# inorganic compounds

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# Crystal and electronic structures of  $\text{La}_2\text{LiGe}_{6-x}$  (x = 0.21) and  $\text{La}_2\text{LiGe}_4\text{Si}_2$

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The synthesis and characterization of a new ternary dilanthanum lithium hexagermanide,  $La_2LiGe_{6-x}$  ( $x = 0.21$ ), belonging to the  $Pr_2LiGe_6$  structure type, and a quaternary dilanthanum lithium tetragermanium disilicide,  $La_2LiGe_4Si_2$ , which crystallizes as an ordered variant of this type, are reported. In both structures, Li is on a site of *mmm* symmetry. All other atoms are on sites of  $m2m$  symmetry. These structures are new representatives of a homologous linear structure series based on structural fragments of the  $\text{AlB}_2$ ,  $CaF<sub>2</sub>$  and  $ZrSi<sub>2</sub>$  structure types. The observed 17-vertex polyhedra are typical for La atoms and the environment of the Li atom is cubic. Two Ge atoms are enclosed in a tetragonal prism with one added atom (nine-vertex polyhedron). The trigonal prismatic coordination is typical for Ge or Si atoms. The metallic nature of the bonding is indicated by the interatomic distances and electronic structure calculations.

### Comment

The reaction of rare earth metals (RE) with lithium and the p-elements of Group IV (Si, Ge and Sn) resulted in an isostructural series of compounds:  $RELiGe<sub>2</sub>$  (Pavlyuk et al., 1986), RE2Li2Ge3 (Pavlyuk, Pecharskii, Bodak & Bruskov, 1988; Pavlyuk, Pecharskii & Bodak, 1989), RELiSn<sub>2</sub> (Pavlyuk, Bodak et al., 1989), RE4LiGe<sub>4</sub> (Pavlyuk et al., 1990), RELiGe (Pavlyuk et al., 1991; Pavlyuk & Bodak, 1992a) and  $RE_3Li_2Ge_3$ (Pavlyuk & Bodak, 1992b). A new ternary germanide,  $RE_2LiGe_6$  (RE = Ce and Pr), which crystallizes in an orthorhombic structure with the space group Cmmm, was detected earlier during the systematic study of ternary germanium-rich alloys of the Ce–Li–Ge and Pr–Li–Ge systems (Pavlyuk, Pecharskii & Bodak, 1988).

During a systematic study of ternary La–Li–Ge alloys synthesized with a high Ge content, a new ternary phase was detected. The powder diffraction pattern of this compound



was similar to that of the  $RE<sub>2</sub>LiGe<sub>6</sub>$  (RE = Ce and Pr) ternary phases, but had added reflections which belonged to another phase. Substitution of some of the Ge atoms by Si in La<sub>2</sub>Li- $Ge_{6-x}Si_x$  quaternary alloys with  $x = 2.0$  altered the unit-cell dimensions. Also at this composition, there was a significant decrease in the intensities of the 041, 151, 170 and 171 reflections and an increase in the intensities of the 001, 110 and other reflections. It appeared very likely that these changes were connected with an ordering process. It was decided to investigate these ternary and quaternary phases further using single-crystal methods.

The single-crystal data proved that both  $La_2LiGe_6$ , (I), and  $La<sub>2</sub>LiGe<sub>4</sub>Si<sub>2</sub>$ , (II), crystallize in the same orthorhombic crystal system in the space group *Cmmm*, with 18 atoms per unit cell.



A projection of the unit cell and coordination polyhedra of the atoms for  $La<sub>2</sub>LiGe<sub>4</sub>Si<sub>2</sub>$ , (II).



The packing of the  $\text{AlB}_2$ ,  $\text{ZrSi}_2$  and  $\text{CaF}_2$  fragment types in the unit cell of  $La<sub>2</sub>LiGe<sub>4</sub>Si<sub>2</sub>$ , (II).



