

TSVV-04: Plasma Particle/Heat Exhaust Gyrokinetic/Kinetic Edge Codes

D. Told and the TSVV 4 Team

EUROfusion Science Meeting - TSVV Final Reports

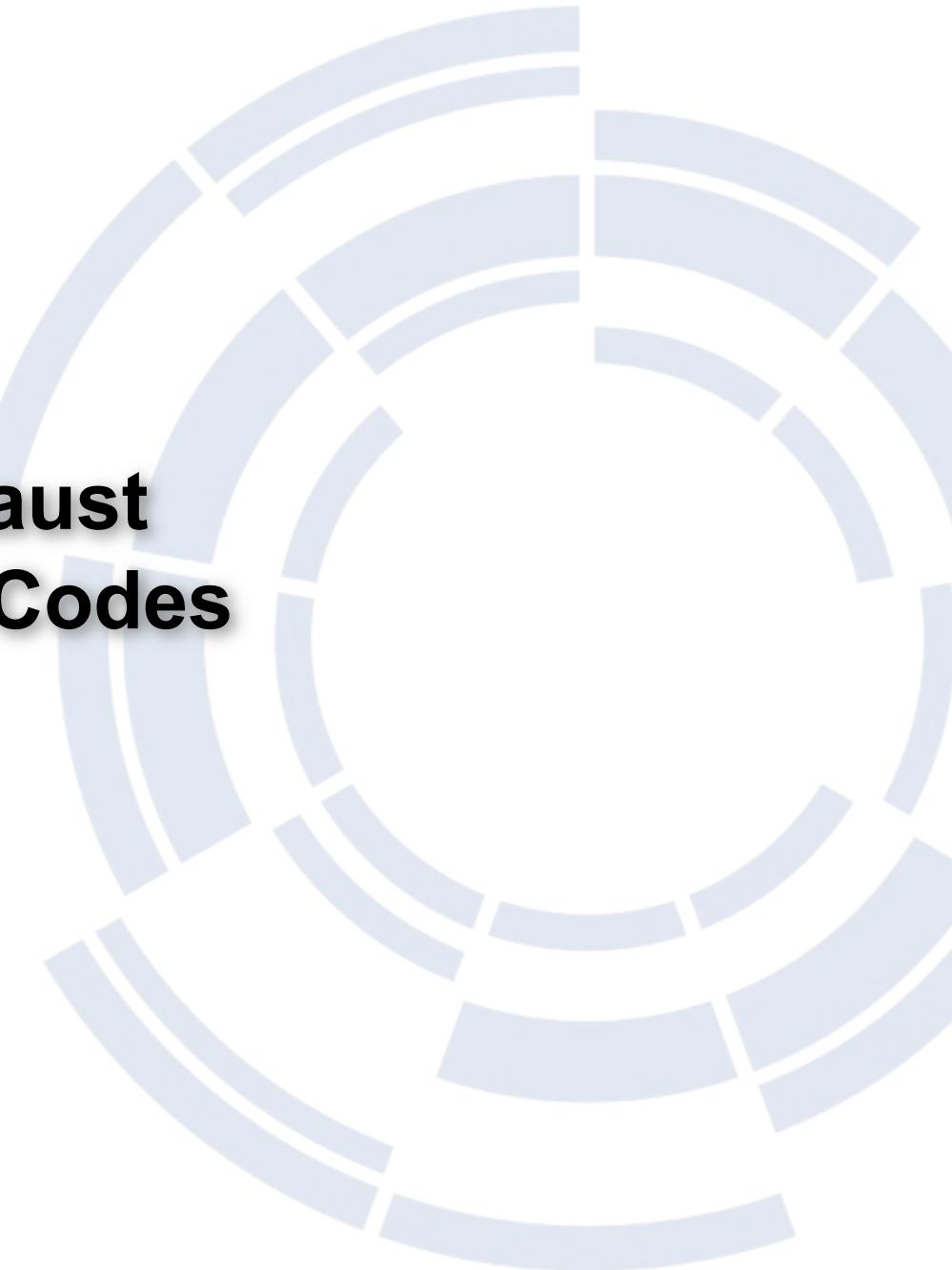
January 28, 2026



**MAX-PLANCK-INSTITUT
FÜR PLASMAPHYSIK**



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TSVV4's main aim in one sentence

Build kinetic codes with all the ingredients needed for modeling edge and scrape-off layer physics.



Why do we need gyrokinetic codes for edge and SOL?

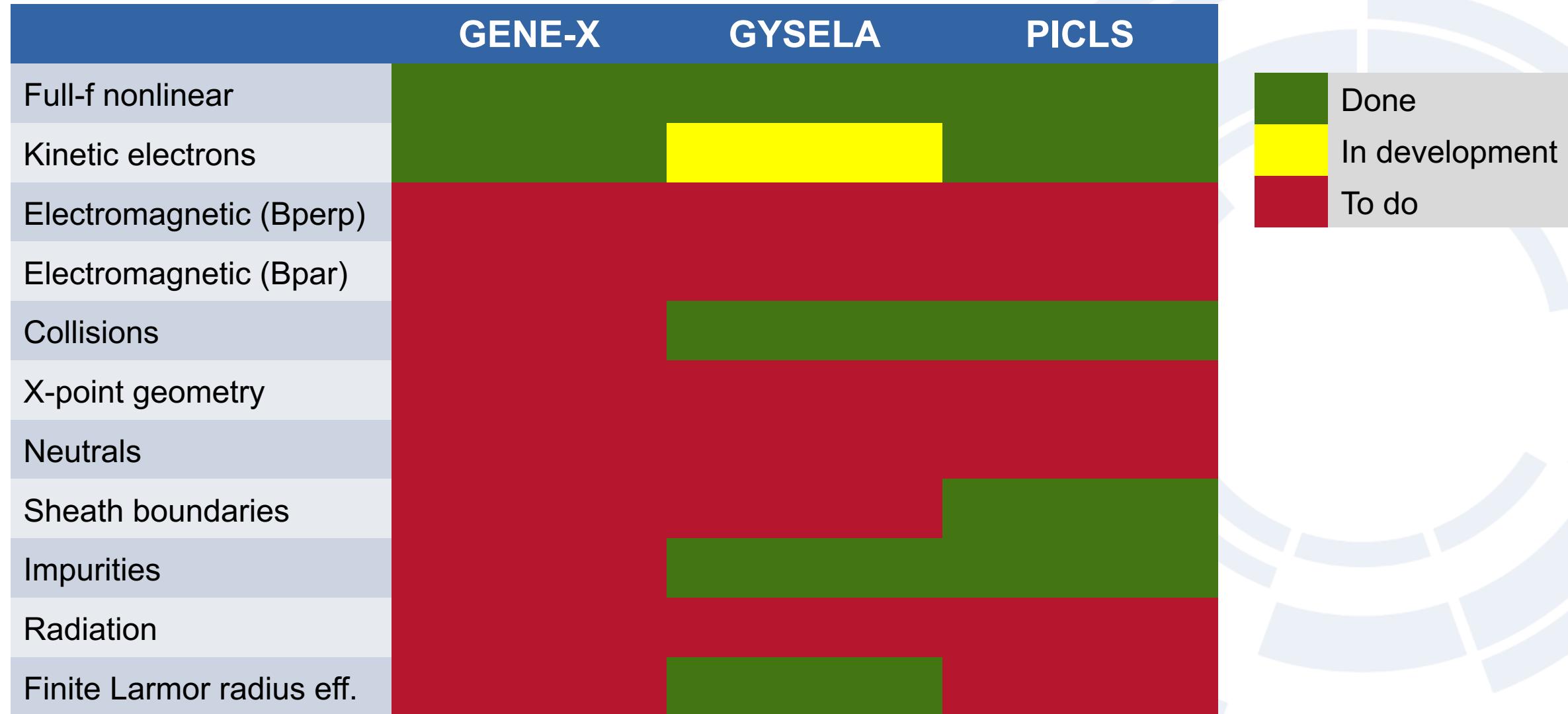
Kinetic physics matters to many aspects of edge/SOL modeling:

- Ion **orbit losses** near the separatrix are naturally included in global GK
- **Neutrals are non-thermal** (e.g. multi energy populations), couple to plasma momentum/energy via CX etc.
- **Parallel transport** in SOL can be nonlocal (tail-dominated), challenging local fluid closures ($\lambda_e \ll L_T$) and fluid sheath heat transmission factors (target power loading)
- Pedestal turbulence includes kinetic instabilities (TEM, KBM, MTM)
- **E_r well** depends on kinetic currents and momentum sinks, feeding back on turbulence and transport (edge/SOL coupling).

We need gyrokinetic codes to anchor our understanding and calibrate fluid codes.

