

ETH zürich

life

March 2014

ETH community magazine

ETHZ SGU

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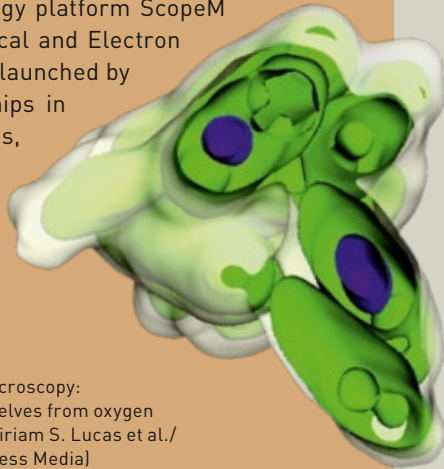
Models of life Page 10

ScopeM – a hub for cutting-edge microscopy

24 March 2014. Thanks to the use of correlative light and electron microscopy on a single sample, researchers can record new properties of biological and inanimate materials in the micrometre and nanometre range. They can also use imaging processes to reproduce them in 3D models. This is why the ETH Zurich Electron Microscopy Center (EMEZ) and the Light Microscopy and Screening Center (LMSC) were merged at the start of the year to form the technology platform ScopeM (Scientific Center for Optical and Electron Microscopy). ScopeM was launched by 100 affiliated professorships in biology, chemistry, physics, materials science and engineering at the user assembly on 24 March.

www.scopem.ethz.ch →

3D model of light and electron microscopy: symbiotic bacteria protect themselves from oxygen in a mung bean root. (Diagram: Miriam S. Lucas et al./ScopeM, Springer Science+Business Media)



(Photo: Eline Keller-Soerensen/ETH)

Evenings with Thomas Mann and Albert Einstein

18 February 2014. Would you like to find out more about ETH Zurich? Then come to one of the public evening tours run by Collections and Archives and the Office for Events and Location Development. Since February, these free tours take place every Tuesday from 6.15 pm to 7.15 pm, in German only, but with no registration required. Check out the digitisation project in the Thomas Mann Archives (15 April) or join the Albert Einstein tour (29 April).

www.ethz.ch/eveningtours →

22 August 2014

togETHer — let the show begin! The fifth ETH Zurich staff party will take place on the Hönggerberg campus this summer. There are some surprises in store, so save the date and time: 4.00 pm to midnight. Details will be provided in the invitation and on the intranet.

www.ethz.ch/intranet →

Web migration underway

1 April 2014. The second phase of the web re-launch has begun. Web content still running on Silva or other systems can now be transferred to the new system. Corporate Communications will contact the central units and departments so that they can define the migration process together. Institutes, professorships and other units, however, can register directly online. There are several migration windows available. Find more information about the migration and the new CMS on the ETH intranet (login required).

www.ethz.ch/webmigration →



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Editorial Staff
Norbert Staub (Editor-in-chief)
Florian Meyer, Angela Harp, Thomas Langholz

Images, layout
Evelyn Graf

Proofreading
Beate Marder (German), Lilian Dutoit (English)

Translation
Syntax Translations Ltd

Concept and Design
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Contact
life magazine, ETH Zurich, HG FO 37.6, 8092 Zurich
Email to editors: life@hk.ethz.ch
Further information: www.ethz.ch/life
Cover
Alessandro della Bella photographs the “Safety Parcours” at ETH Zurich.



Opening up career opportunities together

5 February 2014. The latest round of the “Fix the leaky pipeline” support programme is underway, with 100 young female scientists having attended a local networking event in February to launch the 2014/15 courses. The event allowed them to meet and talk to coaches, trainers and colleagues from the ETH Domain so that they can systematically develop their individual academic careers.

www.fix-the-leaky-pipeline.ch →



“Fusion” on the Höggerberg

17 February 2014. The “Fusion meal & coffee” restaurant opened on ETH’s Höggerberg campus at the start of the semester. “Fusion meal” now offers seating for 600 people and a varied menu. “Fusion coffee” provides quick refreshments and is open on selected Saturdays and Sundays. What’s more, the physics canteen in the HPR building is due to reopen in 2015 with a new food market concept, and the Cheminsula restaurant will be replaced with a restaurant pavilion at the north end of the campus.

www.gastro.ethz.ch/index_EN →
www.ethz.ch/fusion-en →

69°27'N 49°54' W: the SED in Greenland

14 February 2014. Recording earthquakes involves hard work with an ice pick. The Swiss Seismological Service (SED) at ETH Zurich has been monitoring earthquake magnitudes in Switzerland for the Federal Government for 100 years and has a network of over 100 stations. Collaborating with 10 other countries, it also runs three stations in Greenland where researchers like Stefan Hiemer take daily measurements on the ice. Snapshots on the SED website, an exhibition and an open day in the autumn, give an impression of their work.

www.seismo.ethz.ch/index_EN →





Silent helpers: In the Safety Lab on the Hönggerberg campus, ETH members learn what to be aware of when working in a laboratory. This mannequin is properly dressed with protective clothing.

