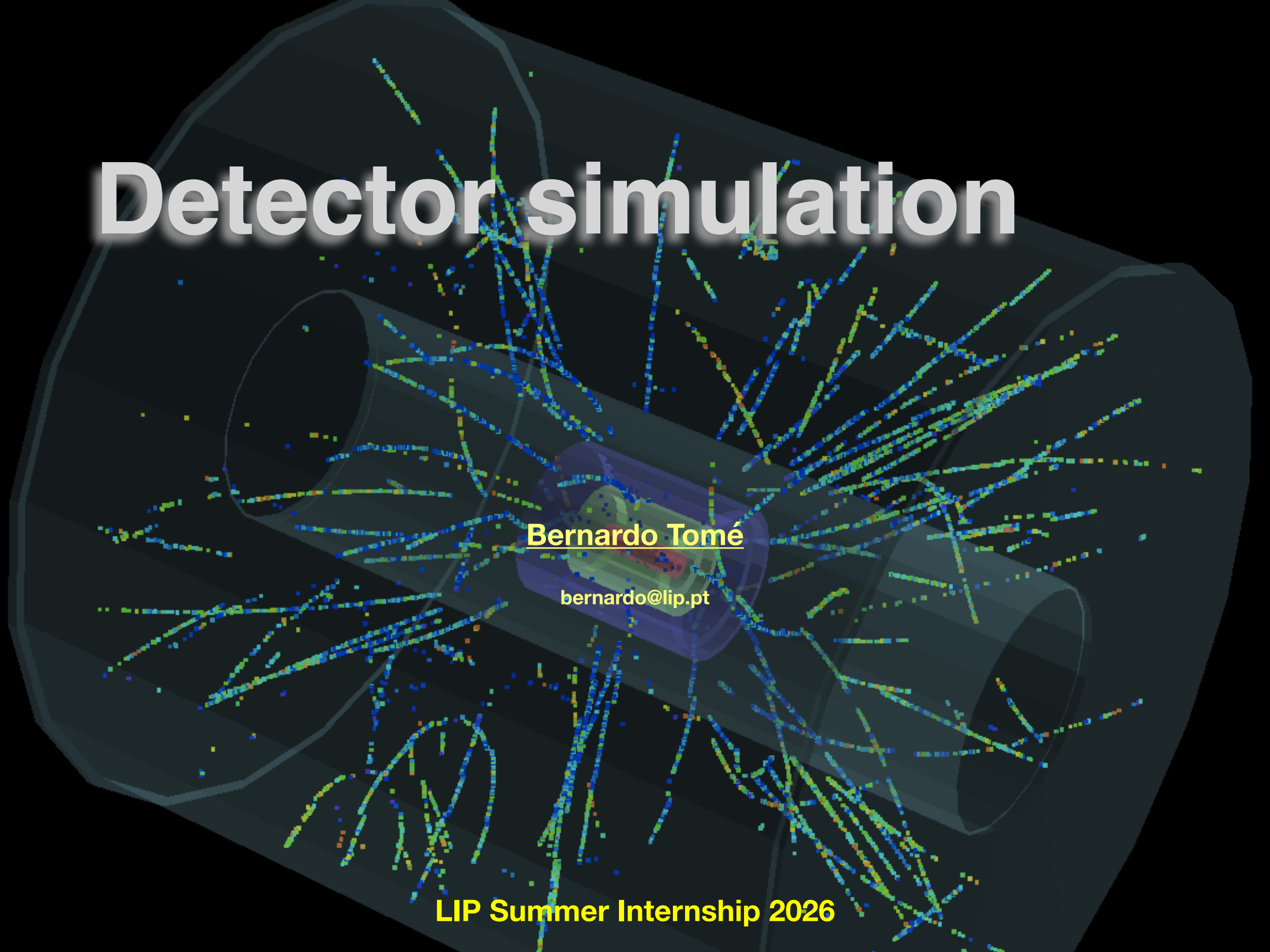


Detector simulation



Bernardo Tomé

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LIP Summer Internship 2026

Why we need simulations ?

- Simulation is a modern and essential tool to :
 - Design a new experiment, allowing to predict very accurately the performance of future apparatus;
 - Analyse and understand the data of ongoing experiments;
 - Develop new data analysis methods, train neural networks, etc.
 - Simulate new physics models, understanding how signatures could be “seen” by a particular detector design;
- Detector configurations can vary a lot but the physics is the same;
- General codes exist that can be used for simulating almost “any” detector configuration :

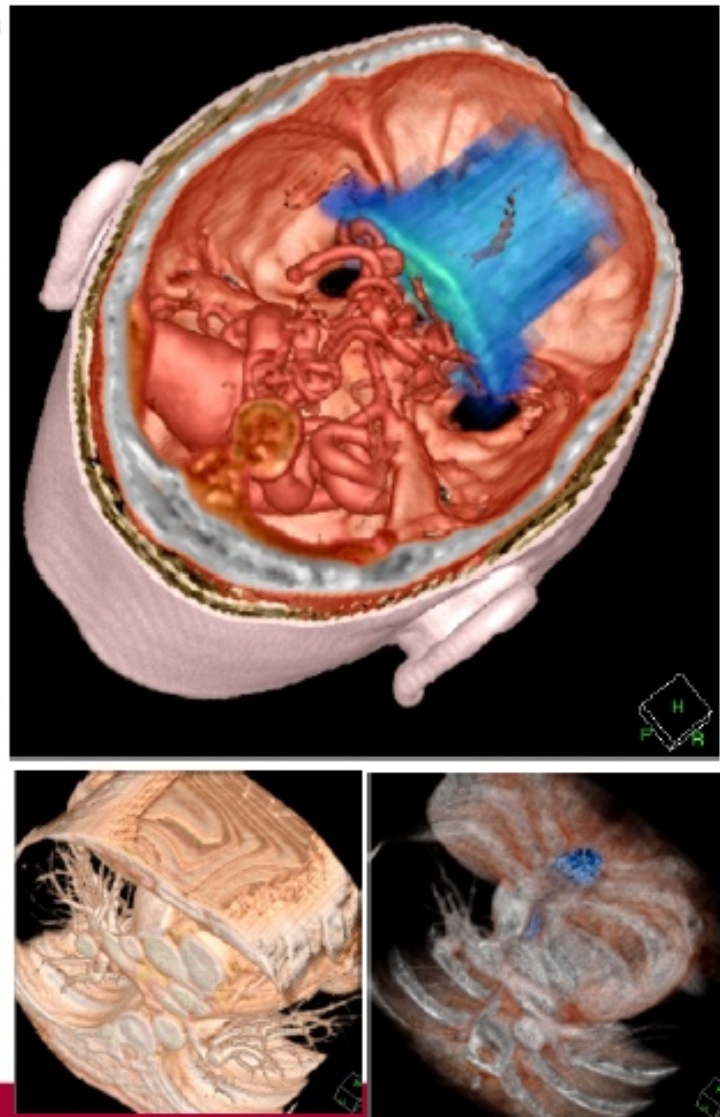
Monte Carlo radiation transportation codes

Monte Carlo simulation tools

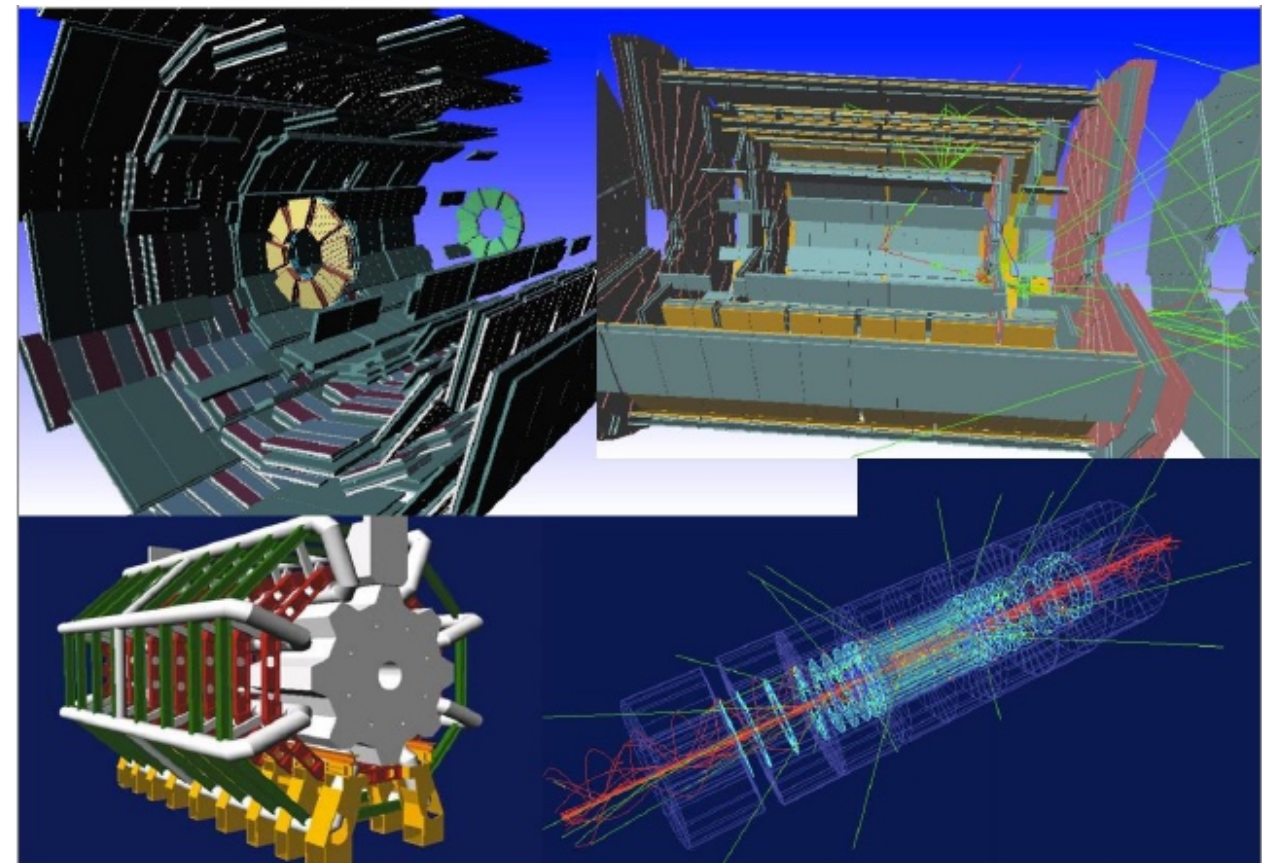
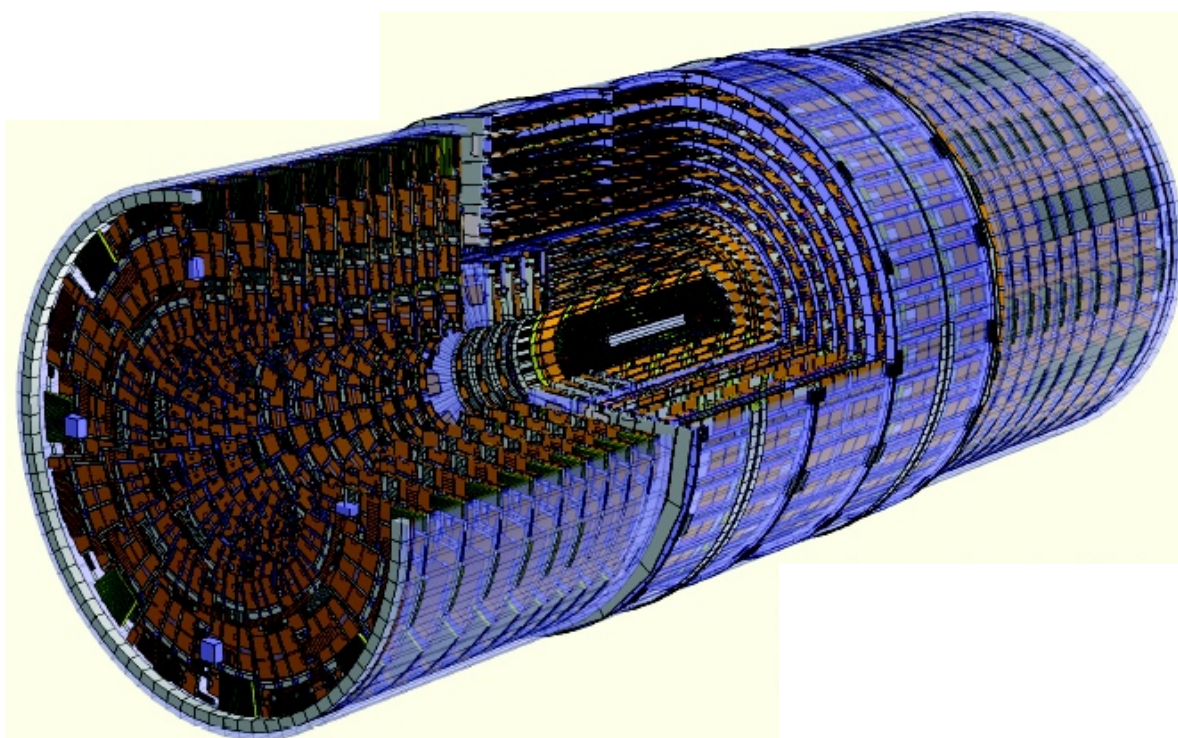
- Monte Carlo radiation transportation tools are non-deterministic
- Physics processes underlying particle detection are governed by the laws of Quantum Mechanics;
- This intrinsic randomness can be emulated by using computers and the possibility to generate (pseudo)-random numbers;

Monte Carlo methods are the tool to simulate the randomness of physics processes

“Detector” simulation is a **multi-disciplinary** field!

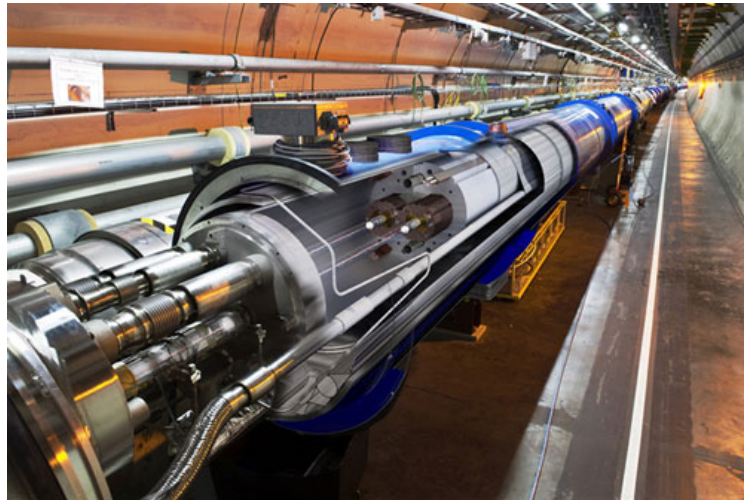


- Nuclear physics
- High-energy physics
- Astrophysics
- Space engineering
- Radiation damage
- Medical physics
- Industrial applications

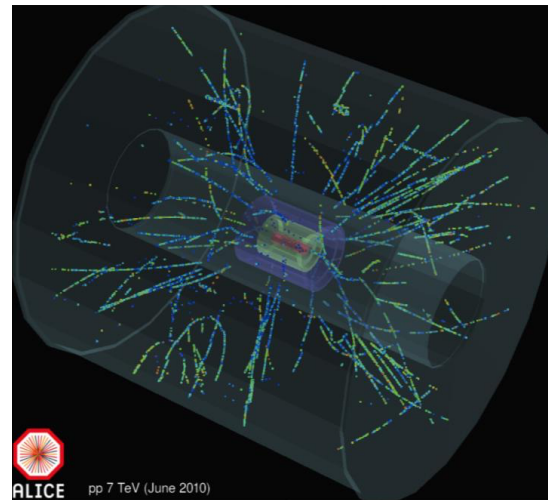


Simulating a High Energy Physics experiment

Simulate the colliding beams



Detector simulation



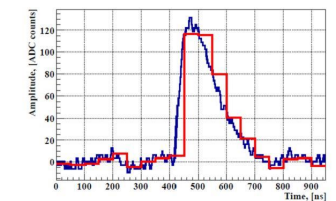
Particle interactions inside detector

Particle tracking

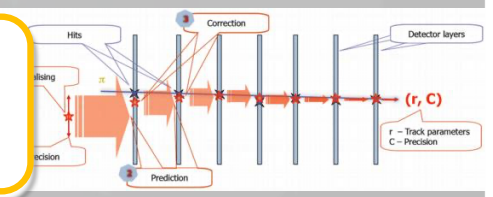
Register interactions in sensitive detectors

