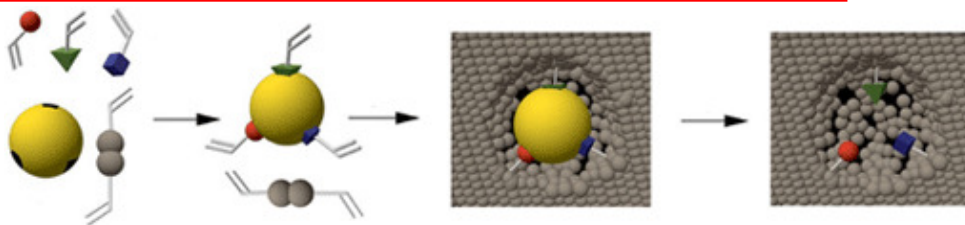


NASCENT Newsletter



Nanomaterials for **A**pplication in **S**ensors, **C**atalysis and **E**merging **T**echnologies



The second NASCENT summer school was organised in Compiègne, France, at the end of July 2008 and it was another excellent opportunity for all the researchers to meet again.

September 2008

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The CNRS team organised a wonderful event and provided a lot of support both during the days as well as in the evenings.

The combination of lectures and practicals covering scientific topics by two intensive days of training sessions in transferable skills such as 'How to give a presentation' and 'How to write your CV' organised by Dr Levi Gheber and Dr Marina Resmini.



After five days of intensive work everyone enjoyed a nice weekend in Paris before being joined by all the PIs from the other teams for the beginning of the International Meeting.



Professor Günter Wulff

Professor Günter Wulff, a member of the NASCENT advisory board, was invited to attend the meeting and give a plenary lecture.

The first day of the meeting was taken by the Mid-Term Review Meeting attended by Professor Luisa Torsi, the EU representative. All the ESRs and ERs gave a short presentation on their background and experience so far in the NASCENT Network. Sofia, Aurelien and Tristan, three ex-NASCENT researchers, attended the meeting after being invited by the Coordinator. Everyone was happy to see them and find out about their new jobs.



The last two days were taken by the scientific meeting and busy with all the presentations on the recent results. Needless to say that all the researchers gave excellent presentations and showed considerable progress in their projects.

New collaborations were discussed and secondments planned, all supported by the excellent organisation provided by Karsten and his team.

During the meeting the Steering Committee decided to bring forward the next two events in order to maximise the benefit for all the ESRs and ERs of the Network.

The next training event, the third NASCENT school will take place in Warsaw, and will be organised by IPC, during the first week of February. This will then be followed by the 4th NASCENT summer school, taking place in Budapest at the end of July, 2009.



The Resmini team travelled to France in July for the 2nd NASCENT Summer School, where all the students from the NASCENT research network, spread out through Europe and Israel converged for a week of training and networking (yes, that bit was done over at the pub).

The multicultural group then headed out to gay Paris for the 2nd NASCENT International Scientific Meeting, where we were joined by Professor Günter Wulff, one of the founders of the Molecular Imprinting field. Having previously received very good feedback from the EU experts on the progress of the Network, everybody felt encouraged to present their own work in front of such a figure in the field - even if suspicious paper denial behavior from his part tempted some Principal Investigators to slip something in the lovely old man's drink...



The training was held at the CNRS in Compiègne, a small and quiet city which really deserved much more silence than it got for that week. Characterization and evaluation techniques such as AFM, SEM and radioassays were some of the topics covered during the lectures and practicals, along with workshops on how to give a scientific presentation (focusing on the actual student speakers and avoiding the usual clichés) and how to write a CV and prepare for a job interview. And, proving that QMUL chooses wisely, our team member Kevin got hired in a NASCENT style version of the "Apprentice", but without the backstabbing drama-queen antics of Sir Alan Sugar's boardroom.

Having finally presented our work, we could all then indulge in the final celebrations, heading towards the "Europe Cabaret" which is probably the cabaret world's homage to pure kitsch. Washing down with copious amounts of wine the amazement of seeing neon lit topless ladies share the stage with a disco-dance hula-hoop cheesy juggler, we all celebrated the hard work of the previous weeks in big NASCENT style. Of the deep lessons learned that week we were all but little prepared for the final one: boss MR dances the YMCA like no other imprinter in the world!"

RICC



Time for celebration



Researcher's News

Two weeks on “tour de France” (with a little touch of Spanish)

By Artur Moro

It was a very busy two weeks for me in what started as a duo trip since me and Tristan were travelling together until we reached Compiègne.