At ETH safety comes first

ETH is an institution where numerous experiments are carried out in laboratories and workshops. So, knowing how to handle chemicals and special equipment is essential for its members. On this note, ETH is taking a new approach to training.

Text Thomas Langholz
Photos Alessandro della Bella

What's a bar of chocolate doing next to the open bottle of acid? Why is the gas canister only secured to the wall with one wire? Why are there boxes in front of the emergency exit? These are just three out of about 200 questions that students and staff have to answer on the so-called "Safety Parcours" (Safety Circuit) at ETH.

Thomas Mäder, the Safety Manager in the Department of Chemistry and Applied Biosciences (D-CHAB), and the Safety, Security, Health and Environment (SSHE) staff unit have set up a training laboratory in the HCI building specifically for teaching ETH members how to handle risks safely.

"Most of the research and teaching at ETH Zurich takes place in laboratories and workshops. That's why students and employees need to be given

practical training in how to avoid the dangers there", says Silke Kiesewetter. She is one of the two chemists responsible for chemical, occupational, biological and radiation protection, COBRa for short.

Training on safety matters is an ongoing task for Kiesewetter, as students, doctoral students and post-docs normally finish their degrees after about five years and then leave ETH Zurich. "By the time they leave ETH Zurich, our graduates should know about the most important safety standards and be able to apply them. That's also part of the basic training provided at ETH Zurich", says Kiesewetter, explaining the objective.

Learning with mannequins

At first sight, the "Safety Parcours" in the HCI building looks like a normal laboratory: test tubes, magnetic stirrers and balances are laid out on the benches. There are various test crucibles and the

required chemicals. It looks as if experiments are being carried out at this very moment.

Only the three life-size shop window dummies in lab coats are silent and unmoving. "We can use the models to show what kind of personal protection equipment is needed or how to tie up long hair so it doesn't get caught in a machine", explains Ines Raabe of COBRa.

The circuit demonstrates a lot of hazards very realistically: students and staff not only learn how to handle chemicals and other laboratory risks safely, but also about the best way to deal with biosafety, radiation protection and lasers. It is not only the safety managers who train here, but also the ETH Zurich security service, the first aid team, the fire alarm team and external professionals, for example, from Zurich's Protection and Rescue Service. Anyone interested can book a "Safety Parcours" session online. ▶

Test your safety expertise. Which statements are correct?

(Look carefully at the pictures. More than one correct statement is possible. Solutions on the next page.)



Photo 1

- A: I can take any bottle available.
- B: I go and find a safety container.
- C: As a safety measure, I take the bottle home with me.



Photo 2

- A: I think I should move the solvent away.
- B: I've done this plenty of times.
- C: The solvent is far enough away.



Photo 3

- A: The goggles protect me from injury.
- B: I tie my hair up.
- C: The goggles will be in the way for the next experiment.



Safety begins with awareness

Text Norbert Staub

Universities are complex organisations, which make it a major challenge to ensure comprehensive safety. At ETH Zurich, the specialists of the Safety, Security and Environment (SSHE) staff unit provide information on everything you need to know about safety.

ETH works on behalf of society. Its “products” – research, education, technology transfer and, above all, competently trained graduates – need wide-ranging scope for development. This is clearly illustrated by the way ETH Zurich approaches the matter of safety. A simple top-down approach with technical orders and prohibitions is not sufficient. Just consider how differently Bachelor students and a workshop leader think and work.

An exemplary “safety culture”

For this reason, the core of the university’s safety strategy corresponds to an exemplary “safety culture” that is lived and promoted in all departments and at all levels of responsibility. Executives have a special exemplary role here. “Safety

begins with employee awareness”, notes Katherine Timmel, head of the Safety, Security and Environment (SSHE) staff unit of ETH, which has 35 employees. The more present the subject is in the minds of employees, the more professionally they can work.

A tight safety network

“This is nearly always the case at ETH Zurich”, emphasises Timmel. If you only think of safety when something has gone wrong, you risk irreparable damage, “especially when it comes to people’s health”. The SSHE staff unit is therefore strongly committed to integrating safety concepts in all work processes, from building management through to research involving hazardous substances.

