Field study of NOx degradation by a mineral-based air purifying paint

Q.L. Yu*, Y. Hendrix, S. Lorencik, H.J.H. Brouwers

Department of the Built Environment, Eindhoven University of Technology, P. O. Box 513, 5600 MB, Eindhoven, The Netherlands

A R T I C L E   I N F O

Keywords:
Mineral-based transparent air purifying paint
Photocatalysis
Nitrogen oxides
Demonstration
Weather condition

A B S T R A C T

This paper studies the performance of a mineral-based transparent air purifying paint. The air pollutants removal efficiency of this photocatalytic paint was first determined following the ISO 22197-1 procedure under laboratory conditions. Subsequently, its air pollutants removal efficiency under realistic conditions was determined by outdoor monitoring with a duration of 20 months, applying a new monitoring protocol. The weather conditions, including temperature, wind flow, humidity, precipitation, and NOx concentration were continuously monitored. The efficiency of the photocatalytic paint was analyzed. The influence of the environmental parameters on the air pollutant removal efficiency as well as long term performance was discussed. The results show the excellent air purifying efficiency of this new paint, nevertheless the environmental parameters show dramatic effects on its long term performance. Furthermore, this study also confirmed the robustness of the proposed air purification performance monitoring protocol.

1. Introduction

Exposure to harmful gases such as nitrogen oxides (NOx) and sulphur oxides (SOx) or particulate matters (PM) has been associated with adverse health effects [1]. Due to the increase in concentrations of these harmful gases in large urban areas, the air quality is becoming a pressing issue, despite strict regulations on pollutant emissions [2]. Therefore, more and more attention is being paid to the removal of these pollutants. One of the most promising removal methods is the application of heterogeneous photocatalysis. Heterogeneous photocatalytic oxidation (PCO) has been studied for several decades and shown as an effective method for water or air purification [3] or self-cleaning [4,5]. Some metal oxide semiconductors like TiO2 and ZnO are photocatalysts which are commonly used for PCO applications [6–9]. Among them, TiO2 is widely used because of its many appropriate characteristics [10]. TiO2 has two main crystal forms of anatase and rutile with a band gap of 3.2 eV and 3.0 eV, respectively. Anatase has some more superior characteristics than rutile, such as a more favorable conduction band location for conjugate reactions and being able to form very stable surface peroxide groups during PCO reactions, which makes anatase the preferable choice to be used as photocatalyst [11].

Extensive studies on the photocatalytic oxidation of NOx have been carried out in the past years. Hashimoto et al. [12] studied the effect of using a titania-zeolite composite catalyst for the photocatalytic oxidation of NO and found a combination of TiO2 and zeolite of 7:3 by weight results in the highest PCO rate. Devahasdin et al. [13] studied the reaction kinetics of NO photocatalytic oxidation with an inlet concentration of 20–200 ppm. Ichiura et al. [14] studied the PCO of NOx using composite sheets containing TiO2 and metal compounds like CaO and MgO from which the CaO treated TiO2 indicated to have the greatest NOx conversion rate. Wang et al. [15] studied the reaction mechanism of PCO of NOx with an inlet concentration of 20–168 ppm using TiO2 supported on woven glass fabric. Yu and Brouwers [16] evaluated the influence of environmental conditions on the photocatalytic oxidation of NO under visible light irradiation, and proposed a kinetic model to predict the photocatalytic behavior of NOx [17]. Kuo et al. [18] studied the PCO of NOx under visible light using carbon-containing TiO2 and the effect of the wavelength of the light was investigated. Ballari et al. [19] investigated the synergetic effect of photocatalytic oxidation of NO and NO2 and observed a combined photocatalysis and photocatalysis of NO2, especially under a relatively high humidity level. Luévano et al. [20–22], developed TiO2 based photocatalysts modified by, for instance, WO3 and these new photocatalysts showed excellent NOx degradation performances. In addition, the effect of different substrates was also evaluated. Ballari et al. [23] evaluated the air decontamination performance of several modified TiO2 under visible light irrigation and proposed a radiation flux balance model to address the radiation absorption of the photocatalyst. Liu et al. [24] synthesized visible-light responsive carbonated-doped anatase TiO2 using sol-gel method and found that the carbonate dopants can help to promote the charge carrier's separation and serve as the photosensitizer for the absorption of visible light. Aghighi and Haghighat [25] confirmed the great effect of humidity on the photocatalytic efficiency.

