

Master's programme), I thoroughly enjoyed my time in Berlin. I was so impressed by the great city and its pulsating life that I decided to stay for six more years and I also met my future wife Martina there.

The year 2006 signified a swift return to astronomy when I landed a PhD position in Prof. Heike Rauer's group at the German Aerospace Centre Berlin (DLR). My astronomy career started over again with long observing runs on transiting exoplanets with the BEST telescope located at the Observatoire de Haute Provence (OHP), France. Subsequently, I exchanged the OHP trips for a significantly more distant destination, Cerro Armazones in Chile, now the chosen site for the future E-ELT. I was very much involved in the building, commissioning and setup of the new transit search telescope BEST II, which started to operate in 2007. Both telescopes were built to support the space mission CoRoT, which is designed to detect transiting exoplanets. So the outcome of my PhD thesis is a fully operational robotic telescope and the first detected candidates for transiting exoplanets.

Since the Chilean Atacama desert is officially the astronomical capital of the



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world, I was delighted to receive the offer of an ESO Fellowship in 2009. Currently, while performing operational duties at Paranal, I am assigned to the Unit Telescopes 4 and 2. Besides these functional duties, I am working on my own scientific research on exoplanets. My major focus is on the detection and physical characterisation of these distant worlds. Most recently, our team has been

attempting to detect and characterise exoplanetary atmospheres with near-infrared instruments, using mostly HAWK-I, ISAAC and SOFI.

ESO has given me a great opportunity to conduct my own research and to reinforce and foster collaborations. Even though I am developing my own scientific focus on exoplanetary atmospheres, I am still collaborating with my former colleagues on the BEST II telescope project. Furthermore, a couple of ESO proposals submitted for the current and upcoming observing period are a result of new and productive collaborations with my current colleagues at the ESO offices in Vitacura.

At present, I am mid-way through my four-year contract. I have not yet decided whether I would like to stay in Chile for the final year or go and spend the fourth year somewhere else. Nevertheless, while I am in Chile I am relishing the chance to experience this diverse culture, and appreciating the breathtaking natural beauty of this captivating country while simultaneously being part of ESO. Of course all that would not be possible without the great support from my wife Martina, to whom I am very thankful for her endless patience with me.

Report on the

## Garching ESO Fellow Days – 2011

held at ESO Headquarters, Garching, Germany, 4–5 April 2011

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For the first of the newly formatted ESO Fellow Days, a total of 25 fellows, including several ESO COFUND Fellows from Alma Regional Centres in Europe, and one fellow from Chile, gathered.

All the fellows briefly introduced themselves and most presented recent research results and perspectives. ESO staff astronomers and students were also invited to these presentations, which beautifully demonstrated the excellence of the science being conducted by ESO Fellows.

The Fellowship Symposia were originally designed to facilitate interactions between fellows spread over the two

main ESO sites in Chile and Germany. These symposia took place every two years (the last one in 2009) alternately in Santiago and Garching and gathered together the full set of ESO Fellows. These meetings have been a great opportunity for science discussions, increased exchanges between all ESO staff and have often led to new collaborations or personal science connections. Since ESO Fellow contracts last for three or four years (in Garching and Santiago respectively), this frequency implied that

a few unlucky ESO Fellows would only travel across the Atlantic to visit the other site around the end of their Fellowship.

In order to maximise the timeliness of these meetings, it was decided to change to an annual basis, with two sessions of ESO Fellow Days each year, one at each site, so that “new” fellows could meet with the “old” ones. The more regular meetings are an increased opportunity to advertise in-house the top-level science being done by ESO Fellows. It was thus decided to organise a two-day meeting in Garching, for this, the first 2011 German edition of the new format. The chosen date also provided an opportunity to attend the ALMA Community Days, taking place during same week (see Randall et al. p. 39).

A total of 25 fellows attended the meeting, including seven ESO ALMA–COFUND Fellows from various ALMA Regional Centres across Europe and also one fellow from Chile. Most fellows gave a science presentation on their ongoing and future work. This workshop was designed to allow relatively long (half-hour) talks, giving ample time for the speakers to introduce themselves, pre-

sent and discuss their field of research and their scientific accomplishments. The presentations covered a wide range of topics including protoplanetary discs, the evolution of debris discs around solar-type stars, high- and low-mass star formation from the formation of the cores to later stages, open clusters, super star clusters, feedback in starburst galaxies, active galactic nuclei, quasars and strong gravitational lensing studies (the full programme is available online<sup>1</sup>).

The talks were of very high quality, and the rather informal atmosphere allowed attendees not too familiar with a field to grasp the essential ingredients and the results emphasised by the speaker. Many interesting discussions took place, often linking the differing areas of expertise of people present in the room.

Long breaks helped to foster scientific and social interactions not only among the fellows themselves, but also with other ESO staff. These breaks were also an opportunity for ESO astronomers to introduce a future instrument or ESO facility, providing a privileged perspective and a chance to seek specific answers to either technical or astrophysical ques-

tions. Pamela Klaassen, Joel Vernet, Markus Kasper and Jochen Liske gave presentations on ALMA, MUSE, KMOS, SPHERE and the E-ELT respectively.

A closed session, attended only by the fellows and the head of the Office for Science in Garching, was organised to discuss ways to improve the fellowship programme in general and addressed specific items such as training and the job market. And of course, a social event was organised: a dinner in the centre of Munich was a nice moment for more informal interactions and to reflect on the amazing science and projects being conducted at ESO.

#### Acknowledgements

This workshop, which we hope will be the first of a long series, would not have been possible without the help of Christina Stoffer and the support from the ESO IT Department. We warmly thank Joel Vernet, Markus Kasper and Jochen Liske for their excellent contributions.

#### Links

<sup>1</sup> ESO Fellow Days 2011 programme: [http://www.eso.org/sci/meetings/2011/fellows\\_gar\\_2011/schedule\\_fellow\\_days\\_gar2011.pdf](http://www.eso.org/sci/meetings/2011/fellows_gar_2011/schedule_fellow_days_gar2011.pdf)



Colour image of the Sc spiral galaxy NGC 3244 formed from FORS2 images in *B*, *V* and *R* filters. The bright star to the right is a nearby object in the Milky Way. The images were taken during the visit of the President of the Czech Republic Václav Klaus to Paranal. A framed print was presented to President Klaus, as a memento of his visit. Further details of the image can be found in Picture of the Week (potw1120) and of the President's visit to Paranal in the Organisation Release eso1112.