**Electronic Supporting Information** 

## Understand, elucidate and rationalize the coordination mode of pyrimidylmethylamines: an intertwined study combining NMR and DFT methods

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#### Experimental details, NMR data and tables

Unless otherwise noted, all starting materials were obtained from commercial suppliers and used without purification. Petroleum ether was distilled under Argon. NMR spectra were recorded on a 400 MHz, 300 MHz and 200 MHz Bruker spectrometers. <sup>15</sup>N-<sup>1</sup>H HMBC spectra were recorded by acquiring 3072 x 256 points with 96 scans per transient. Chemical shifts were reported in ppm relative to the residual solvent peak (DMSO). For <sup>15</sup>N the CH<sub>3</sub>NO<sub>2</sub> has been used as a reference at 0 ppm. High Resolution Mass Spectroscopy data were recorded on an Autospec Ultima (Waters/Micromass) device with a resolution of 5000 RP at 5%. Ligand **1** and complexes **7**, **9** were prepared according to literature. <sup>[1-3]</sup>

## General procedure for the preparation of pyrma ligands 2-6

Boc-protected pyrma were prepared as follows: A sealed tube was charged with CBn-protected  $\beta$ enaminones (1 mmol, 1 equiv.), carboxamide (1.5 mmol, 1.5 equiv.), activated MS 4Å (350 mg) and anhydrous toluene (10 mL). *t*-BuOK (2 mmol, 2 equiv.) was added in one portion and the tube was sealed and stirred at 110°C for 1.5 h. After cooling back to room temperature, the crude mixture was filtered over a short pad of silica gel (2 cm), washed with AcOEt and the filtrate was evaporated. The crude product was used as such for the next deprotection and reductive amination steps.

*Boc deprotection step:* The Boc-protected pyrma (1 mmol), was dissolved in  $CH_2Cl_2$  (5 mL) and TFA (5 mL) was added at 0°C. The reaction mixture was then stirred at room temperature for 1 h. It was then quenched by addition of saturated aqueous NaHCO<sub>3</sub> at 0°C, extracted with  $CH_2Cl_2$  (3 X 10 mL), the combined organic layers were washed with brine (10 mL), dried (MgSO<sub>4</sub>) and evaporated.

*Reductive amination:* The amine (1 equiv.) and benzaldehyde (1.5 equiv.) were dissolved in THF (7 mL) and MgSO<sub>4</sub> (1.5 g) was added. The reaction mixture was then stirred at room temperature for 12h. It was then filtered and the solvent was evaporated. The resulting crude imine was dissolved in MeOH (5 mL) and NaBH<sub>4</sub> (3 equiv.) was added and the mixture was stirred for further 12 h at room temperature. Saturated aqueous NaHCO<sub>3</sub> (10 mL) was added. The product was extracted with  $CH_2Cl_2$  (3 X 10 mL), the combined organic layers were washed with brine (10 mL), dried (MgSO<sub>4</sub>) and evaporated. It was then purified by flash column chromatography (see each case for detail).

Ligand 2:



Ligand **2** was obtained following the aforementioned general procedure on 0.5 mmol scale. After purification on silica gel (PE/AcOEt : 90/10), **2** was obtained in 13 % yield (3 steps). <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, DMSO):  $\delta$  7.28 (m, H-15 and H-16), 7.20 (m, H-17), 7.09 (s, H-5), 3.58 (d, J = 9Hz, H-9a), 3.39 (d, J = 9Hz, H-9b), 3.32 (m, H-7), 2.41 (s, H-21 and H-22), 1.92 (m, H-18), 0.90 (d, J = 6Hz, H-19), 0.75 (d, J = 6Hz, H-20). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, DMSO):  $\delta$  172.9 (C-2), 165.9 (C-6, C-4), 140.9 (C-14), 128.0 (C-16), 127.8 (C-15), 117.7 (C-6), 68.6 (C-7), 51.3 (C-9), 33.1 (C-18), 23.5 (C-21 and C-22), 20.0 (C-20), 18.6 (C-19). HRMS-ESI: m/z [M + H]<sup>+</sup> calcd for C<sub>17</sub>H<sub>24</sub>N<sub>3</sub>: 270.1970; found: 270.1963.



Ligand **3** was obtained following the aforementioned general procedure on 0.3 mmol scale. After purification on silica gel (AcOEt : 100%), **3** was obtained in 19 % yield (3 steps). <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, DMSO):  $\delta$  8.45 (s, H-5), 8.38 (m, H-26 and H-30), 7.58 (m, H-27, H-28, H-31 and H-32), 4.34 (m, H-7), 3.23 (m, H-9a), 2.9 (m, H-9b), 2.25 (m, H-24a), 1.94 (m, H-24b). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, DMSO):  $\delta$  172.0 (C-2), 163.9 (C-6, C-4), 136.5 (C-25, C-29), 131.0 (C-28, C-32), 128.9 (C-27, C-31), 127.3 (C-26, C-30), 110.5 (C-5), 63.9 (C-7), 46.9 (C-9), 32.7 (C-24), 25.8 (C-23). HRMS-ESI: m/z [M + H]<sup>+</sup> calcd for C<sub>20</sub>H<sub>20</sub>N<sub>3</sub>: 302.1657; found: 302.1659.

