

# **Towards Foundational Models for Single-Chip Radar**

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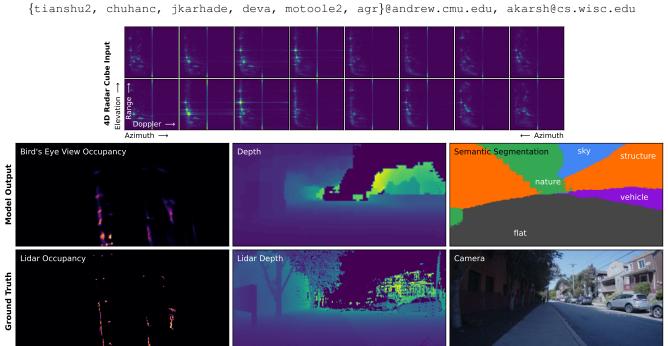


Figure 1. Using only 4D range-Doppler-azimuth-elevation data from a radar with a 3x4 antenna array – equivalent to a 0.26-megapixel camera, we trained (separate) radar transformers on 24 hours (1M radar-lidar-camera samples) of data to predict Bird's Eye View 2D occupancy (left), 3D occupancy (center), semantic segmetation (right), and Ego-Motion.

#### **Abstract**

mmWave radars are compact, inexpensive, and durable sensors that are robust to occlusions and work regardless of environmental conditions, such as weather and darkness. However, this comes at the cost of poor angular resolution, especially for inexpensive single-chip radars, which are typically used in automotive and indoor sensing applications. Although many have proposed learning-based methods to mitigate this weakness, no standardized foundational models or large datasets for the mmWave radar have emerged, and practitioners have largely trained task-specific models from scratch using relatively small datasets.

In this paper, we collect (to our knowledge) the largest available raw radar dataset with 1M samples (29 hours) and train a foundational model for 4D single-chip radar, which can predict 3D occupancy and semantic segmentation with quality that is typically only possible with much higher resolution sensors. We demonstrate that our Generalizable Radar Transformer (GRT) generalizes across diverse settings, can be fine-tuned for different tasks, and shows logarithmic data scaling of 20% per  $10 \times$  data. We also run extensive ablations on common design decisions, and find that using raw radar data significantly outperforms widely-used lossy representations, equivalent to a  $10 \times$  increase in training data. Finally, we roughly estimate that  $\approx 100M$  samples (3000 hours) of data are required to fully exploit the potential of GRT.

## 1. Introduction

As a compact, inexpensive [27], and robust solid-state sensor, mmWave radars are ideal for sensing applications ranging from simple automatic door openers [58] to autonomous

drones [11] or vehicles [53, 62]. mmWave radars are rich sensors which can directly measure range and velocity while capturing a unique range of material properties [18]; however, this comes at the cost of poor angular resolution typically on the order of  $15^{\circ}$  – orders of magnitude worse than cameras or lidars [59].

Radar data are typically processed into radar point clouds (Fig. 2) derived using Constant False Alarm Rate (CFAR) peak detectors [36, 52] combined with Angle-of-Arrival estimation techniques [60]. However, this is a substantially lossy process: while raw radar data suffers from unique noise patterns such as "bleed" and side lobes [25], weak reflectors and other signals can be hidden in this noise, which would ordinarily be filtered out.

On the other hand, raw spectrum (4D range-Dopplerazimuth-elevation data cubes [50]) can be unintuitive and difficult to interpret compared to lidar point clouds or camera images, and include properties such as specularity and Doppler which lack straight-forward Cartesian interpretations [18]. As such, many machine learning methods have been proposed [24, 45, 69] to exploit 4D radar data from single-chip radars, achieving remarkable performance on 2D scene understanding tasks. However, due to the dominance of CFAR point clouds in radar processing, as well as the high data rate of raw mmWave radar data, most radar toolchains only process point-cloud data. Tooling for raw I/Q (in-phase/quadrature) data is often brittle, poorly documented, and largely unsupported by radar vendors, severely limiting the availability and scale of both raw mmWave datasets and the models which operate on raw data.

