Electronic Orbital Currents and Polarization in Mott Insulators; are electrons really localized?

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- ★ Introduction: why electrical properties of Mott insulators differ from those of band insulators.
- ★ Magnetic states in the Hubbard model.
- ★ Orbital currents.
- ★ Electronic polarization.
- ★ Low frequency dynamic properties.
- ★ Conclusions.

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•Mott insulators

$$H = -\sum_{ij\sigma} t_{ij}(c^{+}_{i\sigma} c_{j\sigma} + c^{+}_{j\sigma} c_{i\sigma}) + \frac{U}{2}\sum_{i}(n_i - 1)^2,$$

•Standard paradigm: for U>>t and one electron per site electrons are localized on sites. All charge degrees of freedom are frozen out; only spin degrees of freedom remain in the ground and lowest excited states

$$H_S = \frac{4t^2}{U}(\vec{S}_1 \cdot \vec{S}_2 - 1/4).$$

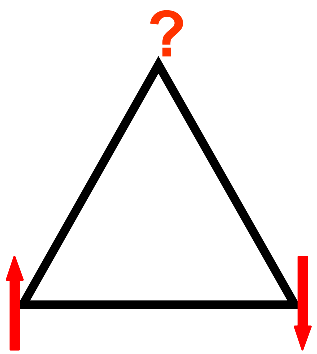
•**Not the full truth!**

•For certain spin configurations there exist in the ground state of strong Mott insulators **spontaneous electric currents** (and corresponding orbital moments)!

•For some other spin textures there may exist a **spontaneous charge redistribution**, so that $\langle n_i \rangle$ is not 1! This, in particular, can lead to the appearance of a spontaneous **electric polarization** (a purely ***electronic mechanism of multiferroic behaviour***)

•These phenomena, in particular, appear in frustrated systems, with **scalar chirality** playing important role

- Spin systems: often complicated spin structures, especially in frustrated systems – e.g. those containing triangles as building blocks



- Isolated triangles (trinuclear clusters) - e.g. in some magnetic molecules (V15, …)
- Solids with isolated triangles ($La_4Cu_3MoO_{12}$)
- Triangular lattices
- Kagome
- Pyrochlore

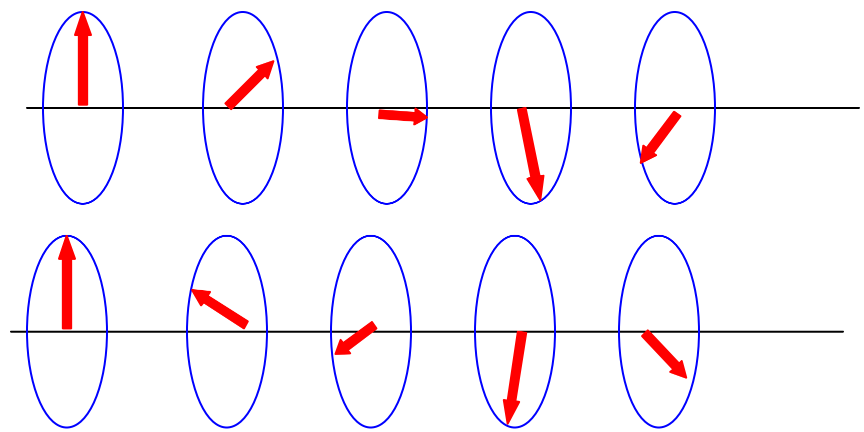
Often complicated ground states; sometimes $\langle \mathbf{S}_i \rangle = 0$ ⇒

⇒ spin liquids

Some structures, besides $\langle \mathbf{S}_i \rangle$, are characterized by:

Vector chirality

$$[\mathbf{S}_i \times \mathbf{S}_j]$$

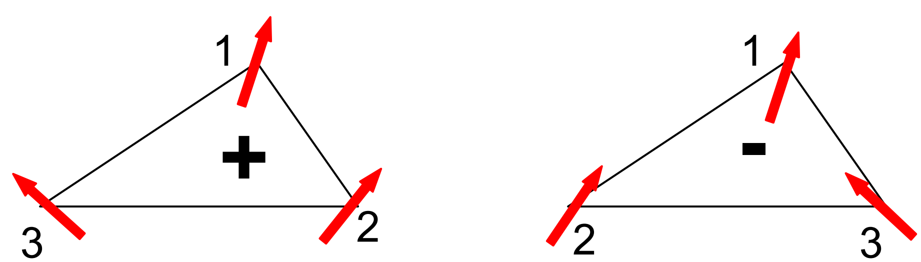


Scalar chirality

$$\chi_{123} = \mathbf{S}_1 [\mathbf{S}_2 \times \mathbf{S}_3]$$

- solid angle

χ may be + or - :

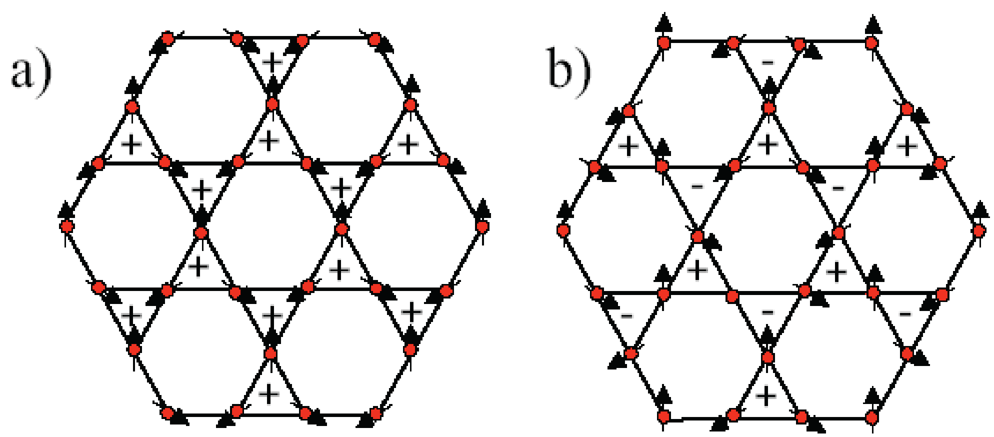


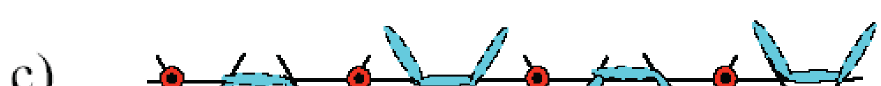
Scalar chirality χ is often invoked in different situations:

- Anyon superconductivity
- Berry-phase mechanism of anomalous Hall effect
- New universality classes of spin-liquids
- Chiral spin glasses

Chirality in frustrated systems: Kagome

a) Uniform chirality (q=0) b) Staggered chirality (√3x√3)





But what is the scalar chirality physically?

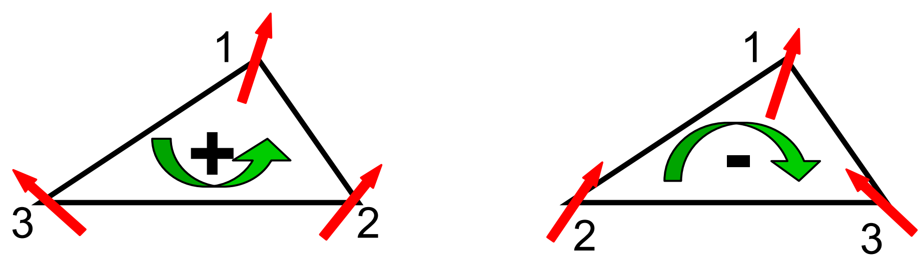
What does it couple to?

How to measure it?

Breaks time-reversal-invariance T and inversion P - like currents!

→ $\chi_{123} \neq 0$ means spontaneous circular electric current $j_{123} \neq 0$ and orbital moment $L_{123} \neq 0$

$$L_{123} \propto j_{123} \propto \chi_{123}$$



Couples to magnetic field:

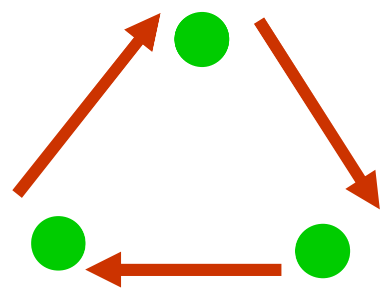
$$-LH \sim -\chi H$$

Difference between Mott and band insulators

$$H = -\sum_{ij\sigma} t_{ij}(c_{i\sigma}^{+}c_{j\sigma} + c_{j\sigma}^{+}c_{i\sigma}) + \frac{U}{2}\sum_{i}(n_i - 1)^2, \qquad \langle n_i \rangle = 1.$$

- Only in the limit $U \to \infty$ electrons are localized on sites.
- At $t/U \neq 0$ electrons can hop between sites.

$$H_S = \frac{4t^2}{U}(\vec{S}_1 \cdot \vec{S}_2 - 1/4).$$



Orbital current

$$H = -t \sum c^{+}_{i\sigma} c_{j\sigma} + U \sum n_{i\uparrow} n_{i\downarrow} =$$
$$= \quad H' \quad + \quad H_0$$

$t = 0$: localized electrons ↑ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓

Superexchange: virtual creation of polar states with $\langle n_i \rangle \neq 1$

↑ ↑ : $\Delta E = 0$ | ↑ ↓ : $\Delta E = -\frac{t^2}{U}$

Calculate in perturbation theory in $t/U \ll 1$;
project to the (2^N-degenerate) states with $\langle n \rangle = 1$;
express through spin operators

$c^{+}_{i\uparrow} c_{i\uparrow} \leftrightarrow \frac{1}{2} + S^z_i$ $\qquad c^{+}_{i\uparrow} c_{i\downarrow} \leftrightarrow S^{+}_i$

$c^{+}_{i\downarrow} c_{i\downarrow} \leftrightarrow \frac{1}{2} - S^z_i$ $\qquad c^{+}_{i\downarrow} c_{i\uparrow} \leftrightarrow S^{-}_i$

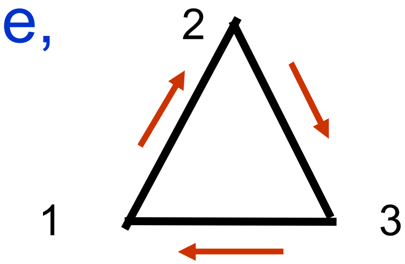
$$H_{eff} \sim \langle H' \frac{1}{H_0 - E_0} H' \rangle \sim \frac{t^2}{U} \langle c^{+}_{i\sigma} c_{j\sigma} c^{+}_{j\sigma'} c_{i\sigma'} \rangle \Rightarrow \frac{2t^2}{U} \vec{S}_i \vec{S}_j$$

Spin current operator and scalar spin chirality

- Current operator for Hubbard Hamiltonian on bond ij:

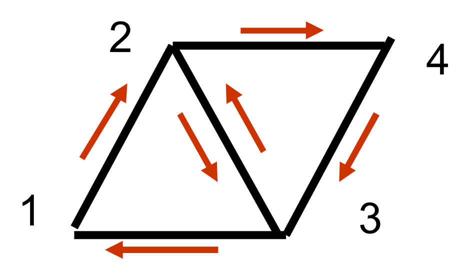
$$\vec{I}_{ij} = \frac{iet_{ij}\vec{r}_{ij}}{\hbar r_{ij}} \sum_{\sigma} (c_{i\sigma}^{+} c_{j\sigma} - c_{j\sigma}^{+} c_{i\sigma}).$$