However, up till now, the performance of photocatalytic materials...
The above reviewed literature shows the following distinguishable remarks: (1) photocatalysis offers distinctive advantages regarding air pollutant removal, for instance, no extra energy input is required and large surfaces can be applicable [33]; (2) environmental conditions play an essential role on the air pollutants degradation efficiency, reflected by the very varied performance of the photocatalytic coatings in various field studies, although those coatings in general show excellent efficiency under laboratory conditions [31,33]; (3) it is difficult to design a reliable field monitoring protocol as well as evaluation methods [30].

The presented project aims at the evaluation of the air pollutants removal efficiency of a newly developed mineral based transparent photocatalytic paint and development of a new protocol for monitoring the air purification performance under outdoor conditions. Firstly, the air pollutants degradation performance of the mineral paint was evaluated under laboratory conditions following the ISO 22197-1 [34], using NO as a model pollutant. Then, the photocatalytic paint was coated on a panel with the size of 100 cm × 65 cm, and lime render was applied as the substrate for the paint. A second panel with the same size using the same lime render as substrate was coated with the mineral paint but containing no photocatalyst, as a control panel. In addition, this photocatalytic paint was applied on a polycarbonate panel at a later stage, to investigate the effect of the substrate on the air pollutants NOx removal performance, by collecting and analysing the produced NO3− ions. The detailed experimental description and the monitoring principle are presented in Sections 2 and 3, respectively.

The air pollutant removal activity of the photocatalytic paint was firstly interpreted by using:

\[ NO_{x} \text{removal}(\%) = \frac{[C_{\text{NO}_x}]_{\text{in}} - [C_{\text{NO}_x}]_{\text{out}}}{[C_{\text{NO}_x}]_{\text{in}}} \times 100\% \]  

(1)
where $C_{\text{NOx,in}}$ is the inlet concentration of NOx (here only NO) [ppm], $C_{\text{NOx,out}}$ is defined as the average NOx concentration that exits the system of the last 5 min of the measurement time [ppm].

The results of these tests are shown in Fig. 2. The NOx removal efficiency of the lime render panel is 48.2% and the efficiency of the polycarbonate panel is 34.2%. The higher efficiency of the lime render panel can be attributed to the rougher surface which results in more available photocatalytically active sites. Furthermore, it should be noted that the generation of NO2 during the experiments is very low, confirming again the excellent air pollutant removal ability. It is suggested in Ref. [29] that a NOx removal of 45% can be achieved under ideal weather conditions with a paving stone that has a NOx removal of 38% under ISO 22197-2 condition. Therefore, a decent air purifying performance applying the present photocatalytic paint can be expected under outdoor conditions.

Furthermore, the reactive uptake coefficient was also evaluated. The reactive uptake coefficient is defined as the ratio of number of collisions that lead to reaction over all collisions of the gas-phase reactant with a reactive surface and it is calculated by following equation [35]:

$$\gamma = 4 \frac{k_{\text{rxn}}}{\nu S / V}$$  \hspace{1cm} (2)

where $V$ is the volume of the reactor [m$^3$], $\nu$ is the mean molecular velocity of the reactant [m·s$^{-1}$] and $k_{\text{rxn}}$ is the first-order rate coefficient [s$^{-1}$]. $\nu$ is calculated using,

$$\nu = \frac{8RT}{\pi M} \text{[m·s}^{-1}]$$  \hspace{1cm} (3)

where $R$ is the ideal gas constant ($R = 8.314$ J mol$^{-1}$ K$^{-1}$), $T$ is the absolute temperature [K] and $M$ is the molecular mass of the reactant [kg·mol$^{-1}$], and $k_{\text{rxn}}$ is calculated with,

$$k_{\text{rxn}} = -\frac{\ln(C_{\text{NOx,out}}/C_{\text{NOx,in}})}{t_{\text{rxn}}}$$  \hspace{1cm} (4)

where $t_{\text{rxn}}$ is the reaction time of the gas-phase reactant and the sample [s].

