Receivers and Correlators

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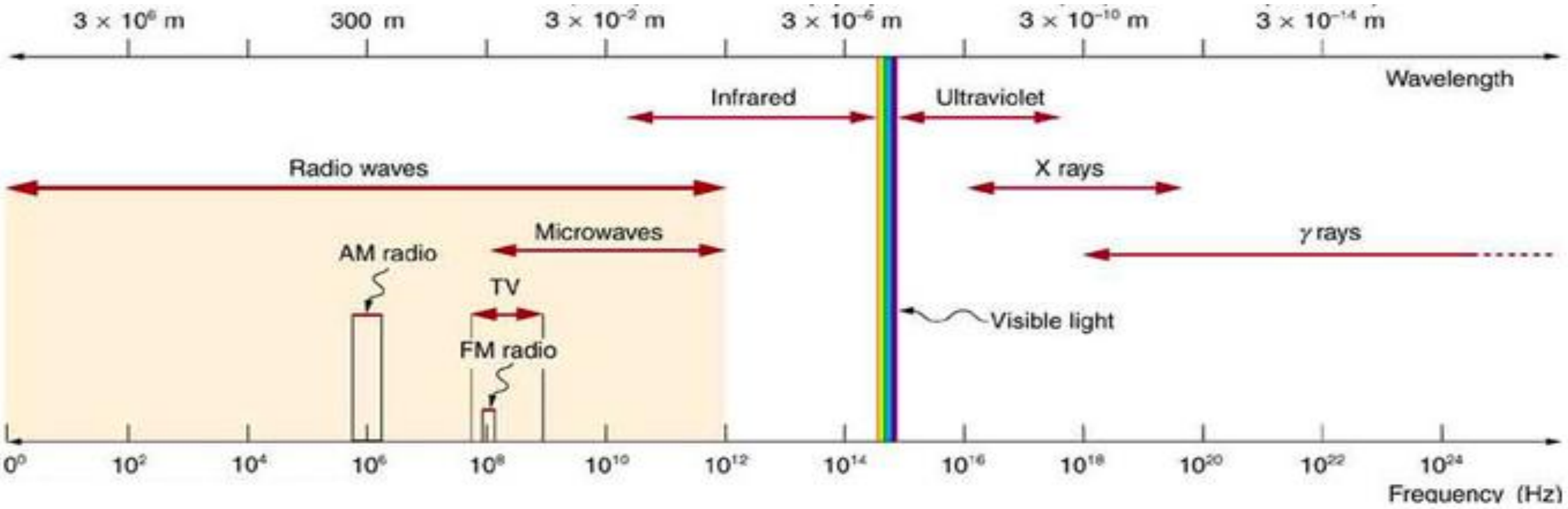
Radio Astronomy

EM spectrum



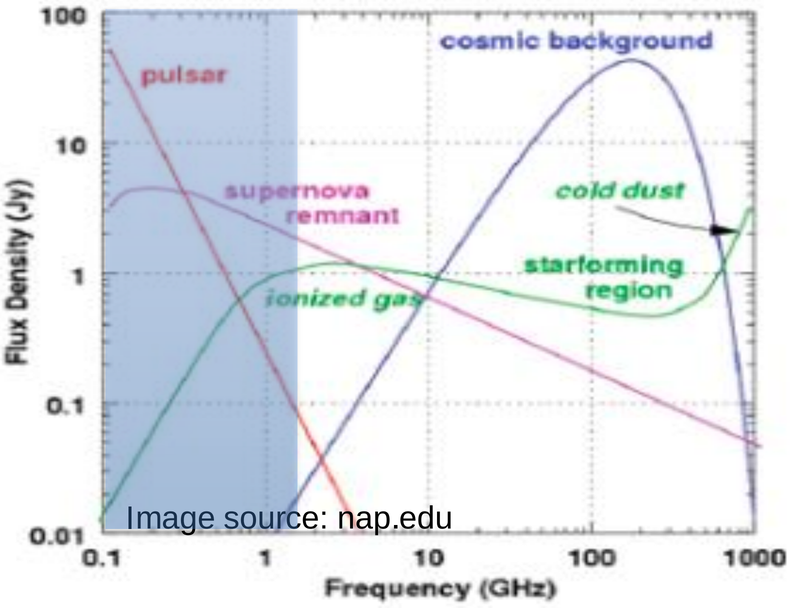


Image source: nap.edu

Objects in radio spectrum

A Basic Radio Telescope

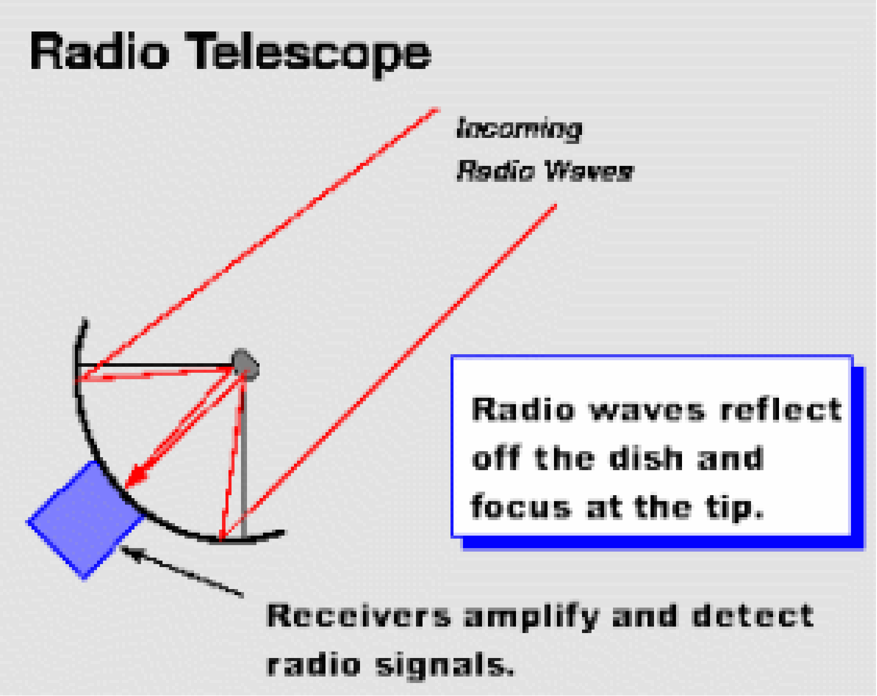
- Collects radio waves from the celestial sky (from a narrow range of angles), over an effective aperture area
- Focuses the radiation to a feed antenna that converts the signal to an electrical voltage – in 2 orthogonal polarisations
- Converts the voltage signal to power ∞ strength of source signal + receiver noise
- For high sensitivity (to see faint sources out to the distant part of the universe)

  Large collecting area ⇨ Large dishes

  High quality, low noise electronics in the receivers

  Large bandwidth of observations

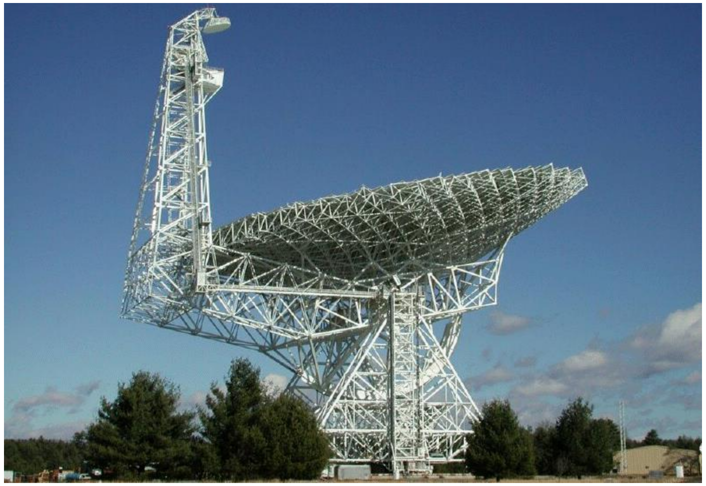
  Long integration time to achieve the desired signal-to-noise level



- Celestial radio signals are VERY weak ; unit of flux used is :
  1 Jy = 10^{-26} W / m^2 / Hz
- Input radio power into a typical telescope is ~ -100 dBm !

Single Dish versus Array Telescopes

- Resolution and sensitivity depend on the physical size (aperture) of the radio telescope
- Due to practical limits, fully steerable single dishes of more than ~ 100 m diameter are very difficult to build
  resolution (λ / D) ~ 0.5 degree at 1 metre (very poor)
- To synthesize telescopes of larger size, many individual dishes spread out over a large area on the Earth are used
- Signals from such array telescopes are combined and processed in a particular fashion to generate a map of the source structure
- resolution (λ / D_s) , D_s = largest separation



The new 100-m Greenbank Telescope

The Very Large Array Telescope

Introducing a modern radio telescope
The GMRT

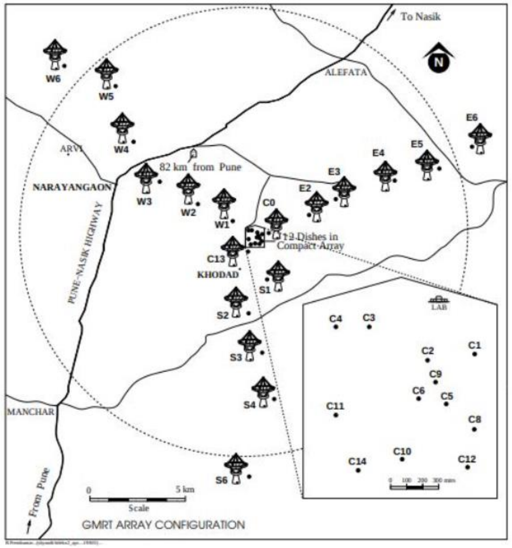
- The Giant Metre-wave Radio Telescope (GMRT) is a new, world class instrument for studying astrophysical phenomena at low radio frequencies (150 to 1450 MHz)

- Designed and built primarily by NCRA, a national centre of TIFR.

- Array telescope consisting of 30 antennae of 45 metres diameter, operating at metre wavelengths -- the largest in the world at these frequencies!

