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► **To cite this version:**

Nadia Bouzid, Christelle Anquetil, Rachid Dris, Johnny Gasperi, Bruno Tassin, et al.. Quantification of Microplastics by Pyr-GC-MS in Sediments: Challenges and Implications. SETAC Europe 32nd Annual Meeting, May 2022, Copenhagen, Denmark. hal-03675605

**HAL Id: hal-03675605**

**<https://hal.science/hal-03675605>**

Submitted on 23 May 2022

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# Quantification of Microplastics by Pyrolysis GC-MS in Sediments: Challenges and Implications

Nadia Bouzid<sup>1</sup>, Christelle Anquetil<sup>2</sup>, Rachid Dris<sup>1</sup>, Johnny Gasperi<sup>3</sup>, Bruno Tassin<sup>1</sup>, Sylvie Derenne<sup>2</sup>

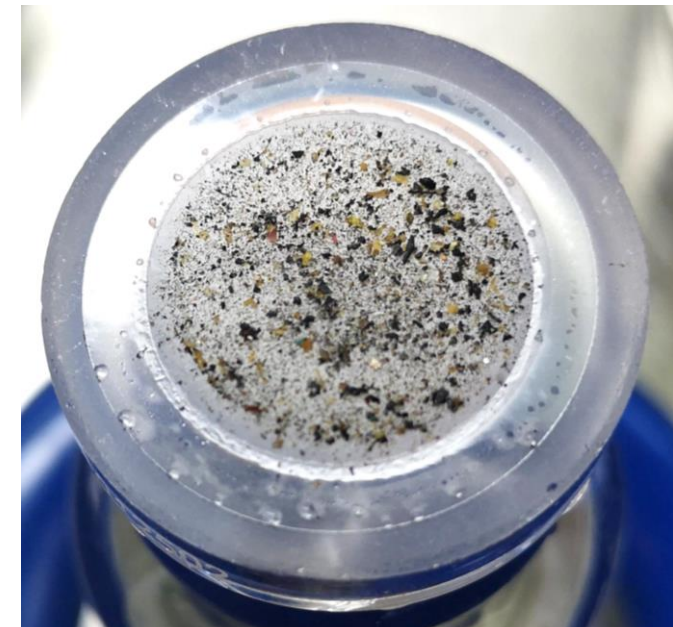
<sup>1</sup>Leesu, Ecole des Ponts, Université Paris Est Créteil, <sup>2</sup>UMR METIS, Sorbonne Université, <sup>3</sup>LEE, Université Gustave Eiffel

**Introduction** The conventionally used protocols of density separation followed by digestion of organic matter do not allow for complete isolation of MP from the associated organic and mineral matter. This effect is important to consider when using Pyr-GC/MS for the **quantification** of MP in sediment samples because it can generate interferences.

## Treatment steps efficiency on a sediment sample?

Density separation + organic matter digestion

10 g dried sediment



Residue analyzed by FT-IR imaging

2% of particles identified as a plastic polymer

## △ interferences

Organic matter may release the same pyrolysis products as the targeted polymers

Mineral fraction could adsorb pyrolysis products during pyrolysis

## Method

① Indicator compounds for PP, PS, PET and PVC reviewed and selected<sup>1</sup> taking into account potential interactions with substances present in the residue after treatment

## ② Matrix effect in Pyr-GC-MS

Pyrolysis cups for calibration curves prepared by weighing polymer particles from 1 to 30 µg and adding inert matrix or sediment matrix

Polymer particles + inert matrix

Polymer particles + sediment matrix



Additional pyrolysis cups were prepared with fixed amount of polymer particles and increasing amount of matrix sediment

