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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 $[(ADC^{Ar})P_3]$ ($ADC^{Ar} = ArC\{(DippN)C\}_2$; $Dipp = 2,6\text{-iPr}_2C_6H_3$; $Ar = Ph$ **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 $[Li(ADC^{Ar})]$. 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**; $M = W$, $n = 5$, $Ar = 4\text{-Me}_2\text{NC}_6\text{H}_4$ **7**).

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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 Cl_2 gas that is required to convert P_4 into PCl_3 , 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 IPr ($IPr = C\{(DippN)CH\}_2$) 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 $B(C_6F_5)_3$ to give **X**.^{6h} 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 $iMICs^{Ar}$ (**XI**) as well as C4/C5-ditopic anionic dicarbenes $[Li(ADC^{Ar})]$ **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 $[Li(ADC^{Ar})]$ and $iMICs^{Ar}$ to give the 1,2,3-triphosphol-2-ide derivatives $[(ADC^{Ar})P_3]$ ($ADC^{Ar} = ArC\{NDipp\}C_2$; $Dipp = 2,6\text{-iPr}_2C_6H_3$; $Ar = C_6H_5$ **4a**, 3-MeC₆H₄ **4b**, 4-MeC₆H₄ **4c**, and 4-Me₂NC₆H₄ **4d**) (Scheme 1).

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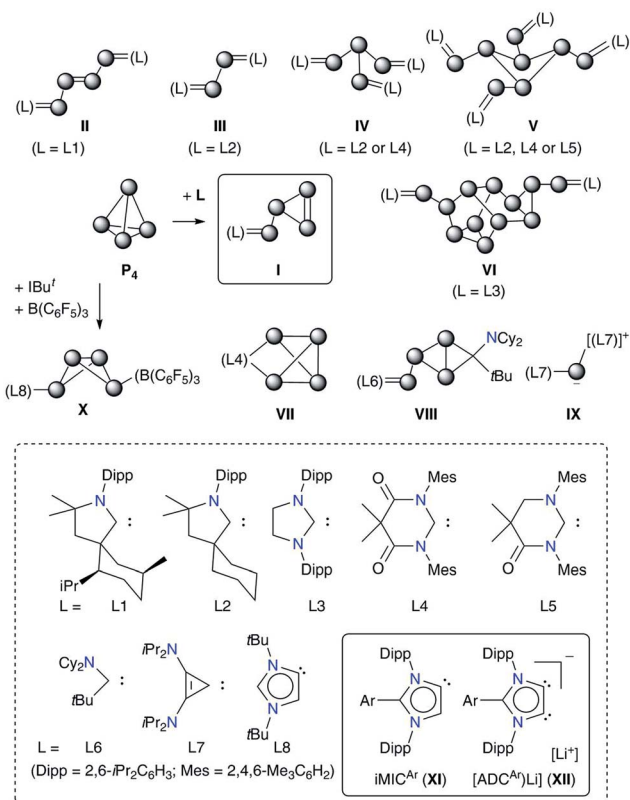
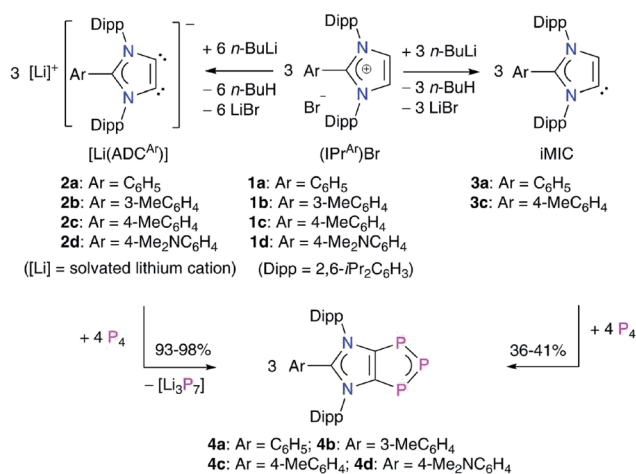


Fig. 1 Singlet carbene-mediated P_4 activation and fragmentation to II–X and a plausible intermediate I. Mesoionic carbenes (iMICs^{Ar}, XI) and anionic dicarbenes (XII) ([Li⁺] = solvated lithium ion) investigated in the current study.



