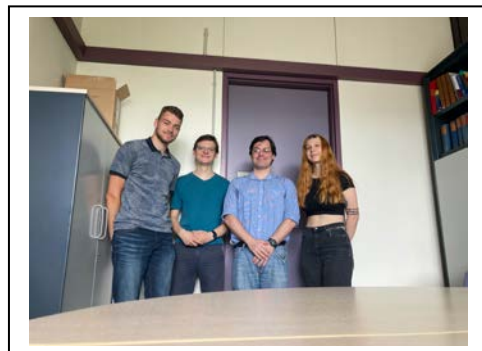


Interview

Prof. Igor Jurberg

University of Campinas (UNICAMP),
Brazil



How did you find your way to Germany?

I did my studies (Bachelors, Masters and PhD) in France at École Polytechnique Paris. Afterwards, I got a PostDoc position in Mülheim, Germany. At that time, I had a girlfriend who was moving to Spain but I also got a funding from the Humboldt foundation. However, I turned down the offer in order to be able to join her. In the end, I did regret it a little bit that I did not apply for more places.

Did you learn the languages in the different countries?

In France I had to, as the courses were in French. It is the easiest way to make active effort if you want to learn a language. But, to be honest, I did not always do that. In Brazil, I had German class in school but here I did not get the opportunity to make this effort as I was really busy as a PostDoc. As my mother tongue is Portuguese however, I can also understand most of Spanish.

What did you find most unusual when coming to Germany first?

Germany has a very good infrastructure and people are friendly, especially compared to France, or at least Paris.

What are you doing outside of chemistry?

I like to spend time with my wife and my child which was born a year ago. Besides that and work there is not too much time for else.

How did you come to do chemistry?

I did not think much about it but I have always liked it and was fairly good at it. So I started the Bachelors and after that I just did my Masters and after that I asked myself what to do next, so I did my PhD and so on. The structure in Brazil is a bit different to Germany. Professors do not get paid that well as here. I can only advise you to do what you like but it is also important to look at the financial side in order to support your family or else. When I was young, I did not do that. It is important to look a bit ahead.

What would you have done if not chemistry?

Most probably I would have worked in finances. I am fairly good at maths but now I am also glad I do not need the very complex mathematics anymore.

What do you look in for a PhD applicant?

Of course not the amount of hobbies but if the person works 14 hours a day in the lab, I will be happy. [laughter] I would ask some chemical questions, have a look at the records and maybe letters of recommendations. But mainly it is the CV and the behavior in a personal interview. Here in Germany, you can expect more of the applicants. But in Brazil the demand is not that high so you have to take what you get.

What are your plans after your stay at UR?

I will go to vacation together with my wife. We will meet in Paris and then go to Germany, rent a car and travel around.

What can you recommend students for their future career?

Think some steps ahead. Where would you like to finish? As a professor? What do you need to do? Or rather in industry? Is there a specific company you would like to work for? I did not do that. The advantage then is that you can change the direction anytime but it is also more difficult.

What tips can you give to settle in in a new country?

Go with the people that you like. I liked in the USA and Germany. It depends very much on the people around you. If you are happy at work you will have it easier to settle in. But there are also other challenges like renewing visa and so on.