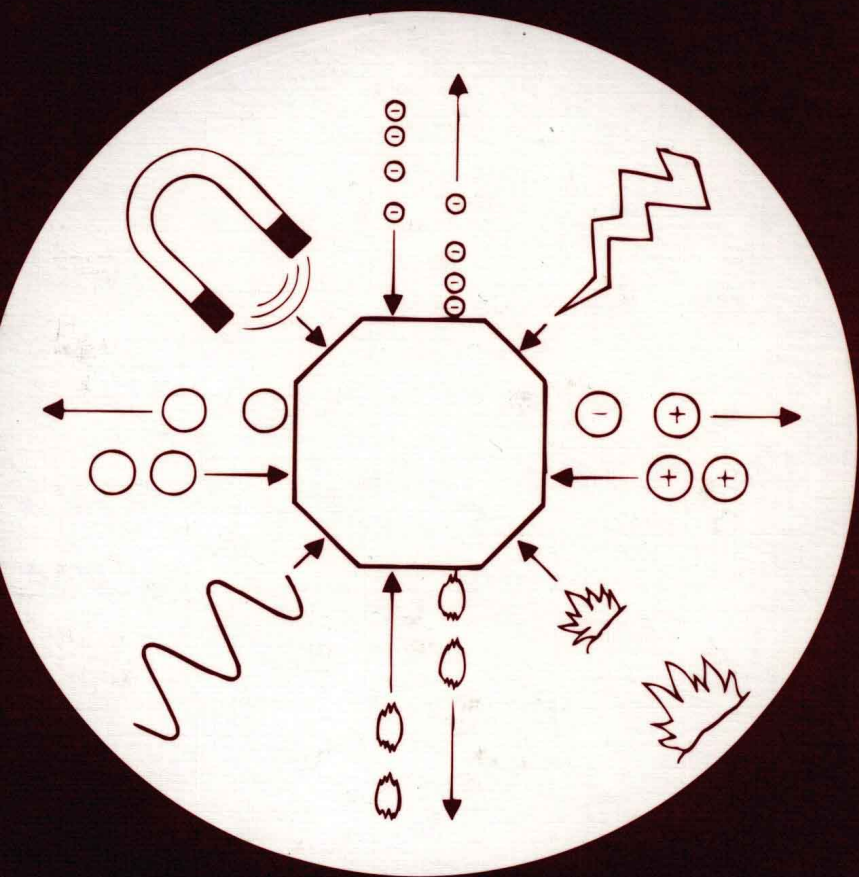


studies in surface science and catalysis



88

# CATALYST DEACTIVATION 1994

B. Delmon  
G.F. Froment  
(editors)

elsevier

**Studies in Surface Science and Catalysis**

**Advisory Editors:** B. Delmon and J.T. Yates

**Vol. 88**

# **CATALYST DEACTIVATION 1994**

**Proceedings of the 6th International Symposium, Ostend (Belgium),  
October 3-5, 1994**

**Editors**

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*EFCE Publications – Series 98*



**ELSEVIER**

**Amsterdam — Lausanne — New York — Oxford — Shannon — Tokyo 1994**

ELSEVIER SCIENCE B.V.  
Sara Burgerhartstraat 25  
P.O. Box 211, 1000 AE Amsterdam, The Netherlands

ISBN 0-444-81682-8

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Printed in The Netherlands

**Studies in Surface Science and Catalysis 88**

**CATALYST DEACTIVATION 1994**

## PREFACE

We are proud to present the Proceedings of the 6th International Symposium on Catalyst Deactivation held in Ostend, Belgium from October 3 to 5, 1994. This symposium is a continuation of the series of symposia on Catalyst Deactivation held in Berkeley, 1978; Antwerp, 1980; Berkeley, 1985; Antwerp 1987 and Evanston, 1991. It is also an activity of the Working Party "Chemical Engineering in the Applications of Catalysis" of the European Federation of Chemical Engineering.

The objective of the symposium is to promote a scientific approach of the phenomenon of catalyst deactivation which will contribute to the development of catalysts less subject to structural transformations and more resistant to poisons and coke formation.

These aspects are dealt with in 12 plenary lectures, 48 oral communications and 35 posters, critically selected from an impressive response to the call for papers.

