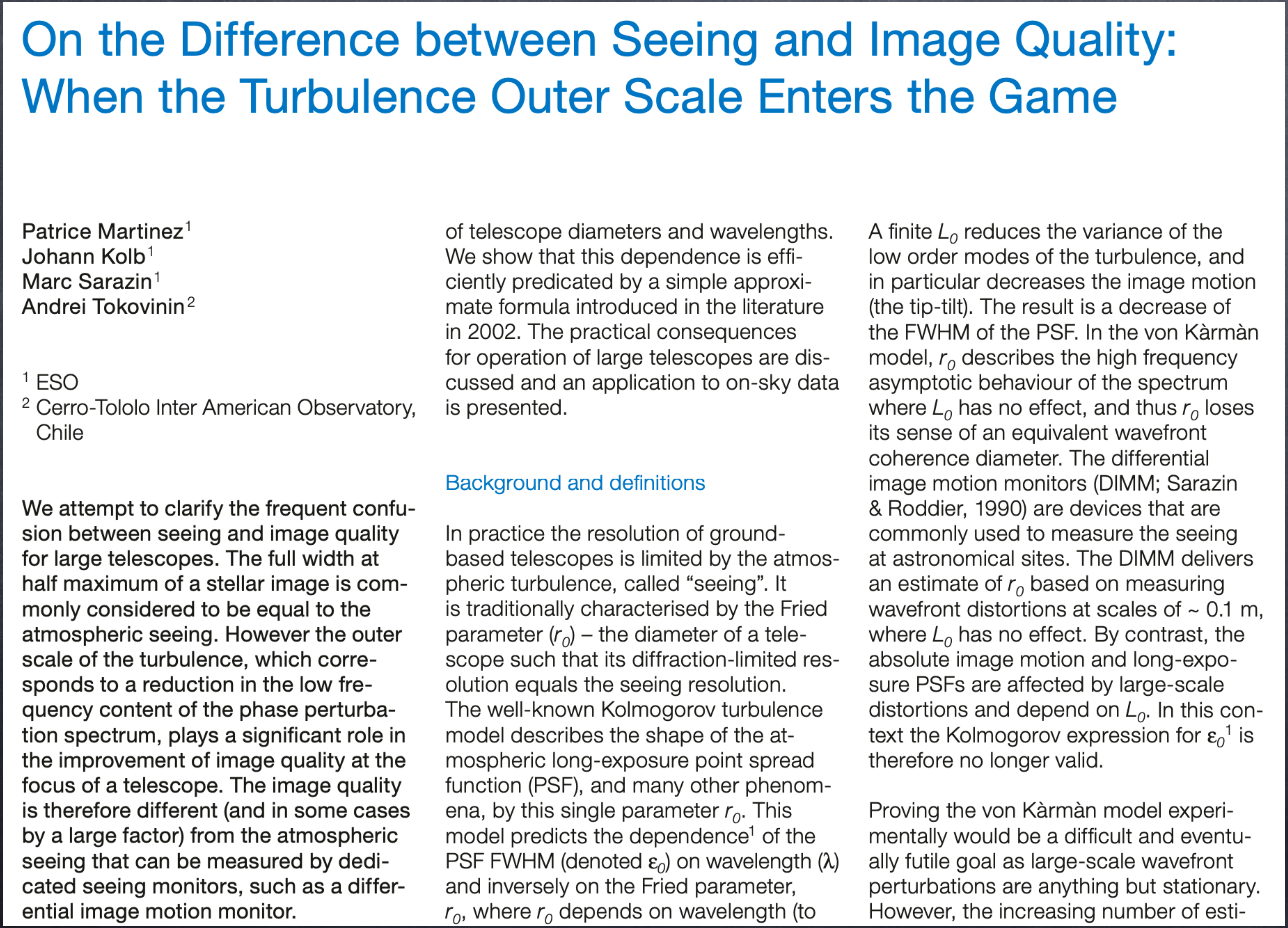
Images & turbulence — 25



On the Difference between Seeing and Image Quality: When the Turbulence Outer Scale Enters the Game

Patrice Martinez[1]
Johann Kolb[1]
Marc Sarazin[1]
Andrei Tokovinin[2]

[1] ESO
[2] Cerro-Tololo Inter American Observatory, Chile

We attempt to clarify the frequent confusion between seeing and image quality for large telescopes. The full width at half maximum of a stellar image is commonly considered to be equal to the atmospheric seeing. However the outer scale of the turbulence, which corresponds to a reduction in the low frequency content of the phase perturbation spectrum, plays a significant role in the improvement of image quality at the focus of a telescope. The image quality is therefore different (and in some cases by a large factor) from the atmospheric seeing that can be measured by dedicated seeing monitors, such as a differential image motion monitor.

