

# Lidar sensor for Europa Clipper feasibility study

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## **Abstract**

This document investigates the feasibility of a lidar sensor based of performance requirements provided by NASA. The main focus of this study is both the required laser power and the resilience of the device against proton radiation. Other considerations include manufacturability, readout specifications and lens specifications. Based on the results of this study a design will be proposed. Finally a radiation test is performed to increase the knowledge about the radiation resilience of the technology used in the proposed design.

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# Introduction

The Europa Clipper is a planned mission by NASA to conduct detailed reconnaissance of Jupiter's moon Europa and investigate whether the moon could harbor conditions suitable for life. To aid in the landing process, a lidar sensor is proposed. The functionality of the lidar sensor is twofold. At high altitudes, the Lidar sensor must operate in Altimetry Mode, and be capable to accurately measure the altitude of the device with respect to the surface of Europa. When the Europa Clipper gets closer to Europa, the lidar sensor must switch to a Hazard Detection Mode, where it scans the landing site on the surface of Europa to make a heightmap to pick a suitable landing spot and to aid the final stages of the landing process.

This study will investigate the feasibility of such a lidar sensor. The focus will lie on required laser power to meet the required resolution, and the resilience of the device against proton irradiation.

Chapter 1 will state the relevant specifications as provided by NASA, and elaborate on the basic structure of the lidar sensor. Finally all assumptions used throughout the study will be listed. Chapter 2 will investigate design choices for the Altimetry Mode and make predictions about the feasibility of the proposed design. Chapter 3 will investigate design choices for the Hazard Detection Mode, with a larger emphasis on SPAD design and manufacturability. Chapter 4 will investigate the resilience against proton irradiation of the proposed technology by performing a radiation test with a proton beam. Finally chapter 5 will summarize the study and list a preliminary specsheet for the proposed design.

# Chapter 1

## Requirements and Specifications

### 1.1 High level specifications

The radiation and mass, power and volume budget are listed in table 1.1 and table 1.2.

Table 1.1: Overview of radiation limitations

| <b>Radiation</b>   |          |
|--|----------|
| Total Integrated Dose in Silicon behind 100 mil Al spherical shell | 500 krad |

Table 1.2: Requirements for mass, power and volume

| <b>Mass, Power &amp; Volume Budget</b>                |       |
|---|-------|
| Optical Head  | <5 kg |
| Inside vault  | <1 kg |
| Max cable length between optical head and electronics | 2 m   |
| Power   | <50 W |

The Lidar sensor features two operation modes: the Altimetry Mode, and the Hazard Detection Mode.

### 1.2 Altimetry Mode

Altimetry Mode is the first phase of the landing. During the Altimetry Mode, the Lidar sensor has to provide the altitude of the sensor in relationship to the surface of Europa. The requirements for the Altimetry Mode are listed in table 1.3

Table 1.3: Requirements for Altimetry Mode

| <b>Altimetry Mode</b>       | Threshold | Goal  |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-------|
| Max acquisition Slant Range | 5 km      | 8 km  |
| Range Accuracy (3-sigma)    | 1%        | 0.10% |
| Update Rate                 | 0.1 Hz    | 1 Hz  |

### 1.3 Hazard Detection Mode

During the Hazard Detection Mode a 3d map of the surface of Europa must be created around the landing place. The Hazard Mode is operational when the sensor is close enough to the surface of Europa. The requirements for the Hazard Detection Mode can be found in table 1.4

Table 1.4: Requirements for Hazard Detection Mode

| Hazard Detection Mode                        | Threshold     | Goal          |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| Max range (altitude)                         | 400 m         | 500 m         |
| Min Operational Range (altitude)             | 5 m           | 1 m           |
| Range Accurcay (3-sigma on final 3D map)     | 10 cm         | 5 cm          |
| Ground Sample Distance (per pixel on 3D map) | 10 cm         | 5 cm          |
| Ground Area Coverage at max altitude         | 100 m x 100 m | 125 m x 125 m |
| Time for 3D map creation                     | 1 s           | 1 s           |

### 1.4 Overview

A schematic overview of the sensor is shown in fig. 1.1.

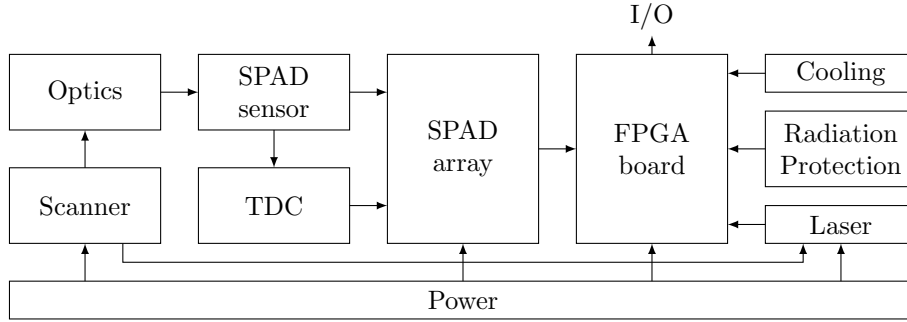


Figure 1.1: Schematic overview

**Laser:** The laser must send short pulses but powerful pulses at a predefined frequency, to transmit photons that can be detected by the SPAD Sensor. A critical requirement for the laser is the amount of photons it is able to transmit as a function of time, within the budget and technical limitations.

**SPAD Sensor:** The Single Photon Avalange Diode (SPAD) is responsible for generating a digital pulse when hit by a photon. A circuit build around the SPAD must ensure that the sPAD is quenched as quickly as possible to minimize the deadline. A critical requirement for the SPAD is a small jitter to maximize the accuracy of the sensor.

**TDC:** The Time Interval to Digital Converter (TDC) is connected to the laser and the SPAD Sensor. The TDC must measure the time difference between the transmission of teh laser and the receiving at the SPAD sensor. This measurement requires an accuracy of tens of picoseconds to meet the accuracy requirements.

**Scanner:** The scanner handles the scanning motion that is needed to accumulate the entire picture. Different scanning motions can introduce undesired jitter and heavily influency the amount of SPAD Sensors that are needed on teh SPAD Array.

**SPAD Array:** The SPAD Array integrates the SPAD Sensors on a chip and connects them to the TDC's. The layout of the SPAD Array is closely related to the scanning motion that is used in the scanner.

**Optics:** The optics must transfer as much of the incoming photons as possible to the sensitive area on the SPAD Sensors. The Optics part also implements a bandpass filter around the target frequency.

**FPGA Board:** The FPGA Board controls the sensor. It is responsible for accumulating and interpreting the measurements from the TDC's, and controlling the Scanner and Laser.

**Cooling:** The cooling has to keep the temperature of the FPGA chip under a threshold temperature.

**Radiation Protection:** The Radiation Protection shields sensitive parts of the sensor from radiation. The most sensitive part of the system is expected to be the FPGA Board, based on experience.

**Power:** The power block has to supply the scanner, SPAD Array, FPGA Board, and the laser with the required power. The power block has to operate within the specified power budget.

## 1.5 Assumptions

This section will list the assumption that are made throughout the study.

**Reflectivity of surface Europa:** It is assumed that out of all light that hit's Europa, 35% is reflected in a perfectly diffuse manner.

**Wavelength laser:** The wavelength of light emitted by the laser is assumed to be  $850\text{ nm}$ . This wavelength is a typical choice for Silicon SPAD's. The main reason for this wavelength as opposed to  $550\text{ nm}$  is because the that sunlight is less strong in that region, and less background noise will left after applying a narrow bandpass filter.

**Bandpass filter:** A bandpass filter will be used to filter background noise. This filter is assumed to be a bandpass filter with a center frequency of  $850\text{ nm}$  and a FWHM of  $10\text{ nm}$ . The minimum transmission of the filter is 50%. These values are directly taken from the "*850nm, 10nm FWHM, 12.5mm Mounted Diameter*" product made by Edmund Optics and sold for 75 \$.

**Jitter of SPAD Sensor:** The jitter of the SPAD Sensor, or Full Width Half Max (FWHM) is assumed to be  $100\text{ ps}$ . This value is a typical FWHM for state of the art Silicon SPAD's.

**Jitter of TDC:** The jitter of the TDC's is assumed to be insignificant when compared to the jitter of  $100\text{ ps}$  caused by the SPAD Sensors. Experience with previous designs show that TDC jitter is generally a very small contributor to overall jitter.

**Accuracy of TDC:** The accuracy of the TDC is assumed to be  $50\text{ ps}$ , and therefore well within the accuracy requirements. The accuracy should be  $5\text{ cm}$ . Using eq. (1.1), the desired accuracy is  $333\text{ ps}$ .

$$t = \frac{2x}{c} \tag{1.1}$$

where  $x$  is the accuracy in distance, and  $c \approx 3 \cdot 10^8$  the speed of light. The factor two is present because the light travels the distance twice.

**Sunlight:** It is assumed that the light from the sun that is reflected of Europa is the only significant contributor to background noise. No other sources of light will be considered.

**Photon Detection Probability:** It is assumed that the PDP of the SPADs is 35%.

**Laser light hitting target:** It is assumed that all the light that leaves the laser is hitting the target area on Europa.

**Laser efficiency:** It is assumed that the laser has an efficiency of 10%.



## Chapter 2

# Altimetry Mode

The Altimetry Mode is the mode in which only the altitude of the device in relationship to Europa is required. The main challenges for the altimetry mode are acquiring the required resolution, acquiring the required speed, staying within the power budget, and being sufficiently resilient against the accumulated radiation for the entire trip.

The first step will be to create a model of the noise that will be present at Europa. Then the required amount of signal will be calculated, resulting in the required signal power.

## 2.1 Optics

The receiver optics are a good place to start of with, beacuse the optics are not very dependent on results attachieved in other areas. The optics have to transport as many desired photons, and as little unwanted photons to the active area on the SPADs as possible. All while having an acceptable depth of field.