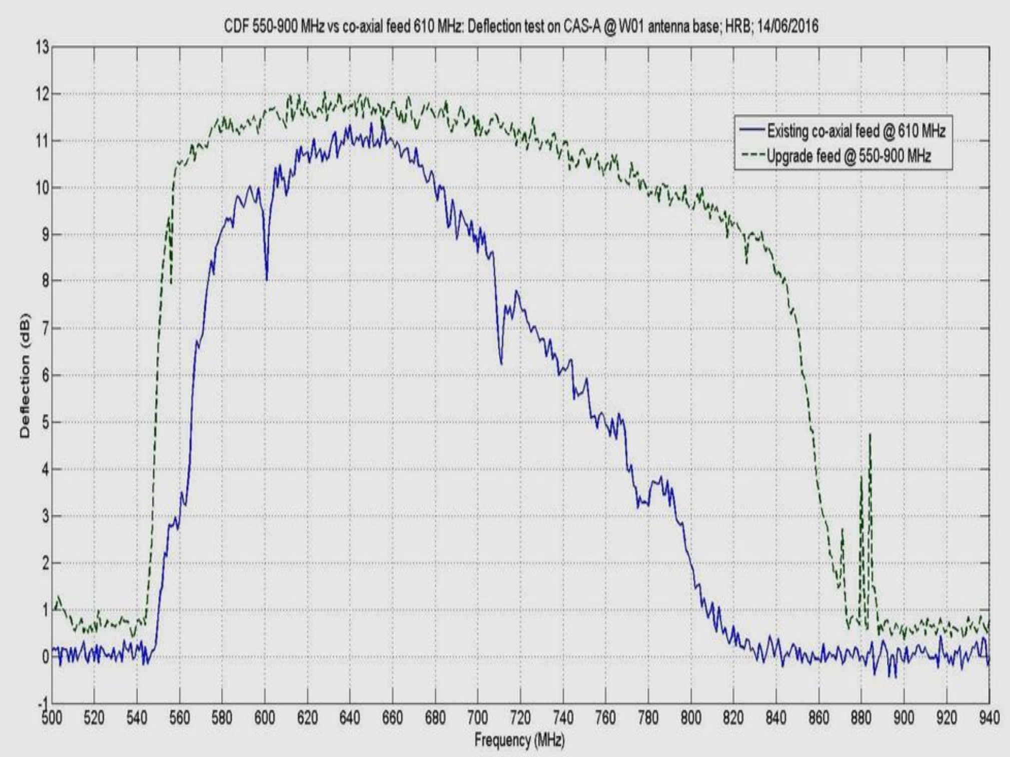
GMRT with upgrades

Array located at 80 km north to Pune consisting of 30 antennas over 25 km maximum baseline



A radio interferometer with fully steerable dishes of 45 metres diameter, operating over 120-250, 250-500, 550-850 and 1060-1460 MHz bands having good G/T_{sys}

An increase of instantaneous bandwidth from 32 to 200/400 MHz makes GMRT an excellent instrument for imaging and time-domain studies



Sub-systems of the GMRT

Mechanical sub-system

Servo sub-system

Antennas (feed and RF)

Analog Receiver sub-system

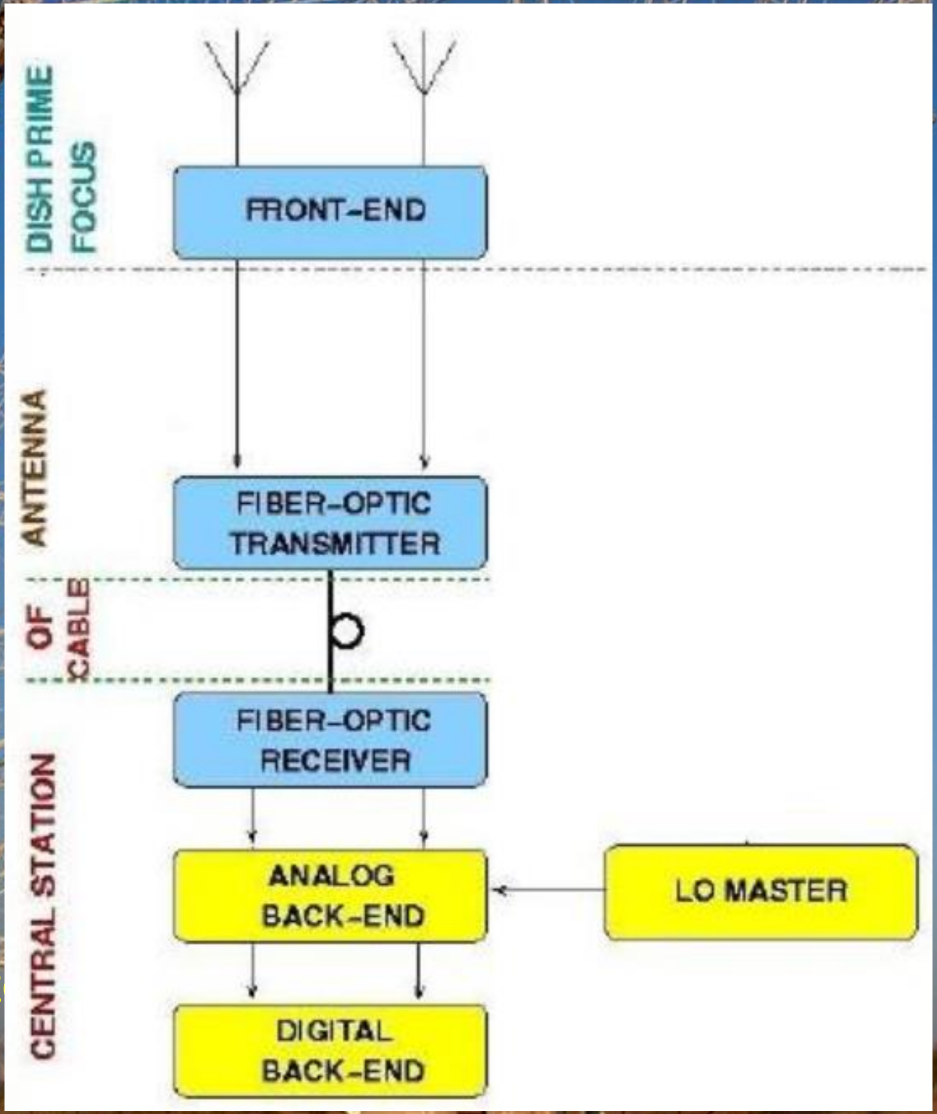
Optical fibre sub-system

Digital Receiver sub-system -- correlator

Telemetry sub-system

“On-line” Control and Monitor sub-syst

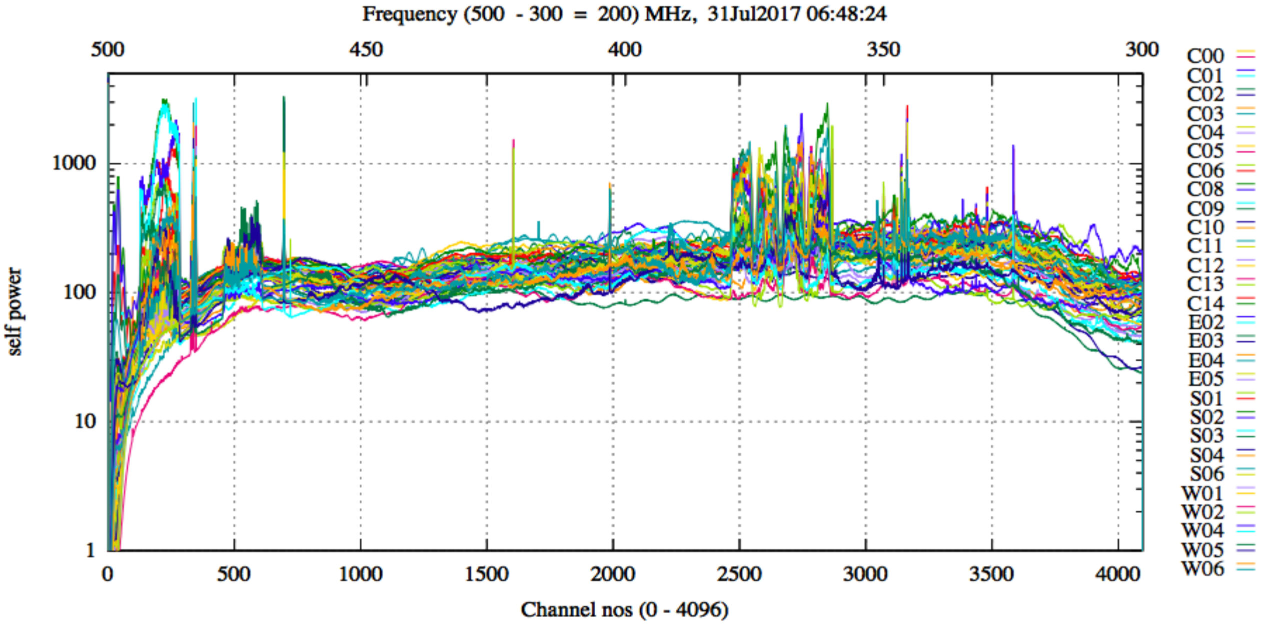
Off-line data processing chain(s)