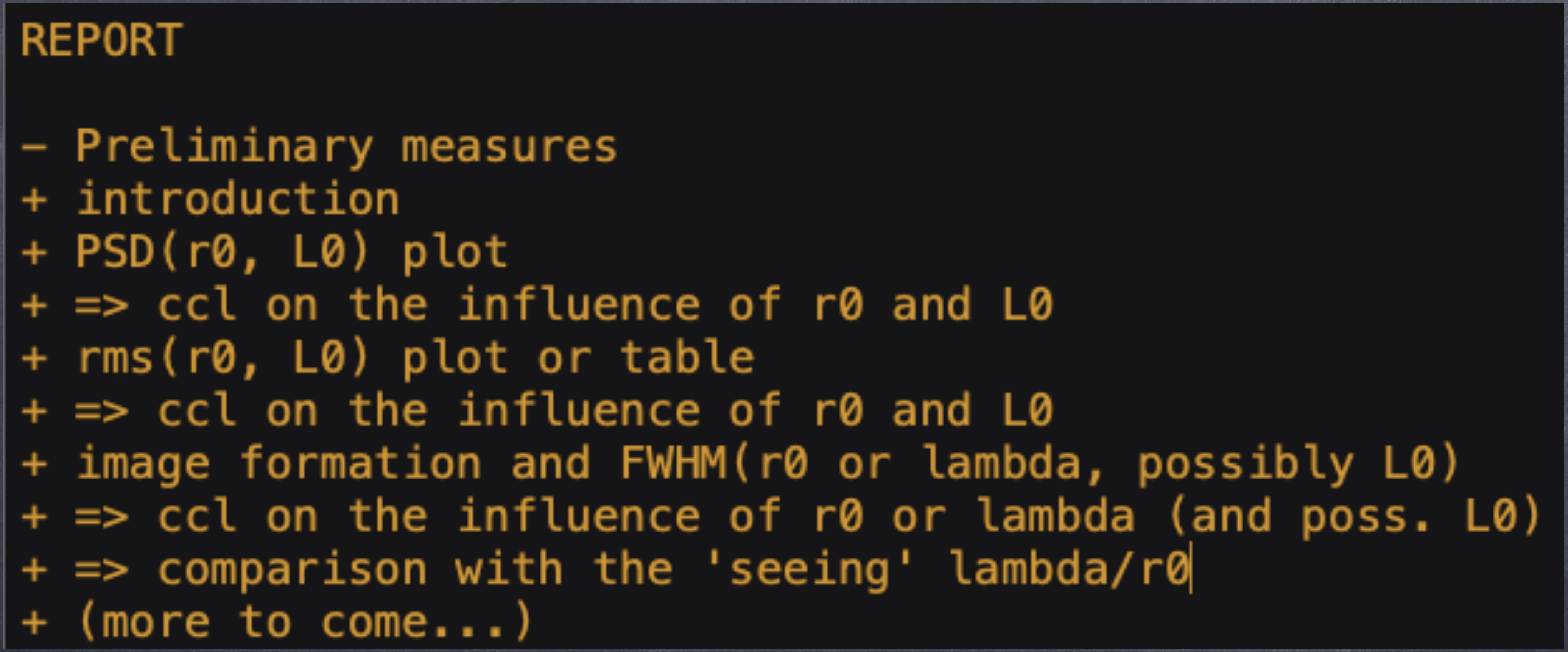
of telescope diameters and wavelengths. We show that this dependence is efficiently predicated by a simple approximate formula introduced in the literature in 2002. The practical consequences for operation of large telescopes are discussed and an application to on-sky data is presented.

