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Swiss Chemical Society
Haus der Akademien
Postfach
3001 Bern
Switzerland
info@scg.ch
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Evidence for laser-induced redox reactions in matrix-assisted laser desorption/ionization between cationizing agents and target plate material: a study with polystyrene and trifluoroacetate salts

G. P. Zeegers¹, R. Steinhoff¹, S. M. Weidner², R. Zenobi^{1*}

¹ETH Zurich, ²Federal Institute for Materials Research and Testing (BAM)

Matrix-assisted laser desorption/ionization mass spectrometry (MALDI-MS) is often applied to assess the dispersity and the end groups of synthetic polymers through the addition of cationizing agents. Here we address how these cation adducts are formed in a redox reaction context using polystyrene (PS) as a model polymer. The addition of several trifluoroacetate (TFA) salts as cationizing agents to a mixture of PS and matrix on a range of different target plate materials was systematically investigated, revealing the existence of laser-induced redox reactions between cationizing agents and target plate material during MALDI.

PS (M_w 1,920 Da) was mixed with a range of TFA salts (Li, Na, K, Cs, Ba, Cr, Pd, Cu, Ag, Zn, Al and In, as well as trifluoroacetic acid) and analyzed with MALDI using 2-[(2E)-3-(4-*tert*-butylphenyl)-2-methylprop-2-enylidene]malononitrile (DCTB) as matrix on different target plate materials (copper, Ti90/Al6/V4, Inconel[®] 625, stainless steel, as well as chrome-, silver- and gold-plated stainless steel) to evaluate the occurrence of redox reactions. Spectra, obtained on a Bruker Autoflex I MALDI-Time-of-Flight mass spectrometer, were processed with MATLAB to obtain PS- and DCTB-adduct ion signal intensities for direct comparison between chosen conditions.

It was found that on a stainless steel substrate the metal cations Al^+ , Li^+ , Na^+ , Cu^+ and Ag^+ formed polystyrene adducts, whereas K^+ , Cs^+ , Ba^{2+} , Cr^{3+} , Pd^{2+} , In^{3+} , or their lower oxidation states, did not. For the copper and silver substrates, PS and DCTB adduct formation with cations liberated from these target plate materials was observed upon addition of a cationizing agent (unless TFA salt cluster ions were preferably formed), which indicates the occurrence of redox reactions between the added TFA salts and the target plate material. To understand at what point these ions were liberated from the substrate surface, control experiments employing salt solutions incubated with copper granules before mixing with matrix and polymer solutions were carried out. Judging from their standard electrode potentials, the redox reactions, which would not normally occur, leading to the observed Cu^+ complexation behavior when using a copper substrate in combination with a copper-free TFA salt, require an additional energy input, strongly suggesting that the observed redox reactions are laser-induced. Furthermore, copper granules were found to successfully sequester PS from a tetrahydrofuran (THF) solution, consistent with the view that adduct formation is preceded by complex formation with the copper target plate prior to the MALDI-MS measurement, facilitating the laser-induced redox reactions. The occurrence of laser-induced redox reactions in MALDI-MS sheds new light on the underlying mechanism and provides a new analyte ionization strategy. It does, however, also raise questions to the reliability of MALDI-MS measurements carried out thus far in the presence of cationizing agents.

Quantifying positional uncertainties in NMR crystallography

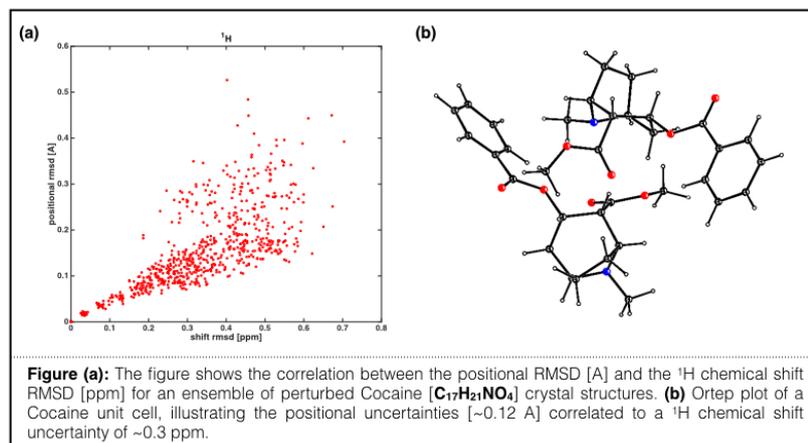
A. Hofstetter¹, L. Emsley^{1*}

¹Institut des Sciences et Ingénierie Chimiques, Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL)

The structural characterization of complex materials is one of the key challenges in chemistry today.

Single crystal diffraction (SD-XRD) methods are capable of characterizing a big diversity of systems, from complicated inorganic structures over entire virus particles up to complex proteins. However in many cases, where the sample is either a powder or for example opaque, structural characterization with SD-XRD remains an enormous challenge. In this area, structure elucidation by a combined approach of solid-state NMR and computational methods holds great promise. In recent years the scope of this combined approach has been steadily improved and today there are many examples of structure validation by chemical shift measurements combined with density functional calculations (DFT). However in contrast to SD-XRD methods, for NMR crystallography there exists no method to quantify the positional uncertainties on individual atoms for the characterized structures.

We present a computational method to estimate the correlation between the root mean square deviation (RMSD) of the chemical shift and the positional RMSD of the investigated structure. This correlation allows us to quantify the positional uncertainties of individual atoms of the structures predicted by NMR crystallography, thereby making them directly comparable to structures characterized by SD-XRD methods. For several crystal structures comprised of organic molecules, we validate different methods of generating an ensemble of perturbed structures. For these perturbed structures we present a method to calculate and correlate the chemical shift RMSD and the positional RMSD of the whole ensembles. The presented method allows us to directly quantify the positional uncertainty of each individual atom in the investigated structure.



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SPRi-MALDI MS: How to follow non-covalent interactions in real time and identify the binding partners directly

U. Anders¹, F. Hibti², J. Schaefer³, C. Frydmann², D. Suckau⁴, A. Plückthun³, R. Zenobi^{1*}

¹ETH Zurich, ²HORIBA Jobin Yvon, ³University of Zurich, ⁴Bruker Daltonics

The coupling of SPRi and MALDI MS technologies meet the increasing demand for high-throughput analysis in pharma and life science research. In addition, it provides information on binding kinetics, binding affinity in real time and identifies the interaction partners with no need of purification, separation or labeling in real time. SPRi-MALDI MS enables the multiplexed investigation of specific interactions out of a crude mixture even in the low fmol range.

SPR imaging measurements were performed on the SPR Plex II (Horiba, France) working with polyoxyethylene functionalized gold slides including NHS-esters for immobilizing ligands. Mass spectrometric detection was done with a commercial MALDI TOF mass spectrometer (Ultraflex II TOF, Bruker Daltonics, Germany). The gold slide was mounted in an adapter. MS measurements were performed in the linear or reflected positive ion mode with standard settings and a "smartbeam" laser with proper energy. Each mass spectrum was the average of 2000 laser shots acquired at random sample position.

We will show an investigation of specific as well as off-target binding of various DARPins against ribosomal protein S6 kinase 2 (RPS6KA2), a potential drug target and suitable for the development of novel inhibitors for pancreatic cancer therapy. Designed ankyrin repeat proteins (DARPins) are a very promising class of non-immunoglobulin proteins that rival antibodies for target binding, but are genetically engineered. They are more robust than antibodies and can be tagged for an aligned chemical coupling to solid supports.

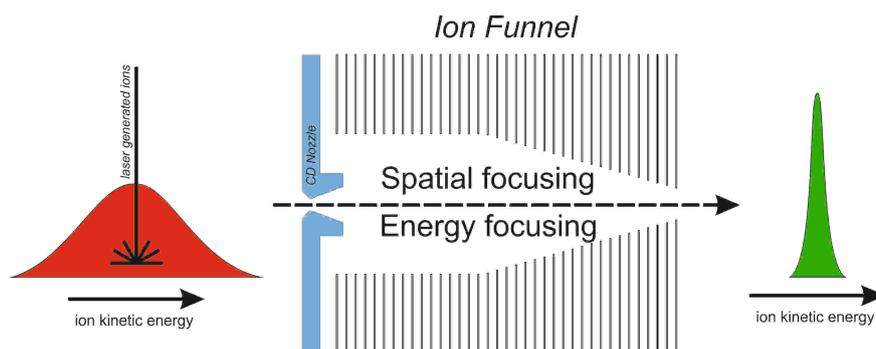
DARPins were immobilized, dissolved pure protein was injected, and the K_D was determined based on the measured SPR data (K_D s of 0.4 to 2 nM resulted). When injecting a cell lysate, i. e. a complex mixture of proteins containing RPS6KA2, a MALDI MS measurement on the SPRi-chip directly after the SPRi experiment verifies the specific interaction between DARPins and RPS6KA2 even in the low fmol range. One problem of the matrix application with pipets is the low reproducibility due to spreading of the matrix solution spots and therefore the dilution of the sample. To boost the sensitivity, we developed a mask that combines the possibility of SPR imaging and upconcentrating the sample for MALDI detection.

Laser Ablation Time of Flight Mass Spectrometry using Ion Funnel for Trace Element Analysis in Solids

L. Querci¹, B. Hattendorf², D. Günther^{2*}

¹ETH Zürich, ²ETH Zurich

The aim of this research is to investigate and further develop a novel LAMS ion source providing both spatial and collisional focusing of laser produced ions with the use of a so called ion funnel. The ion funnel was first described by Shaffer et al [1] to improve ion transmission in electrospray ionization mass spectrometry and is based on the theoretical work of Gerlich [2]. Briefly, the ion funnel consists of stacked ring electrodes with decreasing diameter towards the mass spectrometer orifice. Radiofrequency (RF) power is applied to the ring electrodes at alternating phase (180° shift) between adjacent electrodes. Such an arrangement creates a repulsive quasi-stationary potential wall in the radial direction that confines ions along the funnel axis, and thus improves ion transmission. Classically a DC gradient is superimposed on the ion funnel to drive ions across the funnel; in the hereby presented setup the DC gradient is absent and the transmission relies solely on the gas dynamic effects produced by a convergent-divergent supersonic (CD) nozzle added in front of the sample. In addition to spatial focusing, the kinetic energy of the ions in the funnel is dissipated through collisions with a buffer gas (e.g. He) during their transit through the ion funnel.



In LAMS, the initial ion-energy distribution from the laser ablation process is very broad; energy focusing with an ion funnel should reduce this distribution to improve transport efficiency through the mass analyzer.

The first experiments with our LA-TOFMS instrument show a dramatic influence of collision-gas pressure, gas flow rate, and RF frequency and amplitude on signal intensity and transient evolution for ions across the elemental mass range. Specifically, we have observed a signal enhancement for species with lower mass to charge ratio (Cu^+) under higher pressure, higher RF frequency and lower RF amplitude. Species with higher mass to charge ratio (Pb^+) show an inverse trend regarding RF frequency and amplitude, but seems to be less affected by the pressure differences. Interestingly, the gas flow rate seems to cause changes the transient signal structure.

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In-vivo mass spectrometric analysis of yeast growth metabolism

A. Tejero¹, D. Garcia Gomez², A. J. Ibanez³, P. Martinez-Lozano Sinues¹, R. Zenobi^{1*}

¹ETH Zurich, ²Universidad de Cordoba, ³Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú

Introduction

Yeast (*Saccharomyces cerevisiae*) is widely used in the food industry. Maximizing the desired outcome and minimizing unwanted metabolic end-products is key to optimizing industrial production. Here we present a novel method capable of tracking in real time metabolic changes occurring during yeast growth.

Method

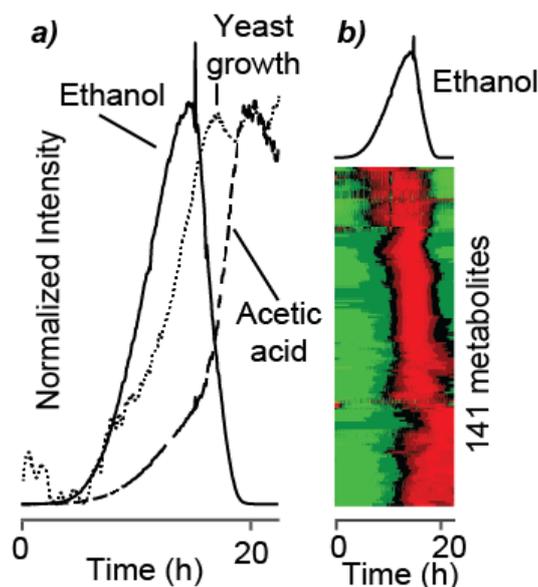
A commercially available Secondary Electrospray Ionization (SESI) source^[1] was interfaced with an LTQ-Orbitrap mass spectrometer (MS). Volatile yeast metabolites in the mass range 50-400 Da were monitored with a time resolution of 1 min during starvation and growth after glucose injection.

Results

141 metabolites were detected simultaneously during yeast growth during 21 hours. For example, figure (a) shows the production of ethanol and acetic acid measured with SESI-MS, along with the yeast growth as measured with a time lapse camera. Lag-, exponential growth-, stationary- and diocic shift-phases are clearly captured. Figure (b) shows a heat map of the 141 metabolites detected.

Conclusions

SESI-MS is an attractive chemical analysis method for the real-time monitoring of yeast bioreactors.



[1] C. Barrios-Collado, G. Vidal-de-Miguel, P. Martinez-Lozano Sinues, *Sensors Actuators B: Chem.* **2016**, 223, 217.

A Laser ablation ICP-TOFMS setup with a 213 nm Laser for High-Resolution, High-Speed and Multielemental Imaging of Biological Tissues

G. Schwarz¹, J. Koch¹, B. Hattendorf¹, D. Günther¹

¹ETH Zurich

Laser ablation inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry (LA-ICP-MS) can be utilized to map elemental distributions in solid materials. In this approach, ICP-MS signal is recorded as function of the position of the ablating laser beam on the surface of the sample. LA-ICPMS imaging is already applied in multiple disciplines such as geology, forensics, biology and medicine. There are, however, several challenges involved to develop this strategy into an even more applicable technique.

For example, in the emerging field of bio-imaging, spot sizes of a few micrometers and below are necessary to provide resolution on sub-cellular scale and therefore the optical setup must be able to focus the laser beam to such dimensions. In order to preserve the highest spatial resolution, ICP-MS signals from individual laser pulses must be clearly identifiable in a transient signal. This requires an ablation cell that provides gas dynamics for instantaneous aerosols transport with minimal dispersion in order to maintain reasonable total analysis times. Furthermore, the ICP-MS system has to be able to detect the short transient signals and record multi-elemental data.

The compact LA setup developed in this work addresses all the challenges mentioned above. It consists of a solid state Nd:YAG-based 213 nm laser, a low-dispersion ablation cell and an ICP-TOFMS (icpTOF, TOFWERK, Thun, Switzerland). While the optical system provides laser spot sizes as small as 1 μm , the low-dispersion tube cell maintains a compact aerosol plug with transient signals below 10 ms (full width at 1% peak maximum) for single ablation events. The LA setup was coupled to an ICP-TOFMS, which is able to acquire full-spectral data within a few milliseconds and is therefore suited for fast and high resolution multi-elemental imaging of geological and biological samples.

