

Interactions between metals, microbes and plants – Bioremediation of arsenic and lead contaminated soils

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CONTENTS

PREFACE	4
ABSTRACT	5
LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS	6
ABBREVIATIONS	7
DEFINITIONS OF TERMS	8
1. INTRODUCTION	9
1.1 Toxic metals in soil-microbe systems	9
1.1.1 Sources of metals in soils	9
1.1.2 Toxic metals and toxicity mechanisms	9
1.1.3 Biosensors	10
1.1.4 Microbial transformations	12
1.1.5 Microbial activity and community structure in metal contaminated soils	13
1.2 Arsenic in the environment	15
1.2.1 Arsenic species in soil	15
1.2.2 Biological properties of arsenic and its compounds	15
1.2.3 Influence of microbes on the speciation of arsenic	16
1.2.4 Bioavailability of arsenic in contaminated soils	18
1.3 Lead in the environment	19
1.3.1 Properties of lead	19
1.3.2 Phytoremediation of lead	19
2. AIMS OF THE RESEARCH	21
3. MATERIALS AND METHODS	22
3.1. Sampling sites	22
3.2. Speciation and mobility of arsenic	23
3.3. Bioavailability measurements	24
3.4. Microbial activity and community structure measurements	24
3.5. Phytostabilization of lead	24
3.6. Phytostabilization of arsenic	25
3.7. Methods used in this study	25
4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	27
4.1. Speciation and mobility of arsenic in soil	27
4.2. Bioavailability of As(V) in contaminated soils	28
4.3. Microbial activity and community structure in arsenic, chromium and copper contaminated soils	29
4.4. Phytostabilization of lead	31
4.5. Phytostabilization of arsenic	32
5. CONCLUSIONS – ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE	36
6. REFERENCES	37

PREFACE

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ABSTRACT

Arsenic (As) and lead (Pb) are common inorganic toxicants at contaminated sites. Arsenic, like many other elements in soils, is subject to microbial transformations. For instance, reduction and methylation of arsenic by bacteria can form gaseous arsines leading to volatilization of arsenic or to mineralization of organic arsenic compounds to inorganic arsenic. These transformations influence arsenic cycling and accumulation in the soil. Accumulation of arsenic in soils is of great concern due to its toxicity and potential to contaminate groundwater. Also, because arsines are the most toxic forms of arsenic, their assessment in contaminated environment is important.

Assessment of mobility and bioavailability of lead in soils is also important as lead can pose significant groundwater or ecological risks in the environment. In lead contaminated soils, biota and vegetation influence the transformations of lead together with environmental parameters such as soil pH and organic matter content. In boreal forest soils, which are rich in humic material and have a podsollic stratification, lead contamination is mainly restricted to surface soil and is gradually passed down to the mineral horizon.

In order to increase the success of bioremediating contaminated soils, it is important to have a better understanding of how microbial populations and plants respond to elevated metal concentrations. In this study, the influence of microbes on the speciation of arsenic and production of arsines in contaminated soils was investigated under laboratory conditions. The volatilization process of arsenic was studied also in the field, in a landfill area where arsenic contaminated soils were temporarily stored. Because ionic species [in soils mainly as As(V)] may be mainly responsible for the biological effects of arsenic in soils, a previously developed luminescent As(III)-specific sensor bacterium was tested for its applicability for analysis of As(V) bioavailability in contaminated soil samples. Also, the effects of arsenic, chromium (Cr) and copper (Cu) contamination on the microbial community structure, potential microbial activity and arsenic-resistance were investigated in soils of long contaminated and abandoned wood impregnating plants. In addition, the effects of pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) on the solubility, mobility and bioavailability of lead in boreal forest soil were investigated in laboratory microcosms.

The results of this study revealed that microbes were able to carry out reactions resulting in changes in the speciation of arsenic in soil. The field results of the contaminated landfill area indicated that the concentrations of gaseous arsines may become high in the soil air, although the dominating species in soil was As(V). In addition, our experiments showed that leaching of arsenic to soil water may be largely driven by microbial activity. In contrast, pine seedlings were able to reduce the solubility, mobility and bioavailability of lead in contaminated boreal forest soil, indicating that pine has a major role in the immobilization of lead. Therefore, deep rooted plants, such as pine, can be used to reduce the risk of groundwater lead contamination through phytostabilization.

The phospholipid fatty acid (PLFA) and terminal restriction fragment (t-RFLP) analyses and microbial activity measurements indicated that microbes are able to adapt to arsenic, chromium and copper contamination and maintain the metabolic activity through changes in microbial community structure and selection for resistance. However, the bioavailability of arsenic was highly site-specific and for this reason similar inputs of arsenic had differing effects on soil microbial populations.

LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

This thesis is based on the following papers, which in the text are referred to by their Roman numerals.

- I Turpeinen, R., Pansar-Kallio, M., Häggblom, M., Kairesalo, T. Influence of microbes on mobilization, toxicity and biomethylation of arsenic in soil. *The Science of the Total Environment* 236 (1999) 173-180.
- II Turpeinen, R., Pansar-Kallio, M., Kairesalo, T. Role of microbes in controlling the speciation of arsenic and production of arsines in contaminated soils. *The Science of the Total Environment* 285 (2002) 133-145.
- III Turpeinen, R., Virta, M., Häggblom, M.M. Analysis of arsenic bioavailability in contaminated soils. (submitted manuscript)
- IV Turpeinen, R., Kairesalo, T., Häggblom, M.M. Microbial activity and community structure in arsenic, chromium and copper contaminated soils. (submitted manuscript)
- V Turpeinen, R., Salminen, J., Kairesalo, T. Solubility, mobility and bioavailability of lead in contaminated boreal forest soil. *Environmental Science&Technology* 34 (2000) 5152-5156.

ABBREVIATIONS

As	arsenic, elemental
CA	sodium cacodylate
CCA	chromated copper arsenate
Cr	chromium, elemental
Cu	copper, elemental
CFU	colony forming units
DMA	dimethylarsine
DMAA	dimethyl arsinic acid
DOC	dissolved organic carbon
EC ₅₀ value	effective concentration giving 50 % inhibition of light output
FAME	fatty acid methyl ester
HG-AAS	hydride generation atomic absorption spectrometry
IC-ICP-MS	ion chromatography-inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry
MMA	monomethylarsine
MMAA	monomethyl arsonic acid
Pb	lead, elemental
PLFA	phospholipid fatty acids
TMA	trimethylarsine
TMAO	trimethyl arsine oxide
t-RFLP	terminal restriction fragment length polymorphism

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The abbreviations As(III) and As(V) are used for arsenic in oxidation states +3 (arsenite) and +5 (arsenate).

The abbreviations for hydrated ionic forms are presented as charged species. For example, Pb^{2+} presents the hydrated form $[\text{Pb}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_6]^{2+}$. As^{3+} presents the anions of arsenious acid and As^{5+} presents the anions of arsenic acid.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Toxic metals in soil-microbe systems

1.1.1. Sources of metals in soils

Mineral rock weathering and anthropogenic sources provide two of the main types of metal inputs to soils. According to Ross (1994) the anthropogenic sources of metal contamination can be divided to five main groups: (1) metalliferous mining and smelting (arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury); (2) industry (arsenic, cadmium, chromium, cobalt, copper, mercury, nickel, zinc); (3) atmospheric deposition (arsenic, cadmium, chromium, copper, lead, mercury, uranium); (4) agriculture (arsenic, cadmium, copper, lead, selenium, uranium, zinc); and (5) waste disposal (arsenic, cadmium, chromium, copper, lead, mercury, zinc). In Finland, most cases of soil metal contamination have been caused by waste treatment plants, sawmills, wood impregnation plants, shooting ranges, garages and scrap yards (Haavisto, 2002). In 2001, a total of 20 000 metal contaminated sites were identified (Haavisto, 2002). Because 38 % of these metal contaminated sites are located in groundwater areas or close to settled areas, metal contaminated soil sites are of great concern (Haavisto, 2002).

1.1.2. Toxic metals and toxicity mechanisms

Metals play an integral role in the life processes of microorganisms. Some metals, such as calcium, cobalt, chromium, copper, iron, potassium, magnesium, manganese, sodium, nickel and zinc, are essential, serve as micronutrients and are used for redox-processes; to stabilize molecules through electrostatic interactions; as components of various enzymes; and for regulation of osmotic pressure (Bruins et al., 2000). Many other metals have no biological role (e.g. silver, aluminium, cadmium, gold, lead and mercury), and are nonessential (Bruins et al., 2000) and potentially toxic to microorganisms. Toxicity of nonessential metals occurs through the displacement of essential metals from their native binding sites or through ligand interactions (Nies, 1999; Bruins et al., 2000). For example, Hg^{2+} , Cd^{2+} and Ag^{2+} tend to bind to SH groups, and thus inhibit the activity of sensitive enzymes (Nies, 1999). In addition, at high levels, both essential and nonessential metals can damage cell membranes; alter enzyme specificity; disrupt cellular functions; and damage the structure of DNA (Bruins et al., 2000).

To have a physiological or toxic effect, most metal ions have to enter the microbial cell. Many divalent metal cations (e.g. Mn^{2+} , Fe^{2+} , Co^{2+} , Ni^{2+} , Cu^{2+} and Zn^{2+}) are structurally very similar. Also, the structure of oxyanions such as chromate resembles that of sulfate, and the same is true for arsenate and phosphate. Thus, to be able to differentiate between structurally very similar metal ions, the microbial uptake systems have to be tightly regulated. Usually, microorganisms have solved this problem by using two types of uptake systems for metal ions. One is fast, unspecific, and driven by the chemiosmotic gradient across the cytoplasmic membrane of bacteria (Nies, 1999). Since this mechanism is used by a variety of substrates, it is constitutively expressed (Nies, 1999). The second type of uptake system has a high substrate specificity, is slower, often uses ATP hydrolysis as the energy source and is only produced by the cell in times of need, starvation or a special metabolic situation (Nies and Silver, 1995).

Even though microorganisms have specific uptake systems, high concentrations of nonessential metals may be transported into the cell by a constitutively expressed unspecific system. This “open gate” is the one reason why metal ions are toxic to microorganisms (Nies, 1999). As a consequence, microorganisms have been forced to develop metal-ion homeostasis factors and metal-resistance determinants (Nies and Silver, 1995; Nies, 1999; Bruins et al., 2000). Because metal ions cannot be degraded or modified like toxic organic compounds, there are six possible mechanisms for a metal resistance system: exclusion by permeability barrier; intra- and extra-cellular sequestration; active efflux pumps; enzymatic

reduction; and reduction in the sensitivity of cellular targets to metal ions (Ji and Silver, 1995; Nies and Silver, 1995; Nies, 1999; Rensing et al., 1999; Bruins, 2000). One or more of these resistance mechanisms allows microorganisms to function in metal contaminated environments.

The oxyanions of arsenic enter bacterial cells via transporters for other compounds. In bacteria, As(V) is taken up by phosphate transport systems, such as the ATP-coupled Pst pump (Rensing, 1999). One route of entry for As(III) is via the GlpF polyol transporters (Rensing, 1999). The bacterial detoxification of arsenic is often based on inducible ion efflux systems that reduce the intracellular concentration of arsenic by active export (Ji and Silver, 1995; Nies and Silver, 1995; Rensing, 1999) (Fig. 1). Since anion export from bacterial cells is driven by the chemiosmotic gradient, simple As(III) efflux systems are composed of just one efflux protein (Ji and Silver, 1995; Nies and Silver, 1995; Rensing et al., 1999). As(V) cannot, however, be transported with this system. The solution to the problem of As(V) efflux is the enzyme arsenate reductase, which catalyzes the reduction of As(V) to As(III), the substrate of the efflux system (Ji and Silver, 1995; Nies and Silver, 1995; Rensing et al., 1999). Thus, this enzyme extends the spectrum of resistance to include both As(III) and As(V). The lead resistance may also be based on metal ion efflux. For example, zinc and cadmium specific pumps are able to export lead from bacterial cells (Nies, 1999; Rensing et al., 1999). In addition, lead resistance can be due to precipitation of lead phosphate within the cells of resistant bacteria (Nies, 1999).