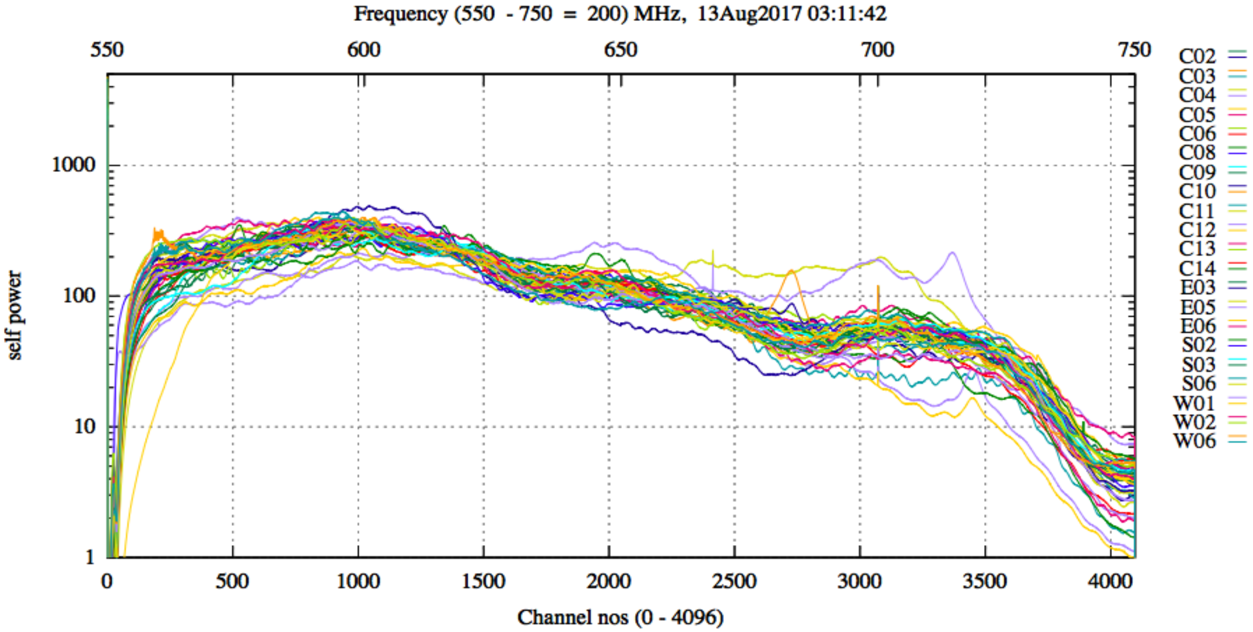


Feed/Dipole

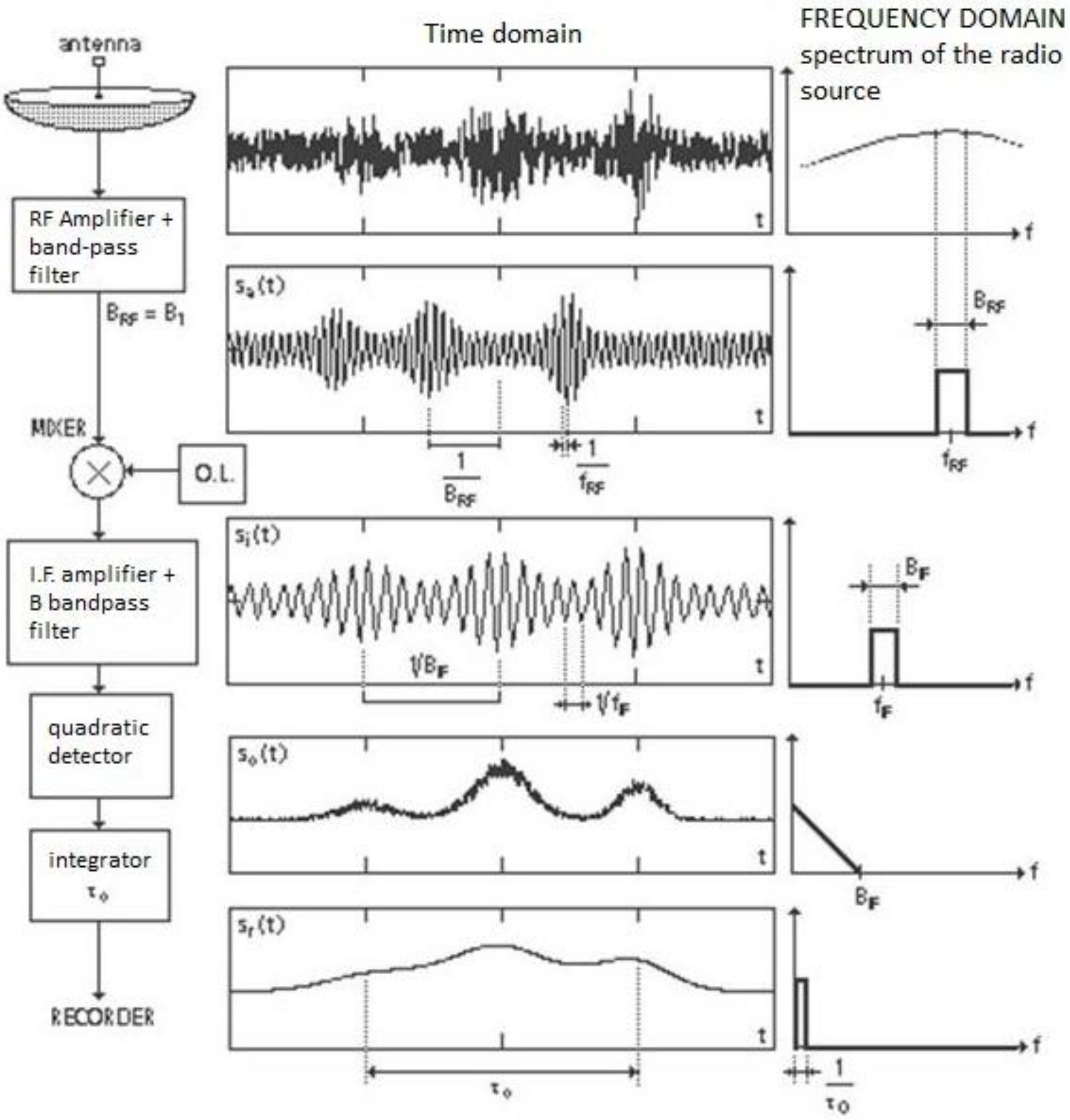
Antenna primary feeds are placed on a rotating turret near the focus of the 45-m dishes.

Band of signals





Radio Receivers



Sensitivity or radiometre Equation:

$$\Delta T = \frac{T_{sys}}{\sqrt{B_F t_0}}$$

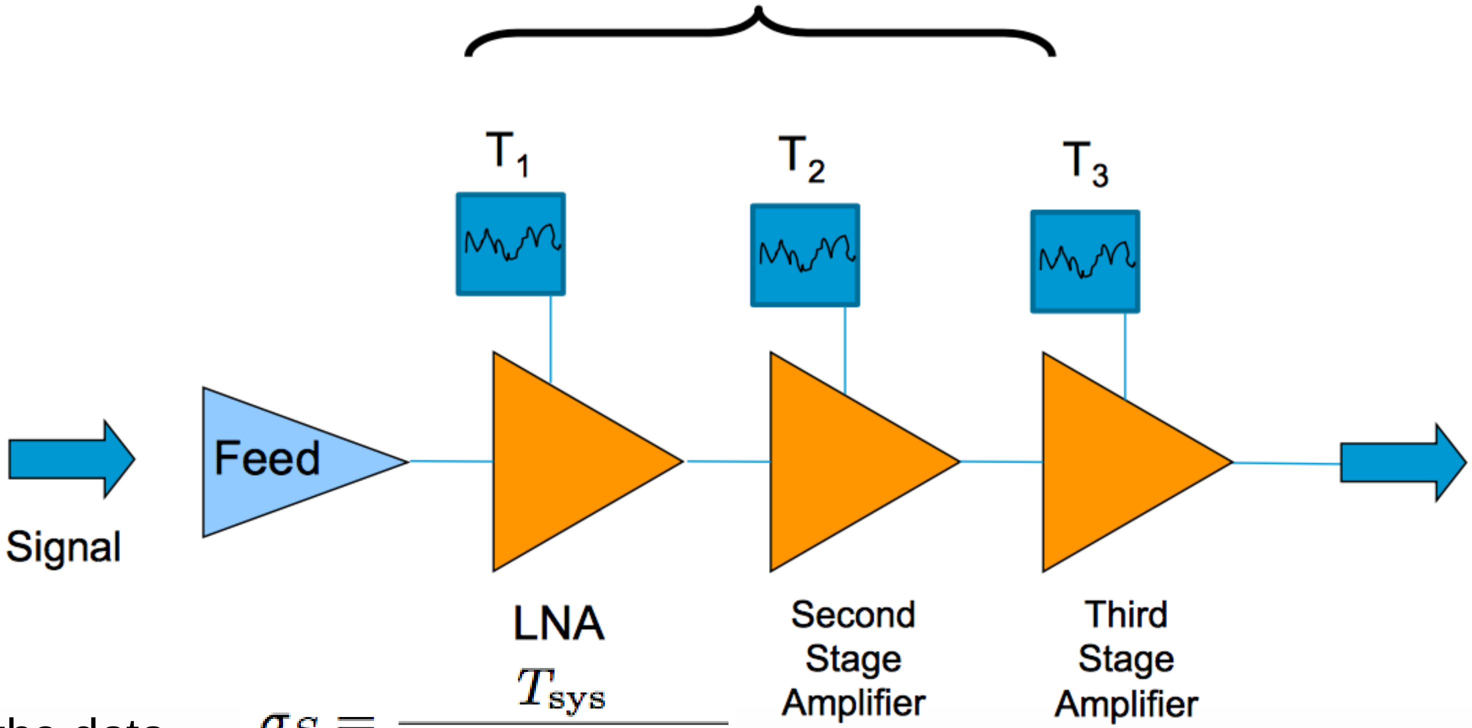
$P_{radio\_source} = S\,A_{eff} = k\,T$ (watts/Hz)

Gain (G) of radio system = T / S (Kelvins/Jy)

$G_{Arecibo}$ = 11 K/Jy
G_{GMRT} = 9 K/Jy or 1.8 K/Jy
G_{GBT} = 2 K/Jy
$G_{Effelsburg}$ = 1.5 K/Jy
G_{Parkes} = 0.74 K/Jy

Receiver noise temperature

$$T_{system} = T_1 + \frac{T_2}{Gain_{LNA}} + \frac{T_3}{Gain_{LNA} \times G_2} + \frac{T_4}{Gain_{LNA} \times G_2 \times G_3} \quad \ldots\ldots$$



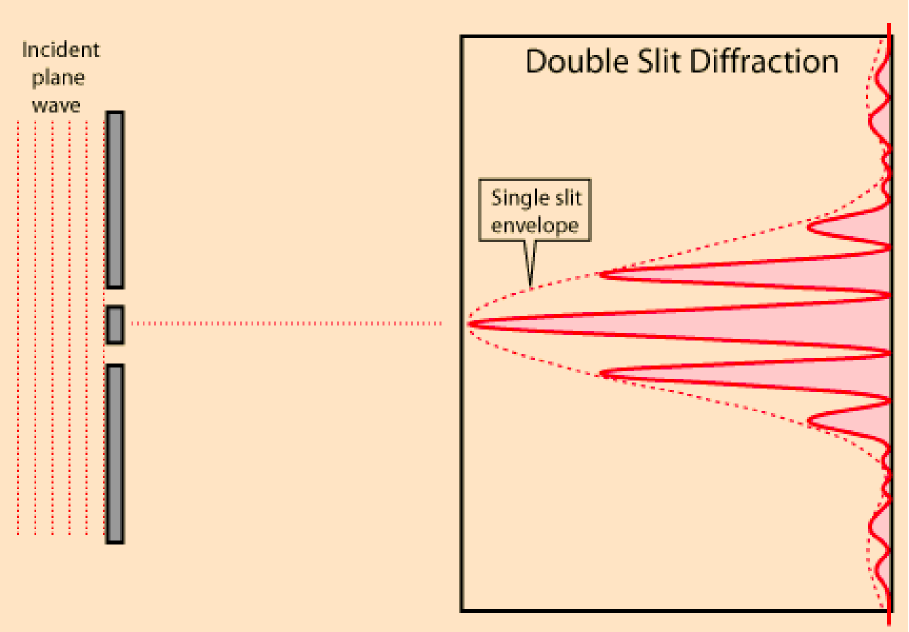
Noise in the data

$$\sigma_S = \frac{T_{\rm sys}}{G\sqrt{2\,\Delta\nu\, t_{\rm samp}}}$$

What happens to the system noise temperature if an attenuator is inserted before the first stage (LNA) ?

