Dear Prof. Küsel,

We thank you and the reviewers for the constructive comments on our manuscript. Below we respond to the comments (*in italic*) and indicate how we have modified the manuscript. As you will see, we have followed most of the reviewers' suggestions.

We hope that you find the revised manuscript acceptable for publication in *Biogeosciences*.

Yours sincerely,

Martina Sollai

Reviewers' comments

Reviewer #1:

General comment Q1.

Microbial ecology associated with the expanding oxygen minimum zone has a crucial impact on the global nitrogen and carbon cycles. AOA and anammox are two key components of the metabolic processes of nitrification and denitrification. Using lipid biomarkers this manuscript discussed the distribution and potential interaction of AOA and anammox in two different sites of ETNP. Both chemistry and lipids data are very well presented. The distribution of Thaumarchaeota and anammox bacteria in the water columns indicated by the lipid profiles is convincing, and consists with other previously reported data. Indeed, it is shown that these two kinds of microbes are more sensitive to oxygen content rather than nutrients.

R1. We thank referee # 1 for this positive assessment and the time spent on reviewing our paper.

Q2. What I am concerned is whether the somehow overlapped crenarchaeol and ladderane profiles in the open ocean site really represents an actual interaction between the AOA and anammox communities. At the coastal site the ammonia spike close to oxycline must have stimulated the growth of Thaumarchaeota, while anammox bacteria is more restricted to nitrite. Therefore, under a suitable oxygen condition these two communities are divided by their favorite nutrients. The nitrite peak in the middle of OMZ is likely not related to AOA. Their overlap at the open ocean site with constant low ammonia concentration is more constrained by oxygen content. The direct metabolic link or network between Thaumarchaeota and anammox bacteria seems really weak. Other species involved in the nitrogen metabolism are probably more closely interacted with either one of them.

R2. We agree with the referee that the slight overlap in the occurrence of crenarchaeol and ladderane at certain depths at the open ocean station does not proof that the AOA and anammox communities interact. However, to our opinion we carefully phrased this; e.g. "but a partial overlap of the two niches of these microbial species in the open water setting. The latter distribution suggests the ***potential*** *for an interaction between the two microbial groups at the open ocean site, either as competition or cooperation" (lines 17-20; page 4834).*

Specific comments Q3.

1. Introduction: A N-cycle diagram showing the metabolic feature of AOA and anammox will be straightforward.

The font of 'Thaumarchaeota' does not need to be in italic.

R3. We do agree with the suggestion and we will add a N-cycle diagram showing how AOA and anammox metabolisms are integrated in the global marine nitrogen cycle.
We will correct the font of Thaumarchaeota in the text.

Q4. 2.2 Sampling: Station names in Table. 1 and Fig. 1 are not consistent. "147-149" is labeled as "147" in Fig. 1. And, "106" is missing in Table 1.

R4. We will correct the labels in Fig. 1 to 147-149 as in Table 1. Station 106 will also be included in Table 1.

Q5. 2.3 Intact polar lipid analysis: It is ok to show the relative abundance of HPH-crenarchaeol with peak areas, but as I know, the response factor of a given compound may also vary due to instrument condition in different times. Did you analyze all your samples in the same batch?

R5. The reviewer correctly points out that the response factor of a given compound may vary as a consequence of instrument condition, in different times. In order to minimize this inconvenience we indeed did analyse our samples in the same batch; we will mention this in the experimental section 2.3, page 8, line 27, of the revised manuscript.

Q6. 4. Results: 3.1 please give a brief statement why water density is so different at the two studied sites. …Salinity?
Please explain the unite (r.u. L^{-1}) of HPH-crenarchaeol, and the same as in Fig. 3.

R6. Indeed the difference in the density anomaly depends on the different salinity of the water masses found at some depth of the two sampling sites. In the revised version we will add at page 9 line 20 this statement: "As the salinity along the water column at the two sampling sites diverges (data not shown), also σ_θ diverges and has an effect on the distributions we observe."

The unit for HPH-crenarchaeol relative abundance, as response unit L^{-1} (i.e. r.u. L^{-1}) is specified, in the Material and method section 2.3, page 9, line 5 but in the revised version we will repeat this in the legend of Figure 3.

Q7. Discussion: P4845, lines 9-11, At the coastal site there is low ladderane concentration detected at the oxycline, first three data points in Figure 2f. There is also typo in this sentence, please rewrite.

R7. We thank the referee for spotting this typo. We will rewrite the paragraph in this way:" Moreover, similarly to De Brabandere et al. (2014) who also reported low anammox rates at the oxycline in one of their sampling stations in the ETSP, we observed low ladderane concentration in the ETNP coastal setting."

Q8. P4848, lines 5-13, Terrestrial input could be the main cause. A more detailed discussion will be better.

R8. This comment is not entirely clear to us; we agree that coastal settings will receive a higher terrestrial input but do not really see that this will affect the nutrient profiles to a large extent. Therefore, we feel we should refrain from bringing this into the discussion.

Q9. Figure caption, What do the yellow shades in Fig. 2 represent?

R9. With those yellow shades we wanted to highlight the differences we observed in terms of HPH-crenarchaeol, PC-monoether, nutrients and oxygen distribution between the two sampling sites. We will add an explanation to the caption of Fig. 2.

Reviewer #2:

Q1. The paper by Sollai et al. reports on the distribution of archaeal and bacterial denitrifying organisms in oxygen deficient zones (ODZ) of the Eastern Tropical North Pacific (ENTP). These groups of organisms are of relevance as they account for most of the nitrogen loss in ODZs worldwide. The authors have tracked the occurrence of the aerobic ammonium oxidizing archaea and anaerobic ammonium oxidizing bacteria in the water column by using two diagnostic biomarkers. Their main observations are that these two groups overlap in offshore regions, while there is a clear zonation separating them in coastal waters. They consequently suggest that this distribution represents a potential for either competition or cooperation of these two microbial groups at the open ocean sites. Understanding the distribution and functioning of these two microbial groups is of great relevance for understanding the marine nitrogen cycle.

While this study gives insights on their distribution patterns, the authors have invested little effort into further investigating the interactions of these two groups with each other. One could envision for instance 15N-labeling studies to track the cycling of for instance nitrite, a potentially important intermediate between aerobic and anaerobic oxidation of ammonium.

This study therefore only provides little in-depth insights into the processes related to nitrogen cycling in ODZs and only adds minimally to the advancement of the field. However, I see no technical problems with the paper and therefore only have minor request for revisions to the paper. Some citations were incorrect that need to be corrected before publication.

R1. We thank referee #2 for the time dedicated to the review of our paper.

We respectfully disagree with the assessment of this referee that this manuscript "adds minimally to the advancement of the field". Our study compares for the first time the simultaneous distribution of AOA and anammox bacteria between the coastal and the open ocean of the ETNP ODZ, which represents one of the most prominent ODZ in the present ocean. Moreover, the resolution of our sampling campaign is very high and therefore provides valuable insights in the distribution of AOA and anammox bacteria in the water column of the two areas investigated in our study, which were beforehand missing. We agree with the referee that this does not provide quantitative rate estimates for nitrification and anaerobic ammonium oxidation. However, we do refer to a previous study, which, by employing $^{15}NH_4^+$-labelling, investigated the oxidation rate of this nutrient to nitrite in the vicinity of our coastal sampling station (Beman et al., 2012 Limnol. Oceanog; see also Discussion 4.1, pages 12, line 26 and page 13, lines 1 to 5). The study suggests that AOA are relevant players in the nitrification taking place in this area. Other papers discussing correlated topics include Beman et al., 2008, The ISME J. and Beman et al., 2013, The ISME J. All together these works represent the only systematic attempt to investigate the contribution by AOA and AOB in the nitrification process occurring in the proximity of our coastal sampling station, at least to the best of our knowledge. On the other hand, an assessment of this kind with respect to the offshore regions of the ETNP ODZ is still missing. Regarding anammox bacteria and their metabolism, such kind of evaluation relative to the ETNP ODZ is still lacking.

Q2. 1) Page 3, lines 24-27: It is true that Karner et al., 2001 observed that Archaea (particularly Crenarchaea) account for 20% of picoplankton and ca. 40% of the estimated total number of cells in the ocean, however, these cells are not very likely to be ammonia oxidizing archaea (AOA), since these archaeal cells were found predominantly between 200 to 5000m water depth and AOA thrive in the upper water column, between 100 to 100m water depth (e.g., Lam et al., 2007, Pitcher et al., 2011). The statement as the authors have written is consequently misleading and needs to be corrected.

R2. We disagree with the referee on this matter. All isolated Thaumarchaeota from the ocean have been shown to be AOA so far and the Thaumarchaeota residing in deep ocean waters contain the amoA gene (the gene coding for the enzyme involved in the first step of ammonium oxidation) in their genome (e.g. Villanueva et al., 2014, Environ. Microbiol.). Although this does not 100% prove that they perform ammonium oxidation, it is judged very likely and another physiology for deep water Thaumarchaeota has not been demonstrated to the best of our knowledge. The paper that claimed the existence of non-nitrifying Thaumarchaeota (Agogue et al., Nature 456, 788, 2008) was actually based on a primer mismatch. Therefore, we feel that this section is not "misleading" and simply provides an accurate explanation.

Q3. 2) Page 6, line 1: The authors are citing a number of studies in the context that HPH-crenarchaeol and not MH and DH-cren is a more suitable tracer to track living biomass. However, many of the cited papers do not provide support for this statement. To my knowledge there exists no study that systematically investigated the relative liabilities of glycosidic over phosphate-based head groups. Instead, what the authors could say is that HPH crenarchaeol has proven to be an adequate tracer for ammonium oxidizing Thaumarchaeota in past studies (e.g., Pitcher et al., 2011), while other IPLGDGTs could have other archaeal sources in the water column (add the other citations, the authors could also consider adding Lincoln et al., 2012 PNAS) or represent fossil contributions (e.g. Xie et al., 2011).

R3. As suggested by the referee, we will refer in the revised manuscript for our statement only to the Picher et al. (2011) reference, since this is the only study that showed by examining HPH-, MH-, and DH-crenarchaeol and 16S rRNA and amoA gene copy numbers that HPH-crenarchaeol is the best marker for tracking "life" Thaumarchaeota. Harvey et al., (1986, GCA) have experimentally demonstrated that phosphate-ester bond lipids are reported to be more labile compared to the glycosidic ether bond lipids and thus more suitable as biomarker for living cells.

