

WIR SCHAFFEN WISSEN – HEUTE FÜR MORGEN



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Skymions in magnetic materials

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I. What is a Skyrmion?

What is a Skyrmion?

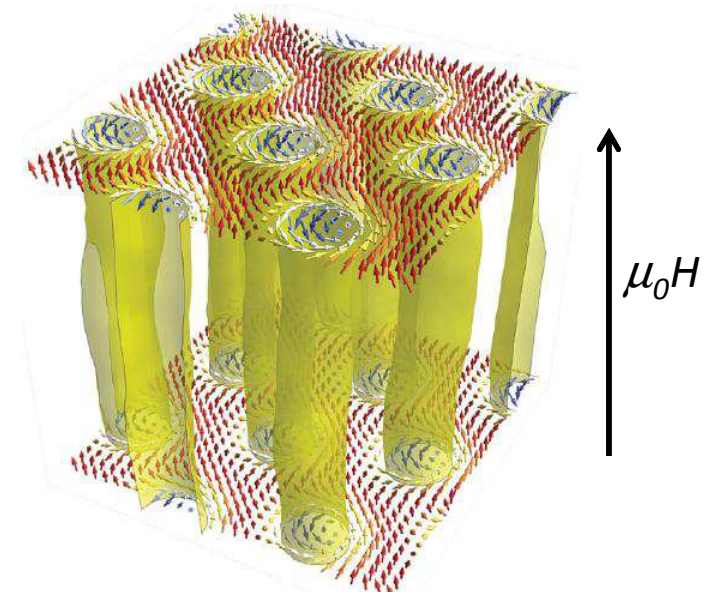
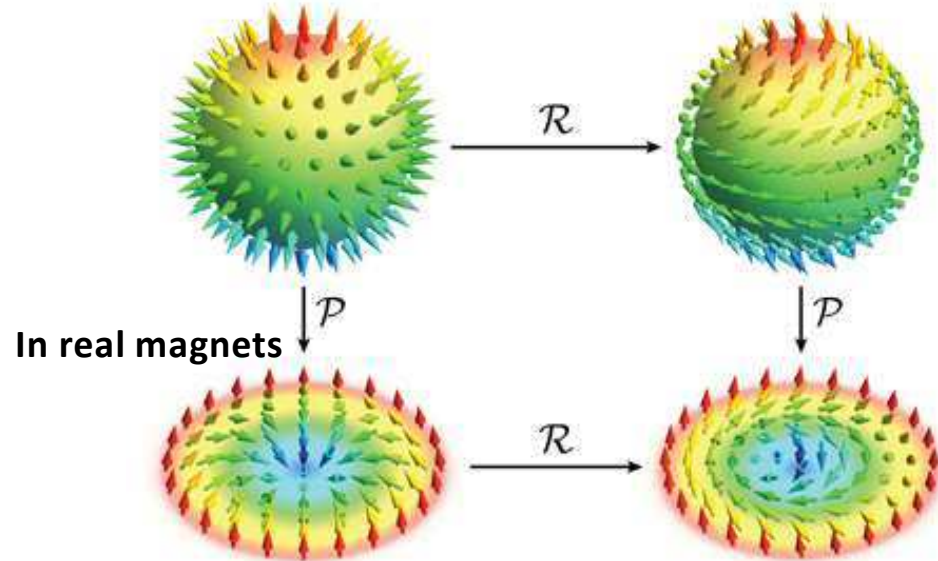


Tony Skyrme

Nucl. Phys. 31 556 (1962)

- A Skyrmion is a local, stable, soliton-like solution of a nonlinear field theory
- Interpreted as **particle-like** objects (baryons in a spinless pion medium)
- These particles persist due to **topological-protection**, which is characterised by a **topological integer (winding number)**.
- Skyrmion excitation in CM: Liquid crystals, QHE, BEC, non-centrosymmetric magnets

In the original sense



Classifying a magnetic skyrmion

Homotopy theory: allows a classification of magnetic structures according to topology.

→ Examine the mapping of magnetic spin vectors in a physical space S^n to its order parameter space S^m .

→ The order is considered 'topological' when the mapping cannot be shrunk to a single point:

$$\pi_n(S^m) > 0$$

→ A topological structure can be characterised according to a winding integer N , which counts the number of times the physical space fully covers the order parameter space.

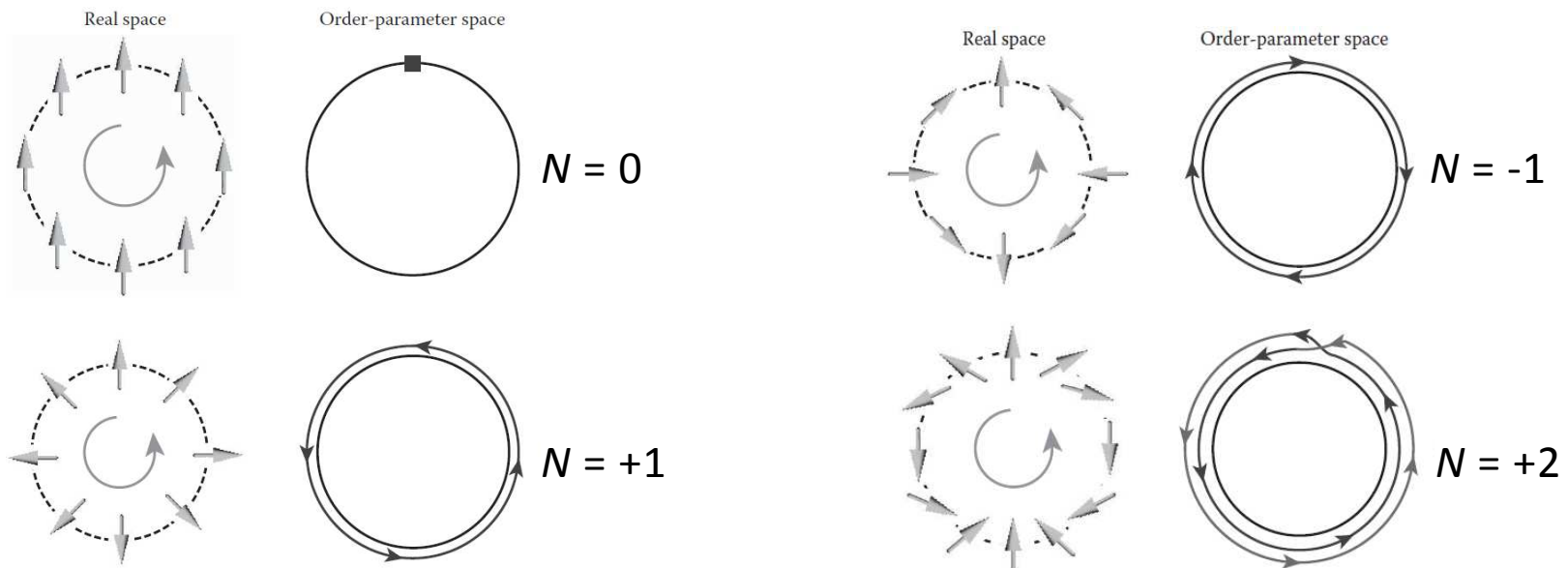
Example: Spins with fixed length on a circle (1-sphere).

Order parameter is a 2D magnetization vector: \mathbf{m}

Order parameter space = circle (one angle) = S^1

Homotopy group: $\pi_1(S^1) = \mathbb{Z}$

e.g. magnetic vortex



Classifying a magnetic skyrmion

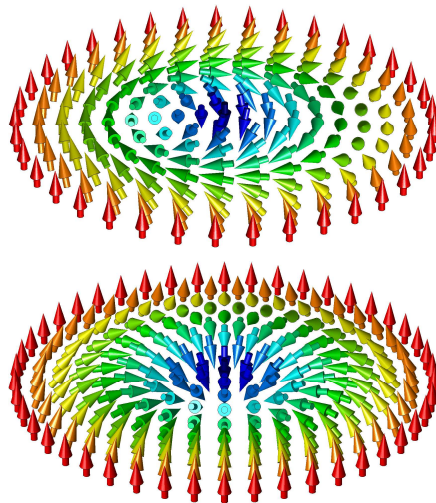
Magnetic Skyrmions belong the homotopy group: $\pi_2(S^2) = \mathbb{Z}$

Spins with fixed length on a 2-dimensional plane

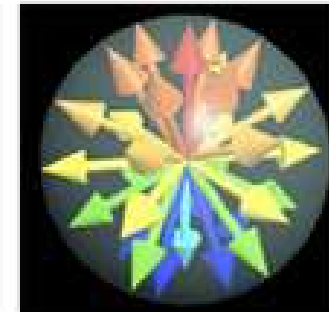
Order parameter is a 3D magnetization vector: \mathbf{m}

Order parameter space = surface of a sphere (two angles) $=S^2$

Real Space



Depiction of mapping to order parameter space



Characterised by **winding number** - $|N| = 1$.

$$N = \frac{1}{4\pi} \int \left(\frac{\partial \mathbf{m}}{\partial x} \times \frac{\partial \mathbf{m}}{\partial y} \right) \cdot \mathbf{m} \, dx \, dy$$

- **Closed particle-like state** (closed surface in order parameter space with physical stability)
- **Topologically non-trivial** (Skyrmions are countable objects)
- **Topological protection** (a continuous change of homotopy is forbidden \rightarrow introduces an energy barrier between different topological states in a real physical system)



II. Where are they found?

Thermodynamically stable magnetic vortex states in magnetic crystals

A. Bogdanov *, A. Hubert

Institut für Werkstoffwissenschaften VI der Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, Martensstr. 7, D 91058 Erlangen, Germany

Received 14 February 1994

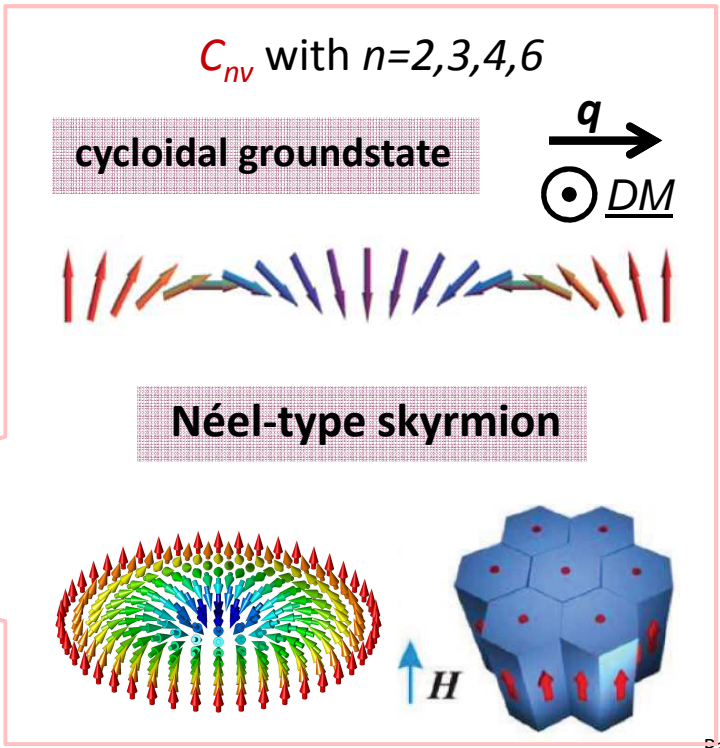
- A. Bogdanov and A. Hubert, JMMM **138**, 255 (1994).
 A.N. Bogdanov and D.A. Yablonsky, Sov. Phys. JETP **95**, 178 (1989).
 A.N. Bogdanov, U.K. Rößler and C. Pfleiderer, Physica B **359**, 1162 (2006).
 U.K. Rößler, A.A. Leonov and A.N. Bogdanov, J. Phys: Conf. Series (2010)