- Projected current operator: odd # of spin operators, scalar in spin space. For smallest loop, triangle,



$$\vec{I}_{S,12}(3) = \frac{\vec{r}_{ij}}{r_{ij}} \frac{24et_{12}t_{23}t_{31}}{\hbar U^2} [\vec{S}_1 \times \vec{S}_2] \cdot \vec{S}_3.$$

- Current via bond 23



$$I_{S,23} = I_{S,23}(1) + I_{S,23}(4).$$

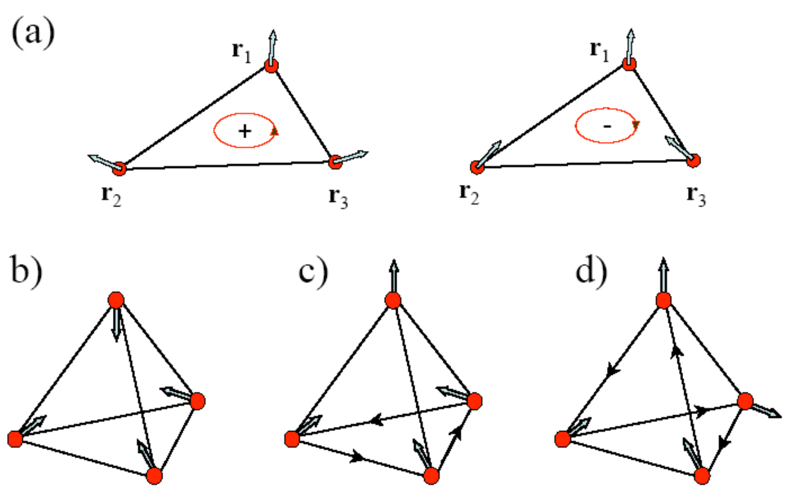
- On bipartite nn lattice I_S is absent.

Orbital currents in the spin ordered ground state $\langle \vec{S}_i \rangle \neq 0$

- Necessary condition for orbital currents is nonzero average chirality

$$\chi_{12,3} = [\vec{S}_1 \times \vec{S}_2]\cdot\vec{S}_3, \qquad \langle \chi_{ij,k} \rangle \neq 0.$$

- It may be inherent to spin ordering or induced by magnetic field



Triangles with $\pm$ chirality

On tetrahedron chirality may be nonzero but orbital currents absent.

Chirality in the ground state without magnetic ordering

- $\langle \chi_{12,3} \rangle = \langle [\vec{S}_1 \times \vec{S}_2] \cdot \vec{S}_3 \rangle \neq 0, \qquad \langle \vec{S}_i \rangle = 0.$

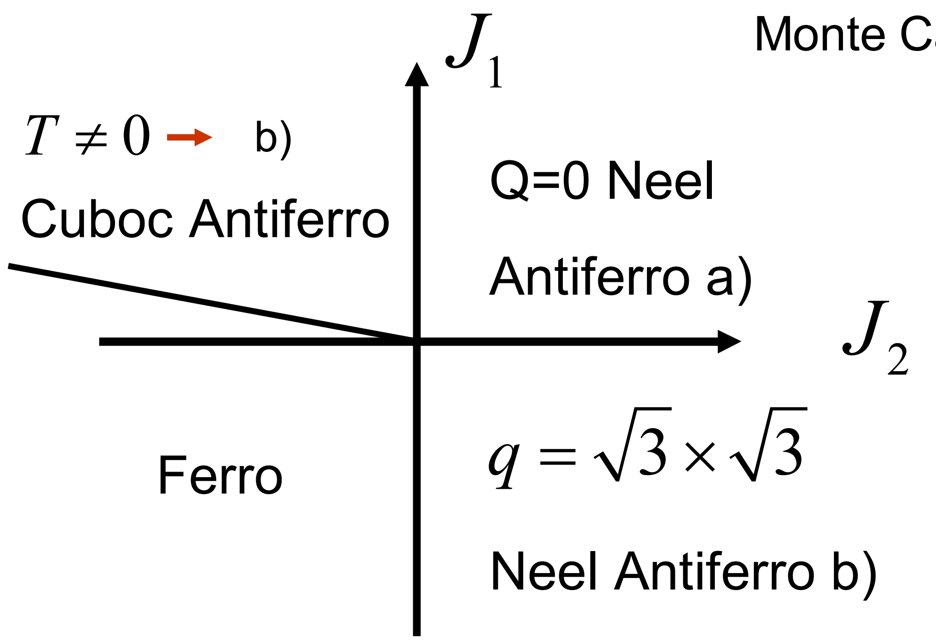
- Geometrically frustrated 2d system → Mermin-Wigner theorem → $\langle \vec{S}_i \rangle = 0.$
- State with maximum entropy may be with broken discrete symmetry $\langle \chi_{12,3} \rangle \neq 0.$
- Example: $J_1 - J_2$ model on kagome lattice:

$$H_S = J_1 \sum_{\langle ij \rangle} \vec{S}_i \cdot \vec{S}_j + J_2 \sum_{\langle\langle ij \rangle\rangle} \vec{S}_i \cdot \vec{S}_k .$$

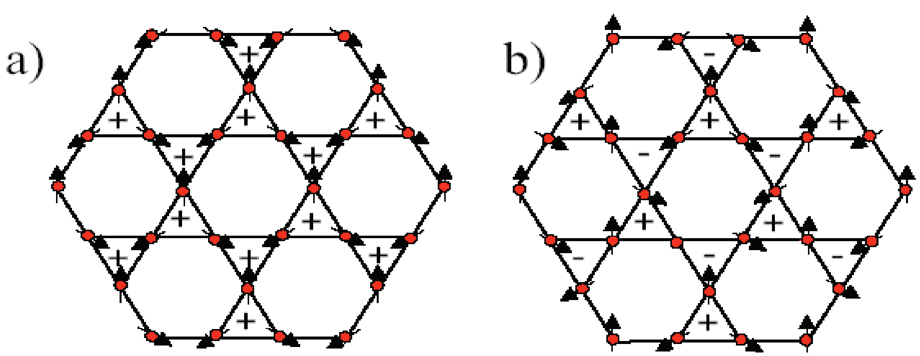
•(group of C.Lhuillier)

Ordering in $J_1 - J_2$ model on kagome lattice at T=0

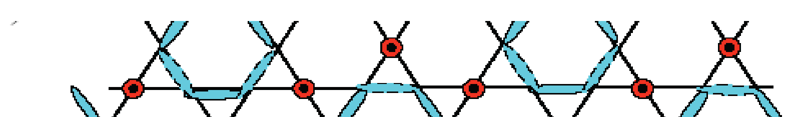
Monte Carlo results by Domenge et al., 2007.



