Supplementary Information

Effect of *tert*-butyl groups on electronic communication between redox units in tetrathiafulvalene-tetraazapyrene triads

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Experimental Section

General

Air- and/or water-sensitive reactions were conducted under nitrogen and dry, freshly distilled solvents were used. Chemicals used for the synthesis of the compounds were purchased from commercial suppliers (Sigma-Aldrich, TCI or Alfa Aesar). UV-Vis-NIR absorption spectra were recorded on a Perkin Elmer Lambda 900 UV/Vis/NIR spectrometer and UV-Vis absorption spectra on a Varian Cary-100 Bio-UV/VIS. ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra were recorded on a Bruker Avance 300 or 400 spectrometer at 300 MHz and 75 MHz or 101 MHz, respectively. Chemical shifts are reported in parts per million (ppm) and are referenced to the residual solvent peak (CDCl₃, δ ¹H = 7.26 ppm, and DMSO- d_6 , δ ¹H = 2.50 ppm). The following abbreviations were used s (singlet), d (doublet), t (triplet) and m (multiplet). High resolution mass spectra (HR-MS) were obtained on a Thermo Fisher LTQ Orbitrap XL using Nano Electrospray Ionization.

Cyclic voltammetry (CV) was performed in a three-electrode cell equipped with a Pt working electrode, a glassy carbon counter-electrode, and Ag/AgCl reference electrode. The electrochemical experiments were carried out under an oxygen-free atmosphere in dichloromethane with TBAPF₆ (0.1 M) as a supporting electrolyte. Naphthalene-1,4,5,8-tetraamine tin(II) salt (1)¹ and 4,5,9,10-tetrabromo-1,3,6,8-tetraazapyrene (5)² were prepared as described in the literature.

TTF-TAP. A mixture of compound **5** (52.2 mg, 0.1 mmol) and TTF precursor (**4**) (144 mg, 0.2 mmol) in anhydrous DMF (10 mL) was sonicated about 15 min. And then a solution of CsOH·H₂O (101 mg, 0.6 mmol) in anhydrous MeOH (5 mL) was dropwise added to the resultant solution over 1 h, forming an orange solution. After additional stirring for 4 h under N₂ at r.t., the reaction mixture was concentrated *in vacuo*. The residue was dissolved in CH₂Cl₂ and extracted with H₂O for three times. The combined organic phase was concentrated under reduced pressure and purified by column chromatography (silica gel, CH₂Cl₂:Hex = 1:1, v/v) to afford **TTF-TAP** as a yellow-green powder (25 mg, 18%). ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 10.01 (s, 2H), 2.83 (t, *J* =

7.3 Hz, 8H), 1.66-1.59 (m, 8H), 1.41-1.19 (m, 56H), 0.89 (t, J = 6.5 Hz, 12H). MALDI-TOF-MS (*m/z*): calcd for $[C_{64}H_{86}N_4S_{16}]^+$ 1422.24; found: 1422.53. HR-MS (ESI, positive): *m/z* calcd for $[C_{64}H_{86}N_4S_{16}]^+$ 1422.2378; found: 1422.2416; calcd for $[C_{64}H_{86}N_4S_{16}]^{2+}$ 711.1186; found: 711.1206. Elemental analysis (%) calcd for $C_{64}H_{86}N_4S_{16}$: C, 53.97; H, 6.09; N, 3.93; found: C, 54.46; H, 6.22; N, 3.98.

t-Bu-TAP (2). To a suspension of 1,4,5,8-tetraaminonaphthalene hexachlorostannate (1) (0.25 g, 0.48 mmol) in dry THF (10 mL) was added an excess of absolute triethylamine (2 mL) under N₂. Pivalic anhydride (2 mmol, 0.4 mL) was added slowly to the reaction mixture and kept in an ice cooling bath. The reaction mixture was then refluxed for 48 h. After cooling down to room temperature, the solvent was removed under reduced pressure, and the residue was purified by column chromatography (silica, hexane/CH₂Cl₂ 4:1, v/v) to afford **2** as a light-yellow powder (92 mg, 60%). ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.54 (s, 4H), 1.67 (s, 18H). ¹³C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 176.72, 152.59, 136.03, 112.06, 40.66, 30.46. HR-MS (ESI, positive): *m/z* calcd for [C₂₀H₂₂N₄+H]⁺ 319.1917; found: 319.1908.