“spin vortices” as solutions of a continuum model → **condensed hcp skyrmion phases**

$$W = A \sum_i \left(\frac{\partial m}{\partial x_i} \right)^2 - Km_z^2 - \underbrace{J \cdot H_{\text{ext}} - \frac{1}{2} J \cdot H_d}_{\text{Zeeman}} + w_D \quad \checkmark$$

Exchange Anisotropy DMI energy

- **DMI couplings included as Lifshitz-type invariants**
- **They generally exist in non-centrosymmetric magnets**
- **The pattern of allowed DMIs determines the Skyrmion type**



$$w_D = D_1 w_1 + D_2 w_2$$

$$= D_1 \left(m_z \frac{\partial m_x}{\partial x} - m_x \frac{\partial m_z}{\partial x} + m_z \frac{\partial m_y}{\partial y} - m_y \frac{\partial m_z}{\partial y} \right)$$
~~$$+ D_2 \left(m_y \frac{\partial m_x}{\partial z} - m_x \frac{\partial m_y}{\partial z} + m_x \frac{\partial m_z}{\partial y} - m_z \frac{\partial m_x}{\partial y} + m_z \frac{\partial m_y}{\partial x} - m_y \frac{\partial m_z}{\partial x} \right)$$~~

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“spin vortices” as solutions of a continuum model → **condensed hcp skyrmion phases**

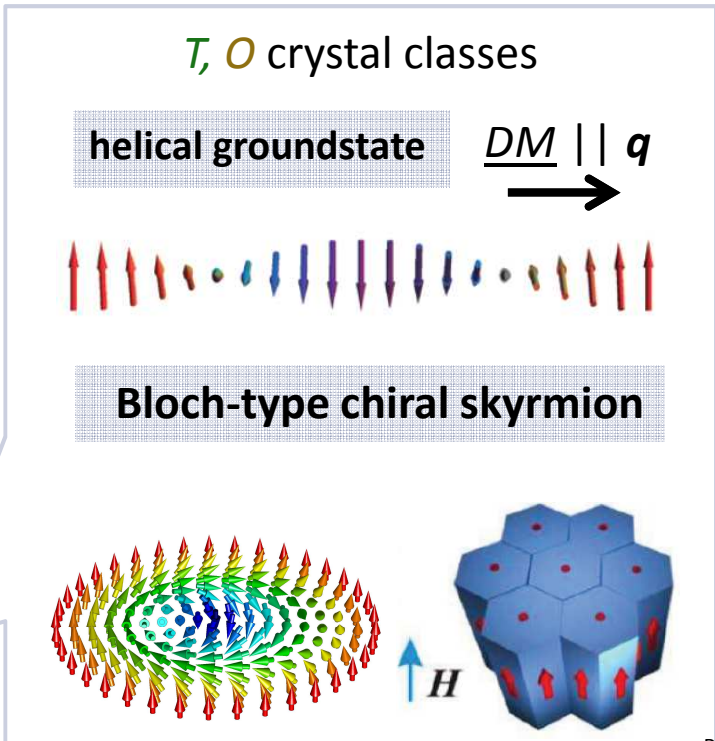
$$W = \underbrace{A \sum_i \left(\frac{\partial m}{\partial x_i} \right)^2}_{\text{Exchange}} - \underbrace{K m_z^2}_{\text{Anisotropy}} - \underbrace{J \cdot H_{\text{ext}} - \frac{1}{2} J \cdot H_d}_{\text{Zeeman}} + \underbrace{w_D}_{\text{DMI energy}}$$

- **DMI couplings included as Lifshitz-type invariants**
- **They generally exist in non-centrosymmetric magnets**
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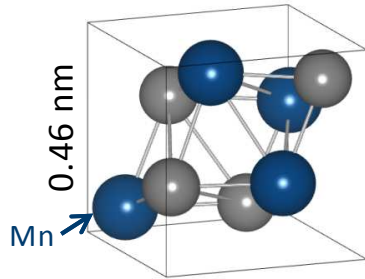
$$w_D = D_1 w_1 + D_2 w_2$$

$$= D_1 \left(m_z \frac{\partial m_x}{\partial x} - m_x \frac{\partial m_z}{\partial x} + m_z \frac{\partial m_y}{\partial y} - m_y \frac{\partial m_z}{\partial y} \right)$$

$$+ D_2 \left(m_y \frac{\partial m_x}{\partial z} - m_x \frac{\partial m_y}{\partial z} + m_x \frac{\partial m_z}{\partial y} - m_z \frac{\partial m_x}{\partial y} + m_z \frac{\partial m_y}{\partial x} - m_y \frac{\partial m_z}{\partial x} \right)$$



Chiral magnet MnSi



Crystal class T
Cubic ($P2_13$)

No inversion \rightarrow DMI

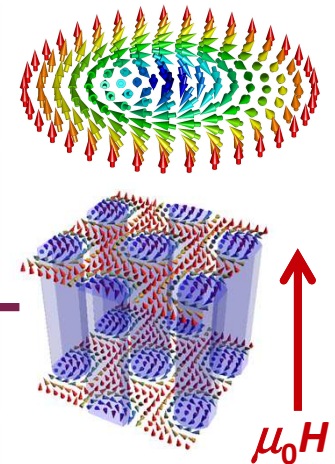
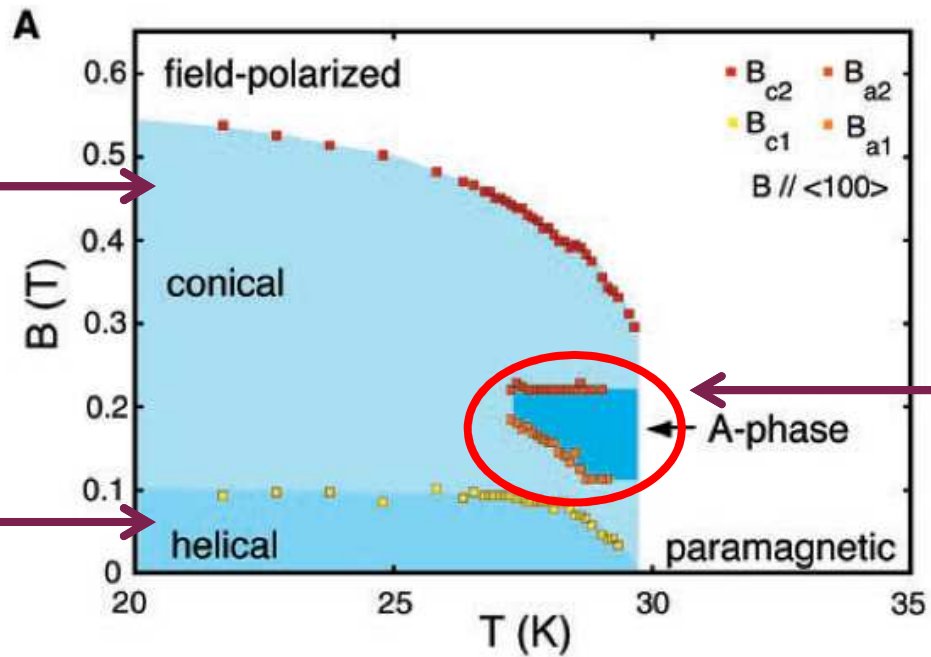
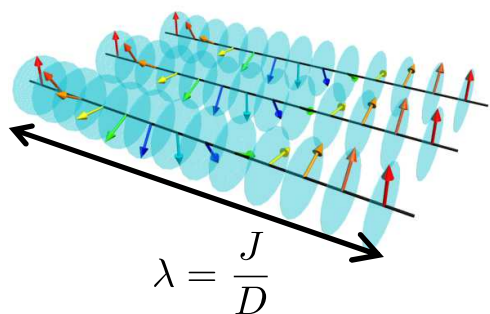
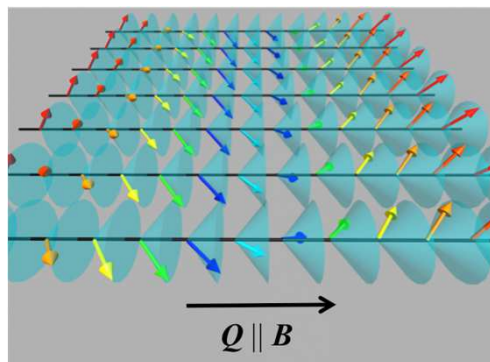
Simple Hamiltonian with a monochiral helix groundstate

$$\mathcal{H} = J(\nabla\mathbf{S})^2 + D\mathbf{S}\cdot(\nabla\times\mathbf{S}) - hS_z$$

Ratio of J/D determines helical pitch = 18 nm.

H-O anisotropy terms align helices with $\langle 111 \rangle$.

