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M. Bley, M. Duvail, Philippe Guilbaud, Jean-François Dufrêche. Activity Coefficients from Vapor-Liquid Interfaces: A Molecular Dynamics Approach for Separation Chemistry. Journées Scientifiques de Marcoule (JSM - 2018), Jun 2018, Bagnols Sur Ceze, France. cea-02338585

HAL Id: cea-02338585

<https://cea.hal.science/cea-02338585>

Submitted on 9 Dec 2019

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Activity Coefficients from Vapor-Liquid Interfaces: A Molecular Dynamics Approach for Separation Chemistry

Michael Bley^a, Magali Duvail^a, Philippe Guilbaud^b, and Jean-François Dufrêche^a

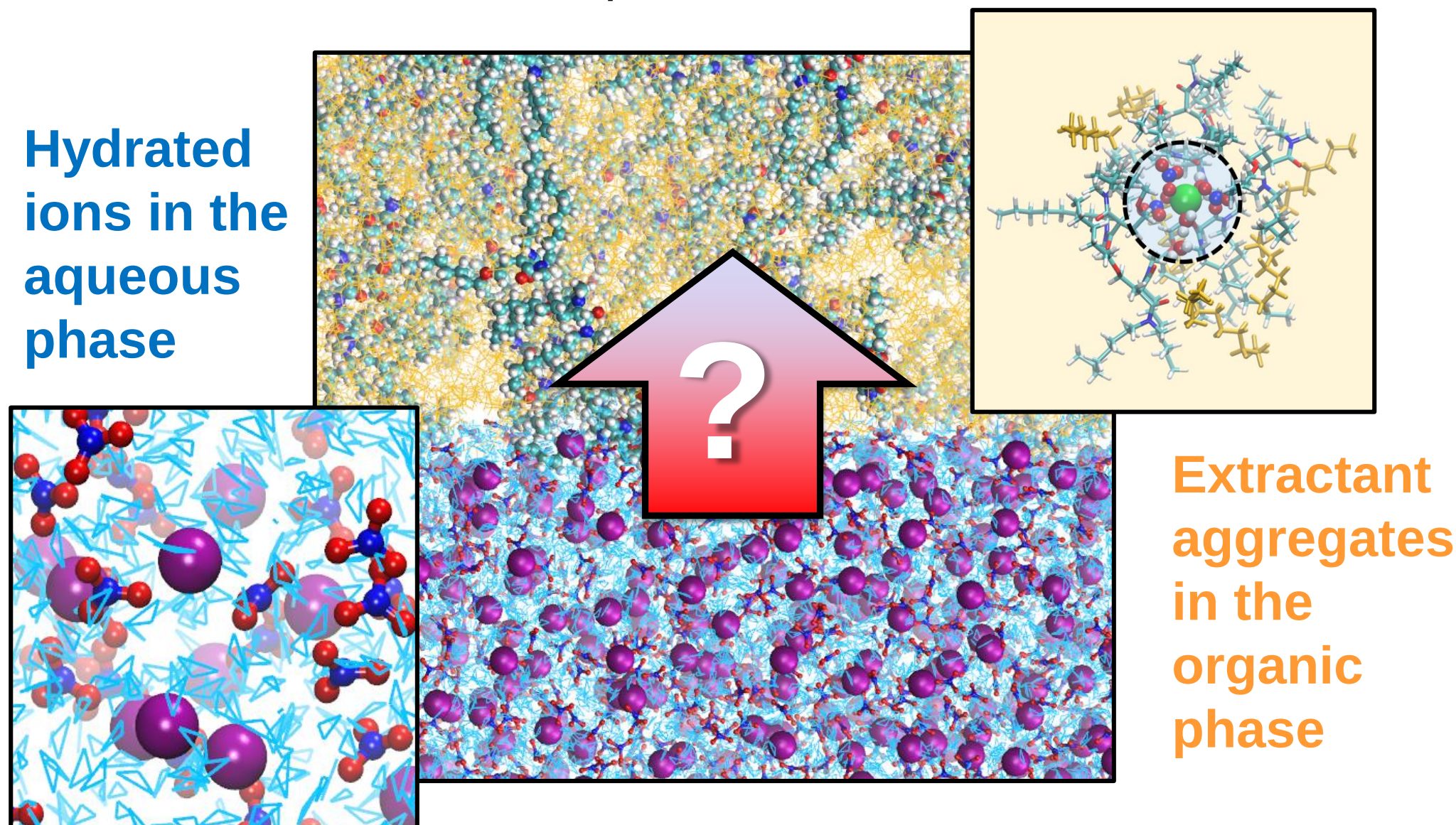
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^bCEA, Nuclear Energy Division, Research Department on Mining and Fuel Recycling Processes (SPDS/LILA), BP 17171, F-30207 Bagnols-sur-Cèze

