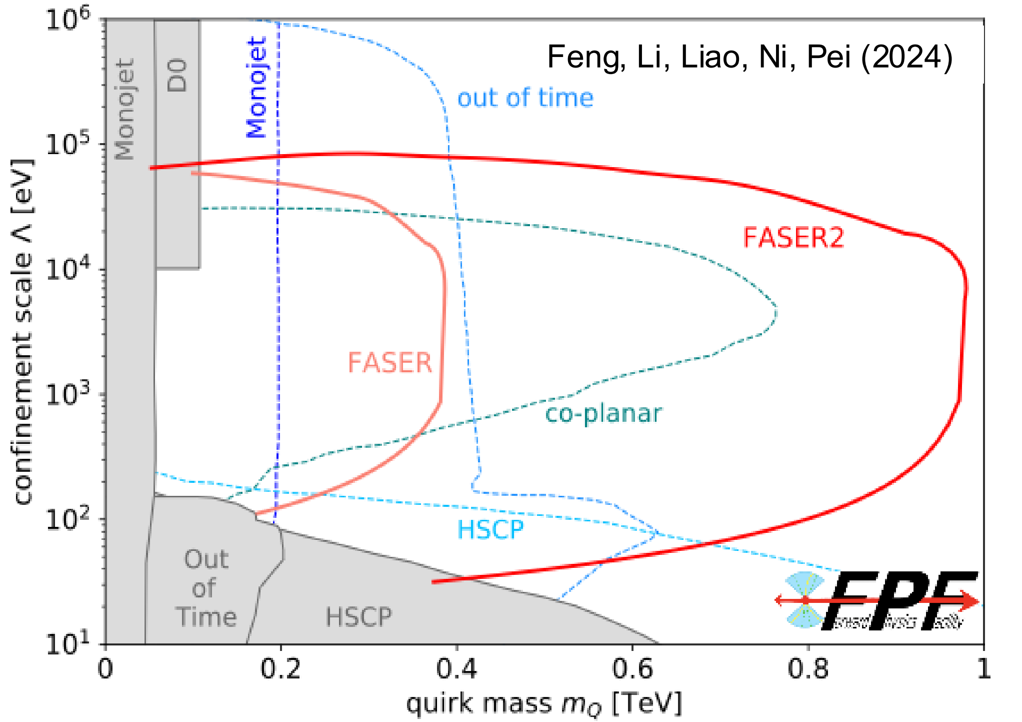
Kang, Luty (2008)

- If heavy, these are produced at the LHC, but move slowly down the beamline, oscillating about their center of mass.

- By looking for 2 coincident slow or delayed tracks (out of time with the bunch crossing), forward experiments can discover quirks with masses up to ~TeV.

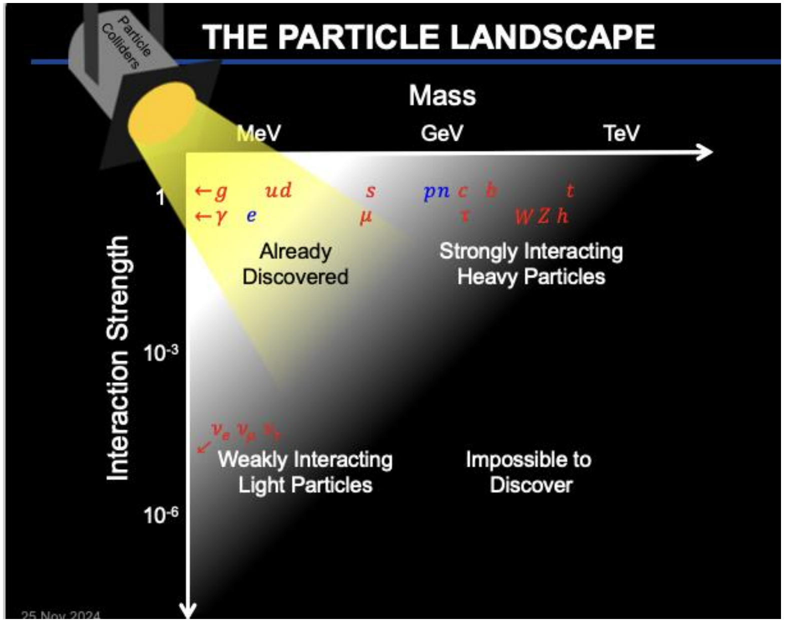
- Unique discovery potential at FASER and the FPF: very challenging at ATLAS/CMS, impossible at all other expts.