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 AB₂ 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

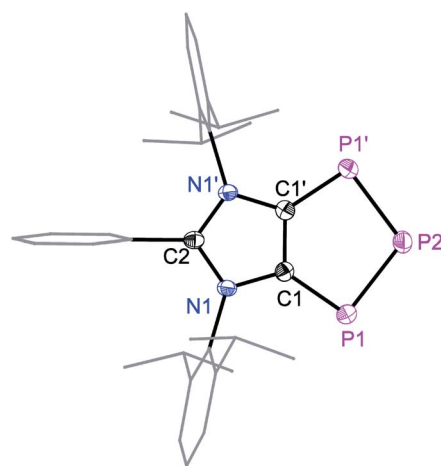
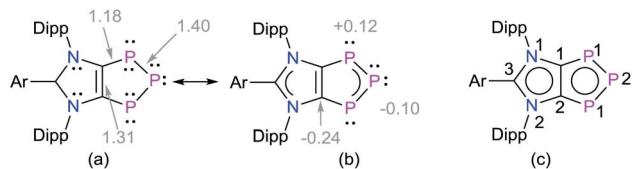


Fig. 2 Solid-state molecular structure of **4a**. Hydrogen atoms are omitted for clarity. Symmetry code: 1 – X, +Y, 3/2 – Z. Selected experimental and calculated [M06-2X/def2SVP] bond lengths (Å) and angles (°): C1–C1' 1.395(5) [1.402], N1–C1 1.404(3) [1.399], P1–C1 1.757(3) [1.764], P1–P2 2.103(1) [2.112], 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 phosphalkenes.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 [P₃C₂R₂][−] (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 6 π -electron C₂P₃ and C₃N₂ aromatic systems (Scheme 2c). The nitrogen atoms contribute 4 π -electrons to the C₃N₃-ring, whereas the P₃ unit shares 4 π -electrons with the C₂P₃-ring. The 2 π -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 C₃N₂- and C₂P₃-rings. For comparison, we also calculated the NICS values for C₆H₆ 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

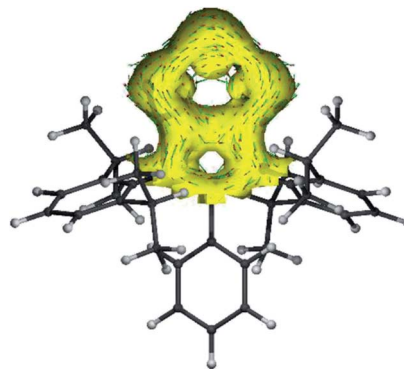


Fig. 3 AICD plot (based on M06-2X/def2-TZVPP//def2-SVP calculations) of the C₃N₂P₃ core of compound **4a**. The isovalue was arbitrarily chosen to be 0.03, the magnetic field is orthogonal to the C₂P₃-plane and points towards the viewer, and thus clockwise ring currents represent aromatic systems, whereas 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 C₃N₂ and the C₂P₃ 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 P₃ and the C₂ moieties of the C₂P₃-ring. Like in alkali metal 1,2,3-triphospholides,^{21b} 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 C₂P₃ 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 (C₂P₃-ring) like triphospholide²¹ and cyclopentadienyl anions. Treatment of **4a**, **4b**, and **4c** with Fe₂(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 C₃N₂/C₂P₃ units of **4a-4d** at the M06-2X/def2TZVPP//M06-2X/def2SVP level of theory

C ₃ N ₂ /C ₂ P ₃	4a	4b	4c	4d	5a	C ₆ H 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).



