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# Unlocking the Catalytic Hydrogenolysis of Chlorosilanes into Hydrosilanes with Superbases

Gabriel Durin, Jean-Claude Berthet, Emmanuel Nicolas, and Thibault Cantat\*

Université Paris-Saclay, CEA, CNRS, NIMBE, 91191 Gif-sur-Yvette Cedex, France

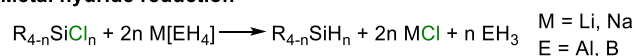
**KEYWORDS:** Hydrosilane synthesis, hydrogenolysis, homogenous catalysis, superbases, iridium pincer complex

**ABSTRACT:** The efficient synthesis of hydrosilanes by catalytic hydrogenolysis of chlorosilanes is described, using an iridium (III) pincer catalyst. A careful selection of a nitrogen base (incl. sterically hindered guanidines and phosphazenes) can unlock the preparation of Me<sub>3</sub>SiH, Et<sub>3</sub>SiH and Me<sub>2</sub>SiHCl in high yield (up to 98%), directly from their corresponding chlorosilanes.

Hydrosilanes are useful molecules in the industry for the production of a variety of organosilicon compounds through hydrosilylation of alkenes or dehydrocoupling reactions.<sup>1,2</sup> In organic synthesis, these mild reducing agents promote reactions with high selectivity and efficiency such as reduction of esters into aldehydes<sup>3</sup> or ethers<sup>4</sup> and amides into amines or enamines.<sup>5,6</sup> Where the use of hydrogen as a reductive source suffers from thermodynamic limitations,<sup>7</sup> hydrosilanes provide convenient alternatives and recent studies have highlighted new utilizations to recover catalytically the valuable organic content of oxygenated feedstocks (lignin, plastics and CO<sub>2</sub>) through C–O bond reduction or to develop phosphine-catalyzed Wittig reactions.<sup>8</sup> However, hydrosilanes are produced *via* energy intensive processes and their utilization also generates quantities of siloxanes.<sup>9</sup> The recycling of these wastes begins with an acidic treatment (HCl) to provide chlorosilanes which are key intermediates in the synthetic route to hydrosilanes.<sup>10</sup> At that time, the most used reagents to reduce [Si]–Cl bonds in chlorosilanes are anionic metal hydrides, such as LiAlH<sub>4</sub> (Scheme 1).<sup>11</sup> The catalytic conversion of [Si]–Cl into [Si]–H derivatives using dihydrogen as reductive source remains highly challenging.

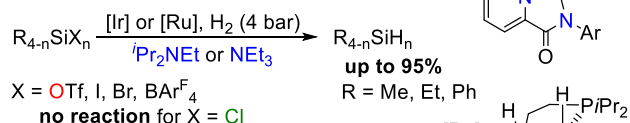
Catalytic hydrogenolysis of halosilanes and triflates was recently introduced by Shimada *et al.* in 2017 and Schneider *et al.* in 2018 (Scheme 1). They reported the efficient transformation of R<sub>3</sub>SiX (X = OTf, I, Br) into R<sub>3</sub>SiH under dihydrogen with the use of noble transition metal catalysts, in the presence of a nitrogen base to drive the thermodynamics of the transformation. This reaction is however particularly difficult with chlorosilanes because the Si–Cl is much stronger than the Si–Br and Si–I bonds, with bond dissociation energies of 456, 343, and 339 kJ.mol<sup>-1</sup>, respectively.<sup>12</sup> As such, a single example supplied the direct hydrogenolysis of Me<sub>3</sub>SiCl into Me<sub>3</sub>SiH but in a near stoichiometric yield (7%).<sup>13</sup> To tackle these limitations, before initiating catalytic hydrogenolysis in presence of a base, a chloride abstractor such as NaI or Na[B(C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>3</sub>-3,5-(CF<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>)<sub>4</sub>] was first added, which greatly improved the yields in hydrosilane (up to 84%).<sup>13,14</sup> We present here an efficient catalytic hydrogenolysis of chlorosilanes into hydrosilanes using an iridium (III) pincer catalyst. This novel route, based on the careful choice of the base (guanidine or phosphazene), avoids the use of additional additives and enables the formation of Me<sub>3</sub>SiH, Me<sub>2</sub>SiHCl and Et<sub>3</sub>SiH in yields up to 98%.