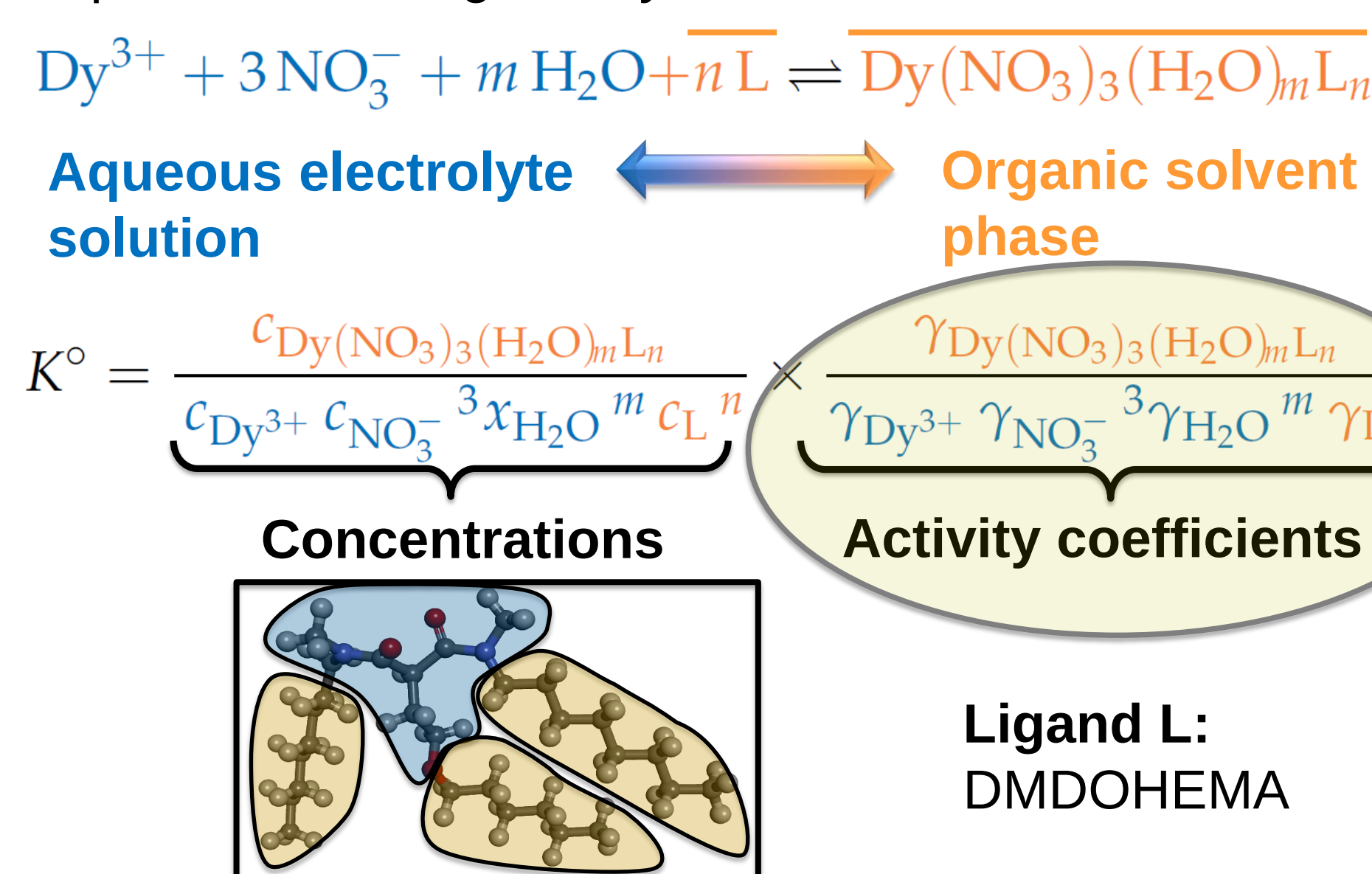


Context

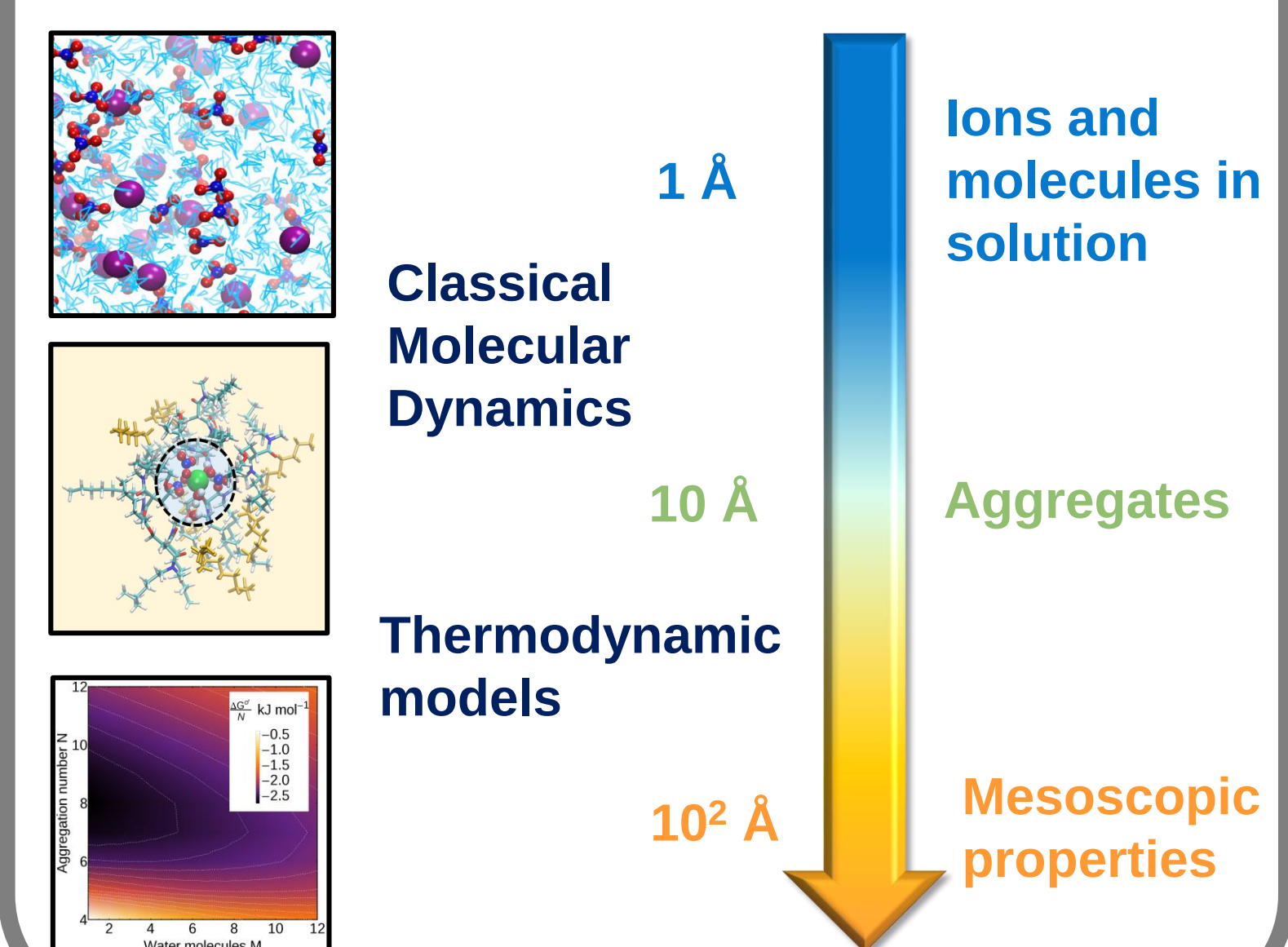
- Understanding **solvent extraction** – Recycling of rare earth elements and spent nuclear fuels