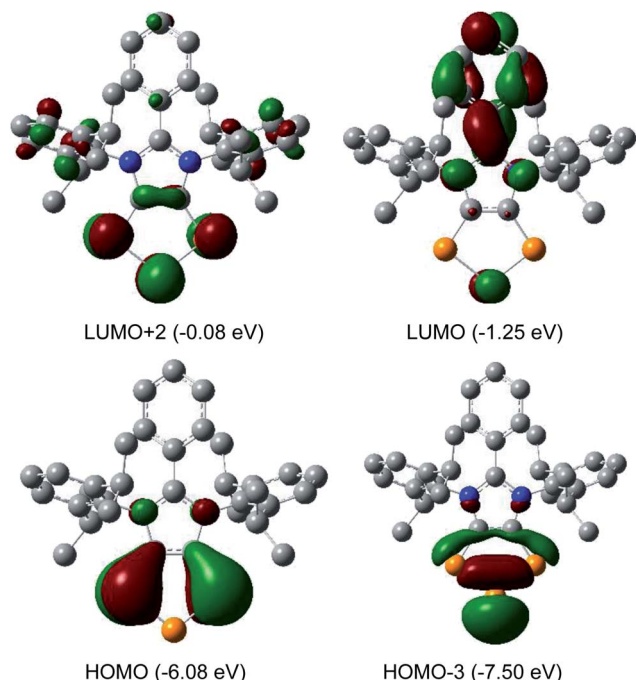
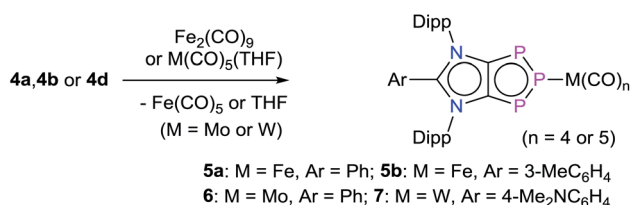


Fig. 4 Selected MOs of **4a** calculated at the M06-2X/def2-TZVPP//def2-SVP level of theory with an isovalue of 0.04. Hydrogen atoms were omitted for clarity.

neighbouring phosphorus atoms. The $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\}$ 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 $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\}$ 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 $[(\text{ADC}^{\text{Ar}})_3\text{M}(\text{CO})_n]$ **5a**, **5b**, **6**, and **7**.

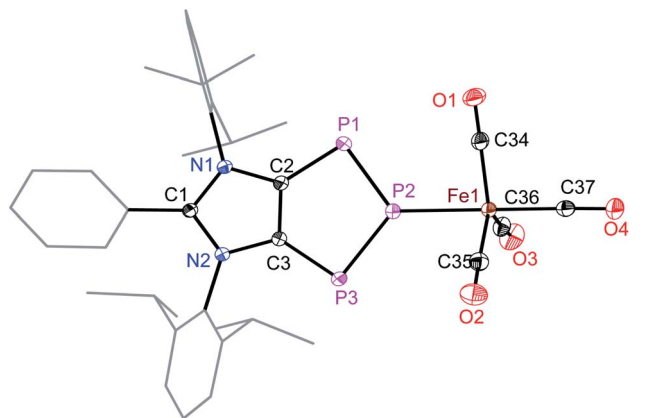


Fig. 5 Solid-state molecular structure of **5a**. Hydrogen atoms and one solvent toluene molecule are omitted for clarity. Selected bond lengths (Å) and angles (°): C2–C3 1.394(2), C2–N1 1.399(1), C3–N2 1.403(1), C2–P1 1.756(1), C3–P3 1.764(1), P1–P2 2.081(1), P2–P3 2.089(1), P2–Fe1 2.240(1), Fe1–C34 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 NICS(0) = -9.95 , NICS(1) = -9.58 , and 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 N_2) 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



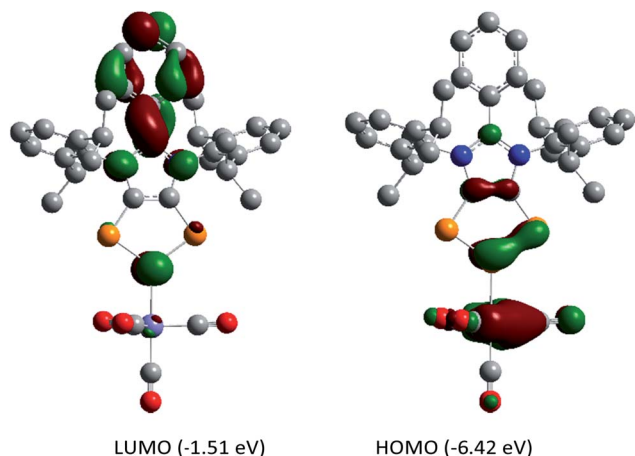


Fig. 6 Frontier molecular orbitals of **5a** calculated at the M06-2X/def2-TZVPP//def2-SVP level of theory. The isovalue was arbitrarily chosen to be 0.04. Hydrogen atoms were omitted for clarity.

