



IEEE

SENSORS 2013

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Design and Analysis of MEMS Accelerometers

Diego Emilio Serrano

Qualtré

Georgia Institute of Technology

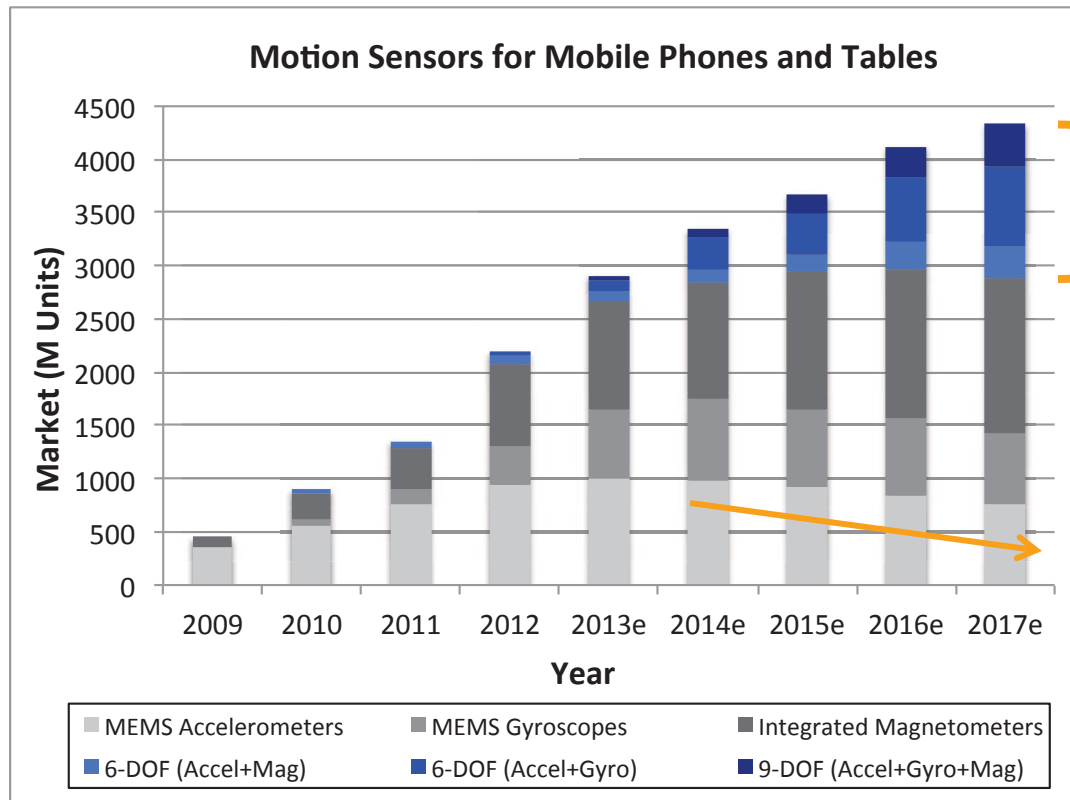


**Georgia Institute
of Technology**



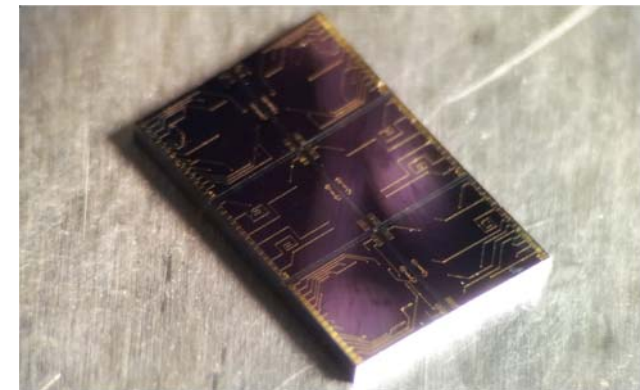
The Future of MEMS Accelerometers

- Are MEMS Accelerometers still relevant?



Source: Yole Développement, "Inertial Sensors in Mobile Products", 2012

Multi-DOF Combos



Monolithic 6-DOF TIMU Die
(Qualtré/Georgia Tech)

- Shift in paradigm → Design for integration

Applications of MEMS Accelerometers



Industrial

- Platform stabilization
- Oil drilling orientation
- Robotic telepresence



Automotive

- Airbag deployment
- Rollover, anti-skid control



Consumer

- Interactive gaming
- Free-fall detection
- Camera stabilization
- Indoor navigation

Military

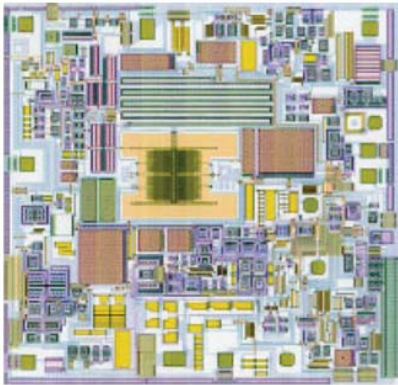
- Aircraft flight control
- Dead-reckoning



Evolution of MEMS Accelerometers

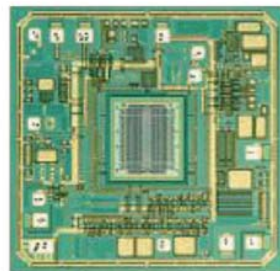
- Analog Devices Accelerometer (Automotive)

ADXL50 (1994)



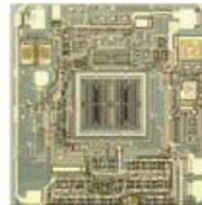
10.8 mm²

ADXL76 (1996)



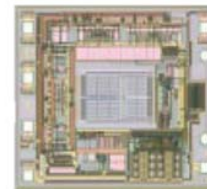
5.4 mm²

ADXL78 (2001)



2.7 mm²

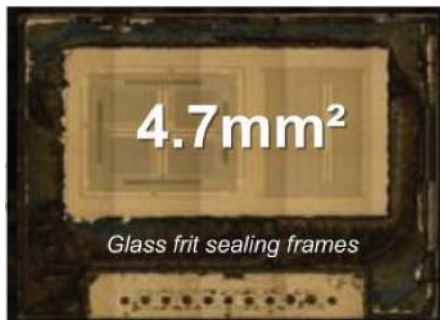
ADXL180 (2006)



2.5 mm²

M. Judy, Proc. Solid-State Sensors, Actuators, and Microsystems Workshop, Hilton Head Island, SC, Jun. 2004

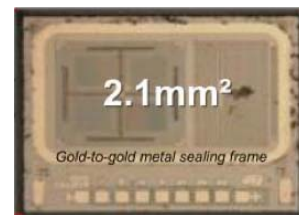
- STMicroelectronics Accelerometer (Consumer)
(2008)



4.7mm²

Glass frit sealing frames

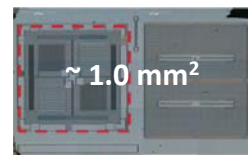
(2010)



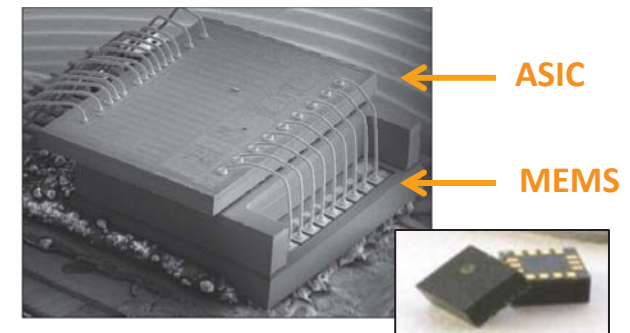
2.1mm²

Gold-to-gold metal sealing frame

(2013)



~ 1.0 mm²



ASIC

MEMS

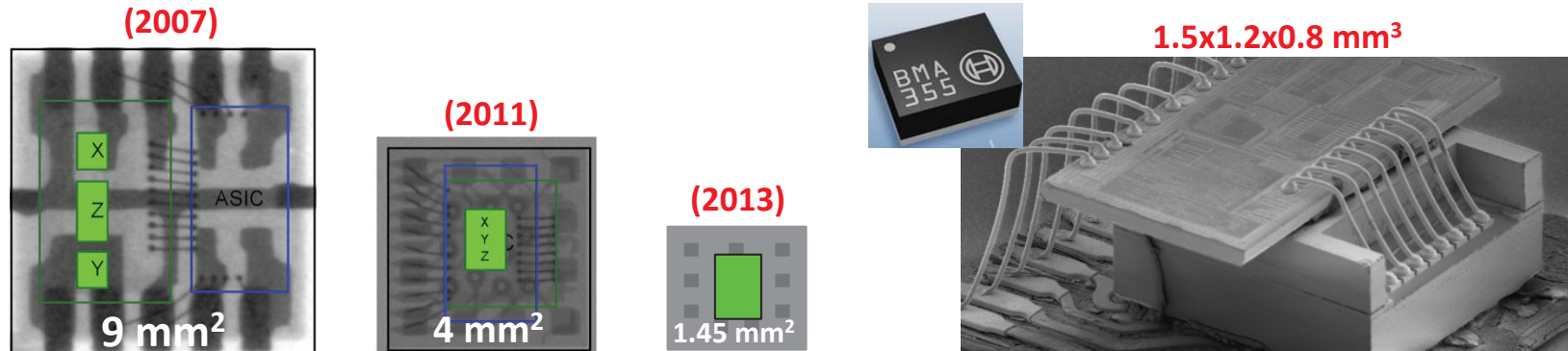
LIS2DH

2x2x0.9 mm³

Source: Yole Développement, "MEMS Packaging sample report", 2012

Sensor Scaling and Integration

- Bosch Sensortec (Consumer)

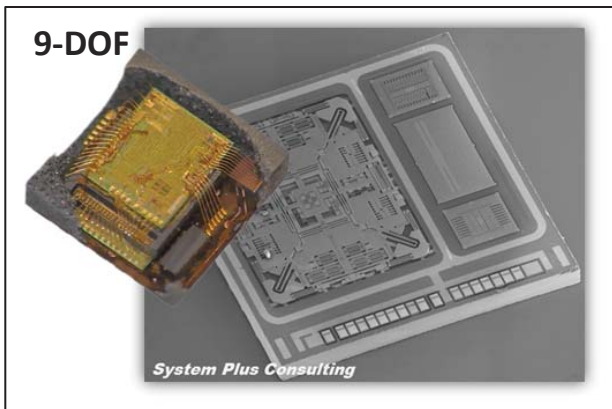


The Evolution of Compact Three Axis Accelerometers, St.J. Dixon-Warren, Chipworks Inc.

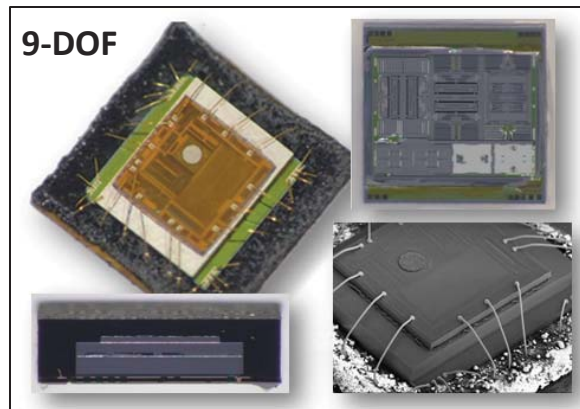
Source: www.bosch-sensortec.com

- Accelerometers in Multi-DOF Combos

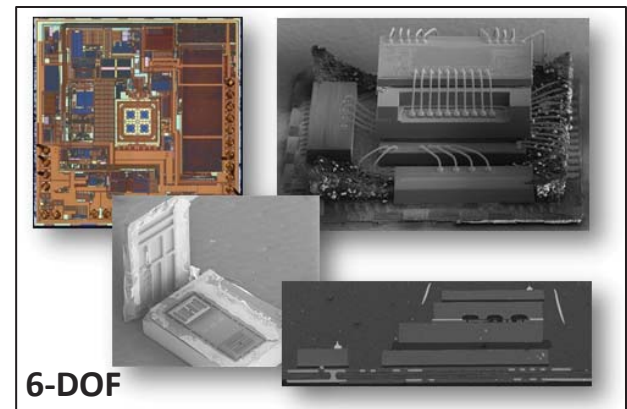
STMicroelectronics (LSMD333D)



Invensense (MPU9150)

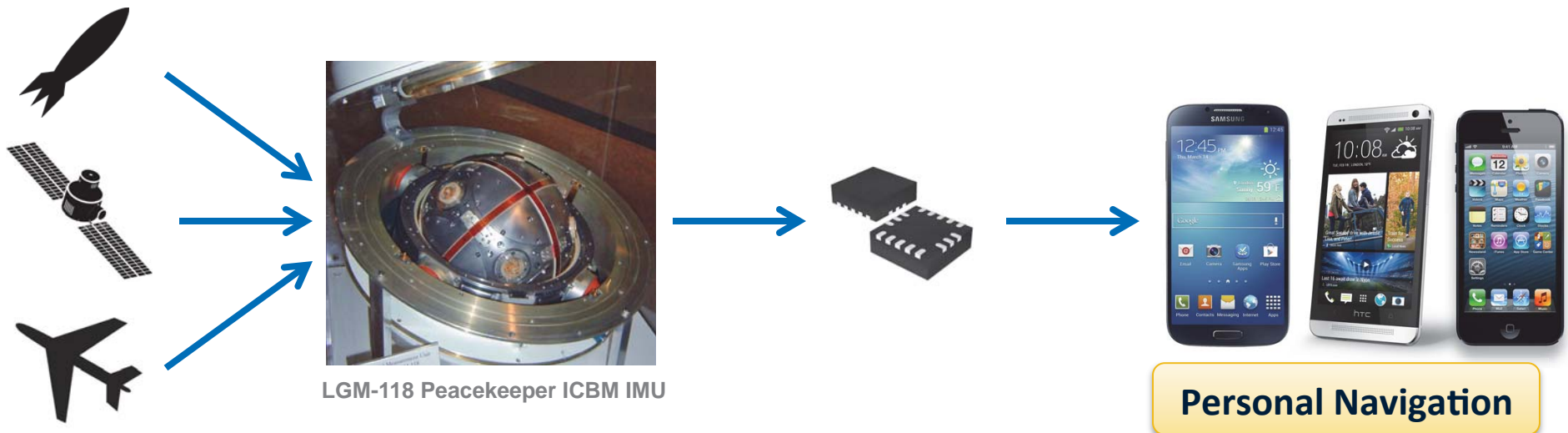


Bosch Sensortec (BMC050)



Accelerometers in Personal Navigation

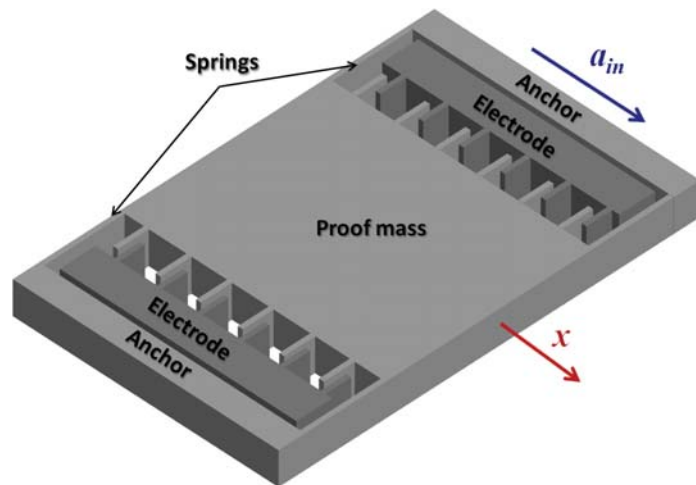
- Bringing navigation-grade performance into hand-held devices



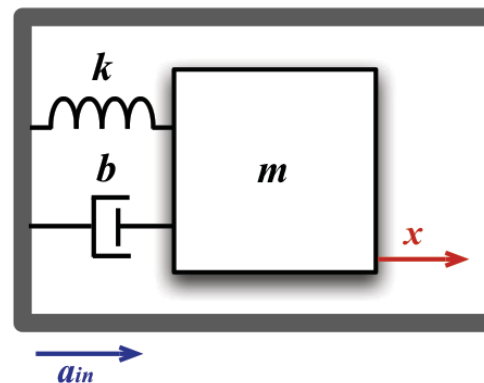
- High-performance micromachined accelerometers
 - Same fabrication platform as gyroscopes → size & cost advantage
 - Large dynamic range & BW → multi-purpose sensors
 - Robust and reliable → immune to shock and vibration

MEMS Capacitive Accelerometers

- Conventional MEMS accelerometer architecture



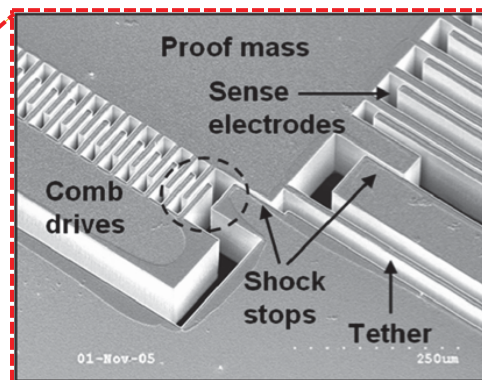
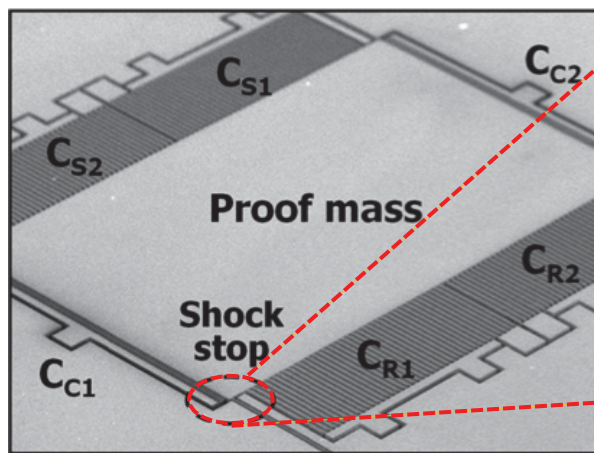
Lumped-Element Model