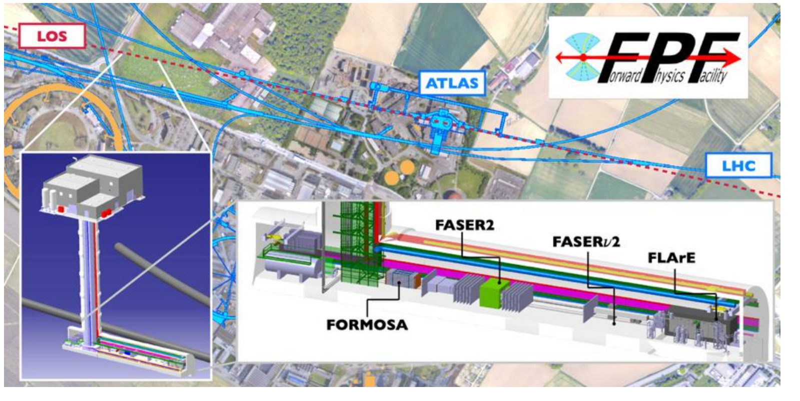




SUMMARY

- Neglected for decades, the forward region at particle colliders turns out to be a treasure trove of interesting physics that can be mined with small, fast, inexpensive experiments.
- At the LHC, initial work has already created the new field of collider neutrino physics and is probing dark matter and dark sectors with far greater sensitivity than previously imagined.
- Is there another November revolution waiting for us in the forward region? Much more to come!



