

[1] J. Choi *et al.*, Transition metal–catalyzed alkyl–alkyl bond formation: Another dimension in cross-coupling chemistry. *Science* **2017**, *356*, 152.

PhD position - 2026

Homogeneous catalysis & coordination chemistry
University Paris-Saclay / CNRS / CEA

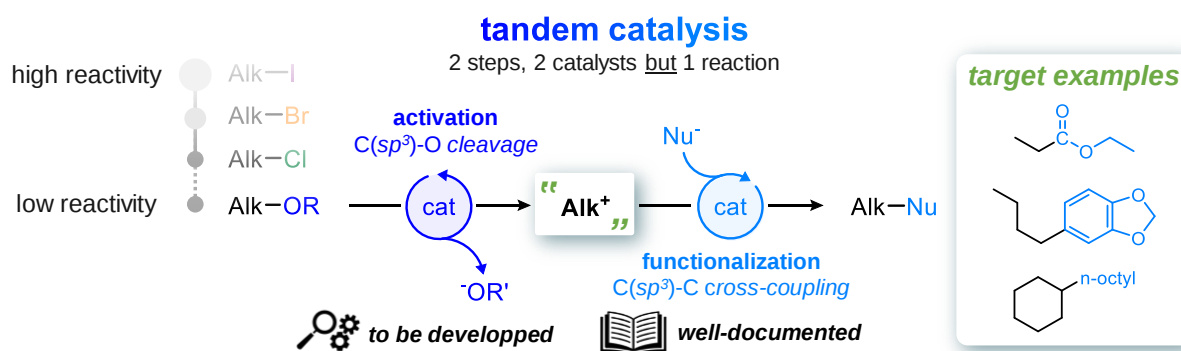
Tandem catalysis for the use of alkyl ethers as electrophile in cross-couplings

Context subject of the PhD

Designing more efficient and sustainable routes towards the formation of C–C bonds is of a paramount importance in organic synthesis, as they are keystones to the construction of organic molecules. While conventional ways such as nucleophilic substitutions can be used to forge C(sp³)–C bonds, they often face limitations in scope and selectivity. Alternatively, transition metal-catalyzed cross-couplings can overcome some of these challenges but still rely on the use of alkyl halide electrophiles that are petro-sourced.¹ In this project, the PhD candidate will try to unlock the reactivity alkyl ethers (Alk–OR) as electrophilic partner for C(sp³)–C cross-couplings. These substrates are particularly appealing as they can be derived from waste of chemical industry, plastics and biomass.

Objectives and methodology

The key objectives of this project are to develop a catalytic system capable of cleaving strong C(sp³)–O bonds (activation step) and forming new C(sp³)–C bonds (functionalization step) to yield valuable products. The approach is to design tandem catalysis, wherein two distinct catalysts — each responsible for one step — operate concurrently within a single reactor. The first task of the PhD project will address preparation of novel organometallics able to activate C–O bonds and convert Alk–OR into strong electrophiles. A structure-property-reactivity rationale will guide the design of the catalyst. The second challenge will be to combine it with well-established transition metal-catalyzed functionalization and to optimize the conditions for synergistic action.



Training and skill development

Catalysis • Organic and organometallic synthesis • High pressure reactor operations (autoclaves) • Work under inert atmosphere (Schlenk lines, gloveboxes) • Analysis of chemical compounds (NMR, GC-MS, IR, X-Ray) • Mechanistic investigations (kinetic and thermodynamic studies) • Theoretical calculations at the DFT level (if desired)

The candidate must hold a master's degree in molecular chemistry, organometallic or organic chemistry. Experience in catalysis and/or experience in coordination chemistry would be also appreciated.

More information on the website of the lab: <https://iramis.cea.fr/en/nimbe/lcmce/>

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