

Some Properties and Uses of the Species Scale



Universidad Autónoma
de Madrid



Instituto de
Física
Teórica

EXCELENCIA
SEVERO
OCHOA

$$\Lambda_{QG}$$

Luis Ibáñez, IFT UAM-CSIC, Madrid
Corfu, September 11, 2025

Honouring Dieter!!



Honouring Dieter!!



CERN

36 years ago....

(he was 33)

CERN-TH picnic 1989

Corfu

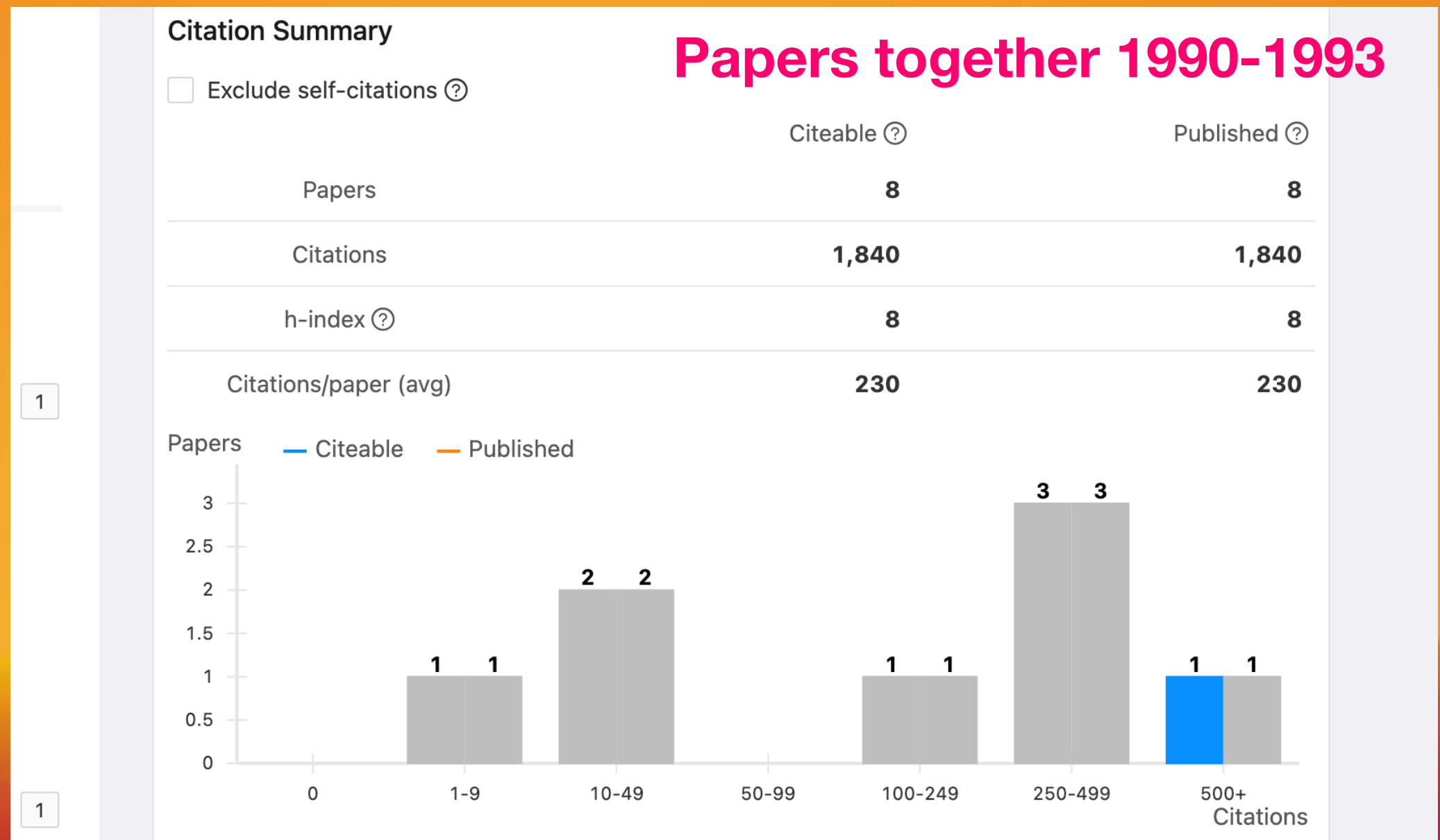
13 years ago....

(he was 55)



CORFU 2011

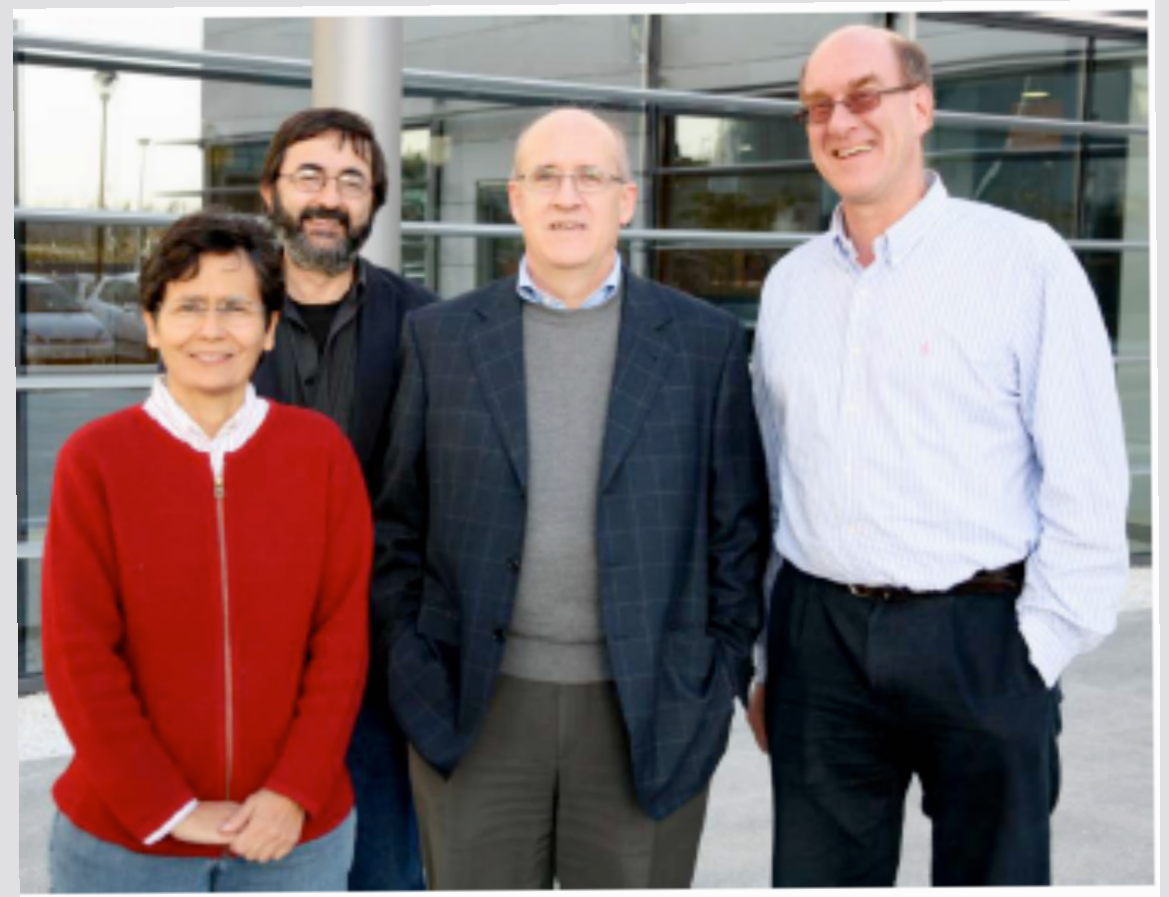
Honouring Dieter!!



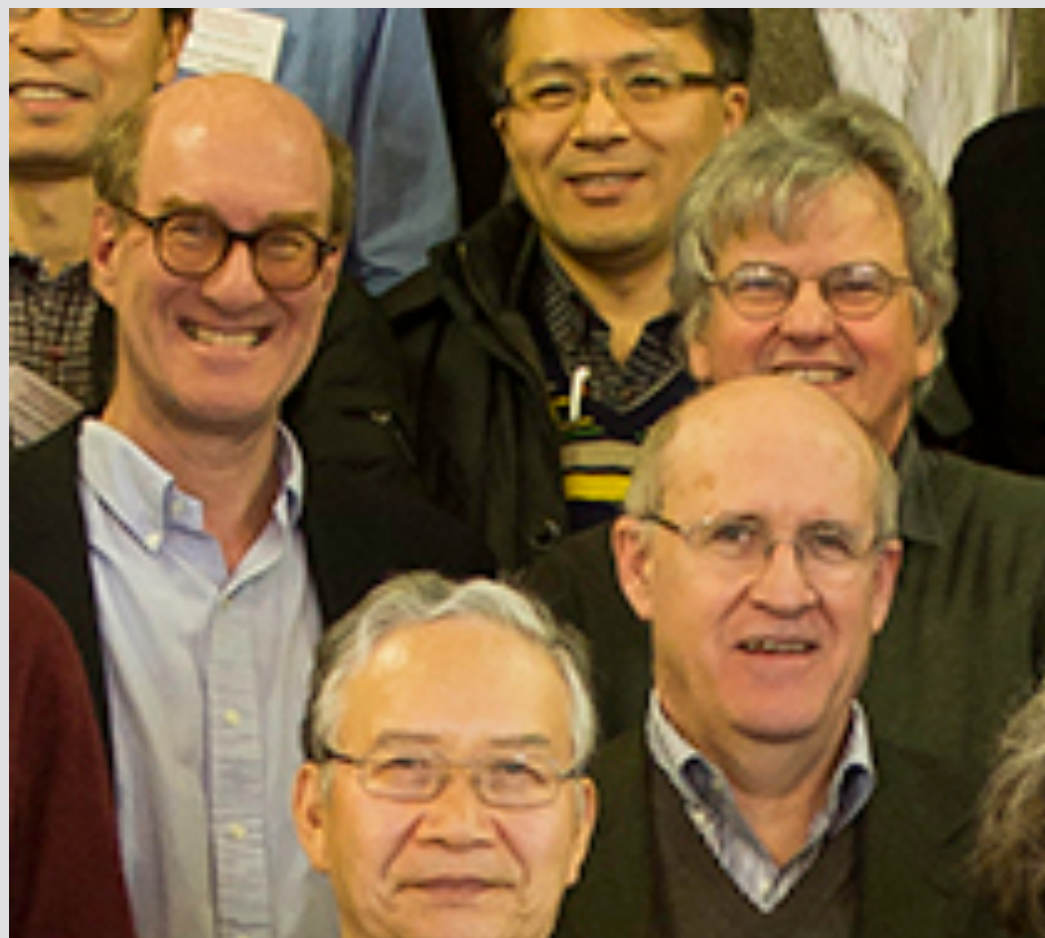
But collaborating all the time between Munich and Madrid !!!



At IFT.....



S-duality friends



....and elsewhere..