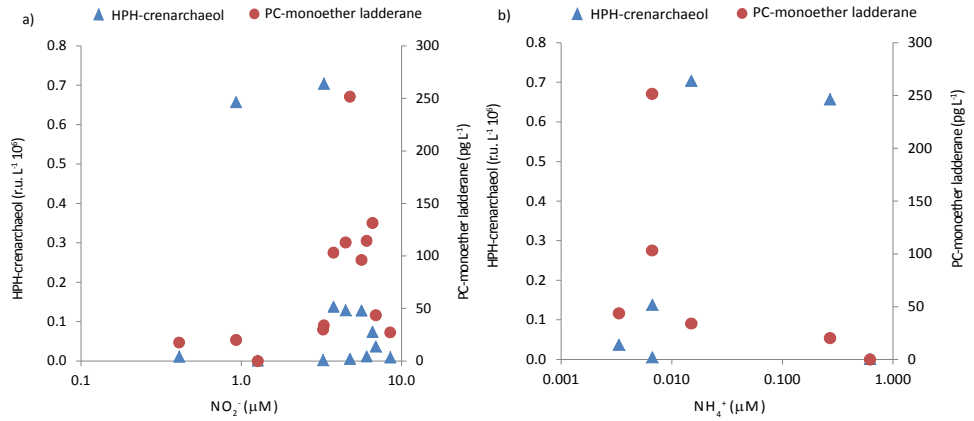
V. Schwab:

Q1. In this paper, the authors investigated the occurrence and distribution of ammonia oxidizing archaea (AOA) and anaerobic ammonia-oxidizing (anammox) bacteria in the Eastern Tropical North Pacific (ETNP) oxygen deficient zone (ODZ). The source specific biomarkers hexose-phosphohexose (HPH)-crenarchaeol and the phosphatidylcholine (PC)-monoether ladderane are used to trace changes of AOA and anammox, respectively in the water column. The occurrence of these microorganisms at different depths of the water column of a coastal and an open ocean setting is discussed. In the coastal setting, the AOA dominated between 25 to 35 m, whereas anammox dominated between ca. 40 to 70 m. In the open ocean setting, both organisms dominated between 90 to 110 m. This article addresses an important topic, which is a possible relationship between different ammonia- oxidizing organisms in anoxic environments and their relation to the marine nitrogen cycle. I recommend publication in Biogeosciences after the authors consider some issues below that may improve the clarity.

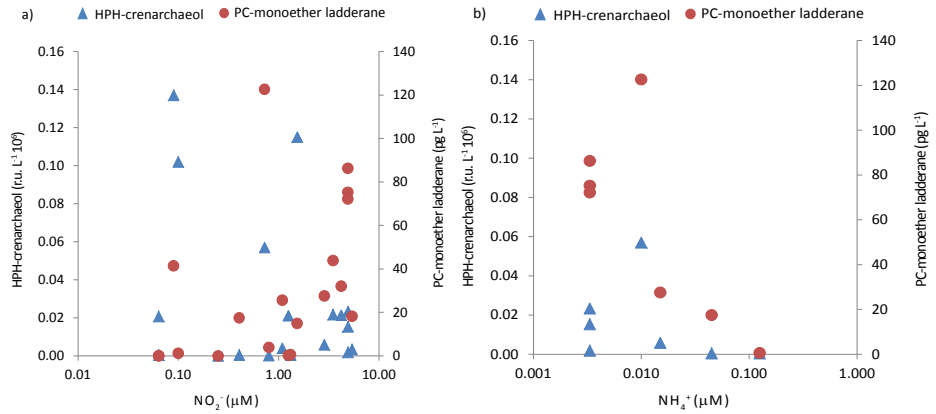
R1. We thank Dr. Schwab for the time dedicated to review our manuscript and the positive assessment.

Q2. The discussion about possible causes, which may explain differences in the ecological niches of the AOA and anammox between both settings, is poor and not clearly structured. Maybe plots comparing the abundance/distribution of nutrients and oxygen with the specific biomarkers between both settings as in Fig. 3 would be useful. This might help to differentiate/characterize the effects of these factors on the AOA and anammox distribution between both settings. In Page 4846_upper lines, the authors suggested that different local circulation may explain such variations, whereas page 4848 line 5-10, they bring the possibility of difference source and availability of organic matter. I think all these hypotheses should be put and discussed together considering circulation, location, availability/concentration of NO_3^-, NO_2^-, NH_4^+ ,O_2 and terrestrial organic matter input...

R2. We respectfully disagree with the assessment of Dr. Schwab that "The discussion about possible causes, which may explain differences in the ecological niches of the AOA and anammox between both settings, is poor and not clearly structured". We believe that possible causes of the divergent distribution of the two microbes between the two settings were already engaged in the Discussion section of the submitted manuscript and we are confident to have further improved the manuscript thanks to the stimulating comments received. With respect to the role of the nutrients required by AOA and anammox bacteria (i.e. NO_2^-, NH_4^+) in explaining the differences observed at the two sampling sites, in a preliminary version of the manuscript we considered plotting their concentrations versus the abundance/concentration of the biomarkers employed in the study (i.e. HPH-crenarchaeol and PC-monoether ladderane). However, since no evident relationship was found, those plots were excluded from the final version for submission: these plots are shown below. We will include a brief explicative statement on this matter in the Discussion section 4.2, page 16, line 3, of the revised manuscript.



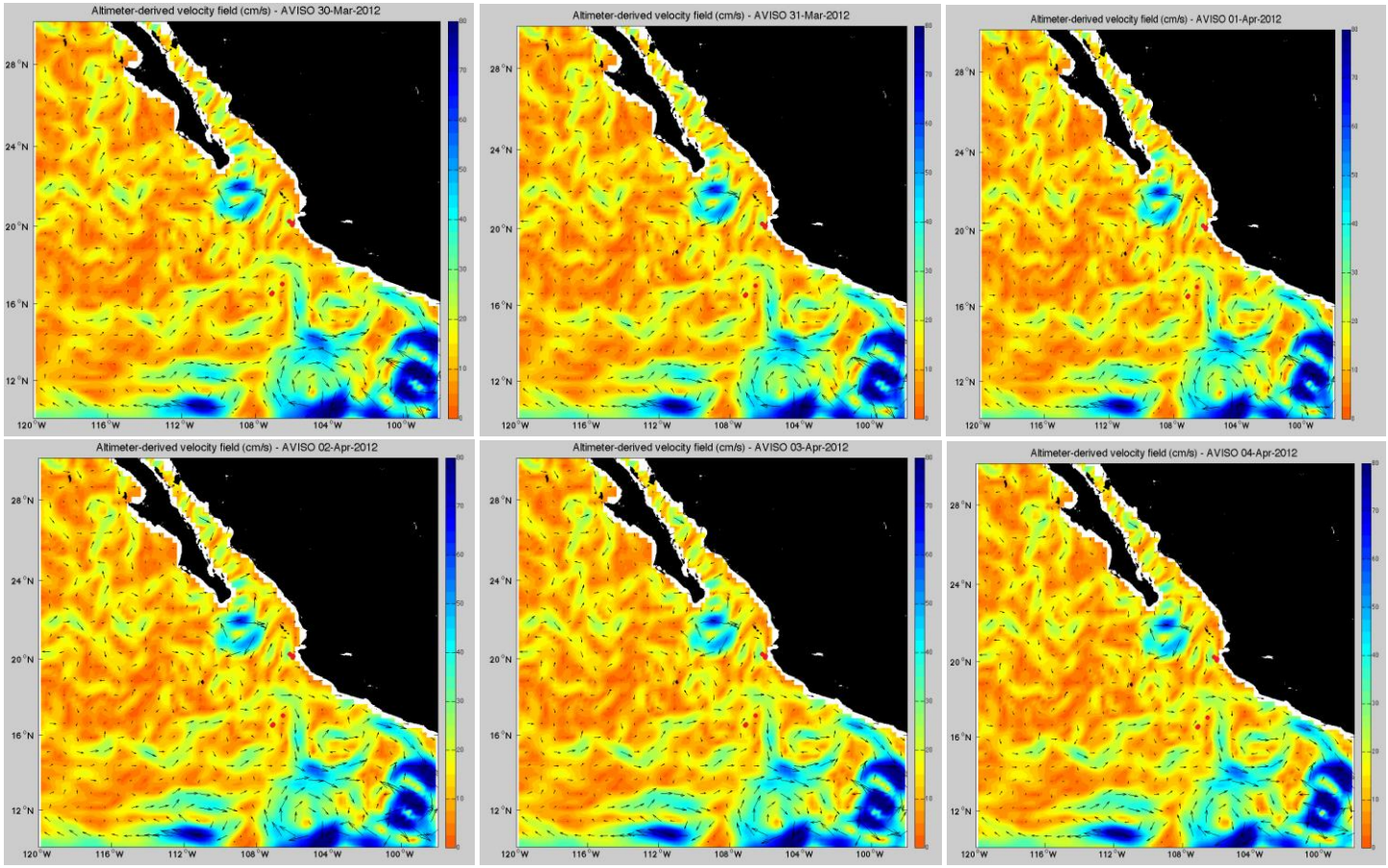
Abundance of HPH-crenarchaeol (r.u. L-1) and PC-monoether ladderane (pg L-1) lipids versus (a) NO_2^- (µM) and of (b) NH_4^+ (µM) at the coastal site.