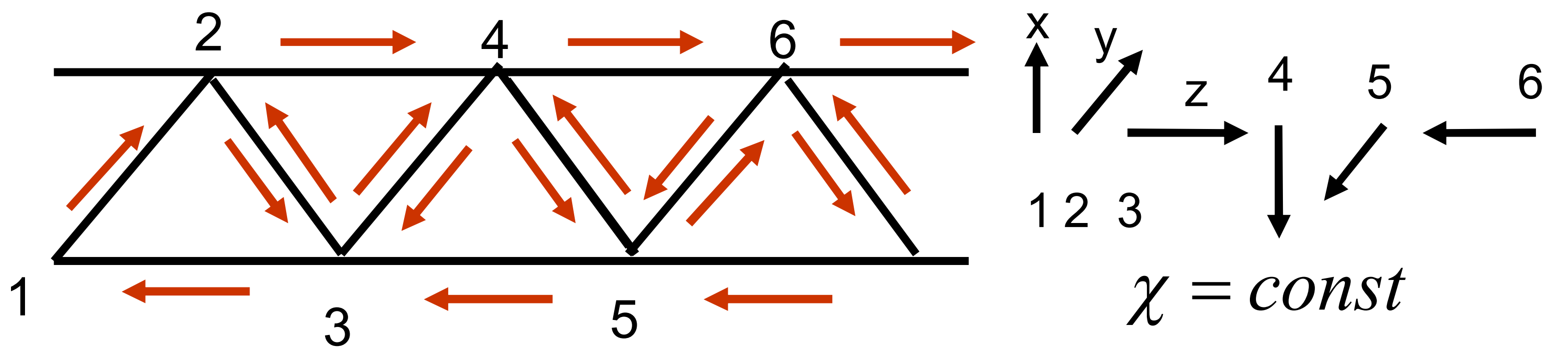
Phase diagram for classical order parameter



For S=1/2 for low T cub'oc is chiral with orbital currents and without spin ordering.



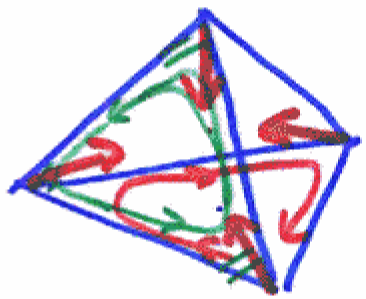
Boundary and persistent current



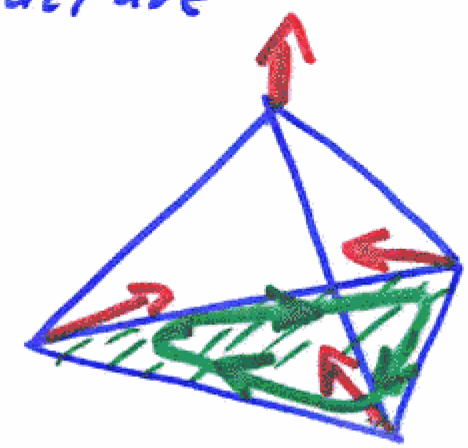
$$\chi = const$$

Boundary current in
gaped 2d insulator

- **Pyrochlores** with [111] anisotropy (a la spin ice, but with antiferro. exchange):



- currents compensate at each bond for 4-in structure



But in the field $H \parallel [111]$: (3 in-1 out)
net current around basal triangle, and $\Sigma \parallel [111]$

The same for the field giving 2 in-2 out

•Tetrahedra in exact solution:

Ground state - S=0, doubly-degenerate. In the ground state one can chose the state with chirality + or - .

Nonzero chirality → magnetic state. But currents at each edge = 0 ! → magnetic octupole states?

Very similar to the situation with doubly-degenerate e_g orbitals:

$|z^2\rangle$ ------- $T^z=1/2$

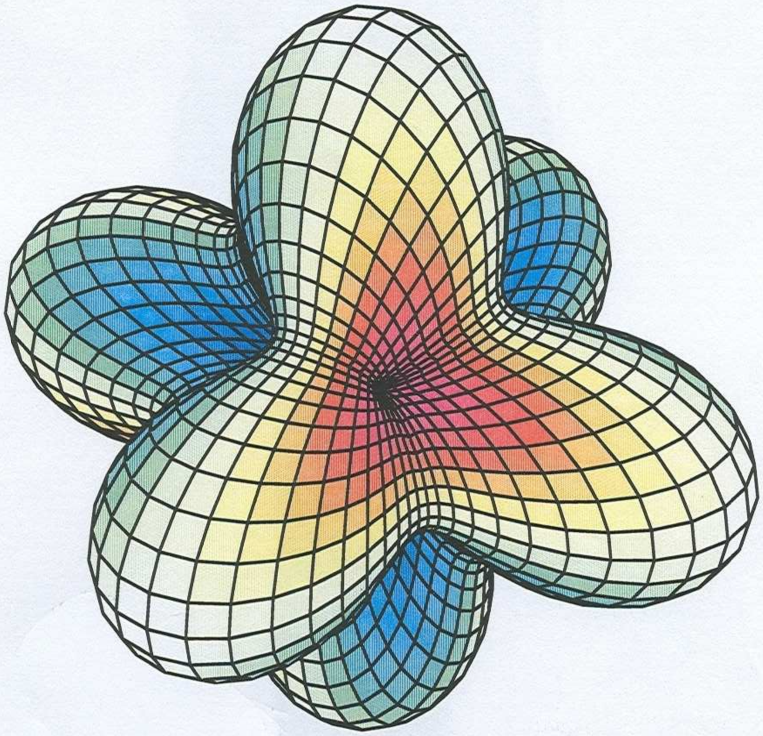
$|x^2-y^2\rangle$ --- $T^z=-1/2$

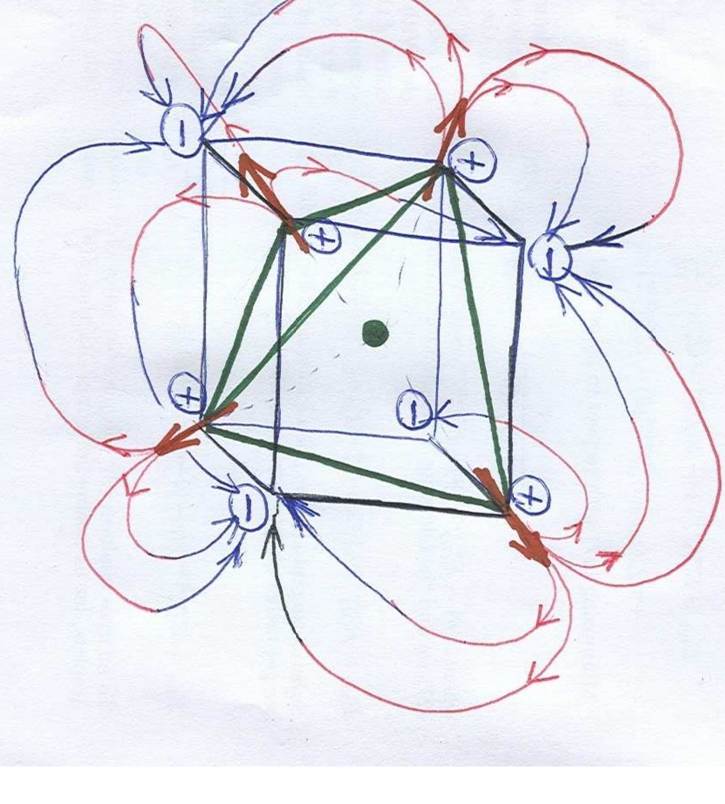
$(|z^2\rangle+i\,|x^2-y^2\rangle)$ ---- $T^y=1/2$, $(|z^2\rangle-i\,|x^2-y^2\rangle)$ ---- $T^y=-1/2$,

Eigenstates of T^y – states with magnetic octupoles!

Real combinations $a|z^2\rangle+b\,|x^2-y^2\rangle$ – states with electric quadrupoles.

The same for spin tetrahedra ?



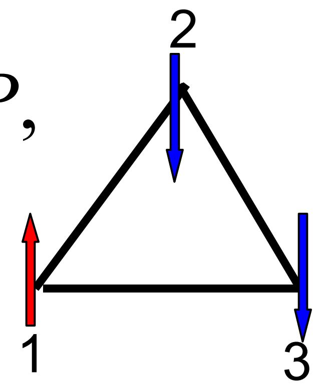


Spin-dependent electronic polarization

- Charge operator on site i: $Q_i = e\sum_{\sigma} c^{+}_{i\sigma} c_{i\sigma}.$

- Projected charge operator $n_{S,i} = P e^{S} n_i e^{-S} P,$

$$n_{S,1}(2,3) = 1 - \frac{8 t_{12} t_{23} t_{31}}{U^2}[\vec{S}_1 \cdot (\vec{S}_2 + \vec{S}_3) - 2\vec{S}_2 \cdot \vec{S}_3].$$

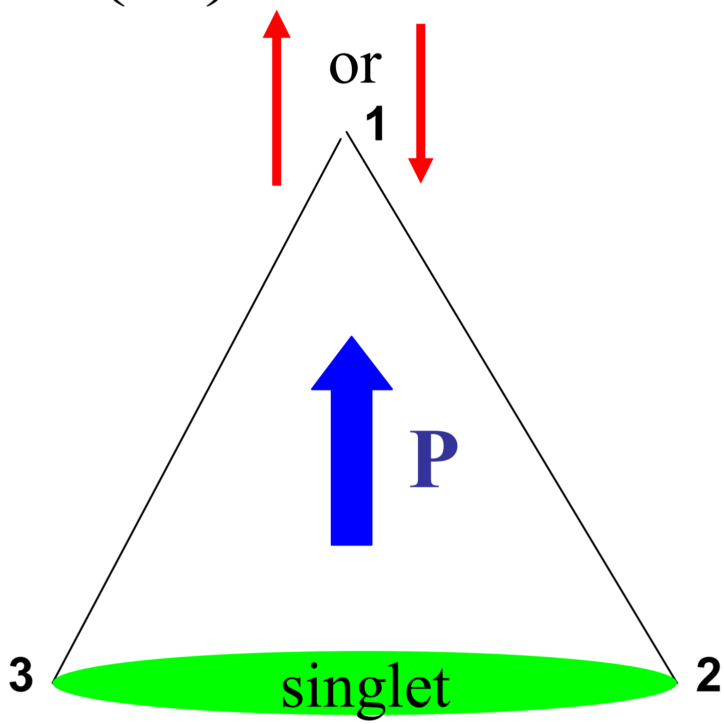


- Polarization on triangle $\vec{P}_{123} = e \sum_{i=1,2,3} n_{S,i} \vec{r}_i, \qquad \sum_i n_{S,i} = 3.$

- Charge on site *i* is sum over triangles at site *i*.

