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# Pd-catalyzed [3+2]-Dehydrogenative Annulation Reactions

Yang Liu,<sup>[a]</sup> Mikaël Le Roch,<sup>[a]</sup> Alessia Mori,<sup>[a]</sup> Alexandre Pradal,<sup>[a]</sup> Giovanni Poli\*<sup>[a]</sup> and Julie Oble\*<sup>[a]</sup>

Dedicated to Professor Maurizio Prato on the occasion of his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday

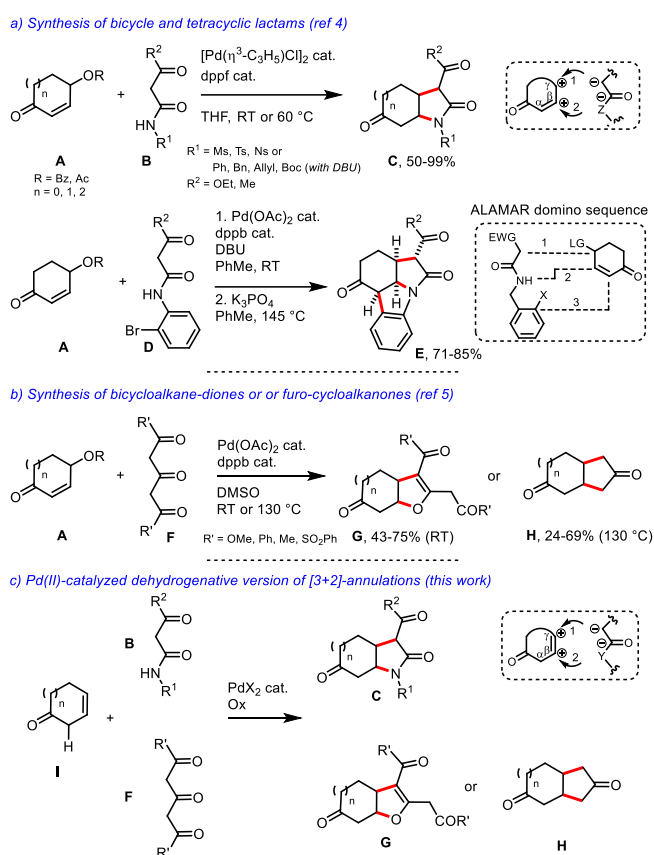
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**Abstract:** The significance of cross dehydrogenative couplings has increased considerably in recent years. This article revisits the [3+2]-C–C/N–C, C–C/O–C and C–C/C–C annulation strategy, recently reported by our group, according to a Pd(II) catalyzed dehydrogenative variant. Our original report relied on Pd(0) catalysis, using  $\alpha,\beta$ -unsaturated- $\gamma$ -oxy carbonyls as bis-electrophiles and resonance-stabilized acetamides or 3-oxoglutarates as C/N and O/C or C/C bis-nucleophiles, respectively. In this more modern and straightforward Pd(II)-catalyzed dehydrogenative approach,  $\beta,\gamma$ -unsaturated carbonyl derivatives replace  $\alpha,\beta$ -unsaturated- $\gamma$ -oxy carbonyls as bis-electrophiles. Our study includes experimental optimization and showcases the synthetic versatility in the formation of diverse heterocyclic structures, such as bicyclic lactams, furo-cycloalkanones and bicycloalkane-diones. Furthermore, a mechanism is proposed to elucidate the underlying processes involved in these reactions.