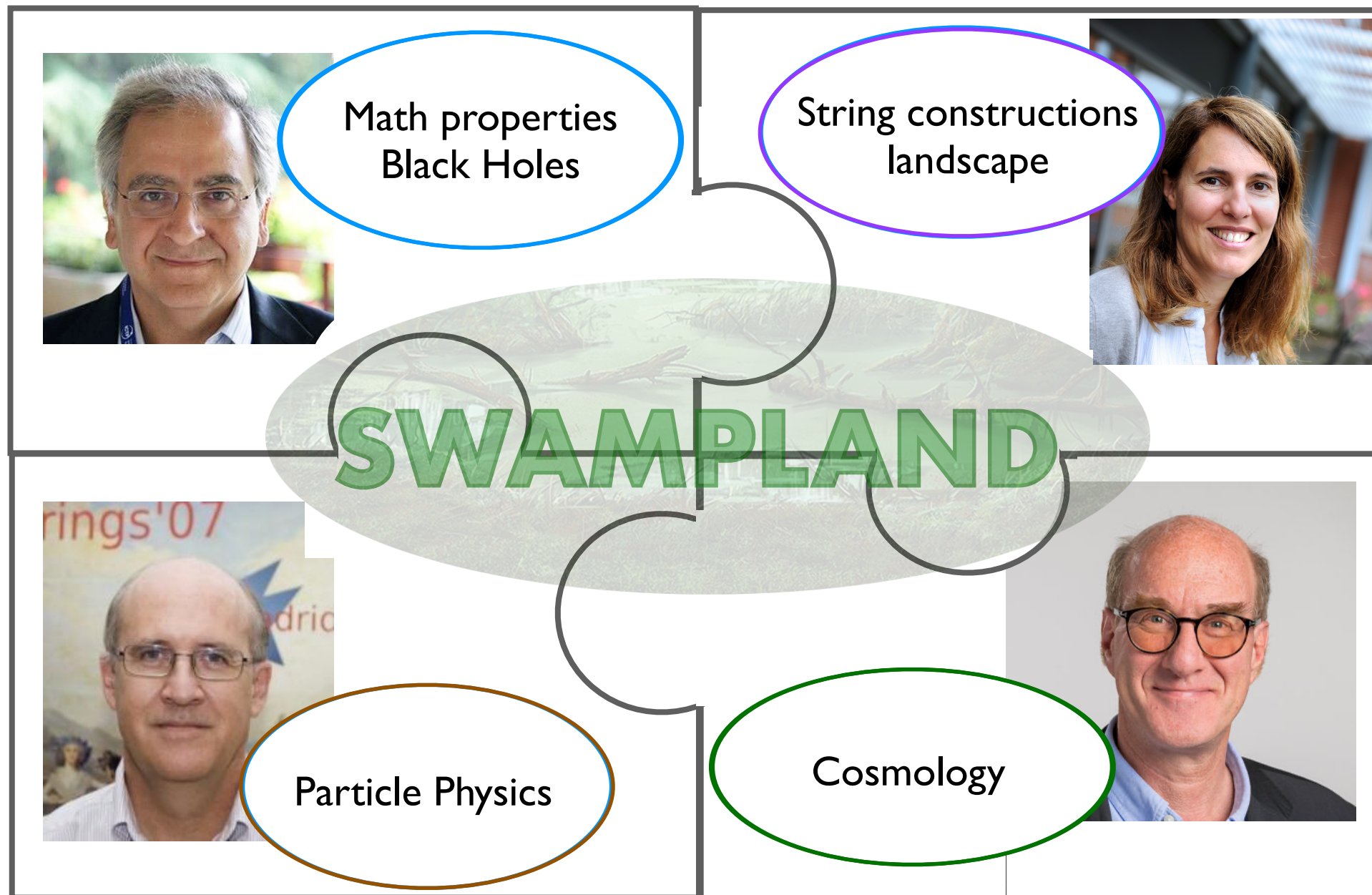
Saclay

2 years ago....

**2023: Going to Brussels for the final interview for an
ERC Synergy Grant (we failed !!)**



UNPRECEDENTED SYNERGY: COMPLETING THE PUZZLE



This will be possible only by the complementary expertise
and the synergy between the 4 PIs and their teams

Corfu today!



*Congratulaions in your
FAKE retirement !!*



Some Properties and Uses of the Species Scale

Based on:

Calderon-Infante, Castellano, Herráez, Ibáñez, hep-th/2306.16450

Castellano, Herráez, Ibáñez, hep-th/2310.07708

Aoufia, Castellano, Ibáñez, hep-th/2506.03253

G.F. Casas, Ibáñez, hep-th/2507.05345


$$\Lambda_{QG}$$

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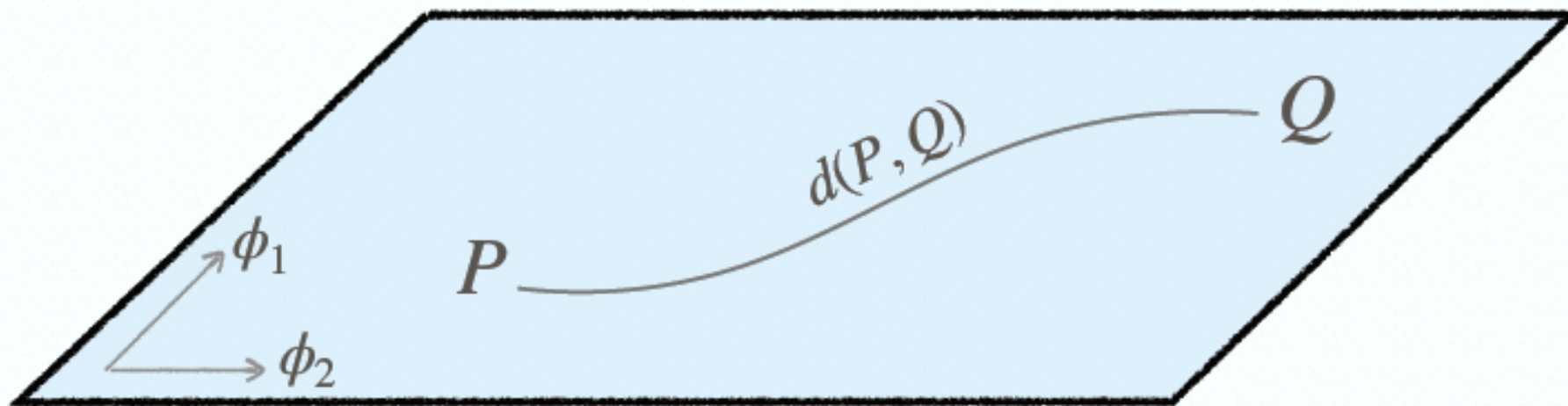

$$\Lambda_{QG}$$

The Swampland Distance Conjecture (SDC)

Starting from a point P in moduli space, and moving to a point Q an infinite distance away, there appears a tower of states which becomes exponentially massless according to

$$M(Q) \sim M(P) e^{-\alpha d(P,Q)} \quad \alpha \sim 1$$

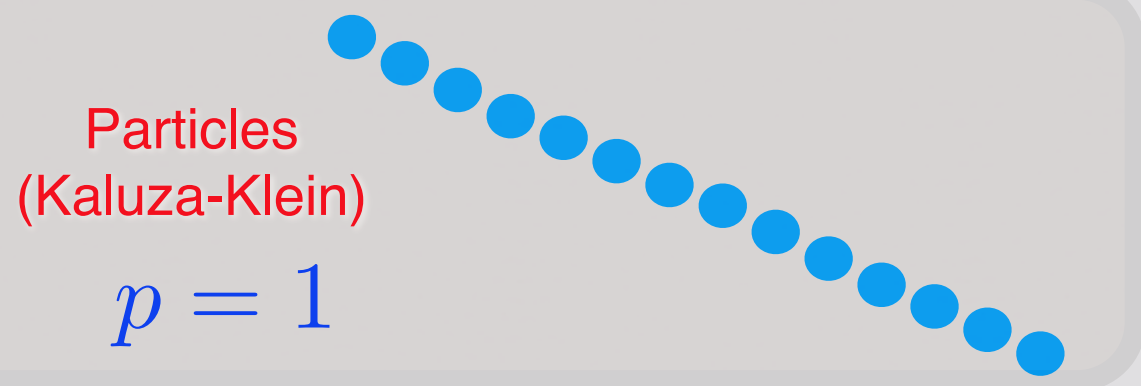
Ooguri, Vafa 2006.....and many more....



Towers

as $\Delta\phi \rightarrow \infty$ exponentially massless towers of states appear

- 1) KK-like, E.g. **decompactification** of p dimensions

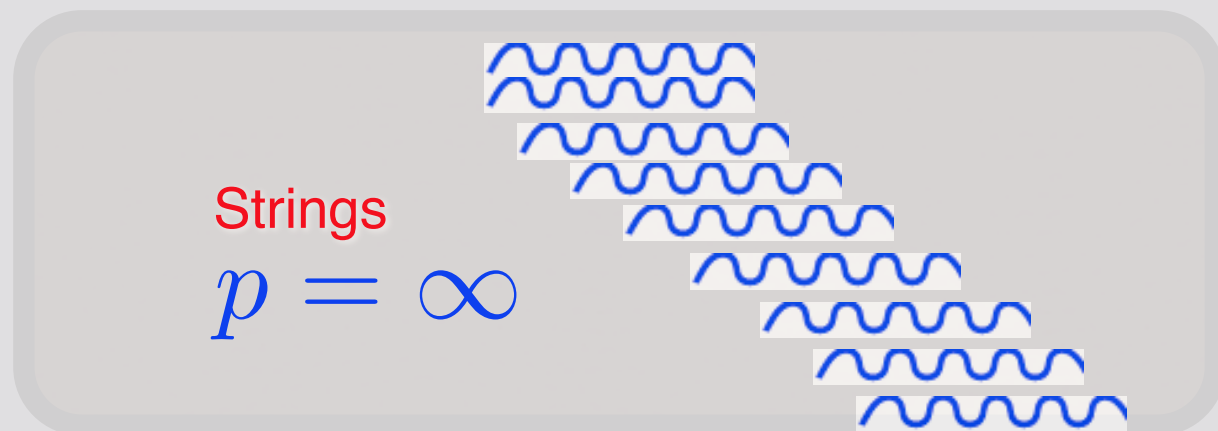


Effective multiple KK tower:

$$m_n = n^{1/p} m_0 \quad ; \quad \Lambda_{UV} \simeq N^{1/p} m_0$$

$N = \text{number states below } \Lambda_{QG}$

- 2) **String** tower



$$\Lambda_{UV} \simeq M_{string} = m_0$$

Only these two options appear.