- The **equilibrium constant K°** describes the extraction process and is given by the Mass Action Law

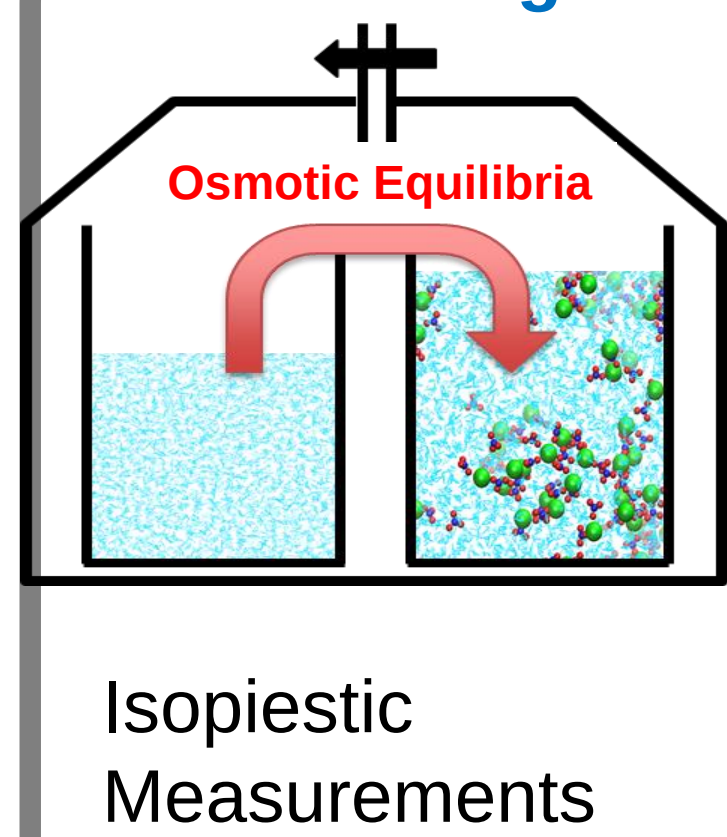


- A **multiscale approach** provides mesoscopic thermodynamic properties

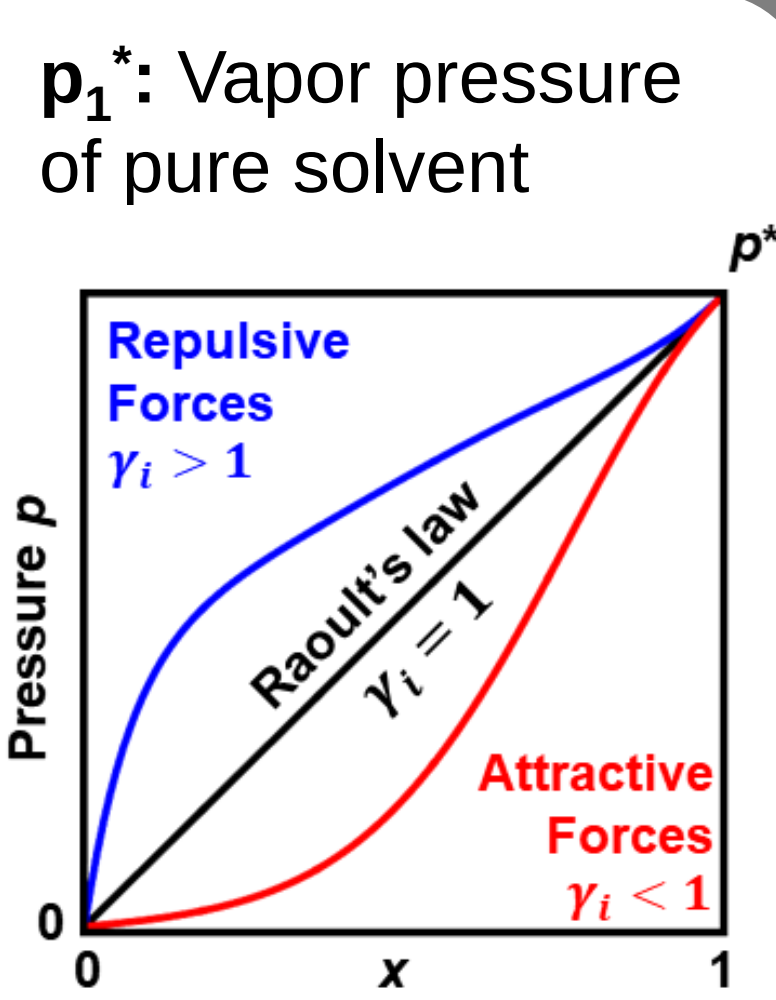


Methods and concepts

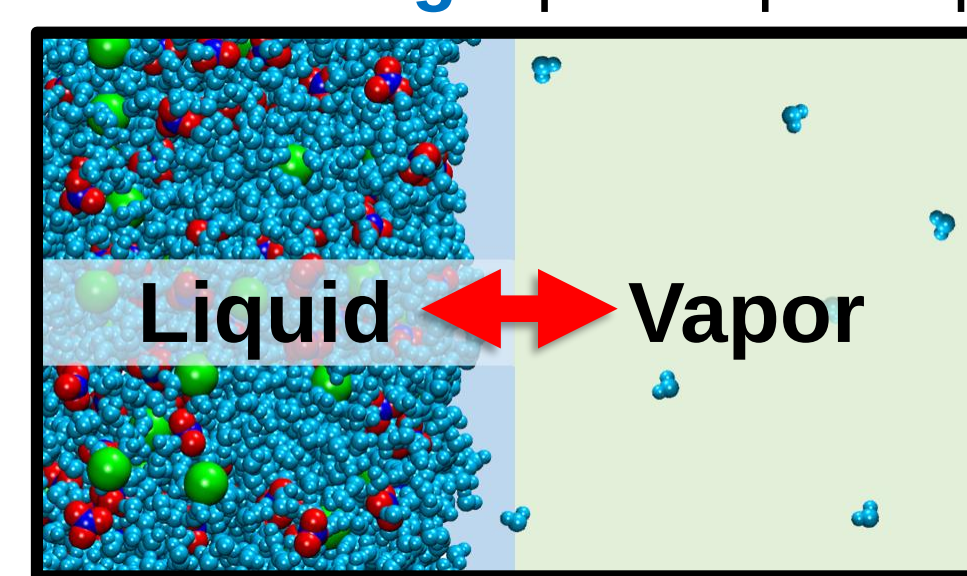
- Measuring** activity and the vapor pressure