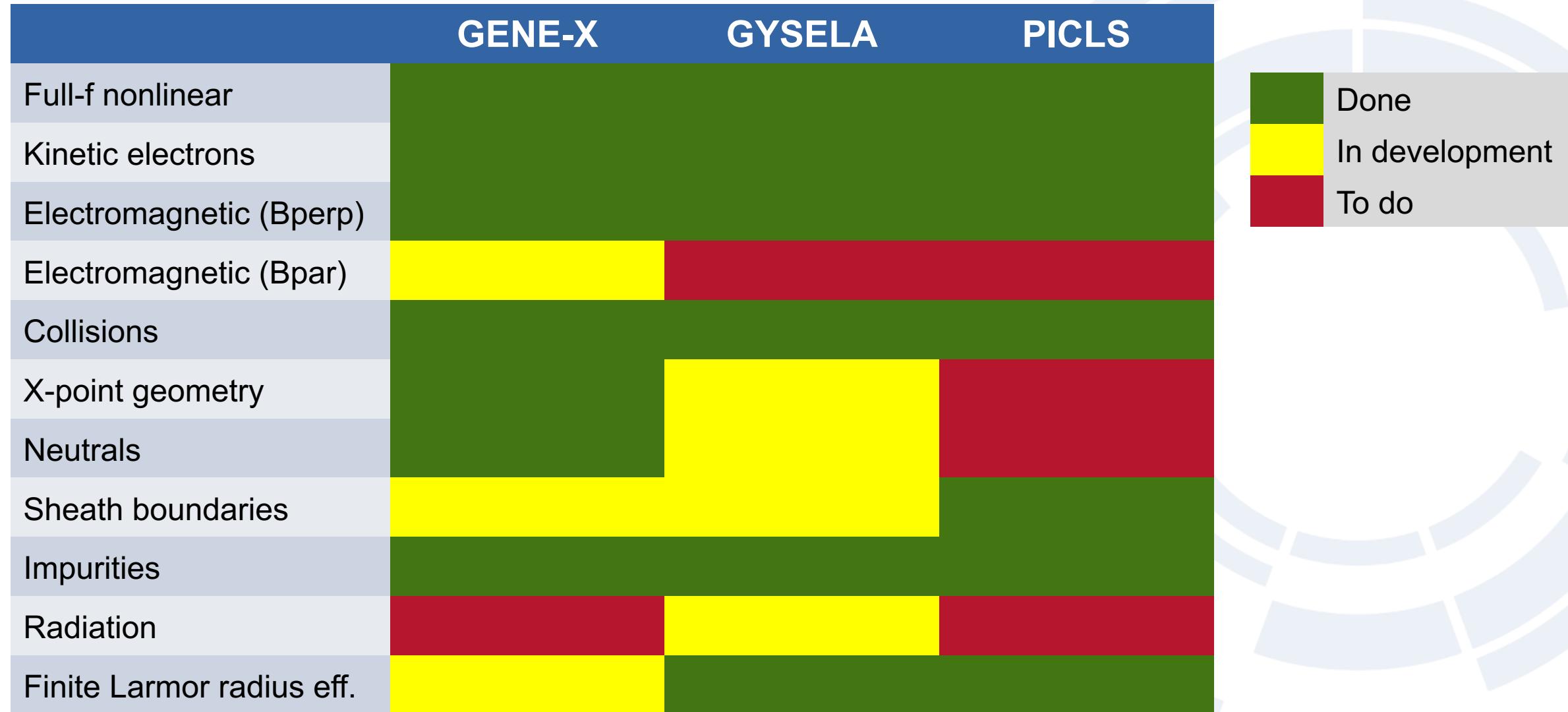


What TSVV4 delivered: Before





What TSVV4 delivered: After





TSVV 4 Project Members

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4) LECAD Laboratory, Faculty Of Mechanical Engineering, University of Ljubljana, SLO

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7) Institute of Plasma Physics of the Czech Academy of Sciences, CZ



EPFL

 **IPP**



**UNIVERZA
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Setup of TSVV Task 4

Key deliverables

Kinetic codes for the plasma edge ▶ TSVV T1



Our work

**GENE-X (IPP)
PICLS (IPP/SPC)
GYSELA (CEA)**

Deal with open field lines



**BIT1
VOICE
Steady-state techniques**

Limitations of Gyrokinetics



**ssV
GempicX
Moment-based edge GK**

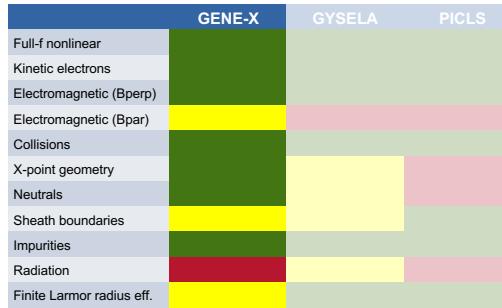
Coupling methods



**Neutrals
Impurities
Fluid-kinetic coupling**



Progress in GENE-X



Arbitrary geometry (open/closed field lines)

Collision operators: BGK, LBD, FPL

Electromagnetics (B_{\perp} ; B_{\parallel} in progress)

Validation on TCV, AUG, DIII-D, JET

Spectral velocity space version

Neutrals: pressure-diffusion model

Stellarator capability

Nonlinear quasineutrality equation

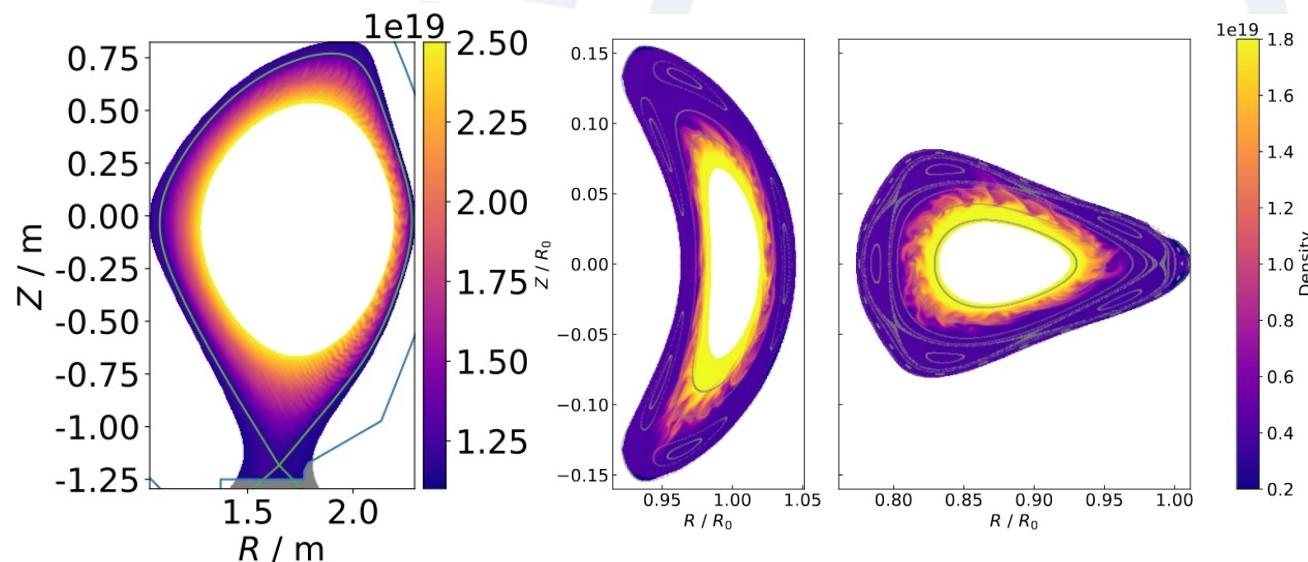
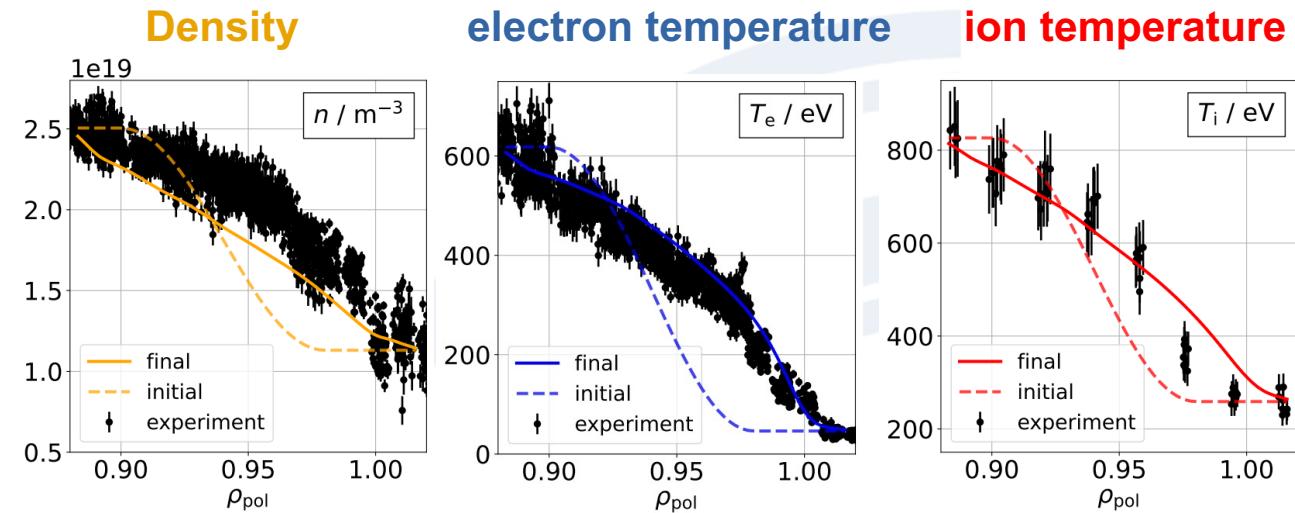
D. Michels CPC 2021, PoP 2022

P. UlbI CPP 2022, PoP 2023, NF 2025

B. Frei CPC 2025

M. Finkbeiner, submitted

S. Ogier-Collin, submitted



Courtesy C. Hill



Progress in GYSEL

	GENE-X	GYSEL	PICLS
Full-f nonlinear			
Kinetic electrons			
Electromagnetic (B _{perp})			
Electromagnetic (B _{par})			
Collisions			
X-point geometry			
Neutrals			
Sheath boundaries			
Impurities			
Radiation			
Finite Larmor radius eff.			

Full-f limiter plasma simulations with prescribed sources

Core-edge-SOL physics with adiabatic electrons

Nonlinear quasineutrality equation

2D field solver for **arbitrary geometry** (shaped magn. equil.)