Tested in many string theory vacua

The Species Scale

The QG-cut-off in the **presence of multiple species N** is NOT the Planck scale but rather:

$$\Lambda_{QG} \simeq \frac{M_{Pl,d}}{N^{\frac{1}{d-2}}}$$

Dvali, Redi, 2007

Dvali, Gomez, 2010

The cut-off thus depends on the number of states becoming light

$$m_n = n^{1/p} m_0 \quad \longrightarrow \quad \Lambda_{QG} = N^{1/p} m_0$$

Combined with Species Scale definition:

$$\Lambda_{QG} \simeq m_0^{\frac{p}{d-2+p}}$$

Note for strings $p = \infty$ and $\Lambda_{QG} \simeq M_s$

The Species convex hull

** One can define convex hull vectors for the **masses** of the towers as

Calderon, Uranga, Valenzuela, 2020

$$\vec{z}_t = -\frac{\vec{\nabla} m_t}{m_t} \quad \text{and} \quad \text{exponential decay rate along } \vec{n} \quad \alpha_t = \vec{n} \cdot \vec{z}_t$$

Then it was conjectured as the Convex hull SDC:

Etheredge et al. 2022

$$\alpha \geq \frac{1}{\sqrt{d-2}} \quad \alpha = \max \alpha_t$$

** One can define convex hull vectors for the **species scale** (including all towers and bulk)

$$\vec{Z} = -\frac{\vec{\nabla} \Lambda}{\Lambda} \quad \text{and} \quad \text{exponential rate} \quad \lambda = \vec{n} \cdot \vec{Z}$$

Then it was conjectured as the Species Scale Convex hull SSDC:

$$\lambda \geq \frac{1}{\sqrt{(d-1)(d-2)}} \quad \text{and} \quad \lambda \leq \frac{1}{\sqrt{d-2}}$$

Calderon, Castellano, Herraez, L. J. 2023

van de Heisteeg, Vafa, Wiesner, 2023

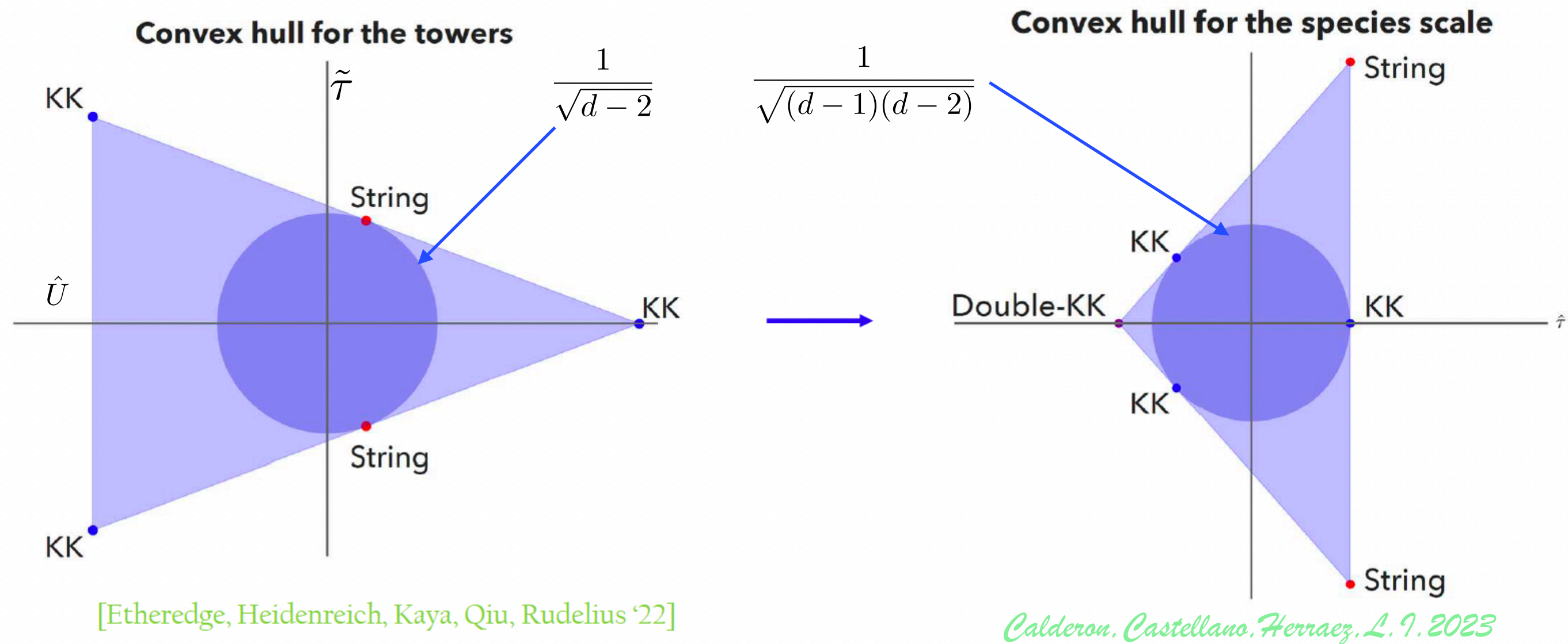
Example: maximal sugra in 9d

M - th on T^2

$$ds_{11}^2 = e^{-2U/7} ds_9^2 + g_{mn} dz^m dz^n$$

$$g_{mn} = \frac{e^U}{\tau_2} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & \tau_1 \\ \tau_1 & |\tau|^2 \end{pmatrix}$$

$$U = \kappa_9 \sqrt{\frac{14}{9}} \hat{U}, \quad \tau_2 = \kappa_9 e^{\sqrt{2} \hat{\tau}}$$



$$\vec{z}_t = -\frac{\vec{\nabla} m_t}{m_t}$$

$$\vec{Z} = -\frac{\vec{\nabla} \Lambda}{\Lambda}$$

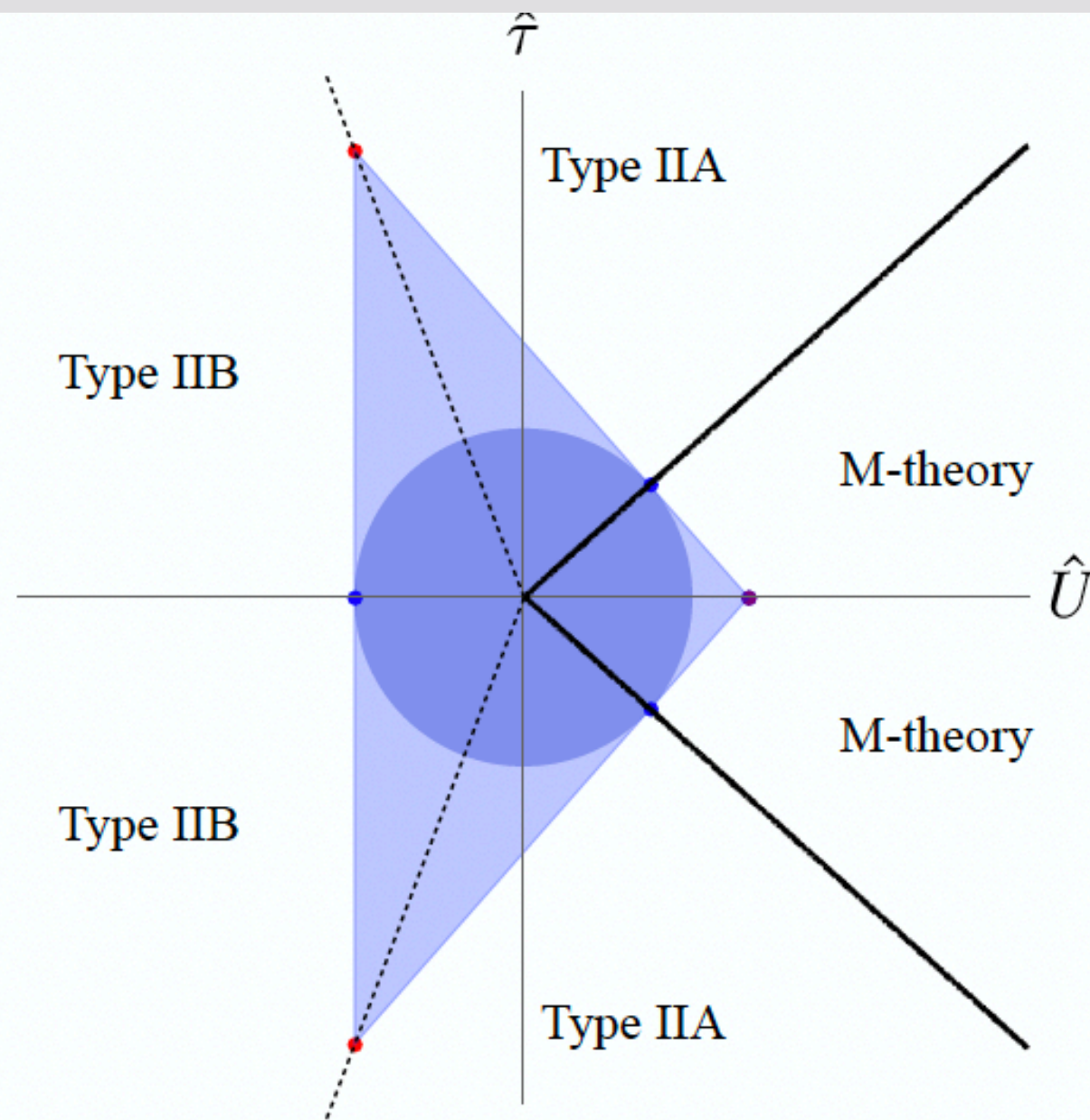


Figure 1: Convex hull diagram for the species scale in M-theory on T^2 in the plane $(\hat{U}, \hat{\tau}) = (\frac{3}{\sqrt{14}} \log \mathcal{V}_2, \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} \log \tau_2)$. The blue dots in the facets represent the single KK towers, whereas the red and purple dots at the vertices represent string oscillator and double KK towers. The self-dual line $\hat{\tau} = 0$ is fixed under the \mathbb{Z}_2 remnant symmetry.

The Species Scale and the QG EFT expansion

- If Λ_{QG} is the QG cut-off it should appear suppressing higher dimensional BPS operators in QG, e.g. higher derivative terms like

*u. d. Heisteeg, Vafa, Wiesner, Wu 2022-2023
Castellano, Herraez, L. 7. 2023*

$$S_{EFT,D} = \int d^D x \frac{1}{2\kappa_D^2} \left(\mathcal{R} + \sum_n \frac{\mathcal{O}_n(\mathcal{R})}{\Lambda^{n-2}} \right) + \dots, \quad (\text{See A. Herraez talk})$$

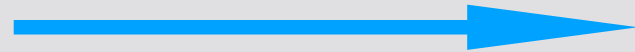
FT

$$\int d^d x \sqrt{-g} \sum_{n \geq d} \frac{\mathcal{O}_n(R)}{M_t^{n-d}}$$

- Alternative definition of species scale.
- In particular in maximal supergravity the operators:

‘Double expansion’
*Calderon, Castellano,
Herraez, 2025*

$$S_{BPS} = \frac{1}{2\kappa_d^2} \int d^d x \sqrt{-g} \mathcal{F}(\phi) \frac{\mathcal{R}^4}{M_{p,d}^6}$$

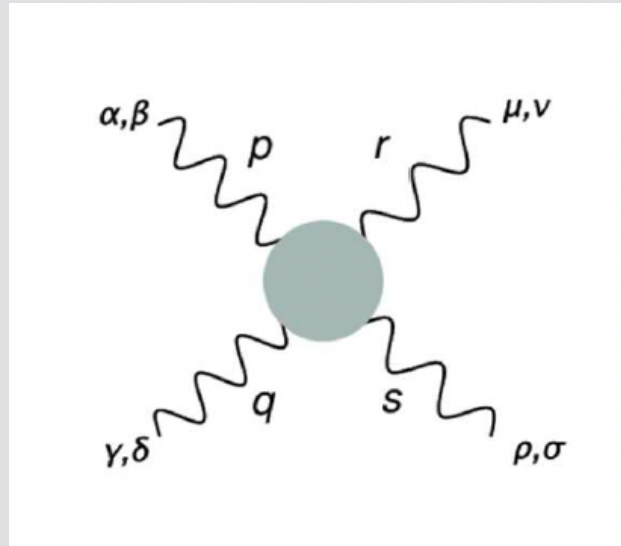


$$\boxed{\Lambda_{QG} = M_{p,d} \mathcal{F}^{-\frac{1}{6}}}$$

Field-dependent Species Scale in terms of field dependent Wilson coefficients
Also give information about the bulk

Example : 10D Type IIB

- The Wilson coefficients have been computed in the literature from 4-graviton scattering



