

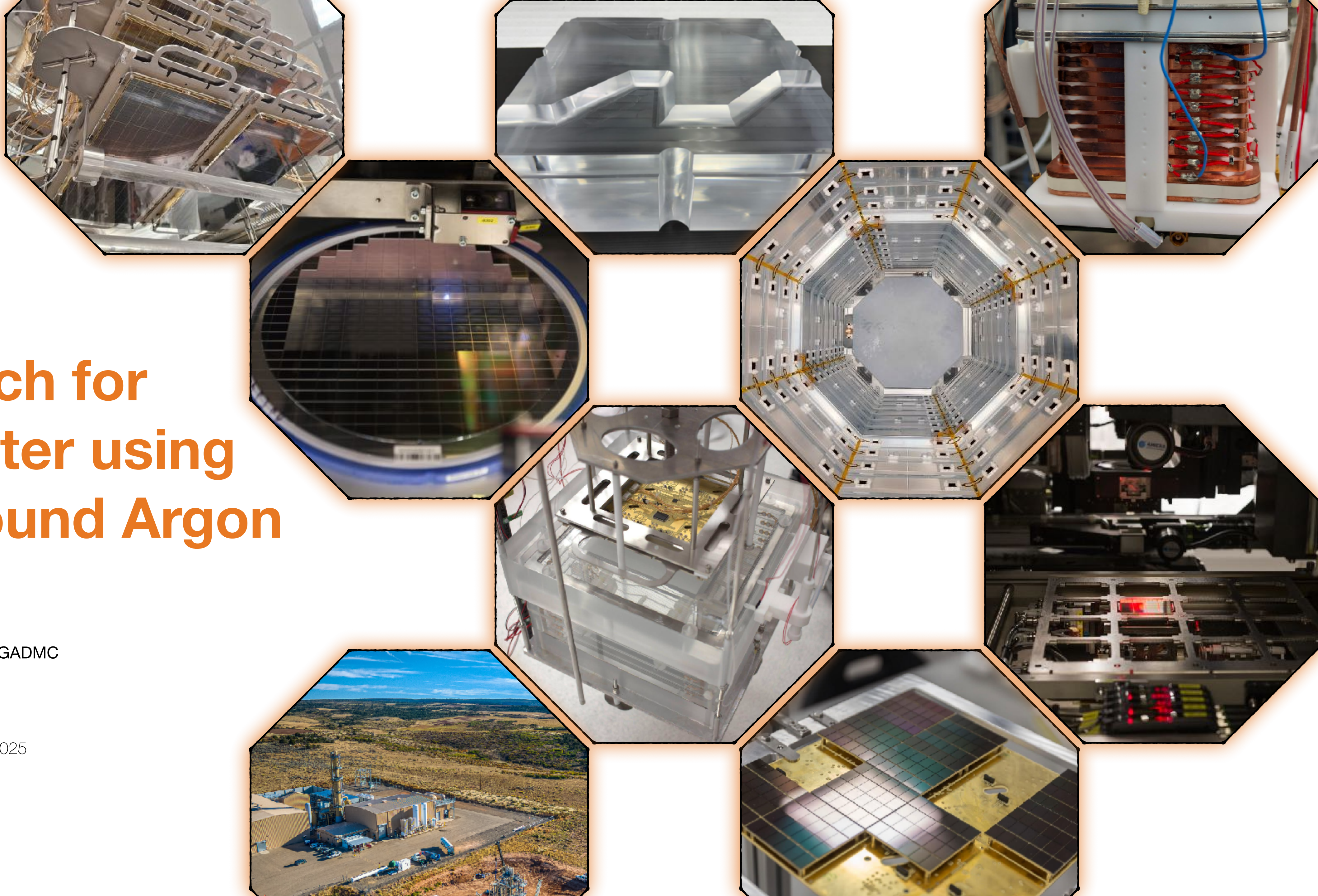
The Search for Dark Matter using Underground Argon

Ako Jamil on behalf of the GADMC
Princeton University

October 21, 2025

Light Detection in Noble Elements 2025

Hong Kong

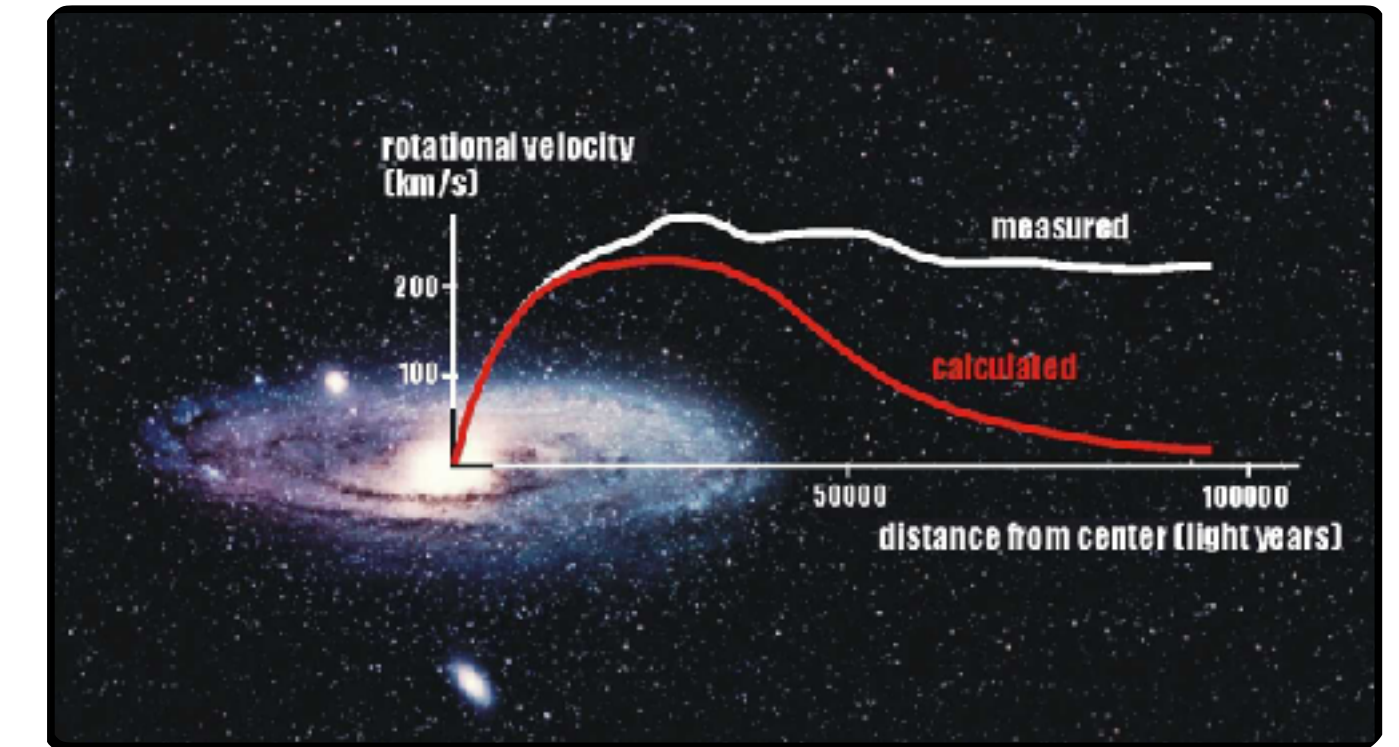


Evidence for Dark Matter (DM) at All Scales

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- Numerous cosmological evidence for the existence of DM
 - *Galactic rotation curves*
 - *Clusters of galaxies*
 - *Early and late cosmology (CMB, LSS)*
 - *Big Bang Nucleosynthesis*
 - ...

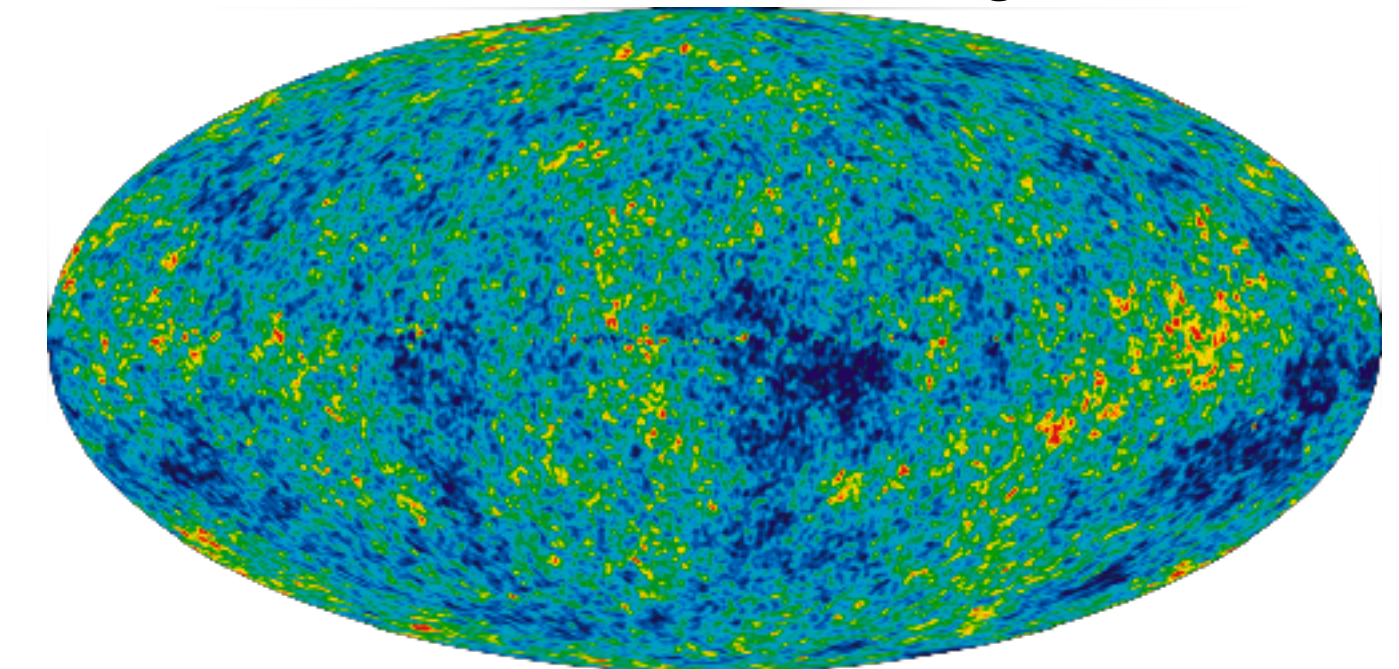
Rotation curves of stars



Colliding galaxy clusters

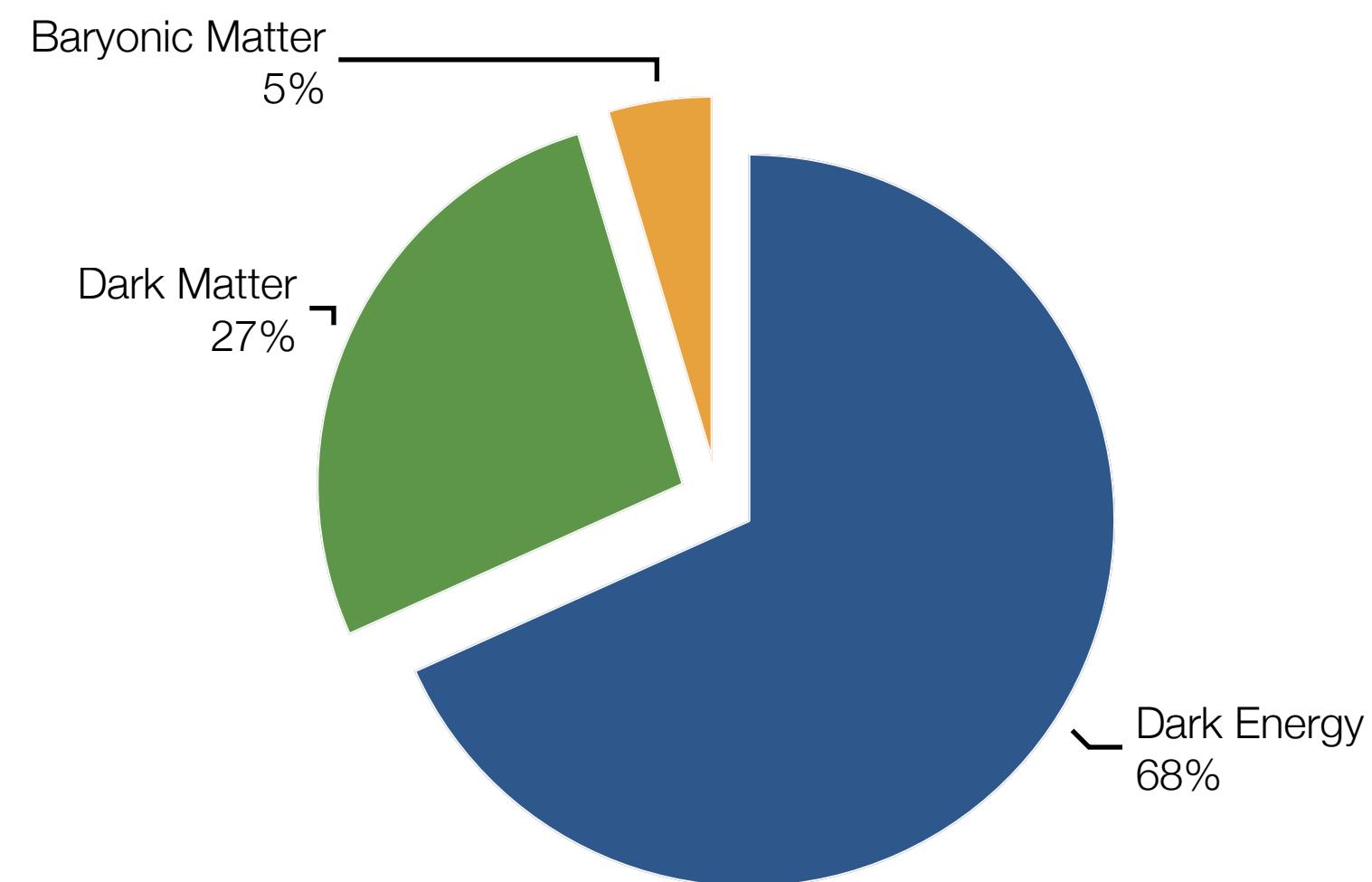


Cosmic Microwave Background

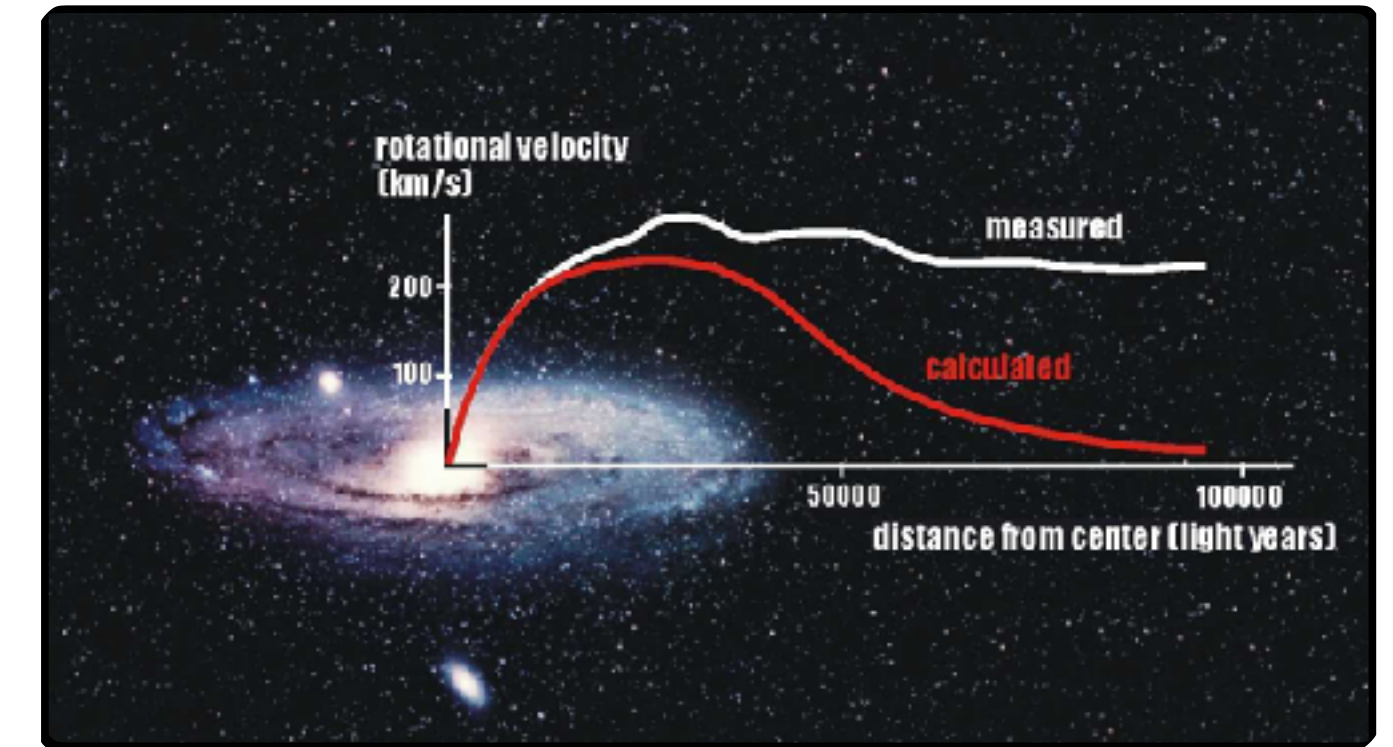


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 - ...
- What we know so far
 - *Long-lived*
 - *Electrically neutral*
 - *Gravitationally interacting*
 - *"Particle-like"*
 - *Non-baryonic*



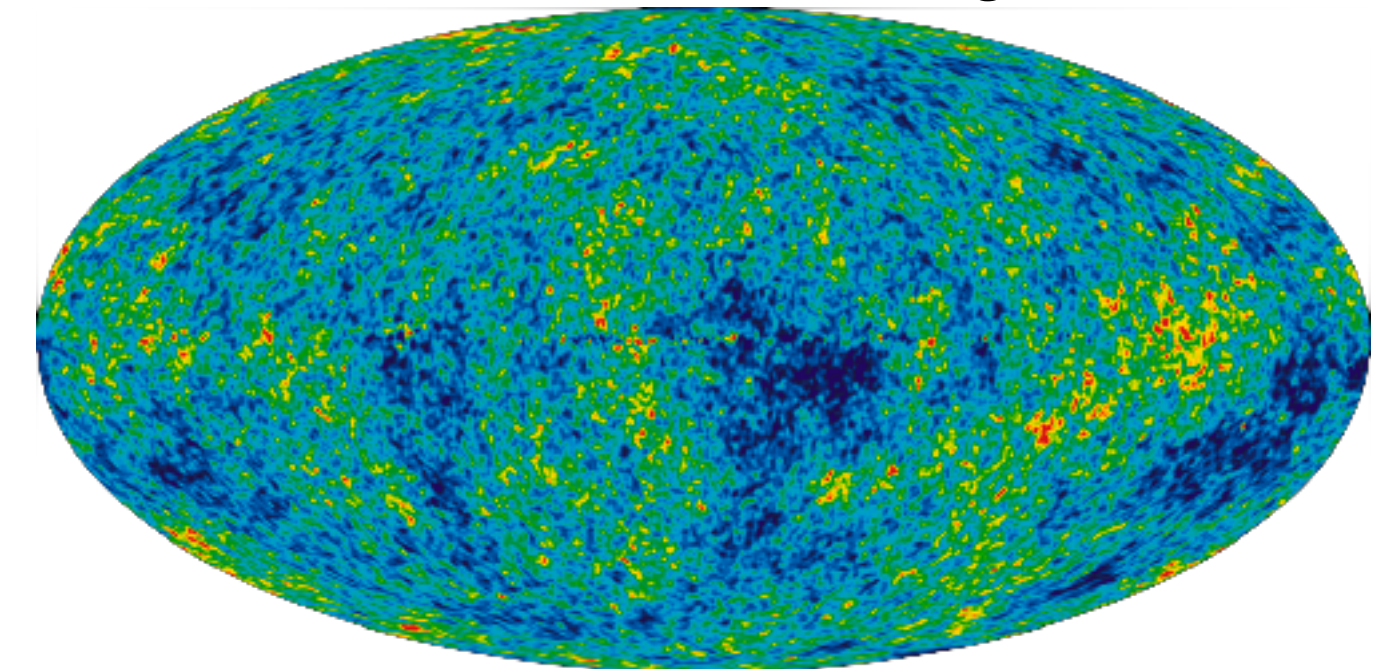
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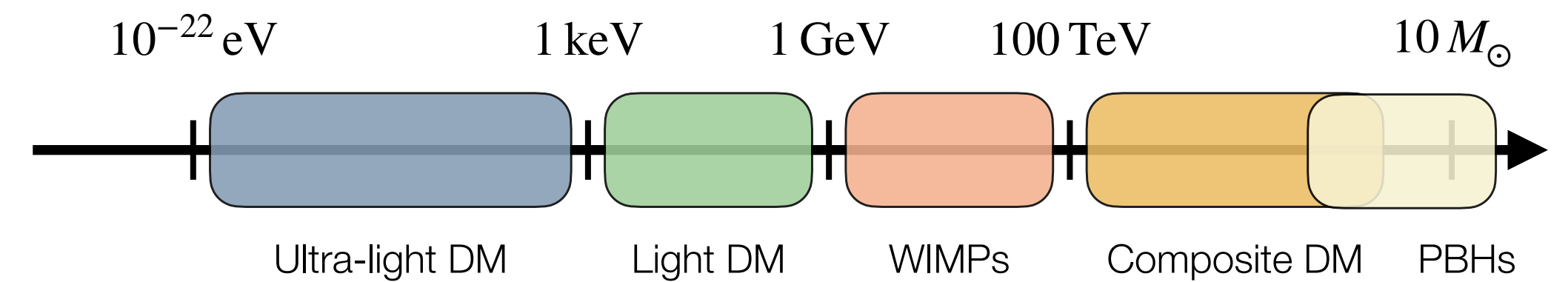


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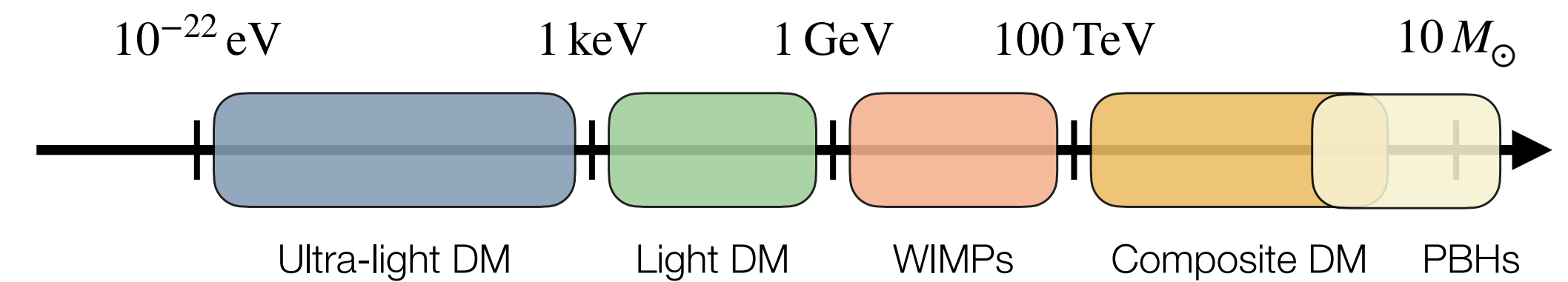
Where do we look?

- Many models consistent with observations exist
 - *WIMPs and axions among popular candidates*



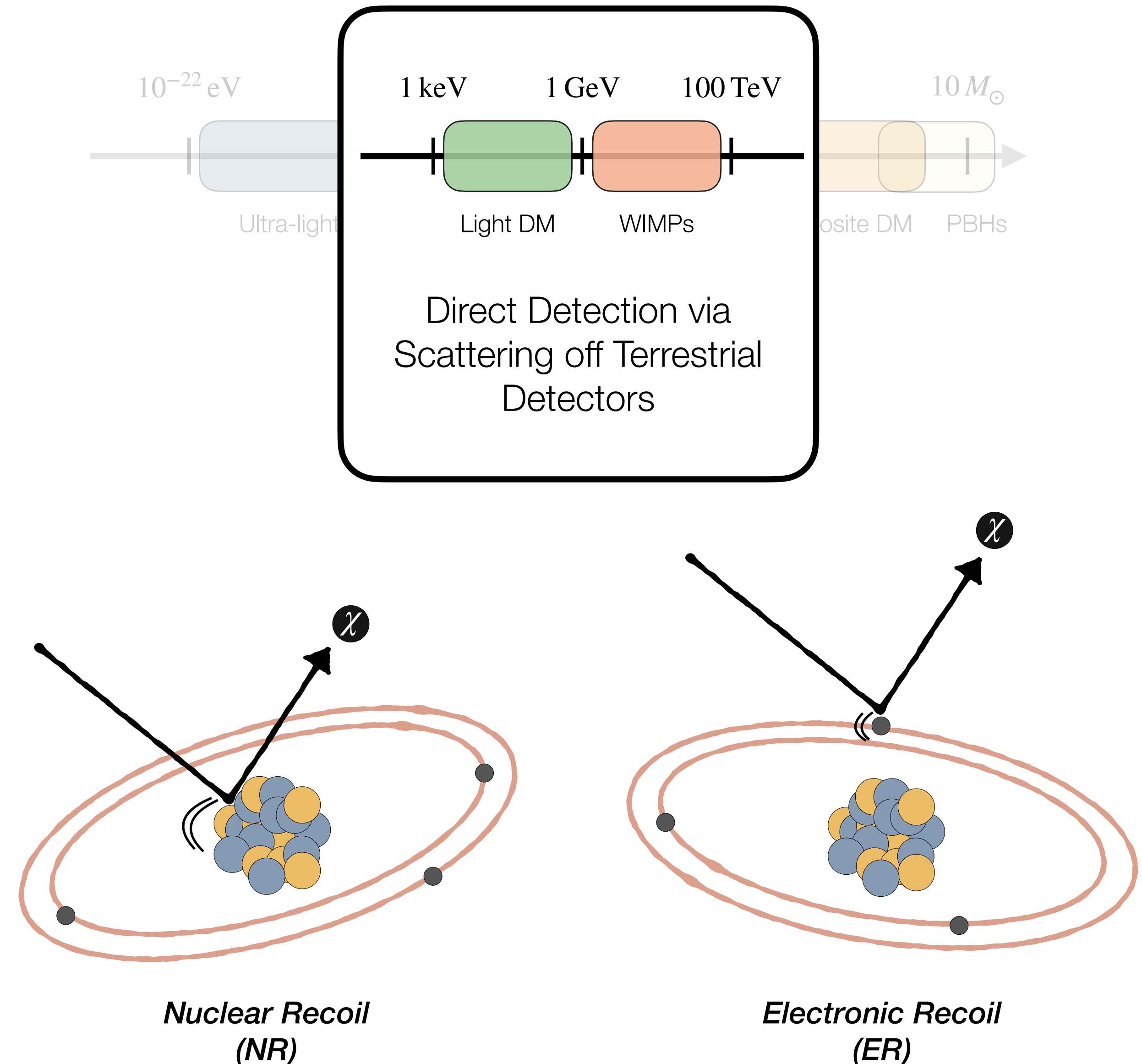
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 - *Production via Colliders*
 - *Indirect detection via Annihilation*
 - *Direct detection via Scattering*



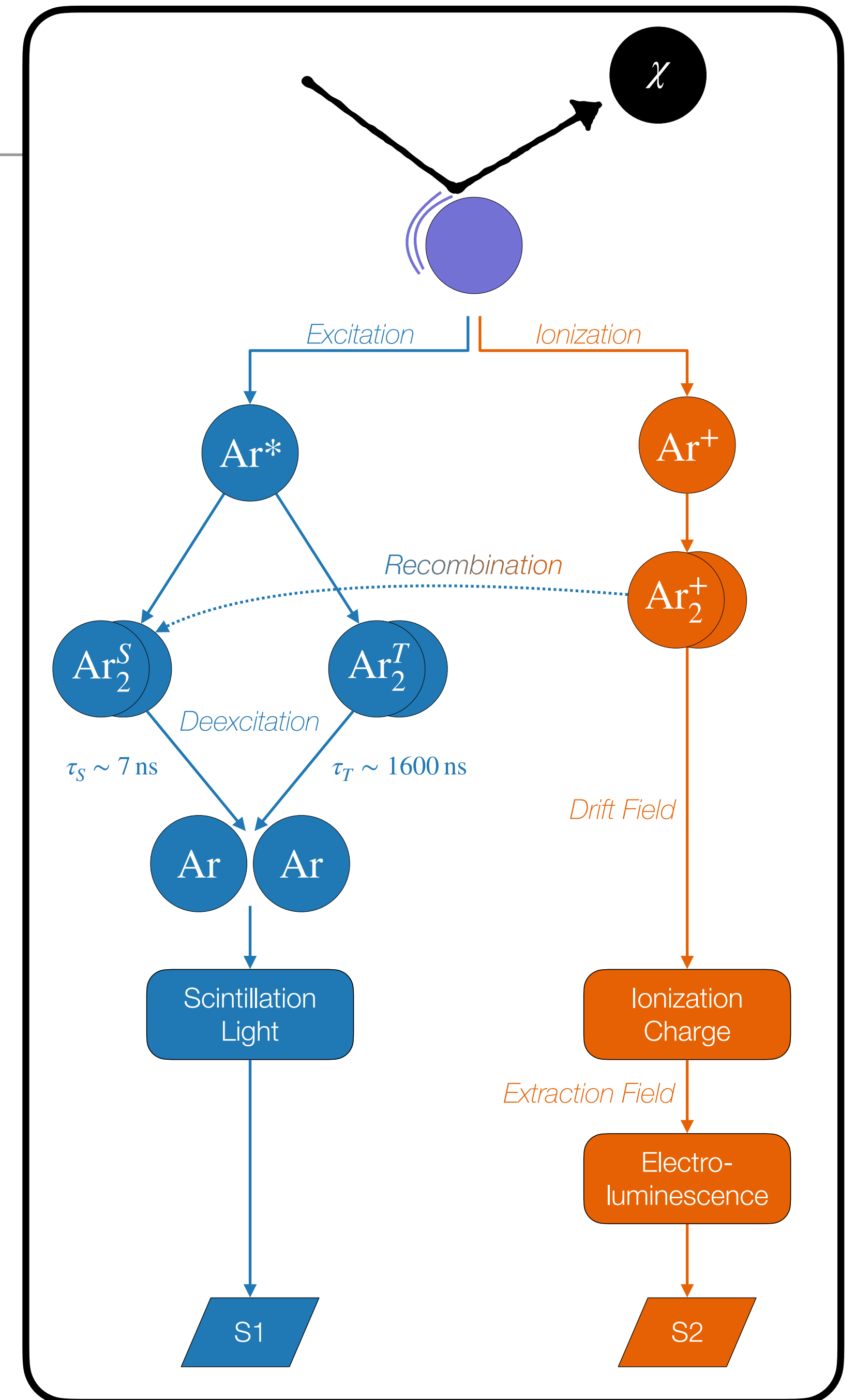
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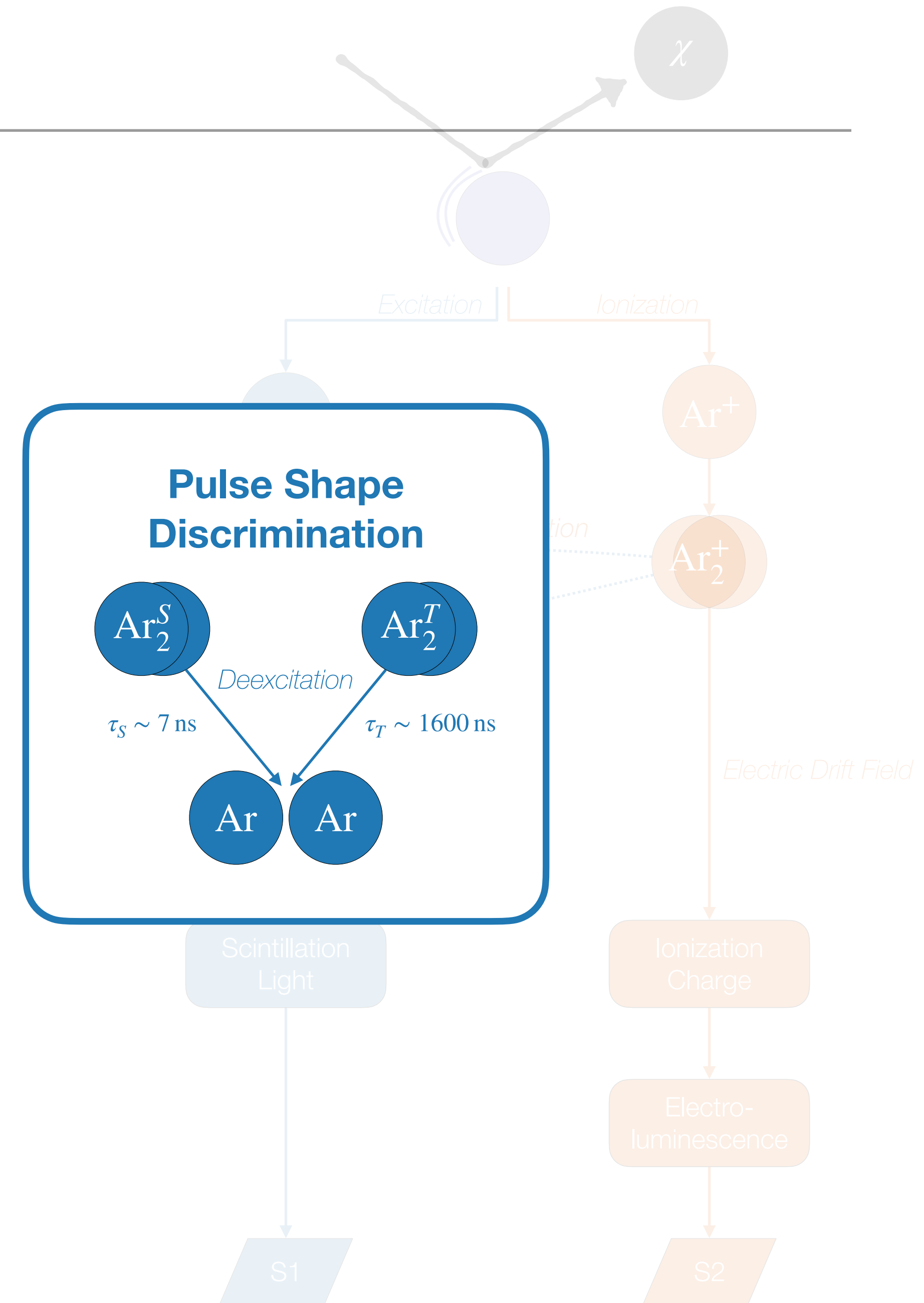
Liquid Argon as Target Material

- Liquid Argon (LAr) properties
 - Scalable to very, very large detector volumes $\rightarrow$ large exposure
 - Easy purification for both electro-negative and radioactive contamination $\rightarrow$ high purity
 - Provide good self-shielding capabilities $\rightarrow$ low background
 - Colder temperatures (easier Rn removal) $\rightarrow$ low background
 - Powerful background rejection techniques by measuring charge and light $\rightarrow$ background rejection
- Emission of VUV scintillation light
 - Requires wavelength-shifting material **128 nm $\rightarrow$ 420nm**
- Presence of cosmogenically activated ^{39}Ar
 - Pulse Shape Discrimination (DEAP-3600)
 - Underground-sourced argon (DarkSide-50)



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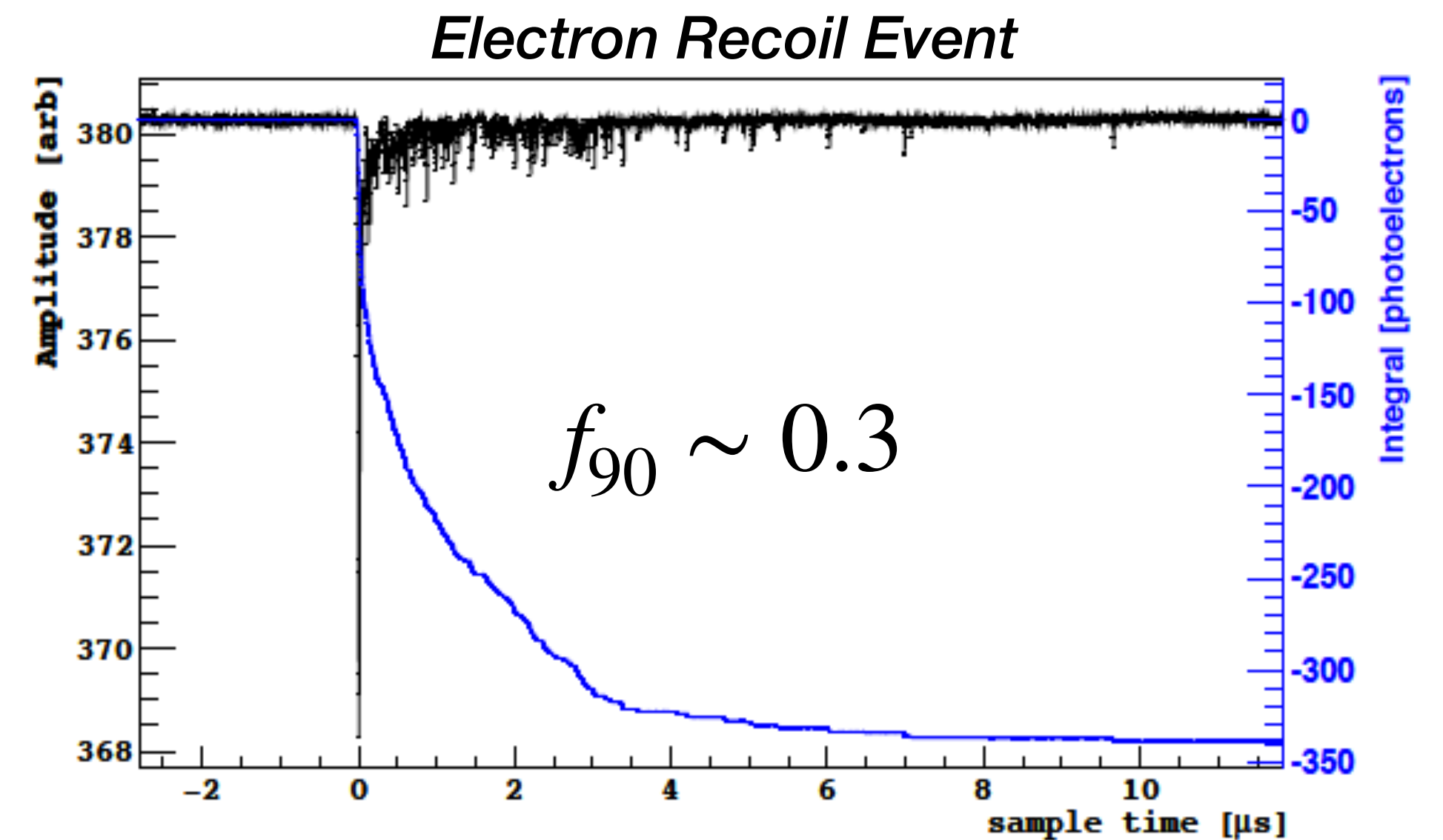
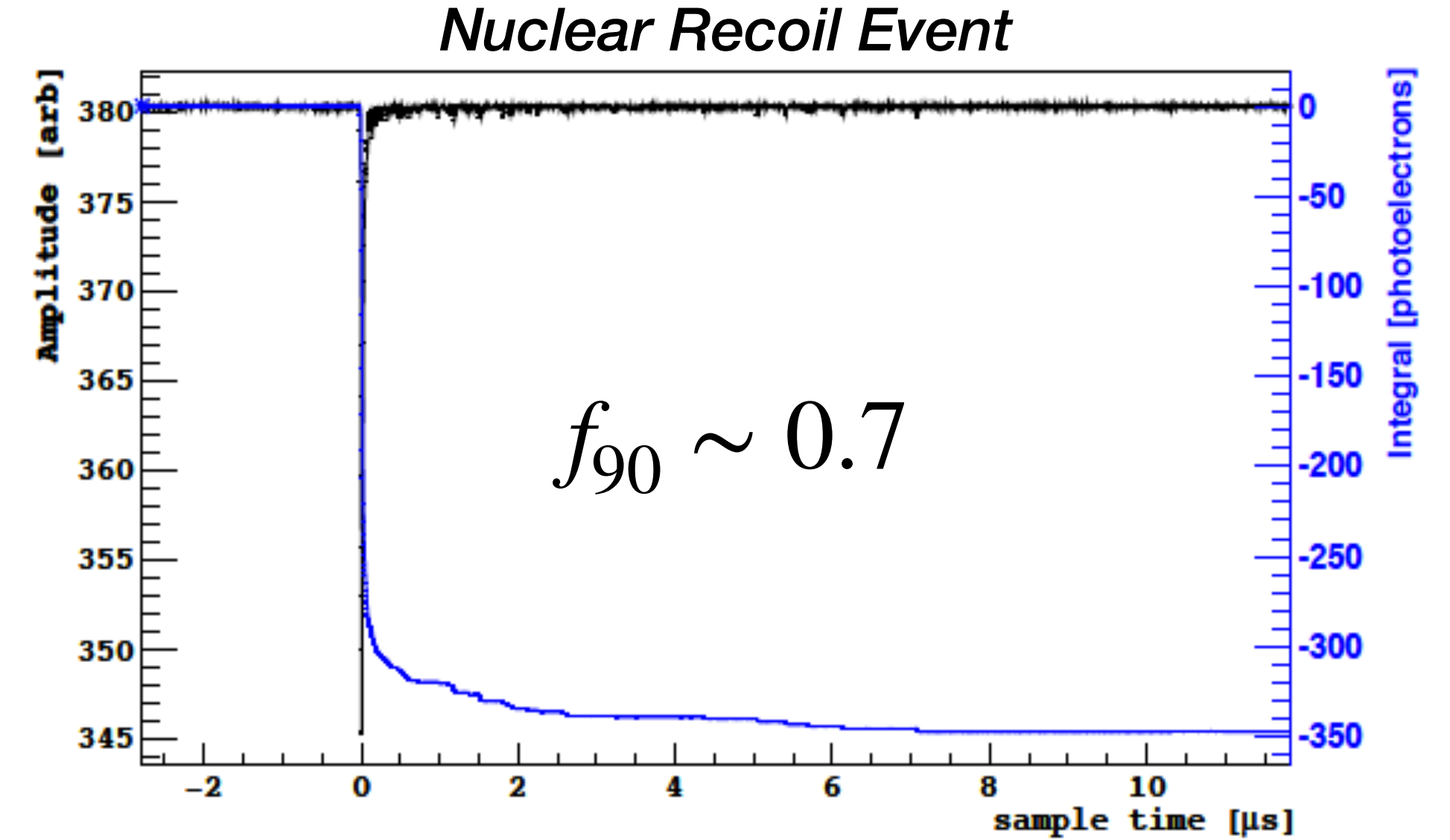


