

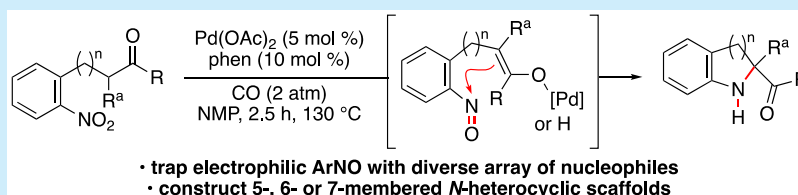
Intramolecular Pd-Catalyzed Reductive Amination of Enolizable sp^3 -C–H Bonds

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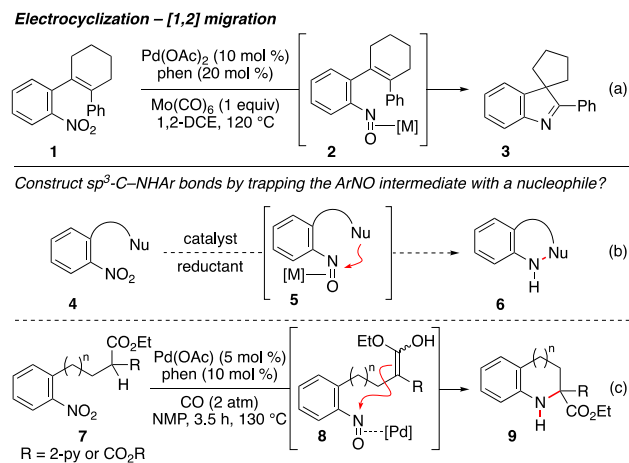
Supporting Information



ABSTRACT: A palladium-catalyzed reductive cyclization of nitroarenes has been designed to construct sp^3 -C–NHAr bonds from sp^3 -C–H bonds by using an enolizable nucleophile to intercept a nitrosoarene intermediate. Exposure of *ortho*-substituted nitroarenes to 5 mol % of Pd(OAc)₂ and 10 mol % of phenanthroline under 2 atm of CO constructs partially saturated 5-, 6-, or 7-membered N-heterocycles using α -pyridyl carboxylates, malonates, 1,3-dimethylbarbituric acid, 1,3-diones, or difurans as the nucleophile.

The amination of sp^3 -C–H bonds continues to spur significant research development, because of the atom- and step-economy of this desirable transformation.¹ Despite the many advances in this field, the formation of sp^3 -C–N bonds from sp^3 -C–H bonds generally requires the use of strong *N*-electron-withdrawing substituents with an oxidant or the use of activated nitrene-precursors, such as an oxycarbamates or azides.^{2–4} While sp^3 -C–N bonds can be constructed from nitrosoarenes through ene⁵ and α -amination reactions,⁶ the instability of nitrosoarenes limits their availability.⁷ This challenge has encouraged the development of methods to generate nitrosoarenes *in situ* from readily accessible precursors. While it is possible to access nitrosoarenes through the oxidation of *N*-hydroxyanilines,⁸ most efforts have focused on their reductive generation from nitroarenes.⁹ Using nitroarenes as precursors to nitrosoarenes is an attractive synthetic strategy, since these compounds are benchtop stable, the nitro group is easy to install, and many examples are commercially available. We previously established that new C–N bonds can be formed by electrocyclic trapping of nitrosoarenes generated *in situ* from Pd- or Fe-catalyzed reduction of nitroarenes **1** to synthesize 3*H*-indoles **3** through a cyclization-migration reaction (see Scheme 1a).¹⁰ We were curious if sp^3 -C–NHAr bonds could be constructed by using a similar strategy to trap nitrosoarenes generated from nitroarenes with a tethered nucleophile (see Scheme 1b). Herein, we report that 5- or 6-membered N-heterocyclic scaffolds can be efficiently constructed through a Pd-catalyzed reductive sp^3 -C–N bond forming reaction from readily accessible 2-substituted nitroarenes using CO as the terminal reductant. A diverse array of nucleophiles are shown to intercept the electrophilic nitrosoarene intermediate to synthesize a broad range of N-heterocycles (see Scheme 1c).