## Metal hydride reduction

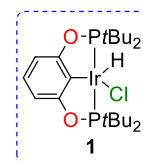
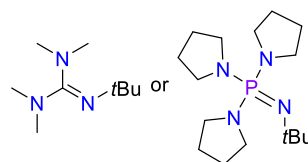
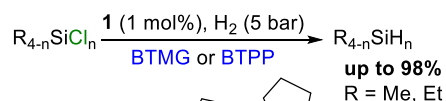


## Hydrogenolysis of SiX bonds

Shimada, 2017 and Schneider, 2018:



## This work: Hydrogenolysis of SiCl bonds



## Scheme 1. Different synthetic ways from chlorosilanes to hydrosilanes.

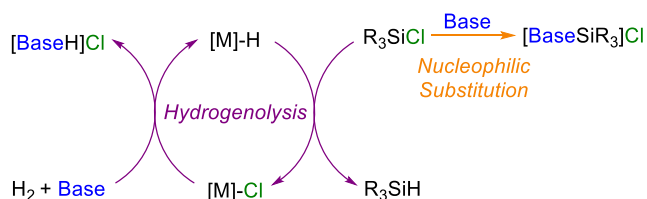
The hydrogenolysis of silyl halides into hydrosilanes is thermodynamically unfavoured and, as shown in Scheme 1, requires a base, to form the corresponding ammonium salt as a byproduct and overcome the thermodynamic limitations. Schneider *et al.* have computed that trialkylamines are not basic enough to perform the hydrogenolysis of chlorosilanes with their Ru(II) complex and a stoichiometric amount of additives was needed with NEt<sub>3</sub> or *i*Pr<sub>2</sub>NEt to induce the reaction (Scheme 1).<sup>14</sup> We chose iridium(III) pincer complexes as potential catalysts because they are competent in a number of hydrogenation<sup>15</sup> or hydrosilylation<sup>16</sup> reactions with formation of reactive [Ir]–H entities which transfer hydrides readily.

We thus turned to the precursor [Ir(<sup>*t*</sup>BuPOCOP)HCl]<sup>17</sup> (**1**) (<sup>*t*</sup>BuPOCOP = (C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>3</sub>){1,3-OPtBu<sub>2</sub>})<sub>2</sub>) as a possible catalyst for the Si–X to Si–H transformation. Beyond its thermodynamic role, the base is kinetically determinant to favour the formation of a metal hydride intermediate from a metal chloride and H<sub>2</sub>

(Scheme 2). The choice of the base is thus crucial and must be rationalized. Organic superbases such as amidines, guanidines and phosphazenes are neutral bases, stronger than alkylamines, and are well-known activators in a variety of base mediated organic transformations as well as in catalysis.<sup>18</sup> Hydroxide or alkoxide bases are not compatible with chlorosilanes and a series of six neutral bases (NEt<sub>3</sub>, DBU = 1,8-diazabicyclo[5.4.0]undec-7-ene, TBDH = 1,5,7-triazabicyclo[4.4.0]dec-5-ene, MeTBD = 7-methyl-1,5,7-triaza-bicyclo[4.4.0]dec-5-ene, BTMG = 2-*t*Bu-1,1,3,3-tetramethyl-guanidine, BTPP = (*t*Bu-imino)tri(pyrrolidino)phosphorane) differing by their Brønsted basicity (*pK<sub>a</sub>*) and steric hindrances have thus been considered in this work.