Pulse Shape Discrimination

- The population of Singlet ($\tau_S \sim 7 \text{ ns}$) vs Triplet ($\tau_T \sim 1600 \text{ ns}$) states is particle dependent
 - Nuclear Recoil (**NR**) (n, α, χ): preferably Singlet
 - Electronic Recoil (**ER**) (β, γ): preferably Triplet
- Effective observable to discriminate based on the prompt light signal

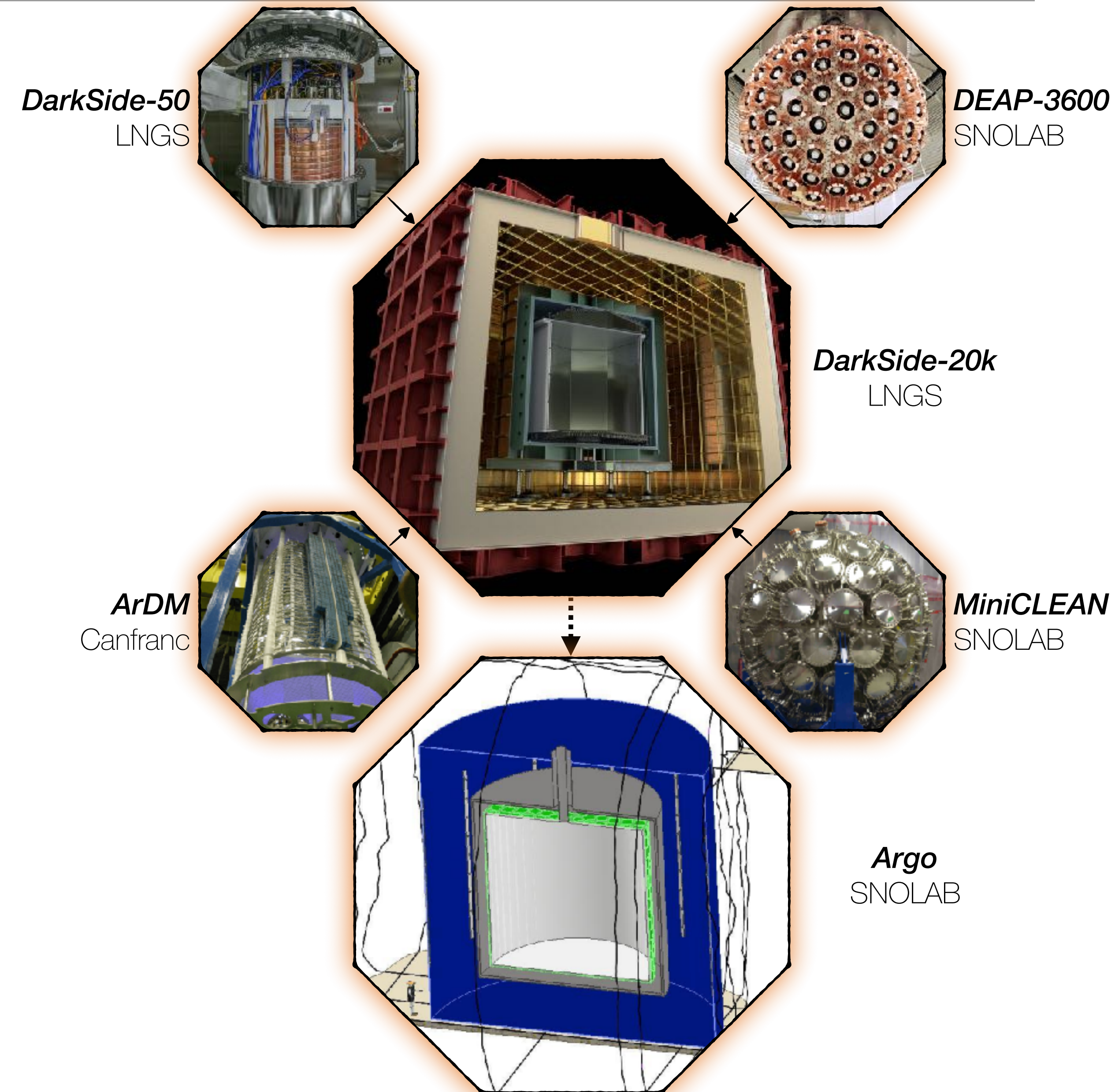
$$f_{90} = \frac{\int_0^{90} A(t) dt}{\int A(t) dt}$$

Needs to be optimized for a given detector



Global Argon Dark Matter Collaboration

- Combined expertise from 4 LAr experiments
 - Over 400 collaborators
 - 100 different institutes
- Goal
 - Build the ultimate LAr Detector
 - Explore DM to the neutrino floor and beyond
 - Extremely low instrumental background
- A sequential, two-step program
 - DarkSide-20k ($200\text{ t} \cdot \text{yr}$ fiducial)
 - Argo ($3000\text{ t} \cdot \text{yr}$ fiducial)

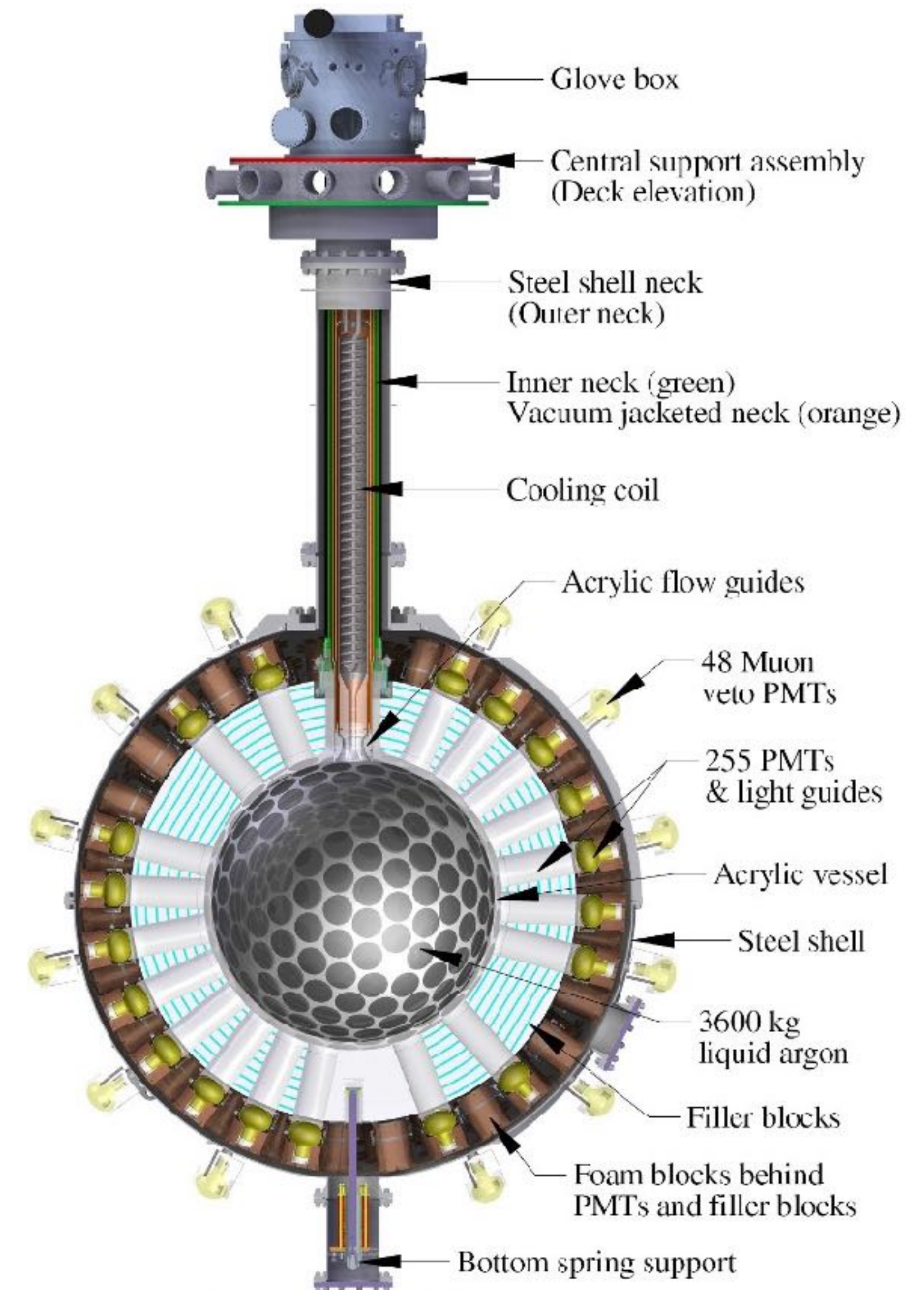


DEAP-3600 Overview

Dark matter Experiment using Argon Pulse-shape discrimination

With input from Susnata Seth

- Largest operating liquid-argon DM detector
 - Single-phase LAr detector with **3600 kg** of LAr
 - Spherical acrylic vessel instrumented with 255 PMTs
 - Located at SNOLAB
- Key achievements
 - World-leading PSD performance
 - Providing the best limit for above **30 GeV** WIMPs with argon
 - Leading sensitivity to superheavy, multi-scattering dark matter
- Main ongoing analyses
 - WIMP search with improved background model and Profile Likelihood Ratio method (3yr dataset)
 - Solar neutrino absorption in ^{40}Ar
 - Muon flux measurement at SNOLAB
- Hardware upgrades completed
 - Reduce challenging alpha backgrounds in the neck
 - Aiming for a background-free sensitivity at 10^{-46}cm^2 level
 - Detector refilled with LAr and currently taking data



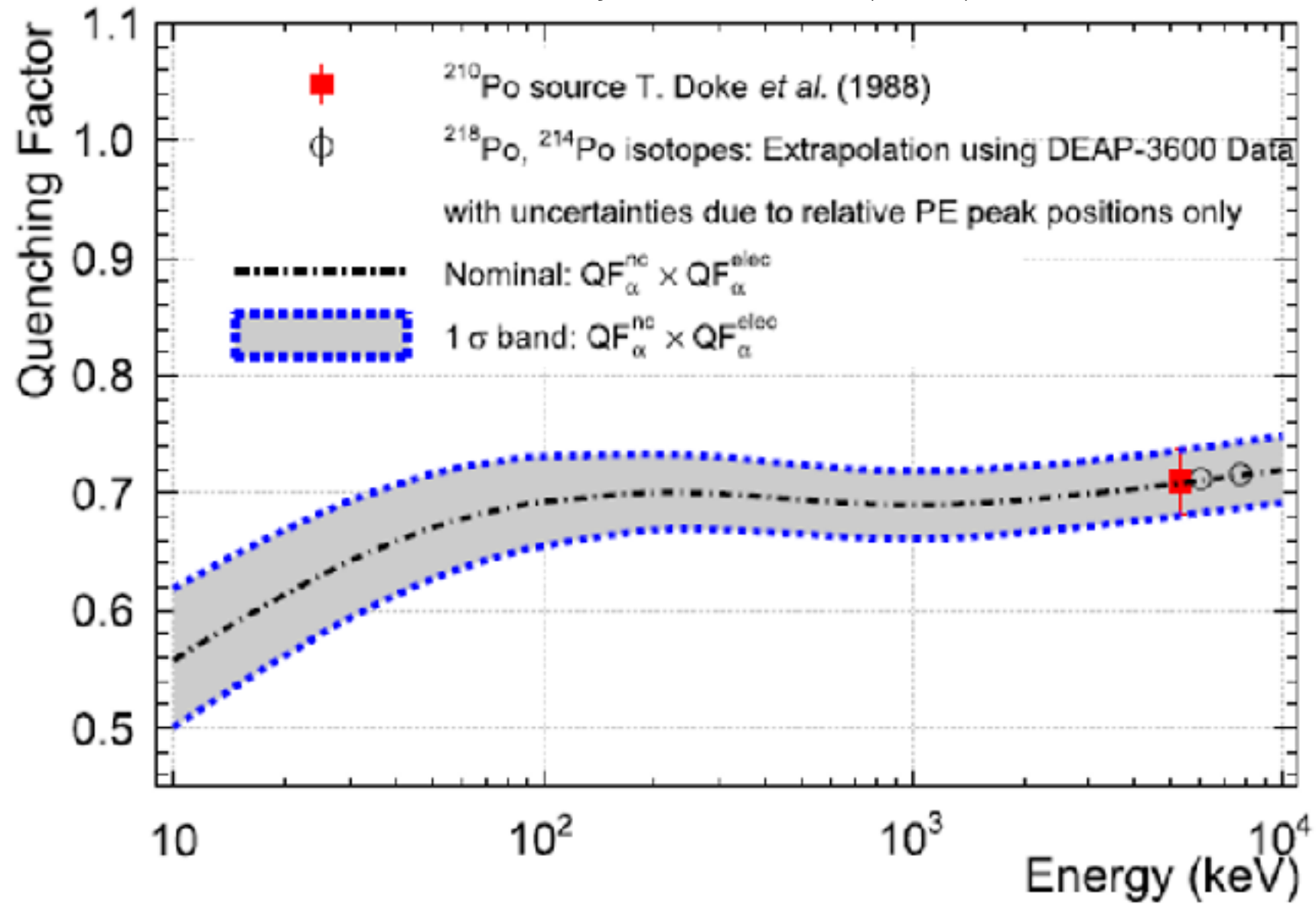
DEAP-3600 Recent Results

Dark matter Experiment using Argon Pulse-shape discrimination

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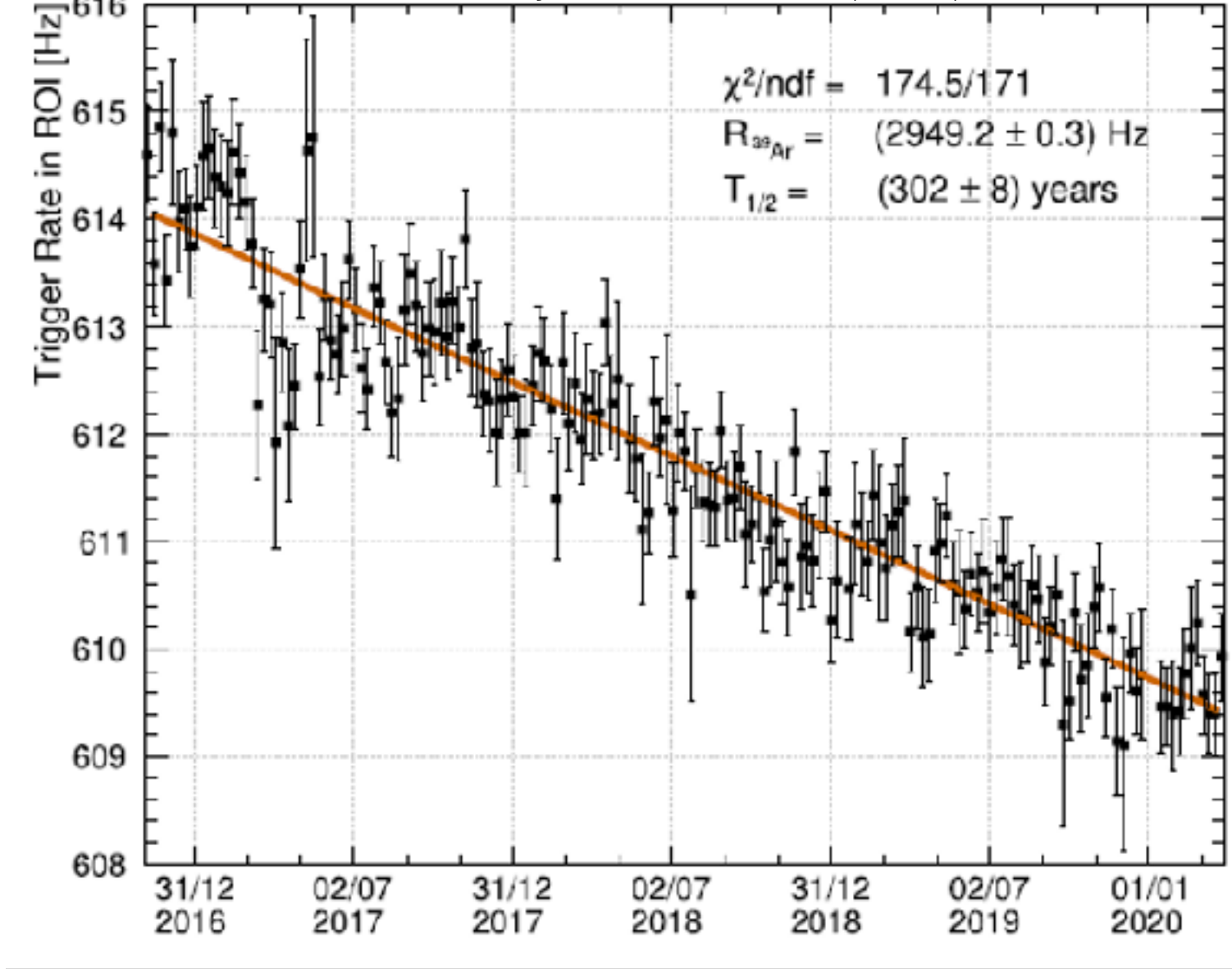
Relative Measurement and Extrapolation of the Scintillation Quenching Factor of α -Particles in Liquid Argon using DEAP-3600 Data

Eur. Phys. J. C 85, 87 (2025)



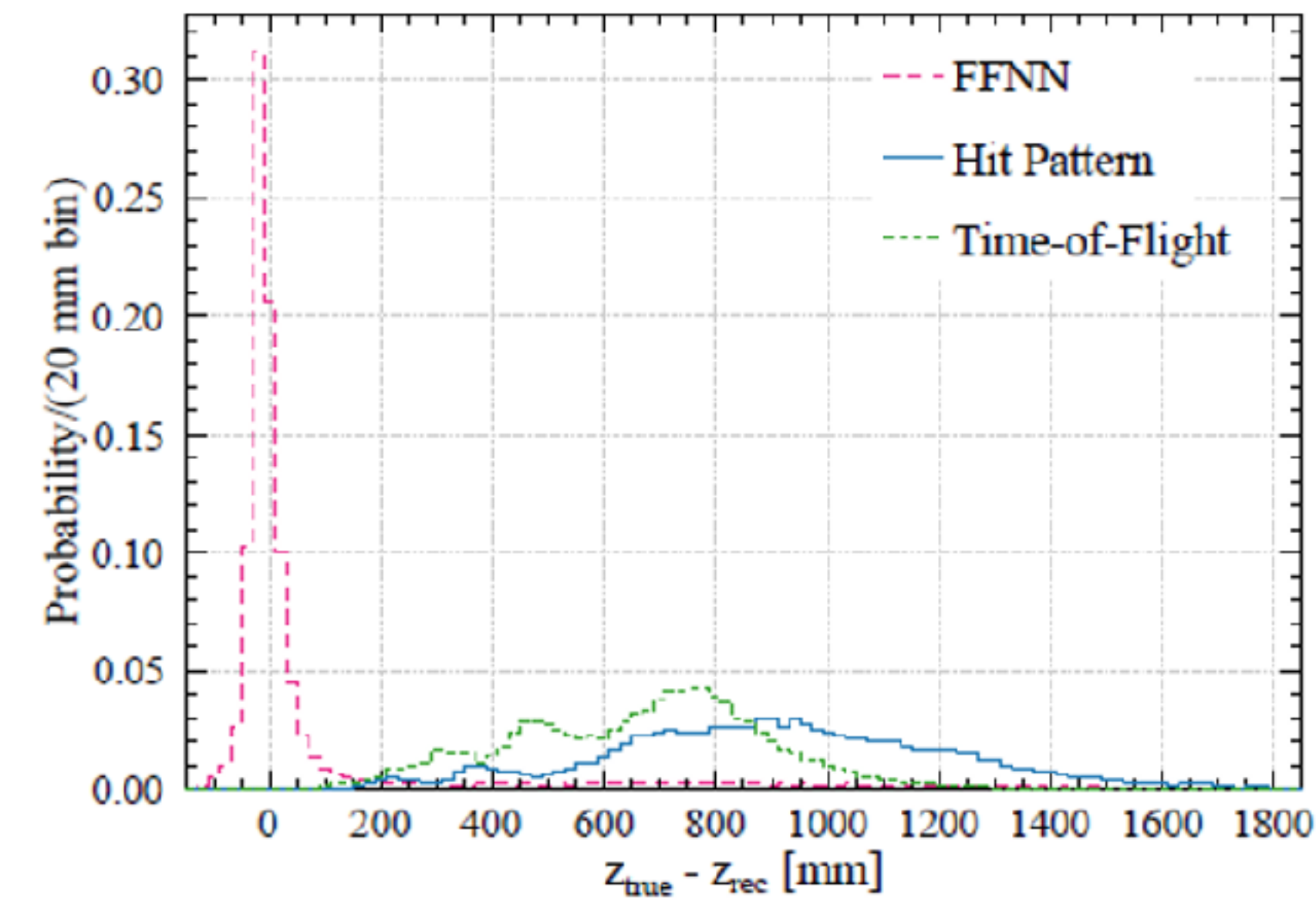
Direct Measurement of the ³⁹Ar Half-life from 3.4 Years of Data with the DEAP-3600 Detector

Eur. Phys. J. C 85, 728 (2025)



Position Reconstruction in the DEAP-3600 Dark Matter Search Experiment

2025 JINST 20 P07012



Updates on the DEAP-3600 experiment and steps towards the ARGO experiment

Tuesday, October 21

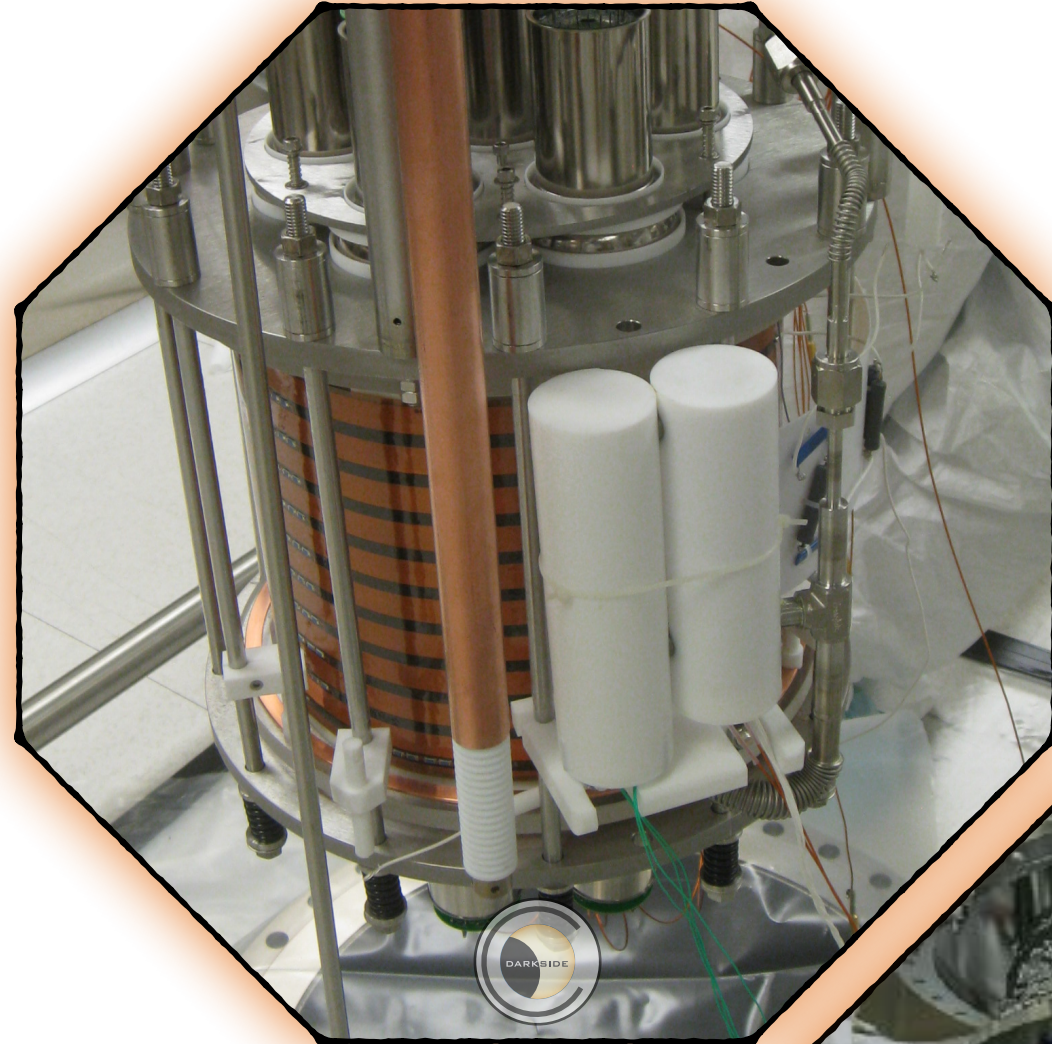
Susnata Seth

<https://indico.ihep.ac.cn/event/24964/contributions/194837/>

The DarkSide Program

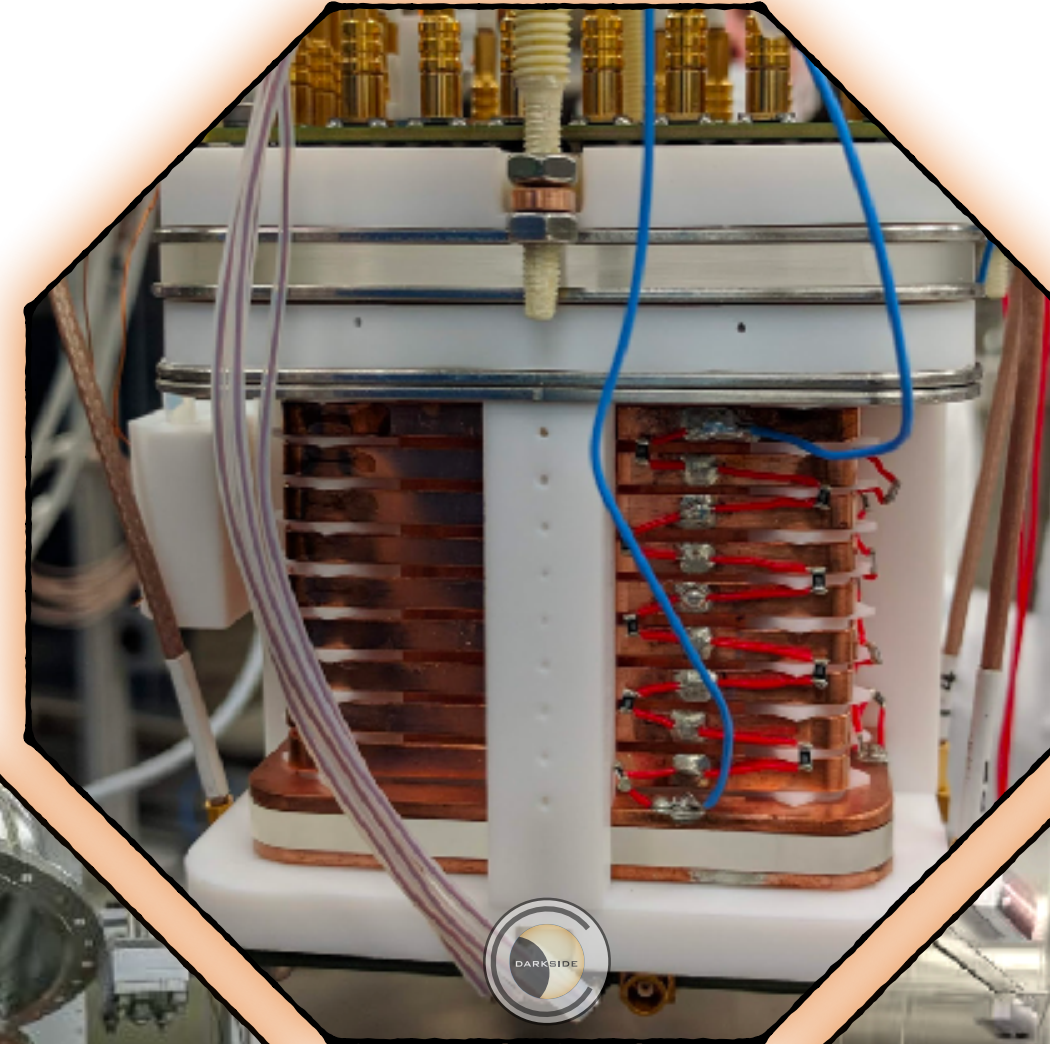
DS-10

2010



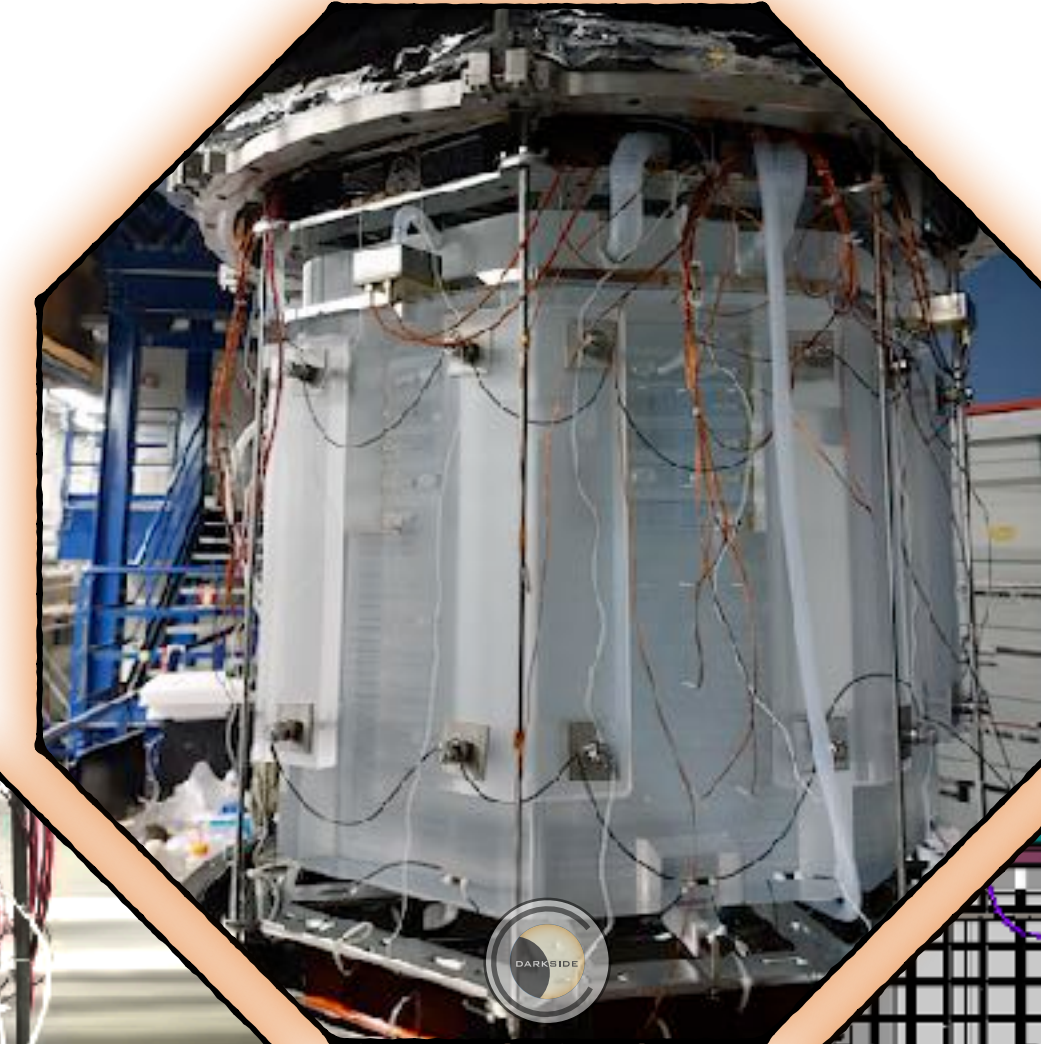
DS-ReD

2017-2025



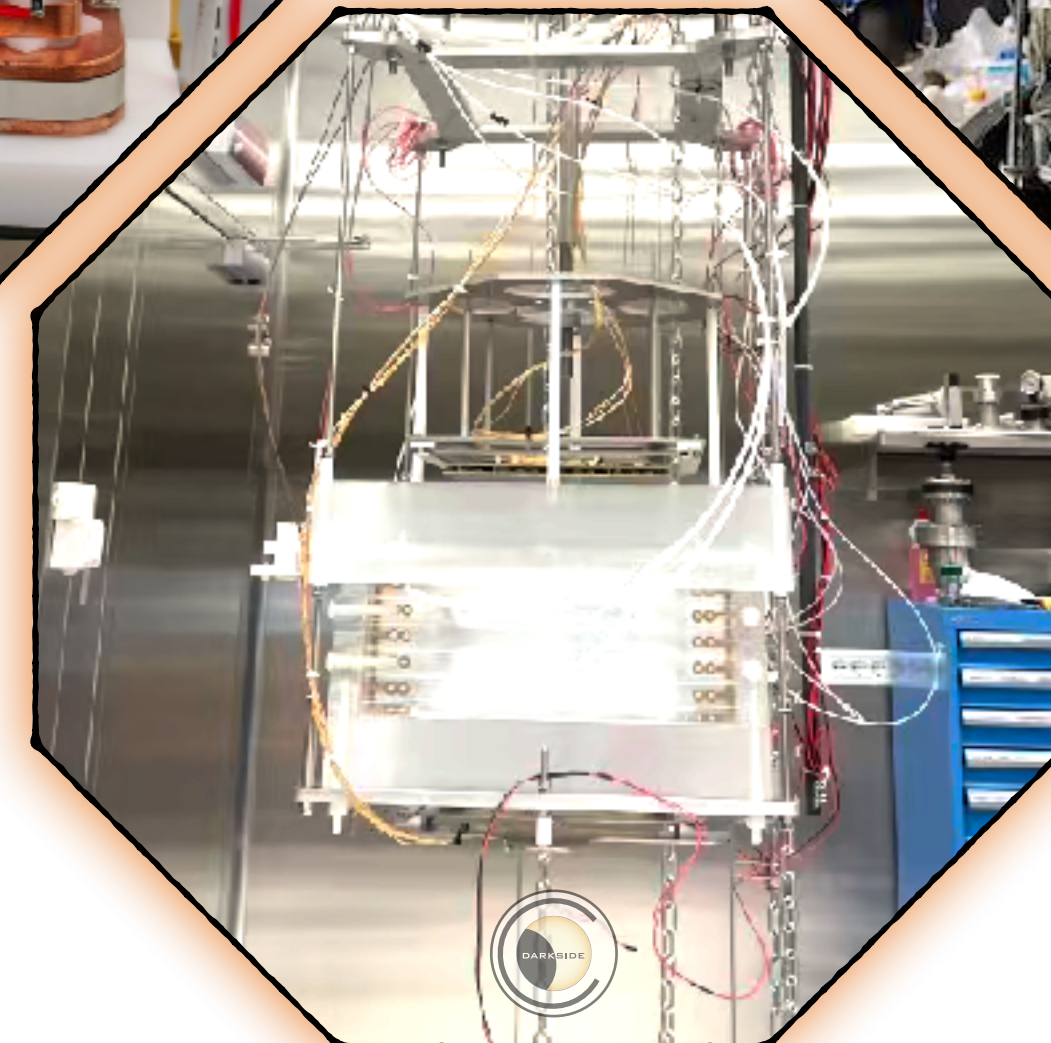
DS-Mockup

2025



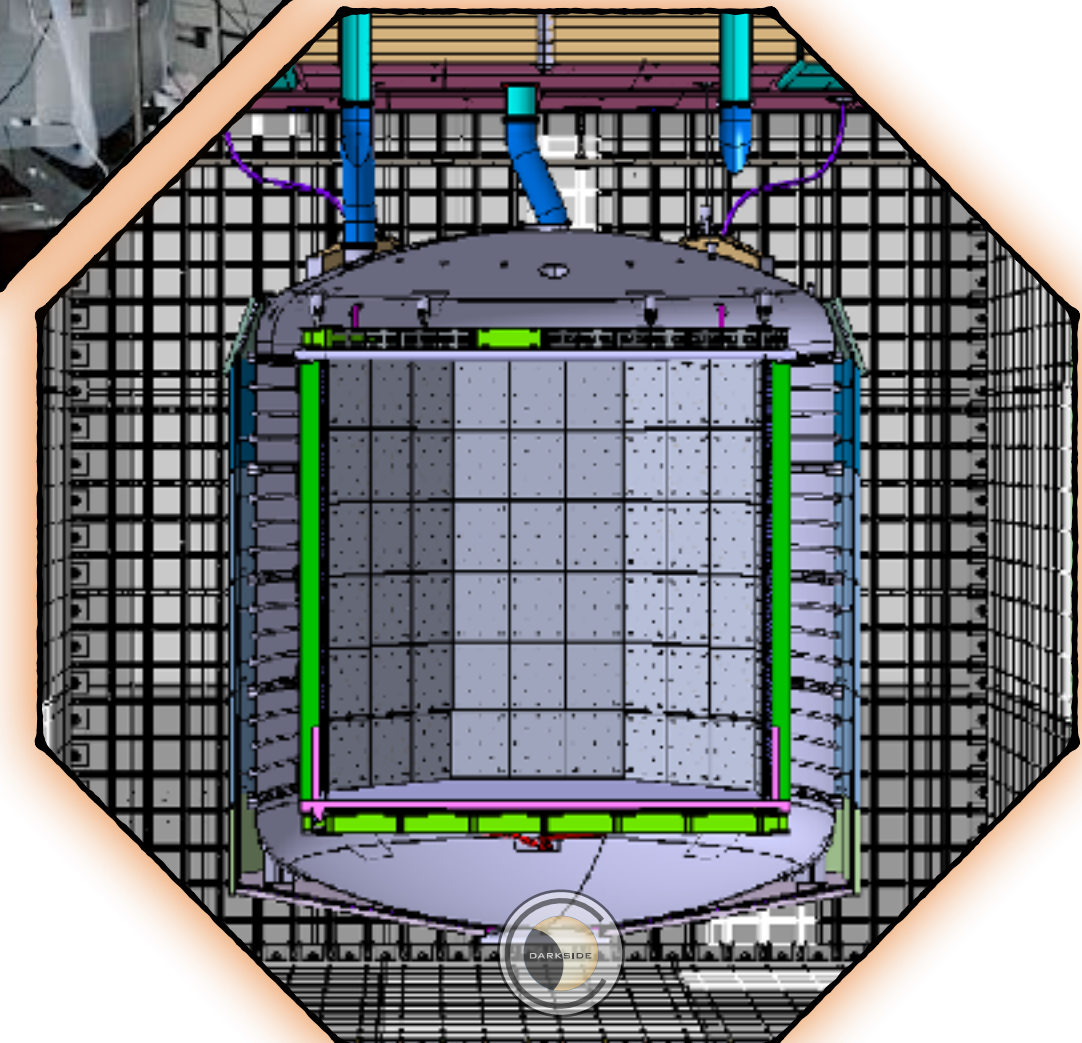
DS-50

2013-2020



DS-Proto-0

2024-2025



DS-20k

2027-

The DarkSide Program

DS-10
2010

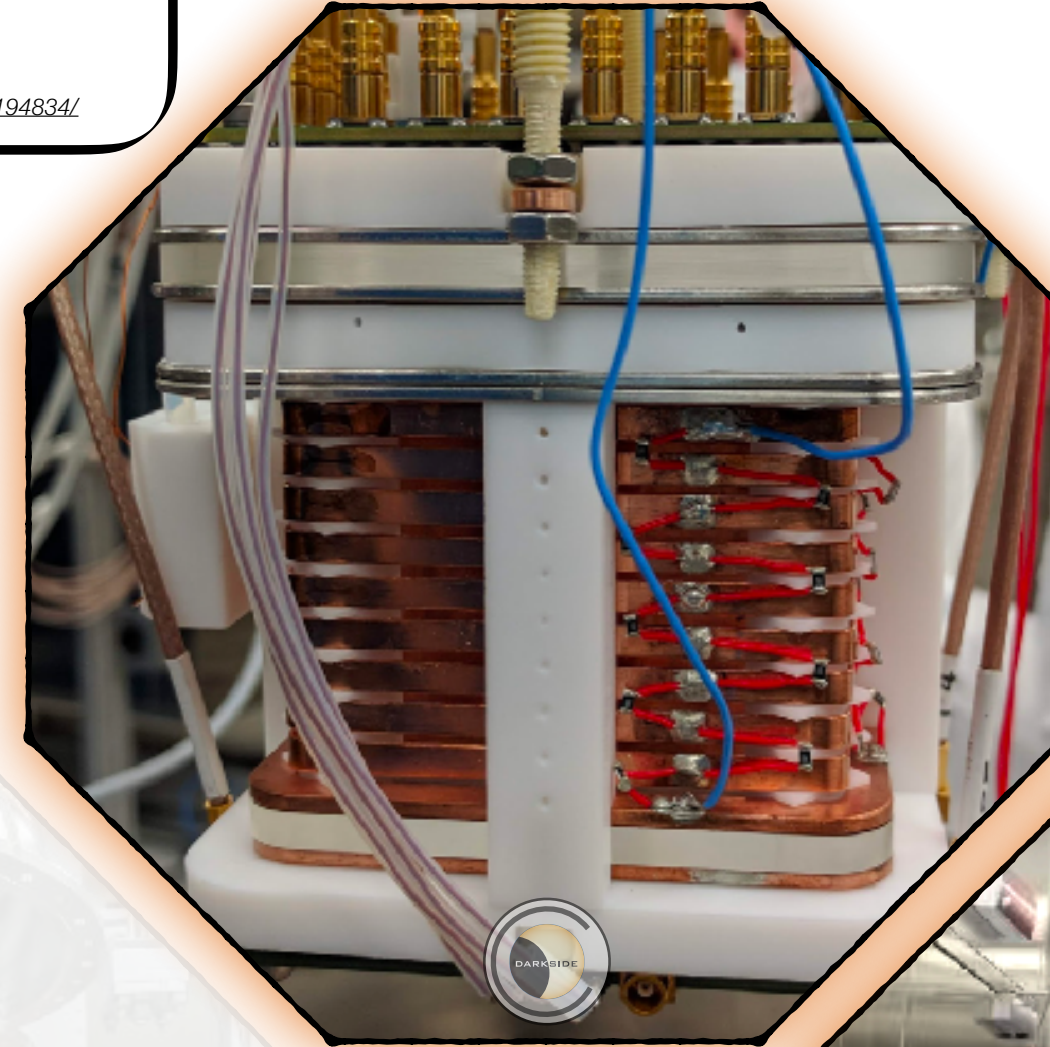
Characterization of argon
recoils at the keV scale with
ReD and ReD+

