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Published on 06 February 2020. Downloaded by Goteborgs Universitet on 2/6/2020 3:15:58 PM.

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Received 00th January 20xx, Accepted 00th January 20xx

DOI: 10.1039/x0xx00000x

propargylic alcohol 1,4-butynediol Saumya Dabral,^a Ulrike Licht,^b Peter Rudolf,^b Gérard Bollmann,^c A. Stephen. K. Hashmi ^{a,c} and

Synthesis and polymerisation of α -alkylidene cyclic carbonates obtained from carbon dioxide, epoxides and the primary

Based on the bulk chemical 1,4-butynediol, readily available epoxides and carbon dioxide, a new series of unsubstituted exovinylene carbonates were synthesised. Chemoselective additions of diamines or diols to these cyclic carbonates allow the regiocontrolled synthesis of new functionalised polyurethanes and polycarbonates under mild conditions. This route to polyurethanes avoids the use of toxic isocyanates.

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Utilising carbon dioxide (CO_2) as a feedstock for industrial synthesis is not new, currently CO_2 is used on a significant scale (> 110 MT p.a.), mainly for the production of urea, carbonates, methanol or salicylic acid.^{1,2} Among all products of the chemical industry, due to their diverse fields of application, polymers remain the most widely produced commodity chemicals. Traditionally, most of the commercial polymers and plastics are produced from non-renewable fossil resources. However, depleting fossil reservoirs and increasing consumer demands as well as environmental pollution and new legislative requirements, have initiated a significant increase of the efforts to find sustainable approaches for their synthesis.^{3–10} In line with this, incorporating CO_2 into new monomers, offers an alternative way to achieve lower carbon footprints.

In the last years, significant advancements were made in catalyst development for integrating the inert greenhouse gas CO_2 as a renewable C_1 carbon feedstock, into valuable polymerbuilding blocks and directly into polymers with high CO_2 content (polycarbonates, polyols, polyurethanes (PU), polyureas and polyesters).^{11–15} Amongst these, five-membered cyclic carbonates (5CCs) represent an important class of CO_2 -based building blocks that are formed by reacting the corresponding oxirane with CO_2 .^{16–24} 5CCs, upon polyaddition with either diamines or diols, provided the two important classes of polymers, the poly(β -hydroxyurethane)s (PHUs)^{25–30} and poly(carbonate)s (PCs).^{31–35} Especially the PHUs obtained by this

isocyanate-free route, offer an advantage of bypassing the handling of moisture sensitive reagents and toxic phosgene gas, thus making the overall process much safer than the classical isocyanate/alcohol synthesis.^{25–31} However, the 5CCs ring opening reactions suffer from drawbacks such as poor reaction rate, lack of regiocontrol as well as generation of side products. Exovinylene carbonates (EVCs), produced by the catalytic carboxylative coupling of propargylic alcohols with CO₂, on the other hand, represent another emerging class of CO2-derived cyclic carbonate building blocks.³⁶ Compared to the 5CCs, due to the establishment of a keto-enol equilibrium, the presence of an exocyclic olefinic group in the EVCs offers higher reactivity and regioselectivity for the ring-opening reactions. As a result of this, these α -alkylidene cyclic carbonates (α CCs) have allowed the synthesis of complex organic molecules such as ββ-hydroxy-1,3carbamates,37 β -oxo-carbonates,³⁸ охо oxazolidin-2-ones,³⁸ α -hydroxyketones,^{39,40} and 3-dialkvl amino-oxazolidin-2-ones.⁴¹ Expanding this scope further, Detrembleur and coworkers recently reported on the application of the CO2-derived bis-EVCs as suitable building blocks for the synthesis of new regioregular functional isocyanate-free PUs and PCs.⁴² The scope was further expanded to the organo-catalysed thiolation of α CCs to sulphur containing polymers.⁴³ These discoveries inspired us to investigate realted reaction pathways for our newly developed unique class of previously inaccessible and now industrially relevant unsubstituted α CCs, which are based on the cheap bulk chemical 1,4-butynediol.44