Signal from readout - digitisation

Detector signal digitization



Detector signal reconstruction



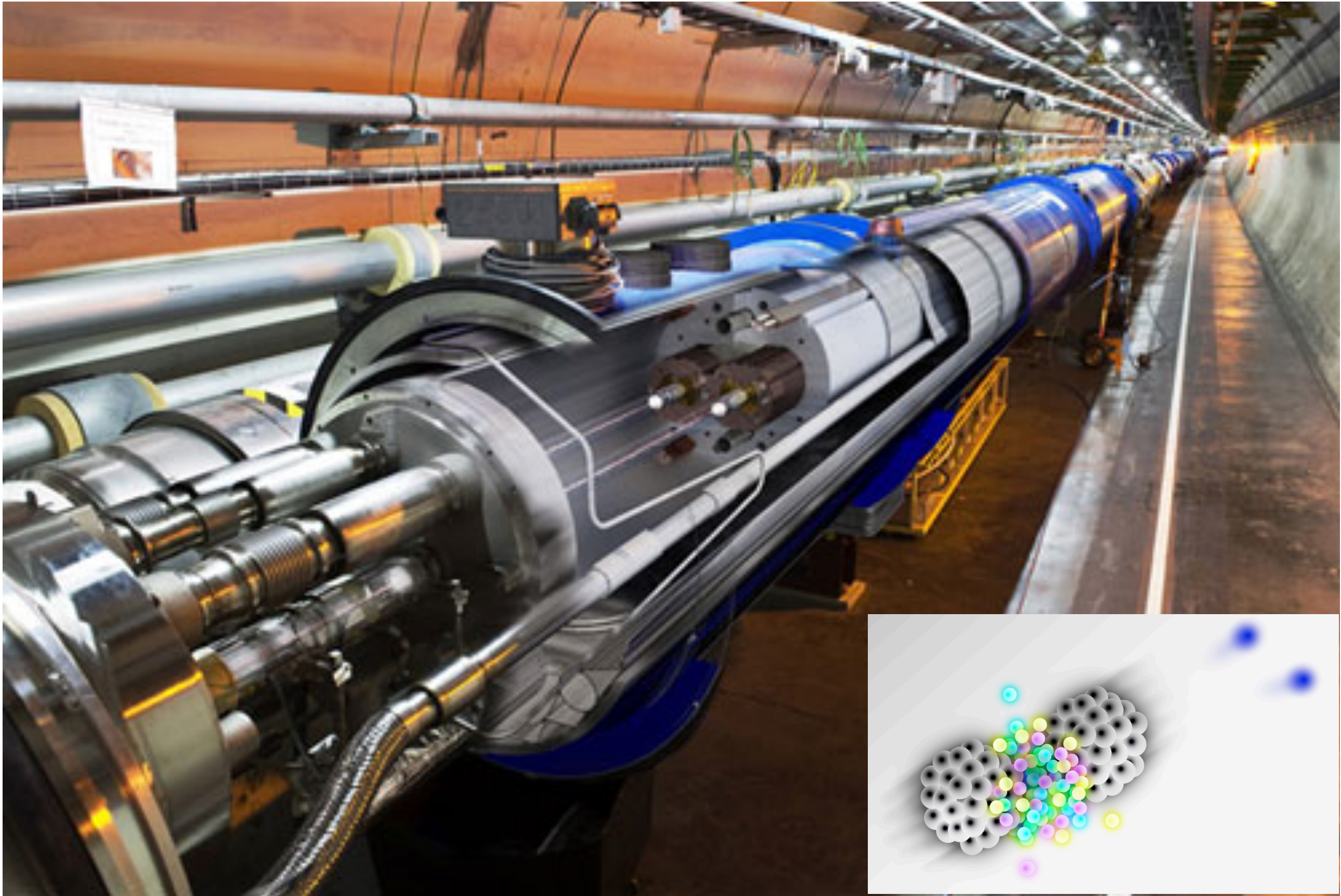
The simulation is usually made in several steps :

- [Simulate the colliding beams](#) - Monte Carlo **event** generators, describing the physics of the high-energy interactions;
- Simulate the passage of the particles produced in the collisions through the detector - [Monte Carlo radiation transportation or simply “detector simulation”](#);
- Simulate the signals produced in the various active components of the detector.

[Similar approach can be found in other types of experiments](#)

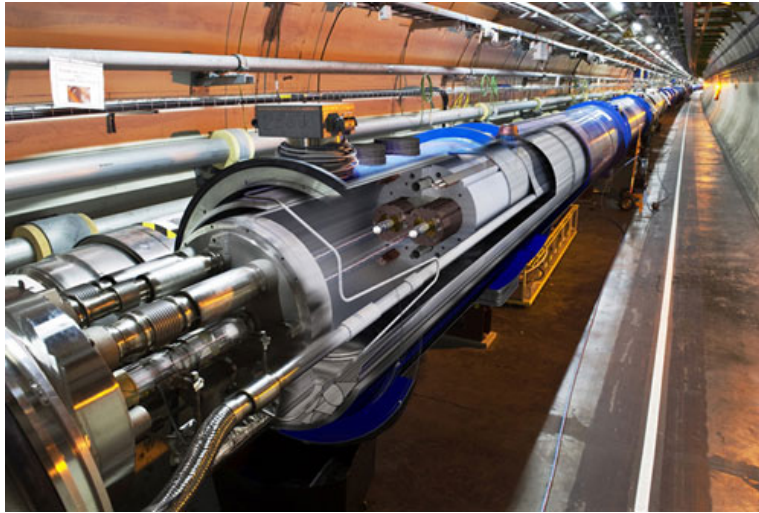
Simulating a High Energy Physics experiment

Simulate the colliding beams

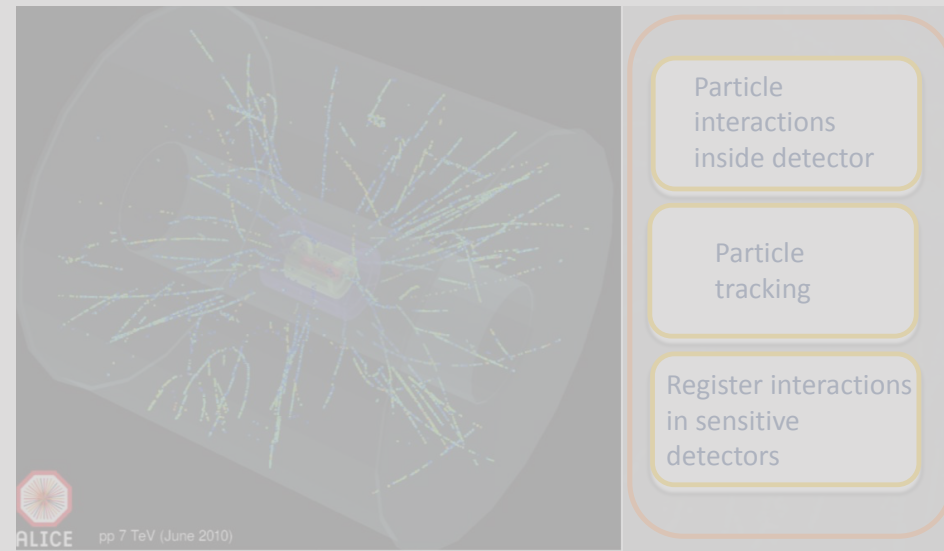


Simulating a High Energy Physics experiment

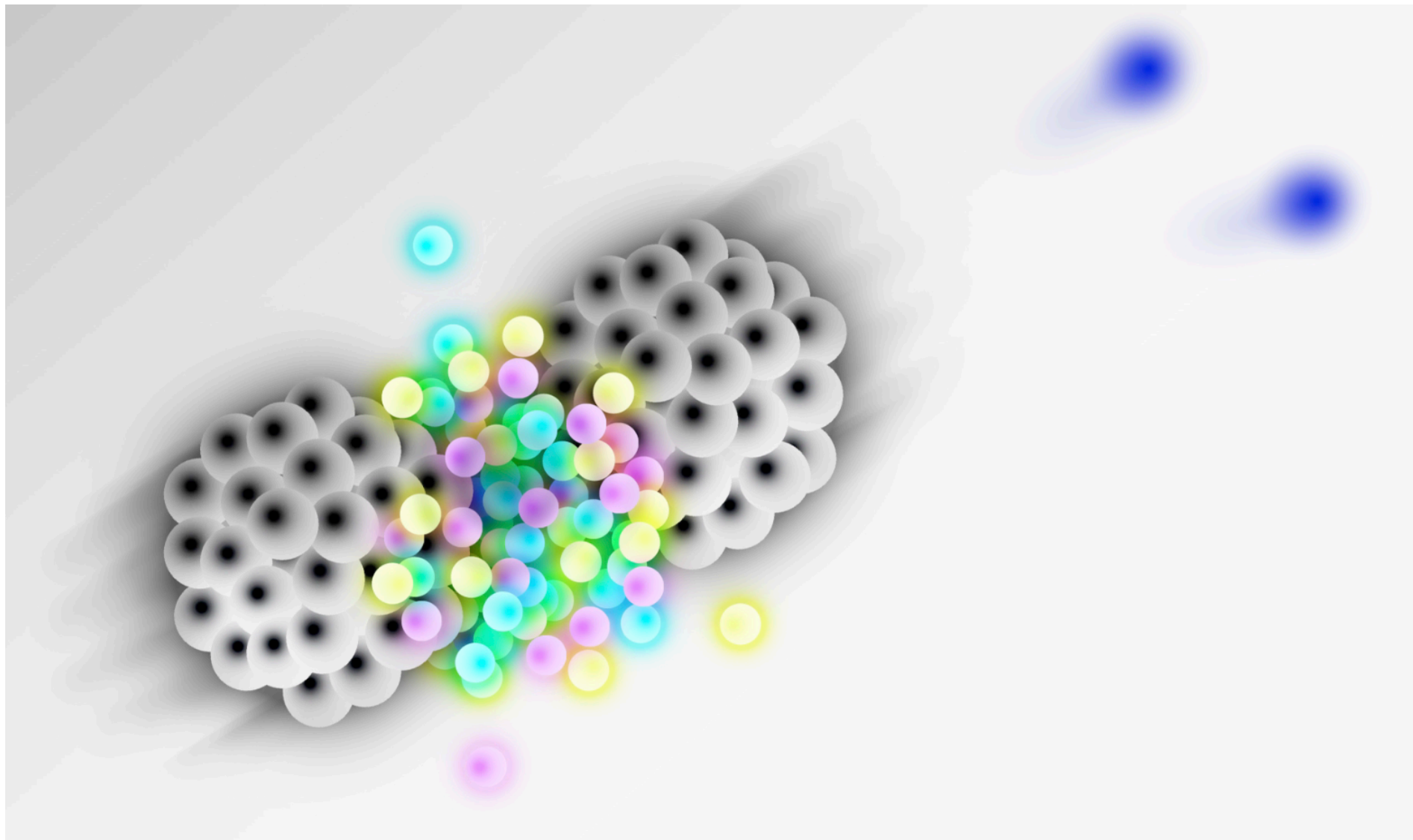
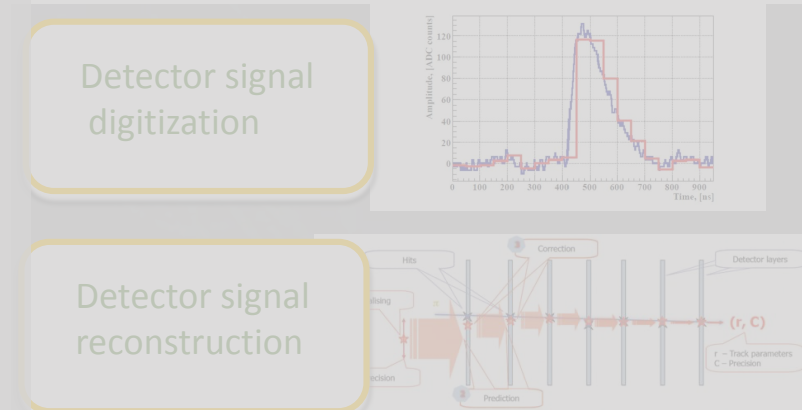
Simulate the colliding beams



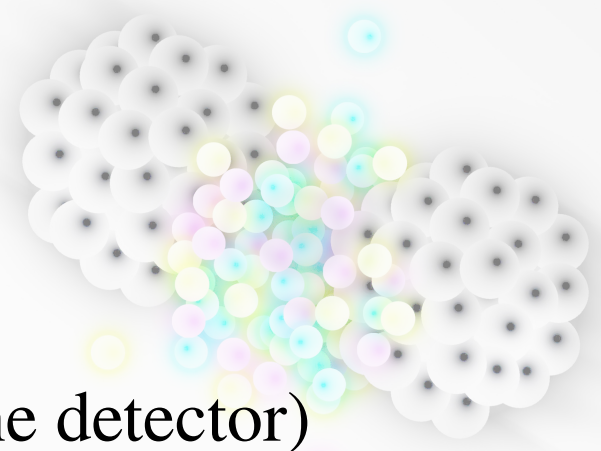
Detector simulation



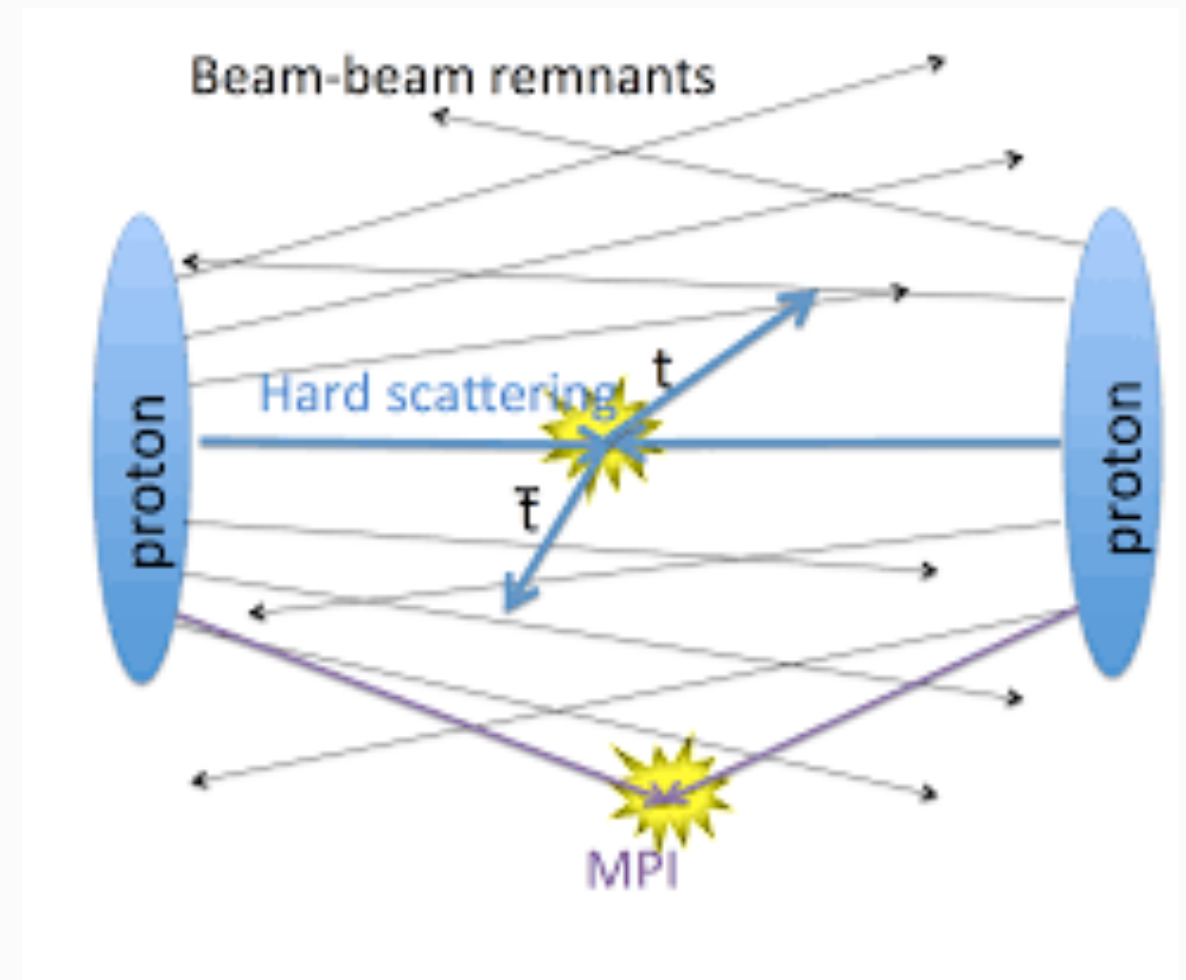
Signal from readout - digitisation



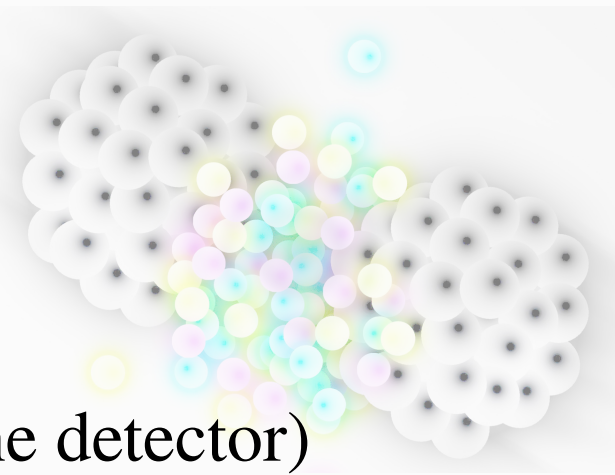
From Collision to Detector



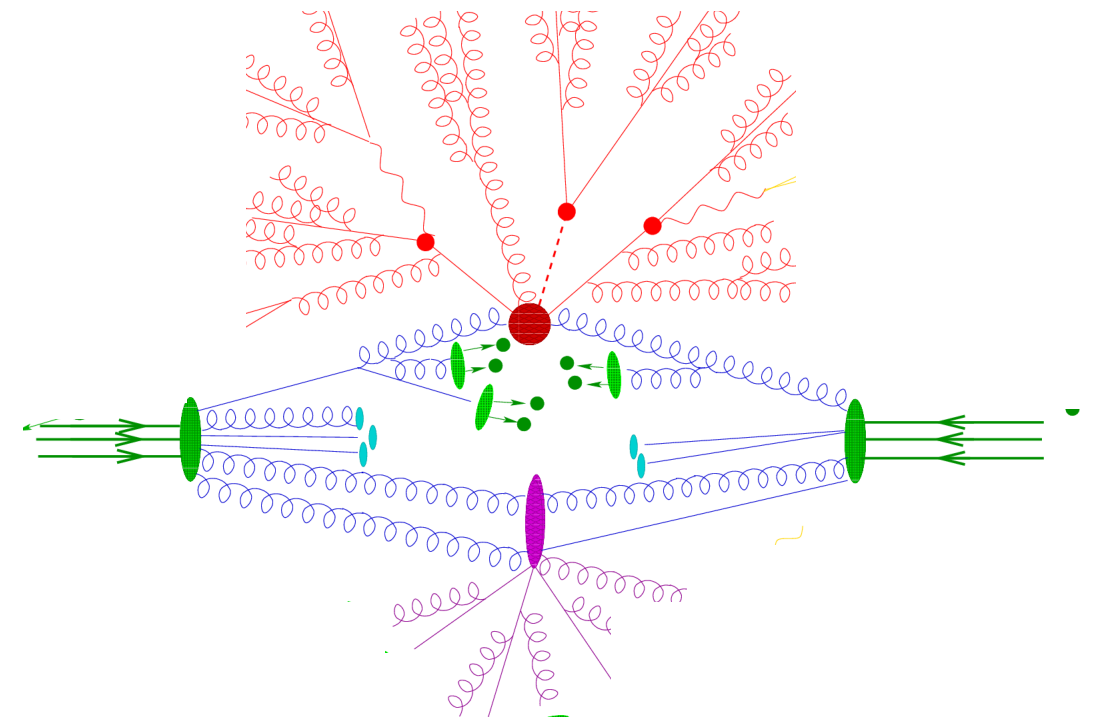
- Need to simulate the full event/interaction (before reaching the detector)
 - Monte Carlo codes specialised in simulating hadronic collisions: PYTHIA, HERWIG, ...
 - What do they simulate?
 - Moment of the collision:
 - Hard Scattering: head-on collisions between particles of each proton
 - Beam remnants: mild interaction between particles of each proton



