



# The role of the global carbonate cycle in the regulation and evolution of the Earth system

Andy Ridgwell<sup>a,\*</sup>, Richard E. Zeebe<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Department of Earth and Ocean Sciences, The University of British Columbia, 6339 Stores Road, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V6T 1Z4*

<sup>b</sup>*University of Hawaii at Manoa, SOEST, Honolulu, HI, United States*

Received 8 October 2004; received in revised form 7 March 2005; accepted 17 March 2005

Available online 27 April 2005

## Abstract

We review one of the most ancient of all the global biogeochemical cycles and one which reflects the profound geochemical and biological changes that have occurred as the Earth system has evolved through time—that of calcium carbonate ( $\text{CaCO}_3$ ). In particular, we highlight a Mid-Mesozoic Revolution in the nature and location of carbonate deposition in the marine environment, driven by the ecological success of calcareous plankton. This drove the creation of a responsive deep-sea sedimentary sink of  $\text{CaCO}_3$ . The result is that biologically driven carbonate deposition provides a significant buffering of ocean chemistry and of atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$  in the modern system. However, the same calcifying organisms that under-pin the deep-sea carbonate sink are now threatened by the continued atmospheric release of fossil fuel  $\text{CO}_2$  and increasing acidity of the surface ocean. We are not yet in a position to predict what the impact on  $\text{CaCO}_3$  production will be, or how the uptake of fossil fuel  $\text{CO}_2$  by the ocean will be affected. This uncertainty in the future trajectory of atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$  that comes from incomplete understanding of the marine carbonate cycle is cause for concern.

© 2005 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

*Keywords:* Earth system; carbon cycle; carbonate; calcifiers; ocean chemistry;  $\text{CO}_2$ ; fossil fuel

## 1. Introduction

The geochemical or long-term carbon cycle primarily involves the exchange of carbon between the ‘surficial’ and ‘geologic’ reservoirs [1]. The former comprise atmosphere, oceans, biosphere,

soils, and exchangeable sediments in the marine environment (Fig. 1) while the latter include crustal rocks and deeply buried sediments in addition to the underlying mantle. How carbon is partitioned between the various reservoirs of the surficial system and between surficial and geologic reservoirs is what sets the concentration of  $\text{CO}_2$  in the atmosphere. Life, and the cycle of organic carbon, as well as its geological (and subsequent fossil fuel exhumation) is of particular importance in this regard. The cycle of

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 604 822 2449; fax: +1 604 822 6088.

E-mail address: [aridgwell@eos.ubc.ca](mailto:aridgwell@eos.ubc.ca) (A. Ridgwell).

## Box 1

## Carbonate chemistry ‘101’ and jargon buster

The mineral *calcium carbonate* ( $\text{CaCO}_3$ ) has a crystal lattice motif comprising one calcium ion ( $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ ) ionically bound to one carbonate ion ( $\text{CO}_3^{2-}$ ), configured in different polymorphic forms; e.g., *calcite*, a trigonal structure, or *aragonite*, which is orthorhombic. Precipitation may be described by the following reaction:  $\text{Ca}^{2+} + 2\text{HCO}_3^- \rightarrow \text{CaCO}_3 + \text{CO}_{2(\text{aq})} + \text{H}_2\text{O}$ . Of the reactants required for this,  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  is naturally abundant in sea-water and at one of the highest concentrations of all ionic species in the ocean. *Bicarbonate ions* ( $\text{HCO}_3^-$ ) are also ubiquitous in sea-water and are formed through the dissolution of  $\text{CO}_2$  gas. Under typical marine conditions, carbon dioxide will largely hydrate to form a proton ( $\text{H}^+$ ) and a bicarbonate ion ( $\text{HCO}_3^-$ );  $\text{H}_2\text{O} + \text{CO}_{2(\text{aq})} \rightarrow \text{H}^+ + \text{HCO}_3^-$  (see Fig. 3), while true *carbonic acid* ( $\text{H}_2\text{CO}_3$ ) is only present in very small concentrations. A fraction of  $\text{HCO}_3^-$  dissociates to form a *carbonate ion* ( $\text{CO}_3^{2-}$ );  $\text{HCO}_3^- \rightarrow \text{H}^+ + \text{CO}_3^{2-}$ . The sum total;  $\text{CO}_{2(\text{aq})} + \text{H}_2\text{CO}_3 + \text{HCO}_3^- + \text{CO}_3^{2-}$  is collectively termed *dissolved inorganic carbon* (‘DIC’).

The climatic importance of the  $\text{CaCO}_3$  precipitation reaction arises because although the sum total of dissolved carbon species (DIC) is reduced, the remaining carbon is re-partitioned in favor of  $\text{CO}_{2(\text{aq})}$ , resulting in a higher *partial pressure* of  $\text{CO}_2$  ( $p\text{CO}_2$ ) in the surface ocean. (Another way of thinking about this is in terms of removing  $\text{CO}_3^{2-}$  and shifting the aqueous carbonate equilibrium reaction  $\text{CO}_{2(\text{aq})} + \text{CO}_3^{2-} + \text{H}_2\text{O} \leftrightarrow 2\text{HCO}_3^-$  to the left to compensate.) The counter-intuitive and often confusing consequence of all this is that the precipitation of carbonate carbon drives an *increase* in ocean  $p\text{CO}_2$ , and with it, an increase in atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$  concentration. Conversely, dissolution of  $\text{CaCO}_3$  drives a  $p\text{CO}_2$  (and atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$ ) *decrease*.

Whether  $\text{CaCO}_3$  precipitates or dissolves depends on the relative stability of its crystal structure. This can be directly related to the ambient concentrations (strictly, activities) of  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  and  $\text{CO}_3^{2-}$  by the *saturation state* (also known as the *solubility ratio*)  $\Omega$  of the solution, defined;  $\Omega = [\text{Ca}^{2+}] \times [\text{CO}_3^{2-}] / K_{\text{sp}}$ , where  $K_{\text{sp}}$  is a solubility constant [44]. The precipitation of calcium carbonate from sea-water is thermodynamically favorable when  $\Omega$  is greater than unity and occurs at a rate taking the form of a proportionality with  $(\Omega - 1)^n$  [100], where  $n$  is a measure of how strongly the precipitation rate responds to a change in  $\text{CO}_3^{2-}$ . Conversely,  $\text{CaCO}_3$  will tend to dissolve at  $\Omega < 1.0$ , and at a rate proportional to  $(1 - \Omega)^n$  [101].

As well as the concentrations of  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  and  $\text{CO}_3^{2-}$ , depth in the ocean is also important because  $K_{\text{sp}}$  scales with increasing pressure. Since  $K_{\text{sp}}$  and  $\Omega$  are inversely related, the greater the depth in the ocean the more likely the ambient environment is to be under-saturated (i.e.,  $\Omega < 1.0$ ). The depth at which  $\Omega = 1.0$  occurs is termed the equilibrium *calcite saturation horizon* (CSH). (Similar terminology can be applied to the aragonite polymorph.) Although calcite becomes thermodynamically unstable just below this, dissolution proceeds only extremely slowly. The (greater) depth at which dissolution impacts become noticeable is termed the *calcite lysocline* [102]. In practice this is taken as the inflection point in the trend of sedimentary  $\text{CaCO}_3$  content vs. water depth. For want of a more robust definition, a *chemical lysocline* is sometimes defined at  $\Omega = 0.8$ , a value which marks a distinct increase in dissolution rate [6]. Deeper still, and dissolution becomes sufficiently rapid for the dissolution flux back to the ocean to exactly balance the rain flux of calcite to the sediments. This is known as the *calcite* (or *carbonate*) *compensation depth* (CCD). Because in the real World the boundary in depth between sediments that have carbonate present and those in which it is completely absent is gradual rather than sharp, the CCD is operationally defined, and variously taken as the depth at which the  $\text{CaCO}_3$  content is reduced to 2 or 10 wt.%.