Gundlach-Graham et al., *Anal. Chem.*, **2015**, *87*, 8250.

Burger et al., *Anal. Chem.*, **2015**, *87*, 8259.

Investigation of the $^{85}\text{Rb}^+$ - $^{88}\text{Sr}^+$ Signal Separation by Online Electrothermal Vaporization in a fs-LA-ETV-SCICPMS Set-Up

H. C. Yilmaz¹, B. Hattendorf^{1*}

¹ETH Zurich

Laser ablation multiple collector inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry (LA-MCICPMS) offers the possibility to determine Sr isotope ratios in solids online with minimal sample preparation. However, compared to solution-based analytical techniques, elements cannot be separated from the laser-generated aerosol before the ICP. Therefore, the isobaric interference of ^{87}Rb on ^{87}Sr , which limits the accuracy and precision of the $^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$ ratio, cannot be suppressed. With the currently available mass resolving power, the two isotopes cannot be separated neither. Jackson et al. [1] concluded from their measurements, that 0.15 is the maximal value for the $[\text{Rb}]/[\text{Sr}]$ concentration ratio, if one is aiming for an accuracy comparable to solution-based methods. When the aerosol is heated in an electrothermal vaporizer (ETV), changes in its chemical composition can be achieved. By using a commercial graphite-tube ETV system (HGA-600 MS), those changes were previously studied for temperatures up to 2'500° C [2]. A partial suppression of the Rb-signal was observed, leading to improved $^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$ accuracy. Selective Rb-evaporation and condensation was suggested to lead to this effect, based on the different vaporization temperatures of Rb ($< 1'000^\circ \text{C}$) and Sr ($\text{SrO} \approx 3'000^\circ \text{C}$). Beside this element-specific vaporization, a temperature regime was observed, where the signals of all elements were suppressed but increased again. It was shown in this work, that when a fs-laser instead of a ns-LA system is used, a less expressed or no non-specific suppression is observed, resulting in a larger temperature range that can be used to study the signal behavior. Therefore, a fs-laser (Excite Pharos operating at 257 nm) was used together with a sector field ICPMS (Element XR). Furthermore, the efficiency of Rb-separation of two ETV units (ETV-4000, Spectral Systems and HGA-600 MS, Perkin Elmer) was studied. The selective Rb-suppression was about one order of magnitude more pronounced when using the ETV-4000, while Sr-sensitivity was retained under optimized settings. The non-specific suppression regime was not observed, which supports the previous work done with the fs-laser. Further characterization of the set-up will be performed as a next step by investigating the influence of different parameters (carrier gas flow rate, laser scan rate and mass load of the furnace) on the Rb-elimination efficiency.

[1] M. G. Jackson et al. *Earth and Planetary Science Letters* **2006**, 245, 260.

[2] R. Brogioli *ETH Diss.* **2012**, Nr. 20795.

A new twist to current understanding of pollen-induced asthma - non-allergenic, secondary metabolites in pollen induce non-inflammatory airways constriction?A. Bozicevic¹, M. DeMieri¹, C. Nassenstein², M. Hamburger^{1*}¹University of Basel, ²Justus-Liebig-University

Plant pollen are known to be strong airborne elicitors of asthma in humans. *In vitro* data and clinical studies corroborate the involvement of small surface proteins present on the pollen grain. They modulate the immune system through IgE cross-linkage, thereby causing airway inflammation, and obstruction due to constriction of airways. At the physiological level, relaxation and constriction of airways is regulated by mechanisms involving proteins such as the lipid kinase PIP5K γ and the cation channel TRPA1. While the role of pollen surface proteins is well established, a possible contribution of small molecules present in pollen to the clinical outcome of asthma has not been explored up to now.

Therefore, we analyzed and compared the phytochemical profiles of pollen originating from thirty plant species causing varying degrees of pollen allergenicity. Profiling was performed by HPLC coupled with PDA, ESIMS, and ELSD detectors, off-line microprobe NMR spectroscopy, and spectrophotometric analysis. The presence of conjugated polyamines, such as N¹,N⁵,N¹⁰-tricoumaroylspermidine, N¹-caffeoyl-N⁵,N¹⁰-dicoumaroylspermidine and N¹,N⁵,N¹⁰,N¹⁵-tetracoumaroylspermine was a characteristic feature of pollen from Asteraceae (*Ambrosia* and *Artemisia* spp.). Compounds with Michael acceptor properties were also mainly present in Asteraceae pollen. Extracts were tested for activation of TRPA1 in murine dorsal root ganglia. Tetrahydrofuran extracts of selected pollen increased intracellular Ca²⁺ at concentrations comparable to the prototypical TRPA1 activator cinnamaldehyde. Characterization of active compounds will be presented.

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Characterization of Membrane Proteins and their Complexes by High-Mass Matrix-Assisted Laser Desorption Ionization-Mass Spectrometry

M. Köhler¹, C. Perez², K. Locher², R. Zenobi^{2*}

¹Department of Chemistry and Applied Biosciences, ETH Zürich, ²Institute of Molecular Biology and Biophysics, ETH Zürich

The structural investigation of membrane proteins is an important area of research due to their relevance in biochemical processes. These include the transport of ions and proteins, signaling, and cell-cell interactions. The characterization of the membrane proteins involved could lead to a better understanding of these processes, enabling novel approaches in medical research, e.g. the development of more specific drugs or the prevention of drug resistance in cancer therapy (1).

The investigation of membrane proteins via mass spectrometric techniques (e.g. ESI MS) (2) often requires extensive sample preparation prior to analysis, due to high concentrations of salts and detergents in “protein-friendly” buffers. To minimize such sample preparation we apply matrix-assisted laser desorption ionization (MALDI) MS combined with a high-mass detector for accurate mass determination and characterization of membrane proteins and their complexes (3).

In this study we investigated the complexes of a lipid-linked oligosaccharide flippase (PglK), known as an important biological actor for the translocation of lipid-linked oligosaccharides that serve as donors in N-linked protein glycosylation, with different nanobodies, designed to stabilize its native structure, in order to obtain pure crystals for x-ray crystallography. We applied chemical cross-linking to investigate the stoichiometry of the nanobody-PglK complexes. Furthermore, we incubated ATP and ADP with the ABC-transporter to observe structural changes of these proteins induced by nanobody-protein interactions.

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Response factor determination of oligomeric proteins in native ESI-MS Katharina Root, Yves Wittwer, Renato Zenobi Department of Chemistry and Applied Biosciences, ETH Zuurich, CH-8093 Zuurich, Switzerland

K. Root¹, R. Zenobi^{1*}

¹ETH Zurich

Electrospray ionization mass spectrometry (ESI-MS) is increasingly used for determination of protein complexes and its constituents. However, it is not clear whether the classical definition of a response factor can be still applied for oligomeric biomolecular complexes. Here, we propose to use a model system based on chain like, covalently linked Maltose Binding Protein (MBP) units [1] to systematically study the behavior of oligomeric protein mixtures in terms of ion suppression effects and determine the response factors. The individual oligomers have the advantage to differ from each other by an increase in mass, while other properties should stay the same. Binary solutions including equimolar mixtures, titration series at constant total concentration as well as titrations with one component kept constant were studied by native ESI-MS. While the classical definition of a response factor was found to be still applicable for equimolar mixtures, this relationship is lost when titration series are performed. By using simulations, we were able to separate and quantify ion suppression effects. It was found that signals corresponding to lighter oligomers always suppressed signals from heavier ones. The strength of ion suppression effects depending on oligomers present in the mixtures was evaluated. For highly concentrated solutions the ion suppression strength was explained by competition for available charges at the surface droplet. By using ion mobility (IMS) and calculations based on the theoretical Rayleigh limit, ion suppression strength behavior for low concentrated samples could be explained by using a discrimination based attempt. For mixtures with low concentrations the magnitude of ion suppression was explained by discrimination during the ionization process, which was confirmed by theoretical calculations and IMS. Titration experiments with anti-MBP binding to MBP ligand were performed using nanoESI-MS. The determined dissociation constant (K_D) using a 2:1 binding model was determined to be 100mM.

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ICP-TOFMS analysis of transient signals generated by laser ablation

M. Burger¹, A. Gundlach-Graham¹, G. Schwarz¹, D. Käser¹, J. Käslin¹, B. Hattendorf¹, D. Günther^{1*}

¹ETH Zurich

Laser ablation inductively coupled plasma time-of-flight mass spectrometry (LA-ICP-TOFMS) is a versatile micro-analytical technique that has recently found great attention in many research fields such as geology, material sciences, biology and medicine.

In this presentation, we describe latest advances in the combination of discrete as well as continuous LA-based sample introduction systems with ICP-TOFMS instrumentation. Using low-dispersion LA cells, the ablated aerosol can be transported to the ICP within 5 ms, which leads to a higher instantaneous concentration of ablated aerosol in the ICP and improved signal-to-noise ratios. Current TOFMS instrumentation can provide real time and continuous full-spectrum recording at 1000 Hz, which provides sufficient sampling of each LA transient event. Moreover, because each batch of ions analyzed with TOFMS is extracted simultaneously from the ICP, spectral intensity skew error is eliminated and improved correction for ICP flicker noise is possible through ratioing.

In addition to its unique merits for use with low-dispersion LA, the latest generation ICP-TOFMS instruments provide characteristics also desirable for the analysis of continuous LA signals. A collision cell upstream of the TOF mass analyzer can be pressurized with a collision or reaction gas. Using He as collision gas, the ion beam is cooled so that mass resolving powers up to $RP_{(FWHM)}=5000$ can be achieved. Operating the cell with a reactive gas like H₂ allows for the suppression of Ar-based interferences (Ar⁺, Ar₂⁺ or ArO⁺), which improves signal/background ratios for interfered isotopes such as ⁴⁰Ca, ⁵⁶Fe and ⁸⁰Se. Furthermore, preventing all Ar⁺ and argon-based molecular ions from entering the TOF extraction region attenuates the total ion current to a level better manageable by a TOF mass spectrometer.

Applying a 44 μm diameter spot size and operating the laser at a repetition rate of 10 Hz allows accurate quantification for most elements in NIST reference glasses with limits of detection in the single ng/g range for most sensitive isotopes. Accurate full mass spectral quantification from a single laser pulse is possible with limits of detection ranging from single μg/g (5 μm diameter laser spot size) to single ng/g (90 μm diameter laser spot size) for most sensitive isotopes in NIST reference glasses. This corresponds to an absolute limit of detection in the tens of femtograms range.

Recording and storing complete elemental mass spectra across a time series provides the opportunity to perform mass spectral deconvolution of non-baseline resolved signals. This accounts for more flexibility regarding the isotope selection. Speed, sensitivity, spatial and mass spectral resolution offered by LA-ICP-TOFMS instrumentation are desirable for various applications including high-resolution qualitative and quantitative imaging of geological and biological specimens, depth profiling, and bulk quantification of solids with minimal sample consumption.

Small-drugs quantification from whole-blood within paper-based microstructures for Point-Of-Care Therapeutic Drug Monitoring

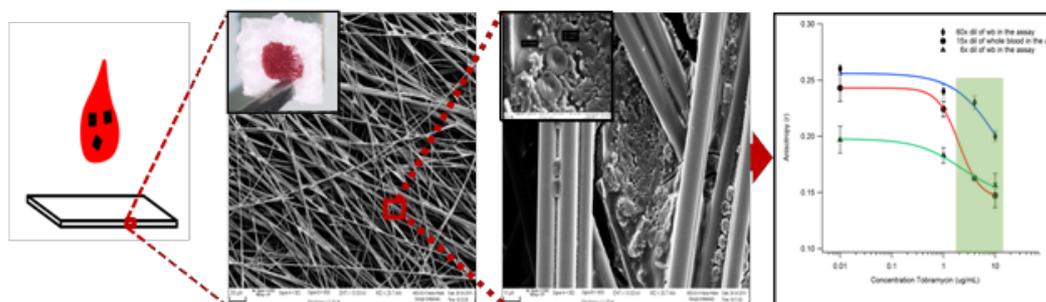
E.-D. Burghilea¹, D. Prim², J.-M. Segura^{2*}

¹University of Applied Sciences Western Switzerland, ²University of Applied Sciences Western Switzerland Valais

Therapeutic Drug Monitoring allows and controls personalized dosage during important therapeutic treatments and it is often mandatory for modern potent drugs against cancer, HIV or in organ transplantation cases. Currently, this process is demanding for the patient as several milliliters of blood are required, is slow and costly, as the sample needs to be transferred to a central laboratory and suffers of limited efficacy as the results are difficult to interpret for a non-specialist. In order to circumvent these problems, we aim to develop a minimally invasive Point-of-Care (POC) device that allows the quantification of small drug molecules in blood with fast turnaround, based on miniaturized fluorescence polarization immunoassays (FPIA).

Precisely, a fluorescence-polarization based immunoassay for Tobramycin, a 456 Da molecule, was miniaturized with significantly reduced human sample (just 1 μ l), reagent consumption and number of steps, without compromising assay reliability. Furthermore, the miniaturized assay was transferred into paper-based microstructures, as we consider paper as an ideal platform for a POC device for clinical and analytical chemistry due to it is light weight, its biocompatibility, easy to use and dispose and its low cost^[1]. However, Fluorescence polarization hasn't been yet associated with direct quantitative measurements into paper mainly due to the fluorescent background and the depolarizing scattering effect that might interfere with analytical performance.

For Tobramycin, we optimized the assay by developing a novel tracer whose fluorescence is not impacted by the biological samples and we managed to measure the anisotropy within human serum, directly into paper (Fig. 1). The novel approach showed good performance in terms of analytical parameters regarding the variation coefficients, recoveries and limit of detection and quantification demonstrating the feasibility of FPIA using only minute amounts of blood as it is available in point-of-care tests.



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LA-ICP-MS for quantification of minerals using matrix-matched glasses as external standards

D. Käser¹, D. Günther^{1*}

¹ETH Zurich

Since the early investigations of Laser-Ablation Inductively Coupled Mass Spectrometry (LA-ICP-MS) in 1985 [1], it has become an extremely important analytical technique for spatially resolved analysis of solids.

Although there have been promising results for non-matrix matched quantification using femtosecond lasers [2 - 4], it still remains a challenge. Non-matrix matched quantification possibilities are still limited by differences in ablated mass, particle size distribution, vaporization, ionization regions within the plasma of different particles etc. [5, 6]. Hence, a variety of certified reference materials (CRMs) not only broadens the possibility for matrix-matched quantification, but rather allows to validate calibration strategies of non-matrix matched quantifications.

Developments of pressed powder CRMs by for example Garbe-Schönberg et al. [7] opens the opportunity to validate matrix-matched, non-phase-matched quantifications, in order to account for different ablation behaviors or different behavior within the plasma.