The “quest” started in Barcelona, for the Marie Curie Conference between 16th and 18th of July. It was a big event (over 300 Marie Curie fellows were there, from all sorts of research fields), not so much scientific but more of an awakening regarding the future of our careers after the current Marie Curie Actions. Also very interesting discussions took place related to the growing partnerships between academia and the private sector. Apart from that, I got the opportunity to get in touch with a former colleague of mine who is now doing his PhD in Barcelona in the field of Genomics. I also met the Portuguese Contact Point for the Marie Curie fellows and other Portuguese researchers like me scattered all over Europe, so it was a nice way of getting to know more people and to have some more contacts for the future.



After Barcelona, a relaxing weekend was waiting for me and Tristan in the beautiful city of Montpellier. With a population of around half a million, Montpellier has a very interesting and rich historical centre. It has its own “Champs Elisées”, a central avenue that finishes with an “Arc du Triomphe”. It is a student city, due to the prestigious University of Montpellier, of which the School of Medicine was one of the first in Europe, dating back to the 12th century. Apart from the cultural sightseeing, it is located a few kilometres away from the Mediterranean Sea, so we took the chance for a quick swim at the beach, followed by a late afternoon picnic. In the vicinity of the city, we visited a small village called “St. Guillaume le Desert”. It is famous for its ancient abbey and the village is a stop on the “Way of St. James” (or as we call it: “The path of Santiago” - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Way_of_st_james), one of the most famous catholic pilgrimage paths ending in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. The historical centre is really peaceful and beautiful and the surrounding landscape is wonderful.

The weekend passed in a rush and Sunday afternoon, we took the train to Compiègne via Paris. Upon arrival, Aude picked us up at the station and we met all of the other people that were already at the hotel. With some beers and kebabs, we improvised a picnic by the river.

The whole week was very helpful in the professional level since we got to actually make the lab work, as well as seeing the apparatus used for the research being done at the UTC. The social programme was also interesting (as always!), with evenings being spent at the pub or by the lake when the stress of the forthcoming presentations was temporarily set aside. The lectures from Marina and Levi were extremely useful and I think I speak for everyone by saying that they will be useful for the rest of our careers.



After a hard-working week it was again time to relax, this time in the city of light. The weekend was spent between museums and the multiple historical landmarks. In the meantime I had the chance to meet up and catch up the latest news with a very good friend of mine who is also a Marie Curie fellow working near Paris. I was also very happy to see Aurélien (Ó Rei Leao!) and Sofia once again and to talk about their new careers outside the project.

On Monday, back to work! Although the presence of the designated EU expert made some of us nervous, in the end it all went perfectly. The scientific lectures were also very well presented by all the researchers and I think we can all congratulate ourselves for that. Personally, I think Levi's lecture on Thursday helped a lot to develop these specific skills.

On Tuesday night... no words to describe it! As one of the researchers said: “Any conference or meeting that has half-naked women in it, that's what I call a great event!” (I'm not sure if these were the exact words but you get the general idea... but the best was saved for after the cabaret, when all of us joined the dance floor. At some point I came to my table to get some wine and I realised that there was absolutely NO ONE sitting, everybody was up on the stage!

The last evening (in my case on Thursday), we had the surprise appearance of Daniel at dinner and we got an update on his new life back in France.

The journey back to Jena was long and tiring and after these two weeks away from home it was good to be back.

To finish, I must say it was a great two weeks and I loved to be with all of the NASCENT people once again. As I remember the goodbyes on Wednesday, I feel a little bit sad that it will take a while (until the Winter School in Poland) until I see all of you guys again.

I leave you with a sentence by Kevin Flavinho: “Now that's what I call Networking!”

See you soon! 

A different planet!

By Subramanian Suriyanarayanan



It is a great pleasure for me to share my experiences in Warsaw and within the NASCENT network with this newsletter. Warsaw, city of historical importance and for me too, since I enjoyed snowfall for the first time in my life. The day I landed in Poland it was 5°C and, believe me or not, I felt as if I were on a different planet.

I live in “Długa”, which means long street in Polish, and it is located in the old town of Warsaw city. For the first two weeks, I found myself as an odd man out, because I could not see another Indian face in Warsaw. For sure not many Indians are staying in Poland compared to other European countries. At a snail's pace, I explored the city over the weekends, and started enjoying the taste of Poland with a map of Warsaw and sandwiches.



