

# Open quantum system approach to medium-induced gluon radiation in a dense QCD medium

**PhD hours**

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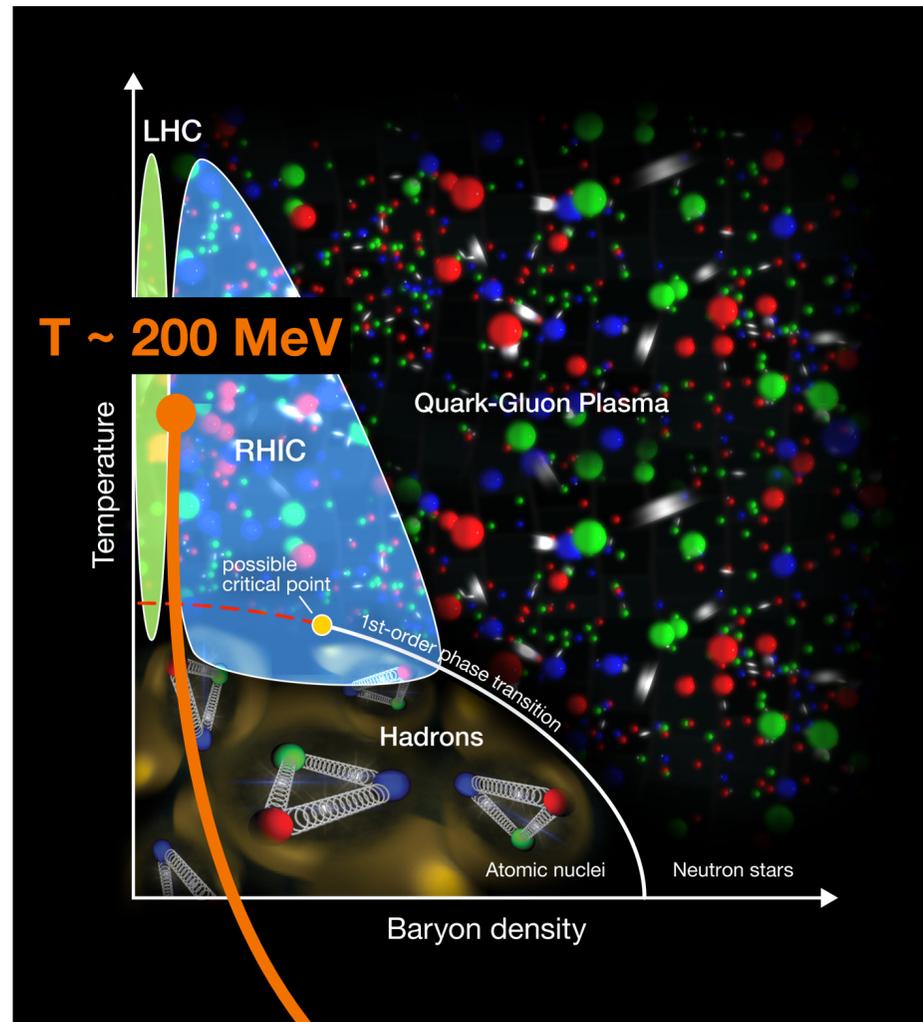
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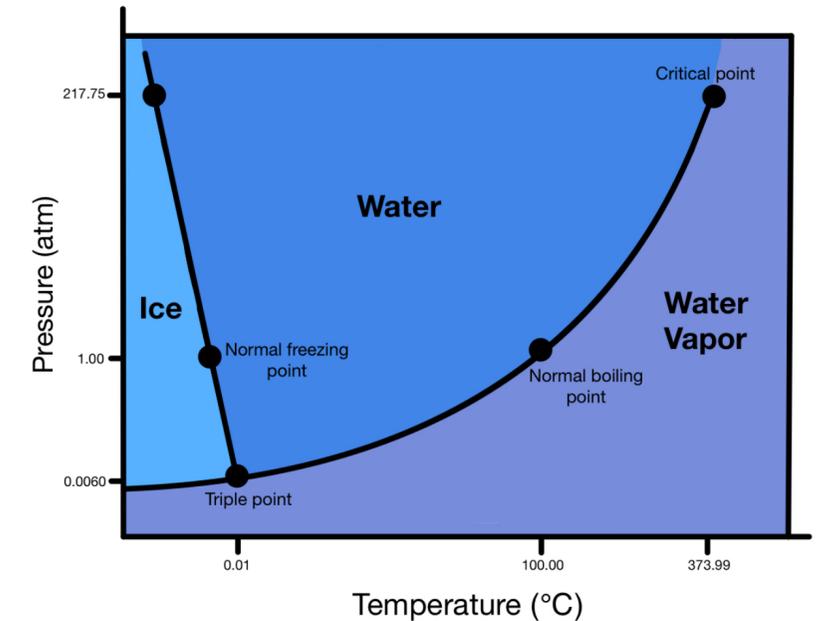
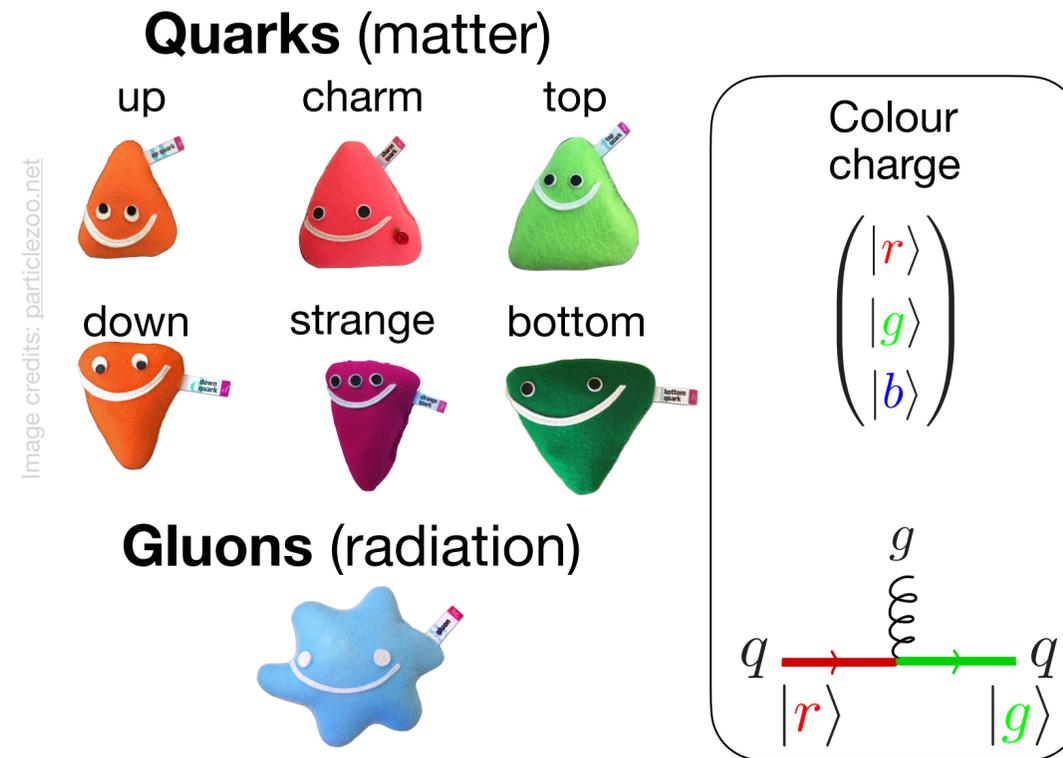
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**5th March 2026**

# A dense QCD medium: Quark-Gluon Plasma



- **Degrees of Freedom:**



- **Interactions:**  
**Quantum ChromoDynamics (QCD)**

- **Heavy-ion collisions:**

e.g. Large Hadron Collider (CERN):  
Pb+Pb collisions at 5 TeV!