The role of the base was evaluated in the catalytic hydrogenolysis of Me<sub>3</sub>SiCl (5 bar of H<sub>2</sub>, room temperature, in benzene) with **1** (1 mol%) (Eqn 1). In the presence of NEt<sub>3</sub>, no reaction occurred even after 48 h (Table 1, entry 1). While Shimada *et al.* observed, by using an Ir(I) complex and DBU, the near stoichiometric formation of Me<sub>3</sub>SiH with a TON of 1.4 with DBU after 7 days<sup>13</sup> **1** provided Me<sub>3</sub>SiH in a promising 6 % yield (TON=6) after 18 h (Eqn 1, entry 2). TBDH proved ineffective and reacted immediately with Me<sub>3</sub>SiCl to give a white precipitate of the silylium adduct [TBDHSiMe<sub>3</sub>]Cl (Scheme 2, right). In contrast to what previously reported,<sup>13</sup> here, the formation of this silylium [BaseSiMe<sub>3</sub>]Cl did not increase the reactivity of the chlorosilane as it remained inert even after 48 h at 90°C in benzene (Table 1, entry 3). This result was further supported by calculations (*vide infra*). Even in CD<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> where [TBDHSiMe<sub>3</sub>]Cl is soluble and formed as major product, only traces of Me<sub>3</sub>SiH were detected (Table 1, entry 4). Interestingly, Me<sub>3</sub>SiH was obtained in 25 % yield after 18 h (Table 1, entry 5) with the use of MeTBD. Using BTMG and BTPP superbases, yields in Me<sub>3</sub>SiCl were considerably improved, up to 54 % after 18 h (Table 1, entries 6 and 7). These results represent the first efficient generation of a hydrosilane by hydrogenolysis of a chlorosilane derivative, without an activator. As the BTPP base is relatively expensive, its recycling would be appealing. A solution might come from electrodialysis to recover the BTMG or BTPP bases from their corresponding hydrogen chloride salt, a process which has been successfully applied to generate ammonia from ammonium chloride.<sup>19</sup>

In contrast to TBDH, the silylium adducts [BaseSiMe<sub>3</sub>]Cl were not formed in benzene with the bases MeTBD, BTMG, and BTPP, while the hydrogenolysis by-product [BaseH]Cl deposited gradually, except for [BTPPH]Cl which is soluble in benzene. Decreasing the H<sub>2</sub> pressure to 1 bar somewhat decreased the conversion of Me<sub>3</sub>SiCl (23%) and the yield in Me<sub>3</sub>SiH (18 % after 18 h) (Table 1, entry 8).<sup>13,14</sup> These experiments underline the crucial role of the base which must be as strong as DBU to favour hydrogenolysis. The ability of the above bases to favour either the hydrogenolysis process or a nucleophilic substitution on Me<sub>3</sub>SiCl was correlated with thermodynamic DFT calculations (Scheme 3). Gibbs free energies (in kcal.mol<sup>-1</sup>) Δ*G*<sub>1</sub> for hydrogenolysis (in purple) and Δ*G*<sub>2</sub> for nucleophilic substitution (in orange) were computed at the PBE0-D3/6-311+G(d,p) level of theory, using the SMD model solvation model in benzene (see SI page S21 for details).

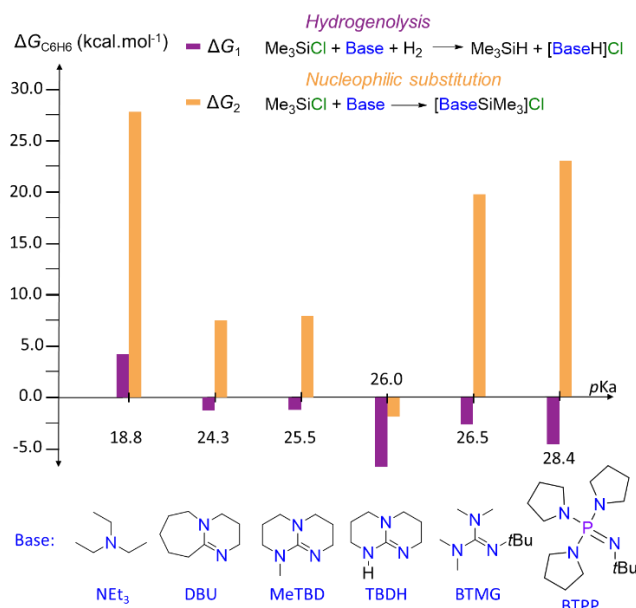


**Scheme 2.** Proposed mechanism for the catalytic hydrogenolysis of silyl chlorides and nucleophilic substitution.

**Table 1.** Screening of bases for the hydrogenolysis of Me<sub>3</sub>SiCl in C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub> with **1**.<sup>a</sup>