In addition to prevention, the SSHE staff unit attaches particular importance to lessons that should be learnt from incidents. This is where the specialists of the COBRa (Chemical, Occupational, Biological and Radiation Protection) section come in with their integral approach: as advisors for measures to prevent similar incidents in the future and as auditors when these measures have been implemented. The SSHE safety network is

therefore tight and broad. It comprises the Emergency Desk, which has 24/7 on-call availability, and also involves providing advice and training for laboratory, workshop and personal safety in buildings. And not least, it protects and advises the SSHE if persons at ETH are threatened or harassed.

A role as an educator

ETH takes its role as an educator very seriously in all these measures. Katherine Timmel is delighted that the SSHE staff unit has managed to considerably expand its range of training services in recent years: “With the safety know-how that students acquire here, they lay important foundations for their future professional lives in the industry.” ■

World Day for Safety and Health at Work

This year’s World Day for Safety and Health at Work takes place on 28 April under the theme – “the use of chemicals at work”. Members of ETH Zurich can take a quiz in the HCO building and win a Safety Memo game (see picture). There will also be a small exhibition on this theme.

► The “Safety Parcours” is perhaps the most unusual precautionary measure, but it is not the only one: there is an extensive range of courses for ETH members that provide training on safety matters. Silke Kiesewetter and Ines Raabe also visit laboratories to give advice on the spot – from buying new machines to support in planning new labs – and they give lectures.

Strict requirements

If you want to work safely, you have to be alert to certain things: the legal regulations are very strict, especially with regard to biosafety and radiation protection. If anyone is discovered not complying with the official rules during unannounced inspections, they must face the consequences. Serious safety deficiencies can lead to the inspectors closing down a laboratory.

Safety is the responsibility of every single person: “As safety specialists, we can inform people and make them more aware. How that knowledge is implemented on a daily basis is up to the researchers and staff themselves”, say the two chemists.

Play “Memory” for safety

As a specialist office, the SSHE is taking a new approach to teaching, too. To mark the “World Day for Safety and Health at Work” on 28 April, it is bringing out a new version of the well-known “Memory” game, where all cards show

the international safety symbols. So what are the most common mistakes in the laboratory when dealing with hazardous substances?

There are no typical mistakes”, says Ines Raabe. “Often it’s routine that leads to accidents.” Routines may simplify work processes, but there is always a risk that people become careless, out of the conviction that “We’ve always done it that

way” or “Nothing has ever happened before”. “Especially with new substances, it’s important to familiarise yourself with the risks very early on, and not wait until you’ve already been working with them for a year, otherwise it’s easy to underestimate the risk”, says Silke Kiesewetter, adding that they are both very happy to provide information and support. ■



What’s wrong here? On the Safety Parcours, you must find the mistakes.

Answers to your questions about safety

SSHE website

www.ethz.ch/sshe →

SSHE course calendar

www.ethz.ch/course-calendar-sshe →

Safety Parcours

www.safetyparcours.ethz.ch →

Send enquiries about safety to:

cabs@ethz.ch

For further articles on the World Day for Safety and Health at Work see the intranet:

www.ethz.ch/intranet →

Results:

Photo 1 A: 0 / B: 3 / C: 0

Photo 2 A: 3 / B: 0 / C: 0

Photo 3 A: 3 / B: 3 / C: 0

0 to 3 points

Back to the Safety Parcours! You urgently need to review your approach to safety for your own protection. Have you talked about safety in your group? The website of the Safety, Security, Health and Environment (SSHE) staff unit can help.

3 to 6 points

Not bad. But you still don’t really understand all about safety in the laboratory. It would do you good to refresh your safety knowledge. Have a look at the range of training courses offered by the Safety, Security, Health and Environment (SSHE) staff unit.

More than 6 points

Great job. You seemed to find it easy and are already familiar with the basic principles. But what about specialist knowledge? For upcoming training and education events, see the SSHE course calendar.



A hit in Vienna's Museum Quarter, the "Enzos" will soon be used to liven up the ETH campus. (Photo: Daniel Gebhart de Koekkoek/MuseumsQuartier)

A good idea makes a difference

Universities thrive on ideas, but while finding ideas is one thing, realising them is another. Two students talk about how they come up with ideas and why ideas competitions are good for ETH Zurich.

