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Direct functionalization of white phosphorus with anionic dicarbenes and mesoionic carbenes: facile access to 1,2,3-triphosphol-2-ides†

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A series of unique C_2P_3 -ring compounds $[(ADC^{Ar})P_3]$ ($ADC^{Ar} = ArC\{(DippN)C\}_2$; Dipp = 2,6-iPr₂C₆H₃; Ar = Ph **4a**, 3-MeC₆H₄ **4b**, 4-MeC₆H₄ **4c**, and 4-Me₂NC₆H₄ **4d**) are readily accessible in an almost quantitative yield by the direct functionalization of white phosphorus (P_4) with appropriate anionic dicarbenes $[\text{Li}(ADC^{Ar})]$. The formation of 1,2,3-triphosphol-2-ides (**4a–4d**) suggests unprecedented $[3 + 1]$ fragmentation of P_4 into P_3^+ and P^- . The P_3^+ cation is trapped by the $(ADC^{Ar})^-$ to give **4**, while the putative P^- anion reacts with additional P_4 to yield the Li_3P_7 species, a useful reagent in the synthesis of organophosphorus compounds. Remarkably, the P_4 fragmentation is also viable with the related mesoionic carbenes ($iMIC^{Ar}$) ($iMIC^{Ar} = ArC\{(DippN)_2CCH\}$, i stands for imidazole-based) giving rise to **4**. DFT calculations reveal that both the C_3N_2 and C_2P_3 -rings of **4** are 6π -electron aromatic systems. The natural bonding orbital (NBO) analyses indicate that compounds **4** are mesoionic species featuring a negatively polarized C_2P_3 -ring. The HOMO–3 of **4** is mainly the lone-pair at the central phosphorus atom that undergoes σ -bond formation with a variety of metal-electrophiles to yield complexes $[(ADC^{Ar})P_3]M(CO)_n$ ($M = Fe$, $n = 4$, Ar = Ph **5a** or 4-Me-C₆H₄ **5b**; $M = Mo$, $n = 5$, Ar = Ph **6**; $M = W$, $n = 5$, Ar = 4-Me₂NC₆H₄ **7**).

Received 3rd September 2019
Accepted 16th October 2019DOI: 10.1039/c9sc04441h
rsc.li/chemical-science

Introduction

The direct conversion of white phosphorus (P_4) into useful organophosphorus compounds (OPCs) is of significant interest because this excludes the involvement of corrosive Cl₂ gas that is required to convert P_4 into PCl₃, a common starting material for OPCs, and thus minimizes the waste and energy consumption.¹ The activation and subsequent functionalization of P_4 has therefore become a topical objective.² Both transition metal³ as well as main-group element⁴ compounds have been shown to activate or functionalize P_4 .⁵ In particular, compounds featuring a low-valent main-group element have made significant advances over the past years.⁶

Among nonmetals, the use of singlet carbenes⁷ has given new impetus to the field of P_4 activation as it leads to the direct C–P bond formation (Fig. 1).⁸ Several stable carbenes (L1–L7) undergo reactions with P_4 and the fate of P_4 fragmentation to

give P_n ($n = 1, 2, 4, 8$ or 12) containing products **II–IX** depends on the relative σ -donor/ π -acceptor (ambiphilic) property as well as the steric demand of carbenes.⁷ Weakly π -accepting NHCs such as iPr₂NHC (iPr = C{DippN}CH₂) do not react with P_4 , however, related derivatives containing the $[P_2]$ or $[P_3^-]$ moiety are accessible by alternative methods.⁹ Sterically demanding 1,3-bis(*t*Bu)imidazol-2-ylidene (IBu^t) activates P_4 in combination with B(C₆F₅)₃ to give **X**.^{6b} This frustrated Lewis pair (FLP) type reactivity¹⁰ led to the transformation of the classical NHC (IBu^t) into the mesoionic carbene ($iMIC$) L8 based on an 1,3-imidazole framework.

$iMIC$ s are very potent σ -donor ligands with almost negligible π -acceptor properties.¹¹ Nonetheless, no reaction of an $iMIC$ alone with P_4 has been described so far. This is most likely due to their limited synthetic accessibility.^{11a} We recently reported¹² C5-protonated $iMIC$ s^{Ar} (**XI**) as well as C4/C5-ditopic anionic dicarbenes $[\text{Li}(ADC^{Ar})]$ **XII** (Fig. 1) by the deprotonation of C2-arylated 1,3-imidazolium salts.¹³ The dicarbenes **XII** feature two adjacent C4/C5-nucleophilic sites, and thus are well endowed to affect unique dual P_4 functionalization.^{5i,14} Herein, we showcase the direct functionalization of P_4 via unprecedented $[3 + 1]$ fragmentation with $[\text{Li}(ADC^{Ar})]$ and $iMIC$ s^{Ar} to give the 1,2,3-triphosphol-2-ide derivatives $[(ADC^{Ar})P_3]$ ($ADC^{Ar} = ArC\{NDipp\}C\}_2$; Dipp = 2,6-iPr₂C₆H₃; Ar = C₆H₅ **4a**, 3-MeC₆H₄ **4b**, 4-MeC₆H₄ **4c**, and 4-Me₂NC₆H₄ **4d**) (Scheme 1).

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† Electronic supplementary information (ESI) available. CCDC 1939608–1939615. For ESI and crystallographic data in CIF or other electronic format see DOI: [10.1039/c9sc04441h](https://doi.org/10.1039/c9sc04441h)