Radio Interferometers

Interference fringe patterns



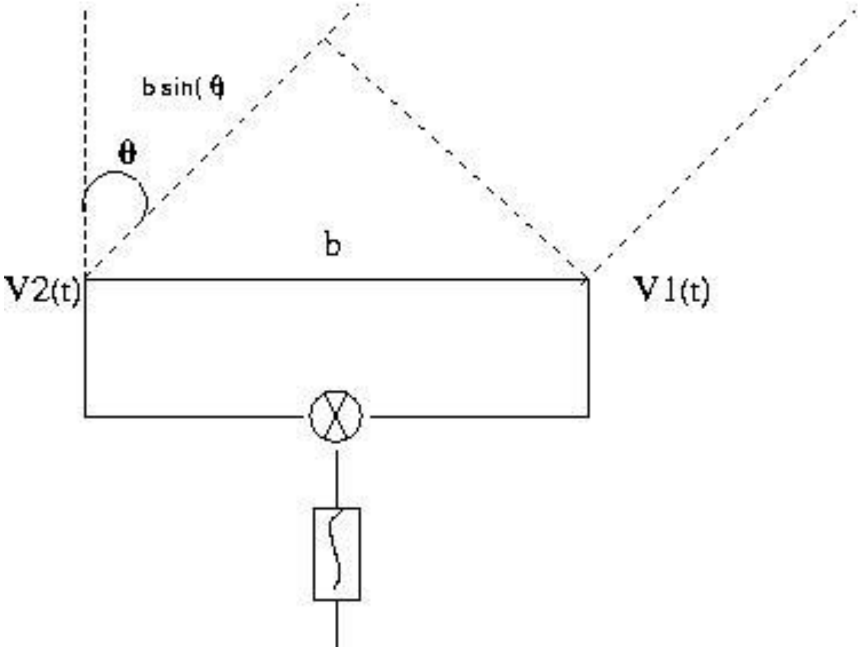
Diffraction limit of a telescope = 1.22 λ/D

Interferometer measures the spatial coherence function of the incident electric field

Signals arrive at Correlator from different Antennas have different *propagation* and *instrumental* delay.

$\tau = b/C \, \mathrm{Sin}(\theta)$

$d\tau/dt = b/C \, \mathrm{Cos}(\theta) \, d\theta/dt$

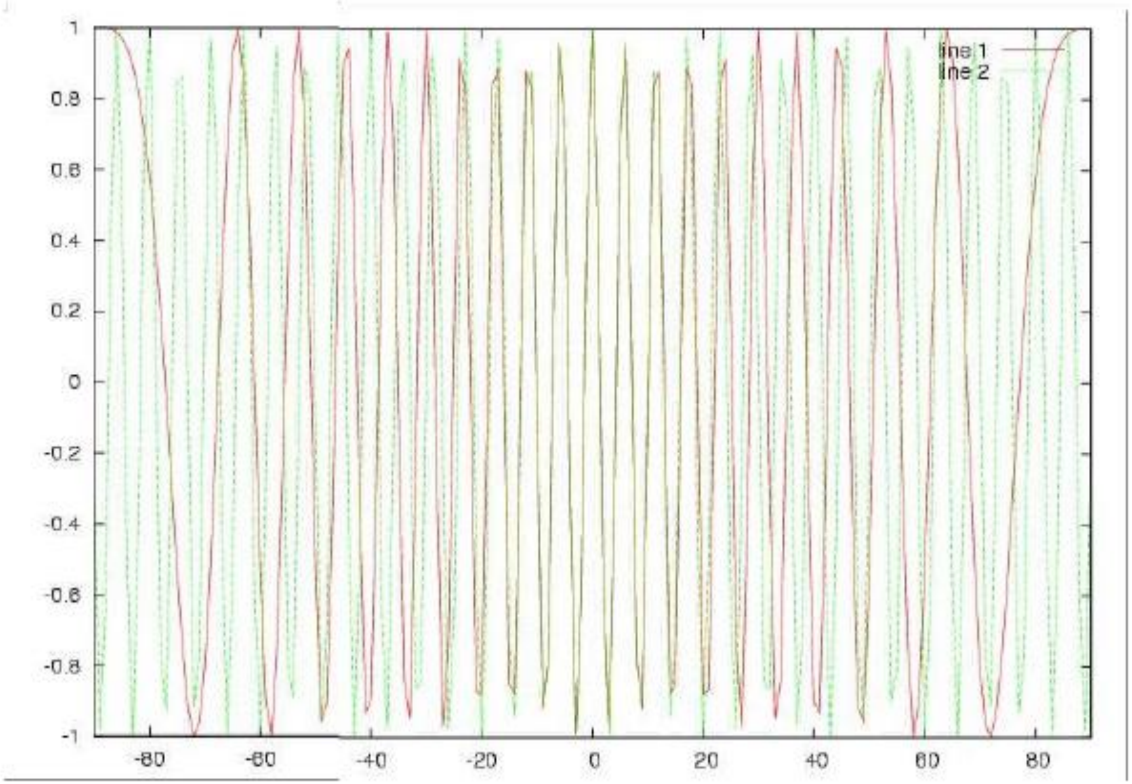


Monochromatic radiation

$$V_1(t)=\cos(2\pi\nu t)$$

$$V_2(t)=\cos(2\pi\nu(t-\tau_g))$$

Output of the interferometer : $\cos(2\pi\nu\tau_g)$



Try with different b and ν combinations

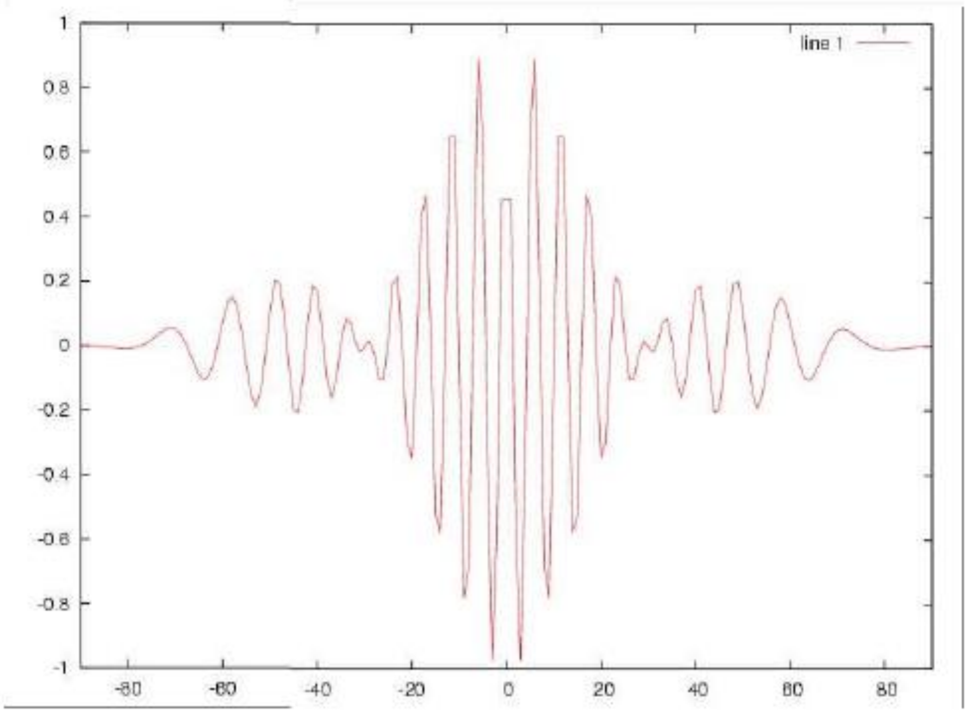
Fringe rate is maximum at zenith and minimum when source is rising or setting

Quasi-monochromatic radiation

Radiation spectrum contains all frequencies in a band $\Delta\nu$ around ν

Averaging over the all ν reduce the amplitude of the fringe

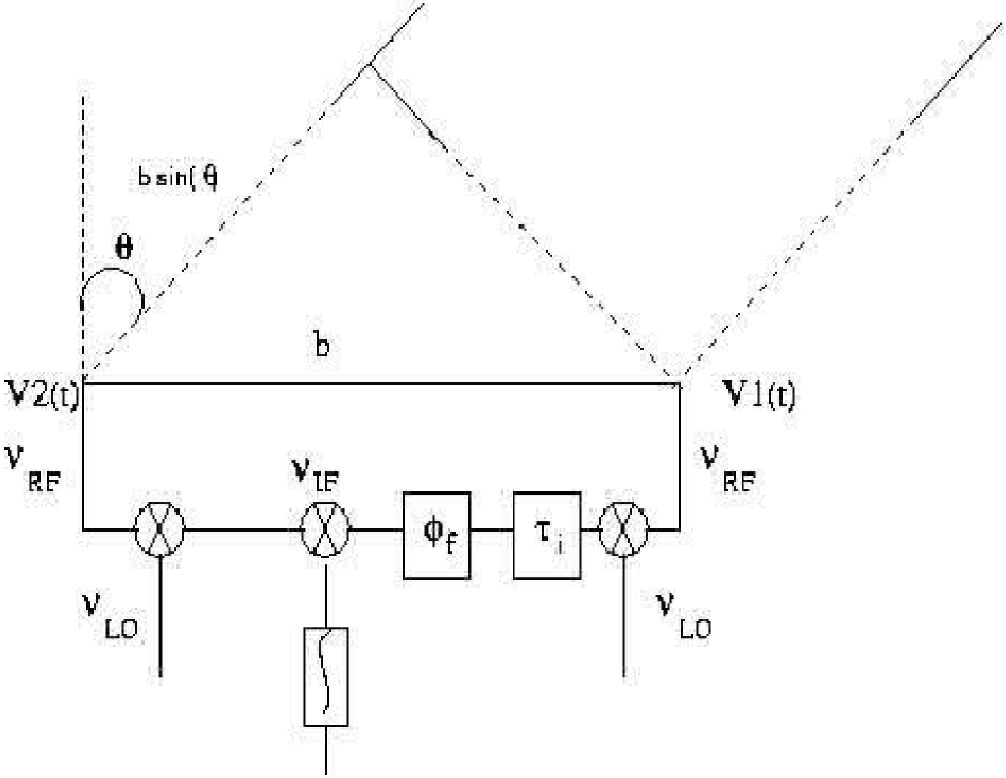
Output of the interferometer : $\cos(2\pi\nu\tau_g)\dfrac{\sin(\pi\Delta\nu\tau_g)}{\pi\Delta\nu\tau_g}$



Increase $\Delta\nu$ to see how fringe amplitude decreases

Increase $\Delta\nu$ without loosing fringe amplitude !!