with a Büchi B-545 melting point apparatus. (IPr^{Ar})Br salts **1a–1d** (Ar = Ph, 3-MeC₆H₄, 4-MeC₆H₄ or 4-Me₂NC₆H₄) were synthesized following the reported method.^{13a} *n*-BuLi (2.5 M solution in hexanes, Sigma-Aldrich) was used as received. White phosphorus was sublimed and stored inside a glovebox. Commercially available Fe₂(CO)₉ (Sigma-Aldrich), Mo(CO)₆ (Fluorochem), and W(CO)₆ (Sigma-Aldrich) were used as supplied.

Synthesis of compound (ADC^{Ph})P₃ (**4a**)

To a 15 mL THF suspension of **1a** (0.88 g, 1.6 mmol), *n*-BuLi (2.5 M, 1.4 mL, 3.5 mmol) was added at -40°C . The resulting reaction mixture was stirred at -20°C for 1 h and then at room temperature (25°C) for 15 minutes to obtain a clear light brown solution of **2a**.¹² To this solution, solid P₄ (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 Li₃P₇ 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°C for three days. Mp: 343°C . Elem. anal. (%), calcd for C₃₃H₃₉N₂P₃ (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, CD₂Cl₂, 298 K): δ = 7.59 (t, J = 7.7 Hz, 2H, *p*-C₆H₃), 7.38 (d, J = 7.8 Hz, 4H, *m*-C₆H₃), 7.34 (t, J = 6.6 Hz, 1H, *p*-C₆H₃), 7.23–7.18 (m, 4H, *o*-, *m*-C₆H₅), 2.62 (sept, J = 6.6 Hz, 4H, CH(CH₃)₂), 1.26 (d, J = 6.6 Hz, 12H, CH(CH₃)₂), and 1.03 (d, J = 6.7 Hz, 12H, CH(CH₃)₂) ppm. ¹³C{¹H} NMR (126 MHz, CD₂Cl₂, 298 K): δ = 167.6 (d, $J_{\text{P-C}}$ = 84.4 Hz, CP); 149.2 (NCN); 146.2, 133.5, 132.0, 131.8, 129.8, 129.1, 125.8, and 123.8 (C₆H₃, C₆H₅); 29.7 (CH(CH₃)₂); 26.1 and 23.5 (CH(CH₃)₂) ppm. ³¹P{¹H} NMR (202 MHz, CD₂Cl₂, 298 K): δ = 332.3 (t, $J_{\text{P-P}}$ = 506 Hz) and 173.7 (d, $J_{\text{P-P}}$ = 506 Hz) ppm. MS (ESI, positive mode): m/z = 557.3 [**4a**

+ H]⁺. UV-vis (λ/nm ϵ (M⁻¹ 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*-BuLi, and P₄.

(ADC^{3-Tol})P₃ (**4b**)