It is rewarding that both fundamental and applied aspects are dealt with. The deactivation of catalysts in important industrial processes like fluid bed catalytic cracking, hydrotreatment, hydrodesulfurization, catalytic reforming, hydrodenitrogenation, steam reforming, hydrodemetallization, hydrocracking, Fischer-Tropsch synthesis, propane dehydrogenation, phthalic anhydride synthesis receives considerable attention. Mechanisms of poisoning, sintering and coking are further investigated and modeled. New experimental techniques for the characterization and the quantification of the deactivation are also introduced.

Finally, the international character of the symposium is truly impressive : the papers originated from some 30 countries.

May these Proceedings, like the Symposium itself, contribute to the continued development of this field of research and to the promotion of contacts between academic and industrial investigators. We hope that it will be a fertile basis for the 7th International Symposium on Catalyst Deactivation.

B. Delmon  
G.F. Froment  
Chairmen

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## CONTENTS

<b>Preface</b>	XIII
<b>Review Articles (Plenary Lectures)</b>	
Sintering kinetics of supported metals : perspectives from a generalized power law approach <i>C.H. Bartholomew</i>	1
Catalyst deactivation in the oxidation of volatile organic compounds by some metal oxides <i>J.B. Butt, J.J. Spivey and S.K. Agrawal</i>	19
Sintering and catalytic implications. A surface thermodynamics approach <i>E. Ruckenstein</i>	33
Fundamental description of deactivation and regeneration of acid zeolites <i>M. Guisnet and P. Magnoux</i>	53
Scanning probe microscopy studies of the activation and deactivation of Pd thin film catalysts <i>K.-H. Lee and E.E. Wolf</i>	69
Catalyst deactivation in HDM of heavy deasphalted oils <i>L. Reyes, C. Zerpa and J.H. Krasuk</i>	85
A recycle electrobalance reactor for the study of catalyst deactivation by coke formation <i>H.C. Beirnaert, R. Vermeulen and G.F. Froment</i>	97
Solid-state reactions in catalysts during ageing : beneficial role of spillover <i>B. Delmon</i>	113
FCC catalyst deactivation : a review and directions for further research <i>P. O'Connor and A.C. Pouwels</i>	129
Coke versus metal deactivation of residue hydrodemetallization catalysts <i>G. Gualda and S. Kasztelan</i>	145
Coke deposition in trickle-bed reactors during heavy oil processing Catalytic and physical effects <i>K.P. de Jong, D. Reinalda and C.A. Emeis</i>	155

## Oral Presentations

### COKING

Problem of coke formation on Ni/ZrO <sub>2</sub> catalysts during the carbon dioxide reforming of methane <i>W. Hally, J.H. Bitter, K. Seshan, J.A. Lercher and J.R.H. Ross</i>	167
Deactivation profiles related to mechanism peculiarities of coke formation inside catalyst pores <i>K. Kumbilieva, L. Petrov and S.L. Kiperman</i>	175
Ageing of Ga/H-MFI(Si,Al) propane aromatisation catalysts <i>S.B. Abdul Hamid, E.G. Derouane, P. Mériaudeau and C. Naccache</i>	183
Influence of sulfur on the interaction of iron with carbon monoxide <i>W.T. Owens, M.S. Kim, N.M. Rodriguez and R.T.K. Baker</i>	191
Formation of coke on hydrotreating catalysts and its effect of activity <i>P. Zeuthen, J. Bartholdy, P. Wiwel and B.H. Cooper</i>	199
CO <sub>2</sub> reforming of methane to syngas : deactivation behavior of nickel aluminate spinel catalysts <i>A. Bhattacharyya and V.W. Chang</i>	207
A study of the deactivation and regeneration behaviour and related catalytic properties of modified zeolite catalysts <i>L. Zhang, S. Chen and S. Peng</i>	215
The dealumination process of acid attack and coking behaviour in ultrastable Y zeolites <i>P. Huifang, W. Xiaofeng, Z. Yewen and S. Zhihong</i>	223
The use of the H <sub>2</sub> -D <sub>2</sub> equilibration reaction as a probe reaction to study the deactivation on Pt/Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> and Pt-Sn/Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> catalysts during propane dehydrogenation <i>M. Larsson, B. Andersson O.A. Barias and A. Holmen</i>	233
Deactivation and coking of HZSM5 catalysts during alkylation reactions <i>G. Mirth, J. Cejka, J. Krtil and J.A. Lercher</i>	241
The activity decay of cracking catalysts : chemical and structural deactivation by coke <i>D. Nevicato, I. Pitault, M. Forissier and J.R. Bernard</i>	249