Electromagnetics (B_{\perp})

Neoclassical physics, multi-species **collision operators**

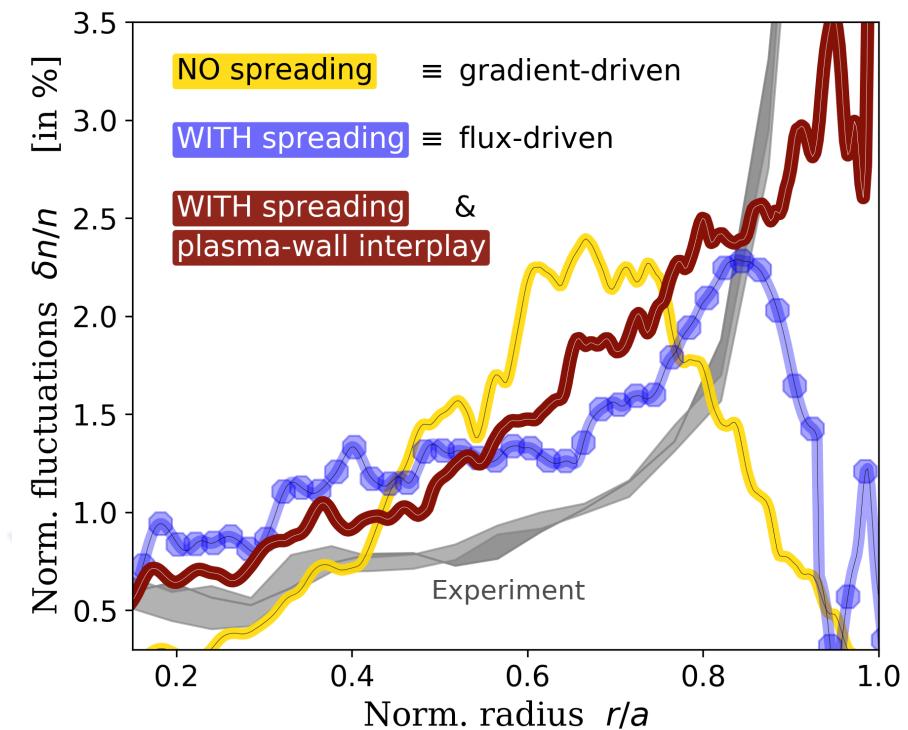
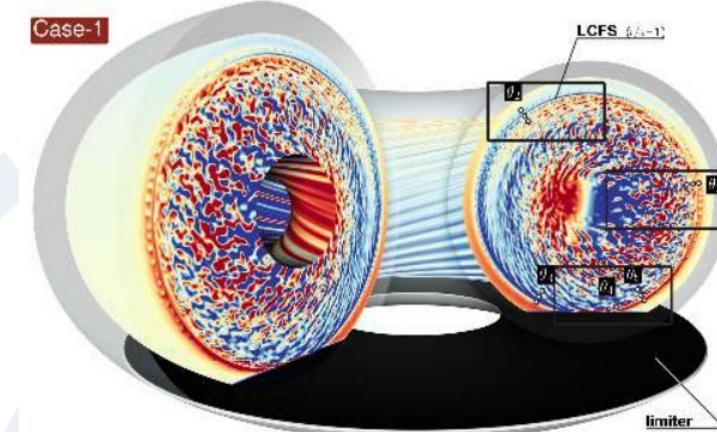
Sheath BC implementation underway

Gysela-X++ in development

G. Dif-Pradalier, Comm. Phys. 2022

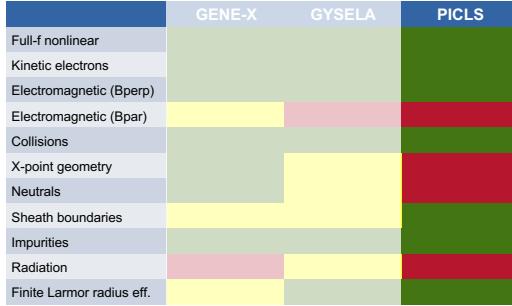
Y. Munsch, NF 2024 + NF 2024

P. Donnel, OPS 2026





Progress in PICLS



EPFL

Capability for delta-f core and full-f SOL runs

Electromagnetic version (B_\perp) implemented

Logical sheath boundary conditions

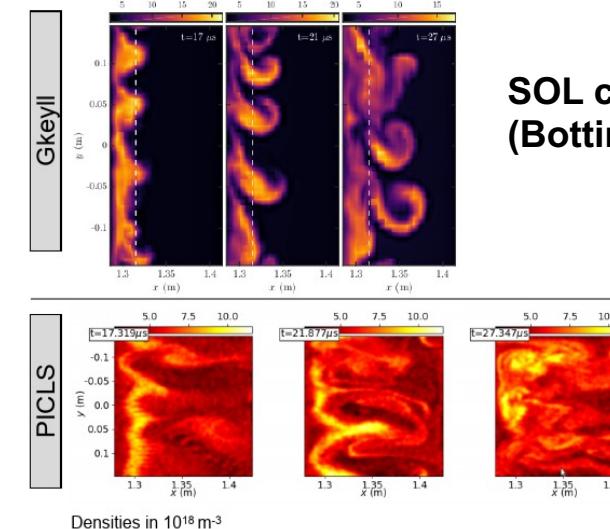
Moment-based full-f nonlinear collisions

Second-order particle Lagrangian terms included

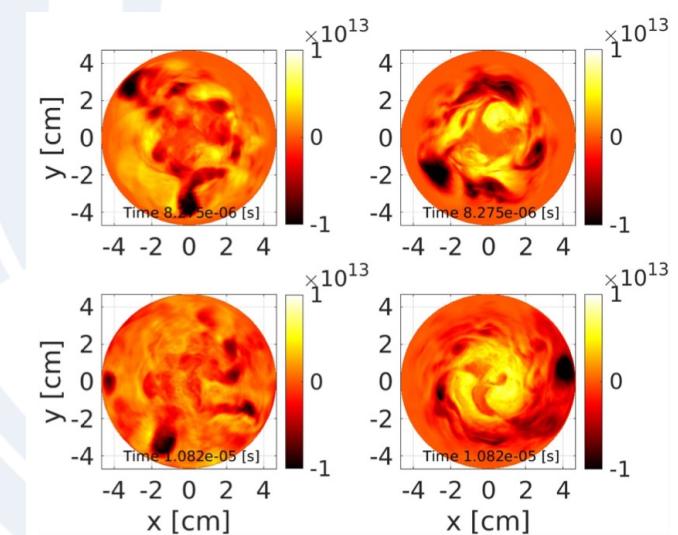
Delta-f/full-f transition scheme (GKEngine / ORB5)

M. Murugappan PoP 2022 + 2024
A. Stier CPC 2024, PPCF 2025
A. Stier PhD Thesis, 2025
A. Bottino, PPCF 2025

Density comparison: Gkeyll vs. PICLS



SOL comparison with Gkeyll (Bottino 2021)



Bottino PPCF 2025
Full-f core with $O(1)$ fluctuations



Progress in sheath studies

Ab-initio sheath simulations – BIT1

Sheath in ELMing SOL ▸ time-dependent BC

Sheath in blobby SOL

ITER / DEMO collisional sheath,
Dressed Cross-Section Model

D. Tskhakaya, EPJ D 2023



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Steady-state sheath studies

Extended preexisting sheath model for grazing angles:

- added kinetic electrons (ρ_e distortion by sheath electric field)
- multispecies ions

Turbulent gradient effects

Generalized solver for arbitrary angle



Immersed boundary – VOICE (1D1V kinetic)

Physics of Debye sheath recovered

Self-organization of plasma: source-collisions-sheath

Agreement and differences w.r.t. fluid predictions:

Mass ratio dependence; shape of f_e and f_i ; $E_r \propto -d_r T_e$

Sheath heat transmission factors larger (x ~2)

Ported to C++, GPU

Implemented neutrals

E. Bourne JCP 2023

Y. Munsch, NF 2024

Y. Munsch, NF 2024



A. Geraldini, PPCF 2024

A. Geraldini, JPP 2024

A. Geraldini, submitted

S. Zeegers, Master thesis

N. Vadot, JPP 2025, submitted



Limitations of Gyrokinetics

Hybrid-kinetic simulations using ssV

Enabled routine **3d operation** of the code

Enabled simulations of **fully kinetic ITG**

Comparison to GENE successful in both local and global (full-f) mode

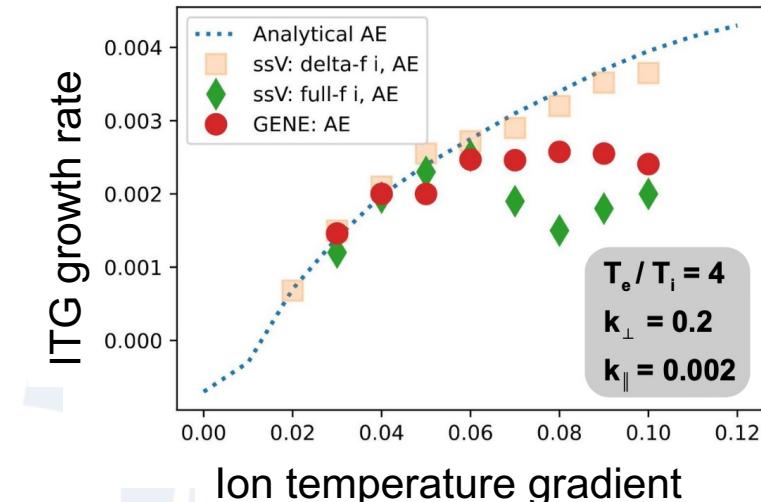


A. Mustonen, PhD Thesis, 2025

S. Thatikonda, CPC 2025

S. Thatikonda, PoP, submitted (2025)

S. Thatikonda, JPP, submitted (2026)



Geometric PIC methods using GempicX

GEMPIC model implemented into **AMReX** framework

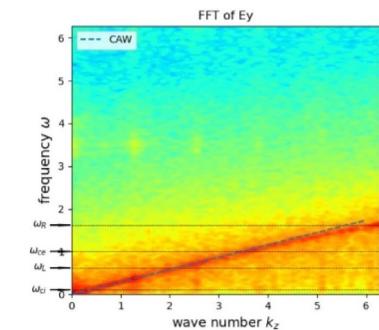
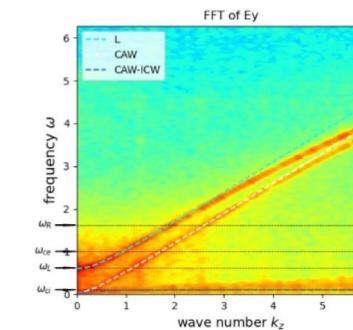
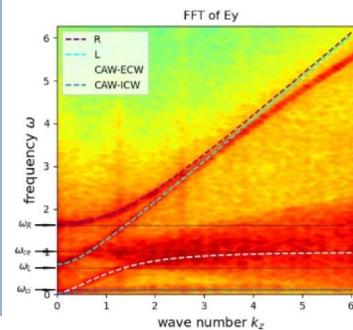
Ported to GPU

