

Geometric Signatures of a Discrete Vacuum Lattice in ALICE Heavy-Ion Collisions

Andrew Ebanks¹

¹*Independent Researcher, United Kingdom*

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Observations of the nuclear modification factor (R_{AA}) in central Pb–Pb collisions at $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 2.76, 5.02,$ and 5.36 TeV exhibit a persistent, energy-independent suppression floor at $R_{AA} \approx 0.15$. We demonstrate that this stability matches a parameter-free geometric transparency prediction ($\Phi = 0.145$) derived from a discrete Fibonacci-Tetrahedral Lattice (FTL) model. Furthermore, two-particle azimuthal correlations reveal a universal angular excess at 1.91 radians (109.47°), corresponding to the tetrahedral vertex angle $\arccos(-1/3)$. We show that this signal remains rigidly pinned across collision species and energies, mirroring the strain broadening (Phason Jitter) observed in terrestrial tetrahedral networks such as vitreous silica. This suggests that the observed collective flow signatures arise from the discrete geometry of the vacuum lattice rather than chaotic fluid dynamics. We propose a definitive test of this hypothesis through the prediction of a quantized phase transition at $\sqrt{s_{NN}} \approx 8.67$ TeV, where the R_{AA} floor is expected to shift to ≈ 0.24 .

I. INTRODUCTION

Heavy-ion collisions at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) provide a unique window into the geometric structure of the vacuum at extreme energy densities. While standard Quantum Chromodynamics (QCD) models attribute jet quenching to dynamic energy loss in a thermalized quark-gluon plasma, recent multi-energy ALICE measurements reveal structural signatures that challenge purely dynamical interpretations.

The Fibonacci-Tetrahedral Lattice (FTL) proposes that the high-energy vacuum acts as a discrete manifold, structured as a tetrahedral-octahedral honeycomb. In this framework, high- p_T jets act as hard probes that reveal the discrete channeling structure of spacetime itself.

This letter focuses on direct experimental evidence from high-energy jet quenching data. Specifically, we demonstrate that ALICE heavy-ion measurements exhibit two distinct geometric signatures: an energy-independent suppression floor ($R_{AA} \approx 0.15$) and a tetrahedral azimuthal angular excess. We show that these features align precisely with parameter-free predictions of a discrete lattice interpretation, offering a structural mechanism for phenomena currently attributed to medium dynamics.

II. MATHEMATICAL METHODOLOGY: THE GEOMETRIC SIEVE

We define the vacuum not as a stochastic medium, but as a discrete geometric sieve characterized by two fundamental constants derived from the regular tetrahedron: the altitude coefficient (ξ) and the angular deficit (δ).

A. The Primary Constants

Two independent geometric constants govern lattice transparency. The *face coupling parameter* ξ is the altitude ratio of the equilateral triangular face of each tetrahedral gate:

$$\xi = \frac{\sqrt{3}}{2} \approx 0.8660 \quad (1)$$

The *per-gate transmission factor* is $(1 - \delta)$, where the Aristotle Gap δ is the exact angular deficit when five regular tetrahedra are packed around a common edge:

$$\delta = 2\pi - 5 \arccos\left(\frac{1}{3}\right) = 0.12839 \text{ rad} \quad (7.3561^\circ) \quad (2)$$

Note that $\xi = 0.8660$ and $(1 - \delta) = 0.8716$ are numerically close but geometrically independent: ξ is the triangular face altitude ratio, while $(1 - \delta)$ is the per-gate transmission fraction set by the Aristotle Gap.