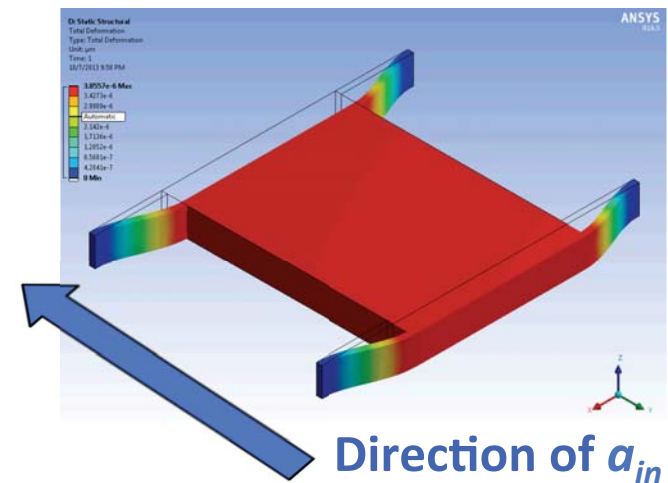
Steady state response:

$$m a_{in} = -k x$$

$$\frac{x}{a_{in}} = -\frac{m}{k}$$

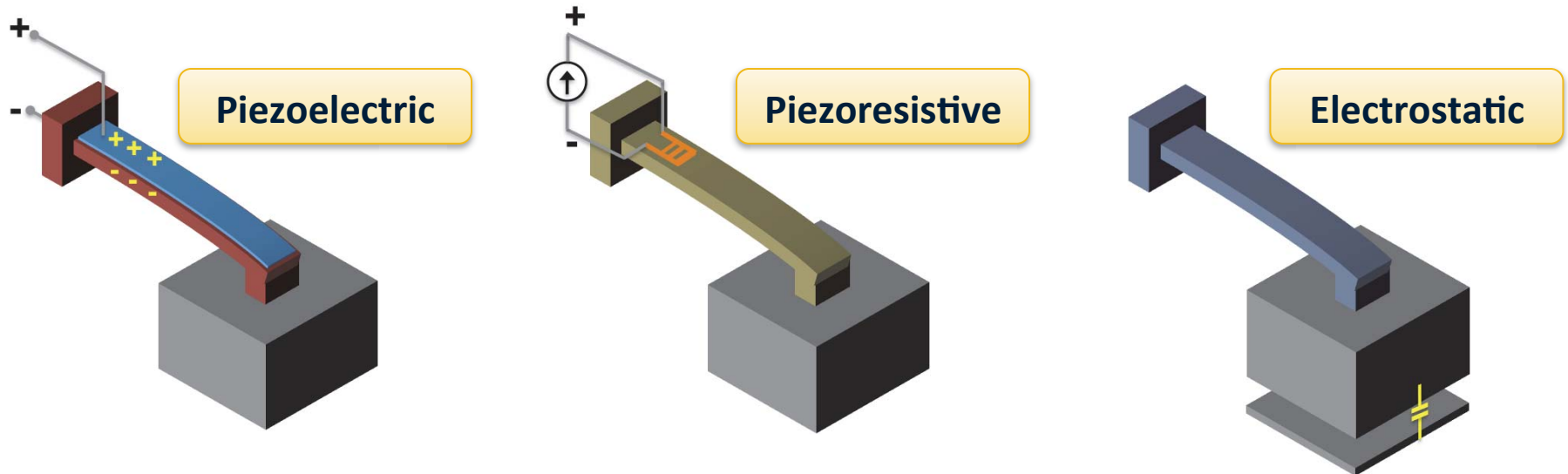


In-plane Accel (SEM)



Electromechanical Transduction

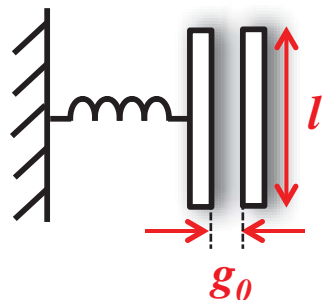
- Displacement has to be converted into electrical signal
- Most common sensing mechanisms:



- Most popular: electrostatic (capacitive) sensing

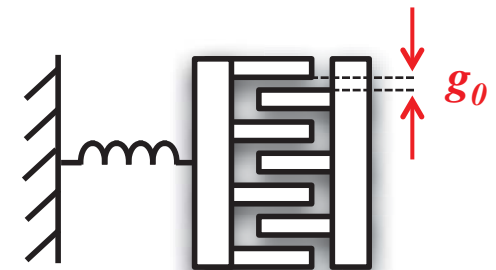
Parallel Plate

$$\frac{dC}{dx} = \frac{\epsilon \cdot w \cdot t}{(g_0 - x)^2}$$



Comb Structure

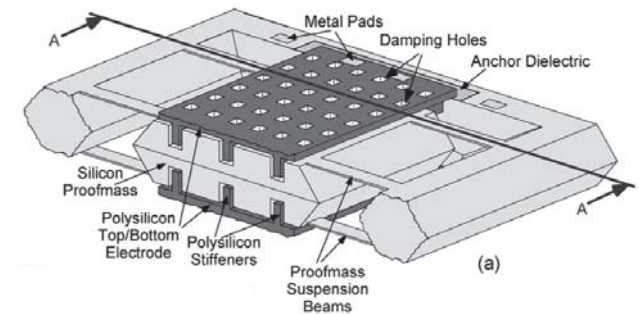
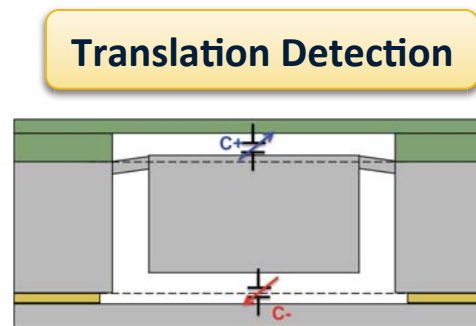
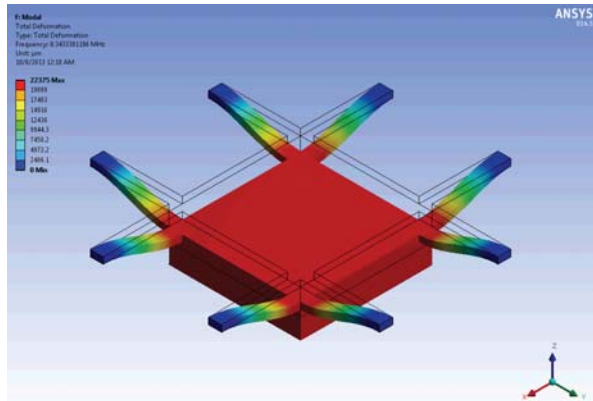
$$\frac{dC}{dx} = \frac{\epsilon \cdot 2n \cdot t}{g_0}$$



t : thickness, n : # of fingers

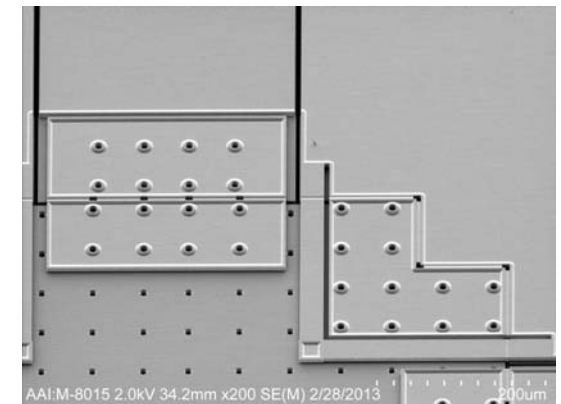
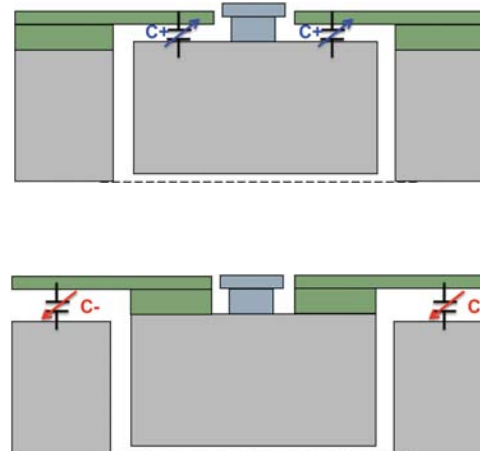
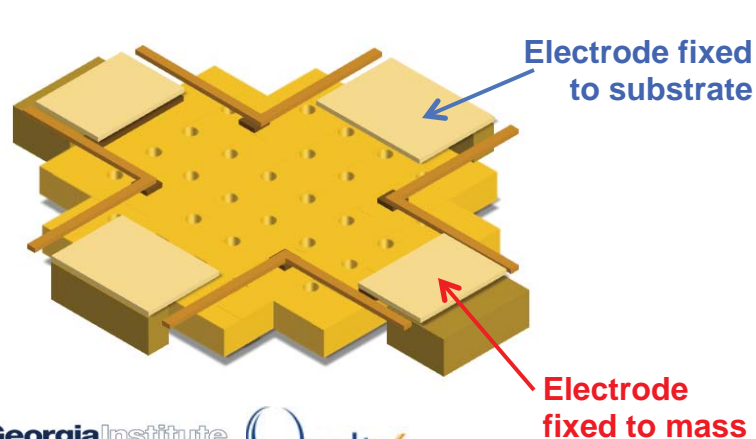
Out-of-Plane Detection: Translation

- In plane electrostatic sensing \rightarrow capacitors defined by trenches
- Z-axis displacement requires out-of-plane (OOP) sense gaps



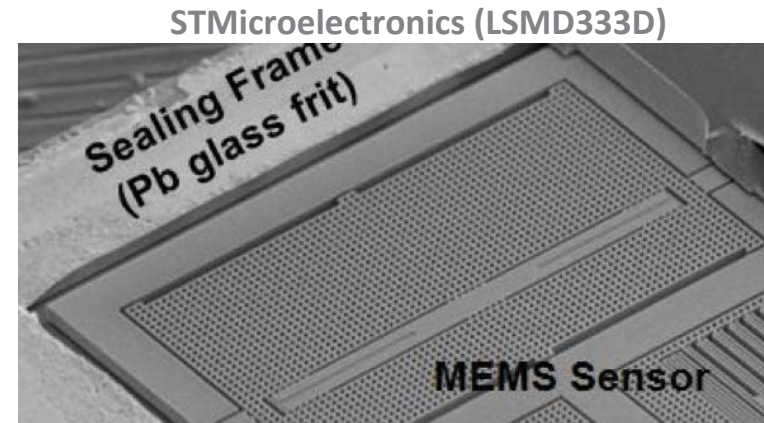
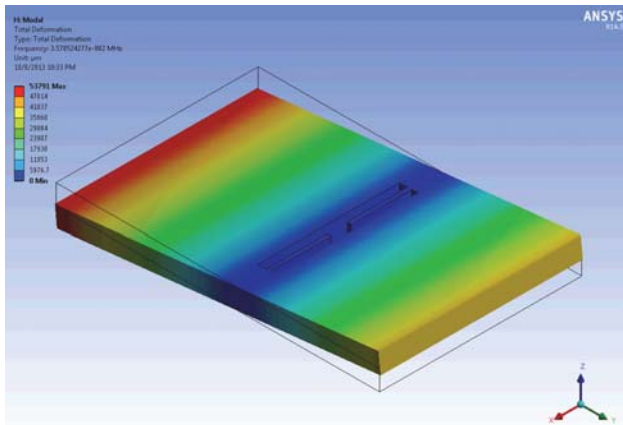
J. Chae, et. al., Journal of Microelectromechanical Systems, Vol. 14, No 2, Apr. 2005

- Differential sensing also achieved with moving electrodes



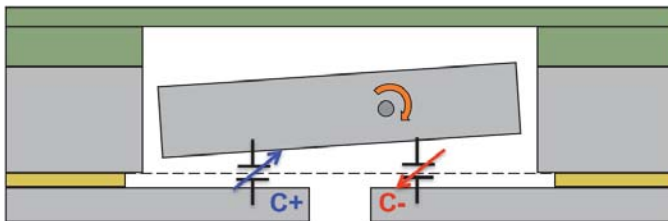
Out-of-Plane Detection: Rotation

- Many processes do not enable top capacitors → Teeter-totter



- Center of mass offset from center of geometry

Torsion Detection



- In presence of z-axis acceleration, device tilts
- Electrodes strategically placed measure differential capacitance change

Metrics in Capacitive Accelerometers

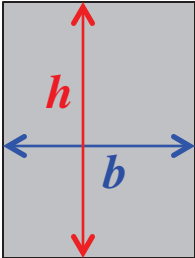
- What to look for when designing parallel-plate capacitive accels

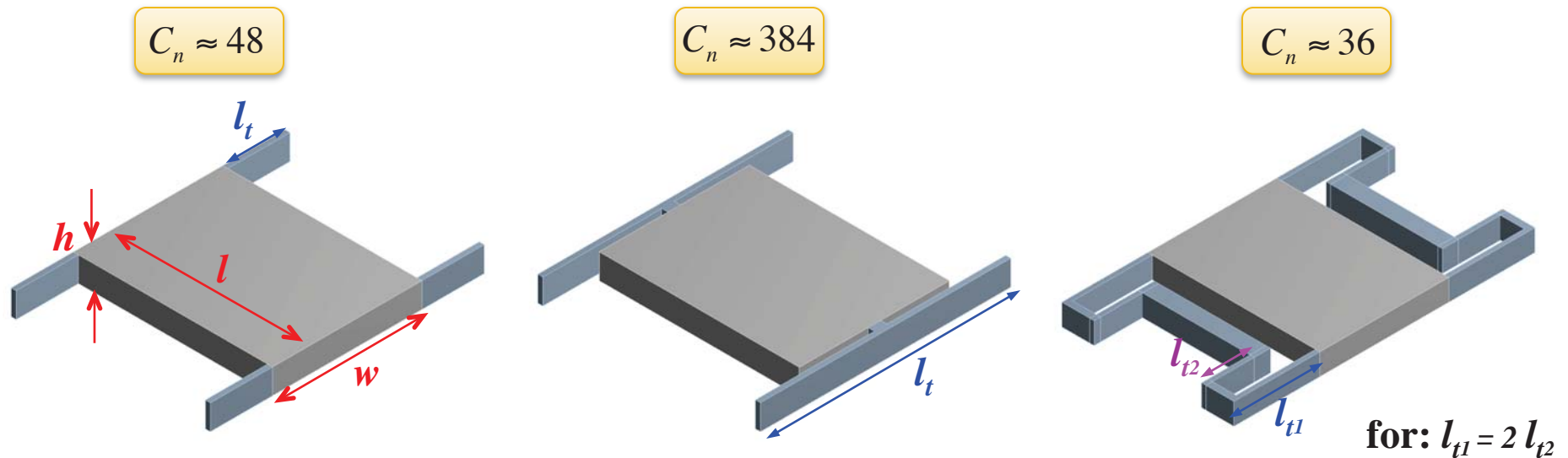
$$\Delta C_x \approx S_x \cdot a_x + S_{x2} \cdot a_x^2 + S_y \cdot a_y + S_z \cdot a_z + C_0$$

Scale Factor
 Non-linearity
 Cross-Axis Sensitivity
 Offset

Parameter	Units	Expression	Description
Resonance Frequency	Hz	$\omega_0 = \sqrt{\frac{k}{m}}$	Free-vibration frequency of accelerometer
Scale Factor	F/(m/s ²)	$SF \approx \frac{1}{\omega_0^2} \frac{\epsilon \cdot A_{elec}}{g_0^2}$	Linear term of the acceleration to capacitance change sensitivity
Quadratic non-linearity	F/(m/s ²) ²	$SF_2 \approx \frac{1}{\omega_0^4} \frac{\epsilon \cdot A_{elec}}{g_0^3}$	Quadratic term of the acceleration to capacitance change sensitivity
Brownian Noise	(m/s ²)/√Hz	$MNEA = \sqrt{\frac{4k_B \cdot T \cdot \omega_0}{Q \cdot m}}$	Mechanical noise equivalent acceleration
Pull-in Voltage	V	$V_{pi} = \sqrt{\frac{8\omega_0^2 \cdot m \cdot g_0^3}{27 \epsilon \cdot A_{elec}}}$	Voltage required to snap-down moving device to parallel
Bandwidth	Hz	$\omega_{3dB} \approx Q \cdot \omega_0$	Approximate 3 dB Bandwidth in over-damped second-order system

Designing for Scale Factor

- Mass: $m = \rho \cdot V = \rho \cdot (h \cdot w \cdot l)$
- Stiffness: $k = C_n \cdot \frac{E \cdot I}{l_t^3}$ Rectangular cross-section → $I = \frac{1}{12} b^3 \cdot h$ 
- $\rho \rightarrow$ Density $E \rightarrow$ Young's Modulus $I \rightarrow$ Second moment of area
- C_n depends on boundary conditions, loads and number of springs

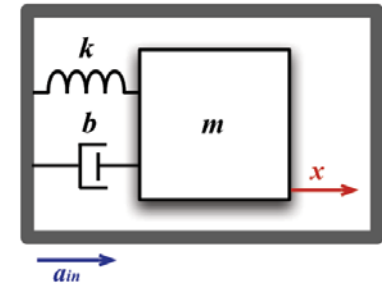


Dynamics of MEMS Accelerometers

- Second-order system approximation

$$m \frac{d^2 x}{dt^2} + b \frac{dx}{dt} + k x = m a_{in}$$

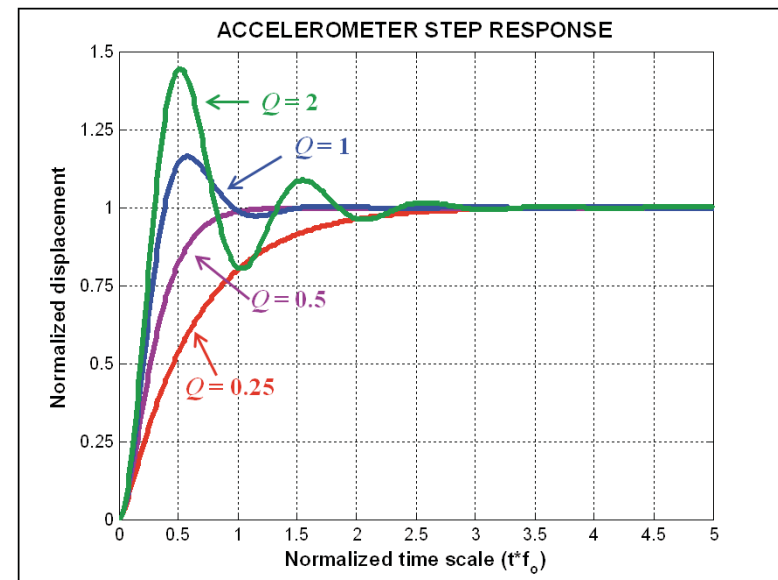
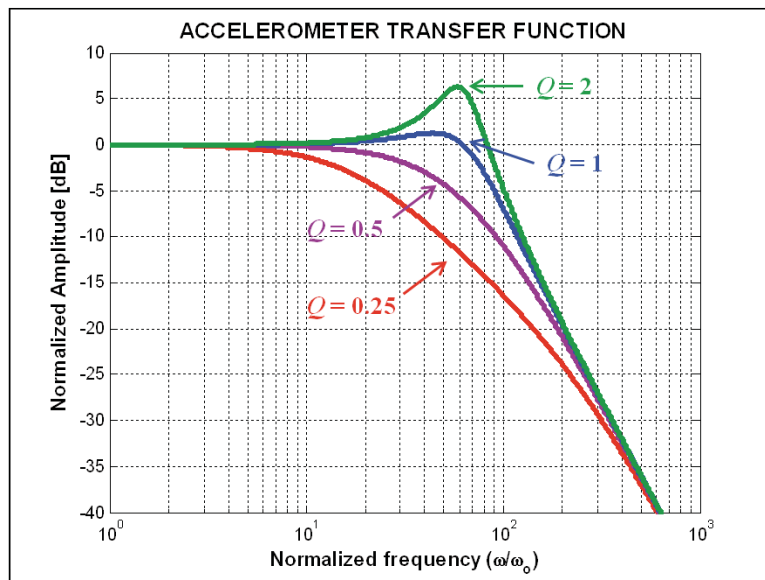
$$\omega_0 = \sqrt{\frac{k}{m}} \quad Q = \frac{\sqrt{k m}}{b}$$



$$\frac{X(s)}{A_{in}(s)} = \frac{1}{s^2 + \frac{\omega_0}{Q}s + \omega_0^2}$$

$$\omega \ll \omega_0$$

$$\left| \frac{X(j\omega)}{A_{in}(j\omega)} \right| \approx \frac{1}{\omega_0^2} = \frac{m}{k}$$