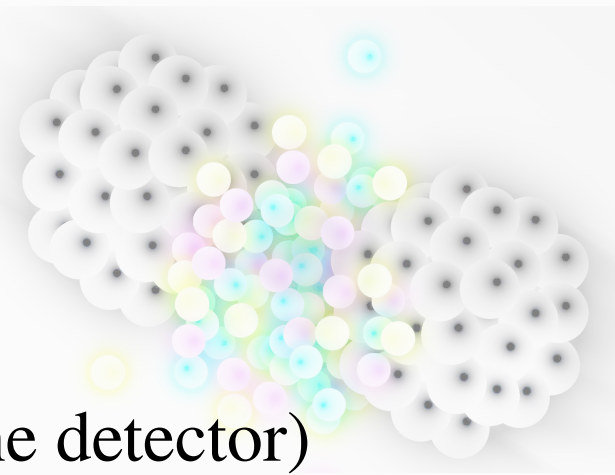
From Collision to Detector



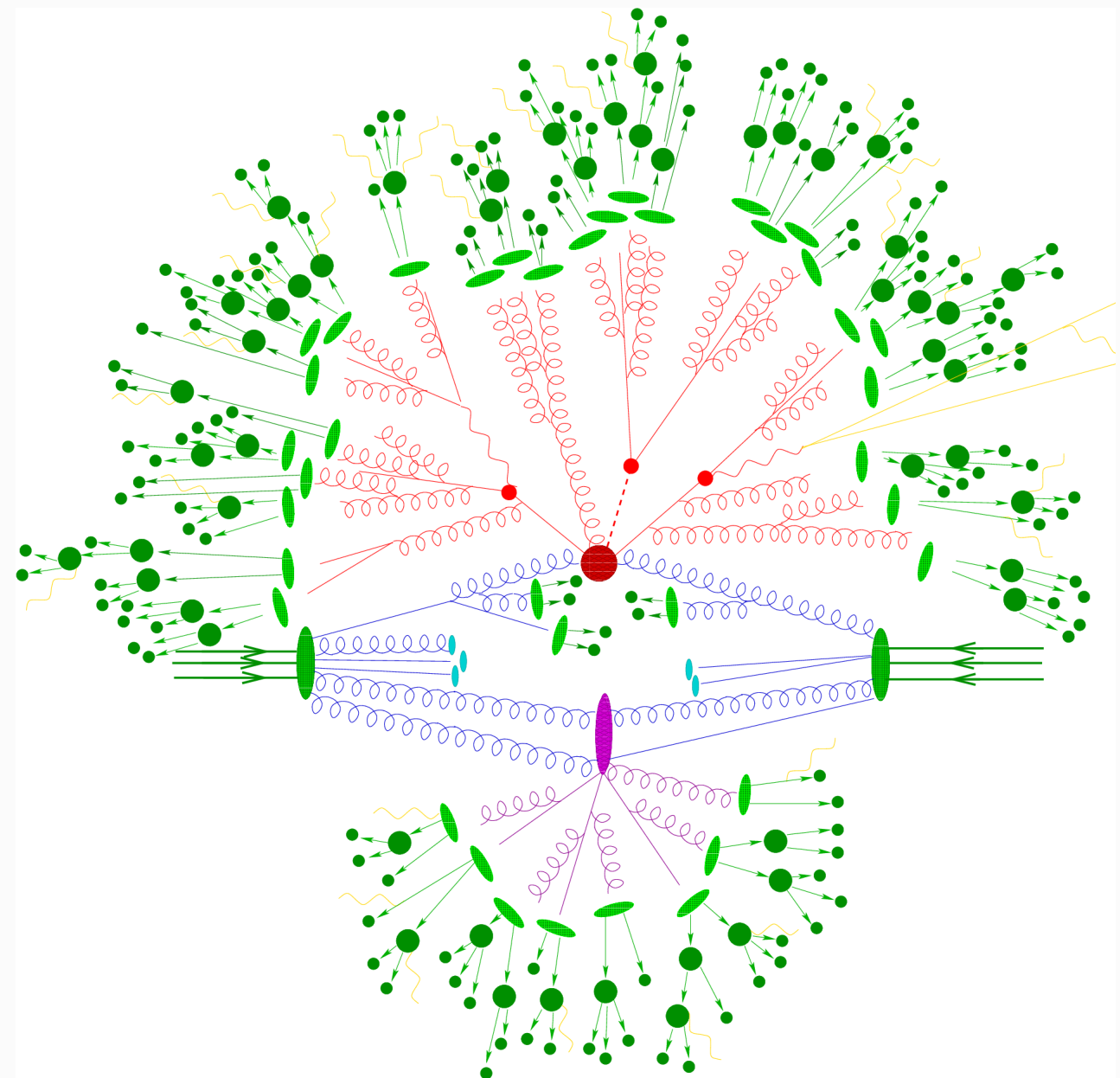
- Need to simulate the full event/interaction (before reaching the detector)
 - Monte Carlo codes specialised in simulating hadronic collisions: PYTHIA, HERWIG, ...
 - What do they simulate?
 - After the collision (hard scattering):
 - Particles from hard scattering (quarks and gluons) have lots of energy!
 - They want to radiate to go to the *fundamental state*:
parton shower



From Collision to Detector



- Need to simulate the full event/interaction (before reaching the detector)
 - Monte Carlo codes specialised in simulating hadronic collisions: PYTHIA, HERWIG, ...
 - What do they simulate?
 - After the collision (whole event):
 - We don't see coloured particles;
 - Quarks and gluons have to re-arrange into composite particles (new hadrons): **hadronization**

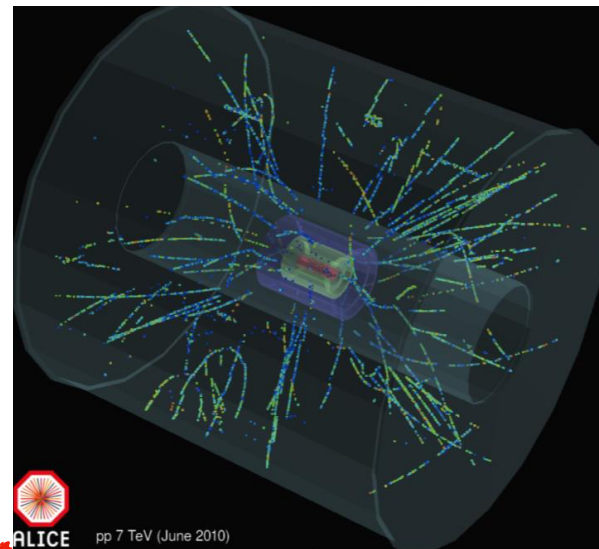


Simulating a High Energy Physics experiment

Simulate the colliding beams



Detector simulation



pp 7 TeV (June 2010)

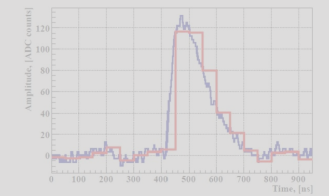
Particle interactions inside detector

Particle tracking

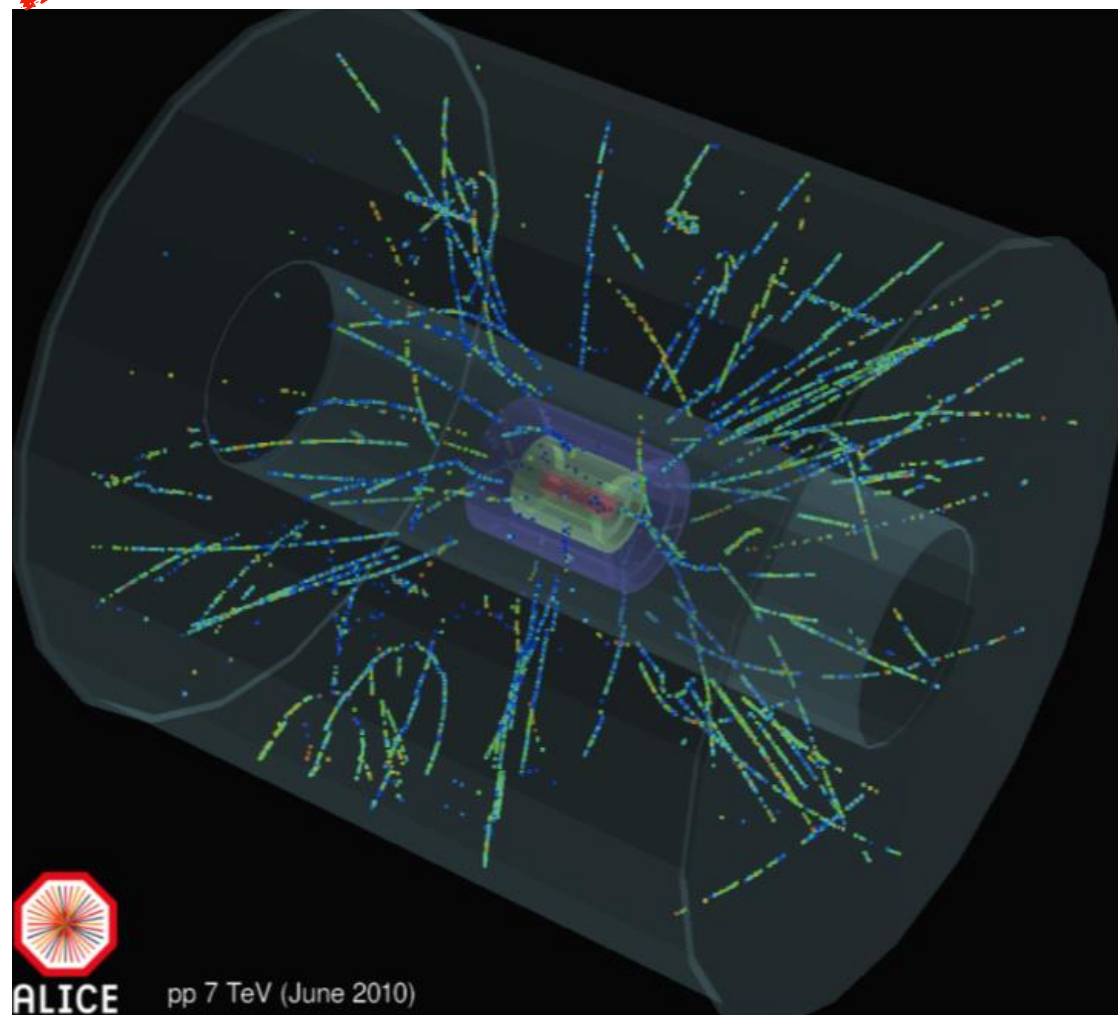
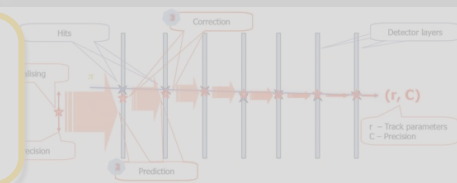
Register interactions in sensitive detectors

Signal from readout - digitisation

Detector signal digitization



Detector signal reconstruction



pp 7 TeV (June 2010)

Particle interactions inside detector

Particle tracking

Register interactions in sensitive detectors

Creating a virtual detector

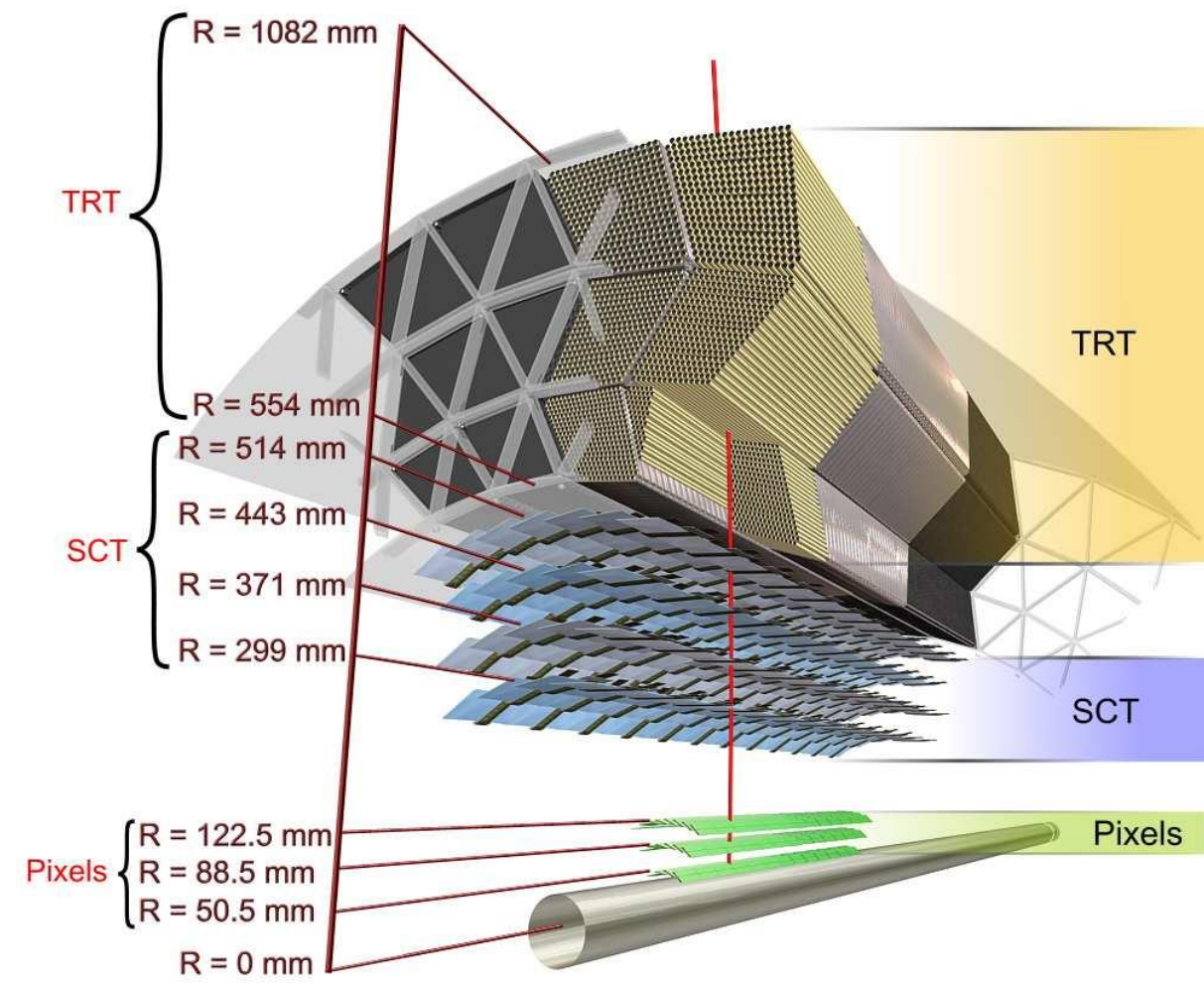
Detector geometry and materials

For detector simulation, an accurate (enough) description of the detector is needed.

The detector definition requires the representation of its **geometrical elements, materials and electronics properties**.

The geometrical representation of detector elements focuses on the definition of solid models and their spatial positioning.

For each component/material one needs to know the **relevant physical properties** -> compute interaction cross-sections for all the relevant processes;



A detector is here viewed as any passive or active volume where particles may interact

Creating a virtual detector

A universal description is usually not needed, or even not possible ...

