Star Formation Theory: Connecting the Local to the Extra-Galactic

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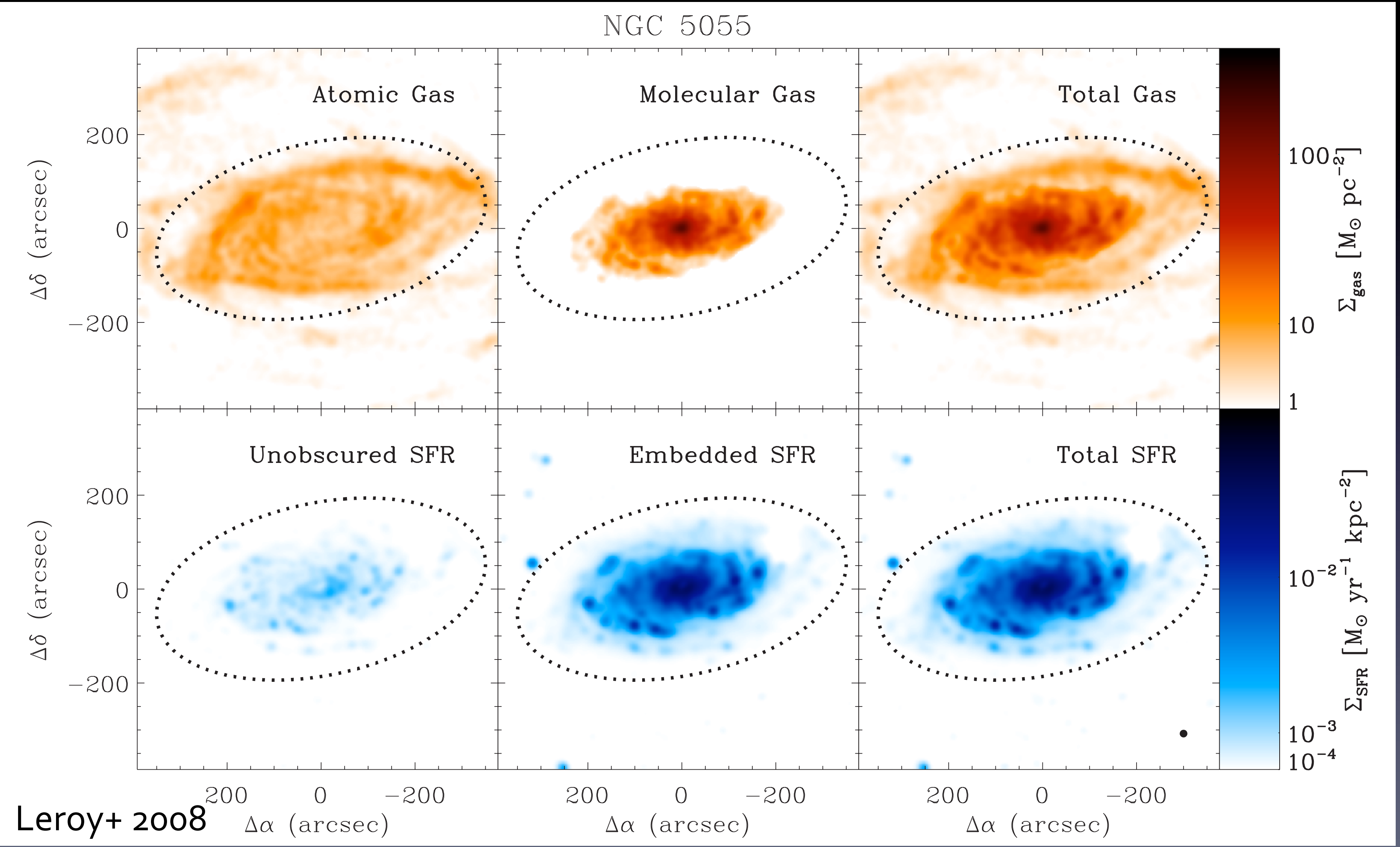
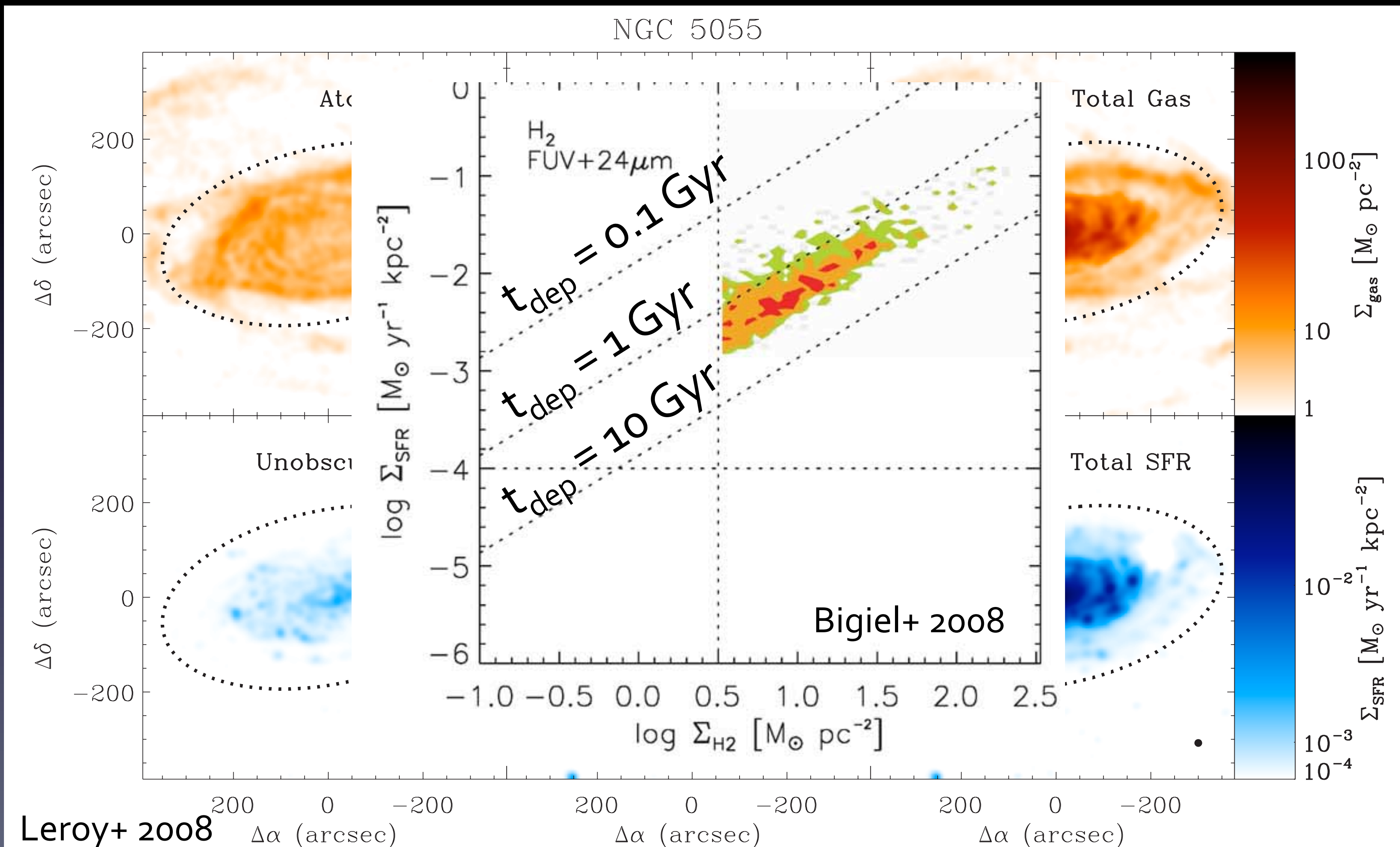
SF Laws on Galactic Scales

