1 **Response to reviewer #1 on „Climate variability and long-term expansion of**

2 **peat lands in Arctic Norway during the late Pliocene (ODP Site 642,**

3 **Norwegian Sea)"**

4 We would like to thank Maria Fernanda Sanchez Goñi for her very constructive review. We

5 have addressed her comments as detailed below.

6 **Reviewer #1 (M.F.Sanchez Goñi):** Panitz et al. present a pollen analysis of the late Pliocene

7 interval, Piacenzian, from ODP site 642 collected off northern Norway. The results are

8 original and the resolution of the analysis is high, up to 800 years between 3.29 and 3.16 Ma,

9 approaching the temporal resolution performed in Pleistocene records. In contrast with

10 previous low resolution studies, they show for the first time that Piacenzian warmth was not

11 as stable as previously thought but punctuated by cooler episodes. These cooler episodes,

12 allowing the development of tundra and peat lands, could contribute to an increase in albedo

13 and atmospheric CO2 capture, both feedback mechanisms contributing to ice build-up leading

14 to the major Pleistocene glaciations. This manuscript deserves publication in Climate of the

15 Past after moderate revision. My main concerns are manuscript length and descriptions of the

16 pollen results. I suggest to the authors delete section 4.2 (description of the raw pollen data)

17 and 4.3 (description of the quantitative climate reconstructions) and draw a new table

18 synthesizing these raw data. Climate of the Past is not a palynological journal. Moreover,

19 section 5 nicely describes the pollen results already along with their interpretation in terms of

20 vegetation and climate. Now, there are many repetitions between sections 4.2 and 4.3 and

21 sections 5.2 to 5.6 and 5.7.

22 R1: We would prefer to keep Sections 4 and 5 separated. We are aware that this produces

23 some repetition, but a separate presentation of results and interpretation avoids circular

24 arguments and allows a higher accuracy if compared with data from other records. This style

25 is not necessarily specific to palynological journals and has already been published in CP (e.g.

26 Andreev et al. 2014. *Clim. Past, 10, 1017-1039).*

27 Reviewer #1 : Below I have listed the points that the authors should also modify or further

28 discuss: Page 5757, Line 11: Please clarify what you mean by "As the mPWP exceeds orbital

29 timescales. . .".

30 R2: Changed to: As the duration of the mPWP exceeds orbital timescales...

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Page 5762, Line 24: Why did the authors sieve the samples with a sieve at 63 μm? I guess that the reason is because this sieving is the common procedure used by paleoceanographers to collect the foraminifera. However, the size of Picea pollen is commonly bigger than 63 μm reaching nearly 100 μm (e.g. Lindbladh et al., 2002, American Journal of Botany). Please argue that the potential bias in the pollen data related with the underrepresentation of Picea would not affect the interpretation and conclusion of the manuscript.

R3: Reviewre#1's assumption is correct and the following changes were made to clarify (p. 5762, line 23):

"All samples were pre-sieved in Bergen, Norway through a 63 μm mesh to retain foraminifera for oxygen isotope analysis (Risebrobakken et al., 2015). In order to identify a potential bias in the pollen data resulting from larger Pinaceae pollen grains exceeding 63 μm, we compared sieved and unsieved samples, and no difference in the overall pollen count has been found."

Page 5763, lines 25-26: ". . ., following the same preparation protocol." The same protocol in comparison with what other protocol?

R4: Changed to: ..., using standard palynological techniques (Faegri and Iversen, 1989).

Page 5763, lines 9-10: How many pollen grains do you count per sample excluding Pinus pollen and how many taxa?

R5: Changed to (p. 5763, line 10): An average of 510 pollen grains was counted per slide, or 185 grains excluding *Pinus*. On average 23 taxa were identified per sample.

Page 5763, lines14-19: Please cite the reference of the paper that validates the criteria used to identify the reworked pollen (dark orange to brown colour, high degree of compression. . .).

R6: The following references will be added: de Vernal and Mudie (1989a), Proceedings of the Ocean Drilling Program (Site 645); de Vernal and Mudie (1989b), Proceedings of the Ocean Drilling Program (Site 646 and 647); Willard (1996) Proceedings of the Ocean Drilling Program (Site 910 and 911).

Page 5763, lines 20-25: Add how the percentages of Pinus pollen have been calculated.

R7: Added p. 5763, line 23: Percentages of *Pinus* pollen was calculated based on the total pollen sum including *Pinus*.

1 Page 5765, lines 13-14: How can the authors discriminate Cupressaceae from Juniperus-type
2 pollen? In Quaternary sediments, this discrimination is not possible. We use Cupressaceae
3 pollen morphotype as synonym of Juniperus-type morphotype.

4 R8: We have added the following sentences to clarify the discrimination between
5 Cupressaceae and *Juniperus*-type pollen (p. 5763, line 14):

6 The group *Juniperus*-type only contains pollen grains that are split open whereas
7 Cupressaceae contains those that are still closed or have a papilla (see e.g. Demkse et al.
8 (2002), Quaternary International).

9 I suggest to the authors to replace "Modern surface samples" by "Modern and mid-Holocene
10 samples" throughout the manuscript.

11 R9: Done.

12 Page 5770, lines 5-22: could the authors please further discuss the type of transport by wind
13 or rivers that brought the pollen to the ODP site. If the pollen grains from deciduous trees are
14 transported by rivers, they would not necessarily be deposited closer to the source area. I
15 guess that the model of Mudie and McCarthy is valid for pollen transported by winds. Is this
16 correct?

17 R10: We thank reviewer#1 for this important comment and will expand the discussion
18 including the following section (p. 5770, line 22):

19 "The pollen spectra at ODP Hole 642B are predominated by wind-pollinated taxa. Low
20 abundance of deciduous trees can also be found in other marine records from the North
21 Atlantic (Mudie and McCarthy, 2006). There is no evidence for large rivers in Norway during
22 the Pliocene, which makes rivers as a significant transport medium for pollen to the site
23 highly unlikely. Today, plumes of cold fjord water enter the Norwegian Sea in spring, but
24 only extend less than 100 km offshore (Mork, 1981). However, fjords and glaciers which
25 trigger such plumes almost certainly did not exist during the Pliocene."

26 May I suggest including in Figure 6 the δ18O curve of Lisiecki and Raymo for the Piacenzian
27 interval in order to better follow the Discussion section?

28 R11: We fully agree and have added the δ18O curve of Lisiecki and Raymo to Figure 6.

29 Minor comments

30 Please write the names of species and genus in italics

1 R12: Done

2 Page 5760, line 11: replace "is" with "are"

3 R13: Done

4 Page 5762, line 23: add a coma after "Norway"

5 R14: Done

6 Page 5764, line 15: replace "analyse" with "document"

7 R15: Done

8 Page 5771, line 24: add "s" to "zone"

9 R16: Done

10 Page 5764, line 25-27: delete the meaning of MAT, CMT, WMT and MAP. This is already
11 mentioned in section 2.2

12 R17: Done

13 Page 5767, line 2: replace "is" with "are"

14 R18: Done

15 Page 5775, line 8-9: This sentence is not clear.

16 R19: Changed to: "Considering the present-day average minimum elevation of glaciers (c.
17 1000 m) in northern Norway and a lower height of the Scandinavian mountains during the
18 Pliocene, mountainous glaciation during the warmer-than-present Piacenzian seems highly
19 unlikely (Andreassen et al., 2012; Sohl et al., 2009)."

20 Page 5779, line 2: add "northern" before "Norway"

21 R20: Sentence has been deleted.

22 Figure 2: Could you add the latitudes?

23 R21: Figure 2 will be provided with latitudes.

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Response to reviewer #2 on „Climate variability and long-term expansion of peat lands in Arctic Norway during the late Pliocene (ODP Site 642, Norwegian Sea)"

We would like to thank Timme H. Donders for his very constructive and helpful comments. In response to this we have taken the following actions:

Reviewer #2 (T. Donders): An important advance in the study is an improvement of the age model, but unfortunately the status of the Risebrodbakken in prep. paper on the age model is still very unclear, and therefore some more information on the dating approach and resolution is needed in the Pantiz et al. manuscript, preferable in a figure. Given the aims of high resolution documentation and targeting of the KM5c isotope stage this is important information for the study. Also, while isotope stratigraphy is referred and correlated to it is important to also show a compilation (e.g LR04) or relevant record for comparison so readers can assess the consistency of both pollen and isotopes in the summary figs 6 or 7. This is especially important for the position of M2 and KM5c.

R1: We fully agree with reviewer #2 and will add an additional figure with the age model, showing the correlation of the LR04 benthic oxygen isotope stack with the $\delta^{18}O$ curve from ODP Hole 642B (after Risebrobakken et al. in review). The LR04 stack will also be added to Figure 6.

The paper focuses on a climatic interpretation of the record, which might very well be justified, but little attention is given to taphonomic issues, roles of shifting depot centers and run-off patterns which might also explain the observed changes. For example, the uppermost zone 2B-II is part of the mid Piacenzian warming yet seem to indicate substantially drier conditions, which is counter-intuitive in this setting and latitude as warm surface waters would bring both heat and moisture. In fact, other low precipitation anomalies in the record indicate cooling . . . could this be a taphonomic bias? Consistently higher diversity, rare types and higher concentrations in upper section (zone 2B-Ib) suggest increased river runoff and/or proximity of river outflow, is anything known about paleo river development along the coast and how does this impact the climate curve? How is this related to uplift phases (section 2.3) Compare e.g. Eidvin et al., 2014, Marine and Petroleum Geology. To eliminate potential overrepresentation of Pinus due to sea level and other transport factors it might be useful to

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calculate abundances excluding Pinus from the percent sum. Although Pinus is rather constant, exclusion might produce a more realistic representation of the vegetation cover.

R2: Reviewer #2 raises a valid point and we have added the following sentences:

p. 5763, line 9: Pollen preservation is generally very good.

P. 5763, line 19: Uplift phases and shifting depocentres as documented in Eidvin et al., 2014, Marine and Petroleum Geology, are restricted to the basins off the Norwegian coast and should not have affected the coring site which is located on the Outer Vøring Plateau.

We added a sentence to the manuscript to make clear that there is no indication for increased river runoff and/or proximity of river outflow (see reviewer #1, R10).

As already mentioned in the method section (Page 5763, lines 22-23), *Pinus* has been excluded from the calculation of pollen percentages.

Regarding the climate calibrations: the climate estimates seem to hit a plateau value in many samples, is this a feature of the calibration dataset and method or the data? And how do the Utescher and Mosbrugger, 2013 calibration data compare to the Greenwood et al. 2005 calibration datasets, and why was one calibration dataset preferred over another? Also, how do the quantitative estimates based on the recent samples in Fig. 3 compare to present climate data? Did the authors test this? Independent tests of the calibration methods on modern vegetation samples have revealed significant mismatches of the climate estimates which are not discussed here (see Grimm and Denk, 2012 Rev Pal&Pal). For example, how do the reconstructed low precipitation values compare to the often high Sphagnum values (e.g. zone 2B-Ia) during these periods which the authors attribute to higher humidity?

R3: Reviewer #2 raises several important issues regarding the suitability of our record for applying quantitative climate estimates and the Coexistence Approach (CA). As mentioned in the manuscript, the very wide range of the climate estimates, including the "plateau" mentioned by Reviewer #2, are partly an artefact of the relatively low number of taxa used for this approach. The "modern" samples only show a modern "cool" temperature if we exclude single rare taxa (i.e. "long distance transport") from the dataset. For that reason, we set in our manuscript an initial threshold of 1% for the Pliocene climate reconstructions (see page 5771, line 16). However, with the exclusion of taxa we increased the range and uncertainty of our climate estimates even further. Our overall number of tree taxa is too low to apply the Greenwood et al. (2005) calibration dataset, which in addition does not include Asian taxa,

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such as *Pterocarya* and *Sciadopitys*. We therefore used the dataset from the Palaeoflora database for our quantitative climate estimates.

Given the great uncertainty and wide ranges of our climate reconstructions, which have been discussed in section 5.7, we do not think that it is useful to discuss in more detail the accuracy of the CA method and/or fluctuations in climate reconstructions as suggested by reviewer #2. However, we think reviewer #2 raised very important issues here and we therefore decided to remove Figure 7 and the stratigraphic climate reconstructions from the final manuscript. We changed section 5.7 which now only provides a single qualitative and quantitative estimate for the entire Pliocene record and discusses the uncertainties mentioned above.

P. 15, lines 28-31: Abundant Asteraceae in combination with dominant Pinus also occur in open wet prairie communities in Southern Florida, indicating fire-controlled moist conditions in warm (subtropical) climates with, in areas, salt influence. While not necessarily a climate analogue, it does provide a comparable palynological signal (see Willard et al, 2001, Rev. Pal &Pal) and the possibility of a coastal-derived signal should be at least discussed (although likely dismissed) in the explanation of zone 2A.

R4: High Asteraceae percentages do not only occur in modern pollen records from Florida but also in Pliocene records from Africa. We do not agree that the modern pollen surface samples from the sub-tropical biomes of Florida show a "comparable" palynological signal. Apart from high *Pinus* pollen percentage in both records, the boreal – cold temperate forest biome signal is distinctly different. The Asteraceae signal in our record seems to have no modern analogue, and we would prefer not to compare our record with any modern subtropical "pseudo-analogues", as this could be highly misleading in regard to Pliocene climate reconstruction.

Technical & minor comments:

Improve subdivision scale x-axes figure 7

R5: Figure will be removed from the final manuscript.

Fig 4: Lycopodium clavatum or annotinum or other type?

R6: Changed to *Lycopodium* spp.

Inclusion of total group curves (conifers, trees, herbs, spores) in fig 4 would be very informative The authors use an uncommon zonation coding; while hierarchy of CONISS

zonation seems strictly used, this is a little artificial and not really realistic. It is better just use increasing numbers with a code relevant to the site or Pliocene stage.

R7: Total groups curves will be added to Figure 4 (Fig. 5 in revised ms). The zonation coding will be changed to increasing numbers and referred to as Pollen Zone (PZ) 1, 2, etc.

P.2, Line 20: "exceeds" is unclear here, in which way does is exceed: due to higher detail (hence shorter variability) or longer due to the entire length of the interval. While the authors seem to point at the first case this excludes influence of long cycles such as eccentricity and long-term (1.2 /2.4 Ma) nodes in obliquity variation.

R8: As the duration of the mPWP exceeds orbital timescales...

p. 2, Line 29: magnitude of warming relative to present

R9: Changed to: a strong warming at high latitudes during the Piacenzian

P.3, line 6: Arctic

R10: Added

P.3, line 27: magnitude of past warming

R11: Changed to: mPWP warming

P.5, line 10: precipitation does not follow a gradient, but forms it.

R12: Changed

P.5, line 17: tree birch (Betula pubescens)

R13: Changed to: birch tree

P6., line 6: upper limit of raised bogs: upper limit of % land cover, or absolute height, or is northernmost extension meant?

R14: altitudinal limit

P.7, line 8: Sieving approach (< 63 micron) likely removed Abies and potentially part of Picea fraction

R15: The loss of large Pinaceae pollen due to sieving through a 63 µm mesh has been discussed in R3, reviewer #1. The following changes were made to clarify (p. 5762, line 23):

"All samples were pre-sieved through a 63 µm 0.063 mm mesh to retain foraminifera for oxygen isotope analysis in Bergen, Norway (Risebrobakken et al., 2015). In order to identify

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a potential bias in the pollen data resulting from larger Pinaceae pollen grains exceeding 63 μm, we compared sieved and unsieved samples, and no difference in the overall pollen count has been found."

