# The curious case of J113924.74+164144.0: a possible new group of galaxies at z = 0.069

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### ABSTRACT

J113924.74+164144.0 is an interesting galaxy at z = 0.0693, i.e.  $D_L \sim 305$  Mpc, with tidaltail-like extended optical features on both sides. There are two neighbouring galaxies, a spiral galaxy J113922.85+164136.3 which has a strikingly similar 'tidal' morphology and a faint galaxy J113923.58+164129.9. We report H121-cm observations of this field to search for signatures of possible interaction. Narrow H1 emission is detected from J113924.74+164144.0, but J113922.85+164136.3 shows no detectable emission. The total H1 mass detected in J113924.74+164144.0 is 7.7 × 10<sup>9</sup> M<sub>☉</sub>. The H1 emission from the galaxy is found to be extended and significantly offset from the optical position of the galaxy. We interpret this as signature of possible interaction with the neighbouring spiral galaxy. There is also a possible detection of H1 emission from another nearby galaxy J113952.31+164531.8 at z = 0.0680 at a projected distance of 600 kpc, and with a total H1 mass of  $5.3 \times 10^9$  M<sub>☉</sub>, suggesting that all these galaxies form a loose group at  $z \sim 0.069$ .

**Key words:** galaxies: general – galaxies: groups: general – galaxies: interactions – radio lines: galaxies.

# **1 INTRODUCTION**

The 21-cm transition has long proved to be an extremely useful tool to probe the neutral hydrogen (H<sub>I</sub>) in both the local and the distant Universe. In particular, the H<sub>I</sub> 21-cm emission has been used to study, in detail, properties of the interstellar medium (ISM) of the nearby galaxies in the local Universe (Briggs 1990; Zwaan et al. 1997, 2005, and references therein). Particularly for gas-rich spiral galaxies (at low and moderate distances) where the H<sub>I</sub> disc is significantly bigger than the stellar disc, H<sub>I</sub> observations provide information not only on the dynamics of the particular galaxy of interest but also on the galaxy environment and on possible interactions of neighbouring galaxies (e.g. Howard & Byrd 1990; Rots et al. 1990; Kantharia et al. 2005; Hota, Saikia & Irwin 2007; Sengupta, Dwarakanath & Saikia 2009). Cosmic evolution of the properties of neutral gas in galaxies also has important implications on our understanding of star formation and galaxy evolution.

However, it should be noted here that, due to weakness of the emission signal, detecting H I emission from galaxies even at moderate redshift (z > 0.05) is a challenging task. Instead, H I absorption has been extensively used to probe ISM at high redshift (e.g. Carilli

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et al. 1996; de Bruyn, O'Dea & Baum 1996; Kanekar, Chengalur & Lane 2007; York et al. 2007) but only in the intervening gas along a narrow line of sight towards the background source, and therefore cannot be as informative as  $H_1$  emission in the kinematics and the dynamics of the gas within galaxies.

