EHT imaging of the shadows of supermassive black holes. I. The unique conditions for mm-VLBI

Introducing

- Chief Scientist at JIVE: Joint Institute for VLBI ERIC
 - EVN: European VLBI Network • Consortium of (European) Telescopes operators
- Professor Galactic Radio Astronomy Sterrewacht Leiden, Leiden University
 Oldest astronomy department in the world
- Affiliated staff University of New Mexico, Albuquerque
- Project Director Event Horizon Telescope



Joint Institute for VLBI



Career path...

- 1981 study astronomy at Leiden
 - Computer science, experimental physics

• 1987 PhD project on OH maser stars in the Galactic centre

- Field around SgrA*, VLA monitoring, VLBI measuring interstellar scattering
- •Algorithm research, visibility based continuum subtraction, MC radiative transfer masers

• 1992 postdoc on astrochemistry

• Using the Owens Valley millimeter telescope

• 1994 postdoc/support at VLBA, New Mexico

- Start interest on astrometry of masers
- Developed VLBI scheduling software used for VSOP mission (still being used)
- 1997-2007 at JIVE, head of software, operations, user tools
- 2007–2017 JIVE director
 - •Heading a small-sized observatory, now a European entity
- 2013- today Professor Galactic Radio astronomy at Leiden
 - •teaching radio astronomy and practical astronomy
- 2020 today EHT project director

What is the EHT?

• 400+ scientists in 19 countries

- Consortium of 13 stakeholders
 - Associated with correlators and telescopes
 - but not ALMA
- Run VLBI telescope 2 weeks/year
- But also organise the science process

Complex project

- Internal structure
 - Board
 - Management Team
 - Science Council
 - Working Groups
 - Including the Publication WG
 - Deciding on papers scope, authorship, status
- Many cultures and ambition levels
 - Mixed funding arrangements
 - Many time zones



Event Horizon Telescope



Outline



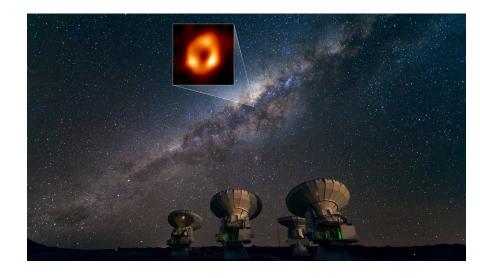
- Overall Objective
 - Introduce the practices of the EHT:
 - facilitating a critical look what it takes to measure the shadow of supermassive black holes

• Today: Understanding the special astronomical circumstances that allow us to resolve 2 black hole shadows

- History, the central engine puzzle
- Optically thin view of centers of AGN
- •Synchrotron emission is bright enough for VLBI
- •The earth can support mm-VLBI at sufficient resolution
- Results so far, variability differences

• Later lectures

- •Synthesis imaging, understanding the visibility data
- Instrument implementation, calibration, polarisation
- Interpretation, calibrating gravity



Who are you?



- Assume you are physics students with basic knowledge of astronomy
 - •Yes?: Galaxies, Fourier transforms, kpc
 - No?: Radiative processess, Radio loud Active Galactic Nuclei, VLBI telescopes
- Must communicate:

QUESTIONS PLEASE!

- •Type 1: Can you explain more?
- •Type 2: That is interesting, does it imply that ...?

Radio Astronomy - Unobscured

\cdot Radio waves travel freely through space

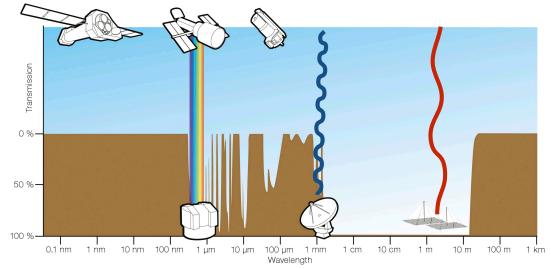
 \cdot Not affected by "dust"

 $\cdot \operatorname{As}$ dust is much smaller than radio waves

- \cdot Molecules come in at FIR
- But radio affected by free electrons • When v goes below plasma frequency, typically $n_e=0.03 \text{ cm}^{-3} \Rightarrow 0.3 \text{ kHz}$
- And through a large window in the atmosphere
 - Except in ionosphere the electron are more abundant $\cdot\,n_e{=}10^6\;cm^{\cdot3}$ \Rightarrow v =10Mhz
 - High end cut-off by molecules • Go to high sites, like ALMA

· But low frequency, long wavelengths

- $\cdot\,Factor\;10^{6}$ longer waves compared to optical
- \cdot Carry little energy, not much signal
 - $\cdot\,\mbox{For small},$ thermally emitting objects like stars
- \cdot Low resolution even with big telescopes

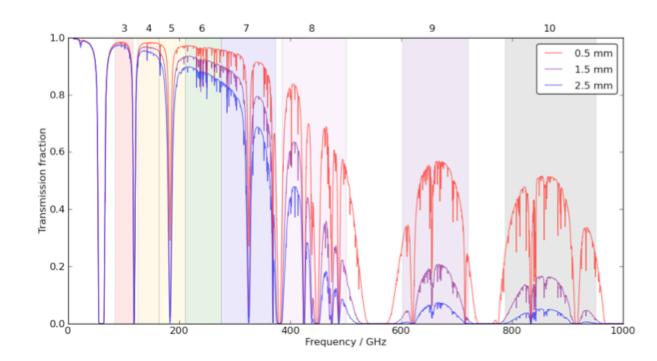


But, at least they can be treated as waves..

Shortest wavelengths

- Must go to very high dry sites • ALMA is "half way space"
- \cdot Can do 1mm or even sub-mm
- ALMA was a game changer!
 - $\cdot\,\text{But}$ was not obvious it would do VLBI...





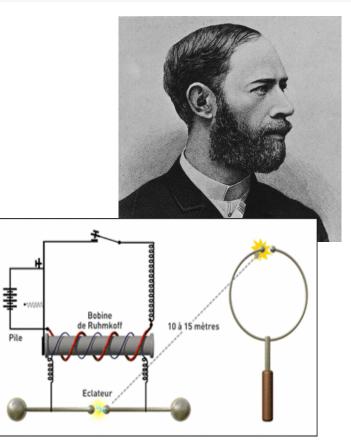
Early days of radio astronomy

• James Clerk Maxwell develops the laws of electro-magnetism (Maxwell's laws) that show that radiation can span a wide-range of frequency (1865)

 $\nabla \cdot D = \rho$ $\nabla \cdot B = 0$ $\nabla \times E = -\frac{\partial B}{\partial t}$ $\nabla \times H = J + \frac{\partial D}{\partial t}$

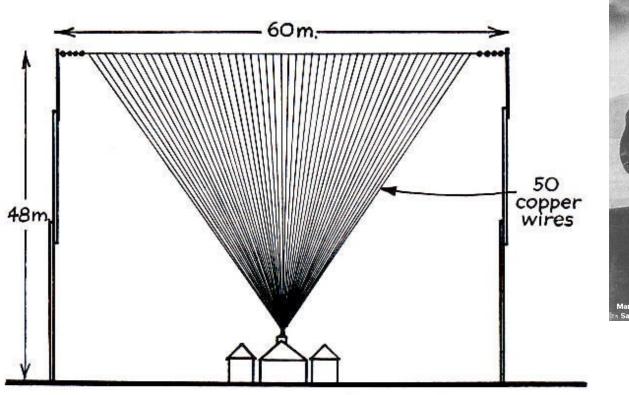


Heinrich Hertz became the first person to artificially generate waves of a different wavelength from those of NIR/ visible light (1886).



