

## Saturation physics with prompt photons at NLO in $p + A$ collisions

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**Sanjin Benić\***

*Yukawa Institute for Theoretical Physics, Kyoto University, Kyoto 606-8502, Japan  
Physics Department, Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb, Zagreb 10000, Croatia  
E-mail: [benic.sanjin@yukawa.kyoto-u.ac.jp](mailto:benic.sanjin@yukawa.kyoto-u.ac.jp)*

**Oscar Garcia-Montero**

*Institut für Theoretische Physik, Universität Heidelberg, Philosophenweg 16, 69120  
Heidelberg, Germany  
E-mail: [garcia@thphys.uni-heidelberg.de](mailto:garcia@thphys.uni-heidelberg.de)*

We present recent progress in the analytical as well as the numerical calculation of the next-to-leading order (NLO) inclusive photon production and photon-jet angular correlations at central rapidities applicable to  $p + A$  and  $p + p$  collisions. After explaining the general cross section formulae we analyze numerically the different NLO contributions. We quantify the importance of quantum evolution effects for the gluon distribution functions. Finally, we show the results on photon-jet angular harmonics as a probe of gluon saturation effects.

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\*Speaker.

## 1. Introduction

Gluons are the dominant component of the hadron wavefunction at high energy (or small- $x$ ). Large gluon occupation numbers are treated within a semi-classical framework, called the Color Glass Condensate (CGC) [1, 2, 3] where all-order rescatterings with a dense target and non-linear quantum evolutions are taken into account. In particular, this leads to a generalization of the gluon distribution functions through which gluons acquire finite transverse momenta with typical values  $k_\perp \sim Q_S(x)$ , where  $Q_S(x)$  is the saturation scale at some momentum fraction  $x$ .

Photons are sensitive to high density gluon effects through their couplings to quarks. As opposed to hadron production, inclusive photon production does not suffer from uncertainties related to hadronization mechanisms. Even for semi-inclusive reactions  $h_1 + h_2 \rightarrow a + b + X$ , where at least  $a$  or  $b$  is the photon, such uncertainties become reduced.

The leading order (LO) photon production in the CGC framework for the  $p + A$  collisions is obtained from the channel  $q \rightarrow q\gamma$  [4, 5, 6] (in the  $A$  background), that would be important at forward photon rapidities,  $\eta_{k_\gamma}$  and/or large photon transverse momenta, where the projectile proton momentum fraction,  $x_p \sim \frac{k_{\gamma\perp}}{\sqrt{s}} e^{\eta_{k_\gamma}}$ , can be large. With current collider energies in the TeV range,  $x_p$  can be of the order of  $x_p \sim 10^{-3} - 10^{-4}$  so that the gluons in the projectile become dominant, leading to new inclusive photon production channels. Although formally next-to-leading order (NLO) in  $\alpha_S$  they would dominate over the LO contribution at central rapidities and/or high energy.

## 2. NLO photon cross section

The NLO contributions come from the exclusive  $g \rightarrow q^*\bar{q}^* \rightarrow \gamma$  channel, the  $g \rightarrow q\bar{q}\gamma$  and the  $q \rightarrow qq\gamma$  channel. Below we give main analytical results for the  $g \rightarrow \gamma$  and the  $g \rightarrow q\bar{q}\gamma$  channel, as obtained in [7] and [8], respectively. For  $q \rightarrow qq\gamma$ , the collinearly enhanced parts are absorbed at LO through parton evolution, while the magnitude of the non-collinearly enhanced parts depend in general on the renormalization and the factorization scale and on the quark distribution  $f_q(x, Q^2)$ , as opposed to the gluon distribution  $f_g(x, Q^2)$ , of the projectile. In this work, we consider the kinematic region where  $f_q(x, Q^2) \ll f_g(x, Q^2)$ , while  $f_g(x, Q^2) < 1/\alpha_S$ .