Ligand 4



Ligand **4** was obtained following the aforementioned general procedure on 0.2 mmol scale. After purification on silica gel (AcOEt : 100%), **4** was obtained in 37 % yield (3 steps). <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, DMSO):  $\delta$  8.26 (m, H-30), 7.89 (s, H-5), 7.56 (m, H-31 and H-32), 4.48 (m, H-7), 3.28 (m, H-9a), 3.05 (m, H-9b), 2.79 (m, H-35), 2.31 (m, H-24a), 1.95 (m, H-24b), 1.73 (m, H-36), 1.36 (m, H-37), 0.93 (H-38). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, DMSO):  $\delta$  171.8 (C-4), 168.7 (C-2), 162.7 (C-6), 136.1 (C-29), 131.1 (C-32), 128.9 (C-31), 127.2 (C-30), 113.9 (C-5), 63.2 (C-7), 46.3 (C-9), 36.8 (C-35), 31.8 (C-24), 30.3 (C-36), 24.7 (C-23), 21.8 (C-37), 13.7 (C-38). HRMS-ESI: m/z [M + H]<sup>+</sup> calcd for C<sub>18</sub>H<sub>24</sub>N<sub>3</sub>: 282.1970; found: 282.1967.

Ligand 5



Ligand **5** was obtained following the aforementioned general procedure on 1 mmol scale. After purification on silica gel (PE/AcOEt : 90/10), **5** was obtained in 25 % yield (3 steps). <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, DMSO):  $\delta$  8.23 (m, H-

30), 7.79 (s, H-5), 7.5 (m, H-31 and H-32), 7.27 (m, H-15, H-16), 7.18 (m, H-17), 3.66 (m, H-9a), 3.49 (m, H-7), 3.48 (m, H-9b), 2.77 (m, H-35), 2.04 (m, H-18), 1.71 (m, H-36), 1.32 (m, H-37), 0.94 (d, H-19), 0.89 (H-38), 0.79 (d, H-20). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, DMSO):  $\delta$  171.6 (C-2), 171.5 (C-4), 162.8 (C-6), 141.0 (C-14), 137.1 (C-29), 131.3 (C-32), 129.3 (C-31), 128.5 (C-16), 128.4 (C-15), 127.5 (C-30), 127.0 (C-17), 113.9 (C-5), 69.2 (C-7), 52.0 (C-9), 37.2 (C-35), 33.6 (C-18), 31.0 (C-36), 22.2 (C-37), 20.2 (C-20), 19.2 (C-19), 14.2 (C-38). HRMS-ESI: m/z [M + H]<sup>+</sup> calcd for C<sub>25</sub>H<sub>32</sub>N<sub>3</sub>: 373.2881; found: 374.2587.

Ligand 6



Ligand **6** was obtained following the general procedure on 1 mmol scale. After purification on silica gel (PE/AcOEt : 90/10), **6** was obtained in 21 % yield (3 steps). <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, DMSO):  $\delta$  8.21 (m, H-30), 7.82 (s, H-5), 7.54 (m, H-31, H-32), 7.25 (m, H-15, H-16), 7.19 (m, H-17), 3.66 (d, H-9a), 3.49 (m, H-7, H-9b), 2.52 (s, H-35), 2.05 (m, H-18), 0.91 (d, H-19), 0.79 (d, H-20). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, DMSO):  $\delta$  171.4 (C-2), 167.5 (C-4), 162.1 (C-6), 140.9 (C-14), 136.5 (C-29), 130.8 (C-32), 128.9 (C-31), 128.0 (C-16), 127.8 (C-15), 127.0 (C-30), 126.5 (C-17), 113.9 (C-5), 68.7 (C-7), 51.4 (C-9), 33.1 (C-18), 24.0 (C-35), 19.4 (C-20), 18.6 (C-19). HRMS-ESI: m/z [M + H]<sup>+</sup> calcd for C<sub>22</sub>H<sub>26</sub>N<sub>3</sub>: 332.2127; found: 332.2129.

## General procedure for the preparation of complexes 8-17

To a stirred solution of ligand **1-6** (0.25 mmol) in 5 mL of freshly distilled MeOH was added  $Na_2PdCl_4$  (74 mg, 0.25 mmol). The mixture was stirred at room temperature for 16 h, filtered over silica gel pad and the solvent was then removed by evaporation under vacuum.