- Solvent flow:** Vapor pressure of the pure solvent always higher than of a mixtures
- Ideal case: Solvent vapor pressure by **Raoult's law**
- Otherwise: **Aggregation increases, dissociation decreases** solvent vapor pressure and thus activity



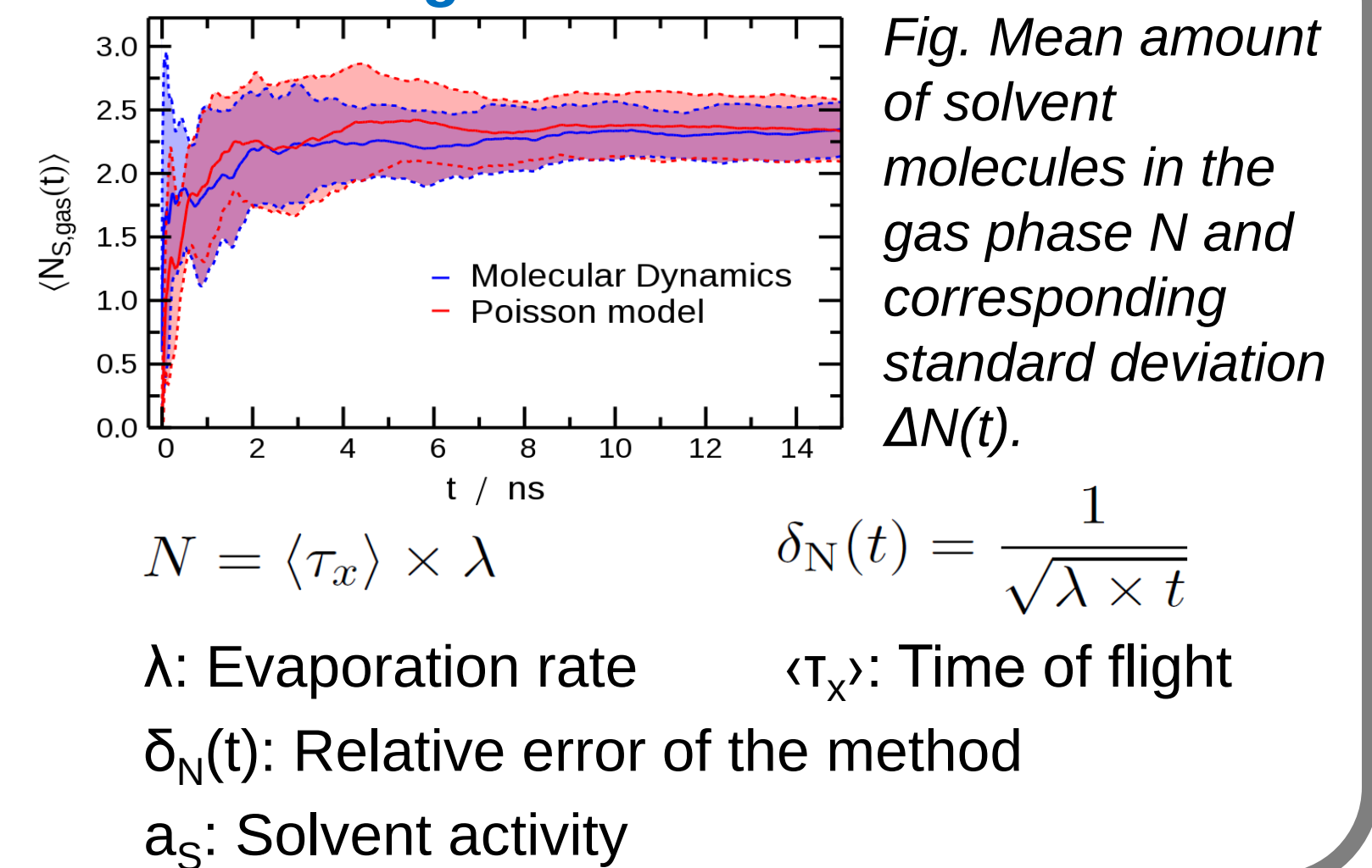
- Simulating** liquid-vapor equilibria ⁽¹⁾



- Molecular Dynamics using **explicit polarization** ^(2,3) at 298.15 K for 15 ns

