

# The ECP ALPINE project: In situ and post hoc visualization infrastructure and analysis capabilities for exascale

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## Abstract

A significant challenge on an exascale computer is the speed at which we compute results exceeds by many orders of magnitude the speed at which we save these results. Therefore the Exascale Computing Project (ECP) ALPINE project focuses on providing exascale-ready visualization solutions including in situ processing. In situ visualization and analysis runs as the simulation is run, on simulations results are they are generated avoiding the need to save entire simulations to storage for later analysis. The ALPINE project made post hoc visualization tools, ParaView and VisIt, exascale ready and developed in situ algorithms and infrastructures.

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The suite of ALPINE algorithms developed under ECP includes novel approaches to enable automated data analysis and visualization to focus on the most important aspects of the simulation. Many of the algorithms also provide data reduction benefits to meet the I/O challenges at exascale. ALPINE developed a new lightweight in situ infrastructure, Ascent.

## Keywords

Ascent, catalyst, in situ analysis and visualization, paraView, scientific visualization, visIt

## 1. Introduction

Prior to the exascale era, typical visualization tasks and analysis used post hoc visualization workflows leveraging a visualization application such as ParaView [Ahrens et al. \(2005\)](#) or VisIt [Childs et al. \(2012\)](#). Post hoc workflows visualize simulation output data that was previously saved during simulation execution. Having reached the exascale regime, scientific simulations can now produce terabytes of data in every time step. Recent advances in I/O and storage capabilities have not kept up with the increases in compute power. Given these challenges, in situ approaches are a viable and necessary solution to meeting the needs of high performance computing applications. In situ approaches are run during a simulation, possibly at each time step, processing simulation outputs as they are generated. In situ analysis and visualization approaches can be used to downselect and reduce data, identify features of interest, produce visualizations, and generate smaller extracts that can be used in post hoc workflows. In situ infrastructures provide the necessary application and systems interfaces to support in situ workflows.

The contributions of the Exascale Computing Project's (ECP) ALPINE project were:

1. Made post hoc visualization tools exascale ready
2. Developed Exascale visualization and analysis algorithms that will be critical for ECP Applications.
3. Developed an Exascale-capable infrastructure for the development of in situ algorithms and deployment into existing applications, libraries, and tools.
4. Integrated other ECP Software Technology data and visualization, and programming model products into our infrastructure.
5. Integrated our algorithms and infrastructure into ECP Applications.

This paper is structured to describe these contributions with sections on: in situ infrastructure, in situ algorithms, software integrations and application integrations.

## 2. ALPINE infrastructure

A key challenge of ECP was achieving high performance, portable, thread-based parallelism on graphical processing units (GPUs). The Visualization Toolkit (VTK) is a open

source visualization library that offers full-featured collection of visualization and analysis filters. VTK algorithms are used by ParaView and VisIt. A distributed memory version of VTK was previously developed to run scalably on supercomputers offering across-node parallelism. The VTK-m [Moreland et al. \(2016\)](#) project, a companion ECP project, developed portable multi-threaded implementations of key VTK visualization and analysis algorithms for on-node parallelism. ALPINE infrastructure has developed a layer on top of the VTK-m library for cross-platform portability and performance. This layer is where all ALPINE algorithms are implemented, and it is deployed in ParaView, Catalyst, VisIt, and Ascent. Thus all development effort by ALPINE is available in all of the tools and, by leveraging VTK-m, addresses issues with portability and many-core architectures. (Note: post-ECP, VTK-m is now available as Viskores [Moreland et al. \(2024\)](#)).

### 2.1. ParaView

ParaView 5.11.1, the open source platform for scientific visualization, was deployed on the Frontier supercomputer at the Oak Ridge Leadership Computing Facility (OLCF), enabling analysis and rendering workflows which take advantage of the exascale computing capabilities of the facility.

To enable ParaView to utilize GPUs on the exascale machines, a new set of "accelerated filters" were implemented. These filters serve as wrappers over VTK-m's filters. These accelerated filters readily use exascale hardware and have been demonstrated to be performant. The accelerated filters are available in ParaView as plugins which can be loaded on demand, and in case of failures, a fallback has been provided to use the traditional (VTK) filters. Additionally, these filters also handle all the necessary conversions between the ParaView and VTK-m data models without unnecessary data movement (zero-copy). Deployment was enabled by new developments in Spack under the ECP DAV-SDK (software development kit) project.

Analysis and visualization workflows were validated on massive datasets, such as that shown in [Figure 1](#), as well as synthetic structured grid datasets composed of over 4.4 trillion elements, taking up over 16.4 TB per timestep on disk. ParaView was able to take advantage of the

considerable GPU resources on Frontier for accelerated analysis filters employing VTK-m.

## 2.2. VisIt

VisIt is an interactive, scalable, distributed visualization and analysis tool. VisIt uses the Visualization Toolkit (VTK) to provide much of its visualization and analysis capabilities. This functionality is encapsulated in a filter architecture.

VisIt uses distributed memory parallelism using MPI to scale its functionality to the largest DOE leadership class systems. The main thrust of the VisIt effort in ECP ALPINE was to leverage on node parallelism using VTK-m, culminating in the release of VisIt 3.3.3 on Frontier. The user can now specify, either through the Python scripting interface or the graphical user interface, whether to use the traditional VTK filters or to use VTK-m filters when possible.

VisIt's internal filters were enhanced to support using either VTK or VTK-m. When VTK-m is enabled, [Figure 2](#) and a filter supports VTK-m then it converts the dataset to VTK-m if necessary and then uses the VTK-m filter. The conversion is done using zero-copy constructs wherever possible to minimize data duplication. Several of the most heavily used filters were converted to use either VTK or VTK-m including Contour, Slice, Clip, Isovolume and Threshold.

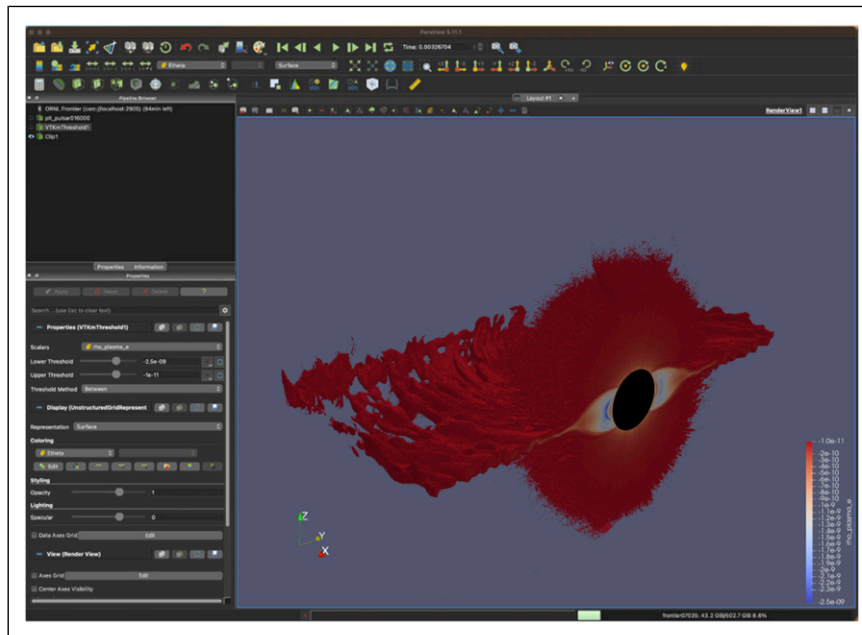
VisIt's Spack package was enhanced to support building VTK-m with the Kokkos backend using HIP. Additionally, several other optional VisIt dependencies were added to VisIt's Spack package including Conduit [Harrison et al. \(2022\)](#) and MFEM [Anderson et al. \(2021\)](#).

