



## Supplementary Materials for

### **The human dimension of biodiversity changes on islands**

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#### **This PDF file includes:**

Materials and Methods

Figs. S1 to S4

Tables S1 to S5

Box S1

References

## **Materials and Methods**

### Data acquisition and preparation

We analyze fossil pollen time-series in sedimentary sequences from islands on which the initial presence of humans is recoded within the past 5000 years. This time frame allows the assessment of vegetation dynamics in continuous time-series from systems when humans were entirely absent to systems where humans represent a novel disturbance (Table S1). We obtained fossil pollen records from The Neotoma Paleocology Database (38) and the published literature (Table S4). All pollen records that we could obtain covering human arrival on islands are included in the manuscript. To maintain consistency between islands and avoid island redundancy, the pollen record with the highest temporal resolution for our study period was selected whenever more than one dataset was available for an island. To avoid geographic biases, we applied the criteria that no single archipelago should be represented by more than three islands, resulting in data for 27 islands being retained for analysis.

Each pollen dataset was screened to remove obligate aquatic and semi-aquatic taxa (following standard paleoecological methodology) and exotic marker taxa (*Lycopodium* spores or *Eucalyptus* pollen). Pollen taxonomy is site specific and includes both identified and unidentified pollen and spore morphotypes, because they represent plant taxa that contribute to turnover and because we presume that the researchers that obtained the data know best which palynomorphs reflect local vegetation. Pollen taxa are not equivalent to species as identification varies to family, genus, occasionally to species, or to pollen types. Hence our analyses are based on comparisons of pollen taxon composition rather than species composition. Human arrival times were derived from the literature and reflect written reports and earliest archeological findings (Table S3).

### Chronology

Age-depth models were run for all the island sequences using the Bayesian methodology of Bchron (39, 40). This led to chronologies based on the recently updated calibration curves to convert radiocarbon dates into calibrated ages (41). IntCal20 is used for sites in the northern hemisphere, and SHCal20 is used for sites in the southern hemisphere. The chronologies of the pollen time-series were transformed into calibrated years before present (cal yr BP; with 1950 CE as the zero

level by definition). Radiocarbon ( $^{14}\text{C}$ ) and  $^{210}\text{Pb}$  information for each site was provided by the authors or downloaded from Neotoma. For a few sites, dates were given in pMC (percent Modern Carbon), and these were calibrated beforehand using clam version 2.3.5 (42) and region-specific post-bomb curves. We truncated them at 5000 years to permit standardized visualization. The number of iterations in Bchron was set to 100,000; the number of starting iterations was set to 20,000; and the step-size to keep for every iteration beyond the burn-in was set to 80. The age–depth models were run on R version 4.0.2 using the Bchron package version 4.7.2 (39, 43).

### Statistical analysis

#### *Data*

For each island, the first axis of a Detrended Correspondence Analysis (DCA ordination, R package 'vegan' version 2.5-5 (44)) was used to quantify how palynological compositional turnover changed over time before and after human arrival. The metric implicit in DCA is theoretically the optimal metric for analyzing percentage compositional data that contain many zero values (45). Similar scores on this ordination axis reflect similar pollen composition. A change in DCA score is interpreted as reflecting a change in pollen composition and hence in vegetation composition. Relating this ordination score to time allows systematic changes in turnover rate to be estimated (45). The DCA axis is approximately scaled in standard deviation units of pollen taxon turnover (45). A change in axis score of 4 units corresponds roughly to a 100% turnover in the pollen composition of the samples (45). While the amount of variation accounted for by the first axis of a DCA ordination varies among datasets, following detailed scrutiny of each ordination we interpreted major changes in DCA axis 1 scores as reflections of human arrival and associated impacts on the vegetation of the island. Because the sign convention in a DCA ordination is arbitrary and for consistency of display, the DCA axis scores were transposed (multiplied by -1) if the sample scores after human arrival were not predominantly positive in DCA space. Subsequent DCA axes were discarded. All analyzes were implemented using R version 4.0.3 (43).

#### *Rates of turnover before and after human arrival*

To quantify how vegetation turnover (represented by pollen compositional turnover) may have changed with human arrival, we analyzed systematic changes in DCA ordination scores (an