tetrabromo-*t*-Bu-TAP (3). *t*-Bu-TAP (2) (285 mg, 0.9 mmol) was dissolved in concentrated sulfuric acid (30 mL). Iodine (39 mg, 0.15 mmol) and bromine (0.45 mL, 8.7 mmol) were added. The reaction mixture was heated to 80 °C for 3 h, and then allowed to cool to room temperature and stirred overnight. The mixture was poured on ice, neutralized with a saturated aqueous solution of NaOH, and extracted with CHCl₃. The solvent was removed under reduced pressure, and the residue was purified by column chromatography (silica, hexane/CH₂Cl₂ 4:1, v/v) to afford **3** as a light-yellow powder (400 mg, 70%). ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 1.71 (s, 18H). ¹³C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 178.58, 151.41, 136.47, 110.67, 41.40, 30.29. HR-MS (ESI, positive): *m/z* calcd for [C₂₀H₁₈Br₄N₄+H]⁺ 630.8338; found: 630.8326.

TTF-*t***-Bu-TAP.** A mixture of compound **3** (50.7 mg, 0.08 mmol) and TTF precursor (**4**) (115 mg, 0.16 mmol) in anhydrous DMF (10 mL) was sonicated about 15 min. To the resulting solution was dropwise added a solution of CsOH·H₂O (81 mg, 0.48 mmol) in anhydrous MeOH (5 mL) over 1 h, forming an orange solution. After additional stirring for 4 h under N₂ at r.t., the reaction mixture was concentrated *in vacuo*. The residue was dissolved in CH₂Cl₂ and extracted with H₂O. The combined green organic phase was concentrated under reduced pressure and purified by column chromatography (silica gel, CH₂Cl₂:Hex = 1:2, v/v) to afford the pure product as a light-green powder (30 mg, 24%). ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 2.83 (t, *J* = 7.4 Hz, 8H), 1.69-1.60 (m, 26H), 1.33-1.23 (m, 56H), 0.88 (t, *J* = 6.7 Hz, 12H). MALDI-TOF-MS (*m/z*): calcd for [C₇₂H₁₀₂N₄S₁₆+H]⁺ 1535.37; found: 1535.87. HR-MS (ESI, positive): *m/z* calcd for [C₇₂H₁₀₂N₄S₁₆]²⁺ 1534.3630; found: 1534.3663; calcd for [C₇₂H₁₀₂N₄S₁₆]²⁺ 767.1812; found: 767.1832. Elemental analysis (%) calcd for C₇₂H₁₀₂N₄S₁₆: C, 56.28; H, 6.69; N, 3.65; found: C, 56.28; H, 6.77; N, 3.66.

Compound	$E_{1/2}^{0X1}$ (V)	$E_{1/2}^{OX2}$ (V)	$E_{1/2}^{0X3}$ (V)	E ^{red1} 1/2 (V)	E ^{red2} 1/2 (V)	HOMO (eV)	LUMO (eV)	E _g (eV)
TTF-TAP	0.63	0.77	1.04	-0.48	-0.98	-4.87	-3.90	0.97
TTF-t-Bu-TAP	0.70	1.03		-0.67	-1.21	-4.89	-3.67	1.22
t-Bu-TAP				-1.03			-3.32	
TTF precursor 4	0.65	0.99				-4.86		

Table S1 Electrochemical data, energies of HOMO and LUMO, and HOMO-LUMO gaps of two triads and precursors. Redox potentials (V) vs Ag/AgCl in CH₂Cl₂.

 $E_{\text{LUMO}} = -e \left(E_{red}^{onset} + 4.29 \right), E_{\text{HOMO}} = -e \left(E_{ox}^{onset} + 4.29 \right), E_{red}^{onset} = \text{the onset reduction}$ potentials, $E_{ox}^{onset} = \text{the onset oxidation potentials}, E_{\text{HOMO}} = E_{\text{LUMO}} - E_{\text{g}}, \text{Fc/Fc}^+ \text{ is } 0.51$ V relative to Ag/AgCl in CH₂Cl₂.

Differential pulse voltammetry (DPV) measurements of two triads (Figure S1) were carried out, clearly showing that the two TTF units of **TTF-TAP** are sequentially oxidized to the TTF radical cation species while this process occurs simultaneously in **TTF-t-Bu-TAP**.



Figure S1: Differential pulse voltammograms of **TTF-TAP** a) and **TTF-***t***-Bu-TAP** b) at the concentration of 3×10⁻⁴ M.

