Coordination of 3-Methylindole-Based Tripodal Tetraphosphine Ligands to Iron(+II), Cobalt(+II), and Nickel(+II) and Investigations of their Subsequent Two-Electron Reduction

van de Watering, F.F.; Stroek, W.; van der Vlugt, J.I.; de Bruin, B.; Dzik, W.I.; Reek, J.N.H.

Published in:
European Journal of Inorganic Chemistry

DOI:
10.1002/ejic.201701209

Link to publication

Creative Commons License (see https://creativecommons.org/use-remix/cc-licenses):
CC BY-NC

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.
Nitrogen Fixation

Coordination of 3-Methylindole-Based Tripodal Tetraphosphine Ligands to Iron(+II), Cobalt(+II), and Nickel(+II) and Investigations of their Subsequent Two-Electron Reduction


Abstract: We report the coordination chemistry of indole based tripodal tetraphosphine ligands to iron(II), cobalt(II) and nickel(II). These complexes are formed by simple synthetic protocols and were characterized by a combination of spectroscopic techniques and single-crystal X-ray analysis. The molecular structures as determined by X-ray diffraction show that the geometry of the nickel and cobalt complexes are distorted trigonal bipyramidal. The monocationic iron(II) complexes also have distorted trigonal bipyramidal geometries, but the dicationic analogue has an octahedral geometry. Two-electron reduction of the cobalt(+II) and the nickel(+II) complexes in the presence of N₂ did not lead to the coordination of N₂. In contrast, two-electron reduction of the iron(+II) complexes did lead to coordination of dinitrogen to the iron center. The Fe₂N₂L₁H complex has a trigonal bipyramidal geometry, and the N–N bond length of the coordinated dinitrogen ligand is longer than that of free dinitrogen, indicating that coordination to this iron(0) complex results in activation of the N≡N bond.

Introduction

Recent years brought about a renaissance of coordination chemistry of base metals. Their abundance and generally lower toxicity in comparison to noble metals makes them ideal candidates to explore them as new homogeneous catalysts.[1–4] Complexes of base metals with phosphine based ligands are among the many highly active catalysts that can facilitate very challenging reactions ranging from reduction of unsaturated compounds such as alkynes,[5] aldehydes[6] or carboxylic acids and esters[7] to reduction of CO₂.[8–14] In particular, expanding the coordination chemistry of base metals with tripodal, tetradentate ligands is attractive, as complexes of tripodal phosphine ligands with base metal iron and cobalt reveal outstanding activity in (among others) dehydrogenation/hydrogenation of CO₂-based fuels or reduction of N₂.[11,15–19]

We turned our attention to the tripodal, tetradentate tris[1-(diphenylphosphanyl)-3-methyl-1H-indol-2-yl]phosphane ligand (L₁H) (Figure 1), which has previously been used in coordination chemistry with Pd,[20] Rh,[21,22] Cu,[22] and Ru,[23,24] showing a remarkable potential to stabilize rare paramagnetic RhII[20] and RuI species,[23] as well as Ru0 dinitrogen complexes.[23,24] These intriguing results triggered us to further explore the coordination behavior of the tripodal indolyl-based ligands with the earth abundant metals iron, cobalt and nickel. Tripodal tetradentate phosphine based complexes using either PPPh₃ = P(CH₂CH₂PPh₂)₃ or PPiPr₃ = [P(CH₂CH₂P)iPr₂]₃ coordinated to iron(+II), cobalt(+II) and nickel(+II) have been exten-

![Figure 1. Coordination of cobalt(+II) and nickel(+II) chlorides to ligand L₁H forming the corresponding cobalt(+II) and nickel(+II) complexes 1 and 2.](image-url)
sively studied. These tripodal ligands generally occupy four coordination sites around a metal center and a trigonal bipyramidal geometry (TPB) is the most commonly observed geometry when the ligand is coordinated to a first row transition metal center. These $\text{[MX(PP$_3$)$_3$]}^+$ complexes are formed by reacting the corresponding MX$_2$ salt with the ligand in the presence of CoCl$_4$ complex $\text{L1H}$. Mixing of stoichiometric amounts of iron(+II) complexes with ligands $\text{L1H}$ and $\text{L2H}$ and $\text{L3PP}^-$ to iron(+II) and the synthetic challenges involved during coordination of these ligands to iron are reported.

In the second section, the electrochemical and chemical reduction of the above-mentioned complexes is described. Electrochemical reduction is used to evaluate if these complexes are redox-active. We further investigate the capability of these complexes to bind N$_2$ upon two-electron reduction with KC$_8$. In addition, we explored whether ligand modification leads to observable electronic effects in the N-N stretch frequency when the PP$_3$ ligand is coordinated to iron. Additionally, the changes in the coordination geometry of the iron complexes upon reduction are discussed based on the crystal structures of iron(+I) complexes with ligands $\text{L1H}$, $\text{L2H}$ and $\text{L3PP}^-$ and iron(0) with ligand $\text{L1H}$.

**Results and Discussion**

**Formation of Mono and Binary Cobalt $\text{L1H}^+$ Complexes**

We started our investigations with coordination studies of the tripodal indolyl-based tetraphosphine ligands to the first-row late transition metals iron, cobalt, and nickel. The coordination of tris[1-(diphenylphosphanyl)-3-methyl-1H-indol-2-yl]phosphane ($\text{L1H}$) to these metals is investigated in detail. Single crystal X-ray structure determination of these complexes allowed to study the changes in the coordination geometry of the ligand while stepwise increasing the d-electron count from d$^6$ to d$^8$ by going from iron(+II) to cobalt(+II) to nickel(+II). Additionally, coordination studies of a variety of 3-methylindole based ligands ($\text{L1H}$, $\text{L2H}$ and $\text{L3PP}^-$) to iron(+II) and the synthetic challenges involved during coordination of these ligands to iron are reported.

Layering a dichloromethane solution of [Co(Cl)$\text{L1H}$]$_2$[CoCl$_4$] with pentane resulted in the formation of single crystals suitable for X-ray diffraction analysis (Figure 3). As expected, the binary complex [Co(Cl)$\text{L1H}$]$_2$[CoCl$_4$] 1a is present in the crystal structure. The two [Co(Cl)$\text{L1H}$]$^+$ units crystallize as two independent molecules, which possess a very distorted geometry around the metal center, almost in-between a trigonal bipyramidal and square pyramidal geometry ($\tau_{5\#1} = 0.55$ and $\tau_{5\#2} = 0.67$). The four strong-field phosphine ligands favor the formation of low spin complexes, thus, d$^7$ complexes tend to form square pyramidal geometries. As the rigidity of the ligand scaffold does not allow such arrangement, a geometry in-between trigonal bipyramidal and a square pyramid is formed. This is different for the iron(+II) and nickel(+II) analogues (vide infra) as these complexes possess intermediate spin d$^6$ or low spin d$^8$ metals, respectively and thus have a preference for the trigonal bipyramidal geometry with this ligand scaffold.

