

1 Acoustic Complexity Index to assess
2 Benthic Biodiversity of a Partially
3 Protected Area in the Southwest of the
4 UK.

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11 **Highlights:**

- 12 • Acoustic Complexity Index higher in fished area vs protected area
13 • Acoustic Complexity Index does not correlate with simultaneous biodiversity indices
14 • Acoustic Complexity Index covaries with mobile assemblage composition

15 **Abstract**

16 The soundscape of the marine environment is a relatively understudied area of ecology that has
17 the potential to provide large amounts of information on biodiversity, reproductive behaviour,
18 habitat selection, spawning and predator-prey interactions. Biodiversity is often visually assessed

19 and used as a proxy for ecosystem health. Visual assessment using divers or remote video
20 methods can be expensive, and limited to times of good weather and water visibility. Previous
21 studies have concluded that acoustic measures, such as the Acoustic Complexity Index (ACI),
22 correlate with visual biodiversity estimates and offer an alternative to assess ecosystem health.

23 Here, the ACI measured over 5 years in a Marine Protected Area (MPA) in the UK, Lyme Bay,
24 was analysed alongside another monitoring method, Baited Remote Underwater Video Systems
25 (BRUVs). Two treatments were sampled annually in the summer from 2014 until 2018 with sites
26 inside the MPA, as well as Open Control sites outside of the MPA.

27 Year by year correlations, which have been used elsewhere to test ACI, showed significant
28 correlations with Number of Species and ACI. However, the sign of these correlations changed
29 almost yearly, showing that more in-depth analyses are needed.

30 Multivariate analysis of the benthic assemblage composition (from BRUVs) was carried out by
31 Permutational Multivariate Analysis of Variance (PERMANOVA) using Distance Matrices.
32 Although not consistently correlating with univariate measures, the ACI was significantly
33 interacting with the changing benthic assemblage composition, as it changed over time and
34 protection (Inside vs Outside the MPA).

35 ACI showed potential to allude to shifting benthic communities, yet with no consistency when
36 used alongside univariate measures of diversity. Although it is not without its own disadvantages,
37 and thus should be developed further before implementation, the ACI could potentially reflect
38 more complex changes to the benthos than simply the overall diversity.

39 Keywords: Acoustic Complexity Index, Biodiversity, Marine Protected Area, Monitoring Tools

40 1. Introduction

41 Biodiversity provides a useful measure to assess ecosystem health (Worm et al., 2006), and is
42 increasingly being used for conservation and monitoring purposes, with an observed decrease used as
43 a proxy for a degraded or negatively impacted ecosystem (Wabnitz et al., 2018). To quantify and

44 compare these changes in diversity, many univariate indices have been produced, which simplify an
45 assemblage of taxa into a single value. The most commonly used indices involve integrating the
46 number of species present with measures of how the species are distributed within the assemblages,
47 such as Number of Species (Kaplan et al., 2015; Pieretti and Farina, 2013; Sheehan et al., 2013b),
48 Shannon-Wiener's diversity index (De-La-Ossa-Carretero et al., 2012), Simpson's diversity index
49 (Miralles et al., 2016; Rombouts et al., 2019) and taxonomic distinctness (Clarke and Warwick, 2001;
50 Leonard et al., 2006), which also involves phylogenetic distance.

51 Historic methods for assessing marine biodiversity have often used destructive practices (Francour,
52 1994; Lipej et al., 2003), such as poisoning (Diamant et al., 1986) or trawling (Cappo et al., 2004).
53 However, for the study of recovering and fragile benthic systems, such as those in Marine Protected
54 Areas (MPAs), non-invasive, non-extractive methods such as Underwater Visual Census (UVC) or
55 Underwater Video Survey (UVS) are considered more appropriate (Sheehan et al., 2013a, 2010).
56 Visual methods will always have the drawback that there is no physical sample taken, although image
57 libraries give a permanent record, and thus those species that are harder to identify visually will
58 always be under-sampled; yet this lack of physical sample means the populations being researched are
59 almost or completely unaffected by the survey taken. A potential addition to supplement visual survey
60 would be the assessment of the marine soundscape (Staaterman et al., 2017). This method for
61 sampling the marine environment is similarly non-extractive and non-invasive, while sampling
62 components of the ecosystem potentially under-represented by visual methods alone.

63 The marine soundscape comprises both natural and anthropogenic elements. Assessment of the
64 biological element (biophony) of the marine soundscape has been used to describe overall biodiversity
65 (Bertucci et al., 2016), reproductive behaviour (de Jong et al., 2018), habitat selection (Vermeij et al.,
66 2010), spawning (Casaretto et al., 2014; Hawkins and Amorim, 2000) and predator-prey interactions
67 (Bernasconi et al., 2011; Giorli et al., 2016). Biophony is produced by a wide range of taxa ranging
68 from large cetaceans producing low frequency (~20Hz) calls or songs (Samaran et al., 2013), that can
69 be detected up to thousands of kilometres away (Rivers, 1997), to crustaceans creating loud (190 dB
70 re 1 μ Pa), broadband (2kHz up to 300kHz) 'snaps' and 'pops' (Picciulin et al., 2013).

71 Acoustic indices have been developed and utilised in marine (Gordon et al., 2018; Harris et al., 2016;
72 Nedelec et al., 2015; Pieretti et al., 2017; Trenkel et al., 2011) and terrestrial (Farina and Pieretti,
73 2014; Merchant et al., 2015; Pieretti et al., 2015, 2011; Pijanowski et al., 2011; Sueur et al., 2008b)
74 environments to assess whole ecosystem biodiversity. The use of these acoustic indices is perceived to
75 allow hidden or shy species, overlooked by other survey methods, to be accounted for (Staaterman et
76 al., 2017). The ACI as set out in Pieretti *et al.* (2011) quantifies the relative change in sound intensity
77 across all frequencies of a soundscape, while being minimally affected by constant anthropogenic
78 noise. The ACI was developed on the assumption that with increased diversity of species, there would
79 be an increase in the complexity of biological sound produced. So far, most analyses of ACI have
80 shown a positive correlation with a variety of biodiversity indices (Bertucci et al., 2016; Harris et al.,
81 2016; Meyer et al., 2018; Pieretti et al., 2015, 2011).

82 The two survey methods, visual and acoustic, are thought to complement each other by overlapping,
83 as well as covering differing spatial scales and taxonomic groups (Staaterman et al., 2017). However,
84 the majority of studies to date regarding this interaction have been based either in areas of very high
85 biodiversity, such as coral reef systems (Bertucci et al., 2016; Kaplan et al., 2015), or only focused on
86 fish diversity (Harris et al., 2016). As such, the transferability to other habitats and ecosystems is
87 limited.