- Approximations will always have to be made when devising the simulation of a real experiment :
 - Complexity of the geometry to be implemented;
 - Lack of a perfect description of the physical properties of the materials;
 - Limitations in describing the relevant physics processes;
 - Computing time available;
 - ...
- But the impact of the approximations must be assessed ! Systematic error of our simulation...

What physics we need to simulate ?

Particle interactions with detector materials :

Electromagnetic processes

Photon processes:

- Compton scattering
- gamma conversion
- photo-electric effect
- muon pair production

Charged particle processes (electron/positron, muons, ions ...):

- ionization and delta ray emission
- Bremsstrahlung
- positron annihilation
- Multiple scattering

Hadronic interactions

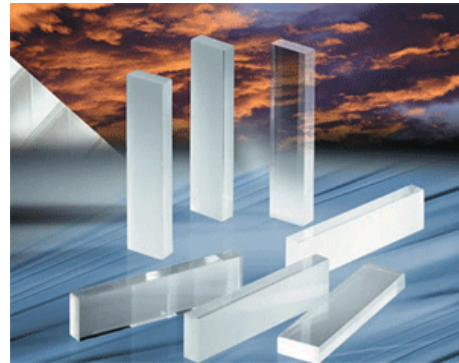
- lepton-hadron interactions
- photonuclear and electronuclear reactions
- nucleus-nucleus reactions
- elastic scattering
- nuclear cascades
- fission, evaporation, ...
- low energy neutron interactions
- radioactive decay

What do we need to simulate ?

Secondary processes giving rise to the measured signal :

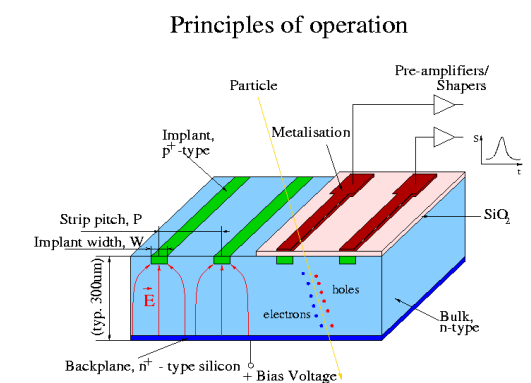
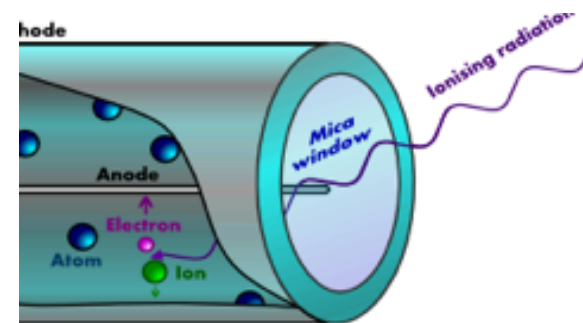
Optical Photons:

- Cerenkov Radiation
- Scintillation
- Wavelength shifting
- Absorption
- Rayleigh and Mie Scattering
- Light detection
- ...



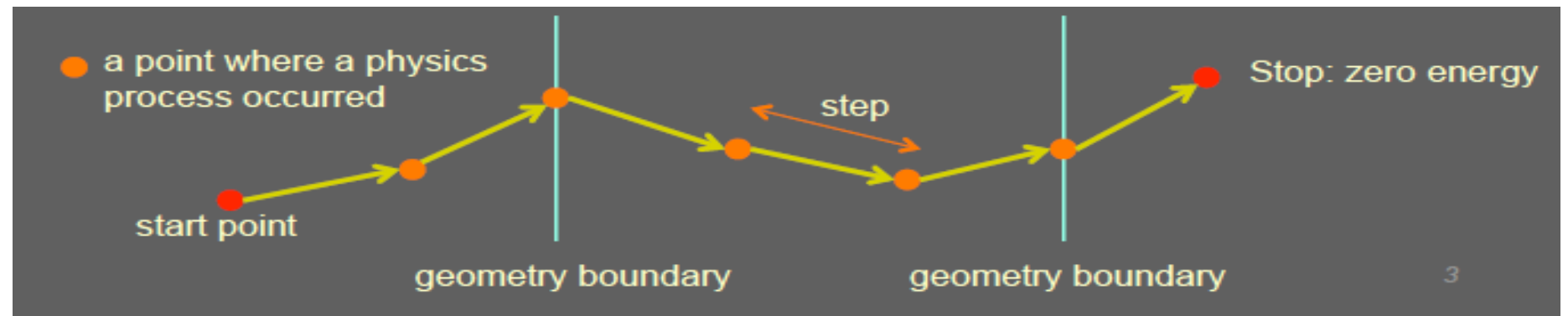
Charge production in gaseous and solid state detectors:

- Avalanche development
- Charge drift
- Induced signals / charge collection
- ...



Monte Carlo radiation transportation

- Treat one particle at the time
- Treat a particle in **steps**



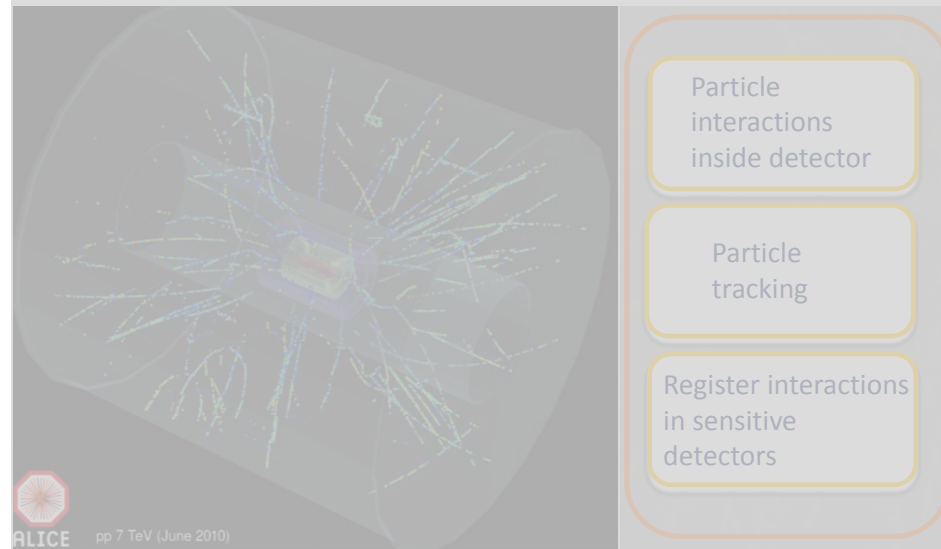
- For each step
 - the step length is determined by the cross sections of the physics processes and the geometrical boundaries; if new particles are created, add them to the list of particles to be transported;
 - local energy deposit; effect of magnetic and electric fields;
 - if the particle is destroyed by the interaction, or it reaches the end of the apparatus, or its energy is below a (tracking) threshold, then the simulation of this particle is over; else continue with another step.
- Output
 - new particles created (indirect)
 - **local energy deposits throughout the detector** (direct)

Simulating a High Energy Physics experiment

Simulate the colliding beams

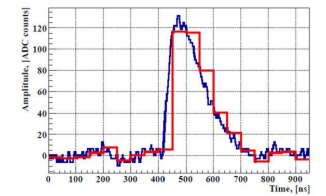


Detector simulation

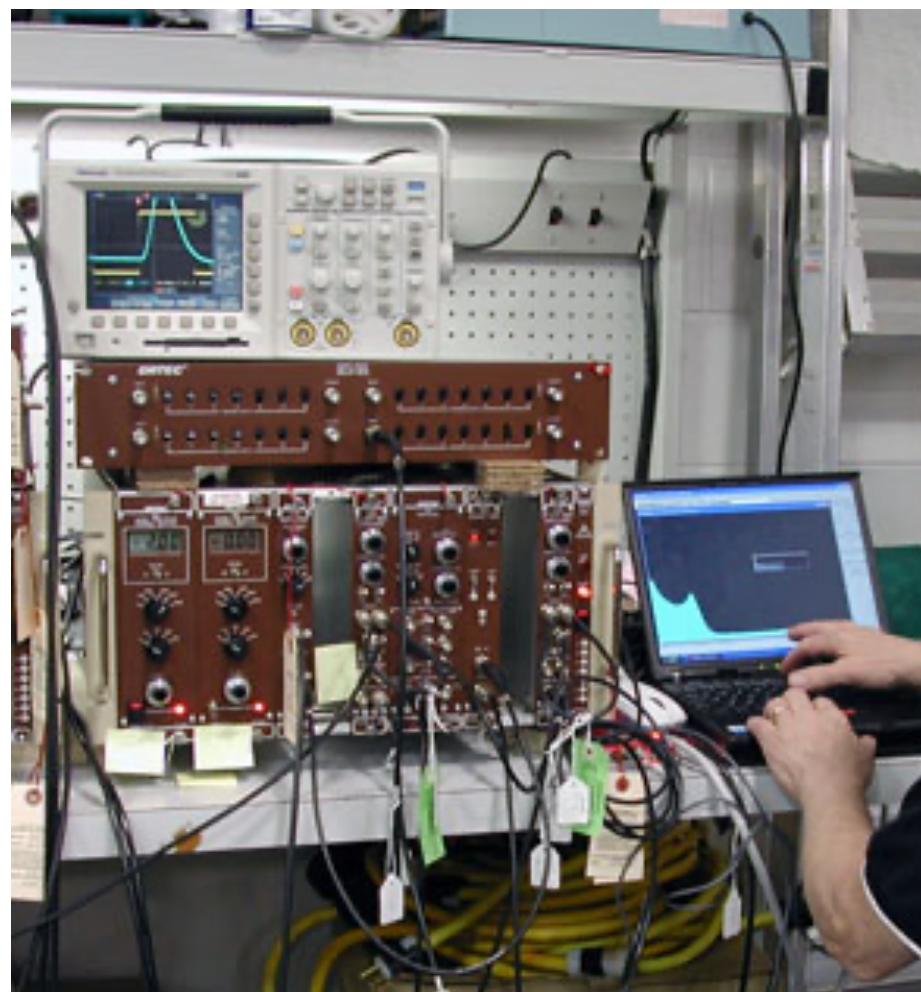
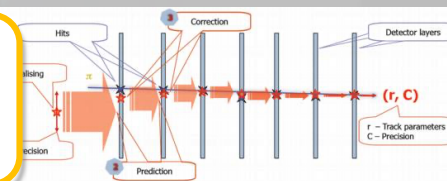


Signal from readout - digitisation

Detector signal digitization



Detector signal reconstruction



“Digitisation”

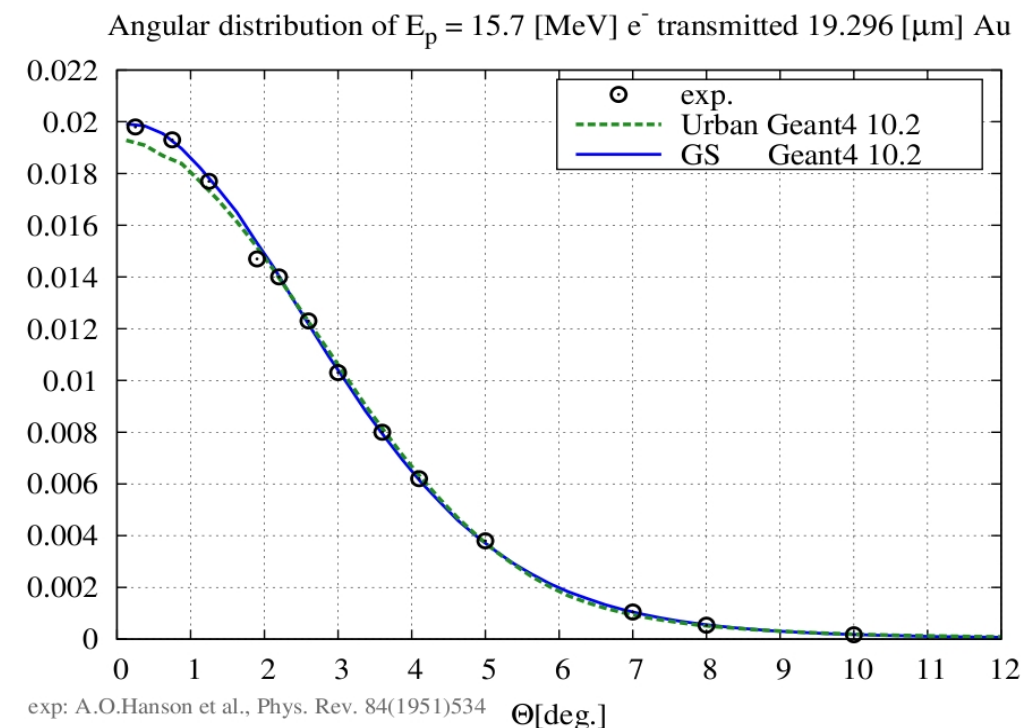
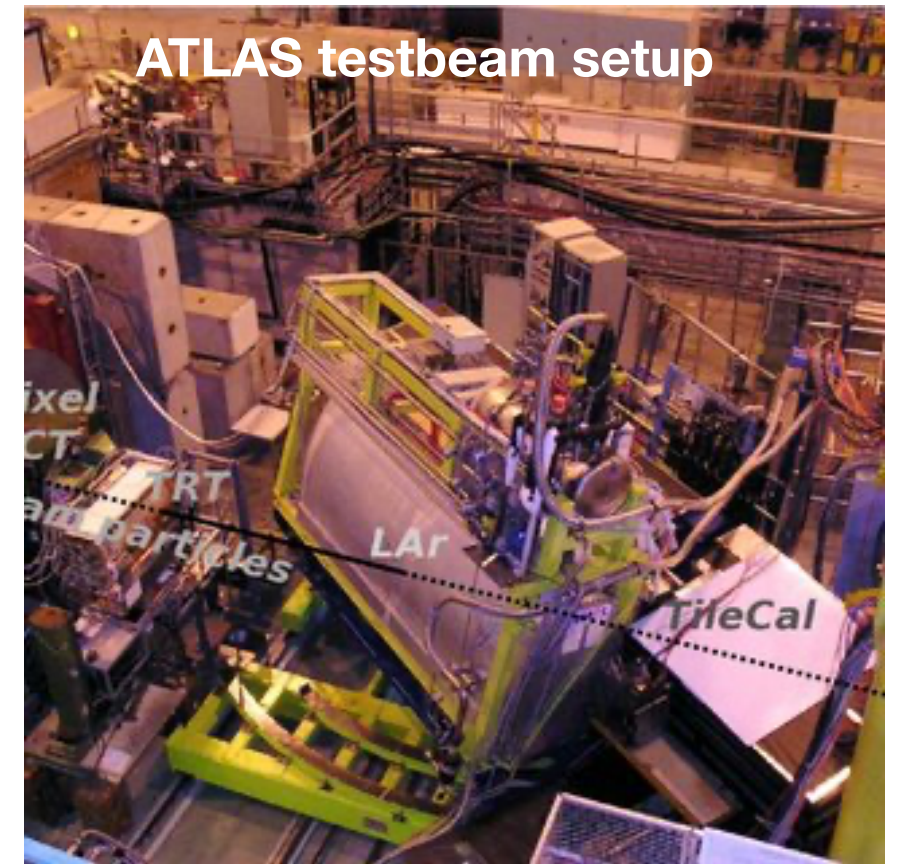
- General radiation transport codes provide energy deposits in the detector.
- From this point, one must simulate realistically the generation of the detectable signal :
 - light emission and propagation in optical materials;
 - charge production, multiplication and collection in gaseous detectors;
 - ...
- some codes allow part of this task in the same simulation flow;

“Digitisation”

