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How can Ocean warming at the NW Iberian Peninsula affect mussel aquaculture?

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Abstract

Understanding and forecasting future consequences of climate change in mussel aquaculture industry require the assessment of changes in physical parameters which may affect mussel growth. The FLOW module of Delft3D model forced with climatic data was validated and calibrated for the Rías Baixas (NW Iberian Peninsula), one of the areas with the highest mussel production in the world. This model was used to perform historical (1999-2018) and future (2080-2099) projections. Temperature and stratification water conditions were compared in order to determine at what extent climate change can affect mussel production. Thermal stress will increase in a non-homogeneous throughout the water column and the comfort level of mussels will be reduced by more than 60% in the upper layers and more than 30% in deep layers in most of the mussel raft polygons. Water column stratification will increase ~ 5-10 cycles h^{-1} in most of the polygons reducing the vertical exchange of nutrients and oxygen. Hereby changes in water temperature and stratification at the end of the century will not be favorable for mussel growth.

Keywords: climate change; mussel aquaculture; *Mytilus galloprovincialis*; Delft3D; CORDEX; CMPI5

1. Introduction

Climate change is expected to have a significant environmental impact affecting primary production, economy and society. In marine systems, sea-level rise, sea temperature changes, changes in circulation patterns and frequency, acidification, and severity of extreme events will impact the marine ecosystems and therefore, affect

fisheries productivity. The analysis of the possible and probable vulnerabilities of these systems in a scenario of climate change allows establishing mitigation and adaptation procedures.

The aquaculture sector is growing rapidly and plays a key role in food production to sustain a growing human population. In recent years, capture fisheries have become relatively stable whereas aquaculture production has increased, providing up to 46.8% of the world combined capture and aquaculture production in 2016, of which 35.9% proceeded from marine aquaculture (FAO, 2018). In the coming years, the aquaculture sector will have to face climate-change impacts through the management of mitigation and adaptation strategies (Duarte et al., 2017; FAO, 2017). Since changes associated with climate change will not be the same everywhere (Cane et al., 1997), the study of the possible effects on specific areas is essential.

This research is focused on the Rías Baixas (Fig. 1), located on the northwest coast of the Iberian Peninsula in the northern limit of the eastern North Atlantic Upwelling system. They are four flooded incised valleys (Evans and Prego, 2003) of high primary productivity, favoured by their location. The economy of the region depends mainly on the fishing, shellfish gathering and aquaculture sectors. This last one is mostly focused on the extensive culture of *Mytilus galloprovincialis* in mussel rafts. Data from the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food show that approximately 279 000 tons of mussels were produced in 2018 in the region of Galicia, most of them within the Rías Baixas (<https://www.pescadegalicia.gal>), corresponding to up to 40% of the European and up to 15% of the World aquaculture production of mussels (Aguilar et al., 2017).

Growth rate, mortality and production of mussels are dependent on several environmental factors such as oxygen and phytoplankton availability, water

temperature, salinity and ocean acidification among others (Pérez Camacho et al., 1995; Anestis et al., 2007; Mesas and Tarifeño, 2015).

Water temperature is one of the most relevant indexes of the quality of aquatic ecosystems due to its importance for biological and chemical processes and species interactions (Zippay and Helmuth, 2012; Gestoso et al., 2016). It is a critical factor in mussel growth, explaining independently 67% of the differences in growth (Kroeker et al., 2014). Biochemical and physiological rates benefit from moderate warming, but only up to an optimal temperature, which is specific for each species (Gillooly et al., 2002; Anestis et al., 2007). Greater warming beyond that optimal range can cause slower growth and reductions in performance and survival (Hrs-Brenko et al., 1977; Anestis et al., 2010).

As mussel aquaculture in the Galician coast depends on the collection of natural seed, both from intertidal rocky shore and collector ropes, most of the studies analyze its distribution and quality (Blanton et al., 1987; Cáceres-Martínez et al., 1993; Cáceres-Martínez and Figueras, 1998; Fuentes et al., 1998). There are numerous studies focused on the mortality of mussels based on the genetics of individuals (Fuentes et al., 1994; López et al., 2001; Fuentes et al., 2002; Diz and Presa, 2009), as well as studies on the factors that can influence mussel productivity, especially in relation with upwelling patterns (Blanton et al., 1987; Figueiras et al., 2002) the proliferation of harmful algae blooms (Álvarez-Salgado et al., 2008; Spyrakos et al., 2011) and the within-raft variability (Fuentes et al., 2000). Most of the studies on the possible impact of climate change on the Rías Baixas investigate the effects on upwelling events (Casabella et al., 2014; Cordeiro Pires et al., 2016; Sousa et al., 2017, Sousa et al., 2020). Few studies have been found that analyze its possible impact on the mussel production, in particular, Pérez Muñuzuri et al. (2009) conclude that if the upwelling weakens under climate

change conditions, mussel production would be reduced and Gestoso et al. (2016) analyze the possible competition between the native *Mytilus galloprovincialis* and the invasive mussel *Xenostrobus securis* in a scenario of global ocean warming.

The present study attempts to determine how climate change will affect the Rías Baixas at the end of the century and its possible impact on mussel culture industry. To achieve this goal, numerical simulations using the FLOW module of Delft3D under imposed conditions from projection data were performed for historical and future periods. Firstly, the skill of the Delft3D-Flow to simulate future estuarine conditions was checked. The characterization of future water temperature and stratification obtained from Delft3D-Flow allows improving our knowledge about how climate change can affect the mussel productivity in the Rías Baixas by the end of the 21st century.

2. Methodology

2.1. Numerical model

Calculations based on climate projections are an arduous task where different sources of error can appear. First, models must be accurate to reproduce *in situ* measurements when forced with real data. In addition, they must also represent mean conditions when forced with climatic data. Note that the results provided by climatic models for a certain period (e.g., June 2003) do not correspond to the actual conditions for that period, in such a way that a group of years must be averaged to obtain values representative of the climate conditions. Thus, models must be calibrated in two different ways: (i) forcing models with real conditions corresponding to a certain time interval (typically from days to months) and comparing the results with *in situ* data (date-to-date); (ii) forcing

models with historical climatic data for longer periods (typically decades) and comparing the mean values with other source at that scale.