88 This study assessed the suitability of the ACI index derived from using acoustic recording as a
89 monitoring method and to explore its relationship with seabed biodiversity. As such, a 5 year study
90 within a recovering temperate reef seabed ecosystem was undertaken, in which were protected areas
91 and those open to bottom fishing.

92 It was expected that the ACI and two visual biodiversity indices, Number of Species and Shannon's
93 Diversity Index, derived from Baited Remote Underwater Video systems (BRUVs) data ('visual
94 biodiversity indices' from now on), would increase over time in the MPA relative to the areas that
95 continue to be fished. As a recovering system it would be predicted that the interaction of time and
96 treatment would be significant. Therefore, the following hypotheses were assessed for inside vs
97 outside the MPA:

- 98 1. The ACI would increase over time,
- 99 2. The visual biodiversity indices would increase over time,
- 100 3. The visual biodiversity indices and the ACI would correlate with each other over time,
- 101 4. Changes in the mobile benthic assemblage composition would result in similar changes to the
- 102 ACI.

103 2. Methods

104 2.1 Study Location

105 Lyme Bay (Fig. 1), is located on the south coast of England, and contains areas of rocky reef habitat
106 known to include nationally important fragile reef building species (Hiscock and Breckels, 2007). A
107 Statutory Instrument (SI), a type of MPA, was established in 2008 in Lyme Bay. The SI excluded all
108 towed demersal fishing equipment (scallop dredging and trawling) from a 206 km² area of the bay.

109 Experimental site selection was based on similar biotope classifications to negate any confounding
110 effects of habitat heterogeneity (Claudet et al., 2008), with all sites being on either hard or 'mixed'
111 substrate at similar depths (Sheehan et al., 2013b; Stevens et al., 2014). There were two treatments:
112 Inside the MPA (n=12) and Outside the MPA (n=6). Geographically similar pairs of sites were
113 grouped into 'Areas'.

114 In the winter of 2013/2014, the south coast of the UK experienced severe and unprecedented storm
115 activity that was observed to have major impacts on South West England's coastal systems
116 (Masselink et al., 2016). The effect to both the protected and non-protected ecosystems provided an
117 opportunity to start a new monitoring strategy. This incorporated acoustic recording and assessment
118 of the marine soundscape inside and outside of the MPA alongside visual measures of the seabed
119 assemblage and allowed the assessment of the emerging acoustic analyses.

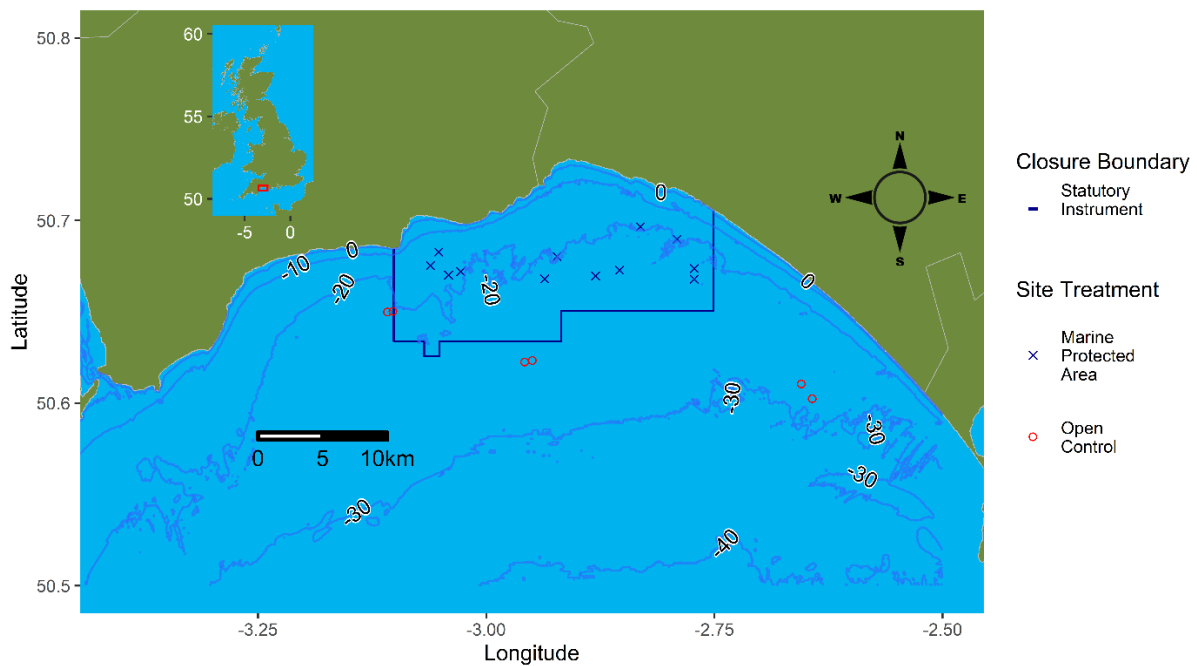


Fig. 1. Map of the UK inlaid in a map of Lyme Bay, showing site locations and their treatments (Blue Cross: Marine Protected Area, Red Circle: Open Control). Dark blue line shows the Statutory Instrument and light blue lines show 10m depth contours.

120 2.2 Data Collection

121 2.2.1 Acoustic Recorder Deployment

122 At each site, an acoustic recorder was attached and deployed with one of the three replicate BRUVs
123 (Fig. 2). The acoustic recorders used were low power Digital SpectroGrams (DSG) (Hydrophone
124 Calibration Sensitivity=-190dBV/uPa, Sample rate=50 kHz, Decimation Factor=4, System Gain=20,
125 Effective Sample Range=0-25 kHz; Loggerhead Instruments, Sarasota, FL, USA), which were used to
126 record DSG files on a duty cycle of 16 seconds recorded every 2 minutes to conserve battery life. The
127 recorders were attached to one BRUVs for every site, to sample identical locations (Fig. 2), but, as

128 DSG acoustic recorders sample a larger area (Simard *et al.*, 2015) than the BRUVs maximum
 129 effective range of attraction (AR) (Cappo *et al.*, 2004), single acoustic recordings were used across the
 130 three BRUVs replicates (Fig. S1).