Phase diagram

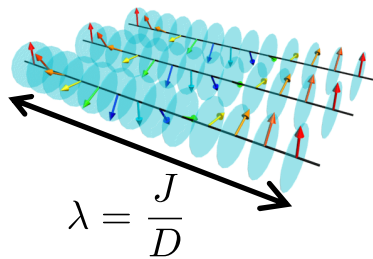


Observing chiral magnetic order by SANS

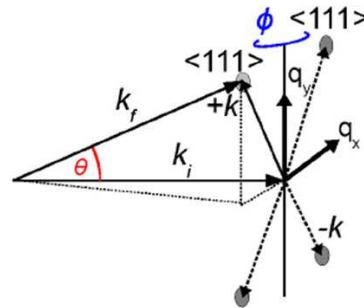
Incommensurate chiral magnetic order → Bragg satellites around commensurate positions

$$\left. \frac{d\sigma}{d\Omega} \right|_{mag,el} = N(\gamma r_0)^2 \frac{(2\pi)^3}{v_0} \sum_{\mathbf{G}} \sum_{\mathbf{k}} \sum_{\alpha,\beta} (\delta_{\alpha\beta} - \hat{q}_\alpha \hat{q}_\beta) F_M^{k\alpha\dagger} F_M^{k\beta} \delta(\mathbf{q} - \mathbf{k} - \mathbf{G})$$

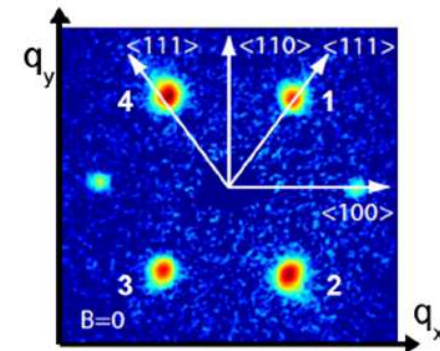
In real space



In reciprocal space

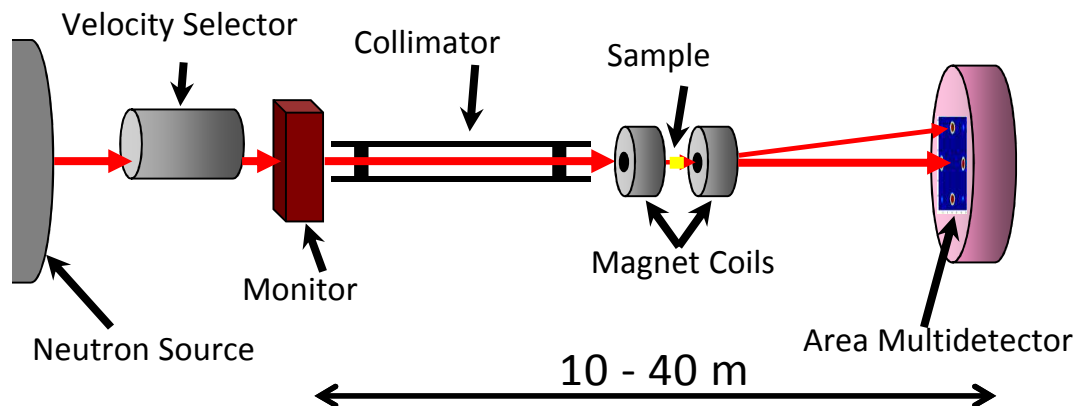


SANS pattern



S. Mühlbauer, PhD Thesis 2009

Large period magnetic structures (~30 to 5000 Å) → low q → SANS

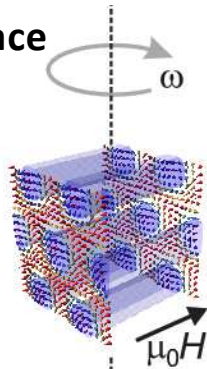


$$\lambda = 2d \sin \theta$$

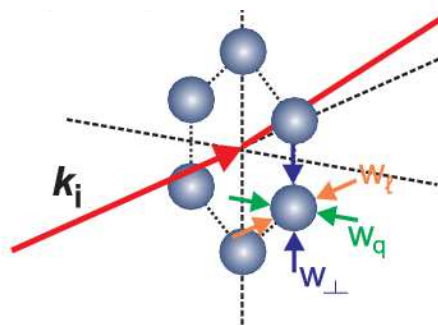
- Length of instrument: 10-40 m
- Scattering angle: $\sim 1^\circ$ (length-scales from ~ 30 to 5000 Å)
- Non-destructive bulk probe

Observing the Skyrmion lattice by SANS

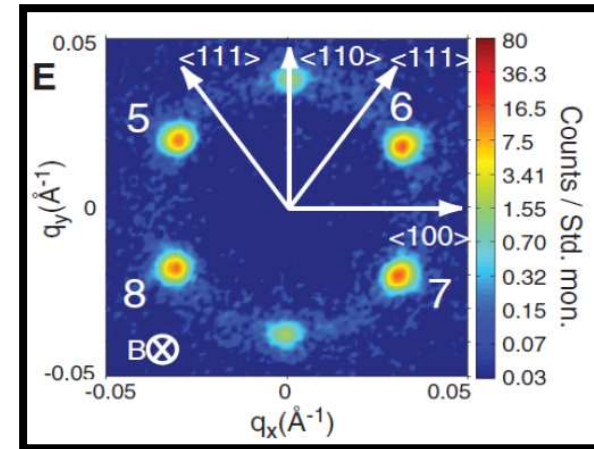
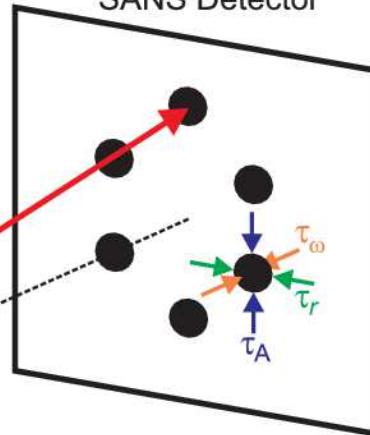
Skyrmion Lattice
Real Space



Reciprocal space



SANS Detector



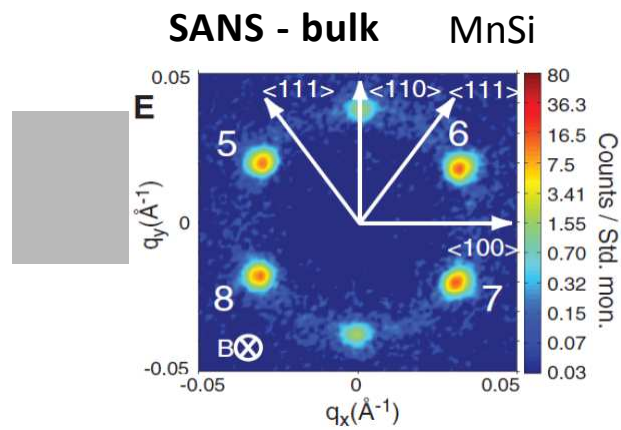
S. Mühlbauer *et al.*, Science **323**, 915 (2009)

Skyrmion lattice in MnSi (and others)

- Hexagonal SANS scattering pattern
- Propagation vectors perpendicular to B
- Weak pinning (alignment) with crystal directions
- First order phase boundary with conical + PM phases

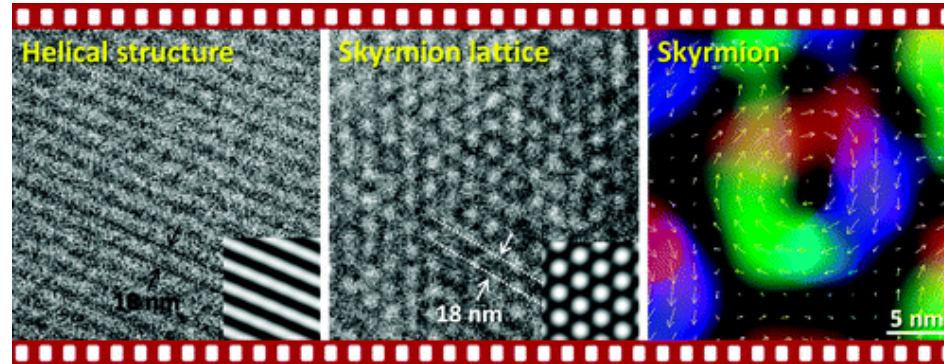
SANS does *not* directly 'see' the particle-like skyrmion property

Real-space imaging of the Skyrmion particle



Spin-polarised TEM – thin samples

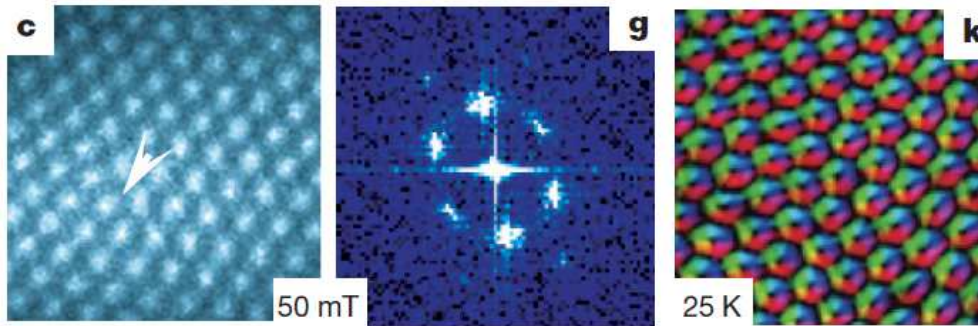
MnSi



A. Tonomura et al., Nano Lett., **12**, 1673 (2012)

Lorentz force TEM – thin samples

$\text{Fe}_{0.5}\text{Co}_{0.5}\text{Si}$ and FeGe

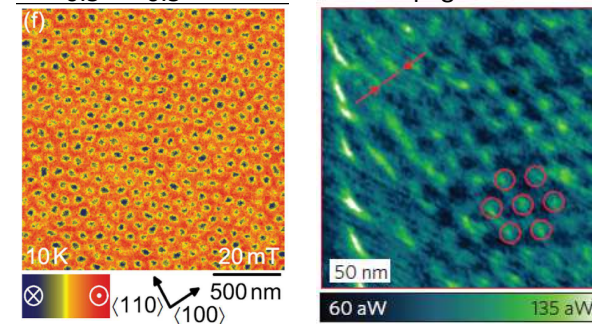


Z.X. Yu et al., Nature **465**, 901 (2010), Nat. Mater. **10**, 106 (2011)