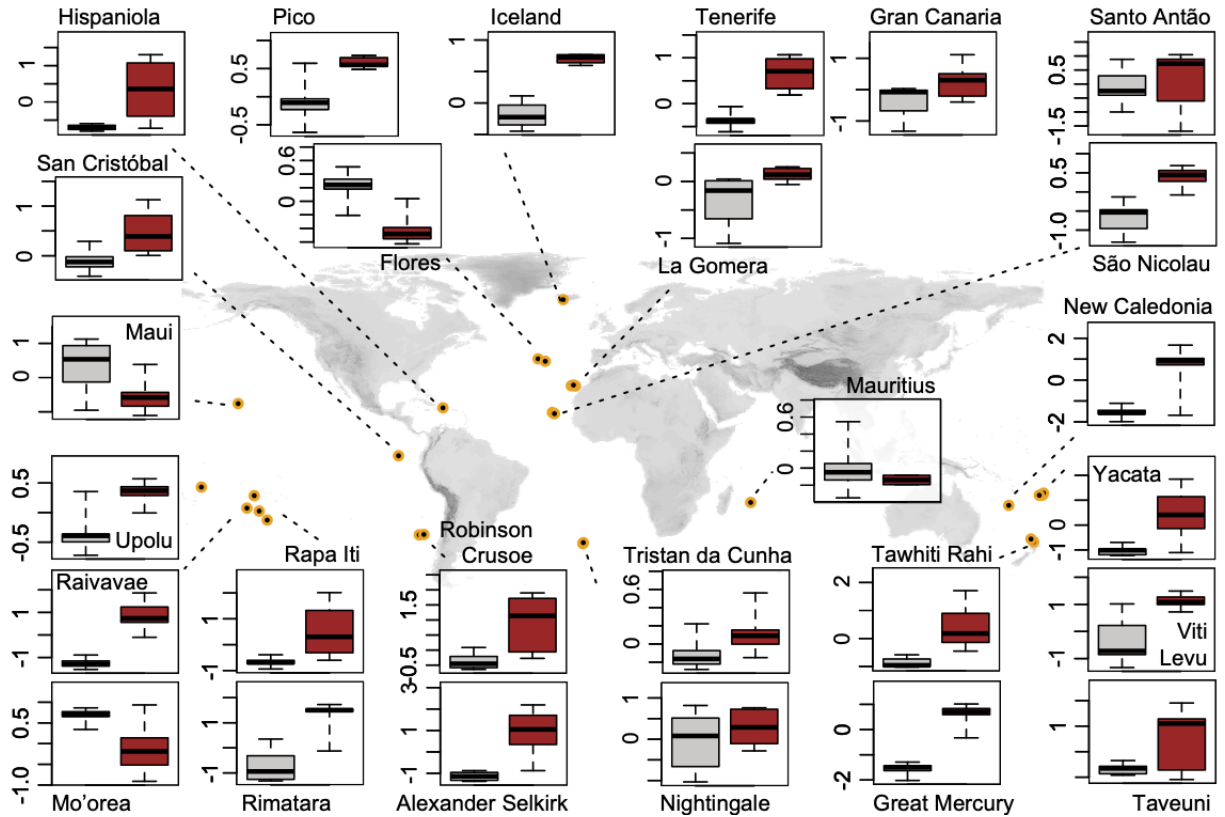
indicator of vegetation compositional change) with time using continuous breakpoint models implemented with standard R syntax  $\text{lm}(y \sim x + \{x - \text{breakpoint}\} * \text{ifelse}(x > \text{breakpoint}, 1, 0))$ . These models assume a linear change in composition, allowing rates of turnover to vary between pre- and post-human colonization periods. The slope of the relationship between ordination score (=compositional change) and time indicates the rate of directional turnover (Fig. 1). A paired *t*-test was used to assess significant differences in this slope before and after human arrival (Fig. 2, Table S3). As an additional robustness test, we repeated the breakpoint analysis after randomizing the link between pollen data and time within each record (random order). The median as well as the mean difference in the rate of directional turnover before and after human arrival was always larger in the data when compared to any of 1000 runs on randomized data. Results were visualized using the R package *visreg* version 2.6-1 (43, 46).

The prescribed breakpoint model was compared with a model including no relationship, as well as a model fitting a linear relationship (Table S5). Explanatory power increases by 33% (median) relative to no-breakpoint linear models when the models prescribe a breakpoint at the date of human arrival (adjusted  $R^2$  values of 0.55 (median) and  $0.48 \pm 0.26$  (mean $\pm$ SD) for a linear no-breakpoint and 0.71 (median) and  $0.68 \pm 0.23$  (mean $\pm$ SD) for a human-breakpoint model, Table S3). However, for seven islands, the prescribed breakpoint models do not perform better than linear models without a breakpoint in the rate of directional turnover ( $\Delta\text{AICc} > 2$ , 7 out of 27 islands, Table S5). One example is New Caledonia, which in fact shows no linear change but an abrupt shift in pollen composition soon after the estimated time of human arrival (Fig.1). The prescribed-breakpoint linear approach cannot represent this pattern adequately and instead conservatively assumes that there is no change in slope with human arrival on the archipelago. This pattern is better captured by comparing the absolute change in pollen composition with human arrival (Figs. S1 and S2, see next section).

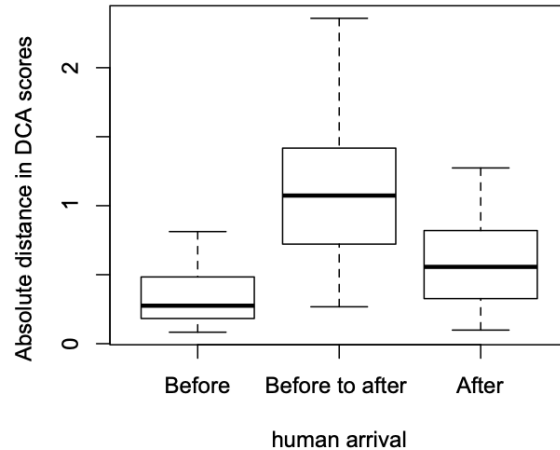
#### *Absolute change in pollen composition with human arrival*

The magnitude of absolute changes in pollen composition with human arrival was visualized by comparing the DCA scores before human arrival with those afterwards (Fig. S1). Calculating the distance in DCA scores between the two time periods allows a multi-island assessment of human-induced changes. For each island, we calculated the mean absolute distance between DCA scores

before human arrival, the mean absolute distance of all DCA scores after human arrival, as well as the mean absolute distance between DCA scores before human arrival and DCA scores after human arrival (Fig. S2). Results showed that the distance between pre- to post-human arrival ( $1.16 \pm 0.57$ ; mean  $\pm$  SD) is much larger than the distance between points before human arrival ( $0.32 \pm 0.21$ ) and still twice as large as after human arrival ( $0.58 \pm 0.35$ ).



**Fig S1: Pollen composition before and after human arrival:** Boxplots indicate the DCA axis scores before (grey) and after (red) people arrivals on the different islands. DCA axis scores approximate standard deviations in units of pollen taxon turnover. The difference between the two periods quantifies the magnitude of change (see Fig. S2).



**Fig S2: Magnitude of change in pollen composition with human arrival:** The distance between DCA axis scores from pre- to post-human arrival (central boxplot) quantifies the absolute change in pollen composition with human arrival (DCA scores approximate standard deviation units of pollen taxon turnover). This distance is much larger than the distance between DCA scores before human arrival (left), or the distance between DCA scores after human arrival (right). Data shown here represent one value for each island (mean distance).