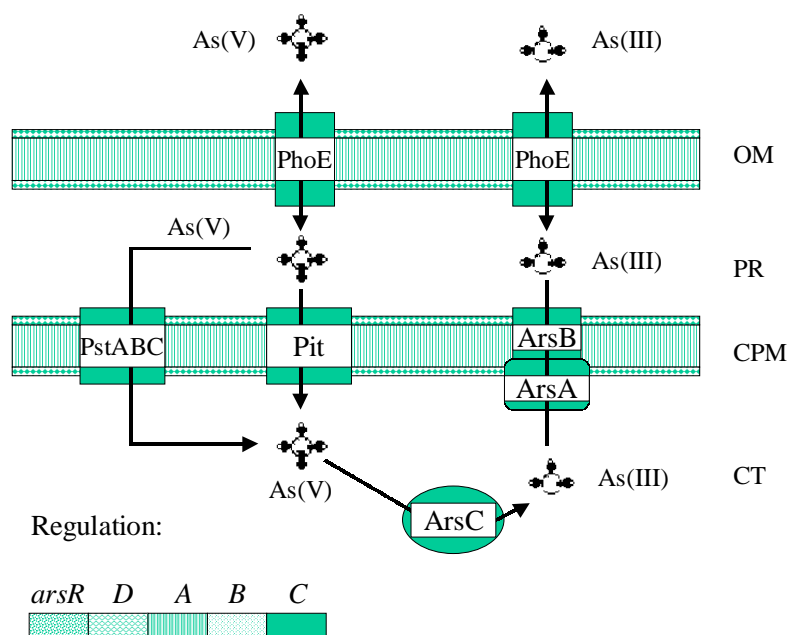


Fig. 1. Transport of and resistance to As(V) in *Escherichia coli*. As(V) enters the periplasmic space through the outer membrane porin, the PhoE protein, and is transported into the cytoplasm by the Pit protein or the Pst system. Within the cell, As(V) is reduced to As(III) by the ArsC protein and As(III) is pumped out of the cell by the ArsAB efflux ATPase. The arsRDABC operon is regulated by the ArsR repressor protein and ArsD co-regulator protein. OM=outer membrane, PR= periplasmic space; CPM= cytoplasmic membrane, CT cytoplasmic space. (Modified from Nies and Silver, 1995).

1.1.3. Biosensors

The genes responsible for microbial metal resistance mechanism are organized in operons and are usually found in plasmids carried by the resistant bacteria (Ramanathan et al., 1997; Bruins et al., 2000). The expression of the resistance genes is tightly regulated and induced

by the presence of specific metals in the cellular environment (Ramanathan et al., 1997). Because of the specificity of this regulation, the promoters and regulatory genes from these resistance operons can be used to construct metal-specific biosensors (promoter-reporter-gene fusions). By using metal specific bacterial sensors in addition to chemical analyses it is possible to distinguish the bioavailable metal concentration from the total metal concentration of the samples.

Recently, various metal-specific sensor strains have been developed and applied in many laboratories (Table 1). These sensor strains are all based on the same concept: a metal responsive regulation unit regulates the expression of a sensitive reporter gene. Reporter genes include those that code for bioluminescent proteins, such as bacterial luciferase (*luxAB*) and firefly luciferase (*lucFF*) or for β -galactosidase, which can be detected electrochemically or by using chemiluminescent substrates (Ramanathan et al., 1997; Cobisier et al., 1999; Bontidean et al., 2000). The light produced can be measured by a variety of instruments, including luminometers, photometers and liquid-scintillation counters.

Table 1. Recently developed bacterial sensors for metals.

METAL	REPORTER	HOST STRAIN	REFERENCE
Antimony (Sb³⁺)	<i>Luc</i>	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> , <i>Bacillus subtilis</i> , <i>Escherichia coli</i>	Tauriainen et al., 1997
Arsenic (As³⁺)	<i>Luc</i>	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> , <i>Bacillus subtilis</i> , <i>Escherichia coli</i>	Tauriainen et al., 1997, 1999
Arsenic (As³⁺)	<i>Lux</i>	<i>Escherichia coli</i>	Corbisier et al., 1993
Arsenic (As³⁺)	<i>Luc</i>	<i>Escherichia coli</i> , <i>Pseudomonas fluorescens</i>	Petänen et al., 2001
Arsenic (As⁵⁺)	<i>Lux</i>	<i>Escherichia coli</i>	Cai and DuBow, 1997
Arsenic (As⁵⁺)	<i>Luc</i>	<i>Escherichia coli</i>	This thesis
Cadmium (Cd²⁺)	<i>Luc</i>	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> , <i>Bacillus subtilis</i>	Tauriainen et al., 1998
Cobalt (Co²⁺)	<i>Lux</i>	<i>Ralstonia eutropha</i>	Tibazarwa et al., 2001
Copper (Cu²⁺)	<i>Lux</i>	<i>Pseudomonas fluorescens</i>	Tom-Petersen et al., 2001
Lead (Pb²⁺)	<i>Luc</i>	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> , <i>Bacillus subtilis</i>	Tauriainen et al., 1998
Mercury (Hg²⁺)	<i>Lux</i>	<i>Escherichia coli</i>	Selifonova et al., 1993
Mercury (Hg²⁺)	<i>Luc</i>	<i>Escherichia coli</i>	Virta et al., 1995
Mercury (Hg²⁺)	<i>Lux</i>	<i>Escherichia coli</i> , <i>Pseudomonas putida</i>	Hansen and Sørensen, 2000
Mercury (Hg²⁺)	<i>Lac</i>	<i>Escherichia coli</i>	Hansen and Sørensen, 2000
Mercury (Hg²⁺)	<i>Gfp</i>	<i>Escherichia coli</i>	Hansen and Sørensen, 2000
Mercury (Hg²⁺)	<i>Luc</i>	<i>Escherichia coli</i> , <i>Pseudomonas fluorescens</i>	Petänen et al., 2001
Nickel (Ni²⁺)	<i>Lux</i>	<i>Ralstonia eutropha</i>	Tibazarwa et al., 2001

In the construction of biosensors, it is important to know how metal-resistance mechanisms work and how the genes coding for them are regulated. For example, the resistance for mercury is encoded by genes of the *mer* operon (Ji and Silver, 1995; Osborn et al., 1997; Nies, 1999). This operon encodes proteins that are involved in the transport of mercury (Hg^{2+}) into the cell and for the transformation of Hg^{2+} to elemental mercury Hg^0 , which is volatile and evaporates out of the cell (Nies, 1999). Selifonova et al. (1993) developed three separate biosensors containing different parts of the *mer* operon fused to the bacterial luciferase genes, using *E. coli* as a host strain. Two of the strains constructed did not contain the *merA* gene, which reduces Hg^{2+} to elemental mercury. Thus, these strains were not resistant to mercury and they could be used to detect only low concentrations of mercury. In contrast, the third strain contained the whole *mer* operon. This sensor was resistant to high concentrations of mercury but the response was not as sensitive as in the first two strains.

On the other hand, the *ars* operon of pR773, present in certain strains of *E. coli*, consists of five genes: *arsA*, *arsB*, *arsC*, *arsD* and *arsR*, which are responsible for arsenic resistance (Ji and Silver, 1995; Nies and Silver, 1995; Ramanathan et al., 1997). The *arsA* and *arsB* genes encode for the proteins that form the ion pump, which is capable of transporting As^{3+} out of the cell (Rensing et al., 1999). As^{5+} cannot be transported by this pump, but *arsC* encodes for an enzyme, arsenate reductase, that reduces As^{5+} to As^{3+} , which can then be removed by the pump (Ji and Silver, 1992). In addition, the *arsR* gene encodes for proteins that regulate the expression of the *ars* operon (Nies and Silver, 1995). In the arsenic biosensor developed by Tauriainen et al. (1997), the sensing of As^{3+} is based on controlling the expression of the firefly luciferase (*lucFF*) reporter gene by the regulatory unit of the *ars* operon of plasmid pR733 in recombinant plasmid pTOO31, with *E. coli* as a host strain. The regulatory unit of the *ars* operon consists of the *ars* promoter and the repressor protein, ArsR. In the absence of As^{3+} , the expression of *lucFF* is repressed, while in the presence of arsenic, transcription of the promoter is induced, and luciferase is produced at a level corresponding to the concentration of arsenic (Tauriainen et al., 1997).

In addition, the resistance mechanism for cadmium was utilized in the construction of a cadmium specific sensor bacterium (Tauriainen et al. 1998). The resistance for cadmium is encoded by the genes of the *cadA* operon, which consists of two genes: *cadA* and *cadC* (Yoon and Silver, 1991). The *cadC* gene encodes for the regulatory protein (Endo and Silver, 1995) and the *cadA* gene for an energy-dependent ion pump, which is responsible for efflux of cadmium from the cells (Tsai et al., 1992). In the sensor bacteria, plasmid pTOO24 carried the firefly luciferase reporter gene under the control of the *cad* promoter and the *cadC* gene of the *cadA* operon of *S. aureus* plasmid pI258 (Tauriainen et al., 1998). Because the sensor bacteria responded also to lead, it can be used to measure both bioavailable cadmium and lead.

1.1.4. Microbial transformations

Microbial transformations of metals serve various functions. Generally, microbial transformations of metals can be divided into two broad categories: redox conversions of inorganic forms; and conversions from inorganic to organic form and *vice versa*, typically methylation and demethylation. Through oxidation of iron, sulfur, manganese and arsenic, microbes can obtain energy (Tebo et al., 1997; Santini et al., 2000). On the other hand, reduction of metals can occur through dissimilatory reduction where microorganisms utilize metals as a terminal electron acceptor for anaerobic respiration. For example, oxyanions of arsenic (Stolz and Oremland, 1999; Niggemyer et al., 2001), chromium (QuiIntana et al., 2001), selenium (Stolz and Oremland, 1999) and uranium (Tebo and Obraztsova, 1998) can be used in microbial anaerobic respiration as terminal electron acceptors. In addition, microorganisms may possess reduction mechanisms that are not coupled to respiration, but instead are thought to impart metal resistance. For example, aerobic and anaerobic reduction of Cr(VI) to Cr(III) (QuiIntana et al., 2001; Nkhalambayausi-Chirwa and Wang,

2001); reduction of Se(VI) to elemental selenium (Lloyd et al., 2001); reduction of U(VI) to U(IV) (Francis, 1998; Chang et al., 2001); and reduction of Hg(II) to Hg(0) (Brim et al., 1999; Wagner-Döbler et al., 2000) are widespread detoxification mechanisms among microorganisms.

Microbial methylation plays an important role in the biogeochemical cycle of metals, because methylated compounds are often volatile. For example, mercury [Hg(II)] can be biomethylated by a number of different bacterial species (e.g. *Pseudomonas* sp., *Escherichia* sp., *Bacillus* sp. and *Clostridium* sp.) to gaseous methylmercury (Pan-Hou and Imura, 1982; Compeau and Bartha, 1985; Pongratz and Heumann, 1999), which is the most toxic and most readily accumulated form of mercury (Nikunen et al., 1990). Also, biomethylation of arsenic to gaseous arsines (Gao and Burau, 1997); selenium to volatile dimethyl selenide (Flury, 1997; Guo et al., 1999; Martens and Suarez, 1999; Zhang and Frankenberger, 1999; Dungan and Frankenberger, 2000); and lead to dimethyl lead (Pongratz and Heumann, 1999) has been observed in various soil environments.

In addition to redox-conversions and methylation reactions, acidophilic iron- and sulfur-oxidizing bacteria are able to leach high concentrations of arsenic, cadmium, copper, cobalt, nickel and zinc from contaminated soils (White et al., 1997; Seidel et al., 2000; Groudev et al., 2001; Löser et al., 2001). On the other hand, metals can be precipitated as insoluble sulfides indirectly by the metabolic activity of sulfate-reducing bacteria (White et al., 1997; Lloyd et al., 2001). Sulfate-reducing bacteria are anaerobic heterotrophs utilizing a range of organic substrates with SO_4^{2-} as the terminal electron acceptor.

In summary, microbiological processes can either solubilize metals, thereby increasing their bioavailability and potential toxicity, or immobilize them, and thereby reduce the bioavailability of metals. These biotransformations are important components of biogeochemical cycles of metals and may also be exploited in bioremediation of metal contaminated soils (Lovley and Coates, 1997; Gadd, 2000; Barkay and Schaefer, 2001; Lloyd and Lovley, 2001).

1.1.5. Microbial activity and community structure in metal contaminated soils

Even though many soil microbes are able to carry out various transformations of metals, high concentrations of metals can harmfully effect the soil microbial activity and functioning. Recently, numerous laboratory and field studies have demonstrated the adverse effect of metals on the soil ecosystem. Significant reductions in microbial biomass (Frostegård et al., 1993; Fliessbach et al., 1994; Roane and Kellogg, 1996; Konopka et al., 1999) and soil respiration (Doelman and Haanstra, 1984; Bååth et al., 1991; Hattori, 1992) have been found in metal contaminated soils compared to uncontaminated soils. Also, many studies have shown that metal contamination causes a shift within the soil microbial community from sensitive to less sensitive microbes (Malizewska et al., 1985, Capone et al., 1983; Bååth et al, 1989; Said and Lewis, 1991; Roane and Kellogg, 1996; Dahlin et al., 1997; Bååth et al., 1998a, 1998b; Khan and Scullion, 2000).