Initially, we performed our preliminary studies with EVC **1** (prepared by the AgOAc-Davephos catalysed carboxylative coupling of CO₂ to 4-(benzyloxy)but-2-yn-1-ol)⁴⁴ and EVC **2** (prepared by the AgOAc-Davephos catalysed carboxylative coupling of CO₂ to 4-hydroxybut-2-yn-1-yl *p*-tolylcarbamate). These 1,4-butynediol-based α CCs were chosen because they provided a variation in functionalisation of the alkylidene side chain. Scheme **1** shows the regioselective nucleophilic ring-opening of the unsubstituted α CCs **1** and **2** that were performed for 24 h at room temperature either with ethanol (EtOH, 1 eq.)

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Electronic Supplementary Information (ESI) available: [details of any supplementary information available should be included here]. See DOI: 10.1039/x0xx00000x

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in the presence of 2 mol% 1,8-diazabicyclo [5.4.0]undec-7-ene (DBU) or with pyrrolidine (1 eq.). Pleasingly, the reaction of both nucleophiles with EVC 1 were quantitative and resulted in the desired carbonate 1a and carbamate product 1b in high yields of 95% and 89% respectively (Scheme 1, Top). When 2 mol% of the related 1,5-Diazabicyclo[4.3.0]non-5-ene (DBN) instead of DBU were used in the ring-opening of 1, we observed the same reactivity. Moreover, the presence of isopropanol (secondary alcohol) did not influence the outcome of the ring opening reaction of EVC 1 with EtOH, hence highlighting the higher rate of reaction of primary alcohol over secondary (see Section 5.1 in the Supporting Information). EVC 2, when subjected to these conditions however, afforded elimination product (paratoulidine) instead of the expected addition product (Scheme 1, bottom, Section 5.2 Supporting Information). These results were especially interesting as they highlighted the stability of the ether bonds (R-O-R) of the alkylidene side-chain in EVC 1 over the carbamate functionality (RNH(CO)-OR) in EVC 2, towards nucleophilic ring-opening rearrangement reactions.

Based on these results, we considered exploring readily available epoxides (**3a-e**) as suitable precursors for the synthesis of primary propargylic alcohols (**4 a-e**) *via* epoxide ring-opening reactions initiated by the bulk chemical 1,4butanediol, (Table **1**). These unprecedented nucleophilic additions of 1,4-butanediol to epoxides were initiated by either catalytic amounts of tetrabutylammonium bromide (TBAB) or boron trifluoride etherate (BF₃·OEt₂) (see Section **2.0** of the Supporting Information). The primary propargylic alcohols (**4 a-e**) were isolated in moderate yields (40-75%). These products **4** were subsequently subjected to our established AgOAc-DavePhos cyclisation conditions (Scheme **2**).⁴⁴

At room temperature, using 1 mol% AgOAc-DavePhos catalyst loading, the propargylic alcohol **4a** was cyclised to the corresponding α CC **5a** in a high yield of 95% after 18 h reaction time under 20 bar of CO₂ pressure. Moreover, the secondary hydroxy group thus generated in **5a**, did not promote any interor intra-molecular ring-opening reaction under the described cyclisation conditions. Pleasingly, the product stability was further expanded to CO₂-based cycloadditon reactions of styrene oxide **(4b)** and cyclohexene oxide **(4c)** derived propargylic alcohols that, under similar reaction conditions, also afforded the corresponding α CCs **5b** and **5c**, bearing either a Journal Name

primary or a secondary -OH group, in excellent yields of 유도% and 97%, respectively. Encouraged by the stability of 한다음을 유운생길이지 Table 1. Nucleophilic ring-opening of epoxides with bulk chemical 1,4-butynediol



 5b: 95%
 5c: 97%

 Mono-ExoVCs
 Bis-ExoVCs

 Scheme 2. Scope of the carboxylation cyclisation of propargyl alcohols (4a-e)

5e: 95%

mono-EVCs, the methodology was next tested in the formation of bis- α CCs using 5 mol% catalyst loadings.