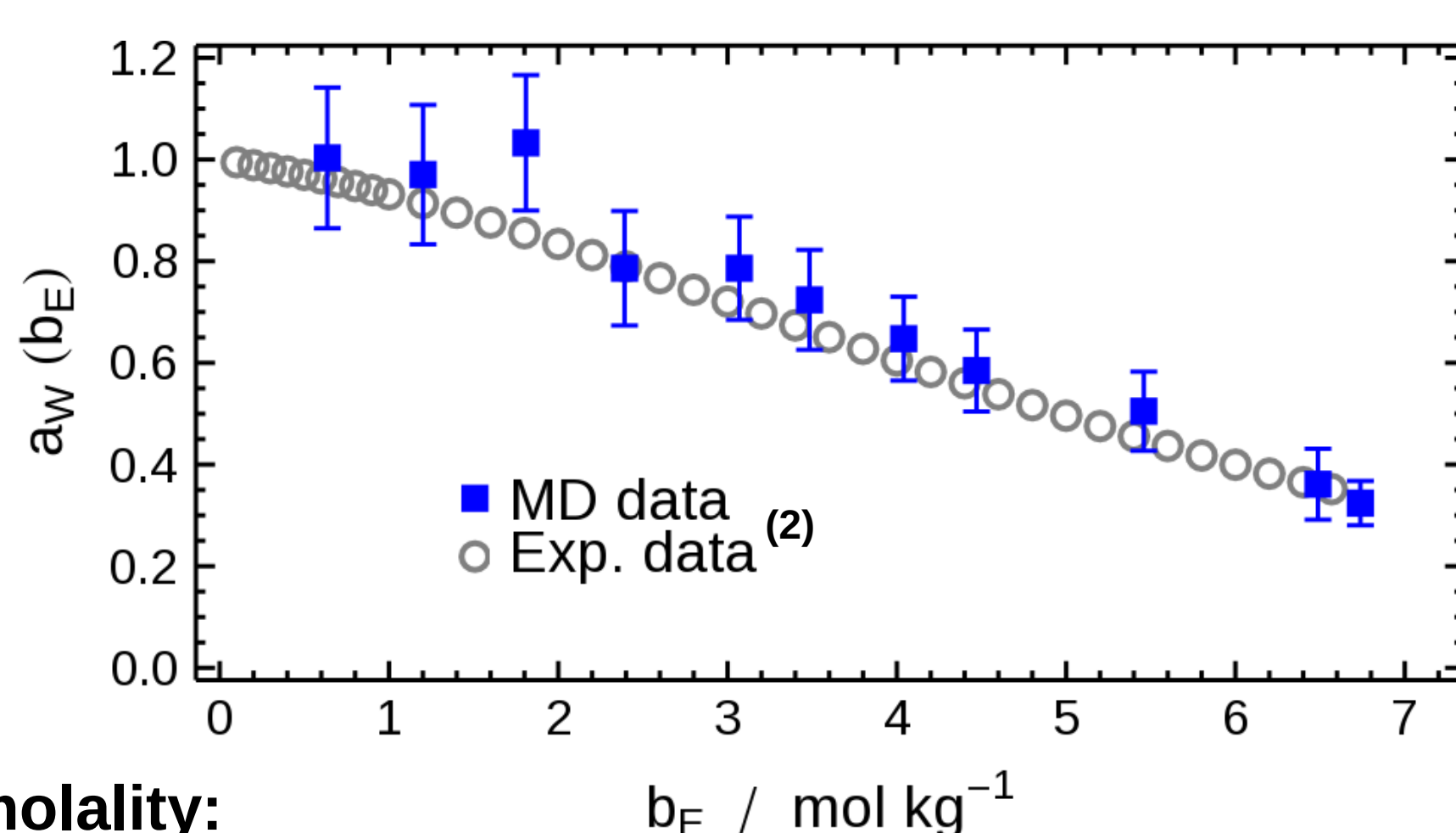
$$a_S = \frac{p}{p^*} = \frac{\rho}{\rho^*} = \frac{N \times V_{\text{gas}}^*}{N^* \times V_{\text{gas}}} = \frac{\lambda \times V_{\text{gas}}^*}{\lambda^* \times V_{\text{gas}}}$$