On the other hand, to resist the toxic effects of metals, microorganisms have evolved different resistance mechanisms to avoid metal toxicity, as discussed earlier (Ji and Silver, 1995; Nies and Silver, 1995; Nies, 1999; Bruins et al., 2000). As a consequence, the replacement of sensitive species by resistant species may not result in any net effect on general microbial sum parameters such as soil respiration or total biomass (Bååth, 1989). For example, Bardgett and Saggar (1994) and Fliessbach et al. (1994) reported increased CO_2 evolution in metal-polluted soils. Adaptation is thus an important mechanism behind the responses of microbes to the presence of soil contaminants (Doelman, 1986; Chew et al., 2001; Muller et al., 2001) and may result in the compensation of an adverse effect by the increased activity of the remaining microbiota (Duxbury and Bicknell, 1983).

The dissimilar findings of microbial responses to soil metal contamination may also have resulted from variations in the levels of metal contamination; in the source of the contamination; in the period of time over which the responses were monitored; in characteristics of the recipient soil (Khan and Scullion, 2000); and in variations of metal bioavailability (Roane and Kellogg, 1996). In addition, the discrepancy in microbial community studies may be attributed to the methods used earlier, which provide data on community processes or culturable bacterial numbers and may not be relevant for a more detailed analysis of microbial community structure or diversity. Because most of these methods require the use of media or substrates which are selective for culturable organisms, the majority of soil microorganisms are usually not detected (Faegri et al., 1977; Smit et al., 1997; Sandaa et al., 2001).

Recent advances in molecular fingerprinting methods using signature biomarkers, such as lipids and nucleic acids, provide a qualitative and quantitative measurement of microbial diversity and community composition in undisturbed and polluted soils (White et al., 1998; Torsvik et al., 1998; Kozdroj and van Elsas, 2001). For example, phospholipid fatty acid analysis (PLFA) can be used to quantify microbial community structure and biomass without relying upon the cultivation of microorganisms (Kozdroj and van Elsas, 2001). Unfortunately, this approach does not have the capability of identifying microorganisms at the species or strain level, but rather produces descriptions of microbial communities based on functional groupings of fatty acid profiles. However, the identification of particular species, contributing to the bacterial community, by cell fatty acid methyl ester profiles (FAME) can be determined from cultured isolates (Zelles, 1997).

Changes in the microbial community structure in response to soil metal contamination has been monitored by PLFA analysis in various studies. For example, accumulation of copper in soil as a consequence of fungicide application resulted in the development of a microbial community with markedly different PLFA patterns when compared to uncontaminated soil (Zelles et al., 1994). In metal contaminated soils, the increase of monounsaturated fatty acids, lower concentrations of branched-chain and methyl-branched fatty acids indicated an increase in numbers of gram-negative bacteria and a decrease of the proportion of gram-positive bacteria and actinomycetes, respectively. Also, in studies of Hiroki (1992) and Frostegård et al. (1993) a decrease in several iso- and anteiso-branched PLFAs and an increase in cy17:0, which is considered to be typical for gram-negative bacteria (Lechevalier, 1977), indicated a dominance of gram-negative over gram-positive bacteria in metal contaminated soils. However, Pennanen et al. (1996) found that many branched PLFAs, like br17:0 and br18:0, or iso- and anteiso-branched PLFAs, commonly found in gram-positive bacteria, increased in the metal contaminated soil. Similar results were found also in coniferous forest humus due to Ni-Cu pollution and acidification (Pennanen et al., 1998). In coniferous forest soil, also fungal markers (18:2 ω 6,9 and 20:4) decreased in response to long-term heavy metal deposition (Pennanen et al., 1996), even though various studies have found that fungi are more resistant to metals than bacteria (Frostegård et al., 1993; Lechevalier, 1975; Hiroki, 1992; Khan and Scullion, 2000). According to Pennanen et al. (1996, 1998), these contradictory findings could be due to a reduction in the forest floor vegetation and rhizosphere habitats in metal contaminated soils, which are typically dominated by gram-negative bacteria. On the other hand, the methyl-branched PLFAs 10Me16:0, 10Me17:0 and 10Me18:0 increased in metal-polluted forest soil, indicating an increase in the proportion of actinomycetes (Frostegård et al., 1993). However, in arable soils, a decrease was observed for 10Me16:0 and 10Me18:0 in response to most metals (Frostegård et al., 1993). Also, Kelly et al. (1999) reported of a relative decrease in 10Me16:0 in zinc contaminated soil when compared to undisturbed soil, suggesting that different members of the actinomycete population responded differently to the elevated metal concentrations.

A molecular approach based on 16S rDNA is useful in detecting bacterial community structure changes, because these genes are conserved and present in all bacteria (Moyer et al., 1994). Microbial community analyses using nucleic acids, such as 16S rDNA, can detect and identify community members with high specificity to the species and strain level, and can also detect and suggest phylogenetic relationships of uncultured organisms (Sakano and Kerkhof, 1998; Phelps et al., 1998; Marsh, 1999; Häggblom et al., 2000; Kerkhof et al., 2000). For example, Smit et al. (1997) and Torsvik et al. (1998) using amplified ribosomal DNA restriction analysis (ARDRA) found distinct differences in microbial community structure in soil contaminated with heavy metals compared to uncontaminated soil. An alternative 16S rDNA-based method is terminal restriction fragment analysis (t-RFLP), which measures only the terminal restriction fragment of each 16S rRNA gene (Marsh, 1999). Thereby, the complexity of the RFLP pattern is reduced (compared to that of ARDRA) and every visible band (fragment) is representative of a single ribotype or operational taxonomic unit (Liu et al., 1997; Marsh, 1999). For example, Widmer et al. (2001) compared microbiological characteristics of three soils contaminated with pesticides and Clement et al. (1998) were able to distinguish the microbial community in hydrocarbon contaminated soil from control soil by t-RFLP.

1.2. Arsenic in the environment

Although arsenic has almost exclusively been associated with criminal poisoning for many centuries, the matter of concern today is its contribution to environmental pollution through man's use of arsenic containing insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, pesticides and wood preservatives and through mining and burning of coal (Leonard, 1991). Thus, anthropogenic use makes arsenic a common inorganic toxicant found at contaminated sites nationwide (Davis, 2001). Consequences of long-term exposure to inorganic forms of arsenic are serious because these compounds have been recognized as skin and lung carcinogens in humans. Because the toxic effects of arsenic are related to its oxidation state (Pongratz, 1998), determination of individual species of arsenic and the examination of factors affecting the speciation of arsenic have become an important issue during the past decade.

1.2.1. Arsenic species in soils

Arsenic (As) occurs naturally in a wide range of minerals. Also, mining activity and widespread use of arsenic in the wood preserving industry and in agriculture as a pesticide and herbicide represent a major source of arsenic in the environment. The common valence states of arsenic in nature include -3, 0, +3 and +5 (Leonard, 1991; Jain and Ali, 2000; Oremland et al., 2000). In soils, the most often encountered arsenic forms are inorganic As(III) (arsenite) and As(V) (arsenate) (Cullen and Reimer, 1989; Masscheleyn et al., 1991; Pansar-Kallio and Korpela, 2000; Balasoïu et al., 2001). Methylated species, monomethyl arsonic acid (MMAA), dimethyl arsinic acid (DMAA) and trimethyl arsine oxide (TMAO), dominate in biomass, but have also been detected in soils (Buchet and Lauwerys, 1981; Leonard, 1991). In addition, As(V) and As(III) can be volatilized to arsine (AsH_3); MMAA to monomethylarsine (CH_3AsH_2 ; MMA); DMAA to dimethylarsine [$(\text{CH}_3)_2\text{AsH}$; DMA]; and TMAO to trimethylarsine [$(\text{CH}_3)_3\text{As}$, TMA] (Cullen and Reimer, 1989).

1.2.2. Biological properties of arsenic and its compounds

The impacts of arsenic on biological systems are concentration dependent and vary from organism to organism. In general, the toxicity of arsenic is dependent on its oxidation state: trivalent arsenic forms are approximately 100 times more toxic than the pentavalent derivatives (Cervantes, 1994). Toxicity of As(III) is due to its binding to protein sulfhydryl groups (Gebel, 2000). Thus, As(III) inhibits enzyme reactions requiring free sulfhydryl groups, leading to membrane degradation and cell death. As(V), on the other hand, is a toxic analog for inorganic phosphate in phosphorylating metabolism (Cervantes, 1994).

As(V) competes with phosphate and therefore acts as an uncoupler of oxidative phosphorylation, resulting in inadequate supply of energy. In general, methylated species, MMAA and DMAA, are less toxic forms than inorganic As(V) and As(III) because of their low solubility and reduced affinity to tissues (Leonard, 1991). For plants, however, organic arsenic compounds are highly toxic when applied foliarly (Marin et al., 1992, 1993). For more developed organisms, gaseous arsines are the most toxic forms of arsenic (Buchet and Lauwerys, 1981; Leonard, 1991) due to their ability to combine with hemoglobin within the red blood cells, causing destruction or severe swelling of the cells and rendering them nonfunctional (Blair et al., 1990).

1.2.3. Influence of microbes on the speciation and mobility of arsenic

Microorganisms play an important role in the environmental fate of arsenic with a multiplicity of mechanisms affecting transformations between soluble and insoluble arsenic forms and toxic and nontoxic arsenic forms. Inorganic arsenic forms, As(V) and As(III), are subjected to microbiologically mediated oxidation-reduction reactions. For example, a *Pseudomonas* strain (with the proposed name "*P. arsenitoxidans*") can derive metabolic energy from the oxidation of As(III) (Ilyaletdinov and Abdrashitova, 1981). *Thermus aquaticus* and *Thermus thermophilus* were also found to rapidly oxidize As(III) to As(V), but they were not able to grow with As(III) as the sole energy source, thus suggesting that the ecological role of As(III) oxidation was detoxification of arsenic (Gihring et al., 2001).

On the other hand, As(V) can be reduced by dissimilatory reduction, where microorganisms utilize As(V) as a terminal electron acceptor for anaerobic respiration. To date, dissimilatory reduction has been observed in several bacteria, such as *Sulfurospirillum barnesii*, *S. arsenophilum*, *Desulfotomaculum auripigmentum*, *Bacillus arsenicoselenatis*, *B. selenitireducens*, *Crysiogenes arsenatis*, *Sphingomonas* spp., *Pseudomonas* spp. and *Wolinella* spp. (Ahmann et al., 1994; Lovley and Coates, 1997; Newman et al., 1997; Newman et al., 1998; Stolz and Oremland, 1999; Oremland et al., 2000; Macur et al., 2001). In addition, microorganisms may possess As(V) reduction mechanisms that are not coupled to respiration but instead are thought to impart arsenic resistance. For example, a plasmid-encoded, detoxifying reductase (*arsC* enzyme) present in the cytoplasm of certain bacteria (e.g. *Escherichia coli* and *Staphylococcus aureus*) reduces As(V) to As(III) for its rapid extrusion from the cell (Ji et al., 1994; Diorio et al., 1995). In addition, Gihring and Banfield (2001) isolated a new *Thermus* strain from an arsenic-rich terrestrial geothermal environment, which was capable of both As(III) oxidation and As(V) dissimilatory reduction.

Microbes are also able to biomethylate inorganic arsenic species to MMAA and DMAA (Ridley et al., 1977; Woolson, 1977a; Cullen and Reimer, 1989; Gadd, 1993). In contrast, demethylating microorganisms can carry out conversion of methylated species back to inorganic forms (Sohrin et al., 1997). In addition, microbial activity can result in volatilization of arsenic to gaseous arsines (Bachofen et al., 1995; Gao and Burau, 1997). Arsines may travel in air or they are oxidized rapidly depending on environmental conditions (Pongratz, 1998). Oxidation returns arsenic back to inorganic species, As(V) or As(III), or to organic forms, MMAA, DMAA or TMAO, and the cycle of arsenic is completed because atmospheric arsenic is deposited back to soil by rain or by dry deposition (Pongratz, 1998) as illustrated in Fig. 2. In summary, the basis for arsenic transformations in soils lies primarily in the microbiological methylation and oxidation-reduction processes.