Complex 8 (86%)



<sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, DMSO):  $\delta$  7.03 (s, H-5), 7.69 (m, H-15), 7.28 (m, H-16), 7.18 (m, H-17), 5.82 (brs, H-8), 3.97 (m, H-7), 3.97 (m, H-9a), 3.59 (m, H-9b), 2.99 (m, H-18), 2.45 (s, H-29), 2.36 (s, H-35), 1.45 (d, H-19), 1.33 (d, H-20). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, DMSO):  $\delta$  171.8 (C-2), 169.1 (C-6), 168.1 (C-4), 120.9 (C-5), 76.5 (C-7), 57.9 (C-9), 135.1 (C-14), 131.2 (C-15), 128.8 (C-17), 128.6 (C-16), 33.6 (C-18), 25.8 (C-29), 23.6 (C\_35), 19.8 (C-19), 20.5 (C-20). HRMS-ESI: m/z [M –Cl+MeCN]<sup>+</sup> calcd for C<sub>19</sub>H<sub>26</sub>ClN<sub>4</sub>Pd: 453.0879; found: 453.0911.

Complex **10** (38%)



<sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, DMSO): δ 8.38 (s, H-5), 8.30 (m, H-26), 7.92 (m, H-30), 7.62 (m, H-27, H-28), 7.53 (H-33), 7.11 (m, H-31, H-32), 5.50 (brs, H-8), 4.87 (m, H-7), 3.23 (m, H-9a), 3.08 (m, H-9b), 2.46 (m, H-24a), 2.08 (m, H-24b). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, DMSO): δ 168.6 (C-2), 165.0 (C-4), 173.4 (C-6), 157.2 (C-34), 146.9 (C-29), 136.0 (C-25, C-33), 132.5 (C-28), 131.4 (C-32), 129.6 (C-27), 128.2 (C-26), 126.5 (C-30), 124.9 (C-31), 109.1 (C-5), 67.9 (C-7), 49.7 (C-9), 32.4 (C-24), 26.4 (C-23). HRMS-ESI: m/z [M – Cl+MeCN]<sup>+</sup> calcd for  $C_{22}H_{21}N_4Pd$ : 447.0810; found: 447.0830.

Complex 13 (31%)



<sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, DMSO): δ 7.81(s, H-5), 7.74 (m, H-30), 7.54 (m, H-33), 7.12 (m, H-31, H-32), 5.55 (brs, H-8), 4.77 (m, H-7), 3.19 (m, H-9a), 3.03 (m, H-9b), 2.78 (m, H-35), 2.38 (m, H-24a), 1.95 (m, H-24b), 1.73 (m, H-36), 1.36 (m, H-37), 0.92 (H-38). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, DMSO): δ 173.3 (C-4), 172.7 (C-2), 167.6 (C-6), 156.8 (C-8), 146.2 (C-29), 135.6 (C-33), 130.7 (C-32), 125.5 (C-30), 124.3 (C-31), 111.8 (C-5), 67.2 (C-7), 49.1 (C-9), 37.3 (C-35), 31.9 (C-24), 30.2 (C-36), 25.9 (C-23), 21.8 (C-37), 13.7 (C-38). HRMS-ESI: m/z [M –Cl–HCl +MeCN]<sup>+</sup> calcd for C<sub>20</sub>H<sub>25</sub>N<sub>4</sub>Pd: 427.1122; found: 427.1132.



<sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, DMSO):  $\delta$  8.18 (m, H-30), 7.83 (s, H-5), 7.66 (m, H-15), 7.60 (m, H-31 and H-32), 7.21 (m, H-17, H-16), 5.76 (brs, H-8), 4.06 (m, H-7), 3.97 (m, H-9a), 3.69 (m, H-9b), 3.08 (m, H-18, H-35), 1.62 (m, H-36), 1.49 (d, H-19), 1.38 (m, H-37), 1.34 (d, H-20), 0.97 (H-38). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, DMSO):  $\delta$  172.0 (C-2), 174.7 (C-4), 162.8 (C-6), 135.0 (C-14), 134.6 (C-29), 129.5 (C-32), 129.7 (C-31), 128.7 (C-16), 131.2 (C-15), 128.2 (C-30), 128.5 (C-17), 116.0 (C-5), 76.7 (C-7), 57.7 (C-9), 37.6 (C-35), 33.3 (C-18), 31.8 (C-36), 22.4 (C-37), 20.6 (C-20), 19.8 (C-19), 14.3 (C-38). HRMS-ESI: m/z [M + Na]<sup>+</sup> calcd for C<sub>25</sub>H<sub>31</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>N<sub>3</sub>PdNa: 574.0822; found: 574.0853.