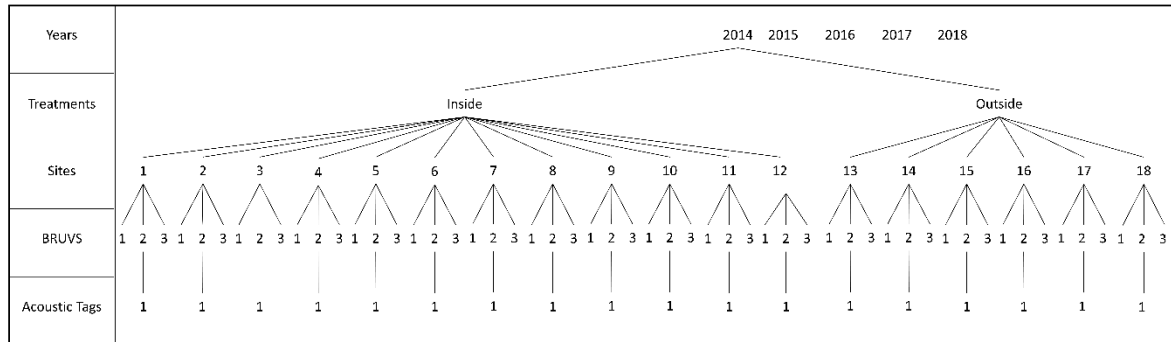


Fig. 2. Sampling design for BRUVs and Acoustic Recorders.

131 2.2.2 Acoustic File Extraction

132 For each deployment, audio recordings were prepared to ~360 second WAV format files, equating to
 133 45 minutes, to align with the recorded BRUVs. Auditory and visual examinations were then used to
 134 remove any sporadic dominant anthropogenic interference using ‘seewave’ package in R (Sueur *et al.*,
 135 2008a). For each deployment Acoustic Complexity Index (ACI)(Pieretti *et al.*, 2011) was calculated,
 136 using the R packages ‘tuneR’ and ‘seewave’ (Ligges *et al.*, 2016; Sueur *et al.*, 2008a).

137 2.2.3 Acoustic Complexity Index

138 Originally developed to analyse terrestrial avian communities, the Acoustic Complexity Index (ACI)
 139 quantifies the change in adjacent spectrogram intensities for all temporal steps and frequency bins of a
 140 recording (Pieretti *et al.*, 2011). Firstly, sound files were split into frequency bins and temporal steps.
 141 The change in adjacent intensities are then summed across these frequency bins and temporal steps.
 142 Thus, high ACI values are produced by large variations in sound intensity across many frequencies
 143 and times, whereas constant levels of similar intensity, such as most anthropogenic sources (e.g. boat
 144 engine), will produce low values of ACI (Bertucci *et al.*, 2016).

145 ACI was chosen for the current study since the hydrophones used were encased in resin and could not
 146 be calibrated, which is a necessary requirement for calculating amplitude. As such, the acoustic files
 147 created could not be analysed with other popular acoustic measures which rely on amplitude, such as

148 Acoustic Entropy, Acoustic Richness, Root Mean Square or Sound Pressure Level (Picciulin et al.,
149 2013; Sueur et al., 2008b).

150 2.3 Baited Remote Underwater Video Systems

151 Baited Remote Underwater Video systems (BRUVs) are a non-destructive method for sampling
152 mobile communities (Babcock et al., 1999; Heagney et al., 2007). Three replicate BRUVs were
153 deployed at each site (Fig. 2) for 45 minutes then recovered. Specifications of equipment are
154 described in Bicknell *et al.*, (2019).

155 2.3.1 Video analysis

156 After a preliminary settling period of 5 minutes, 30 minutes of video were analysed in 1 minute
157 segments. For each segment all mobile benthic organisms were identified and recorded. All organisms
158 were identified to the highest taxonomic resolution possible. Abundance (MaxN) was calculated for
159 each species from the maximum number of individuals of each species observed across all of the 30
160 minute segments.

161 2.4 Statistical Analysis

162 Permutational Analysis of Variance (PERMANOVA) was used to test differences in between years
163 and treatments for the ACI, Shannon's Diversity Index, Number of Species and the assemblage
164 composition. Year and Treatment were fixed factors with five and two levels respectively (Year:
165 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018; Treatment: MPA and Open Control) using Primer v7 and
166 PERMANOVA+ (Anderson et al., 2008; Clarke and Gorley, 2015). The assemblage composition
167 analysis also included a random factor Area, which was nested inside Treatment (MPA=6 areas,
168 OC=3 areas). PERMANOVA was chosen as it is robust to unbalanced designs (Sheehan et al.,
169 2013b). For Shannon's Index, Number of Species and assemblage composition, the ACI was included
170 as a covariate. The statistical significance of the variance components were tested using 9999
171 permutations under a reduced model (Anderson, 2001; Anderson and ter Braak, 2002). The analyses
172 of the ACI and the two visual biodiversity indices were undertaken on the basis of a Euclidean
173 distance matrix calculated from the Index values (Anderson and Millar, 2004). The assemblage

174 composition analysis was based on a Bray-Curtis dissimilarity matrix calculated from dispersion
 175 weighted, fourth root transformed abundance data. Significant interactions ($p < 0.05$) of fixed terms
 176 were tested using PERMANOVA pairwise tests.

177 To assess correlations between visual biodiversity measures and the ACI, scatter plots were created
 178 with Pearson correlations showing R values and significance ($p < 0.05$). Assemblage composition was
 179 visualised using non-metric Multi-Dimensional Scaling (nMDS: Clarke and Gorley, 2015).

180 3. Results

181 3.1 Acoustic Complexity Index

182 The interaction between year and treatment was significant for the ACI (Table 1: Pseudo-F=2.6766,
 183 $p = 0.0351$). This significant interaction shows that there is a combined effect of year and treatment.

184 The MPA was more acoustically complex than Open Controls (OC) in 2014 and 2018 (Table 1; 2014:
 185 $p = 0.009$; 2018: $p = 0.0288$), whereas the OC group was more complex in 2016 (Fig. 3A, Table 1;
 186 2016: $p = 0.0218$). Overall across all years, mean ACI was lower inside the MPA (1.4% lower than
 187 outside: Fig. 3A).