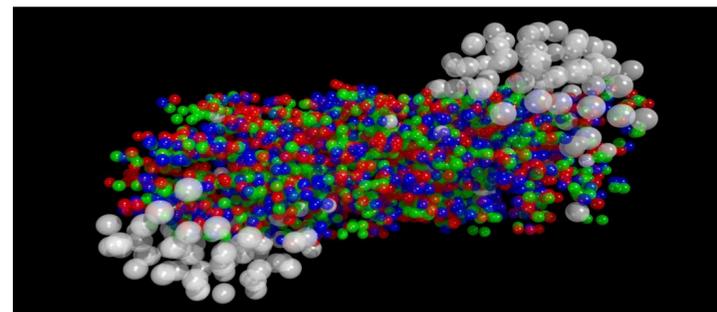
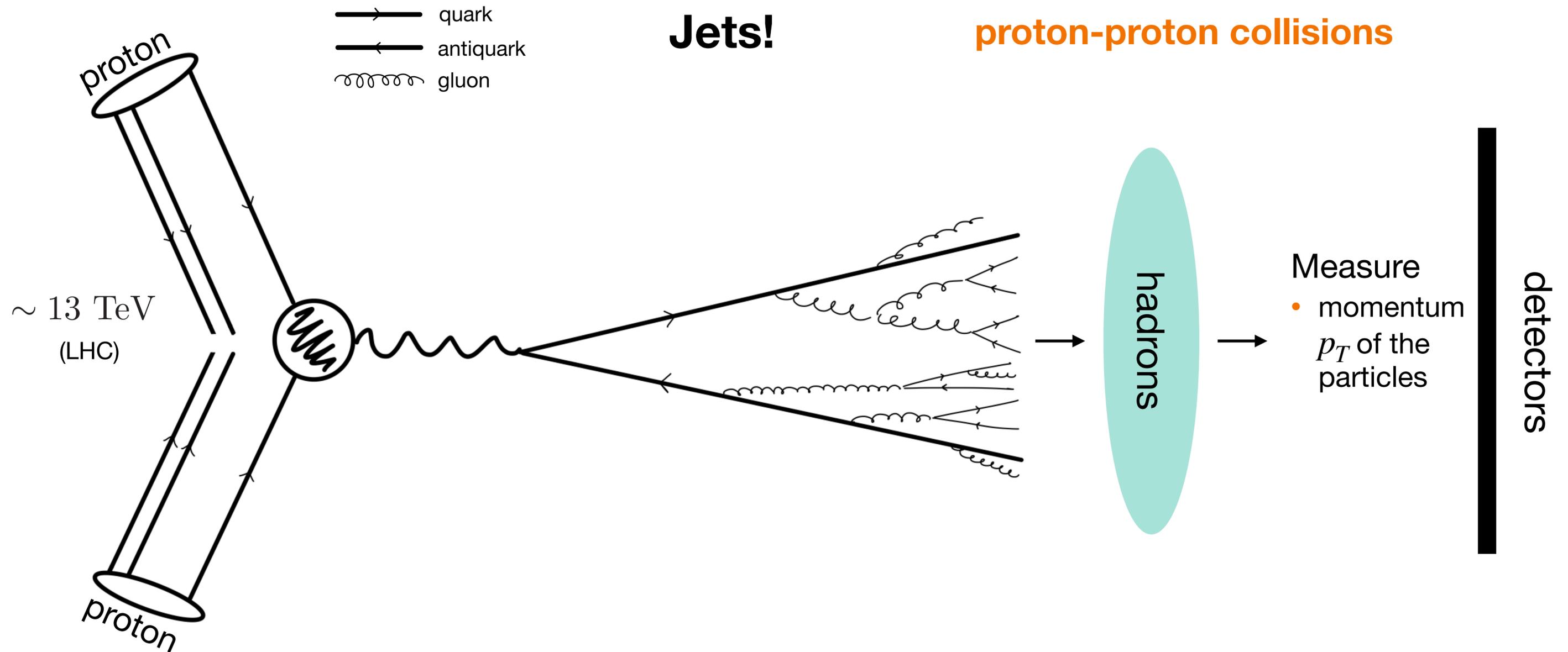