Complex 17 (71%)



<sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, DMSO): δ 8.14 (m, H-30), 7.78 (s, H-5), 7.72 (m, H-15), 7.58 (m, H-31, H-32), 7.20 (m, H-16, H-17), 5.95 (brs, H-8), 4.10 (m, H-7), 4.03 (m, H-9b), 3.65 (d, H-9a), 3.05 (m, H-18), 2.51 (s, H-35), 1.55 (d, H-19), 1.37 (d, H-20). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, DMSO): δ 171.6 (C-2), 170.2 (C-4), 162.0 (C-2), 134.7 (C-14), 134.1 (C-29), 132.3 (C-31), 130.8 (C-15), 129.2 (C-32), 128.3 (C-16), 128.1 (C-17), 127.5 (C-30), 116.3 (C-5), 76.1 (C-7), 57.4 (C-9), 32.7 (C-18), 25.7 (C-35), 20.1 (C-20), 19.2 (C-19). HRMS-ESI: m/z [M –Cl+MeCN]<sup>+</sup> calcd for C<sub>24</sub>H<sub>28</sub>ClN<sub>3</sub>Pd: 513.1044; found: 513.1074.

Nitrogen 15		N1	N3	N8
1	δ1 (ppm)	-87,5	-87,5	-331,2
7	δ2 (ppm)	-163,2	-85,3	-345
	$\Delta = \delta 2 - \delta 1$	-75,7	2,2	-13,8
2	δ1 (ppm)	-96,1	-96,1	-332,6
8	δ2 (ppm)	-164,8	-92,6	-349,9
	$\Delta = \delta 2 - \delta 1$	-68,7	3,5	-17,3
3	δ1 (ppm)	-103,8	-103,8	-330,8
10	δ2 (ppm)	-158,6	-104,7	-343,2
	$\Delta = \delta 2 - \delta 1$	-54,8	-0,9	-12,4
4	δ1 (ppm)	-107,9	-95,7	-327,7
13	δ2 (ppm)	-159,3	-95,4	-342,8
	$\Delta = \delta 2 - \delta 1$	-51,4	0,3	-15,1
5	δ1 (ppm)	-103,4	-91,6	-334,4
15	δ2 (ppm)	-101,8	-163,8	-349,9
	$\Delta = \delta 2 - \delta 1$	1,6	-72,2	-15,5
6	δ1 (ppm)	-104,3	-90,8	-334,9
17	δ2 (ppm)	-102,9	-163,1	-349,9
	Δ=δ2-δ1	1,4	-72,3	-15

**Table 1**. Characteristic <sup>15</sup>N chemical shifts for ligands **1-6** and complexes **7-17**. An error of  $\pm$  2ppm has been measured for  $\Delta\delta N$ .

**Table 2:** Geometrical data of all pyrma ligands (A) and their  $PdCl_2$  complexes (B) obtained by DFT calculations considering the solvent effect by the means of the SCRF calculation scheme, having DMSO as implicit solvent (see computational methods and 3D atomic coordinates schemed on Figure 6 SI) Bond distances as well as pyrimidine – benzylic aromatic ring distances ( $d_{inter-rings}$ ) are expressed in Angstroms (Å) whilst torsional angles are depicted in degrees (deg). Pyrimidine – benzylic interplanar ring angles (IA) are also expressed in degrees. For Pd(C,N,N) complexes **10**, **13** and **17**<sup>6</sup> it is also expressed the bond distance between carbon and palladium (Cortho-Pd) in Angströms.

	N1-N8	N3-N8		N3CCN8		
	(Å)	(Å)	N1CCN8(deg.)	(deg.)	d <sub>inter-rings</sub> (Å)	IA (deg.)
1	2.97	3.53	54.48	-127.92	4.5875	-8.41
2	3.01	3.42	65.71	-115.6	4.605	-12.21
3	2.96	3.49	57.92	-122.74	Х	Х
4	2.96	3.49	57.82	-122.65	Х	Х
5	2.93	3.42	61.65	-117.98	5.6675	48.66
6	2.9	3.57	50.12	-131.27	4.5275	15.79

Α

B

	N1-N8	N3-N8		N3CCN8		
	(Å)	(Å)	N1CCN8(deg.)	(deg.)	d <sub>inter-rings</sub> (Å)	IA (deg.)
7	2.71	3.67	23.63	-157.63	4.6825	29.92
8	2.69	3.6	29.06	-149.9	4.39	22.13
10	2.72	3.73	8.13	-172.91	Х	Х
10'	2.67	3.67	-10.81	169.26	Х	Х
13	2.72	3.74	8.18	-172.77	Х	Х
12	3.64	2.66	160.26	-19.48	Х	Х
15	3.6	2.69	-150.29	28.82	4.36	22.26
14	2.71	3.61	27.87	-151.89	4.565	23.31
17	3.59	2.69	-149.17	29.72	4.3875	19.34
17'	2.71	3.66	32.18	-151.01	4.665	33.65