Quality Factor in Accelerometers

- Q in accelerometers dominated by squeeze-film damping (SFD)

$$\frac{1}{Q} = \frac{1}{Q_{\text{SFD}}} + \frac{1}{Q_{\text{TED}}} + \frac{1}{Q_{\text{anchor}}} + \frac{1}{Q_{\text{material}}} \longrightarrow \frac{1}{Q} \approx \frac{1}{Q_{\text{SFD}}}$$



- In plates with narrow gaps, SFD is described by Reynold's equation
- For small changes in gap and pressure:

$$\frac{\partial^2 P}{\partial x^2} + \frac{\partial^2 P}{\partial y^2} = \frac{12\mu_{\text{eff}}}{h^3} \frac{dh}{dt}$$

h : Gap size

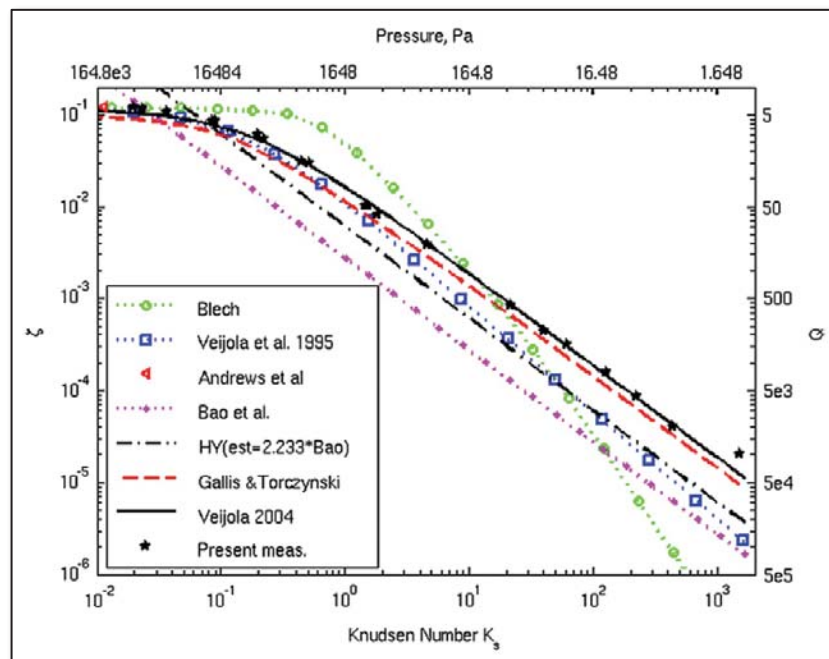
P : Pressure

μ : Coefficient of viscosity

Squeeze Film Damping

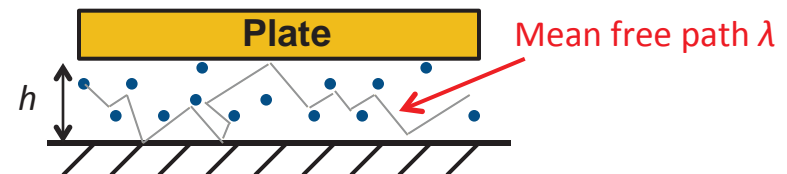
- Boundary conditions and approximations depend on pressure level
- Simplified damping coefficient:

$$b \approx \frac{\mu_{eff} \cdot l \cdot t^3}{h^3} \longrightarrow Q \propto h^3$$



Mean free path: $\lambda = \frac{\mu}{P} \sqrt{\frac{2k_B T}{m}}$

Knudsen Number: $K_s \approx \frac{\lambda}{h}$



- Second order effects:
 - Slip fluid-wall correction ($K_s > 0.1$)

$$\mu_{eff} \approx \frac{\mu_0}{1 + 9.638 K_s^{1.159}}$$

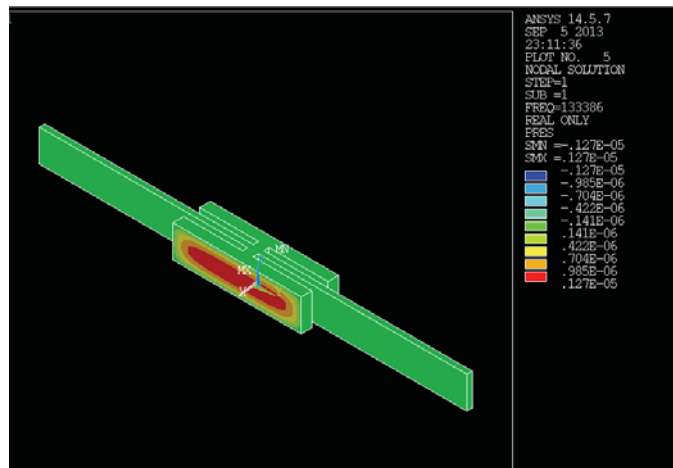
- Non-trivial boundary conditions ($K_s > 1$)

H. Sumali, J. Micromech. Microeng., Vol. 17 pp. 2231–2240, 2007

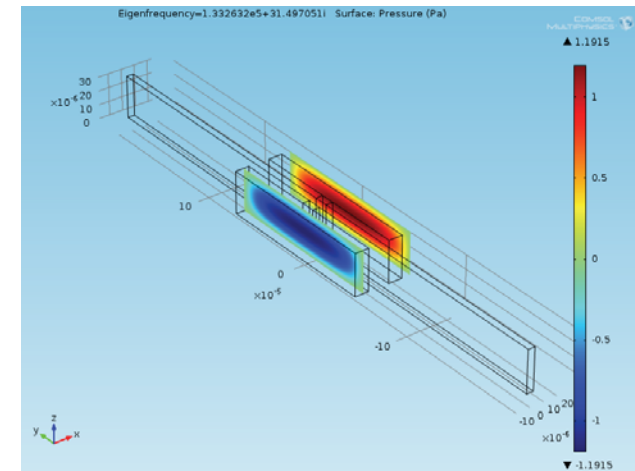
FEA modeling of SFD

- For complex geometries → SFD through finite element analysis (FEA)
- FEA elements incorporate second-order effects (slip correction, non-trivial boundaries)

ANSYS

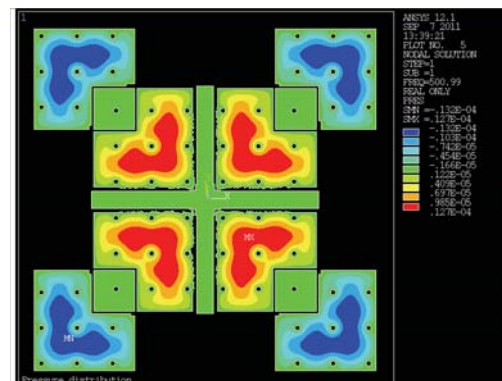
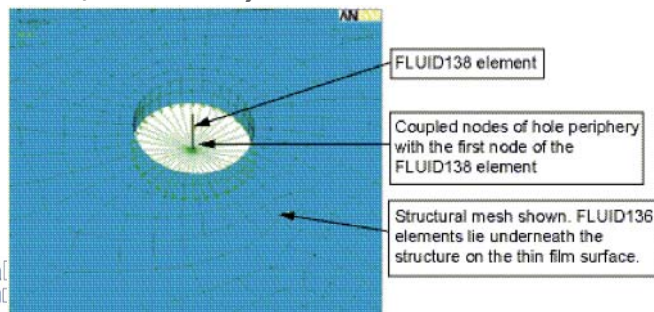


COMSOL



- Modeling release-holes

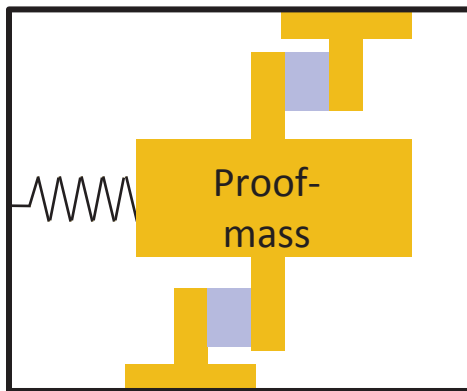
ANSYS, Fluids Analysis Guide



Pressure distribution in tri-axial accelerometer

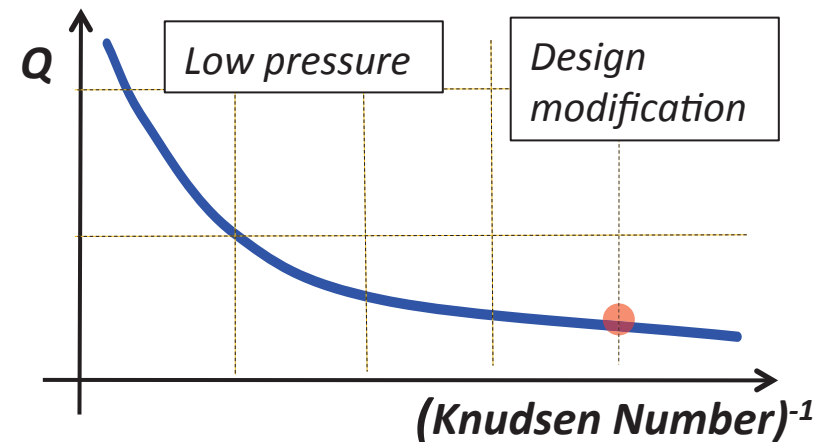
Static Accelerometers at Low Pressure

- Vacuum environment → Essential for resonators (i.e. gyroscopes)
- Monolithic integration → Accelerometers packaged at same pressure



Quality factor

$$Q = \frac{\sqrt{k m}}{b}$$

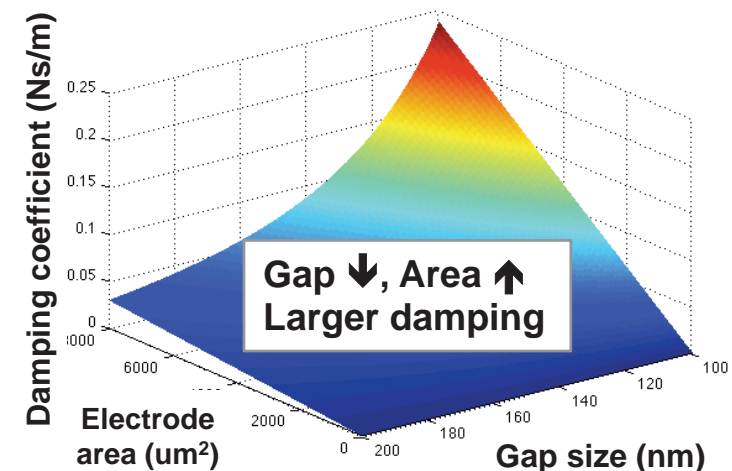


Damping in Parallel Plate

$$b \approx \frac{n_{elec} \cdot \mu_{eff} \cdot l \cdot t^3}{h^3}$$

n_{elec} : # of electrodes
 μ_{eff} : Viscosity
 l : Electrode length
 t : Electrode height
 h : Gap size

1. Narrow Gap
2. Large Electrode Area



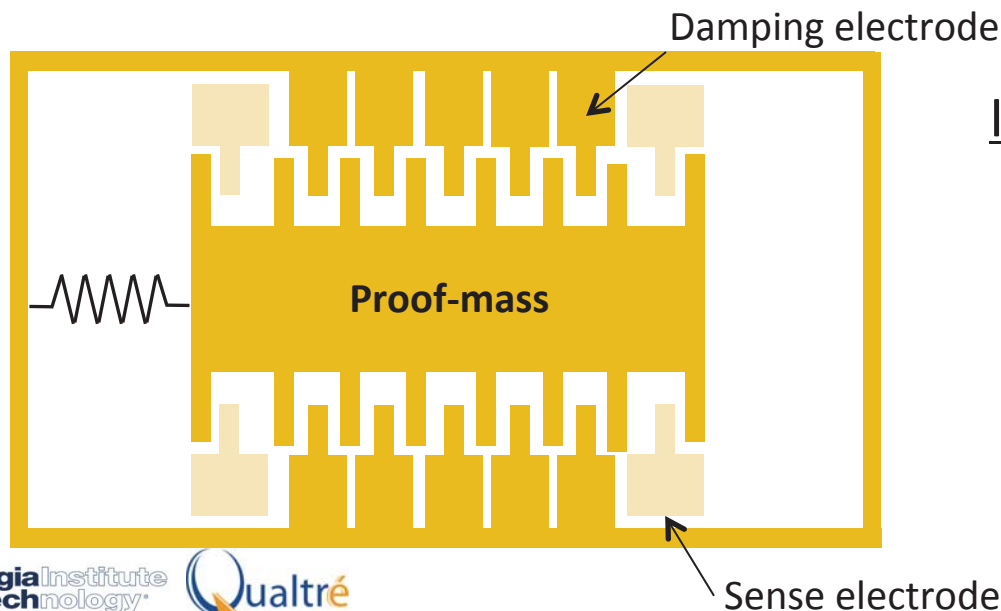
Narrow Gaps in Accelerometers

- Increased damping \rightarrow lower Q
- Increased Scale factor
- Facilitates designing for higher BW
- Draw-back: lower pull-in voltage

$$SF = \frac{\Delta C}{a_{in}} \approx \frac{1}{\omega_0^2} \frac{\varepsilon \cdot A_{elec}}{g_0^2}$$

$$BW_{3dB} \approx Q \cdot \omega_0 \quad (\text{overdamped})$$

$$F_{elec} \approx \frac{1}{2} \frac{\varepsilon \cdot A_{elec}}{g_0^2} V^2 \quad V_{pull-in} \approx \sqrt{\frac{8}{27} \frac{k \cdot g_0^3}{\varepsilon \cdot n_{sens} \cdot A_{elec}}}$$



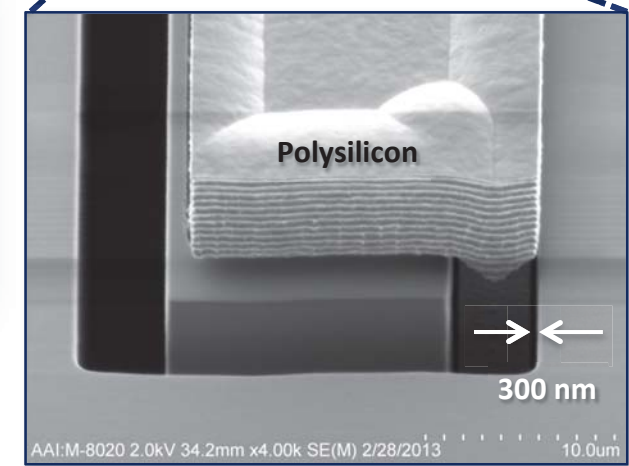
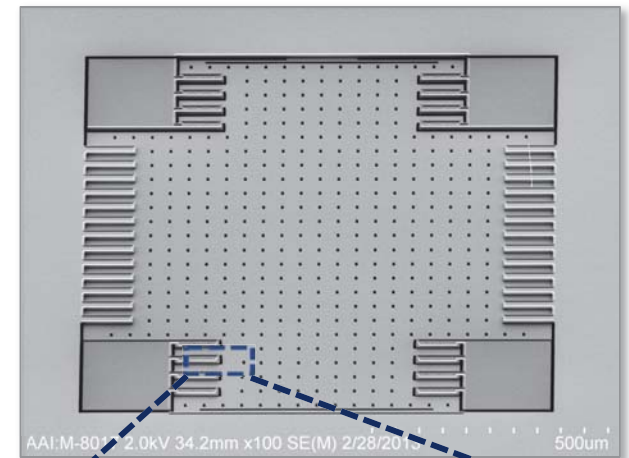
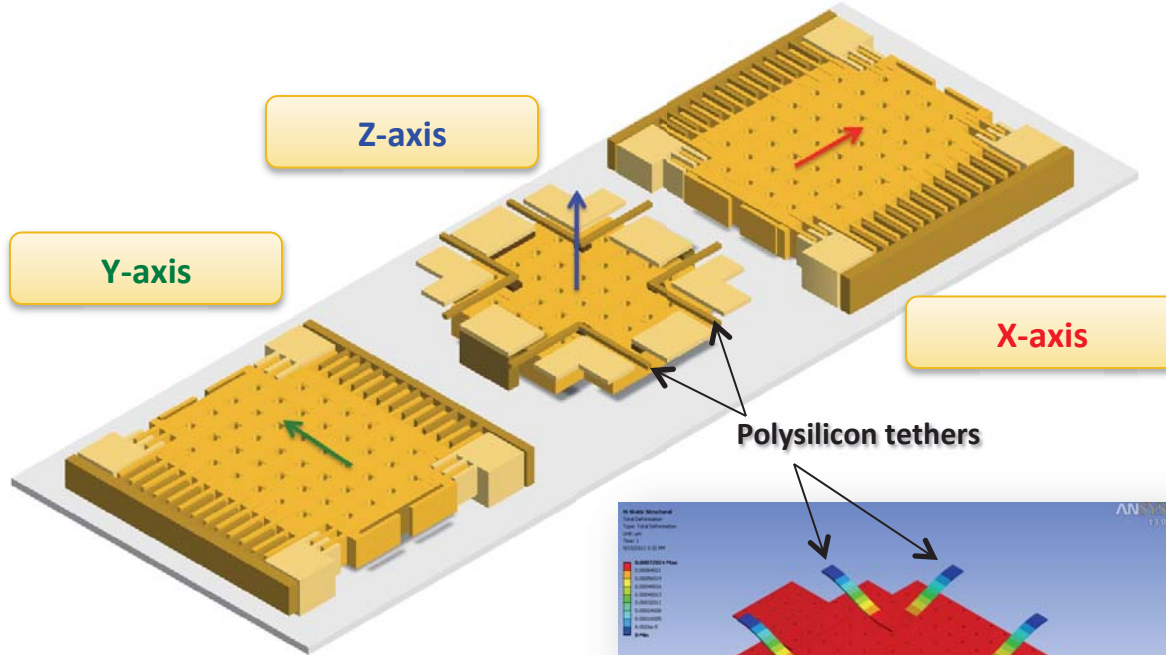
Independent damping electrodes

$$b = \mu_{eff} \cdot l \cdot \left(\frac{t}{g_0^3} \right)^3 \cdot (n_{sens} + n_{damp})$$