Text Florian Meyer

In February 2014, chemistry graduate Justus Söllner and mechanical engineering student Benedikt Ummen won the "Ideenwettbewerb13" ideas competition for students and staff with their idea to install "Enzo" furniture, which can be used as anything from a chair or couch to a stage, or simply to liven up the ETH campus. This was not Ummen's first success: he also won ETH

Zurich's Innovedum ideas competition in February 2012.

Benedikt Ummen, you have won two ideas competitions at ETH Zurich. What constitutes a good idea?

Benedikt Ummen: A good idea makes a noticeable difference when you put it into practice.

How do you come up with a good idea?

Justus Söllner: Good ideas are actually

obvious. They're simple and make sense right away. All you need is that moment when it "clicks" to see them.

Benedikt Ummen: Exactly, keep your eyes open! An idea can come from perfectly normal everyday life at ETH or at home. You might feel a need for something in your daily activities or see that something is lacking and you want to improve it. Then the thought just keeps resurfacing in your mind. One more thing: a good idea does not have to be entirely your own.

Why not?

Benedikt Ummen: Millions of people have ideas every day. We can learn from them. An idea becomes effective when we link a solution that has already been realised somewhere else with a problem that concerns us. That's what Justus did with the "Enzos".

You are referring to the furniture that will soon live up the ETH campus.

Justus Söllner: Precisely. I was on holiday in Vienna and there's a square in the Museum Quarter that reminded me of the Piazza on the Hönggerberg campus. It's actually quite dull, but people are attracted to these large, colourful pieces of furniture because they're practical too. You can relax, read or sit and chat on them. There's nothing like this on the ETH campuses, so it seemed logical to suggest installing these "Enzos".

What is it about ideas competitions that appeals to you?

Justus Söllner: Developing and implementing your own is a very welcoming change from studying.

Benedikt Ummen: I enjoy being able to take part in a collective improvement process. Besides, ideas competitions are really good for ETH Zurich.

In what way?

Benedikt Ummen: ETH has around 18,000 students from over 100 countries, all of whom are very bright. Tapping into this virtually free supply of ideas can lead to amazing results.

Justus Söllner: Ideas competitions make projects much easier for us students.

Why?

Justus Söllner: Take the campus furniture. The standard procedure for carrying out this kind of project is often too complex for students and requires too much coordination.

And it's different with an ideas competition?

Justus Söllner: Yes. Because we receive support from expert contract partners. This enables us to implement projects much more quickly and also makes it



Two minds full of ideas: Justus Söllner (left) and Benedikt Ummen (right). (Photo: Florian Meyer).

more fun. We could actually do with more competitions.

What do you have in mind?

Justus Söllner: An ideas competition for students who come from other universities. They could be asked what they think is needed and what was done better at their previous university. ETH could gain input for improvement from this.

Benedikt Ummen: The "Raus aus den 4 Wänden" ["Outside our own four walls"] project I submitted for the Innovedum student competition in 2011 was based on the same kind of idea – only the other way round.

The project involved visiting Stanford University in California last autumn. What did you learn there?

Benedikt Ummen: First of all, I think it's great that ETH lets me develop my ideas freely and then helps me and my team to implement them. At Stanford we saw that a university can try out ideas more easily using a method called "prototyping", which involves testing new infrastructures on a small scale to see how they are received by students first before making any major investments.

Your Innovedum idea was based on the concept that students need quiet

spaces to work. "Enzo" is meant to live up the campus; can these contrasting ideas work together?

Benedikt Ummen: Students like to have access to quiet spaces as well as livelier areas nearby. I find it ideal when I can concentrate on my work in one place, but only have to go down a floor or dash around the corner to find somewhere to relax or socialise when I want to.

Justus Söllner: We know that more people will be working and living on the ETH Zurich campus by 2020. Both concepts will help to make the campus all the more attractive. ■

Idea Management

In addition to competitions, ETH Zurich runs an idea management programme for staff. Employees can submit ideas for improving the organisation at any time:

www.ideenmanagement.ethz.ch →


Student and employee inquiries about idea management can be sent to Marcel Schmucki, VP Resources and Infrastructure at: schmucki@sl.ethz.ch.

Blog on the trip to Stanford University:

www.studienreise.ethz.ch →

Modelling a career on models of life

Since the start of the year, talented young researcher Tanja Stadler has been working in the Department of Biosystems Science and Engineering in Basel. She has been fine-tuning not only the mathematical models she uses to study evolution, but also her career.

A portrait of Tanja Stadler, a young woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a brown ribbed turtleneck sweater. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a bright, slightly blurred indoor setting with architectural lines.