The dimensionless reactive uptake coefficient considers the surface reaction rate, while independent on the geometry of the reactor. Therefore, it can be directly used to indicate the performance of a given air purifying sample. The computed reactive uptake coefficients of the samples are $14.5 \times 10^{-4}$ and $9.2 \times 10^{-4}$. According to Ifang et al. [35], photocatalytic materials should possess a minimum reaction uptake coefficient value of $1 \times 10^{-3}$ in order to show air purifying effect. A reaction uptake coefficient value of this magnitude will not significantly improve the urban air quality. The excellent NOx reaction uptake ability under laboratory condition confirms again that a relatively good performance can be expected under realistic outdoor conditions.

### 3. Outdoor monitoring

#### 3.1. Monitoring principle

As discussed in the previous section, in the reported field studies, measurement of the NOx concentrations before and after application of photocatalytic products has often been used [29,30]. But this method shows certain disadvantages, for instance, it is rather difficult to interpret the local air quality by discontinuous samplings of the air at certain height level; the control streets or campaign sites in some field studies lack representativeness [36]; a short monitoring period does not provide a reliable spectrum of the effect of the environmental conditions on the air pollutant removal efficiency [29].

Hence in the present study, a new protocol is proposed to assess the outdoor air pollutant removal efficiency of the developed mineral-based transparent paint. Photocatalytic oxidation can be divided into three main steps: (1) mass transport and adsorption of pollutants from the bulk air to the surface of catalyst; (2) photocatalytic reaction on the catalyst; (3) desorption and mass transport of the reaction products. Extensive investigations on the photocatalytic oxidation mechanism have shown that NO in the gas form oxidizes to the final product, NO3, in liquid form through a number of reaction steps and intermediate, including NO2 in gas form [13,17,37-40]. Laufs et al. [41] reported HONO production from NO2 under dark condition, especially under high humidity condition, but the produced HONO can be very efficiently removed once UV irradiation is applied. However, Gandolfo et al. [42] observed the production of gas phase HONO by photocatalytic oxidation of NO2 under UV light irradiation, nevertheless, the production level is rather limited.

This indicates that the efficiency of NO removal can be interpreted if the amount of the produced NO3$^-$ (and possible NO2$^-$) can be relatively precisely quantified. In this case, if one can ensure that the produced NO3$^-$ (and possible NO2$^-$) can be efficiently collected, then the evaluation of the NO degradation by the photocatalysis becomes feasible. In this project, this principle is first applied, and a monitoring setup is designed for this purpose that will be described in detail in the following section.

#### 3.2. Description of the monitoring setup

The roof of the podium building (one floor) of the educational building Vertigo on the campus of Eindhoven University of Technology (Eindhoven, The Netherlands) was selected as the field study site because of the following reasons. This building is adjacent to the main traffic road and located within a campus containing a good number of residential/office buildings, as shown in Fig. 3, so this situation is representative to a typical Dutch city environment. A full weather station is installed on the roof of this building so the full spectrum of the environmental parameters could be collected. Furthermore, an online NOx monitoring analyzer could be placed on the roof so the NOx concentration could be continuously collected during the whole monitoring...
The setup of the outdoor monitoring is shown in Fig. 4. Two panels of 100 cm × 65 cm were prepared with lime render (No. 1 and 2 in Fig. 4) and one panel with polycarbonate (No. 3 in Fig. 4). The panels No. 1 and No. 3 in Fig. 4 were then coated with the mineral based transparent photocatalytic paint, and mounted to a back support. The other panel of lime render (No. 2 in Fig. 4) was coated with only the base of this transparent paint (i.e. without photocatalyst) and was used as a reference panel. The panels were fixed to the handrail of the roof, about 60 cm from the roof, facing to the south. Rain water reaching the surface of the panels was collected by a 2L bottle hanging beneath the panels. The water in the bottles was collected weekly and the panels were washed with distilled water to reset the amount of ions on the panels. In case of heavy rains, the collection frequency was adjusted in order to avoid possible water loss due to overflowing. The adopted artificial washing procedure was to make sure each week's measurement only measured the ions collected by the panels in that week and not from the previous weeks.