P.7, line 28: Reference of CONISS is Grimm et al., 1987: Grimm, E.C. 1987. CONISS: a FORTRAN 77 program for stratigraphically constrained cluster analysis by the method of incremental sum of squares. Computers & Geosciences 13, 13-35.

R16: Changed

P.7, line 30: did diversity estimate also take into account the varying count sums (rarefaction of the richness, see Birks and Line, 1992)? This is implemented in PAST as well and should be used to normalize and intercompare palynological richness between samples in variable counts sums prior to calculation of the Shannon index.

R17: We thank reviewer #2 for this comment and have added a rarefaction curve using PAST software to Figure 6 (Fig. 7 in revised ms).

P.9, line 27 correct Querucs

R18: Changed

P. 11, line5/6: pollen taxa . . . are absent. See also lines 26/27

R19: Changed

P.12, line 5/6: Higher sedimentation rates generally lower ("dilute") the concentration, so how can they here explain the opposite? Again an increase in run off could be a reason, is there indication for enhanced river run off?

R20: We agree with reviewer #2 and deleted the respective sentence. However, as already explained in response to reviewer #1 (R10), we have no indication for any influence from river run off.

P. 13, line 28: correct "reaches is"

R21: Done

P. 16, line 18: I don't understand to what observation this statement refers to; in what way does site 642B represent "stable cold conditions", it seems to be quite the opposite? And why these figures are indicated as the climate reconstruction is in fig. 7"?

R22: We removed the word "stable" in order to prevent misunderstandings.

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P.17, lines 13-15: I cannot follow the line of reasoning here, please explain some more.

R23: We revised the respective sentence to clarify the interpretation of a wetter climate. It now states: "Around 3.3 Ma the high relative abundance of *Sphagnum* spores reflects a spread of peat lands and high precipitation."

P.17, line21: double comma

R24: Changed

P.17, line 30: explain "modern-like ice configuration"

R25: In the Northern Hemisphere a modern-like ice configuration with glaciation in Greenland, Iceland, the Barents Sea and Scandinavia is suggested for MIS M2 (De Schepper et al., 2014).

P.18, line 22: I would say Pinus remains approximately stable after the 3.26 Ma decline

R26: Changed to: Thereafter, percentages of *Pinus* are quite variable, suggesting repeated warmer phases.

P. 18, diversity is directly relate to climatic warming which is not necessarily the case

R27: We agree with Reviewer #2 and revised the respective sentence to prevent misunderstandings:

"Taxa diversity is higher during the warmest climatic conditions within the Piacenzian record (3.26 and 3.18 Ma) when compared to the preceding cool intervals (3.47–3.29 Ma) (Fig. 6)."

Response to comment on „Climate variability and long-term expansion of peat lands in Arctic Norway during the late Pliocene (ODP Site 642, Norwegian Sea)"

We are grateful for additional comments from Ian Bailey and have taken the following actions:

1) It seems that the highest fidelity age-depth relationships used in this study are based on an unpublished benthic d18O record not shown in any of their figures. I admit that I would rather see them plot these benthic d18O data since it appears that much of the useful information gained from the regional to global correlations discussed rely on the validity of the benthic d18O-based aspects of their age model. It is also frustrating (albeit highly interesting) that they allude to a potential hiatus in their stratigraphy spanning part of MIS M2 but present no data to support this possibility (by the way, the 'lack of IRD' argument is circular and I suggest it is removed). I appreciate that in practice it is not so simple to show these d18O data because Risebrobakken et al. (2015) (where it appears these data will be presented?) is in review elsewhere. I'm not familiar with CP's policy on this front. At the least, I agree with the referee comment published on the 22nd January that their pollen data need to plotted alongside the LR04 stack (and in all data figures where the data are presented in the age domain).

A figure with the benthic $\delta^{18}O$ record from Hole 642B in comparison with the LR04 stack will be added (reviewer #2, R1).

The 'lack of IRD' argument will be removed.

The LR04 record will be added to Figure 6 (reviewer #1, R11).

2) The same referee states that "In contrast with previous low resolution studies, they show for the first time that Piacenzian warmth was not as stable as previously thought but punctuated by cooler episodes." It seems that their data do indeed illustrate rather nicely the dynamic nature of climate change in Arctic Norway during their study interval. However, I do not agree with the reviewer that this study illustrates for the first time that the climate of the Piacenzian is highly dynamic. Perhaps I misunderstand the reviewer. Nevertheless, Lawrence et al. (2009) have already shown, for example, that SST variability at ODP Site 982 in the subpolar northeast North Atlantic was highly variable (and 'Late-Pleistocene-like') between 4-3 Ma on the same sort of timescales highlighted by Panitz et al. This fact has been a clear

1 motivation for the proposed PRISM-P4 time slice. I'm not even sure Panitz et al. are even

2 claiming to have a first here on this front since their study is a nice first for the nature of

3 climate variability centred on Norway at this time, rather than during the Piacenzian per se.

4 Perhaps this point needs to be made clearer in their conclusions. I do not think for one

5 moment that this fact diminishes the worth of Panitz et al's contribution, but I do suggest that

6 they cite Lawrence et al. (2009) and compare their findings to that important piece of work.

7 Lawrence, K. T., T. D. Herbert, C. M. Brown, M. E. Raymo, and A. M. Haywood (2009),

8 High-amplitude variations in North Atlantic sea surface temperature during the early Pliocene

9 warm period, Paleoceanography, 24, PA2218, doi:10.1029/2008PA001669.

10 It was indeed not our intention to claim to have a first on the "Pliocene high resolution front".

11 In order to avoid a misunderstanding we reworded the respective sentence (p. 5781, line 20-

12 22). We also included the high resolution marine cores described in Lawrence et al. (2009)

13 and Naafs et al. (2010) in our discussion.

Climate variability and long-term expansion of peat lands in Arctic Norway during the late Pliocene (ODP Site 642, Norwegian Sea)

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Abstract

Little is known about the terrestrial response of high-latitude Scandinavian vegetation to the warmer-than-present climate of the Late Pliocene (Piacenzian, 3.60—2.58 Ma). In order to assess Piacenzian terrestrial climate variability, we present the first high resolution reconstruction of vegetation and climate change in northern Norway between 3.6—3.14 Ma. The reconstructions are derived from pollen assemblages in the marine sediments of ODP Hole 642B, Norwegian Sea (67°N). The palynological assemblages provide a unique record of latitudinal and altitudinal shifting of the forest boundaries, with vegetation alternating between cool temperate forest during warmer-than-present intervals, and boreal forest similar to today during cooler intervals. The northern boundary of the nemoral to boreonemoral forest zone was displaced at least 4—8° further north and warmest month temperatures were 6—14.5°C higher than present during warm phases. Warm climatic conditions persisted during the earliest Piacenzian (c. 3.6—3.47 Ma) with diverse cool temperate nemoral to boreonemoral forests growing in the lowlands of the Scandinavian mountains. A distinct cooling event at c. 3.47 Ma resulted in a southward shift of vegetation boundaries, leading to the predominance of boreal forest and the development of open, low alpine environments. The cooling culminated around 3.3 Ma, coinciding with Marine Oxygen Isotope Stage (MIS) M2. Warmer climate conditions returned after c. 3.29 Ma with higher climate variability

indicated by the repeated expansion of forests and peat lands during warmer and cooler periods, respectively. Climate progressively cooled after 3.18 Ma, resembling climatic conditions during MIS M2. A high variability of Norwegian vegetation and climate changes during the Piacenzian is superimposed on a long-term cooling trend. This cooling was accompanied by an expansion of *Sphagnum* peat lands that potentially contributed to the decline in atmospheric CO_2-concentrations at the end of the Piacenzian warm period and facilitated ice growth through positive vegetation-snow albedo feedbacks. Correlations with other Northern Hemisphere vegetation records suggest hemisphere-wide effects of climate cooling.

1 Introduction

Preceding the glacial-interglacial cycles of the Pleistocene, the Late Pliocene (Piacenzian Stage, 3.60—2.58 Ma, Gibbard et al. (2010)) marks the last time interval in the Earth´s history that~~which~~ was characterised by a sustained warmer-than-present climate (Lisiecki and Raymo, 2005). The mid-Piacenzian warm period (mPWP, 3.264—3.025 Ma) has ~~recently~~ been subject of intensive palaeoclimate research due to its similarity to projections of future global warming and its near-modern palaeogeography, palaeoceanography and palaeobiology (Dowsett, 2007; Dowsett et al., 2010; Haywood et al., 2013b; IPCC, 2013; Salzmann et al., 2009). During the mPWP average global mean annual surface temperatures were about 2—3°C higher than present (Haywood et al., 2013a). As the duration of the mPWP exceeds orbital timescales its warmth was not driven by insolation changes but rather by differences in the state of boundary conditions intrinsic to the climate system itself (Haywood et al., 2013b; Miller et al., 2010; Pound et al., 2014). Relatively high atmospheric CO_2 concentrations with values of about 270—400 ppm have been identified as the most important cause of Piacenzian warmth while differences in orography, vegetation and ice sheets constitute the remaining proportion of warming relative to modern (Badger et al., 2013; Lunt et al., 2012; Martínez-Botí et al., 2015; Pagani et al., 2010; Seki et al., 2010).

In the North Atlantic and Nordic Seas both marine and terrestrial records reveal a strong warming at high latitudes during the Piacenzian~~an increase in the magnitude of warming with increasing latitude during the Piacenzian~~. Sea surface temperatures (SSTs) were up to 8°C warmer than present in the Nordic Seas as opposed to only ~2—4°C in the mid-latitudes (Dowsett et al., 2013). The amplified warming has been suggested to be related to~~a cause of~~

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an enhanced Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) (e.g. Dowsett et al., 2013; e.g. Robinson, 2009). However, model simulations indicate a similar-to-present AMOC during the mPWP, supporting the notion that the amplified warming in the Nordic Seas was a result of increased radiative forcing (Zhang et al., 2013). On land, boreal taiga forests reached the coast of the Arctic Ocean during the Piacenzian, and tundra biomes were markedly reduced (Bennike et al., 2002; Rybczynski et al., 2013; Salzmann et al., 2008; Willard, 1996). In the high Artic Pliocene, deposits reveal mean annual temperatures (MATs) ~19°C warmer than present, favouring the growth of larch-dominated forests on Ellesmere Island (Ballantyne et al., 2006, 2010; Rybczynski et al., 2013). In contrast, vegetation changes were less profound in the mid-latitudes. The prevalence of mixed forests in eastern Arctic Canada during the Piacenzian suggests a northward shift of the northern boundary of the deciduous forest zone by a minimum of 5° latitude with MATs 3—5°C warmer than present (de Vernal and Mudie, 1989b; Willard, 1994). In Norway, warm-temperate taxa occur at least 7° further north of their present limit, pointing towards substantially warmer conditions (Willard, 1994). A northward latitudinal shift of vegetation of about 10° is inferred from the presence of mixed to boreal forest on Svalbard during the Pliocene (Willard, 1996).

The mPWP has often been described as a relatively stable warm period with only minor temporal variations in climate and vegetation distribution (e.g. Willard, 1994; Thompson and Fleming, 1996). Up to the present, high resolution vegetation records with a robust age control are missing for the surroundings of the North Atlantic and Nordic Seas, and it is unclear whether the available palaeoclimate records represent the full variability or peak warm phases of the Piacenzian only. A recently published high resolution pollen record from Lake El'gygytgyn in the north-eastern Russian Arctic reveals major changes in the dominant biome distribution during the Piacenzian, ranging from temperate cool mixed forests to Arctic shrub tundra vegetation (Andreev et al., 2014).

Data-model comparison studies for the mPWP suggest that climate models currently underestimate the magnitude of mPWP warming that is evident in proxy-based SST reconstructions for the Nordic Seas (Dowsett et al., 2013). The data-model discrepancy has been partly ascribed to the comparison of simulations that represent a discrete time interval to time-averaged proxy data (Dowsett et al., 2013; Salzmann et al., 2013). A recent modelling study indicates that the Norwegian Current, which strongly affects the climate of Norway, may have been cooler than present when altered palaeogeographic boundary conditions are

considered (Hill, 2015). In order to resolve these uncertainties a time slice centred around 3.205 Ma (Marine Isotope Stage (MIS) KM5c) has been proposed for future palaeoclimate research in the Piacenzian, requiring high resolution proxy records (Haywood et al., 2013b).

Here we present a new high-resolution reconstruction of Piacenzian vegetation and climate changes for Arctic Norway based on the recently re-dated Ocean Drilling Program (ODP) sediment core 642B (Risebrobakken et al., in reviewprep). The aim of this study is (1) to assess the evolution and temporal variability of vegetation and climate changes in Norway during the Piacenzian, (2) to determine their magnitude, and (3) to evaluate the potential of glacier and ice sheet build up on Scandinavia during cold intervals of the Piacenzian.

2   Geographical setting

2.1   Oceanographic location of ODP Hole 642B

ODP Hole 642B is located on the Outer Vøring Plateau in the Norwegian Sea about 400– 450 km west of Norway (67°13.2'N, 2°55.8'E, 1286 m water depth, Shipboard Scientific Party (1987), Fig. 1). On either side of the Vøring Plateau a branch of the Norwegian Atlantic Current (NwAC) flows northward. The Eastern branch follows the continental slope of Norway and the Western branch flows around the Vøring Plateau. Atlantic Water is spread between both branchesthose currents and lies above the site (Nilsen and Nilsen, 2007). The branches of the NwAC are an extension of the North Atlantic Current (NAC) which in turn is a continuation of the Gulf Stream (Orvik, 2002). The Eastern branch of the NwAC enters the Nordic Seas (Greenland Sea, Iceland Sea and Norwegian Sea) across the Iceland-Faroe Ridge while the Western branch flows through the Faroe-Shetland Channel (Hansen and Østerhus, 2000).

2.2   Present-day climate and vegetation of Norway

As a result of the influence of the NAC and warm westerly and south-westerly winds, the climate of Norway is maritime with mild winters and higher MATs than any other area at comparable latitudes (Diekmann, 1994). Due to its geographic location and the Scandinavian mountains that run from north to south, the climate and vegetation of Norway changes along three gradients: latitudinal, altitudinal and continental (Moen, 1987). While MATs decrease

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with increasing latitude as well as altitude and continentality, precipitation decreases from west to east, being highest along the southwest coast of Norway (Diekmann, 1994).

In northern Norway (Nordland) Mean Annual Temperatures (MATs) and Warmest Month Temperatures (WMTs, July) range between -6–-4°C and 0–4°C at the higher altitudes and 4–6 °C and 12–16°C along the coast, respectively (Moen, 1999). Bodø (67°N) and Mo i Rana (66°N) are ~~T~~the closest meteorological stations to ODP Hole 642B ~~are located in Bodø (67°N) and Mo i Rana (66°N)~~ (Fig. 1), f~~r~~om~~or~~ which climate data is available for the last 30 years from the Meteorological Institute of Norway. Present-day Mean Annual Temperatures (MATs) average -0.5°C with values ranging between ~ -2.5 and 1.7°C~~. Mean Cold Month Temperatures (CMTs, January) are -8.9°C but vary between -13.3 and -3.5°C and~~ and ~~W~~warmest ~~M~~month ~~T~~temperatures ~~(WMTs, July)~~ reach 9.8°C on average, ranging between 5.8 and 13.8°C (Norwegian Meteorological Institute and Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation, 2014). In Norway precipitation follows a strong east-west gradient.~~ In the southwest and some coastal areas further north Mean Annual Precipitation (MAP) amounts to more than 2500 mm/year.~~ ~~M~~Mean ~~A~~Annual ~~P~~Precipitation (MAP) ranges ~~between~~ from 1000 ~~to~~and 2500 mm along a broad south-north stretching coastal belt and only drops below 1000 mm further inland. In the area around Bodø and Mo i Rana MAP is 1000–1500 mm (Diekmann, 1994; Moen, 1999).