9

Early Antenna Arrays (1900)

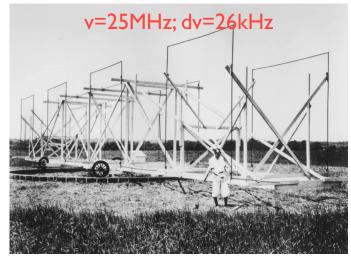






Early days of radio astronomy

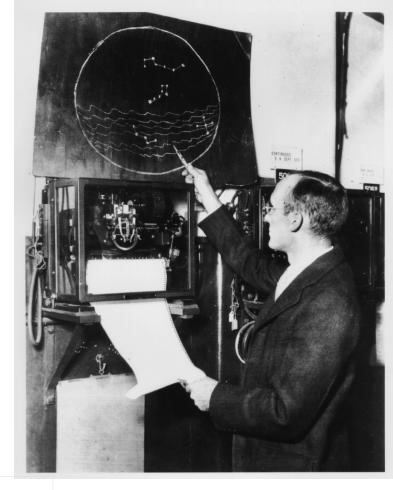
1932 Discovery of cosmic radio waves Karl Jansky:



Galactic centre

20.5 MHz Recording 16 Sept 1932

Skepsis: requires something of 2 10⁵ K covering many square degrees in the sky



Radio astronomy was a surprise

\cdot As almost all we see shine in optical are stars

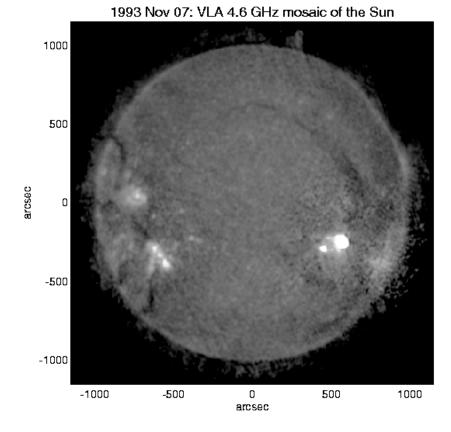
- \cdot Close nebulas are in fact heated by stars
- · Other galaxies? Only established after 'Great debate" in 1920

\cdot Do some numbers with that knowledge

- \cdot Observe at 1GHz = 30cm
- \cdot Assume the Sun is a black-body at 5770K
- Observe it with the Dwingeloo telescope • Note: its beam at 1 GHz = 0.8°
- · Yields 12000Jy = 12,000 10^{-26} W m⁻² Hz⁻¹
- Power received: 5 10-14W for bandwidth of 1MHz

· The current in antenna receiver:

- \cdot approximately 0.03µA
- \cdot But at a frequency where you can operate an amplifier
 - $\cdot\, Like$ in your mobile phone, 50dB does the trick



But this was at 8 light-min, next star...

- \cdot Put the sun at 1pc
 - \cdot Same calculation, now with much smaller beam
 - \cdot Or simply divide everything by (1 pc/1 AU)²
- ·Normal, thermally emitting star: 0.3µJy
 - \cdot Very hard to do, even nowadays
 - \cdot Bit better if you go up the Planck curve
- \cdot So (normal) stars are not (yet) the favourite targets
- Need something that is a bit bigger on the sky • Example: interstellar clouds
- Or something that appears to be a lot hotter • Non-thermal emission from "exotic" processes
- \cdot Or move up the RJ law by going to (sub)mm

 \cdot Clouds the size of planetary systems can be detected at 10 - 100 K

Proxima Centauri



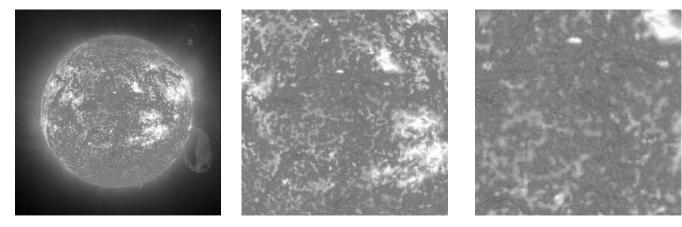
False color Hubble Space Telescope WFPC2 image taken in 2013. The bright lines are diffraction spikes.

Observation data				
Epoch J2000.0 E	quinox J2000.0 (ICRS)			
Constellation	Centaurus			
Pronunciation	/prokseme sen'to:ri/ or			
	/proksime sen'to:rai/ ^[1]			
Right ascension	14 ^h 29 ^m 42.946 ^{s[2]}			
Declination	-62° 40′ 46.16″ ^[2]			
Apparent magnitude (V)	10.43 – 11.11 ^[3]			
Characteristics				
Evolutionary stage	Main sequence			
Spectral type	M5.5Ve ^[4]			
U-B color index	1.26			

Flux vs Intensity

· Specific Intensity is an intrinsic property of the source,

- \cdot Flux density depends on the distance
 - \cdot As the solid angle of the source decreases
 - \cdot If it is smaller than the telescope beam: "beam dilution"



- · Specific intensity can be measured on earth
 - \cdot Relates to the radiation physics
 - \cdot If the radiation reaches us without absorption, scattering
- · Brightness temperature + LTE + optically thick = T_{kin}
 - · Assumption of optically thin necessary to measure column density

From intensity to detected energy

• Accumulate specific intensity (for up to 2 polarisation components) over time, frequency, solid angle

$$dE = I_{v} \cos\theta \, d\sigma \, d\Omega \, dt \, dv$$

\cdot Integrate Specific Intensity to get Flux density

- \cdot Express Flux density as Jy (not to be called flux)
- $\cdot 1 \text{ Jy} = 10^{-26} \text{ W m}^{-2} \text{ Hz}^{-1}$
- · Specific Intensity as Jy/beam (also spectral intensity, spectral brightness)
- \cdot Difference is the beam solid angle
 - \cdot Set by the telescope (i.e. unresolved object)
 - $\cdot \, \text{Or}$ by the astronomical body (resolved object)

· Relates in turn to receiver temperature of telescope

		radians	steradian
1	deg	1.75E-02	2.39E-04
1	arcmin	2.91E-04	6.65E-08
1	arcsec	4.85E-06	1.85E-11
1	mas	4.85E-09	1.85E-17

$$S_v = \int I_v \, d\Omega$$

Radiative transfer and brightness temperature

· Basic equation defines absorption and source

$$\frac{dI_v}{ds} = -\kappa I_v + j_v$$

· Defining optical depth:

$$\frac{dI_v}{d\tau_v} = I_v - B_v(T)$$

 \cdot Note that optical depth has only meaning at specific frequency

• In Rayleigh Jeans approximation:

• Remember:

$$h\nu/kT << 1 \qquad e^{h\nu/kT} \sim 1 + h\nu/kT + \dots$$

$$B_{v} = \frac{2hv^{3}/c^{2}}{e^{hv/kT} - 1} \Longrightarrow B_{v} \approx \frac{2kTv}{c^{2}}$$

$$\frac{dT_b}{d\tau_v} = -T_b + T$$

Simple solution

 \cdot Which has the formal solution

$$T_{b} = T_{ex}(1 - e^{-\tau_{v}}) + T_{bg}e^{-\tau_{v}}$$

- ·So, the brightness temperature starts (τ =0) at some background T_{bg}
- · And approaches the (excitation) temperature ($\tau = \infty$)
- \cdot This in turn is the kinetic temperature when LTE can be assumed

\cdot Lot of detailed physics hidden in τ_v

- \cdot But when $\tau=0$ the brightness is constant
 - $\cdot \operatorname{Brightness}$ is an observable that is distance independent
 - $\cdot\,\text{Can}$ be measured (and interferometers are good at that)
- \cdot When optically thick: measure Temperature at $\tau{=}1$
 - \cdot Spectrum depends on $\tau(\nu)$
 - \cdot And $T(\tau):$ the temperature structure along line of sight

