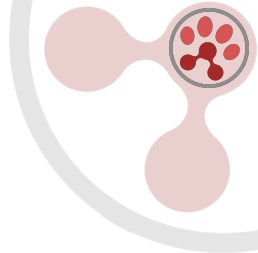




FishMed-PhD



Hologenomics

Applied to host-microbiota

interactions in marine organisms

Antton Alberdi

University of Copenhagen

antton.alberdi@sund.ku.dk



Hologenomics



CENTER FOR EVOLUTIONARY HOLOGENOMICS



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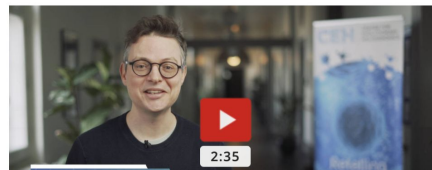


Center for Evolutionary Hologenomics

Meet our researchers



The Hologenomic approach introduced by Professor Tom Gilbert and colleagues at Center for Evolutionary Hologenomics



Tweets by @evohologen

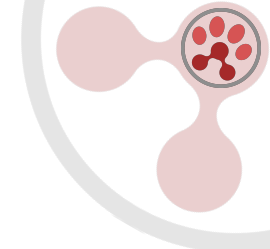
Evohologen Retweeted
 European Aquaculture Society @easaqua

#EAStalk
"Fish and gut microbiota dialogue. Towards standard methods and genetics, nutrition and host transcriptomic interactions"

Ariadna Sitjà-Bobadilla, Jaume Pérez-Sánchez, Maria Carla Piazzon, Simona Rimoldi



Hologenomics

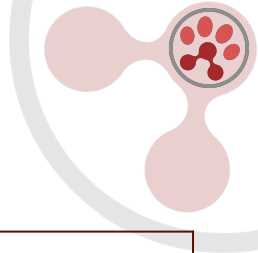


alberdilab.dk

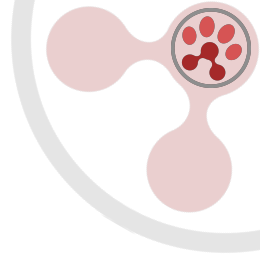




Hologenomics



55' 09.30 - 10.25	Session 1 Introduction to hologenomics
50' 10.30 - 11.25	Session 2 Experimental design for hologenomics
75' 11.30 - 12.25	Session 3 Bioinformatics methods for hologenomics
30' 12.30 - 13.30	Session 4 Statistics methods for hologenomics



Assignment

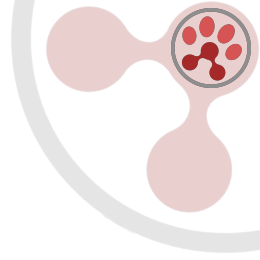
Hologenomic grant proposal

Length: 10,000-15,000 characters (3-4 pages)

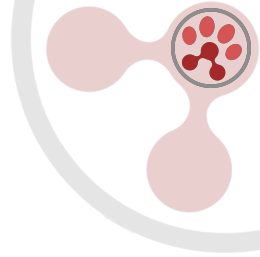
Submission: May 9th, 2025



Hologenomics

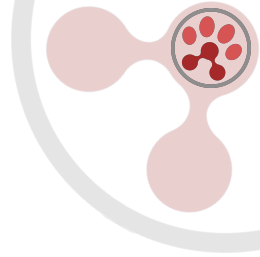


- **Background:** ca. 3000 chr.
- **Hypothesis and objectives:** ca. 1000 chr.
- **Methodology:** ca. 2000 chr.
- **Work plan:** ca. 2000 chr.
- **Impact:** ca. 1000 chr.
- **References:** ca. 15-20



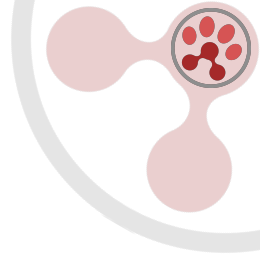
Background

- Start from the big picture and narrow down to the study questions
- Provide enough information to contextualise the hypotheses and objectives
- Avoid cluttering information that does not contribute to the application



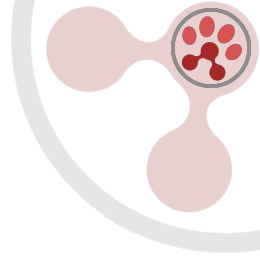
Hypotheses and objectives

- Ensure the background information to understand the hypotheses are provided in the background
- Ensure hypotheses are addressable with the proposed methodology and study design



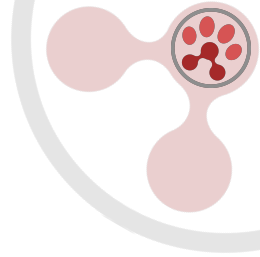
Methodology

- Study system
- Experimental / field work to produce samples
- Laboratory
- Bioinformatics
- Statistics



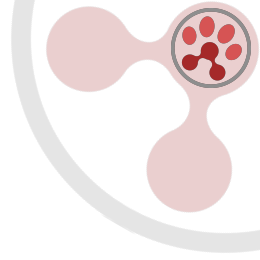
Work plan

- How is the project going to be structured?
- How long will it take for each task or work package to be accomplished?
- Who is going to conduct each task?



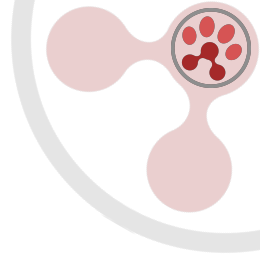
Impact

- What is the scientific impact of your research?
 - How will it contribute to the community?
 - How will it change your field?
- What is the societal impact of your expected results?
 - Environment, sustainability, biodiversity...



References

- Use databases
- Prioritise peer-reviewed articles
- Use a reference manager like Mendeley



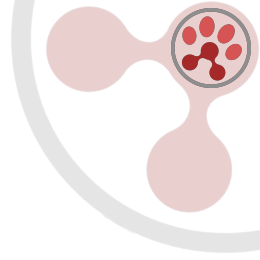
Assignment

Hologenomic grant proposal

Length: 10,000-15,000 characters (3-4 pages)

Submission: May 9th, 2025, through this form:

<https://airtable.com/appi3wfndMqVyksv3/pag6S4jLcyzVV79BP/form>



Session 1

Introduction to **HOLOGENOMICS**



Do not edit
How to change the design



Do all animals have an associated microbiome?



Do not edit
How to change the design



Are animals able to detect and react against all microbes?

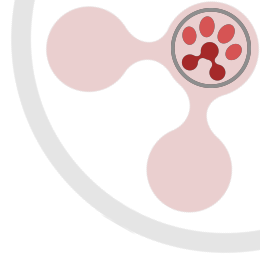


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Hologenomics

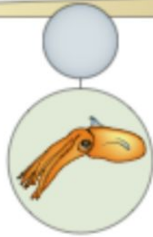


a

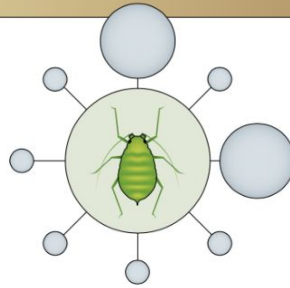
Increasing complexity gradient in animal-associated microbiotas



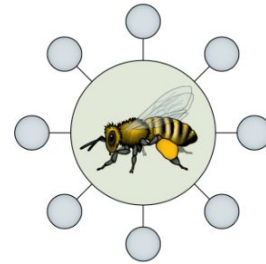
Lepidoptera caterpillar gut
No detectable
resident microbiota



Bobtail squid light organ
Single symbiont



Aphid bacteriocytes
1–2 primary symbionts +
a few microorganisms



Honey bee gut
A few microorganisms

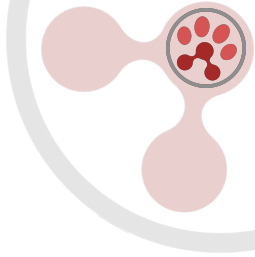


Vertebrate gut
Hundreds of
microorganisms

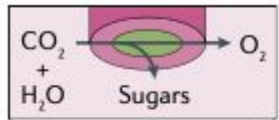
Alberdi et al. 2022
Nature Reviews Genetics



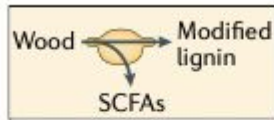
Hologenomics



b



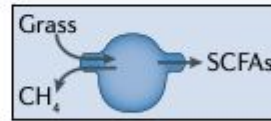
Corals and dinoflagellates
Carbon provision in
nutrient-poor waters



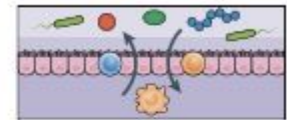
Termites and wood decay
Lignocellulose degradation



**Crop plants and
root microbiome**
Nutrient provision



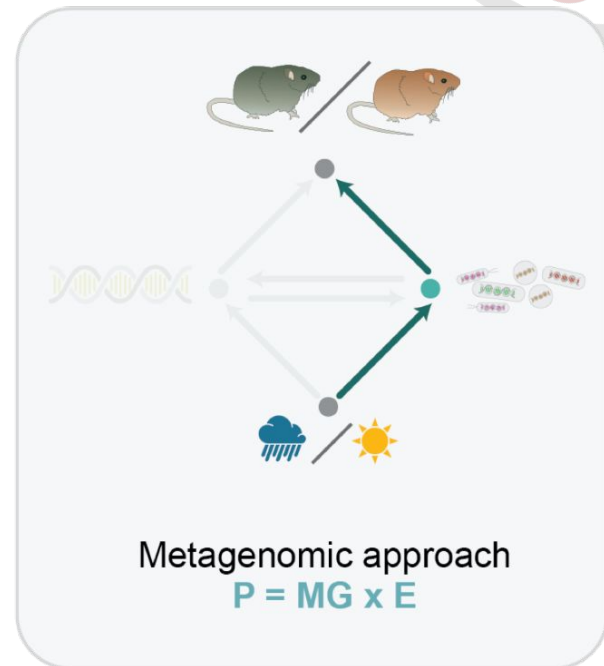
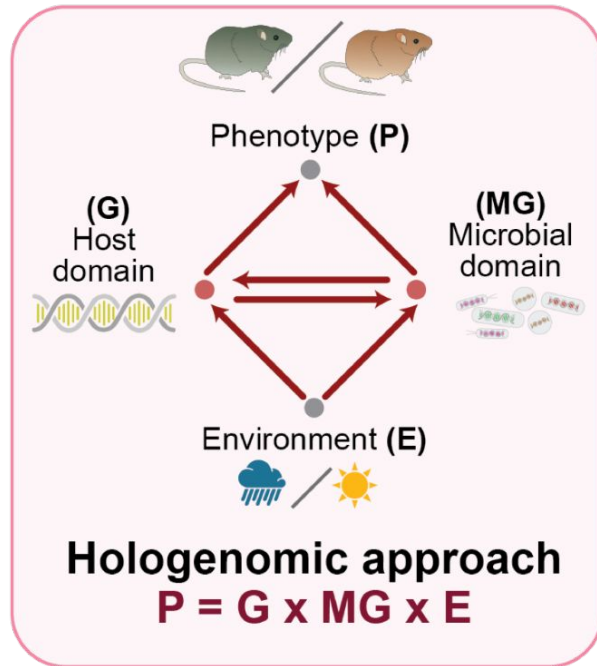
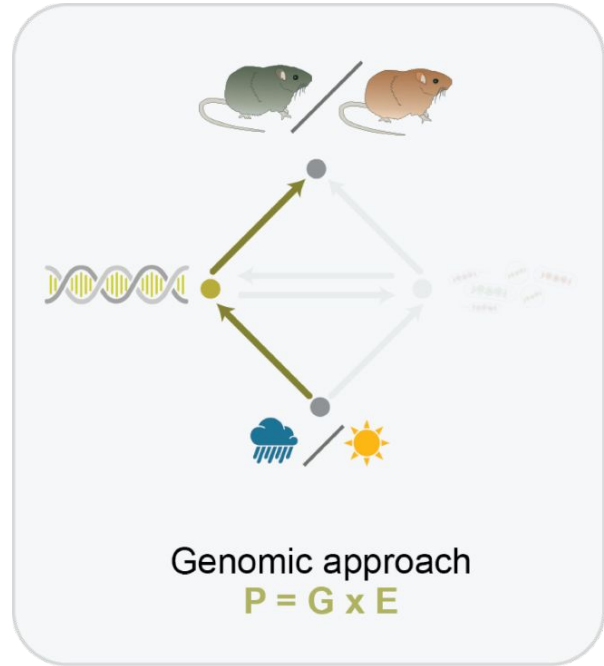
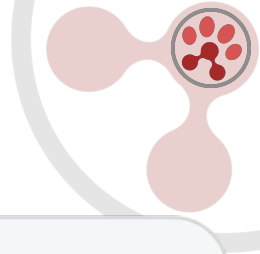
**Cows and rumen
microbiota**
Nutrient metabolism



**Laboratory mice and
gut microbiota**
Disease modelling

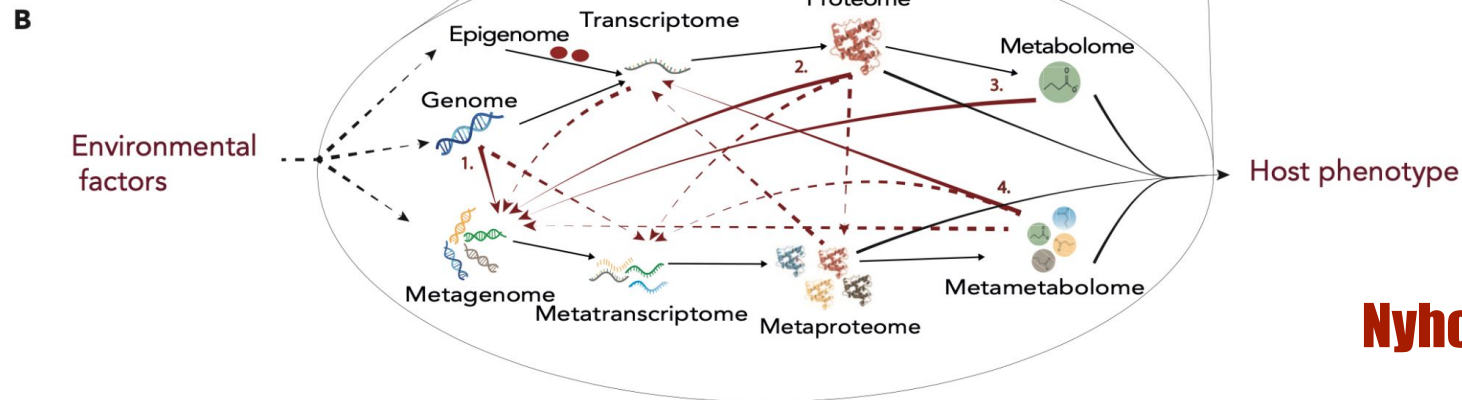
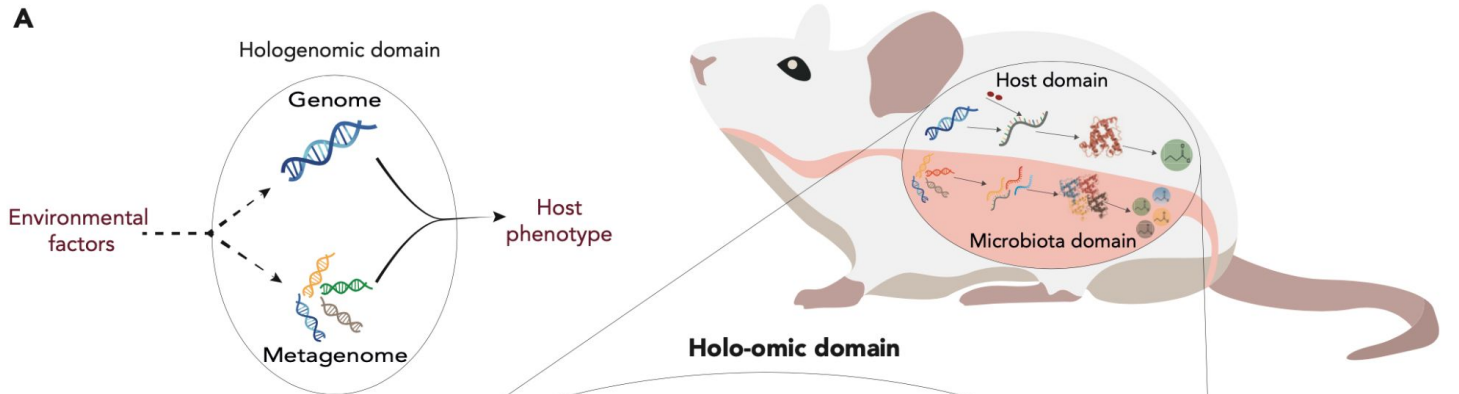
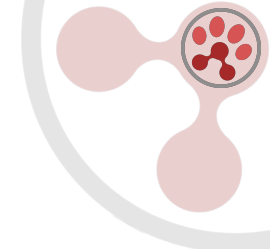


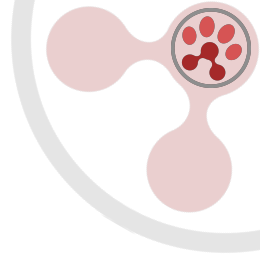
Hologenomics





Hologenomics

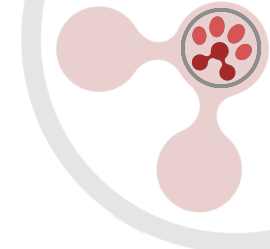




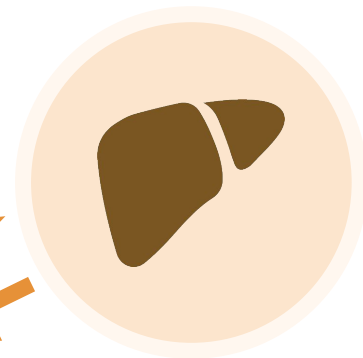
Host-microbiota interactions



Hologenomics

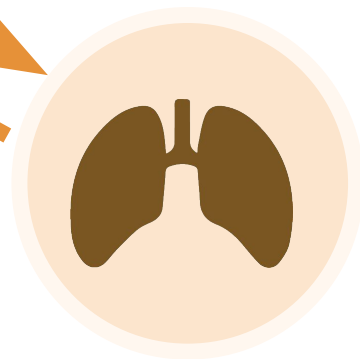
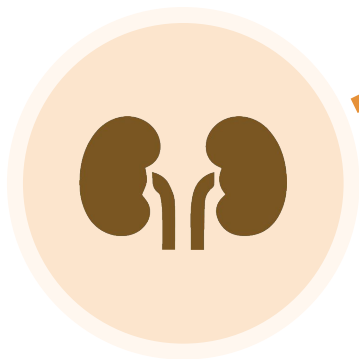