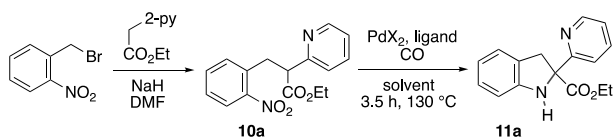
Scheme 1. Formation of sp^3 -C–N Bonds from Nitroarenes



To test our hypothesis that sp^3 -C–H bond amination could be achieved with nitroarenes under reductive conditions, the reactivity of **10a** was examined in the presence of a metal catalyst and reductant (see Table 1). This substrate is readily prepared in one step from commercially available reagents 2-nitrobenzyl bromide and 2-pyridylacetic acid ethyl ester through a NaH-mediated alkylation. While no reaction occurred when **10a** was exposed to the combination Pd(OAc)₂, phenanthroline and Mo(CO)₆,¹¹ changing the identity of the reductant to carbon monoxide produced indoline **11a** in 70% yield (Table 1, entry 1). A screen of polar aprotic solvents revealed NMP to be the

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Table 1. Development of Optimal Conditions



entry	PdX ₂ (mol %)	ligand (mol %)	CO pressure (atm)	solvent	11a content ^a (%)
1	Pd(OAc) ₂ (10)	phen (20)	2.0	DMF	70
2	Pd(OAc) ₂ (10)	phen (20)	2.0	DMSO	53
3	Pd(OAc) ₂ (10)	phen (20)	2.0	NMP	76
4	Pd(OAc) ₂ (5)	phen (10)	2.0	NMP	83
5 ^b	Pd(OAc) ₂ (1)	phen (2)	2.0	NMP	0
6	Pd(OAc) ₂ (5)	phen (10)	1.0	NMP	72
7	Pd(OAc) ₂ (5)	tmphen (20)	2.0	NMP	30
8	Pd(OAc) ₂ (5)	4,7-(MeO) ₂ phen (10)	2.0	NMP	71
9	Pd(OAc) ₂ (5)	Bphen (10)	2.0	NMP	42
10	PdCl ₂ (5)	phen (10)	2.0	NMP	n.r.
11	Pd(TFA) ₂ (5)	phen (10)	2.0	NMP	n.r.

^aAs determined via ¹H NMR spectroscopy, using CH₂Br₂ as an internal standard. ^b16 h reaction time.

optimal reaction medium for the transformation (Table 1, entries 1–3). Diminishing the catalyst loading to 5 mol % resulted in a small increase in the yield of 11a, but further reduction impeded indoline formation (Table 1, entries 3–5). While the pressure of CO could be reduced to 1 atm and afford indoline in good yield (Table 1, entry 6), using 2.0 atm gave the best result. Deviation from the use of the phenanthroline ligand and testing of alternative palladium salts did not further improve the synthesis of 11a from 10a and therefore, the conditions shown in entry 4 in Table 1 were selected to interrogate the scope of the transformation (Table 1, entries 7–11).

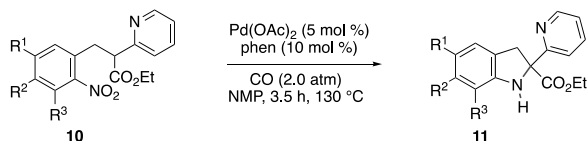
Using these optimal conditions, we examined the scope and limitations of palladium-catalyzed reductive cyclization reaction by changing the electronic and steric nature of the nitroarene (see Table 2). Although Pd-catalyzed reduction of nitroarenes

as CF₃, and the addition of an R³-substituent impeded the transformation to suggest coordination of the metal catalyst to the nitro-group (Table 2, entry 10).¹³