The most basic solution is a single lens with an aperture. The opacity of the lens can be calculated with the absorption of the lens material and f-number of the lens using eq. (2.1).

$$\text{opacity} = \frac{1 - \text{absorption}}{\text{f-number}^2} \quad (2.1)$$

The performance of a possible configuration is shown in table 2.1

Table 2.1: Performance of basic optics solution

| Basic Optics |         |
|--------------|---------|
| f-number     | 2.00    |
| absorption   | 5.00 %  |
| opacity      | 23.75 % |

### 2.1.1 Improvements

There are a couple of additions that can improve the performance of the optics. The first and very necessary one, is the use of a bandpass filter. The transmitted signal will have a very specific bandwidth of  $850\text{ nm}$ . Using a narrow bandpass filter one can filter out an enormous part of the background noise. The filter will have an opacity of 50 % for the target wavelength.

The captured photons that hit the lens need to be guided to the active area of the SPADs. If the active area on the chip is very small, one can use microlenses to improve the effectiveness of the optics. A Microlens focusses light on a single SPAD on the chip. Two types of microlenses will be considered: a spherical lens, and a square shaped lens. The presence of microlenses poses

a limitation of the main lens. The f-number must be relatively large. A higher f-number means a smaller aperture and therefore more loss of photons. A way of dealing with this problem is to use a second lens instead. An overview of the available options is shown in fig. 2.1

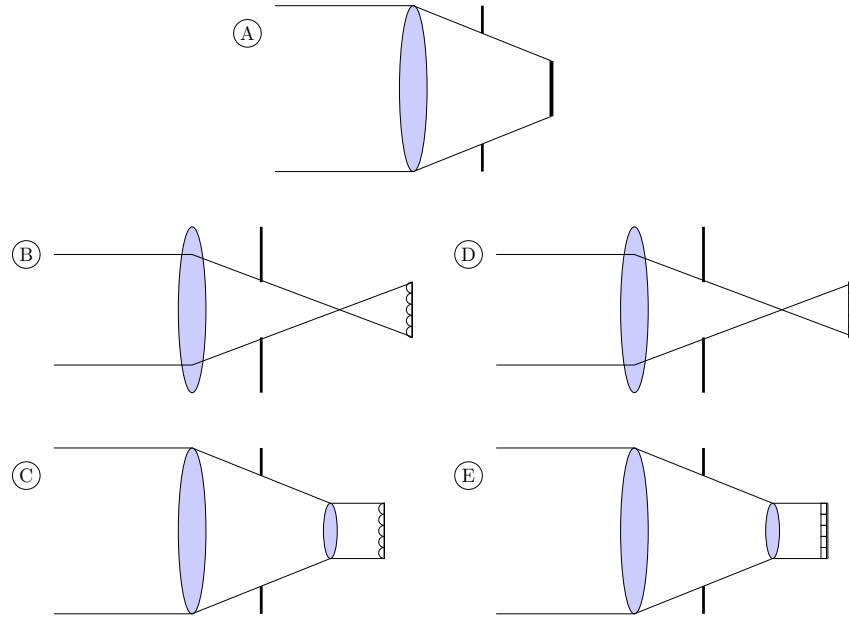


Figure 2.1: Overview of possible receiver optics implementations

$$\text{opacity} = (1 - \text{absorption}_1)(1 - \text{absorption}_2) \cdot \text{opacity filter} \cdot \frac{X}{\text{f-number}^2} \quad (2.2)$$

Where  $X$  is the active area on the chip. A comparison between the different options is shown in table 2.2

Table 2.2: comparison of different optics solutions

| Type                            | A                  | B        | C       | D        | E         |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|----------|---------|----------|-----------|
| absorption 1 <sup>st</sup> lens | 0.05               | 0.05     | 0.05    | 0.05     | 0.05      |
| f-number                        | 2                  | 8        | 2       | 8        | 2         |
| absorption 2 <sup>nd</sup> lens | 0                  | 0        | 0.05    | 0        | 0.05      |
| opacity bandpass filter         | 0.5                | 0.5      | 0.5     | 0.5      | 0.5       |
| active area on chip             | $X$                | 0.55     | 0.55    | 0.65     | 0.65      |
| effective opacity               | $X \cdot 11.75 \%$ | 0.4082 % | 6.204 % | 0.4924 % | 14.6656 % |

The comparison in table 2.2 shows some good alternatives to the basic lens, if there is a need for it due to a small active area on the chip. However, most of the future calculations will focus on the basic model A.

## 2.2 Noise caused by the sun

The sun is the most dominant source of unwanted photons at Europa. This section will investigate how much energy is hitting the surface of Europa.

To calculate that the sun will be modelled as an ideal black body. The spectral irradiance of the sun can be calculated using eq. (2.3).

$$I_{\lambda}(\lambda, T) = \frac{2hc^2}{\lambda^5} \frac{1}{e^{\frac{hc}{\lambda kT}} - 1} \quad (2.3)$$

where  $I_{\lambda}(v, t)$  is spectral irradiance with unit  $W/m^3$ .

$h$  is the planck constant

$c$  is the speed of light in vacuum

$k$  is the Boltzman constant

$\lambda$  is the wavelength of the electromagnetic radiation

$T$  is the absolute temperature of the body

The spectral irradiance of the sun is calculated in table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Calculation of sun irradiation

| Sun irradiation |                            |
|-----------------|----------------------------|
| $h$             | $6.63 \cdot 10^{-34} Js$   |
| $c$             | $3.00 \cdot 10^8 m/s$      |
| $k$             | $1.38 \cdot 10^{-23} j/K$  |
| $\lambda$       | $850.00 nm$                |
| $T$             | $5.78 kK$                  |
| $I_{\lambda}$   | $1.51 \cdot 10^4 W/m^2/nm$ |

The next step is to calculate the power emitted by the sun in the specified bandwidth, at the location of Europa. The specified bandwidth is in this case the assumed bandpass filter used on the lens. The emitted power is calculated by modelling the sun as a point source, and then spreading that power over a sphere with a radius equal to the distance between the sun and Europa, as is done in eq. (2.4).

$$P_{sun} = I_{sun} B_{\lambda} S \frac{r_{sun}^2}{r_{europa}^2} \quad (2.4)$$

where  $I_{sun}$  is the spectral irradiance of the sun at the center frequency of the filter,  $B_{\lambda}$  is the bandwidth of the filter in meters,  $S$  the surface area of the target area on Europa,  $r_{sun}$  the of radius of the sun, and  $r_{europa}$  the distance between Europa and the sun. The effective radiance of the background noise at Europa is calculated in table 2.4 using eq. (2.4).

Table 2.4: Calculation of background power on target area on Europa

| Background power |                            |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| $I_{\lambda}$    | $1.51 \cdot 10^{13} W/M^3$ |
| $B_{\lambda}$    | $10.00 nm$                 |
| Surface area     | $15625.00 m^2$             |
| $r_{sun}$        | $6.96 \cdot 10^5 km$       |
| $r_{europa}$     | $7.79 \cdot 10^8 km$       |
| $P_B$            | $1.89 kW$                  |

The next step is to calculate the percentage of energy that hits the device when hovering over Europa. The focal length and aperture of the lens will be configured in such a way that the target surface on Europa fills the entire view at the maximum altitude of the Hazard Detection Mode, so that altitude will be chosen to calculate the received noise power. The amount of power received at the lens of the device can be calculated using eq. (2.5).

$$P'_B = \frac{P_B \cdot R_{Europa} \cdot D_l \cdot \text{opacity}}{2r^2} \quad (2.5)$$

where  $P'_B$  is the power hitting the lens,  
 $P_B$  the noise power on the target area of Europa,  
 $R_{Europa}$  the reflectivity of Europa,  
 $D_l$  the diameter of the lens,  
opacity the opacity of the lens,  
and  $r$  the altitude of the device. The calculations are performed in table 2.5.

Table 2.5: Amount of noise power that hits the SPAD array

| noise power at SPADs    |              |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| $P_B$                   | 1.89 kW      |
| $r$                     | 500.00 m     |
| $R_{europa}$            | 35.00 %      |
| Diameter lens ( $D_l$ ) | 50.00 mm     |
| opacity optics          | 11.75 %      |
| $P'_B$                  | 7.76 $\mu W$ |

Finally the power needs to be converted to number of photons. To calculate how many photons bounce from the surface of Europa and actually hit the light. To calculate the amount of photons one needs to know the amount of energy per photon. This can be calculated using eq. (2.6). The calculation is performed in table 2.6.

$$E_{photon} = \frac{hc}{\lambda} \quad (2.6)$$

Table 2.6: Pulse frequency for both modes of operation

| energy of photon |                          |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| $h$              | $6.63 \cdot 10^{-34} Js$ |
| $c$              | $3.00 \cdot 10^8 m/s$    |
| $\lambda$        | 850.00 nm                |
| $E_{photon}$     | $2.34 \cdot 10^{-19} J$  |

The amount of photons per second can then be calculated using eq. (2.7). The calculation is shown in

$$\text{photon}/s = \frac{P}{E_{photon}} \quad (2.7)$$

Table 2.7: Pulse frequency for both modes of operation

| photons hitting SPADs |                                       |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| $P'_B$                | $7.76 \cdot 10^{-6} W$                |
| $E_{photon}$          | $2.34 \cdot 10^{-19} J$               |
| photons at SPADs      | $3.31 \cdot 10^{13} \text{ photon}/s$ |

## 2.3 Detected photon characterisation

This section tackles the problem of calculating the resolution of the set-up. To do this, the different types of detection by the SPADs, due to sunlight, signal source and dark counts, must be characterized first.

To avoid pileup a couple of temporary assumptions about the performance of the SPADs will be made. Firstly, it is temporarily assumed that the percentage of the surface that is sensitive to photons is 50 %. Secondly it is temporarily assumed that the dark count rate (DCR), of the entire array is  $PSS_N = 1 \cdot 10^9 \text{ photon/s}$ .