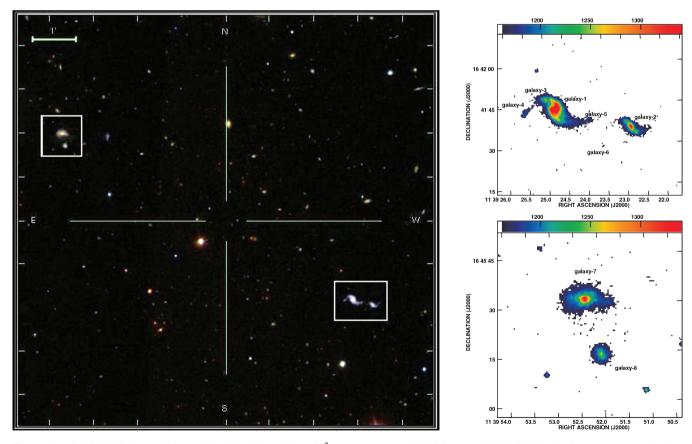
Recently, however, attempts to detect H I emission at high z have been made with upgraded or new powerful receivers. Large HI surveys like the ongoing Arecibo Legacy Fast ALFA (ALFALFA) Survey, the HI Parkes All-Sky Survey (HIPASS), the HI Jodrell All-Sky Survey (HIJASS) and the Arecibo Galaxy Environment Survey (AGES) are targeting the detailed study of HI only in nearby galaxies at  $z \leq 0.06$  (Barnes et al. 2001; Lang et al. 2003; Giovanelli et al. 2005a,b; Auld et al. 2006). In the last 10 yr, sensitive observations with very long integration times using radio telescopes like Arecibo, Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT), VLA and WSRT have resulted in a few detections of H I emission from galaxies at  $z \gtrsim 0.1$ : a single galaxy in Abell 2218 at z = 0.18 (Zwaan, van Dokkum & Verheijen 2001), one in Abell 2192 at z = 0.19 (Verheijen 2004), 19 galaxies in Abell 963 at z = 0.21 and 23 galaxies in Abell 2192 at z = 0.19 (Verheijen et al. 2007) and 20 optically selected galaxies from the Sloan Digital Sky Survey (SDSS; Catinella et al. 2008) at redshifts between z = 0.17-0.25. Additionally, there have been measurements of neutral atomic hydrogen gas content from multiple galaxies using co-adding technique for galaxy clusters Abell 3128 at z = 0.06, Abell 2218 at z = 0.18, a sample of star-forming galaxies at z = 0.24 and Abell 370 at z = 0.37 (Zwaan 2000; Chengalur, Braun & Wieringa 2001; Lah et al. 2007, 2009). However, with hundreds of hours of observation time, all these are detection of mainly very gas-rich systems and the number of H<sub>I</sub> emission measurements beyond the local Universe is still small. Hence H<sub>I</sub> emission study of galaxies at z > 0.05 is challenging but important from many considerations including increasing the number of H<sub>I</sub> detection in individual galaxies at these redshifts and understanding the galaxy evolution.

Here we present H<sub>I</sub> observation and results of a particularly interesting galaxy J113924.74+164144.0 at z = 0.0693 and its neighbouring galaxy J113952.31+164531.8 at z = 0.0680. The details of the field containing these galaxies are outlined in Section 2 while the observation and data analysis method is briefly described in Section 3. Section 4 contains the results, and we present conclusions in Section 5.

## 2 THE FIELD OF J113924.74+164144.0

The spiral galaxy J113924.74+164144.0 ( $m_r = 16.42$ ) at a spectroscopic redshift of  $z_{sp} = 0.069295 \pm 0.000077$  ( $cz = 20774 \text{ km s}^{-1}$ , corresponds to a look-back time of ~1 billion yr) is found to be a very interesting object because of two main reasons. First of all, there are long, tidal-tail-like extended features on both sides of

this galaxy (see Fig. 1 for r-band image). Though these features bear strong resemblance to tidal structures, SDSS DR6 (York et al. 2000; Adelman-McCarthy et al. 2008) has identified these structures as three separate faint galaxies: (1) J113925.00+164147.8  $(m_r = 20.49;$  photometric redshifts from SDSS  $z_{\rm ph} \sim 0.99, 0.46$ and 0.50), (2) J113925.55+164142.5 ( $m_r = 20.03$ ;  $z_{ph} \sim 1.00$ , 0.47 and 0.30) and (3) J113923.94+164139.5 ( $m_r = 19.45$ ;  $z_{\rm ph} \sim$ 0.04, 0.13 and 0.12). Derived photometric redshift for these features quoted in SDSS has large error with an overlap around 0.07 indicating that they are probably at the same redshift. Fig. 1 shows the SDSS DR6 *r*-band image of the field containing this galaxy along with a  $\sim 2 \times 2 \operatorname{arcmin}^2$  image around this main galaxy (marked as 'galaxy-1' in the figure) to show the details of these three neighbouring 'galaxies' ('galaxy-3', 'galaxy-4' and 'galaxy-5' in the figure). Other than these three galaxies, there is another faint  $(m_r = 21.81)$ galaxy ('galaxy-6' in the figure), J113923.58+164129.9 ( $z_{\rm ph} \sim$ 0.22, 0.60 and 0.58), which is 0.364 arcmin away and a comparatively bright ( $m_r = 17.80$ ) spiral galaxy ('galaxy-2' in the figure), J113922.85+164136.3 ( $z_{\rm ph} \sim 0.00, 0.05$  and 0.09), 0.471 arcmin away. This corresponds to a projected separation of  $\sim$ 37 kpc at z =0.069. Both galaxy-1 and galaxy-2 seem to have open spiral arms and no significant bulge, and so are likely to be Sc or Sd type. The second interesting point is that this smaller spiral galaxy has an optical morphology with tidal-tail-like extended features very similar to that of the bigger spiral galaxy. Given that the errors in