To demonstrate running at scale using the AMD APUs on Frontier, VisIt was used to generate an image, [Figure 3](#), from a 2048 domain WarpX calculation with 70 billion zones. VisIt was run on 512 nodes using 2048 APUs.

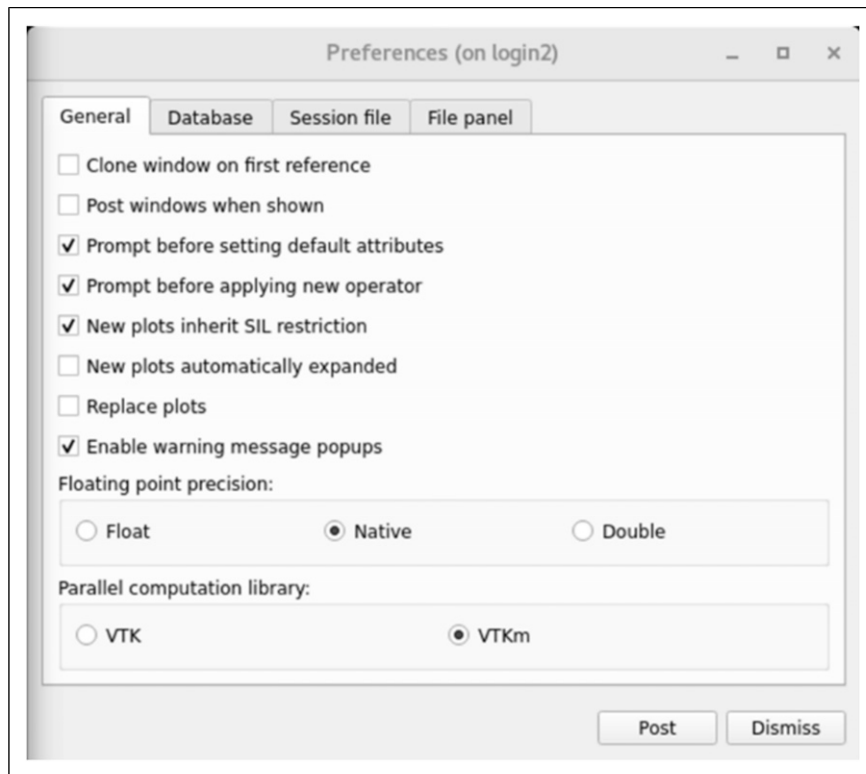
## 2.3. Ascent

Developed under the ALPINE project, Ascent is a flyweight in situ visualization and analysis library for multi-physics simulations targeting current and next-generation HPC architectures. It was designed and built from the start to leverage GPUs for on-node parallelism. Ascent productized and expanded the flyweight software architecture prototype of the Strawman [Larsen et al. \(2015\)](#) [Larsen et al. \(2017\)](#) in situ visualization proxy.

Ascent aims to be easy to use, providing three main use cases: making pictures, transforming data, and capturing data. To pass data to Ascent, Ascent leverages Conduit Blueprint to intuitively describe simulation mesh data. Ascent was the first production infrastructure to demonstrate Conduit Blueprint as a viable strategy for sharing simulation mesh data in situ. The Ascent team worked closely with ECP Co-Design Centers to create easy paths to



**Figure 1.** A single timestep from a simulation of a pulsar conducted in WarpX is rendered in ParaView running remotely on Frontier at OLCF. This dataset is composed of a 5.75 B element AMR mesh totaling 1.16 TB of data. This visualization takes advantage of GPU accelerated VTK-m analysis filters employing 128 nodes and a total of 512 GPUs. This data is courtesy of Revathi Jambunathan at Lawrence Berkeley National Lab.



**Figure 2.** Selecting the VTK-m backend in Vist.

publish simulation mesh data to Ascent from codes using AMReX [Zhang et al. \(2019\)](#) or MFEM.

Ascent supports the most common visualization and analysis operations, provides infrastructure to integrate custom analysis, and creates several types of extracts including HDF5 The HDF Group files and Cinema databases [Ahrens et al. \(2015\)](#). Ascent uses Conduit to provide C, C++, Python, YAML, and Fortran APIs to describe which visualization actions to execute. Ascent requires minimal dependencies resulting in lower memory requirements than other current tools, resulting in a flyweight design with a small memory footprint, while leveraging libraries that provide parallel performance.

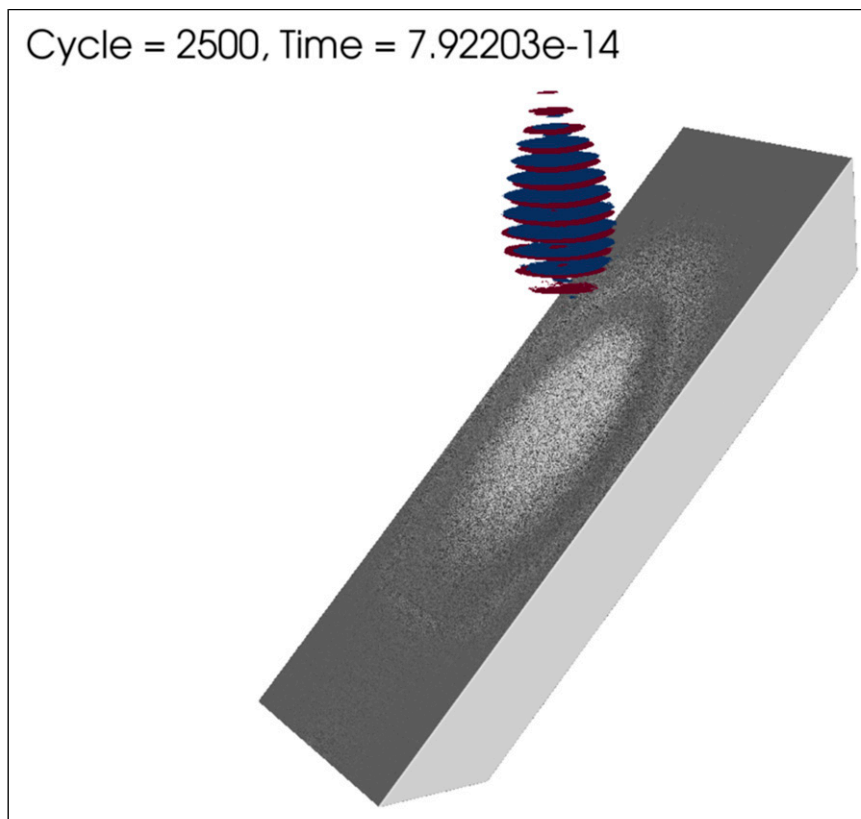
To achieve performance and portability, Ascent leverages the VTK-m library and RAJA [Beckingsale et al. \(2019\)](#) for on-node parallelism, and MPI (Message Passing Interface) for distributed-memory coordination. VTK-m provides a suite of visualization and analysis algorithms, as well as zero-copy capabilities and the ability to pass device-pointers, allowing for efficient exploitation of shared resources. Ascent was also a platform for research into in situ triggers [Larsen et al. \(2018\)](#) [Larsen et al. \(2021\)](#) [Lawson et al. \(2021\)](#), which provide flexibility to adapt visualization actions and help address a priori constraints that can limit batch use of in situ tools.