To rectify this limitation, we develop an open-source toolchain and associated large dataset specifically for 4D mmWave radar data. Training a radar-to-lidar model and fine-tuning for a range of other tasks, we demonstrate the surprising effectiveness of mmWave radar models trained at scale (Fig. 1). Going further, just as large foundational models [4] have greatly accelerated the pace of innovation in computer vision and natural language processing, we believe that a foundational model for raw mmWave radar trained at even larger scale could similarly supercharge the advancement of radar sensing techniques.

**Contributions** In this paper, we develop a full stack<sup>1</sup> for collecting data, training, and evaluating a transformer for 4D single-chip radar to quantify both the potential costs and benefits of training a foundational model at scale. To summarize our contributions:

(1) We develop a compact, lightweight multimodal data collection system (Sec. 3.1) capable of collecting synchronized raw radar, Lidar, and camera data which can be operated as a handheld device. Our system can be

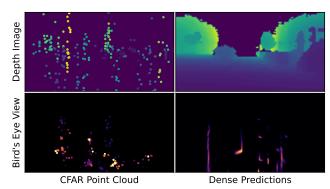


Figure 2. While a transformer can generate Lidar-like depth and bird's eye view images, traditional CFAR point clouds are noisy, and have poor angular resolution – especially in the elevation axis.

- easily replicated using off-the-shelf components, 3D printed parts, and our open-source software.
- (2) Using this data collection system, we collect a dataset, I/Q-1M (*One Million IQ Frames*), consisting of 29 hours of data 8× longer than the next largest publicly available raw radar dataset split between indoor, outdoor-handheld, and bike-mounted settings, each with different radar configurations (Sec. 3.2).
- (3) Finally, using our dataset, we train a Generalizable Radar Transformer (GRT), which can output depth maps and segmentation images with quality which is typically only possible with much higher resolution radars. Using GRT, we then run ablations on common design choices (Sec. 5.1), quantify the scalability of GRTs with increasing dataset and model size (Sec. 5.2, 5.4), and demonstrate that our GRT can be readily finetuned for other tasks and settings (Sec. 5.3), including obtaining state-of-the-art performance on the Coloradar [23] dataset with 30-minutes of fine-tuning.

**Key Findings** We summarize our key findings as follows:

- Radar models can generalize to different settings and radar configurations (Sec. 5.2), as well as across objectives (with some fine-tuning). This suggests great potential for a cross-domain foundational model to improve and accelerate the development of new radar models.
- Using raw data yields outsized performance gains, equivalent to more than a 10× increase in training data (Sec. 5.1). While existing datasets largely focus on CFAR point clouds or other processed representations, we believe that more emphasis should be placed on making raw data available for research.
- Existing mmWave radar datasets are vastly undersized. 24 hours of training data is not enough to saturate even a 4M parameter model! Our analysis suggests that at least 100× more data is required to exploit the full potential of radar transformer models (Sec. 5.4).

 $<sup>^1</sup> Our \ data$  collection system, dataset, code, and model can be found via our project site:  $\label{eq:code} \text{https://wiselabcmu.github.io/grt/.}$ 



Figure 3. **Our data collection rig** in its handheld (right) and bikemounted (left) configurations; see App. A for additional images.

**Limitations** Despite its size compared to previous datasets, I/Q-1M is quite small compared to the datasets used to train modern vision transformers, which can exceed billions of samples [68]. I/Q-1M also only includes daylight conditions and fair weather, and lacks the scale to capture "edge cases" that would be represented in a larger dataset [22]. Finally, since I/Q-1M uses a single type of radar, we cannot evaluate generalization across different antenna configurations — only radar configurations.

## 2. Related Work

**4D Solid State Radar** Excluding mechanical radars, which perceive the world as lidar-like 2D heatmaps [3, 5, 54] via a rotating antenna, solid-state mmWave radars operate by transmitting and receiving a sequence of frequency-modulated "chirps" from an array of transmit (TX) and receive (RX) antenna [19]; this data is typically (losslessly) transformed to a 4D range-Doppler-azimuth-elevation data cube using a 4D FFT [50], whose resolutions are constrained by bandwidth, form factor, and the integration window. We focus on single-chip radars which have compact form factors – and thus poor angular resolution.