*Estimated human arrival time and the onset of vegetation change*

Human induced transformation of vegetation composition may sometimes start considerably after (even occasionally before) earliest establishment on the island or earlier than archaeological and historical records attest. We thus implemented a second breakpoint model, which optimizes breakpoint placement based on a likelihood approach using the R package segmented version 1.3-2 (47). An optimal breakpoint that is close to the historically dated arrival of humans based on archaeological and other independent proxy data, indicates that strong human impact starts directly in association with their arrival. A time lag of human impacts would be indicated if the optimal statistically solution lags hundreds of years behind human arrival; a statistically optimal breakpoint preceding the historical arrival point may indicate that humans may have altered the island earlier than indicated by archeological records. It is also possible that non-anthropogenic processes have driven turnover in these situations. The times selected as breakpoints by the model optimization algorithm are within 500 years of the estimated human arrival times in 70% of cases (81% for 1000 years; median difference is 329 years relative to 953 for breakpoint models with randomized data, Table S5). Human arrival estimates lie within the 95% confidence intervals of the optimal breakpoint estimate in 41% of islands.

### *Quantifying directional rate of change in pollen data with uneven temporal sampling*

The aim of the simulations presented below is to test if the ordination-based analytical approach implemented in this study is robust regarding uneven temporal sampling. It shows that the analysis does not suffer from the limitations of traditional rate-of-change quantifications based on bin-by-bin comparisons of directly adjacent stratigraphical levels (48).

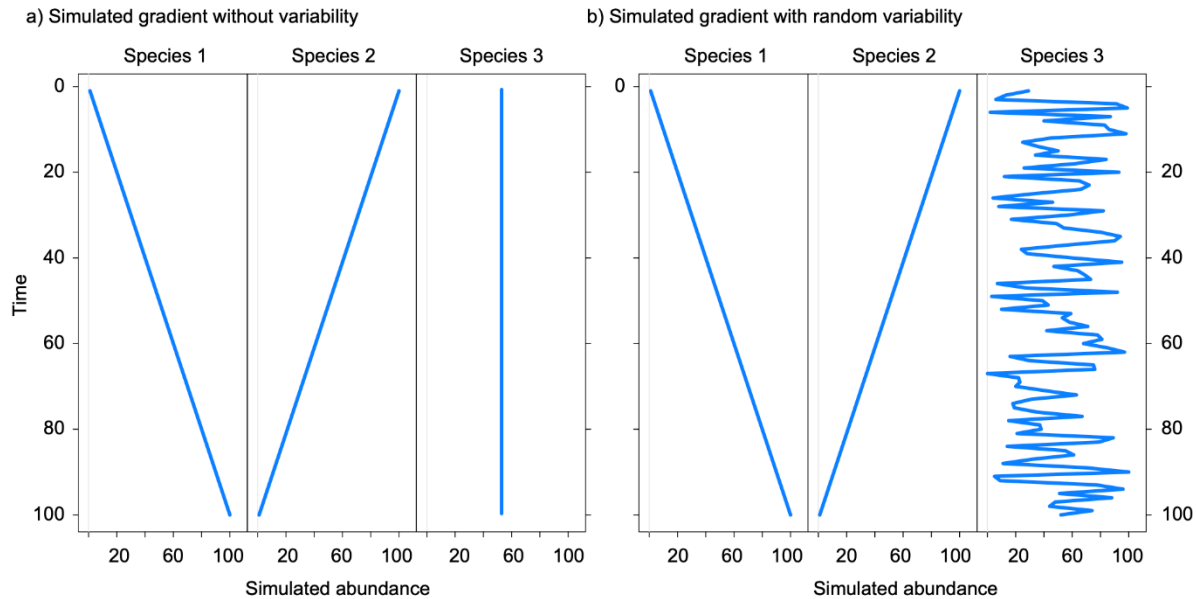
Rate-of-change analyzes measure the change in assemblage composition per unit time. Rate-of-change in pollen composition is traditionally quantified by dividing assemblage dissimilarity (i.e. compositional turnover) by the time passed between two adjacent stratigraphical levels (e.g. 48, 49). The measured assemblage dissimilarity between these two adjacent stratigraphical levels quantifies long-term directional change as well as random short-term variability. Differentiating directional change from the random variability is impossible while directly comparing two adjacent stratigraphical levels. Equal temporal sampling is necessary if longer time series are analyzed with this approach, as the magnitude of a directional change increases along with temporal distance between two samples, while the effect of random variability remains constant.

The need for equal sampling can be bypassed by estimating the entire gradient in the pollen assemblage composition based on all available stratigraphic levels before calculating the rate-of-change. Ordination analyzes have been developed to quantify unknown gradients in assemblage composition with uneven sampling. The directional rate-of-change in assemblage composition can thus be quantified from ordination scores. Analyzing the relationship of the resulting gradient with time provides a powerful tool to measure directional rate-of-change in assemblage composition that is robust with regard to unequal sampling as well as random variability. DCA is particularly suitable for this approach as the units of the first axis measure standard deviations in assemblage composition, with a distance of 4 standard deviations representing complete turnover in composition between samples (50). To demonstrate that the rate-of-change estimated using DCA is independent from the temporal distance between samples we implemented two simulation analyses. The simulations implemented below show that this approach works well even with very uneven sampling and high random variability.

#### *Simulation 1: Random sampling along a gradient with length 100 (= 100 timesteps)*

A directional gradient in assemblage composition with three species is simulated along a time axis of 100 timesteps. The first species changes its abundance from 1 to 100% along this time axis,

while the second species changes its abundance in the opposing direction from 100 to 1%. A third species is characterized by a constant abundance of 50% along the entire temporal gradient. Simulations were run with and without random variability. Random variability is implemented by adding a random value between -50 and 50 to the abundance of the third species (Fig. S3).



**Fig. S3: Simulated gradient in community composition.** A directional gradient in species composition was simulated along 100 timesteps with species 1 increasing abundance from 1 to 100%, species 2 decreasing abundance from 100 to 1%. (A) Abundance of species 3 was kept constant at 50% for simulations without variability. (B) Simulations including random variability do so by adding a random value between -50 and 50 to each time step of species 3.

