

Free-Space Optical Communication at High Rates

Fernando P. Guiomar

*¹Instituto de Telecomunicações, 3810-193, Aveiro, Portugal
guiomar@av.it.pt*

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UNIVERSIDADE DE COIMBRA



instituto de
telecomunicações

Who we are

- Non-profit Organization
- Public Utility (since 1995)
- Associate Laboratory (since 2001)

Mission



create and disseminate scientific knowledge



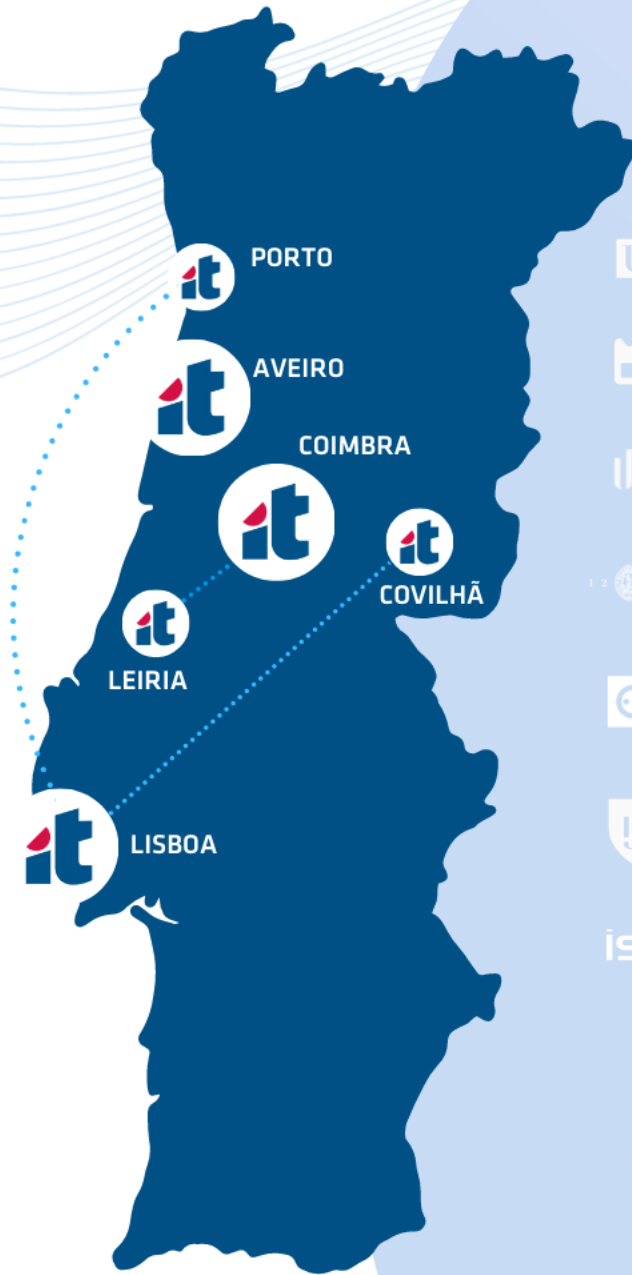
support advanced training



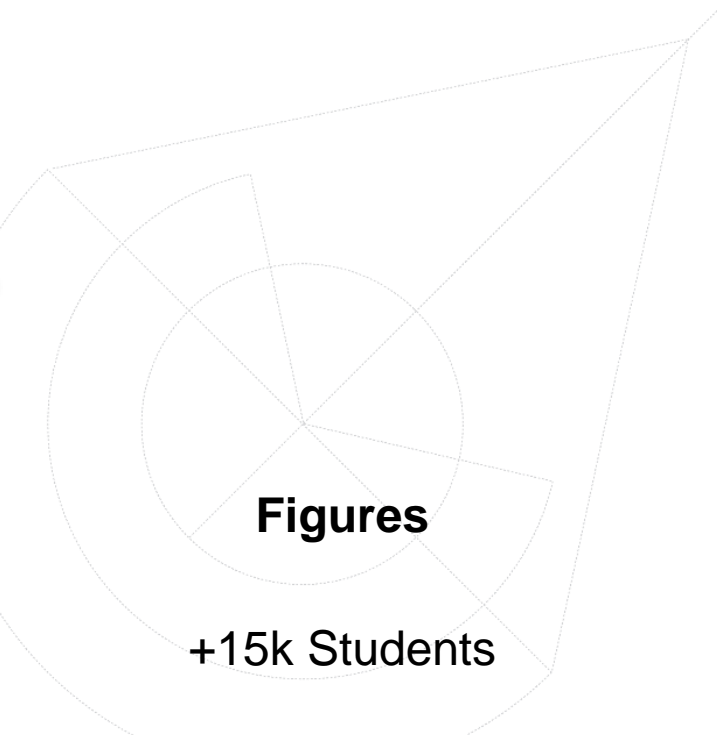
promote technology transfer



support public policy



University of Aveiro Campus



Figures

+15k Students

+1k Professors

+500 researchers

Research Team – Researchers and Senior PhD Students



Paulo Monteiro – Associate Professor
<https://www.it.pt/Members/Index/448>



Fernando Guiomar – Senior Researcher
<https://www.it.pt/Members/Index/4556>



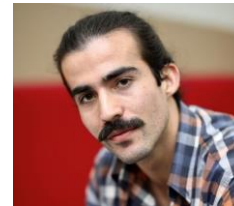
Gil Fernandes – Post-Doc Researcher
<https://www.it.pt/Members/Index/5475>



Beatriz Oliveira – Post-Doc Researcher
<https://www.it.pt/Members/Index/27257>



Bruno Brandão – PhD Student
<https://www.it.pt/Members/Index/27776>



Manuel Neves – PhD Student
<https://www.it.pt/Members/Index/29937>



Pedro Loureiro – PhD Student
<https://www.it.pt/Members/Index/31791>

Research Team – Junior PhD and MSc Students



Manuel Freitas – PhD Student



Nwanze Nzekwu – PhD Student



Victor Correia – PhD Student



André Campos – PhD Student



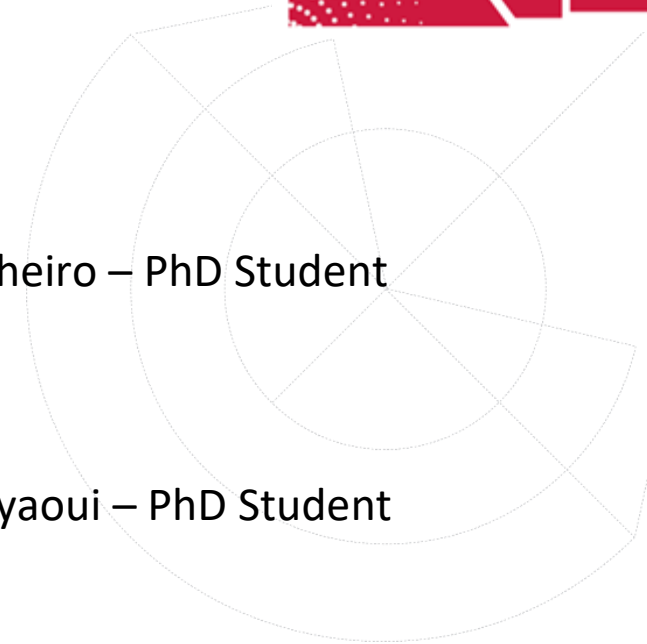
Diogo Malheiro – PhD Student



Salma Yahyaoui – PhD Student



Paulo Carvalho – MSc Student



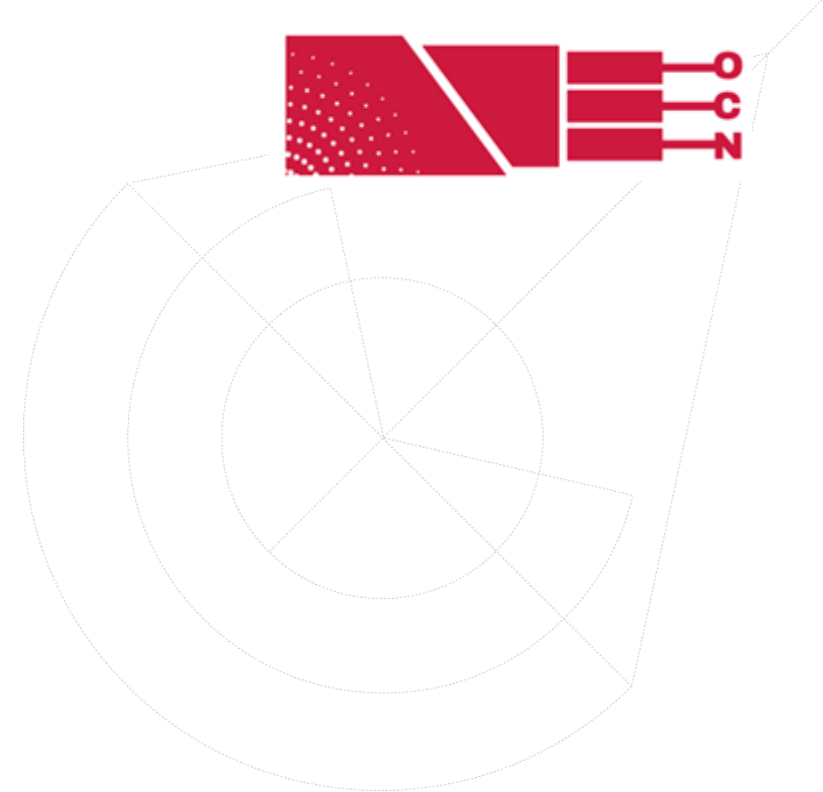
Research Team - Alumni



Marco Fernandes – Post-Doc Researcher
<https://www.it.pt/Members/Index/27781>



Romil Patel – Post-Doc Researcher





fiber optics

- high-capacity coherent links;
- PON;
- radio-over-fiber.

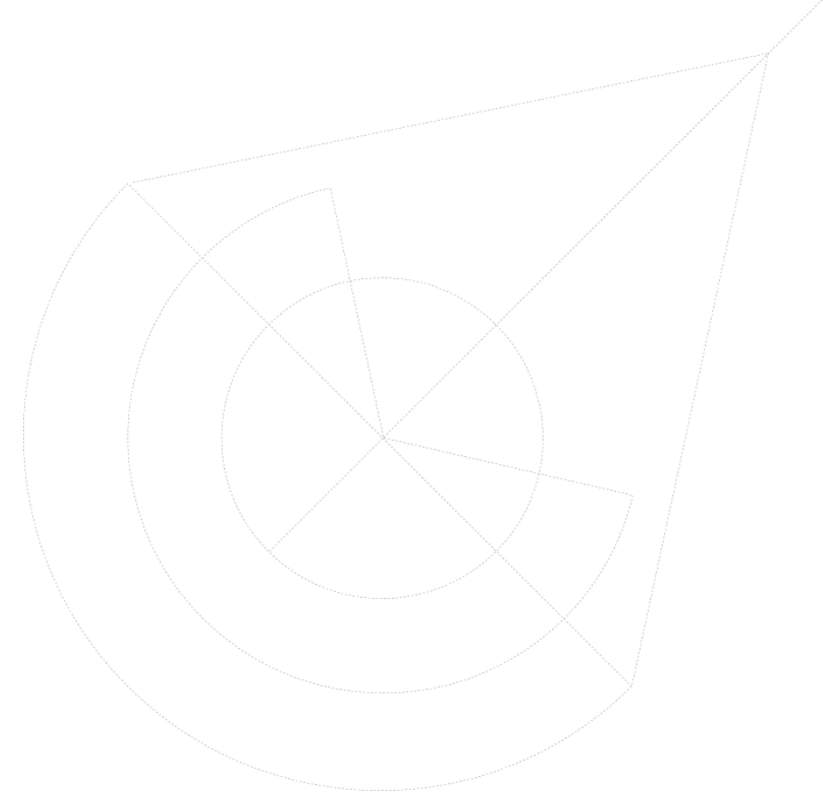
optical wireless

- free-space optics (FSO);
- visible light communications (VLC).

DSP

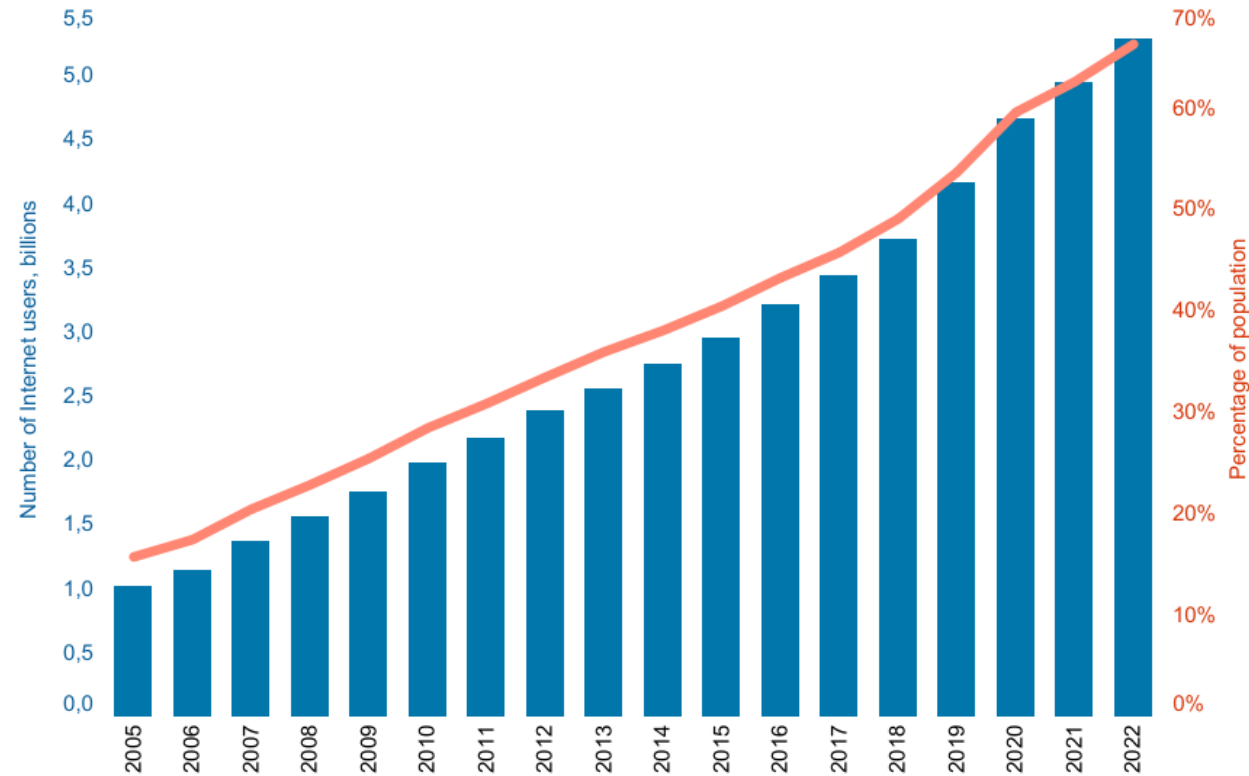
Outline

- **Introduction and Motivation**
 - Free-Space Optics: What, Why and How?
- **FSO Implementation Challenges**
 - Impact of Pointing Errors;
 - Impact of Atmospheric Turbulence.
- **Enhancing FSO Reliability**
 - Advanced Channel Estimation;
 - Mitigating Atmospheric Turbulence: MIMO-FSO.
- **Enhancing FSO Capacity**
 - Adaptive Modulation for Turbulence Mitigation;
 - Adaptive Modulation for Pointing Error Mitigation.
- **1.8 km WDM-FSO Field Trial**
 - How Many Channels are Enough?
- **Conclusions**



FSO: A High-Capacity Solution for Next-Generation Wireless

Individuals using the Internet



Source: ITU

- More than 30% of world population still does not have access to internet, with the number being higher considering high-speed transmission.
- Free-Space Optics (FSO) is a solution for providing worldwide high-capacity internet delivery reaching places where fiber cannot go, either with terrestrial or satellite links.

Why FSO?

STARLINK'S INTER-SATELLITE LASER LINKS ARE SETTING NEW RECORD WITH 42 MILLION GB PER DAY

by: [Maya Posch](#)

44 Comments

February 5, 2024



(NYSE) and Nasdaq will soon be switched on in March.

Alphabet's X tests Free Space Optics Communications in 700TB across 5km

RTX, 2 Other Companies to Help DARPA Develop Airborne Wireless Power Transfer System

by [Mary-Louise Hoffman](#)
September 8, 2023, 10:52 am



Starlink's Laser System Is Beaming 42 Million GB of Data Per Day

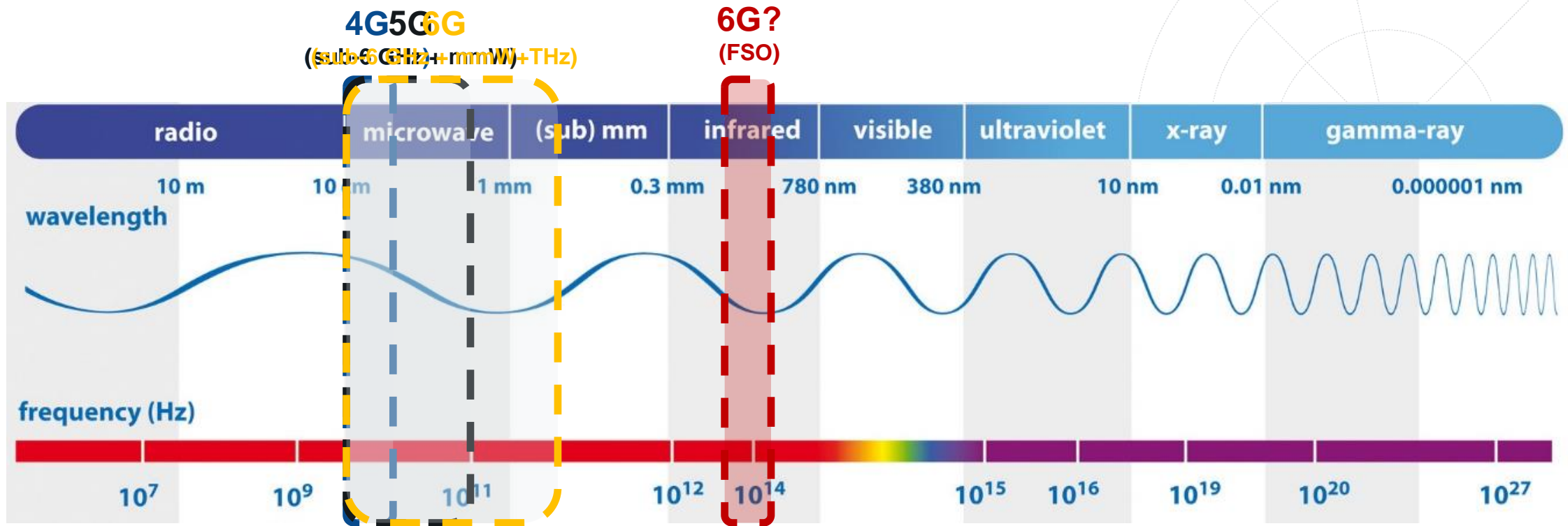
A SpaceX engineer details how the company is using a fleet of 9,000 lasers over the Starlink constellation to deliver high-speed internet across the globe.