## Introduction

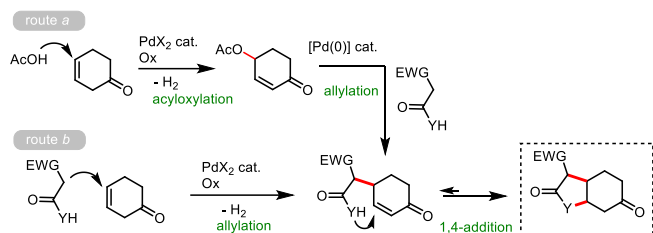
Heteropolycyclic structures are of major interest in chemistry due to their wide range of applications, including pharmaceutical, materials, catalysis and agrochemistry.<sup>[1]</sup> Synthesizing these structures in the most sustainable way, with atoms and steps economy, is therefore essential for their large-scale application.<sup>[2]</sup> In 2018, we developed a method for the synthesis of bicyclic lactams **C** via a Pd(0)-catalyzed [3+2]-C–C/N–C annulations,<sup>[3]</sup> using cyclic  $\alpha,\beta$ -unsaturated- $\gamma$ -benzyloxy-carbonyls **A** as bis-electrophiles and resonance-stabilized acetamides **B** as bis-nucleophiles (Scheme 1a, top).<sup>[4]</sup> This selective method involves an intermolecular allylation/intramolecular 1,4-addition sequence. Furthermore, in the presence of an *ortho*-haloaryl group at the nitrogen substituent (compounds **D**), an allylation/aza-Michael/arylation (ALAMAR) domino sequence can be elicited to generate more complex tricyclic structures **E** (Scheme 1a, bottom). We have also successfully extended this synthetic method to the selective formation of furo-cycloalkanone **G** or bicycloalkane-dione **H** structures using 3-oxoglutarates **F** as C/C or C/O bis-nucleophiles, depending of the experimental conditions (Scheme 1b).<sup>[5]</sup> Although these strategies are of interest in terms of efficiency, selectivity, and step economy, with the creation of two, or even three, C–C bonds in a single synthetic operation, we thought that switch from a Pd(0)-catalyzed redox neutral coupling to a dehydrogenative Pd(II)-catalyzed coupling might represent an interesting and modern variant.



**Scheme 1.** Pd-catalyzed [3+2]-annulation strategies: *previous works and this work.*

Building on our knowledge on transition-metal-catalyzed allylic C–H activation strategies,<sup>[6]</sup> we considered for this new project the use of  $\beta,\gamma$ -unsaturated carbonyl derivatives **I** instead of the more oxidized  $\alpha,\beta$ -unsaturated- $\gamma$ -oxy carbonyls **A** as bis-electrophiles, and the change from a redox neutral Pd(0) to an oxidative Pd(II) catalysis (Scheme 1c).<sup>[7]</sup> In particular, two possible reaction pathways were anticipated: the former involving a direct oxidative Pd(II)-catalyzed C-allylation (Scheme 2 top, route a), and the latter based on a direct Pd(II)-catalyzed acyloxylation followed by an *in-situ* Pd(0)-catalyzed C-allylation (Scheme 2, bottom, route b). We present here our results in the Pd(II)-catalyzed C–C/N–C, C–C/O–C and C–C/C–C dehydrogenative [3+2] annulation reactions using bis-electrophiles **I** and bis-nucleophiles **B** or **F**. In addition, *ad hoc*

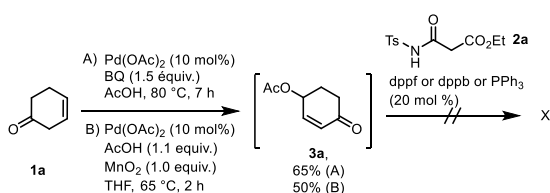
experiments enabled us to propose the reaction mechanism of the transformation under study.



**Scheme 2.** Mechanistic routes for the planned Pd(II)-catalyzed dehydrogenative [3+2]-annulations.

## Results and Discussion

Taking the coupling between bis-electrophile **1a**<sup>[8]</sup> and bis-nucleophile **2a**<sup>[9]</sup> as our model [3+2] annulation, preliminary tests considered the sequential route Pd(II)-catalyzed allylic acyloxylation / C-allylation / 1,4-addition sequence (Scheme 2, top). As the allylation step needs a Pd(0) catalysis, we envisioned to add, after successful detection of the allyl acyloxylation step, a phosphine ligand, capable of *in-situ* Pd(II)-to-Pd(0) reduction.<sup>[10]</sup> Our first tests were quite promising. Indeed, selective  $\gamma$ -acyloxylation of **1a** could be successfully performed either using benzoquinone as oxidant in acetic acid, or using MnO<sub>2</sub> in THF, in the presence of 1.1 equivalents of AcOH (Scheme 3). To our knowledge, the  $\gamma$ -acyloxylation of cyclic  $\beta$ - $\gamma$ -unsaturated cycloalkenones has not been previously reported.<sup>[6e,11]</sup> Unfortunately, any attempt to perform the other steps of the planned annulation along route *a* by *in situ* addition of a phosphine ligand (dppf, dppb or PPh<sub>3</sub>) and of the bis-nucleophile met with failure.<sup>[12]</sup> Incompatibility between the oxidant and the phosphine, and/or activity loss of the palladium salt after the first step, was suspected to be the likely reason of the failure.<sup>[13]</sup>

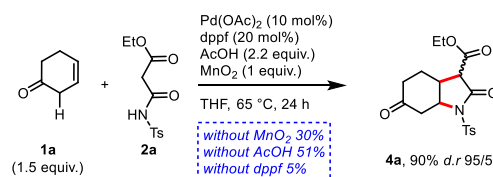


**Scheme 3.** First attempts at the sequential process: allylic acyloxylation of **1a**, followed by C-allylation/1,4-addition sequence.