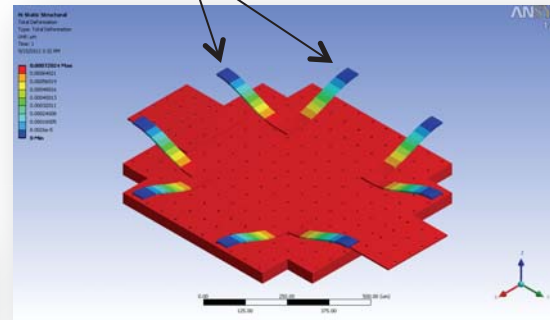
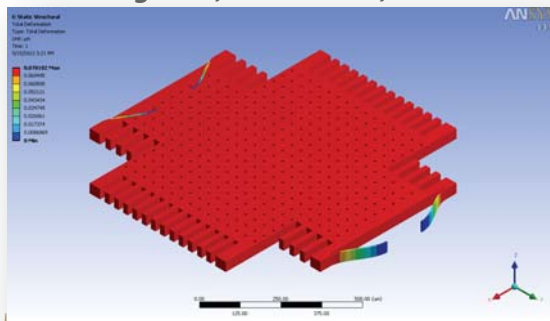
Only n_{sens} contributes to pull-in

Low-Pressure Tri-axial Accelerometers

- Three individual proof-masses \rightarrow x-, y-, z-axis detection

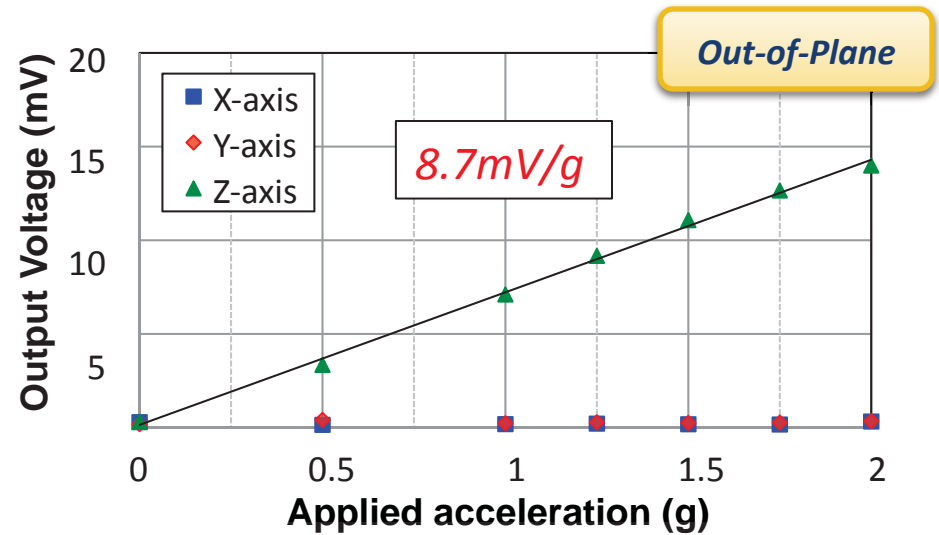
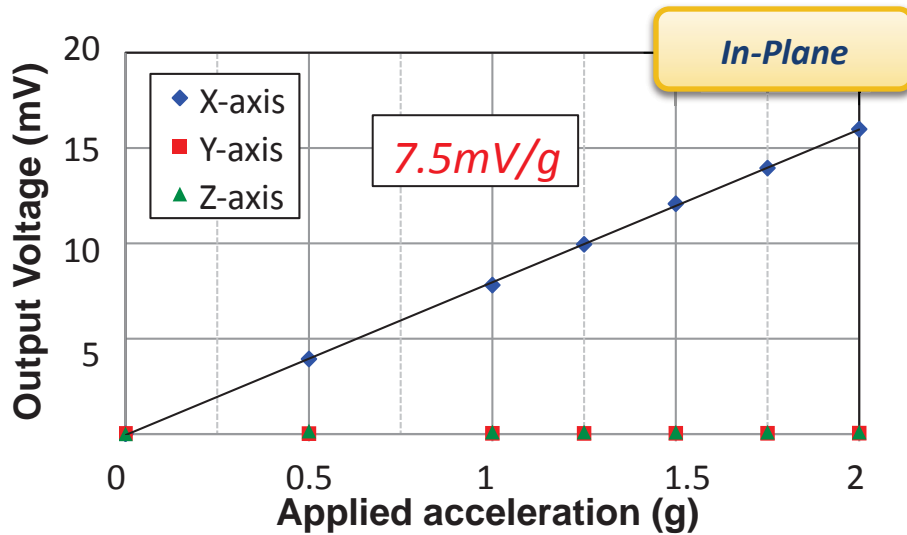
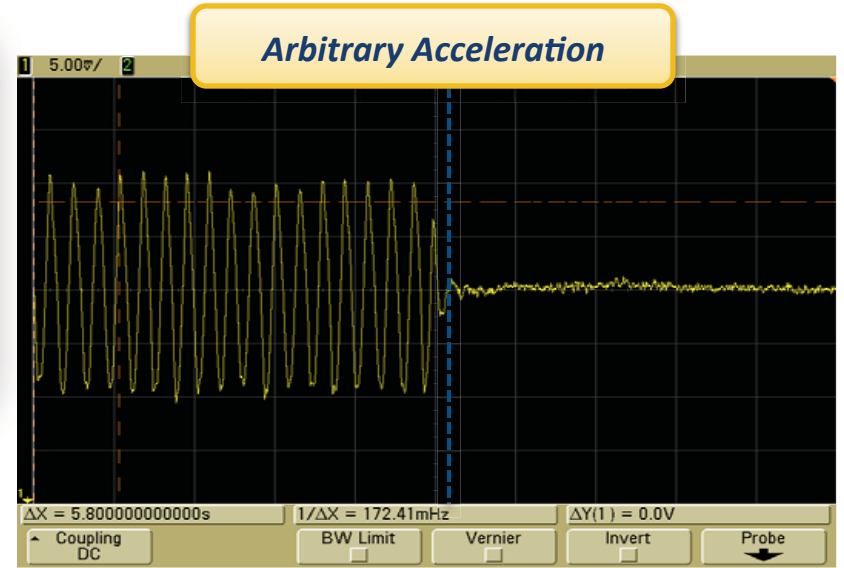
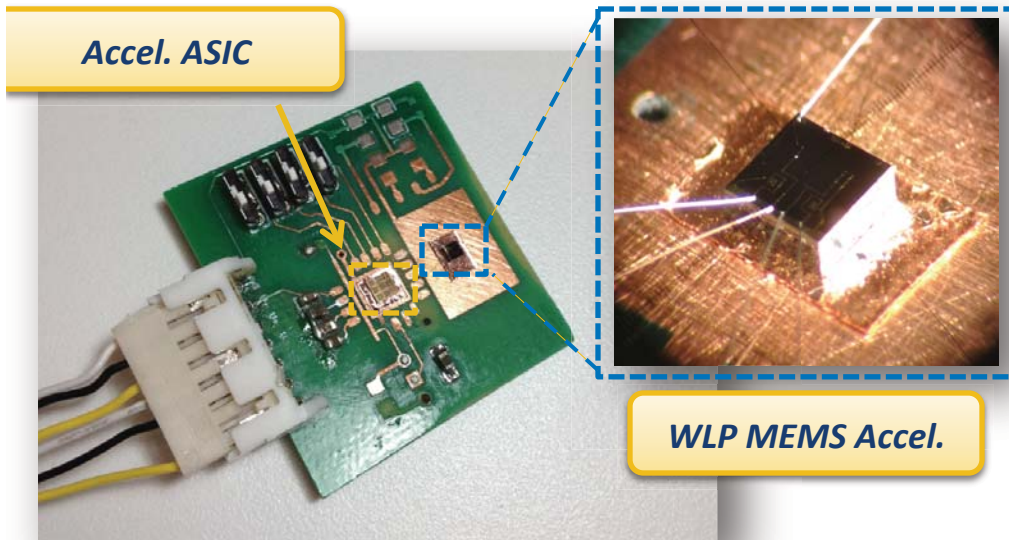


Y. Jeong et al, IEEE MEMS, 2013



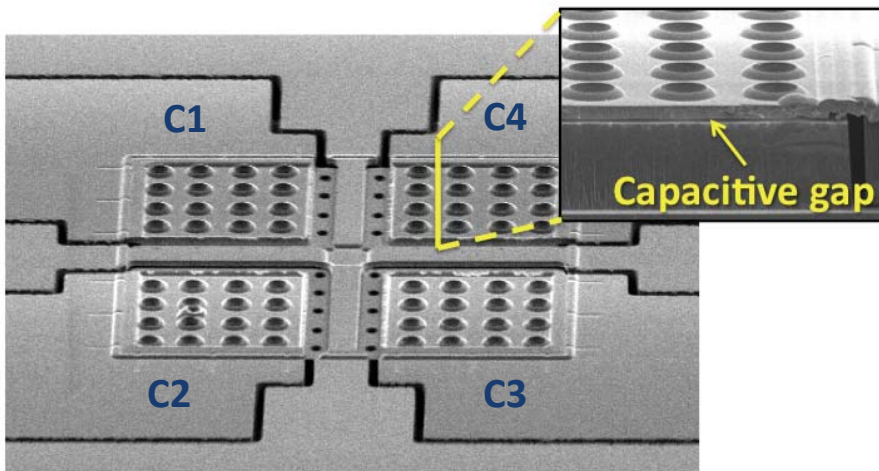
Response to Linear Acceleration

Low-Pressure Accelerometers Response

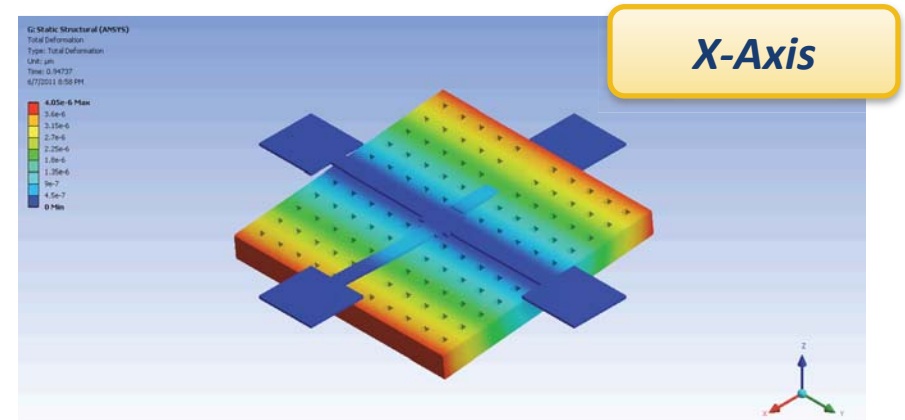


Single Proof Mass 3-axis Accelerometers

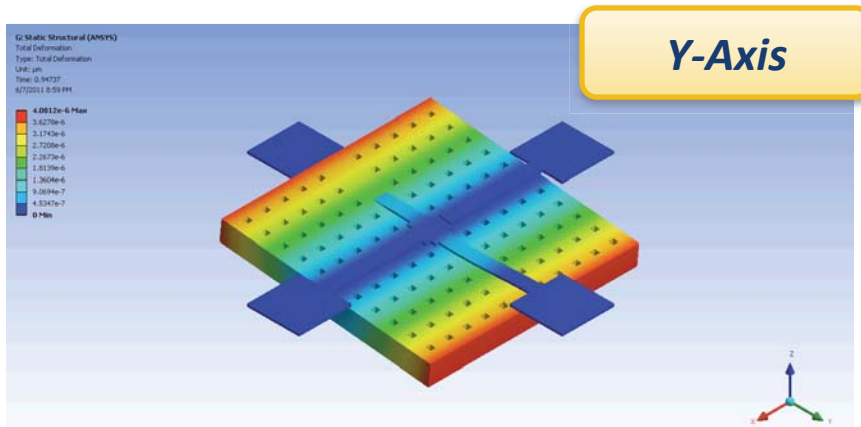
- Pendulum-like sensor with 4 top electrodes



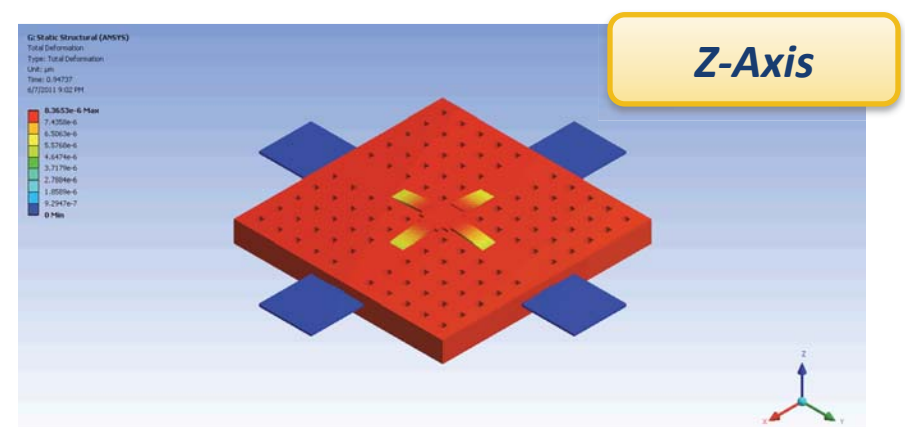
D. E. Serrano et al, to appear at IEEE MEMS, 2014



$$\Delta C_{TOT} = (C1+C2) - (C3+C4)$$



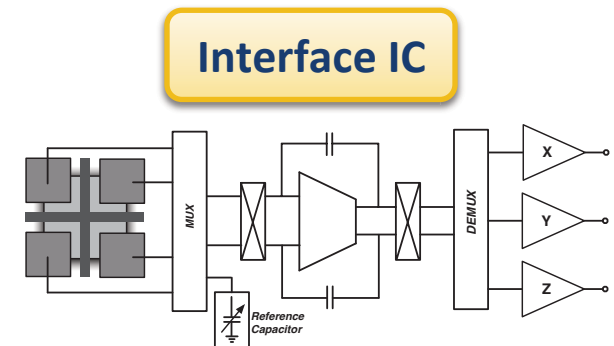
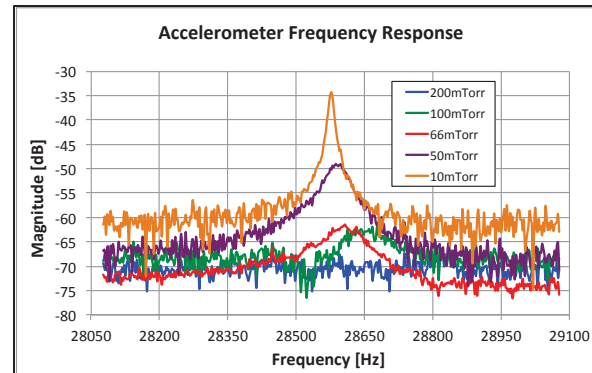
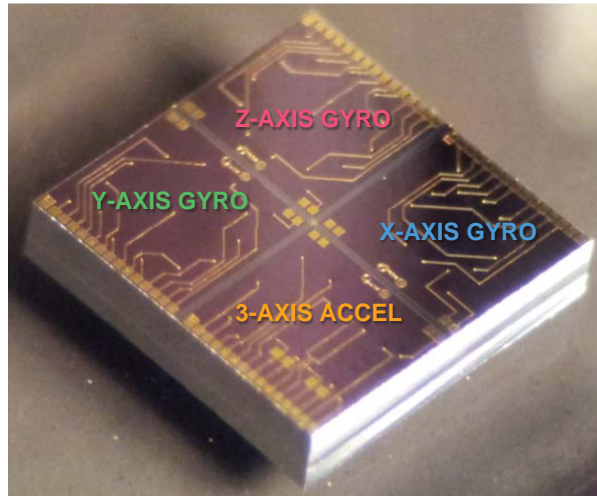
$$\Delta C_{TOT} = (C1+C4) - (C2+C3)$$