188 *Table 1 Results table of PERMANOVA analysis of Euclidean distances assessing Acoustic Complexity Index with Year and*
 189 *Treatment as interactions and Pairwise comparisons of yearly differences between Treatments for the ACI. (Bold p values*
 190 *denotes significance, *: $p < 0.05$, **: $p < 0.01$, ***: $p < 0.001$).*

Source	PERMANOVA				Pairwise Comparisons		
	df	MS	Pseudo-F	p	Year	MPA vs OC	
						t	p
Year	4	849.5	8.6736	0.0001***	2014	2.7956	0.009**
Treatment	1	255.76	2.6113	0.1117	2015	0.33271	0.9741
Year x Treatment	4	262.15	2.6766	0.0351*	2016	2.3627	0.0218*
					2017	1.6034	0.1182

Residual	168	97.941	2018	2.2848	0.0288*
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192 3.2 Visual Biodiversity Indices

193 Both indices of diversity (Shannon’s Diversity Index and Number of Species) were greater on average
 194 inside vs outside the MPA, with a mean percentage difference from outside to inside of: 20.0% for
 195 Shannon’s and 8.4% for Number of Species (Fig. 3B & 3C).

196 When all diversity indices, both acoustic and visual biodiversity, are analysed by year within
 197 treatment, there is no significant trend with year displayed by the ACI, either inside or outside the
 198 MPA (Fig. 4, Inside: $R=0.14$, $p>0.05$; Outside $R=0.18$, $p>0.05$). However, Number of Species
 199 significantly increased with time both inside and outside the MPA (Fig. 4: Inside: $R=0.36$, $p<0.0001$,
 200 Outside: $R=0.32$, $p=0.02$). Outside the MPA, Shannon’s index shows no significant trend with time
 201 and has a small significant increase with time inside the MPA (Fig. 4: Inside: $R=0.21$, $p=0.017$;
 202 Outside: $R=5.7 \times 10^{-4}$, $p>0.05$).

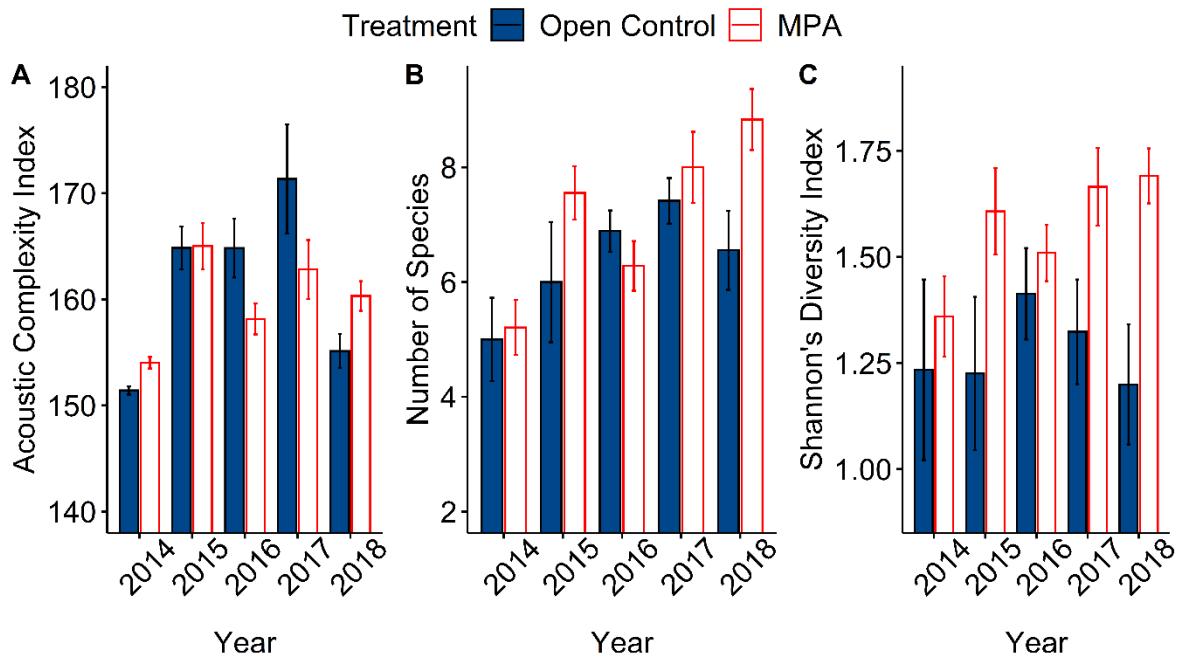


Fig. 3. Mean \pm SE Acoustic Complexity (A), Number of Species (B) and Shannon's Diversity (C) Inside (Filled Blue) and Outside the MPA (Unfilled Red) across all years.