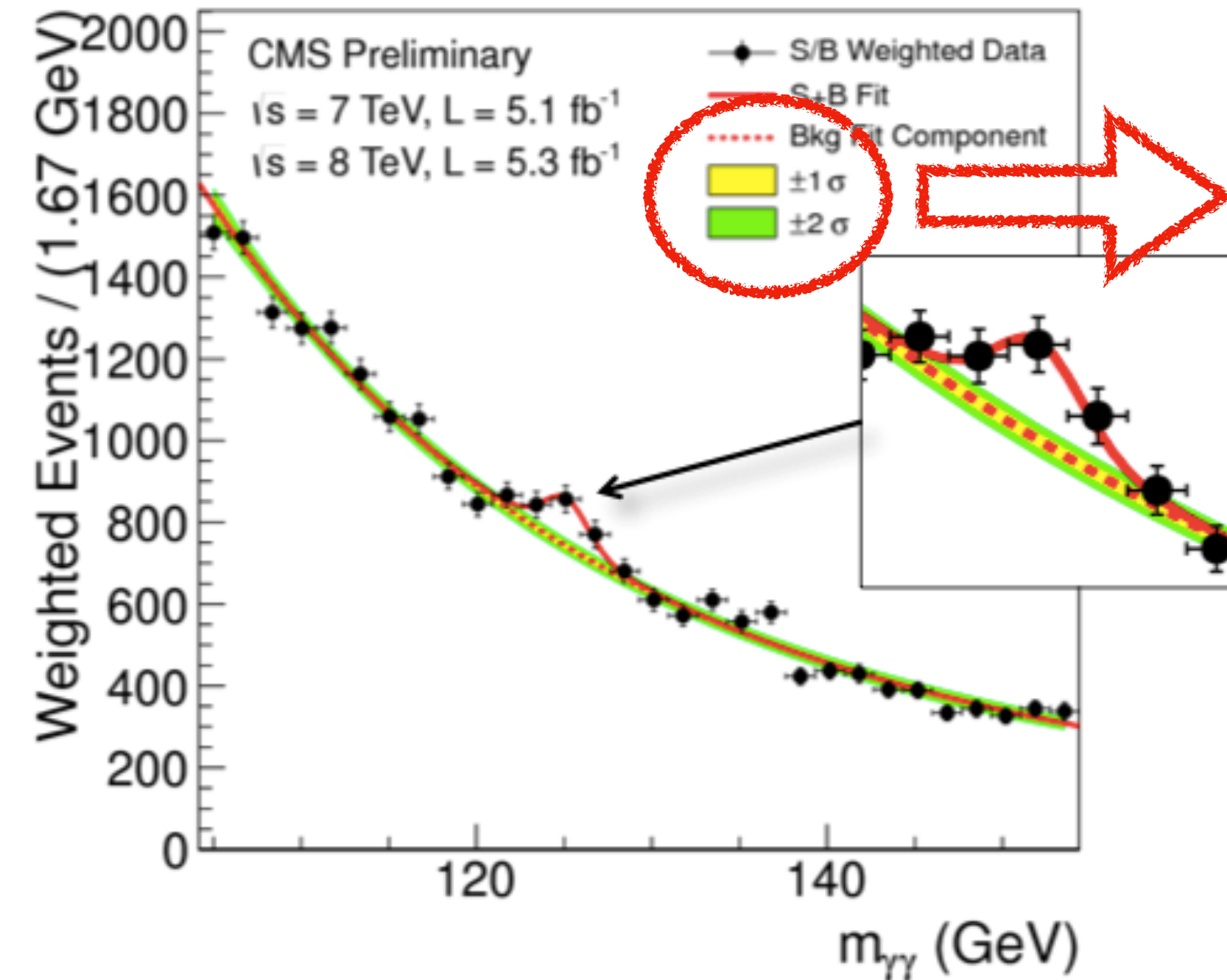
- General radiation transport codes provide energy deposits in the detector.
- From this point, one must simulate the generation of the detectable signal, which includes:
 - emission and propagation of light in optical materials;
 - charge production, multiplication and collection in gaseous detectors;
 - some codes allow part of this in the same simulation flow;
- **“Digitisation”** is a **detector-specific** aspect of the simulation:
 - simulate the detector response in terms of measurable signals from the data acquisition electronics as in the real experiment;
 - simulate the trigger logics, pile-up; generation of raw data;
- From here the calibration procedures, event reconstruction algorithms and data analysis can be applied for the **simulated data as it is done in real data**;

Validation

- Validation is a critical aspect in implementing a Monte Carlo simulation code;
- It covers both the physics models utilised and the code implementation;
- Trusting several million lines of code ?
- Validation of complete physics configurations is primarily conducted through measurements in test-beam setups.



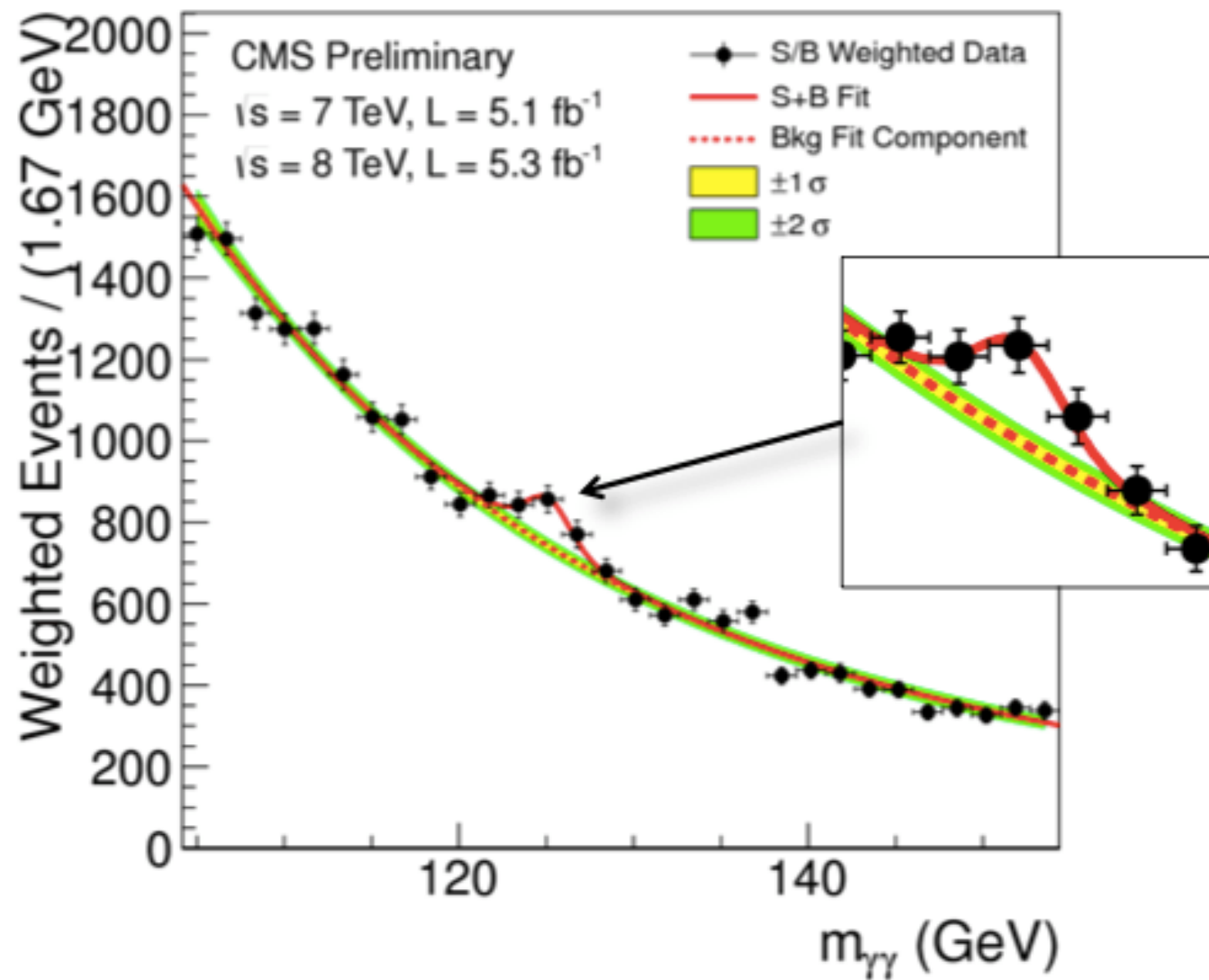
The importance of simulations...



Precisely simulated background :

- Simulation of proton-proton collisions;
- Simulation of detector response;

The importance of simulations...



Discovery of the Higgs boson !



The Geant4 toolkit



Geant4

Toolkit for the simulation of the passage of particles through matter. Its areas of application include high energy, nuclear and accelerator physics, as well as studies in medical and space science.

[Getting started](#)

Get started

Everything you need to get started with Geant4.

[I'm ready to start!](#)

Download

Geant4 source code and installers are available for download, with source code under an [open source license](#).

Latest: [11.3.2](#)

Docs

Documentation for Geant4, along with tutorials and guides, are available online.

[Read documentation](#)

News

[» More](#)

25 Apr 2025

[Release 11.3.2](#)

21 Mar 2025

[Release 11.3.1](#)

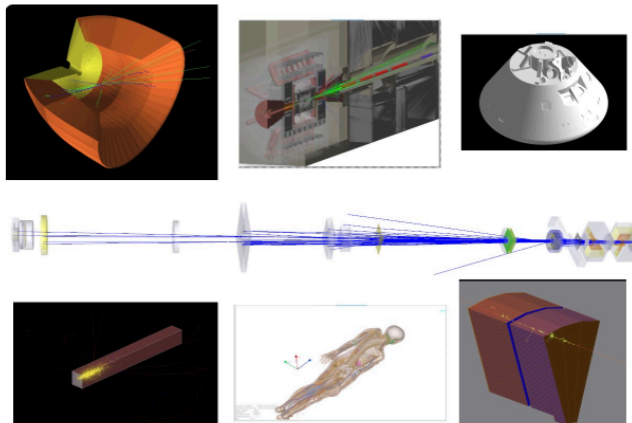
11 Mar 2025

[2025 Planned Features](#)

06 Dec 2024

[Release 11.3](#)

28 Jun 2024

[Release 11.3.beta](#)

About us



Collaboration

```
template <typename T>
struct G4TaskSingletonEvaluator
{
    using key_type = typename G4Traits::TaskSingletonKey<T>::type;
    using data_type = G4TaskSingletonData<T>;

    template <typename... Args>
    G4TaskSingletonEvaluator(key_type&, Args&&...)
    {
        throw std::runtime_error("Not specialized!");
    }
};

//-----

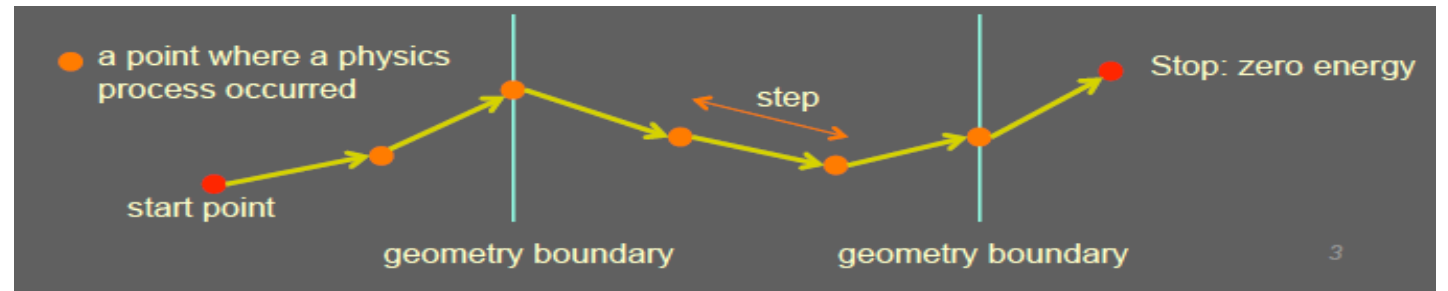
template <typename T>
class G4TaskSingletonDelegator
{
public:
    using pointer = T*;
    using evaluator_type = G4TaskSingletonEvaluator<T>;
    using data_type = G4TaskSingletonData<T>;
    using key_type = typename G4Traits::TaskSingletonKey<T>;

    template <typename... Args>
    static void Configure(Args&&... args)
    {
    }
```

Contribute

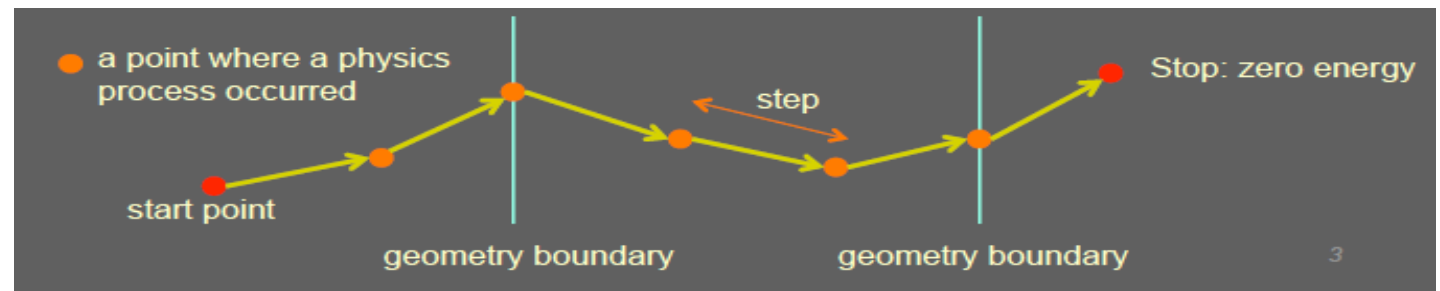
Geant4 in a nutshell

- Geant4 is a general purpose [Monte Carlo simulation toolkit](#) for tracking particles through matter breaking the particle motion into small segments, applying appropriate physical processes and probabilities at each step.

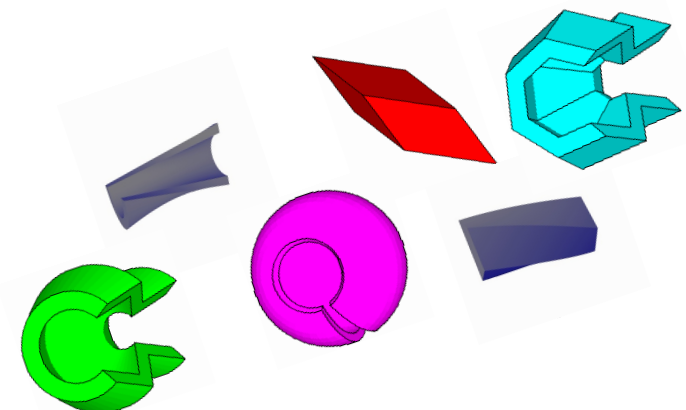
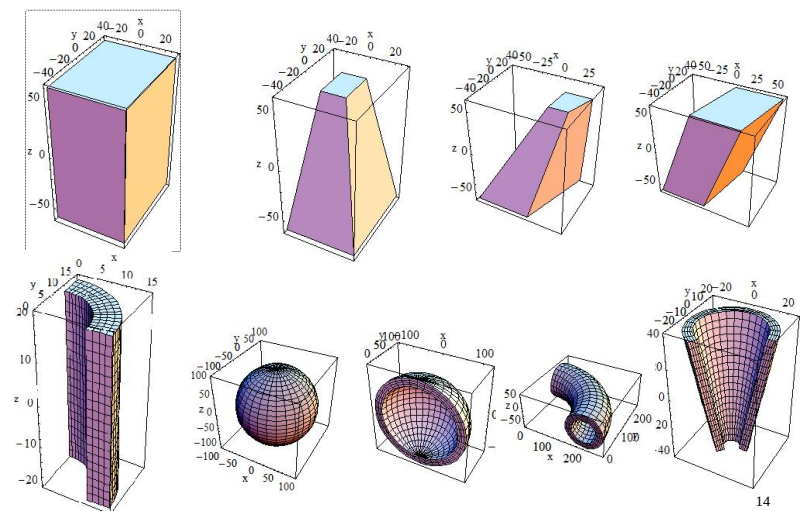


Geant4 in a nutshell

- Geant4 is a general purpose [Monte Carlo simulation toolkit](#) for tracking particles through matter breaking the particle motion into small segments, applying appropriate physical processes and probabilities at each step.



- It provides a [complete set of tools for all domains of radiation transport](#):
 - Definition of geometries and materials of almost [arbitrary complexity](#), namely through importing of CAD models;
 - Particle tracking including propagation in electric and magnetic fields;
 - Description of all relevant physics processes;
 - Scoring of particle interactions;
 - Biasing techniques;
 - Graphical and user interfaces;