Herein the feasibility to quantify samples in mineral phase with an external standard in glass phase was investigated, using LA-ICP-MS. The samples are pressed powder tablets from basalt rocks [7], produced without any additional binders, whereas the external calibrants are basalt glasses from USGS [8]. The effect of different laser-ablation parameters, such as wavelength, pulse duration and energy density were investigated. Results for nanosecond laser ablation at 193nm as well as for femtosecond laser ablation at 257nm, using calcium as internal standard and different spot sizes (60µm, 55 µm, 30µm), show significant overestimations for silicon, whereas aluminum and magnesium tend to be underestimated. Though, major elements, such as iron, manganese and titanium are accurately quantified. Quantifications using femtosecond laser ablation at lower energy density, higher photon energy (206nm) and smaller spot sizes (30µm), leads to higher accuracy for silicon, magnesium and aluminum. Possible explanations for these quantification errors using an external standard with a different chemical environment, but the same chemical composition will be part of this presentation.

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Observation of forbidden vibrational transitions in a plasmonic nanogapJ. Szczerbiński¹, L. Opilik¹, R. Zenobi^{1*}¹ETH Zurich

We demonstrate a breakdown of selection rules for vibrational spectroscopy in a plasmonic nanogap between a silver tip and a gold substrate.

Tip-enhanced Raman spectroscopic (TERS) measurements were performed for a model dipeptide (Phe-Phe) located in the tip-sample junction of a scanning tunneling microscope (STM). Tuning the junction geometry by modifying the STM feedback set point allowed observation of several IR-active modes, normally not observed in Raman spectroscopy. Conversely, certain Raman-active vibrations disappeared from the spectrum upon tightening the junction.

Appearance of new spectral features is mostly due to the high field gradient in the plasmonic nanogap, which affects the selection rules for vibrational transitions. The effect of tunneling current on the spectra was verified by direct comparison of spectra obtained in STM and AFM feedback using the same probe.

The observed phenomena are of general relevance for nanospectroscopy and may help to resolve the controversy about spectral discrepancies between confocal Raman and TERS.

Nanoscale molecular orientation mapping by Tip-Enhanced Raman Spectroscopy

F. Shao¹, V. Müller², A. D. Schlüter², R. Zenobi¹

¹Department of Chemistry and Applied Biosciences, ETH Zurich, Vladimir-Prelog-Weg 1-5/10, CH-8093, Zurich, Switzerland, ²Department of Materials, Institute of Polymers, ETH Zurich, Vladimir-Prelog-Weg 5/10, CH-8093, Switzerland

Molecular orientation plays an important role in molecular interactions, affecting intermolecular binding [1], catalytic properties [2], thermal stability [3], and solar cell performance [4]. For generation of monolayer sheets with a certain orientation, the Langmuir-Blodgett (LB) technique is often used. It relies on orientation of amphiphilic molecules floating on a liquid/air interface. As the potential for applications utilizing oriented thin films grows, the need for accurate, reliable analysis of molecular orientation and surface coverage also tends to increase.

Tip-enhanced Raman spectroscopy (TERS) combines scanning probe microscopy (SPM) with Raman spectroscopy, and allows one to simultaneously record the topography and a chemical fingerprint of samples with nanoscale resolution [5]. Moreover, TERS has been shown to have a sensitivity down to the single molecule level [5].

Here, we investigate monolayer/sub-monolayer samples generated with different sample preparation methods, spin-coating and the LB technique, by using TERS with scanning tunneling microscope (STM) feedback at ambient conditions. We record high-resolution TERS maps of these samples and evaluate the distribution of molecular orientations by statistical analysis. Furthermore, utilizing density functional theory (DFT) calculations, we compare the confocal Raman spectra, TERS spectra and theoretical Raman spectra with different surface selection rule to get quantitative information on the orientation of our molecules [6].

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Constant Potential Coulometry for All-Solid-State Chloride-Selective Electrodes

Z. Jarolímová¹, U. Vanamo², E. Hupa², E. Bakker¹, J. Bobacka²

¹University of Geneva, ²Åbo Akademi University

In recent years, the exploration and the development of chemical sensors have been the subjects of growing scientific attention. Today, a number of solid-contact ion-selective sensors exist for the recognition of ions in fundamental chemical science as well in modern applications, including environmental monitoring and clinical diagnostics.

Solid contact ion-selective electrodes (SC-ISEs) have been extensively characterized during the last two decades and their application allows one to develop a new generation of ion sensors. The SC-ISEs having a conducting polymer as ion-to-electron transducer display excellent and tunable analytical properties that make them advantageous to be used in sensor technology.^{1,2}

We present here an extended experimental study of a novel signal transduction principle for SC-ISEs introduced by Bobacka et al.^{2,3} The novel technique is based on constant potential coulometry and uses the redox capacitance of the internal solid-contact of the ion-selective membrane electrode to convert changes in ion activity into an electrical current (and charge) readout.^{3,4} The potential of the SC-ISE vs the reference electrode is kept constant and the potential change at the interface between the ion-selective membrane and the sample solution is compensated by the oxidation/reduction of the conducting polymer PEDOT (poly(3,4-ethylenedioxythiophene)) that is covered by a cation-selective or anion-selective membrane. We provide here a systematic comparative study between constant potential coulometry and traditional potentiometry for detecting small changes in ion activity using chloride-selective SC-ISEs. The attention was focused on the optimization of analytical parameters by varying e.g. the thickness of the PEDOT layer and the chloride-sensitive membrane.

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Ionization Mechanism of Perfluorinated Compounds Using an Active Capillary Plasma Ionization Source

Luzia Gyr¹

¹Department of Chemistry and Applied Biosciences, ETH Zurich, HCI E331, CH-8093 Zurich, Switzerland.

Active capillary plasma ionization is a soft ionization technique, which is based on a dielectric barrier discharge. This plasma source operates with air, N₂ or CO₂ as discharge gas and features a fully enclosed ionization volume, which facilitates mechanistic investigations. In this study, the ionization of perfluorinated compounds (PFC) was investigated, a class of compounds that can only be ionized with great difficulty by other ambient ionization techniques. More detailed knowledge about negative ion formation of perfluorinated compounds would allow us to better understand the ionization mechanisms taking place in our plasma source, compare it with other ambient ionization techniques, and find useful applications that can take advantage of the specific features of our source.

Several perfluorinated compounds (e.g. perfluorohexane, perfluoroheptane, perfluorooctane, perfluorotributylamine) were investigated in the gas phase. The samples were evaporated within a hollow heating cartridge held at 200 °C, and a preheated discharge-gas stream (air or N₂) was used to transport the vapors to the active capillary plasma ionization source, which was directly connected to the inlet of a mass spectrometer. The active capillary plasma ionization source contains a stainless steel capillary working inserted into a glass capillary as an electrode, and a copper ring surrounding the glass capillary functioning as the counter-electrode. The cold plasma was generated by applying a sine modulated (5750 Hz) high voltage (3.0 kV_{pp}) to the electrodes. For all measurements, a commercial ion trap instrument (LTQ Finnigan, Thermo Fischer) was used for the detection.

The perfluorinated alkanes were ionized to two main gas-phase products, namely by loss of a fluorine atom to form [M-F]⁻ and by a substitution reaction of fluorine by oxygen to form [M-F+O]⁻. The radical anion [M]^{-•} was only detected when applying a lower voltage. It was found that the applied voltage has a great impact on negative ion formation. The oxygen source for the substitution reaction ([M-F+O]⁻) was successfully determined by operation under different conditions. H₂O and O₂ molecules present (in traces) in the discharge gas were identified to contribute as an oxygen source for the substitution reaction. NO₂ and NO₃ ions were generated in the plasma source, but it is not yet clear if they are able to react with the perfluorinated alkanes.

UV-fs-LA-ICP-TOF-MS for the quantitative analysis of $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Ca}_x\text{MnO}_3$ PLD thin films in high spatial resolution

K. Guex¹, J. Koch¹, D. Günther^{1*}

¹ETH Zurich

The pulsed laser deposition (PLD) technique is a proven way of manufacturing films of a thickness below 200 nm. The subjects of interest in this study are thin films made from the raw material; perovskite-structured compound $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Ca}_x\text{MnO}_3$ ($0 \leq x \leq 1$), the physical properties of which (e. g. electrical conductivity) are subjected to change depending on slight variations in the La/Ca stoichiometry^[1]. Rutherford backscattering spectrometry (RBS) has been used to reliably quantify the immediate surface (first 5 nm) of these films so far ^[2]. However, considering the lateral resolution of RBS is in the mm-range, laser ablation inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry (LA-ICP-MS) (lat. Resolution: μm -range) would qualify as a more efficient, swifter technique to obtain a 3-dimensional, quantitative profile of the stoichiometry within the film. The deployment of a novel UV-fs-LA system allowed a low uptake rate of 40 nm per pulse, whereas the quasi-simultaneous ion detection of TOF-MS prevented spectral intensity skew, enabling single pulse quantification.^[3]

Initial UV-fs-LA-ICP-TOF-MS depth profiling, yielding novel elemental information on the thin films, as the layer depth could be analysed in its entirety, indicated relative homogeneity with depth (5% *rsd*) but less so laterally (up to 15% *rsd*). However, the average stoichiometry derived from the UV-fs-LA-ICP-TOF-MS depth profiling was similar (6% difference) to the values the RBS measurements yielded. Considering the discrepancy in actual sampling area between RBS and UV-fs-LA-ICP-TOF-MS (mm^2 vs μm^2), further analyses were conducted on the PLD films in an acquisition mode that emulated that of the RBS measurements, to produce valid comparisons between both techniques.

Results of the UV-fs-LA-ICP-TOF-MS analyses on the aforementioned films, i.e., quantification data and comparisons to RBS measurements will be presented and discussed.

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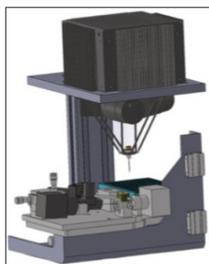
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Capillary Gap Sampler : a new microfluidic platform directly coupled to ESI-MS for fast analysis of low sample amounts

S. Ghasikhou¹, Y. Zhu², R. Zenobi^{1*}

¹ETH Zurich, ²Zhejiang University

Miniaturized sampling devices hyphenated with ESI-MS are very attractive analytical tools for early drug discovery. ESI-MS is compatible with microfluidics, and allows comprehensive, label-free sample analysis yielding information that is orthogonal to that available from optical methods. This project aims at the development and implementation of a “capillary gap sampler”- a miniaturized sampling device as a platform for directly connecting microfluidics to μ -ESI-MS for fast and comprehensive sample analysis. The sampler is robust, light and compact, and allows precise liquid handling or extraction of very low sample amounts.



Important requirements for the sampler design come from an increasing interest in both site-specific sample pickup (e.g., for imaging applications) and for improved productivity in resource-saving screening procedures. The basic idea consists of creating an “open” system for sample infusion, by forming a liquid bridge of several nanoliters within a micrometer-sized gap between two capillaries, which minimizes the system dead volume as well as sample adsorption/sticking on surfaces. One of the capillaries acts directly as the ESI-MS spray needle. This design allows for the system to be constantly ready for sample infusion. A solid pin is used for sample uptake and delivery, such that neither valves nor additional lines for sample introduction are needed. Other components includes onboard microrobotics, optics, and a sophisticated pressure and liquid flow regulation system that enables robust sample infusion without distressing the stability of the liquid bridge in the gap.

The system shows good performance characteristics such as symmetric peak shapes, low sample carryover (below 1%), and total injection cycle times of less than 15 s. This device thus has the potential for rapid analysis of biomedical and pharmaceutical samples with limited sample amounts in a high-throughput mode. Characterization of the liquid bridge as a new microfluidic element showed a miniaturization-friendly behavior based on self-stabilization, which opens the door for further reduction of injection volumes, gap dimensions, and capillary lengths, in order to further minimize the internal system volumes and the sample dilution factor. Performance tests of the sampler revealed promising figures of merit in terms of sensitivity, response linearity, and robustness for multiple sample analysis (1).

We present a coupling of solid phase microextraction with the capillary gap sampler to address challenges for small-volume sample cleanup prior to ESI-MS analysis (2). We have shown that the sampler is capable of extracting benzodiazepines from PBS. Experimental conditions are optimized and repeatability for 20 extractions of benzodiazepines from PBS with less than 17 % RSD, confirming the promising performance of the method. This would be interesting for less available or expensive biological samples within complicated matrices. Recently we also developed a specific extraction tool for a synthetic antineoplastic agent. This example opens the door for studying targeted drug delivery such as quantification of drug in targeted tissue.

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Study of the Interaction Between p53 and DNA by Tip-Enhanced Raman SpectroscopyL. Zheng¹¹ETH Zurich

p53 is a tumor suppressor protein that plays an important role in cellular apoptosis, genomic stability, and inhibition of [angiogenesis](#). The ability to bind DNA is crucial for the tumor suppressor activity of p53. [1] p53 forms tetramers that bind specifically to the DNA. [2] A chemical characterization of this binding behavior will contribute to better understand p53's mechanism of action.

Tip-enhanced Raman spectroscopy (TERS) is a near-field optical technique that combines the advantages of scanning probe microscopy (SPM) and Raman spectroscopy. A metal nanostructure can be deposited on the apex of tip, which amplifies the electromagnetic field of incident laser light and enhances the Raman signal of a sample located close to the tip. TERS possesses high spatial resolution and high sensitivity, down to the single molecule level. [3,4]

We investigated the interaction between p53 and DNA by atomic force microscopy (AFM)-TERS. After p53 and DNA were incubated in solution, Mg²⁺ was used to bridge the negatively charged mica surface and DNA backbone. [1,5] TER spectra of DNA, protein and DNA-protein complexes were collected. First results on spectral imaging of the DNA-protein complex with nanoscale spatial resolution will be presented.

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Sample Acidification for Potentiometric Sensing of Anions in Environmental SamplesN. Pankratova¹, G. A. Crespo¹, M. G. Afshar¹, M. Cuartero¹, D. Yuan¹, E. Bakker¹¹University of Geneva

The detection of inorganic and hydrophilic anions is essential in many areas of applied analytical chemistry, particularly for the analysis of environmental samples. For instance, the determination of phosphate and nitrite concentration is of great interest since aquatic ecosystems are highly affected by the levels of nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen. In the last decades potentiometric ion-selective sensors have become a very attractive tool for practical applications due to their reasonably fast response, small dimensions, portability, low energy consumption and simple operation.^{1,2} However, due to strong hydroxide interference, most anion sensors reported so far are not suitable for application above pH 7 while the pH of environmental samples normally ranges from 6.5 to 8.5³.

The hydroxide interference can be suppressed by means of sample acidification which is commonly achieved either with a cation exchanger column or a loop injector/mixing coil where the sample is mixed with acid in adequate proportion.^{4,5} Here we report on two new principally different concepts for the sample acidification, coupled with potentiometric measurements.

The first concept suggests acidification of the bulk solution in a flow. The principle is based on the ion exchange process between cations present in the sample and protons released through the preconditioned cation-exchange membrane (FKL, fumasep) with constantly renewed hydrochloric acid reservoir behind the membrane. The acidification occurs in-line and allows for various resulting pH depending on the flow rate, cation concentration in the sample compartment and acid concentration in the acid compartment. Moreover, the concept can be relatively easily adapted for in-situ measurements and provides for long-term continuous determination. No additional valves are required unlike with ion exchange column where the latter needs to be periodically rinsed and reconditioned. A theoretical model was suggested for the description of acidification process within the proposed configuration.