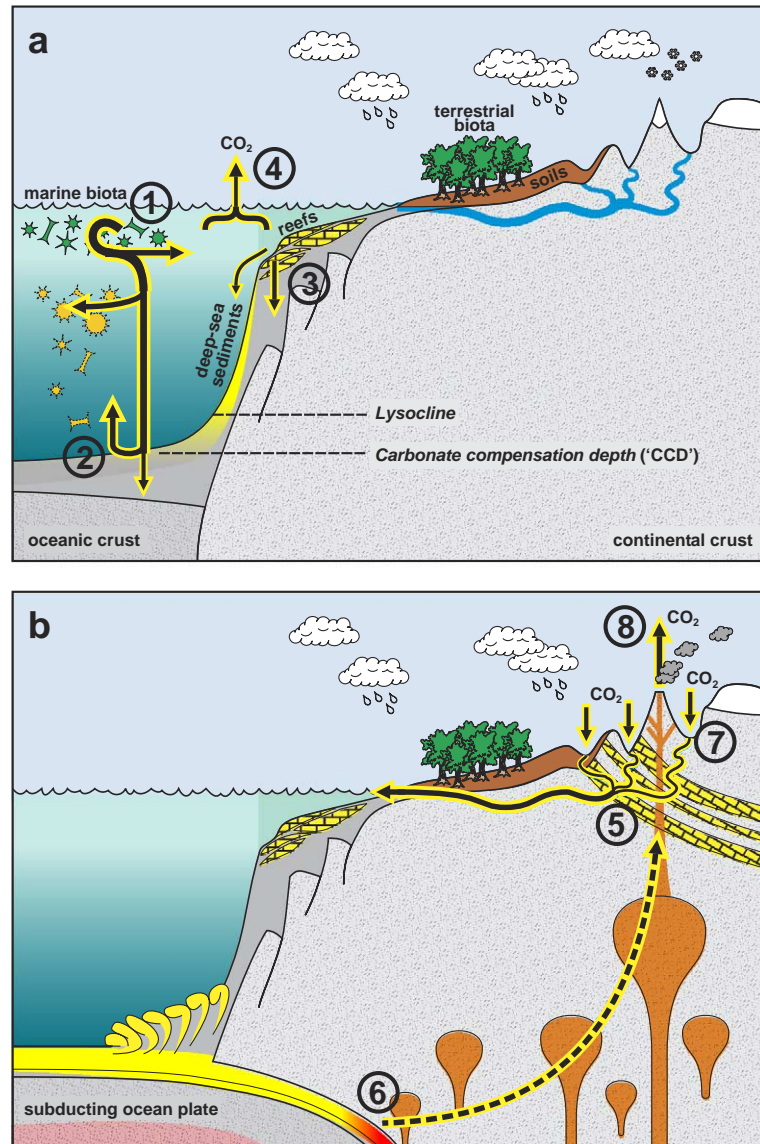


Fig. 1. The global biogeochemical cycling of calcium carbonate. (a) Modes of CaCO<sub>3</sub> transformation and recycling within the surficial system and loss to the geological reservoir (labeled '1' through '4'). #1 Precipitation of calcite by coccolithophores and foraminifera in the open ocean;  $\text{Ca}^{2+} + 2\text{HCO}_3^- \rightarrow \text{CaCO}_3 + \text{CO}_2(\text{aq}) + \text{H}_2\text{O}$ . #2 Carbonate reaching deep-sea sediments will dissolve during early diagenesis if the bottom water is under-saturated and/or the organic matter flux to the sediments is sufficiently high. #3 Precipitation of CaCO<sub>3</sub> by corals and shelly animals, with a significant fraction as the aragonite polymorph. Because modern surface waters are over-saturated relatively little of this carbonate dissolves in situ, and instead contributes to the formation of reefal structures or is exported to the adjoining continental slopes. #4 Precipitation of CaCO<sub>3</sub> results in higher pCO<sub>2</sub> at the surface, driving a net transfer of CO<sub>2</sub> from the ocean to the atmosphere. (b) Modes of CaCO<sub>3</sub> transformation and recycling within the geologic reservoirs and return to the surficial system (labeled '5' through '8'). #5 CaCO<sub>3</sub> laid down in shallow seas as platform and reef carbonates and chalks can be uplifted and exposed to erosion through rifting and mountain-building episodes. CaCO<sub>3</sub> can then be directly recycled;  $\text{CO}_2 + \text{H}_2\text{O} + \text{CaCO}_3 \rightarrow \text{Ca}^{2+} + 2\text{HCO}_3^-$ . #6 Thermal breakdown of carbonates subducted into the mantle or deeply buried. The decarbonation reaction involved is essentially the reverse of silicate weathering, and results in the creation of calcium silicates and release of CO<sub>2</sub>;  $\text{CaCO}_3 + \text{SiO}_2 \rightarrow \text{CO}_2 + \text{CaSiO}_3$ . #7 Weathering of silicate rocks;  $2\text{CO}_2 + \text{H}_2\text{O} + \text{CaSiO}_3 \rightarrow \text{Ca}^{2+} + 2\text{HCO}_3^- + \text{SiO}_2$ . #8 Emission to the atmosphere of CO<sub>2</sub> produced through decarbonation. This closes the carbon cycle on the very longest time-scales.

carbon in its inorganic, calcium carbonate ( $\text{CaCO}_3$ )<sup>1</sup> form also affects atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$ , but by more subtle means. It also plays a fundamental role in regulating ocean chemistry and pH—a major factor in the viability of calcareous marine organisms.

Before exploring some of the roles that the global carbonate cycle plays in the functioning of the Earth system (Section 2), we first discuss the two constituent parts of this cycle; (a) precipitation and burial of  $\text{CaCO}_3$ , and (b) weathering and geologic recycling, illustrated in Fig. 1a and b, respectively. Then, in Sections 3 and 4 we highlight the ways in which carbonate cycling on Earth has evolved through time, and look to the future and the increasing impact that fossil fuel  $\text{CO}_2$  release will have on the system. We finish with a brief perspective on the implications for future research. Readers are referred to Box 1 for a brief primer on aqueous carbonate chemistry and  $\text{CaCO}_3$  thermodynamics.

### 1.1. Carbonate precipitation and burial

Today, the surface of the ocean is everywhere more than saturated ('over-saturated') with respect to the solid carbonate phase, with a mean value for the saturation state ( $\Omega$ —see Box 1) of calcite of 4.8. In other words, the minimum thermodynamical requirement for calcite to precipitate is exceeded by a factor of almost 5 (for aragonite,  $\Omega$  is 3.2). Despite this, the spontaneous precipitation of  $\text{CaCO}_3$  from the water column is not observed in the ocean [2]. This is because the initial step of crystal nucleation is kinetically unfavorable, and experimentally, spontaneous (homogeneous) nucleation does not occur in sea water solutions until  $\Omega_{\text{calcite}} > \sim 20\text{--}25$  [3]. Although  $\text{CaCO}_3$  precipitation occurs as cements and coatings in the marine environment, it is primarily associated with the activities of living organisms, particularly corals, benthic shelly animals, plankton species such as coccolithophores and foraminifera, and pteropods, and where it takes place under direct metabolic control. In comparison, carbonate deposition in fresh-water systems is of

only minor importance globally, and will not be discussed further here.

While not in itself sufficient to drive substantial abiotic precipitation, the saturation state of the modern ocean surface is favorable to the preservation of carbonates deposited in shallow water (neritic) environments. Long-term accumulation of this material can result in the formation of extensive marine topographical features such as barrier reefs and carbonate banks and platforms. A different fate awaits  $\text{CaCO}_3$  precipitated in the open ocean by plankton such as coccolithophores and foraminifera, however. This is because oceanic waters become increasingly less saturated with depth. Below the depth of the saturation horizon, conditions become under-saturated ( $\Omega < 1.0$ ) and carbonate will start to dissolve. In the modern ocean the calcite saturation horizon (see Box 1) lies at about 4500 m in the Atlantic and  $\sim 3000$  m in the Pacific Ocean. Within a further 1000 m sediments are often completely devoid of carbonate particles (the carbonate compensation depth, or 'CCD'). Topographic highs on the ocean floor such as the mid-Atlantic ridge can thus be picked out by sediments rich in  $\text{CaCO}_3$  while the adjacent deep basins are low in  $\text{CaCO}_3$  (Fig. 2). The visual effect has been likened to 'snow-capped mountains'. The pressure induced surface-to-deep vertical contrast in  $\Omega$  is further enhanced by the respiration of organic matter and release of metabolic  $\text{CO}_2$  in the ocean interior which suppresses the ambient carbonate ion concentration and thus  $\Omega$  (see Box 1). The greater accumulation of metabolic  $\text{CO}_2$  in the older water masses of the deep Pacific explains why the sea-floor there is much poorer in  $\text{CaCO}_3$  compared to the Atlantic at a similar depth [4] (Fig. 2).

Unfortunately, the carbonate cycle does not conform to this simple picture, and a significant fraction of  $\text{CaCO}_3$  appears to dissolve in the water column even before it can reach the sediment surface [4–6]. This has been something of an enigma because the reduction in carbonate flux measured by sediment traps occurs well above the depth at which calcite becomes thermodynamically unstable. Dissolution of carbonate particles in acidic digestive conditions of zooplankton guts has been one proposed mechanism [6]. Acidic micro-environments within individual 'marine snow' aggregates may also be important [7]. Another possible explanation surrounds the

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this review we simply refer to 'calcium carbonate', but recognize that carbonates exhibit a range of substitutions of  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  by  $\text{Mg}^{2+}$  with a generic composition of  $\text{Mg}_x \cdot \text{Ca}_{(1-x)} \cdot \text{CO}_3$ .

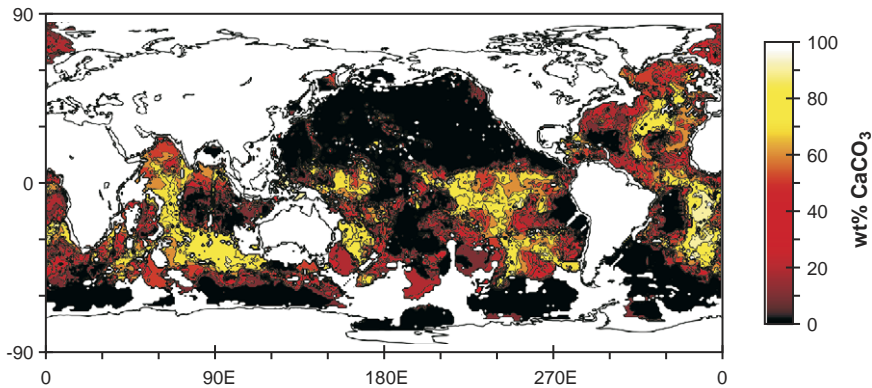


Fig. 2. Distribution of the calcium carbonate content of the surface sediments of the deep sea [10]. There is an apparent predominance of  $\text{CaCO}_3$  accumulation taking place in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans compared to much more sparse accumulation in the Pacific. This is primarily a consequence of the greater accumulation of metabolic  $\text{CO}_2$  in deep Pacific waters which drives a greater degree of under-saturation and lowers the depth of the lysocline (see Box 1). The virtual absence of  $\text{CaCO}_3$  in sediments of the Southern Ocean is due to a combination of much lower  $\text{CaCO}_3/\text{POC}$  rain ratio to the sediments and relatively corrosive bottom-waters. Topographic ‘highs’ can be picked out as areas of higher wt.%  $\text{CaCO}_3$  compared to sediments elsewhere in the same basin at similar latitudes. Areas with no data coverage (parts of the Southern Ocean, and many of the continental margins) are left blank.

aragonite polymorph because it becomes susceptible to dissolution at much shallower depths than calcite under the same ambient conditions. In support of this are recent estimates of the depth at which most  $\text{CaCO}_3$  dissolution occurs in the ocean which appears to correspond to the aragonite saturation horizon [4,5]. However, calculations suggest that solute release from sinking pteropod shells, the main aragonite product in the open ocean, should mostly occur much deeper than this [8]. Dissolution of aragonite also does not help explain how 65% of calcitic foraminiferal tests can be lost at shallow depths [9]. This uncertainty is of concern because a full appreciation of the controls of atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$  and response to global change requires an understanding of the dissolution and the depth of recycling of  $\text{CaCO}_3$  in the water column.

Overall, more than 80% of all carbonate precipitated in the open ocean dissolves either in the water column or within the uppermost layers of the underlying sediments [4,10,11]. The remainder, some 1 Gt  $\text{CaCO}_3 \text{ yr}^{-1}$  accumulates in deep-sea sediments. This burial loss, to which can be added as much as another 1 Gt  $\text{CaCO}_3 \text{ yr}^{-1}$  of deposition in neritic environments (although the uncertainty in this figure is substantial) [11,12], must somehow be balanced if the ocean is not to run out of calcium ions! This is achieved through the weathering of carbonate and silicate rocks.

