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Turning Quinones into Cyanoarenes: Developing a reaction from sketch to application

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SUMMARY:

Small modifications to a well-known reaction can lead to something completely new. That is what we realized after drawing the first sketch of a reaction turning quinones into cyanoarenes (Scheme 1). Considering the (commercial) availability of quinones in a wide range of different substitution patterns and the positive effect of the cyano groups on the material properties (such as improved light emission and stability), this reaction and the resulting materials are extraordinary interesting for a range of applications; especially for organic field-effect transistors and organic light-emitting diodes.

Scheme 1. Sketch of a reaction turning quinones into cyanoarenes; modifying the well-known reaction from quinones to alkynyl-substituted arenes.

However, it has been a bumpy road from the initial sketch to the materials for applications. Finding suitable reagents and solvents was challenging; particularly for the reductive aromatization in the second reaction step. In situ IR spectroscopy helped to overcome these challenges and finally led to a protocol to carry out both steps in a one-pot reaction. [1] This protocol has been optimized for the preparation of halogenated cyanoarenes and other poorly soluble cyanated acenes, including 6,13-dicyanopentacene for organic field-effect transistors (Scheme 2, top). [2]

Scheme 2. Examples showcasing the general applicability of the novel reaction.

The scope of the optimized reaction was further investigated from a general perspective (Scheme 2, bottom) by turning an ortho-quinone instead of para-quinones into the corresponding cyanoarene. Furthermore, the alkynyl-substituted 9,10-dicyanoanthracene and its precursor proved to be surprisingly stable towards the reaction conditions.

Our recent investigations focused on increasing the yield for the synthesis of 6,13-dicyanopentacene, but we also managed the first quadruple cyanation: the synthesis of 5,7,12,14-tetracyanopentacene. In

the field of organic light-emitting diodes, promising results were obtained by Suzuki coupling brominated dicyanoanthracenes and sterically hindering substituents.

The development of the novel reaction will be presented from the initial ideas to the recent investigations. The importance for the field of material chemistry will be emphasized by characterization results; most importantly, the data obtained from X-ray diffraction measurements, which accompanied the development of the reaction from the most simple reaction intermediate [3] to the quadruple cyanated 5,7,12,14-tetracyanopentacene.

[1] F. Glöcklhofer, M. Lunzer, J. Fröhlich, *Synlett* **2015**, 26, 950-952.

[2] F. Glöcklhofer, M. Lunzer, B. Stöger, J. Fröhlich, *Chem. - Eur. J.* **2016**, 22, 5173-5180.

[3] F. Glöcklhofer, J. Fröhlich, B. Stöger, M. Weil, *Acta Crystallogr. Sect. E* **2014**, 70, 77-79.

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[Attachement 2](#)