Learning and Datasets for 4D Radar Most radar processing methods use point clouds extracted from the 4D cubes [36, 52] as inputs [1, 7, 32, 44, 55, 56], allowing them to re-use popular Lidar architectures or even pre-trained models such as PointNet [46]. However, since this discards much of the information contained in a 4D radar cube, many competing approaches propose to directly interpret the 4D radar cube using methods and architectures such as feedforward convolutional architectures [9, 38, 43, 49, 69], multiview convolutional networks across different tensor axes [13, 34, 40], U-Nets [26, 39, 45], diffusion models [70], and transformers [2, 15, 21, 21].

These prior machine learning-based approaches rely on publicly available datasets with 4D radar data, including

Table 1. **Comparison with other single-chip mmWave radar datasets;** a *frame* refers to the number of unique radar-sensor samples. For comparisons with datasets using other types of radar, see App. A.3. Our dataset is significantly larger than previous single-chip radar datasets, enabling us to explore scaling up models.

Dataset	4D Data Cube	Dataset Size
I/Q-1M (Ours)	Yes	29 hours (1M frames)
MilliPoint [7]	No (3D Points)	6.3 Hours (545k frames)
RaDICal [29]	Yes	3.6 Hours (394k frames)
CRUW [63]	No (2D Map)	3 hours (400k frames)
Coloradar [23]	Yes	2.4 hours (82k frames)
RadarHD [45]	Yes	200k frames
CARRADA [41]	No (3D Cube)	21 Minutes (13k frames)
RADDet [69]	Yes	10k frames

from both cascaded [42, 49] and single-chip [23, 29, 69] radars; however, existing datasets are relatively small, with 3.6-hour RaDICal [29] and 2.4-hour Coloradar [23] as the largest (Table 1). Due to the success of powerful but datahungry [68] transformer models [61] in computer vision [12], we believe that limited data availability imposes a substantial bottleneck on learning for 4D radar.

High-resolution Imaging from Low-Resolution Radar Due to the low angular resolution of single-chip radars, extracting high-resolution angular information can be challenging; as a result, prior work focuses on recovering 2D spatial information [15, 45, 70]. Thus, while prior methods can extract 3D information using high-resolution cascaded radars [10], 3D imaging from single-chip radars generally requires additional information such as structured motion or multiple views, for example segmentation and maps using a rotating single-chip radar [24], a 3D occupancy map using multiple views [18], or high resolution images from fixed trajectories using Synthetic Aperture Radar [14, 35, 66, 67]. Instead, we show that by leveraging a sufficiently large dataset, even single frames are sufficient to recover dense angular resolution in both azimuth and elevation.

## 3. Data Collection System and Dataset

Dataset scale is key to training and evaluating potential foundational models. As such, we developed a scalable data collection system (Fig. 3), which we used to collect a large raw mmWave radar dataset, consisting of 1M radar-lidar-camera samples over 29 hours (Table 1). For additional details on our dataset and data collection rig, see App. A.

## 3.1. Data Collection System

Our data collection system, red-rover, was built around a TI AWR1843 Radar, Lidar, Camera, and IMU which can be easily operated via a simple web app on a mobile phone. Our system records all data to a single hot-swappable external drive via a single linux computer which handles time synchronization, minimizing turnaround time.

Table 2. Key specifications for each setting. Settings have varying max Doppler  $D_{\rm max}$  and range  $R_{\rm max}$ ; all traces used a fixed resolution of 64 Doppler and 256 range bins.

Setting	Size	Length	Average Speed	$D_{max}$	$R_{\text{max}}$
indoor	310k	8.9h	1.0m/s	1.2m/s	11.2m
outdoor	372k	10.7h	1.4m/s	1.8m/s	22.4m
bike	333k	9.3h	5.4m/s	8.0m/s	22.4m

Table 3. **Transformer sizes.** *Layers* indicates the number of encoder + decoder layers; *Speed* indicates the (batched) inference throughput of each model on a single RTX 4090.