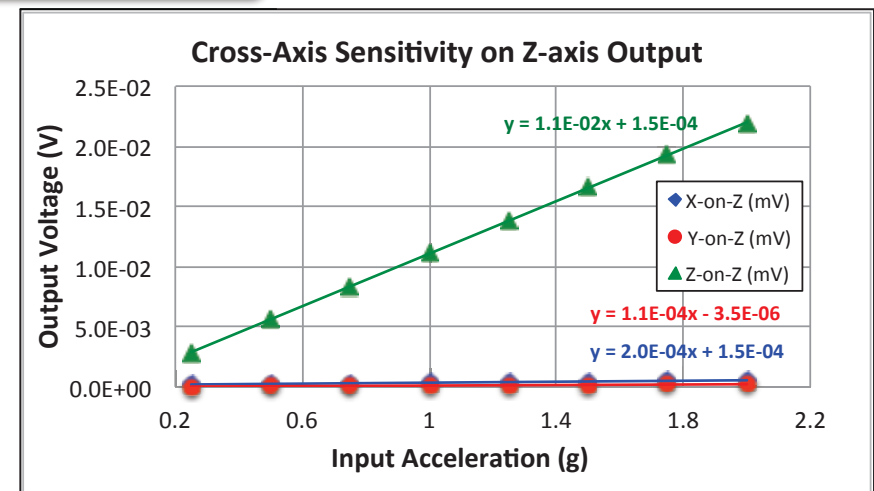
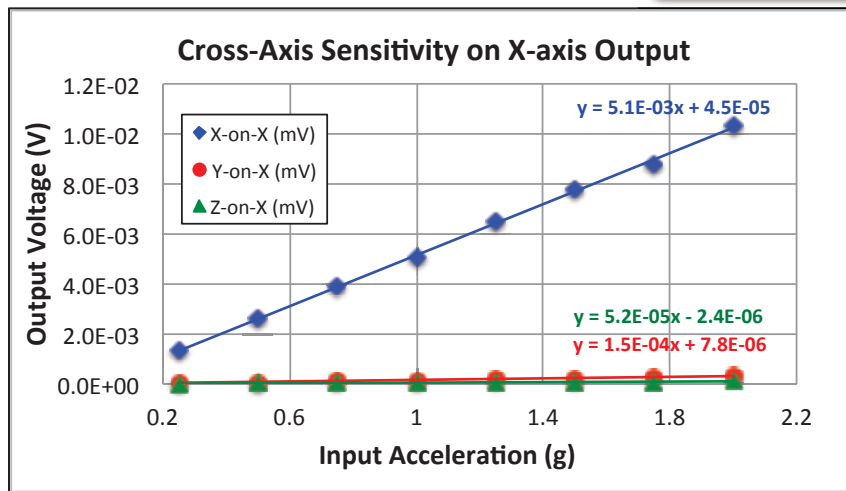
$$\Delta C_{TOT} = (C1+C2+C3+C4) - 4C_{rest}$$

Pendulum Accelerometer Response

- Response of vacuum-packaged single proof mass design

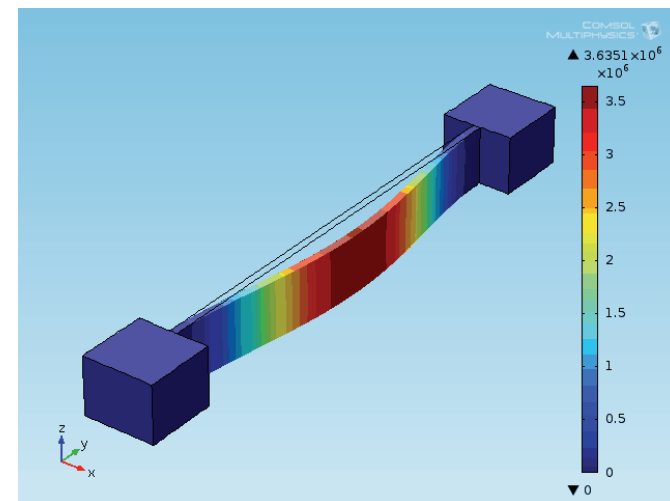
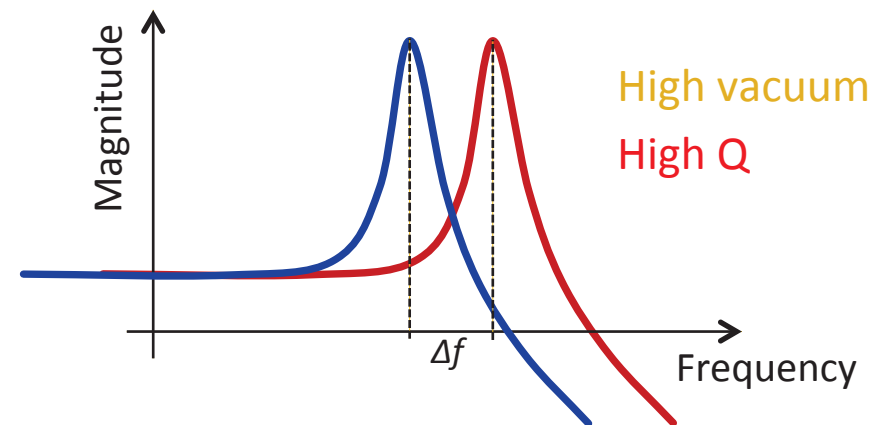
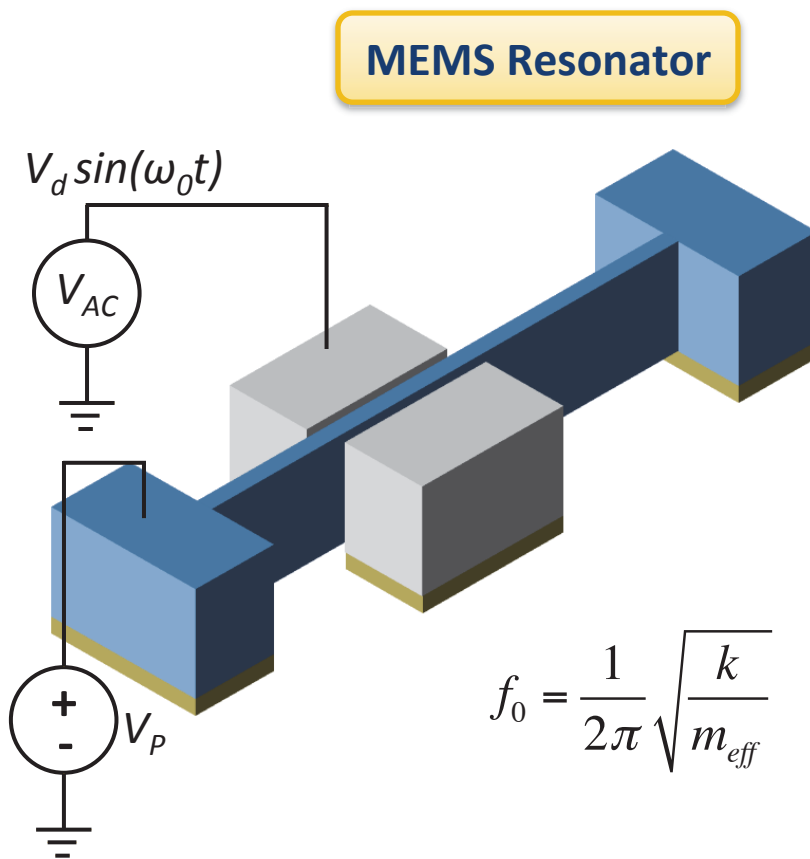


Scale Factor & Cross-Axis



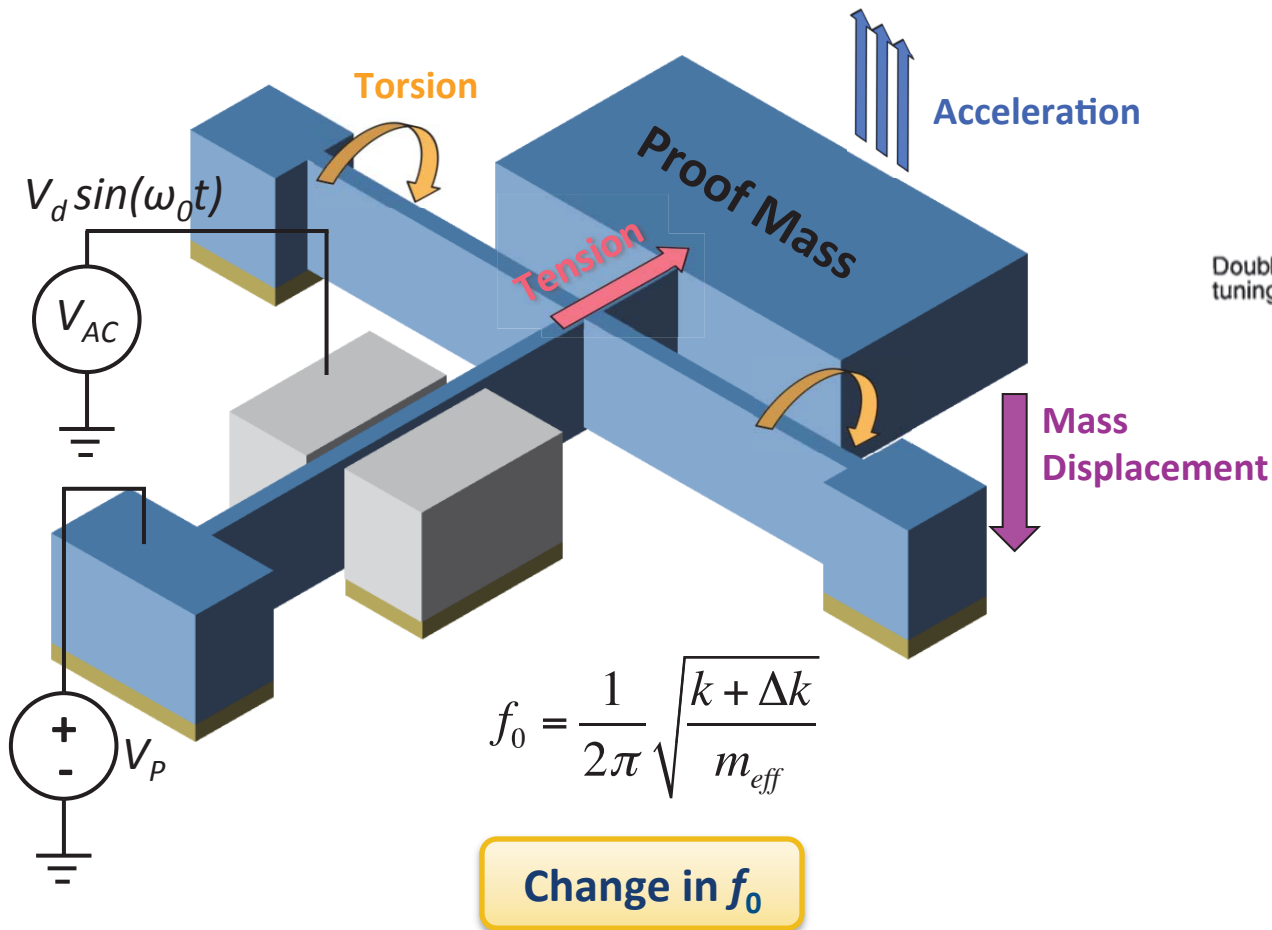
Resonant Accelerometers

- At very low pressures (mTorr range), Q_{SFD} difficult to stabilize
- Different sensing technique \rightarrow Change in resonance frequency

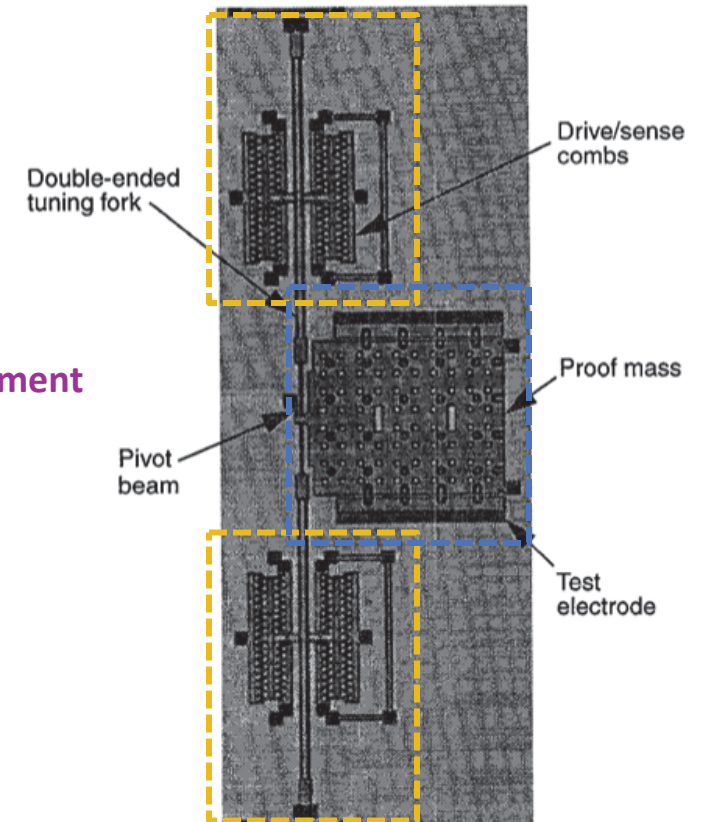


Mass-Loaded Resonator

- At very low pressures (mTorr range), Q_{SFD} difficult to stabilize
- Different sensing technique required → Change in frequency

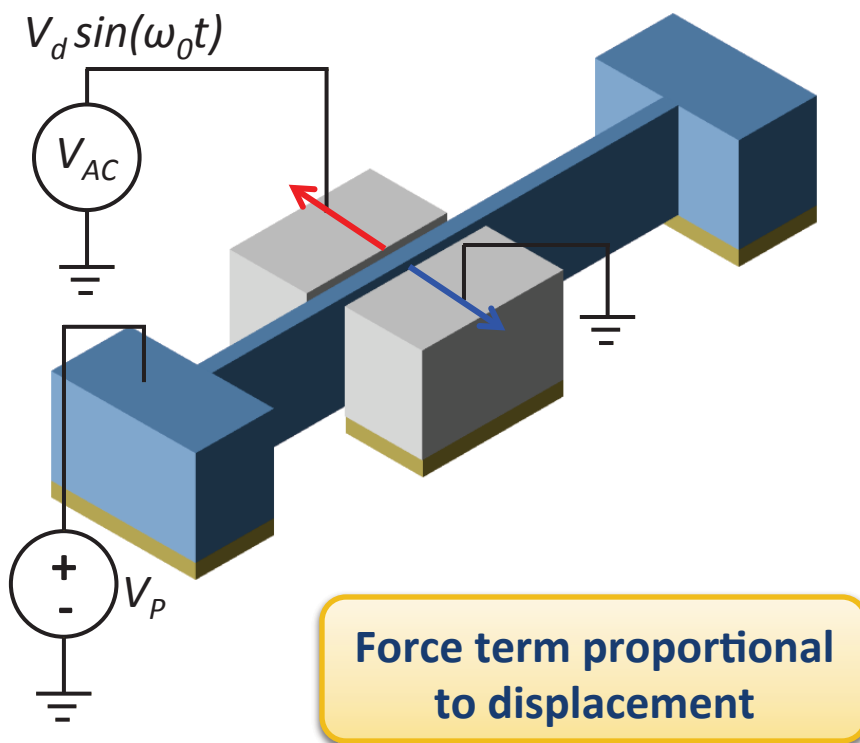


T.A Roessing et al, Transducers, 1997



Electrostatic Spring Softening

- Mechanical loading of stiffness is not very effective
- Also, highly prone to fabrication imperfections and built-in stress
- Alternative: Electrostatic spring softening



$$F_{elec} = \frac{1}{2} \frac{\partial C}{\partial x} V^2 = \frac{1}{2} \frac{\epsilon A}{(g_0 \mp x)^2} V^2$$

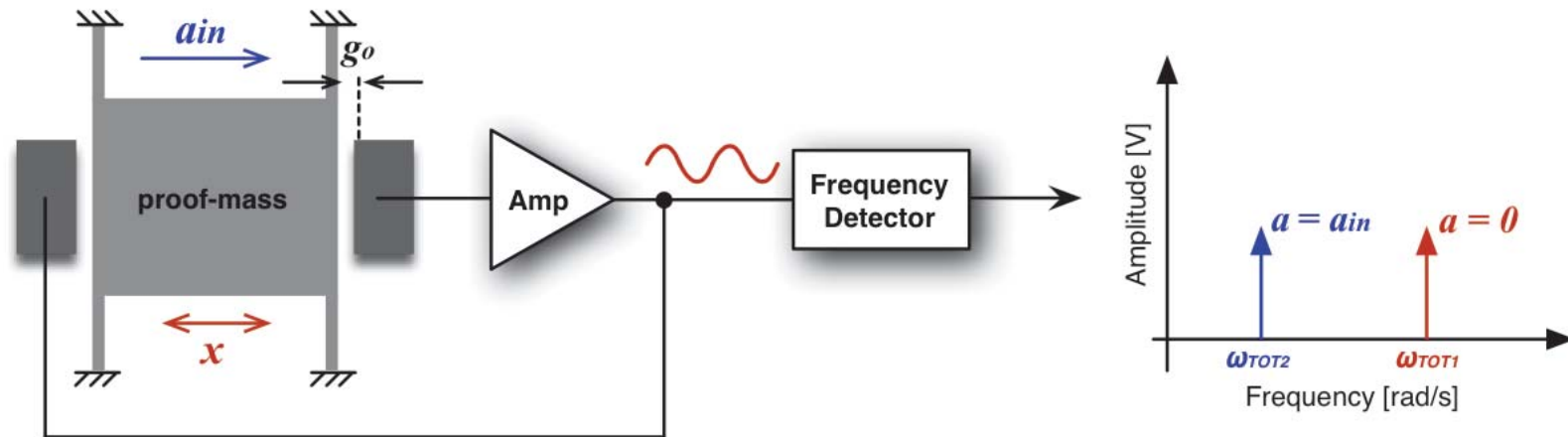
$$F_{elec} \approx \frac{1}{2} \frac{\epsilon A}{g_0} V^2 \cdot \left(\frac{1}{g_0} \pm \frac{2}{g_0^2} x + \frac{3}{g_0^3} x^2 \pm \dots \right)$$

$$F_{elecTOT} = F_{elec1} - F_{elec2}$$

$$F_{elecTOT} \approx \frac{\epsilon A}{g_0} \cdot \left(V_{AC} \cdot V_P + \frac{2 \cdot V_P^2}{g_0^2} x \right)$$

Accelerometer as a Resonator

- Replacing beam resonator with an accelerometer



$$m \frac{d^2 x}{dt^2} + b \frac{dx}{dt} + k x = m a_{in} + F_{elecTOT}$$

Mechanical Transfer Function
 Input Acceleration
 Electrostatic Force

$$m \frac{d^2 x}{dt^2} + b \frac{dx}{dt} + \left(k - \frac{2 \epsilon A}{g^3} V_P^2 \right) x = m a_{in} + \frac{\epsilon A}{g^2} V_{ac} V_P$$

$$\omega_{TOT} = \sqrt{\frac{k - 2 \frac{\epsilon A}{g^3} V_P^2}{m}}$$

Gap g_0 changes with a_{in}

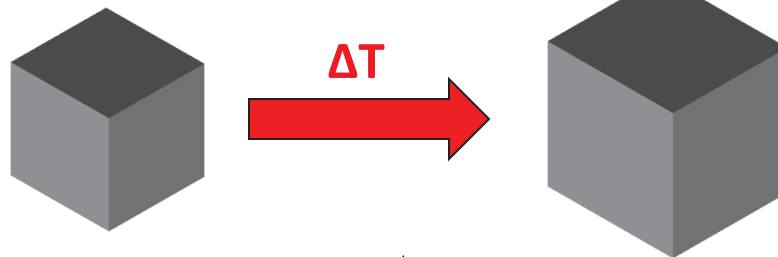
$$\frac{\partial \omega_{TOT}}{\partial a_{in}} \approx -\frac{3}{2} \frac{\epsilon A}{k \omega_0 g^4} V_{DC}^2$$