Most of Norway is covered by boreal and alpine vegetation today (Fig. 2). In the south, the boreal zone transitions into the temperate deciduous forests of Central Europe. In the north (~70°N) and at higher elevations, the boreal zone is limited by the tree line formed by the birch tree ~~(~~*Betula pubescens*~~)~~ and borders the Arctic and alpine tundra (Moen, 1987, 1999). The altitudinal limit of the tree line above which alpine tundra dominates decreases gradually from ~1200 m above sea level (a.s.l.) in the southern Scandinavian mountains to sea level in northernmost Norway (Moen, 1999). The flora becomes less diverse and forest productivity as well as tree density decline from south to north (Moen, 1987). Temperate deciduous forest is only found along the far south coast and is characterised by the absence of *Picea abies* (Fig. 2) (Diekmann, 1994; Moen, 1987).

The boreal zone is divided into four subzones (boreonemoral, southern, middle and northern boreal zone, Fig. 2) that follow climatic gradients. The climate of the boreal zone is characterised by cold winters, long-lasting snow cover and a short growing season (Moen, 1987). The southernmost boreal zone (boreonemoral) mainly consists of *Pinus sylvestris* and

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1 *Picea abies*, with deciduous trees (e.g. *Acer platanoides*, *Fraxinus excelsior*, *Quercus* spp.,

2 *Tilia cordata* and *Ulmus glabra*) abundant under favourable local climatic conditions,

3 especially on south-facing slopes (Diekmann, 1994). Presently, the boreonemoral zone

4 extends over a continuous area in southern Norway, but also occurs sporadically up to ~64°N

5 (Moen, 1987). The northern boreonemoral limit is defined by the northernmost distribution of

6 *Quercus* forest, but the absence of oak forest in central Norway m~~ight~~ay also be due to

7 geographical barriers (Diekmann, 1994; Moen, 1987).

8 In the southern boreal zone deciduous forest is~~are~~ still present and wide areas are covered by

9 raised bogs. The latitudinal boundary between the southern and middle boreal zone,

10 dominated by coniferous forests, is located at ~67°N (Fig. 2). Raised bogs reach their upper

11 altitudinal limit in this zone (Moen, 1987). Along the coast the middle boreal zone extends to

12 about 70°N where it transitions into the northern boreal zone, consisting of sparsely growing

13 coniferous forest, a broad belt of birch forest (especially at higher altitudes in southern to

14 central Norway), and peat lands (Moen, 1987). Beyond the northern boreal zone, alpine

15 regions with grass-heaths communities extend at higher ~~latitudes and~~ altitudes and latitudes

16 ~~extend alpine regions with grass-heaths communities~~ (Moen, 1987).

17 Moen (1987) and Diekmann (1994) both separate a coastal section along the west and

18 southwest coast of Norway that is distinct in climate and vegetation. Climatically, the coastal

19 area is associated with mild winters, relative cool summers and frequent precipitation. The

20 modern vegetation, however, has been significantly altered by human activity, with the

21 present dominance of open heathland (*Calluna vulgaris*) ascribable to logging and continuous

22 burning and grazing cycles (Moen, 1987). Altantic raised bogs that naturally lack~~g~~ any

23 marginal forest stretch along the coast and the remaining forest stands are composed of *Alnus*

24 spp., *Betula* spp., *Corylus avellana*, *Fraxinus excelsior*, *Pinus sylvestris* and *Quercus* spp.

25 (Diekmann, 1994; Moen, 1987).

26 **2.3 Orography**

27 At present mountains reach a maximum elevation of 1500 m in the areas surrounding Bodø

28 and Mo i Rana with the tree line being lowest near the coast (400–500 m a.s.l.) and reaching

29 elevations of up to 800 m a.s.l. further inland (Moen, 1999). During the Piazencian the

30 Scandinavian mountains had already been uplifted, they were, however, lower than present

31 (Anell et al., 2009; Knies et al., 2014). Anell et al. (2009) report uplift of ~1 km in northern

Norway and 1—1.5 km in the southern Scandinavian mountains during the Neogene. These estimates correspond to the height of the Scandinavian mountains of 500 to 1000 m, that was used for the PRISM3 reconstruction of Pliocene climate (Sohl et al., 2009), reducing them by 500—1000 m in altitude compared to present.

3 Materials and Methods

3.1 Sample preparation and pollen analysis

A total of 70 samples were taken from ODP Hole 642B of which 68 samples are situated between 69.90 and 66.95 meter below sea floor (mbsf) (Shipboard Scientific Party, 1987). Additionally two surface samples were taken from the same core at 0 and 3 cm below sea floor in order to compare the Piacenzian to modern pollen assemblages. All samples were pre-sieved in Bergen, Norway through a 63 µm mesh to retain foraminifera for oxygen isotope analysis (Risebrobakken et al., in reviewprep). In order to identify a potential bias in the pollen data resulting from the loss of larger Pinaceae pollen grains exceeding 63 µm, we compared sieved and unsieved samples, and no difference in the overall pollen count has been found. After sieving, the <0.063 µmm fraction of the Ssamples wereas prepared for palynological analysis at the Palynological Laboratory Services Ltd, North Wales and Northumbria University, Newcastle, following the same preparation protocolusing standard palynological techniques (Faegri and Iversen, 1989). One *Lycopodium clavatum* spore tablet was added to each sample to allow pollen concentration calculations to be made (Stockmarr, 1971). The samples were treated with HCl (20%) and concentrated HF (48%) to remove carbonates and silicates, respectively. An additional wash with hot (ca. 80°C) HCl (20%) was necessary to remove fluorosilicates. The sediment was back-sieved through a 10 µm screen and finallythe residue was mounted on glass slides with glycerol-gelatine jelly.

The microscopic analysis was carried out using a Leica Microscope (DM 2000 LED) at magnifications of 400x and 1000x. Pollen preservation is generally very good. An average of 510 pollen grains was counted per slide, or 185 grains excluding *Pinus*. On average 23 taxa were identified per sample. Only ten samples yielded counts below 300 grains. Pollen identification was aided by the pollen reference collection at Northumbria University and the following literature: Erdtman et al. (1961); Moe (1974); Faegri and Iversen (1989); Beug (2004); Demske et al. (2013). In-situ *Lycopodium clavatum* spores were differentiated from

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the reference spores by distinct differences in shape and colour. The group *Juniperus*-type only contains pollen grains that are split open whereas Cupressaceae contains those that are still closed or have a papilla (Demske et al., 2013). Reworked pollen and spores were identified based on the thermal maturity of the exine as seen by their dark orange to brown colours, and/or their presence outside their stratigraphic range. In addition to a discolouration to yellow/orange colours, particularly reworked bisaccates showed a high degree of compression, a faint alveolar structure of airsacks and mineral imprints (de Vernal and Mudie, 1989a, 1989b; Willard, 1996). Cenozoic uplift phases and shifting depocentres as documented in Eidvin et al. (2014) are restricted to the basins off the Norwegian coast and should not have affected the coring site which is located on the Outer Vøring Plateau.

Pollen diagrams were generated with the software Tilia which was also used to perform stratigraphically constrained cluster analysis in order to delimit pollen zones (Grimm, 1987, 1990). The presented cluster analysis does not include *Pinus* to highlight the assemblage changes in the other pollen and spores. Pollen Ppercentages were calculated on the total pollen sum excluding *Pinus* pollen, unidentified and reworked pollen and spores. Percentages of *Pinus* pollen was calculated based on the total pollen sum including *Pinus*. Rarefaction was applied to estimate the number of taxa at a constant count of grains (Birks and Line, 1992). Diversity was assessed using the Shannon index which takes into account the relative abundance of a taxon as well as the number of taxa. The Shannon index is zero if the assemblage is dominated by a single taxon and shows high values for assemblages with many taxa that are each represented by few individuals (Hammer et al., 2001). Both, rarefaction and diversity wereas calculated in PAST (PAleontologial STatistics, Hammer et al. (2001)). The Shannon index is zero if the assemblage is dominated by a single taxon and shows high values for assemblages with many taxa that are each represented by few individuals (Hammer et al., 2001).

3.2 Age model

The Pliocene age model for ODP Hole 642B is based on the magnetic stratigraphy of Bleil (1989) updated to the Astronomically Tuned Neogene Time Scale (ATNTS) 2012 (Hilgen et al., 2012), and further correlation of the benthic oxygen isotopes to the global LR04 benthic δ^{18}O stack (Fig. 3) (Lisiecki and Raymo, 2005; Risebrobakken et al., in reviewprep.). Across glacial MIS M2, the benthic δ^{18}O signal is not any heavier than during other times of the Pliocene. This points, in conjunction with a lack of increased ice rafted debris input, to the

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possibility of a hiatus for the globally coldest part of MIS M2, even though a restricted local response to M2 cannot be excluded (Risebrobakken et al., in review). A major hiatus exists after 3.14 Ma (Jansen and Sjøholm, 1991; Risebrobakken et al., in prep.).

The investigated samples have an age range of 3.60 to 3.14 Ma. The upper part of the sequence, which coincides with the PRISM interval, has been counted in high resolution (800 to 14,700 years) and covers the central part of interglacial MIS KM5c (3.205 Ma). The earlier part of the Piacenzian was analysed in lower resolution (6,600 to 23,300 years) in order to documentanalyse the main climatic states and trends.

The modern surface sample presumably covers less than 2000 years while the subsurface sample at 3 cm depth possibly reveals a maximum age of 6000 years. These assumptions are based on a modern sedimentation rate of <2 cm/kyr (Romero-Wetzel, 1989).

3.3 Climate reconstruction

To obtain quantitative estimates of Piacenzian climate, the Coexistence Approach (CA) of Mosbrugger and Utescher (1997) was applied. This approach uses the modern climatic tolerances of the Nearest Living Relatives (NLRs) of the fossil taxa present in an assemblage to determine the climatic range in which these taxa could coexist. Climatic ranges have been quantified based on presence/absence of all taxa for Mean Annual Temperature (MAT), Coldest Month Temperature (CMT), and Warmest Month Temperature (WMT), and Mean Annual Precipitation (MAP) using the Palaeoflora database (Utescher and Mosbrugger, 2013).

Several requirements with regard to the inclusion of samples and taxa were defined before applying the CA tTo ensure accurate and reliable palaeoclimate estimates . Oonly samples with a minimum of teneight NLR taxa were used to determine the palaeoclimatic range in order to obtain narrower intervals. This led to the exclusion of two samples with a total count of less than 100 pollen grains. For this study a total of 38 taxa are used for the CA. All estimates are based on an average of 17 taxa per sample. Rare taxa, comprising less than 1% of the assemblages, were excluded from the analysis to account for misidentification and the uncertainty caused by long distance transport of pollen grains.

4 Results

4.1 Modern pollen assemblages

The ~~two~~ analysed modern and mid-Holocene~~surface and subsurface~~ samples show pollen concentrations of 238 and 294 grains/g sediment, respectively (Fig. 4~~3~~). Percentages of *Pinus* pollen (45–~~-~~52%) and *Sphagnum* spores (14–~~-~~32%) are highest in the two samples. Pollen of other conifers (*Picea*, *Juniperus*-type and~~,~~ *Taxus*) are represented by proportions of less than 4%, but Cupressaceae pollen accounts for ~10% of the assemblage in the subsurface sample. The relative abundance of *Lycopodium* spores and undifferentiated monolete spores is also relatively high, with ~6–~~-~~15% and ~9%, respectively. *Betula* is the most common deciduous tree pollen. *Alnus*, *Corylus*, Ericaceae, *Fraxinus, Ilex aquifolium* and *Myrica* pollen occur in very low numbers. Compared to the subsurface sample, the surface sample reveals a higher diversity of herb pollen (Asteraceae, Brassicaceae, Cyperaceae, and Fabaceae). The proportion of reworked pollen and spores is relatively high in both samples (21–~~-~~32%).

4.2 Piacenzian pollen assemblages

4.2.1 Pollen Zone 1 (69.9—69.0 mbsf, c. 3.60—3.47 Ma, 13 samples)

Pollen Zone (PZ) 1 is characterised by a high abundance of *Pinus* pollen (61~~0.7~~—77.~~2~~%) and pollen from other conifer trees (*Picea,* Cupressaceae, *Juniperus*-type*, Sciadopitys* and *Tsuga*) (Fig. 5~~4~~, 7~~6~~). *Juniperus*-type*, Sciadopitys* and *Tsuga* pollen reveal their maximum abundances of the entire pollen record with up to ~22%, 18% and 10%, respectively, within this zone. Ericaceae pollen reaches a maximum of ~16.~~5~~% in the middle of the zone and subsequently decreases to values of around 6% towards the upper part. *Alnus*, *Betula, Corylus*, *Querc*us~~ues~~ and *Ulmus* pollen is frequently present whereas other deciduous tree pollen such as *Carpinus* and *Carya* occur~~s~~ only sporadically (Fig. 5~~4~~). The abundance of herb pollen is generally low throughout PZ 1. The number of *Lycopodium* (including *L. annotinum*, *L. clavatum*, *L. inundatum* and *L.*~~ycopodium~~ spp. indet.) spores is relatively high in the early part (up to ~34%), declining continuously throughout the interval. The relative abundance of *Sphagnum* spores is fair~~relativ~~ely constant, showing its lowest values (<22%) within the entire study interval (Fig. 7~~6~~). Spores of *Huperzia, Osmunda*, Polypodiaceae and undifferentiated monoletes are regularly found (Fig. 5~~4~~). Rare pollen taxa only occur sporadically and the average diversity index across the zone is relatively low (Fig. 6~~5~~, 7~~6~~). The number of taxa

increases towards the upper part of the interval (Fig. 7). Pollen concentrations mostly vary between ~1000–20~~15~~00 grains/g sediment and peak at a maximum of 43~~39~~00 grains/g sediment in the upper part of the zone. Reworked pollen and spores occur in low numbers with a maximum percentage of ~4.~~4~~% (Fig. 5~~4~~).