**Gut-
brain
axis**



**Gut-
liver
axis**

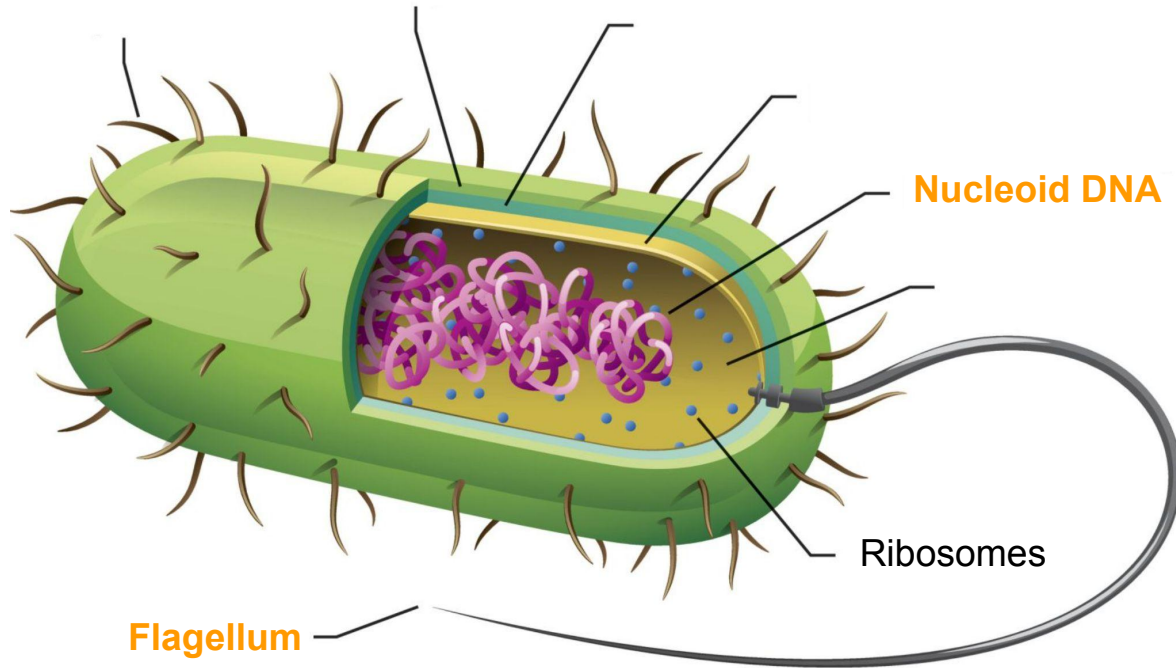
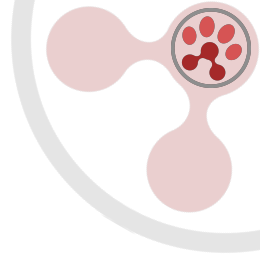
**Gut-
kidney
axis**



**Gut-
lung
axis**

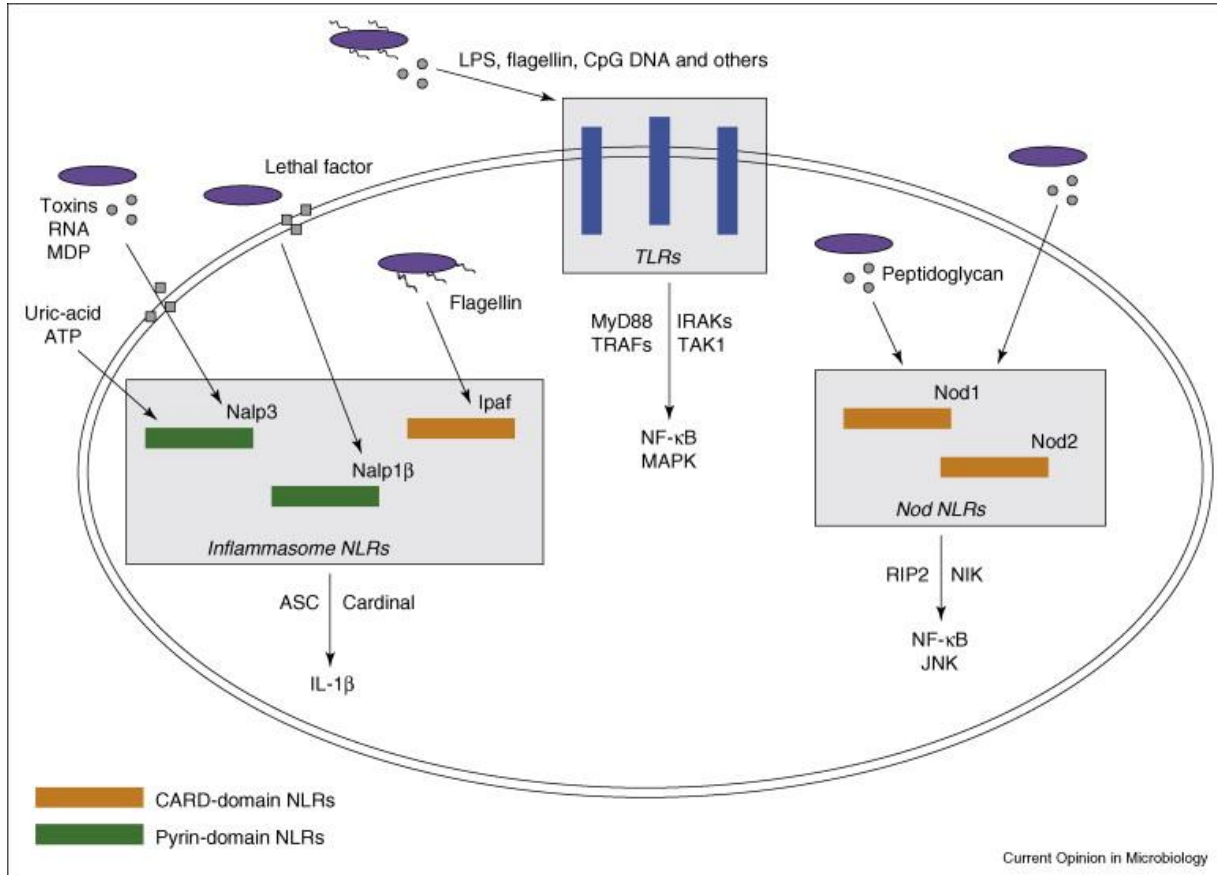
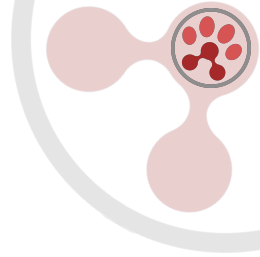


Hologenomics





Hologenomics



Toll-like receptors (TLR)

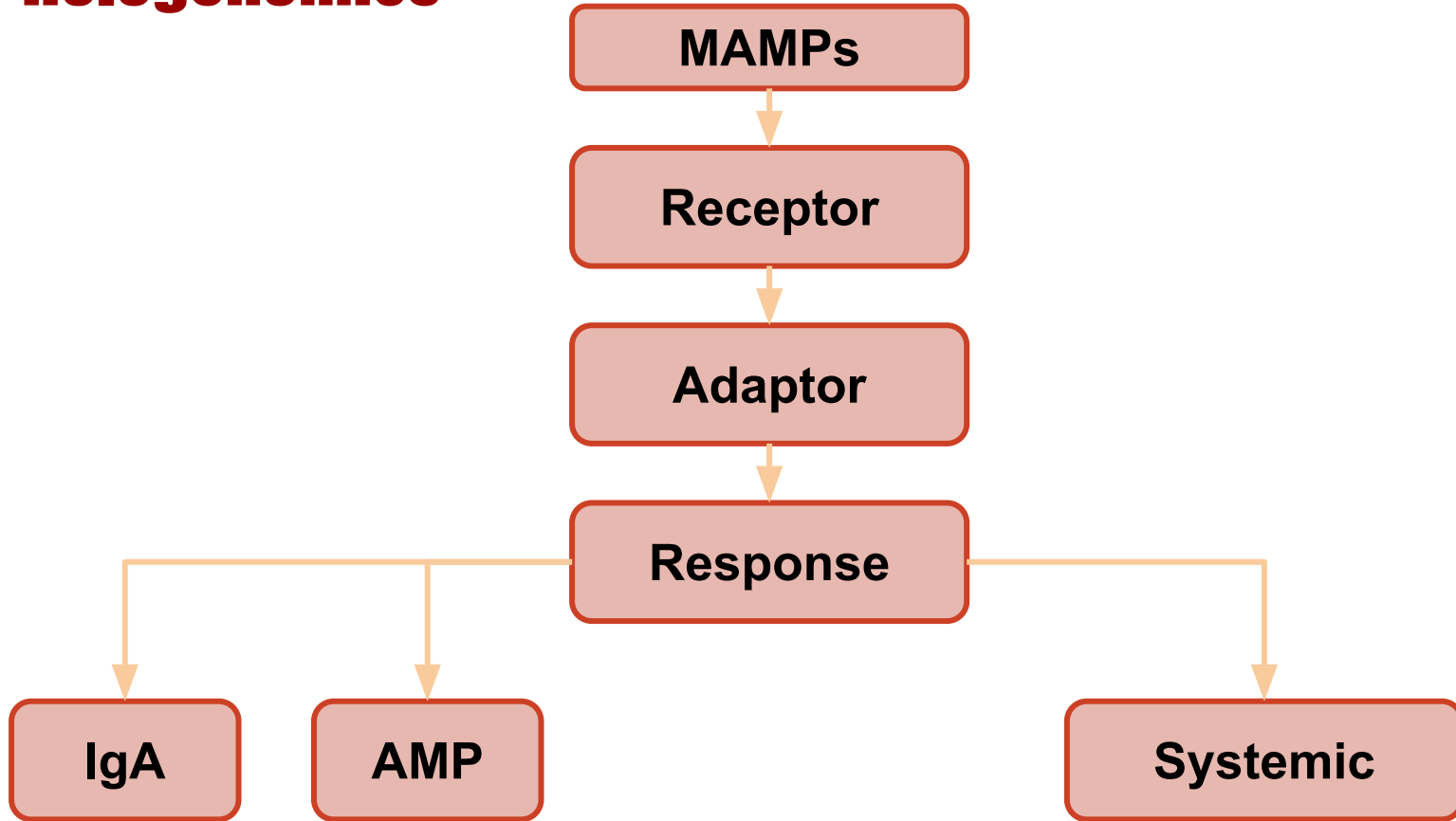
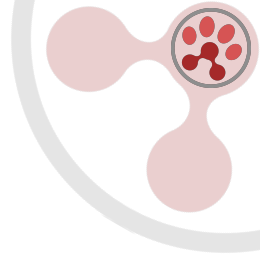
Nod-like Receptors (NLR)

Kufer et al. 2007

Current Opinion in Microbiology

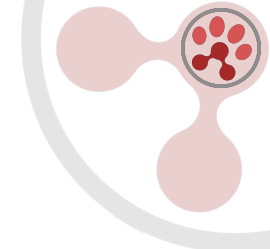


Hologenomics





Hologenomics

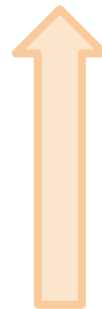
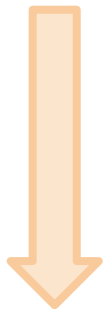


Microbes



Response

AMP, IgA...



MAMPs

LPS, SCFA...

Receptors

TLR, NLR, GPCR...



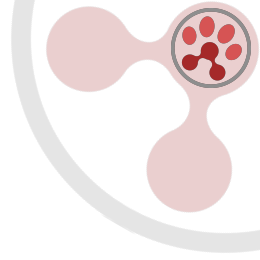


How much of the explanations of "Introduction to Hologenomics" did you understand?



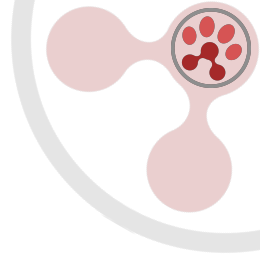


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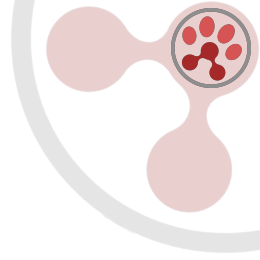


Session 2

Experimental designs for **HOLOGENOMICS**



$$P = G \times MG \times E$$

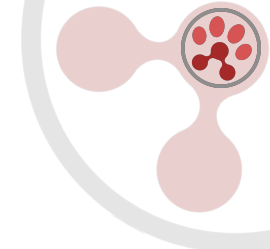


$$P = G \times MG \times E$$

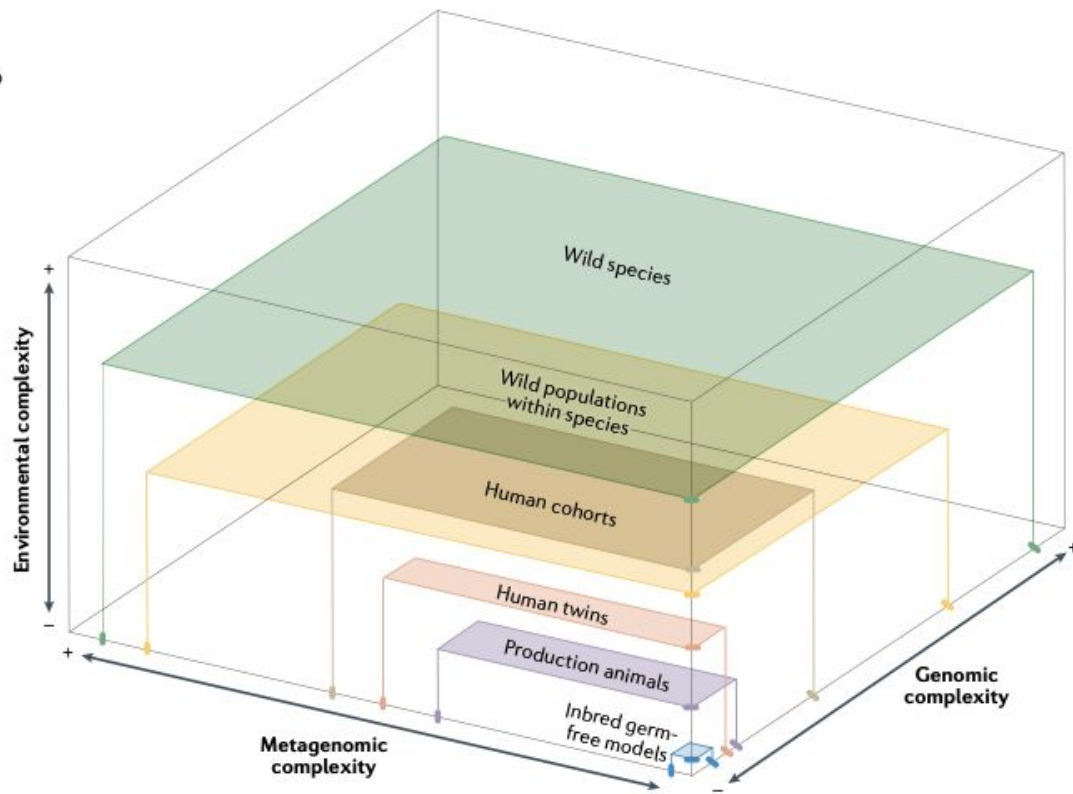
Interactions



Hologenomics



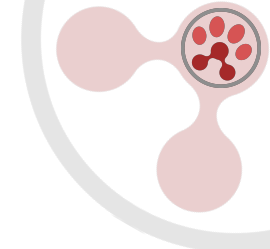
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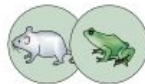


Hologenomics



a

Wild species
Interspecific comparisons



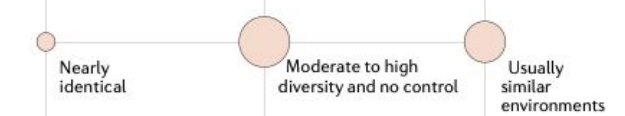
Wild populations
For example, latitudinal gradient of a species



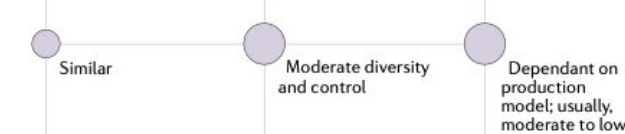
Human cohorts
For example, HMP, MetaHIT



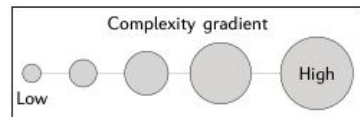
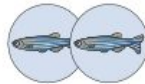
Human twins
Monozygotic vs dizygotic