The second concept requires no flow and is based on local electrode surface acidification by proton release in the thin layer adjacent to the electrode membrane. Three different approaches were developed for the implementation of the proposed concept. All three require no pre-treatment and suggest direct contact of the sensor with the natural sample. In a first approach, a concentrated acetic acid solution is placed in the inner filling solution of the PVC-based membrane electrode, forcing a significant acid gradient across the membrane. A second strategy achieves the same type of passive acidification by using an external proton source placed in front of a potentiometric solid contact anion selective electrode where the thin layer gap allows one to observe spontaneous acidification at the opposing detection electrode. The third approach shares the same configuration, but protons are here released by electrochemical control from the selective proton source into the thin layer sample.⁶

All concepts are explored with ionophore-based membrane electrodes selective for nitrite and phosphate as guiding examples. The suggested protocols improve the limit of detection by more than two orders of magnitude at environmental pH.

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Source apportionment of atmospheric mercury species measured at the high-alpine site Jungfrauoch

L. Klein¹, B. Denzler¹, C. Bogdal¹, K. Hungerbühler^{1*}

¹ETH Zurich

Mercury is a heavy metal which can cause severe adverse health effects in humans and the environment [2]. It is released to the atmosphere, both from natural sources, including volcanic eruptions and anthropogenic activities, like fossil fuel combustion. The largest emissions of mercury are in the form of gaseous elemental mercury (GEM) which is distributed globally. Parts of it are oxidized in the atmosphere or bind to particles. However, in contrast to GEM, these compounds are deposited rapidly [1]. Anaerobic organisms in water can transform this deposited inorganic mercury to highly toxic methyl mercury which is known to accumulate in the food chain [1]. Thus, humans and animals are most exposed to it through their diet. The Minamata Convention aims to control anthropogenic mercury emissions globally, to protect humans and the environment.

Until now, the atmospheric anthropogenic mercury emissions have only been estimated with bottom up approaches based on activity data [1]. A focus lies on gaseous elemental mercury, which, due to its long residence time, is responsible for long range atmospheric transport. For a regional perspective it is important to investigate gaseous oxidized (GOM) and particle bound mercury (PBM) emissions as well, as these species are deposited quickly. To lay a basis for an improved estimation of atmospheric mercury emissions by human activities, we recently built a top down inventory for GEM emissions in Europe.

In the first part of this work a Tekran mercury analyzer was set up at the high alpine-site Jungfrauoch and GEM, GOM, and PBM concentrations were measured over a three months period.

In the second part GOM and PBM is analyzed during time periods with different influence of the planetary boundary layer (PBL) to our measurement location, in order to better understand the oxidation processes of mercury. Analogously to aircraft measurements [3] higher concentrations of GOM in situations with little PBL influence were measured, due to the fact that the oxidation potential in the free troposphere is higher. Furthermore, PBL air originates in Switzerland, whereas free tropospheric air can stem from all over Europe, thus allowing to compare Swiss and European emissions.

In a last part atmospheric emission sources and fluxes of GOM and PBM as well as their transport have been investigated. With the Lagrangian dispersion model FLEXPART backward trajectories of air parcels reaching Jungfrauoch were calculated. Thus, it was possible to establish a source receptor relationship. Subsequently, the emission fluxes were calculated with a Bayesian inversion method. By comparing and combining the modeled emissions with the AMAP mercury emission inventory an improved emission map of Europe has been obtained.

In Conclusion, the measurement done within the framework of this project allow to better understand reactions, emission sources and fluxes of atmospheric mercury. It is a first step toward the implementation of a novel top down inventory of human caused mercury emissions, which can be used to validate uncertain anthropogenic bottom-up approaches and provide additional support for decision-makers and politicians to better monitor, track and control mercury emissions.

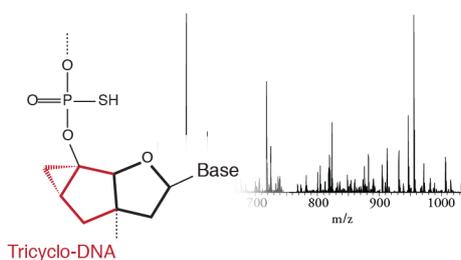
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Gas-phase properties of natural and modified nucleic acid duplexesY. Hari¹, A. Istrate¹, E. Laczko², C. Leumann¹, S. Schürch^{1*}¹University of Bern, ²Functional Genomics Center Zürich

Antisense therapy aims at treating hereditary diseases by modifying the processing of mRNAs, for instance by inducing alternative splicing. For most effective treatment at minimal dose, the antisense oligonucleotides should selectively bind the targeted mRNA and evade fast enzymatic degradation. These properties are introduced by structural modifications in the synthetic oligonucleotide. One promising example of antisense chemistries is tricyclo-DNA (tcDNA), a DNA analogue comprising a three-membered ring system instead of the deoxyribose moiety.



The relative stability of natural and modified nucleic acid duplexes can be assessed by tandem mass spectrometric experiments. On one hand, these experiments probe the specificity of antisense oligonucleotides for their designated target and provide insight into the interaction between complementary strands. On the other hand, comparison of different types of nucleic acid duplexes illustrates the contribution of thermodynamic parameters to the gas-phase stability of duplexes. The entropy-favored strand separation is the dominant fragmentation channel in DNA duplexes. In modified heteroduplexes, by contrast, alternative reaction pathways compete with strand separation because the free activation enthalpies of the different channels converge.

The conformation and rigidity of higher-order nucleic acid structures were probed by ion-mobility spectrometry-mass spectrometry (IMS-MS). It was found that the modified sugar-moiety leads to a substantial increase of the collision cross-section in single strands and duplexes. Presumably, tcDNA adopts an extended conformation because the rigid sugar-moiety restricts the contraction of the molecule to a more compact, globular structure. Moreover, ion-mobility experiments evidence how the charge state influences the extension of the macromolecule as well as the rigidity of the structure.

Interaction of Metallocenes with Nucleic Acids

R. Eberle¹, S. Schürch^{1*}

¹University of Bern

Metallocene dichlorides (Cp_2MCl_2 , Cp=cyclopentadienyl ligand, M=Ti, V, Nb, Mo) are metal-based compounds, which were found to be highly effective against several cancer cell lines [1]. Evidence for the accumulation of the transition metal in the cell nucleus suggests DNA as one of the major targets. However, the characteristics of the interaction between different types of metallocenes and nucleic acids remain largely unknown. The progress of this therapeutic approach comprises the development of cyclopentadienyl-modified metallocenes [2] and precise knowledge of their interaction with the target. Tandem mass spectrometry is the ideal method to investigate the formation of metallodrug adducts and to elucidate nucleobase selectivity and binding.

In this study, four different metallocenes were incubated with eight dinucleotide monophosphates (AT, TA, CG, GC, CT, TC, AG, GA) to elucidate the favored binding sites. ESI-MS experiments emphasized that adduct formation is primarily determined by the type of transition metal attached. While only titanocene and molybdenocene yield adducts including the two Cp ligands, vanadocene exhibits adducts that underwent extensive ligand exchange, and no niobocene adducts were detected at pH 7. ESI-MS/MS data of the adducts revealed that the nucleobase is involved in the binding of the metallocenes and that the type (pyrimidine or purine) and the position (3' or 5') of the nucleobase essentially determine the binding motif and the gas-phase fragmentation.

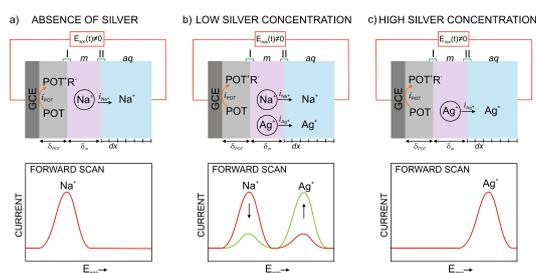
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Solid Contact Thin Layer Ionophore Based Membranes for Ion Activity Detection: Two sensing modes

D. Yuan¹, M. Cuartero¹, G. A. Crespo¹, E. Bakker^{1*}

¹University of Geneva

Solid contact thin layer ionophore-based membranes have recently gained much attention in the community of analytical chemistry for the sensing of small cations and anions both in environmental and physiological samples. Generally, this electrochemical sensor consists of two thin layers. The first layer is a conducting polymer such as poly-(3-octyl)thiophene (POT) that serves as reversible electron transfer layer in the electrochemical sensing process. The second layer is a thin layer liquid membrane which is spin coated on top of conducting polymer underlayer with a thickness of ~ 200 nm. This membrane usually contains selective receptors and cation/anion exchanger sites that facilitated the ion-transfer upon an applied potential triggered by the oxidation of the underlying conducting polymer. The application of the two thin layer configuration was primarily found in stripping voltammetric analysis of the nanomolar level of potassium, ammonium and perchlorate in drinking waters and ultrapure waters. This sensing mechanism is based on the linear relationship of voltammetric peak current or peak charge with increasing analyte concentration. In this mode, the membrane is not saturated and the current is mass transport controlled. Recently, our group found new applications of ionophore based membrane at relatively high analyte concentrations, at which the membrane is fully saturated and voltammetric peak potential exhibit a Nernstian displacement with increasing analyte concentration (so-called thin layer regime). Furthermore, a membrane incorporated with several ionophores is devised to acquire multi analyte information about the sample in a similar way as performing multiple potentiometric measurements with individual membranes. The transition between one mode to the other as well as the limiting conditions of these two approaches are here defined. A selective membrane containing silver ionophore is selected to study the transition from low analyte concentration to high analyte concentration due to an excellent discrimination of silver signal towards background sodium signal. The transition is successfully described by a model considering equilibrium at both aqueous/membrane and POT/GC interface and diffusion processes in the aqueous phase. A semi-empirical treatment was used and validated to distinguish the two sensing modes.



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Mobile spectroscopic real-time monitoring of NO₂ for pollution maps of Zurich

M. Hundt¹, M. Müller¹, M. Mangold^{1,3}, B. Tuzson¹, C. Hüglin¹, H. Looser², P. Scheidegger¹, L. Emmenegger^{1*}

¹Empa, ²FHNW, ³IRsweep

The concentration of air pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) in cities is highly variable because important determining factors (e.g. source activities and the density of the built environment) are changing on small spatial scales. Therefore, measurements at a small number of fixed sites can only provide incomplete information about the distribution of air pollutants in urban environments. Mobile measurement platforms are a powerful option for improving the knowledge of the small scale variability with high temporal resolution [1].

Recently, we developed a very compact (40x36x15cm) quantum cascade laser absorption spectrometer (QCLAS) for selective and rapid NO₂ detection and installed it on the roof of a tram travelling through Zurich on a regular schedule. The instrument is based on DFB-QCL operated in icw mode [2] and uses a paraboloid multipass cell with 12 m path length [3]. The NO₂ concentration is determined with a best precision of 30ppt using an integration time of 100 s. We present a detailed analysis of the variability of NO₂ in Zurich and demonstrate how the mobile high-frequency NO₂ data can complement the data from fixed traditional air quality monitoring sites for a thorough assessment of the urban NO₂ concentration field. Furthermore, we explore the potential of using the QCLAS concentration measurements in statistical Land Use Regression (LUR) modelling to create pollution maps of the city of Zurich at unprecedented resolution in time and space [1]. This is a promising tool to provide data for future health studies which will include highly resolved information of individual human activities, especially in the city environment. Furthermore, other air quality parameters, such as NO, can be implemented in the same optical setup using an additional or a multi-wavelength QCL [4].

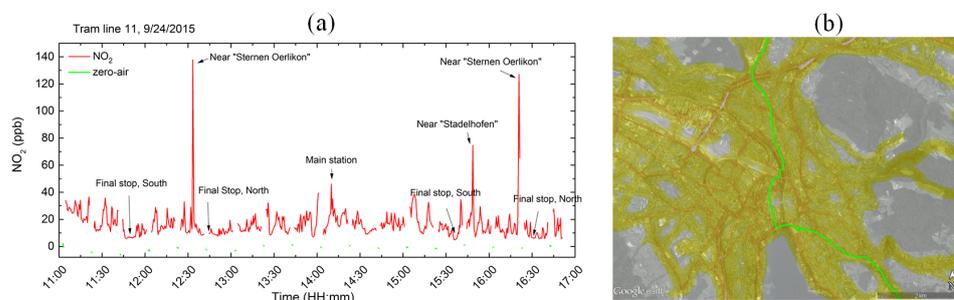


Figure 1: (a) The QCL spectrometer can resolve the large spatial and temporal variability of NO₂ in the city of Zurich. (b) Illustrative example of hourly resolved pollution map.

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Polyurethane Thin Layer Membranes for Multiion Detection in Blood and SerumM. Cuartero¹, G. A. Crespo¹, E. Bakker¹¹University of Geneva

The benefit of using thin layer ionophore-based membranes (~200 nm) backside contacted with a film of poly(3-octylthiophene) (POT) and interrogated by cyclic voltammetry for selectively triggering cation transfer processes has been recently demonstrated.¹ An anodic potential scan partially oxidizes the POT film (~50 nm), thereby initiating the release of hydrophilic cations present in the membrane to the sample solution at a characteristic potential. This ion transfer potential is related to the cation-ionophore binding constant and defines the cation release order, i.e. the less favorable cation is first expelled from the membrane.

An interesting selectivity pattern is observed with membranes containing multiple ionophores (selective for different cations). Voltammograms with multiple peaks are observed and each peak is associated with the transfer of the different cations.² The concept results really attractive to be applied for multiion detection in real samples such as blood. Importantly, in order to provide sensors capable of being implemented in routine analysis, it is necessary to improve the robustness found for thin layer membranes based on poly(vinyl chloride) (PVC) as the polymeric matrix. For instance, the peaks observed for different cations tend to disappear when the membrane is rinsed with water owing to the leaching of the membrane components.¹

In order to find a suitable alternative to PVC thin layer membranes, several polymeric matrix and membrane compositions are explored. Interestingly, polyurethane-based membranes show similar analytical performances as PVC membranes with the additional overcoming of the rinsing effect. This material provides excellent mechanical, physical and chemical robustness, exhibiting no leaching of the lipophilic additives from the membrane.³

Simultaneous determination of lithium and potassium in blood and serum samples is successfully demonstrated as a proof-of-concept. Notably, the use of polyurethane membranes has many advantages regarding (bio)analytical applications. Biocompatibility, less nonspecific protein adsorption in biological samples and the use of a lower percentage of plasticizer in the membrane, which is often the cause of blood clotting and tissue inflammation when the sensor is used in biomedical applications are among these advantages.^{4,5} In addition, polyurethane membranes present excellent adhesion conditions in order to fabricate miniaturized sensors with biodetection schemes providing a promising wave of sensors based on thin layer membranes for the detection of key ion analytes.