4.2.2 Pollen Zone 2~~A~~ (69–68.54 mbsf, c.3.47–3.35 Ma, 9 samples)

The amount of *Pinus* remains high (65.~~1~~–75.~~2~~%) throughout PZ 2~~A~~ while percentages of *Picea* pollen decreases (Fig. 5~~4~~). Pollen of other conifer trees (Cupressaceae, *Juniperus*-type, *Sciadopitys* and *Tsuga*) shows a sharp decrease in numbers at the lower pollen zone boundary (Fig. 5~~4~~, 7~~6~~). Ericaceae pollen increases to maximum values of ~18% in the upper part of the zone. The proportion of deciduous tree pollen is generally low. *Betula* pollen is consistently present while the proportion of *Alnus* and *Corylus* pollen peaks in the middle of PZ 2~~A~~. Pollen of Asteraceae, especially Asteraceae Liguliflorae-type, shows maximum values of up to 31% in this zone while other herb pollen remains low in abundance (Fig. 5~~4~~, 7~~6~~). *Lycopodium* spores peak in the lower and upper parts of PZ 2~~A~~, reaching proportions of up to 56%. A peak in the abundance of *Sphagnum* spores (43%) is observed in the lower part of the zone (Fig. 7~~6~~). *Osmunda* spores show highest abundance and subsequently decrease until it disappears from the assemblage in the upper part. *Huperzia* spores become more abundant and undifferentiated monolete spores are continuously present. *Pteridium* spores are also regularly found (Fig. 5~~4~~). The number of rare pollen taxa is very low and the number of taxa and the diversity index show~~s a~~ similar ~~average~~ value~~s~~ to PZ 1 (Fig. 6~~5~~, 7~~6~~). Pollen concentrations reach maximum values of ~22~~19~~00 grains/g sediment within the zone. Reworked pollen and spores first reach a relatively high proportion (~9~~8.6~~%) in the middle part of this zone and peak again, after declining to values of <3%, in the upper part of the zone (~15%) (Fig. 5~~4~~).

4.2.3 Pollen Zone 3a~~2B-1a~~ (68.54–68.365 mbsf, c. 3.35–3.29 Ma, 5 samples)

The proportion of *Pinus* pollen is slightly reduced when compared to PZ 1 and 2~~A~~ with percentages ranging between 43 and ~~–~~66% (Fig. 5~~4~~). Other conifer pollen remains low in abundance. Ericaceae pollen shows percentages of less than 10%. *Alnus*, *Betula* and *Corylus* pollen are~~is~~ continuously present whereas more temperate pollen taxa like *Carpinus* and *Carya* are~~is~~ absent. Asteraceae Liguliflorae-type pollen shows a pronounced peak (c. 10%) in

the lower part of the zone while other herb pollen taxa only occur sporadically and in low numbers (Fig. 54). *Lycopodium* spores reach their highest abundance in the lower part of the zone. A subsequent decline in the relative abundance of *Lycopodium* spores is accompanied by a distinct increase in *Sphagnum* spores, reaching proportions of up to ~63% in the upper part of the zone (Fig. 76). The number of rare pollen taxa remains very low. The average diversity index is slightly higher when compared to PZ 1 and 2A, whereas the number of taxa remains the same (Fig. 76). Pollen concentrations are relatively low with maximum values of ~9500 grains/g sediment (Fig. 54).

4.2.4 Pollen Zone 3b2B Ib (68.365–67.09, c. 3.29–3.16, 36 samples)

PZ 3b2B Ib exhibits the highest sample density and shows a high variability which is superimposed by a prevailing change in abundances (Fig. 54, 76). *Pinus* pollen shows relatively high values (43–79%) in the lower part of the zone alongside an increased proportion of pollen from other conifer trees (Cupressaceae, *Juniperus*-type*, Picea, Sciadoiptys* and *Tsuga*). Subsequently the proportion of *Pinus* pollen stays around 50% before steadily increasing to a maximum of ~65% in the upper part of the zone. Peaks in *Pinus* pollen are concurrent with higher abundances of the other conifer pollen (Fig. 54, 76). The relative abundance of Ericaceae pollen does not exceed 15%. *Alnus*, *Betula*, *Corylus* and *Quercus* pollen occurs frequently in low percentages (<9%). Other deciduous tree pollen, such as *Carpinus, Carya, Ostrya, Pterocarya* and, *Ulmus*, as well as pollen of the evergreen shrub *Ilex aquifolium* areis found regularly within PZ 3b2B Ib in low percentages. Asteraceae Liguliflorae-type pollen never exceeds 6% throughout the zone. Although still low in abundance comparatively more taxa of herb pollen is present in this interval. Pollen of *Artemisia* as well as the families Apiaceae and Cyperaceae first appears in this pollen zone (Fig. 54). *Lycopodium* spores show a general decrease in abundance throughout the interval and alternate with high proportions of *Sphagnum* spores. After reaching a minimum of 11% the proportion of *Sphagnum* spores increases, reaching ~68% in the upper part (Fig. 76). Spores of *Huperzia, Osmunda*, Polypodiaceae*, Pteridium* and undifferentiated monolete spores occur frequently (Fig. 54). The number of rare pollen taxa is highest in this pollen zone (Fig. 65). The number of taxa counted on a constant pollen sum is highly variable (Fig. 7). In the lower part of the zone the diversity index shows a high variability with the same average value as PZ 3a2B Ia. Subsequently, the average diversity index of PZ 3b2B Ib increases markedly (Fig. 76). Pollen concentrations peak in the lower part (max. 32100 grains/g

sediment) and again in the middle part of the zone (max. 49~~3~~00 grains/g sediment) (Fig. 5~~4~~). ~~These high values can be ascribed to an increased sedimentation rate (Risebrobakken et al., in prep.).~~ The proportion of reworked pollen and spores is highest between 68.05 and 67.55 mbsf, reaching values of up to ~13~~2.5~~% and stay below 7% outside the interval (Fig. 5~~4~~).

4.2.5 Pollen Zone 4~~2B-II~~ (67.09–66.95 mbsf, c. 3.16–3.14 Ma, 5 samples)

The amount of *Pinus* pollen varies between ~32 and 48% and thus shows its lowest percentages within the entire Piacenzian record (Fig. 5~~4~~). Pollen concentrations are also relatively low (<580 grains/g sediment). While *Picea* and Ericaceae pollen decreases, *Juniperus*-type pollen percentages increase. Single pollen grains of *Sciadopitys* are still found whereas pollen of *Tsuga* are~~is~~ absent. *Alnus, Betula* and *Corylus* pollen is consistently present while pollen of other deciduous trees (*Carya, Ostrya, Pterocarya,* and *Quercus*) only occurs sporadically. The diversity of herb pollen is reduced compared to PZ 3b~~2B Ib~~ (Fig. 5~~4~~). *Lycopodium* spores are relatively low in abundance (<21%) whereas the proportion of *Sphagnum* spores is high (up to ~62%) (Fig. 7~~6~~). *Huperzia* and undifferentiated monolete spores peak in the upper part of the zone. Rare pollen taxa are present in relatively low numbers (Fig. 6). ~~and~~ The number of taxa is comparable to PZ2 and 3a and the average diversity index remains unchanged when compared to PZ 3b~~2B Ib~~ (Fig. ~~5,~~ 7~~6~~). Pollen concentrations are low with values <11~~6~~00 grains/g sediment. Reworked pollen reaches proportions of up to 12% (Fig. 5~~4~~).

4.3 Quantitative palaeoclimate estimates

Piacenzian temperature estimates using the CA show very wide ranges for each sample. MATs based on the CA range on average ~~between~~ from 3.75 to~~and~~ 15.84°C ~~in the majority of samples~~, suggesting MATs 5~~4.2~~–14~~6.3~~°C higher than present in comparison to climate data from the reference stations. However, the lower end of the estimated MATs is similar to the modern coastal temperatures (4–6°C) (Moen, 1999). ~~(Fig. 7). CMTs show values between – 8.4 and 3.7°C, encompassing higher than present temperature ranges of 0.5 – 12.6°C. The CA reconstructs~~Piacenzian WMTs range on average from ~~of~~ 15.18 to~~–~~ 24.3°C for most pollen assemblages, implying a rise of summer temperatures of 6~~8~~–14.5°C when compared to ~~modern values~~climate data from the reference stations. In comparison to coastal values, these estimates are at least 2 – 8°C higher than present (Moen, 1999). ~~MAP values are confined to~~

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1300 – 1741 mm in the lower part and overlap with the upper limit of the modern precipitation range. MAP decreases in PZ 2A to average values of ~700 mm. For the modern and mid-Holocene samples WMTs match the upper end of the present-day coastal values of 12 – 16°C (Moen, 1999). However, MATs appear to be too warm and only match modern temperatures when the thermophilic taxa *Ilex* and *Taxus,* which occur in low numbers in modern and mid-Holocene samples, respectively (Fig. 4), are removed from the Coexistence matrix.

5 Discussion

5.1 Modern pollen assemblages and vegetation

The modern and mid-Holocene Two Holocene samples from ODP Hole 642B were analysed in order to get a better understanding of the modern pollen signal in the marine sediments off Norway and to facilitate the interpretation of Piacenzian pollen assemblages. The pollen assemblages found in the two Holocene samples are representative of the modern vegetation of northern Norway, suggesting that northern Norway is the main source area for pollen and spores deposited at ODP Hole 642B. High abundances of *Pinus* pollen and *Sphagnum* spores reflect the extensive distribution of boreal forest and peat lands in northern Norway (Moen, 1987, 1999). Both fossils pollen grains are generally overrepresented in marine sediments. This effect becomes more pronounced with increasing distance from the shore due to their preferential transportation over long distances (e.g. Heusser, 1983; Mudie and McCarthy, 2006). Nevertheless, percentages of *Pinus* pollen generally reflect its relative proportion in the vegetation community, and proportions of *Sphagnum* spores are highest where extensive peatlands are found onshore (e.g. Heusser, 1983; Mudie and McCarthy, 1994; e.g. Mudie, 1982). In contrast, pollen from deciduous trees is underrepresented in marine sediments as this pollen is deposited closer to the source area (<200 km), as a result of their small size and high density (Mudie and McCarthy, 2006). With ODP Hole 642B being located ~400 km offshore, the contrast between the relative abundance of *Pinus* and deciduous tree pollen is especially pronounced. The pollen spectra at ODP Hole 642B are predominated by wind-pollinated taxa. Low abundance of deciduous trees can also be found in other marine records from the North Atlantic (Mudie and McCarthy, 2006). There is no evidence for large rivers in Norway during the Pliocene, which makes rivers as a significant transport medium for pollen

to the site highly unlikely. Today, plumes of cold fjord water enter the Norwegian Sea in spring, but only extend less than 100 km offshore (Mork, 1981). However, modern-like fjords and glaciers which trigger such plumes almost certainly did not exist during the Pliocene.

The increase in *Sphagum* spores and slight decline in *Pinus* pollen in~~from~~ the mid to late Holocene sample has been interpreted to~~might~~ reflect the expansion of peatlands that is observed in the late Holocene vegetation records from northern Norway (Bjune et al., 2004). Deciduous trees such as *Alnus* and *Betula* are common elements in terrestrial Holocene vegetation records (e.g. Bjune and Birks, 2008; ~~e.g.~~ Bjune, 2005) but are only represented in low numbers (<3%) in the marine surface pollen assemblages, complicating the quantification of their representation in the vegetation. The same applies for *Corylus* which is a thermophilic~~warmth loving~~, oceanic climate species in Norway and reaches its upper limit in the middle boreal zone, thus extend~~grow~~ing up to 70°N (Bjune, 2005; Moen, 1987). Other thermophilic~~warmth loving~~ taxa such as *Fraxinus*, *Ilex* and *Taxus* that are restricted to southern Norway (<62.5°N) (Moen, 1987, 1999) are represented with a relative abundance of up to 2% in the modern and mid-Holocene pollen samples of Hole 642B, suggesting pollen input from a large source area. Human activity has, however, significantly altered the natural vegetation of Norway (Moen, 1987, 1999), resulting in the occurrence of species outside their natural habitat, which could explain the presence of *Fraxinus* and *Taxus* in the modern samples. ~~The similar relative abundance of all deciduous tree pollen also hampers the unequivocal definition of a threshold for the inclusion/exclusion of taxa in palaeoclimate reconstructions. Hereafter, taxa that occur with a proportion of less than 1% in the fossil assemblages are excluded from any quantitative palaeoclimate estimates. Pollen taxa that are regularly abundant with percentages >1% are considered to be representative of the vegetation at roughly the same latitude as the coring site.~~

5.2 Vegetation and climate at 3.60 – 3.47 Ma

At the onset of the Piacenzian the occurrence of pollen from deciduous temperate elements (e.g. *Carpinus*, *Carya* and *Quercus*) together with high abundances of pollen from conifer trees, including temperate taxa such as *Sciadopitys* and *Tsuga*, suggest the presence of cool temperate deciduous to mixed forest in northern Norway. At present, *Quercus* spp. are a distinctly southern species in Norway, occurring in the nemoral and boreonemoral zones (Fig. 2). During the earliest Piacenzian the northern boundary of the boreonemoral zone was presumably positioned at least 4° further north when compared to today, reaching the Arctic

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Circle. Predominantly deciduous forest might even have prevailed in the lowlands of northern Norway, implying a northward shift of the northern limit of the nemoral zone by at least 8° latitude.

Sciadopitys and *Tsuga* are considered to be part of the cool temperate montane vegetation. Both species went extinct in Europe during the glacial-interglacial cycles of the Pleistocene but can still be found in East Asia and North America (e.g. Svenning, 2003; e.g. Wen, 1999). Only one species of *Sciadopitys* still exists at present, growing in the warm to cool temperate montane zone of Japan. There, *Sciadopitys* forests are associated with steep rocky ridges or slopes, requiring relatively dry habitat conditions in a humid climate (Ishikawa and Watanabe, 1986). In Neogene deposits from central Europe and Denmark *Sciadopitys* is, however, known to be an element of peat-forming vegetation or conifer forests that grew in better drained or elevated areas, respectively, suggesting that its ecological requirements have changed (e.g. Figueiral et al., 1999; e.g. Schneider, 1995). In the Lake Baikal region *Tsuga-Picea* forests are also ascribed to habitats at higher altitudes during the Piacenzian (Demske et al., 2002). Our assignment of *Sciadopitys* and *Tsuga* to montane conifer forests is supported by the correlation of the relative percentage changes of these taxa to those of other high-altitude taxa (Cupressaceae, *Juniperus-type*, *Picea*; Fig. 54) (e.g. Numata, 1974; Seppä and Birks, 2001).

Ericaceae shrubs, *Lycopodium* and *Sphagnum* mosses likely originated from both the understorey of the cool temperate to boreal forests, and open environments. The relative abundance of *Sphagnum* spores during the earliest Piacenzian is lower than that in the surface sample but similar to the subsurface sample (Fig. 43, 54) which might be indicative of a less extensive distribution of peat lands.

Warmer-than-present climatic conditions between 3.55 and 3.48 Ma have also been recorded at Lake El'gygytgyn in the north-eastern Russian Arctic where *Larix*/*Pseudotsuga* forests predominated (Andreev et al., 2014; Brigham-Grette et al., 2013). In southern East Siberia mixed coniferous forests grew under a relatively warm climate in the Lake Baikal region during the early Piacenzian (Demske et al., 2002).

5.3   Vegetation and climate at 3.47 – 3.35 Ma

A marked cooling around 3.47 Ma and a subsequent establishment of similar-to-present boreal conditions are inferred from a sharp drop in the relative abundance of conifer tree

pollen (except *Pinus* pollen). A corresponding increase in the abundances of spores and pollen from herbs, shrubs and mosses (Asteraceae, Ericaceae, *Lycopodium* and *Sphagnum*; Fig. 54) indicates the development of open environments at high altitudes, possibly similar to the modern low alpine vegetation. At present the lower boundary of the low alpine zone, corresponding to the tree line, is reached at 400—800 m in the area around Bodø and Mo i Rana (Moen, 1999).

