





# Viewpoint

# Infochemicals in terrestrial plants and seaweed holobionts: current and future trends

## **Summary**

Since the holobiont concept came into the limelight ten years ago, we have become aware that responses of holobionts to climate change stressors may be driven by shifts in the microbiota. However, the complex interactions underlying holobiont responses across aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems remain largely unresolved. One of the key factors driving these responses is the infochemicalmediated communication in the holobiont. In order to come up with a holistic picture, in this Viewpoint we compare mechanisms and infochemicals in the rhizosphere of plants and the eco-chemosphere of seaweeds in response to climate change stressors and other environmental stressors, including drought, warming and nutrient stress. Furthermore, we discuss the inclusion of chemical ecology concepts that are of crucial importance in driving holobiont survival, adaptation and/or holobiont breakdown. Infochemicals can thus be regarded as a 'missing link' in our understanding of holobiont response to climate change and should be investigated while investigating the responses of plant and seaweed holobionts to climate change. This will set the basis for improving our understanding of holobiont responses to climate change stressors across terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

## Introduction

Ten years ago, a paradigm shift across the life and medical sciences brought awareness to the importance of the holobiont concept (see Table 1 Glossary). The term holobiont was first introduced by Lynn Margulis (Margulis, 1991) and describes the host and its associated community of microorganisms. Since then, several studies have addressed the complex interactions of host-associated microbes that influence many eukaryotic holobionts, including marine (e.g. the sponge, coral and seaweed holobionts; Thompson et al., 2015; Webster & Thomas, 2016; Pita et al., 2018; van der Loos et al., 2019) and terrestrial holobionts (e.g. the plant and insect holobionts; Vandenkoornhuyse et al., 2015; Dittmer et al., 2016). In the plant and seaweed holobiont (also known as marine macroalgae), these interactions with microbes can result in improved host health (Longford et al., 2019), increased growth (Berendsen et al., 2012), disease suppression (Mendes et al., 2011; Chapelle et al., 2016; Ritpitakphong et al., 2016; Saha & Weinberger, 2019) and adaptation towards abiotic stressors (Dittami et al., 2016). However, these interactions can also have negative effects, such as loss of morphology without the presence of beneficial bacteria (Wichard, 2015; Compant et al., 2019) or can cause diseases as a result of dysbiosis between microbes with planthealth supporting functions and plant pathogenic microbes (Mendes et al., 2013; Durán et al., 2018; Yu et al., 2019). Thus, responses of both plants and seaweeds to climate-change-induced stressors and environmental stress may be driven by shifts in their microbiota (Naylor & Coleman-Derr, 2018; Timm et al., 2018; van der Loos et al., 2019).

Surfaces of plants and seaweeds are characterised by strong chemical gradients due to exudation of organic and inorganic compounds (collectively called infochemicals), which can attract or deter microbes. Bacteria use quorum sensing (QS) to co-ordinate collective behaviours through cell-to-cell communication. QS relies on the production, release, and group-level detection of infochemicals called auto-inducers (reviewed in Papenfort & Bassler, 2016). Thus, infochemicals drive much of the hostmicrobial and microbe-microbe interactions and are suggested as one of the key ecological drivers in terrestrial and marine holobiont interactions (Hassani et al., 2018; Saha et al., 2019; Schmidt et al., 2019). Yet, infochemicals are often overlooked in studies investigating the effect of climate change on the plant and seaweed hostmicrobe relationship. In this viewpoint, we aim to bring attention to the importance of infochemicals in climate change responses by comparing mechanisms and compounds that play key roles in both, plant and seaweed holobionts. Consequently, we call for the inclusion of chemical ecology concepts in holobiont research, which can provide essential key aspects in understanding responses of plant and seaweed holobionts to climate change stressors and other environmental stressors.

