The Cosmic Web



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The Universe in a box - 1983

- Put 32 768 particles in a box 160 Mpc on a side (520 light years)
- Only gravity at work (between particles)
- Start at z=5.25 (1.1 billion years after the Big Bang)
- Run the model till z=0 (present time 13.7 billion years after the Big Bang)

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1983

Contours of constant density

Interconnected dense regions

Notice 'pancakes' and 'filaments'



Fig. 1 A cellular structure of interconnecting dense regions forms in the dark matter, shown here on our three-dimensional spatial coordinate system. Isodensity contours $\rho/\delta > 2$ are shown at an expansion factor of 125 for a high-density model, $\Omega_0 = 1.07$. At this stage, most of the dark matter is undergoing strong nonlinear collapse $(\delta \rho / \rho)_{rms} > 1$. Our large number of clouds, $\sim 9 \times 10^3$, makes it possible to resolve both filaments and the lower density contrast pancakes with isodensity contours.

The Millenium Simulation - 2004

- More than 10 billion particles to trace the evolution of the matter distribution in a cubic region of the Universe over 2 billion light-years on a side
- Each particle has mass 8.6 x 10⁸ solar mass
- 512 processors with 1TB of memory (IBM p690 supercomputer)
- 1 month run time
- Output 25 Tb
- 20 million galaxies formed

z=18.3 t = 0.21 Gyr



z=5.7 t = 1.0 Gyr



z=1.4 t = 4.7 Gyr



z=0 t = 13.6 Gyr







z=0 (t = 13.6 Gyr)

z=18.3 (t = 0.21 Gyr)



The Illustris simulations 2013

- 12 billion resolution elements in a box volume 106.5Mpc on aside
- The largest Illustris simulation was run on 8,192 compute cores, and took 100 days or 19 million CPU hours



- ~ 10 PB Disk Space
- Power consumption ~3.2MW



HST

Illustris

IllustrisTNG 2107



DM density

Gas density

Stellar density

37 Mpc

IllustrisTNG 2107



Cosmic large-scale structure. The baryonic density field, where image 'brightness' indicates mass density and color hue visualizes gas temperature.

The region is about 375 Mpc (1.2B ly) across

So, is the Cosmic Web just a simulation effect?

Or is it real?

CfA 1988

"As the number of galaxies mapped in three dimensions grew from hundreds to thousands to tens of thousands large scale structures began to emerge. It appeared that galaxies were not distributed uniformly throughout space. Rather there were huge voids, like vast bubbles where there were no galaxies at all, and long filaments and sheets filled with galaxies. The largest structure of all, known as the "Great Wall" of galaxies was discovered and reported in 1989, which is when Geller's and Huchra's project came to the attention of the media."



2001 - Chandra detects hot gas filaments

Four independent teams have detected intergalactic gas with temperatures in the range 300,000 to 5 million degrees Celsius by observing quasars with the Chandra X-ray Observatory. The astronomers were able to estimate the temperature, density and mass of the absorbing gas cloud.

The hot gas, which appears to lie like a fog in channels carved by rivers of gravity, has been hidden from view since the time galaxies formed. It is thought that this gas forms part of a web, of hot gas and dark matter that defines the cosmic landscape.

The hot gas part of this system could contain more material than all the stars in the universe. Ultraviolet telescopes had detected cooler components of the hot gas system, but most of it is now known to be detectable only with an extremely sensitive X-ray telescope.

There appears to be a filament in which the Milky Way and Andromeda galaxies are embedded, whereas other detected portions are at distances of a few billion light years from Earth.

Merali 2012 – Detection by weak lensing



A filament 'bridge' between two galaxies

Cantalupo 2014





The image contains 65 resolved radio galaxy jets. The spatial distribution reveals a prominent alignment of jet position angles along a 'filament' of about 1 degree. Taylor 2016 (UCT)

Where are the missing baryons?

Observations of galaxies and galaxy clusters in the local universe can account for only 10% of the baryon content inferred from measurements of the cosmic microwave background and from nuclear reactions in the early Universe.

In cosmological simulations the 'missing baryons' are spread throughout filamentary structures in the cosmic web, forming a low density gas with temperatures of 100 000 10 000 degrees Kelvin. Difficult to observe this diffuse warm-hot filamentary gas via X-ray emission or absorption in guasar spectra

The **Sloan Digital Sky Survey** (SDSS) has created the most detailed threedimensional maps of the Universe ever made, with deep multi-color images of one third of the sky, and spectra for more than three million astronomical objects

Looked for pairs of galaxies with separation 6 to 14 Mpc

Found one million pairs of galaxies with a mean pair separation of 10 Mpc.

Stacked the relevant Compton maps after rescaling (Sunyaev-Zel'dovich effect)

Cosmic Microwave Background

370 000 years after the Big Bang





Warm-hot baryons in stacked filaments were detected through the thermal Sunyaev-Zel'dovich (SZ) effect, which arises from the distortion in the cosmic microwave background spectrum due to ionised gas.

The estimated gas density in these 15 Mpc-long filaments is approximately 6 times the mean universal baryon density, and overall this can account for 30% of the total baryon content of the Universe.

This suggests that the missing baryons problem may be resolved via observations of the cosmic web.

Galaxy Orientation - West 2017

A galaxy's orientation is one of its most basic observable properties.

Using Hubble Space Telescope observations of 65 distant galaxy clusters, we show for the first time that similar alignments are seen at earlier epochs when the universe was only one-third its current age.

These results suggest that the brightest galaxies in clusters are the product of a special formation history, one influenced by development of the cosmic web over billions of years.



The Cosmic V-Web Pomarede et al 2017



PERSEUS-PISCES





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Missing baryons in the cosmic web - de Graaff 2017

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