Astronomy: A star is born


The birth of young stars is shrouded in mystery because they tend to form at the centre of giant clouds of dust and hydrogen gas. Only light in the millimetre- and infrared-wavelength range can pass through the clouds, and astronomers have historically lacked telescopes that are capable of clearly discerning those wavelengths.

Now, Jonathan Williams of the University of Hawaii and his colleagues have used the latest generation of telescopes to capture a high-resolution view of a nearby star-forming cluster. They found five objects in the cluster, including a bright protostar and a starless, collapsing core of gas. The observations show that a single cluster can give birth to a plethora of different protostellar types, and may help to give astronomers a better understanding of the birthing process.