[Kiritsis, Pioline '97; Green, Gutperle '97; Green, Gutperle, Vanhove, Gatto '99; Green, Sethi '99; Obers, Piolone '00; Green, Vanhove '06; Lambert, West '07; Green, Miller, Russo, Vanhove '10; Green, Russo, Vanhove '10]

$$t_8 t_8 \mathcal{R}^4 \equiv t^{\mu_1 \dots \mu_8} t_{\nu_1 \dots \nu_8} \mathcal{R}_{\mu_1 \mu_2}^{\nu_1 \nu_2} \dots \mathcal{R}_{\mu_7 \mu_8}^{\nu_7 \nu_8}$$

$$S_{\text{IIB}}^{10\text{d}} \supset \frac{1}{\ell_{10}^2} \int d^{10}x \sqrt{-g} E_{3/2}^{sl_2}(\tau, \bar{\tau}) t_8 t_8 \mathcal{R}^4$$

$E_{3/2}^{sl_2}(\tau)$ is the order $-3/2$ non-holomorphic Eisenstein form in $SL(2, \mathbf{Z})$

$$\Lambda_{IIB} = \frac{M_{p,10}}{E_{3/2}^{1/6}}$$

$$E_{3/2}^{sl_2} = 2\zeta(3)\tau_2^{3/2} + 4\zeta(2)\tau_2^{-1/2} + \mathcal{O}(e^{-2\pi\tau_2})$$

$$\Lambda_{\text{sp}} \sim m_s = \frac{M_{\text{Pl},10}}{(4\pi\tau_2^2)^{1/8}}$$

Matches known expression

Species scale is the string scale in this case

Example : 9d $M - th$ on T^2

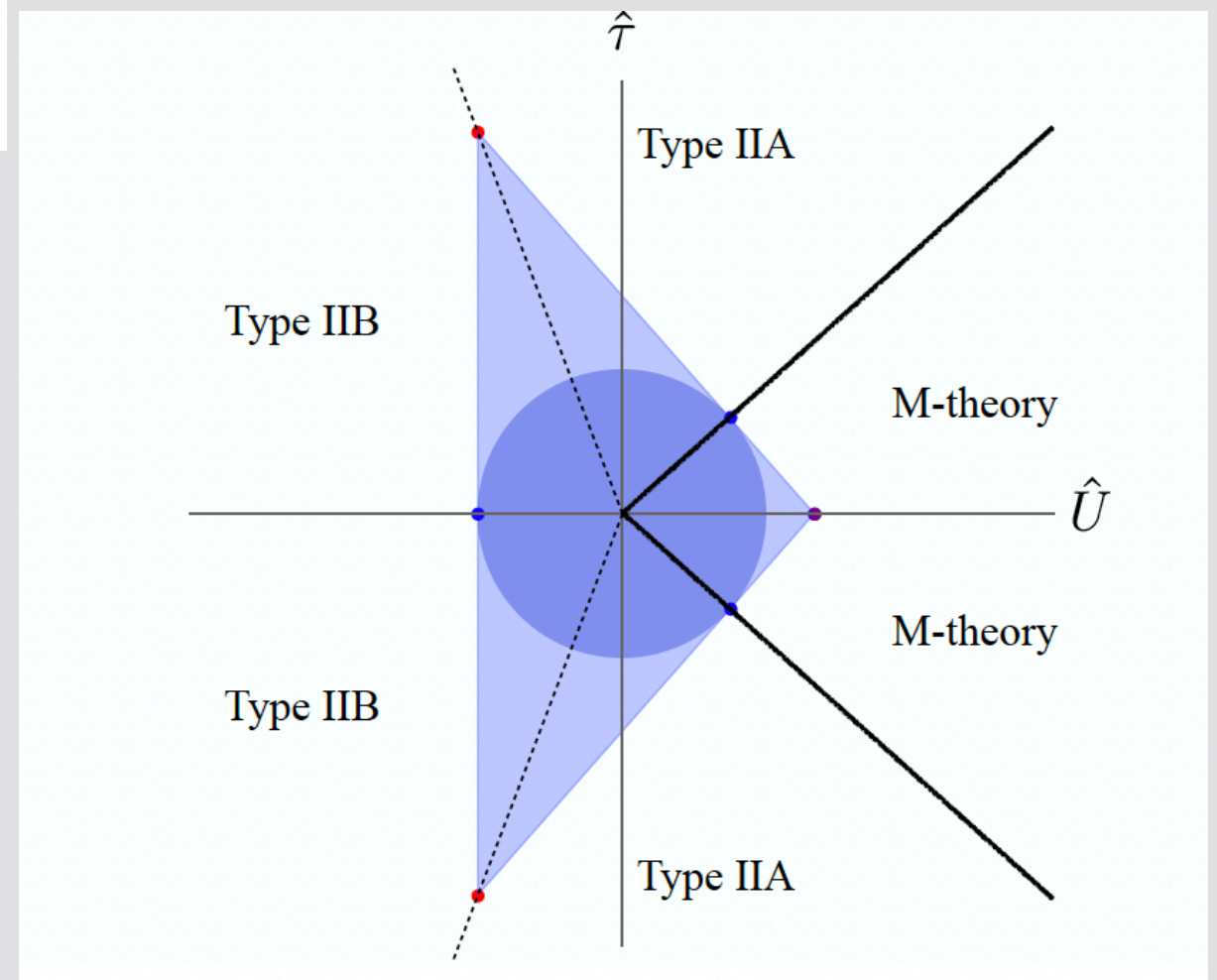
- The Wilson coefficients have been computed to be

$$S_{R^4}^{9d} = \frac{1}{\ell_9} \int d^9x \sqrt{-g} \left(\frac{2\pi^2}{3} \mathcal{V}_2^{6/7} + \mathcal{V}_2^{-9/14} E_{3/2}^{sl_2}(\tau, \bar{\tau}) \right) t_8 t_8 R^4$$

$$\mathcal{V}_2 = e^U$$

$$\Lambda_{QG} = \left(\frac{2\pi^2}{3} \mathcal{V}_2^{6/7} + \mathcal{V}_2^{-9/14} E_{3/2}^{sl_2}(\tau) \right)^{-1/6}$$

Diferent limits: 11d M-th, 10d Type II
and string limis recovered



The case of 4d : IIA on a CY

$$S_{\mathcal{R}^2} = \frac{1}{2\kappa_4^2} \int d^d x \sqrt{-g} \mathcal{F}_{4d} \frac{\mathcal{R}^2}{M_{\text{Pl};4}^2}$$

v. d. Heisteeg, Vafa, Wiesner, Wu 2022-2023

Vec – moduli dependence of \mathcal{F}_{4d} from topological string computation

for large overall Kahler moduli $s \rightarrow \infty$

$$\mathcal{F}_{4d} \simeq \frac{2\pi c_2}{12} s - \beta \log(s) + \tilde{N}_0 + \mathcal{O}(s^{-1})$$

linear

c_2 = integrated 2nd Chern class

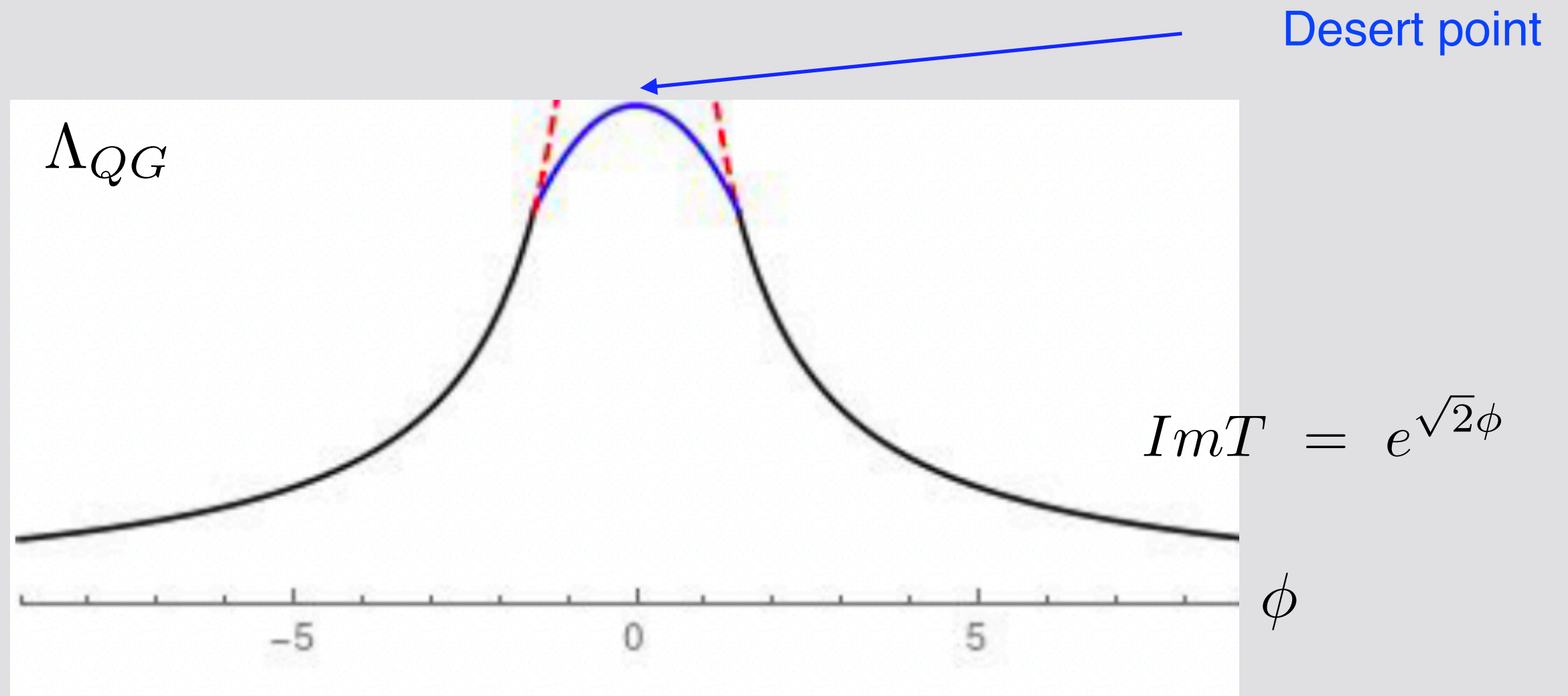
$$\longrightarrow \Lambda_{QG} \simeq \frac{M_{p,4}}{\mathcal{F}_{4d}^{1/2}} \simeq \frac{M_{p,4}}{s^{1/2}}$$

- Example: **Enriques CY, $(K3 \times T^2)/Z_2$**

$$\mathcal{F} = -6 \log(2t |\eta(T)|^4) + \tilde{N}_0$$

Torus $SL(2, \mathbf{Z})$ modular invariant

Qualitative shape of the Species Scale



maximum $\Lambda_{QG} \longrightarrow$ minimum number of states $\sim \mathcal{F}$

‘Desert points’

Laplacians and the species scale

Aoufia, Castellano, L. J., 2025

$$S_{\text{BPS}} = \frac{1}{2\kappa_d^2} \int d^d x \sqrt{-g} \mathcal{F}_n^{(d)}(\phi^i) \frac{\mathcal{R}^{2n}}{M_{\text{Pl};d}^{4n-2}}, \quad n = 1, 2$$

- It has been found that **Wilson coefficients for 32, 16 and 8 SUSY's obey a Laplace-like equation** of the form

$$\boxed{\mathcal{D}_{\mathcal{M}}^2 \mathcal{F}_n^{(d)} = \eta_d \mathcal{F}_n^{(d)}} \quad \mathcal{D}_{\mathcal{M}}^2 = \Delta_{\mathcal{M}} \text{ (modulo subtleties)}$$

- It was already known for **maximal sugra with**: $\eta_d = \frac{3}{d-2}(11-d)(d-8)$