## 2.4. Catalyst

Under ECP ALPINE, the Catalyst [Ayachit et al. \(2021\)](#) in situ analysis and visualization platform was expanded and matured to meet the requirements of advanced exascale simulation workflows.

The standalone Catalyst 2.0 API leverages Conduit Blueprint to describe simulation data and manage its transmission to runtime selectable backends which execute analysis and visualization workflows. By using the same library as Ascent to manage data description and transmission, simulation applications can use both in situ libraries with little changes to their codebase, significantly increasing the surface area for both Catalyst and Ascent across the exascale simulation workflow ecosystem. This benefit was showcased by the rapid integration of a Catalyst in situ analysis adapter to MFIX-Exa, a massively parallel computational fluid dynamics–discrete element model (CFD-DEM) code, to study multiphase flows [Musser et al. \(2022\)](#). Results of that integration are shown in the ALPINE Integrations Highlights section later in this article.

Further increasing the usability and applicability of Catalyst, language support for Python and Fortran were added to the Catalyst 2.0 API under ECP ALPINE. This effort provided bindings so that the Catalyst 2.0 API can be



**Figure 3.** Visualization from the 70 billion cell WarpX Gordon Bell-winning simulation [Fedeli et al. \(2022\)](#) visualized with 2048 GCDs on Frontier using Vistl.

called from Python and Fortran based simulation codes directly. This development leveraged the existing Conduit bindings for the two languages.

One of the key advantages of Catalyst is runtime selectable backends. Here, a user can decide at simulation startup whether to use, for instance, the ParaView Catalyst backend for full featured leadership class analysis and visualization workflows, or the ADIOS Catalyst backend, targeting in-transit workflows for asynchronous analysis activities, or the new Ascent backend developed under ECP ALPINE, for direct access to GPU accelerated Ascent tools. Because Catalyst 2.0 utilizes Conduit in similar ways to Ascent, it was natural to expose Ascent as a backend for Catalyst, allowing existing Catalyst users to easily employ Ascent in situ workflows.

### 2.5. Task-based composable workflows

In the realm of in situ processing, where analysis routines seamlessly integrate with simulation code stacks, a notable distinction arises. Unlike simulation code, analysis and visualization routines are generally applicable across a broad spectrum of applications. However, complications emerge when different simulation codes operate on varied

architectures or runtimes, leading to the constant need to tailor analysis code to specific hardware. A multi-runtime abstraction layer called BabelFlow [Petruzza et al. \(2018\)](#) was introduced to address these challenges, offering developers a straightforward dataflow-based interface for the implementation of parallel algorithms. By utilizing task graphs, BabelFlow explicitly delineates parallel execution sections of the algorithm and their interrelations.

This framework has been integrated into Ascent to allow the implementation of task based analysis and visualization algorithms and has been extended to support the composition of dataflow graphs into more complex workflows. This extension, called LegoFlow [Shudler et al. \(2021\)](#), currently provides task based in situ workflows for: (i) a distributed rendering and image compositing using Devil [\(Ray, 2019\)](#) and VTK-h [\(2019\)](#) (described in [Shudler et al. \(2021\)](#)); and (ii) a merge tree based segmentation and feature statistics computation. The merge tree based analysis segments the domain into features according to threshold values (i.e., level sets). This kind of segmentation has been proven to be useful in a number of scenarios, such as extracting extinction regions in turbulent combustion simulations, or identifying and tracking eddies in the oceans. We have extended the merge tree computation

workflow [Petruzza et al. \(2018\)](#) to compute statistics of the features extracted using a streaming statistics library [Shudler and Bremer \(2022\)](#).

### 3. ALPINE algorithms

The development of innovative algorithms to support the needs of exascale applications was an important facet of ALPINE’s contributions to ECP. Algorithm development generally began with a basic Python or C++ prototype. ECP science application partners shared early datasets of interest which were used for prototype testing and to gauge the impact of algorithm for potential use. In order for algorithms to be accessed in both post hoc and in situ infrastructures, final algorithm productization required converting the algorithm to a VTK-m filter with associated unit testing.

- Topological analysis: These methods are used to detect features in the data and adaptively steer visualizations. For example, contour trees can identify the most significant isosurfaces in complex simulations and then the resulting visualizations can use these isosurfaces.
- Adaptive sampling: These methods can be used to guide visualizations and extracts to the most important parts of the simulation, significantly reducing I/O.
- Statistical feature detection: These methods use distribution-based approaches and statistical similarity measures to identify and isolate features of interest. Significant data reduction is possible by only saving the statistical representations of the data.
- Lagrangian flow analysis: This method is used to analyze fluid flow, allowing more efficient and complete tracking of particles over time. It can save time-varying vector field data with higher accuracy and less storage than the traditional approaches
- Optimal viewpoint selection: These metrics can be used to automate visualization decisions in situ, minimizing visualizations written to disk.
- Rotational invariant pattern detection algorithm.

#### 3.1. Topological analysis

Visualization increasingly requires analytic tools for data beyond human comprehension: tools such as the *contour tree*, *Reeb graph* and *merge tree* which summarize the development of features in the data set as the isovalue varies are therefore of prime interest. However, the application of these tools has been limited by the scalability of often serial algorithms, in particular the standard serial algorithm [Carr et al. \(2003\)](#) for merge and contour trees.

Our goal in ECP ALPINE was to use the contour tree for selection of isosurfaces on exascale machines, see [Figure 4](#).

This required algorithms using both on-node (shared memory) parallelism and multi-node (distributed) parallelism. We achieved this through a hybrid algorithm, using data parallel primitives, VTK-m and DIY [Morozov and Peterka \(2016\)](#) for portability.

To do so, we introduced (data-) parallel peak pruning (PPP) [Carr et al. \(2021\)](#), exploiting parallel-friendly properties of monotone paths instead of the serializing properties of contours previously used [Carr et al. \(2003\)](#). However, computing the contour tree alone is insufficient, as it captures only critical points where topology changes, where analysis requires further information about “regular” points where topology is invariant. We therefore extended this algorithm to compute the fully-augmented contour tree [Carr et al. \(2022a\)](#), based on data-parallel *hyperstructures* for acceleration. With these, we were able to implement data-parallel data analysis using the contour tree and tie it into the Cinema database for single-node visualization [Hristov et al. \(2020\)](#).