By [Michael Kan](#) January 30, 2024

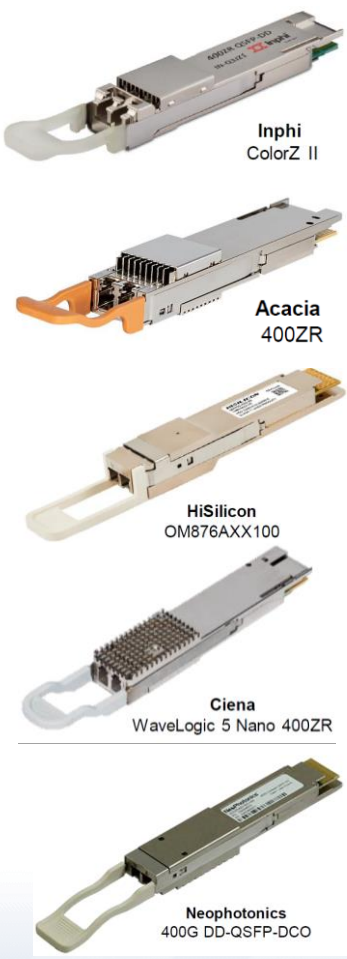


Wireless Communications – Past, Present and Future

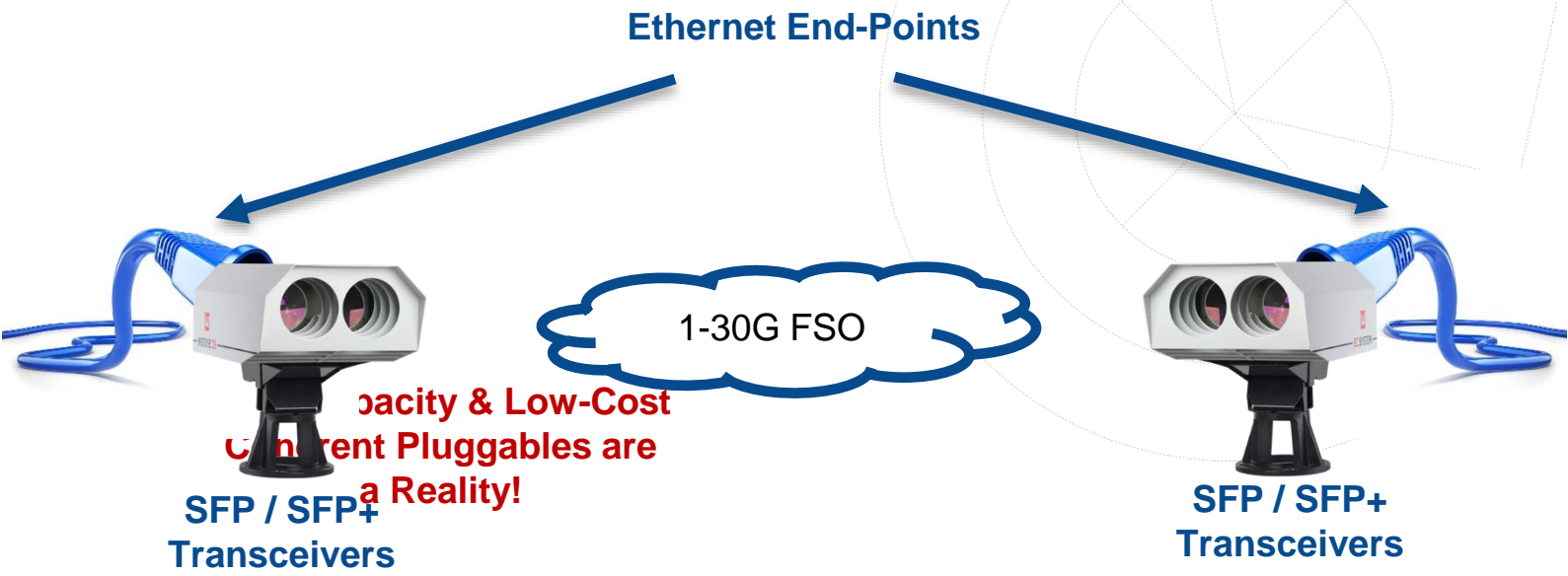


- **5G** extends 4G with mmW frequencies below 100 GHz;
- **6G** is expected to extend mmW and use THz-wave frequencies (above 300 GHz);
- **Free-space optics** in the infrared region (800 nm – 2000 nm) are an attractive alternative to mmW and THz-wave.

High-Capacity Coherent Pluggables + Seamless Fiber-FSO: A Perfect Match?



400ZR Commercial Transceivers

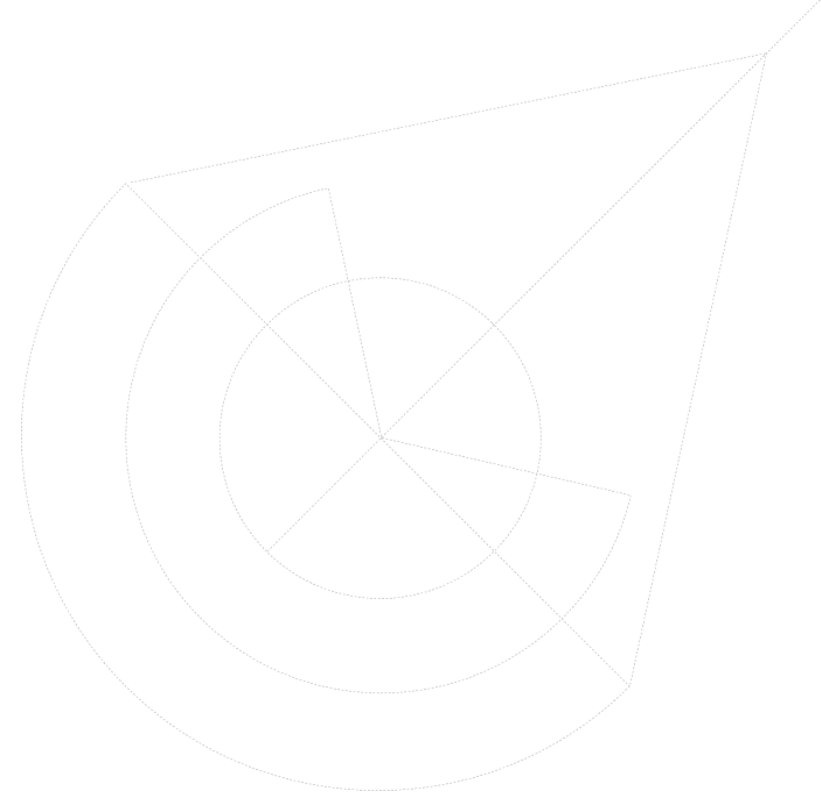


High-Capacity Coherent Pluggables + Seamless Fiber-FSO: A Perfect Match?

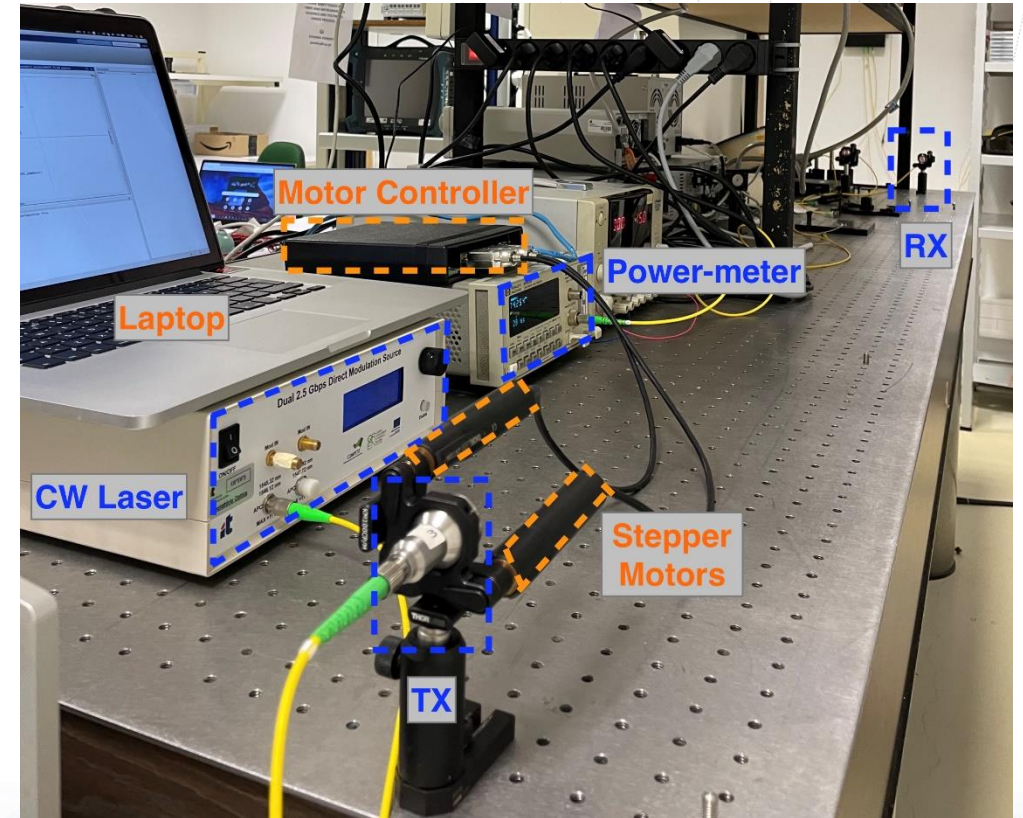
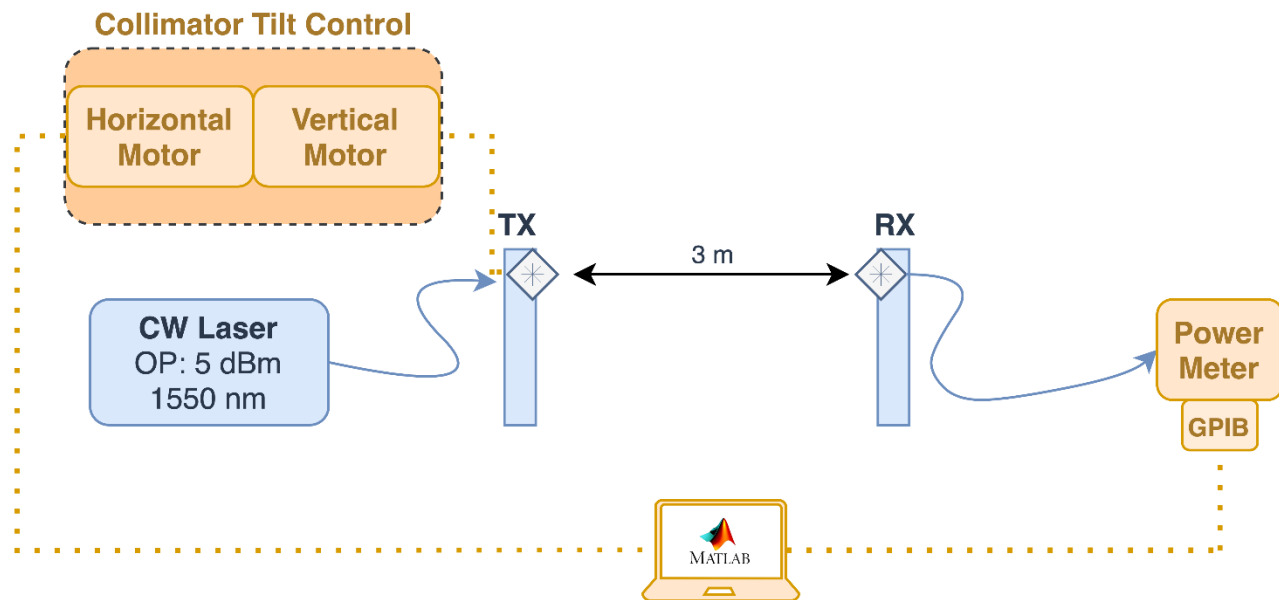


FSO Implementation Challenges

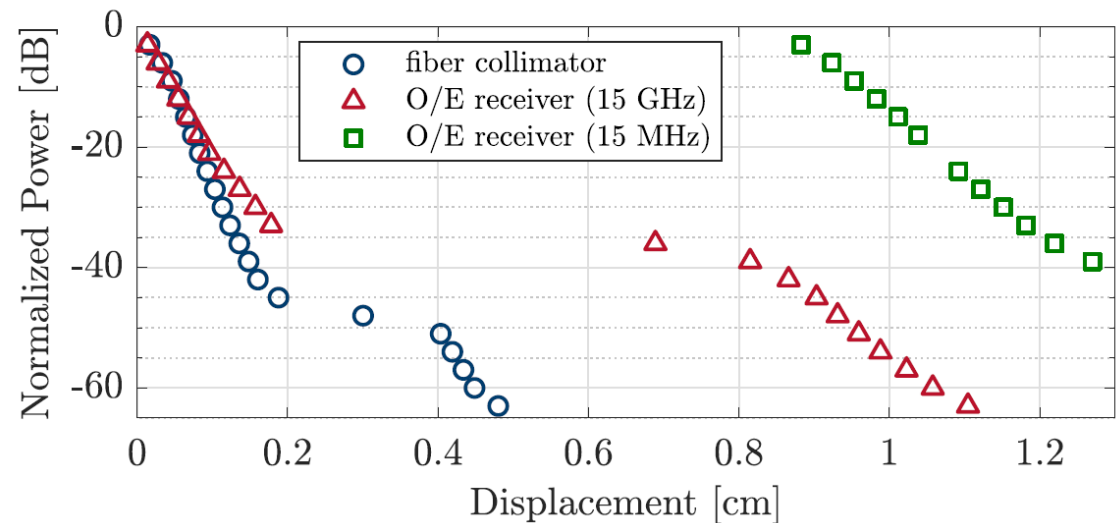
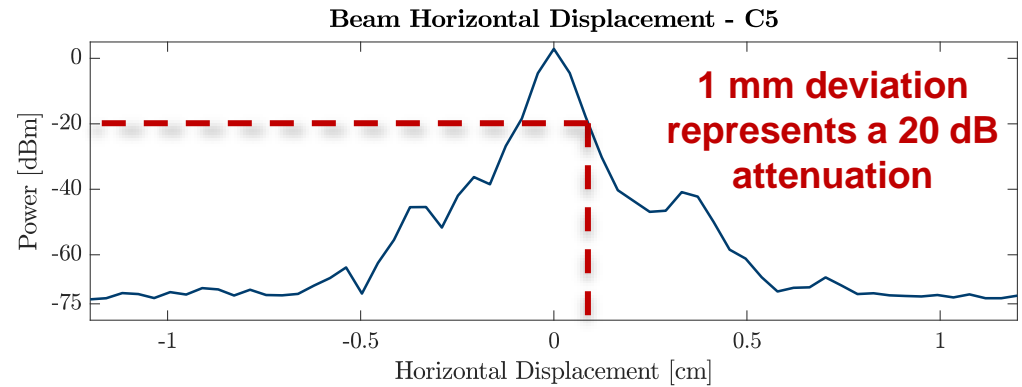
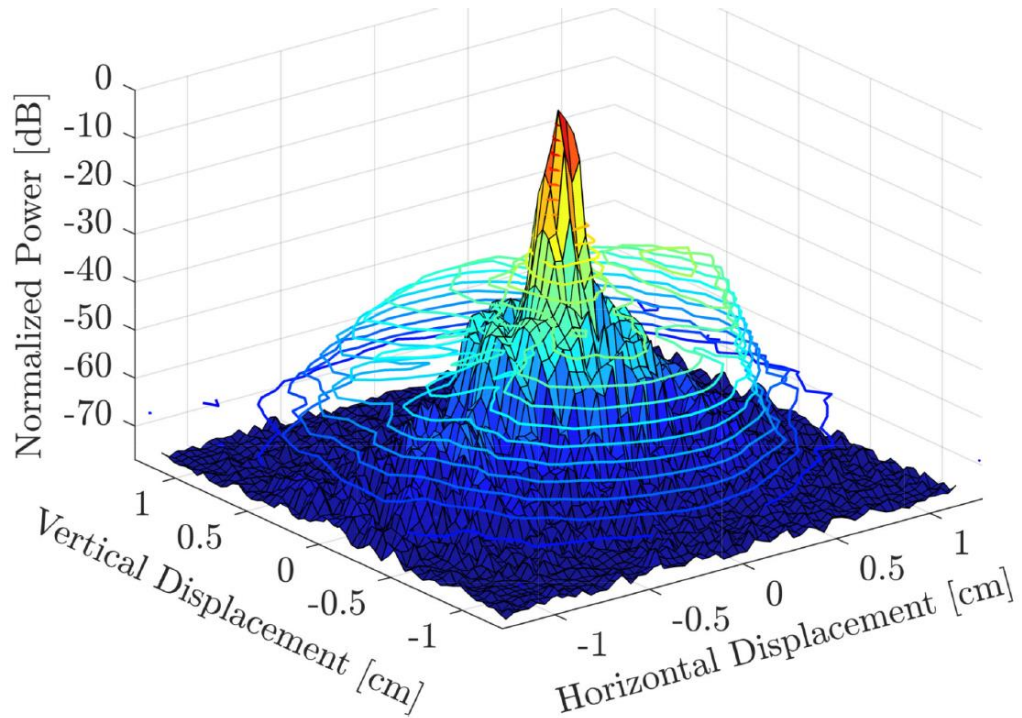
1) Impact of Pointing Errors



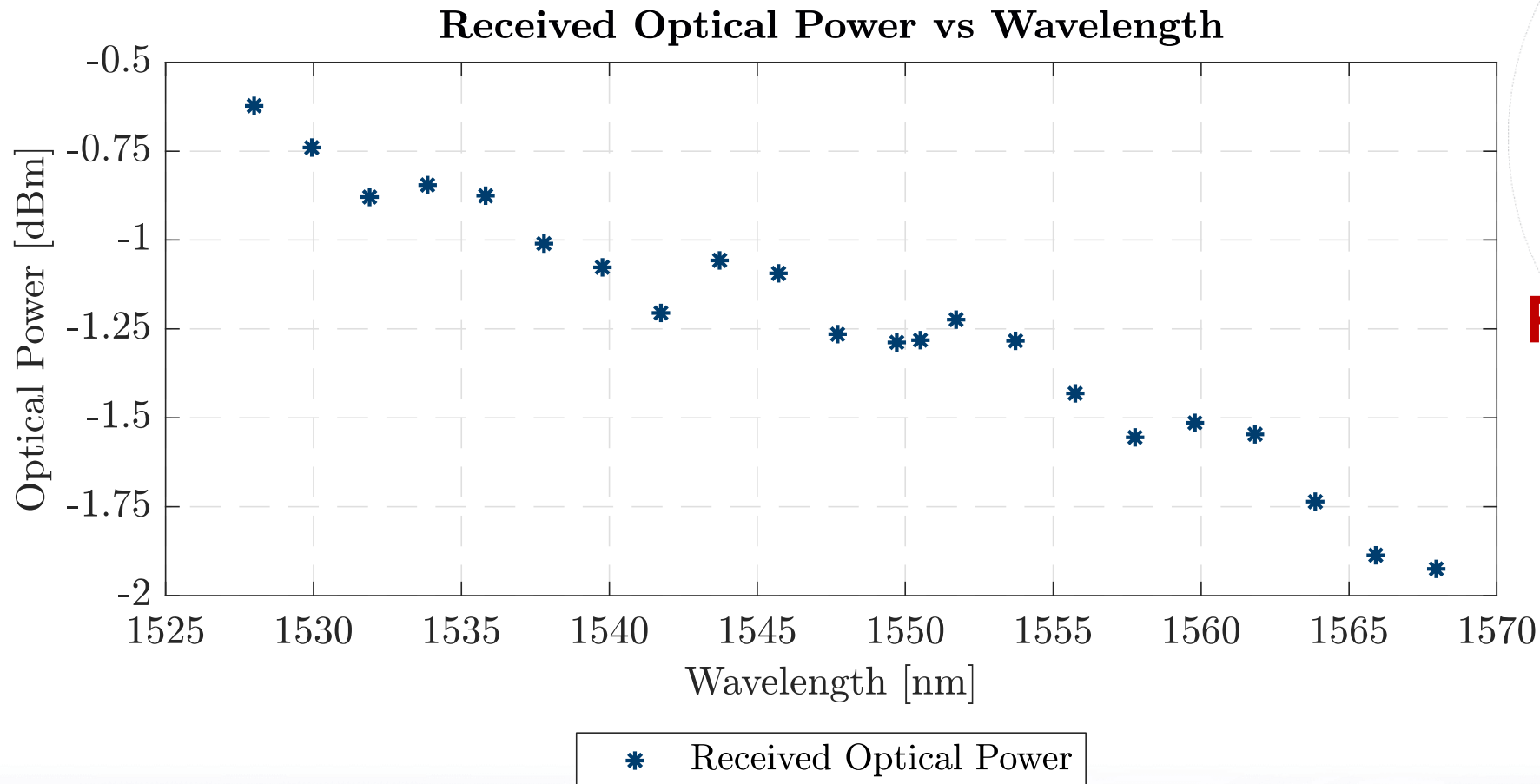
Pointing Errors Tolerance: Seamless Air-to-Fiber



Pointing Errors Tolerance: Seamless Air-to-Fiber



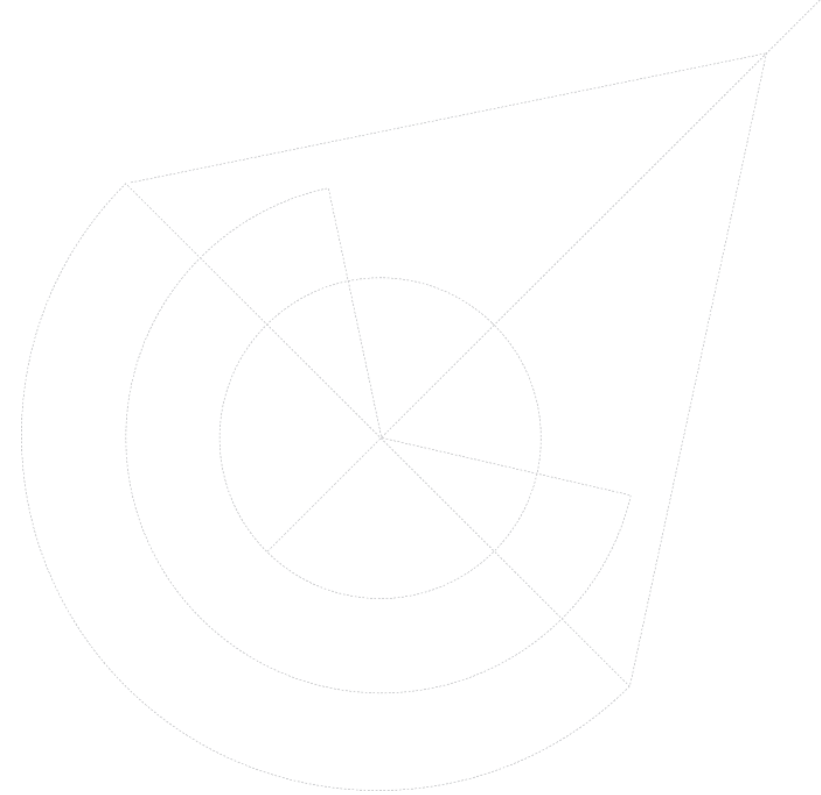
Pointing Errors Tolerance: Seamless Air-to-Fiber



~1.5 dB Optical Power Variation over the Entire C-Band!