Magnetic tip AFM (MFM) – surfaces

$\text{Fe}_{0.5}\text{Co}_{0.5}\text{Si}$

GaV_4S_8 $B = 50 \text{ mT}$



P. Milde et al., Science **340**, 1076 (2013)

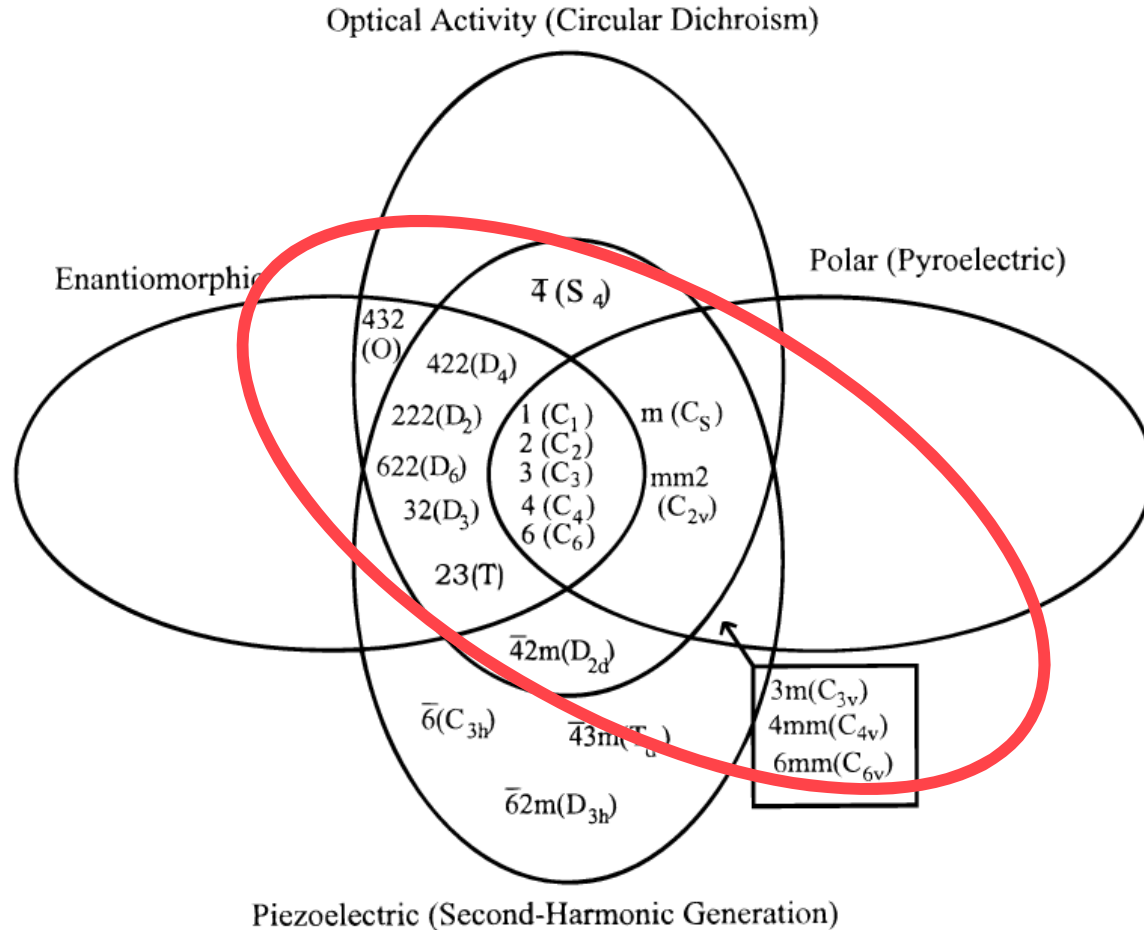
I. Kézsmárki et al., Nat. Mater. **14**, 116 (2015)

- Spin-polarised STM
- Ultrasonic measurements
- Microwave spectroscopy
- Muon spin rotation
- Resonant soft x-ray scattering
- PEEM
- Classical measurements, $M(H)$, χ_{ac}
- Transport (Hall effect)

Table of DMI Skyrmion host materials

Material	Crys. Class	SG	Skyrm. Type	T_c	λ (nm)	Trans.	References
MnSi	T	$P2_13$	Bloch	30 K	18	Metal	S. Mühlbauer <i>et al.</i> , Science 323 , 915 (2009)
FeGe	T	$P2_13$	Bloch	279 K	70	Metal	X.Z. Yu <i>et al.</i> , Nat. Mater. 10 , 106 (2010)
Fe _{1-x} Co _x Si	T	$P2_13$	Bloch	< 36 K	40-230	Semi-cond.	W. Münzer <i>et al.</i> , PRB 81 , 041203(R) (2010) X.Z. Yu <i>et al.</i> , Nature 465 , 901 (2010)
Mn _{1-x} Fe _x Si	T	$P2_13$	Bloch	< 17 K	10-12	Metal	S.V. Grigoriev <i>et al.</i> , PRB 79 , 144417 (2009)
Mn _{1-x} Fe _x Ge	T	$P2_13$	Bloch	< 220 K	5–220	Metal	K. Shibata <i>et al.</i> , Nat. Nanotech. 8 , 723–728 (2013)
Cu ₂ OSeO ₃	T	$P2_13$	Bloch	58 K	60	Insulator	S. Seki <i>et al.</i> , Science 336 , 198 (2012) T. Adams <i>et al.</i> , PRL 108 , 237204 (2012)
Co _x Zn _y Mn _z	O	$P4_132$ / $P4_332$	Bloch	150 K – 500 K	120 – 200	Metal	Y. Tokunaga <i>et al.</i> , Nat. Commun. 6 , 7638 (2015)
(Fe,Co) ₂ Mo ₃ N	O	$P4_132$ / $P4_332$	Bloch	< 36 K	110	Metal	W. Li <i>et al.</i> , Phys. Rev. B 93 , 060409(R) (2016)
GaV ₄ S ₈	C_{3v}	$R3m$	Néel	13 K	17	Semicond/ Insulator	I. Kézsmárki <i>et al.</i> , Nat. Mater. 14 , 1116 (2015)
GaV ₄ Se ₈	C_{3v}	$R3m$	Néel	18 K	24	Semicond/ Insulator	Previous talk!

Non-centrosymmetric crystal classes



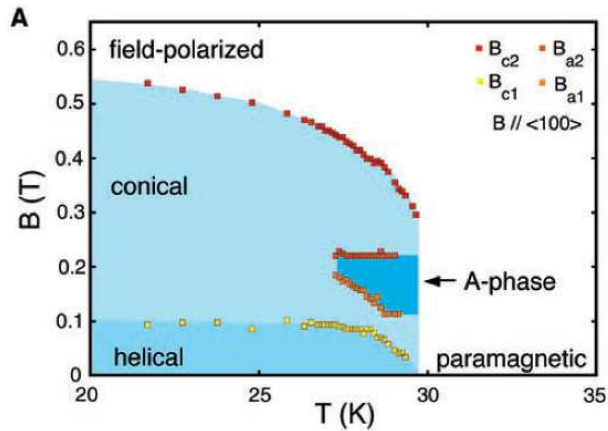
More Skyrmion host systems with novel functionalities are waiting to be discovered!



III. Getting out of a tight spot Understanding Skyrmion phase stability

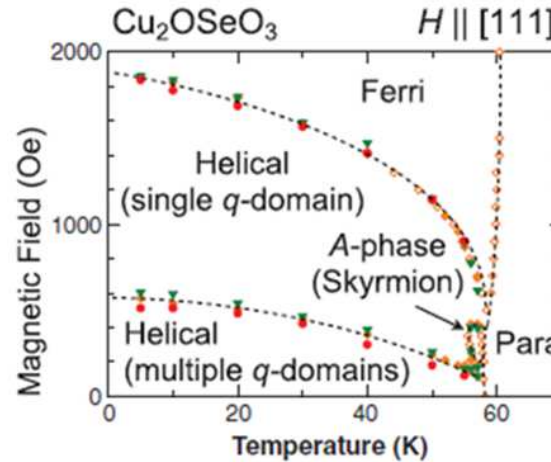
Important factors beyond DMI

MnSi



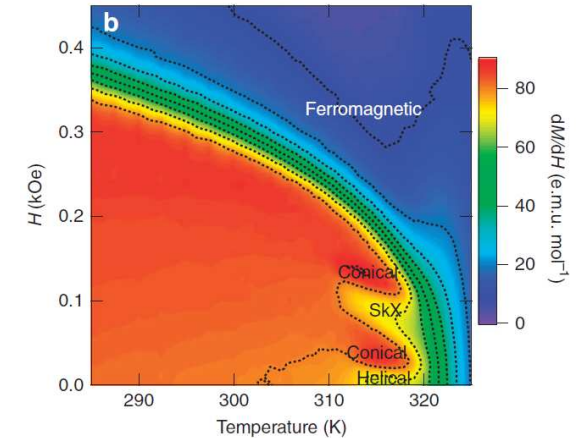
S. Mühlbauer *et al.*, Science (2009)

Cu₂OSeO₃



S. Seki *et al.*, Science (2012)

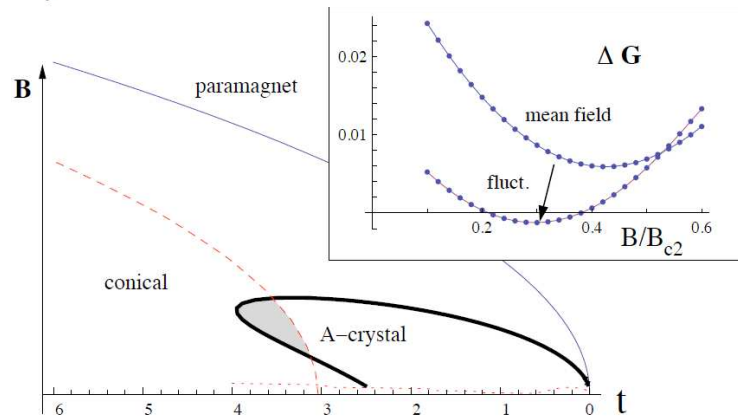
Co-Zn-Mn alloys



Y. Tokunaga *et al.*, Nat. Commun. (2015)

Skyrmion state stabilised by Gaussian fluctuations?

$$F[\mathbf{M}] = \int d^3r \left(r_0 M^2 + J(\nabla \mathbf{M})^2 + 2D \mathbf{M} \cdot (\nabla \times \mathbf{M}) + U M^4 - \mathbf{B} \cdot \mathbf{M} \right)$$

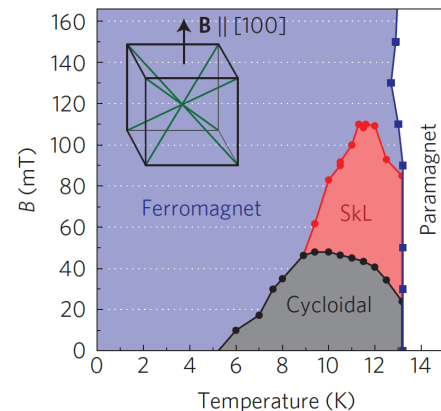


S. Mühlbauer *et al.*, Science **323**, 915 (2009)

Longitudinal magnetisation fluctuations

U.K. Rössler *et al.*, Nature **442**, 797 (2006).

A.N. Bogdanov and D.A. Yablonskii, Sov. Phys. JETP **68**, 101 (1989).



