Plasmonic Effects in Laser-Driven Acceleration

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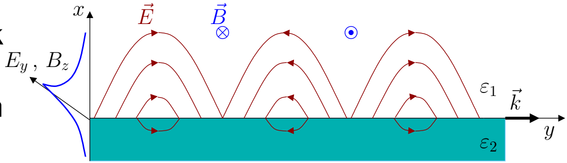
Outline

- Theory of plasmon excitation in targets with periodically modulated surfaces (gratings)
- Experimental results:
  - protons: enhanced Target Normal Sheath Acceleration (TNSA)
  - electrons: evidence for surface plasmon acceleration
- Simulations of light sail acceleration:

  plasmonic-enhanced Rayleigh-Taylor instability

Surface plasmons

SP: building block of plasmonics (mostly studied in the *linear* regime)



SP excitation $\longrightarrow$ EM field confinement and enhancement

Interface between vacuum and simple metal or plasma:

$$\varepsilon_1 = 1 \qquad \varepsilon_2 = 1 - \frac{\omega_p^2}{\omega^2} = 1 - \frac{n_e}{n_c(\omega)}$$

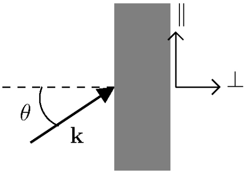
$$k = \frac{\omega}{c}\left(\frac{\omega_p^2 - \omega^2}{\omega_p^2 - 2\omega^2}\right)^{1/2} \qquad \omega < \frac{\omega_p}{\sqrt{2}} \qquad v_{\text{ph}} = \frac{\omega}{k} < c$$

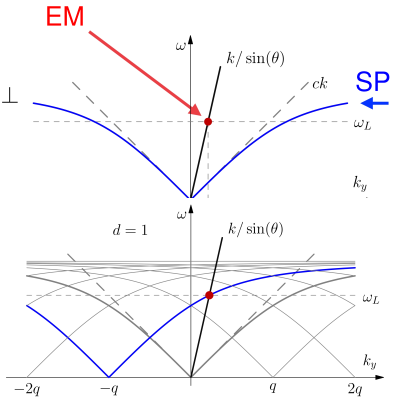
Surface plasmon coupling in periodic media

Coupling with EM wave requires phase matching: $\varphi_{\mathrm{EM}} = \varphi_{\mathrm{SP}}$
where $\varphi = \mathbf{k}_{\parallel} \cdot \mathbf{r} - \omega t$

No matching with EM wave at a plane interface:

$$\omega = ck = \frac{ck_{\parallel}}{\sin\theta}$$

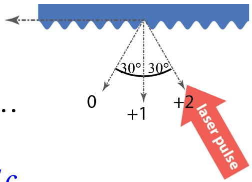




Matching possibile in a periodic medium (lattice vector q) thanks to the “replica” or folding in the Brillouin zone (Floquet-Bloch theorem) of $\omega_{\mathrm{SP}}(k_{\mathrm{SP}})$

Surface plasmon resonance in laser-grating interaction

Resonant matching with SP in a grating at an angle of incidence θ_{res}:



$$\frac{\omega}{c}\sin\theta_{\text{res}} \pm nq = k_{\text{SP}}(\omega) \qquad q = \frac{\pi}{d} \qquad n = 1, 2, \ldots$$

Solid targets $(\omega_p/\omega)^2 = n_e/n_c \gg 1 \longrightarrow k_{\text{SP}} \simeq \omega/c$
($\omega_{\text{SP}}(k_\parallel)$ weakly changes for shallow gratings)

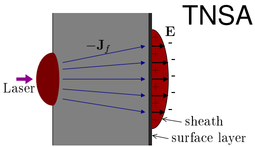
Coupling to superintense pulses requires high contrast, ultra-short ($\sim$ tens of fs) pulses to preserve the grating prior to, and during the interaction