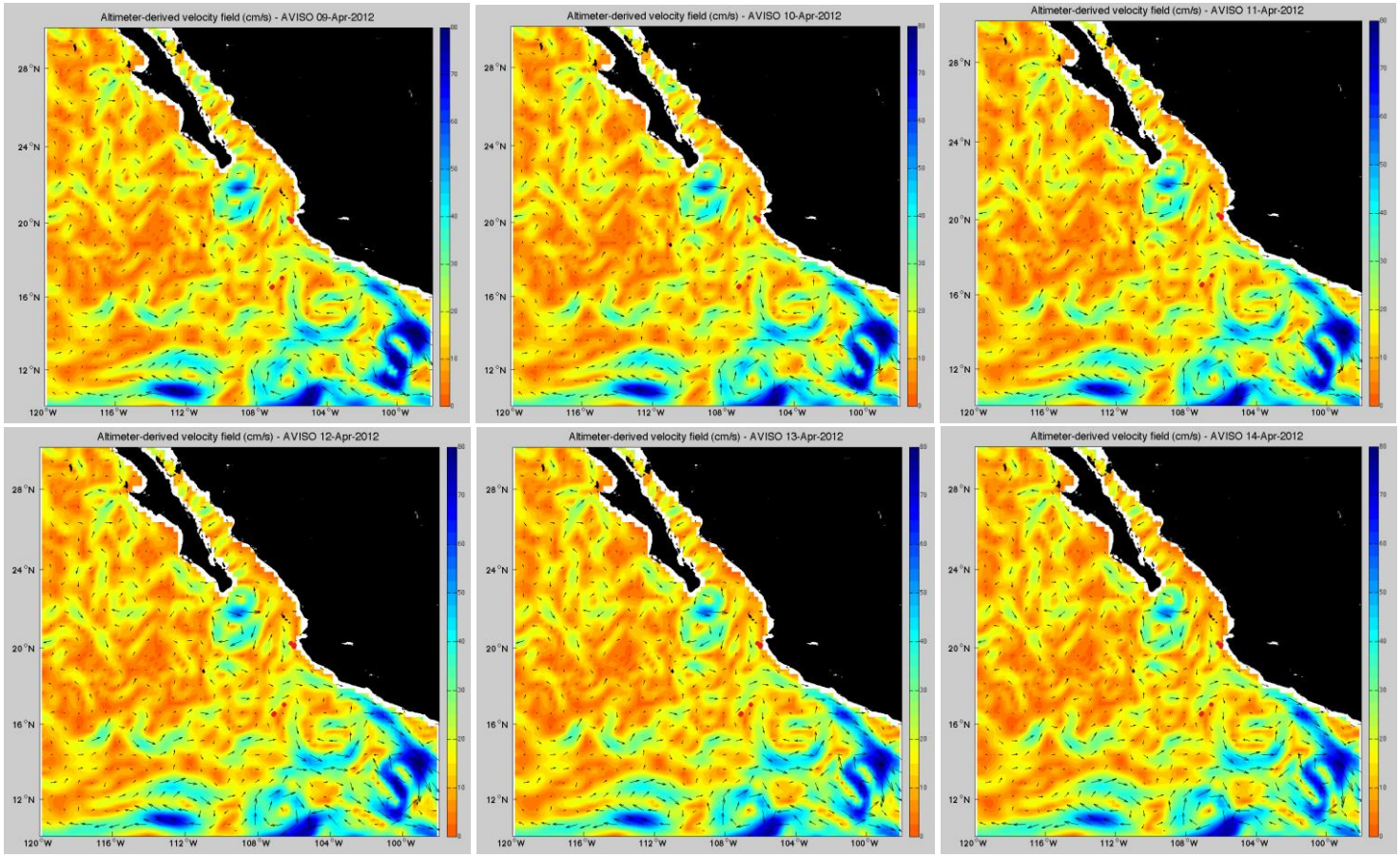


Abundance of HPH-crenarchaeol (r.u. L-1) and PC-monoether ladderane (pg L-1) lipids versus (a) NO_2^- (µM) and of (b) NH_4^+ (µM) at the open ocean site.

Q3. Small comments:
Table 1: Add NO_3^- concentration and concentration of the AOA and anammox biomarkers in the table. Fig.1: would be great to see the different currents in the figure.

R3. We are thankful for the suggestion. We will complement Table 1 with additional information as suggested. Regarding the currents in the ETNP ODZ at the time of our sampling campaign, satellite images do not show any specific feature such an eddy for instance that involves our sampling sites: the coastal site looks primary influenced by coastal currents, weather the open ocean one by oceanic currents. Figures showing this are reported below.


Altimeter-derived velocity field (cm/s) - AVISO 30-Mar-2012
Altimeter-derived velocity field (cm/s) - AVISO 31-Mar-2012
Altimeter-derived velocity field (cm/s) - AVISO 01-Apr-2012
Altimeter-derived velocity field (cm/s) - AVISO 02-Apr-2012
Altimeter-derived velocity field (cm/s) - AVISO 03-Apr-2012
Altimeter-derived velocity field (cm/s) - AVISO 04-Apr-2012
28°N
24°N
20°N
16°N
12°N
120°W
116°W
112°W
108°W
104°W
100°W



Satellite snapshots showing the currents in the ETNP ODZ during the ETNP (TN278) cruise (R/V Thomas G. Thompson, March-April 2012). In red are the coastal and the open ocean sampling sites.

List of relevant changes made in the manuscript:

1. Page 2, lines 17-19. We have rephrased the sentence:

Old sentence: The latter distribution suggests the potential for an interaction between the two microbial groups at the open ocean site, either as competition or cooperation.

New sentence: The latter distribution suggests the potential for an interaction between the two microbial groups at the open ocean site, although the nature of this hypothetical interaction (i.e. either competition or cooperation) remains unclear.

2. Page 3, line 24 and Page 45, Figure 1. We have added a marine N cycle diagram.
3. Page 4, line 3 and later in the text. We have changed the font of "Thaumarchaeota".
4. Page 6. Lines 13 to 15. We have changed the list of the references cited in the sentence.
5. Page 8, line 7 and later in the text. We have updated the numbers assigned to the Figures.
6. Page 9, lines 23 to 24. We have added the following sentence:

In order to minimize possible variations in the IPLs response factors, the extract was analyzed in the same batch.

7. Page 11, lines 9 to 11. We have added the following sentence:

In the upper water column values for σ_θ differ at the two sampling sites as a consequence of differences in salinity (data not shown).

8. Page 15, lines 8 to 11. We have corrected a typo and rephrased the sentence:

Old sentence: However, De Brabandere et al. (2014) also reported low anammox rates at the oxycline in one of their sampling stations in the ETSP, which we did not observed in the ETNP coastal setting.

New sentence: Moreover, similarly to De Brabandere et al. (2014), who also reported low anammox rates at the oxycline in one of their sampling stations in the ETSP, we also observed low ladderane concentrations in the ETNP coastal setting.

9. Page 15, lines 12 to 15. We have added the following sentence:

The role of NO_2^- and NH_4^+ in differentiating the distribution of Thaumarchaeota and anammox bacteria observed at the coastal and at the open water sites of the ETNP ODZ is not clear; when the NO_2^- and NH_4^+ concentrations were compared with those of the specific biomarkers studied at both sites, no evident relationship was apparent (data not shown).

10. Pages 30-31, Table 1. We have added extra informations in Table 1 (i.e. station 106 relative data, NO_3^- measurements) and we have renamed station 147 to 147-149.
11. Page 34. Line 8. We have modified the names of several stations in the caption of Figure 2.
12. Page 37, lines 17 to 19. We have added the following the sentence.

The yellow bars highlight the main differences observed between the two sampling sites with respect to the distribution of the two microbial species: i.e. on the one hand a clear niche segregation of AOA and anammox bacteria in the coastal waters of the ETNP and on the other hand a partial overlap of the two niches of these microbial species in the open water setting.

Page 38, lines 22 to 23. We have reported the units relative to the two biomarkers employed.

Intact polar lipids of Thaumarchaeota and anammox bacteria as indicators of N-cycling in the Eastern Tropical North Pacific oxygen deficient zone

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Abstract

In the last decade our understanding of the marine nitrogen cycle has improved considerably thanks to the discovery of two novel groups of microorganisms: ammonia-oxidizing archaea (AOA) and anaerobic ammonia-oxidizing (anammox) bacteria. Both groups are important in oxygen deficient zones (ODZs), where they substantially affect the marine N-budget. These two groups of microbes are also well known for producing specific membrane lipids, which can be used as biomarkers to trace their presence in the environment. We investigated the occurrence and distribution of AOA and anammox bacteria in the water column of the Eastern Tropical North Pacific (ETNP) ODZ, one of the most prominent ODZs worldwide. Suspended particulate matter (SPM) was collected at different depths of the water column in high resolution, at both a coastal and an open ocean setting. The SPM was analyzed for AOA- and anammox bacteria-specific intact polar lipids (IPLs), i.e. hexose-phosphohexose (HPH)-crenarchaeol and phosphatidylcholine (PC)-monoether ladderane. Comparison with oxygen profiles reveals that both the microbial groups are able to thrive at low (<1 μM) concentrations of oxygen. Our results indicate a clear niche segregation of AOA and anammox bacteria in the coastal waters of the ETNP, but a partial overlap of the two niches of these microbial species in the open water setting. The latter distribution suggests the potential for an interaction between the two microbial groups at the open ocean site, although the nature of this hypothetical interaction (i.e. either competition or cooperation) remains unclear.

Comment [MS1]: We have rephrased this sentence to make it more clear, as suggested by Dr. Küs and following Q2 by Referee #1.

1. Introduction

The marine nitrogen cycle has been widely investigated, as nitrogen is one of the main limiting factors of primary production in the upper sunlit layers of the oceans (Arrigo, 2005; Codispoti L.A., 1997) and the ocean accounts for about half of the global net primary production (Field et al., 1998; Gruber and Galloway, 2008). In the traditional view, the marine nitrogen cycle includes nitrogen fixation as the main input of nitrogen in the ocean and dinitrogen gas formed by denitrification as the main output, so that these two pathways are mainly responsible for the marine nitrogen budget status (Karl et al., 1997). In 2001, Codispoti and coauthors suggested that in the present-day ocean, the nitrogen budget is not in a steady state, but rather out of balance, with denitrification fluxes being underestimated (Codispoti et al., 2001). Nitrogen fixation is mediated by few microorganisms, including cyanobacteria, while denitrification is performed by a wide range of microorganisms with different metabolic features, able to switch from aerobic to anaerobic nitrate (NO_3^-) dependent respiration modes (Lam and Kuypers, 2011). In this classical view, nitrification, representing the major oxidative part of the cycle, connecting organic nitrogen to NO_3^- (Codispoti et al., 2001; Lam and Kuypers, 2011), was seen exclusively as an aerobic process carried out by ammonia- (AOB), and nitrite-oxidizing bacteria, members of the β- and γ-proteobacteria. The nitrification reaction is divided into two steps, performed by distinct bacterial groups. In the first part ammonium (NH_4^+) is oxidized to nitrite (NO_2^-), whereas in the second NO_2^- is oxidized to nitrate (NO_3^-). In both cases oxygen serves as electron acceptor, although AOB have been reported to perform nitrification in sub-oxic conditions (Lam et al., 2007; Schmidt and Bock, 1997).

The overall understanding of the marine nitrogen cycle has substantially changed in the last decade (Fig. 1). Specific archaea were discovered to be important players in the

Comment [MS2]: We have added diagram of the marine N cycle, following Q3 from Referee #1.

marine nitrogen cycle (Venter et al., 2004) as some of them perform nitrification in the marine water column and sediment (Francis et al., 2005; Könneke et al., 2005; Wuchter et al., 2006). The group of archaea capable of nitrification has recently been relocated in a separate phylum named Thaumarchaeota (Brochier-Armanet et al., 2008; Spang et al., 2010). Compared to their bacterial counterpart, ammonia oxidizing archaea (AOA) are often more abundant in the ocean (Karner et al., 2001; Lam et al., 2007; Wuchter et al., 2006), accounting for 20% of picoplankton and 40% of the estimated total number of cells (Karner et al., 2001). These microorganisms are able to cope with low oxygen conditions (Coolen et al., 2007; Lam et al., 2007; Park et al., 2010; Pitcher et al., 2011b; Sinninghe Damsté et al., 2002a), have low substrate requirements (Martens-Habbena et al., 2009) and are able to utilize a highly energy efficient CO_2- fixation pathway (Könneke et al., 2014); new coastal marine AOA isolates show obligate mixotrophy and vary in their adaptive ability to different environmental parameters (Qin et al., 2014). All these features have been suggested to provide a reason for AOA observed dominance over ammonia oxidizing bacteria (AOB) as ammonia oxidizers in the open oceans (Könneke et al., 2014; Pester et al., 2011). Moreover, a 'novel' process in the nitrogen cycle, named anammox, was discovered. Anaerobic ammonia oxidizing (anammox) bacteria, are a unique group of microorganisms member of the order of *Planctomycetales* (Strous et al., 1999). They are able to oxidize ammonium (NH_4^+) to molecular nitrogen (N_2) under anoxic conditions, using nitrite (NO_2^-) as electron acceptor (van de Graaf et al., 1995). Anammox bacterial activity has been detected in marine anoxic sediments and waters (Dalsgaard et al., 2003; Kuypers et al., 2003; Thamdrup and Dalsgaard, 2002) and has been recognized to contribute, along with denitrifying bacteria, to the loss of N_2 from the ocean (Galán et al., 2009; Hamersley et al., 2007; Kuypers et al., 2005; Lam et al., 2009; Thamdrup et al., 2006). Despite different oxygen tolerances, anammox bacteria and Thaumarchaeota have been observed to co-exist in different settings, particularly in oxygen deficient zones

Comment [MS3]: We have correct the font as suggested by Referee #1 Q3.