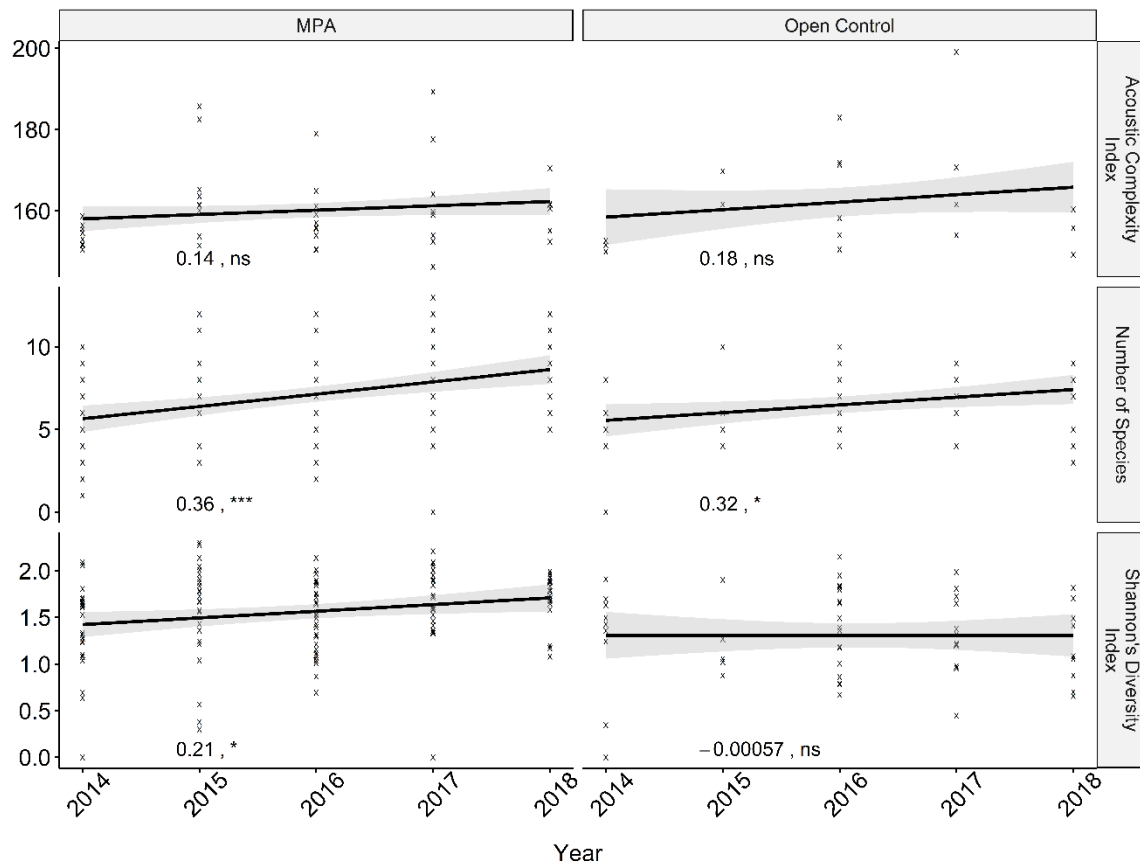


Fig. 4. Scatter plot with Pearson correlation coefficient for Year against Acoustic Complexity Index (top), Number of Species (middle) and Shannon's Diversity Index (bottom) split by treatment (Inside: blue and left, Outside: red and right). Includes R values and significance shown by ns: $p > 0.05$, *: $p < 0.05$, **: $p < 0.01$, ***: $p < 0.001$. Shading around regression line shows 95% confidence interval.

203 3.3 Relationship between Visual Biodiversity and Acoustic Complexity

204 Shannon's Index was greater in the MPA than the Open Controls but the relationship with Year was
 205 marginally non-significant (Table 2; Treatment: Pseudo-F=10.726, $p=0.0013$; Year: Pseudo-
 206 F=2.3123, $p=0.0564$). For the Number of Species there was a significant interaction between the
 207 Year and the ACI (Pseudo-F=6.4837, $p=0.0002$) as well as ACI and Treatment (Pseudo-F=6.1875,
 208 $p=0.0157$). This shows that, although not correlating with Number of Species, the ACI is interacting
 209 when the factors Year and Treatment are introduced. However, this is not significant for the Year x
 210 Treatment interaction.

211 Table 2. Results table of PERMANOVA analysis on Euclidean distance assessing Shannon's Diversity Index (A) and Number
 212 of Species (B) with Year and Treatment as interactions and ACI as a covariate. (Bold p values denotes significance, *:
 213 $p < 0.05$, **: $p < 0.01$, ***: $p < 0.001$).

Source	df	Shannon's Diversity Index			Number of Species		
		MS	Pseudo-F	p	MS	Pseudo-F	p
ACI	1	0.17249	0.89629	0.3526	1.5537	0.34091	0.5553
Year	4	0.445	2.3123	0.0564	53.05	11.64	0.0001***
Treatment	1	2.0641	10.726	0.0013**	6.3986	1.4039	0.2415
ACI x Year	4	0.30352	1.5771	0.1812	29.55	6.4837	0.0002**
ACI x Treatment	1	0.21135	1.0982	0.2936	28.2	6.1875	0.0157*
Year x Treatment	4	0.25056	1.3019	0.2712	10.249	2.2487	0.0635
ACI x Year x Treatment	4	0.27228	1.4148	0.2248	5.133	1.1262	0.3408
Residuals	158	0.19245			4.5576		

214
 215 Neither Number of Species nor Shannon's Index correlated with the ACI when compared across all
 216 the years and treatments (Fig. 5; Shannon's Index: $R = -0.37$, $p > 0.05$ and Number of Species: $R =$
 217 0.067 , $p > 0.05$). However, within each year, Number of Species did correlate with ACI with the
 218 exception of 2016. However, the orientation of this correlation was inconsistent; it was positive for
 219 2014 and 2018, and negative for 2015 and 2017 (Fig. 6; Positive- 2014: $R = 0.36$, $p = 0.041$; 2018:
 220 $R = 0.4$, $p = 0.041$; Negative- 2015: $R = -0.42$, $p = 0.017$; 2017: $R = -0.57$, $p < 0.001$). In contrast, Shannon's
 221 Index correlated with ACI in only 2017; this correlation was negative (Fig. 6; 2017: $R = -0.4$, $p = 0.017$).