**Figure 1.** Left: SDSS DR6 *r*-band image of the field  $(9.5 \times 9.5 \operatorname{arcmin}^2)$  centred at RA 11:39:37 Dec. +16:43:32 (J2000) showing two galaxy pairs. Top right: part of the field showing details of the galaxy pair J113924.74+164144.0 and J113922.85+164136.3 (marked 'galaxy-1' and 'galaxy-2', respectively). Note the other four neighbour sources identified as separate galaxies in SDSS ('galaxy-3', 'galaxy-4', 'galaxy-5' and 'galaxy-6'). Bottom right: part of the field showing details of the galaxy pair J113952.31+164531.8 and J113952.02+164514.8 (marked 'galaxy-7' and 'galaxy-8', respectively). Note the striking morphological similarity of the two spirals (galaxy-1 and galaxy-2) and the disturbed morphology of galaxy-7. The GMRT radio observation field of view was ~25 arcmin centred at galaxy-1. The optical properties for these sources are listed in Table 1.

ID	SDSS galaxy	Distance <sup>a</sup>		Photometry					Redshift	cz
		(arcmin)	$(kpc)^b$	и	g	r	i	z	Zsp	$(\mathrm{km}\mathrm{s}^{-1})$
galaxy-1	J113924.74+164144.0	_	_	17.83	16.82	16.42	16.14	16.05	0.0693	20774
galaxy-2	J113922.85+164136.3	0.471	37	19.21	18.26	17.80	17.57	17.53	_	_
galaxy-3 <sup>c</sup>	J113925.00+164147.8	0.088	7	20.63	20.23	20.49	20.14	19.76	_	_
galaxy-4 <sup>c</sup>	J113925.55+164142.5	0.195	15	20.41	20.02	20.03	19.67	19.89	_	_
galaxy-5 <sup>c</sup>	J113923.94+164139.5	0.206	16	20.29	19.57	19.45	19.11	19.03	_	_
galaxy-6	J113923.58+164129.9	0.364	28	22.19	22.50	21.81	21.59	23.38	_	_
galaxy-7	J113952.31+164531.8	7.615	595	19.35	17.60	16.82	16.42	16.08	0.0680	20386
galaxy-8	J113952.02+164514.8	7.415	580	19.86	18.67	18.24	17.96	17.91	-	-

Table 1. Details of the sources in the SDSS field with J113924.74+164144.0.

<sup>a</sup>Distance from the spiral galaxy J113924.74+164144.0

<sup>b</sup>Projected separation at z = 0.069

<sup>c</sup>Most likely to be part of galaxy-1

photometric redshift measurements are large due to various uncertainties, it is possible that all these galaxies are almost at the same redshift and interacting with each other. Apart from these, ~7 arcmin away from the source (~600 kpc at z = 0.069) there are two galaxies, J113952.31+164531.8 ( $m_r = 16.82$ ) with a spectroscopic redshift of  $z_{sp} = 0.068000 \pm 0.000090$  ( $cz = 20386 \text{ km s}^{-1}$ ) and its close neighbour J113952.02+164514.8 ( $m_r = 18.24$ ;  $z_{ph} \sim 0.04$ , 0.06 and 0.07). SDSS DR6 *r*-band image of the field containing these two galaxies (marked 'galaxy-7' and 'galaxy-8') is also shown in Fig. 1. Clearly, the optical morphology of galaxy-7 is 'disturbed' with tidal features. The photometry and redshift measurements for these sources are summarized in Table 1.