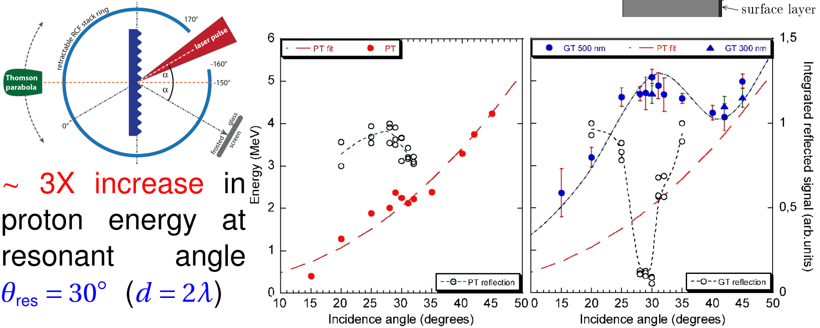
Notice: SP theory not well developed in the relativistic, nonlinear regime

$$a_0 \equiv \frac{p_{\text{osc}}}{m_e c} = \frac{eE_L}{m_e \omega c} > 1 \qquad I\lambda^2 > 1.4 \times 10^{18}\ \text{W cm}^{-2}\mu\text{m}^2$$

Grating-enhanced proton acceleration

LaserLAB experiment at SLIC, CEA Saclay
laser UHI, 28 fs, 5×10^{19} W cm^{-2}, $a_0 = 4.8$
pulse contrast $\sim 10^{12}$





$\sim$ 3X increase in proton energy at resonant angle $\theta_{\rm res} = 30°$ $(d = 2\lambda)$

T.Ceccotti et al, PRL **111** (2013) 185001 (presented at LPAW2013)

Surface plasmon electron acceleration *in vacuum*

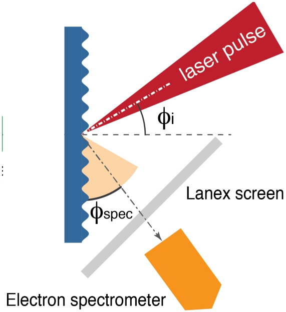
- Phase velocity $v_f = \omega/k \lesssim c$ + longitudinal $\mathbf{E}$ component
  $\rightarrow$ SP may accelerate (relativistic) electrons
- Plasmon field on the vacuum side is purely electrostatic in frame L' moving with phase velocity $\beta_f = v_f/c$:

$$\Phi' = -\left(\frac{\gamma_f E_{\mathrm{SP}}}{k}\right) \mathrm{e}^{k'x} \sin k'y' \qquad k' = k/\gamma_f \qquad \gamma_f = (1-\beta_f^2)^{-1/2}$$

- "Lucky" electron injected with velocity v_f goes downhill the potential Φ' acquiring an energy $W' = eE_{\mathrm{SP}}\gamma_f/k$
- Energy gain and emission angle in the lab (L) frame in the strongy relativistic limit $W' \gg m_e c^2$

$$\mathscr{E}_f \simeq \frac{eE_{\mathrm{SP}}\gamma_f^2}{k} \simeq m_e c^2 a_{\mathrm{SP}} \left(\frac{n_e}{n_c}\right), \qquad \tan\phi_e = \frac{p_x}{p_y} \simeq \gamma_f^{-1}$$

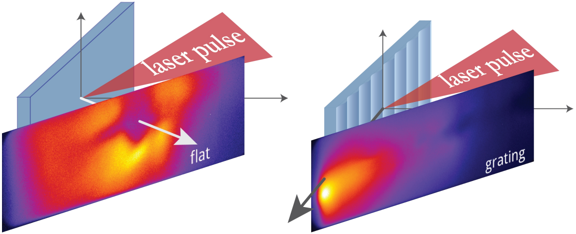
Electron acceleration: experimental results



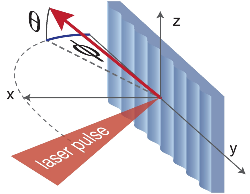
Imaging of electrons emitted from the front side of the target: evidence of narrow-angle, intense beam near the target surface for grating targets

No such beamed emission for flat targets!

