Matteo Maggi and colleagues from Italy and Brazil present a new model of the development of fractures showing a stairway trajectory, commonly occurring in finely laminated rock, such microbialites and travertines. These fractures strongly enhance permeability by connecting several highly porous zones enveloped in tight impermeable levels. Understanding and predicting this fracture pattern geometry, distribution, and interconnection is valuable not only for locating water supplies, but also for oil, gas, and geothermal exploration.

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