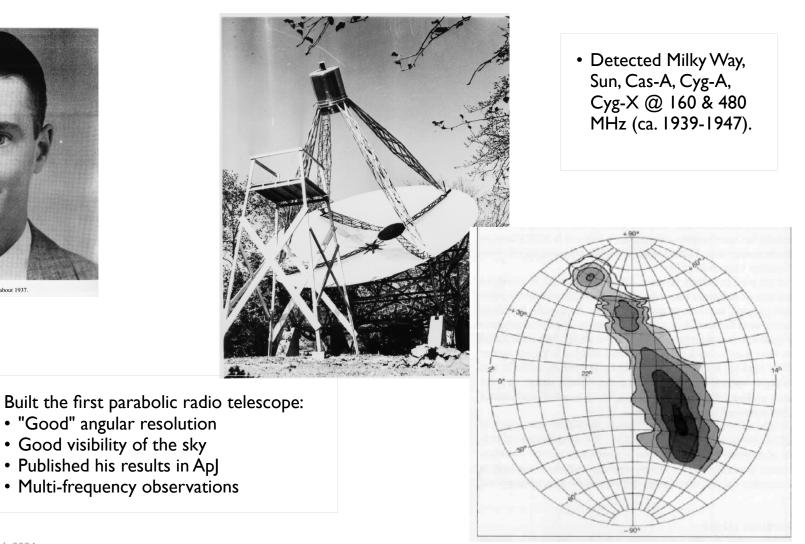
 $T_{ex} \approx T_{kin}$

Grote Reber (1911-2002); the first radio astronomer



-Grote Reber, about 1937.

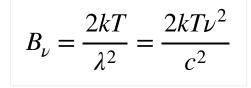
• "Good" angular resolution • Good visibility of the sky • Published his results in Apl

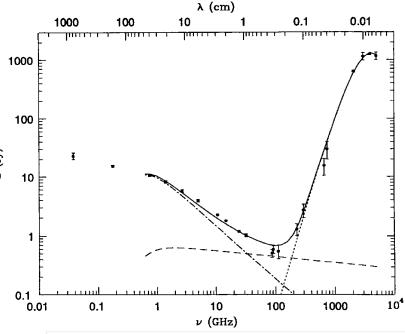


Emission mechanism

- Thermal emission: radio is in the Rayleigh Jeans tail
 - · Example: Sun = 5600K, and 6 10⁵km at 1 pc: 1µJy at 1 GHz
 - \cdot Need much brighter/much larger objects





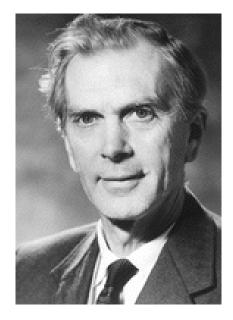


The radio and far-infrared spectrum of the nearby starburst galaxy M82: dust, free-free and synchrotron

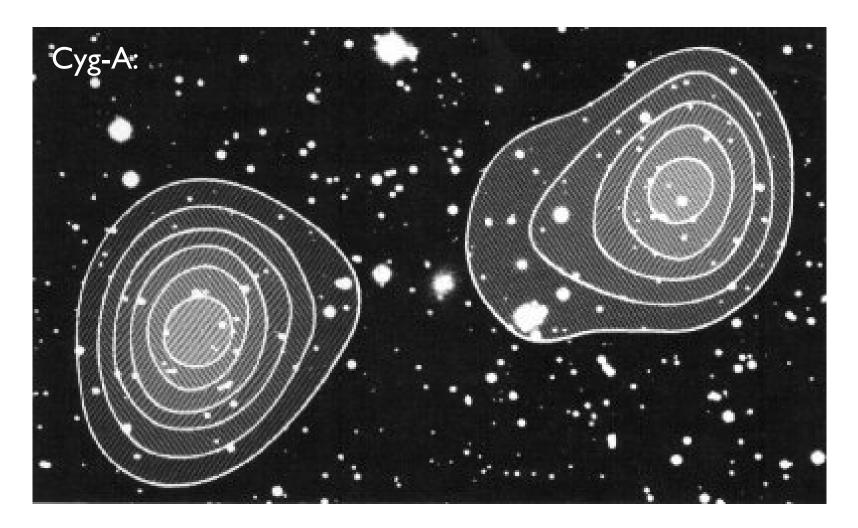
Radio interferometers

In the 1950's the first radio arrays (interferometers) were constructed. People like Martin Ryle (pictured) pioneered the the interferometry technique, receiving the Noble Prize in 1974 for developing the concept of aperture synthesis (see lecture 4).

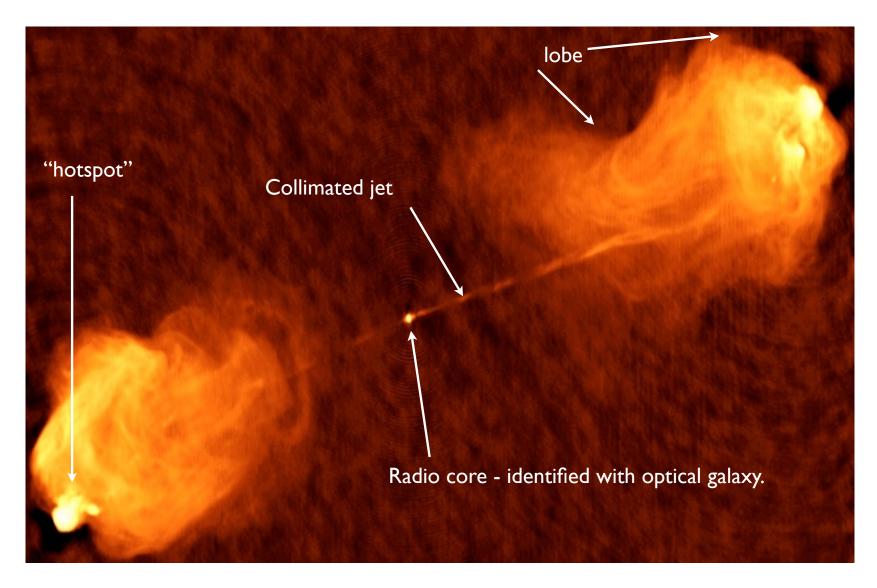




In 1954 interferometer measurements showed that the radio emission from one of the brightest sources in the sky, Cyg-A came from bright regions on either side of a host galaxy.



As interferometers began to survey hundreds of bright radio sources, many of them exhibited this "classical double-structure".