Uniaxial anisotropy (with no conical phase)

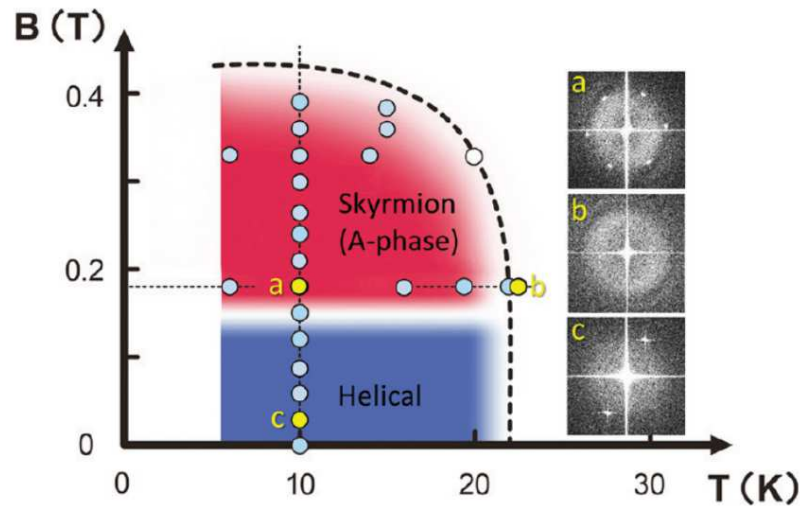
GaV₄S₈

I. Kézsmárki *et al.*, Nat. Mater. **14**, 116 (2015)

Thin samples of chiral magnets

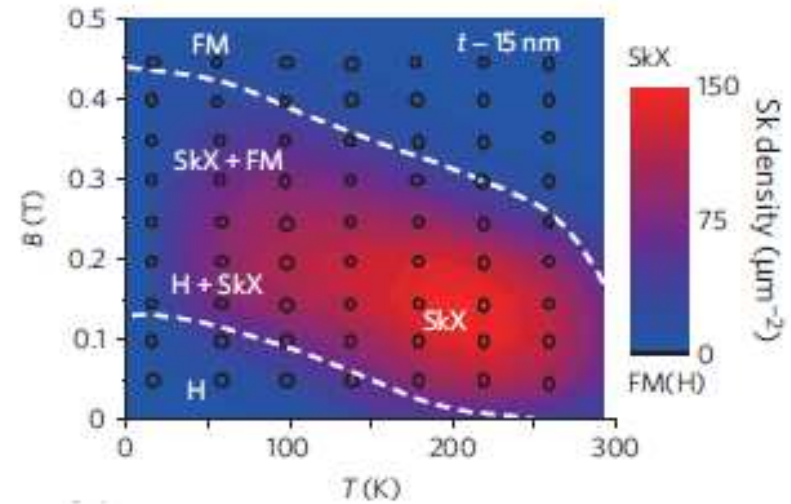
Fabrication of thin films (bottom-up) / thin plates (top-down)

MnSi (50nm thick)



A. Tonomura *et al.*, Nano Lett., **12**, 1673 (2012)

FeGe (15nm thick)



X.Z. Yu *et al.*, Nat. Mater. **10**, 106 (2010)

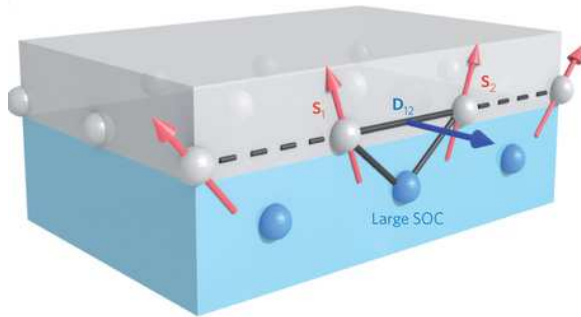
Uniaxial anisotropy is enhanced by reducing the sample thickness, d
→ competing conical phase suppressed when $d \sim \lambda$

A.B. Butenko *et al.*, PRB **82**, 052403 (2010)

S.D. Yi *et al.*, Phys. Rev. B **80**, 054416 (2009)

Going even thinner..

Interfaces break inversion symmetry!

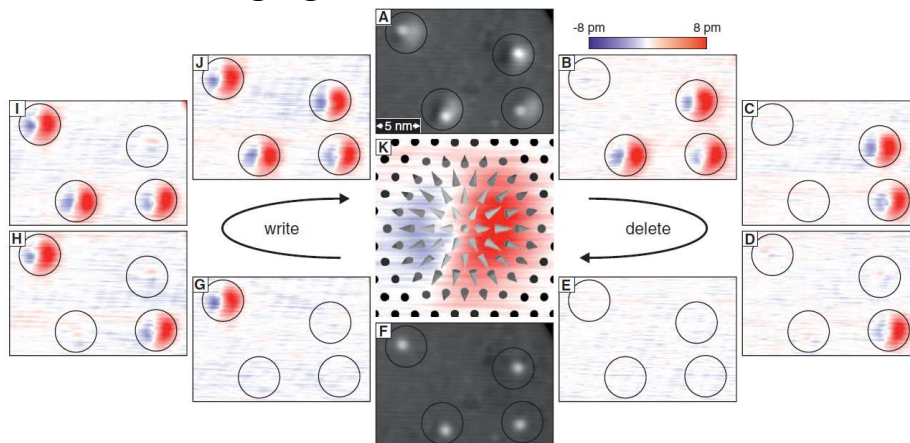


Ingredients to induce a DMI (spin twisting):

- An interface!
- Ultrathin magnetic bi- or monolayer, e.g. PdFe or Fe
- Bottom layer of heavy metal with SOC, e.g. Ir

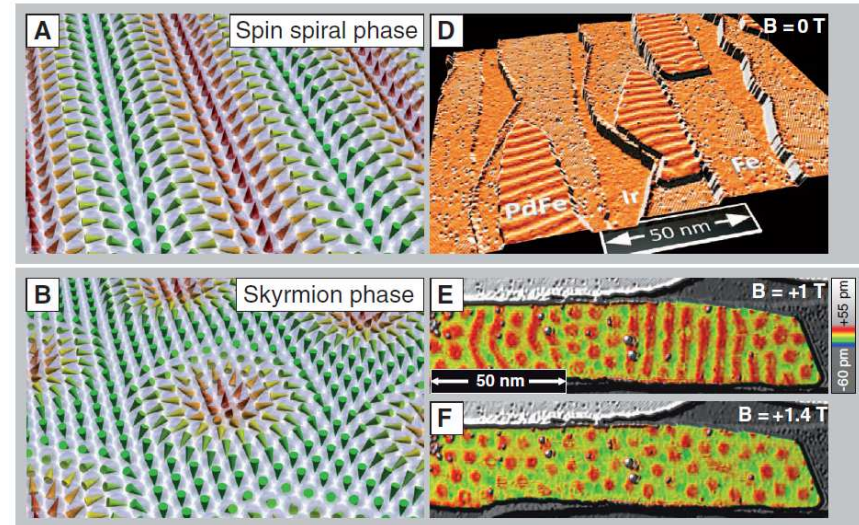
Writing and erasing of individual Skyrmions

SP-STM imaging



But at < 10 K ..

PdFe bilayer on Ir(111) – 3 nm diameter Skyrmions



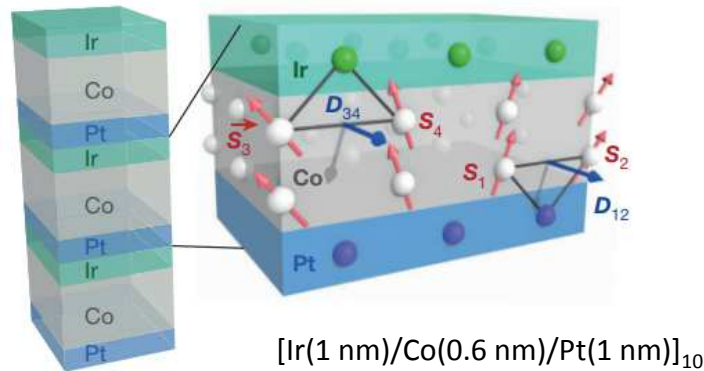
$$\begin{aligned}
 H = & - \sum_{ij} J_{ij} (\mathbf{M}_i \mathbf{M}_j) \\
 & - \sum_{ij} \mathbf{D}_{ij} (\mathbf{M}_i \times \mathbf{M}_j) \\
 & - \sum_{ijkl} K_{ijkl} [(\mathbf{M}_i \mathbf{M}_j)(\mathbf{M}_k \mathbf{M}_l) + (\mathbf{M}_i \mathbf{M}_l)(\mathbf{M}_j \mathbf{M}_k) \\
 & - (\mathbf{M}_i \mathbf{M}_k)(\mathbf{M}_j \mathbf{M}_l)] \\
 & \text{four-spin interaction}
 \end{aligned}$$

N. Romming *et al.*, Science **341**, 636 (2013)

S. Heinze *et al.*, Nat. Phys., **7**, 713 (2011)

Ir/Co/Pt multilayer with additive interfacial chiral interactions → strong DMI at RT

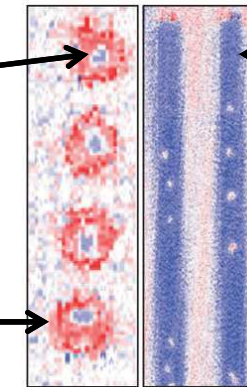
C. Moreau-Luchaire *et al.*, Nat. Nanotech. **11**, 444 (2016)



Scanning X-ray transmission microscopy

Small < 100 nm diameter Néel-type Skyrmions

300 nm diameter disks



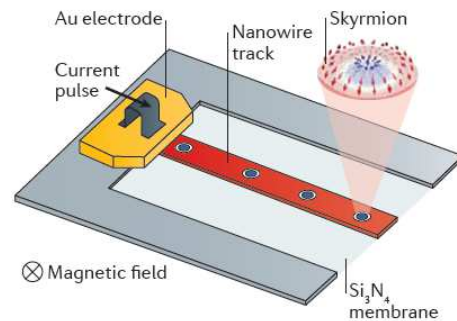
200 nm wide tracks

$T = 300$ K

$\mu_0 H_{\perp} = 8 - 50$ mT

Room temperature, current pulse-driven motion of skyrmions at high speeds

S. Woo *et al.*, Nat. Mater. **15**, 501 (2016)



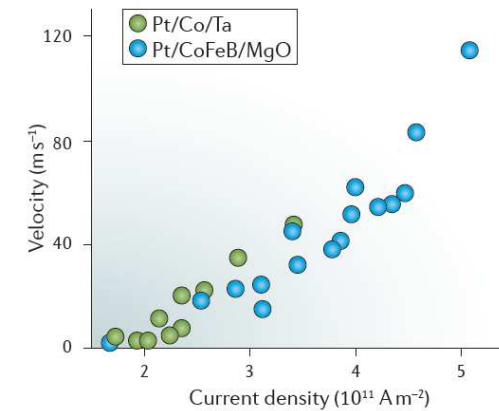
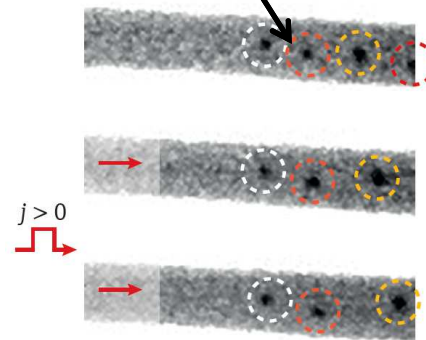
[Pt(3 nm)/Co(0.9 nm)/Ta(4 nm)]₁₅