Image credits: <https://www.eurekalert.org/multimedia/906348>

**problem:** the QGP has a life of  $\sim 10 \text{ fm}/c$  ( $10^{-23} \text{ s}$ ) before cooling down to hadrons!

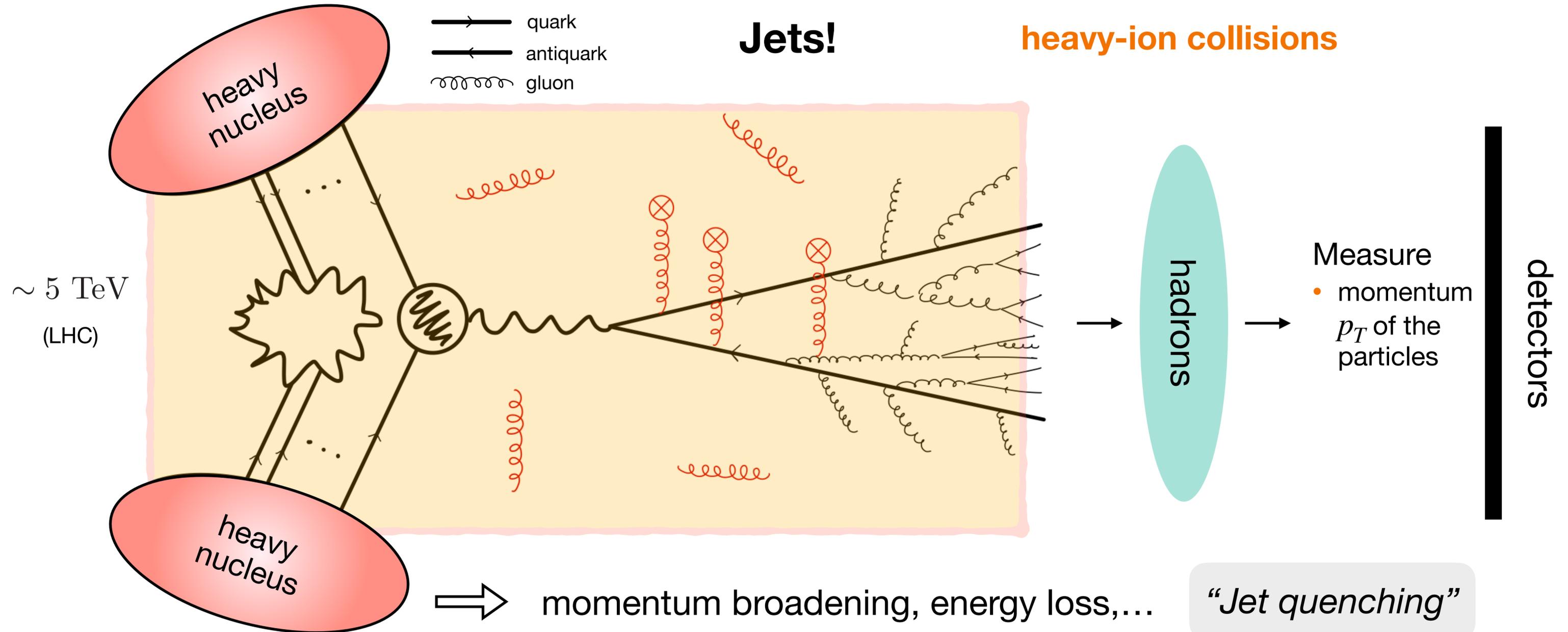
# Jets as QGP probes

- **Idea:** use **high-energetic (hard)** particles which are produced in the **early-stages** of heavy-ion collisions and which leave an **identifiable mark in the measurements**



# Jets as QGP probes

- **Idea:** use **high-energetic (hard)** particles which are produced in the **early-stages** of heavy-ion collisions and which leave an **identifiable mark in the measurements**



# Jets as QGP probes

- Observe these effects and compare with  $pp$  collisions

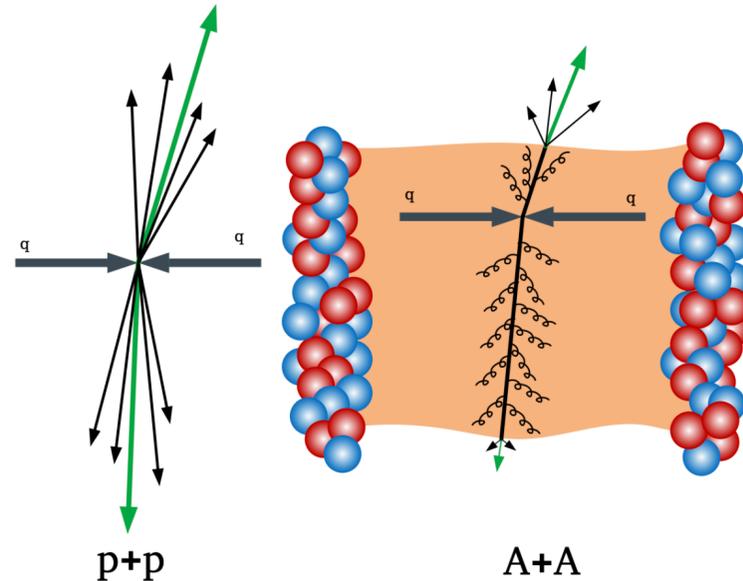
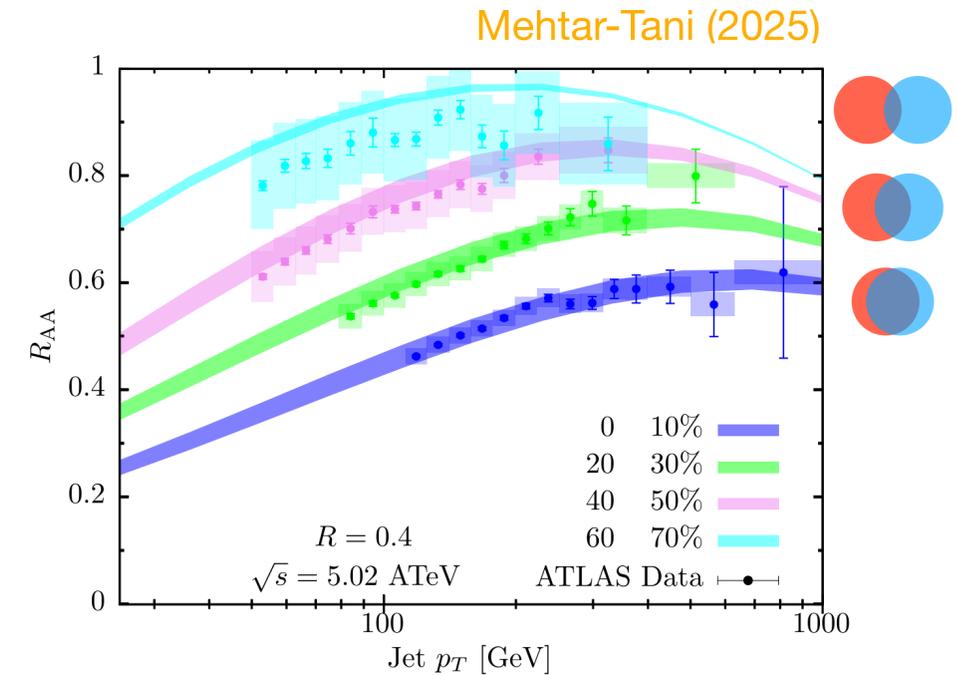


Image credits: Atlas Collaboration/CERN

Ratio between **protons** and **heavy-ion** collisions:



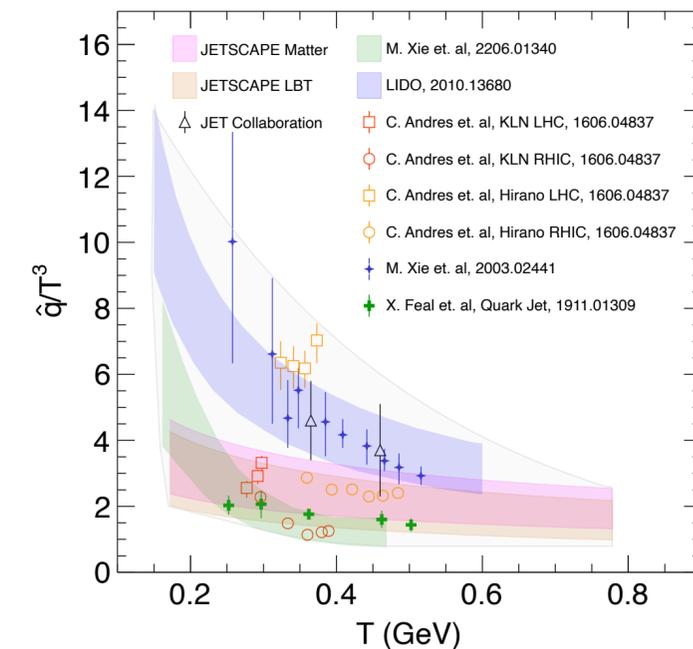
- Extract quantities of the QGP:

e.g. jet quenching parameter  $\hat{q}$

- transverse momentum (squared) per unit length
- relation with the QGP viscosity  $\eta/s$

→ **theoretical uncertainties:** depending on

- initial state modelling
- QGP modelling
- jet-medium interaction modelling
- ...