"Modern" (1990!) VLA image of the radio galaxy Cyg-A

AGN Energy crisis

- · Cygnus A is blowing radio lobes
 - \cdot Distance of CygA = 230Mpc (cosmological scale)
 - · Radio lobes are at 30kpc radius \Rightarrow this has lasted at least 30,000 yr!
- · Synchrotron radiation: relativistic electrons in magnetic fields
 - . Flux of CygA is $S_{\nu} = 3000 \text{Jy} \left(\frac{\nu}{1 \text{GHz}}\right)^{-0.8}$, where 1 Jy = 10⁻²⁶ W m⁻² Hz⁻¹
 - \cdot Very little energy reaches our telescopes, but the total energy is enormous

. Integrate from 10MHz to 100GHz, and use $L = 4\pi d^2 \int S_{\nu} d\nu$

- \cdot 3.5 $10^{11}~L_{\odot}\,!$ same as entire Galaxy (and this is only radio)
- · This requires converting 0.5 M_{\odot} /yr into energy at 5% efficiency...
 - \cdot For direct conversion E=mc²
- And if it comes from single object, stationary, we need to worry about Eddington limit:

 $\left(\frac{L_E}{L_e}\right) \approx 3.310^4 \left(\frac{M}{M_e}\right)$

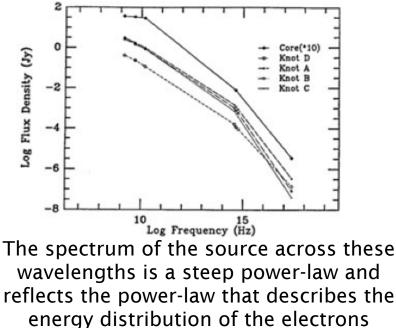
- \cdot There is a minimum mass for certain energy production
- $\cdot \operatorname{Or}$ it will be blown apart
- \cdot At least $10^7\,M_{\odot}$ object required to gravitationally balance radiation pressure

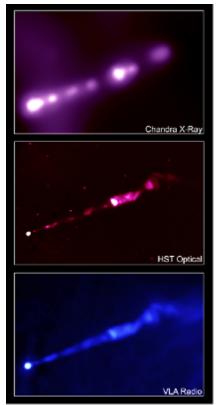
Non-thermal synchrotron emission

• Synchrotron emission is associated with the acceleration of (ultra-)<u>relativistic</u> electrons in magnetic fields

 \cdot Energy emitted depends on magnetic field $% \left({{{\mathbf{r}}_{{\mathbf{r}}}}_{{\mathbf{r}}}} \right)$ and electron energies

 Synchrotron emission is observed in AGN at radio, IR, optical, UV and even X-ray wavelengths

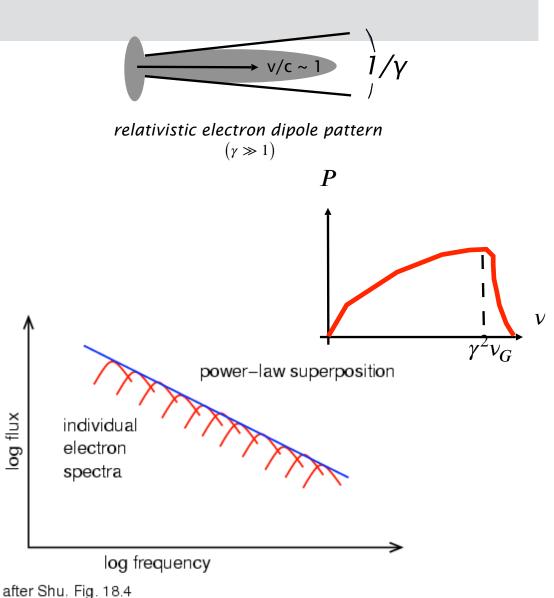




Synchrotron emission observed in Virgo-A (M87)

Synchrotron particularities

- Relativistic effects: $m = \gamma m_e$ and $E = \gamma m_e c^2$
 - $\cdot\,power$ pattern of the electron beamed $\approx\,1/\gamma$
 - \cdot Frequency pattern electron depend on E
 - \cdot In practice power spectrum of energies
- Large scale magnetic fields are involved
 - $\cdot \, \text{Source}$ will polarised
 - Beam depolarisation can occur when small scale



Common radio emission processes

λ	Spectral line	Continuum
m, cm and mm	Neutral Hydrogen (HI) 21cm fine structure line: neutral gas Hydrogen recombination lines: ionized gas OH, H ₂ 0, SiO Masers: dense, warm molecular gas Molecular rotation lines: cold molecular gas	Thermal Bremsstrahlung (free-free emission): HII regions Synchrotron Radiation: Jets in radio galaxies, pulsars, shocks in supernovae, cosmic ray electrons in the magnetic fields of normal galaxies etc., acceleration of electrons in stellar and planetary systems Thermal emission from dust: cold, dense gas
sub-mm (and FIR)	Molecular Rotation Lines: warm, dense gas Solid State features (silicates): dust Hydrogen recombination lines: ionized HII regions	Thermal emission - warm dust

The radio sky is dominated. by bright radio galaxies in far universe



Radio sky over Green Bank radio telescopes



Active Galactic Nuclei come in varieties

· Low activity AGN (radio quiet)

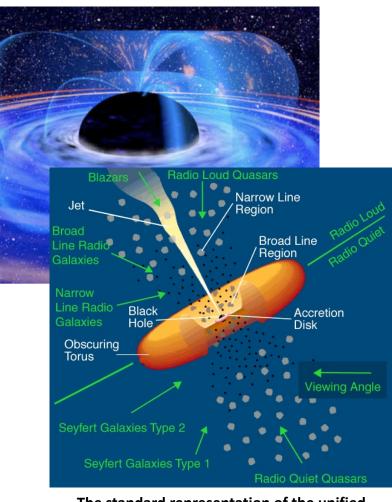
• Mainly spirals (Sa-c)

- \cdot Some disturbed morphology E/S0 galaxies
- \cdot High activity AGN (radio quiet)

• Mainly E/S0 galaxies

 \cdot Some spirals

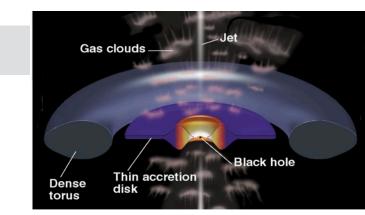
- Radio loud AGN • Massive ellipticals
- Likely due to a difference in black hole mass
 Unified by orientation?

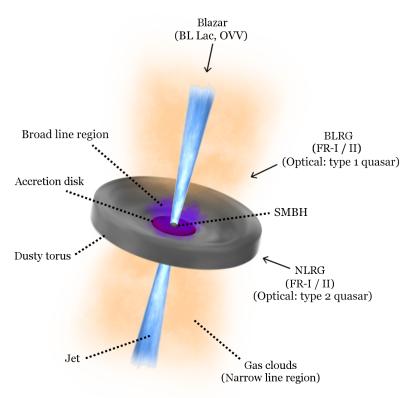


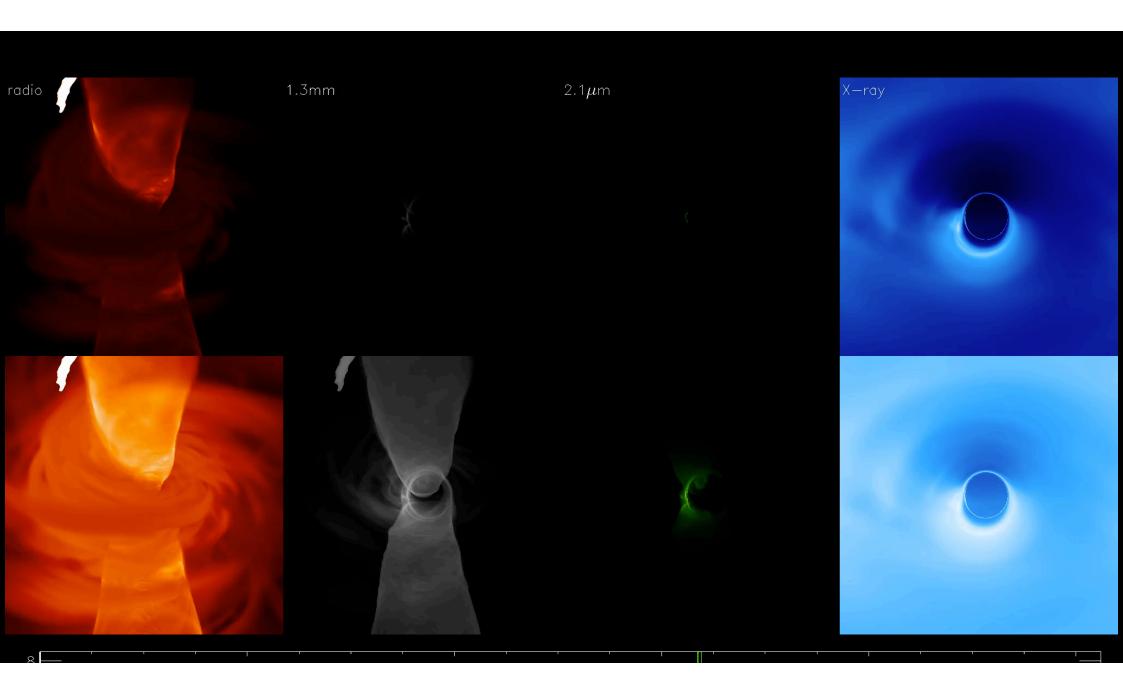
The standard representation of the unified model of AGN