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Starting from bisphenol-A diglycidyl ether and 1,4-butanediol diglycidyl ether propargylic alcohols **4d** and **4e**, the



corresponding symmetrical bis-EVCs **5d** and **5e** were also isolated in high yields of 90% and 95%, respectively. These new CO_2 -derived bis-exovinylene carbonates were then studied in co-polymerisation reactions. Based on our observations with EVCs **1** and **2**, the regio-controlled ring-opening reactions were first studied on the mono-EVC **5a**, bearing an ether linkage on the side chain of the exocyclic olefin (Scheme **3**) Subjecting **5a** to 2 mol% DBU, even in the absence of an external alcohol as nucleophile, resulted in its self-polymerisation (due to presence of secondary -OH groups) to give a dark coloured sticky macromolecule with a weight average molecular mass (M_w) of 2497 g mol⁻¹ (see Section **5.3** in the Supporting Information). However, the addition of a primary alcohol (butane-1-ol) to **5a** in the presence of DBU (2 mol%) led to a regio-selective ring-opening to afford 65% of the β -oxo-carbonate product **6** (a β -

Scheme 3: Nucleophilic ring-opening reactions of EVC 5a

keto tautomer)42 along with the formation of the decarboxylated product 7 in 25% yield after a 24 h reaction time (Scheme 3, reaction 1). Since 7 could be formed due to the presence of water (H_2O) in the reaction mixture, the reaction was repeated in the glove box, which increased the yield of 6 to 87%. It is important to mention here that in the absence of DBU no conversion wasobserved for the above reaction. This underlines the catalytic activity of DBU, that possibly activates the alcohol by hydrogen bonding which in turn increases its nucleophilicity towards the EVC. Furthermore, a separate reaction of EVC 5a with stoichiometric amounts of H₂O in the presence of DBU (2 mol%) as catalyst gave the decarboxylation product 7 in 40% yield (Scheme 3, reaction 2). This observation is especially interesting as parallels could be drawn to the reactivity of α CCs with H₂O to the blowing process (an important competing reaction) occurring between isocyanate and H₂O during the production of rigid polyurethane foams, hence opening similar opportunities for future application of EVCs to be looked into.45

Next the stability of the side-chain in EVC **5a** towards primary (1-hexylamine) and secondary (pyrrolidine) amines as nucleophiles was tested. While the reaction of **5a** with 1-hexylamine in just 1 h at room temperature led to the formation of the oxazolidone (formed by intramolecular ring-cyclisation of the corresponding β -oxo-urethane intermediate), which on

Based on the above regioselective ring-opening reactions, the polyaddition of bis- α CCs (**5d** = **M**₁ and **5e** = **M**₂) were finally attempted with equimolar amounts of either a diamine (*N*,*N*'-dimethylethylenediamine, **N**₁) or a diol (1,4-butanediol, **N**₂)





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nucleophile to afford a novel class of CO₂-based isocyanate-free poly(β -oxo-urethane)s and poly(β -oxo-carbonate)s (Figure 2). Figure 1 shows the crude ¹H NMR and ¹³C NMR spectra for the copolymerisation of bis-EVC M₁ with nucleophiles N₁ and N₂. The comparison of the ¹H NMR spectra showed the full consumption of the starting EVC 5d (M₁) at room temperature, after 24 h reaction time, while the comparison of ¹³C NMR spectra for the polymers (M₁-N₁ and M₂-N₂) with the starting monomer M₁ indicated the appearance of new resonance peaks for the β -keto group at δ = 207 ppm and the urethane and carbonate carbonyl peaks at δ = 156 and