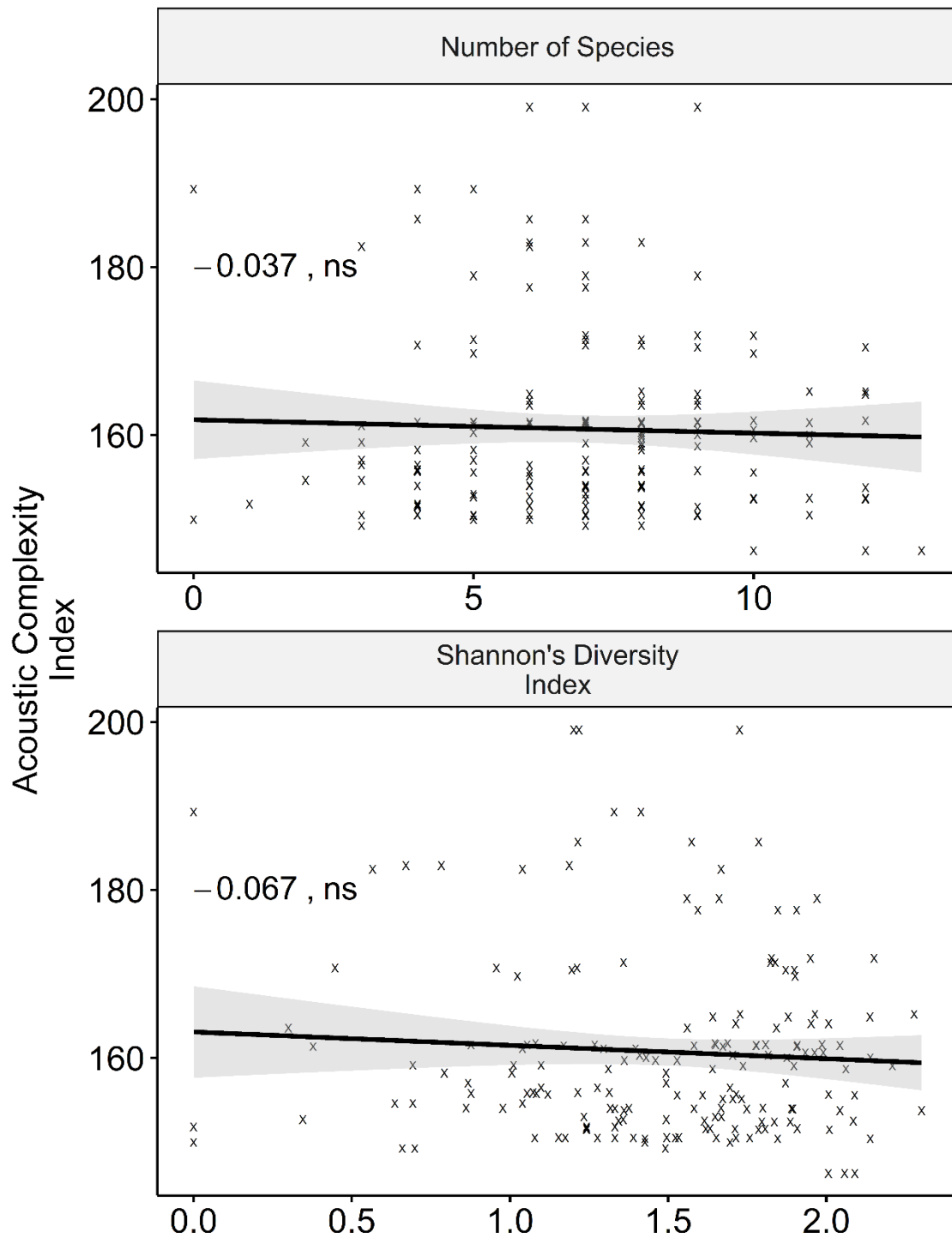


Fig. 5 Scatter plot with Pearson correlation coefficient for Acoustic Complexity against Number of Species (above) and Shannon's Diversity Index (below). R values are shown and significance shown by ns: $p > 0.05$, *: $p < 0.05$, **: $p < 0.01$, ***: $p < 0.001$. Shading around regression line shows 95% confidence interval.

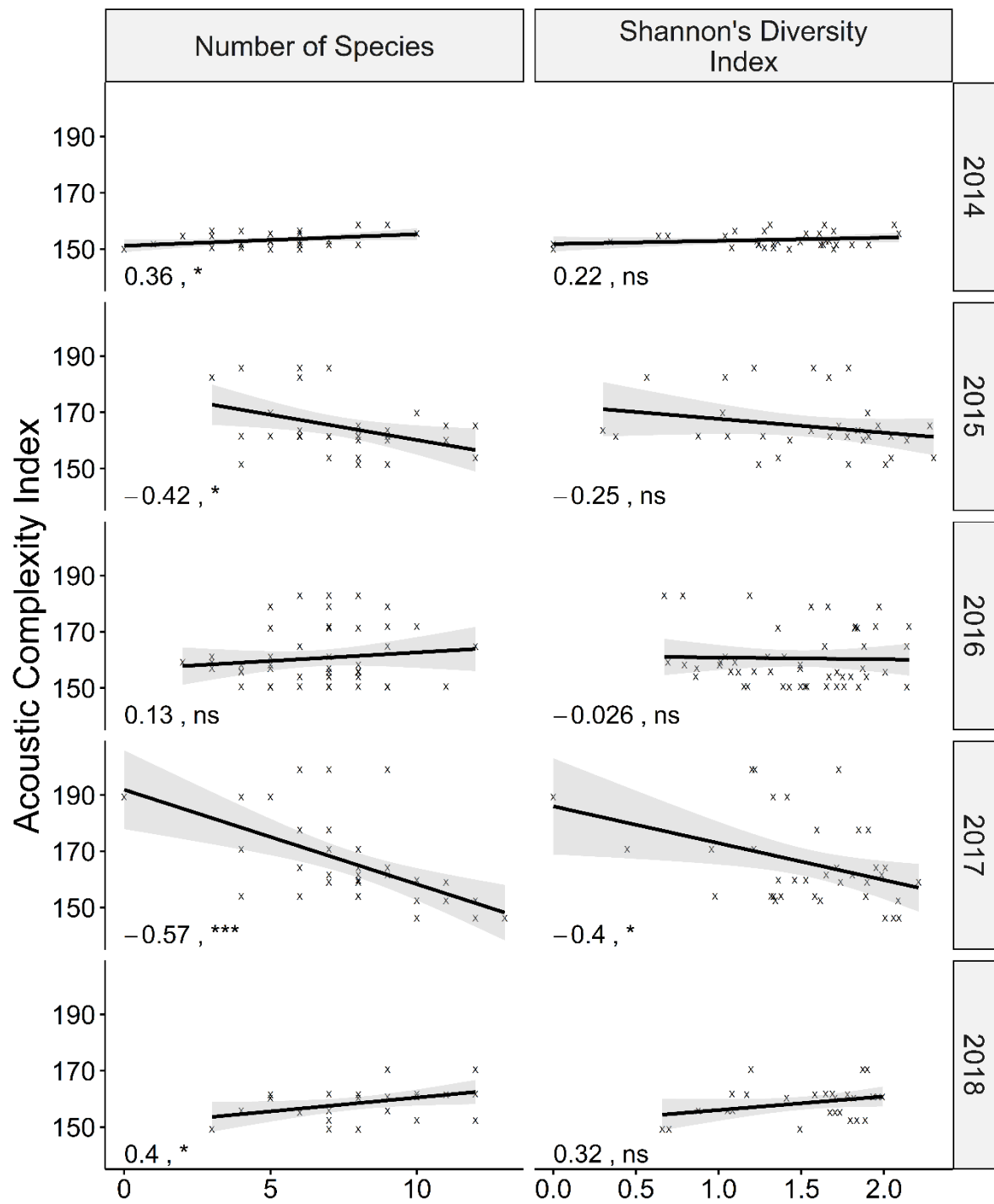


Fig. 6. Scatter plot with Pearson correlation coefficient for Number of Species (left) and Shannon's Diversity Index (right) against Acoustic Complexity Index. R values are shown and significance shown by ns: $p > 0.05$, *: $p < 0.05$, **: $p < 0.01$, ***: $p < 0.001$. Shading around regression line shows 95% confidence interval.

223 3.4 Mobile Benthic Assemblage Composition

224 The assemblage compositions of the two treatments diverged with increasing time with the two
 225 treatments changing at different rates (Fig. 7; Table 3: ACI x Year x Treatment: Pseudo-F: 1.7682,
 226 $p=0.0482$). Pearson correlation of more than 0.85 showed the reptant decapod crustaceans *Inachus*
 227 spp. and *Pagurus* spp. were most important to the Open Control composition (Fig.7), whereas, the
 228 species most important for the MPA assemblage were the wrasse species *Labrus mixtus*, *Labrus*
 229 *bergylta* and *Ctenolabrus rupestris* (Fig. 7).