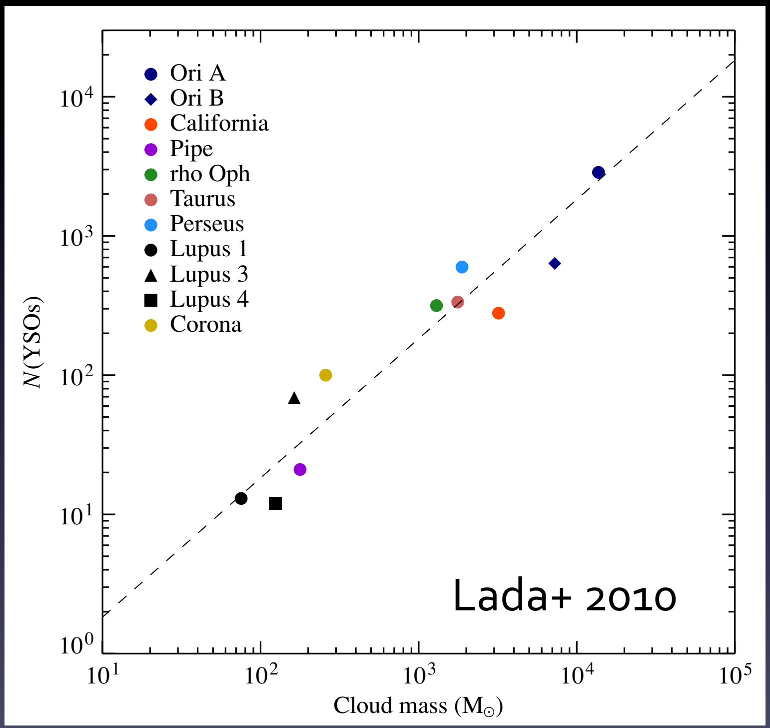


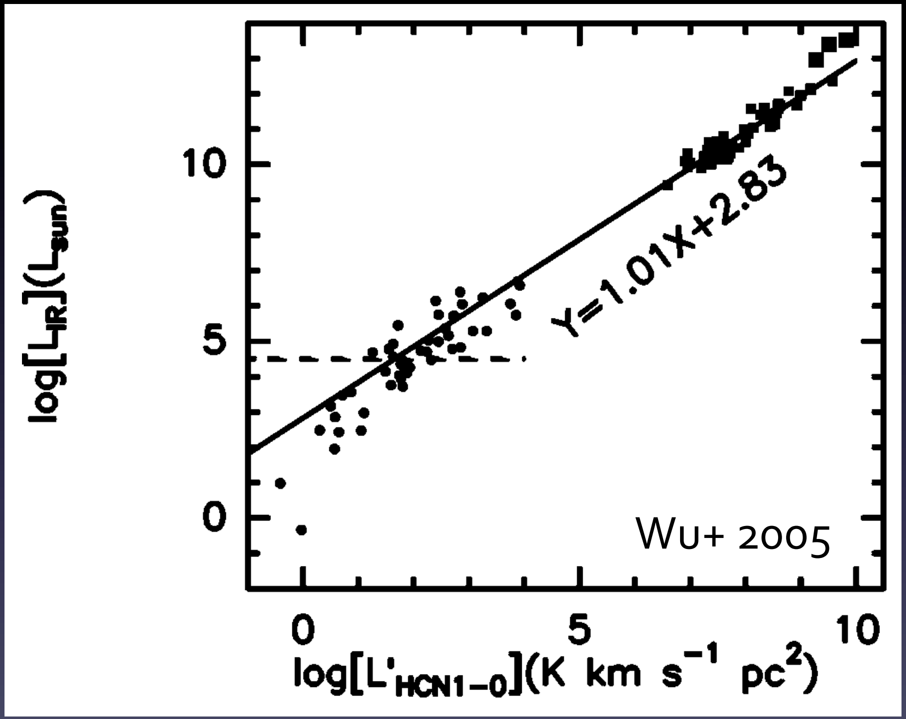
Leroy+ 2008

SF Laws on Galactic Scales

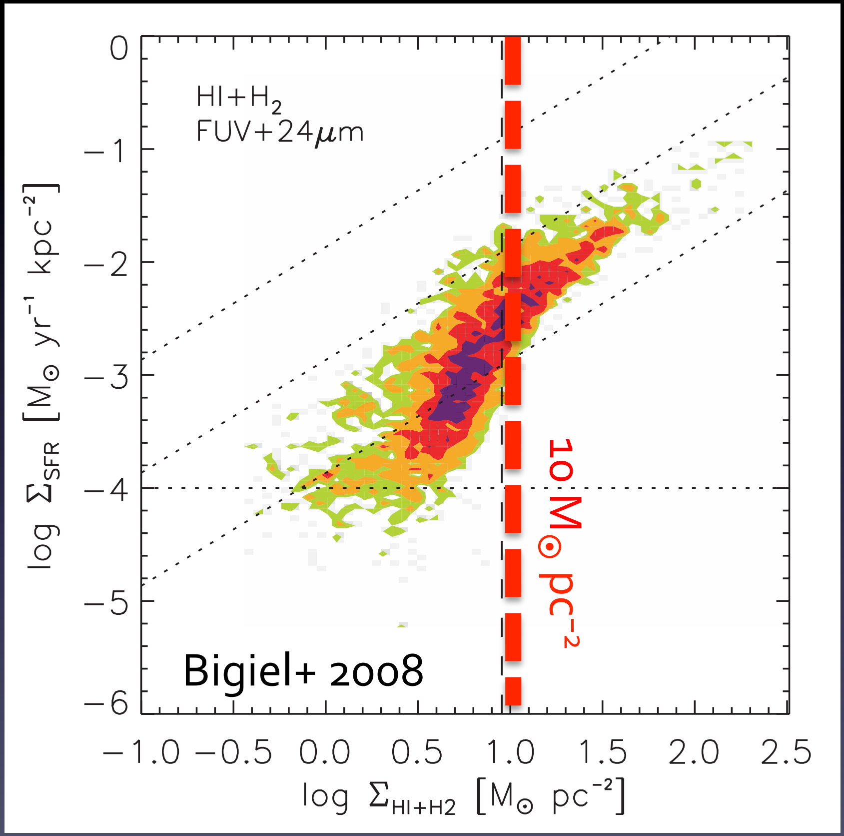


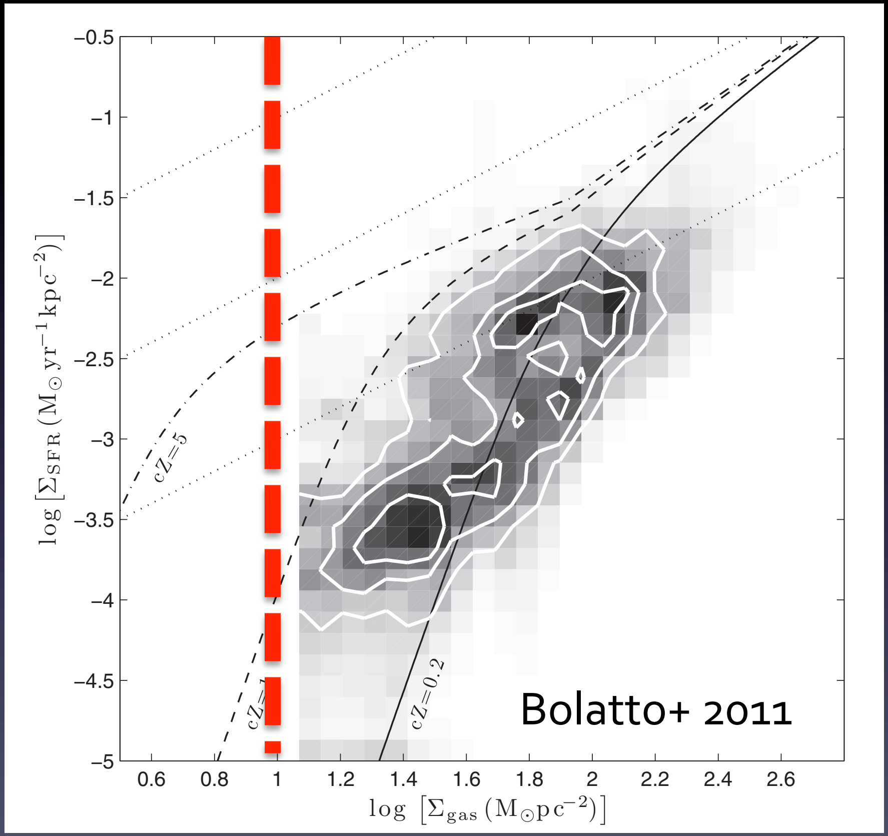
SF Laws on Sub-Galactic Scales



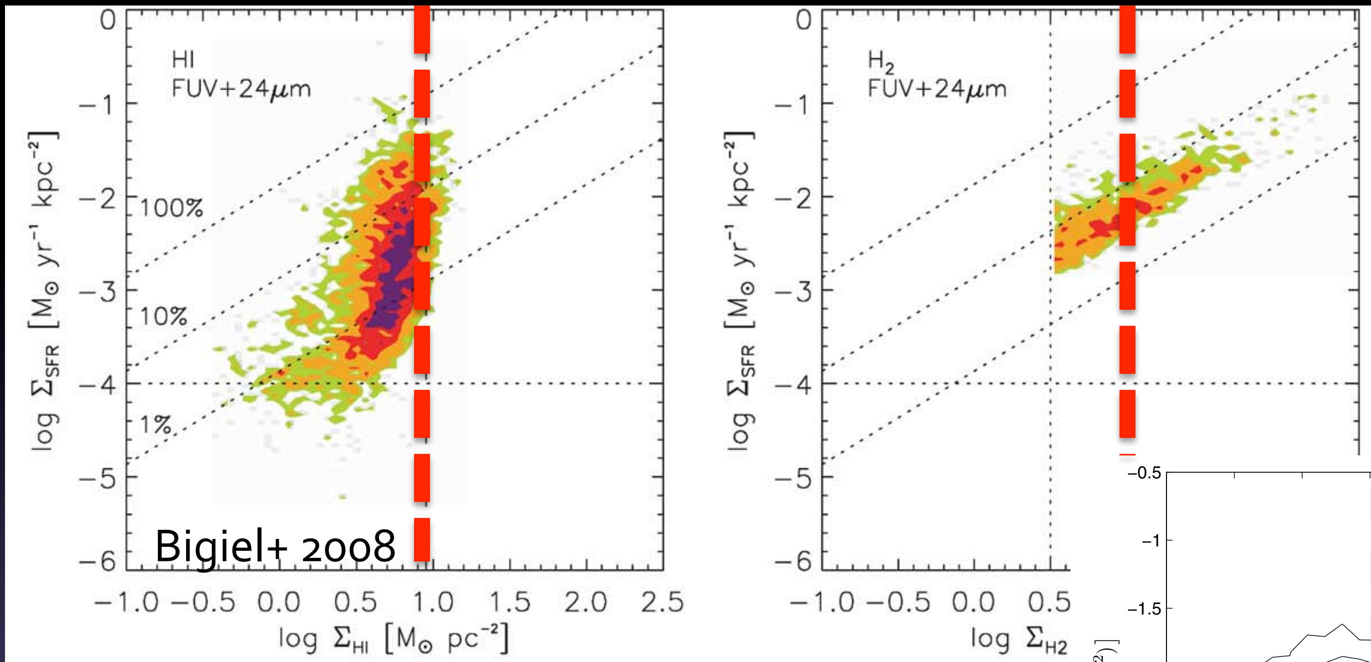


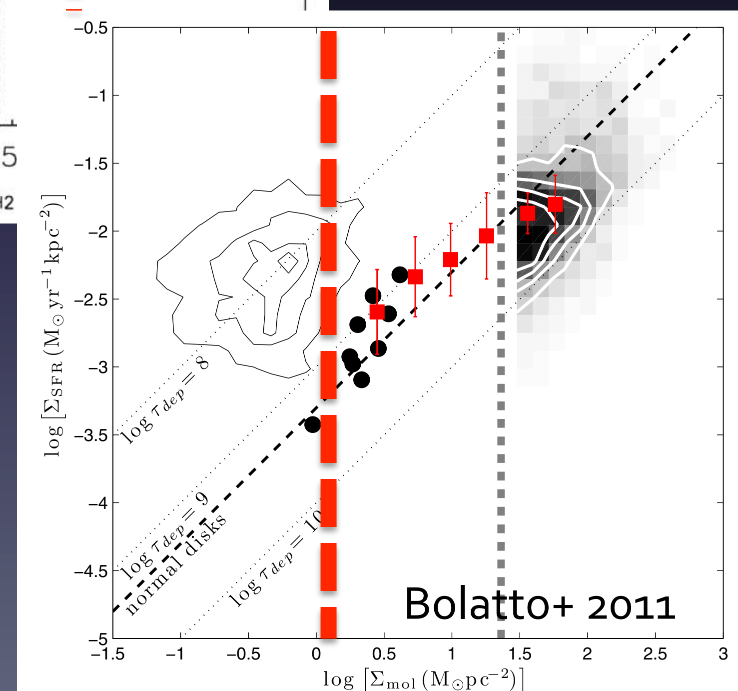
Metallicity-Dependence





Phase-Dependence

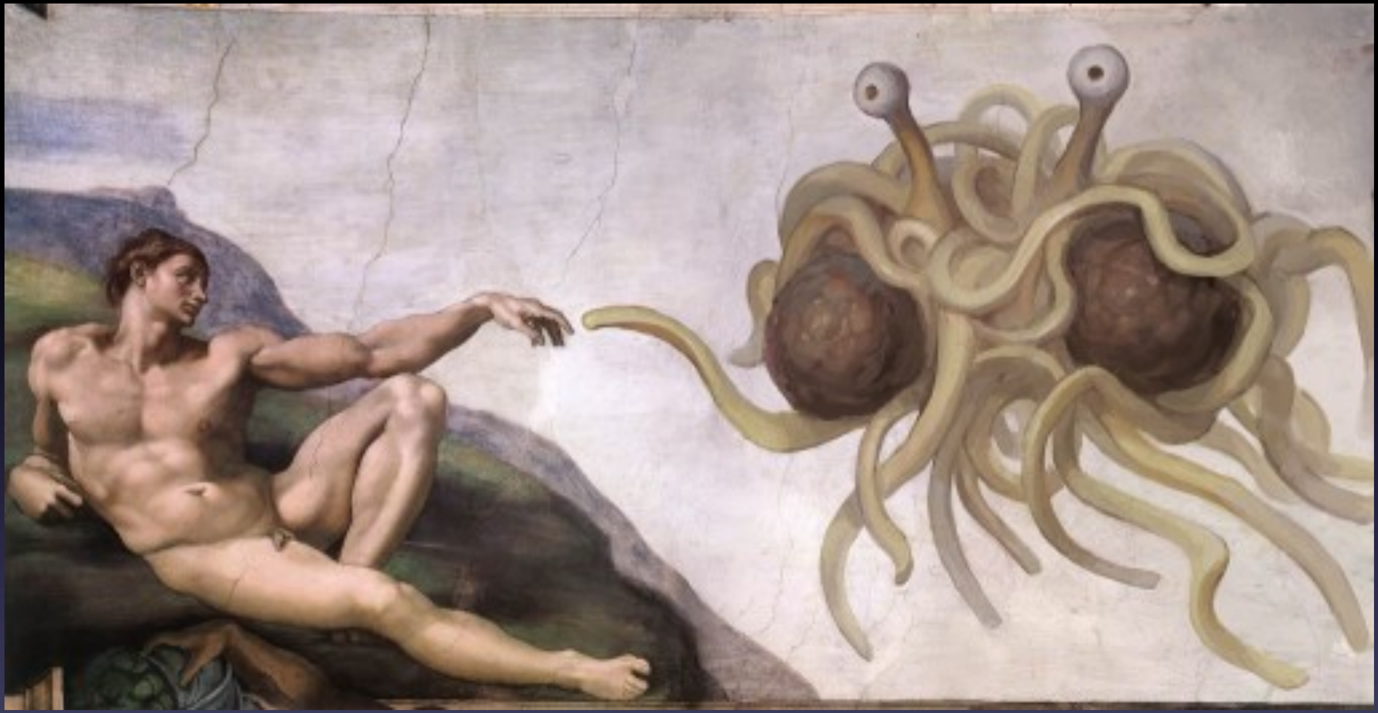




The Theoretical Challenge

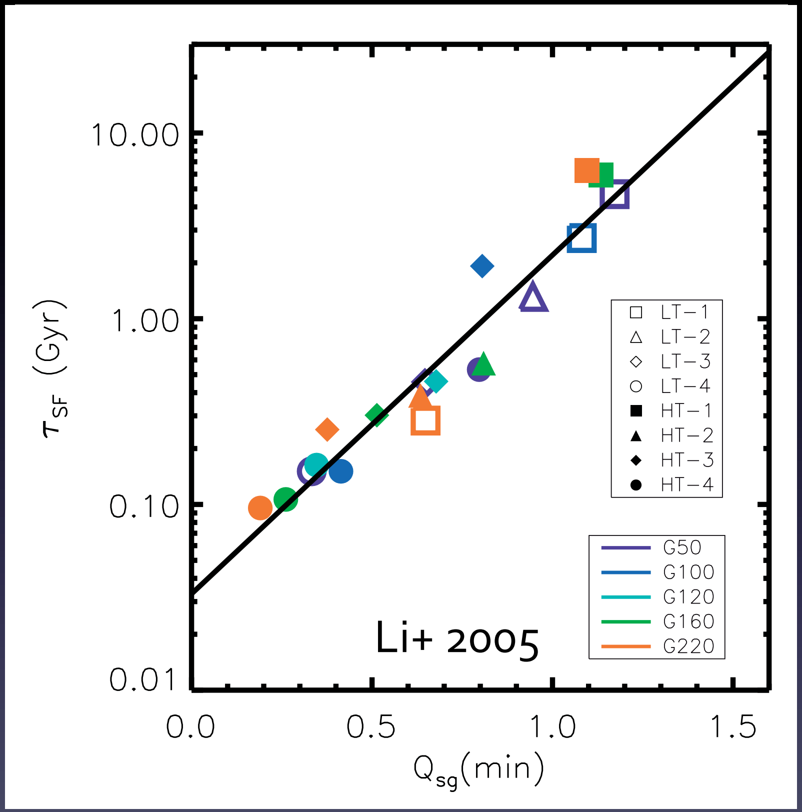
- Which laws are the fundamental ones, the local or the galactic-scale? Both? Neither?
- Can we unify the different sets of laws (at different scales, for different phases) within a single theoretical framework?