Production animals
For example, chicken, salmon



Inbred germ-free models
For example, mice, zebrafish



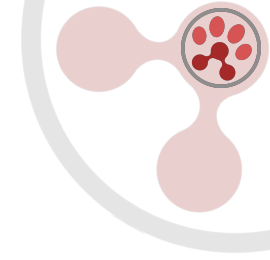
Genomic complexity

Metagenomic complexity

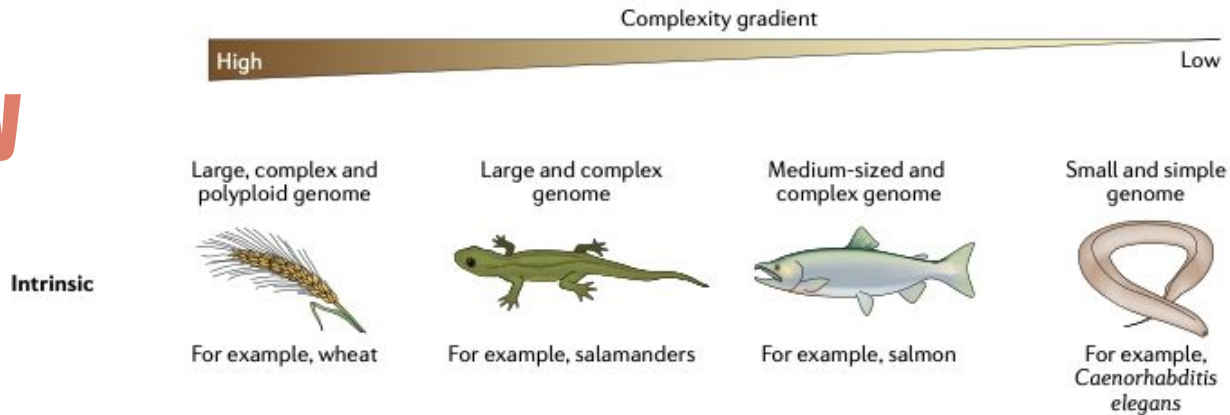
Environmental complexity



Hologenomics



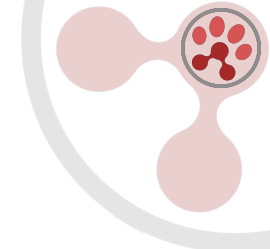
Genomic complexity



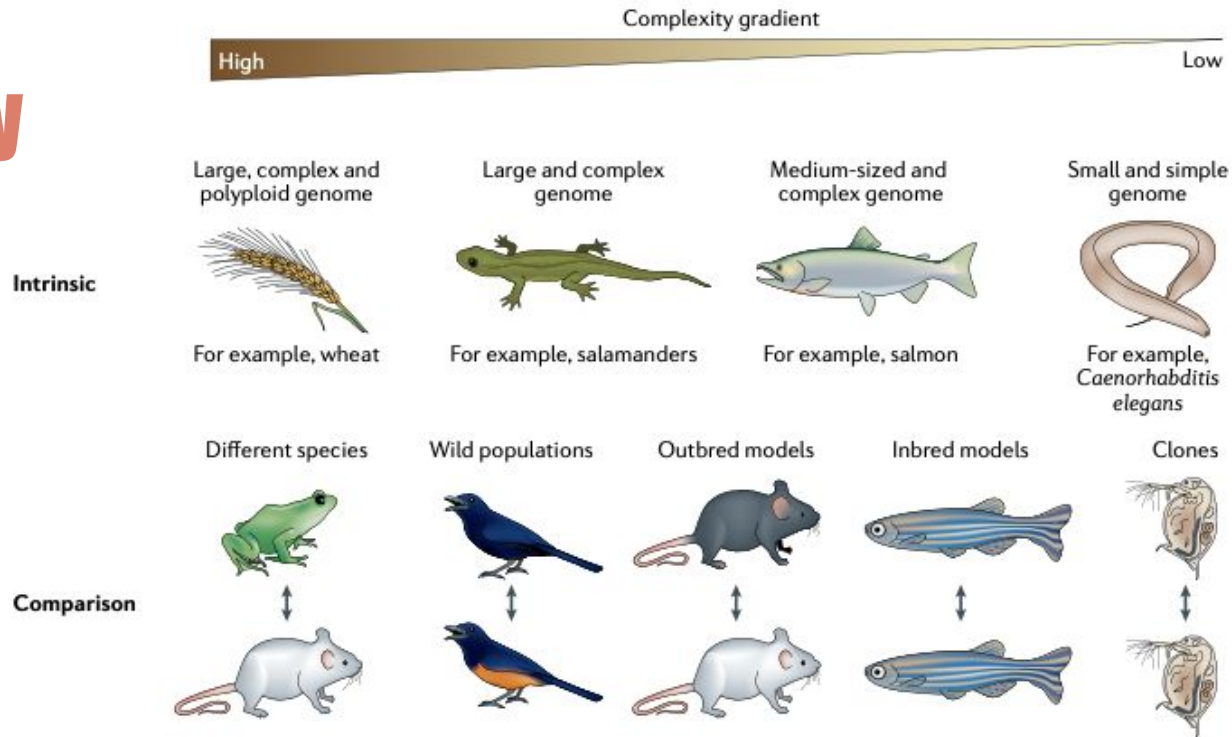
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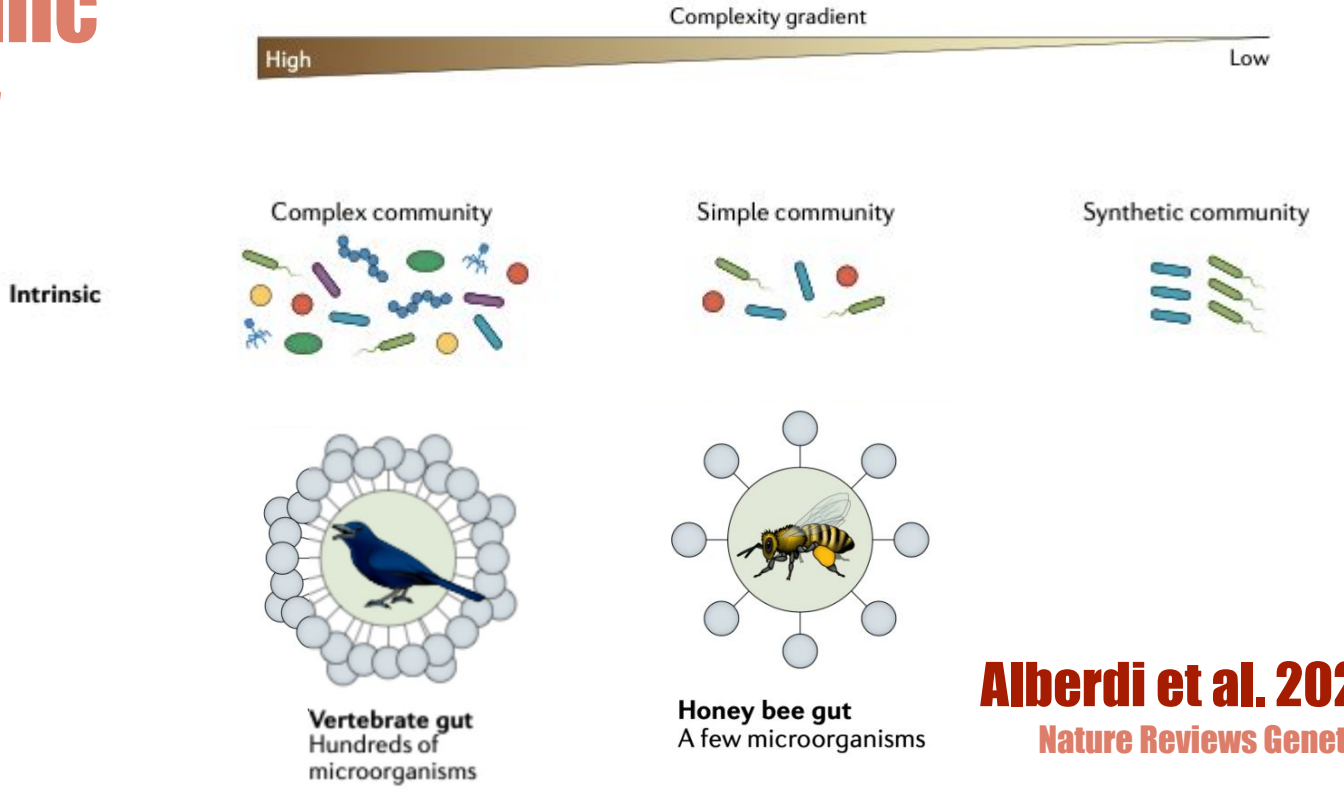
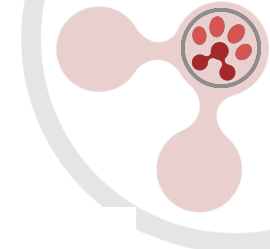
Genomic complexity





Hologenomics

Metagenomic complexity

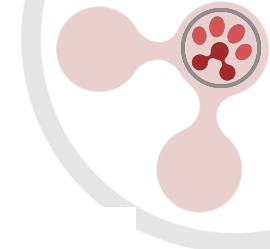
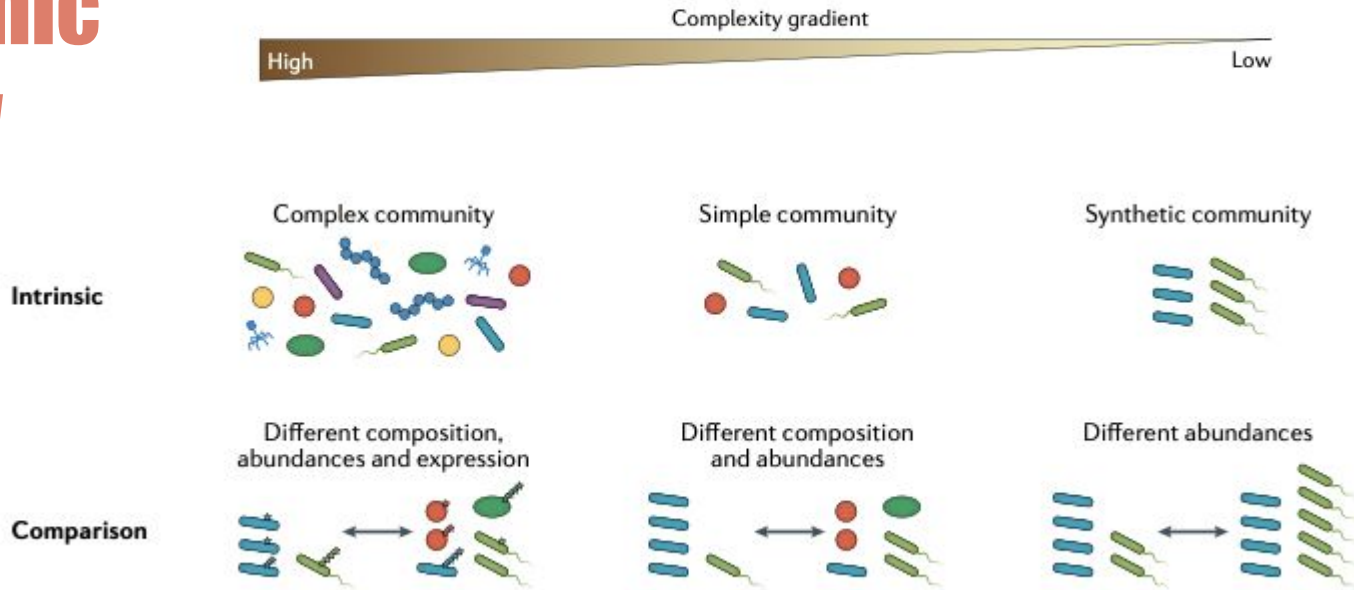


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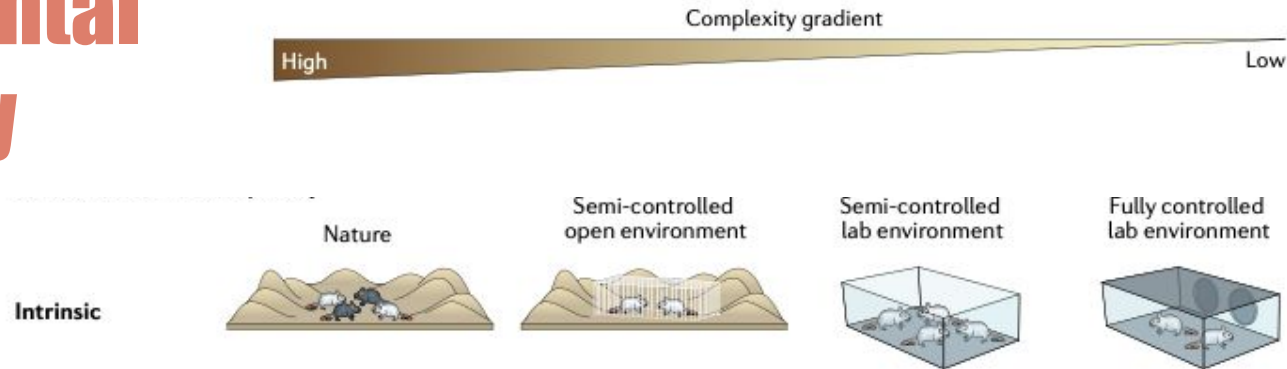
Metagenomic complexity





Hologenomics

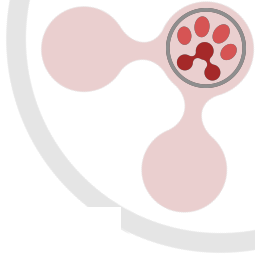
Environmental complexity



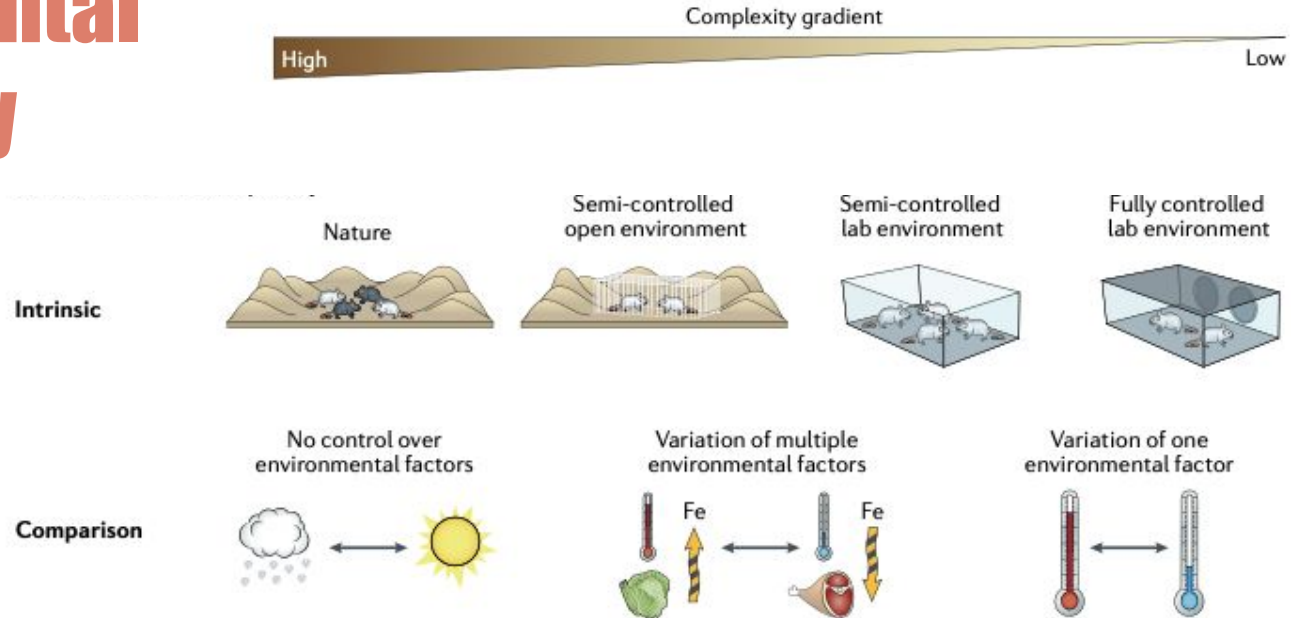
Alberdi et al. 2022
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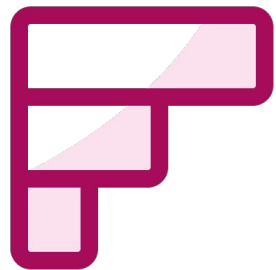
Hologenomics



Environmental complexity



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Rank these systems from maximum to minimum according to genomic complexity

Do not edit
How to change the design

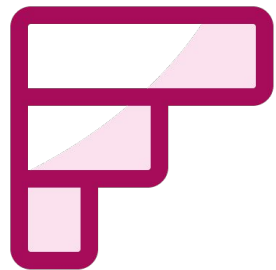


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Rank these systems from maximum to minimum according to metagenomic complexity

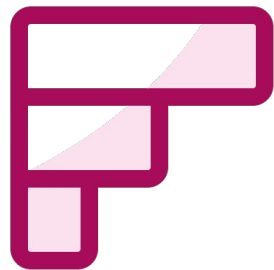


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Do not edit
How to change the design

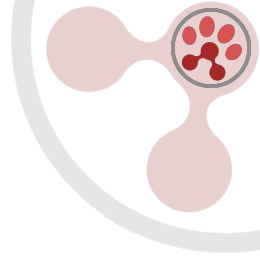


Rank these systems from maximum to minimum according to environmental complexity



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Scientific approaches



Field observation

Hologenomic data generation and analysis in wild vertebrates

Carlotta Pietroni¹ | Nanna Gaun¹ | Aoife Leonard^{1,2} | Jonas Lauritsen¹ |
Garazi Martin-Bideguren¹ | Iñaki Odrizola¹ | Ostaizka Aizpurua¹ | Antton Alberdi¹ |
Raphael Eisenhofer¹

¹Centre for Evolutionary Hologenomics (CEH), Globe Institute, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark
²Department of Ecoscience, Aarhus University, Roskilde, Denmark

Correspondence
Antton Alberdi
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Funding information
Carlsbergfondet, Grant/Award Number: CF20-0460; Danmarks Grundforskningsfond, Grant/Award Number: DNRF143

Handling Editor: Pablo Duchén

Abstract

1. Hologenomics, the joint analysis of host genomes and microbial metagenomes, has the potential to address fundamental biological questions from a systemic host-microbiota perspective. However, multiple fieldwork, laboratory and bioinformatic steps challenge quality, representativeness and comparability of hologenomic data.
2. Leveraging the first 2025 samples sourced from 151 wild vertebrate species analysed in the Earth Hologenome Initiative, we scrutinise hologenomic data generation steps, including laboratory and bioinformatic procedures. Comparisons across taxa and sample types provide novel insights into the relationships between laboratory quality metrics and derived data, the variation of host, prokaryotic and non-prokaryotic fractions of shotgun data, and the relationship between data quality and quantity with genome and metagenome reconstruction.
3. Our results show that faecal samples are significantly better than anal and cloacal swabs to study intestinal microbiomes using genome-resolved metagenomics. We also report that birds and bats both have substantially lower microbial DNA fractions and a higher degree of sample-to-sample variability compared to amphibians, reptiles and non-flying mammals.
4. Based on these data, we provide suggestions to the field for robustly and efficiently generating hologenomic data from wild vertebrates.

KEYWORDS

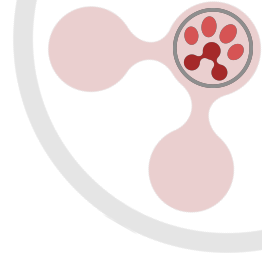
bioinformatics, ecological genetics, laboratory methods, microbial ecology, molecular biology, molecular methods, population genetics

1 | INTRODUCTION

Mounting evidence points towards the relevance of host-microbiota interactions in ecological and evolutionary processes of both animals and their associated microorganisms (Comizzoli et al., 2021; Davidson et al., 2020; Moeller & Sanders, 2020).

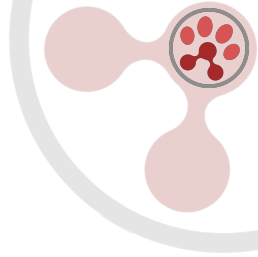
Microorganisms play key roles in many eco-evolutionary features of their hosts, including dietary shifts (Kohl et al., 2014), pathogen resistance (Knutie et al., 2017), and defence mechanisms (Vaeli et al., 2020). Meanwhile, spatial-temporal features and functions of animal-associated microbial communities are strongly influenced by the phylogenetic, behavioural, environmental

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Hologenomics

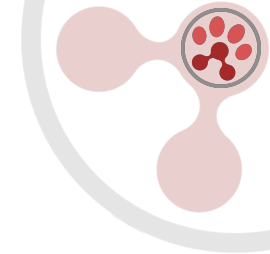


EARTH
HOLOGENOME
INITIATIVE

www.earthhologenome.org



Hologenomics



Sampling event metadata (A)

Sampling ID	201006_LIMU
Country	France
Region	Limousin
Date	2020/09/23
Latitude	46.552398
Longitude	1.323766
Biome	0196
Env Feature	Dense Pinus radiata plantation
Weather	D
Temperature	17 °C

Fieldwork metadata sheet A

All these sample data are related to this animal specimen code

Specimen ID	MMY12
Sampling event ID	201006_LIMU
Species	Myotis myotis
Trapping method	Mistnetting
Trapped time	01:20
Length	5.34 cm
Weight	32.5 grams
Sex	Male
Dev & Repro	Adult

Tube code	Type	Sample origin	Freshness	Time to freezing
AAB34	Faeces	H	10 minutes	24h
AAB35	Oral swab	D	Immediately	24h
AAB36	Tissue	D	Immediately	24h

Fieldwork metadata sheet B

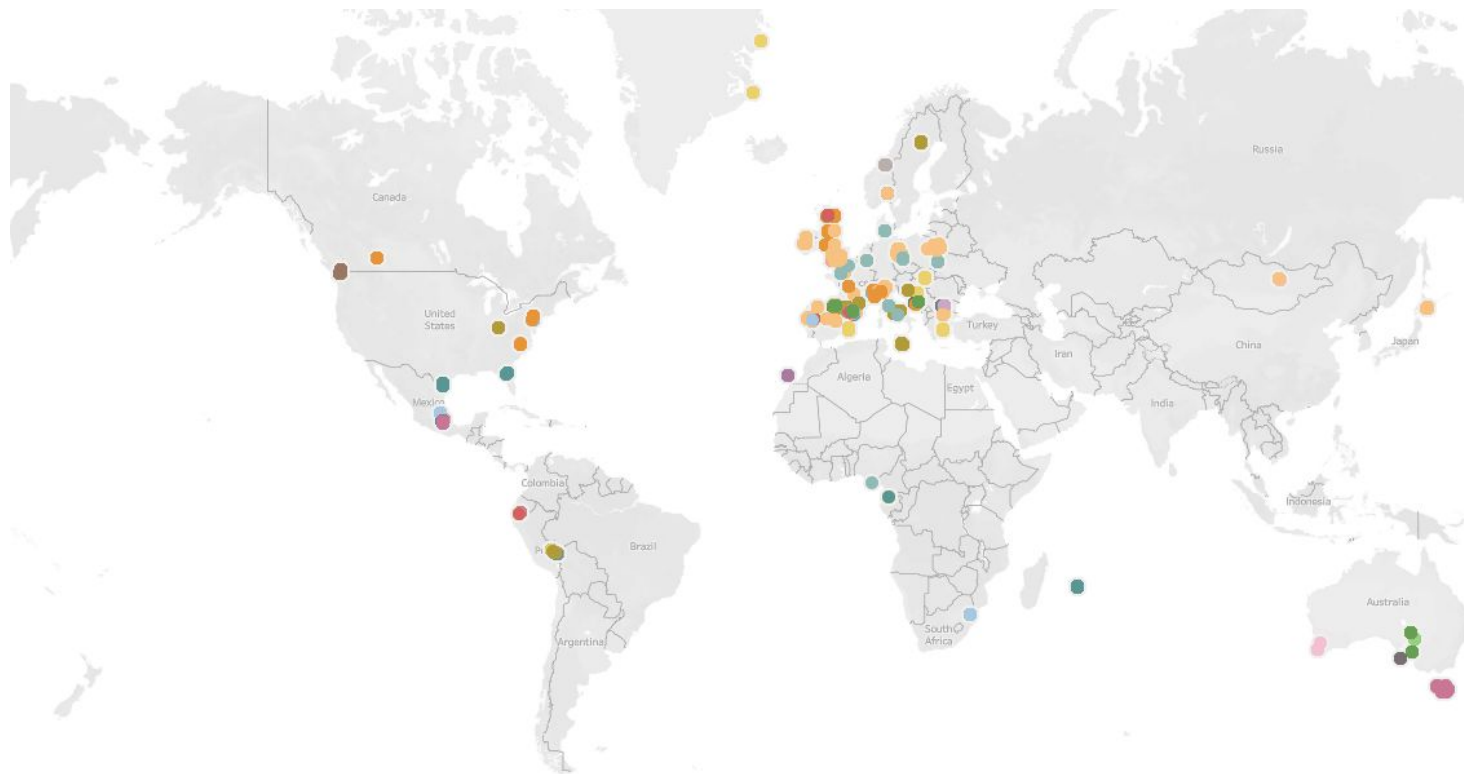
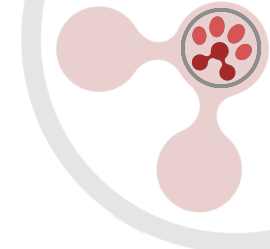
Notes: Full of scars in the wings. Probably quite old.