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Silver nanoparticle transformations in lake water explored by an asymmetrical flow field-flow fractionation and single particle ICP-MS characterization

V. Slaveykova¹, J. Jiménez-Lamana^{1*}

¹University of Geneva

The continuously growing production and use of nano silver-based materials (nanoAg) in a wide range of applications and their unavoidable release into the environment, raise concerns about their fate and impact to the environment and human health. However, given the low concentrations of engineered nanomaterials in the natural water, the study of their fate and transformation requires the use of highly sensitive analytical techniques. In the present work a combination of an asymmetrical flow field-flow fractionation (AsFIFFF), surface plasmon resonance (SPR), and single particle inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry (SP-ICP-MS) is used to examine the transformations of nanoAg with three different coatings - citrate (CIT), polyvinyl pyrrolidone (PVP) and lipoic acid (LIP) and size of 20 and 50nm in lake water. The influence of nanoAg size, surface coating, exposure time and the presence and nature of dissolved organic matter on the nanoAg transformations in terms of agglomeration, dissolution and surface modifications in lake water were investigated.

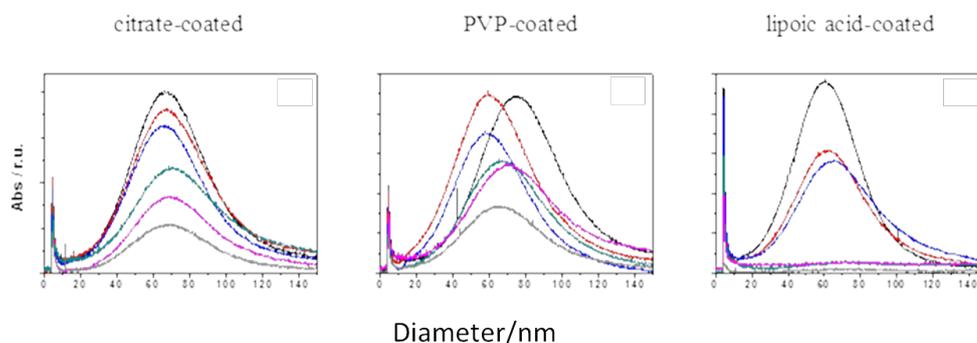


Figure 1. Size distributions of 50 nm citrate-coated nanoAg at different exposure times obtained by AsFIFFF-UV-Vis: 0h (black line), 1h (red line), 2h (blue line), 24h (green line), 48h (pink line) and 168h (gray line).

The results revealed that prevailing transformations e.g. agglomeration vs dissolution are a complex interplay between the surface coating characteristics, exposure time and presence and nature of DOM rather than the initial nanoAg size. The combination of the AsFIFFF-UV-Vis and SP-ICP-MS allows to better understand the persistence of different nanoAg in the aquatic systems.

Two-dimensional algal array combining AC-dielectrophoresis with ROS fluorescence detection as a contaminant biosensing chip

C. Suscillon¹, V. Slaveykova¹, O. D. Velev²

¹University of Geneva, ²North Carolina State University

An alternative current (AC) dielectrophoretic lab-on-chip setup was evaluated as a rapid tool of capture in two-dimensional (2D) arrays of microalga *Chlamydomonas reinhardtii*. Combined with fluorescence microscopy detection, the capability of using the 2D whole-cell arrays on chip to follow the reactive oxygen species production to several environmental contaminants, including mercury, methylmercury, copper, copper oxide nanoparticles (CuO-NPs), and diuron was explored. The results showed significant increase of the cellular reactive oxygen species when *C. reinhardtii* was exposed to increasing concentrations of methylmercury, CuO-NPs and 10^{-5} M Cu, as revealed by enhancement of the CellROX[®] stained cells proportion. Overall, this study demonstrates the potential of combining of AC-dielectrophoretically assembled two-dimensional algal array with single cell fluorescence analysis using a fluorescence stain, as a rapid biosensing tool for environmental contaminants and toxins at high exposure concentrations.

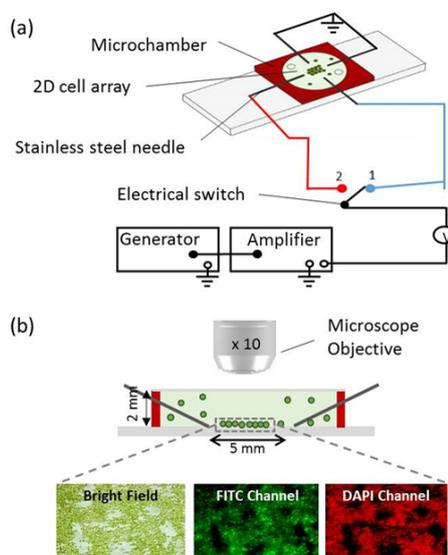


Figure 1. Schematic of the experimental set-up. The four stainless steel needle electrodes were orthogonally connected to the generator and amplifier. The electric field was applied to one pair of electrodes and switched to the other pair every 2 min allowing the formation of 2D cell array at the surface of the chamber. (b) Transverse section of the 2 mm high chamber, the 2D-array formed inside the 5 mm gap formed by the four point needle electrodes is observed under x10 magnification objective using bright field light, FITC channel and DAPI channel. The chamber and the cells sizes are not to scale.

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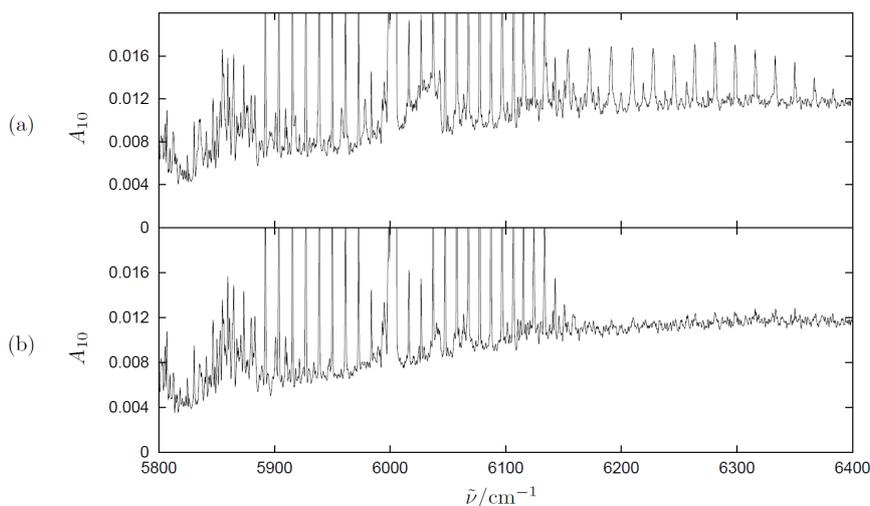
Mathematical demodulation of interreflection based multi-modulation artefacts in Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy

M. Schilling¹, J. Stohner^{1*}

¹Zurich University of Applied Sciences, ZHAW, Einsiedlerstrasse 31, 8820 Wädenswil, Switzerland, juergen.stohner@zhaw.ch

Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR) is widely used to record rovibrational spectra of molecules in the gas-phase and to assign the corresponding transitions [1]. If reflected light in a FTIR spectrometer reaches the interferometer again and is being detected, double-modulation artefacts are observed in the spectra [2, 3]. Those artefacts interfere with rovibrational transitions of overtones and combination bands at half the wavenumbers of the artefacts and therefore can perturb the transition intensities and line shapes in spectra. It is very desirable to eliminate those artefacts. We developed a demodulation scheme, which is applied directly to the interferogram. The contribution of the reflection interferogram is cancelled using the original interferogram at double the frequency in combination with a compensation coefficient γ . This coefficient is determined iteratively resulting in a complete compensation of the artefacts can be compensated completely.

In the figure below, the P_4 tetradecad band of CH_4 (5800 to 6150 cm^{-1}) and double modulation artefacts of the P_2 pentad region are shown. The original spectrum (a) was compensated (b) with a single iteration using $\gamma = 0.004$.



Using this demodulation scheme, intensity correction characteristics on the real signals have been identified. Implementing a few apparatusive modifications inside the spectrometer would in principle allow for a full automation [4, 5].

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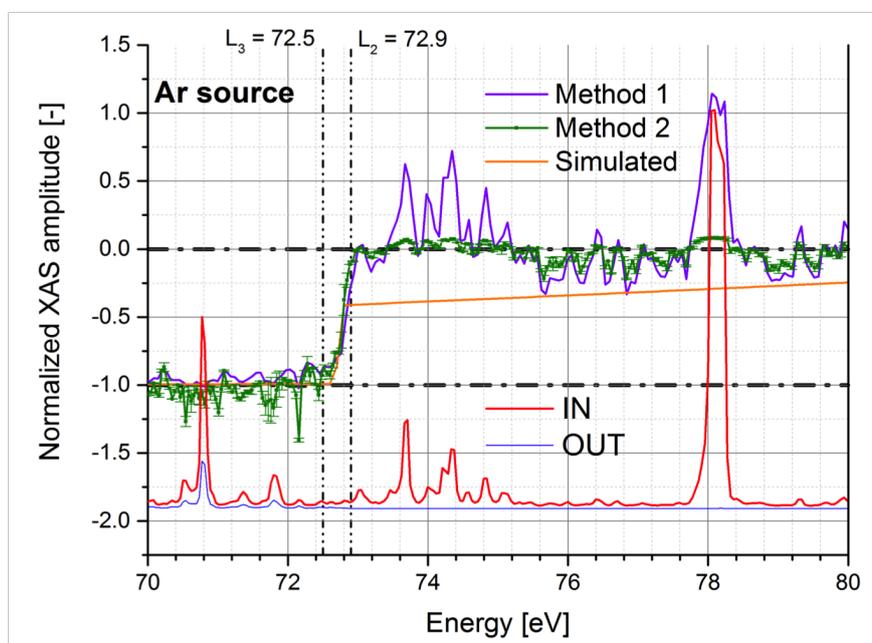
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Implementing Plasma-based Extreme UV radiation for table-top nano-analytics

D. Bleiner^{*1,2}, C. Cirelli¹, Y. Arbelo Pena¹, F. Barbato¹, B. D. Patterson^{1,2}, G. R. Patzke^{2*}

¹Empa - Swiss Federal Laboratories of Materials Research & Technology, Ueberlandstrasse 129, CH 8600, Duebendorf, Switzerland, ²University of Zurich, Dept. Chemistry, Winterthurerstrasse 190, 8057 Zürich, Switzerland

Laser action in the extreme ultraviolet and soft X-ray has been demonstrated on tabletop setups using laser-produced and discharge-produced hot/dense plasmas as single-pass high-gain media. In the time of large *accelerator-based* X-ray lasers, fundamental and applied research on compact *plasma-driven* X-ray laser carries the promise of bridging the gap between the user and the analytical tools. This demands contributions in (i) better quantitative understanding of the parameters' effect on plasma-lasing, and generalization of the empirical models, (ii) assembling compact "table-top" demonstrators with the required robustness to address research and industry challenges, (iii) performing proof-of-principle experiments on "real world" advanced materials.



Experiments were run using the newly installed *Beagle^{Plus}* system at the Empa Laboratories. The "back-end system", i.e. compact and close to the application needs, uses also a self-developed pseudospark XUV source for imaging or spectroscopy. A parametric study is also presented.

Nano-analytics were indeed performed on certified reference materials (CRM) as well as catalysts. Imaging was performed using a self-developed Schwarzschild microscope, with a back-end resolution well-below the resolution of commodity confocal microscopes and without the sample prep for super-resolution techniques. Proof-of-principle spectroscopy experiments using a home-built FT-Time-of-Flight Spectrometer as well as X-ray absorption and fluorescence measurements in the so-called HEROS (High-Energy Resolution Off-resonance Spectroscopy) configuration are discussed (see figure, showing an absorption spectrum acquired on a table top without scanning).

SOLUTIONS for effective Non-target Screening in environmental samples

E. L. Schymanski¹, C. Ruttkies², N. Munz^{1,3}, S. Neumann², J. Hollender^{1,3*}

¹Eawag: Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology, Überlandstrasse 133, 8600 Dübendorf, Switzerland, ²IPB: Leibniz Institute of Plant Biochemistry, Weinberg 3, 06120 Halle/Saale, Germany, ³Institute of Biogeochemistry and Pollutant Dynamics, ETH Zürich, 8092 Zürich, Switzerland

Non-target screening using high resolution tandem mass spectrometry (HR-MS/MS) is essential to help prioritize and identify the tens of thousands of unknown chemicals detected in complex mixtures, but is also time-consuming and requires compilation of information from a plethora of sources. A high-throughput, consolidated non-target identification workflow for environmental HR-MS/MS screening was developed within the European project SOLUTIONS (www.solutions-project.eu). The *in silico* fragmenter MetFrag, first released in 2010, was expanded to include retention time (RT), reference and patent information, spectral similarity, suspect list screening, element and/or substructure selection and exclusion as well as user-defined scores [1], see also <http://c-ruttkies.github.io/MetFrag/>. References and patents provide vital clues for high-use substances. The suspect screening functionality allows candidate retrieval from large compound databases (such as PubChem and ChemSpider with several million entries) combined with tagging entries in various specialised suspect lists such as STOFF-IDENT (<http://bb-x-stoffident.hswt.de/>) and other lists on the NORMAN Network Suspect Exchange (<http://www.norman-network.com/?q=node/236>). User-defined scores allow the inclusion of exposure and toxicity predictions. Finally, the inclusion of mass spectral information from the MassBank of North America (<http://mona.fiehnlab.ucdavis.edu/>) via both a MetFusion spectral-structural similarity score [2] and per-substance best match gives users the chance to increase the confidence of the tentative identifications with spectral evidence, where available.

Firstly, MetFrag2.2 was evaluated on 473 merged spectra of environmental reference standards to determine the optimal weightings for the fragmentation, reference and retention time scores. The ranking results improved from 15 % structures ranked correctly in first place using MetFrag2010 to 89 % with MetFrag2.2 using the ChemSpider database. Comparable results were obtained for three independent Orbitrap datasets of 310, 289 and 225 substances [1], all from MassBank (contributed by Eawag and UFZ). Including an alternative fragmenter, CFM-ID [3], improved the results further. For high throughput use, MetFrag2.2 was applied within an R-based workflow using the packages enviPick, enviMass, enviPat, nontarget and RMassBank (<http://www.eawag.ch/en/departement/uchem/software/>). Upstream, downstream and wastewater effluent samples from three small streams in the Rhine catchment were evaluated. Masses (159 positive, 137 negative mode) were prioritized for data-dependent MS/MS acquisition using peak picking, componentization and pattern analysis. Meaningful MS/MS was obtained for 182 (92 positive, 90 negative) of these masses, respectively. Of these, 28 and 16 (positive, negative) were prioritized as potentially high exposure and/or high risk substances from compiled (and partially confidential) registration data (S. Fischer, KEMI, Sweden, *pers. comm.*). Identification has yielded 5 confirmed, 5 probable and 27 tentative (structural) identifications (84 % of peaks with MS/MS), clearly showing the benefit of the increased metadata and mass spectral exchange. The entire SOLUTIONS non-target workflow greatly expedites high-throughput non-target screening and has huge potential to assist prioritization of substances for identification purposes.