The  $g \rightarrow \gamma$  channel proceeds through a loop with virtual quarks  $q^*\bar{q}^*$ , that annihilate to a photon in the final state. The cross section is [7]

$$\begin{aligned}
\frac{d\sigma^{g \rightarrow \gamma}}{d^2\mathbf{k}_{\gamma\perp} d\eta_{k_\gamma}} &= \frac{\alpha_e \alpha_S}{64\pi^8 C_F} \int_{xx'} \int_{\mathbf{y}_\perp \mathbf{y}'_\perp \mathbf{z}_\perp \mathbf{z}'_\perp} \int_{\mathbf{k}_{1\perp}} e^{-i(\mathbf{k}_{1\perp} - \mathbf{k}_{\gamma\perp}) \cdot (\bar{x}\mathbf{y}_\perp + x\mathbf{z}_\perp - \bar{x}'\mathbf{y}'_\perp - x'\mathbf{z}'_\perp)} \varphi_p(Y_p, \mathbf{k}_{1\perp}) \\
&\times \left[ \mathcal{Q}_{A, Y_A}(\mathbf{y}_\perp, \mathbf{y}'_\perp, \mathbf{z}_\perp, \mathbf{z}'_\perp) - \tilde{\mathcal{N}}_{A, Y_A}(\mathbf{y}_\perp - \mathbf{z}_\perp) \tilde{\mathcal{N}}_{A, Y_A}(\mathbf{y}'_\perp - \mathbf{z}'_\perp) \right] \\
&\times \sum_{f, f'} q_f q_{f'} \left[ \hat{\mathbf{u}}_\perp \Psi_{1, f}(\mathbf{k}_{1\perp}, \mathbf{u}_\perp, x) + \hat{\mathbf{k}}_{1\perp} \Psi_{2, f}(\mathbf{k}_{1\perp}, \mathbf{u}_\perp, x) \right] \\
&\times \left[ \hat{\mathbf{u}}_\perp \Psi_{1, f'}^*(\mathbf{k}_{1\perp}, \mathbf{u}'_\perp, x') + \hat{\mathbf{k}}_{1\perp} \Psi_{2, f'}^*(\mathbf{k}'_{1\perp}, \mathbf{u}'_\perp, x') \right],
\end{aligned} \tag{2.1}$$

where  $\int_x \equiv \int_0^1 dx$ ,  $\bar{x} \equiv 1 - x$  and  $\mathbf{u}_\perp \equiv \mathbf{z}_\perp - \mathbf{y}_\perp$  and similar for the primed coordinates, while  $\hat{\mathbf{x}}_\perp \equiv \mathbf{x}_\perp / x_\perp$ . Here the gluons in the nuclei in the  $g \rightarrow \gamma$  process are described through the dipole  $\tilde{\mathcal{N}}_{A,Y_A}(\mathbf{y}_\perp - \mathbf{z}_\perp)$  and the quadrupole distribution  $\mathcal{Q}_{A,Y_A}(\mathbf{y}_\perp; \mathbf{y}'_\perp, \mathbf{z}'_\perp, \mathbf{z}''_\perp)$ , while the gluons in the proton are described by the familiar un-integrated gluon distribution  $\varphi_p(Y_p, \mathbf{k}_{1\perp})$ . The explicit forms of the functions  $\Psi_{(1,2),f}(\mathbf{k}_{1\perp}, \mathbf{u}_\perp, x)$  are given in [7].

The fully differential cross section for the  $g \rightarrow q\bar{q}\gamma$  channel was calculated in [8], where the most general form was found as

