Optical control of betatron oscillation amplitude in a laser wakefield accelerator

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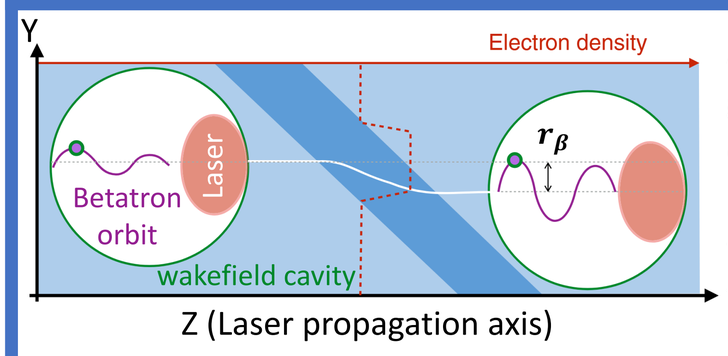
Introduction



A sharp transverse density gradient leads to refraction of the laser pulse and an increase in the amplitude of the betatron oscillations $\boldsymbol{r_\beta}$. The figure is taken from [1].

Scaling for betatron radiation:

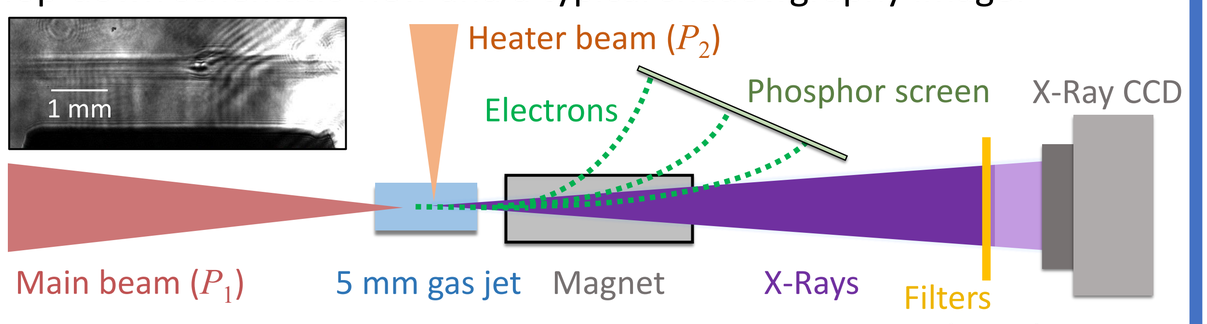
1. Number of emitted photons $N_\gamma \propto N_e N_\beta \boldsymbol{r_\beta} \sqrt{\gamma n_e}$.
2. Critical energy $E_c \propto \gamma^2 n_e \boldsymbol{r_\beta}$.
3. X-rays divergence $\theta_r \propto \boldsymbol{r_\beta} \sqrt{n_e/\gamma}$.

γ – the electron relativistic factor, n_e – electron density, N_e – number of electrons, N_β – number of betatron oscillation periods.

Increasing $\boldsymbol{r_\beta}$ should result in an equal increase in $\boldsymbol{N_\gamma}$, $\boldsymbol{E_c}$, and $\boldsymbol{\theta_r}$.