Experimental methods for the determination of coke formation and deactivation kinetics of heterogeneous catalysts <i>H. Hofmann and G. Kolb</i>	257
Use of $^{129}\text{Xe}$ NMR and HRADS techniques to study coking and decoking of HY zeolites <i>J.L. Bonardet, M.C. Barrage, J. Fraissard, M.A. Ferrero and W.C. Conner</i>	265
Accelerated tests of catalyst coking : what do they tell us? <i>D.B. Dadyburjor, Z. Liu, S. Matoba, S. Osanai and T. Shiro-oka</i>	273
Deactivation of Ni-catalysts and its prevention by mechanically mixing an oxide for the formation reaction of $\text{CO} + \text{H}_2$ from $\text{CO}_2 + \text{CH}_4$ <i>O. Takayasu, C. Soman, Y. Takegahara and I. Matsuura</i>	281
Regeneration of coked Pt-Re/ $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$ catalyst by burning with oxygen and ozone <i>C.L. Pieck, E.L. Jablonski and J.M. Parera</i>	289
An isotope labelling study of the deactivation of a Pt/alumina catalyst used for propane dehydrogenation <i>G. Webb, I.M. Matheson, S.D. Jackson and J. Grenfell</i>	297
In situ coking kinetics obtained from a new flow through microbalance and reaction kinetics monitored by GC <i>S.C. Fung, C.A. Querini, K. Liu, D.S. Rumschitzki and T.C. Ho</i>	305
Characterisation of the carbonaceous deposit formed during the selective hydrogenation of propyne over palladium/zirconia <i>S.D. Jackson, N.J. Casey and I.J. Huntington</i>	313
Deactivation of heterogeneous catalysts for hydrocarbon conversion <i>P.A. Sermon, M.S.W. Vong and M.A. Martin-Luengo</i>	319
Coking and activity of a reforming catalyst in near-critical and dense supercritical reaction mixtures <i>D.M. Ginosar and B. Subramaniam</i>	327

## POISONING

Catalyst deactivation in hydrodemetallisation of model compound vanadyl-tetraphenylporphyrin <i>J.P. Janssens, B.J. Bezemer, A.D. van Langeveld, S.T. Sie and J.A. Moulijn</i>	335
---	-----

Modification by sulfur of automotive exhaust catalysts : effects of the preparation procedure of the catalysts <i>P. Marécot, D. El Azami El Idrissi, L. Pirault, G. Mabilon, M. Prigent and J. Barbier</i>	343
Fischer-Tropsch precipitated iron catalysts : deactivation studies <i>D.J. Duvenhage, R.L. Espinoza and N.J. Coville</i>	351
Regeneration of heavily poisoned reformer catalyst. A case study <i>V.K. Kapoor, J.R. Rai, Y.K. Kuchhal, R.K. Agarwal, R.P. Mehrotra, K.R. Murthy, Nagesh Sharma and Noble George</i>	359
Effect of alloying on the sulfur resistance of bimetallic Pt-based catalysts <i>T.F. Garetto, A. Borgna and C.R. Apesteguia</i>	369
A fundamental study of the deactivation of FCC catalysts : a comparison of quinoline and phenanthrene as catalysts poisons <i>R. Hughes, G. Hutchings, C.L. Koon, B. McGhee and C.E. Snape</i>	377
Platinum-catalyzed oxidation of alcohols in aqueous solutions. The role of Bi-promotion in suppression of catalyst deactivation <i>T. Mallat, Z. Bodnar, C. Brönnimann and A. Baiker</i>	385

## SOLID STATE TRANSFORMATIONS

Deactivation effects in the synthesis of methyl ethyl ketone by selective oxidation over solid Wacker-type catalysts <i>G. Centi, S. Perathoner and G. Stella</i>	393
The changes of morphologic structure of Mo-Ni/Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> hydrodenitrogenation catalyst during its commercial use <i>N. Yueqin, Z. Jingling, Z. Yan and W. Jifeng</i>	401
Deterioration mechanism of Cu/ZSM-5 as a catalyst of selective reduction of NO <sub>x</sub> by hydrocarbons from the exhaust of stationary natural gas-fuelled engine <i>T. Tabata, M. Kokitsu, O. Okada, T. Nakayama, T. Yasumatsu and H. Sakane</i>	409
In-situ electron microscopy studies of the palladium/alumina-oxygen system <i>N.M. Rodriguez, S.G. Oh, R.A. Dalla-Betta and R.T.K. Baker</i>	417
Interfacial reactions of transition metal oxides on aluminium oxide studied by high-energy ion beam analysis techniques <i>P.H. Bolt, F.H.P.M. Habraken and J.W. Geus</i>	425

