

Our Trip to Hasselt

Or like Mr. Deferme would say:

“Funcoatings”

Hasselt:

Hasselt is with about 72 thousand citizens the capital of the Belgian Province Limburg, which is in the north-east of Belgium. It is a Flemish city, so the spoken language is a Belgian form of Dutch. The center is mostly car free and it contains a lot of historical buildings, such as the St. Quentin's Cathedral which was build between the 11th and 18th century and the “Herkenrode Abbey refuge house”, completed in 1542. Also, the streets in the center are often lined with cafes, restaurant or bars, so that there are a lot of outgo-possibilities. A lot of events are hold in Hasselt, so for example the yearly “Jeneverfeesten” where the history of jenever beverage in Hasselt is celebrated. Also, Carnival is celebrated but at a slightly different date than in most places.

Our Trip:

Our trip started on Sunday around 12 pm. After we gave our vote for the election of the Zweibrückener major, we drove first to Liège, where we spent the Sunday afternoon. We walked a bit through the city and despite it was very cold and rained a bit, we tried to do a little sightseeing. We came to a cathedral which looked very beautiful from the outside, so we decided to look inside. We went inside and yeah; a ceremony was held. Oops! We went further until we were frozen like hell, so we decided to drink a café and a tee respectively. After that, we went back to the car and drove to Hasselt. We arrived around 8 pm and first took or luggage to our rooms. After that, we looked for a restaurant because we were very hungry. Most of the restaurant were closed, because it was Sunday evening, 9 pm, and we were so glad as we found an open one. After the meal, most of the others decided to go back to the hostel, so in the end, only me and a friend of mine (I don't want to mention any names because of DSGVO, you know) were remaining. We strolled along the city, and he showed me some nice places to go or where he lived during his practical phase at the Hasselt university. We arrived at the hostel around 1 am.

The next day should start at 10 am, so we met at 9.15 and drove to the university. As we arrived, no one of us had a plan where we should go. We looked at the E-Mails from Mr. Deferme and saw: Room H2. We thought: okay, room H2 must be in building H. So first, we went to building H, but there was no one. It was already 10 o'clock, so we called Dave to ask where we should go, and we understood “Building B”, so we went to building B, but again, there was no person around. We had no plan where to go, because everyone didn't notice the mail in where there was standing that we had to go to building D. Anyway, we found it after a while, but that is the reason, why we were 20 minutes late for the first masterclasses on Monday. The first Masterclass I visited was from Dr Klaus Peter Crone and was hold about

“Industrial non-vacuum coatings for thin and thick layers”. It was quite interesting, because it gave a first overview about different coating technologies and in which case you can use them. After the lunch break, my second Masterclass was by Prof dr. Klaatje de Buysser about Ink formulation. It was also a bit interesting, but not that much as the first presentation because it was already more detailed, and I missed the necessary previous knowledge. Nevertheless, I learned something about problems in ink preparation and applying. The first day was ended with some tidbits in the foyer where we first networked with some other students from Leuven. While half of our group leaved earlier, we stayed a bit longer. The food was so good that we hadn't to eat anything else. As we arrived in the Hostel, we set off to meet the others. We went to a metal pub called Café De Witte Non, and even tough I'm the only metalhead in our group, everyone was feeling good. We drank a few beers, and even if the beer is a little bit more expensive than in Germany, it gets equable caused by the higher alcohol-percentage of 6 % and more. Three beers and everything's fine. We talked and laughed much, and I never imagined that the persons I didn't known well before are that cool persons. As I arrived at my bed, I began to feel the beer. Dammit, but never mind.