CS-ESI mass spectroscopy analysis showed the presence of the $\text{[Co(Cl)L1H]}^+$ cation in both [Co(Cl)$\text{L1H}$]BF$_4$ 1b and [Co(Cl)$\text{L1H}$]$_2$[CoCl$_4$] 1a samples (see experimental section). Similar to findings reported by Braunstein and co-workers the [Co(Cl)$\text{L1H}$]$_2$[CoCl$_3$]$^+$ fragment could be detected in the [Co(Cl)$\text{L1H}$]$_2$[CoCl$_4$] sample, indicating formation of the proposed binary complex. Both the cationic and anionic cobalt complexes are paramagnetic. EPR analysis of the [Co(Cl)$\text{L1H}$]BF$_4$ 1b and [Co(Cl)$\text{L1H}$]$_2$[CoCl$_4$] 1a complexes in THF at 20 K are indicative for an S = 1/2 system with the cobalt(+II) ion being in a low-spin configuration (Figure 2). Small hyperfine couplings (presumably with cobalt and the phosphine atoms) are also noticeable. In addition, the spectrum of [Co(Cl)$\text{L1H}$]$_2$[CoCl$_4$] shows an extra signal (700–2500 G) corresponding to the high spin tetrachlorido cobaltate anion, which is absent in the [Co(Cl)$\text{L1H}$]BF$_4$.
Full Paper

Figure 3. Displacement ellipsoid plot of [Co(Cl)L1H]2[CoCl4] (1a) (50 % probability ellipsoids) (CCDC 1579207). Dichloromethane solvent molecules, phenyl rings and hydrogen atoms have been omitted for clarity.

Table 1. Selected bond lengths and angles of the [Co(Cl)L1H]2[CoCl4] (1a) and [Ni(Cl)L1H][NiCl4] (2a) complexes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>[Co(Cl)L1H]2[CoCl4] (1a)</th>
<th>[Ni(Cl)L1H][NiCl4] (2a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Co(Cl)L1H]+ #1</td>
<td>[Ni(Cl)L1H]+ #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M1–P1</td>
<td>2.2422(11)</td>
<td>2.2187(10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M1–P2</td>
<td>2.2590(11)</td>
<td>2.2435(10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M1–P3</td>
<td>2.2767(11)</td>
<td>2.3108(10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M1–P4</td>
<td>2.1432(11)</td>
<td>2.1321(10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M1–Cl1</td>
<td>2.2401(11)</td>
<td>2.2345(10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1–M1–P2</td>
<td>140.74(4)</td>
<td>137.07(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1–M1–P3</td>
<td>110.35(4)</td>
<td>116.25(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2–M1–P3</td>
<td>107.23(4)</td>
<td>111.39(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1–M1–P4</td>
<td>85.89(4)</td>
<td>86.56(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2–M1–P4</td>
<td>85.28(4)</td>
<td>86.30(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3–M1–P4</td>
<td>86.71(4)</td>
<td>87.54(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C11–M1–P4</td>
<td>173.63(5)</td>
<td>173.23(4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Formation of Mono and Binary Nickel L1H Complexes

Similar to the cobalt system, the coordination of nickel(+II) chloride hexahydrate to L1H resulted in the formation of either the [Ni(Cl)L1H][NiCl4] (2a) or the [Ni(Cl)L1H]BF4 (2b) complexes, depending on the use of NaBF4 during the synthesis (Figure 1). As expected for the pentacoordinate d⁸ complexes with strong-field phosphorus ligands, the [Ni(Cl)L1H]+ cations are diamagnetic, and thus NMR analysis of the complexes was possible. The identical ³¹P NMR spectra of Ni(Cl)L1HBF4 (1b) and [Ni(Cl)L1H][NiCl4] (1a) show one doublet (δ = 61.06 ppm) and one quartet (δ = 25.91 ppm), indicating a C₃-symmetrical trigonal bipyramidal geometry in solution (on the NMR time scale). C₃-symmetrical diamagnetic complexes of tripodal tetradeinate phosphines coordinated to nickel have been previously reported,[29,42,43] and trigonal bipyramidal geometry was also reported for the d⁰ [Ru(N₂)L1H][²²] and the [Pd(Cl)L1H][Cl][²²] complexes. Interestingly, whereas the coordination of nickel to L1H results in the formation of the binary [Ni(Cl)L1H][NiCl4] complex 2a, the palladium complex does not form the tetrachlorido palladate, but one of the chloride anions remains non-coordinating.[²⁰] In accordance with the NMR spectroscopic data, CSI mass spectrometry analysis showed the presence of the

Figure 4. Displacement ellipsoid plot of [Ni(Cl)L1H][NiCl4] (2a) (50 % probability ellipsoids) (CCDC 1579208). Dichloromethane solvent molecules, phenyl rings and hydrogen atoms have been omitted for clarity.
[Ni(Cl)L1H]+ ion in both [Ni(Cl)L1H]BF4 (2b) and [Ni(Cl)L1H]2−
[NiCl2] (2a) (see experimental section). Slow diffusion of hexane
to a dichloromethane solution of [Ni(Cl)L1H]2[NiCl2] resulted in
the formation of crystals suitable for X-ray diffraction analysis
(Figure 4).

The crystal structure shows the presence of the binary
[Ni(Cl)L1H]2[NiCl2] complex 2a where the two [Ni(Cl)L1H]+ units
crystallize as two independent molecules. The [Ni(Cl)L1H]+ units
feature a distorted trigonal bipyramidal geometry around the
metal center (τ 5a = 0.70 and τ 5b = 0.86) (Table 1).[41] The ge-
ometry is less distorted than the geometry of the cobalt ana-
logues (vide supra), but more distorted than the geometry of
the iron analogue, which is likely a result of the smaller atomic
radius of the nickel atom compared to iron (vide infra). The
largest angle P1–Ni–P2 is 131.39(4)° for one of the independent
structures and 126.51(4)° for the other, which is still close to the
ideal 120° angle for the TBP geometry.