The mechanism of deactivation of supported Wacker catalysts in the oxidation of 1-butene <i>A.W. Stobbe-Kreemers, M. Makkee and J.J.F. Scholten</i>	433
Deactivation of copper ion exchanged mordenite catalysts by SO <sub>2</sub> for NO reduction with NH <sub>3</sub> : role of copper <i>S.-W. Ham, H. Choi, I.-S. Nam and Y.G. Kim</i>	441
Deactivation of steam reforming catalysts for molten carbonate fuel cell applications <i>S.H. Clarke and T.A. Smith</i>	449
Deactivation of a sulfided NiMo/ $\gamma$ -Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> during the hydrodeoxygenation of bio-oils : influence of a high water pressure <i>E. Laurent and B. Delmon</i>	459

## MISCELLANEOUS

Deactivation of carbon-supported platinum catalysts during oxidations in aqueous media <i>J.H. Vleeming, F.A. de Bruijn, B.F.M. Kuster and G.B. Marin</i>	467
Deactivation of V <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> /TiO <sub>2</sub> catalysts in the oxidation of o-xylene to phthalic anhydride <i>C.R. Dias, M.F. Portela and G.C. Bond</i>	475
Deactivation during the hydrogenation of 2-methylglutaronitrile to $\beta$ -picoline <i>S. Lanini and R. Prins</i>	483
The behavior of titania-supported iron oxide catalysts in butene dehydrogenation <i>L.A. Boot, S.C. van der Linde, A.J. van Dillen, J.W. Geus, F.R. van Buren and J.E. Bongaarts</i>	491
Sulphur poisoning of nickel catalysts in catalytic hot gas cleaning conditions of biomass gasification <i>J. Hepola, P. Simell, E. Kurkela and P. Stahlbergh</i>	499

## Poster Presentations

## COKING

Coke formation during catalytic dehydrogenation <i>F.M. Mandani and R. Hughes</i>	507
--	-----

Deactivation and reactivation of Ru/SiO <sub>2</sub> catalyst <i>M. Najbar, B. Pietruszka and B. Borzecka-Prokop</i>	513
Propane dehydrogenation over supported platinum catalysts : the influence of tin on the coking properties <i>O.A. Barias, A. Holmen and E.A. Blekkan</i>	519
Monte Carlo simulation of effects of pore entrance deactivation on reaction performance <i>J.G. Wang, Y.W. Li, S.Y. Chen and S.Y. Peng</i>	525
Effect of preparation method and support on the deactivation of nickel catalysts by carbon deposition <i>J.A. Montoya, J.C. Rodriguez, I. Schifter, A. Monzon and T. Viveros</i>	531
Induction period of coking in the steam reforming of hydrocarbons <i>T. Borowiecki, A. Machocki and J. Ryczkowski</i>	537
Kinetic models of catalyst deactivation in paraffin transformations <i>S.L. Kiperman, L.C. Loc and N.A. Gaidai</i>	543
Method to verify the hydrotreating catalysts life for medium petroleum cuts <i>E. Voicu-Bosovei, C. Savu and M. Savulescu</i>	549
Influence of the catalyst pretreatment on the relative rates of the main and coking reactions during acetylene hydrogenation on a NiO/NiAl <sub>2</sub> O <sub>4</sub> catalyst <i>J.A. Pena, J.C. Rodriguez, J. Herguido, J. Santamaria and A. Monzon</i>	555
Deactivation studies on Ni,H-ZSM-5 containing catalysts 1. Effect of chemical composition <i>A. Masalska and J.R. Grzechowiak</i>	561
Acidity deterioration and coke deposition in a HZSM5 zeolite in the MTG process <i>A.T. Aguayo, P.L. Benito, A.G. Gayubo, M. Olazar and J. Bilbao</i>	567
Coke formation during the hydrotreating of biomass pyrolysis oils : influence of guaiacol type compounds <i>E. Laurent, A. Centeno and B. Delmon</i>	573
Deactivation in hydrogenolysis catalysts : the effect of SnO <sub>x</sub> on Pt <i>P.A. Sermon and J. Sivalingam</i>	579