To get a good understanding of the distinct electrochemical behaviors of triads **TTF-TAP** and **TTF-t-Bu**-**TAP** in terms of the degree of aggregation impeded by the presence of bulky tert-butyl groups, we did perform concentration-dependent CVs of **TTF-TAP** (Fig. S2). The step-wise oxidations of **TTF-TAP** are observed even in a very diluted solution (Fig. S2). Furthermore, concentration-dependent UV-Vis spectra

of two triads (Figure S3) were carried out. In both cases, the absorbance is proportional to the concentration, suggesting that no strong intermolecular interactions occur. Based on all these results, the possibility of associations between **TTF-TAP** molecules is definitively ruled out.



Figure S2: Cyclic voltammograms of **TTF-TAP** as a function of concentration in the positive a) and negative b) potential windows.

a)

b)



Figure S3: Concentration-dependent UV-Vis spectra of a) TTF-TAP and b) TTF-*t*-Bu-TAP.

b)

Figure S4 shows the optimized structure of the **TTF-TAP** and **TTF-t-Bu-TAP** triads. Both structures have a planar TAP core with curved TTF moieties attached at an angle *via* the sulfur atoms.



Figure S4: Structures of a) TTF-TAP and b) TTF-t-Bu-TAP triads.

Intuitively, energy levels of MOs change if non-zero partial charges are next to them. The LUMO is localized closer to where the *tert*-butyl groups are attached. Leaving aside electron rearrangement (which do not seem to happen comparing Fig. 5 and Fig. S3 and also from atomic charges), any electrostatic effect decays with 1/r going away from the attachment point. As a result, electrostatically the LUMO is more affected than the HOMO. Moreover, DFT calculations show that the insertion of *tert*-butyl groups leads to a slight decrease in electrostatic potentials at all nuclear positions (Table S2). This implies that electrons are in lower energy states around the nuclei dominating the LUMO and hence virtual orbitals (without electrons) become destabilized.

Atom	TTF-TAP	TTF-t-Bu-TAP	
3	-14.656914	-14.662298	3 4 7 9
4	-14.647453	-14.654592	
5	-14.687975	-14.696912	6 13 17
6	-18.328110	-18.338104	18
17	-14.645921	-14.650957	

Table S2. The electrostatic potentials (in atomic units) at nuclear positions (see attached figure for atom numbering).

The C17-C18 bond length is slightly shorter (1.530Å) than for example those in the *tert*-butyl itself (1.537Å and 1.547Å), indicative of hyperconjugation.

Figure S5 shows the adsorption spectra of the **TTF-TAP** and **TTF-t-Bu-TAP** triads obtained *via* TD-DFT calculations at the B3LYP/6-31G(d,p) level of theory. After DFT relaxation to within default thresholds, TD-DFT calculations of the lowest excited states were carried out and the absorption spectra extracted with GaussSum 3.0. As there are transitions with vanishing oscillator strength at large wavelengths, the 10 lowest energy transitions along with their oscillator strength and molecular orbital contributions are given in Tables S3 and S4.



Figure S5: Computed absorption spectra and oscillator strengths of the charge neutral a) TTF-TAP and b) TTF-*t*-Bu-TAP triads.

Wavelength (nm)	Oscillator strength	Molecular orbital contri				
1019.77458	0	НОМО	\rightarrow	LUMO	(99%)	
1014.18563	0.0005	HOMO-1	\rightarrow	LUMO	(99%)	
560.431194	0	HOMO-2	\rightarrow	LUMO	(95%)	
541.817913	0.0139	HOMO-3	\rightarrow	LUMO	(97%)	
473.583625	0	HOMO	\rightarrow	LUMO+1	(99%)	
473.457032	0.001	HOMO-1	\rightarrow	LUMO+1	(99%)	
441.869607	0.0049	HOMO-1	\rightarrow	LUMO+4	(48%)	
		HOMO	\rightarrow	LUMO+3	(49%)	
441.806624	0.0005	HOMO-1	\rightarrow	LUMO+3	(48%)	
		HOMO	\rightarrow	LUMO+4	(49%)	
423.00987	0.0002	HOMO-1	\rightarrow	LUMO+2	(82%)	
422.995439	0.0034	HOMO	\rightarrow	LUMO+2	(90%)	

Table S3: Computed transitions in the **TTF-TAP** triad.