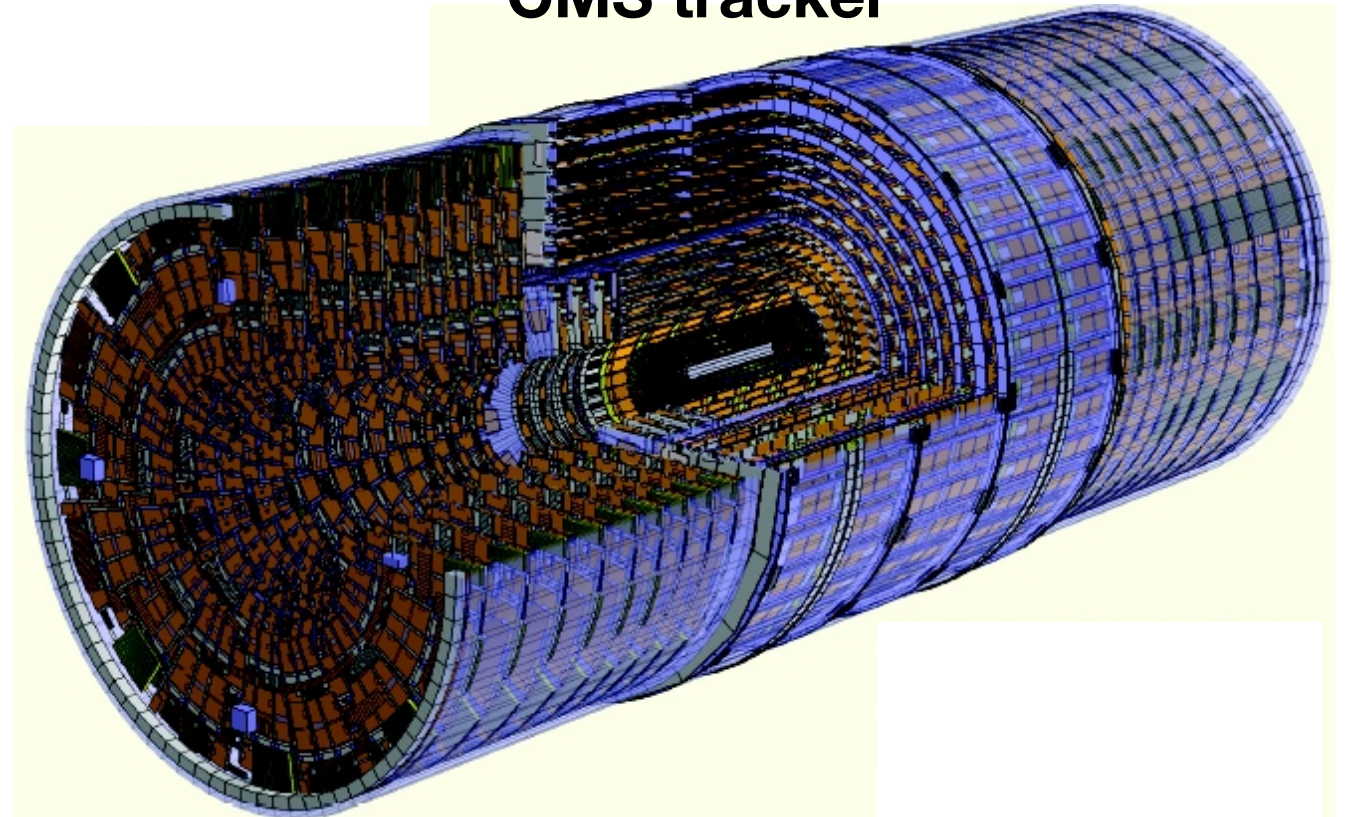


Defining complex geometries with Geant4

Medical phantoms - animal PET



CMS tracker

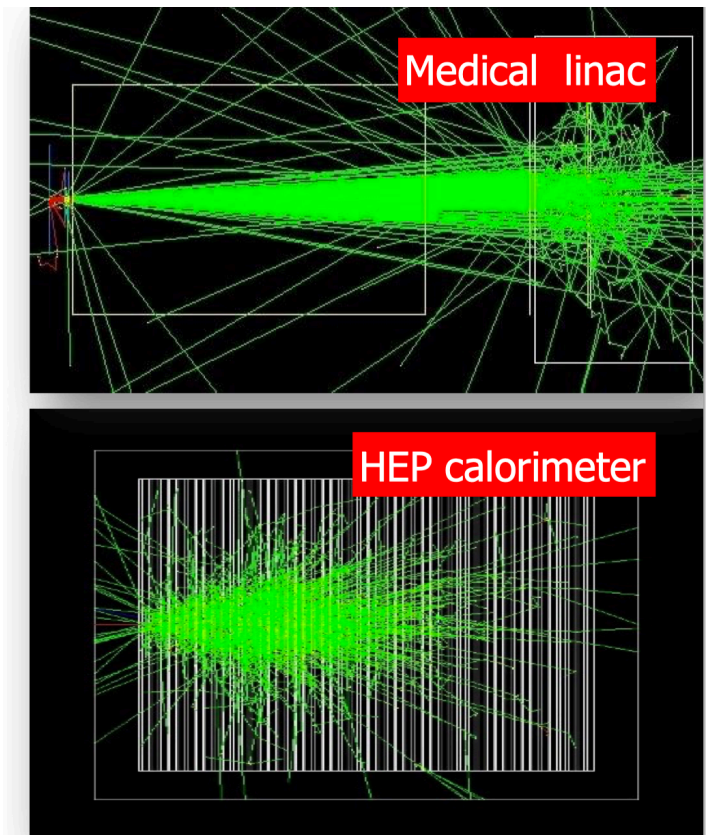


Simplified (!) version of the geometry

Geant4 in a nutshell

- Geant4 physics processes describe **electromagnetic and nuclear interactions** of particles with matter, at energies from **eV to TeV**.
- A choice of physics models exists for many processes, providing options for applications with different accuracy and time requirements.

- **Photon processes**
 - γ conversion into e^+e^- pair
 - Compton scattering
 - Photoelectric effect
 - Rayleigh scattering
 - Gamma-nuclear interaction in *hadronic sub-package*
- **Electron and positron processes**
 - Ionisation
 - Coulomb scattering
 - Bremsstrahlung
 - Positron annihilation
 - Production of e^+e^- pairs
 - Nuclear interaction in *hadronic sub-package*
- Suitable for HEP & many other Geant4 applications with electron and gamma beams

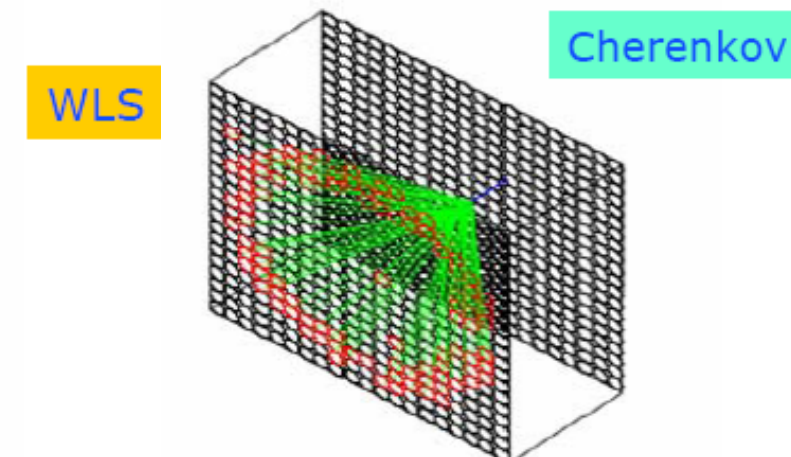
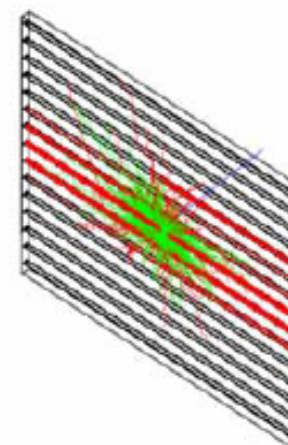
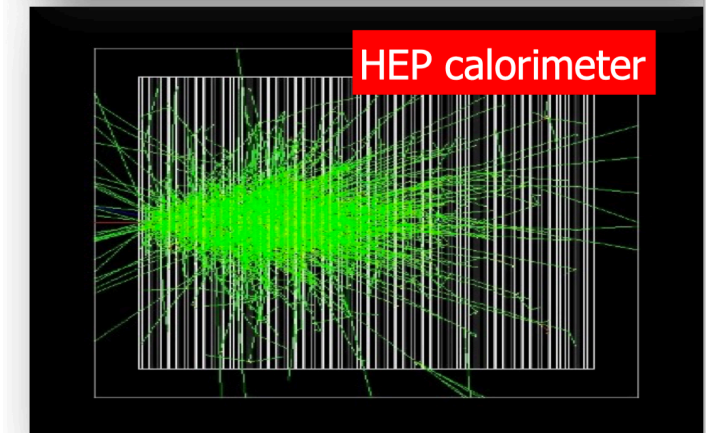
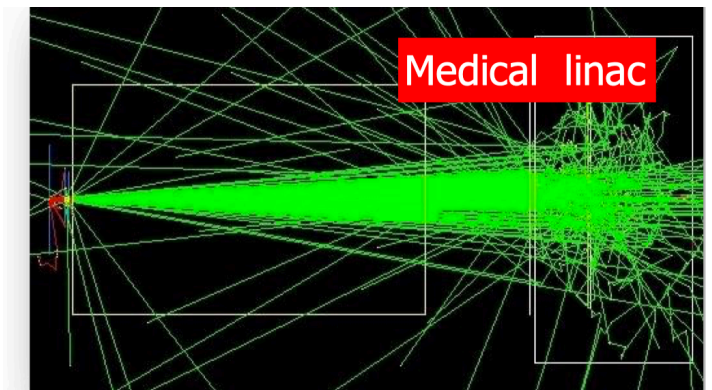


Geant4 in a nutshell

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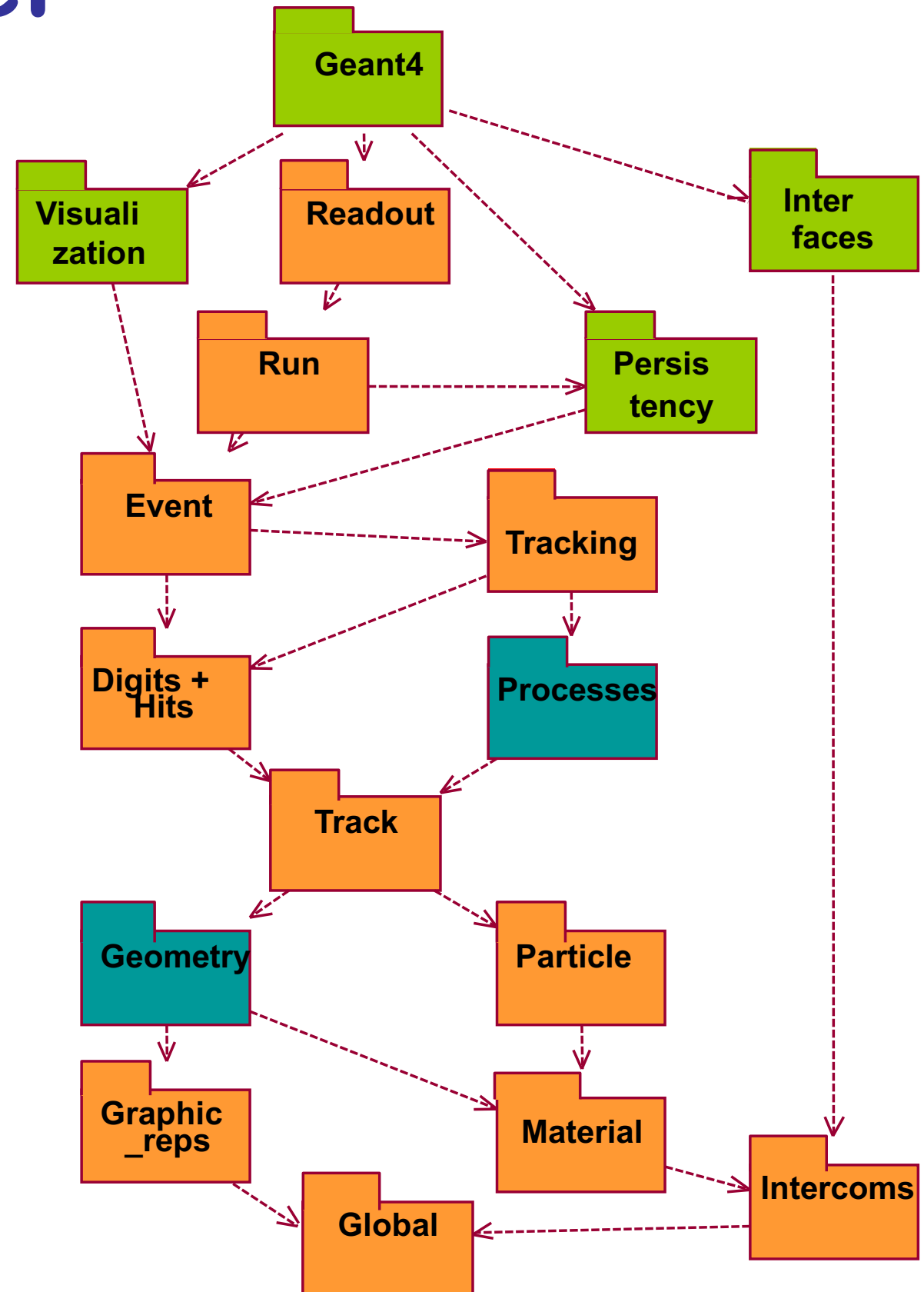
- Geant4 physics processes describe **electromagnetic and nuclear interactions** of particles with matter, at energies from **eV to TeV**.
- A choice of physics models exists for many processes, providing options for applications with different accuracy and time requirements.
- Simulation of secondary processes :

- Cherenkov and scintillation light;
- Synchrotron and transition radiation;
- Propagation of light in dielectric media



Geant4 kernel

- Geant4 consists of 17 categories.
 - Independently developed and maintained by WG(s) responsible to each category.
 - Interfaces between categories (e.g. top level design) are maintained by the global architecture WG.
- Geant4 Kernel
 - Handles run, event, track, step, hit, trajectory.
 - Provides frameworks of geometrical representation and physics processes.



Workflow of a Geant4 simulation

Pre-Initialization

Detector construction:

Geometry
Materials
EM Fields
Sensitivity

Physics List choice:

electromagnetic,
Hadronic high precision
neutrons...
+
Particle production cuts

Run-time

N events

Primary vertex generation (from Event Generator):

Position
Direction
Energy
Particle type

Interaction with detector materials:

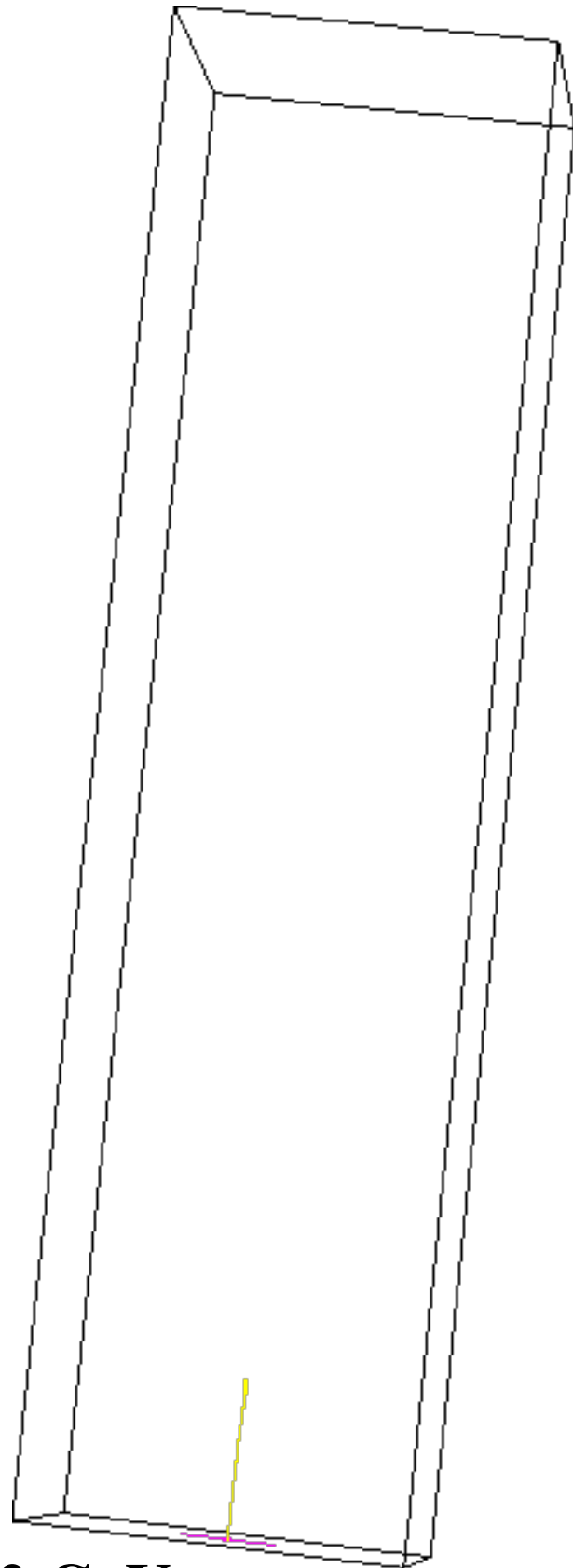
Production of secondaries,
Energy deposits
Energy loss
Multiple scattering, etc

Register signals in sensitive detectors:

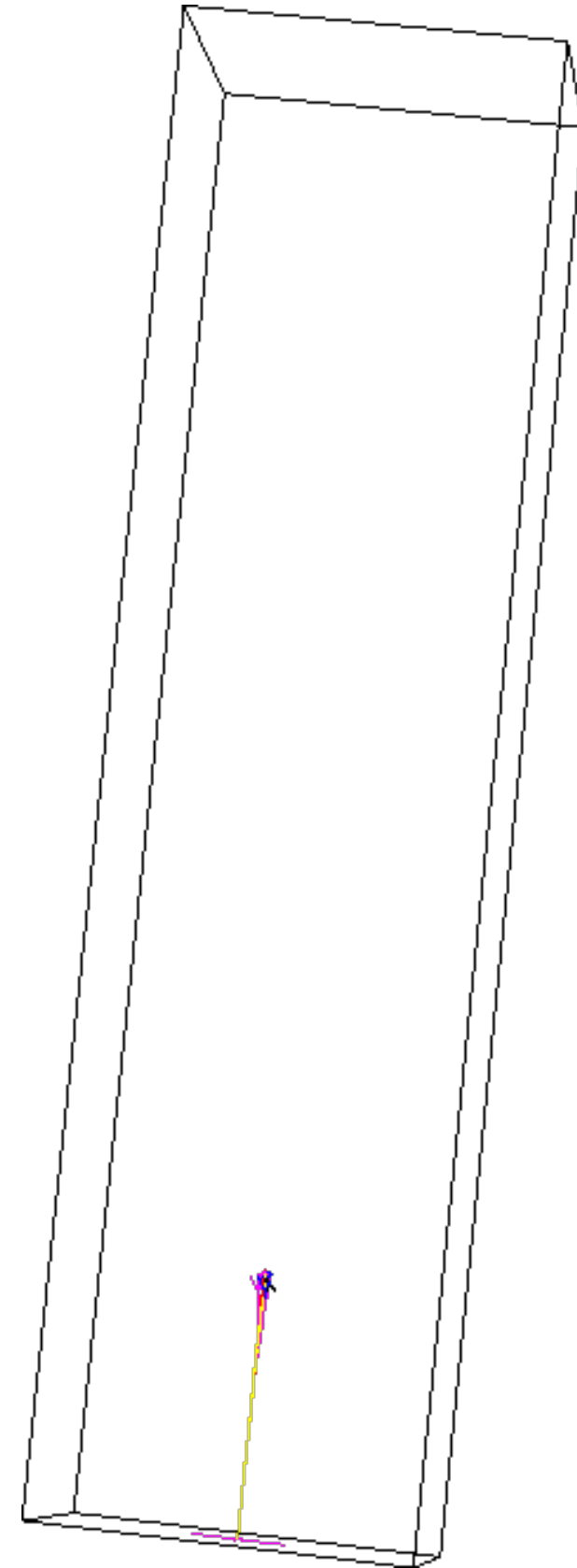
Deposited energy
Track momentum
Time
Position
Detector ID
Particle type
Etc

