

# Tips for ALMA Proposal Preparation

---

2026 Feb 3

Jongho Park (Kyung Hee University)

# How to write good proposals?

ALMA's guidelines for reviewers (<https://almascience.nrao.edu/proposing/alma-proposal-review/guidelines-for-reviewers>)

**Reviewers should assess the scientific merit of the proposals to the best of their ability using the following criteria:**

*The overall scientific merit of the proposed investigation and its potential contribution to the advancement of scientific knowledge.*

- Does the proposal clearly indicate which important, outstanding questions will be addressed?
- Will the proposed observations have a high scientific impact on this particular field and address the specific science goals of the proposal? ALMA encourages reviewers to give full consideration to well-designed high-risk/high-impact proposals even if there is no guarantee of a positive outcome or definite detection.
- Does the proposal clearly describe how the data will be analyzed in order to achieve the science goals?

*The suitability of the observations to achieve the scientific goals.*

- Is the choice of target (or targets) clearly described and well justified?
- Are the requested signal-to-noise ratio, angular resolution, largest angular scale, and spectral setup sufficient to achieve the science goals and well justified?
- Does the proposal justify why new observations are needed to achieve the science goals?
- For Joint Proposals (see the Proposer's Guide), does the proposal clearly describe why observations from multiple observatories are required to achieve the science goals?

In general, the scientific merit should be assessed solely on the content of the proposal, according to the above criteria. Proposals may contain references to published papers (including preprints) as per standard practice in the scientific literature. Consultation of those references should not, however, be required for a general understanding of the proposal.

# How to write good proposals?

NRAO's guidelines for reviewers (<https://science.nrao.edu/observing/proposal-types/documentation/srp-review-instructions>)

The purpose of the proposal-selection process for NRAO telescopes is to prioritize and recommend the proposals that potentially are most valuable for the advancement of scientific knowledge. This does not necessarily mean recommending only those proposals that will provide sure results; it also includes a careful consideration of well-reasoned proposals that may be unconventional but provide opportunities for new discoveries. In the evaluation of proposals, we ask that reviewers think about how best to exploit the full capability of the unique scientific instruments that NRAO operates on behalf of the community. In this context, we ask the reviewers to take a constructive approach.

# How to write good proposals?

## Something I learned when I reviewed NRAO proposals...

Proposal Code	Title	Normalized Scores			SRP Consensus		Status
		Avg.	Stdev.	Score	PI & TAC Comments	TAC Only Comments	
<a href="#">A000000-000</a> PI: Douglas Price Type: Regular Priority: 0.00 Review: No		1.76	0.31	1.76			Review
<a href="#">A000000-000</a> PI: Michael Johnston Type: Regular Priority: 0.00 Review: No	Proposed extension of the AT with 2000 MHz observations of 500 nearby galaxies	2.50	0.54	2.50			Review
<a href="#">A000000-000</a> PI: Greg Karmali Type: Regular Priority: 0.00 Review: No	Studying the Molecular Torus in NGC 1068	3.07	2.04	3.07			Review
<a href="#">A000000-000</a> PI: Eileen Meyer Type: Regular Priority: 0.00 Review: No	MA 500 - The search for activity in a changing look AGN	3.69	1.63	3.69	<p><b>Summary</b></p> <p>This is a proposal to obtain <math>C_{\alpha}</math>, <math>H\alpha</math>, and <math>H\beta</math> based continuum and primary VLBA observations of the changing-look AGN CL-AGN MA 500 to continue monitoring the radio spectrum and evolution of the proposed radio source. This is a continuation of their previous VLBA monitoring program. MA 500 has changed its spectral state between type 1 and type 0 at least four times over a period of decades and has shown an extreme variability in optical luminosity and <math>H\alpha</math> line luminosity which are believed to be linked by episodic accretion events. These events may be followed by the launch of relativistic jets and, indeed, CL0 observations in 2012 revealed a fast-moving source interpreted as a relativistic jet. Recent multi-frequency VLBA imaging (project J040209-001) confirms the launching of an ejection at multiple epochs. The primary goal of these new observations is to detect and characterize the high jet proper motion, rapid changes in the morphology of the source or the presence of a new component, and look for spectral changes with time. The specific science goals are to compare the new <math>H\alpha</math> and <math>H\beta</math> based observations to previous ones to see if the spectrum is a jet and estimate its velocity, get more detailed jet structure with the VLBA, compare the spectral index trend associated with a typical look for outflows in the various components and maybe map the magnetic field. Compare these observations with already approved CL0 observations, and to select the best frequency for future long-term monitoring if these observations are evasive of the radio structure, they will continue to follow the source.</p> <p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <p>A strong case is made that this is an opportune time to be observing MA 500 with the VLBA given the busy schedule of a radio jet. Continued monitoring of the CL-AGN will continue to provide valuable information about the dynamic accretion physics near SAGB. VLBA monitoring of this unique CL-AGN target is needed to test for connection between AGN activity and jet launching and, possibly, on the mechanisms triggering jet formation.</p> <p>The target has already been approved for new simultaneous Swift-XT and UVOT observations, to be triggered upon observation with the VLBA. This additional data will also be very valuable and will allow the team to investigate the connection between radio and optical/UV-X-ray emission.</p> <p>The analysis plan for the new proposed data is well described. The observing strategy and the amount of requested observing time are appropriate to reach the proposed goals.</p> <p><b>Recommendation</b></p> <p>A number of what can already be deduced from the 2012 observations would have strengthened the proposal.</p> <p>The proposal could have discussed how the target compares with other CL-AGN sources and whether the results will provide general insights for this group of remarkable objects.</p> <p><b>Recommended time:</b> The Swift team did recommend a change to the proposed time requires individual issues affecting timing or recommendation time. None.</p>		Review
<a href="#">A000000-000</a> PI: Lucien Bernardi-Monard Type: Regular Priority: 0.00 Review: No	Are QSO AGNs or not AGNs, that is the question	4.20	0.84	4.20			Review

# How to write good proposals?

Something I learned when I reviewed NRAO proposals...

Proposal Code	Title	Normalized Scores			SRP Consensus		Status
		Avg.	Stdev.	Score	PI & TAC Comments	TAC Only Comments	
2020A0001P001 Mr. Douglas Price Type: Regular Priority: 2.00 Review: No		1.76	0.31	1.76			Review
2020A0001P004 Mr. Michael Johnston Type: Regular Priority: 3.00 Review: No	Proposed extension of the AT with 2020 VLA observations of SGR neutron star	2.50	0.54	2.50			Review
2020A0001P005 Mr. Greg Karmali Type: Regular Priority: 3.00 Review: No	Observing the Molecular Torus in NGC 1068	3.07	2.04	3.07			Review
2020A0001P009 Mr. Dorian Meyer Type: Regular Priority: 2.00 Review: No	VLA 500 - The search for activity in a changing look AGN	3.69	1.63	3.69	<p><b>Summary</b></p> <p>This is a proposal to obtain C<sub>IV</sub>, Fe, and H<math>\beta</math> broad emission and preliminary VLA observations of the changing-look AGN CL-AGN M3 500 to continue monitoring the radio spectrum and evolution of the proposed radio source. This is a continuation of their previous VLA monitoring program. M3 500 has changed its spectral state between type 1 and type 0 at least four times over a period of decades and has shown an extreme variability in optical luminosity and Fe K<math>\alpha</math> luminosity which are believed to be linked by episodic accretion events. These events may be followed by the launch of relativistic jets and, indeed, CL0 observations in 2012 revealed a fast coronal source interpreted as a relativistic jet. Recent multi-frequency VLA imaging (project 12-00229-001) confirms the presence of an episodic jet structure. The primary goal of these new observations is to detect and characterize the high jet power events, rapid changes in the structure of the source or the presence of a new component, and how to respond changes with time. The specific science goals are to compare the new Fe and H<math>\beta</math> broad observations to previous ones to see if the emission is a jet and estimate its velocity, get more detailed jet structure with the VLA, compare the spectral index trend associated with a typical look for outbursts in the optical components and maybe map the magnetic field. Compare these observations with already approved CL0 observations, and to select the best frequency for future long-term monitoring. If these observations show evolution of the radio structure, they will continue to follow the source.</p> <p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <p>A strong case is made that this is an opportune time to be observing M3 500 with the VLA given the deep coverage of a factor of 10. Continued monitoring of the CL-AGN will continue to provide valuable information about the dynamic accretion physics near SAGBH. VL2 monitoring of this unique CL-AGN target is needed to test for correlation between AGN activity and way of launching and, possibly, on the mechanism triggering jet formation.</p> <p>The target has already been approved for new simultaneous Swift-XT and UVOT observations, to be triggered upon observation with the VLA. This additional data will also be very valuable and will allow the team to investigate the connection between radio and optical/UV-X-ray emission.</p> <p>The analysis plan for the new proposed data is well described. The observing strategy and the amount of requested observing time are appropriate to reach the proposed goals.</p> <p><b>Recommendation</b></p> <p>A number of what can already be deduced from the 2022 observations would have strengthened the proposal.</p> <p>The proposal could have discussed how the target compares with other CL-AGN sources and whether the results will provide general insights for this group of variable objects.</p> <p><b>Recommended time:</b> The SRP team did recommend a change to the proposed time requires individual issues affecting timing or recommendation time. None.</p>		Review
2020A0001P012 Mr. Lucien Bernard-Monard Type: Regular Priority: 2.00 Review: No	Are QSO AGNs or not AGNs, that is the question	4.20	0.84	4.20			Review

# How to write good proposals?

## Lessons Learned from Reviewing NRAO Proposals:

1. **Prepare Strong Science Cases:** This is always the most important aspect! Ensure that your proposal is compelling and well-supported by scientific rationale.
2. **Consider the Reviewers' Time Constraints:** Reviewers, particularly for ALMA proposals, have limited time. Make sure your proposal is:
  - Catchy and engaging
  - Easy to understand
  - Very clear and concise
3. **Use Visual Aids:** Schematic diagrams can be very helpful in conveying complex ideas quickly and effectively.
4. **Be Specific with Scientific Objectives:**
  - Avoid vague, broad scientific goals (e.g., "This observation will broaden our knowledge about star formation...").
  - Specify which models and aspects are important (e.g., simulations) and explain how the proposed observation can distinguish and constrain these models.

# How to write good proposals?

Lessons Learned from Reviewing NRAO Proposals:

5. **Cater to Non-Experts:** Reviewers are often not specialists in your specific field, especially for ALMA proposals. Write in a way that is accessible and friendly to a broader scientific audience.
6. **Justify the Need for ALMA:** Clearly articulate why ALMA is necessary for your research. Could this be accomplished with other, less expensive telescopes?

# List of Successful ALMA Proposals written as a P.I.

1. 2016.1.00112.S (Cycle 3, Ph. D. student)  
: Probing the Magnetic Fields in the Jet Base of the Gamma ray Bright Blazar PKS 1510-08 (3 hours, Band 4, 6, 7)
2. 2022.1.00750.V (Cycle 9, Postdoc)  
: A Multicolor View of the Black Hole Environment in M87 (16 hours, B3)
3. 2023.1.01086.V (Cycle 10, Scientific Staff)  
: Peering into M87's Black Hole in Multiple Colors (16 hours, B1,3)
4. 2024.1.01311.V (Cycle 11, Professor)  
: Challenging the Structured Jet Paradigm of AGN with the Event Horizon Telescope (6.5 hours, B6)
5. 2023.A.00043.V (Cycle 10 DDT, Professor)  
: Peering into M87's Black Hole in Multiple Colors (16 hours, B3,7)

In total, 57.5 hours (3 hours for the 12m array, 54.5 hours for VLBI).

# Successful ALMA proposal: 2016.1.00112.S

Title: Probing the Magnetic Fields in the Jet Base of the Gamma-ray Bright Blazar PKS 1510-08.

Requested time: 3 hours

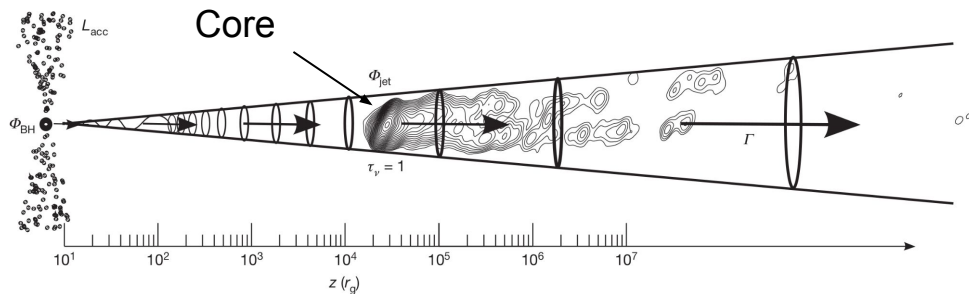
Bands: 4 (150 GHz), 6 (230 GHz), 7 (345 GHz)

Special Requests: Polarimetry but standard mode, time constraints (multiple bands), student project

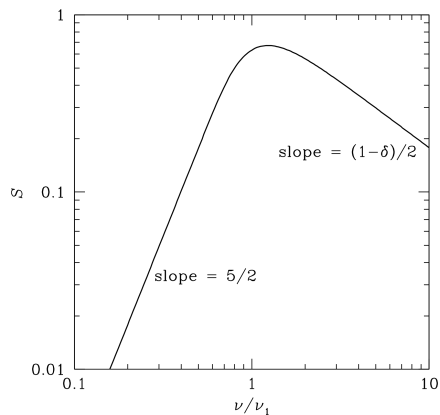
# Successful ALMA proposal: 2016.1.00112.S

The “core-shift” effect in synchrotron emitting AGN jets.

Model 1: The radio cores are  $\tau=1$  surfaces?