# **3 DATA AND ANALYSIS**

The GMRT L-band (1.4 GHz) receiver was used to observe the H I emission in this field. The observations were carried out on 2009 July 11 and 12, (GMRT observing cycle 16). Total observation duration was about 20 h (10 h on each day) with on-source time of about 12 h. VLA calibrator source 1120+143 ( $\sim 5^{\circ}$  away from the target source) with  $S_{1.4 \text{ GHz}} = 2.4 \text{ Jy}$  was used for phase calibration. This calibrator was observed for 7 min for every 45 min observation of the target field centred at galaxy-1. A standard flux calibrator (3C147 or 3C286) was observed for about 10-15 min in every 2 h during the observation. The flux calibrator scans were also used for bandpass calibration. A total baseband bandwidth of 8.0 MHz divided into 128 frequency channels centred at 1328.35 MHz, which corresponds to redshifted H I 21-cm frequency at z = 0.0693, was used for the observation. This gives a velocity resolution of  $\sim 15$  km s<sup>-1</sup> per channel and a total velocity coverage of  $\sim 1800 \,\mathrm{km \, s^{-1}}$ . Data analysis was carried out using standard AIPS. After flagging out bad data, the flux density scale, instrumental phase and frequency response were calibrated. The calibrated visibility data from the two days were combined and used to make an image cube and check for H1 emission. The line-free channels were used to make continuum images at various resolution by weighting down different long baseline data points with Gaussian function using UVTAPER and UVRANGE in IMAGR. The high-resolution continuum map has an rms noise of  $\sim$ 142 µJy beam<sup>-1</sup> for a synthesized beam size of 3.49 × 2.78 arcsec<sup>2</sup>. No continuum emission was detected in either high- or low-resolution images at the optical positions coinciding with that of these galaxies. The continuum emission from other sources in the field was subtracted from the data cube in the visibility domain. This continuum subtracted data cube, which contains signal only from the line emission, was imaged at different resolution to get

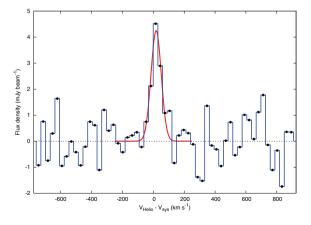
the H<sub>I</sub> emission spectra and the H<sub>I</sub> maps. The H<sub>I</sub> mass detection limit for this observation (~4 × 10<sup>9</sup> M<sub>☉</sub>) is better than that of the ALFALFA survey (~1.2 × 10<sup>10</sup> M<sub>☉</sub>) and comparable to that of the AGES for galaxies at a distance of ~300 Mpc (Cortese et al. 2008).

## 4 RESULTS

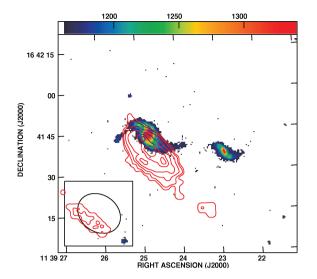
H<sub>I</sub> emission from galaxy-1 is detected at >6 $\sigma$  in the spectral channels with velocity close to the systemic velocity of the source. Fig. 2 shows the H<sub>I</sub> emission spectrum with a spectral resolution of ~30 km s<sup>-1</sup> for this galaxy and the best-fitting Gaussian function to the data. The linewidth ( $\sigma$ ) of the component is only 33 km s<sup>-1</sup> (full width at zero intensity ~200 km s<sup>-1</sup>). Luminosity distance  $D_L$  of this galaxy for standard  $\Lambda$ CDM cosmology ( $H_0 = 73$  km s<sup>-1</sup>,  $\Omega_m = 0.27$ ,  $\Omega_{\Lambda} = 0.73$ ) quoted in the NASA/IPAC Extragalactic Data base (NED) is 305 Mpc. Hence, the total H<sub>I</sub> mass for the galaxy is found to be

$$M_{\rm H_{1}} = 2.36 \times 10^{5} D_{L}^{2} \int S_{\nu} d\nu \, \rm M_{\odot} = 7.7 \pm 0.8 \times 10^{9} \, \rm M_{\odot}, \quad (1)$$

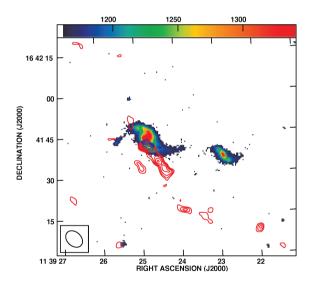
where the distance to the galaxy  $D_L = 305$  Mpc,  $S_v$  is in Jy and the velocity interval is in km s<sup>-1</sup>. No H<sub>I</sub> emission is detected from the smaller spiral galaxy (galaxy-2) for which the  $3\sigma$  upper limit of H<sub>I</sub> mass assuming a similar distance and linewidth is  $2.4 \times 10^9 M_{\odot}$ . Since galaxy-2 is about factor of two smaller in size than galaxy-1, for a similar H<sub>I</sub> surface density, the total mass is expected to be



**Figure 2.** H<sub>I</sub> emission spectrum for galaxy-1 (blue) and the best-fitting Gaussian function to the observed spectra (red). The linewidth ( $\sigma$ ) is only 33 km s<sup>-1</sup> (full width at zero intensity ~200 km s<sup>-1</sup>).