Both **fully kinetic and hybrid models** (FK ions + DK electrons)

Cylindric coordinates implemented



Wave physics with different models in GempicX (**Meng PPCF 2025**)



(a) FK. Wave spectrum of E_y vs k_z .

(b) Hybrid. E_y vs k_z .

(c) DK. Wave spectrum of E_y vs k_z .

K. Kormann, SIAM JSC, 2024
G. Meng, PPCF, 2025



Progress on developing the gyro-moment approach

Gyro-moment approach

Developed **flux-tube linear GM** code

Benchmarked to GENE

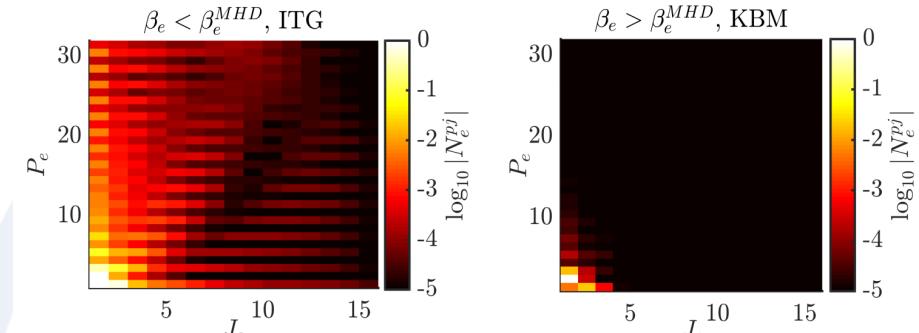
Implemented + compared a range of **collision operators**

Nonlinear simulations in Z-pinch + Cyclone Base Case

Full-f version applied to linear plasma device

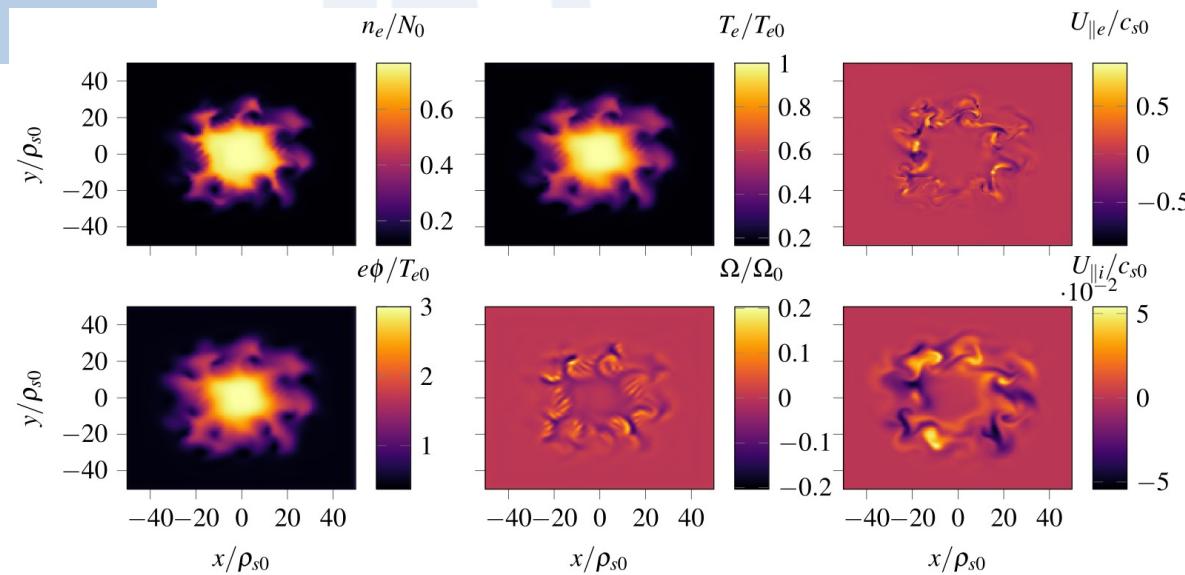
Extended orderings are being developed

EPFL



Moment spectra for linear ITG and KBM

LAPD-like simulations with extended k_{\perp} ordering
Mencke PPCF 2025



- BJ Frei JPP 2021
- BJ Frei JPP 2022
- BJ Frei PoP 2022
- BJ Frei JPP 2023
- BJ Frei, PoP 2024
- ACD Hoffmann JPP 2023
- ACD Hoffmann, JPP 2023
- JE Mencke, PPCF 2025

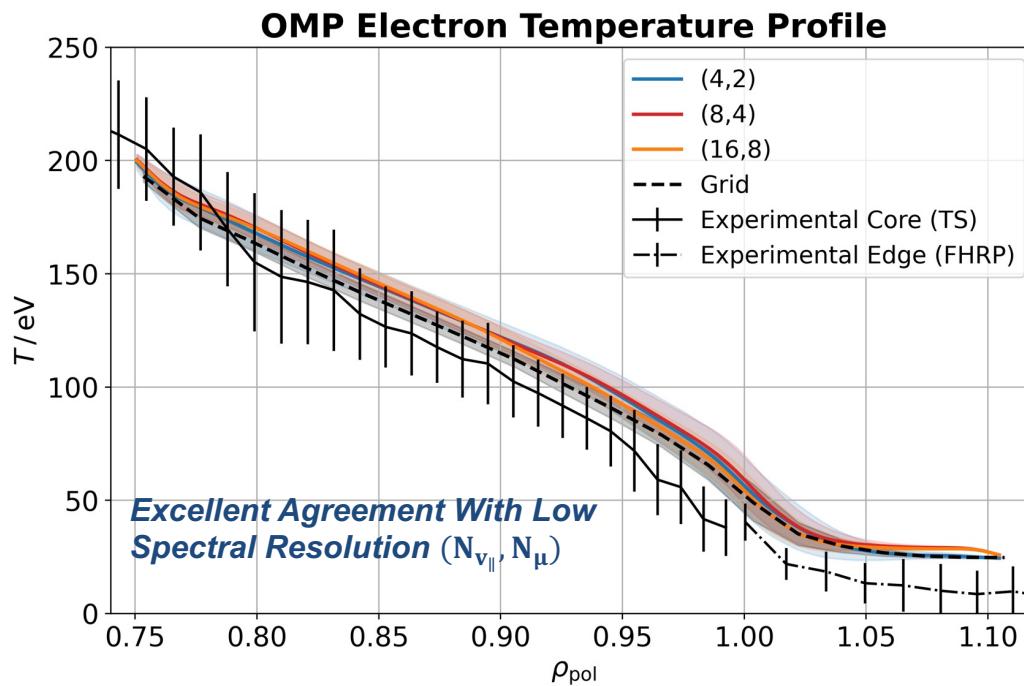


Full-f spectral approach speeds up GENE-X by $\sim 50x$

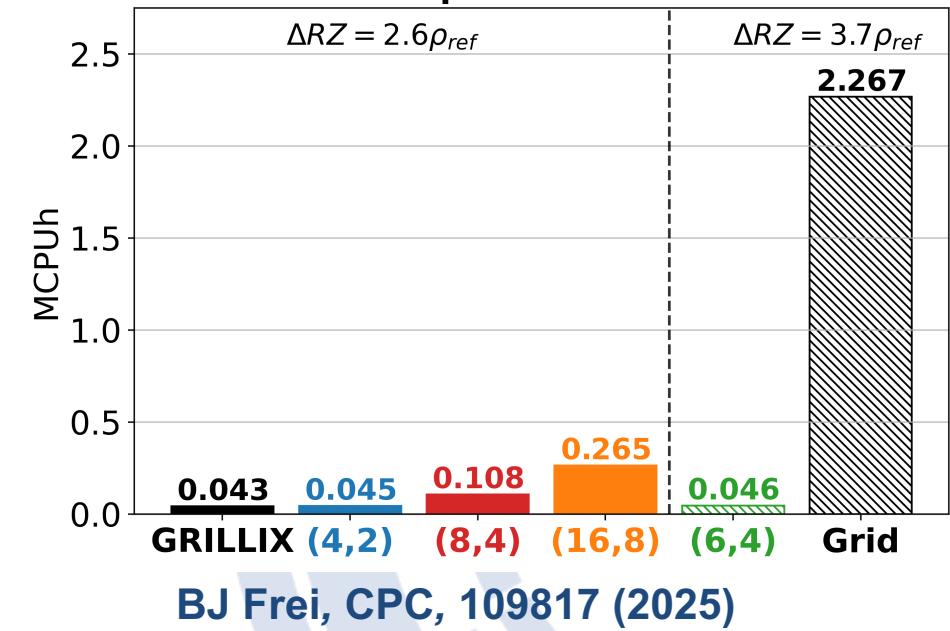
Spectral Velocity-Space Expansion (Hermite-Laguerre poly.) of the full-f distribution function

$$f_\alpha \simeq \sum_{p=0}^{N_{v\parallel}} \sum_{j=0}^{N_\mu} \mathcal{N}_\alpha^{pj} H_p(v\parallel) L_j(\mu) F_{\mathcal{M}\alpha}$$