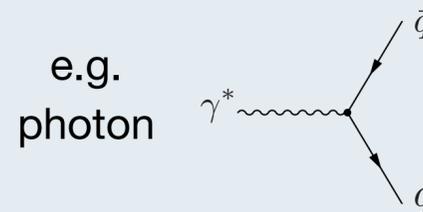
Apolinário et al. (2022)

# Jets as QGP probes

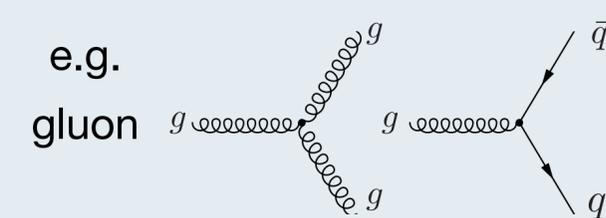
- We focus on the problem of **jet interaction with the QCD medium (QGP)**

Strong force **colour** representations:

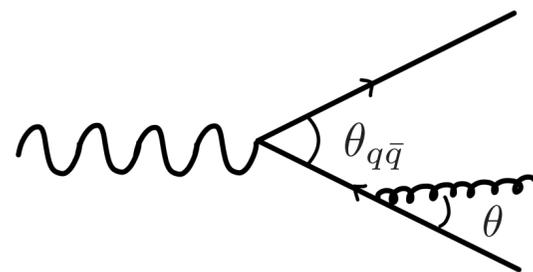
**singlet**  
colourless (non-interacting)



**octet**  
interacting



## Colour coherence (vacuum)



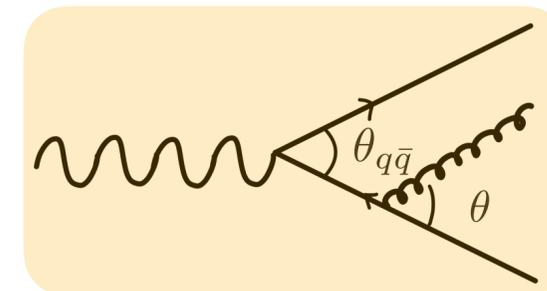
**Soft** (low energy) gluon radiation:

$$\theta < \theta_{q\bar{q}}$$

otherwise, the gluon **resolves** the full  $q\bar{q}$  dipole  
 → **suppressed**

Dokshitzer, Khoze, Mueller, Troyan (1991)

## Colour decoherence (in-medium)



radiation **also** for  $\theta > \theta_{q\bar{q}}$

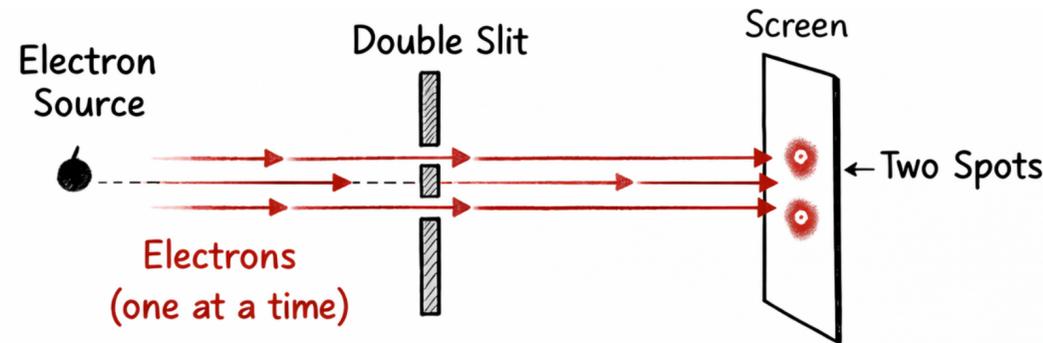
→ **enhancement** of large angle radiation

Mehtar-Tani, Salgado, Tywoniuk (2011-2013)  
 Casalderrey-Solana, Iancu (2011)

# A step back: what is decoherence?

Quantum mechanics has a *uncommon* behaviour

e.g. double slit experiment



classical mechanics **expected** outcome



real outcome

- **Quantum mechanics:**

describes electrons as **clouds of probability** of where to find a moving particle



well-described through the **Schrödinger's equation** as propagating waves

- Different from our daily experience: classical mechanics

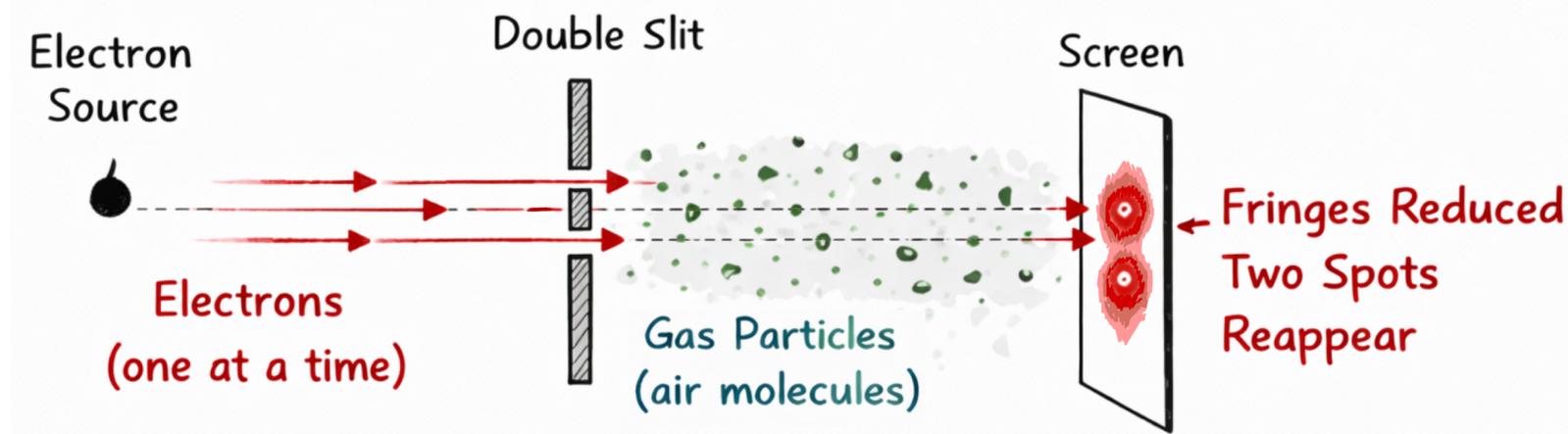
e.g. a goalkeeper would have a tough life...

→ Why do we experience this? **Decoherence!**



# A step back: what is decoherence?

- **Decoherence** is the consequence of studying a physical system in a **non-isolated (open) environment**
- If we look again at the double slit experiment, but we forget to pump the vacuum out of (i.e. **isolate**) our system:



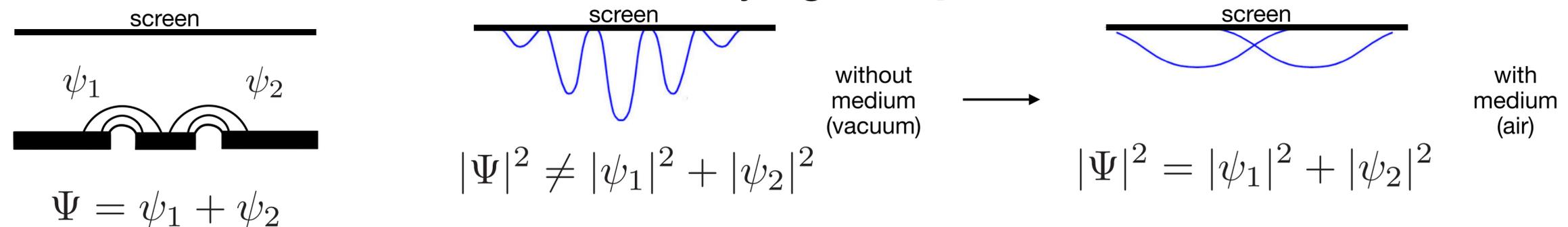
Quantum dynamics gets **modified** when a system is put inside an environment!