**Figure 3.** SDSS DR6 *r*-band image of the galaxy pair J113924.74+ 164144.0 and J113922.85+164136.3 (galaxy-1 and galaxy-2) overlaid with the integrated H<sub>1</sub> emission in contours. For the H<sub>1</sub> map, the synthesized beam size is  $16.6 \times 13.5 \operatorname{arcsec}^2$  and the contour levels are for column densities of (3, 7, 15, 25, 35, 40) times  $3.95 \times 10^{19} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ . The low level H<sub>1</sub> contours are likely to be artefacts.



**Figure 4.** SDSS DR6 *r*-band image of the galaxy pair J113924.74+ 164144.0 and J113922.85+164136.3 (galaxy-1 and galaxy-2) overlaid with the integrated H<sub>1</sub> emission in contours. For the H<sub>1</sub> map, the synthesized beam size is  $6.9 \times 5.1 \operatorname{arcsec}^2$  and the contour levels are for column densities of (5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15) times  $2.51 \times 10^{20} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ . The low level H<sub>1</sub> contours are likely to be artefacts.

 $\sim 1.9 \times 10^9 \,\mathrm{M_{\odot}}$ , consistent with the derived upper limit. Figs 3 and 4 show the SDSS DR6 *r*-band image of the field overlaid with the integrated H<sub>I</sub> emission contours for synthesized beam size of  $16.6 \times 13.5$  and  $6.9 \times 5.1$  arcsec<sup>2</sup>, respectively. Both these H<sub>I</sub> maps show the emission to be extended and significantly offset from the optical position of the galaxy.

Fig. 5 shows the H<sub>1</sub> emission spectrum for galaxy-7 with a spectral resolution of  $\sim$ 45 km s<sup>-1</sup> and a >4 $\sigma$  peak flux density of  $\sim$ 2.8 mJy. This marginally significant emission feature at the expected systemic velocity of the galaxy coinciding with the optical position makes it most likely to be H<sub>1</sub> emission from this galaxy. The emission profile shows weak indication of asymmetry and the

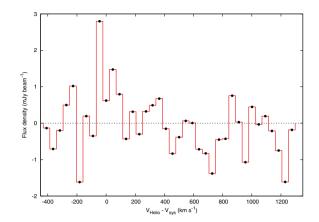


Figure 5. H I spectrum for galaxy-7 with a resolution of  $\sim$ 45 km s<sup>-1</sup>.

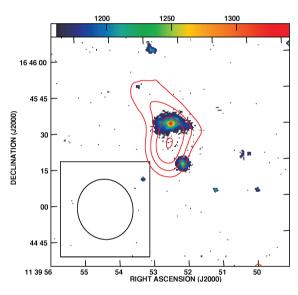


Figure 6. SDSS DR6 *r*-band image of the galaxy pair J113952.31+ 164531.8 and J113952.02+164514.8 (galaxy-7 and galaxy-8) overlaid with the H I emission in contours for the channel at  $V \approx 20350 \text{ km s}^{-1}$  and channel width ~45 km s<sup>-1</sup>. For the H I map, the synthesized beam size is  $25.2 \times 23.0 \text{ arcsec}^2$  and the contour levels are for flux densities of (2.5,3.0,3.4,3.8) times 400 µJy beam<sup>-1</sup>.

total estimated H<sub>I</sub> mass is  $5.3 \pm 1.3 \times 10^9 \,M_{\odot}$  for a luminosity distance of 299 Mpc quoted in NED. Fig. 6 shows the SDSS DR6 *r*-band image of the field overlaid with the H<sub>I</sub> emission contours for a synthesized beam size of  $25.2 \times 23.0 \,\mathrm{arcsec^2}$ . Apart from the disturbed optical morphology, for this galaxy also there is some hint that the H<sub>I</sub> emission is extended and offset from the optical position. But this offset is smaller than the beam size and hence needs to be confirmed. This low surface brightness emission is resolved in the high-resolution map, making it difficult to draw any definitive conclusion on interaction between this pair of galaxies.