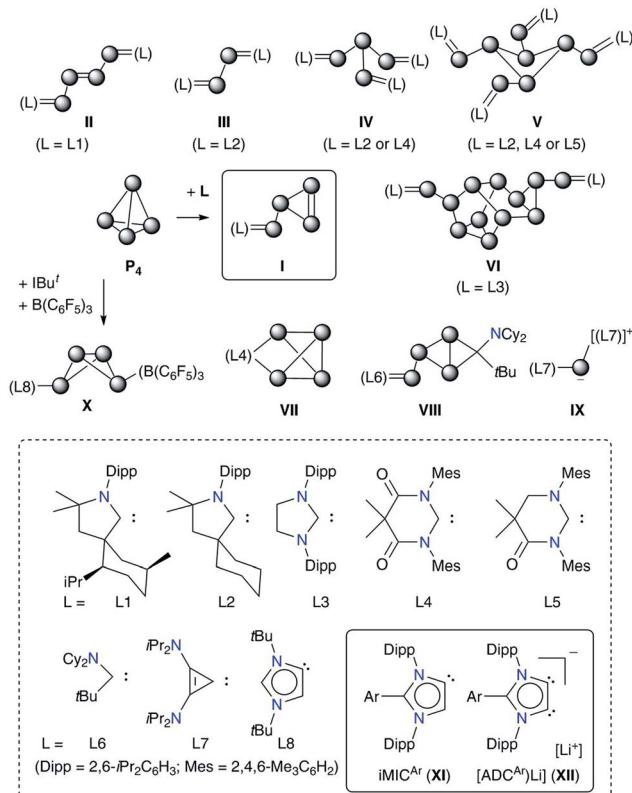
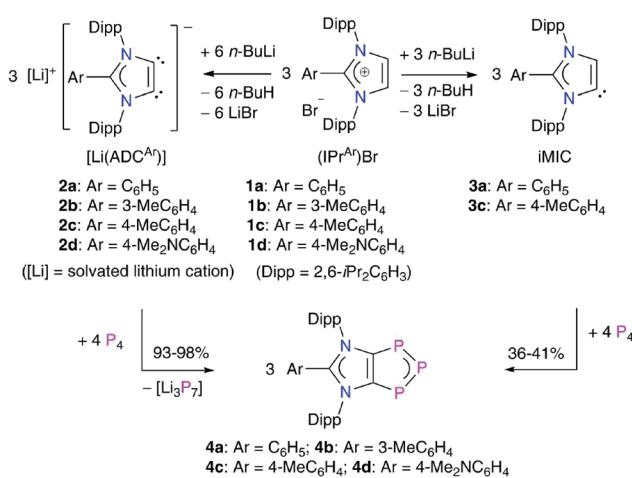


Fig. 1 Singlet carbene-mediated P_4 activation and fragmentation to II–X and a plausible intermediate I. Mesoionic carbenes (iMICs^{Ar}, XI) and anionic dicarbenes (XII) ($[Li^+]$ = solvated lithium ion) investigated in the current study.



Scheme 1 Synthesis of 1,2,3-triphosphol-2-ide derivatives 4a–4d by the direct fragmentation of white phosphorus with $[Li(ADC^{Ar})]$ (2a–2d). Reaction of iMICs^{Ar} 3a and 3c with P_4 to form 4a and 4c.

Results and discussion

Treatment of $[Li(ADC^{Ar})]$ (2a–2d),¹² which are readily accessible by the double deprotonation of C2-arylated 1,3-imidazolium salts 1a–1d with n -BuLi, with P_4 at room temperature afforded

the 1,2,3-triphosphol-2-ides 4a–4d as crystalline solids in almost quantitative yields (Scheme 1). Compounds 4a–4d are indefinitely stable (as solids as well as in solutions) under an inert gas atmosphere. The formation of 4a–4d indicates formal $[3 + 1]$ fragmentation of P_4 into P_3^+ and P^- . The cationic P_3^+ species is captured by the ADCs to give 4a–4d, whereas the P^- nucleophile reacts with additional P_4 to eventually form the phosphide (P_7^{3-}) anion, a very common species in metal mediated fragmentation of P_4 .¹⁵ Indeed, Li_3P_7 can be isolated as a red-brown solid,^{15,16} which was confirmed by its reaction with (iPr)HCl to give (iPr)PH, reported previously using Na_3P_7 .¹⁷

Interestingly, treatment of iMICs^{Ar} 3a and 3c with P_4 also afforded, *albeit* in a lower yield, the corresponding products 4a and 4c, respectively. 1H NMR analyses of the crude reaction product indicate the presence of a 1 : 1 mixture of 4a : 1a and 4c : 1c, suggesting the reprotonation of iMICs^{Ar} 3a and 3b to 1,3-imidazolium salts 1a and 1c. Pure 4a and 4c can be extracted from the mixture using toluene.

The 1H NMR spectra of 4a–4d are very symmetric and show two doublets and one septet for the isopropyl groups along with the signals due to the aryl protons. The $^{13}C\{^1H\}$ NMR resonances for 4a–4d are fully consistent with their 1H NMR spectra. The $^{13}C\{^1H\}$ NMR spectrum of 4a–4d each exhibits a doublet at 167 ppm ($J_{P-C} \approx 84$ Hz) for the backbone carbon atoms due to coupling with the ^{31}P nucleus. The $^{31}P\{^1H\}$ NMR spectrum of 4a–4d each shows a doublet at ~ 73 ppm and a triplet at 325 ± 6 ppm in 2 : 1 ratio ($J_{P-P} \approx 500$ Hz), indicating the presence of an AB_2 type system with unsaturated P–P bonds.¹⁸

Solid-state molecular structures¹⁹ of 4a (Fig. 2), 4b (Fig. S47†), and 4c (Fig. S48†) reveal the presence of a C_2P_3 -ring that is coplanar with the imidazole C_3N_2 -ring plane. The metrical parameters of 4a–4c are comparable (Table S1†) and hence, for brevity, only 4a is discussed here. The P1–P2 bond length of 4a (2.103(1) Å) is intermediate of the sum of covalent

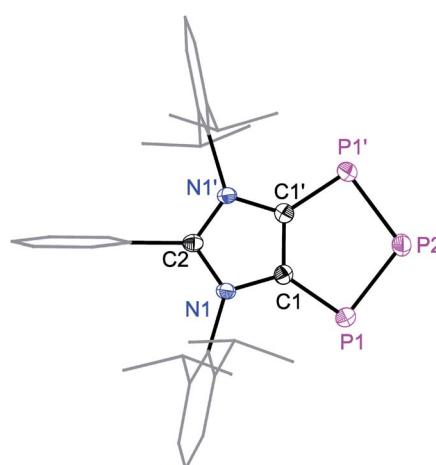
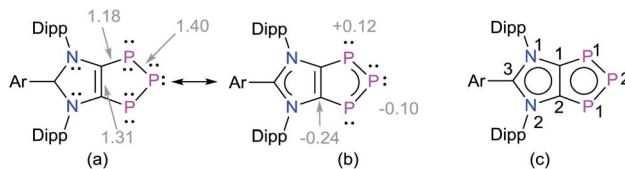


Fig. 2 Solid-state molecular structure of 4a. Hydrogen atoms are omitted for clarity. Symmetry code: 1 – X, +Y, $3/2$ – Z. Selected experimental and calculated [M06-2X/def2SVP] bond lengths (Å) and angles (°): C1–C1' 1.395(5) [1.402], N1–C1 1.404(3) [1.399], P1–C1 1.757(3) [1.764], P1–P2 2.103(1) [2.112], C1–P1–P2 94.9(1) [94.8], and P1–P2–P1' 104.0(1) [104.1].



