

## ***Interactive comment on “Carbon fixation prediction during a bloom of *Emiliana huxleyi* is highly sensitive to the assumed regulation mechanism” by O. Bernard et al.***

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The paper has been deeply revisited in order to address the points raised by Referee 2.

*In this paper the authors used a model to test different scenarios concerning the regulation of calcification and photosynthesis in *Emiliana huxleyi*. They considered either carbon dioxide, bicarbonate, carbonate or the calcite saturation state to be a regulating factor. They run the models at three different concentrations of atmospheric carbon dioxide and compared the carbon dynamics, including export within and between the models. The qualitative results of this paper directly follow from DIC speciation chem-*

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*istry: if production is made a function of CO<sub>2</sub> or HCO<sub>3</sub> then it increases with atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> and if a function of CO<sub>2</sub> or HCO<sub>3</sub> it decreases. Since sedimentation rate is constant in this model it follows production. This is not exactly only because the dissolution term is CO<sub>2</sub> dependant. However, we assume that, for the short considered period, sedimentation rate is constant.*

*The quantitative results of this paper are of no scientific interest, because they are not based on measured rates, do not include competition among phytoplankton groups and include no mechanisms that might have made the results depart from those predicted from DIC speciation. We disagree with these statements: this model focuses on a bloom of *E. huxleyi*. It assumes that during the bloom (20 days), *Emiliana* is dominating the phytoplanktonic communities and predation is done at constant rate, which is a reasonable hypothesis at this time scale. The second phase, due to predation, leads to most of organic and inorganic carbon export. These points have been made clearer in this new version. We recall that it is, to our knowledge, the first model dynamically coupling DIC speciation and biological models for photosynthesis and calcification. Finally, our models have been calibrated using data and parameter values from other measurement based modeling works. Detailed comments – Proofreading by a native speaker would be highly desirable. Many sentences are difficult to understand, but on close reading suggest they were written to make foregone conclusions sound new. English has been reread. “Model simulations suggested that only the models where carbonate ion regulates calcification could reproduce the decrease in calcification rate after a pCO<sub>2</sub> doubling, hence refuting the general assumption of a regulation by HCO<sub>3</sub>-.” This is a misleading statement, as the ongoing discussion in the literature is not at all concerned with carbonate chemistry – everybody accepts that carbonate decreases with an increase in pCO<sub>2</sub> AT CONSTANT ALKALINITY- but some experiments show an increase in calcification and others a decrease under these or similar circumstances (constant DIC). Thus, the issue is not whether calcification decreases with increase CO<sub>2</sub> once you’ve set calcification to respond to carbonate, but whether the latter is the case or not.*

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We are not completely sure to have understood the point raised by the reviewer: it is clear that alkalinity plays a key role to understand the complex behavior of the coupled coccolithophorid-carbonate systems. Since alkalinity is not constant because of calcification, we agree that it must of course be considered, and this is what we do in our modeling. This sentence was referring to the work of Bernard et al. (2008). In this study, the analysis which was performed took into account the alkalinity variation, and actually the statement was proven from a generic mathematical analysis, independent of parameter values.

*Pg. 5341 and 5342: Paragraph more or less copied from Bernard et al. 2008 This has been made more synthetic, but we wanted to keep the paper self-contained.*

*Eq. 4 would be understandable if it were multiplied by alpha* If this equation is multiplied by alpha, then it is no more normalized by the photosynthesis rate  $\mu$ .

*From Eq. 16 to 20, an approximation of the DIC speciation is presented, and then it is stated that this approximation wasn't used. Delete this section.*

This has been made more synthetic. Since the Matlab code of Zeebe and Wolf-Gladrow (2003) had to be modified to account for the  $\text{Ca}^{++}$  variations, it was however important to provide details. It is now clearer.

*The text at the end of 3.1 and Figure 1 suggest that there is no sinking POC, while Eq. 23 and Table 4 say there is.*

It was indeed ambiguous. It has now been corrected.

*The four models are calibrated to give the same behaviour at  $p\text{CO}_2=380$  ppm and are then run at a lower  $p\text{CO}_2$ . Predictably, the four reference runs at present  $\text{CO}_2$  then behave completely differently, so that it becomes very difficult to see what the relative effect of a  $p\text{CO}_2$  doubling is.* As explained in the paper, one of reason for this is that  $p\text{CO}_2$  is not at all constant in the water, especially during a bloom, and especially since the coccolithophorids bloom takes place after the diatom bloom which

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exhausted the inorganic carbon. This is now better explained and discussed in the discussion section. *By using growth rate to calibrate the model, the temporal dynamics of the four reference runs are very different.* What is important is that these models all predict the observed inorganic uptake for standard experiments with nowadays  $p\text{CO}_2$ . This is why the parameter  $\mu$  was used to tune the models to the same measured baseline. This is now better explained in the paper. *Amongst others, this means that the peak in N:C occurs at different times, with repercussions for the carbon dynamics and the conclusions.* The exhaustion of the inorganic nitrogen appears indeed at different time (earlier for the models which are stimulated by the considered conditions). However, it always appears within the 20 considered days, and this has therefore no striking effect. *I very much doubt that the large differences that they find in the reference runs are robust. E.g., what would have been the results if they had used  $\mu$  or some other model variable to calibrate the model? In this new version of the paper, a Monte Carlo the parameters are randomly taken from a distribution centered on the nominal parameter values*

*Pg. 5356 line 9 and 10: There is no two-fold difference in the  $\text{HCO}_3$  model run Indeed, we referred to PIC and POC. The discussion has been extended and it is now clear.*

*Please also note the supplement to this comment:  
<http://www.biogeosciences-discuss.net/6/C3680/2009/bgd-6-C3680-2009-supplement.pdf>*

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*Interactive comment on Biogeosciences Discuss., 6, 5339, 2009.*

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