Maximum abundance of herb pollen, especially those of Asteraceae Liguliflorae-type are reached at 3.42 Ma, steadily declining towards 3.35 Ma (Fig. 54, 76). They are indicative of drier conditions. At present tall-herb meadows reach their distribution limit in the southern Arctic zone in northern Norway but are less common in the alpine regions (Moen, 1999). The high abundance of Asteraceae in ODP Hole 642B might reflect a vegetation community with no modern analogue. At present, alpine environments with abundant Asteraceae can only be found in the Southern Hemisphere. At Kosciuszko National Park, New South Wales, Australia, Asteraceae grows in alpine herbfields, grasslands, bogs and heath communities along with Ericaceae, *Huperzia*, *Lycopodium* and *Sphagnum* (Costin et al., 2000). Additionally, Asteraceae and Ericaceae pollen as well as *Lycopodium* and *Sphagnum* spores in the sediments of ODP Hole 642B may~~ight~~ have ~~also~~ originated from the field layer of forests covering the lower altitudes. These were more boreal in character during this time interval with *Pinus* as the dominant species, as indicated by low percentages of pollen from other conifers, including the temperate taxa *Sciadopitys* and *Tsuga* (Fig. 54). The diversity index shows the lowest average value across this ~~time~~ interval of ~~, aiding the interpretation of the prevalence of low diverse boreal forest and~~ relative cool climatic conditions (Fig. 76).

The development of open environments at high altitudes implies an altitudinal downward shift of vegetation belts as well as a southward displacement of vegetation zones. Taxa characteristic of the boreonemoral zone (e.g. *Quercus*, *Sciadopitys*) comprise low proportions in the pollen assemblage at ODP Hole 642B between c. 3.47 and 3.35 Ma (Fig. 54), suggesting that patches of deciduous to mixed forests grew in the area. These patches presumabl~~e~~y represent extensions of the northern boundary of the mixed forest zone. The prevalence of boreal forest together with patchy deciduous forest stands and low alpine environments at higher altitudes is indicative of climatic conditions similar to today. Assuming tree line elevations of 400—800 m, the northern Norwegian mountains were

probably not high enough for mountain glaciers to establish between 3.47 and 3.35 Ma. Presently, glaciers only form in the high alpine zone, above 1000 m (Moen, 1987, 1999).

While the ODP Hole 642B pollen record indicates stable cold conditions similar to present-day (Fig. 54, 76), re-occurring warmer and cooler climate conditions are documented in the Lake El'gygytgyn and Lake Baikal region between 3.47 and 3.35 Ma (Andreev et al., 2014; Demske et al., 2002). As in ODP Hole 642B, the pollen percentages of thermophilic tree species (*Abies*, *Picea* and *Tsuga*) also decrease significantly between c. 3.48 and 3.45 Ma. At the same time, increased percentages of Poaceae and Cyperaceae pollen as well as *Sphagnum* and other spores indicate the development of open habitats, suggesting cooler and reoccurring drier and wetter climatic conditions around Lake El'gygytgyn (Andreev et al., 2014). The peak in *Sphagnum* spores at c. 3.43 Ma in ODP Site 642B coincides with an increase in *Sphagnum* spores in the Lake El'gygytgyn record, suggesting wetter climatic conditions both in northern Norway and the Siberian Arctic. A biome reconstruction for Lake El'gygytgyn suggests the first appearance of tundra during a cool interval, lasting from 3.39 to 3.31 Ma (Andreev et al., 2014). A thinning of the forests and spread of Ericaceae shrubs and Lycopodiaceae is also recorded at Lake Baikal at 3.47 Ma, but warm conditions prevailed until 3.5 Ma (Demske et al., 2002). Between 3.5 and 3.38 Ma drier but still relatively warm climatic conditions are inferred from a change of moist (*Abies*, *Picea* and *Tsuga*) to dry (*Juniperus*-type, *Quercus*, *Larix*/*Pseudotsuga*) forests (Demske et al., 2002). A strong cooling is observed in the Lake Baikal region at 3.39 Ma from a spread of boreal taxa and a maximum in *Selaginella selaginoides* (Demske et al., 2002).

The period of cooling in Scandinavia, north-eastern Russian Arctic and southern East Siberia corresponds to the time of deposition of till, and hence glaciation, in the James Bay Lowland, Canada (~52°N) at c. 3.5 Ma (3.6–3.4 Ma) (Gao et al., 2012), and also to enriched global benthic δ^{18}O (Lisiecki and Raymo, 2005). No major glacial events are, however, evident in the Nordic Seas during this time interval (Fronval and Jansen, 1996; Kleiven et al., 2002). Gao et al. (2012) propose that the lack of ice-rafted detritus in the Nordic Seas either indicates a significant contribution from the North American ice sheet to the elevated benthic δ^{18}O values or a restriction of glaciation to the continental interior of Greenland and Fennoscandinavia. The Piacenzian vegetation record for northern Norway suggests a wide distribution of boreal forest between 3.47 and 3.35 Ma. Considering the present-day average minimum elevation of glaciers (~1000 m) in northern Norway, and a lower height of the

Scandinavian mountains during the Pliocene, with no evidence of mountainous glaciation seems highly unlikely (Andreassen et al., 2012; Sohl et al., 2009). if a lapse rate of 6.5°C/km is assumed.

In the North Atlantic, SSTs derived from alkenones decrease at 3.45 Ma at Integrated Ocean Drilling Progam (IODP) Site U1313 (41°N, 33°W) just north of the subtropical gyre, suggesting a weakened northward heat transport via the North Atlantic Current (NAC) (Naafs et al., 2010). At ODP Site 982 (58°N, 16°W), which sits at the northern end of the NAC, a gradual cooling of SSTs (alkenones) is recorded from c. 3.5 Ma onwards (Lawrence et al., 2009). These SST records confirm the hemispheric-wide extent of climatic changes around c. 3.47 Ma.

5.4 Vegetation and climate at 3.35 – 3.29 Ma

After c. 3.35 Ma the percentages of *Pinus* pollen drop below 50%, suggesting a decline in pine forest coverage and a further cooling of climate (Fig. 54). This cooling culminates aAround 3.3 Ma which is evident from the high relative abundance of *Sphagnum* spores, reflectsing a spread of peat lands and high precipitation (Fig. 78). Additionally, the absence of temperate pollen taxa, e.g. *Carpinus*, *Carya*, *Sciadopitys* and *Tsuga*, is indicative of the predominance of boreal forest. The proportion of *Sphagnum* spores is about twice as high around 3.3 Ma than in the surface sample, suggesting a more extensive distribution of peat lands.

The upper limit of well-developed peat land communities is presently reached in the lower alpine zone. The maximum elevation of this zone which upper limit ranges from 600 to up to 1400 m where the Scandinavian mountains reach a sufficient height (Moen, 1987, 1999). The clear boreal to alpine character of the vegetation around 3.3 Ma suggests thatpoints towards climatic conditions might have been cold enough to allow for the establishment of mountain glaciers in northern Norway. The cooling event at c. 3.3 Ma coincides with glacial MIS M2, a major global glaciation event. In the Northern Hemisphere a modern-like ice configuration with glaciation in Greenland, Iceland, the Barents Sea and Scandinavia is suggested for MIS M2 (De Schepper et al., 2014). However, the possibility of a hiatus in ODP Hole 642B over the most extreme part of MIS M2 must be considered (Fig. 3) (see section *Age model*).

At Lake El'gygytgyn a further increase in herbs and spores combined with a decrease in tree taxa is observed at 3.352 Ma, indicating enhanced cooling and relatively dry climatic

conditions (Andreev et al., 2014). Between 3.310 and 3.283 Ma tundra- and steppe-like vegetation dominated around the lake but tree and shrub vegetation was still present in the area. A high *Sphagnum* content also points to the existence of wetlands around the lake (Andreev et al., 2014). In the lake Baikal region, cool climatic conditions still persisted around 3.3 Ma (Demske et al., 2002).

5.5   Vegetation and climate at 3.29 ~~—~~ 3.16 Ma

After 3.29 Ma, cool temperate deciduous to mixed forests re-migrated to northern Norway as shown by the frequent presence of pollen from temperate deciduous taxa (e.g. *Carpinus*, *Carya, Pterocarya*, *Quercus*) and the increase in the relative abundance of conifer pollen (Fig. 5~~4~~). Between 3.29 and 3.26 Ma, pollen percentages of *Pinus* and conifers are high while those of *Sphagnum* spores are relatively low, suggesting a spread of forest at the expense of peat lands and thus warmer climatic conditions. A reestablishment of *Pinus-Larix-Picea* forests after MIS M2 is also documented at Lake El'gygytgyn and mixed coniferous forests spread in the Lake Baikal region (Andreev et al., 2014; Demske et al., 2002).

In the pollen record of ODP Hole 642B an opening of the vegetation is seen at c. 3.26 Ma, when the relative abundance of *Pinus* pollen and *Lycopodium* spores decreases. The correspondingly increased proportion of *Sphagnum* spores suggests wetter and possibly also cooler climatic conditions (Fig. 5~~4~~). Thereafter, percentages of *Pinus* ~~increase until c. 3.18 Ma~~are quite variable, suggesting ~~a spread of forests and~~ repeated warmer phases. Taxa ~~D~~diversity is higher during the warmest climatic conditions within the Piacenzian record (3.29–3.18 Ma) ~~according to the Shannon index is higher on average between 3.26 and 3.18 Ma~~when compared to the preceding cool intervals (3.47 ~~—~~ 3.29 Ma)~~. which might be indicative of the warmest climatic conditions within the Piacenzian record~~This coincides with a higher number of taxa in individual samples (Fig. 7~~6~~). ~~The decline in the relative abundance of *Pinus* pollen and marked increase in the proportion of *Sphagnum* spores after 3.18 Ma suggest the establishment of cooler climatic conditions similar to those during MIS M2.~~ In the north-eastern Russian Arctic an opening of the vegetation and drier climatic conditions is inferred from the high amounts of herb pollen in the Lake El'gygytgyn record between c. 3.25 and 3.20 Ma (Andreev et al., 2014)~~,~~. This coincid~~ing~~es with low *Pinus* pollen and high *Sphagnum* spore percentages in the sediments of ODP Hole 642B. Cooler climate conditions are also recorded in the Lake Baikal region during this interval (Demske et al., 2002). In northern Norway climate oscillated between cooler and warmer phases. The high abundance

of *Pinus* pollen in the sediments of ODP Hole 642B around 3.20–3.18 Ma coincides with a re-establishment of forests around Lake El'gygytgyn at c. 3.20 Ma (Andreev et al., 2014). The decline in the relative abundance of *Pinus* pollen and marked increase in the proportion of *Sphagnum* spores after 3.18 Ma suggest the establishment of cooler climatic conditions similar to those during MIS M2.

Over the entire 3.29–3.16 Ma interval, a wider distribution of cool temperate montane forests in northern Norway during warmer phases is indicated by peaks in the abundances of *Sciadopitys* and *Tsuga* pollen, coinciding with high *Pinus* pollen contents (Fig. 54). Thermophilic pollen taxa like *Carpinus*, *Carya*, *Ilex*, *Pterocarya* and *Quercus* occur frequently together with other rarely represented pollen of deciduous trees (e.g. *Acer*, *Fagus*, *Juglans*, *Nyssa* and *Tilia*), pointing to the presence of nemoral to boreonemoral forests and a warm climate (Fig. 54, 65). Relatively high numbers of *Juniperus*-type and Cupressaceae pollen suggest the prevalence of open shrub vegetation at higher altitudes throughout the interval (Bjune, 2005; Seppä and Birks, 2001). The high proportion of *Sphagnum* spores, peaks in herbs such as Asteraceae, Chenopodiaceae and Poaceae pollen and the regular occurrence of other herb pollen taxa also suggest the continuous presence of open environments (Fig. 54). The relatively high abundance of *Sphagnum* spores also points to more humid conditions than during the previous intervals.

The negative correlation of *Pinus* and *Sphagnum* pollen percentages suggests distinct changes between a wider forest coverage and expansion of peat lands, presumably indicative of repeatedly warmer and cooler climatic conditions. The development of peat lands during Piacenzian intervals that show a similar-to-present vegetation distribution and climate might have contributed to the long-term decline in atmospheric CO_2 concentrations towards the Pleistocene (e.g. Lunt et al., 2008; Martínez-Botí et al., 2015; Pound et al., 2015). At present circumarctic peat lands in the Northern Hemisphere form a major carbon sink (e.g. Gajewski et al., 2001; MacDonald et al., 2006). In addition, a change from a taiga- to tundra-dominated vegetation significantly increases surface albedo by expanding snow cover over the summer (Koenig et al., 2011 and references therein). The wider distribution in peat lands in northern Norway during the Piacenzian might have acted as a positive internal feedback mechanism that facilitated the development of an extensive Scandinavian ice sheet around 2.72 Ma (Kleiven et al., 2002).

Our findings corroborate a previous palynological analysis of nine samples from the Piacenzian section of ODP Hole 642C, indicating the presence of a mixed conifer-hardwood forest at the northern limits of the deciduous forest zone in Norway between c. 3.3 and 3.1 Ma (Willard, 1994). However, our high-—resolution study indicates that the warmth of the Piacenzian was not as stable as previously thought, but was instead interrupted by cooler intervals, causing latitudinal and altitudinal shifts of the boundary between the deciduous and boreal forest zone.

In the North Atlantic, a return of warm conditions at 3.29 Ma is documented in the alkenone-based SST record of Site U1313, indicating an enhanced northward heat transport by the NAC (Naafs et al., 2010). A re-establishment of the NAC at 3.285 Ma, following the glacial maximum of MIS M2, is also seen in the alkenone- and Mg/Ca-derived SSTs as well as dinoflagellate assemblage changes at IODP Site U1308 (50°N, 24°W) and Deep Sea Drilling Project (DSDP) Site 610 (53°N, 19°W) further north (De Schepper et al., 2013). The warming documented at these sites is in agreement with this study. In contrast, Site 982 records a continuous cooling over this interval which might, however, be attributed to discrepancies in the age model (Khélifi et al., 2012; Lawrence et al., 2009, 2013).

5.6   Vegetation and climate at 3.16 —3.14 Ma

The Cclimate of Norway cooled further, as indicated by the steady decrease in the relative abundance of *Pinus* pollen, high proportions of *Sphagnum* spores and the sporadic occurrence of pollen from temperate taxa between c. 3.16 and 3.14 Ma (Fig. 54, 78). The pollen assemblage shows a strong resemblance to that during MIS M2, suggesting similar or slightly colder climatic conditions when compared to today, and potentially creating conditions favourable for glacier buildt-up at high altitudes. Cool climate prevaileds in the James Bay Lowland, Canada during that timebetween c. 3.11 and 3.04 Ma, as indicated by the prevalence of boreal forests (Gao et al., 2012). A thinning of forests and deflection to cooler conditions is also observed at Lake Baikal at c. 3.18 and 3.15 Ma (Demske et al., 2002). In contrast, conifer forests grew under relatively warm climate conditions until 3.06 Ma in the Lake El'gygytgyn area (Andreev et al., 2014).

5.7 Late Pliocene climate reconstruction

According to the pollen assemblages, the northern boundary of the boreonemoral and nemoral zone was shifted 4–8° latitude to the north during the two warmer-than-present intervals in the Piacenzian (3.6–3.47 Ma and 3.29–3.18 Ma). Conditions rather similar-to-present characterised the interval between 3.47 and 3.29 Ma.