The FLOW module of the Delft3D numerical model was used to analyze global warming effects in the Rías Baixas. A detailed description of the numerical model parametrization, implementation and validation for the Galician Rías Baixas can be found in Des et al., (2019).

Two numerical experiments were used in the present manuscript. In the first one (Exp#1 from now on), Delft3D was forced with real conditions and run for the period 2009-2018 to be compared with *in situ* data. This setup was previously used by Des et al. (2019). In the second experiment (Exp#2 from now on), the model was forced with historical climatic data over the period 2009-2018 and values were averaged to be compared with average values provided by Exp#1. Finally, once the accuracy of Delft3D for the area under study was assessed the Exp#2 was extended, comprising the historical (1999 - 2018) and future (2080-2099) period under climate conditions. The RCP8.5 greenhouse gas emission scenario was considered for future projections.

The model uses a mesh covering an area from 41.18°N to 43.50° N and from 10.00° to 8.33°W (Fig. 1, rectangle). The horizontal resolution increases gradually from 2200 m x 800 m on the oceanic West boundary to 220 m x 140 m in the Rías Baixas and to 50 m x 77 m in the Minho River estuary. The vertical resolution is 16 sigma layers with top layers refined.

The bathymetry used for numerical simulations was elaborated by compilation from different sources. The bathymetries for the rias of Arousa, Muros and adjacent shelf area were digitalized from nautical charts elaborated by the Spanish Navy Hydrographical Institute. The multibeam-sourced bathymetries of the rias of Vigo and

Pontevedra with a horizontal resolution of 5 m were provided by the General Fishing Secretary, dependent on the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Portuguese Navy Hydrographic Institute provided the bathymetry of the Minho estuary. Bathymetry gaps were covered using data from the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO, <https://www.gebco.net/>) which has a spatial resolution of 30 arc seconds.

The oceanic boundary was divided into 127 sections and was forced with water level and transport conditions. Thirteen main tidal harmonic constituents obtained from the model TPXO 7.2 TOPEX/Poseidon Altimetry (M_2 , S_2 , N_2 , K_2 , K_1 , O_1 , P_1 , Q_1 , M_sF , MM , M_4 , MS_4 , MN_4) were prescribed as astronomical forcing. Salinity and water temperature (transport conditions, from now on), were specified per layer. Transport conditions for Exp#1 were imposed using daily data from the operational Atlantic-Iberian Biscay Irish-Ocean Physics Reanalysis, with a horizontal resolution of $1/12^\circ$ and a vertical resolution of 50 sigma coordinate levels. Data are available through the Copernicus Marine Service website (<http://marine.copernicus.eu>). For the Exp#2, the transport conditions were retrieved from the GCM MOHC-HadGEM2-Es GCM in the framework of phase 5 of the Coupled Model Intercomparison (CMIP5) project.

As surface boundary conditions (air temperature, relative humidity, net solar radiation, surface pressure and wind), Exp#1 used hourly data from MeteoGalicia Weather Research and Forecasting Model, with a resolution of 4 km, Exp #2 were obtained from the MOHC-HadGEM2-Es-RCA4 RCM in the framework of the Coordinated Regional Climate Downscaling Experiment (CORDEX) project. MOHC-HadGEM2-Es-RCA4 is the RCM, which better reproduces historical climate conditions in the area under study, as stated in Sousa et al. (2020).

Freshwater discharges were imposed as fluvial open boundary conditions. Minho River discharge data was provided by the Confederación Hidrográfica Miño-Sil, where the Verdugo-Oitavén, Lerez, Ulla, and Umia river discharge data were retrieved from the MeteoGalicia database for Exp#1. In the Exp#2, the climatologic river discharge data were obtained by accessing to the Hype Web portal. In this setup, a reduction of 25% in river discharges and the RCP8.5 greenhouse gas emission scenario were considered for future projections, following the most pessimistic predictions (<https://hypeweb.smhi.se/explore-water/climate-impacts/europe-climate-impacts/>).

Both experiments were run for July and August using a spin-up period of two weeks.

2.2. Processing of numerical data

The skill of numerical simulations carried out using Exp#1 to reproduce thermohaline variables was evaluated through root mean square error (RMSE) and bias indicators. Weekly *in situ* vertical salinity and temperature profiles at 38 sampling stations distributed within the four rias (Fig. 2) were compared with the predicted values date-to-date. These *in situ* data were collected using a SBE25 CTD at 38 field stations (8 at the Ría de Muros, 11 at the Ría de Arousa, 11 at the Ría de Pontevedra and 8 at the Ría de Vigo, Fig. 2) and were downloaded from the Instituto Tecnológico para o control do Medio Mariño de Galicia (INTECMAR) website (www.intecmar.gal). Thompson Tau test, with $\alpha = 0.1$, was used to detect and remove outliers in data. Additionally, gaps were filled using a cubic interpolation.

Statistical analysis over the historical period for each atmospheric and oceanic variable was carried out. Atmospheric dataset from MOHC-HadGE2-Es-RCA4 RCM was compared with ERA-Interim dataset while oceanic data from MOHC-HadGE2-Es GCM were compared with *in situ* data from Cabo Silleiro buoy (Fig. 1). This statistical

analysis shows a good agreement for all variables except for the air temperature, for which a bias of 2 °C was observed. Thus, a reduction of 2 °C was applied to predicted air temperature data before entering it into the Delft3D-Flow model.

To assess the impact of the climate change on the aquaculture sector of the Rías Baixas hourly model outputs were used to characterize 44 points located within areas of mussel rafts (referred as mussel raft polygons).

Thermohaline variables were used to analyze the stratification using the Brunt-Väisälä frequency (N). Hourly Brunt-Väisälä frequency was averaged obtaining a representative value for historical (\bar{N}^H) and future periods (\bar{N}^F).