What is fringe stopping and delay tracking



Delay suffered at RF frequency

Correction applies at IF frequency

$$< \cos(\phi_v + 2\pi\nu_{IF}t - 2\pi\nu_{RF}\tau_g)\cos(2\pi\nu_{IF}(t-\tau_i)+\phi_f) >$$

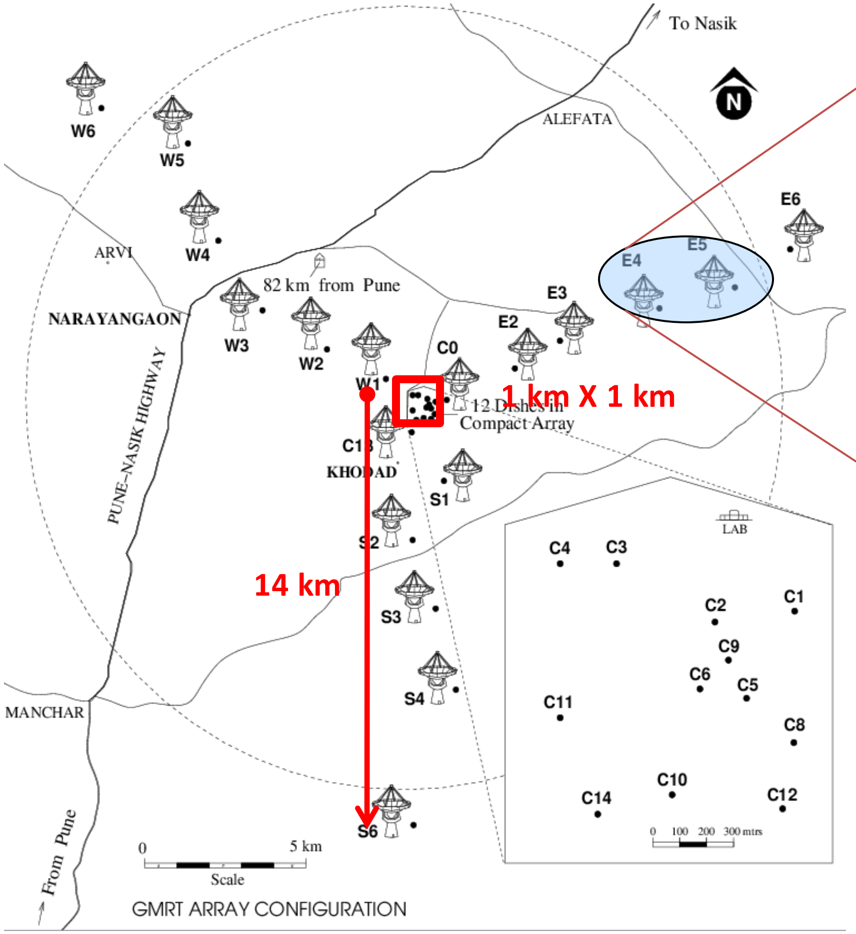
$$= \cos(\phi_v + 2\pi\nu_{LO}\tau_g - \phi_f)$$

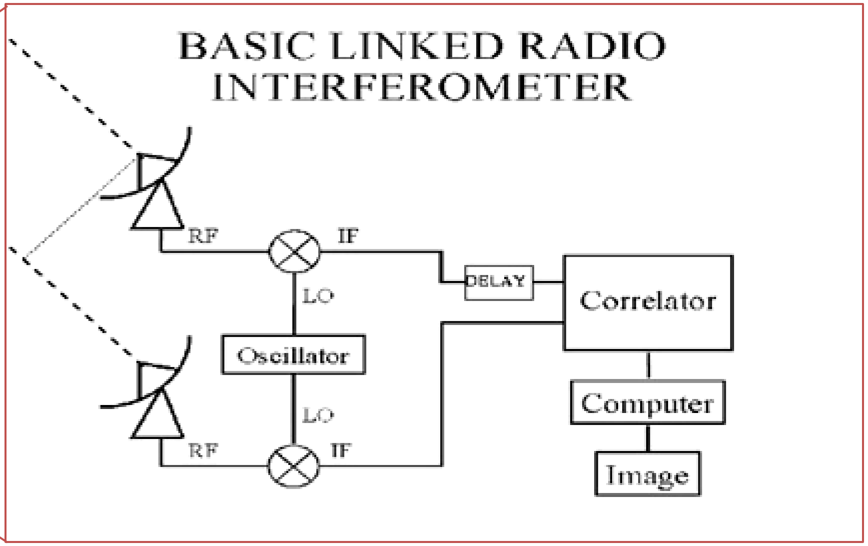
Applying this time varying phase ϕ_f is called : fringe stopping

Applying this additional delay τ_i is called delay tracking

The GMRT array distribution :

Concept of Radio Interferometry and Aperture Synthesis





- Signals from pair of antennae are cross-correlated (cross-spectrum is obtained)
- Product of Interferometer :
  Visibility Function : V(r1,r2)
  V(r1,r2) = <E(r1) E*(r2)>
- ~ N(N-1) such instantaneous measurements (Fourier components of the image)
- Reconstruction of Source Brightness Distribution : I $\underset{\text{FFT}}{\longleftrightarrow}$ V (Aperture Synthesis)

Design consideration of a back-end for an array telescope

- Digitisations of the analog signals : more bits per sample → better dynamic range
- Ability to correct for variable time delays between pair of antennae → delay and fringe correction
- Extract the spectral information about the celestial source → realization of FFT
- Variable spectral resolutions → ranges from studying continuum sky to finer emission/absorption features of the HI cloud
- Complex correlator → in order to get N^2 instantaneous measurement of the Fourier components of the sky brightness distribution
- Variable time resolution → snapshot imaging to study the dynamic sky
- Ability to observe the Polarized sky
- A high time resolution total power receiver → to study the time domain features of the periodic signal from Pulsars
- Ability to add sophisticated algorithms to detect and filter out RFI signals at various stages in processing pipeline (wish-list)

Digitization of signals

Sampling

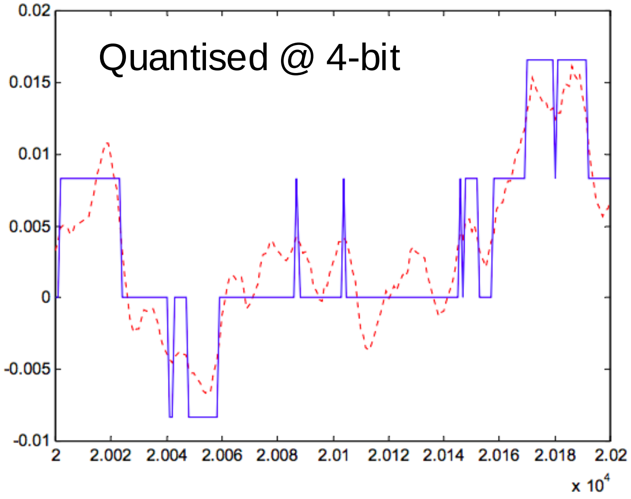
Band-limited signal down-converted to baseband sampled at Nyquist rate with 8 bits per sample
Input power level adjustment for 10*sigma range

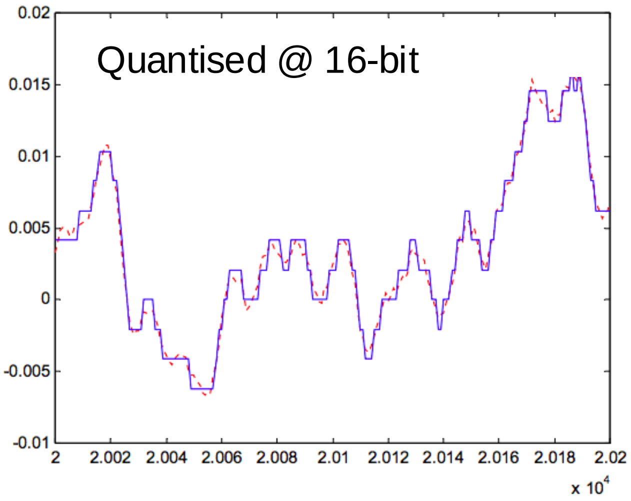
Quantization

Discretization add quantization noise, more severe for fewer levels system.

Variation of gain with frequency makes the SNR of correlated signal varies across the band due to quantization noise

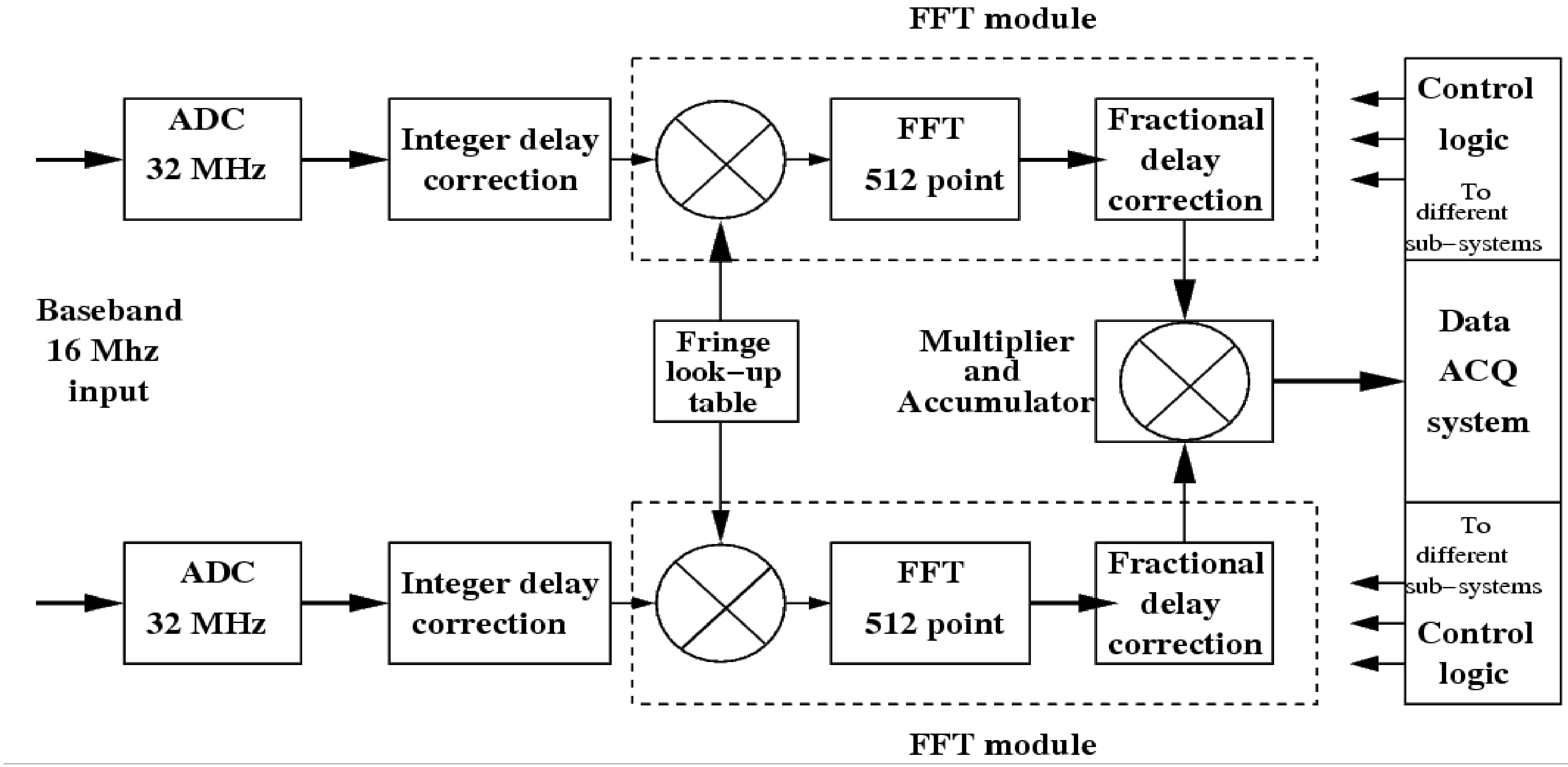
No. of levels	Quantize efficiency
3	80.9%
8	96.25%
16	98.84%
32	99.65%
256	99.99%