FSO Implementation Challenges

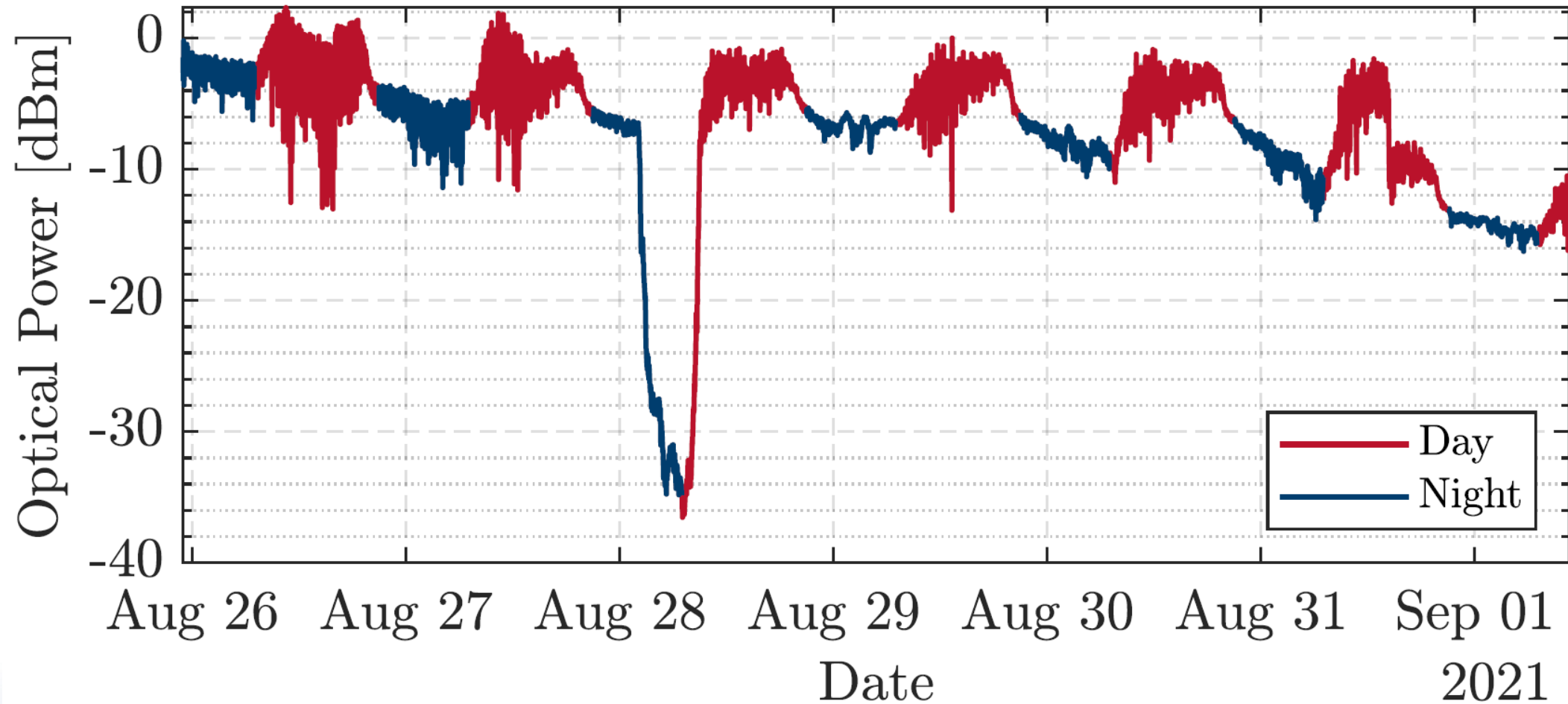
2) Impact of Atmospheric Turbulence



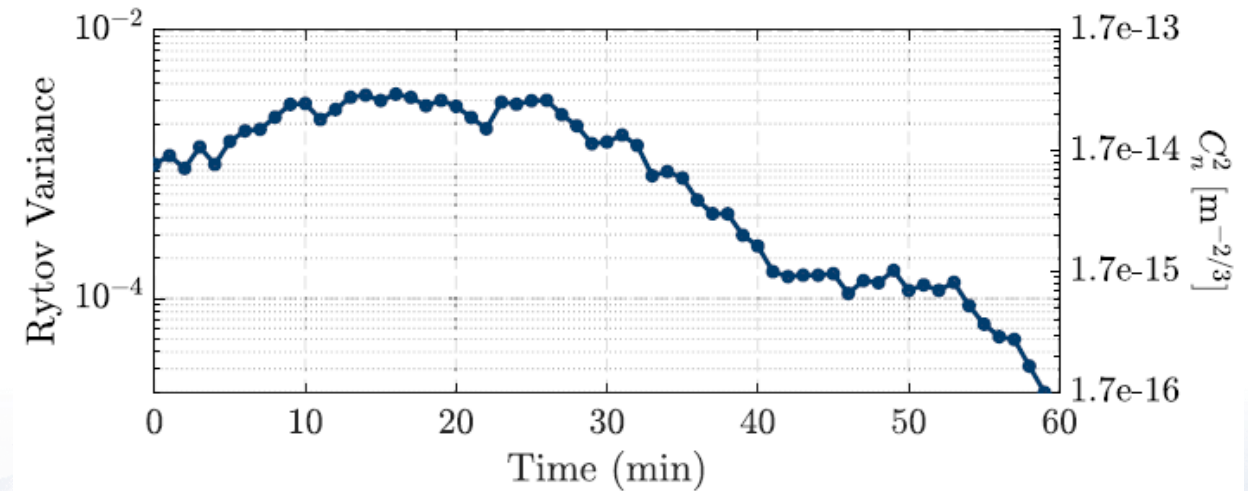
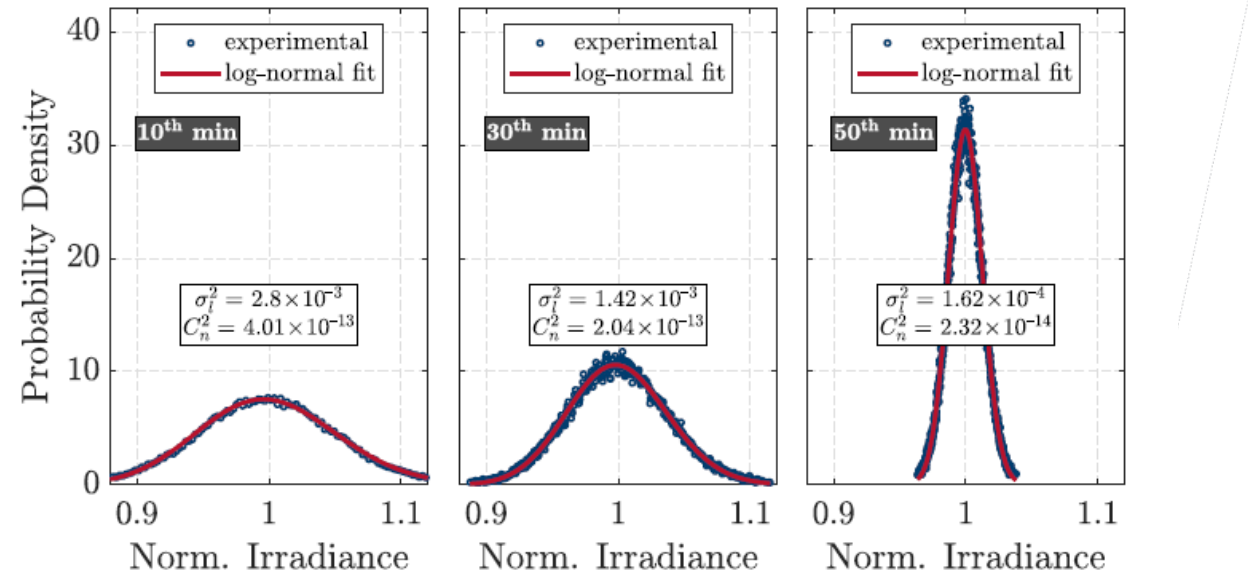
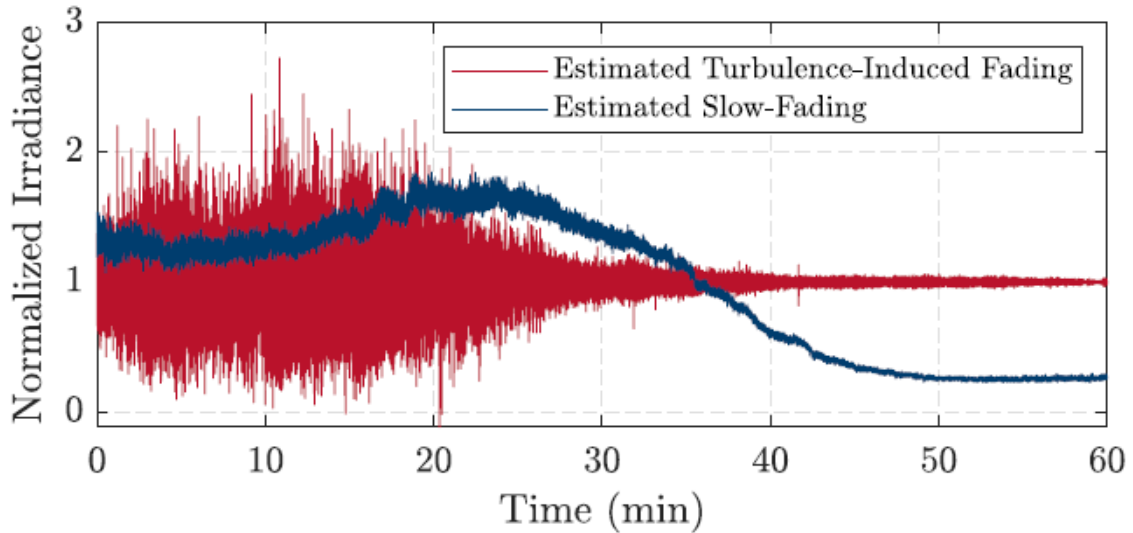
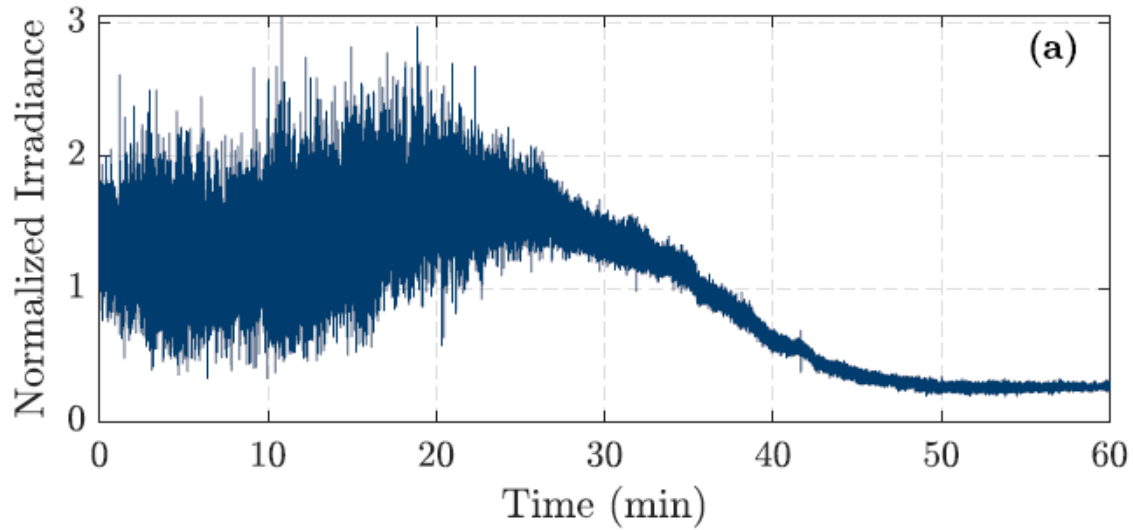
Experimental Analysis of Outdoor FSO



Time-Varying FSO Channel

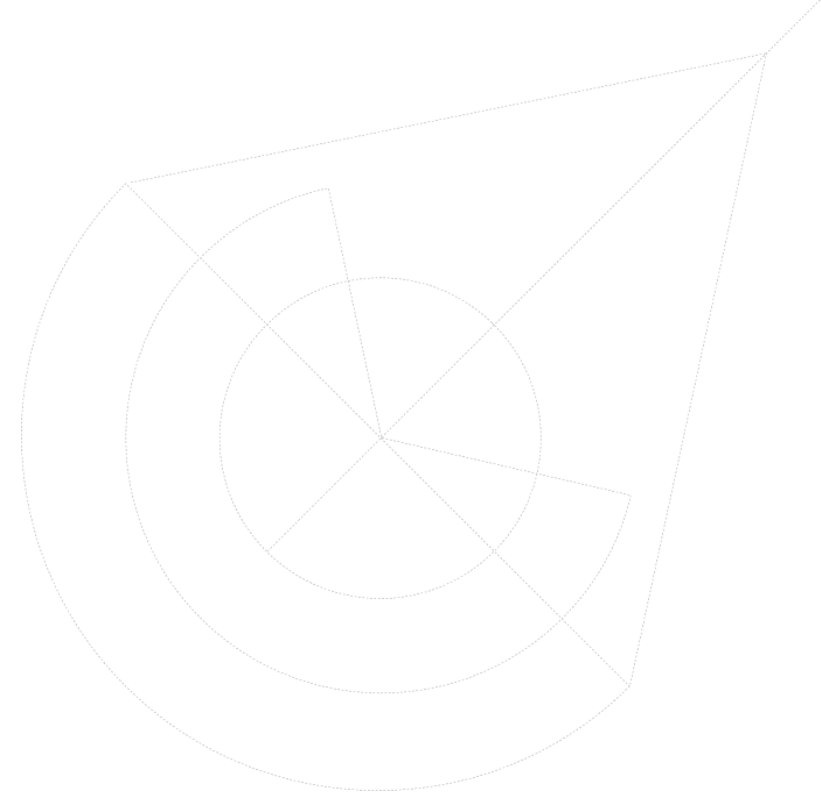


Time-Varying FSO Channel

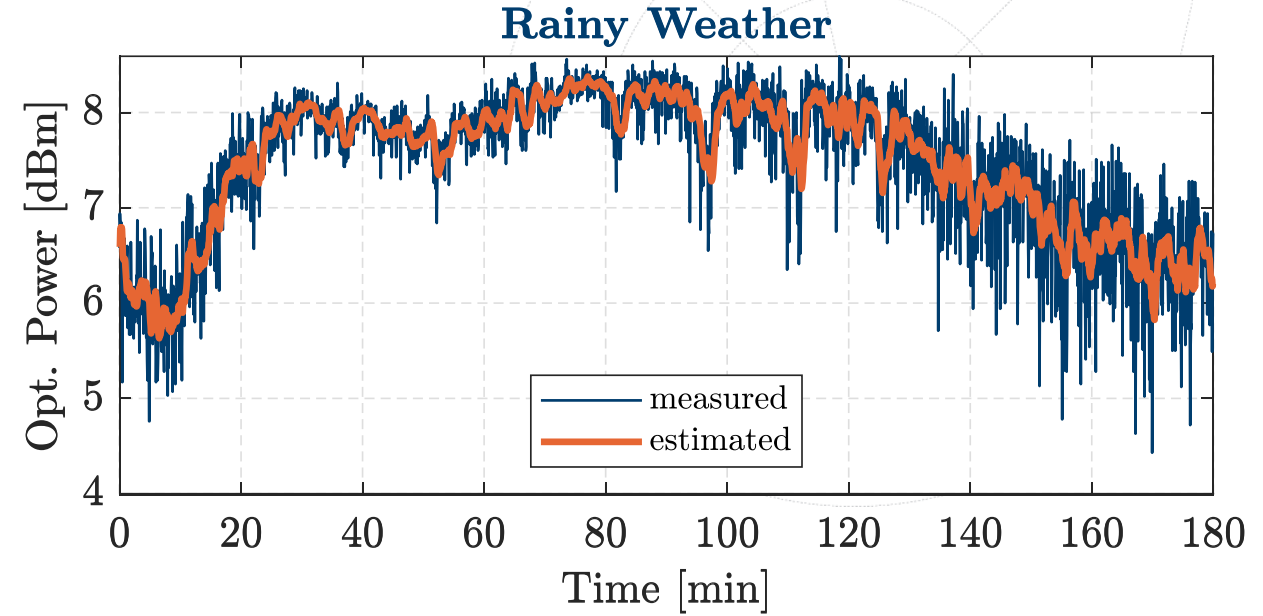
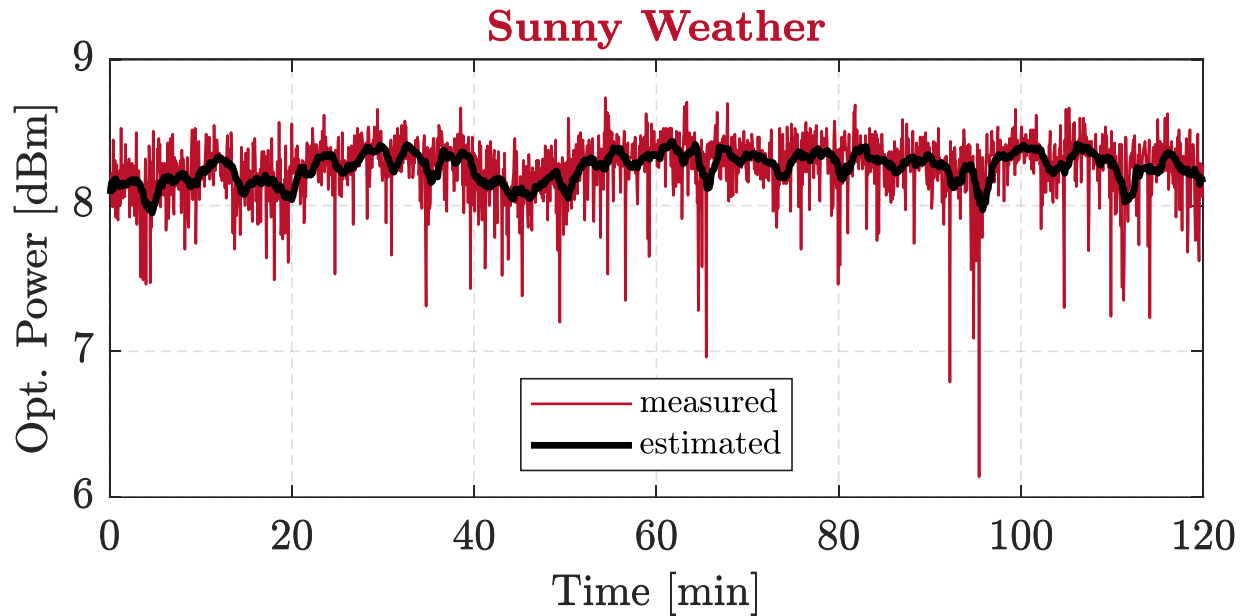