Animal Specimen metadata (B1)

Sample metadata (B2)



Hologenomics





Experimental manipulation



Ecology | Research Article

Mammals show distinct functional gut microbiome dynamics to identical series of environmental stressors

Adam Koziol,¹ Iñaki Odriozola,¹ Aoife Leonard,¹ Raphael Eisenhofer,¹ Carlos San José,² Ostaizka Aitzpurua,¹ Antton Alberdi¹

AUTHOR AFFILIATIONS See affiliation list on p. 14.

ABSTRACT The ability of the gut microbiome has been posited as an additional axis of animals' phenotypic plasticity. However, whether and how such plasticity varies across hosts with different biological features remains unclear. We performed a captivity experiment to compare how the taxonomic, phylogenetic, and functional microbial dynamics varied across a series of temperature and dietary disturbances in two mammals: the insectivorous-specialist *Crocidura russula* and the omnivorous-generalist *Apodemus sylvaticus*. Combining genome-resolved metagenomics, metabolic pathway distillation and joint species distribution modeling, we observed that, although microbiome alpha diversity of both species remained stable, *C. russula* exhibited substantially higher variability and directionality of microbial responses than *A. sylvaticus*. Our results indicate that the intrinsic properties (e.g., diversity and functional redundancy) of microbial communities coupled with physiological attributes (e.g., thermal plasticity) of hosts shape the taxonomic, phylogenetic, and functional response of gut microbiomes to environmental stressors, which might influence their contribution to the acclimation and adaptation capacity of animal hosts.

IMPORTANCE In our manuscript, we report the first interspecific comparative study about the plasticity of the gut microbiota. We conducted a captivity experiment that exposed wild-captured mammals to a series of environmental challenges over 45 days. We characterized their gut microbial communities using genome-resolved metagenomics and modeled how the taxonomic, phylogenetic, and functional microbial dynamics varied across a series of disturbances in both species. Our results indicate that the intrinsic properties (e.g., diversity and functional redundancy) of microbial communities coupled with physiological attributes (e.g., thermal plasticity) of hosts shape the taxonomic, phylogenetic, and functional response of gut microbiomes to environmental stressors, which might influence their contribution to the acclimation and adaptation capacity of animal hosts.

KEYWORDS acclimation, adaptation, apodemus, beta diversity, crocidura

The gut microbiome has been posited to confer animals with an increased capacity to tackle environmental variation (1–3). To date, there have been studies that have demonstrated how gut microbiomes can confer host-specific functions, such as cold adaptation in mice (4), fat metabolism in hibernating bears (5), or heat stress resistance in tadpoles (6). In order to provide adaptive capacity to animals, microbial communities need to be rearranged in ways that provide functional benefits to their hosts, and at a pace that is fast enough to cope with environmental change. The attribute that measures the level of functional genetic variation a microbiome undergoes in response to disturbances has been termed “metagenomic plasticity” (1, 7). How this attribute varies within and between host species remains unexplored, because the understanding of the basis of metagenomic plasticity requires going beyond mere characterisation of

Invited Editor Katherine R. Amato, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, USA

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Address correspondence to Antton Alberdi, antton.alberdi@sund.ku.dk.

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

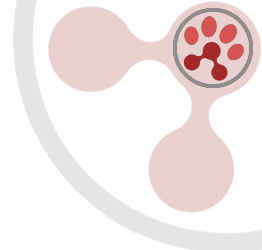
See the funding table on p. 15.

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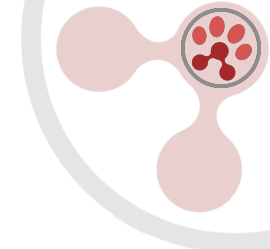
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Experimental manipulation



Ecology Research Article

Mammals show distinct functional gut microbiome dynamics to identical series of environmental stressors

Adam Kotze¹, Mali Odijková¹, Aude Leonard¹, Raphael Eisenhofer¹, Carlos San José¹, Olatinka Akinwale¹, Anton Kiberal¹

AUTHOR AFFILIATIONS See affiliation list on p. 14.

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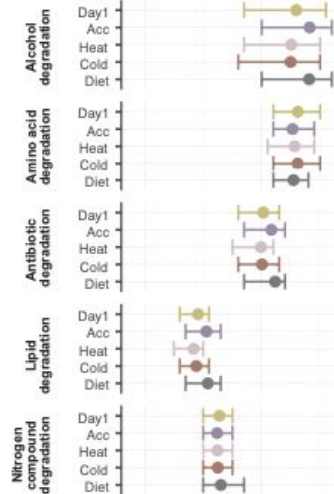
KEYWORDS acclimation, adaptation, apodemus, beta diversity, crocodyrus

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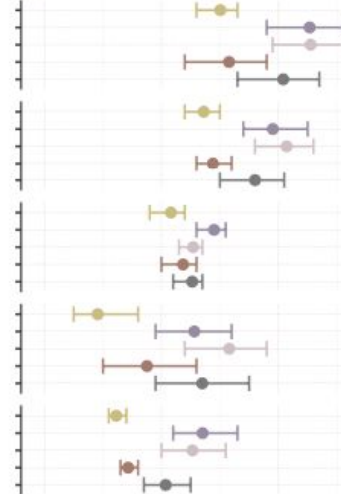
(a) *Apodemus sylvaticus*

AS



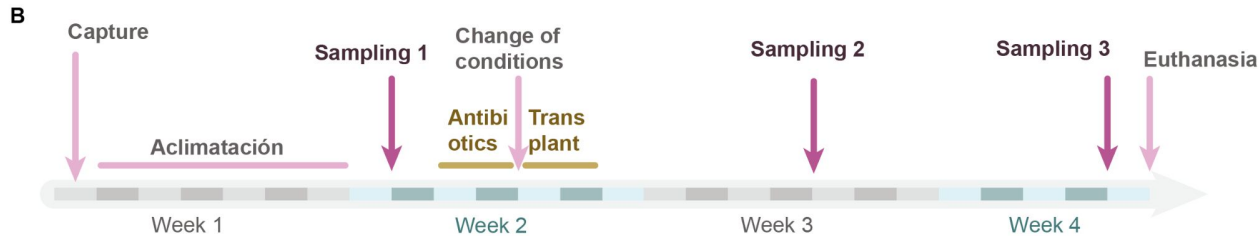
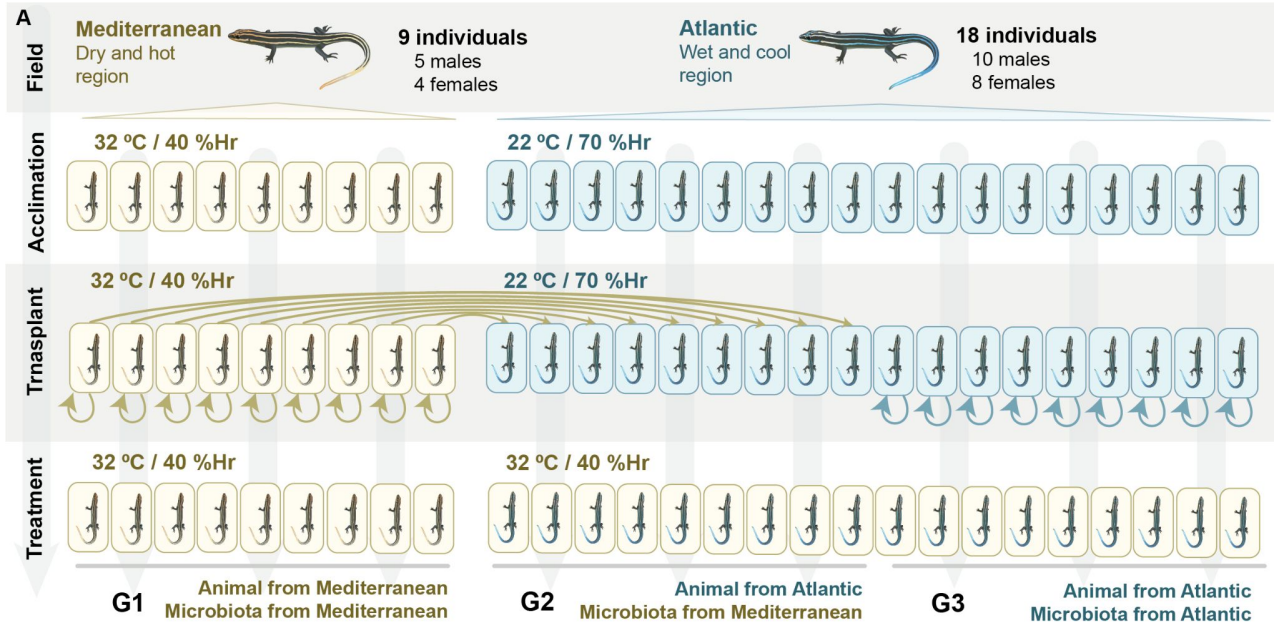
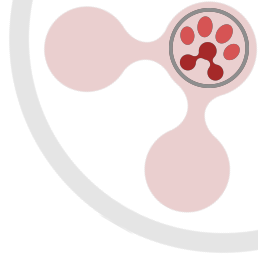
(b) *Crocodyrus russula*

CR





Hologenomics





Hologenomics

In vitro experimentation

Opinion

Unravelling animal–microbiota evolution on a chip

Ostaizka Aizpurua ^{1,*} Kees Blijleven,¹ Urvish Trivedi ²,
M. Thomas P. Gilbert ^{1,3} and Antton Alberdi ¹

Whether and how microorganisms have shaped the evolution of their animal hosts is a major question in biology. Although many animal evolutionary processes appear to correlate with changes in their associated microbial communities, the mechanistic processes leading to these patterns and their causal relationships are still far from being resolved. Gut-on-a-chip models provide an innovative approach that expands beyond the potential of conventional microbiome profiling to study how different animals sense and react to microbes by comparing responses of animal intestinal tissue models to different microbial stimuli. This complementary knowledge can contribute to our understanding of how host genetic features facilitate or prevent different microbiomes from being assembled, and in doing so elucidate the role of host–microbiota interactions in animal evolution.

Introduction

Many microorganisms that are associated with animals partake in, influence, or even drive their hosts' biological functions [1]. This realisation has led to an intuitive notion that host–microbiota interactions might have shaped the evolutionary trajectories of animals. Large-scale studies spanning dozens of host species and hundreds of microorganisms have revealed patterns (e.g., diet-driven convergence [2], cophylogeny [3], phyllosymbiosis [4]) that suggest some relevance of microorganisms for animal evolution. However, due to the observational and correlative nature of the research conducted so far, direct evidence that supports such claims is still limited [5,6].

In theory, microbial communities, and in particular those that reside in the animal gut, can impact the evolutionary trajectories of animals through different mechanisms, such as modifying dietary niches, modulating ontogenic development, or conferring increased adaptive capacity [5]. To understand under which circumstances microbes can affect animal evolution, animal-associated microorganisms should not be treated as external organs that only serve their hosts, but as diverse and dynamic communities of microscopic organisms that continuously interact both with each other and with their hosts [7]. In fact, animal hosts react to the presence of microbes by not only modifying their physiological parameters, but also altering the environment in which microbes live [8], thus exerting some level of control over their associated microbial community [9,10]. Therefore, any evolutionary process that involves adaptive changes in the microbiota would be expected to exert selective pressure on how animals react towards microbial stimuli.

However, our knowledge about how such animal–microbiota interactions vary across the tree of life is practically non-existent. The study of molecular host–microbiota interactions, such as how epithelial transporters respond to specific microbial metabolites [11], requires a reductionist

Highlights

Host–microbiota interactions can influence biological functions in animals, but direct evidence of their impact on animal evolution is limited.

Gut-on-a-chip systems emulate biological properties of the natural intestine, including establishment of simplified microbial communities in the epithelial barrier.

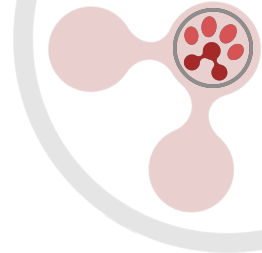
Development of chips derived from multiple animal hosts can enable evolutionary aspects of animal–microbiota interactions to be studied with unparalleled resolution.

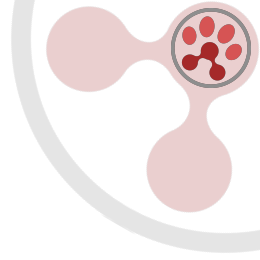
¹Center for Evolutionary Hologenomics, Globe Institute, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark

²Department of Biology, Section of Microbiology, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark

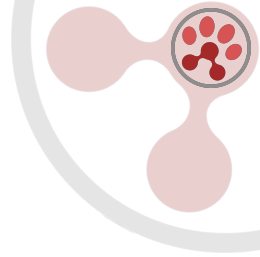
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Technical considerations



Critical Reviews in Biotechnology



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Field and laboratory guidelines for reliable bioinformatic and statistical analysis of bacterial shotgun metagenomic data

Ostaizka Aizpurua, Robert R. Dunn, Lars H. Hansen, M. T. P. Gilbert & Antton Alberdi

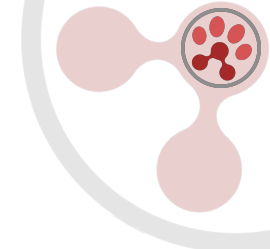
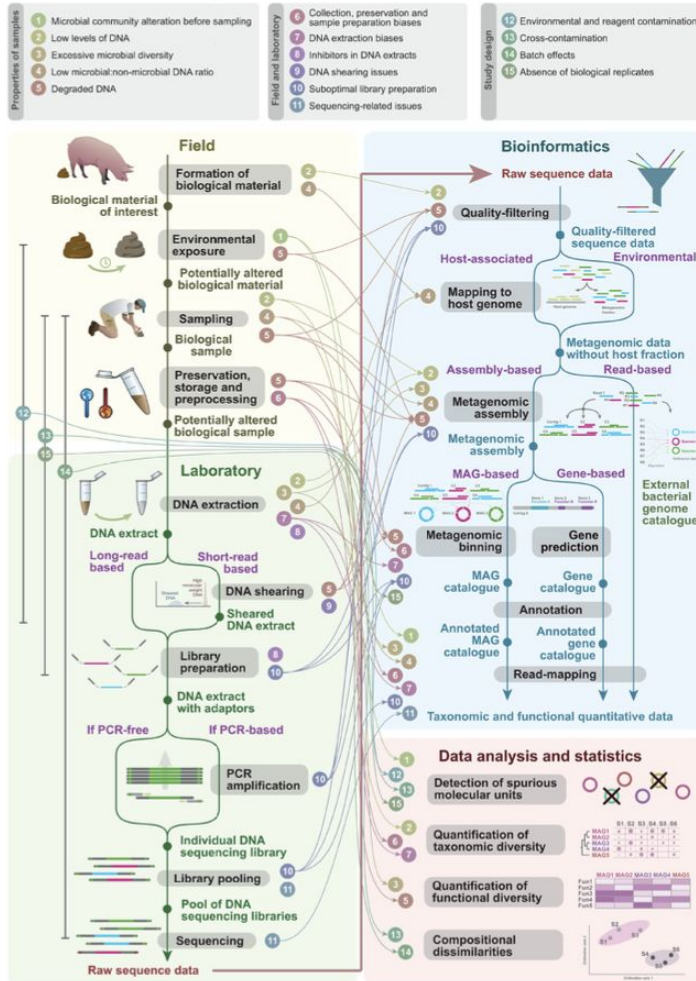
To cite this article: Ostaizka Aizpurua, Robert R. Dunn, Lars H. Hansen, M. T. P. Gilbert & Antton Alberdi (2024) Field and laboratory guidelines for reliable bioinformatic and statistical analysis of bacterial shotgun metagenomic data, *Critical Reviews in Biotechnology*, 44:6, 1164-1182, DOI: [10.1080/07388551.2023.2254933](https://doi.org/10.1080/07388551.2023.2254933)

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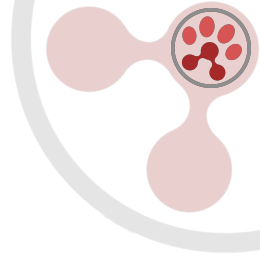
Hologenomics