~~Schrödinger's equation~~

New master equation  
**Open quantum systems (OQSs) !**

# A step back: what is decoherence?

- Just a bit more precisely, what's happening?
- The **interactions with the medium** are destroying the **quantum interferences**



In the language of OQs: **off-diagonal** terms of the density matrix get **suppressed!**

- To illustrate this, let's consider the case of **spin**:

*e.g. spin state decoherence*

$$|\psi\rangle = \frac{|\uparrow\rangle + |\downarrow\rangle}{\sqrt{2}}$$

$$\rho = |\psi\rangle \langle\psi|$$

probabilities

$$\rho(t=0) = \frac{1}{2} \begin{pmatrix} \langle\uparrow| & \langle\downarrow| \\ \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix} & \begin{pmatrix} \uparrow \\ \downarrow \end{pmatrix} \end{pmatrix}$$

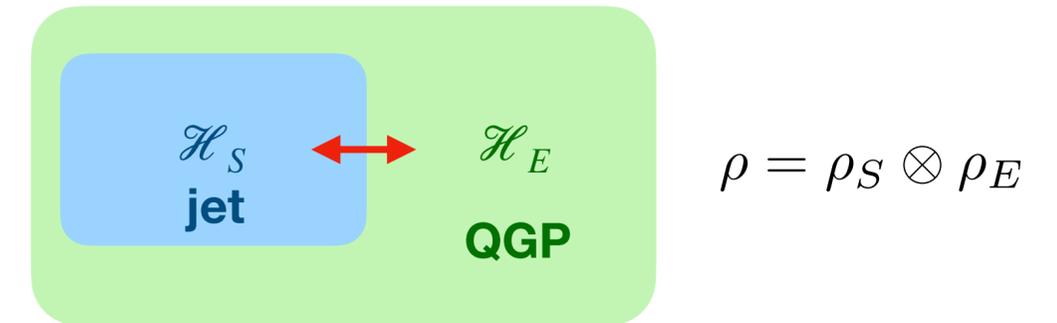
coherences

stochastic magnetic field

$$\rho(t \rightarrow \infty) = \frac{1}{2} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

# A “more sophisticated double slit”: jets as OQs

- We are interested in describing the way radiation of several energetic particles (quarks and gluons) behave **in the QGP**



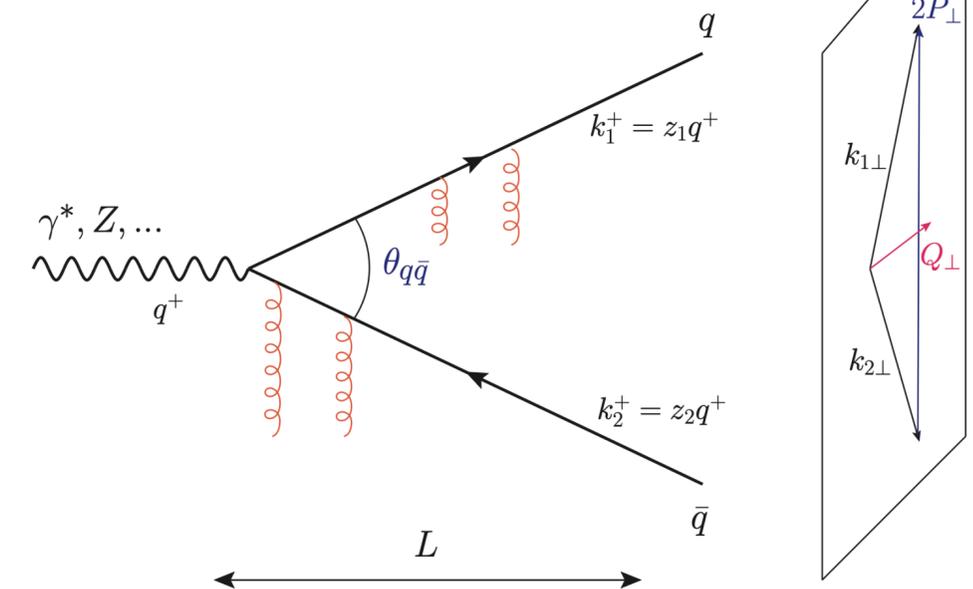
→ quantify **decoherence** and **momentum broadening**

- As a **first step** we have studied the (almost) simplest, but still very interesting, jet:

## High energy $q\bar{q}$ dipole

$$E \sim q^+ \gg P_\perp \gg Q_\perp$$

longitudinal mom.      relative transv. mom.      center-of-mass transv. mom.



- Why starting from here?

- **Heavy quark-antiquark** (quarkonium) OQS

Blaizot, Escobedo (2018)

heavy mass

- **Single quark jet** OQS

Barata, Blaizot, Mehtar-Tani (2023)

high energy

non-relativistic description

in 3+1 dimensions

in 2+1 dimensions

# Derivation of the master equation

- Hamiltonian in 2D transverse space:

$$H = \left( \frac{\hat{p}_{\perp,q}^2}{2k_1^+} + \frac{\hat{p}_{\perp,\bar{q}}^2}{2k_2^+} \right) \otimes \mathbb{1}_E - g \int d^2x_{\perp} \hat{n}^a(x_{\perp}) \otimes A_a^-(t, x_{\perp}) + \mathbb{1}_S \otimes H_{\text{pl}}$$

kinetic term                      interaction                      QGP

number density:  $\hat{n}^a(x_{\perp}) = \delta(x_{\perp} - \hat{x}_{\perp,q}) t^a \otimes \mathbb{1}_{\bar{q}} - \mathbb{1}_q \otimes \delta(x_{\perp} - \hat{x}_{\perp,\bar{q}}) \tilde{t}^a$

quark                      antiquark

$$\frac{d\rho}{dt} = -i [H, \rho]$$

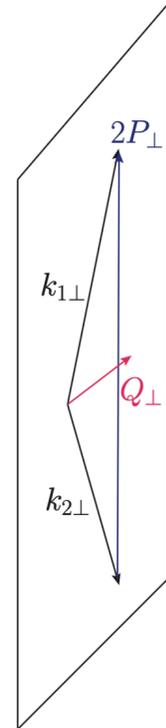
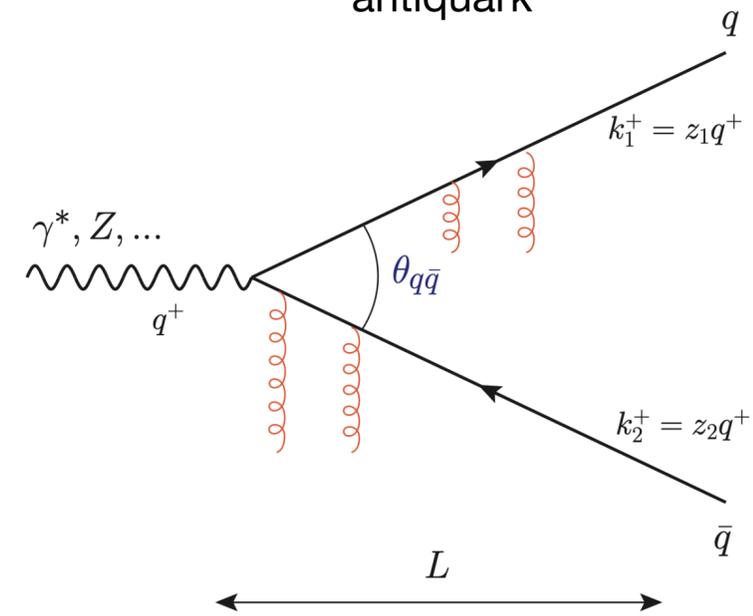
Von Neumann's equation