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{d\sigma^{g \rightarrow q\bar{q}\gamma}}{d^2\mathbf{k}_{\gamma\perp} d\eta_{k_\gamma} d^2\mathbf{q}_\perp d\eta_q d^2\mathbf{p}_\perp d\eta_p} &= \frac{\alpha_e \alpha_S^2}{256\pi^8 C_F} \sum_f q_f^2 \int_{\mathbf{k}_{1\perp} \mathbf{k}_{2\perp}} (2\pi)^2 \delta^{(2)}(\mathbf{P}_\perp - \mathbf{k}_{1\perp} - \mathbf{k}_{2\perp}) \\ &\times \frac{\varphi_p(Y_p, \mathbf{k}_{1\perp})}{\mathbf{k}_{1\perp}^2 \mathbf{k}_{2\perp}^2} \left\{ \tau_{g,g}(\mathbf{k}_{1\perp}; \mathbf{k}_{1\perp}) \phi_A^{g,g}(Y_A, \mathbf{k}_{2\perp}) \right. \\ &+ 2 \int_{\mathbf{k}_\perp} \tau_{g,q\bar{q}}(\mathbf{k}_{1\perp}; \mathbf{k}_\perp, \mathbf{k}_{1\perp}) \phi_A^{q\bar{q},g}(Y_A, \mathbf{k}_\perp, \mathbf{k}_{2\perp} - \mathbf{k}_\perp; \mathbf{k}_{2\perp}) \\ &\left. + \int_{\mathbf{k}_\perp \mathbf{k}'_\perp} \tau_{q\bar{q},q\bar{q}}(\mathbf{k}_\perp, \mathbf{k}_{1\perp}; \mathbf{k}'_\perp, \mathbf{k}_{1\perp}) \phi_A^{q\bar{q},q\bar{q}}(Y_A, \mathbf{k}_\perp, \mathbf{k}_{2\perp} - \mathbf{k}_\perp; \mathbf{k}'_\perp, \mathbf{k}_{2\perp} - \mathbf{k}'_\perp) \right\}, \end{aligned} \quad (2.2)$$

where  $\phi_A^{m,n}$  are the multi-gluon correlators describing the distribution in the saturated target, while  $\tau_{n,m}$  are the appropriate hard factors (explicit expressions can be found in [8]). The multi-gluon correlators were first introduced in [9] for  $q\bar{q}$  production in  $p + A$  collisions. There it was demonstrated that  $\phi_A^{q\bar{q},q\bar{q}}$  involves a product of four Wilson lines in the fundamental representation, while  $\phi_A^{q\bar{q},g}$  a product of two Wilson lines in the fundamental and a Wilson line in the adjoint representation, while  $\phi_A^{g,g}$  involves a product of two Wilson lines in the adjoint representation. At large  $N_c$  these distributions simplify to a product of dipoles  $\tilde{\mathcal{N}}_{A,Y_A}(\mathbf{k}_\perp)$  defined as

$$\tilde{\mathcal{N}}_{A,Y_A}(\mathbf{k}_\perp) = \frac{1}{N_c} \int_{\mathbf{x}_\perp} e^{i\mathbf{k}_\perp \cdot \mathbf{x}_\perp} \text{tr}_c \langle \tilde{U}(\mathbf{x}_\perp) \tilde{U}^\dagger(0) \rangle_{Y_A}, \quad (2.3)$$

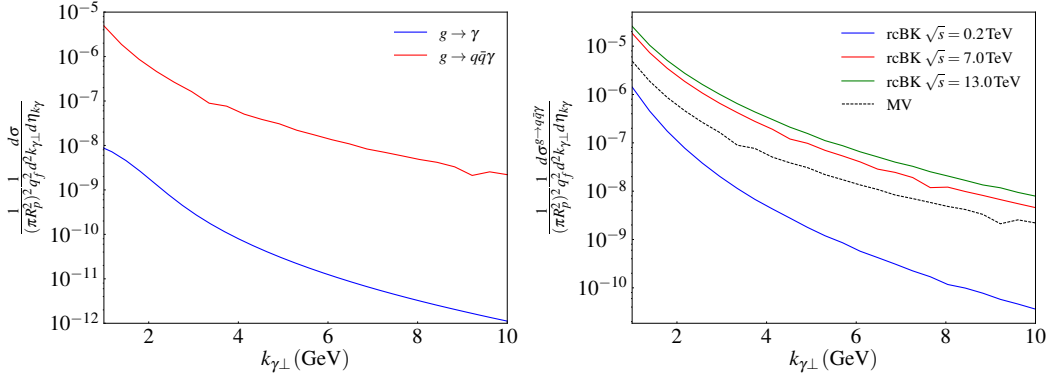
where  $\tilde{U}(\mathbf{x}_\perp)$  is the fundamental Wilson line, and  $\langle \dots \rangle_{Y_A}$  denotes a quantum average to be calculated with the appropriate weight functional and satisfying the general JIMWLK evolution equations. The inclusive cross section from Eq. (2.2) becomes