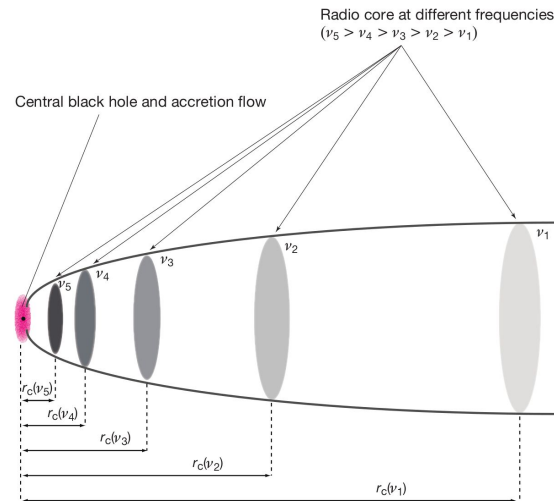


Zamaninasab et al. (2014)



Synchrotron self-absorption  
The location of the synchrotron  
peak frequency depends on the  
magnetic field strength and  
electron density.

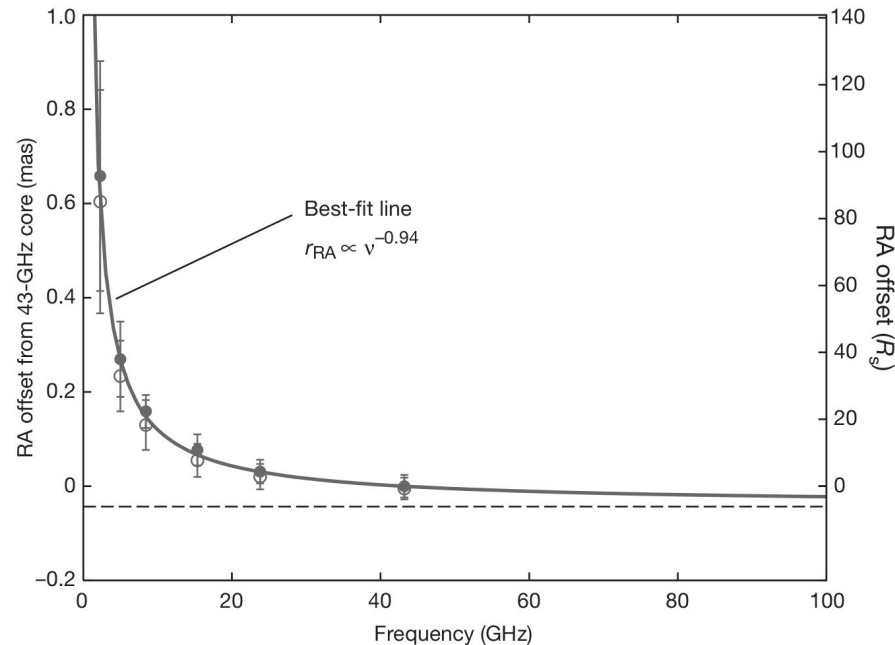
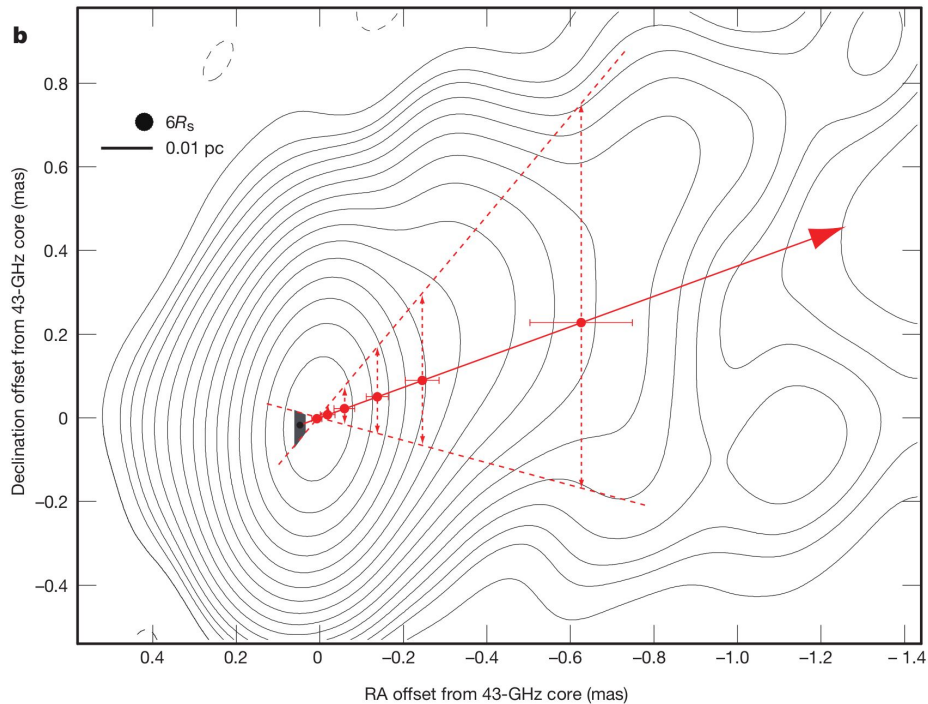
(구본철, 김웅태 교수님  
천체물리학)



Hada et al. (2011)

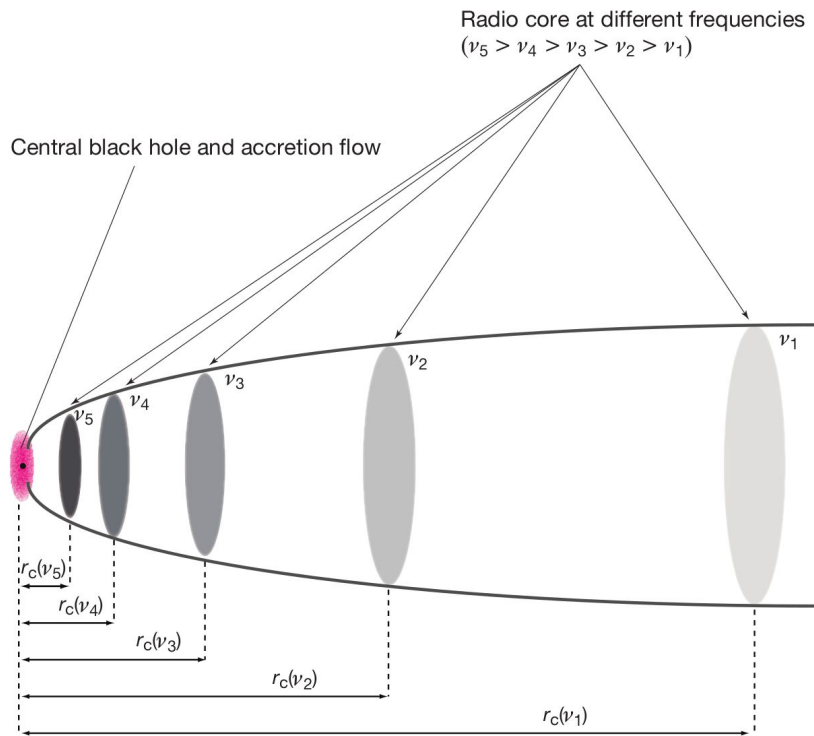
# Successful ALMA proposal: 2016.1.00112.S

The core-shift effect observed in the M87 jet using the VLBA.



Hada et al. (2011)

# Successful ALMA proposal: 2016.1.00112.S



$$\text{RM} \propto \int n_e B_{||} dl$$

$$\text{RM} \propto \nu^a$$

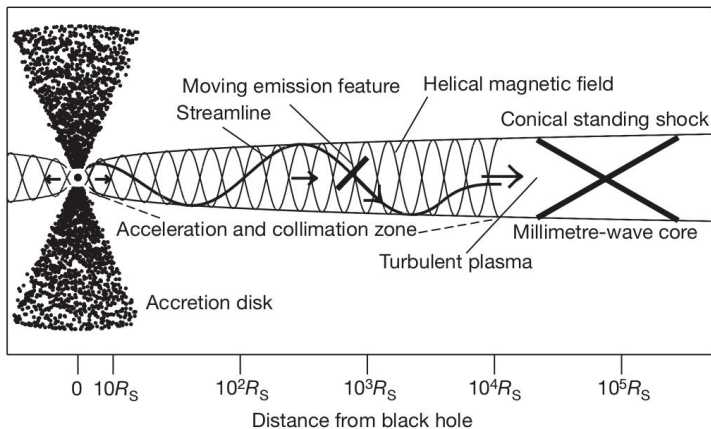
$a$  depends on the jet geometry and magnetic field configuration.

As we go to higher frequencies...

Higher  $n_e B_{||}$  are expected.

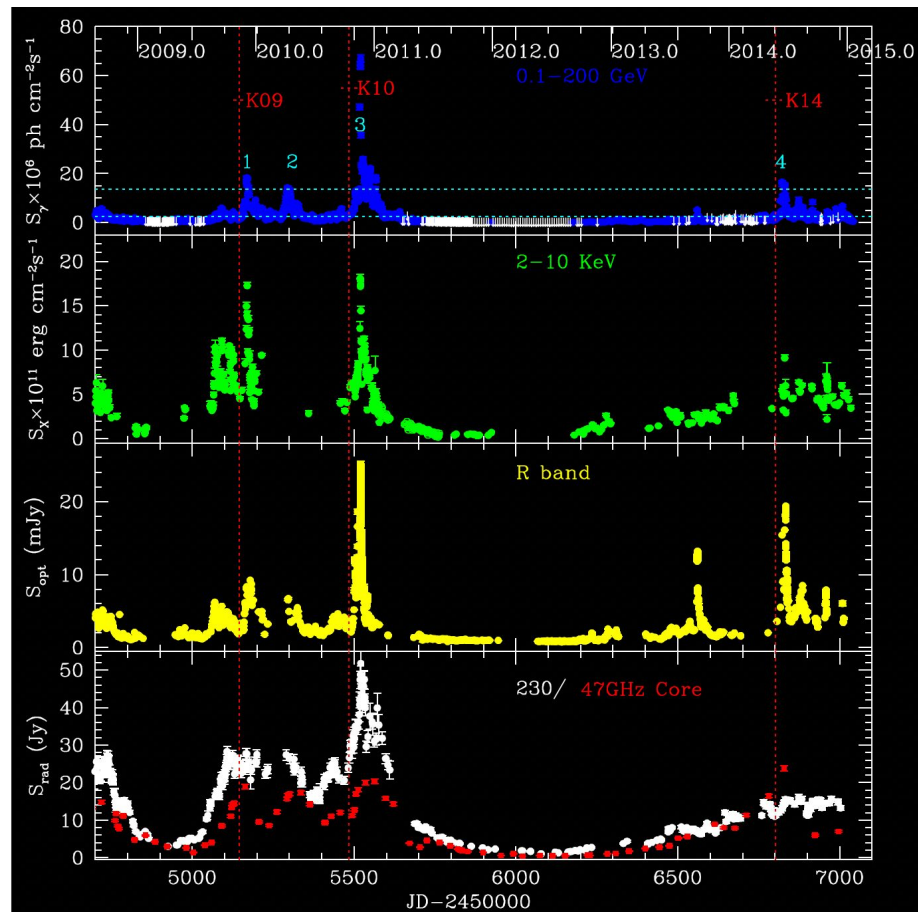
# Successful ALMA proposal: 2016.1.00112.S

Model 2: The radio cores are standing shocks?



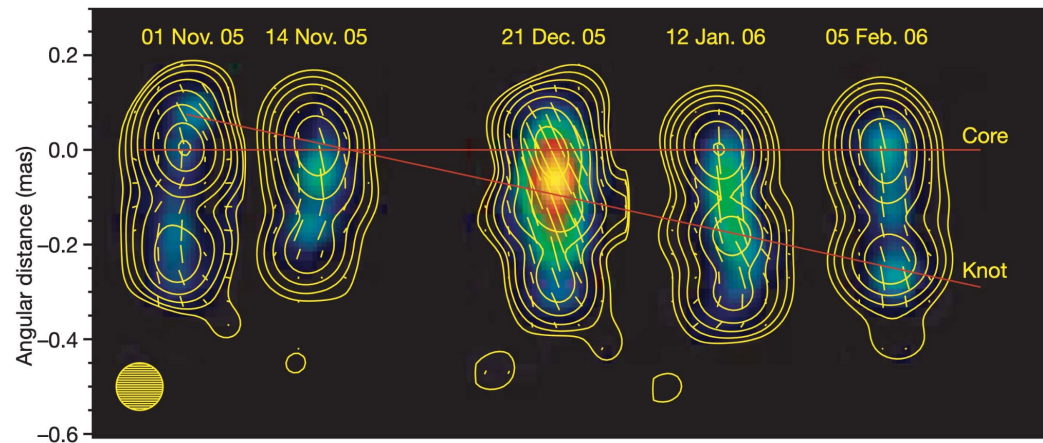
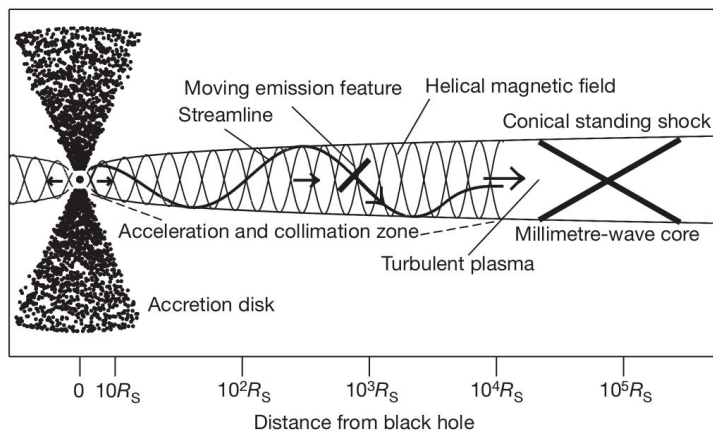
Marscher+2008

Jorstad & Marscher (2016)



# Successful ALMA proposal: 2016.1.00112.S

Model 2: The radio cores are standing shocks?



Marscher+2008

Marscher et al. (2008)

The linear polarization structure of the cores of some AGN jets are consistent with that of a recollimation shock.

# Successful ALMA proposal: 2016.1.00112.S

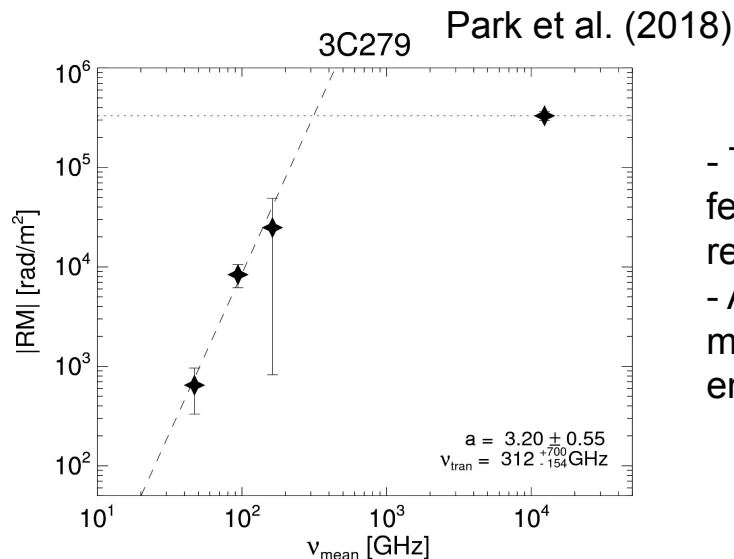
**Model 1:** The radio cores are  $\tau=1$  surfaces?

-> RM is expected to increase with observing frequency.

**Model 2:** The radio cores are standing shocks?

-> RM is expected to be constant over frequency.

$$\text{RM} \propto \int n_e B_{||} dl$$



- The core-shift effect is observed at frequencies lower than a few hundred GHz due to the opacity of the jet downstream the recollimation shock.

- At high enough frequencies (> a few hundreds GHz), no more frequency dependence of RM is expected as the emission from the recollimation shock is dominated.

Based on KVN 22/43/86 GHz observations + optical archival data

# Successful ALMA proposal: 2016.1.00112.S

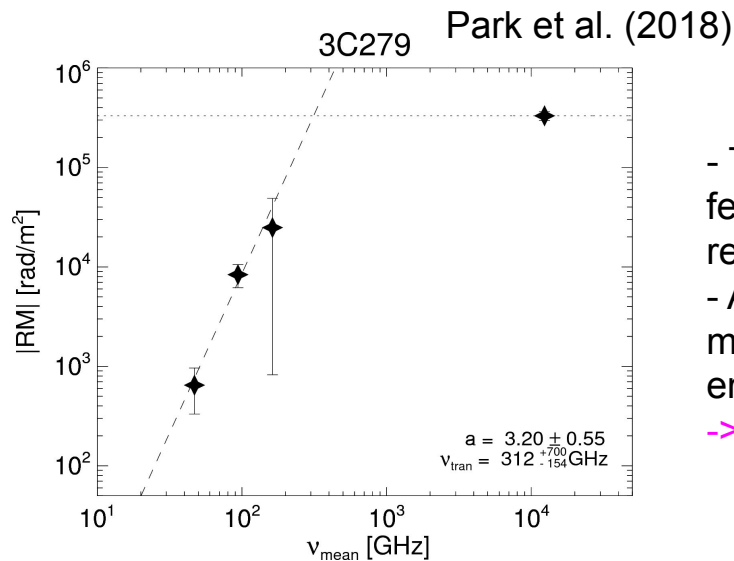
**Model 1:** The radio cores are  $\tau=1$  surfaces?

-> RM is expected to increase with observing frequency.

**Model 2:** The radio cores are standing shocks?

-> RM is expected to be constant over frequency.

$$\text{RM} \propto \int n_e B_{\parallel} dl$$



- The core-shift effect is observed at frequencies lower than a few hundred GHz due to the opacity of the jet downstream the recollimation shock.

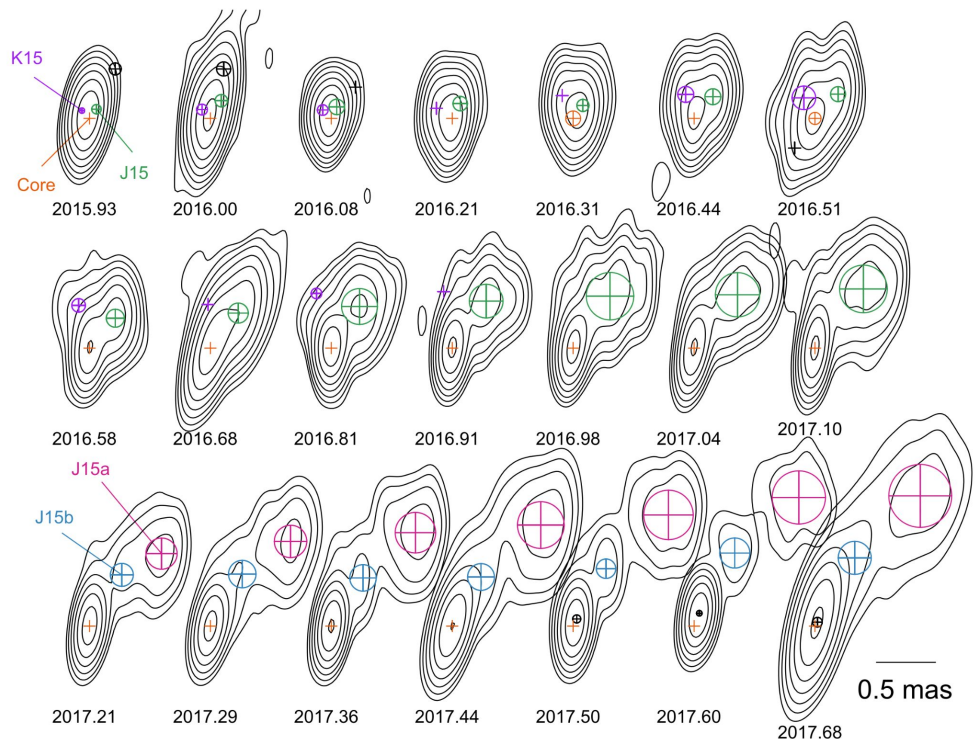
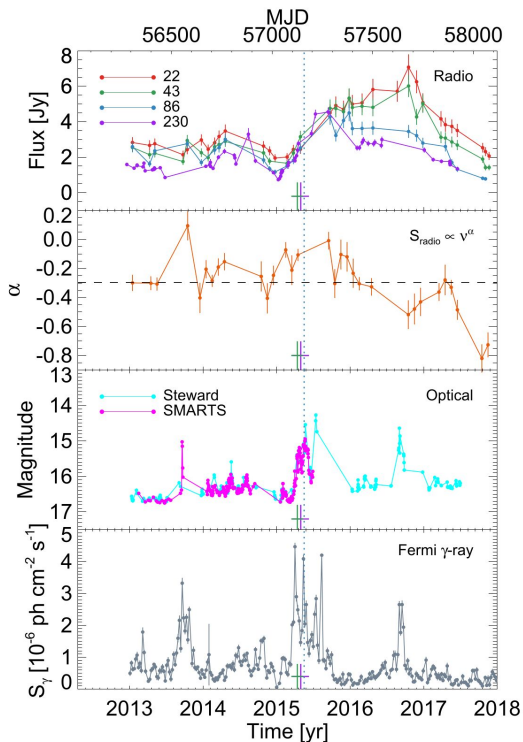
- At high enough frequencies (> a few hundreds GHz), no more frequency dependence of RM is expected as the emission from the recollimation shock is dominated.

-> We will test this conjecture using ALMA.

Based on KVN 22/43/86 GHz observations + optical archival data

# Successful ALMA proposal: 2016.1.00112.S

The target source PKS 1510-089: one of the brightest sources in the gamma-ray sky. Indication of the existence of a recollimation shock. Compact geometry (less confusion). Being monitored with the KVN.



# Successful ALMA proposal: 2016.1.00112.S

The “Earth-rotation Polarimetry”

- We need multifrequency polarization observations of the target source at three bands (band 4,6,7)
- It takes about three hours to properly calibrate polarization of ALMA at each band -> too large amount of observing time.
- We instead proposed to use the Earth-rotation Polarimetry, which can be done with a much shorter integration time.

$$\begin{aligned}
 XX &= (I + Q_\psi) + U_\psi(d_{X_j}^* + d_{X_i}) \\
 XY &= U_\psi + I(d_{Y_j}^* + d_{X_i}) + Q_\psi(d_{Y_j}^* - d_{X_i}) \\
 YX &= U_\psi + I(d_{Y_i}^* + d_{X_j}) + Q_\psi(d_{Y_i}^* - d_{X_j}) \\
 YY &= (I - Q_\psi) + U_\psi(d_{Y_i} + d_{Y_j}^*)
 \end{aligned}$$

$$Q_\psi = Q \cos 2\psi + U \sin 2\psi$$

$$U_\psi = -Q \sin 2\psi + U \cos 2\psi$$

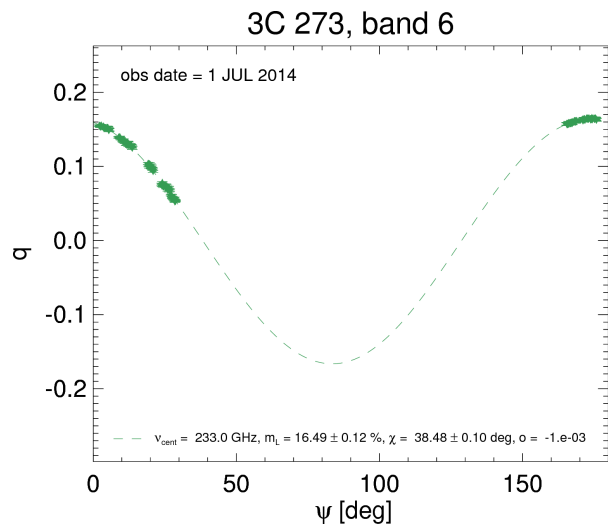
$$\begin{aligned}
 \frac{XX - YY}{XX + YY} &= \frac{Q}{I} \cos 2\psi + \frac{U}{I} \sin 2\psi && \alpha = Q/I \\
 &= \alpha \cos \theta + \beta \sin \theta && \beta = U/I \\
 &= \sqrt{\alpha^2 + \beta^2} \left( \frac{\alpha}{\sqrt{\alpha^2 + \beta^2}} \cos \theta + \frac{\beta}{\sqrt{\alpha^2 + \beta^2}} \sin \theta \right) && \theta = 2\psi \\
 &= \sqrt{\alpha^2 + \beta^2} (\cos \phi \cos \theta + \sin \phi \sin \theta) && \tan \phi = \frac{\beta}{\alpha} = \frac{U}{Q} \\
 &= m_L \cos(\phi - \theta) && \sqrt{\alpha^2 + \beta^2} = \frac{\sqrt{Q^2 + U^2}}{I} = m_L \\
 &= m_L \cos[2(\chi - \psi)] && \phi = 2\chi \\
 & && \theta = 2\psi
 \end{aligned}$$

$$q \equiv \frac{XX - YY}{XX + YY} = m_L \cos[2(\chi - \psi)]$$

# Successful ALMA proposal: 2016.1.00112.S

## The “Earth-rotation Polarimetry”

- We need multifrequency polarization observations of the target source at three bands (band 4,6,7)
- It takes about three hours to properly calibrate polarization of ALMA at each band -> too large amount of observing time.
- We instead proposed to use the Earth-rotation Polarimetry, which can be done with a much shorter integration time.



## ALMA SCIENCE VERIFICATION DATA: MILLIMETER CONTINUUM POLARIMETRY OF THE BRIGHT RADIO QUASAR 3C 286 <sup>CrossM</sup>

H. NAGAI<sup>1</sup>, K. NAKANISHI<sup>1,2,3</sup>, R. PALADINO<sup>4</sup>, C. L. H. HULL<sup>5,9</sup>, P. CORTES<sup>3,6</sup>, G. MOELLENBROCK<sup>7</sup>, E. FOMALONT<sup>3,6</sup>, K. ASADA<sup>8</sup>, AND K. HADA<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>National Astronomical Observatory of Japan, Osawa 2-21-1, Mitaka, Tokyo 181-8588, Japan; [hiroshi.nagai@nao.ac.jp](mailto:hiroshi.nagai@nao.ac.jp)

<sup>2</sup>The Graduate University for Advanced Studies (SOUKENDAI), Osawa 2-21-1, Mitaka, Tokyo 181-8588, Japan

<sup>3</sup>Joint ALMA Observatory, Alonso de Córdova 3107, Vitacura 763 0355, Santiago de Chile, Chile

<sup>4</sup>INAF-Osservatorio di Radioastronomia, Via P. Gobetti, 101 I-40129 Bologna, Italy

<sup>5</sup>Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, 60 Garden St., Cambridge, MA 02138, USA

<sup>6</sup>National Radio Astronomy Observatory, Charlottesville, VA 22903-2475, USA

<sup>7</sup>National Radio Astronomy Observatory, Socorro, NM 87801, USA

<sup>8</sup>The Academia Sinica Institute of Astronomy and Astrophysics, AS/NTU, No.1, Sec. 4, Roosevelt Rd, Taipei 10617, Taiwan, R.O.C

Received 2016 March 20; revised 2016 April 17; accepted 2016 April 29; published 2016 June 21

## ABSTRACT

We present full-polarization observations of the compact, steep-spectrum radio quasar 3C 286 made with the Atacama Large Millimeter and Submillimeter Array (ALMA) at 1.3 mm. These are the first full-polarization ALMA observations, which were obtained in the framework of Science Verification. A bright core and a southwest component are detected in the total intensity image, similar to previous centimeter images. Polarized emission is also detected toward both components. The fractional polarization of the core is about 17%; this is higher than the fractional polarization at centimeter wavelengths, suggesting that the magnetic field is even more ordered in the millimeter radio core than it is further downstream in the jet. The observed polarization position angle (or electric vector position angle (EVPA)) in the core is  $\sim 39^\circ$ , which confirms the trend that the EVPA slowly increases from centimeter to millimeter wavelengths. With the aid of multi-frequency VLBI observations, we argue that this EVPA change is associated with the frequency-dependent core position. We also report a serendipitous detection of a sub-mJy source in the field of view, which is likely to be a submillimeter galaxy.

*Key words:* galaxies: active – galaxies: jets – galaxies: individual (3C 286) – radio continuum: galaxies

# Successful ALMA proposal: 2016.1.00112.S

The “Earth-rotation Polarimetry”

- We need multifrequency polarization observations of the target source at three bands (band 4,6,7)
- It takes about three hours to properly calibrate polarization of ALMA at each band -> too large amount of observing time.
- We instead proposed to use the Earth-rotation Polarimetry, which can be done with a much shorter integration time.

Band	$S_\nu$ (Jy)	$\sigma_{1\text{min}}$ (mJy)	$\Delta\chi$ for LST offset from transit [deg]			
			0 hour	1 hour	2 hour	3 hour
4	2.0	0.10	0.88	1.01	4.06	29.04
6	1.5	0.14	0.90	1.26	8.34	37.63
7	1.2	0.20	0.97	2.08	19.60	43.84

# How to write good proposals?

ALMA's guidelines for reviewers (<https://almascience.nrao.edu/proposing/alma-proposal-review/guidelines-for-reviewers>)

**Reviewers should assess the scientific merit of the proposals to the best of their ability using the following criteria:**

*The overall scientific merit of the proposed investigation and its potential contribution to the advancement of scientific knowledge.*

- Does the proposal clearly indicate which important, outstanding questions will be addressed?
- Will the proposed observations have a high scientific impact on this particular field and address the specific science goals of the proposal? ALMA encourages reviewers to give full consideration to well-designed high-risk/high-impact proposals even if there is no guarantee of a positive outcome or definite detection.
- Does the proposal clearly describe how the data will be analyzed in order to achieve the science goals?

*The suitability of the observations to achieve the scientific goals.*

- Is the choice of target (or targets) clearly described and well justified?
- Are the requested signal-to-noise ratio, angular resolution, largest angular scale, and spectral setup sufficient to achieve the science goals and well justified?
- Does the proposal justify why new observations are needed to achieve the science goals?
-

# How to write good proposals?

ALMA's guidelines for reviewers (<https://almascience.nrao.edu/proposing/alma-proposal-review/guidelines-for-reviewers>)

**Reviewers should assess the scientific merit of the proposals to the best of their ability using the following criteria:**

*The overall scientific merit of the proposed investigation and its potential contribution to the advancement of scientific knowledge.*

- Does the proposal clearly indicate which important, outstanding questions will be addressed?
- Will the proposed observations have a high scientific impact on this particular field and address the specific science goals of the proposal? ALMA encourages reviewers to give full consideration to well-designed high-risk/high-impact proposals even if there is no guarantee of a positive outcome or definite detection.
- Does the proposal clearly describe how the data will be analyzed in order to achieve the science goals?

*The suitability of the observations to achieve the scientific goals.*

- Is the choice of target (or targets) clearly described and well justified?
- Are the requested signal-to-noise ratio, angular resolution, largest angular scale, and spectral setup sufficient to achieve the science goals and well justified?
- Does the proposal justify why new observations are needed to achieve the science goals?
-

# Successful ALMA proposal: 2016.1.00112.S

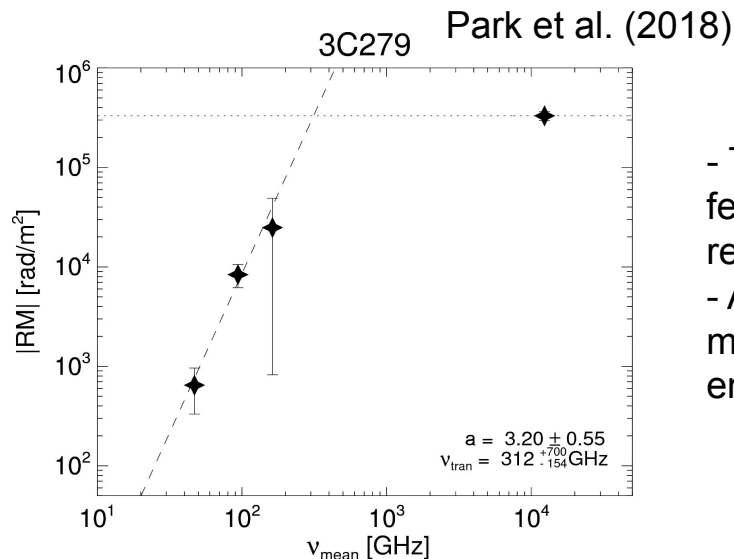
**Model 1:** The radio cores are tau=1 surfaces?

-> RM is expected to increase with observing frequency.

**Model 2:** The radio cores are standing shocks?

-> RM is expected to be constant over frequency.

$$\text{RM} \propto \int n_e B_{||} dl$$



- The core-shift effect is observed at frequencies lower than a few hundred GHz due to the opacity of the jet downstream the recollimation shock.

- At high enough frequencies (> a few hundreds GHz), no more frequency dependence of RM is expected as the emission from the recollimation shock is dominated.

Based on KVN 22/43/86 GHz observations + optical archival data

# How to write good proposals?

ALMA's guidelines for reviewers (<https://almascience.nrao.edu/proposing/alma-proposal-review/guidelines-for-reviewers>)

**Reviewers should assess the scientific merit of the proposals to the best of their ability using the following criteria:**

*The overall scientific merit of the proposed investigation and its potential contribution to the advancement of scientific knowledge.*

- Does the proposal clearly indicate which important, outstanding questions will be addressed?
- Will the proposed observations have a high scientific impact on this particular field and address the specific science goals of the proposal? ALMA encourages reviewers to give full consideration to well-designed high-risk/high-impact proposals even if there is no guarantee of a positive outcome or definite detection.
- Does the proposal clearly describe how the data will be analyzed in order to achieve the science goals?

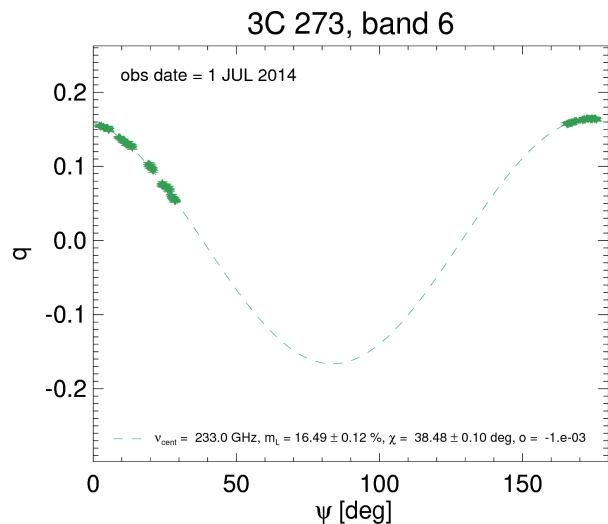
*The suitability of the observations to achieve the scientific goals.*

- Is the choice of target (or targets) clearly described and well justified?
- Are the requested signal-to-noise ratio, angular resolution, largest angular scale, and spectral setup sufficient to achieve the science goals and well justified?
- Does the proposal justify why new observations are needed to achieve the science goals?
-

# Successful ALMA proposal: 2016.1.00112.S

## The “Earth-rotation Polarimetry”

- We need multifrequency polarization observations of the target source at three bands (band 4,6,7)
- It takes about three hours to properly calibrate polarization of ALMA at each band -> too large amount of observing time.
- We instead proposed to use the Earth-rotation Polarimetry, which can be done with a much shorter integration time.



## ALMA SCIENCE VERIFICATION DATA: MILLIMETER CONTINUUM POLARIMETRY OF THE BRIGHT RADIO QUASAR 3C 286 <sup>CrossM</sup>

H. NAGAI<sup>1</sup>, K. NAKANISHI<sup>1,2,3</sup>, R. PALADINO<sup>4</sup>, C. L. H. HULL<sup>5,9</sup>, P. CORTES<sup>3,6</sup>, G. MOELLENBROCK<sup>7</sup>, E. FOMALONT<sup>3,6</sup>, K. ASADA<sup>8</sup>, AND K. HADA<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>National Astronomical Observatory of Japan, Osawa 2-21-1, Mitaka, Tokyo 181-8588, Japan; [hiroshi.nagai@nao.ac.jp](mailto:hiroshi.nagai@nao.ac.jp)

<sup>2</sup>The Graduate University for Advanced Studies (SOUKENDAI), Osawa 2-21-1, Mitaka, Tokyo 181-8588, Japan

<sup>3</sup>Joint ALMA Observatory, Alonso de Córdova 3107, Vitacura 763 0355, Santiago de Chile, Chile

<sup>4</sup>INAF-Osservatorio di Radioastronomia, Via P. Gobetti, 101 I-40129 Bologna, Italy

<sup>5</sup>Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, 60 Garden St., Cambridge, MA 02138, USA

<sup>6</sup>National Radio Astronomy Observatory, Charlottesville, VA 22903-2475, USA

<sup>7</sup>National Radio Astronomy Observatory, Socorro, NM 87801, USA

<sup>8</sup>The Academia Sinica Institute of Astronomy and Astrophysics, AS/NTU, No.1, Sec. 4, Roosevelt Rd, Taipei 10617, Taiwan, R.O.C

Received 2016 March 20; revised 2016 April 17; accepted 2016 April 29; published 2016 June 21

## ABSTRACT

We present full-polarization observations of the compact, steep-spectrum radio quasar 3C 286 made with the Atacama Large Millimeter and Submillimeter Array (ALMA) at 1.3 mm. These are the first full-polarization ALMA observations, which were obtained in the framework of Science Verification. A bright core and a southwest component are detected in the total intensity image, similar to previous centimeter images. Polarized emission is also detected toward both components. The fractional polarization of the core is about 17%; this is higher than the fractional polarization at centimeter wavelengths, suggesting that the magnetic field is even more ordered in the millimeter radio core than it is further downstream in the jet. The observed polarization position angle (or electric vector position angle (EVPA)) in the core is  $\sim 39^\circ$ , which confirms the trend that the EVPA slowly increases from centimeter to millimeter wavelengths. With the aid of multi-frequency VLBI observations, we argue that this EVPA change is associated with the frequency-dependent core position. We also report a serendipitous detection of a sub-mJy source in the field of view, which is likely to be a submillimeter galaxy.

*Key words:* galaxies: active – galaxies: jets – galaxies: individual (3C 286) – radio continuum: galaxies

# How to write good proposals?

ALMA's guidelines for reviewers (<https://almascience.nrao.edu/proposing/alma-proposal-review/guidelines-for-reviewers>)

**Reviewers should assess the scientific merit of the proposals to the best of their ability using the following criteria:**

*The overall scientific merit of the proposed investigation and its potential contribution to the advancement of scientific knowledge.*

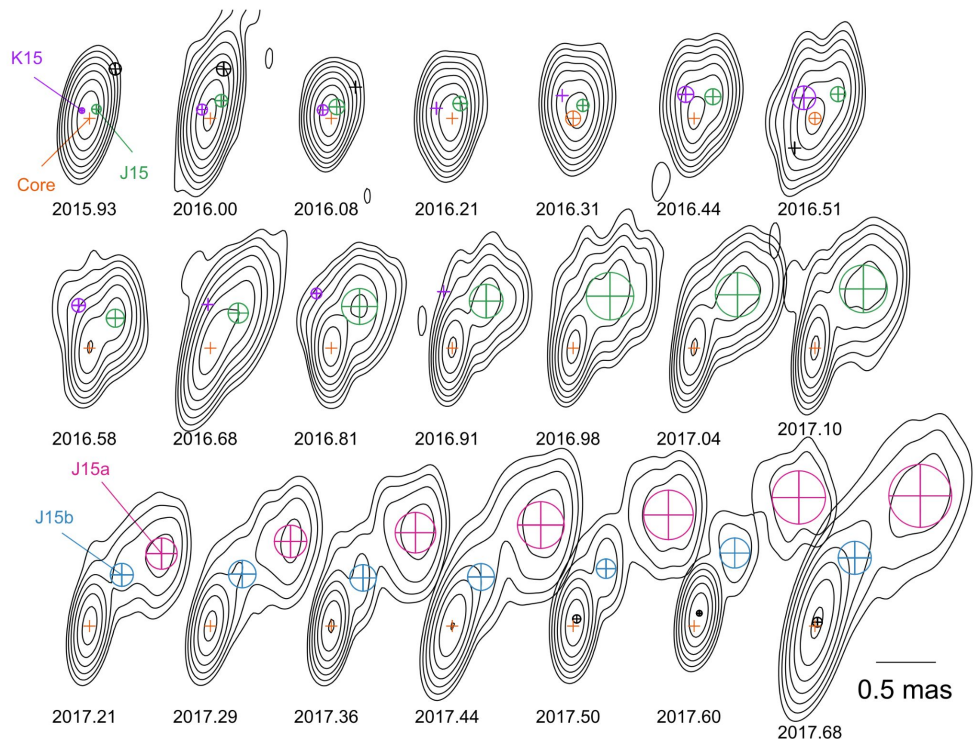
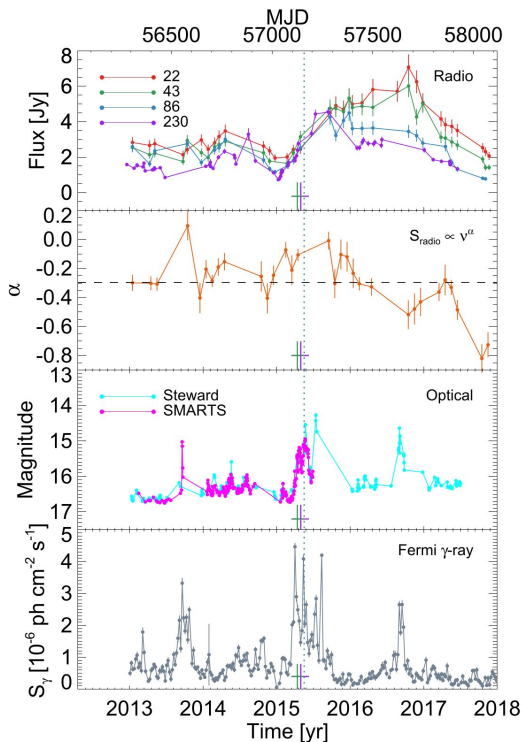
- Does the proposal clearly indicate which important, outstanding questions will be addressed?
- Will the proposed observations have a high scientific impact on this particular field and address the specific science goals of the proposal? ALMA encourages reviewers to give full consideration to well-designed high-risk/high-impact proposals even if there is no guarantee of a positive outcome or definite detection.
- Does the proposal clearly describe how the data will be analyzed in order to achieve the science goals?