As a tenure track assistant professor in the Department of Biosystems Science and Engineering, Tanja Stadler has gained a new perspective to help her develop her research and her team.



Thanks to the professorship and the ERC Starting Grant, Tanja Stadler has her own team: Veronika Boskova, Denise Kühnert and Louis du Plessis (left to right).

Text Florian Meyer **Photos** Gerry Amstutz

The view from Tanja Stadler's office looks straight out at the Basel Trade Fair Tower. Some people see this 105-metre-tall skyscraper as an emblem of the city, while others regard it as symbolic of Basel as a cosmopolitan centre. For those who have only been working in Basel for a short while, the tower is, apart from anything else, a convenient landmark – something to help them become attuned to this city, as it is built around a bend in the river Rhine.

Tanja Stadler certainly does not have much time to survey her surroundings: the theoretical evolutionary biologist moved into her new office in the Department of Biosystems Science and Engineering (D-BSSE) in early January. When “life” paid her a visit three weeks later, she was busy familiarising herself with her new working environment, setting up her office and establishing contacts with research groups in Basel.

On Professor Stadler's desk there is a large eye-catching computer, an important feature of the 32-year-old German's

work. Carrying out research in the field of “computational evolution”, she uses the computer to calculate mathematical models showing how viruses, bacteria, plants or animals originate, develop and die out over the course of evolution.

Evolution in mathematical terms

Professor Stadler's job is to develop statistical models and computational methods that enable genetic data to be interpreted in a meaningful way. If her models work effectively, they can pave the way for new findings on how certain genes cause a type of virus, bacteria, plant or animal to change from one generation to the next and thus, ultimately, drive evolution and the transformation of species.

Tanja Stadler studied mathematics in Munich and mathematical modelling still forms the basis and starting point for her work today. “I would definitely describe myself as more than just a mathematician, however”, she says. “These days my research is made up of three equal parts: mathematics, computer science and biology.” Tanja Stadler's working method involves combining theory with practical

applications and exchanging ideas with researchers from various specialist areas. She works closely with the teams led by Sebastian Bonhoeffer and Jonathan Levine in the Department of Environmental Systems Science (D-USYS). Their research is in infectious diseases, evolution and ecology.

How infections come and go

Tanja Stadler also regularly collaborates with scientists from university hospitals and the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute in Basel, focusing on the topic of infectious diseases such as HIV or tuberculosis. While Stadler primarily studies how entire species originate and die out, she is also interested in examining how pathogenic types of virus and bacteria spread.

Stadler's models illustrate how pathogens propagate in the bodies of infected people and then die off again. She recognises the potential this knowledge could offer with regard to advising health authorities on how to contain epidemics. Stadler has high hopes of interacting with the biologists ►



More space for teaching, research and communication: a new D-BSSE building is planned for the "Schällemättli" site in Basel. (Visualisation: Nickl & Partner)

► undertaking experimental research at D-BSSE, who are examining stem cells to investigate how cells develop and change. "All the infrastructures I need for my research are conveniently

in Basel", Stadler remarks, on her way to the laboratory where the equipment for sequencing biological genotypes is kept. This equipment digitises the typical genome sequences of particular living organisms, providing Stadler with comprehensive files of genetic information, which she can then analyse.

Open day

On 10 May 2014, the Department of Biosystems Science and Engineering (D-BSSE) and the Biozentrum at the University of Basel are holding an open day. On its premises at Mattenstrasse 26 in Basel, D-BSSE will be presenting 19 laboratory stations and offering short talks, two tours and a magic show. A vintage vehicle shuttle service will be available to transport visitors between D-BSSE and the Biozentrum.

www.openhouse2014.ch →

An almost ideal organisation

As a theoretical biologist, professor Stadler rarely carries out laboratory-based research herself and does not conduct any experiments. She represents a new generation of biologists who have in-depth training in mathematical principles and apply their knowledge to statistics and programming in order to analyse the vast amounts of genetic data that are available today.

"We have deliberately brought biologists who specialise in theoretical and computer-aided research, like Tanja Stadler, to Basel to promote a productive exchange with engineering and experimental biology research groups at D-BSSE", says Jörg Stelling, head of the department. This interdisciplinary work is characteristic of the systems biology and synthetic biology approaches adopted by the department since its establishment in 2007.

Meanwhile, in the server room, Tanja Stadler is talking to a member of the IT support team about how to link her computer with the computer cluster. She raves about how efficiently the D-BSSE is organised and how well the technical and administrative staff support each other, enabling her to concentrate fully on her research.

