

Special issue

Percolating towards Ageing through Physics,

proceedings of a workshop in honor of Prof. Dietrich Stauffer's 60th birthday,
edited by Paulo Murilo C. Oliveira, Suzana Moss de Oliveira, and Hans J. Herrmann

Foreword

In this issue the reader will find 13 articles which were submitted as a consequence of the workshop on complex systems "Percolating towards Ageing through Physics". This meeting occurred in February 2003, at the Physics Institute of Universidade Federal Fluminense, in honour of Dietrich Stauffer's 60th birthday (despite his strong protests). Stauffer holds a professorship at the Theoretical Physics Department of Cologne University, Germany, and is among the most cited and influential physicists in the world. He has been collaborating with many Brazilian researchers since a long time, mainly during the last ten years. In particular, he was the first to introduce the interdisciplinary subject "computational models for biological ageing" in Brazil, which is now, thanks to him and to Thadeu Penna, a leading country in this area.

I still remember the first time I met him. I was still a PhD student attending the "Jorge André Swieca School" of 1987, in São Carlos. In his first lecture on computational physics, Stauffer introduced himself by saying: "If you forget my name, I'm just the fat guy with a red shirt". This episode characterizes his constant effort to interact with students, always trying to help them and to make them aware of the new trends in statistical physics. Some years later I realized that his words were also a consequence of his modesty allied to an enormous sense of humor. Concerning modesty, the thing he hates most is to be treated as a famous German "Herr Professor", something that he usually cannot avoid. Knowing his sense of humor, Hans Herrmann solved this problem by addressing him as "Majesty". I prefer to call him "Great Guru". Let me quote a last example of his "complex" personality: during her talk at the workshop, Lucilla de Arcangelis showed a transparency of a cage in a zoo, in which a sign said "Don't feed the animals". Inside the cage was... Stauffer! He laughed so much that it made me afraid he would lose completely his breath and get sick. Immediately after the talk he asked her to give him a copy of that transparency.

I think we all have learned a lot from him, not only about physics but also about how to face life. Despite his sixty years of age, he still works like a machine, always willing to collaborate with everybody. I am sure he will remain eternally young, contrarily to his own computer simulations on ageing.

Suzana Moss de Oliveira

Paris, August 12, 2003, presently working with P.M.C. de Oliveira, J.S. Sá Martins, A.O. Sousa and D. Stauffer at Laboratoire de Physique et Mécanique de Milieux Hétérogènes, École Supérieure de Physique et de Chimie Industrielles de la Ville de Paris.