*The suitability of the observations to achieve the scientific goals.*

- Is the choice of target (or targets) clearly described and well justified?
- Are the requested signal-to-noise ratio, angular resolution, largest angular scale, and spectral setup sufficient to achieve the science goals and well justified?
- Does the proposal justify why new observations are needed to achieve the science goals?
-

# Successful ALMA proposal: 2016.1.00112.S

The target source PKS 1510-089: one of the brightest sources in the gamma-ray sky. Indication of the existence of a recollimation shock. Compact geometry (less confusion). Being monitored with the KVN.



# How to write good proposals?

ALMA's guidelines for reviewers (<https://almascience.nrao.edu/proposing/alma-proposal-review/guidelines-for-reviewers>)

**Reviewers should assess the scientific merit of the proposals to the best of their ability using the following criteria:**

*The overall scientific merit of the proposed investigation and its potential contribution to the advancement of scientific knowledge.*

- Does the proposal clearly indicate which important, outstanding questions will be addressed?
- Will the proposed observations have a high scientific impact on this particular field and address the specific science goals of the proposal? ALMA encourages reviewers to give full consideration to well-designed high-risk/high-impact proposals even if there is no guarantee of a positive outcome or definite detection.
- Does the proposal clearly describe how the data will be analyzed in order to achieve the science goals?

*The suitability of the observations to achieve the scientific goals.*

- Is the choice of target (or targets) clearly described and well justified?
- Are the requested signal-to-noise ratio, angular resolution, largest angular scale, and spectral setup sufficient to achieve the science goals and well justified?
- Does the proposal justify why new observations are needed to achieve the science goals?
-

# Successful ALMA proposal: 2016.1.00112.S

The “Earth-rotation Polarimetry”

- We need multifrequency polarization observations of the target source at three bands (band 4,6,7)
- It takes about three hours to properly calibrate polarization of ALMA at each band -> too large amount of observing time.
- We instead proposed to use the Earth-rotation Polarimetry, which can be done with a much shorter integration time.

Band	$S_\nu$ (Jy)	$\sigma_{1\text{min}}$ (mJy)	$\Delta\chi$ for LST offset from transit [deg]			
			0 hour	1 hour	2 hour	3 hour
4	2.0	0.10	0.88	1.01	4.06	29.04
6	1.5	0.14	0.90	1.26	8.34	37.63
7	1.2	0.20	0.97	2.08	19.60	43.84

# How to write good proposals?

ALMA's guidelines for reviewers (<https://almascience.nrao.edu/proposing/alma-proposal-review/guidelines-for-reviewers>)

**Reviewers should assess the scientific merit of the proposals to the best of their ability using the following criteria:**

*The overall scientific merit of the proposed investigation and its potential contribution to the advancement of scientific knowledge.*

- Does the proposal clearly indicate which important, outstanding questions will be addressed?
- Will the proposed observations have a high scientific impact on this particular field and address the specific science goals of the proposal? ALMA encourages reviewers to give full consideration to well-designed high-risk/high-impact proposals even if there is no guarantee of a positive outcome or definite detection.
- Does the proposal clearly describe how the data will be analyzed in order to achieve the science goals?

*The suitability of the observations to achieve the scientific goals.*

- Is the choice of target (or targets) clearly described and well justified?
- Are the requested signal-to-noise ratio, angular resolution, largest angular scale, and spectral setup sufficient to achieve the science goals and well justified?
- Does the proposal justify why new observations are needed to achieve the science goals?
-

# Successful ALMA proposal: 2022.1.00750.V



The Global Millimeter VLBI Array (GMVA)

wavelength: 3 mm

angular resolution:  $\sim 40 \mu\text{as}$

ALMA recently joined the GMVA, providing super-sensitive very long North-South baselines.

## Maximizing angular resolution through ALMA as a VLBI station

---



ALMA: Interferometers. “Multiply” (cross-correlation) the signals received at each antenna. However, you can “add” the signals received at each antenna. Then, ALMA serves as a single, super-sensitive station. The signal received at this station can be cross-correlated with the signals received at other stations that are located very far from ALMA.

## Event Horizon Telescope (EHT)

A Global Network of Radio Telescopes



The Event Horizon Telescope

wavelength: 1.3 mm


resolution:  $\sim 20$   $\mu$ as

The idea was already there about  $\sim 25$  years ago. But it was not possible to build this array until ALMA came.

## Maximizing angular resolution through ALMA as a VLBI station

---

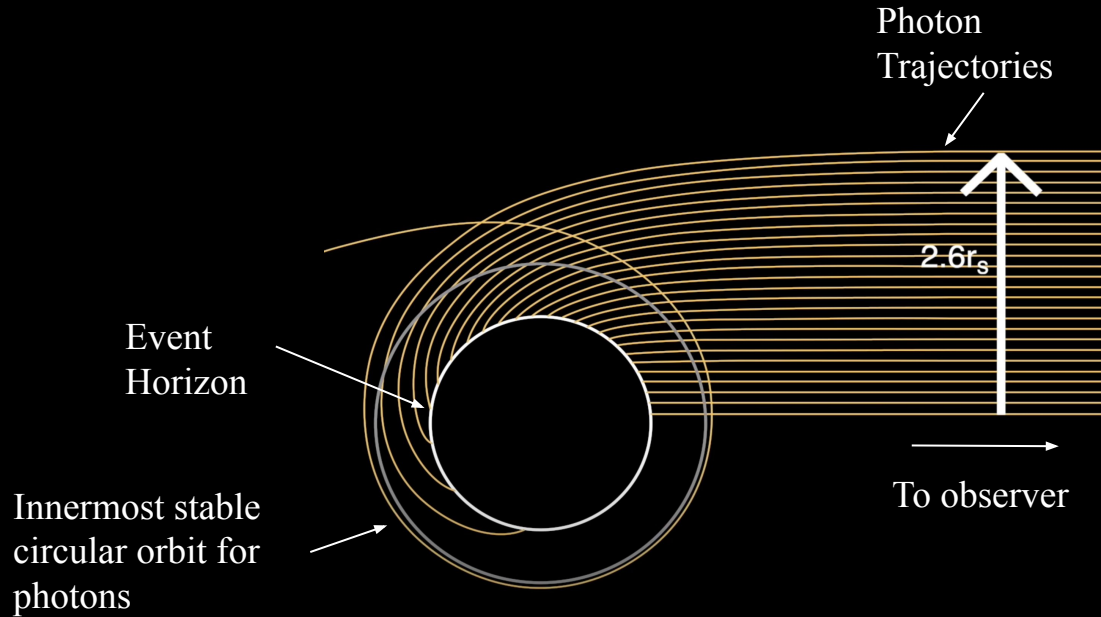
The first-ever image of a supermassive black hole revealed by the EHT.



The image of the M87 black hole observed  
with the Event Horizon Telescope (EHT)  
published in April 2019

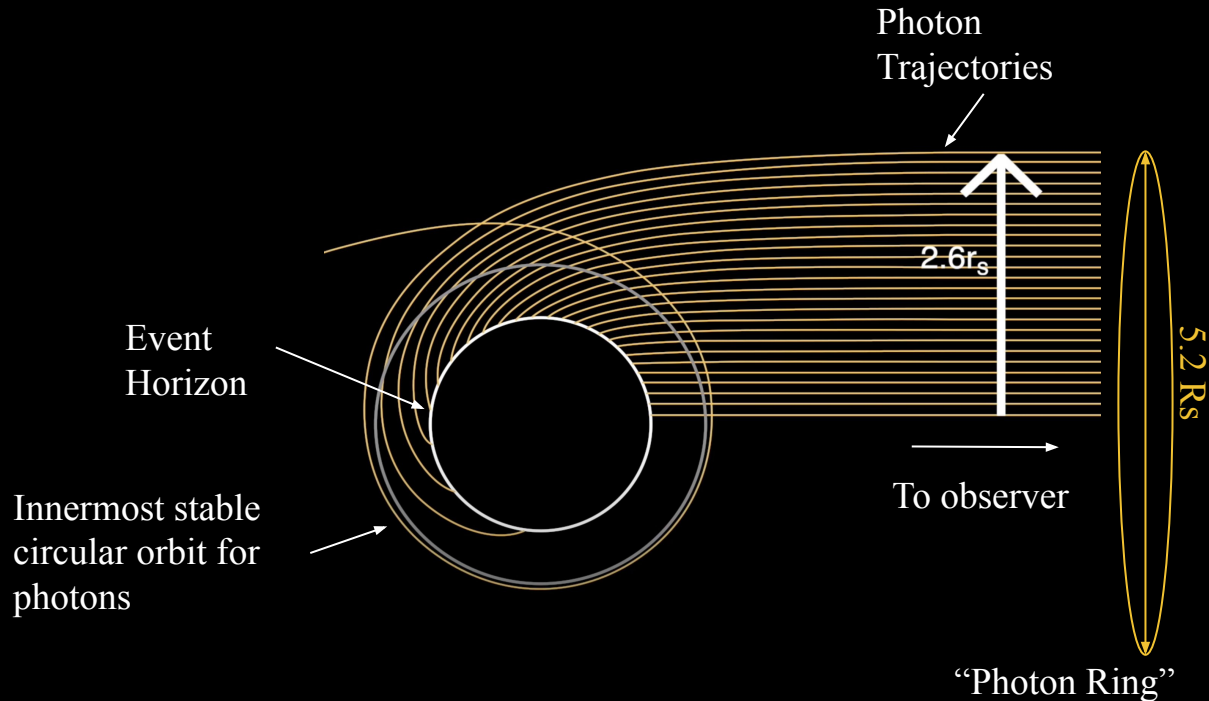
# Maximizing angular resolution through ALMA as a VLBI station

The first-ever image of a supermassive black hole revealed by the EHT.



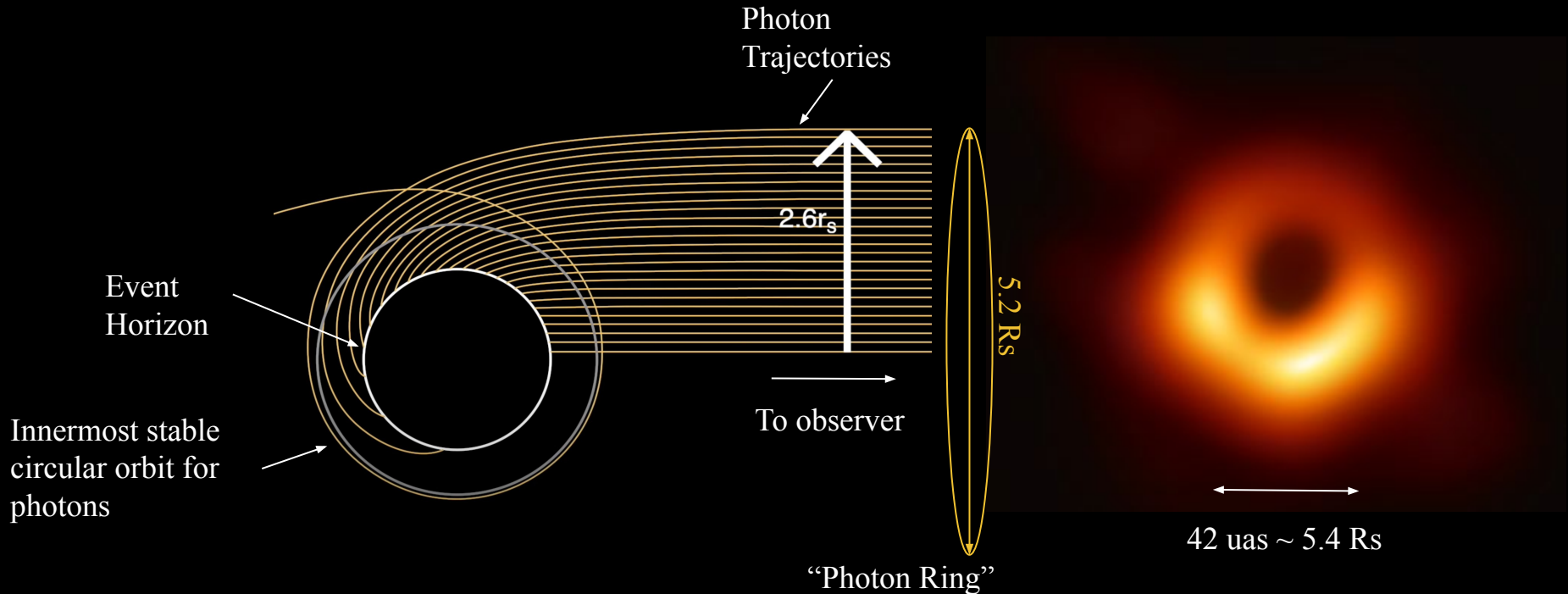
# Maximizing angular resolution through ALMA as a VLBI station

The first-ever image of a supermassive black hole revealed by the EHT.