### 1.2. Weathering and carbonate recycling

The weathering of calcium carbonate and calcium silicate minerals in soils and at exposed rock surfaces helps balance the  $\text{CaCO}_3$  sedimentation loss by unlocking  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  from the geologic reservoir. Alteration of ocean crust by percolating fluids adds an additional but more minor contribution [13]. The weathering reactions (see Fig. 1b; #5 and #7) provide the other raw material necessary for carbonate precipitation—bicarbonate ions ( $\text{HCO}_3^-$ ). However, because the transformation  $2\text{CO}_2 \rightarrow 2\text{HCO}_3^-$  (Fig. 1b; #7) is internal to the surficial system and does not represent a source of ‘new’ carbon, the component of  $\text{CaCO}_3$  burial derived from silicate rock weathering represents a loss of carbon to the geologic reservoir. This must be replaced on the long-term, achieved through the release of  $\text{CO}_2$  to the atmosphere from volcanic sources<sup>2</sup> [1]. (In contrast, the weathering and burial of  $\text{CaCO}_3$  results in no net loss or gain of  $\text{CO}_2$  to the surficial system).

<sup>2</sup> Imbalances between the rates of burial of organic carbon and weathering of ancient organic matter (kerogens) exposed at the land surface affects the inventory of carbon in the surficial reservoirs and thus atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$ . The details of how this particular sub-cycle fits into the Earth system picture lies outside the scope of this review, however.

A powerful regulatory mechanism of the Earth system arises because weathering rates respond to surface temperature and atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$  while simultaneously silicate weathering rates control the rate of transformation  $\text{CO}_2 \rightarrow \text{HCO}_3^-$  and thus rate of loss of carbon through  $\text{CaCO}_3$  burial. This is a negative feedback system [14] and acts to regulate the concentration of  $\text{CO}_2$  in the atmosphere over hundreds of thousands of years [1].

Buried carbonate is eventually recycled back from the geologic reservoir. This can occur if carbonates laid down in shallow seas such as limestones or chalks are subsequently uplifted and exposed to weathering as a result of mountain building episodes. However, carbonates deposited in open ocean sediments are only infrequently exposed at the Earth's surface, as ophiolite complexes—portions of the oceanic crust and overlying sediments that have been trapped between colliding cratonic blocks and uplifted. Instead, the primary recycling of deep-sea  $\text{CaCO}_3$  occurs through subduction into the upper mantle and decarbonation (see Fig. 1b; #6).

At this point it is important to recognize that carbonate burial represents the principal geologic mechanism of  $\text{CO}_2$  removal from the ocean and atmosphere. However, the act of precipitating  $\text{CaCO}_3$  has the effect of re-partitioning dissolved carbon in the surface ocean into  $\text{CO}_{2(\text{aq})}$ , raising ambient  $p\text{CO}_2$  and pH (see Box 1). Thus, precipitation and deposition of  $\text{CaCO}_3$  have the short-term effect of increasing the concentration of  $\text{CO}_2$  in the atmosphere at the expense of the ocean carbon inventory, but at the same time represents the ultimate long-term sink for  $\text{CO}_2$ .

## 2. The role of the global carbonate cycle in the Earth system

Over millions of years the silicate rock weathering feedback controls the concentration of  $\text{CO}_2$  in the atmosphere [1,14]. On time-scales shorter than ca. 100 ky, however, the weathering feedback is ineffective and the marine carbonate cycle plays an important role in determining atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$ . We illustrate this by considering some of the global changes that marked the end of the last ice age 18 thousand years ago (18 ka), when  $\text{CO}_2$  rose from a

glacial minimum of 189 ppm to 265 ppm at the beginning of the Holocene [15].

The demise of the great Northern Hemisphere ice sheets was marked by a rise in sea-level of about 120 m [16]. With the flooding of the continental shelves came a 4-fold increase in the area of shallow water environments available for coral growth [17]. Because an increase in the rate of  $\text{CaCO}_3$  deposition will drive more  $\text{CO}_2$  into the atmosphere, this mechanism was once proposed as an explanation for the 70–80 ppm deglacial rise in atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$ —known as the ‘coral reef’ hypothesis [18]. Subsequent ice core measurements made it apparent that the main increase in  $\text{CO}_2$  occurred prior to the rise in sea-level [19]. However, one cannot reject a role for corals out of hand because reconstructions of the time-history of reef building episodes are unambiguous in demonstrating a profound increase in  $\text{CaCO}_3$  deposition following the end of the last glacial [20–22]. A priori geochemical reasoning argues that this must translate into a net re-partitioning of  $\text{CO}_2$  from the ocean to atmosphere. The solution to this is that the ‘coral reef’ mechanism is essentially a Holocene phenomenon, with post-glacial coral re-colonization and reefal buildup potentially explaining much of the 20-ppm increase in  $\text{CO}_2$  observed in ice cores that starts at around 8 ka [23].

The global carbonate cycle plays other interesting biogeochemical games. Since the last glacial, the expansion of ecosystems to higher latitudes and stimulation of productivity by rising atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$  resulted in an increase in the amount of carbon contained in the terrestrial biosphere (vegetation plus soils). The estimates for this increase vary—from around 600 Gt C based on deep-ocean  $^{13}\text{C}$  changes [24] (but see [25] for a new re-assessment), ~850 Gt C according to global vegetation models [26], to 1300 Gt C (and higher) in some paleo vegetation reconstructions [27]. A transfer of carbon into the terrestrial biosphere of just 500 Gt C should have driven atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$  downwards by some 40 ppm [28], yet ice cores show an increase between glacial and early Holocene of 70–80 ppm [15]. However, as  $\text{CO}_2$  is sucked out of the atmosphere and ocean, oceanic  $\text{CO}_3^{2-}$  concentrations (and pH) increase (Fig. 3) enhancing the stability of  $\text{CaCO}_3$  in deep-sea sediments. Increased carbonate burial drives more  $\text{CO}_2$

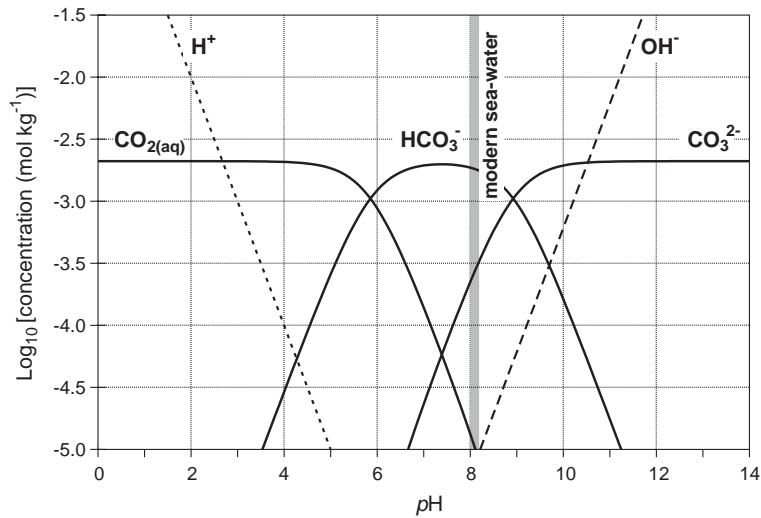


Fig. 3. The concentrations of the dissolved carbonate species as a function of pH (referred to as the Bjerrum plot, cf. [44]): Dissolved carbon dioxide ( $\text{CO}_{2(\text{aq})}$ ), bicarbonate ( $\text{HCO}_3^-$ ), carbonate ion ( $\text{CO}_3^{2-}$ ), hydrogen ion ( $\text{H}^+$ ), and hydroxyl ion ( $\text{OH}^-$ ). At modern seawater pH, most of the dissolved inorganic carbon is in the form of bicarbonate. Note that in seawater, the relative proportions of  $\text{CO}_2$ ,  $\text{HCO}_3^-$ , and  $\text{CO}_3^{2-}$  control the pH and not vice versa.

into the atmosphere, countering about 60% of the impact of re-growth in the terrestrial biosphere to leave a net  $\text{CO}_2$  fall of just 17 (rather than 40) ppm [28]. This amelioration of a perturbation of atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$  by changes induced in the preservation of  $\text{CaCO}_3$  in deep-sea sediments is known as ‘carbonate compensation’ [29] and represents a critical regulatory mechanism in the modern global carbon cycle on time-scales of 5–10 ky. (Carbonate compensation also represents an additional way of helping to explain the 20 ppm late Holocene rise in atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$  [30], to which a rise in sea-surface temperature (SST) [31] and a reduction in terrestrial carbon storage could also have contributed [32,33].) Carbonate compensation on its own does not explain why atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$  should have risen during deglaciation at about the same time as the terrestrial biosphere was accumulating carbon. Clearly, there must be additional carbon cycle mechanisms operating at this time to explain the ice core  $\text{CO}_2$  record, the main candidates being: higher SSTs, reduced sea-ice cover, a more restricted iron supply to the ocean biota, and increased ventilation of the deep ocean [23,28].

Yet another possible way of explaining an increase in atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$  arises because the saturation state of the deep-sea sedimentary pore-

waters where  $\text{CaCO}_3$  dissolution takes place is determined not only by  $\Omega$  of the overlying waters but also by the amount of metabolic  $\text{CO}_2$  released by the in situ respiration of particulate organic carbon (POC) [34,35]. Any change in the POC flux to the sediments will therefore alter the fraction of  $\text{CaCO}_3$  that dissolves. (Strictly, it is the ratio between  $\text{CaCO}_3$  and POC fluxes, the  $\text{CaCO}_3/\text{POC}$  ‘rain ratio’ that is the critical parameter rather than the absolute POC or  $\text{CaCO}_3$  flux, per se). Models predict an atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$  sensitivity of about 1.6 ppm per percent reduction in  $\text{CaCO}_3/\text{POC}$  [36,37]. A 67% increase in pelagic POC production (or 40% decrease in  $\text{CaCO}_3$ ) could therefore theoretically account for the entire deglacial  $\text{CO}_2$  rise. Thus, although the responsiveness of deep-sea sedimentary  $\text{CaCO}_3$  preservation offers a means of stabilizing ocean chemistry through carbonate compensation, the atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$  control setting on this carbonate regulator can be adjusted by changing surface ocean productivity and  $\text{CaCO}_3/\text{POC}$  rain ratio. However, despite its potential for explaining the ice core  $\text{CO}_2$  record, a primary role for the rain ratio mechanism does not appear consistent with reconstructed shifts in the CCD and lysocline and model analysis [38,39]. Recent interpretations of sediment

trap data also question whether changes in the  $\text{CaCO}_3/\text{POC}$  rain ratio at the surface would be transmitted to the abyssal sediments [40,41] (see Section 4).