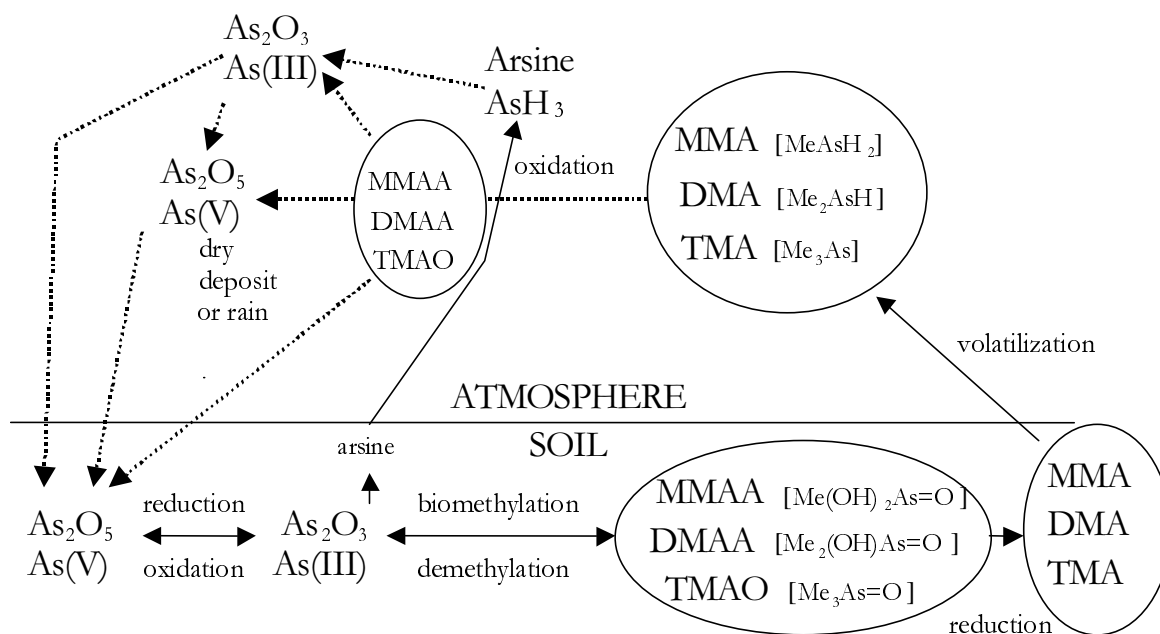


Fig. 2. Microbial (—→) and abiotic (.....→) transformations of arsenic in soils. Particulate species are not presented in the figure. [MMAA=monomethyl arsonic acid; DMAA=dimethyl arsonic acid; TMAO=trimethyl arsine oxide; MMA=methylarsine; DMA=dimethylarsine; TMA=trimethylarsine.]

One example of microbial transformations of arsenic relates to the fate of the French emperor Napoleon Bonaparte. For a long time it was thought that Napoleon had died because of stomach cancer. However, recent scientific analyses of Napoleon's hair have revealed arsenic levels from 35 up to 640 times ($10\text{-}250\text{ mg kg}^{-1}$) found in the hair of a healthy human suggesting that he had been poisoned with arsenic (Lewin et al., 1982). After this discovery, David Jones started to clarify the links between Napoleon's death and arsenic and a few years later he reported that it seems quite obvious that arsine poisoning caused Napoleon's death (Jones, 1982). Jones was fortunate enough to be able to obtain a piece of the original wallpaper from Longwood House, St. Helena, where Napoleon had been imprisoned. The wallpaper, in fact, contained large amounts of arsenic due to use of a green pigment containing copper and arsenic. Furthermore, the house itself was very damp and it was necessary to change the wallpaper at frequent intervals due to the development of moulds. Thus, when the wallpaper became damp, moulds, such as *Penicillium previcaulis*, likely grew on the wallpaper using the cellulose or glue for growth. The moulds may have converted arsenic to the volatile and highly poisonous trimethylarsine that volatilized into the atmosphere of the room. Thus, the villain of the story may not have been only the British authorities, but rather the wicked wallpaper mould *Penicillium previcaulis*. Even though it is difficult to know the truth about Napoleon's death afterwards, this story is a good example of unexpected problems caused by toxic metals and their species conversion.

Studies on arsenic transformations in soils have shown that the process is affected not only by the microorganisms involved but also by the soil environment and by arsenic characteristics (Gadd, 1993). The presence of certain elements and ions, such as phosphate (Huysmans and Frankenberger, 1991 – inhibition), antimony (Andrewes et al., 2000 – inhibition) and molybdate (Oremland et al., 2000 – enhancement), may inhibit or enhance microbiological transformations of arsenic in soil systems. According to Gao and Burau (1997) soil properties such as pH, texture, temperature and organic matter content all affect the arsine evolution rate. In addition, a study of the evolution of gaseous arsenic forms in soils showed, that the production of arsines was enhanced under reduced, wet soil

conditions (Atkins and Lewis, 1976). Arsine evolution from arsenic-amended soil was dependent also on the speciation of arsenic. The cumulative arsine production followed the order CA > MMAA > As(III) > As(V), indicating that evolution of arsines is much higher from organic arsenic compounds than from inorganic arsenic compounds (Gao and Burau, 1997).

1.2.4. Bioavailability of arsenic in contaminated soils

The toxicological effects of arsenic depend on its chemical form and bioavailability (La Force et al., 2000). Therefore, hydrated ions are considered to be the most toxic forms of arsenic, while strong complexes and species associated with colloidal particles are usually assumed to be less toxic (Russeva, 1995).

In soils, the bioavailability and thus toxicity of arsenic is dependent on various soil parameters. For example, waterlogging, pH, redox-conditions, other elements, soil and site hydrology and plant and microbial components influence the adsorption capacity and behaviour of soil colloids (clay, oxides or hydroxides, surfaces of aluminium, iron and manganese, calcium carbonates and/or organic matter), and thus alter the solubility and bioavailability of arsenic (Woolson, 1977b; Sadiq, 1997). In general, iron oxides/hydroxides are most commonly involved in the adsorption of arsenic in both acidic and alkaline soils (Polemio et al., 1982). In the acidic oxic and suboxic soils, Fe-arsenate [$\text{Fe}_3(\text{AsO}_4)_2$] may control arsenic solubility, whereas in anoxic soils, sulfides of As(III) may control the concentrations of the dissolved arsenic in soil solutions (Sadiq, 1997). According to Hongshao and Stanforth (2001), also direct precipitation as discrete arsenic solid phases [i.e. as reduced phases such as arsenopyrite (FeAsS) or as oxidized phases such as hematite (Fe_2O_3) associated with arsenic] may occur in contaminated soils. This indicates that as arsenic persists, or ages, it becomes progressively less soluble and bioavailable with time (Alexander, 2000).

Generally, due to sorption reactions and solid phase formation of arsenic in contaminated soils, the soil particulate phases have high concentrations of arsenic relative to the concentrations of arsenic in dissolved phase or in terrestrial organisms (Peijnenburg et al., 1997; Alexander, 2000). Traditional methods used to evaluate the risk of contaminants in an ecosystem include the analyses of soil total metal concentrations (Alexander, 2000; Murray et al., 2000). The relationship between the total metal content in the soil and its effect on biota is not, however, straightforward (Plette et al., 1999). As a consequence, current approaches for ranking sites for cleanup may lead to choosing less acute sites for remediation resulting in delaying cleanup of such polluted areas where the risk is greater (Alexander, 2000). Also, even though microbial activity measurements have proven to be good indicators of the degree of pollution of metal contaminated soils (Tabatabai, 1977; Bååth et al., 1992; Insam et al., 1996), possible adaptation of the microbial communities in contaminated soils may induce a significant bias in this evaluation (Giller et al., 1998). Therefore, the ability to distinguish bioavailable arsenic from the total metal content is important.

The bacterial-based biosensors can be used to assess the bioavailability of arsenic. For example, Tauriainen et al. (2000) used biosensors to detect As(III) in natural water samples. In addition, Cai and DuBow (1997) applied a bacterial sensor to estimate the toxicity of arsenic-containing wood preservative, chromated copper arsenate. The use of biosensors in assessing the bioavailability of arsenic in soil samples is, however, complicated. The response of the biosensor may be biased by the presence of the soil particles. On the other hand, filtration to remove soil particles may result in an underestimation of arsenic bioavailability, because some of the arsenic fractions, for example arsenic complexes with

colloidal and fine particles, are eliminated in filtration. These fractions can, however, be important factors when considering the toxicity of arsenic in soils.

1.3. Lead in the environment

1.3.1. Properties of lead

In nature, lead (Pb) is a ubiquitous but biologically non-essential element (Nriagu, 1978; Ewers and Schlipkötter, 1991). However, during the last fifty years the use of lead in batteries, bearing metals, cable covering, gasoline additives, explosives and ammunition as well as in manufacture of pesticides, antifouling paints and analytical reagents has caused widespread environmental contamination (Ewers and Schlipkötter, 1991; Watanabe, 1997; Johnson, 1998). The toxicity of lead is a consequence of the ability of Pb^{2+} to interfere with several enzymes (Ewers and Schlipkötter, 1991). Because lead causes a large variety of toxic effects, including gastrointestinal, muscular, reproductive, neurological and behavioral and genetic malfunctions (Johnson, 1998), the fate of lead in the environment is of great concern.

In lead-contaminated soils, biota and vegetation influence the transformations of lead together with environmental characteristics such as soil pH, organic matter content, texture, redox-potential and presence of other elements (van der Sloot et al., 1996). According to Bindler et al. (1999) lead contamination is mainly restricted to surface soil in boreal forests, which are rich in humic material and have a podsollic stratification. Also, Heinrichs and Mayer (1980) considered lead as one of the least soluble metals with a very long retention time in the forest floor. However, Friedland et al. (1992) found that lead complexed with dissolved organic matter may migrate from the surface soil layer to mineral soil, thus raising the concern of lead contaminating the groundwater. Also, Johnson et al. (1995) reported that concentrations of lead in humic surface soils have declined between 1977 and 1987 by 29 %, thus indicating that lead had passed down to the mineral soil. In addition, Ulkomaanaho et al. (2001) found that the retention of lead by the humus layer of boreal forest soil was only 26-54 % of the total input of lead to the forest floor. Therefore, cleaning up lead-contaminated soils or detoxifying lead with the fewest environmental side effects is of great interest and practical methods are needed.

1.3.2. Phytoremediation of lead

Traditional methods of remediating lead contaminated sites include a variety of physical, thermal and chemical treatments (Berti and Cunningham et al., 1997; Chen et al., 2000; Mulligan et al., 2001). Recently, also phytoremediation technologies have been recognized as quite efficient and cost-effective method for remediating sites contaminated with toxic metals (Salt et al., 1995; Shann, 1995; Chaney et al., 1997; Raskin et al., 1997; Meagher, 2000; Garbisu and Alkorta, 2001; van der Lelie, 2001). Categories of phytoremediation include:

1. phytoextraction - the use of plants to remove contaminants from soil
2. phytovolatilization - the use of plants to make volatile chemical species of soil elements
3. phytostabilization - the use of plants to transform soil metals to less toxic forms, or to reduce mobility, but not remove the metal from soil.

For phytoextraction to be a feasible remediation tool, plants that are used have to be able to take up large concentrations of heavy metals into the roots; to translocate these metals to the shoots; and to grow rapidly and reach a high biomass, which can be harvested (Kumar et al., 1995; Mejare and Bulow, 2001). For lead, there are a few plants, such as *Brassica juncea* (Watanabe, 1997), *Vetiveria zizanioides* (Chen et al., 2000), *Cardaminopsis halleri*

(Dahmani-Muller et al., 2000), *Spartina alterniflora* (Windham et al., 2001), *Cynodon dactylon* and *Sorghum halepense* (Madejon et al., 2001), that possess these qualities. However, according to Reimann et al. (2001) none of the tested plants growing in Northern Europe (blueberry, *Vaccinium myrtillus*; cowberry, *Vaccinium vitis-idaea*; crowberry, *Empetrum nigrum*; birch, *Betula pubescens*; willow, *Salix* spp.; pine, *Pinus sylvestris*; and spruce, *Picea abies*) accumulated lead effectively into their shoots, thus not enabling efficient phytoextraction of lead. To overcome these shortfalls, the use of metal chelators such as EDTA have been applied to soils to make lead more bioavailable for plant uptake. In several experiments, the use of these chelators has dramatically increased the amount of lead that high biomass plants take into their roots and translocate to their shoots (Huang and Cunningham, 1996; Huang et al., 1997; Blaylock et al., 1997; Cooper et al., 1999). The use of the chelators in the phytoextraction process, however, creates problems: remediation costs are increased and metals that are mobilized by the chelators can migrate offsite and contaminate e.g. underlying groundwater (Brennan and Shelley, 1999; Römken et al., 2002).

Even though no real lead accumulator plant growing in Northern Europe has been identified, high concentrations of lead have been found in the roots of pine (Hartley et al., 1999), one of the dominant tree species in boreal forests. In addition, the concentrations of lead were much higher in the roots of *Agrostis tenuis* (Dahmani-Muller et al., 2000) *Arabidopsis halleri* (Dahmani-Muller et al., 2001), *Typha latifolia* and *Scirpus sylvaticus* (Hozhina et al., 2001) than in the shoots suggesting that lead was immobilized by roots of various plants. Also, Klassen et al. (2000) have found that *Betula occidentalis* promoted soil lead stabilization by sequestering mobile lead fractions in its rhizosphere.