3.2.1. Ion chromatography calibration

The ions in the collected liquid were determined by employing an ion chromatography (Thermo Scientific Dionex TM ICS-1100 Ion chromatography). Calibrations were made in order to quantify the tested species, including Fluoride, Chloride, Nitrite, Bromide, Nitrate, Sulfite, Phosphate and Sulphate.

Based on the calibration lines, the ions in the collected liquid can be reliably quantified. Furthermore, the used demi-water was analyzed in order to determine whether the demineralized water is suitable for the washing of the samples. The goal was to find any impurities, which could affect the final results. It is shown that no significant impurities were found, thus demineralized water was used in further experiments.

3.2.2. Washing efficiency analysis

The washing efficiency was firstly assessed as it is reasonable to raise the question whether artificial washing once or more times is efficient enough to collect the produced ions from the surface of the panels. The PCO panel was washed several times in order to determine how much water has to be used in order to get representative results.
The ion masses of these washings were compared to the reference panel. Figs. 5 and 6 show the washing efficiency results based on two dates (2.10.2015 and 9.10.2015).

The results show that two sets of washing is relatively sufficient to wash most of the ions adsorbed on the surface of the PCO panel. This was obvious in case of sample washed on 2.10.2015. Three sets of washing were required on 9.10.2015 in order to get to the same level as on REF panel. Therefore, 4 sets of washing were eventually applied in order to wash both panels effectively throughout the whole monitoring period.

3.2.3. Post-monitoring analysis

This field study intended to assess the performance of the air purifying paint under real conditions. Under complex weathering, the testing sample would undergo significant changes, both physically and chemically. Therefore, a post-monitoring analysis study was planned. The samples placed outdoor for the field study was subjected to a series of experiments under fully controlled laboratory conditions. The chemical composition of the sample, including the elemental composition and chemical structure, was evaluated by using X-ray fluorescence (XRF) and X-ray diffraction (XRD) instruments. The air pollutant degradation performance of the exposed sample was assessed by lab test following the ISO 22197-1.

3.3. Pre-air quality monitoring

A pre-air quality monitoring was performed between March 2015 and May 2015 before the commencement of the real monitoring campaign on the performance of the photocatalytic paint. The aim was to check the robustness and stability of the monitoring system. Furthermore, the analysis was performed in order to evaluate the suitability of the environment for the analysis of photocatalytic efficiency of panels coated with the developed photocatalytic mineral paint. Some typical results, selected one week in March, are shown in Fig. 7.

The NOx concentrations at the location next to the panels were measured continuously using an online HORIBA 370 NOx analyzer (see the sampling point, labelled with No. 4 in Fig. 4). The NOx analyzer measures the NO and NO2 concentration every 5 s. Besides the NOx collection from the own analyzer, NO and NO2 data were also taken from public institute of people’s health and environment (RIVM, The Netherlands) [43] (see Fig. 8). These data were measured at the Genovevelaan Street in Eindhoven (about 4 km from the monitoring site in the present study).

These data show that the NOx concentration varies significantly during the day. Although in the peak hours, the concentration reached up to 115 ppb, this high concentration is very exceptional. Nevertheless, it can be seen that in most of the time the NO concentration is below 20 ppb. The measured NO2 concentrations are in most of the time higher than NO, as expected. But in peak values, it is clearly seen that NO concentration is higher, indicating the direct effect of car emissions. Furthermore, it can be seen that although the day-to-day NOx concentration values measured at the monitoring site are different from the values taken from RIVM, the trend as well as the range of the measured pollutants are very similar. This confirms the reliability of the site monitoring.