Palaeoclimate estimates for the Piacenzian using the based on the Coexistence Approach suggest that MATs and WMTs were at least (minimum) 4°C and 8°C higher than today, respectively. These minimum estimates fit well with the reconstructed latitidunal shifts in forest zones and broadly corroborate previous temperature estimates from this site (Willard, 1994). Despite this match, it should be noted that the CA is only of very limited use in our study. Factors which hamper accurate climate estimates include:

- *Uncertainties in pollen identification* allow a determination of many pollen taxa to genus level only. This yields wide climatic tolerances and ranges
-
- *Distance of site from the mainland* results in overall lower number of taxa and complicates the identification of the pollen source area
- *Near coastal Scandinavian mountains* cause a mixed pollen signal with taxa from different vegetation and climate zones along the altitudinal gradient
- *Lack of modern analogue*: several taxa are extinct in Europe, such as *Carya*, *Sciadopitys* and *Tsuga*, and their modern distribution might not reflect their climatic tolerances during the Pliocene.

Considering these limitations, the Piacenzian climate reconstruction based on the CA for northern Norway should be considered a low confidence estimate only.

ranged between 3.7 and 15.8°C in Norway during the Piacenzian and thus were 4.2 – 16.3°C higher than present. The potential warming of CMTs amounts to winter temperatures 0.5 – 12.6°C higher when compared to today. WMTs show a clear warming with values 6-14.5°C higher than present. A minimum increase of MATs of ~4°C compares well with climate conditions found in southern Norway today. However, WMTs average 12°C in southern Norway at present while minimum values of ~16°C are inferred for the Piacenzian, suggesting Piacenzian climatic conditions that are comparable to the modern day climate of

southern Sweden. The average MAP levels of ~1500 mm that are reconstructed for the warmer-than-present intervals compare well to the upper range of modern values. MAP is estimated to average ~700 mm during the cooler, more similar-to-present intervals (Fig. 6, 7). A prolonged decline in MAP between 3.42 and 3.35 Ma coincides with high abundances in Asteraceae pollen, supporting the interpretation of drier climatic conditions (Fig. 6, Section 5.3).

The application of the CA to the Piacenzian pollen assemblages of ODP Hole 642B clearly reveals a warmer than present climate but several factors hamper the reconstruction of narrow ranges for palaeoclimate parameters and the detection of smaller climatic changes. The prolonged colder phase between c. 3.47 – 3.31 Ma that is inferred from pollen assemblage changes is not seen in the climate reconstructions because of wide and overlapping coexistence intervals (Fig. 7), which in turn result from the wide climatic tolerances of taxa. The quantification of temperature and rainfall using the CA is further hampered by the fact that the vegetation of Norway does not only change along a latitudinal gradient but also with increasing altitude of the Scandinavian mountains resulting in the regular occurrence of most common taxa in almost all samples These limitations especially apply to marine sediment cores as a consequence of their wider pollen source area.

5.8 (Sub)Arctic vegetation evolution during the Piacenzian

During the Cenozoic, temperate to boreal forests showed a wide distribution in the Northern Hemisphere and were very uniform in their floristic composition (e.g. Wen, 1999; Xing et al., 2015). Palaeogeographic and palaeoclimatic changes during the Pliocene and Pleistocene led to today's disjunct distribution of tree genera in Europe, Asia and North America (e.g. Svenning, 2003; Xing et al., 2015). The Piacenzian flora of northern Norway exhibits a similar composition to that in Canada and Siberia at that time (e.g. Andreev et al., 2014; Pound et al., 2015; de Vernal and Mudie, 1989b). The reconstructed Piacenzian vegetation and climate changes in northern Norway are closely correlated with other vegetation records across the Northern Hemisphere (Table 1), indicating a hemispheric response to external and internal forcing. Vegetation changes at Lake El'gygytgyn strongly follow orbitally-induced glacial-interglacial cycles (Andreev et al., 2014; Brigham-Grette et al., 2013). For instance, the hemisphere-wide cooling at c. 3.48—3.47 Ma and c. 3.3 Ma coincide with MIS MG6 and M2, respectively (Andreev et al., 2014; Brigham-Grette et al., 2013; Lisiecki and Raymo, 2005).

1   The circum-arctic distribution of tundra/peat lands developed during the late Piacenzian and
2   throughout the glacial-interglacial cycles of the Pleistocene (e.g. Andreev et al., 2014;
3   Gajewski et al., 2001). The transition of high-latitude vegetation changes from forest to tundra
4   environments during the late Piacenzian presumably amplified the cooling through
5   vegetation-snow albedo feedbacks (e.g. Gallimore and Kutzbach, 1996; Koenig et al., 2011).
6   The long-term cooling trend over the Piaceanzian that is observed in all records is in
7   accordance with declining atmospheric CO_2 values from the Piacenzian towards the early
8   Pleistocene (Bartoli et al., 2011; Martínez-Botí et al., 2015; Seki et al., 2010). Expansion of
9   tundra biomes may have contributed to the drawdown of atmospheric CO_2, further enhancing
10   cooling.

11   The main vegetation and climate changes during the Piacenzian observedrecorded in
12   (sub)Arctic records are illustrated in Table 1. During the earliest Piacenzian diverse forest
13   communities persisted under a warmer-than-present climate in northern Norway, the north-
14   eastern Russian Arctic and southern East Siberia (Andreev et al., 2014; Demske et al., 2002).
15   In all regions cooling around 3.48—3.47 Ma is indicated by the development of open habitats.
16   Till deposits in the James Bay Lowland, Canada provide evidence for glaciations at between
17   3.6 and 3.4 Ma (Gao et al., 2012). A further opening of the vegetation and deterioration of
18   climate is observed both in northern Norway and the north-eastern Russian Arctic after
19   3.35 Ma, culminating in the coldest recorded climatic conditions around 3.3 Ma. High
20   *Sphagnum* spore contents in ODP Hole 642B and the Lake El'gygytgyn record are indicatve
21   of an extensive distribution of peat lands during the coldest interval (Andreev et al., 2014).
22   Warm climatic conditions re-established after c. 3.29 Ma in northern Norway, the north-
23   eastern Russian Arctic and southern East Siberian which wereare interrupted by cooler
24   intervals until c. 3.186 Ma (Andreev et al., 2014; Demske et al., 2002). However, conifer
25   forests prevail under relatively warm climatic conditions in the vicinity of Lake El'gygytgyn
26   until 3.06 Ma. Piacenzian deposits from the Yukon Territory, Canada have been assigned to
27   the mPWP and reveal the prevalence of diverse forests with wetlands/lakes (Pound et al.,
28   2015). Between 3.186 and 3.14 Ma reduced forest coverage in northern Norway and in the
29   Lake Baikal area, and the predominance of boreal forest in the James Bay Lowland are
30   indicative of cool climatic conditions (Demske et al., 2002; Gao et al., 2012).

31

6 Conclusion

The Piacenzian high-resolution pollen record from ODP Hole 642B in the Norwegian Sea reveals repeated fluctuation of cool temperate and boreal conditions ~~during a time interval that has previously been regarded as relatively stable~~. Warmest month temperatures are estimated to be 8~~6~~–14.~~5~~°C higher than present ~~with mean annual precipitation levels similar to today~~. The northern boundary of the boreonemoral to nemoral forest zone was shifted northward by at least 4–8° latitude during warmer-than-present intervals. Throughout the Piacenzian record (c. 3.6–3.14 Ma) three main climatic phases are observed:

- 3.60–3.47 Ma: Cool temperate deciduous to mixed forest prevailed in northern Norway, suggesting a northward shift of vegetation boundaries of at least 4–8° latitude.

- 3.47–3.29 Ma: A southward shift of vegetation zones as well as a displacement of vegetation belts to lower altitudes indicates cooling. Low alpine environments develop in mountainous areas, suggesting climatic conditions similar to today. The cooling culminate~~s~~d at c. 3.3 Ma (around MIS M2), potentially creating conditions cold enough for glacier buil~~t~~d-up at the highest summits.

- 3.29–3.14 Ma: Re-establishment of warmer-than-present climate conditions is indicated by re-migration of deciduous to mixed forest to northern Norway. Repeated warmer and colder phases are recorded until c. 3.18 Ma after which climate continuously cools and conditions similar to MIS M2 establish again. The development of peat lands might have contributed to the drawdown of atmospheric CO_2 before the start of Northern Hemisphere glaciation~~NHG~~.

Future studies will focus on comprehensive multi-proxy analyses of ODP Hole 642B. By combining data from terrestrial and marine palynomorphs with SST estimates based on alkenones, and oxygen and carbonate isotopes these studies will further improve our understanding of the link between terrestrial and marine changes and the mechanisms causing Piacenzian climate changes in the Nordic Seas region.

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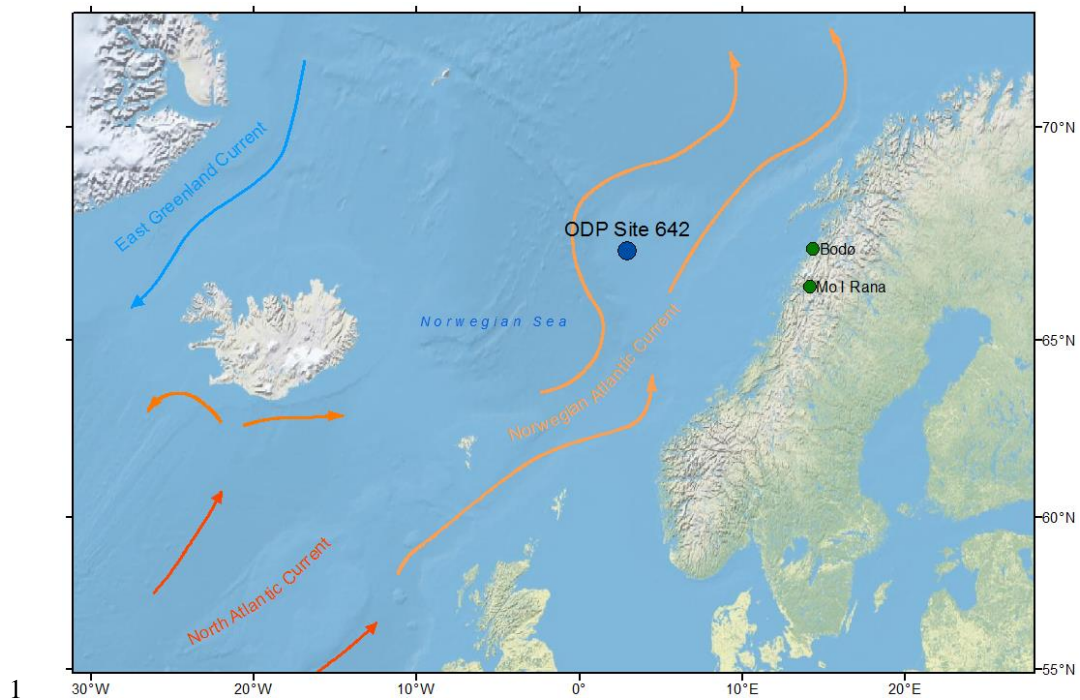
Figure 1: Location of ODP Site 642 in the Norwegian Sea. Meteorological station used for present-day climate data are located in Bodø and Mo i Rana in northern Norway. Colour coding indicates the relative temperature of currents, red = warm; orange = moderately warm; blue = cold.
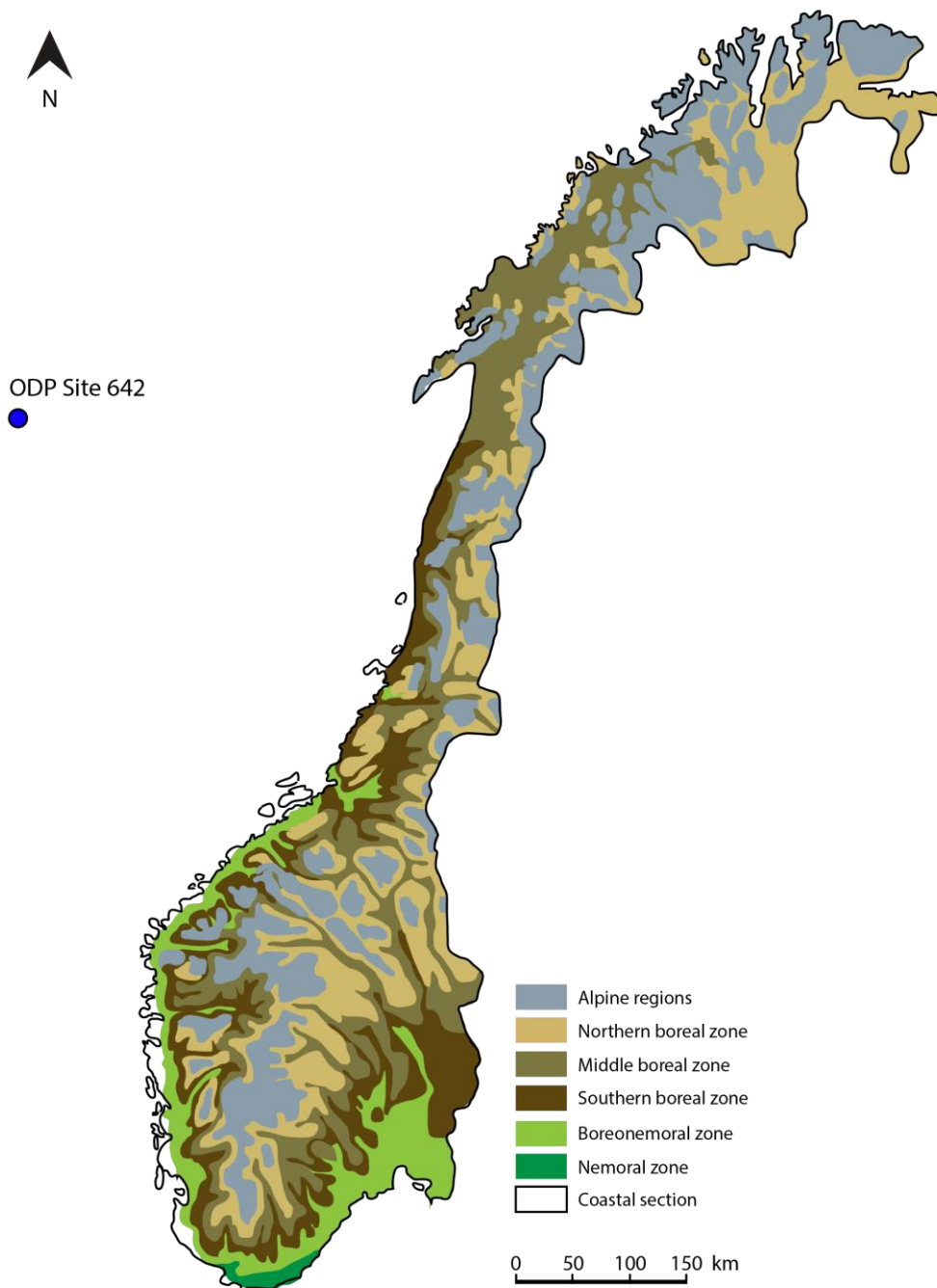
ODP Site 642

Alpine regions
Northern boreal zone
Middle boreal zone
Southern boreal zone
Boreonemoral zone
Nemoral zone
Coastal section

0   50   100   150 km

1

2   Figure 2: Vegetation map of Norway modified after Moen (1987). Position of ODP Site 642

3   was drawn according to scale.