A different facet of the carbonate cycle is in its role as regulator of the saturation state of the ocean. Understanding past changes in surface saturation ( $\Omega$ ) provides the environmental context for the geological interpretation of primary carbonate mineralogy, particularly the occurrence of abundant environmentally controlled carbonates such as marine cements and ooids [42]. The occurrence of extremes in  $\Omega$  may also be important in understanding the evolutionary driving force behind the advent of biomineralizing species [43]. Furthermore, given the partial pressure of  $\text{CO}_2$  ( $p\text{CO}_2$ ), knowledge of  $\Omega$  (plus temperature and major cation composition) uniquely determines the state of the entire aqueous carbonate system [44]. Thus, as proxy-based reconstructions of paleo atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$  for the Phanerozoic improve [45] an understanding of how ocean  $\Omega$  has also changed through time would enable all the properties of the aqueous carbonate state to be deduced, providing critical information in the interpretation of Earth history [46].

### 3. Evolution of the global carbonate cycle through Earth history

We review the history of global carbonate cycling in two parts; the Precambrian (up to 542 Ma), when inorganic geochemical processes tended to dominate the nature and location of carbonate deposition, and the Phanerozoic (542 Ma to present), when life became the single most important factor.

#### 3.1. Carbonate cycling in the Precambrian—when geochemistry ruled the roost

The requirements for carbonate cycling to begin on the early Earth are fairly minimal—the contact of basaltic rock with water and dissolved  $\text{CO}_2$  to initiate chemical weathering [47]. With the weathering of silicate rocks comes the delivery of solutes to the ocean, making an over-saturated surface and the eventual precipitation of carbonates inevitable. The early start to this biogeochemical cycle is reflected in

the dated carbonate record which extends back to at least 3800 Ma [48] and deposition of the first facies would have occurred well before this.

Early Precambrian carbonates are characterized by sea-floor encrustations, crystal fans, and thick cement beds, all indicative of a relatively rapid and ‘abiotic’ mechanism of  $\text{CaCO}_3$  precipitation. Progressively younger Precambrian rocks show a decreasing abundance of such inorganically precipitated carbonates [49]. This secular trend in carbonate fabric most likely reflects a progressive decline in the degree of ocean over-saturation. However, the reasons for this are not entirely clear. One possibility is because as the atmosphere and surface ocean become more oxygenated towards the end of the Precambrian, sea-water concentrations of  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$  and  $\text{Fe}^{2+}$  would have declined [49,50]. Since these cations inhibit the precipitation of  $\text{CaCO}_3$ , a reduction in their concentration would mean that a lower degree of over-saturation is required to achieve the same global carbonate deposition rate. Alternatively, the gradual accretion of continental crust and associated increase in area of shallow water depositional environments means that a lower precipitation rate per unit area (and thus  $\Omega$ ) would be required to balance the same global weathering flux [51]. Whatever the reasons, the Precambrian inorganic geochemical age was brought to a relatively abrupt end as life stepped on the evolutionary accelerator and drove the Earth system through a succession of new modes of carbonate cycling.

#### 3.2. Carbonate cycling in the Phanerozoic—enter the biota

The advent of carbonate biomineralization occurred around the time of the Cambrian–Precambrian boundary [52] when evolutionary innovation conferred on organisms the ability to precipitate carbonate structures (skeletons). Prior to this there could have been no significant biologically driven production of  $\text{CaCO}_3$ , and carbonate deposition would have been primarily restricted to heterogeneous nucleation and crystal growth on organic and inorganic surfaces in warm shallow water environments [49]. Because biomineralization enabled the more efficient removal of weathering products from the ocean by the expenditure of metabolic energy, a lower thermodynamic driving



force for carbonate precipitation would have been required in the ambient marine environment. The result would have been a reduction in ocean saturation ( $\Omega$ ) as the Phanerozoic got under way.

A second major development took place several hundred million years (My) later, with the Mesozoic proliferation of planktic calcifiers [53] and the establishment of the modern mode of carbonate cycling in a ‘Mid-Mesozoic Revolution’ [46]. We illustrate the profound importance of this by considering the response of the marine carbonate cycle to two environmental forcings; (i) sea-level, which varies over hundreds of million years by up to 300 m (Fig. 4a), and (ii) the cation chemistry of the ocean; particularly Magnesium ( $\text{Mg}^{2+}$ ) and Calcium ( $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ ) ion concentrations (Fig. 4c). Although global temperatures and continental paleo-latitude also affect global carbonate deposition by determining the latitudinal extent of carbonate production by warm-water corals [43,54], we will restrict our analysis to just two factors.

Times of high sea-level such as the Mid Paleozoic produced flooding extents in excess of 50% on some cratons [55] and the creation of extensive inland (epeiric) seas. This in turn facilitated widespread carbonate platform development and shallow water carbonate accumulation [43,54] which would have driven a lower  $\Omega$ . Conversely, times of low sea-level and restricted depositional area would produce a tendency towards high ocean  $\Omega$  [56]. Superimposed on this is a variation in the oceanic ratio of  $\text{Mg}^{2+}$  to  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  by a factor of three [57–59]. In order to maintain the same global rate of carbonate production, higher ambient  $\text{Mg}^{2+}/\text{Ca}^{2+}$  requires a more over-saturated ocean because  $\text{Mg}^{2+}$  inhibits calcite precipitation [60]. (The inhibition is predominantly a result of the  $\text{Mg}^{2+}$  interaction with the solid calcite phase, rather than a solution effect involving  $\text{Mg}^{2+}-\text{CO}_3^{2-}$  complexation. The latter effect reduces  $\text{CO}_3^{2-}$  activity but is independent of the  $\text{CaCO}_3$  polymorph present in solution—see [61] and references therein.) At higher  $\Omega$ , aragonite becomes more common in abiotic cements and hyper-calcifying organisms, which we observe in the geological record as distinctive times of relatively abundant shallow water carbonate aragonite [62,63]—periods dubbed ‘aragonite seas’ [64] (Fig. 4d).

The coincidence of times of low sea-level and low  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  concentrations (Fig. 4) should have given rise to a

highly over-saturated ocean. This is consistent with the widespread occurrence of abundant environmentally controlled carbonates such as cements, calcified cyanobacteria, and thick precipitated beds during parts of the Permian and Triassic [42,65,66], all indicative of comparatively rapid and ‘abiotic’ modes of carbonate precipitation. However, despite similar sea-level and cation chemistry, environmentally controlled carbonates are rare in the modern ocean. The difference is a direct consequence of the proliferation of calcareous plankton during the Mesozoic and creation of a new and substantive sink for  $\text{CaCO}_3$  [46,65,66].

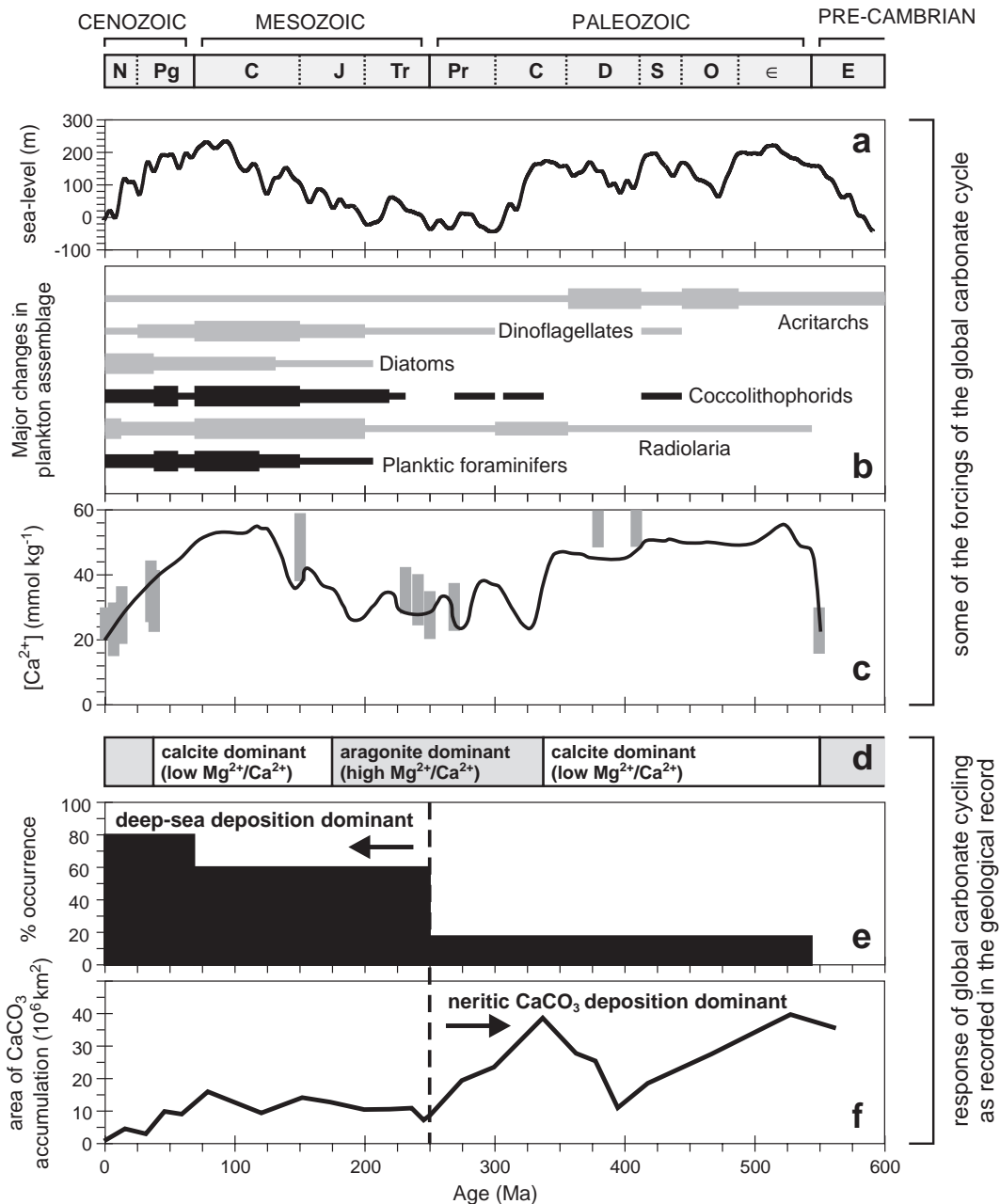
Although benthic foraminifera and other bottom-dwelling calcifiers evolved early in the Phanerozoic, it is not until the Mesozoic that a marked proliferation in coccolithophore and planktic foraminiferal diversity and abundance is observed [53,67] (Fig. 4b). Only then would a substantive deep-sea sedimentary carbonate sink have been possible. This supposition is supported by the observed composition of Phanerozoic ophiolite suites which indicate that pelagic carbonate accumulation was comparatively rare in Paleozoic ocean sediments [68] (Fig. 4e). Conversely, the mean area of platform carbonates during the Mesozoic and Cenozoic is much reduced compared to the Paleozoic (Fig. 4f). One might speculate whether the ca. 200 My gap between the first appearance of calcifying planktic foraminifera and coccolithophorids and their rise to relative dominance in global pelagic ecosystems [53] is related to extreme ocean over-saturation in the late Permian and early Triassic, a potential environmental driving force favoring calcifiers. A similar thesis can be advanced to help explain the timing of the advent of metazoan biomineralization following the inferred occurrence of extreme oceanic saturation events during the late Precambrian [69].