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Skill of Delft3D- Flow

The capability of the numerical model (Exp#1) to reproduce thermohaline variables in the rias was evaluated by the average of bias and RMSE for each station (Fig. 2). Then, the mean RMSE and bias for each station are averaged for every ria (Table 1). The model overestimates salinity (positive bias values), being the bias for the rias of Pontevedra and Vigo close to zero. Regarding water temperature, the model overestimates *in situ* data for the Ría de Muros and underestimates it in the rias of Pontevedra and Vigo. In the Ría de Arousa, the bias is almost zero. Both bias and RMSE values are similar to those obtained by Des et al. (2019) for the same area using the same numerical model and set up.

Additionally, Figure 3 shows both measured (blue line) and computed (red line) salinity and water temperature vertical profiles for a station located in the middle part of each ria during July and August averaged from 2009 to 2018. Shadows represent measured

and numerical standard deviations. These vertical profiles show the accuracy of numerical simulations to reproduce field data.

Once the accuracy of the model to reproduce *in situ* data was assessed using the configuration of Exp#1, the average temperature field of Exp#1 and Exp#2 for July-August was compared over the period 2009 to 2018. Top layer temperature outputs for both experiments are depicted in Fig. 4a and Fig. 4b, respectively. Fig. 4c shows the difference between these two outputs ($\Delta T = T^{\text{Exp\#2}} - T^{\text{Exp\#1}}$). The histogram of Fig. 4d shows that more than 90% of the ΔT values are within the range -1 to 1 °C. In addition, ΔT tends to be positive, mostly between 0 and 0.75 °C with an average bias of 0.40 °C (Fig. 4c). Despite the different nature of data sources used to force the model, both configurations provide, in general, a similar pattern, although numerical results from Exp#2 tend to overestimate the results of Exp#1. The agreement between both setups shows that Delft3D-Flow forced with climatic data can be accurately used to simulate future temperature conditions in the Rías Baixas.

3.2 Physical parameters that can affect mussel production under the future climate warming

Different physical parameters that can change in the future affecting mussel production, like water temperature and stratification, will be analyzed in next subsections. Temperature will be responsible of mussels comfort conditions related to thermal stress while stratification will be a proxy to assess the capability of the water column to allow vertical movements and, hence, the vertical exchange of nutrients and oxygen.

3.2.1. Water temperature

Water temperature is the main physical parameter that affects the mussel productivity of the Rías Baixas. Mussels survive in a wide range of temperature, being able to

withstand high temperatures (Goslin, 1992), although the optimal range for mussel growth is narrower. The mechanisms of mussels' adaptation to the water temperature increase may be limited by their physiological limits. Some studies indicate that mussel has a limited capacity to modify their physiological tolerance limit and that they are experiencing temperatures close to it (Tomanek, 2008; Ioannou et al., 2009). The optimal range for *Mytilus galloprovincialis* growth was determined between 14 and 20 °C following previous research on the effect of water temperature on the growth and mortality of mussels (<https://longline.co.uk/meta/List>; Hrs-Brenko et al., 1977; Anestis et al., 2007; Peharda et al., 2007; Sánchez-Lazo and Martínez-Pita, 2012; Kroeker et al., 2014). The comfort index was considered as the percentage of time in which water temperature remains within that optimal range. Mussel comfort is 80-100% at the upper layers (0-6 m) for all mussel rafts for the historical period (Fig. 5a). However, comfort at these upper layers will be considerably reduced by the end of the century (Fig. 5b) with a percentage ranging from 40% to 60% in the outer areas of the rias and from 20% to 40% in the middle part, especially near the north shore. The lower values (0-20%) are observed near the mouths of the rivers, possibly due to the shallowness of the zone. Changes in comfort ($\Delta C = \text{Comfort}^F - \text{Comfort}^H$ in Fig. 5c) will be always negative, reaching values $< -60\%$ in most of the points, which results in a remarkable loss in the comfort conditions for the future, which can eventually cause biological stress and reduce mussel growth.

The comfort index at deep layers (6-12 m, Fig. 6) shows a similar pattern than at surface ones. For the historical period, it is in the interval 80-100% (Fig. 6a) for all mussel rafts, equal than previously calculated for surface layers (Fig. 5a), and it is also reduced for the future projections (Fig. 6b). In these future projections the comfort index ranges from 60% to 100% in the outer areas of the rias, from 40% to 80% in the middle part

and from 0% to 40% near the mouths of the rivers. These results show that the shallow areas will be more affected by ocean warming. Regarding ΔC (Fig. 6c), values are always negative but only reach $< -60\%$ near the river mouths, in general deep layers lose fewer comfort conditions than the upper ones. The locations where lower ΔC are observed correspond to the areas most affected by summer upwelling. The upwelled water, whose current temperature tends to range from 12 to 14 °C (Blanton et al., 1987; Prego et al., 2001; Alvarez et al., 2005), mitigate the water temperature rise in deep layers.

As for the future thermal comfort at deep layers (Fig. 6b), in general, it will be higher than at surface layers (Fig. 5b). This fact can have a negative impact on the productivity since, at present, the upper part of the ropes (first meters) tends to be more productive than the lower part (Fuentes et al., 2000; Figueras, 2007). On the other hand, although all of the locations show negative values, the reduction in future comfort will affect less to the outermost stations (Figs. 5b and 6b) and mainly in the deep layers. In summary, the outermost stations, where productivity is higher at present (Navarro et al., 1991; Pérez Camacho et al., 1995; Figueras, 2007) will be affected differently by ocean warming depending on the depth. The temperature rise of the deep layers will not have a very significant impact in comfort conditions while temperature will increase at surface layers leading to more stressed conditions for mussel growth.

Finally, it should be noted that this index only refers to thermal comfort not to the concentration of nutrients or oxygen of the upwelled water or to the light conditions.