## **B** (continue)

	N1-Pd	N3-Pd		Cortho-Pd		
	(Å)	(Å)	<b>N8-Pd</b> (Å)	(Å)	Cl1Pd (Å)	Cl2Pd (Å)
7	2.07	х	2.09	х	2.42	2.41
8	2.12	Х	2.08	Х	2.44	2.42
10	1.99	Х	2.26	2.01	2.43	Х
10'	2.11	Х	2.06	Х	2.42	2.41
13	1.99	Х	2.26	2.01	2.43	Х
12	Х	2.13	2.06	Х	2.44	2.42
15	Х	2.12	2.08	X	2.44	2.42
14	2.11		2.09	Х	2.43	2.42
17	Х	2.12	2.08	X	2.44	2.42
17'	1.99	X	2.29	2.01	2.43	Х



















































Ligand 5











Complex 15

































*Figure 1 SI* <sup>1</sup>H-<sup>15</sup>N HMBC spectra overlay A) ligand 1 and the symmetric Pd-pyrma 7





*Figure 2 SI:* Overlapped <sup>1</sup>H-<sup>15</sup>N HMBC for the ligand 4 and the complex **13.** Asterix (\*) represents a peak coming from an impurity.



A) 5Q-1Q Maximum Quantum experiment recorded on both ligand 5 and complex 15. Phenyl groups have the same spectral fingerprint confirming coordination to the Pd(II) (in light blue) B) Overlapped <sup>1</sup>H-<sup>15</sup>N HMBC for the ligand 5 (in blue) and the complex 15 (in red). Asterix (\*) represents a peak coming from an impurity.



Overlapped  ${}^{1}H{}^{15}N$  HMBC for the ligand **6** (in blue) and the complex **17** (in red). Asterix (\*) represents a peak coming from an impurity

#### Computational methods

All computations of geometry optimizations, electronic structure determinations and NMR chemical shift values were carried out using the Gaussian 09 program [5]. All geometries were optimized by minimizing energies with respect to all the geometrical parameters, without imposing any molecular constraints. Restricted Hartree – Fock method was used as geometry pre-optimization scheme. Density Functional Theory (DFT) Self Consistent Field (SCF) procedure for energy minimizations and description of orbitals were performed with the hybrid method B3LYP, whereas electronic correlation and exchange were respectively described by the use of the Becke [6] and Lee-Yang Parr [7] functionals. Relativistic effective core potentials (ECP) were used to describe electrons of heavy atoms (Pd and Cl) with the valence double  $\zeta$  quality basis sets LANL2DZ [8]. The standard 6-311G(d,p) basis sets were used for the rest of the atoms on PYRMA ligands and their Pd complexes (i.e. H, C and N). Geometrical results are similar when chlorine atoms are described even with LANL2DZ and 6-311G(d,p) basis sets but the former case was used for the rest of calculations. Stable structures were confirmed with the calculation of harmonic vibrational frequencies of all structures. None of the predicted vibrational spectra has any imaginary frequency (data not shown), implying that the optimized geometry of each of the molecules under study lay at a local point on the potential energy surface. The electronic properties such as Molecular Electrostatic Potential (MEP), frontier molecular HOMO - LUMO orbital energies and Mulliken atomic charges have been obtained with the same level of theory as previously described. Gauge – Invariant Atomic Orbital (GIAO) [10] scheme was used to compute <sup>1</sup>H, <sup>13</sup>C and <sup>15</sup>N chemical shift values, theoretically referenced with respect to TMS / 6-311G(d,p) (<sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C, *vide infra*) and NH<sub>3</sub> with later subtraction of all values with respect the calculated theoretical chemical shift of CH<sub>3</sub>NO<sub>2</sub> (<sup>15</sup>N). As for geometry optimizations and electronic properties, B3LYP functional with 6-311G(d,p) for H,C and N and LANL2DZ / ECP basis sets for heavier atoms were used as levels of theory for NMR parameters. Higher accuracy of the full set of computed carbon resonances for all PYRMA complexes were obtained with the basis set 6-311G(d,p), in comparison with the IGLO-III basis functions, popularly used to calculate NMR tensors (Figure 13 SI). Basis Set Superposition Error (BSSE) Counterpoise correction [9] in the gas phase prior to NMR GIAO computations was carried out for all palladium pyrma complexes. In the limits of both types of basis functions LANL2DZ /ECP (Pd, Cl atoms) and 6-311G(d,p) (H, C, N atoms), electronic environments are poorly described without the BSSE correction, which would eventually produce important <sup>13</sup>C chemical shifts overestimations especially for the C-Pd quaternary carbons in Pd (C, N, N) complexes 10 and 13, when correction is ignored. Systematic overestimation of the *overall* solvent dependent isotropic <sup>13</sup>C calculated resonances in the range of 0 to -8 ppm were obtained for all energetically favored PYRMA complexes (7, 8, 10, 13, 15 and 17) when B3LYP / 6-311G(d,p) with the TMS (tetramethylsilane) reference standard was used. In deep contrast, loss of systematic estimation with ranges of  $\Delta \delta^{I3}C$  between -30 and +10 ppm were observed for all energetically disfavored PYRMA complexes (10', 12, 14 and 17') with the same reference standard. As a result, we suggest that both  $\Delta \delta^{I3}C$  within the 0 to -8 ppm ranges as well as systematic overestimations of the full set of carbon resonances per complex could be used as fingerprints to qualitatively assign the preferred coordination modes for each type of PYRMA complex.  $\Delta \delta^{I3}C$  values of energetically favored complexes can be significantly lowered to  $\pm 3$  ppm (compensated by the loss of systematic overestimations) when calculated shifts are referenced with different standards [12], such as B3LYP / 6-311G(d,p) optimized benzene as reference standard (Figure 14 SI). Self-Consistent Reaction Field (SCRF) Tomasi's Polarized Continuum Model (PCM) for solvation [11] was used in all calculations (except BSSE) to describe implicitly the solvent (DMSO), which was the selected solvent to obtain experimental NMR data. Further details are highlighted on SI figure captions.