Of course, by this time, I made some Indian friends to roam about the country. Basically I am interested in exploring the mysteries of history, and Warsaw is the best city for my curiosity. Museums, monuments, palaces abound and portray several incidents and happenings of the world. With this country of diverse life style and outlook, I am happy to stay in Warsaw, accompa-

nied by my job, wife, and special norms, ethics, food culture of Poland and of course snowfall. More than me, my wife likes this city for its tradition, awesome weather and weekends. Traditionally, this country is rich in cultural, religious aspects and scientific findings. The old town, is the place I like best in Warsaw. This part of the city is peculiar with old style buildings, a variety of music, dance and programmes, especially at weekends. Well, I should mention my bitter experience in Poland while receiving my residence permit card. Thank God, I got it with immense struggle in the end.



Last week my wife and I went to a hotel for “Onam” celebrations, which is a ritual being followed by Hindus in India. It was an enjoyable moment as we could feel Indian traditions in Poland.



The Institute of Physical Chemistry where I work, is located close to my house. It only takes 15 minutes by bus. The Institute is affiliated to the Polish Academy of Sciences and offers different scientific programmes for graduate students. The project which I address aims at devising chemosensors for clinically important biogenic amines. I have planned my objectives toward exploring new methods for application of molecular thin films in nanotechnology. In this regard, I learned in the six-month training how to use thin films to devise chemosensors. Moreover, I have been trained to write chapters and contributed to chapters in an edited book on MIPs entitled: “Molecularly imprinted polymers – fundamentals and applications”. I have developed my experiments as well as my writing skills during my tenure here. Among amicable labmates I am happy with this job and planning to extend my career in Poland.

The NASCENT Summer School in Compiègne was a cherished moment and without a special mention about the NASCENT International Scientific Meeting in Paris, this article will be incomplete. It was a great opportunity for me to gain a broad view on recent developments in molecularly imprinted polymers and to develop my personality toward my future research career. Special thanks to Professor Karsten Haupt for the hospitality. I am eager to see all you guys once again in the winter school in Warsaw.

Cheers. **Subbu**



Around the World in Seven Days

By Dr Kevin Flavin



Our epic adventure began in the heart of east London, just a mere 9585 km from our reasonably priced hotel in Tokyo, Japan. Myself and Sardinian folk hero Davide Carboni boarded the central line, en route to Heathrow, with our suitcases and suspiciously shaped poster receptacles in hand. After meeting our sisters in arms Anna Rita Faria Vidal Jorge and Ania Marie-Elise Irene Servant (such beautiful names), we set off on our twelve-hour voyage to the other side of the world.

Six Hollywood blockbusters, a nap and a game of Tetris later and we had arrived in Narita airport. Following some general confusion, a lack of Japanese comprehension and a quick cup of cappuccino, at Starbucks no less, we found ourselves on the train to Sakura Hotel, in Ikebukuro, Tokyo. It was at this point that our torturous fight against jetlag kicked in, and without delay we magically transformed us into a faction of temperamental children. Following our collective fight against the changing time zones, and our well over due check in to the hotel, we got our first taste of the local cuisine. After a lot of pointing and sign language our feast arrived and was washed down with a very nice bottle of sake (I'm still not quite sure who made the sign for chicken tails and hearts?).

The next day after a well-earned night's sleep in Tokyo, we embarked upon our maiden voyage on the Shinkansen (the bullet train), which took us in a westerly direction through Osaka to Kobe,





our final destination, and the location of the eagerly awaited MIP2008 conference. On arrival at the Crown Plaza Hotel I began to appreciate the extraordinary standards that the Japanese people set for themselves, with respect to the support and attention to detail they afford visitors, seemingly unparalleled in our European culture. The swimming pool, gym and magnificent view from our 25th floor bedrooms, were also of course an incentive to brag to other conference attendees that stayed at the less extravagant organiser's hotel.

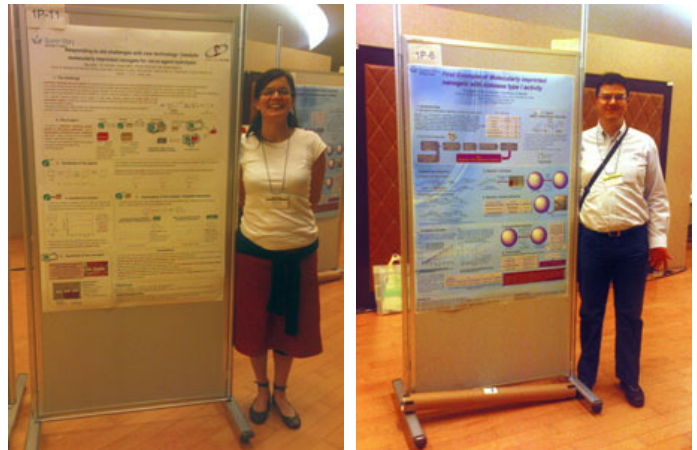
After reacquainting with old friends at the welcome party, what can now only be remembered as "Black Sunday" ensued. For the first time in nearly half a century, my local hurling (Irish sport) team made it to the All-Ireland final, the pinnacle of the sport, a game that I managed to witness following great difficulty, with imprinters of numerous nationalities and origins, in an Irish pub on the far end of the earth. This incredible event was however spoiled, especially for all those emanating from County Waterford, by the largest thrashing in an all-Ireland hurling final for over 114 years.