3.2.2. *Water stratification*

Water stratification is another important physical parameter to analyze the future survival of mussel aquaculture activities within the Rías Baixas. Water stratification

reduces vertical exchange and is usually related to the occurrence of harmful algae blooms (Álvarez-Salgado et al., 2008; Pitcher et al., 2010). The Brunt-Väisälä frequency was calculated and averaged through the water column to determine the stratification of the rias. The Brunt-Väisälä frequency (Fig. 7) shows that the innermost part of the rias is more stratified than the outermost one as it can be observed both for the historical (Fig. 7a) and future (Fig. 7b) period.

The percentage of change in future stratification relative to the historical one is shown in Figure 7c. This percentage is calculated as $\Delta\bar{N} = 100 \times (\bar{N}^F - \bar{N}^H) / \bar{N}^H$, where the superscripts *F* and *H* refer to the future and historical period respectively. An increase in the future stratification is observed in most of the points, being the most significant changes (between 10% and 15%) located in the external part of the south coast of the rias of Pontevedra and Arousa. In general, the percentage of change decreases for the northern shores and, especially, in the areas most influenced by river discharge. Values can even be negative (less stratified conditions in the future) in the area affected by the Ulla River, the river with the highest runoff in the area and, at a lesser extent, in the areas of influence of Umia River (also in the ria of Arousa) and Tambre River (Ría de Muros) (Fig. 1). The same behaviour was not observed in Vigo and Pontevedra due to the long distance between the mouth of the river and the sampling stations. The pattern is possibly related to the circulation pattern of the rias, where the outer area is more influenced by oceanic conditions while the inner part is controlled by river discharge. It was also observed that the thermocline will be deeper. According to Sousa et al. (2020), the future deepening of the thermocline will counteract the increase in upwelling favorable winds and will induced thermal stratification. The stratification will be more marked in the outer part of the rias while the future reduction in river discharge (<https://hypeweb.smhi.se/explore-water/climate-impacts/europe-climate-impacts/>) will

diminish the haline stratification of the inner part of the rias. The projected increase in stratification, especially at the outer stations (the most productive ones according to Navarro et al. (1991), Pérez Camacho et al. (1995) and Figueras, (2007) will constitute a clear drawback for mussel exploitation. It will limit the vertical exchange of nutrients and oxygen and will give rise to the probable intensification of harmful algae blooms, increasing the number of days that mussel raft polygons are inactive.

Conclusions

Numerical simulations using Delft3D-FLOW under historical and future RCP8.5 conditions were used to analyze how climate change will affect the Rías Baixas at the end of the 21st century and its possible impact on the main physical parameters (water temperature and stratification) that affect mussel aquaculture productivity.

The general rise in water temperature will increase the time during which mussels will be subjected to thermal stress conditions. The impact on the water column will not be homogeneous, upper layers will be more affected than the deep ones. The comfort level of mussels will be reduced by more than 60% in the upper layers in most of the mussel raft polygons. Regarding deeper layers, the mussels comfort conditions will be reduced but less than in the upper layers.

Water column stratification will increase in most of the stations, particularly in the outer areas of the rias. A reduction in stratification is only observed in the areas most affected by river discharges. This increase in water stratification will limit the vertical exchange of nutrients and oxygen and will give rise to less favorable conditions for aquaculture.

The present work helps to improve knowledge about how climate change can affect mussel industry in the Rías Baixas. Analysis of physical parameters shows that

changing the location to most suitable areas to ensure aquaculture of mussel raft polygons may help to mitigate the effect of climate change in mussel productivity. The outer areas of the rias seem to be more advisable for new locations.

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Figure Legends:

Fig. 1. (a) Location of the study area. (b) The box indicates the modeled area. The black square indicates the location of Cabo Silleiro buoy. The black dots indicate the location of the stations used to perform the vertical profiles. Contour bathymetry lines (shown in gray) were elaborated using the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO) from the British Oceanographic Data Centre (BODC).

Fig. 2. Mean values of bias (upper number) and RMSE (lower number) obtained comparing Delft3D-Flow predicted and measured weekly vertical profiles of salinity (a) and water temperature (b) for August 2009 to 2018. Red dots indicate that the model overestimates *in situ* data, positive bias. Blue dots indicate that the model underestimates *in situ* data, negative bias. Dot size indicates the bias percentile.

Fig. 3. Measured (blue line) and computed (red line) vertical profiles of salinity (upper row) and water temperature (lower row) in a sampling station located in the middle part of the rias of Muros, Arousa, Pontevedra and Vigo during July- August from 2009-2018. Shadows represent measured and numerical standard deviations.

Fig. 4. Delft3D-Flow predicted water temperature (upper layer) using Exp#1 (a) and using Exp#2 (b) for July- August over 2009- 2018. Difference between predicted water temperature using Exp#1 and Exp#2 (Exp#2 - Exp#1) (c). Histogram showing the frequency of the temperature differences shown in c (d).

Fig. 5. Percentage of time (July-August) during which mussels are within the comfort temperature range (14-20 °C) for the historical period (a), the future (b) and the difference (Future-Historical, c) considering surface layers [0-6] m.

Fig. 6. Percentage of time (July-August) during which mussels are within the comfort temperature range (14-20 °C) for the historical period (a), the future (b) and the difference (Future-Historical, c) considering deep layers (6-12] m.

Fig. 7. Predicted mean Brunt-Väisälä frequency for July and August using Exp#2 at mussel raft polygons for (a) historical (1999-2019) period, (b) future (2080-2099) and (c) percentage of change in predicted future Brunt-Väisälä frequency respect to the historical one.

Table Legends:

Table 1. Model accuracy in reproducing *in situ* data of salinity and water temperature in each ria calculated averaging the values of all stations per ria.