"It's obvious the D-BSSE, being the newest department, was specifically organised to ideally suit research", she says. Stadler has been employed as a tenure track assistant professor since January 2014, with the prospect of being awarded full professorship.

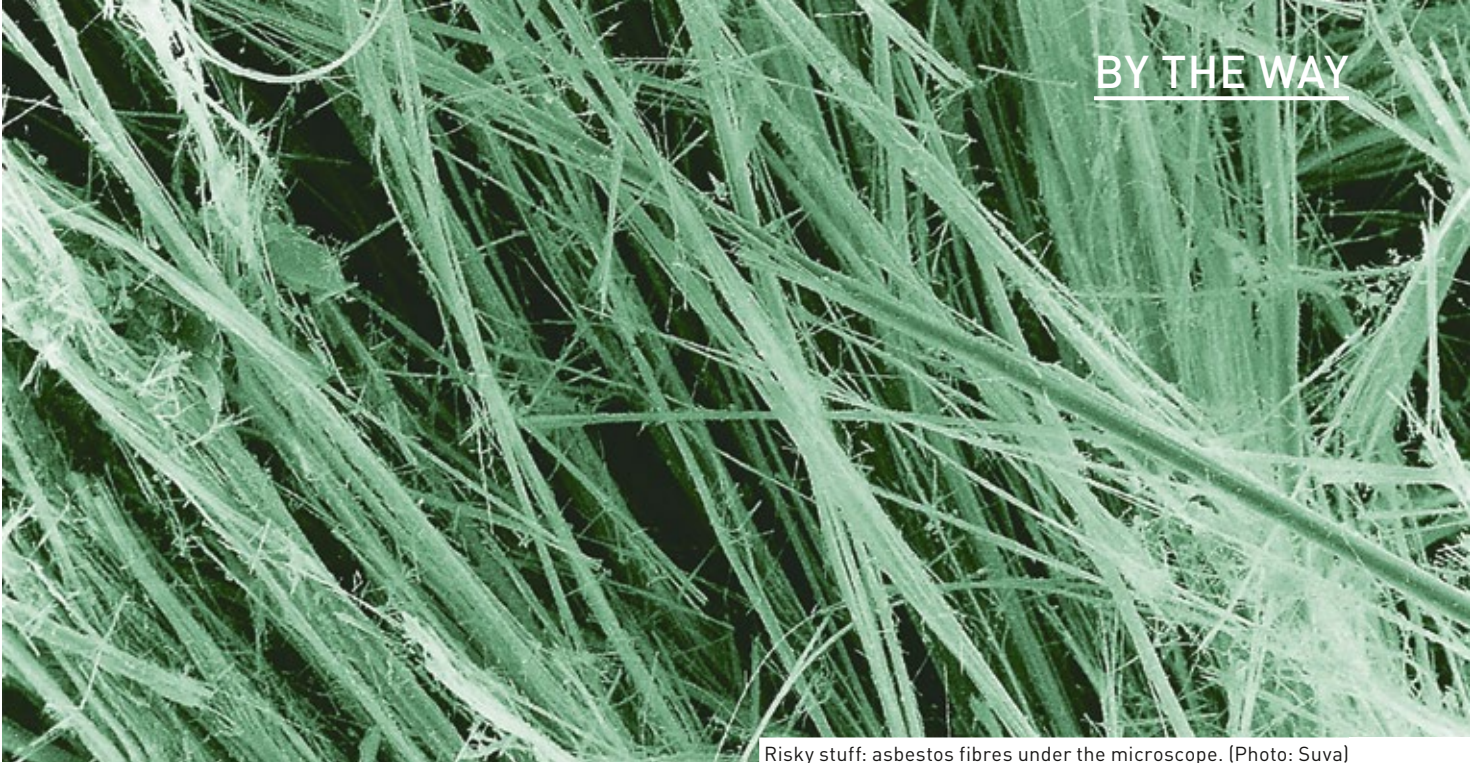
This, like the prestigious ERC Starting Grant she won in 2013, has been a real boost to her confidence. "With the ERC Grant I was able to initiate a major research project and build a team for it.

A hint of doubt turns to confidence

Tanja Stadler spent the past few years intensively searching for a job. She recalls how an element of doubt about her career prospects crept in during that period: "Despite the struggle, it was always clear to me that my future lay in fundamental research." This makes her all the more appreciative of the free rein she was given in setting up her research team, which is currently made up of two doctoral students and one postdoc.