Scheme 2 (a) Calculated Wiberg Bond Indices (WBIs) and (b) NPA atomic charges of 1,2,3-triphosphol-1,2-ides 4. (c) Schematic representation of 4 with atom numberings.

radii for $P=P$ double (2.04 Å) and $P-P$ single (2.22 Å) bond lengths,²⁰ indicating a partial π -bond character. Similarly, the C1-P1 (1.757(3) Å) bond length of **4a** is shorter compared to a classical C-P single bond length (1.85 Å)¹⁵ but compares well with C=P bond lengths (*ca.* 1.75 Å) of inversely polarized phosphaalkenes.¹⁷ The C1-C1' (1.395(5) Å) and C2-N1 (1.404(3) Å) bond lengths of **4a** are elongated in comparison with those of **1a** (1.350(2) and 1.344(2) Å, respectively).¹³ The C1-C1', C1/C2-P1 and P1-P2 bond lengths of **4a-4c** are comparable with the corresponding bond lengths of triphospholide anions $[P_3C_2R_2]^-$ (R = H, C-P 1.726(2) and 1.781(3), and P-P 2.081(1) and 2.094(1) Å; R = Ph, C-P 1.760(2) and 1.762(2), and P-P 2.091(2), 2.098(2) Å).²¹ Thus, **4a-4d** may be considered as the neutral analogues of the triphospholide anions.

To gain further insight into the electronic structures of **4a-4d**, we performed DFT calculations at the M06-2X/def2-TZVPP//M06-2X/def2-SVP level of theory. The computed NPA charges (Table S7†) at the P2 (−0.10e) and the C1/C2 (−0.24e) atoms are negative, whereas both the P1 atoms bear a positive charge (0.12e) (Scheme 2). The Wiberg Bond Indices (WBIs) of 1.40 (P-P), 1.18 (C-P), and 1.31 (C-C) indicate a partial double bond character. The WBI for the C1-C2 bond of **4a** (1.31) is significantly smaller compared to that of the imidazolium salt **1a** (WBI = 1.64). The WBIs for the C3-N1/2 bonds in **1** (1.28) and **4** (1.26) are, however, almost equal. Thus, compounds **4** may be described as mesoionic species with 6π -electron C_2P_3 and C_3N_2 aromatic systems (Scheme 2c). The nitrogen atoms contribute 4π -electrons to the C_3N_2 -ring, whereas the P_3 unit shares 4π -electrons with the C_2P_3 -ring. The 2π -electrons of the C1=C2 bond are pooled by both the ring systems. Indeed, calculated nucleus-independent chemical shift (NICS)²² values for **4a-4d** (Table 1) suggest the aromaticity of the C_3N_2 - and C_2P_3 -rings. For comparison, we also calculated the NICS values for C_6H_6 and cyclobutadiene (CBD) molecules.

The anisotropy of current-induced density (AICD) has been used to study the aromatic behavior of several molecules.²³ The AICD plots of **4a** (Fig. 3) and **4b-4d** (Fig. S62†) clearly show

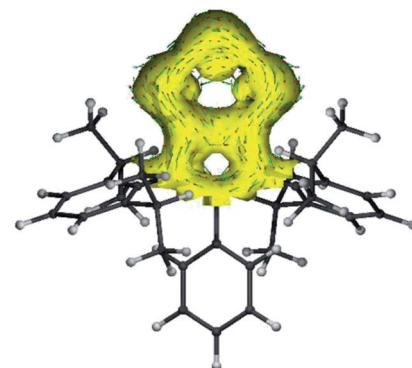


Fig. 3 AICD plot (based on M06-2X/def2-TZVPP//def2-SVP calculations) of the $C_3N_2P_3$ core of compound **4a**. The isovalue was arbitrarily chosen to be 0.03, the magnetic field is orthogonal to the C_2P_3 -plane and points towards the viewer, and thus clockwise ring currents represent aromatic systems, whereas counter-clockwise ring currents are indicative of antiaromatic systems. AICD plots of the complete molecules **4a-4d** are given in the ESI.†

significant delocalization of the π -electrons of both the C_3N_2 and the C_2P_3 heterocycles, forming one coherent π -system.

The HOMO of compounds **4a** (Fig. 4) and **4b-4c** (Fig. S58–S60†) corresponds to the π -orbitals of the C-P bonds with a small contribution from the lone pairs at the nitrogen atoms. The HOMO–1 corresponds mainly to the π -orbitals of the P_3 and the C_2 moieties of the C_2P_3 -ring. Like in alkali metal 1,2,3-triphospholides,^{21a} the analyses of frontier molecular orbitals, HOMO and HOMO–1 in particular, of **4a-4d** reveal the mixing of phosphorus orbitals with lone-pair character amongst the π -manifold frontier orbitals. The HOMO–3 and HOMO–2 are the lone pairs on the central and neighbouring P atoms, respectively. The LUMO of **4a-4d** corresponds to the π^* orbital of the aryl group on the C3 carbon atom along with a p-orbital at the central phosphorus atom. The LUMO+2 corresponds mainly to the π^* -orbitals of the C_2P_3 unit.

The intriguing electronic structures of **4** prompted us to investigate their ligand properties as they may function as neutral two electron σ -donors (*via* phosphorus atoms) and/or 6 π -electron η^5 -donors (C_2P_3 -ring) like triphospholide²¹ and cyclopentadienyl anions. Treatment of **4a**, **4b**, and **4c** with $Fe_2(CO)_9$ or $M(CO)_5(THF)$ ($M = Mo$ or W) led to the formation of related complexes **5a**, **5b**, **6**, and **7** (Scheme 3). In all complexes, the central phosphorus atom functions as a two-electron σ -donor ligand to bind to the $M(CO)_n$ moiety. This is consistent with the NBO analysis, which suggests higher charge accumulation at the central phosphorus atom with respect to that of the

Table 1 Calculated NICS values for the C_3N_2/C_2P_3 units of **4a-4d** at the M06-2X/def2TZVPP//M06-2X/def2SVP level of theory

C_3N_2/C_2P_3	4a	4b	4c	4d	5a	C_6H_6/CBD^a
NICS(0)	−7.08/−10.19	−7.29/−10.31	−7.29/−10.31	−6.77/−10.37	−7.57/−9.95	−7.53/33.21
NICS(1)	−5.94/−10.18	−6.11/−10.28	−6.11/−10.23	−5.64/−10.21	−6.29/−9.58	−10.19/21.09
NICS(2)	−2.43/−5.51	−2.53/−5.21	−2.53/−5.53	−2.36/−5.52	−2.52/−5.12	−5.22/4.98

^a CBD (cyclobutadiene).