# Infochemicals of the rhizosphere in the plant holobiont

In the plant holobiont, the rhizosphere represents a hotspot of chemically mediated interactions (Mendes et al., 2013; Mhlongo et al., 2018) in which millions of chemical compounds are being exchanged between the plant and its microbiota (Mhlongo et al., 2018). Therefore, we focus here on the interactions taking place in the rhizosphere. Infochemicals in the rhizosphere are largely composed of low-molecular weight, high-molecular weight and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) (Ortíz-Castro et al., 2009; Schenkel et al., 2015; Tyc, et al., 2017). Depending on their diffusion ability infochemicals have different action ranges, with VOCs diffusing further in the soil environment than non-volatile compounds (de la Porte et al., 2020). This gradient can guide either chemo-attraction of beneficial bacteria in the rhizosphere that sense infochemicals via as yet unknown receptors (Schulz-Bohm et al.,

#### Table 1 Glossary.

Antifoulant	Chemical compounds that inhibit the colonization
	process of a solid surface (living or non-living).
Dysbiosis	The shift in the microbiome from a stable state to
	disturbed state where commensal or new colonizers may become detrimental.
Epibacteria	Bacteria colonizing the surface of the host organisms.
Holobiont	Host and its associated communities of microorganisms (i.e. microbiota, including mutualistic to parasitic interactions).
Infochemicals	Chemical compounds (organic and inorganic) released by microbes, animals and plants into their environment and used as cues and signals, where chemical cues are unintentionally released compounds and chemical signals are intentionally released compounds that supply specific information.
Microbiota	The collection of microorganisms in interaction with their host, ranging from mutualistic to parasitic interactions.
Quorum sensing	A cell-density dependent mechanism by which bacteria communicate and collectively regulate gene expression.
Rhizosphere	The region of the soil under the direct influence of plant root activities, including water and nutrient uptake, rhizodeposition, and gas dynamics.
Volatile organic compounds (VOCs)	Small, carbon based molecular weight compounds with low molecular mass, high vapor pressure, low boiling point and a lipophilic moiety.

2018), or deterrence of pathogens (Weisskopf, 2013; Raza et al., 2016) and other predators (Schulz-Bohm et al., 2017). Infochemicals produced on the root surface can also act as chemical defence against pathogens and other microorganisms that compete for nutrients (Bais et al., 2004; Raaijmakers & Mazzola, 2012). Lowmolecular weight root exudates, including sugars, amino acids and organic acids (e.g. malic acid or fumaric acid), phenolics (e.g. flavonoids) and other secondary metabolites serve as substrates and signaling molecules for microbes (Bais et al., 2006). Microbial lowmolecular weight compounds with direct and indirect beneficial properties for the plant host include siderophores (Aznar & Dellagi, 2015) and quorum sensing signals, like N-acyl-homoserine lactones (AHLs, Schikora et al., 2016). AHL-based quorum sensing is a well described mechanism of chemical communication that acts in a cell density-dependent manner (Eberl, 1999). Quorum sensing is likely an important mechanisms for the communication between the plant holobiont by serving as a universal language for bacterial communication (for more details we refer to the review by Hassani et al. (2018)). Microbe-associated molecular patterns (MAMPs) and pathogen-associated molecular patterns (PAMPs) may also be classified as low-molecular weight infochemicals that are sensed by the plant host and trigger innate immunity responses (Ranf, 2017). These include the protein flagellin, the Elongation Factor Tu (EF-Tu) or the receptor-like protein ReMAX (for a more in-depth review on innate immunity and the plant microbiota we refer to the review by Hacquard et al. (2017)). High-molecular weight root exudates primarily include mucilage (high molecular weight polysaccharides) and proteins that mostly serve as carbon-based nutrients for microbes and

