

Fellows at ESO



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My journey to the Atacama desert started quite a while ago. When I learned from my parents that what I was referring to as the “big lamp”, was a celestial companion called “the Moon” and was not in fact shining itself, but only reflecting the light from the “truly big lamp”, the Sun, I became more curious about what was going on up there in the skies above Berlin. Thanks to the supply of books from Jules Vernes, television shows from Carl Sagan and films in which the Earth stood still, or featuring people from a planet called Vulcan, I held on to this curiosity. Eventually I started studying physics at the Technical University of Berlin, spending a year (1998) at the University of Melbourne and finishing at the University of Potsdam (2005).

Finally, in March 2006, I had the privilege of joining the ESO team serving the astronomical community as support astronomer in Paranal. I had spent a lot of nights before on telescopes, but none as clear and long as the ones in the Martian-like Atacama desert. Apart from being an out-of-this-world place, what strikes me most, is the dedication and enthusiasm of the people working there. No matter the time of the day you always find a helping hand with a smile. However ESO is much more than an observatory. The science life at ESO Vitacura — last, but

not least, thanks to new impulses given by the recently arrived Head of Science Michael West — offers an attractive mix of talks ranging from passing high profile experts from all fields, to specialised seminars organised by local staff, fellows and students.

So my decision to spend my last off-duty fellow year (starting in March 2009) outside ESO was certainly not easy, but the temptation to exchange the starry lights for the city lights of the Institut d’Astrophysique de Paris, where a strong team in my favourite field of research (the hunt for exoplanets using microlensing) is forming, was too big. However I will surely stay in contact with my ESO colleagues and friends and, who knows, may be back some day or some night.

Jörg Dietrich

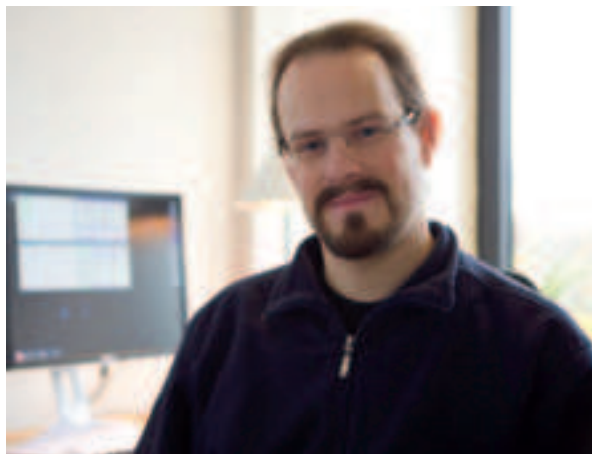
I am one of those astronomers who became enchanted with astronomy very early in their lives. My parents tell me that shortly after my fascination with astronomy started, at the age of five, I declared that I wanted to become an astronomer, a goal I have pursued ever since.

I studied physics and astronomy at the University of Bonn and the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and obtained a masters degree in physics in Bonn in 2002. After that I joined ESO for the first time, working for the ESO Imaging Survey for one year. I then returned to Bonn to

work on my PhD, which I obtained in 2006, two months before starting my ESO fellowship.

My work focuses on studying galaxy clusters, the cosmic web, and the determination of cosmological parameters. My tool of choice is weak gravitational lensing, a technique that has fascinated me ever since I first heard about it in a lecture course in 2000. During my fellowship I have mostly worked on comparing weak-lensing mass estimates of galaxy clusters to those obtained with other methods, and developing new statistics to constrain cosmological parameters with upcoming imaging surveys. Garching, with its unique conglomeration of astronomical institutes, is a near-perfect environment for my science and some of my projects could not have been realised without the close collaborations of colleagues at ESO’s neighbouring Max-Planck Institutes.

For my functional work at ESO I joined the ESO Survey Team, which oversees the preparation and, eventually, the execution of ESO public surveys with the upcoming VISTA and VST facilities. Since my research is based on large imaging surveys, my functional work is a perfect match to my science interests.



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