Figure 2: Vegetation map of Norway modified after Moen (1987). Position of ODP Site 642
was drawn according to scale.
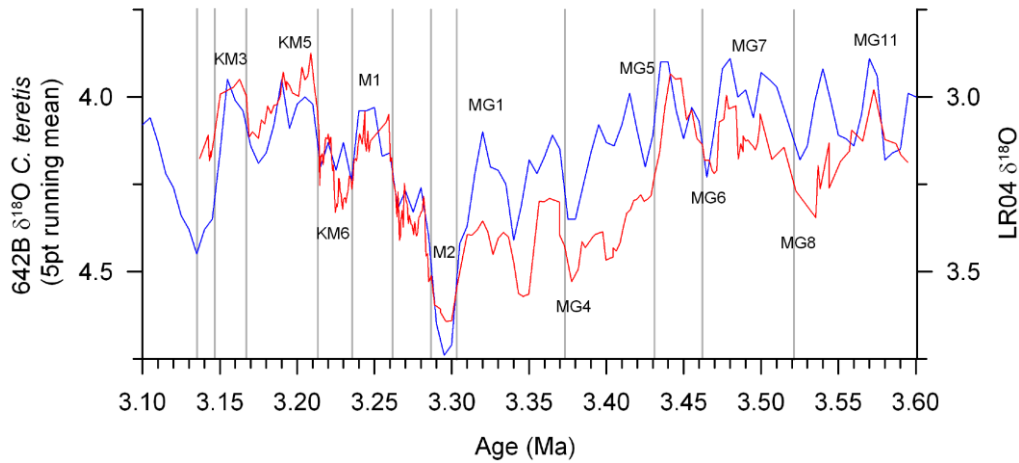
Figure 3: For the investigated time interval the age model of ODP Hole 642B is based on correlating the 5 point smoothed benthic $\delta^{18}O$ from 642B (Risebrobakken et al., in review) with the global benthic oxygen isotope stack, LR04 (Lisiecki and Raymo, 2005). The LR04 stack is shown in blue and the smoothed 642B *Cassidulina teretis* $\delta^{18}O$ record is shown in red. The grey vertical lines indicate the tie points defined by the correlation and were used when calculating the ages of Hole 642B. Indicated isotope stages refers to isotope stages as defined by Lisiecki and Raymo (2005).
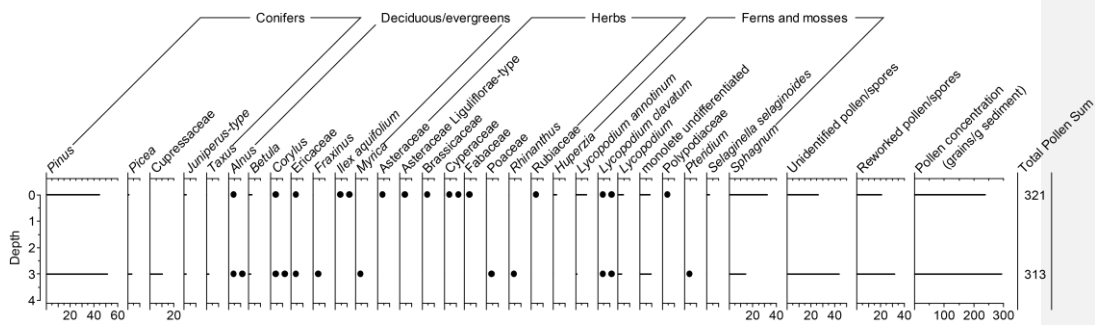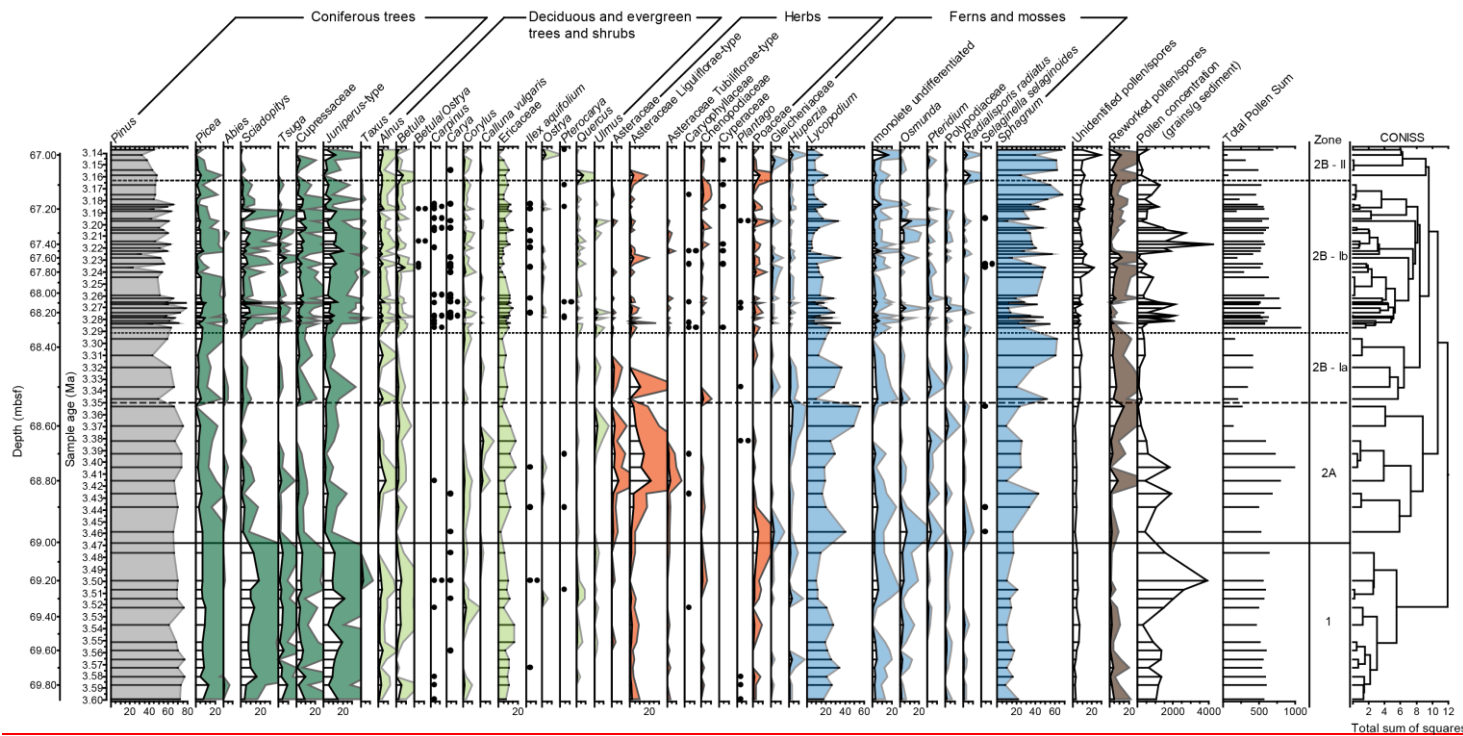
Figure 43: Pollen assemblages in the two modern and mid-Holcene(sub)surface samples from ODP Hole 642B. Black circles areis representative of a single pollen or spore grains. Percentages of pollen and spores were calculated based on the pollen sum, excluding *Pinus*, unidentified and reworked pollen/spores.

Figure 4: Pollen assemblages in the late Pliocene sediments of ODP Hole 642B. Non-patterned, coloured area represents five times exaggeration of percentages. Black circle is representative of a single pollen grain. Percentages of pollen and spores were calculated based on the pollen sum, excluding *Pinus*, unidentified and reworked pollen/spores. *Pinus* was included in the pollen sum to calculate percentages of *Pinus*. The total pollen sum shown here comprises *Pinus* and unidentified pollen. Depth is indicated in meters below sea floor (mbsf).

Figure 5: Pollen assemblages in the Piacenzian sediments of ODP Hole 642B. Non-patterned, coloured area represents five times exaggeration of percentages. Black circles are representative of single pollen or spore grains. Percentages of pollen and spores were calculated based on the pollen sum, excluding *Pinus*, unidentified and reworked pollen/spores. *Pinus* was included in the pollen sum to calculate percentages of *Pinus*. The total pollen sum shown here comprises *Pinus* and unidentified pollen. Depth is indicated in meters below sea floor (mbsf).
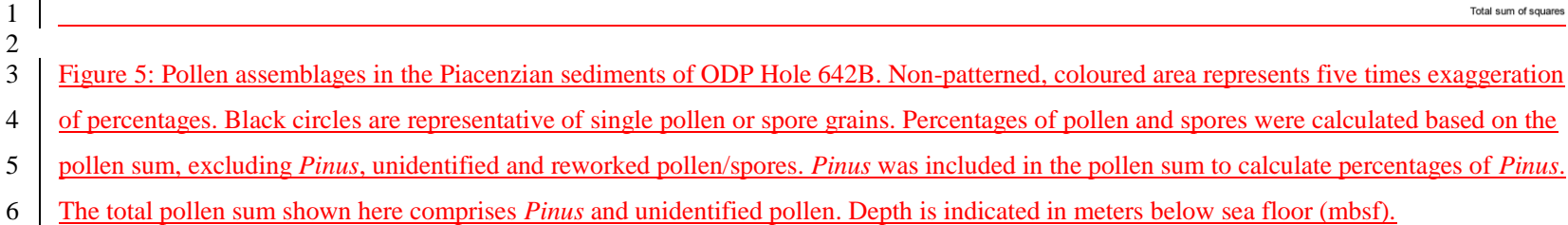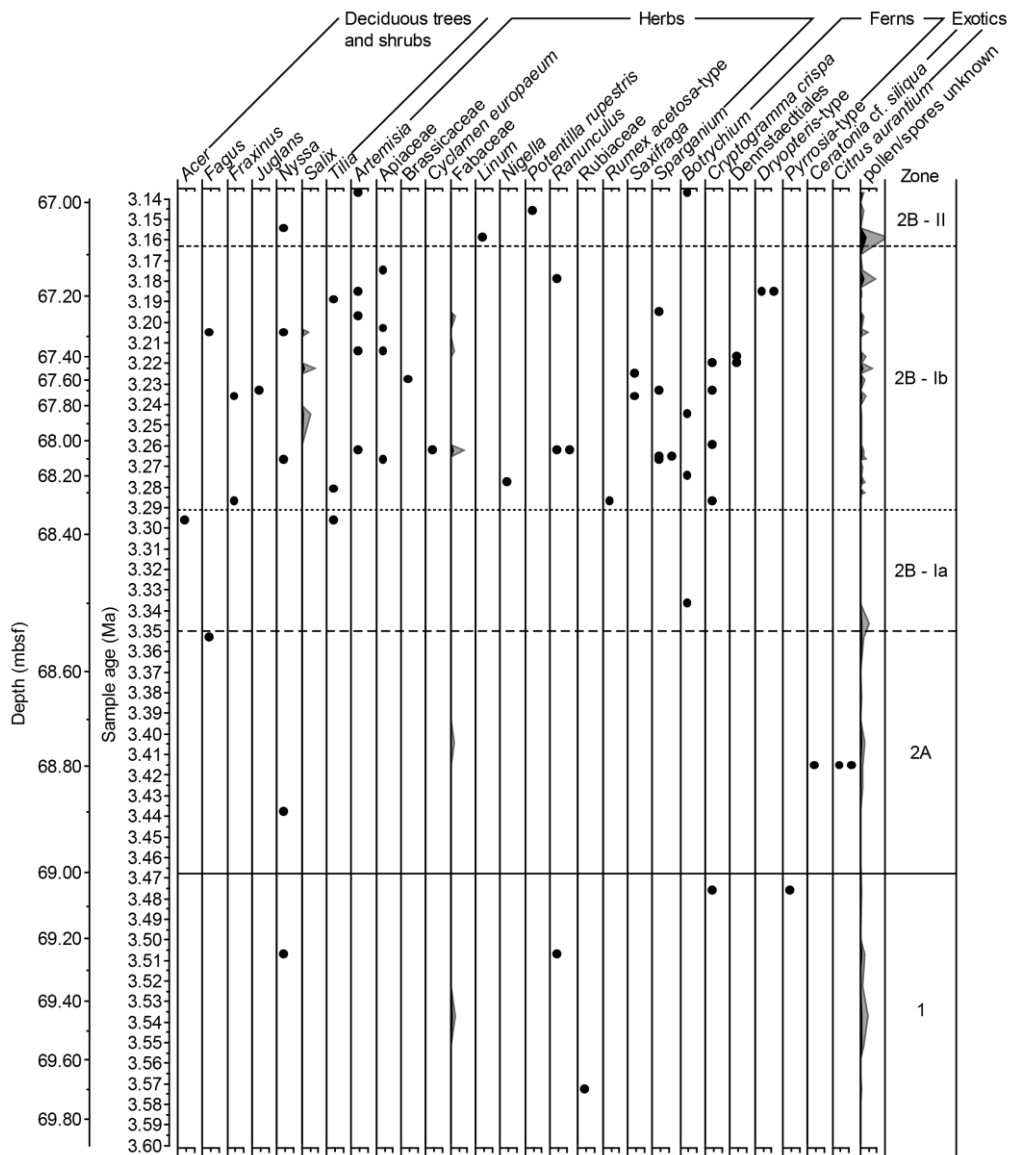
Figure 5: Pollen diagram showing taxa that occur in five or less samples. Blank area
represents five times exaggeration. The exotic group marks taxa that have likely been
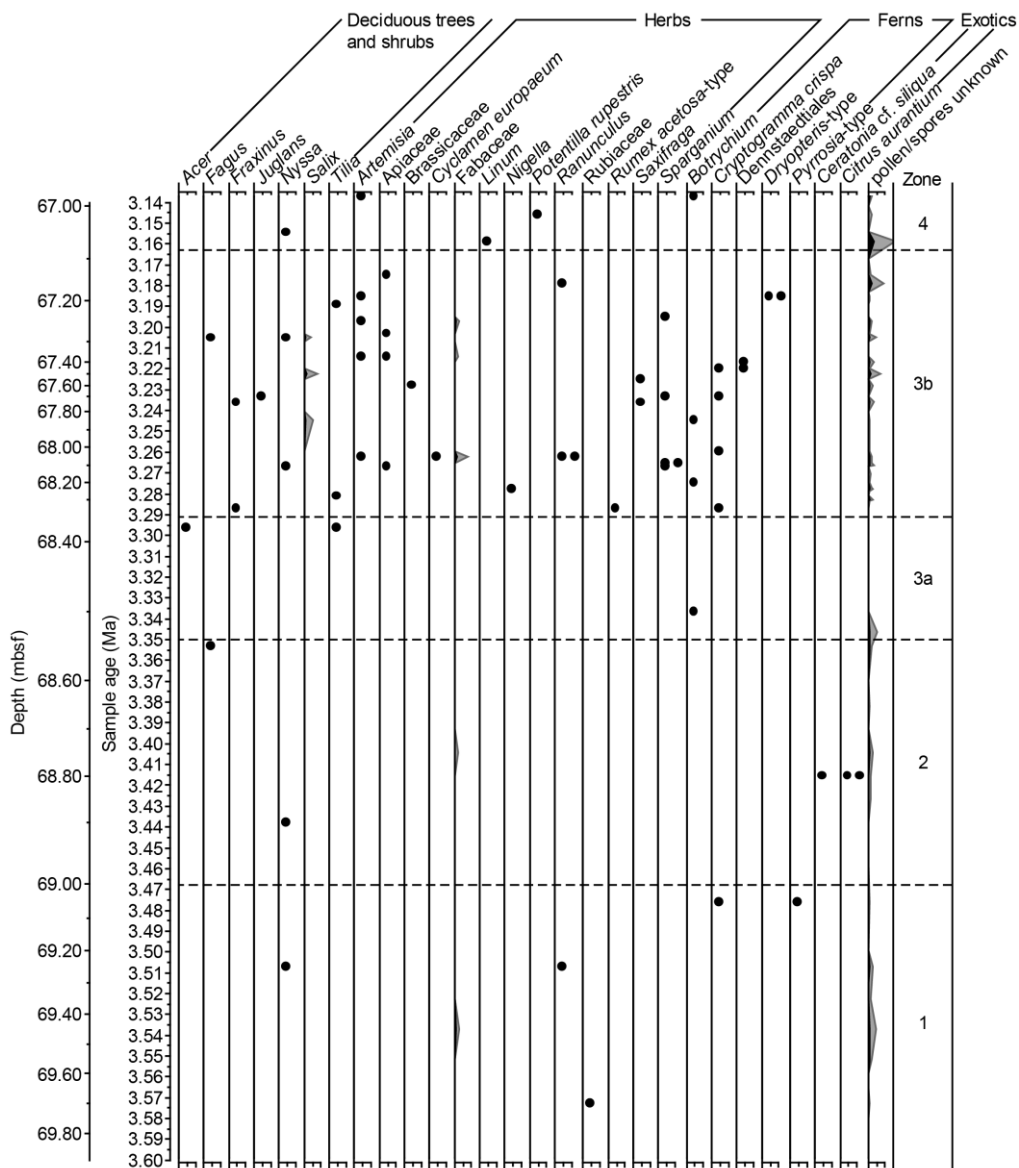transported to the site from the south. Depth is indicated in meters below sea floor (mbsf).