The following conclusions can be drawn based on the pre-air quality monitoring campaign:
A continuous air pollution (NOx) monitoring for the Vertigo building (TU/e) was performed between March and May 2015, the measurement showed the NOx collection using the online analyser was reliable.

The NOx concentration was correlated with the monitored concentration level by other governmental organizations, and the comparison shows the reliability of the own measurement at the monitoring site.

Full weather conditions were collected.

The NOx concentration is clearly related to the traffic next to the Vertigo building.

### 3.4. Air quality monitoring and results analysis

#### 3.4.1. NOx concentration monitoring

The real field study monitoring study began in July 2015 and ended in November 2016, covering the full four seasons. Within this period, the NOx concentration and other weather conditions were continuously monitored and the nitrates from the panels were periodically collected.

The NOx analyser measured NOx concentration based on the amount of molecules NOx compared to the amount of air molecules, i.e. with the unit of ppm. To express NOx concentrations in \( \mu g/m^3 \), the measured values were converted using Eq. (5):

\[
C (\mu g/m^3) = \frac{M \times C_{ppm} \times P}{R \times T}
\]

where \( M \) is the molar mass of the calculated gasses (NO or NO2) in grams per mole, \( C_{ppm} \) the concentration in ppm, \( P \) is the pressure (101325 Pa for 1 atm), \( R \) is the gas constant 8.314 and \( T \) the temperature in Kelvin (for these calculations the average of each day was used).

The collected NOx concentration data are shown in Figs. 9 and 10, where Fig. 9 shows the average values of every single day and Fig. 10 shows the highest values of every single day. A clear difference in concentration between the two figures can be observed, which shows that the NOx concentration can increase for short times. The EU goal is to have, on average, not more than 40 \( \mu g/m^3 \) NO2 (annual mean) and not more than 18 h per year in which the concentration is 200 \( \mu g/m^3 \) or more [44]. It was calculated that over the year only for 4.2 h the 200 \( \mu g/m^3 \) limit was exceeded. In addition, according to Fig. 9, the NOx concentration on average indeed did not reach 40 \( \mu g/m^3 \) in most days. Nevertheless, these low concentrations clarify that the amount of nitrates measured could have been higher if the same test would have been performed in more polluted areas [45].

#### 3.4.2. Weather monitoring

The data of the weather condition close to the panels were collected and shown in Figs. 11–15. The weather can have a large influence on the PCO reaction [16,46]. The humidity shown in Fig. 14 shows that the average humidity in Eindhoven is almost every day very high. Most of the time the RH is over 60% and often it even reaches over 80%. Such a high humidity level negatively influences the PCO efficiency [47,48].

The wind is relatively strong as the average wind speed is in general higher than 2 m/s, while according to Gallus et al. [31] a wind speed value of 1 m/s would provide good air removal efficiency. In addition to the very high humidity and wind speed, during the autumn and winter, the irradiance was low. In this period, the light intensities are in general lower than 50 W/m², about 20–30 W/m². While according to [49],
about 9% of the irradiance of solar radiation outside the atmosphere is UV light, which means a rather low UV light intensities of about 2–3 W/m² in the monitoring site. Folli et al. [45] reported that a UV irradiance value of 6.9 W/m² can provide an adequate NO abatement. This indicates that the acquired low UV irradiance value in this research would provide a rather poor photocatalytic effect. In overall, these poor weather conditions would contribute to rather low photocatalytic activities [50].