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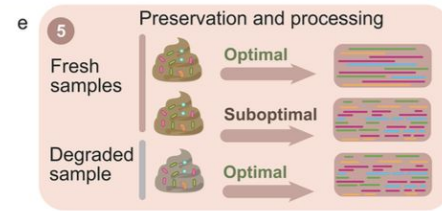
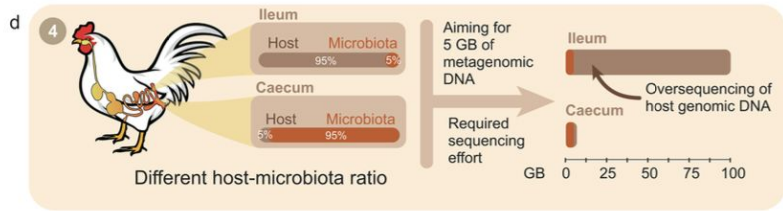
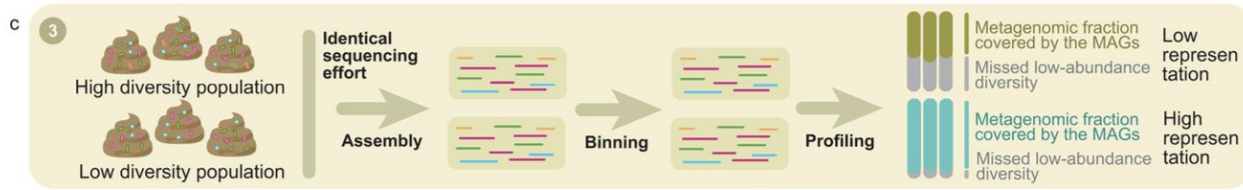
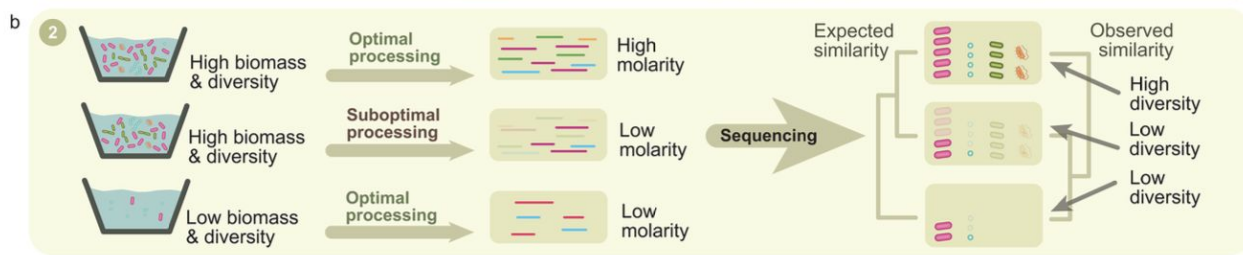
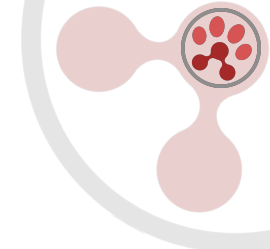


- Properties of samples**
 - 1 Microbial community alteration before sampling
 - 2 Low levels of DNA
 - 3 Excessive microbial diversity
 - 4 Low microbial:non-microbial DNA ratio
 - 5 Degraded DNA
- Field and laboratory**
 - 6 Collection, preservation and sample preparation biases
 - 7 DNA extraction biases
 - 8 Inhibitors in DNA extracts
 - 9 DNA shearing issues
 - 10 Suboptimal library preparation
 - 11 Sequencing-related issues
- Study design**
 - 12 Environmental and reagent contamination
 - 13 Cross-contamination
 - 14 Batch effects
 - 15 Absence of biological replicates





Hologenomics

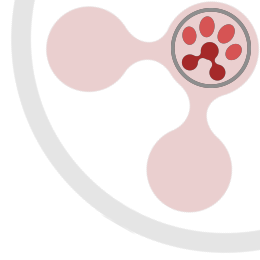


Intrinsic sample properties

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Hologenomics



Microbial community alteration before sampling

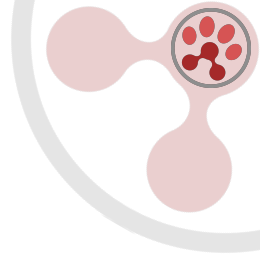
Intrinsic sample properties



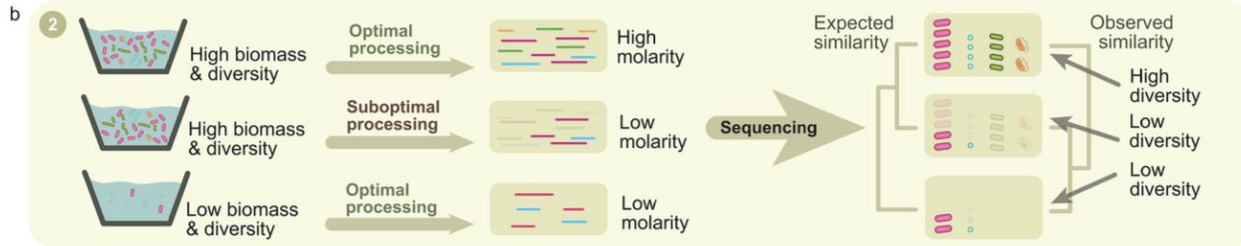
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Hologenomics



Low levels of DNA

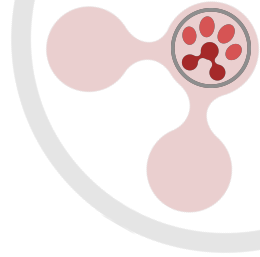


Intrinsic sample properties

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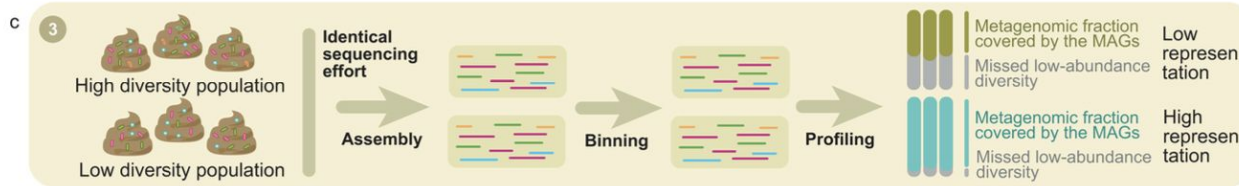


Hologenomics



High microbial diversity

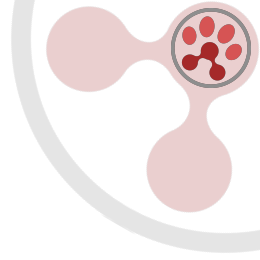
Intrinsic sample properties



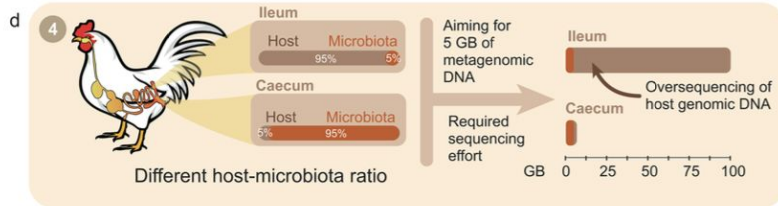
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Hologenomics

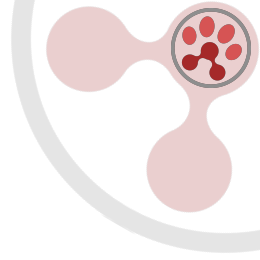


Low ratio of microbial:non-microbial DNA

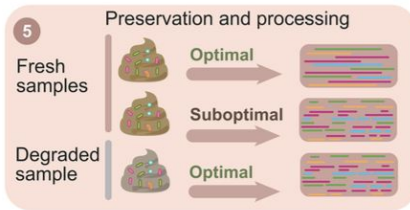


Intrinsic sample properties

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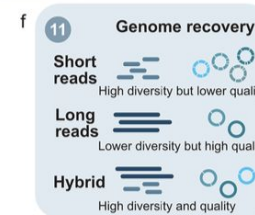
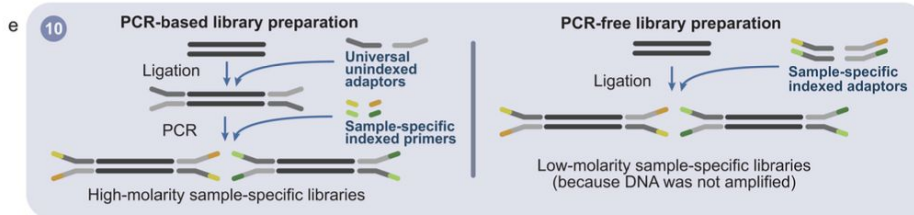
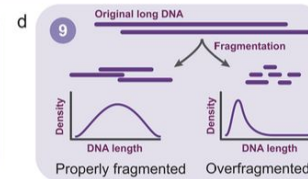
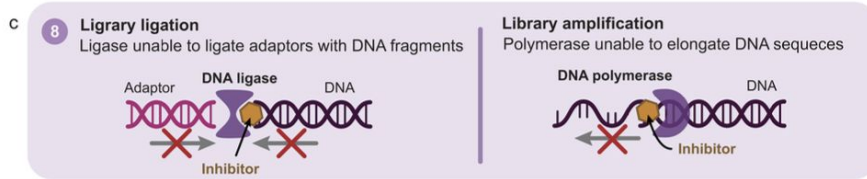
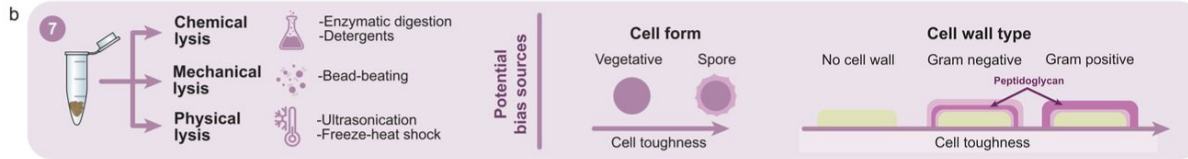
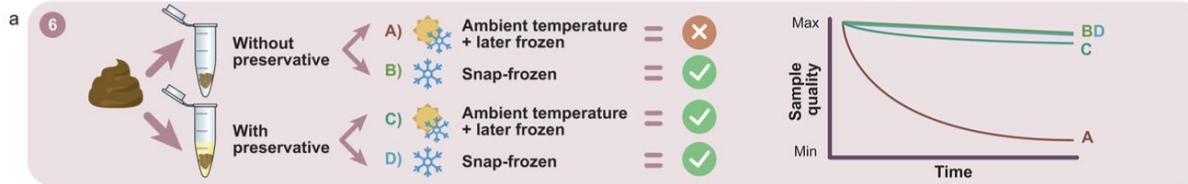
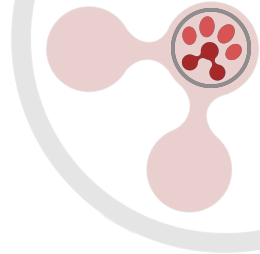
Degraded DNA



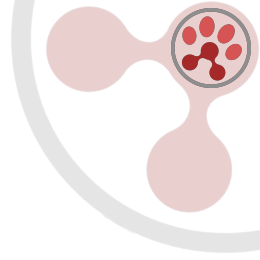
Intrinsic sample properties



Hologenomics

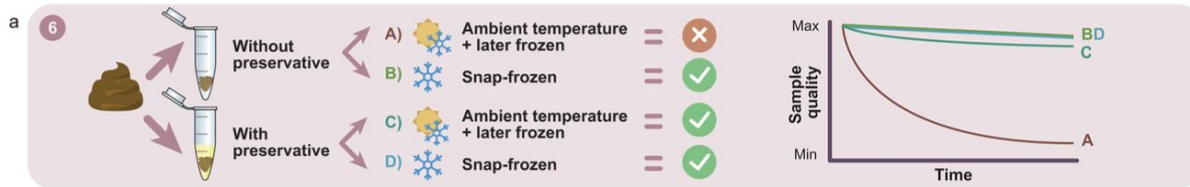


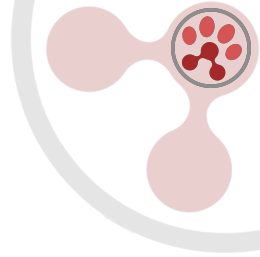
Laboratory steps



Collection, preservation, and sample preparation biases

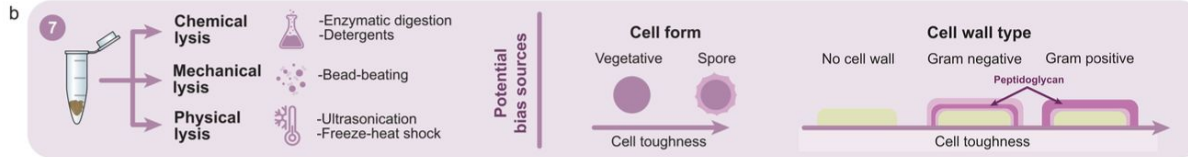
Intrinsic sample properties

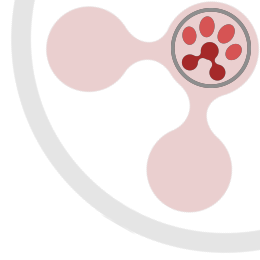




DNA extraction biases

Intrinsic sample properties





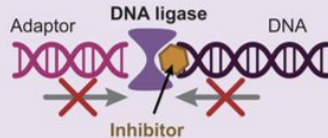
Inhibitors in DNA extracts

c

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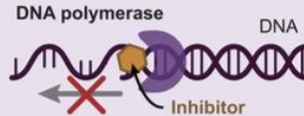
Ligary ligation

Ligase unable to ligate adaptors with DNA fragments

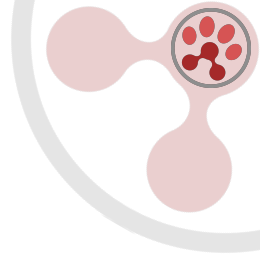


Library amplification

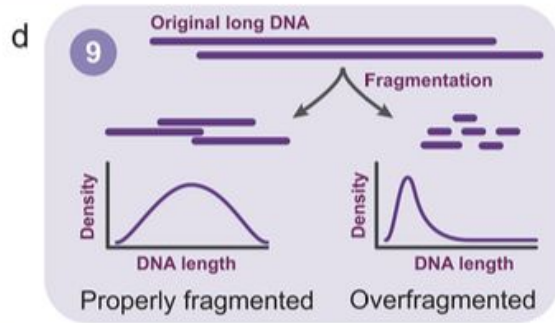
Polymerase unable to elongate DNA sequences



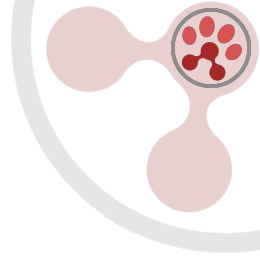
Intrinsic sample properties



DNA shearing issues

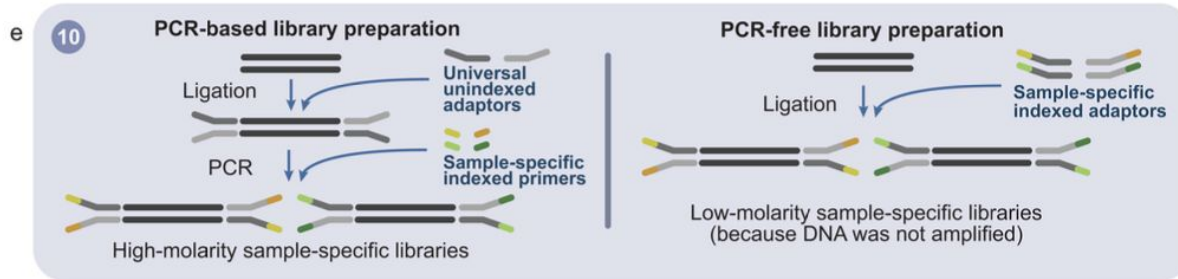


Intrinsic sample properties



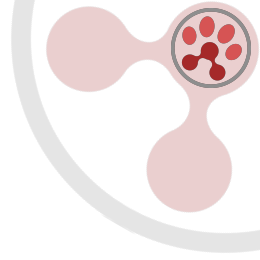
Suboptimal library preparation

Intrinsic sample properties

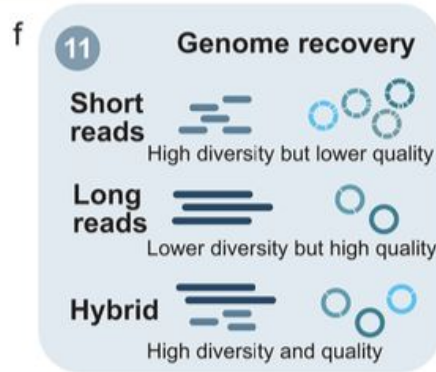




Hologenomics



Sequencing-related issues



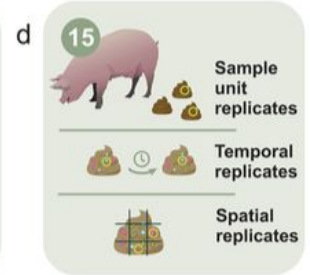
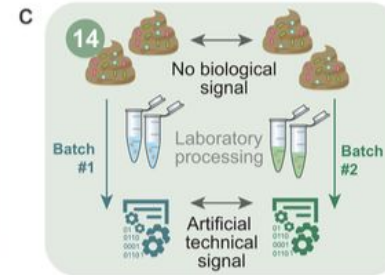
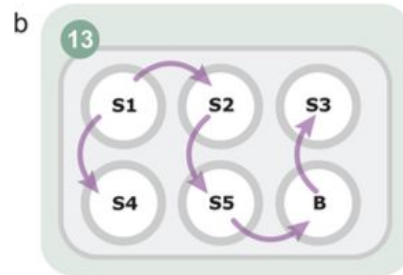
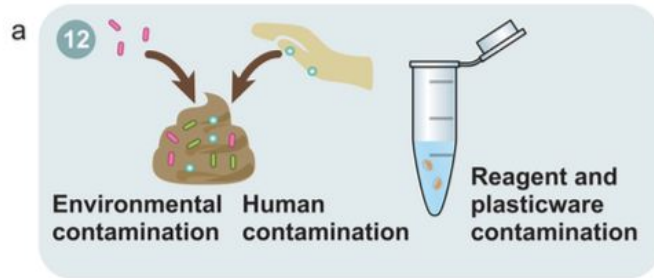
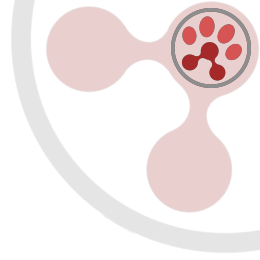
Intrinsic sample properties

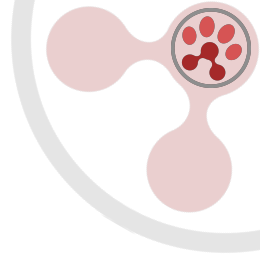
Aizpurua et al. 2023
Critical Reviews in Biotechnology



Hologenomics

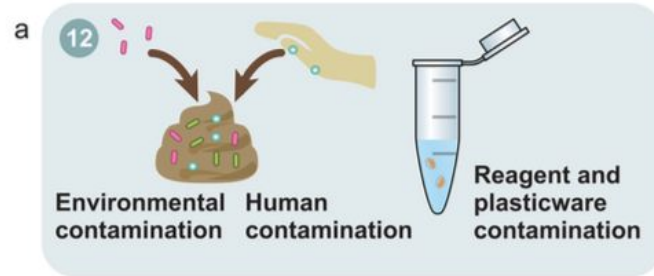
Study design

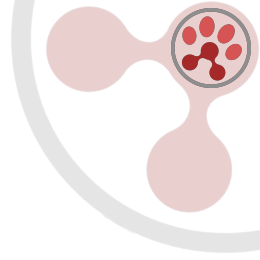




Environmental and reagent contamination

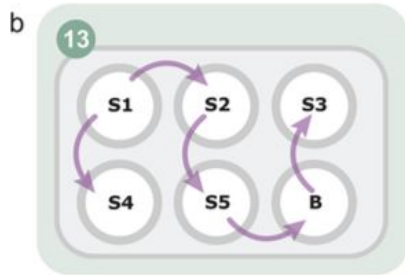
Study design

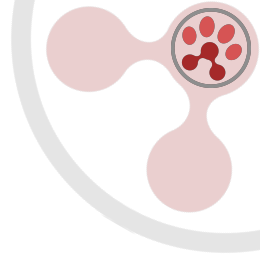




Cross-contamination

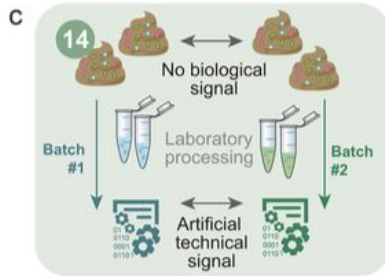
Study design

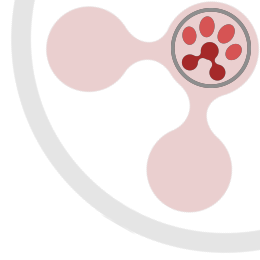




Batch effects

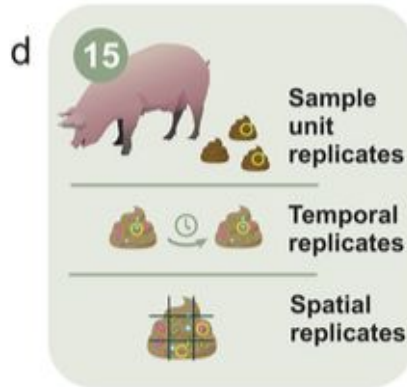
Study design





Absence of biological replicates

Study design





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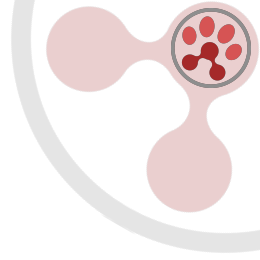
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How to change the design



How much of the explanations of "Experimental designs for Hologenomics" did you understand?