- Controlling** the error of the method

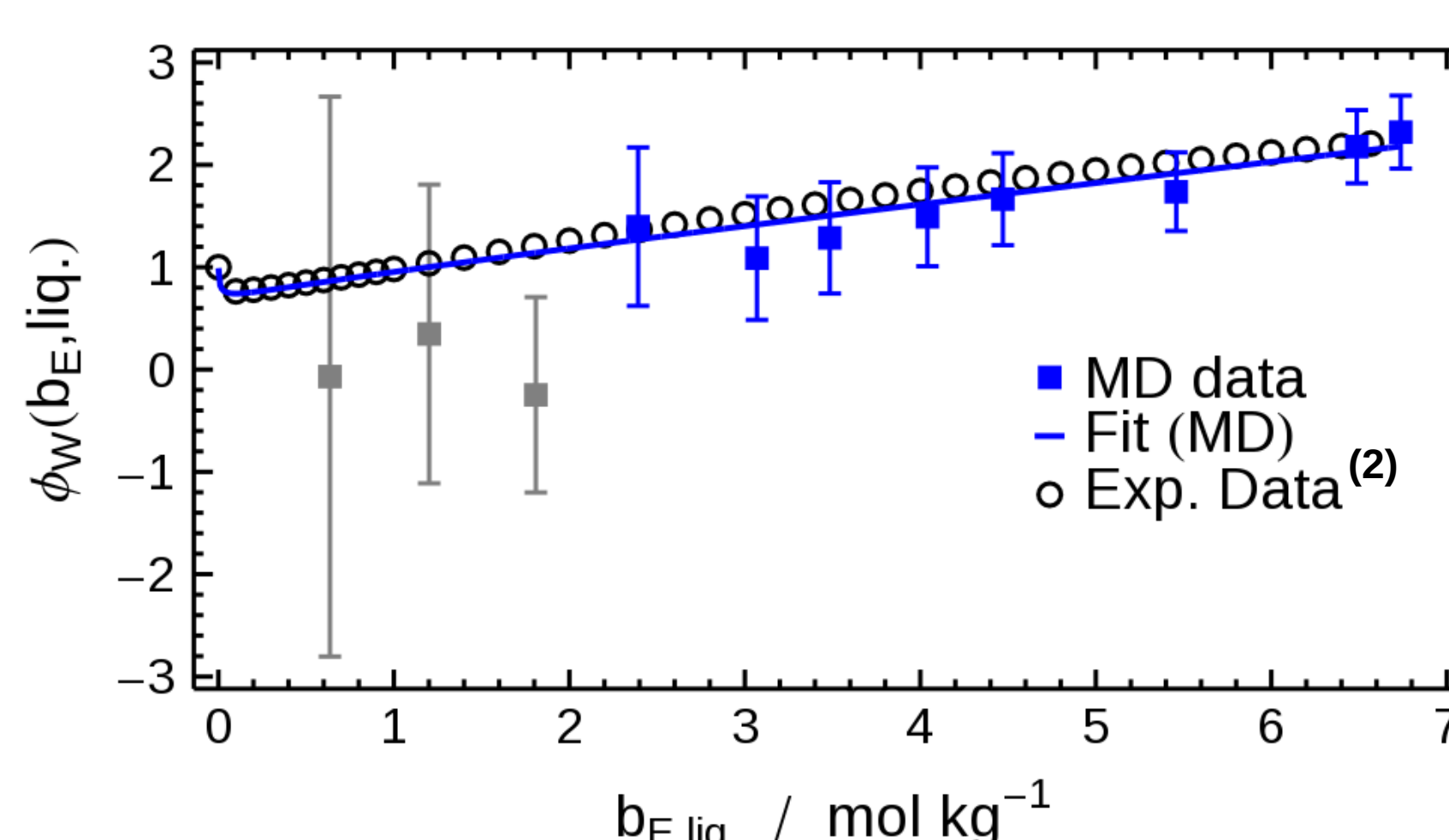


Aqueous dysprosium nitrate $\text{Dy}(\text{NO}_3)_3$ solutions ⁽²⁾

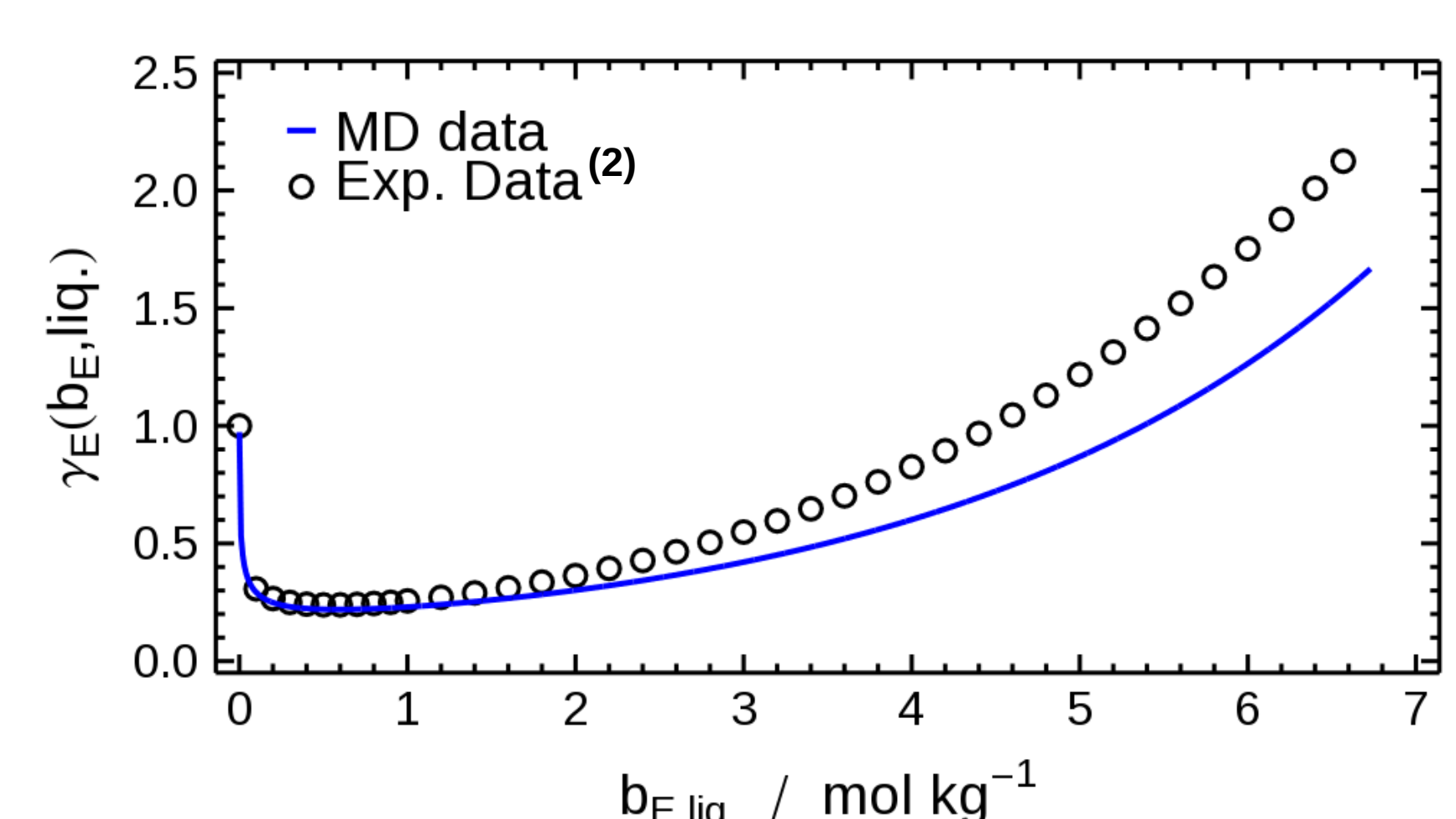
Water activity a_W



Osmotic coefficient ϕ_W



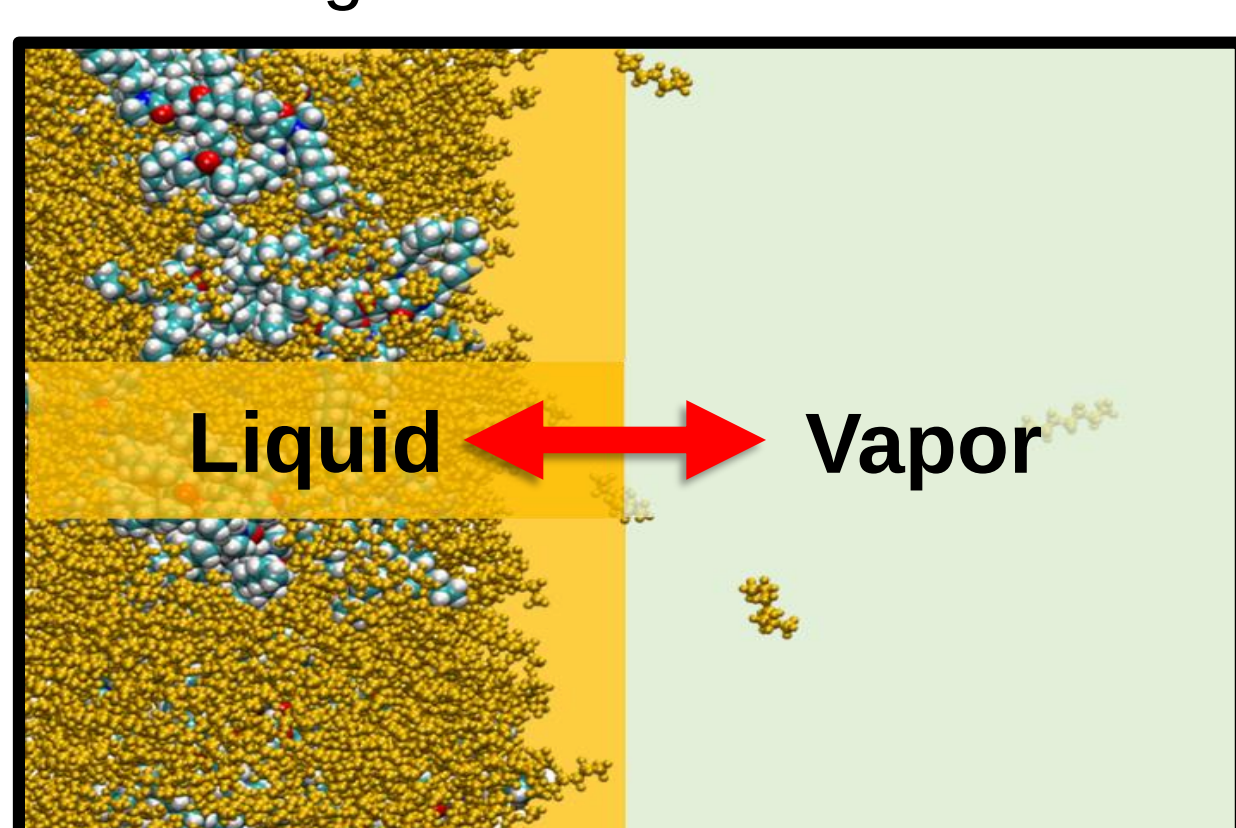
Activity coefficient γ_E



Gibbs-Duhem relation

Organic phases – Binary Mixtures of DMDOHEMA and *n*-heptane

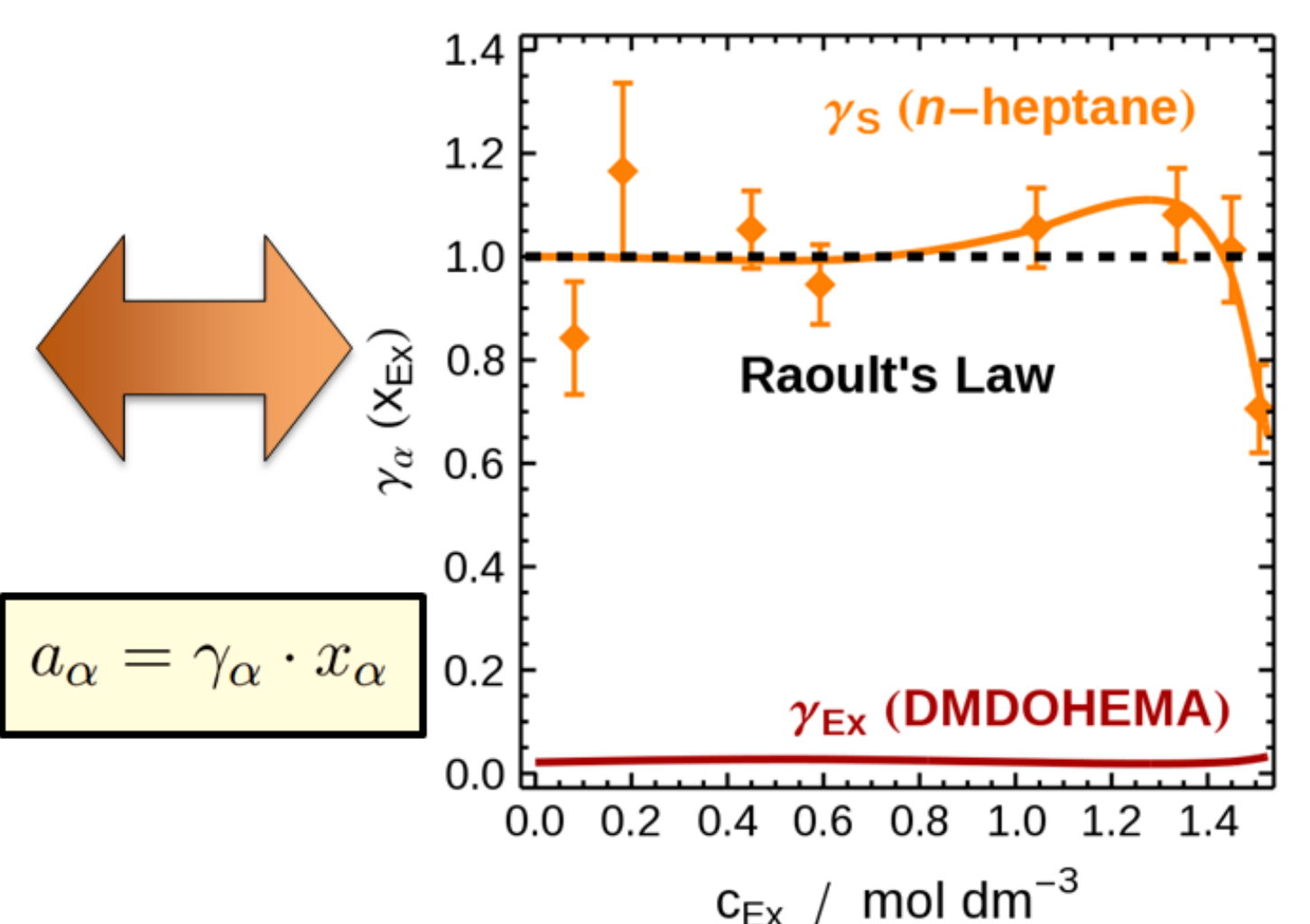
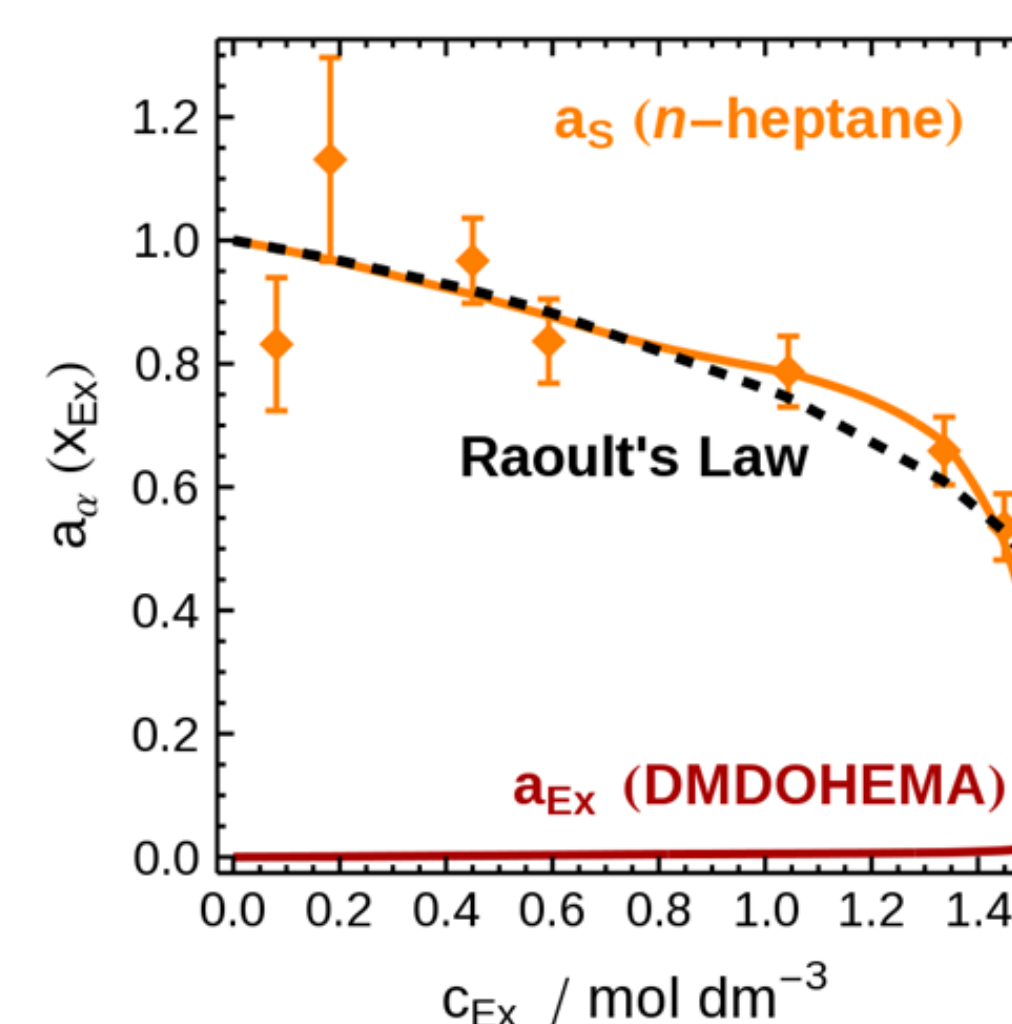
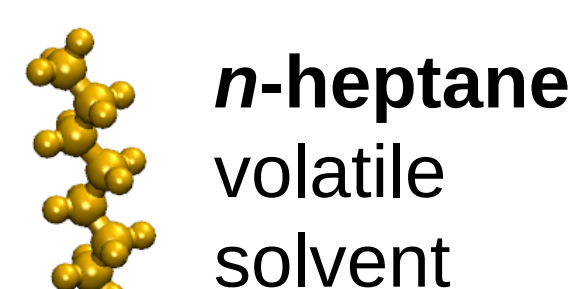
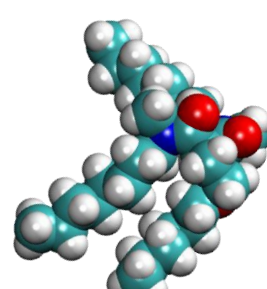
- Molecular dynamics simulation of liquid-vapor equilibria of organic solvent phases containing:



Pure solvent
+
Extractant
+
Water
+
Ionic species

Increasing computational cost

- Aggregation of DMDOHEMA in the organic phase relies on the availability of water⁽³⁾



$$a_\alpha = \gamma_\alpha \cdot x_\alpha$$

- Solvent activities in binary mixtures of *n*-heptane and DMDOHEMA show ideal behavior and follow Raoult's law in good agreement up to a high extractant concentration
- Attractive and repulsive interactions in the mixtures cancel out

Outlook and conclusion

- Aqueous salt solutions:** Results from molecular dynamics simulation are in good agreement with experimental data for different nitrate salts. This approach can be used for the validation of force fields for MD simulation with respect to thermodynamic properties.
- Organic Phases:** Method has been successfully applied on binary mixtures (*n*-heptane and DMDOHEMA, but also ethanol and water⁽⁴⁾). Allows accessing more complex organic solvent phases containing water and ionic species.

- Simulation of activity coefficients of **complex solutions with volatile solvents** for understanding solvent extraction

References

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Acknowledgements

This work was made possible thanks to the high performance computing facilities of TGCC/CCRT and the computing center of CEA Marcoule.