The simulation shows that rate-of-change estimates based on direct comparisons of dissimilarity of adjacent temporal levels is only reasonable without random variability. Equal temporal sampling is needed if the assemblage composition is influenced by random variability.

In the simulated example without variability (Fig. S3A), Chi-square distance between two directly adjacent temporal levels is 0.0162 (per time unit). Increasing the temporal distance to 20 by e.g., comparing stratigraphic level 20 with stratigraphic level 40, results in a dissimilarity of 0.3239 per 20-time units. Further dividing this result by 20 results again in a rate-of-change of 0.0162 per time unit. The rate-of-change estimate is thus independent of the temporal distance between



samples if assemblage composition is only changing along a continuous directional gradient and not influenced by any random variability. Adding variability (Fig. S3B), however, increases dissimilarity between two directly adjacent temporal levels from 0.0162 per time unit (without variability) to  $0.3625 \pm 0.0228$  per time unit (mean  $\pm$  standard deviation of 100 independent simulations). Increasing the temporal distance to 20 in the simulation with variability (Fig. S3B) results in a dissimilarity of  $0.5085 \pm 0.1120$  per 20-time units (mean  $\pm$  standard deviation of 100 runs) or  $0.0254 \pm 0.0056$  per time unit. Random variability that influences assemblage composition independently from the directional gradient thus makes it impossible to compare rate-of-change estimates from time periods that are not sampled with a similar temporal resolution. Uneven temporal sampling will result in non-interpretable results (see Table S1 for an overview).

*Table S1: Rate-of-change estimates based on direct comparisons of dissimilarity between adjacent temporal levels implemented for different sampling densities (number of stratigraphic sampling units 100, 50, 20, 10, 5) and strategies (equal distance and random placement) along a simulated temporal gradient of length 100. Analyses were performed for data without random variability (Fig. S3A) and with random variability in assemblage composition (Fig. S3B). Results for the data with random variability represent mean  $\pm$  standard deviations of 100 independent simulations. Results show a strong effect of random variability on the rate-of-change estimates that further depend on the temporal distance between the sampling units.*

<b>Equal sampling</b>					
Number of sampling units	<b>100</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
No variability	0.0162	0.0162	0.0162	0.0162	0.0162
Random variability	$0.3625 \pm 0.0228$	$0.1826 \pm 0.0187$	$0.0757 \pm 0.0126$	$0.0412 \pm 0.0084$	$0.0254 \pm 0.0056$
<b>Random Sampling</b>					
No variability	$0.0162 \pm 0$	$0.0162 \pm 0.0000$	$0.0162 \pm 0.0000$	$0.0162 \pm 0.0000$	$0.0162 \pm 0.0000$
Random variability	$0.3622 \pm 0.0218$	$0.2511 \pm 0.0302$	$0.1500 \pm 0.0381$	$0.0979 \pm 0.0443$	$0.0622 \pm 0.0514$

*Simulation 2: Detrended correspondence analysis (DCA) approach as implemented in the manuscript*

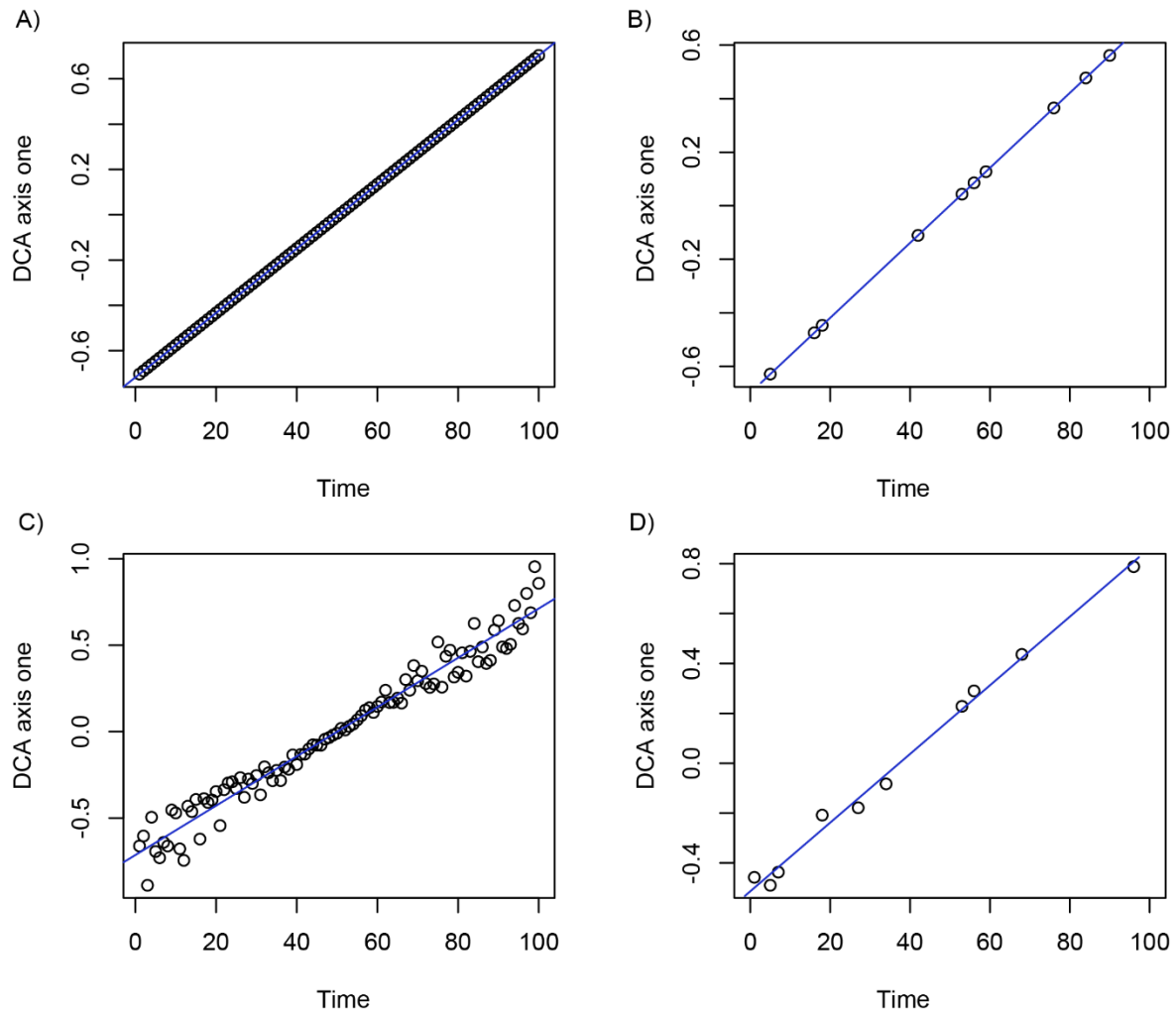
Analyzing rate-of-change with an ordination, in contrast, is able to quantify directional rate-of-change consistently even if stratigraphic levels are sampled unevenly and if random variability in composition is added to the data. DCA quantifies the strongest gradient in assemblage composition