The establishment of a substantive deep-sea carbonate sink is important because it introduced a new stabilizing mechanism to the Earth system—‘carbonate compensation’ (see Section 2). Indeed, the absence of a responsive deep-sea carbonate sink in the Precambrian would have made the carbon–climate system much more sensitive to perturbation. Ice ages of near-global extent and multi million-year duration deduced for the end of the Precambrian [70] could have been facilitated by the weak ‘buffering’ of the Precambrian carbon cycle and atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$  [71,72]. This view is also consistent with the wide-

spread occurrence of strange ‘cap’ carbonate facies deposited during postglacial flooding of the shelves. Other explanations for the genesis of cap carbonates in the aftermath of extreme late Precambrian glaciation have been proposed, such as the removal of the solutes derived from rapid rock weathering under a

high CO<sub>2</sub> atmosphere [73,74] and the overturning of a stagnant ocean [42]. However, all hypotheses recognize extreme changes taking place in global carbonate cycling at this time.

As well as adding new mechanisms for stabilizing atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>, the establishment of a substantive



deep-sea sedimentary  $\text{CaCO}_3$  sink would have also had a destabilizing effect. For instance, episodes of high weathering rates and sequestration of carbon in pelagic carbonates could subsequently lead to periods of enhanced metamorphic  $\text{CO}_2$  out-gassing to the atmosphere as the sea-floor  $\text{CaCO}_3$  is subducted and undergoes decarbonation [75]. The subduction of carbonates as ocean basins close and are destroyed would also result in episodic enhanced  $\text{CO}_2$  release [76,77]. Both mechanisms predict secular oscillation in metamorphic  $\text{CO}_2$  out-gassing rates on tectonic time-scales, and both would not have been possible before the Mid-Mesozoic Revolution in carbonate deposition.

### 3.3. Synthesis

This evolution in global carbonate cycling over geologic time can be neatly conceptualized as three distinct marine carbonate cycle modes, termed ‘Strangelove’, ‘Neritan’, and ‘Cretan’ ocean modes by Zeebe and Westbroek [39]. The geochemistry-ruled Precambrian mode of  $\text{CaCO}_3$  cycling resembles a carbonate-‘Strangelove’ ocean, in which biogenic precipitation of  $\text{CaCO}_3$  is essentially absent. It is characterized by high-supersaturation and generally inorganic (at most partly biologically mediated) formation of carbonates. Following the advent of biomineralization in the Cambrian, biologically controlled carbonate precipitation in shallow-water (neritic) environments became significant. Its conceptual analog is the ‘Neritan’ ocean, in which the dominant mode of  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  and  $\text{CO}_3^{2-}$  removal from seawater is biogenic, neritic carbonate deposition. The saturation state of the Neritan ocean is highly susceptible to

changes in the population or ecological success of shallow-water calcifiers. The Mesozoic shift towards widespread pelagic biomineralization finally led to a significant stabilization of the marine  $\text{CaCO}_3$  saturation state, termed the ‘Cretan’ ocean. Large and rapid shifts between, e.g. the Neritic- and Cretan-ocean mode have likely occurred in the aftermaths of catastrophic events such as the Cretaceous–Tertiary bolide impact [78].

## 4. Back to the future: carbon cycling in the Anthropocene

The ocean is capable of absorbing about 70% of all the  $\text{CO}_2$  released by fossil fuel combustion [79]. For a 4000 Gt C ‘burn’, this means that the equivalent of  $\sim 600$  ppm  $\text{CO}_2$  will remain in the atmosphere after hundreds of years [80]. An atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$  concentration of  $\sim 1000$  ppm is about three times the present-day (year 2003) value of 376 ppm [81] and represents a very significant long-term radiative forcing of the climate system. The terrestrial biosphere is unlikely to be of much help and may well become a net source of  $\text{CO}_2$  to the atmosphere in the coming centuries as the Earth’s surface warms [82,83], further exacerbating the problem. Fortunately, geochemical interactions between the ocean and deep-sea sediments intervene and on a time-scale of 5–8 ky, carbonate compensation will remove a further 10–20% of fossil fuel  $\text{CO}_2$  emitted to the atmosphere [79]. Ultimately, on a time-scale of 1 My, higher silicate rock weathering rates induced by enhanced greenhouse warming will remove the remaining fraction.

---

Fig. 4. Evolution of global carbonate cycling through the Phanerozoic—major driving forces (panels *a* through *c*) and responses of the system recorded in the geological record (panels *d* through *f*). FORCINGS: (a) Eustatic sea-level plotted relative to modern [103]. (b) Major changes in plankton assemblages [53]. Calcifying taxa are highlighted in black with non-calcifying taxa shown in grey. Although the rise of planktic foraminiferal taxa (for which we take *Globigerina* as broadly representative) occurs during the early- to mid-Mesozoic, the evolution of the first calcifying foraminifera taxa occurred somewhat earlier in the mid-Paleozoic [53]. (c) Paleo-marine  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  concentrations as recorded in fluid inclusions contained in marine halite crystals [57] (vertical grey bars) as well as the model predictions of [62] (black curve). RESPONSES: (d) Ascribed characteristic periods of aragonite and calcite ‘seas’ [62,63], corresponding to times of high and low  $\text{Mg}^{2+}/\text{Ca}^{2+}$  ratios, respectively. (e) Percent occurrence of carbonates in ophiolite complexes for which sedimentary composition has been reported [68]. The comparative rarity of carbonate sediments in ophiolite complexes of Paleozoic age is noticeable. (f) Reconstructed changes in the total area of platform (shallow water) carbonates [43]. A general poleward movement of the major continents through the Phanerozoic has been proposed as the reason for the apparent long-term decline in areal extent [43]. However, the general shape of the curve is also consistent with an oscillation in sea-level, with a step reduction in the importance of shallow water carbonate after the Mid-Mesozoic Revolution [46]. The geological periods from the end-Precambrian to end-Phanerozoic are delineated at the top, running from Ediacran (‘E’) (600 to 542 Ma) at the far right through to Paleogene (‘Pg’) and Neogene (‘N’) on the left-hand side.

This has been the view of the response of the global carbonate cycle to anthropogenic perturbation—largely predictable and beneficial. New research paints a much murkier picture.

When CO<sub>2</sub> gas dissolves in water, there is a reduction in carbonate ion concentrations and an increase in ocean acidity (see [Box 1](#)). As a result of

historical fossil fuel CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, surface pH has already been reduced by some ~0.1 pH units [80,81]. A further fall over the next few hundred years of more than 0.6 pH units is possible [80] ([Fig. 5](#)). Because carbonate is thermodynamically less stable under such conditions, the metabolic cost to organisms of building carbonate shells and skeletons