### Figure 3

(a) The electron localization function (ELF) mapping and (b) isosurfaces of the ELF around the atoms for  $La_2LiGe_6$ , (I), and  $La_2LiGe_8Si_2$ , (II).

The La atoms in both structures occupy the  $4i$  site and the Li atoms are located on the  $2a$  site. In (I), all the Ge atoms occupy 4j sites, whereas in (II) one of these sites is fully occupied by Si atoms. Disorder in  $La_2LiGe_{6-x}$  occurs as the Ge atoms are partially displaced from a single site. The presence of these defects may lead to a limited homogeneity range for  $La_2LiGe_{6-x}$ .

Although (I) and (II) are very similar to the  $Pr<sub>2</sub>LiGe<sub>6</sub>$ structure (Pavlyuk, Pecharskii & Bodak, 1988) in terms of having the same space group, the same Wyckoff positions and similar lattice parameters, quaternary (II) cannot be treated as being isostructural with it. According to the classification scheme of Krypyakevich (1977), an ordered variant must be treated as a new structure type.

A projection of the unit cell and the coordination polyhedra of the atoms for (II) are shown in Fig. 1. A detailed analysis shows that the Si atom has trigonal prismatic coordination with two additional capping atoms [coordination number

 $(CN) = 8$ , *i.e.* Ge1 and Ge2 are enclosed in a tetragonal prism with one added atom (nine-vertex polyhedron). The 17-vertex polyhedron is typical for an La atom and the environment of the Li atom is cubic.

The title compounds may be viewed as the first intermetallic representatives of the novel homologous series based on the  $CaF<sub>2</sub>$ ,  $ZrSi<sub>2</sub>$  and  $AlB<sub>2</sub>$  structure types (Fig. 2). The general formula of the ternary series is  $R_{m+n}M_kX_{2(k+m+n)}$  and that of the quaternary series is  $R_{m+n}M_kX'_{2(k+n)}X''_{2m}$  (*m* = number of blocks of AlB<sub>2</sub>-type trigonal prisms,  $n =$  number of blocks of  $ZrSi<sub>2</sub>$ -type empty tetragonal antiprisms and  $k =$  number of blocks of  $CaF<sub>2</sub>$ -type filled and empty cubes). For the title compounds,  $m = n = k = 2$  and the compositions of the fragments are LiGe<sub>2</sub> (for the CaF<sub>2</sub> block), LaGe<sub>2</sub> (for the  $ZrSi<sub>2</sub>$ block) and  $\text{LaGe}_2$  in (I) or  $\text{LaSi}_2$  in (II) (for the AlB<sub>2</sub> block). The combination of these fragments in the unit cell gives the compositions of the title compounds as

 $2LaSi<sub>2</sub> + 2LaGe<sub>2</sub> + 2LiGe<sub>2</sub> = La<sub>4</sub>Li<sub>2</sub>Ge<sub>8</sub>Si<sub>4</sub> = 2La<sub>2</sub>LiGe<sub>4</sub>Si<sub>2</sub>$ or  $2LaGe_2 + 2LaGe_2 + 2LiGe_2 = La_4Li_2Ge_{12} = 2La_2LiGe_6.$ 

Among the known structure types similar to the title compounds is  $Lu_2NiSn_6$  (Skolozdra *et al.*, 1985). The main diffrerence between that structure type and the present one is in the location of the trigonal prism and the filled cubes.

The electronic structures of the title compounds were calculated using the tight-binding linear muffin-tin orbital (TB-LMTO) method in the atomic spheres approximation (TB-LMTO-ASA; Andersen, 1975; Andersen & Jepsen, 1984; Andersen et al., 1985, 1986), using the experimental crystallographic data reported here. The exchange and correlation were interpreted in the local density approximation (von Barth & Hedin, 1972).