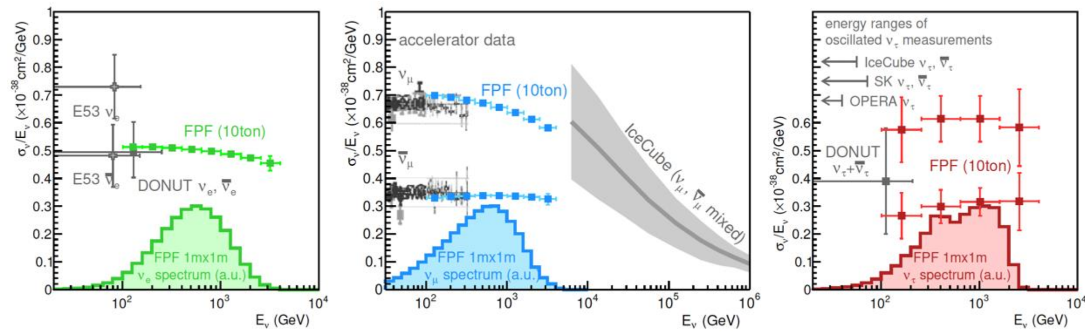


EXTRAS

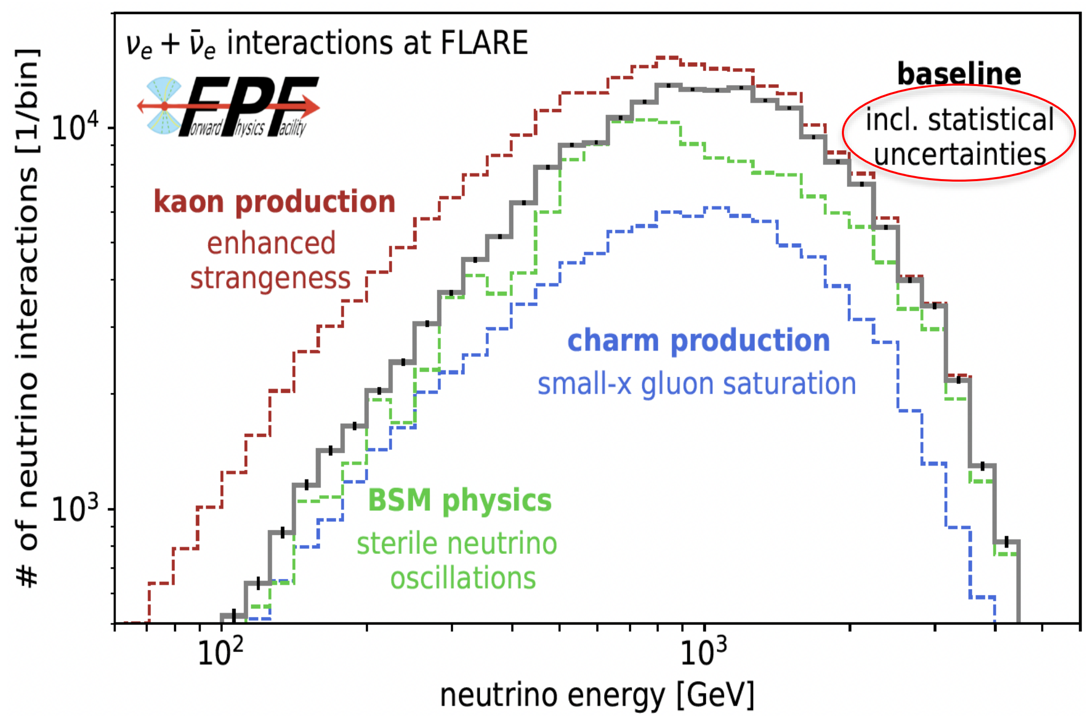
A LESSON FROM BLAZING SADDLES

NEUTRINOS AT THE FPF

- The FPF experiments will see $10^5\ \nu_e$, $10^6\ \nu_\mu$, and $10^4\ \nu_\tau$ interactions at TeV energies. The last chance to probe this in a controlled environment for at least 50 years.