Enhancing FSO Reliability

1) Advanced Channel Estimation



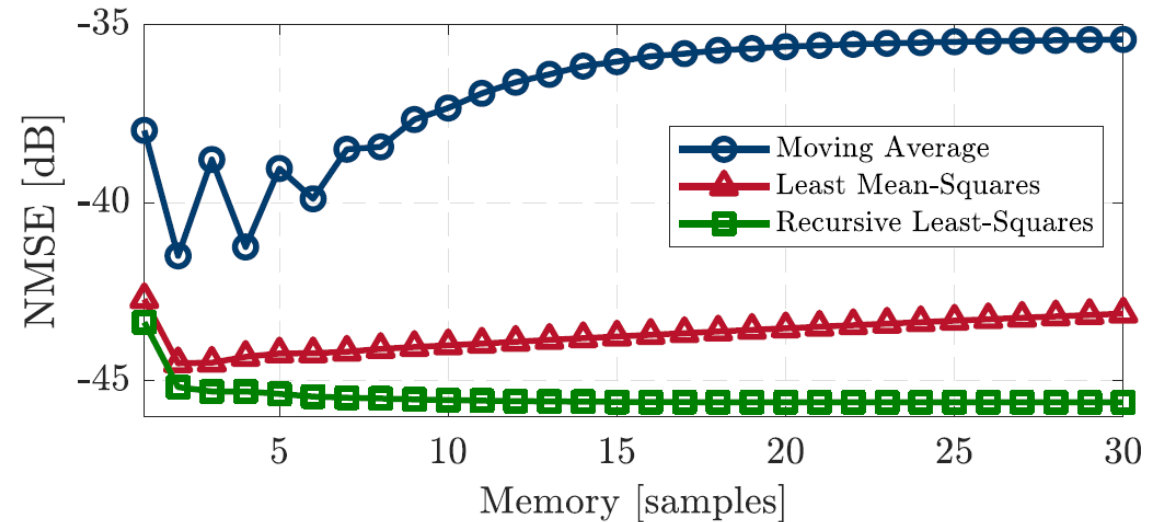
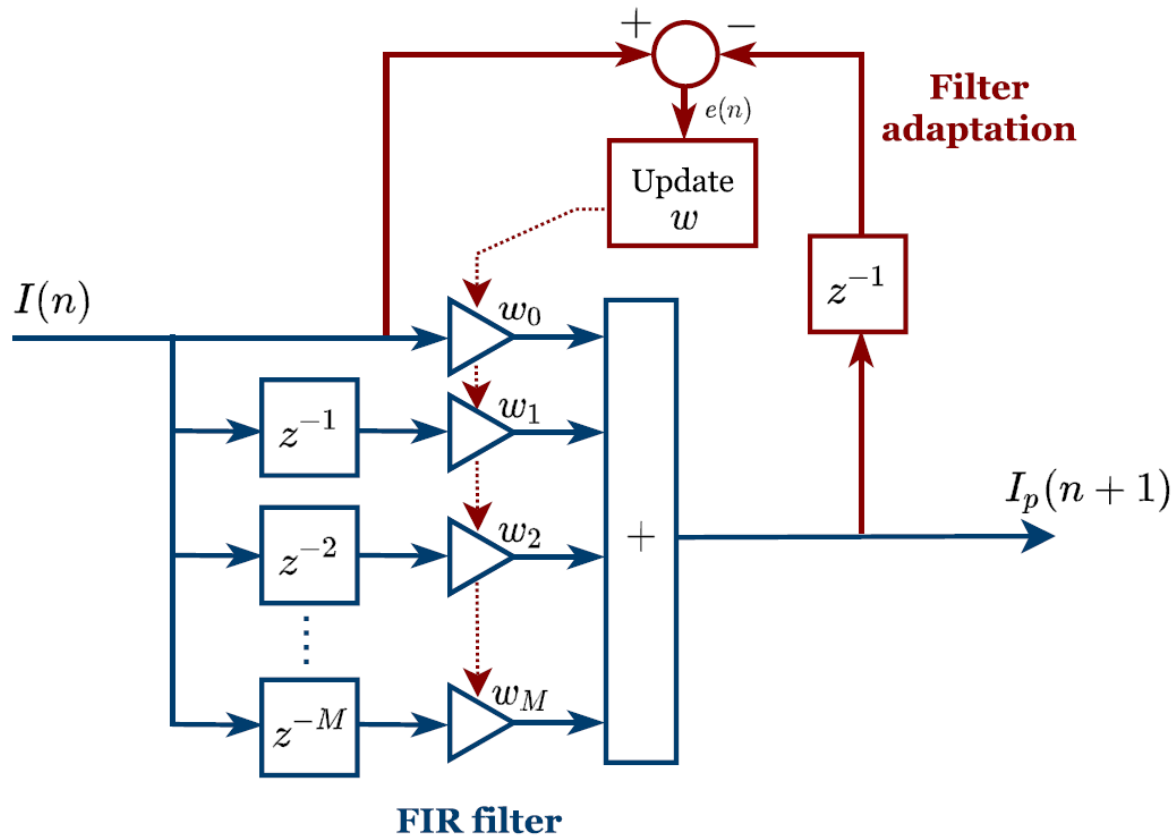
FSO Channel Estimation: Low-Complexity Moving Average



Low-complexity channel estimator:

$$P_{\text{est}}(n + 1) = \frac{1}{N_{\text{taps}}} \sum_{n - N_{\text{taps}} + 1}^n P_{\text{meas}}(n),$$

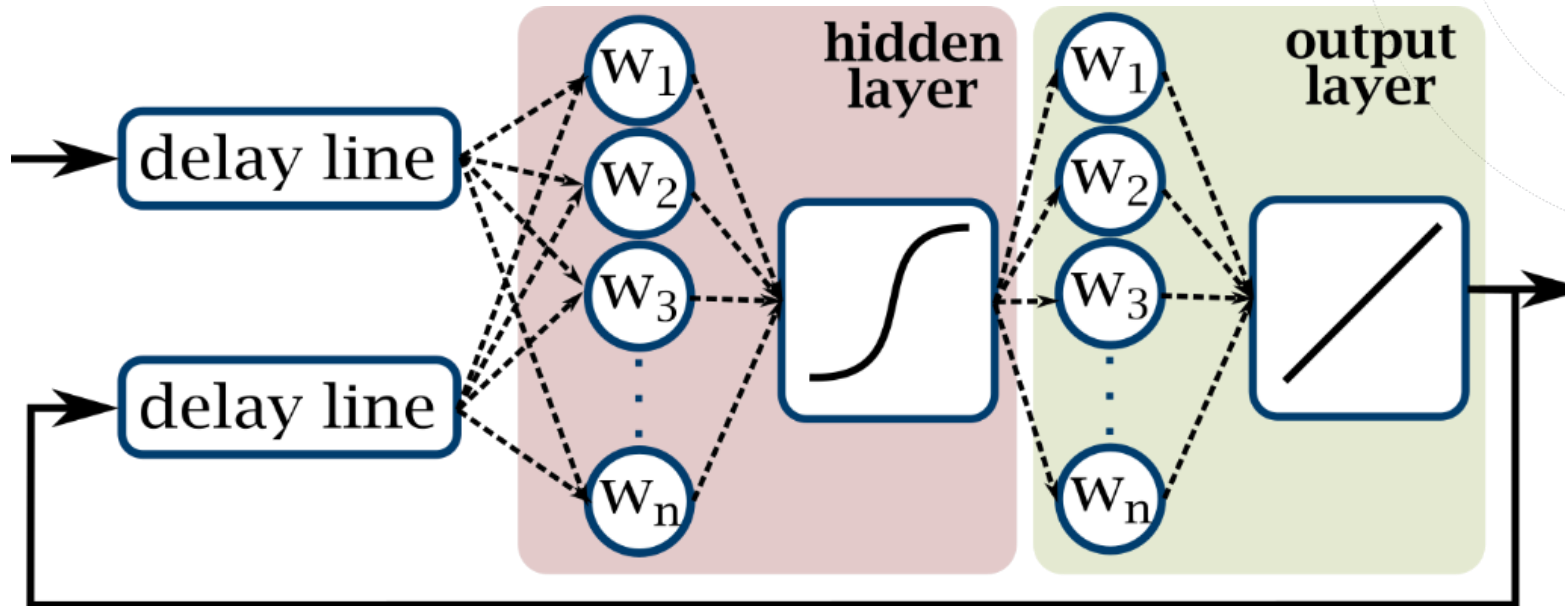
FSO Channel Estimation: Adaptive Algorithms



FSO Channel Estimation: Advanced Solutions using Machine Learning

Highly Reliable Outdoor 400G FSO Transmission Enabled by ANN Channel Estimation

Marco A. Fernandes, J. Leonardo Nascimento, Paulo P. Monteiro and Fernando P. Guiomar



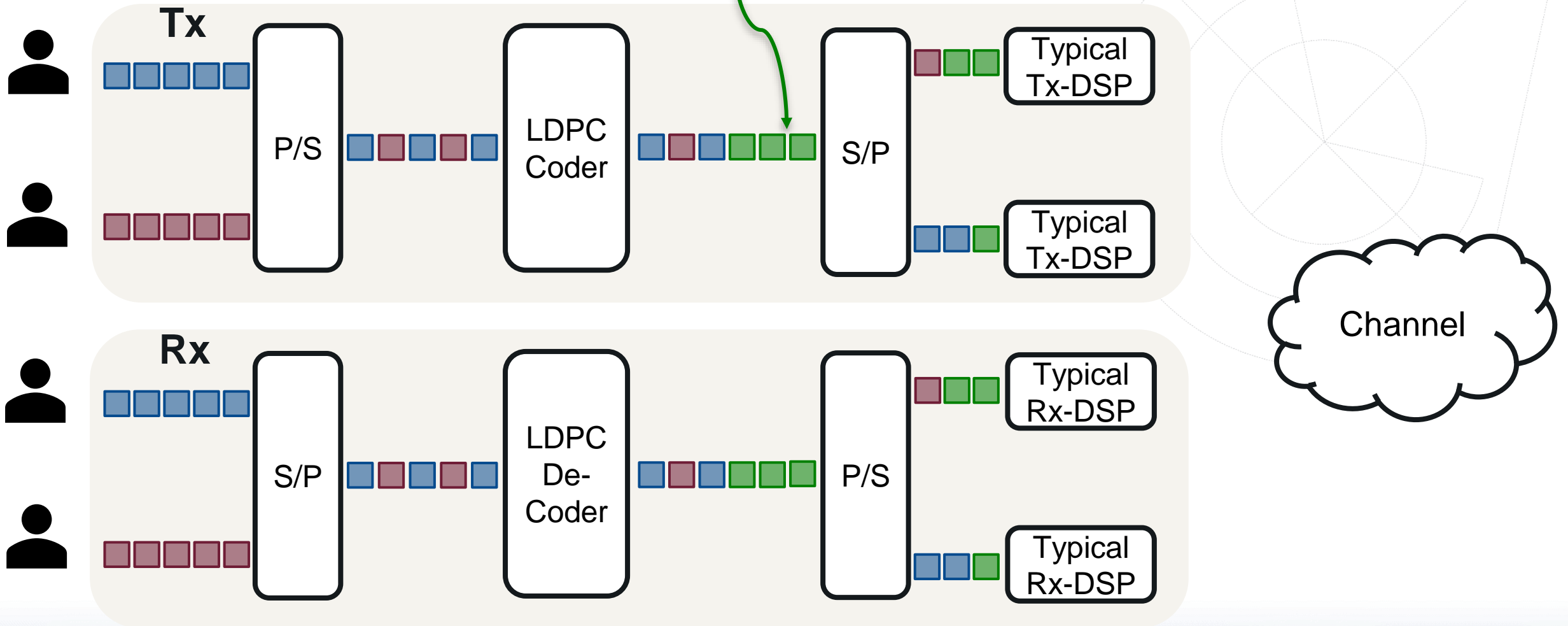
Enhancing FSO Reliability

2) Mitigating Atmospheric Turbulence: MIMO-FSO



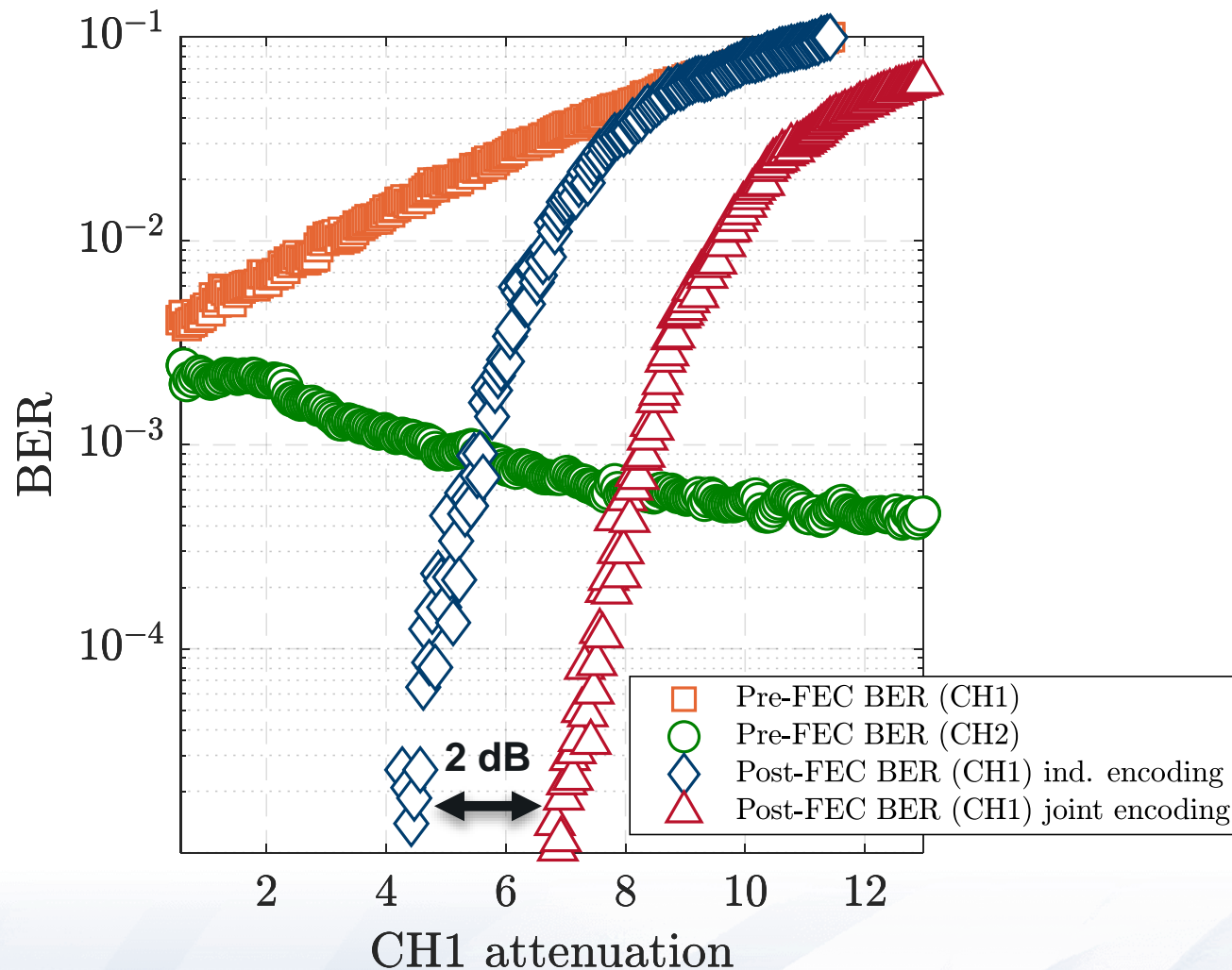
Joint LDPC Coding

Concept & Implementation



Joint LDPC Coding: Experimental Results

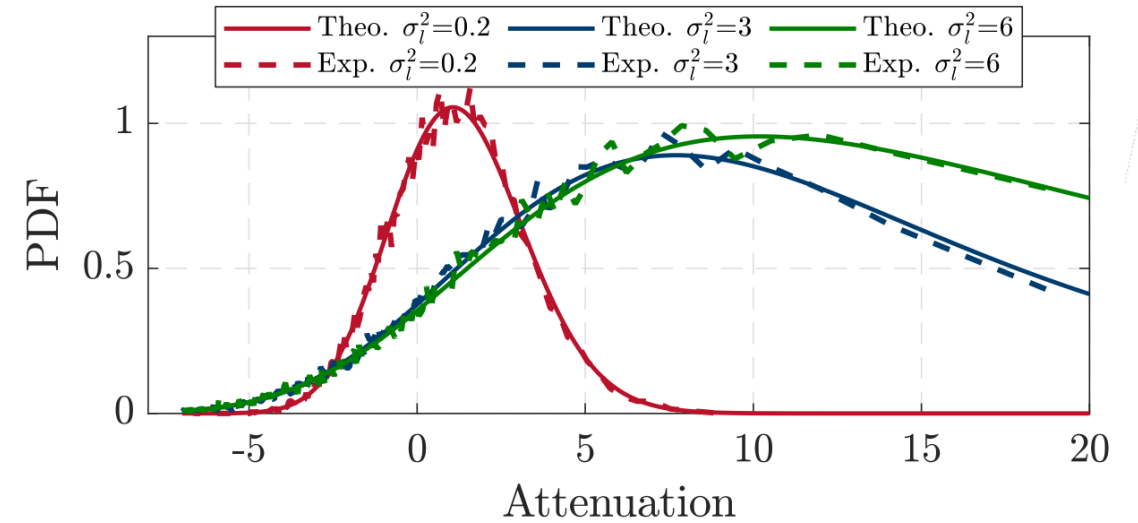
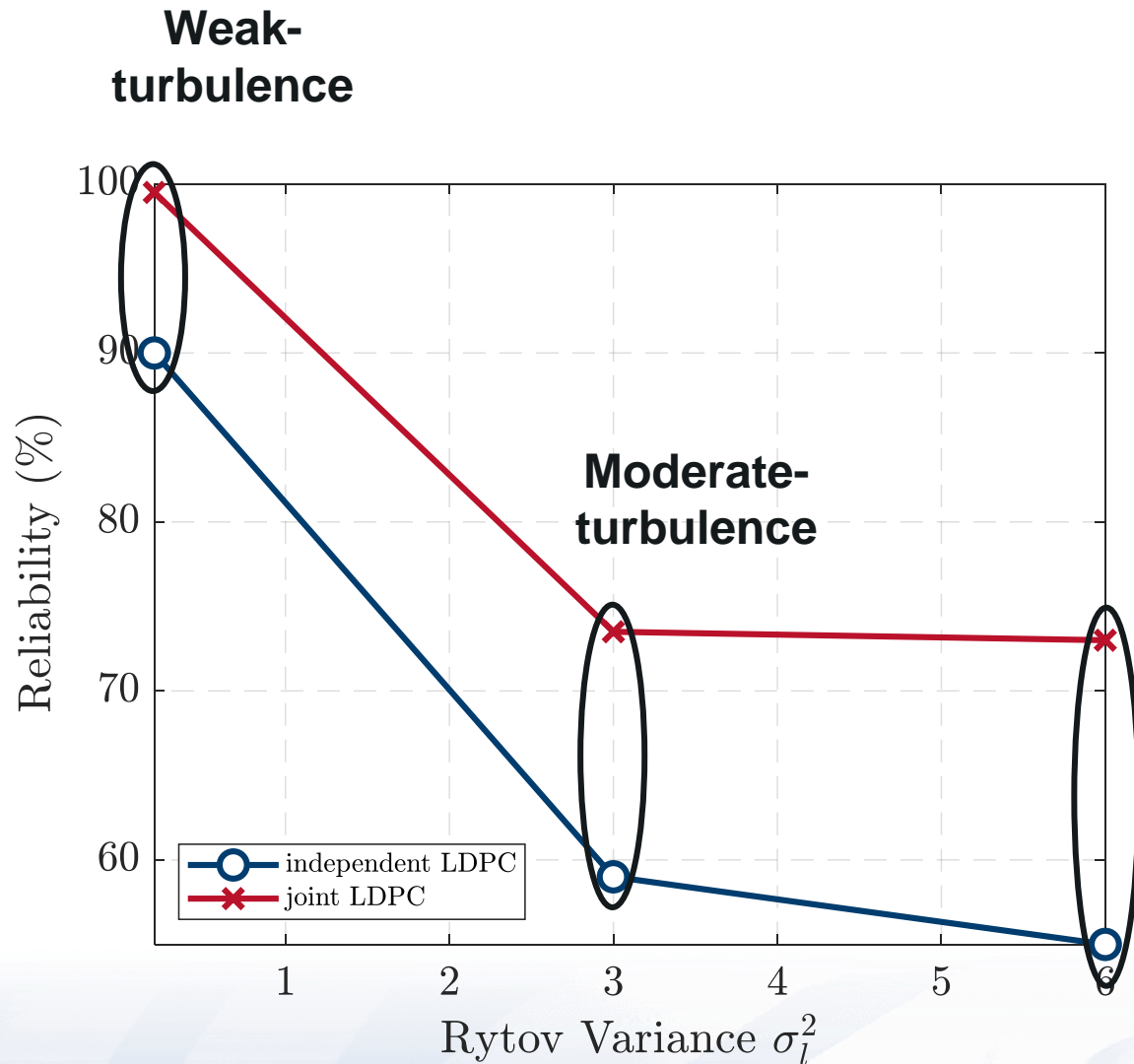
Concept validation



- The VOA was used to sweep the attenuation of CH1.
- Due to having only one receiver, while the CH1 performance degrades, the CH2 performance slightly improves.
- In these conditions, only 4 dB of attenuation are supported with individual encoding.
- Performing joint encoding present a gain of 2 dB.