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	Size	Layers	Dimension	Params	Speed
	pico	2 + 2	256 (4 heads)	3.9M	750 fps
	tiny	3 + 3	384 (6 heads)	12.7M	320 fps
	small	4 + 4	512 (8 heads)	28.9M	170 fps
	medium	6 + 6	640 (10 heads)	69.4M	84 fps
	large	9 + 9	768 (12 heads)	149M	44 fps

We also designed our data collection system to have a compact, battery-operated form factor to allow for a variety of collection modalities, including handheld and bicycle mounted. This also allows us to collect data relevant for tasks such as indoor sensing and localization, which are underrepresented in existing datasets, while still collecting automotive-like data by mounting our system to an E-bike.

#### 3.2. Collected Data

We collected three roughly equally sized splits (Table 2) from indoor handheld, outdoor handheld, and bike-mounted settings on the CMU campus and Pittsburgh area:

- indoor: inside buildings at a slow to moderate walking pace, visiting multiple floors and areas within each.
- outdoor: neighborhoods ranging from single family detached to high density commercial zoning at a moderate to fast walking pace.
- bike: bike rides in different directions from a set starting point with a moderate biking pace.

Each setting features a mobile observer, with radar modulation parameters tuned for typical speeds. For sample data from each setting, see App. A.4.

## 4. Methodology

Using a transformer architecture (Sec. 4.1), we train our Generalizable Radar Transformer (GRT) for a range of different tasks (Sec. 4.2-4.3), and evaluate it on our dataset using a rigorous statistical methodology (Sec. 4.4).

## 4.1. Model Architecture

While many architectural refinements exist for vision transformers [30, 48], as well as for radar specifically [15, 26], we use a direct adaptation (Fig. 4) of the original Transformer [61] and Vision Transformer [12] to focus on measuring the fundamental properties of Radar transformers.

**Radar Processing** From the (slow time, TX, RX, fast time) I/Q stream, we perform a 4-Dimensional FFT to obtain (range, Doppler, azimuth, elevation) dense 4D radar data cubes of size (256, 64, 8, 2), which we provide to the model as two channels consisting of the amplitude and phase angle. This data cube is patched along the range and Doppler dimensions into patches of size  $4 \times 2(\times 8 \times 2)$ , yielding an initial set of  $64 \times 32 = 2048$  patch tokens.

**Transformer Architecture** Crucially, unlike a vision transformer [12], radar models take inputs that have different *spatial axes* than their outputs, with vastly different relative resolutions where they overlap. As such, we use a standard transformer *with a decoder* [61], with varying layers and widths (Table 3); for a full specification of our transformer architecture and training procedure, see App. B.1.

**Decoder Query** To handle the "change of basis" between the input and output space, we use an architecture based on Perceiver I/O [20]. We start by concatenating a (learned) output token to the encoder (similar to standard vision transformer [8]). The encoder output corresponding to the output token is then tiled into the desired decoder shape with a 3D sinusoidal positional encoding applied and is used as the input to the decoder, which attends to the encoder outputs.

## 4.2. Base Task: 3D Occupancy Classification

An ideal foundational model training task should be easy to gather data for (e.g., using self-supervised learning) and closely aligned with a wide range of potential downstream tasks. As such, since we are primarily concerned with understanding the *spatial* relationship between 4D radar data and 3D space, we use 3D (polar) occupancy classification – predicting the occupancy of  $64 \times 128 \times 64$  range-azimuth-elevation cells – as a base task, with Lidar as a ground truth. Our task uses a binary cross entropy objective, with some weighting to correct for cell sizes; see App. B.3 for details.

Notably, in addition to being fully self-supervised, this task covers all three possible *output dimensions* (range, azimuth, and elevation), meaning that downstream tasks such as range-azimuth classification or azimuth-elevation segmentation can be cast as 2D slices of this 3D output. This enables us to fine-tune for tasks, even if they have different spatial dimensions, simply by replacing the output head and modifying the output positional encoding queries.