The amount of detected sunlight photons detected by the SPADs per second can now be calculated using eq. (2.8). The calculation are shown in table 2.8. Both the sunlight detections and the DCR detections are uniformly distributed.

$$PPS_B = \text{photons at SPADs} \cdot PDP \cdot \text{effective area} \quad (2.8)$$

Table 2.8: Amount of detected sunlight photons detected per second

| <b>PPS for background photons</b> |                                       |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Photons at SPADs                  | $3.31 \cdot 10^{13} \text{ photon/s}$ |
| $PDP$                             | 35.00 %                               |
| effective area                    | 50.00 %                               |
| $PPS_B$                           | $5.80 \cdot 10^{12} \text{ photon/s}$ |

The next step is to characterize the relationship between the laser power and the received photons. It is assumed that all light emitted by the laser is hitting Europa. It is also assumed that the efficiency of the laser is 10 %. Next, similar calculation as performed with  $P_B$  can be used to calculate the amount of detected signal photons per second  $PPS_S$ . There is one important difference however: where for sunlight an altitude of 500  $m$  was used, for the signal photons an altitude of 8  $km$  must be considered. The calculation are performed in table 2.9. Note that even with the largest power budget of 50  $W$ , the SNR will be well below 0  $dB$ .

Table 2.9: Amount of detected signal photons detected per second

| <b>PPS for background photons</b> |                                    |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| $P_S$                             | 1.00 $W$                           |
| Altitude                          | 8.00 $km$                          |
| $P'_S$                            | $1.61 \cdot 10^{-11} W$            |
| $PPS_S$                           | $1.20 \cdot 10^7 \text{ photon/s}$ |

The signal photons are not uniformly distributed like the noise and background photons. The signal photons are assumed to be distributed in a normal distribution with a  $FWHM = 100 ps$ . This distribution is convoluted with the jitter on the SPADs, which is assumed to be a normal distribution with a  $FWHM = 100 ps$ . Using eq. (2.9) and eq. (2.11), the resulting distribution has a  $\sigma_S = 60 ps$ . The mean  $\mu_s$  is equal to the time of flight of the photon.

$$FWHM = 2\sqrt{2 \ln 2} \sigma \quad (2.9)$$

$$\sigma = \frac{FWHM}{2\sqrt{2 \ln 2}} \quad (2.10)$$

$$\sigma_{f \otimes g} = \sqrt{\sigma_f^2 + \sigma_g^2} \quad (2.11)$$

The maximum allowable *FWHM* of the measurement is  $333\text{ ps}$  as shown in section 1.5. Using eq. (2.10) the maximum standard deviation is  $\sigma = 141\text{ ps}$ .

## 2.4 Sampling Method

The sampling method used has a massive impact on the performance of the system. This section investigates the options that can be chosen from.

The time that the sensor should listen to a response is determined by the maximum round trip time of a photon, and can be calculated using eq. (2.12).

$$t_{round} = \frac{2r}{c} \quad (2.12)$$

where  $c \approx 3 \cdot 10^8$  is the speed of light, and  $r$  the altitude of the sensor.

The next step is to calculate the relationship between observed number of good and bad photons for a given listening period, and the resulting standard deviation of the measurement. To calculate the standard deviation of the sum of multiple random variables that are independent and uncorrelated, one can use eq. (2.13)

$$\text{Var}[aX + bY + cZ] = a^2\text{Var}[X] + b^2\text{Var}[Y] + c^2\text{Var}[Z] \quad (2.13)$$

Because the DCR and sunlight photons have the same uniform distribution they are taken from the same uniform random variable  $N$ , where  $n$  is the amount of detected sunlight and dark photons,  $\mu_n = \frac{1}{2}t_{round}$ , and  $\sigma_n = \frac{1}{\sqrt{12}}t_{round}$ . The signal photons are taken from the random variable  $S$ , where  $s$  is the amount of detected signal photons,  $\mu_s = ToF$ , and  $\sigma_s = 42.5\text{ ps}$ . The resulting mean  $\mu_{tot}$  can be calculated using eq. (2.15). The error with the desired  $\mu$  can be calculated using eq. (2.17).

$$\mu_{tot} = \frac{1}{s+n} \left( \sum_{k=1}^s \mu_s + \sum_{l=1}^n \mu_n \right) \quad (2.14)$$

$$= \frac{s \cdot ToF}{s+n} + \frac{n \cdot \frac{1}{2}t_{round}}{s+n} \quad (2.15)$$

$$\mu_{error} = |ToF - \mu_{tot}| \quad (2.16)$$

$$= \left| \frac{n(ToF - \frac{1}{2}t_{round})}{s+n} \right| \quad (2.17)$$

The resulting standard deviation  $\sigma_{tot}$  can be calculated using eq. (2.21).

$$\text{Var}_{tot} = \text{Var} \left[ \frac{1}{s+n} \left( \sum_{k=1}^s \text{Var}_s + \sum_{l=1}^n \text{Var}_n \right) \right] \quad (2.18)$$

$$= \frac{1}{(s+n)^2} (s\sigma_s^2 + n\sigma_n^2) \quad (2.19)$$

$$\sigma_{tot} = \sqrt{\text{Var}_{tot}} \quad (2.20)$$

$$= \frac{\sqrt{s\sigma_s^2 + n\sigma_n^2}}{s+n} \quad (2.21)$$

Using eq. (2.21), one can calculate the relationship between the amount of signal photons needed for a given amount of noise photons. For the long distance a  $t_{round} = 53.3\text{ }\mu\text{s}$  is used. Using

eq. (2.23) the relationship between the number of noise photons and required signal photons is shown in fig. 2.2. Note that the amount of required signal photons first rises quickly, then slowly, and finally even drops. The reason for this trend is that increasing the number of random samples also decreases the standard deviation by itself. Figure 2.3 shows the same relationship for a smaller number of noise photons.

$$\sigma_{tot} = \frac{\sqrt{s\sigma_s^2 + n\sigma_n^2}}{s + n} \quad (2.22)$$

$$s = \frac{\sigma_s^2 + \sqrt{\sigma_s^4 - 4\sigma_s^2\sigma_{tot}^2n + 4\sigma_n^2\sigma_{tot}^2n - 2\sigma_{tot}^2n}}{2\sigma_{tot}^2} \quad (2.23)$$

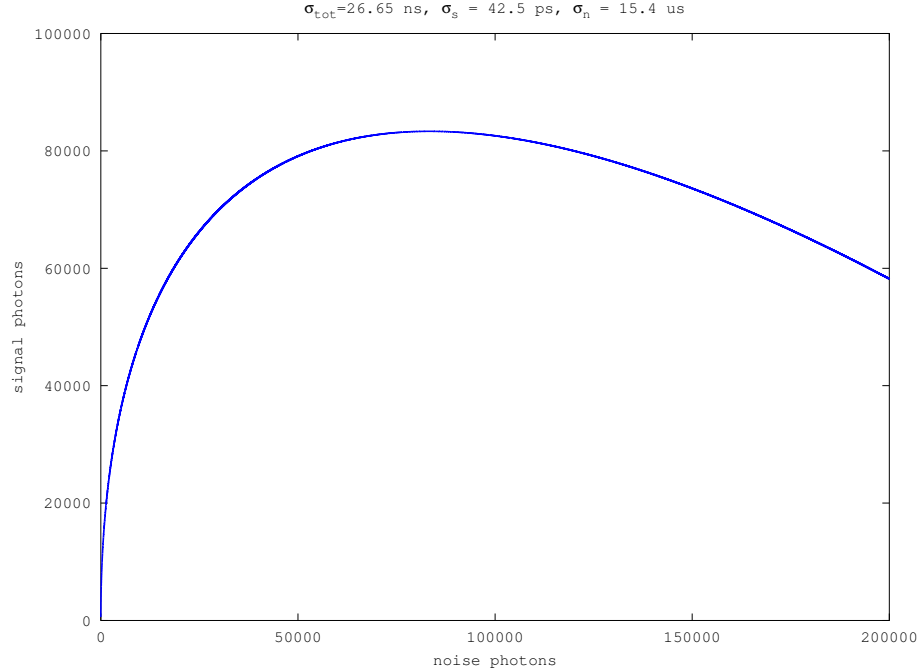


Figure 2.2: Relationship between number of signal and noise photons to get the required resolution

### 2.4.1 Energy Threshold

An energy threshold can be a very powerful way to improve signal to noise ratio. The signal photons all arrive with a  $FWHM = 100\text{ ps}$ , while the noise photons are spread out over  $53.3\text{ }\mu\text{s}$ . An energy threshold is a perfect way to take advantage of this. When the photons are divided over bins, the expected number of bins can be modelled as Poisson process. Using this the efficiency of the energy threshold can be performed which is shown in fig. 2.4, where the opacity is 1 if all photons pass through the threshold, and 0 if no photons pass through the threshold. It is important to notice that a certain threshold has no effect at all if the expected number of photons is sufficiently high. The threshold is most effective when the opacity for the signal photons is close to 1, and the opacity for noise photons close to 0. To apply a threshold however, one needs to assemble a histogram of all the detections. The feasibility of such a histogram will be investigated later, but for now both a system with and without an energy threshold are considered.