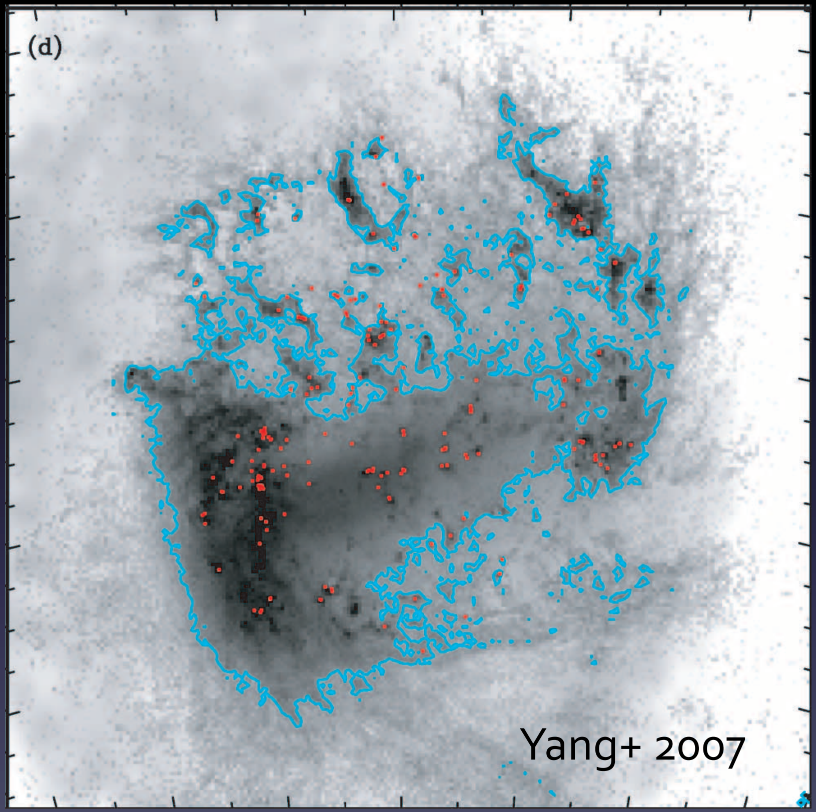
SF Laws: the Top-Down Approach



The idea in a nutshell: the SFR is set by *galactic-scale* regulation, independent of the local SF law. The local law is to be explained separately.

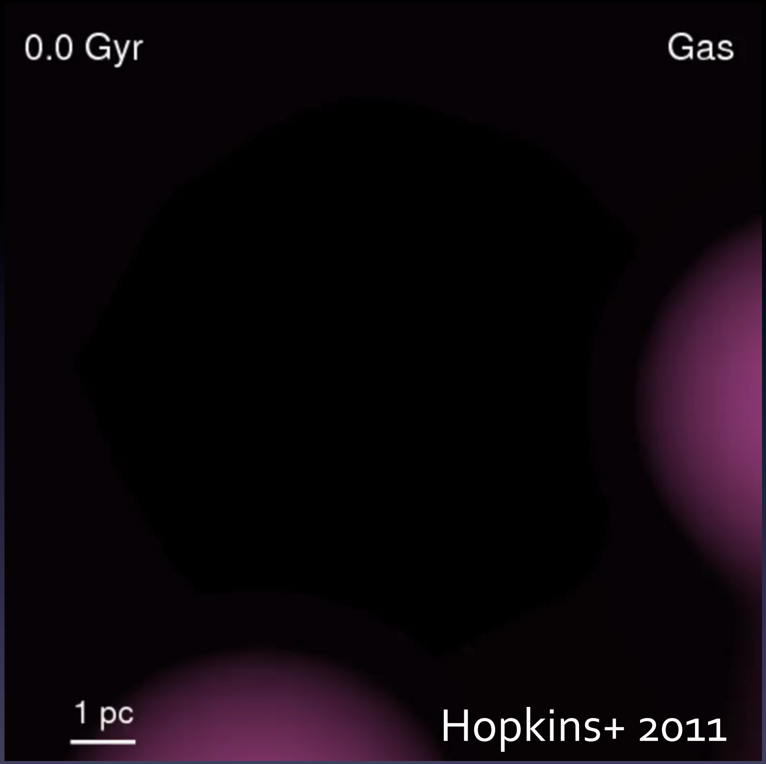
Q-Based Models

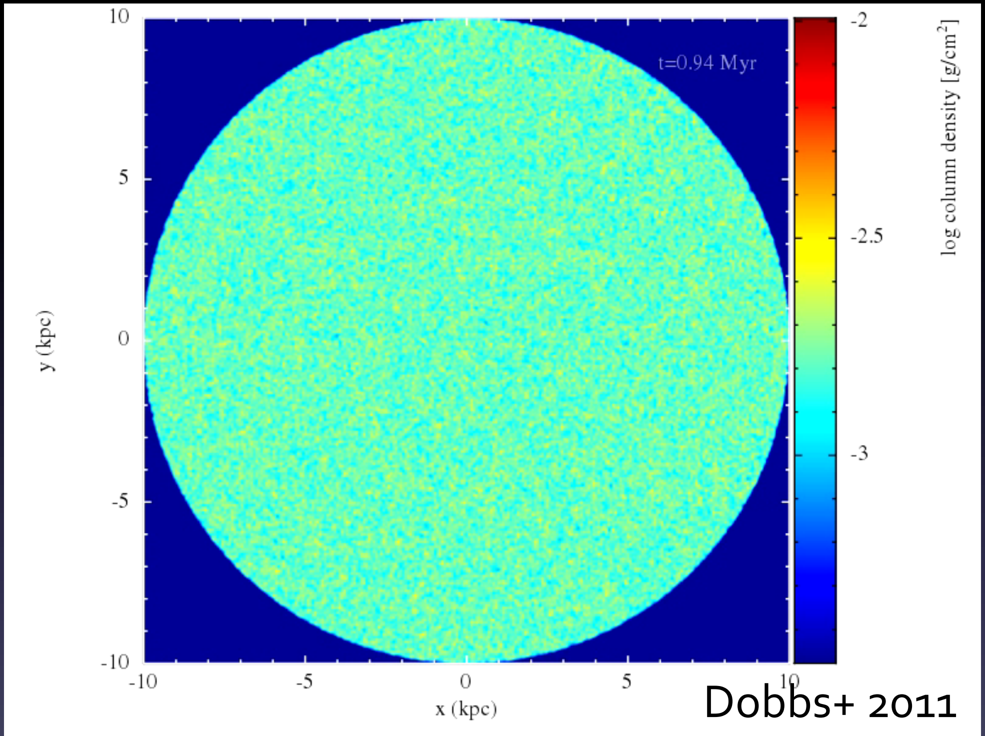




Basic idea: SFR is a function of Toomre Q in galaxy

Feedback Models

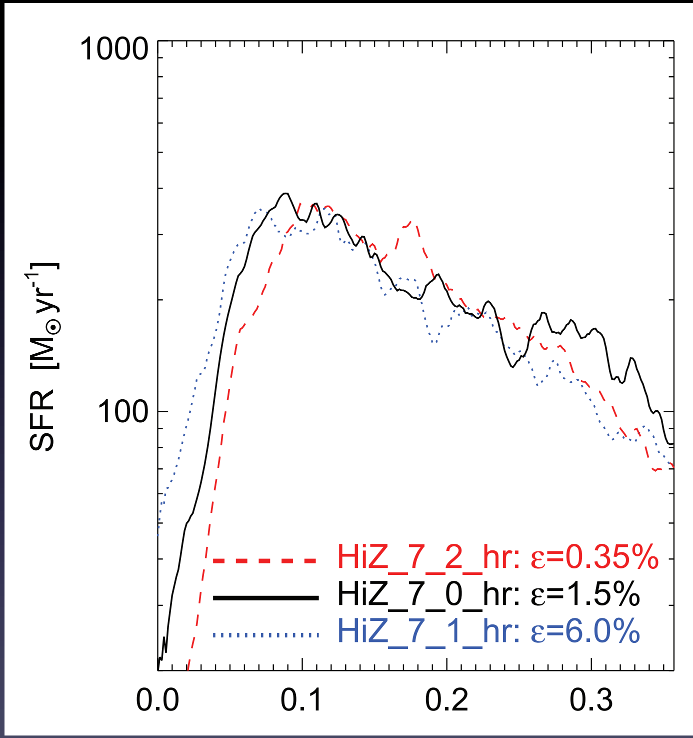


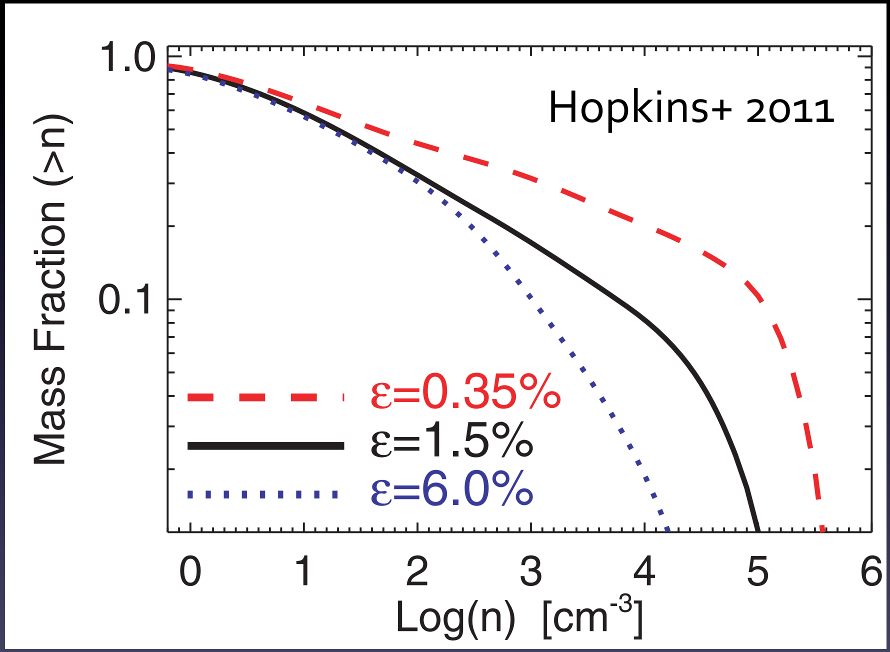


Also see Tasker (2011), E. Ostriker's talk

Mechanisms that regulate SF rate: supernovae, radiation pressure, ionized gas pressure, FUV heating

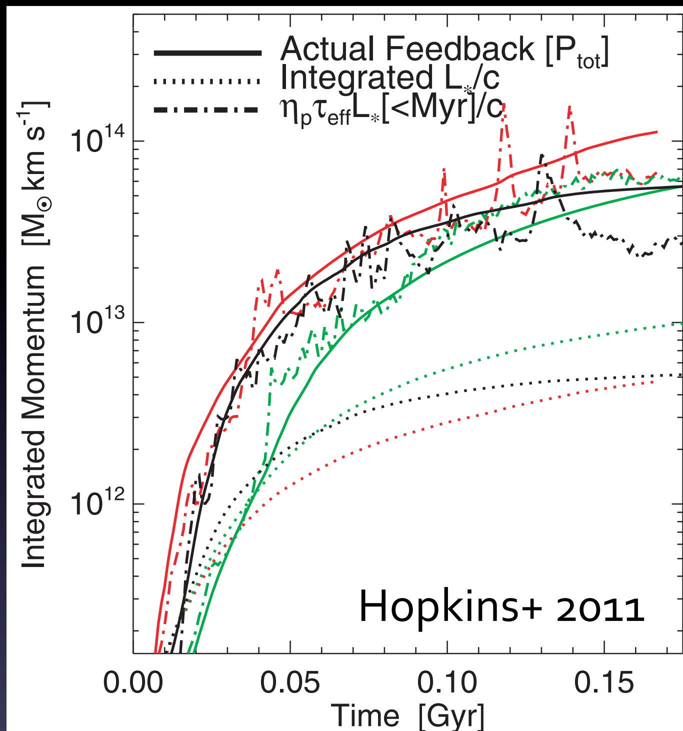
Characteristics of Top-Down Models





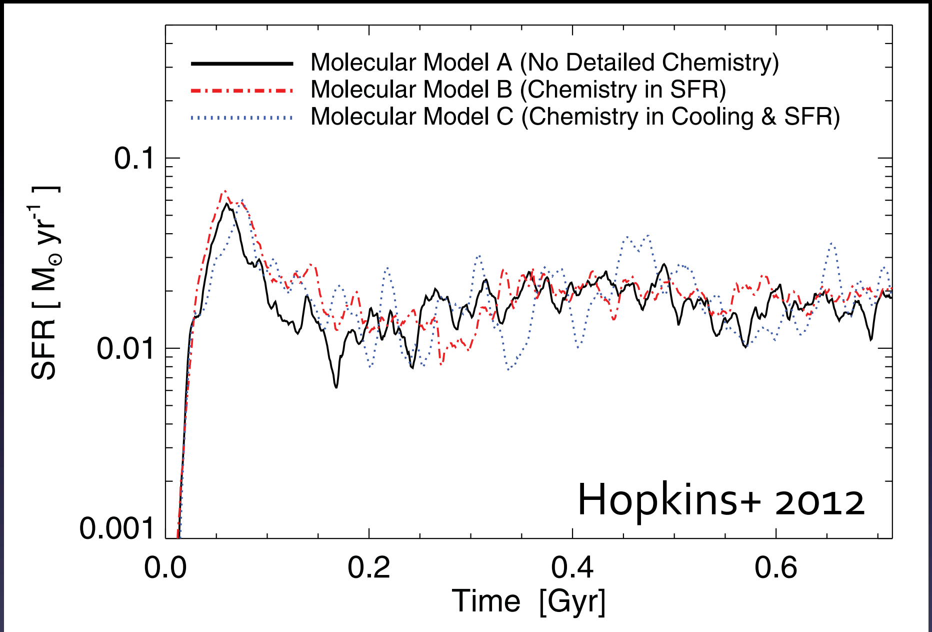
Changing the small-scale SF law does not change the SFR in the galaxy, but it does change the gas density distribution