## 4.3. Other Tasks

In order to evaluate GRT's suitability as a *foundational model* for downstream fine-tuning, we use three additional tasks, each representing different output dimensions:

Bird's Eye View (BEV) Occupancy: Similarly to [15, 45], we classify the 256 × 1024 range-azimuth polar occupancy using Lidar as a ground truth, with the range normalized to the radar's range resolution.

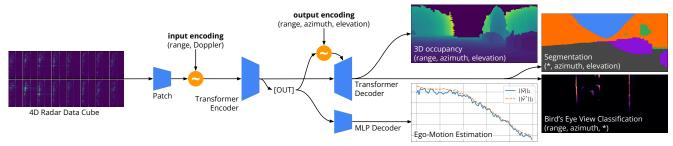


Figure 4. **The GRT architecture.** 4D radar cubes are patched with a linear projection, and a sinusoidal positional encoding is added. A transformer architecture is then used, with a transformer decoder for dense outputs and a MLP decoder for Ego-Motion estimation; different output encodings are used depending on the output axes and resolution.

- Semantic Segmentation: Similar to [24], we train our GRT to output 640 × 640 azimuth-elevation class labels. Since radars cannot feasibly identify many classes (e.g., poster vs. sign vs. wall) which a camera could, we use eight coarse categories: person, sky, vehicle, flat, nature, structure, ceiling, and object.
- **Ego-Motion Estimation**: Since radars can "natively" measure velocity<sup>2</sup>, we predict the velocity of the radar relative to its current orientation. Since ego-motion estimation does not require a dense output, we replace the transformer decoder with a multi-layer-perceptron decoder head with 3 layers of 512 units.

For more detail about each task, see App. B.3.

## 4.4. Evaluation

Due to the cost of scaling foundational models, false positives can result in significant wasted resources, especially if associated with a costly methodological change. As such, since our dataset cannot be treated as having an "infinite sample size", we calculate upper-bounded uncertainty estimates wherever possible. In order to ensure these results are statistically accurate, we take the following steps:

- **Geo-Split**: Within each setting, ≈1.5 hours of data was reserved as a test set, which we ensured to be geographically disjoint from the training set to prevent leakage [28].
- Sample Size correction: Time series signals e.g. radarlidar-video tuples – cannot be viewed as independent samples; as such, the *effective sample size*, which we obtain from an autocorrelation-based estimate [51], must be used when calculating the standard error.
- Paired z-Test: Using the fact that models are evaluated on the same test traces, we use a paired z-test on the relative performance of each model with respect to a baseline.

We report each metric relative to its specified baseline by default, along with error bars for a two-sided 95% confidence interval; using our procedure and dataset, we can measure differences of 1-2% (App. B.4).

Validation Split and Data Size Sampling. We used the last 10% of each training trace for validation (separate from the test set), with the first 90% used for training. When training on reduced dataset sizes, we use the first 9%, 18%, and 45% of each trace for training for 10%, 20%, 50% dataset sizes respectively; to reduce the variance of our experiments, we always 10% of each trace for validation.

## 5. Results

Using our dataset, we first ran extensive ablation (Sec. 5.1), scaling (Sec. 5.2), and fine-tuning (Sec. 5.3) experiments which show the efficacy, scalability, and generalizability of GRT. Our experiments took 874 RTX 4090-hours<sup>3</sup> of training time, with the GRT-small model taking 22 RTX 4090-hours to train.

**Model Performance** Despite the low resolution (only 3  $TX \times 4 TX$  antenna) of our radar, GRT is able to predict a range of outputs with remarkable quality (Fig. 5); we show additional examples in App. C.1. We also evaluated common metrics for each objective as an absolute reference (App. C.2); GRT achieves a 3D chamfer distance of 4.9 range bins, corresponding to 0.66m indoors, 1.6m outdoors, and 1.5m on bike.

## **5.1. Ablation Studies**

Using our dataset and GRT, we performed ablation studies on several parameters that are independent of the underlying architecture and the task (Table 4). In particular, we find that several common practices – omitting Doppler information, using Angle-of-Arrival Estimates, and applying CFAR thresholding – result in degraded performance equivalent to more than a  $10\times$  reduction in training data.