3.4.3. Results analysis

The amount of nitrate ions in the rain water and washing water collected by the panels are presented in Fig. 16. It has to be emphasized that nitrite was also analyzed in the collected water, but the amount was too low to be detectable. Therefore, only the amount of nitrate is
shown here. In addition to the total nitrate amounts, the amount of rain water collected by each panel is also shown since the total amount of ions collected in the rain water immensely depends on these amounts. The photocatalytic activity of the PCO panel with lime render as the substrate is visible for most of the measurements as its nitrate amount exceeds those of the reference panel. Nevertheless, in some weeks, the nitrate amount from the reference panel exceeds that of the PCO lime render panel. For example, in the first week of August 2016, the collected nitrate from the reference panel is obviously more than that from the PCO panel. This can be explained by the weather condition, as can be seen from Fig. 15 that it rained a lot in this week which resulted in very low or almost no photocatalytic effect due to supersaturation of the panels. It was found [30] that it is very hard to reconcile NO abatement entirely with a photocatalytic process under the conditions of little sun and substantial rain. Considerable pollution wash-off by rain is clearly observed in Fig. 16, especially when correlating the collected nitrate by the reference panel with the weather conditions shown in Fig. 15, which is also confirmed by Folli et al. [30].

It is also rather obvious that the activity of the PCO lime render panel decreases over the entire monitoring period. Initially the activity was supposed to increase during the summer time of 2016. However, the overall collected data did not show any extra high difference in nitrate amounts, possibly attributed to the high amount raining and deactivation of the photocatalyst. The reason for the deactivation will be further analyzed in the following sections.

The polycarbonate panel (No. 3) was installed at a later stage, in June 2016. It did not show significant differences in nitrate amounts in the first weeks after installation, compared to the reference panel. However, after the first three weeks, the photocatalytic activity started increasing. This can be explained by the time needed for the activation of the photocatalysts which were partly covered by the binder in the mineral paint. The coverage of the photocatalysts causes inhabitation of photocatalytic oxidation of air pollutants. In fact, the nitrate amounts surpass those of the lime render PCO panel. This higher activity indicates as well the deactivation of the PCO lime render panel. The large scale measurements showed that the lime render panel should have had a higher efficiency (See Section 2) indicating that if there would have been no deactivation, the lime render panel should have had a higher activity. Next to the nitrate amounts also the amount of rain water is higher, which can be explained by the different penetration depths in the panel attributed to the difference in the rendering materials. While this higher amount of rain water can have contributed to the higher nitrate amounts, the increase is too large to be only caused by the amount of rain.

In the whole monitoring period of 471 days, a total of 497.3 mg of nitrate was collected by the reference panel and 831.3 mg of nitrate by the photocatalytic lime render panel. In the whole monitoring period of 105 days, the photocatalytic polycarbonate panel collected 365.0 mg against 97.2 mg collected by the reference panel in that period. These results show on the one hand the effectiveness of the photocatalytic oxidation of NOx by the mineral paint, and on the other hand the deactivation of the photocatalysts on the lime-based panel over time.

Figs. 17 and 18 show separately the amount of nitrate measured from the water used to wash the panel and the rain water collected by the panels. It can be seen the majority of nitrate is collected by the natural rain flushing and the artificial washing only helps to collect the produced nitrate. This shows that artificial washing can be skipped in the future research applying this principle. As on the other hand, artificial washing does not really contribute much to the collected ions and on the other hand, artificial washing in fact alters the pollutants degradation efficiency because the surface becomes wet after washing which causes inactivation within certain time period.

In addition, the absolute amount of the NO₃⁻ that are removed by rain and artificial washing are calculated, by deducting the same amount of nitrate collected by the reference panel and the results are shown in Fig. 19. These figures show very evident the air purification efficiency of this mineral-based transparent coating. It is clear that the degradation efficiency becomes dramatically lower when there is a large quantity of rain water, which causes the competition between water molecular and NOx molecular [25].
3.5. Post-monitoring analysis

3.5.1. Correlations between photocatalytic activity, surface wetness and humidity

After the full field monitoring, a post-monitoring analysis study was performed to the lime-render PCO panel. The testing samples were cut from the original big panels used for the outdoor monitoring, to the size of 100 mm × 200 mm, matching the size of the photocatalysis reactor. The experiments were carried out under the laboratory condition to one specimen that was extracted from the large photocatalytic lime render panel. This specimen was washed and dried before each experiment series. The effect of two different influential parameters were investigated, including the relative humidity and surface wetness to simulate the outdoor conditions.