**Formation of Iron PP3 Complexes**

The above results show that the coordination of the tetra-
dentate indolyl phosphine ligand L1H to d6 nickel(II) and d7
cobalt(II) chlorides results in formation of (highly distorted in
the case of cobalt) trigonal bipyramidal complexes of the type
[MII(Cl)L1H]+ and that in the absence of non-coordinating BF4−
anion, binary tetrachlorido metallate complexes are formed. We
next turned our attention to iron, and the results of these inves-
tigations are described in the following section. Whereas in the
case of nickel and cobalt the L1H ligand complexes are penta-
coordinate, complexation of this ligand to d6 iron(II) could in
principle result in formation of a hexacoordinate 18 VE complex,
as was observed for iron’s heavier analogue ruthenium,[23,24] or
alternatively in the formation of a pentacoordinate 16 VE com-
plex. Thus, we decided to study the coordination chemistry of
iron in more detail, including the use of other tripodal indolyl
phosphine ligands. The reaction of FeCl2 with L1H and NaBF4
in THF in a 1:1:1 stoichiometry led to full conversion of the
ligand according to the absence of its 31P NMR signal, and the
paramagnetic behavior hinted at the formation of a five-coordinate species. CS-ESI mass spec-
trometry analysis in both positive and negative modes shows
the presence of both the [Fe(Cl)L1H]+ complex and the BF4−
counterion respectively, which is in accordance with a five-co-
dordinate geometry around the metal center, supported by one
non-coordinating anion. These data thus indicate that the syn-
thetized compound is a pentacoordinate iron complex [Fe(Cl)L1H]BF4 (3b). DFT calculations suggest that the lowest
energy state of the [Fe(Cl)L1H]+ cation is an intermediate spin,
paramagnetic trigonal bipyramidal complex[43] iron(II) (d5)
complexes with TBP geometry that are paramagnetic and are uncommon.[19,28,30,45,46] Crystals suitable for X-ray diffraction
were obtained by layering a dichloromethane solution of
[Fe(Cl)L1H]BF4 (3b) with pentane.

As anticipated, the crystal structure shows a trigonal bi-
pyramidal geometry around the metal center (Figure 5). The
overall crystal structural data is in good agreement with other
tripodal five-coordinate tetraphosphine TBP iron(II) complexes.[10,11,19,28,37,46] The longest equatorial angle P1–Fe1–P2 of
120.51(4)° (Table 2) fits well with that of an ideal TBP geometry,
which is in correspondence with a τ 5 = 0.92.[41]

Table 2. Selected bond lengths and angles of the [Fe(Cl)L1H]BF4 and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>[Fe(Cl)L1H]+</th>
<th>[Fe(Cl)L3PP3]+ #1</th>
<th>[Fe(Cl)L3PP3]+ #2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M1–P1</td>
<td>2.2721(9)</td>
<td>2.3542(11)</td>
<td>2.3762(12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M1–P2</td>
<td>2.2765(10)</td>
<td>2.3851(11)</td>
<td>2.3975(12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M1–P3</td>
<td>2.2748(9)</td>
<td>2.4021(12)</td>
<td>2.3710(12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M1–P4</td>
<td>2.1952(8)</td>
<td>2.1729(11)</td>
<td>2.1711(11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M1–P5</td>
<td>2.1458(8)</td>
<td>2.2136(11)</td>
<td>2.2070(12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1–M1–P2</td>
<td>118.37(3)</td>
<td>116.23(4)</td>
<td>116.75(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2–M1–P3</td>
<td>117.52(4)</td>
<td>117.63(4)</td>
<td>116.26(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3–M1–P4</td>
<td>117.36(4)</td>
<td>117.63(4)</td>
<td>116.26(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4–M1–P5</td>
<td>83.36(3)</td>
<td>82.56(4)</td>
<td>82.01(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1–M2–P4</td>
<td>83.96(3)</td>
<td>81.84(4)</td>
<td>81.70(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2–M3–P4</td>
<td>83.20(3)</td>
<td>81.91(4)</td>
<td>82.64(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3–M4–P1</td>
<td>178.58(4)</td>
<td>177.63(5)</td>
<td>178.95(5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subsequently, we explored the coordination of FeCl2 to the
PP3 ligands L1CF3, L1OMe, L2H, and L3PP3 in the presence of
NaBF4 (Figure 6) to form complexes 4, 5, 6, and 7, respectively.
The new ligand L3PP3 was prepared by reacting the lithium salt
of tris-2-(3-methylindolyl)phosphine[47] with disiropropyl chloro-
phosphine. Coordination of ligands other than L1H to iron in
presence of NaBF4 did not provide the monometallic complex
[Fe(Cl)L]BF4 quantitatively as indicated by the presence of free
ligand in the filtrate in the 31P NMR spectrum. The addition of
excess NaBF4 to the purple to pink reaction mixtures nor the
addition of alcohol as a co-solvent increases the yields of the
product significantly.[19,27,46] Nevertheless, the CS-ESI mass spec-
trometry analysis of these reaction mixtures in the positive
mode shows the presence of the [Fe(Cl)L]+ cation, which indi-
cates that the ligand does coordinate to the iron center. Analy-
sis in the negative mode showed the presence of the expected $\text{BF}_4^-$ anion but also the presence of the $\text{FeCl}_3^-$ and $\text{FeCl}_4^-$ anions. These tetrachlorido ferrates are likely formed from the iron precursor, as was observed for the cobalt and nickel analogues, which is the reason that the reactions do not go to full conversion. When the purple reaction mixture from the reaction of $\text{L}_3^{\text{Pr}}$ with $\text{FeCl}_2$ in the presence of $\text{NaBF}_4$ was dissolved in dichloromethane and layered with pentane, crystals suitable for X-ray diffraction analysis formed. The crystal structure indeed contains the (oxidized) tetrachlorido ferrate anion $[\text{FeCl}_4^-]$ (likely formed in situ by a reaction of $[\text{FeCl}_4]^2-$ with traces of oxygen) as counterion, resulting in the binary $[\text{FeCl}]\text{L}_3^{\text{Pr}}[\text{FeCl}_4]$ complex 7 (Figure 7).

Figure 6. Synthesis of $\text{L}_3^{\text{Pr}}$ and coordination of $\text{L}_1^{\text{CF}_3}$, $\text{L}_1^{\text{OMe}}$, $\text{L}_3^{\text{Pr}}$ and $\text{L}_2^\text{H}$ to $\text{FeCl}_2$ in the presence of $\text{NaBF}_4$.