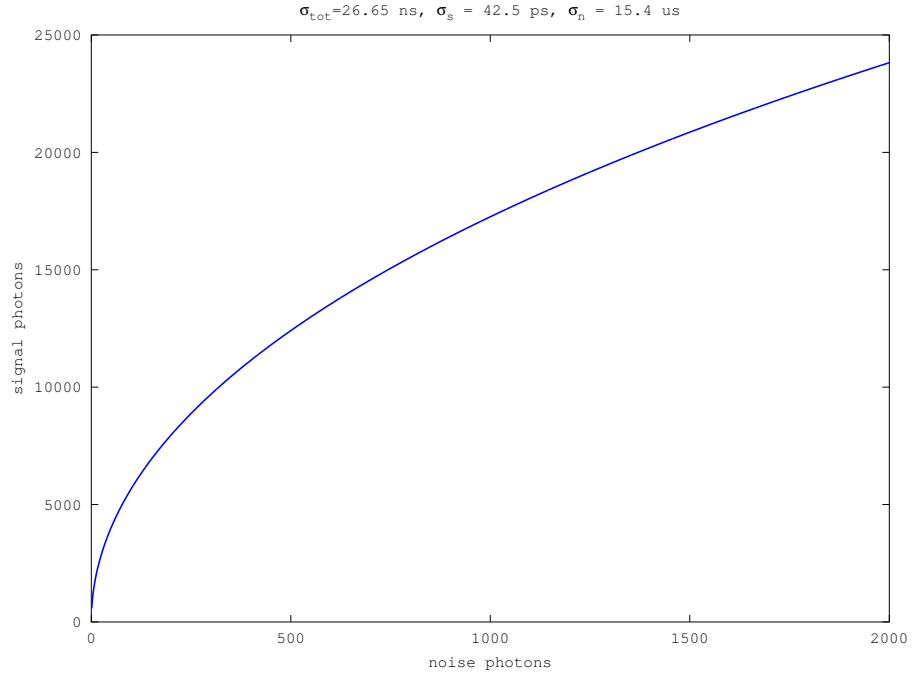


Figure 2.3: Relationship between number of signal and noise photons to get the required resolution

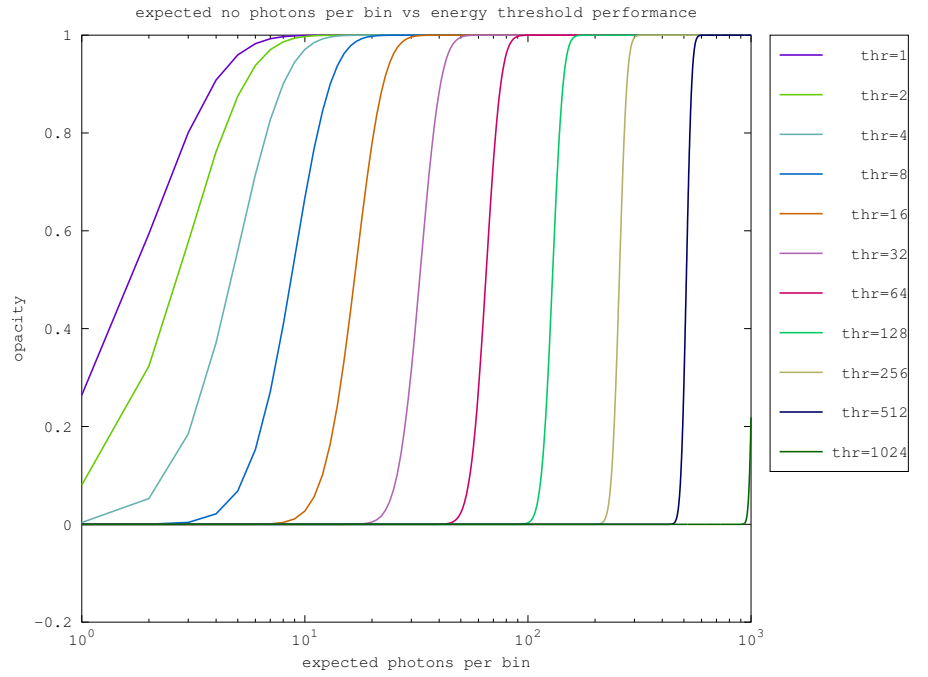


Figure 2.4: Expected number of photons per bin versus the opacity of the threshold, where opacity=1 means all photons pass through the threshold, and opacity=0 means no photons pass through the threshold



## 2.5 Required Laser Power

The requirement for the altimetry mode changes based on the height. The target is a resolution of at least 0.1%. To ensure that this requirement is met, both the largest altitude of 8 km, and the smallest altitude of 500 m will be investigated.

The minimum resolution for the largest and shortest altitude are 8 m and 0.5 m respectively. The maximum allowable FWHM can be calculated using eq. (2.24). Using eq. (2.10) the maximum standard deviation can be calculated. The calculations are performed in table 2.10.

$$FWHM_{max} = \frac{2x}{c} \quad (2.24)$$

Table 2.10: Pulse frequency for both modes of operation

| <b>AM requirements</b> | short   | long     |
|------------------------|---------|----------|
| altitude               | 500 m   | 8 km     |
| resolution             | 50 cm   | 8 m      |
| FWHM                   | 3.33 ns | 53.33 ns |
| $\sigma$               | 1.42 ns | 22.65 ns |

### 2.5.1 Peak Power

A very important restriction to the sampling method is the highest achievable peak power of the laser. If there would be no limit on the peak power, one could send out one extremely powerful pulse, listen for an extremely short period of time, and then reconstruct the altitude. The key advantage is the listening time. Shortening the listening time directly reduces the amount of background and noise that can be observed.

During the transmission of the laser, the peak power must be more than the average power of the background noise. Using eq. (2.25) one can calculate the average optical power required for the laser to get an  $SNR = 0$ . These calculations are performed in table 2.11. Combing that result with a laser efficiency of 10%, this gives a required electrical power of 4.8 MW to match the power of the sun. In order to be able to distinguish noise from signal, the peak power is lower bound by this amount of power.

$$P_{av} = P_B \frac{\text{HDM altitude}^2}{\text{current altitude}^2} \quad (2.25)$$

Table 2.11: required average power to get SNR=0

| <b>matching average power</b> |           |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| $P_B$                         | 1.89 kW   |
| HDM altitude                  | 500 m     |
| current altitude              | 8 km      |
| $P_{av}$                      | 482.78 kW |

Using the results in fig. 2.2, and the calculations performed in ??, a relationship between the peak power and average power can be constructed, which is shown in fig. 2.5. This figure illustrates the clear advantage of having a high peak power. If the peak power is high enough, a single pulse is enough to acquire the desired resolution, resulting in an extremely low average power. The figure also shows that the increase of amount of pulses decreases the required peak power, but after a

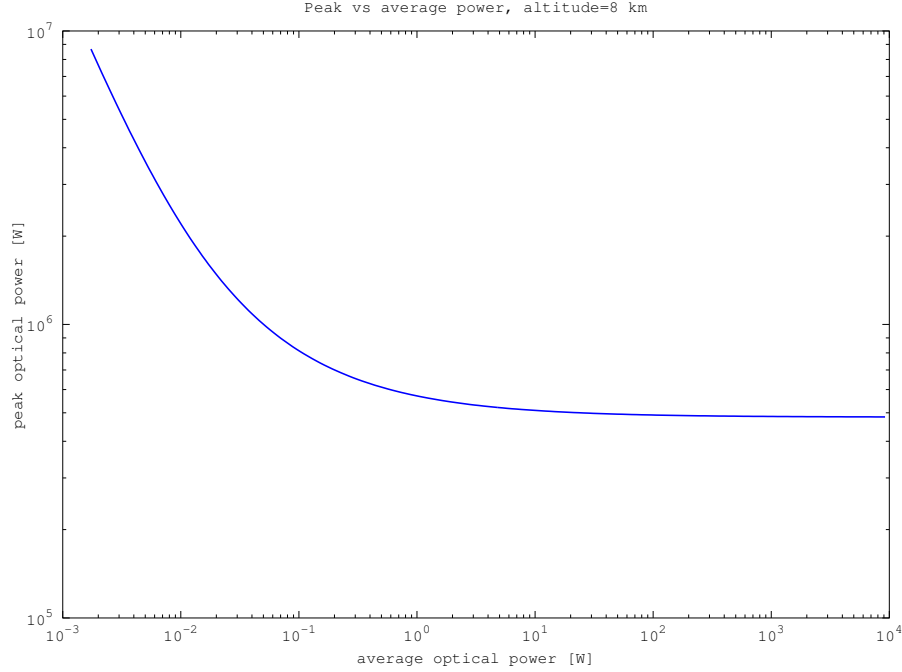


Figure 2.5: required peak power for a given average power for the requirements at an altitude of  $8\text{ km}$

certain point this decrease is no longer significant. It is important to note that the variation in the mean is not considered here, which means that the actual required power will be higher.

When the energy threshold is added a very different relationship can be found. The threshold can be so powerful that noise can be almost completely eliminated without losing any signal photons, as long as the difference between the expected number of signal photons per bin is sufficiently larger than the expected number of noise photons per bin. To avoid pileup, it is assumed that a difference of a factor  $F = 10$  will be sufficient. It will also be assumed that a single pulse will be enough to acquire the required information. Using the calculations in table 2.11, one can quickly tell that the peak optical power must be at least  $4.8\text{ MW}$ . This is also an enormous amount of peak power to produce, and hardly feasible.

### 2.5.2 Reducing the field of view

The limit calculated in table 2.11 is too high to design feasible laser specifications. The only way to reduce this lower limit, the amount of observed background noise must be further limited. To limit the amount of observed background noise, the field of view must be limited. Until this point the amount of background noise was defined as the amount of noise hitting the device from a  $125 \times 125\text{ m}^2$  surface on Europa at an altitude of  $500\text{ m}$ . This means that on an altitude of  $8\text{ km}$ , a surface of  $2 \times 2\text{ km}$  is observed. Now we take a look at what happens when the field of view is limited to a thin slice of  $125 \times 0.1\text{ m}^2$ . Assuming that the laser is capable of transmitting exactly into the small target area, this reduces the limit calculated in table 2.11 by a factor 1250. This shows that the altimetry mode for the laser is feasible, but that a sufficiently limited field of view is required. The target area for the Altimetry Mode can be arbitrarily small. The field of view can be limited by either the lens, or by disabling a portion of the SPADs on the chip.

## Chapter 3

# Hazard Detection Mode

The Hazard Detection Mode is the mode of operation that operates closer to Europa than the Altimetry Mode. The main difference and challenge is however, is that this time a detailed heightmap must be formed. Therefore, for the Hazard Detection Mode, the layout of the SPADs and the scanning method are essential in determining the feasibility of the device.

### 3.1 Types of SPADs

In Hazard Detection Mode, individual SPADs will have the responsibility of measuring their part in the target. Therefore it is important to first investigate what type of SPAD is best suited for the device. As mentioned in section 2.1, SPADs can have microlenses. Two types are considered: conventional spherical lenses, and rectangular lenses. Spherical lenses typically achieve an effective active area of approximately 55 %, while rectangular lenses typically get an effective active area of approximately 65 %. The active area can also be shaped in different sizes, and a circular and rectangular shape are considered here. An overview of the different options is shown in fig. 3.1.