En-try	H <sub>2</sub> pressure (bar)	Base	<i>pK<sub>a</sub></i> <sup>c</sup>	Conversion <sup>b</sup> (%)	Yield (Selectivity) <sup>b</sup> (%)	Reaction Time (h)
1	5	NEt <sub>3</sub>	18.8	0	0 (0)	48
2	5	DBU	24.3	10	6 (60)	18
3	5	TBDH	26.0	0	0 (0)	48
4 <sup>d</sup>	5	TBDH	26.0	1	<1	18
5	5	MeTBD	25.5	30	25 (83)	18
6	5	BTMG	26.5	55	42 (76)	18
7	5	BTPP	28.4	59	54 (92)	18
8	1	BTPP	28.4	23	18 (78)	18

<sup>a</sup>General conditions: 0.1 mmol of Me<sub>3</sub>SiCl, 0.11 mmol of base, 1 μmol of catalyst, 0.6 mL of solvent, at room temperature under 5 bar H<sub>2</sub> except entry 7 (1 bar). <sup>b</sup>Conversions, selectivities, and yields were determined by <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectroscopy, through integration of the R<sub>3</sub>Si signals versus an internal standard (1,3,5-trimethylbenzene). <sup>c</sup>*pK<sub>a</sub>* in MeCN<sup>20</sup>. <sup>d</sup>in CD<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>.



**Scheme 3. Calculated  $\Delta G_{\text{C6H6}}$  by DFT (PBE0-D3/6-311+G(d,p), SMD: benzene) of the hydrogenolysis process  $\text{Me}_3\text{SiCl} + \text{H}_2 + \text{Base} \rightarrow \text{Me}_3\text{SiH} + [\text{BaseH}]\text{Cl}$  ( $\Delta G_1$ ) and the reaction  $\text{Me}_3\text{SiCl} + \text{Base} \rightarrow [\text{BaseSiMe}_3]\text{Cl}$  ( $\Delta G_2$ ) plotted against the  $\text{pK}_a$  of the base in MeCN.**

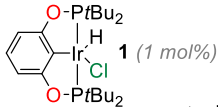
The highest positive  $\Delta G$  values are found for the amine  $\text{NEt}_3$  in agreement with the absence of reactivity noted experimentally. Increasing the Brønsted basicity of the base favours the hydrogenolysis of  $\text{Me}_3\text{SiCl}$  as reflected in the drop of  $\Delta G_1$  from  $-1.2$  to  $-4.6$  kcal.mol $^{-1}$  from DBU to BTTP. While the hydrogenolysis of chlorosilanes ( $\Delta G_1$ ) with DBU and MeTBD is only slightly exergonic ( $-1.2$  and  $-1.1$  kcal.mol $^{-1}$  respectively), the reaction proceeds in benzene as it is driven by the precipitation of the by-product salt  $[\text{BaseH}]\text{Cl}$ . Interestingly, with DBU, MeTBD, BTMG and BTTP, formation of the silylium  $[\text{BaseSiMe}_3]\text{Cl}$  is disfavoured with  $\Delta G_2$  values ranging from  $+7.6$  to  $+23.4$  kcal.mol $^{-1}$ , presumably due to unfavourable steric interactions. TBDH exhibits a very different behaviour: the two reactions being thermodynamically favourable, the more negative value of  $\Delta G_1$  may be related to the high stability of  $[\text{TBDH}_2]\text{Cl}$ .<sup>21</sup> However, the absence of  $\text{Me}_3\text{SiH}$  production in the presence of TBDH therefore results either from the lower  $\Delta G_2$  balance compared to  $\Delta G_1$  or the low solubility of  $[\text{TBDHSiMe}_3]\text{Cl}$  which was observed to rapidly precipitate in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ .

Experimental and computational results show that BTTP is the most suitable base for the production of  $\text{Me}_3\text{SiH}$  because it presents a large  $\Delta G_1$ – $\Delta G_2$  difference with a negative  $\Delta G_1$  value of  $-4.6$  kcal.mol $^{-1}$ , and it is able to favour the thermodynamics of the hydrogenolysis while preventing the formation of the silylium side-product  $[\text{BaseSiMe}_3]\text{Cl}$ . Since the formation of the hydrogenolysis by-product  $[\text{BaseH}]\text{Cl}$  can drive the catalysis and because its solubility is strongly related to the nature of the solvent, we investigated the influence of some polar and non-polar solvents in the hydrogenolysis of  $\text{Me}_3\text{SiCl}$  (1–5 bar  $\text{H}_2$ , r.t., 18 h), catalyzed by **1** (1 mol%) in the presence of BTTP (Eqn 2, Table 2). Replacing benzene with toluene or THF, at 1 bar of  $\text{H}_2$ , somewhat decreased the yields in  $\text{Me}_3\text{SiH}$  to 13 and 17 %, respectively (Table 2, entries 2 and 3). In the more polar solvents DMF, DMSO and MeCN, the conversion rates at 1 bar  $\text{H}_2$  are low and  $\text{Me}_3\text{SiH}$  is observed only in MeCN and in low quantity (4 %) (Table 2, entries 6–8). NMR analyses actually revealed in the later solvents the formation of large quantities of the soluble silylium salt  $[\text{BTTPSiMe}_3]\text{Cl}$ , which is detrimental to the catalysis. Finally, at 1 bar  $\text{H}_2$ , the highest conversion (56 %) with excellent yield and selectivity in  $\text{Me}_3\text{SiH}$  (56 % and 99 % respectively) were achieved in dichloromethane (entry 4). Importantly, under 5 bar  $\text{H}_2$ ,  $\text{Me}_3\text{SiH}$  was obtained in near quantitative yield (98 %) from  $\text{Me}_3\text{SiCl}$  (entry 5).

Capitalizing on these findings, the hydrogenolysis of  $\text{Et}_3\text{SiCl}$  and  $\text{Me}_2\text{SiCl}_2$  was attempted (Scheme 4; Eqns 3–5). The conversion of  $\text{Et}_3\text{SiCl}$  with BTTP proved more difficult than  $\text{Me}_3\text{SiCl}$  requiring 40 h to afford  $\text{Et}_3\text{SiH}$  selectively in 59 % yield. This is in agreement with the observation of the Shimada and Schneider groups, that an increase in the steric hindrance of the silyl iodides or triflates led to longer reaction times.<sup>13,14</sup> Interestingly,  $\text{Me}_2\text{SiCl}_2$ , which is more electrophilic<sup>22</sup> than  $\text{Me}_3\text{SiCl}$ , proved less reactive in our conditions (Scheme 4, Eqn 4) and a mixture of  $\text{Me}_2\text{SiHCl}$  (13 %) and  $\text{Me}_2\text{SiH}_2$  (3 %) was observed after 40 h. This result matches the hydrogenolysis of  $\text{Me}_2\text{Si}(\text{OTf})_2$  by an iridium catalyst reported to be much slower

(7 days vs 8 h for  $\text{Me}_3\text{SiOTf}$ ).<sup>13</sup> These poor yields in hydrosilanes demonstrated that the hydrogenolysis of dialkylchlorosilanes must be optimized. Replacing BTTP with MeTBD (Scheme 4, Eqn 5) favoured higher conversion rate in  $\text{Me}_2\text{SiCl}_2$  (48 %) and formation of  $\text{Me}_2\text{SiHCl}$  as the major product (37 % yield). Increased reaction times led to higher yields in  $\text{Me}_2\text{SiHCl}$  (54% after 7 days). No trace of the silylium  $[\text{MeTBDSiClMe}_2]\text{Cl}$  could be detected by  $^1\text{H}$  NMR in dichloromethane. The latter results evidence the formation of  $\text{R}_2\text{SiHCl}$  species from  $\text{R}_2\text{SiCl}_2$  in smooth conditions while  $\text{Me}_2\text{SiH}_2$  is the major product with strong reducing agents (such as  $\text{LiAlH}_4$ ).<sup>23</sup>

**Table 2. Influence of the solvent on the hydrogenolysis of  $\text{Me}_3\text{SiCl}$ .<sup>a</sup>**



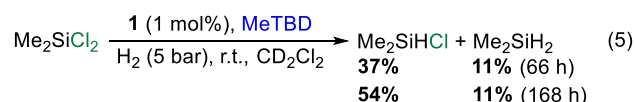
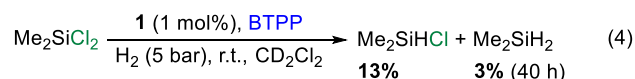
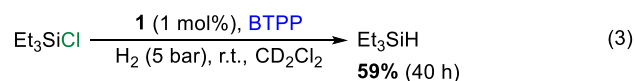
**1** (1 mol%)

$$\text{Me}_3\text{SiCl} + \text{BTTP} \xrightarrow[\text{H}_2, \text{r.t., Solvent, 18 h}]{1.1 \text{ eq}} \text{Me}_3\text{SiH} + [\text{BTTPH}]\text{Cl} \quad (2)$$