Tuesday, October 21

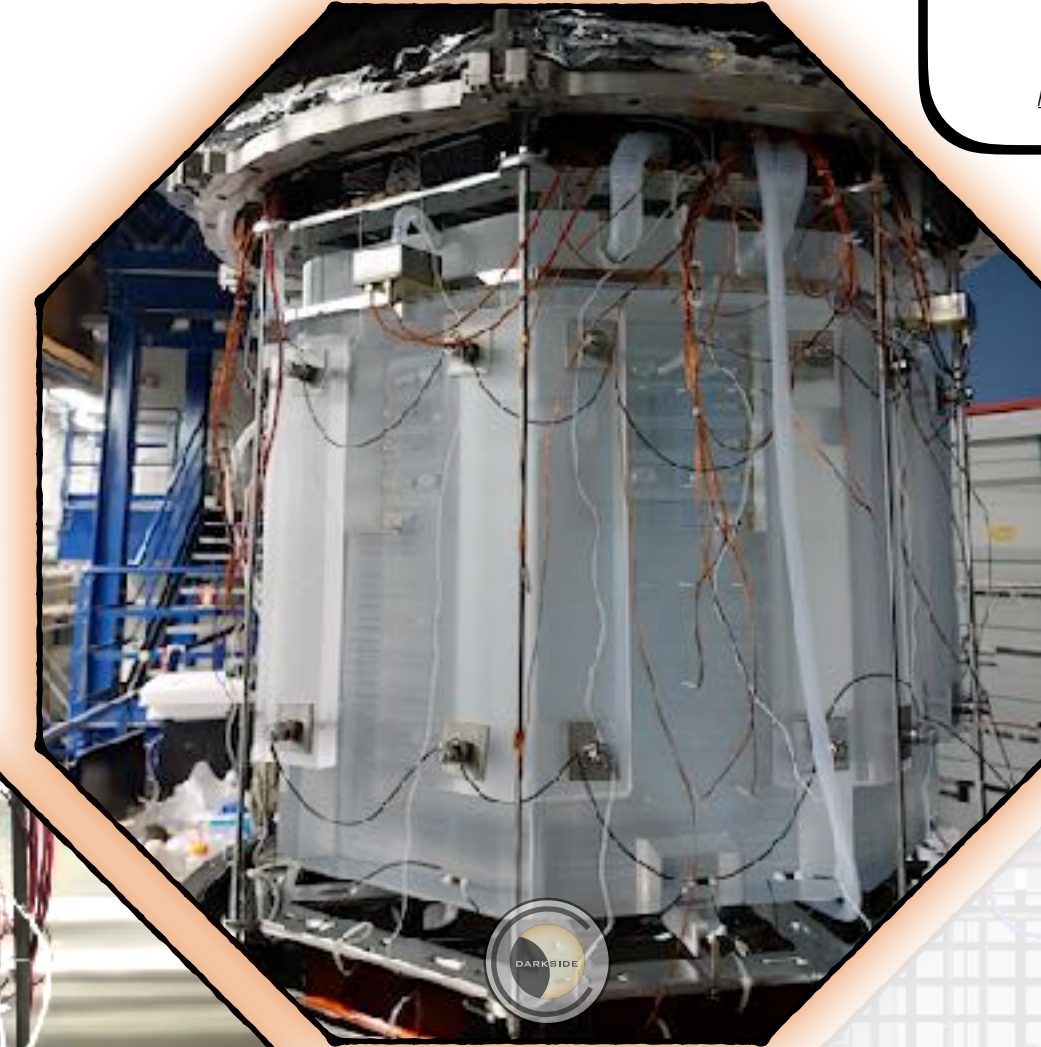
Luciano Pandola

<https://indico.ihep.ac.cn/event/24964/contributions/194834/>

DS-ReD
2017-2025



DS-Mockup
2025



A Tonne-scale Demonstrator
for the DarkSide-20k Inner
Detector at LNGS

Tuesday, October 21

Paolo Salomone

<https://indico.ihep.ac.cn/event/24964/contributions/196480/>

DS-50
2013-2020



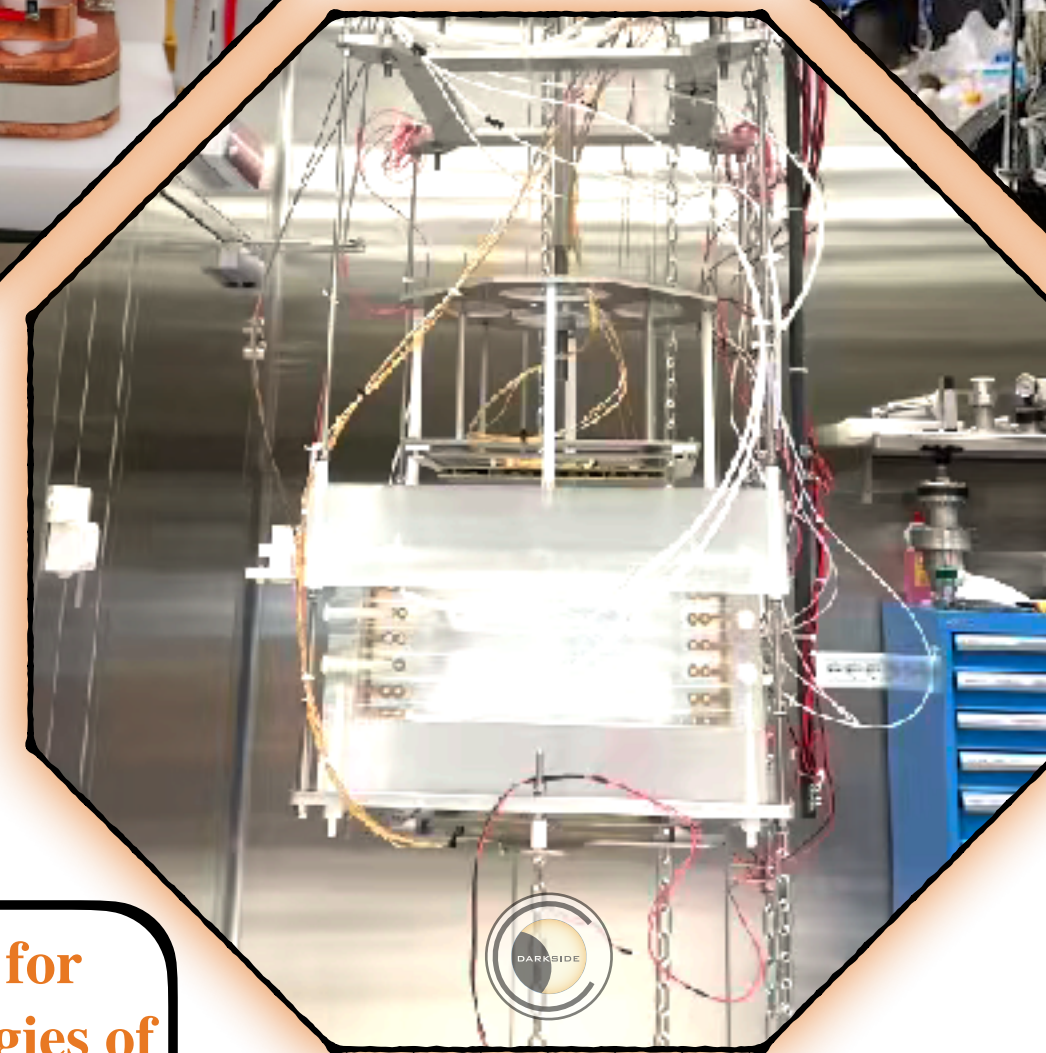
Proto-0: a prototype for
validating key technologies of
the DS-20k experiment

Tuesday, October 21

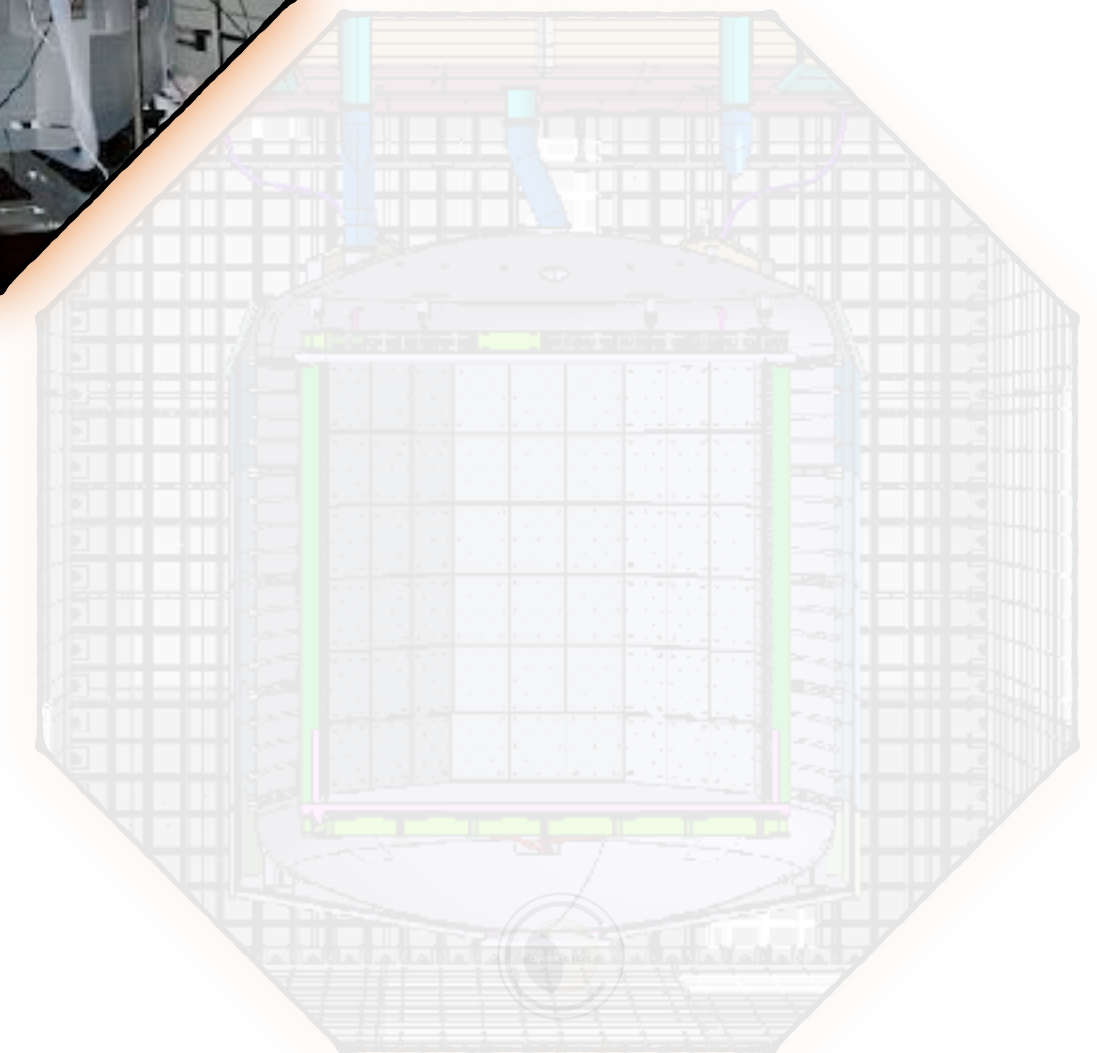
Giuseppe Matteucci

<https://indico.ihep.ac.cn/event/24964/contributions/196481/>

DS-Proto-0
2024-2025



DS-20k
2027-



Key Technologies for DarkSide-20k

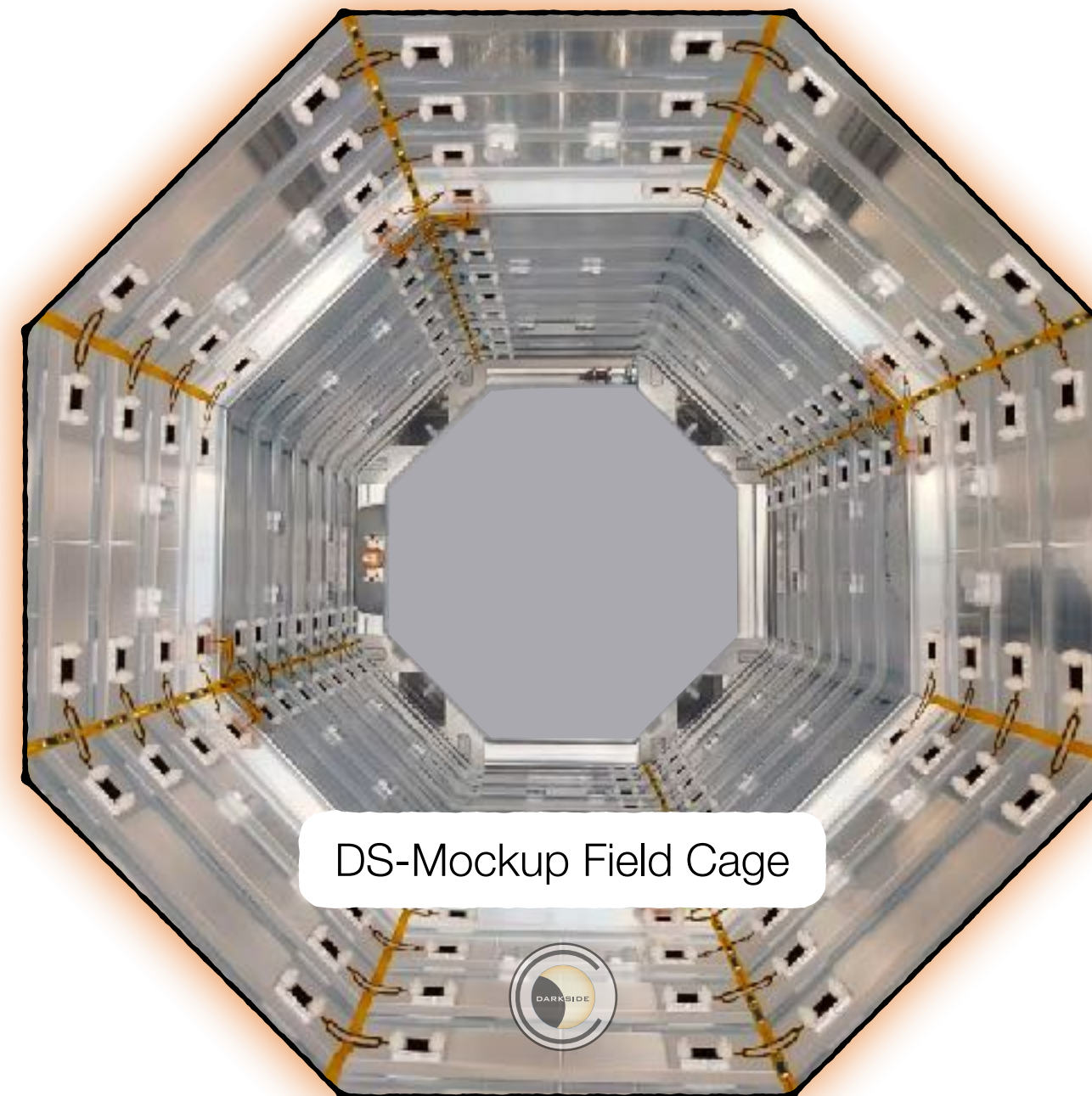
Underground Argon (UAr)



Argon Extraction Facility

A detector medium with a reduction factor of ~ 1400 in ^{39}Ar compared to atmospheric argon

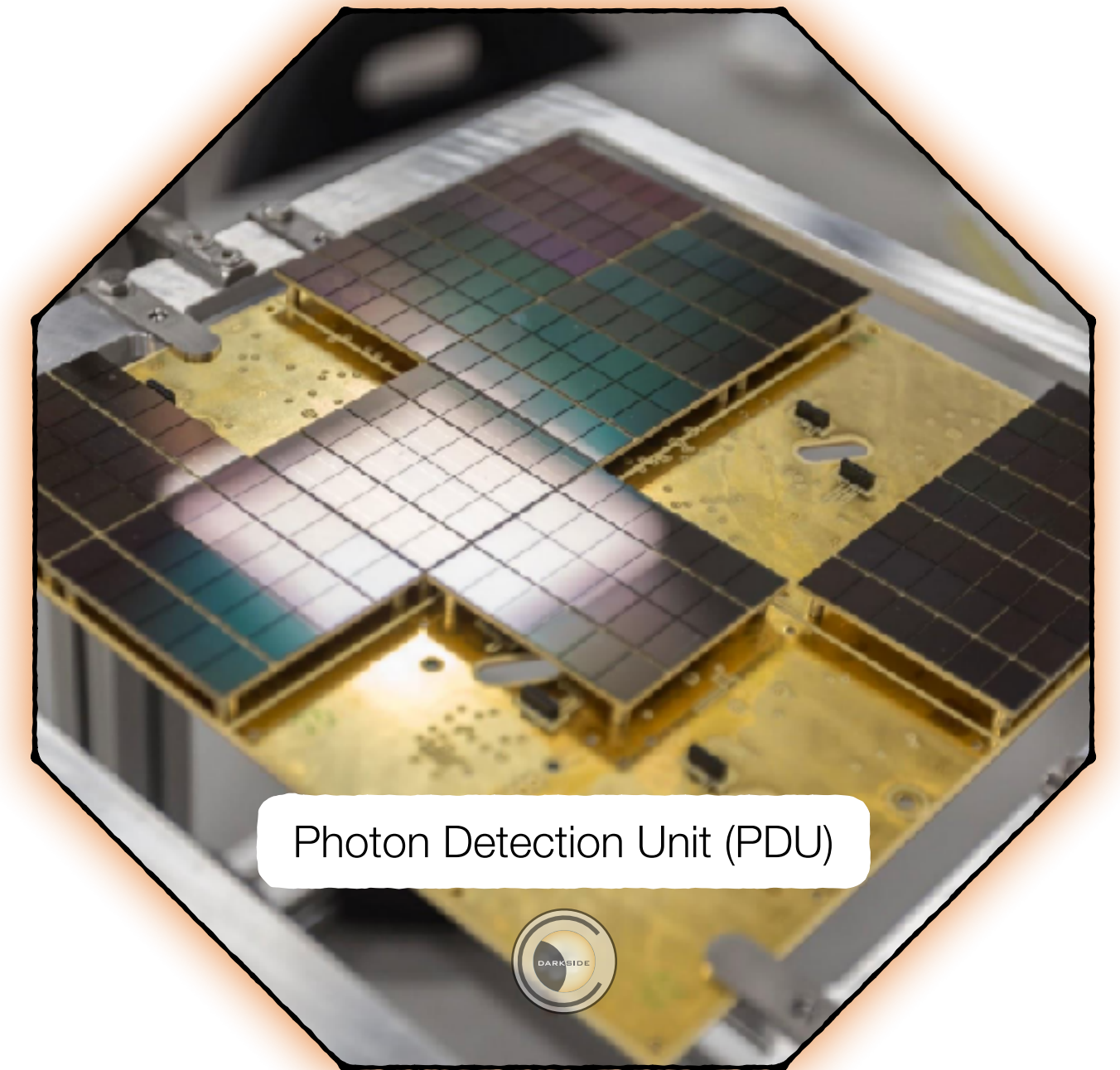
PMMA TPC



DS-Mockup Field Cage

Transparent low-radioactivity **PMMA TPC** with conductive **Clevios™**-coated surfaces as electrodes

Silicon Photomultiplier (SiPM)



Photon Detection Unit (PDU)

Large-area ($\sim 25 \text{ m}^2$), low-noise, low-radioactivity SiPM arrays

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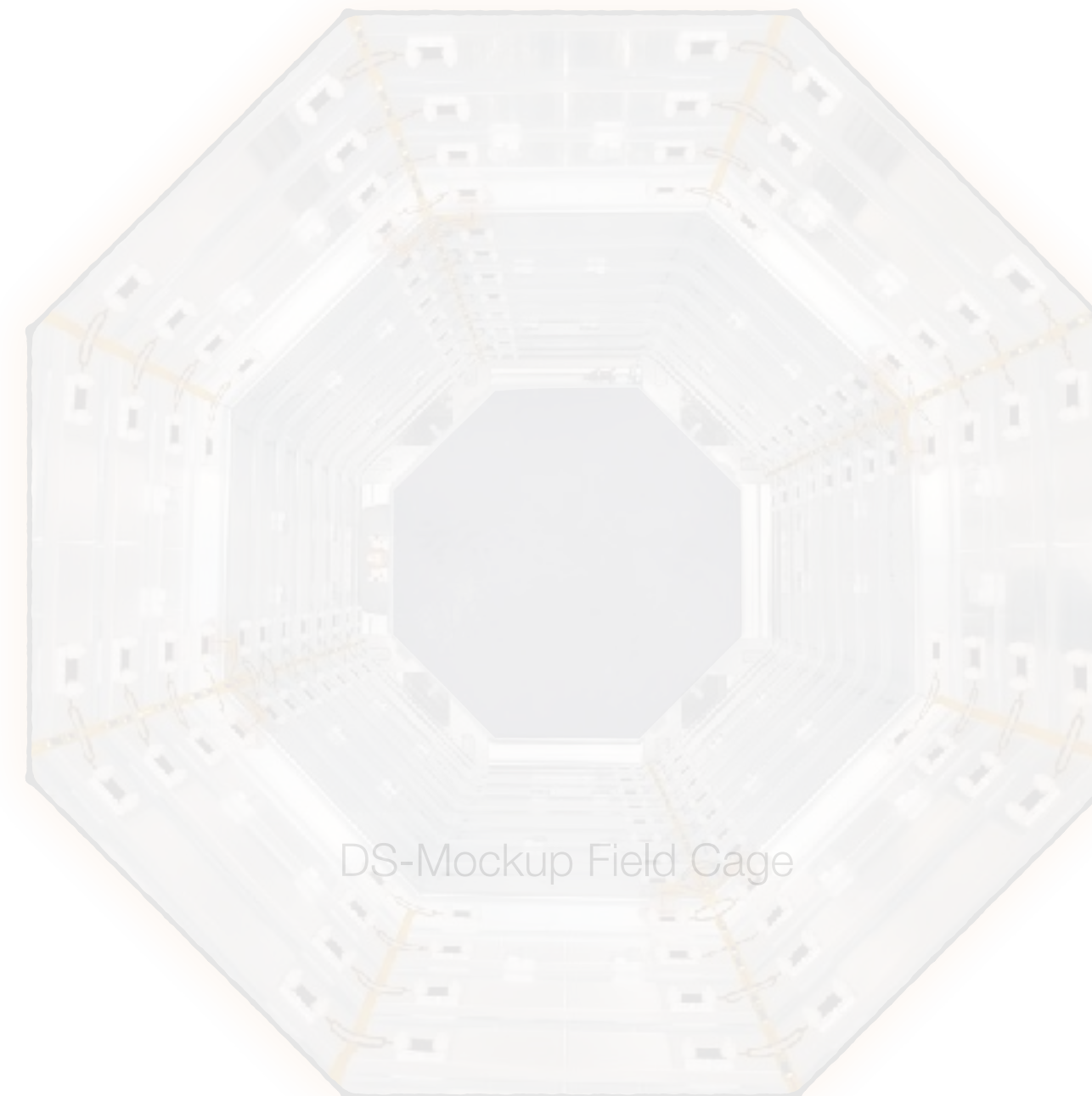
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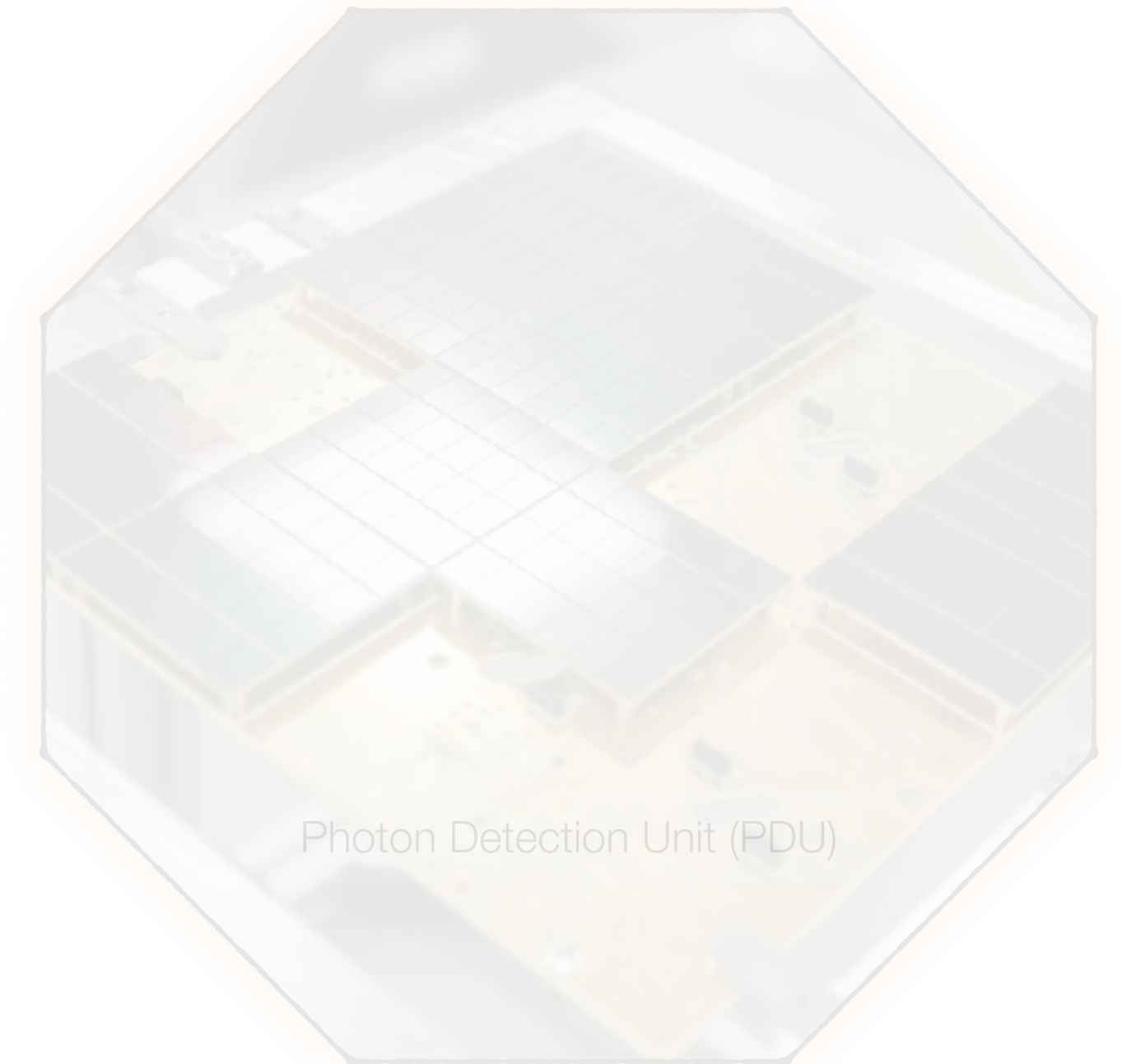
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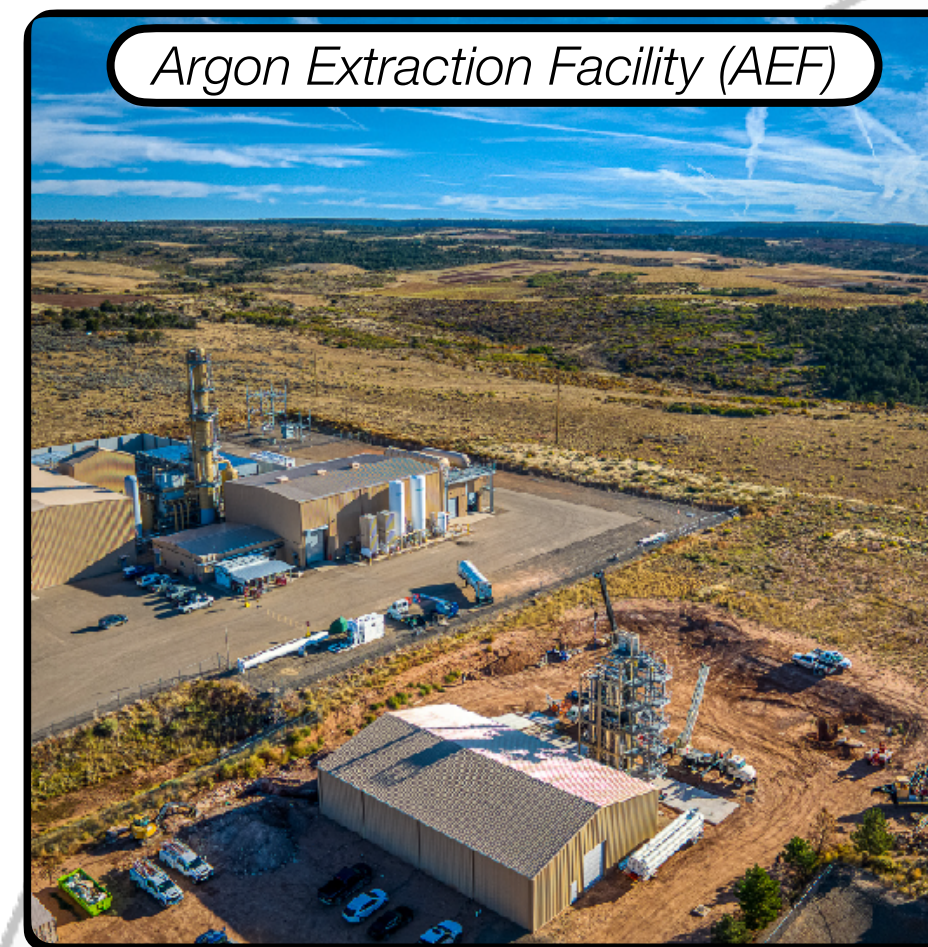
Industrial Scale Underground Argon (UAr)



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- **Production in Colorado, USA**

- *Industrial-scale extraction plant*
- *Extraction rate of $(250 - 330) \text{ kg/day}$*
- *Production capability of $\approx 120 \text{ t}$ over two years for DarkSide-20k*
- *UAr purity of 99.99%*



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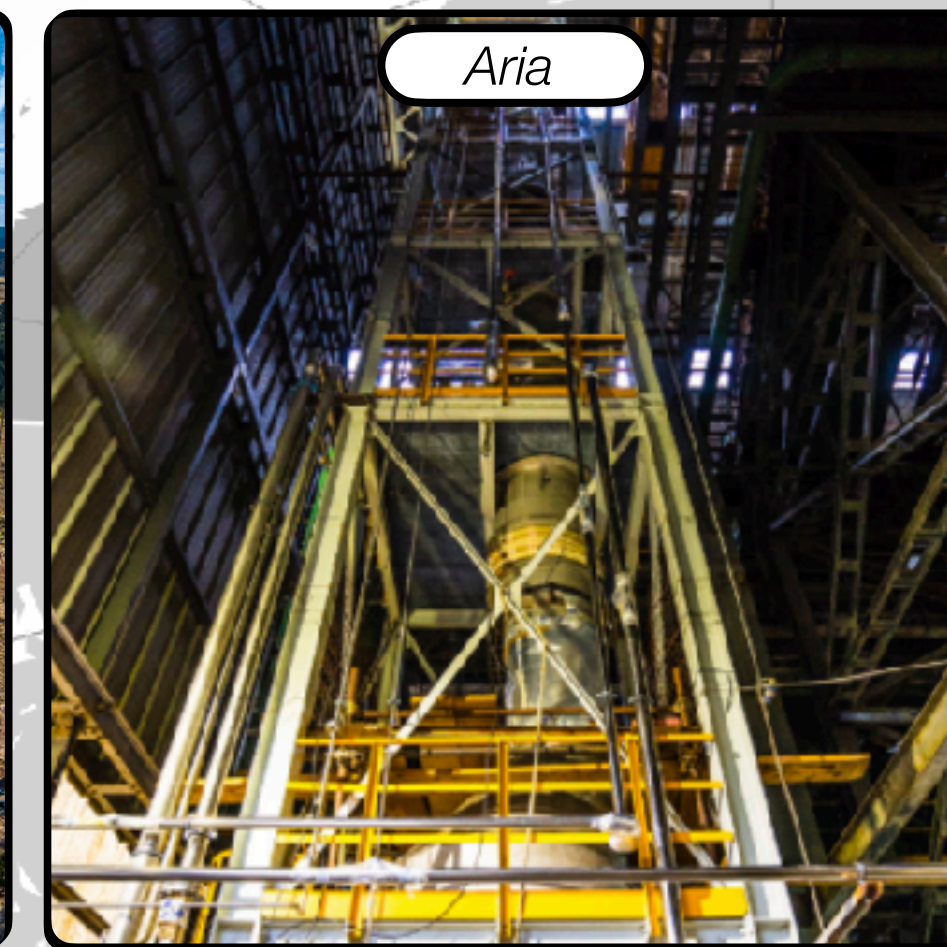
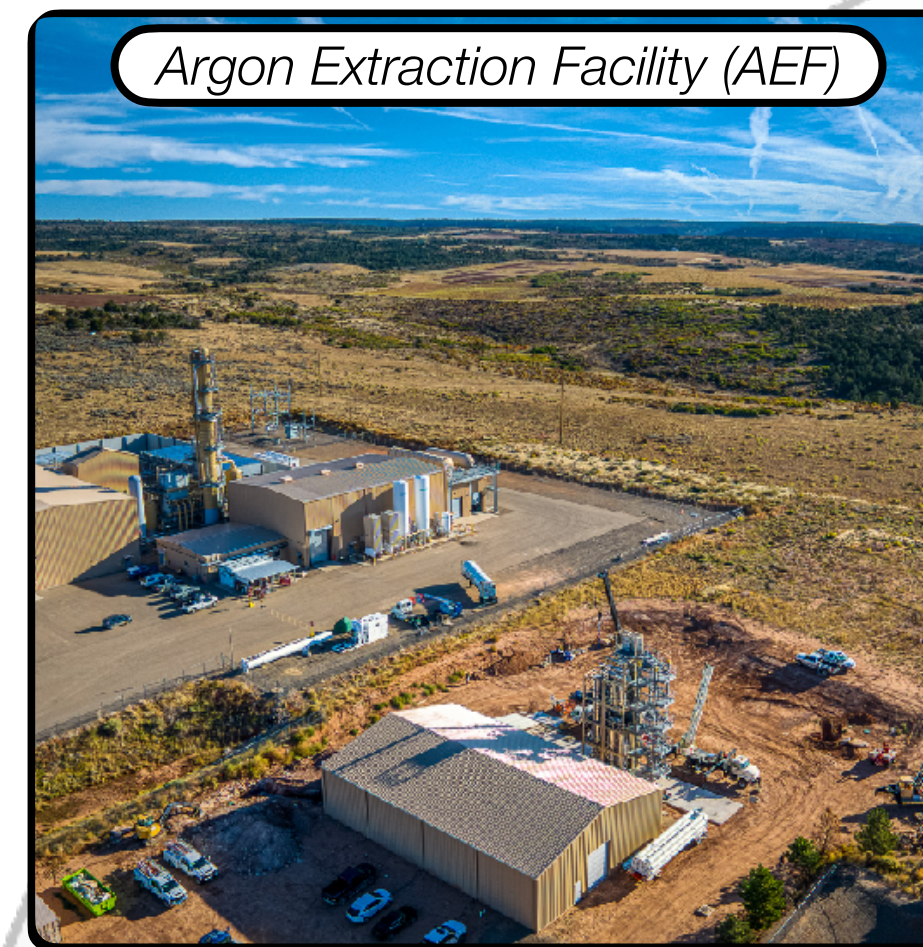
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- **Purification in Sardinia, Italy**

- *Seruci-0 demonstrator tested*
- *350 m tall cryogenic distillation column*
- *$\mathcal{O}(1 \text{ tonne/day})$ purification throughput*
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Argon Extraction Facility

