



Dynamic Interactive Nanosystems

Marie Curie Initial Training Network

Interview with Susanne Schneider ESR – Strasbourg University, Strasbourg, France



Susanne Schneider

I was born in Halle (Saale) in Germany where I went to school and where I pursued my undergraduate studies in Chemistry at the Martin-Luther University. The studies there covered a broad range of Chemistry including Inorganic, Analytical, Organic, Physical and Theoretical Chemistry and consisted of theoretical and practical training. At the end of my studies I somewhat felt like I needed a change and applied for several Master's programs abroad. I was lucky because the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) granted me a scholarship which then allowed me to sign up for a Master by Research at the University of Otago (Dunedin, New Zealand). I was working on a very interesting project involving redox active hydrogels under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Steve Moratti and Prof. Lyall R. Hanton. I feel that working abroad taught me a great deal about academic research, where you always encounter people from different countries. Since October 2012 I have started a PhD at the Université de Strasbourg under the Cosupervision of Prof. N. Giuseppone and Prof. J.-M. Lehn .

What is your PhD project about? What objectives do you have to reach? What have you achieved so far?

My PhD consists of one main project and two side projects. The main project focuses on the synthesis of a new macromolecule and the study of its molecular and supramolecular properties. The synthesis of this macromolecule was the first big challenge of my PhD, and was nothing but trivial. But the work paid off and I am now studying the properties of this new macromolecule. This means I have to learn

about many different physico-chemical techniques, which is challenging and very interesting at the same time. The other two projects are in collaboration with Dr. Barboiu in Montpellier, who is also part of the DYNANO network. After synthesizing the target molecules, the projects required the use of techniques such as electrochemistry, fluorescence assays or DLS. Again, this was a great opportunity to learn some new techniques, as well as to do a collaboration with a different group. This gave me the chance to do a secondment and spend some time in a different laboratory.



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What is the best thing about taking a PhD in the framework of an ITN European Project? What is challenging?

One of the best things for me was the secondment that I did in Montpellier. It was great to learn some different techniques and to work within a different group, in a different city. I learned a lot in that short period of time and liked the topic very much. In addition, I also enjoy the meetings with all the DYNANO partners and the hands-on training on certain techniques that is offered to us during those meetings.

A PhD is always challenging, it is important to manage your time properly, to focus on the things that work well and to be able to critically look at your own work. I feel that being in this network always helped the progress of my PhD, as there are so many experienced researchers that can help.

Could you tell us something about your secondments: how many, where? What was the best think you learned/achieved during your secondments?

I was working for almost two months in the group of Dr. Barboiu in Montpellier. I learned about many techniques that are used to characterize artificial transport in bilayer membranes and I also learned a lot about electrochemistry.

What did you learn from your participation to national/international events during your PhD?

I learned that there is a lot out there to discover that I would like to learn about. Science is a broad field and its applications are very diverse. It is good to see what other people are working on. One example that comes to my mind is the one of Attana in Stockholm, a relatively young company that develops biosensors. The idea of the company was based on recent research results and the innovators put in a lot of creativity and effort into their company. I found it very impressive and inspiring.



Secondement in Montpellier in the NSA group



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Do you have some advice to master/engineer students considering taking a PhD?

I think the most important thing before starting a PhD is to find a topic you are interested in. To find out what interests you, the best way is to try and get as much practical experience as you can before starting your PhD. This might not always be easy to find, as Bachelor or Master's degrees are fairly structured, but you can work in a lab during summer break for example. I also find it very helpful to talk to people beforehand that have experience within the field and with the university that you are interested in.

Do you have any plans after completing your PhD?

I have been very busy with my PhD and I still have some time before I complete my thesis, so it has not been my priority so far to make detailed plans for the future. Being part of the DYNANO network gave me a chance to expand my horizons in terms of what jobs are available for me, both in academia and in industry. At the moment I am weighing out my options and I will make a decision closer towards the end of my thesis.

*Thank you Susanne
and all the best for DYNANO.*



Institute Charles Sadron

Interviewed by Laurence Bosch

DYNANO in brief

Starting date: 1st November 2011

Project duration: 48 months

Number of partners: 15

Project Coordinator: Dr. Mihai BARBOIU,
European Membrane Institute -IEM, Montpellier, France.

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