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{1}{\pi R_p^2 \pi R_A^2} \frac{d\sigma^{g \rightarrow q\bar{q}\gamma}}{d^2\mathbf{k}_{\gamma\perp} d\eta_{k_\gamma}} &= \frac{\alpha_e N_c^3}{128\pi^4 (N_c^2 - 1)} \sum_f q_f^2 \int_{\eta_q \eta_p} \int_{\mathbf{q}_\perp \mathbf{p}_\perp \mathbf{k}_{1\perp} \mathbf{k}_\perp} \mathcal{N}_{p,Y_p}(\mathbf{k}_{1\perp}) \\ &\times \tilde{\mathcal{N}}_{A,Y_A}(\mathbf{k}_\perp) \tilde{\mathcal{N}}_{A,Y_A}(\mathbf{P}_\perp - \mathbf{k}_{1\perp} - \mathbf{k}_\perp) \\ &\times [\tau_{g,g}(\mathbf{k}_{1\perp}; \mathbf{k}_{1\perp}) + 2\tau_{g,q\bar{q}}(\mathbf{k}_{1\perp}; \mathbf{k}_\perp, \mathbf{k}_{1\perp}) + \tau_{q\bar{q},q\bar{q}}(\mathbf{k}_\perp, \mathbf{k}_{1\perp}; \mathbf{k}_\perp, \mathbf{k}_{1\perp})], \end{aligned} \quad (2.4)$$

where we used  $\varphi_p(Y_p, \mathbf{k}_{1\perp}) \equiv (\pi R_p^2) \frac{N_c \mathbf{k}_{1\perp}^2}{4\alpha_S} \mathcal{N}_{p,Y_p}(\mathbf{k}_{1\perp})$  for the gluon distribution in the projectile proton, with  $\mathcal{N}_{p,Y_p}(\mathbf{k}_{1\perp})$  as the adjoint dipole.

### 3. NLO Inclusive photon production - selected numerical results

Here we show several preliminary numerical results of the calculation of the inclusive photon cross section in  $p + p$  collisions. It is useful to compare the magnitude of the NLO



**Figure 1:** Left panel: comparison of the NLO  $g \rightarrow \gamma$  and  $g \rightarrow q\bar{q}\gamma$  transverse photon momentum ( $k_{\perp}$ ) dependence of the inclusive photon cross section in  $p+p$  collisions using the MV model (3.1) for the gluon distributions. Right panel: comparison of inclusive  $g \rightarrow q\bar{q}\gamma$  cross section in  $p+p$  at central rapidity and for several collision energies  $\sqrt{s}$  using the rcBK solutions for the gluon distributions. The results are shown for a single flavor with mass  $m_f = 0.2$  GeV.

channels  $g \rightarrow \gamma$  and  $g \rightarrow q\bar{q}\gamma$ . For the moment we simplify our approach by using a classical McLerran-Venugopalan (MV) model [10, 11] to calculate the gluon distributions, so that

$$\mathcal{N}(\mathbf{x}_{\perp}) = \exp \left[ -\frac{(x_{\perp}^2 Q_{S0}^2)^{\gamma}}{2} \log \left( \frac{1}{x_{\perp} \Lambda_{\text{IR}}} + e \right) \right]. \quad (3.1)$$

We use the parameters  $\gamma = 1$ ,  $Q_{S0}^2 = 0.2$  GeV<sup>2</sup>,  $\Lambda_{\text{IR}} = 0.241$  GeV. A separable form of the quadrupole  $\mathcal{Q}(\mathbf{y}_{\perp}, \mathbf{y}'_{\perp}, \mathbf{z}'_{\perp}, \mathbf{z}_{\perp})$  was found [12] to be a good approximation and we use it in this work. We used a single quark flavor with mass  $m_f = 0.2$  GeV. The result on the left panel of Fig. 1 demonstrates in a clear way that, due to the restricted phase space of the virtual  $q^*\bar{q}^*$ , the  $g \rightarrow \gamma$  channel is greatly suppressed relative to  $g \rightarrow q\bar{q}\gamma$ . Taking into account all quark flavors there are even more suppressions due to the strong cancellations of the different flavor contributions, see Eq. (2.1).