Aria

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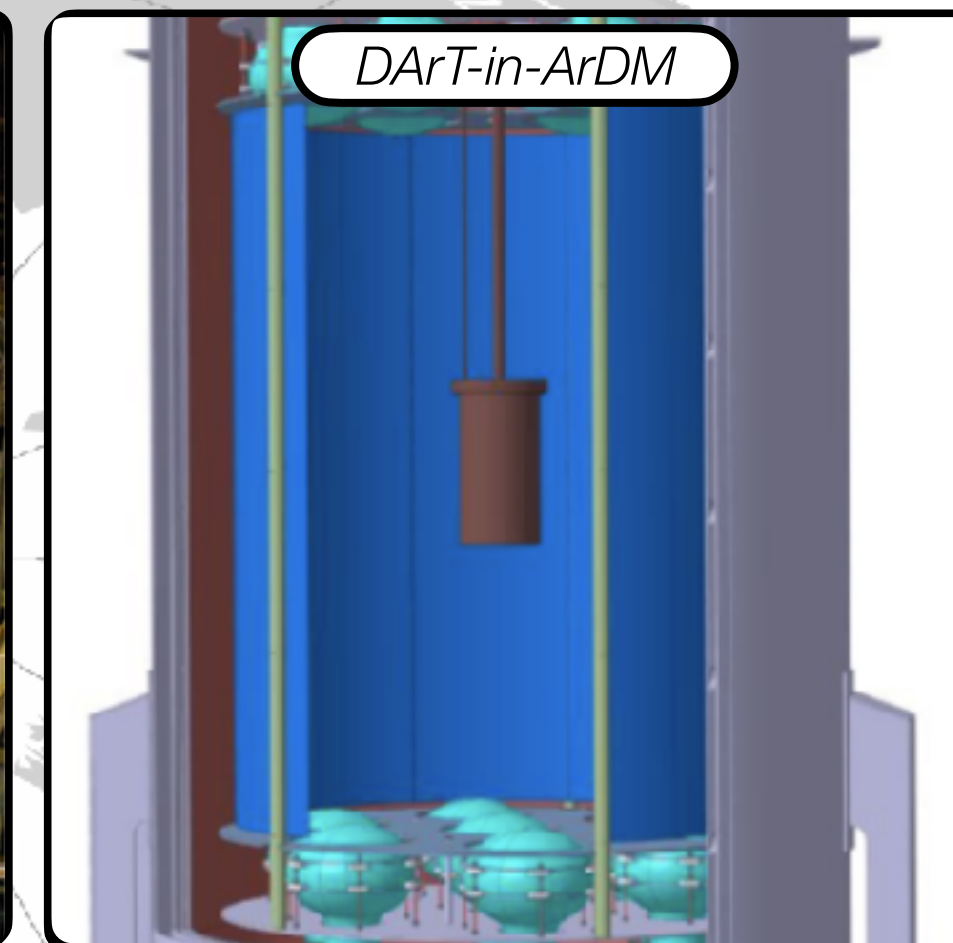
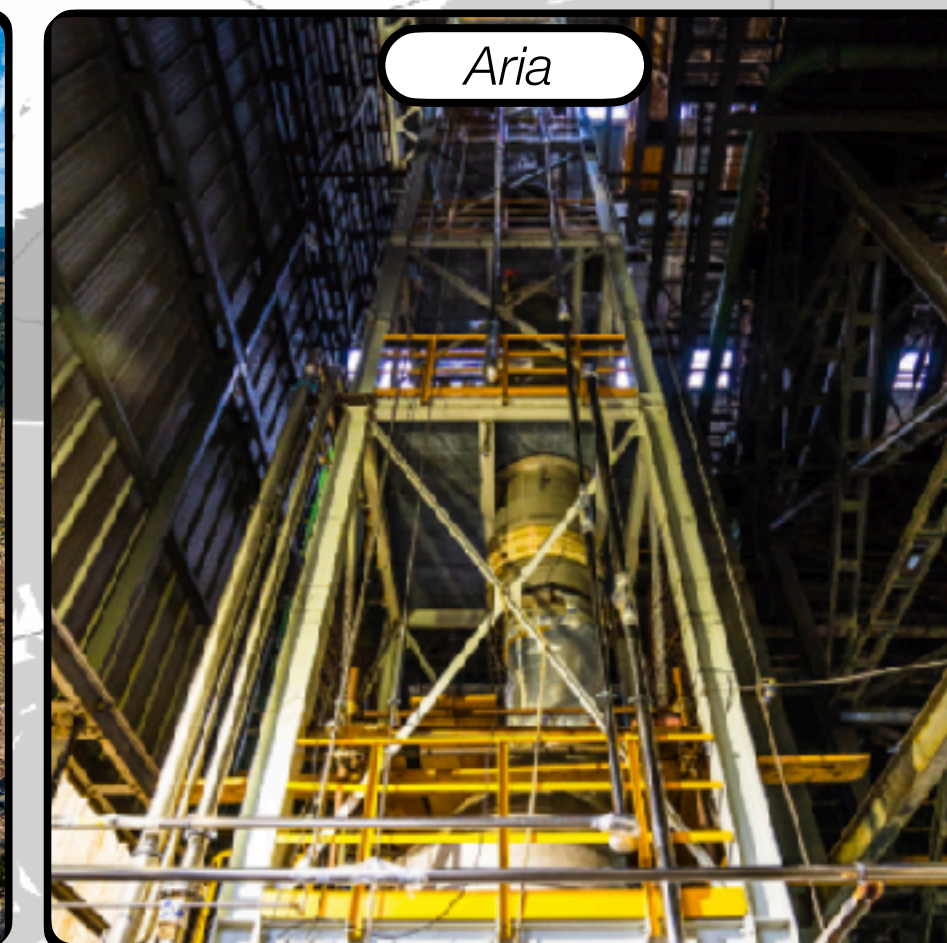
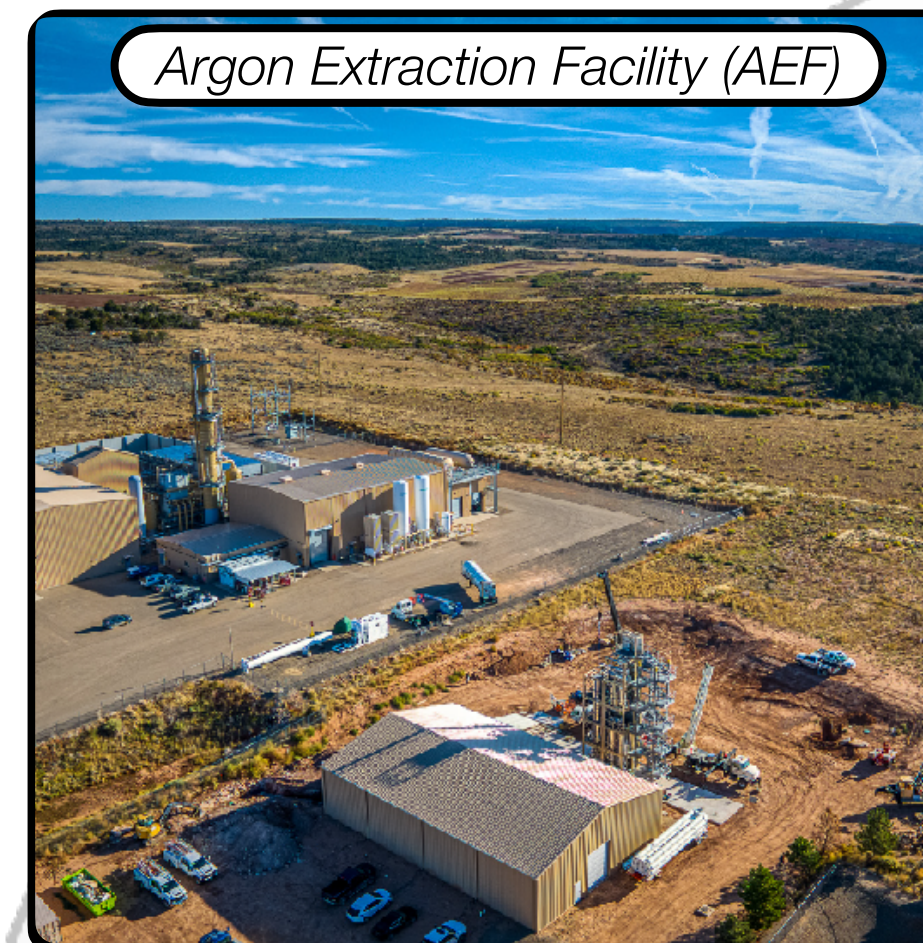
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- **Qualification in Canfranc, Spain**

- Single-phase detector to measure ^{39}Ar depletion factor
- Sensitive to ^{39}Ar down to a reduction factor of 1400 with 7% accuracy
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Argon Extraction Facility

DArT
Aria

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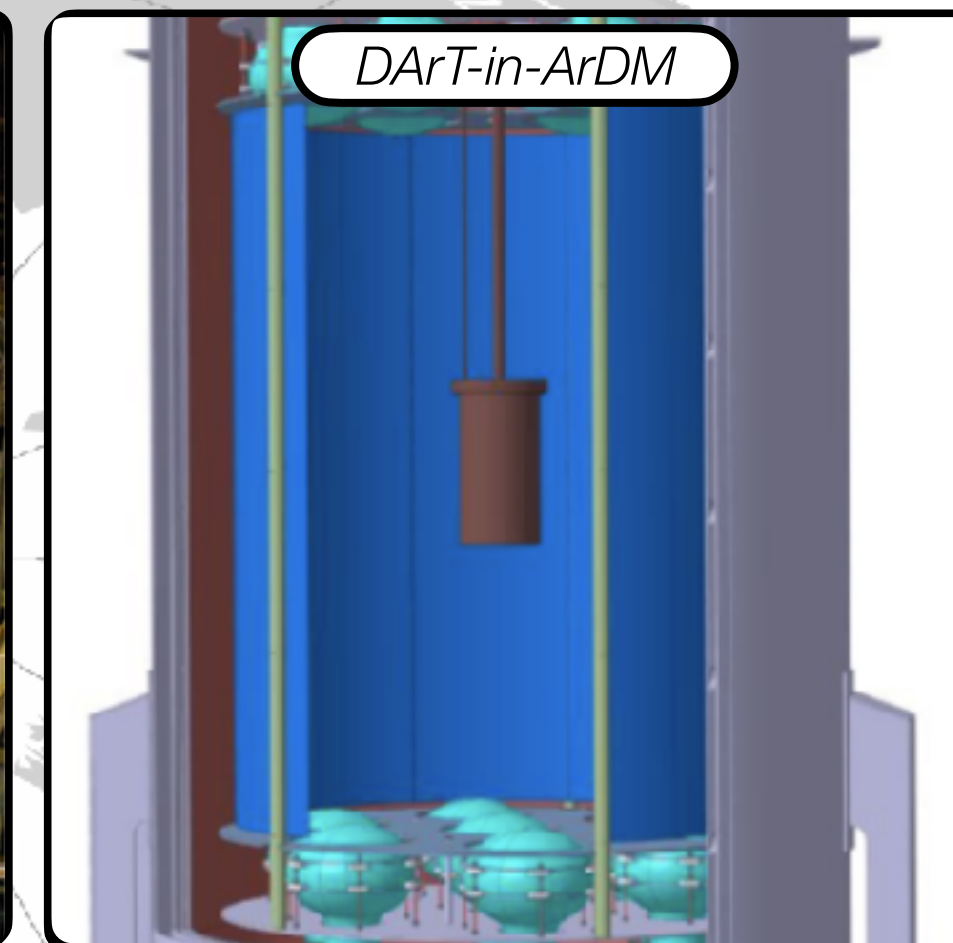
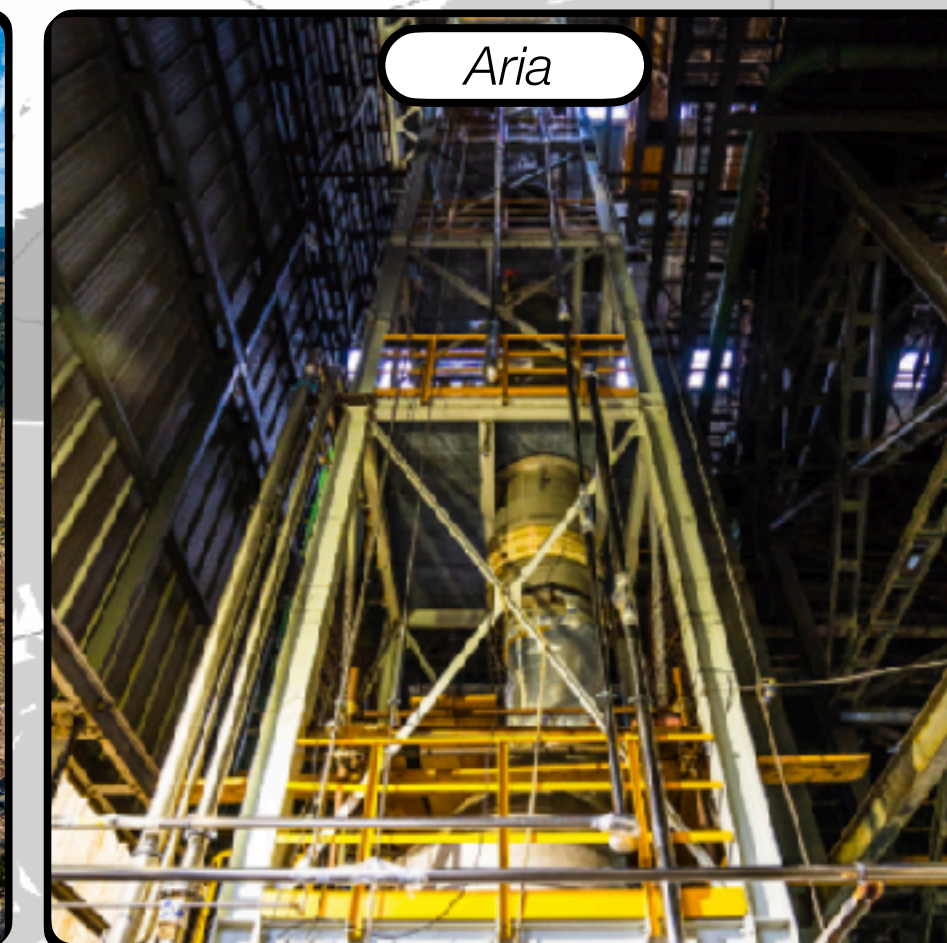
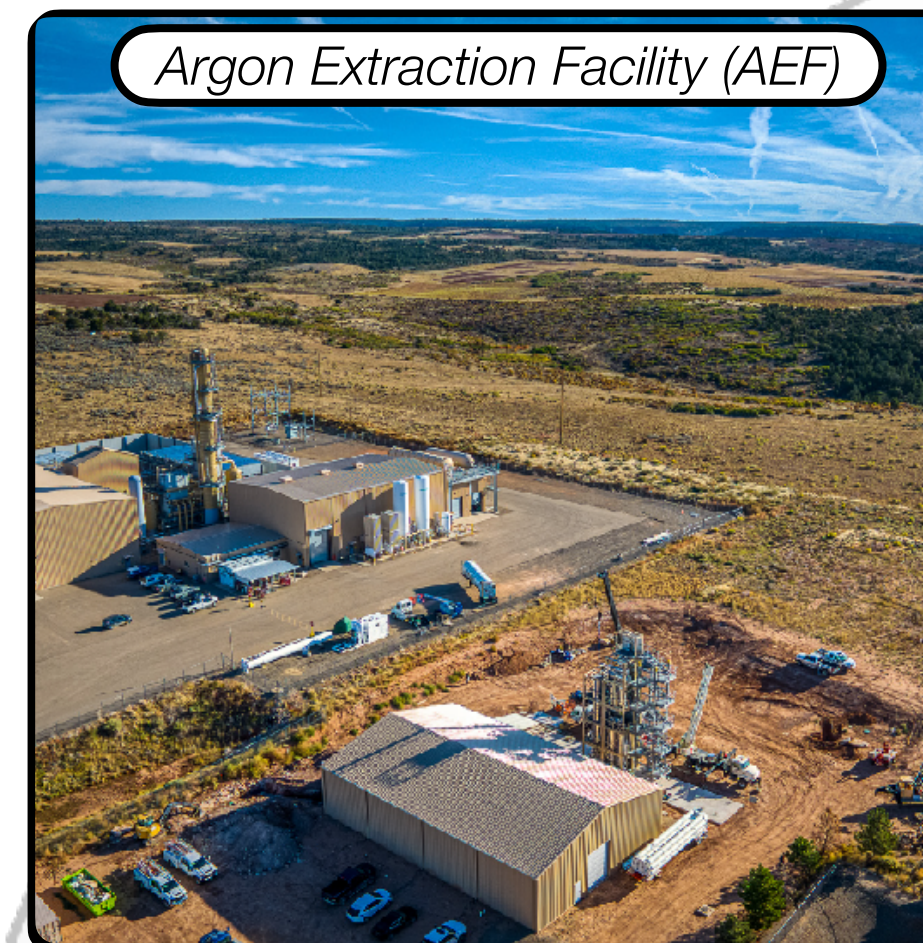
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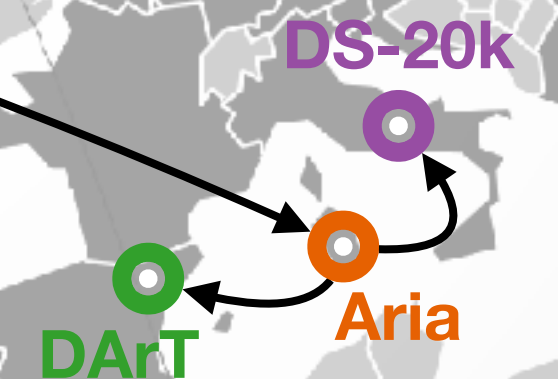
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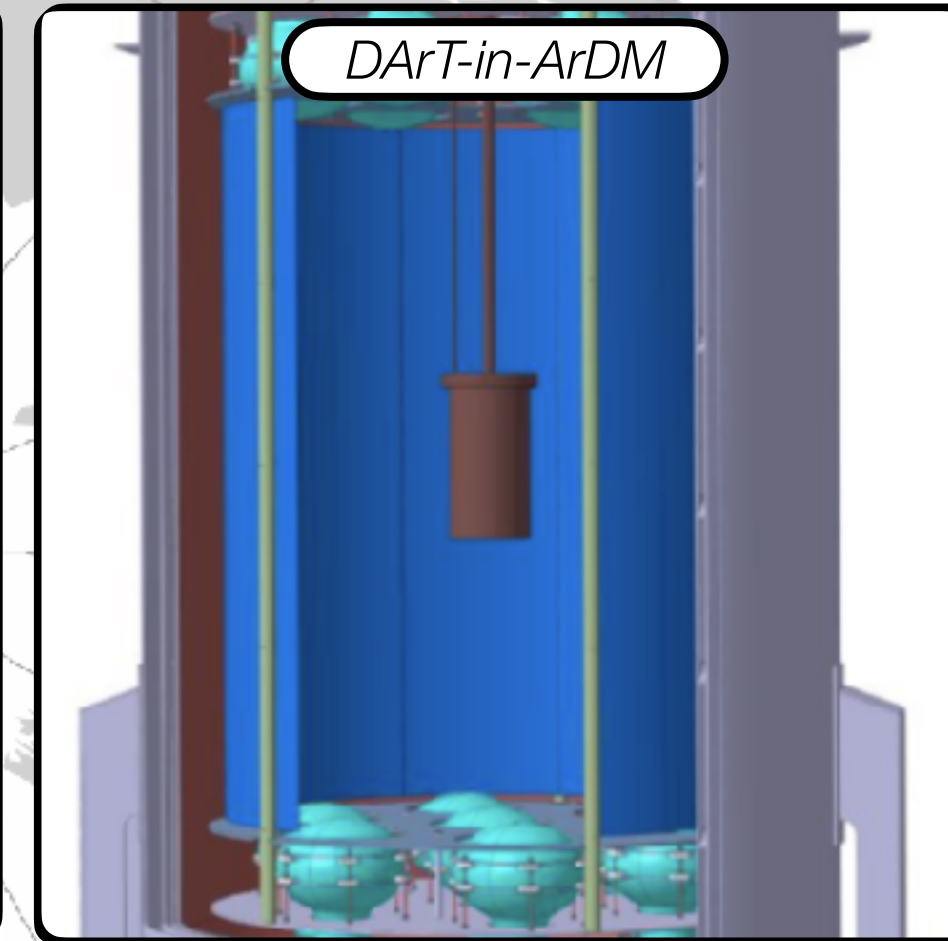
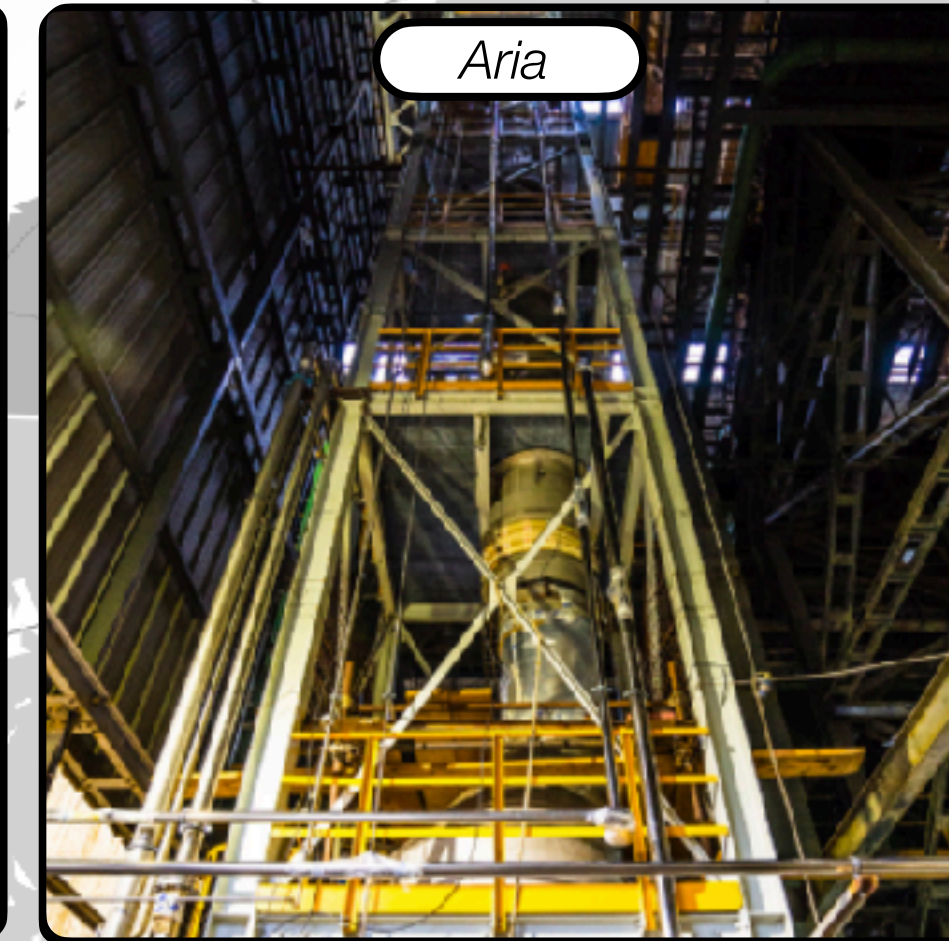
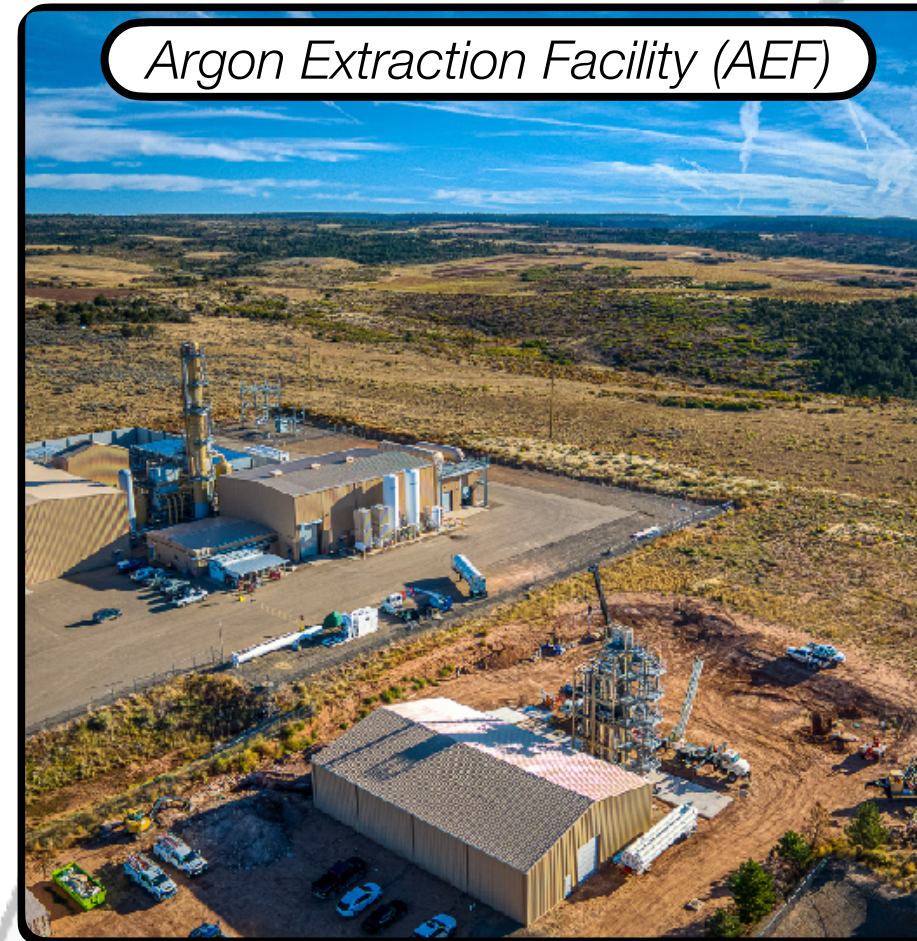
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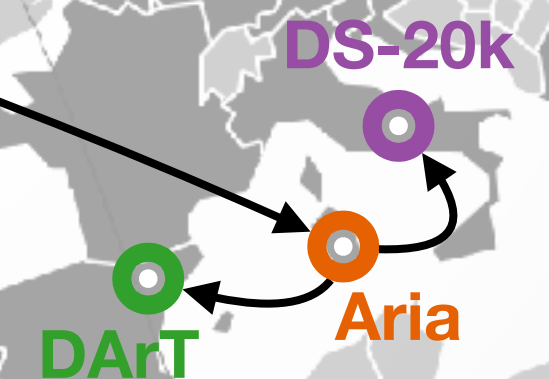
Argon Extraction Facility

**DArT-in-ArDM: A
Dedicated Detector for ^{39}Ar
Characterization in UAr**

Thursday, October 23

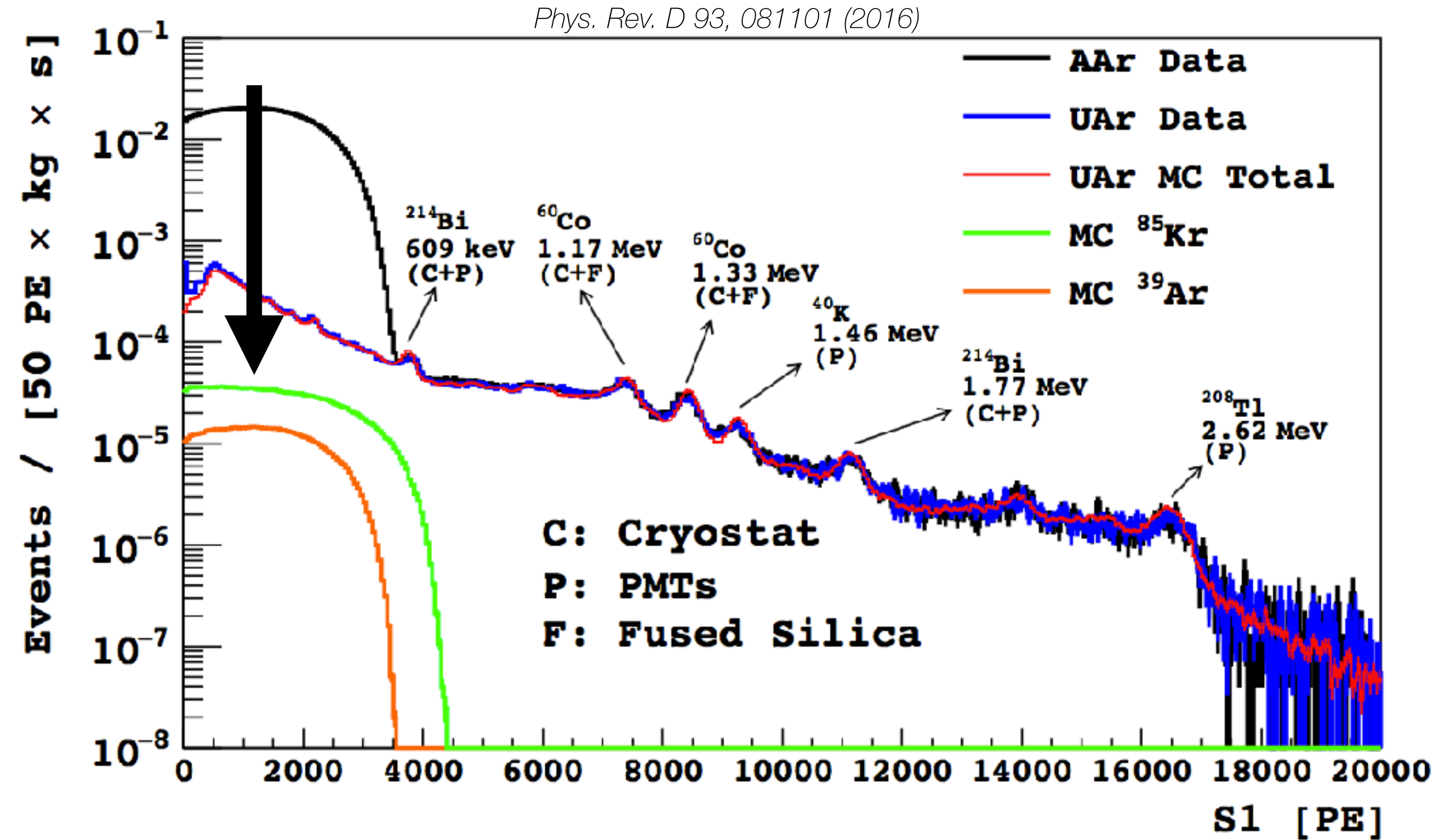
Sara Tullio

<https://indico.ihep.ac.cn/event/24964/contributions/196460/>



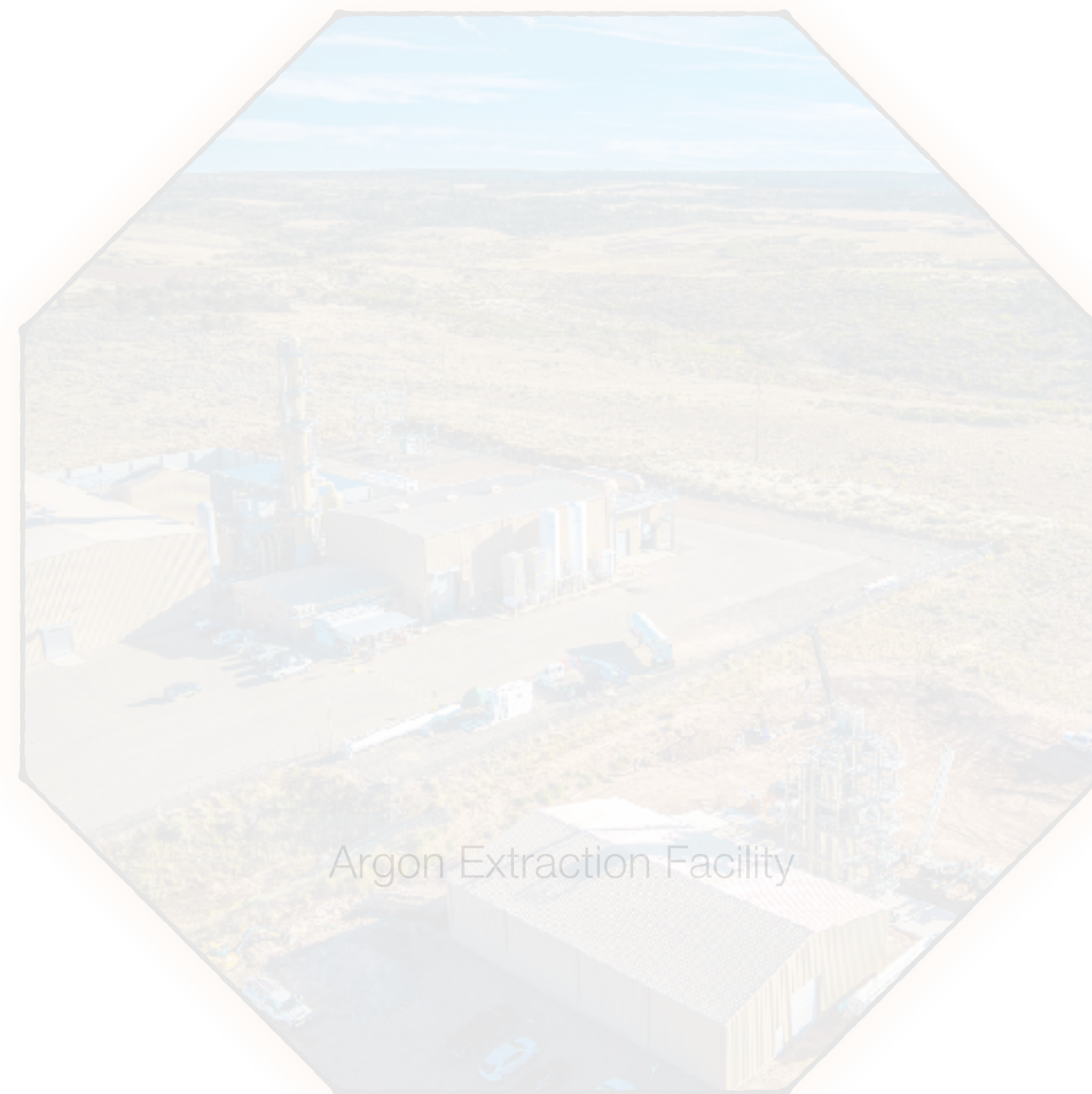
UAr in DarkSide-50

- ^{39}Ar activity sets the detection threshold at low energies
 - *where pulse shape discrimination is less effective*
- Deployed **157 kg** UAr in 2015
- ^{39}Ar reduction factor of ~ 1400
 - *Intrinsic depletion factor in UAr is likely higher*



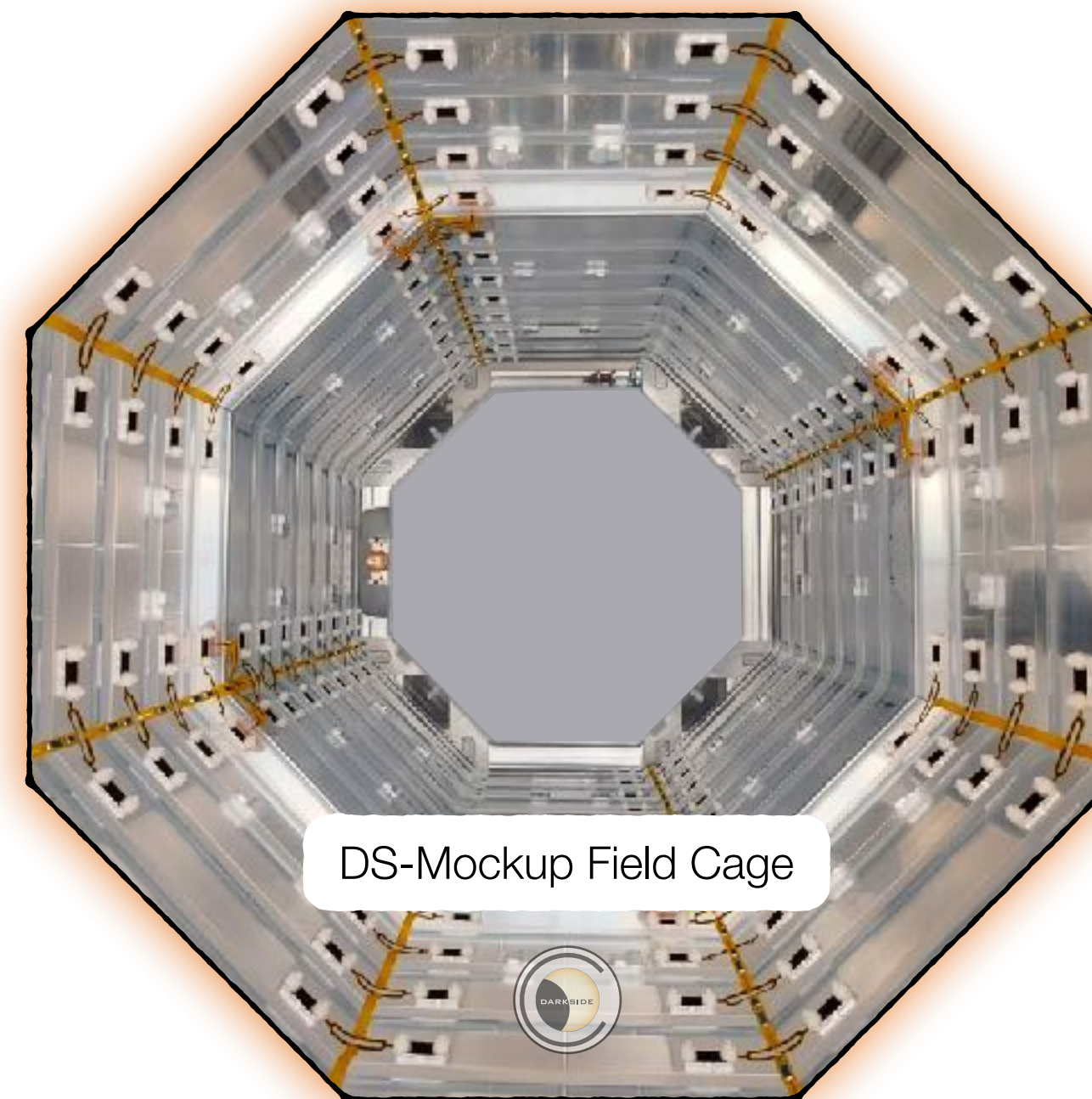
Key Technologies for DarkSide-20k

Underground Argon (UAr)



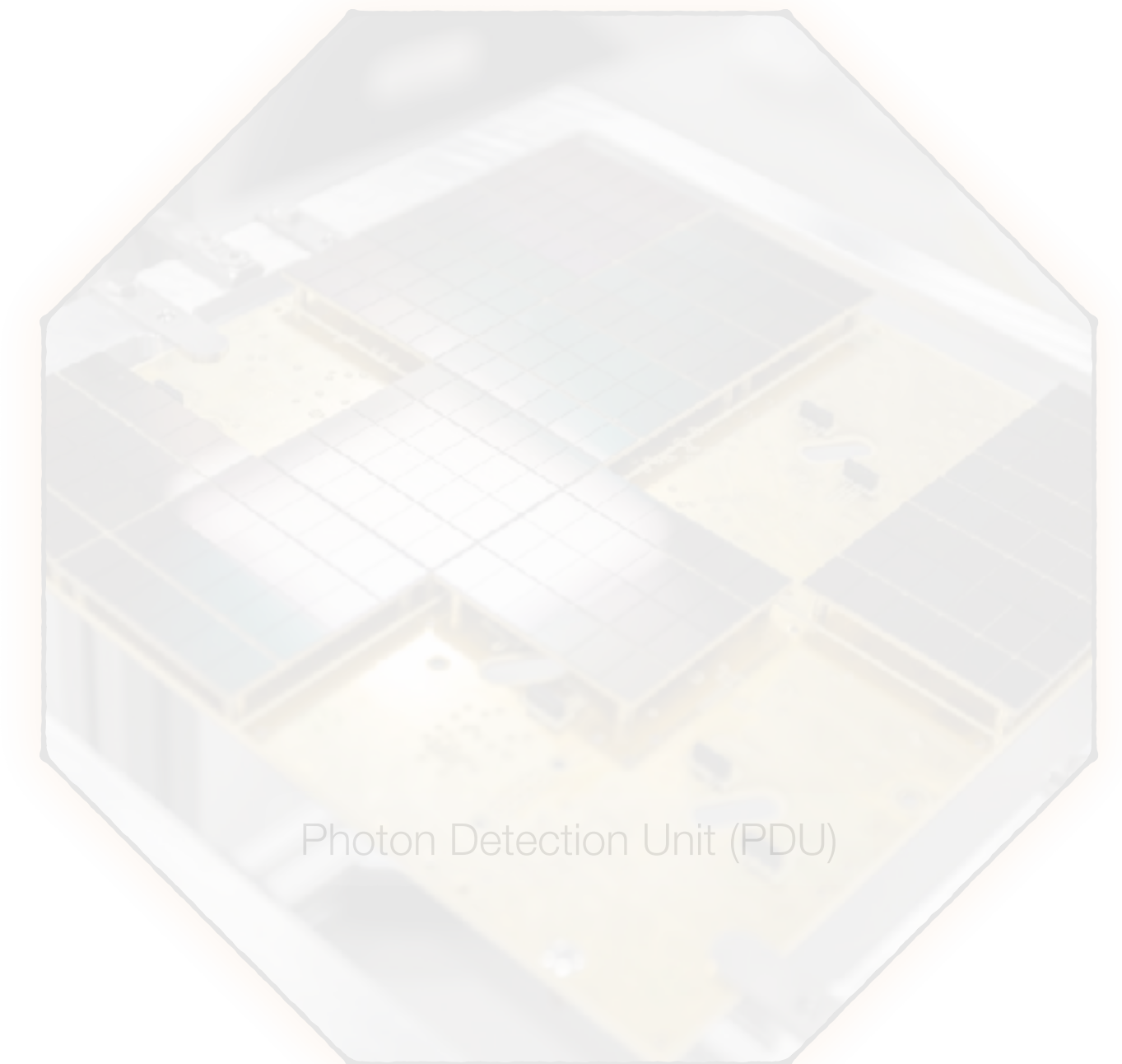
A detector medium with a reduction factor of ~ 1400 in ^{39}Ar compared to atmospheric argon