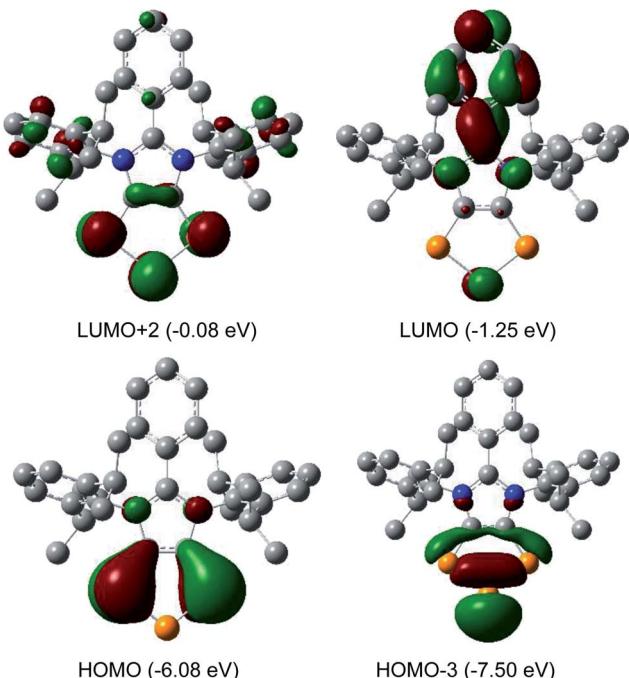
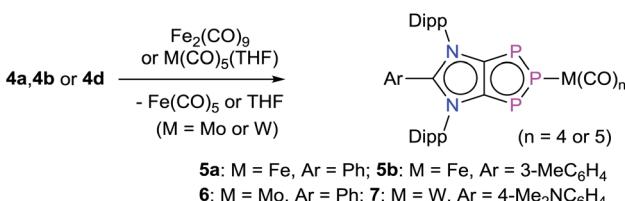


Fig. 4 Selected MOs of **4a** calculated at the M06-2X/def2-TZVPP//def2-SVP level of theory with an isovalue of 0.04. Hydrogen atoms were omitted for clarity.

neighbouring phosphorus atoms. The $^{31}\text{P}\{\text{H}\}$ NMR spectrum of **5a**, **5b**, **6**, and **7** each exhibits one doublet (**5a**: 145; **5b**: 145; **6**: 160; **7**: 157 ppm) and one triplet (**5a**: 316; **5b**: 315; **6**: 299; **7**: 250 ppm), which have been upfield shifted with respect to that of **4a** (173, 332 ppm), **4b** (173, 331 ppm), and **4d** (173, 319 ppm). In the $^{31}\text{P}\{\text{H}\}$ NMR spectrum of **7**, the triplet at 250 ppm is accompanied by the ^{183}W satellites ($J_{\text{P-W}} = 202$ Hz).

The iron atom in **5a** (Fig. 5) and **5b** (Fig. S49†) each features a trigonal-bipyramidal geometry. Three equatorial positions are occupied by CO ligands, whereas one CO and one **4a** or **4b** are present at the axial positions. The P–Fe bond length of **5a** (2.240(1) Å) compares well with that of triphosphaindane-derived P_3Fe_3 iron-carbonyl clusters (av. 2.244 Å).²⁴ Interestingly, the metrical parameters of the C_3N_2 - and C_2P_3 -rings of **5a** and **5b** are very similar to those of the precursors **4a** and **4b**, respectively. This indicates that the aromatic π -systems remain virtually intact upon complexation of **4a** and **4b** with the $\text{Fe}(\text{CO})_4$ fragment. As expected, the molecular structures of **6** (Fig. S50†) and **7** (Fig. S51†) feature six-fold coordinated Mo and W atoms, respectively.



Scheme 3 Synthesis of complexes $[(\text{ADC}^{\text{Ar}})\text{P}_3]\text{M}(\text{CO})_n$ **5a**, **5b**, **6**, and **7**.

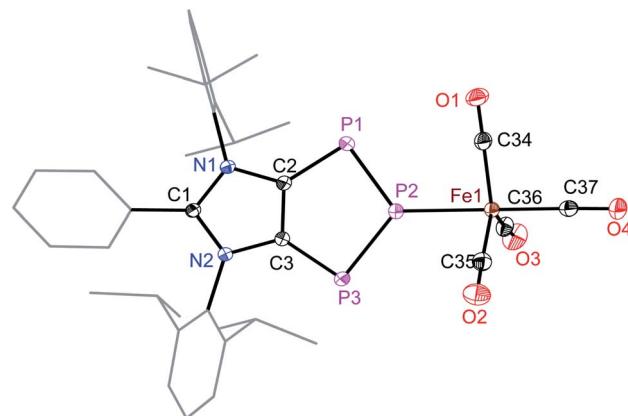


Fig. 5 Solid-state molecular structure of **5a**. Hydrogen atoms and one solvent toluene molecule are omitted for clarity. Selected bond lengths (Å) and angles (°): C2–C3 1.394(2), C2–N1 1.399(1), C3–N2 1.403(1), C2–P1 1.756(1), C3–P3 1.764(1), P1–P2 2.081(1), P2–P3 2.089(1), P2–Fe1 2.240(1), Fe1–C34 1.791(1), Fe1–C35 1.797(2), Fe1–C36 1.810(1), Fe1–C37 1.783(1), P1–P2–P3 109.1(2), and P2–Fe1–C37 178.5(1).

DFT calculations suggest that the HOMO of **5a** (Fig. 6) is mainly located at the iron atom and has some contribution from the π -orbitals of the C–C and one P–P bond. The LUMO is comparable to that of **4a** but is lower in energy by -0.26 eV, indicating metal-to-ligand π -back bonding. The aromaticity of the C_2P_3 moiety in **5a** remains almost unchanged as indicated by $\text{NICS}(0) = -9.95$, $\text{NICS}(1) = -9.58$, and $\text{NICS}(2) = -5.12$ values. The aromaticity of **5a** is also corroborated by the AICD plot (Fig. S62†).

Experimental

All syntheses and manipulations were carried out under an inert gas atmosphere (Ar or N₂) using standard *Schlenk* techniques or a glove box (MBraun LABMasterPro). Solvents were dried over appropriate drying agents, distilled, and stored over a 3 Å molecular sieve prior to use. Deuterated solvents were dried over appropriate drying agents, distilled, and stored inside a glove box. NMR spectra were recorded on a Bruker Avance III 500 or a Bruker Avance III 500 HD spectrometer. Chemical shifts (in δ , ppm) are referenced to the solvent residual signals of CD_2Cl_2 : ^1H 5.32; ^{13}C 53.84 and C_6D_6 : ^1H 7.16; ^{13}C 128.62 ppm. ESI mass spectra were recorded using an Esquire 3000 ion trap mass spectrometer (Bruker Daltonik GmbH, Bremen, Germany) equipped with a nano-ESI source. Samples were dissolved in CH_2Cl_2 and introduced by static nano-ESI using in-house pulled glass emitters. Nitrogen served as a nebulizer gas as well as a dry gas and was generated by a Bruker nitrogen generator NGM 11. Helium served as a cooling gas for the ion trap. The mass axis was externally calibrated with ESI-L Tuning Mix (Agilent Technologies, Santa Clara, CA, USA) as the calibration standard. UV/vis spectra were recorded on a ThermoFisher Evolution 300 spectrophotometer. Infrared spectra were recorded using a Bruker Alpha-T FTIR spectrometer equipped with a Bruker Platinum diamond ATR unit. Melting points were measured