Yield: 98% (0.90 g). Mp: $338\text{--}341^{\circ}\text{C}$. Elem. anal. (%), calcd for **4b**, C₃₄H₄₁N₂P₃, (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, CD₂Cl₂, 298 K): δ = 7.57 (t, J = 7.8 Hz, 2H, *p*-C₆H₃), 7.35 (d, J = 7.8 Hz, 4H, *m*-C₆H₃), 7.14 (d, J = 7.6 Hz, 1H, *o*-C₆H₄), 7.08 (t, J = 7.8 Hz, 1H, *m*-C₆H₄), 7.02 (s, 1H, *o*-C₆H₄), 6.96 (d, J = 7.8 Hz, 1H, *p*-C₆H₄), 2.60 (sept, J = 6.7 Hz, 4H, CH(CH₃)₂), 2.10 (s, 3H, CH₃), 1.24 (d, J = 6.7 Hz, 12H, CH(CH₃)₂), and 1.03 (d, J = 6.8 Hz, 12H, CH(CH₃)₂) ppm. ¹³C{¹H} NMR (126 MHz, CD₂Cl₂, 298 K): δ = 167.5 (d, $J_{\text{P-C}}$ = 84.5 Hz, CP); 149.6 (NCN); 146.3, 139.3, and 133.6 (*i*-C₆H₄ and *i*-, *m*-C₆H₃); 132.7 (*o*-C₆H₄); 131.7 (*p*-C₆H₃); 130.5 (*o*-C₆H₄); 129.5 and 128.9 (*m*-C₆H₄); 126.9, 125.8, and 123.71 (*m*-C₆H₃); 29.7 (C(CH₃)₂); 26.2 and 23.5 (C(CH₃)₂); 21.2 (CH₃) ppm. ³¹P{¹H} NMR (202 MHz, CD₂Cl₂, 298 K): δ = 331.1 (t, $J_{\text{P-P}}$ = 506 Hz) and 173.6 (d, $J_{\text{P-P}}$ = 506 Hz) ppm. MS (ESI, positive mode): m/z = 571.3 [**4b** + H]⁺. UV-vis (λ/nm ϵ (M⁻¹ cm⁻¹)): 280 (25637), 345 (36323), and 361 (36539).

(ADC^{4-Tol})P₃ (**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°C . Mp: $339\text{--}343^{\circ}\text{C}$. Elem. anal. (%), calcd for C₃₄H₄₁N₂P₃ (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, CD₂Cl₂, 298 K): δ = 7.59 (t, J = 7.8 Hz, 2H, *p*-C₆H₃), 7.38 (d, J = 7.8 Hz, 4H, *m*-C₆H₃), 7.05 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 2H, C₆H₄), 7.02 (d, J = 8.3 Hz, 2H, C₆H₄), 2.61 (sept, J = 6.8 Hz, 4H, CH(CH₃)₂), 2.23 (s, 3H, CH₃), 1.26 (d, J = 6.7 Hz, 12H, CH(CH₃)₂), and 1.03 (d, J = 6.9 Hz, 12H, CH(CH₃)₂) ppm. ¹³C{¹H} NMR (126 MHz, CD₂Cl₂, 298 K): δ = 167.5 (d, $J_{\text{P-C}}$ = 84.1 Hz, CP); 146.2 (NCN); 143.1, 133.7, 131.7, 129.8, 129.7, 125.8, and 120.9 (C₆H₃ and C₆H₄); 29.7 (CH(CH₃)₂); 26.1 and 23.5 (CH(CH₃)₂); 21.7 (CH₃) ppm. ³¹P{¹H} NMR (202 MHz, CD₂Cl₂, 298 K): δ = 329.9 (t, $J_{\text{P-P}}$ = 506 Hz) and 173.6 (d, $J_{\text{P-P}}$ = 506 Hz) ppm. MS (ESI, positive mode): m/z = 571.3 [**4c** + H]⁺. UV-vis (λ/nm ϵ (M⁻¹ cm⁻¹)): 283 (23295), 336 (28771), 346 (29238), and 362 (29676).

(ADC^{4-DMP})P₃ (**4d**)