Figure 6: Pollen diagram showing taxa that occur in fewer than five samples. Grey area represents five times exaggeration. The exotic group marks taxa that have likely been transported to the site from the south. Depth is indicated in meters below sea floor (mbsf).
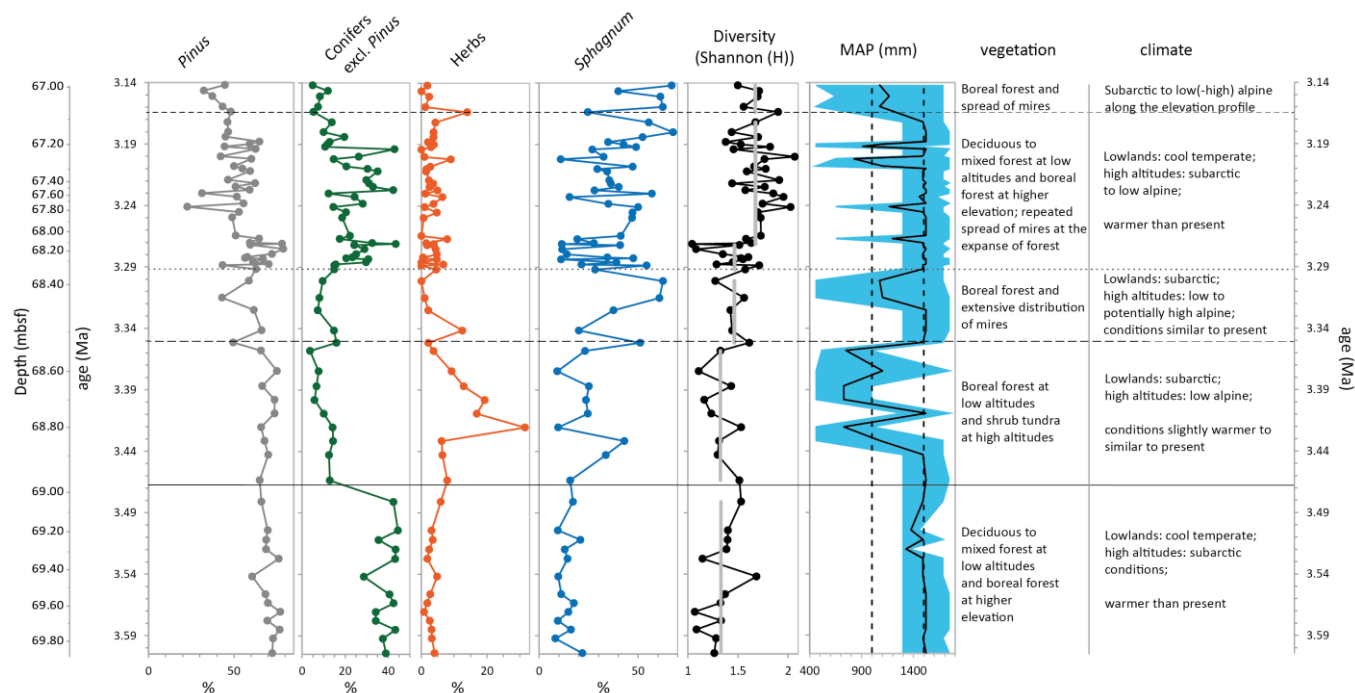
Figure 6: Summary diagram illustrating percentage changes of the main taxa/taxa groups, diversity based on the Shannon index, reconstructed mean annual precipitation (MAP) and description of the main vegetation configuration and climatic conditions. The vertical grey lines in the diversity graphs correspond to the average value across the interval. Modern MAP values are represented by the vertical dashed lines and equal 1000 and 1500 mm, respectively (Diekmann, 1994). The solid and dashed horizontal lines correspond to the main pollen zones shown in Fig. 4.
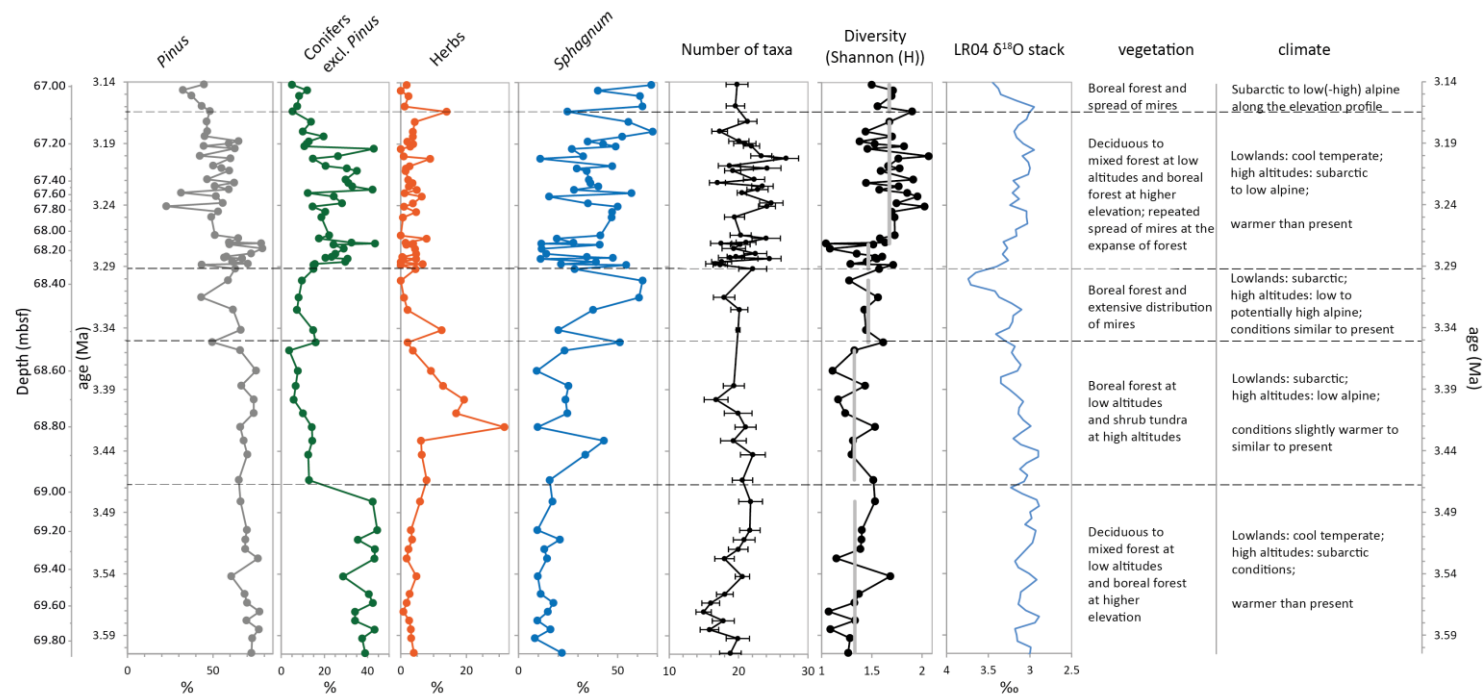
Figure 7: Summary diagram illustrating percentage changes of the main taxa/taxa groups, diversity based on the Shannon index, number of taxa rarefied at 300 individuals, the global benthic LR04 oxygen isotope stack (Lisiecki and Raymo, 2005) and description of the main vegetation configurations and climatic conditions. The vertical grey lines in the diversity graphs correspond to the average value across the interval. The dashed horizontal lines correspond to the main pollen zones shown in Fig. 5.
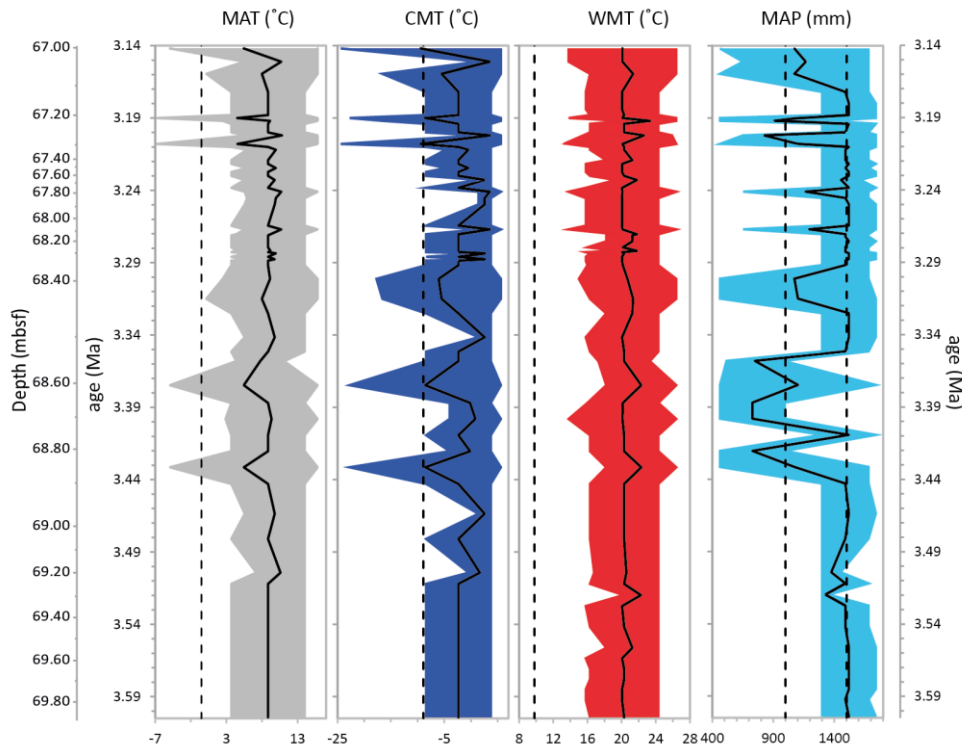
Figure 7: Climate reconstruction for Mean Annual Temperature (MATs), Coldest Month Temperature (CMT), Warmest Month Temperature (WMT) and Mean Annual Precipitation (MAP) using the Coexistence Approach. Dotted lines represent modern climate data that has been taken from the meteorological station in Bodø and Mo i Rana (see Fig. 1 for location): MAT = 0,5°C, CMT = 8.9°C and WMT = 9.8°C (Norwegian Meteorological Institute and Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation, 2014). Values for MAP (1000 and 1500 mm) have been taken from Diekmann (1994).

Location/time interval	3.6-3.47 Ma	3.47-3.35 Ma	3.35-3.29 Ma	3.29-3.16 Ma	3.16-3.14 Ma
Northern Norway (ODP Hole 642B, 67°N)	Cool temperate to deciduous forest	Boreal forest and low alpine environments	Boreal forest and extensive peat lands	Cool temperate to boreal forests, long-term expansion of peat lands	Further decrease of forest coverage and spread of peat lands
Temperature / **Precipitation**	Warm / High	*Cool* / *Low*	*Cool* / High	Warm / High	*Cool* / High
North-eastern Russian Arctic (Lake El'gygytgyn, 67°N)	Diverse coniferous forest with temperate trees and shrubs and peat lands	3.48 Ma: decrease in thermophilic taxa; 3.48-3.42 Ma: predominance of boreal forest and open habitats, repeated wetter and drier intervals; 3.42-3.39 Ma: boreal forest; After 3.39 Ma: boreal forest and first appearance of tundra	After 3.35 Ma: further opening of the vegetation; 3.31-3.28 Ma: mostly treeless tundra- and steppe-like vegetation with forest patches and peat lands	3.28-3.25 Ma: boreal forest; 3.25-3.20 Ma: boreal forest with open habitats; 3.20 Ma: boreal forest	After 3.06 Ma: opening of the vegetation
Temperature / **Precipitation**	Warm / *Low*	*Cool* High · Warm High · *Cool* *Low*	*Cool* / *Low*	Warm · High *Low* High	Warm *Cool* / High
South-eastern Siberia (Lake Baikal, 53°N)	Mixed coniferous forests	At 3.47, 3.43 and 3.39 Ma: thinning of forest and predominance of boreal vegetation	After 3.3 Ma: Spread of coniferous forest	At 3.26 and 3.18 Ma: thinning of boreal forest and spread of boreal taxa	After 3.15 Ma: reduced forest coverage and development of open habitats
Temperature / **Precipitation**	Warm / High	*Cool* Warm *Cool* / *Low* High *Low*	*Cool* *Low* · High	*Cool* / *Low*	*Cool* / *Low*

Canada (Yukon, 64°N and James Bay Lowland, 52°N)	James Bay Lowland: till deposits dated to 3.5 Ma (3.4 – 3.6 Ma)	Yukon: diverse boreal forest with wetlands/lakes	James Bay Lowland: boreal forest
Temperature	*Cool*	Warm	
Precipitation		High	

1   Table 1: Summary of Piacenzian (sub)Arctic vegetation records. Time intervals correspond to
2   the main pollen zones delimited in ODP Hole 642B (this study). Piacenzian vegetation
3   changes are compiled from the Lake El'gygytgyn record in the NE Russian Arctic (Andreev
4   et al., 2014); Lake Baikal record in SE Siberia (Demske et al., 2002); Yukon, NW Canada
5   (Pound et al., 2015) and James Bay Lowland, SE Canada (Gao et al., 2012). Description of
6   temperature and precipitation is relative and division of time intervals is arbitrary, indicating
7   fluctuating climatic conditions.