

with a dielectric constant of 1 and with a nonbonded cut-off range of 15 Å, with a switch function operating from 11 to 14 Å. For the final energy minimization the Ewald summation with a cut-off of 20 Å for nonbonding interactions was used. Electrostatic point charges were taken from templates provided by QUANTA. For the generation of a systematic search a charmm script was written, which is an implementation of the cluster search method of Gavezzotti^[15] but limited to translational symmetry operations. Each search started with a different conformation of the bisurea compound, and gave 5–10 trial structures. These trial structures were then energy minimized to an energy gradient of 0.00005.

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Fast Experiments for Charge-Density Determination: Topological Analysis and Electrostatic Potential of the Amino Acids L-Asn, DL-Glu, DL-Ser, and L-Thr**

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X-ray diffraction experiments not only give atomic positions from which the geometry of a chemical structure can be determined, but the exact charge density distribution $\rho(\mathbf{r})$ can also be deduced,^[1] which is an observable in contrast to the wave-function in the Schrödinger equation. To accomplish this the experiment has to be carried out up to high resolution ($d \leq 0.5$ Å or $\sin\theta/\lambda \geq 1.0$ Å⁻¹) and at the lowest temperature possible. With conventional diffractometers and serial (scintillation) detection this required measurement periods of several weeks or even months, even for structures of moderate size (20–30 atoms), so that the method, although known since the 1960s,^[2] was hardly applied and led only to more qualitative results. In the meantime several developments have changed the situation drastically.

By means of Bader's theory of "atoms in molecules", which was developed on a quantum chemical basis, a topological analysis of $\rho(\mathbf{r})$ allows a well-defined partitioning of a chemical structure into sub-molecular regions (atoms or functional groups).^[3] This initiated the generation of appro-

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priate computer programs, among them XD,^[4] which is able to calculate all the properties that can be deduced from the charge density and display them as high quality graphics.

Almost at the same time experimental conditions have improved substantially, with intensive X-ray sources (especially synchrotron radiation) and low temperatures (down to 15 K) contributing to a better scattering from the sample. Thanks to the emergence of area detectors (imaging plates or CCDs) a decisive breakthrough has been accomplished and this has increased the number of reflections that could be measured per unit time by about two orders of magnitude. This reduced the measurement periods from several weeks to one or a few days.^[5]

Recently we started comparative charge density determinations in the group of the 20 naturally occurring amino acids to deduce, as far as possible, their topological and electrostatic properties, and in particular to study the reproducibility and transferability in the vicinity of the C_α-carbon atom. At the same time there is a chance to supplement Bader's theoretical works^[6] and prove experimentally the transferability of electronic properties of molecular and submolecular fragments from this class of compounds onto larger systems like oligopeptides.

Herein we describe the results for L-asparagine monohydrate, DL-glutamic acid monohydrate, DL-serine, and L-threonine, which are based mainly on fast diffraction experiments performed at HASYLAB/DESY with a combination of synchrotron radiation/CCD area detection^[7] (Table 1). A first experiment of this kind was reported recently.^[5] The synchrotron experiment with DL-serine,^[8] which was executed up to a resolution of $d = 0.33 \text{ \AA}$ ($\sin \theta / \lambda = 1.54 \text{ \AA}^{-1}$), is probably one of the most highly resolved diffraction experiments in charge density work. Further charge density studies based on conventional experiments that took several weeks are known for the amino acids L-alanine,^[9] glycine,^[10] DL-histidine,^[11] and DL-aspartic acid.^[12]

Table 1. Summary of the different measurements, experimental conditions, and figures of merit.

	Asn	Glu	Ser (Sy)	Ser (Mo)	Thr
radiation/beamline	Sy/F1	Sy/F1	Sy/D3	MoK _α /Smart	AgK _α /four circle
wavelength [Å]	0.5297	0.5297	0.4500	0.7107	0.5608
resolution ($d/\sin \theta \lambda^{-1}$) [Å/Å ⁻¹]	0.34/1.46	0.39/1.30	0.33/1.54	0.41/1.22	0.37/1.34
temperature [K]	100	100	100	123	19
measurement time [d]			< 2		25
reflections					
total	58720	59716	49928	19567	12215
unique	11452	13940	11120	6333	5994
$F_o > 3\sigma(F_o)$	9972	9246	7127	5181	4487
$R(F)$	0.0333	0.0455	0.0362	0.0433	0.0204
$Rw(F)$	0.0266	0.0347	0.0309	0.0341	0.0167

Qualitative and quantitative results for the Laplacian function $\nabla^2 \rho(\mathbf{r})$ ^[13] are compiled in Figure 1 and Table 2, respectively. Since $\nabla^2 \rho(\mathbf{r})$ has a finer structure than $\rho(\mathbf{r})$ small changes of the charge density that arises from bond formation