Electronic optimized structures of all pyrma ligands (1 to 6) and their PdCl2 complexes (7, 8, 10, 10', 12, 13, 14, 15, 17 and 17'; referring the labelling to Schemes 2 and 3) obtained by DFT calculations (see computational methods, ESI), ,considering the solvent effect by the means of the SCRF calculation scheme, having DMSO as implicit solvent. Electronic energy differences between the lowest local minimum (consistent with experimental data,) and other observed local minimum for each complexation possibility are highlighted in red. Dotted orange lines represent the shortest distance between pyrmidine

- benzylic aromatic rings ( $d_{inter-rings}$ , see Table 2 SI), the last one coming from the NHBn moiety in the pyrma methylamine-capped ligands and their Pd(II) complexes. Despite the dispersion-correction protocol [13] was not used to confirm the presence of  $\pi$  stacking weak dipole-dipole interaction, pyrma complexes bearing a valine-capped substitution present geometries deeply comparable to X-Ray diffraction data of their pma analogues with known  $\pi$  stack interaction [14] Thus, we inquire that  $d_{inter-rings}$  observed in PYRMA at the B3LYP level of theory is a consequence of the accuracy of calculation to predict geometries at the level of metallic center. The last suggest that  $d_{inter-rings}$  distances are comparable to the expected  $\pi$  stack interactions in NHBn PYRMA complexation, being a non-essential weak interaction to explain the sterical arrangement around the metallic core and thus not responsible of the electronic structural stability. For balanced energy equations between energetically favored Pd(C,N,N) species (10 and 13) with respect their less favorable Pd(N,N) counterparts as well as for complexes 17 and 17<sup>+</sup> (with inverse energetic tendency respect 10 or 13), it is considered the released HCl moiety in Pd(C,N,N) complex formation for  $\Delta E$  computations. The orientation of HCl release respect the Pd(II) complex plane is also depicted in the Figure.



Figure 7 SI:

Molecular electrostatic potential (MEP) mapped on the SCF total electronic density surface calculated by DFT / B3LYP method for pyrma ligands 1-6. For visualisation of the most electronegative sites within each molecule, it is presented a pair of MEP surfaces for each ligand by just turning each projection 180° around the plane and thus showing the faces of N1 or N3 as depicted in the Figure. Developed ball-sticks formulae of ligands are projected on top of each MEP surface, showing the numbering of each N atom as well as the 3D arrangement of atoms that are depicted on the MEP surface. Similar electronegativities are observed for N1 and N3 in

ligands 1 and 2. In contrast, pyrrolidine-capped pyrma ligands (3 and 4) show a striking higher negative electronic density over N1 whilst N3 atoms are considerably more electronegative in non-symmetrical methylamine-capped pyrma ligands (5 and 6). Numeric representation of electron availability of each pair of N1 / N3 atoms per PYRMA ligand is given by computing the difference of Mulliken's charges (MC) between N8 and each of the aromatic N PYRMA nitrogens ( $\Delta MC[N_8-N_i]$ , whereas i = 1 or 3). Highest negative values of  $\Delta MC$  show the most electronegative aromatic nitrogen which chelates the palladium, consistent to the graphical analysis by MEP.





Ground state isodensity surfaces for the frontier molecular HOMO orbitals calculated with DFT/B3LYP level of theory for pyrma ligands **1-6**. For observing the Pi lobes of nitrogens N1 and N3 for each ligand, an expansion is depicted along the dotted lines.



Valine-capped complexes 15, 14, 17 and 17'. MEP maps (top) and Van der Waals radii formulae (bottom) depicting the relative SCRF electronic-energy differences ( $\Delta E$ ) of each pair of complexes, as stated above in Figure 6 SI.