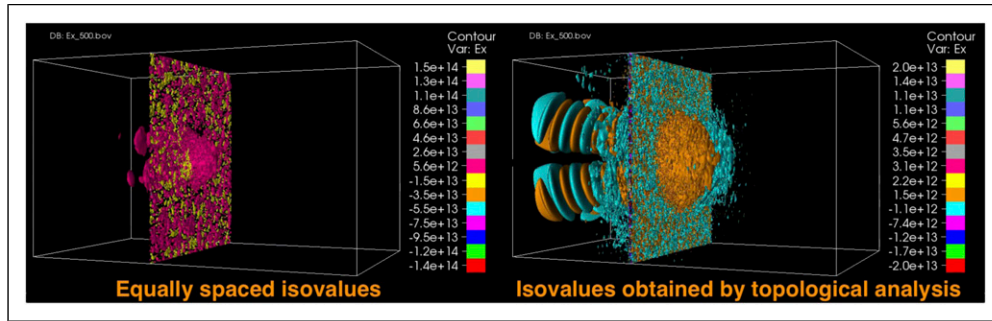
Based on an efficient single-node contour tree algorithm, we then developed a distributed, hierarchical representation of the contour tree [Carr et al. \(2022b\)](#), based on the hyperstructure used in shared-memory. This in turn allowed us to extend analysis and visualization tools to hybrid distributed parallelism, supporting geometric computations, branch decomposition and selection of the most relevant contours. Finally, we coupled our contour-tree based analysis using Ascent to the WarpX simulation code and ran tests, see [Figure 5](#).

Both, the single node contour tree algorithm as well as the distributed version are available to anyone through VTK-m.

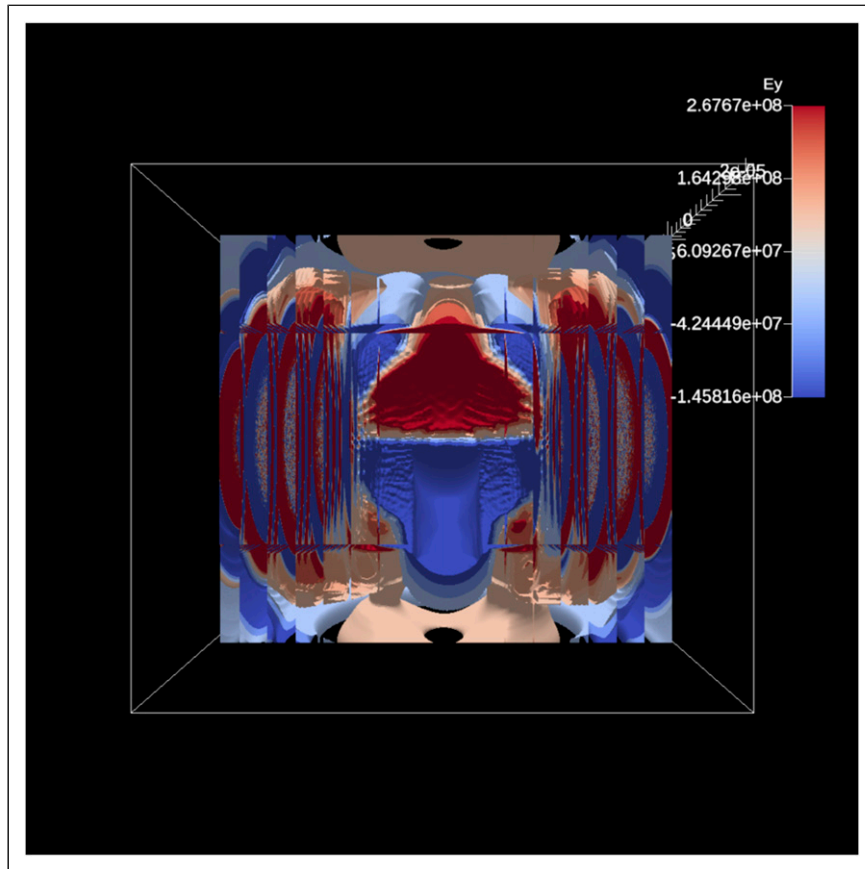
#### 3.2. Adaptive sampling

Sampling is an in situ data reduction approach for scalar datasets generated by large-scale scientific simulations. Under ECP, ALPINE developed several data-driven sampling methods. The most generic sampling method essentially analyzes the scalar data distribution and local smoothness property of data to automatically assign *importance* to the scalar values. Points in the field are accepted (i.e, kept for post hoc analysis) or rejected (i.e., removed during in situ processing) based on their importance. Typically, important features are the rarer events. Thus the automated sampling approach assigns higher importance to the low probability scalars and lower importance to the higher frequency scalars.

The other aspect of importance is based on local smoothness or local gradient information. High gradient regions often are of high importance to the domain experts as they can indicate feature boundaries or regions of high turbulence or mixing. The high gradient sampling scheme exploits local smoothness to assign higher importance to



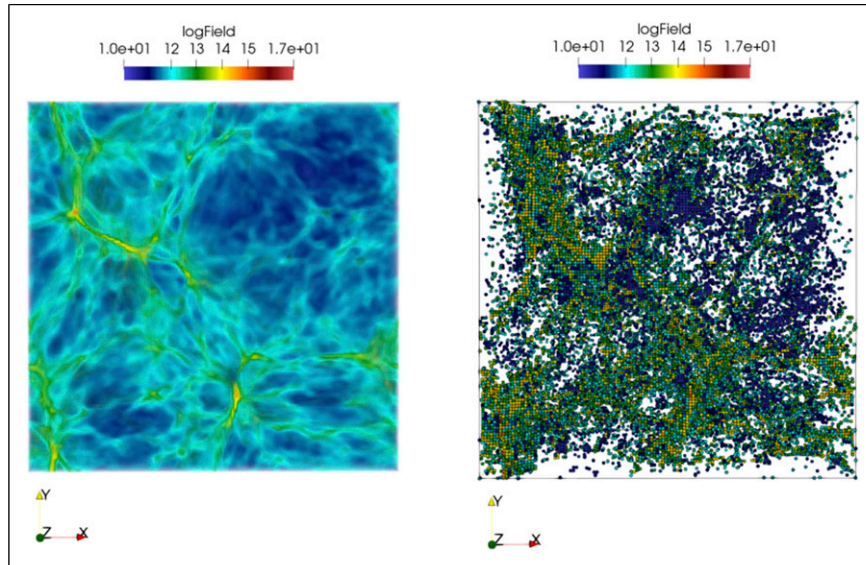
**Figure 4.** Comparing contours for equally spaced isovalues to contours selected using topological analysis via the contour tree for a Warp simulation. This early illustrative was example created via post hoc analysis of a Warp simulation.



**Figure 5.** Small scale run of contour selection using topological data analysis via the contour tree. This image was created using a WarpX simulation instrumented with Ascent. This is a 32 node run on Frontier using 256 MPI ranks.

high gradient regions alongside the previously mentioned value-based importance. An example of this sampling scheme is shown in Figure 6. Figure 6(a) shows the volume rendering of density field from Nyx simulation and Figure 6(b) shows the particles remaining after applying the data-driven sampling scheme. As can be seen in those two figures, the sampled particles follow the structures of the density field quite closely.