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Solvent based Selective Titration Reagents for High Affinity Complexometric Titrations

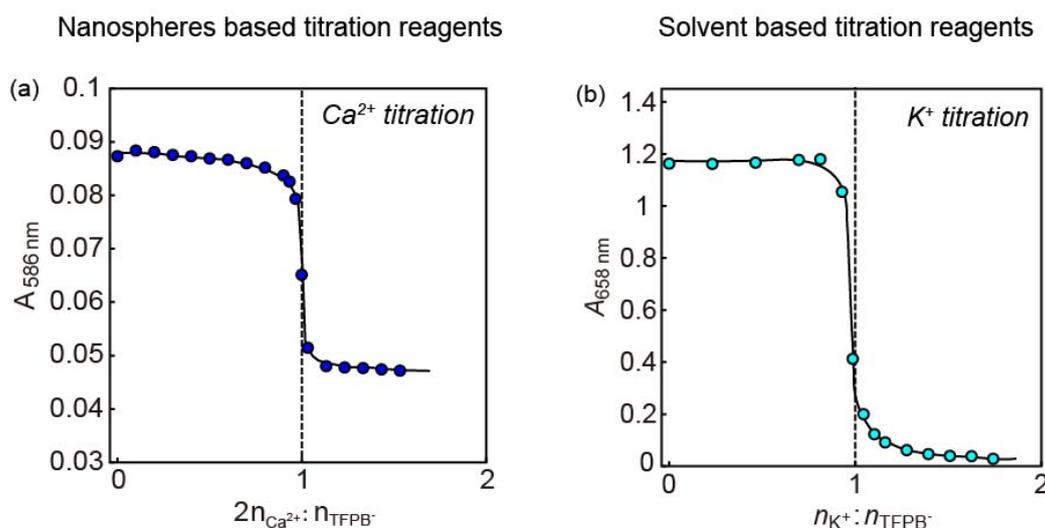
J. Zhai¹, E. Bakker^{1*}

¹University of Geneva

Complexometric titration is a mature analytical technique that is being used and taught all over the world in analytical science. Titrations are routinely used to determine ion concentration, speciation as well as complexation reactions in various fields such as environmental, clinical and bioanalytical chemistry. Traditionally, the titrations are performed with water soluble reagents such as EDTA. However, their pH dependent complexing ability and rather rigid selectivity remains problematic.

Recently, we reported ion selective nanospheres as a novel class of titration reagents capable of moving the titration process from homogeneous phase to heterogeneous phase.^{[1] [2] [3]} Based on the ion exchange principle, the water soluble ions can be exchanged into the lipophilic core of the nanospheres which extends the use of lipophilic ionophores with high selectivity and sensitivity. Both the chelating and indicating nanospheres can be designed to be pH independent. However, only the ionophores with high affinity to the analyte could be successfully applied because of the relatively polar microenvironment of the nanospheres. Calcium and lead titrations were successfully demonstrated (Figure a).^[4]

To expand the palette of useful ionophores by including those with relatively lower affinity for the analyte, solvent based titration reagents are presented here. An organic solvent doped with ionophore, ion exchanger and chromoionophore may also serve as titration reagent. With high amount of the ion exchanger and small amount of chromoionophore, the solvent based titration reagents possess the ability to act both as chelators and indicators. The use of organic solvent increased the affinity of the ionophores compared with the abovementioned nanospheres. The solvent based method also increased the doping capacity of the sensing components compared to the nanospheres (Figure b). Potassium, sodium and lithium titrations were successfully demonstrated by using solvent based reagents. Potassium concentrations in human serum were also accurately determined.



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New SI-traceable reference gas mixtures for sulfur hexafluoride (SF₆) at the pmol/mol level

S. A. Wyss¹, S. Reimann¹, M. Vicar³, M. K. Vollmer¹, C. Pascale², G. Nieuwenkamp⁴, B. Niederhauser², L. Emmenegger^{1*}

¹Laboratory for Air Pollution and Environmental Technology, Empa, Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Science and Technology, Dübendorf, Switzerland, ²Laboratory Gas Analysis, METAS, Federal Institute of Metrology, Bern, Switzerland, ³Department of primary metrology of pressure, vacuum and low mass flow rate, Czech Metrology Institute, Brno, Czech Republic, ⁴VSL, Delft, The Netherlands

We developed a SI-traceable method to produce reference gas mixtures for sulfur hexafluoride (SF₆) at pmol/mol. This research activity is conducted under the framework of the European EMRP HIGHGAS project, in support of the measurements of this important greenhouse gas in the Earth's atmosphere.

First, the single component mixture of SF₆ in synthetic air, which is a widely used gaseous dielectric in gas insulated switchgear power installations [1], was gravimetrically generated at a mole fraction of approximately 1 μmol/mol according to ISO 6142 and was pressurised into an aluminium cylinder at VSL.

In a second step this primary mixture was further dynamically diluted to the pmol/mol level. Two systems were independently developed and were checked for their performance in the course of this project. The first one was produced by the Federal Institute of Metrology (METAS) achieving the final molar fractions with a two-step dilution system, whereas the Czech Metrology Institute (CMI) used a three-step dilution system. In both systems the dilution is controlled by mass flow controllers. The final gas mixtures at near-ambient mole fraction, in the pmol/mol range, were measured with the use of a Medusa gas chromatography-mass spectrometry system (Medusa-GC/MS) against working standards calibrated on existing scales of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography (SIO) [2].

For both systems the assigned value of the primary reference mixture in the μmol/mol range was in excellent agreement with the measured values. This shows the ability of producing accurate SI-traceable standards at the pmol/mol level without laborious static dilution steps and could be a breakthrough in the efficient and precise production of standards, e.g. for newly emerging halogenated greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

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Nucleotide and nucleotide sugar quantification in cell extracts by capillary electrophoresis

B. BucSELLA¹, A. Fornage¹, D. Brühlmann², F. Kálmán^{1*}

¹University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Western Switzerland (HES-SO Valais-Wallis), ²BioTechnology and Innovation, Merck Serono SA, Route de Fenil 25, 1804 Corsier-sur-Vevey

In biotechnological processes the intracellular level of nucleotides and nucleotide sugars has direct impact on the post-translational modification (glycosylation) of therapeutic protein products and on the exopolysaccharide pattern of the cells. Thus, they are precursors and also key components in the production of glycoproteins and glycolipids [1].

The nucleotides and their sugar derivatives coexist in biological samples. Therefore, their simultaneous determination in biotechnological samples is reasonable and challenging. The most common approaches are the high pH anion exchange liquid chromatography [2], reverse-phase liquid chromatography [3] and capillary electrophoretic techniques [4]. The reported separation performance with even high performance LC methods is often not sufficient.

In our study nucleotides (AMP, CMP, GMP, ATP, ADP, GTP, CTP, GDP, UMP, UTP, UDP) and nucleotide sugars (GDP-Glc, UDP-GlcNAc, UDP-Glc, UDP-GalNAc, UDP-Gal) are analyzed with capillary electrophoresis similarly to [5]. The extracted nucleotides and sugar derivatives are separated in back ground buffer (pH 9.5) of 40mM borate containing 1% PEG (MW=35'000Da) under 30kV separation voltage. The capillary (ID=50µm, total length=75.7cm, length to the detection window=67.2cm) was treated with dynamic coating from CEofix Carbo Kit (Analis SA, Belgium). They are detected by direct detection at 260nm with an LOQ of about 10µM. The high efficiency of CE allows the separation / quantification of all compounds, the use of the dynamic coating from CEofix Carbo Kit allows reproducible migration times (RSD 0.5%, n=14). Therefore, their quantification in the cell extracts is possible.

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Novel instrumentation for analysis of halogenated trace gases by GC-TOFMS (APRECON)

B. Spenger¹, M. K. Vollmer¹, M. Hill¹, S. A. Wyss¹, L. Emmenegger^{1*}, S. Reimann¹

¹Laboratory for Air Pollution and Environmental Technology, Empa, Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Science and Technology, Dübendorf, Switzerland

A variety of halogenated trace gases in the atmosphere are of anthropogenic origin and derive from usage as refrigerant, foam blowing agents and solvents. The chlorine and bromine bearing compounds are typically ozone depleting substances and most of the halogenated trace gases are potent greenhouse gases. The measurement of these is demanding, as they occur in low concentrations. Especially difficult is monitoring the time trend of the concentration for some phased-out substances is particularly difficult as they are often very stable causing the concentration to change very slowly. This requires high measurement precision and accuracy.

Our new APRECON (Advancend PRECONcentration) instrumentation provides high precision, high sensitivity and high throughput using a sophisticated preconcentration unit in combination with gas chromatography time-of-flight mass spectrometry (GC TOF MS). Prior to measurement the sample is preconcentrated by adsorption onto a polymer under cryogenic conditions (-180 °C) using a Stirling cooler. The sample amount is quantified barometrically which is more precise than using mass flow controllers. For desorptive heating the traps are decoupled from the cold head. This minimizes the overall heat input and results in a rapid subsequent cooling in preparation for the next sample preconcentration. The desorbed fraction is injected into a gas chromatograph (Agilent 7890B) where it is separated into its compounds and finally analyzed in a MS. For comparison we tested two different MS for this set up: A quadrupole and a TOF. The later shows significant advantages such as virtually simultaneous measurement of all masses during the entire acquisition time and a mass resolution in the 4'000 range enabling fractional masses rather than the integer resolution of a quadrupole. First results of continuous measurements at the urban site of Duebendorf will be presented.

A novel analytical peak fitting tool for the integration of very noisy or overlapped peaks (for the inexperienced users)

M.R. Mazenauer¹, C. Yeretian^{1*}

¹Zürich University of Applied Sciences, Institute of Chemistry and Biotechnology, Wädenswil

The analysis of volatile aroma compounds in products such as coffee is usually conducted by HS-GC-MS [1]. The complexity of the aroma leads to congested chromatograms with a large number of overlapping signals. As an additional challenge, many compounds appear only with very low intensities, near the limit of detection, and hidden by a strong noise. To extract information from such data, a reliable method for peak integration is needed.

Generally numeric peak integration is performed based on MS data. Each peak is defined by a start- and an end-point. Yet, for overlapped and/or noisy peaks, these are difficult to detect, leading to non-reproducible results. An alternative is analytical peak fitting, which circumvents the need of defining start- and end-point. Overlapped as well as very noisy peaks can easily be integrated individually. As an example for such an approach, the mathematical function published by Pap and Pápai [2], for describing chromatographic peaks, was considered as a starting point. Yet, this method has one big disadvantage. It requires a highly experienced user, with a high level of expertise in numerical mathematical least squares fitting and a profound knowing of probability density functions, in order to obtain accurate and reliable results.

The aim of the novel analytical peak fitting tool presented here was to develop a function, which enables for analytical peak fitting without prior knowledge, even in the presence of strong noise. This was integrated into an easy-to-use graphical user interface (figure). The function developed here is particularly suitable for the automatic, robust and fast analysis of chromatographic peaks, but was shown to give very good results for any peak shaped signal, such as spectroscopic peaks and electrochemical signals. The tool automatically estimates the number of peaks and their function coefficients, such that even inexperienced users can execute analytical peak fitting and therefore obtain reliable integration of overlapped and/or noisy peaks (plot window in figure). Batch processing of multiple samples is also possible as well. The time needed for each sample is usually below 0.5 s and the results are fully reliable, despite overlapping or noisy peaks. With this tool, analytical peak fitting becomes a good, reliable and fast alternative to conventional trapezoidal method for peak integration, also for users without prior knowledge.



Graphical user interface. The axes shows chromatographic data of coffee ($\Delta t_R = 40$ s). The signals are very noisy and overlapping. Five compounds were automatically detected and fitted in approx. 0.5 s.

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Can We Use Targeted Proteomics to Explore Dynamics in Glutathione S-Transferase Expression in Zebrafish Embryos?

A. Tierbach^{1,2}, K. Groh¹, K. Schirmer^{1,2}, M. Suter¹

¹Eawag, Dübendorf, ²EPFL, Lausanne

Zebrafish embryos are increasingly employed as alternative to the conventional acute fish toxicity test. One important requirement for the establishment of an alternative test model is that both models should be comparable in terms of uptake and biotransformation of xenobiotics. However, little is known about the expression of xenobiotic metabolizing enzymes in the developing zebrafish embryo.

In this study, we have developed a targeted proteomic approach to characterize the expression of Glutathione S-transferases. Selected members of the family were monitored in zebrafish embryos by mass spectrometry on the basis of proteotypic peptides and peptides characteristic for the enzyme groups of interest.

The basal expression of GSTs on the protein level was investigated at 4, 8, 24, 48, 72, 96, 120 hpf and compared to adult liver samples. Samples collected at 4 and 8 hpf were used to estimate the relevance of maternal mRNA transfer in zebrafish eggs - samples from the later time points give an insight into the dynamic of GST expression throughout the development. The expression pattern of selected GST enzymes is presented including members of the alpha and pi class - candidates that have been suggested to be involved in xenobiotic metabolism.

This study will help to fill existing knowledge gaps regarding the comparability of metabolic capacity of fish at different life stages.

Table-top XUV mass spectrometry for nano-scale chemical imaging

Y. Arbelo Pena¹, M. Ruiz¹, C. Cirelli¹, D. Bleiner^{1,2}

¹Empa Materials & Technology, ²University of Zürich

Optical lasers for solid micro-sampling, coupled to mass spectrometry, e.g. laser-ablation-ionization mass spectrometry imaging (MSI), have combined spatial resolution down to a few microns with extremely high chemical sensitivity. Advanced capabilities for accessing nano-scale resolution are important to investigate chemical zoning at the -interfaces. Enhanced spatial resolution implies adopting shorter lasers wavelengths [1], since the smallest spot is $\sim \lambda/2$. Beyond the UV/Vis region of laboratory lasers, radiation in the XUV as found at Synchrotron and X-ray Free-Electron Lasers (XFEL), offers the sought-for capability. They permit to tune the wavelength, but it is clear that they suffer from beamtime limitation. Ideally, advanced analytical technologies should be also non-destructive. Aim of this work was to demonstrate XUV-assisted mass spectrometry for nano-scale imaging in a table-top setup in our home-lab.

A complete setup is shown in Fig. 1, as used for the XUV-assisted MSI measurements. A pseudospark XUV source was operated which gives, about 10^{13} photons/($2\pi sr$ pulse) (I between 7 nm and 16 nm) and repetition rate of up to 25 Hz. The source was operated with Ar at a pressure of 0.1 mbar and using an input voltage of 2.5 kV. The XUV radiation was delivered on Al samples using a Y/Mo-multilayer [2] that reflects about 30 % at 12 nm. A self-designed time-of-flight mass spectrometer was used as detector. The TOF spectrometer had a length of 500 mm and was based in 6 electrostatic lenses and one extraction/retarding electrode, all of them independently connected to 7 bipolar high voltage power supplies, adjusted in voltages from -50 V to 500 V. A Channeltron electron multiplier with gain of about 10^7 at 2.5 kV was used for the time-of-flight measurements. Fig. 2 shows preliminary analytical results irradiating a Al certified reference. XUV Al mass spectra show peaks for Al^{2+} and Al^+ , as well as for ions originated from residual gas and metallic trace impurities. It should be noted that these measurements were realized without focusing the XUV beam and without destruction of the sample.