More details in G.Cantono's talk (yesterday ...)



Electron angular distribution

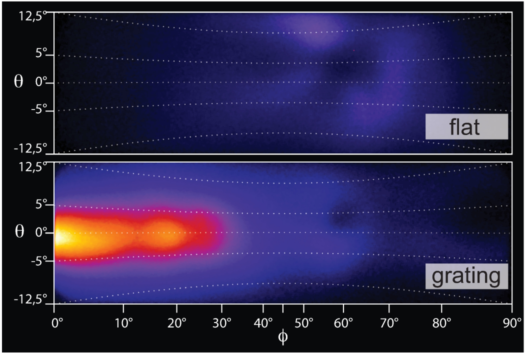


Target: 10 μm Mylar

$\phi_{\text{inc}} = \phi_{\text{res}} = 30°$

Angular spread

$\Delta\phi \simeq 20°$

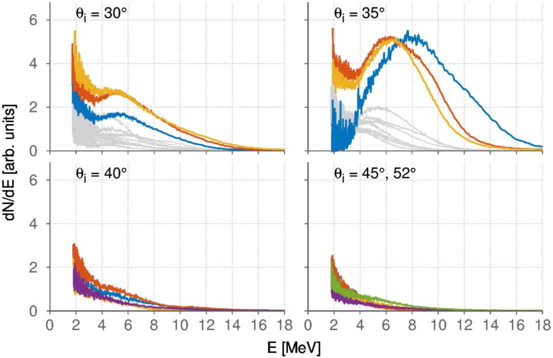


"Holes" in angular distribution observed in specular direction for both targets and for $m = 1$ diffraction order for gratings

Shot-to-shot fluctuations $\delta\phi \sim \delta\theta \simeq 5°$ due to non-perfect planarity of foil target

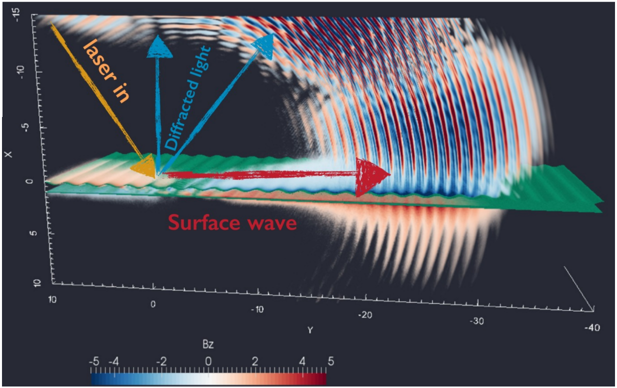
Electron energy spectra

Near resonance ($\phi_{\text{inc}} = 30° - 35°$) with spectrometer close to tangent $\phi_{\text{spec}} \simeq 2°$: strongly non-Maxwellian spectrum with peak at $6 - 8$ MeV, cut-off at $15 - 18$ MeV



Spectrum variability (gray lines) related to beam direction fluctuations due to the small acceptance angle of the spectrometer

Three-dimensional simulations

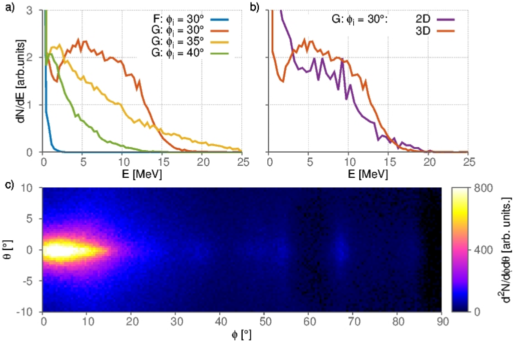


PICcante open source code on 16384 cores of BlueGene/Q FERMI at CINECA, Italy

Target: $1\ \mu$m foil, $n_e/n_c = 50$ Box: $(80 \times 60 \times 60)\lambda^3$
Resolution: $\Delta\mathbf{r}/\lambda = (70, 51, 34)$, 196 particles/cell