PMMA TPC



Transparent low-radioactivity **PMMA TPC** with conductive **Clevios™**-coated surfaces as electrodes

Silicon Photomultiplier (SiPM)

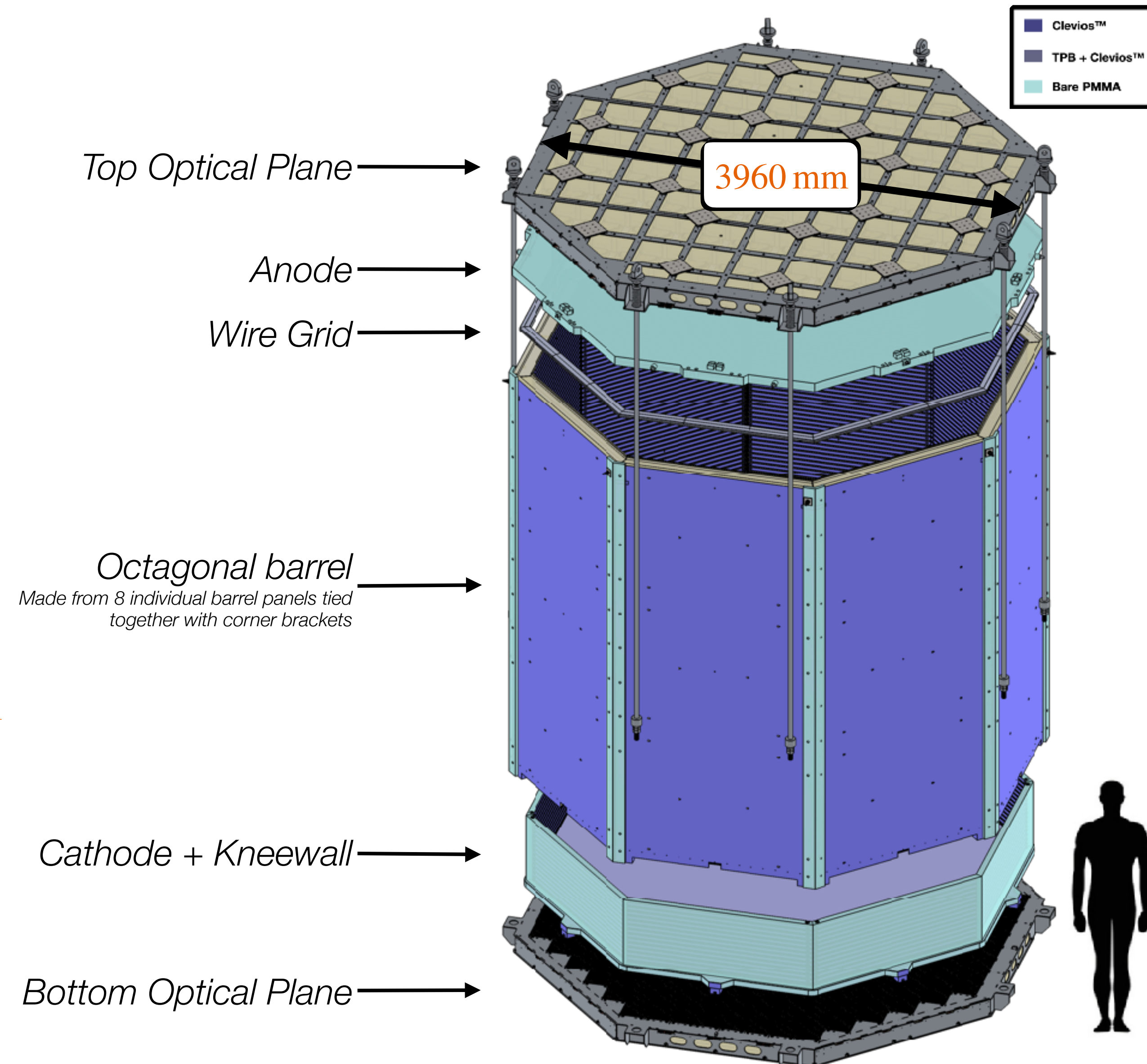


Large-area ($\sim 25 \text{ m}^2$), low-noise, low-radioactivity SiPM arrays

The DarkSide-20k Inner Detector

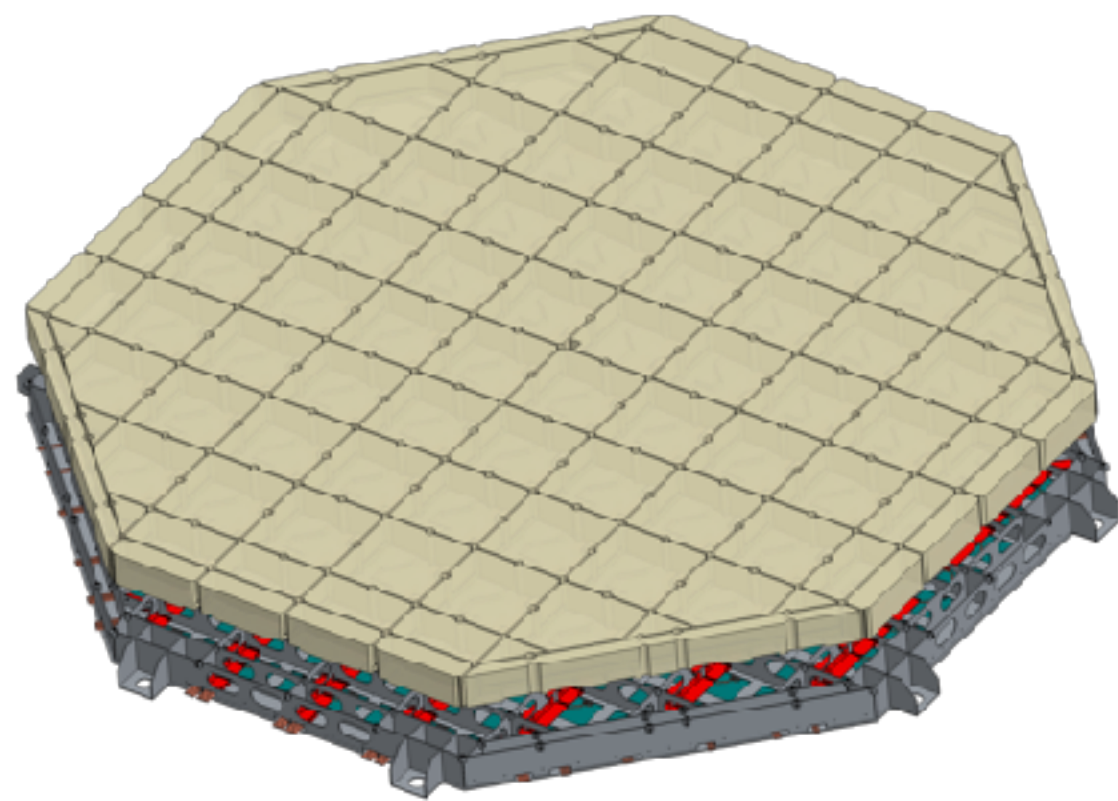
- Octagonal vessel made from ultra-pure PMMA
 - Operated as a dual-phase time projection chamber (TPC) filled with *low radioactivity underground argon*
 - Active (fiducial) mass of **49.7 t (20.2 t)**
 - Drift length of **3480 mm**
- Two optical planes with 528 light readout channels each (total of **20 m²** of light sensors + **5 m²** in inner veto)
 - Light wavelength-shifted via TPB from **128 nm** to **420 nm**
 - Visible light reflected by foils of Enhanced Specular Reflector (ESR)
- Drift field of **200 V/cm**
 - ($V_{\text{Cathode}} \approx -75 \text{ kV}$)

Exploded View of DS-20k Inner Detector 3D Model

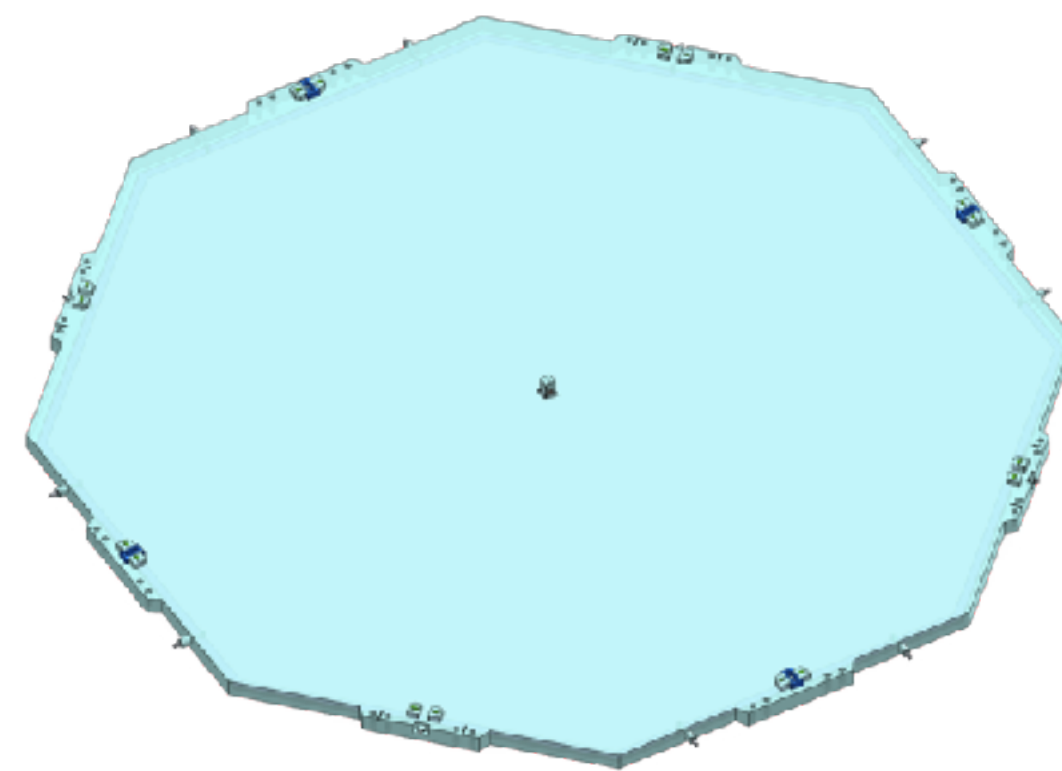


PMMA Time Projection Chamber

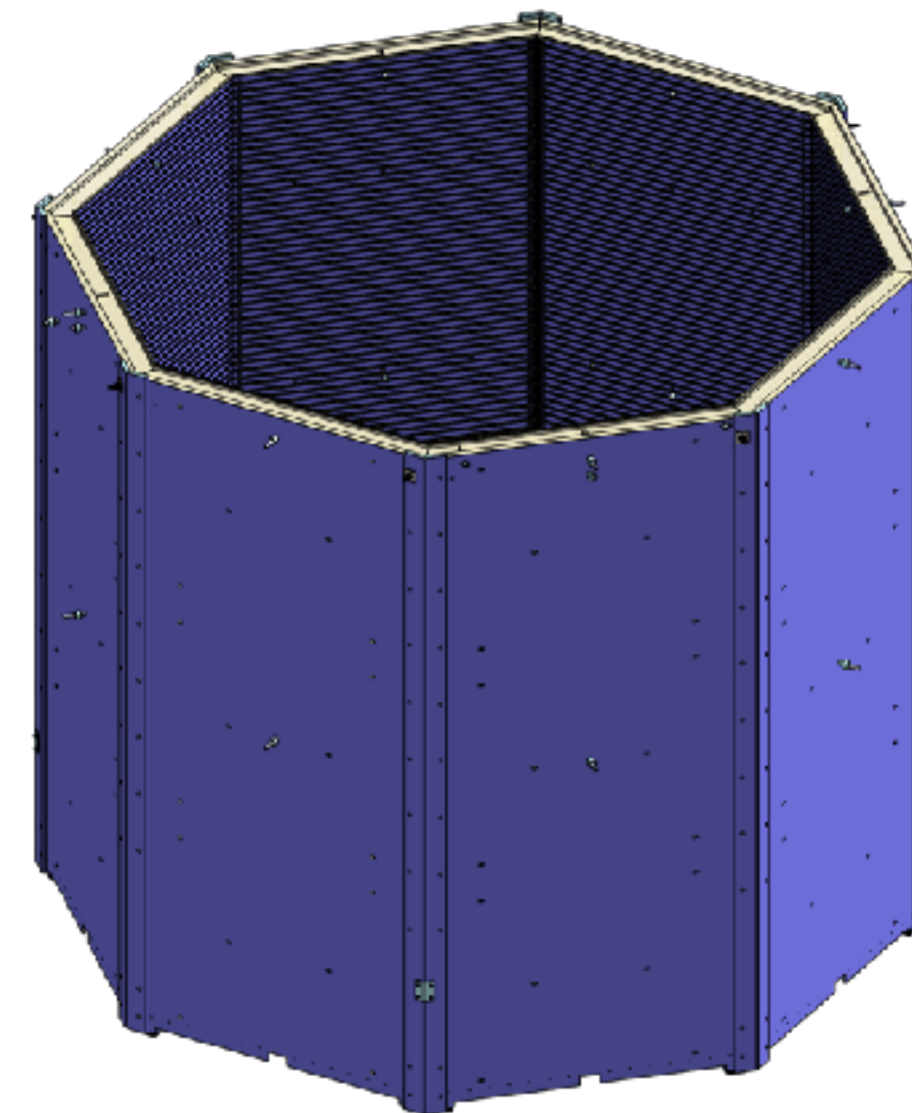
- Many pieces of the DarkSide-20k are made from PMMA
 - Neutron capture on ^1H
 - Transparent to visible light



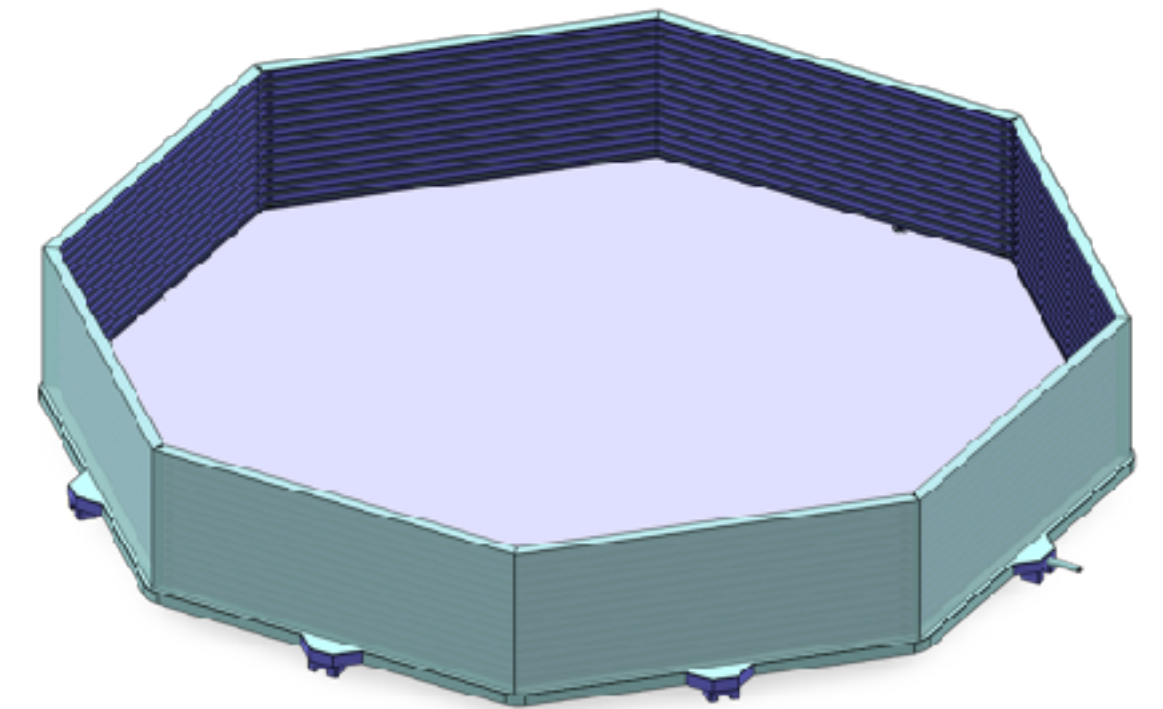
*PMMA Blocks
inside Optical Planes (Top and Bottom)*



PMMA Anode



PMMA Barrel



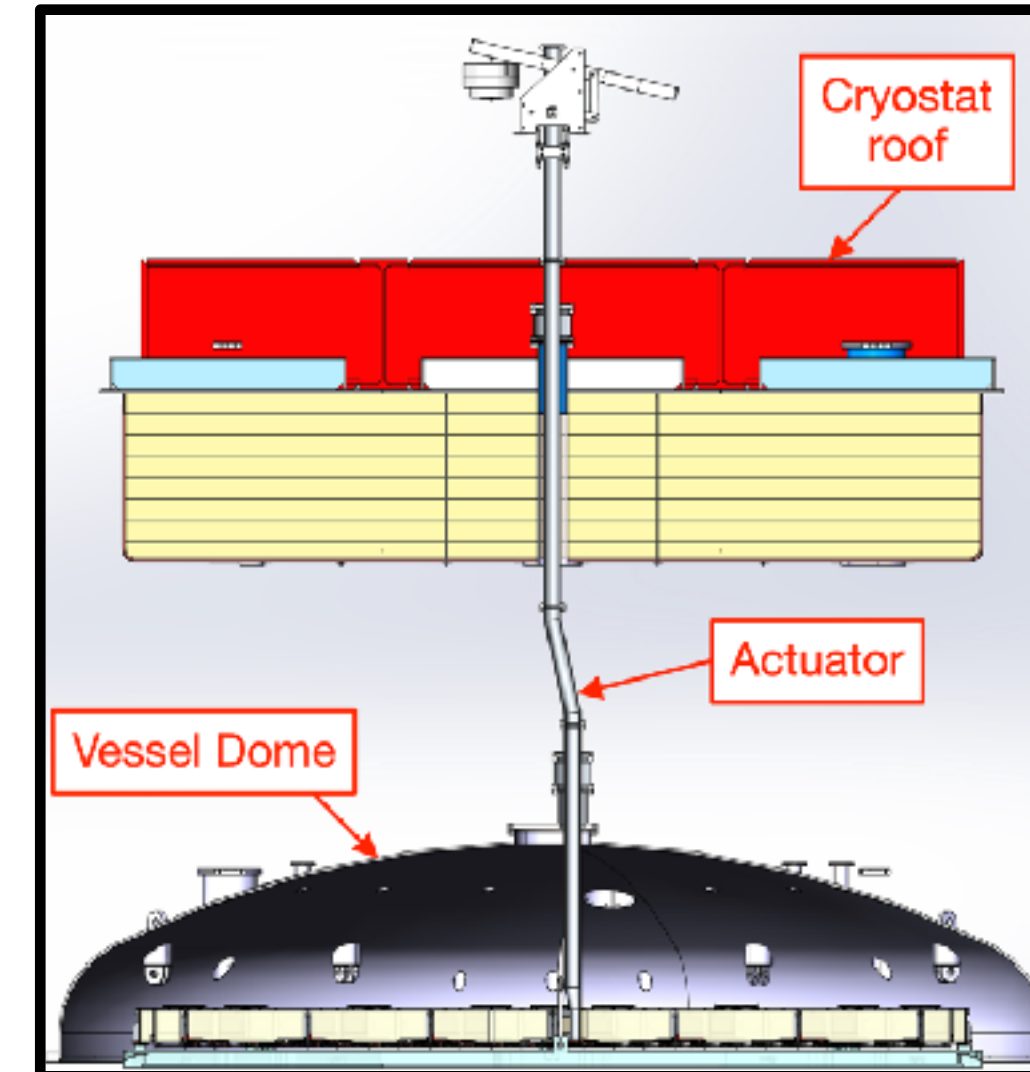
PMMA Cathode/Kneewall

PMMA Time Projection Chamber

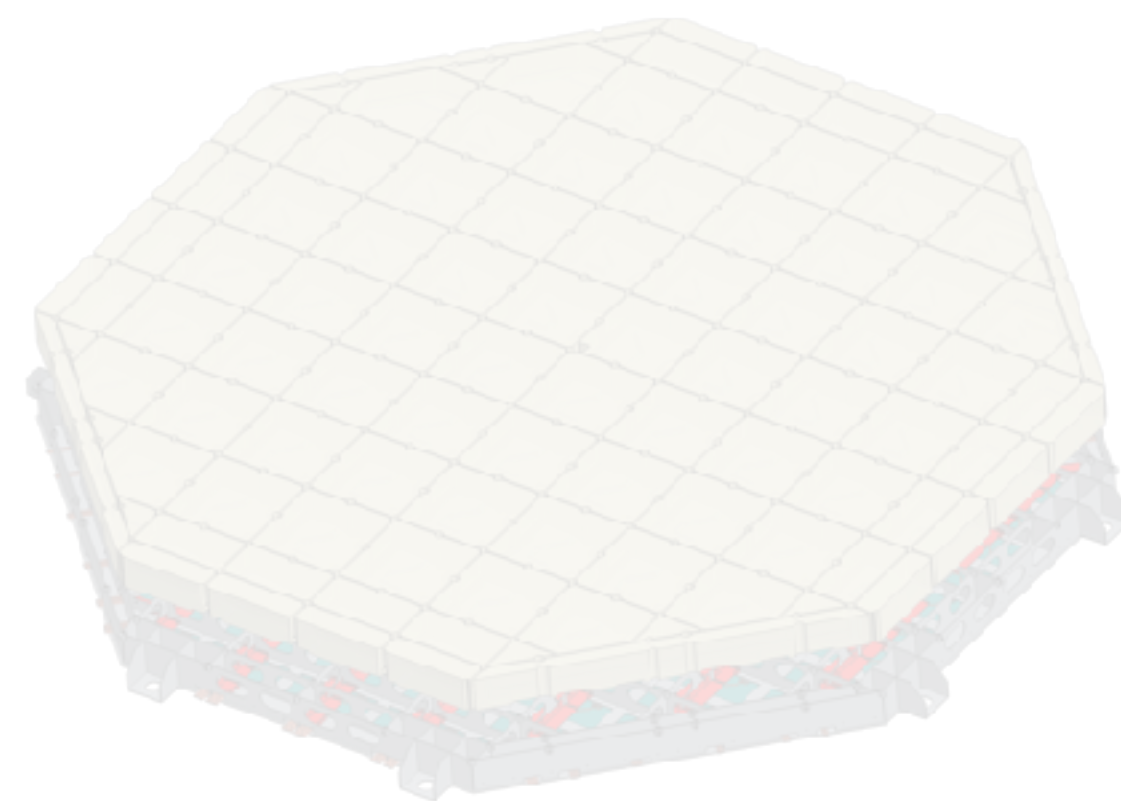
Spatial uniformity of S2-response requires the bottom surface of the anode window to be planar, stationary, parallel and 7 mm above the liquid argon surface, and parallel to the grid wires.

➔ **Optimal S2 gain:**
flatness across the **whole anode/grid system** to be **within 0.5 mm** coupled with **S2 (x,y) calibrations**.

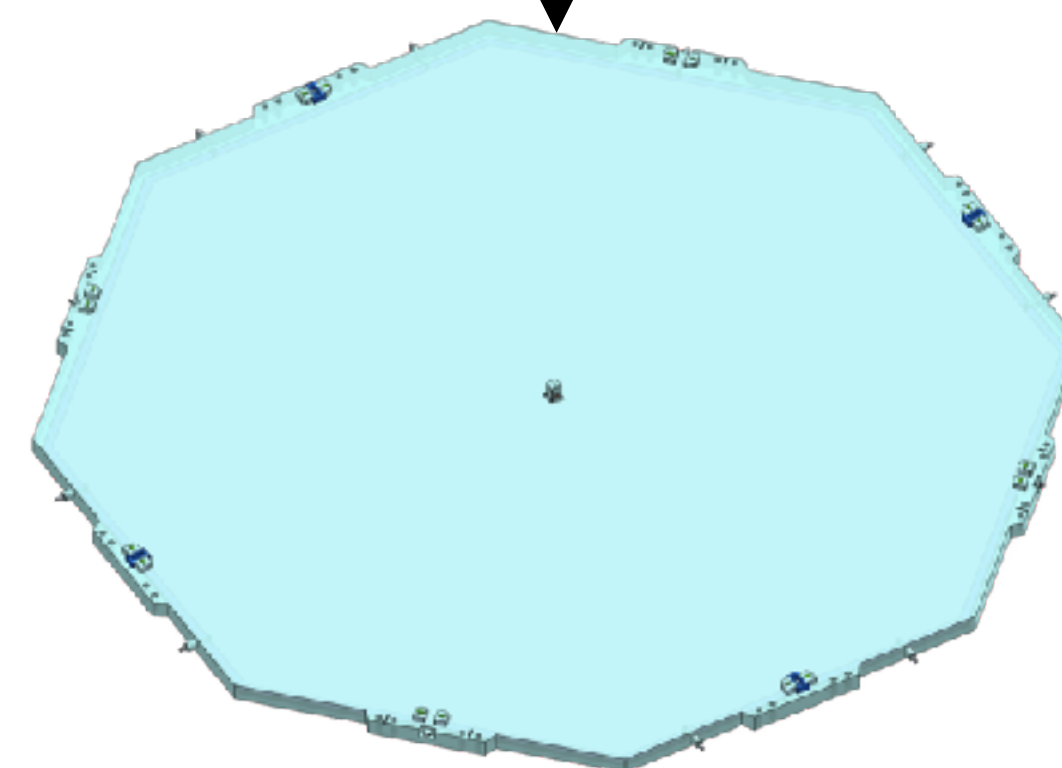
➔ **Optimal S2 resolution:**
surface flatness across **distances of order 20 cm** to be **within 0.1 mm**.



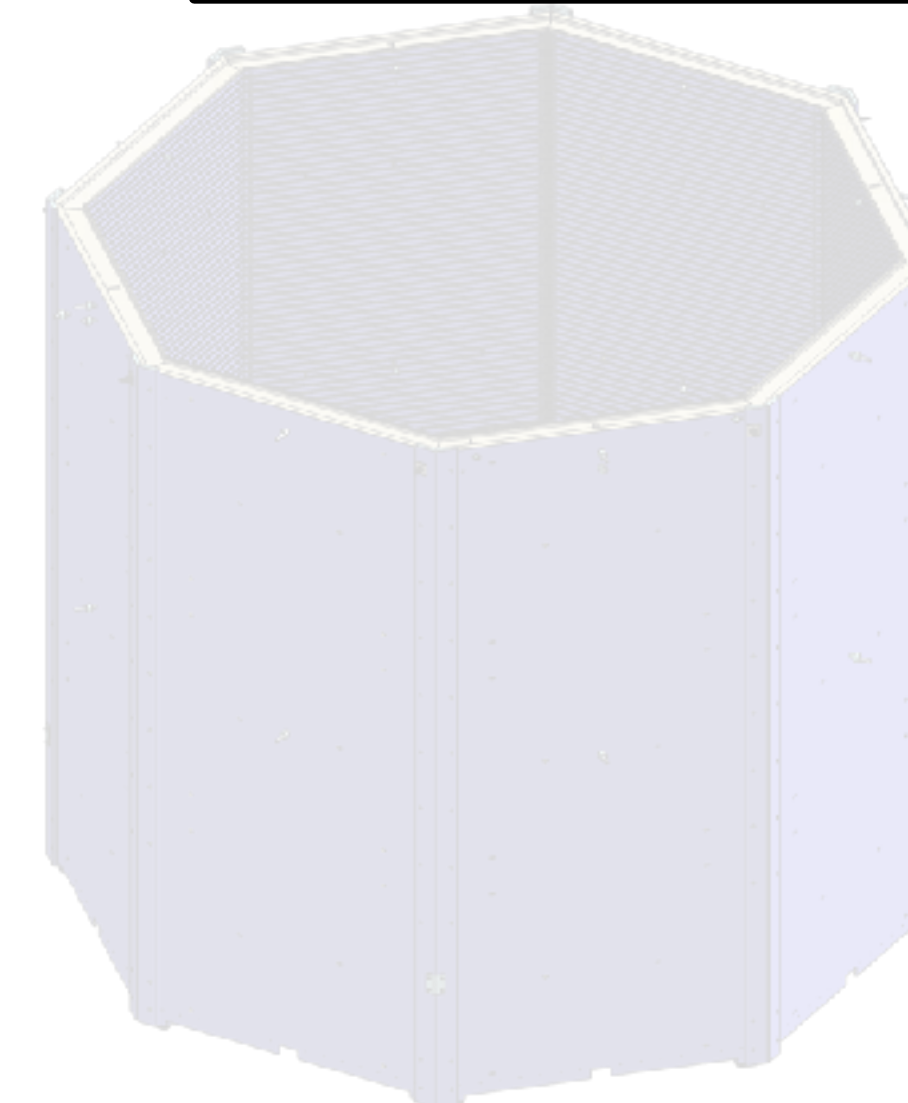
Anode Adjustment System to Counteract Creep of Anode due to Gravity



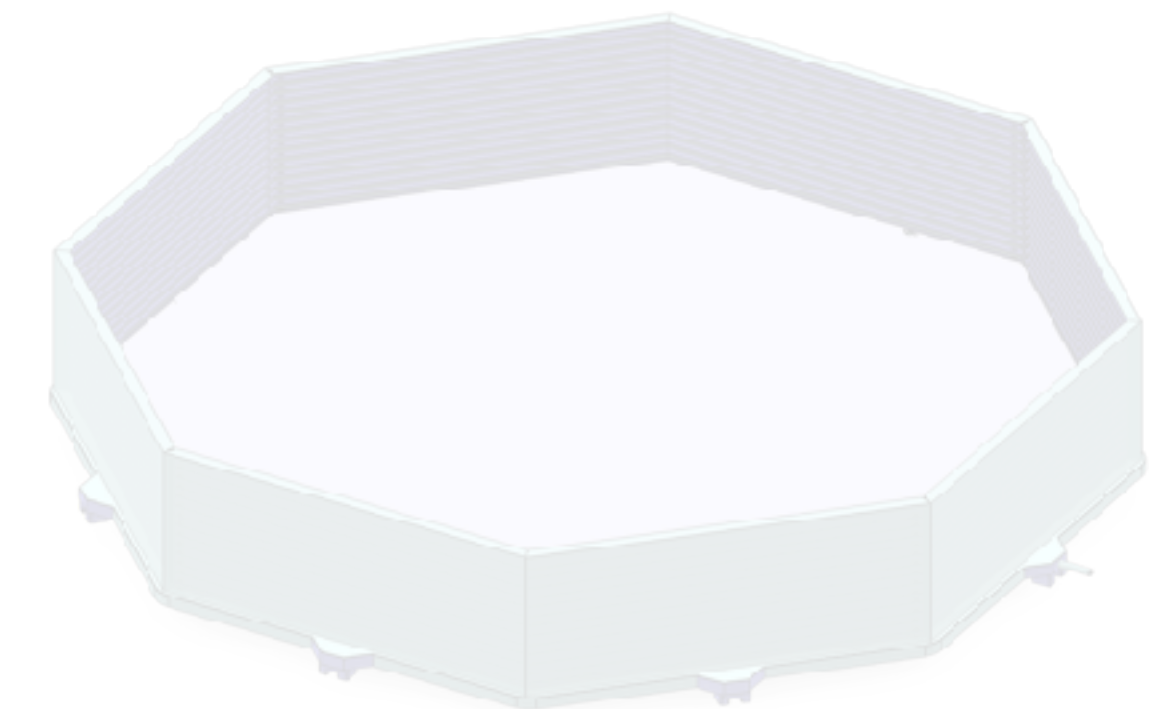
*PMMA Blocks
inside Optical Planes (Top and Bottom)*



PMMA Anode

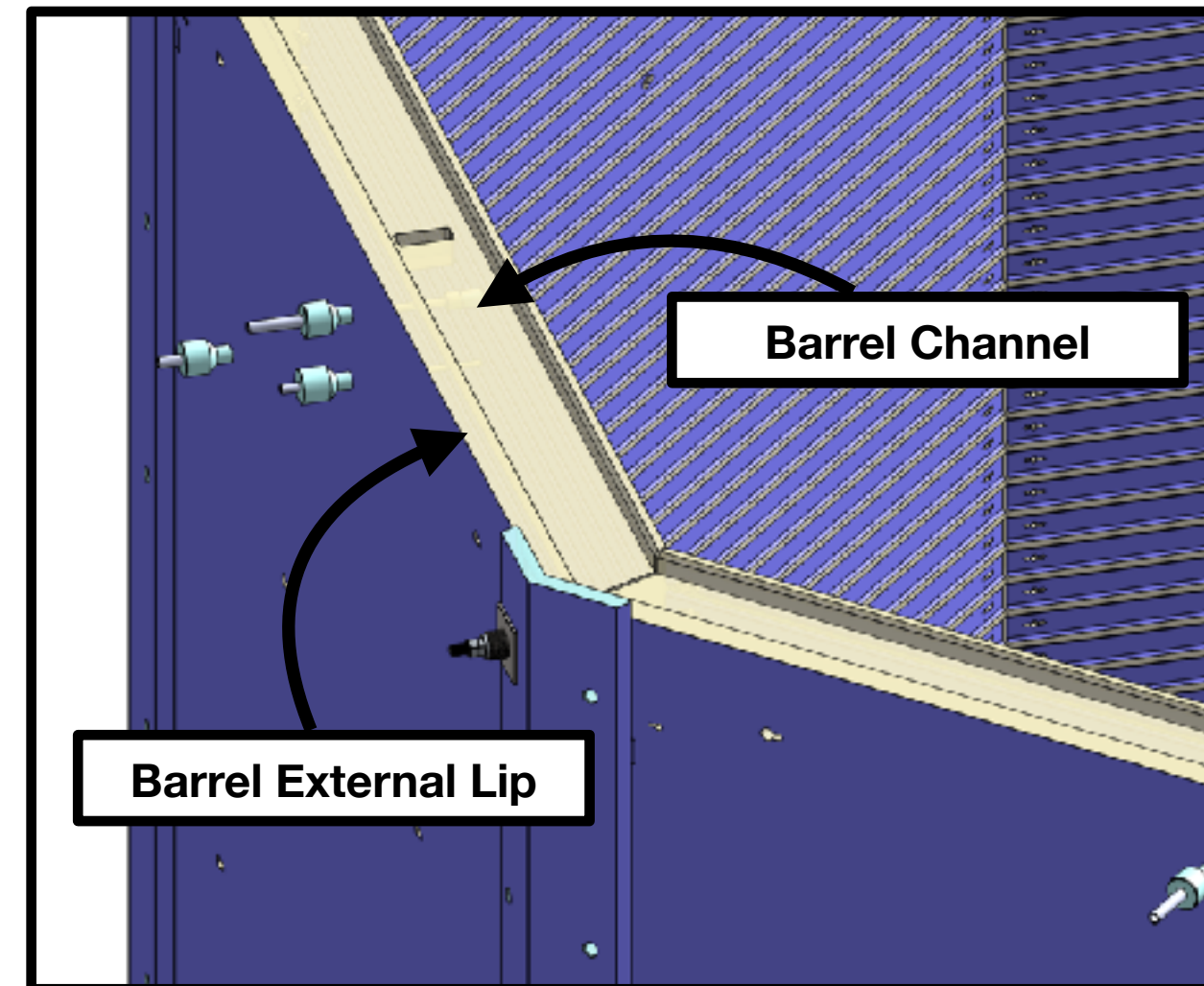


PMMA Barrel

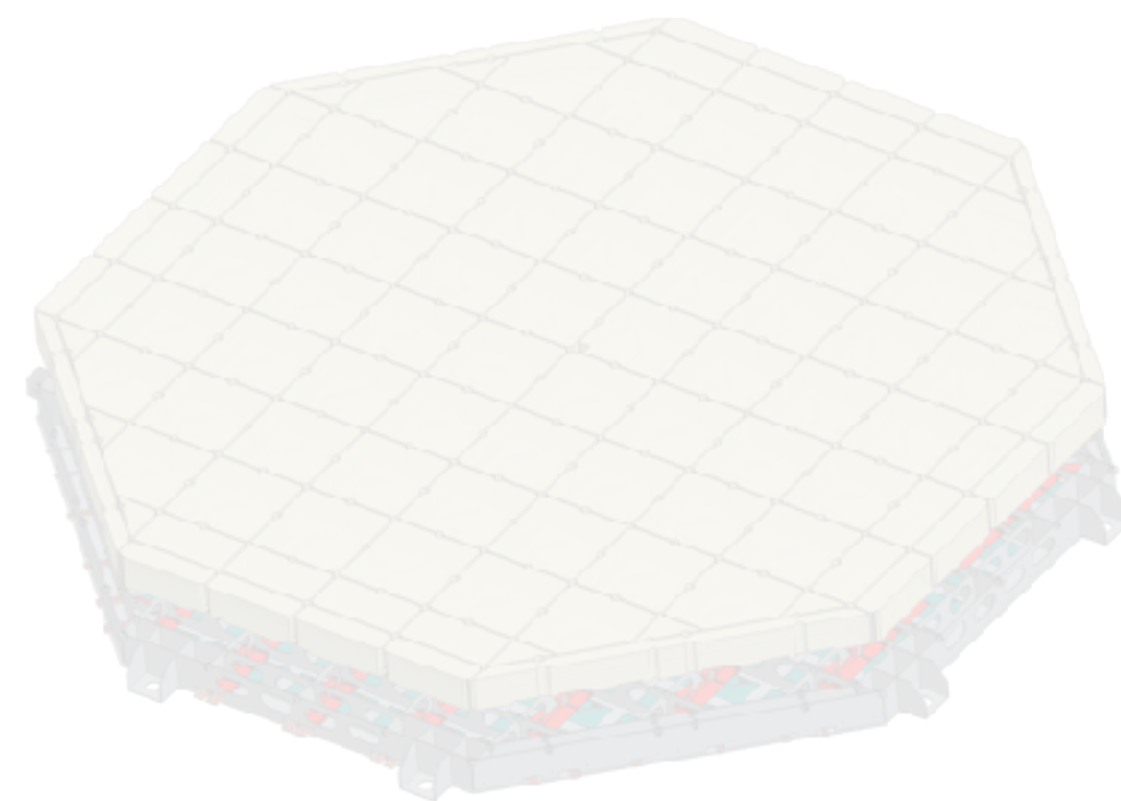


PMMA Cathode/Kneewall

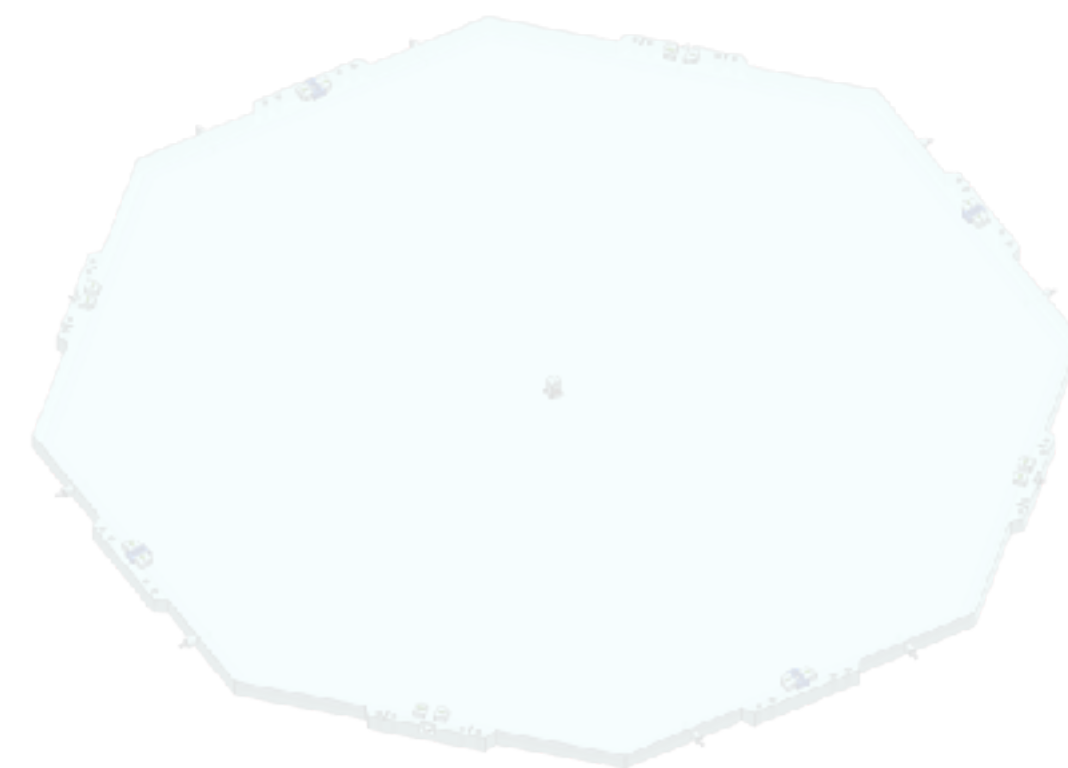
PMMA Time Projection Chamber



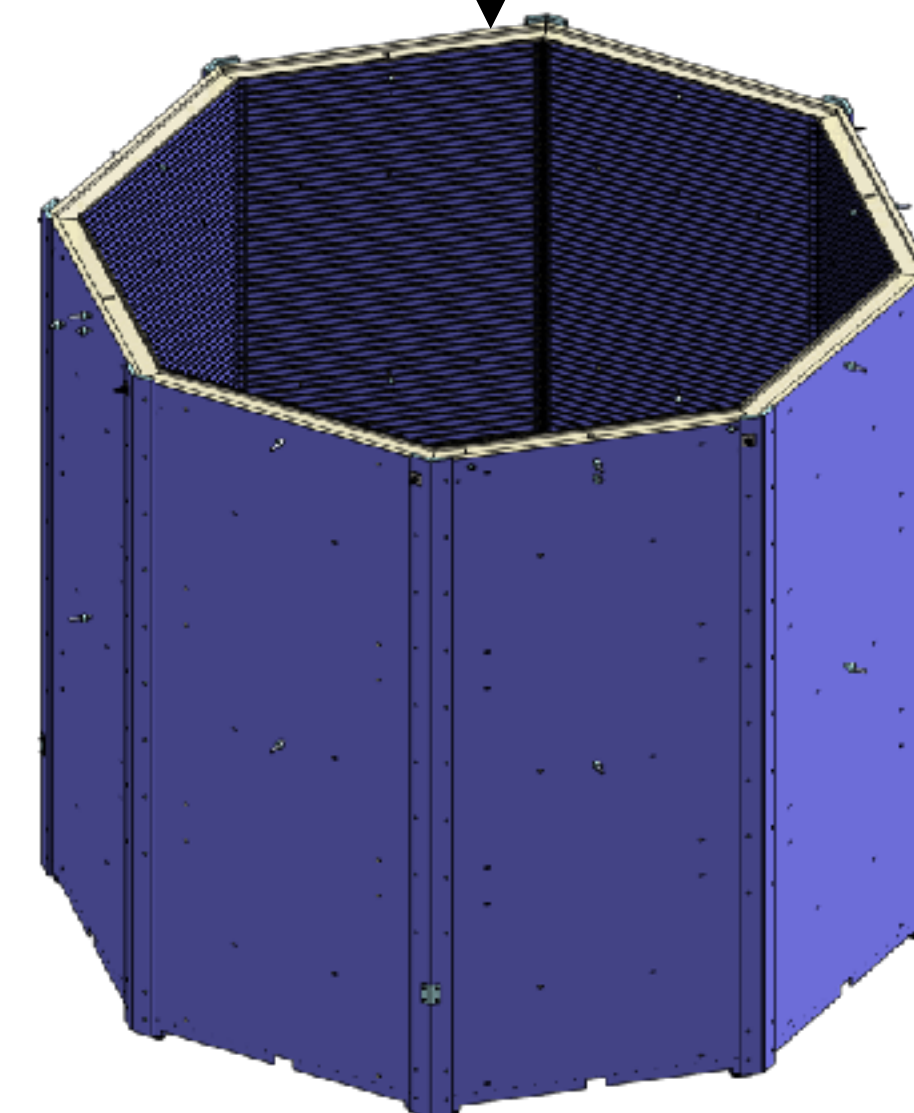
- Aiming to **0.1 mm flatness requirement** on:
- **external lip** of barrel (where the anode rests);
 - barrel **channel** (where the wire-grid frame rests).
- ➔ developed a barrel-assembly procedure and anchoring scheme aiming to **enable alignment** of panel top features within **0.1 mm**