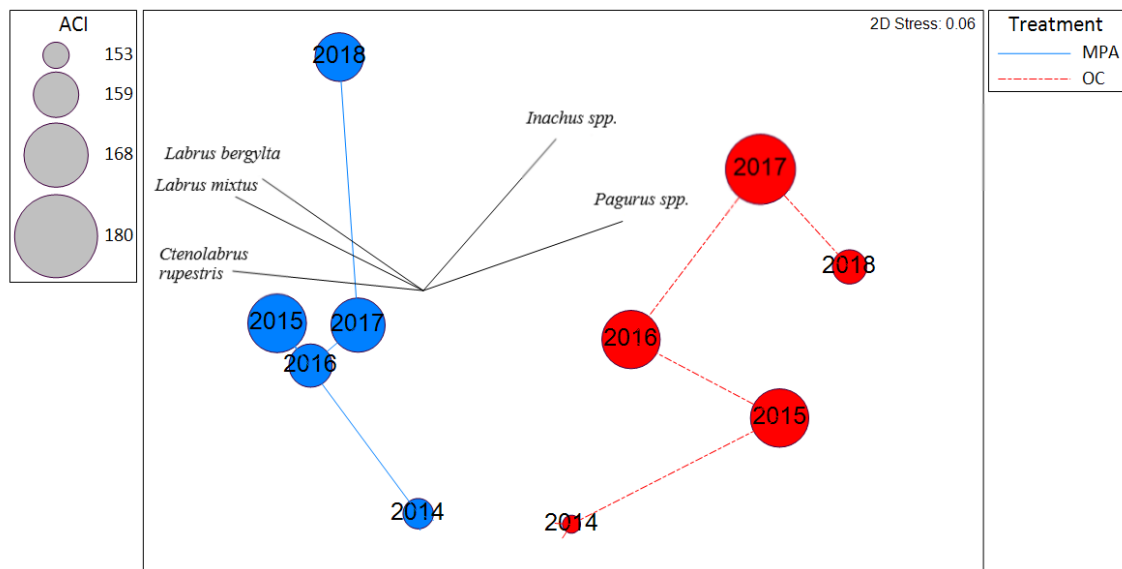


Fig. 7. Non-Metric Multidimensional Scaling plot of distance to centroids split by Year and Treatment from adjusted Bray-Curtis similarity of fourth root transformed abundance data. Points are labelled by Year and coloured by treatment (blue: Inside MPA, red: Outside MPA) and scaled according to mean ACI values. Vectors overlaid display 0.85 Pearson correlation for the species driving the difference in the assemblage composition.

230 Table 3. Results table of PERMANOVA analysis on adjusted Bray-Curtis similarity assessing mobile benthic assemblage
 231 composition with Year and Treatment as fixed interactions, area as a random interaction nested within treatment and ACI as
 232 a covariate. (Bold p values denotes significance, *: $p<0.05$, **: $p<0.01$, ***: $p<0.001$).

Source	Assemblage Composition			
	df	MS	Pseudo-F	p
ACI	1	4003.3	2.0845	0.0457*
Year	4	9011.3	3.4253	0.0001***

Treatment	1	29580	3.652	0.0003***
Area(Treatment)	7	8302.8	8.974	0.0001***
ACI x Year	4	2167.7	1.5326	0.0607
ACI x Treatment	1	2296.2	2.4819	0.0177*
Year x Treatment	4	1883.9	1.1026	0.3666
ACI x Area(Treatment)	7	1338.7	1.4469	0.0328*
Year x Area(Treatment)	23	1419.6	1.5344	0.0001***
ACI x Year x Treatment	2	1635.9	1.7682	0.0482*
Residuals	123	925.2		

233 4. Discussion

234 After high storm activity impacted the coastal systems of Lyme Bay and beyond (Masselink et al.,
235 2016), acoustic and BRUV monitoring was implemented. It was hypothesised that the Acoustic
236 Complexity Index would increase over time as the biodiversity of the area increased. Furthermore, the
237 ACI was expected to be greater inside the protected area in comparison to the surrounding fished
238 areas. Finally it was hypothesised that the ACI would change in a similar pattern to that of the mobile
239 benthic assemblage composition recorded by BRUV systems.

240 4.1 Visual Biodiversity and Acoustic Indices

241 The Acoustic Complexity Index, as a covariate, showed a greater number of significant interactions
242 alongside treatment and year with Number of Species than Shannon's Diversity (Fig. 4 & 6; Table 2).
243 This relationship between ACI and Number of Species implies that the ACI is less affected by
244 abundance and more by the number of species present. This is to be expected as the ACI was
245 developed under the theory that many differing biological noises in an environment imply many
246 different species (Pieretti et al., 2011). Yet, when studying fish vocal communities specifically, the
247 ACI shows little discrimination between the abundance and the diversity of sound (Bolgan et al.,
248 2018). Thus, the features that the ACI is enumerating from the marine soundscape may not, as
249 hypothesised, correspond directly to the species detected by the BRUVs represented in the
250 biodiversity indices tested. This may explain the yearly correlations between ACI and Number of
251 Species, which changed orientation (between positive and negative), while also displaying small

252 effect sizes throughout the study. This complete reversal, at times, could be misleading if studies
253 using this method do not cover an appropriate temporal scale. This inconsistency may be the result of
254 abiotic or anthropogenic noises (McWilliam and Hawkins, 2013), or specific species and behaviours
255 dominating the soundscape, meaning the presence of specific species in the acoustically sampled area,
256 but not recorded by the BRUVs, could be driving this inconsistent pattern and therefore may preclude
257 it from certain applications, such as directly replacing more traditional biodiversity monitoring
258 methods.

259 4.2 Shifting Benthic Composition

260 There was a clear divergence of assemblage compositions, between inside and outside treatment areas
261 moving further apart year on year (Fig. 7). However, without data on the ‘before fishing’ assemblage,
262 it would be very difficult to suggest whether this separation is recovery of the ecosystem. Yet,
263 Pearson’s correlations would suggest that the species most associated with the MPA are classed as
264 reef dwelling species: *Ctenolabrus rupestris* remain in the same local area for several years, thus,
265 maintaining their ‘territory’ (Darwall et al., 1992). The Open Controls were dominated by the
266 scavenging species *Inachus* spp. and *Pagurus* spp. (Fig. 7): both have broad habitat preferences
267 although *Inachus* spp. is more likely to be found on mixed coarse substrata (Rowley, 2008).