For professor Stadler, Basel represents a world of interesting opportunities. The narrow corridors in the department building are the only thing that makes it difficult to get her bearings at times – but that, too, will change when D-BSSE moves into newly built premises on the Schällemättli site. ■

www.bsse.ethz.ch →



Risky stuff: asbestos fibres under the microscope. (Photo: Suva)

From miracle fibre to health risk

Text Norbert Staub

Today it is common knowledge that certain building materials that were once popular and effective can damage health. Disposing of them properly is a complex matter. ETH Zurich's approach is to react quickly, rigorously and transparently if harmful substances are found.

Lightweight asbestos fibres are even stronger than steel wire. Ideal for use in insulation, they do not rot and are extremely heat- and fireproof, capable of withstanding temperatures up to an incredible 1,000°C. It is no wonder that asbestos took the engineering and construction industries by storm in the 20th century. It became known as the “miracle fibre” – until the miracle was turned on its head.

Asbestos is one of the biggest and most expensive problems facing the construction industry today. From the 1970s onwards, it became clear that the human body struggles to break down these tiny fibres if they are inhaled. This can lead to serious health problems, such as asbestosis and pleural or peritoneal cancer, which often only become apparent decades later. The issue of asbestos disposal is therefore now being tackled across the world.

Asbestos was once used all over buildings – in facades, roofs, walls, flooring or heat shields for ovens. Banned in Switzerland since 1990, it is nevertheless likely to be found in any construction

built before then, including at ETH Zurich. Usually it is concealed inside structures and does not pose any problems, but sometimes chance incidents reveal where danger lurks. In 2012, for example, asbestos sheets were found on 70 steel girders in the HIL building on the Hönggerberg campus, installed some 40 years ago as a fire prevention measure.

“A building services engineer noticed asbestos in scratches in the panelling, so all the supports were clearly marked and wrapped up”, explains Regula Rüegg, an expert of the Safety, Security, Health and Environment (SSHE) staff unit who is responsible for harmful substances in buildings. Specialist companies removed the asbestos under low-pressure conditions to prevent any particles from being released.

Protecting health is vital

Air circulation is crucial: the university is well supplied with ventilation systems, so it is essential to ensure that no asbestos particles are dispersed via ventilation channels. Air measurements therefore must be carried out during renovation work. “Protecting the health of those who use the buildings in question is a top priority for us”, explains Regula Rüegg.

Open communication plays a key role in this. “Over the past few years, straightforward, personal communication based on sound expert knowledge has proved very effective in various cases involving harmful substances at ETH Zurich. It addresses the legitimate concerns of those affected and creates trust.” ■

www.ethz.ch/sshe →

Dedicated hosts

Text: Florian Meyer Photo: Florian Bachmann

A thick fog hangs over the Üetliberg mountain; no ray of sunlight can penetrate it. The shining surface of Lake Zurich is utterly grey. Yet, in spite of all this wintry gloom, it is impossible not to be captivated by the view as you look down on central Zurich from the terrace of Villa Hatt. This is an experience shared by many who visit ETH Zurich's hilltop guesthouse on the Zürichberg.

It is a sensation that Andrea Hess enjoys on a daily basis. She has been looking after the guests at Villa Hatt since the start of the year. "I love seeing how guests are inspired by the views from this place", she says. ETH Zurich has been using the historical villa as a place to accommodate guests and as a venue for meetings, receptions and other events since 2008.

Working in this kind of atmosphere, where guests are immediately delighted by what they see, is something that Andrea Hess finds both a pleasure and a challenge: "Villa Hatt is a guesthouse, not a hotel, so the focus is on personal contact. Guests should be made to feel comfortable here", she says.

Laurent Perrenoud has been working at Villa Hatt for six months now. He and Hess operate as a team, complementing

each other very well with their shared expertise in catering and the hotel industry. However, unlike their predecessors – who retired in 2013 – they are not a married couple.

Perrenoud worked his way up from the bottom of his trade. Having started out as a trainee cook and waiter before becoming a chef and eventually a food and beverage manager, he has first-hand experience of virtually every activity in the catering industry. "I was familiar with Villa Hatt from my catering work", he recalls, "and I was in love with the place at first sight."

Andrea Hess also began her career in catering and trained at the Belvoirpark hotel management college in Zurich. She then went on to manage banquets at a traditional hotel in Zurich's old town. She likes the freedom she has in her job working for ETH Zurich: "We are given a lot of scope to decide how the guesthouse should be run, but we also appreciate being an integral part of the university."

Aiming to make Villa Hatt more homelike and more welcoming:
Laurent Perrenoud and Andrea Hess.