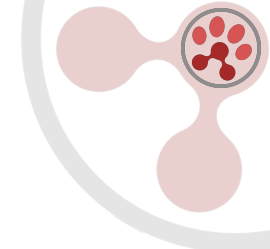
Hologenomics



Session 3

Bioinformatics methods

HOLOGENOMICS



Review

A practical introduction to holo-omics

Iñaki Odriozola,^{1,3} Jacob A. Rasmussen,^{1,3} M. Thomas P. Gilbert,^{1,2} Morten T. Limborg,¹ and Antton Alberdi^{1,*}

¹Center for Evolutionary Hologenomics, Globe Institute, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark

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³These authors contributed equally

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.crmeth.2024.100820>

SUMMARY

Holo-omics refers to the joint study of non-targeted molecular data layers from host-microbiota systems or holobionts, which is increasingly employed to disentangle the complex interactions between the elements that compose them. We navigate through the generation, analysis, and integration of omics data, focusing on the commonalities and main differences to generate and analyze the various types of omics, with a special focus on optimizing data generation and integration. We advocate for careful generation and distillation of data, followed by independent exploration and analyses of the single omic layers to obtain a better understanding of the study system, before the integration of multiple omic layers in a final model is attempted. We highlight critical decision points to achieve this aim and flag the main challenges to address complex biological questions regarding the integrative study of host-microbiota relationships.

INTRODUCTION

The realization of the importance of microorganisms for animal and plant biology,¹ along with the increased capacity to generate and process molecular data,² has given rise to a new holistic way to study biological systems.³ Holo-omics refers to the technical approach to jointly (hence the prefix holo-) analyze multiple non-targeted molecular data layers (known as multi-omics) from both hosts and their associated microorganisms,^{4,5} aimed at unraveling their intricate relationships.⁶ The generation, analysis, and integration of holo-omic datasets requires deep knowledge of the myriad of conceptual and technical steps involved in the process.⁴ Here, we provide an overview of the main steps researchers must undergo while highlighting the challenges that should be overcome to obtain meaningful results that enable them to address complex biological questions.

While acknowledging the relevance and value of other methods for studying host-microbiota interactions (e.g., 16S rRNA amplification, spatial transcriptomics), in this review we primarily consider seven omic layers characterized by a non-targeted data generation approach without spatial resolution. These methods require specific data generation and analysis strategies before integrating them into multi-omic statistical models (Figure 1). Four of them are based on nucleic acid sequencing, namely host genomics (HG), host transcriptomics (HT), microbial metagenomics (MG), and microbial metatranscriptomics (MT). The three remaining layers are based on molecular spectroscopy, namely host proteomics (HP), microbial metaproteomics (MP), and (meta)metabolomics (ME), which is not split between hosts and microorganisms for the difficulties in assigning an origin to a given metabolite. Each omic layer contains fundamentally different information, at different levels of biological organization. A host contains a single genome (HG) that encodes thousands of genes (HT)

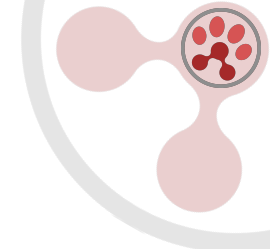
which are expressed to produce an even larger number of proteins (HP). A host might have multiple (often hundreds or thousands) associated bacterial species (n), each with a distinct genome (MG), containing a few thousand genes that can be expressed (MT), thus potentially encoding microbial proteins (MP). The biological activity enabled by those proteins builds the metabolomic (ME) landscape that not only shapes host phenotype but also conditions the environment in which host-associated microbes live (e.g., the gut).

HG—which in this manuscript is solely discussed in terms of nucleotide sequences without considering other levels such as epigenetic and DNA folding that may also shape the holo-genome^{7,8,9}—can inform about population structure and the genetic features of individuals but is invariable to treatments or environmental disturbances. In contrast, MG contains the genetic information of microbial communities that are likely to change over very short timescales and reflects the immediate responses of hosts to treatments or disturbances. Although HG and MG inform about the potential of hosts and microorganisms to perform biological functions, HT and MT provide snapshots of the actual functional activity of the system, which can be validated using HP, MP, and ME that result from the activity of the expressed genes. Acknowledging the distinct biological characteristics of the omic layers is therefore essential to design experiments and analytical pipelines for better solving the complex puzzle of host-microbiota relationships.

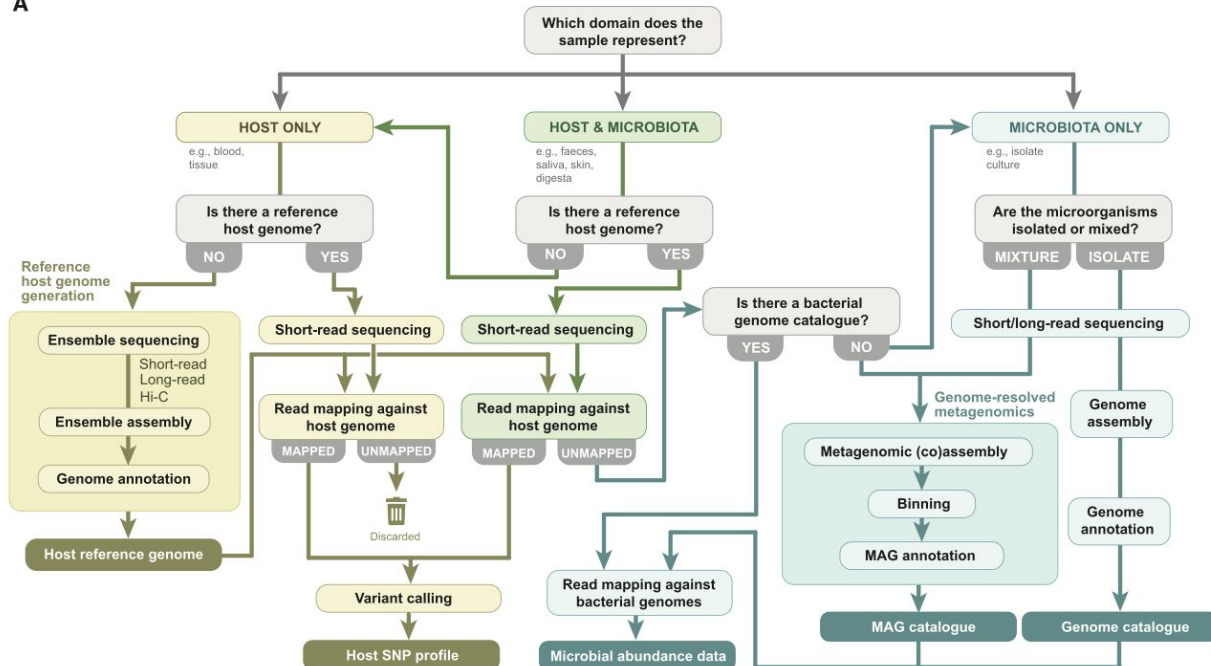
In light of this, we navigate from sample acquisition to data interpretation through six sections: (1) sample collection and preservation, (2) laboratory sample processing, (3) bioinformatic analysis of raw data, (4) data filtering, imputation, and distillation, (5) initial quantitative exploration of omic layers, and (6) multi-omic data integration. Each of these sections deals with key methodological aspects, focusing on the commonalities and



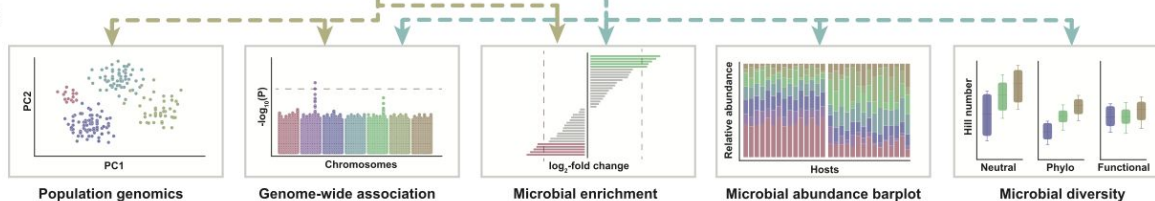
Hologenomics



A



B

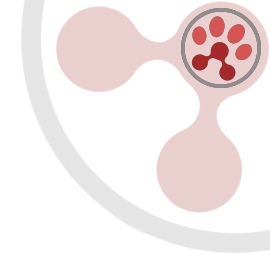
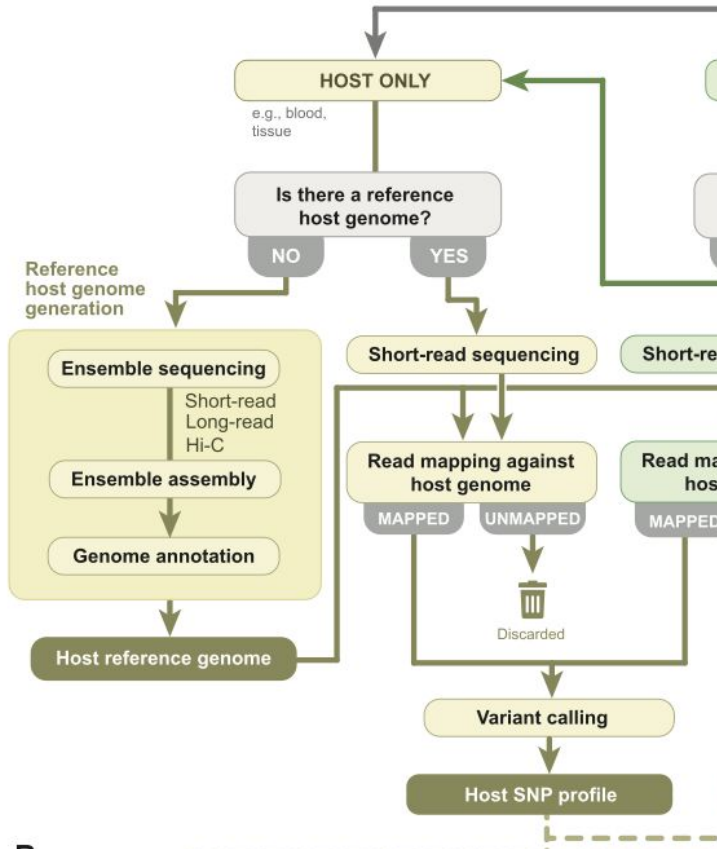




Hologenomics

Host genomes

A





Hologenomics

Host genomes



National Library of Medicine
National Center for Biotechnology Information

Search NCBI ...

NCBI Datasets Taxonomy **Genome** Gene Command-line tools Documentation

Genome

Search by taxonomic name or ID, Assembly name, BioProject, BioSample, WGS or Nucleotide accession

Search term

Enter a search term



Search

Try examples: [Homo sapiens](#) [GCF_000001405.40](#) [PRJNA489243](#) [SAMN15960293](#) [WFKY01](#) [GRCh38.p14](#) [NC_000913.3](#)

Genomic data available from NCBI Datasets

Click below to learn more about the genomic data available from NCBI Datasets.



Eukaryota



Archaea



Bacteria

All Genomes

2.86M

39.23K

2.31M

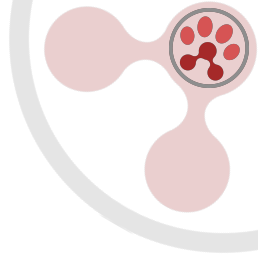


Hologenomics

Host genomes

- Contig
- Scaffold
- Chromosome
- Complete

Reference





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How to change the design



Does your study species have a reference genome available? If yes, which quality is it? Mention species and quality.

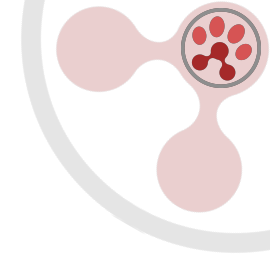




Hologenomics

Host genomes

Resequencing

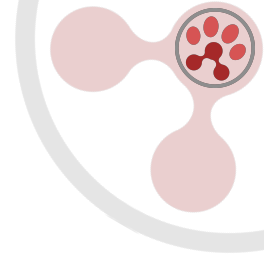




Hologenomics

Host genomes

Resequencing

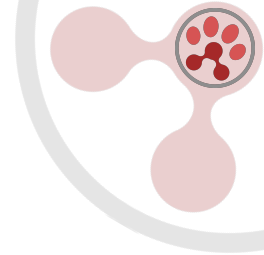
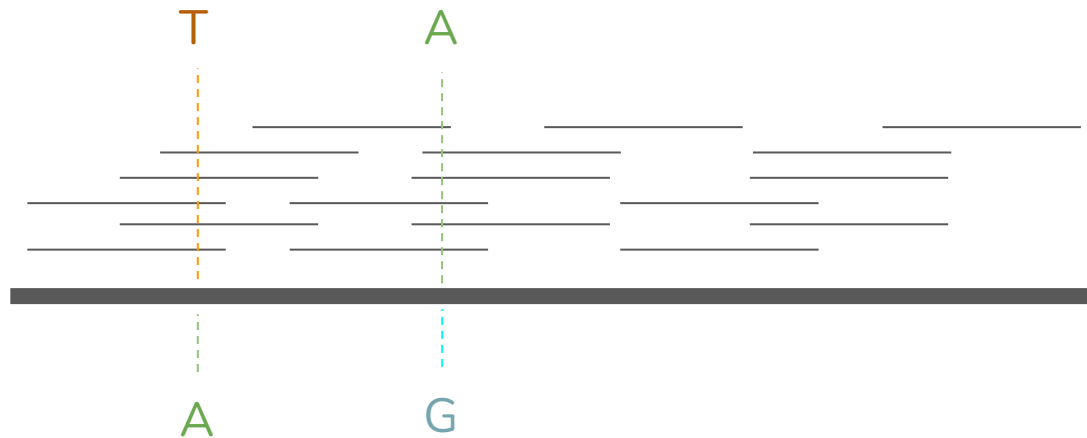




Hologenomics

Host genomes

Variant calling

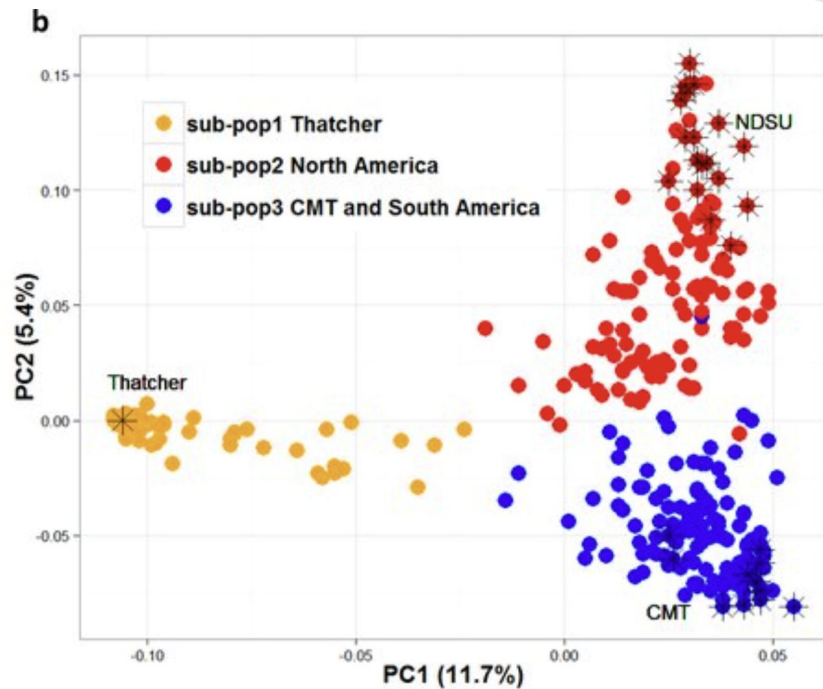
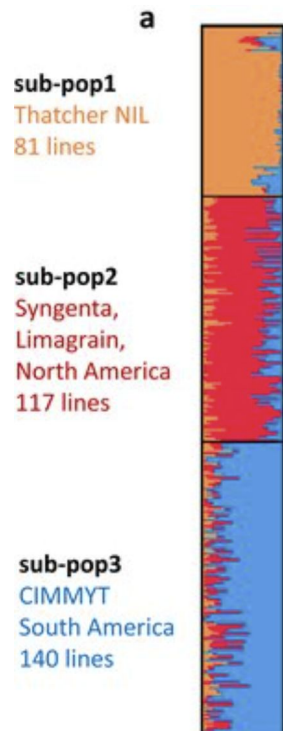
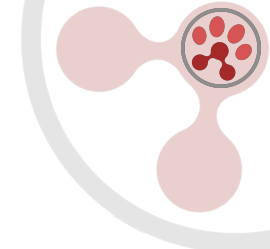




Hologenomics

Host genomes

Population structure

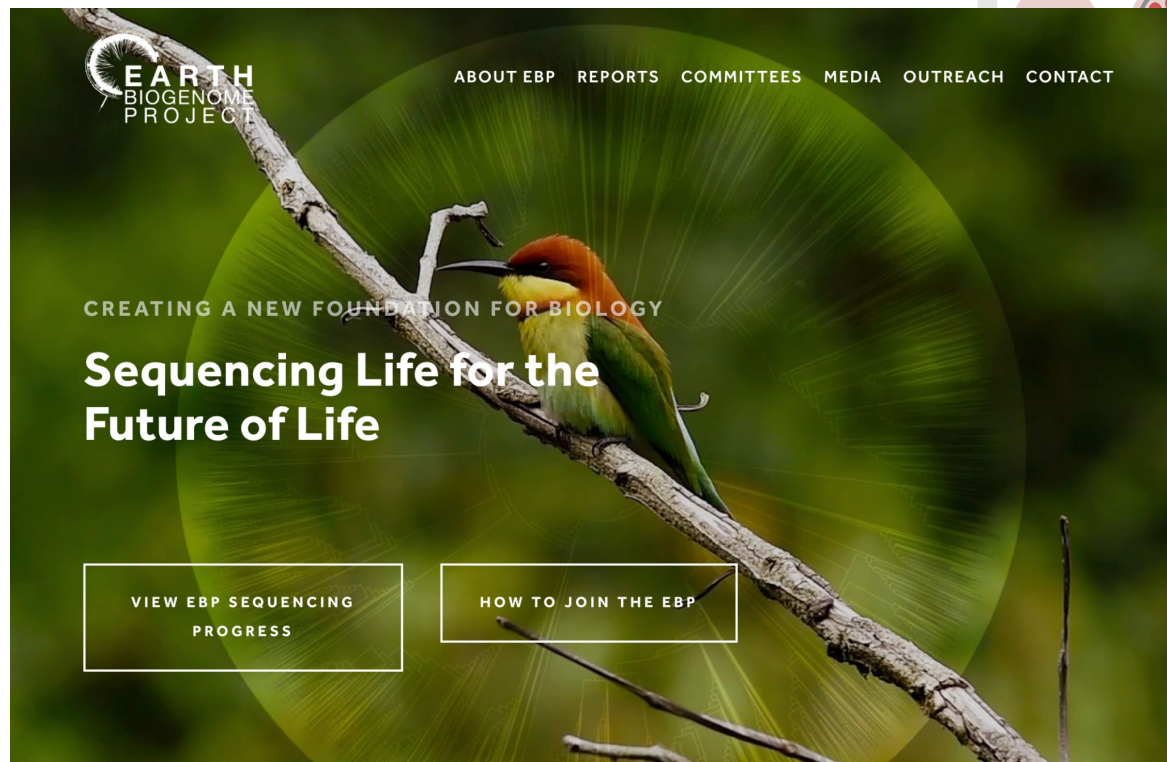




Hologenomics

Host genomes

Reference genome generation



What is the Earth BioGenome Project?