Comment [MS4]: We have correct the font as suggested by Referee #1 Q3.

(ODZs) and anoxic waters (Coolen et al., 2007; Francis et al., 2005; Lam et al., 2007; Pitcher et al., 2011b; Woebken et al., 2007). These two microbial groups can potentially benefit from each other, because the thaumarchaeotal nitrification might be coupled with the anammox process by providing the NO_2^- anammox bacteria need and, at the same time, consume oxygen to which anammox bacteria are sensitive. Alternatively, when nitrite is provided to anammox by other sources, the two groups might compete for NH_4^+ (Yan et al., 2012).

In this study we investigated the occurrence and depth distribution of Thaumarchaeota and anammox bacteria in the Eastern Tropical North Pacific (ETNP) oxygen deficient zone, one of the most extended ODZs in the contemporary ocean. The presence of AOA and anammox bacteria has been reported in the ETNP oxygen deficient zone by a few studies (Beman et al., 2008, 2012, 2013; Francis et al., 2005; Podlaska et al., 2012; Rush et al., 2012) and the significance of the two microbial groups to local marine nitrogen cycling is starting to be elucidated for other ODZs (Dalsgaard et al., 2003; Galán et al., 2009; Kalvelage et al., 2013; Kuypers et al., 2003, 2005; Lam et al., 2007, 2009; Pitcher et al., 2011b; Ward et al., 2009). However, the spatial distribution and the possible co-occurrence of the two groups in the ETNP have not been investigated in detail as well as the relative contribution of AOA and anammox to the local N-cycle and their possible interactions. To the best of our knowledge only one study so far has examined concurrently the presence of the two microbial groups in the southern part of the ETNP (Podlaska et al., 2012). Other studies on the ETNP ODZ have investigated the presence of AOA along a north-south transects following the coastal line of southern California (Beman et al., 2008, 2012, 2013) and the occurrence of anammox bacteria in the southern ETNP ODZ (Rush et al., 2012). These studies did not investigate the occurrence of AOA and anammox bacteria at true open ocean sites and a comparison of AOA and anammox bacteria dynamics between coastal and open ocean waters is still missing. To

Comment [MS5]: We have correct the font as suggested by Referee #1 Q3.

fill this gap in the current knowledge we performed high resolution water sampling, at both coastal and open ocean settings in the ETNP ODZ.

To trace the two microbial groups we applied intact polar lipids (IPLs) specific for these groups, which have proved to be good biomarkers in various settings (Bale et al., 2013; Buckles et al., 2013; Lengger et al., 2012; Pitcher et al., 2011b, 2011c). Anammox bacteria produce unique ladderane fatty acids which contain 3-5 concatenated cyclobutane moieties (Sinninghe Damsté et al., 2002c). They are attached to the glycerol backbone with polar head groups comprising phoshocholine (PC) and phosphoethanolamine (PE) (Boumann et al., 2006; Rattray et al., 2008). Thaumarchaeota produce also specific biomarker lipids, i.e. crenarchaeol, a glycerol dibiphytanyl glycerol tetraether (GDGT) lipid, containing a cyclohexane moiety beside four cyclopentane moieties (de la Torre et al., 2008; Pitcher et al., 2010; Schouten et al., 2008; Sinninghe Damsté et al., 2002b, 2002c). Attached to crenarchaeol are various polar headgroups such as monohexose (MH), dihexose (DH) and a hexose-phosphohexose (HPH) (Schouten et al., 2008) with the latter being the most suitable for tracing living active cells (Pitcher et al., 2011a). By applying these specific IPLs, i.e. HPH-crenarchaeol and PC-monoether ladderane, respectively, we investigate the depth habitat of the Thaumarchaeota and anammox bacteria in the ETNP oxygen deficient zone and the factors controlling their ecological niche.

Comment [MS6]: We have correct the font as suggested by Referee #1 Q3.

Comment [MS7]: We have change the references as suggested by Referee #2 in Q3.

Comment [MS8]: We have correct the font as suggested by Referee #1 Q3.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Environmental setting of the ETNP

The ETNP ODZ is one of the thickest in the contemporary ocean and extends to depths as deep as ~1000 m. Geographically it ranges from ~25°N (i.e. Baja California) to ~10°N (i.e. Costa Rica) and from ~160°W in the North Pacific Ocean to the coast of Mexico and Costa Rica. It is a permanent feature of the eastern tropical Pacific region (Paulmier and Ruiz-Pino, 2009). The region is important for its role in the global carbon cycle, for its involvement in El Niño Southern Oscillation, and it is economically relevant for fishery (Fiedler and Lavín, 2006). A shallow and strong thermocline causes water stratification and weak exchanges of nutrients and oxygen between surface waters and sub-thermocline layers, which are poorly ventilated (Lavín et al., 2006). This feature is further exacerbated by Ekman pumping which causes coastal and open ocean upwelling (Lavín et al., 2006). The hydrology of the eastern tropical Pacific is influenced by water circulation features and by strong winds in the part close to the American continent (Kessler, 2006). The ETNP oxygen deficient zone comprises part of the North Pacific sub-tropical gyre, specifically it is delimited southeastern by the California Current (CC), the North Equatorial Current (NEC) and the North Equatorial Countercurrent (NECC) (Karstensen et al., 2008). The boundary area where the CC, flowing along the coast of the Baja California and southern, encounters the NEC is characterized by Ekman transport westward and upwelling mainly off the Californian coast and in a weakened magnitude off the north Mexico coast (Kessler, 2006; Lavín et al., 2006). Our sampling area lies in this transition region; however the upper water circulation in this region is not fully understood yet (Kessler, 2006). Although ODZs have been now studied for almost a century, only recently it has been possible to determine in situ concentration in these areas to the accuracy of nanomolar O_2 (Revsbech et al., 2009). This has allowed to prove that ODZ

regions, including the ETNP, are functionally devoid of oxygen, although respiratory rates indicate that aerobic metabolisms successfully occur, even in such extreme conditions (Canfield et al., 2010; Jensen et al., 2011; Revsbech et al., 2009; Thamdrup et al., 2012; Tiano et al., 2014).

2.2. Sampling

Sampling was performed at twelve stations during the Eastern Tropical North Pacific (TN278) cruise (R/V Thomas G. Thompson, March-April 2012) (Fig. 2. panel A). The cruise route was split in two legs with the former one comprising six sampling stations (Fig 2. panel B), in very close proximity to each other, in coastal waters, north-west of the departure port of Manzanillo (Colima, MX), and the latter including six sampling stations, clustered closely together, in open ocean waters south-west of the departure port, around the area known as the Moctezuma Trough (Fig. 2. panel C). Suspended particulate matter (SPM) samples were collected on pre-ashed 0.7 µm pore size glass fiber (GF) filters, mounted in McLane WTS-LV in situ filtration systems. At each sampling site four McLane pumps were deployed simultaneously at different depths (Table 1). The volume of water filtered varied according to the depth and the material collected (Table 1). Upon the recovery of the pumps the GF filters were removed, split in two halves and frozen at -40°C.

Physical parameters of the water column were recorded by conductivity-temperature-density (CTD) equipment (SBE-911, Sea-Bird Electronics); dissolved-oxygen depth concentrations were measured by a SBE 43 electrochemical sensor mounted on the CTD rosette. Sensor oxygen concentrations were calibrated against on-deck Winkler titrations. The data reported here do not take into account recent evidence that these techniques (i.e. Clark electrodes, Winkler titrations) overestimate oxygen at the very lowest concentrations (Tiano et al., 2014). Water samples for inorganic nutrient profiles were collected using 24×10 L

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Niskin bottles mounted on a rosette to the CTD. The CTD was cast shortly before or after the deployment of the McLane pumps. In case this was not possible, data from another station, the closest in time and space to that of the deployed in situ pumps, were used. This means that at some sites the depths sampled for nutrients data do not always directly correspond to the depths at which SPM was sampled with the in situ pumps (Table 1). The detection limits for NO_3^-, NO_2^-, and NH_4^+ were respectively 0.08 µM, 0.01 µM and 0.07 µM. The electrochemical oxygen sensor SBE 43 has a detection limit of 1-2 µM (Tiano et al., 2014).

2.3. Intact polar lipid analysis

Intact polar lipids were extracted from freeze-dried SPM filter halves using a modified Bligh-Dyer technique as described in Sturt et al. (2004) with some adjustments as described in Schouten et al. (2008). Briefly, a known volume of methanol (MeOH):dichloromethane (DCM):phosphate buffer (P-buffer) (2:1:0.8, v/v/v) was added to the filter in a glass centrifuge tube and the total lipid contents were extracted in a sonication bath for 10 min. After centrifugation for 3 min at 2000 rpm the supernatant was removed. The extraction was repeated two more times and the supernatants combined. To induce separation of the combined supernatant into two phases, additional DCM and P-buffer were added to a new volume ratio of 1:1:0.9 DCM:MeOH:P-buffer. The mixture was centrifuged for 2 min at 3000 rpm after which the DCM layer was removed. The procedure was repeated two more times and the combined DCM phases were collected in a round bottom flask, reduced under rotary vacuum and completely dried under N_2 (Schouten et al., 2008; Sturt et al., 2004).

IPLs were analyzed directly in the extract using a high performance liquid chromatography (HPLC)-electrospray ionization (ESI)/triple quadrupole MS in selected reaction monitoring (SRM) mode as described by Pitcher et al. (2010). In order to minimize possible variations in the IPLs response factors, the extract was analyzed in the same batch.

Comment [MS10]: We have added this statement, following Q5 by Referee #1.