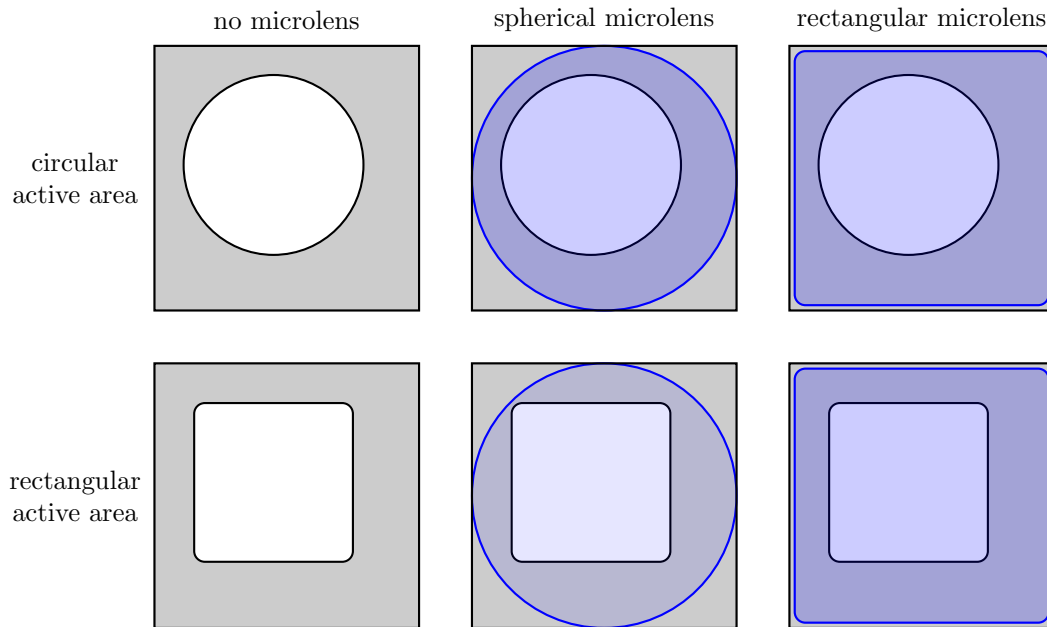


Figure 3.1: Options for lenses with varying types of active areas and microlenses

The use of microlenses is not the only viable option of increasing the active area on the chip. A second option is to pick the circuitry required per SPAD, and push it to the side. These circuitry include the Read-Out Integrated Circuit (ROIC) that also includes the quenching of the SPADs, and the Time interval to Digital converter (TDC). It is important to note that the push-out of the circuitry poses additional constraints of the design. The pushed out electronics must still be in a reasonable close range to the SPADs, which limits the dimensions of a device using push-out electronics.

To avoid pileup, the following calculations are done for an  $0.18\ \mu\text{m}$  technology and it is assumed that the ROIC will take up  $110\ \mu\text{m}^2$  surface area per SPAD, and that the TDC will take up  $1200\ \mu\text{m}^2$  surface area per SPAD. It will also be assumed that the minimum amount of pitch between two SPADs is  $1.5\ \mu\text{m}$ . These numbers are based on current SPAD designs in  $0.18\ \mu\text{m}$  technology. An overview of the performance of all different possibilities is shown in fig. 3.2. Note that, while the microlenses are assumed to focus the light on an arbitrarily small area, this is in reality not the case. If one would use no push-out electronics with a microlens for example, the pitch must be at least  $40\ \mu\text{m}$  because otherwise there will not even be active area to focus the light on.

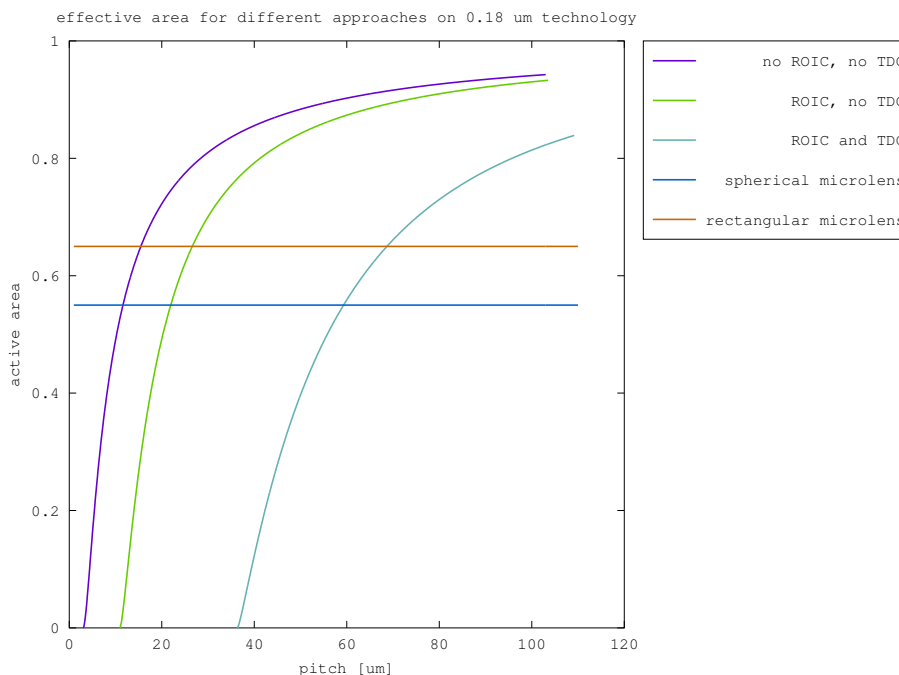


Figure 3.2: effective area for different approaches in relationship to the pitch of the SPAD on  $0.18\ \mu\text{m}$  technology

### 3.2 Scanning motion

The specifications indicate a target area of  $125 \times 125\ \text{m}^2$  with a ground sample distance of  $5\ \text{cm}$ . This results in  $2500 \times 2500$  pixels. For now however an array of  $2048 \times 2048$  pixels will be considered, because that is a more convenient power of 2. Depending on the SPAD layout, different scanning motions are required to cover the target area. Possible scanning motions for different SPAD array configurations are shown in fig. 3.3. Note that the  $2048 \times 1$  motion is in essence a special case of the  $2048 \times N$  motion, where exactly one row of pixels is observed at a time.  $2048 \times 2048$  is also a special case of  $2048 \times N$  where no scanning motion is needed. The  $M \times N$ , with  $M < 2048$  and  $N < 2048$  needs a scanning motion in both x and y direction. This makes the scanning motion very

complicated and unreliable. Therefore only the family of solutions with  $2048 \times N$  will be considered.

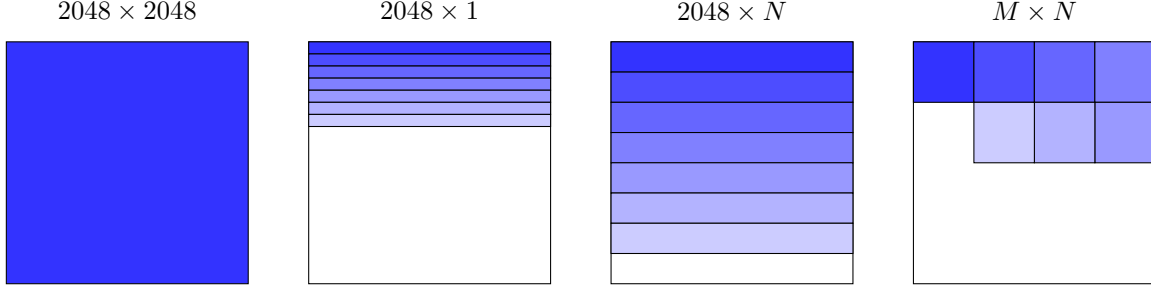


Figure 3.3: Different types of scanning motions

### 3.3 SPAD layout

The results in fig. 3.2 clearly show that an increase in the pitch will also increase the part of the SPAD that is active. However, arbitrarily large pitches cannot be afforded. An array of  $2048 \times 2048$  does not allow for push-out electronics. Therefore the minimum pitch is  $40 \mu m$  combined with a microlens. This amount of pixels would result in a chip area of  $8 \times 8 cm^2$  which is not feasible with current manufacturing technology. This means that with current technology constraints a  $2048 \times 2048$  SPAD array cannot be manufactured and is therefore not feasible. In fact, even in a single dimension,  $8 cm$  is not feasible. This means that push-out electronics of at least the TDC are a requirement to meet the pixel density requirements.

The push-out electronics pose a restriction that the electronics must be at most 4, or in extreme cases, 8 SPAD pitches away from the SPAD. This restricts the SPAD array to a maximum of  $2048 \times 8$  pixels. To avoid pileup, only the feasibility of a pitch of  $20 \mu m$  will be investigated. Using the results obtained in fig. 3.2, one can see that the effectiveness of a SPAD with push-out ROIC is approximately 75 % and the effectiveness of a SPAD with onboard ROIC approximately 55 %. The surface area of the SPAD array is a line with a length of  $4 cm$  and a width of at least  $160 \mu m$ . There is no point in using microlenses for these dimensions. They add little to no benefit on the efficiency, and there are several issues with the use of microlenses, like restrictions on the lens, that can't make them justifiable in this setup. To avoid pileup, the feasibility of a SPAD array of  $2048 \times 8$  will be considered.

### 3.4 Detected photon characterisation

This section is similar to section 2.3, but recalculates parts that are different for the HDM mode. First of all, the results of all the SPAD measurements are no longer bundled together, but interpreted separately. Also the device is a lot closer to Europa with an altitude of at most  $500 m$  which causes the laser to be more effective when compared to the noise. The new values to work with are shown in table 3.1. Note that the  $PPS_S$  is the amount of photons per Watt of optical transmitted energy.

Table 3.1: Amount of background (B), dark count (N), and signal (S) photons that hit a single SPAD per second

| photons per SPAD |                                      |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| $PPS_B$          | $1.38 \cdot 10^6 \text{ photon/s}$   |
| $PPS_N$          | $2.00 \cdot 10^3 \text{ photon/s}$   |
| $PPS_S$          | $1.88 \cdot 10^5 \text{ photon/s/W}$ |

Another important changed property, is that the maximum time of flight  $t_{round} = 3.33 \mu s$ . This directly means that per measurement, less noise is received. However, the expected amount of noise per bin remains the same. The new  $\mu_n = \frac{3.33 \cdot 10^{-6}}{2} = 1.67 \mu s$ , and the new  $\sigma_n = \frac{3.33 \cdot 10^{-6}}{\sqrt{12}} = 304 ns$ .

