CONGRATULATIONS

to Dr Ana Linares (CNRS) and Dr Ania Servant (QMUL)

who successfully defended their PhD thesis

Ana completed her PhD on the topic of Hierarchically structured molecularly imprinted nanomaterials as recognition elements in biochips in Compiegne on the 9th April 2010. Her supervisor was Prof. Karsten Haupt.

Ania passed her PhD Viva in London on Wednesday 30th June 2010. Her thesis “Synthesis and characterisation of imprinted nanogels with catalytic activity for the Kemp elimination” was supervised by Dr Marina Resmini.

Well done*** You did it!!
Levi asked me if I wanted to join, even for a short while, this amazing NASCENT group, and spend a short period of time at Karsten’s lab. As a biotechnology engineer, who always had a soft spot for chemistry, I was very excited to go to UTC and to be a “chemist” for a bit. And so, after a short family event in Amsterdam and Brussels, I said my goodbyes and got on a train to France. I got on my way to start a new adventure.

Seeing Compiègne for the first time was amazing. It was fun to meet some familiar and friendly faces, and some that were as friendly (though not as familiar). The whole experience was wonderful. I don’t think words can sum up everything I have learned and done over there. Thus, as a true engineer I decided to use numbers instead…
8.5 total hours on planes.

50 minutes train ride from Paris to Compiegne.

76 days away from home: 2 in Belgium, 6 in the Netherlands and 68 days in France.

4 minutes walk from my residence to UTC’s center of researchers, through the nice and green Abbey Park.

9 different languages in one room – Karsten’s group meeting.

10 weekends full of events: Some day trips in Paris, Some Shopping in Compiegne, one barbeque at Karsten and Chayito’s home, and one delightful visit at Asterix Park.

6 new pairs of shoes.

2 European “Ph.D. defense” – one in Amsterdam (of my eldest sister) and one in Compiegne (of the lovely Dr. Linares). Attending the PhD defenses was an enlightening experience, since the Israeli universities have no such thing. It seems like a very appropriate way to sum up 3-4 years of hard work and say farewell to all of your friends and colleagues.

And last but not least …

3 Amazing girls I feel proud and lucky to call my friends: Pinar, Nataliya and Ana – you are wonderful. I will cherish you forever, and hope I will get to see you again sooner than later.

To sum up –

100! - This experience was definitely a 100 in my book, and I feel very lucky that I have got a chance to join this network before it ended. I wish everyone good luck, and hope I’ll get to see you again. That’s what conferences are for…See you all soon.

and
Greetings from a very sunny Madrid. My name is Freda and I have started a 3-month placement at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid in May 2010. I had a friendly welcome at the university and I am very much enjoying living in this amazing city that has so much to offer. Working as a chemist in a different laboratory away from home has been an interesting learning experience so far, and in the weekends I have kept myself busy with sightseeing in the touristy areas in Madrid and beyond.

Top attractions in Madrid include ‘Plaza Mayor’, ‘Plaza de España’, ‘El Retiro Park’, the royal palace ‘Palacio Real’ and ‘El Prado’, which houses a good selection of works by Goya and Velázquez. The colourful Sunday flea market ‘El Rastro’ is also a highlight. Apart from experiencing the city as a tourist, I’ve also got an insider’s view of Madrid from my colleagues. Madrid boasts a huge number of traditional and chic bars and cafés and I’ve had the chance to sample the nightlife during La fiesta de San Isidro, in Spanish style: salir de marcha (pub crawl). I have been treated to the typical cañas (beers) and a selection of tapas by the good food-loving Madrileños…and I was very impressed!

The city is a fascinating contrast of history and industrial development, with plenty more places to be explored. I am looking forward to discovering more hidden jewels during the remaining of my stay in the Spanish capital—from Flamenco bars to beautiful gardens. With Madrid struck by the World Cup fever, I can’t wait to soak up the amazing atmosphere.

¡Es hora del fútbol!