along its first DCA axis. Each pollen assemblage in a stratigraphic level receives a coordinate on that axis (axis score). Differences in axis scores between two pollen assemblages are proportional to changes in assemblage composition and proportional to standard deviations (SD). A change in axis score of 4 SD units corresponds roughly to a 100% turnover in the pollen composition. Relating axis scores of the first DCA with time using linear regression allows estimation of the directional rate-of-change along the gradient in assemblage composition identified by the DCA. An additional important feature of DCA is that the transformations implicit in the dissimilarity metric used in DCA provides a solution to the problem of analyzing numerically closed percentage data that contain many zero values, such as pollen data (50).

When we implemented this methodology in the simulation analysis, we found that the simulated example without variability (Fig. S3A) had a rate of change of  $0.0142 \text{ SD}_{\text{ptt}}$  (directional change in composition measured in standard deviations of pollen assemblage turnover ( $\text{SD}_{\text{ptt}}$ ) per time unit) (Table S2). Increasing the temporal distance to 20 (5 equally spaced samples along 100-time units) results in a very similar rate-of change estimate ( $0.0141 \text{ SD}_{\text{ptt}}$ , Table S5, Fig. S4A). The rate-of-change estimate is thus independent of the temporal distance between samples. Adding random variability (Fig. S4B) results in very similar rate-of-change estimates with  $0.0142 \pm 0.0003 \text{ SD}_{\text{ptt}}$  for 100 equally spaced samples (Fig. S3B). The estimate is even robust if only 5 unevenly distributed samples are taken along the entire gradient ( $0.0145 \pm 0.0027 \text{ SD}_{\text{ptt}}$ , Table S2). Estimates of directional rate-of-change are thus highly robust with respect to uneven sampling and random variability (Table S2, Fig. S4).

Table S2: *Rate-of-change estimates via Detrended Correspondence Analysis (DCA) implemented for different sampling densities (number of sampled stratigraphic levels 100, 50, 20, 10, 5) and sampling strategies (equal distance and random placement) along a simulated temporal gradient of length 100. Analyses were performed for data without random variability (Fig. S3A) and with random variability in assemblage composition (Fig. S3B). Results for the data with random variability represent mean  $\pm$  standard deviations of 100 independent simulations. Results show that rate-of-change estimates (via DCA) are independent of the distance between sampled units and are not systematically affected by random variability in assemblage composition. The methodology is thus suitable to quantify directional rate-of-change in pollen data.*

<b>Equal sampling</b>					
Number of sampling units	<b>100</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
No variability	0.0142	0.0142	0.0142	0.0141	0.0141
Random variability	0.0142 $\pm$ 0.0003	0.0141 $\pm$ 0.0004	0.0141 $\pm$ 0.0007	0.0143 $\pm$ 0.0011	0.0143 $\pm$ 0.0016
<b>Random Sampling</b>					
No variability	0.0142 $\pm$ 0	0.0142 $\pm$ 0.0001	0.0141 $\pm$ 0.0001	0.0140 $\pm$ 0.0002	0.0141 $\pm$ 0.0004
Random variability	0.0142 $\pm$ 0.0003	0.0141 $\pm$ 0.0004	0.0141 $\pm$ 0.0008	0.0141 $\pm$ 0.0012	0.0145 $\pm$ 0.0027



**Fig. S4: Gradient analyses with different sampling strategies using DCA:** Detrended correspondence analyses (DCA) order the major gradient in assemblage composition along the first axis. Rate-of-change is quantified as the slope of the regression between the scores of this first DCA-axis with time (blue lines). This slope is constant and independent of the sampling strategy (even sampling in A and C; uneven sampling in B and D) as well as the amount of random variability (no variability in A and B; with random variability in C and D).

*Analyzing possible influences of geographic covariables on the magnitude of human effects.*

Human arrival affects vegetation turnover considerably, but the magnitude differs between islands. The diversity of the analyzed islands allows us to test whether this difference in the effect of human arrival can be explained by the timing of when humans entered the island system or by present and past geo-environmental characteristics of the islands. Analyses were conducted with linear models explaining the difference in pre- and post-human arrival turnover. Explanatory variables include the timing of human arrival as well as current and historic geographic characteristics (Table S3 and Box1).

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Box S1: Explanatory variables included in Figure 3 and their potential function.

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Variable	Function
Human arrival time	The purpose (e.g. exploitation or settlement) and toolkit available to humans to modify pristine islands after arrival changes with time (e.g. 51). For example, there are studies referring to early impacts on ecological systems as ‘first contact extinctions’ (e.g. 52).
Latitude (°)	Ecological systems (53) and cultural diversity (54) are known to differ with latitude, which may change the effect human actions have when arriving in pristine ecosystems.
Elevation (m a.s.l.):	Elevation where the sedimentary sequence was collected may have an effect on vegetation turnover. Lower elevations might be more accessible to humans and thus more impacted than higher elevation island ecosystems (55).
Island area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Smaller islands may show a greater rate of vegetation turnover than bigger islands and generally support fewer stable populations (56, 57). In addition, island resources are more limited. These characteristics may translate into a stronger human impact.
Glacial-interglacial island area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Variations in island area over time account for the legacy effect of past sea-level change (35, 58). We used the median sea-level (as calculated over the previous nine glacial cycles) following 35.
Isolation quantified by: distance of island to mainland (km) and surrounding landmass (km <sup>2</sup> )	Quantified as direct distance as well as the proportion of surrounding landmass (59). More isolated islands tend to have been inhabited by people more recently and therefore island taxa are more susceptible to human arrivals.
Absolute rate of turnover before human arrival	To test how the natural rates of vegetation turnover in pre-human times may affect early human impacts (51, 52, 60).

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**Table S3. Human arrival times and geographic characteristics for the islands studied**

Islands used in this study organized by ocean. Island area depicts the current situation as well as long-term median over the previous nine glacial-interglacial cycles (35, 58). Isolation was estimated using distance from the mainland as well as the proportion of surrounding landmass (*SLMP*) (59). Human arrival times were extracted from original data sources. Cal yr BP ages use 1950 CE as the zero level. Notes: <sup>i</sup>Debated pre-Portuguese arrivals to the Azores; <sup>ii</sup>First migration of agriculturalist societies in Hispaniola; <sup>iii</sup>Portuguese arrival in 1506 CE, while the first regular settlement on Tristan da Cunha was established between 1810 and 1820 CE; <sup>iv</sup>European arrival on San Cristóbal was in 1535 CE, with the introductions of goats occurring in 1813-1835 CE, while the first regular settlement on San Cristóbal was established between 1842 and 1845 CE.

Ocean	Archipelago	Island	Latitude, Longitude (°)	Core elevation (m a.s.l)	Island area (km <sup>2</sup> ; current and long-term)	Distance [km]	SLMP [km <sup>2</sup> ]	Human arrival (cal yr BP)	References for human arrival
Atlantic	Azores	Flores	39.41, -31.22	530	143, 217	1872	0.44	468 <sup>i</sup>	[61, 62]
	Azores	Pico	38.44, -28.20	903	447, 487	1637	0.46	468 <sup>i</sup>	[61, 62]
	Cabo Verde	São Nicolau	16.62, -24.35	1000	388, 445	750	0.46	370	[63]
	Cabo Verde	Santo Antão	17.11, -25.06	1200	785, 944	857	0.42	370	[63]
	Canary Islands	Gran Canaria	28.03, -15.33	870	1560, 2183	220	0.81	2000	[64, 65]
	Canary Islands	La Gomera	28.07, -17.15	1250	370, 518	347	0.76	1800	[65, 66]
	Canary Islands	Tenerife	28.30, -16.19	600	2034, 2381	310	0.76	2000	[65, 67]
	Greater Antilles	Hispaniola	19.03, -70.92	2455	76480, 84232	715	0.37	2500 <sup>ii</sup>	[68]
	Tristan da Cunha	Nightingale Island	-37.4, -12.5	180	3, 25	2795	0.27	444 <sup>iii</sup>	[69]
	Tristan da Cunha	Tristan da Cunha	-37.0, -12.3	63	98, 133	2777	0.27	444 <sup>iii</sup>	[69]
Indian	Iceland	Iceland	64.02, -20.71	80	102775, 126840	1209	0.61	1076	[70]
	Mascarenes	Mauritius	-20.40, 57.52	530	2040, 2670	1874	0.40	302	[71]
	Fiji	Taveuni	-16.83, -179.94	810	442, na	2963	0.30	3000	[72]
	Fiji	Viti Levu	-18.07, -178.53	4	10531, 21769	2707	0.21	3000	[72, 73]
	Fiji	Yacata	-17.26, 179.51	2	6, 43	2870	0.34	3000	[72]
	Galápagos	San Cristóbal	-0.89, -89.48	679	558, 803	948	0.24	115 <sup>iv</sup>	[74, 75]
	Hawaiian Islands	Maui	20.79, -156.47	0	1884, 3004	3706	0.29	750	[76]
	Juan Fernández Islands	Alexander Selkirk	-33.75, -80.83	1200	50, 54	752	0.26	385	[77]
	Juan Fernández Islands	Robinson Crusoe	-33.60, -78.90	130	48, 118	609	0.34	385	[77]
	New Caledonia	Grande Terre	-22.27, 166.61	3	18576, 38254	1354	0.17	2800	[72]
Pacific	Mercury Islands	Great Mercury	-36.61, 175.79	5	20, 155458	2179	0.39	780	[78]
	Poor Knights	Tawhiti Rahi	-35.47, 174.73	50	2, 6	2070	0.45	780	[19]
	Sāmoa	Upolu	-13.9, -171.83	760	1125, 1786	3887	0.22	2800	[72, 79]
	Society Islands	Mo'orea	-17.5, -149.83	83	133, 165	5868	0.24	1000	[80, 81]
	Austral Islands	Rimatara	-22.64, -152.81	5	9, 10	5500	0.20	750	[81]
	Austral Islands	Raivavae	-23.87, -147.68	1	18, 105	5830	0.20	750	[81]
	Austral Islands	Rapa Iti	-27.60, -144.35	2	38, 95	6010	0.19	750	[81]