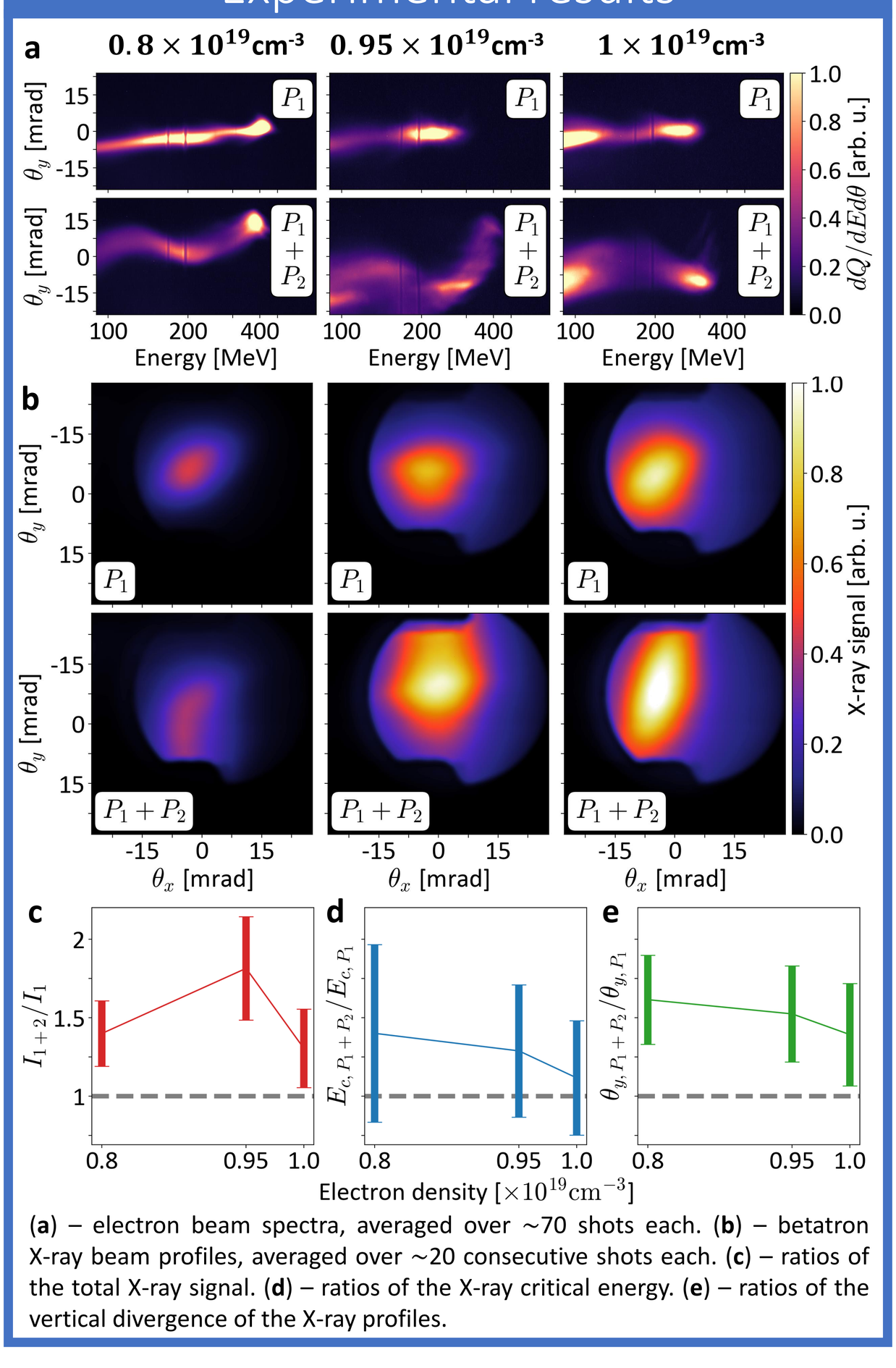
Experimental setup

Top-down schematic view and a typical shadowgraphy image:



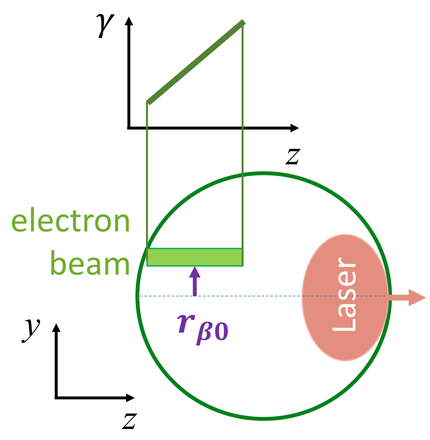
- **Laser system parameters**: repetition rate – 1 Hz, combined energy – 3.2 J, duration – 30 fs, the spectrum centered at 800 nm.
- **80%** of power — to the main beam, **20%** — to the heater beam.
- **Focusing**: the main beam — 1.5 m mirror, the heater beam — 65 cm motorized positive lens.
- **Heater beam:** a line profile created using a deformable mirror.
- **Heater beam:** arrives 3 ns before the main beam.
- **Gas**: mix of He and 1% of N_2.