Joint LDPC Coding: Experimental Results

Reliability measurements



Next Step:
NxN MIMO

Enhancing FSO Capacity

1) Adaptive Modulation for Turbulence Mitigation

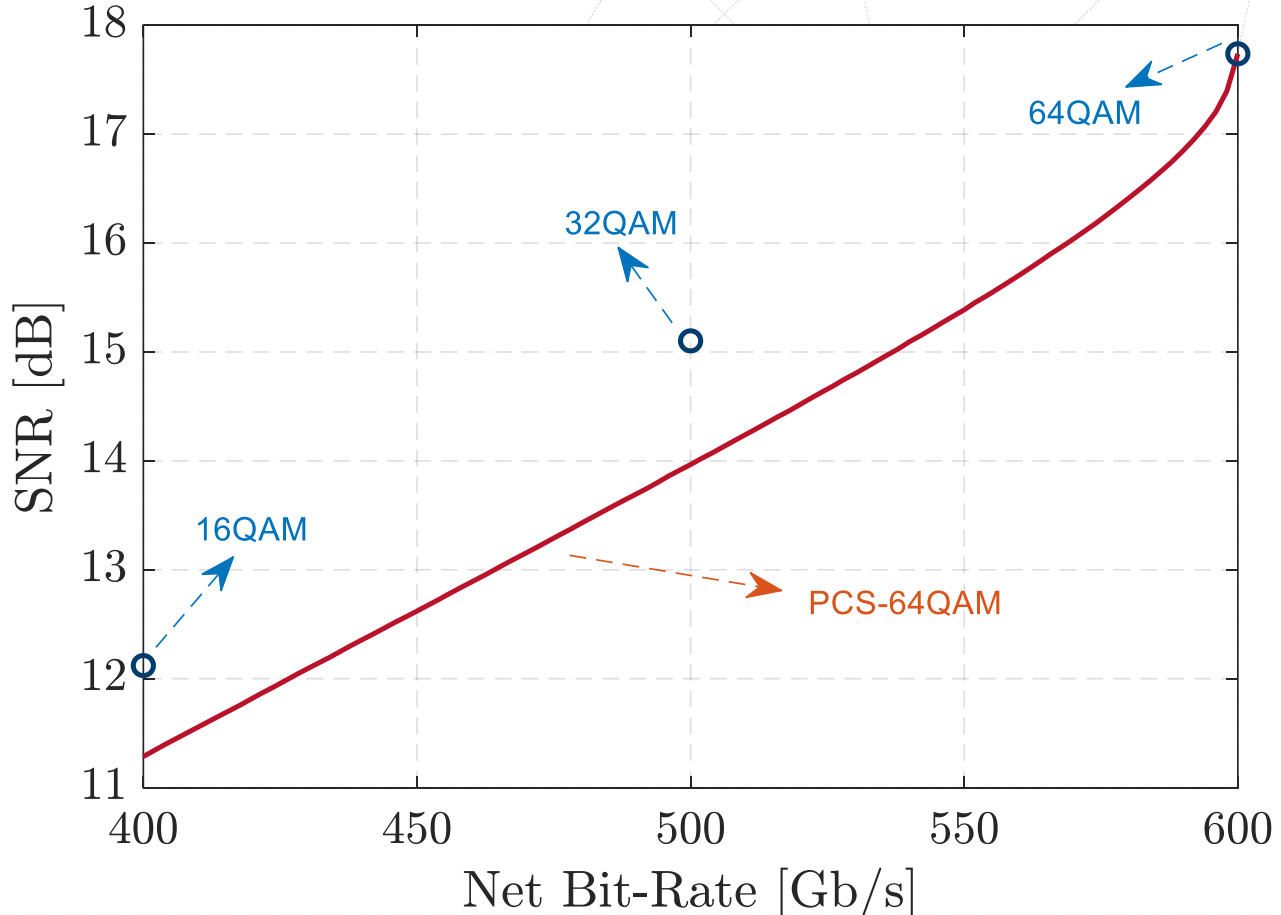
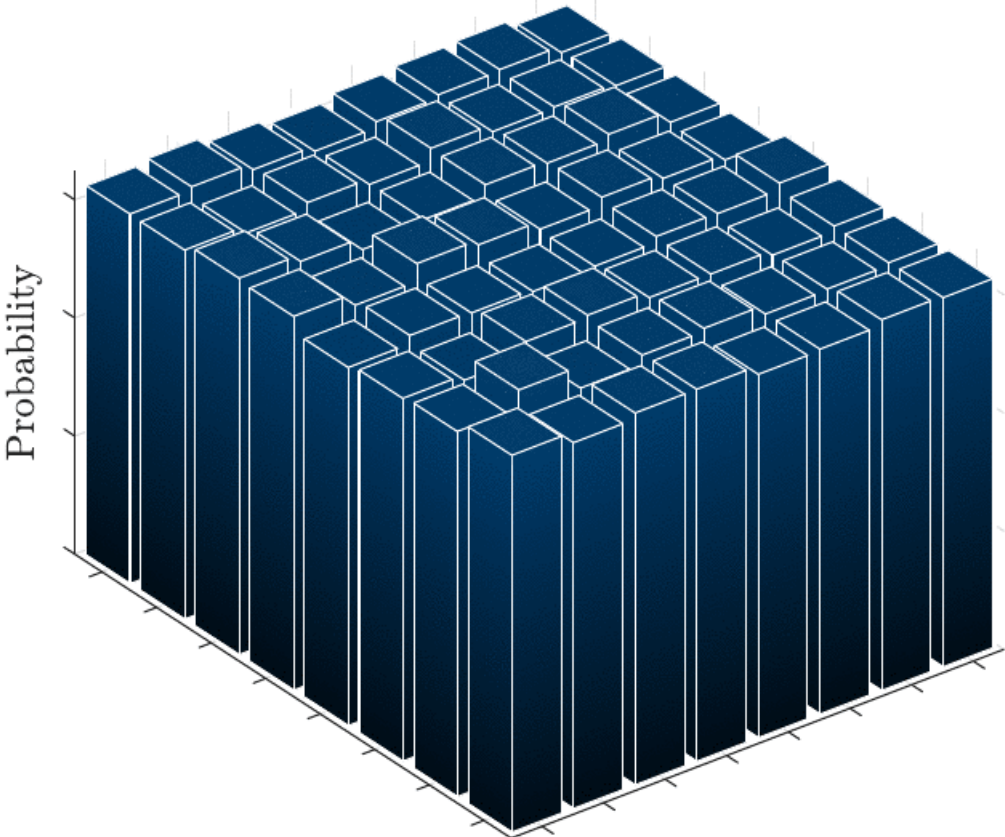


FSO: Indoor Communications Testbed

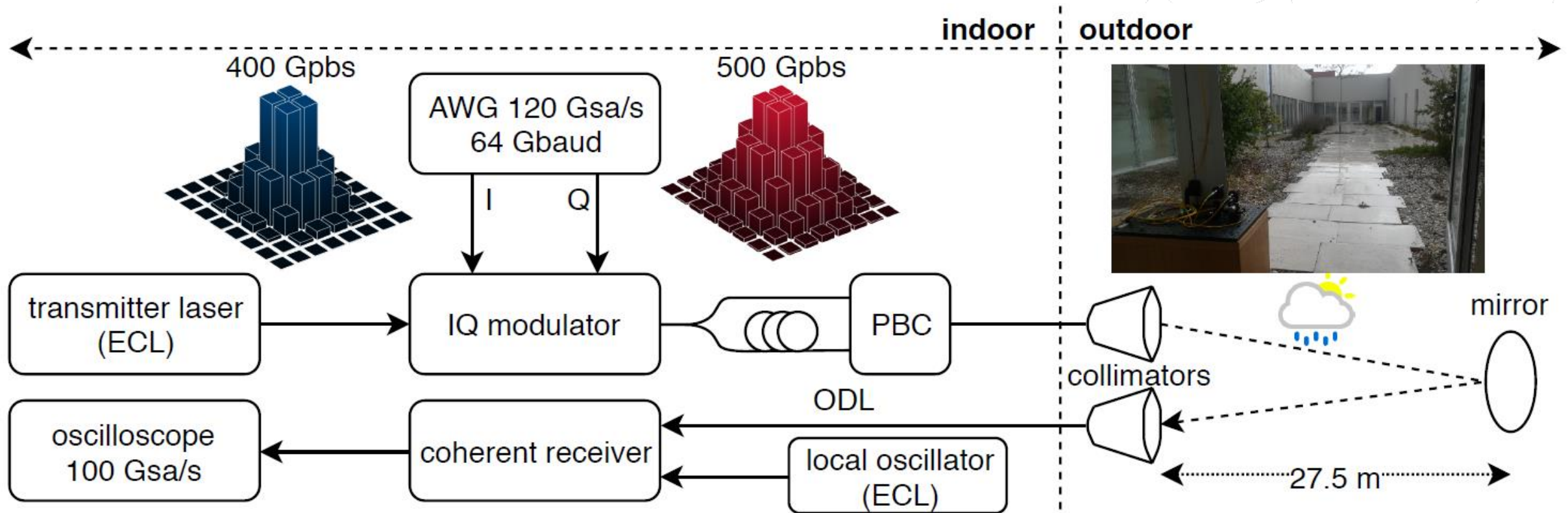


Probabilistic Constellation Shaping for Bit-Rate Flexibility

PS-64QAM — 600G — $H = 6.00$



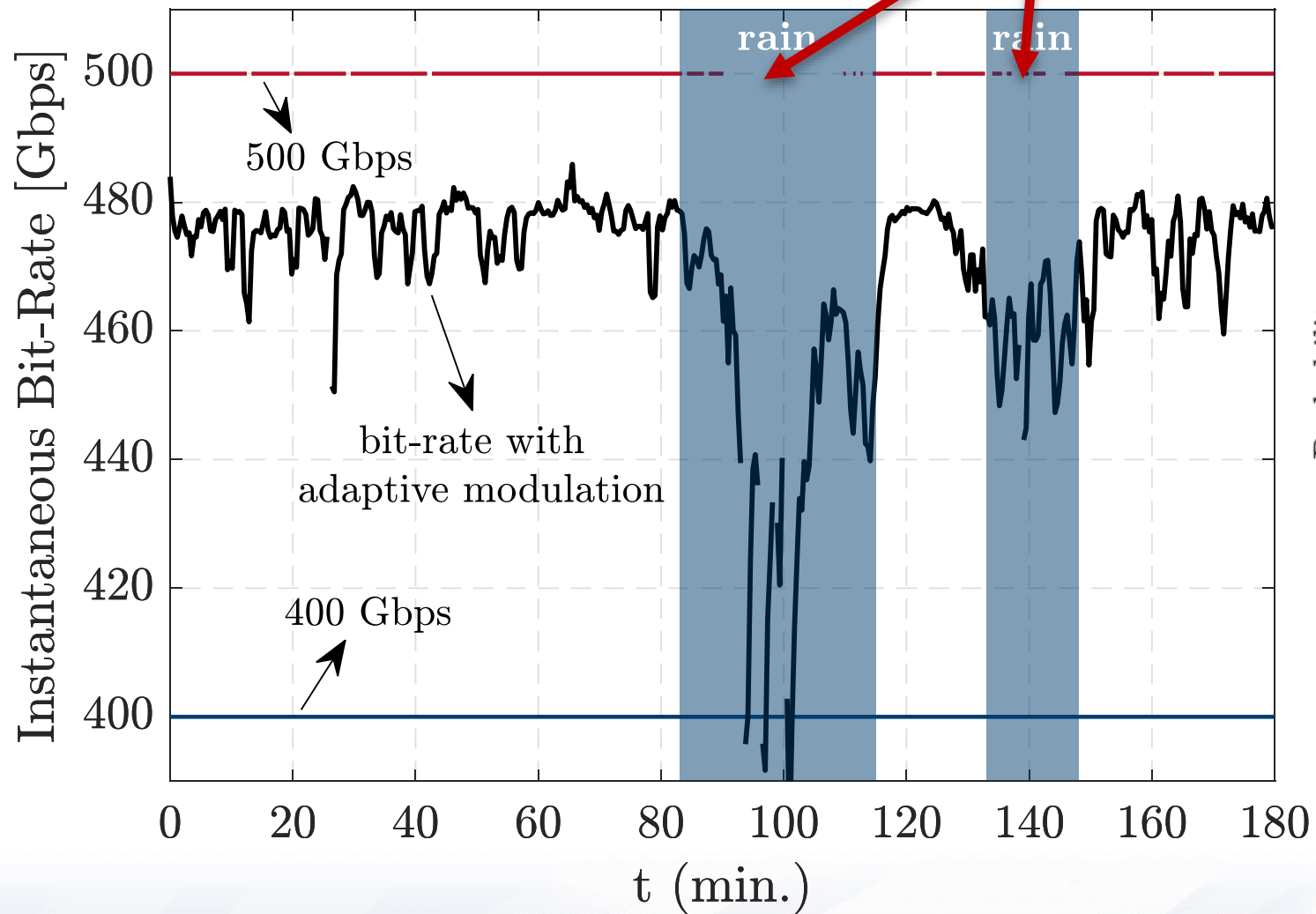
FSO: Experimental Setup



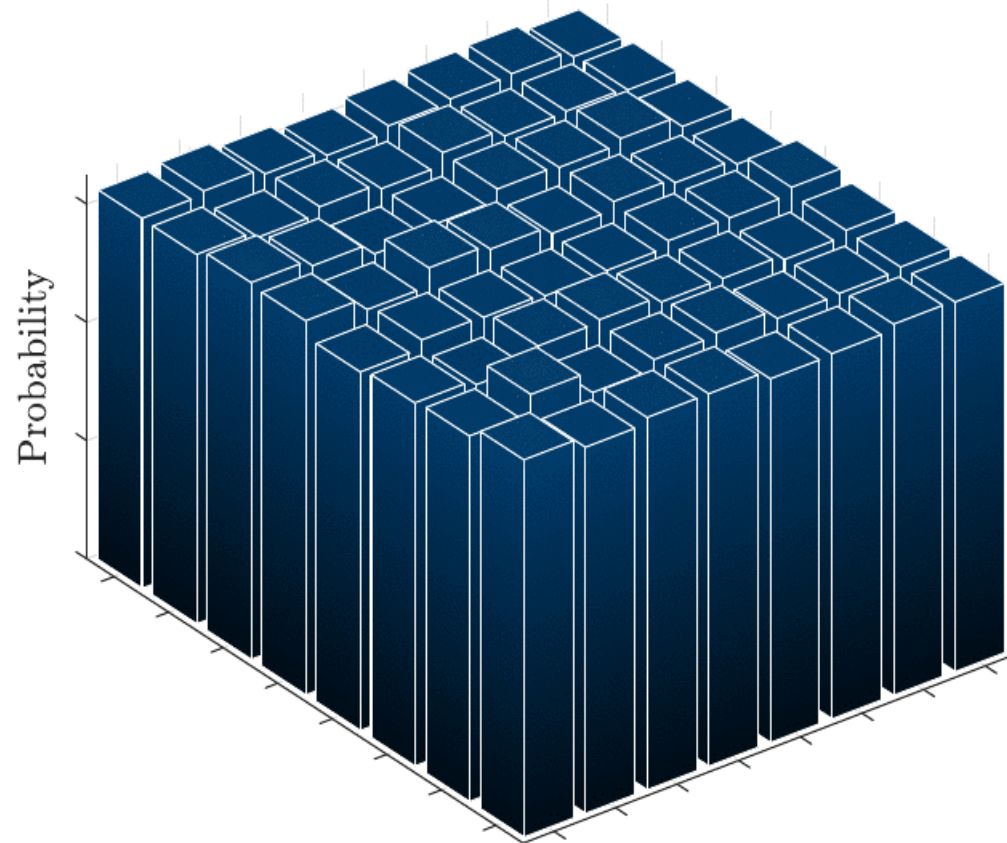
- **64 Gbaud** polarization-multiplexed **PCS-64QAM**;
- **55 meter** outdoor FSO link, with continuous measurement over 3 hours;
- Aim: test resilience against adverse weather conditions (rain showers).

FSO: Adaptive Modulation

Insufficient SNR -> LoS



PS-64QAM — 600G — $H = 6.00$

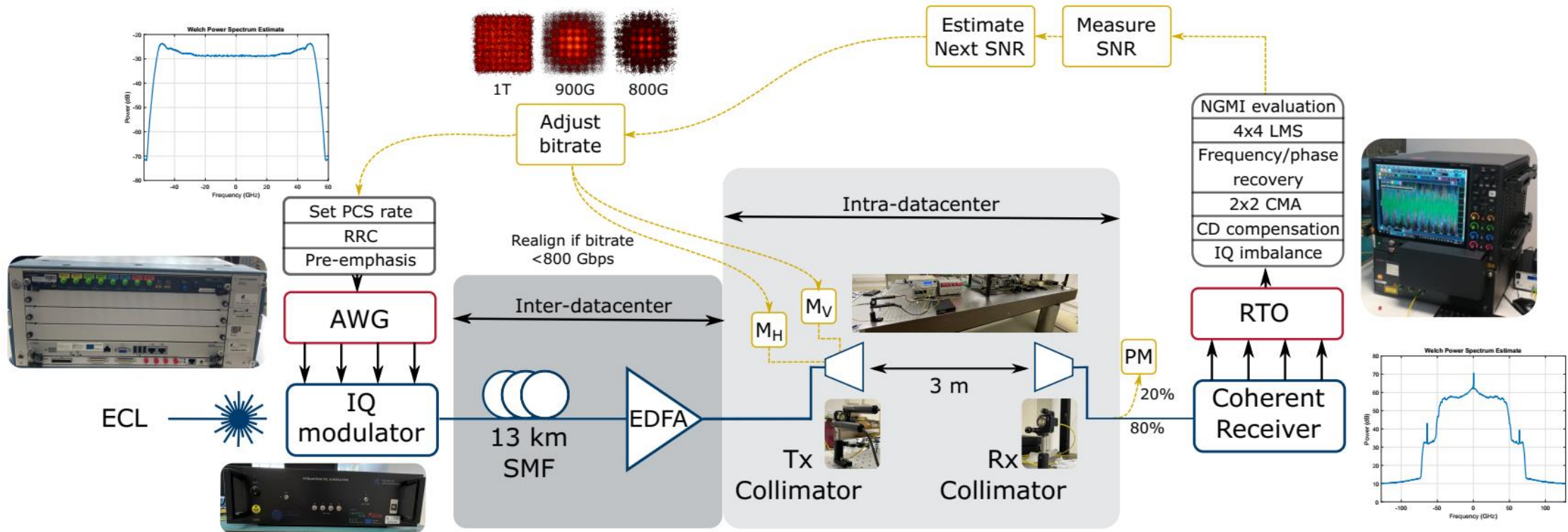


Enhancing FSO Capacity

2) Adaptive Modulation for Pointing Error Mitigation



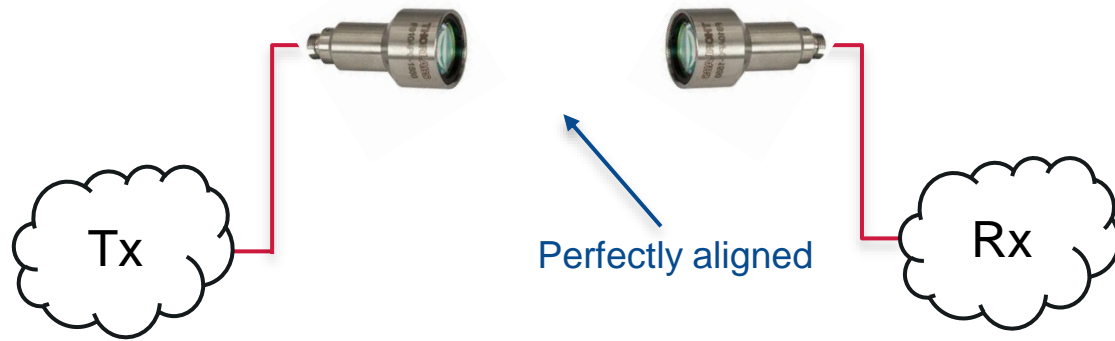
Experimental Setup



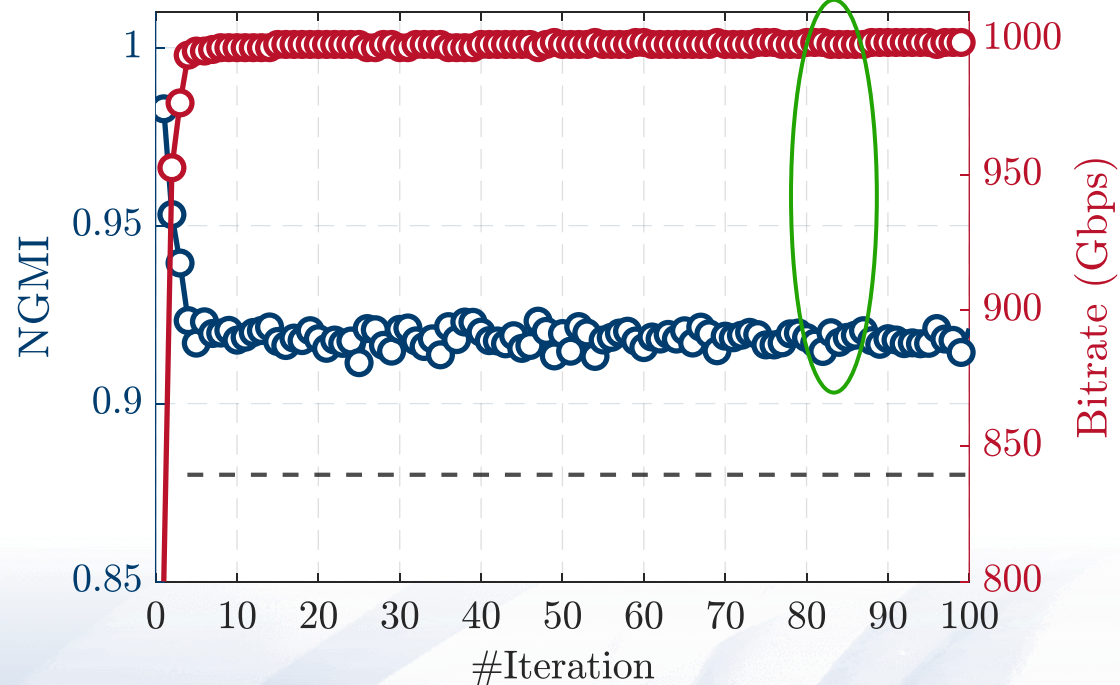
ECL: External Cavity Laser; RRC: Root-Raised Cosine; AWG: Arbitrary Waveform Generator; SMF: Single-Mode Fiber; PCS: Probabilistic Constellation Shaping; EDFA: Erbium-Doped Fiber Amplifier; M_H : Motor Horizontal; M_V : Motor Vertical; SNR: Signal-to-Noise Ratio; PM: Power-Meter; RTO: Real-Time Oscilloscope; CD: Chromatic Dispersion; CMA: Constant Modulus Algorithm; LMS: Least-Mean Squares; NGMI: Normalized General Mutual Information

- **64QAM-PCS** signal, with a symbol rate of **100 Gbaud**.
- **Goal:** Use PCS to adjust the bitrate to account for sequential beam misalignment.