The sampling algorithm is available through Ascent as a VTK-m filter. Two versions of this algorithm are available: a histogram-based sampling using importance and a histogram+gradient-based sampling. The histogram-based version emphasizes the scalar value distribution alone, whereas the histogram+gradient-based version considers the joint distribution of both the scalar values as well as the gradient magnitude values. Including the scalar value distribution



**Figure 6.** Left: the density field from Nyx simulation; right: the sampled particles data from the density field.

helps preserve the low-frequency regions of the data, while gradient magnitudes emphasize the smoothness of the data in those regions. Therefore, the histogram+gradient-based version is generally better at retaining important features of the data than just the histogram-based version of sampling algorithm. The interested reader is directed to Biswas et al., Biswas et al. (2022, 2021) for further information.

### 3.3. Lagrangian Flow Analysis

Lagrangian analysis is an in situ data reduction operator used for time-dependent vector field data generated by a simulation code. With the objective of storing/representing fluid dynamics data in its Lagrangian representation, the Lagrangian analysis functionality is implemented as a VTK-m filter. The filter operates by placing seeds and calculating the corresponding particle trajectories in the flow volume. These particle trajectories encode the underlying behavior of the flow field. Calculating and extracting a Lagrangian representation of a flow field offers significantly improved accuracy-storage propositions for time-dependent flow visualization compared to the traditional (Eulerian) method. Thus, the Lagrangian analysis filter enables data reduction of large vector fields while maintaining high data integrity. Computing a Lagrangian representation using in situ processing and storing a reduced flow map representation of the vector field can potentially address the shortcomings of the traditional approach.

The VTK-m Lagrangian flow analysis filter produces flow maps when provided with time-varying vector field data and manages particles on a per rank basis. The flow maps themselves consist of the start locations and displacement of each particle over several simulation

iterations, thus capturing the behavior of the particle over an interval of time. To maintain domain coverage, particles are reset to their initial start position after each interval. The flow maps can be interpolated directly to generate new particle trajectories accurately. The efficacy of the approach has been demonstrated on multiple computational fluid dynamics applications including cosmology, seismology, and hydrodynamics. The interested reader is invited to peruse Sane et al. (2018, 2021a), Sane et al. (2021b), Sane and Childs (2022), Sane et al. (2022) for example use cases.

### 3.4. Optimal viewpoint selection

Optimal viewpoint selection is an in situ algorithm for automating camera placement for in situ visualization of multi-physics HPC simulations. The algorithm operates on mesh data and uses Viewpoint Quality (VQ) metrics to evaluate how much insight a camera position provides. Typically, VQ metrics analyze some visible aspect of the visible data, such as the geometry or field data. In order to determine which VQ metrics best represent choices a domain scientist would make, a user study (complying with institutional requirements for human subject research) with large data analysis and visualization experts was performed and resulted in a new, entropy-based VQ metric that best predicts user preference Marsaglia et al. (2021). The entropy-based VQ metric is a combination of three entropy calculations: entropy of the visible field data, entropy of the visible depths (measured from the camera to the geometry), and the entropy of the visible shading values.

Optimal viewpoint selection was implemented as a filter in the Ascent in situ visualization and analysis framework. The VQ metrics were written using VTK-m to guarantee

shared-memory performance and portability, as well as MPI for efficient distributed-memory parallelism [Marsaglia et al. \(2022b\)](#). Optimal viewpoint selection can be useful for exploratory purposes when there is no a priori knowledge of the simulation, it can also be used as a trigger when the simulation has changed [Marsaglia et al. \(2022a\)](#). However, more importantly, the optimal viewpoint selection minimizes the amount of data written to disk, reducing a large-scale simulation time step to a single, insightful image.

### 3.5. Statistical feature detection

The Statistical feature detection algorithm processes three-dimensional (3D) particle fields in situ and transforms the data into a feature similarity field, which is stored to disk for further post hoc analysis. The current version of the algorithm works on a particle field; however, the algorithm can be easily applied to any regular-grid scalar data with minor modifications. Starting with analyzing data in situ and detecting features of interest to the user, the algorithm then outputs a statistically summarized data set that is significantly smaller in size compared to the raw particle data. The summarized data can be analyzed interactively in post hoc analysis for further feature analysis. This algorithm follows the feature-driven data reduction paradigm to achieve significant data reduction while preserving important information so that post hoc analysis can be done on the reduced data.

The algorithm works on an unstructured particle field and a feature is represented as a statistical probability distribution. Representing the feature in the form of a distribution allows the application scientists to specify a descriptor of the features of interest without needing to precisely define it. In many application domains, a precise description of a feature is not readily available due to the complexity of the scientific data. A statistical technique is a flexible solution for feature detection. An interactive user interface can be used where the users can move a cube object freely inside the data and put it in a region where they are interested. Next, a distribution representation (currently Gaussian distribution is used, but any other distribution model can be used) is created from the data points within that selected cube region and is used as the target feature descriptor.

The ECP use case was the MFI-Exa CFD-DEM code. The feature of interest is an area of low density or a bubble. For this particle-based code, the algorithm takes a particle field as input and first transforms it into a regular grid particle density field. The density field is passed through a 3D super voxel generating algorithm, called Simple Linear Iterative Clustering (SLIC) that produces super voxels from the particle density field. A Gaussian distribution is modeled for each super voxel. Finally, a distribution similarity measure is used to compute a statistical similarity field

between each super voxel distribution and the user-provided target feature distribution. These steps can be seen in [Figure 7](#). The interested reader is directed to [Dutta et al. \(2022a\)](#) and [Dutta et al., \(2022b\)](#) for details.

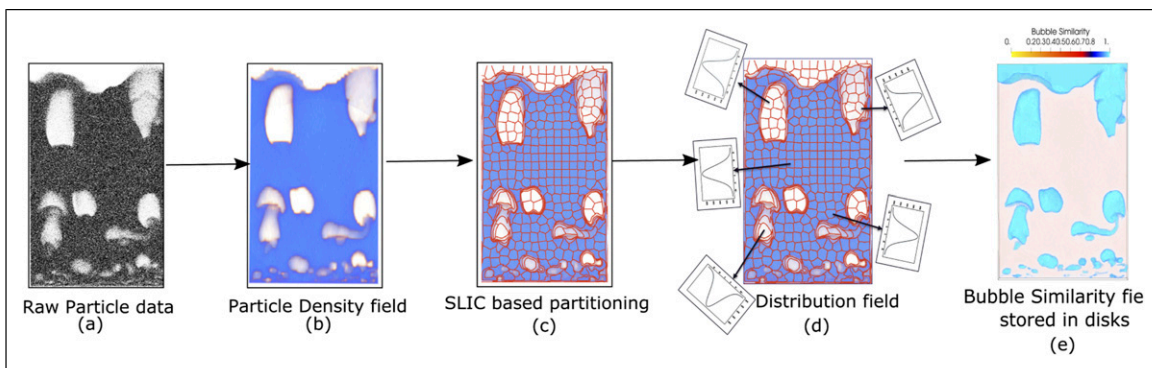
### 3.6. Rotational invariant pattern detection

Pattern detection can be used to identify features in a simulation in situ to reduce the amount of data that needs to be written to disk. For simulations where physically meaningful patterns are already known, the orientation of the pattern may not be known a priori. Pattern detection can be unnecessarily slowed if the pattern detection algorithm must search for all possible rotated copies of a pattern template. Therefore, rotation invariance is a critical requirement. Moment invariants can achieve rotation invariance without the need for point to point correlations, which are difficult to generate in smooth fields [Bujack and Hagen \(2017\)](#); [Bujack et al. \(2022\)](#).