regulate microbial diversity and activity in the rhizosphere (Bais et al., 2008; Mendes et al., 2013). Root and microbial derived volatile infochemicals belong to several chemical classes, including alkenes, alcohols, ketones, benzenoids, pyrazines, sulfides, and terpenes (Schulz & Dickschat, 2007; Schmidt et al., 2015; Bouwmeester et al., 2019) and generally act in a concentration dependent manner (Nemcovic et al., 2008; Schmidt et al., 2016). VOCs that maintain soil health, promote plant growth and drive resistance of pathogens include 2-3-butanediol (Ryu et al., 2003; Kong et al., 2018), dimethyl-disulfide (DMDS) (Meldau et al., 2013; Chinchilla et al., 2019), and indole (Bailly et al., 2014). Terpenes are one of the most important volatile infochemicals that mediate belowground-interactions between plants and microbes, such as (E)-β-caryophyllene (Rasmann et al., 2005; Schulz-Bohm et al., 2017). While plant roots release a wide range of unique terpene compounds via the mevalonate (MVA) or non-mevalonate (MPE) pathways (Huang & Osbourn, 2019) with terpene synthases (TPSs) being the key gatekeepers in terpene biosynthesis (Karunanithi & Zerbe, 2019). Since the recent discovery that TPSs are widely distributed in bacteria too (Yamada et al., 2015; Dickschat, 2016), TPSs encoding for several common plant root and fungal emitted terpenes, like the (E)-β-caryophyllene synthase (Fig. 1) have been also been found in soil bacteria (Rabe et al., 2013).

Apart from infochemicals being individually produced by the plant host and the microbiota, the microbiota can induce plant infochemicals and modulate plant hormone levels and the pathways they steer (Ravanbakhsh et al., 2018). For example, the microbial VOC acetoin and 2,3-butanediol and the quorum sensing signals AHLs (reviewed in Sharifi & Ryu, 2018b) can elicit the plant hormonal signals salicylic acid and jasmonic acid/ethylene that trigger plant defense mechanisms. Similarly, the plant growth promoting hormones auxin or cytokinin can be induced by bacteria producing infochemicals like indole (Ryu et al., 2003; Bailly et al., 2014; Bhattacharyya et al., 2015). Some of these volatile infochemicals are suggested to act in similar ways as the previously described MAMPs (Sharifi & Ryu, 2018a); however no experimental evidence has supported this hypothesis so far. Overall, the hormonal regulation by the microbiota illustrates one of the core concepts of the holobiont theory, namely that plants and microbes form an ecological unit that adapts plant responses to specific situations (Vandenkoornhuyse et al., 2015) (for a review on ethylene signaling as a model system for holobiont evolution we refer to Ravanbakhsh et al. (2018)).

# Infochemicals of the eco-chemosphere in the seaweed holobiont

Communication via infochemicals is mainly mediated through the seaweed surfaces which, together with their 'second skin' of microbes (dominated mainly by epibacteria; Wahl et al., 2012) and an additional diffusive boundary layer of water (Hurd, 2000) represents a micro-niche analogous to the rhizosphere of plant roots or the phycosphere of phytoplankton cells (Seymour et al., 2017). Rich in infochemicals, a seaweed's surface layer is a micro-hotspot of ecological interactions that are chemically mediated. Therefore,

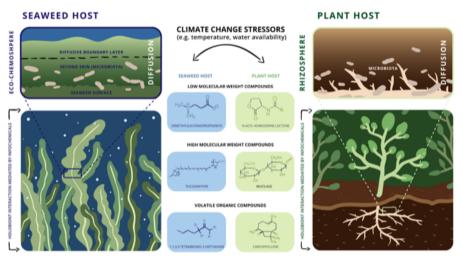


Fig. 1 Seaweed (left) and plant (right) holobiont interactions driven by infochemicals in the eco-chemosphere and rhizosphere, respectively. Infochemicals are either produced by the microbiota, by the host or both. E.g. DMSP (Dimethylsulfoniopropionate) is produced by both, the seaweed host and the microbiota. Similarly, in the plant holobiont, E-β-caryophyllene is produced the host and the microbiota, while quorum sensing molecules like N-acyl homoserine lactones are produced only by the microbiota. Climate change stressors, such as increasing temperature in water or soil or water availability in soil can affect the infochemical-driven interactions taking place in the holobionts, leading to either 1) holobiont adaptation or 2) holobiont breakdown depending on the balance of beneficial and pathogenic members of the microbiota and the infochemicals produced. Figure by illustrator Ariana Sauder.