Ideal Conditions (Baseline Performance)

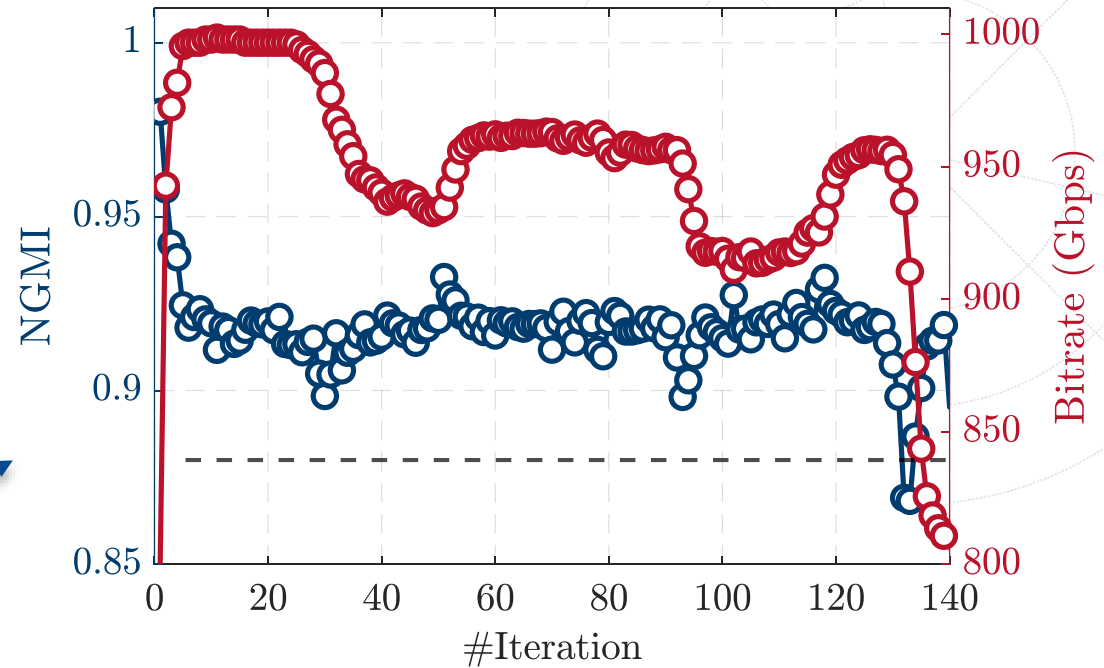
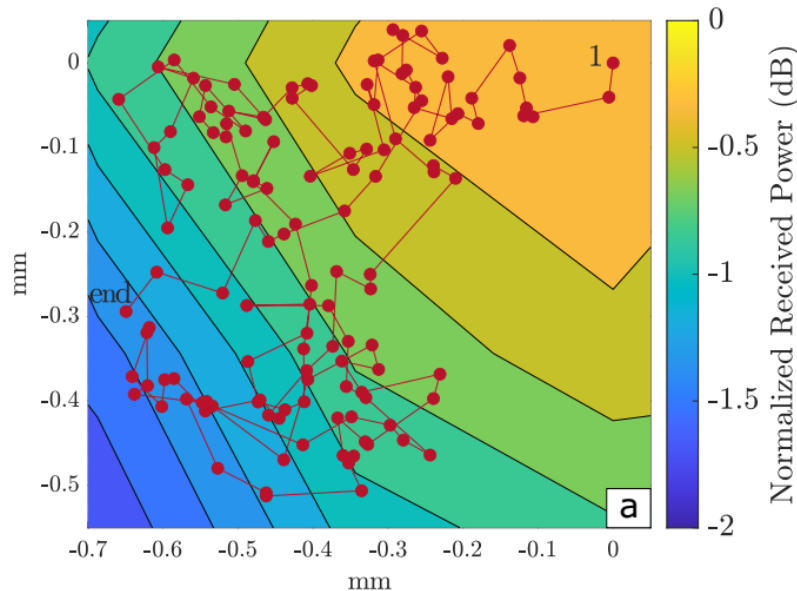
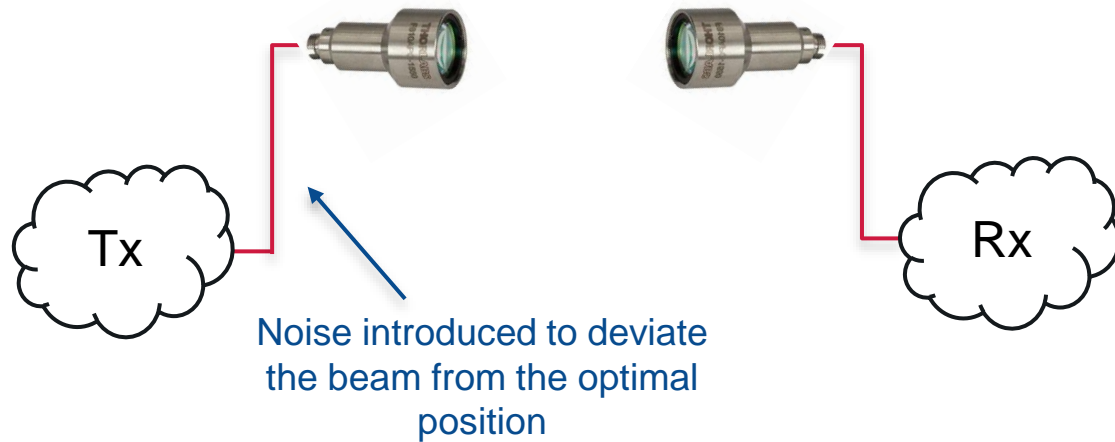


1 Tbps transmission is achieved with a quite good NGMI



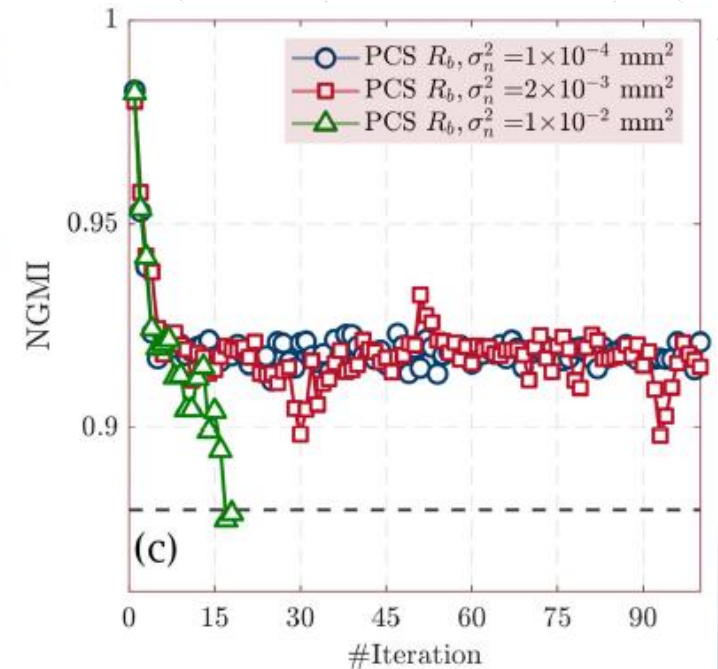
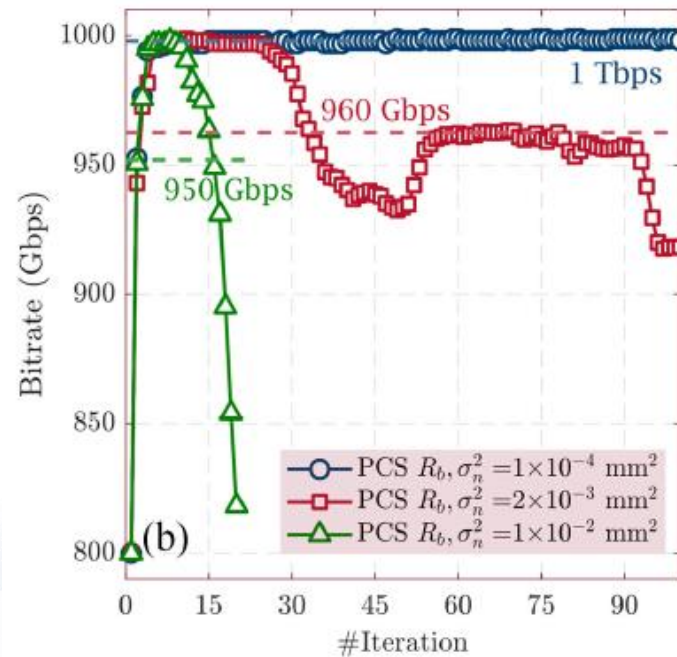
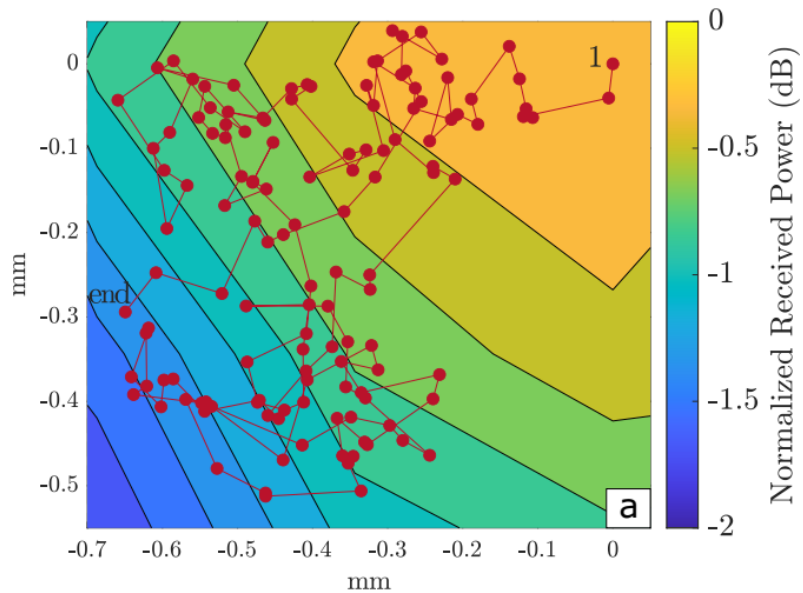
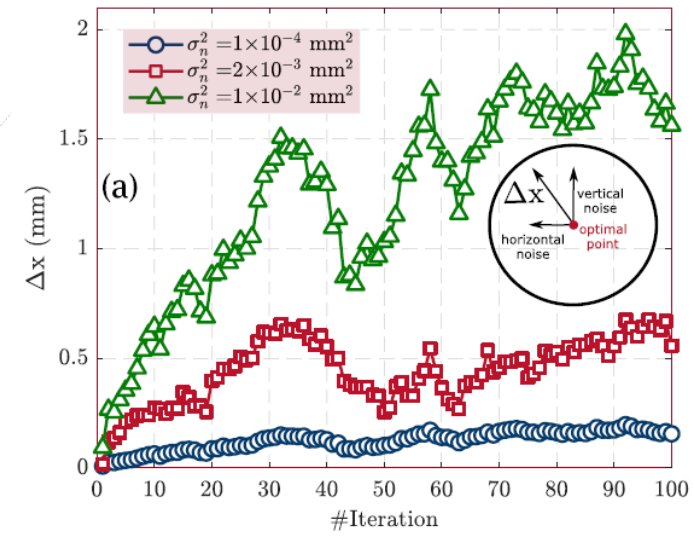
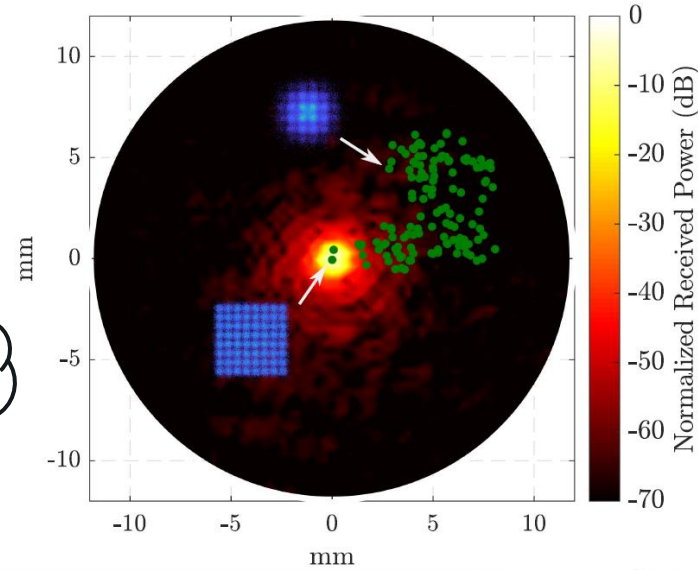
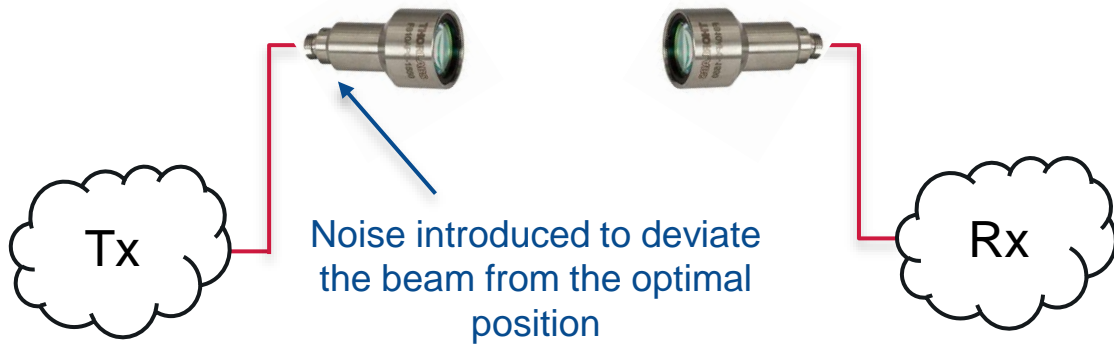
But there are always pointing errors....

Introducing pointing errors



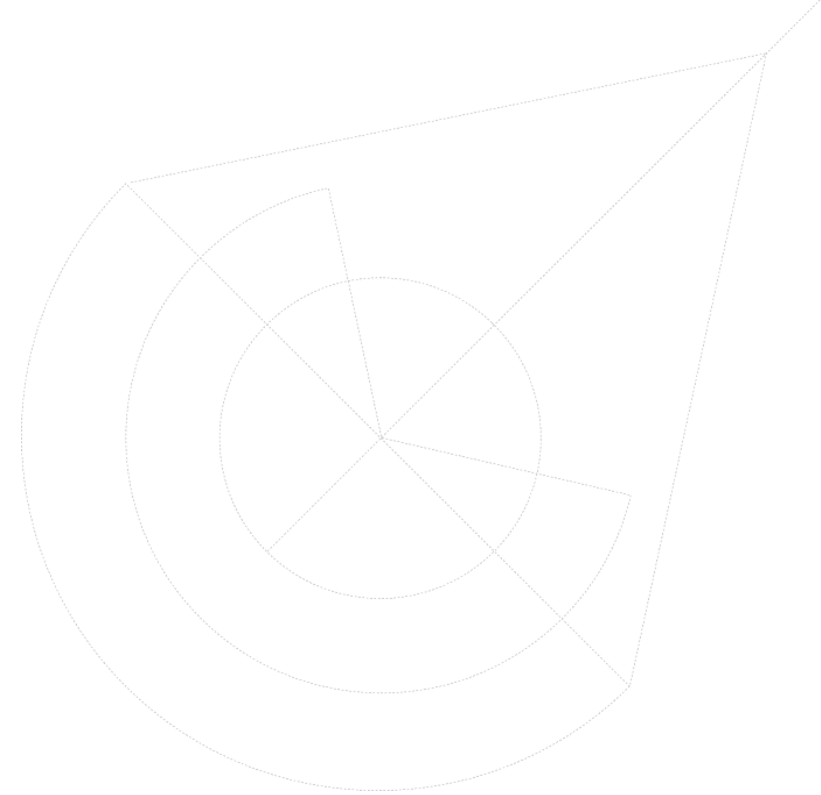
PCS is used to lower the bit-rate and the NGMI is kept constant

Introducing pointing errors



1.8 km WDM-FSO Field Trial

How many channels are enough?



Achievable bit-rate

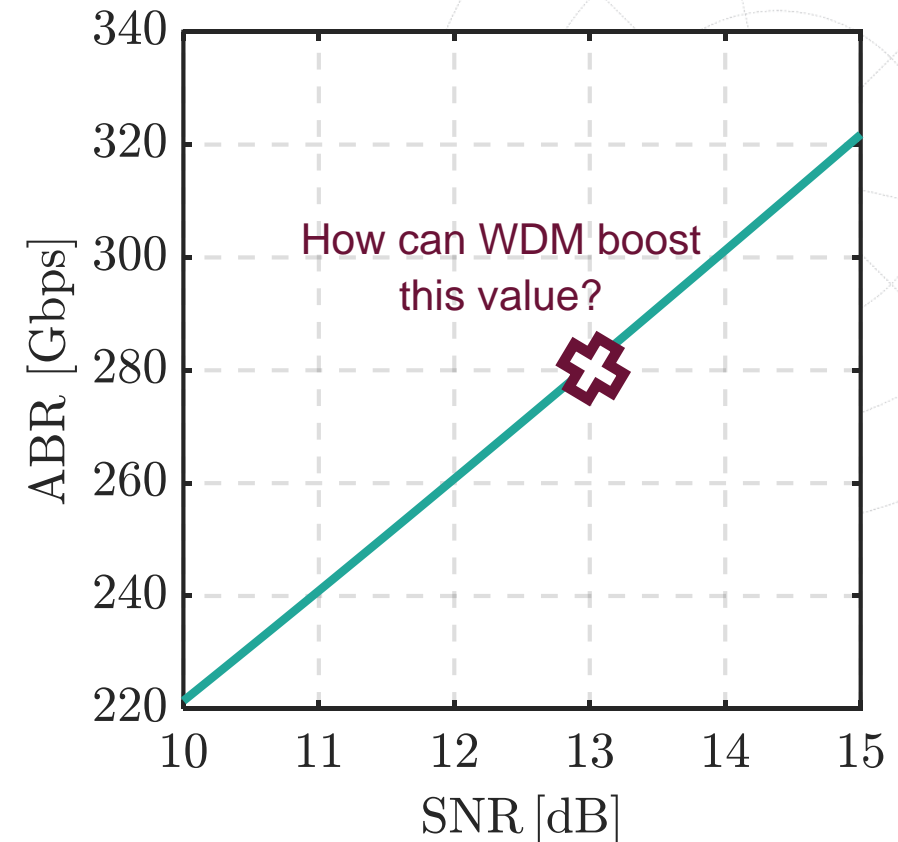
Single-wavelength Shannon capacity

Transceiver Parameters (200G COTS-like):

- $B = 32$ Gbaud

Shannon Capacity (dual-pol):

- $ABR = 2 \times B \times \log_2(1 + SNR)$



Achievable bit-rate

WDM Shannon capacity (infinite power)

Transceiver Parameters (200G COTS-like):