Figure 7. Displacement ellipsoid plot of $[\text{FeCl}\text{L}_3^{\text{Pr}}][\text{FeCl}_4]$ (7) (50 % probability ellipsoids) (CCDC 1579210). Hydrogen atoms and the $\text{FeCl}_4^-$ counterion have been omitted for clarity. The crystal of $[\text{FeCl}\text{L}_3^{\text{Pr}}][\text{FeCl}_4]$ reveals the presence of two independent $[\text{FeCl}\text{L}_3^{\text{Pr}}]^+$ cations and two independent $[\text{FeCl}_4^-]$ anions in the asymmetric unit.

$[\text{FeCl}\text{L}_3^{\text{Pr}}][\text{FeCl}_4]$ crystallizes as two independent molecules (next to the tetrachlorido ferrate) with almost identical bond angles and distances. They both have a trigonal bipyramidal geometry ($\tau_{51} = 0.95$ and $\tau_{52} = 0.98$) (Table 1).[41] The P1–Fe1, P2–Fe1 and P3–Fe1 bond lengths are elongated compared to the $[\text{FeCl}\text{L}_1^\text{H}]^+$ unit, which is likely a result of the more electron-donating diisopropylphosphine groups. The other angles and distances are comparable to the $[\text{FeCl}\text{L}_1^\text{H}]^+$ unit and values reported in literature.[19,28,46]

The presence of tetrachlorido ferrates as counterions is undesired as iron chlorides could interfere during the follow-up redox chemistry. Therefore, a method previously described by Beller was used[11] that involved the coordination of $\text{L}_1^\text{H}$ to $\text{Fe(BF}_4)_2$ (Figure 8).

Stirring of stoichiometric amounts of $\text{L}_1^\text{H}$ and $\text{Fe(BF}_4)_2$ in 1:1 (v/v) THF/toluene mixture at 70 °C for three days led to precipi-
tation of a purple powder in significant amounts. Full conversion was, however, not reached as indicated by the presence of free ligand in the $^{31}\text{P}$ NMR spectrum of the supernatant. The exact structure of this highly oxygen sensitive purple solid could not be determined due to its paramagnetism and poor solubility in $[\text{D}_8]\text{THF}$. However, dissolution of the purple solid in acetonitrile caused an immediate color change from purple to orange. This orange solution was diamagnetic as evidenced by $^{31}\text{P}$ NMR spectroscopy, which indicates that the coordination environment around the metal center has changed. The $^{31}\text{P}$ NMR spectrum shows a similar splitting pattern as previously reported for the octahedral Ru(Cl)$_2$L$_1^\text{H}$ complex.$^{[23]}$ The integral-ratio of 1 ($\delta = 116.77$ ppm, $dt$):2 ($\delta = 97.59$ ppm, $t$):1 ($\delta = 56.18$ ppm, $dt$) confirms formation of an octahedral geometry around the metal center. Crystals suitable for X-ray diffraction analysis were grown by slow diffusion of methanol to an acetonitrile solution of the orange iron complex. The crystal structure features two independent [FeL$_1^{\text{H}}$]$^{2+}$ units, which indeed show both an octahedral geometry around the metal center of the [Fe(MeCN)$_2$L$_1^{\text{H}}$](BF$_4$)$_2$ complex 8 (Figure 9). The two cis sites in this complex are occupied by two acetonitrile ligands. The P1–Fe1–P2 [163.72(8) Å], P3–Fe1–N4 [177.49(7)°], and the P4–Fe1–N5 angle [175.49(7)°] are all close to the theoretical 180° angle for an ideal octahedral geometry. The P1–Fe1 bond [2.3797(8) Å] is slightly longer than the other P–Fe bonds [2.2576(8) Å and 2.2494(8) Å], and the axial acetonitrile ligand (N5–C66–C67), seems to bend in the direction of the P1–Fe1 bond.

Attempts to synthesize iron(+II) complexes with ligands L$_1^{\text{C}5\text{H}}$ and L$_1^{\text{OMe}}$, provided only very low yield of the targeted compounds and therefore this method could unfortunately not be used for the coordination of iron to the other PP$_3$ ligands.

Reduction of the Cobalt, Nickel and Iron Complexes in Presence of N$_2$

Having the new iron, cobalt and nickel complexes in hand, we decided to investigate their reduction in the presence of di-nitrogen. In analogy to ruthenium,$^{[23,24]}$ the iron complexes may bind N$_2$ upon two-electron reduction to form the respective pentacordinate 18 VE iron(0) complexes. However, for the cobalt and nickel complexes the coordination of dinitrogen would likely require dissociation of one of the ligand arms for the complexes to adhere to the 18 VE rule. To evaluate whether the formation of dinitrogen complexes upon reduction of these complexes is possible, we conducted cyclic voltammetry (CV) studies and in situ reduction of the new complexes in the presence of N$_2$.

Reduction of [Co(Cl)L$_1^{\text{H}}$]BF$_4$

In order to gain insight in the reduction potentials needed for the cobalt complexes to form the hypothetical Co$^{0}$/L$_1^{\text{H}}$/N$_2$ complex, the [Co(Cl)L$_1^{\text{H}}$]BF$_4$ (1b) complex was analyzed electrochemically. The CV of this cobalt complex shows one reversible redox couple ($E^{0}\text{1/2} = -0.56$ V vs. Fc/Fc$^+$), below which Co$^{0}$ complex [Co(Cl)L$_1^{\text{H}}$]BF$_4$ is reduced to Co$^{+}$/complex [Co(Cl)L$_1^{\text{H}}$] (see the Supporting Information). This value is slightly more negative than for the reversible Rh$^0$/Rh$^+$ couple of the rhodium [Rh(Cl)L$_1^{\text{H}}$]PF$_6$ analogue ($E^{0}\text{1/2} = -0.4$ V vs. Fc/Fc$^+$),$^{[20]}$ and comparable to the reversible Co$^{0}$/Co$^{+}$ couple of the [Co(PPh$_3$)$_3$(CH$_3$CN)](BF$_4$)$_2$ complex ($E^{0}\text{1/2} = -0.54$ V).$^{[28]}$ Scanning to lower potentials resulted in two non-reversible reduction peaks at very similar potentials ($E = -2.3$ and $-2.4$ V vs. Fc/Fc$^+$). Likely, one of these peaks corresponds to the reduction of Co$^{+}$/Co$^0$, which could lead to binding of the dinitrogen to the cobalt center. Consequently, we also tried to reduce the [Co(Cl)L$_1^{\text{H}}$]BF$_4$ (1b) complex chemically. The chemical reduction of the [Co(Cl)L$_1^{\text{H}}$]BF$_4$ complex with 2 equiv. of KC$_8$ in the presence of N$_2$ was monitored by IR spectroscopy. The IR spectra did not show a signal corresponding to the dinitrogen stretch frequency typical for an N$_2$ coordination complex. In addition, in situ analysis of the reaction mixture by $^{31}\text{P}$ NMR spectroscopy showed signals indicative of ligand decomposition. Ligand decomposition may be responsible for the second reduction peak observed in the CV ($E = -2.4$ V vs. Fc/Fc$^+$). The inability of the complex to form N$_2$ coordinated complexes may be related to the strong coordination of the ligand, inhibiting the dissociation of one of the phosphine arms when it is bound to cobalt(0).