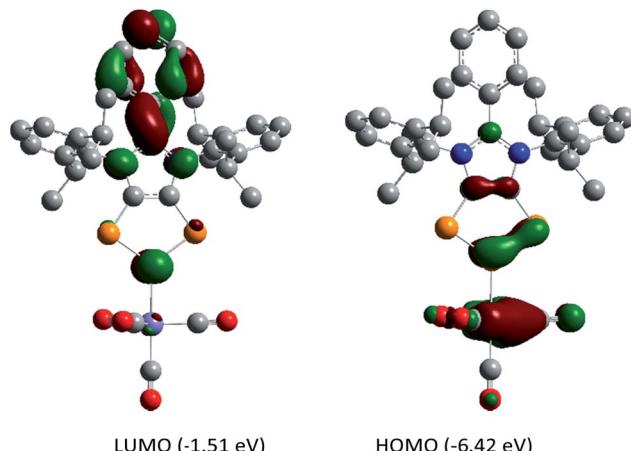


Fig. 6 Frontier molecular orbitals of **5a** calculated at the M06-2X/def2-TZVPP//def2-SVP level of theory. The isovalue was arbitrarily chosen to be 0.04. Hydrogen atoms were omitted for clarity.

with a Büchi B-545 melting point apparatus. $(\text{IPr}^{\text{Ar}})\text{Br}$ salts **1a**–**1d** ($\text{Ar} = \text{Ph}$, 3-Me C_6H_4 , 4-Me C_6H_4 or 4-Me $\text{N}(\text{C}_6\text{H}_4)\text{C}_6\text{H}_3$) were synthesized following the reported method.^{13a} $n\text{-BuLi}$ (2.5 M solution in hexanes, Sigma-Aldrich) was used as received. White phosphorus was sublimed and stored inside a glovebox. Commercially available $\text{Fe}_2(\text{CO})_9$ (Sigma-Aldrich), $\text{Mo}(\text{CO})_6$ (Fluorochem), and $\text{W}(\text{CO})_6$ (Sigma-Aldrich) were used as supplied.

Synthesis of compound $(\text{ADC}^{\text{Ph}})\text{P}_3$ (**4a**)

To a 15 mL THF suspension of **1a** (0.88 g, 1.6 mmol), $n\text{-BuLi}$ (2.5 M, 1.4 mL, 3.5 mmol) was added at $-40\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$. The resulting reaction mixture was stirred at $-20\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ for 1 h and then at room temperature ($25\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$) for 15 minutes to obtain a clear light brown solution of **2a**.¹² To this solution, solid P_4 (0.4 g, 3.2 mmol) was added in one portion and then stirred overnight at rt. The resulting dark suspension was refluxed for 2 h and the red insoluble material (probably a mixture of Li_3P_7 and other polyphosphides) was removed by filtration. The volatiles from the filtrate were removed under vacuum to give a brown residue, which was extracted with dichloromethane, dried under vacuum, washed with toluene (2×10 mL), and re-dried to obtain compound **4a** as a yellow solid. Yield: 96% (0.86 g). Single crystals suitable for X-ray diffraction analysis were grown by storing a saturated toluene solution of **4a** at $-24\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ for three days. Mp: $343\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$. Elem. anal. (%), calcd for $\text{C}_{33}\text{H}_{39}\text{N}_2\text{P}_3$ (556.6): C, 71.21; H, 7.06; N, 5.03; found: C, 71.02; H, 6.84; N, 4.87. ^1H NMR (500 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): $\delta = 7.59$ (t, $J = 7.7$ Hz, 2H, $p\text{-C}_6\text{H}_3$), 7.38 (d, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 4H, $m\text{-C}_6\text{H}_3$), 7.34 (t, $J = 6.6$ Hz, 1H, $p\text{-C}_6\text{H}_5$), 7.23–7.18 (m, 4H, *o*-, $m\text{-C}_6\text{H}_5$), 2.62 (sept, $J = 6.6$ Hz, 4H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$), 1.26 (d, $J = 6.6$ Hz, 12H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$), and 1.03 (d, $J = 6.7$ Hz, 12H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$) ppm. $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (126 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): $\delta = 167.6$ (d, $J_{\text{P}-\text{C}} = 84.4$ Hz, CP); 149.2 (NCN); 146.2, 133.5, 132.0, 131.8, 129.8, 129.1, 125.8, and 123.8 (C_6H_3 , C_6H_5); 29.7 ($\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$); 26.1 and 23.5 ($\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$) ppm. $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (202 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): $\delta = 332.3$ (t, $J_{\text{P}-\text{P}} = 506$ Hz) and 173.7 (d, $J_{\text{P}-\text{P}} = 506$ Hz) ppm. MS (ESI, positive mode): $m/z = 557.3$ [**4a** + H]⁺.

UV-vis ($\lambda/\text{nm } \varepsilon (\text{M}^{-1} \text{ cm}^{-1})$): 282 (22336), 346 (31017), and 361 (31397).

Compounds **4b**–**4d** were prepared by employing a similar protocol to that described for **4a** using the appropriate precursor **1b**, **1c** or **1d**, $n\text{-BuLi}$, and P_4 .

$(\text{ADC}^{\text{3-Tol}})\text{P}_3$ (**4b**)

Yield: 98% (0.90 g). Mp: 338–341 $^\circ\text{C}$. Elem. anal. (%), calcd for **4b**, $\text{C}_{34}\text{H}_{41}\text{N}_2\text{P}_3$, (570.6): C, 71.56; H, 7.24; N 4.91; found C, 70.64; H, 7.33; N 4.68. ^1H NMR (500 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): $\delta = 7.57$ (t, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 2H, $p\text{-C}_6\text{H}_3$), 7.35 (d, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 4H, $m\text{-C}_6\text{H}_3$), 7.14 (d, $J = 7.6$ Hz, 1H, *o*- C_6H_4), 7.08 (t, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 1H, $m\text{-C}_6\text{H}_4$), 7.02 (s, 1H, *o*- C_6H_4), 6.96 (d, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 1H, $p\text{-C}_6\text{H}_4$), 2.60 (sept, $J = 6.7$ Hz, 4H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$), 2.10 (s, 3H, CH_3), 1.24 (d, $J = 6.7$ Hz, 12H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$), and 1.03 (d, $J = 6.8$ Hz, 12H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$) ppm. $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (126 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): $\delta = 167.5$ (d, $J_{\text{P}-\text{C}} = 84.5$ Hz, CP); 149.6 (NCN); 146.3, 139.3, and 133.6 (*i*- C_6H_4 and *i*, $m\text{-C}_6\text{H}_3$); 132.7 (*o*- C_6H_4); 131.7 ($p\text{-C}_6\text{H}_3$); 130.5 (*o*- C_6H_4); 129.5 and 128.9 ($m\text{-C}_6\text{H}_4$); 126.9, 125.8, and 123.71 ($m\text{-C}_6\text{H}_3$); 29.7 ($\text{C}(\text{CH}_3)_2$); 26.2 and 23.5 ($\text{C}(\text{CH}_3)_2$); 21.2 (CH_3) ppm. $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (202 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): $\delta = 331.1$ (t, $J_{\text{P}-\text{P}} = 506$ Hz) and 173.6 (d, $J_{\text{P}-\text{P}} = 506$ Hz) ppm. MS (ESI, positive mode): $m/z = 571.3$ [**4b** + H]⁺. UV-vis ($\lambda/\text{nm } \varepsilon (\text{M}^{-1} \text{ cm}^{-1})$): 280 (25637), 345 (36323), and 361 (36539).