The La and Li atoms donate their electrons to the Ge and Si atoms. Therefore, positive charge density can be observed around the rare earth and Li atoms, and negative charge density is present around the Ge atoms in phase (I) or the Ge and Si atoms in phase (II) (Fig. 3). The dominant type of bonding in this compound is metallic. However, Ge—Ge and Si—Si covalent dumbbells are also observed. Similar covalent dumbbells were observed in  $La_4Mg_5Ge_6$  (Solokha et al., 2012),  $Tb_4Zn_5Ge_6$  (Chumak et al., 2006) and  $Gd_4Zn_5Ge_6$  (Kranenberg et al., 2001).

The total and partial densities of states for  $La<sub>2</sub>LiGe<sub>6</sub>$  and La<sub>2</sub>LiGe<sub>4</sub>Si<sub>2</sub> (Figs. 4*a* and 4*b*, respectively) in the region below  $E_F$  exhibit significant mixing between the La and Ge sites in phase (I), and a decrease of this mixing in the case of phase (II). The region above  $E_F$  consists mostly of La 5d orbitals and Ge p orbitals. The Si and Ge s-type states are mainly close to the lower valence band (from  $-12.0 \text{ eV}$  to  $<-7.5 \text{ eV}$ ). The higher occupation number of electronic states at the Fermi level for  $La_2LiGe_6$  than for  $La_2LiGe_4Si_2$  indicates a more metallic behaviour.

The crystal orbital Hamilton population (COHP) and integrated COHP (iCOHP) calculations were used to obtain a



Figure 4

The total and partial density of states for (a)  $La<sub>2</sub>LiGe<sub>6</sub>$ , (I), and (b)  $La<sub>2</sub>LiGe<sub>4</sub>Si<sub>2</sub>$ , (II).

quantitative evaluation of the bonding strength between the different types of atoms. From the COHP curves for both phases (Fig. 5), it can be concluded that the strongest interactions are between Ge1-Ge1 atoms  $\delta = 2.451 \text{ Å}$  and  $-iCOHP = 3.425$  eV for (I), and  $\delta = 2.381$  Å and  $-iCOHP =$ 3.796 eV for (II)] and between Ge2-Ge2 atoms  $\delta$  = 2.423 Å and  $-iCOHP = 3.441$  eV for (I), and  $\delta = 2.389$  Å and  $-iCOHP = 3.547$  eV for (II)]. These atoms in both structures are enclosed by a tetragonal prism. The  $Si1 \cdots Si1$  interaction in (II)  $(\delta = 2.581 \text{ Å} \text{ and } -iCOHP = 2.162 \text{ eV})$  and the Ge3...Ge3 interaction in (I) ( $\delta = 2.594 \text{ Å}$  and  $-i\text{COHP} =$ 2.060 eV), which are enclosed by a trigonal prism, are weak. These results indicate that the strength of  $Ge \cdots Ge$  and  $Si \cdots Si$ covalent interactions depends significantly on the type of coordination.

## Experimental

Lanthanum, lithium, germanium and silicon, all with a nominal purity greater than 99.9 wt.%, were used as starting materials. First, pieces of the pure metals with stoichiometries  $\rm La_{22}Li_{12}Ge_{66}Ca_{22}Li_{12}Ge_{60}Si_6$ and  $La_{22}Li_{12}Ge_{44}Si_{12}$  were pressed into pellets, which were then enclosed in a tantalum crucible and placed in a resistance furnace with a thermocouple controller. The heating rate from room



Figure 5  $-$  COHP curves for La<sub>2</sub>LiGe<sub>6</sub>, (I) [parts (*a*) and (*b*)], and La<sub>2</sub>LiGe<sub>4</sub>Si<sub>2</sub>, (II) [parts (*c*), (*d*) and (*e*)].

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temperature to  $670 \text{ K}$  was  $5 \text{ K}$  min<sup>-1</sup>. The alloy was kept at this temperature for 2 d and then the temperature was increased from 670 to 1070 K over a period of 1 h. The alloy was then annealed at this temperature for 6 h and cooled slowly to room temperature. After these melting and annealing procedures, the total weight loss was less than 2%. Small good quality single crystals of (I) and (II) were isolated from the  $La<sub>22</sub>Li<sub>12</sub>Ge<sub>66</sub>$  and  $La<sub>22</sub>Li<sub>12</sub>Ge<sub>44</sub>Si<sub>12</sub>$  alloys.