TCV-X21 L-mode dominated by TEM turbulence



Computational cost of 0.5 ms of TCV-X21
Computational Cost



Key Takeaways:

- Numerical implementation **verified using MMS**
- Excellent agreement** (profiles, turbulence, and transport) between **spectral** and **grid-based** simulations
- Large **reduction of computational cost** \Rightarrow **gain in efficiency**



GENE-X validation is moving to larger devices

Previously reported (TSVV Midterm eval.):

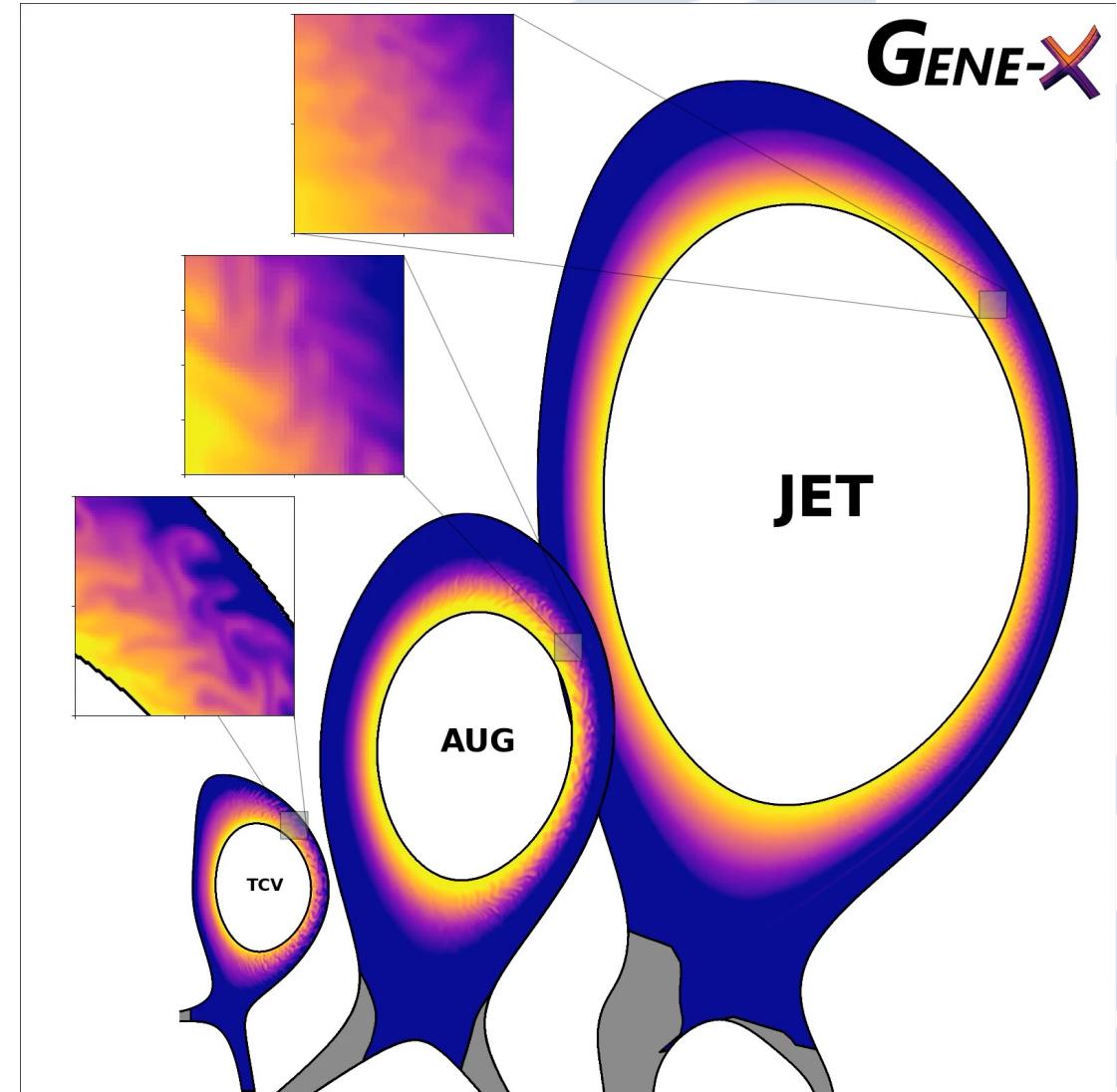
- TCV-X21 validation with various collision operators
- Found good agreement in profiles and λ_q when including collisions

Many new validation exercises with GENE-X:

- TCV with NT/PT (Ulbi NF 2025)
- DIII-D with NT

Both gyro-moment approach and GPU porting enable simulations of larger machines.

Appetizer:
JET L-mode validation ⇒





GYSELA: limiter BC with kinetic electrons



□ Limiter boundary condition (r, θ) with **adiabatic electrons**

[G. Dif-Pradalier, Comm. Phys. 2022]

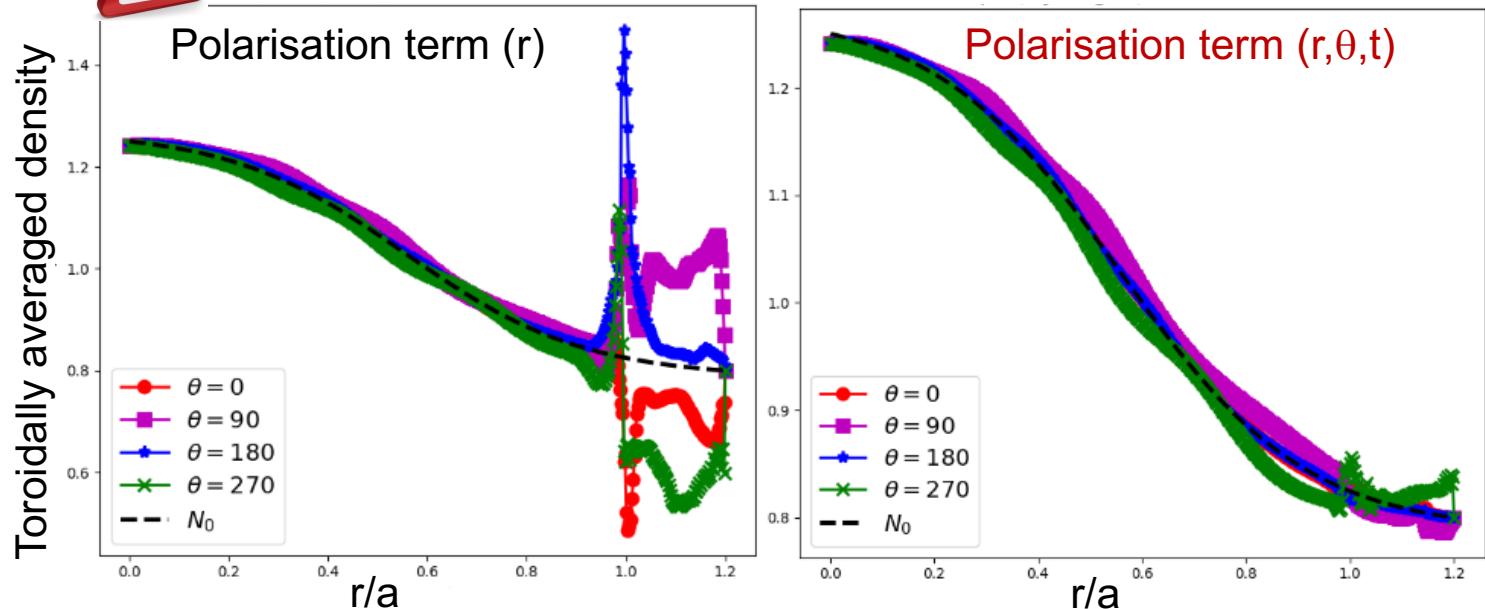
- Penalisation of f_i towards f_{target} at low temperature \rightarrow heat sink
- Modified adiabatic electron response in the scrape-off layer

□ Generalisation with **kinetic electrons** [P. Donnel, Open Plasma Science 2025]

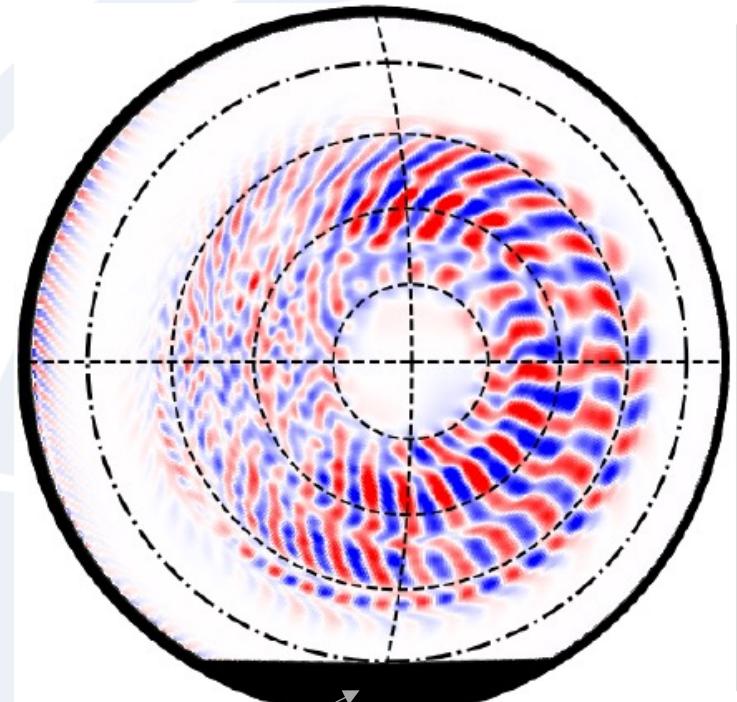
- Penalisation of f_i & f_e towards f_{target} \rightarrow heat & particle sink @ constant charge
- Trapped Kinetic Electrons in the core, Full Kinetic Electrons in the SOL
- **Refined calculation of polarisation density** \rightarrow accounting for time evolution & poloidal inhomogeneity is key