The sample was made surface wet by washing the same way as applied to the large panel during the outdoor monitoring. The surface dry condition was achieved by drying the sample at 60 °C in an oven overnight. The results show that the NOx removal efficiency is lower when the panel piece is wet, namely 4% compared to 8%. Comparing the results of the panel after 2 years’ exposure to outdoor to that of the newly prepared panel, it is clear that the NOx deactivation and potential loss of photocatalytic active sites by either loss of the photocatalyst, and surface modification, which will be analyzed in the following section. In addition, the produced intermediate NO2 is evidently more than that of the newly prepared panel (0.08 ppm vs. 0.04 ppm), especially considering the drastically reduced NO removal content, indicating further the reduced active sites.

Two RH values of 50% and 80% were applied to the panel under both dry and wet conditions. In this case, the drying was done by leaving the sample under ambient conditions for three days. In both surface wet and dry cases, the PCO efficiency first decreases when the humidity is increased from 50% to 80% but then slowly increases during the experiment. However, under the wet scenario, the difference is much smaller, which can be explained by the fact that the water on the panel contributes to the humidity inside the reactor and that the efficiency is already rather low. Before the humidity was increased, the PCO efficiencies were 16.1% under dry condition and 6.5% under wet condition. The end PCO efficiencies after the humidity was increased are 7.5% and 4.6%, respectively. The reason why the PCO efficiency of the sample under the natural surface dry state at the same RH of 50% is higher than that of the surface dry condition after drying at 60 °C overnight in an oven might be due to the longer drying. This means not only the surface humidity but also the moisture inside the matrix of the substrate affects the photocatalytic performance, indicating a longer air purification performance recovery after a rain period.

3.5.2. Minerology and elemental analysis of the coating after monitoring

After the full demonstration, elemental composition and phase content of the aged coating were analyzed employing X-ray fluorescence (XRF) and X-ray diffraction (XRD), respectively. The quantitative XRF analysis was performed using a PANalytical Epsilon 3 XRF device. The results show that the sample contains: CaO 45.2%, MgO 7.5%, TiO2 0.1%, Br 4.2% and LOI 42.1% among a few other trace elements.

The XRD analysis was performed by using a Bruker D8 advance powder X-ray diffractometer with a Cu tube (20 kV, 10 mA) with a scanning range from 5° to 65° (2θ), applying a step 0.02° and 0.2 s/step measuring time. The qualitative analysis was carried out by using the Diffracplus Software (Bruker AXS) and the PDF database of ICDD. The results are shown in Fig. 20. It is clearly shown that calcite is the primary phase in the tested coating. All major peaks correspond to the calcite crystal structure. Only a very small trace of dolomite (MgCa (CO3)2) peak can be seen. No detectable TiO2 is observed, which is in line with the XRF analysis. While in the original photocatalytic paint, also shown in Fig. 20, it can be clearly seen that the broad peaks around 25 and 38 indicate the existence of anatase nanocrystals and the sharp peaks at 28 and 40.5 rutile.

It is surprising to observe that the initially applied photocatalysts were almost entirely disappeared from the XRD and XRF analysis. This can be possibly explained by the following reasons. Firstly, the gradual reaction of lime binder to calcite which over time overgrows the surface of the photocatalyst. Karatasios et al. [51] observed a uniform and
compact carbonated layer of about 5 μm on the surface of TiO2 modified lime mortar after only 4 weeks curing. In addition, the TiO2 induced photocatalysis accelerated the carbonation due to the locally increased CO2 concentration resulting from photocatalytic oxidation of organic matters, which is further confirmed by Diamanti et al. [52] who reported an increased carbonation coefficient from 20 mm/year of plain concrete to 24 mm/year of concrete containing 5% of TiO2 by mass of cement. The carbonation process of Portland cement based concrete leads to a continuous but slight reduction of the photocatalytic activity under normal curing conditions and a dramatic reduction under accelerated carbonated condition [53]. Secondly, the weathering including rain and wind and artificial washing over the entire monitoring time (20 M) might cause the removal of part of the coating. Chen and Poon [54] observed a continuous NOx removal efficiency reduction at the increase of concrete age and found that TiO2 is not chemically involved in the concrete matrix, but the continuing hydration of cement leads to a gradual reduction of porosity and crystal surface which is adverse for the photocatalytic activity. These factors in overall contribute to a significantly reduced photocatalytic performance, which can be both seen from the gradually reduced nitrate production over time during the monitoring period and the evidently reduced NOx removal efficiency under the laboratory condition test after the monitoring. From this study, it is shown deactivation of photocatalyst is a serious issue that affects the long term stability of air purifying performance of the paint. Gallus et al. [31] performed the field study using the Leopold II tunnel in Brussels and also observed a significant deactivation, caused by the heavily polluted tunnel in that specific condition. It can be concluded that it is critical for the application of photocatalytic material to have a proper location together with an appropriate substrate to achieve a desired air purifying performance.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