we propose a new term, the 'eco-chemosphere' for this layer (Fig. 1), which could be also applied to other marine macroorganisms like sponges or corals. Similar to the rhizosphere, gradients of infochemicals within this sphere can guide chemoattraction of bacteria in microscale interactions (Seymour & Raina, 2018), where motile bacteria can sense infochemicals using transmembrane chemoreceptors that allow them to direct their movement towards or away from the chemical gradients. The radius of influence of this sphere, for example, would be dependent of properties of the living surface (including infochemicals release rate, wettability, microtopography) as well as of the properties of the infochemical itself (e.g. polarity, molecule persistence in the medium). Infochemicals from the surface of seaweeds can also act as a chemical defence against other microbial colonizers as excessive microbial colonization followed by colonization of macro-organisms (e.g. mussels, bryozoans) might not only hinder nutrient uptake, but also reproduction and photosynthesis among other processes (reviewed by da Gama et al., 2014; Saha et al., 2018). Moreover, this defence can be provided by associated microbes (Nasrolahi et al., 2012). Yet, until the development of surface extraction method about two decades ago, identifying infochemicals that are present at (or near) the surface of the seaweed host and the boundary layer was a major challenge. Compared to terrestrial plants, surface associated infochemicals mediating interactions with bacteria have only been identified from a handful of seaweeds so far and include VOCs like halogenated furanones (Dworjanyn et al., 2006), bromoform and dibromoacetic acid (Paul et al., 2006), polybrominated 2-heptanone (Nylund et al., 2008) from red seaweeds. The halogenated furanones act as a specific antagonist of the acylated homoserine lactone (AHL) regulatory system (quorum sensing) present in bacteria, thereby inhibiting bacterial colonization (Manefield et al., 2002). Bromoform and dibromoacetic acid were found to reduce epibacterial colonization on the surface of the red seaweed Asaparagopsis armata. The volatile

polyhalogenated 2-heptanone (1,1,3,3-tetrabromo-2-heptanone) isolated from the surface of the red seaweed Bonnemaisonia hamifera had growth-inhibiting effects against bacterial strains isolated from co-occurring red algae and demonstrated an ecologically relevant role as an antifoulant against bacterial colonization (Nylund et al., 2008). Thus, 1,1,3,3-tetrabromo-2heptanone could provide significant fitness benefits to B. hamifera. Besides reducing the overall bacterial density, this compound was found to control the density and composition of seaweedassociated bacterial communities (Persson et al., 2011). Other VOCs like sesquiterpenes (Othmani et al., 2016b) are known to be produced by the brown seaweed Taonia atomaria. T. atomaria produces two sesquiterpenes as surface-associated compounds that exhibited anti-adhesion properties towards non-epibiotic marine bacteria of the seaweed while being inactive towards epibiotic bacteria isolated from the surface of *T. atomaria*, which suggests their ability to regulate surface colonization (Othmani et al., 2016a). Surface associated seaweed compounds also include low molecular weight compounds like dimethylsulfoniopropionate (DMSP; Saha et al., 2012), and high molecular weight compounds like fucoxanthin (Saha et al., 2011) from the brown seaweed Fucus vesiculosus. Infochemicals like DMSP, fucoxanthin and proline identified from the surface of F. vesiculosus that are known to have both anti and pro-biotic effect depending on the bacterial strains tested, were found to affect the overall bacterial community composition associated with F. vesiculosus. Tendencies for insensitivity towards all three compounds were reported among bacterial taxa that were found to typically dominate the epibacteria communities of the F. vesiculosus holobiont (Saha et al., 2014).