Types of radio-loud AGN

- Looking down the barrel of the jet (θ = few degrees) we see spectral continuum over all wavelengths e.g. no spectral lines in BL Lacs
- At small angles (~15 degrees), a one sided jet is observed. Broad and narrow line emission may also be seen in the optical
- When the jet is close to the plane of the sky (~75 - 90 degrees) we see a two sided radio galaxy
- \cdot When viewed in the plane of the sky they take two (morphological) forms, FR I and FR II







The Largest Black Holes on the Sky

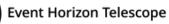
• Depends on knowing:

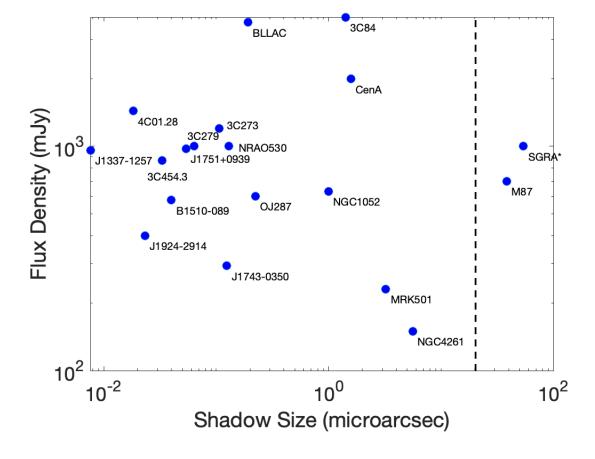
- Distances (not so easy)
- BH mass estimates (no easy at all)
 - Interesting stuff with last stable orbit
 - Or photon ring

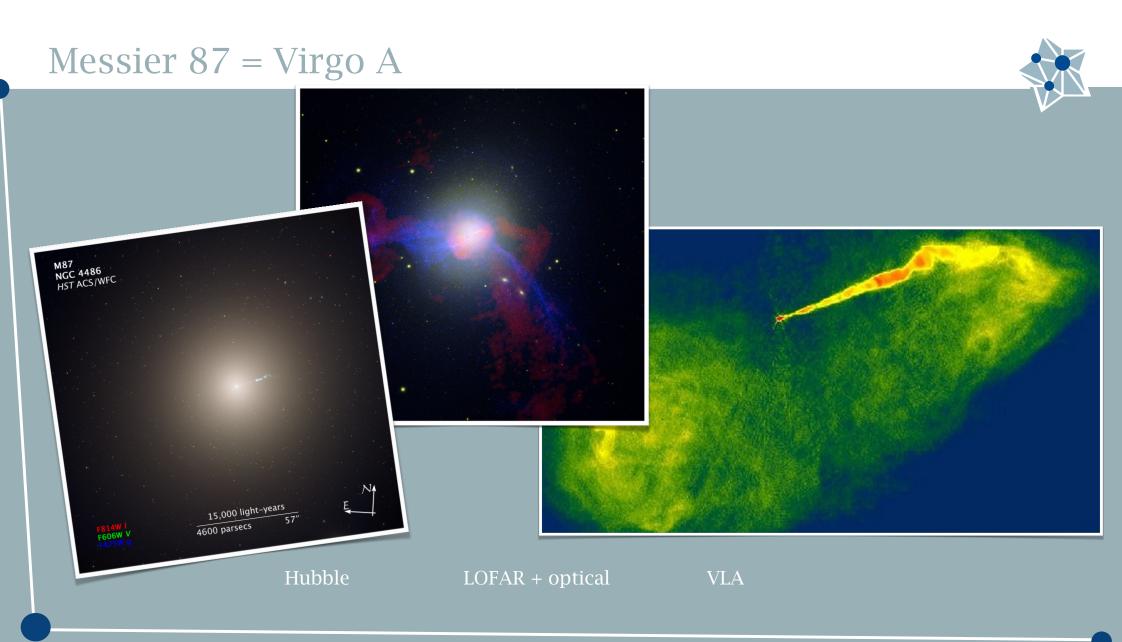
$$\theta_{\rm shadow} \approx 10 \frac{GM}{Dc^2}$$

- M87 ≈ 20 40 µas
 - Depending on mass determination
- SgrA* ≈ 50 µas
 - very well determined









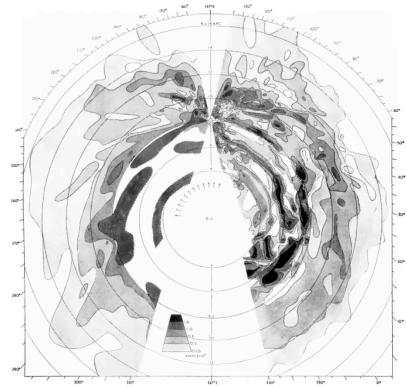
Jan Oort



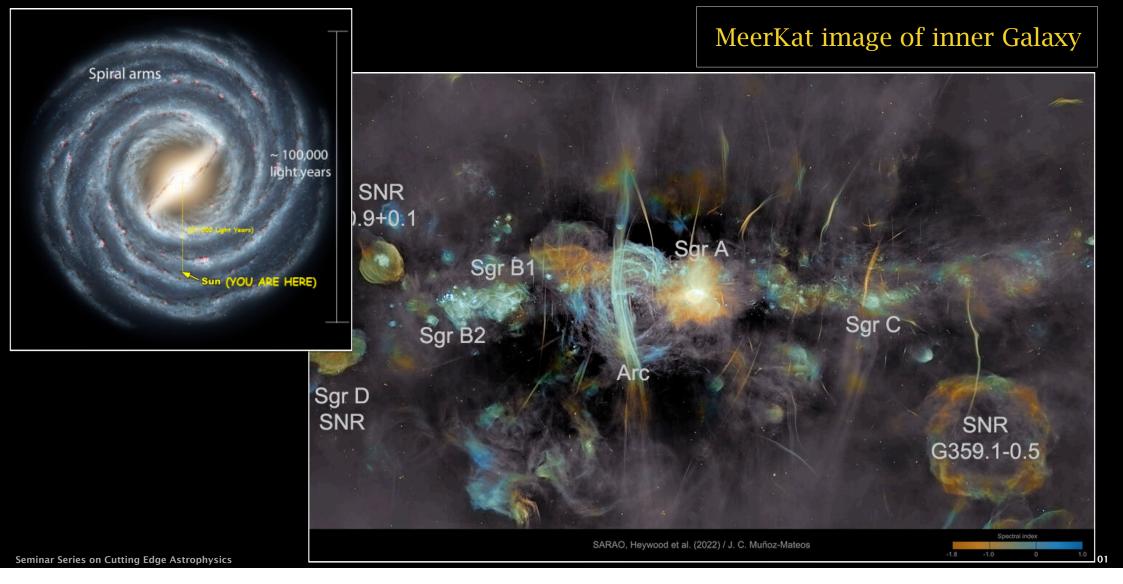
Oort had shown that the Milky Way rotated around its nucleus in Sagittarius.