One intriguing thing here is the striking similarity in the morphology of the central object of our study (galaxy-1) and that of the other spiral galaxy (galaxy-2) in the field. The small spiral galaxy-2 looks like a scaled down image of galaxy-1 with similar tidal-tail-like extended features. The total H<sub>I</sub> mass estimated for galaxy-1 from the GMRT observations is  $7.7 \times 10^9 \, M_{\odot}$ . As has been mentioned earlier, the H<sub>I</sub> mass is mostly concentrated on galaxy-1 and seems to have an offset with respect to the optical

position which can be due to a tidal interaction between the two neighbours. From the optical image, the galaxy diameter quoted in NED is  $\sim$ 22 arcsec. Assuming the entire H I is only from galaxy-1, the H<sub>I</sub> surface density of this galaxy turns out to be  $\log (M_{\rm HI}/d_{I}^{2}) =$ 6.86 M<sub> $\odot$ </sub> kpc<sup>-2</sup>, where  $d_l$  is the linear diameter of the galaxy. The quantity  $\log(M_{\rm H_{I}}/d_{I}^{2})$  is known to be a good diagnostic of the H<sub>I</sub> content of galaxies. Comparing the derived H1 surface density for this galaxy with the expected surface density for spiral galaxies of similar size (Haynes & Giovanelli 1984), we find no H1 deficiency in this particular case. Thus even if we detect a reasonably disturbed and displaced HI disc in the main galaxy of the system possibly due to an ongoing interaction, we do not see any signs of gas loss from the system. This conclusion is based on the assumption that the entire H1 detected belongs to galaxy-1 and there is no contribution from the other galaxy. But, its external origin cannot be ruled out completely. A possible explanation of the disturbed and displaced HI disc of galaxy-1, presumably used to be a nicely rotating spiral, is tidal interaction with galaxy-2. Based on the absence of m = 2symmetry and the fact that its centre being too off from the optical centre, it is less likely to be caused only through tidal interaction. Gas accretion from satellites (potentially including galaxy-2) may also contribute to the origin of this displaced HI gas.

These two systems at  $z_{sp} = 0.0680$  and 0.0693 are most likely to be distinct and evolving independently. However, the other possibility is that they have been involved in an interaction. The projected separation is ~600 kpc, which is a reasonable size for a moderate group. Assuming the true distance to be few times 600 kpc and typical velocity to be few hundred km s<sup>-1</sup>, the corresponding time-scale is ~6 Gyr. So, if there was any interaction, the close approach would have happened ~6 Gyr ago. It is also worth mentioning that since the photometric redshift measurements often have large errors, it is possible that all these galaxies almost at the same redshift are in a loose group and interacting with each other.

## **5** CONCLUSIONS

We have reported H1 observation of the field with an interesting galaxy J113924.74+164144.0 at z = 0.0693, and two other neighbouring galaxies, a spiral galaxy J113922.85+164136.3 which has a strikingly similar 'tidal' morphology and a faint galaxy J113923.58+164129.9. Narrow H1 emission is detected from J113924.74+164144.0, but J113922.85+164136.3 shows no detectable emission. The total H1 mass detected in J113924.74+ 164144.0 is about  $7.7 \times 10^9 \,\mathrm{M_{\odot}}$ . The H I emission from the galaxy is found to be extended and offset from the optical position of the galaxy. This along with the long, tidal-tail-like extended optical features indicate possibility of interaction with the neighbouring spiral galaxy. About 7 arcmin away from these sources, there is another galaxy J113952.31+164531.8 at z = 0.0680 with a close neighbour J113952.02+164514.8. There is a possible H1 detection of the galaxy J113952.31+164531.8 with an estimated HI mass of about  $5.3 \times 10^9$  M<sub> $\odot$ </sub>. The scenario, that all these galaxies are almost at the

same redshift and interacting with each other, cannot be ruled out due to possible large uncertainties of photometric redshifts. Deep optical spectroscopic measurements are required to ascertain the redshifts of all the galaxies.

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