Simulations vs experiment

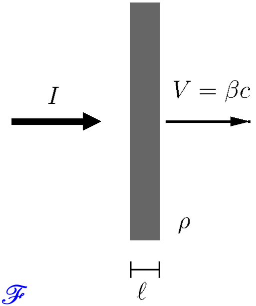
Simulations confirm SP-enhancement of number and energy and reproduce accurately: - energy peak and cut-off values
- spectrum shape (only with 3D)
- angular distribution including "ponderomotive holes"



In 3D sim $a_{\text{SP}} \simeq 1$, $n_e/n_c = 50$

$\longrightarrow$ theory: $\mathcal{E}_f \simeq 25$ MeV, $\phi_e \simeq 8°$

Light Sail acceleration



"Accelerated mirror" 1D model:

$$\mathscr{E}_{\text{max}} = m_p c^2 \frac{\mathscr{F}^2}{(2(\mathscr{F}+1))}$$

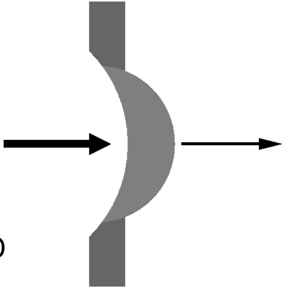
$$\mathscr{F} = \frac{2}{(\rho\ell)} \int_0^\infty I(t')dt' \simeq \frac{2I\tau_p}{\rho\ell}$$

Favorable scaling with normalized fluence $\mathscr{F}$
100% efficiency in the relativistic limit (accessible with ELI)
"Perfect" monoenergeticity for "rigid", coherent sail motion

Issue: slow energy gain → stability, laser diffraction, ...

$$\mathscr{E}_{\text{ion}}(t) \propto \left(\frac{2It}{\rho\ell c^2}\right)^{1/3} \qquad \left(t \gg \frac{\rho\ell c^2}{I}, \mathscr{E}_{\text{ion}} > m_p c^2\right)$$

Fast gain Light Sail in 3D



Transverse expansion of the target
reduces on-axis surface density $\rho\ell$
$\Rightarrow$ sail gets "lighter": **boost of energy gain**
at the expense of the number of ions

Faster gain $E_{\text{ion}}(t) \simeq \left(\frac{2It}{\rho\ell c^2}\right)^{3/5}$ predicted in 3D

[S.V.Bulanov et al, "Unlimited ion acceleration by radiation pressure", PRL **104** (2010) 135003]

Mechanism is effective for *relativistic* ions ($\mathscr{F} \gg 1$)

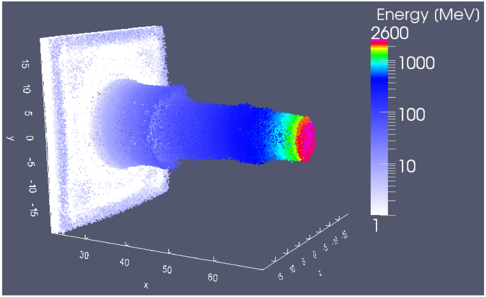
Need to explore this regime with fully 3D simulations
over long time scales

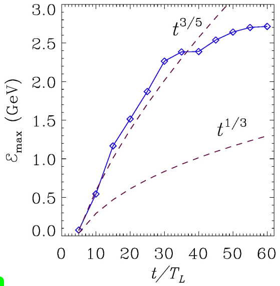
ALADYN code [C. Benedetti, A. Sgattoni, G. Turchetti, P. Londrillo, IEEE Trans. Plasma Science **36** (2008) 1790]

High energy gain in 3D LS simulations (H foil)

Laser: 24 fs, 4.8 μm spot, $I = 0.85 \times 10^{23}$ W cm^{-2} $\Longrightarrow$ **1.5 kJ**

Target: $d = 1$ μm foil, $n_e = 10^{23}$ cm^{-3}, $\pi \left(\frac{n_e}{n_c}\right)\left(\frac{d}{\lambda}\right) \simeq a_0 \simeq 200$