M.B. Green et al. 2010

- We found such Laplacian equations:

i) Related to some known Swampland constraints

ii) Also appear with less, 16, 8 SUSY's

E.g. 10d Type IIB

Acufia, Castellano, L. J., 2025

$$\Delta \mathcal{F}(\tau, \bar{\tau}) = \frac{3}{4} \mathcal{F}(\tau, \bar{\tau})$$

- Ansatz: $\mathcal{F} = \tau_2^\lambda$ $\Delta = \tau_2^2 \partial_{\tau_2}^2$

$$\lambda(\lambda - 1) = \frac{3}{4} \longrightarrow \lambda_{1,2} = 3/2, -1/2$$

- Matches with $E_{3/2}$ expansion

$$E_{3/2}^{sl_2} = 2\zeta(3)\tau_2^{3/2} + 4\zeta(2)\tau_2^{-1/2} + \mathcal{O}(e^{-2\pi\tau_2})$$

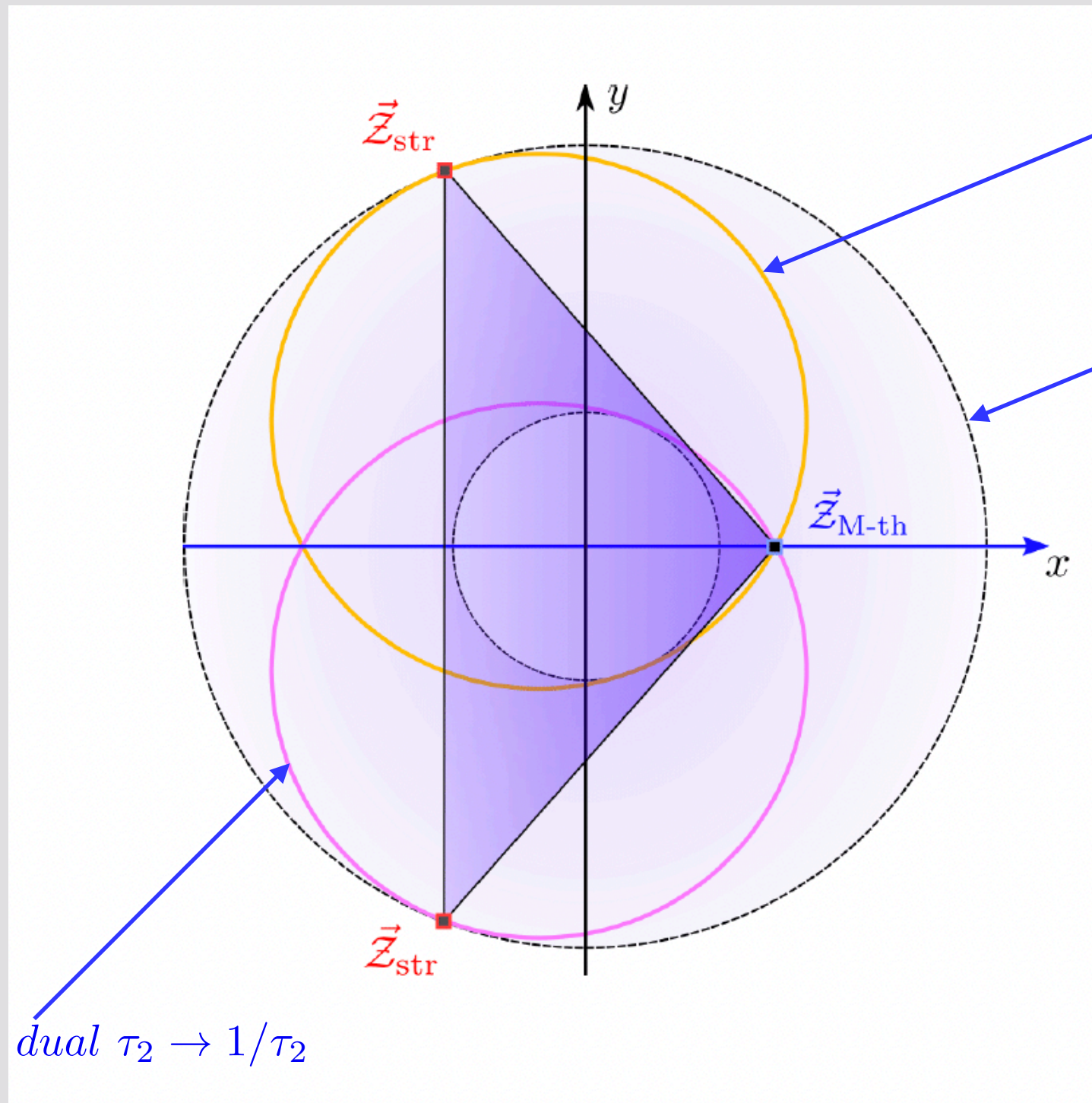
- And predicts for large dilaton

$$\Lambda_{QG} \simeq \frac{M_{p10}}{\mathcal{F}^{1/6}} \simeq \frac{M_{p10}}{\tau_2^4} \sim M_{string}$$

- In canonical basis yields the **exponential decay of the distance conjecture**

$$\mathcal{F}(U, \tilde{\tau}) \sim e^{Ux + \tilde{\tau}y}$$

Laplace \longrightarrow circle constraint on rates



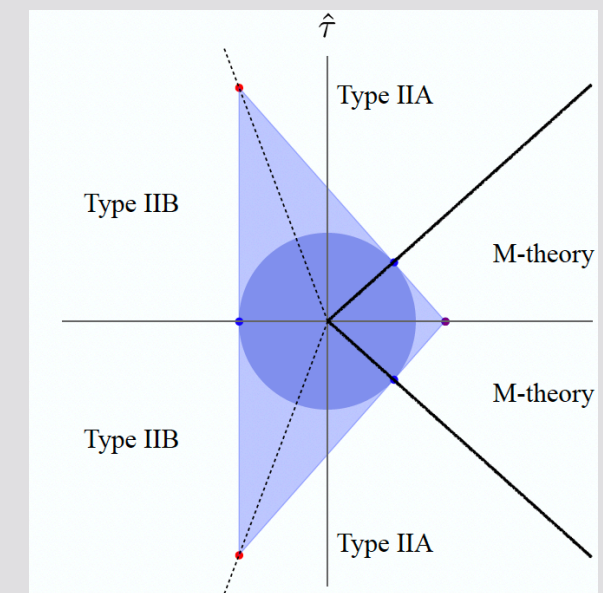
Laplace condition
for decay rates

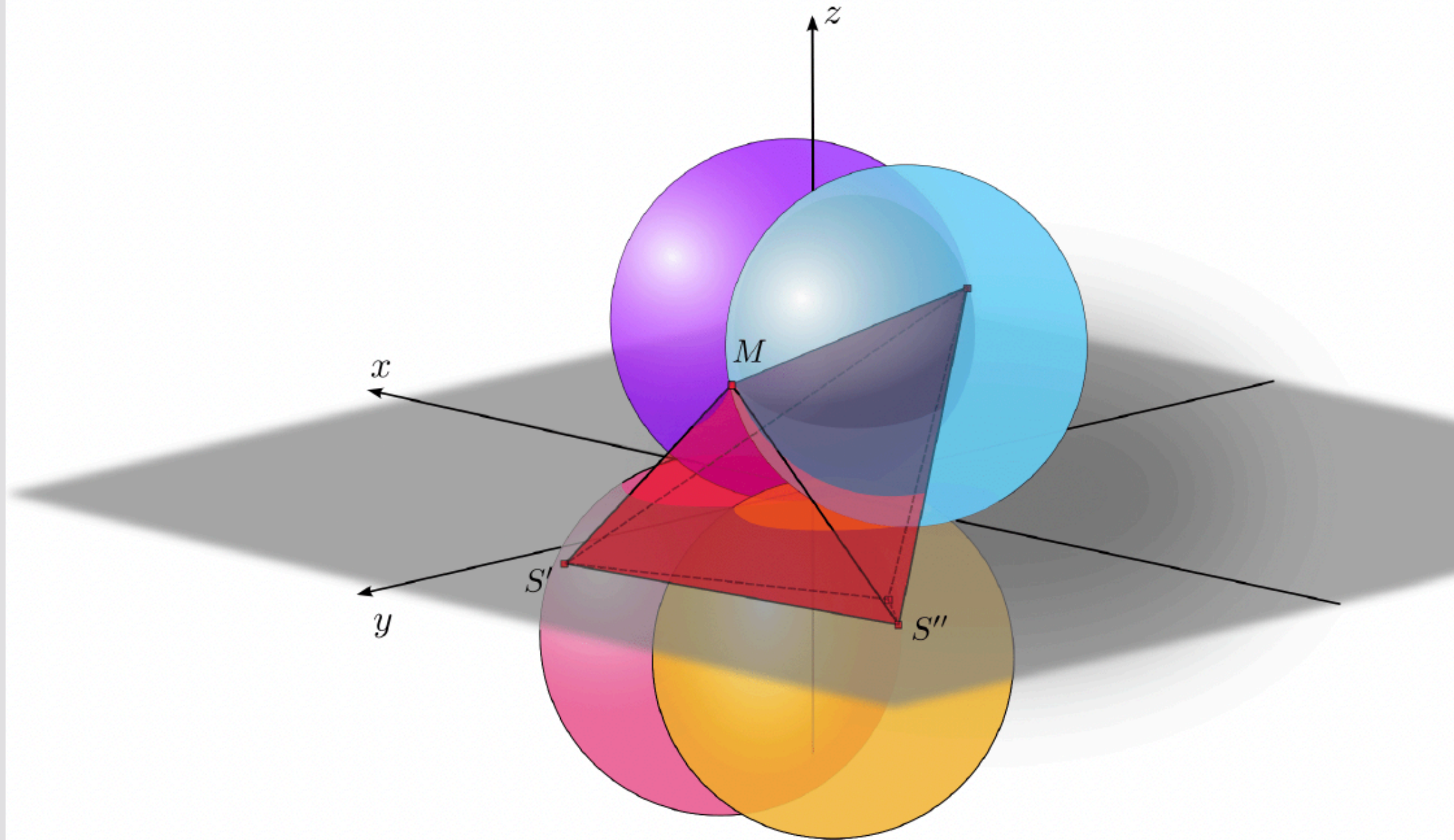
$$\text{circle } \lambda = \frac{1}{\sqrt{d-2}}$$

Predicts Swampland Bound we mentioned

dual $\tau_2 \rightarrow 1/\tau_2$

Species Scale convex hull





Eight dimensions

Laplace conditions on decay rates are spherical surfaces

Laplacian for 8 supercharges

Aoufia, Castellano, L. J., 2025

- **d=6** $\mathcal{N} = (1, 0)$ *sugra* Moduli space spanned by scalars in tensor multiplets

It is a slice in $SO(1, n_T)/SO(n_T)$

$$\Delta_{\mathcal{M}} \mathcal{F} = n_T \mathcal{F} \quad n_T = \text{number of tensors}$$

- **d=5** M-th on a CY, Laplacian more subtle

$$\mathcal{D}^2 \mathcal{F}_5 = \frac{1}{6} (h^{1,1} - 1) \mathcal{F}_5$$

- **d=4** e.g. Type IIA on a CY. One has in vector moduli space
(up to IR threshold corrections)

$\Delta_{\mathcal{M}} \mathcal{F} = 0$

 (using axion independence at large moduli)