Briefly, an Agilent (Palo-Alto, CA, US) 1100 series LC equipped with a thermostat-controlled auto-injector was used coupled to a Thermo TSQ Quantum EM triple quadrupole MS equipped with an Ion Max source with ESI probe. The SRM method for the crenarchaeol IPLs was targeting specifically HPH-crenarchaeol (Schouten et al., 2008; Pitcher et al., 2010). Due to the lack of a standard, HPH-crenarchaeol was quantified as the integrated IPL area peak response units L^{-1} (i.e. r.u. L^{-1}), unveiling the relative depth distribution of the lipid biomarker in the water column, but not providing information on its absolute abundance. The anammox-specific membrane lipid C_{20}-[3]-ladderane with a phosphocholine (PC)-monoether was analyzed according to Jaeschke et al. (2009). The intact ladderane monoether lipid was quantified referring to an external calibration curve of an isolated C_{20}-[3]-ladderane (PC)-monoether standard (Jaeschke et al., 2009).

3. Results

3.1. Oxygen and nutrient profiles

During the ETNP (TN278) cruise in March-April 2012 the water column of the ETNP ODZ was sampled at high resolution for SPM, at depths from 20 to 2000 m in coastal waters and from 50 to 2500 m in open ocean waters at a number of geographically nearby stations (Fig. 2; Table 1). To compile all our data in two (coastal and open ocean) composite profiles, we report our nutrient (Figs. 3a-c; 3g-i), oxygen (Figs. 3d and 3l), and lipid SPM (Figs. 3e and 3f; 3m and 3n) data relative to the potential density anomaly, σ_θ (kg m^{-3}) of the water masses sampled at each of the coastal or open ocean stations, respectively. In the upper water column values for σ_θ differ at the two sampling sites as a consequence of differences in salinity (data not shown).

Comment [MS11]: We have added this sentence, following Q6 by Refere #1.

For both locations, the oxygen profiles (Figs. 3d and 3l) obtained by an oxygen electrochemical sensor mounted on the CTD of the nearby stations were virtually identical. Station 106, which is slightly further away from the other coastal stations (Fig. 2), is an

exception since the upper oxycline is located at a σ_θ of 25.5, ca. 30 m deeper than at the other stations. For the other coastal stations the oxycline occurs in shallow waters at a σ_θ of 25.0, i.e. ~30 m depth, whilst for the in open ocean waters it is located at σ_θ 25.5, which corresponds to ~100 m depth. Because of the virtual identical oxygen- σ_θ profiles, it was decided that all the data for the coastal (except for station 106) and open ocean stations could be combined in presenting the nutrient concentrations and IPL data from SPM. In this way we provide an expanded view of the vertical distribution of the two microbial species along the water column.

In the upper coastal waters the oxygen concentration varies between 250 to 50 µM until σ_θ 23.5 (i.e. ~15-20 m), then drops to values below 20 µM at the upper oxycline (Fig. 3d). In this setting, the ODZ spans from σ_θ 25.0 to 27.0 (i.e. between ~35 to ~800 m), with a minimal oxygen concentration below 1 µM in the core (Fig. 3d) (see also Tiano et al., 2014). Below 850 m σ_θ is between 27.0 and 27.5 and the oxygen concentration increases gradually again until ~75 µM, at 2000 m depth (Fig. 3d). In the open ocean waters oxygen concentration is stable at ~200 µM until σ_θ 22.5, at ~55 m depth, and rapidly decreases to values close to 1 µM at σ_θ 25.5, at 100 m depth. The ODZ extends until σ_θ 27.0, at 850 m depth. Below the lower oxycline the oxygen concentration increases again to ~120 µM at 3000 m depth, where σ_θ ranged between 27.5 and 28.0 (Fig. 3l).

Nutrient concentration data (i.e. NO_3^-, NO_2^-, NH_4^+) from different stations were combined in one coastal and one open ocean setting, as described above for the oxygen depth profiles. The resulting profiles show distinct patterns (Figs. 3a-c; 3g-i). In both coastal and open waters nitrate is the most abundant nitrogen species and show two maxima at different σ_θ (Figs. 3a and 3g). In coastal waters the first maximum of ~25 µM occurs at the upper oxycline at σ_θ 25, then the concentrations decrease to 15-20 µM until σ_θ 26.5. The second maximum of ~45 µM occurs at σ_θ 27.4, just below the lower oxycline (i.e. at 1000 m depth)

(Fig. 3a). In open ocean waters the trend in nitrate appears similar to the one in the coastal waters, although some differences can be noticed (Fig. 3g). The first maximum (i.e. ~25 µM) in this case is broader and deeper, spanning from σ_θ 24.5 to 26, where the upper oxycline is located. The second deeper maximum (i.e. ~50 µM) as well occurs where the waters start to be re-oxygenated (i.e. σ_θ 27.4, depth 1100 m). Like for nitrate, the profiles of nitrite are slightly different for the coast and open ocean waters (Figs. 3b and 3h). In the former setting the shallow maximum occurs at σ_θ 24.6, at declining oxygen concentrations. The peak is only ~1 µM and rather narrow. The lower peak of ~8 µM is located at σ_θ 26 (i.e. 88 m depth) in the core ODZ (Fig. 3b). The first nitrite maximum in the open ocean reaches1 to 2 µM and spans from fully oxygenated waters to the oxycline (i.e. σ_θ from ~23 to ~25). The deeper maximum on the other hand (i.e. ~6 µM) occurs in the upper ODZ (i.e. σ_θ 26.2) (Fig. 3h). Finally, at both sampling sites NH_4^+ concentrations are mostly below the detection limit of 0.07 µM (Figs. 3c and 3i) with the exception of a few data points at the costal oxycline (i.e. σ_θ 24.6) and in the open water where the oxygen decreases, and the NH_4^+concentrations are respectively 0.6 µM and ~0.1 µM.

3.2. Biomarker lipid profiles

The SPM for biomarker analysis were collected on 0.7 µm pore size GF filters. Limitations related to the use of 0.7 µm filters to collect archaeal living cells have been reported (Ingalls et al., 2012; Schouten et al., 2012) as the typical size of thaumarchaeotal cells is <0.6 µm (Könneke et al., 2005) and they are suggested to occur predominantly free-living during their lifetime (Ingalls et al., 2012). Although the pore size tends to diminish as the particulate material accumulates, the employment of 0.7 µm filters likely causes an underestimation of the archaeal population, and thus archaeal IPL abundance (Schouten et al., 2012). However, Pitcher et al. (2011b) showed that depth profiles of HPH-crenarchaeol, analyzed on SPM

collected using 0.7 µm GFF filters, in the Arabian Sea ODZ were similar to that of thaumarchaeotal genes, analyzed on SPM collected using 0.2 µm filters (Pitcher et al., 2011b). Therefore, our results are likely still suitable to probe the depth habitat of Thaumarchaeota.

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Figures 3e and 3m show HPH-crenarchaeol vertical profile for the coastal and the open ocean sites, respectively. In the coastal setting, HPH-crenarchaeol has a maximum in abundance at the interface between the oxycline and the upper ODZ, where σ_θ is ~25 (i.e. ~30 m depth) (Fig. 3e). In the open ocean setting, HPH-crenarchaeol starts to increase at declining oxygen concentrations and peaks at the base of the oxycline (i.e. at σ_θ 25.8 and 100 m depth). Deeper in the water column (i.e. at σ_θ 27.4 corresponding to ~1000 m water depth) a secondary minor maximum in HPH-crenarchaeol was detected (Fig. 3m).

In the coastal waters, the ladderane PC-monoether concentration stays low, except for one data point (i.e.~17 pg L^{-1} at 55 m depth), until the upper ODZ where it starts to increase to its maximum (i.e. ~251 pg L^{-1}) at σ_θ 26.4 in the core ODZ (i.e. 150 m depth) (Fig. 3f). In the open ocean, the PC-monoether maximum in concentration (i.e. ~122 pg L^{-1}) is located at the oxycline (i.e. at σ_θ 25.9 and 105 m depth).

4. Discussion

4.1. Depth distributions and abundance of AOA and anammox bacteria in the ETNP

In this study we have been able to investigate concurrently for the first time, the vertical distribution of AOA and anammox bacteria in both coastal and open waters of the ETNP ODZ. The IPL-biomarker profiles show that AOA and anammox bacteria are present in the region and partially co-exist along the water column (Figs. 3e and 3f; 3m and 3n). Such a distribution was already observed in other dysoxic or anoxic marine systems worldwide such

as the Black Sea, and the ODZs of the ESTP and the Benguela upwelling system (Lam et al., 2007, 2009; Woebken et al., 2007), whereas in the southern part of the ETNP ODZ (Podlaska et al., 2012) and in the Arabian Sea (Pitcher et al., 2011b) the two microbial groups are reported to thrive at different water depths. In the northern ETNP our IPLs depth profiles highlight some substantial differences in the distribution and abundance of the two groups between the different settings.

In the coastal setting, the two microbial groups show clear niche segregation in the upper part of the water column. Here, AOA thrive at the bottom of the oxycline, at a σ_θ of ~25, whereas anammox bacteria are just starting to increase in abundance at that point and exhibit a clear maximum only in the core ODZ (Fig. 3e and 3f), where σ_θ has shifted to ~26. The trend of our coastal HPH-crenarchaeol depth profile agrees with previously reported data for thaumarchaeotal 16SrRNA, archaeal *amoA* gene concentration and rate measurements from the same area (station 3 in Beman et al., 2012), which also revealed an AOA maximum at the base of the oxycline. Consequently, Beman et al. (2012) suggested a prominent role of AOA in performing nitrification in shallow O_2-depleted waters. The observed maximum abundance of anammox bacteria in the core ODZ as based on the ladderane lipid profile is in agreement with previous investigations in the ETSP ODZ, where it has been proposed as a preferential niche for anammox activity (De Brabandere et al., 2014; Hamersley et al., 2007; Ward et al., 2009). Moreover, similarly to De Brabandere et al. (2014), who also reported low anammox rates at the oxycline in one of their sampling stations in the ETSP, we also observed low ladderane concentrations in the ETNP coastal setting.

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At the open ocean site, we also find the maximum abundance of anammox bacteria between the base of the oxycline and the upper part of the ODZ. However, here the anammox bacterial abundance displays a concurrent maximum with that of AOA (Figs. 3m and 3n). The segregation of AOA and anammox bacteria niches in the coastal waters of the ETNP ODZ

and their contrasting co-occurrence in the open waters clearly indicates a different behavior of the two microbial species at different locations of the ETNP. To the best of our knowledge this is the first study that highlights such different vertical distribution of the two groups on a local scale. We also note that both IPL-biomarkers exhibit higher concentration maxima in coastal waters (Figs. 3e and 3f) than in the open ocean (Figs. 3m and 3n), i.e. the concentration of HPH-crenarchaeol is five times higher and that of the PC-monoether ladderane is more than twice that found in the open ocean. This suggests that both AOA and anammox bacteria are more abundant in the coastal waters of the ETNP. The reasons for such divergence may be various. For instance, the complex and so far not fully resolved upper water circulation in this region may play a role (Fiedler and Talley, 2006; Kessler, 2006). The proximity of the American continent is likely to have a greater influence on the hydrography of the coastal site (i.e. in a straight line the closest point on the Mexican coastline to our coastal settings is roughly 40 km away), than on the open ocean site. At these latitudes the continental wind forcing is a dominant factor and together with the variations in the coastline influences the local upper circulation (Fiedler and Talley, 2006; Kessler, 2006) and might have an effect on the different vertical distribution and abundance observed in the two microbial species as well. In the same way the nitrogen species profiles are likely to be influenced by variable hydrographical features (Fig. 3).