The inherent hazard posed by lead contained in a soil matrix is a function of its relative mobility and bioavailability, which are dependent on soil characteristics such as pH, mineralogy, texture, organic matter content as well as on the source and quantity of lead in the soil (Berti and Cunningham, 1997). Therefore, phytostabilization, i.e. the use of metal-tolerant plant species to immobilize contaminants in the soil through absorption and accumulation by roots, adsorption onto roots, or precipitation within the rhizosphere, appears to be a potential remediation technique for lead contaminated soils (Huang and Cunningham, 1996; Berti and Cunningham, 1997; Chaney et al., 1997). This process reduces the mobility of the lead and prevents migration to the groundwater. Through phytostabilization it is also possible to reduce the bioavailability of lead and thus its entry into the terrestrial food webs.

2. AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

Microbes play a key role in controlling the speciation and cycling of metals in soil. Because bioavailability, toxicity and reactivity of metals is greatly influenced by chemical speciation, it is important to have a better understanding of the major factors that link microbial activity to the biogeochemistry of metals. In addition, plants can considerably alter the mobility and bioavailability of metals in soil. Therefore, understanding the roles of microorganisms and plants in cycling of metals may lead to improved processes for bioremediation of contaminated sites.

Arsenic and lead are toxic metals found at several contaminated sites. Thus, there is a high level of interest in developing methods aimed at cleaning up or detoxifying arsenic and lead contaminated soils at minimal costs with the fewest environmental side effects. To get some insight on how microbes and plants could be exploited in developing bioremediation methods for arsenic and lead contaminated soils, the specific aims of the research in this thesis were:

1. To determine the effects of microbial activity on the speciation and mobility of arsenic in soil. (Papers I and II)
2. To determine the influence of microbes on the production of arsines in arsenic-contaminated soils. (Paper II)
3. To measure the amount of bioavailable As(V), the dominant arsenic species in soils, using a luminescent arsenic-specific bacterial sensor. (Papers III and IV)
4. To characterize and compare the structure and function of microbial populations in arsenic-, chromium- and copper-contaminated soils. (Paper IV)
5. To examine the effects of pine and liming on the mobility and bioavailability of lead in boreal forest soil. (Paper V)
6. To evaluate the use of bioremediation in cleaning up or detoxifying arsenic- and lead-contaminated soils. (Papers III and V)

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This chapter provides a brief outline of the materials and methods used. More detailed descriptions are given in each original paper.

3.1. Sampling sites

Arsenic-contaminated soils were collected from seven different wood impregnating plants (Sites 1, 3-8) and from one landfill of contaminated soils (Site 2) (Fig. 3; Table 2). Lead-contaminated soil was collected from a shooting range (Site 9).

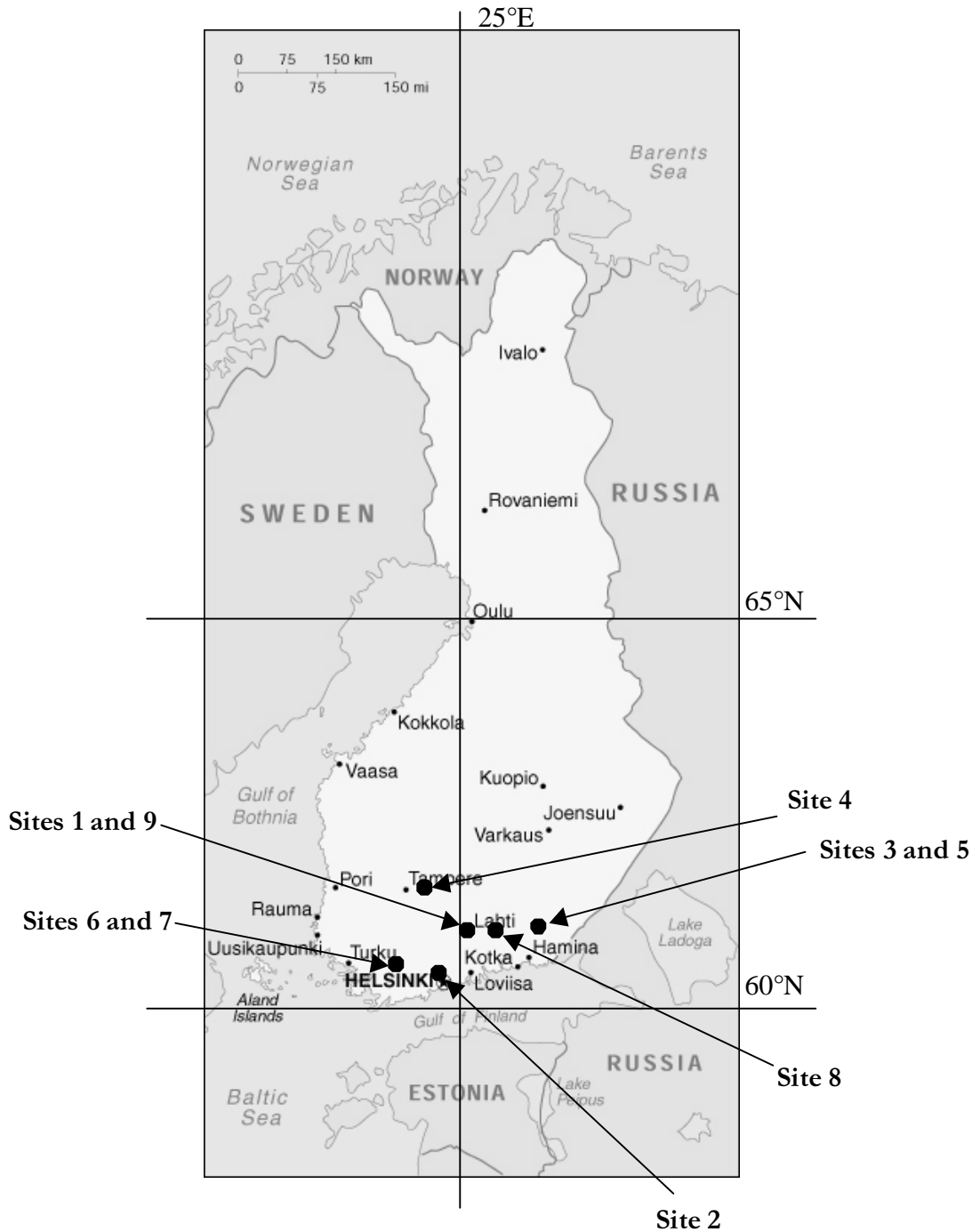


Fig. 3. Map of sampling sites 1-9.

Table 2. Sampling sites of this study.

SITE	DESCRIPTION [location, in operation (years)]	CONTAMINANTS (acid-soluble metals)	PAPER
1	Southern-Finland (61°N;25°E), 1956-1965	10-26100 mg kg ⁻¹ As 32-18500 mg kg ⁻¹ Cr 26-7000 mg kg ⁻¹ Cu	I, II
2	Southern-Finland (60°N; 25°E), 1980 →	3-100 mg kg ⁻¹ As	II
3	South-Eastern Finland (61°N;27°E), 1974 →	310-4600 mg kg ⁻¹ As, Cr, Cu	III
4	Southern-Finland (62°N;24°E), 1957-1968	760-92000 mg kg ⁻¹ As, Cr, Cu	III
5	South-Eastern Finland (61°N;27°E), 1945-1968	170-20100 mg kg ⁻¹ As, Cr, Cu	III
6	Southern-Finland (60°N;23°E), 1950-1980	100-340 mg kg ⁻¹ As 115-620 mg kg ⁻¹ Cr 30-310 mg kg ⁻¹ Cu	IV
7	Southern-Finland (60°N;23°E), 1975-1998	1270-3660 mg kg ⁻¹ As 430-1720 mg kg ⁻¹ Cr 460-1470 mg kg ⁻¹ Cu	IV
8	Southern-Finland (61°N;26°E) 1950-1980	900-8500 mg kg ⁻¹ As 600-6200 mg kg ⁻¹ Cr 210-2500 mg kg ⁻¹ Cu	IV
9	Southern-Finland (61°N;25°E) 1964-1987	9800 mg kg ⁻¹ Pb (surface soil) 330 mg kg ⁻¹ Pb (mineral soil)	V

3.2. Speciation and mobility of arsenic

Speciation studies of water soluble and gaseous arsenic forms and mobility studies of arsenic were carried out as microcosm experiments (Papers I, II). To determine if the microbial activity had an influence on the speciation and mobility of arsenic, formaldehyde (0.04 %) was added to “killed” control samples before incubation to inhibit microbial activity. The advantage of formaldehyde for inhibiting microbial activity is that it does not cause any changes in dissolved nutrient concentrations or pH in soil (Tuominen et al., 1994; Kairesalo et al., 1995). To determine in detail if the mobilization of arsenic was enhanced as a result of addition of a carbon source, different concentrations of glucose (0, 0.5 or 1.0 %) were added to soil microcosms.

The speciation analyses of water-soluble arsenic species [As(V), As(III), MMAA, DMAA] were carried out by ion chromatography-inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry

(IC–ICP–MS) and the acid-soluble and the total water soluble concentrations of arsenic were determined by hydride generation atomic absorption spectrometry (HG–AAS) or by ICP–MS. The volatile arsenic species were analyzed by gas chromatography–mass spectrometry (GC–MS). The uncertainties of measurements were: 5 % for ICP–MS, 10 % for IC–ICP–MS and 10 % for HG–AAS.

3.3. Bioavailability measurements

The aim of these experiments was to test a previously developed As(III)–specific bacterial sensor, *Escherichia coli* MC1061(pTOO31) (Tauriainen et al., 1999), for its applicability for analysis of As(V) bioavailability in contaminated soil samples (Paper III). M9 minimal medium (Sambrook et al., 1989) supplemented with 0.1% acid hydrolysed casein or LB-medium (Sambrook et al., 1989) was used for rehydration of lyophilised bacteria and for the incubation of the bacteria with samples. The bacteria were incubated together with the standards or samples (i.e. soil water extractions and soil suspensions) for 120 min at 37 °C, after which 100 µl of 0.5 mM D-luciferin substrate (in 0.1 M citrate buffer) was added. The reaction mixture was incubated at room temperature for 15 min before measurement of luminescence. The measurement was performed with a luminometer.

In this method, the sensing of arsenic is based on controlling the expression of a reporter gene, firefly luciferase (*lucFF*), by the regulatory unit of the *ars* operon of *Staphylococcus aureus* plasmid pR773 in recombinant plasmid pTOO31, with *E.coli* MC1061 as the host strain (Tauriainen et al., 1999). The regulatory unit of the *ars* operon consists of the *ars* promoter and the repressor protein, ArsR. In the absence of arsenic, the expression of *lucFF* is repressed while in the presence of arsenic, transcription of the promoter is induced, and luciferase is produced at a level corresponding to the concentration of arsenic.

3.4. Microbial activity and community structure measurements

Wood impregnation has contaminated numerous sites due to the use of chromated copper arsenate (CCA) for timber treatment. In addition to arsenic also chromium (Cr) and copper (Cu) can have negative effects on the soil microbial activity in these areas. In this study, the effects of arsenic, chromium and copper contamination on the soil microbial community structure, potential microbial activity and arsenic-resistance were investigated at three field sites (Paper IV). Microbial community structure was determined by analysis of phospholipid fatty acids (PLFAs) and 16S rRNA gene terminal restriction fragment length polymorphism (t-RFLPs). Potential microbial activity was estimated by measuring ¹⁴CO₂ evolution from ¹⁴C-glucose. Arsenic-resistant bacteria were enumerated on agar plates. A total of 90 randomly selected resistant colonies from As(III)-plates were tentatively identified by their fatty acid methyl ester profiles (FAME). The concentrations of soil acid-soluble and total water soluble arsenic, chromium and copper and the concentration of bioavailable arsenic (analyzed with a bacterial sensor) were also determined.

3.5. Phytostabilization of lead

A total of 24 soil microcosms were set up in the laboratory (Paper V). For measuring drainage, 20 holes were drilled through the bottom of each container. For the sampling of soil, 4 holes were drilled through the wall of each container. Into each microcosm, 1.5 kg of lead-contaminated or uncontaminated soil was added, as a 15 cm thick mineral soil layer on the bottom and a 5 cm thick organic soil layer on the top. The microcosms were incubated under controlled temperature and light conditions for 77 days. Into half of the microcosm of both soil types, a 20 cm high pine seedling was planted and CaCO₃ was added also to half of the microcosms. Each treatment had three replicates. The soil of the microcosm was sampled 5 times. Soil samples (to measure water soluble lead, bioavailable lead, DOC) were taken separately from surface and mineral soils. Samples for plant roots, stems and

needles were taken at the end of the experiment. For analyzing the mobility of lead, the soil moisture was raised to 55 % at day 55 and the leachate was collected into plastic containers.