# Maximizing angular resolution through ALMA as a VLBI station

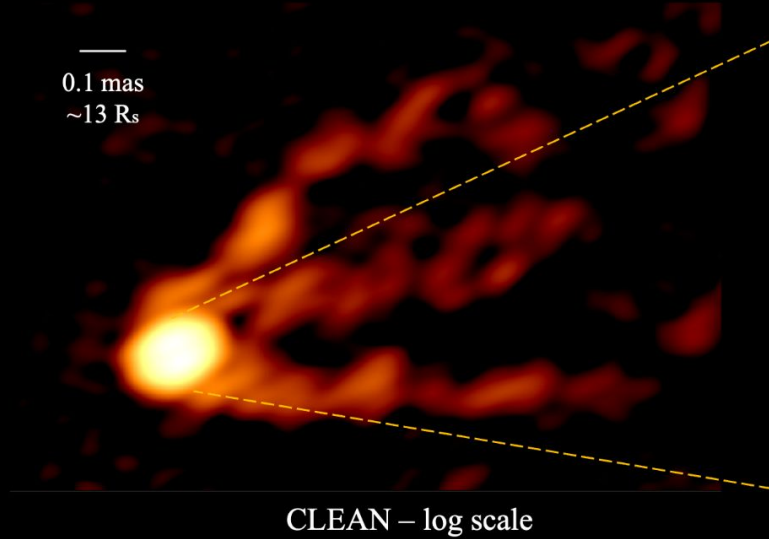
The first-ever image of a supermassive black hole revealed by the EHT.



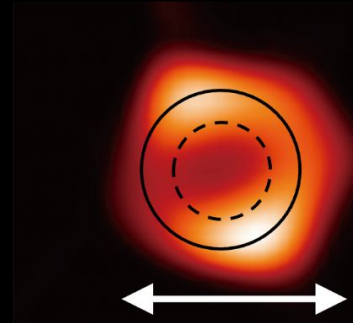
# Successful ALMA proposal: 2022.1.00750.V

Lu et al. (2023, Nature)

**M87 - GMVA+ALMA 2018**

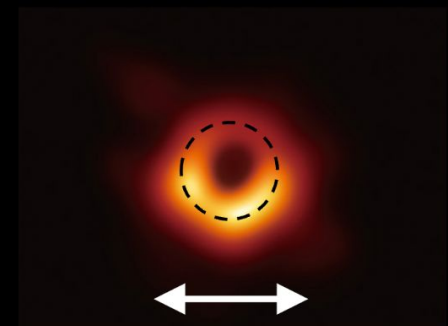


**3.5 mm**



**EHT+ALMA 2017**

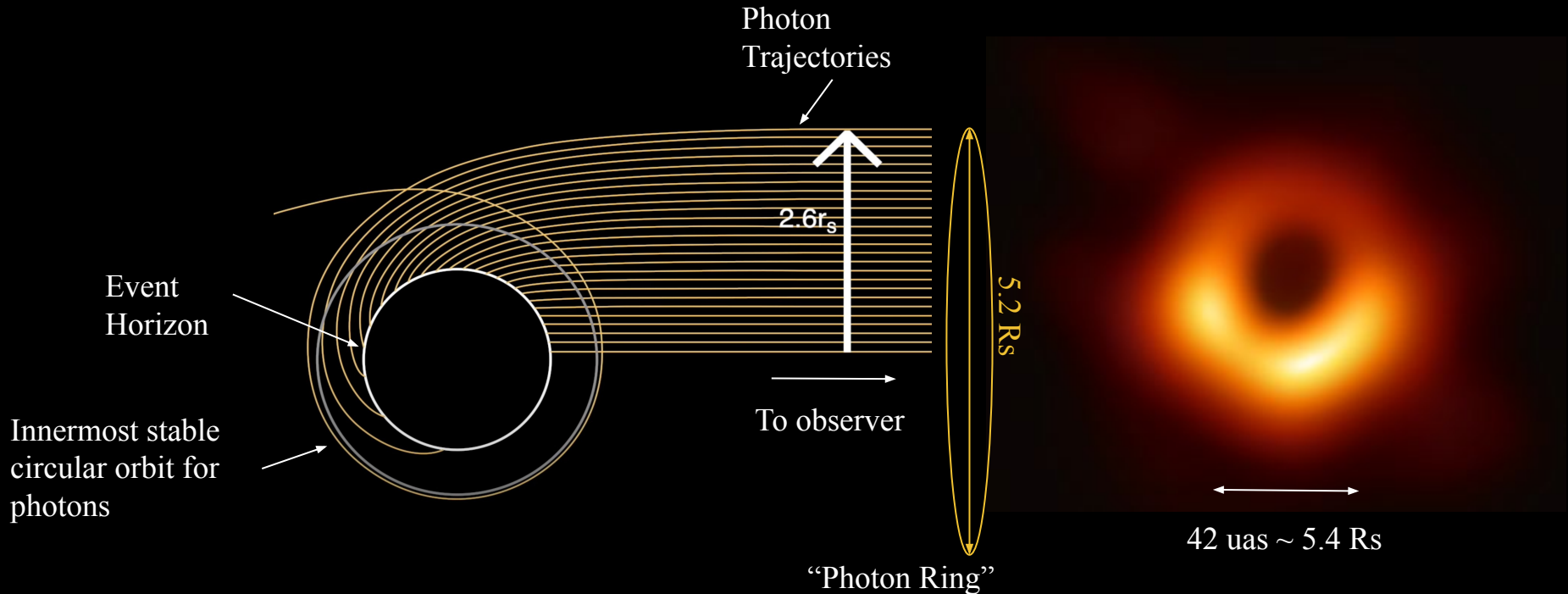
**1.3 mm**



- The GMVA+ALMA image presents a limb-brightened jet that emerges from the core at a very wide opening angle.
- A ring-like structure is detected in the core for the first time.
- The ring size is ~50% larger than the EHT ring size.

# Maximizing angular resolution through ALMA as a VLBI station

The first-ever image of a supermassive black hole revealed by the EHT.



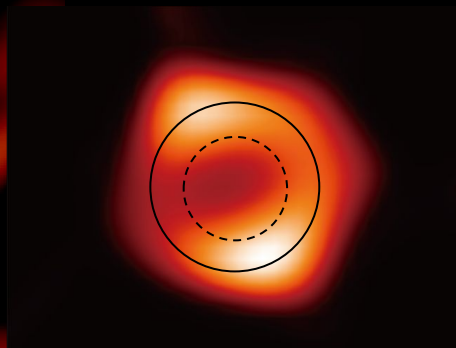
# GMVA+ALMA+GLT observation of M87 in 2018

—  
0.1 mas  
~13 Rs

The ring size at 3.5 mm is ~50% larger than that at 1.3 mm.  
The 3.5 mm ring is more symmetric than the 1.3 mm ring.

Log scale

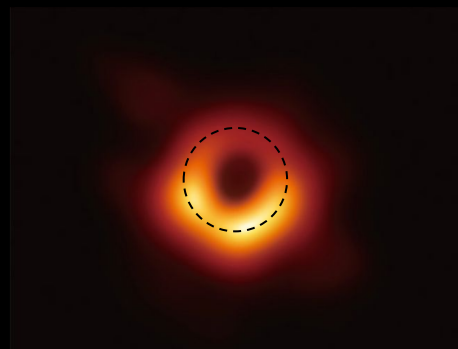
GMVA 3.5 mm



~8.4 Rs

Linear scale

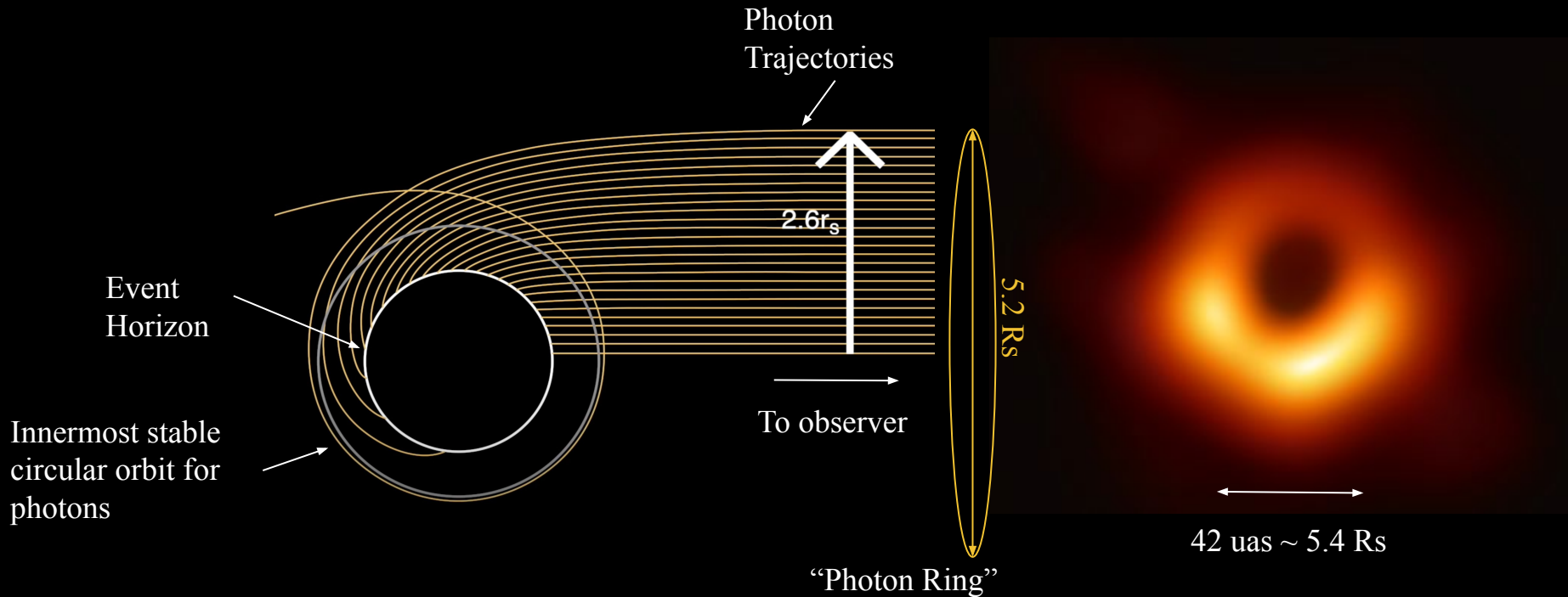
EHT 1.3 mm



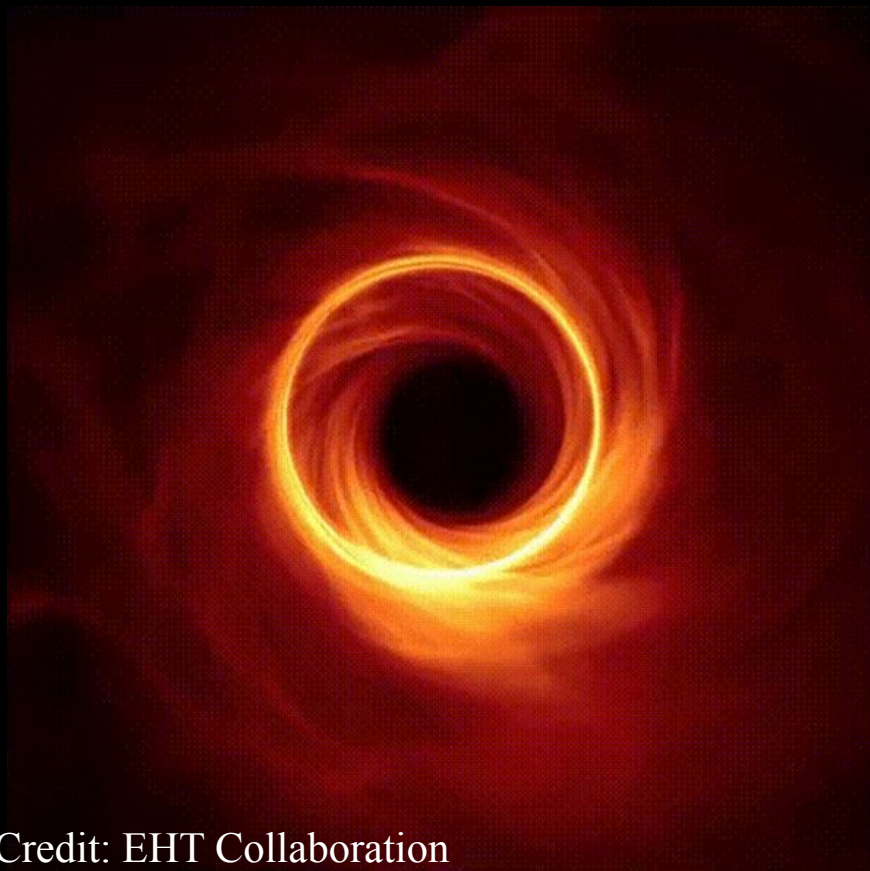
~5.2 Rs

Linear scale

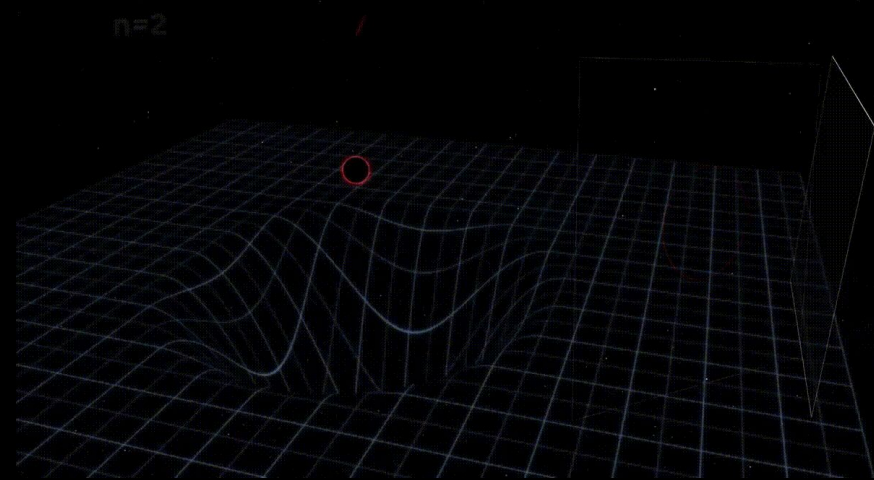
# “Photon ring” and “Black Hole Shadow”