**Input Representation** Our models use complex 4D radar cubes that losslessly capture all information measured by a radar; however, the common practice in radar models and data sets is to use processed higher-level representations. We benchmark three common approaches:

 $<sup>^2{\</sup>rm Sensors}$  which provide "absolute" pose, e.g. Lidars and Cameras, must differentiate, while IMUs must integrate.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Our experiments were run on a range of different machines with varying compute capacity, which we normalize with respect to a single RTX 4090. We only tracked training and validation time, with testing excluded.

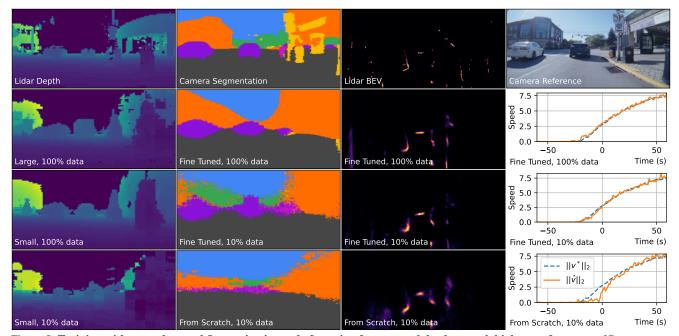


Figure 5. Training with more data and fine tuning instead of starting from scratch lead to much higher performance. 3D occupancy maps are less noisy as seen in rendered depth images (left), semantic segmentation is cleaner (center left), bird's eye view occupancy is sharper (center right), and velocity estimation is more accurate (right). However, scaling model size (left) does not have a large impact.

- Real (amplitude-only) 4D data cubes are not significantly different from complex data, indicating that the "leftover" phase from a Doppler FFT carries little additional information. Since using complex data has negligible compute overhead, we default to complex inputs.
- Angle of Arrival Estimates can be used to replace dense antenna measurements. Since our radar has only 2 elevation bins, we reduce the azimuth axis (8 bins) into an AoA estimate. This discards a substantial amount of information, leading to a 28.0% loss increase, equivalent to more than a 10× decrease in the size of the dataset.
- Constant False Alarm Rate (CFAR) processing removes weak or noisy reflectors based on local estimates of background noise [36]; this ablation uses a p-value threshold of 0.05, and zeros out rejected points. This leads to an even higher 31.5% loss increase.

Impact of Doppler With limited angular resolution, GRT is highly dependent on Doppler information, which can capture higher resolution geometry [18]. We find that removing the Doppler FFT from our processing pipeline (i.e. treating each 4D radar cube as a time series of 64 3D frames [45]) leads to a 22.5% loss increase. As an additional ablation, we also shuffle the slow-time axis to fully destroy any Doppler information; this does not lead to a futher significant loss increase, suggesting that off-the-shelf transformers cannot easily learn FFTs. Finally, we observe worse performance at low speeds since less Doppler information is available at slow speeds (App. C.3).

Table 4. **Test loss for each ablation** (smaller is better) relative to GRT-small trained on our full dataset, along with 95% confidence intervals for the relative differences.

Ablation		Relative Test Loss
Inputs	Amplitude Only	$+0.04 \pm 0.85\%$
	Angle of Arrival	$+28.0 \pm 2.12\%$
	CFAR Thresholding	$+31.5 \pm 2.38\%$
Doppler	Without Doppler FFT	$+22.5 \pm 1.76\%$
	Slow Time Shuffled	$+23.10 \pm 1.94\%$
Post-Patch Axes	Doppler-Az-El	$+6.22 \pm 1.11\%$
	Range-Az-El	$+6.27 \pm 1.10\%$
	Range-Doppler-Az-El	$+4.18 \pm 1.09\%$
Augmentations	None	$+5.87 \pm 1.32\%$
	Scale, Phase, and Flip Only	$+3.89 \pm 1.19\%$
Separate Models	Indoor Data Only	$+5.76 \pm 1.85\%$
	Outdoor Data Only	$+5.58 \pm 1.26\%$
	Bike Data Only	$+2.77 \pm 1.41\%$

**Patch Axes** Since 4D range-Doppler-azimuth-elevation radar data cubes have four axes with different properties, they do not have an obvious counterpart to the square patches used in Vision Transformers. Benchmarking four alternatives (App. B.1), with each resulting in 2048 total patches, we find that Range-Doppler patching where the azimuth and elevation axes are "patched out" (similar to [15, 49]) is the most effective, performing  $\approx 5\%$  better.