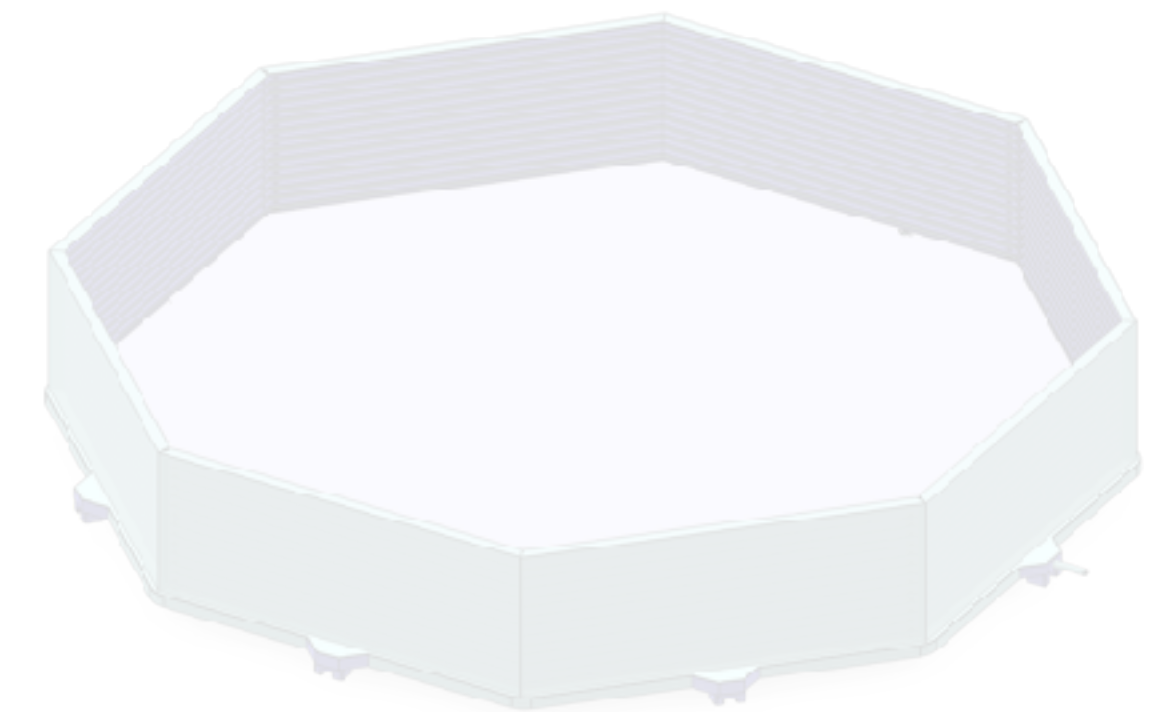
*PMMA Blocks
inside Optical Planes (Top and Bottom)*



PMMA Anode

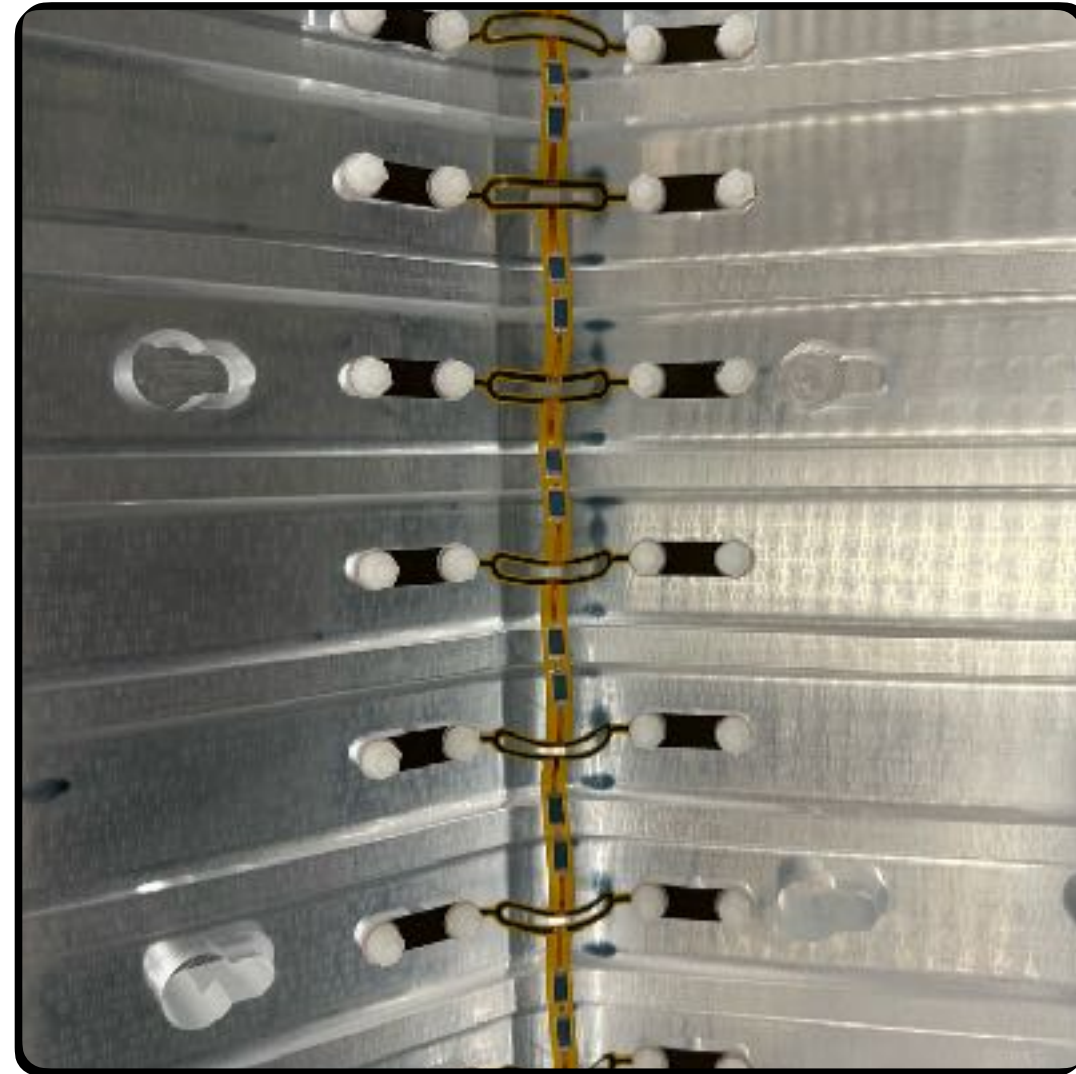


PMMA Barrel

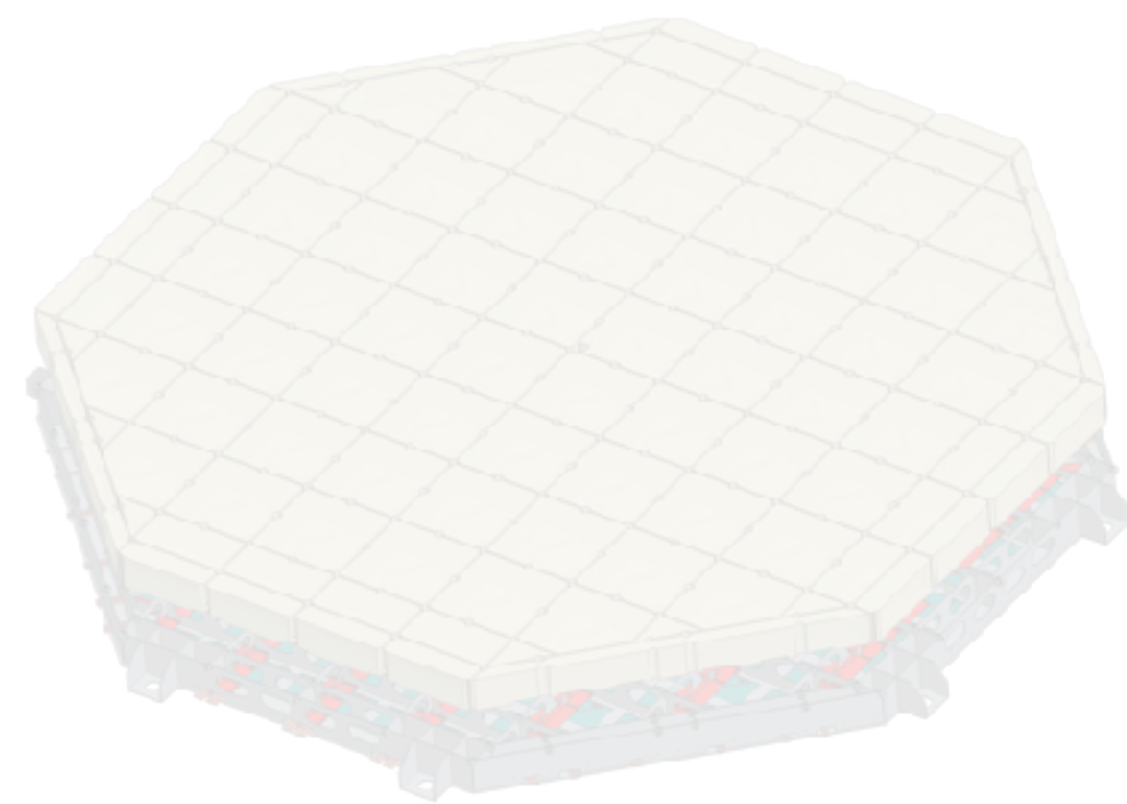


PMMA Cathode/Kneewall

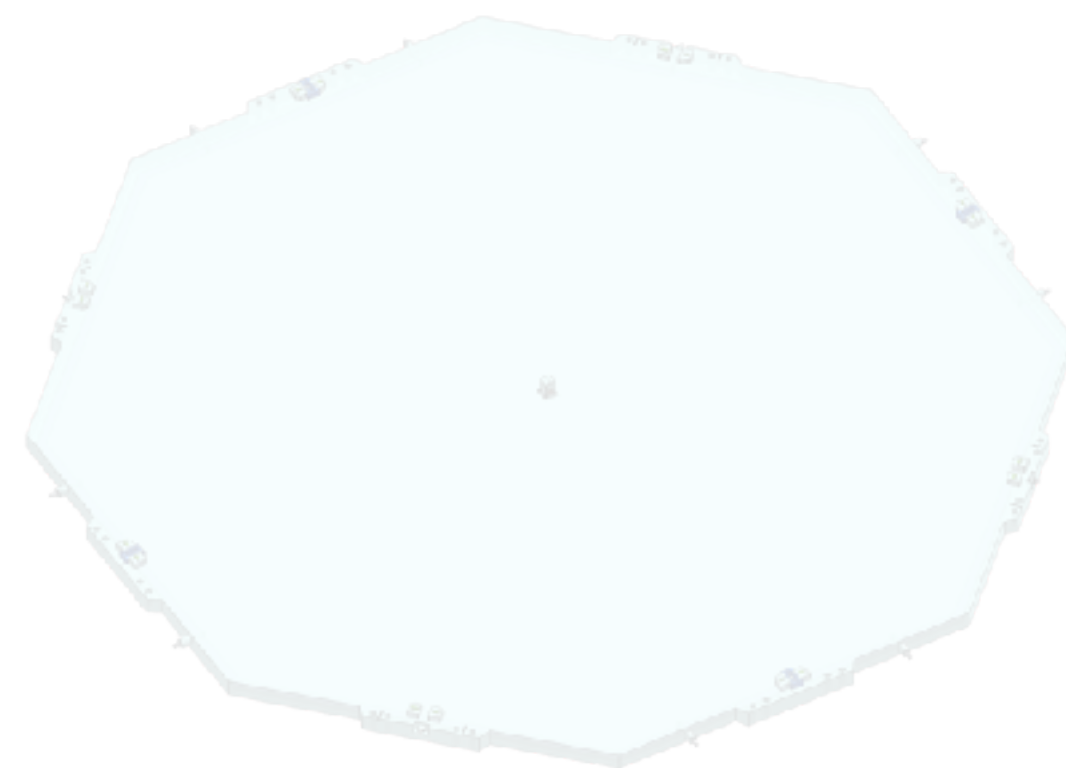
PMMA Time Projection Chamber



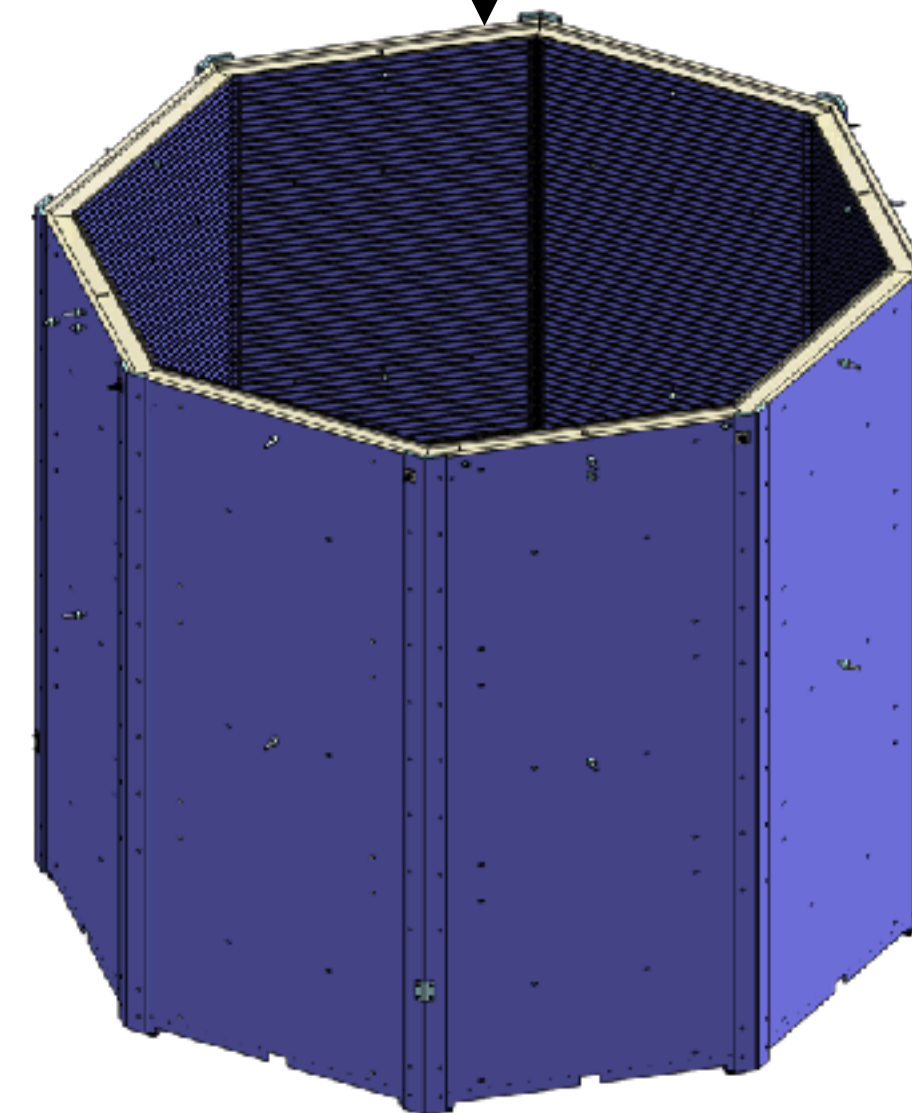
Field shaping rings are kept at a degrading voltage via **4 redundant Resistor Chains** i.e. voltage dividers on a flexible capton PCB.



*PMMA Blocks
inside Optical Planes (Top and Bottom)*



PMMA Anode

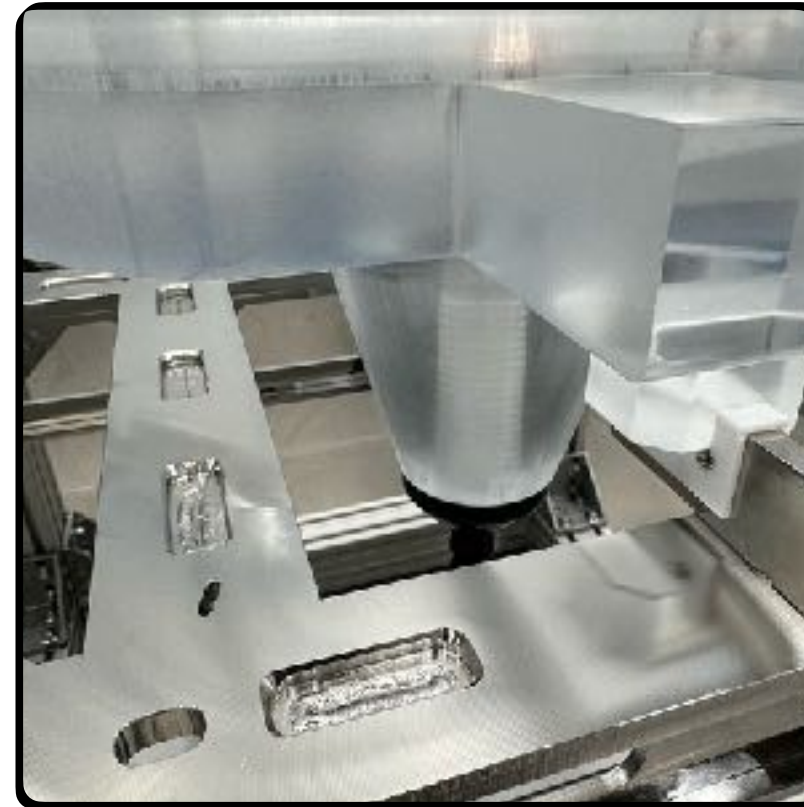
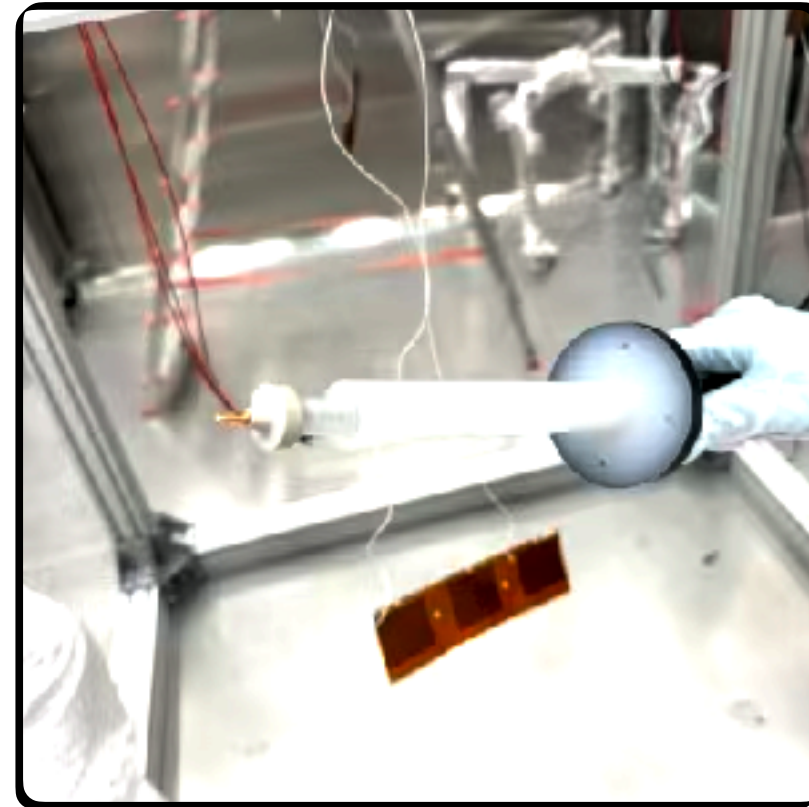
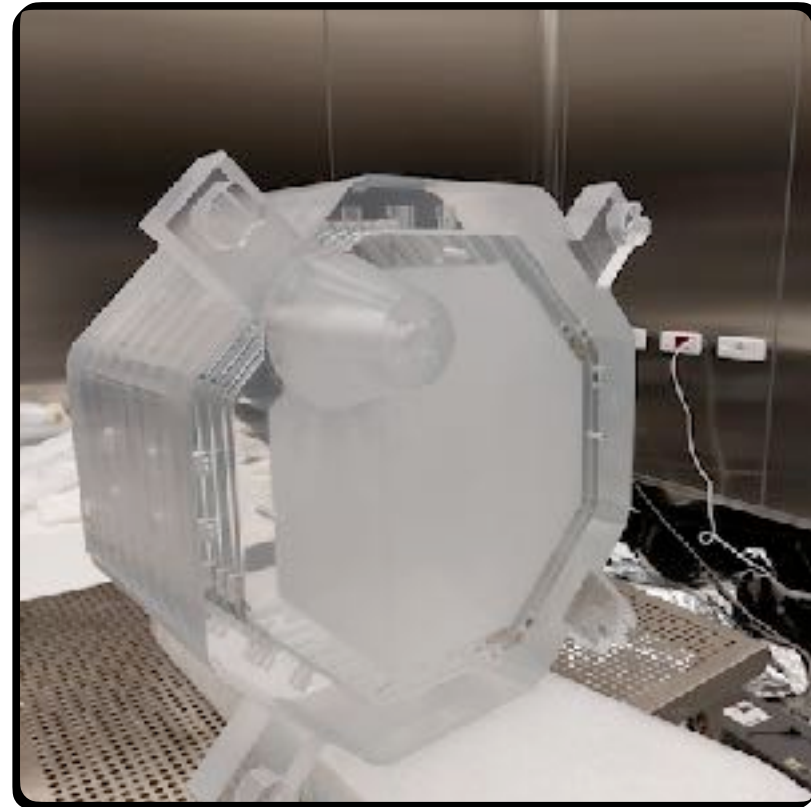


PMMA Barrel



PMMA Cathode/Kneewall

PMMA Time Projection Chamber



A conducting PE HV cable delivers the high voltage to the Clevios™-coated cathode surface ;

- ➔ penetrating the Argon volume through a warm feedthrough on the roof of the cryostat.

A stress cone located below the cathode

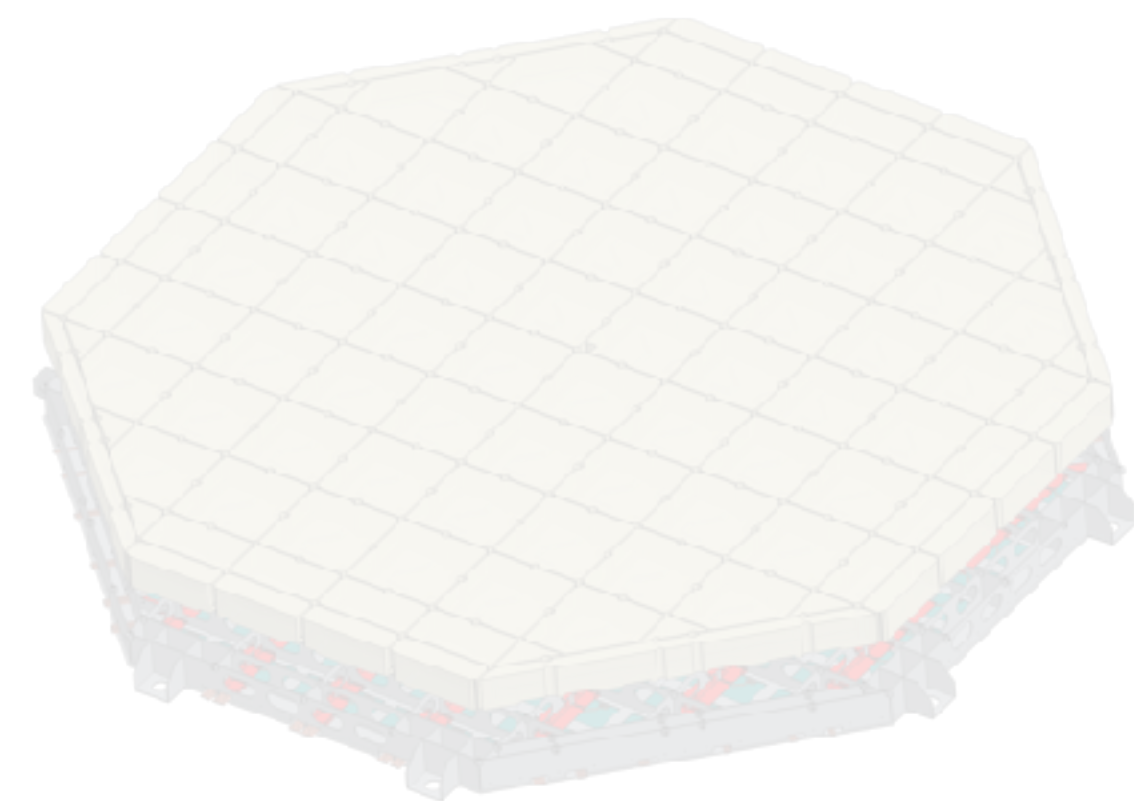
- ➔ a plug terminating the cable
- ➔ a PMMA cone bonded on the outer face
- ➔ a copper “mushroom” contacting the inner Clevios™-coated cathode surface.

**HV Performance Testing in
LAr of the PMMA Cathode
Connection for DS-20k**

Wednesday, October 22

Ludovico Luzzi

<https://indico.ihep.ac.cn/event/24964/contributions/194833/>

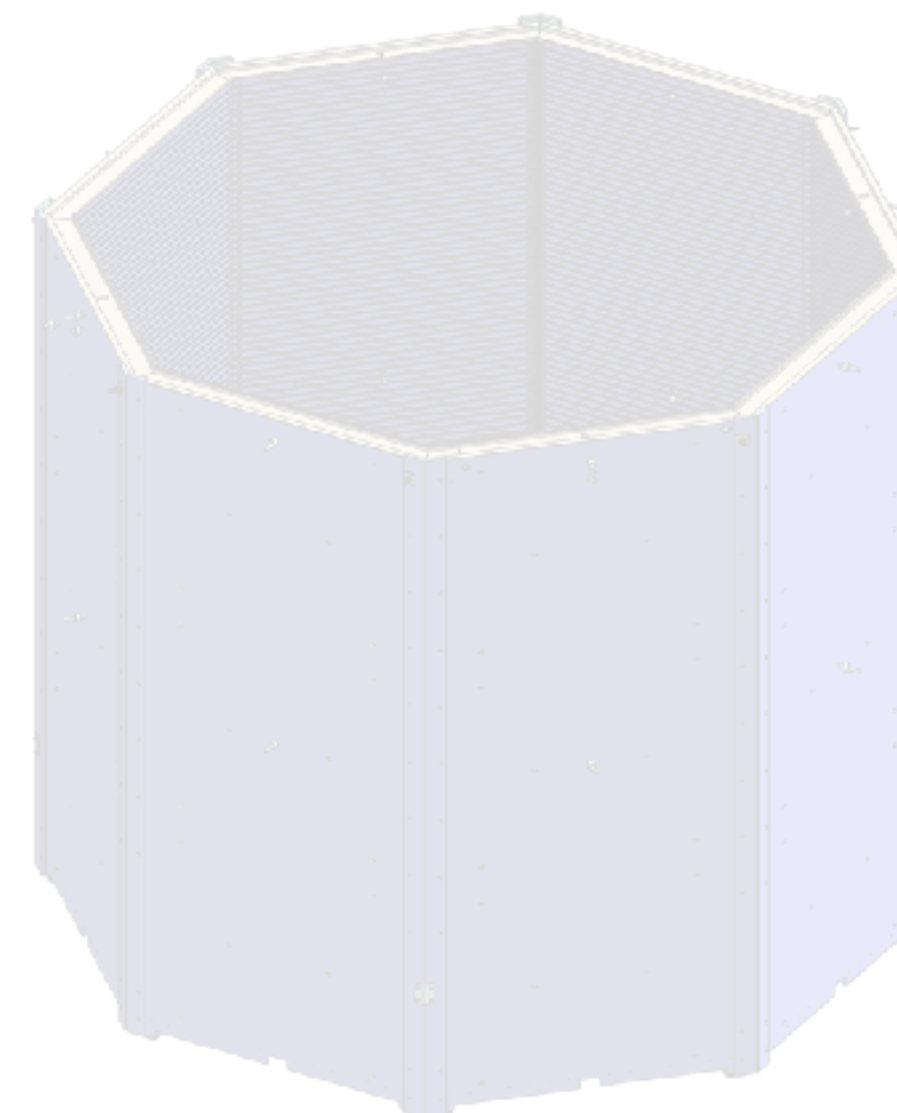


PMMA Blocks

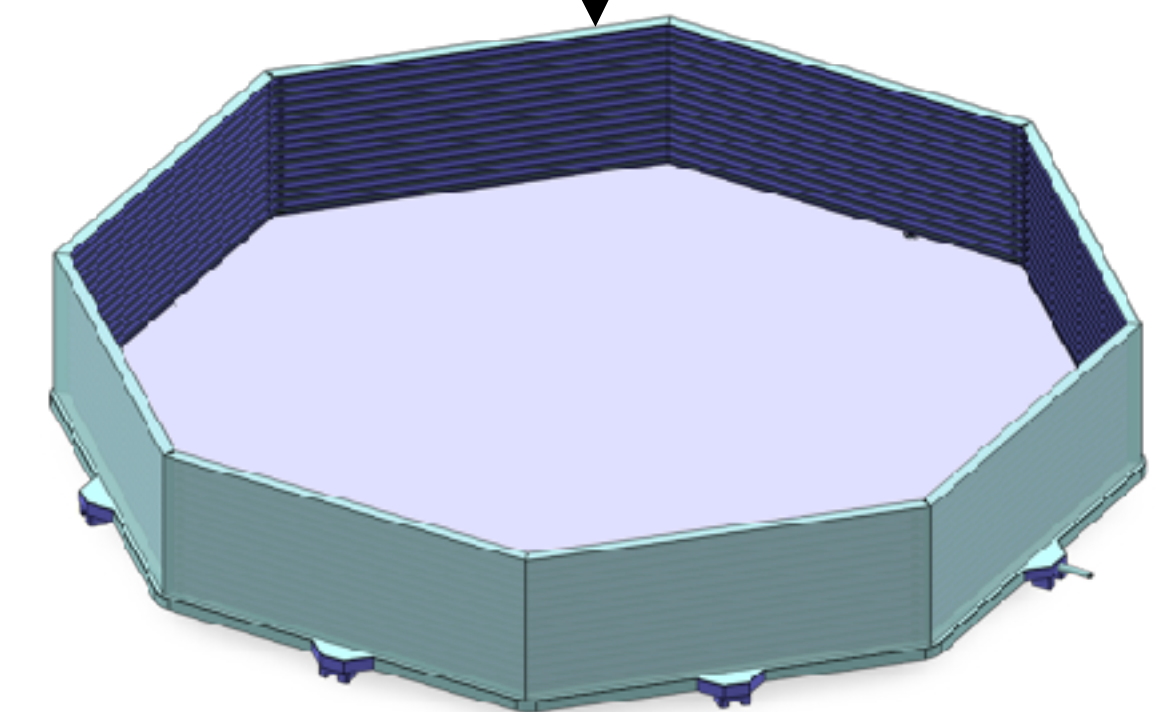
inside Optical Planes (Top and Bottom)



PMMA Anode



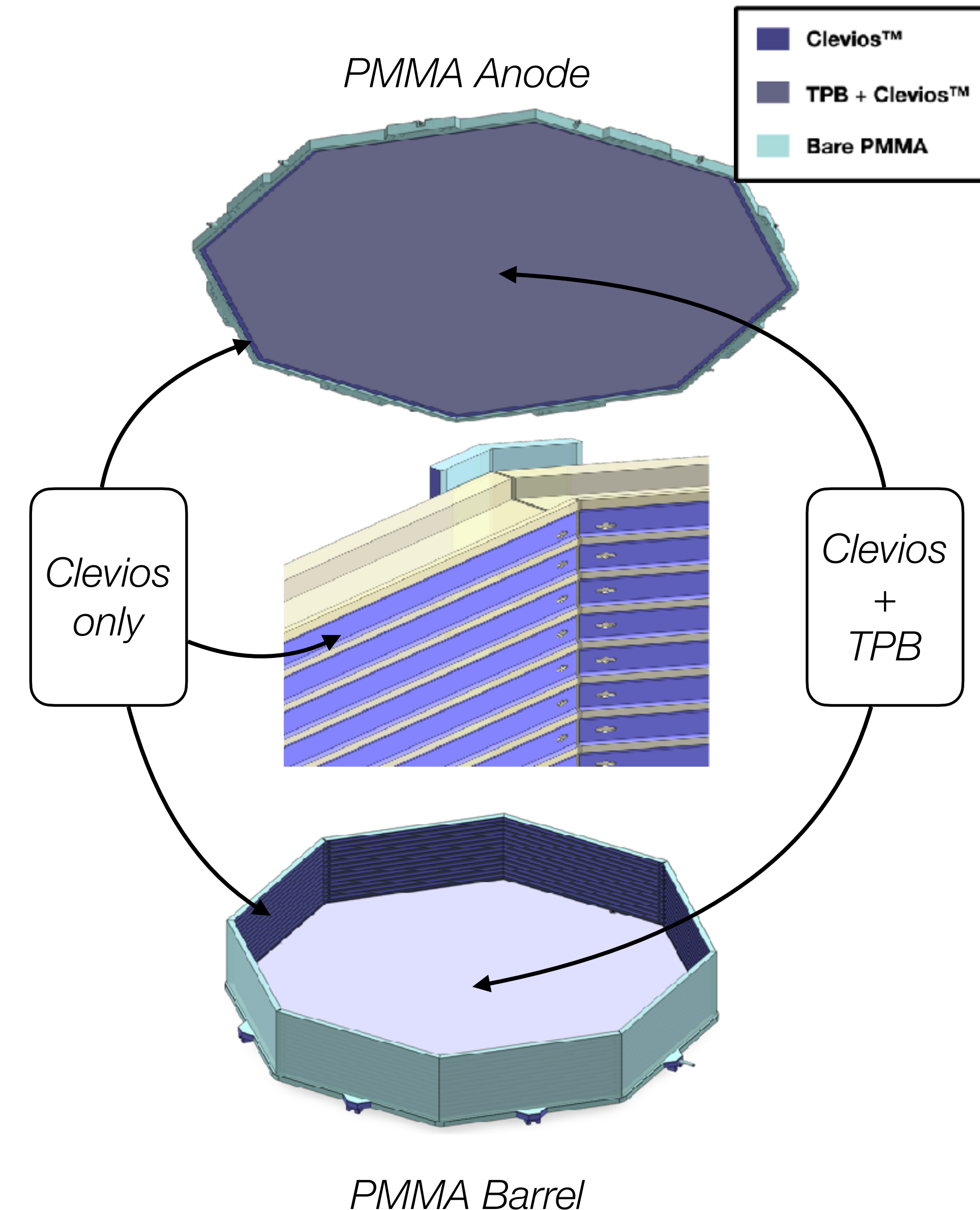
PMMA Barrel



PMMA Cathode/Kneewall

Clevios and TPB Coatings

- Clevios™-coated PMMA surfaces as electrodes
 - ➔ *Conductive polymer*
 - *Inward-facing cathode window at potential ($V_C \approx -75 \text{ kV}$)*
 - *Inward-facing anode window ($V_A = 0 \text{ V}$)*
 - *Inward-facing strips on the barrel at potential*
 - *Outward-facing PMMA surfaces will be grounded*
- TPB coating for wavelength shifting
 - *Inward-facing cathode window (Clevios+TPB)*
 - *Inward-facing anode window (Clevios+TPB)*
 - *Reflector assembly around barrel (ESR+TPB)*