### 3.5 Required laser power

The laser power too requires new calculations when compared to those performed in section 2.5. First and foremost, the resolution required for the Hazard Detection Mode is  $5 cm$ , with a resulting maximum allowable standard deviation of  $\sigma_{tot} = 142 ps$ . Finally, it was decided that a scanning method would be used where the target area would be divided into at least  $2048/8 = 256$  pieces. Figure 3.4 and fig. 3.5 show the updated relationship between signal and noise photons to meet the requirements.

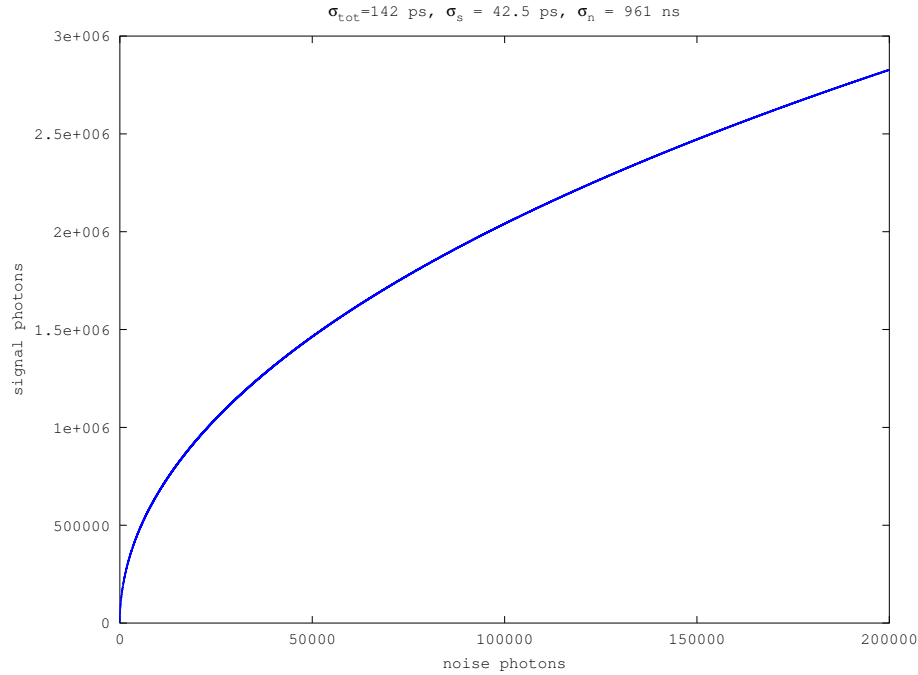


Figure 3.4: required signal photons for a given number of noise photons to meet the HDM requirements at maximum altitude

All the acquired new information can now be used to calculate a new relationship between the required peak power and average power. Note that in this case the least amount of pulses is 256. The reason being only a 1/256th of the target can be observed at a time. The results of these calculations are shown in fig. 3.6. This time increasing the number of pulses does decrease the required signal power significantly. The more important result is however, that the power budget is orders of magnitude of for obtaining a feasible peak optical power for the laser. Therefore the HDM modus is not feasible without extra processing like an energy threshold.

The next step is to look at the energy threshold again. The average noise power  $P_B = 7.4 W$ . In order to make sure that the expected amount of photons per bin is 10 times higher than for the noise, one needs a peak power of  $P_{peak} = 74 W$ . The resulting average optical laser power is calculated below.

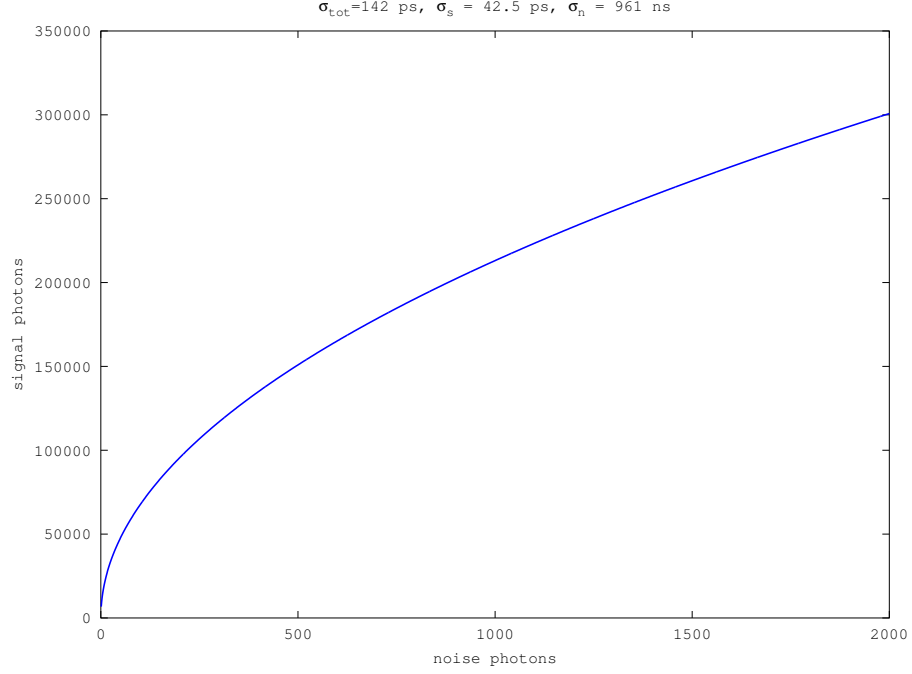


Figure 3.5: required signal photons for a given number of noise photons to meet the HDM requirements at maximum altitude

$$\begin{aligned}
 P_{av} &= P_{peak} \cdot \frac{2048}{8} \cdot FWHM \\
 &= 74 \cdot 256 \cdot 100 \cdot 10^{-12} \\
 &= 1.89 \mu W
 \end{aligned}$$

Both the peak and average laser power fall royally in the power budget. This means that the device can meet the resolution requirements within the power budget, granted that the damage caused by radiation can be reasonably contained. This will be investigated in chapter 4. Another important, but less pressing challenge is the design of the readout and the data processing of the SPAD array.

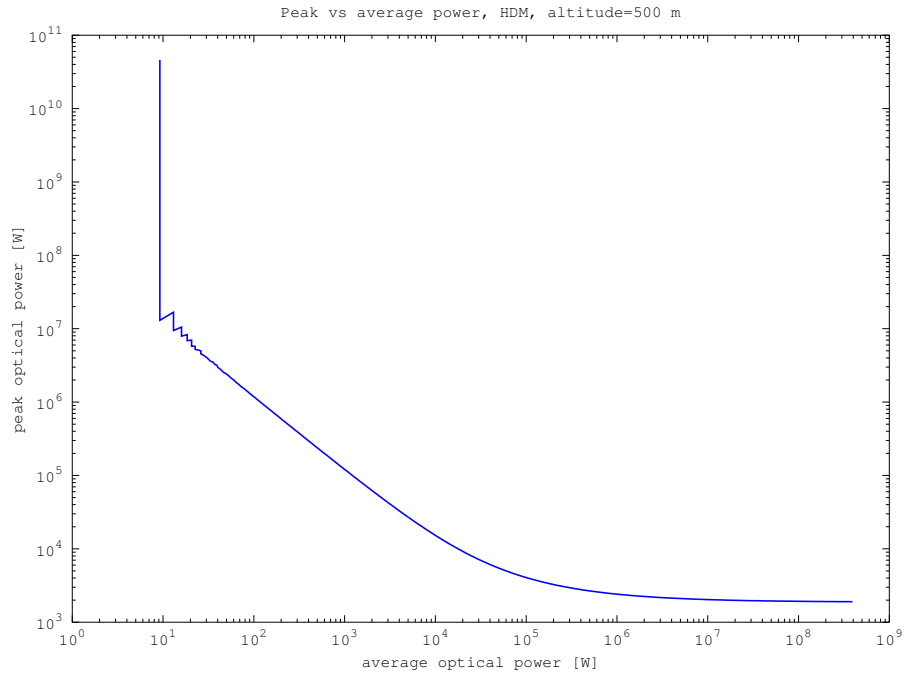


Figure 3.6: required signal photons for a given number of noise photons to meet the HDM requirements at maximum altitude



### 3.6 Readout

In section 3.1 two circuitry components were mentioned that are required for each SPAD: a ROIC and a TDC. While the decision on whether or not to push out the ROIC has not yet been made, section 3.3 concluded that it is necessary to push out the TDC. One other important aspect of the TDC is that it must meet the designed resolution of  $50\text{ ps}$ . The proposed TDC design uses a Phase Locked Loop (PLL) to generate signals that the TDC can use to timestamp an incoming pulse. The PLL, for which a schematic is shown in fig. 3.7, locks onto an input in such a way, that both signals entering the phase detector are equal. By using a divider by  $X$  block, one can generate a signal with a frequency that is equal to  $x$  times the clock frequency. The voltage controlled oscillator is capable of generating 4 signals with 4 different phases to increase the resolution further. Figure 3.8 shows a line of TDCs connected to the PLL.

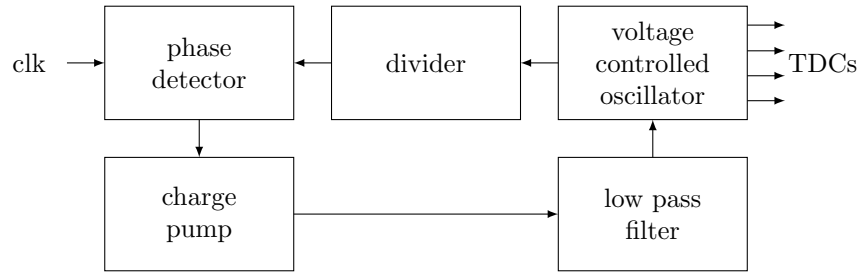


Figure 3.7: schematic of phase locked loop generating signals for TDCs

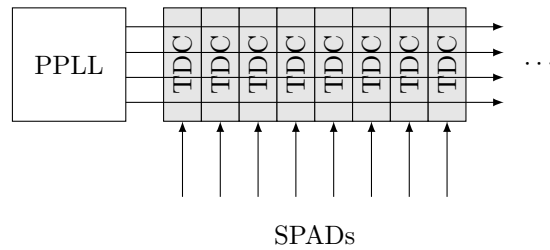


Figure 3.8: TDC line connected to PLL

# Chapter 4

## Radiation

One of the key challenges for deploying a sensor on the Europa Clipper is its resilience on large amounts of radiation. The performance of the SPAD technology considered in this report when exposed to large amounts of radiation must therefore be examined.