Challenges in Resonant Accelerometers

- Temperature coefficient of frequency (*TCF*)
 - Dimensional change \rightarrow *CTE* or α (~ 2.6 ppm/ $^{\circ}\text{C}$ in silicon)
 - Material properties \rightarrow *TCE* (~ -32 ppm/ $^{\circ}\text{C}$ in silicon)

$$f = \frac{1}{2\pi} \sqrt{\frac{k}{m_{\text{eff}}}} \propto \frac{w}{\sqrt{\rho \cdot l^2}} \quad w = w_0(1 + \alpha \cdot \Delta T) \quad l = l_0(1 + \alpha \cdot \Delta T) \quad \rho = \rho_0(1 - 3\alpha \cdot \Delta T)$$

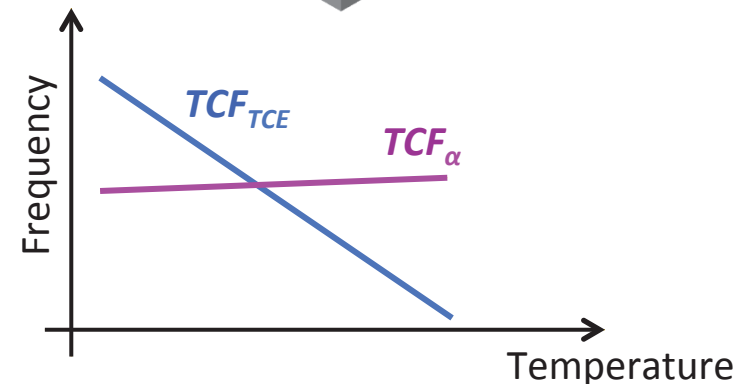
$$TCF_{\alpha} = \frac{1}{f_0} \frac{df}{dT} \approx \frac{\alpha}{2}$$



$$f = \frac{1}{2\pi} \sqrt{\frac{k}{m_{\text{eff}}}} \propto \sqrt{E} \quad E = E_0(1 + TCE \cdot \Delta T)$$

$$TCF_{TCE} = \frac{1}{f_0} \frac{df}{dT} \approx \frac{TCE}{2}$$

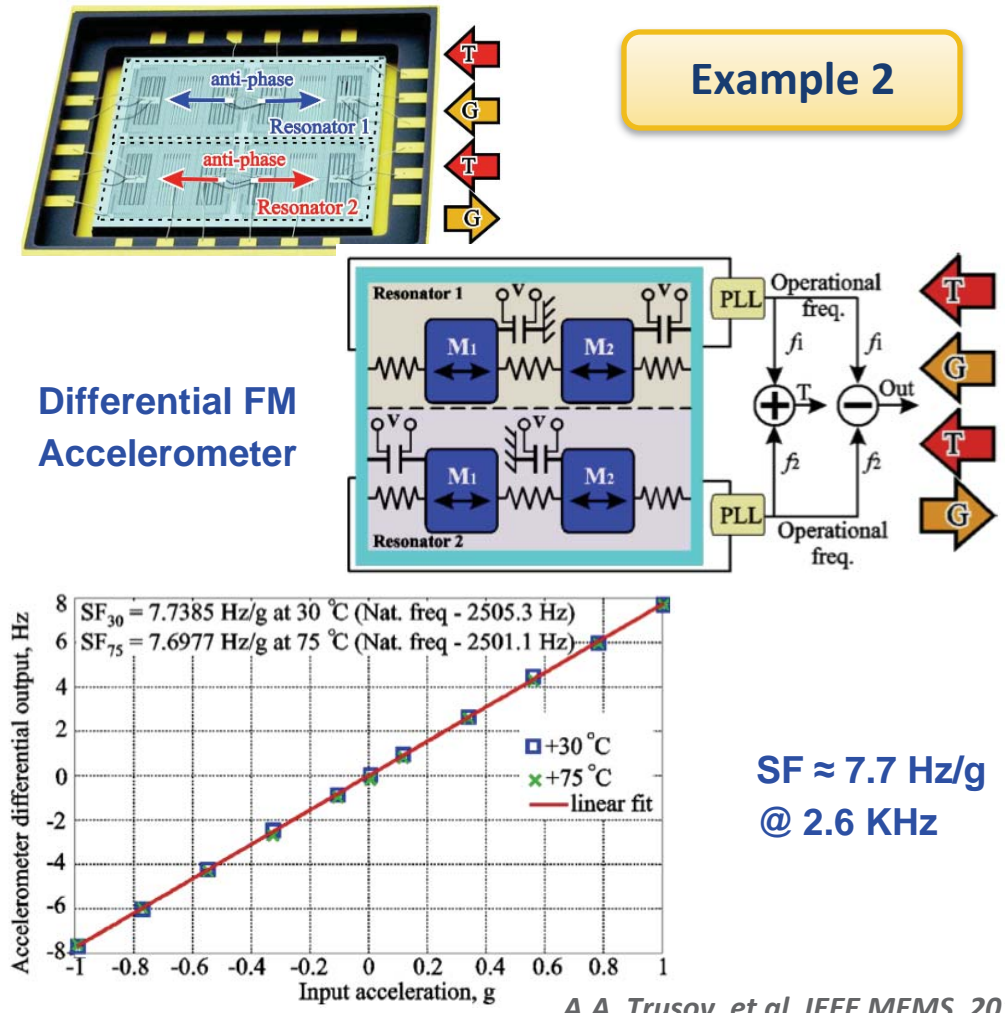
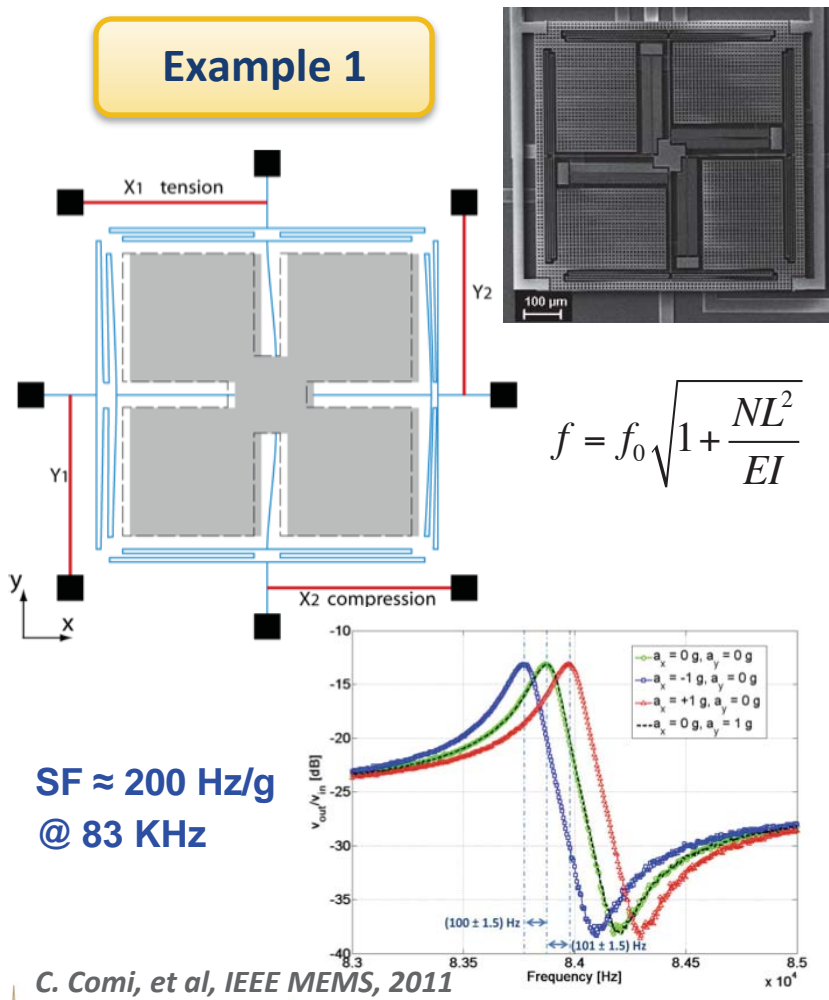
TCF ≈ -30 ppm/ $^{\circ}\text{C}$
SF $\approx 500-1500$ ppm/g



- Error in silicon resonant accelerometers: 20 – 60 mg/ $^{\circ}\text{C}$

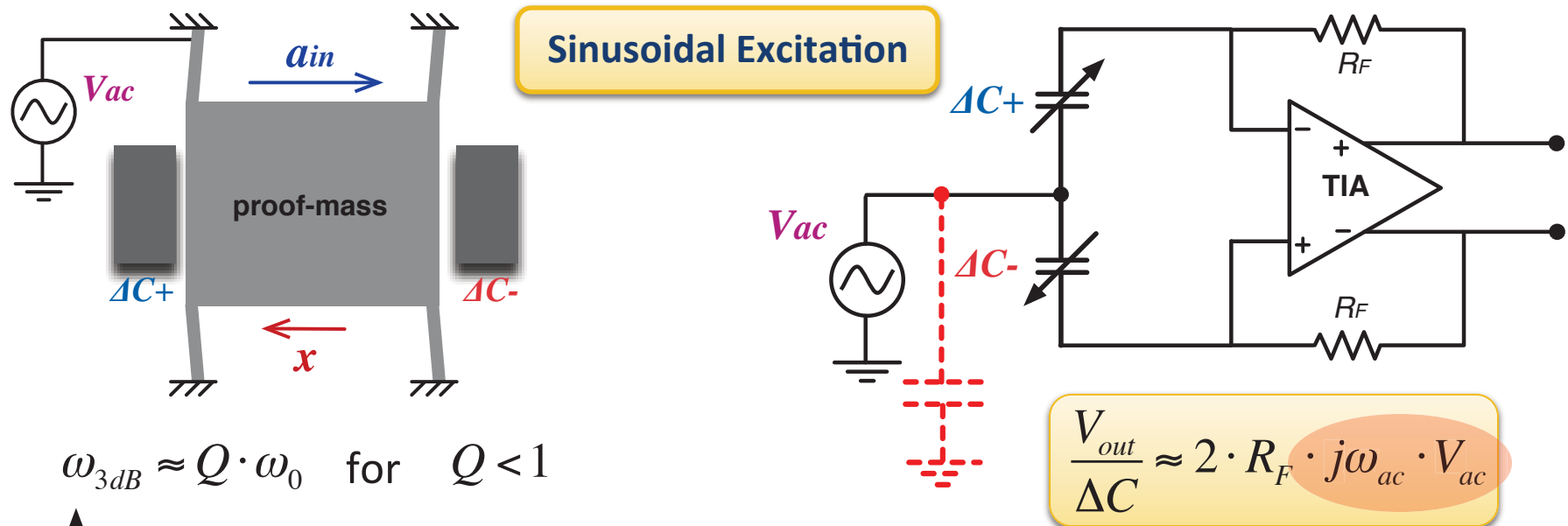
Dual-Resonator Approach

- Use two separate resonators operating differentially

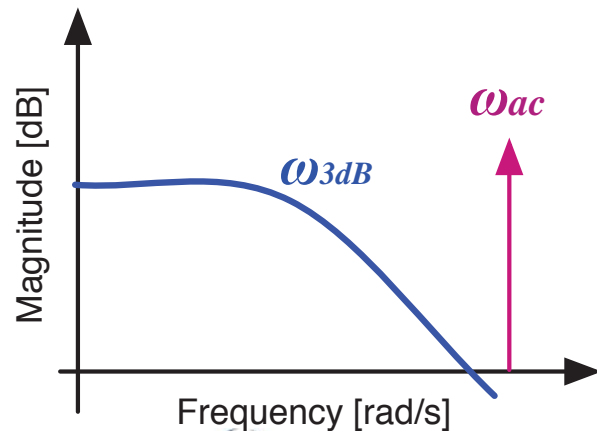


Interfacing Capacitive Accelerometers

- Detection of capacitance change

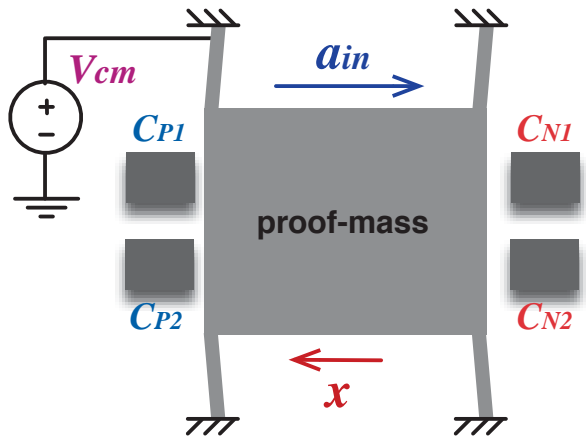


$$\omega_{3dB} \approx Q \cdot \omega_0 \quad \text{for } Q < 1$$

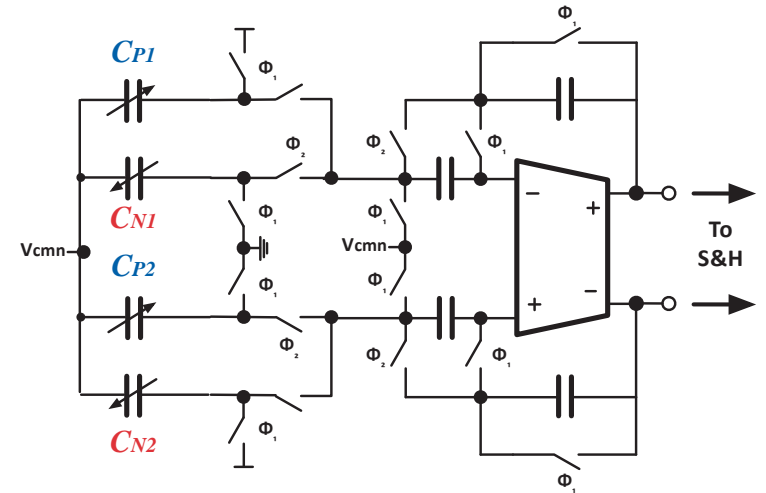


- To avoid electrostatic excitation: $\omega_{ac} \gg \omega_{3dB}$
- Challenges:
 - Generating stable V_{ac} , ω_{ac}
 - Driving the “proof-mass node” (power)

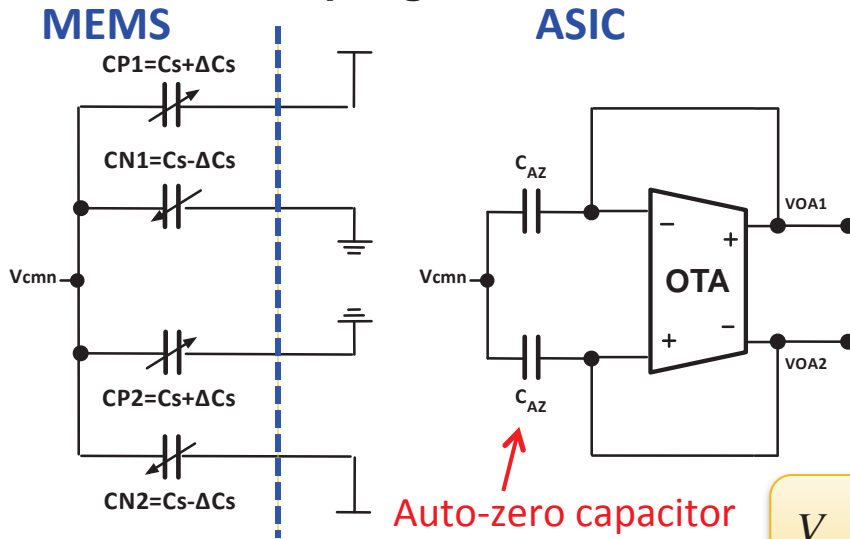
Switched-Capacitor Interfaces



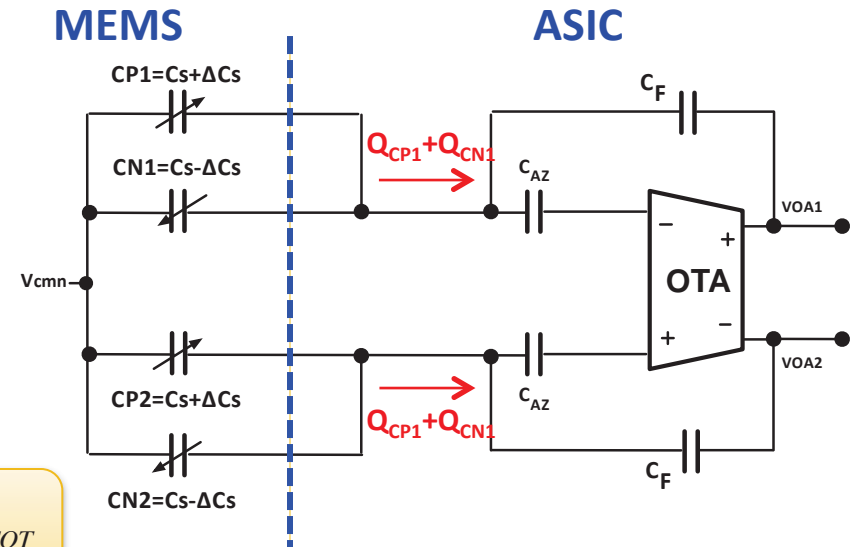
- Small IC area
- Low power
- Low noise (AZ, CDS)
- Multiplexing ability
- Digital output