Ria	Salinity		Temperature (°C)	
	Bias	RMSE	Bias	RMSE
Muros	0.26	0.33	0.25	0.90
Arousa	0.16	0.21	0.01	0.88
Pontevedra	0.06	0.14	-0.63	1.06
Vigo	0.09	0.14	-0.32	0.89

Table 1

Declaration of interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

The authors declare the following financial interests/personal relationships which may be considered as potential competing interests:

Journal Pre-proof

Highlights

- Analysis of climate change impact on mussel aquaculture using numerical predictions
- Water temperature and stratification will increase
- The comfort level of mussels will be reduced, especially in surface layers
- Changing the mussel raft polygons location may mitigate the climate change impact

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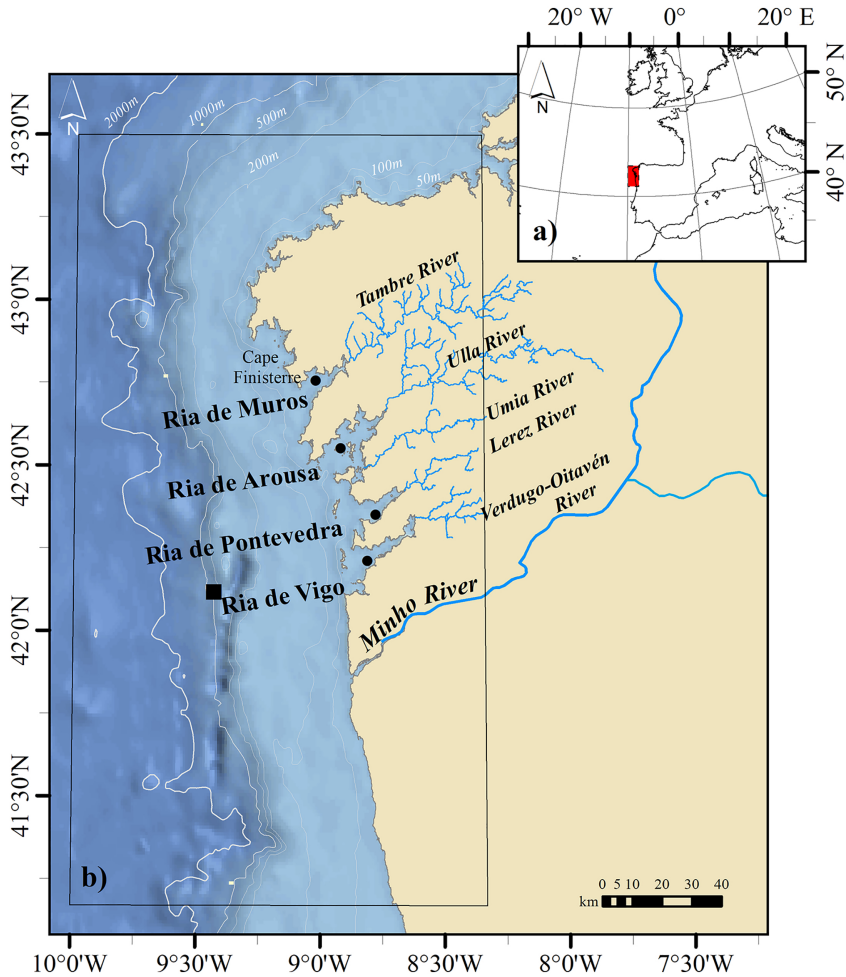