Reduction of [Ni(Cl)L$_1^{\text{H}}$]BF$_4$

We also investigated the reduction potentials of the nickel complex using electrochemistry (see the Supporting Information).
Similar as for the cobalt analogue, the CV of 2b shows one reversible reduction-oxidation peak at \( E^{1/2} = -1.0 \) V vs. Fc/Fc*. In addition, two non-reversible reduction peaks were observed (\( E = -2.0 \) V vs. Fc/Fc* and \( E = -2.5 \) V vs. Fc/Fc*). CV measurements of [Ni(PPPh\textsubscript{3})(CH\textsubscript{3}CN)][BF\textsubscript{4}]\textsubscript{2} showed only one reversible redox couple (\( E^{1/2} = -1.03 \) V vs. Fc/Fc*; likely the Ni\textsuperscript{II}/Ni\textsuperscript{I} couple)\textsuperscript{42,48}. The chemical reduction of our [NiL\textsubscript{1}\textsuperscript{H}][BF\textsubscript{4}](2b) complex with two equivalents of KC\textsubscript{8} resulted in formation of a yellow precipitate. Unfortunately, we were unable to measure \(^{31}\text{P}\) NMR or infrared spectra of this yellow precipitate, as the complex is insoluble in both THF and benzene. The filtrate of the reaction mixture did not show any IR signal corresponding to an N\textsubscript{2} ligand bound to nickel. Comparable to the cobalt analogue, this result likely indicates that the ligand does not facilitate dinitrogen coordination when bound to nickel(0).

**Reduction of [Fe(Cl)L\textsubscript{1}\textsuperscript{H}]BF\textsubscript{4}**

Next, we investigated whether it was possible to reduce the [Fe(Cl)L\textsubscript{1}\textsuperscript{H}]BF\textsubscript{4} (3) complex electrochemically. The cyclic voltammogram (see Figure S19) of [Fe(Cl)L\textsubscript{1}\textsuperscript{H}]BF\textsubscript{4} (3) in THF shows two reversible redox couples, one at \( E^{1/2} = -0.38 \) V vs. Ag/AgCl (–0.96 V vs. Fc/Fc+) and one at \( E^{1/2} = -1.29 \) V vs. Fc/Fc*, corresponding to the Fe\textsuperscript{II}/Fe\textsuperscript{III} and Fe\textsuperscript{0}/Fe\textsuperscript{I} couple respectively. The latter Fe\textsuperscript{0}/Fe\textsuperscript{I} reduction potential is much lower than the earlier mentioned paramagnetic [Fe(Cl)(PPPh\textsubscript{3})\textsuperscript{2}]+ complex of Bianchini (\( E^{1/2} = -0.64 \) V vs. Ag/AgCl).\textsuperscript{40} Like Bianchini’s complex, the reduction of Fe\textsuperscript{I} to Fe\textsuperscript{0} likely takes place very close to the reduction wave of THF, and can therefore not be determined. From this data it was not apparent if we would be able to reduce the [Fe(Cl)L\textsubscript{1}\textsuperscript{H}]BF\textsubscript{4} (3) complex chemically and bind dinitrogen to the metal center. However, the addition of two equivalents of KC\textsubscript{8} in the presence of N\textsubscript{2} led to the formation of the Fe(N\textsubscript{2})L\textsubscript{1}\textsuperscript{H} (9) complex as indicated by the N\textsubscript{2} stretch frequency observed in the IR spectrum (Figure 10 and Table 3). Encouraged by this result we also attempted to reduce the other iron complexes with KC\textsubscript{8}.

**Reduction of Other Iron(+II)ClPP\textsubscript{3} Complexes**

The in situ formed iron(0)N\textsubscript{2}PP\textsubscript{3} complexes, prepared by two-electron reduction of the corresponding iron(+II) complexes with KC\textsubscript{8}, all showed coordination of dinitrogen to the iron metal center as indicated by infrared spectroscopy measurements (Table 4). The Fe(N\textsubscript{2})L\textsubscript{2}\textsuperscript{H} complex 12 has the highest IR stretch frequency (\( \nu_{N2} = 2068 \) cm\textsuperscript{-1}) and Fe(N\textsubscript{2})L\textsubscript{3}\textsuperscript{PrI} (13) has the lowest IR stretch frequency (\( \nu_{N2} = 2018 \) cm\textsuperscript{-1}) in the infrared spectrum.