Partial trace  
over  
environment

$$\text{Tr}_E(\cdot)$$

$$\rho = \rho_S \otimes \rho_E$$

system      environment



$$\frac{d\rho_S}{dt} = -i [H_0, \rho_S] + \mathcal{D}(\rho_S)$$

Linblad's equation

contains the **potential**  $W(x_{\perp} - x'_{\perp})$   
which describes the interactions with the medium  
→ in the **high-energy limit**: mainly **collisions**

# Master equation

$$\frac{d\rho_S}{dt} = -i [H_0, \rho_S] + \mathcal{D}(\rho_S)$$

- **Harmonic approximation** of the potential:  $W \propto \hat{q} \hat{O} [r_\perp^2, \nabla_{\mathbf{p}_\perp}^2, \nabla_{\mathbf{q}_\perp}^2]$

$\mathbf{r}_\perp$  relative position

$\mathbf{p}_\perp$  relative

$\mathbf{q}_\perp$  center-of-mass transv. momentum

- We have a **master equation!**

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t} \begin{pmatrix} \rho_s \\ \rho_o \end{pmatrix} + \frac{1}{E} \mathbf{p}_\perp \cdot \nabla_{\mathbf{r}_\perp} \begin{pmatrix} \rho_s \\ \rho_o \end{pmatrix} = \frac{\hat{q} r_\perp^2}{4C_F} \begin{pmatrix} -2C_F & 2C_F \\ \frac{1}{N_c} & -\frac{1}{N_c} \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} \rho_s \\ \rho_o \end{pmatrix}$$

kinetic term
jet quenching parameter
colour transitions

Colour factors:

$N_c$  # of colours

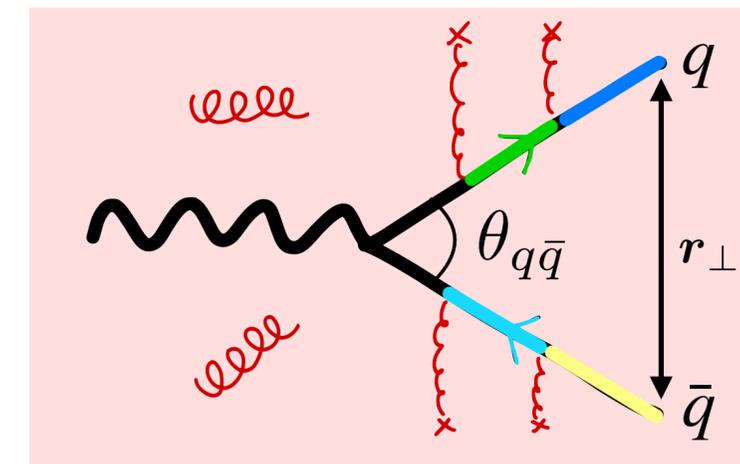
$$C_F = \frac{N_c^2 - 1}{2N_c}$$

$$\frac{1}{E} = \frac{1}{k_1^+} + \frac{1}{k_2^+}$$

effective longitudinal momentum

We have separated the evolution of the

- **singlet** component  $\rho_s$  (colourless/non-interacting)
- **octet** component  $\rho_o$  (colourful/interacting)





# Solutions: kinematical decoherence

$$\frac{1}{E} = \frac{1}{k_1^+} + \frac{1}{k_2^+}; \quad q^+ = k_1^+ + k_2^+$$

- Let's now consider the **motion of the center-of-mass** too:

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t} \begin{pmatrix} \rho_s \\ \rho_o \end{pmatrix} + \left( \frac{1}{E} \mathbf{p}_\perp \cdot \nabla_{\mathbf{r}_\perp} + \frac{1}{q^+} \mathbf{q}_\perp \cdot \nabla_{\mathbf{b}_\perp} \right) \begin{pmatrix} \rho_s \\ \rho_o \end{pmatrix} = \frac{\hat{q}}{4C_F} \left\{ \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & N_c \end{pmatrix} \nabla_{\mathbf{q}_\perp}^2 + \begin{pmatrix} -2C_F & 2C_F \\ \frac{1}{N_c} & -\frac{1}{N_c} \end{pmatrix} \mathbf{r}_\perp^2 \right\} \begin{pmatrix} \rho_s \\ \rho_o \end{pmatrix}$$

- Initial colour **singlet** state

$$\rho_T(\mathbf{q}_\perp, \mathbf{b}_\perp; 0) = \frac{1}{\pi^2} e^{-\mathbf{q}_\perp^2/\Lambda^2 - \Lambda^2 \mathbf{b}_\perp^2}$$

(Gaussian with width  $\Lambda$ )