After much experimentation along route *b*, we serendipitously found that by reacting **1a** with **2a** in the simultaneous presence of MnO<sub>2</sub>, AcOH, Pd(OAc)<sub>2</sub>, and dppf, in a sealed tube, gave the desired bicyclic lactam **4a** without traces of intermediate **3a** (Scheme 4). The best result gave **4a** in 90% isolated yield after optimization of several parameters (SI, table S1).<sup>[14]</sup> With such a striking result, the planned dehydrogenative version of [3+2]-C/N-C annulation was thus reached.

However, some aspects of the mechanism needed a rational explanation, as the essential role of acetic acid (no reaction takes place in its absence) and well as that of the oxidant and of the phosphine (Scheme 4). <sup>31</sup>P NMR analysis at 300 K of a Pd(OAc)<sub>2</sub>/dppf combination allowed to detect the formation of

[Pd(OAc)<sub>2</sub>dppf] complex, without generation of Pd(0).<sup>[15]</sup> We also confirmed by <sup>31</sup>P NMR that MnO<sub>2</sub> did not oxidize the free-phosphine, thereby not interfering with the formation of the [Pd(OAc)<sub>2</sub>dppf] complex (see SI). Then, the influence of acetic acid on the bis-nucleophile **2a** was studied. <sup>1</sup>H-NMR analysis of a sample of **2a** in CDCl<sub>3</sub> showed that addition of one equivalent of AcOD induced a 25% decrease of the integration of the signal corresponding to the two H-C acidic atoms, and a 79% decrease after 24 h (see SI). Such integration decrease unambiguously confirms that **2a** is in equilibrium with the corresponding nucleophilic enol form.