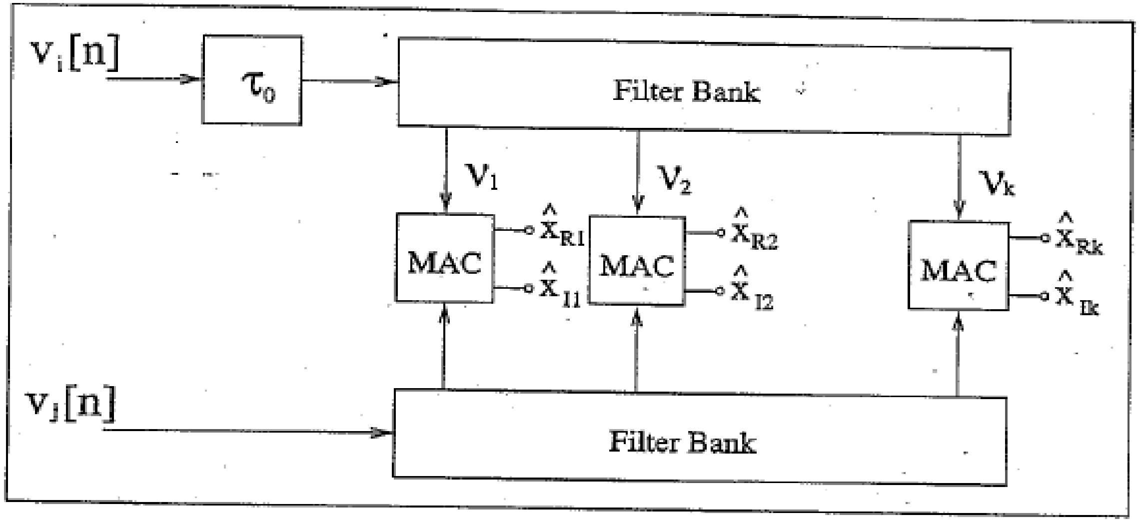


Digital Backend of a radio telescope like the GMRT

- Simultaneous operation as
  - FX correlator as an Imaging instrument
  - Beamformer as a Pulsar receiver



Spectral correlator : FX Vs XF

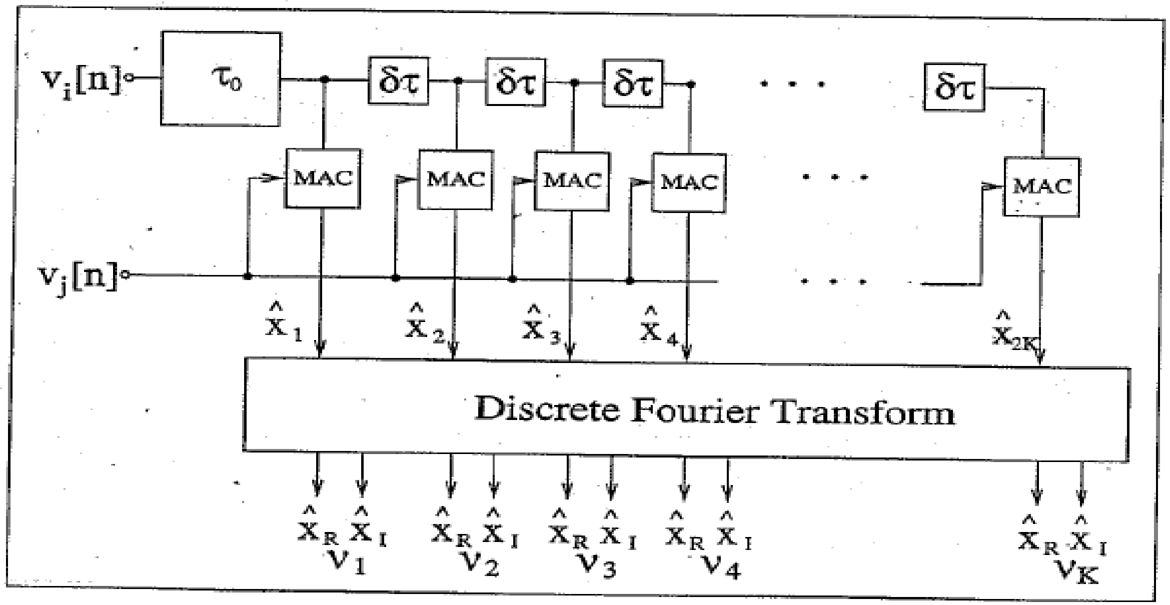


FX correlator

$\sim 2*Na*BW*log(NFFT)+$

$BW*Na*(Na+1)$

$= 2*Na*BW[log(NFFT)+(Na+1)/2]$ *Cops*



XF correlator

$\sim BW*Na*(Na+1)*$

$[1+log(NFFT)]$

Cops

For GMRT, Na=30, NFFT=1024

FX or XF, which one is computationally expensive?

Spectral correlator : FX Vs XF

Sensitivity
FX operates on block of data determined by the FFT algorithm. Cross-correlation is derived from fewer pair of samples than XF ⇨ loss of sensitivity in FX, requires overlapping adjacent blocks, net increase in computing load in FX

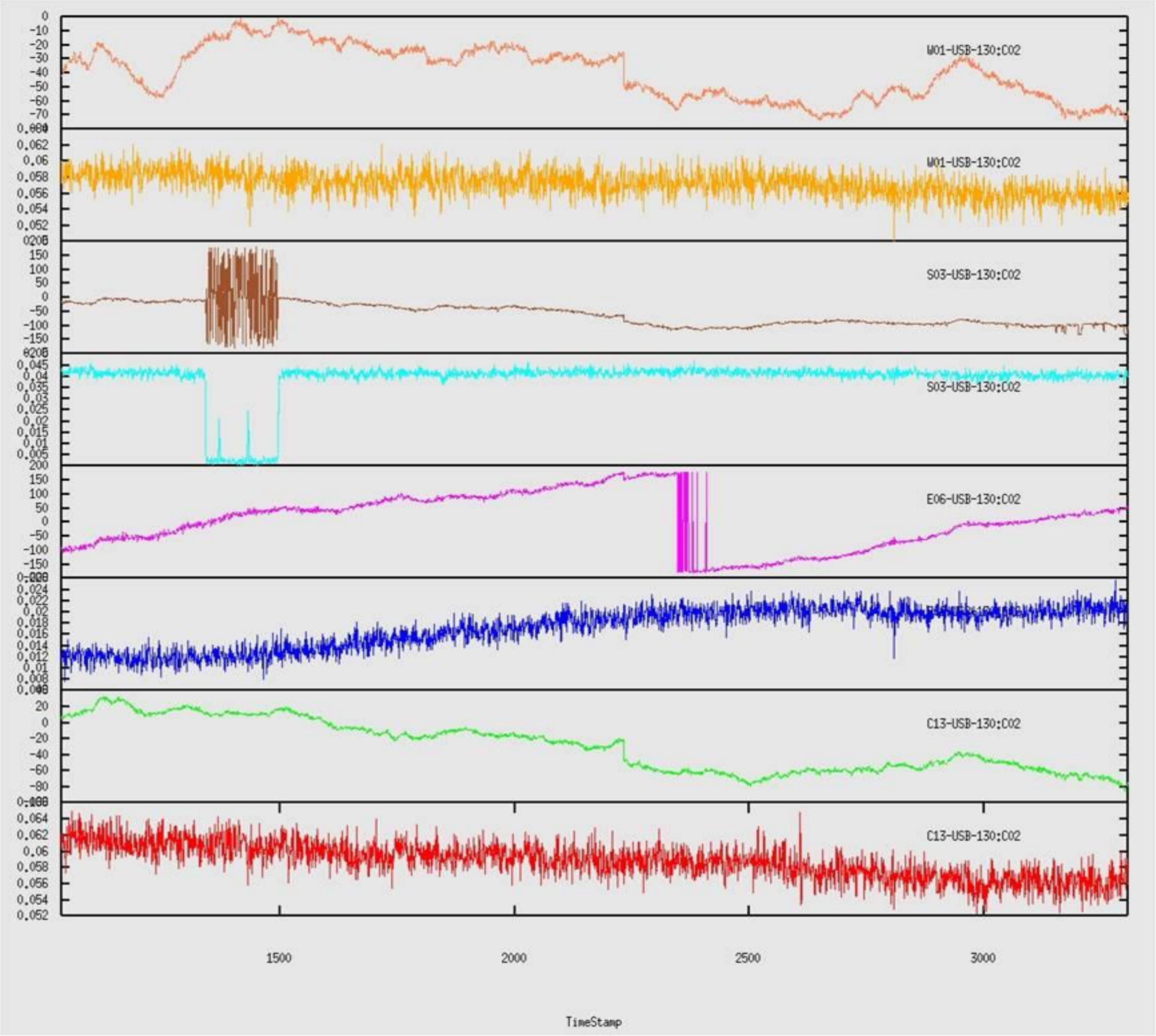
Quantization
Correction for quantization efficiency before correlation possible for XF, but difficult for FX ⇨ XF is advantageous for small no. of bit corrrelator