**Data Augmentations** We develop a range of data augmentations that together provide a modest but significant performance improvement  $(5.87\pm1.32\%; \text{Table 4})$ ; we pro-

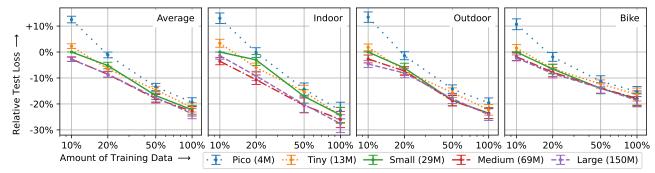


Figure 6. Scaling laws for mmWave radar transformers across indoor, outdoor, and bike test splits. Models and confidence intervals are measured relative to the small transformer trained on 10% of the dataset. While our models show weak scaling over model size when trained on our dataset, we see strong log-linear scaling across dataset size of  $\approx 20\%$  loss decrease per  $10\times$  increase in data size. For variants of this graph with respect to absolute metrics, see App. C.2.

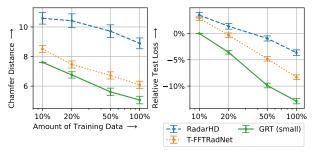


Figure 7. **GRT compared to Baselines**, measured with respect to Chamfer distance (in range bins) and test loss across different training set sizes, averaged across our dataset.

vide details about each augmentation in App. B.2.

#### 5.2. Towards a Radar Foundational Model

Scalability vs. Baselines Since prior work on learning for single-chip radar focuses on 2D outputs, we benchmark our transformer-based approach against two prior architectures for 2D BEV Occupancy prediction: a U-Net-based model (RadarHD [45]), and a Swin Transformer-based model (T-FFTRadNet [15]), with minor architecture modifications to conform to our data dimensions (App. B.5). We find that GRT-small outperforms both baselines at all training splits (Fig. 7), demonstrating the suitability of transformer architectures for scalability.

Scaling Laws Training 20 different models for 5 different sizes (Table 3) and dataset sizes ranging from 10-100% of our data (Fig. 6), we observe a logarithmic improvement with data size of approximately 20% improvement per  $10 \times$  increase in data, similar to early observations in computer vision [57]. This can also be seen qualitatively (Fig. 5), where models trained on more data produce much higher quality predictions. Similarly to vision transformers [57, 68], we also observe that larger models are more data efficient, although the magnitude of difference that we observe is much smaller due to our limited dataset size.

Table 5. Chamfer Distance (in meters) for 2D BEV occupancy prediction on the Coloradar dataset [23] by location; the geometric mean is listed to account for the varying difficulty of each location. A fine-tuned GRT model outperforms baselines trained only on Coloradar, including a state of the art diffusion-based model [70] and a U-Net based model [45].

Trace	GRT (Ours)	Diffusion [70]	RadarHD [45]
Geometric Mean	0.98	1.19	1.73
ARPG Lab	0.78	0.96	1.73
EC Hallways	1.04	1.04	1.69
Aspen	0.61	0.51	0.91
Longboard	2.63	5.47	5.40
Outdoors	1.84	2.37	3.10
Edgar	0.36	0.44	0.60

Generalizability across different settings We evaluate the ability of GRT to generalize across different settings by comparing a baseline model trained on combined indoor, outdoor, and bike data with models trained on each setting separately (Table 4). Despite the differences in these settings, the jointly trained model performs significantly better than models trained on each setting separately, confirming that data from different settings can be combined to train a single, stronger model.