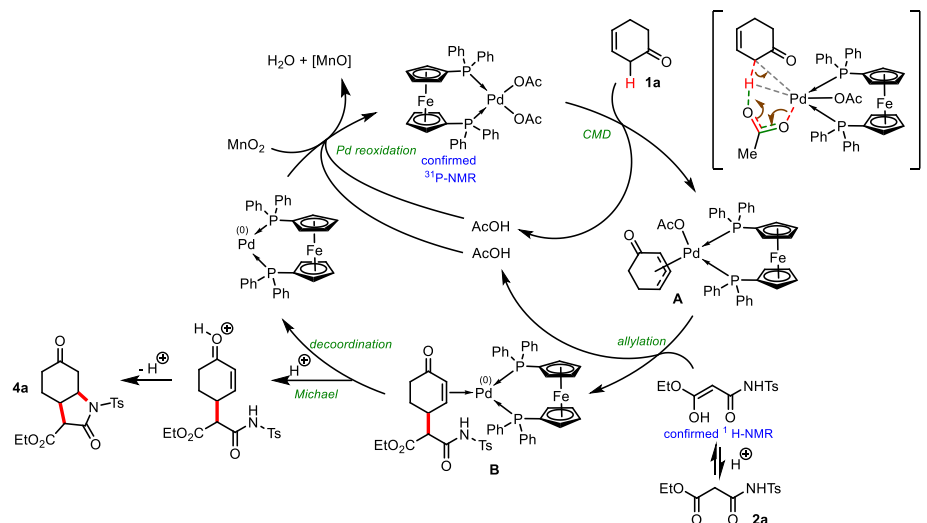


**Scheme 4.** Dehydrogenative C-allylation/1,4-addition: "one-pot" protocol.

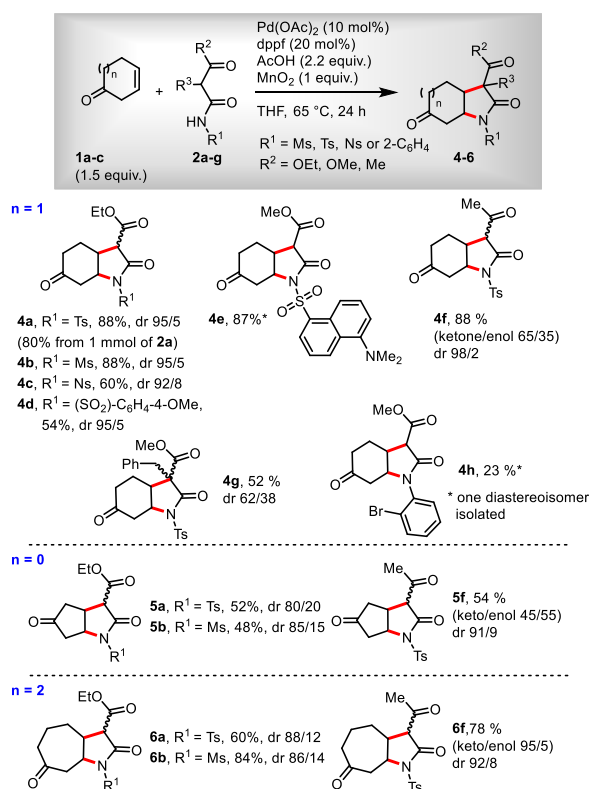
The above experimental observations allow to propose the following mechanism for the direct oxidative [3+2] annulation (Scheme 5 and Scheme 2 bottom). Interaction between the catalytic complex  $\kappa^2$  P,P [Pd(OAc)<sub>2</sub>dppf] and the bis-electrophile **1a** takes place via a likely concerted-metalation-deprotonation (CMD) pathway<sup>[16]</sup> mechanism, generating the  $\eta^3$ -allylpalladium **A** complex and one equivalent of acetic acid. Subsequently, **A** undergoes nucleophilic attack at the  $\gamma$ -position by the enol form of **2a**, creating a C-C bond with release of an additional equivalent of acetic acid. Alkene decoordination from the metal in **B**, followed by aza-Michael addition leads to the final product **4a** and the release of Pd(0) complex. The latter is then reoxidized by MnO<sub>2</sub> in the presence of acetic acid to regenerate the catalytically active Pd(II) species. The presence of acetic acid may have an additional notable influence in this reoxidation step.<sup>[17]</sup> The generation of **4a** in 30% NMR yield in the experiment performed without MnO<sub>2</sub> (Scheme 4), may be accounted for by assuming that **1a**, present in excess, might act as an H<sub>2</sub> acceptor.

We next investigated the scope of the dehydrogenative [3+2]-annulation. To overcome the volatility problem of **1a**, as well as its partial undesired oxidation to phenol, the use of 1.5 equivalents of the  $\beta,\gamma$ -unsaturated carbonyl component was found advantageous for achieving better yields. Formation of phenol is very likely due to  $\beta$ -elimination of the  $\delta$ -H from cyclic  $\eta^3$ -allylpalladium complex **A**, which competes with the allylation step, followed by keto-enol tautomerization.<sup>[18]</sup> Scheme 6 shows the annulation reactions between bis-electrophile **1a** and various *N*-sulfonyl protected acetamides (**2a-g**), which give the corresponding lactams (**4a-g**) in moderate to excellent yields and a high level of diastereoselectivity. Consistent with our previous study, the bis-nucleophile **2f** produced the desired lactam **4f** as a keto/enol mixture, while the presence of a benzyl group on the malonic position in bis-nucleophile **2g** resulted in a more moderate yield, likely due to increased steric hindrance impeding nucleophilic attack. In contrast, attempts with non-sulfonylated bis-nucleophiles (NBn, NBoc) were unsuccessful, except for *N*-aryl compound **1h**, which provided the desired product in a low yield. Subsequently, we evaluated the synthetic potential of the five-membered bis-electrophile **1b**<sup>[19]</sup> and the seven-membered one **1c**.<sup>[20]</sup> Despite encountering substantial volatility issues with

**1b**, we managed to obtain the bicyclic lactams **5a-b,f** in moderate yields. Conversely, the seven-membered bis-electrophile **1c** allowed better yields of the final annulated compounds **6a-b,f**.



