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High angular resolution studies of protoplanetary discs

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Curriculum Vitae

MY interest in nature and science grew with me, as my father often told me about the ways nature works, about agriculture, geology, meteorology and helped me search the sky for constellations from an astronomical atlas, one of very few publications related to astronomy in ex-Yugoslavia in the eighties. Until I was about 14 it wasn't really clear what my special gifts were as I was interested in practically everything, until my physics teacher, impressed by my explanation on why the dust sticks to the back of buses, declared I decisively had the talent for physics. I cherished the idea, and dreamed of following the path of Nikola Tesla leading to great discoveries that may change the world.

I was attending high-school in Bosnia while raging war was penetrating every aspect of the life of each person, soldier or child. The way I saw it, education was one thing that no one could deprive me of, and my way of rebelling to what was happening around me. By the time I graduated at top of the class, in 1996, my dreams and ambitions had outgrown the boundaries of the reality around me. For a few years I settled for what was possible, began undergraduate studies in Economics and worked in the OSCE⁵ diplomatic mission, on the implementation of election results in the region of Eastern Bosnia. The first made it clear to me that I had to go and study abroad while through the latter I earned enough money to do so, or at least for a year. Becoming an astronomer was not on my mind, I had never heard of anyone becoming an astronomer and it was a possibility so exotic and outside-the-box that even I couldn't think of it. But as I saw Astronomy in the alphabetical list of studies at the University of Bologna (IT), I felt it was "the one" so much that I never even looked further beyond letter A.

In 2000, following a long battle to obtain an entry visa, I enrolled in the Astronomy joint BSc and MSc programme in Bologna. As soon as I had my first academic results, I discovered the magical words 'e lode' sometimes awarded with the maximum grade of an exam. Consequently, I won scholarships and fee-exemptions each year. I was dazzled by the intersection between physics, astronomy and chemistry and set to follow that line of research. In 2004 I did a small research project on "Mapping the cosmic evolution of metals in the Universe" in the University of Durham (UK). In 2005 I chose to do the MSc research project more connected to astro-chemistry, on the "Physical and chemical evolution of pre-stellar cores" at Arcetri Astrophysical Observatory in Florence (IT).

⁵Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe

I graduated cum laude the same year and not even a month later I was in the Netherlands, and begun my PhD project in Leiden. I was aspiring to work in the famous astro-chemistry group and learn from the best, but I got that and so much more. In the 4 years of my PhD I participated in 20 schools, workshops and international conferences in 9 countries. I carried out observations at the facilities of SMA and JCMT in Hawaii and CARMA in California (USA). A part of my PhD was funded through the Marie-Curie FP6 programme of the EU, and I was a member of the Molecular Universe Network bringing together experts and students in molecular astrophysics from different European countries.

I have been awarded a Fellowship of the European Southern Observatory in Garching (DE). There, I intend to pursue my protoplanetary discs' research further, and work specifically on the preparations for the great new future instrument: the Atacama Large Millimeter/Submillimeter Array (ALMA).

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