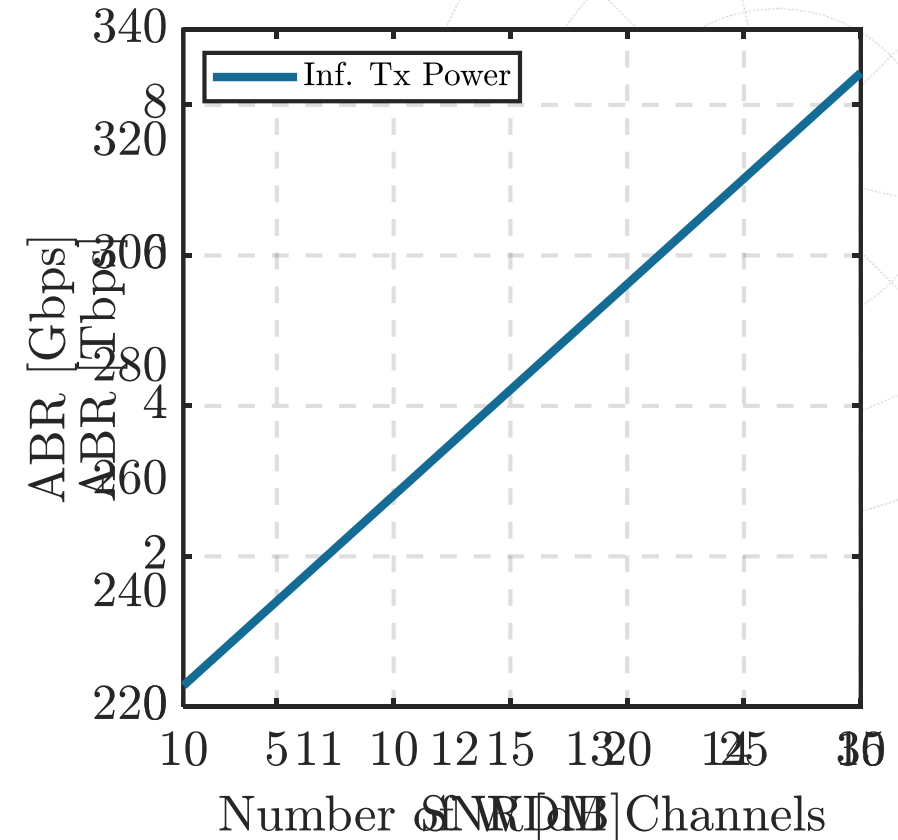
- $B = 32$ Gbaud

Shannon Capacity (dual-pol):

- $ABR = 2 \times B \times \log_2(1 + SNR)$

Shannon Capacity (dual-pol, WDM):

- $ABR = 2 \times B \times nCh \times \log_2(1 + SNR)$



Achievable bit-rate

WDM Shannon capacity (limited power)

Transceiver Parameters (200G COTS-like):

- $B = 32$ Gbaud

Shannon Capacity (dual-pol):

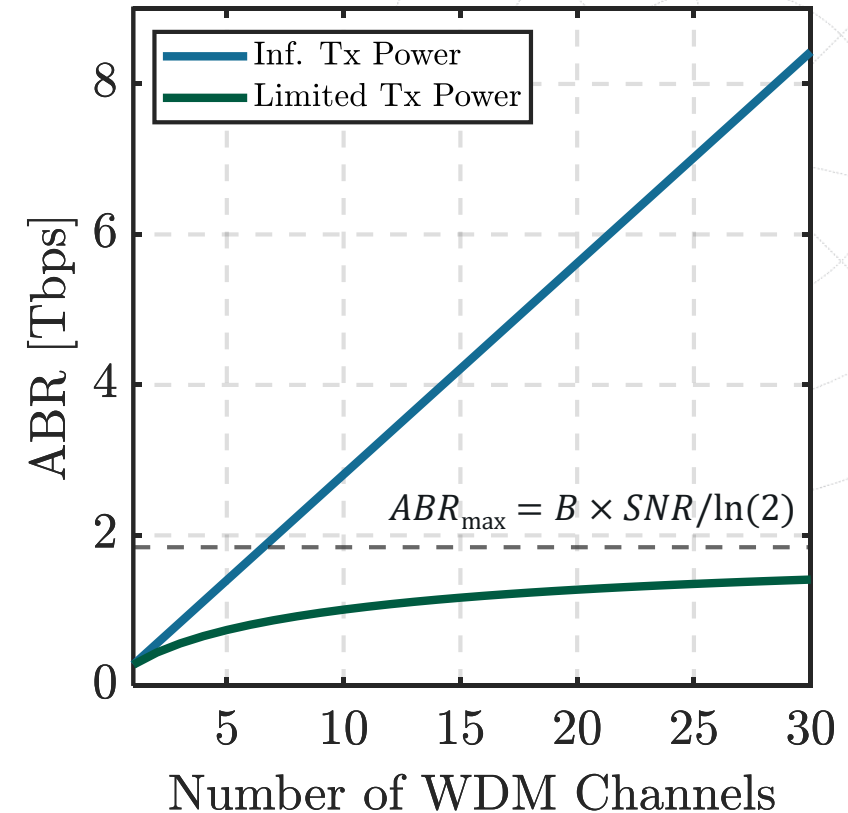
- $ABR = 2 \times B \times \log_2(1 + SNR)$

Shannon Capacity (dual-pol, WDM):

- $ABR = 2 \times B \times nCh \times \log_2(1 + SNR)$

Shannon Capacity (dual-pol, WDM, lim. power):

- $ABR = 2 \times B \times nCh \times \log_2(1 + SNR/nCh)$

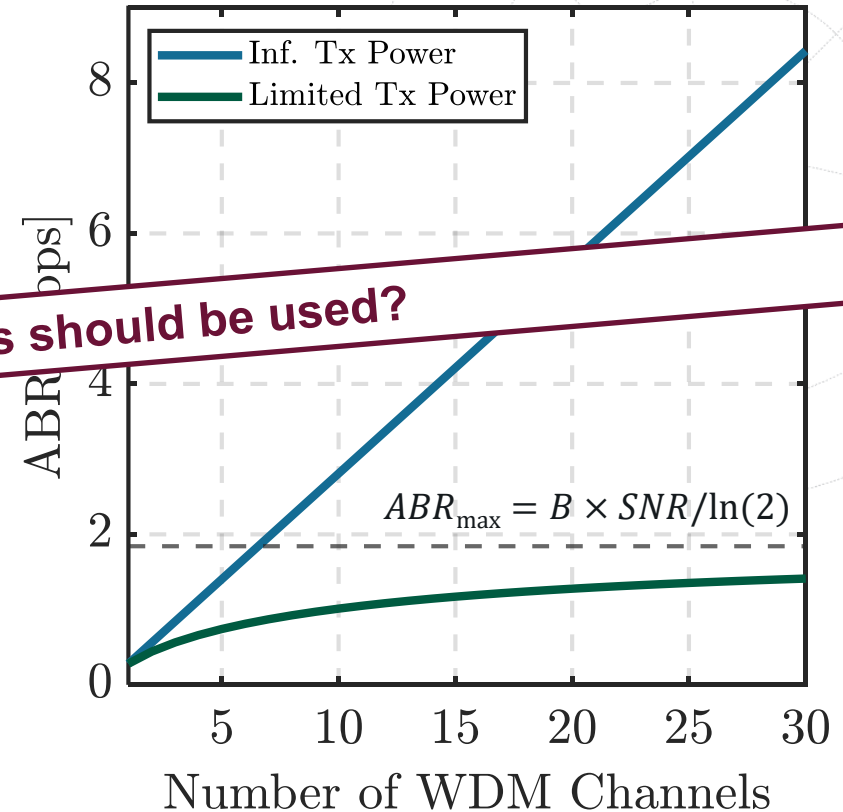


Achievable bit-rate

WDM Shannon capacity (limited power)

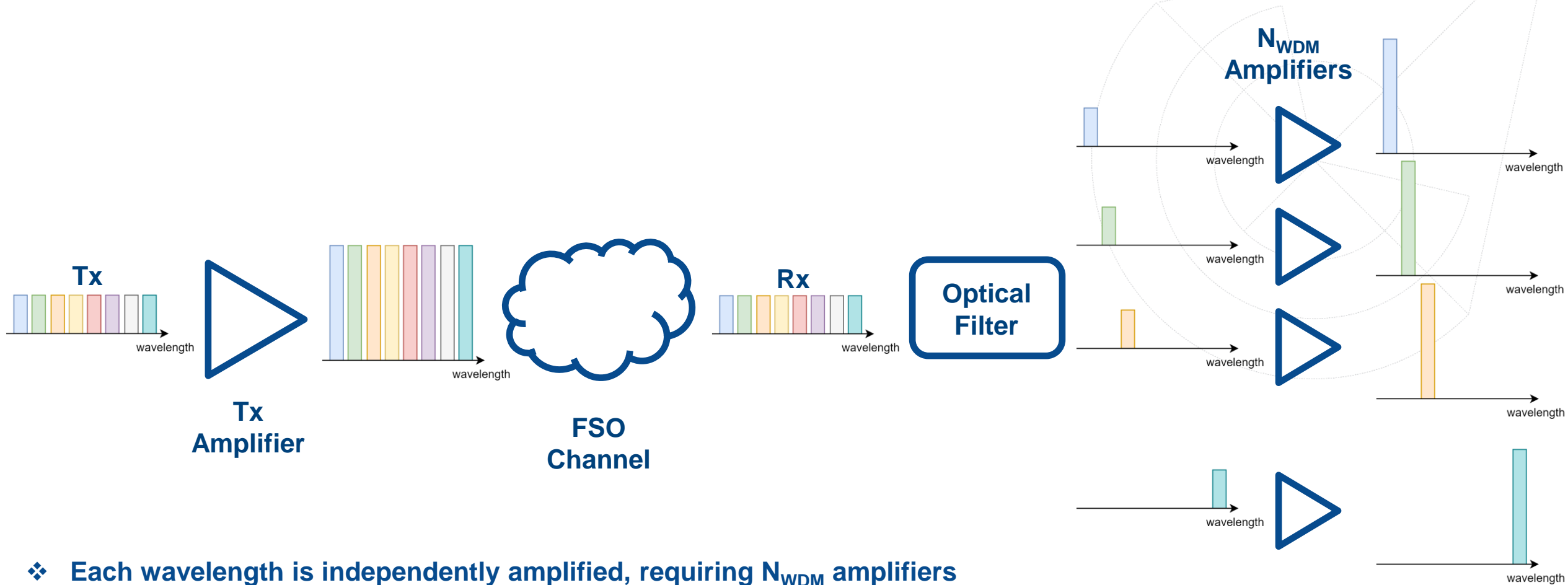
- The capacity gain of increasing the number of WDM channels considerably decreases
- Considering simple Tx-power as a limitation, the global ABR saturates
- If additional constraints are considered (filtering / wavelength-dependent losses) **increasing** the number of channels can **degrade** the global ABR.

Question 1: How many channels should be used?



Receiver amplification architecture

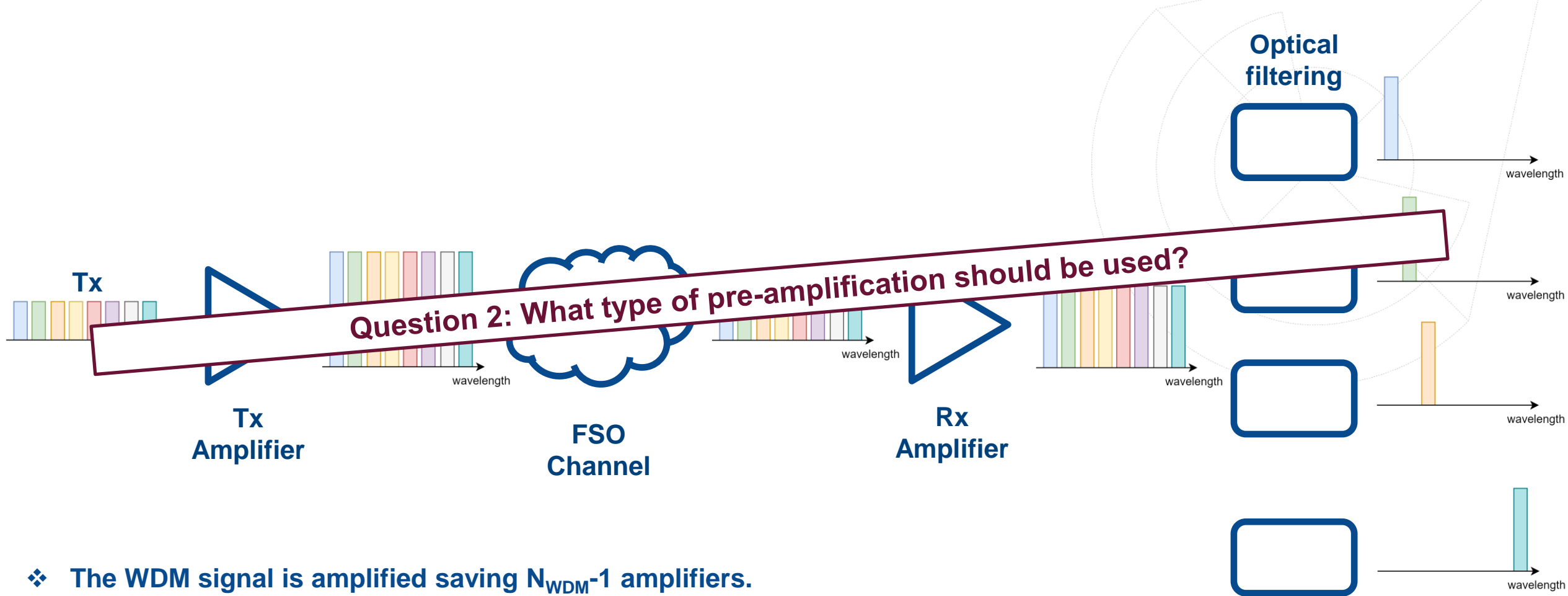
Dedicated amplification.



❖ Each wavelength is independently amplified, requiring N_{WDM} amplifiers

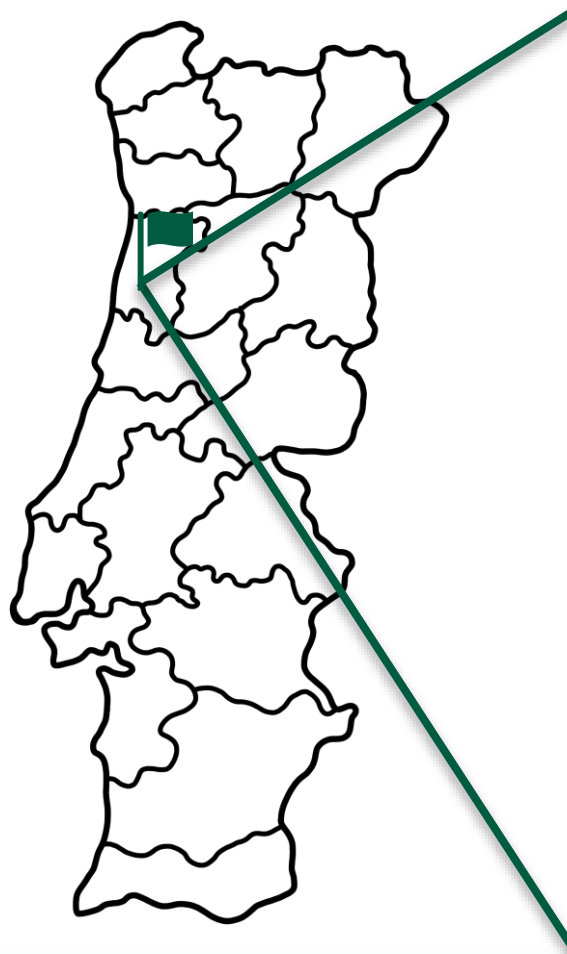
Receiver amplification architecture

Global amplification.

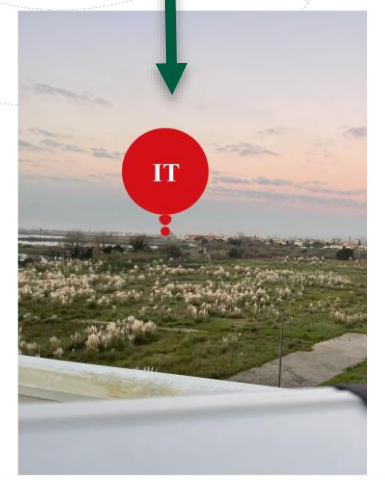


❖ The WDM signal is amplified saving $N_{\text{WDM}}-1$ amplifiers.

Field trial: Experimental Setup



//////AIRCISION



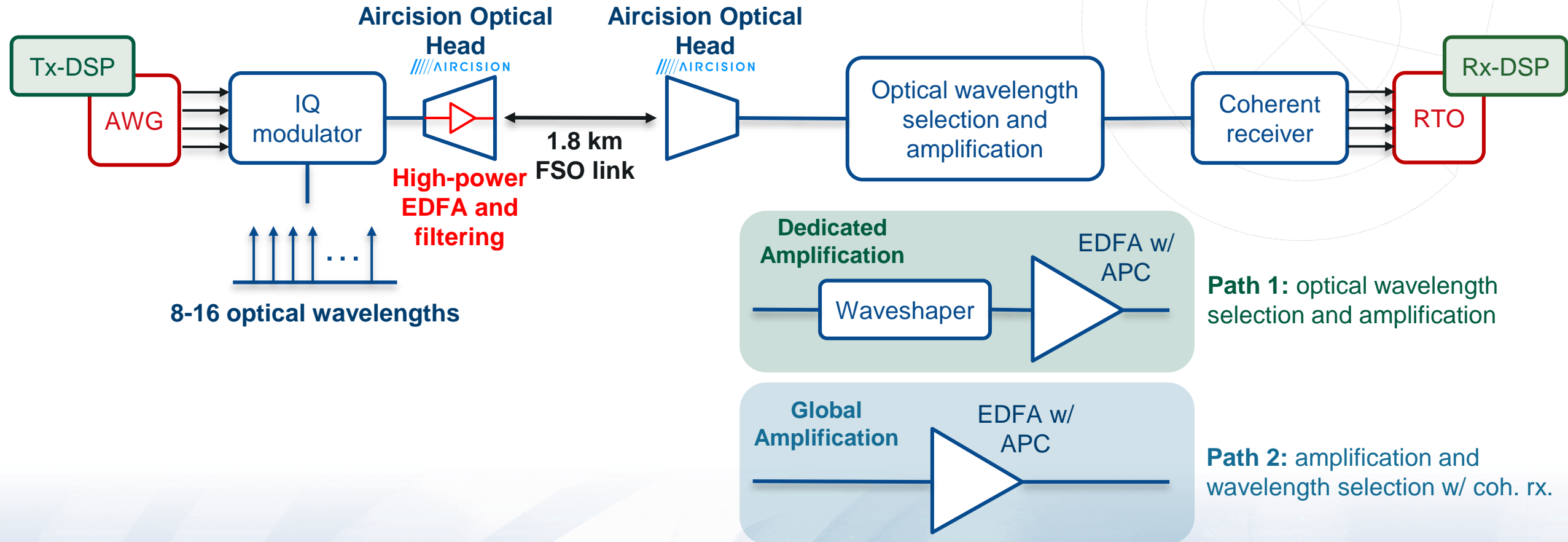
//////AIRCISION

Field trial:

Experimental Setup

Single channel parameters:

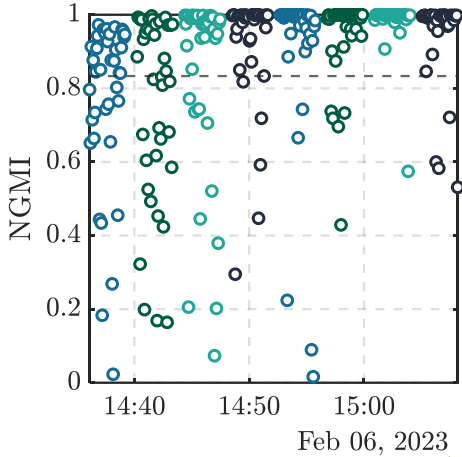
- 32 Gbaud, 16 QAM
- 200 Gbps



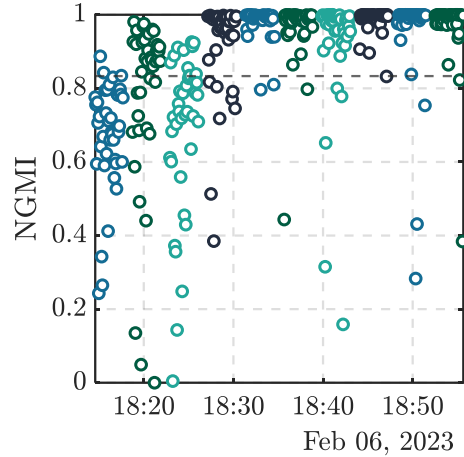
Field trial:

NGMI results (path 1: channel-wise amplification)