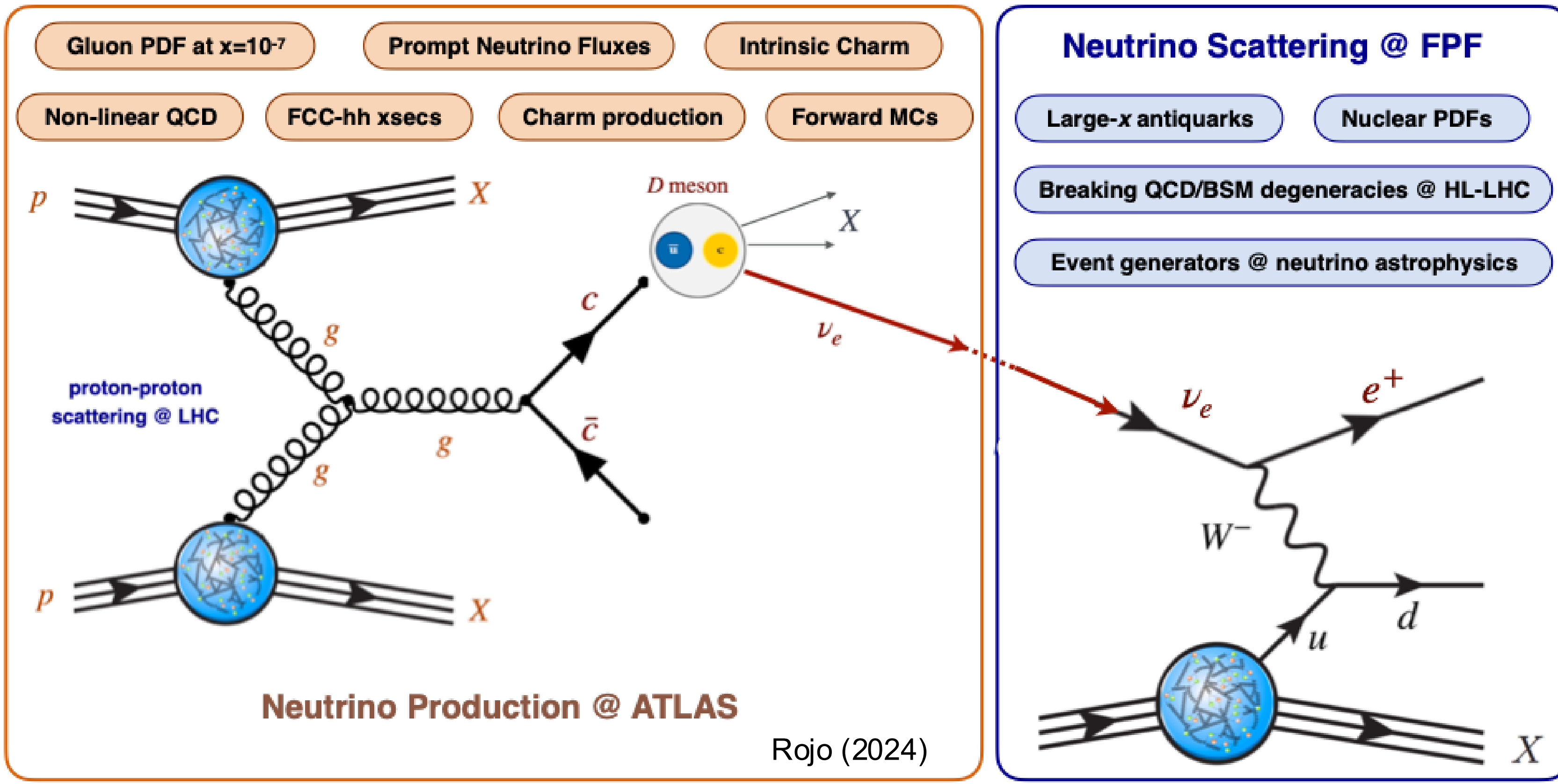


- Neutrinos are produced by forward hadron production: π, K, D, ... Dependence on E, η will inform
  - Astroparticle physics: muon puzzle, …
  - QCD: pdfs at x $\sim 10^{-1}$, x $\sim 10^{-7}$, intrinsic charm, small-x gluon saturation, …
  - Neutrino oscillations: ν_s with $\Delta m^2 \sim 10^3\ \mathrm{eV}^2$



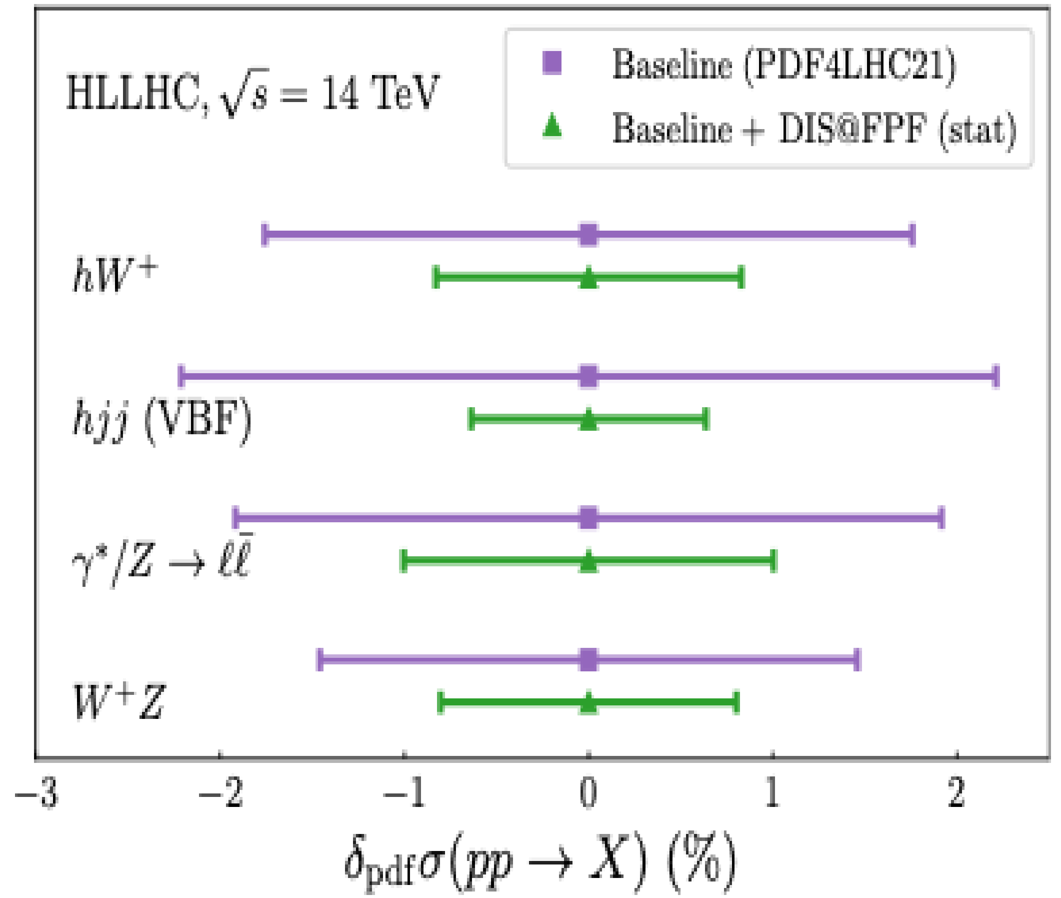
PRODUCTION, PROPAGATION, INTERACTION

- Neutrino event rates are sensitive to forward hadron production, neutrino propagation, and neutrino interactions. Double differential event rates as a function of energy and pseudorapidity for each neutrino flavor can disentangle these, probe a vast number of interconnected topics.