The next morning started tired. At least, we now knew the building we had to go so we weren't late this day. On Tuesday and Wednesday, we were supposed to listen to the Keynotes which took about 40 minutes and the presentations of the different PhDs that were joining the Summer School. It started with the presentation of Peter Visser from AkzoNobel, a worldwide operating Company specialized in ink-formulation and special chemistry with a yearly turnover about 9,6 billion Euros. He talked about “Chromate-free active protection coatings for the protection of aluminum alloys”. He first gave a small introduction to the different uses and the importance of corrosion inhibiting coating technologies for example in Aerospace, Automotive or electronic industry. Corrosion-inhibitors are working after a quiet easy concept. Once the Topcoat and the corrosion inhibiting are damaged, the Inhibitor is released and passivates the damaged are. For a satisfactory inhibition, the inhibitor must fulfill some criteria, so it must be a soluble inhibitor and the passivation mechanism must proceed fast, effective and irreversible. Till today, the most common used inhibitors are based on Chromates which are unfortunately toxic and carcinogenic, why they will be banned in a shift of sunset date by 7 years by the REACH compliance. To treat this banning, researchers are looking for other protections, and found promising assessments in coatings based on magnesium or lithium. Further investigations will produce more and more trustworthy results. After the keynote, two PhD-lectures took place. It was hard to follow because they got a lot of theoretical aspects, I knew nothing about, and I also couldn't understand the speaker every time because they spoke sometimes too quiet or with an accent. Often, I also couldn't retrace the used devices like ToF-SIMS and therefore the according results because we never discussed them in the lectures. Even sometimes I couldn't get the sin of the research. Anyway, sometimes I could follow and was a bit interested in the presented results. Especially the presentation of Mr. Sachs was interesting because I could get the sin behind it and the possible technical use. After the presentation, there was a small guided tour trough different labs and workplaces of the university, where they also showed us on what they are working. Till today I can't get the purpose of the lab where they tested the stability of different packaging and how this relates to functional coatings. As this was finished, the conference dinner took place, which was on an important aim because I nearly died of hunger. The meal was very good, it

contained a soup of water-cress, a carpaccio and as the main dish Belgian Meatballs. But as it says: the best comes last, and the dessert was amazing. It was like a Tiramisu but with apples and cinnamon, and yeah, no more words needed. As we arrived back in the hostel, we were that tired, that we decided to stay and make a smooth evening. So, we sat in the lobby, drank a bottle of wine we brought, and played a game I forgot the name of.

The next day was not very different from Tuesday. We were all quite tired, and the presentations were more or less interesting. The most interesting presentation in my opinion was the one by David Schönfish about the "Microtechnical Moisture Sensor for Textile Applications" because like at Mr. Sachs, I could get the purpose behind it and the technical application. Also, the presentation of Hendrik Reynders about "Coating iron oxide nanoparticles for drug delivery" was very interesting because it was the first time that a lecture was really related to our study, and it is also a topic that could be very useful in further medical technology. Later, there was a presentation from Dr. David Seveno about "How fast can one coat a surface?". At first it sounded quite interesting, but later, I was a bit disappointed. I imagined it would be a presentation about the fastest coating technology and how fast really you can coat a surface, but he talked a lot about the angle between the droplet and the surface and after a time, I couldn't follow anymore and was a bit disinterested.

Never mind, in the evening, we wanted to visit a restaurant as an friend said, there are "exquisite" fried meals. As we came there we were all a bit disappointed. Short story: The meal wasn't very good, and it looked as if you put a whole chicken or what else it was in a blender. And it also tasted like that. After that we went to the funfair that took place in Hasselt. It was cool, most of us drove a fairground ride and some were not far from getting sick. After that we entered again the metal pub, drank a few beers and laughed again a lot.

The next morning was already the last one. We booked-out of the Hostel, packed or luggage to the car and drove to the university. The last day in the university were the labs and nearly every one of our group has chosen the two labs taking place in Hasselt. The lab in the forenoon was about Coating technology, so they showed us the different devices they're using for different printing technologies like spray-coating or inkjet printing. It was not that interesting because they just showed us these devices and we hadn't done anything on our own. Also, the spray-coater wasn't even working, so they couldn't show it to us. In the afternoon, we joined the lab "ink formulation" where we should make or own ink. It was very fun because we could at least make something on our own. Also, it was mostly a typical chemical labor which we already knew and worked in. The only negative thing about it was, that the time was quite short, and I also had the feeling, that our supervisor was a bit overtaxed because he was alone with all 10 to 15 people of us. Nevertheless, we had finished our ink. After the lab, we ate a few snacks before we made or way home towards Zweibrücken. The ride was, like the hole week, very funny and full of laughers. It was a very sentimental moment as we arrived and had so split. But we saw each other again on Friday, so I could survive it.

In conclusion, the summer-school was a week full of fun, friends and with many good moments I will remember a long time. And even if not every lecture was that thrilling, there still were a few interesting and informative moments.