4.2. Influence of nitrogen species on the abundance and the distribution of Thaumarchaeota and anammox bacteria in the ETNP

Ammonium and nitrite concentrations have been proposed as critical factors in determining the vertical distribution and the abundance of Thaumarchaeota and anammox bacteria (Hamersley et al., 2007; Jaeschke et al., 2007; Jensen et al., 2009; Kuypers et al., 2005;

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Martens-Habbena et al., 2009; Stahl and de la Torre, 2012; Thamdrup et al., 2006; Ward et al., 2009).

NH_4^+ serves as a substrate for both Thaumarchaeota and anammox bacteria and has been observed to not accumulate in ODZs as a results of efficient turnover between sources and sinks (Kalvelage et al., 2013). In the ETNP ODZ, we found both Thaumarchaeota and anammox bacteria in sub-oxic and anoxic waters. Ammonium concentrations are low and mostly under the detection limit, likely due to the consumption of the nutrient by both (or other) microorganisms (Figs. 3c and 3i). Even at concentrations <1 µM, NH_4^+ may support anammox reaction, which is considered the main sink for this nitrogen species in the core ODZs (Bianchi et al., 2014). Nitrite is the electron acceptor in the anammox process and it has been already described as a limiting factor to anammox bacteria activity in the southern ETNP ODZ (Rush et al., 2012).

In the coastal waters, thaumarchaeotal nitrification is probably taking place at the bottom of the oxycline, as indicated by the HPH-crenarchaeol maximum (Fig. 3e) and the concurrent ammonium concentration peak (Fig. 3c), most likely resulting from the mineralization of organic matter. Moreover, thaumarchaeotal nitrification, which converts ammonium into nitrite (Arrigo, 2005), may cause the observed minor primary peak in the nitrite concentration profile (the so-called primary nitrite maximum or PNM) occurring at the bottom of the oxycline in these waters (Fig. 3b), which coincides with the maximum of AOA abundance (Figs. 3b and 3e). In the core ODZ a clear secondary nitrite maximum (SNM) co-occurs with the maximum in anammox bacteria concentration (Figs. 3b and 3f). Although heterotrophic denitrification represents the obvious candidate as main provider of nitrite to anammox bacteria in oceanic settings (Ward et al., 2009), the two processes are usually not found coupled together (Dalsgaard et al., 2012). Alternatively, a combination of several pathways including dissimilatory NO_3^- reduction to NO_2^- (DNRN) or NH_4^+ (DNRA) plays a

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role, as has been observed in other ODZs (Canfield et al., 2010; Kartal et al., 2007; Lam et al., 2009, 2011; Lipschultz et al., 1990; Ward et al., 2009). The extent of the contribution of these processes as nutrients providers to anammox bacteria is still unclear (Lam and Kuypers, 2011). Finally, a recent study has also brought into attention zooplankton migrators as alternative source of substrates to the anammox metabolism, previously overlooked in ODZs (Bianchi et al., 2014). In total, these things suggest that those mechanisms are all feasible to feed the anammox process in the coastal waters of the core ETNP ODZ with the nutrients required.

In the open ocean ETNP, AOA and anammox bacteria maxima may be coupled in the upper ODZ because of the (partial) overlap of the ecological niches of the two groups in this setting (Figs. 3m and 3n). In this case, AOA and anammox bacteria could either compete or co-operate for the substrates they require, as already proved in laboratory-scale models (Yan et al., 2010, 2012). The nutrient profiles are also consistent with the co-occurrence of the two metabolic processes (Figs. 3h and 3i): the secondary nitrite maximum is concurrent with the two biomarker maxima (Figs. 3h; 3m and 3n), whereas NH_4^+ is either possibly consumed by anammox as the water column turns sub-oxic or by nitrification by AOA successfully adapted to low nutrients and oxygen conditions (Coolen et al., 2007; Francis et al., 2005; Lam et al., 2007, 2009; Martens-Habbena et al., 2009; Park et al., 2010; Pitcher et al., 2011b; Schouten et al., 2004; Sinninghe Damsté et al., 2002a; Stahl and de la Torre, 2012; Stolper et al., 2010; Tiano et al., 2014; Woebken et al., 2007) and potentially to a broad variety of different environmental conditions (Qin et al., 2014).

The role of NO_2^- and NH_4^+ in differentiating the distribution of Thaumarchaeota and anammox bacteria observed at the coastal and at the open water sites of the ETNP ODZ is not clear; when the NO_2^- and NH_4^+ concentrations were compared with those of the specific biomarkers studied at both sites, no evident relationship was apparent (data not shown).

Comment [MS17]: We have adde this paragraph, following Dr. Schwab comment Q2.

In conclusion, further investigation is required to establish the contribution of the single processes to the N cycle occurring in the settings investigated in this study and to explain the divergence between the two. Other studies have called attention to the relevance of organic matter fluxes as a control over these metabolic pathways and ultimately over the balance between the two mainly responsible for the N_2 removal from the oceans, i.e. anammox and denitrification (Babbin et al., 2014; Chang et al., 2014; Kalvelage et al., 2013; Koeve and Kähler, 2010; Ward, 2013; Ward et al., 2008, 2009). Specifically, variations in the C/N ratio content of the particulate organic matter (POM) entering the ODZ may play a prominent role in determining anammox and heterotrophic denitrification rates, with anammox being favorite by nitrogen-rich OM (Babbin et al., 2014).

4.3. The role of the oxygen

As the features of ODZs suggest, oxygen might play a pivotal role in controlling the abundance and the special distribution of Thaumarchaeota and anammox bacteria in those areas. Previous studies have already pointed to this in other ODZs (Jaeschke et al., 2007; Kuypers et al., 2005; Stahl and de la Torre, 2012; Thamdrup et al., 2006) and in the southern ETNP ODZ itself (Rush et al., 2012). To investigate if oxygen concentration is influencing the abundance of Thaumarchaeota and anammox bacteria in our study sites in the ETNP ODZ, we compared our biomarker concentrations with oxygen concentrations in both coastal and open ocean site (Figs. 4a and 4b). Figure 4a and 4b shows how PC-monoether ladderane and HPH-crenarchaeol are distributed according to O_2 concentration at the two sites. The two distributions appear rather similar, with both biomarkers being more abundant at an oxygen concentration below the detection limit, i.e. ca. 1 µM, which is even overestimated by the CTD sensor employed for the measurements, as suggested by O_2 measurements taken with the STOX microsensor during the same cruise (Tiano et al., 2014). The only evident

Comment [MS18]: We have corrected the font as suggested by Referee #1 in Q3.

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difference between the two plots is found in one HPH-crenarchaeol data point from the coastal site, corresponding to an oxygen concentration of ~26 µM, which reflects the much broader range of tolerance of AOA to O_2 compared to the strictly anaerobic anammox bacteria (Tiano et al., 2014). However, the relation revealed by our plots suggests that both microbial species are potentially able to cope with low oxygen concentrations and O_2 plays a primary role in controlling the distribution of the two microbial species, as shown previously (Martens-Habbena et al., 2009; Park et al., 2010; Pitcher et al., 2011b; Rush et al., 2012; Stahl and de la Torre, 2012; Tiano et al., 2014). The high relative abundance of HPH-crenarchaeol in the poorly oxygenated waters of the ETNP is consistent with the ability of AOA to thrive and perform nitrification under low oxygen conditions (Coolen et al., 2007; Francis et al., 2005; Lam et al., 2007, 2009; Park et al., 2010; Pitcher et al., 2011b; Schouten et al., 2004; Sinninghe Damsté et al., 2002a; Stolper et al., 2010; Woebken et al., 2007). In the open ocean site a secondary minor peak of HPH-crenarchaeol at the lower oxycline, i.e. 1100 m depth (Fig. 3m), supports the hypothesis. Pitcher et al. (2011b) also observed a secondary maximum of AOA at the bottom of the Arabian Sea ODZ. Our findings thus confirm oxygen concentration as an important environmental control in determining the distribution of Thaumarchaeota and anammox bacteria in the water column of the ETNP ODZ.

Comment [MS20]: We have corrected the font as suggested by Referee #1 in Q3.

4.4. Conclusions

In this study high resolution profiles of the two specific IPL-biomarkers of AOA and anammox bacteria, i.e. HPH-crenarchaeol and PC-monoether ladderane, allowed us to have a detailed insight on the vertical distribution of these microbial groups in the ETNP ODZ. It shows that AOA and anammox bacteria are abundant at both shallow coastal and open ocean waters of the ETNP oxygen deficient zone. Our findings also indicate that the ecological niches of the two species diverge on a local scale in the ETNP. Different O_2 concentration and

water stratification features between the two study sites play an important role in determining such differences; whereas the role of NO_2^- and NH_4^+ is not clear. Further studies are needed to elucidate potential interactions between AOA and anammox in this ODZ. However future investigations on the N-cycle in the ETNP and other ODZs might take into a greater account the importance of regional differences in the ecological niches of these microbial species.

Comment [MS21]: This sentence also refers to Dr. Schwab's comment Q2.

Acknowledgements

We thank the captain and the crew of the R/V Thomas G. Thompson for help and hospitality. The chief scientists, Allan Devol and Bess Ward, are thanked for organizing and supervising the ETNP (TN278) cruise. We thank Stuart G. Wakeham for the invitation to take part to this cruise. Allison Myers-Pigg, Jaqui Neibauer and Rodolfo Alatorre-Gutierrez are thanked for assistance in the sampling. We also thank Rachel Horack for providing potential density data and for helpful discussion. Additional thanks are due to Laura Villanueva, Anna Rabitti, Laura Tiano, Yvonne Lipsewers and Borja Aguiar-González for helpful discussion and comments. This research was funded by a grant to JSSD from the Darwin Center for Biogeosciences (project nr. 3012). In-situ pump sampling and nutrient analyses were funded by grants to RGK (USA NSF #1153935) and Allan Devol (USA NSF #1029951).

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Table 1. Sampling locations for SPM during the Eastern Tropical North Pacific cruise aboard the R/V Thomas G. Thompson (March-April 2012). For each sampling location the table reports the depth of SPM sampling, the volume of water filtered by each pump deployed as well as physical parameters of the water at these depths, i.e. temperature and oxygen concentration (O_2). Nutrients concentrations, i.e. nitrate (NO_3^-), nitrite (NO_2^-) and ammonium (NH_4^+) and corresponding station and depth of sampling, when available, are also reported.