Freda
As the NASCENT project is slowly coming to an end, we are all busy finishing research that should be done before moving to another projects or plans we may have, doing all the writing that can multiply itself while we are asleep, travelling around and getting a little bit crazy about the time constantly running out. In such a situation it would be almost impossible not to appreciate the change of environment especially when it involves staying for a while in the small, but so beautiful, Compiègne. Its unique atmosphere and tranquillity helps me to actually stop for a short moment and forget about all our worries. Still, being here for almost a month, I cannot keep myself from sitting by the window every evening and listening to all those sounds coming from outside – birds and crickets singing, where no cars or disturbing big city noises are allowed.

During my secondment in Karsten’s group, I have had the great opportunity to learn new, fantastically interesting things for me, that I am sure, are going to rock my scientific world soon! Also, what is as important, I managed to look at the ‘old’ problem of fluorescent MIPs from the very new perspective, pouring in me a little bit of the optimism I needed so much these days. Having spent June in Compiègne, I had the chance to meet the ‘Glycosense’ team from Jena, Germany and listen to few very stimulating presentations that will surely broaden my horizons a lot.

Of course the lab crew at UTC, always eager to help me with literally any problem I may have, should not be underestimated. They even let me take the MIPO teddy bear for the weekend at no additional costs, but the hard work. So taking the chance, I would like to thank all those wonderful people for welcoming me so warmly and Karsten – thank you for having me in your lab and your unfailing patience. I will miss you a lot guys and hopefully see you next time!

And now the time has come to set off for another scientific adventure (but not only that...), this time in London.
As I did not know what career path to pursue after the PhD, and because I still wanted to stay in touch with science, I decided to consider the different options in science careers besides research.

I discovered that there were many possibilities of careers in science that do not involve research in a laboratory including publishing, editing, intellectual property… The career that was the most appealing to me was in science policy.

In order to gain some experience, I decided to undertake a three-month internship at the Science Policy Center (SPC) at The Royal Society.

The Royal Society celebrated its 350th anniversary and therefore a lot of interesting events were organized.

During these three months, I was involved in recording the impact of the activities of the SPC including policy lab (small debates organized by SPC about an important science matter in the society), publications, reports… in the media and parliament. I was also involved in generating a ‘best practice of recording impact’ document for each policy advisor working on a particular project to be able to record and evaluate their own impact. Since I was also involved in organizing events, I had the pleasure to meet Angela Merkel when she received the King Charles II award for her participation in the progress of science throughout her whole career. This award is rarely given and the last person to be honored with this award was the President of India in the 80s.

This was a fantastic experience for me, working in a very nice team and also in a very nice building and with a fabulous restaurant well-known for their delicious puddings!

This internship gave a good insight of how science could be advised to the policy makers in the government. This also made me realise that after a while I was missing the lab and research and therefore I needed to spend some more time doing research before starting a career in science policy.

That is why I decided after my internship to pursue my career in research at least for a little while longer and undertook a post-doc position at the School of Pharmacy where I have been working since the beginning of June.

Ania

Ania Servant at The Royal Society

Her experience

Angela Merkel receiving the King Charles II award from the President of the Royal Society Lord Martin Rees.
Ania minutes after her viva with Marina

party time
The leading popular science monthly journal Wiedza i Życie (Knowledge and Life) published an article (No. 4, April 2010, pp. 31-34) by Jaroslaw Chrostowki in which the research of the Polish NASCENT team on selective for melamine piezoelectric microgravimetry chemical sensor, based on molecularly imprinted polymers, was described. For those who can read polish, an excerpt of the article, entitled "Oszust w mleku" ("Cheat in milk"), can be access online at: http://www.wiz.pl/main.php?go=1&op=2&id=240

The article describes principles of molecular imprinting in polymers so that every housewife could understand it. Moreover, the article explains how this imprinting can be used for devising a piezoelectric microgravimetry chemical sensor for selective determination of melamine. This amine was added to milk and milk products, mostly in China, to increase readings of protein content in these products. The analysis of the food products for proteins relays on determination of nitrogen. This is because proteins are major nitrogen suppliers in our food. Melamine is 66% rich in nitrogen. So, if you dilute milk with water and add melamine to it then the nitrogen level in it remains the same. This fraud would go smoothly if infants fed with baby formulas using this milk would not started to die because of kidney malfunctioning. Because of hat, several death sentences of guilty swindlers were executed in China in 2008.