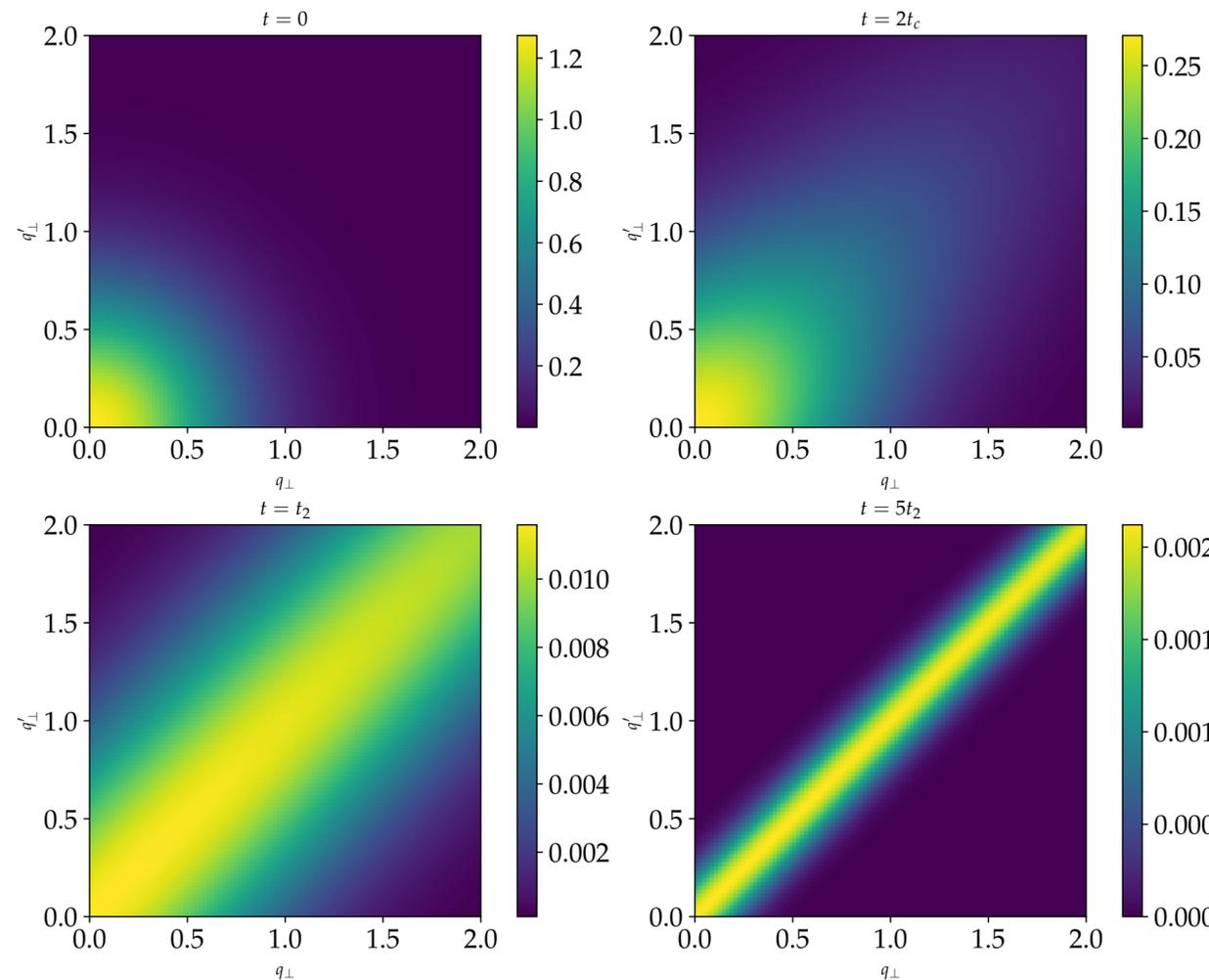
Numbers:

$$\Lambda = 500 \text{ MeV}$$

$$\hat{q} = 1.5 \text{ GeV}^2/\text{fm}$$

$$q^+ = 50 \text{ MeV}$$

$$\theta_{q\bar{q}} = 0.4$$



$$t_c = \left( \frac{4}{\hat{q} \theta_{q\bar{q}}^2} \right)^{\frac{1}{3}} \sim 0.87 \text{ fm}$$

**colour** decoherence occurs (**inside** the medium)

$L = 4 \text{ fm}$  medium length

$$t_2 = \left( \frac{(q^+)^2}{\hat{q} \Lambda^2} \right)^{\frac{1}{3}} \sim 10 \text{ fm}$$

**kinematical** decoherence occurs (**outside** the medium)

# Summary

- We have derived a **master equation** for the  $q\bar{q}$  evolution with the **OQS formalism**
  - ▶ The collisions with the medium cause **color decoherence**
    - **colour transitions** (singlet-octet)
    - **diagonalization** of the density matrix in the colour-anticolour basis
    - **color equilibration**
  - ▶ and afterwards, **kinematical decoherence** in momentum space (if not already outside the QGP)
- Beyond what has been shown here, we have also studied
  - ▶ the **broadening** of the center-of-mass transverse momentum
  - ▶ **perturbatively** the **full** master equation equipped of the relative transverse momentum diffusion term

# Towards better *open* and *quantum* jets

- We are now working to implement **radiation** within the OQS framework
  - ▶ This means generalizing the master equation to a **non-fixed number of particles**
- Interesting **real-time** formalism for quantifying
  - ▶ **In-medium** modifications of the radiation spectrum
  - ▶ **Color decoherence**
- Possible implementation into **Monte Carlo codes** to simulate jets in a QGP and do phenomenology

**Thank you for your attention!**

# Backups

# Derivation of the master equation

- From the Von Neumann equation we have carried out the following approximations:

$$i \frac{d\rho}{dt} = [H, \rho]$$

Von Neumann equation

- ▶ Double iteration of the equation by integrating it and insert the solution back

partial trace —

$$\frac{d}{dt} \rho^I(t) = -ig [H^I(t), \rho^I(0)] - g^2 \int_0^t dt' [H^I(t), [H^I(t'), \rho^I(t')]]$$

- ▶ **Born** approximation: the state remains factorized at all times  $\rho(t) = \rho_S(t) \otimes \rho_E$

- ▶ **Markov** approximation: we impose **locality in time** thanks to the weak coupling  $g$

→ **Redfield** equation:  $\frac{d}{dt} \rho_S^I(t) = -g^2 \int_0^t dt' \text{Tr}_E [H^I(t), [H^I(t'), \rho_S^I(t) \otimes \rho_E]]$

- ▶ Locality is not enough for **Markovianity**: the equation still depends on the initial condition at  $t' = 0$



# Derivation of the master equation

- 
- ▶ If we assume that the **environment correlation time**  $\tau_E$  is much smaller than the **system relaxation time**  $\tau_R$  than, the information on the specific initial state at  $t' = 0$  becomes irrelevant

→ we extend the integration domain from  $t' \in [0, t]$  to  $[-\infty, t]$ . Then, after a change of variables we obtain

$$\frac{d}{dt}\rho_S^I(t) = -g^2 \int_0^{+\infty} dt' \text{Tr}_E [H^I(t), [H^I(t-t'), \rho_S^I(t) \otimes \rho_E]]$$

- ▶ Now, one has just to substitute the factorized structure of the Hamiltonian and keep within the partial trace just the environment contributions
- two-point correlators of the environment part of the interaction

# Derivation of the master equation

$$\frac{d\rho_S}{dt} = -i [H_0, \rho_S] + \mathcal{D}(\rho_S)$$

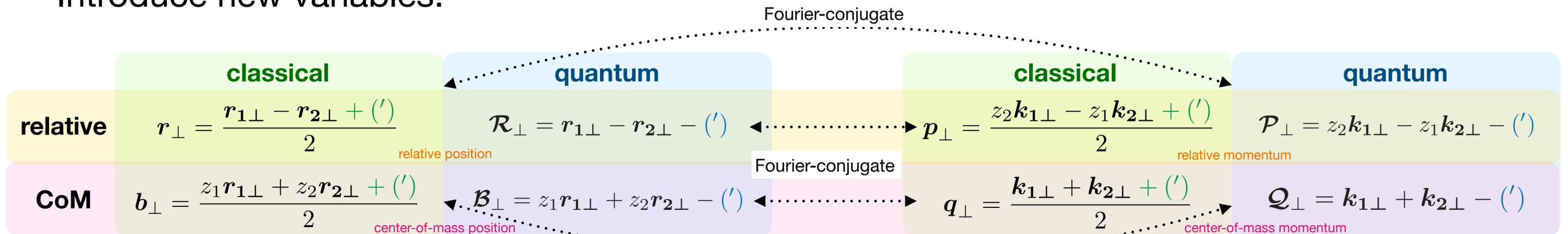
## Wigner function and variables

- The equation is still at the **operator** level: we want to study the evolution of the **matrix elements** of the density matrix  $\rho$

$$\langle \mathbf{r}_{1\perp} \mathbf{r}_{2\perp} | \rho | \mathbf{r}_{1\perp}' \mathbf{r}_{2\perp}' \rangle = \rho(\mathbf{r}_{1\perp} \mathbf{r}_{2\perp}; \mathbf{r}_{1\perp}' \mathbf{r}_{2\perp}')$$

$$\langle x | \rho | x' \rangle = \begin{pmatrix} \cdot & \cdot \\ x - x' & \frac{x + x'}{2} \\ \cdot & \cdot \end{pmatrix}$$