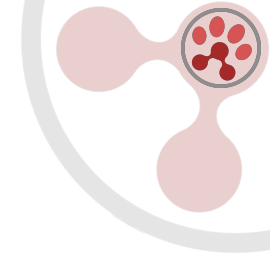
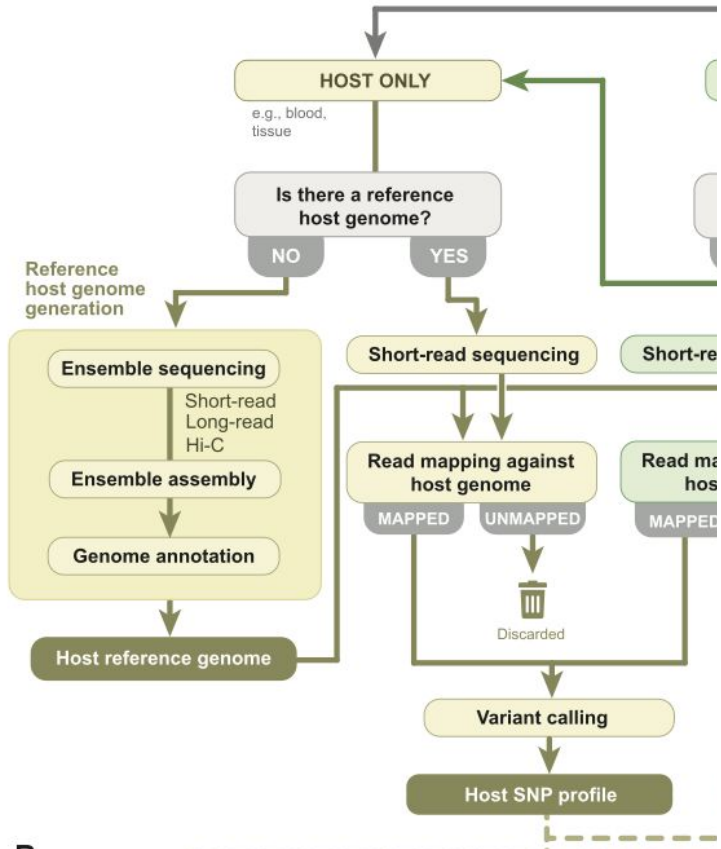
Powerful advances in genome sequencing technology, informatics, automation, and artificial



Hologenomics

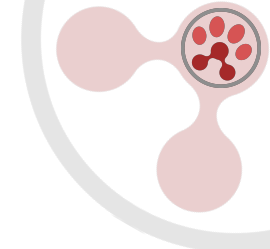
Host genomes

A

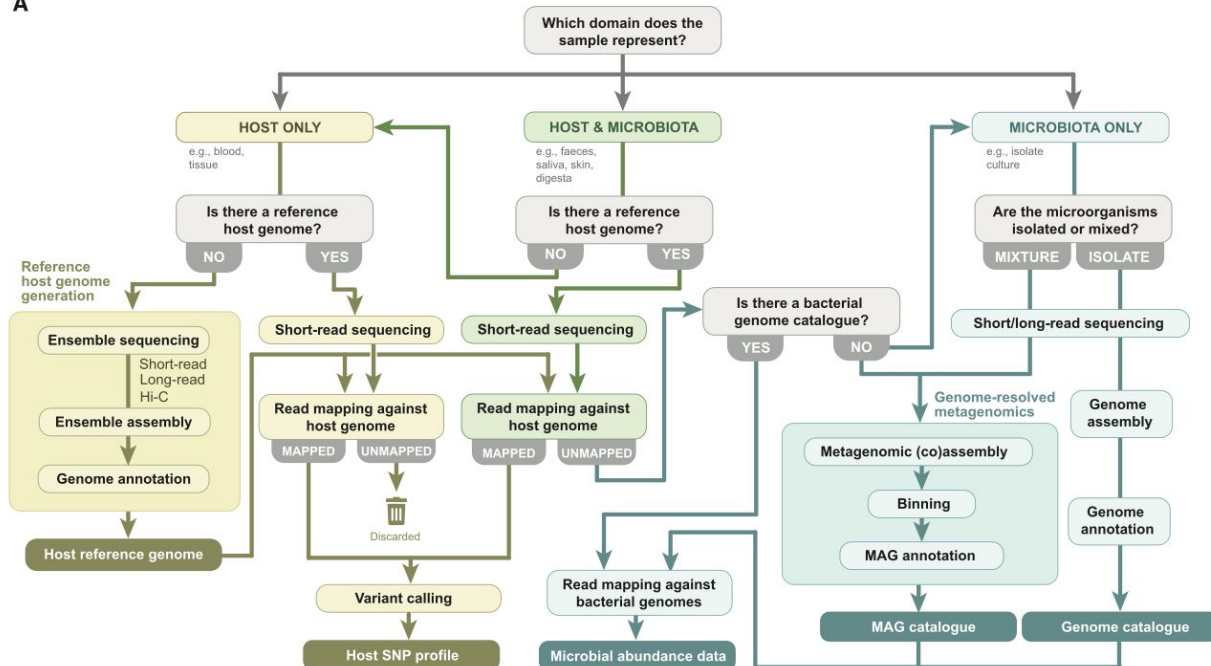




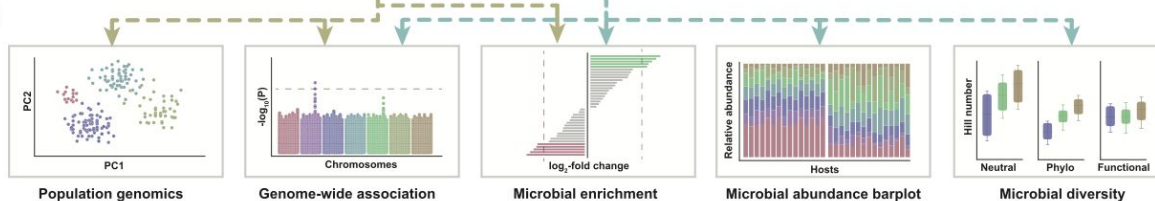
Hologenomics



A



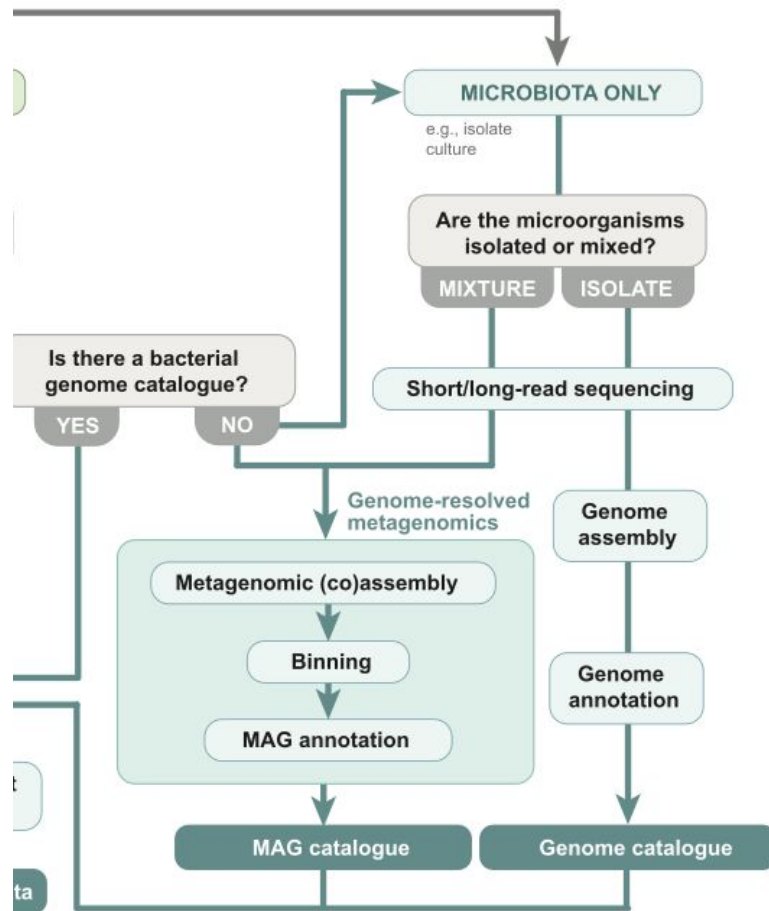
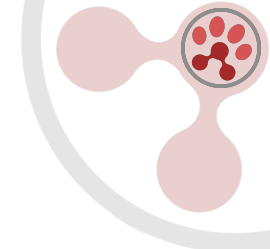
B





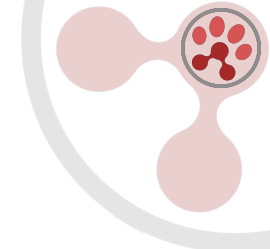
Hologenomics

Microbial metagenomes





Hologenomics



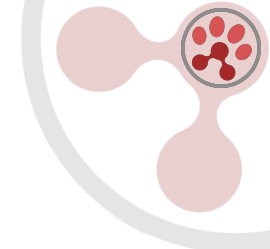
Genome resolved metagenomics





Hologenomics

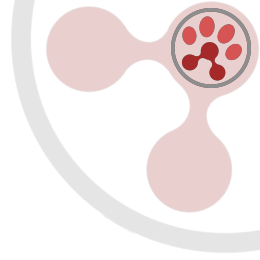
Genome resolved metagenomics





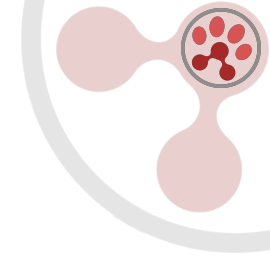
Hologenomics

Genome resolved metagenomics

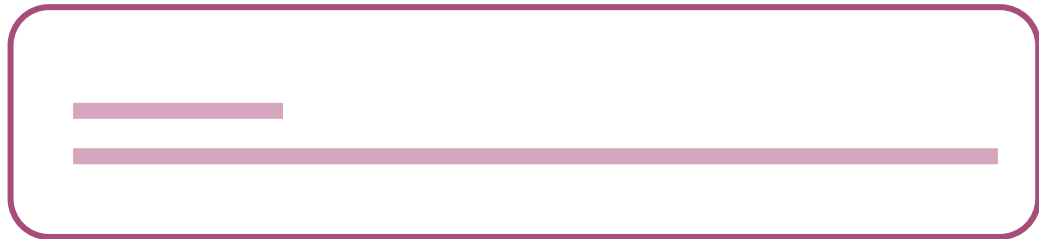




Hologenomics



Genome resolved metagenomics



Bacteria 1

Bacteria 2

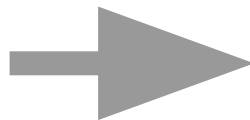
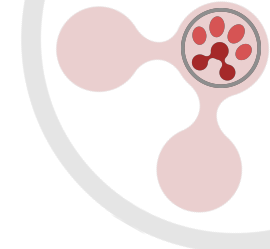
Host

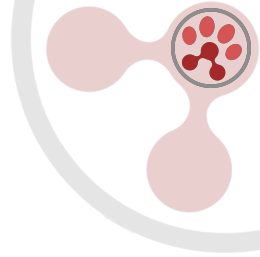
Virus



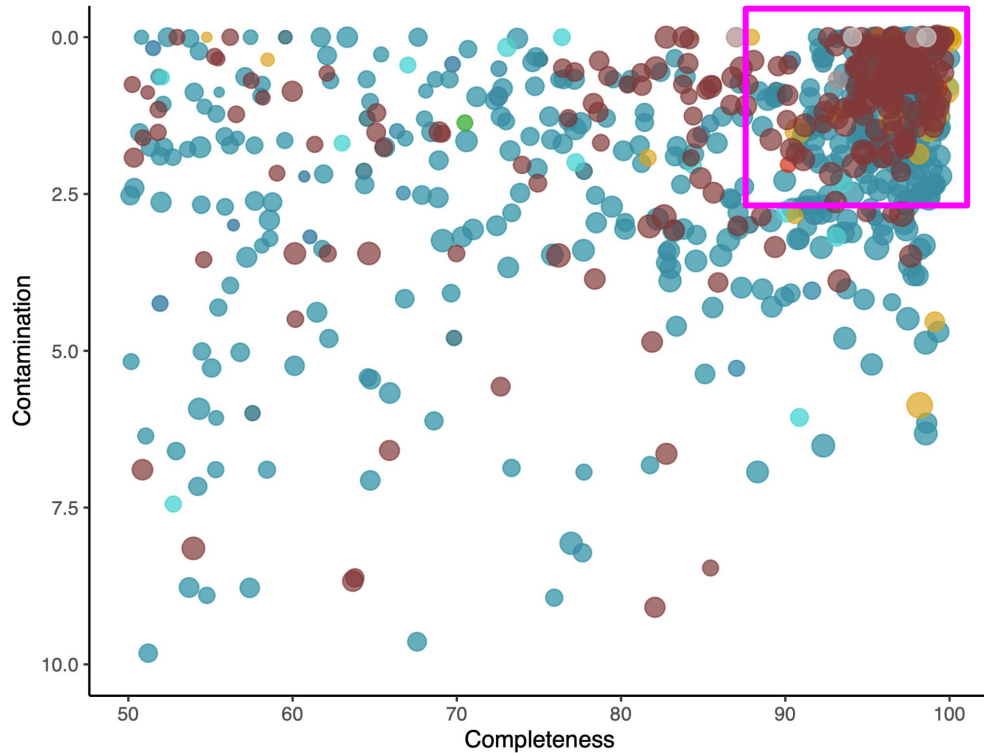
Hologenomics

Genome resolved metagenomics





Genome resolved metagenomics



Completeness

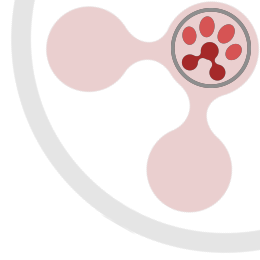
Percentage of single-copy core genes present

Contamination/ redundance

Excess of single-copy core genes present



Hologenomics

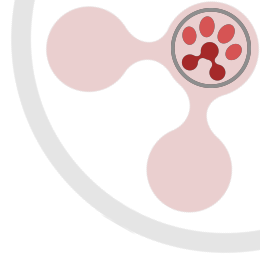


Genome resolved metagenomics

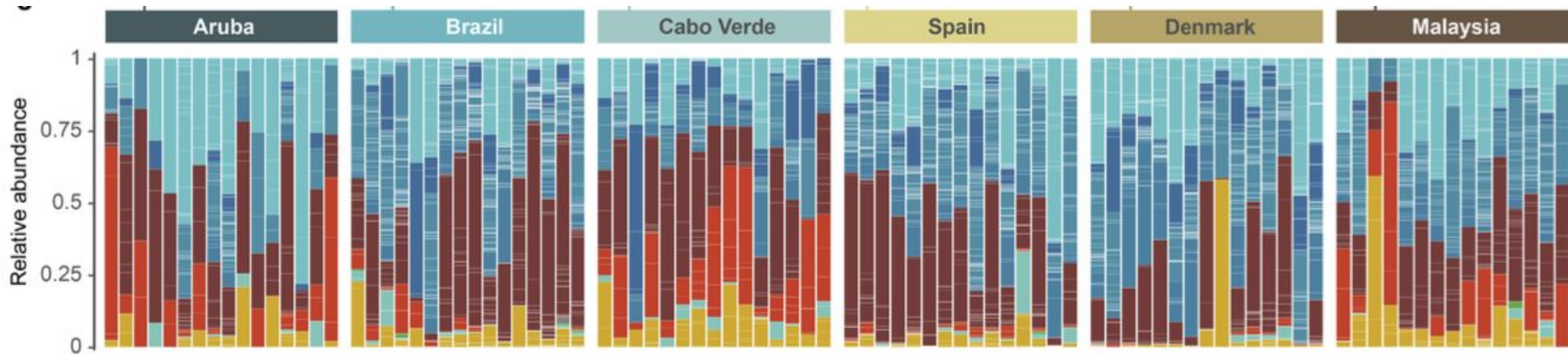




Hologenomics

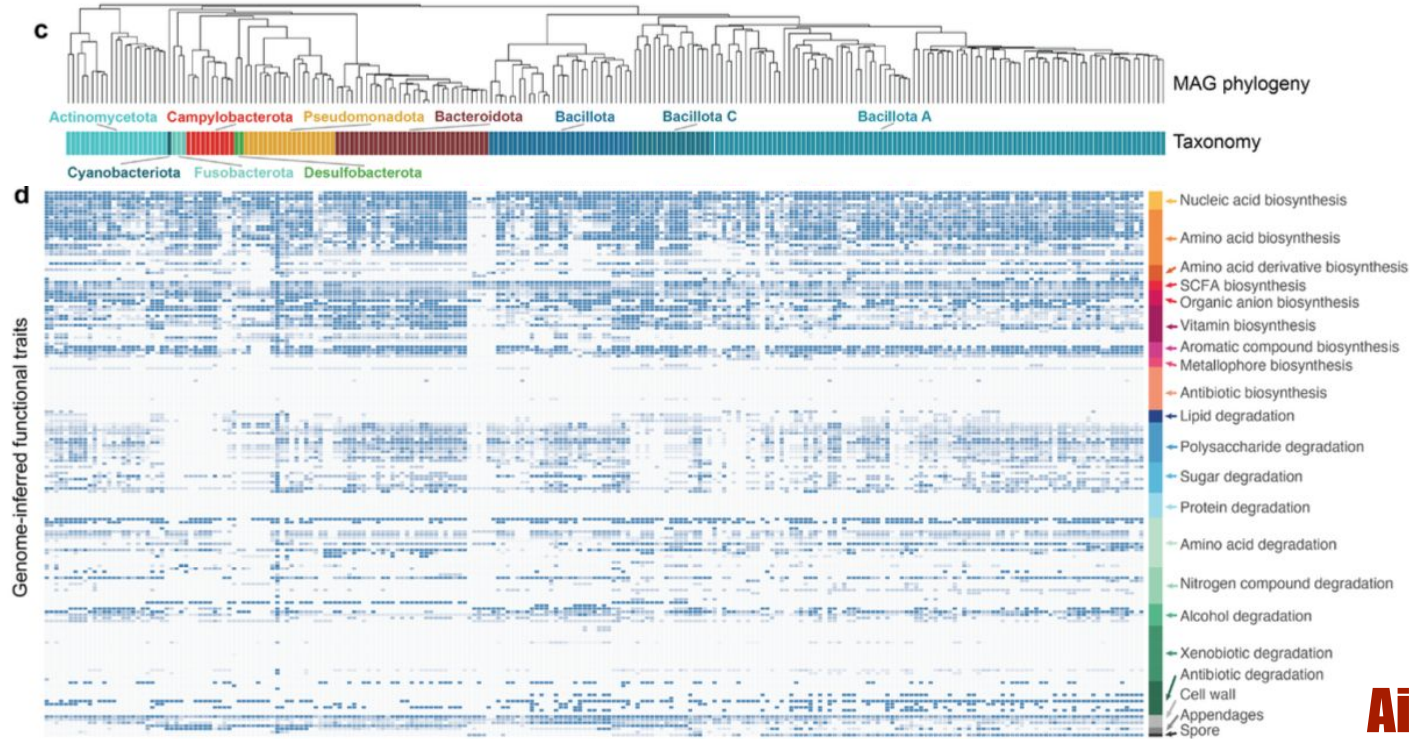
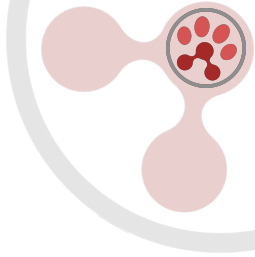