[Pt(4.5 nm)/CoFeB(0.7 nm)/MgO(1.4 nm)]₁₅

400 nm diameter Néel-type Skyrmions

$T = 300$ K

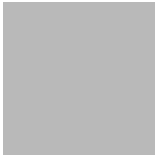
$\mu_0 H_{\perp} < 2$ mT



Multilayers seem very promising for skyrmionics: see

A. Soumyanarayanan *et al.*, Nature **539**, 509 (2016)

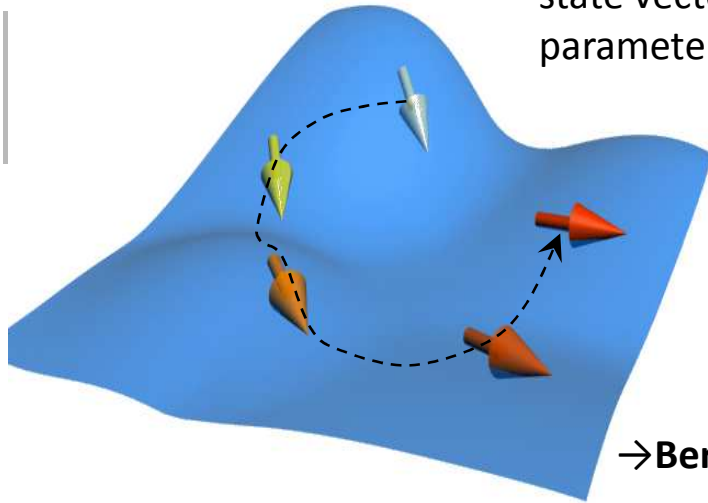
R. Wiesendanger, Nat. Rev. Mater. **1**, 16044 (2016)



IV. Back to chiral magnets: Consequences of the topology

Spin textures and emergent fields

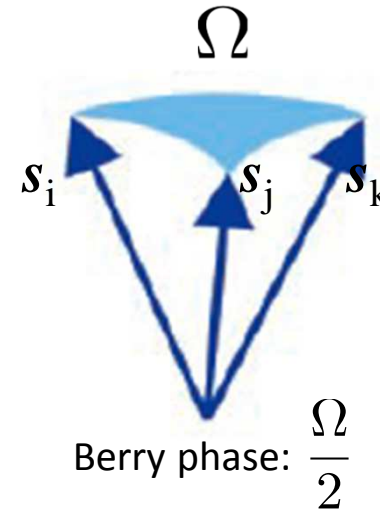
In general...



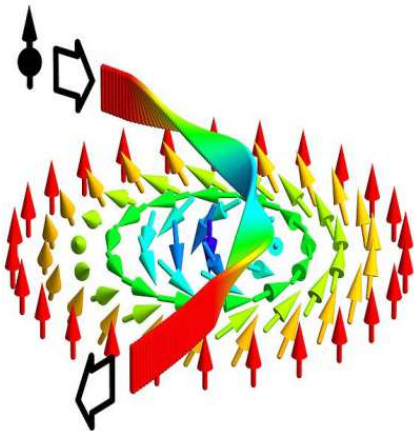
Development of an electron state vector in a **distorted** parameter space

→ Berry phase, gauge fields

Non-coplanar spin structure



Topological spin texture



A. Rosch

-Electrons adiabatically traversing the Skyrmion spin texture adapt to the local \mathbf{M} and acquire a quantum-mechanical Berry phase.

-The Berry phase physics is associated with **emergent EM fields**:

$$\mathbf{B}_i^e = \frac{\hbar}{2} \epsilon_{ijk} \hat{n} \cdot (\partial_j \hat{n} \times \partial_k \hat{n})$$

$$\hat{n}(\mathbf{r}, t) = \mathbf{M}/|\mathbf{M}|$$

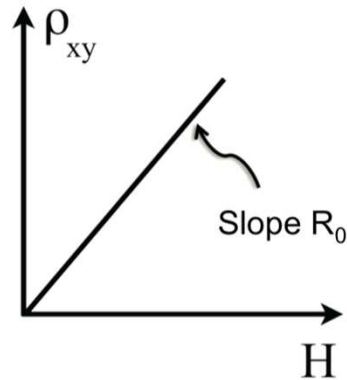
$$\mathbf{E}_i^e = \hbar \hat{n} \cdot (\partial_i \hat{n} \times \partial_t \hat{n})$$

'Emergent flux' B is topologically quantised!

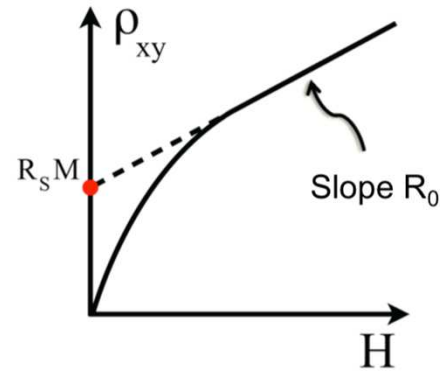
T. Schulz *et al.*, Nat. Phys. **8**, 301 (2012)

Experimental detection by Hall effect

Normal Hall effect

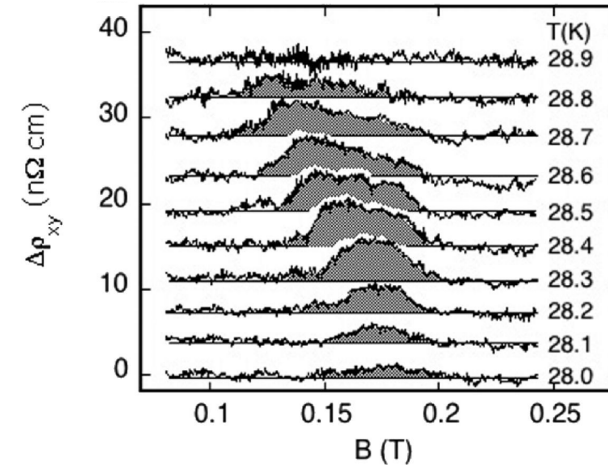


Anomalous Hall effect



Topological Hall effect

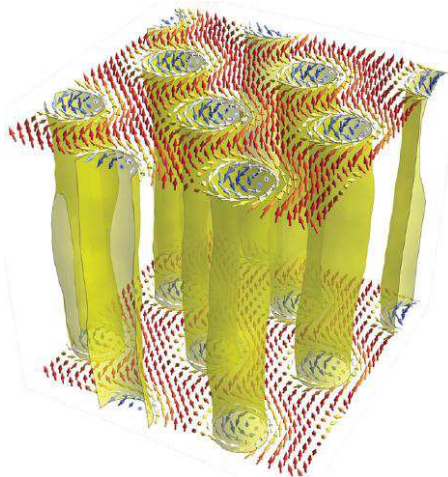
MnSi



A. Neubauer *et al.*, PRL **102**, 186602 (2009)

$$\Delta\rho_{xy}^B \propto B_z^e$$

$$\rho_H = \rho_H^N + \rho_H^A + \rho_H^T = R_0 B + S_A \rho_{xx}^2 M + \rho_H^T$$



Size of the topological Hall response is proportional to $B_i^e \rightarrow$
gives a direct measure of the flux quantum!

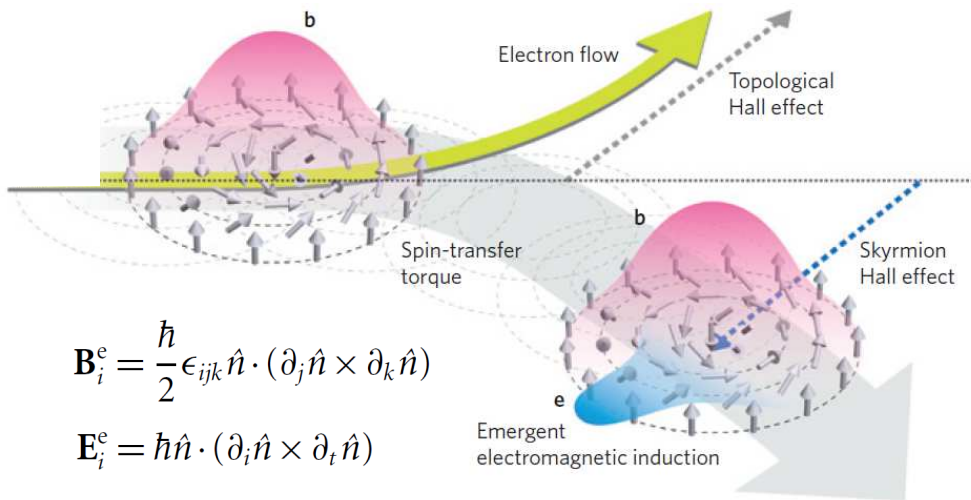
Quantised emergent flux: $\int \mathbf{B}^e d\sigma = -4\pi\hbar$

Average B_i^e in Skyrmion phase of MnSi ≈ 11 T!

Detecting and driving skyrmion motion

Skyrmion motion is detectable by the THE

N. Nagaosa and Y. Tokura, Nat. Nanotech. **8**, 899 (2013)



The topological Hall effect in MnSi is more pronounced above j_c due to E_i^e

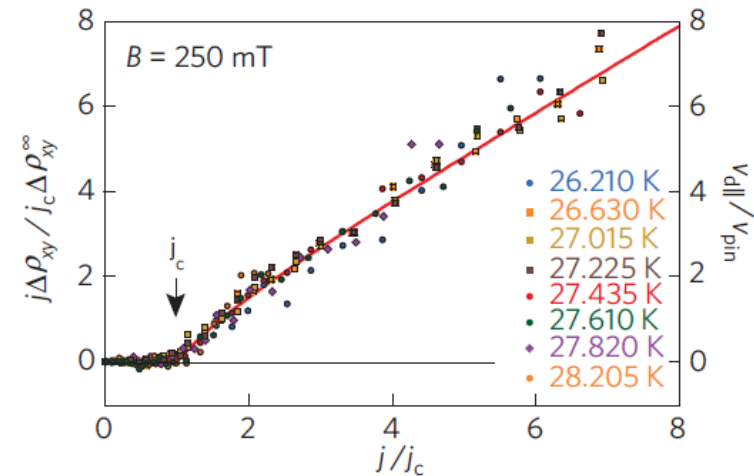
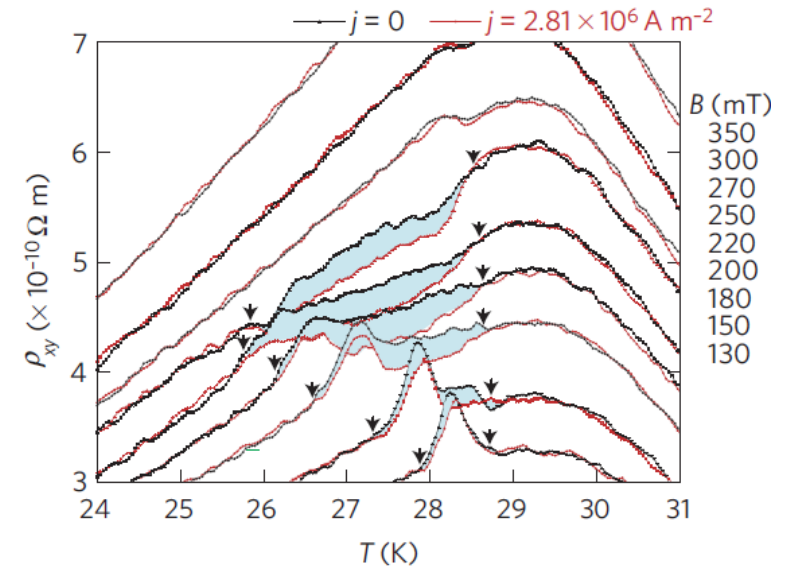
$$j \sim j_c \sim 10^6 \text{ A m}^{-2}$$