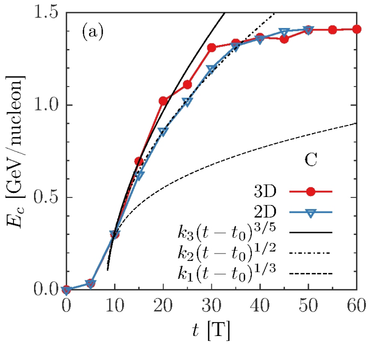
$\mathcal{E}_{max} \simeq 2.6$ GeV $>$ **4X 1D model prediction**

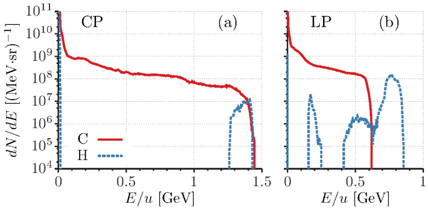
Macchi et al, PPCF **55** (2013) 124020;

Sgattoni et al, APL **105** (2014) 084105

High energy gain in 3D LS simulations (CH foil)

C+H double layer foil , $n_C = (64/6)n_c$, $n_H = 8n_c$

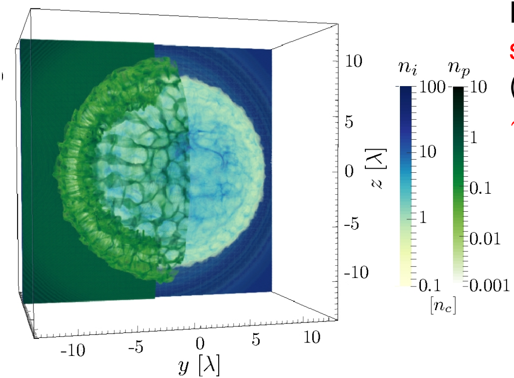




Circular vs Linear Polarization: Higher energy and narrower H spectrum for CP

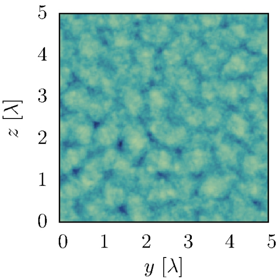
Onset of transparency stops acceleration and is faster in 3D than in 2D → similar final energy in 2D and 3D (~1.4 GeV for CP)

Transverse structures in ion density



Two species target - protons and carbon ions

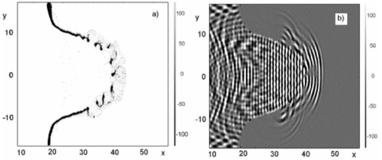
Formation of net-like structures with size $\sim \lambda$ (laser wavelength) and $\sim$ hexagonal shape



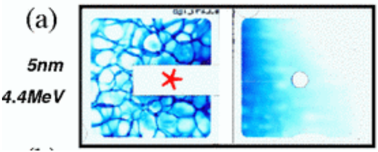
What is the origin of structures and of the dominant scale?

Rayleigh-Taylor Instability in LS?

Thin foil target of areal density σ accelerated by a laser of intensity I is unstable with growth rate $\gamma = (P_0 q/\sigma)^{1/2}$ with $P_0 = 2I/c$ and q the wavevector [Ott, PRL **29** (1972) 1429]



2D simulation
[F.Pegoraro & S.V.Bulanov, PRL **99** (2007) 065002]

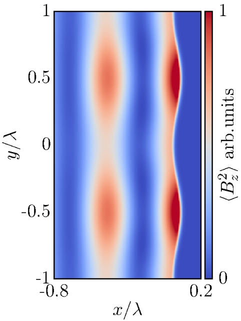


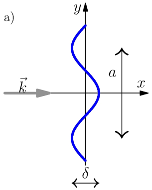
Experimental indication from accelerated ion beam profile structures [C.Palmer et al, PRL **108** (2012) 225002]

What sets the dominant wavevector $q \sim (2\pi/\lambda)$?