3.6. Phytostabilization of arsenic

The soil types, treatments and measurements of phytostabilization experiment with arsenic contaminated soil are presented in Table 3. The experiment was carried out in microcosms, as described in section 3.5.

Table 3. The soil types, treatments and measurements of phytostabilization experiment with arsenic contaminated soil.

SOIL (acid soluble As concentration mg kg ⁻¹)	TREATMENT	MEASUREMENTS (sampling days)
Control (As concentration < 10 mg kg ⁻¹)	no plant	acid soluble As (Day 1)
	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	water soluble As (Day 1, 14, 28, 42, 56)
	<i>Betula pendula</i>	speciation of As (Day 1, 28, 56)
As-I (5000 mg kg ⁻¹ As)	<i>Festuca ovina</i>	bioavailable As (using a biosensor) (Day 1, 14, 28, 42, 56)
As-II (15000 mg kg ⁻¹ As)		As concentration in drainage (Day 56)
		As concentration in plants* (Day 56)
		activity of plants** (transport of ¹⁴ C-labeled photosynthetic products of plants to the roots)
		(Day 56)

* The concentration of arsenic in plants was measured separately from plant leaves, stems and roots, except in *Festuca ovina*, in which the leaves included both stem and leaves (i.e. the shoot). Homogenized and dried plant samples were digested by wet oxidation (HNO₃; autoclave for 30 min). After digestion, the samples were diluted with water and the arsenic concentration was analyzed with ICP-MS.

** The activity of plants was measured as the accumulation of ¹⁴C-labeled photosynthetic products of plants to the leaves and stems, and as the transport of these products to the plant roots. For the measurement, plants (*Pinus sylvestris*; *Betula pendula*; *Festuca ovina*) were incubated with ¹⁴C-CO₂ for 8 hours in light and 16 hours in darkness. After incubation, samples from leaves, stems and roots of plants were collected and combusted in a Junitek Oxidizer (Turku, Finland). The evolved ¹⁴CO₂ was trapped into Lumasorb II and analyzed with a liquid scintillation counter (Wallac 1414 Win Spectral™).

3.7. Methods used in this study

The analytical methods used in this thesis are listed in Table 4. References to the published methods and modifications made to them are described in each article.

Table 4. Methods used in this study.

Method	Paper number
- Analysis of soil acid soluble As concentration (8 M HNO ₃ extraction in autoclave for 30 min)	I, II, III, IV
- Modified Tessier's fractioning of soil samples for As analysis	I
- Speciation analysis of water soluble As forms (IC-ICP-MS)	I, II
- Toxicity test, BioTox TM	I
- Analysis of water soluble As concentration (shaking for 60 min with dH ₂ O)	II, III, IV
- Speciation analysis of gaseous As forms (GC-MS)	II
- Speciation analysis of As(III) and As(V), cartridge method	III, IV
- Analysis of bioavailable As(V), <i>Escherichia coli</i> MC1061(pTOO31)	III, IV
- Soil PLFA	IV
- 16S rRNA gene t-RFLP	IV
- ¹⁴ C-glucose mineralization	IV
- Enumeration of culturable As-resistant bacteria, CFU	I, IV
- Identification of bacterial strains, FAME	IV
- Analysis of soil acid-soluble and water soluble Cr and Cu (8 M HNO ₃ extraction in autoclave for 30 min; shaking for 60 min with dH ₂ O)	IV
- Dehydrogenase activity	V
- Analysis of acid-soluble and water soluble Pb (8 M HNO ₃ extraction in autoclave for 30 min; shaking for 60 min with dH ₂ O)	V
- Analysis of bioavailable Pb, <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> RN4220(pTOO24)	V
- Analysis of plant Pb concentration (wet oxidation with HNO ₃)	V
- Analysis of plant As concentration (wet oxidation with HNO ₃)	This thesis
- Activity of plants (transport of photosynthetic products of plants to the roots)	This thesis

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Speciation and mobility of arsenic in soil

The influence of microbes on the speciation of arsenic was studied under laboratory conditions (Papers I, II). In the beginning of the experiments, almost all (> 99.9%) of the arsenic existed as As(V). During the laboratory incubations (5 or 10 days) some methylation and reduction took place. The degree of species conversion was, however, not very high, being < 0.5 % compared to the original As(V) concentration (Paper I, Tables 4 and 5). Also, according to Cullen and Reimer (1989), Masscheleyn et al. (1991), Pongratz (1998) and Balasoiu (2001) the most often encountered arsenic form in soils is As(V). It is, however, possible that more reduction of As(V) to As(III) occurs in soils. If As(III) is rapidly oxidized, either microbiologically or chemically, back to As(V), only low concentrations of As(III) can be detected. The conversion of arsenic species during the extraction and storage of soil samples have been studied by Pansar-Kallio and Manninen (1997). The authors reported that no conversions of As(V) to As(III) was detected and also that the recoveries of As(III) were near 100 % at pH-values 3-9. Thus, the reason for only low concentration of As(III) was not its rapid oxidation during the extraction and storage of soil samples.

It is known that inorganic As(V) is subject to microbial reduction and methylation leading to volatilization as arsines (Alexander, 1977; Woolson, 1977a; Cheng and Focht, 1979; Gao and Burau, 1997). However, the reduction and/or methylation rates of arsenic, necessary pre-requisites to production of arsine, MMA, DMA and TMA, vary greatly depending on soil properties such as soil pH (Carbonell-Barrachina et al., 1999) and soil moisture, temperature, abundance of different species of arsenic and microbial populations in soil (Gao and Burau, 1997). In our study soils, the microbial transformation rate of water soluble As(V) under both aerobic and anaerobic conditions to volatile TMA represented 0.02-0.3 % (Paper II, Fig. 6). The production of TMA in soils was lower in this study when compared to previous studies; for example Atkins and Lewis (1976), Woolson (1977b) and Woolson and Kearney (1973) observed that 11 %, 18 % and 61 %, respectively, of soil acid-soluble arsenic concentration was converted to TMA. However, Gao and Burau (1997) found that there might be large variation in the transformation rates of arsenic. According to their results, the demethylation of arsenic was much higher (3-87 % of soil acid-soluble arsenic concentration) than the loss of arsenic as arsines (0.001-0.4 %). This indicates that the loss of arsenic from some soils to the atmosphere may not be an important pathway and inorganic arsenic may accumulate in some soils.

TMA was detected also from the landfill of arsenic contaminated soils (Paper II, Fig. 4). Even though the concentration of soil acid-soluble arsenic was an order of magnitude lower in the field than in soil used in laboratory experiments, the concentration of TMA produced under field conditions was higher than under laboratory conditions. In the field, the gas samples were, however, taken from the soil gas phase, not diffused out from the soil, like in the laboratory experiment. This indicates that gaseous arsines may concentrate inside the soil and are emitted from the soil to the atmosphere mainly when treating, e.g. turning over, the soil material. According to Pansar-Kallio and Korpela (2000) the stability of the gaseous arsenic species can be different in those soil sites where they are formed compared with their stability in surrounding air. Thus, the distance arsines may travel in air depends on environmental conditions (Pongratz, 1998). The stability of TMA is, however, higher than the stability of arsine (AsH₃) and therefore TMA is the most often encountered gaseous arsenic species in the environment (Pansar-Kallio and Korpela, 2000).

Even though the microbial transformation rates of As(V) were low, microbes were able to enhance the leaching of arsenic into the soil water (Paper I, Fig. 1). Also Ahmann et al. (1997) and Bachofen et al. (1995) have reported that in autoclaved, filtered or

formaldehyde-killed samples the leaching of arsenic was much lower than in “live” samples. In our study, most of the arsenic was leached as As(V). However, arsenic can be mobilized also through microbial reduction of As(V) to As(III). As(III) is more mobile than As(V), and thus the microbially mediated species conversion may enhance the mobilization of arsenic. For example, Macur et al. (2001) reported that microbial reduction of As(V) to As(III) in arsenic-contaminated soils may occur relatively fast resulting in enhanced arsenic mobilization. Macur et al. (2001) found also, that reduction of arsenic occurred under aerobic conditions, thus indicating that the reduction of As(V) was not coupled to anaerobic respiration, but was more likely a detoxification mechanism. However, also dissimilatory As(V)-reducing bacteria have been implicated in the mobilization of arsenic (Niggemyer et al., 2001). Also, various field experiments have demonstrated that arsenic may be mobilized and transported from contaminated soils to groundwaters or through brooks and rivers to surrounding lakes (Räsänen et al., 1997; Kalbitz and Wennrich, 1998; Lyytikäinen et al., 2001; Cai et al., 2002).

In this study, however, microbes needed a carbon source (glucose addition) before they functioned as effective bioleachers (Paper I). Also, McCreadie et al. (2000) and Balasoiu et al. (2001) found, that addition of organic carbon may stimulate bacteria, which mobilize arsenic. However, according to authors, the mobilization was due to microbial reduction of As(V) to more mobile As(III). In this study, arsenic was mobilized also in “killed” samples. Thus, physicochemical leaching in addition to biological leaching was a significant mechanism for mobilizing arsenic from soil. In this case phosphate, carbonate and chloride anions in minimum medium solution could have leached arsenic anions from the soil by ion exchange mechanism (Pantzar-Kallio and Manninen 1997).

4.2. Bioavailability of As(V) in contaminated soils

The bioavailable arsenic content of contaminated soils was determined by joint analyses of acid-soluble, total water soluble and bioavailable arsenic using a luminescent bacterial sensor *Escherichia coli* MC1061(pTOO31) (Paper III). The dominant (> 99 %) arsenic species in contaminated soils studied was As(V). Therefore, a previously developed As(III)-specific bacterial sensor, *Escherichia coli* MC1061(pTOO31) (Tauriainen et al., 1999), was tested for its applicability for analysis of As(V) contaminated soil samples. In M9 medium the bacteria reacted to As(III) at 100 times lower concentrations compared to As(V). In nutrient-rich LB-medium, however, the difference in the concentrations causing the response was significantly smaller. The sensitivity of the test for As(III) was approximately the same in both media (about $7.5 \mu\text{g l}^{-1}$, $0.1 \mu\text{M}$), but for As(V) the sensitivity improved from $\sim 750 \mu\text{g l}^{-1}$ ($10 \mu\text{M}$) to $\sim 35\text{-}40 \mu\text{g l}^{-1}$ ($0.5 \mu\text{M}$), i.e. approximately 20-fold in LB-medium (Paper III, Fig. 2). Therefore, LB-medium was used to rehydrate the bacterial biosensors in this study [Paper III, Fig. 3 (Standards), Fig. 4 (Water extractions), Fig. 5 (Soil suspensions)]. According to Diorio et al. (1995) the improved sensitivity for As(V) in LB-medium may be due to the higher expression of chromosomal arsenate reductase of *E. coli*. It is also possible that the rich medium provides a more suitable environment for biological reduction of As(V) by the reductase enzyme.

In contaminated soils, a significant correlation was found between the concentration of total water soluble arsenic and the bioavailability of arsenic (Paper III, Fig. 4). The bioavailability of arsenic, however, varied between sampling sites and was not predictable from the soil acid-soluble arsenic concentration or from the soil water soluble arsenic concentration; bioavailable arsenic was 3-77 % of total water soluble arsenic in soil. This indicates that the acid-soluble arsenic concentration is not a good indicator of arsenic bioavailability and apparent toxicity. Also, even if the water soluble arsenic content is useful in risk assessment of arsenic leaching to the ground water (Wenzel et al., 2001), it does not provide a relevant prediction of the bioavailability of arsenic in soils.

The bioavailability of arsenic was highly site-specific (Paper III, Table 1) indicating that many factors may affect the bioavailability of metals in soil. Similar results were reported in the study of Bååth (1989), who found that soil clay content decreased the bioavailability of metals. In addition, according to Barkay et al. (1997) dissolved organic carbon decreased the bioavailability of mercury. However, Giller et al. (1998) reported, that decreased pH resulted in increased bioavailability of metals, such as zinc, nickel and cadmium, in soil. In this study, the bioavailability of arsenic was considerably lower (15 % of water soluble arsenic) at old and abandoned sampling sites (in operation before 1968) than at a site, which was still in use (35 % of water soluble arsenic) during the studies (year 2000). This suggests that the arsenic-compounds that have aged in the soil are less bioavailable than when freshly added to soil. According to Alexander (2000) and Lock and Janssen (2001) aging of zinc, cadmium, nickel and cobalt has also been shown to occur in contaminated soils. This declining bioavailability (i.e. the bioavailability of arsenic may decline with little or no reduction in the acid-soluble arsenic concentration) is not, however, reflected by currently used methods for risk assessment of arsenic contaminated soils (Khan and Scullion, 2000; Chew et al., 2001; Kunito et al., 2001). As a consequence, the risks of abandoned and old contaminated soils may often be overestimated, which might lead to wrong decisions in choosing arsenic contaminated sites for remediation.