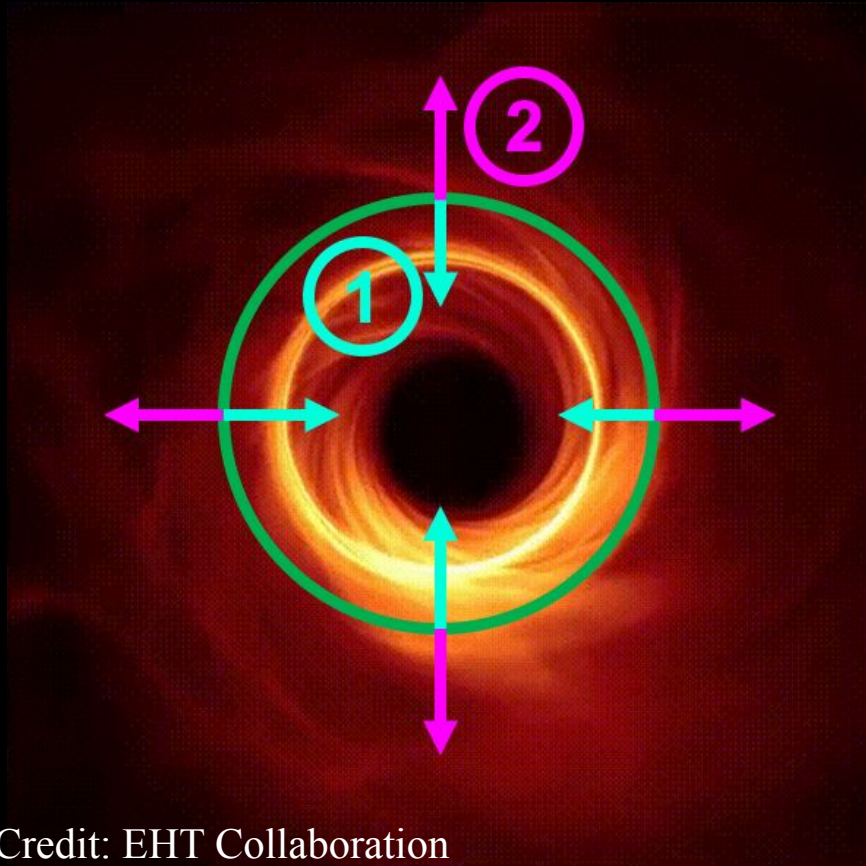
# A Multicolor View of a Black Hole



Credit: EHT Collaboration



# A Multicolor View of a Black Hole



Credit: EHT Collaboration

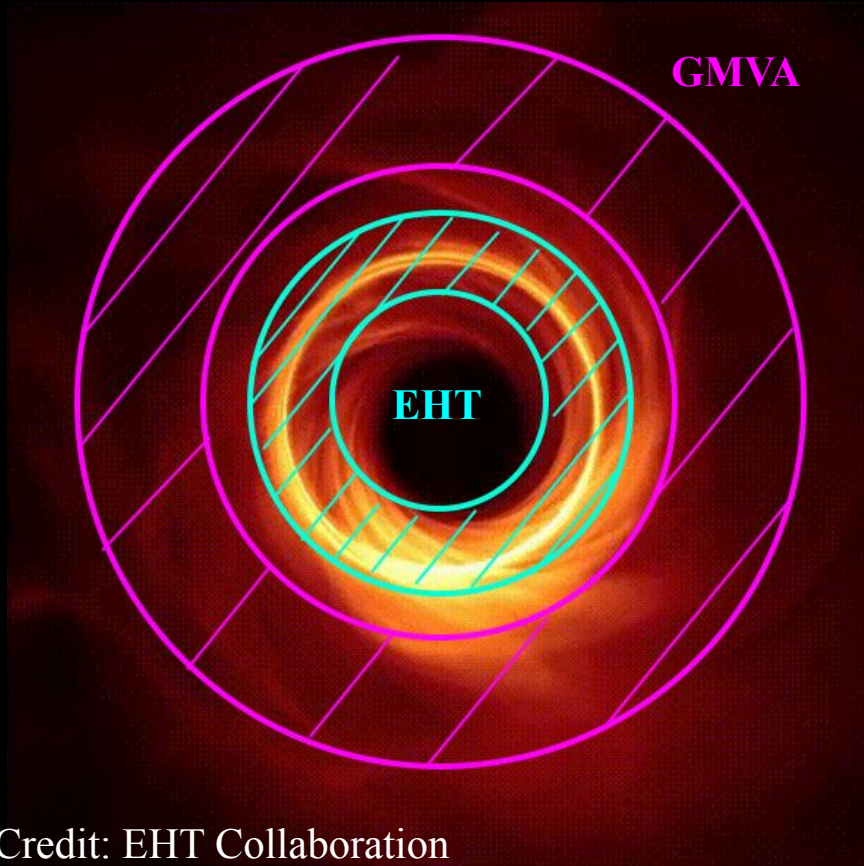
## 1. Gravitationally Lensed Ring

- Diameter  $\sim 5.2 R_s$
- South is brighter than North
- Optically thin at 230 GHz (EHT), but optically thick at 86 GHz (GMVA)

## 2. Outer accretion flows

- Diameter  $> 5.2 R_s$
- Less Beaming Effect
- Bright at 86 GHz (GMVA), and faint at 230 GHz (EHT)

# A Multicolor View of a Black Hole



Credit: EHT Collaboration

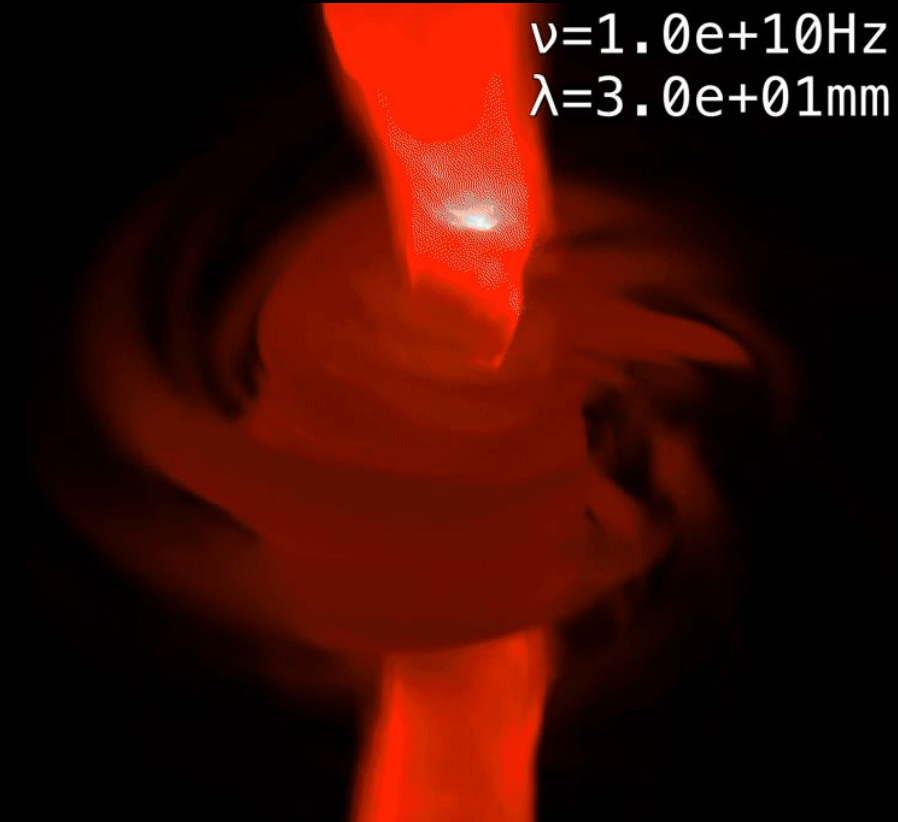
## 1. Gravitationally Lensed Ring

- Diameter  $\sim 5.2 R_s$
- South is brighter than North
- Optically thin at 230 GHz (EHT), but optically thick at 86 GHz (GMVA)

## 2. Outer accretion flows

- Diameter  $> 5.2 R_s$
- Less Beaming Effect
- Bright at 86 GHz (GMVA), and faint at 230 GHz (EHT)

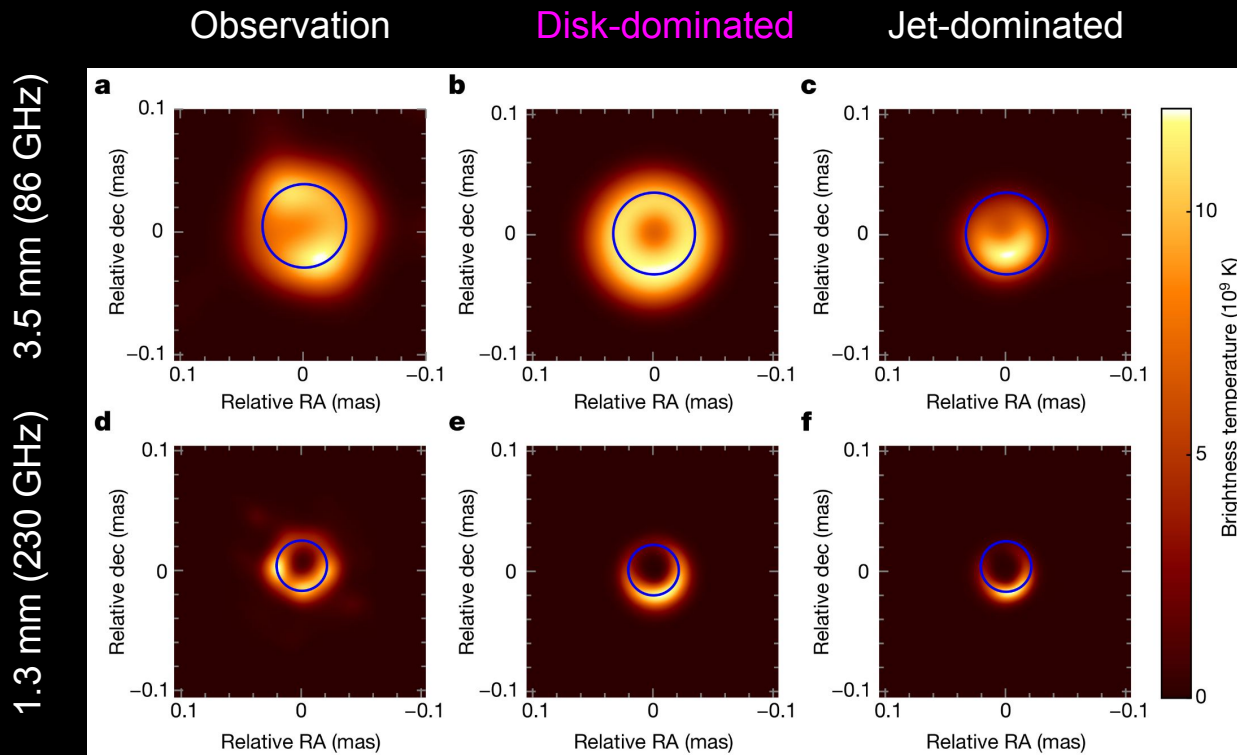
# A Multicolor View of a Black Hole



$\nu=1.0e+10\text{Hz}$   
 $\lambda=3.0e+01\text{mm}$

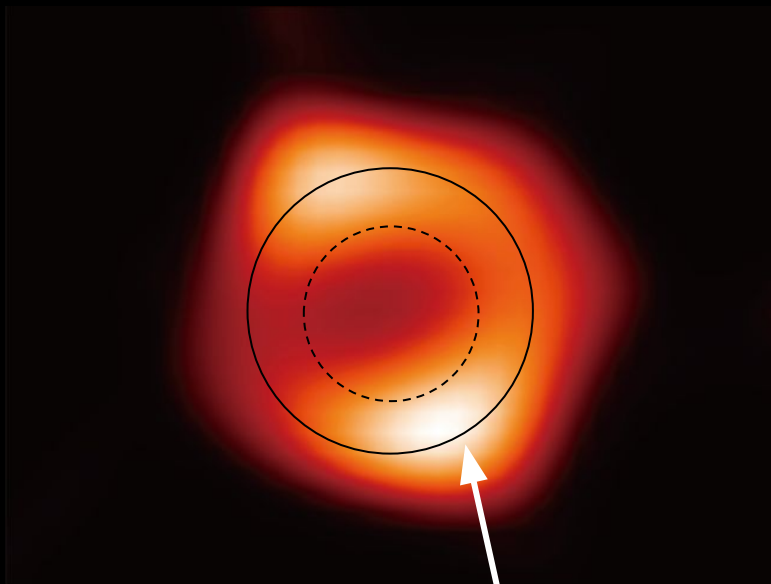
Credit: CK Chan

# What constitutes the observed ring-like structure?



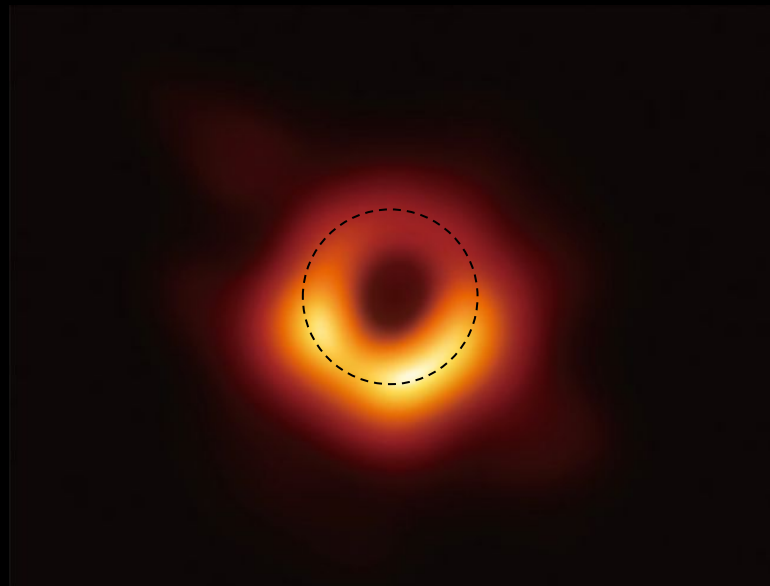
- The ring-like structure revealed by GMVA+ALMA at 86 GHz indicates the accretion structure that was not very evident in the EHT 230 GHz images.
- We don't see clear brightness asymmetry as the emission is dominated by the outer accretion disk.