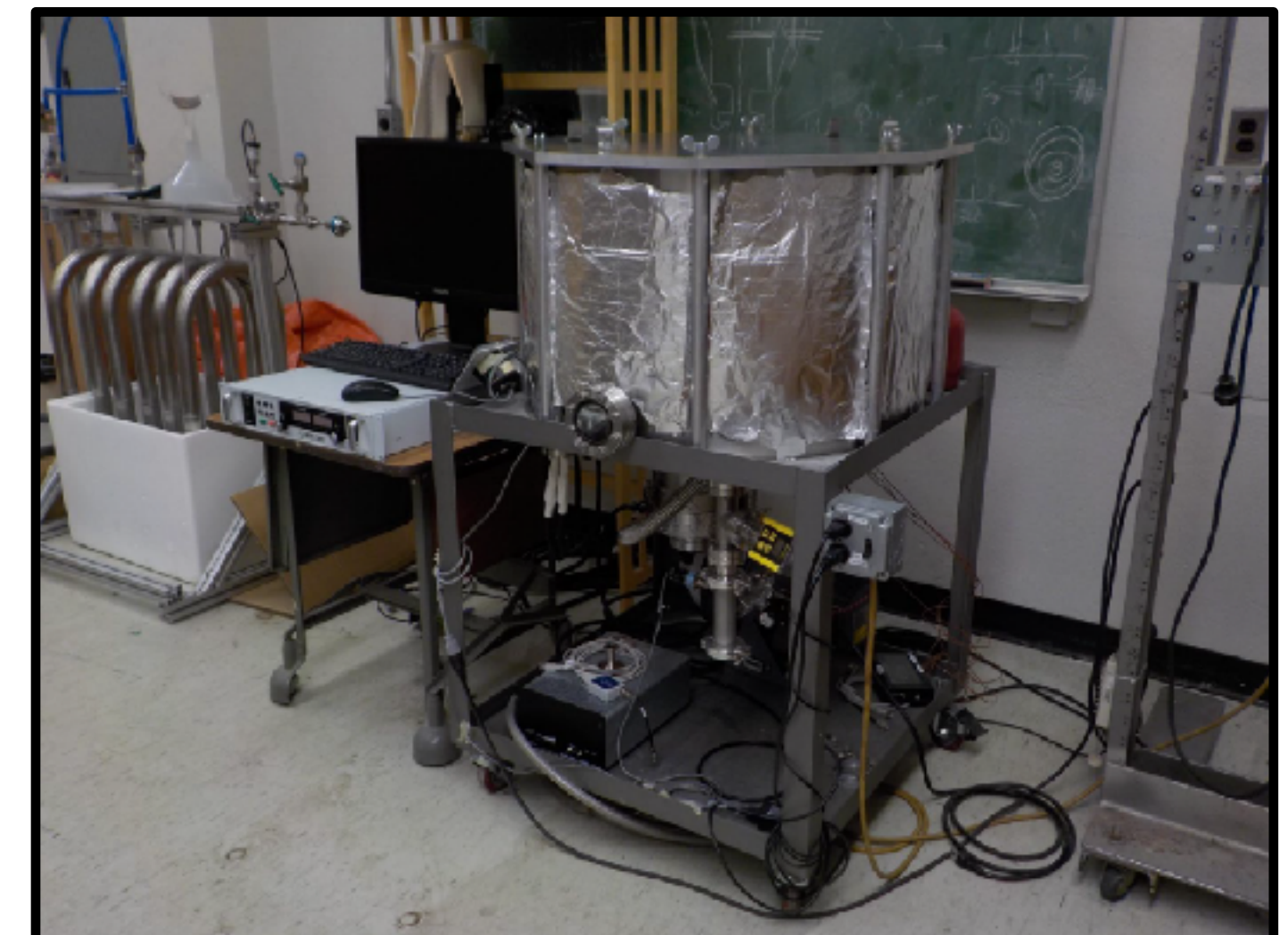
Clevios and TPB Coatings

- **CleviosTM**-coated PMMA surfaces as electrodes
 - ➔ *Conductive polymer*
 - *Inward-facing cathode window at potential ($V_C \approx -75 \text{ kV}$)*
 - *Inward-facing anode window ($V_A = 0 \text{ V}$)*
 - *Inward-facing strips on the barrel at potential*
 - *Outward-facing PMMA surfaces will be grounded*
- TPB coating for wavelength shifting
 - *Inward-facing cathode window (Clevios+TPB)*
 - *Inward-facing anode window (Clevios+TPB)*
 - *Reflector assembly around barrel (ESR+TPB)*
- Fully exercised for the DS-Mockup demonstrator

CNC Table for Clevios Spray Coating

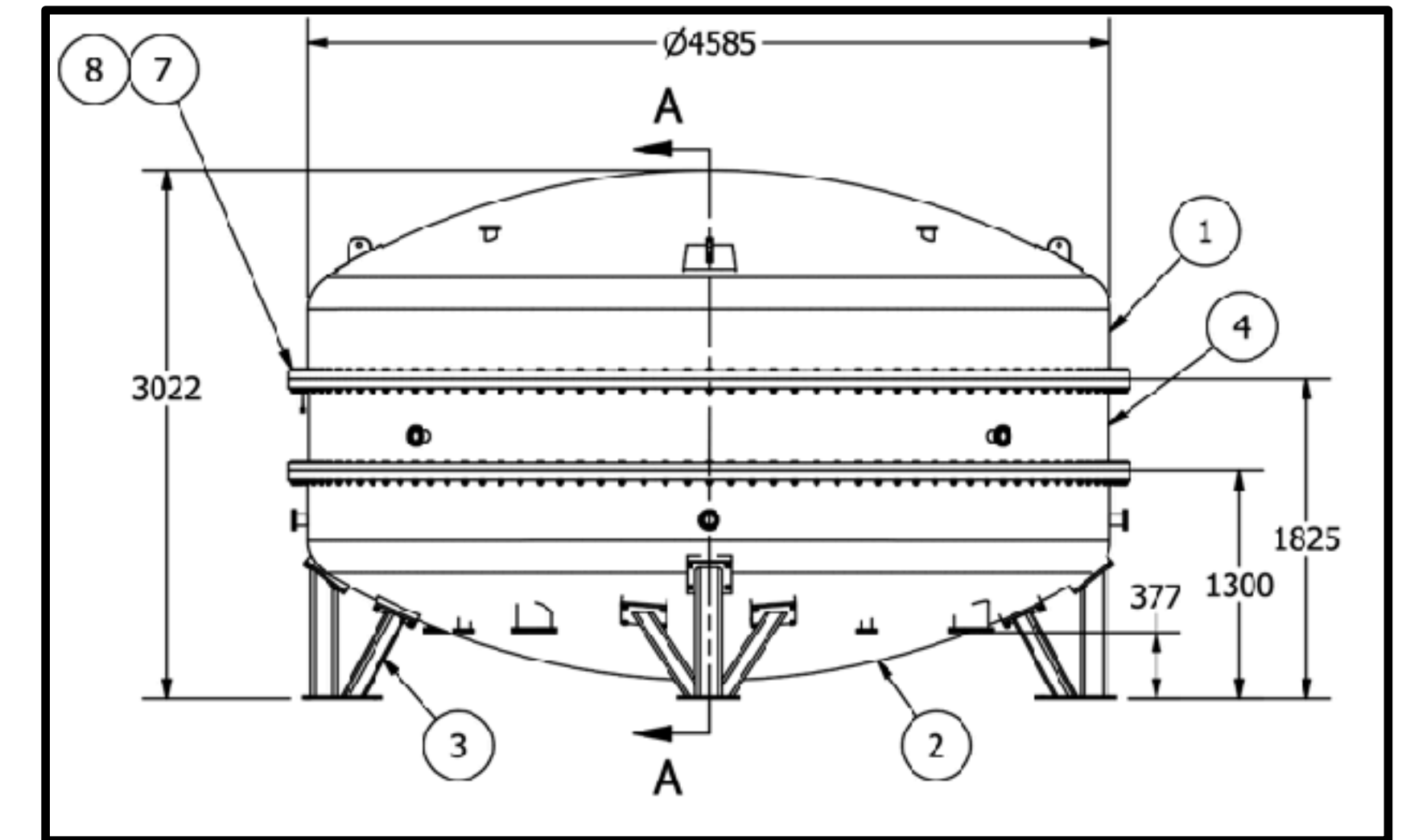


TPB Evaporation Chamber



Clevios and TPB Coatings

- CleviosTM-coated PMMA surfaces as electrodes
 - ➔ *Conductive polymer*
 - *Inward-facing cathode window at potential ($V_C \approx -75$ kV)*
 - *Inward-facing anode window ($V_A = 0$ V)*
 - *Inward-facing strips on the barrel at potential*
 - *Outward-facing PMMA surfaces will be grounded*
- TPB coating for wavelength shifting
 - *Inward-facing cathode window (Clevios+TPB)*
 - *Inward-facing anode window (Clevios+TPB)*
 - *Reflector assembly around barrel (ESR+TPB)*
- Fully exercised for the DS-Mockup demonstrator
- Scaling it up for DS-20k



DS-20k Evaporation Chamber



DS-Mockup

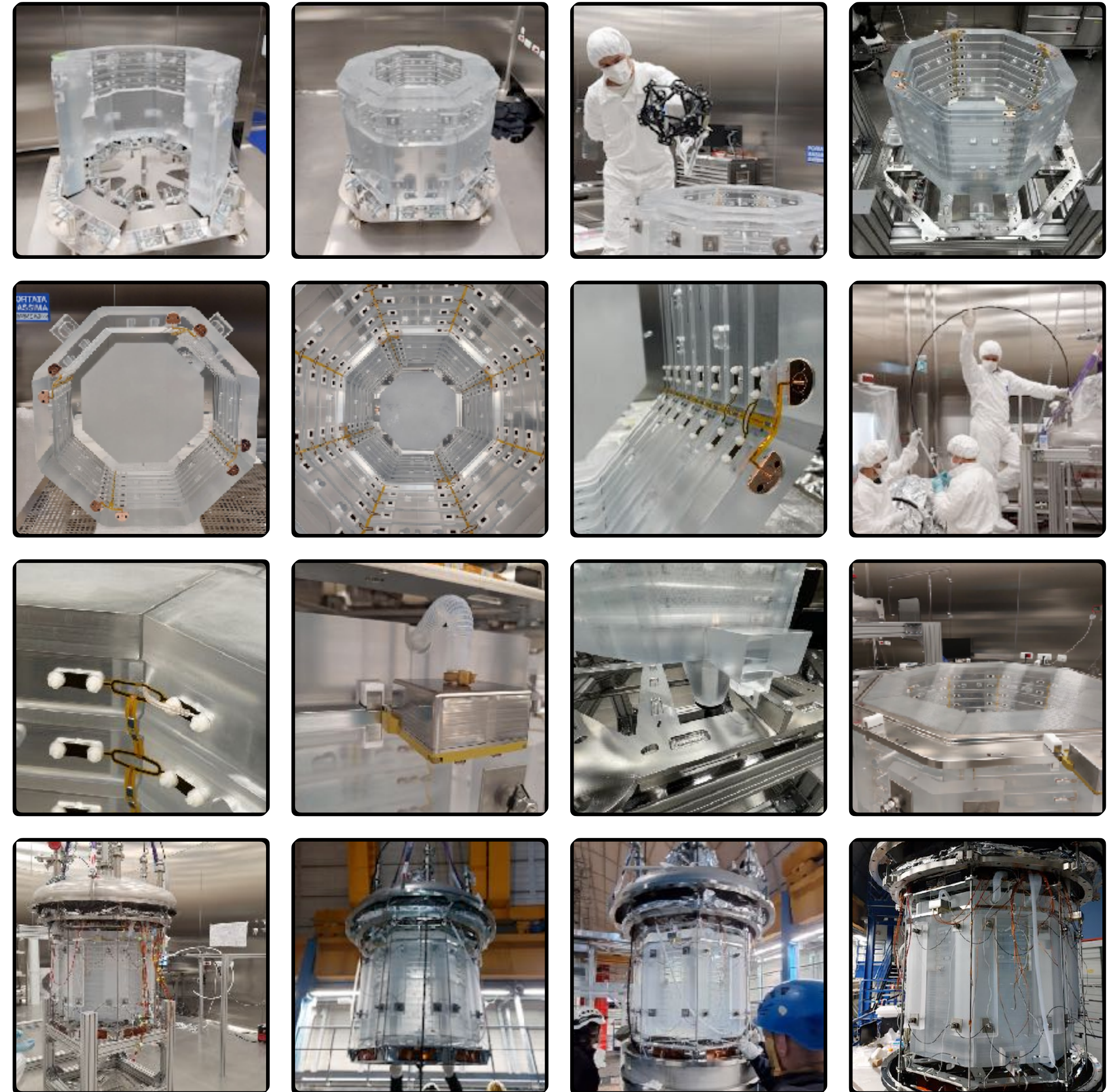
- Integration exercise at the tonne-scale
 - PMMA barrel assembly and flatness of the top surface to within $\sim 100\ \mu\text{m}$
 - Thermal cycling of conductive **CleviosTM**-coated PMMA TPC
 - High-voltage (HV) delivery up to $V_C \sim -100\ \text{kV}$
 - Power requirements for gas pocket generation
- Multiple runs over the last 2 years with important technical results
 - ➔ Benchmarking of the UAr cryogenic system
2025 JINST 20 P02016
 - ➔ A Tonne-Scale Demonstrator for the DarkSide-20k Inner Detector
in preparation

**A Tonne-scale Demonstrator
for the DarkSide-20k Inner
Detector at LNGS**

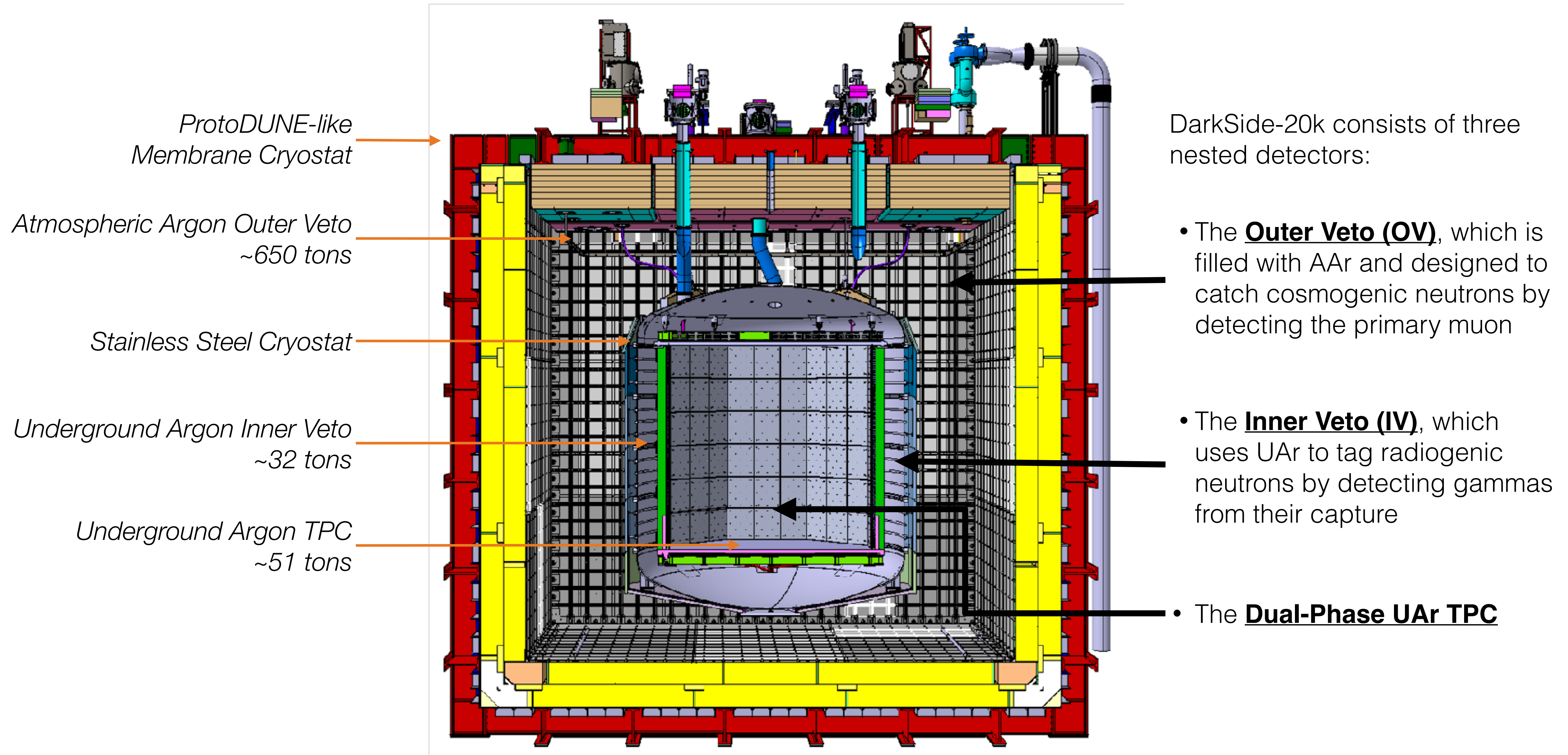
Tuesday, October 21

Paolo Salomone

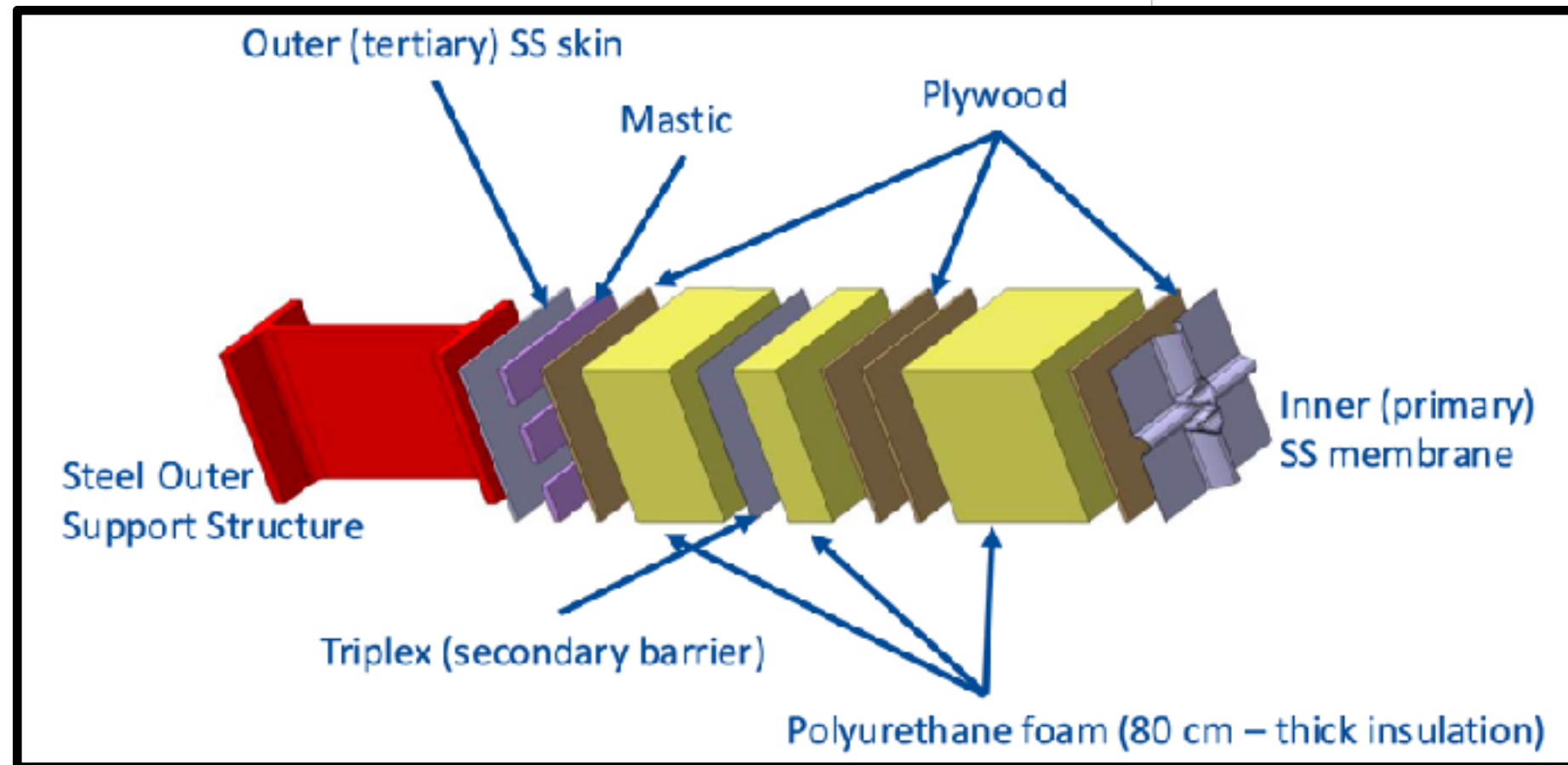
<https://indico.hep.ac.cn/event/24964/contributions/196480/>



The DarkSide-20k Cryostat

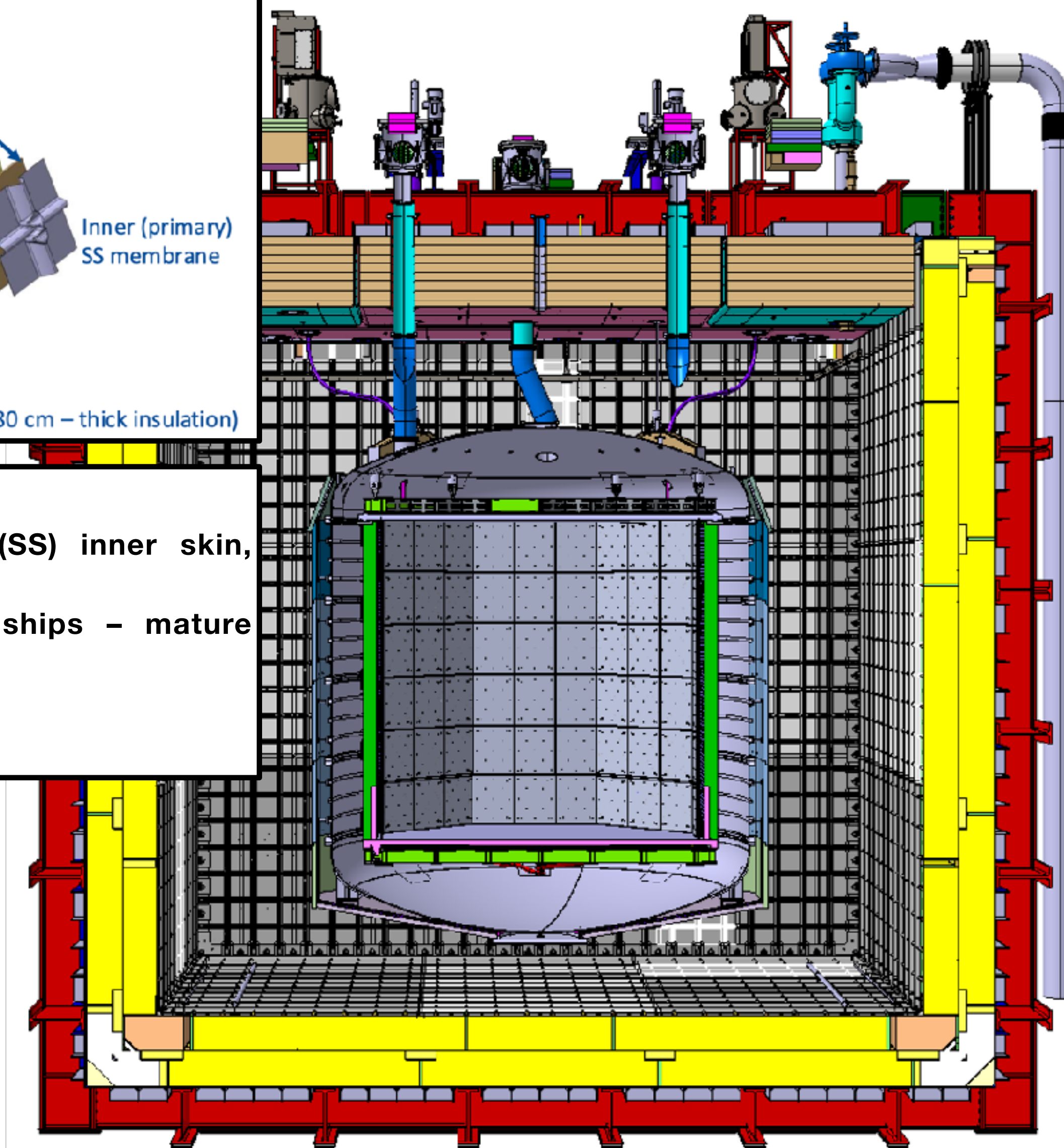


The DarkSide-20k Cryostat

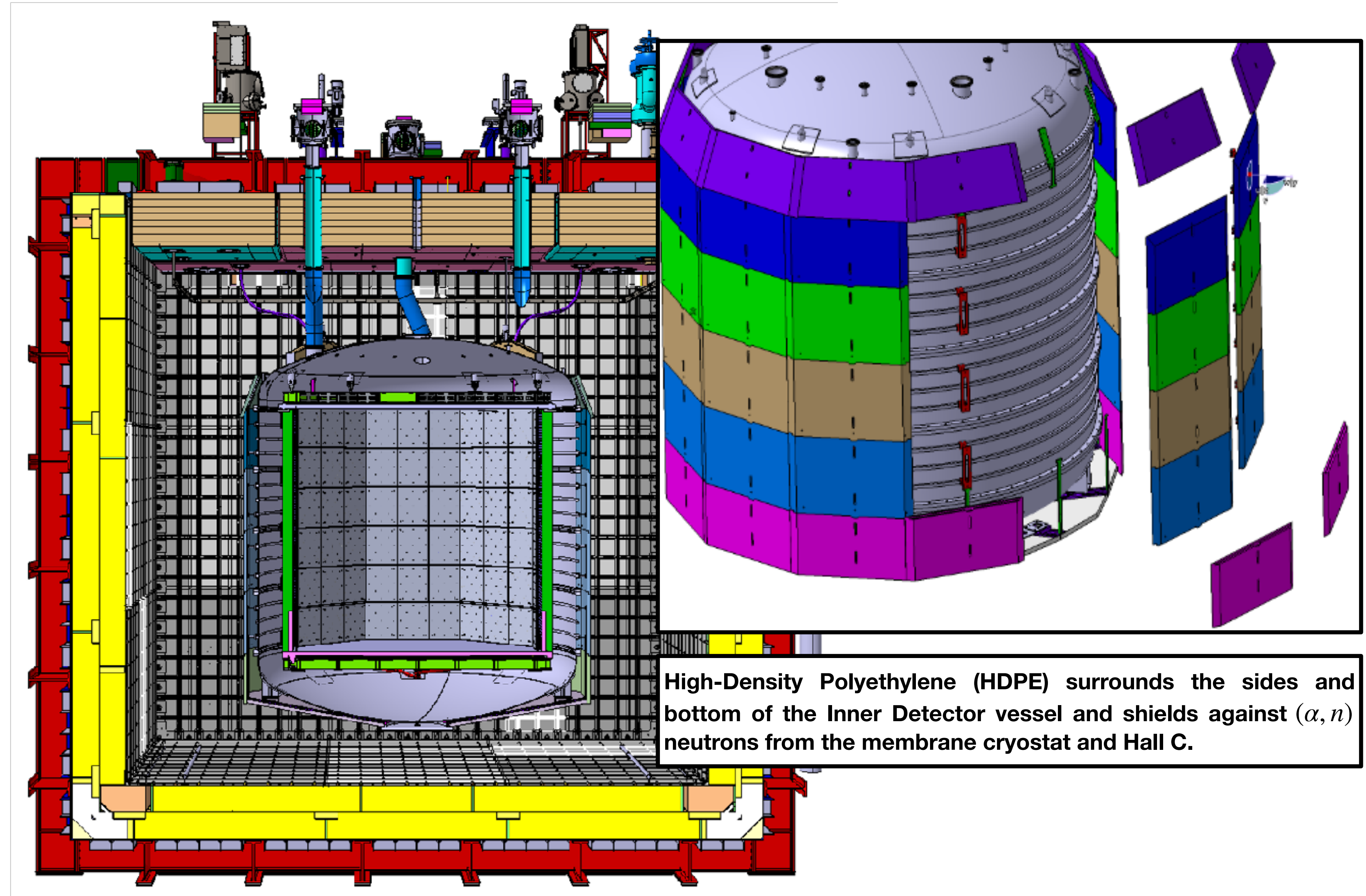


Membrane cryostats

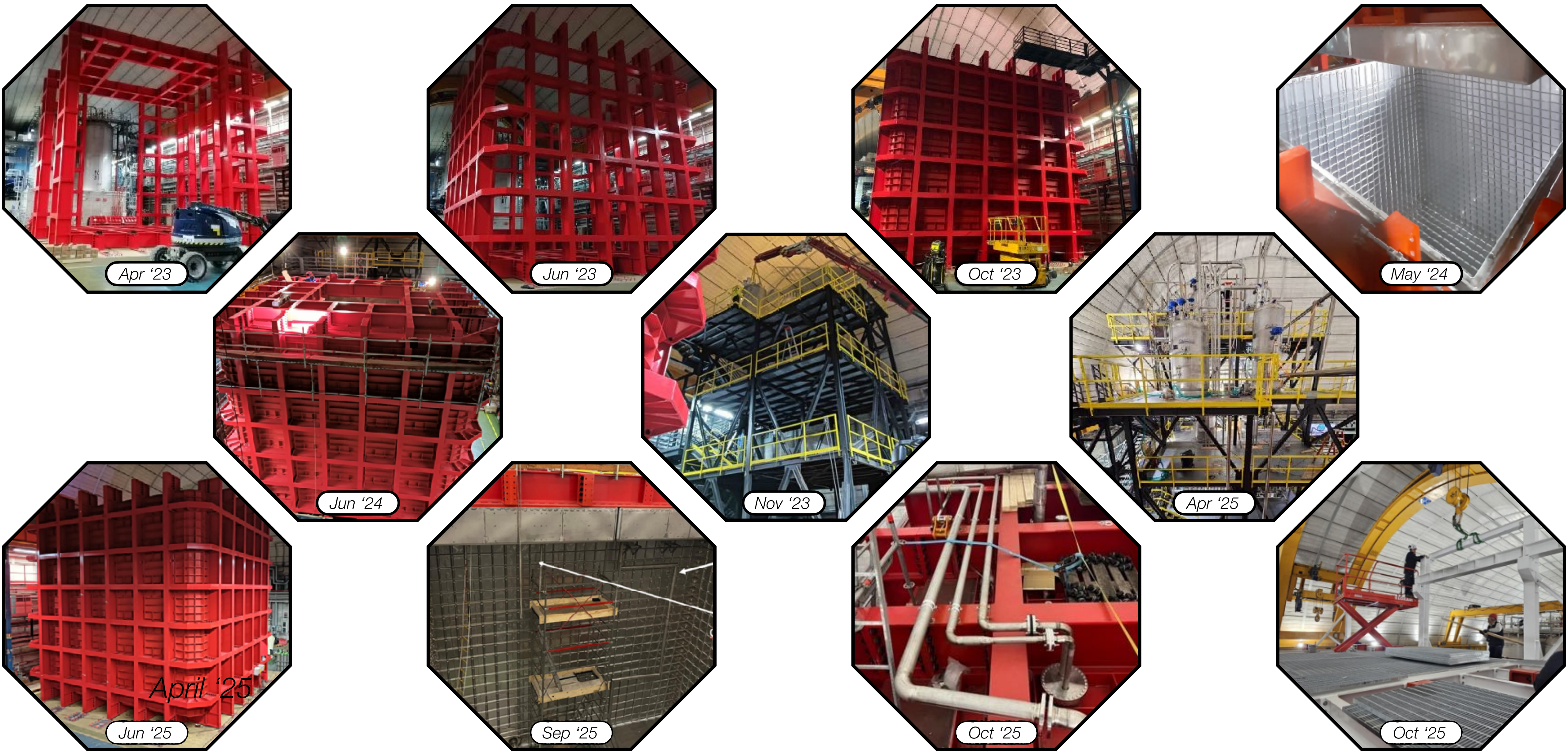
- elastic, 1.2 mm thick stainless steel (SS) inner skin, accommodates cryogenic shrinking
- used on liquid natural gas transport ships – mature technology;
- No need for vacuum (argon purge)
- Few months of construction time



The DarkSide-20k Cryostat

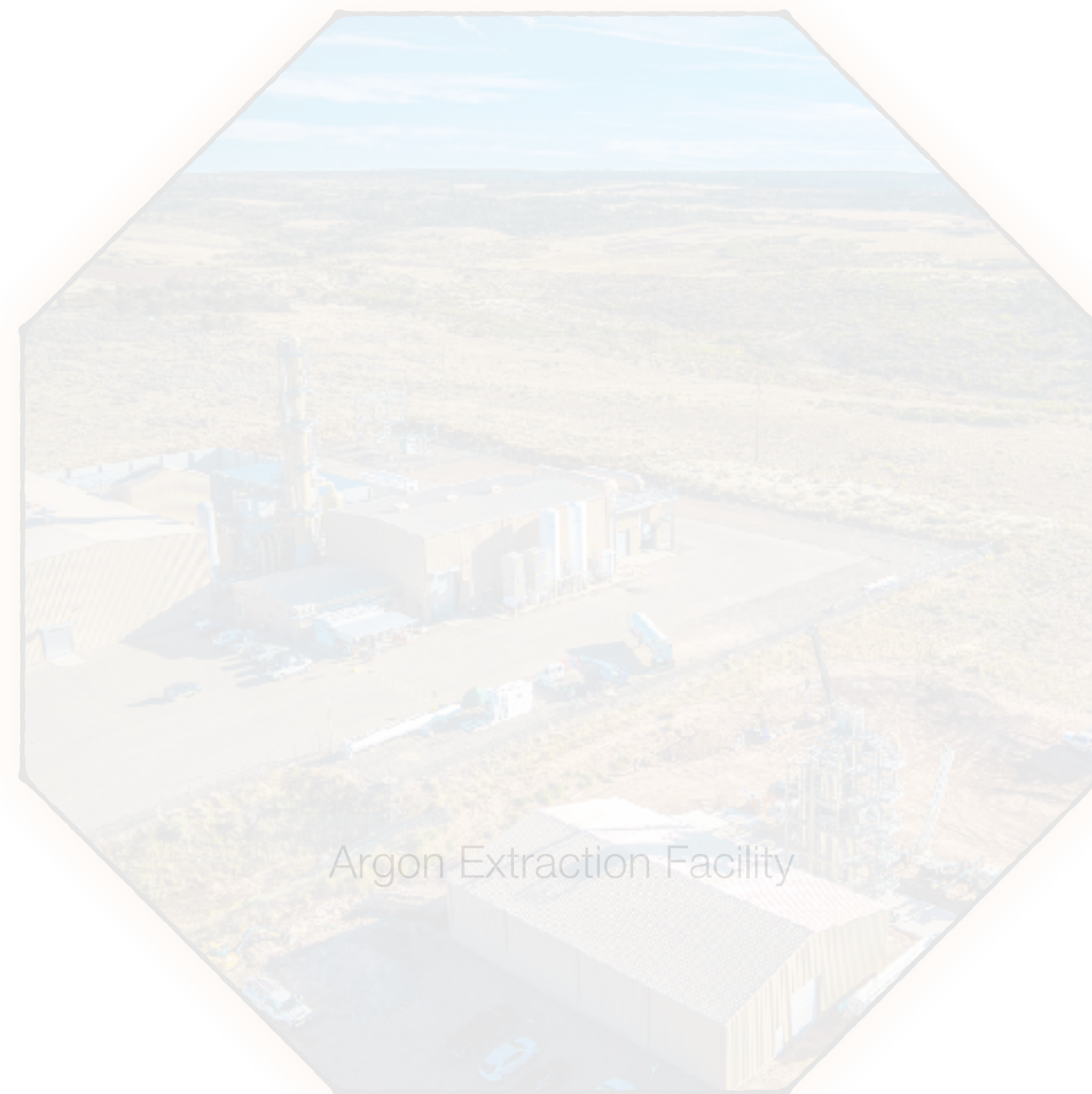


Status of Construction at LNGS



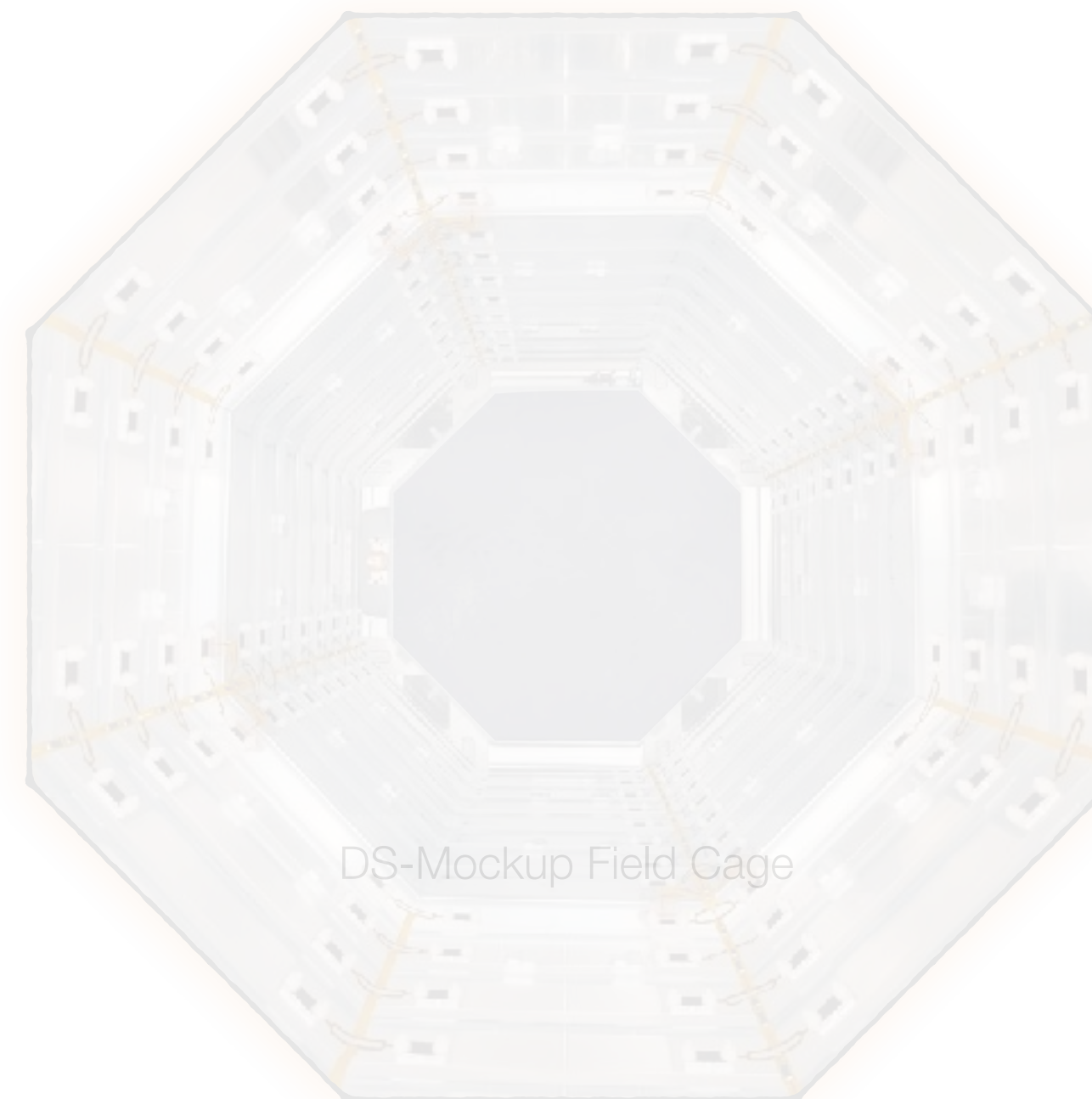
Key Technologies for DarkSide-20k

Underground Argon (UAr)



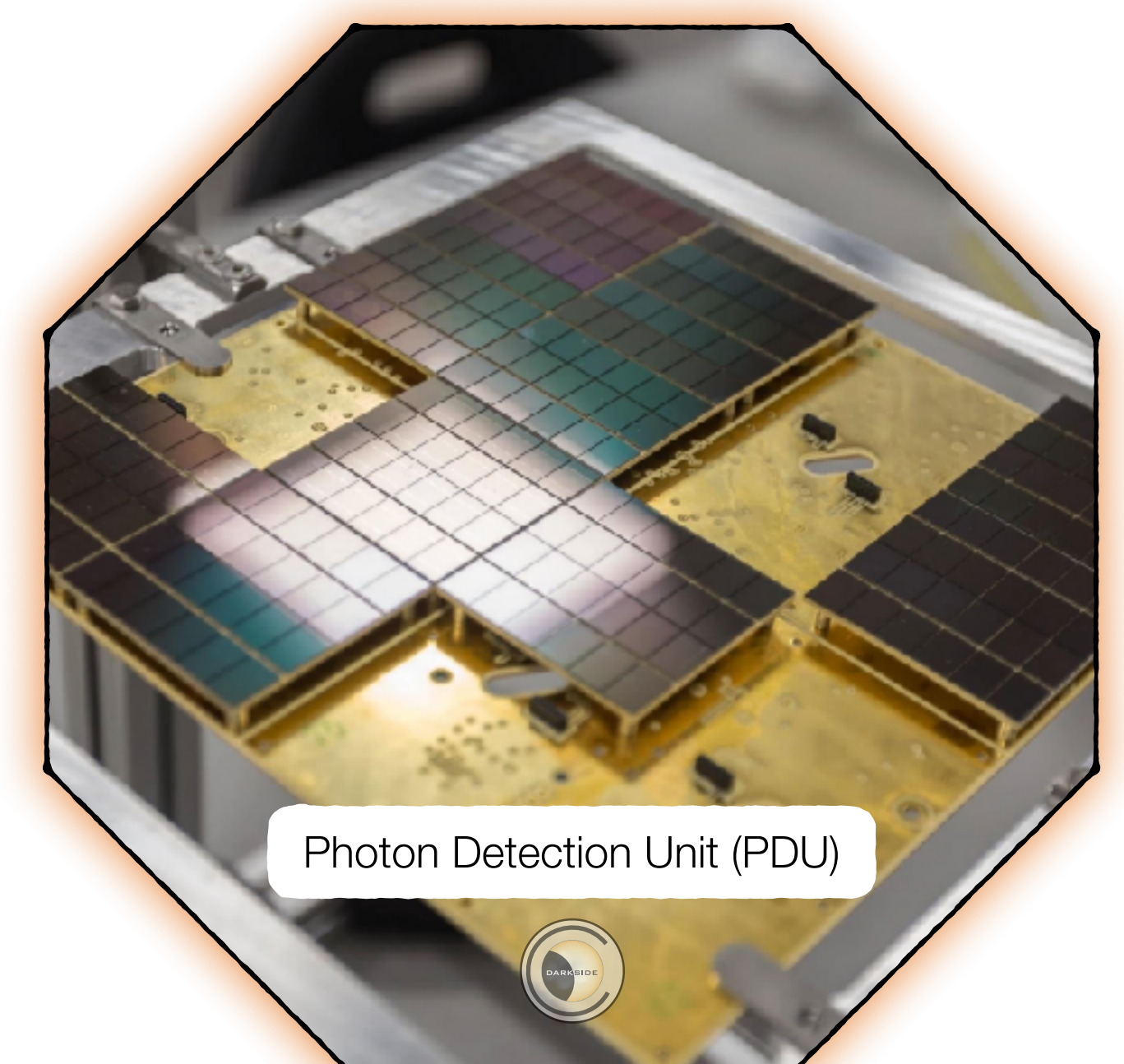
A detector medium with a reduction factor of ~ 1400 in ^{39}Ar compared to atmospheric argon