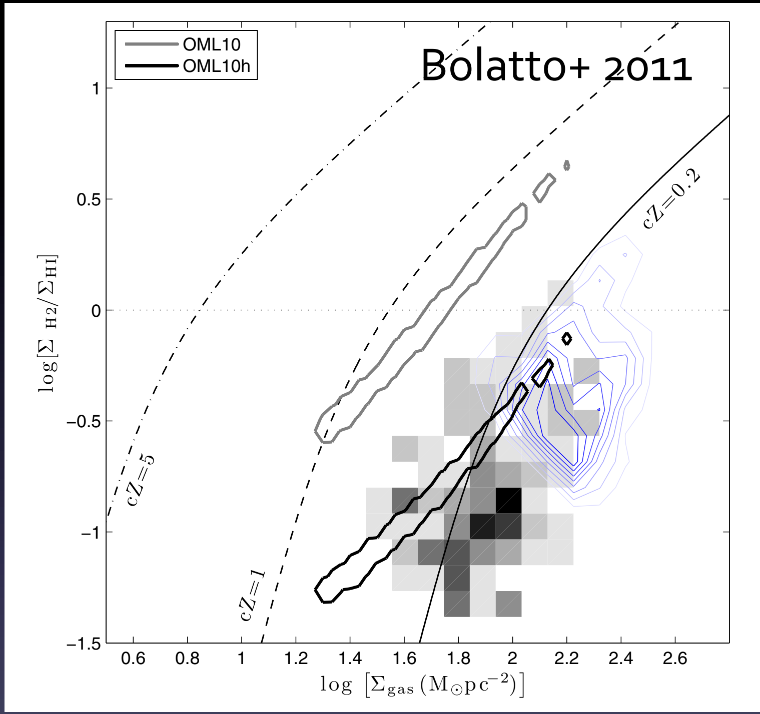
Top-Down Model Limitations



- Results depend strongly on subgrid feedback model (e.g. radiative trapping, SFE inside unresolved GMCs, UV heating per unit)
- No independent prediction for local SF laws

Metallicity in Top-Down Models



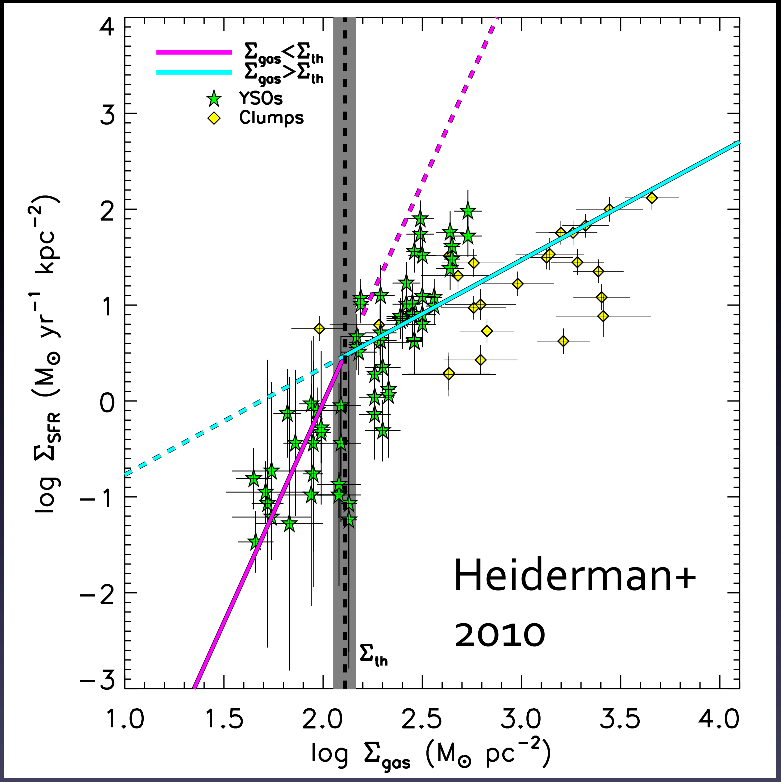


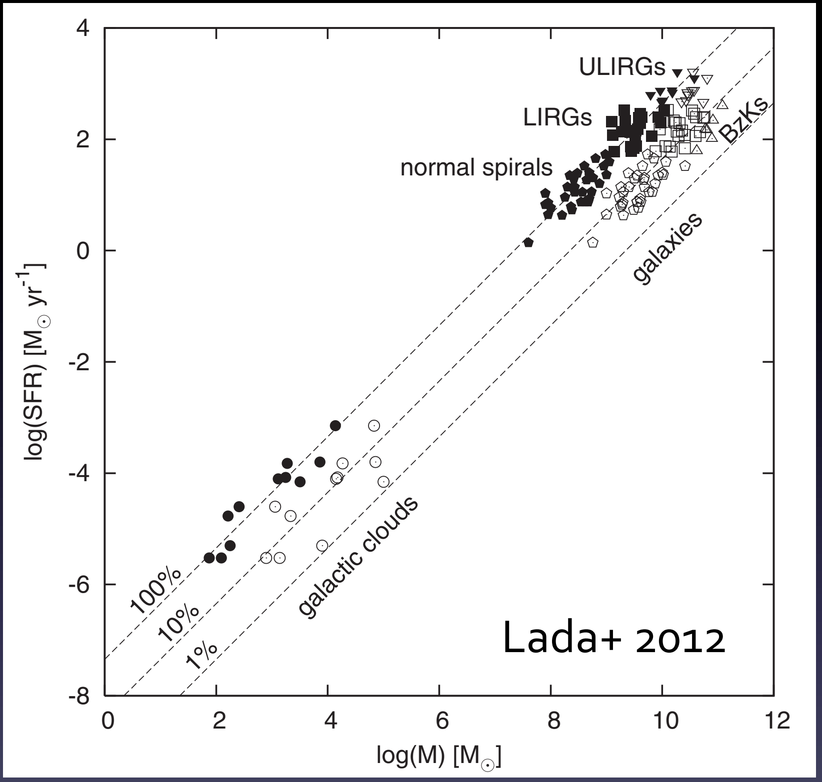
Top-down models most naturally predict SF laws that do not depend on metallicity or phase, strongly inconsistent with observations

SF Laws: the Bottom-Up Approach

The idea in a nutshell: the SFR is set by a *local* SF law, plus a galactic-scale distribution of gas.

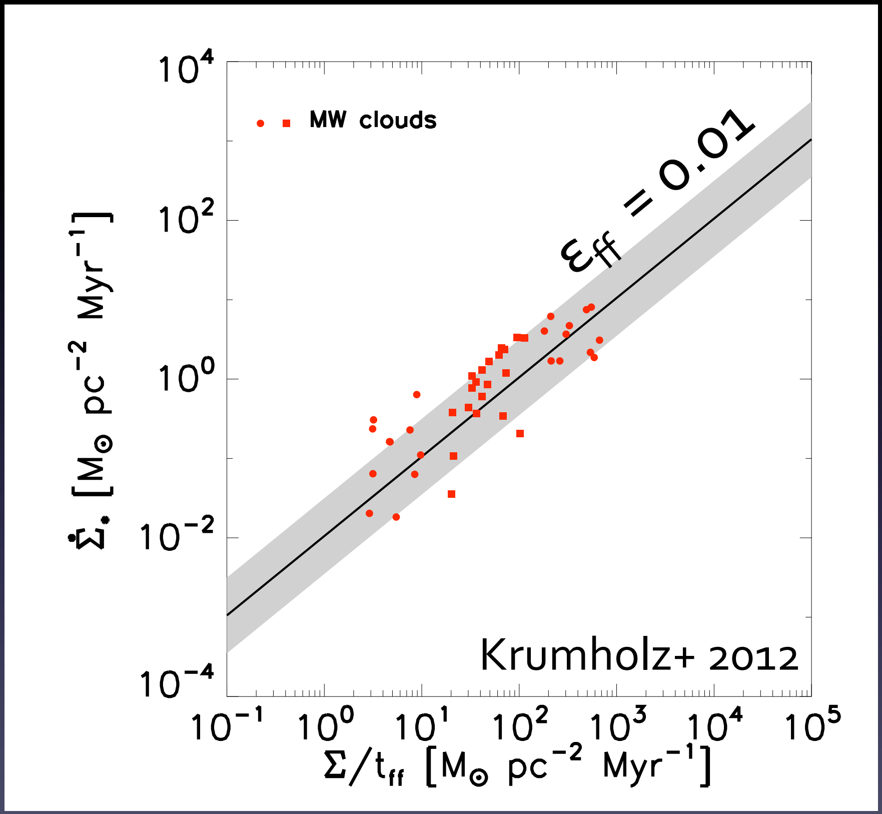
The "Dense Gas" Model

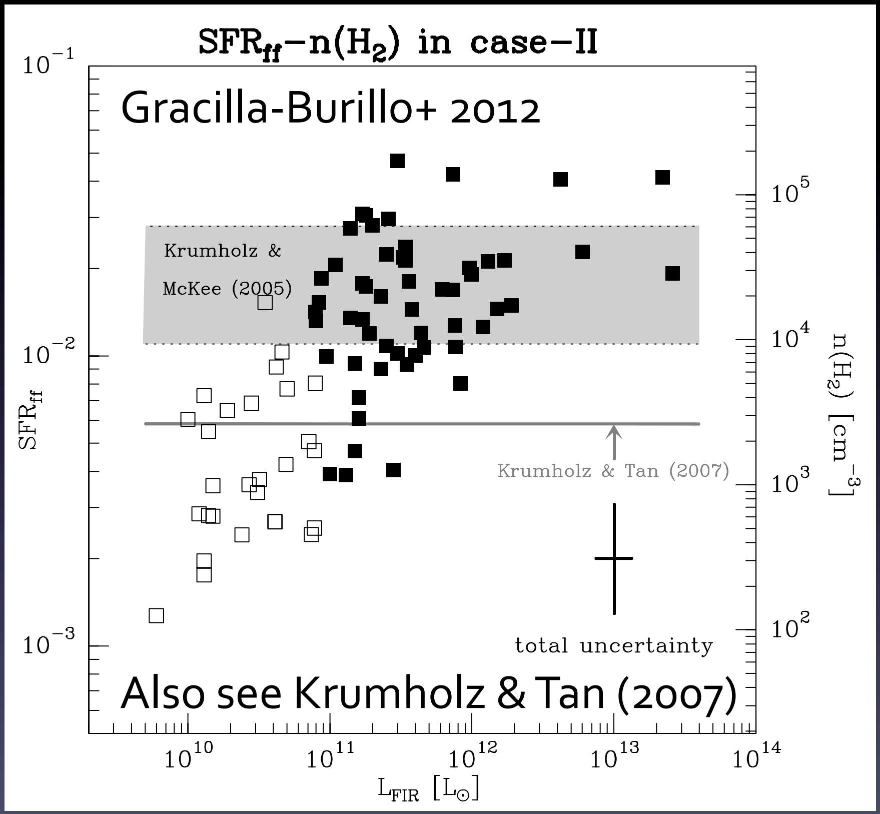




Basic idea: SFR = $M(>\rho_{dense}) / t_{dense}$, with ρ_{dense}, t_{dense} = const
Problems: no physical basis for values of ρ_{dense}, t_{dense};
evidence for threshold mixed

Observed Local SF Law



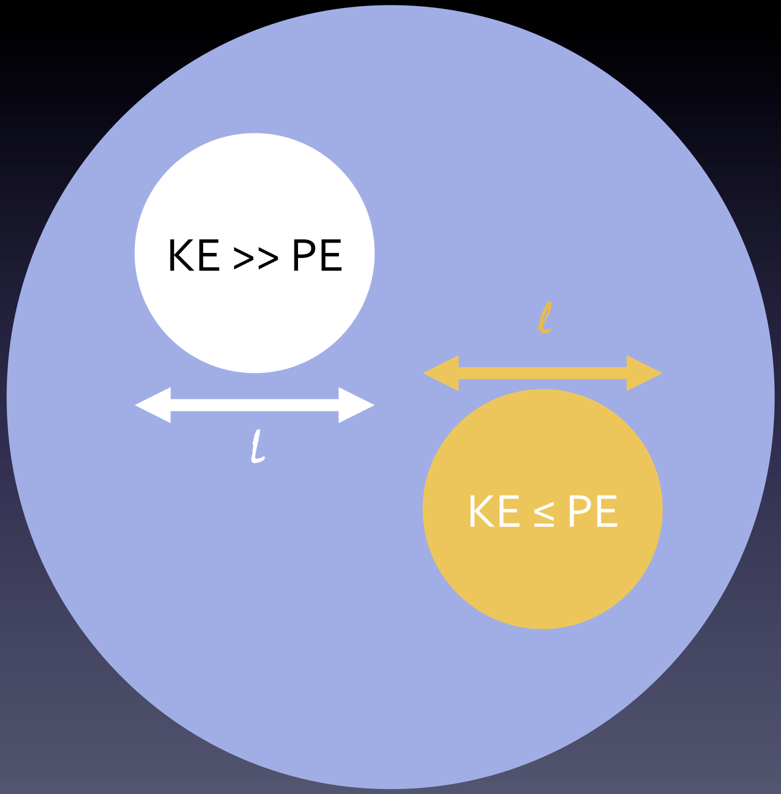


Local SF law: ~1% of gas mass goes into stars per free-fall time, independent of density or presence of massive stars

Why is ε_{ff} Low?