ENHANCEMENT OF HIGH P_T SEARCHES

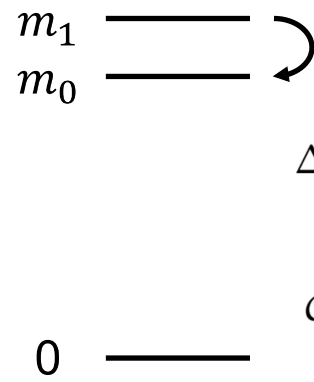
- The FPF will provide new constraints on pdfs that will sharpen studies at ATLAS and CMS.
- For example, W, Z, and Higgs boson studies.
- Will also remove degeneracies between pdfs and new physics ("fitting away new physics"), extending the reach for new particle searches (e.g., ~10 TeV W', Z').



Cruz-Martinez, Fieg, Giani, Krack, Makela, Rabemananjara, Rojo (2023)

DARK MATTER

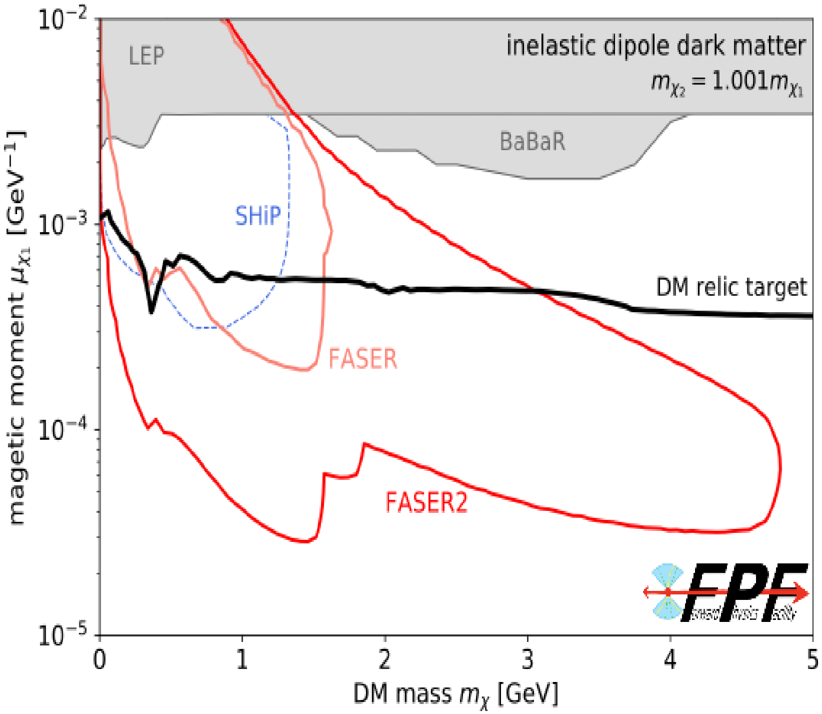
- In the last few decades, there has been an intense effort to detect dark matter through non-gravitational couplings, all yielding null results.
- One generic possibility that is infamously hard to detect: inelastic dark matter, where there are two nearly-degenerate dark states with off-diagonal couplings to the SM.
- These generically lead to long-lived particles, but with soft decay products, but these are highly boosted to observable levels at the FPF.
- Bottom line: the FPF can discover DM (or any compressed spectrum), which cannot be seen anywhere else (ATLAS/CMS, SHiP and other fixed target expts, direct and indirect DM searches, …)



$\chi_1 \to \chi_0 \gamma$

$$\Delta \equiv \frac{\Delta m}{m_0} \equiv \frac{m_1 - m_0}{m_0}$$

$$\mathcal{O}_m = \frac{1}{\Lambda_m} \overline{\chi}_1 \sigma^{\mu\nu} \chi_0 F_{\mu\nu}$$



Dienes, Fieg, et al. (2023)