**GMVA 3.5 mm**



**Significant contribution from  
the outer part of the Accretion Disk**

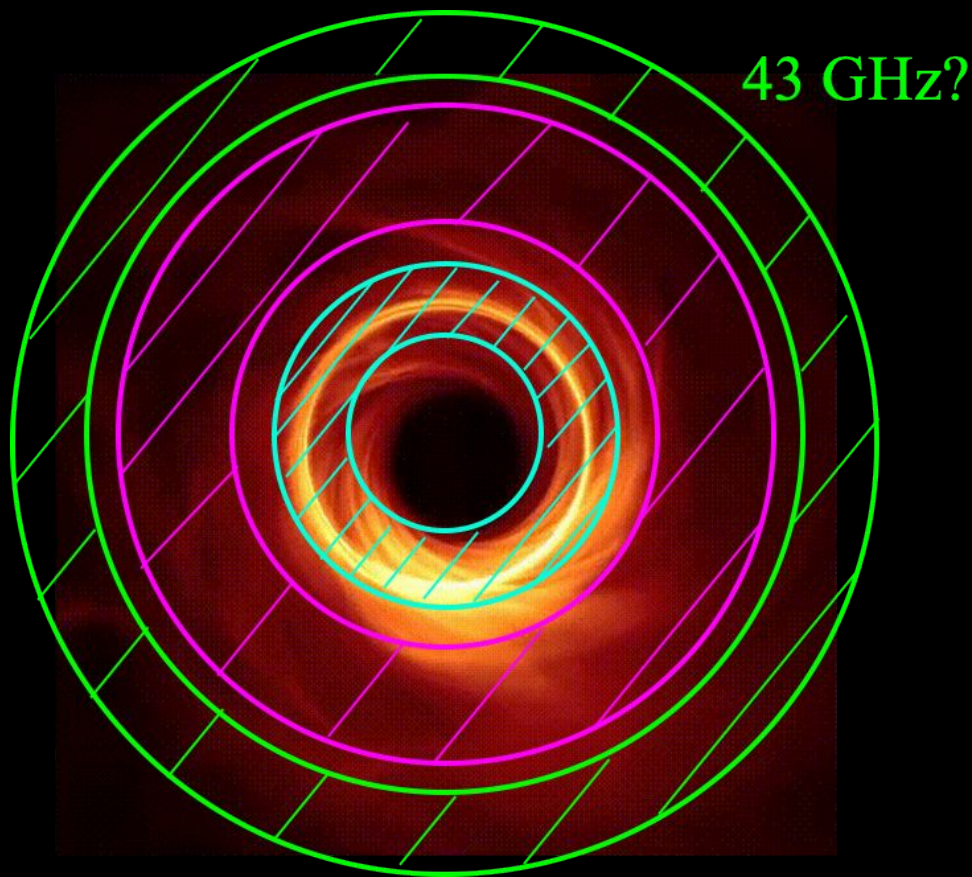
**EHT 1.3 mm**



**Larger Diameter &  
Symmetric Brightness**



# A Multicolor View of a Black Hole



GMVA+ALMA

43/86 GHz

(PI: J. Park)

+

EHT

230/345 GHz

in 2024/2025

# Successful ALMA proposal: 2022.1.00750.V

## Description of Observations

### - The Need for ALMA

: We cannot resolve the ring at 86 GHz without ALMA

### - Why Cycle 9?

: ALMA-VLBI at band 7 (345 GHz) is available for the first time in Cycle 9.

### - Scientific Impact

: The first-ever multicolor view of the M87 black hole.

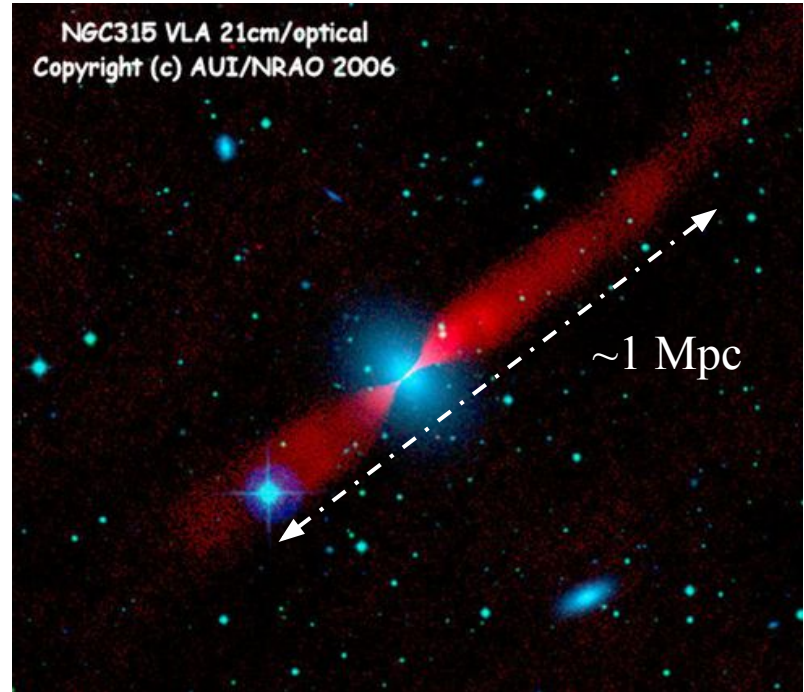
# Lessons Learnt from 2024.1.01311.V

Project: observing NGC 315 with global mm-VLBI including ALMA

- 2021.1.00063.V (Cycle 8, rejected)
- 2022.1.01236.V (Cycle 9, rejected)
- 2023.1.01120.V (Cycle 10, rejected)
- 2024.1.01360.V (Cycle 11, accepted!)

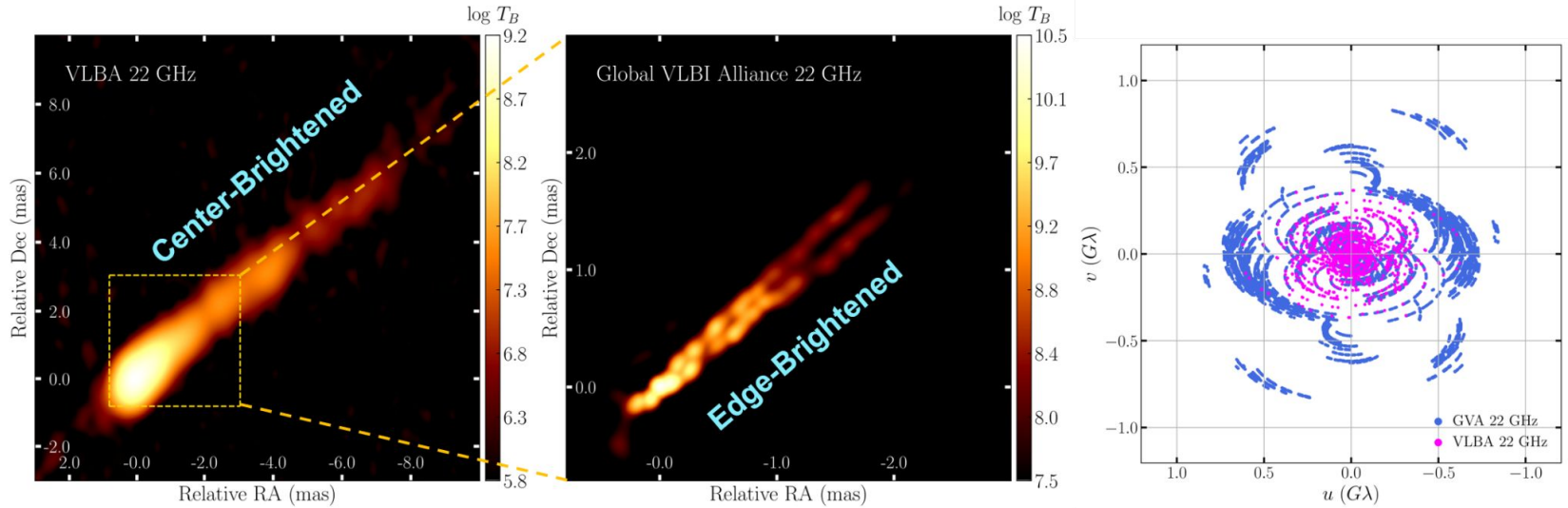
The main scientific objective is to investigate the edge-brightening of the jets at the innermost scales.

→ Why were the proposal rejected three times but accepted in Cycle 11?



# Lessons Learnt from 2024.1.01311.V

Park et al. (2024, ApJL)

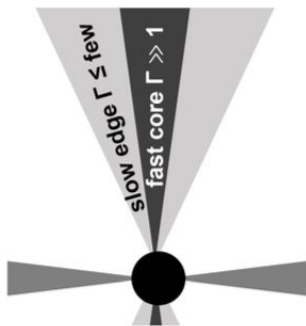


If the edge-brightening phenomenon is observed in the jet base using EHT+ALMA, it would allow us to rule out the jet model that has been considered the standard in the field (cited over 500 times since 2005).

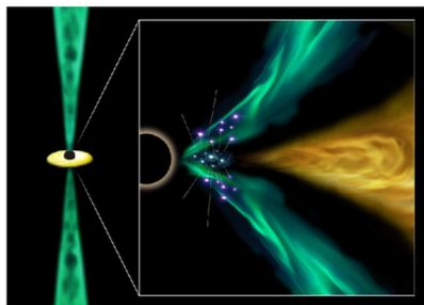
→ Potential to trigger a paradigm shift in our understanding of AGN jets.

# Lessons Learnt from 2024.1.01311.V

## Models

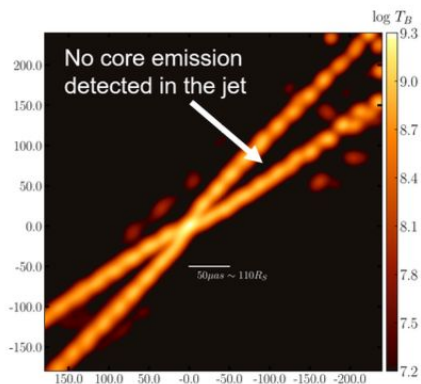
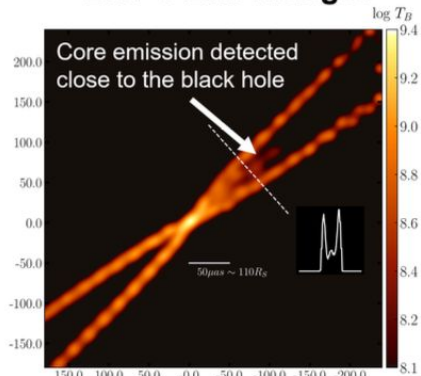


1. The fast-core and slow-edge model  
(a conventional model often invoked in the literature)

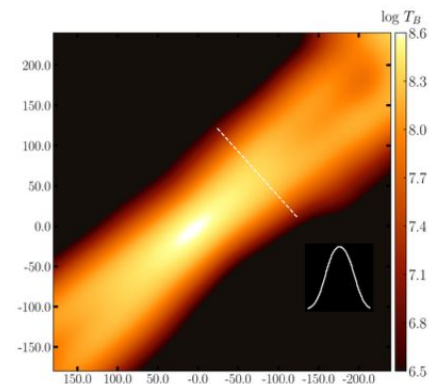
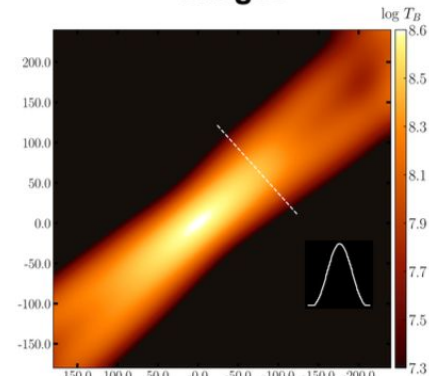


2. Enhanced edge emissivity model  
(a novel alternative model)

## Predicted EHT+ALMA Images



## Non-EHT+ALMA Images



# How do I know if I wrote a good proposal or not?

I would suggest you to do the following before submission (Please keep in mind that there is no golden rule of thumb though).

1. Show your proposal to your colleagues and friends.
2. If it takes more than 10 minutes for them to read the proposal, then probably your proposal is not very strong.
3. If they could not understand the proposal very well and ask you questions regarding the basics of the proposal, then probably your proposal is not very strong.
4. If they think that your proposal is good but is not impressive, then probably your proposal is not very strong.

Please keep in mind that the oversubscription rate for ALMA is 7:1 (and 8:1)

# Summary

- Just follow the guidelines provided by ALMA!
- Be friendly to anonymous and non-expert reviewers. The same applies to all kinds of applications (budget proposal, job application, and so on).
- Never give up!