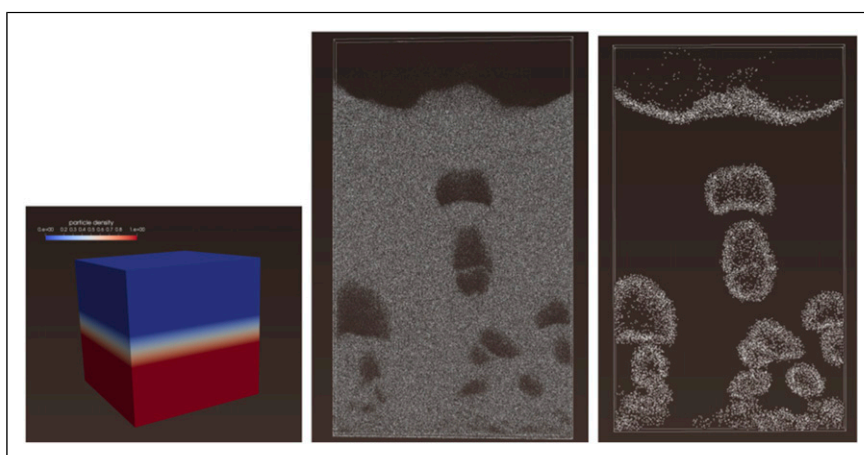
The rotational invariance feature detection algorithm can take either scalar or vector fields and requires a pattern template as input. An example using the same MFI-Exa dataset defined the search pattern to be a density boundary between a high density and low density field. The first step of the VTK-based filter computes the moments while the second step performs a normalization based on the given pattern that makes them invariants. Then, the third step computes the similarity between each part of the simulation and the template. [Figure 8](#) shows the original pattern template and data along with the bubbles identified with this algorithm. The interested reader can find more details in [Tsai et al., Bujack et al. \(2018\)](#); [Tsai et al. \(2020\)](#).

## 4. ALPINE software technology integration highlights

ECP's data and visualization (DAV) portfolio is a software stack of products designed to support data management, data analysis, and visualization needs at exascale. With the emphasis on interoperability, ALPINE infrastructures can be used to link client applications to capabilities across the DAV portfolio and other ECP capabilities. In particular, ALPINE relies on VTK-m for cross-platform portability and visualization filters. By integrating ECP co-design codes such as AMReX [Zhang et al. \(2019\)](#) into ALPINE infrastructures, AMReX-based applications can easily access ALPINE capabilities. All ALPINE infrastructures support HDF5 for I/O and, through HDF5 ([The HDF Group, 2006](#)), access to the zfp [Lindstrom \(2014\)](#) and SZ [Di and Cappello \(2016\)](#) compressors. Cinema databases [Ahrens et al. \(2015\)](#) can be exported in situ from ALPINE infrastructures to support post hoc visualization and analysis workflows. Ascent, in addition to VTK-m [Moreland et al.](#)



**Figure 7.** The steps of the in situ statistical feature detection algorithm from the raw data to the similarity field.



**Figure 8.** Left: the density boundary as the search pattern; middle: the original particle dataset; right: the identified bubbles in the data.

(2016) for portability, includes a RAJA Beckingsale et al. (2019) backend. The MFEM Anderson et al. (2021) high-order finite element library has also been integrated into Ascent. Through the DAV Software Development Kit (Dav SDK, 2023), all ALPINE capabilities are available in the Extreme-scale Scientific Software Stack (E4S) Heroux et al. (2023) for post-ECP sustainability.

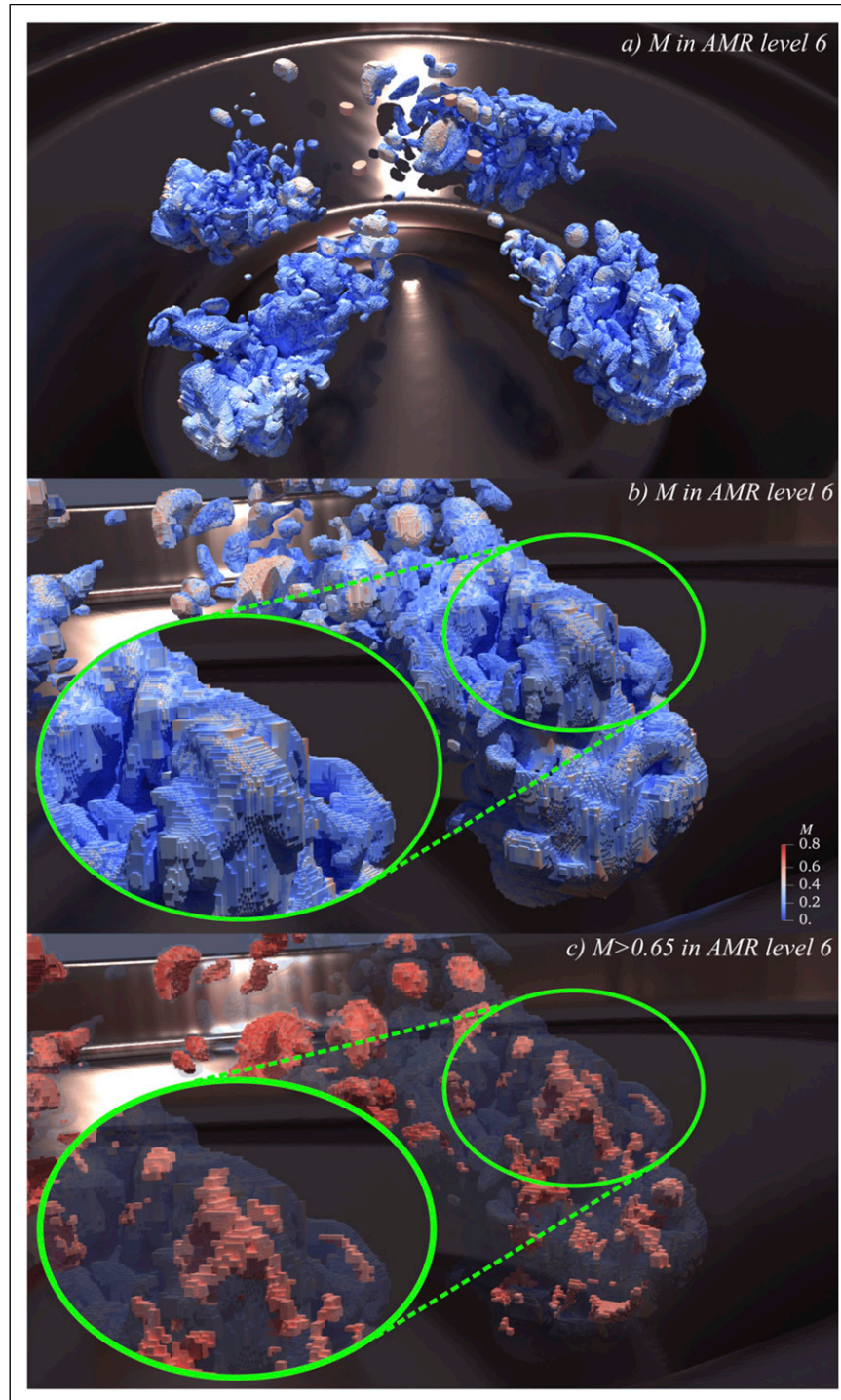
## 5. ALPINE application integration highlights

The success of our project is demonstrated by the integration of our in situ algorithms and infrastructure into ECP applications. In this section, we highlight our integration with the Combustion-Pele, WarpX, and MFX-Exa projects.