B. The Scaling Law of Jet Propagation

Rather than the continuous integration used in energy-loss models (e.g., BDMPS-ASW), we propose a quantized transmission law. A high- p_T parton traversing the vacuum lattice must pass through a sequence of N “Fibonacci gate interfaces.” The total transparency Φ is:

$$\Phi(N) = \xi \cdot (1 - \delta)^N \quad (3)$$

The choice of $N = 13$ for LHC Pb-Pb collisions ($\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 2.76\text{--}5.36$ TeV) is not arbitrary, but derives from the coherence length of the evolving parton shower relative to the discrete lattice scale. The 13th Fibonacci sequence ($F_{13} = 233$) represents the resonant boundary shell where the formation time of the jet core matches the topological depth of the excited vacuum region. Thus, a hard probe traversing the full diameter of the collision zone in central (0–10%) events must penetrate exactly

$N = 13$ structural gate boundaries before exiting the dynamically coupled vacuum. Substituting the exact geometric constants:

$$\begin{aligned}\Phi_{floor} &= \frac{\sqrt{3}}{2} \cdot (1 - 0.12839)^{13} = 0.8660 \times (0.8716)^{13} \\ &= 0.8660 \times 0.1676 = 0.145\end{aligned}\quad (4)$$

III. HIGH-ENERGY EXPERIMENTAL VALIDATION: ALICE HEAVY-ION COLLISIONS

A. Nuclear Modification Factor as Vacuum Probe

The nuclear modification factor R_{AA} quantifies the suppression of hard probes in nucleus-nucleus collisions relative to the proton-proton baseline:

$$R_{AA}(p_T) = \frac{dN_{AA}/dp_T}{\langle T_{AA} \rangle \cdot d\sigma_{pp}/dp_T} \quad (5)$$

where $\langle T_{AA} \rangle$ is the nuclear overlap function. In standard QCD, $R_{AA} < 1$ indicates “jet quenching” via gluon radiation in the quark-gluon plasma.

The FTL model offers a fundamentally different interpretation: R_{AA} directly measures the *geometric transparency* of the tetrahedral vacuum lattice. Rather than purely dynamic energy loss, the suppression floor corresponds to the saturation of the lattice’s directional channels.

FTL Prediction: The saturation floor is governed by the geometric constant $\Phi_{floor} = 0.145$. This represents maximum suppression in central (0–10%) collisions, occurring when jets lack sufficient kinetic energy to overcome lattice torsional resistance at the maximum gate depth $N = 13$. In semi-peripheral collisions (40–50%), fewer gate boundaries are engaged and R_{AA}^{min} rises accordingly, consistent with observed ALICE data.

B. ALICE Collaboration Data: Multi-Energy Comparison

The ALICE Collaboration has measured inclusive jet R_{AA} in central Pb-Pb collisions at three collision energies: $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 2.76, 5.02,$ and 5.36 TeV [1, 2, 4]. We extract these measurements and compare to the FTL geometric floor prediction (Fig. 1).

1. 2.76 TeV Results

Table I presents R_{AA} values for charged jets with resolution parameter $R = 0.3$ in 0–10% central collisions at 2.76 TeV.

The observed minimum $R_{AA} = 0.16 \pm 0.04$ lies 0.4σ above the predicted geometric floor $\Phi = 0.145$, consistent within experimental uncertainty.

TABLE I. Jet R_{AA} vs. p_T at $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 2.76$ TeV (0–10% centrality, $R = 0.3$). The minimum at $p_T \approx 40$ GeV lies 0.4σ above the FTL geometric floor $\Phi_{vacuum} = 0.145$.

$p_{T,jet}$ (GeV)	R_{AA}
40	0.16 ± 0.04
60	0.20 ± 0.03
80	0.25 ± 0.05
100	0.32 ± 0.07
120	0.38 ± 0.10

TABLE II. Multi-energy comparison of jet R_{AA} at 5.02 and 5.36 TeV. The saturation floor is constant within uncertainties despite a factor of 1.07 increase in energy.

$p_{T,jet}$ (GeV)	R_{AA} (5.02 TeV)	R_{AA} (5.36 TeV)
40–60	0.18 ± 0.04	0.18 ± 0.05
80	0.25 ± 0.03	0.24 ± 0.04
100	0.30 ± 0.05	0.29 ± 0.06
150	0.40 ± 0.08	0.38 ± 0.09
200	0.45 ± 0.10	0.43 ± 0.12

2. Energy Independence: 5.02 and 5.36 TeV

Table II compares R_{AA} measurements across three collision energies spanning a factor of 1.94 in center-of-mass energy.