Background and definitions

In practice the resolution of ground-based telescopes is limited by the atmospheric turbulence, called “seeing”. It is traditionally characterised by the Fried parameter (r_0) – the diameter of a telescope such that its diffraction-limited resolution equals the seeing resolution. The well-known Kolmogorov turbulence model describes the shape of the atmospheric long-exposure point spread function (PSF), and many other phenomena, by this single parameter r_0. This model predicts the dependence[1] of the PSF FWHM (denoted ε_0) on wavelength (λ) and inversely on the Fried parameter, r_0, where r_0 depends on wavelength (to

A finite L_0 reduces the variance of the low order modes of the turbulence, and in particular decreases the image motion (the tip-tilt). The result is a decrease of the FWHM of the PSF. In the von Kàrmàn model, r_0 describes the high frequency asymptotic behaviour of the spectrum where L_0 has no effect, and thus r_0 loses its sense of an equivalent wavefront coherence diameter. The differential image motion monitors (DIMM; Sarazin & Roddier, 1990) are devices that are commonly used to measure the seeing at astronomical sites. The DIMM delivers an estimate of r_0 based on measuring wavefront distortions at scales of ~ 0.1 m, where L_0 has no effect. By contrast, the absolute image motion and long-exposure PSFs are affected by large-scale distortions and depend on L_0. In this context the Kolmogorov expression for ε_0[1] is therefore no longer valid.

Proving the von Kàrmàn model experimentally would be a difficult and eventually futile goal as large-scale wavefront perturbations are anything but stationary. However, the increasing number of esti-



```
REPORT

- Preliminary measures
+ introduction
+ PSD(r0, L0) plot
+ => ccl on the influence of r0 and L0
+ rms(r0, L0) plot or table
+ => ccl on the influence of r0 and L0
+ image formation and FWHM(r0 or lambda, possibly L0)
+ => ccl on the influence of r0 or lambda (and poss. L0)
+ => comparison with the 'seeing' lambda/r0
+ (more to come...)
```

Images & turbulence — 26

-> Detection noises:

- At first: *photon noise* (or *shot noise*), poissonian, actually a transformation of the image.

$$p(n) = \frac{N^n e^{-N}}{n!}, \text{with} : N = \frac{L\Delta t}{h\nu}, L = \text{luminosity}, \Delta t = \text{time exp.}$$

p(n) = probability to detect n photons when N are expected

For large N: ~gaussian…

$$p(n) \simeq \exp\left(-\frac{(n-N)^2}{2N}\right)$$

Images & turbulence — 27

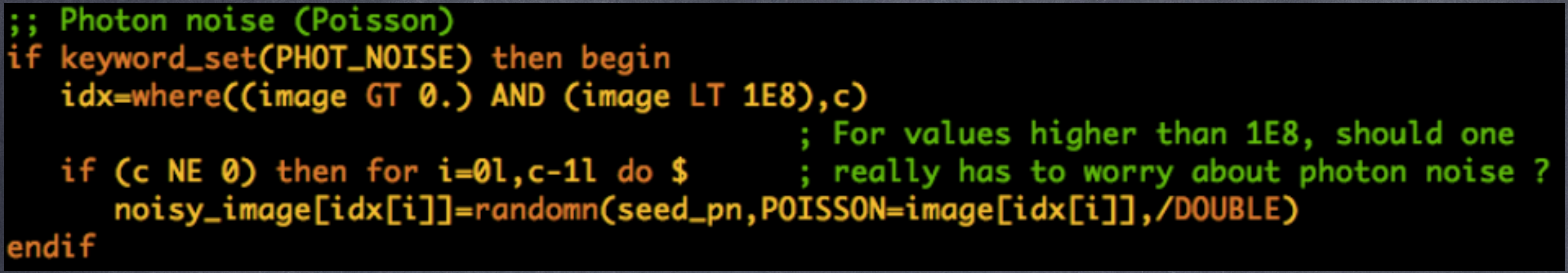
-> Detector noises:

- At first: *photon noise* (or *shot noise*), poissonian, actually a transformation of the image.

- At last: *read-out noise* (*RON*), gaussian with zero mean and rms σ_e [e-/px], additive noise.

- In between: *dark current noise, amplification noise* & *exotic dark current noise* in the case of EMCCDs, noise due to the *calibration* of the *flat field, 'salt & pepper' noise* ('hot' and 'cold' pixels), etc.