**Scheme 5.** Proposed mechanism for the [3+2]-dehydrogenative annulation.

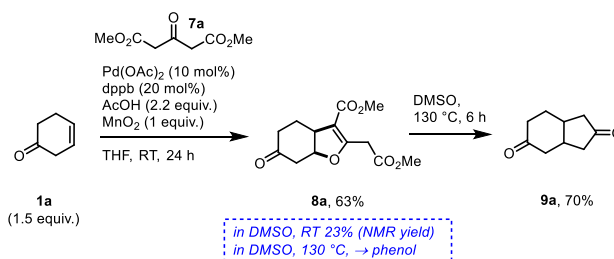


**Scheme 6.** Scope of Pd-catalyzed dehydrogenative [3+2]-C-C/N-C bond-forming annulation.

We subsequently turned our attention to the O/C (or C/C) bis-nucleophiles, namely 3-oxoglutarates **F**. In our previous study, we observed that starting from the same  $\gamma$ -benzyloxycyclohexenone **A** and using the same catalytic system [Pd(OAc)<sub>2</sub>]/dppb in DMSO, dihydrofuran **G** or bicyclo[4.3.0]nonane **H** could be synthesized at will, simply by changing the reaction temperature (Scheme 1c). Indeed, a reversible intramolecular O-1,4-addition to the

intermediate allylation product at room temperature affords the kinetic product, while an irreversible C-1,4-addition followed by demethoxycarbonylation takes place at 130 °C.

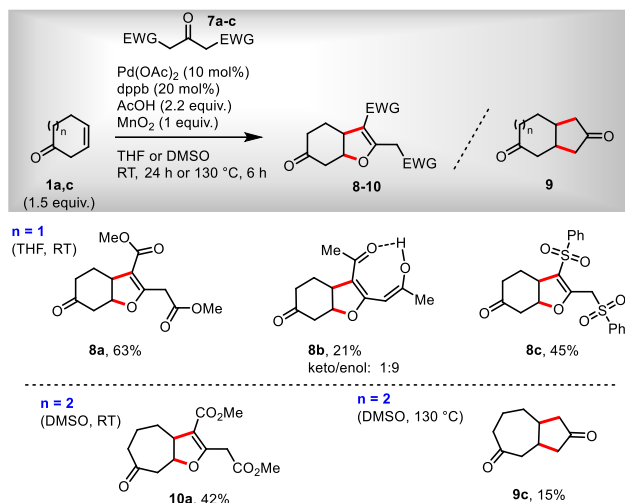
The reaction between the bis-nucleophile **7a** and the bis-electrophile **1a** was chosen as model reaction to develop a dehydrogenative version of the above [3+2]-C-C/O-C and/or C-C/C-C annulation reactions, optimizing the ligand, the solvent, and the temperature (SI, Table S2). The most favorable outcome, which gave the bicyclic dihydrofuran derivative **8a**, was achieved by using the dppb ligand in THF at room temperature (Scheme 7). Heating at 65 °C in THF lowered the yield of **8a**. In addition, use of DMSO led to poorer yield of **8a** at room temperature, or significant amount of phenol at elevated temperatures. Thus, in the case of this dehydrogenative variant, it was not possible to reverse the selectivity of the sequence (from C-C/O-C to C-C/C-C annulation), by playing on the temperature, as done in the previous study. Not unexpectedly, heating isolated **8a** at 130 °C in DMSO gave **9a** in 70% yield.



**Scheme 7.** [3+2] annulation between **1a** and dimethyl 3-oxoglutarate **7a**.

Putting to react 1,3,5-triketone **7b**<sup>[21]</sup> with bis-electrophile **1a** gave the expected annulated product **8b** in a modest yield as a keto/enol mixture in a 1:9 ratio (Scheme 8). The use of 1,3-bis-sulfonylpropan-2-one **7c**<sup>[22]</sup> as a bis-nucleophile proved to be more effective, leading to the formation of furo-cycloalkanone **8c** with a yield of 45%. While experiments with the five-membered

bis-electrophile **1b** resulted in degradation, or formation of the Diels-Alder cycloadduct of the cyclopentadienone by-product,<sup>[23]</sup> the seven-membered bis-electrophile **1c** provided the desired heterocycle **10a** in 42% yield. The best result was obtained with DMSO as solvent, at room temperature. In this case, the kinetic-to-thermodynamic switch by increasing the reaction temperature to 130 °C, allowed the expected bicyclo[3.3.0]octane-dione **9c** to be obtained, albeit in very low yield.



**Scheme 8.** Scope of Pd-catalyzed dehydrogenative [3+2] C-C/O-C and C-C/C-C bond-forming annulations.

## Conclusion

In summary, we have developed a new [3+2]-annulation strategy by the Pd(II)-catalyzed coupling between resonance-stabilized acetamides (or 3-oxoglutarates) and  $\beta,\gamma$ -unsaturated cyclic carbonyl derivatives. These dehydrogenative couplings enable the efficient construction of a range of heteropolycyclic structures such as bicyclic lactams, furo-cycloalkanones and bicycloalkano-diones, and they represent a more atom- and step-economical version than the corresponding Pd(0)-catalyzed redox-neutral couplings previously studied by our group. With the support of *ad hoc* experiments, it was possible to propose a plausible mechanism for this new annulation.