Yield: 94% (0.93 g). Mp: $270\text{--}273^{\circ}\text{C}$ (decomp.). Elem. anal. (%), calcd for C₃₅H₄₄N₃P₃ (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, CD₂Cl₂, 298 K): δ = 7.56 (t, J = 7.8 Hz, 2H, *p*-C₆H₃), 7.35 (d, J = 7.8 Hz, 4H, *m*-C₆H₃), 6.90 (d, J = 9.0 Hz, 2H, C₆H₄), 6.28 (d, J = 9.0 Hz, 2H, C₆H₄), 2.88 (s, 6H, N(CH₃)₂), 2.67 (sept, J = 6.8 Hz, 4H, CH(CH₃)₂), 1.24 (d, J = 6.7 Hz, 12H, CH(CH₃)₂), and 0.97 (d, J = 6.8 Hz, 12H, CH(CH₃)₂) ppm. ¹³C{¹H} NMR (126 MHz, CD₂Cl₂, 298 K): δ = 167.0 (d, $J_{\text{P-C}}$ = 82.8 Hz, CP); 151.9 (NCN); 146.2, 138.4, 134.6, 131.4, 130.8, 126.3, 125.8, and 111.1 (C₆H₃ and C₆H₄); 40.0 (N(CH₃)₂); 29.6 (CH(CH₃)₂); 25.7 and 23.5 (CH(CH₃)₂) ppm. ³¹P



$\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (202 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): δ = 319.5 (t, $J_{\text{P-P}}$ = 504 Hz) and 173.3 (d, $J_{\text{P-P}}$ = 504 Hz) ppm. MS (ESI, positive mode): m/z = 600.3 [$\mathbf{4d} + \text{H}$] $^+$. 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 $\text{IPr}=\text{PH}^{17}$ 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_{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, $J_{\text{P-H}}$ = 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), $n\text{-BuLi}$ (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 ($3 \times 10 \text{ mL}$). The filtrate was dried in a vacuum to obtain **4a**. Yield: 41% (0.4 g).

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

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

$[(\text{ADC}^{\text{Ph}})_3\text{P}_3]\text{Fe}(\text{CO})_4$ (**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°C for one week to obtained orange needles of **5a** (696 mg, 80%), which were also suitable for X-ray diffraction. Mp: 167–172 $^\circ\text{C}$ (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, $J_{\text{P-C}}$ = 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, $J_{\text{P-P}}$ = 531 Hz) and 145.4 (d, $J_{\text{P-P}}$ = 531 Hz) ppm. MS (ESI, positive mode): m/z = 725.1 [$\mathbf{5a} + \text{H}$] $^+$. 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.

$[(\text{ADC}^{3\text{-Tol}})_3\text{P}_3]\text{Fe}(\text{CO})_4$ (**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 $^\circ\text{C}$ (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, $J_{\text{P-C}}$ = 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, $J_{\text{P-P}}$ = 531 Hz) and 145.4 (d, $J_{\text{P-P}}$ = 532 Hz) ppm. MS (ESI, positive mode): m/z = 739.1 [$\mathbf{5b} + \text{H}$] $^+$. 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.

$[(\text{ADC}^{\text{Ph}})_3\text{P}_3]\text{Mo}(\text{CO})_5$ (**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 $^\circ\text{C}$. 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 $n\text{-hexane}$ 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, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$) ppm. $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (126 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): δ = 206.0 and 201.8 (CO); 164.4 (d, $J_{\text{P-C}}$ = 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, $J_{\text{P-P}}$ = 510 Hz) and 160.2 (d, $J_{\text{P-P}}$ = 511 Hz) ppm. IR (ATR, diamond): $\tilde{\nu}/\text{cm}^{-1}$ = 2065, 2051, 1945, 1925, and 1911.

$[(\text{ADC}^{4\text{-DMP}})_3\text{P}_3]\text{W}(\text{CO})_5$ (**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



= 6.8 Hz, 4H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$), 1.26 (d, $J = 6.9$ Hz, 12H, $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$), and 1.00 (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): $\delta = 197.3$ 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 ($\text{N}(\text{CH}_3)_2$); 29.7 ($\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$); 25.6 and 23.6 ($\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$) ppm. $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (202 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K): $\delta = 250.9$ (t, $J_{\text{P-P}} = 512$ Hz, with ^{183}W satellites, $J_{\text{W-P}} = 202$ Hz) and 157.0 (d, $J_{\text{P-P}} = 505$ Hz) ppm. MS (ESI): $m/z = 924.2$ [$7 + \text{H}$] $^+$. IR (ATR, diamond): $\tilde{\nu}/\text{cm}^{-1} = 2063$, 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 $^{\text{Ar}}$) (**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 $(\text{P}_7)^{3-}$ 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 6π -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.

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