Closure errors
FX correlator is less vulnerable to baseline dependent systematic effects

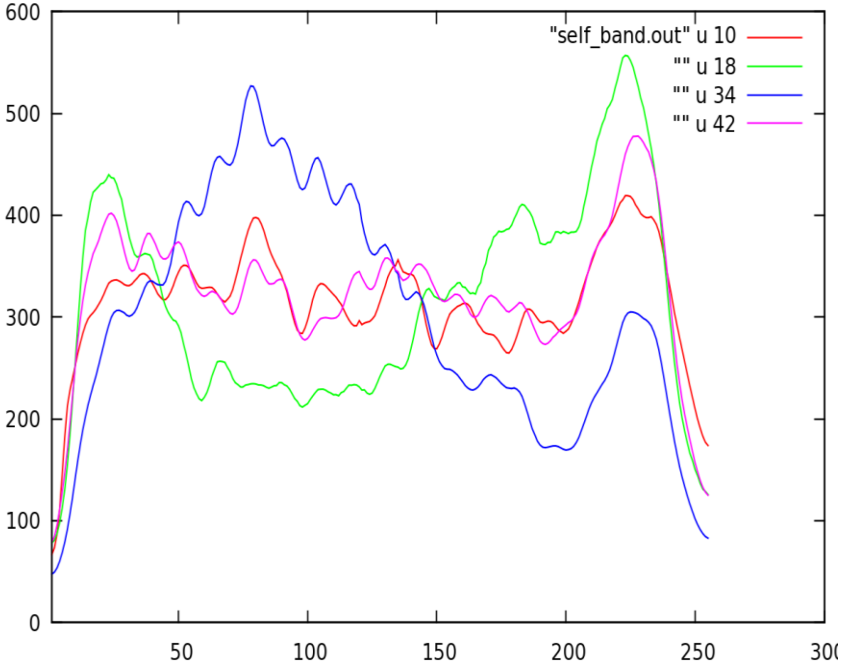
Fractional sample correction
In XF correction can be done in base-line base after transform

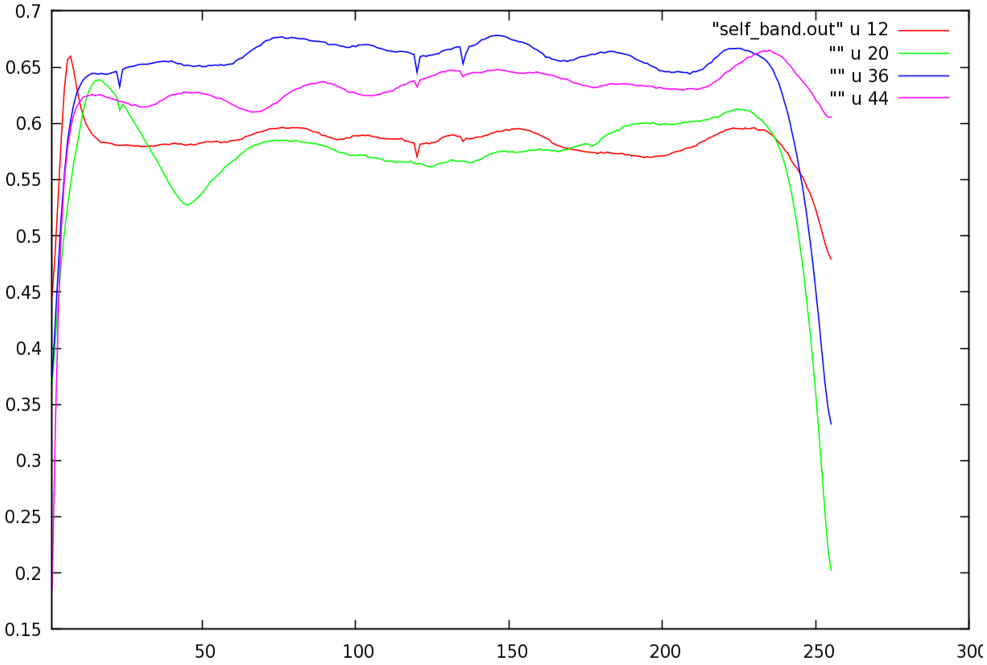
shape of channel bandpass
FX correlator bandpass function of each channel is Sinc^2, whereas for XF it is Sinc; Which one offer less spectral leakage?