(Original model: Krumholz & McKee 2005;
updates by Padoan & Nordlund 2011, Hopkins 2012, Federrath & Klessen 2012)

- Properties of GMC turbulence: $\alpha_{vir} \sim 1$, density PDF lognormal, LWS relation $\sigma_v \sim \ell^{1/2}$
- Scaling: $M \sim \ell^3$, $PE \sim \ell^5$, $KE \sim \ell^4$, so PE << KE, typical region unbound
- Only over-dense regions bound; integrating over lognormal PDF gives $\varepsilon_{ff} \sim 0.01$



Building a Galactic SF Law from a Local One

- Need to estimate characteristic density
- In MW-like galaxies, GMCs have $\Sigma_{GMC} \sim 100$ $M_\odot$ pc^{-2}, $M_{GMC} \sim \sigma^4 / G^2 \Sigma_{gal}$; this gives

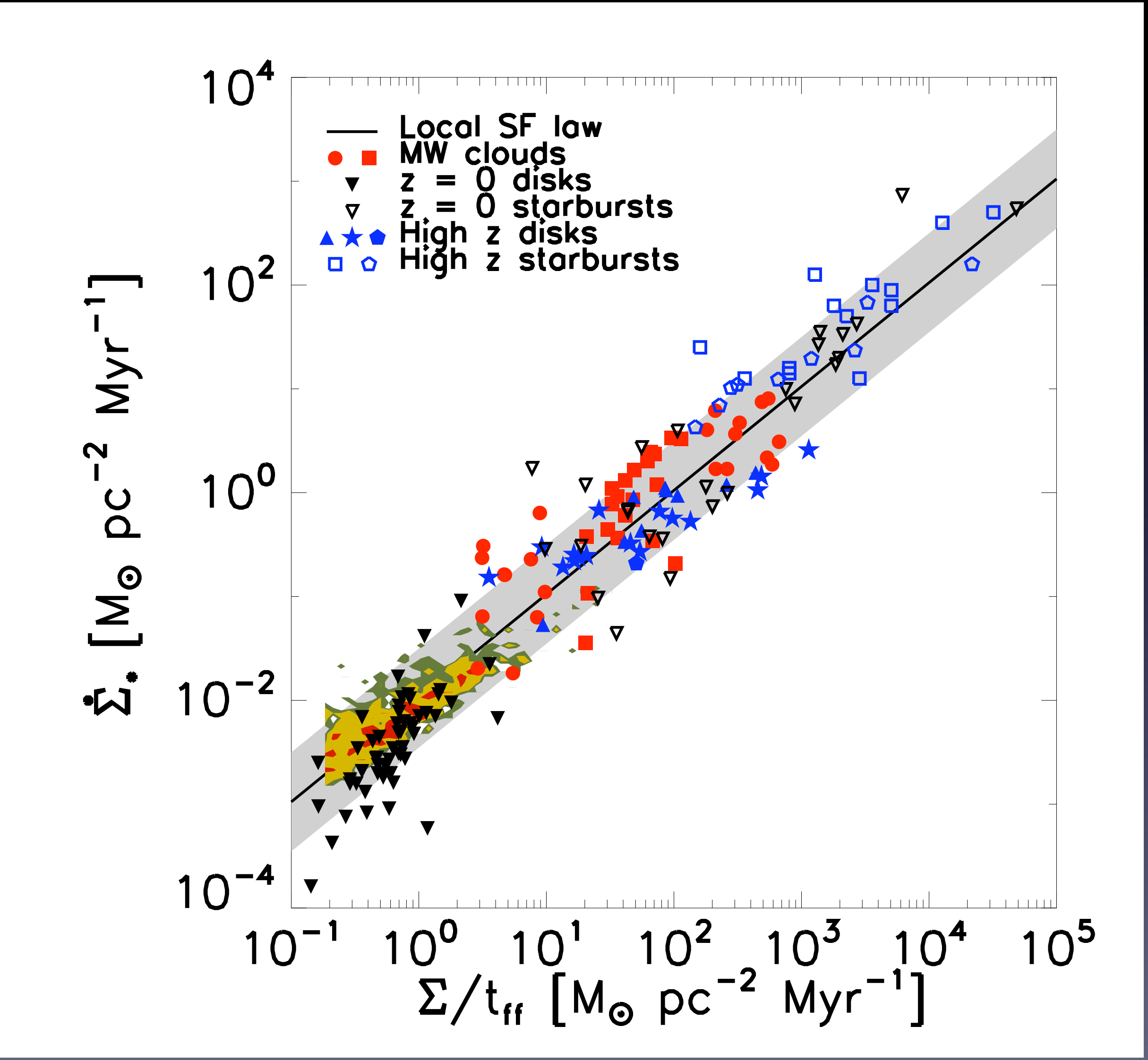
$$\rho_{\mathrm{GMC}} \sim G(\Sigma_{\mathrm{GMC}}^3 \Sigma_{\mathrm{gal}})^{1/4}/\sigma^2$$

- In SB / high-z galaxies, Toomre stability gives

$$\rho_{\mathrm{T}} \sim \Omega^2/GQ^2$$

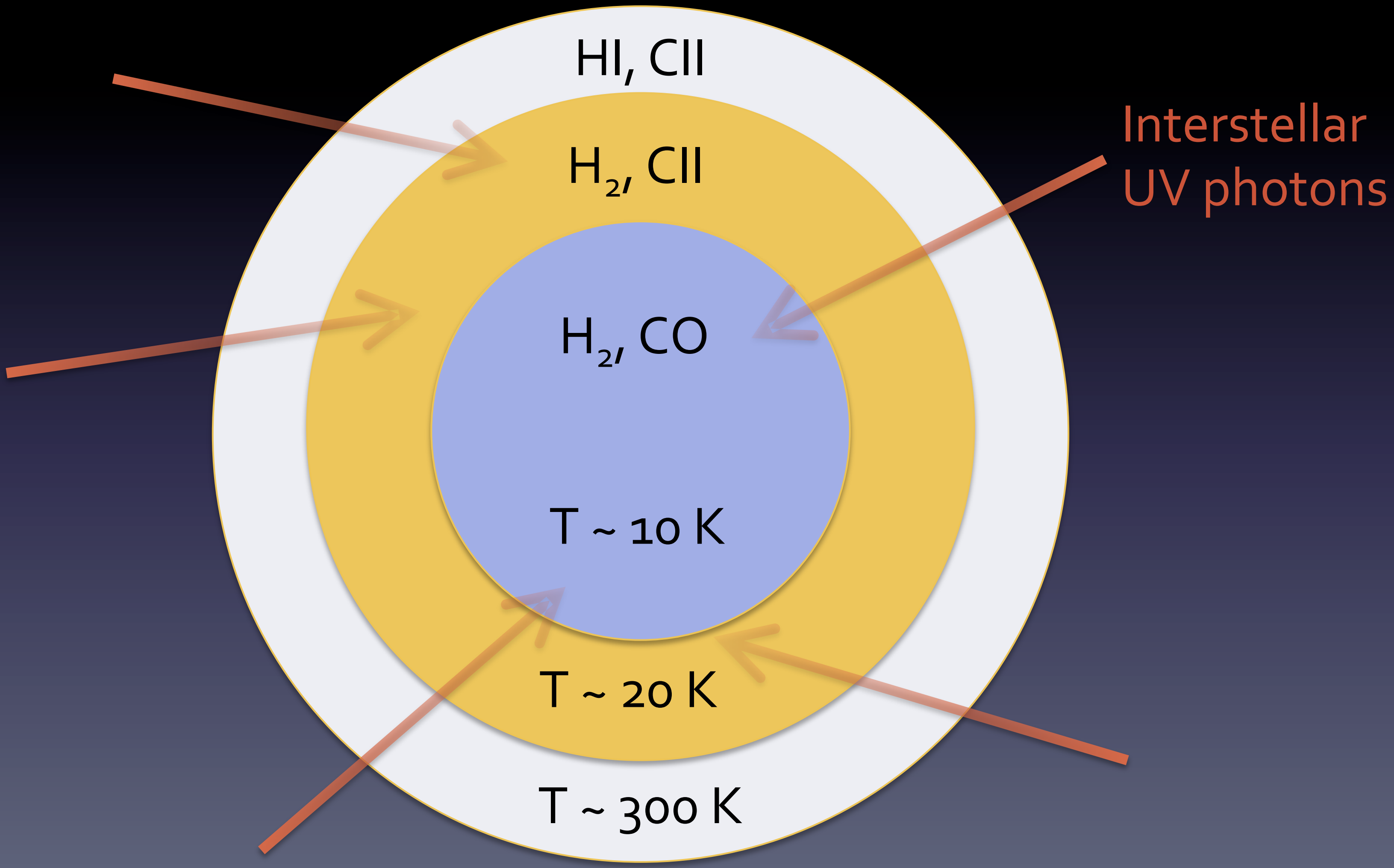
- Ansatz: $\rho = \max(\rho_T, \rho_{GMC})$

Combined Local-Galactic Law



Krumholz, Dekel, & McKee 2012

Metallicity / Phase-Dependence



Chemical and Thermal Balance

H_2 formation $\qquad$ H_2 photodissociation

$$n_{\mathrm{HI}} n \mathcal{R} \quad = \quad n_{\mathrm{H_2}} \int d\Omega \int d\nu \, \sigma_{\mathrm{H_2}} f_{\mathrm{diss}} I_\nu / (h\nu)$$

$$\hat{e} \cdot \nabla I_\nu \quad = \quad -(n_{\mathrm{H_2}} \sigma_{\mathrm{H_2}} + n \sigma_{\mathrm{d}}) I_\nu$$

Decrease in rad. intensity

Absorption by dust, H_2

Line cooling $\qquad$ Photoelectric heating

$$n^2 \Lambda = n \int d\Omega \int d\nu \, \sigma_d E_{\mathrm{PE}} I_\nu / (h\nu)$$

$$\hat{e} \cdot \nabla I_\nu = -n \sigma_d I_\nu$$

Decrease in rad. intensity

Absorption by dust

Caveat: this is assumes equilibrium, which may not hold

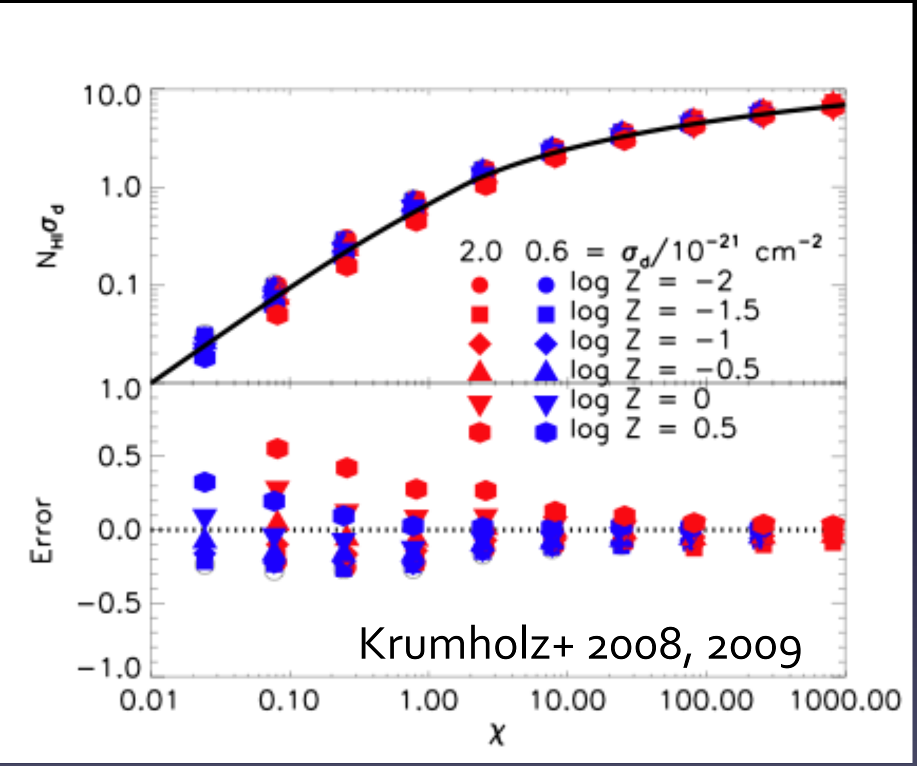
Calculating Molecular Fractions

To good approximation, solution only depends on two numbers:

$$\tau_{\mathrm{R}} = n\sigma_{\mathrm{d}}R$$

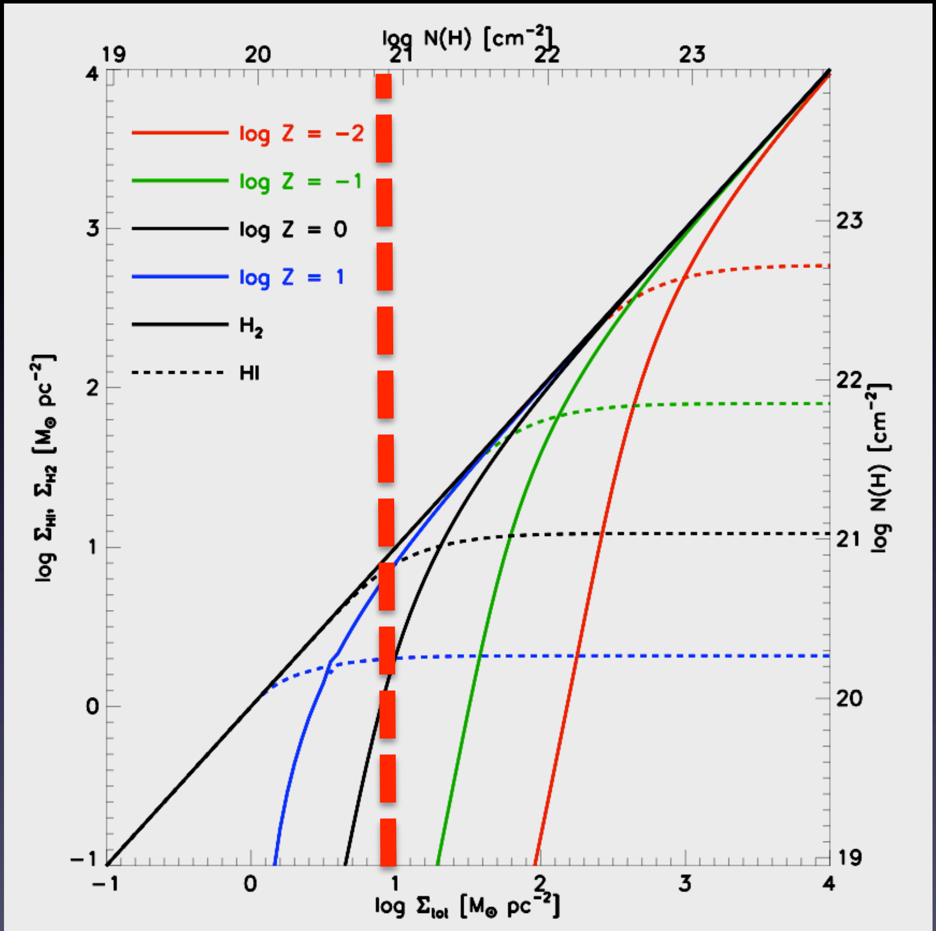
$$\chi = \frac{f_{\mathrm{diss}}\sigma_{\mathrm{d}}E_0^*}{nR}$$

An approximate analytic solution can be given from these parameters.



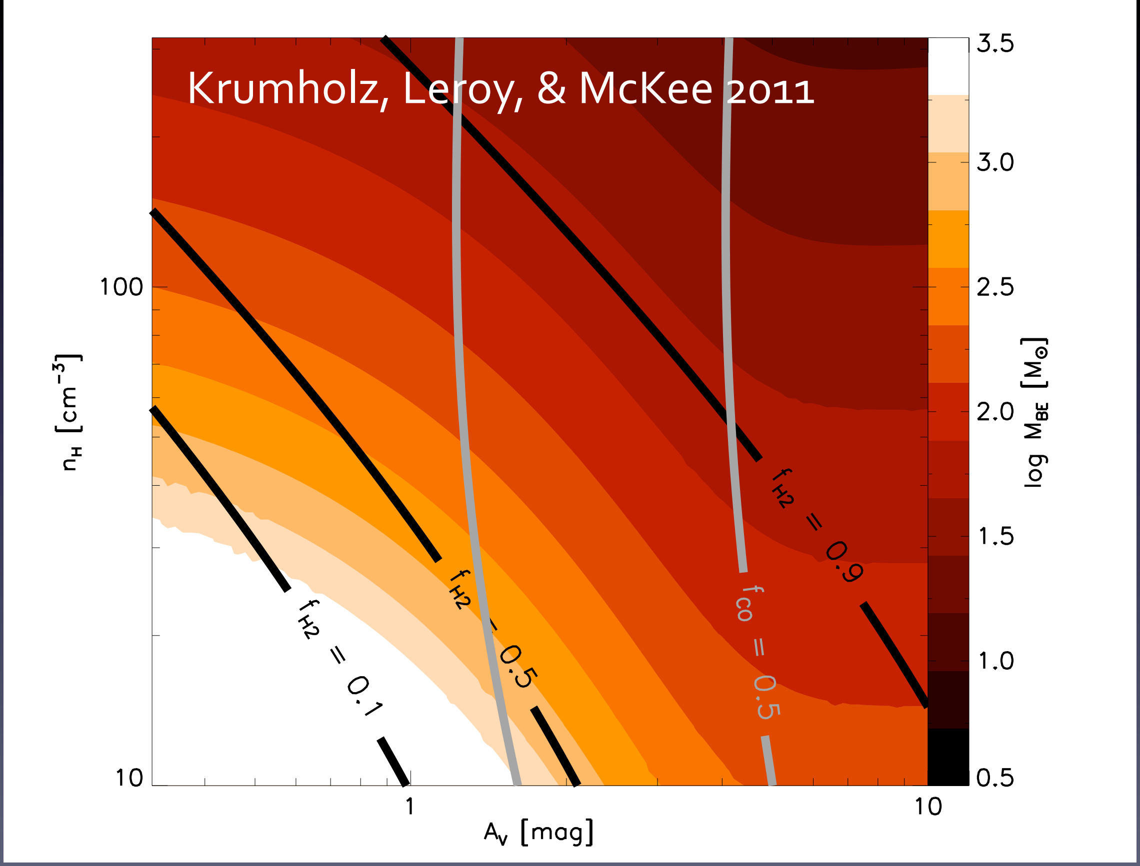
Analytic solution for location of HI / H_2 transition vs. exact numerical result

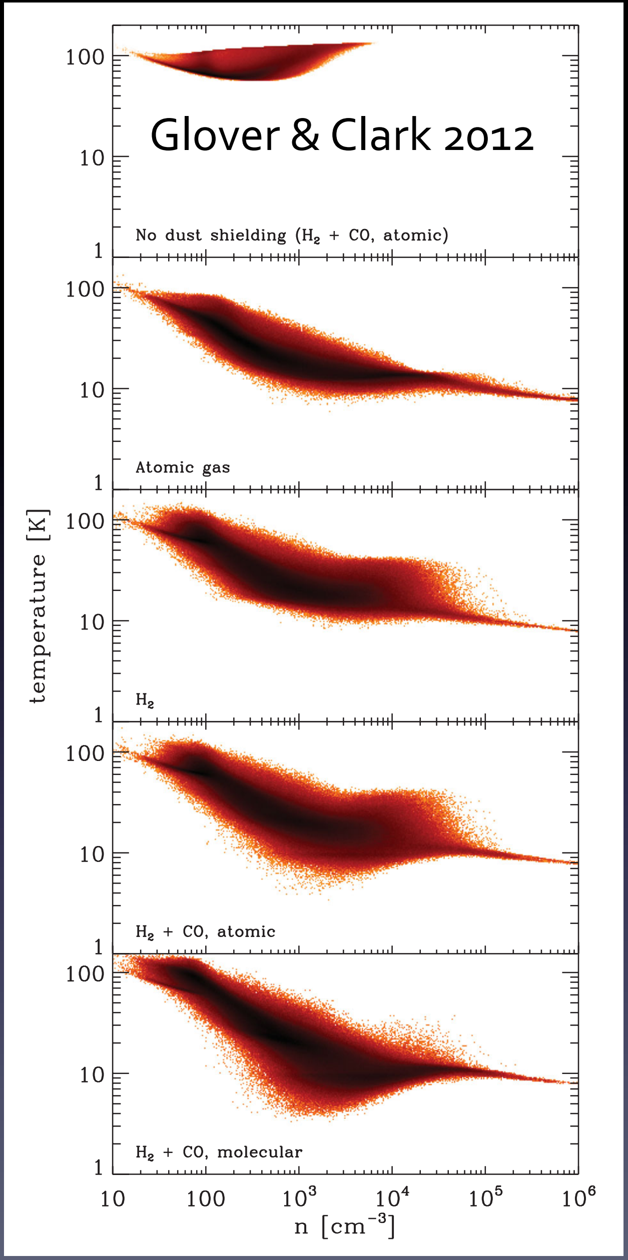
Calculating f_{H_2}



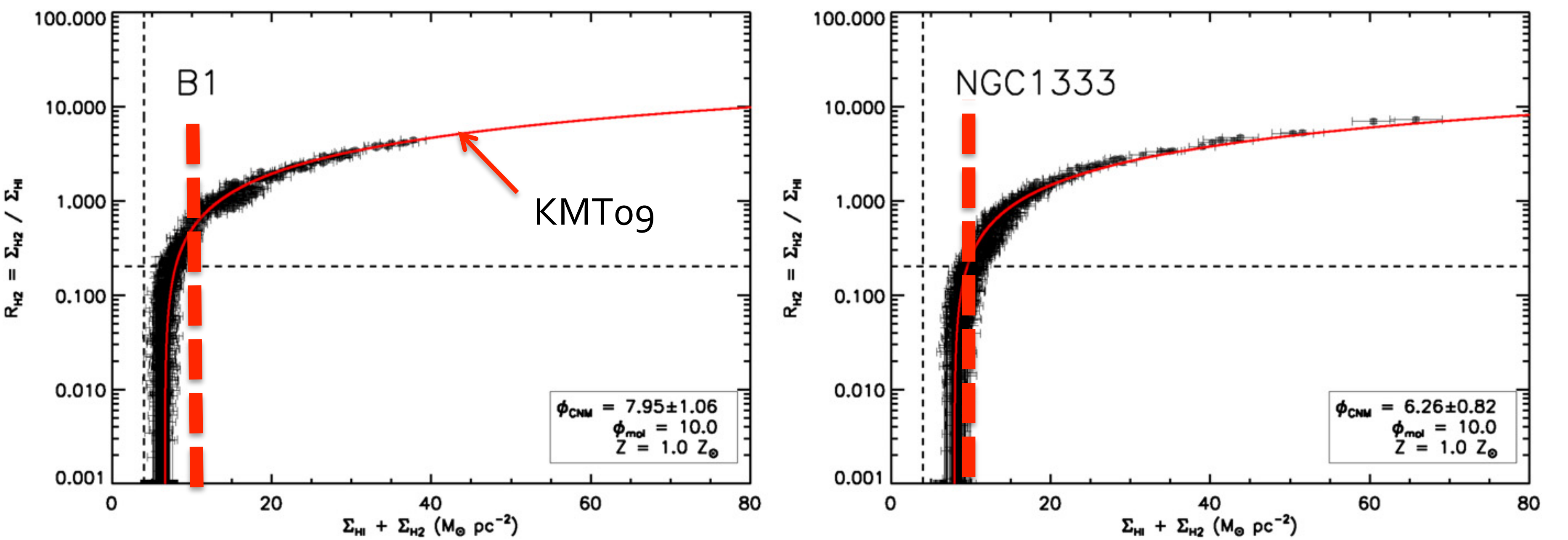
Qualitative effect: f_{H_2} goes from ~0 to ~1 when $\Sigma Z \sim 10\ M_\odot\ pc^{-2}$

Why Does SF Follow H_2?