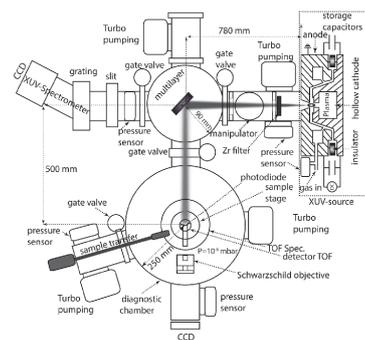


Fig. 1 Far field set up used to demonstrate XUV mass spectrometry. A Schwarzschild condenser and objective (NA=0.15 and expected resolution about 50 nm) are being integrated.

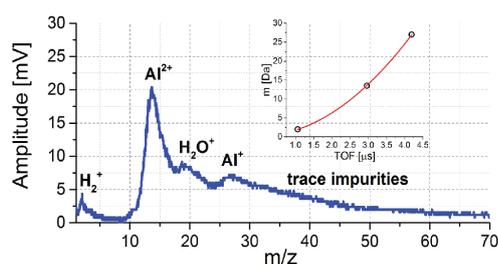


Fig. 2. XUV Al mass spectrum and calibration curve obtained for the TOF spectrometer.

In conclusion: (i) this lab-scale set up allows obtaining XUV MSI at nano-scale (ii) XUV photons are able to efficiently sample even without focusing.

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Distribution and speciation of Ag, Ce and Ti in natural freshwaters

F. Piccapietra¹, A. Hofacker^{1,2}, L. Sigg¹, R. Behra¹

¹Eawag, Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology, CH-8600 Dübendorf, ²FOEN, Federal Office for the Environment, CH-3003 Bern

Engineered nanoparticles (NPs), including Ag, CeO₂ and TiO₂ NPs, are currently produced and incorporated in several consumer products. To evaluate risks related to their potential release into natural freshwaters from wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs), more information is urgently required on the natural background of the corresponding metals. Therefore, the aim of this project was to investigate the occurrence of Ag, Ce and Ti in natural freshwaters, focusing on their speciation and distribution among size fractions, and to evaluate possible anthropogenic inputs by comparing their occurrence up- and downstream of WWTPs.

Experimentally, we sampled several small streams in Switzerland before and after wastewater discharges. After successive filtrations (0.45 µm, 0.22 µm, 3kDa) and microwave assisted acid digestion, total, particulate and dissolved concentrations of Ag, Ce and Ti were determined by ICP-MS analysis. To further characterize dissolved and particulate fractions, we also used diffusive gradients in thin films (DGT) devices and we are currently testing and optimizing single-particle ICP-MS analysis. Additional experiments were carried out to investigate the bioaccumulation of Ag, Ce and Ti in biofilm communities of algae and bacteria collected at selected sites.

Ce and Ti were regularly detected in the particulate fraction and often in their dissolved form, even in the 3 kDa fraction, indicating the presence of very small Ce and Ti complexes, possibly stabilized by humic acids. Up- and downstream concentrations of Ti and Ce were similar at most sites. However, in few cases, Ti concentrations showed to be higher downstream compared to upstream, suggesting a possible discharge of anthropogenic Ti from the WWTPs. Ag was below the quantification limit in most of the considered water samples, but it was found to accumulate in the biofilms, confirming the potential of this approach to investigate the presence of target elements commonly expected at very low concentrations.

Deconvolution of chlorinated paraffins and their transformation products from DI-CE-APCI-qTOF mass spectra

L. Schinkel^{1,4}, S. Lehner^{1,2}, P. Lienemann², C. Bogdal³, K. McNeill⁴

¹Empa, Laboratory for Advanced Analytical Technologies, Überlandstrasse 129, 8600 Dübendorf, ²ZHAW, Institute of Chemistry and Biological Chemistry, Reidbach, 8820 Wädenswil, ³ETH Zürich, Institute for Chemical and Bioengineering, Vladimir-Prelog-Weg 1, 8093 Zürich, ⁴ETH Zürich, Institute of Biogeochemistry and Pollutant Dynamics, Universitätstrasse 16, 8092 Zürich

Chlorinated paraffins (CPs) are high production volume chemicals (1 Mio t/a in 2009) widely used as metal working fluids, plasticisers and flame retardants. They are of concern due to their persistence and bioaccumulation potential. Analysis of CPs in environmental samples is a challenge, but the analysis of their transformation products is a nightmare, considering the large number of congeners. Thus, information on environmental fate of selected congeners is limited. Recently, we developed a method overcoming the need for chromatographic separation using direct liquid injection (DI) and focussing on accurate mass determination [1]. Atmospheric pressure chemical ionisation (APCI) is applied under chlorine-enhanced (CE) conditions in negative ion mode followed by quadrupole time-of-flight (qTOF) mass spectrometry. This method allows rapid (Figure). In presence of chlorinated alkenes the respective isotopic distributions of the observed CP patterns are affected and vice versa. Here, we will present a deconvolution method that can be used to determine the relative contributions of CPs and respective alkenes within the measured pattern. The observed isotopic patterns are deconvoluted into a linear combination of both interfering patterns. After deconvolution, we are able to study alkane/alkene ratios and changes in chlorination degree after transformation and investigate corresponding transformation kinetics.

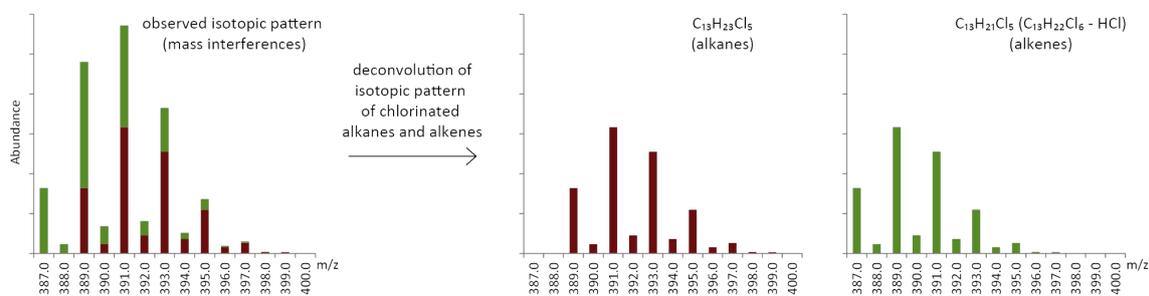


Figure: Principle of deconvolution of observed isotopic pattern into respective patterns of chlorinated alkanes (CP) and alkenes (transformation product).

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Biotransformation of chlorinated paraffins with LinA, a HCH-converting bacterial enzyme found in various *Sphingomonadacea*

S. Schalles^{1,3}, S. Lehner^{1,4}, L. Schinkel^{1,2}, I. Schilling^{2,5}, N. Heeb¹, C. Bogdal³, P. Lienemann⁴, K. McNeill^{2*}, H. E. Kohler^{5*}

¹Empa, Laboratory for Advanced Analytical Technologies, Überlandstrasse 129, 8600 Dübendorf, ²ETH, Institute of Biogeochemistry and Pollutant Dynamics, Universitätsstrasse 16, 8092 Zürich, ³ETH, Institute for Chemical and Bioengineering, Vladimir-Prelog-Weg 1, 8093 Zürich, ⁴ZHAW, Institute of Chemistry and Biological Chemistry, Reidbach, 8820 Wädenswil, ⁵Eawag, Department for Environmental Microbiology, Überlandstrasse 133, 8600 Dübendorf

Chlorinated paraffins (CPs) are like hexachlorocyclohexanes (HCHs) high production volume chemicals. CPs are produced at about 1 million t/y and widely used as polymer additives e.g. as flame retardants, plasticizers or metal working fluids. HCHs on the other hand have been widely used as insecticides with production rates up to 270,000 t/y in 1980. HCH production and use is now prohibited and HCHs are classified as persistent organic pollutants (POP) in the Stockholm Convention. A risk profile recently published for short-chain chlorinated paraffins (SCCPs) by the POP review committee concludes that SCCPs too are persistent, bioaccumulating and have substantial long-range transport potential. In our contribution we study the biotransformation of selected CPs with LinA, a HCH-converting bacterial enzyme found in various *Sphingomonadacea* (**Figure**). LinA shows dehydrohalogenase activity when exposed to HCHs and hexabromocyclododecanes (HBCDs) [1]. Our newly developed analytical method [2] which is based on direct injection chlorine-enhanced atmospheric pressure chemical ionisation quadrupole time-of-flight mass spectrometry (DI-CE-APCI-qTOF-MS) is well suited to study such biotransformation reactions. The applied analytical method which will be presented separately [3] is capable to resolve the various mass interferences occurring in spectra of CPs and their transformation products.



Figure: 3D ribbon model of trimeric LinA. The enzyme supports dehydrohalogenase activity as recently shown for HCHs and HBCDs [1].

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Tracking biotransformation of hexachlorocyclohexane isomers by compound-specific isotope analysis

I. Schilling^{1,2}, T. Hofstetter^{1,2}, H. E. Kohler^{1,2*}

¹Eawag, Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology, Ueberlandstrasse 133, 8600 Dübendorf, Switzerland, ²IBP, Institute of Biogeochemistry and Pollutant Dynamics, ETH Zürich, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland

Hexachlorocyclohexanes (HCHs) are frequently used in agriculture and medicine due to the pesticidal activity of the γ -isomer. The persistence of HCHs led to their frequent detection as diffuse pollution in the environment and as point sources at abandoned production and dumpsites. To date, production and use of HCHs is prohibited in many countries and the α -, β - and γ -isomers are listed as persistent organic pollutants in the Stockholm Convention. Remediation strategies rely on the biodegradation of HCH isomers under oxic conditions, which is initiated through a sequence of substitution and elimination reactions to chlorohydroquinones which are further metabolized via maleylacetate in the citric acid cycle.

In this work, we explore the use of compound-specific isotope analysis (CSIA) for assessing the extent and pathways of HCH biodegradation. As has been shown in studies with nitroaromatic compounds and fuel constituents such as methyl tert-butyl ether CSIA can give insight on the different predominant reaction mechanisms. To quantify the C- and H-kinetic isotope effects (KIEs) of HCH biodegradation by substitution and elimination reactions, we use experimental systems with purified LinA and LinB enzymes, originating from *Sphingobium japonicum* UT26 and *Sphingobium indicum* B90A, respectively. LinA and LinB are produced in our laboratory using arabinose and IPTG inducible expression systems in *E. coli* BI21 and are then purified via fast-protein liquid chromatography (FPLC). Concentration and isotope signatures of HCHs and reaction products are measured in GC/MS and in GC/IRMS systems, respectively.

Experiments with LinA2 and γ -HCH show that at low and high turnover, C-isotope fractionation can be detected in the substrate and the products. Current work focuses on adapting and improving the experimental setup for model systems [1], in order to quantify H-KIEs using a chromium-oxidation reactor. Furthermore, different γ -pentachlorocyclohexene (γ -PCCH) isomers are synthesized to determine the C-KIEs of single reaction steps.

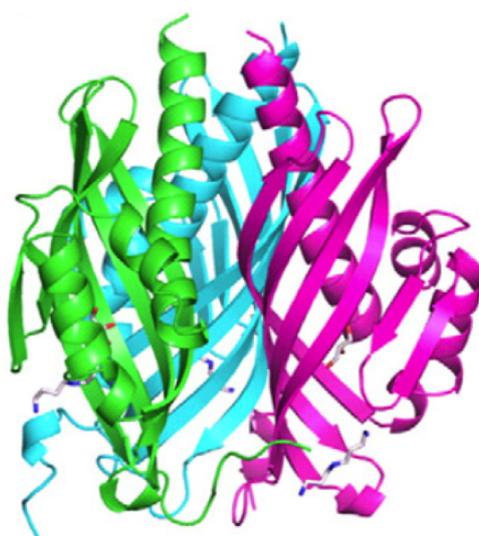


Figure 1: Structure of LinA from *S. japonicum* UT26 [2]

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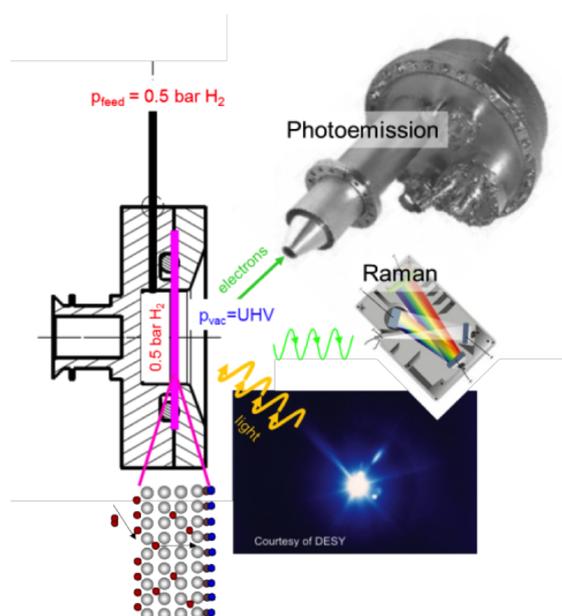
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The Swiss Army Knife of Analytics for Energy Storage

A. Borgschulte¹, D. Bleiner^{1*}

¹Laboratory 502 Advanced Analytical Technologies, Empa - Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Science & Technology, Dübendorf

Traditional chemical analytics was driven by pushing the detection limit towards ultralow concentrations. Recently, this target has been upgraded in the sense of detecting lowest concentrations at ultrahigh spatial and temporal resolution. There are several reasons: the chemical gradient is very high at interfaces, where different media meet, and complicated phenomena (e.g. segregation phenomena) can occur. These may be used in technical applications, such as pn-junctions to separate charge carriers, and the triple phase boundary in fuel cells, where gas, conductive solid, and electrolyte have to be in contact to each other. However, from the viewpoint of the analytical chemist, these surfaces and interfaces are most difficult to characterize: either, the required interaction volume of probe and sample is much smaller than needed for a proper signal-to-noise ratio (an example is X-ray diffraction), or, vice versa, the strong interaction of probe with sample allows characterization of a few monolayers, i.e., a surface, but is then hindered by the surrounding material. A typical example is photoelectron spectroscopy. Resolving the kinetics of chemical processes taking place in an atomically confined space adds another challenge. The analytical tool of the future will thus be a kind of Swiss Army knife, which has various blades being selective for each specific target. I will highlight the idea on examples, that is surface enhanced Raman spectroscopy on silver nano-particles produced in biofilms and photoemission on promotion of hydrogen desorption from palladium surfaces by fluoropolymer coating. In both cases the analytical tools have to be adapted: the bulk method Raman has to be made interface selective by surface plasmon interactions, the surface sensitive XPS had to be adapted to be compatible to “bulk” conditions. Here, we propose a smart combination of time resolved photoemission and Raman spectroscopy to unravel kinetic and dynamic phenomena at interfaces relevant in catalysis and electro-catalysis for energy applications. For this we are developing a table-top pulsed laser-plasma source providing EUV-photons for (ns) time-resolved photoemission and ns pulsed visible photons for time-resolved Raman spectroscopy.