To investigate the breadth of the reactivity of the in-situ-generated nitrosoarene, we explored nitroarenes bearing a variety of nucleophiles to showcase the diverse *N*-heterocyclic scaffolds that could be constructed through the reductive sp³-C–N bond forming reaction (see Table 3). Through simple modification of our initial test substrate, we determined that the yield of the cyclization was dependent on the size of the ester substituent and independent of the steric environment around the pyridyl nitrogen (Table 3, entries 1–3). Changing the position of the pyridyl-nitrogen to the 4-position, however, resulted in no indoline formation and confirmed our suspicion that the orientation of the Lewis basic functionality plays an important role in enol stabilization for trapping of the nitrosoarene intermediate (Table 3, entry 4). Gratifyingly, pyridine was not required for successful cyclization (Table 3, entries 5–12). Malonate 12e was smoothly converted to indoline 13e (Table 3, entry 5). To our delight, cyclization was not limited to the formation of 5-membered *N*-heterocycles: tetrahydroquinoline 13f was formed in 68% and even tetrahydrobenzazepine 13g could be accessed in attenuated yield (Table 3, entries 6 and 7). While the cyclization of malonate 12h was determined not to be diastereoselective (see Table 3, entry 8), heteroatoms could be incorporated into the tether to smoothly afford more-complex heterocycles such as benzo-1,3-oxazine 13i and dihydroquinazoline 13j (Table 3, entries 9 and 10). Beyond malonate and 2-pyridylacetic acid ethyl esters, enolizable nucleophiles such as 1,3-dimethylbarbituric acid-derived 12k and 1,3-indanedione-derived 12l smoothly formed new sp³-C–N bonds (Table 3, entries 11 and 12),¹⁴ and even difuran 12m underwent reductive cyclization and ring-opening to give indole 13m (see Table 3, entry 13).¹⁵ These studies established the generality of this reductive cyclization method for the construction of a variety of partially saturated *N*-heterocyclic compounds from simple *ortho*-substituted nitroarenes.

To account for cyclization by sp³-C–N bond formation of *ortho*-substituted nitroarenes under reductive conditions, we have outlined a potential catalytic cycle in Scheme 2 and included potential alternative pathways for consideration.

Table 2. Scope and Limitations of the Nitroarene Moiety



entry	#	R ¹	R ²	R ³	yield ^a (%)
1	a	H	H	H	83 (68) ^b
2	b	Cl	H	H	65
3	c	F	H	H	72
4	d	Me	H	H	80
5	e	H	CF ₃	H	50
6	f	H	Cl	H	65
7	g	H	F	H	80
8	h	H	Me	H	85
9	i	H	OMe	H	61
10	j	H	H	Me	n.r.

^aIsolated yield of 11 after silica gel chromatography. ^b1 mmol scale.

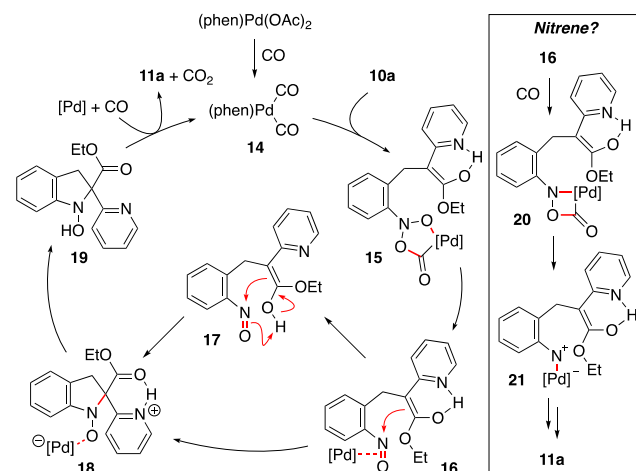
using CO was reported to be attenuated by electron-releasing substituents,¹² we found that the reaction is fairly insensitive to the electronic nature of the nitroarene (Table 2, entries 2–9). While the reaction tolerated a range of electron-rich or moderately electron-poor R¹ or R² substituents, lower yields were observed with stronger electron-withdrawing groups such

Table 3. Investigation of Nucleophile Scope

entry	#	12	13	%, yield ^a
1	a			64, R = Bn
2	b			44, R = <i>t</i> -Bu
3	c			70
5	d			0
6	e			88, n = 1
7	f			62, n = 2
8	g			14, n = 3
9	h			44
10	i			50
11	j			51
12	k			78
13	l			61
14	m			61

^aIsolated yield of 13 after silica gel chromatography.