$(\text{ADC}^{\text{4-Tol}})\text{P}_3$ (**4c**)

Yield: 93% (0.85 g). Single crystals suitable for X-ray diffraction were obtained by storing a saturated toluene solution of **4c** for three days at $-24\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$. Mp: 339–343 $^\circ\text{C}$. Elem. anal. (%), calcd for $\text{C}_{34}\text{H}_{41}\text{N}_2\text{P}_3$ (570.6): C, 71.56; H, 7.24; N, 4.91; found C, 71.11; H, 7.06; N, 4.65. ^1H NMR (500 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): $\delta = 7.59$ (t, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 2H, $p\text{-C}_6\text{H}_3$), 7.38 (d, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 4H, $m\text{-C}_6\text{H}_3$), 7.05 (d, $J = 8.4$ Hz, 2H, C_6H_4), 7.02 (d, $J = 8.3$ Hz, 2H, C_6H_4), 2.61 (sept, $J = 6.8$ Hz, 4H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$), 2.23 (s, 3H, CH_3), 1.26 (d, $J = 6.7$ Hz, 12H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$), and 1.03 (d, $J = 6.9$ Hz, 12H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$) ppm. $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (126 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): $\delta = 167.5$ (d, $J_{\text{P}-\text{C}} = 84.1$ Hz, CP); 146.2 (NCN); 143.1, 133.7, 131.7, 129.8, 129.7, 125.8, and 120.9 (C_6H_3 and C_6H_4); 29.7 ($\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$); 26.1 and 23.5 ($\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$); 21.7 (CH_3) ppm. $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (202 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): $\delta = 329.9$ (t, $J_{\text{P}-\text{P}} = 506$ Hz) and 173.6 (d, $J_{\text{P}-\text{P}} = 506$ Hz) ppm. MS (ESI, positive mode): $m/z = 571.3$ [**4c** + H]⁺. UV-vis ($\lambda/\text{nm } \varepsilon (\text{M}^{-1} \text{ cm}^{-1})$): 283 (23295), 336 (28771), 346 (29238), and 362 (29676).

$(\text{ADC}^{\text{4-DMP}})\text{P}_3$ (**4d**)

Yield: 94% (0.93 g). Mp: 270–273 $^\circ\text{C}$ (decomp.). Elem. anal. (%), calcd for $\text{C}_{35}\text{H}_{44}\text{N}_3\text{P}_3$ (599.3): C, 70.10; H, 7.40; N, 7.01; found: C, 69.66; H, 7.18; N 6.59. ^1H NMR (500 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): $\delta = 7.56$ (t, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 2H, $p\text{-C}_6\text{H}_3$), 7.35 (d, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 4H, $m\text{-C}_6\text{H}_3$), 6.90 (d, $J = 9.0$ Hz, 2H, C_6H_4), 6.28 (d, $J = 9.0$ Hz, 2H, C_6H_4), 2.88 (s, 6H, $\text{N}(\text{CH}_3)_2$), 2.67 (sept, $J = 6.8$ Hz, 4H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$), 1.24 (d, $J = 6.7$ Hz, 12H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$), and 0.97 (d, $J = 6.8$ Hz, 12H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$) ppm. $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (126 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): $\delta = 167.0$ (d, $J_{\text{P}-\text{C}} = 82.8$ Hz, CP); 151.9 (NCN); 146.2, 138.4, 134.6, 131.4, 130.8, 126.3, 125.8, and 111.1 (C_6H_3 and C_6H_4); 40.0 ($\text{N}(\text{CH}_3)_2$); 29.6 ($\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$); 25.7 and 23.5 ($\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$) ppm. ^{31}P



^1H NMR (202 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): δ = 319.5 (t, $J_{\text{P}-\text{P}} = 504$ Hz) and 173.3 (d, $J_{\text{P}-\text{P}} = 504$ Hz) ppm. MS (ESI, positive mode): m/z = 600.3 [**4d** + H]⁺. UV-vis (λ/nm ($\epsilon \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ cm}^{-1}$)): 285 (37768), 322 (46655), 343 (47543), 366 (48310), and 398 (45288).

Experimental identification of the insoluble material. A mixture of the insoluble material (20 mg, 80 μmol , calcd for Li_3P_7) and IPrHCl (80 mg, 188 μmol) was stirred in 3 mL of THF for three days at rt, resulting in a dark red suspension. A black solid was removed by filtration and the filtrate was dried in a vacuum, affording a dark red solid which was identified as IPr=PH¹⁷ by NMR spectroscopy. ^1H NMR (500 MHz, C_6D_6 , 298 K): δ = 7.23 (t, $J = 7.7$ Hz, 2H, $p\text{-C}_6\text{H}_3$), 7.14 (d, $J = 7.6$ Hz, 4H, $m\text{-C}_6\text{H}_3$), 6.18 (s, 2H, NCH), 3.06 (sept, $J = 6.7$ Hz, 4H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$), 1.92 (d, $J_{\text{PH}} = 165.2$ Hz, 1H, PH), 1.47 (d, $J = 6.8$ Hz, 12H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$), and 1.15 (d, $J = 6.9$ Hz, 12H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$) ppm. ^{31}P NMR (C_6D_6 , 298 K, 500 MHz): δ = -134.4 (d, $J_{\text{P}-\text{H}} = 165.2$ Hz) ppm. $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (C_6D_6 , 298 K, 500 MHz): δ = -134.4 ppm.