### Compound (I)





### Data collection

Oxford Xcalibur3 CCD areadetector diffractometer Absorption correction: analytical (CrysAlis RED; Oxford Diffraction, 2008)  $T_{\text{min}} = 0.015, T_{\text{max}} = 0.528$ 

### Refinement

 $R[F^2 > 2\sigma(F^2)] = 0.024$  $wR(F^2) = 0.059$  $S = 1.20$ 290 reflections 21 parameters  $\Delta \rho_{\text{max}} = 1.20 \text{ e A}^{-3}$  $\Delta \rho_{\text{min}} = -0.98$  e  $\AA^{-3}$ 

### Compound (II)

Crystal data

La<sub>2</sub>LiGe<sub>4</sub>Si<sub>2</sub>  $M_r = 631.38$ Orthorhombic, Cmmm  $a = 4.1462$  (1) Å  $b = 21.0674(6)$  Å  $c = 4.3704$  (1) Å

### Data collection

Oxford Xcalibur3 CCD areadetector diffractometer Absorption correction: analytical (CrysAlis RED; Oxford Diffraction, 2008)  $T_{\min} = 0.074, T_{\max} = 0.451$ 

#### Refinement

 $R[F^2 > 2\sigma(F^2)] = 0.020$  $wR(F^2) = 0.045$  $S = 1.20$ 290 reflections

 $V = 388.20$  (2)  $\AA^3$  $Z = 1$ Mo  $K\alpha$  radiation  $\mu = 32.73$  mm<sup>-1</sup>  $T = 293 K$  $0.14 \times 0.12 \times 0.02$  mm

1770 measured reflections 290 independent reflections 289 reflections with  $I > 2\sigma(I)$  $R_{\text{int}} = 0.034$ 

 $V = 381.75$  (2)  $\AA^3$  $Z = 2$ Mo  $K\alpha$  radiation  $\mu = 26.69$  mm<sup>-1</sup> 1  $T = 293 K$  $0.12 \times 0.09 \times 0.03$  mm

1770 measured reflections 290 independent reflections 289 reflections with  $I > 2\sigma(I)$  $R_{\text{int}} = 0.073$ 

18 parameters  $\Delta \rho_{\text{max}} = 1.15 \text{ e A}^{-3}$  $\Delta \rho_{\text{min}} = -1.62 \text{ e } \text{\AA}^{-3}$ 



peak was 6.54 e  $\AA^{-3}$ . For (II), R1 was 0.032 after refinement of the La, Ge and Si atoms, and the highest difference peak was 7.58 e  $\AA^{-3}$ . The remaining Li atoms were located in subsequent difference Fourier syntheses and, after refinement of their parameters, R1 reduced to 0.024 for (I) and 0.020 for (II), and the highest difference peaks decreased to 1.20 e  $\AA^{-3}$  for (I) and 1.15 e  $\AA^{-3}$  for (II). However, in (I), the Ge1 position showed a displacement parameter considerably different from those of the other Ge atoms, suggesting that this position is only partially occupied by the Ge atom. The siteoccupancy factor for Ge1 was refined to 0.896 (8).

For both compounds, data collection: CrysAlis CCD (Oxford Diffraction, 2008); cell refinement: CrysAlis CCD; data reduction: CrysAlis RED (Oxford Diffraction, 2008); program(s) used to solve structure: SHELXS97 (Sheldrick, 2008); program(s) used to refine structure: SHELXL97 (Sheldrick, 2008); molecular graphics: DIAMOND (Brandenburg, 2006); software used to prepare material for publication: SHELXL97.

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Supplementary data for this paper are available from the IUCr electronic archives (Reference: FN3108). Services for accessing these data are described at the back of the journal.