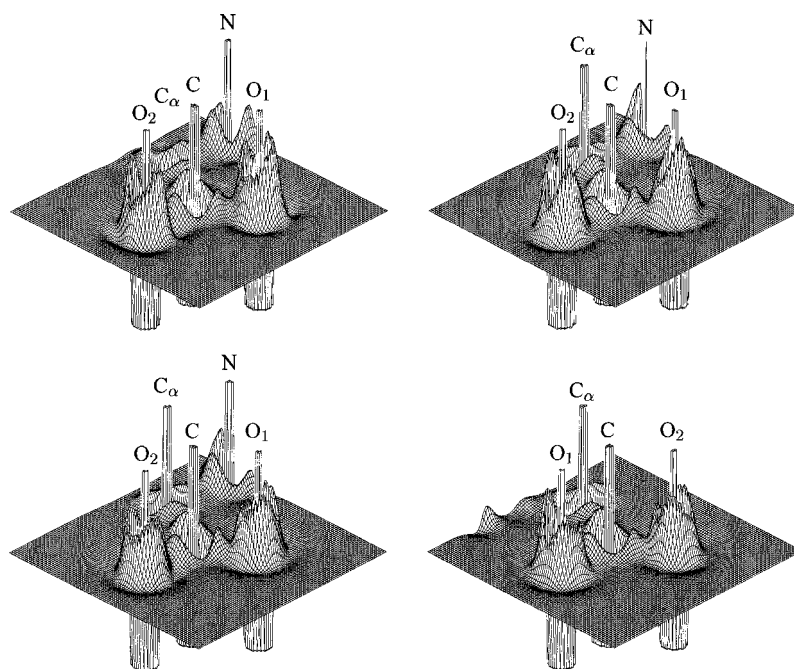


Figure 1. Relief representation of the negative Laplacian function in the plane of the carboxylate group: L-Asn (top left), DL-Glu (top right), DL-Ser (bottom left), and L-Thr (bottom right).

Table 2. Charge density [e \AA^{-3}] (first line) and Laplacian function [e \AA^{-5}] (second line) at the bond critical points. The two C–O bonds in the carboxylate group are distinguished by their different (partly to a small extent) bond lengths. C–O(1) corresponds to the longer and C–O(2) to the shorter bond.

bond	Asn	Glu	Ser (Sy)	Ser (Mo)	Thr	Pro ^[5]	Asp ^[12]	Ala ^[9]	Gly ^[10]	Average
O(1)–C	2.74(4) –34.3(2)	2.53(4) –27.3(2)	2.70(3) –36.1(1)	2.55(4) –32.0(3)	2.64(4) –30.7(3)	2.83(4) –39.3(3)	2.71(3) –37.6(2)	2.86 –29.6	2.67 –30.5	2.69(11) –33.0(40)
O(2)–C	2.90(4) –32.5(2)	2.77(4) –33.9(3)	2.74(3) –35.7(2)	2.67(4) –31.4(3)	2.78(4) –38.1(2)	2.84(4) –34.3(3)	2.87(3) –36.1(2)	3.02 –39.0	2.77 –32.8	2.82(10) –34.9(26)
N–C _α	1.74(3) –13.6(1)	1.72(3) –9.3(1)	1.69(2) –11.4(1)	1.72(3) –16.9(2)	1.72(3) –13.2(1)	1.68(2) –9.7(1)	1.69(2) –12.9(1)	1.70 –11.1	1.69 –11.9	1.71(2) –12.2(23)
C–C _α	1.67(3) –8.6(1)	1.86(2) –14.5(1)	1.77(2) –13.4(1)	1.86(3) –15.5(1)	1.80(3) –15.4(1)	1.88(2) –15.5(1)	1.69(2) –12.9(1)	1.76 –10.8	1.78 –15.6	1.79(7) –13.6(25)
C _β –C _β	1.83(3) –16.1(1)	1.68(2) –10.1(1)	1.79(2) –14.8(1)	1.77(3) –14.4(1)	1.80(3) –13.8(1)	1.66(2) –11.5(1)	1.61(2) –12.1(1)	1.67 –10.1	–	1.73(8) –12.9(22)

are easily detectable. As an example we show a relief plot of the negative Laplacian function in Figure 1 for the four amino acids. Its topology around the carboxylate group is in very good agreement for all amino acids. The distribution of $\nabla^2\rho(\mathbf{r})$ in the valence region, which corresponds to the Lewis electron pair model and the VSEPR model of Gillespie,^[3] allows an exact assignment of bonding and nonbonding electron pairs. All covalent bonds show the characteristic saddle-shaped bonding charge concentrations. The nonbonding charge concentrations of the oxygen atoms correspond to the lone pairs.