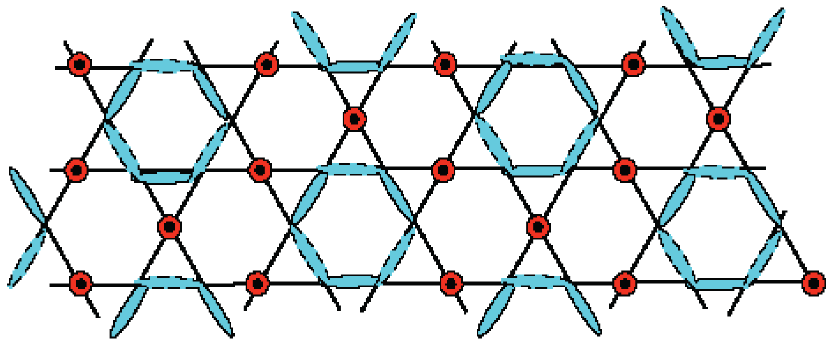
Electronic polarization on triangle

$$\langle n_1 \rangle = 1 + \delta n_1 = 1 - 8\left(\frac{t}{U}\right)^3 \left[\mathbf{S}_1(\mathbf{S}_2 + \mathbf{S}_3) - 2\mathbf{S}_2\mathbf{S}_3\right]$$



Purely electronic mechanism of multiferroic behavior!

Charges on kagome lattice



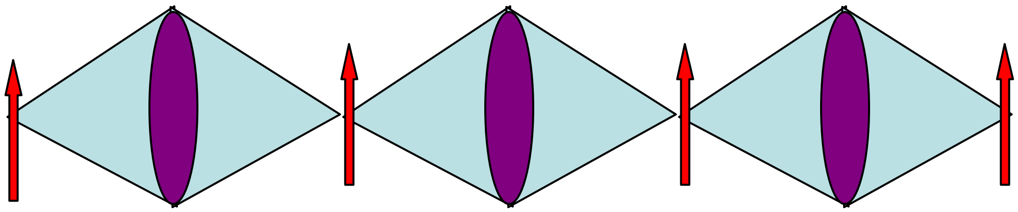
1/3 magnetization plateau:

Charge ordering for spins 1/3 in magnetic field: spin-driven CDW

• Typical situation at the magnetization plateaux!

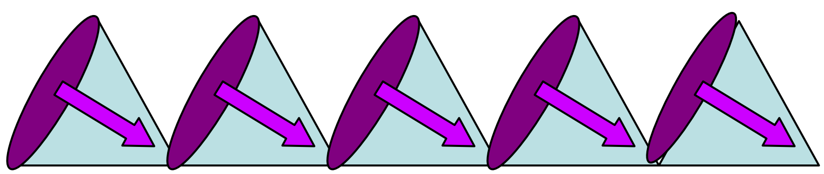
- Diamond chain (azurite $Cu_3(CO_3)_2(OH)_2$)