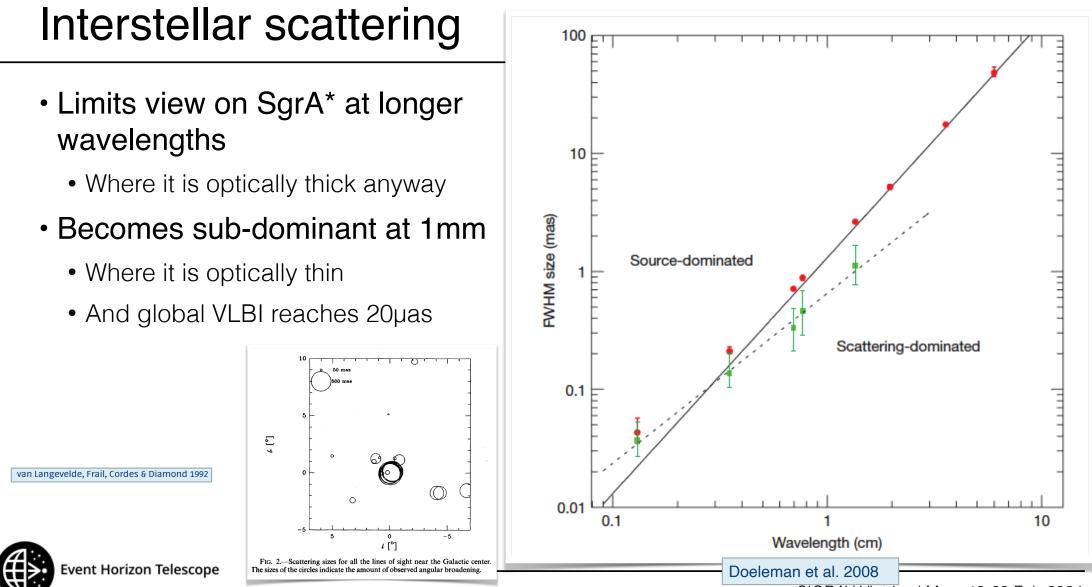
First heard of Reber's work in 1944.

He was greatly interested in studying the central part of the Milky Way but was unable to make progress due to dust obscuration...



The Milky Way, our Galaxy

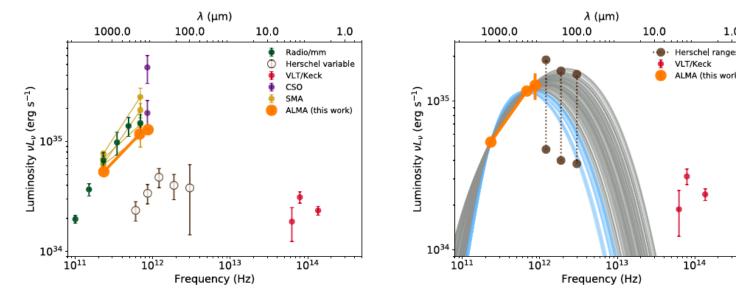




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Optically thin?

- Can be determined from overall spectrum
 - But must be taken with similar aparture across frequency range
 - ALMA result for SgrA*

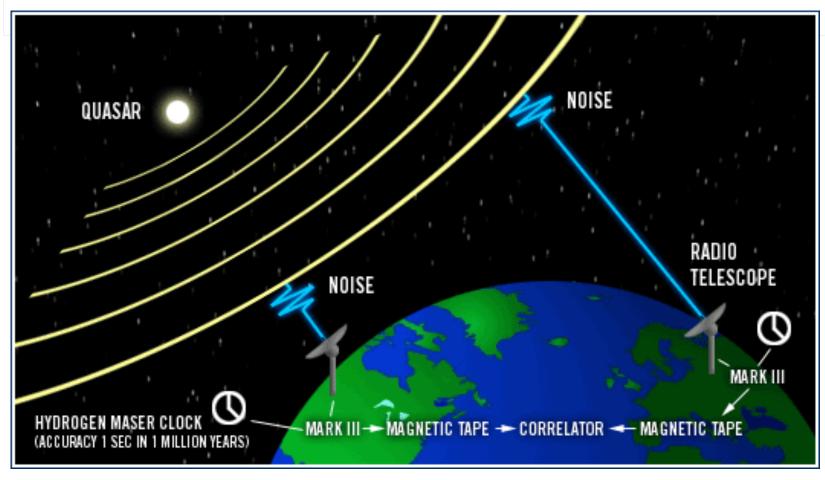


- AGN often show core-shift across frequencies
 - BH surrounding optically thick except for highest frequencies



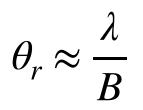
Very Long Baseline Interferometry

In 1967 the first transatlantic baselines (USA-Sweden) detected very compact radio sources. B ~ 8000km: milli-arcsecond resolution, very small sources.

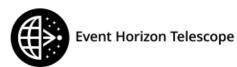




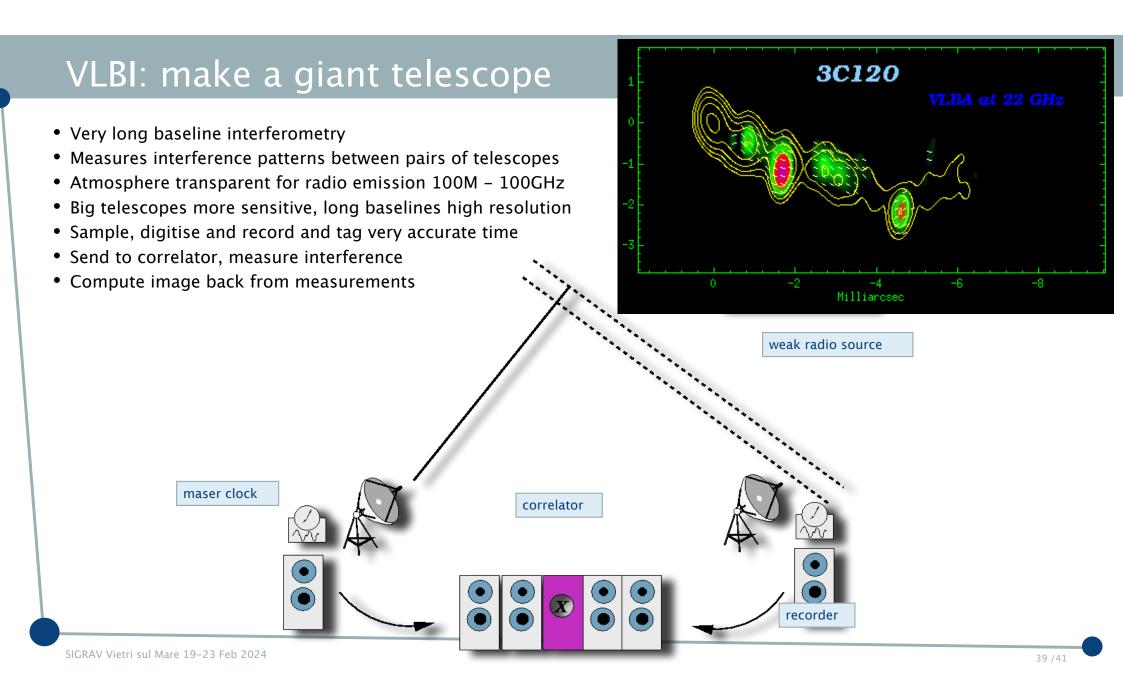
- Atacama Large Millimeter Array (ALMA), Chile
- ALMA Pathfinder Experiment (APEX), Chile
- James Clerk Maxwell Telescope (JCMT), Hawaii
- Large Millimeter Telescope (LMT), Mexico
- IRAM 30-meter Telescope, Spain
- South Pole Telescope (SPT), South Pole
- Submillimeter Array (SMA), Hawaii
- Submillimeter Telescope (SMT), Arizona