Entry	p( $\text{H}_2$ ) (bar)	Solvent	Conv. <sup>b</sup> (%)	Yield (Select.) <sup>b</sup> (%)	$\epsilon^c$
1	1	$\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$	23	18 (78)	2.3
2	1	Tol- <i>d</i> <sub>8</sub>	15	13 (89)	2.4
3	1	THF- <i>d</i> <sub>8</sub>	17	17 (99)	7.6
4	1	$\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$	56	56 (99)	8.9
5	5	$\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$	99	98 (99)	8.9
6	1	$\text{CD}_3\text{CN}$	12	4 (30)	36.6
7	1	DMF- <i>d</i> <sub>7</sub>	18	0 (0)	38.3
8	1	DMSO- <i>d</i> <sub>6</sub>	9	0 (0)	46.7

<sup>a</sup> General conditions: 0.1 mmol of  $\text{Me}_3\text{SiCl}$ , 0.11 mmol of BTTP, 1  $\mu\text{mol}$  of **1** (1 mol%), 0.6 mL of solvent, room temperature (r.t.).

<sup>b</sup>Conversions, selectivity and yields were determined by  $^1\text{H}$  NMR integration of the  $\text{Me}_3\text{Si}$  signals versus an internal standard (1,3,5-trimethylbenzene). <sup>c</sup>Dielectric constant of the solvents.

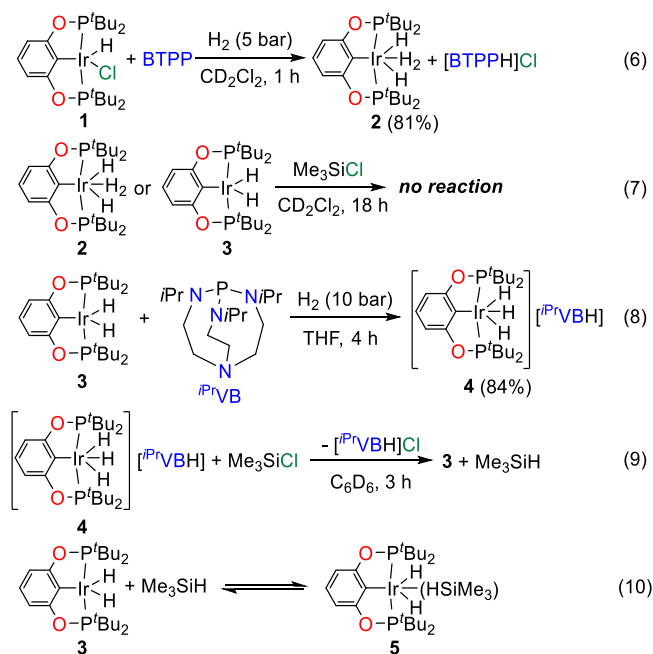


**Scheme 4. Catalytic hydrogenolysis by **1** (1 mol%) of  $\text{Et}_3\text{SiCl}$  and  $\text{Me}_2\text{SiCl}_2$  with BTMG or MeTBD in  $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ . Yields were determined by  $^1\text{H}$  NMR integration of the  $\text{R}_n\text{Si}$  ( $n = 2$  and 3) signals versus an internal standard (1,3,5-trimethylbenzene).**

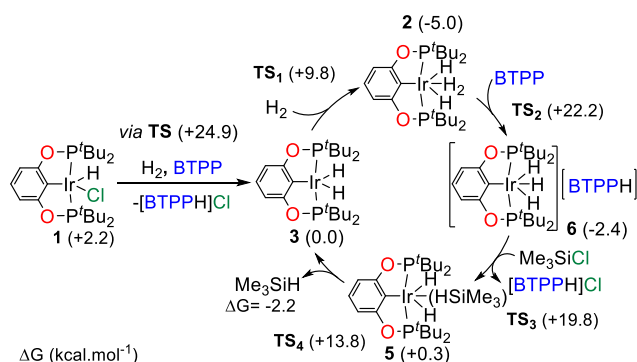
To gain insights into the mechanism of the catalysis in the optimized conditions (5 bar  $\text{H}_2$  in  $\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2$ ) (Scheme 5), we focused on the iridium complexes that might form from **1** either by stoichiometric addition of the reagents (Eqn 6, 7 and 8) or in catalytic conditions. The  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum of **1** is not modified by addition of 1 equiv. of  $\text{Me}_3\text{SiCl}$  or BTTP or when pressurized



under  $H_2$ . **1** is however converted in 1 h into  $[Ir^{(tBu)POCOP}H_2(H_2)]^{24}$  (**2**) (81 %), when treated with BTTP under 5 bar  $H_2$ . **2** is the only complex detected by  $^1H$  during the catalysis and at its end. Hydrogenolysis of  $Me_3SiCl$  with  $[Ir^{(tBu)POCOP}H_2]$  (**3**) (1 mol%)<sup>24</sup> also led to **2** as the only observable iridium species (see SI Fig. S7). However, **2** and **3** do not react with stoichiometric quantities of  $Me_3SiCl$  to give  $Me_3SiH$ . Our hypothesis for the active species is based on the formation of the anionic hydride species  $[Ir^{(tBu)POCOP}H_3]^-$  for which the hydride transfer is expected to be much more efficient than from the neutral derivatives **2** or **3** (Eqn 7). Such species are known,  $[Ir^{(tBu)POCOP}H_3]Na^{24}$  was previously reported by Brookhart and co-workers from the treatment of **1** with NaH. Although never detected in our catalytic experiments, anionic species may be an intermediate formed by deprotonation of **2** with a strong base. Attempts to generate such species from **3** using only BTTP and  $H_2$  have not been successful. However, the use of a stronger base such as Verkade superbase  $iPrVB$  ( $iPrVB = 2,8,9$ -Triisopropyl-2,5,8,9-tetraaza-1-phosphabicyclo[3.3.3]undecane) in the presence of **3** under 10 bar  $H_2$  (Eqn 8) in THF immediately afforded a white deposit. This solid has been characterized by NMR in acetonitrile as the ion pair  $[Ir^{(tBu)POCOP}H_3][iPrVBH]$  (**4**), featuring both the expected anionic hydride and the phosphonium salt. Complex **4** shows  $^1H$  NMR signals similar to those reported in  $[Ir^{(tBu)POCOP}H_3]Na^{24}$ . It is not stable in  $CD_2Cl_2$ ,<sup>25</sup> but reacted in  $C_6D_6$  with 1 equiv.  $Me_3SiCl$  to give  $Me_3SiH$  quantitatively after 4 h (Eqn 9). The resulting complexes **3** and  $[Ir^{(tBu)POCOP}H_2(HSiMe_3)]$  (**5**) were identified by NMR (Eqn 10 and SI Fig. S17/S18). Complex **5** is analogous to the previously reported  $[Ir^{(tBu)POCOP}H_2(HSiEt_3)]^{26}$  and displays an Ir–H hydride signal at  $-8.56$  ppm by  $^1H$  NMR. This result supports the involvement of the anionic hydride complex  $[Ir^{(tBu)POCOP}H_3][BTPPH]$  (**6**) as a key hydride donor in the formation of the hydrosilane. Generated catalytically and prone to reduce Si–Cl bonds, complex **6** would be the first anionic trihydride iridium complex involved in catalytic hydrogenation reactions and would be responsible for the excellent performances of this system (Scheme 5).



**Scheme 5.** Stoichiometric reactions. Reaction (7) with **2** has been conducted under 1 bar of  $H_2$ .



**Scheme 6.** Computed mechanism (PBE0-D3/Def2-TZVP (Ir, 6-311+G(d,p) (mobile H, Si), 6-31G(d) (other atoms), )//wB97M-V/Def2-TZVPP SMD (Solvent: dichloromethane) for the hydrogenolysis of  $Me_3SiCl$  with BTTP and **1** or **3**. Energies are reported compared to **3**,  $H_2$ , BTTP and  $Me_3SiCl$ .