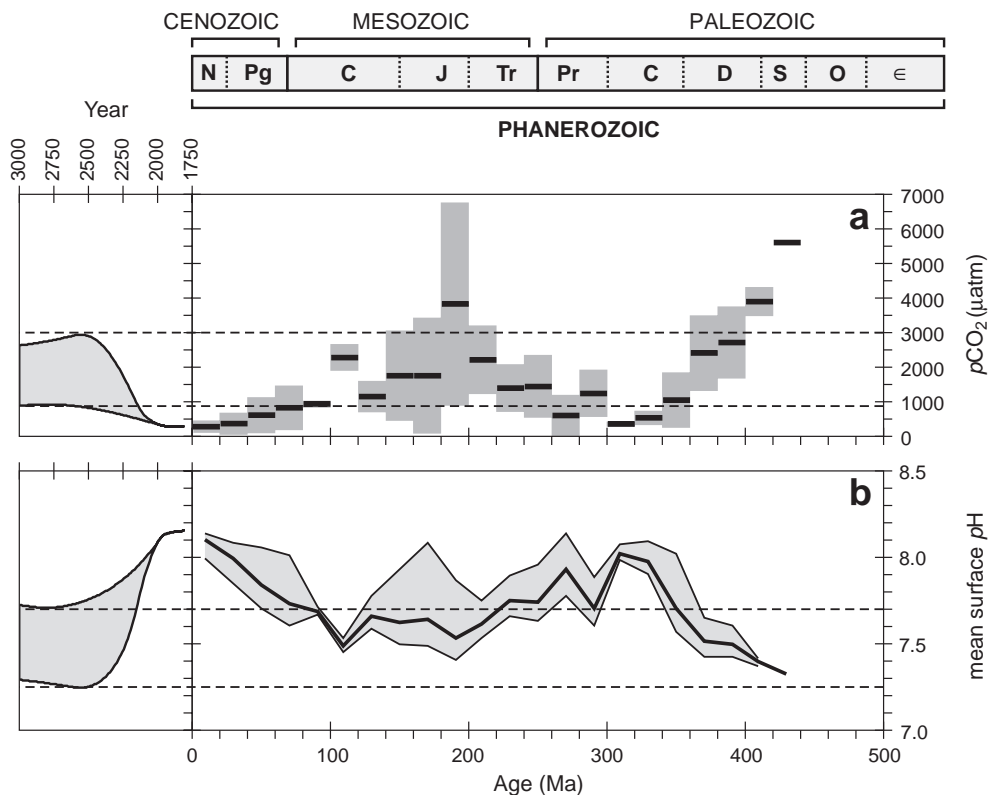


Fig. 5. A geologic perspective on current anthropogenic perturbation of the global carbon cycle. (a) Phanerozoic evolution of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> reconstructed from proxy records by Royer et al. [45]. Paleo-CO<sub>2</sub> data has been binned into 20 My intervals, with the mean and error (one standard deviation) for each interval shown as horizontal black dash and vertical grey bar, respectively. The left hand side of the figure shows the historical atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> trend (years 1800 to 2000) followed by the range in trajectories that would occur if between 4000 and 8000 Gt C fossil fuel resources were to be combusted (and also depending on the assumed rate of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions) [104]. A peak value of between ~1000 and 3000 ppm is reached before the end of this millennium, indicated by the pair of horizontal dashed lines. (b) Model-predicted evolution of mean surface pH through the Phanerozoic (but only considering the case of a modern mode of carbonate cycling) [46]. The solid black line represents the response of the global carbonate cycle to the mean paleo pCO<sub>2</sub> reconstruction while the grey-filled envelope reflects the response to the error (1 S.D.) in paleo CO<sub>2</sub>. The model is also forced with changes in ambient ocean Ca<sup>2+</sup> concentrations (see [Fig. 4c](#)) following [62]), which has the effect of additionally suppressing ocean pH by up to ~0.25 pH units during periods of elevated [Ca<sup>2+</sup>] such as the early-to-mid Paleozoic, and mid-to-late Mesozoic. Further factors affecting carbonate cycling have a comparatively smaller effect and are excluded for clarity. For instance, the absence of a significant deep-sea sedimentary carbonate sink prior to ca. 200 Ma would increase pH and make the earlier Phanerozoic ocean slightly less acidic compared to the curve shown here, but by no more than ~0.1 pH units [46]. The predicted historical and future trajectory of mean surface ocean pH in response to the same range of CO<sub>2</sub> emission scenarios as detailed in (a) above [104] is shown on the left hand side of the figure. Future surface ocean pH reaches a minimum in the range 7.7–7.75 (indicated by the pair of horizontal dashed lines).

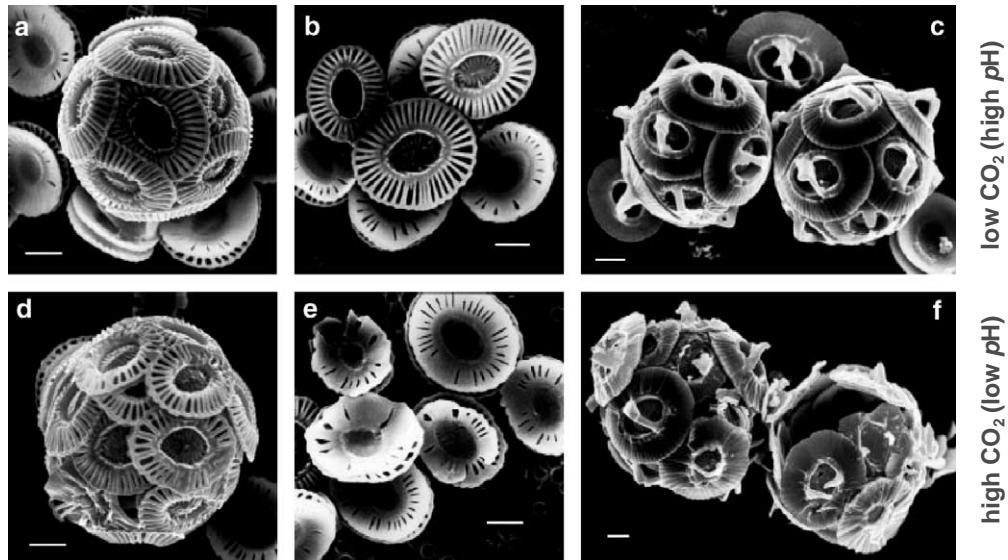


Fig. 6. Scanning electron microscopy (SEM) photographs of coccolithophorids cultured under different  $\text{CO}_2$  concentrations [90]. (a,b,d,e) *Emiliana huxleyi* and (c,f) *Gephyrocapsa Oceanica*. Scale bars represent 1  $\mu\text{m}$ . Coccolith structure is notably different, with distinct malformations and a reduced degree of calcification in cells grown at elevated  $\text{CO}_2$  levels (and lower pH) (d,e,f) compared to cultures incubated at preindustrial  $\text{CO}_2$  levels (a,b,c). With copyright permission from Nature Publishing Group.

will be greater. Experimental studies have indeed demonstrated that corals are adversely affected at higher  $p\text{CO}_2$  [84–86] with the implications for coral reef ecosystems already starting to be widely appreciated [87,88]. In contrast, much less attention has been paid to the open ocean environment. Only more recently has the extent to which calcifying plankton could be affected started to be recognized [89–91] (Fig. 6). This has important implications for the marine carbon cycle.

The precipitation of  $\text{CaCO}_3$  and subsequent removal from surface ocean layers through gravitational settling have the effect of driving surface ocean  $p\text{CO}_2$  higher. This decreases the air–sea  $\text{CO}_2$  gradient and opposes the uptake of fossil fuel  $\text{CO}_2$  from the atmosphere. If carbonate production was reduced, surface ocean  $p\text{CO}_2$  would fall and the rate of  $\text{CO}_2$  invasion into the ocean would be enhanced—acting as a ‘brake’ (negative feedback) on rising atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$  [89–91]. Preliminary estimates suggest that an increase in the rate of  $\text{CO}_2$  uptake of 0.5–1.0 Gt C  $\text{yr}^{-1}$  is possible [91]. In this respect, decreasing calcification and  $\text{CaCO}_3$  export rates would play a direct and ‘helpful’ role in ameliorating future global change.

However, a strong association between particulate organic carbon (POC) and  $\text{CaCO}_3$  fluxes recognized in deep-sea sediment trap data [92,40] may reflect a ‘ballasting’<sup>3</sup> of organic matter by carbonate particles [92,93]. A decrease in  $\text{CaCO}_3$  production would then drive a reduction in the efficiency with which POC is transported to depth, weakening the biological pump, and driving higher surface ocean  $p\text{CO}_2$  [94]. This would reduce the flux of fossil fuel  $\text{CO}_2$  into the ocean [95] and exacerbate future climate change.

Which is it? Unfortunately, the respective importance of these two mechanisms is poorly constrained and even the sign of the net impact is uncertain [95]. Underlying this is uncertainty in the interpretation of the observed relationship between sinking fluxes of  $\text{CaCO}_3$  and POC because alternative explanations require no direct link between the degree of calcification and the efficiency of particulate organic matter transport [40,41].

<sup>3</sup> The enhancement of the sinking rate of POC through the water column due to a greater mean aggregate density.

## 5. Summary and perspectives

The trajectory that the concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere takes will largely dictate the rate and magnitude of future climate change. In order to make sufficiently informed choices regarding the maximum fossil fuel CO<sub>2</sub> release that will keep global change within ‘acceptable’ limits, the natural pathways of CO<sub>2</sub> removal from the atmosphere must be fully characterized. Of primary importance is the oceanic sink, which already accounts for the equivalent of almost half of all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions due to fossil fuel burning and cement manufacture [96]. Improving our understanding of the role of the marine carbonate cycle in this and how it might change in the future is essential.

To put the possible environmental changes facing us into some perspective, one would have to turn the clock back at least 100 million years to find analogous surface ocean pH conditions (Fig. 5b). One must recognize, however, that the calcifying species involved and relative importance of shallow vs. deep-water carbonate deposition have both changed over this period. More importantly, this also excludes transient perturbations of the carbon cycle—‘catastrophic’ events such as associated with the ‘Paleocene/Eocene Thermal Maximum’ (PETM) at 55.5 Ma [97]. Indeed, the early Eocene could have seen significant surface ocean acidification in response to inferred CO<sub>2</sub> release to the ocean and atmosphere. Events such as the PETM represent a possible geologic analogue for future global change [97,98]. Understanding the PETM may prove critical in being able to correctly predict the long-term impact of continued fossil fuel CO<sub>2</sub> release, as well as what (if any) species of marine calcifying organisms might go extinct. However, we are still far from achieving this understanding and even the source and magnitude of the carbon release is currently hotly debated [99].

Given the importance of managing future global change, we believe that new impetus should be given to elucidating the role of the global carbonate cycle in the regulation and evolution of the Earth system. We identify several key priorities; (i) better quantification of the modern global carbonate budget, especially of neritic deposition, (ii) elucidating the response of planktic calcifiers and ecosystem composition to depressed ambient pH, (iii) understanding the reasons for the dissolution of carbonate particles sinking in the

water column (and the general controls on the CaCO<sub>3</sub>/POC ‘rain’ ratio at the sediment surface), and (iv) application of coupled carbon-climate models in the quantitative interpretation of ‘catastrophic’ geological events such as the PETM.

## Acknowledgements

AJR acknowledges support from Canada Research Chairs. Both authors would like to thank Derek Vance, Daniela Schmidt, Brad Opdyke, and an anonymous reviewer for helpful and supportive comments on the manuscript.