We implement the quantum evolution of the distributions using the solutions of the running coupling Balitsky-Kovchegov (rcBK) equation [13, 14, 15, 16] with the initial condition (3.1) at  $x = 10^{-2}$ , as obtained in [17]. The results are shown on the right panel of Fig. 1, where we again use a single flavor with  $m_f = 0.2$  GeV at collision energies  $\sqrt{s} = 0.2, 7$  and 13 TeV and central rapidity  $\eta_{k_{\gamma}} = 0.0$ .

The result at 0.2 TeV is different from the result using only the MV model, without the initial condition. As the relevant kinematic region is mostly  $x > 10^{-2}$  this is not the quantum evolution effect, but rather the large- $x$  physics effect, with the rcBK solutions extrapolated to large- $x$  region  $x > 10^{-2}$  as in [12], not present in the MV model. We can see the rcBK evolution effect at 7 and 13 TeV where the cross section now considerably deviates from the calculation using the initial condition.

#### 4. Photon-jet angular correlations

The calculation of the photon-jet angular correlations was carried out in [18]. Using

the transverse momenta variables

$$\mathbf{Q}_\perp = \mathbf{p}_\perp + \mathbf{k}_{\gamma\perp} \quad \tilde{\mathbf{P}}_\perp = \frac{\mathbf{p}_\perp - \mathbf{k}_{\gamma\perp}}{2}, \quad (4.1)$$

we consider almost back-to-back events as  $Q_\perp \ll \tilde{P}_\perp$ , where  $Q_\perp$  should be understood as a soft scale (in this context  $Q_\perp \sim Q_S$ ) while  $\tilde{P}_\perp$  is a hard scale.

The LO cross section, when expressed in the back-to-back variables, is isotropic to  $Q_\perp^2/Q_S^2$ , with angular dependence arising only at  $(Q_\perp^2/Q_S^2) \times (Q_\perp/\tilde{P}_\perp)$  [18]. Intuitively, at LO the back-to-back (or *anti*-collinear) correlations are suppressed in the CGC regime, as the photon would dominantly be emitted collinear to its parent quark. Thanks to the three body final state at NLO we can consider collinear photon emission from the parent quark and check for back-to-back correlations with the remaining antiquark (or vice versa).

Due to the presence of a hard scale, we are able to simplify further the general NLO expression for the cross section (2.2). The gluon distributions of the target appear in the form of various transverse momentum distributions [19, 20]  $F_i(x_A, \mathbf{k}_\perp^2)$  and  $H_i(x_A, \mathbf{k}_\perp^2)$  where  $i = 1, \dots, 3$  and  $F_i(H_i)$  are the distributions of unpolarized (linearly polarized) gluons. Integrating over the parent quark momenta  $\mathbf{q}_\perp$ , our final expression takes the form

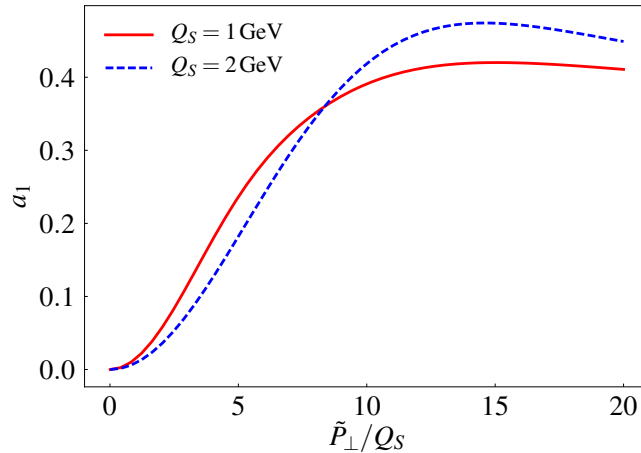
$$\begin{aligned} \frac{d\sigma}{d^2\tilde{\mathbf{P}}_\perp d^2\mathbf{Q}_\perp d\eta_p d\eta_{k_\gamma} dz} &= \frac{\alpha_e \alpha_S q_f^2}{64\pi^4 N_c (N_c^2 - 1)} x_p f_{g,p}(x_p, \mathbf{P}_\perp^2) \frac{1}{2\pi} \frac{1 + (1-z)^2}{z} \log\left(\frac{\mathbf{P}_\perp^2}{\Lambda_{\text{MS}}^2}\right) \\ &\times \frac{\zeta(1+z)^4}{z(\zeta+z)^6} \frac{1}{\tilde{\mathbf{P}}_\perp^4} \left\{ (\zeta^4 + 6\zeta^2 z^2 + z^4) F_1(x_A, \mathbf{P}_\perp^2) - 2\zeta z (\zeta - z)^2 F_2(x_A, \mathbf{P}_\perp^2) - 4\zeta^2 z^2 F_3(x_A, \mathbf{P}_\perp^2) \right. \\ &\left. + 4\zeta z (\zeta - z)^2 \left[ \frac{(\mathbf{P}_\perp \cdot \tilde{\mathbf{P}}_\perp)^2}{\mathbf{P}_\perp^2 \tilde{\mathbf{P}}_\perp^2} - \frac{1}{2} \right] \left[ -H_1(x_A, \tilde{\mathbf{P}}_\perp^2) - H_2(x_A, \mathbf{P}_\perp^2) + H_3(x_A, \mathbf{P}_\perp^2) \right] \right\}. \end{aligned} \quad (4.2)$$