Quantitative values for $\rho(\mathbf{r})$ and $\nabla^2\rho(\mathbf{r})$ at the bond critical point, which give hints on the character and strength of a bond, are compiled in Table 2 for comparable bonds of the amino acids under investigation. The observed variations for a given bond in the range of 1–5 % for $\rho(\mathbf{r})$ and 7–19 % for $\nabla^2\rho(\mathbf{r})$ are even lower than those seen with Hartree–Fock calculations obtained from different basis sets.^[9, 12] This means that especially for $\rho(\mathbf{r})$ a high degree of reproducibility and transferability is observable in this group of the amino acids. The bigger variation for $\nabla^2\rho(\mathbf{r})$ is not too surprising since it is the second derivative of the charge density and therefore much more sensitive to the curvature at the critical point. The various C–O bonds in the amino acids allows them to be compared quantitatively. In the carboxylate group, common to all compounds, we find mean values for $\rho(\mathbf{r})$ of $2.69/2.82 \text{ e}\text{\AA}^{-3}$ at the bond critical points. For the C–O(H) bond of the hydroxyl group in Ser and Thr $\rho(\mathbf{r})$ is in the range of $1.81\text{--}1.85 \text{ e}\text{\AA}^{-3}$. In the carboxyl groups (Glu and Asp) we find values of 2.21 and $2.41 \text{ e}\text{\AA}^{-3}$ for $\rho(\mathbf{r})$ at the C–O(H) bond, whereas for the C=O bonds these values are 3.06 and $2.96 \text{ e}\text{\AA}^{-3}$. For the C=O bond in Asn we find $\rho(\mathbf{r}) = 2.89 \text{ e}\text{\AA}^{-3}$. The comparison of these values, which describe the bond strength quantitatively, with values from some oligopeptides we are currently working on, should show how far they change on forming a peptide bond and how the transferability to peptides is expressed.

The three-dimensional distribution of the Laplacian function, which we generated from the proline data measured earlier, contains important information about weak interactions. According to Bader's theory local charge accumulation corresponds to strongly negative regions in the Laplacian function. These are visible as holes in the green isosurface for $\nabla^2\rho = -12 \text{ e}\text{\AA}^{-5}$ in the environment of the two oxygen atoms displayed in Figure 2. If the oxygen atoms are connected to the H atoms of their intra- and intermolecular hydrogen bonding partners, it is interesting to note that each of these connecting vectors passes through one of these holes as can easily be seen in the stereo representation of Figure 2. Thus the Laplacian function also describes fine charge-density

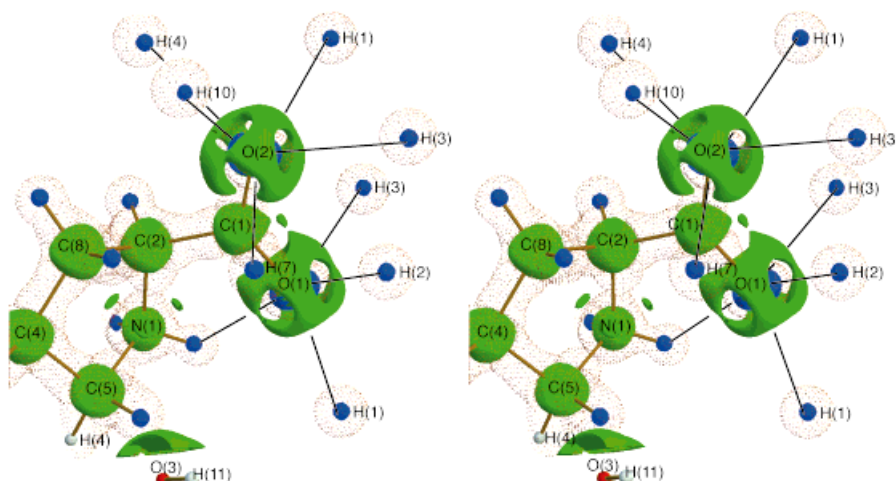


Figure 2. Stereo representation of three isosurfaces of the Laplacian function of DL-proline. Blue = $100 \text{ e}\text{\AA}^{-5}$, red dots = zero surface, green = $-12 \text{ e}\text{\AA}^{-5}$. In addition to the proline molecule all hydrogen atoms that are involved in intermolecular hydrogen bonds are drawn. All connecting vectors from the oxygen atoms to these hydrogen atoms pass through regions of local charge concentration, which can be seen as holes in the green isosurface.

reorganizations as a result of nonbonding interactions. Therefore, the directions where chemical interactions are favored can be observed from its topology.