PMMA TPC



Transparent low-radioactivity **PMMA TPC** with conductive **Clevios™**-coated surfaces as electrodes

Silicon Photomultiplier (SiPM)



Large-area ($\sim 25 \text{ m}^2$), low-noise, low-radioactivity SiPM arrays

Low-radioactivity, high-efficiency SiPM Development

- Developed with Fondazione Bruno Kessler (FBK)
 - Photon detection efficiency: $> 40\%$ at 77K
 - $SNR > 8$ (TPC PDU)

PDU packaging and assembly at Nuova
Officina Assergi (NOA) at LNGS



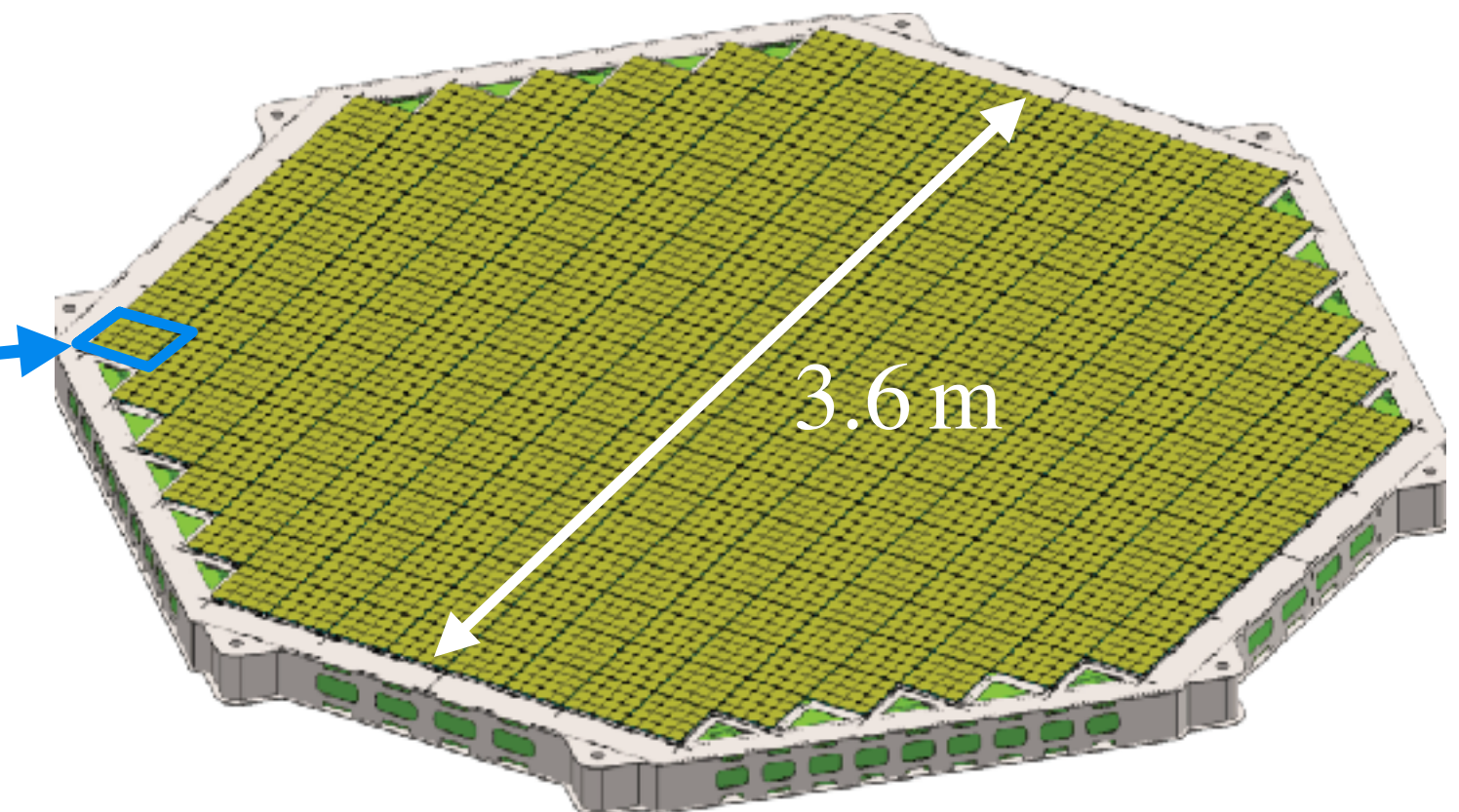
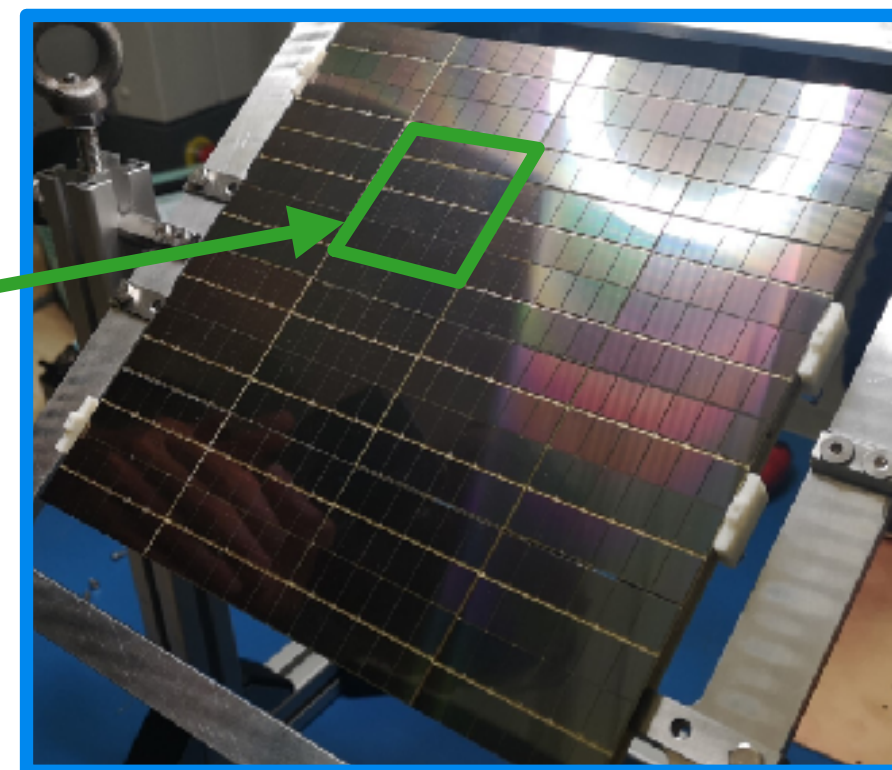
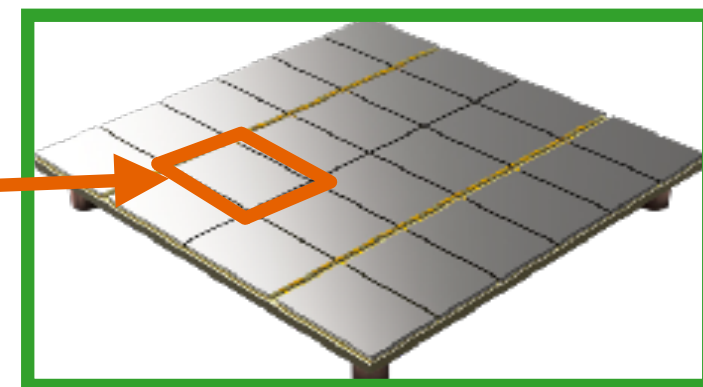
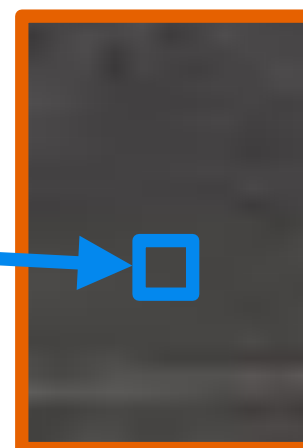
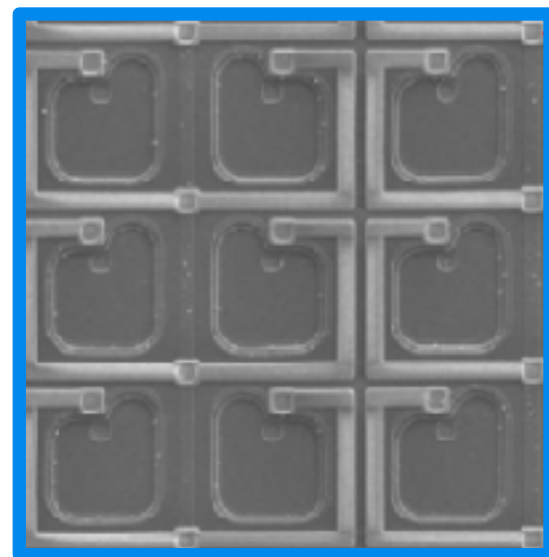
SPAD
 $30 \times 30 \mu\text{m}^2$

SiPM
 $8 \times 12 \text{ mm}^2$

Tile (24 SiPM)
 $5 \times 5 \text{ cm}^2$

PDU (16 Tiles)
 $20 \times 20 \text{ cm}^2$

Optical Plane (264 PDUs)
 21 m^2 in TPC, 5 m^2 in Veto



DarkSide Collaboration: "Cryogenic Characterization of FBK RGB-HD SiPMs", JINST 12 P09030 (2017)

SiPM Production and Testing

Nuova Officina Assergi

LNGS, Italy

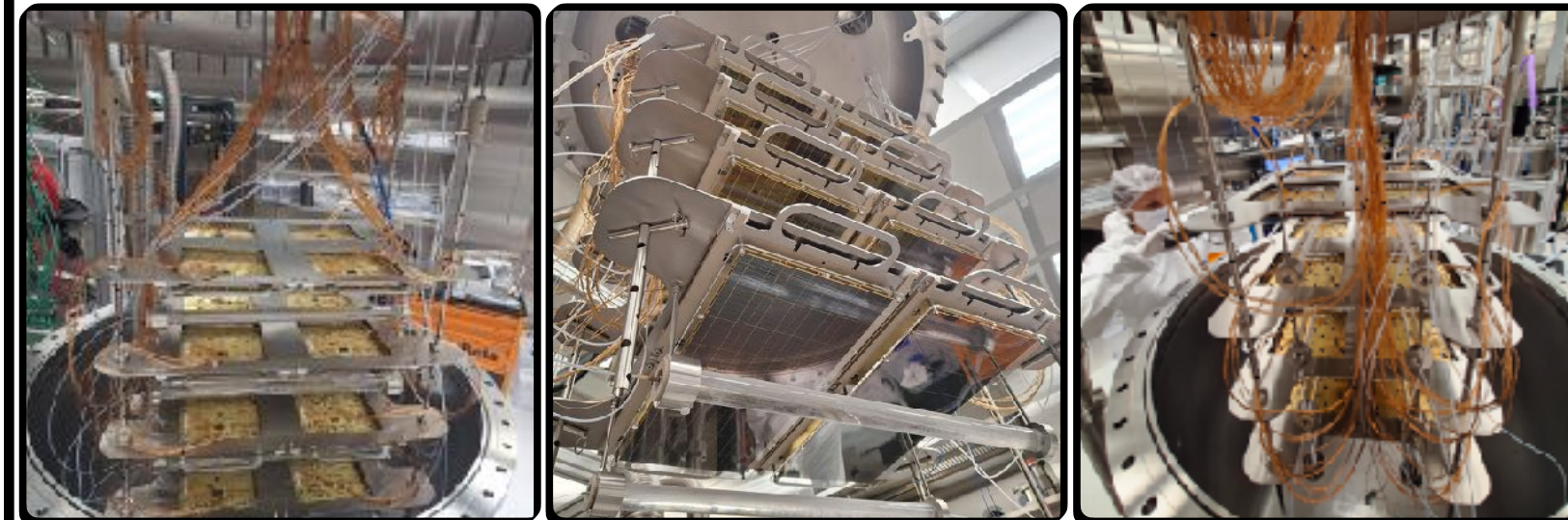
- ISO-6 class with 420 m²
- CR3: Production facility for TPC PDUs
- CR2: Optical plane assembly area



PDU Test Facility

Naples, Italy

- Testing facility for TPC PDUs
- 800 L cryostat with LN₂
- 16 PDU capacity
- TPC prototype setup



vPDU Test Facilities

United Kingdom, Poland

- Production and testing pipeline across DS-20k institutions in the UK and Poland
- **All vPDUs already produced!**



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LNGS, Italy

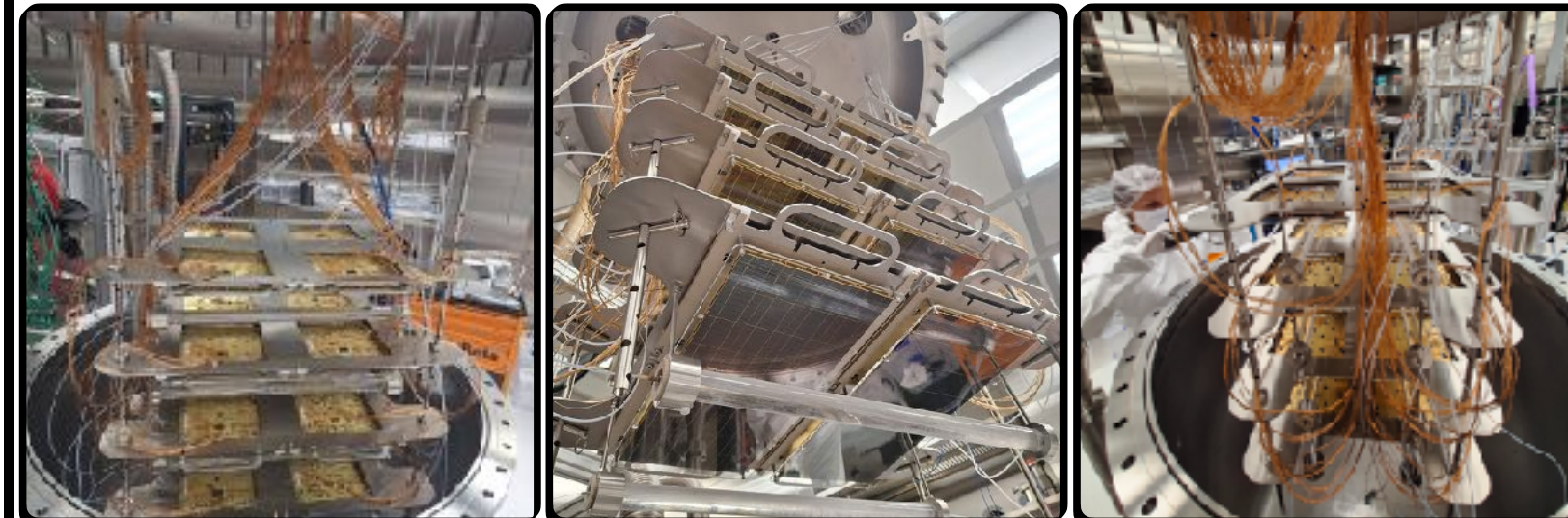
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PE Activities for DS-20k at NOA: Production, Tile-Testing, and Assembly

Wednesday, October 22

Devidutta Gahan

<https://indico.ihep.ac.cn/event/24964/contributions/196502/>

Characterization of DarkSide-20k Photodetector Units

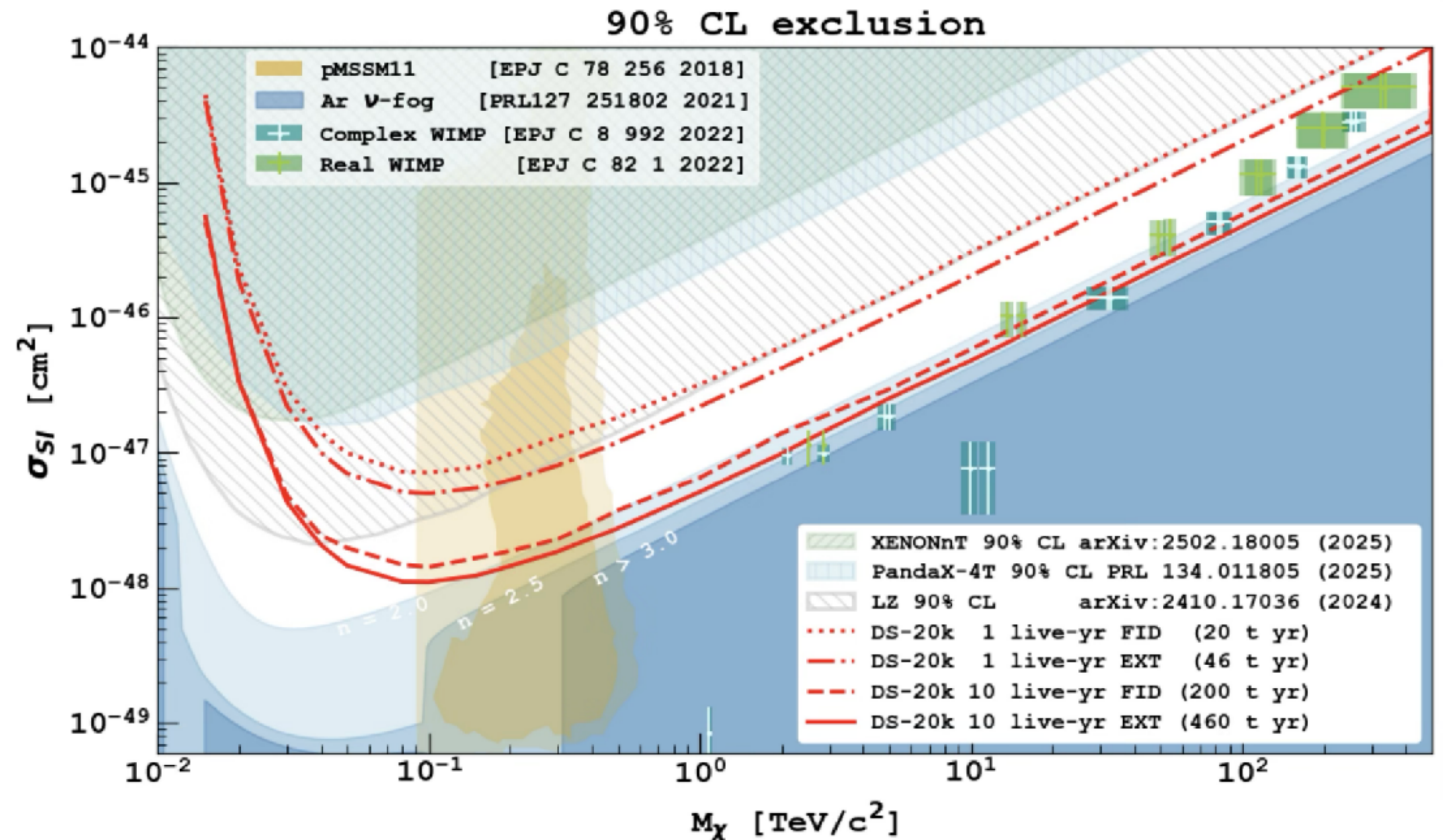
Wednesday, October 22

Dmitrii Rudik

<https://indico.ihep.ac.cn/event/24964/contributions/196500/>

DarkSide-20k Sensitivity — High Mass

- Fiducial volume
 - *Low instrumental background rate*
 - **< 0.3 events in ROI (30-200 keVnr) with 200 t-yr exposure**
- Extended volume
 - *Almost full active mass is used*
 - *background dominated by radiogenic neutrons from photo-sensors and experimental Hall*



DarkSide-20k Sensitivity — Low Mass

- Using S2 (ionization signal) only
- Detailed background study, information from DarkSide-50 data
- New data for nuclear recoil response at low energies from the ReD experiment
 - *Recasting DarkSide-50: new best limit below 3.5 GeV / c²*
 - *Enhanced potential of DarkSide-20k in the low-mass range*

Characterization of argon recoils at the keV scale with ReD and ReD+

Tuesday, October 21

Luciano Pandola

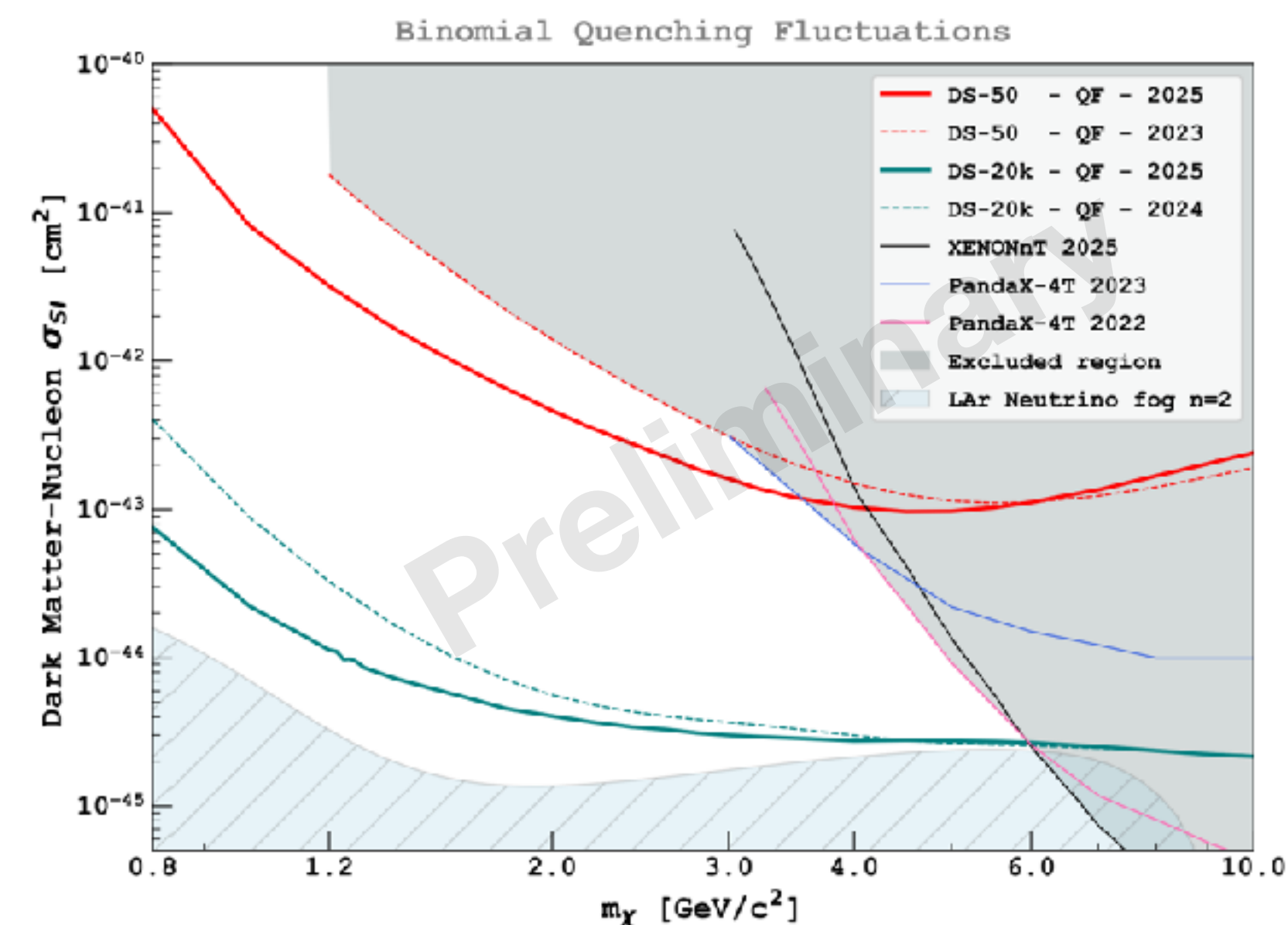
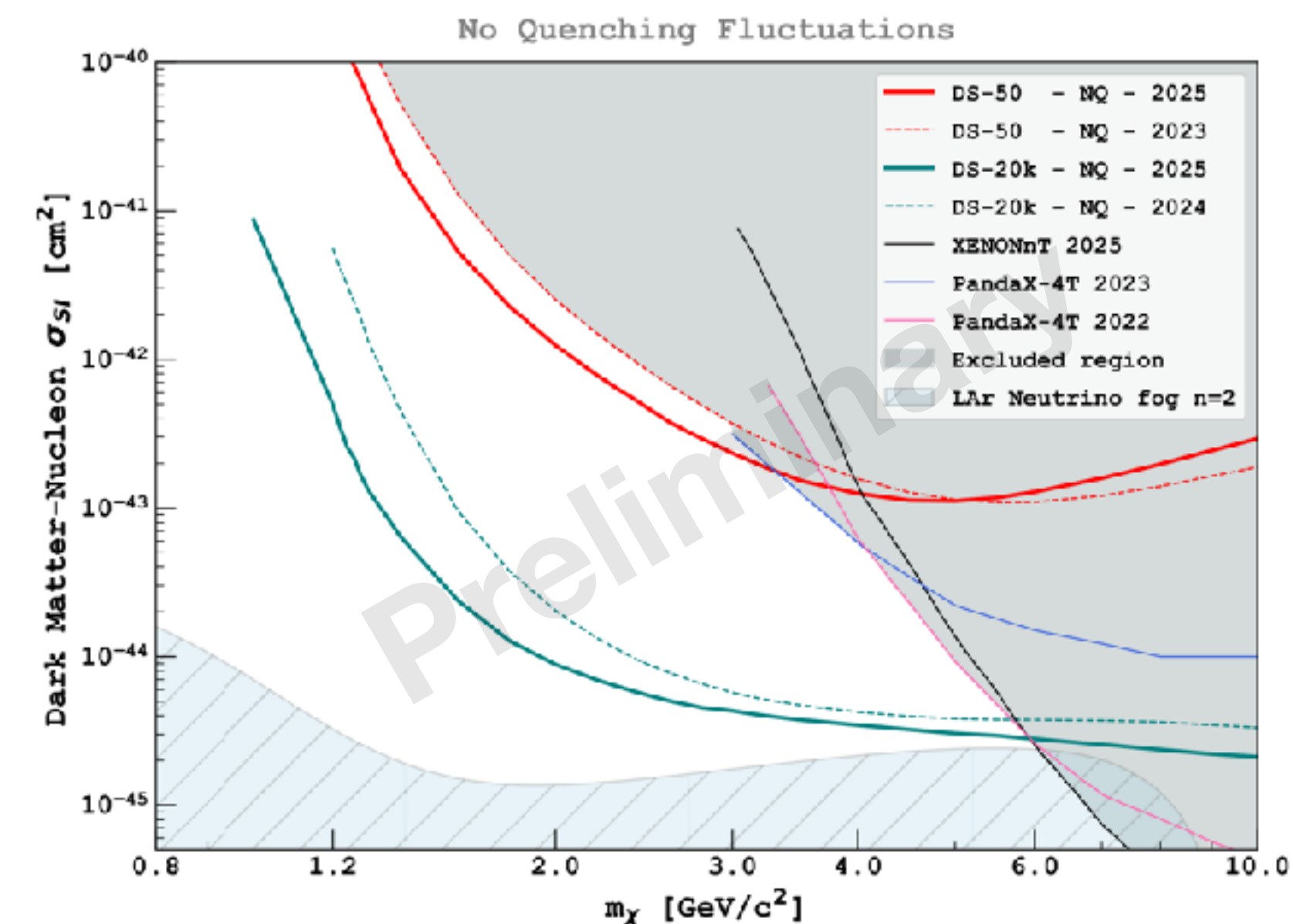
<https://indico.ihep.ac.cn/event/24964/contributions/194834/>

Improved ionization response model of LAr within the DarkSide programme

Tuesday, October 21

Davide Franco

<https://indico.ihep.ac.cn/event/24964/contributions/197371/>



The ARGO Experiment at SNOLAB

With input from Asish Moharana

- Detector Overview

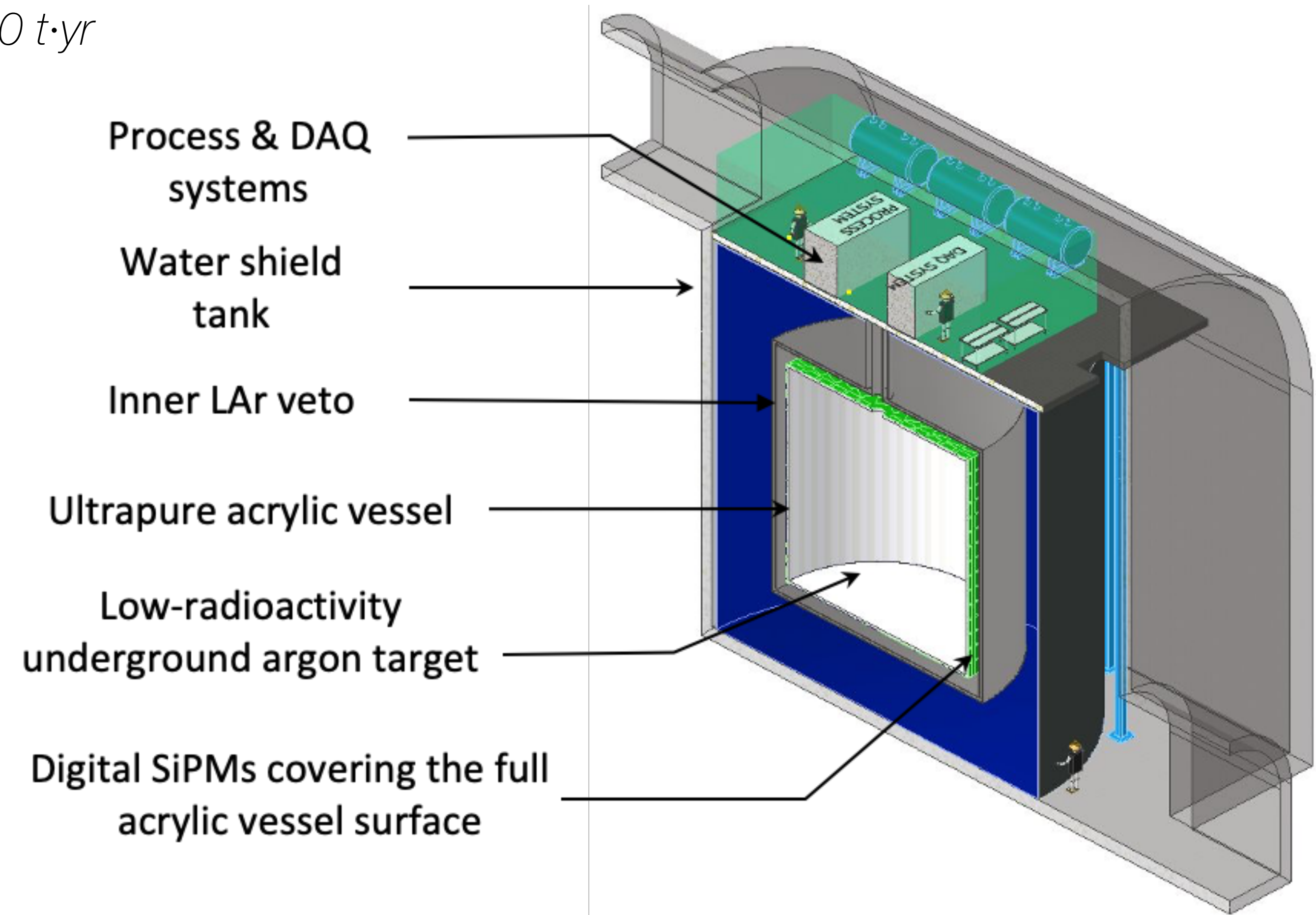
- *Target mass of 400 t of UAr (300 t fiducial; ~3000 t·yr exposure)*
- *~250 m² of pixelated digital SiPM readout.*
- *Planned in SNOLAB Cube Hall (Gateway-1a approved in 2025)*

- Physics Goals

- *leading sensitivity to heavy WIMPs*
- *extending deep into the neutrino fog*
- *solar and supernova neutrinos*

- Timeline

- *ARGOlite prototype: 2028–2030*
- *Full-scale design by 2031*



R&D Towards Argo

With input from Asish Moharana

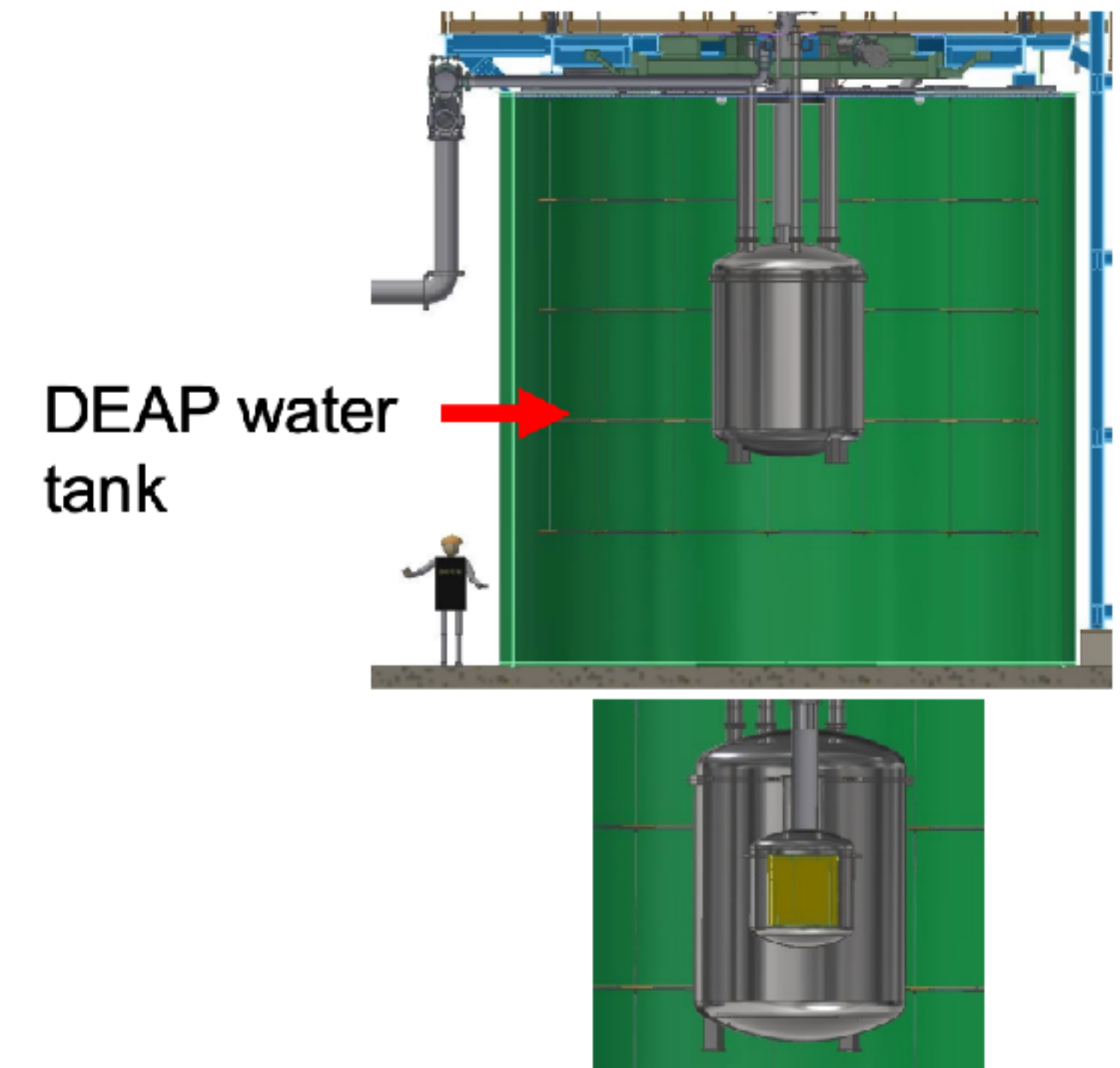
- Key Technologies

- Digital SiPMs: pixelated arrays with ns-scale timing and spatial granularity → enable precise event localization and strong background rejection*
- ARGOLite prototype: 2 m² digital SiPM array in DEAP-3600 shield tank to validate PSD (10^{-9} ER rejection) and surface- α rejection (10^{-7}).*
- Smart DAQ system: FPGA-based edge computing for real-time filtering and ML-driven data reduction.*

- Software development

- Optical modeling: realistic Monte Carlo of SPAD-level photon detection and optical crosstalk tracking.*
- Detailed neutron simulations: target of demonstrating < 1 neutron event leakage into WIMP ROI in 10 live-years.*
- Event reconstruction algorithms:*
 - *Position reconstruction with time/charge fitters.*
 - *Machine learning techniques for complex signals.*

ARGOLite in the DEAP shield tank at SNOLAB



Optical modeling of pixelated digital SiPMs for ARGO

Thursday, October 23

Asish Moharana

<https://indico.ihep.ac.cn/event/24964/contributions/194844/>

Summary

- Argon-based searches for DM are a scalable technology to the kton scale
- The GADMC is heavily investing in key technologies
 - *Low-radioactivity underground argon*
 - *Large-Area Silicon Photomultiplier*
 - *Ultra-Pure PMMA*
- Achieving very low instrumental backgrounds is realistic
 - *will allow to expand the reach beyond heavy WIMPs*
- The construction of DS-20k is progressing well!

GADMC Talks at LIDINE 2025

**Updates on the DEAP-3600
experiment and steps towards the
ARGO experiment**

Tuesday, October 21

Susnata Seth

<https://indico.ihep.ac.cn/event/24964/contributions/194837/>

**Characterization of argon recoils
at the keV scale with ReD and
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<https://indico.ihep.ac.cn/event/24964/contributions/194834/>

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Tuesday, October 21

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<https://indico.ihep.ac.cn/event/24964/contributions/197371/>

**The DarkSide-20k Dark Matter
Detector: Physics Goals and Data
Acquisition**

Tuesday, October 21

Marek Walczak

<https://indico.ihep.ac.cn/event/24964/contributions/194831/>

**Proto-0: a prototype for
validating key technologies of the
DS-20k experiment**

Tuesday, October 21

Giuseppe Matteucci

<https://indico.ihep.ac.cn/event/24964/contributions/196481/>

**A Tonne-scale Demonstrator for
the DarkSide-20k Inner Detector
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<https://indico.ihep.ac.cn/event/24964/contributions/196480/>

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**DArT-in-ArDM: A Dedicated
Detector for ^{39}Ar
Characterization in UAr**

Thursday, October 23

Sara Tullio

<https://indico.ihep.ac.cn/event/24964/contributions/196460/>

**Optical modeling of pixelated
digital SiPMs for ARGO**

Thursday, October 23

Asish Moharana

<https://indico.ihep.ac.cn/event/24964/contributions/194844/>

United States



United Kingdom



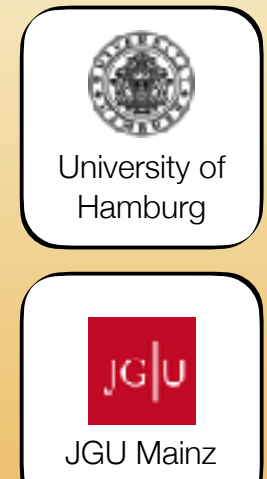
Italy



Canada



Germany



Brazil



France



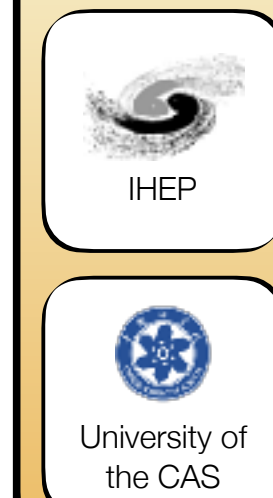
Switzerland



Poland



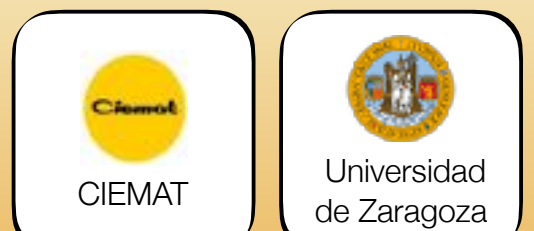
China



Russia



Spain



The  -20k Collaboration

Bonus Slides