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# **supplementary materials**

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# **Crystal and electronic structures of La<sub>2</sub>LiGe<sub>6</sub>** $-x$  **(** $x = 0.21$ **) and La<sub>2</sub>LiGe<sub>4</sub>Si<sub>2</sub>**

# **Andrij Stetskiv, Renata Misztal and Volodymyr Pavlyuk**

# **(I) dilanthanum lithium hexagermanide**

*Crystal data*

 $La<sub>2</sub>LiGe<sub>5.79</sub>$  $M_r = 1410.11$ Orthorhombic, *Cmmm* Hall symbol: -C 2 2  $a = 4.1871(1)$  Å  $b = 21.1132(6)$  Å  $c = 4.3912(1)$  Å  $V = 388.20$  (2) Å<sup>3</sup> *Z* = 1

### *Data collection*

Oxford Xcalibur3 CCD area-detector diffractometer Radiation source: fine-focus sealed tube Graphite monochromator Detector resolution: 0 pixels mm-1 *ω* scans Absorption correction: analytical (*CrysAlis RED*; Oxford Diffraction, 2008)  $T_{\text{min}} = 0.015$ ,  $T_{\text{max}} = 0.528$ 

## *Refinement*

Refinement on *F*<sup>2</sup> Least-squares matrix: full  $R[F^2 > 2\sigma(F^2)] = 0.024$  $wR(F^2) = 0.059$  $S = 1.20$ 290 reflections 21 parameters 0 restraints Primary atom site location: structure-invariant direct methods Secondary atom site location: difference Fourier map  $w = 1/[\sigma^2 (F_0^2) + (0.P)^2 + 14.9101P]$ where  $P = (F_o^2 + 2F_c^2)/3$  $(\Delta/\sigma)_{\text{max}}$  < 0.001 Δ*ρ*max = 1.20 e Å−3  $\Delta\rho_{\text{min}} = -0.98$  e Å<sup>-3</sup>

## *Special details*

**Geometry**. All e.s.d.'s (except the e.s.d. in the dihedral angle between two l.s. planes) are estimated using the full covariance matrix. The cell e.s.d.'s are taken into account individually in the estimation of e.s.d.'s in distances, angles and torsion angles; correlations between e.s.d.'s in cell parameters are only used when they are defined by crystal symmetry. An approximate (isotropic) treatment of cell e.s.d.'s is used for estimating e.s.d.'s involving l.s. planes.

 $F(000) = 605.2$  $D_x = 6.032$  Mg m<sup>-3</sup> Mo *Kα* radiation,  $\lambda = 0.71073$  Å Cell parameters from 289 reflections  $\theta$  = 3.9–27.6°  $\mu$  = 32.73 mm<sup>-1</sup> *T* = 293 K Plate, metallic dark grey  $0.14 \times 0.12 \times 0.02$  mm

1770 measured reflections 290 independent reflections 289 reflections with  $I > 2\sigma(I)$  $R_{\text{int}} = 0.034$  $\theta_{\text{max}} = 27.6^{\circ}, \theta_{\text{min}} = 3.9^{\circ}$  $h = -5 \rightarrow 5$  $k = -27 \rightarrow 27$ *l* = −5→5

**Refinement**. Refinement of  $F^2$  against ALL reflections. The weighted *R*-factor  $wR$  and goodness of fit *S* are based on  $F^2$ , conventional *R*-factors *R* are based on *F*, with *F* set to zero for negative  $F^2$ . The threshold expression of  $F^2 > \sigma(F^2)$  is used only for calculating *R*-factors(gt) *etc*. and is not relevant to the choice of reflections for refinement. *R*-factors based on *F*<sup>2</sup> are statistically about twice as large as those based on *F*, and *R*-factors based on ALL data will be even larger.