Table S4: Computed transitions in the **TTF-***t***-Bu-TAP** triad.

Wavelength (nm)	Oscillator	Molecular orbital contributions				
	strength					
926.430494	0	HOMO	\rightarrow	LUMO	(98%)	
921.473006	0.0009	HOMO-1	\rightarrow	LUMO	(99%)	
537.286328	0	HOMO-2	\rightarrow	LUMO	(95%)	
519.327272	0.0205	HOMO-3	\rightarrow	LUMO	(97%)	
443.101365	0.0049	HOMO-1	\rightarrow	LUMO+3	(45%)	
		HOMO	\rightarrow	LUMO+4	(41%)	
443.038031	0.0004	HOMO-1	\rightarrow	LUMO+4	(46%)	
		HOMO	\rightarrow	LUMO+3	(40%)	
435.337756	0	HOMO-8	\rightarrow	LUMO	(37%)	
		HOMO	\rightarrow	LUMO+1	(56%)	
435.184953	0	HOMO-1	\rightarrow	LUMO+1	(90%)	
435.108591	0.0007	HOMO-8	\rightarrow	LUMO	(61%)	
		HOMO	\rightarrow	LUMO+1	(34%)	
410.883821	0.0068	HOMO	\rightarrow	LUMO+2	(93%)	

Figure S6 shows the molecular orbitals involved in the main transitions of triads **TTF-TAP** and **TTF-***t***-Bu-TAP**. While the highest occupied orbitals represent different linear combinations of mainly TTF contributions, the LUMO is dominated by the TAP core.



Figure S6: Molecular orbitals of TTF-TAP (left) and TTF-*t*-Bu-TAP (right) along with their molecular orbital energy.

Figure S7 shows the computed absorption spectra of the **TTF-TAP** and **TTF-t-Bu-TAP** triads in the cationic +1 and +2 charge states. For the +2 charge state a triplet configuration was found to be energetically favorable compared to the singlet case. In all cases transitions at wavelengths larger than 1000 nm become active. Tables S5-S8 give the main transitions (oscillator strength > 0.01) for the four cationic triads, while **Figures S8-S11** show the primarily involved molecular orbitals.

Importantly, the appearance of new absorptions at wavelengths above 400 nm is well represented, in good agreement with the optical spectra of the chemically oxidized triads. Thereby, the calculation for the open-shell +1 cationic state of the triads acts as a clarifying example for characterizing the occurrence of the intense broad NIR absorption, since two strong excitations $D_0 \rightarrow D_3$ (99% β-HOMO-2 to β-LUMO) and $D_0 \rightarrow D_4$ (99% β-HOMO-1 to β-LUMO) at 1013 nm and 1008 nm, respectively, lie in that spectral region. The involved molecular orbitals reveal that through photoexcitation, the majority of charge remains on the TTF units, but there is also some distinct charge flow from the central moiety towards the terminal parts. The absorptions in the 400 - 550 nm range are of mixed orbital nature.

Moreover, TD-DFT calculations in presence of a CH_2Cl_2 solvent modelled *via* the SMD implicit solvation model³ show that the presence of the solvent has little effect on the absorption spectra of the neutral triads but blueshifts the main excitations of the cations by 100 to 200 nm for the +2 and +1 charge states respectively.

Figure S7: Computed absorption spectra of the cationic a) +1 TTF-TAP, b) +2 TTF-TAP, c) +1 TTF-*t*-Bu-TAP and d) +2 TTF-*t*-Bu-TAP triads.

Wavelength (nm)	Oscillator	Molecular orbital contributions				
	strength					
1012.86	0.197	HOMO-2(B) \rightarrow	LUMO(B)	99%		
1007.91963	0.0456	HOMO-1(B) \rightarrow	LUMO(B)	99%		
537.682436	0.012	HOMO-3(A) \rightarrow	LUMO(A)	45%		
		HOMO-2(B) \rightarrow	LUMO+1(B)	47%		
511.992868	0.013	HOMO-1(A) \rightarrow	LUMO+3(A)	33%		
		$HOMO(A) \rightarrow$	LUMO+2(A)	33%		
		$HOMO(B) \rightarrow$	LUMO+4(B)	23%		
470.671145	0.0133	HOMO-9(B) \rightarrow	LUMO(B)	97%		
431.399419	0.0167	HOMO-1(A) \rightarrow	LUMO+1(A)	11%		
		HOMO-1(A) \rightarrow	LUMO+10(A)	14%		
		$HOMO(A) \rightarrow$	LUMO+11(A)	13%		
		$HOMO(B) \rightarrow$	LUMO+11(B)	27%		

Table S5: Computed transitions (oscillator strength > 0.01) in the cationic +1 TTF-TAP triad.

