Thermodynamic Effects in Morphological Evolution of Polymer-Fullerene Nanocomposites for Photovoltaic Applications

Gabriel Bernardo¹, Bobby Sumpter², David G. Bucknall³

¹~Institute for Polymers and Composites (IPC) and I3N, University of Minho, Campus de Azurém, 4800 – 058 Guimarães, Portugal
²~Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Tennessee, USA
³~School of Materials Science and Engineering, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, Georgia 30332, USA

Polymer based photovoltaic devices promise solar technologies that are inexpensive enough to be widely exploited and therefore provide a significant fraction of the future energy needs. There are many promising polymer-fullerene mixtures that are promising materials candidates for achieving high performance devices, but their exploitation requires an improved understanding of their structure-property relationships. Of particular relevance is the phase behavior of the mixtures.

The phase behavior of donor-acceptor materials for photovoltaic applications is of key importance [1,2]: i) to gain a fundamental understanding and control of morphology development in the donor-acceptor blends; ii) to appropriately choose the operating window for thermal annealing; iii) to understand the long-term stability of the blended film morphology and consequently of the photovoltaic performance of the corresponding solar cells.

In this work the phase behavior of polymer-fullerene mixtures is being studied using Differential Scanning Calorimetry (DSC), Wide-Angle X-Ray Scattering (WAXS), Small-Angle Neutron Scattering (SANS) and theoretical ab initio Density Functional Theory (DFT) calculations.

References:
