Corrections in yellow correspond to Referee 1 comments
Corrections in blue correspond to Referee 2 comments
Corrections in green correspond to Refereee 3 comments

Acidification impacts and acclimation potential of Caribbean benthic foraminifera assemblages in naturally discharging low-pH water

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Abstract. Ocean acidification (OA) is expected to negatively affect many ecologically important organisms. Here we explored the response of Caribbean benthic foraminiferal assemblages to naturally discharging low-pH waters similar to expected future projections for the end of the 21st century. At low-pH (~ 7.8 sw pH units and), low calcite saturation (Ω < X4), the relative abundance of agglutinated and symbiont-bearing species were relatively more abundantincreased, indicating higher resistance to potential carbonate chemistry changes. Diversity and other taxonomical metrics (list herei.e., richness, abundance, and evenness) declined steeply with decreasing pH despite exposure of this ecosystem to low pH conditions for millennia to low pH conditions, suggesting that tropical foraminifera communities will be negatively impacted under acidification scenarios SSP3-7.0 and SSP5-8.5. The species *Archaias angulatus*, a major contributor to sediment production in the Caribbean was able to calcify at conditions more extreme (7.1 pH units) than those projected for the late 21st century, but the calcified tests were of lower density than those exposed to high-pH ambient conditions (7.96 pH units), indicating that reef foraminiferal carbonate budget might decrease. Smaller foraminifera were highly sensitive to decreasing pH and our results demonstrate their potential use as indicators to monitor increasing OA conditions.

1 Introduction

With anthropogenic carbon emissions steadily increasing since the beginning of the industrial age, atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO_2) is now higher than it has been in the past 800 thousand years (Petit et al., 1999; Lüthi et al., 2008). Global emissions are annually increasing and leading to a proportional increase of CO_2 uptake by the oceans and consequently decreases of surface ocean pH ($-$ 0.0181 $\pm$ 0.0001 decade^{-1}, Lida et al., 2021) and carbonate ion concentrations [CO_3^{2-}], a process known as ocean acidification (OA) (Doney et al., 2020). Following the results ofBased on the Coupled Model Intercomparison Project Phase Six (CMIP6), a further decrease of surface ocean pH is expected for all Shared Socioeconomic Pathways (SSPs) at the end of the 21st century (Kwiatkowski et al., 2020; IPCC, 2021). As the carbonate system has

major control on biogenic calcification efficiency this process is expected to negatively affect many ecologically important calcifying organisms such as corals (Kroeker et al., 2013; Crook et al., 2013; Hughes et al., 2017), foraminifers (Uthicke, Momigliano, and Fabricius, 2013; Kawahata et al., 2019), and coralline crustose algae (Penã et al., 2021).

Among these, foraminifera are dominant members of both planktonic and benthic communities with widespread distribution in the oceans. ~~During their lifespan, t~~They are vital to calcium carbonate (CaCO₃) cycling, especially through calcification (Langer et al., 1997; Langer, 2008). On a global scale, they are estimated to contribute a total of 14 billion tons of $CaCO_3$ ~~calcium carbonate~~ per year, which accounts for about 25 % of current total $CaCO_3$ production (Langer, 2008). Due to their ability to consume substantial amounts of organic matter, they are also relevant for organic carbon cycling (Moodley et al., 2000), being part of a key link in marine food ~~chains~~webs. After death, their tests become important contributors to sediment mass accumulation in many ecosystems (Yamano, Miyajima, and Koike, 2000; Doo et al., 2016) and are also relevant for the carbon burial flux in the ocean (Schiebel, 2002). With ongoing OA and future scenarios projecting rapid changes (Kwiatkowski et al., 2020; IPCC, 2021), it is vital to understand how foraminifera will be affected for assessing biological feedbacks and changes in biochemical cycles. ~~To date, m~~Many studies under controlled conditions often document the association of low-pH with decreased calcification, weight, size, and taxonomical metrics (Nehrke et al., 2013; Kawahata et al., 2019; Narayan et al., 2021, and references therein). However, some studies have also demonstrated either resilience (Engel et al., 2015; Pettit et al., 2015; Stuhr et al., 2021), or even positive effects on foraminifera, such as enhanced calcification (Fujita et al., 2011) and enzymatic calcification activity (Prazeres et al., 2015), which demonstrate the complexity of interspecific responses to OA. Additionally, relatively little is known about how foraminifera respond in natural low-pH low carbonate saturation waters, which is crucial for determining if and how communities have the potential to acclimate.

In situ investigations have been performed in natural CO₂ vents in the Mediterranean Sea (Dias et al., 2010; Pettit et al., 2015), Papua New Guinea (Uthicke, Momigliano, and Fabricius, 2013), the northern Gulf of California (Pettit et al., 2013) and coastal springs in Puerto Morelos (PM), Mexico (Martinez et al., 2018). In the latter, recruitment and early succession (Crook et al., 2016), acclimatization potential (Crook et al., 2013), and the responses of calcifying communities were studied (Crook et al., 2012; Martinez et al., 2018), ~~notably~~ demonstrating that despite general deleterious effects, some ~~calcifiers were relatively resilient t~~organisms were able to calcify under~~o~~ OA conditions. ~~Specifically, a~~A study focused on Large Benthic Foraminifera (LBF) has shown that porcelaneous, chlorophyte-bearing foraminifera, (e.g., *Archaias angulatus*), were relatively less impacted (Martinez et al., 2018). Study sites such as coastal springs allow the investigation of foraminiferal communities under projected future conditions more realistically, helping to decrease the uncertainty in global-scale models. However, a detailed survey considering community-wide responses (i.e., including smaller foraminifera) is necessary to ascertain a wider range of potential impacts.

As CO₂ emissions continue to grow despite emerging climate policies (Peters et al., 2020), global awareness has demonstrated a strong interest in research focused on potential impacts for mitigative action. To build on and expand the findings at PM we aimed to (i) ~~investigate~~ explore the mid-term (i.e.,

multidecadal~~decades to centuries~~) responses of foraminifera species using total assemblages, (ii) investigate the effects of OA on both large and small foraminiferal assemblages for acidification scenarios projected to the end of the 21st century (Kwiatkowski et al., 2020; IPCC, 2021), (ii~i~) explore the taphonomical and ecological implications of *post mortem* alterations for reef ecosystems, and (~iii~iv) investigate possible acclimation patterns in the shell structure of the species *A.~r~. angulatus*. Specifically, an examination of assemblage structure, taxonomic metrics, assemblage test size, preservation potential and an X-ray micro-CT analysis in the species *A.~r~. angulatus* was employed.

2 Methods

2.1 Study site and data retrieval

The Yucatán Peninsula is a karstic region in Southern Mexico (Fig. 1a). The ~geology is dominated by~ Tertiary limestones is underlain by an ejecta/evaporite complex, where several structural and tectonic features strongly influence and divide the area into six distinct physiographic regions (Back and Hanshaw, 1970). Among these, Puerto Morelos reef lagoon is part of the Holbox Fracture Zone–Xel-Ha region, which is characterized by >100 km long chain of elongated depressions referred as 'sabanas' (Perry, Velazquez-Oliman, and Marin, 2002). In this area, rainwater infiltrates the porous karstic limestone of Quintana Roo (Fig. 1b) and flows towards the ocean through interconnected caves and fractures where the groundwater mixes with seawater in the underground aquifers before discharging between the shore and the offshore barrier reef (Beddows et al., 2007; Null et al., 2014). Flowing through the limestones and interacting with the strata through processes of dissolution, precipitation, and mixing, the groundwater conditions change and finally discharge along the Mexican coast as low-pH, low carbonate-saturation-state (Ω), and high inorganic C content waters (Back and Hanshaw, 1970; Perry, Velazquez-Oliman, and Marin, 2002; Crook et al., 2012, 2013, 2016; Martinez et al., 2018, 2019; Hernandez-Terrones et al., 2021). These waters discharge at submarine springs, which structure ranges from long ''fractures'' to small circular depressions "seeps" (Fig. 1d, spring Agua), (Crook et al., 2012). The discharge of the springs is relatively constant throughout the year (Crook et al., 2016), and the lagoon circulation is not significantly affected by tides (av. 17 cms), and currents due to the microtidal regime of the region (Coronado et al., 2007) and their location in the protected back-reef. The waves overtopping on the reef and the resulting flow is ~considered to be~ the main driving factor of circulation, which in general ~is considered to be~ ~small~slow (av. 2–3 cm s^{-1}), ~and~with ~relatively higher~faster (av. 20 cm s^{-1}) ~through~flow restricted to the northern and southern channels where the water exits the lagoon (Coronado et al., 2007). ~For~At the springs, the discharged ~lslightely~slightly lower salinity waters mainly flow vertically and not towards the sediment due to the buoyancy effect. The beach sediments are composed of coarse (~0.258 mm)~, medium~ carbonate sands of biogenic origin (Escudero et al. 2020).

Surface sediment samples ~(~(< 1 cm depth~, coarse sand~) were retrieved using a plastic spoon at various distances from the center of six submarine springs (Fig. 1c, Gorgos, Laja, Mini, Norte, Agua, and Pargos) in October 2011. In the laboratory, samples were weighed, washed with deionized water through a 63 µm sieve mesh, and dried at 50 °C for 24 hours. Discrete water samples near the sites of sediment collection were also retrieved for water chemical analysis. The carbonate chemistry, temperature, and salinity data

from seven samples ~~on those presented~~reported in Martinez et al., 2018. ~~Here the data set~~ was complemented with 20 additional~~mid ranges~~ samples collected at the same day following the protocols described by the authors. Briefly, the samples were filtered (0.2 µm) and split into aliquots for the analysis of salinity, total inorganic carbon (C_T) and total alkalinity (A_T), following the protocols of Dickson, Sabine and Christian (2007). The C_T was measured on a CM5011 Carbon Coulometer (UIC, Inc.; analytical measurement error: $\pm$ 3 µmol kg^{-1}) and T_A using an automated open-cell, potentiometric titrator (Orion model 950; analytical measurement error: $\pm$ 2 µmol kg^{-1}). Salinity was measured using a portable salinometer (Portasal Model 8410, Guild Line). Seawater temperature was measured in situ with a handheld YSI micro-processor ~~analyzer~~ (Yellow Springs model 63). The pH (Seawater scale), carbonate ion concentration (CO_3^{2-}) and calcite saturation state (Ω-Calcite) were calculated using the program CO$_2$Sys (Pierrot, Levis and Wallace, 2006), considering the CO$_2$ dissociation constants of Lueker, Dickson and Keeling (2000); KHSO$_4$ – Dickson, Sabine and Christian (2007); B concentration – Uppström, 1974. Certified CO$_2$ reference material (from A. Dickson lab at UC San Diego, batch 112) was used to calibrate all instruments.
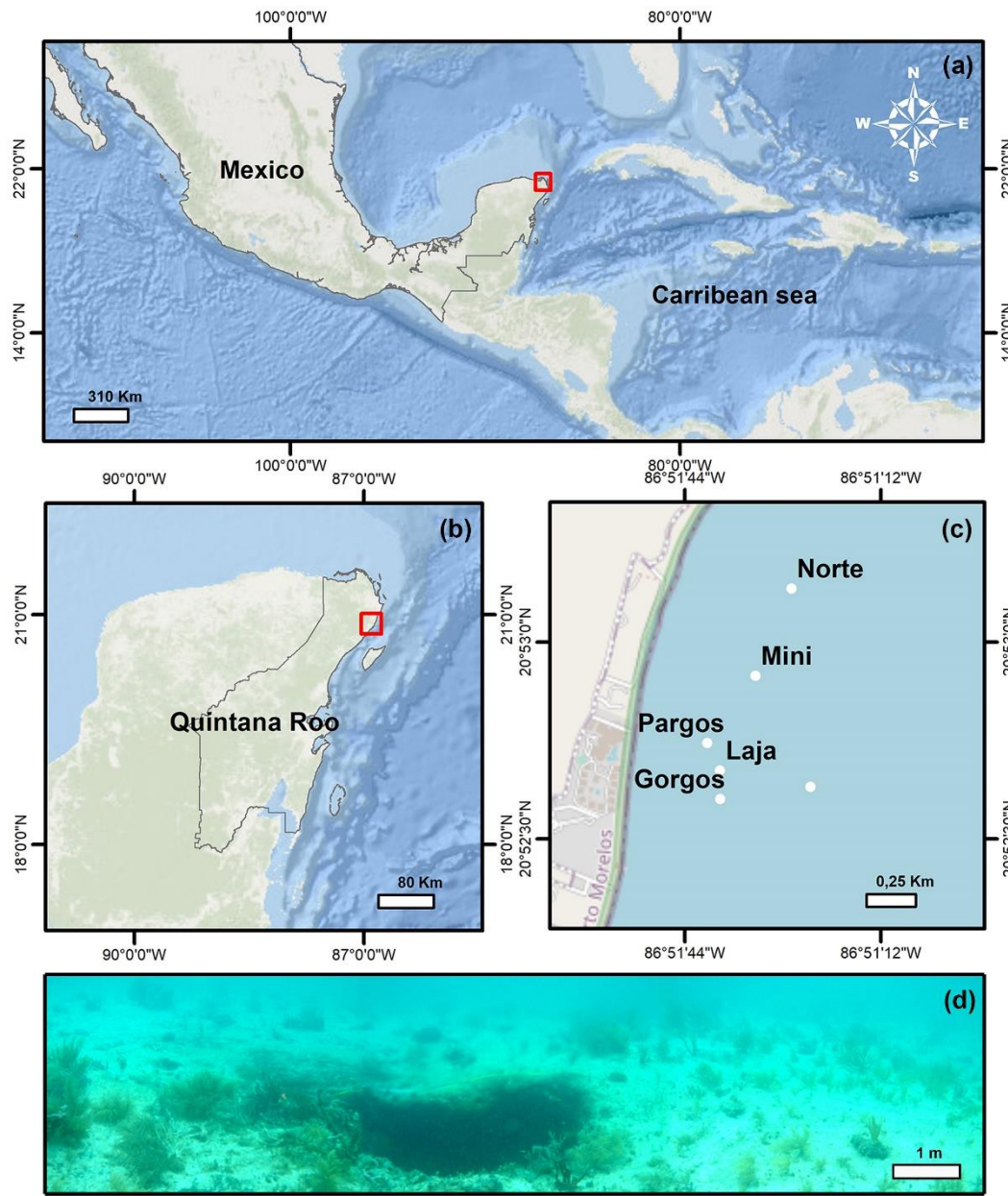
Figure 1 (a) Location map of the Yucatán Peninsula, (b) Quintana Roo, and (c) the six submarine springs (Gorgos, Laja, Mini, Norte, Pargos and Agua) studied at Puerto Morelos reef Lagoon (National Marine Park), (d) Spring agua, which structure presents a small circular depression.

2.2 Foraminiferal analysis

The dry weight of sediments was recorded, and samples were split to make them more suitable and efficient to pick. The specimens found in each pre weighted sediment aliquot were counted under a Zeiss STEMI 2000 stereomicroscope until a minimum of 250 specimens were obtained from each sample. Foraminiferal tests were identified to the lowest possible taxonomic level and assigned to informal species categories for diversity analyses. The taxonomic classification was based on the specialized bibliography of Cushman

(1929), Jones (1994), and supplementary taxonomic studies (Milker and Schmiedl, 2012; Abu-Zied, Al-Dubai, and Bantan, 2016; Sariaslan and Langer, 2021). Each species and genus were verified against WoRMS to ensure the use of the most recent nomenclature.

145 The samples were stained in rose Bengal to consider the living counts ~~in faunal analysis. Specimens were considered "alive" when all chambers, except for the last one or two, were well stained. Non-transparent agglutinated and miliolid taxa were broken to inspect their contents. ,~~ , ~~but~~ while most test were at least partially stained the proportions of fully stained specimens were small (~3 %) ~~and~~ hence ~~hence~~ total (live plus dead) assemblages were used. We expect that the sample represents accumulation over several
150 decades. This approach allows us to assess the mid-term responses of foraminiferal assemblages since the generational accumulation of tests in the sediments integrate the effects of stressors over time (Hallock et al., 2003), and ~~also~~ averages out ~~of~~ seasonal fluctuations ~~of the assemblages~~, therefore documenting the foraminifera responses to prevailing marine conditions (Scott and Medioli, 1980). ~~Moreover~~ We note that, the low live percentage is a common pattern as most reef-dwelling taxa tend to live on phytal or hard
155 substrates rather than directly on the sediments (Martin, 1986; Barbosa et al., 2009, 2012; Stephenson, Hallock and Kelmo, 2015). Shannon-Weiner Diversity Index (H′), and Pielou's evenness (J′) were calculated considering the standardized foraminifera density at 1 cm^3. These taxonomic metrics were calculated as follows: Shannon-Weiner Diversity Index with the equation H′=−Σ(Pi*log(Pi)), where Pi is the proportion of individuals per species; Pielou's evenness with the equation J′=H′/log(S), where H′ is the
160 Shannon-Weiner Diversity Index and S the species richness. Assemblage distributions were ~~also~~ assessed according to differences in functional groups, i.e., symbiont-bearing and opportunistic, and test type groups, i.e., small miliolids, small rotaliids, and agglutinated that do not present an opportunistic behavior. This approach is used by Amergian et al. (2022) in nearby settings, based on categories designed by Hallock et al. (2003) for sensitivity/stress-tolerance taxa and Murray (2006) for different test compositions.

165 **2.3 Taphonomy and assemblage test size analysis**

To improve the understanding of the extent to which tests have been taphonomically altered foraminifera tests were classified into three categories 'optimally' (i.e., pristine tests), 'well' (i.e., tests with weak taphonomic signals), and 'poorly' (i.e., strongly abraded or fragmented tests) preserved, following the descriptions of Yordanova and Hohenegger, 2002. Discoloration patterns were analyzed to investigate the
170 vertical mixing and exposure of relict tests. In general, if colored ~~of~~ black (with iron/manganese sulfides) the tests indicate relict sediments deposited under reducing conditions, whereas a brown coloration indicates the oxygenation of iron through the reworking of the sediments (Maiklem, 1967) and white tests indicate lack of significant sediment burial and alteration. For a complete survey of the assemblage test size distribution, the surface area of all individuals was calculated using the ImageJ software (Schneider,
175 Rasband, and Eliceiri, 2012). All specimens picked were placed on the dorsal side in common brass picking trays and photographed under the same magnification and camera settings using an adapter for a microscope camera as ~~. A similar procedure was performed by~~ Prazeres et al. (2015), to trace surface area changes (i.e., gain or loss) in large benthic foraminiferal species under low-pH conditions. The parameter of surface area

was the most suitable for the analysis since it identifies the size of the foraminifera tests in a standard way,

180   considering the high taxonomical and consequently morphological diversity of PM samples.

2.4 X-ray MicroCT

An X-ray MicroCT analysis was employed in four individuals from ~~high~~ ambient (7.96 pH units) and low-pH conditions (7.11 pH units). To ensure that the analyzed tests represent living conditions, only tests in excellent condition, and therefore, not influenced by *post mortem* processes of dissolution and transport

185   were selected. For the X-ray microCT acquisition, a V/TOMEX/M (GE Measurement and Control Solutions, Wunstorf, Germany) was used. The microCT parameters for the acquisition included a voltage of 60 kV, current of 100 μA, 5 frames, and an Al filter with a thickness of 0.5 mm. The geometry had a magnification of 31.81~~,~~ and pixel size of 6.28 μm. Certified calcite standards were used to calibrate the density for this material. The 3D reconstructions were performed using the Phoenix Datos X Reconstruction

190   software, in which the slice alignment, beam hardening correction was implemented, and a mathematical edge-enhancement filter was applied to achieve a higher contrast between the edges. For the 3D visualization, VG Studio Max v 3.0 and Avizo 2020.3 softwares were used. For calcite density analysis, the CTAnalyser v. 1.18.4.0 software was used. Calcite density was assessed by the calcite density distribution calculated from the CT number that was calculated based on the X-ray attenuation coefficient

195   of each sample (Iwasaki et al., 2019). In addition, the estimation of morphometric parameters such as total volume and chamber wall thickness distribution was performed.

2.5 Statistical analysis

~~Cluster analysis of group average was performed using a similarity matrix (Bray-Curtis) of square root transformed abundances of foraminifera (≥3 %) with a second permutation procedure, the similarity profile~~

200   ~~(SIMPROF) routine (Clarke and Gorley, 2006). The matrix was also used to perform the similarity percentages analysis (SIMPER) to define which species contributed most to the forming groups considering a 90 % cut. Non-metric multidimensional scaling (nMDS) was used to visualize the similarity in foraminiferal assemblages.~~ A BIO-ENV procedure (9999 permutations) and global BEST test (statistical significance) was used to identify the set of explanatory environmental parameters that produced a

205   Euclidean matrix that best correlated (Spearman method) the species assemblage similarity matrix and normalized environmental variables. ~~A Canonical Correspondence Analysis (CCA) was also used to explore the relationship between the biological and water chemistry data.~~ Polynomial models (second order) were performed to investigate the relationships between carbonate chemistry and the taxonomical metrics (n = 26). They were compared according to their contribution to the model's Akaike Information

210   Criterion (AIC), and the models with the lowest AIC value (i.e., highest fit) were selected for the analysis. For comparison of *A~r~. angulatus* microstructure parameters between high and low-pH the student's t-test (n = 8) was used for variables with normal distributions and homogenous variances. When these conditions were not met, Welch's t-test was performed. We used the Kruskal-Wallis test to assess differences between functional groups, taxonomic metrics, and assemblage test size. For the latter, the stations were separated

215   into four groups considering the following pH gradients in respect to future projections: 8.1−8.05 pH units

as present-day conditions (n = 4); 8.01−7.9 pH units surveying low-intermediate acidification scenarios SSP1-2.6 and SSP2-4.5 (n = 11); 7.8−7.7 surveying high acidification scenarios SSP3-7.0 and SSP5-8.5 (n = 4); 7.6−7.2 surveying acidification conditions beyond those predicted to the end of 21st century (n = 7). Data normality and variance homogeneity were tested using Shapiro-Wilk and Levene's Test. The BIO-ENV and global BEST procedure were performed in Primer v.6 software (Clarke and Gorley, 2006). Student's t-test, Welch's t-test, Kruskal-Wallis test, and data visualization were performed using R software (version 4.0.2; http://www.Rproject.org, R core team, 2020). ~~The CCA analysis was performed in PAlaeontological STatistics PAST software (version 4.09).~~

3 Results

3.1 Water chemistry

Seawater carbonate chemistry (Table 1) contrasted strongly between samples. Obtained ranges were as follows: pH = 7.2–8.1 units, Ω-Calcite = 1.3–6.2, CO_3^{2-} = 52–240 µmol/kg^{-1}, T$_A$ = 2044-3108 µmol/kg^{-1}, and C$_T$ = 1725–3197 µmol/kg^{-1}. The temperature was consistent ~~in ranging~~among sites from 26.1–27.9. while salinity decreased with proximity to the springs, ranging from 28–37. ~~As described in previous studies conducted at the same sites the salinity at the springs is > 30 over 90 % of the time and does not drop below 27 (Crook et al., 2012), and therefore is expected to produce little to no effect on foraminiferal communities (Martinez et al., 2018).~~ The BIOENV analysis and global BEST test revealed that the best combination (p-value = 0.01) of environmental variables with species abundance was observed when considering pH, CO_3^{2-}, Ω Calcite and T (ρ = 0.55), in which CO_3^{2-} and pH were the environmental variables matching the highest correlation (ρ = 0.5) and salinity (ρ = 0.33) and temperature (ρ = 0.038) the lowest (ρ = 0.038). ~~In~~With respect to the taxonomic metrics ~~(further presented in this section),~~ the multiple regression analysis presented similar results. For diversity, richness, and evenness the pH model presented the lowest AIC value (26.96, 196.65, -67,05, respectively), indicating the central influence of this variable on the communities, while salinity (43.77,- 209.71, -54,79, respectively) and temperature (59.46, 224.28-, -40.65 , respectively) were less influential~~the least~~. Interestingly, the T$_A$ and C$_T$ were the most important variables for foraminiferal density (AIC=401.79, and 401.99). The salinity (AIC = 406.34) and temperature (AIC = 409.03) were also not significant for foraminifera density. The weighting by relative likelihood (Akaike weights), log-likelihood, significance and level of variation explained by each of the environmental parameters (R^2) are available in Table S1. Considering its predominant influence, pH will be mainly used to discuss the potential impacts of changing carbonate chemistry.

Table 1 Carbonate chemistry parameters of discrete water samples collected near the substrate at the time of sediment collection. T$_A$ = total alkalinity; C$_T$ = total inorganic carbon; CO_3^{2-} = carbonate ion concentration; Ω Calcite = calcite saturation-state; T = temperature.

Site	Depth (m)	Distance	A_T (µmol/kg^{-1})	C_T (µmol/kg^{-1})	pH	CO_3^{2-} (µmol/kg^{-1})	Ω Calcite	T (C°)	Salinity
Norte	5.8	Center	2611	2588	7.38	67.03	1.66	27.5	32.21
		25 cm	2734	2734	7.34	60.93	1.53	27.2	30.70
		50 cm	2699	2694	7.34	62.20	1.54	27.2	31.90
		1 m	2451	2314	7.66	118.47	2.85	27.0	35.25
Pargos	6.8	Center	3000	3048	7.23	52.73	1.33	27.6	29.95
		25 cm	3054	3047	7.38	71.16	1.82	27.7	28.00
		50 cm	2304	2160	7.72	119.78	2.97	27.6	32.00
		1 m	2387	2084	8.00	220.39	5.36	27.5	34.20
		> 1 m	2336	2012	8.01	229.56	5.49	27.6	36.17
Gorgos	7.2	25 cm	2350	2065	7.98	207.09	5.03	27.3	34.40
		50 cm	2364	2004	8.10	255.79	6.18	26.8	34.80
		1 m	2044	1725	8.09	216.08	5.24	26.9	34.40
		> 1 m	2325	2033	7.96	209.44	5.02	27.8	35.90
Laja	5.8	Center	2827	2756	7.51	102.65	2.50	27.9	32.75
		25 cm	2590	2385	7.83	164.17	4.00	26.1	33.70
		50 cm	2354	2013	8.05	240.04	5.70	26.4	36.70
		1 m	2319	2051	7.94	192.93	4.59	26.5	36.60
		> 1 m	2357	2092	7.90	193.55	4.63	28.1	36.17
Agua	5.4	Center	2444	2167	7.93	203.84	4.90	27.4	35.60
		25 cm	2364	2128	7.87	176.51	4.27	28.0	35.10
		50 cm	2314	2088	7.85	168.22	4.07	28.4	35.10
		1 m	2347	2063	7.95	206.13	4.98	28.2	35.10
		> 1 m	2363	2049	8.01	226.08	5.47	27.7	34.90
Mini	4.9	25 cm	2443	2071	8.08	265.01	6.31	26.9	36.50
		1 m	2365	2113	7.90	184.16	4.37	26.6	36.90
		> 1 m	2356	2049	7.99	218.13	5.16	26.4	37.30

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3.3 Taphonomical and assemblage test size analysis

High-pH stations (~8.1 pH units) at PM are relatively pristine with optimally and well preserved tests representing approximately 80% of the assemblage, however, this gradually changes as the effects of ~~exudated~~ spring water~~s~~ increase (Fig. 2b). ~~The area plots shows that poorly preserved tests ($R^2 = 0.55$, p-value = 0.00), ($R^2 = 0.30$, p-value = 0.00), increased with reducing pH~~ up to 80%. In general, dissolution was not homogenous between species, but mainly associated with the occurrence of LBF, specifically, *Archaias angulatus,* which ~~alone~~ was able to individually explain 73% of highly dissolved tests occurrence ($R^2 = 0.73$, ~~Fig. 7~~Fig. 2c). The small, less robust calcifiers (e.g., *Rosalina* spp, *Elphidium* spp) were rare but when found they were mainly in pristine conditions ~~since after sedimentation they might dissolve very fast. In respect to species distribution, the regression analysis shows a high correlation between the occurrence of some species and changing pH. Specifically, *Ar. angulatus* was responsible for 73 % of the dissolution observed in the samples ($R^2 = 0.73$, p-value = 0.00).~~ Regarding color patterns, only two specimens with brown color were found at spring Laja, indicating little reworking of sediments and therefore, mixing of pristine and relict tests. Overall, we observed that the specimens are in good conditions, ~~composing~~composed of well-preserved time-averaged assemblages, which still ~~regards~~provides a good representation of the present-day biocoenosis (Yordanova and Hohenegger, 2002). However, ~~after~~at 7.7 pH units and lower, high levels of taphonomical alteration started to occur (Fig. 2b-c, Dashed lines), when poorly preserved tests comprised ~ 50 % of total assemblage.

Along the gradient of changing carbonate chemistry, a significant change in foraminiferal assemblage test size was observed (Kruskal-Wallis, chi-squared = 16, df = 3, ~~p-value = 0.00~~p-value =< 0.05). A gradual decrease in the abundance of tests with smaller surface area and a relative increase of larger tests is observed towards low-pH sites (~~Fig. 7~~Fig. 2a, $R^2 = 0.73$, ~~p-value = 0.00~~p-value =< 0.05), whereas a~~n~~ abrupt increase was observed at 7.8 pH units. The post hoc Dunn's test reveals that only the differences between present-day and extremely low-pH conditions, which are beyond the predicted to the end of the 21st century ~~were~~was significant (z = -2.7, ~~p-value = 0.00~~p-value =< 0.05). Specifically, the average test size in the assemblage more than tripled when compared to present-day conditions (from 0.33 ± 0.2 to 0.87 ± 0.14 mm^2). This abrupt change can be visualized in Fig. ~~6a~~2a, likely responding to changes in faunal composition rather than interspecific changes in species size. As observed in taphonomical analysis, linear correlation with respect to dominant taxa coverage, i.e., the species *A~~r~~. angulatus,* shows a high and significant correlation ~~of this species~~ to changes in average assemblage test size (~~Fig. 7~~Fig. 2c, $R^2 = 0.89$, ~~p-value = 0.00~~p-value =< 0.05). Raw data of assemblage average test size, and taxonomic metrics are available in table ~~S3~~S2.

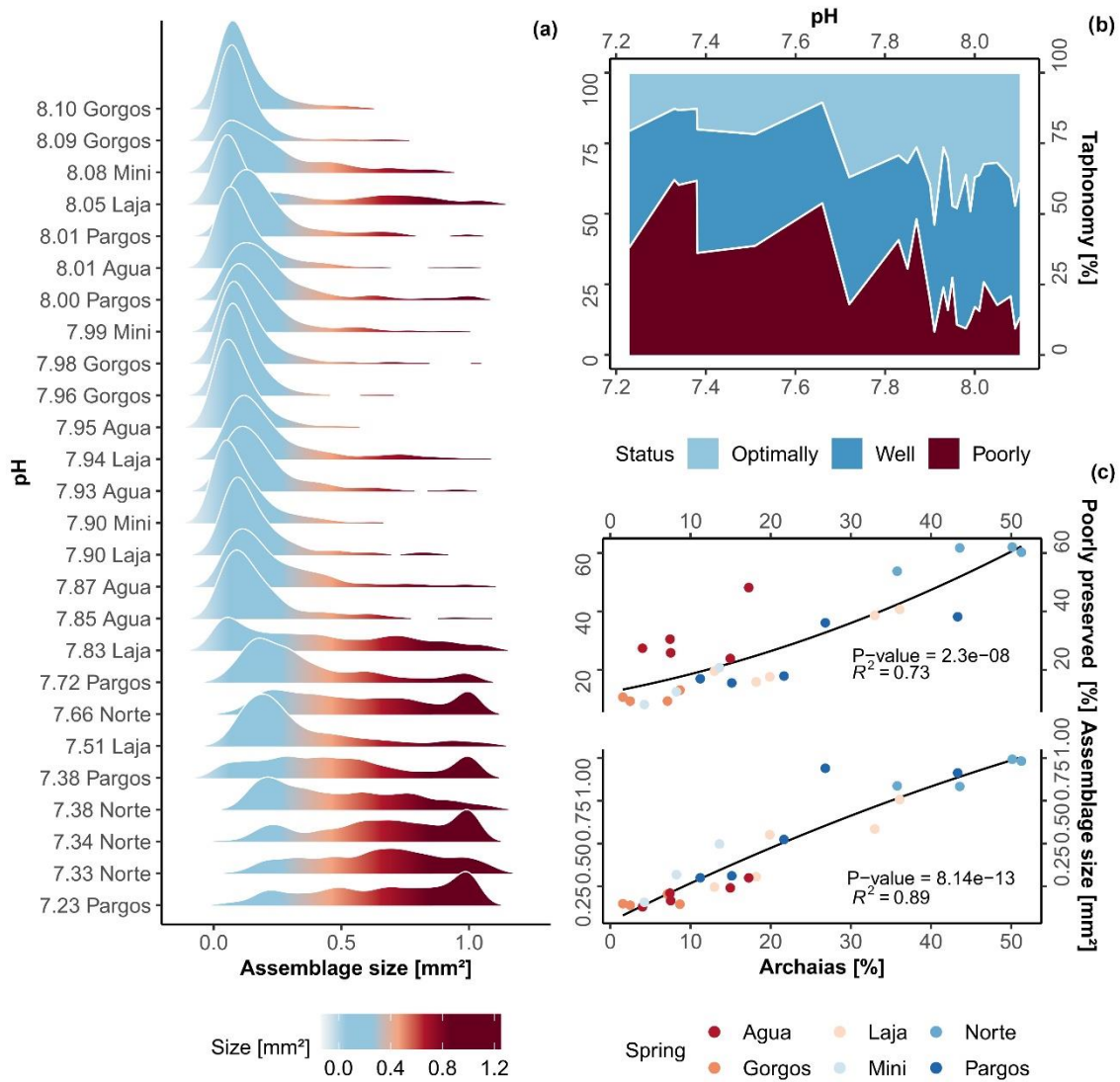



Figure 7 2 (a) The (a) density plot of assemblage test size, (b) area plot of foraminifera taphonomical status variation of dissolution and breakage against changing pH, and (c) variation of poorly preserved tests dissolution and average assemblage test size against *Archaias angulatus* relative contribution. The black lines represent the second-order polynomial model fits along with the R² value and p-value (b; c). Dashed lines demark stations under high taphonomical alteration.

3.2 Foraminiferal analysis

The assemblages (live + dead, table S3) found at PM exhibit similar composition to previous studies conducted in nearby coastal settings (Gischler and Möder, 2009), Caribbean eastern islands (Wilson and Wilson, 2011), and the Gulf of Mexico (Stephenson, Hallock and Kelmo, 2015; Amergian et al., 2022). A total of 8564 foraminifera from 141 species were identified, belonging to 4 orders, 37 families, and 73 genera. Agglutinated species contributed with 6.4 % (9 species), porcelaneous 61 % (86 species), and hyaline 32.6 % (45 species) of the total species richness. For total assemblages the species *A. angulatus*

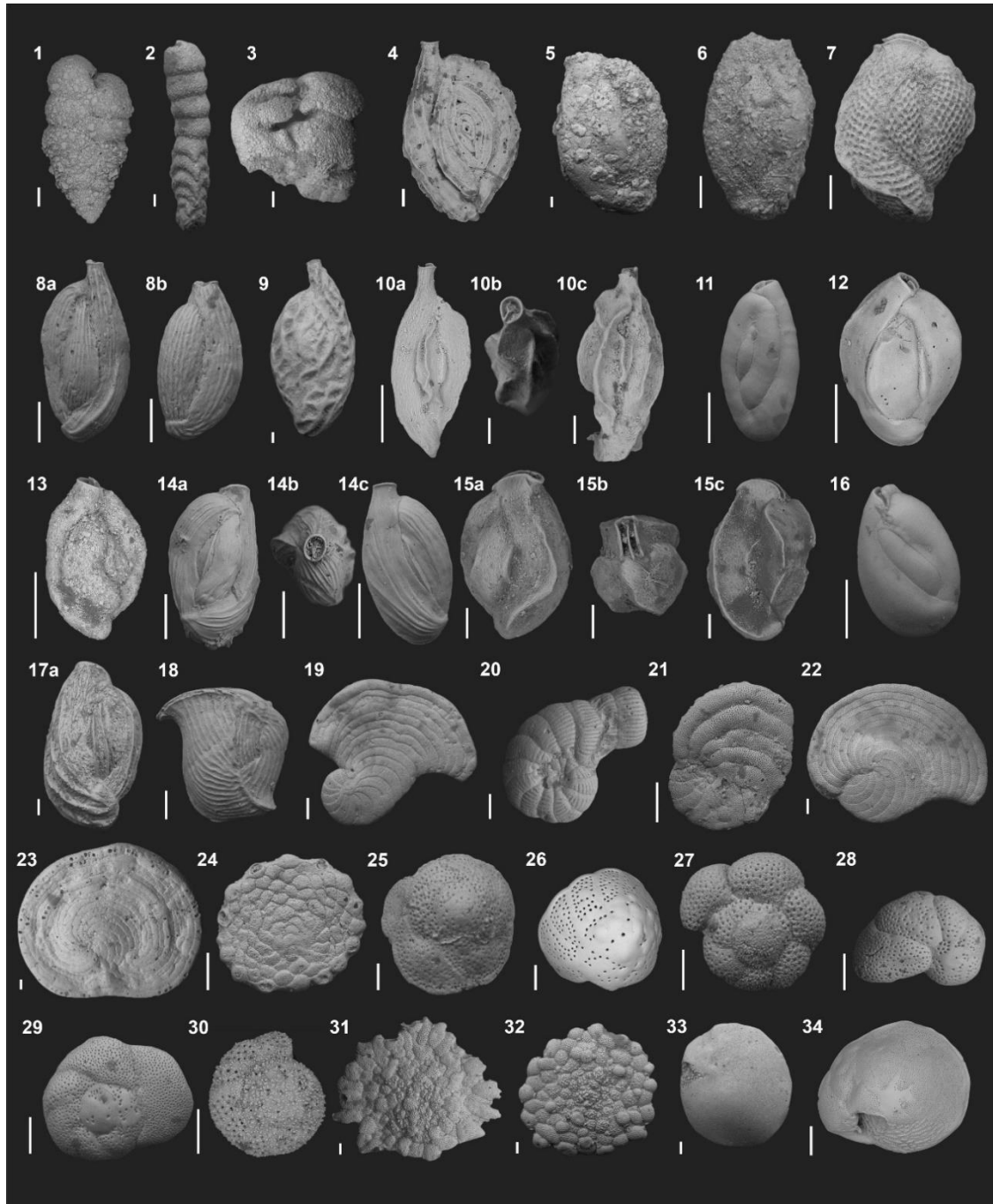
(9.4 %), followed by *Rotorbinella rosea* (9.3 %), *Asterigerina carinata* (6.9 %), and the *Rotorbis auberii* (4.7 %) were the most important contributing taxa, whereas for living counts *Rosalina globularis* was the most important taxa (11 %). The species that contributed with at least Considering a 3 % contribution of total abundance are shown in Fig. 32.

300

Figure 2 3 Electron micrographs of the species from Puerto Morelos reef lagoon springs considered for faunal analysis. All scale bars represent 100 μm. Legend: *1 Textularia agglutinans*, lateral view. **2** *Clavulina angularis*, lateral view. **3** *Valvulina oviedoiana*, lateral view. **4** *Spiroloculina corrugata*, lateral view. **5** *Agglutinella compressa*, lateral view. **6** *Schlumbergerina alveoliniformis*, lateral view. **7**

Lachlanella carinata, lateral view. **8** *Quinqueloculina subpoeyana*, lateral view. **9** *Quinqueloculina tricarinata*, lateral view. **10a, 10c** *Quinqueloculina* conf. *Quinqueloculina distorqueata*, lateral views. **10b** *Quinqueloculina* conf. *Quinqueloculina distorqueata*, apertural view. **11** *Quinqueloculina bosciana*, lateral view. **12** *Quinqueloculina disparilis*, lateral view. **13** *Quinqueloculina* conf. Q. *berthelotiana*, lateral view. **14a,14c** *Quinqueloculina carinatastriata*, lateral views. **14b** *Quinqueloculina carinatastriata*, apertural view. **15a,15c** *Affinetrina quadrilateralis*, apertural views. **15b** *Affinetrina quadrilateralis*, apertural view. **16** *Miliolinella elongata*, lateral view. **17** *Pseudotriloculina linneiana*, lateral view. **18** *Articulina pacifica*, lateral view. **19** *Laevipeneroplis proteus*, lateral view. **20** *Peneroplis pertustus*, lateral view. **21** *Peneroplis planatus*, lateral view. **22** *Archaias angulatus*, lateral view. **23** *Cyclorbiculina compressa*, lateral view. **24** *Sorites marginalis*, lateral view. **25** *Rotorbis auberii*, spiral view. **26** *Rotorbinella rosea*, spiral view. **27** *Trochulina* sp, spiral view. **28** *Rosalina* cf. *floridana*, spiral view. **29** *Rosalina globularis*, spiral view. **30** *Cibicidoides* sp, spiral view. **31** *Planorbulina mediterranensis*, lateral view. **32** *Planogypsina acervalis*, lateral view. **33** *Amphistegina gibbosa*, lateral view. **34** *Asterigerina carinata*, lateral view. ~~Scale bar represents 100 μm.~~

In general, the ~~relationship between water chemistry and species abundance can be visualized~~is shown in ~~the CCA diagram (Fig. 3), where a gradient of acidification stress is represented by Axis 1 (p value = 0.001), which explains roughly 63 % of the total variance. In CCA, the environmental variables are represented by vectors, and their length reflects the relative importance to species distribution. As observed in BIOENV and global BEST analysis, CCA indicates that pH represents the most important variable to foraminifera distribution, while the temperature is the least.~~ species ~~at the left side of Fig. 3 (e.g.,~~ *Quinqueloculina tricarinata*, A~~r~~. *angulatus*, *Amphistegina gibbosa*, *Valvulina oviedoiana*, *Ciclorbiculina compressa*~~)~~ increased towards low-pH, high C_T, and T_A values, presenting an increased _relative_ abundance and lower sensitivity to OA. On contrary, high sensitive species were presented by *Tho_c_hulina* sp, *Sorites marginalis*, *Quinqueloculina subpoeyana*, *R. auberii*_._ ~~) are positioned at the right side of the plot (Fig. 3) close to high pH, Ω Calcite and CO_3^{2-} values.~~ The species *Rotorbinella rosea*, *Clavulina angularis*, *Quinqueloculina disparilis*, *Lachlanella carinata*_,_ and *Schlumbergerina alveoliniformis* present ~~at the intermediated position in the graph~~ decrease_d_ in abundance towards ~~low pH~~low pH at a lower rate compared to the species on the right suggesting more tolerance. ~~Axis 2 explained 19 % of the total variance, however no significant correlation to species distribution was found (p value = 0.1).~~

The symbiont-bearing taxa (Fig. 4a, R^2 = 0.54, ~~p-value = 0.00~~p-value =< 0.05) presented lower sensitivity

345 to OA conditions increasing in relative abundance towards low-pH. The small miliolids (Fig. ~~5c~~4c, R^2 = 0.42, ~~p-value = 0.00~~p-value =< 0.05), opportunistic (Fig. 4d, R^2 = 0.28, ~~p-value = 0.00~~p-value =< 0.05), and small rotaliids taxa (Fig. 4e, R^2 = 0.36, ~~p-value = 0.00~~p-value =< 0.05) decreased in relative abundance towards low-pH conditions, presenting higher sensitivity. Kruskal-Wallis analysis reveal that the observed variation was statistically significant for most ~~taxonomic metrics~~functional groups: Symbiont-bearing (chi-

350 squared = 13, df = 3, ~~p-value = 0.00~~p-value =< 0.05), small miliolids (chi-squared = 12, df = 3, p-value =< 0.05), opportunistic (chi-squared = 16, df = 3, ~~p-value = 0.00~~p-value =< 0.05), and small rotaliids (chi-squared = 9, df = 3, ~~p-value = 0.00~~p-value =< 0.05) ~~and H (chi-squared = 19, df = 3, p-value = 0.00)~~. Specifically, post hoc Dunn test revels that ~~the~~ significant changes occurred mainly between present day (~ 8.1 pH units) and extremely low-pH conditions (≤ 7.6 pH units) representing conditions beyond those predicted by the end of 21st century: Symbiont-bearing (z = −2.38, p-value = 0.01), small miliolids (z = 2.7,

355 ~~p-value = 0.00~~p-value =< 0.05), and opportunistic (z= 2.4, p-value = 0.01). For small rotaliids taxa the significance was observed between low-intermediate acidification scenarios (~7.9 pH units), at which the

group presented a higher contribution, and extremely low-pH conditions (≤ 7.6 pH units) where a strong decrease was observed with the other metrics (z = 1.7, ~~p-value = 0.00~~p-value =< 0.05). No significance was observed for agglutinated foraminifera (chi-squared = 2, df = 3, p-value = 0.5), which also did not present significant correlation with changing pH (Fig. 4b, R^2 = 0.11, p-value = 0.1). Raw data of functional and test type group are ~~presented~~ in table ~~S1~~ S4 and ~~The~~the distribution of functional groups against changing pH is ~~represented~~ in Fig. 4.

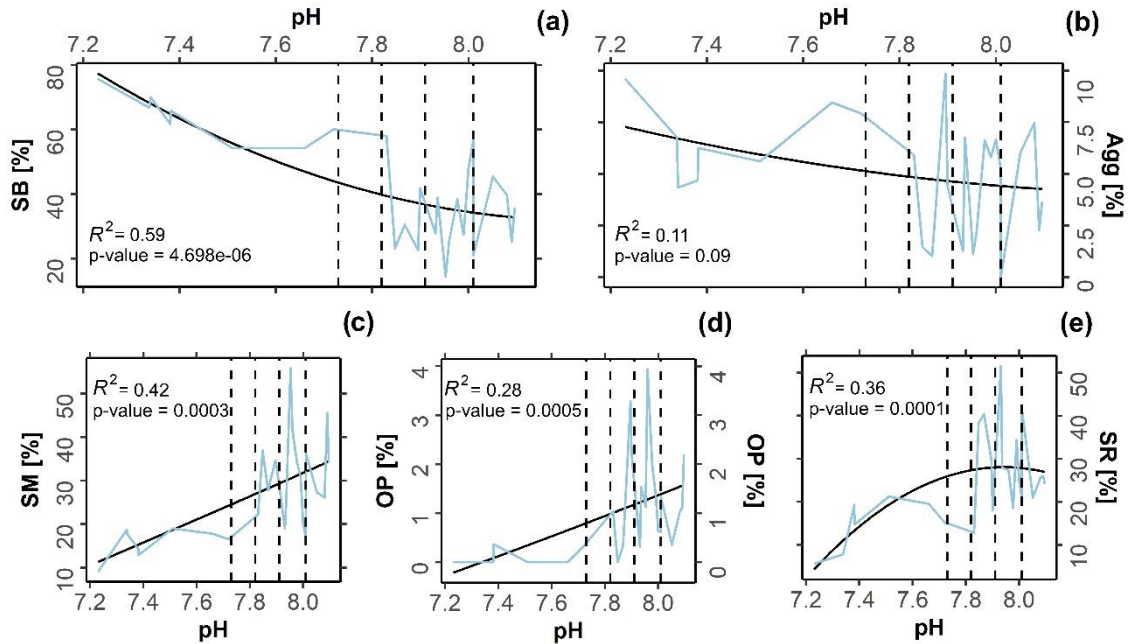



Figure 4 Variation of functional groups against changing pH. The black line represents the second-order polynomial model fits along with the R^2 value and the blue line represents the raw values obtained from in situ assemblages. Dashed lines demark predicted pH values at the end of this century following the Coupled Model Intercomparison Project Phase Six (CMIP6) predictions for Shared Socioeconomic Pathways (SSP1-2.6: 8.01 pH units; SSP2-4.5: 7.91 pH units; SSP3-7.0: 7.82 pH units, and SSP4: 7.73 pH units). SB = simbiont bearing, Agg = agglutinated, SM = small miliolids, OP = Opportunistic, SR = small rotaliids.

All taxonomic metrics presented a gradual decrease towards ~~low pH waters~~the springs (Fig.5a-d). On average, H′ ranged from 3.9 to 1.6 (Fig. 5a, R^2 = 0.72, p-value = 4.8[-08]); S from 71 to 11 (Fig. 5b, R^2 = 0.67, p-value = 3.3[-07]); J' from 0.9 to 0.6 (Fig. 5c, R^2 = 0.64, p-value = 9.5[-07]), and foraminifera density from 2167 to 36 ind./cm^3 (Fig. 5d, R^2 = 0.22, p-value = 0.02). Kruskal-Wallis analysis revealed that the observed variation was statistically significant for all taxonomic metrics: N (chi-squared = 14.5, df = 3, ~~p-value = 0.00~~p-value =< 0.05), S (chi-squared = 20, df = 3, ~~p-value = 0.00~~p-value =< 0.05), J' (chi-squared = 15, df = 3, ~~p-value = 0.00~~p-value =< 0.05) and H (chi-squared = 19, df = 3, ~~p-value = 0.00~~p-value =< 0.05). However as observed for functional and test type groups, the post hoc Dunn test revealed that significant changes occurred mainly between present day and extremely low-pH conditions: N (z = 2.2, p-value = 0.02), S (z = 3.4, ~~p-value = 0.00~~p-value =< 0.05), J (z = 3.1, ~~p-value = 0.00~~p-value =< 0.05), and H (z= 3.4,

~~p-value = 0.00~~p-value =< 0.05). No significant difference was observed for any taxonomic metric at low-intermediate acidification scenarios (SSP1-2.6 and SSP2-4.5), and only S differed significantly between present day and high acidification scenarios (Fig. 5b, SSP3-7.0 and SSP5-8.5, z = 2.1, p-value = 0.03). ~~The taxonomic metrics were also plotted against changing Ω Calcite for comparison with previous studies (e.g., Pettit et al., 2013, 2015, Martinez et al., 2018), however the obtained correlations were lower than those observed for pH (Fig. S1).~~

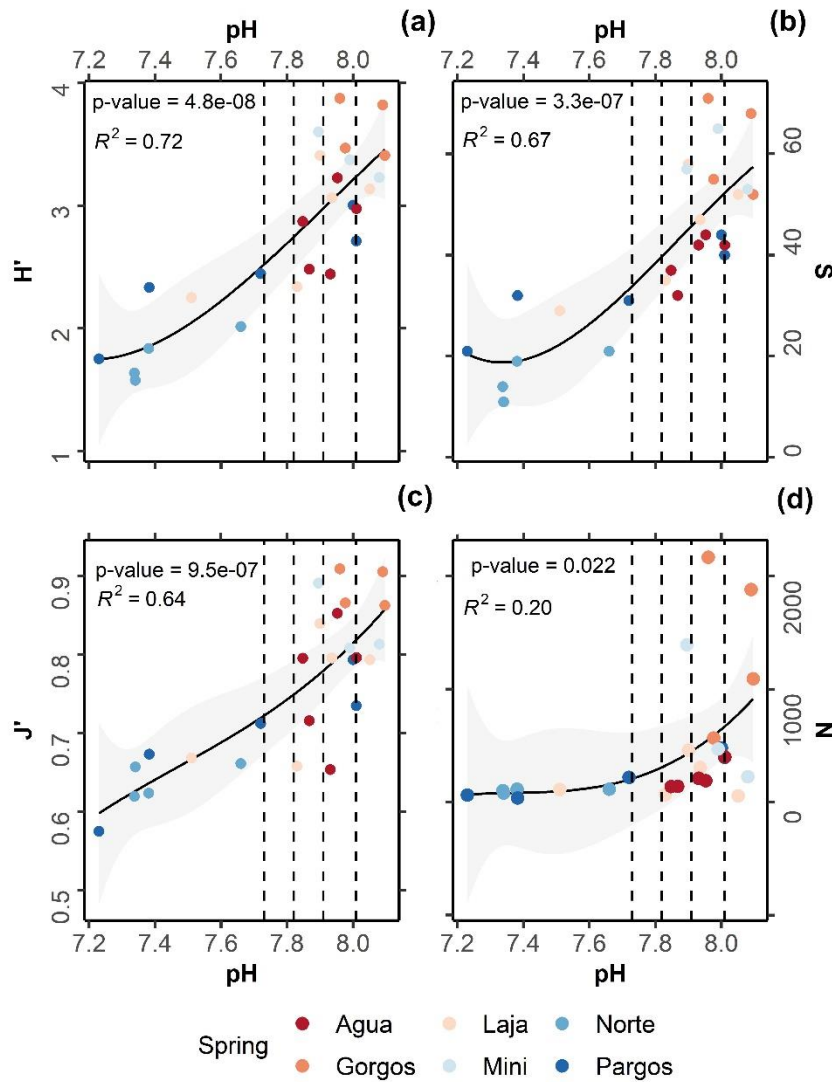



Figure 5 Relationships between pH and (a) Shannon-Weiner Diversity Index (H'), (b) foraminiferal density (N), (c) Pielou's evenness (J'), and (d) species richness (S). The black lines represent second-order polynomial model fits, and grey areas mark 95 % confidence intervals. Dashed lines demark predicted pH values at the end of this century following the Coupled Model Intercomparison Project Phase Six (CMIP6) predictions for Shared Socioeconomic Pathways (SSP1-2.6: 8.01 pH units; SSP2-4.5: 7.91 pH units; SSP3-7.0: 7.82 pH units, and SSP4: 7.73 pH units).

The hierarchical clustering based on foraminifera abundances revealed 7 assemblages, which corresponded well to functional and test type group distributions (Fig. 4), changes in carbonate water chemistry (Table 1) and taxonomic metrics (Fig. 5). A good representation of assemblage group's structure is present in nMDS plot (Fig. 6, 2D Stress: 0.06, Supplemented). Assemblages "f" and "e" consisted of samples retrieved at the higher pH conditions (8.1-7.9 pH units). Assemblages "g" and "d" comprised of samples retrieved at intermediated pH conditions (8.08-7.72 and 8-7.85, respectively). Assemblage "c" and assemblages "b" and "a" comprised samples retrieved living at extremely low pH conditions of 8-7.51 and 7.66-7.23, respectively. The reduction of diversity, richness, and evenness along with decreasing pH can be observed from the left to the right part of the diagram (Fig. 6). An increase in symbiont-bearing and decrease in other groups also occurs towards the right part of the plot. SIMPER analysis reveals that the species *Ar. angulatus* whose relative contribution increased towards low-pH conditions was the major contributor to the forming groups, except assemblages "e" and "f" that were dominated by sensitive species that did not occur at low-pH (e.g., *Trochulina* sp, *Sorites marginalis*, *Quinqueloculina subpoeyana*, *R. auberii*). All species which are predominantly responsible for each group are listed in table S2.

In comparison to future projections, the highest dissimilarity (> 80 %) was observed between assemblages living close to present-day conditions (assemblage "e") and at the center of discharge, representing conditions beyond those projected for the end of the 21st century (assemblages "a" and "b"). Moderate similarity (47 %) was still observed for samples living at present day (8.1 pH units), low-intermediate acidification (~7.9 pH units, SSP1-2.6 and SSP2-4.5), and high acidification scenarios (7.8-7.7 pH units, SSP3-7.0 and SSP5-8.5).

Considering the consistency in the data analyses, we observed that under the most conservative projections (SSP1-2.6; SSP2-4.5) foraminifera assemblages did not display considerable changes in taxonomic metrics, presenting a moderate similarity (~50 %, SIMPER analysis) relative to assemblages living at present-day conditions. For projections SSP3-7.0 and SSP5-8.5, moderate similarity was also observed, but the analyzed assemblages presented a significant decrease in richness S, indicating that foraminifera assemblages are likely to be affected under high acidification scenarios. To a species level, the symbiont-bearing taxa presented relatively higher resistance, when compared to other functional groups, while agglutinated foraminifera were not measurably influenced by changes in pH. For conditions beyond the predicted for the late 21st century, foraminifera density decreased abruptly and high taphonomical alteration was observed.

3.4 X-ray MicroCT

The X-ray MicroCT (Fig. 8Fig. 6a-d) analysis revealed that despite having a similar size (0.80 ± 0.05 mm^3), and volume (0.06 ± 0.02 mm^3) the specimens present at low-pH conditions (7.1 pH units) were on average 46 % less dense (2.4 ± 0.2 to 1.30 ± 0.03 g/cm^3) than the specimens present at high-pH conditions (Welch Two Sample t-test, $t = 8.1204$, $df = 3.0808$, p-value = 0.0035). Yet, no significant (Two Sample t-test, $t = -1.4378$, $df = 6$, p-value = 0.2) difference in chamber wall thickness was observed (0.050 ± 0.006 mm^3). The differences in internal density can be seen in (Fig. 8Fig. 6a and 68b) representing 2 specimens living in high and low-pH conditions, respectively. The external differences of these same individuals are

represented in the 3D volume (rendering at Fig. 8Fig. 6c and 8d6d). Raw data of test density, chamber wall thickness, test volume, and test diameter measured in A*r*. *angulatus* individuals are listed in table S4S5.

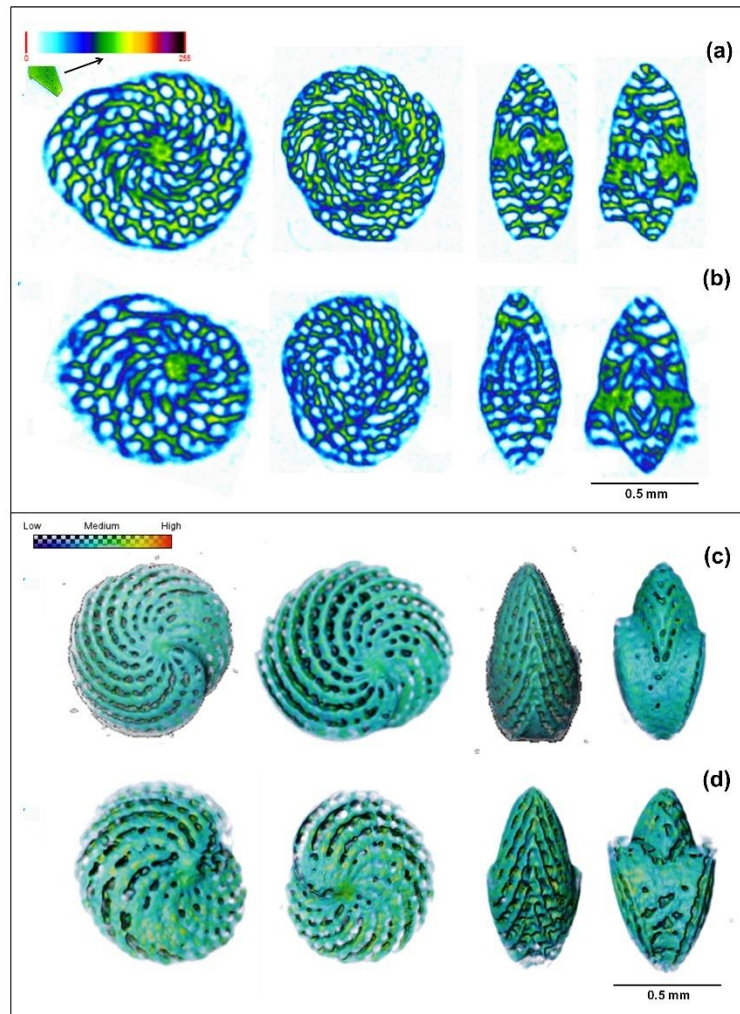



Figure 8 6 - Comparison between X-ray microCT images with color code as a function of calcite density. The specimen living at ~ 7.96 pH units (a) presents a higher calcite density (more green) when compared with low ~ pH 7.11 individual (more blue) (b). The 3D Volume volume rendering in function of calcite density for the same individuals living at the high (c) and low-pH conditions (d). Note that individual at "d" living under low pHlow pH presents a test with incomplete parts and blurred edges, which demonstrates a lower density.