- EHT λ/B
 - •1.3 mm/13000 km = 1E-10 = 20.6 µas
- Hair in New York
 - •75 µm / 1700 km = 4E-11
- Donut on the moon • 8cm / 384400 km = 2E-10
- GPS on Mars
 - •15m / 225E6 km = 6.7E-11



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Fantastic resolution⇔ high brightness

• Express the sensitivity of VLBI in terms of Tb

 \cdot The sensitivity of an array with N identical dishes of size A is given by:

$$\Delta S_{v} = \frac{\sqrt{2} k_{b} T_{\text{sys}}}{\eta_{a} \eta_{c} A \sqrt{\Delta t \,\Delta v} \sqrt{\frac{1}{2} N(N-1)}}$$

· Convert to Intensity $\Delta I = \Delta S / \Delta \Omega$

· Approximate the resolution as $\Delta \Omega = \pi \theta^2 \approx (\lambda/L)^2$

• An use the Rayleigh-Jeans approximation:

 \cdot Not really valid in mm regime...

$$T_b = \frac{c^2}{2\upsilon^2 k} I_{\upsilon}$$

Brightness sensitivity of an array:

 \cdot So one can derive:

$$\Delta T_{\nu} \approx \frac{A_{synth} T_{sys}}{\sum A_{tel} \eta_a \eta_c \sqrt{\Delta t \Delta \nu}}$$

 \cdot Which expresses the brightness sensitivity in terms of the aperture filling factor (A_{synt}\!\!/\!\Sigma A_{tel})

 \cdot Typically we have:

• And:

$$\sqrt{\Delta t \Delta v} \le 10^3$$

$$A_{synth} / A_{tel} = 1000^2 km^2 / 30^2 m^2 \approx 10^9.$$

 \cdot So we can only detect very high brightness emission

- $\cdot\,ie$ lots of flux coming from a very small region
- \cdot Only interesting (resolved) when matching the beam

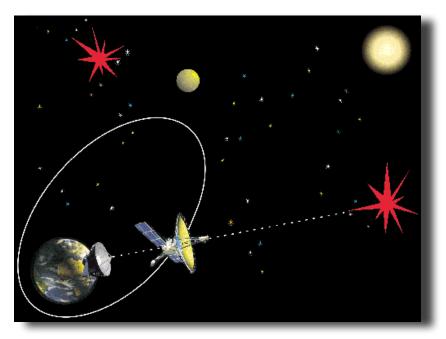
Brightness sensitivity

\cdot Sub-arcsec resolution requires 200000 λ baseline

· Brightness sensitivity requires filled aperture

- \cdot Thermal emission can be reached with ALMA
- \cdot Highest possible brightness temperatures with RadioAstron

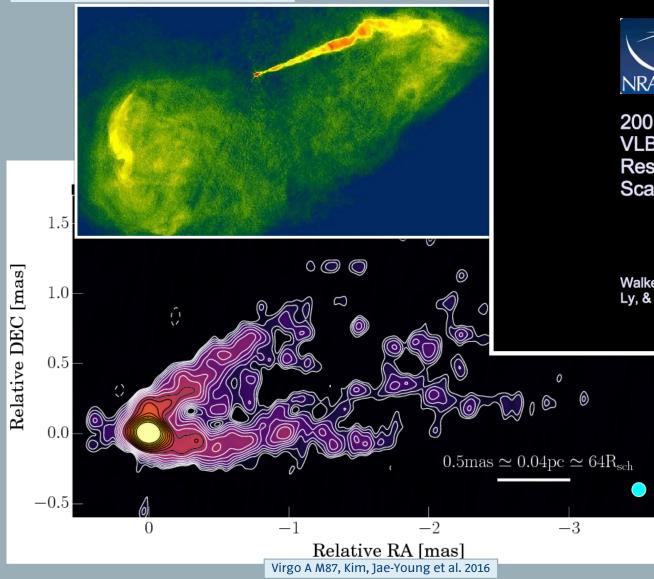




ALMA

RadioAstron

Let's zoom in on M87





M87 INNER JET

2007: Interval three weeks VLBA at 43 GHz Resolution 0.21 X 0.43 mas Scale: 1 mas = 0.081 pc \approx 140 Rs

Walker, Hardee, Davies, Ly, & Junor Ap. J. 2018

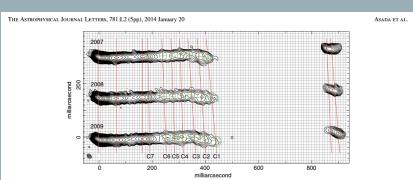
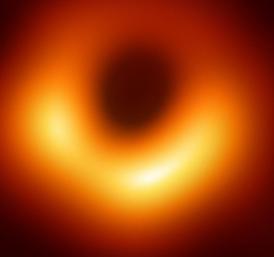


Figure 1. Contours are plotted at -1, 1, 1.4142, ..., 1024 \times 2.12 mJy beam⁻¹, which is three times the residual rms noise in the first epoch image. The synthesized beam is 19.9 mas x 14.6 mas with the major axis at a position angle of 73.24 for the first epoch. Model components and trajectories are represented by green circles and red lines, respectively. (A color version of this figure is available in the online journal.)



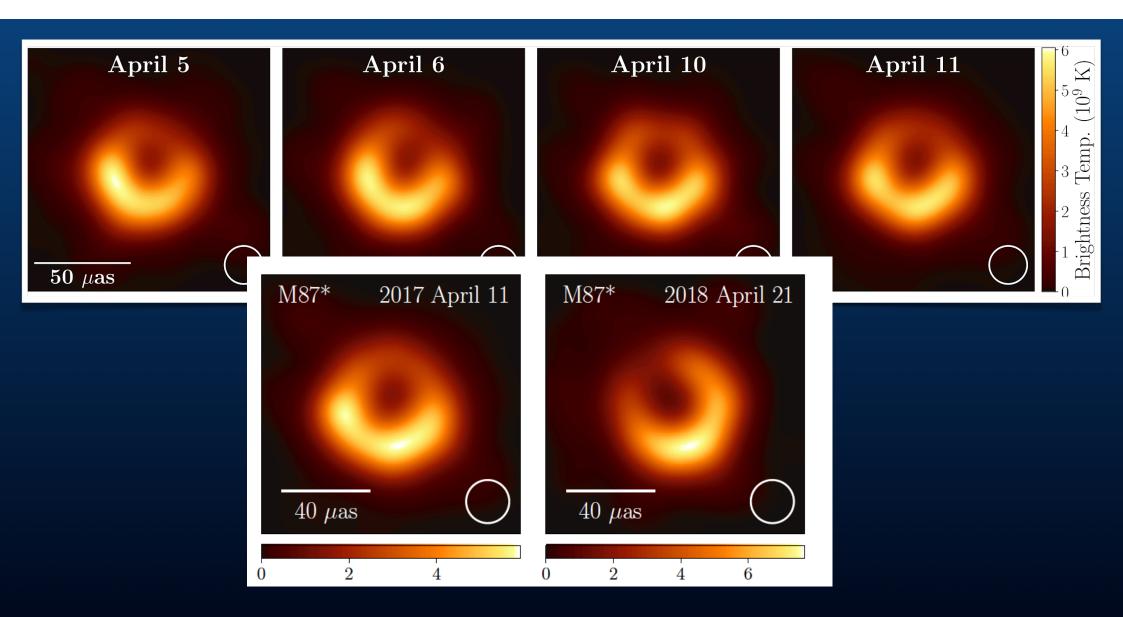
First M87 Event Horizon Telescope Results I. The Shadow of the Supermassive Black Hole