Geant4 simulation of a crystal calorimeter

37 x 10 x 10 cm³ Lead Glass scintillator

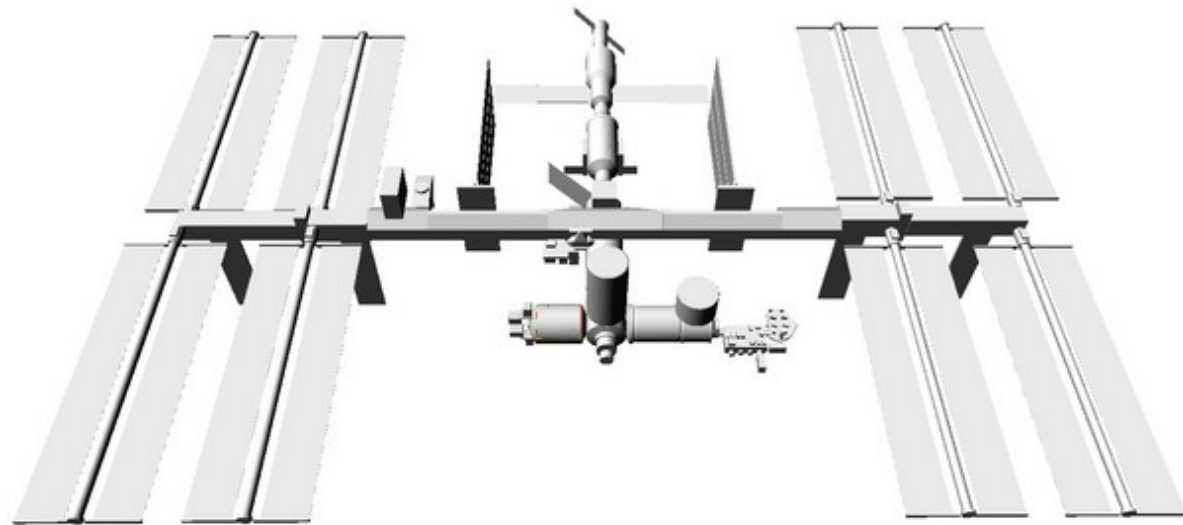


2 GeV e⁻

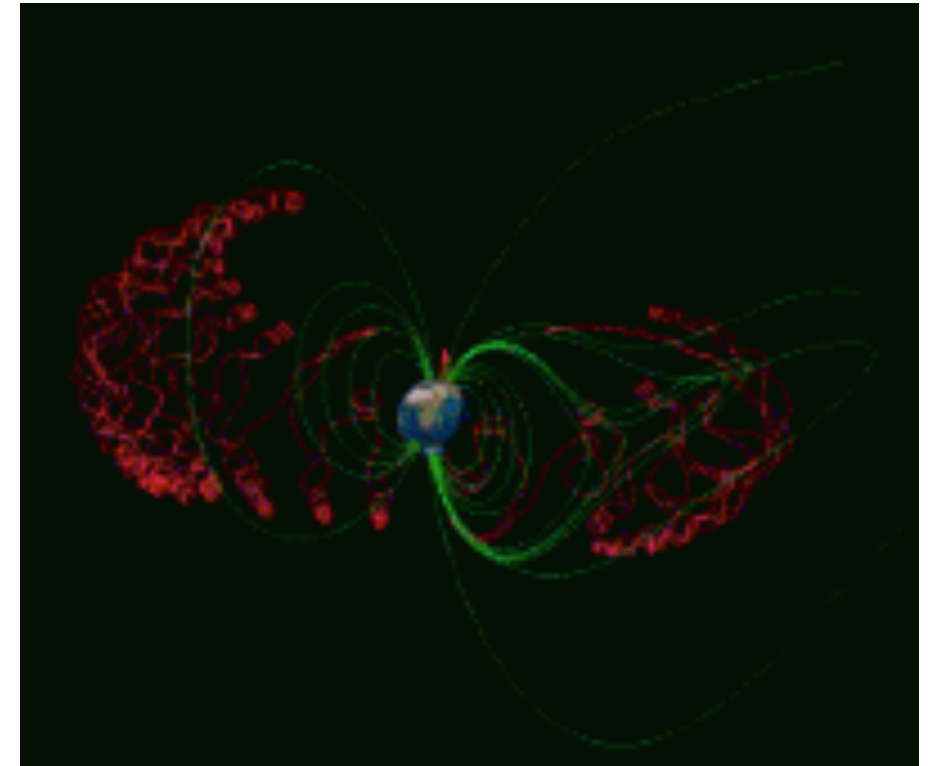


80 GeV e⁻

Examples of Geant4 applications

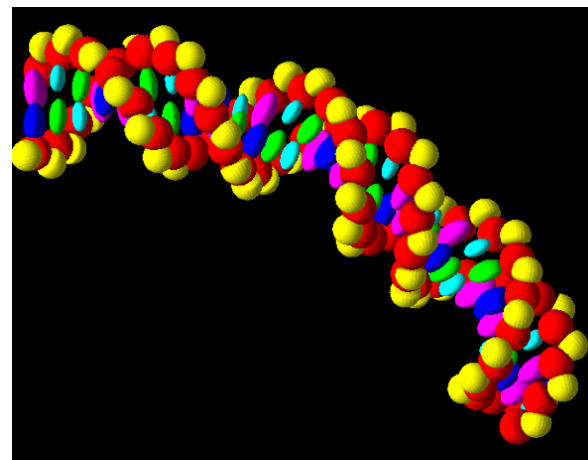
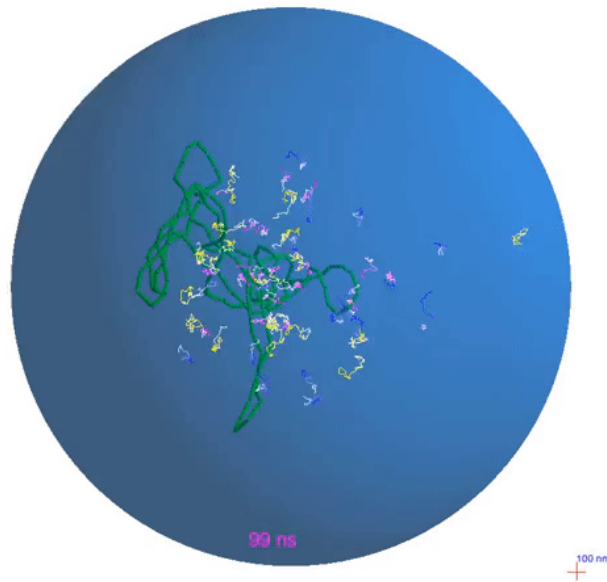


DESIRE - Dose Estimation by Simulation of the ISS Radiation Environment

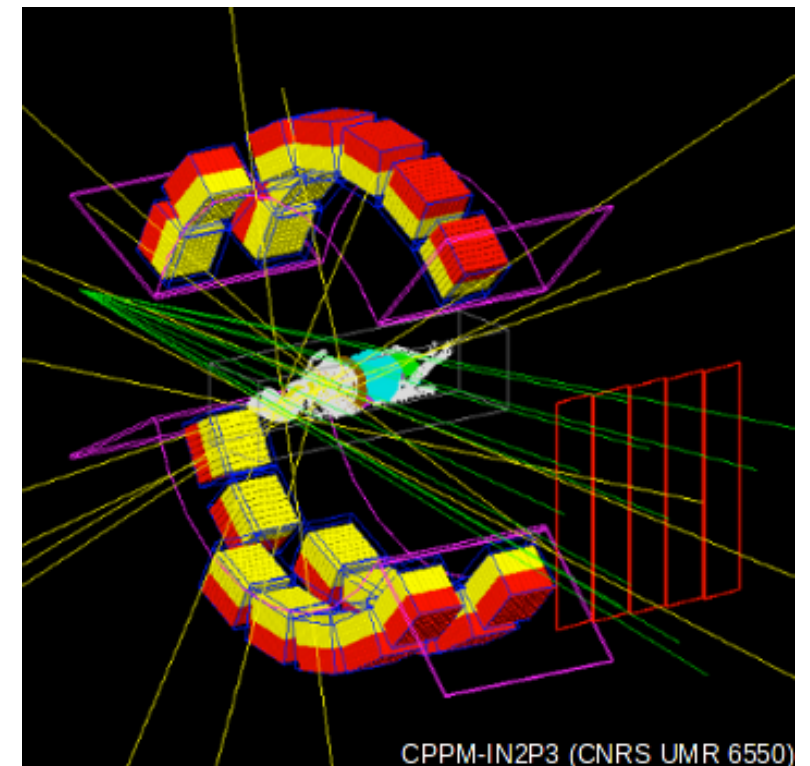


PLANETOCOSMICS - interactions of cosmic rays with planets atmospheres, magnetic field and soil.

GEANT4-DNA : Simulation tools for radiobiology



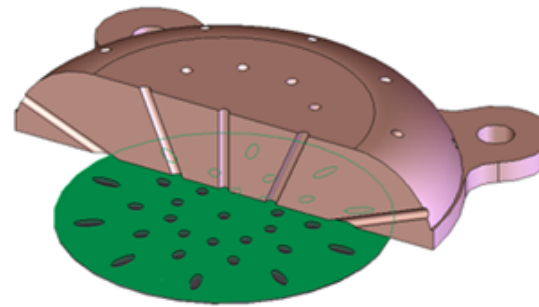
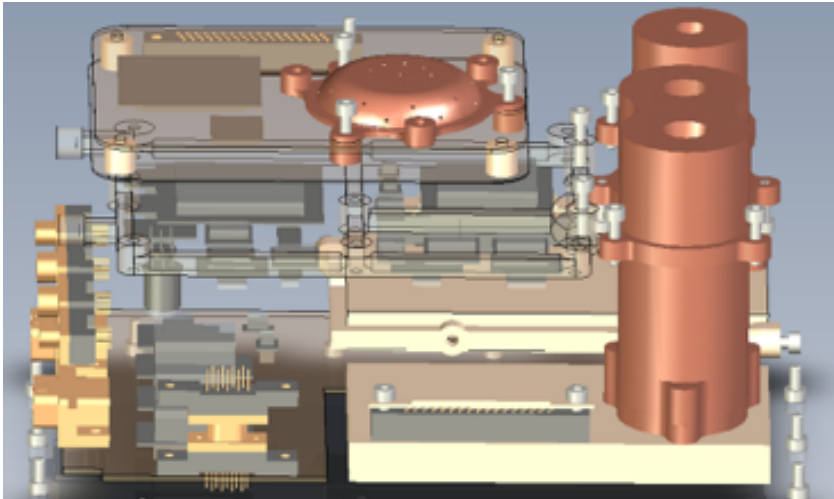
Irradiation of a pBR322 plasmid, including radiolysis
movie courtesy of V. Stepan (NPI-ASCR/CENBG/CNRS/IN2P3/ESA) -



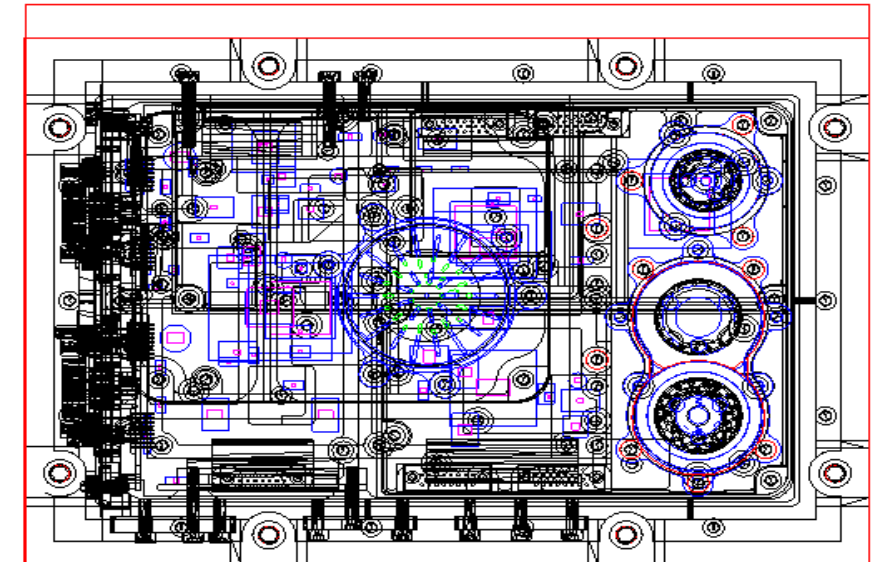
GATE - numerical simulations in medical imaging and radiotherapy. Simulations of Emission Tomography (PET and SPECT), Computed Tomography (CT), Optical Imaging (Bioluminescence and Fluorescence) and Radiotherapy experiments.

Geant4 @ LIP

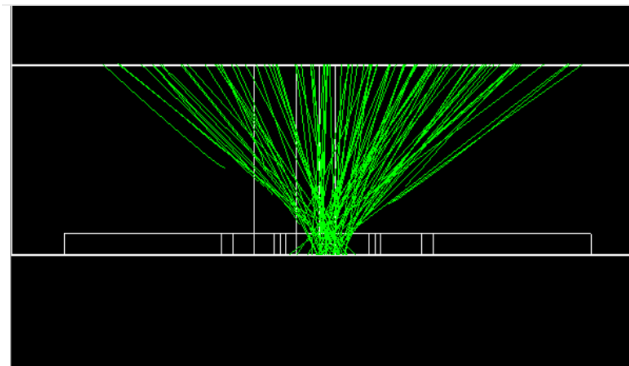
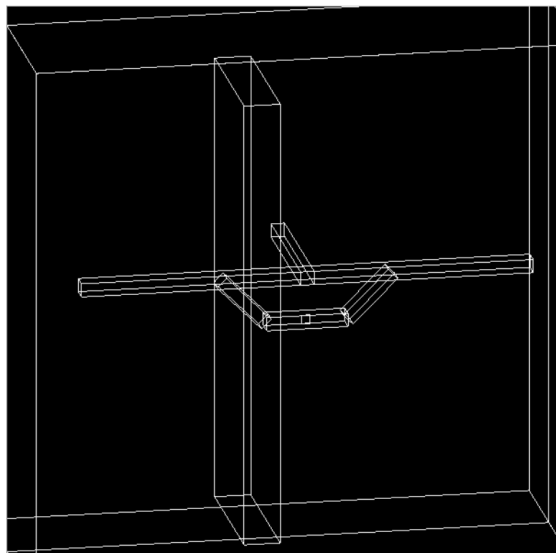
RADEM - Radiation Monitor for the Jovian system