20 µg of polymer particles + 1 to 9 mg sediment

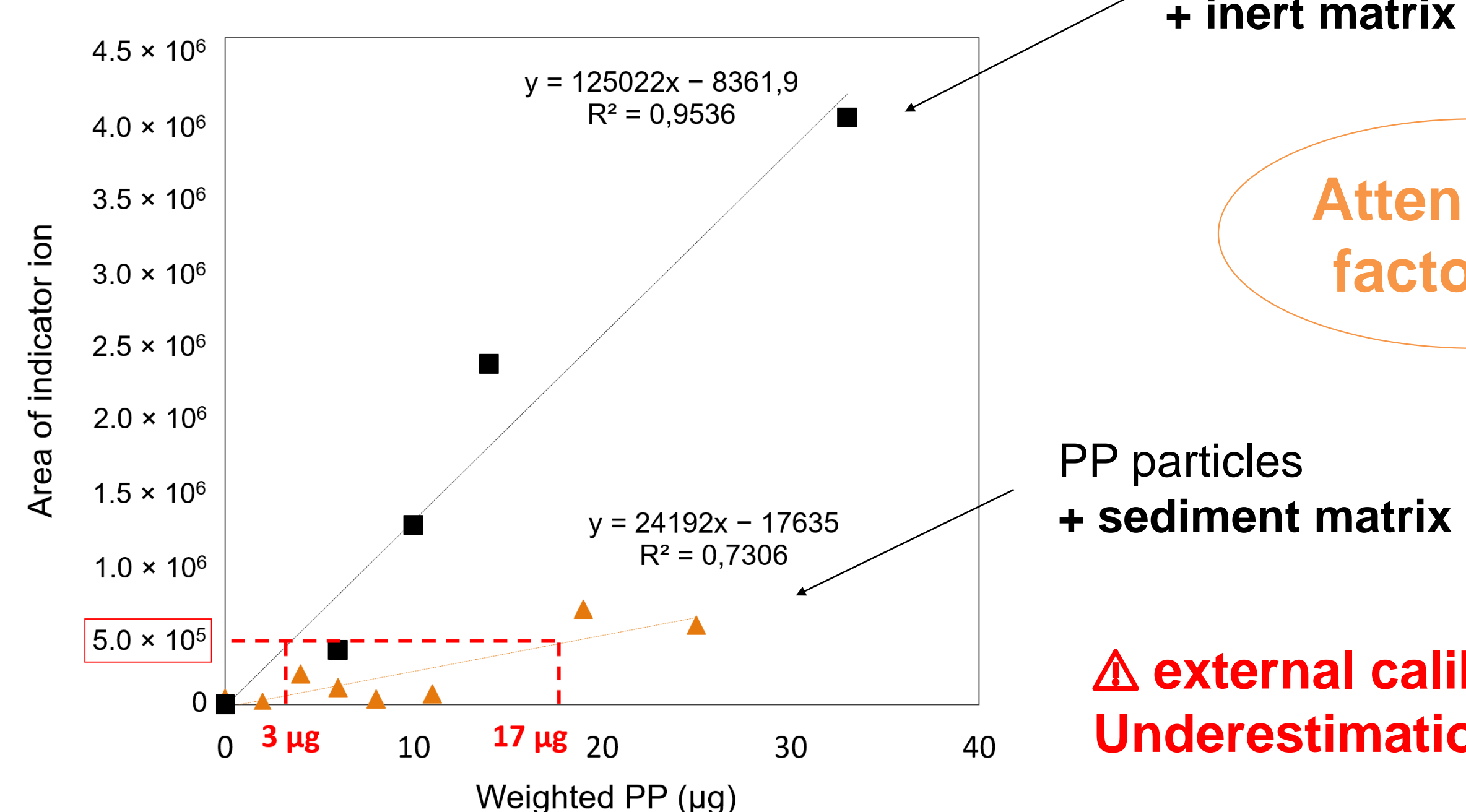
Matrix effects depend on the matrix mass?



