

**Title:** Re-entrant phase behaviour of network fluids: A patchy particle model with temperature-dependent valence

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**Source:** Journal of Chemical Physics

**Volume:** 135 **Issue:** 3 **Article Number:** 034501

**DOI:** 10.1063/1.3605703 **Published:** Jul 21 2011

**Document Type:** Article

**Language:** English

**Abstract:** We study a model consisting of particles with dissimilar bonding sites ("patches"), which exhibits self-assembly into chains connected by Y-junctions, and investigate its phase behaviour by both simulations and theory. We show that, as the energy cost  $\epsilon(j)$  of forming Y-junctions increases, the extent of the liquid-vapour coexistence region at lower temperatures and densities is reduced. The phase diagram thus acquires a characteristic "pinched" shape in which the liquid branch density decreases as the temperature is lowered. To our knowledge, this is the first model in which the predicted topological phase transition between a fluid composed of short chains and a fluid rich in Y-junctions is actually observed. Above a certain threshold for  $\epsilon(j)$ , condensation ceases to exist because the entropy gain of forming Y-junctions can no longer offset their energy cost. We also show that the properties of these phase diagrams can be understood in terms of a temperature-dependent effective valence of the patchy particles. (C) 2011 American Institute of Physics. [doi: 10.1063/1.3605703]

**KeyWords Plus:** Dipolar Hard-Spheres; Directional Attractive Forces; Monte-Carlo; Thermodynamics; Coexistence; Separation; Colloids; Clusters; Liquids; Systems

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**Funding:**

Funding Agency	Grant Number
Foundation of the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Lisbon	
FCT	POCTI/ISFL/2/618 PTDC/FIS/098254/2008
	ERC-226207-PATCHYCOLLOIDS
	ITN-234810-COMPLOIDS

**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:** RUSSO, J.; TAVARES, J. M.; TEIXEIRA, P. I. C.; TELO DA GAMA, M. M.; SCIORTINO, F. - Re-entrant phase behaviour of network fluids: A patchy particle model with temperature-dependent valence. *Journal of Chemical Physics*. ISSN 0021-9606. Vol. 135, n.º 3 (2011).