Title: Branching points in the low-temperature dipolar hard sphere fluid

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Source: Journal of Chemical Physics Volume: 139 Issue: 13 Article Number: 134901
DOI: 10.1063/1.4821935 Published: Oct 7 2013

Document Type: Article
Language: English

Abstract: In this contribution, we investigate the low-temperature, low-density behaviour of dipolar hard-sphere (DHS) particles, i.e., hard spheres with dipoles embedded in their centre. We aim at describing the DHS fluid in terms of a network of chains and rings (the fundamental clusters) held together by branching points (defects) of different nature. We first introduce a systematic way of classifying inter-cluster connections according to their topology, and then employ this classification to analyse the geometric and thermodynamic properties of each class of defects, as extracted from state-of-the-art equilibrium Monte Carlo simulations. By computing the average density and energetic cost of each defect class, we find that the relevant contribution to inter-cluster interactions is indeed provided by (rare) three-way junctions and by four-way junctions arising from parallel or anti-parallel locally linear aggregates. All other (numerous) defects are either intra-cluster or associated to low cluster-cluster interaction energies, suggesting that these defects do not play a significant part in the thermodynamic description of the self-assembly processes of dipolar hard spheres. (C) 2013 AIP Publishing LLC.

KeyWords Plus: Liquid-Phase, Monte-Carlo; Gas; Ferrofluids; Transition; Particles; Clusters; Colloids

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Funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Agency</th>
<th>Grant Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT)</td>
<td>PEstOE/FIS/UI0618/2011</td>
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<td>PTDC/FIS/098254/2008</td>
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<td>ERC-226207-PATCHYCOLLOIDS</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Publisher: Amer Inst Physics
Publisher Address: Circulation & Fulfillment Div, 2 Huntington Quadrangle, STE 1 N O 1, Melville, NY 11747-4501 USA
ISSN: 0021-9606

Citation: ROVIGATTI, Lorenzo; KANTOROVICH, Sofia; IVANOV, Alexey O.; TAVARES, Jose Maria; SCIORTINO, Francesco - Branching points in the low-temperature dipolar hard sphere fluid. Journal of Chemical Physics. ISSN 0021-9606. Vol. 139, nr. 13 (2013).