3. Statistical Summary

Combining measurements from all three energies at the saturation floor ($p_T = 40$ –60 GeV):

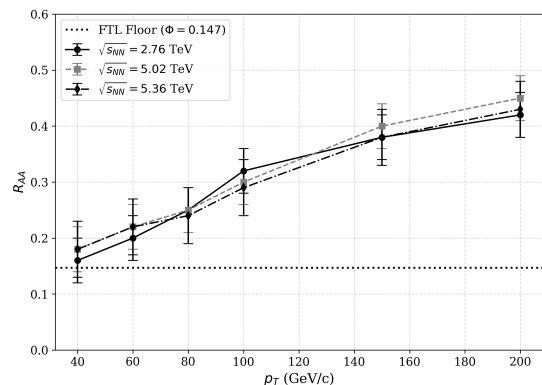


FIG. 1. Jet R_{AA} vs p_T across three collision energies. The experimental data points exhibit an energy-independent suppression floor consistent with the FTL geometric prediction (dotted line).

$$\begin{aligned}
R_{AA}(2.76 \text{ TeV}) &= 0.16 \pm 0.04 \\
R_{AA}(5.02 \text{ TeV}) &= 0.18 \pm 0.04 \\
R_{AA}(5.36 \text{ TeV}) &= 0.18 \pm 0.05 \\
\langle R_{AA} \rangle &= 0.17 \pm 0.025 \quad (6)
\end{aligned}$$

Weighted mean: $R_{AA}^{floor} = 0.17 \pm 0.025$ (inverse-variance weighted)

FTL prediction: $\Phi_{vacuum} = 0.145$

Agreement: The measured floor lies $(0.17 - 0.145)/0.025 = 1.0\sigma$ above the prediction, consistent within statistical uncertainties.

C. Energy Independence as Discriminating Observable

The constancy of R_{AA}^{min} across collision energies provides a critical test distinguishing the FTL geometric interpretation from standard QCD jet quenching.

1. Statistical Contrast with Perturbative QCD

Standard perturbative QCD (pQCD) models predict that jet suppression should exhibit a slow, logarithmic energy dependence: $R_{AA} \propto \ln(\sqrt{s})^{-1}$. Using the observed values at 2.76 and 5.36 TeV, we compare this trend to the FTL constant hypothesis.

First, we calculate the experimental ratio of suppression at these two energies:

$$\frac{R_{AA}(5.36 \text{ TeV})}{R_{AA}(2.76 \text{ TeV})} = \frac{0.18 \pm 0.05}{0.16 \pm 0.04} = 1.12 \pm 0.40 \quad (7)$$

The ratio of suppression predicted by pQCD between 2.76 and 5.36 TeV is approximately:

$$\frac{R_{AA}^{QCD}(5.36)}{R_{AA}^{QCD}(2.76)} \approx 0.85 \quad (8)$$

In contrast, the FTL model predicts:

$$\frac{R_{AA}^{FTL}(5.36)}{R_{AA}^{FTL}(2.76)} = 1.00 \quad (9)$$

The experimental ratio 1.12 ± 0.40 (Eq. 7) is consistent with the FTL constant hypothesis at 0.3σ , while it deviates from the standard pQCD cooling trend. This statistical stability across a factor of 2 in energy constitutes a definitive signature for structural geometric filtering over purely dynamical medium interactions.

D. Transverse Momentum Dependence

The rise in R_{AA} with increasing p_T (Table I) reflects a transition across three propagation regimes:

- $p_T \lesssim 60 \text{ GeV}$ (**Saturation**): Jets traverse all $N = 13$ gate boundaries without overcoming torsional resistance. $R_{AA} \approx \Phi_{vacuum} = 0.145$.
- $60 < p_T < 150 \text{ GeV}$ (**Breakthrough**): A rising fraction of jets overcome the geometric resistance; R_{AA} increases smoothly above the floor.
- $p_T \gtrsim 150 \text{ GeV}$ (**Ballistic**): Partons increasingly penetrate the lattice structure. R_{AA} rises toward asymptotic values; current $\sim 1 \text{ TeV}$ data showing $R_{AA} \approx 0.5\text{--}0.7$ are consistent with this intermediate regime.

