Zeolitic imidazolate frameworks (ZIFs) are an outstanding class of MOFs, constructed from tetrahedrally configured transition metal cations linked through bridging imidazolate (Im) spacers. ZIFs are structurally isomorphous to zeolites since the metal-Im-metal angle is similar to the Si–O–Si angle (145°) in the latter compounds. This feature was exploited to produce a huge variety of porous transition metal-based ZIFs. Our initial goal was to combine Im and alkaline earth metal borohydrides in the same structure with the formation of porous borohydride compounds, where Im serves as a structural unit of the framework, while borohydride anions provide with a functionality. However, alkali and alkaline earth metal-based imidazolates are not structurally characterized so far. Thus, the coordination chemistry of Im towards alkali and alkaline earth metal cations remains a challenge. With this in mind and inspired by the storage properties of alkaline earth metal-based ZIFs, we have recently turned our attention to Im-based coordination compounds with Li⁺, Na⁺ and K⁺ [1]. Unfortunately, these imidazolates form dense and hypercoordinated structures. The coordinative demand of Im towards alkali and alkaline earth metal-based imidazolates are not structurally characterized so far. Thus, the coordination chemistry of Im towards alkali and alkaline earth metal cations remains a challenge. With this in mind and inspired by the storage properties of ZIFs, we have recently turned our attention to Im-based coordination compounds with Li⁺, Na⁺ and K⁺ [1].

Our next challenge was to obtain magnesium imidazolate (MgIm₃), which, based on the nature of Mg²⁺ as well as its coordination chemistry, was considered as a much more promising complexing agent in comparison with alkali metal cations. While, the freshly synthesized MgIm₃ was found to be amorphous, annealing at relatively high temperatures yields the crystalline and porous MgIm₂. Herein, we present our results on the synthesis, characterization and some properties of newly obtained MgIm₂.

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Keywords: zeolitic imidazolate framework, magnesium imidazolate, porous structure, crystal structure, physical properties

email: damir.a.safin@gmail.com

1. Institute of Condensed Matter and Nanosciences, Université catholique de Louvain, Place L. Pasteur 1, 1348 Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

email: c.j.mcmonagle@ed.ac.uk

1. EaStCHEM , The Centre for Science at Extreme Conditions, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, EH9 3JJ, UK
2. Diamond Light Source Ltd., Harwell Science & Innovation Campus, Diamond House, Oxfordshire, OX11 0DE, UK

High-Pressure Guest Included Phase Transitions, Amorphisation and Negative Linear Compressibility on a Porous Copper-Based Metal Organic Framework

Charlie J. McMonagle 1, Priyanka Comar 1, Euan K. Brechin 1, Mark R. Warren 2, David R. Allan 3, Stephen A. Moggach 1

Porous materials such as zeolites and porous organic polymers have long been considered good candidates for storing and separating molecules based on their size. More recently, metal organic frameworks (MOFs) have attracted further interest with many aspects of their functional and mechanical properties investigated. The porous channels found in MOFs are ideal for the uptake of guests of different shapes and sizes, and with careful design they can show high selectivity for particular species from a mixture. Adsorption properties of MOFs have been thoroughly studied, however obtaining in depth ‘structural’ insight into the adsorption/desorption mechanism is not so common place.

Over the last 6 years, we have been using high-pressure crystallographic techniques to explore the uptake of guest species in the pores of MOFs. This is done by selecting a hydroscopic medium that can penetrate the pores on increasing pressure and has revealed unexpected flexibility, explained unusual adsorption phenomena under milder gas pressures, and increased reactivity in MOFs.

Here, we present a high-pressure and low-temperature crystallographic study on the Cu-based MOF, bis[1-(4-pyridyl)butane-1,3-dione]copper(II), (CuPyr-I) which crystallises in the rhombohedral space group R-3. Under ambient temperature and pressure, the structure of CuPyr-I is composed of Jahn-Teller distorted octahedral Cu-centres, which link via the dione linkers to form a one-dimensional porous framework material. On increasing pressure to 3.34 GPa using methanol as a hydroscopic medium, CuPyr-I undergoes an isosymmetric single-crystal to single-crystal phase transition which results in a doubling of the a- and b-axes, while the c-axis displays negative linear compressibility caused by a subtle twisting of the framework in order to accommodate the uptake of methanol into the pores. In comparison, on direct compression using a nonpenetrative hydrostatic medium (FC-70), amorphisation occurs above 1.60 GPa, with no associated phase transition.