Fellows at ESO

Cédric Foellmi

After my studies in Geneva and my PhD in Montréal, I moved to ESO and La Silla. Like many others, I was fulfilling a dream. I was not only visiting La Silla, but actually working in it! Long *turnos* provide this very peculiar feeling of a little community of specialised workers whose goal is to observe the sky every night. And the people in La Silla are really great. As much as the sky.

I have been right away attached to the NTT. These were hard and great times. I was still finishing my PhD, and having duties at the NTT in the "old" control room: cold, very dry, moving all night. Tough. However, I was not only learning how ESO operates, but also how to become an efficient observer on large telescopes. "Efficient" here means having a strong vision of the variety of astronomical objects and phenomena, and a detailed knowledge of instruments and techniques. This proves to be of the greatest importance for my research.

Research is the other part of the fellowship, and actually the most important for me. Greatly enhanced by a unique experience of the "backstage" of telescope operations, I can conduct my research freely at Vitacura. Even in the context where none of my colleagues is directly working in my field. Of course, not everybody is aware of the great interest Wolf-Rayet stars might represent ... But I am slowly making more and more people aware of it! And I realise after these years the advantages of being an ESO fellow: in Vitacura there are simply all the "instruments scientists" of all ESO instruments! And the fellowship is three years in Chile. It gives precious time to start serious collaborations, and develop a coherent research. Friends, coherence and sense. Isn't it what we all are looking for? Some lucky ones looking at the beautiful southern sky.

Margrethe Wold

I arrived at ESO in the winter of 2003. I had been working as a post doc at the Spitzer Science Center at Caltech in Pasadena, so arriving in cold Garching was quite a dramatic change from warm and sunny California. From early on, I had a deep interest in science, not just astronomy, but several different topics like archaeology, ornithology and particle physics. In the end, I decided to study astronomy, even though I first started an engineering education at a technical university.

My astronomy career started at the University of Oslo where I did my master degree. During this period, I went on frequent observing trips to the 2.5-m Nordic Optical Telescope on La Palma, and hence got observing experience fairly early. To pursue my PhD, I moved to the University of Stockholm. My PhD concentrated on clustering of galaxies around quasars, but I also worked with weak gravitational lensing by clusters of galaxies. I still find weak gravitational lensing a very fascinating technique to measure the masses of the largest bound structures in the Universe.

During my post doc at the Spitzer Science Center I started a programme to study the centres of nearby radio galaxies, in particular to measure their black hole masses. For this, I used the historic 5-m Hale telescope on Mt. Palomar. During my time here at ESO, I have continued this project using both the NTT and the 3.6-m telescope. Being interested in what is going on in the centres of galaxies, I am now using the new mid-infrared VLT instrument, VISIR, to study gas in the centres of active galaxies.

Never did I dream that my interest for astronomy as a kid would take me to so many different places in this world, and would allow me to meet so many interesting people. This is still an adventure for me!