Current-driven Skyrmion motion is an example of spin-transfer torques \rightarrow

Magnus force (Berry phase)

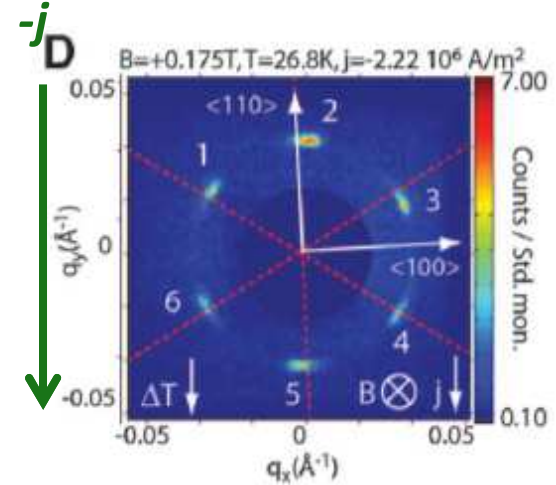
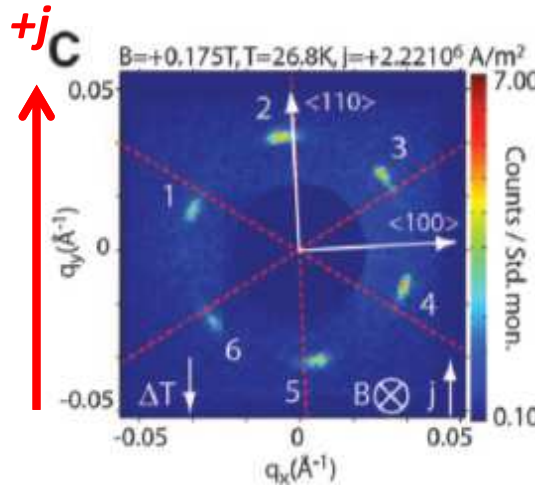
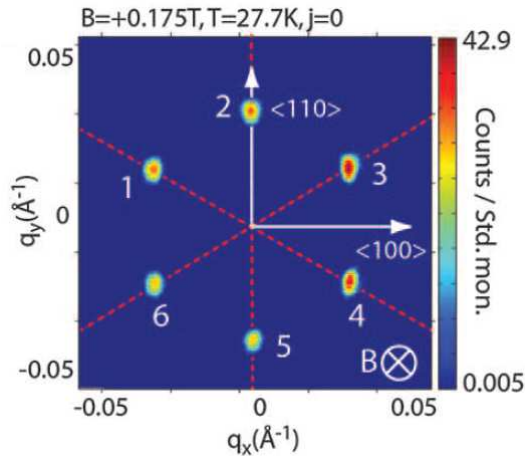
MnSi

T. Schulz *et al.*, Nat. Phys. **8**, 301 (2012)

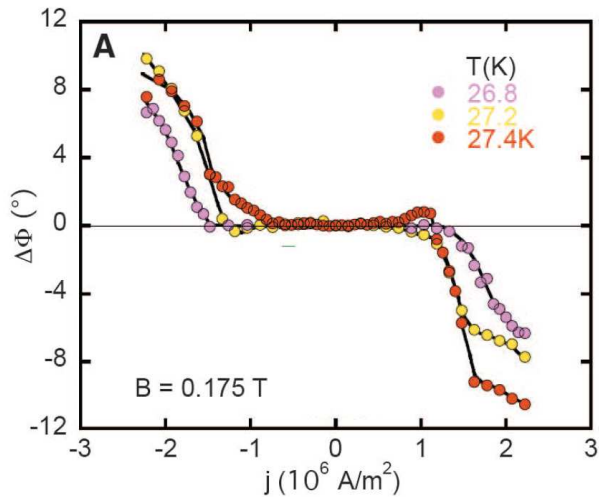


Further indications of Skyrmion motion in MnSi

F. Jonietz *et al.*, Science **330**, 1648 (2010)

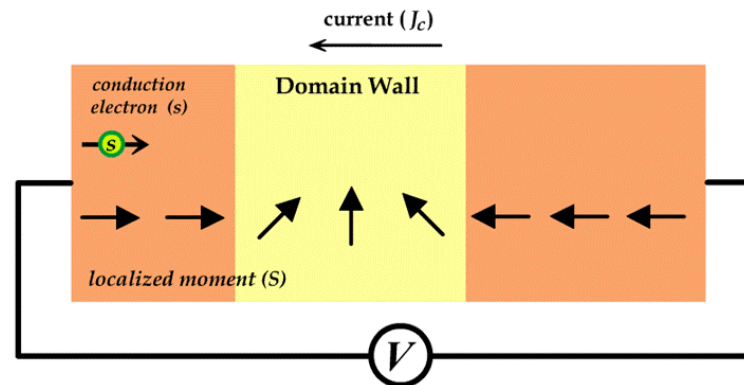


$$j \sim j_c \sim 10^6 \text{ A m}^{-2}$$



Compare: Current pulses drive the movement of FM domain walls by STTs:

$$j \sim j_c \sim 10^{11} \text{ A m}^{-2}$$



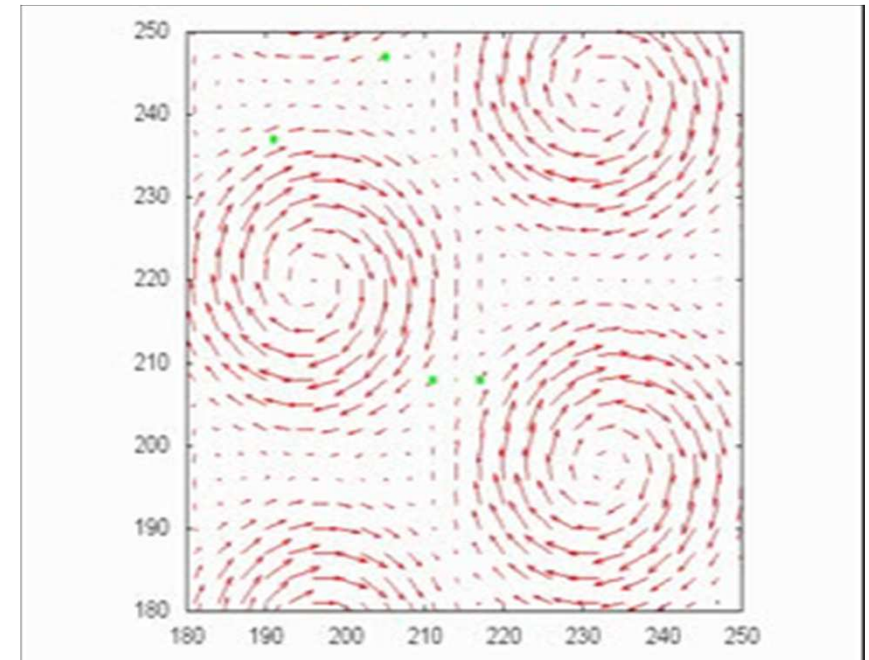
Why are very small current densities needed to drive skyrmions compared with FM domains?

- **Efficient coupling between the conduction electrons and emergent B -field (Berry phase) that generates Magnus forces**
 F. Jonietz *et al.*, Science 330, 1648 (2010)
 K. Everschor *et al.*, PRB **84**, 064401 (2011), PRB **86**, 054432 (2012)
- **No Magnus forces in helical (trivial) phase** → current–velocity relations similar to those of a FM domain wall
- **Weak pinning/alignment effects** due to the large length-scale of the Skyrmion lattice: $\lambda_{\text{SKL}} \gg a$
- **Skyrmions in motion are flexible:** can deform their shape and twist their trajectory to avoid pinning to defects/disorder.

STTs also generated by **magnon currents** deflected by emergent B -field of Skyrmions

M. Mochizuki *et al.*, Nat. Mater. **13**, 241 (2014)

Numerical study using the LLG equation



Current density

$t=0 \rightarrow t = 65 \text{ ns}$

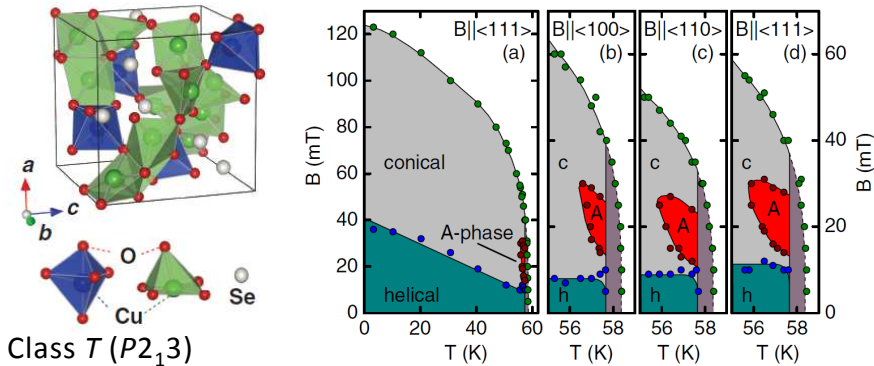
See: J. Iwasaki *et al.*, Nat. Commun. **4**, 1463 (2013)

Motion driven by currents of electrons or magnons relies on the emergent fields of the topological skyrmion spin structure