Density functional theory calculations (see SI page S21 for details) were performed to get a deeper insight into the mechanism and to confirm the possible hydride transfer to  $Me_3SiCl$  from the anionic trihydride species **6**. The most favoured pathway is depicted in Scheme 6: complex **1** is a precatalyst and its deprotonation with BTTP under  $H_2$  is slightly exergonic ( $-2.2$  kcal.mol<sup>-1</sup>) and leads to the dihydride species **3** with a high activation barrier at  $24.9$  kcal.mol<sup>-1</sup> (see SI Fig. S23 for the full computed pathway). **3** is rapidly transformed into **2** under  $H_2$  ( $TS_1$ :  $\Delta G^\ddagger = +9.8$  kcal.mol<sup>-1</sup>,  $\Delta G = -5.0$  kcal.mol<sup>-1</sup>). Deprotonation of **2** with BTTP can then occur, requiring an activation energy of  $+22.2$  kcal.mol<sup>-1</sup> from **3** ( $TS_2$ :  $\Delta G^\ddagger = +27.2$  kcal.mol<sup>-1</sup>,  $\Delta\Delta G = +2.6$  kcal.mol<sup>-1</sup>). This step is rate-determining and is key in generating the high-energy, anionic trihydride species **6**. Hydride transfer from **6** to  $Me_3SiCl$  provides **5**, which features the product  $Me_3SiH$  coordinated to dihydride **3**,<sup>27</sup> concomitantly with the release of  $[BTPPH]Cl$  as a salt. This step is  $20.8$  kcal.mol<sup>-1</sup> higher in energy than **3** and follows an  $S_N2$  mechanism at the silicon atom ( $TS_3$ :  $\Delta G^\ddagger = +22.2$  kcal.mol<sup>-1</sup>,  $\Delta\Delta G = +2.7$  kcal.mol<sup>-1</sup>). By releasing the coordinated silane, **3** is regenerated, thereby closing the catalytic cycle ( $TS_4$ :  $\Delta G^\ddagger = +13.5$  kcal.mol<sup>-1</sup>,  $\Delta\Delta G = -1.9$  kcal.mol<sup>-1</sup>), with an overall exergonicity of  $1.2$  kcal.mol<sup>-1</sup>. Notably, in agreement with the experiments, the hydride transfer from **3** into  $Me_3SiCl$  has been discarded computationally (see SI Fig. S21). The total energetic span of the catalytic cycle,  $27.2$  kcal.mol<sup>-1</sup>, is only lightly higher than expected compared to the reaction conditions (18 h at r.t. under 5 bar of  $H_2$ ) and defined by **2** and the base-assisted activation of coordinated  $H_2$  ( $TS_2$ ), which is the rate-determining transition state of the reaction.

In summary, hydrogenolysis of some chlorosilanes ( $Me_3SiH$ ,  $Et_3SiH$  and  $Me_2SiHCl$ ) catalyzed by an  $Ir^{III}$  catalyst in the presence of a sterically hindered guanidine or phosphazene base (MeTBD, BTMG, BTTP) afforded hydrosilanes with moderate to excellent yields and selectivity (up to 98 %). The reaction proceeds in mild conditions (r.t., 1 to 5 bar  $H_2$ ), with a low catalyst loading (1 mol%), without other additional additives, and requires moderate reaction times (18 h). The active species in the hydride transfer would involve the anionic iridium trihydride complex  $[Ir^{(tBu)POCOP}H_3]^-$ , formed by the deprotonation of the  $H_2$  complex  $[Ir^{(tBu)POCOP}H_2(H_2)]$  with a strong base. This complex exhibits an outstanding hydridic character, able to reduce a chlorosilane to a hydrosilane, without the need for a

pre-activation of the Si–Cl bond. Future works will concern the development of earth-abundant metal or transition metal-free catalysts to replace the noble metal complex.

## ASSOCIATED CONTENT

**Supporting Information.** This material is available free of charge via the Internet at <http://pubs.acs.org>.

Detailed descriptions of experimental methods; procedures for the catalytic reduction of the chlorosilanes; stoichiometric reactions with complexes **1–4**; and computational details. (PDF)

Coordinates for all computed structures (XYZ File)

## AUTHOR INFORMATION

### Corresponding Author

\*Email: [thibault.cantat@cea.fr](mailto:thibault.cantat@cea.fr)

### Author Contributions

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### Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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