**Table S4.** Data sources for island palaeoecological records included in Figure 1 (103, 104).

Ocean	Archipelago	Island	Data source	Reference
Atlantic	Azores	Flores	S.E. Connor	(3)
Atlantic	Azores	Pico	S.E. Connor <i>et al.</i>	(3, 82)
Atlantic	Cabo Verde	São Nicolau	A. Castilla-Beltrán & S. Nogué	(83)
Atlantic	Cabo Verde	Santo Antão	A. Castilla-Beltrán & S. Nogué	(84)
Atlantic	Canary Islands	Gran Canaria	L. de Nascimento	(85)
Atlantic	Canary Islands	La Gomera	S. Nogué	(29)
Atlantic	Canary Islands	Tenerife	L. de Nascimento	(86)
Atlantic	Greater Antilles	Hispaniola	Neotoma	(87)
Atlantic	Tristan da Cunha	Nightingale Island	K. Ljung & S. Björck	(88)
Atlantic	Tristan da Cunha	Tristan da Cunha	K. Ljung & S. Björck	(89)
Atlantic	Iceland	Iceland	Neotoma	(70)
Indian	Mascarenes	Mauritius	Neotoma & E.J. de Boer	(90)
Pacific	Fiji	Taveuni	J. Stevenson & M. Prebble	(91, 92)
Pacific	Fiji	Viti Levu	Neotoma & J. Stevenson	(92)
Pacific	Fiji	Yacata	J. Stevenson	(92)
Pacific	Galápagos	San Cristóbal	Neotoma	(26)
Pacific	Hawaiian Islands	Maui	Neotoma	(93)
Pacific	Juan Fernández Islands	Alexander Selkirk	S.G. Haberle	(94)
Pacific	Juan Fernández Islands	Robinson Crusoe	S.G. Haberle	(77, 95)
Pacific	New Caledonia	Grande Terre	J. Stevenson	(27)
Pacific	Mercury Islands	Great Mercury	Neotoma & M. Prebble	(96, 97)
Pacific	Poor Knights	Tawhiti Rahi	J.M. Wilmshurst	(19)
Pacific	Sāmoa	Upolu	W.D. Gosling <i>et al.</i>	(18)
Pacific	Society Islands	Mo'orea	J. Stevenson	(98)
Pacific	Austral Islands	Rimatara	M. Prebble	(99)
Pacific	Austral Islands	Raivavae	Neotoma & M. Prebble	(97)
Pacific	Austral Islands	Rapa Iti	Neotoma & M. Prebble	(97, 100, 101)

Background information on the impacts of climate change and volcanic eruptions for the islands included in Tables S3 and S4

Vegetation turnover is not only linked to human activities but also to many other disturbances including volcanic activities, climate change, extreme weather events, fire, and sea-level fluctuations. While those factors influence vegetation composition, they cannot explain the systematic change in turnover that we attribute to human arrival over the analyzed time period.

When looking at the islands independently, the original authors found no evidence of lasting changes in local vegetation assemblage caused by past climate change over the studied time period of the past 5000 years. For example, on Galápagos fluctuating shifts in vegetation abundance were found in response to El Niño/La Niña with a reversion to the previous state following climatic oscillations (26). For the other Pacific islands (e.g. 18, 26, 27, 91-95, 98-101) included in this study, such as Tawhiti Rahi (19) and Great Mercury (96, 97), there are no reliable data pinpointing major vegetation responses to specific climatic events for the past 2000 years (but see 102). In the Azores, there was a weak link between vegetation and paleoclimatic changes detected through geochemical proxies on the island of Pico. Even if the Azorean paleoclimate varied substantially (e.g. cooler/drier periods occurred 400–800, 1300–1800, 2600–3000, 3300–3400 and possibly also 4400–4600 cal yr BP) its impact on the local vegetation, at least in terms of pollen composition, was relatively small (3). On La Gomera (Canary Islands), there was a decline in hygrophilous plant taxa towards the present, possibly linked to the end of a regional climatic change called the African Humid Period (5000 years ago) (29, 105). However, on the other Canary Islands (Tenerife and Gran Canaria) (85, 86) and Cabo Verde (Santo Antão and São Nicolau) (83, 84), the age of the sedimentary sequences was not old enough to detect potential changes related specifically to this regional climatic change. Further south in the Atlantic Ocean, on Tristan da Cunha, paleoecological studies show a local dry period (1050–1450 cal yr BP) associated with an increase in sedges (89). On Nightingale Island there were recurrent humid periods during the Holocene. The most recent of these dated back to 1800–2600 cal yr BP and 4700 cal yr BP. These seem to have had mostly local effects on the vegetation (88), with a return to prior vegetation composition after humidity decreased. Climate in the southwest Indian Ocean is mainly controlled by the monsoon system at orbital and millennial timescales. Most studies use isotope data from stalagmites to reconstruct hydroclimate variability. A study from Rodrigues Islands (106) located 560 km east of Mauritius shows a recurring submillennial-scale aridity trend punctuated by multidecadal megadroughts throughout the past 8000 years. This suggests that the insular fauna and flora in the Mascarenes survived prior episodes of severe climate stress on the islands, but collapsed when a substantial increase in human activities started, which coincided with the late Holocene drying trend (90, 107). In summary, these data provide strong evidence of “pre-human island systems” that responded to climatic forcing but were capable of shifting back to their prior state.



The volcanic eruptions found in sedimentary sequences are inferred from chronologically dated tephra layers. However, most of the island sites do not have an independent study on tephrochronology and the tephra layers are not all well-dated. Hence, the quality of the information might be skewed between islands. In addition, individual volcanic eruptions typically are short-lived perturbations to the climate system, with effects lasting on the order of 1–3 years. These short time-periods are considered to be too brief to explain the trends seen here. Taking into account these limitations, when reviewing the original datasets for each island we found minimal vegetation responses to volcanic eruptions. In New Zealand if we looked at vegetation responses to the eruption of the Okataina volcano (600 cal yr BP), the authors found only minor disturbance, where tephra layers were found in most places in northern New Zealand, suggesting that the signature of human settlement overwhelmed the signature of this eruption (19, 108). There are no known eruptions that affected Rimatara, Raivavae, or Rapa Iti. In the Azores, volcanic eruptions appear to have had localized impacts on the vegetation, lasting 500–1000 years and favoring endemic taxa (3). The main impacts seem to have occurred in the last 2000 years on Pico (the Caveiro pollen record (82)), with temporary declines in arboreal pollen every time there was an eruption (3, 82). On Nightingale Island, where a tephra layer was identified (dated to around 3400 cal yr BP), the authors do not find any significant change in vegetation that could be directly linked to this eruption (88). On Tristan da Cunha, numerous small eruptions have been recorded during the Holocene as, for example, the tephra layer found at around 500–700 cal yr BP (89). If there were any vegetation effects on this island associated with these eruptions, they were too small to be recorded by the pollen data (86). The same explanation is suggested for the Canary Islands (29, 85, 86) and Cabo Verde (83, 84). In Mauritius, the last volcanic activity was dated at 25,000 years ago (109). Since then, the hotspot of volcanic activity has moved towards the southwest and is currently located off the southeast coast of Réunion. The *Piton de la Fournaise* is a highly active volcano, but there are neither historical eruptions nor other indications that pre-historic volcanic activity to have directly impacted the other Mascarene islands (90).