Implies linear large modulus behaviour for any CY

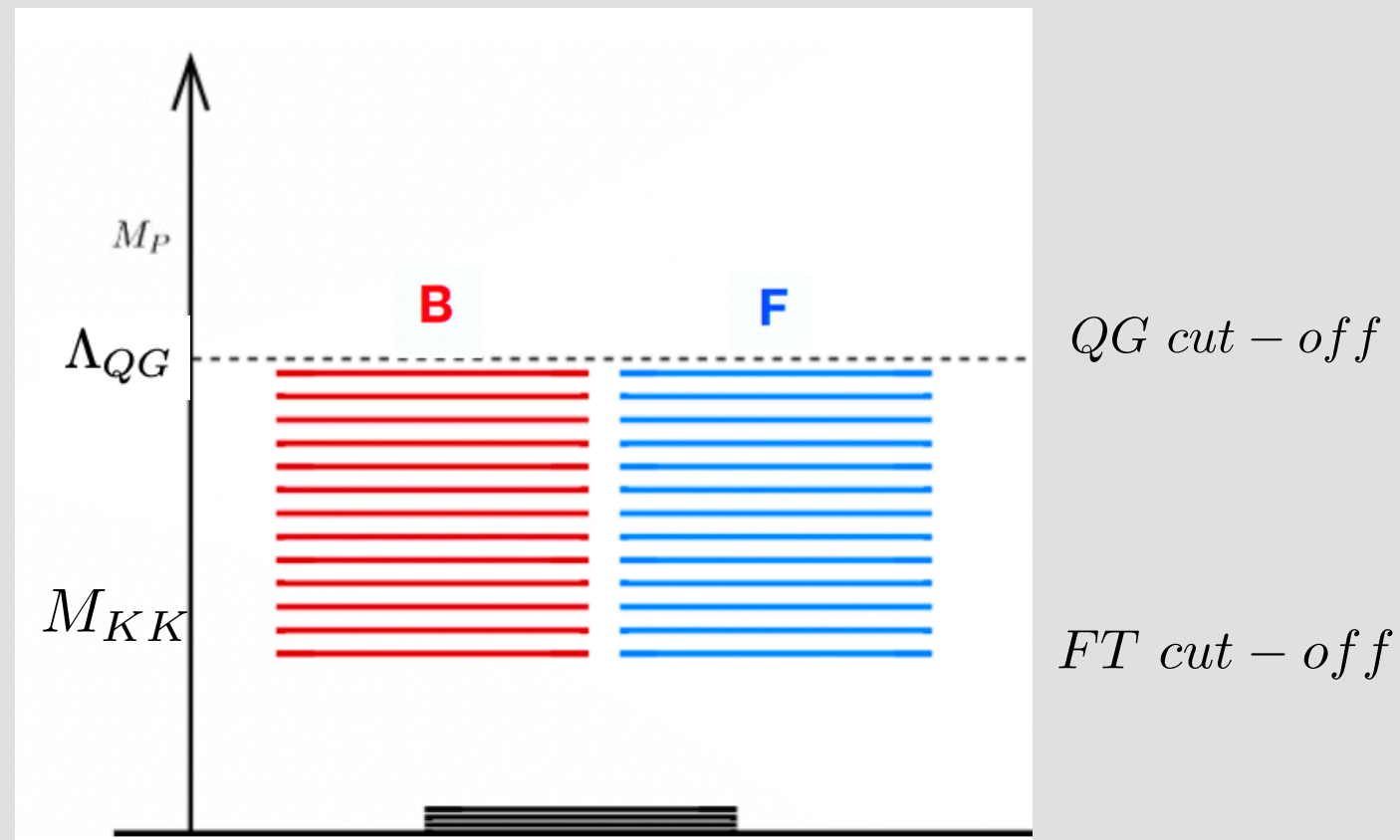
$$\mathcal{F}(z, \bar{z}) \sim \text{Im} z + \dots \quad \Lambda_{QG} \sim \mathcal{F}^{-1/2} \sim \frac{1}{\sqrt{\text{Im} z}}$$

Why this Laplace equation?

The Species Scale as an EFT cut-off

- One may consider the species scale as a (field-dependent) cut-off in certain EFT computations

Will consider $\mathcal{N} = 1, 2$ 4d theories



- In certain cases (like vacuum energy) the relevant cut-off is Λ_{QG}
 - We will consider contributions to the vacuum energy once SUSY is broken taking Λ_{QG} as the cut-off
- (See A. Herraes talk)

Vacuum energy in GKP models

- These are **N=1 4d 'no-scale'** IIB vacua, SUSY broken in Minkowski (at leading order)

- Two types of chiral fields:

Y_a , Z_i

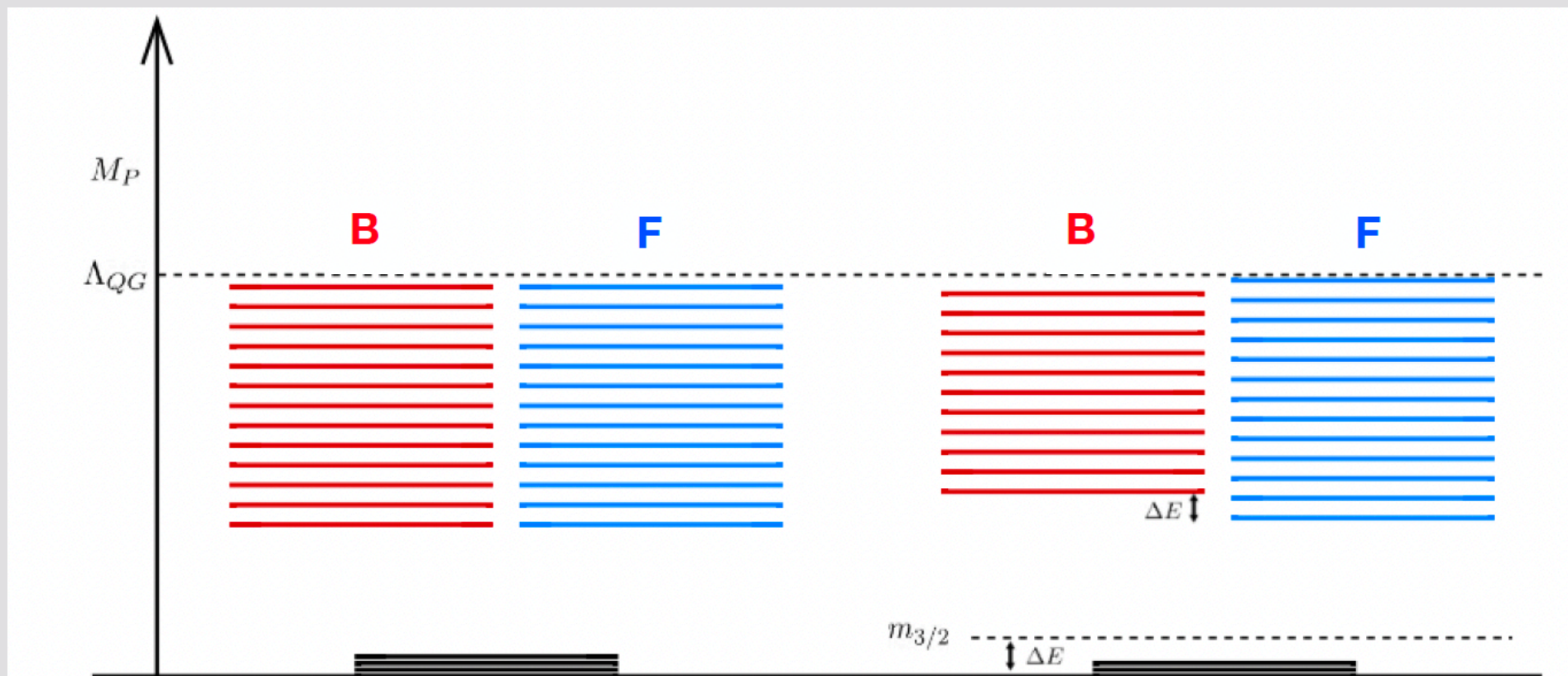
$W(Y_a) \neq 0$ with $D_a W = 0$

masses fixed by e.g. fluxes

massless 'no-scale moduli'

$$g_{i\bar{i}} |F^i|^2 = 3m_{3/2}^2 \longrightarrow V_0 = 0$$

- We would now consider the Y_a fixed and consider **one-loop corrections to the vacuum energy** depending on the no-scale Z_i
- This is 'sugra mediated' SUSY breaking



$$V_{total}^{eff} = \frac{1}{(8\pi)^2} \left(-\cancel{\text{Str} \mathcal{M}^0 \Lambda^4} + 2 \text{Str} \mathcal{M}^2 \Lambda^2 - 2 \text{Str} \mathcal{M}^4 \log \left(\frac{\Lambda}{\mathcal{M}} \right) \right)$$

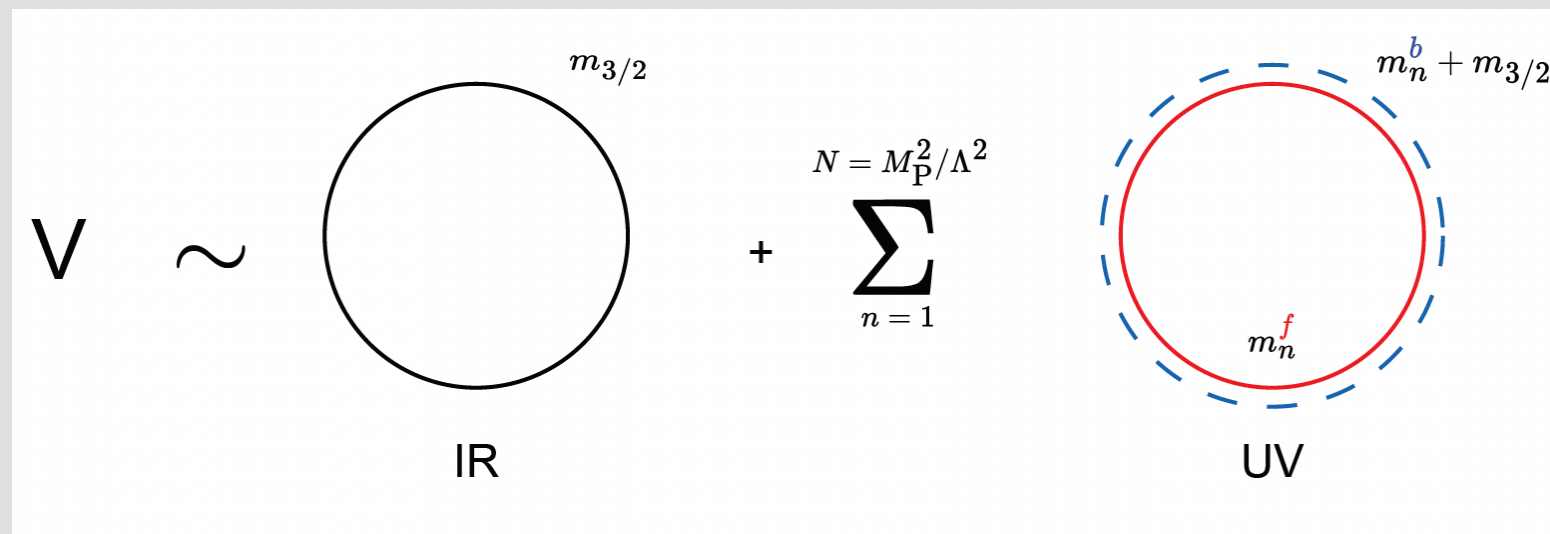
SUSY

subleading

$$\text{Str} \mathcal{M}^a = \sum_n (-1)^{2j_n} (2j_n + 1) (m_n)^a, \quad a = 0, 2, 4,$$

$$V_{1-loop}^{eff} \simeq \frac{2}{(8\pi)^2} (\text{Str} \mathcal{M}_{tower}^2 + \text{Str} \mathcal{M}_{light}^2) \Lambda^2$$