Around the World in Seven Days (continued)



Following the agonising defeat of the night before, the first day of the conference “kicked off” with a very *interesting* opening lecture by Professor Klaus Mosbach. This was followed later in the day by some exciting lectures from both the coordinator (Marina Resmini) and the vice-coordinator (Karsten Haupt) of the NASCENT network. The first day’s oral contributions were brought to a conclusion with the young scientists session, in which ten of the poster presenters were asked to give a short oral presentation based on their work. To the network’s great delight, Arnaud (PhD from Karsten’s group), who had been chosen as one of the ten, left the opposition in the wake of his smooth French accent and obviously his fantastic scientific work, to take first place. The first poster session of the conference closed the day’s proceedings and was followed by a tranquil night for most.



lecular imprinting. Thank you very much for that! Professor Takeuchi! This, combined with the interesting chicken dish I had consumed at lunchtime, was definitely, how should I put it?, not helping my situation. However, the anxiousness did subside after I finally got up to speak and thankfully managed not to trip over a cable and fall off the stage. The second day was brought to a close with the conference “Gala” dinner at which, to my great surprise, there was a notable absence of chairs, stools or seating accessories of any kind. This



however did not seem to phase anyone and was followed by much discussion, some great oriental food and copious amounts of sake. Many of the conference attendees decided to exercise their vocal cords, following the dinner, in one of the local Karaoke bars!!?... and even though Kobe had endured an earthquake of historic proportions in the not so distant past, I’m not so sure they will ever recover from that!



Professor Günter Wulff initiated the second day’s events with a planary lecture on the preparation of enzyme mimics and his work in this area during the later years of his career. I’m not quite sure who was responsible for the scheduling of the conference, but if they had wanted to make me nervous they were succeeding! I was scheduled to present just a few hours after the “creator” of mo-

To say the least, a lot of fatigued figures appeared on the third day of proceedings, after the musical antics of the night before, however the less said about this matter the better. A visit to one of the most famous castles in Japan ensued after a shorter than normal day of lectures and two shattering hours on the bus to Himeji. It became clear however after reaching our final destination, that



beauty and intricacy of the structure in question, far outweighed the affliction we had faced to get there. And when I finally got my first glimpse of it through the bus window, realisation hit me.... I'm an idiot! For two hours I had been imagining this stronghold in my head and for two hours I was conjuring up this image of stone and



towers in a typical Japanese style, and its design and beauty are unlike anything I have ever seen before.

The final day of the conference was our day of farewells, some to people we have known for an age and some to newfound friends that we hope to see again and some simply to that nameless stranger who danced on the table during karaoke. Nonetheless, we got our last taste of science, before embarking on our return journey, from Professor Kenneth Shea who talked about some extraordinary work he has recently done on epitope imprinting (keep an eye out for his next paper, it will be good). Boarding the Shinkansen we were preparing our minds for a last night in Tokyo, before chasing the sun back across Asia and Europe to the little island, that for the moment, we call home.



mortar, somewhere in between Lord of the Rings and Robin Hood? Reality however was a distant world from any of the daft notions flying around in my head, this castle and its oriental architectural uniqueness has multiple



Around the World in Seven Days (continued)



Following a trip to a dark graveyard, an enlightened drink in a mysterious place, and one long stand (woops, sorry Rita) we convened back at the hotel for one last beer before we left Japan.



After just a couple of hours sleep, we were on our way back to the airport, which consisted of a lot of running, getting on the wrong train carriage, getting off at the wrong station and some generally uncoordinated behaviour. At last arriving at Narita, we communally considered that the rushing and racing had come to an end! How wrong were we? Following a parting of ways, in the departures lounge, while seeking gifts of oriental origin, one



of our party lost his way, the unexpected one, the careful one, the cautious one, the Sardinian one. Luck was on our side, however, the plane had been delayed, and while Davide had found himself wandering in the wrong direction, in the wrong terminal, he had realised the time and began to hasten. His hastening turned to hurrying and his hurrying soon

into full out sprinting, with a bag the size of a small person on his back (roll the chariots of fire theme tune); it was a sight to behold, Davide screeching around the corner to the departure gate, with the visions of a missed flight painted all over his face. However, all's well that ends well, and that is true of this trip, we went, we learned a lot, we survived and we returned in one piece. And in the words of Jules Verne (author of around the world in eighty days): "Science, my lad, is made up of mistakes, but they are mistakes which it is useful to make, because they lead little by little to the truth."