- TG-DSC, UV-VIS-IR studies on catalysts deactivated in alkylation of isobutane with 1-butene 585

*C. Flego, L. Galasso, I. Kiricsi and M.G. Clerici*

- Effect of thermal deactivation of vanadium - titanium catalyst on o-xylene oxidation process yielding phthalic anhydride 591

*M. Galantowicz, W. Krajewski, S. Karpinski and B. Wielowinska*

## POISONING

- Deactivation of the palladium catalyst in the hydrogenation of 2-ethyl-5,6,7,8-tetrahydroanthraquinone 597

*E. Santacesaria, M. Di Serio, R. Velotti and U. Leone*

- Effects of surface modifiers in the liquid-phase hydrogenation of olefins over silica-supported Pt, Pd and Rh catalysts. 603

II. Thiophene and CS<sub>2</sub>

*I. Palinko*

- Effect of nitric acid on the isotopic exchange reaction between H<sub>2</sub> and HDO(v) over a hydrophobic platinum catalyst 609

*Y.-Z. Wei, K. Takeshita, M. Shimizu, M. Kumagai and Y. Takashima*

- Analysis of deactivation of a water gas shift catalyst CoMoK/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> in an ammonia plant 617

*W.D. Li, M.J. Chen, X.H. Wang, X.W. Lu, Y.H. Li, J.S. Cheng and Y.H. Kong*

- Impurity poisoning of Ni-catalyst pellets 623

*D. Rusic and S. Zrnecvic*

- Deactivation of platinum catalysts by lead 629

*E. Lamy-Pitara, B. Alfatimi and J. Barbier*

- Kinetics of the catalyst deactivation in the recovery of active anthraquinones 635

*F. Sandelin, P. Oinas, T. Salmi and H. Haario*

- Effect of SO<sub>2</sub> on Pd-V catalyst activity for NO<sub>x</sub> reduction by ammonia 641

*K. Dosumov, G.M. L'dokova and A.K. Umbetkaliev*

- Deactivation of Pt/ZrO<sub>2</sub>/SO<sub>4</sub> catalyst 647

*R.A. Keogh, D.E. Sparks and B.H. Davis*

**SOLID STATE TRANSFORMATIONS**

Hydrodesulfurization of thiophene on supported phosphomolybdenum heteropolyacid : study of deactivation 651

*A. Spojakina and N. Kostova*

Deactivation of copper-based catalysts in alcohol dehydrogenation 657

*Y.-J. Tu, Y.-W. Chen and C. Li*

Deactivation and reactivation of boron phosphate catalysts 663

*G.J. Hutchings, I.D. Hudson and D.G. Timms*

The role of acid sites by deactivation of industrial alumina claus catalyst and their protection 669

*F.B. Kasumov*

**Author Index** 673

**Studies in Surface Science and Catalysis (Other Volumes in the Series)** 679

## Sintering Kinetics of Supported Metals: Perspectives from a Generalized Power Law Approach

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Studies of sintering kinetics of conventional supported metal catalysts are reviewed. Available kinetic data for sintering have been reanalyzed using the new General Power Law Expression (GPLe), which provides the capability of treating these data in a consistent, unifying fashion such that quantitative comparisons regarding effects of reaction conditions and catalyst properties are possible for the first time. It is shown that all available dispersion versus time data can be fitted to second order GPL kinetics. From the analysis of these data new conclusions arise regarding the effects of atmosphere, time, temperature, support, promoters, and metal on the thermal stability of supported metals.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Sintering is an important mode of deactivation in supported metals. The high surface area support (carrier or substrate) in these catalysts serves several functions: (1) to increase the dispersion and utilization of the catalytic metal phase, (2) to physically separate metal crystallites and to bind them to its surface, thereby enhancing their thermal stability towards agglomeration, and (3) in some cases to modify the catalytic properties of the metal and/or provide separate catalytic functions. The second function is key to the prevention or inhibition of thermal degradation of the catalytically active metal phase.