## Experimental Section

**General procedure for synthesis of 4,5-fused bicyclic pyrrolidin-2-ones 4-6:** In a sealed microwave tube Pd(OAc)<sub>2</sub> (0.10 equiv.), dppf (0.20 equiv.), MnO<sub>2</sub> (1.0 equiv.) and the bis-nucleophile **2** (1.0 equiv.) were introduced under an argon atmosphere. Anhydrous THF (0.15 M) and bis-electrophile **1** (1.5 equiv.) were then added. After 2 minutes stirring, AcOH (2.2 equiv.) was added and the reaction allowed to stir for 24 to 30 h at 65 °C until total consumption of the bis-nucleophile **2**. The mixture was filtered on a plug of silica and washed with EtOAc. The filtrate was concentrated under reduced pressure. Purification by column chromatography on silica gel afforded the corresponding 4,5-fused bicyclic pyrrolidin-2-one **4-6**.

**General procedure for synthesis of 4,5-fused bicyclic dihydrofurans **8** and **10**:** In a sealed microwave tube Pd(OAc)<sub>2</sub> (0.10 equiv.), dppb (0.20 equiv.), MnO<sub>2</sub> (1.0 equiv.) and the bis-nucleophile **7** (1.0 equiv.) were

introduced under an argon atmosphere and solubilized in freshly distilled THF or DMSO (0.15M). After 5 minutes, the bis-electrophile **1** (1.5 equiv.) and AcOH (2.2 equiv.) were added. After 24 h stirring at RT, the mixture was filtered on a plug of silica and washed with EtOAc. The filtrate was concentrated under reduced pressure. Purification by column chromatography on silica gel afforded the corresponding 4,5-fused bicyclic dihydrofurans **8**.

## Supporting Information

Additional references cited within the Supporting Information.<sup>[24-27]</sup>

## Acknowledgements

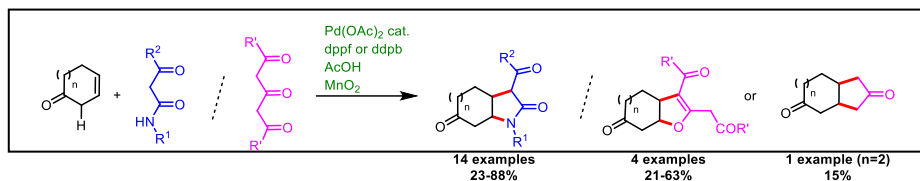
The authors acknowledge H2020-WIDESPREAD-05-2020-Twinning project Biomass4Synthons (B4S: grant agreement 951996) for financial support, as well as MS3U of Sorbonne Université for HRMS analysis – particularly Gilles Clodic, and CNRS. Y. L. thanks the China Scholarship Council for financial support.

**Keywords:** Annulation • Heterocycle • Dehydrogenative Coupling • Palladium • Mechanism

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- [13] The addition of a catalytic amount of palladium/ligand system in the second step provides the desired compound **4a** in good to moderate yields.
- [14] In the experiment carried out in absence of MnO<sub>2</sub> (30% yield, see scheme 4), the enone could partially behave as the formal H<sub>2</sub> acceptor. We recently met an analogous scenario in a Ru(0)-catalyzed alkenylation of 2-carboxaldimineheterocyclopentadienes: R. Sala, G. Kiala, L. F. Veiros, G. Broggin, G. Poli, J. Oble, *J. Org. Chem.* **2022**, *87*, 4640-4648.
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## Research article



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**Pd-catalyzed [3+2]-  
dehydrogenative annulation  
reactions**

Pd-catalyzed [3+2] annulations go dehydrogenative: a new protocol enables the Pd(II)-catalyzed [3+2] annulation between resonance-stabilized acetamides (or 3-oxoglutarates) and  $\beta,\gamma$ -unsaturated cyclic carbonyl derivatives. This dehydrogenative strategy represents a more atom- and step- economical version than the corresponding Pd(0)-catalyzed redox-neutral couplings previously studied by our group, enabling the straightforward construction of a number of heteropolycyclic structures.

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