



Germane vs. digermane formation†‡

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Oxidative addition reactions of dialkylchalcogenanes R_2E_2 and $[Me_2Si(Nt-Bu)_2]Ge$ 1 yielded bis(alkylchalcogeno)germanes $Me_2Si(Nt-Bu)_2-Ge(ER)_2$ ($R = Et$, $E = S$ 2, Se 3; $R = Me$, $E = Se$ 4) and digermanes $[Me_2Si(Nt-Bu)_2Ge(EEt)]_2$ ($E = S$ 5, Se 6). The reaction of 1 with Et_2Te_2 proceeds with formation of $Me_2Si(Nt-Bu)_2Ge(TeEt)_2$ 7, which slowly converts into the Te-bridged complex $[Me_2Si(Nt-Bu)_2GeTe]_2$ 8. 1–6 and 8 were characterized by single crystal X-ray diffraction.

Germynes R_2Ge , which have singlet ground states with a low-lying s lone-pair orbital and a higher-lying p orbital,¹ have evolved from exotic reaction intermediates to important reagents in organic chemistry.² They were shown to activate a large variety of bonds including P–Cl,³ O–H,⁴ Ge–C⁵ and C–H bonds⁶ and to react in [2+1]- and [4+1]-cycloaddition reactions with alkenes and alkynes.^{2,7} Germynes tend to dimerize to digermenes Ge_2R_4 or oligomerize into polygermanes, but monomeric R_2Ge were kinetically stabilized by bulky organic ligands.⁸ Lappert's $[(Me_3Si)_2CH]_2Ge$ is monomeric in the gas phase and in solution^{9,10} and dimeric in the solid state,¹¹ while $[(Me_3Si)_3C]_2Ge$ ¹² and $[(Me_3Si)_2N]_2Ge$ ¹³ are monomeric in solution and in the solid state. $[Me_2Si(Nt-Bu)_2]Ge$ 1 is monomeric in solution, while its solid state structure was not reported.¹⁴

Germynes react with elemental chalcogenes with the formation of complexes containing chalcogen-bridges¹⁵ or terminal Ge=E bonds¹⁶ as well as polychalcogenides.¹⁷ In addition, insertion reactions in E–C bonds¹⁸ and E–E bonds ($E = S, Se$)¹⁹ as well as reactions with $R_3P=E$ ²⁰ were reported. Our general interest in the reactivity of complexes with low-valent main group elements²¹ prompted us to investigate reactions of $[Me_2Si(Nt-Bu)_2]Ge$ 1 with dialkylchalcogenanes R_2E_2 , which were recently shown to

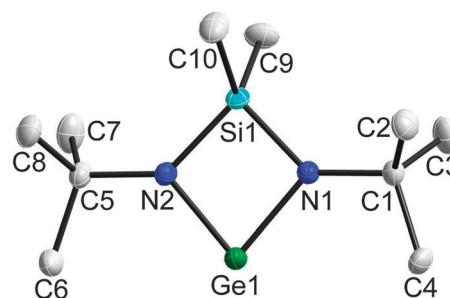


Fig. 1 Solid state structure of 1 as determined at 100(1) K. Non-H-atoms shown as thermal ellipsoids at 50% probability levels, H atoms omitted for clarity.

react with monovalent tin ($RSnSnR$), antimony (RSb), bismuth (RBi) and zinc complexes (R_2Zn_2) in oxidative addition reactions.^{22,23} In addition, we report on the solid state structure of $[Me_2Si(Nt-Bu)_2]Ge$ 1 (Fig. 1).

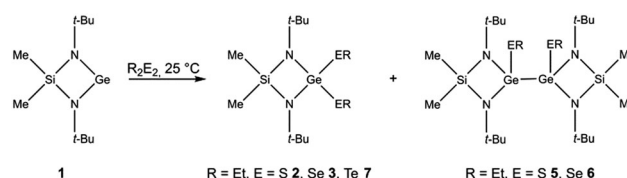
Crystals of 1 were grown in closed quartz glass capillaries under an Ar atmosphere at 100 K (**1lt**) and 230 K (**1ht**) using an IR-laser-assisted technique.³⁰ 1 crystallizes in the monoclinic space group $P2_1/n$ with four molecules in the unit cell. The shortest Ge–Ge distance is 4.158 Å, so 1 is monomeric in the solid state.