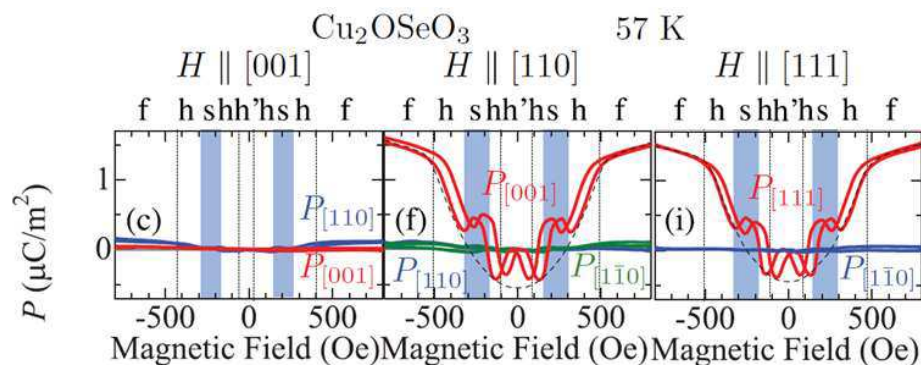
Magnetoelectric insulator Cu_2OSeO_3

S. Seki, *et al.*, Science **336**, 198, (2012)

T. Adams *et al.*, Phys. Rev. Lett. **108**, 237204 (2012)



Magnetoelectric coupling in Skyrmion phase



Symmetry of ME coupling: *d-p* hybridization model

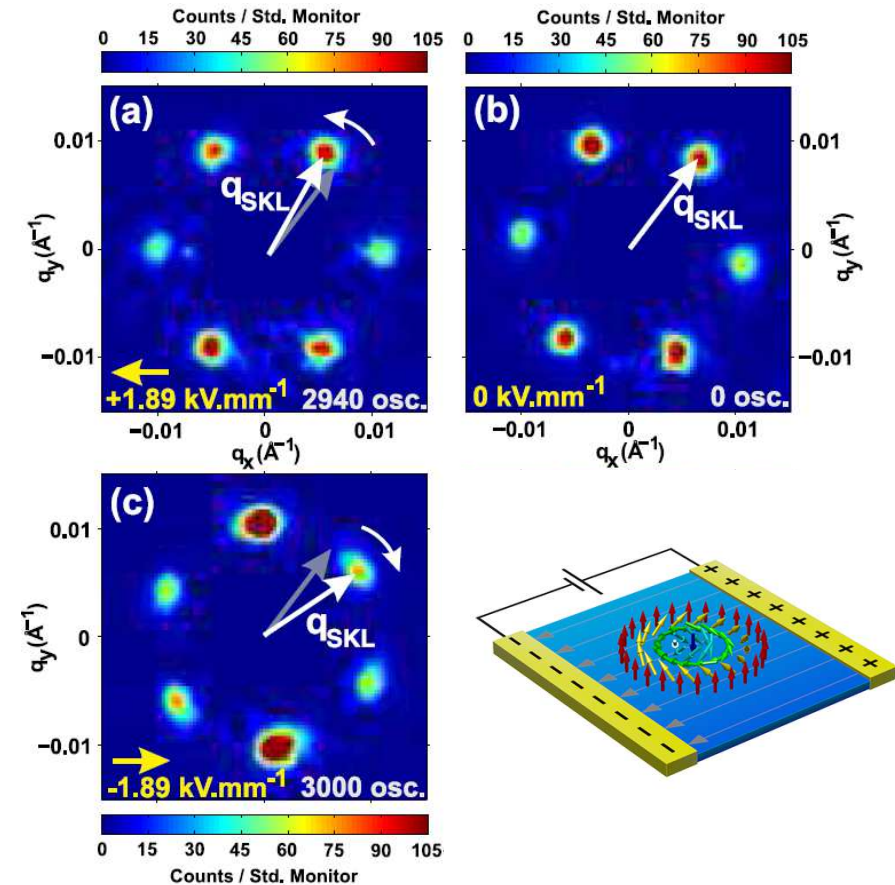
For more on the ME coupling, see also:

E. Ruff *et al.*, Sci. Rep. **5**, 15025 (2015)

P. Milde *et al.*, Nano Lett. **16**, 5612 (2016)

Electric field control of the Skyrmion lattice

JSW *et al.*, Phys. Rev. Lett. **113**, 107203 (2014)



Skyrmion lattice rotations achieved with no STTs – i.e. no current or magnon flows

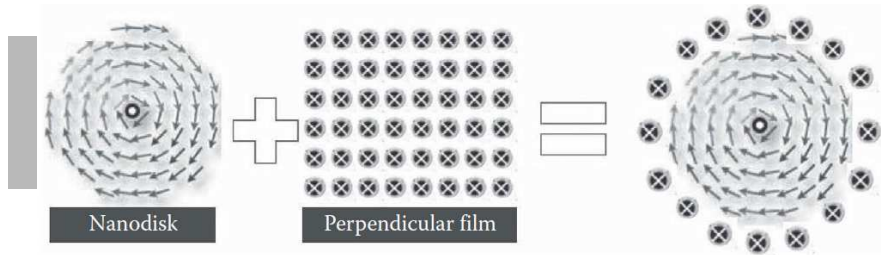
Microscopic explanation for rotation still missing!



V. Some interesting topics

But certainly not limited to ..

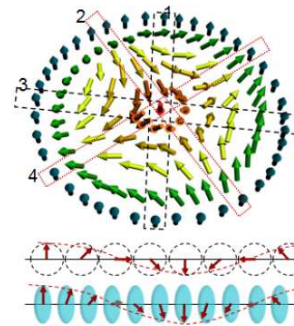
Artificial Skyrmions



Implant a magnetic vortex into a film with PMA

Skyrmions by design

Diverse topological spin textures



$Mn_{1.4}Pt_{0.9}Pd_{0.1}Sn$ - LTEM

A. K. Nayak *et al.*, arXiv: 1703.01017

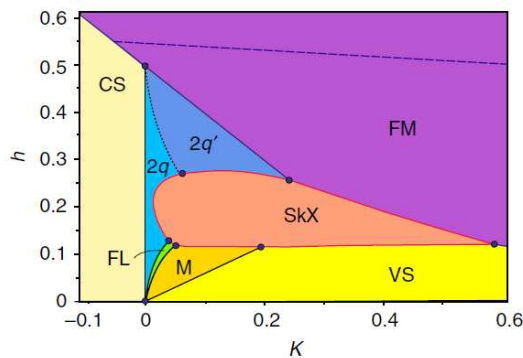
D_{2d} symmetry

$$\left(m_z \frac{\partial m_x}{\partial y} - m_x \frac{\partial m_z}{\partial y} - m_z \frac{\partial m_y}{\partial x} + m_y \frac{\partial m_z}{\partial x} \right)$$

'Antiskyrmions' spotted?

Skyrmions by magnetic frustration?

A.O. Leonov and M. Mostovoy, Nat. Commun. 6, 8275 (2015)

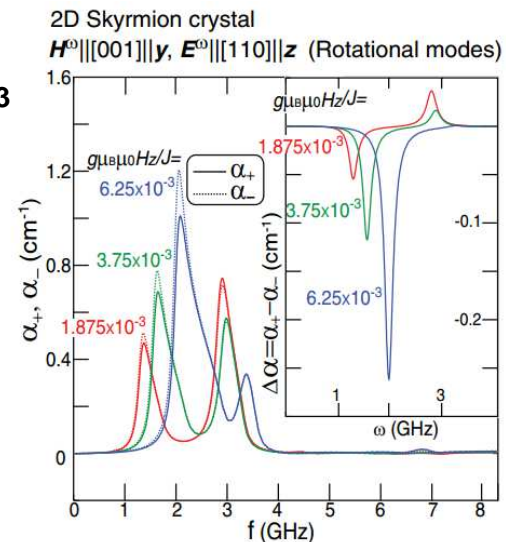


$$E = -J_1 \sum_{\langle ij \rangle} \mathbf{S}_i \cdot \mathbf{S}_j + J_2 \sum_{\langle\langle ij \rangle\rangle} \mathbf{S}_i \cdot \mathbf{S}_j - h \sum_i S_i^z - \frac{K}{2} \sum_i (S_i^z)^2.$$

Stability mechanism without DMIs

Gigahertz oscillators + optical dichroism

Cu_2OSeO_3

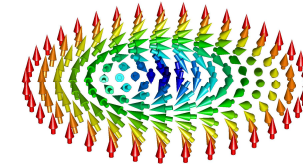


Novel microwave functionalities

- **Skymions are topologically non-trivial particle-like objects composed of magnetic spins.**

- **Identifiable using a variety of experimental techniques.**

- SANS, LTEM, Hall effect, MFM, STM ..

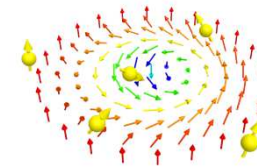


- **Skymions are well-established to be stabilised by Dzyaloshinskii-Moriya interactions in a few bulk non-centrosymmetric materials like MnSi, GaV₄S₈.**

- Other stability mechanisms I did not discuss in detail: dipolar fields, frustration, four-spin interactions

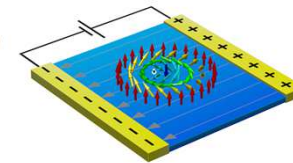
- **Skymions host quantised emergent electromagnetic fields in the presence of a flow of conduction electrons.**

- The conduction electrons exert forces via STTs on skymions driving their motion.



- **Electric fields can drive skymion motion in insulators.**

- Open questions still to be addressed



- **Ultrathin metallic films and multilayers host Néel-type skymions at room temperature that can be controlled by electric currents.**

- Most promising for Skymionics!

There are many talks on Skymions at this meeting!



SNF Sinergia project:

“Discovery and Nanoengineering of Novel Skyrmion-hosting Materials”

Start: Oct. 2017 for 4 years

2 post-docs and 6 PhDs

Dr. J.S. White

jonathan.white@psi.ch

1 PhD

1 post-doc (2yr +)

Application of large-scale facility techniques at PSI (SINQ + SLS)

Real-space imaging at EPFL/PSI - LTEM, PEEM



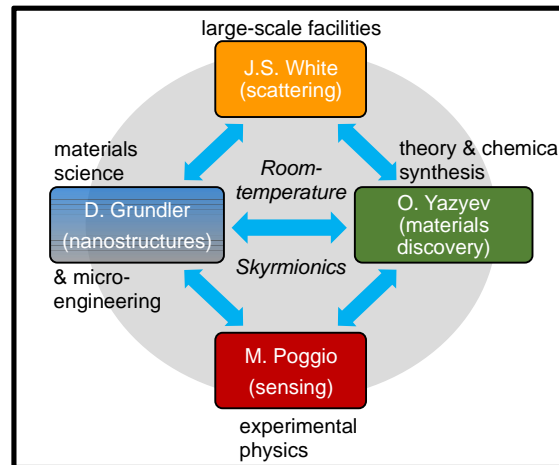
Prof. D. Grundler

dirk.grundler@epfl.ch

- New approaches to nanofabrication of Skyrmion materials
- Device fabrication

School of Engineering (STI)

2 PhDs



Prof. O. Yazyev

oleg.yazyev@epfl.ch

- First-principles-driven materials discovery
- Synthesis

School of Basic Sciences (SB)

1 PhD

1 post-doc (theory)



Prof. M. Poggio

martino.poggio@unibas.ch

2 PhDs

- New techniques in nanosensing applied to Skyrmion-hosting nanostructures

Start date:
Summer/Fall 2017

Contact us if interested!