Figure 10 SI:



Proline-capped complexes 10, 10', 13 and 12: HOMO(red/ green)/ LUMO (blue / purple) orbitals (top), MEP maps with chlorine electronic charges obtained by Mulliken population analysis (middle) and Van der Waals radii formulae (bottom), depicting the relative SCRF electronic-energy differences ( $\Delta E$ ) of each pair of complexes. As stated above for Figure 6 SI,  $\Delta E$  was obtained by balanced equations between [Pd(C,N,N) + HCl] and [Pd(N,N)] energy values. For visualization purposes, the HCl expelled prior to Pd(C,N,N) complexation is not depicted on the Figure.

## Figure 11 SI:









**Figure 12 SI:**  $\Delta \delta^{l3}C$  fingerprints between Pd(N,N) and Pd(C,N,N) obtained by the difference of experimental  $^{l3}C$  chemical shifts of symmetric (A, B) and non-symmetric (C, D) pyrma complexes, with respect to the DFT – GIAO predicted shifts.

Electronically favourable (8, 10, 13, 17) and unfavourable (10', 12, 17') pyrma complexes present the following colour code for histograms

• Black- gray to describe respectively aromatic and aliphatic carbons of 8, 10, 13, 17.

• Red - yellow to describe respectively aromatic and aliphatic carbons of 10', 12, 17'.

DFT GIAO shifts were obtained by using TMS (tetramethylsilane) as a reference standard Dotted black line limits the interval of statistical confidence, which scales up to  $\Delta\delta$  values of - 8 ppm. Magenta asterisk highlight the relevant aliphatic and aromatic carbons of unfavourable electronic states that are non-systematically underestimated. It is worth noting to remark that isopropyl methyls <sup>13</sup>C shift's estimations (A and C) are close to  $\Delta\delta=0$  but slightly underestimated and are not considered in our analysis. The B3LYP – GIAO approach, using a 6-311G basis set, has been used to compute  $\Delta\delta^{13}$ Cvalues in the present figure. The use of different basis sets or reference standard are discussed below.



Systematic overestimation of the overall solvent dependent isotropic <sup>13</sup>C calculated resonances in the range of 0 to -8 ppm were obtained for all energetically favored PYRMA complexes (7 (data not shown), 8, 10, 13, 15 (data not shown) and 17) when B3LYP / 6-311G(d,p) using TMS as reference standard. In deep contrast, loss of systematic estimation with ranges of  $\Delta \delta^{13}C$ between -30 and +10 ppm were observed for all energetically disfavored PYRMA complexes (10', 12, 14 (data not shown) and 17') with the same reference standard and mostly for aromatic carbons close to the coordination sphere. (red histograms with magenta stars) Thus, not only inaccurate overestimations of <sup>13</sup>C shifts above - 8 ppm, but mostly non-systematic underestimations of key  $\delta^{13}C$  shifts could serve as fingerprints to discriminate incorrect entries of local minima palladium complexes of higher electronic energy.

# Analysis of non-symmetric PYRMA complexes $\Delta \delta^{13}C$ histograms (also applied to the symmetric cases)

First, systematic overestimations of predicted <sup>13</sup>C shifts (between 0 to -8 ppm) of complex **13** show that the Pd(C,N,N) coordination mode is the electronic structure that best fits the experimental evidence, in agreement with the energetics coming from the full optimization of electronic geometries of non-symmetric proline headed pyrma complex (Figure 6 SI). Important non – systematic underestimations even above + 20 ppm are observed for its Pd(N3,N8) analog **12** of higher electronic energy.

The pair of complexes 17 and 17' were also subjected to the analysis of  $\Delta \delta^{I3}C$  dispersions. As seen by the energetics in Figure 6 SI, the most stable electronic structure was assigned to the complex 17 (i.e. Pd(N3,N8) coordination mode), whereas a second local minimum of 103 KJ/mol of higher energy with respect complex 17, was founded to be the Pd(C,N,N) mode. Again, systematic overestimations of experimental and predicted  $\Delta \delta^{I3}C$  shifts between 0 to -8 ppm were only observed for the stable coordination mode Pd(N3,N8) value-capped pyrma complex. In contrast, complex 17' can be rejected as observable by the fact of presenting nonsystematic underestimations as well as overestimations of several <sup>13</sup>C predicted shifts below the limit of - 8 ppm. Some of these highly overestimated  $\Delta \delta^{I3}C$  values of complex 17' correspond to spin systems that are not experimentally observed like the hypothetic quaternary C-ortho linked to Pd at  $\delta^{I3}C_{(calculated)} = 160$  ppm which is dispersed by -32 ppm with respect the experimental CH-ortho at  $\delta^{I3}C_{(experimental)} = 128$  ppm (extreme right histogram bar at Figure 12 SI C). The last proves the fact that this simple qualitative analysis is independent of the capped pyrma complex to distinguish complexation modes of pyrma by only N-Pd coordination or by a third C-Pd bound.

