
UP-North: Exploring the environmental context of the Late Upper Palaeolithic peopling of Northwest Europe

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Résumé

Human subsistence, mobility and environmental interactions at the end of the Palaeolithic were undoubtedly influenced by large-scale and rapid climate change. With the melting of ice sheets and expansion / contraction of ecosystems, new landscapes and resources became available to Late and Final Palaeolithic hunter-gatherer people. The UP-North project is examining the dispersal of people and animal populations into Northern Europe after the Last Glacial Maximum. Using a range of techniques, including stable isotope, radiocarbon and ancient DNA analyses, UP-North is establishing local chronological, palaeoclimatic and palaeoecological frameworks in which links between cultural innovation and/or persistence under changing environments can be explored. A key aspect of the project is to assess the timing, pace and scales of change at a local level, and to evaluate whether these changes varied by or were consistent between locations. Here we present new stable isotope and radiocarbon data from Belgium and the British Isles. We apply a multi-isotope approach to key herbivore prey species (reindeer, red deer, horse, elk, and aurochs) to infer habitat change, local landscape evolution and ecological context of the human activity in the area. We explore the timing of human presence in the regions through radiocarbon dating faunal remains that show evidence of human modification. By developing multiple integrated lines of evidence the project provides an insight into the Late-glacial landscape and environment change that Palaeolithic people experienced and evaluates how these may have influenced the decisions they made.

Mots-Clés: Late Upper Palaeolithic, isotopes, bones, palaeoclimate, late glacial, palaeoecology, radiocarbon dating

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