G.F. Casas, L.J., 2025



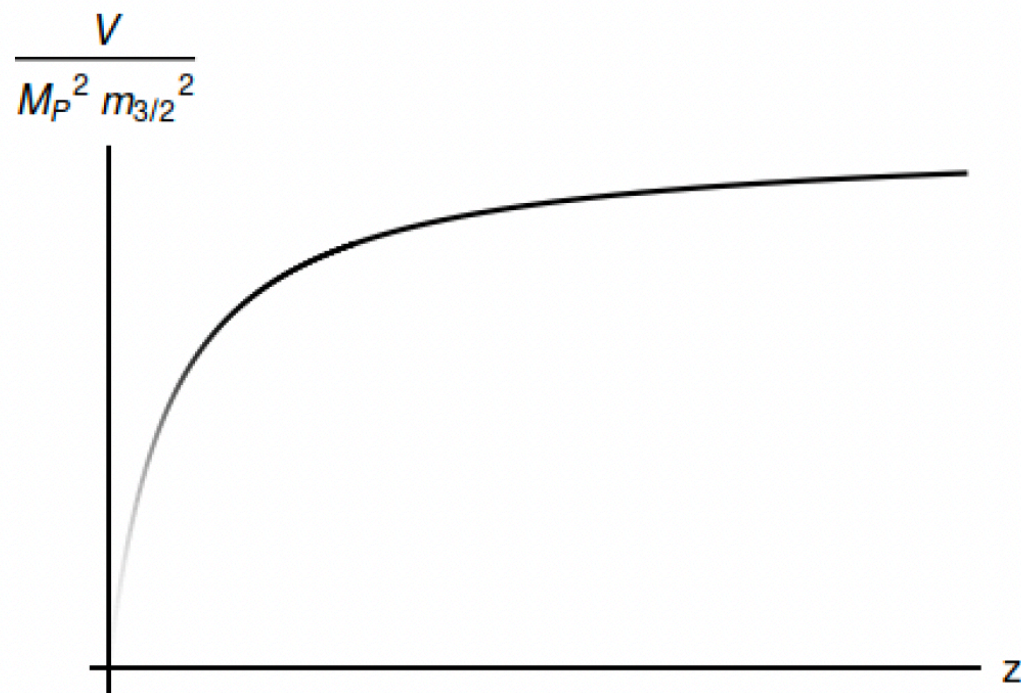
Λ – independent



$$\text{Str} \mathcal{M}_{\text{light}}^2 = -4m_{3/2}^2(N_0 + 2) \Lambda^2 \quad \text{Str} \mathcal{M}_{\text{tower}}^2 \Lambda^2 \simeq N m_{3/2}^2 \Lambda^2 \simeq m_{3/2}^2 M_p^2$$

Ferrara, v. Proeyen, 2016

$$V_{1\text{-loop}} \simeq \frac{m_{3/2}^2 M_P^2}{(8\pi)^2} \left(c - \frac{\eta}{N(z_i, \bar{z}_i)} \right) ; \quad \eta = 8(N_0 + 2)$$



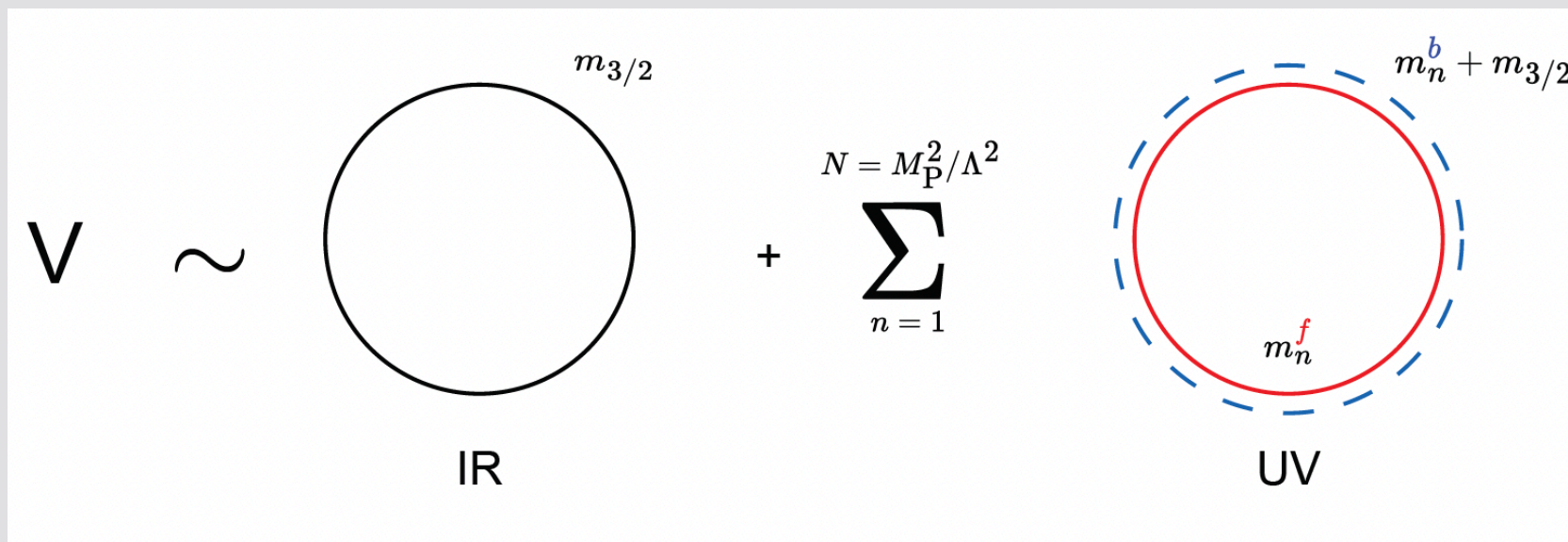
$$\Lambda^2 \simeq \frac{M_p^2}{N} \sim \frac{M_p^2}{\text{Im} z}$$

no-scale moduli
dynamically sent to

$$z \sim 1$$

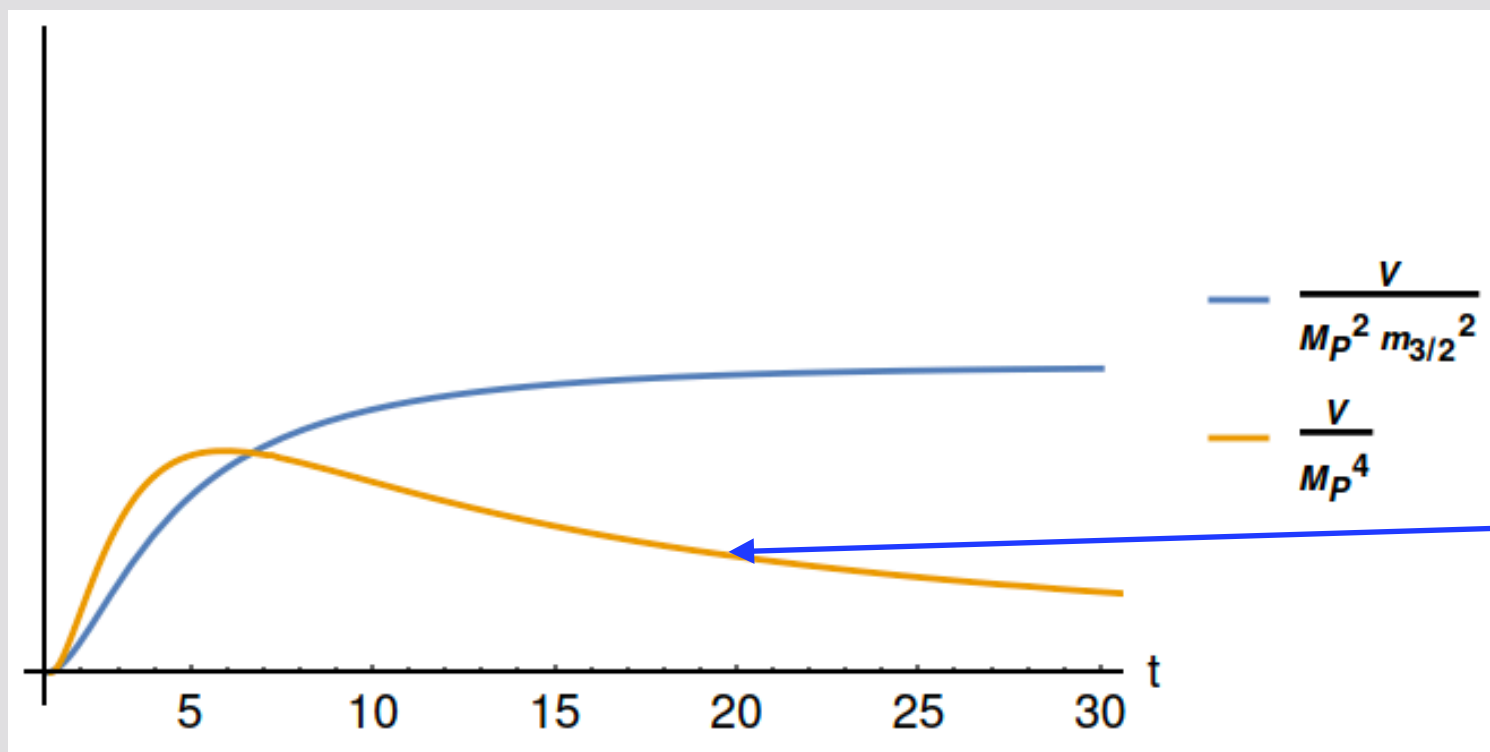
where N is minimal

G.F. Casas, L.G., 2025



$$Str \mathcal{M}_{light}^2 = -4m_{3/2}^2(N_0 + 2) \Lambda^2 \quad Str \mathcal{M}_{tower}^2 \Lambda^2 \simeq N m_{3/2}^2 \Lambda^2 \simeq m_{3/2}^2 M_p^2$$

$$V_{1-loop} \simeq \frac{m_{3/2}^2 M_P^2}{(8\pi)^2} \left(c - \frac{\eta}{N(z_i, \bar{z}_i)} \right) ; \quad \eta = 8(N_0 + 2)$$



In no-scale models
the gravitino
decreases like

$$m_{3/2}^2 \simeq \frac{|W_0|^2}{t^\alpha}$$

as expected in QG

G.F. Casas, L.J., 2025

The scalar potential and the Species Scale

- One can obtain a more general expression for the scalar potential in terms of the Species Scale
- One computes the one loop correction to the metric $\delta g_{i\bar{i}}$

As in 'emergence' computations

$$\delta g_{i\bar{i}} \sim \sum_{n=1}^{N = M_P^2/\Lambda^2} z_i \times \bar{z}_{\bar{i}} \quad m_n^2 \simeq \left(\frac{n}{N}\right)^{2/p} \Lambda^2$$