Bacterial biosensors can be used to give information on the bioavailability of arsenic in soils (Paper III). However, the toxicity and bioavailability of arsenic differs between organisms (Plette et al., 1999) and the results from bacterial sensor tests can not be applied directly to the higher organisms, such as plants and human beings. Another difficulty of using bacterial sensors is that the biological component is a viable cell, and therefore bioavailability measurements are limited to conditions which allow survival of the cell, e.g. narrow pH and temperature ranges (Bontidean et al., 2000). Also, because the promoter used is specific to arsenic, this technique is not well suited for universal “blind toxicity” screening. However, the use of bacterial biosensors is simple, rapid and inexpensive and therefore, this technique is potentially an ideal tool for preliminary screening of contaminated soils.

4.3. Microbial activity and community structure in arsenic, chromium and copper contaminated soils

The effects of arsenic, chromium and copper contamination on the microbial community structure and potential microbial activity were investigated in soils of old and abandoned wood impregnating plants (Paper IV). The microbial community structure analyses, PLFA and t-RFLP, indicated that exposure to high metal contamination or subsequent effects (for example lower plant growth) of this exposure can permanently change the microbial community structure (Paper IV, Figs. 5 and 7). Specifically, in PLFA analyses, a decrease in several iso- and anteiso-branched PLFAs, all commonly found in gram-positive bacteria, was found in highly contaminated soils. Evidence for a similar shift was found in studies reported by Jordan and Lechevalier (1975), Doelman and Haanstra (1979) and Hiroki (1992). A further indication that such shift had occurred in our study was indicated by the increase in cy17:0, which is considered to be typical for gram-negative bacteria (Lechevalier, 1977). Also, an increase in 18:2 ω 6,9, an indicator fatty acid for fungi was found at highly contaminated sites. Similar results were found in the studies of Jordan and Lechevalier (1975), Hiroki (1992) and Khan and Scullion (2000). However, several methyl-branched fatty acids, which are typical for actinomycetes, responded differently to metal contamination. This indicates that different members of the actinomycete population can respond differently to elevated metal concentrations, which was found also in a study of Kelly et al. (1999).

The t-RFLP results (Paper IV, Fig. 6) indicated, that the microbial community is able to compensate for the reduced population size and diversity with time. According to t-RFLP results, this was not due to a reversion towards the pre-exposure community but mainly due to the appearance of new dominating species. Similar results were reported by Maliszewska et al. (1985) who found that As(V) stimulated the proliferation of certain groups of microorganisms in soil resulting in a shift of the microbial community comprise only a few tolerant species. Also, Rasmussen and Sorensen (2001) found that microbial diversity decreased immediately after exposure to mercury but also that adaptation to mercury stress may result in a recovery of diversity due to a shift in the community structure.

Even though the microbial community structure was altered in highly contaminated soils, no differences were noted in glucose mineralization ($^{14}\text{CO}_2$ evolution from ^{14}C -glucose) or in the total number of heterotrophic colony forming units (CFU) among contaminated and control soil samples within sites (Paper IV, Fig. 1 and Table 3). This indicates that the microbial populations at contaminated sites were well adapted even to high concentrations of arsenic, chromium and copper. Also Pennanen et al. (1996) reported that at long-term field sites, soil microbial communities have had time to adapt to the stress presented by the elevated metal concentrations. In addition, the results were supported by the finding of Konopka et al. (1999) that the microbial metabolic potential of readily degradable substrates, such as glucose, was not inhibited by lead, even though high concentrations of lead changed the soil microbial community structure. Similar results were found in the studies of Dahlin et al. (1997) and Bååth et al. (1998b) who reported that significant differences were found in the microbial community structure determined by PLFA patterns between heavy metal treated soils and control soils. According to authors, the microbial activity or basal respiration was not, however, affected by metal additions.

Arsenic can be classified as a potentially hazardous metal at old wood impregnating plants (Hingston et al., 2001; Hingston et al., 2002), because of high long-term solubility of arsenic compared to chromium and copper (McLaren et al., 1998; Ruokolainen et al., 2000). This was found also in soil of this study; the solubility of arsenic was 10-200 fold higher than the solubility of chromium or copper. Therefore, special attention was paid to the examination of arsenic-resistance and characterization of the resistant community members. In the contaminated soils studied, the proportion of As(V)-resistant bacteria was high and relatively independent of the soil arsenic concentration (Paper IV, Table 3). In contrast, the proportion of As(III)-resistant bacteria was low and dependent on the concentration of arsenic in the soils. This indicates that As(III) is more toxic to culturable microbes than As(V), which was also found in study of Maliszewska et al. (1985).

Characterization and identification of the arsenic-resistant bacterial isolates from three study sites supported the conclusion based on PLFA and t-RFLP microbial community analyses, which revealed considerable differences between the three sampling sites. According to FAME analyses, arsenic-resistant genera included *Salmonella*, *Pseudomonas*, *Edwardsiella*, *Enterobacter*, *Acinetobacter* and *Serratia* species (Paper IV, Fig. 3). The isolated strains showed a relatively high resistance against As(III) and As(V), and among them the *Acinetobacter radioresistens*, *A. baumannii*, *Pseudomonas chlororaphis* and *P. syringae* were extremely resistant. The dominant arsenic-resistant organisms found at the most contaminated site were *A. radioresistens* and *A. baumannii* (Paper IV, Fig. 3). One of the main peaks found in the t-RFLP pattern corresponded to the *Acinetobacter* species. This suggests that the culturable organisms may be important members of microbial communities in soils. Also, Nieto et al. (1989) and Deshpande et al. (1993) have found that *Acinetobacter* species are highly resistant to metals and that several *Acinetobacter* sp. strains are commonly found at metal contaminated sites. The results of Macnaughton et al. (1999), that the major changes in the microbial community structure of metal-treated

microcosms consisted of the appearance of *Acinetobacter* sp. strains, correspond to the results of this study.

The identification of arsenic-resistant isolates was, however, tentative, because it was based only on one method (FAME analysis). For a more reliable identification of microbial species, it is recommended to use two or three different methods, such as FAME and 16S rDNA sequencing, combined.

In summary, this study indicates that microbes are able to respond to soil metal contamination and maintain the metabolic activity apparently through changes in microbial community structure and selection for resistance. The changes in microbial community structure and diversity were site-specific and were not related to the soil acid-soluble metal concentration. Thus, the differing findings in microbial community structure in metal contaminated soils may have resulted from variations in the levels of metal bioavailability. Similar results were found in the study of Rasmussen et al. (2000) who reported that the microbial response to mercury was observed as development of mercury-resistant bacteria and lowering of diversity, which correlated with changes in concentrations of bioavailable mercury.

4.4. Phytostabilization of lead

Effects of pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) and liming (pH-change with CaCO_3) on the solubility, mobility and bioavailability of lead in boreal forest soil, previously used as a shooting range area, were examined in laboratory microcosms (Paper V). Pine seedlings had a major role in immobilization of lead in contaminated soil. In boreal forest soil, the reduction of water soluble lead was 0-56 % in humic rich surface soil and 12-93 % in mineral soil (Paper V, Fig. 2). In the surface and mineral soil the reduction in mobility was 40-57 % (Paper V, Table 2). These results showed that pine seedlings had a major role in the immobilization of lead in the contaminated soil. Similar results were reported by Berti and Cunningham (1997) who found that in-place inactivation, i.e. the use of green plants to remediate lead contaminated soils, reduces the hazards associated with lead contaminated soils through chemical and physical stabilization. Also, Cotter-Howells and Caporn (1996) found that the roots of *Agrostis capillaris*, growing in highly contaminated lead/zinc mine wastes, caused the formation of pyromorphite, a highly insoluble and non-bioavailable lead phosphate mineral, thus decreasing the solubility of lead in contaminated soils. Lead stabilization is soil specific and depends on the level of lead contamination and soil characteristics controlling the solubility and mobility of lead, and more likely the phytostabilization of lead may be efficient remediation method in soils with relatively low levels of contamination (Klassen et al., 2000).

Sauve et al. (1997) reported that the relation of dissolved lead and Pb^{2+} in the soil solutions of various contaminated soils can be predicted from simple soil properties like pH, soil total lead and phosphate concentration. Various sequential extraction techniques have been used to predict the bioavailability of soil metals (Tessier, 1979; Krisnamurti et al., 1995; Gupta et al., 1996; Morera et al., 2001). Biosensors, however, provide a direct and more accurate determination of metal bioavailability. In this study, the bioavailability of lead was assessed directly using a lead-specific luminescent bacterial sensor, *Staphylococcus aureus* RN4220(pTOO24), in which the lead resistance promoter controls the expression of firefly luciferase. Significant positive correlation was found between the concentration of total water soluble lead and the bioavailability of lead in the soils (Paper V, Fig. 4). The concentration of bioavailable lead was not, however, predictable from the concentration of total water soluble lead; bioavailable lead was only 4-6 % of total water soluble lead in humic surface soil and 13-43 % in mineral soil (Paper V, Table 4). This is of great importance because ionic species (Pb^{2+}) are mainly responsible for the biological effect of lead in soils (Sauve, 1999). Thus, the lead bioavailability measurements indicate low

toxicity of lead to soil microbes even when the soil total lead concentration is high. The results of dehydrogenase activity measurements of highly lead-contaminated boreal forest soil supported this result. In lead-contaminated soils the microbial activity was reduced only slightly when compared to uncontaminated control soils (Paper V, unpublished data, Fig. 4).

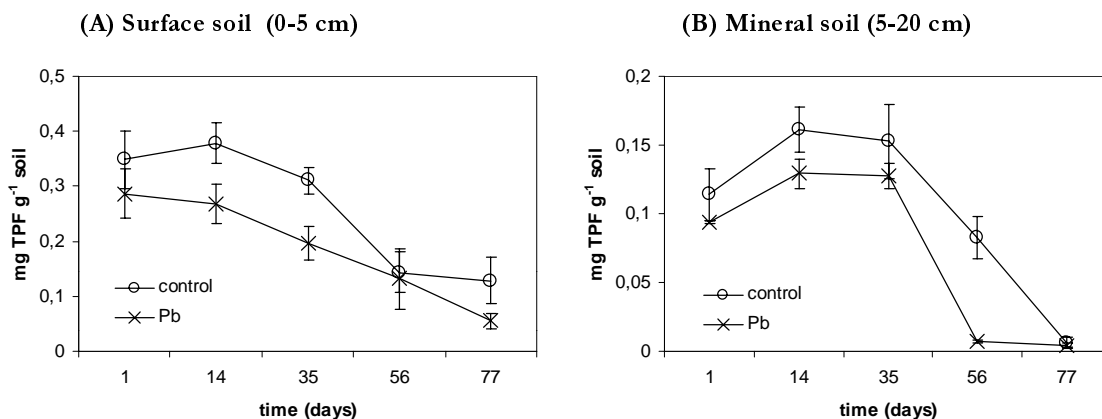


Fig. 4. Microbial dehydrogenase activity (mg TPF g⁻¹ soil) in Pb-contaminated (Pb) and uncontaminated (control) (A) surface soil and (B) mineral soil during 77-day laboratory experiment (mean \pm SD, n=3).

In acidic soils with high total lead concentrations, the solubility and bioavailability of lead is often elevated (Wang and Benoit, 1996; Fang and Wong, 1999). Thus, liming (increasing pH) should decrease the solubility, bioavailability and toxicity of lead in soils (Derome, 2000). However, according to results of this study, liming (pH increase from 3.5-4.3 to 6.5) did not reduce the solubility, mobility or bioavailability of lead in the soil (Paper V, Fig. 2 and Table 2), indicating that soil pH is not the only factor affecting mobility and bioavailability of lead in boreal forest soils. One possible reason for the increased solubility and mobility of lead can be the higher formation of dissolved organic lead-complexes as a result of elevated soil pH (Reddy et al., 1995; Sauve et al., 1998). In addition, Harter (1979) reported that the relationship between pH and lead adsorption in soil is not straightforward and thus he suggested that total bases would give a better prediction of lead adsorption in soils because it is a function of both pH and cation exchange capacity. According to Harter (1979), the high amount of calcium ions could have resulted in increased ion exchange of Pb²⁺ and resulted in elevated concentrations of soluble and bioavailable lead.

4.5. Phytostabilization of arsenic

Because the results of phytostabilization experiments with lead contaminated soils were promising, the same method was tested for arsenic contaminated soils. However, in arsenic contaminated soils, the tested plants (*Pinus sylvestris*, *Betula pendula*, *Festuca ovina*) did not decrease the solubility, mobility or bioavailability of arsenic in soil (unpublished, Fig. 5). Arsenic was highly toxic to plants and decreased the activity of plant roots (i.e. the transport of ¹⁴C-labeled photosynthetic products of plants to the roots) (unpublished, Fig. 6), which could be one reason for the low phytostabilization potential of the plants tested. However, the plants decreased the species conversion of As(V) to As(III) in deeper soil layer (15 cm) (unpublished, Fig. 5), and thus the presence of plants may have an important role in detoxification of arsenic. Similar results were found in the study of Otte et al. (1992) who reported that due to oxidizing activity of plant roots and/or microorganisms, As(III) may be oxidized to As(V) in the rhizosphere of plants. In addition, *Festuca ovina* accumulated high concentrations of arsenic into its roots and shoots (unpublished, Table 5), and thus this grass could be used for phytoextraction of arsenic contaminated surface soils. Ma et al. (2001) and Visoottiviset et al. (2002) have also found that for example *Pteris*

vittata, *Pityrogramma calomelanos*, *Mimosa pudica* and *Melastoma malabrathricum* accumulate high concentrations of arsenic, and therefore these plants seem to be suitable for phytoextraction.

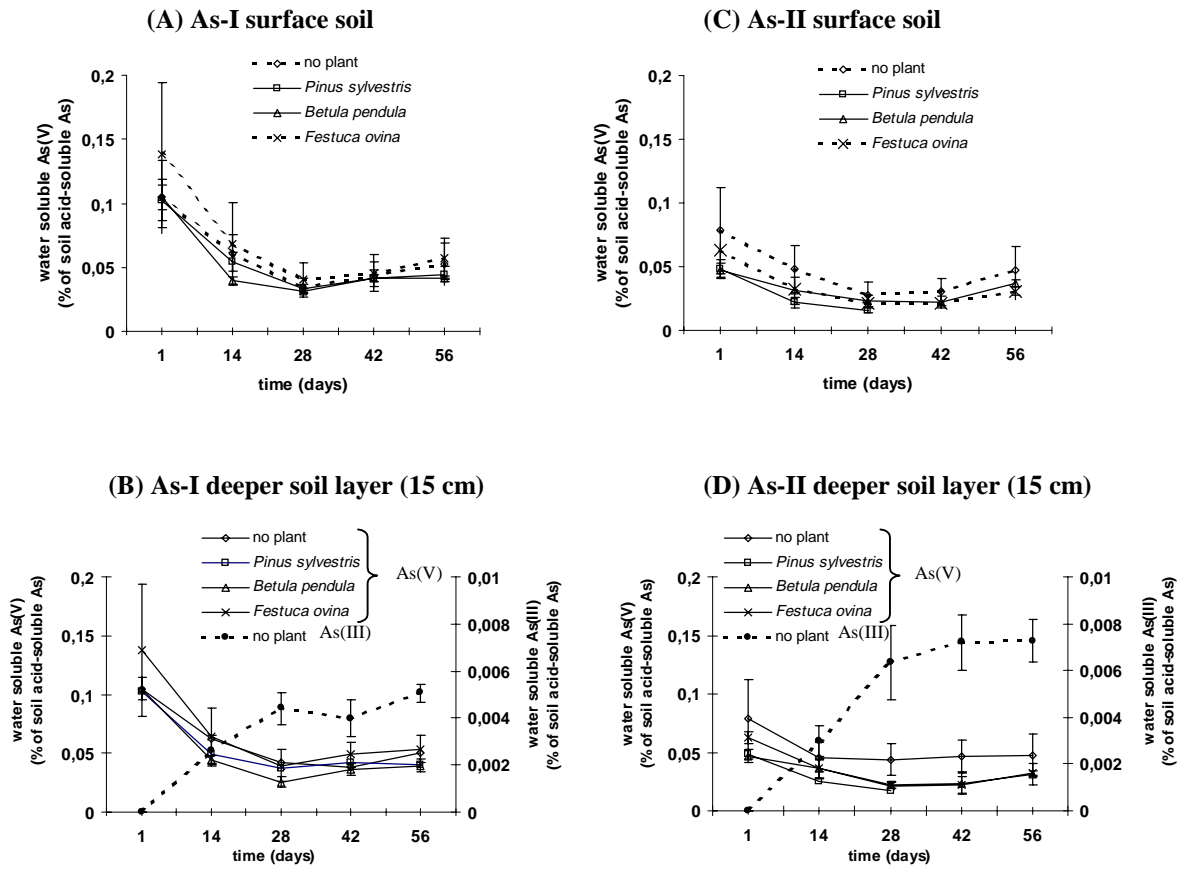


Fig. 5. Water soluble As(V) and As(III) (as percentage of soil acid-soluble arsenic) during 56-day laboratory experiment with no plant; with *Pinus sylvestris*; with *Betula pendula*; and with *Festuca ovina*. (A) As-I (5000 mg As kg⁻¹) surface soil; (B) As-I (5000 mg As kg⁻¹) deeper soil layer; (C) As-II surface soil (15000 mg As kg⁻¹); and (D) As-II (15000 mg As kg⁻¹) deeper soil layer.

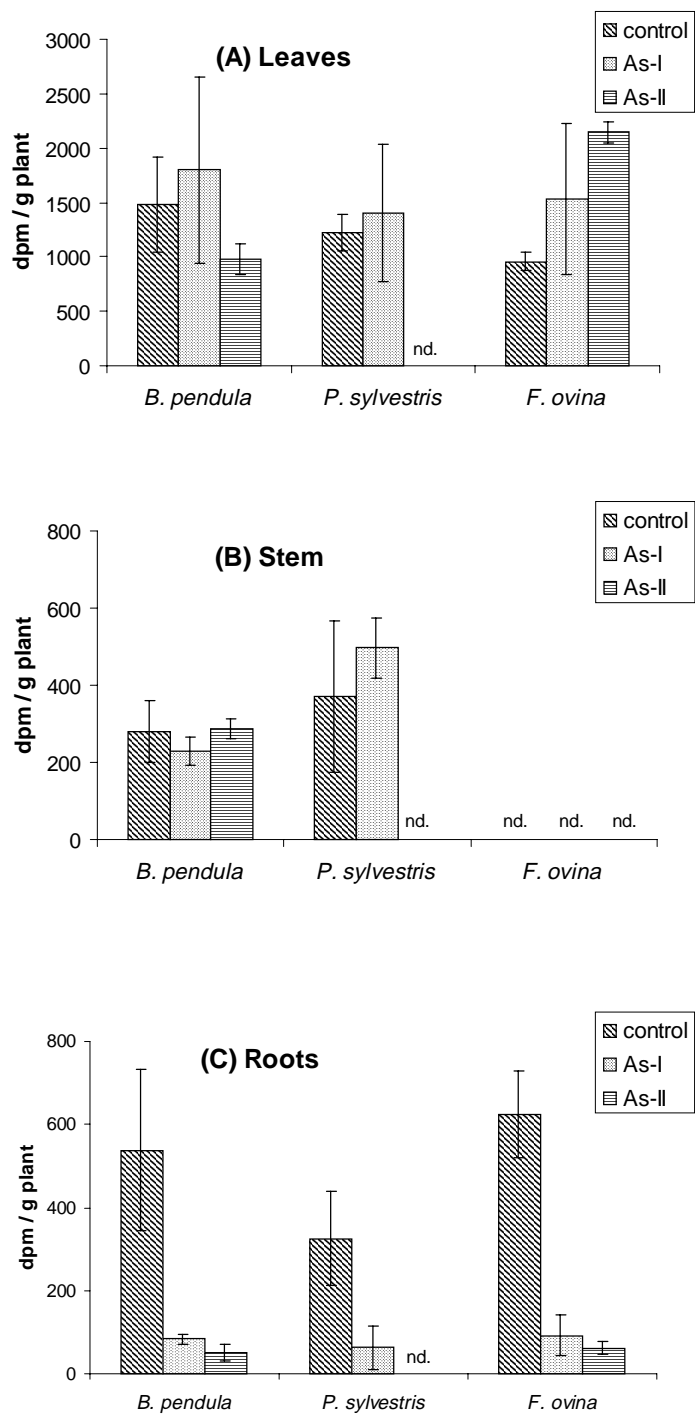


Fig. 6. Accumulation of ^{14}C -labeled photosynthetic products of plants (*Betula pendula*, *Pinus sylvestris* and *Festuca ovina*) in (A) leaves; and (B) stems, and their transport to (C) roots after 56 days of laboratory incubation in uncontaminated (control); As-I ($5000 \text{ mg As kg}^{-1}$); and As-II ($15000 \text{ mg As kg}^{-1}$) soils (mean \pm SD, $n=3$).

Table 5. Concentration of arsenic (mg As kg⁻¹) in roots, stem and leaves of *Pinus sylvestris*, *Betula pendula* and *Festuca ovina* after 56 days of laboratory incubation in As-I (5000 mg As kg⁻¹) and As-II (15000 mg As kg⁻¹) soils (mean \pm SD, n =3). In uncontaminated (control) soils, the concentration of arsenic in roots, stem and leaves of plants was below 3 mg kg⁻¹.

	Mg As kg⁻¹		
As-I	Roots	Stem	Leaves
<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	773 \pm 286	42 \pm 7.2	76 \pm 14
<i>Betula pendula</i>	353 \pm 50	< 3	11 \pm 1.2
<i>Festuca ovina</i>	863 \pm 293	nd.	1367 \pm 116
As-II			
<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	433 \pm 133	330 \pm 120	353 \pm 110
<i>Betula pendula</i>	340 \pm 111	11 \pm 2.3	11 \pm 2.3
<i>Festuca ovina</i>	2533 \pm 551	nd.	3200 \pm 700

5. CONCLUSIONS – ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE

In order to be able to exploit the potential of bioremediation and phytoremediation, basic environmental phenomena like the effects of microbes and plants on metals have to be understood. This thesis gives insight how these phenomena could be exploited when developing bioremediation methods for metal, especially arsenic and lead, contaminated soils.

Unlike organic pollutants, that can be mineralized to harmless products such as CO₂, arsenic and lead cannot be biodegraded, but persist indefinitely, complicating the remediation of contaminated soils. Therefore, the main strategy is to reduce the bioavailability, mobility and toxicity of the metal. Biological methods for remediation of arsenic- and lead-contaminated soils include detoxification, bioleaching and phytoremediation. In arsenic-contaminated soils, microbial methylation of inorganic arsenic to water soluble methylated arsenic forms, MMAA and DMAA, may function as a detoxification method. However, in soils tested in this study, biomethylation of arsenic was of minor importance. Also, the possibility that MMAA and DMAA, may be transformed to highly toxic volatile arsines by biomethylation has to be taken into account in the bioremediation of arsenic-contaminated soils.

The bioavailability of arsenic was low at all sites when compared to the acid-soluble arsenic concentration. This can explain why biomethylation was not a common microbial transformation process in the soils tested. Even though the results of this study revealed that biomethylation activity in arsenic-contaminated soils was low, arsenic was bioleached [mainly as As(V)] in laboratory microcosms. Therefore, as a result of enhanced microbial activity due to addition of nutrient rich or organic soil, the mobilization of arsenic from soil may be increased and result in pollution of groundwaters and downstream lakes. Thus, bioleaching is not a suitable *in situ* bioremediation method. More likely, bioleaching could be a potential *ex-situ* bioremediation method in which the contaminated soils are treated in closed tanks or reactor vessels.

The PLFA and t-RFLP profiles and microbial activity measurements indicated that the microbial community is able to adapt to arsenic, chromium and copper contamination and maintain the metabolic activity through changes in the microbial community structure towards higher resistance for metals. The dominant arsenic-resistant bacteria in highly contaminated soils were *Acinetobacter radioresistens* and *A. baumannii* strains.

In lead-contaminated boreal forest soils tested in this study, the presence of pine seedlings significantly reduced the solubility, mobility and bioavailability of lead. This result indicates that the use of deep-rooted plants (such as pine) may serve as an appropriate remediation tool (through phytostabilization), at least decreasing the downward leaching of lead and thereby the risk to groundwater contamination. However, in arsenic-contaminated soils, plants (*Pinus sylvestris*, *Betula pendula*, *Festuca ovina*) did not decrease the solubility, mobility or bioavailability of arsenic. Arsenic was highly toxic to plants and inhibited the metabolism of plant roots, which could be one reason for low phytostabilization potential of plants tested. However, the plants decreased the formation of As(III) and thus the presence of plants may have an important role in detoxification of arsenic. Also, *Festuca ovina* accumulated high concentrations of arsenic into its roots and shoots, indicating that this grass could be employed for phytoextraction of arsenic-contaminated surface soils.

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