Thermally induced deactivation of catalysts is a particularly difficult problem in high-temperature catalytic reactions. Thermal deactivation may result from one or a combination of the following: (i) loss of catalytic surface area due to crystallite growth of the catalytic phase, (ii) loss of support area due to support collapse, (iii) reactions/transformations of catalytic phases to noncatalytic phases, and/or (iv) loss of active material by vaporization or volatilization. The first two processes are typically referred to as "sintering." Sintering, solid-state reactions, and vaporization processes generally take place at high reaction temperatures (e.g.  $> 500^{\circ}\text{C}$ ), and their rates depend upon temperature, reaction atmosphere, and catalyst formulation. While one of these processes may dominate under specific conditions in specified catalyst systems, more often than not, they occur simultaneously and are coupled processes.

Sintering of supported metals involves complex physical and chemical phenomena including dissociation/emission of metal atoms from crystallites, diffusion of atoms and crystallites across support surfaces, spreading of particles, wetting of the support by particles, nucleation of particles, coalescence and/or bridging of two particles, capture of atoms by particles, liquid formation, vaporization of metal atoms, and volatilization of metals as complexes. The importance of these different processes may change with reaction condition (especially temperature), time, and catalyst formulation (e.g. support and/or promoter). The treatment of sintering processes requires an understanding of surface diffusional processes, interfacial phenomena, solid-state reactions and the energetics of metal-metal and metal surface interactions. Most of these processes are only qualitatively understood. Accordingly, the investigation and simulation of sintering phenomena are difficult tasks. Moreover, thermal

deactivation problems are generally more difficult to prevent and to reverse than other deactivation problems such as poisoning and carbon deposition.

Nevertheless, efforts to understand, treat, and model sintering/thermal-deactivation phenomena are easily justified. Indeed, deactivation considerations greatly influence research, development, design, and operation of commercial processes. While catalyst deactivation by sintering is inevitable for many processes, some of its immediate, drastic consequences may be avoided or postponed. If sintering rates and mechanisms are known even approximately, it may be possible to find conditions or catalyst formulations that minimize thermal deactivation. Moreover, it may be possible under selected circumstances to reverse the sintering process through redispersion (the increase in catalytic surface area due to crystallite division or vapor transport followed by redeposition).

Studies of sintering and redispersion of supported metal catalysts have been reviewed by several authors [1-18]; most of these reviews focus on early kinetic studies of sintering of supported metal catalysts using a simplified power law expression (SPLE). Unfortunately this crude approach does not permit sintering kinetics to be presented in a consistent way nor does it enable (1) useful extrapolation of the data to other conditions, (2) useful quantitative comparisons between different studies, or (3) physically meaningful kinetic parameters to be obtained. The ultimate result has been confusion regarding the effects of reaction parameters such as atmosphere and temperature and of catalyst properties such as support, promoters, etc., on sintering rates.

Fortunately, a new approach to the analysis of sintering kinetics introduced by Fuentes et al. [19,20], the "General Power Law Expression (GPLE)," provides for the first time the capability of analyzing available kinetic data in a consistent, unifying fashion in such a way that quantitative comparisons regarding effects of reaction conditions and catalyst properties are now possible. Moreover, a recent Catalytica study [16] and two recently published reviews [17,18] provide a GPLE analysis of most of the previously published sintering kinetic data.

The purpose of this review is to summarize briefly from the new GPLE perspective *what has been learned from experimental studies of supported metal catalysts* regarding the kinetics of sintering. Companion reviews [17,18] provide more comprehensive analyses of kinetic data and mechanistic information obtained from model supported catalysts [17] commercially-relevant real supported metal catalysts [18]. The discussion in this paper focuses on the effects of atmosphere, temperature and catalyst properties on the kinetics of sintering of the latter group of catalysts.

## **2. GPLE ANALYSIS OF AVAILABLE KINETIC DATA FOR SINTERING OF SUPPORTED METALS**

From previous experimental studies of sintering [2,9,11,12] it is evident that sintering and redispersion are strong functions of temperature, time, atmosphere, and support. Sintering/redispersion rates are also significantly affected by choice of metal and/or promoter, metal loading, and catalyst preparation. The discussion below of previous work will focus on how sintering rates are affected by these variables.

