Basic methodological research on waterlogged sediments
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The project
Sites
Two Neolithic lakeshore settlements from Central Switzerland:
- Zürich-Parkhaus Opéra
- Zug-Riedmatt
dated to c. 3200-3100 cal BC

The tests
Comparison of volume measurement techniques (Antolin et al., 2015)
Systematic comparison of the two commonly used methods of displacement and classical (upper limit of the sediment in water, measured before and after freezing as pre-treatment) volume measurement were done with the samples of ZHOPE (>300). Four operators measured the classical volume.

Comparison of different sample volumes/fractions (Antolin et al., in preparation)
Results from the 2mm fraction of large-volume samples were compared with the ones from the 2mm fraction and the 0.35mm fractions of small-volume subsamples taken from the same samples. The goal was to see which taxa were found in which fraction and sample type (large or small volume) in order to improve the sampling strategy in future projects.

Guidelines based on methodological results

Basic sampling unit
bulk or profile sample, ideally min. 3L (Hosch and Jacomet, 2001)
taking of subsamples for special examinations, eg. of pollen, parasites, geochemistry

Volume measurement
using the displacement method (Antolin et al., 2015)

Freezing and slow thawing
of sample as pre-treatment (Vandorpe and Jacomet, 2007)

Wash-over sieving
(Hosch and Zibulski, 2003)
clear instructions and feedback for sievers (Steiner et al., 2015)
at best 100% of the sample
subsample after sieving
(Steiner et al., submitted)
if time-saving strategy needed
random sampling
large subsample
8 + 2 mm
small subsample
(2 +) 0.35 mm

Analysis
using detailed counting instructions
to avoid counting remains twice in different fractions (Antolin et al., in preparation)

References
Antolin F, Steiner BL, Vach W, Jacomet S. The bigger the better? On sample volume and the representativeness of archaeobotanical data in waterlogged deposits, in prep.


Online handbook of procedures incl. video with wash-over sieving instructions in preparation

Guidelines based on methodological results

Introduction
Within the framework of the SNF-funded project Formation and taphonomy of archaeological wetland deposits: two transdisciplinary case studies and their impact on lakeshore archaeology (project nr. CR3012_149679), several studies were performed in order to determine how to best treat a waterlogged archaeobotanical sample before and during analysis.

Together with research at the IPAS over the last 20 years, these studies give important methodological implications, which are briefly presented here.

Testing the consistency of wash-over sieving (Steiner et al., 2015)
Inconsistencies of sieving performed by different operators can negatively affect archaeobotanical results (Hosch and Zibulski, 2003).

Here we tested the consistency between four sievers with identical instructions using the wash-over sieving method (Kenward et al., 1980).

Investigation of the subsampling process (Steiner et al., submitted)
Following previous research (Hosch and Jacomet, 2001), the sampling of ZHOPE was based on bulk samples (5-8L) for a representative recovery of large remains. Subsamples (0.3L) were taken to investigate the smaller fraction, thus minimizing the sieving time. Different techniques for carrying out this subsampling were tested.