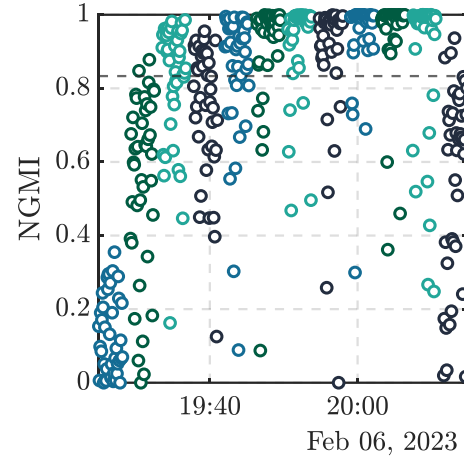
8 Channels



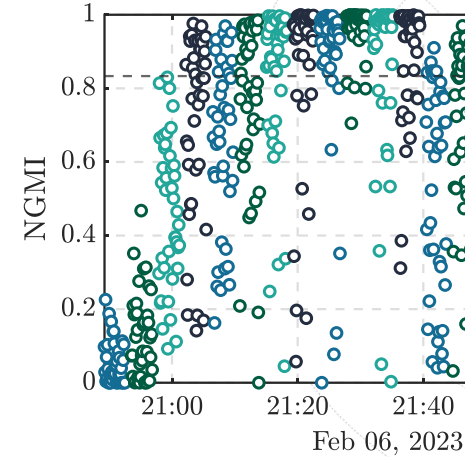
10 Channels



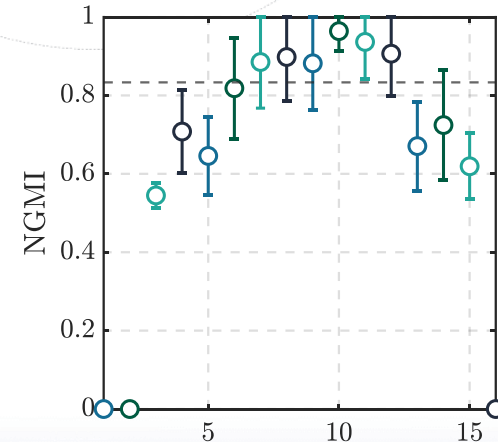
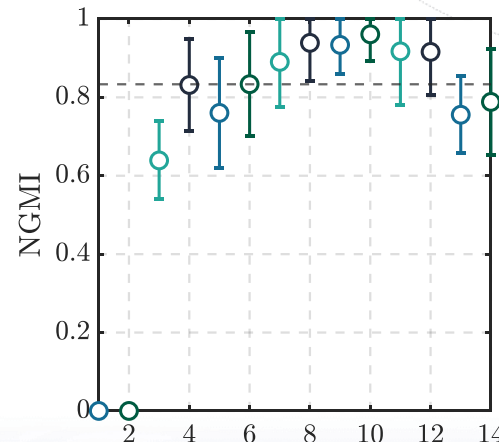
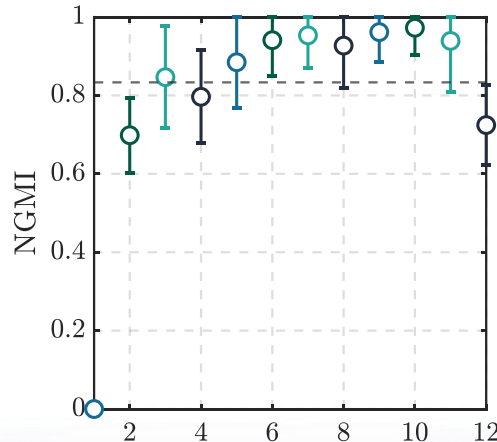
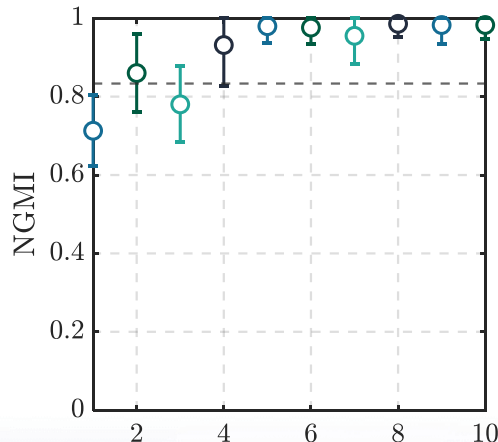
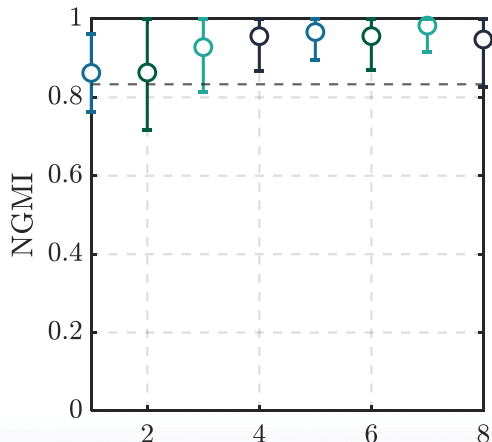
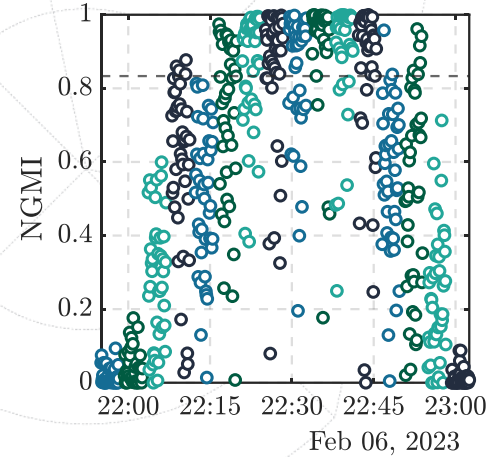
12 Channels



14 Channels



16 Channels

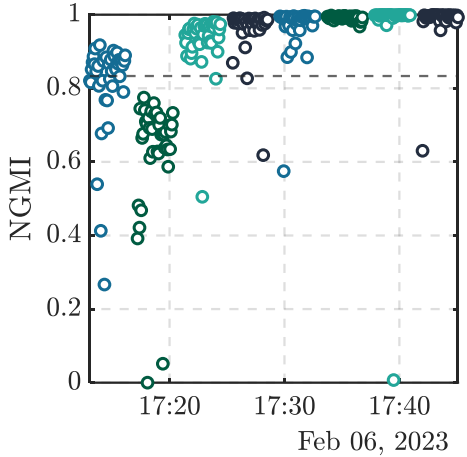


❖ Despite channel-wise amplification, increasing the number of channels tends to degrade the global performance due to optical filtering in the optical heads.

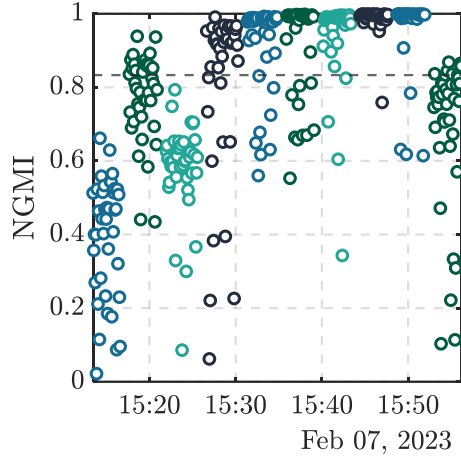
Field trial:

NGMI results (path 2: global amplification)

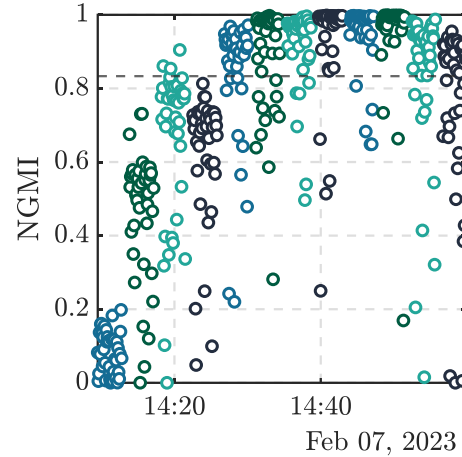
8 Channels



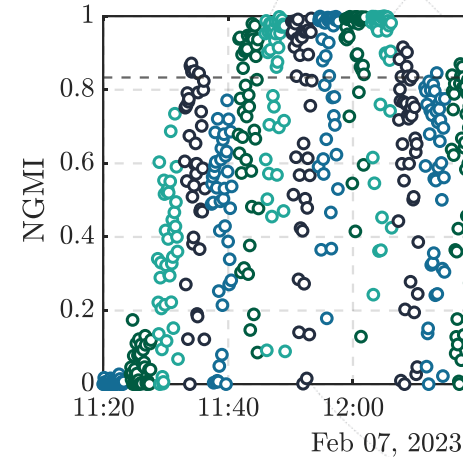
10 Channels



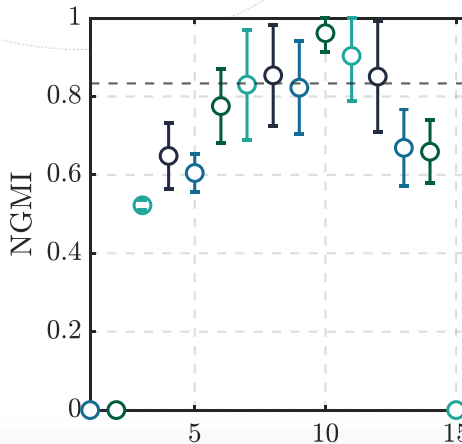
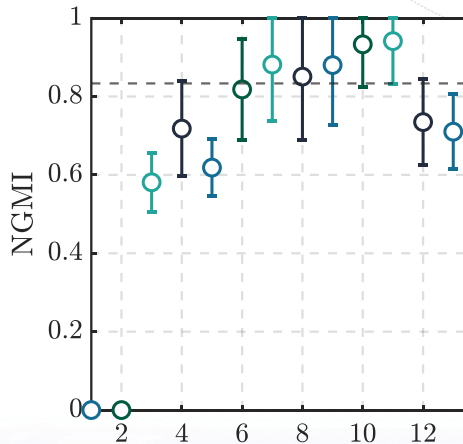
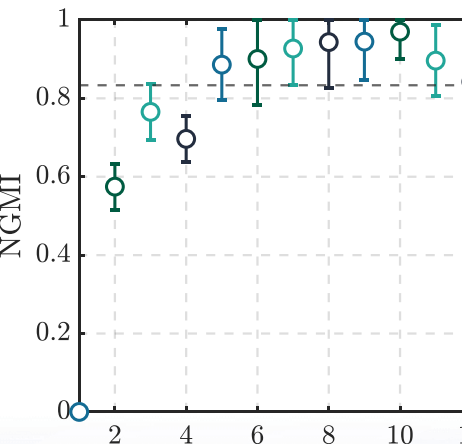
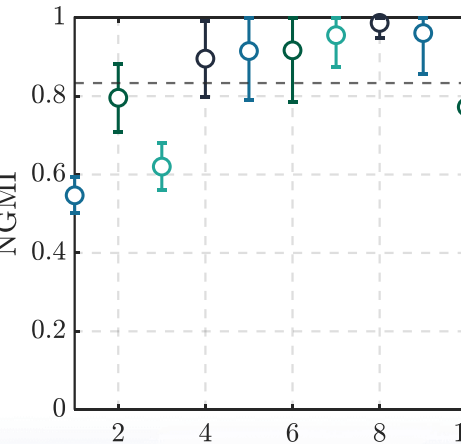
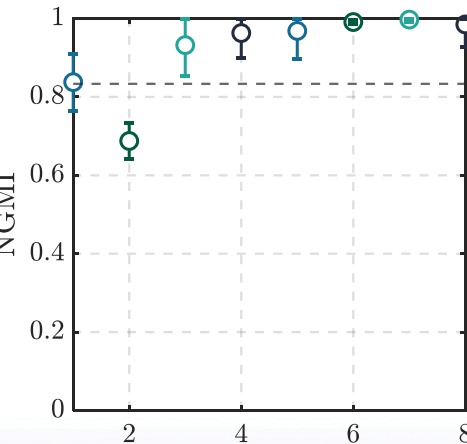
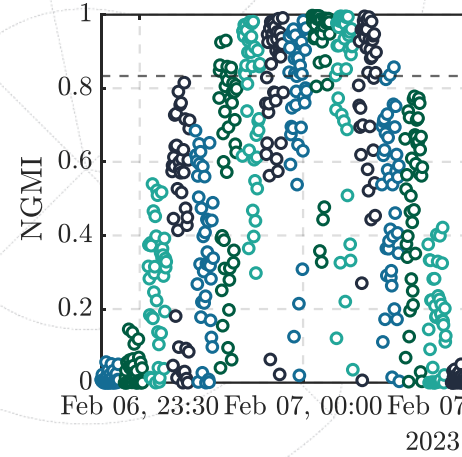
12 Channels



14 Channels



16 Channels

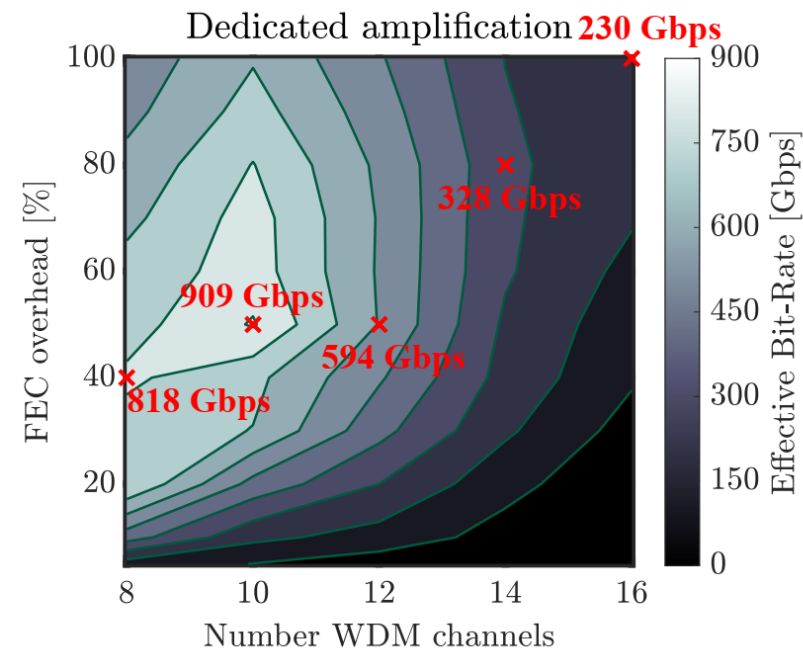
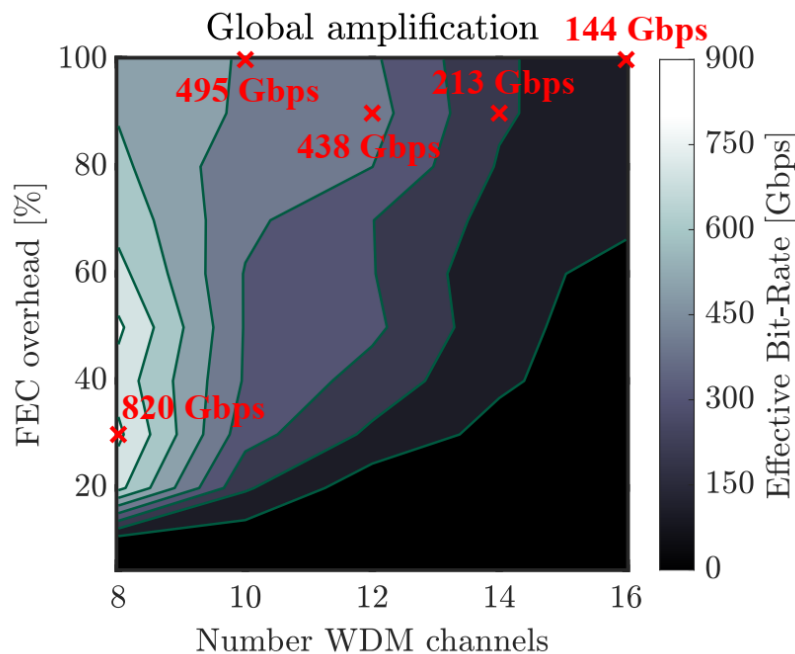


❖ Amplifying the full WDM signal together, exposes more significantly the limitations imposed by the transmitted power and optical filtering.

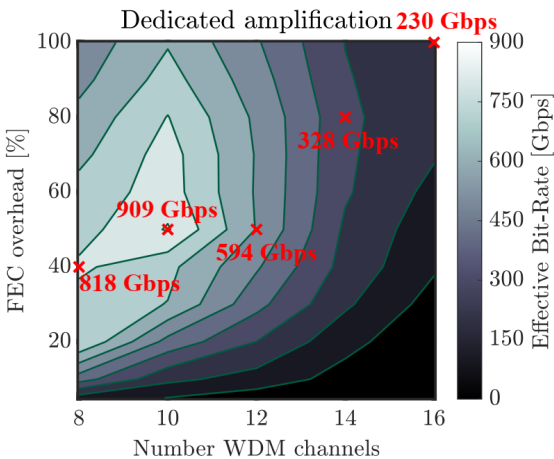
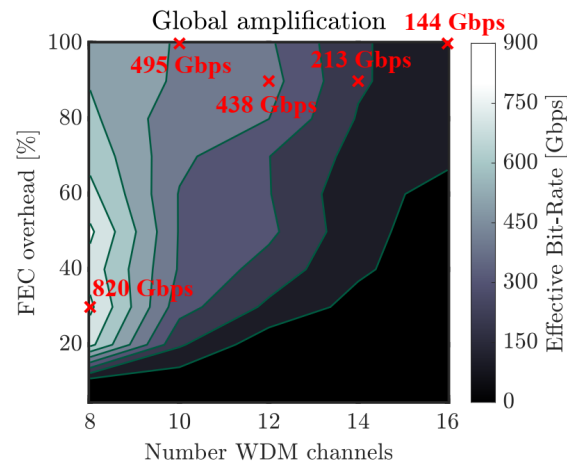
Field trial:

Achievable capacity (vs number of channels and FEC overhead)

- ❖ The chosen number of WDM channels significantly impacts the achievable capacity / reliability.
- ❖ We have previously demonstrated that optimizing the FEC overhead, can considerably increase the achievable effective bit-rate (<https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/10414049>)

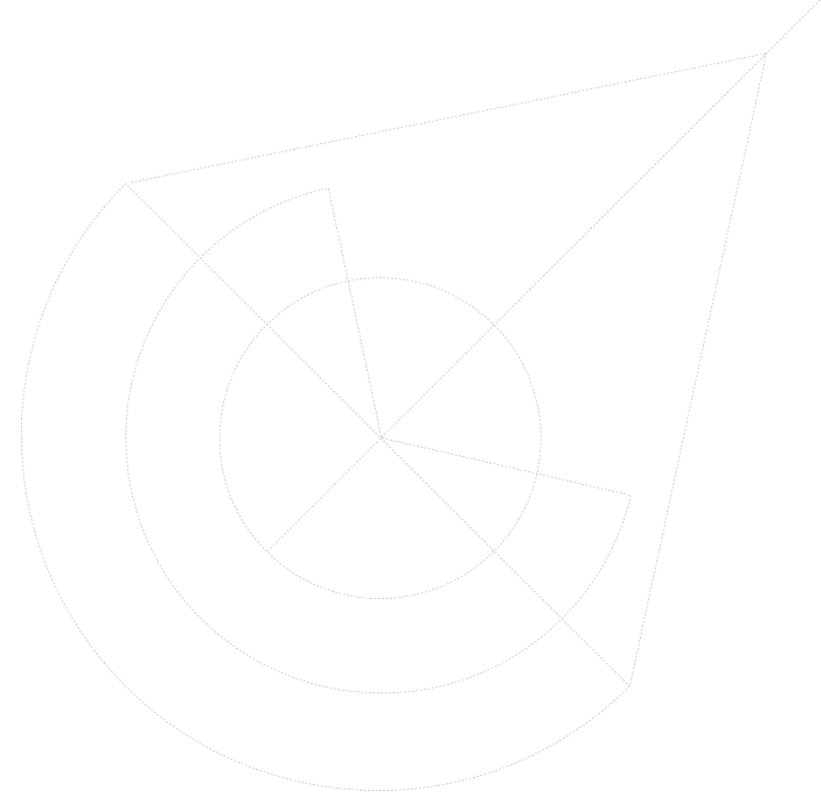


Conclusion:



- ❖ Contrarily from the expected power-constrained Shannon capacity, the overall system capacity **does not monotonically increase** with the number of WDM channels:
 - Limited optical bandwidth.
 - Limited gain provided by the receiver EDFA.
- ❖ If maximum capacity is required, channel-wise dedicated amplification is required **achieving 909 Gbps**; however, global amplification still reaches **820 Gbps** while **saving $N_{\text{WDM}}-1$ amplifiers**.
- ❖ The presented results are very constrained by limited optical bandwidth, in different scenarios (longer distances / no optical filtering), the **benefits of dedicated amplification can be higher**. The optimal solution can be resorting to **group amplification**.
- ❖ We have presented a **field-trial (1.8 km)** addressing critical signal design optics for terabit WDM-FSO, showing the high impact of number of channels and the FEC overhead, achieving a maximum **effective bit-rate of 909 Gbps**.

Conclusions



Conclusions

- **Coherent technology + FSO: high-capacity fiber-compatible optical wireless!**
 - Commercial off-the-shelf 400G+ coherent transceivers are available;
 - Optical collimators perform seamless fiber-to-air conversion;
 - No need for E/O and O/E conversion;
 - Full fiber bandwidth is preserved;
 - Compatible with WDM.
- **Reliability challenges: Pointing errors and atmospheric turbulence;**
 - Channel estimation and adaptive modulation are key ingredients to enable robust FSO transmission;
- **High-capacity FSO demonstrations:**
 - 400G+ outdoor FSO transmission with adverse weather conditions;
 - 1 Tbps indoor FSO transmission with enhanced resilience towards pointing errors;
 - Multi-Terabit field trial over 1.8 km, enabled by optimized WDM-FSO transmission.



Thank You!
Questions?