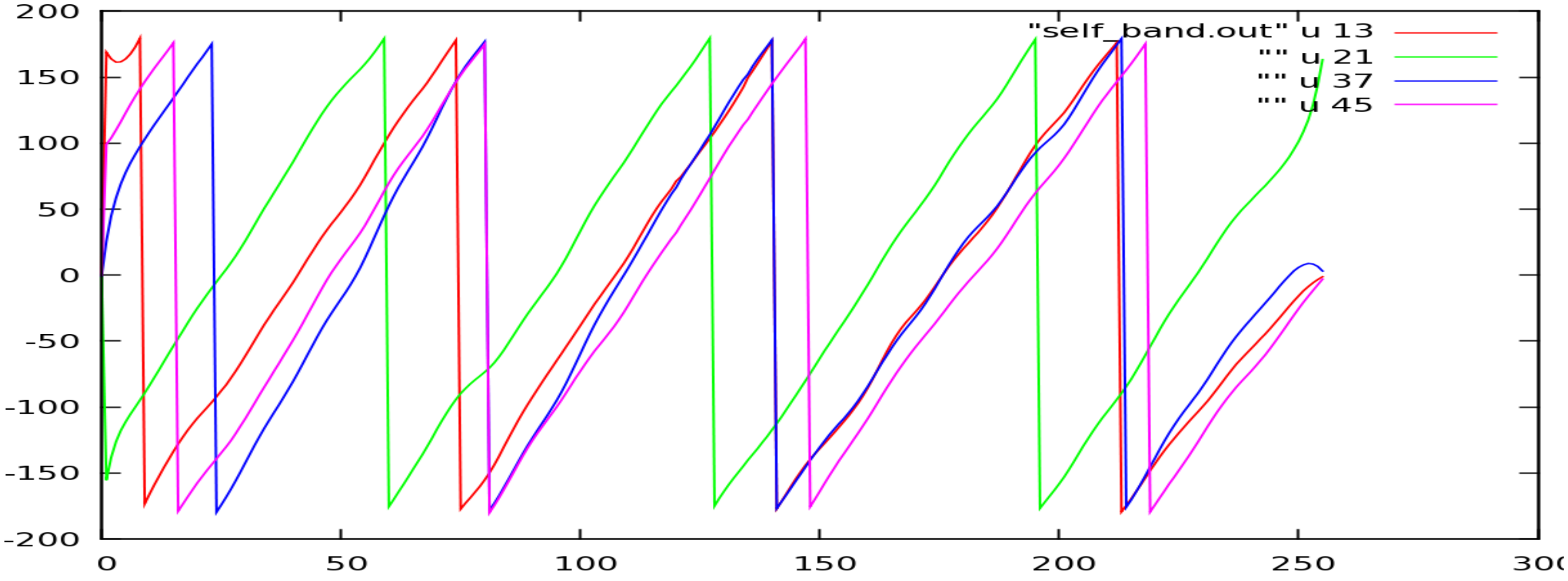
Cross correlation output



Cross spectrum in presence of correlated signals

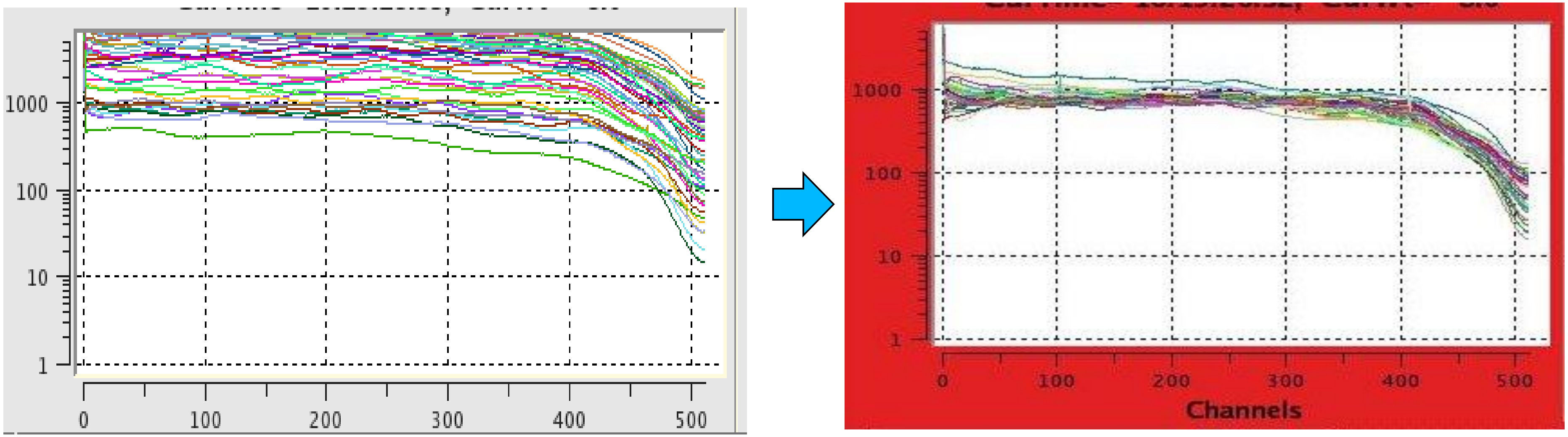


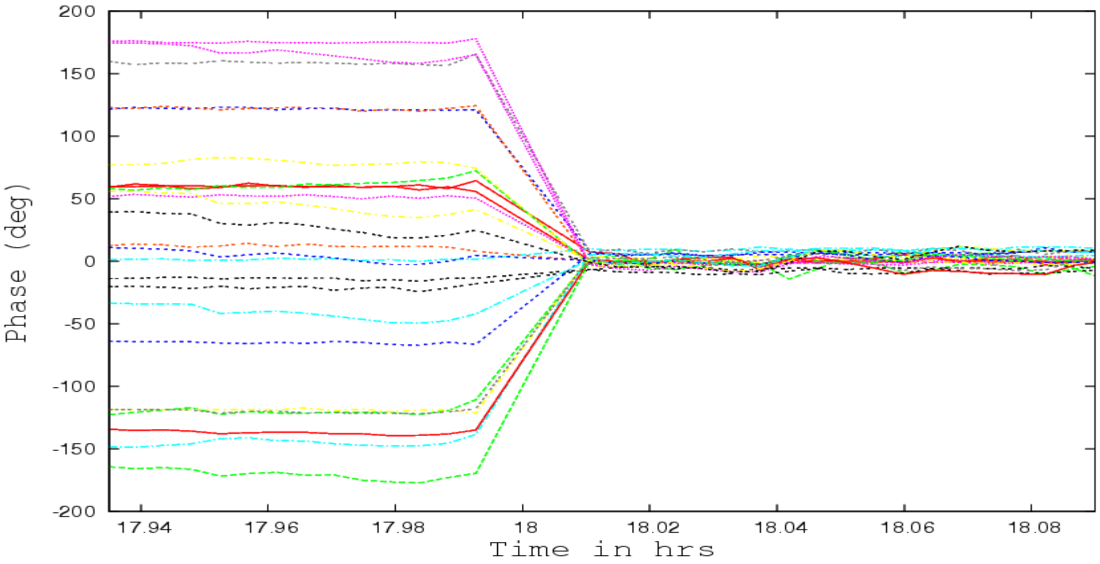




Amplitude and phase calibration for beamformer

Antenna based gain offset correction

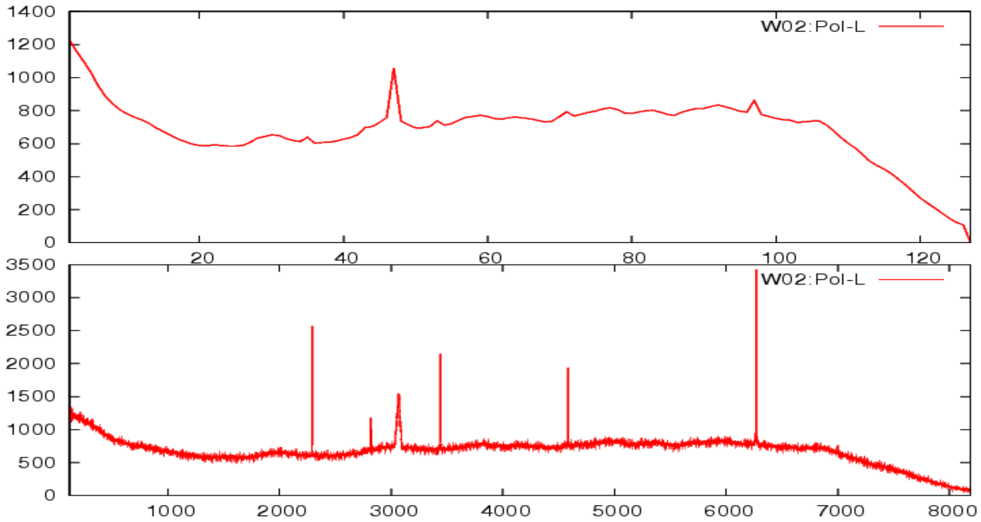




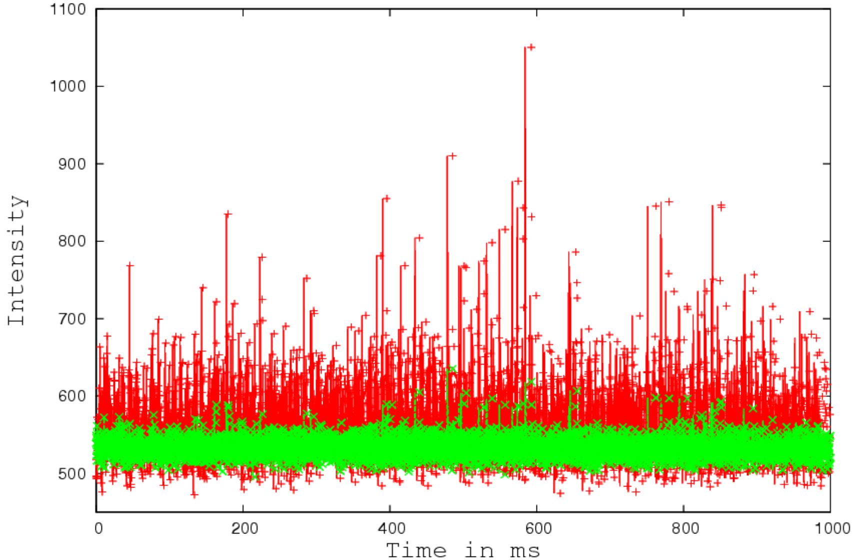
Antenna based phase offset correction

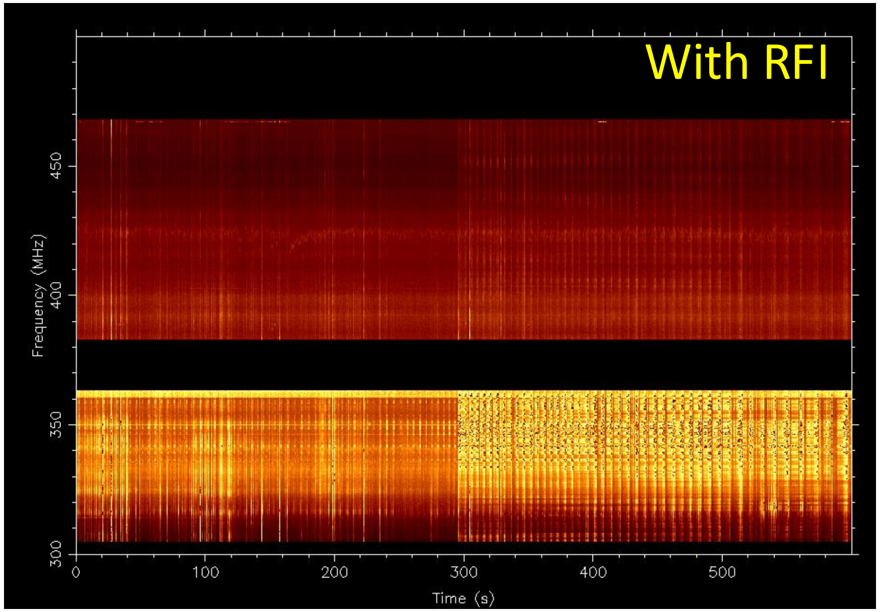
Detecting and mitigating RFIs

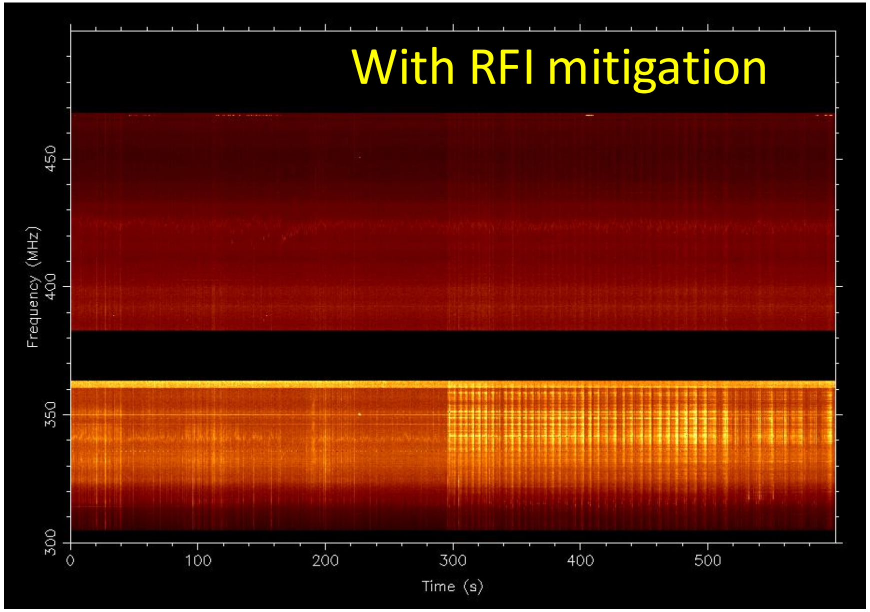
High spectral res



Pre detection RFI removal

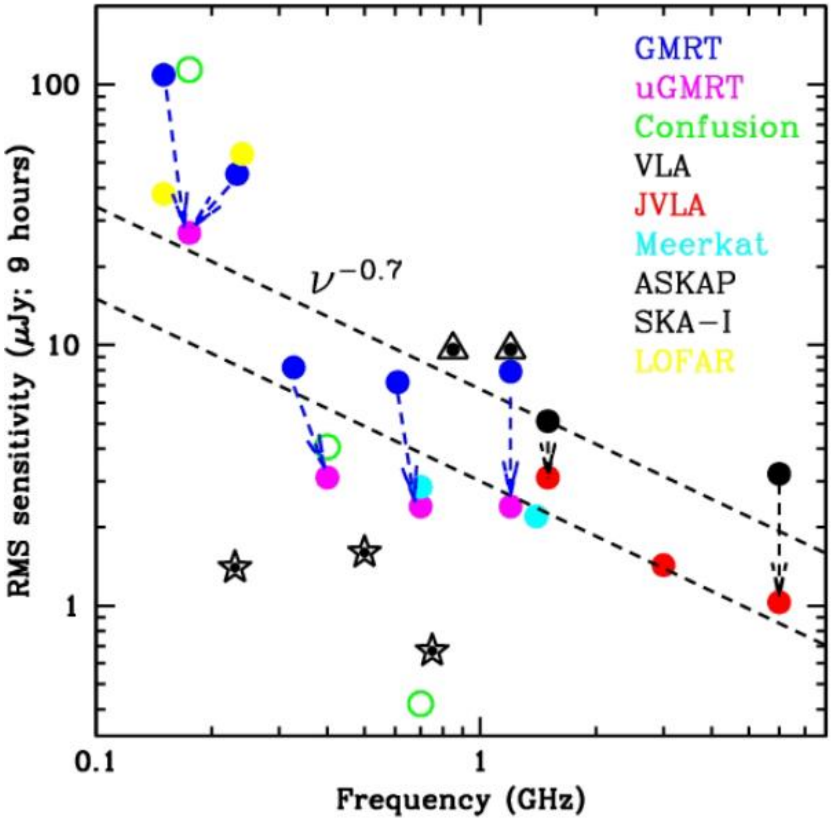






The upgraded GMRT (uGMRT)

- ✓ Seamless frequency coverage from 150 to 1450 MHz
- ✓ Improved G/T_{sys}
- ✓ Increase of instantaneous bandwidth from 32 MHz to 200 MHz/400 MHz
- ✓ Expected increase in sensitivity by 3x
- ✓ Time-domain study simultaneously in 3-4 frequencies



Credit: Nissim Kanekar

Ref: Gupta et al. 2018

Thank you