Table 3. Reduction potentials of [M(Cl)L\textsubscript{1}\textsuperscript{H}]BF\textsubscript{4} complexes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complex</th>
<th>( E^0 ) M\textsuperscript{III}/M\textsuperscript{II}</th>
<th>( E^0 ) M\textsuperscript{II}/M\textsuperscript{I}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Co(Cl)L\textsubscript{1}\textsuperscript{H}]BF\textsubscript{4} (1b)</td>
<td>–0.56 V</td>
<td>–0.96 V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Ni(Cl)L\textsubscript{1}\textsuperscript{H}]BF\textsubscript{4} (2b)</td>
<td>–1.00 V</td>
<td>–1.90 V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Fe(Cl)L\textsubscript{1}\textsuperscript{H}]BF\textsubscript{4} (3)</td>
<td>–0.96 V</td>
<td>–1.90 V</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Compared to the iron complexes with tripodal tetradeionate ligands used by the group of Peters for N\textsubscript{2} reduction to ammonia or hydrazine\textsuperscript{[51–53]} the dinitrogen complexes reported in this work reveal higher stretch frequencies of the N\textsubscript{2} ligand. For instance, the dinitrogen complexes of iron(0) with ligands featuring three diisopropyl phosphine donors connected via a phenylene linker to the pivotal B, C– and Si– coordination centers Fe\textsuperscript{0}(BP\textsubscript{i}Pr\textsubscript{3})N\textsubscript{2}\textsuperscript{[52]}, Fe\textsuperscript{0}(CP\textsubscript{i}Pr\textsubscript{3})N\textsubscript{2}\textsuperscript{[53]} and Fe\textsuperscript{0}(SiP\textsubscript{i}Pr\textsubscript{3})N\textsubscript{2}\textsuperscript{[52]} reveal \(\nu\textsubscript{N2} = 2011\) cm\textsuperscript{-1}, 1870 cm\textsuperscript{-1} and 1891 cm\textsuperscript{-1} respectively. Since ligands CP\textsubscript{i}Pr\textsubscript{3} and SiP\textsubscript{i}Pr\textsubscript{3} are anionic, the extent of \(\pi\)-back donation to the N\textsubscript{2} moiety in their respective iron complexes is obviously higher than in the case of the L\textsuperscript{3}Pr\textsubscript{3} complex. However, the overall donating capability of BP\textsubscript{i}Pr\textsubscript{3} (which is the most effective tripodal system for N\textsubscript{2} activation\textsuperscript{[15]}) to iron is similar to L\textsuperscript{3}Pr\textsubscript{3}. The major difference between BP\textsubscript{i}Pr\textsubscript{3} and the 3-methylindolyl-based ligand systems presented in this work is the capability of BP\textsubscript{i}Pr\textsubscript{3} to accommodate a negatively charged [Fe\textsuperscript{−}(N\textsubscript{2})L]− complex upon one electron reduction of the neutral Fe(N\textsubscript{2})L, resulting in further weakening of the N–N bond (\(\nu\textsubscript{N2} = 1905\) cm\textsuperscript{-1}), and rendering this complex an active catalyst for ammonia formation. The stabilization of such Fe\textsuperscript{−} species is possible thanks to the incorporation of the \(\sigma\)-acidic boron atom in the BP\textsubscript{i}Pr\textsubscript{3} ligand. Unfortunately, the addition of one extra equivalent of KC\textsubscript{8} to Fe\textsuperscript{0}(N\textsubscript{2})PP\textsubscript{3} led to the detection of decomposed ligand in the 31P NMR spectra. In addition, no new bands corresponding to the N\textsubscript{2} stretch frequency were detected in the infrared spectrum. The resulting reaction mixtures proved to be EPR silent. This led us to conclude that such putative negatively charged complexes are too unstable to be detected, or perhaps not formed at all.

All of the reaction mixtures that were prepared for the in situ analysis of the N\textsubscript{2} stretch frequency with infrared spectroscopy were set for crystallization by slow diffusion evaporation with pentane. In the case of Fe(Cl)L\textsubscript{1}H\textsuperscript{14}, Fe(Cl)L\textsubscript{2}H\textsuperscript{15} and Fe(Cl)L\textsuperscript{3}Pr\textsubscript{16}, crystals suitable for X-ray diffraction were obtained for some of these batches (Figure 11). In all three cases, analysis of the crystal structure showed the presence of the Fe(Cl)L complex, indicating that the reduction reactions intended to form Fe\textsuperscript{0}N\textsubscript{2}L did not go to completion, and besides the desired iron(0) species also iron(+I) complexes are formed. As expected for a d\textsuperscript{7} metal complexes, all three iron(+I) complexes feature a distorted trigonal bipyramidal geometry around the metal center due to the Jahn–Teller effect: Fe(Cl)L\textsubscript{1}H (\(\tau_5 = 0.75\)), Fe(Cl)L\textsubscript{2}H (\(\tau_5 = 0.69\)) and Fe(Cl)L\textsubscript{3}Pr (\(\tau_5 = 0.75\)) (Table 5).

Upon addition of a slight excess of KC\textsubscript{8} to the [Fe(Cl)L\textsubscript{1}H]BF\textsubscript{4} complex, a more intense absorption of the N\textsubscript{2} moiety was observed in the IR spectrum. When this red reaction mixture was set for crystallization by layering with pentane, crystals of Fe(N\textsubscript{2})L\textsubscript{1}H\textsuperscript{9} (Figure 12). The crystal structure of Fe(N\textsubscript{2})L\textsubscript{1}H reveals a nearly ideal trigonal bipyramidal geometry around the metal center (\(\tau_5 = 0.95\))\textsuperscript{[41]} The structure is more symmetrical than the iron(+II) and ruthenium(0)\textsuperscript{[23]} analogues, but structurally comparable to the known Fe(N\textsubscript{2})(PP\textsubscript{i}Pr\textsubscript{3}) (\(\nu\textsubscript{N2} = 1985\) cm\textsuperscript{-1}) complex\textsuperscript{[19]} The N–N bond length of FeN\textsubscript{2}L\textsubscript{1}H is slightly shorter [1.118(5)] Å than in FeN\textsubscript{2}(PP\textsubscript{i}Pr\textsubscript{3}) [1.1279(16)] Å, which is in accordance with a less activated N\textsubscript{2} moiety in Fe(N\textsubscript{2})L\textsubscript{1}H. These experiments therefore show that electronic variation in the ligands that coordinate to the iron metal have a clear effect on the activation of N\textsubscript{2} bound to Fe.
cobalt(+II) and the nickel(+II) complex in the presence of N2 compared to iron atom. The two-electron reduction of the likely a result of the smaller atomic radius of the nickel atom the nickel complex is more distorted than that of iron, which is distorted as a result of the Jahn–Teller effect. The geometry of bipyramidal geometry, where the cobalt complex is the most on the number of d-electrons of the metal: a (distorted) trigonal
nation geometry around the metal centers, which is dependent The crystal structures obtained give clear insight in the coordi-
pation, which features two acetonitrile ligands in [MCl₄]²⁻. In addition, one octahedral iron PP₃ complex was pre-
phosphine based ligands results in the formation of the corre-
sponding cationic metal(+II) complexes. All of the complexes have been omitted for clarity.