### Figure 13 SI:

Effect of the basis set used in the NMR B3LYP/GIAO calculations of <sup>13</sup>C chemical shifts of PYRMA complexes 10 and 10' by comparing  $\Delta(\delta^{13}C_{experimental} - \delta^{13}C_{calculated})$ ; displayed as histograms and overall  $\Delta\delta^{13}C$  ranges per calculated complex. Color codes for sp3 and sp2 carbons are the same as in Figure 12 SI.

Proton, carbon and nitrogen -s, -p and -d atomic orbitals were respectively described with

- A) 6-311g(d,p)
- B) IGLO-III

For fair comparisons between both basis sets and due to the scarcity of default reference standards implemented within the Gaussian software [5],  $\delta^{I_3}C_{calculated}$  shifts were referenced as follows:

- 1. Using Benzene isotopic magnetic shielding values as reference standard, obtained by SCRF (cpcm, solvent = DMSO) / B3LYP / GIAO calculations, computed at the same level of theory  $(\sigma_{Benzene/6-311g(d,p)} = 133.24 \text{ ppm}, \sigma_{Benzene/IGLO-III} = 141.34 \text{ ppm})$  and referencing all carbon signals with respect the experimental value of benzene's  $\delta^{I3}C_{experimental}$  shift = 128.37 ppm [12].
- 2. Referencing C6 of both complexes at each level of theory, with respect the  $\delta^{I3}C_{experimental}$  shift of 173.4 ppm for **10** (page 5 ESI).  $\Delta \delta^{I3}C6 = 0$  of the internal reference standard is depicted with blue dotted squares. The scaling factor produced by each  $\Delta \delta^{I3}C$  is applied for the rest of the <sup>13</sup>C calculated shifts, for both levels of theory.

Computation of overall  $^{13}C$  resonances of both expected and unexpected complexes, as a function of the basis set and comparison with experimental data run as follows:





6-311g(d,p)	$-3.5 \le \Delta \delta^{13} C \text{ (complex 10)} \le 2.7$ $-26.4 \le \Delta \delta^{13} C \text{ (complex 10')} \le 7.2$	Reference standard:
IGLO-III	$-7.2 \le \Delta \delta^{13} C \text{ (complex 10)} \le 4.0$ $-26.3 \le \Delta \delta^{13} C \text{ (complex 10')} \le 6.3$	σ <sup>13</sup> C benzene (1)
6-311g(d,p)	$-4.3 \le \Delta \delta^{13} C \text{ (complex 10)} \le 2.7$ -25.3 \le \Delta \delta^{13} C (complex 10') \le 8.7	Reference standard:

Intervals of  $\Delta \delta^{I3}C$  ranges show that independently of the selected reference standard, 6-311G(d,p) basis functions describes with higher accuracy the electronic environment under the influence of the magnetic shielding tensors and thus the overall calculated sp3 and sp2 carbon chemical shifts of PYRMA complex **10**. Similar trends were observed for the rest of the complexes described in the main text (data not shown).

In terms of the selected reference standard, TMS gives differences between experimental and calculated <sup>13</sup>C from 0 to -8 ppm for all type of carbons (Figure 12 SI). The benzene (commonly used as reference for sp2 <sup>13</sup>C) allows the reduction of  $\Delta \delta^{13}C$  range between - 3 and +3 ppm, but leads a loss of the systematic calculated  $\delta^{13}C$  overestimation. Finally the utilization of an internal <sup>13</sup>C reference chosen as  $\delta C6$  gives comparable  $\Delta \delta^{13}C$  to the ones coming from the benzene.

In conclusion, the IGLO-III data set is not better than the 6-311G. The reference has to be judiciously chosen for reducing the prediction discrepancies, like with benzene. However, using the benzene leads to the removing of the systematic over-estimation obtained by using the TMS (see Figure 14 SI) and preventing to get an additional qualitative fingerprint of the most stable complexes.

#### Figure 14 SI:



 $\Delta\delta^{13}C$  stacked plots of PYRMA complexes 8 (A), 10-10' (B), 17-17' (C) and 12-13 (D) referenced with TMS (lower case) and Benzene (upper case) at the level of theory B3LYP / 6-311G(d,p). Systematic overestimations from 0 to -8 ppm of predicted <sup>13</sup>C resonances of the favored complexes are obtained when the former reference standard was used (green region). Accuracy of overall <sup>13</sup>C resonances' prediction (± 3 ppm, blue region) but loss of systematic estimation is given when benzene is used as reference standard. The over estimations are not existing for all <sup>13</sup>C and are especially localized on some <sup>13</sup>C of the diazine or phenyl rings heart of the coordination sphere.

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