### 4.1 linoSPAD

To characterise the performance of the  $0.18\mu s$  technology SPADs. The LinoSPAD as developed by Sammuel Burri et al. features a SPAD array of this type. therefore the LinoSPAD was used to test its resilience against radiation. Figure 4.1 shows a simple schematic of the linoSPAD. Note that the SPAD array is isolated from the readout electronics and FPGA. This is convenient for testing with a radiation beam that can be directed to the SPAD array and away from the sensitive ROIC and FPGA. This layout is also useful to shield of the ROIC and FPGA using e.g. blocks of lead.

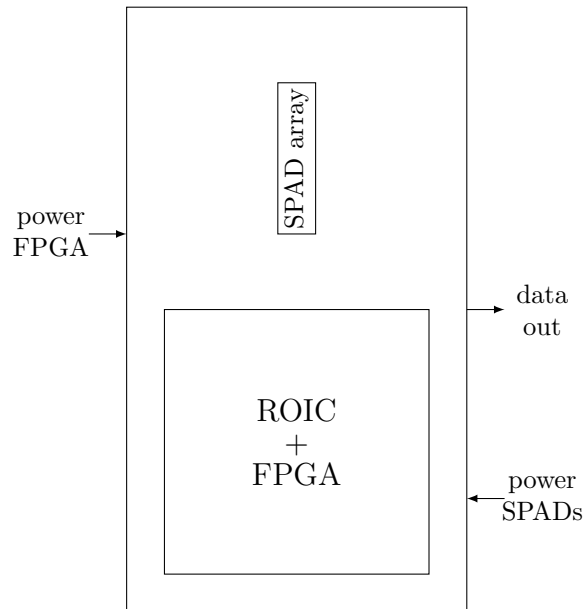


Figure 4.1: simple schematic of linoSPAD

The software used to read out the linoSPAD is programmed to count the photons for each individual SPAD for a duration of one second and store this information in a file. This operation

is called every minute.

## 4.2 Test setup

To characterise the performance of the linoSPAD under radiation, a test was performed in the cyclotron of the Paul Scherrer Institute (PSI) in Switzerland. The test involved proton radiation beams of both  $60\text{ MeV}$  and  $10.1\text{ MeV}$ . A schematic of the setup is shown in fig. 4.2. The collimator and radiation shield have to make sure that only the SPAD array gets a large radiation dose. Figure 4.3 shows the amount of radiation that is projected onto the SPAD array as a function of time. The red dashed lines indicate the start and stop time of the  $60\text{ MeV}$  beam, and the green dashed lines indicate the start and stop of the  $10\text{ MeV}$  beam. The collimator needs to be replaced when switching from  $60\text{ MeV}$  to  $10\text{ MeV}$  which is why the power of the SPAD array will be off for a brief time during the test. The blue line indicates the moment the power of the SPAD array is off.

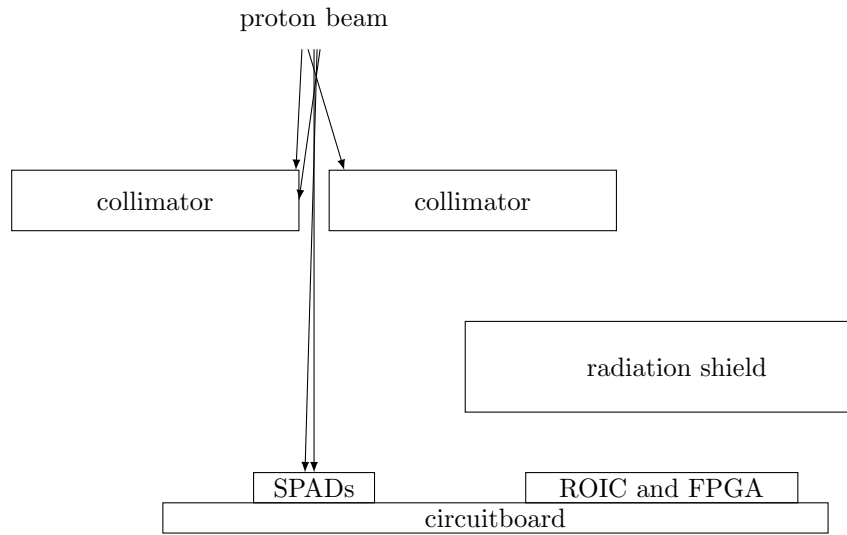


Figure 4.2: schematic of radiation test setup

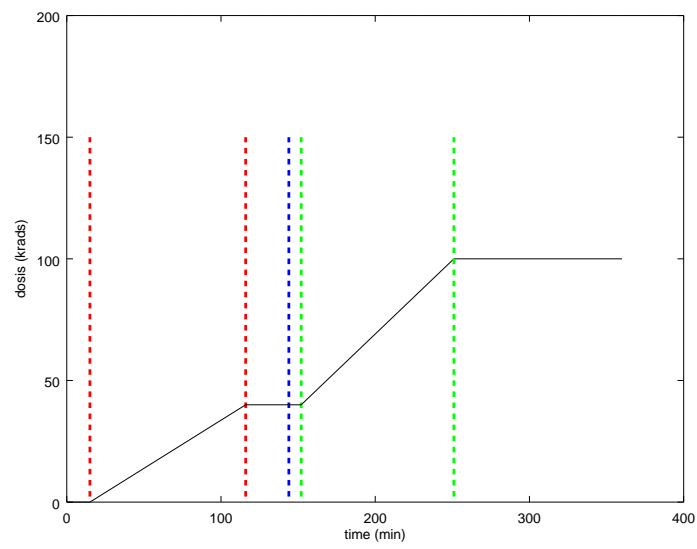


Figure 4.3: The accumulative dose of radiation produces by the proton radiance as a function of time

### 4.3 Results

This section shows the measurements and results obtained during the radiation experiment. Note that the linoSPAD used is a relatively noisy one, in the knowledge that the device would no longer be useable for normal applications after the radiation test.

Figure 4.4 shows the accumulative DCR of all SPADs as a function of time. The first 150 minutes are behaving as expected. The plot shows that the DCR linearly increases when the 60 MeV beam is turned on with a constant intensity. After the beam is turned off, the DCR stops rising and the device starts annealing, resulting in a gradual decrease of the DCR. At approximately 145 minutes, the device receives a total of 0 counts, and the reason for that is that the power on the SPAD array was briefly turned off at that time. However the device behaves unexpectedly when the 10 MeV beam is turned on. There is no change in DCR that can be observed due to the 10 MeV beam, which is contradictory with the expectations that the 10 MeV beam would cause more damage than the 60 MeV beam. Another interesting event is that at approximately 165 minutes, 25 % of the SPADs no longer detect counts. Figure 4.5 shows the same graph, but with the 25 % defect SPADs removed. Here one can see that the other SPADs are not at all affected by the 10 MeV beam and continue annealing. At approximately 240 minutes the entire sensor stops communicating, 10 minutes before the beam is turned off.

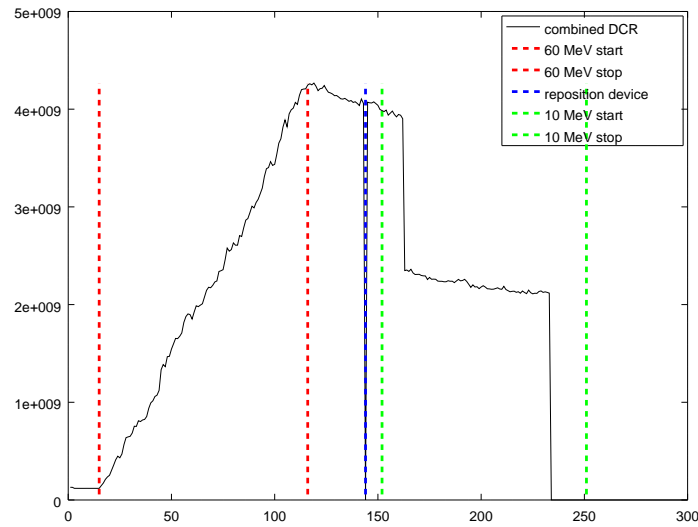


Figure 4.4: The amount of DCR for the sum of all SPADs combined as a function of time

Figure 4.6 shows the accumulative number of counts for individual SPADs. This plot illustrates that the contribution in DCR varies wildly across different SPADs. It also shows that the second half of the SPADs seem to behave at a much lower count than the first half, which is something that needs to be looked at.

Figure 4.7, fig. 4.8 and fig. 4.9 show the individual DCR as a function of time for three SPADs in the high, mid and low segment respectively. The segments are sorted by how much counts a SPAD accumulated over the course of the entire test. Note that the individual SPADs don't show the same trend as the sum of all SPADs. The individual SPADs get damaged at arbitrary points in time, and anneal at a certain point in time.

Figure 4.10 shows the spread of DCR for single SPADs at different points in time. The behavior is consistent with the results shown in fig. 4.4. Note that after approximately 165 minutes 25 % of the SPADs stop working, which is the reason why the black line starts at 25 %.