CAD model of RADEM

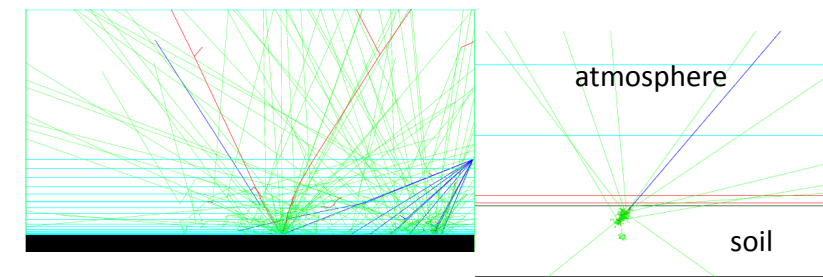


Muon tomography in Lousal mine



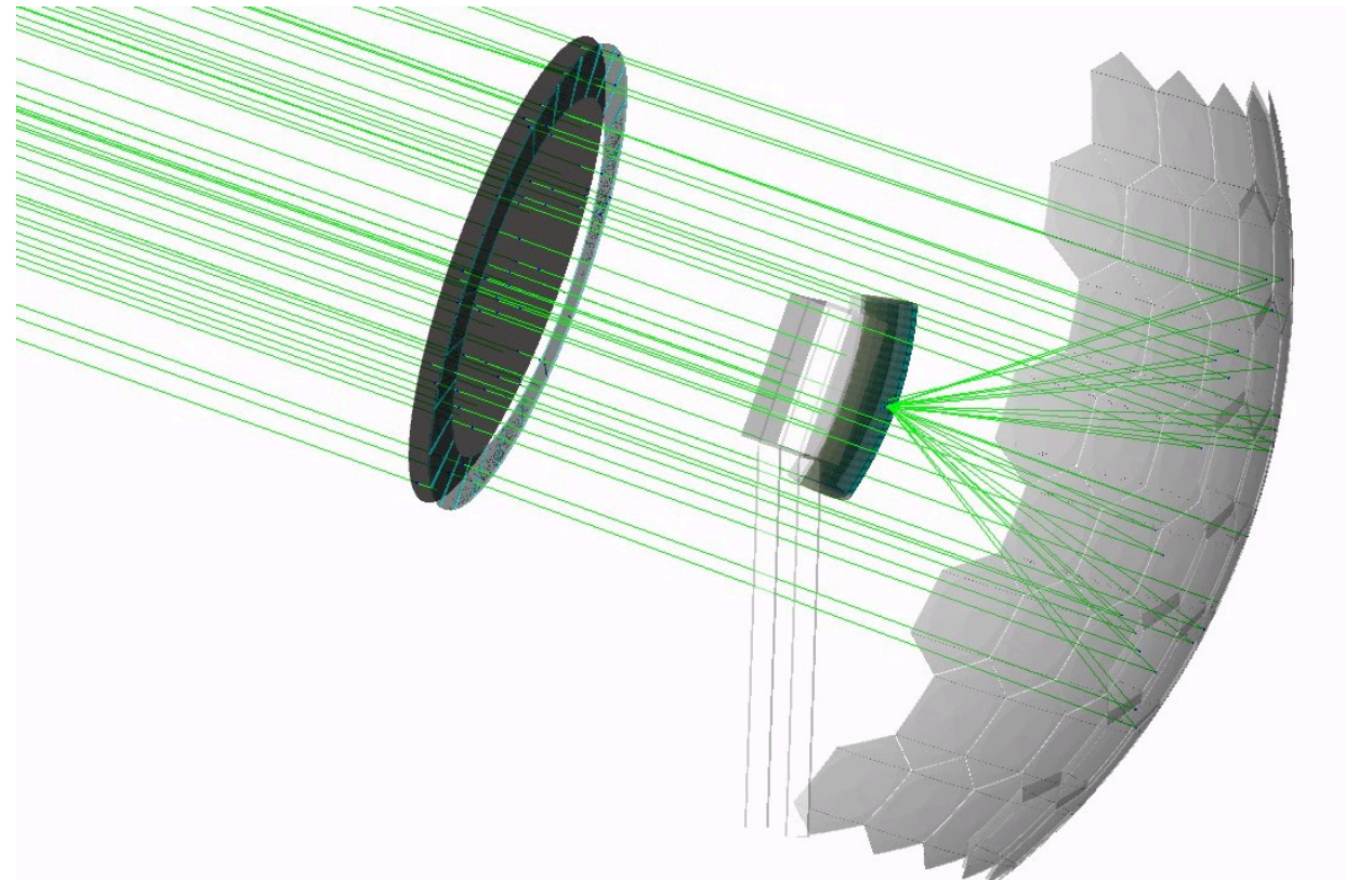
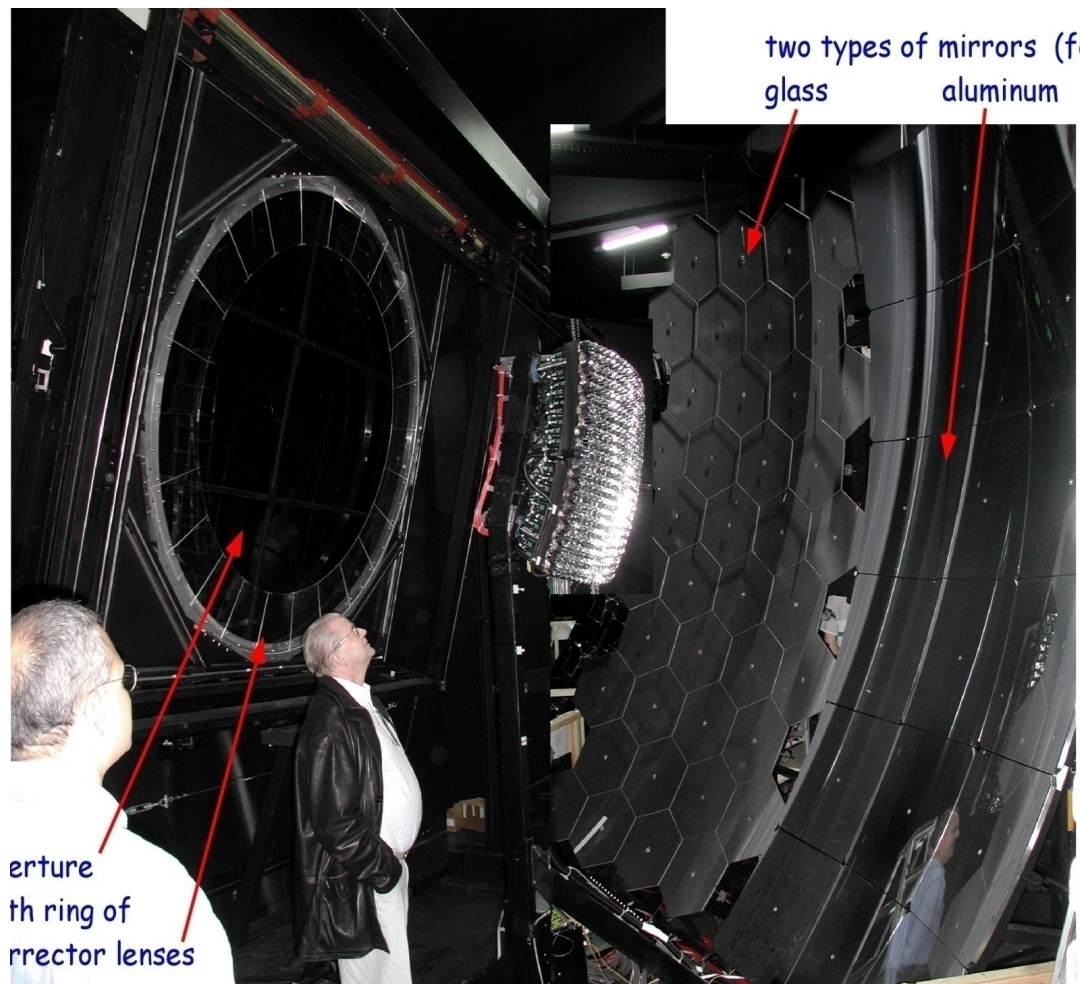
Simulation of particles interacting in the Martian atmosphere and soil

**detailed Martian Energetic
Radiation Environment Model**



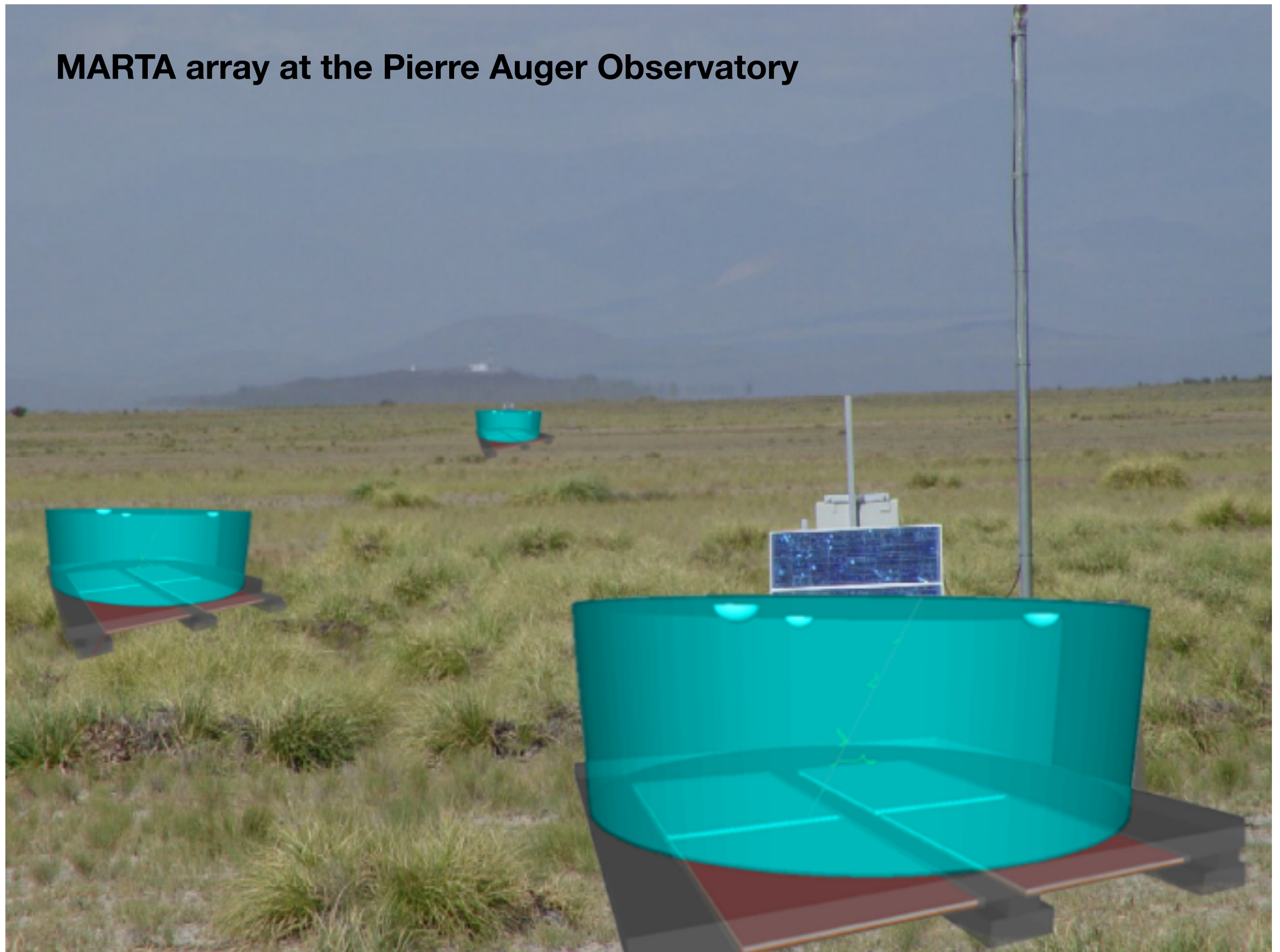
Geant4 @ LIP - Optics simulations

Fluorescence Detector of the Pierre Auger Observatory

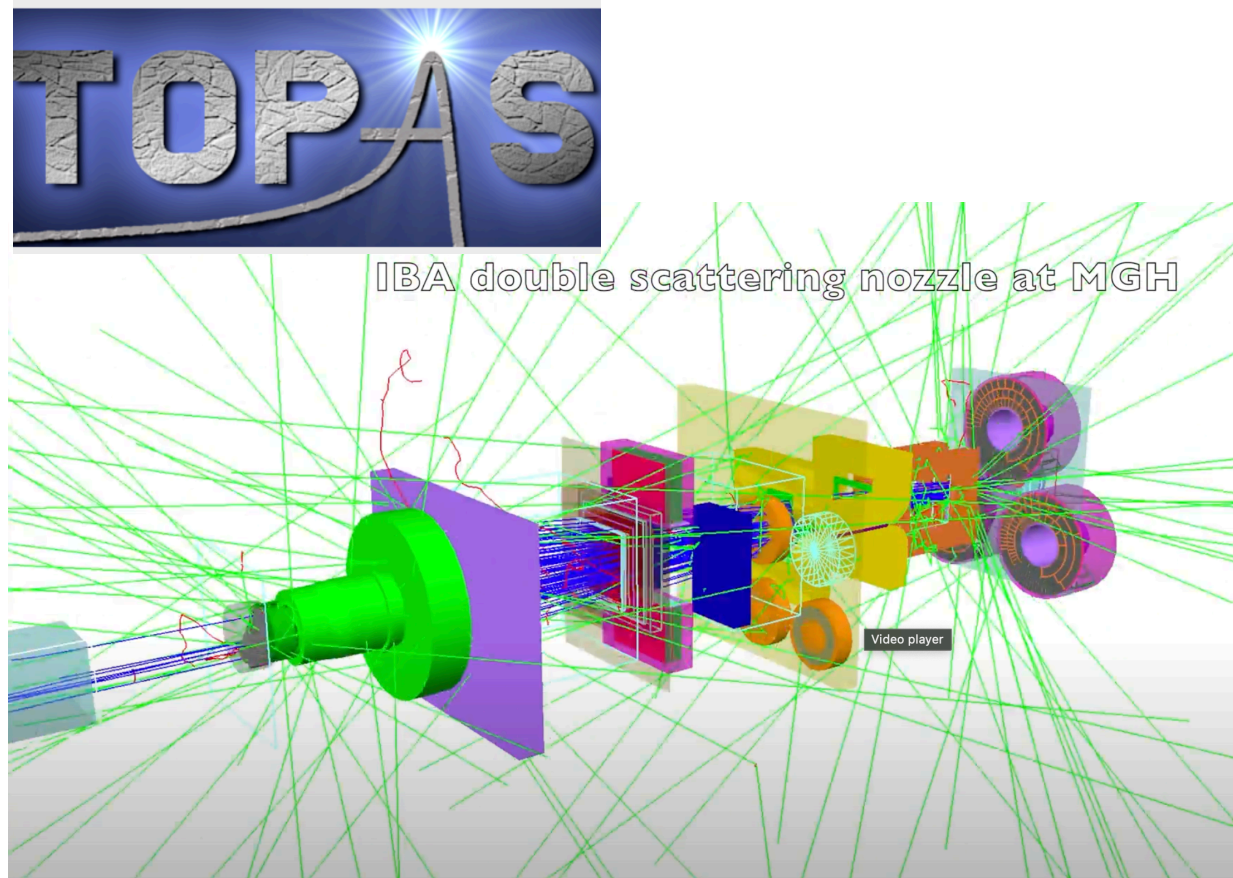
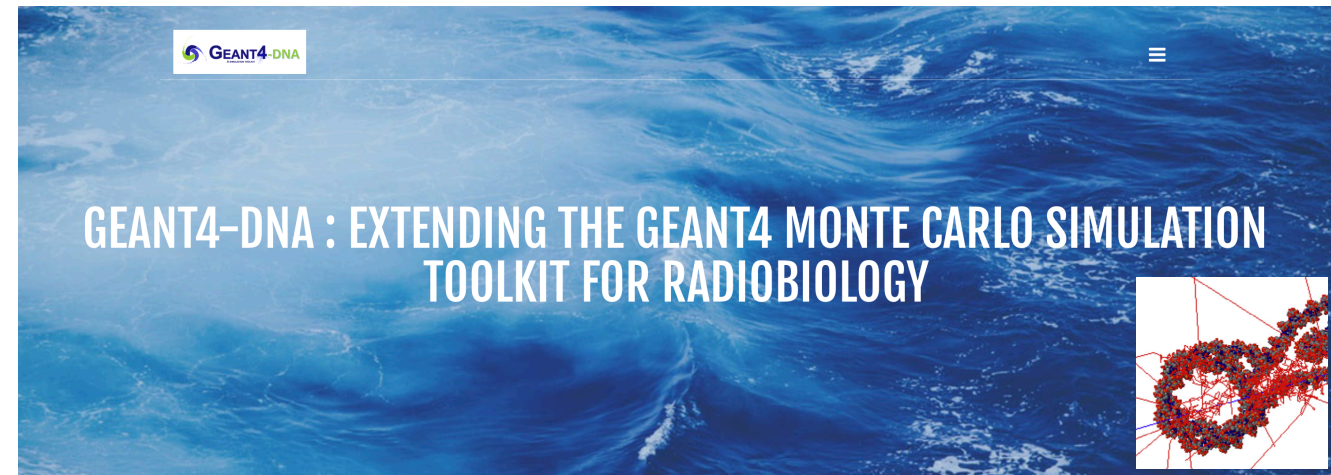
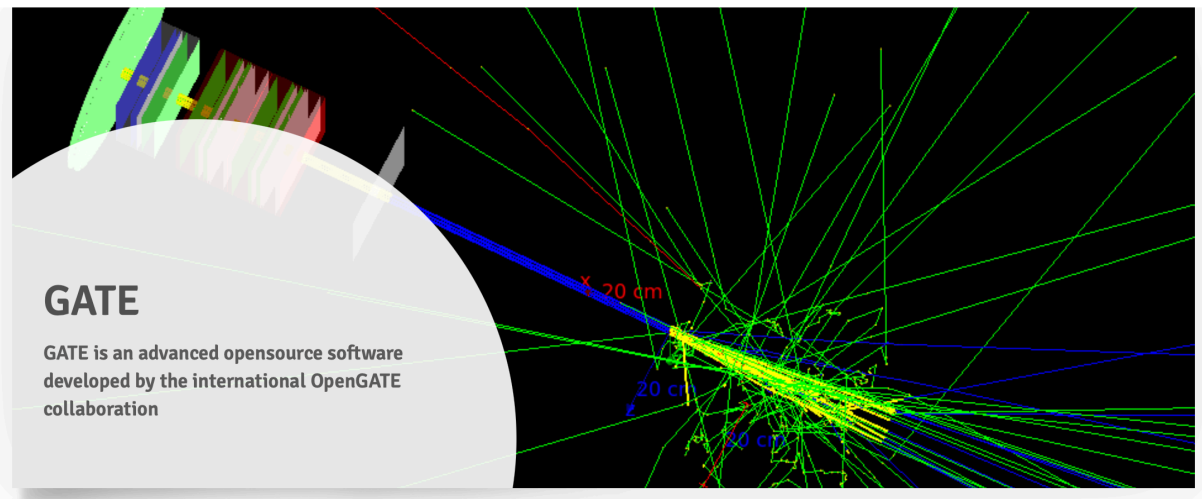


Simulations of full cosmic ray detectors

MARTA array at the Pierre Auger Observatory



Geant4 based simulation tools



Tutorial on TOPAS, July 10th

by Joana Antunes