#### 5.3. As a Base Model for Downstream Tasks

**Dataset Fine-tuning** We fine-tuned a small GRT model on the Coloradar [23] dataset using a BEV Occupancy objective, and benchmarked the resulting model against two prior approaches trained only on ColoRadar, including a state-of-the-art diffusion model, using the same data splits and evaluation procedure [70]. Notably, despite using a modulation and resolution (128 range  $\times$  128 Doppler) which is not present in our dataset, GRT can be run without any architectural modifications, such as modifying the number of upsampling stages, as would be required for a convolutional architecture (App. B.5). After fine-tuning until vali-

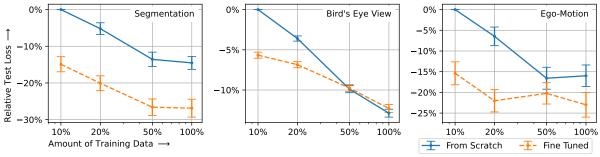


Figure 8. Fine tuning mmWave radar transformers to different downstream tasks. Models and confidence intervals are measured relative to the small transformer trained (from scratch) on 10% of the dataset. Pre-training and fine tuning strongly impacts data efficiency, equivalent to up to a  $5\times$  increase in dataset size (observed in the Segmentation task).

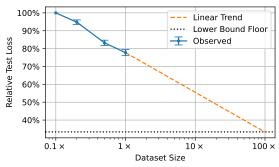


Figure 9. A linear projection of the observed logarithmic scaling to a test loss lower bound suggests that logarithmic scaling cannot continue beyond  $100 \times$  our current dataset

dation loss convergece ( $\approx$ 30 minutes of training using a single RTX 4090), GRT achieves substantially lower Chamfer distance than baselines trained only on ColoRadar, showing the value of easily tunable foundational models (Table 5).

Task Fine-tuning We also fine-tuned GRT-small for each of our secondary tasks using 10-100% of our dataset, and compared the results with models trained from scratch on the same proportions of the dataset. Following this procedure, we find substantial performance gains equivalent to up to a 5× increase in dataset size compared to training from scratch (Fig. 8). This effect is especially pronounced when less data is available, with the performance benefits of fine tuning disappearing as the dataset is scaled for the BEV Occupancy objective but staying more or less constant for the Semantic Segmentation objective. We also observe this effect as a clear qualitative difference: fine-tuned models produce sharper and more accurate predictions than their counterparts trained from scratch (Fig. 5).

## **5.4.** How Much More Data is Needed?

Although we cannot directly observe performance saturation, we project how much data would be required to saturate a Radar Transformer using two different methods to arrive at a best guess of approximately 100M samples –  $100\times$  our current dataset.

Linear Projection of Scaling Laws To lower-bound the possible test loss in our dataset, we trained a small model on the test set to approximate convergence. Assuming that the rate of improvement in model performance with increased training data cannot decrease, we extend our observed (Fig. 6) logarithmic scaling law to this lower bound to, in turn, estimate an upper bound for when the logarithmic trend will no longer hold (Fig. 9). This yields an estimate of  $100 \times$  our current dataset size. For additional details justifying our estimation of this bound, see App. C.4.

**Validation Curve Trends** We observe that GRTs tend to stop improving (with respect to validation loss) after  $\approx 10$  training epochs, regardless of model or dataset size (App. C.4); this is similar to trends observed in the training of data-constrained LLMs, which are also observed to saturate around 10 epochs [37]. Using vision transformers, whose scaling laws are well studied [68] due to the availability of internet data, as a reference, we expect training saturation to occur around  $10^2-10^4 \mathrm{M}$  samples seen. Since each epoch in our dataset corresponds to  $\approx 1 \mathrm{M}$  samples seen, this implies that  $10 \times$  to  $1000 \times$  our current dataset size is required to delay overfitting beyond this point.

#### 6. Conclusion

In this paper, we train a Generalizable Radar Transformer using a large, 29 hour (1M sample) dataset collected using our open-source data collection system and demonstrate that our Radar Transformer can generalize across datasets and settings, can be readily fine-tuned, and exhibits logarithmic scaling. While we believe that substantial gains are still possible through further data scaling, we hope that our dataset and baseline models will enable the community to revisit previous methods in new context and explore new capabilities made possible by a much larger dataset.

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