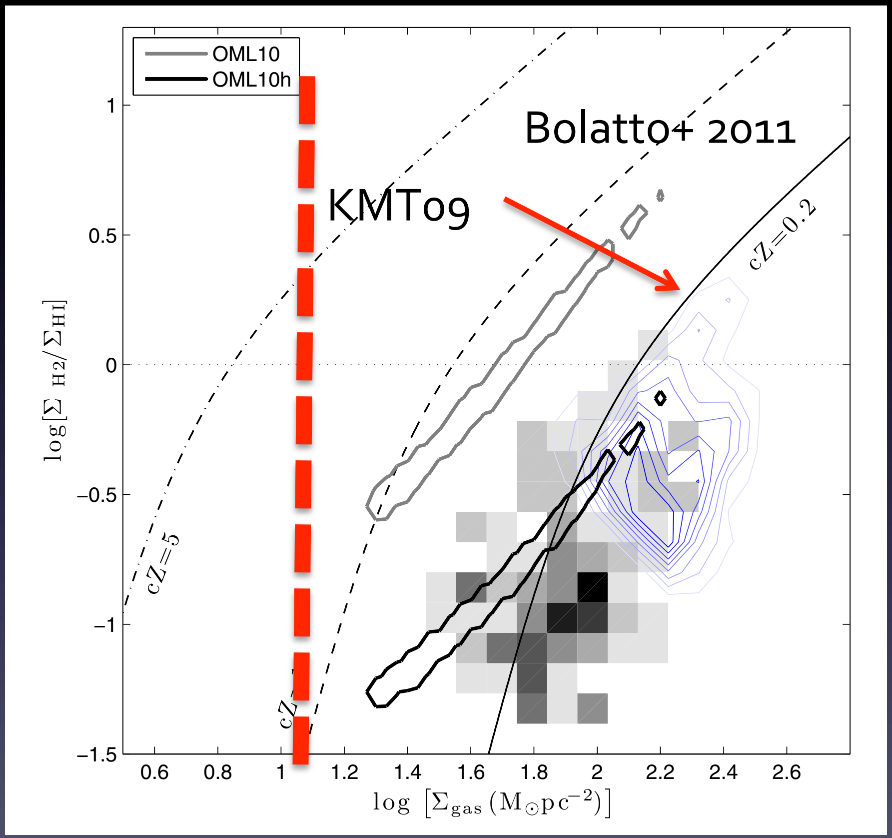


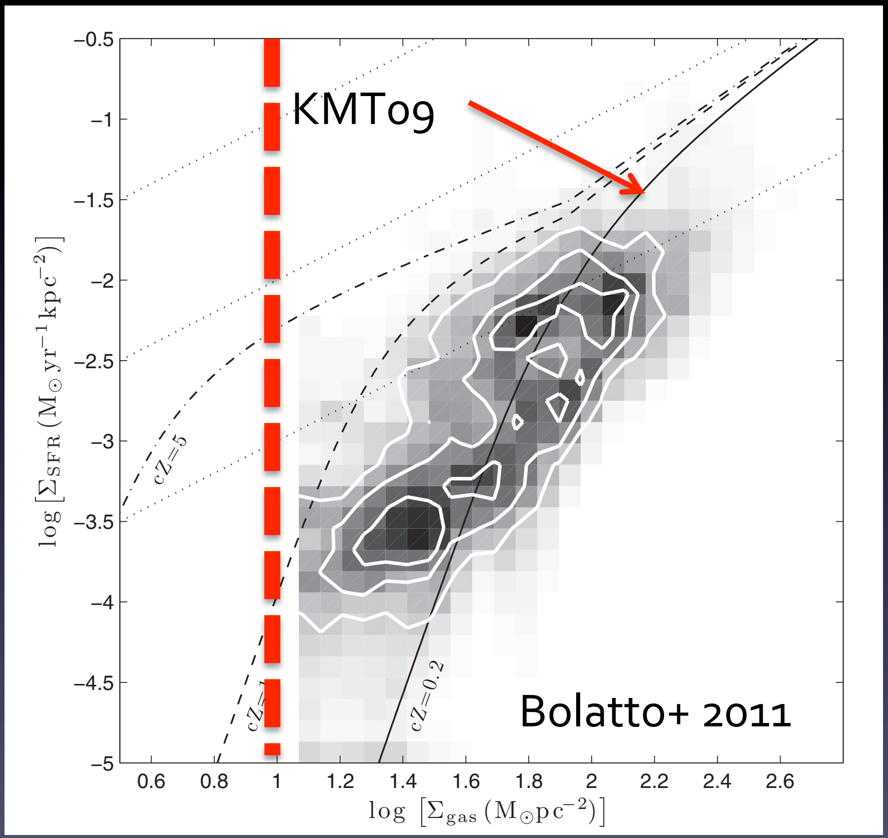
The Local HI – H2 Transition



Lee+ 2012

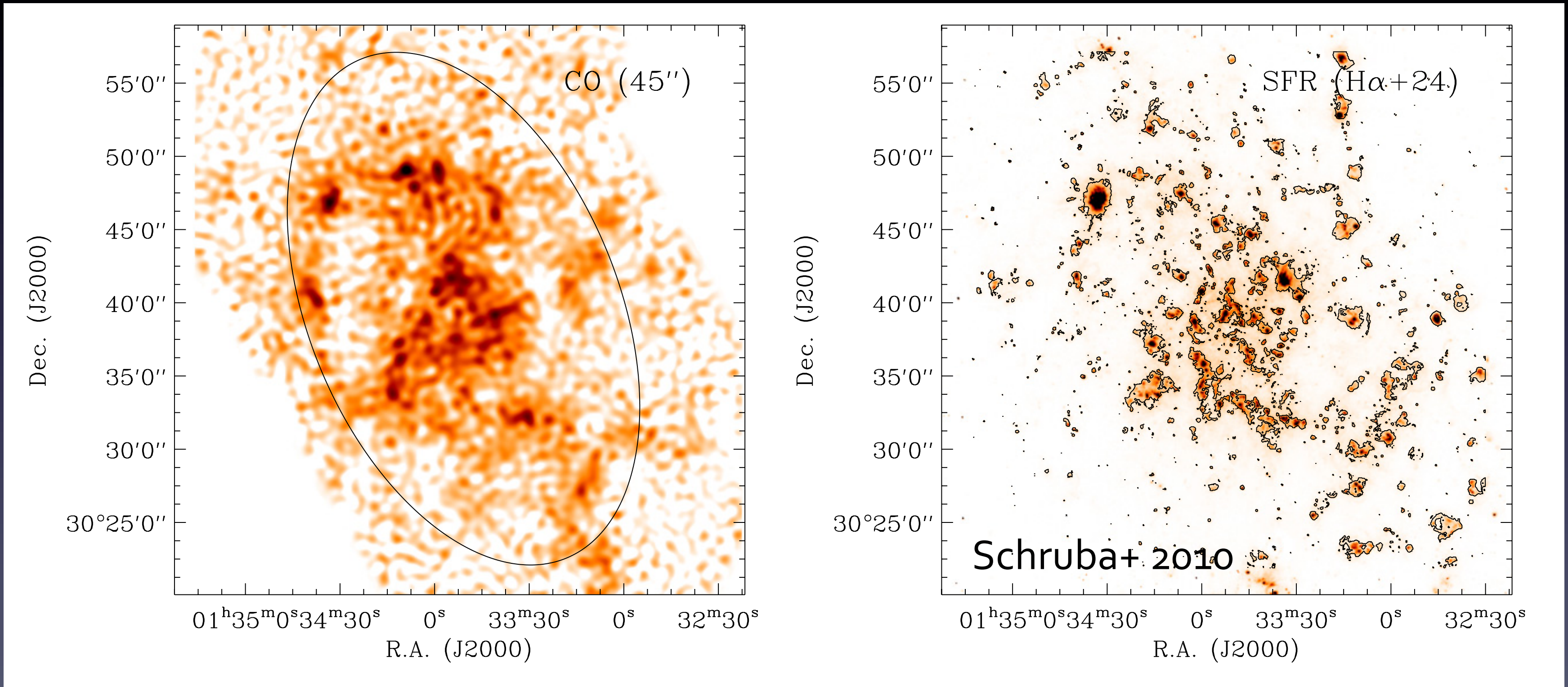
Extra-Galactic Phase Dependence



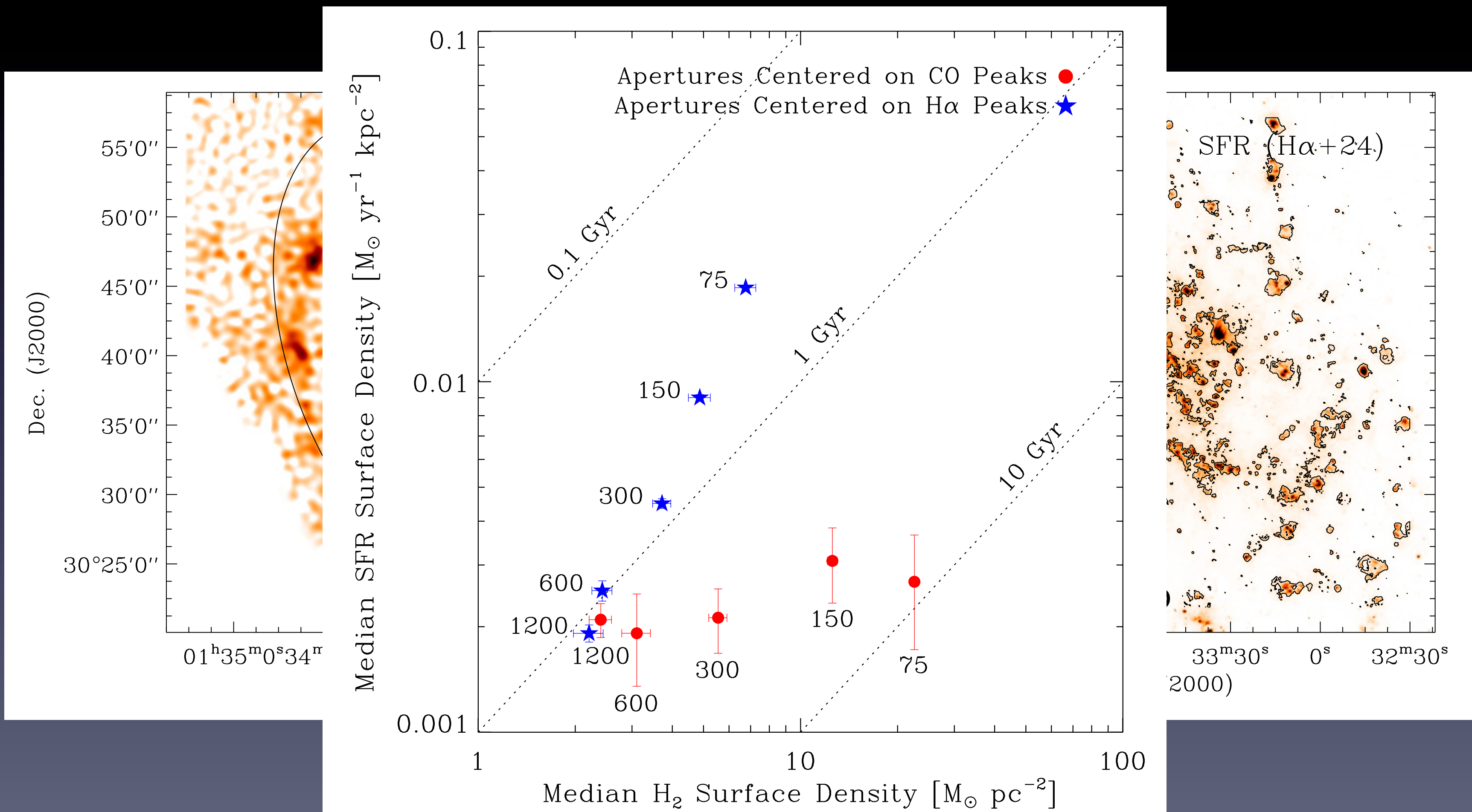


The Future: Mapping out the Space Between Local and Galactic

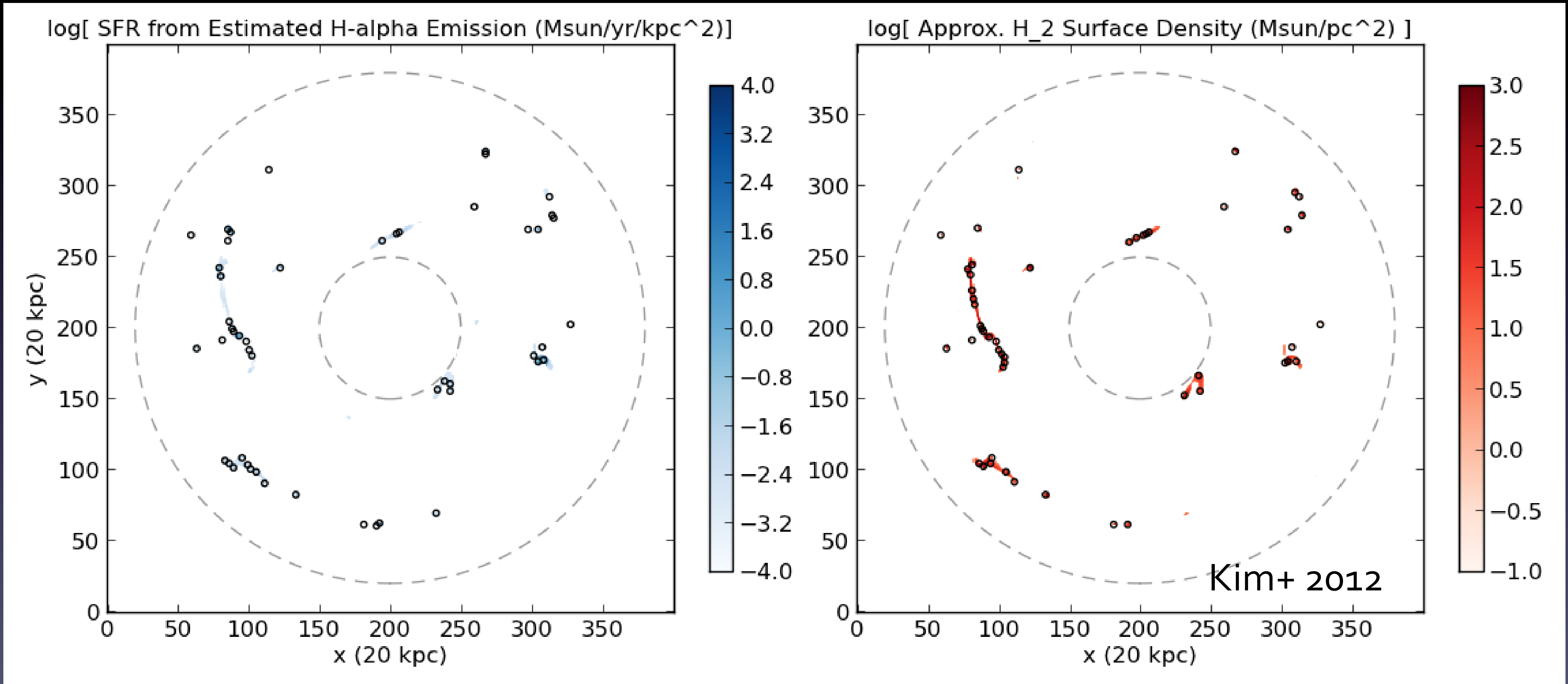
Extragalactic SF Laws at High Resolution



Extragalactic SF Laws at High Resolution



Comparison to Model



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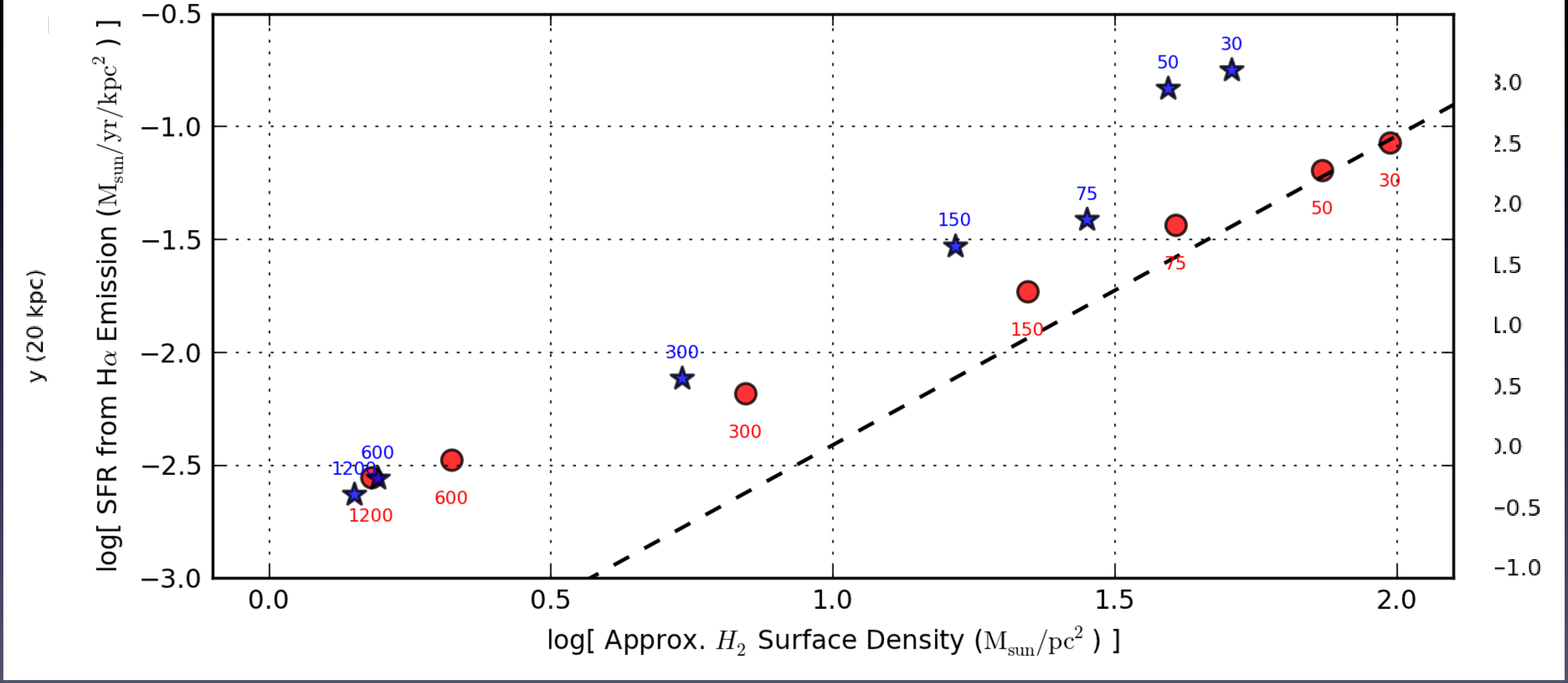