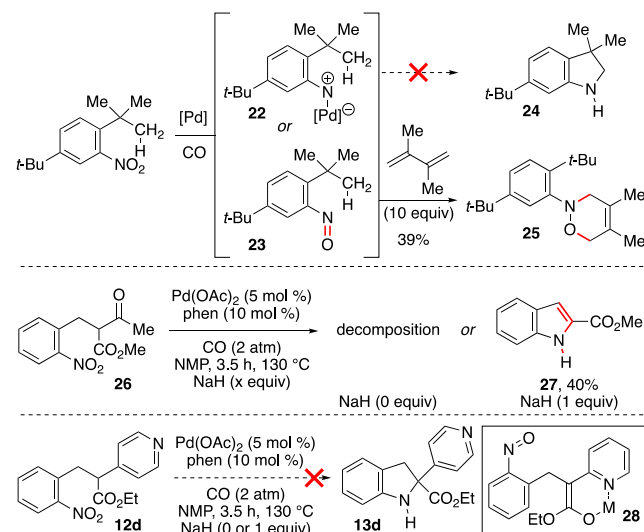
Because our reaction requires enolizable groups, this suggests that cyclization occurs through nucleophilic attack on an enol onto a nitrosoarene. The active catalyst for nitroarene reduction and cyclization could be generated from CO-mediated reduction of the palladium(II) precatalyst. Oxidative addition of nitroarene 10a could then form palladacycle 15.¹⁶ Loss of CO₂ could generate nitrosoarene 16,¹⁷ which could be attacked by the pendant enol (or palladium enolate) to construct the sp³-C–NAr bond.¹⁸ Alternatively, the nitrosoarene could dissociate from palladium before nucleophilic attack.^{8g,19} This dissociation could facilitate an ene-reaction to afford *N*-hydroxy indoline 18.^{5,20} Irrespective of how 18 is formed, reduction of the *N*-hydroxyindoline occurs to form 11a.²¹ A metal nitrene mechanism is also potentially possible for C–N bond formation. Reaction of the nitrosoarene with an additional CO ligand on palladium could produce palladacyclobutane 20, which has been

Scheme 2. Proposed Mechanism for Pd-Catalyzed sp³-C–H Bond Formation To Access *N*-Heterocycles

characterized by X-ray crystallography by Osborn and co-workers in their studies on the mechanism of palladium-catalyzed carbonylation of nitroarenes.²² A loss of CO₂ would produce palladium *N*-aryl nitrene 21, which could react with the proximal enol to produce the *N*-heterocyclic product.

Several experiments were performed to test our proposed mechanism for reductive cyclization (see Scheme 3). To test for

Scheme 3. Mechanistic Probes



potential radical intermediates, TEMPO was examined as an additive for the cyclization of 10a. Its addition to the reaction mixture did not significantly impact the yield of the transformation, suggesting that radical intermediates are not formed or do not escape the solvent shell in the catalytic cycle. To determine if an *N*-aryl nitrene such as 21 plays a critical role in these transformations, 2,5-di-*tert*-butylnitroarene was examined; however, only reduction to the corresponding aniline was observed. The 2,5-di-*tert*-butylnitroarene intermediate could be intercepted by 2,3-butadiene to afford oxazine 25, suggesting that the nitrosoarene intermediate is not bound to palladium.^{8b,c,23} Examination of acetoacetate-derived 26 provided insight into the effect of acidity and enolization on the reaction outcome.²⁴ Only decomposition was obtained when 26 was

subjected to the reaction conditions. The increased acidity of **26** appears to be responsible for the decomposition: deprotonation of **26** with NaH resulted in amination to form the deacylated indole **27**.²⁵ While deprotonation rescued the reactivity of **26**, deprotonation of 4-pyridyl **12d** did not result in *N*-heterocycle formation using palladium and CO. Since the use of an α -4-pyridyl group should not preclude an ene-reaction, we interpret this data as evidence that $\text{sp}^3\text{-C-N}$ bond formation does not occur through an ene-reaction and that a bidentate chelation of the pyridyl group and the carboxylate to the metal ion (or proton) is critical for bond formation.

In conclusion, we have developed a palladium-catalyzed reductive cyclization of nitroarenes that converts a $\text{sp}^3\text{-C-H}$ bond to a $\text{sp}^3\text{-C-N}$ bond. By constructing the C-N bond through nucleophile attack onto a nitrosoarene catalytic intermediate, this reaction is mechanistically distinct from C-H bond amination reactions to enable synthesis of a variety of ring sizes and *N*-heterocycles by simply changing the identity of the nucleophile and tether length. Our future investigations will further probe the synthetic potential of each class of initially explored nucleophiles to define the fundamental electrophilicity of the nitrosoarene intermediate.

■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

● Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge on the ACS Publications website at DOI: 10.1021/acs.orglett.9b03458.

Experimental procedures and analytical data (PDF)

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Author Contributions

The manuscript was written through the contributions of all authors.

Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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