spin singlet

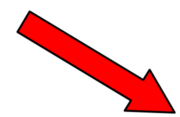


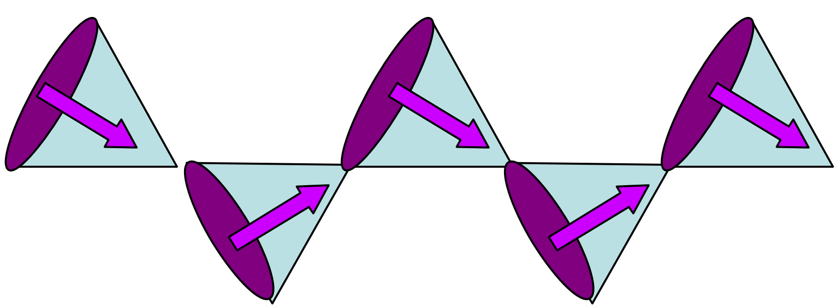
-will develop S-CDW

- Saw-tooth (or delta-) chain



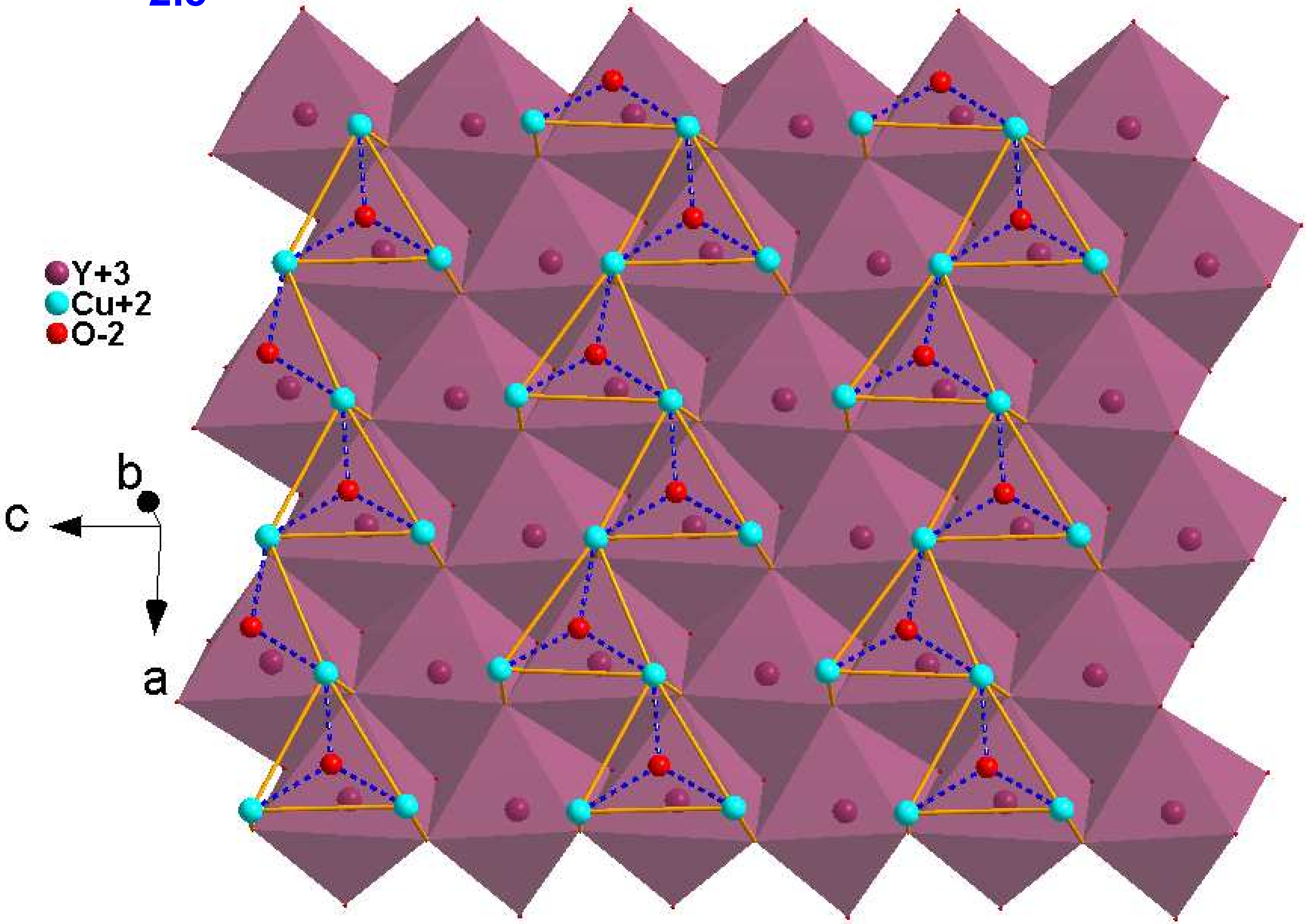
Net polarization



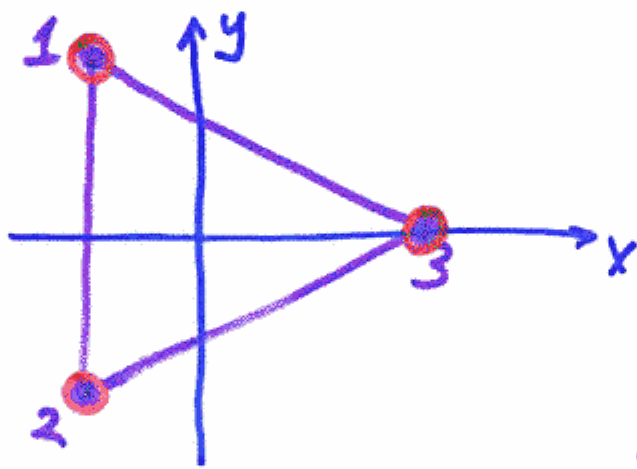


Net polarization

$CuYO_{2.5}$



Polarization of a triangle:



$$P_x = 4\sqrt{3}\, ea \left(\frac{t}{U}\right)^3 \left[\vec{S}_1 \cdot (\vec{S}_2 + \vec{S}_3) - 2\vec{S}_2\cdot\vec{S}_3\right]$$

$$P_y = 12\, ea \left(\frac{t}{U}\right)^3 \vec{S}_1 \cdot (\vec{S}_2 - \vec{S}_3)$$

Dipole moments, or polarization, and current on a triangle, can be combined in one „isospin"-$\frac{1}{2}$:

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} P_x \longrightarrow -c\, T_x \\ P_y \longrightarrow c\, T_y \\ \frac{ta}{U} I \longrightarrow c\, T_z \end{array} \right.$$

P_x, P_y } real (T-even)

$\frac{ta}{U} I$ } imaginary (T-odd)

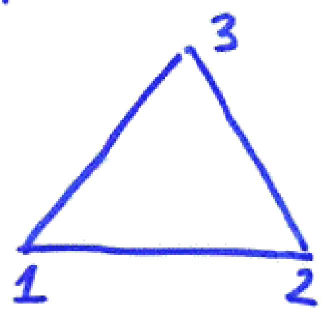
– somewhat similar to pseudospin $\vec{\tau}$ for e_g-orbitals

$\left(\tau_z \to |z^2\rangle,\ \tau_x \to |x^2-y^2\rangle,\ \tau_y \to \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}}\left(|z^2\rangle \pm i|x^2-y^2\rangle\right)\right)$

real (T-even) — Im. (T-odd)

Consequences for dynamic properties:

Equilateral triangle of $S=\frac{1}{2}$ with antiferro. exchang



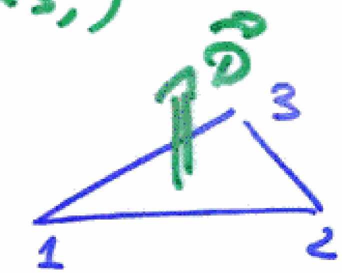
$2^3 = 8$ states $\left\{ \equiv \; S_{tot} = 3/2 \right.$

$\left\{ \equiv \; S_{tot} = \frac{1}{2}, \; \chi = \pm \right.$

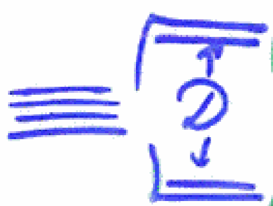
Dzyaloshinskii – Moriya interaction:

$$-\vec{D}_{12}\cdot(\vec{S}_1\times\vec{S}_2) - \vec{D}_{23}(\vec{S}_2\times\vec{S}_3) - \vec{D}_{31}(\vec{S}_3\times\vec{S}_1)$$

E.g. $\vec{D}_{12} = \vec{D}_{23} = \vec{D}_3 \perp (123)$ plane



Splits ground state quartet



$(S^z = \frac{1}{2}, \chi = -)$

$(S^z = \frac{1}{2}, \chi = +)$

$(S^z = \frac{1}{2}, \chi = +)$

$(S^z = -\frac{1}{2}, \chi = -)$

(DM interaction plays a role of spin-orbit interaction for ground state quartet)