## References

- [1] R.A. Berner, K. Caldeira, The need for mass balance and feedback in the geochemical carbon cycle, *Geology* 25 (1997) 955–956.
- [2] J.W. Morse, S.L. He, Influences of *T*, *S* and *p*CO<sub>2</sub> on the pseudo-homogeneous precipitation of CaCO<sub>3</sub> from seawater—implications for whiting formation, *Mar. Chem.* 41 (1993) 291–297.
- [3] J.W. Morse, D.K. Gledhill, F.J. Millero, CaCO<sub>3</sub> precipitation kinetics in waters from the Great Bahama Bank: implications for the relationship between Bank, *Geochim. Cosmochim. Acta* 67 (2003) 2819–2826.
- [4] R.A. Feely, et al., Impact of anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> on the CaCO<sub>3</sub> system in the oceans, *Science* 305 (2004) 362–366.
- [5] S.-N. Chung, et al., Calcium carbonate budget in the Atlantic column inorganic carbon chemistry, *Glob. Biogeochem. Cycles* 17 (2003), doi:10.1029/2002GB002001.
- [6] J.D. Milliman, et al., Biologically mediated dissolution of calcium carbonate above the chemical lysocline?, *Deep-Sea Res., Part I* 46 (1999) 1653–1669.
- [7] H. Jansen, R.E. Zeebe, D.A. Wolf-Gladrow, Modeling the dissolution of settling CaCO<sub>3</sub> in the ocean, *Glob. Biogeochem. Cycles* 16 (2002), doi:10.1029/2000GB001279.
- [8] R.H. Byrne, et al., Water column dissolution of aragonite in the Pacific Ocean, *Nature* 312 (1984) 321–326.
- [9] R. Schiebel, Planktic foraminiferal sedimentation and the marine calcite budget, *Glob. Biogeochem. Cycles* 16 (2002), doi:10.1029/2001GB001459.
- [10] D. Archer, An atlas of the distribution of calcium carbonate in sediments of the deep sea, *Glob. Biogeochem. Cycles* 10 (1996) 159–174.
- [11] J.D. Milliman, A.W. Droxler, Neritic and pelagic carbonate sedimentation in the marine environment: ignorance is not bliss, *Geol. Rundsch.* 85 (1996) 496–504.
- [12] A. Vecsei, A new estimate of global reefal carbonate production including the fore-reefs, *Glob. Planet. Change* 43 (2004) 1–18.

- [13] K. Caldeira, Long-term control of atmospheric carbon-dioxide—low-temperature sea-floor alteration or terrestrial silicate-rock weathering, *Am. J. Sci.* 295 (1995) 1077–1114.
- [14] R.A. Berner, A new look at the long-term carbon cycle, *GSA Today* 9 (1999) 1–6.
- [15] E. Monnin, et al., Atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations over the last glacial termination, *Science* 291 (2001) 112–114.
- [16] R.G. Fairbanks, A 17,000-year glacio-eustatic sea level record: influence of glacial melting rates on the Younger Dryas event and deep-ocean circulation, *Nature* 342 (1989) 637–642.
- [17] J.A. Kleypas, Modeled estimates of global reef habitat and carbonate production since the last glacial maximum, *Paleoceanography* 12 (1997) 533–545.
- [18] W.H. Berger, Increase of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere during deglaciation: the coral reef hypothesis, *Naturwissenschaften* 69 (1982) 87–88.
- [19] W.S. Broecker, G.M. Henderson, The sequence of events surrounding Termination II and their implications for the cause of glacial–interglacial CO<sub>2</sub> changes, *Paleoceanography* 13 (1998) 352–364.
- [20] L. Montaggioni, Postglacial reef growth, *Earth Planet. Sci.* 331 (2000) 319–330.
- [21] D.A. Ryan, B.N. Opdyke, J.S. Jell, Holocene sediments of Wistari Reef: towards a global quantification of coral reef related neritic sedimentation in the Holocene, *Palaeogeogr. Palaeoclimatol. Palaeoecol.* 175 (2001) 173–184.
- [22] A. Vecsei, W.H. Berger, Increase of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> during deglaciation: constraints on the coral reef hypothesis from patterns of deposition, *Glob. Biogeochem. Cycles* 18 (2004), doi:10.1029/2003GB002147.
- [23] A.J. Ridgwell, A.J. Watson, M.A. Maslin, J.O. Kaplan, Implications of coral reef buildup for the controls on atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> since the Last Glacial Maximum, *Paleoceanography* 18 (2003), doi:10.1029/2003PA000893.
- [24] T.J. Crowley, Ice-age terrestrial carbon revisited, *Glob. Biogeochem. Cycles* 9 (1995) 377–389.
- [25] M.A. Maslin, E. Thomas, Balancing the deglacial global carbon budget: the hydrate factor, *Quat. Sci. Rev.* 22 (2003) 1729–1736.
- [26] J.O. Kaplan, I.C. Prentice, W. Knorr, P.J. Valdes, Modelling the dynamics of terrestrial carbon storage since the Last Glacial Maximum, *Geophys. Res. Lett.* 29 (2002) 2074, doi:10.1029/2002GL015230.
- [27] J.M. Adams, et al., Increases in terrestrial carbon storage from the Last Glacial Maximum to the present, *Nature* 348 (1990) 711–714.
- [28] D. Archer, A. Winguth, D. Lea, N. Mahowald, What caused the glacial/interglacial atmospheric pCO<sub>2</sub> cycles?, *Rev. Geophys.* 38 (2000) 159–189.
- [29] W.S. Broecker, T.-H. Peng, The role of CaCO<sub>3</sub> compensation in the glacial to interglacial atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> change, *Glob. Biogeochem. Cycles* 1 (1987) 15–29.
- [30] W.S. Broecker, J. Lynch-Stirglitz, E. Clark, I. Hajdas, G. Bonani, What caused the atmosphere’s CO<sub>2</sub> content to rise during the last 8000 years?, *Geochem. Geophys. Geosyst.* 2 (2001) (2001GC000177).
- [31] F. Joos, et al., Transient simulations of Holocene atmospheric carbon dioxide and terrestrial carbon since the Last Glacial Maximum, *Glob. Biogeochem. Cycles* 18 (2004), doi:10.1029/2003GB002156.
- [32] V. Brovkin, et al., Carbon cycle, carbon cycle, vegetation and climate dynamics in the Holocene: experiments with the CLIMBER-2 Model, *Glob. Biogeochem. Cycles* 16 (2002), doi:10.1029/2001GB001662.
- [33] A. Indermühle, et al., Holocene carbon-cycle dynamics based on CO<sub>2</sub> trapped in ice at Taylor Dome, Antarctica, *Nature* 398 (1999) 121–126.
- [34] D. Archer, J.L. Morford, S.R. Emerson, A model of suboxic sedimentary diagenesis suitable for automatic tuning and gridded global domains, *Glob. Biogeochem. Cycles* 16 (2002), doi:10.1029/2000GB001288.
- [35] B. Hales, Respiration, dissolution, and the lysocline, *Paleoceanography* 18 (2003), doi:10.1029/2003PA000915.
- [36] D. Archer, E. Maier-Reimer, Effect of deep-sea sedimentary calcite preservation on atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentration, *Nature* 367 (1994) 260–263.
- [37] A.J. Ridgwell, A.J. Watson, D.E. Archer, Modelling the response of the oceanic Si inventory to perturbation, and consequences for atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>, *Glob. Biogeochem. Cycles* 16 (2002) 1071, doi:10.1029/2002GB001877.
- [38] D.M. Sigman, D.C. McCorkle, W.R. Martin, The calcite lysocline as a constraint on glacial/interglacial low-latitude production changes, *Glob. Biogeochem. Cycles* 12 (1998) 409–427.
- [39] R.E. Zeebe, P. Westbroek, A simple model for the CaCO<sub>3</sub> saturation state of the ocean: the “Strangelove,” the “Neritan,” and the “Cretan” Ocean, *Geochem. Geophys. Geosyst.* 4 (2003), doi:10.1029/2003GC000538.
- [40] R. Francois, et al., *Glob. Biogeochem. Cycles* 16 (2002), doi:10.1029/2001GB001722.
- [41] U. Passow, Switching perspectives: do mineral fluxes determine particulate organic carbon fluxes or vice versa?, *Geochem. Geophys. Geosyst.* 5 (2004), doi:10.1029/2003GC000670.
- [42] J.P. Grotzinger, A.H. Knoll, Anomalous carbonate precipitates: is the Precambrian the key to the Permian?, *Palaios* 10 (1995) 578–596.
- [43] L.J. Walker, et al., Continental drift and Phanerozoic carbonate accumulation in shallow-shelf and deep-marine settings, *J. Geol.* 110 (2002) 75–87.
- [44] R.E. Zeebe, D. Wolf-Gladrow, CO<sub>2</sub> in seawater: equilibrium, kinetics, isotopes, Elsevier Oceanographic Series, vol. 65, Elsevier, New York, 2001.
- [45] D.L. Royer, et al., CO<sub>2</sub> as a primary driver of Phanerozoic climate, *GSA Today* 14 (2004) 4–10.
- [46] A.J. Ridgwell, A mid Mesozoic revolution in the regulation of ocean chemistry, *Mar. Geol.* (in press).
- [47] N.H. Sleep, K. Zahnle, Carbon dioxide cycling and implications for climate on ancient Earth, *J. Geophys. Res.* 106 (2001) 1373–1399.
- [48] G. Shields, J. Veizer, Precambrian marine carbonate isotope database: version 1.1, *Geochem. Geophys. Geosyst.* 3 (2002), doi:10.1029/2001GC000266.