Scientifically, the sensor is described in the Analytical Chemistry, vol. 81, No 24, December 15, 2009, pages 10061-10070.

Moreover, Professor Kutner was interviewed by a journalist of Program One of the National Polish Radio on the same topic and this interview was aired in a news block on 24 March, 2010, at prime time, i.e., at around 5:00 p.m.

Professor Kutner also actively participated in the 43rd Heyrovsky Discussion, an international conference annually organized in the Castle Trest’ by the Jaroslav Heyrovsky Institute of Physical Chemistry of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in Prague, on May 30 till June 3 2010. This year Discussion was entitled: “Electrochemistry of Organic Molecules and Coordination Compounds”. More details on the Discussion are available on the conference webpage at: http://www.jh-inst.cas.cz/~hdisc/.

At the Discussion, he chaired one session and presented a lecture, entitled: “Supramolecular complexation of biogenic amines by functional electroactive monomers of thiophene derivatives for formation of molecularly imprinted polymer (MIP) films for biosensor development”, which was authored by Agnieszka Pietrzyk, Wlodzimierz Kutner, Subramanian Suriyanarayanan, Raghu Chitta, Eranda Maligaspe, Melvin E. Zandler, Francis D’Souza, Francesco Sannicolò, and Patrizia R. Mussini.
Inbal Tsarfati was born in Rishon Le Zion, a small city near Tel Aviv, Israel, in August 1982. Just before she went to high-school her family moved to Modi’in, a place she considers as home.

During her high school she studied chemistry, physics and computer skills, and decided she wanted to continue in a road allowing her to combine all of these disciplines.

Thus, after serving in the Israeli Army, as required, she moved to Be’er Sheva to study Biotechnology Engineering at Ben Gurion University in the Negev. In her fourth year of undergraduate studies she has applied and was accepted to the fast track towards M.Sc., and engaged on an interdisciplinary project under the supervision of Dr. Levi Gheber. During Her M.Sc. she studied the effect of miniaturization of antibody microarray to nanoarray. In this research she modeled the reduction and succeeded miniaturizing the microarray spots to submicron dimensions.

In addition she took part in a joint research on the topic "Detection of Nano-biochip Arrays by Raman Spectroscopy", with participation of Prof. Ilana Bar from the Physics Department, Ben Gurion University, and Prof. Karsten Haupt, Compiegne University of Technology, France.

She currently continues her studies as a Ph.D student under the supervision of Dr. Levi Gheber, and concentrates on Development of strategies for fabrication and signal enhancement of protein nano arrays. Within this framework, she has expanded her expertise in Prof. Haupt’s lab, in Compiègne for two months from April to May 2010.

Freda Chio was born in Macau, in 1985. She moved to the UK with her family as a teenager and grew up in the city of Birmingham.

She graduated in 2009 in Pharmaceutical Chemistry at Queen Mary, University of London where she carried out her MSci project working on the synthesis and polymerisation of 2,3-diaminopropionic acid derivatives.

She started her PhD studies at the same university in September 2009 under the supervision of Dr. Adrian Dobbs. The research is focused on developing the aza-silyl-Prins reaction into a viable route for the synthesis of tetrahydropyridines and to elaborate the work to the aza-Prins reaction for the synthesis of piperidines.

Starting from May 1st 2010, she joined the NASCENT programme as an early stage researcher in Marie Curie Network for three months at the Complutense University of Madrid (UCM). She will be working on the preparation of magnetic molecularly imprinted polymer particles.
The QMUL team attended the “Frontiers of Chemistry” Symposium in Paris on 21st May 2010

The Symposium celebrated the 10th anniversary of two important European scientific journals ChemBioChem and ChemPhysChem, at the Maison de la Chimie in Paris. Catalysis, Biochemical imaging, Chemical Biology, Bionanotechnology, Proteomics, Solar Cells, Spectroscopy were the main topics.

Three Nobel prize speakers talked not only about their amazing and interesting results but especially their passion for this work. They pointed out that the ingredients to research are hard work, new ideas, capacity and persistency to support these ideas.

Researchers presented their work, shared their knowledge, captured some suggestions and had constructive discussions. This event underlined the importance of communicating with each other and creating Network.

by Silvia Pavan