Alternative synthesis of **4a** and **4c** from iMICs^{Ar} **2a** and **2c**

To a 15 mL THF suspension of **1a** (0.98 g, 1.8 mmol), *n*-BuLi (2.5 M, 0.8 mL, 2.0 mmol) was added at -40 °C. The resulting brown solution was stirred at -20 °C for 45 min and then for 15 min at rt. Subsequently, P_4 (0.3 g, 2.4 mmol) was added in one portion and the resulting reaction mixture was stirred overnight at rt. The volatiles were removed under vacuum to obtain a dark residue, which was extracted with toluene (3×10 mL). The filtrate was dried in a vacuum to obtain **4a**. Yield: 41% (0.4 g).

$[(\text{ADC}^{\text{4-Tol}})\text{P}_3](\text{4c})$. Similarly, treatment of **3c** with P_4 gave **4c**. Yield: 36% (0.4 g).

Syntheses of complexes **5a**, **5b**, **6**, and **7**

$[(\text{ADC}^{\text{Ph}})\text{P}_3]\text{Fe}(\text{CO})_4$ (**5a**). To a mixture of **4a** (651 mg, 1.2 mmol) and $\text{Fe}_2(\text{CO})_9$ (510 mg, 1.4 mmol), 30 mL THF was added at rt. The brown colored solution changed to a dark red colored solution after 15 min, which was further stirred overnight. The volatiles were removed in a vacuum to afford a red solid, which was extracted with 30 mL toluene. The volume of the filtrate was reduced to 10 mL and stored at -30° for one week to obtain orange needles of **5a** (696 mg, 80%), which were also suitable for X-ray diffraction. Mp: 167–172 °C (decomp.). Elem. anal. (%), calcd for $\text{C}_{37}\text{H}_{39}\text{FeN}_2\text{O}_4\text{P}_3$ (724.5): C, 61.34; H, 5.43; N, 3.87; found: C, 59.66; H, 5.24; N, 3.71. ^1H NMR (500 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): δ = 7.60 (t, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 2H, $p\text{-C}_6\text{H}_3$), 7.38 (d, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 4H, $m\text{-C}_6\text{H}_3$), 7.34 (t, $J = 7.5$ Hz, 1H, $p\text{-C}_6\text{H}_5$), 7.22–7.15 (m, 4H, $o\text{-, }m\text{-C}_6\text{H}_5$), 2.57 (sept, $J = 6.7$ Hz, 4H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$), 1.27 (d, $J = 6.7$ Hz, 12H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$), and 1.01 (d, $J = 6.8$ Hz, 12H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$) ppm. $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (126 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): δ = 215.1 (CO); 161.7 (d, $J_{\text{P}-\text{C}} = 70.3$ Hz, CP); 146.0 (NCN), 133.1, 132.2, 129.7, 129.5, 129.3, 128.7, 126.1, and 123.1 (C_6H_3 and C_6H_5); 29.8 ($\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$); 26.0 and 23.5 ($\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$) ppm. $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (202 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): δ = 316.8 (t, $J_{\text{P}-\text{P}} = 531$ Hz) and 145.4 (d, $J_{\text{P}-\text{P}} = 531$ Hz) ppm. MS (ESI, positive mode): m/z = 725.1 [**5a** + H]⁺. UV-vis (λ/nm ($\epsilon \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ cm}^{-1}$)): 285 (33061), 328 (31345), and 428 (37184). IR (ATR, diamond): $\tilde{\nu}/\text{cm}^{-1}$ = 2041, 1966, 1937, and 1919.

$[(\text{ADC}^{\text{3-Tol}})\text{P}_3]\text{Fe}(\text{CO})_4$ (**5b**). Compound **5b** was synthesized following a similar procedure to that described above for **5a** using **4b** (300 mg, 0.53 mmol) and $\text{Fe}_2(\text{CO})_9$ (191 mg, 0.53 mmol) as an orange crystalline solid. Yield: 84% (333 mg). Crystals suitable for X-ray diffraction were obtained by storing a saturated toluene solution of **5b** overnight at rt. Mp: 180–182 °C (decomp.) Elem. anal. (%), calcd for **5b**, $\text{C}_{38}\text{H}_{41}\text{FeN}_2\text{O}_4\text{P}_3$ (738.5): C, 61.80; H, 7.56; N, 3.79; found C, 62.69; H, 5.95; N, 3.45. ^1H NMR (500 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): δ = 7.59 (t, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 2H, $p\text{-C}_6\text{H}_3$), 7.37 (d, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 4H, $m\text{-C}_6\text{H}_3$), 7.15 (d, $J = 7.4$ Hz, 1H, $o\text{-C}_6\text{H}_4$), 7.08 (t, $J = 7.7$ Hz, 1H, $m\text{-C}_6\text{H}_4$), 7.00 (s, 1H, $o\text{-C}_6\text{H}_4$), 6.94 (d, $J = 7.7$ Hz, 1H, $p\text{-C}_6\text{H}_4$), 2.56 (sept, $J = 6.6$ Hz, 4H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$), 2.09 (s, 3H, CH_3), 1.27 (d, $J = 6.6$ Hz, 12H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$), and 1.04 (d, $J = 6.7$ Hz, 12H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$) ppm. $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (126 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): δ = 215.1 and 214.9 (CO); 161.6 (d, $J_{\text{P}-\text{C}} = 71$ Hz, NCP); 147.6 (NCN); 146.1, 139.5, 133.1, 133.0, 132.1, 130.3, 129.9, 129.0, 126.8, 126.0, and 122.9 (C_6H_3 and C_6H_5); 29.8 ($\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$); 26.1 and 23.6 ($\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$); 21.2 (CH_3) ppm. $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (202 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): δ = 315.5 (t, $J_{\text{P}-\text{P}} = 531$ Hz) and 145.4 (d, $J_{\text{P}-\text{P}} = 532$ Hz) ppm. MS (ESI, positive mode): m/z = 739.1 [**5b** + H]⁺. UV-vis (λ/nm ($\epsilon \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ cm}^{-1}$)): 282 (35189), 327 (29758), and 416 (37568). IR (ATR, diamond): $\tilde{\nu}/\text{cm}^{-1}$ = 2039, 2007, 1962, and 1921.