Station	Location	Temperature CTD	Depth of SPM sampling	Water filtered	O_2	Depth of nutrients sampling	NO_3^-	NO_2^-	NH_4^+
		(°C)	(m)	(L)	(µM)	(m)	(µM)	(µM)	(µM)
106	20°14.49' N	15	70	1627.72	0.75	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
	106°10.00' W	13	105	200.00	0.81	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
		10	365	699.50	0.97	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
110	20° 08.48' N	14	70	128.50	0.67	50	20.14	2.32	0.02
	105° 59.18' W	13	125	336.14	0.77	100	15.27	7.06	0.01
		12	150	511.79	0.86	150	20.13	5.12	0.00
		6	710	999.50	1.05	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
114	20° 07.54' N	18	25	104.10	26.20	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
	106° 00.84' W	17	35	97.40	0.78	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
		15	45	255.51	0.71	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
		15	55	230.50	0.71	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
119	20° 08.72' N	14	80	211.60	0.72	100	16.55	5.74	0.00
	105° 59.77' W	8	500	932.50	0.95	501	31.27	1.50	0.00
		5	800	595.50	1.61	800	43.66	0.00	0.00
		5	1000	1069.38	8.78	1001	45.42	0.00	0.00

Comment [MS22]: We added the NO3- in the Table as suggested by Dr. Schwab in Q3.

Comment [MS23]: We added station 106 in the Table as suggested by Referee #1 in Q4.

123	20° 03.50’ N	19	20	41.50	51.16	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
	106° 00.59’ W	14	60	181.70	0.71	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
		13	90	179.81	0.76	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
		12	200	210.50	0.87	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
125-126	20° 04.26’ N	20	15[a]		72.05	15	12.55	0.96	0.36
	106° 00.81’ W	n.d.	1300	1003.00	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
		n.d.	1600[a]		n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
		n.d.	2000	859.66	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
136	17° 01.95’ N	14	110	755.19	0.74	110	21.54	1.07	0.00
	106° 31.96’ W	13	150	747.50	0.74	160	19.24	4.74	0.00
		11	250	987.99	0.87	200	21.30	3.37	0.00
		10	350	714.90	0.88	300	23.39	1.97	0.00
141	16° 30.98’ N	23	60	482.64	108.13	60	7.00	1.14	0.16
	107° 08.52 W	16	90	997.00	0.88	80	22.91	0.45	0.00
		15	105	496.00	0.77	100	24.20	0.09	0.00
		12	200	864.96	0.89	181	23.62	5.21	0.00
145	16° 31.78’ N	26	50	368.00	189.01	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
	107° 08.45’W	21	65[a]		69.83	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
		13	155	768.44	0.99	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
		n.d.	710	1417.63	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
147-149	16° 31.60’ N	13	170	668.00	0.84	175	27.54	4.04	0.00
	107° 06.80’ W	5	990	1249.18	7.30	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
		4	1100	689.50	13.11	1100	46.27	0.01	0.00
		n.d.	2500	567.81	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
154-155	16° 35.34’ N	25	55	382.80	176.12	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.

Comment [MS24]: We renamed the station according to Q4 by Referee #1.

	107° 08.98’ W	15	100	686.29	1.09	104	23.40	0.65	0.00
		13	145	334.50	1.06	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
		n.d.	160	612.86	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
157-158	16° 34.66’N	19	80	3287.62	3.49	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
	107° 04.61’ W	13	140	1178.02	0.75	141	25.70	3.89	0.02
		9	450	3484.84	0.96	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
		8	550[a]		1.02	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.

[a] Sample not analyzed for lipids.

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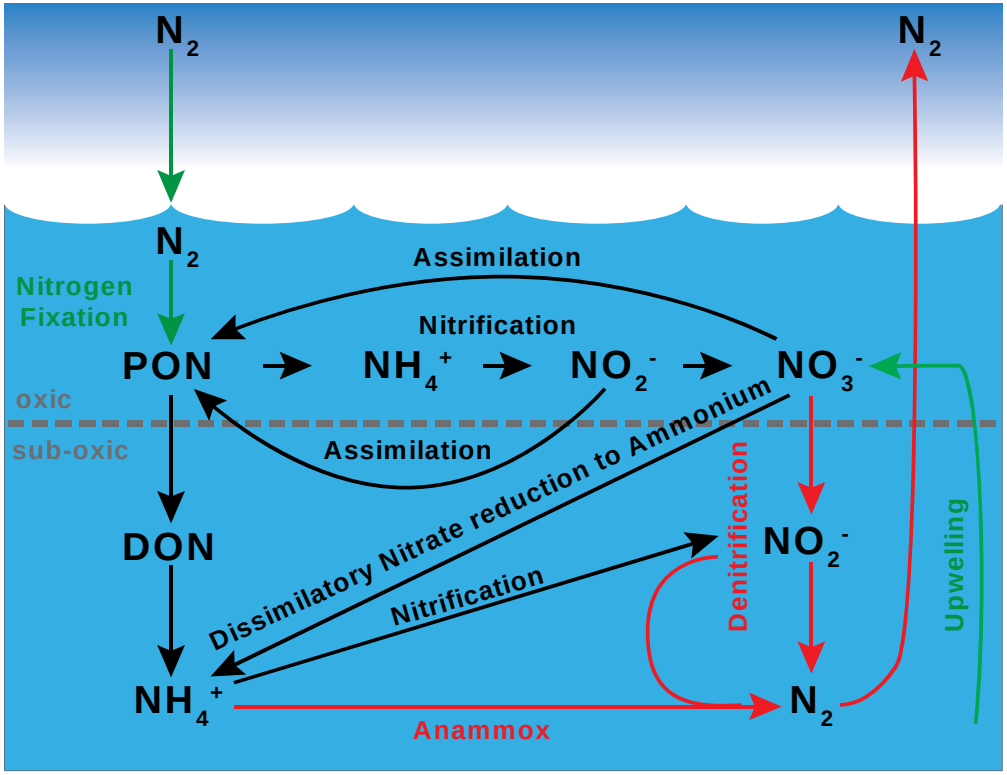

Figure 1. The marine biogeochemical nitrogen cycle. The main redox reactions involved are included: in green are the processes responsible for gains of nitrogen to the ocean, in red are the losses. Modified from Arrigo (2005).

Comment [MS25]: We included a diagram of the marine N cycle as suggested by Referee #1 in Q3

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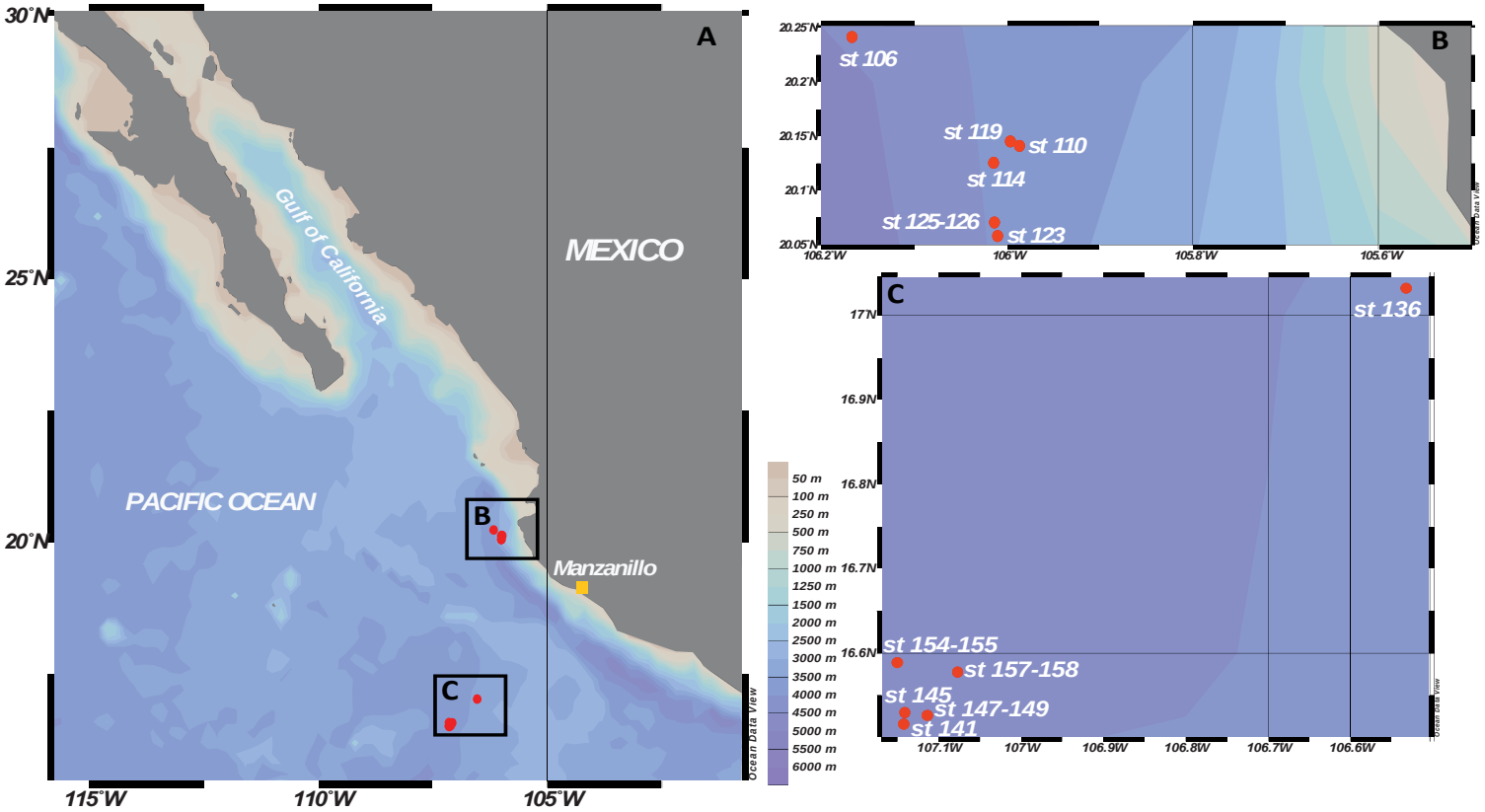
A
B
C
30°N
25°N
20°N
115°W
110°W
105°W
MEXICO
Gulf of California
PACIFIC OCEAN
Manzanillo
Ocean Data View
st 106
st 119
st 110
st 114
st 125-126
st 123
20.25°N
20.2°N
20.15°N
20.1°N
20.05°N
106.2°W
106°W
105.8°W
105.6°W
st 136
17°N
16.9°N
16.8°N
16.7°N
16.6°N
st 154-155
st 157-158
st 145
st 147-149
st 141
107.1°W
107°W
106.9°W
106.8°W
106.7°W
106.6°W
50 m
100 m
250 m
500 m
750 m
1000 m
1250 m
1500 m
2000 m
2500 m
3000 m
3500 m
4000 m
4500 m
5000 m
5500 m
6000 m

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Figure 2. (**A**) Map of the sampling area of the Eastern Tropical North Pacific cruise (March-April 2012) and sampling stations (red dots), in the coastal (**B**) and in the open ocean site (**C**).The coastal sampling site (i.e. st 106, st 110, st 114, st 119, st 123, and st 125-126) is placed in the area between 20 25.00N and 105 60.00W; the open ocean sampling site (i.e. st 136, st 141, st 145, st 147-149, st 154-155, st 157-158) is placed in the area between 17 00.00N and 106 60.00W.