Debye-sheath physics not implemented yet



Fluctuations of electric potential ϕ



$$\frac{d\bar{f}_s}{dt} = -\mathcal{M}_{\text{lim.}}(r, \theta) \nu_s (\bar{f}_s - \bar{f}_{s,\text{target}})$$

$$-\nabla_{\perp} \cdot \left(\frac{m_i \langle \bar{n}_i \rangle_{\varphi}}{\langle B \rangle_{\varphi}^2} \nabla_{\perp} \phi \right) = \sum_s e_s \delta \bar{n}_s$$

Function of (r, θ, t)

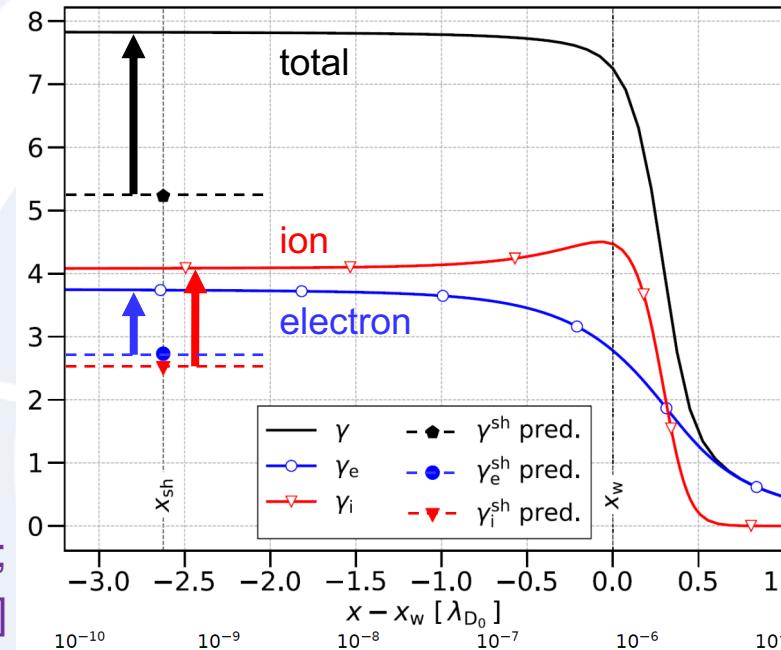


- Core turbulence & confinement depend on boundary conditions → Scrape-Off Layer

- Reduced (1D,1V) GYSELA along field line → kinetic plasma-wall interaction with immersed boundary

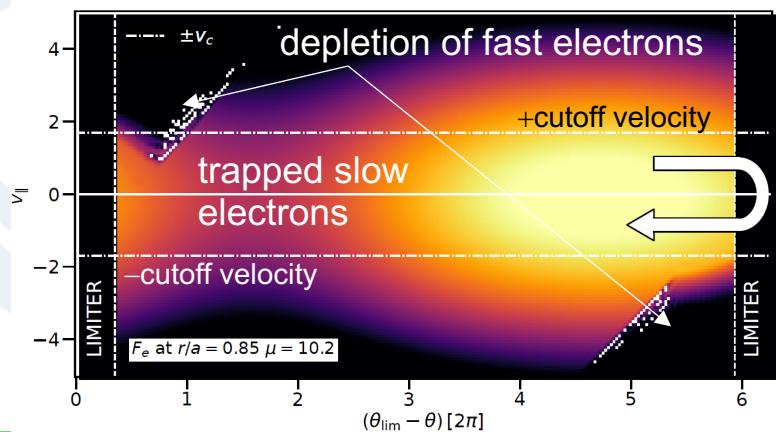
- Finite electron heat flux (=0 in fluid), up to ~50% of energy flux
→ very slow decay with v^*
- Consequence: Debye sheath heat transmission factor $Q_s = \gamma_s \Gamma_{sh} T_s$ larger than fluid-like prediction → $\sim \gamma_{i,fluid} \times 1.60$ and $\sim \gamma_{e,fluid} \times 1.35$

[Y. Munsch et al., Nucl. Fusion 64 (2024) 046013;
Y. Munsch et al., Nucl. Fusion 64 (2024) 056027]



- Subgrid modelling of Debye sheath in (3D,2V) GYSELA

- Absorption of ions & reflection of slow electrons is OK
- New "Flux-averaged sheath" model to allow for finite surface currents
- Promising technique for toroidally localized limiter → in progress



[Y. Munsch, PhD thesis (2024), Aix-Marseille Univ.]



Moving into TSVV-C: Scope changes

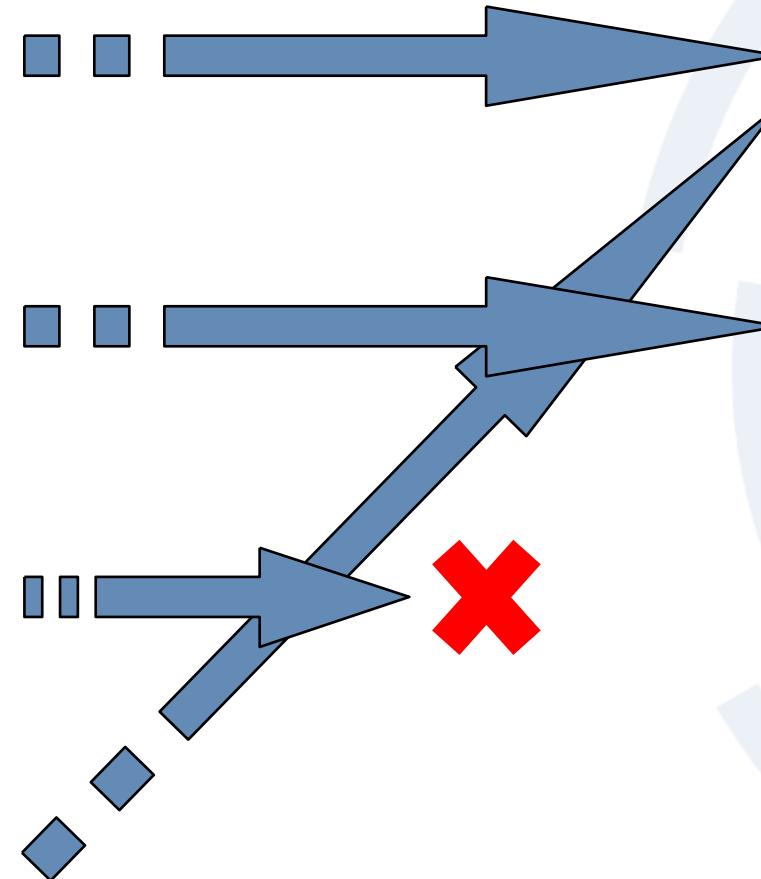
TSVV-4

Kinetic codes for the plasma edge ▶ TSVV T1

Deal with open field lines

Limitations of Gyrokinetics

Coupling methods



TSVV-C

Build capability to predict exhaust w. GK, neutrals + impurities

Develop realistic **boundary conditions using full kinetics**

Apply tools to key tokamak and stellarator questions

Develop **reduced models for integrated modelling**

HPC



TSVV-C: How we address the call

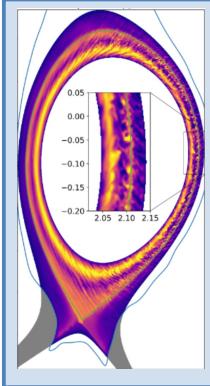
Build capability to predict exhaust w. GK, neutrals + impurities

Apply tools to key tokamak and stellarator questions

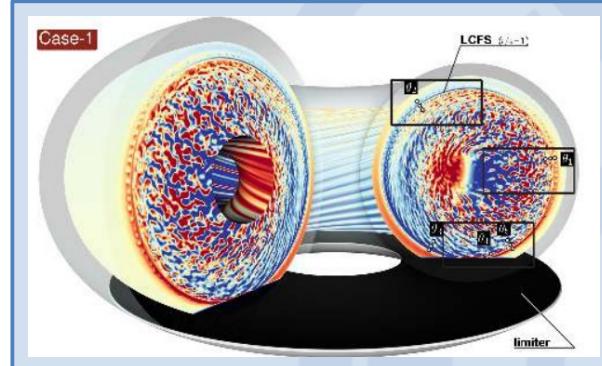
Develop realistic **boundary conditions** using full kinetics

Develop **reduced models** for integrated modelling

GENE-X (IPP/SPC)



GYSELA (CEA)



Gyro-Moment (SPC)

JOREK-GK (CEA)

BIT1 (IPP-CR, UL)

Steady-state approach (SPC)

Separatrix BC database (with TSVV-B)

SOL transport modelling (DIFFER)



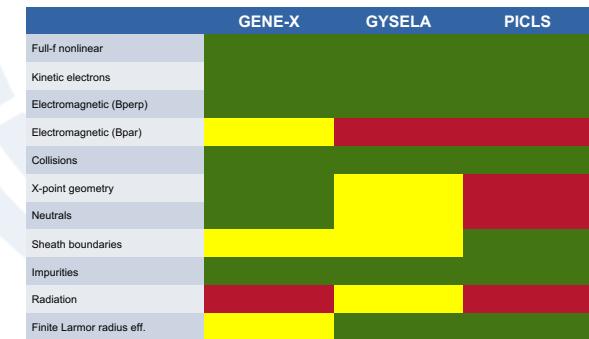
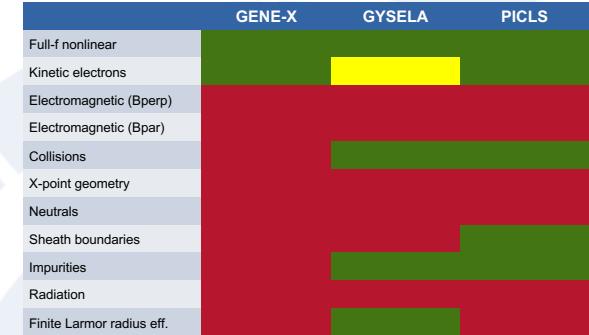
Summary

TSVV-4 codes have made impressive progress, moving towards reactor-relevant capabilities.