Conclusions
In conclusion, we have shown that the coordination of iron(+II), cobalt(+II) and nickel(+II) to several tripodal 3-methylindole phosphine based ligands results in the formation of the corre-
sponding cationic metal(+II) complexes. All of the complexes featuring the bulky chlorido ligand are five coordinate, with a
non-coordinating counterion, which can be either BF₄⁻ or [MCl₃]²⁻. In addition, one octahedral iron PP₃ complex was pre-
pared, which features two acetonitrile ligands in cis position. The crystal structures obtained give clear insight in the coordi-
nation geometry around the metal centers, which is dependent on the number of d-electrons of the metal: a (distorted) trigonal bipyramidal geometry, where the cobalt complex is the most distorted as a result of the Jahn–Teller effect. The geometry of the nickel complex is more distorted than that of iron, which is likely a result of the smaller atomic radius of the nickel atom compared to iron atom. The two-electron reduction of the cobalt(+II) and the nickel(+II) complex in the presence of N₂ did not lead to the coordination of N₂. However, two-electron reduction of the iron(+II) complexes did lead to coordination of dinitrogen to the iron center. The corresponding iron-dinitro-
gen complexes, showed observable electronic effects in the N–N stretch frequency as a result of the ligand modifications: The complex Fe[N₂]L₂(H₂) featuring the most π-acidic phosphorus donor trans to the coordinated N₂ ligand has the highest IR stretch frequency (ν(N₂) = 2068 cm⁻¹) while introduction of strongly s-donating groups in complex Fe[N₂]L₃(iPr) resulted in the lowest IR stretch frequency (ν(N₂) = 2018 cm⁻¹) within the Fe(N₂)L series. The coordination of dinitrogen to the iron(0)PP₃ complexes is interesting in the light of the potential application of these complexes as dinitrogen reduction catalysts, as the co-
ordination of dinitrogen to the metal is the first step in dinitro-
gen reduction to ammonia.

Experimental Section

General Methods: All reactions were carried out under an atmos-
phere of nitrogen using standard Schlenk techniques or in the
glovebox. Reagents were purchased from commercial suppliers and used without further purification. THF, pentane, hexane and Et₂O were distilled from sodium benzophenone ketyl, CH₂Cl₂ was distilled from CaH₂ under nitrogen. NMR spectra [¹H, ³¹P, and ¹³C(¹H, ³¹P)] were measured on a Bruker DRX 500, Bruker AV 400, Bruker DRX 300 or on a Bruker AV 300 spectrometer. IR spectra (ATR mode) were recorded with a Bruker Alpha-P FT-IR spectrometer. High reso-
lution mass spectra were recorded on a JEOL AccuTOF LC, JMS-T100LP mass spectrometer using cold electron-spray ionization (CSI) at –40 °C. L₁H₂[iPr], L₁CF₃, L₁OMe and L₂H₂[iPr] were prepared in two steps from 3-methylindole. KC₆ was prepared by the method of Weitz and Rabinovitz.[52] Experimental X-band EPR spectra were recorded on a Bruker EMX spectrometer equipped with a He tem-
perature control cryostat system (Oxford Instruments). Crystallo-
graphic data was obtained using a Bruker D8 Quest Eco diffractom-
eter equipped with a Triumph monochromator and a Photon 50 detector. The intensities were integrated with the SAINT software package.[53] Multiscan absorption correction and scaling was per-
formed with SADABS.[54] The structure was solved with Intrinsic Phasing Methods using SHELXT[55] Least-squares refinement was performed with SHELXL 2013[56] against F² of all reflections. Non-
hydrogen atoms were refined freely with anisotropic displacement parameters. All hydrogen atoms were located in difference Fourier maps and refined with a riding model. Structures of [Co(Cl)L₁H₂][CoCl₃], [Ni(Cl)L₁H₂][NiCl₃], [Fe(MeCN)L₁H₂(BF₄)]₂ and [Fe(Cl)L₃(iPr)]
[FeCl₃] have solvent accessible voids filled with disordered solvent that could not be satisfactorily refined. Their contribution to the structure factors in the refinement was taken into account with the PLATON/SQUEEZE approach.\(^{[19]}\)

**Tris-2-(3-methyl-N-diisopropylphosphinoindolyl)phosphine (L₃P³⁺):** Tris-2-(3-methylindolyl)phosphine (1.02 g; 2.42 mmol; 1.0 equiv.) was dissolved in THF (50 mL) and cooled to −78 °C. This was added to nBuLi (2.5 M in hexanes; 2.9 mL; 7.38 mmol; 3.0 equiv.) dropwise and stirred for 1 h resulting in a yellow solution. Subsequently, chlorodisopropylphosphine (1.2 mL; 7.38 mmol; 3.0 equiv.) was added dropwise and the mixture was stirred for 3 d allowing the reaction mixture to warm to room temperature. The yellow solution was evaporated to dryness, and the thus formed solid was washed with CH₂Cl₂ (3 × 10 mL). The combined CH₂Cl₂ solutions were filtered through basic alumina and evaporated in vacuo. The formed solid was washed with Et₂O (3 × 1 mL), yielding the product in pure form as a white powder (0.83 g; 45 % yield).

\(^1\)H\(^{31}\)P NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): \(\delta = 7.51\) (d, \(J = 16.4\) Hz, 3 H), 7.49 (d, \(J = 15.8\) Hz, 3 H), 7.21 (m, 6 H), 2.93–2.61 (m, 6 H), 1.90 (s, 9 H), 1.24 (d, \(J = 6.9\) Hz, 9 H), 1.11 (d, \(J = 7.0\) Hz, 9 H), 0.88 (d, \(J = 6.8\) Hz, 9 H), 0.46 (d, \(J = 6.9\) Hz, 9 H) ppm. \(^{31}\)P NMR (121 MHz, CDCl₃): \(\delta = 63.35\) (d, \(J = 168.7\) Hz, 3 P), \(-79.74\) (q, \(J = 168.8\) Hz, 1 P) ppm.

\(^{13}\)C\(^{1}H\)\(^{31}\)P NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃): \(\delta = 140.90\), 137.14, 133.30, 123.64, 122.19, 119.51, 118.95, 112.98, 27.19, 26.51, 21.85, 21.31, 20.18, 19.44, 10.03 ppm. Mass Analysis (CS-ESI) \([\text{Co}(\text{Cl})\text{L}_1\text{H}]^+\): found: 2302.2782, calcd.: 2302.2511; \([\text{Co}(\text{Cl})\text{L}_1\text{H}][\text{CoCl}_3\text{]}^+:\) found: 1067.2097 calcld.: 1067.2052; negative: no fragments belonging to the complex could be observed. The NMR spectra of this compound are identical to \([\text{NiClL}_1\text{H}]^+\)BF₄⁻.