$[(\text{ADC}^{\text{Ph}})\text{P}_3]\text{Mo}(\text{CO})_5$ (**6**). To a mixture of **4a** (447 mg, 0.8 mmol) and $\text{Mo}(\text{CO})_6$ (212 mg, 0.8 mmol), 20 mL THF was added at rt. The yellow suspension was stirred for three days at 60 °C. Filtration through a plug of Celite afforded an orange solution. The volatiles were removed under vacuum to obtain **6** as a yellow solid (523 mg, 81%). Crystals suitable for X-ray diffraction were obtained by a slow diffusion of *n*-hexane into a saturated toluene solution of **6**. Elem. anal. (%), calcd for **6**, $\text{C}_{38}\text{H}_{39}\text{MoN}_2\text{O}_5\text{P}_3$ (792.6): C, 57.58; H, 4.96; N, 3.53; found: C, 57.06; H, 4.73; N, 3.25. ^1H NMR (500 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): δ = 7.60 (t, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 2H, $p\text{-C}_6\text{H}_3$), 7.38 (d, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 4H, $m\text{-C}_6\text{H}_3$), 7.35 (t, $J = 7.6$ Hz, 1H, $p\text{-C}_6\text{H}_5$), 7.21 (t, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 2H, $m\text{-C}_6\text{H}_5$), 7.17 (d, $J = 7.9$ Hz, 2H, $o\text{-C}_6\text{H}_5$), 2.58 (sept, $J = 6.7$ Hz, 4H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$), 1.27 (d, $J = 6.7$ Hz, 12H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$), and 1.02 (d, $J = 6.8$ Hz, 12H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$). $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (126 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): δ = 206.0 and 201.8 (CO); 164.4 (d, $J_{\text{P}-\text{C}} = 73$ Hz, NCP); 146.1 (NCN); 133.2, 132.2, 132.1, 129.7, 129.2, and 126.1 (C_6H_3 and C_6H_5); 29.8 ($\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$); 26.0 and 23.6 ($\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$) ppm. $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (202 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): δ = 299.1 (t, $J_{\text{P}-\text{P}} = 510$ Hz) and 160.2 (d, $J_{\text{P}-\text{P}} = 511$ Hz) ppm. IR (ATR, diamond): $\tilde{\nu}/\text{cm}^{-1}$ = 2065, 2051, 1945, 1925, and 1911.

$[(\text{ADC}^{\text{4-DMP}})\text{P}_3]\text{W}(\text{CO})_5$ (**7**). A 10 mL THF solution of $\text{W}(\text{CO})_6$ (212 mg, 0.8 mmol) was irradiated under UV light for 3 h and then combined with a 6 mL THF solution of **4d** (447 mg, 0.8 mmol). The yellow solution was stirred overnight at rt. The volatiles were removed under vacuum to obtain **7** as a yellow solid (256 mg, 88%). Crystals suitable for X-ray diffraction were obtained by slow evaporation of a saturated toluene solution of **7** at rt. Elem. anal. (%), calcd for **7**, $\text{C}_{40}\text{H}_{44}\text{N}_3\text{O}_5\text{P}_3\text{W}$ (923.6): C, 52.02; H, 4.80; N, 4.55; found C, 51.40; H, 4.39; N, 4.10. ^1H NMR (500 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): δ = 7.61 (t, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 2H, $p\text{-C}_6\text{H}_3$), 7.41 (d, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 4H, $m\text{-C}_6\text{H}_3$), 6.91 (d, $J = 9.2$ Hz, 2H, C_6H_4), 6.33 (d, $J = 9.2$ Hz, 2H, C_6H_4), 2.88 (s, 6H, $\text{N}(\text{CH}_3)_2$), 2.60 (sept, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 2H, C_6H_4), 2.22 (s, 6H, $\text{N}(\text{CH}_3)_2$), 1.96 (s, 6H, $\text{N}(\text{CH}_3)_2$), and 1.62 (s, 6H, $\text{N}(\text{CH}_3)_2$) ppm. $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (126 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): δ = 215.1 (CO); 164.4 (d, $J_{\text{P}-\text{C}} = 73$ Hz, NCP); 146.1 (NCN); 133.2, 132.2, 132.1, 129.7, 129.2, and 126.1 (C_6H_3 and C_6H_5); 29.8 ($\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$); 26.0 and 23.6 ($\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$) ppm. $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (202 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): δ = 299.1 (t, $J_{\text{P}-\text{P}} = 510$ Hz) and 160.2 (d, $J_{\text{P}-\text{P}} = 511$ Hz) ppm. IR (ATR, diamond): $\tilde{\nu}/\text{cm}^{-1}$ = 2065, 2051, 1945, 1925, and 1911.



= 6.8 Hz, 4H, $CH(CH_3)_2$), 1.26 (d, J = 6.9 Hz, 12H, $CH(CH_3)_2$), and 1.00 (d, J = 6.8 Hz, 12H, $CH(CH_3)_2$) ppm. $^{13}C\{^1H\}$ NMR (126 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): δ = 197.3 and 192.0 (CO); 152.1 (NCP); 146.1 (NCN); 134.3, 131.8, 130.7, 129.9, 126.1, 111.2, and 108.7 (C_6H_3 and C_6H_5); 40.0 (N($CH_3)_2$); 29.7 ($CH(CH_3)_2$); 25.6 and 23.6 ($CH(CH_3)_2$) ppm. $^{31}P\{^1H\}$ NMR (202 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): δ = 250.9 (t, J_{P-P} = 512 Hz, with ^{183}W satellites, J_{W-P} = 202 Hz) and 157.0 (d, J_{P-P} = 505 Hz) ppm. MS (ESI): m/z = 924.2 [7 + H] $^+$. IR (ATR, diamond): $\tilde{\nu}$ /cm $^{-1}$ = 2063, 1978, 1925, and 1907.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the direct functionalization of white phosphorus (P_4) with anionic dicarbenes (ADCs) (**2a–2d**) as well as with mesoionic carbenes (iMICs AR) (**3a** and **3c**) that leads to the formation of unique 1,2,3-triphosphol-2-ide derivatives **4a–4d** as crystalline solids up to 98% yield has been reported. The isolation of C_2P_3 -heterocycles **4a–4d** is unprecedented in the P_4 activation by singlet carbenes and main-group compounds. The formation of **4a–4d** suggests unique [3 + 1] fragmentation of P_4 into P_3^+ and P^- . The former species combines with an ADC to give **4a–4d**, whereas the latter reacts with additional P_4 to form $(P_7)^{3-}$ that can be isolated as Li_3P_7 . Electronic structures of **4a–4d** have been analyzed by computational studies, which, along with the crystallographic data, show that both $C_3N_2^-$ and $C_2P_3^-$ rings of **4a–4d** are 6 π -electron aromatic systems. Thus, **4a–4d** can be considered as neutral analogues of cyclopentadienyl anions. The C_2P_3 -ring of **4a–4d** is negatively polarized towards the central phosphorus atom, and hence **4a–4d** may also function as potent two-electron σ -donor ligands. This feature has been demonstrated with the isolation of transition metal complexes **5a**, **5b**, **6**, and **7**. Consequently, **4a–4d** have interesting perspectives as ligands in main-group element as well as transition-metal chemistry and catalysis. Further investigations in this direction are currently underway in this laboratory.

Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts to declare.

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the support from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) and thank Professor Norbert W. Mitzel for his continuous support. The authors gratefully acknowledge the support by computing time provided by the Paderborn Center for Parallel Computing (PC2).

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