In this research, a mineral-based transparent photocatalytic paint was developed and its NOx degradation efficiency was assessed under laboratory conditions following ISO 22197-1. Furthermore, the NOx removal efficiency of this paint under realistic outdoor conditions was investigated through an outdoor field study for almost two years. A new air purification quality monitoring protocol was proposed. The air pollutant removal efficiency was interpreted by using the measured NO3⁻ that was produced by the photocatalytic oxidation of NO. The full weather parameters were collected and their relation with the NOx degradation performance was analyzed. From the obtained results the following conclusions can be derived:

- Both lab-scaled test and the outdoor experiment confirm that the transparent mineral paint can be used for making photocatalytic surfaces.
- Measuring the nitrate amount in the collected liquid is an effective method to determine the air purification activity.
The activity of the panels is lower with very high humidity, low irradiance and no raining.

The NO$_x$ concentrations at the monitoring site are, in general, relatively low. With higher NO$_x$ concentrations the amount of nitrate formed could have been higher.

Deactivation of the photocatalytic coating on the lime render panel is observed, most probably caused by the overgrowth of calcite on the surface of the photocatalyst.

This research demonstrates that this innovative mineral-based transparent paint can be applied for outdoor air pollutants removal purpose. Furthermore, the proposed monitoring principle and test protocol work relatively well. Besides, the applied weather parameters collection system shows robustness. Nevertheless, much more effort is further needed on this topic, especially considering the limited time within the current project. The following topics should be addressed in the future research:

- The chosen monitoring site, the building on the campus of Eindhoven University of Technology, in general possesses a very good air quality, reflected by the very low NO$_x$ concentration. A more polluted area can be better selected for this aim to increase the contrast;
- The weather conditions are very complex, which makes it very difficult or impossible to derive effective correlation between the NO$_x$ removal and environmental parameters. Much more studies including big data study and mathematical modelling are needed;
- The stability of the paint as well as the substrate play a significant role on the performance, especially considering the interaction between the used substrates and the used base materials, which increases the complexity of the performance evaluation. This should be considered more carefully.

Acknowledgement

This research was carried out under project number T81.4.14542 in the framework of the Partnership Program of the Materials innovation institute M2i (www.m2i.nl) and the Technology Foundation TTW (www.stw.nl), which is part of the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (www.nwo.nl). Furthermore, the authors wish to express their gratitude to Mr. Dr. Derk Bol (former program manager of this project) and Mrs. Dr. Ir. V. Savran (program manager of this project), to Mr. Kees Mylanus from Keim Nederland, Mr. Dr. Mark Plunkett and Dr. Robert Corkery from Joma International, Mr. Leo Verboeket from Sirius International and Mr. Hans Konig from Sirius International/Joma International for sponsoring this project. In addition, Mr. Kees Mylanus and Dr. Robert Corkery are acknowledged for providing many valuable advices during the entire project; technician Mr. Geert-Jan Maas in the lab of Building Physics and Services at TU/e is acknowledged for the support with the design, production and...
installation of the studied panels, technician Mrs. Anneke Delsing in the lab of Building Physics and Services at TU/e is acknowledged for the support with the ion analysis; and Master student Mr. Bart Kok is acknowledged for his measurement support.

References