It should also be emphasized that interpretation, comparison, and correlation of previous experimental studies of sintering and redispersion involving supported metals is complicated by the following limitations: (1) relatively few of the previous studies were systematic, i.e. provided statistical data sets carefully defining effects of the important variables, (2) different experimental methods yielding different measures of average crystallite diameter and crystallite size distribution were used, (3) there may have been serious problems in the measurement of dispersion by chemisorption, XRD and TEM in a number of the studies because workers didn't understand the limitations of their technique, (4) it was assumed in most previous studies that particles were distributed uniformly through the catalyst, when in practice the metals may have been distributed in clusters such that local metal concentrations might have been as much as a factor of 10 higher than the mean [21], (5) the support material



as well as the metal may have undergone thermally-induced changes, (6) the purity, surface area and pore structure of the support material may not have been specified, and (7) the state of the metal (whether metal, metal oxide, or salt) was not determined in many of the studies.

## 2.1. Correlation of sintering rate data through rate equations

### 2.1.1. The simple power law expression (SPLE) and its limitations

Sintering rates have been historically correlated by an empirical rate equation involving either surface area  $S$  or dispersion  $D$  in a simple power law expression (PLE) of the form:

$$-d(D/D_0)/dt = k_s(D/D_0)^n \quad (1)$$

where  $k_s$  is the sintering rate constant,  $D_0$  the initial dispersion, and  $n$  is the sintering order, which for typical catalyst systems may vary from 3 to 15 [2]. Unfortunately, this simple rate expression is very limited in its ability to represent experimental data; indeed it is found that sintering orders vary as a function of time, temperature and atmosphere for the same catalyst system. For example, plots of  $\log(D_0/D)$  versus  $\log(t)$  for sintering of Ni/silica catalysts in nitrogen and hydrogen atmospheres (e.g., Fig. 1) illustrate how the slope  $n$  varies with time and temperature from 4 to 15 for a given catalyst and atmosphere [22,23]. Rate constants and activation energies based on Equation 1 are also a function of the reaction order [2,19]. Thus, it is not possible to quantitatively compare kinetic parameters from this rate expression because they are a function of time for the same catalyst even at the same temperature and functions of time and temperature for the same catalyst at different temperatures; comparison of data for different catalysts at the same conditions may be invalid since the data are typically fitted by different sintering orders.

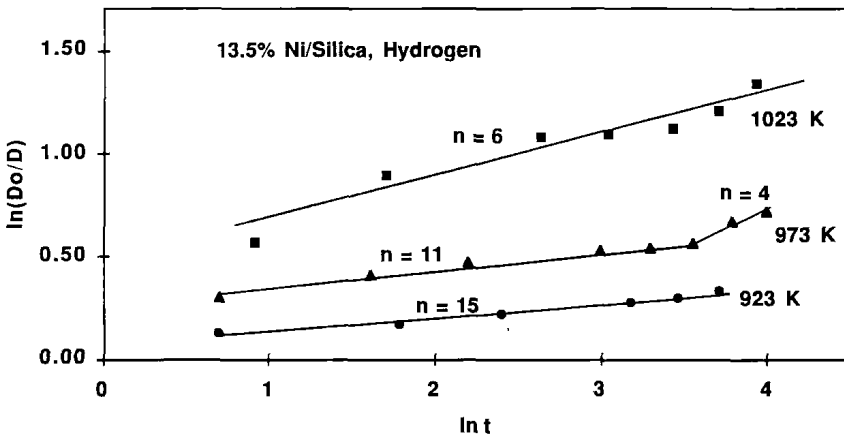


Figure 1. Plot of  $\ln(D_0/D)$  vs  $\ln t$  for 13.5% Ni/SiO<sub>2</sub> during sintering in H<sub>2</sub> [23].

### 2.1.2. The general power law expression (GPLe) and its application to available data: first and second order kinetic parameters

A promising solution to the dilemma discussed above is the application of the general power law expression (GPLe) proposed by Fuentes [19,20],

$$-d(D/D_0)/dt = k_s(D/D_0 - D_{eq}/D_0)^m \quad (2)$$

which adds a term  $-D_{eq}/D_0$  to account for the observed asymptotic approach of the typical dispersion versus time curve to a limiting dispersion  $D_{eq}$  at infinite time. The introduction of this term is physically meaningful since values of dispersion and metal particle size are generally observed to approach a limiting value with time [24,25]. The GPLe (Eqn. 2) also