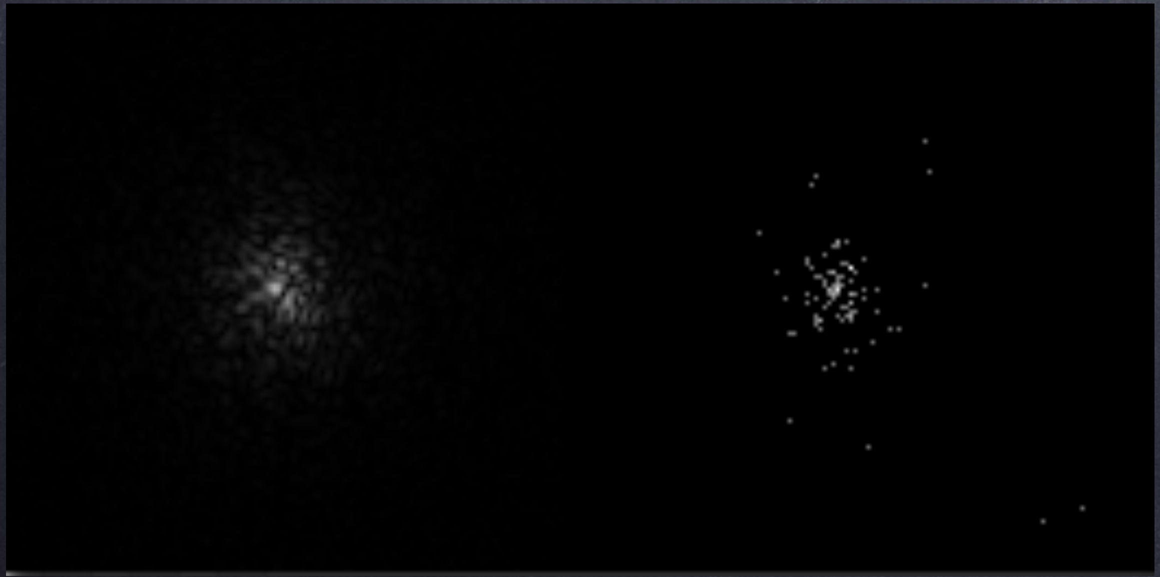
Images & turbulence — 28

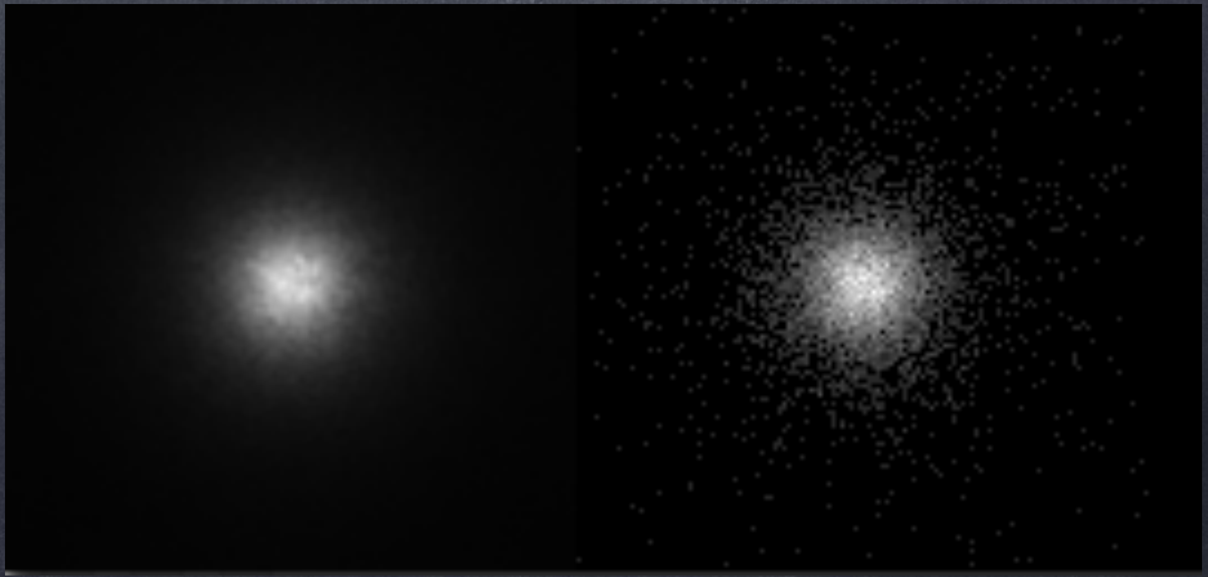


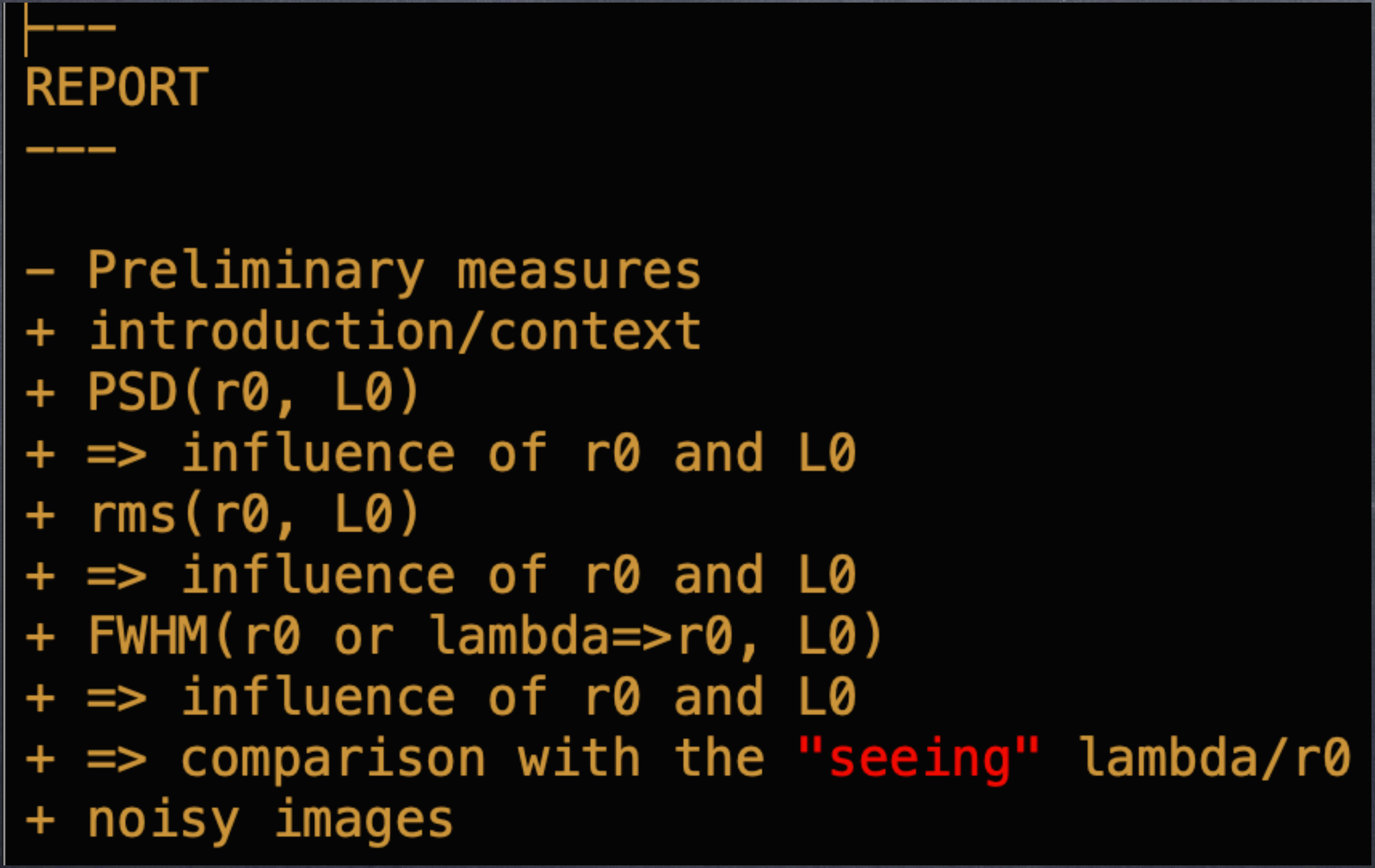
```
;; Photon noise (Poisson)
if keyword_set(PHOT_NOISE) then begin
   idx=where((image GT 0.) AND (image LT 1E8),c)
                                             ; For values higher than 1E8, should one
   if (c NE 0) then for i=0l,c-1l do $       ; really has to worry about photon noise ?
      noisy_image[idx[i]]=randomn(seed_pn,POISSON=image[idx[i]],/DOUBLE)
endif
```

image formation with noise:

1- ‘add’ photon noise on one short-exp. PSF (in function of N…),
2- long-exp. PSF (100N photons!),
3- ‘add’ photon noise on the long-exp. PSF,
4- compare long-exp. & short-exp. noisy images (and ‘clean’ images),
5- compare also with the sum of the (100) short-exp. noisy images…







```
---
REPORT
---


- Preliminary measures
+ introduction/context
+ PSD(r0, L0)
+ => influence of r0 and L0
+ rms(r0, L0)
+ => influence of r0 and L0
+ FWHM(r0 or lambda=>r0, L0)
+ => influence of r0 and L0
+ => comparison with the "seeing" lambda/r0
+ noisy images
```