Kevin



Roche Continents 2008: Exploring the common ground of creativity and innovation in arts and sciences

By Rita Jorge

As a representative of QMUL, I was selected to participate in the "Roche Continents 2008", a workshop about Creativity & Innovation in the Arts and the Sciences.

The workshop was held in Salzburg, Austria, in August 2008, amongst the mountains that harboured the singing nun Maria von Trapp and the Von Trapp brats. Unfortunately, the workshop participants received no clear evidence that the hills were, in fact, alive - except for the ethanolic diatribes of some cringe worthy versions of the "Sound of Music" hits (a side effect of the free beer & wine provided by Roche during that week).

The workshop consisted of morning lectures and group activities – such as learning how to play the djembé as a united team (painful...) - and afternoon talks about the contemporary operas planned for the night.

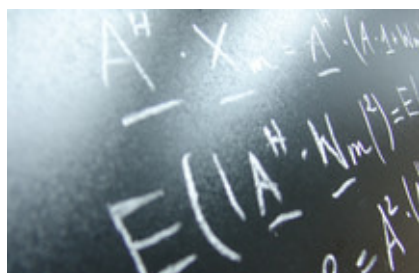
Aside from very few people (yes...the artists...) the general idea was that contemporary opera is about as enjoyable as nails on a blackboard, and everyone felt elevated by the experience of enduring it for two hours every night without going on a crazy murdering rampage afterwards (...really... it's that disturbing).

From a scientific point of view, the opportunity of meeting Dr. Gianni Gromo and Professor Klaus Muller was amazing. Their talks showed to everybody there (scientartists) that not everyone's career is very neat and clearly planned, and that sometimes - almost every time - true science has more to do with "passion, curiosity and foolishness" than with carefully cultivated "I'm-so-good-it's almost-a-sin" type of arrogance.

Yay to the underdogs! Although I confess that if I hear the word "Creativity" again I will run straight to the river and slap a goose around. I also admit that it was one of the most inspiring and enjoyable experiences of my scientific career so far.

Shaking hands with the President of Roche Pharma and the President of Austria over a 'pint' of champagne wasn't that bad either...

For more information about Roche Continents (or to apply next year) see: <http://www.roche-continents.net/>



Researchers... Coming and Going

NASCENT welcomes two new Early Stage Researchers who started their employment at UCM and CNRS in September 2008.



Jolanta Zdunek (UCM) is from Szczecin, Poland. She investigated the physico-chemical properties of organic compounds of lanthanide ions at the University of Wrocław and attained her MSc in 2007. Jolanta did her PhD studies at the Chemistry Faculty, University of Wrocław as a member of Physical Chemistry of Lanthanides and Structure of Liquid Systems research group.

Pinar Cakir (CNRS) was born in Çorlu, a small town in the European part of Turkey, close to Greece. She studied chemistry at the Bogaziçi University in Istanbul and obtained her BSc in Chemistry in 2004. She then worked as an analytical chemist at BILIM, a big pharmaceutical company. In 2005 she went back to university to further her studies and obtained her MSc in Chemistry Major.



Pinar also likes reading, playing the flute and painting on wood and fabric.

Our industrial partners KODAK and POLYNTCELL will employ their ER early next year. Please help them by circulating their job advertisement widely, published on the NASCENT website.



The NASCENT Team wishes HAPPY BIRTHDAY

to:

Daniel, Marina, Giorgio, Ana and Rita



NASCENT

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Please send all your news and photos
to the NASCENT Administrator:
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Polish Academy of Sciences

Forthcoming NASCENT Events

Third NASCENT Winter Training School

1-6 February 2009 Warsaw, Poland
NASCENT researchers will meet again in February next year for the third Winter School which will be held at the Institute of Physical Chemistry of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IPC PAS) in Warsaw, from Monday 2nd to Friday 6th February 2009.

Participants will have to arrive in Warsaw on Sunday 1st February 2009.

More information will be published on the NASCENT website.

Kodak Workshop
May 2009, Cambridge, UK

**4th NASCENT
Summer Training School**
19-24 July 2009, Budapest, Hungary

**3rd NASCENT
International Meeting**
26-29 July 2009, Budapest, Hungary

**4th NASCENT
International Meeting**
April 2010, Beer Sheva, Israel



Marina presenting Levgen his prize for the best photograph taken at the First NASCENT International Scientific Meeting.