Helicoid Shiftamers for the Transport of \( \pi \)-Clumps and Charges

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Dedicated to an inspired and inspirational chemist, Duilio Arigoni

Hypothetical helical organic polymers with localized electrons, charges, and/or atoms are described, in which these localized substructures can move along the backbones of the polymers via sigmatropic H shifts.

**Introduction.** -- Sigmatropic shiftamers are (so far hypothetical) organic polymers in which localized electrons and/or atoms can be transported along the polymer chains by sequential sigmatropic shifts [1]. Recently, we described a shiftamer for the net transport of H-atoms along a polyacetylene chain *via* [1,7] shifts (Scheme 1) [1b]. We now show variants of this system that allow for the net transport of localized polyenes and polyenyl ions.

Scheme 1

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Our original helicoid shiftamer design (1 → 1'; Scheme 1) was based on the helical geometry required for facile orbital-symmetry-allowed antarafacial H transfer for the parent [1,7]-H shift in (all-Z)-hepta-1,3,5-triene (the transition structure for this rearrangement, 2, is shown in Fig. 1). Extending this helical structure out towards infinity by appending polyacetylene chains to its ends resulted in a locally saturated polymer 1 in which H-atoms could move along its helical polyene backbone in seven C leaps2) (i.e., a H-atom is transferred from site a to site b in 1, but then it is the other H-atom at site b that is transferred in the next jump)3). B3LYP/6-31G(d) Computations4) [2–4] on models in which the polyacetylene arms were treated as hexatriene groups [1b] suggested that the barrier for one such jump in the infinite system is ca. 15 kcal/mol, essentially unchanged from the barrier of 15.6 kcal/mol computed for [1,7] shift through transition structure 2. A simplified model with two vinyl rather than hexatriene groups (see transition structure 3 in Fig. 1) has a computed barrier of 18.5 kcal/mol. In short, attachment of unsaturated arms has only a small effect on the rearrangement barrier (and core geometry) of the parent system.

Fig. 1. Computed4) (B3LYP/6-31G(d)) transition structures 2–4 and corresponding rearrangement barriers [kcal/mol] for antarafacial H shifts discussed in the text

Polyenes Creeping Along, Pretty Quickly. – Instead of attaching polyacetylene chains to the ends of (all-Z)-hepta-1,3,5-triene, we could alternatively append saturated

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2) Made perhaps in ‘seven league boots’, which appear in legends of various cultures.
3) This assumes a series of shifts in the same direction along the helix. However, in structures like 1, shifts in both directions are degenerate. Dynamic effects could play a role in determining the actual probabilities of ‘forward’ and ‘backward’ shifts, especially in systems where the shifting barriers are low. Tunneling is also a possibility (see Footnote 5).
4) All calculations were performed with GAUSSIAN 98 [2]. Geometry optimizations and frequency calculations were performed at the B3LYP/6-31G(d) level [3]. Zero-point-energy corrections are included in all reported energies and were scaled by 0.9806, as recommended in [4]. All reported barriers are calculated by using the productive helical conformers of the reactants. Issues associated with achieving such conformations were discussed in [1b]. For leading references on previous calculations on [1,7] shifts, see [1b][5][6]. Ball-and-stick drawings were produced with Ball & Stick (Norbert Müller and Alexander Falk, Ball & Stick V.3.7.6, molecular graphics application for MacOS computers, Johannes Kepler University Linz, 2000).
(i.e., polyethylene) chains. This construction leads to the locally unsaturated polyethylene polymer 5, in which a hexatriene substructure could be transported via antarafacial [1,7]-H shifts along its helical alkyl chain. Note that this would be accomplished in rather small steps – a steady vermiform burrowing of the triene substructure along the chain (by the movement of a H-atom from site a out of its way, followed then by the movement of a H-atom from site c out of its way, and so on) rather than the hopping from place to place characteristic of the localized substructure in 1. A simple model of 5 is (all-Z)-nona-2,4,6-triene – the parent heptatriene system with Me groups attached to its ends. The barrier for [1,7]-H shift in this system, through transition structure 4 (Fig. 1), is computed to be 20.4 kcal/mol5) [5][6] and slightly higher than the barrier for the parent system and the models of 1 discussed above6) [7].

5) The [1,7]-H shift in a system with two Me groups at the C-atom from which the H-atom is transferred ((all-Z)-7-methylocta-1,3,5-triene) has been studied previously, also at the B3LYP/6-31G(d) level. The computed barrier for this H-shift from the productive helical conformer of the reactant is 14.8 kcal/mol (see [5]; for leading references on additional calculations on [1,7]-H shifts, see also [6]).

6) The increase in the rearrangement barrier upon alkyl substitution may be due to steric crowding involving the alkyl groups in the transition structure (see also [7]).

7) Additional studies on the spectacularly low barriers for cationic [1,8]-H shifts (and their potential eradication) will be reported separately.
situation is observed when the Me-substituted systems are compared; the barrier for [1,8] shift through transition structure 10 (Fig. 2) is by ca. 15 kcal/mol lower than for the analogous [1,7] shift through transition structure 4 (Fig. 1). A [1,7]-H shift could potentially compete with the [1,8] shift in the (all-Z)-octatrienyl cation, but the transition structure for this rearrangement (11; Fig. 2) is much higher in energy than 9 (and typical [1,7] shifts). This is likely due to a combination of i) the fact that such a [1,7] shift would generate a localized primary cation, and ii) the fact that, as described above, the barriers for cationic [1,8] shifts are inherently lower than those for neutral [1,7] shifts7). [1,8] Shifts in systems such as 6 thus appear to provide a viable mechanism for charge transport along alkane helices.