The results of the test are in line with until the 150 minute mark, but afterwards the reaction to the 10 MeV beam is odd. The break down at 165 minutes and 250 minutes indicate damage in the readout circuit. This is a feasible explanation for the events as it is known that the 10 MeV can be

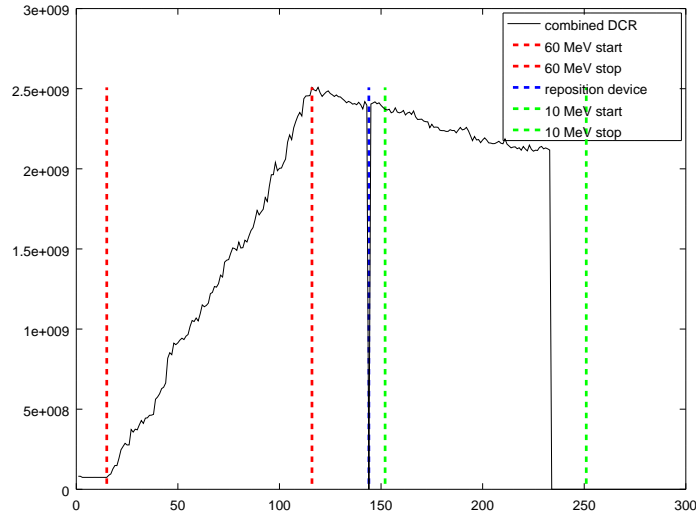


Figure 4.5: The amount of DCR for the sum of 75 % of SPADs combined as a function of time. The left-out 25 % are the SPADs that broke down at the 165 minute mark

very damaging to these types of circuitry. This would mean that the protection provided for the ROIC and FPGA were insufficient. There are two possible explanations for the observation that the SPADs are not affected by the 10 *MeV* beam that will be listed here. The first explanation, is that the SPADs at this particular 0.18  $\mu m$  technology are not affected by the 10 *MeV* as opposed to their 0.35  $\mu m$  counterpart. The second explanation is that something went wrong during the setup of the 10 *MeV* beam test, which caused the beam to aim for the ROIC and FPGA instead of the SPAD array.

Considering only the effect of the 60 *MeV* beam, and especially the behavior observed in fig. 4.5, show a very interesting trend where the change in DCR seems to be a linear relationship with the amount of radiation it is exposed to. Both the periods between 10 and 120 minutes, and between 120 and 240 minutes show a very constant slope. This means that not only the amount, but also the time over which the radiation dose is accumulated greatly affects the DCR of the device. This property should be further investigated and compared to the circumstances at Europa.

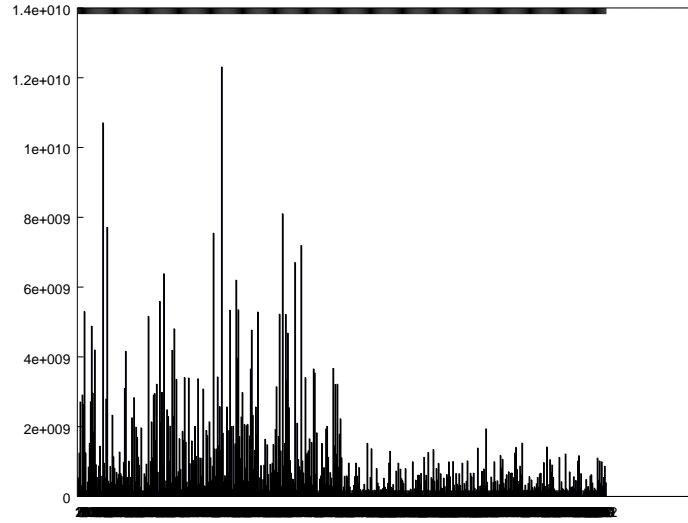


Figure 4.6: accumulative number of counts for the entire experiment for individual SPADs

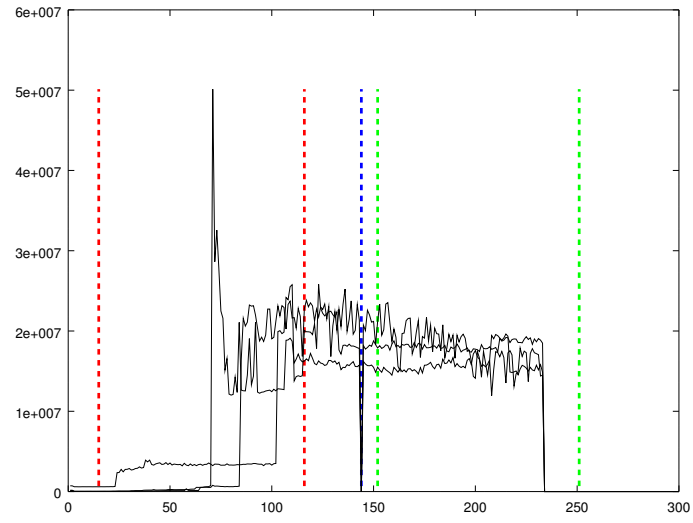


Figure 4.7: three SPADs from that are in picked from the 33 % SPADs with the highest contribution to noise

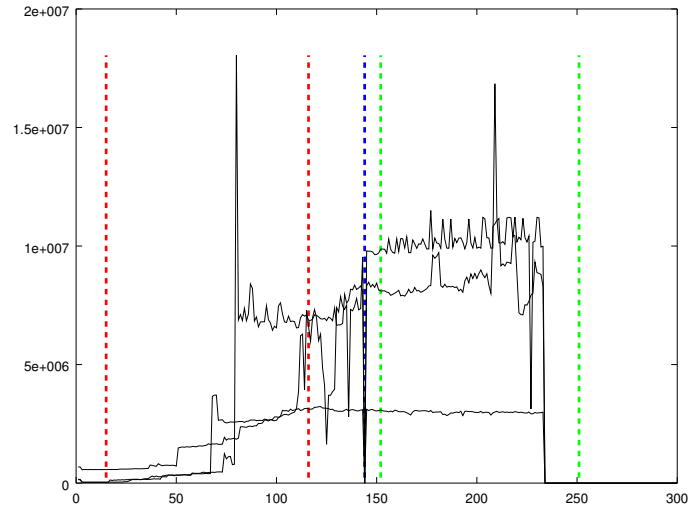


Figure 4.8: three SPADs from that are in picked from the 33 % SPADs with the most average contribution to noise

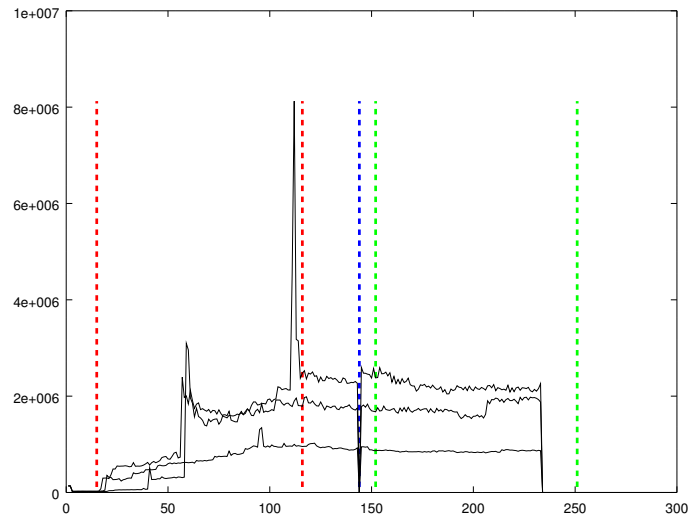


Figure 4.9: three SPADs from that are in picked from the 33 % SPADs with the lowest contribution to noise



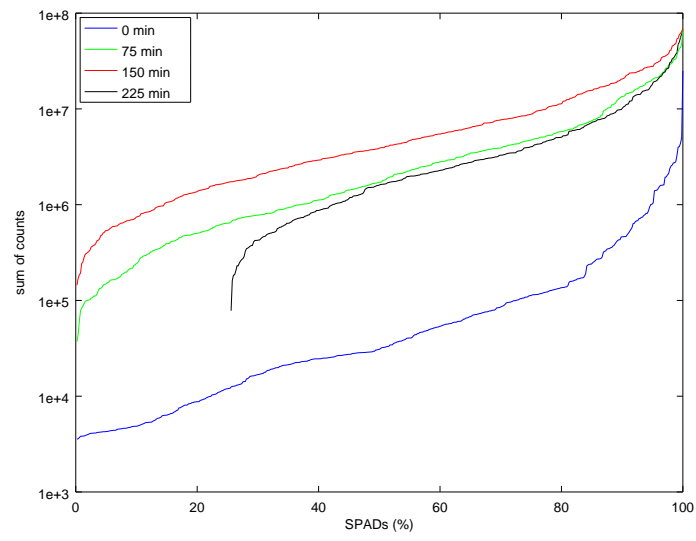


Figure 4.10: distribution of DCR over individual SPADs at different time frames. After the 165 minute mark 25 % of SPADs stop working, which is why the black line starts later at 25 %

## 4.4 Effect of radiation on performance

Now that the results of the radiation tests are in, it is worth revisiting the calculations performed in section 3.4 and section 3.5. In these sections, the DCR was so low that it was of absolutely no consequence, and completely dominated by the background noise. Figure 4.10 however, shows that with a dose of 40 *krad* applied in approximately 2 hours, the average DCR can rise to approximately  $10^7$  counts/s. This means that for a large amount of radiation damage, the DCR starts to dominate over the background noise. Now the expected amount of background noise is expected to be 500 *krad* as is listed in section 1.1. Now assuming that all this radiation is 60 *MeV* radiation build up with similar conditions as during the radiation test, that the relationship between dose and DCR stays linear as observed, and assuming that about half of the damage is healed over time due to annealing, one can make a loose estimation about the required peak and average power of the laser to meet the resolution requirements.

The average amount of DCR after 40 *krad* of radiation is  $10^7$  counts/s. Extrapolating this number to the assumptions made previously on gets a  $6.25 \cdot 10^8$  counts/s. The resulting peak and average optical laser power are calculated below.

$$\begin{aligned} P_{peak} &= \frac{10 \cdot DCR}{PPS_S} \\ &= 33 \text{ kW} \\ P_{av} &= P_{peak} \cdot FWHM \\ &= 3.3 \mu W \end{aligned}$$

## 4.5 Possible improvements

There are several ways that the resilience against radiation could be improvement. The first improvement could be a shield in front of the sensor that can be removed when the sensor is deployed. A second improvement could be to look in the FPGA for unusually high counts among the SPADs to filter out the SPADs who are damaged the most. This solution could mean however that not all pixels of the target image can be produced, because some data is missing. A third improvement could be to look at the area of the SPADs that are susceptible to traps caused by radiation, and try to reduce that area in the SPAD design to improve the overall resilience against radiation.

## Chapter 5

# Specs

Work in progress