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155 ppm respectively. Further peaks in the NMR were assigned on the basis of the similarity of these regions with the products dsolated for the individual reaction of **5d** with pyrrolidine and butan-1-ol. Similar studies were also performed on bis-EVC **5e** (see Section **5.5** of the Supporting Information). Size exclusion chromatography (SEC) was also performed on newly formed polymers, that indicated the weight average molar mass (M_w) of 5701 g mol⁻¹ and 7656 g mol⁻¹ for poly(β -oxo-urethane)s (**M**₁-**N**₁) and (**M**₂-**N**₁) respectively (Table **2** entries **1** and **2**). On the other hand the M_w values for the poly(β -oxo-



Figure 2: Representative structures of the monomers used and the corresponding polymers formed.

Table 2: Molecular weight characterisation of the poly(β-oxo-ureth	nane)s and poly(β-oxo-carbonate)s ^a
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Entry	Polymer	Solvent	Cat. ^b	Time (h)	<i>M</i> _n (g mol ⁻¹)	<i>M</i> _w (g mol ⁻¹)	Conv ^c	Ð
1	M ₁ -N ₁	MeCN	-	24	5204	5701	99	1.09
2	M ₂ -N ₁	MeCN	-	24	3852	7656	99	1.98
3	M ₁ -N ₂	MeCN	DBU	24	2113	2144	99	1.01
4	M ₂ -N ₂	MeCN	DBU	24	1905	1971	99	1.03

^a Determined by GPC in EtOH-stabilised CHCl₃ eluent using polystyrene standards for calibration. ^b 3 mol% DBU. ^c Monomer conversions determined by ¹H NMR spectroscopy

carbonate)s (M_1 - N_2) and (M_2 - N_2) were found to be 2144 g mol⁻¹ and 1971 g mol⁻¹ respectively (Table 2, entries 3 and 4). Further studies pertaining to the effect of solvents and the nature of the base-catalyst on the molecular weight of the polymers are currently underway in our laboratory.

Conclusions

In conclusion, for the first time we demonstrated the synthesis of new CO₂-based unsubstituted mono- and di- α -alkylidene cyclic carbonates using readily available epoxides and 1,4-butynediol as starting materials. These EVCs are envisioned as cheap building-blocks for the synthesis of new region-regular isocyanate-free polyurethanes and polycarbonates along with incorporating CO₂ as a chemical feedstock in the polymer backbone. The synthesis of EVCs (**5a-e**) were based on the nucleophilic ring-opening studies performed on EVC **1** and **2**, which highlight that stability of the ethereal side chain

substituent of the exocyclic olefinic group effected the successful formation of the corresponding β-oxo-urethane and Preliminary β-oxo-carbonate. ring-opening reactions performed on mono-EVC 5a and bis-EVC 5d and 5e in the presence of either mono-amines or mono-alcohols as nucleophiles (pyrrolidine, 1-hexylamine and butanol) thus led to the of the corresponding β -oxo-urethane, oxazolidone and β oxo-carbonate products in very good yields and under mild reaction conditions. The robustness of this system was then extended to the synthesis of regioregular poly(β-oxourethane)s and poly(β-oxo-carbonates)s obtained via copolymerisation of bis-EVC 5d and 5e with a diamine or a diol respectively. The presence of the -OH groups in the polymer is of special importance as they could potentially initiate secondary hydrogen bonding interactions, similar to those found in PU adhesives thereby opening new avenues for their application in the industry. The current protocol for the synthesis of epoxide-based propargylic alcohols and the catalyst recycling after the formation of the EVCs have to be further

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optimised in order to facilitate the scale-up synthesis of the regioregular polymers at a reasonable cost.

Conflicts of interest

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Two patents from the authors disclosing the catalyst system and the new monomers are published (see ref 44b and 44c).

Acknowledgements

CaRLa (Catalysis Research Laboratory) is co-financed by the Heidelberg University and BASF SE.

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