Hess and Perrenoud are in agreement on what they should do with the villa: they intend to make it more homelike and open it up to all members of ETH Zurich.

Their signature style is reflected in details: every day they work hard to make Villa Hatt an even more welcoming place for guests. They deliberately refer to themselves as "hosts" rather than managers: "We're dedicated hosts, and want our guests to feel at ease around us", says Perrenoud. ■

Villa Hatt — Guesthouse of ETH Zurich

The Villa Hatt is available to employees of ETH Zurich for private and professional events. To book, please contact Villa Hatt via e-mail (villahatt@ethz.ch). For further information see the online article "A guesthouse with a twist" on the ETH intranet or visit the home page of the guesthouse.

www.villahatt.ethz.ch/index_EN →

Lars Bütke
AVETH President
Association of Scientific Staff



(Illustration: Kornel Stadler)

An end to “pseudo part-time”

Anyone doing a doctorate at ETH Zurich normally works full-time, and sometimes even more. Yet, in many departments – as at most other universities in Switzerland and other countries – doctoral students are only appointed on a part-time basis. 60 per cent is the minimum prescribed by ETH Zurich. Despite this reduced level of employment, supervisors often expect students to be present full-time and to devote themselves to their work. This “pseudo part-time” employment is widely recognised as an instrument for salary-setting purposes.

It is on this note that last summer the Executive Board proposed, in the context of the ongoing revision of the Ordinance for Scientific Employees of ETH Zurich, that in future all doctoral students be employed on a full-time basis. In the eyes of the AVETH this is a step in the right direction, as it would reflect the reality of the situation. However, to avoid some departments getting into financial difficulties, the new proposal envisages different salary classes.

So is the new system really any better? Opponents of the proposal argue that full-time employment would mean losing the freedom to have another paid job alongside a doctorate, or to engage in other activities. Essentially, the very freedom that is so important for scientists in

particular and so highly valued at ETH Zurich would be jeopardised. The transparency of the pay system would also be lost, as salary classes are no longer really meaningful, especially for foreigners or external parties.

But why should there be different salaries anyway? EPFL has been getting on very well for several years with the same pay scheme for doctoral students across the university. But would ETH Zurich, which, unlike EPFL, is highly decentralised, even get involved in testing out a new salary system? In the end, many people argue, supply and demand should still determine the salary scale.

The future terms of employment for doctoral students, and their wages, is being hotly debated, and not just within the AVETH Association. However, we are confident that in the course of 2014 a suitable solution can be found and that the AVETH will play an active role in the process. ■

Lars Bütke

www.aveth.ethz.ch →

Participation should be effective

The University Assembly of ETH Zurich is currently looking into the issue of participation. The four university groups – students, professors, scientific staff as well as administrative and technical staff – have joined forces to analyse ways in which they can more actively participate at ETH Zurich. Participation is deeply ingrained at ETH Zurich. An entire article of the ETH Act is devoted to participation rights, explicitly stating that the four university groups are to be involved in all matters and decisions relating to teaching, research and planning at ETH Zurich. This approach sounds great and the will to implement the requirements is there, yet ETH Zurich is still a long way from allowing its university groups to participate in all areas.

Technical and administrative staff are left out when it comes to appointing professors in almost every department, while students are excluded from matters concerning research. In many areas – building and construction particularly springs to mind – there are no official committees in which we could take part. The University Assembly will soon produce a report indicating – I sincerely hope – measures to improve participation so that university groups can fulfil their wishes to contribute to the advancement and development of ETH Zurich.

I hope, at the very least, that this report will stimulate constructive discussions that will in turn lead to demonstrable results.



Julia Wysling, President of the VSETH Student Association

www.vseth.ethz.ch →

Read Julia Wysling’s columns on the ETH intranet.



A simple switch

Text Florian Meyer **Photo** 3dfoto

The Safety, Security, Health and Environment (SSHE) staff unit and the start-up WeAct is launching the "Energy Efficiency Challenge" in May 2014. ETH's power consumption generates some 1,600 tonnes of CO₂ per year. "We could easily save up to 10% of the energy used if we switch off workplace devices", says Christian Kaufmann from WeAct, which promotes sustainability through online competitions. Using activities and suggestions, this challenge aims to encourage students and staff to reduce energy consumption. It starts with a three-week team competition, then – from July onwards – teams will put their energy-saving schemes to long-term use in the workplace for the "Our Commitment" module.

More information in the intranet news (login required):

www.ethz.ch/eechallenge-en →