Sampling Phase



Amplifying Phase

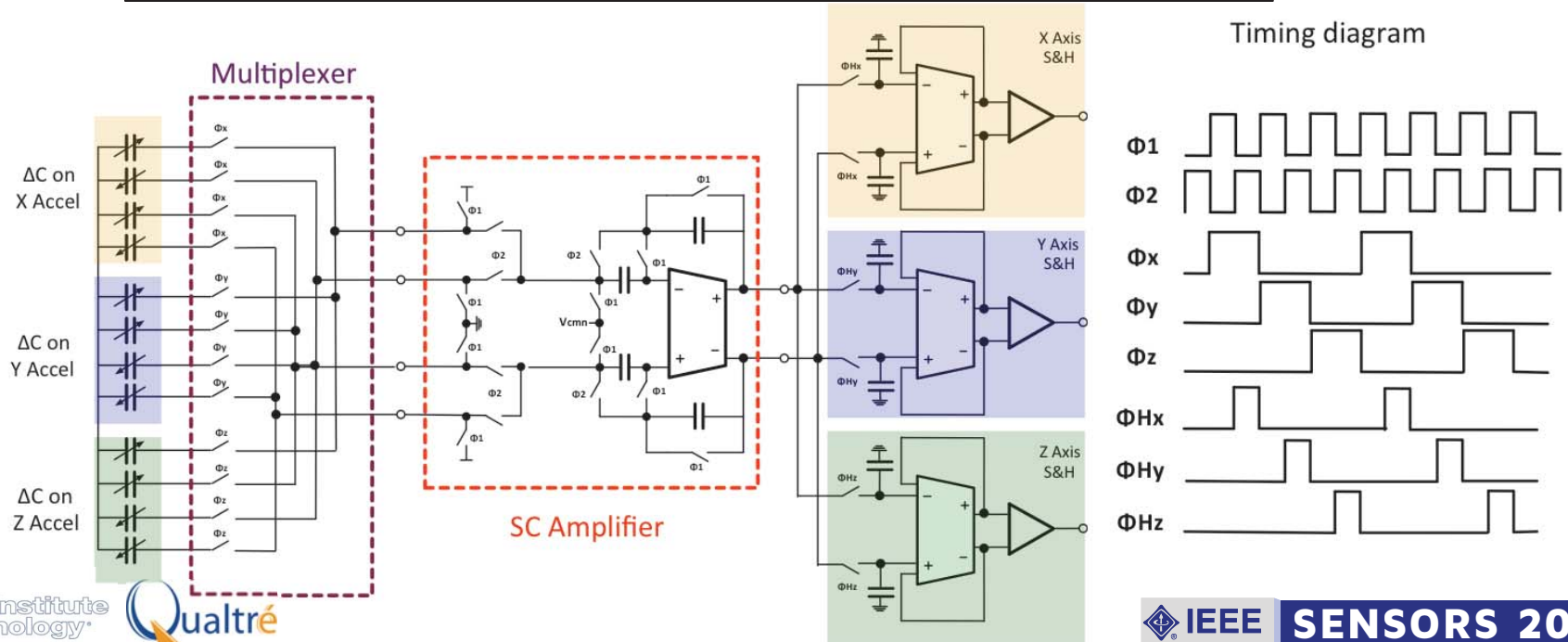
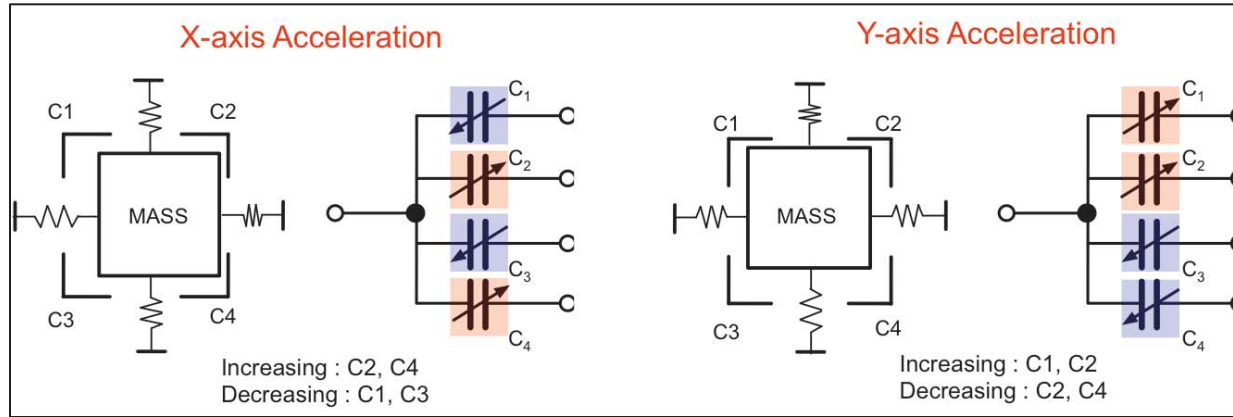


$$V_{out} = \frac{1}{2} \frac{V_{DD}}{C_F} C_{TOT}$$

$$(C_{TOT} = C_{P1} - C_{N1} + C_{P2} - C_{N2})$$

Multi-Axis Sensing

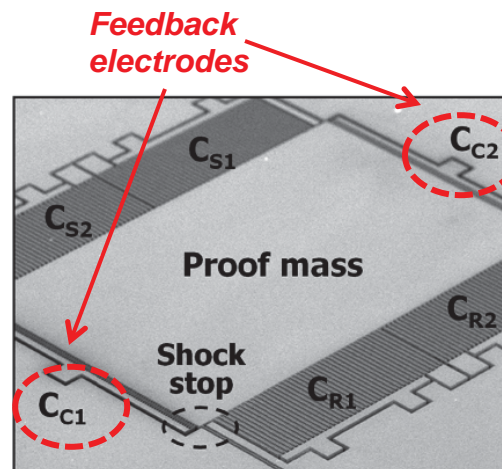
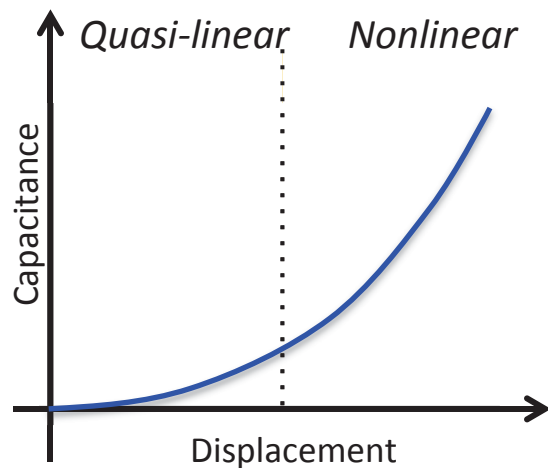
- Multiplexing used to sense different axes with same interface



Closed-Loop Interfaces

- MEMS Sensitivity (parallel plate) → Strong function of gap (non-linear)

$$\frac{dC}{dx} = \frac{\epsilon \cdot A}{(g_0 - x)^2}$$



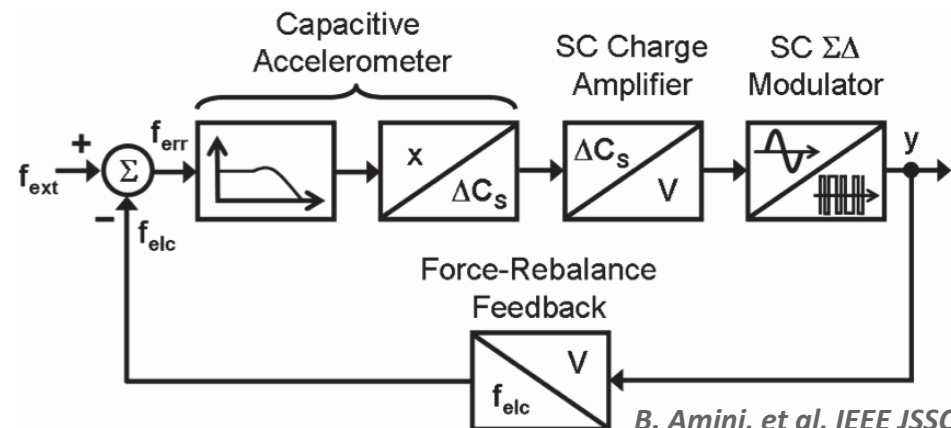
Force-to-Rebalance

$$F_{err} \propto x \approx 0$$

$$y = \frac{F_{elec}}{FB} \approx \frac{F_{ext}}{FB} = \frac{m \cdot a_{in}}{FB}$$

- F_{elec} proportional to input

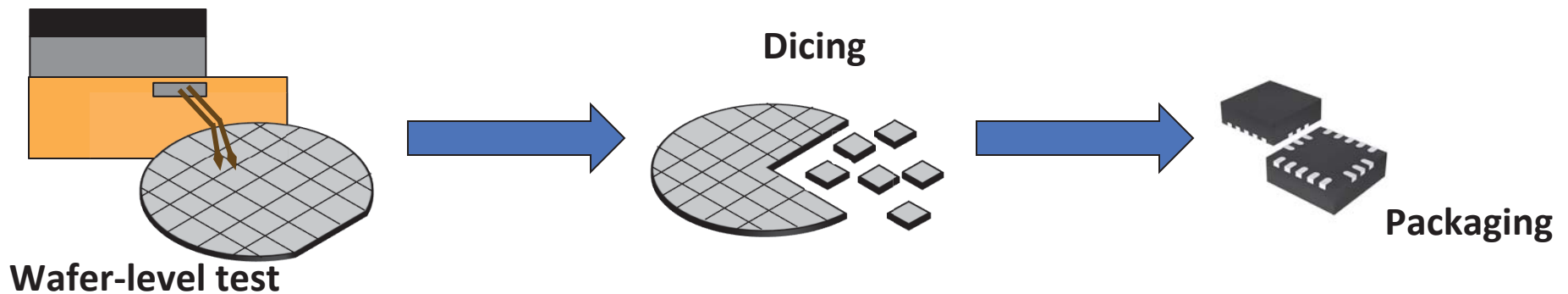
- ✓ Linearizes output using FB
- ✓ Increases operational BW
- ✗ Degrades noise
- ✗ Increases complexity



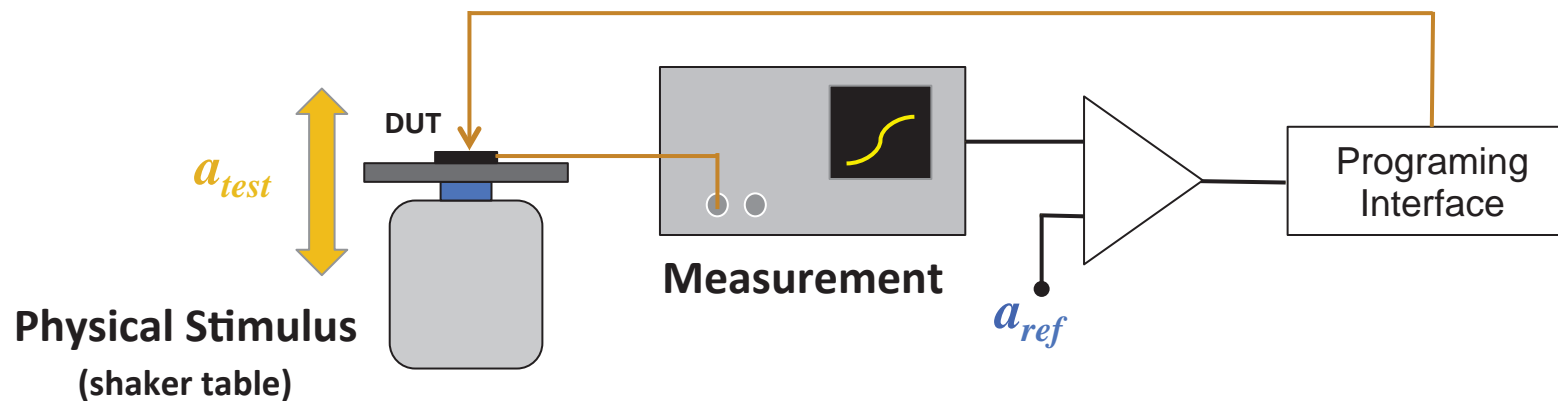
B. Amini, et al, IEEE JSSC, 2006

Calibration in MEMS Accelerometers

- Required to compensate for process variations
- Contributes significantly to overall cost of product

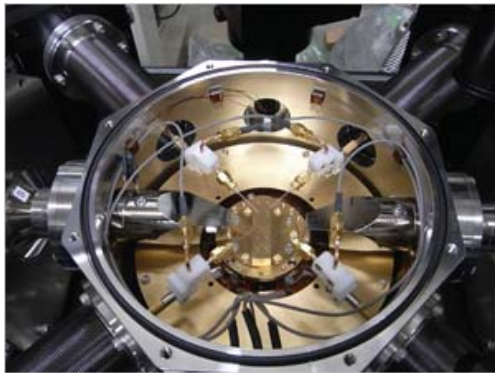


Calibration Procedure (Factory Trim)



Testing & Calibration

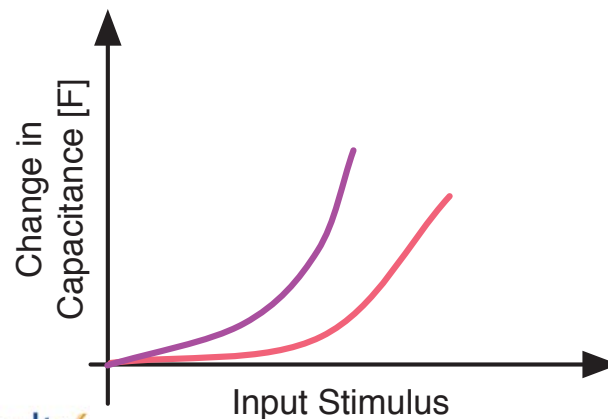
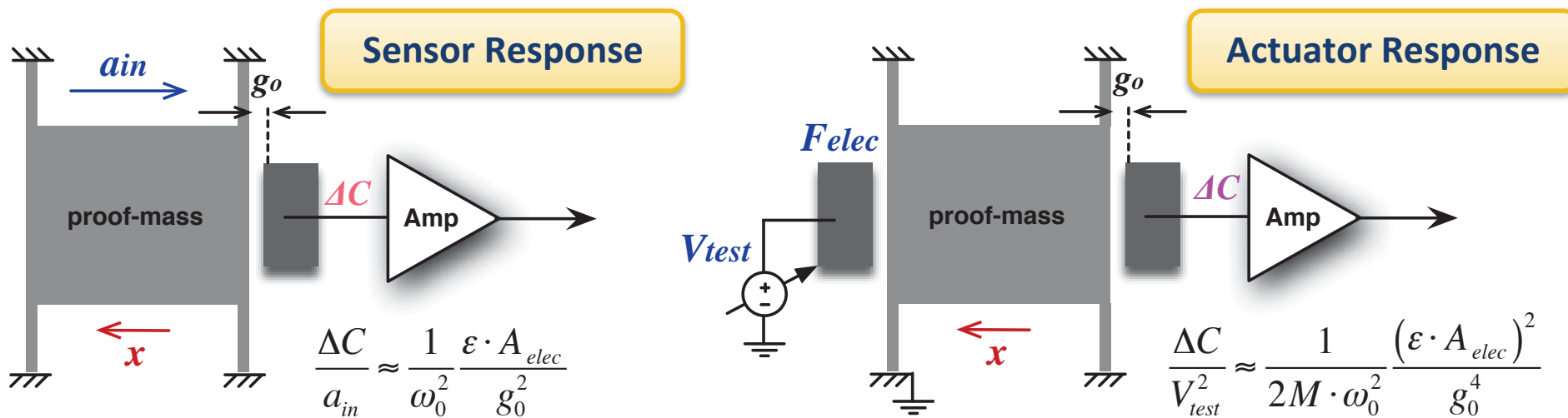
- Inertial MEMS require “unconventional” test methods
 - Vacuum prober, SEM, rate-table, shaker-table, temperature chamber



- Expensive equipment
- Sensor parameters dependent on fabrication tolerances
- Extended test time → temperature, pressure, physical stimuli

No Physical Stimulus Calibration

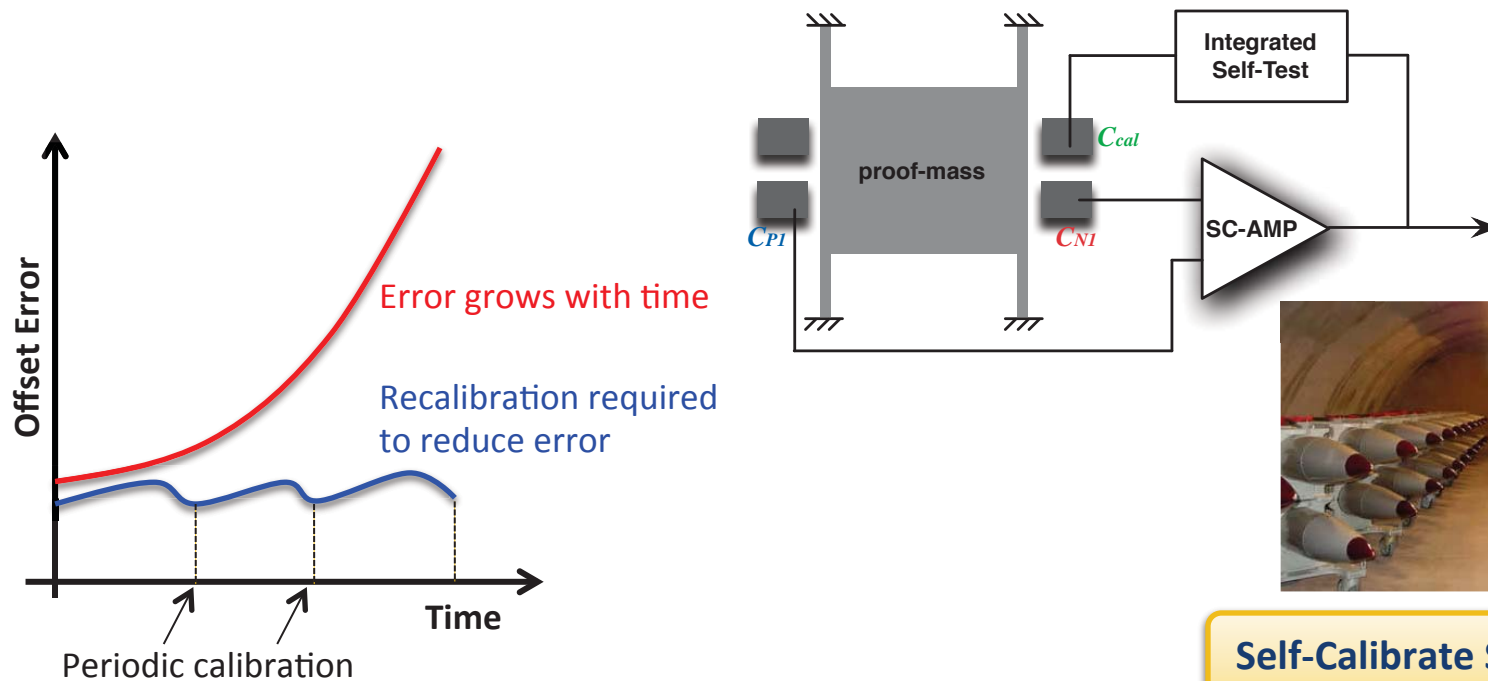
- Avoid time-consuming/expensive test
- In accelerometers: Turn the sensor into an actuator