4 Discussion

4.1 Foraminiferal resistance to low intermediate pH lowering conditions

Under the two most conservative acidification projections (Fig. 5a-d) foraminifera assemblages in PM did not display considerable changes, while at high acidification scenarios a significant decrease in species richness was observed. These results indicate that benthic foraminifera are unlikely to be affected by pH decreases of ~ 0.2, but certainly respond adversely to higher acidification levels (~ 0.4 pH units). These

findings are consistent with previous observations from other naturally high pCO_2 sites in which taxonomic metrics decreased significantly with declining pH (Bernhard et al. 2009; Dias et al. 2010; Pettit et al., 2015; Dong et al., 2019, 2020). It is noteworthy, however that changes in assemblage composition did not follow the same pattern observed in these previous studies. Whereas the proportion of calcareous species usually decline with decreasing pH, they remained dominant (~90 %, mainly SB, Fig. S44a) under all projections in PM, suggesting a relatively higher resistance for these shallow-reef benthic assemblages.

Considering the mid-range pH resistance (~ 7.9 pH units), mainly observed for small rotaliids are more resiliant,; the chemical conditions at PM, along with the physiology of calcification in foraminifera may explain the lack of sensitivity of the species. Recent calcification models demonstrate that hyaline foraminifera are able tocan manipulate pH to control the speciation of inorganic carbon parameters during calcification (De Nooijer et al., 2009; Toyofuku et al., 2017; De Goeyse et al., 2021; Geerken et al., 2022). Specifically, the proton-pumping based model (Toyofuku et al., 2017) shows that at the external environment, a decrease in pH (~ 6.9 pH units) induces the transformation of CO_3^{2-} and bicarbonate (HCO^{3-}) into CO_2, whereas at the site of calcification the elevated pH (~ 9 pH units) results in the opposite shift into CO_3^{2-}. As foraminifera induce pH changes exceeding the predicted to SSP1-2.6 and SSP2-4.5, low-intermediate acidification scenarios are unlikely to impair foraminiferal calcification. In fact, the higher abundance of small rotaliid (Fig. 4e) and resistance of SB species (e.g., *Amphistegina*) supports the hypothesis that they might, at least to a certain extent, benefit from the extra dissolved inorganic carbon (Toyofuku et al., 2017, De Goeyse et al. 2021). Evidence for this hypothesis is that carbonic anhydrase plays a key role in the biomineralization process of some rotaliids, possibly concentrating inorganic carbon for calcification by converting HCO^{3-} into CO_2 (De Goeyse et al. 2021). As such, these models suggest that increased CO_2 might favor foraminifera calcification by increasing C_T, which is notably higher towards the springs in PM (Table 1).

The higher C_T and T_A might also induce CO_2 fertilization effects in SB species, increasing the activity of symbionts (Fujita et al., 2011; Uthicke and Fabricius, 2012; Martinez et al., 2018). It This could explain why symbiont-bearing species including (A) *Ar. angulatus* (chlorophyte-bearing), increased in relative abundance from 11-15 % to 21 % from ~ 8 to 7.72 pH units (e.g., Pargos spring). This resistance behavior was also observed for *Amphistegina gibbosa* (diatom-bearing), from 16-19 % to 23 %, and (C) *Cyclorbiculina compressa* (chlorophyte-bearing) that presented low contribution ~ 1 % at high-pH stations but also increased in relative contribution to 3.2 % at intermediated pH. These species were placed close to the C_T and T_A vectors at the CCA diagram, which highlights their association to higher dissolved carbon and alkalinity content (Fig. 3). These findings are supported by laboratory-controlled experiments demonstrating that both *Ar. angulatus* (Stuhr et al., 2021) and *Amphistegina* sp. (McIntyre-Wressnig et al., 2013; Prazeres et al., 2015) can calcify and live under relatively low-pH conditions (~ 7.6 pH units).

Thisa positive and resistant behavior, however, was not observed for all SB. For example, the species *H. depressa* was documented to be resilient in laboratory controlledlaboratory-controlled conditions (Vogel and Uthicke et al., 2012; Schmidt, Kucera and Uthicke, 2014), but in PM it presented a strong decline towards low-pH waters. A possible explanation is that even although salinity is considered to not be a significant factor controlling to the overall foraminiferal communities (AIC, BIO-ENV/global BEST

analysis), salinity ~~possibly restricted~~may have specifically affected the occurrence of select species close to the springs, which are known to be typically stenohaline, e.g., larger rotaliids (30–45, Hallock, 1986). However, ~~little effect is expected~~this cannot be very important since salinity at the springs is > 30 over 90 % of the time and does not drop below 27 (Crook et al., 2012; Martinez et al., 2018). Other parameters, such as heavy metals could also influence the ~~sensitive behavior~~abundance of certain species, but concentrations of the metals (Paytan unpublished) were not significantly higher at the springs when compared to sites at > 1m distance from the water discharge. Hence, we do not attribute the changes in foraminifera assemblages to impacts of heavy metals. We note that the springs furthest analyzed sites are just a few meters apart hence other parameters such as light, eutrophication, and pollution are identical.

Additionally, the high C_T and T_A might also raise local pH and carbonate saturation during photosynthesis, even if only on the scale of an individual organism at the foraminiferal shell surface. A diffusive boundary layer of increased pH (up to 8.9) has been documented at the underlying surface of symbiont bearing foraminifera (Koehler-Rink and Kuehl, 2000; Glas et al., 2012), and ~~despite~~although insufficient to compensate future decreases of ambient seawater pH, it might increase the symbiont-bearing resistance in PM. Correspondently, the symbioses between seagrasses and foraminifera has also been ~~appointed~~suggested ~~to be~~ a key factor ~~to~~in the resilience of epiphytic species (e.g., *A. angulatus*, *C. compressa* and *A. gibbosa*). Although no significant effect (Fabricius et al., 2011; Pettit et al., 2015) has been reported for some species~~.~~, *Marginopora vertebralis* was observed to maintain its growth when associated with its common algal host, *Laurencia intricata* in laboratory conditions (Doo et al., 2020). In respect to ~~the observed~~observations in the present study, the epiphytic species *R. globularis* was the most important taxa for living counts (11 %), ~~which despit~~and although~~e~~ not ~~being~~ the primary objective of the present study, it gives important insights about short-term foraminifera responses. Specifically, this finding is in agreement with the observed resilient behavior of Rosalinids in the natural, low-pH venting sites of Panarea (Di Bella et al., 2022). However, ~~low coverage of~~considering the low occurrence of fully stained tests ~~was found and~~future analysis on phytal substrates in PM would be necessary to confirm this trend.

Lastly, t~~T~~he ability of foraminifera to function and calcify near the springs may also be related to the site-specific natural pH variability to which the species are exposed. For many coastal/transitional areas characterized by high pCO$_2$ variability, foraminifera seem to be more resilient and acclimated to changing conditions including low-pH (Haynert et al., 2012; Charrieau et al., 2018). By discharging low-pH waters for millennia (Back et al., 1979) the foraminifera living near the spring have experienced a pH variability over a much longer timespan than the life span of individual organisms (Martinez et al., 2018). Specifically, as reef-dwelling organisms, the foraminifera in PM experience a wide range of pH on daily and seasonal scales which might physiologically increase the species resilience to low-pH waters (Price et al., 2012).

4.1 High pH acidification scenarios

Previous data from recruitment and succession experiments in PM showed that foraminifera were able to calcify and increased in ~~density~~wight over the investigated period (14 months) at low (~ 7.8) pH conditions (data from Laja and Gorgos springs , Crook et al., 2016). Two years later, Martinez et al. (2018) documented the occurrence of calcareous tests at PM even at extreme acidification levels (~ 7.1 pH units). In agreement, we observed that despite the strong decrease in foraminifera density calcareous foraminifera still remained

525 relatively dominant in PM (~90 %, mainly *A. angulatus* and *A. gibbosa*) ~~under~~ at ~~and beyond~~ expected future conditions for the end of the 21st century ~~in PM~~and beyond.

For high acidification scenarios (SSP3-7.0 and SSP5-8.5), the in-situ occurrence of calcifying foraminifera ~~have~~has only been reported in the deep-sea near extensive CO_2 vents in the Wagner Basin (Pettit et al., 2013). At this site, a rich food supply and stable temperatures were considered to offset the effects of OA and a shift towards opportunistic assemblages was reported. The springs from PM also have relatively high nutrient concentrations compared to the open waters in the region (Null et al., 2014; Crook et al., 2016), however, near the springs, assemblages did not change towards opportunistic dominated assemblages, suggesting that the nutrient availability does not exert a major control at this site. Rather, the high-pH assemblages heavily dominated by small calcareous forms were replaced by larger symbiont-bearing species near the springs (Fig. 4a-e)~~. , which~~Such species are known to be sensitive to high nutrient loading, likely because of changes in turbidity/light regimes and their dependence on algal symbionts to enhance growth and calcification (Hallock et al., 2003; Prazeres et al., 2020; Girard et al., 2022). ~~At~~However at PM despite higher nutrient levels the waters at the springs are clear and light regimes are not reduced.