where  $z = k_\gamma^+ / (k_\gamma^+ + q^+)$ ,  $\zeta = p^+ / k_\gamma^+$  and  $\mathbf{P}_\perp = (-(1-z)\tilde{\mathbf{P}}_\perp + (1+z)\mathbf{Q}_\perp/2)/z$ . We are considering events where  $z$  is close to unity so that photon takes most of the momentum from the parent quark. It turns out that the particular combination of  $H_i$  in Eq. (4.2) vanishes [18].

Expanding (4.2) in powers of  $Q_\perp/\tilde{P}_\perp$  we can extract the angular correlations as  $a_n = \langle \cos(n\phi) \rangle$  where  $\phi$  is the angle between  $\mathbf{Q}_\perp$  and  $\tilde{\mathbf{P}}_\perp$ . By contrast to LO, the anisotropic contribution to the cross section starts at  $Q_\perp/\tilde{P}_\perp$ . The angular harmonics have an overall  $a_n \sim (Q_\perp/\tilde{P}_\perp)^n$  dependence. For example, the explicit expression for  $a_1$  is [18]

$$a_1 = \frac{1+z}{4(1-z)} \frac{Q_\perp}{\tilde{P}_\perp} \frac{(\zeta^4 + 6\zeta^2 z^2 + z^4) F_1^{(1,1)} - 2\zeta z (\zeta - z)^2 F_2^{(1,1)} - 4\zeta^2 z^2 F_3^{(1,1)}}{(\zeta^4 + 6\zeta^2 z^2 + z^4) F_1 - 2\zeta z (\zeta - z)^2 F_2 - 4\zeta^2 z^2 F_3} + O\left(Q_\perp^3/\tilde{P}_\perp^3\right), \quad (4.3)$$

with  $F_i^{(a,b)} = F_i^{(a,b)}(x_A, (1-z)^2 \tilde{\mathbf{P}}_\perp^2/z^2)$  are the moments of the distributions  $F_i$ . Even though  $\tilde{P}_\perp$  is hard, since  $1-z \ll 1$ , the argument of the distribution functions is sensitive to scales appropriate for exploring saturation effects. On Fig. 2 we show results for  $a_1$  using the MV model. Results for  $a_2$  are qualitatively similar, but overall suppressed due to the  $Q_\perp^2/\tilde{P}_\perp^2$  prefactor.



**Figure 2:** Angular correlation  $a_1$  for inclusive  $g \rightarrow q\gamma$  to order  $Q_\perp^2/\tilde{P}_\perp^2$  using the MV model with two different saturation scales. We take  $Q_\perp/\tilde{P}_\perp = 0.1$ ,  $z = 3/4$  and  $\zeta = 1$ . Fig. from [18].

## 5. Conclusions

We have calculated complete analytical result for the photon production at NLO in the CGC framework. We have found that  $g \rightarrow \gamma$  is numerically much smaller than the  $g \rightarrow q\bar{q}\gamma$  channel due to phase space restrictions. For LHC phenomenology it is important to take into account the effects of quantum evolution. In the case of photon-jet final state we have found interesting all-orders azimuthal harmonics from back-to-back kinematics sensitive to the saturation physics.

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