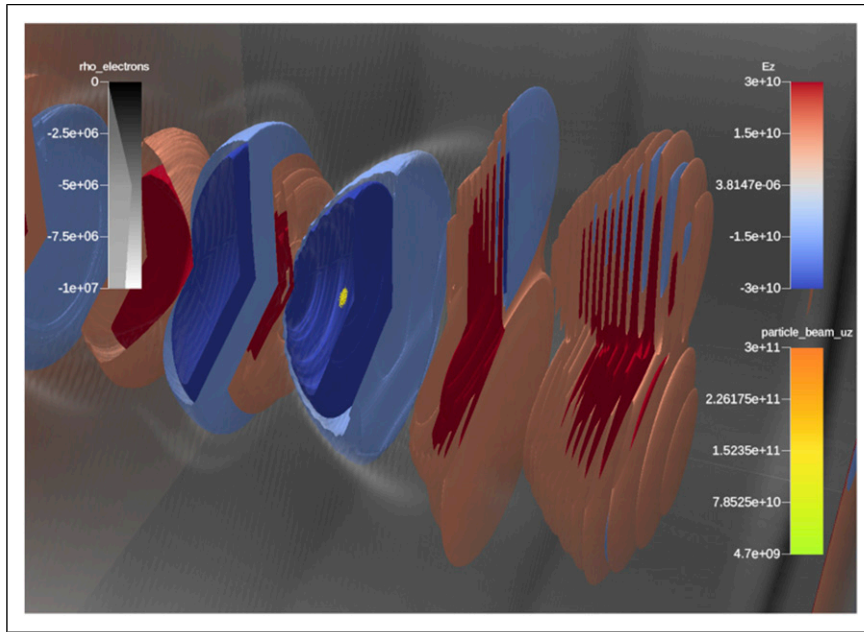
### 5.1. Integration of combustion-pele with ascent and ExaLearn

An anomaly can be loosely defined as an occurrence of something that is “abnormal”, “atypical” or “unexpected”.

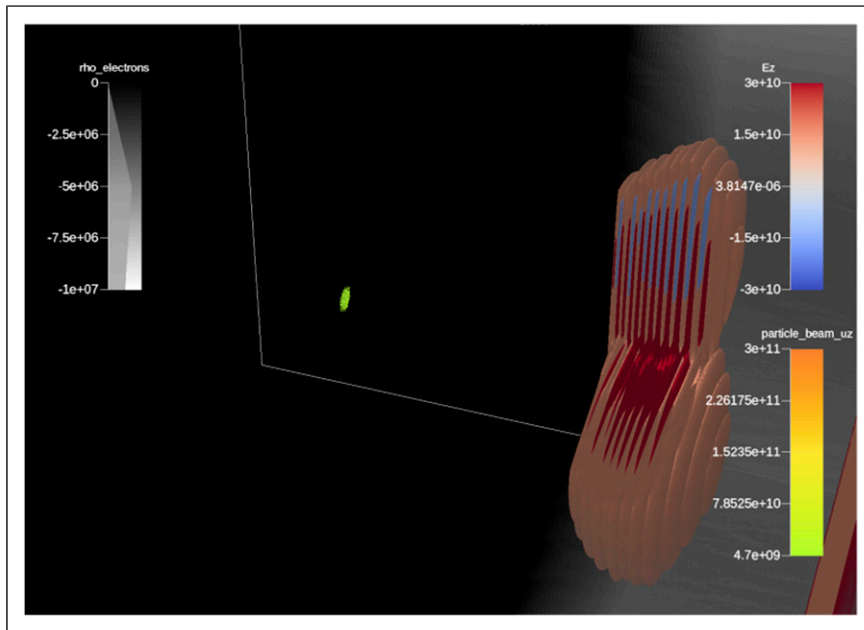
Here, we have implemented a methodology that is centered on analyzing high-order joint moments in multi-variate combustion datasets, and then applied it to the problem of identifying the onset of autoignition in a combustible mixture in situ. The methodology is based on the co-kurtosis algorithm by Aditya et al. (Aditya et al., 2019) for calculation and analysis of fourth-order joint moments. Kurtosis is a measure of either existing outliers (for the sample kurtosis) or of the propensity to produce outliers (for the kurtosis of a probability distribution; Westfall (2014)). The integration between the co-kurtosis calculation, implemented via ExaLearn Alexander et al. (2021) into the exascale code for reacting flows Pele Henry De Frahan et al. (2024) was powered by ALPINE Ascent, the flyweight visualization and analysis infrastructure for multi-physics HPC simulations. Thanks to the combination of the adaptive mesh refinement granularity in Pele with the statistical outlier detection capability of co-kurtosis, the method demonstrated a considerable speed-up compared to traditional post-processing techniques when tested for the identification of ignition kernels from the injection of a



**Figure 9.** Simulation of direct injection of four jets of prevaporized n-dodecane fuel-air mixture into a methane-air mixture in an internal combustion engine cylinder. The domain is discretized using 60.2 Billion cells, with a total of 2.4 Trillion degrees of freedom. (a) Co-kurtosis metric  $M$  for AMR blocks in sixth level of refinement, colored by value (from blue to red); (b) Detailed view of AMR blocks in the highest level of refinement (level 6) colored by anomaly metric  $M$  (from blue to red). Zoomed-in view (green circle) shows the AMR blocks in more detail; (c) Same detailed view as in panel b, but only for blocks with anomaly metric  $M > 0.65$ . Note: Figures were produced a posteriori using Python and Paraview.