**[Ni(Cl)L⁺]BF₄⁻ (2b):** Compound L¹H (94.9 mg; 0.097 mmol; 1.0 equiv.), NaBF₄ (107 mg; 0.097 mmol; 1.0 equiv.) and NiCl₂·6H₂O (23.1 mg; 0.097 mmol; 1.0 equiv.) were suspended in THF (10 mL) and stirred overnight. The green precipitate was filtered off, washed with Et₂O and was dried in vacuo yielding the complex as a green solid. Yield: 98.9 mg (0.086 mmol, 87.9 %). \(^1\)H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): \(\delta = 7.81\) (d, \(J = 8.1\) Hz, 3 H), 7.27–7.17 (m, 9 H), 7.21–6.82 (m, 29 H), 2.67 (s, 9 H) ppm. \(^{31}\)P NMR (121 MHz, CDCl₃): \(\delta = 61.06\) (d, \(J = 47.1\) Hz, 3 P), 25.91 (q, \(J = 47.4\) Hz, 1 P) ppm. \(^{13}\)C\(^{1}H\)\(^{31}\)P NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃): \(\delta = 139.65\) (m, Cq), 136.03 (m, Cq), 130.94 (s, CH-ph), 130.02 (m, CH-ph), 128.99 (m, CH-ph), 126.99 (s, CH-ind), 123.57 (s, CH-ind), 122.27 (s, CH-ind), 115.78 (s, CH-ind), 106.9 (s, CH₃) ppm. Mass Analysis (CS-ESI) \([\text{NiClL}_1\text{H}]^+\)BF₄⁻: found: 1066.2097 calcld.: 1066.2075; BF₄⁻: found: 87.0049, calcld.: 87.0029.

**[Fe(Cl)L⁴⁺]BF₄⁻ (3):** Compound L⁷H (1.05 g; 1.08 mmol; 1.0 equiv.), NaBF₄ (150 mg; 1.18 mmol; 1.1 equiv.) and FeCl₃ (118 mg; 1.08 mmol; 1.0 equiv.) were suspended in THF (40 mL) and stirred overnight. The purple reaction mixture was evaporated in vacuo and extracted with CH₂Cl₂ (100 mL). The purple solution was filtered, evaporated, dissolved in THF (3 × 10 mL) and the solvents evaporated to dryness to remove the residual CH₂Cl₂. The solid was washed with Et₂O (3 × 5 mL) and dried in vacuo yielding the complex as a purple solid. Yield: 404.2 mg (35 %) ± half of the amount of solid was lost during the work up. Crystals suitable for X-ray diffraction analysis were obtained by layering a dichloromethane solution of FeCl₃BF₄ with pentane. \(^1\)H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): \(\delta = 16.24\) (bs), 147.4 (bs), 8.87 (bs), 3.83 (bs), 3.13 (bs), \(-0.37\) (bs), \(-8.30\) (bs), \(-9.14\) (bs) ppm. UV/Vis (THF) \(\lambda_{max} = 553\) nm. Mass Analysis (CSI) \([\text{FeClL}_1\text{H}]^+\)BF₄⁻: found: 1064.2105 calcld.: 1064.2073; BF₄⁻: found: 87.0000, calcld.: 87.0029.

**[Fe(Cl)L⁴⁺]²[BF₄]⁻ ([FeClL₁H]²[BF₄]⁻ (7):** Compound L³P⁺ (0.523 g; 0.68 mmol; 1.0 equiv.), NaBF₄ (0.082 g; 0.74 mmol; 1.1 equiv.) and FeCl₃ (0.178 g; 1.36 mmol; 2.1 equiv.) were suspended in THF (10 mL) and stirred for three days. The reaction mixture was evaporated to dryness, washed with pentane (5 × 10 mL) and extracted with CH₂Cl₂ (100 mL). The purple solution was filtered, evaporated, dissolved in vacuo, and evaporated in vacuo to remove the residual CH₂Cl₂. After washing with Et₂O and drying in vacuo the solid was obtained as a paramagnetic purple powder. Yield: not determined. Crystals were prepared by layering a dichloromethane solution with pentane at 5 °C. CSI mass analysis showed that the product was a mixture of \([\text{FeClL}_3\text{H}]^+\)BF₄⁻, \([\text{FeClL}_4\text{H}]^+\)BF₄⁻, but the exact ratio could not be determined. Mass Analysis (CSI) \([\text{FeClL}_3\text{P}]^+\): found: 860.2963 calcld.: 860.3012; BF₄⁻: found: 87.0049; \([\text{FeClL}_4\text{H}]^+\)BF₄⁻: found: 160.8455; \([\text{FeClL}_1\text{H}]^+\)BF₄⁻: 197.8139.

Reactions of L³OMe with L⁴PF₆ and L⁴H with FeCl₃ were performed in a similar way as \([\text{FeClL}_3\text{P}]^+\)BF₄⁻, \([\text{FeClL}_4\text{H}]^+\)BF₄⁻ leading to complexes 4, 5, 6 and 7 as mixtures of the \([\text{FeClL}]^+\) with unknown amounts of BF₄⁻ and FeCl₃. These mixtures were used as such for the reduction to the Fe₃N₄L complex and the in situ analysis of the N₂ stretch frequency using infrared spectroscopy.

**Reaction of L⁴H with Fe(BF₄)₂:** Compound L¹H (488 mg, 0.55 mmol) and Fe(BF₄)₂·2H₂O (168 mg, 0.55 mmol) were suspended in 20 mL 1:1 (v/v) THF/toluene and heated at 70 °C for three days. The purple precipitated complex was filtered off and dried in vacuo to yield 369.2 mg of a purple solid. When the purple solid was dissolved in acetonitrile, a color change to orange was observed, yielding \([\text{Fe(MeCN)}L]^+\)BF₄⁻.
[Fe(MeCN)2L1H](BF4)2 (8): A solution of the purple powder obtained in the previous procedure in acetonitrile was set for crystallization by slow diffusion evaporation of methanol at 5 °C resulting in the formation of crystals suitable for X-ray diffraction analysis. 1H NMR (300 MHz, CD3CN): δ = broad peaks as a result of paramagnetic impurities: 7.80, 7.42, 7.39, 7.16, 6.85, 6.57, 6.37, 5.92, 3.00, 2.70, 2.60, 1.93.31P NMR (121 MHz, CD3CN): δ = 116.77 (q), 97.59 (t, J = 44.2 Hz), 56.18 (q) ppm. The 13C-NMR spectrum could not be obtained in pure form. 19F NMR (282 MHz, CD3CN): δ = 2.70, 2.60, 1.93. 31P NMR (121 MHz, CD3CN): δ = 116.77 (q), 97.59 (t, J = 44.2 Hz), 56.18 (q) ppm. The 13C-NMR spectrum could not be obtained in pure form.

Acknowledgments

We thank the National Research School Combination Catalysis (NRSC-C) and the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO-CW) for a VENI grant 722.013.002 to W. I. D., and the University of Amsterdam (RAP Sustainability Challenge) for funding. We thank Jan Meine Ernsting for assistance with NMR spectroscopy and Ed Zuiddia for mass spectrometry measurements.

Keywords: Iron · Cobalt · Nickel · Dinitrogen complexes · P ligands


Full Paper

Received: October 16, 2017