Experimental results



(**a**) – electron beam spectra, averaged over ~70 shots each. (**b**) – betatron X-ray beam profiles, averaged over ~20 consecutive shots each. (**c**) – ratios of the total X-ray signal. (**d**) – ratios of the X-ray critical energy. (**e**) – ratios of the vertical divergence of the X-ray profiles.

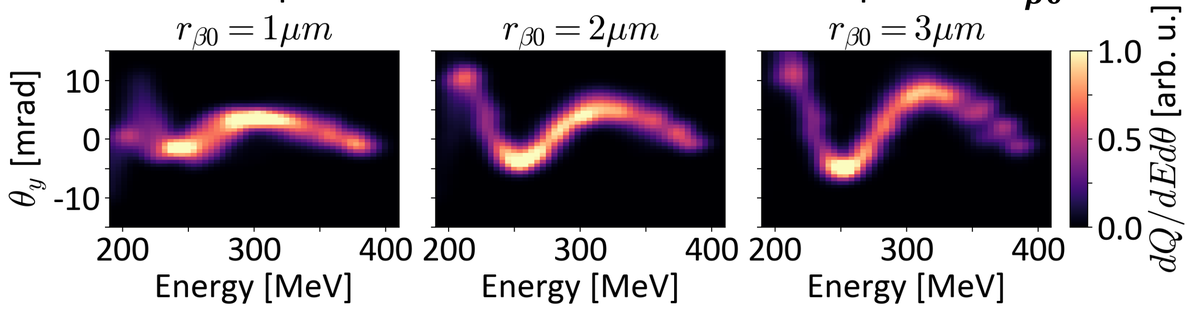
Numerical results and discussion



Toy model simulated with WarpX [2]:

- **Laser parameters**: $a_0 = 2, w_0 = 18\ \mu$m, $\tau_{FWHM} = 30$ fs, linear polarized along y.
- **Plasma**: He, 0.3×10^{19} cm^{-3}, 2 mm.
- **Electron beam**: tracer electrons, initially linear dependence of energy on longitudinal position.

Electron beam spectra for three different initial amplitudes $\boldsymbol{r_{\beta 0}}$:



We demonstrate that:

- a shock wave created by a heater beam can increase the amplitude of betatron oscillations;
- the increase of the amplitude is inferred from the increase of total X-ray flux, X-ray critical energy, X-ray divergence, and oscillations on the electron beam spectrum;
- the increase of the amplitude is stable over 70 shots;
- numerical simulations show correlation between the betatron and electron spectrum oscillation amplitude.

The proposed method can be used to enhance and control betatron x-rays produced by laser wakefield accelerators.

References and acknowledgments

[1] Kozlova, Michaela, et al. "Hard X rays from laser-wakefield accelerators in density tailored plasmas." *Physical Review X* 10.1 (2020): 011061.

[2] Fedeli, Luca, et al. "Pushing the frontier in the design of laser-based electron accelerators with groundbreaking mesh-refined particle-in-cell simulations on exascale-class supercomputers." *SC22: international conference for high performance computing, networking, storage and analysis*. IEEE, 2022.

This poster presentation has received support from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme under Grant Agreement No 101004730. This research was supported by research grants from the France-Israel IRP program LABX, the Hubert Curien and Maimonide grant LAMA, the Fondation du Judaisme Francais, and by the Gerald Schwartz & Heather Reisman Foundation.