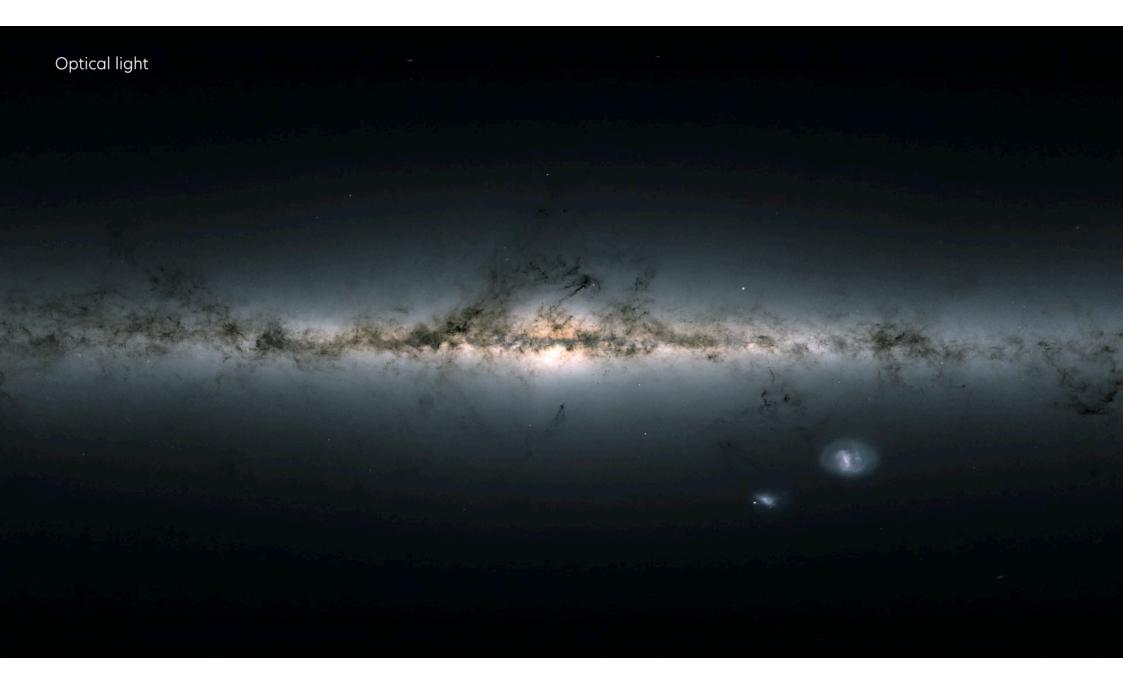
Distance to M87: 54 million lyr Black Hole mass: 6.5 10⁹ M_o



42 μas ≈ 700 au = 98 lh

Observations at 1.3 mm \times 230 GHz Brightness temperature: 6 10⁹K





Astrophysics with the SgrA* Black Hole

we know quite precisely it is at a distance of 26 thousand lightyear...

last stable orbit of gas in orbit around Black Hole

Event Horizon, radius of the Black Hole, no return from here

Photon Ring, where we see the photons that have gone round the Black Hole once or multiple times

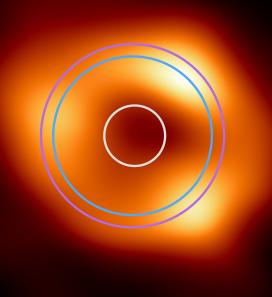


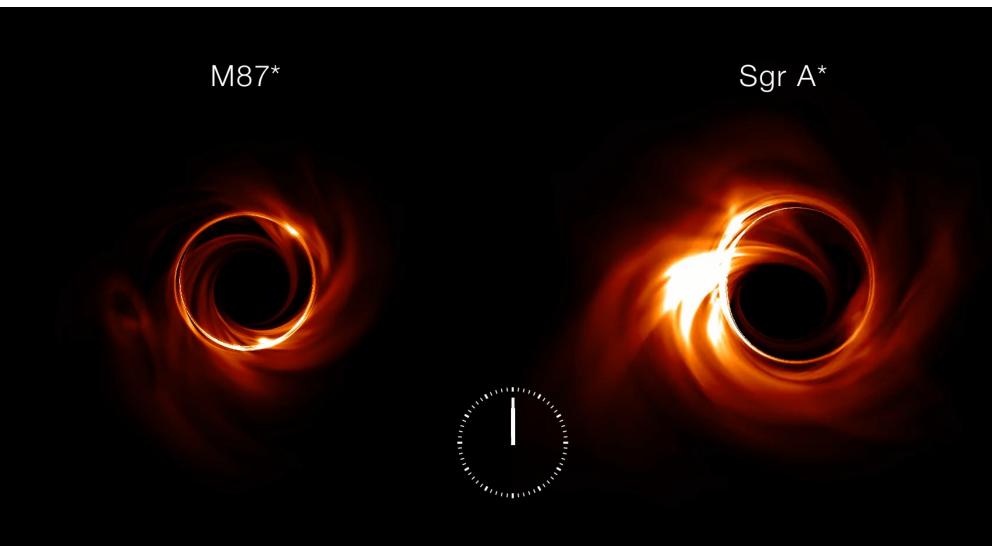
image follows circle, as predicted by General Relativity

diameter equals 51 µas, because we know the mass and distance, this is precisely correct!

Source is variable, azimuthal structure uncertain; almost face on?



resolution of the EHT, we cannot resolve smaller details

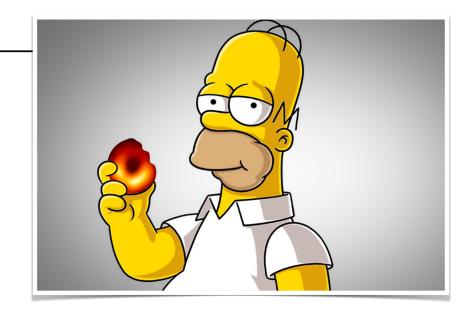


Simulation

We are "lucky"

- 2 Black Holes big enough on the sky
 - For VLBI baselines across the entire planet
 - At the edge of the radio window (≤ 1 mm)
- Optically thin
 - At the edge frequency
- Just not obscured by interstellar scattering
- Bright enough to be observable
 - With current size telescopes
 - And bandwidth
 - To track variability



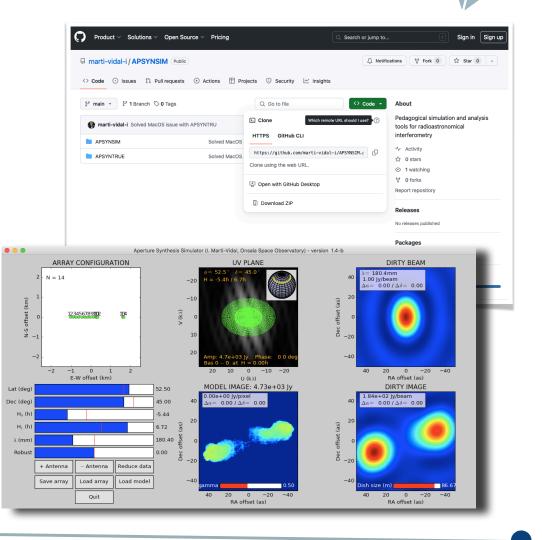


Next:



- •Synthesis imaging, understanding the visibility data, deconvolution
- Instrument implementation, correlator, calibration, polarisation
- Interpretation, calibrating gravity, future projects

- •We can play with
 - Ivan Marti-Vidal's APSYNSIM, APSYNTRUE
 - https://github.com/marti-vidal-i/APSYNSIM



End of lecture I