Isolated triangle: accounting for DM interaction

- DM coupling: $H_{DM} = \sum_{ij} D_{ij} \vec{S}_i \times \vec{S}_j .$
- For V15 $H_{DM} \approx D_z L_z S_z .$
- Splits lowest quartet into 2 doublets $\left|+\uparrow\right\rangle, \left|-\downarrow\right\rangle$ and $\left|+\downarrow\right\rangle, \left|-\uparrow\right\rangle$ separated by energy $\Delta = D_z .$
- Ac electric field induces transitions between $\chi = \pm 1.$
- Ac magnetic field induces transitions between $S_z = \pm 1/2.$

- ESR : magnetic field (**-HM**) causes transitions

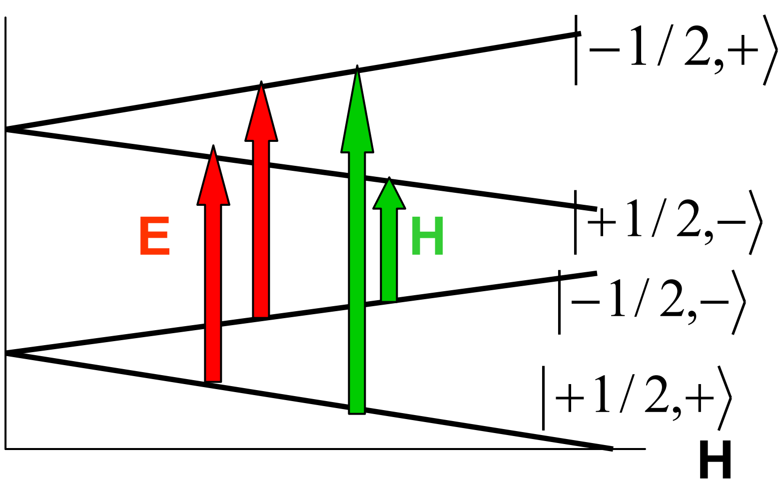
$$|1/2,\chi\rangle \rightarrow |-1/2,\chi\rangle,\ or\ |-1/2,\chi\rangle \rightarrow |1/2,\chi\rangle$$

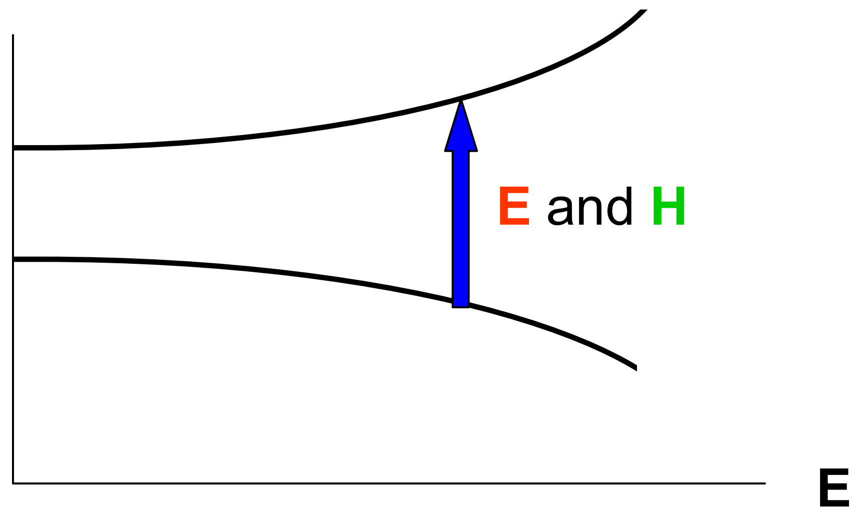
Here: electric field (**-Ed**) has nondiagonal matrix elements in χ:

$$\langle \chi = + | \mathbf{d} | \chi = - \rangle \neq 0$$ ⟹ electric field will cause

dipole-active transitions $$|S^z,+\rangle \Leftrightarrow |S^z,-\rangle$$

-- ESR caused by electric field E !





Low frequency dynamic properties: negative refraction index

- Responses to ac electric and ac magnetic field are comparable for $J \approx 100$ K:

$$\varepsilon_{ik}(\omega) = \varepsilon_0 \delta_{ik} + \frac{8\pi}{V} \sum_n \frac{\omega_{n0} \langle 0 | P_{S,i} | n \rangle \langle n | P_{S,k} | 0 \rangle}{\omega_{n0}^2 - \omega^2 + i\delta},$$

- Spin-orbital coupling may lead to common poles in $\varepsilon_{ik}(\omega)$ and $\mu_{ik}(\omega)$ ➡

- Negative refraction index if dissipation is weak.

•Triangle: S=1/2, chirality (or pseudosin T) = ½

•Can one use chirality instead of spin for quantum computation etc,

•as a qubit instead of spin?

•We can control it by magnetic field (chirality = current = orbital moment)

•and by electric field

•

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• Georgeot, Mila, arXiv 26 February 2009

CONCLUSIONS

- Contrary to the common belief, there are real charge effects in strong Mott insulators (with frustrated lattices): spin-driven spontaneous electric currents and orbital moments, and charge redistribution in the ground state

- Spontaneous currents are ~ scalar spin chirality $\chi_{123} = \vec{S}_1 \cdot [\vec{S}_2 \times \vec{S}_3]$

- Charge redistribution ($\langle n_i \rangle$ is not 1!) may lead to electric polarization (purely electronic mechanism of multiferroicity)

- Many consequences:

  - In the ground state: lifting of degeneracy; formation of spin-driven CDW, …….

  - In dynamics: electric field-induced "ESR"; rotation of electric polarization by spins; contribution of spins to low-frequency dielectric function; possibility of negative refraction index; etc