Polymer particles + quartz wool

## Results

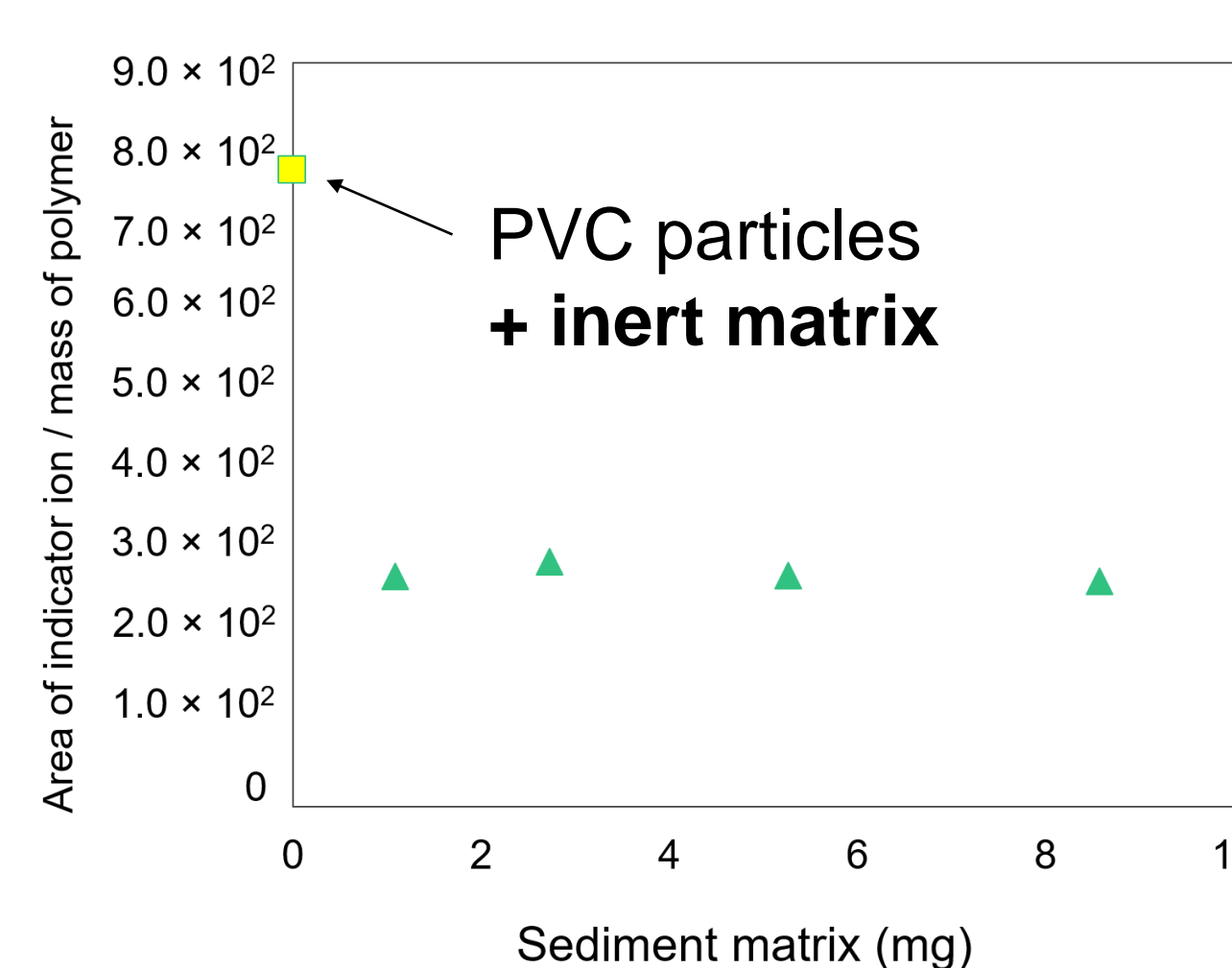
PP indicator compound  
2,4-dimethyl-1-hept-1-ene m/z 70



△ external calibration curves: Underestimation of PP mass

The attenuation reflects the adsorption of the pyrolysis product onto or within clay sheets, as reported in the literature<sup>2,3</sup>.

PVC indicator compound  
chlorobenzene m/z 112



Constant attenuation indicating that the matrix effect does not depend on the amount of matrix

**Conclusion** The establishment of calibration curves in the presence of a sediment matrix has highlighted an attenuation of the signal for PP, PS, and PVC. Because of potential interferences with residual organic matter and mineral matrix effects, the use of an **internal standard** is emerging as a prerequisite for the quantification of plastic polymers in complex environmental samples such as sediments.

## Literature cited

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## Acknowledgments

This study was carried out in the framework of the Sedi-Plast research program funded by the French Research Agency (ANR-19-CE34-0012).



Sedi-PLAST