To better understand the ~~positive~~ resilient response towards the springs (~~Fig. 8~~Fig. 4a-d) and investigate possible acclimation patterns that could explain the observation of relatively higher SB ~~resistence~~occurence, we employed an X-ray microCT analysis in *A. angulatus* specimens living under high and low pH conditions. The analysis revealed that despite having similar size (0.80 ± 0.05 mm³), volume (0.06 ± 0.02 mm³), and chamber wall thickness (0.050 ± 0.006 mm³) the specimens found at low-pH conditions (7.1 pH units) were on average 46 % less dense (2.40 ± 0.2 to 1.30 ± 0.03 g/cm³) than the specimens present at high-pH conditions (7.96 pH units). This demonstrates that the species ~~is able to~~could calcify in low-pH conditions beyond ~~the~~those predicted for the late 21st century albite at lower density. The lower density however indicates that *Archaias* individuals were not capable to acclimate sufficiently to maintain ambient present day calcification efficiency. These results ~~are in agreement~~agree with Knorr et al. (2015) that observed a 50 % decrease in *A~~r~~. angulatus* size at 7.6 pH units, and a consequent decrease of 85 % in the production of high-Mg calcite by this species, and also with the documented for other SB species such as *Peneroplis* spp (pH 7.4, approximately 25 % lower, Charrieau et al., 2022), and *Amphistegina* spp (pH 7.6, approximately 20 % lower, Prazeres et al., 2015). ~~Further analyses are needed for a better understanding of *Archaias* biological thresholds considering that only a few specimens were analyzed, but this ability to calcify at even 7.1 pH units might provide a competitive advantage over other species that are less robust calcifiers.~~ We acknowledge that post-mortem dissolution may also contribute to the observed lower density, but only pristine tests were analyzed, so this influence must be minimum. Future analysis of B isotopes and B/Ca ratios could provide more information about the documented trends in the present study.

Since *A~~r~~. angulatus* showed lower density close to the low-pH springs and hence is negatively impacted by the low-pH, the species increase in relative increase ~~in contribution~~ towards the springs is probably associated with the high preservation potential of its tests. The~~ir~~ tests of *A. angulatus* are large~~r~~, thick~~er~~, and reinforced by internal partitions (pillars), therefore more likely to be preserved in the sediment (Martin, 1986; Cottey and Hallock, 1988). This is confirmed by the performed regression analysis as the species

relative contribution explains 88 % of assemblage test size and 73 % of high dissolved test occurrence in the samples (~~Fig. 7~~Fig. 2c). In fact, changes were so abrupt that shifts in the assemblage test size and functional groups were clearly observed at ~7.7 pH units (~~Fig. 7~~Fig. 2a), when the symbiont-bearing taxa relative contribution also started to increase (Fig. 4a). At this point preservation thresholds of smaller taxa seemed to be crossed, and their ~~relative~~ decrease in relative abundance near the springs is likely related to higher rates of breakage and dissolution (Present study, Martinez et al., 2018).

Considering that foraminifera are a crucial component of reef sediment production (Langer et al., 1997; Langer, 2008), including *Ar. angulatus* in the Caribbean region, our results support previous findings that reef-building carbonate production and accumulation are likely to decrease under future scenarios, even in the tropics (Knorr et al., 2015; Eyre et al., 2018; Kuroyanagi et al., 2021). Specifically, we also observed a decrease in foraminifera density (Fig.5d) and therefore in carbonate accumulation as foraminifera tests in the sediments. As OA intensifies, symbiont-bearing taxa, which demonstrated higher resistance to low-pH (–> 7.8 pH units), will likely still represent major contributors in the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico sediments where species like *Ar. angulatus* may dominate (Culver and Buzas, 1982). In contrary, the high sensitivity of *Quinqueloculina* spp, *Triloculina* spp, *Articulina* spp, and *Miliolinella* spp to ~~low pH~~low pH highlighted their lower fitness in response to OA, demonstrating that changes in abundance of small taxa can be used as bioindicators to monitor the effects of OA.

The relative contribution of agglutinated foraminifera slightly increased towards low-pH (Fig. 4b), but they did not compensate for the decline in calcareous species (Fig. 4a–e), even at extreme low pH conditions. Since the particles available for the agglutinated tests are made of carbonate and under low-Ω waters are also prone to dissolve ~~that may w~~that could affect the agglutinated species. Interestingly, agglutinated foraminifera also presented species-specific responses to acidification ~~similar to~~like ~~the~~ calcareous foraminifera. For example, *Valvulina oviedoiana* increased in relative abundance towards ~~low pH~~low pH, while *Textularia agglutinans* presented a strong decrease. Since acidification is expected to have little direct effect on agglutinated foraminifera the observed interspecific behavior is also probably associated with preservation potential. The variation of agglutinating material (e.g., mucopolysaccharide), structure (e.g., fibrous, strands, foam-like masses), and size of granular particles (e.g., fine, and coarser) are essential to determine the preservation and accumulation of agglutinated tests (Bender and Hemleben, 1988). The most important agglutinated species, in our study e.g., *T. agglutinans*, *C. angulata,* and *V. oviedoiana* use ~~calcitic~~calcite cement as the agglutinating material of particles, which probably assigns a higher resistance to dissolution (Bender, 1995). Among these, *T. agglutinans* lower resistance likely responds to its smaller size, which implies higher dissolution (Bender, 1995). Altogether, we observe that until ~ 7.8 pH units foraminifera physiology was a main driver of foraminifera distribution, whereas at ≤ 7.7 pH units (~~Fig. 7~~Fig. 2b) the preservation potential became an important factor affecting the distribution of both calcareous and agglutinated tests.

~~Although *post mortem*postmortem degradation likely occurs at higher rates near the springs the distribution of species still provide a good representation of the fauna over a short ecological time. That is also the case for most symbiont-bearing taxa, as the relative contribution of individual species discussed above increase towards low pH. However,~~ Hence, we cannot exclude the possibility that a higher accumulation of *Ar.*

angulatus tests could be responsible for an overestimation in symbiont-bearing taxa density. In this case, species richness would be more reliable to the interpretation of assemblage responses, which was the only parameter to decrease significantly at < 7.7 pH units (Fig. 5b), ~~validating that in general~~suggesting that overall foraminifera are less likely to acclimate under high acidification scenarios. These results bring serious implications as SSP3-7.0 and SSP5-8.5 scenarios also predict substantial increases of sea surface temperature (Kwiatkowski et al., 2020), which combined to surface OA might critically decrease the tolerance of foraminifera (reviewed in Kawahata et al., 2019). Recently, Bernhard et al. (2021) observed that foraminiferal assemblages presented the lowest number of species and abundances under a triple-stressed (low-pH/O_2 and high temperature) treatment demonstrating the synergetic effects of these variables. As observed in PM, agglutinated foraminifera were relatively more resistant than calcareous taxa.

In general, for emissions beyond the predicted to the end of 21st century ($<$ 7.7 pH units) all taxonomic metrics decreased significantly, and calcareous species with higher preservation potential like *C. compressa* and *A̶r̶. angulatus* comprised up 50–60 % of assemblage composition. This was expected since a drop in the Ω aragonite < 3.2 would increase foraminifera dissolution (Yamamoto et al., 2012), but these calcareous taxa were still found at the center of discharge where the surface sediments were still composed by carbonates. ~~It~~ We attribute this ~~probably occurred due~~ to high T_A levels, which was also considered to likely limit the dissolution rates of *A̶r̶. angulatus* and other porcelaneous tests in the springs at the coast of Florida, where numerous spring-fed rivers emerge from Eocene and Oligocene limestone and dolostone substrata (Amergian et al., 2022). The high T_A ~~was also recognized to~~may also provide a calcification optimum within the polyhaline (22-30) waters of the Springs at the Florida Coast, ~~Coast ,~~where a similar range of salinity to PM was observed. This hypothesis could explain the observed -resistance of *A̶r̶. angulatus* in the present study, and the ~~specifical~~ higher association of foraminifera density to T_A. Nevertheless, if we restricted the analysis to only pristine, well-preserved tests, the taxonomic metrics at 7.~~6~~7-7.2 (Fig. ~~6~~5) would be much lower and more similar to those presented by Uthicke, Momigliano, and Fabricius (2013), in which foraminifera were almost absent at sites with ≤ 7.9 pH units.

5 Conclusion

~~This work shows that d~~Despite their life-long exposure to low-pH conditions, benthic tropical foraminifera species ~~will~~ could be negatively affected under the high acidification scenarios (SSP3-7.0 and SSP5-8.5) for the end of the 21st century. Species-specific responses in foraminiferal assemblages were observed and as the oceans become more acidic, reef foraminiferal assemblages might gradually shift towards larger, symbiont-bearing species and agglutinating foraminifera. The species *A̶r̶. angulatus*, which is known to be dominant in warm, oligotrophic areas of the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico ~~are able to~~can calcify at pH conditions lower than those projected by SSP5-8.5, however, the observed lower density of the pristine tests suggests that reef carbonate budget might decrease as this species represent a major carbonate producer at these areas. Considering the observed trends of increasing average assemblage test size ~~and the results of multivariate faunal analysis (SIMPER, CCA)~~, our results demonstrate the key role smaller foraminifera have as bioindicators to monitor the effects of OA, as their high sensitivity to dissolution makes them first responders to ongoing OA.

6 Data availability

All data related to this study are given in the Supplement data files that accompany this paper.

7 Author contribution

DF, AP and CFB conceived of and designed the study. DF performed the faunal and statistical analysis.

645 OMA and RTL conducted the Micro-CT experiments. DF, AP and CFB analyzed the data. DF, AP, CFB

prepared the original draft of the manuscript with writing, and OMA and RTL reviewed and edited.

8 Competing interest

We declare that this manuscript has no conflict of interest.

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