Figure 1

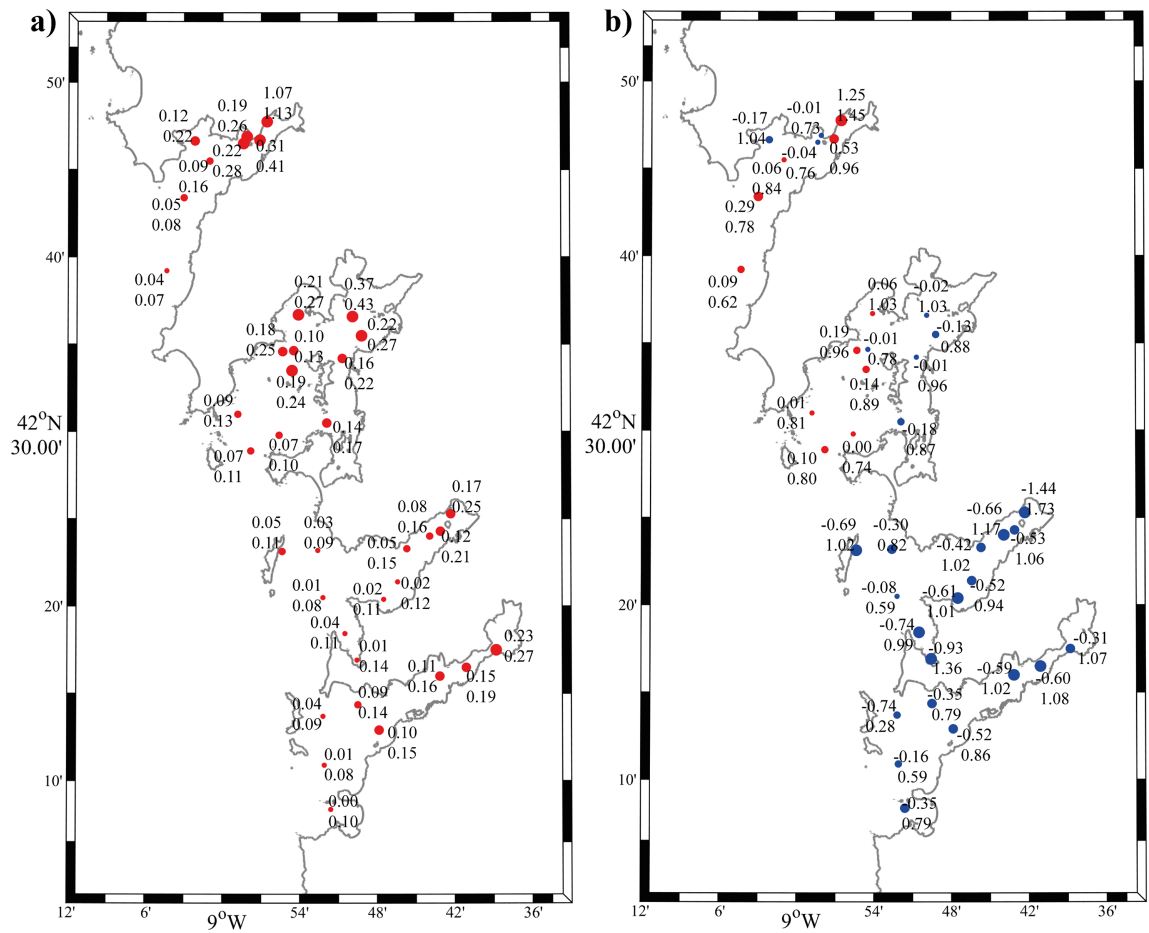


Figure 2

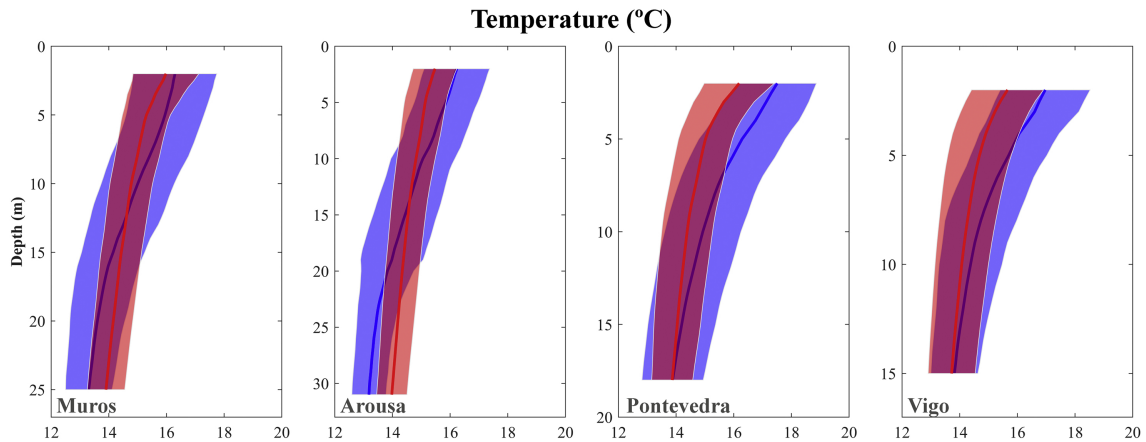
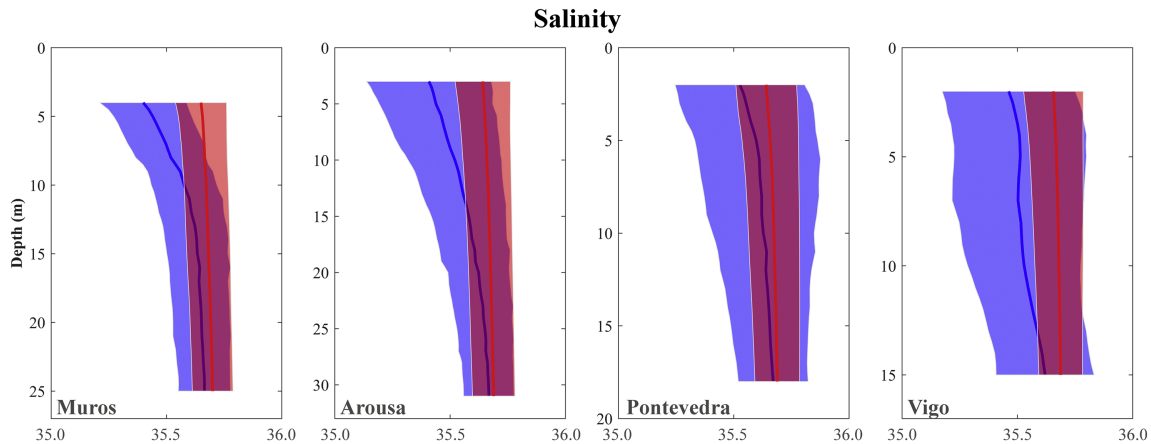