- Introduce new variables:



- Wigner function:**

$$\rho(\mathbf{r}_{\perp}, \mathcal{R}_{\perp}, b_{\perp}, \mathcal{B}_{\perp}) \xrightarrow{\text{partial Fourier transforms}} \boxed{\rho(\mathbf{r}_{\perp}, \mathbf{p}_{\perp}, b_{\perp}, \mathbf{q}_{\perp})}$$

Quasi-probability distribution

$$z_i = \frac{k_i^+}{k_1^+ + k_2^+}$$

# Master equation

- **Harmonic approximation** of the potential:

$$W = W(\mathbf{r}_\perp, \mathbf{b}_\perp, \mathcal{R}_\perp, \mathcal{B}_\perp) \longrightarrow \text{harmonic approx.} \xrightarrow{\text{Wigner transform}} \propto \hat{q} \hat{\mathcal{O}} \left[ \mathbf{r}_\perp^2, \nabla_{\mathbf{p}_\perp}^2, \nabla_{\mathbf{q}_\perp}^2 \right]$$

- We have a **master equation!**

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t} \begin{pmatrix} \rho_s \\ \rho_o \end{pmatrix} + \left( \frac{1}{E} \mathbf{p}_\perp \cdot \nabla_{\mathbf{r}_\perp} + \frac{1}{q^+} \mathbf{q}_\perp \cdot \nabla_{\mathbf{b}_\perp} \right) \begin{pmatrix} \rho_s \\ \rho_o \end{pmatrix} = \frac{\hat{q}}{4C_F} \left\{ \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & N_c \end{pmatrix} \nabla_{\mathbf{q}_\perp}^2 + \begin{pmatrix} -2C_F & 2C_F \\ \frac{1}{N_c} & -\frac{1}{N_c} \end{pmatrix} \mathbf{r}_\perp^2 \right. \\ \left. + \begin{pmatrix} \frac{C_F}{2} & \frac{C_F}{2} \\ \frac{1}{4N_c} & \frac{C_F}{2} - \frac{1}{2N_c} \end{pmatrix} \nabla_{\mathbf{p}_\perp}^2 \right\} \begin{pmatrix} \rho_s \\ \rho_o \end{pmatrix}$$

kinetic term                      CoM diffusion                      colour transitions

$$\frac{1}{E} = \frac{1}{k_1^+} + \frac{1}{k_2^+}$$

$$q^+ = k_1^+ + k_2^+$$

**quantum diffusion:**

It causes diffusion in  $\mathbf{p}_\perp, \mathbf{q}_\perp$   
and decoherence in  $\mathcal{R}_\perp, \mathcal{B}_\perp, \mathcal{P}_\perp, \mathcal{Q}_\perp$

**relative diffusion**

rescaling of variables

→ **relative diffusion**  
operator **scales** as

$$\kappa^2 \sim \frac{\theta_s^2}{\theta_c^2} \quad \theta_s = \frac{\sqrt{\hat{q}L}}{E}$$

**small** in  $E \gg p_\perp, q_\perp$   
high-energy regime

- A “two species” Fokker-Planck -like equation: any analytical **solutions?**

# Solutions: colour transitions

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t} \begin{pmatrix} \rho_s \\ \rho_o \end{pmatrix} + \left( \frac{1}{E} \mathbf{p}_\perp \cdot \nabla_{\mathbf{r}_\perp} + \frac{1}{q^+} \mathbf{q}_\perp \cdot \nabla_{\mathbf{b}_\perp} \right) \begin{pmatrix} \rho_s \\ \rho_o \end{pmatrix} = \frac{\hat{q}}{2} \left\{ \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \nabla_{\mathbf{q}_\perp}^2 + \begin{pmatrix} -1 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix} \mathbf{r}_\perp^2 \right\} \begin{pmatrix} \rho_s \\ \rho_o \end{pmatrix}$$

Large- $N_c$  limit

- **Neglect** the diffusion term  $\longrightarrow$  **analytical solution** with the method of characteristics

- **Initial Wigner function (colour singlet):**  $\rho(\mathbf{p}_\perp, \mathbf{r}_\perp; \mathbf{q}_\perp, \mathbf{b}_\perp; 0) = \underbrace{\rho_R(\mathbf{p}_\perp, \mathbf{r}_\perp; 0)}_{\text{relative}} \underbrace{\rho_T(\mathbf{q}_\perp, \mathbf{b}_\perp; 0)}_{\text{center-of-mass}}$   $\rho_R(\mathbf{p}_\perp, \mathbf{r}_\perp; 0) = H(\mathbf{p}_\perp) \delta(\mathbf{r}_\perp)$   
 $\rho_T(\mathbf{q}_\perp, \mathbf{b}_\perp; 0) = \frac{1}{\pi^2} e^{-\mathbf{q}_\perp^2 / \Lambda^2 - \Lambda^2 \mathbf{b}_\perp^2}$

- By integrating over the coordinates  $\mathbf{r}_\perp$  and  $\mathbf{b}_\perp$ :

$$(\Lambda \rightarrow 0) \quad \frac{dP}{d^2 \mathbf{p}_\perp d^2 \mathbf{q}_\perp} = H(\mathbf{p}_\perp) \times \frac{1}{\pi} \left\{ \underbrace{e^{-\frac{\hat{q} \theta_{q\bar{q}}^2 t^3}{12}} \delta(\mathbf{q}_\perp)}_{\text{singlet}} + \int_0^t ds \underbrace{\frac{\theta_{q\bar{q}}^2 (t-s)^2}{8s} e^{-\frac{\hat{q} \theta_{q\bar{q}}^2 (t-s)^3}{12}} e^{-\frac{\mathbf{q}_\perp^2}{2\hat{q}s}}}_{\text{octet}} \right\}$$

$t_c = \left( \frac{4}{\hat{q} \theta_{q\bar{q}}^2} \right)^{\frac{1}{3}}$

$\theta_{q\bar{q}}^2 = \frac{2\mathbf{p}_\perp^2}{E^2}$

- We compute the **CoM transverse momentum distribution:**

$$Q_s^2 = \hat{q}L \quad \langle \Delta Q_\perp^2 \rangle = 2Q_s^2 \left\{ 1 - \int_0^1 ds \exp \left( -\frac{\theta_{q\bar{q}}^2 s^3}{\theta_c^2} \frac{1}{3} \right) \right\} \quad \theta_c^2 = \frac{4}{\hat{q}t^3}$$

- **Non-trivial check** of known *Wilson lines*-like calculations with OQSs

Dominguez et al. (2019); Isaksen, Tywoniuk (2023); ...

- **Clarify hypothesis** behind the same results
  - ▶ initial factorization
  - ▶ neglect diffusion term