- [49] J.P. Grotzinger, N.P. James, Precambrian carbonates; evolution of understanding, *Carbonate Sedimentology and Diagenesis in the Evolving Precambrian World*, SEPM, 2000.
- [50] J.P. Grotzinger, J.F. Kasting, New constraints on Precambrian ocean composition, *J. Geol.* 101 (1993) 235–243.
- [51] D.J. Des Marais, Isotopic evolution of the biogeochemical carbon cycle during the Precambrian, *Rev. Mineral. Geochem.* 43 (2001) 555–578.
- [52] R.A. Wood, J.P. Grotzinger, J.A.D. Dickson, Proterozoic modular biomineralized metazoan from the Nama Group, Namibia, *Science* 296 (2002) 2383–2386.
- [53] R.E. Martin, Cyclic and secular variation in microfossil biomineralization—clues to the biogeochemical evolution of Phanerozoic oceans, *Glob. Planet. Change* 11 (1995) 1–23.
- [54] B.N. Opdyke, B.H. Wilkinson, Carbonate mineral saturation state and cratonic limestone accumulation, *Am. J. Sci.* 293 (1993) 217–234.
- [55] T.J. Algeo, K.B. Soslavinsky, The Paleozoic world—continental flooding, hypsometry, and sealevel, *Am. J. Sci.* 295 (1995) 787–822.
- [56] T. Volk, Sensitivity of climate and atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> to deep-ocean and shallow-ocean carbonate burial, *Nature* 337 (1989) 637–640.
- [57] J. Horita, et al., Chemical evolution of seawater during the Phanerozoic: implications from the record of marine evaporates, *Geochim. Cosmochim. Acta* 66 (2002) 3733–3756.
- [58] T.K. Lowenstein, et al., Oscillations in Phanerozoic seawater chemistry: evidence from fluid inclusions, *Science* 294 (2002) 1086–1088.
- [59] T.K. Lowenstein, et al., Secular variation in seawater chemistry and the origin of calcium chloride basinal brines, *Geology* 31 (2003) 857–860.
- [60] K.J. Davis, et al., The role of Mg<sup>2+</sup> as an impurity in calcite growth, *Science* 290 (2000) 1134–1137.
- [61] R.E. Zeebe, A. Sanyal, Comparison of two potential strategies of planktonic foraminifera for house building: Mg<sup>2+</sup> or H<sup>+</sup> removal?, *Geochim. Cosmochim. Acta* 66 (2002) 1159–1169.
- [62] S.M. Stanley, L.A. Hardie, Secular oscillations in the carbonate mineralogy of reef-building and sediment-producing organisms driven by tectonically forced shifts in seawater chemistry, *Palaeogeogr. Palaeoclimatol. Palaeoecol.* 144 (1998) 3–19.
- [63] S.M. Stanley, L.A. Hardie, Hypercalcification: paleontology link plate tectonics and geochemistry to sedimentology, *GSA Today* 9 (1999) 1–7.
- [64] P.A. Sandberg, An oscillating trend in Phanerozoic non-skeletal carbonate mineralogy, *Nature* 305 (1983) 19–22.
- [65] R. Riding, Phanerozoic patterns of marine CaCO<sub>3</sub> precipitation, *Naturwissenschaften* 80 (1993) 513–516.
- [66] D.Y. Sumner, J.P. Grotzinger, Were kinetics of Archean calcium carbonate precipitation related to oxygen concentration?, *Geology* 24 (1996) 119–122.
- [67] M.B. Hart, The search for the origin of the planktic Foraminifera, *J. Geol. Soc.* 160 (2003) 341–343.
- [68] S.K. Boss, B.H. Wilkinson, Planktogenic eustatic control on cratonic oceanic carbonate accumulation, *J. Geol.* 99 (1991) 497–513.
- [69] S.T. Brennan, T.K. Lowenstein, J. Horita, Seawater chemistry and the advent of biocalcification, *Geology* 32 (2004) 473–476.
- [70] J.L. Kirschvink, Late Proterozoic low-latitude global glaciation: the snowball Earth, in: J.W. Schopf, C. Klein (Eds.), *The Proterozoic Biosphere*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 51–52.
- [71] A.J. Ridgwell, M.J. Kennedy, K. Caldeira, Carbonate deposition, climate stability, and Neoproterozoic ice ages, *Science* 302 (2003) 859–862.
- [72] A.J. Ridgwell, M.J. Kennedy, Secular changes in the importance of neritic carbonate deposition as a control on the magnitude and stability of Neoproterozoic ice ages, in: G. Jenkins, et al. (Eds.), *The Extreme Proterozoic: Geology, Geochemistry, and Climate*, Geophysical Monograph Series, vol. 146, American Geophysical Union, Washington, DC, 2004.
- [73] P.F. Hoffman, A.J. Kaufman, G.P. Halverson, D.P. Schrag, A Neoproterozoic snowball earth, *Science* 281 (1998) 1342–1346.
- [74] P.F. Hoffman, D.P. Schrag, The snowball Earth hypothesis: testing the limits of global change, *Terra Nova* 14 (2002) 129–155.
- [75] K. Caldeira, Continental–pelagic carbonate partitioning and the global carbonate–silicate cycle, *Geology* 19 (1991) 204–206.
- [76] J.M. Edmond, Y. Huh, Non-steady state carbonate recycling and implications for the evolution of atmospheric pCO<sub>2</sub>, *Earth Planet. Sci. Lett.* 216 (2003) 125–139.
- [77] D.P. Schrag, Control of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> and climate through Earth history, *Geochim. Cosmochim. Acta* 66 (2002) A688.
- [78] K. Caldeira, M.R. Rampino, Aftermath of the end-Cretaceous mass extinction—possible biogeochemical stabilization of the carbon-cycle and climate, *Paleoceanography* 8 (1993) 515–525.
- [79] D. Archer, H. Kheshgi, E. Maier-Reimer, Multiple timescales for neutralization of fossil fuel CO<sub>2</sub>, *Glob. Biogeochem. Cycles* 12 (1998) 259.
- [80] K. Caldeira, M.E. Wickett, Anthropogenic carbon and ocean pH, *Nature* 425 (2003) 365.
- [81] C.D. Keeling, T.P. Whorf, Atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> records from sites in the SIO air sampling network, *Trends: A Compendium of Data on Global Change*, Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, U.S. Department of Energy, Oak Ridge, Tenn., USA, 2004, (<http://cdiac.esd.ornl.gov/trends/co2/sio-mlo.htm>).
- [82] T.M. Lenton, Land and ocean carbon cycle feedback effects on global warming in a simple Earth system model, *Tellus* 52 (2000) 1159–1188.
- [83] J.A. Kleypas, et al., Geochemical consequences of increased atmospheric carbon dioxide on coral reefs, *Science* 284 (1999) 118.



- [84] C. Langdon, et al., Effect of calcium carbonate saturation state on the calcification rate of an experimental coral reef, *Glob. Biogeochem. Cycles* 14 (2000) 639–654.
- [85] N. Leclercq, J.P. Gattuso, J. Jaubert, CO<sub>2</sub> partial pressure controls the calcification rate of a coral community, *Glob. Chang. Biol.* 6 (2000) 329–334.
- [86] A.T. Marshall, P.L. Clode, Effect of increased calcium concentration in sea water on calcification and photosynthesis in the scleractinian coral *Galaxea fascicularis*, *J. Exp. Biol.* 205 (2002) 2107–2113.
- [87] T.P. Hughes, et al., Climate change, human impacts, and the resilience of coral reefs, *Science* 301 (2003) 929–933.
- [88] J.A. Kleypas, R.W. Buddemeier, J.-P. Gattuso, *Int. J. Earth Sci.* 90 (2001) 426.
- [89] S. Barker, H. Elderfield, Foraminiferal calcification response to glacial–interglacial changes in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>, *Science* 297 (2002) 833.
- [90] U. Riebesell, I. Zondervan, B. Rost, P.D. Tortell, R.E. Zeebe, F.M.M. Morel, Reduced calcification of marine plankton in response to increased atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>, *Nature* 407 (2000) 364–367.
- [91] I. Zondervan, R.E. Zeebe, B. Rost, U. Riebesell, Decreasing marine biogenic calcification: a negative feedback on rising atmospheric pCO<sub>2</sub>, *Glob. Biogeochem. Cycles* 15 (2001) 507–516.
- [92] R.A. Armstrong, C. Lee, J.I. Hedges, S. Honjo, S.G. Wakeham, A new, mechanistic model for organic carbon fluxes in the ocean: based on the quantitative association of POC with ballast minerals, *Deep-Sea Res., Part II* 49 (2002) 219–236.
- [93] C. Klaas, D.E. Archer, Association of sinking organic matter with various types of mineral ballast in the deep sea: implications for the rain ratio, *Glob. Biogeochem. Cycles* 16 (2002), doi:10.1029/2001GB001765.
- [94] A.J. Ridgwell, An end to the ‘rain ratio’ reign?, *Geochem. Geophys. Geosyst.* 4 (2003), doi:10.1029/2003GC000512.
- [95] S. Barker, J.A. Higgins, H. Elderfield, The future of the carbon cycle: review, calcification response, ballast and feedback on atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>, *Philos. Trans. R. Soc. A* 361 (2003) 1977.
- [96] C.L. Sabine, et al., The oceanic sink for anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub>, *Science* 305 (2004) 367–371.
- [97] G.R. Dickens, Rethinking the global carbon cycle with a large, dynamic and microbially mediated gas hydrate capacitor, *EPSL* 213 (2003) 169–183.
- [98] S. Bains, R.D. Norris, R.M. Corfield, K.L. Faul, Termination of global warmth at the Palaeocene/Eocene boundary through productivity feedback, *Nature* 407 (2000) 171–174.
- [99] A.C. Kurtz, et al., Early Cenozoic decoupling of the global carbon and sulfur cycles, *Paleoceanography* 18 (2003), doi:10.1029/2003PA000908.
- [100] S.J. Zhong, A. Mucci, Calcite precipitation in seawater using a constant addition technique—a new overall reaction kinetic expression, *Geochim. Cosmochim. Acta* 57 (1993) 1409–1417.
- [101] L.M. Walter, J.W. Morse, The dissolution kinetics of shallow marine carbonates in seawater: a laboratory study, *Geochim. Cosmochim. Acta* 49 (1985) 1503–1513.
- [102] W.S. Broecker, The oceanic CaCO<sub>3</sub> cycle, in: H.D. Holland, K.K. Turekian (Eds.), *Treatise on Geochemistry*, Elsevier, 2003, pp. 529–549.
- [103] B.U. Haq, et al., Mesozoic and Cenozoic chronostratigraphy and cycles of sea-level change, in: C.K. Wilgus, et al. (Eds.), *Sealevel-changes; An Integrated Approach*, Special Publication-Society of Economic Paleontologists and Mineralogists, vol. 42, 1988, pp. 71–108.
- [104] T. Tyrrell, Submission to the Royal Society working group on Ocean acidification, personal communication.



**Andy Ridgwell** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Earth and Ocean Sciences of the University of British Columbia, and has the fancy title of ‘Canada Research Chair in Global Process Modelling’. Although in practice spending most of his time tending to the every need of 5 cats, his research addresses fundamental questions surrounding the past and future controls on atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> and the role of feedbacks in the climate system. His weapon of choice in this endeavor is an Earth System Climate Model.



**Richard Zeebe** is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Oceanography at the University of Hawaii. His research focuses on the global carbon cycle, biogeochemistry and paleoceanography. His interest ranges from physico-chemical properties of molecules and the biogeochemistry of foraminifera to the scale of the global ocean. Together with Dieter Wolf-Gladrow he has published a book in 2001 on the CO<sub>2</sub> chemistry in seawater which has been referred to as ‘the CO<sub>2</sub> survival kit’.