Reactions of equimolar amounts of $[Me_2Si(Nt-Bu)_2]Ge$ 1 and Et_2E_2 ($E = S, Se$) at 25 °C yielded two products in 2 : 1 ($E = S$) and 4 : 1 ($E = Se$) molar ratios as was shown using 1H and ^{77}Se NMR spectroscopy (Scheme 1). The relative intensities of the signals due to the $Me_2Si(Nt-Bu)_2$ and the Et groups within each set of resonances in

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† Dedicated to Prof. H. J. Frohn on the occasion of his 70th birthday.

‡ Electronic supplementary information (ESI) available: Experimental details, NMR spectra of 2–8; bond lengths and angles of 1–6. CCDC 1009920 (**1lt**), 1009921 (**1ht**), 1009925 (2), 1009924 (3), 1009923 (4), 1009922 (5), 1019789 (6) and 1010028 (8). For ESI and crystallographic data in CIF or other electronic format see DOI: 10.1039/c4cc07921c



Scheme 1 Synthesis of 2–7.



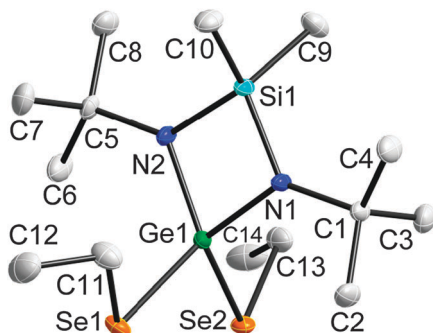


Fig. 2 Solid state structure of **3**. Non-H-atoms shown as thermal ellipsoids at 50% probability levels, H atoms omitted for clarity.

the ^1H NMR spectra were 1:2 and 1:1, respectively. In contrast, reactions of **1** with Me_2Se_2 and Et_2Te_2 at 25°C only yielded $[\text{Me}_2\text{Si}(\text{N}t\text{-Bu})_2]\text{Ge}(\text{SeMe})_2$ **4** and $[\text{Me}_2\text{Si}(\text{N}t\text{-Bu})_2]\text{Ge}(\text{TeEt})_2$ **7**. Fractional crystallisation of the reaction mixtures gave $[\text{Me}_2\text{Si}(\text{N}t\text{-Bu})_2]\text{Ge}(\text{EET})_2$ ($\text{E} = \text{S}$ **2**, Se **3**), which are the expected products from the insertion reaction of **1** into the E–E bond, and the digermenes $[\text{Me}_2\text{Si}(\text{N}t\text{-Bu})_2]\text{GeEET}_2$ ($\text{E} = \text{S}$ **5**, Se **6**). Attempts to grow single crystals of **7**, which slowly decomposes in solution into $[\text{Me}_2\text{Si}(\text{N}t\text{-Bu})_2]\text{Ge}(\mu\text{-Te})$ **8** and TeEt_2 (ESI ‡), failed.²⁴

Single-crystals of **2–6** were obtained from solutions in hexane upon storage at -30°C , whereas **8** was obtained from a solution of **7** in C_6D_6 after 72 h (Fig. 2 and 3). The bond lengths and angles within the SiN_2Ge ring in **2–6** are almost identical to those of **1** (Table 1). The Ge–E bond lengths agree with the calculated (S 2.24 Å; Se 2.37 Å)²⁵ and experimental values for Ge–E single

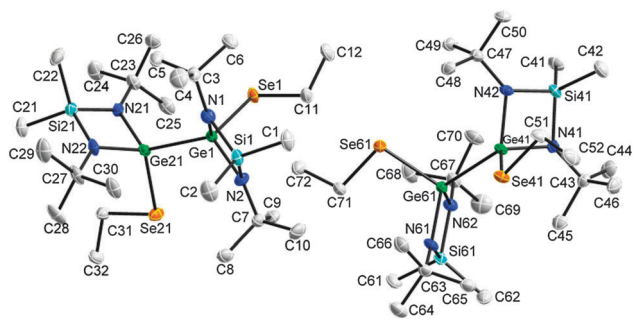


Fig. 3 Solid state structure of **6** (2 independent molecules). Non-H-atoms shown as thermal ellipsoids at 50% probability levels, H atoms omitted for clarity.