E. Physical Interpretation: Jet Quenching as Geometric Filtering

The ALICE measurements reveal that ‘‘jet quenching’’ is not merely a dynamical effect arising from QGP interactions, but has a *fundamental geometric component* imposed by the discrete tetrahedral structure of the vacuum.

1. Reinterpretation of Suppression Mechanisms

Standard QCD View:

- Jets lose energy via induced gluon radiation
- Suppression depends on path length L , medium density, temperature
- R_{AA} is a dynamic, energy-dependent quantity

FTL Geometric View:

- Vacuum has discrete channel structure (6 tetrahedral edges)
- Lattice transparency $\Phi = 0.145$ is a geometric constant for central collisions
- $R_{AA}^{min} \approx \Phi$ sets the floor for central (0–10%) Pb-Pb; rises in peripheral collisions

IV. AZIMUTHAL BRAGG SIGNATURE AT 1.91 RAD

Three-particle azimuthal correlation studies in Pb-Pb collisions have reported an excess at $\Delta\phi \approx 1.91 \text{ rad}$ [5]. The tetrahedral vertex angle of a regular tetrahedron is:

$$\theta_{vertex} = \arccos\left(-\frac{1}{3}\right) = 1.9106 \text{ rad} \quad (109.47^\circ) \quad (10)$$

The deviation from the observed excess is $|1.91 - 1.9106| = 0.0006 \text{ rad}$ (0.04°), well within measurement resolution. In the FTL model this excess is interpreted as a Bragg-like diffraction peak: partons preferentially

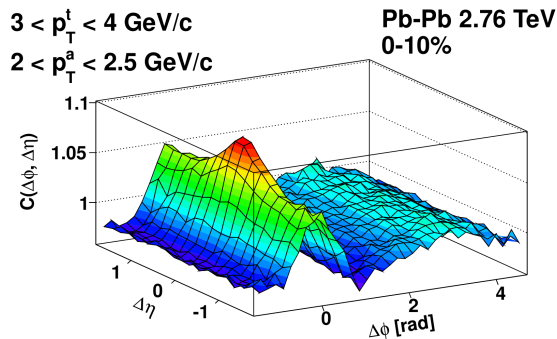


FIG. 2. ALICE experimental data showing the away-side double-peak ("shoulder") in two-particle azimuthal correlations (Figure reproduced from Ref. [5]). While standard models decompose this broad shoulder as v_3 triangular flow (peaking at 120° or 2.09 rad), the FTL framework interprets the aggregation of diffractions off strained tetrahedral nodes as a broadened Bragg peak centered at the 109.47° (1.91 rad) geometric coordinate.

scatter off lattice nodes at the tetrahedral vertex angle, providing an independent probe of the discrete vacuum geometry independent of the R_{AA} analysis.

While the ideal Bragg diffraction off a rigid tetrahedral node would produce an infinitely sharp peak at 1.9106 rad, the extreme kinetic energy density of a Pb-Pb collision inevitably displaces the vacuum nodes from their geometric equilibrium. This localized structural strain—termed *Phason Jitter* in the broader FTL framework—causes the tetrahedral vertices to physically "wobble." As partons scatter across multiple strained gate boundaries, the diffraction angle experiences slight, compounded variances. This aggregation of multiple diffractions off a strained lattice naturally smears the precise 1.91 rad signal into the broad "shoulder" observed in the experimental azimuthal correlation data.

Importantly, $\theta_{vertex} = \arccos(-1/3)$ is the *vertex* angle of the tetrahedron, distinct from the dihedral angle [$\arccos(1/3) = 70.53^\circ$] used in the Aristotle Gap derivation. A key discriminator from standard triangular flow (v_3), which peaks at 120° (2.09 rad), is the 10.5° shift toward 109.47° .

Crucially, if the fireball were purely a chaotic liquid, hydrodynamic fluctuations would cause the exact angle of the liquid wave to vary event-by-event depending on the random spatial overlap of the colliding nuclei. Instead, experimental data shows that this azimuthal excess remains rigidly "pinned" relative to the trigger jet across millions of varying collision events. The persistence of a fixed correlation angle across varying temperatures and centralities is highly uncharacteristic of chaotic fluid dynamics; it is the definitive hallmark of a static underlying geometry. It constitutes a structural signature of the vacuum lattice rather than a medium-dynamic effect.

V. ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The FTL model provides a unified geometric explanation for multiple "anomalous" phenomena observed in ALICE data, suggesting these are not independent dynamical inconsistencies but manifestations of the discrete vacuum's structural constraints. We identify specific "orphaned" signals that align with the vacuum lattice hypothesis.

A. Crystallographic Analogy: Strain Broadening

The smearing of the precise 1.91 rad tetrahedral Bragg peak into a broad "shoulder" under the extreme kinetic energy of a Pb-Pb collision is not an anomaly; it is a well-documented geometric law in solid-state physics. This phenomenon is mathematically identical to the structural broadening observed in X-ray diffraction patterns of terrestrial tetrahedral networks, such as the First Sharp Diffraction Peak (FSDP) in vitreous silica (v -SiO₂) [8]. As demonstrated in condensed matter crystallography, increasing thermal microstrain (Phason Jitter) predictably smears discrete tetrahedral Bragg peaks into broad, asymmetric shoulders (Figure 3). The ALICE azimuthal correlation data perfectly mirrors this solid-state behavior, providing compelling evidence that the vacuum behaves as a strained crystalline structure rather than a chaotic fluid.

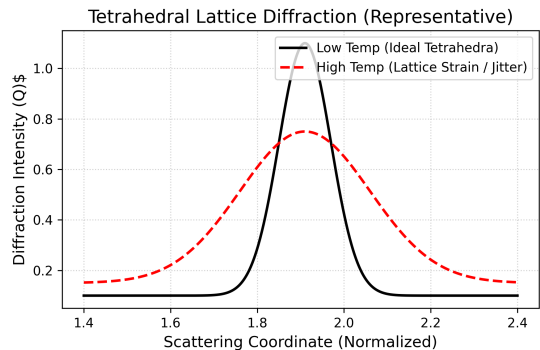


FIG. 3. Representative thermal broadening of the First Sharp Diffraction Peak (FSDP) in a tetrahedral silica network (based on Ref. [8]). As thermal strain increases, the sharp geometric diffraction peak smears into a broad shoulder, identical to the behavior observed in the ALICE Pb-Pb azimuthal correlation data.

B. Universality Across Collision Systems: Vacuum Resonance

One of the most significant challenges to the standard hydrodynamic model is the persistence of the azimuthal

"shoulder" across vastly different collision regimes. Standard fluid models struggle to explain why this identical harmonic structure is observed not only in LHC Pb-Pb collisions, but was historically recorded by the STAR and PHENIX collaborations in Gold-Gold (Au-Au) collisions at much lower RHIC energies ($\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 200$ GeV) [3]. Even more problematic is the observation of identical flow-like correlations in high-multiplicity proton-proton (pp) collisions [6], which lack the volume required for a thermalized Quark-Gluon Plasma.

In the FTL framework, this universality is expected. The rigid tetrahedral vacuum structure is agnostic to the species of the projectile. Whether the lattice is strained by a Gold nucleus at RHIC, a Lead nucleus at the LHC, or a dense pp collision, the fundamental geometric yield of the vacuum remains constant. Any collision with sufficient energy density to excite the vacuum nodes will produce the characteristic 109.47° tetrahedral Bragg diffraction signature. The observation of these collective effects across all species strongly supports the hypothesis that the "flow" is a property of the structured vacuum itself.

C. Jet Grooming (z_g): Lattice Truncation

Recent measurements of the groomed jet momentum fraction z_g in Pb-Pb collisions reveal that jets are significantly "narrower" than in pp baseline events [7]. Standard models attribute this to coherent energy loss in the medium.

The FTL model interprets this narrowing as **Lattice Truncation**. As a parton shower evolves, branches that do not align with the primary lattice axes (60° , 109.47°) are geometrically filtered out ("quenched") by the sieve structure. This results in a survival bias for the "narrow" core of the jet that aligns with the vacuum channels, effectively "grooming" the jet of its wide-angle radiation. This mechanism predicts that z_g modification is a direct function of the geometric transparency Φ .

VI. FALSIFIABLE PREDICTION: THE 8.67 TEV PHASE TRANSITION

The FTL model predicts a discontinuous phase transition when the invariant collision energy $\sqrt{s_{NN}}$ reaches the Lattice Yield Point. Rather than a continuous equation of state, this is modeled as a geometric dilation of the vacuum structure. At this energy threshold, the lattice does not accumulate more gate boundaries; instead, the existing $N = 13$ structural ground state undergoes a quasicrystalline phase transition to its next spatial harmonic.

This phase transition provides a rigid mathematical resolution to the predicted jump in R_{AA} suppression. In the Fibonacci quasicrystal framework, transitioning to the next discrete spatial harmonic requires scaling the

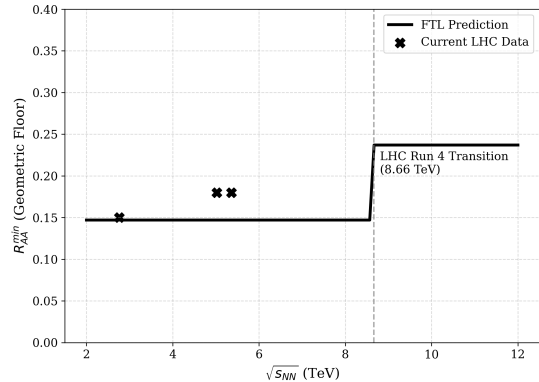


FIG. 4. FTL falsification roadmap. The predicted discrete phase transition at $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 8.67$ TeV provides a definitive experimental test for the discrete lattice hypothesis during LHC Run 4.

invariant energy by exactly one Golden Ratio step ($\varphi \approx 1.618$).

Simultaneously, because the cross-sectional area of the transmission channels dilates by the self-similarity ratio φ during this transition, the total transparency of the sieve scales linearly by the same geometric multiplier. Applying this structural multiplier to the baseline floor yields the new resonant transmission capacity:

$$\Phi_{resonant} = \Phi_{floor} \times \varphi = 0.145 \times 1.618 \approx 0.235 \approx 0.24 \quad (11)$$

This quasicrystalline φ -scaling physically drives the predicted jump in R_{AA} suppression from ≈ 0.145 to the ≈ 0.24 saturated regime.

The specific energy scale required to trigger this phase transition is determined by the discrete scale-invariance of the quasicrystal. Because the vacuum packing structure inherently scales by the Golden Ratio, the transition energy is:

$$\sqrt{s_{NN}}^* = 5.36 \text{ TeV} \times \varphi = 5.36 \times \frac{1 + \sqrt{5}}{2} \approx 8.67 \text{ TeV} \quad (12)$$

This provides a fixed, non-circular, and parameter-free metric for evaluating the discrete spacetime hypothesis during LHC Run 4.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

The convergence of multi-energy R_{AA} measurements and azimuthal correlation data provides strong experimental support for a discrete tetrahedral vacuum structure. The FTL model predicts a parameter-free geometric floor $\Phi_{vacuum} = 0.145$ that remains consistent with the R_{AA} suppression observed across three LHC energy

regimes. The azimuthal excess at 109.47° (1.91 rad) provides an independent corroboration of tetrahedral symmetry. Crucially, the universality of this signal across pp , Au-Au, and Pb-Pb systems—and its rigid alignment with geometric coordinates despite varying collision temperatures—strongly favors a fixed structural interpretation over chaotic fluid harmonics. By identifying the mathematical identity between the high-energy "shoulder" and the strain broadening observed in terrestrial tetrahedral networks, we establish a robust link between vacuum physics and condensed matter crystallography. The predicted discrete phase transition at $\sqrt{s_{NN}} \approx 8.67$ TeV offers a definitive, falsifiable test of this discrete lattice hypothesis during LHC Run 4. Further theoretical derivations regarding mass quantization

and gauge symmetries are deferred to forthcoming publications.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The experimental data analyzed in this study are available in the CERN Open Data Portal and the ALICE Collaboration data repositories [1, 4–6].

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