The electrostatic potential (EP)^[14] displayed in Figure 3 considers an isolated molecule extracted from the crystal but which still bears the polarization effects induced by intermolecular interactions. Thus a three-dimensional distribution of the EP in the crystal is obtained. This chemical environment surely simulates better, for example, physiological conditions, than an EP extracted from an isolated molecule, which is the situation most often considered in quantum chemical calculations. The EP not only plays an important role in the treatment of chemical reactivity but also when considering molecular recognition (for example, drug receptor interaction). This is because electrostatic forces are long-range interactions and therefore determine the reaction path of two molecules.

The isosurface representations in Figure 3 all show a big kidney-shaped electronegative region as a common feature around the carboxylate group. This region is more extended relative to electrostatic potentials derived from theoretical calculations,^[5, 12] and we attribute this to polarization effects arising from intermolecular interactions in the crystal.

The following aspects seem important in regard to the above results: Thanks to fast experiments we were able to obtain comparable quantitative results on an electronic level for a number of amino acids. Similarity and molecular recognition play an important role in molecular modelling. The Laplacian function of a compound, which is now obtainable in a fast and reliable way with modern experimental methods, considers both aspects. The method used here yields the topology of the charge density in the crystalline state. In this state, in which molecular recognition is realized to a high degree, the derived properties of a system are surely closer to the “real” properties than those derived from the isolated stationary state. If it turns out that the functionality given by the Laplacian function is invariant with

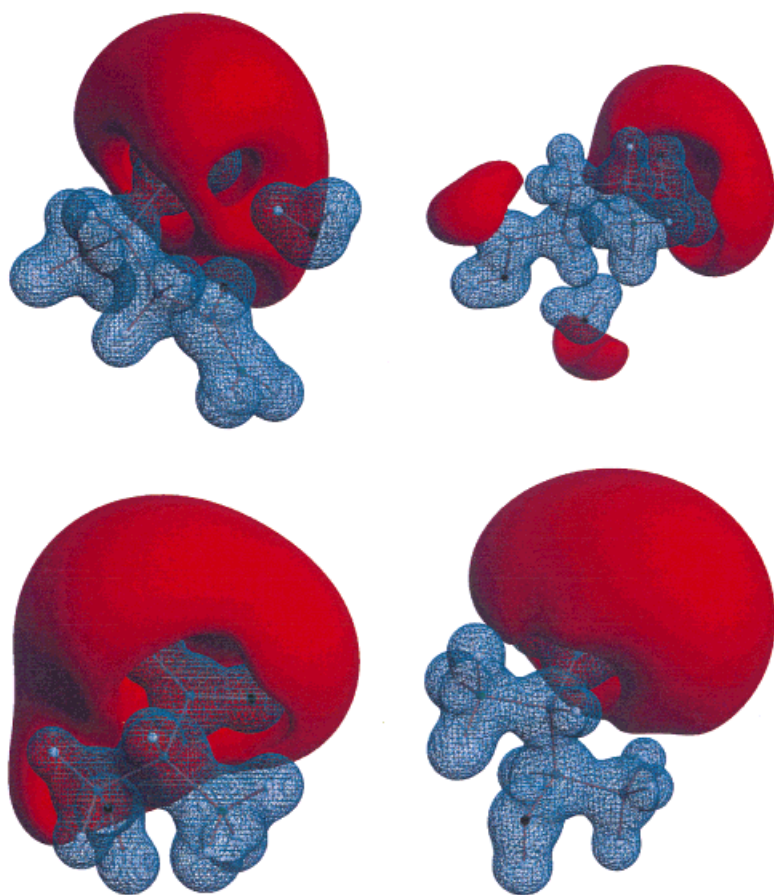


Figure 3. Isosurface representation of the experimental electrostatic potentials. Blue: positive potential, red: negative potential, L-Asn (top left, 0.5/–0.15), DL-Glu (top right, 0.5/–0.08), DL-Ser (bottom left, 0.5/–0.1), L-Thr (bottom right, 0.5/–0.1). Unit: $e \text{ Å}^{-1}$.

respect to changing chemical environments (for example different crystal fields) then the behavior of a molecule in different chemical environments can be reliably predicted. Although atomic properties based on Bader's partitioning of the charge density were not determined, the similarity of the topology of chemically equivalent bonds found in this study yields an indirect proof for the transferability of atomic and group properties. The experimental determination of such properties will surely gain importance in the fields of molecular modelling and design as well as in crystal engineering.^[15]

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$$\nabla^2 \rho(\mathbf{r}) = \frac{\partial^2 \rho(\mathbf{r})}{\partial x^2} + \frac{\partial^2 \rho(\mathbf{r})}{\partial y^2} + \frac{\partial^2 \rho(\mathbf{r})}{\partial z^2} \quad (1)$$

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