**Table S5. Breakpoint model results by island**

Summary statistics (AICc and adjusted R<sup>2</sup>) for the four implemented breakpoint models relating DCA ordination scores (SD<sub>ptt</sub>, standard deviation of pollen taxon turnover = compositional change) with time. Implemented models include no relationship (no slope), a linear relationship with no breakpoint (linear), a linear breakpoint model with estimated human arrival time as a prescribed breakpoint (prescribed), as well as a linear breakpoint model with optimized breakpoint (optimal). Bold text indicated the no-slope, linear, or human breakpoint model is considered best (AICc difference >2 to the less complex model). Asterisks (\*) indicate two islands (Grande Terre and Rimatara) where turnover shifted abruptly with human arrival. Such a jump in composition is a clear indication of human effects that our modelling approach will treat conservatively as no change in turnover. The two “slope” columns depict the slope (change in ordination score with time) of the human breakpoint model before and after human arrival (SD<sub>ptt</sub>/100 years). The right column depicts the percentage of inertia (weighted variance) explained by the first DCA axis relative to the total inertia of a correspondence analysis.

Island	AICc				Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>			Breakpoint		Slope		DCA
	no slope	linear	prescribed	optimal	linear	prescribed	optimal	prescribed	optimal	before human	after human	% expl.
Flores	42.2	0.30	<b>-31.9</b>	-44.9	0.62	0.82	0.87	468	651	-0.020	-0.147	45
Pico	48.0	11.9	<b>-21.5</b>	-74.6	0.35	0.56	0.77	468	889	0.009	0.154	30
São Nicolau	51.0	47.1	<b>30.4</b>	43.7	0.18	0.58	0.39	370	235	0.005	0.267	25
Santo Antão	88.9	86.6	<b>77.7</b>	72.4	0.08	0.27	0.39	370	109	-0.013	0.280	23
Gran Canaria	44.1	20.3	<b>17.5</b>	18.5	0.65	0.71	0.74	2000	1839	0.048	0.147	23
La Gomera	15.1	<b>-3.2</b>	-4.7	-24.2	0.59	0.65	0.88	1800	3629	0.030	0.001	21
Tenerife	49.0	22.4	<b>-5.1</b>	-22.4	0.63	0.87	0.94	2000	2439	0.013	0.137	52
Hispaniola	86.8	45.4	<b>1.1</b>	-39.3	0.71	0.92	0.98	2500	1435	-0.017	0.084	48
Nightingale Island	74.9	<b>68.3</b>	70.5	71.3	0.18	0.17	0.20	444	2655	0.020	-0.029	40
Tristan da Cunha	18.6	7.0	<b>-16.3</b>	-27.8	0.33	0.69	0.80	444	3	-0.013	0.144	56
Iceland	23.6	<b>5.1</b>	4.4	4.4	0.66	0.70	0.76	1076	1677	0.015	0.063	47
Mauritius	-12.2	-36.8	<b>-73.8</b>	-71.5	0.39	0.71	0.71	302	284	-0.006	-0.233	15
Taveuni	79.3	60.9	<b>50.4</b>	52.9	0.53	0.71	0.72	3000	2775	-0.034	0.090	31
Viti Levu	65.4	45.6	<b>35.2</b>	30.8	0.61	0.77	0.83	3000	3806	0.148	-0.019	29
Yacata	82.0	41.4	<b>22.6</b>	25.1	0.79	0.90	0.90	3000	2814	-0.002	0.104	27
San Cristóbal	104.7	-21.5	<b>-303.2</b>	-339.7	0.40	0.81	0.83	115	65	0.013	0.544	25
Maui	<b>79.6</b>	81.5	83.4	79.8	-0.01	-0.03	0.15	750	1599	0.005	0.066	22
Alexander Selkirk	85.8	67.6	<b>58.6</b>	61.7	0.55	0.70	0.70	385	379	0.020	0.664	22
Robinson Crusoe	51.5	53.0	<b>3.2</b>	6.7	0.01	0.93	0.93	385	381	-0.013	1.488	61
Grande Terre	89.9	<b>52.2*</b>	54.6	51.0	0.78	0.77	0.82	2800	622	0.053	0.077	26
Great Mercury	84.8	52.9	<b>18.9</b>	13.6	0.71	0.92	0.94	780	1109	0.023	0.295	31
Tawhiti Rahi	59.4	24.5	<b>1.6</b>	4.9	0.80	0.93	0.93	780	767	0.035	0.236	24
Upolu	28.6	<b>9.8</b>	12.7	14.8	0.61	0.59	0.61	2800	4075	0.019	0.026	37
Mo'orea	102.1	96.1	<b>86.9</b>	80.2	0.11	0.25	0.35	1000	838	0.302	-0.005	24
Rimatara	98.2	80.2	<b>67.8*</b>	52.3	0.48	0.67	0.82	750	1199	0.012	0.407	35
Raivavae	86.7	<b>25.6</b>	26.6	15.2	0.90	0.90	0.94	750	1088	0.195	0.285	40
Rapa Iti	68.6	58.3	<b>17.4</b>	19.9	0.38	0.89	0.89	750	693	-0.004	0.287	26

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