Figure 3

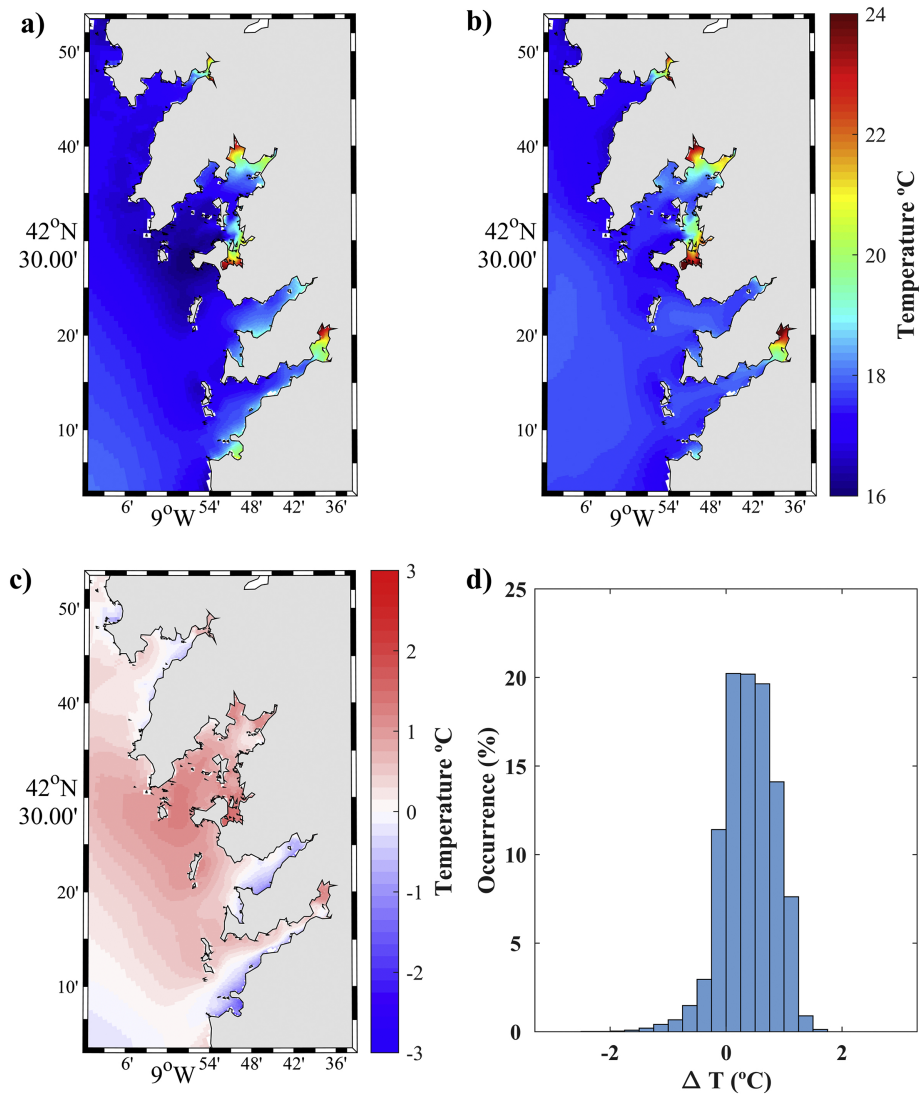


Figure 4

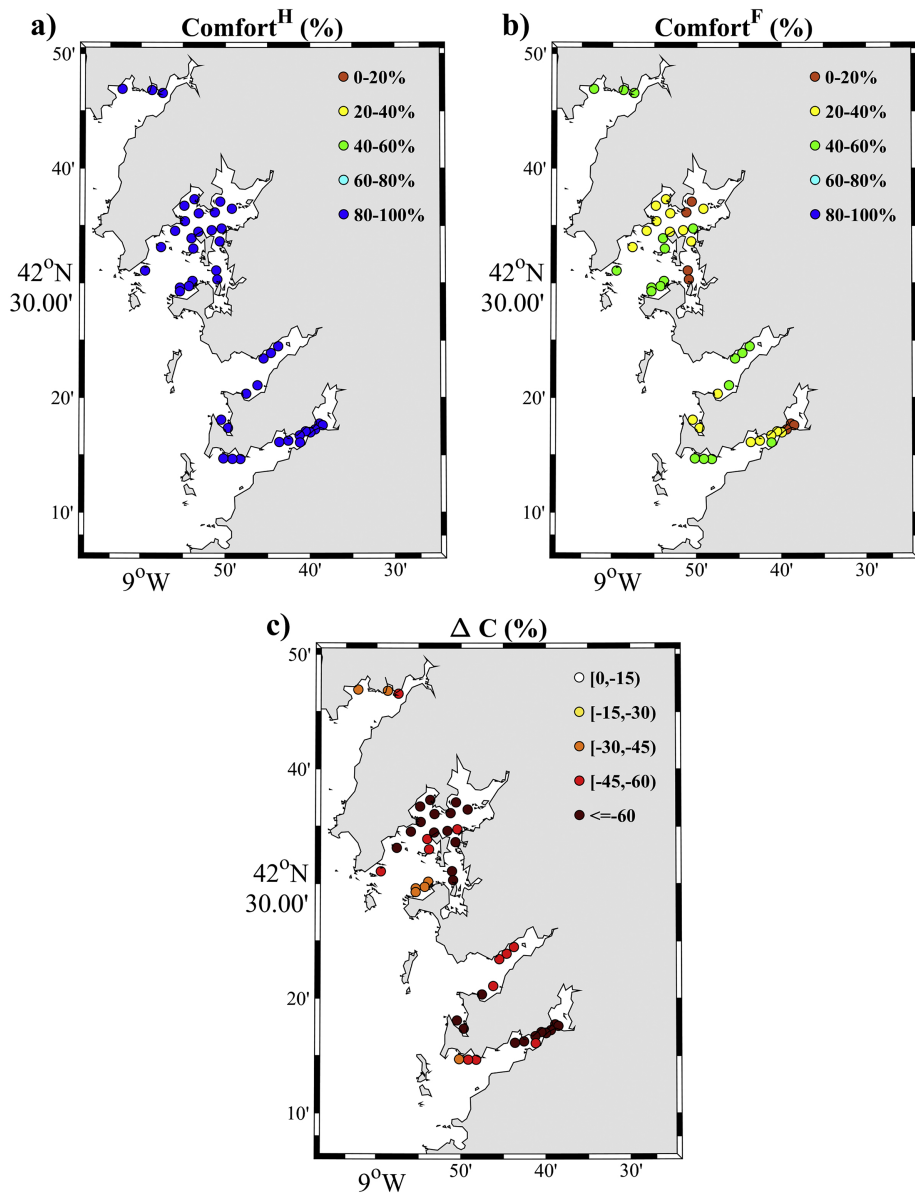