Comment [MS26]: The sampling stations were renamed as suggested in Q4 by Referee #1.

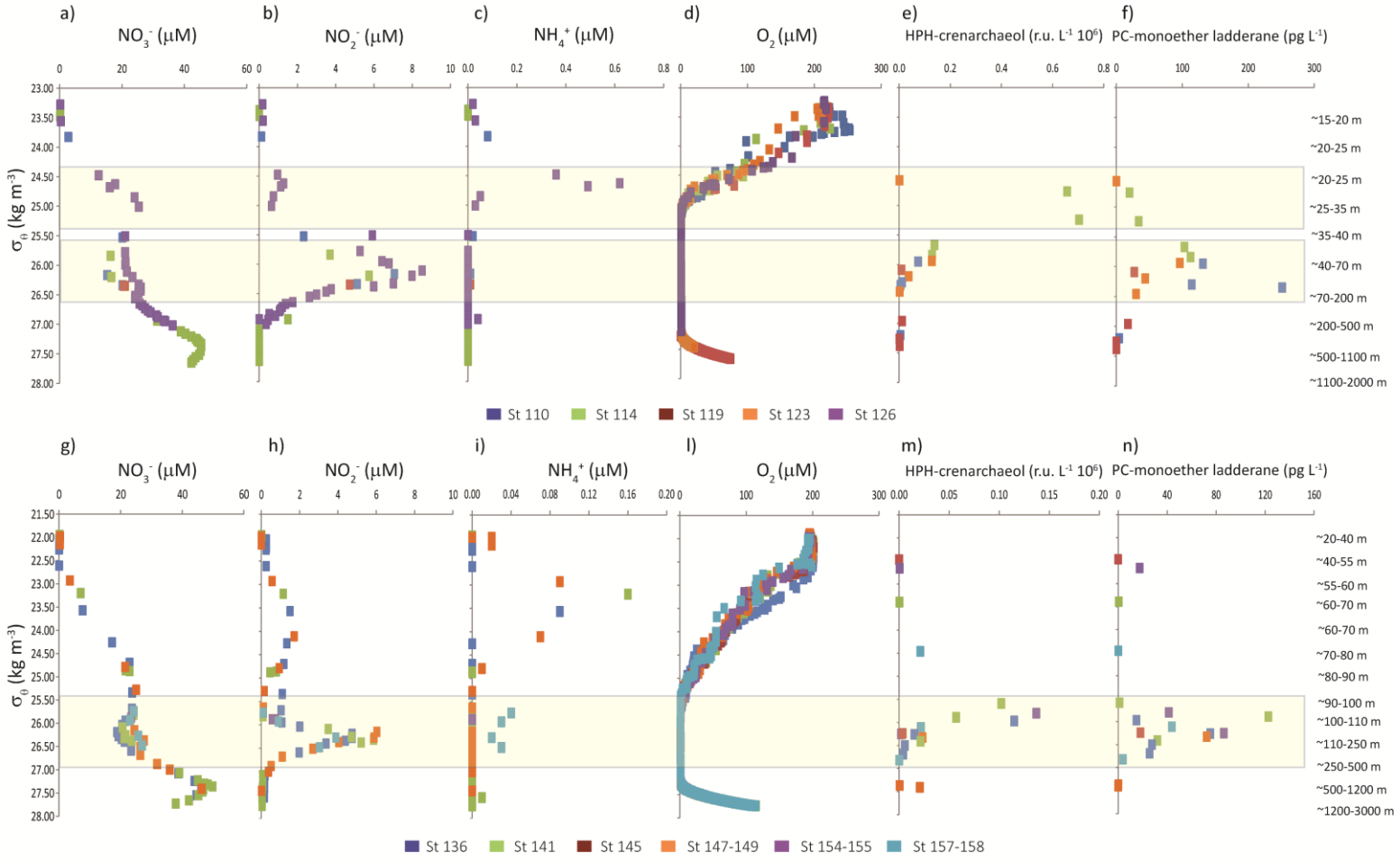
a)
b)
c)
d)
e)
f)
NO3- (µM)
NO2- (µM)
NH4+ (µM)
O2 (µM)
HPH-crenarchaeol (r.u. L-1 10^6)
PC-monoether ladderane (pg L-1)
σθ (kg m-3)
~15-20 m
~20-25 m
~20-25 m
~25-35 m
~35-40 m
~40-70 m
~70-200 m
~200-500 m
~500-1100 m
~1100-2000 m
St 110
St 114
St 119
St 123
St 126
g)
h)
i)
l)
m)
n)
NO3- (µM)
NO2- (µM)
NH4+ (µM)
O2 (µM)
HPH-crenarchaeol (r.u. L-1 10^6)
PC-monoether ladderane (pg L-1)
σθ (kg m-3)
~20-40 m
~40-55 m
~55-60 m
~60-70 m
~60-70 m
~70-80 m
~80-90 m
~90-100 m
~100-110 m
~110-250 m
~250-500 m
~500-1200 m
~1200-3000 m
St 136
St 141
St 145
St 147-149
St 154-155
St 157-158

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Figure 3. Concentration profiles of (**a**, **g**) nitrate (NO_3^-); (**b**, **h**) nitrite (NO_2^-); (**c, i**) ammonium (NH_4^+); (**d**, **l**) oxygen; (**e**, **m**) hexose-phosphohexose (HPH)-crenarchaeol; and (**f**, **n**) phosphocholine (PC)-monoether ladderane according to the potential density anomalies (σ_θ) of the water column of the ETNP. The corresponding depths intervals are reported on the right side of the figure as a reference. Upper four panels (**a-f**) provide an overview of the complete water column (2000 m) of the coastal sampling site; lower four panels (**g-n**) show the complete water column (3000 m) relative to the open ocean sampling site. All profiles are obtained by combining respectively the coastal and the open ocean stations sampled. The yellow bars highlight the main differences observed between the two sampling sites with respect to the distribution of the two microbial species: i.e. on the one hand a clear niche segregation of AOA and anammox bacteria in the coastal waters of the ETNP and on the other hand a partial overlap of the two niches of these microbial species in the open water setting.

Comment [MS27]: We added this explicative sentence as suggested by Referee #1 in Q9.

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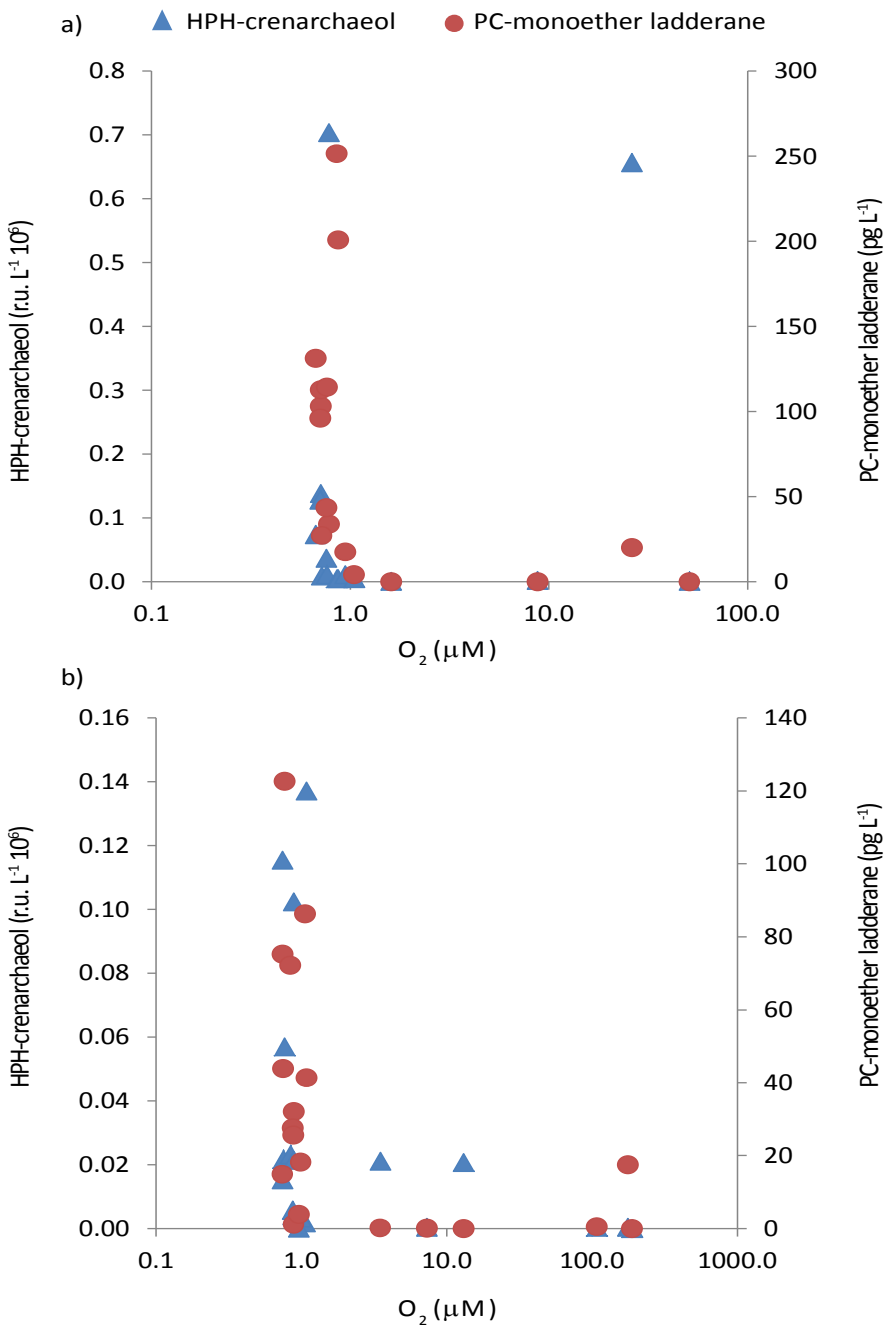

Figure 4. Abundance of HPH-crenarchaeol (r.u. L^{-1}, i.e. response units L^{-1}) and PC-monoether ladderane lipids (pg L^{-1}) according to the concentration of oxygen (µM). In the upper panel (**a**) the response of the two biomarkers at the coastal site; in the lower panel (**b**) the response at the open ocean site.

Comment [MS28]: We defined the units used in this caption as suggested by Referee #1 in Q6