268 Although not significant, inside the MPA there was a higher Number of Species and Shannon’s
269 Diversity (Fig. 3). Both indices increasing with treatment (Shannon’s Index) and year (Number of
270 Species) show that the MPA in Lyme Bay acts as a refuge to allow biodiversity to increase (Fig. 4:
271 Table 2). The assemblage composition does not interact with changing ACI alone, but is significant
272 when aligned with year and treatment, which would be expected of a recovering system (Table 3).
273 This would suggest that, although it did not correlate overall with visual biodiversity, the ACI is
274 sensitive to some level of the non-background variation in the assemblage composition.

275 4.3 Applications of the Acoustic Complexity Index

276 Research into acoustic recordings is such a growing area due to its ability to provide information on
277 local assemblage structure (Pijanowski et al., 2011; Sueur and Farina, 2015). Yet, as with most areas

278 of ecology, the transition from the terrestrial to the marine poses a new range of obstacles to
279 overcome (Giorli, 2016; Radford et al., 2011; Ricci et al., 2017). Many different indices have been
280 produced to quantify marine biological processes, such as Acoustic Richness, Acoustic Entropy Index
281 and Acoustic Complexity Index (Gage and Axel, 2014; Lillis et al., 2014; McWilliam and Hawkins,
282 2013; Staaterman et al., 2014). Their use as proxies for marine biodiversity has been assessed (Harris
283 et al., 2016), with the Acoustic Complexity Index being the most favoured (Lindseth and Lobel, 2018)
284 both alone and in combination with other acoustic indices (Gordon et al., 2018).

285 The Acoustic Complexity Index has been shown to have a number of drawbacks (Kaplan et al., 2015;
286 McWilliam and Hawkins, 2013). These drawbacks can arise from interference by the biophony,
287 geophony or anthrophony. For example, the ACI has shown to be increased heavily by snapping
288 shrimp, which produce a high intensity broadband ‘snap’, meaning an increased ACI when diversity
289 has only marginally increased (McWilliam and Hawkins, 2013). In contrast, chorusing behaviour can
290 heavily decrease ACI (Kaplan et al., 2015). Hence, ACI in certain situations can be dominated by
291 either few or many species, producing opposing changes in the ACI and the observed biodiversity.

292 The assemblage composition outside of the MPA, in this case, was heavily dominated by hermit crabs
293 of the genus *Pagurus*. It is possible that these large aggregations of *Pagurus* spp. (up to 70 in one
294 video), which ‘rap’ on others’ shells for shell competition (Edmonds and Briffa, 2016), dominated the
295 ACI in a similar way to snapping shrimps. Dominance of snapping shrimp in the marine soundscape
296 affects most other acoustic indices, not just the ACI (Au and Banks, 1998; Lindseth and Lobel, 2018;
297 Radford et al., 2008). Thus, this issue needs to be overcome for multiple different methods. The ACI
298 can also be heavily influenced by geophony such as wind and rain (McWilliam and Hawkins, 2013).
299 Although designed to minimise the influence of anthropogenic inputs, ACI will also be affected by
300 any sounds which are not repetitive or consistent in intensity sounds, such as boat engines (Pieretti et
301 al., 2011). Therefore, post sampling examination of the recordings was carried out here to minimise
302 any sporadic dominant abiotic or anthropogenic interference, which would otherwise influence the
303 ACI.

304 All recordings here were made during the day and, as such, potentially not at the highest acoustic
305 activity times, which for most fish are dawn and dusk (Bertucci et al., 2017, 2016, 2015; Radford et
306 al., 2014). Further investigation into this index should include diurnal recording strategies, while also
307 taking into consideration the activity cycles based upon lunar phase (Harris et al., 2016; Staaterman et
308 al., 2014). As shown here, correlations between the ACI and other diversity measures can occur, but
309 can vary considerably in their orientations over years. Thus, temporal scales which include lunar and
310 daily cycles, should be used to assess these indices. Although not possible here, the combination of
311 multiple metrics together has been suggested to provide a more robust assessment of the marine
312 soundscape (Gordon et al., 2018). However, the individual aspects of the soundscape which ACI
313 quantifies need to be further understood before it can be appropriately combined with other metrics.

314 The use of ACI in this MPA, off the south coast of the UK, has not shown the direct relationship with
315 the observed ecology as demonstrated elsewhere (Harris et al., 2016; Picciulin et al., 2013), yet did
316 show significant interactions across treatments and years. As the significant interactions were found
317 under multivariate and not univariate analysis, it is likely that the ACI is quantifying other elements of
318 the marine soundscape and not just the diversity of species (Bolgan et al., 2018; Kaplan et al., 2015;
319 McWilliam and Hawkins, 2013). For this, or another, acoustic index to be used as a rapid and cost-
320 effective monitoring tool, the drawbacks mentioned here need to be addressed. Yet more importantly,
321 the elements of the marine soundscape, which the ACI is quantifying, need to be better understood.
322 Subsequently, thorough experimental assessments will be needed, with robust spatial and temporal
323 coverage. This is essential, as based on a single year of this study (e.g. 2014 or 2018), ACI would
324 have shown a positive correlation with Number of Species that has been found elsewhere. Again, this
325 shows that temporal and geographical scales are important considerations for the development of any
326 such index or method.

327 4.4 Conclusions

328 In conclusion, the Acoustic Complexity Index is not as yet ready to be used as a standalone marine
329 diversity monitoring tool. In conjunction with other methods, such as BRUVs, which showed the
330 recovery and increased diversity within the Lyme Bay MPA, this acoustic index shows potential to

331 allude to shifting benthic assemblage compositions. Yet this was not seen with consistency when used
332 alongside univariate measures of diversity. This implies that although it is not without its own
333 disadvantages, the ACI is demonstrating more complex changes than overall univariate diversity. This
334 potential as a tool for rapidly assessing a large area of the marine environment makes it highly
335 attractive. However, for it to be used as a monitoring tool, the information it provides regarding
336 shifting assemblage compositions and diversity needs to be fully researched and understood.

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343 Authors' Contributions

344 EVS and MJA conceived the ideas and monitoring design; MJW provided technical advice regarding
345 acoustic analytical methods; EVS, LH, AR and BFRD collected data; BFRD and LH organized and
346 analysed data; BFRD, EVS and LH led the writing of the manuscript. All authors contributed
347 critically to drafts and gave final approval for publication.

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