- All GK codes are now **electromagnetic**
- GENE-X has been **extended to 3d** and includes neutrals
- VOICE studied **immersed sheath boundary, includes neutrals, transfer to GYSELA** ongoing
- BIT1 studied sheath in **transient events** and **reactor conditions**

TSVV-C will build on this foundation and focus increasingly on applications.

Two main gyrokinetic codes in TSVV-C: GYSELA, GENE-X.





Backup slides





TSVV-04 Publications

First Author	Initials	Journal / Conference	Doc. Type	DOI or status of paper	Pinboard ID	First Author	Initials	Journal / Conference	Doc. Type	DOI or status of paper	Pinboard ID
Bécoulet	M.	Plasma Physics and Controlled Fusion	Paper	Under review		Hoffmann	ACD	Journal of Plasma Physics	Article	Submitted	41071
Blanco Ortiz	J.	Aix-Marseille University	Internship report	-	-	Kormann	K.	SIAM Journal on Scientific Computing	Paper	10.1137/23M1618910	873
Bottino	A	Plasma Physics and Controlled Fusion 67 025008	Article	10.1088/1361-6587/ada0dc	38790	Mencke	JEM	Plasma Physics and Controlled Fusion 67 035029	Article	10.1088/1361-6587/adb6d4	39162
Bourne	E.	Journal of Computational Physics	Paper	DOI10.1016/j.jcp.2023.112249	33965	Meng	G	IAEA FEC 2025	Poster + Conference	Submitted	39792
Bourne	E.	Journal of Computational Physics	Paper	DOI10.1016/j.jcp.2023.112229	33966	Meng	G	Plasma Physics and Controlled Fusion 67 055007	Article	10.1088/1361-6587/adc832	39252
Cordonnier	A	Phys. Rev. Letters	Article	Under review		Michels	D.	Physics of Plasmas	Paper	10.1063/5.0082413	30105
Donnel	P	Open Plasma Science	Article	accepted	40642	Michels	D.	Technical University of Munich	PhD thesis	-	-
Finkbeiner	ME	Computer Physics Communications	Article	Submitted	40698	Munschy	Y.	Nuclear Fusion	Paper	10.1088/1741-4326/ad346c	33864
Frei	B.J.	Journal of Plasma Physics	Paper	doi:10.1017/S0022377821000830	29545	Munschy	Y.	Nuclear Fusion	Paper	10.1088/1741-4326/ad2724	36060
Frei	B.J.	Journal of Plasma Physics	Paper	10.1017/S0022377823000715	33126	Munschy	Y.	Aix-Marseille University	PhD thesis	-	-
Frei	B.J.	Physics of Plasmas	Paper	10.1063/5.0091244	31631	Murugappan	M.	Physics of Plasmas	Paper	10.1063/5.0106661	32321
Frei	B.J.	Journal of Plasma Physics	Paper	10.1017/S0022377822000344	31263	Narechania	N	Journal of Plasma Physics	Article	Submitted	41117
Frei	B.J.	arXiv:2307.04562, Submitted	Paper	10.1063/5.0167997	35671	Ogier-Collin	S	International Workshop on Plasma Edge Theory in Fusion Devices (PET-20), Leuven	Poster + Conference	Submitted	40191
Frei	BJ	Computer Physics Communications 316, 109817	Article	10.1016/j.cpc.2025.109817	38998	Panico	O	J. Plasma Phys. (2025), vol. 91, E26	Article	10.1017/S0022377824001624	39091
Frei	BJ	Nuclear Fusion 65 116026	Article	10.1088/1741-4326/ae114a	40410	Panico	O	J. Plasma Phys. (2025), vol. 91, E118	Article	10.1017/S0022377825100603	40076
Geraldini	A.	Journal of Plasma Physics	Paper	doi:10.1017/S0022377824001387	37335	Qu	Z.S	Plasma Phys. And Controlled Fusion	Article	Under review	
Geraldini	A.	Plasma Physics and Controlled Fusion	Article	Submitted	40916	Stier	A	Plasma Physics and Controlled Fusion 67 055032	Article	10.1088/1361-6587/adc53	39448
Geraldini	A.	Plasma Physics and Controlled Fusion	Paper	doi:10.1088/1361-6587/ad705a	35707	Sulimro	AI	International Workshop on Plasma Edge Theory in Fusion Devices (PET-20), Leuven	Poster + Conference	Submitted	40203
Glasser	A	Plasma Phys. Control. Fusion 67 (2025) 035022	Article	10.1088/1361-6587/adb519		Tskhakaya	D.	European Physical Journal D	Paper	10.1140/epjd/s10053-023-00682-...	34977
Guillon	P	Phil. Trans. R. Soc. A	Article	Under review		Ulbl	P.	Contributions to Plasma Physics	Paper	10.1002/ctpp.202100180	29586
Guillon	P	J. Plasma Phys. (2025), vol. 91, E145	Article	10.1017/S0022377825100895	40706	Ulbl	P.	Annual Meeting of the APS Division of Plasma Physics (APS-DPP) + Physics of Plasmas	Invited talk + Paper in preparation	10.1063/5.0144688	32935
Hoffmann	A.C.D.	Journal of Plasma Physics	Paper	10.1017/S0022377823000284	32901	Ulbl	P.	Phys. Plasmas	Paper	10.1063/5.0144688	33797
Hoffmann	A.C.D.	arXiv:2308.01016, Journal of Plasma Physics 2023;89(6)	Paper	DOI: 10.1017/S0022377823001320	35753	Ulbl	P.	Technical University of Munich	PhD Thesis	-	-
Hoffmann	A.C.D.	Bulletin of the American Physical Society, American Physical Society, JP11.00090	Paper	doi:10.1103/APS.DPP.2023.JP11.00090	090	Ulbl	P	Nuclear Fusion 65 106004	Article	10.1088/1741-4326/adfd70	40137
Hoffmann	A.C.D.	Published soon in PPCF; arXiv:2407.12942	Paper	10.1088/1361-6587/ad9e6f	-	Vadot	N	Journal of Plasma Physics	Article	Submitted	
Hoffmann	A.C.D.		Ph.D. thesis		-	Yoshida	M	Nucl. Fusion 65 033001 (2025)	Article	10.1088/1741-4326/ad8ced	



GENE-X added 1-mom fluid neutrals model

Status of GENE-X neutrals (S. Ogier-Collin):

- In general, follows GRILLIX path thanks to shared infrastructure
- Add neutrals as simple in-code model before coupling to any external code
- Choice: pressure-diffusion model (1-moment) from Horsten (NF 2017), as already added in GRILLIX

$$\frac{\partial N}{\partial t} = \nabla \cdot \frac{\tilde{D}_N}{T_i} \nabla N T_i - k_{iz} n N + k_{rec} n^2$$

$$D_N = \frac{c_{s,N}^2}{\nu_{cx}} = \frac{T_i/m_i}{k_{cx} n}$$

Eqs. from Zholobenko NF 2021

What additional developments are needed beyond those done for GRILLIX?