Table 1 Selected bond lengths [Å] and angles [$^\circ$] of **1–4**

	1 ^b	2	3	4 ^a
Ge(1)–N(1)	1.8574(13)	1.8400(7)	1.8444(19)	1.8451(9)
Ge(1)–N(2)	1.8584(13)	1.8410(7)	1.8411(18)	1.8451(9)
Ge(1)–E(1)	—	2.2072(2)	2.3355(4)	2.3439(2)
Ge(1)–E(2)	—	2.2070(2)	2.3371(4)	2.3439(2)
N(1)–Ge(1)–N(2)	81.33(6)	82.93(3)	82.74(8)	82.89(6)
E(1)–Ge(1)–E(2)	—	101.15(1)	102.05(2)	102.53(1)
N(1)–Si(1)–N(2)	88.82(6)	88.70(3)	88.80(9)	89.00(6)

^a Special position. Equal values are symmetry equivalent and labeling may differ. ^b Structural parameters of the “ht” version of **1** are almost identical (ESI).

Table 2 Selected bond lengths [Å] and angles [$^\circ$] of **5** and **6**

	5	6
Ge(1)–N(1)	1.855(3)	1.846(3)
Ge(1)–N(2)	1.845(4)	1.851(3)
Ge(1)–E(1)	2.2271(13)	2.3700(5)
Ge(1)–Ge(2)	2.4727(6)	2.4921(5)
N(1)–Ge(1)–N(2)	82.05(16)	81.75(13)
N(1)–Si(1)–N(2)	88.69(17)	88.40(14)

bonds²⁶ but are longer than those of $\text{Ge}=\text{E}$ double bonds (calc: S 2.05 Å; Se 2.18 Å²⁷).^{2d,15b} The Ge–Se bond lengths in $[\text{MeC}(\text{NCy})_2]\text{Ge}(\text{SePh})_2$ (2.3522(5), 2.4009(5) Å) are slightly elongated.¹⁹ The Ge–Ge bond lengths (2.4727(6) **5**, 2.4921(5) Å **6**) are comparable to those observed in digermenes (Table 2).²⁸

The ratio of the $\text{Ge}(\text{III})$ and $\text{Ge}(\text{IV})$ species formed in the reactions with Et_2E_2 ($\text{E} = \text{S}, \text{Se}$) depends on the reaction temperature and the molar ratio of the starting reagents. **2** and **3** were formed in equimolar ratios at 70°C . **5** was formed in 36% yield together with **2** in the reaction of **1** and Et_2S_2 in a 2 : 1 molar ratio at -30°C , while **6** was obtained in less than 25% yield together with **3**. Equimolar amounts of **1** and Et_2S_2 reacted at -30°C to **2** and **5**, while the reaction of **1** with 0.5 equivalents of Et_2S_2 at 70°C gave **2** and unreacted **1**. The reaction of **5** with Et_2S_2 failed to give **2** even after heating to 70°C for 1 h, hence proving that **5** is no reaction intermediate in the formation of **2** (Fig. S22, ESI ‡). In contrast, **5** was quantitatively converted at 100°C in solution into **1** and **2** by disproportionation reaction (Fig. S11, ESI ‡).

The formation of digermenes **5** and **6** is without precedence in germylene chemistry. ^1H NMR spectroscopy studies on the reactions of **1** with isolated **2** and **3** did not show the formation of **5** and **6**, hence excluding the formation of **5** and **6** by insertion of the germylene $[\text{Me}_2\text{Si}(\text{N}t\text{-Bu})_2]\text{Ge}$ **1** into the Ge–E bond of initially formed **2** and **3**. Since digermenes $\text{R}_2\text{Ge}=\text{GeR}_2$ are known to react with water, alcohols, carboxylic acids, CCl_4 , CHCl_3 or HN_3 in a 1,2 fashion with the formation of the corresponding digermenes,²⁹ ^1H NMR spectra were recorded at -60°C and $+60^\circ\text{C}$ to investigate whether **1** formed a temperature-dependent germylene–digermene equilibrium in solution. However, only a single set of resonances was observed. In addition, reactions of **1** with 2-methylbutadiene, a trapping agent for transient and stable germynes and digermenes,³¹ at 25°C and -60°C only yielded the germylene products (germacyclopentene) as was reported previously,³² whereas no sign of the digermene reaction products was observed. A possible explanation for the formation of **5** and **6** is the presence of a loosely bound dimer in solution, held together by weak dispersion forces. Computational studies are currently being performed in order to address this hypothesis.

Oxidative addition reactions of dichalcogenanes to germylene **1** at elevated temperature yielded the expected $\text{Ge}(\text{IV})$ species, whereas the reactions at low temperatures proceeded with the predominant formation of digermenes **5** and **6**, in which the Ge atoms adopted the formal oxidation state of +III. These findings indicate that **1** forms a loosely bound dimer in solution.



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