- Use V_{test} to emulate a_{in}
- No physical excitation needed

Built-In Self Test (BIST)

- Sensor parameters drifts over time
- Periodic re-calibration required for high-end applications

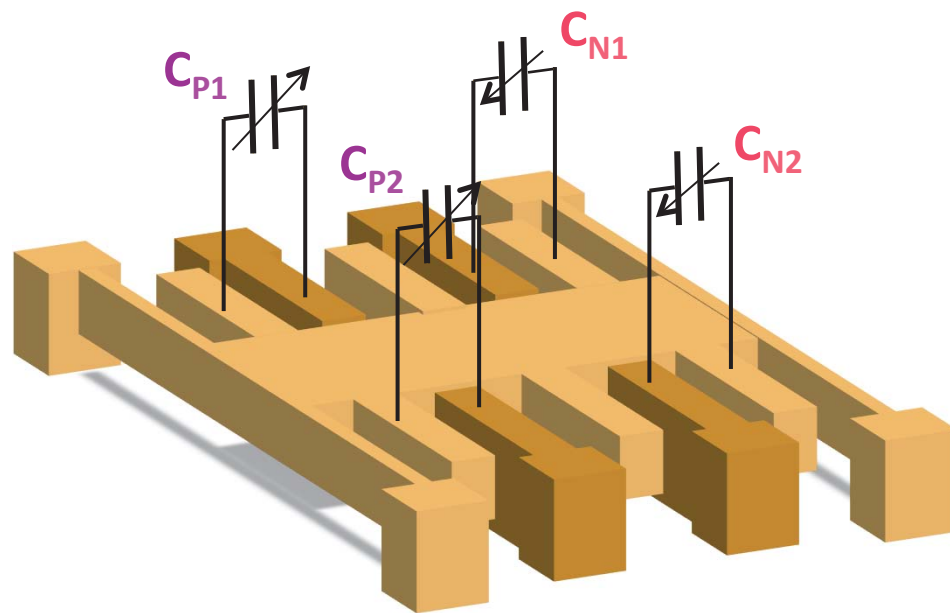


Self-Calibrate Stored Equipment

- Issue: Online calibration → How to test during operation?
- Calibration should be common mode to acceleration signal

Offset in Capacitive Accelerometers

- Offset in capacitive MEMS → Highly dependent on mismatch
 - Typical scale-factor (consumer) → ~ 10 - 100 fF/g & 250 mV/g (@ $V_{DD} = 2.5$)
 - It takes only 100 fF of mismatch to rail the output



$$C_{s.P1} \neq C_{s.N1} \neq C_{s.P2} \neq C_{s.N2}$$

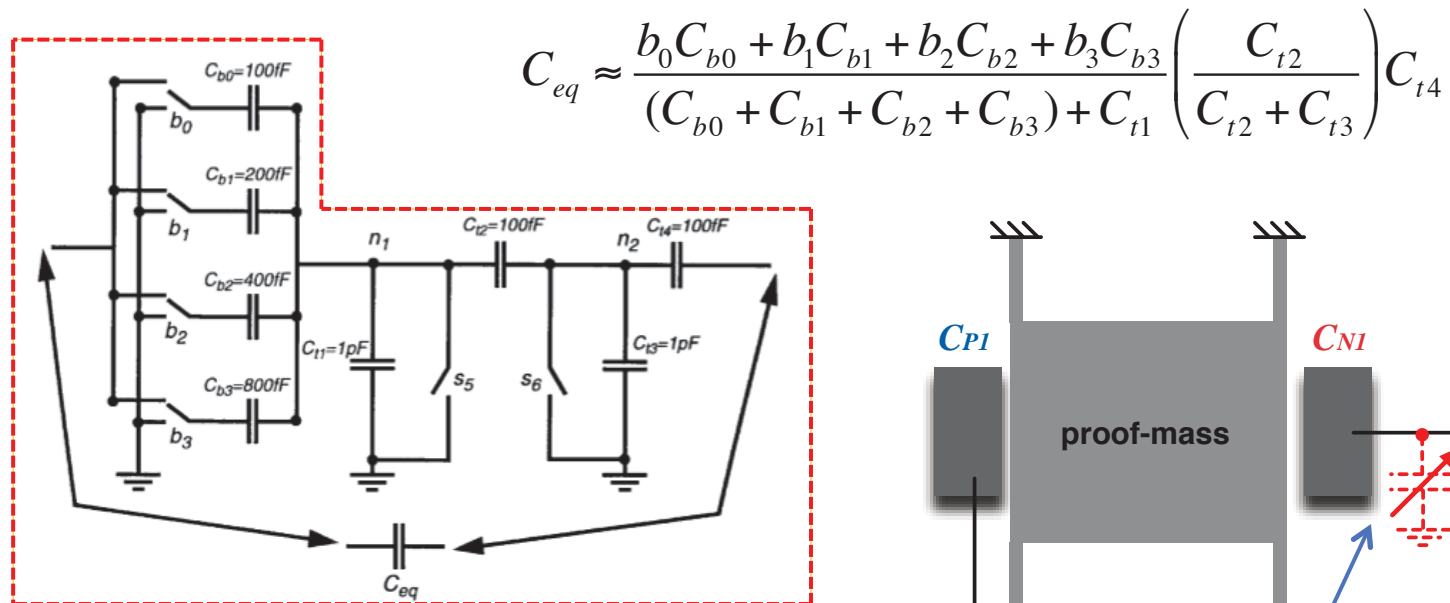
$$V_{out} = \frac{1}{2} \frac{V_{DD}}{C_F} (C_{P1} - C_{N1} + C_{P2} - C_{N2})$$

$$= \underbrace{\frac{2V_{DD}}{C_F} \Delta C}_{\text{Sensitivity}} + \underbrace{\frac{V_{DD}}{2C_F} (C_{s.P1} - C_{s.N1} + C_{s.P2} - C_{s.N2})}_{\text{Output Offset}}$$

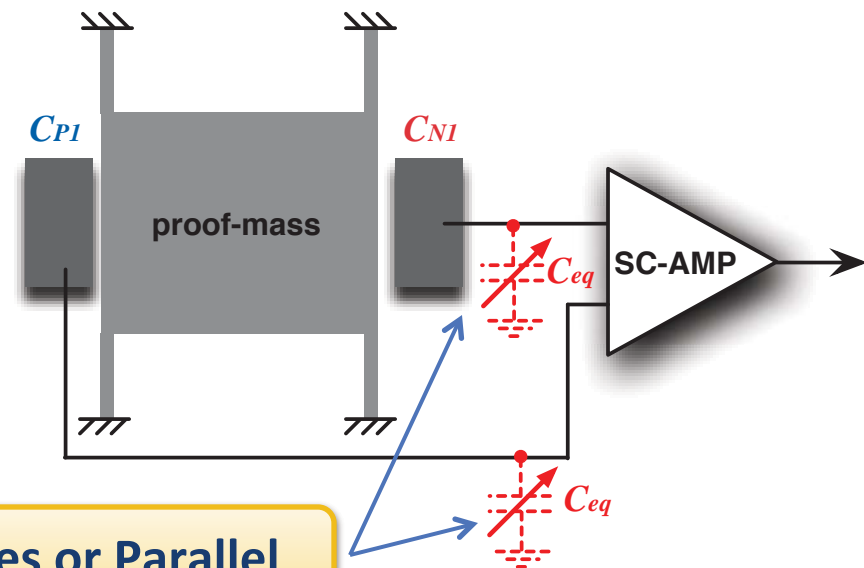
- ΔC → change due to acceleration
- C_s → static capacitance, changes:
 - Process tolerances
 - Wafer bonding
 - Temperature

Offset Calibration – Discrete Steps

- Capacitor bank → add programmable capacitors in front-end
- Series/parallel combination allows bring offset down
- Limitation → Resolution



M. Lemkin, et al, IEEE JSSC, 1999

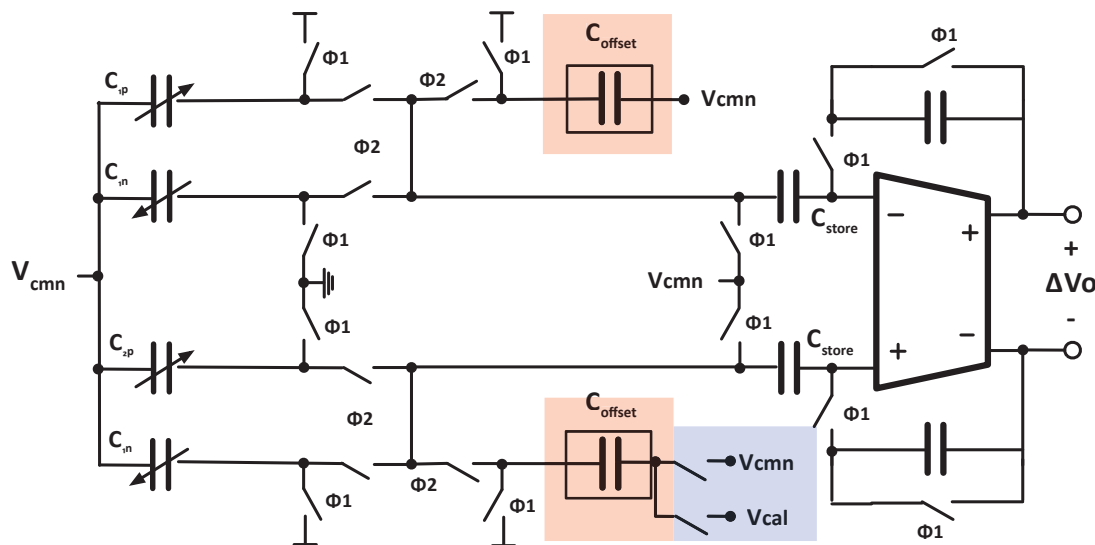


Series or Parallel

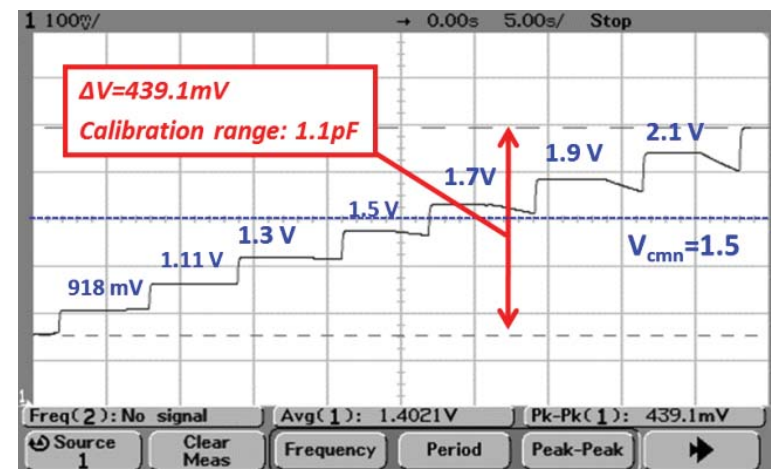
Offset Calibration – Fine Tuning

- In addition to capacitor bank (C_{offset}), add analog tuning voltage
- Allocate mux time-slot for calibration

$$V_{out} = \underbrace{\frac{2V_{DD}}{C_F} \Delta C}_{\text{Sensitivity}} + \underbrace{\frac{V_{DD}}{2C_F} C_{mismatch}}_{\text{Offset}} + \underbrace{\frac{0.5V_{DD} - V_{cal}}{C_F} C_{offset}}_{\text{Offset Calibration}}$$

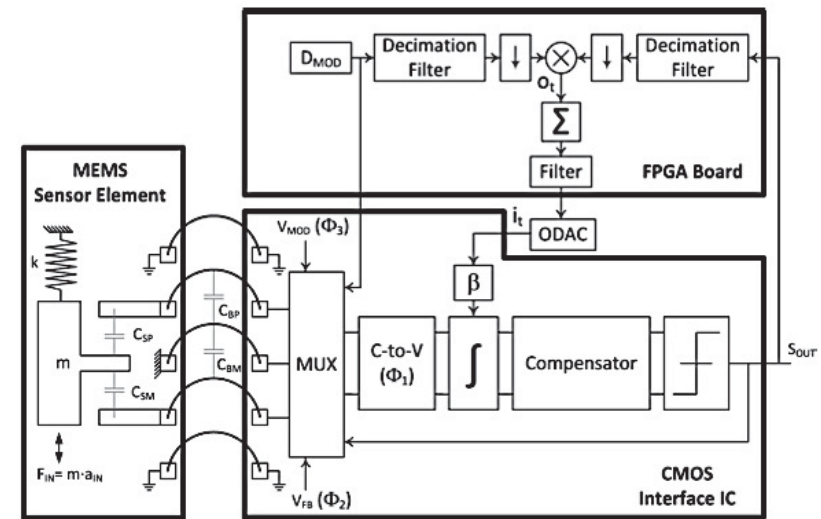
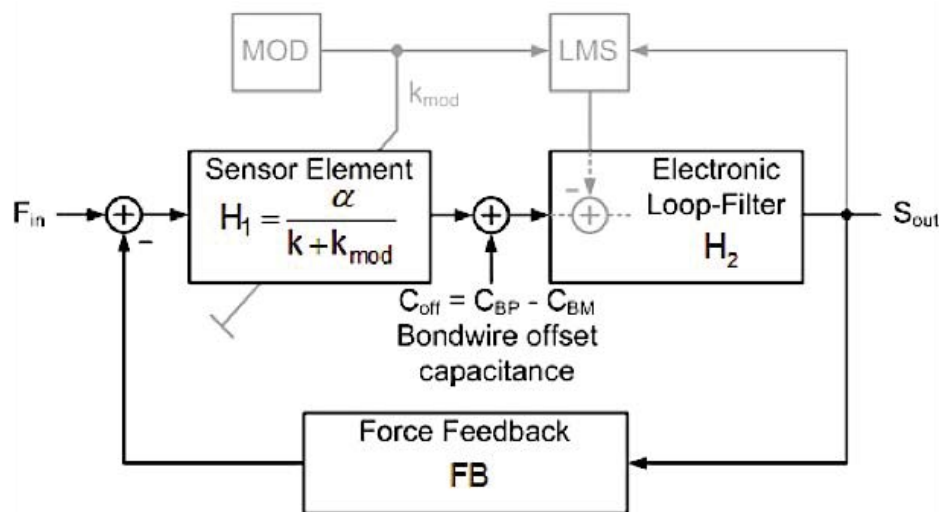


Offset vs. V_{cal}



Offset Calibration – Bond-wire Drift

- Thermal and Mechanical stress changes C between bond-wires
- Parametric modulation used to up-convert bond-wire C change



P. Lajvardi, et al, IEEE JSSC, 2013

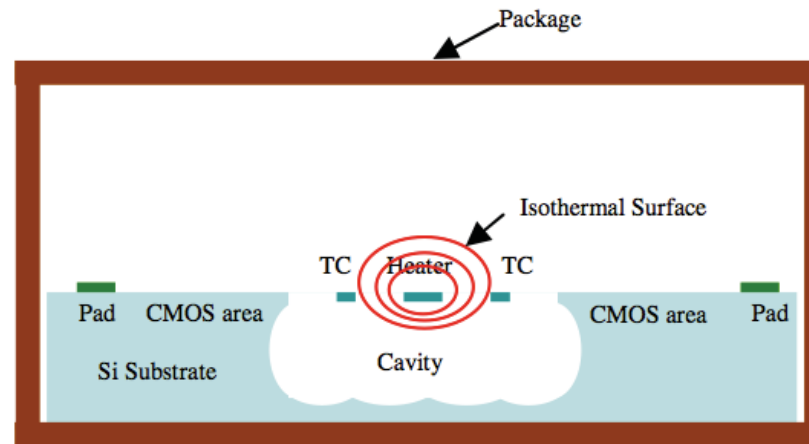
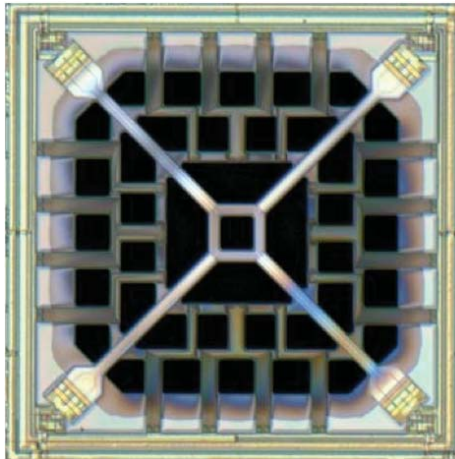
- Different transfer-function from:

- a_{in} to S_{out}
- C_{off} to S_{out} (dependent on k)

$$S_{OUT} \approx F_{IN} \underbrace{\frac{1}{FB}}_{\text{Sensitivity}} + C_{OFF} \underbrace{\frac{k}{\alpha \cdot FB}}_{\text{Offset}} + C_{OFF} \underbrace{\frac{k_{mod}}{\alpha \cdot FB}}_{\text{Offset Calibration}}$$

Other Types of Micro-accelerometers

Thermal Convection



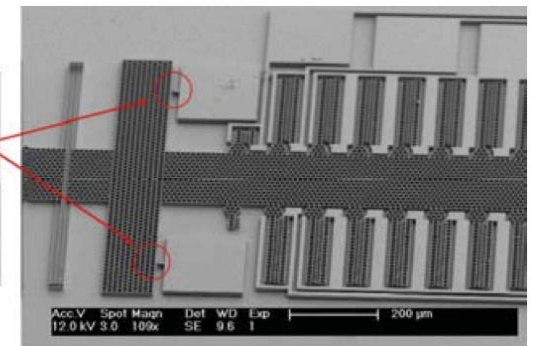
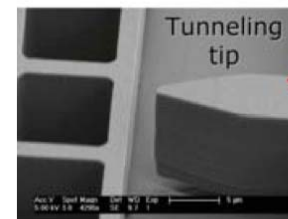
- ✓ High reliability & low-cost
- ✗ Degraded noise performance

Y. Cai, et al, solid-state sensors, actuators and microsystems workshop, Hilton-Head 2008

Tunneling Sensing

- ✓ High sensitivity (resolution)
- ✗ Large temperature dependency

L.A Oropeza-Ramos, et al, solid-state sensors, actuators and microsystems workshop, Hilton-Head 2008



Summary

- Accelerometer design is experiencing a shift in paradigm
- Integration with other (resonant) structures → e.g. gyroscopes
- Accelerometers in low-pressure are the “next big challenge”
- Reducing size without compromise in performance
 - Single-Proof mass designs?
- Online calibration extremely important in high-performance apps

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