- Need source terms for gyrokinetic distribution functions (ready for 3-moment model)
- Derive, add + test those terms (EF Pinboard: S. Ogier-Collin, #40191)

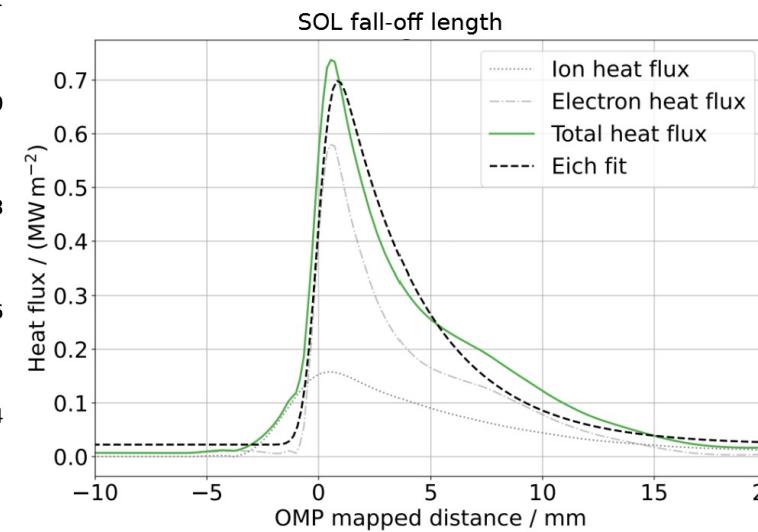
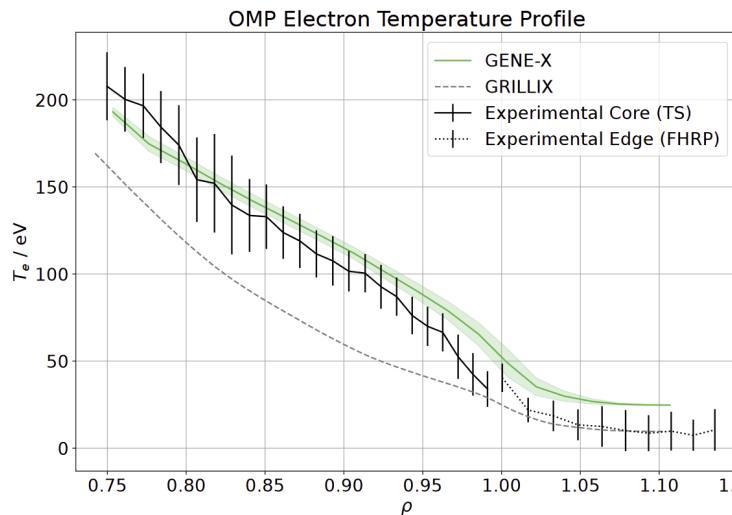
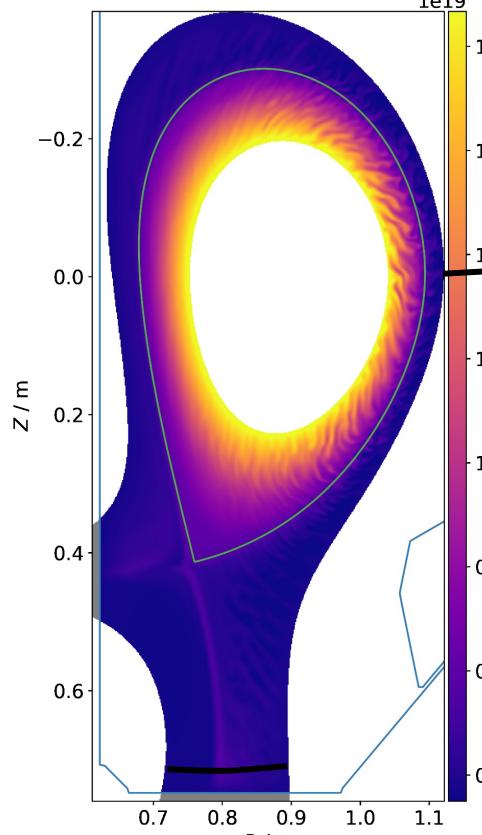


Validation of GENE-X in TCV

[Courtesy of P. Ulbl]

GENE-X

Ion density n_i / m^{-3} at $t = 369.326 \mu s$



[P. Ulbl et al., APS invited 2022 + PoP 2023]

Code validation vs. “TCV-X21” open dataset

- Simulations reproduce key aspects of the experiment

Left: **green** vs. **black** lines

- Divertor heat flux fall-off follows Eich-fit function, match improves with collisions

SOL fall-off length λ_q : **Experiment 5.5 mm**

Fluid Models			GENE-X (Gyrokinetic)		
GRILLIX	1.1	mm	No Coll	1.34	mm
GBS	11.6	mm	Coll BGK	4.68	mm
TOKAM3X	0.1	mm	Coll LBD	3.75	mm



GYSELA: 1-mom fluid neutrals added to VOICE testbed

Neutrals in VOICE (Y. Munsch, M. Protais):

- VOICE = 1d1v fully kinetic, with same numerics as GYSELA (semi-Lagrangian)
- Within TSVV-4, focused on immersed boundary condition treatment of sheath physics
- Recently added pressure-diffusion model
- Use different grids for plasma + neutrals

Studied neutrals in combination with sheath physics:

- Observe ionization + CX, recycling
- How do those interact with ions accelerating towards the sheath?

Next:

- Physics studies, e.g. heat transmission factor



BIT1 simulation of ITER inter-ELM SOL

[Courtesy of
D. Tskhakaya]

Two new sets of ITER SOL simulations have been performed:

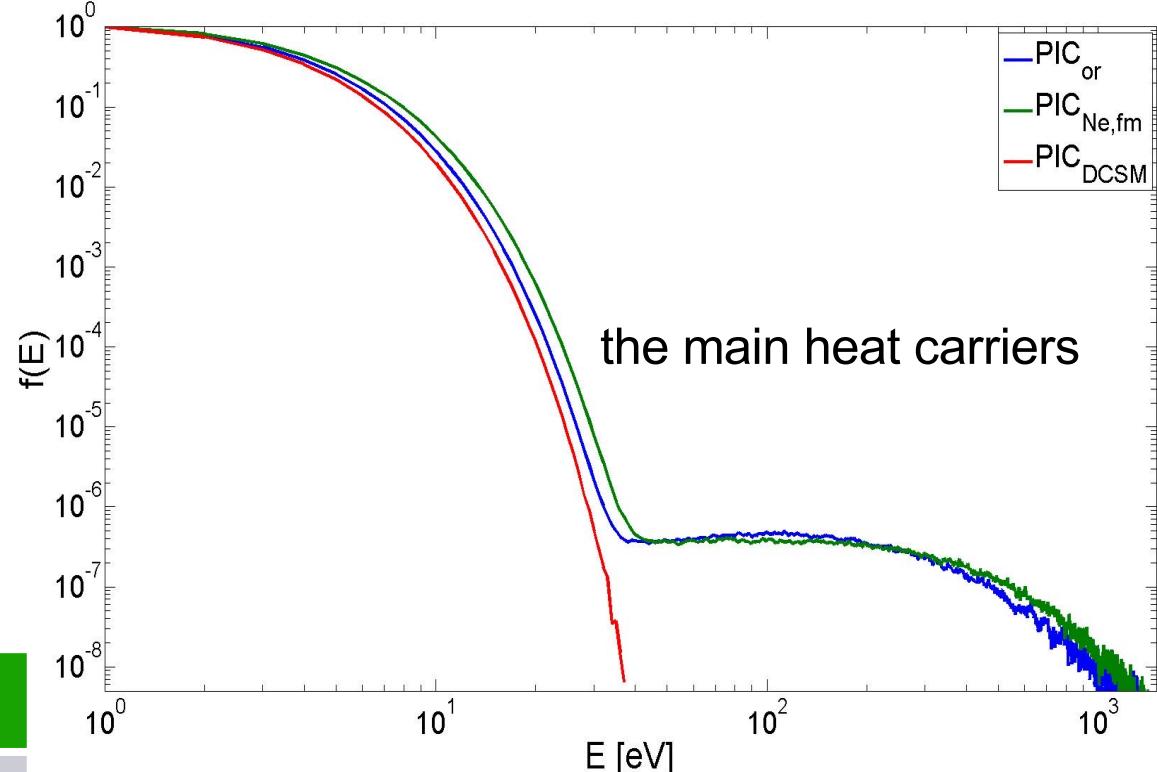
- including higher ionized states of Ne^{+i} (up to $i=6$)
- including Dressed Cross-Section Model (DCSM). The DCSM [1] does not apply the coronal approximation and takes into the account millions of possible atomic transitions.

No significant influence of the applied model on the plasma profiles has been found, but on the electron power loads to the divertor

q_e [MW/m ²]	Original	With $\text{Ne}^{+i} < 7$	With DCSM
ID / OD	3.7 / 15.7	7.2 / 13.2	0.9 / 0.9

The explanation of these results is the following: the main heat carriers to the divertors are the super-thermal non-Maxwellian collisionless electrons originated from the upstream SOL, which are absent in the DCSM.

[1] D. Tskhakaya, Europ. J. Phys. D, 2023



Electron energy distribution function at the ITER outer divertor sheath entrance from different SOL models. "or" denotes the original model including only up to the 5th ionized states of Ne



TSVV-C proposal: Building predictive capability

Build capability to predict exhaust w. GK, neutrals + impurities

Apply tools to key tokamak and stellarator questions

Develop realistic **boundary conditions** using full kinetics

Develop **reduced models** for integrated modelling

GENE-X (IPP/SPC)

- Advanced collision operators
- Finite- β stellarator equilibria
- 3-moment fluid neutrals
- Sheath boundary conditions
- PIROCK time stepping

JOREK-GK (CEA)

- Couple kinetic neutrals to GK
- Couple kinetic impurities to GK

GYSELÀ (CEA)

- Kinetic neutrals source
- Surrogate sheath model

Gyro-Moment (SPC)

- GM with extended ordering in toroidal geometry
- Nonlinear collisions
- Electromagnetics
- Boundary conditions



TSVV-C proposal: Addressing key questions

Build capability to predict exhaust w. GK, neutrals + impurities

Apply tools to key tokamak and stellarator questions

Develop realistic **boundary conditions** using full kinetics

Develop **reduced models** for integrated modelling

GENE-X (IPP/SPC)

- Isotope effect + impurity studies
- Validation with improved neutrals + sheath
- W7-X validation

GYSELA (CEA)

- Impact of kinetic neutrals on turbulence + transport
- Limiter simulations with surrogate sheath model



TSVV-C proposal: Sheath physics

Build capability to predict exhaust w. GK, neutrals + impurities

Apply tools to key tokamak and stellarator questions

Develop realistic boundary conditions using full kinetics

Develop reduced models for integrated modelling

BIT1 (IPP-CR, UL)

- Effect on impurities on sheath
- Effect of blobs/ELMs on sheath

Steady-state approach (SPC)

- Add kinetic electrons + neutral collisions
- Extend to 2D3V
- Effect of tangential fluctuations on sheath