As described earlier for the plant holobiont, infochemicals in the seaweed holobiont can be also produced by the host, the microbiota or both. For example, transcriptomic analysis of the red seaweed *Laurencia dendroidea* and its microbiome demonstrated biosynthesis of terpenoids, such as (—)-elatol through the MEV pathway

by the seaweed itself (de Oliveira et al., 2012). By contrast, DMSP can be emitted by both the seaweed host and the surface associated bacteria (Fig. 1) as marine bacteria are also known to be DMSP producers (Williams et al., 2019) and can contribute to the production of DMSP along with the seaweed host. Thus, contribution towards the chemical cocktail of surface associated infochemicals will depend on the abundance and thickness of epibacteria in the 'second skin' as well as their metabolic activity (Wahl et al., 2010). Epibacteria on seaweeds also have core functions related to protection against pathogens (Saha & Weinberger, 2019) and in morphogenesis via the release of morphogenetic compounds (Wichard et al., 2015). Moreover, epibacteria from seaweeds are known to offer functions like chemical defence as they can produce antibacterial compounds that can protect seaweeds from further colonization (Kumar et al., 2011).

Vesicle transportation along membranous tubular collection and cell death events of corps en cerise (or cherry bodies) was found to be responsible for exudation of halogenated compounds to the thallus surface of the red macroalgae Laurencia obtusa with defensive role against colonizers (Salgado et al., 2008). Molecular mechanism regulating morphogenesis in the green macroalgae was deciphered recently when demonstrated that thallusin released by Maribacter sp. induced rhizoid and cell wall formation. The authors showed that gametes acquired the iron complex of thallusin thereby linking morphogenetic processes with intracellular iron homeostasis.

# Current trends: infochemicals across plant and seaweed holobionts in response to climate change stressors and other abiotic factors

Climate-change-induced stressors, such as warming and increased CO<sub>2</sub>, can alter the production and composition of infochemicals with profound effects on terrestrial and marine ecosystems. In the plant holobiont, abiotic stress such as water (flooding, drought) and nutrient stress (changes in nitrogen and phosphorus availability) can alter chemical composition of root exudate profiles and root morphology, which in turn affect the assembly, composition and metabolic functioning of the microbiota (Hartman & Tringe, 2019). A widely observed phenomenon in water-limited soils is an increase in the ratio of Gram-positive to Gram-negative bacteria, with increases in bacteria of the phylum Actinobacteria and Firmicutes (Naylor et al., 2017; Fitzpatrick et al., 2018); an effect that can be partially explained by a physiological advantage that makes these phyla more adapted to dry conditions in soil. Often these changes are driven by one or a few members of a phylum with observed small shifts in response to drought (Barnard et al., 2013). Actinobacteria, including Streptomyces sp. are known emitters of VOCs that belong to a range of chemical classes, including alcohols, ketones, esters, and nitrogen- and sulfur-containing compounds, and their VOC profiles are typically strain specific (Cordovez et al., 2015; Choudoir et al., 2019). Changes in the abundance of Actinobacteria suggests an effect on the emission of infochemicals and the resulting chemically mediated interactions in the plant holobiont on a fine-scale level.