Genome resolved metagenomics





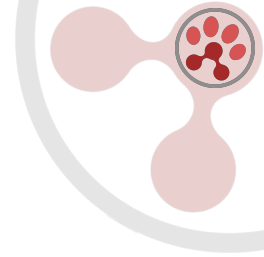
Hologenomics



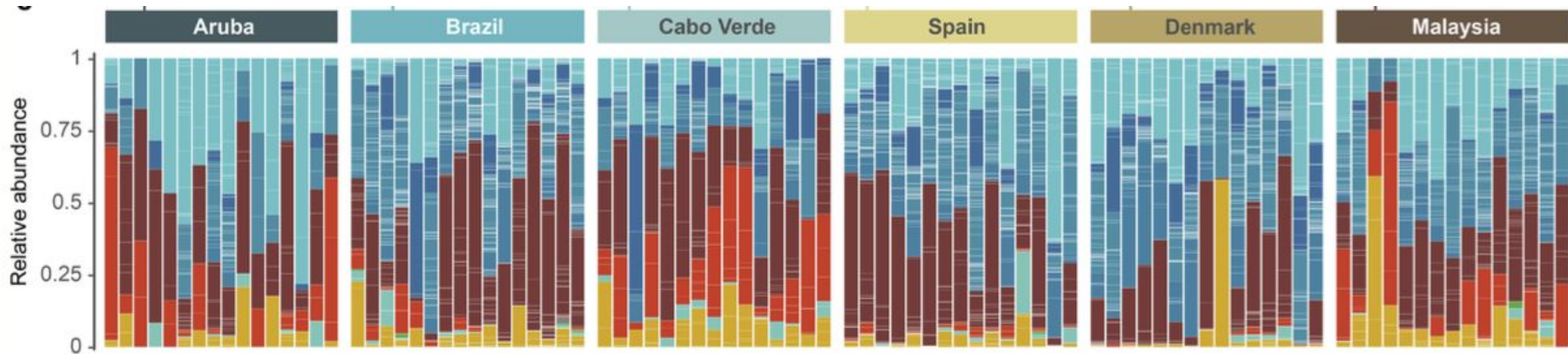
Aizpurua et al. 2025
Molecular Ecology



Hologenomics

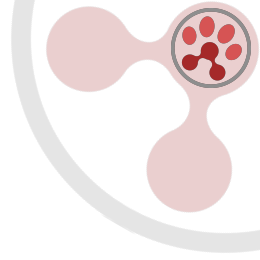


Genome resolved metagenomics





Hologenomics



Genome resolved metagenomics

- Which bacteria are there?
- At which proportions are they?
- Which functional capacities do they carry?



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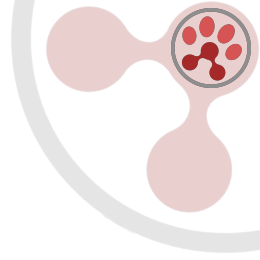


How much of the explanations of "Bioinformatics methods for Hologenomics" did you understand?



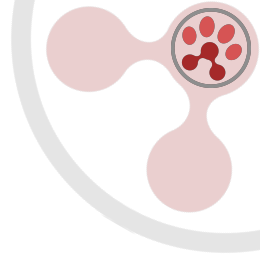
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Session 4

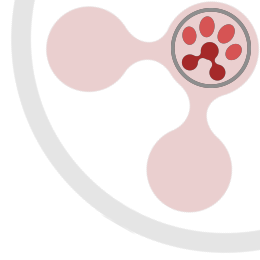
Statistics methods for **HOLOGENOMICS**



Univariate vs multivariate modelling

value = var1 + var2

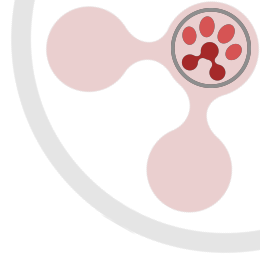
matrix = var1 + var2



Univariate vs multivariate modelling

value = var1
matrix = var1
univariable

value = var1 + var2
matrix = var1 + var2
multivariable



Univariate vs multivariate modelling

alpha diversity = var1 + var2

beta diversity = var1 + var2

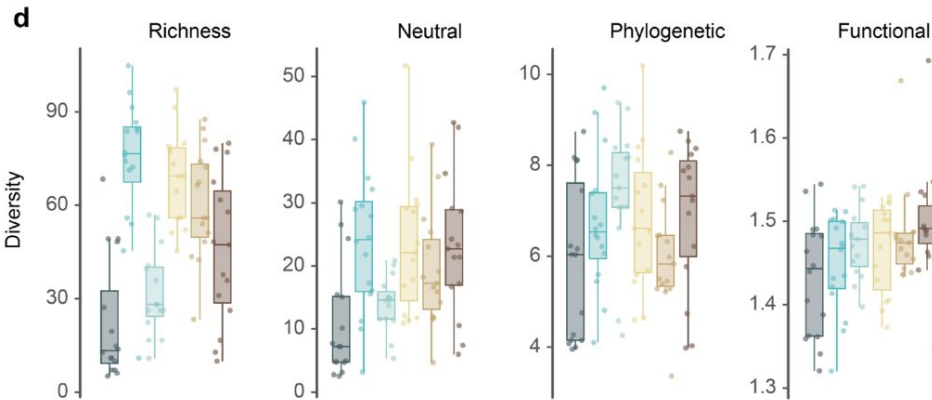
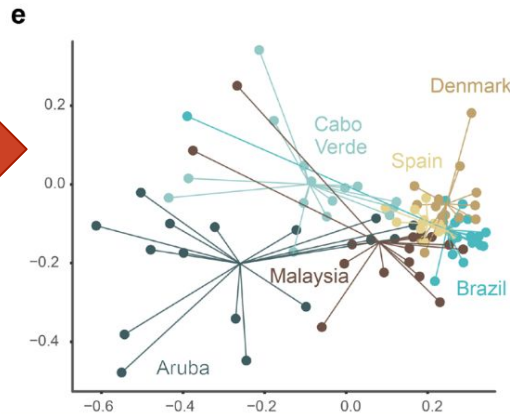


Hologenomics

Multivariate



Univariate



ORIGINAL ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS

Functional Insights Into the Effect of Feralisation on the Gut Microbiota of Cats Worldwide

Ostaiikka Aizpurua¹ | Amanda Bolt Botnen¹ | Raphael Eisenhofer² | Itäki Odriozola¹ | Luisa Santos-Bay¹ | Mads Bjørn Bjørnsen¹ | M. Thomas P. Gilbert^{1,2} | Antton Alberdi¹

¹Center for Evolutionary Hologenomics, Globe Institute, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark | ²University Museum, NTNU, Trondheim, Norway

Correspondence: M. Thomas P. Gilbert (gilbert@sund.ku.dk) | Antton Alberdi (antton.alberdi@sund.ku.dk)

Received: 20 September 2024 | Revised: 28 January 2025 | Accepted: 4 February 2025

Handling Editor: Jacob A Russell

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Keywords: Mammals | Metagenomics | Microbial Biology | Species Interactions

ABSTRACT

Successfully adapting to a feral lifestyle with different access to food, shelter and other resources requires rapid physiological and behavioural changes, which could potentially be facilitated by gut microbiota plasticity. To investigate whether alterations in gut microbiota support this transition to a feral lifestyle, we analysed the gut microbiomes of domestic and feral cats from six geographically diverse locations using genome-resolved metagenomics. By reconstructing 229 non-redundant metagenome-assembled genomes from 92 cats, we identified a typical carnivore microbiome structure, with notable diversity and taxonomic differences across regions. While overall diversity metrics did not differ significantly between domestic and feral cats, hierarchical modelling of species communities, accounting for geographic and sex covariates, revealed significantly larger microbial functional capacities among feral cats. The increased capacity for amino acid and lipid degradation corresponds to feral cats' dietary reliance on crude protein and fat. A second modelling analysis, using behavioural phenotype as the main predictor, unveiled a positive association between microbial production of short-chain fatty acids, neurotransmitters and vitamins and cat aggressiveness, suggesting that gut microbes might contribute to heightened aggression and elusiveness observed in feral cats. Functional microbiome shifts may therefore play a significant role in the development of physiological and behavioural traits advantageous for a feral lifestyle, a hypothesis that warrants validation through microbiota manipulation experiments.

1 | Introduction

Feralisation is the process by which a once-domesticated organism detaches from the anthropic environment (Henriksen et al. 2018). While possessing some distinct characteristics, feralisation can generally be perceived as the counterpoint to domestication (E. O. Price 1984). Many species initially domesticated by humans have subsequently given rise to feral populations (Gering et al. 2019), often leading to adverse impacts on

both human settlements and biodiversity (Bonaic et al. 2019; Medina et al. 2011; Palmas et al. 2017). Despite the profound implications of this phenomenon, feralisation remains a relatively understudied process compared to its counterpart, domestication.

One of the animal species that is commonly found in feral form is the house cat (*Felis tigris catus*). The domestication of cats is thought to have taken place in the Near East at the

Ostaiikka Aizpurua and Amanda Bolt Botnen should be joint first authors.

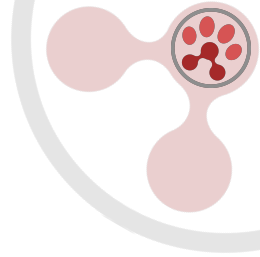
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Molecular Ecology, 2025, 0, 1–15
<https://doi.org/10.1111/mec.17969>

1 of 15





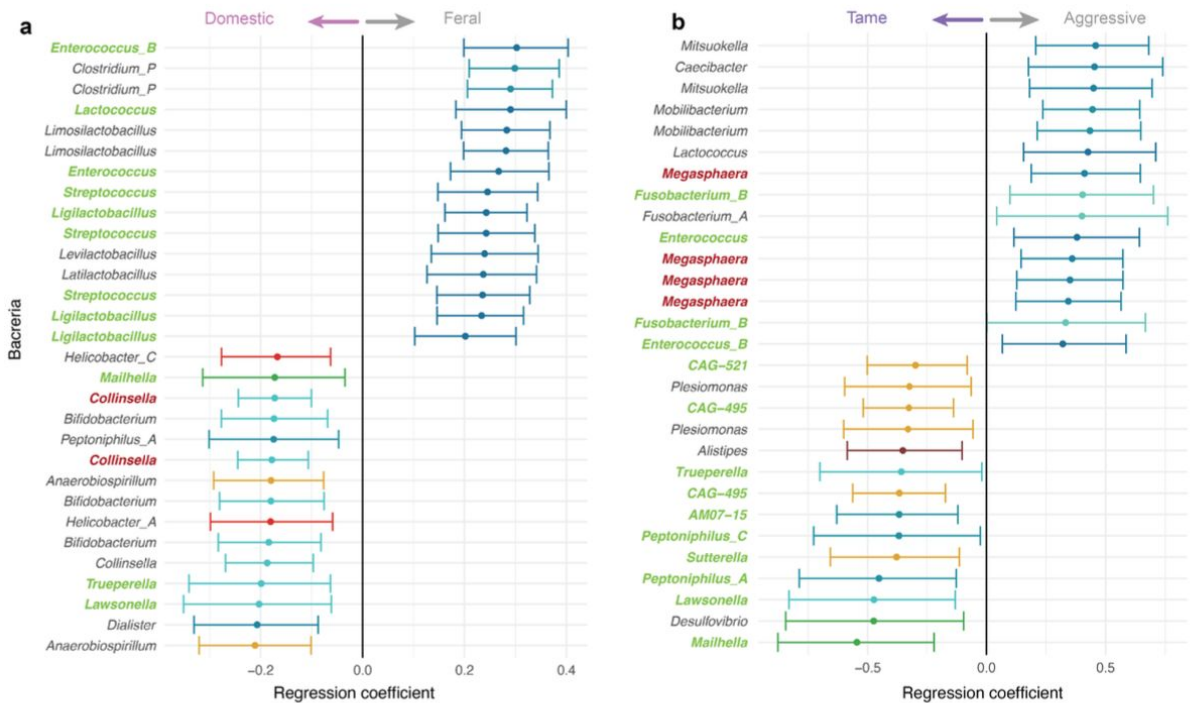
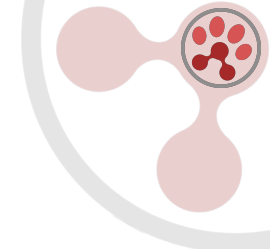
Univariate vs multivariate modelling

Multiple samples

- > Multiple bacteria
- > Multiple functions



Hologenomics



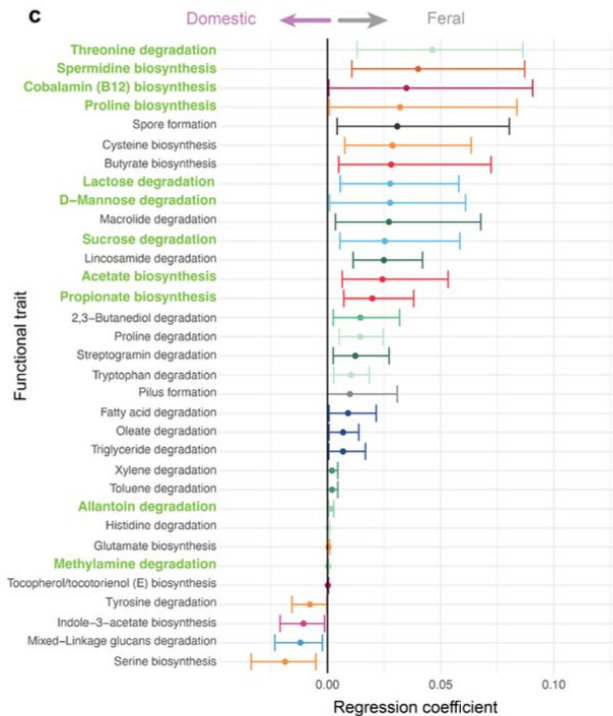
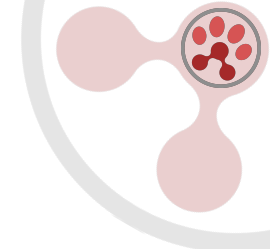
Taxonomy legend

- Actinomycetota
- Cyanobacteriota
- Fusobacterota
- Campylobacterota
- Desulfobacterota
- Pseudomonadota
- Bacteroidota
- Bacillota
- Bacillota C
- Bacillota A

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Hologenomics



Function legend

Biosynthesis: Nucleic acids Amino acids Amino acid derivatives SCFAs Organic anions Vitamins Aromatic compounds Metallophores Antibiotics

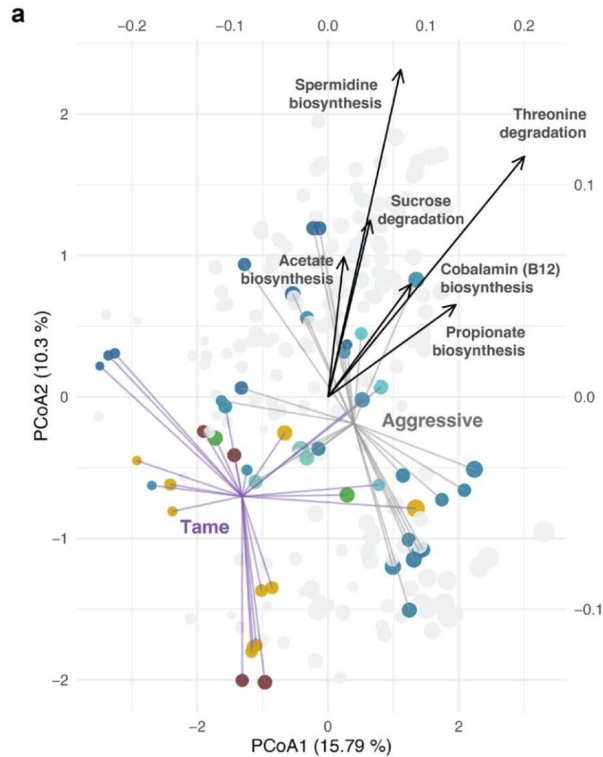
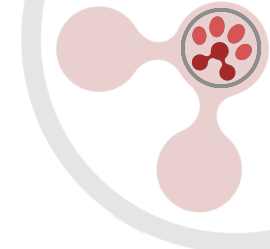
Degradation: Lipids Polysaccharides Sugars Proteins Amino acids Nitrogen compounds Alcohols Xenobiotics Antibiotics

Structure: Cell wall Appendages Spore

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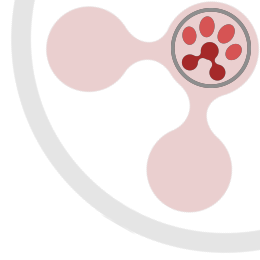
Hologenomics





How much of the explanations of "Statistics methods for Hologenomics" did you understand?





Assignment

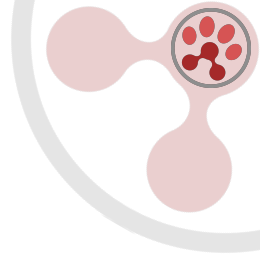
Hologenomic grant proposal

Length: 10,000-15,000 characters (3-4 pages)

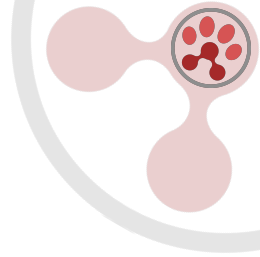
Submission: May 9th, 2025



Hologenomics



- **Background:** ca. 3000 chr.
- **Hypothesis and objectives:** ca. 1000 chr.
- **Methodology:** ca. 2000 chr.
- **Work plan:** ca. 2000 chr.
- **Impact:** ca. 1000 chr.
- **References:** ca. 15-20



Assignment

Hologenomic grant proposal

Length: 10,000-15,000 characters (3-4 pages)

Submission: May 9th, 2025, through this form:

<https://airtable.com/appi3wfndMqVyksv3/pag6S4jLcyzVV79BP/form>



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Assessment