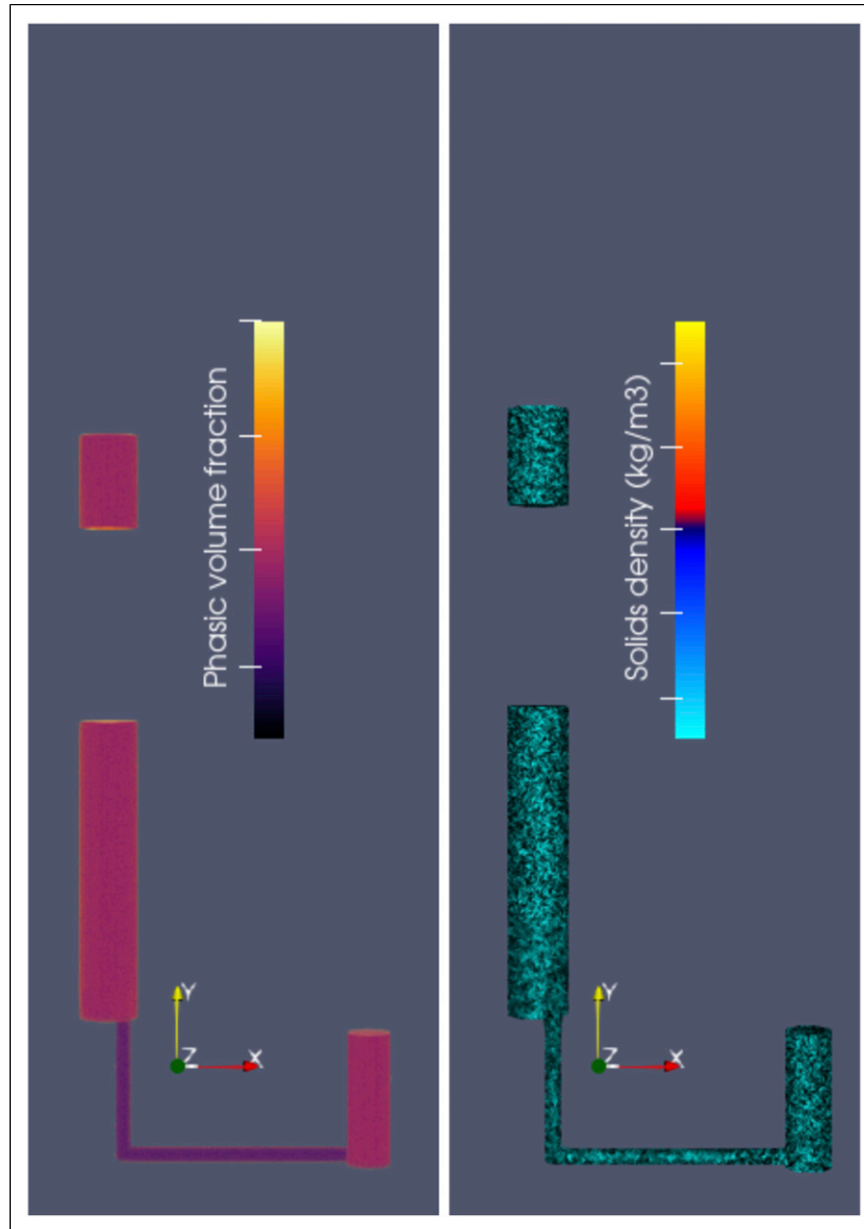
**Figure 10.** Visualization of a staged laser-plasma accelerator simulation. Shown is the strong traversal focusing fields (red-blue) in the first plasma stage (gray) and injected into this structure is an electron beam (orange-green) that is accelerated to the right to high energies. This in situ rendering of a later time step of the WarpX simulation executed on 552 GPUs across 69 nodes of Frontier.



**Figure 11.** This in situ rendering of an early time step of the WarpX simulation was executed on 4,416 GPUs across 552 nodes of Frontier.

Diesel-like fuel in air (Borghesi et al., 2018). Using all AMR levels and all chemical species, the entire process of identification was shown to take only 2% per solver time step in its target run (2.4 Trillion degrees of freedom) on

56,800 GPUs, thus demonstrating its in situ effectiveness. The metrics generated at runtime for AMR levels 3 to 6 are shown in Figure 9, where each AMR block (each small cube shown) is comprised of between  $16^3$  and  $64^3$  cells.



**Figure 12.** The MFiX-Exa team ran several intermediate-sized simulations using the Catalyst integration to generate in situ graphics. The above visualizations were demonstrated utilizing 30 nodes and 239 GPUs. This figure shows (left) rendering of the mesh outline of the reactor and (right) rendering of particles of the fluid phase volume fraction within the chemical looping reactor during the initial condition. Darker colors represent areas higher in solids concentration, whereas brighter colors are areas with few particles.

## 5.2. WarpX visualization pipeline

WarpX is an award winning particle-in-cell simulation code that studies advanced particle acceleration in laser-driven plasma wakefields Fedeli et al. (2022) in order to advance the future of high-energy physics colliders Albert et al. (2021). WarpX is built on top of the AMReX library and is an example of the value of integrating the co-design AMReX suite into ALPINE infrastructures. In this case,

the integration of Ascent and AMReX created an easy path to publish WarpX simulation mesh data to Ascent. WarpX was integrated with Ascent and tested on OLCF’s super-computer, Frontier, at varying scales. Figures 10 and 11 are in situ renderings from Ascent of a staged laser-wakefield accelerator in a boosted reference frame. In these images an electron beam (orange-green) is accelerated to the right through multiple stages to high energies. And in the plasma stages (gray), the strong traversal focusing fields are shown

in red-blue. To create these images, Ascent utilized VTK-m [Moreland et al. \(2016\)](#) to first transform the data via scaling, isosurfacing, and clipping, before rendering the final images. Ascent also utilized RAJA [Beckingsale et al. \(2019\)](#) to combine multiple electron fields into one to allow for volume rendering.

### 5.3. MFIX-exa in situ visualization with catalyst

MFIX-Exa is a multiphase flow code developed to utilize the massive scale parallelism offered by the modern supercomputers while being performant and portable [Musser et al. \(2022\)](#). It relies on the AMReX [Zhang et al. \(2019\)](#) library, which provides a collection of efficient iterators, linear solvers, and communication routines on structured data and particles. To address the data management challenges posed by massive parallelism, MFIX-Exa added support for in situ visualization and analysis using Catalyst. This integration benefited both the products mutually as Catalyst and its ParaView backend unlocked access to an almost exhaustive suite of visual analytics for MFIX, and to support the needs of MFIX-Exa, Catalyst had to develop new protocols to handle AMReX data. This integration was tested on varying scales, and Catalyst was able to run on up to 649 nodes while using 5187 GPUs on Frontier. [Figure 12](#) showcases the type of output images generated using this integration.

## 6. Conclusions

Exascale supercomputing architectures challenged the traditional post hoc visualization and analysis approaches because it is difficult to save simulation outputs at the rate they are generated. In addition, GPU accelerators required new algorithm and infrastructure implementations. The ALPINE project met these challenges by offering in situ algorithms and infrastructures. ALPINE infrastructures and algorithms are available to the community and can be found at the following sites:

- ParaView: <https://www.paraview.org/>
- ParaView GitLab: <https://gitlab.kitware.com/paraview/paraview>
- Catalyst Documentation: <https://catalyst-in-situ.readthedocs.io/en/latest/>
- VisIt: <https://visit-dav.github.io/visit-website/>
- Ascent GitHub: <https://github.com/Alpine-DAV/ascent>
- Ascent Documentation: <https://ascent.readthedocs.io/en/latest/>
- Algorithms: <https://github.com/Alpine-DAV/algorithms/tree/master>

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