Soft X-ray HEROS on photoactive materials

C. Cirelli¹, F. Barbato¹, Y. Arbelo Pena¹, A. Borgschulte¹, L. Mewes², D. Kinschel², C. Arrell², J. Budarz², D. Leuenberger³, B. D. Patterson^{1,1}, M. Chergui^{2*}, D. Bleiner^{1,4*}

¹Empa, Laboratory for Advanced Analytical Technology, Überlandstrasse 129, CH-8600, Dübendorf, Switzerland, ²EPFL, Laboratory of Ultrafast Spectroscopy, ISIC, Station 6, CH-1015, Lausanne, Switzerland, ³Physik-Institut, Universität Zürich, Winterthurerstrasse 190, CH-8057, Zürich, Switzerland, ⁴Department of Chemistry, University of Zurich, Winterthurerstrasse 190, CH-8057, Zürich, Switzerland

X-ray absorption spectroscopy (XAS) is a powerful tool to study the electronic structure of molecular species: e.g., valence charge distribution and state energies, symmetries and interactions of molecular orbitals as well as oxidation and spin state of selected ions. Its main strength is its elemental selectivity. High-brightness, short-pulse X-ray sources have opened the possibility of time-resolved, pump-probe XAS measurements of photo-active molecular species. But such measurements generally require a series of measurements in which, besides the pump-probe delay, also the incoming X-ray photon energy must be varied. The new “high energy resolution off-resonant spectroscopy” (HEROS) technique [1,2], in which a sample is irradiated at a fixed photon energy slightly below an absorption edge and the resulting X-ray emission spectrum (XES) is analyzed in terms of the Kramers-Heisenberg expression for resonant X-ray scattering, in effect allows a single-shot XAS spectrum to be obtained without varying the incident X-ray energy [2].

In the present work we show the first application of the HEROS technique to soft X-rays, with the purpose of investigating time dependent chemical processes such as charge transfers, spin changes or photocatalytic reactions at the molecular level. Soft X-rays represent the ideal probe when the concentration of the interacting center is reduced, like in the case of thin films and interfaces or single molecules in solution, due to their high absorption cross section.

We have performed experiments at the GASPHASE beamline of the Elettra synchrotron facility in Trieste, using a high resolution XES spectrometer optimized for operation in the soft X-ray energy range [3].

After first test experiments on crystalline and amorphous solid samples aimed to identify the optimal incident X-ray energy for soft X-ray HEROS, we focused on the response of organic molecular systems diluted in solvents. Particularly, we measured static HEROS spectra of polypyridil-based iron complexes [4, 5] and PV cyanine borate dyes [6].

Based on these preliminary results, pump-probe studies will be performed by exciting electronic states and charge transfer dynamics in the same systems with femtosecond laser pulses (pump) and probing the delay-dependent response of Co 3d and B 1s orbitals with core level HEROS spectroscopy.

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Table-top pseudo-spark XUV source for energy dispersive absorption spectroscopyF. Barbato¹, C. Cirelli¹, B. D. Patterson¹, D. Bleiner^{1,2*}

¹Empa, Laboratory for Advanced Analytical Technology, Überlandstrasse 129, CH-8600, Dübendorf, Switzerland, ²Department of Chemistry, University of Zurich, Winterthurerstrasse 190, CH-8057, Zürich, Switzerland

X-ray absorption spectroscopy (XAS) is a powerful tool extensively used to study the chemical state and the local geometric and electronic structure of matter [1]. XAS offers the attractive capability to investigate the atomic environment of each separate element in a compound because it is non-destructive and elemental sensitive. Moreover, structures can be determined from samples that are both crystalline and amorphous [2]. The standard procedure is based on the measurement of the incoming and transmitted photon flux through the sample while scanning the energy across the absorption edge with a monochromatic beam. This is possible only at large scale facilities like synchrotrons able to offer tunable and monochromatic X-ray radiation.

There is thus a strong motivation to develop small laboratory scale systems to allow a larger number of researchers to explore new field of applications. To date available table top extreme ultraviolet (XUV or EUV) sources are not easily tunable, thus making energy scanning infeasible. A possible alternative is offered by the use of energy dispersive X-ray absorption [3]. The main advantage of such scheme is the simultaneous acquisition of all energies in a single-shot, which brings the additional advantage of being suited for time-resolved measurement. For instance in-situ energy reactions can be followed with a time resolution in the order of millisecond [6]. In the present work a table-top setup, composed by a source and a high resolution spectrometer, is tested as an energy dispersive absorption tool. The system operates in the EUV range, from 12 eV to 30 eV (12 - 5 nm). Several transition metals have *L* and *M*-edge in the EUV range. Studying the absorption spectra in this energy range is not easy due to the strong absorption of the element for EUV energies. But at the same time the use of EUV radiation makes the technique chemical sensitive, due to the inner shell electrons excited by such energies that are well defined and different in energy for each element [4,5].

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Gaining a Comprehensive Picture of Transformation Products formed during Wastewater Treatment Processes

J. E. Schollée^{1,3}, E. L. Schymanski¹, M. Bourgin¹, S. E. Avak^{2,1}, R. Teichler¹, C. S. McArdell^{1*}, J. Hollender^{1,3*}

¹Department of Environmental Chemistry, Eawag, Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology, Switzerland, ²Department of Chemistry, University of Zurich, Switzerland, ³Institute of Biogeochemistry and Pollutant Dynamics, ETH Zurich, Switzerland

It is known that thousands of compounds end up in wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) and it is estimated that about half of these may be present in the effluent since they are either resistant to treatment or form transformation products (TPs) [1]. These unintended TPs therefore, through their discharge, may affect downstream aquatic communities or contaminate drinking water supplies. Lab studies and target screening can only provide a limited picture of the compounds present because many TPs are unknown. This project focused on nontarget screening methods using statistical tools to analyze data collected with liquid chromatography coupled to high-resolution tandem mass spectrometry (LC-HRMS/MS). The aim of this work was to characterize nontarget peaks at different points in a WWTP, prioritize peaks through a combination of statistics and chemical logic, and to identify new micropollutants.

Samples were collected at a full-scale WWTP after conventional activated sludge treatment, ozonation, and various post-treatments (e.g., sand filtration and granulated activated carbon). Data pre-processing included peak picking, profile building, and isotope/adduct clustering [2]. Nontarget peaks were classified into potential parent compounds and potential TPs with principal component analysis (PCA). Links between these groups were explored using known biotransformation (for activated sludge treatment) or chemical (for ozonation) reactions and a tentative transformation type was assigned. Compounds not falling into either of these categories were further investigated as possible persistent compounds.

The highest number of features was detected at the influent of the WWTP (14,268), and generally decreased along the treatment train. From the four ozone doses investigated (*i.e.*, 2, 3, 4, and 5 mg/L O₃), the highest number of features were found at 3 mg/L, but characteristics of nontarget peaks after ozonation were not substantially different in retention time, *m/z*, or intensity. Most commonly detected transformation from activated sludge was hydroxylation, while most common across the ozone doses was demethylation. There was little to no observable difference between the influent and effluent of the post-treatments and no peak classification could be done with PCA. From the biological treatment an unknown surfactant series was detected which was then eliminated during ozonation. Overall, results demonstrate that by applying a comprehensive workflow designed for nontarget analysis, relevant compounds can be found and unknown TPs can be identified.

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A computational workflow for elucidating phytoplankton biotransformation using LC-HRMS

M. A. Stravs^{1,2}, F. Pomati¹, J. Hollender^{1,2*}

¹Department of Environmental Chemistry, Eawag, Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology, Switzerland, ²Institute of Biogeochemistry and Pollutant Dynamics, ETH Zurich, Switzerland

Green algae and cyanobacteria, as part of the phytoplankton, are an important component of the biosphere in lakes and marine ecosystems. Despite their abundance and diversity, it is largely unknown if and how phytoplankton species contribute to the biotransformation of polar organic pollutants. However, recent reports have suggested an involvement of photosynthetically active organisms in the degradation of plant protection products [1]. Because of their diversity in metabolic functions as well as the scarce information available, unexpected transformation products could likely be found.

The advent of high-resolution mass spectrometry (HRMS) has spurred the development of a variety of computational tools for different tasks in the detection and structure elucidation of transformation products, using both suspect screening of hypothetical transformation products generated from transformation rules, and non-target screening for detection of possible transformation products via e.g. time trends.

With a set of 20 pesticides and pharmaceuticals, we investigated the biotransformation of model species *Microcystis aeruginosa*, and *Synechococcus* sp. (both cyanobacteria), and *Chlamydomonas reinhardtii* (unicellular green alga). We used a combination of computational approaches with LC-HRMS/MS data to detect transformation products and elucidate their structure: potential transformation products were detected through suspect screening and/or time trend analysis using R scripts and packages developed in-house [2], and spectra were acquired in positive and negative mode with 9 collision energies (15-180 NCE). For structure elucidation, we combined structure generation using MOLGEN [3] or SMIRKS reaction rules [4] with spectral simulation using CFM-ID [5] and MetFrag [6], as well as automatic spectrum annotation and shifting using RMassBank [7]. The used workflow was made accessible as an R package (<https://github.com/meowcat/RMassScreening>).

Using the workflow, we were able to detect and elucidate different classes of novel transformation products, among them multiple methylation products as well as amino acid conjugates.

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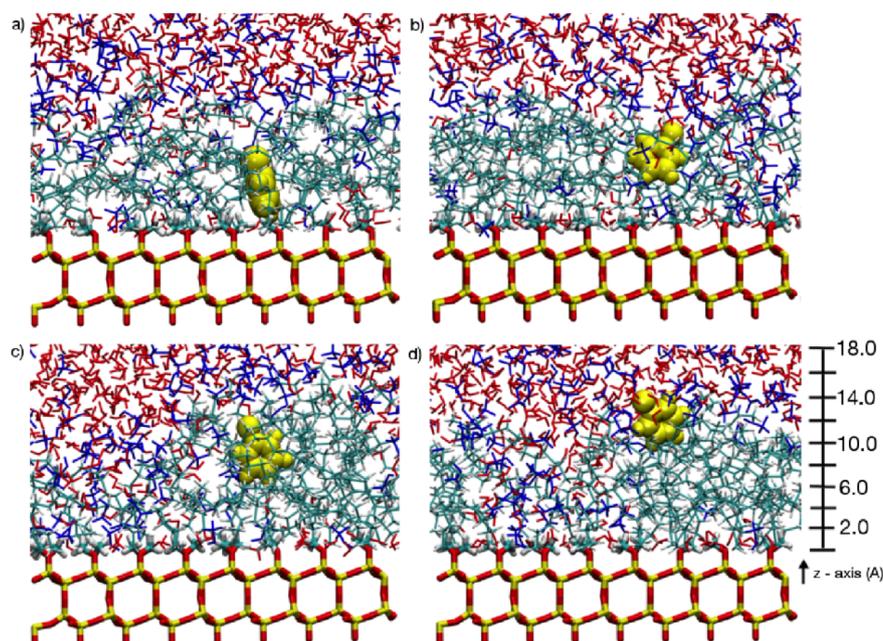
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Quantitative Atomistic Simulations of Solute Intercalation in Reversed Phase Liquid Chromatography

K. El Hage¹, M. Meuwly^{1*}

¹Department of Chemistry, University of Basel

The separation mechanism in reversed-phase liquid chromatography (RPLC) is based on interactions between the solute and its environment which includes the solvent mixture and the functionalized alkyl chains chemically bonded to the support surface. [1] Despite the seemingly “simple” chemical composition of such systems, the atomistic understanding underlying the separation process remains elusive since the system is highly dynamical, heterogeneous and disordered.[2,3,4] During elution, the alkyl chains are highly flexible which modulates the intermolecular interactions at the stationary/mobile interface which significantly influences retention and chemical selectivity.[2-5] Recent work has shown that atomistic simulations with accurate force fields are ideally suited to describe the thermodynamics of complex systems.[6] Hence, in the present study the thermodynamics of intercalation of a range of benzene-derivatives is studied using state-of-the-art atomistic simulations. The compounds include halogenated benzenes (PhX where X=F, Cl), phenol, nitrobenzene and toluene for which experimental data in C18 columns and different solvent mixtures is available.[1] Simulations (see Figure for desorption of PhCl from the surface) allow to explicitly determine the hydration free energy for desorption from the surface which is directly compared with the experimentally measured partition coefficients.[1] This provides the basis for an atomistically resolved picture of solute desorption from the surface in RPLC.



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Advanced Trace Analysis Bridging Industrial Scientific Challenges

R. Figi¹, C. Schreiner¹, M. Bürki¹, O. Nagel¹, H. Hagendorfer¹, Y. Romanyuk¹, P. Wäger¹, A. N. Tiwari¹, D. Bleiner^{1*}

¹Empa - Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Science, Advanced Analytical Technologies
Überlandstrasse 129, 8600 Dübendorf - Switzerland

The industry is confronted with a number of challenges, which often require the advanced capabilities of a research laboratory. In this poster two flag projects are discussed.

For the solar cell industry and RD, knowledge of the major to trace elements concentration is crucial for the performance. The quantitative analytical determination of different photo-cell types such as **CIGS** (Copper, Indium, Gallium, DiSelenide) and **CZTS** (Copper, Zinc, TinSulfide), especially their impurities such as Na, K, Rb, Al, is a real challenge. The latter requires a complete understanding of the sample preparation, of the instrumental analysis, in order to obtain a robust information coverage.

In fact, for the dissolving processes of the solar cells two different procedures were used. For the CIGS cells a mixture of HNO₃ / H₂O₂ is used whereas for the CZTS¹ cells reversed aqua regia was preferred. For the main elements the quantification was carried out by ICP-OES (inductively coupled plasma emission spectrometry). Sulfur and trace elements (Na, K, Rb, Al) were measured by means QQQ-ICP-MS (triple quadrupole inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry) using the reaction cell with different reaction gases such as He and O₂. The poster will highlight the advanced character of these analysis and how the combination of multiple techniques resulted decisive to drastically advance the analytical capabilities.

Data on primary and secondary raw materials are available in Europe, but scattered amongst a variety of institutions including government agencies, universities, NGOs and industry. By establishing an EU Information Network (EUIN), the project will coordinate efforts to collect secondary CRM data and collate maps of stocks and flows for materials and products of the "urban mine". The scope is the particularly relevant sources for secondary CRMs: Electrical and electronic equipment, vehicles, batteries and mining tailings. The project will construct a comprehensive inventory identifying, quantifying and mapping CRM stocks and flows at national and regional levels across Europe. Via a user-friendly, open-access Urban Mine Knowledge Data Platform (EU-UMKDP), it will communicate the results online and combine them with primary raw materials data from the on-going Minerals4EU project. To maintain and expand the EU-UMKDP in the future, it will provide update protocols, standards and recommendations for additional statistics and improved reporting on CRM's in waste flows required.

The development of consistent advanced analytical methods for the determination of traces and ultra traces of raw materials such as rare earth elements (REE) and more is necessary for the creation of the database.

Features of KF and NaF Postdeposition Treatments of Cu(In, Ga)Se₂. Absorbers for High Efficiency Thin Film Solar Cells

Patrick Reinhard, Benjamin Bissig, Fabian Pianezzi, Enrico Avancini, Harald Hagendorfer, Debora Keller, Peter Fuchs, Max Döbeli, Carlos Vigo, Paolo Crivelli, Shiro Nishiwaki, Stephan Buecheler, Ayodhya N Tiwari, *Chemistry of Materials* 2015, 16, 5755-5764.