Figure 5

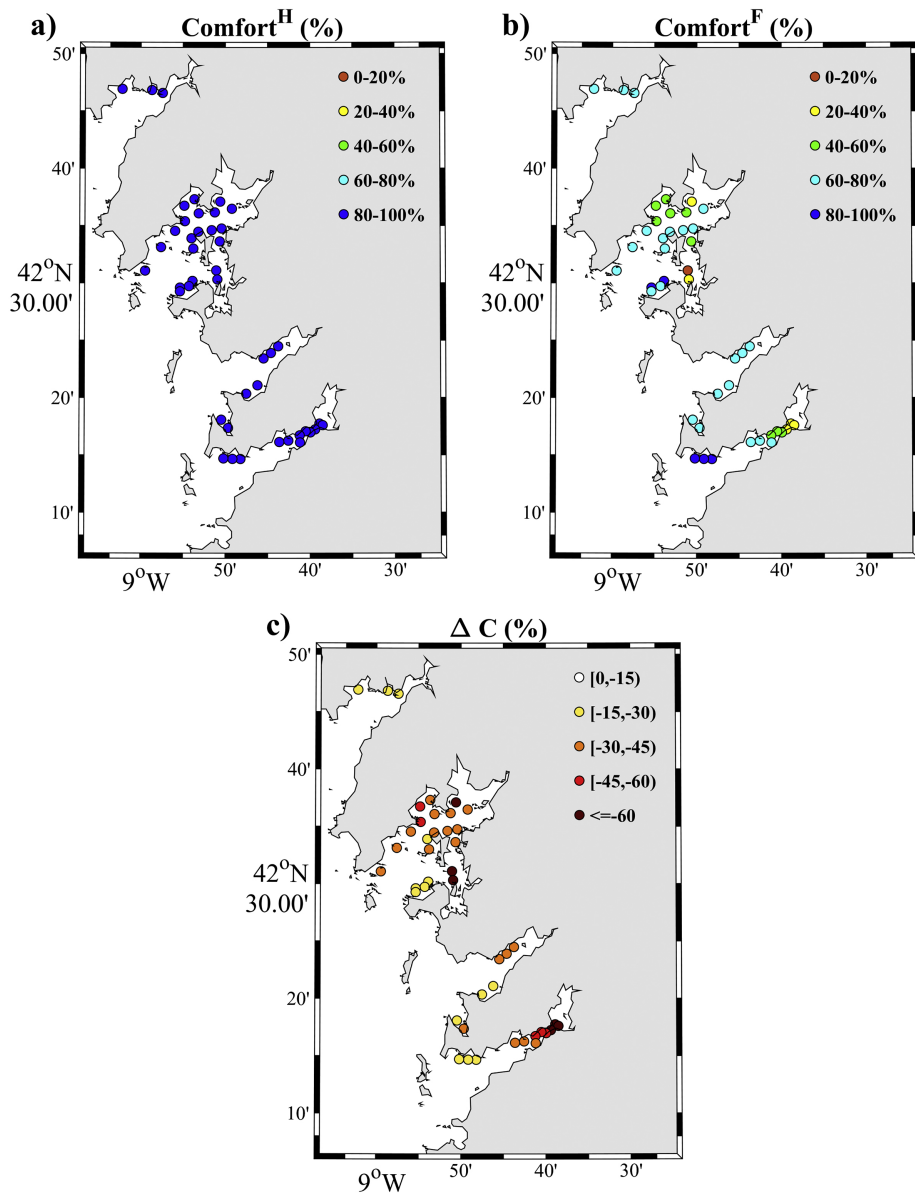


Figure 6

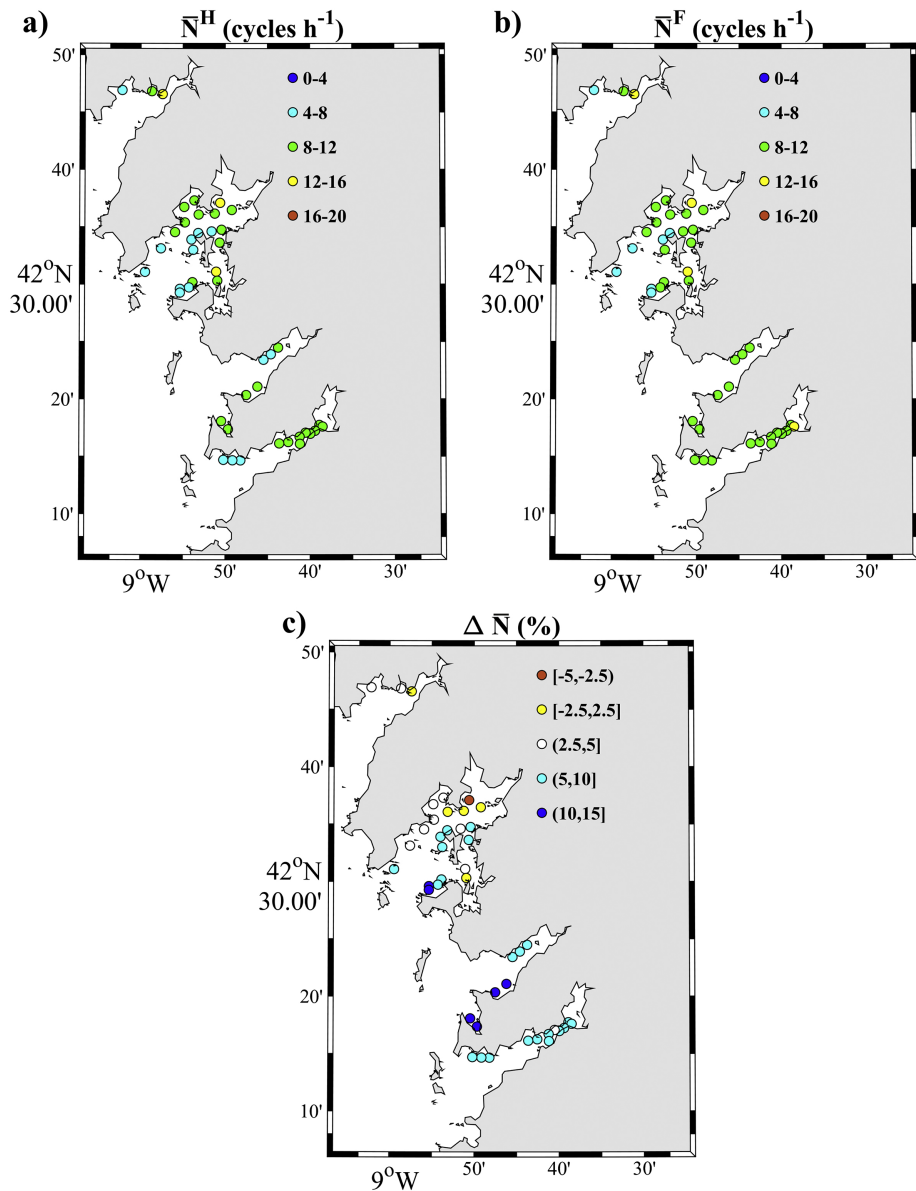


Figure 7