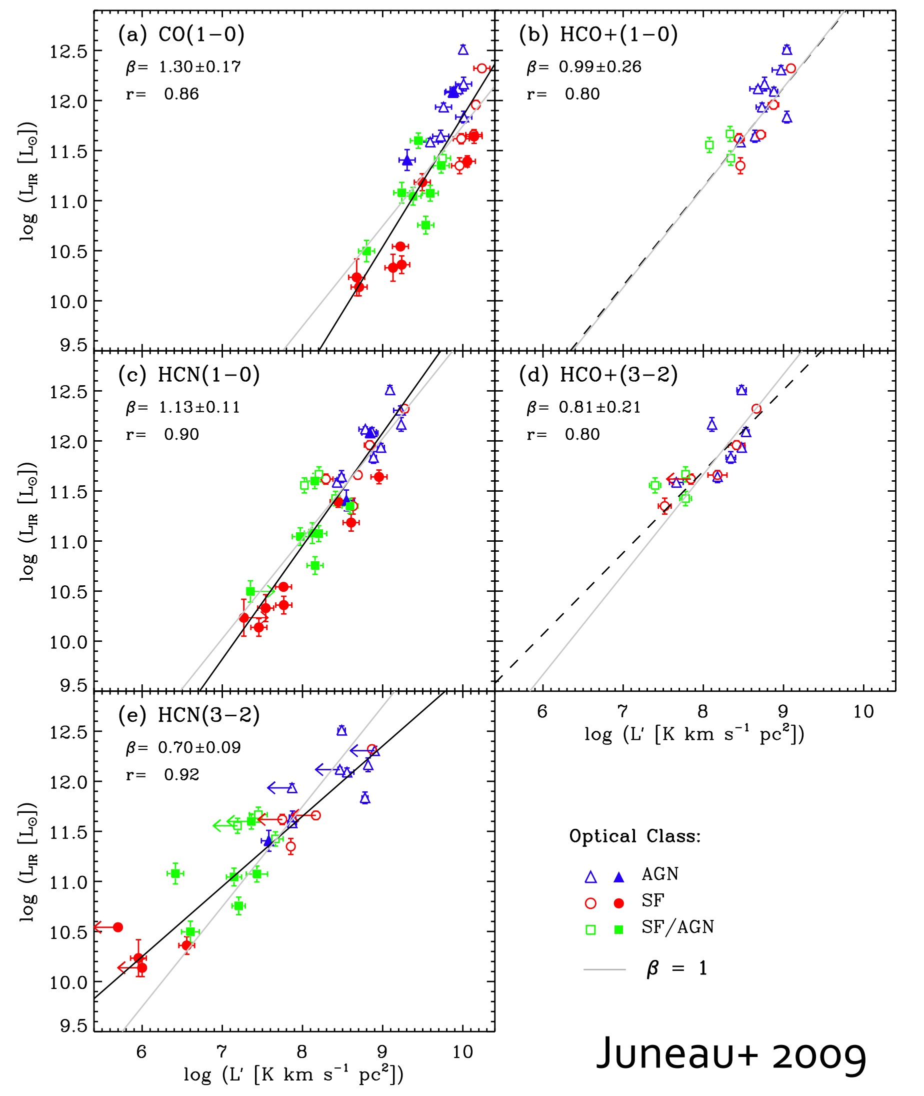
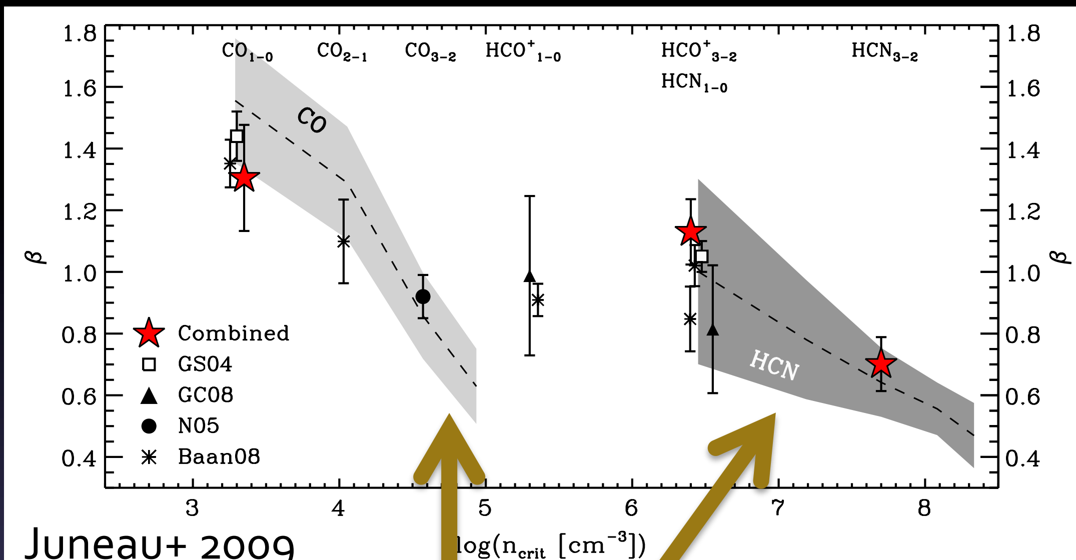


SF Laws in Many Lines



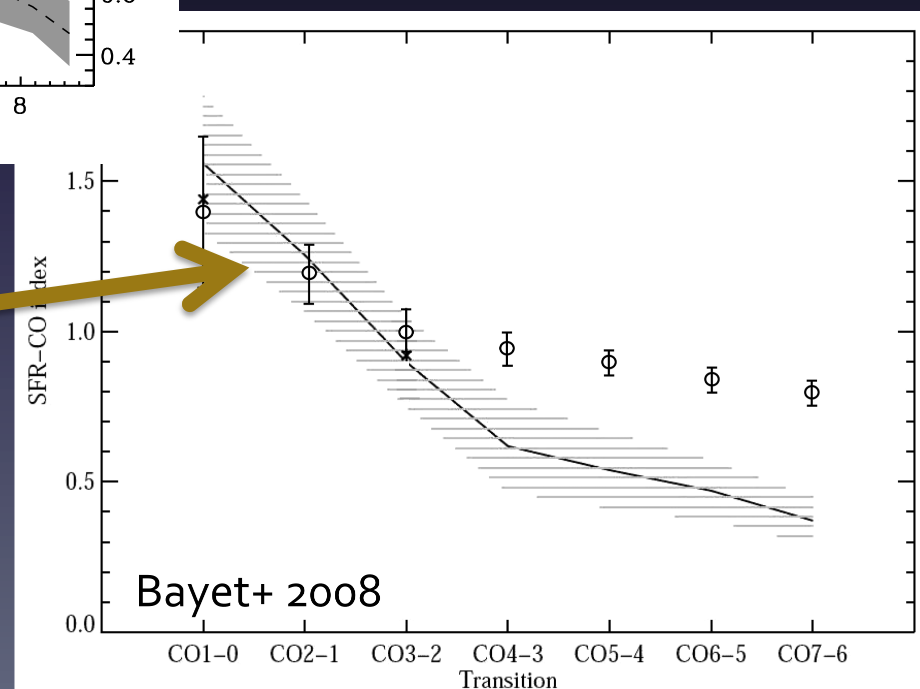
Juneau+ 2009

Comparison to Model



Juneau+ 2009

Models: Narayanan+ (2008)



Bayet+ 2008

Summary

- Can local and extra-galactic laws be unified? Depends on whether SF regulation is top-down or bottom-up
- Can laws for different phases / metallicities be unified with other laws? Yes, but this only happens naturally in a bottom-up framework.
- Promising approach: measure and predict SF laws at intermediate scales and densities