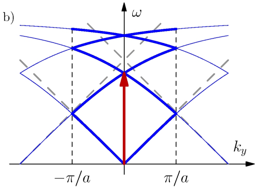
Plasmonic modulation of radiation pressure

The EM field at a rippled surface (e.g. 2D reflecting, sinusoidal grating of period d) is modulated with plasmonic enhancement of the P-component when $d \sim \lambda$





Geometry



Matching with surface plasmons

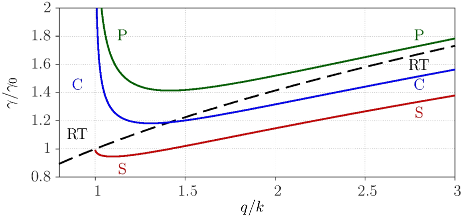
The resulting modulation of laser light pressure provides a spatial seed for RTI

Thin foil RTI with self-consistent pressure modulation

Model: reflection from shallow 2D grating of depth δ (first order in δ/λ) + modified Ott's theory[1] with modulated pressure:

$$P \simeq P_0\left(1 + K(q)\delta\cos qy\right) , \qquad K(q) = \begin{cases} -(q^2-k^2)^{1/2} & (S) \\ k^2(q^2-k^2)^{-1/2} & (P) \\ (k^2-q^2/2)(q^2-k^2)^{-1/2} & (C) \end{cases}$$

$$\gamma = (P_0/\sigma)^{1/2}\left[\left(q^2 + K^2(q)/4\right)^{1/2} + K(q)/2\right]^{1/2}$$



S-polarization
P-polarization
C-ircular polarization
RT: no modulation ($\delta = 0$)

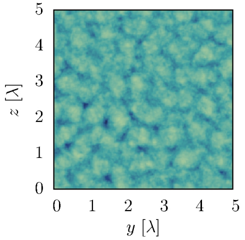
[1] E. Ott, PRL **29** (1972) 1429

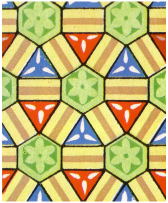
Symmetry of RTI structures

Hexagonal-like structures generated by nonlinear evolution of RTI: an example of spontaneous symmetry breaking in a classical system with “wallpaper” p6m symmetry

S.I.Abarzhi, PRE **59** (1999) 1729
D.Schattschneider, Amer. Math. Monthly **85** (1978) 439

A. Sgattoni, S. Sinigardi, L. Fedeli, F. Pegoraro, A. Macchi, PRE **91** (2015) 013106

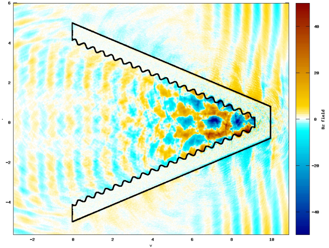




Persian glazed tile

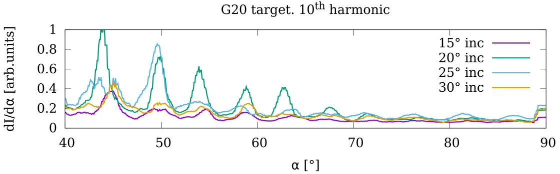
Relativistic high field plasmonics: what next?

Some ideas under testing with PIC simulations:



tapered waveguide for light nano-focusing and amplification
(Original plasmonic concept:
M.Stockman, PRL **93** (2004) 137404)

Plasmonic enhancement and angular selection of high harmonics from gratings



Work in progress . . .

Conclusions

- Experimental evidence of surface plasmon excitation in laser-grating interaction at relativistic intensity
- enhanced TNSA of protons
- direct acceleration of electrons by surface plasmons

→ interest as an electron source?

→ possible to develop plasmonics for EM field manipulation and enhancement in the relativistic regime

- Plasmonic enhancement in the Rayleigh-Taylor instability during Light Sail acceleration

→ issue for high-gain regime of radiation pressure acceleration with ELI-class laser?

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