	$\mathcal{X}$		Ζ	$U_{\rm iso}*/U_{\rm eq}$	$Occ. ( \le 1)$
Lal	0.0000	0.16551(3)	0.0000	0.0114(2)	
Ge1	0.0000	0.05806(7)	0.5000	0.0179(5)	0.896(8)
Ge <sub>2</sub>	0.0000	0.44262(6)	0.0000	0.0152(3)	
Ge <sub>3</sub>	0.0000	0.28626(6)	0.5000	0.0155(3)	
Li1	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.018(6)	

*Fractional atomic coordinates and isotropic or equivalent isotropic displacement parameters (Å2 )*

*Atomic displacement parameters (Å2 )*



*Geometric parameters (Å, º)*







Symmetry codes: (i)  $-x-1/2$ ,  $-y+1/2$ ,  $-z$ ; (ii)  $-x+1/2$ ,  $-y+1/2$ ,  $-z$ ; (iii) x, y, z-1; (iv)  $-x+1/2$ ,  $-y+1/2$ ,  $-z+1$ ; (v)  $-x-1/2$ ,  $-y+1/2$ ,  $-z+1$ ; (vi)  $-x$ ,  $-y$ ,  $-z+1$ ; (vii) x, y, z+1; (viii) x+1/2, y+1/2, z; (ix) x-1/2, y+1/2, z; (x) -x, -y+1, -z; (xi) x-1/2, y-1/2, z; (xii) x+1/2, y-1/2, z; (xiii) -x, -y, -z.

> $F(000) = 546$  $D_x = 5.493$  Mg m<sup>-3</sup>

 $\theta$  = 3.9–27.8°  $\mu$  = 26.69 mm<sup>-1</sup> *T* = 293 K

Mo *Kα* radiation, *λ* = 0.71073 Å Cell parameters from 289 reflections

Plate, metallic dark grey  $0.12 \times 0.09 \times 0.03$  mm

## **(II) dilanthanum lithium tetragermanium disilicide**

### *Crystal data*



# *Data collection*



# *Refinement*

*Special details*



**Geometry**. All e.s.d.'s (except the e.s.d. in the dihedral angle between two l.s. planes) are estimated using the full covariance matrix. The cell e.s.d.'s are taken into account individually in the estimation of e.s.d.'s in distances, angles and torsion angles; correlations between e.s.d.'s in cell parameters are only used when they are defined by crystal symmetry. An approximate (isotropic) treatment of cell e.s.d.'s is used for estimating e.s.d.'s involving l.s. planes.

**Refinement**. Refinement of  $F^2$  against ALL reflections. The weighted *R*-factor  $wR$  and goodness of fit *S* are based on  $F^2$ , conventional *R*-factors *R* are based on *F*, with *F* set to zero for negative  $F^2$ . The threshold expression of  $F^2 > \sigma(F^2)$  is used only for calculating *R*-factors(gt) *etc*. and is not relevant to the choice of reflections for refinement. *R*-factors based on *F*<sup>2</sup> are statistically about twice as large as those based on *F*, and *R*-factors based on ALL data will be even larger.

*Fractional atomic coordinates and isotropic or equivalent isotropic displacement parameters (Å2 )*





*Atomic displacement parameters (Å2 )*

*Geometric parameters (Å, º)*







Symmetry codes: (i)  $-x-1/2$ ,  $-y+1/2$ ,  $-z$ ; (ii)  $-x+1/2$ ,  $-y+1/2$ ,  $-z$ ; (iii) x, y, z-1; (iv)  $-x+1/2$ ,  $-y+1/2$ ,  $-z+1$ ; (v)  $-x-1/2$ ,  $-y+1/2$ ,  $-z+1$ ; (vi)  $-x$ ,  $-y$ ,  $-z+1$ ; (vii) x, y, z+1; (viii) -x, -y+1, -z; (ix) x+1/2, y+1/2, z; (x) x-1/2, y+1/2, z; (xi) x-1/2, y-1/2, z; (xii) x+1/2, y-1/2, z; (xiii) -x, -y, -z.