Grimm, Palti, Valenzuela, 2018

Heidenreich et al. 2018

Castellano, Herraez, 2022

Blumenhagen, Cribiori, Gligovic,

Paraskevopoulou, 2023

(But 'strong emergence' not assumed)

$$\delta g_{i\bar{i}} \simeq \frac{1}{(8\pi)^2} \sum_n n^2 (\partial_i m_{0i}) (\partial_{\bar{i}} m_{0i}) \simeq \frac{M_p^2}{(8\pi)^2} \frac{(\partial_i m_{0i}) (\partial_{\bar{i}} m_{0i})}{m_{0i}^2} \simeq \frac{M_p^2}{(8\pi)^2} \frac{(\partial_i \Lambda) (\partial_{\bar{i}} \Lambda)}{\Lambda^2}$$

$$\text{recall } \Lambda \simeq m_0^{\frac{p}{d-2+p}}$$

$$Z_i = (\eta_i + iz_i) + \theta \tilde{z}_i + \theta^2 F_i$$

$$\delta \mathcal{L}_{kin} = \left[\delta g_{i\bar{i}} Z^i \bar{Z}^{\bar{i}} \right]_D \simeq \left[\frac{4M_P^2}{(8\pi)^2} \frac{(\partial_i \Lambda)(\partial_{\bar{i}} \Lambda)}{\Lambda^2} |Z^i \bar{Z}^{\bar{i}}| \right]_D$$

$$Z^i = \theta^2 F^i$$

$$g_{i\bar{i}} |F^i|^2 = 3m_{3/2}^2$$

$$V_{1-loop} \simeq \frac{m_{3/2}^2 M_p^2}{(8\pi)^2} g^{i\bar{i}} \frac{(\partial_i \Lambda)(\partial_{\bar{i}} \Lambda)}{\Lambda^2}$$

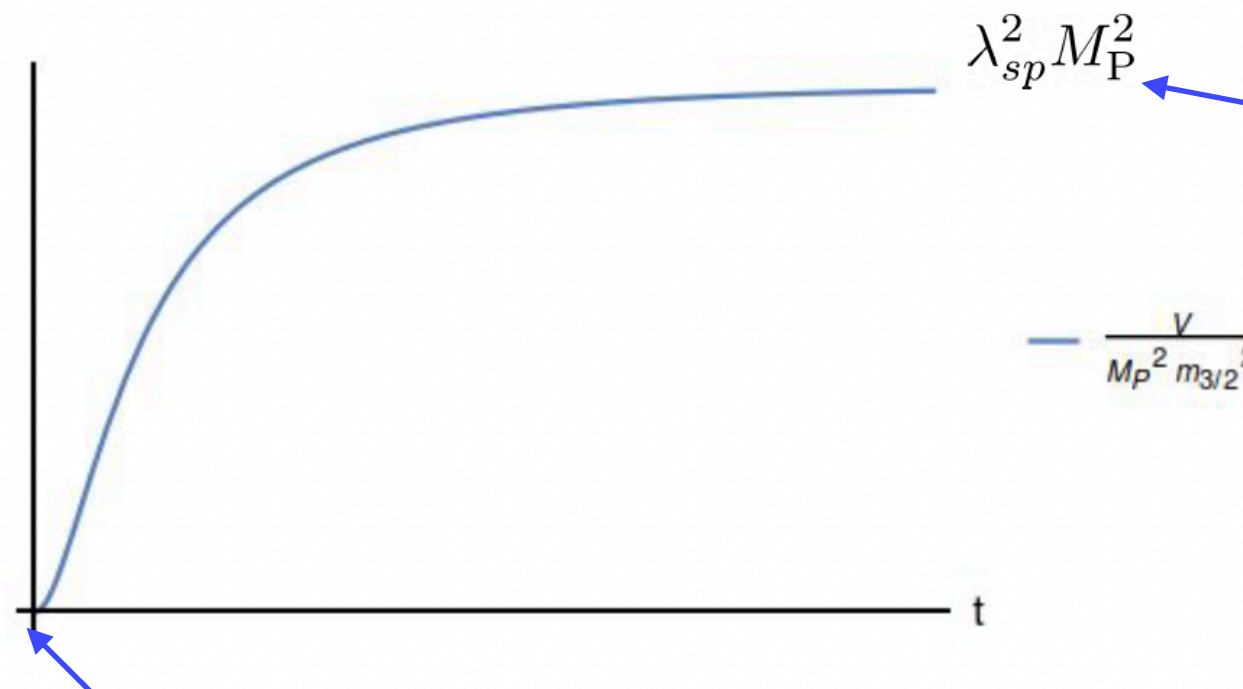
G.F. Casas, L.P., 2025

λ_{sp}^2

recall it goes to constant for large modulus

Same structure as previous computation
but gives extrapolation to the bulk

Local minima in Minkowski



$\partial_i \Lambda = 0$ at the desert points $z_i \sim \mathcal{O}(1)_{40}$

$$Z_i = (\eta_i + iz_i) + \theta \tilde{z}_i + \theta^2 F_i$$

$$\delta \mathcal{L}_{kin} = \left[\delta g_{i\bar{i}} Z^i \bar{Z}^{\bar{i}} \right]_D \simeq \left[\frac{4M_P^2}{(8\pi)^2} \frac{(\partial_i \Lambda)(\partial_{\bar{i}} \Lambda)}{\Lambda^2} |Z^i \bar{Z}^{\bar{i}}| \right]_D$$

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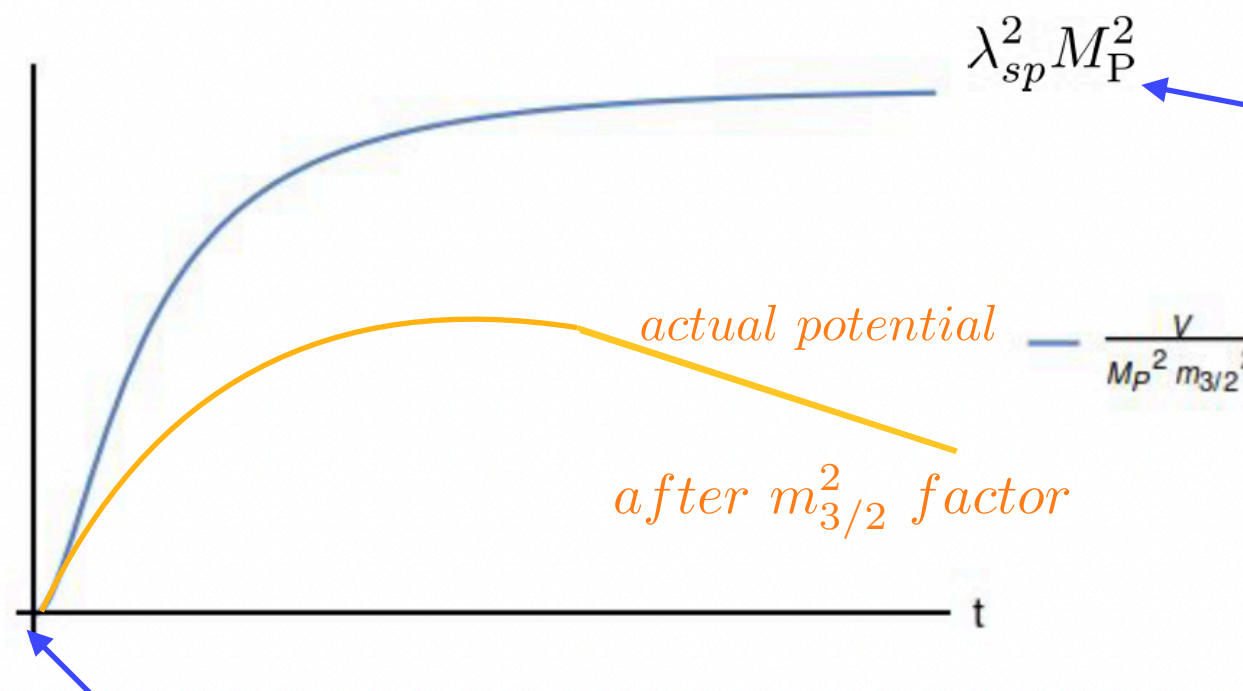
G.F. Casas, L.J., 2025

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Local minima in Minkowski



$\partial_i \Lambda = 0$ at the desert points $z_i \sim \mathcal{O}(1)$

Possible application to moduli fixing

- $N=1$, 4d Type IIA(B) orientifolds with fluxes
- Y_a moduli fixed by fluxes (e.g. c.s. fields in IIB)
- Z_i massless no-scale moduli fixed at one-loop as above.
Potential all moduli fixed.
- A practical issue is that we do not know in detail the structure of the field dependent Species Scale for general CY vacua, particularly in the bulk, except few cases
- Note these corrections are larger than those computed in the literature
- in e.g. the KKLT and LVS at large moduli
- Seems compatible with one-loop string computations by Berg, Haack, Kang, Sjörs in 2014: [hep-th/1407.0027](#)

Example: $Z_2 \times Z_2$ Type IIA toroidal orientifold

- Species scale depending on vector moduli in parent N=2 CY Known for T^2

$$\Lambda^2 = (-6 \log(\text{Im} T |\eta(T)|^4) + \tilde{N}_0)^{-1}$$

- Orientifold inherits same structure
- Example of flux superpotential (metric fluxes):

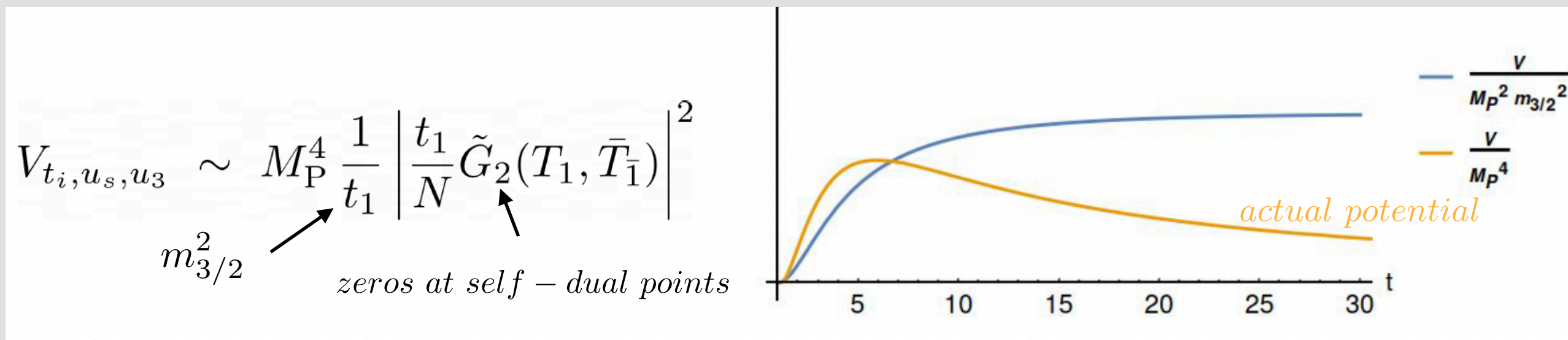
Villadoro, Zwirner, 2005

$$W = S(a_2 T_2 + a_3 T_3) + U_1(b_{21} T_2 + b_{31} T_3)$$

Camara, Font, L. J. 2005

T_1, U_2, U_3 are no – scale moduli

- t_1 gets a one-loop potential. Setting u_2, u_3 at their desert points



duality invariant actions : recent review

Cribiori, Lüst, 2024

Conclusions

- Species Scale is a **useful tool** to check asymptotic properties of string vacua
- It is defined **over all moduli space** of a given vacuum, and not only along asymptotic tower directions
- Explicit field dependent Species Scale functions **may be obtained in some cases** from higher dimensional protected operators
- Associated Wilson coefficients (related to number of species) verify a **Laplace-like equation. Formally somewhat analogous to Heat Equation.....**
- May be used as a **field dependent cut-off in the EFT**. Doing this for the one-loop potential of **no-scale moduli** in GKP-like of scenarios, leads to potentials with **minima at the ‘desert points’ and dS maxima**. Could be very relevant for the moduli fixing issue.
- **Full string computation** would be important to confirm this behaviour

*Thanks a lot Dieter for
your friendship and your
outstanding Physics !!*