Figure S8: Primary molecular orbitals involved in the transitions of the cationic +1 TTF-TAP triad.

Wavelength (nm)	Oscillator strength	Molecular orbit	al con	tributions	
1029.25613	0.4475	HOMO-1(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO(B)	18%
		HOMO-1(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO+1(B)	28%
		HOMO(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO(B)	32%
		HOMO(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO+1(B)	20%
992.747162	0.0759	HOMO-1(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO(B)	30%
		HOMO-1(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO+1(B)	17%
		HOMO(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO(B)	19%
		HOMO(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO+1(B)	34%
692.030548	0.021	HOMO-3(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO(B)	37%
		HOMO-3(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO+1(B)	12%
		HOMO-2(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO(B)	46%
420.856052	0.0241	HOMO-11(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO(B)	22%
		HOMO-9(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO(B)	37%
404.199625	0.0585	HOMO-8(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO(B)	41%
		HOMO-8(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO+1(B)	41%

Table S6: Computed transitions (oscillator strength > 0.01) in the cationic +2 TTF-TAP triad.

Figure S9: Primary molecular orbitals involved in the transitions of the cationic +2 TTF-TAP triad.

Wavelength	Oscillator	Molecular orbital contributions					
(nm)	strength						
1036.05075	0.1948	HOMO-2(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO(B)	99%		
1032.77129	0.0459	HOMO-1(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO(B)	99%		
512.924843	0.0135	HOMO-1(A)	\rightarrow	LUMO+1(A)	36%		
		HOMO(A)	\rightarrow	LUMO+2(A)	37%		
		HOMO(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO+2(B)	24%		
510.895801	0.0191	HOMO-3(A)	\rightarrow	LUMO(A)	44%		
		HOMO-2(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO+1(B)	49%		
431.444455	0.0179	HOMO-1(A)	\rightarrow	LUMO+10(A)	15%		
		HOMO(A)	\rightarrow	LUMO+11(A)	13%		
		HOMO-13(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO(B)	23%		
		HOMO(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO+11(B)	31%		

Table S7: Computed transitions (oscillator strength > 0.01) in the cationic +1 **TTF**-*t*-**Bu-TAP** triad.

Figure S10: Primary molecular orbitals involved in the transitions of the cationic +1 TTF-*t*-Bu-TAP triad.

Wavelength	Oscillator	Molecular orbital contributions					
(nm)	strength						
1061.78122	0.4454	HOMO-1(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO+1(B)	41%		
		HOMO(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO(B)	47%		
1023.30962	0.0741	HOMO-1(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO(B)	42%		
		HOMO(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO+1(B)	48%		
715.596174	0.0329	HOMO-3(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO(B)	48%		
		HOMO-2(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO(B)	12%		
		HOMO-2(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO+1(B)	38%		
505.789553	0.0144	HOMO-3(A)	\rightarrow	LUMO(A)	39%		
		HOMO-1(B)	\rightarrow	LUMO+2(B)	43%		

Table S8: Computed transitions (oscillator strength > 0.01) in the cationic +2 TTF-*t*-**Bu-TAP** triad.

Figure S11: Primary molecular orbitals involved in the transitions of the cationic +2 TTF-*t*-Bu-TAP triad.

 ^{1}H NMR spectrum of **TTF-TAP** in CDCl₃.

MALDI-TOF-MS analysis of TTF-TAP.

HR-MS spectrum of TTF-TAP.

¹H NMR spectrum of *t*-Bu-TAP in CDCl₃.

HR-MS spectrum of *t*-Bu-TAP.

¹H NMR spectrum of tetrabromo-t-Bu-TAP in CDCl₃.

¹³C NMR spectrum of tetrabromo-t-Bu-TAP in CDCl₃.

HR-MS spectrum of tetrabromo-t-Bu-TAP.

¹H NMR spectrum of **TTF-***t***-Bu-TAP** in CDCl₃.

MALDI-TOF-MS analysis of TTF-t-Bu-TAP.

HR-MS spectrum of TTF-t-Bu-TAP.

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