A cationic analog of shiftamer 1 (structure 7) can also be formulated. Cationic [1,8]-H shifts in this type of system again involve lower barriers than those computed for analogous neutral [1,7] shifts (compare, e.g., rearrangement through transition structures 3 and 12 in which the polyacetylene arms are modeled by vinyl groups (Fig. 1 and 3, respectively)7). Direct competition from [1,7] shifts in this system (through transition structure 13, which is isomeric to 12; Fig. 3) is more likely than in structures like 6 because the incipient cation can be stabilized directly by conjugation. But the barrier for [1,7] shift is still higher (by ca. 13 kcal/mol) than that for [1,8] shift. At first glance, it appears that system 7 achieves the net transport of both a H-atom and a positive charge (in a sense, a proton that has been decoupled) along the polyene chain. However, this system actually would not demonstrate typical shiftamer behavior. Although an antarafacial [1,8] shift in 7 would be extremely facile, such a rearrangement would switch the side of the polymer backbone (relative to the CH2 group) that bears the positive charge. Consequently, after the first [1,8] shift, the only [1,8] shift available to the product would be the reverse shift to regenerate the original structure (Scheme 2). The H-shifts could continue in the initial direction, but these would

\[ ^{8} \text{The transition structure for a competing cationic suprafacial [1,6]-H shift is also much higher in energy (by 15.8 kcal/mol) than transition structure 9.} \]
necessarily involve [1,7] shifts (of the type modeled by \textbf{13}). Still, this system would demonstrate interesting behavior: at low temperatures (when [1,7] shifts become very slow), it should behave as two long wires – one a normal polyacetylene and the other a cation-doped polyacetylene – separated by a piece of insulation (the CH\textsubscript{2} group). \[1,8\] Shifts involving this CH\textsubscript{2} group would switch the wire bearing the positive charge; in other words, the piece of insulation would really be part of a gate, which controls the passage of the positive charge. At high temperatures, sequential [1,7] and [1,8] shifts would be possible, thereby allowing for the net transport of a H-atom along with the positive charge.

Anionic analogs of \textbf{6} and \textbf{7} are also possible. While fully unsaturated systems should show the same sort of unusual behavior predicted for \textbf{7}, saturated structures such as \textbf{8} should display typical shiftamer behavior. Transition structures for the parent anionic antarafacial [1,6]-H shift (\textbf{14}) and that of a dimethyl-substituted analog (\textbf{15}) are shown in Fig. 4. The barriers for these rearrangements are slightly lower than those in their uncharged relatives (\textbf{2} and \textbf{4}; Fig. 1)\textsuperscript{9,10}.

\textbf{Coalescence and Annihilation.} – Many other interesting shiftamer architectures are conceivable. For example, while the backbone of \textbf{1} is fully unsaturated, and that of \textbf{5} is fully saturated, intermediate structures with varying degrees of unsaturation can also be imagined. Consider structure \textbf{16} (Scheme 3), which contains two hexadiene units.

\textsuperscript{9} An experimental activation energy of 18 kcal/mol has been reported for the anionic [1,6]-H shift in (1,1-dimethylpentadienyl)lithium. This barrier is somewhat higher than the barriers we have predicted for anionic [1,6] shifts, but our barriers have been computed from the productive (all-Z)-conformers of the reactants and also do not include lithium counterions (see \cite{7}).

\textsuperscript{10} Test calculations with a larger basis set with added diffuse and polarization functions (B3LYP/6-311 + G(2d,p)) yielded similar reactant and transition-state geometries and a slightly higher but similar (15.1 vs. 12.4 kcal/mol) barrier for the parent anionic [1,6] rearrangement.
Scheme 2

Fig. 4. Computed\(^a\) (B3LYP/6-31G(d)) transition structures 14 and 15 and corresponding rearrangement barriers [kcal/mol] for antarafacial H shifts discussed in the text.
separated by saturated CH₂ groups – two in the case illustrated. If a [1,7]-H shift from site a to site b in 16 occurs, structure 17 would be obtained. A subsequent [1,7]-H shift from site c to site d in 17 would produce structure 18. In 18, however, the distinction between the two hexadiene units is lost – they have condensed into a single larger polyene, like merging drops of water combining into a single large drop.

\[\text{Scheme 3}\]

A related scenario is exemplified by structure 19 (Scheme 4), a relative of 16 whose different sites of unsaturation are differently charged – in this case, one is set up for cationic [1,8] shifts and the other for anionic [1,6] shifts. Here, sequential H-shifts such as those that convert 19 to 20, and 20 to 21, again lead to a condensation of small \(\pi\)-clumps into larger ones. In this case, oppositely charged \(\pi\)-clumps attract each other, their charges ultimately annihilating each other when they meet. There is a relation here to the properties of bipolarons in polyacetylene [8].

Thus, we have described a variety of new helical sigmatropic shiftamer architectures that vary in charge and extent of unsaturation. We predict that sigmatropic shiftamers 1, 5, 6, and 8 will have relatively low barriers for the shuttling of their localized substructures along their polymer chains – roughly 5–20 kcal/mol – with rearrangement in cationic shiftamer 6 likely to be considerably faster than in the neutral and anionic systems\(^7\). For each of these systems, the localized substructure that can be transported is different: for 1, a H-atom; for 5, a clump of three conjugated \(\pi\)-bonds; for 6, a heptatrienyl cation, and for 8, a pentadienyl anion. Structure 7 should behave as a ‘compound’ shiftamer, in which sequential neutral [1,7] and cationic [1,8] shifts could occur. We look forward to the synthesis of architectures of these types and the development of strategies for exploiting their transport properties.
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REFERENCES


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