Indirect or direct changes in microbial chemical compounds in the rhizosphere have already been shown to influence the health and fitness of the plant host in response to abiotic changes (Hartman & Tringe, 2019). Root exudates seem to be one of the key class of infochemicals in shaping plant holobiont responses to climate change by contributing to the structure of rhizosphere communities. A recent study showed that root exudation is coupled with microbial substrate-use preferences that contributes to the assembly of the rhizosphere microbiome, enabling the use of metabolite interaction traits to engineer favorable microbial communities on roots (Zhalnina et al., 2018). This suggests that plants regulate their metabolic interactions with microorganisms, thus potentially recruiting beneficial communities (Zhalnina et al., 2018). A controlled mechanism of the plant holobiont to maintain microbial activity during drought recovery also stems from root exudates that can trigger more soil respiration (priming of soil carbon), thus facilitating regrowth through stimulating microbial activity in the rhizosphere (Vries et al., 2019). Similarly, microbial VOCs like 2,3-butanediol and DMDS can induce abiotic stress tolerance consequently preventing the suppression of plant growth and reduction in crop yields (Ryu et al., 2004; Tyagi et al., 2020). The same compound, 2,3-butanediol was shown to induce drought tolerance by stimulating the plant production of hydrogen peroxide (H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>) and nitric oxide (NO) (Cho et al., 2013). Other protecting mechanisms triggered by infochemicals include the accumulation of antioxidants and osmo-protectants in plants via microbial VOCs (Zhang et al., 2010), facilitation of iron uptake under iron deficiency via microbial VOCs and coumarins (Zhang et al., 2009; Voges et al., 2019), plant growth by microbial VOCs (Ryu et al., 2003; Bailly & Weisskopf, 2012; Bitas et al., 2013) and immunity via MAMPs (Stringlis et al., 2018). Infochemicals can also serve as nutrients when the plant is under starvation. Under conditions of sulfur starvation, plants can directly take up and assimilate the Scontaining compounds like DMDS emitted from some plantgrowth promoting bacteria (Meldau et al., 2013) (for more details we refer to the review by Liu & Zhang, 2015).

Increasing CO<sub>2</sub> levels are largely absorbed by the oceans, decreasing pH of the surface water impairing functionality of marine infochemicals (e.g. volatile infochemicals cause chemotactic reactions among invertebrates associated with the seagrass community. Such behaviour was found to differ between current and high CO<sub>2</sub> conditions treated seagrass (Zupo et al., 2015). Diseases are also an emerging threat to ocean ecosystems due to increasing anthropogenic stressors, like increased water temperatures. In heat stressed coral holobiont fragments, concentrations of the infochemical DMSP increased five-fold, correspondingly increasing the chemotactic response of the pathogen Vibrio corallilyticus towards heat stressed coral (Garren et al., 2014). However, compared to marine animal holobionts like corals, the impact of climate change stressors on infochemicals mediating interactions within the seaweed holobiont remains underexplored (see Saha et al., 2014).

Warmer waters have been positively correlated with higher frequencies of bleaching in the red seaweed Delisea pulchra. Bleached thalli of the alga not only had low levels of antibacterial defence compared to healthy individuals but the microbial

community associated with bleached thalli were also distinct from those on surfaces of healthy Delisea individuals (Campbell et al., 2011). Bleached individuals had significantly lower level of the antimicrobial infochemical furanones than co-occurring healthy individuals. Contradictory to Delisea, temperature stressor up to 25°C using indoor mesocosms leads to a very limited effect upon antibacterial infochemical (dimethylsulphoniopropionate (DMSP), fucoxanthin and proline) concentrations of the brown seaweed Fucus vesiculosus (Saha et al., 2014). Interestingly, while proline and fucoxanthin rarely reached surface concentration ranges necessary to deter epibacterial colonization, DMSP was found to be sufficiently concentrated on the surface of the alga to inhibit epibiotic bacterial colonization under all temperature treatments.

# Future trends: Integration of chemical ecology in holobiont under climate change studies

In order to recruit beneficial microorganisms, plants release infochemicals (see section 'Infochemicals of the rhizosphere in the plant holobiont') into their root's surroundings that selectively stimulate beneficial microorganisms for plant growth and health (Reinhold-Hurek *et al.*, 2015; Sasse *et al.*, 2018), but also microbes produce infochemicals as a direct response to changes in their environment which helps the plant to adapt to stressors. As a result, in the past few years lots of focus has been put towards investigating the protective functions of the microbiota for the health of the plant host in response to biotic and abiotic stresses (Vannier *et al.*, 2019). Yet, we do not know how abiotic changes affect the production of infochemicals of microorganisms that show a higher abundance in response to stressful conditions.

Variation in abiotic factors due to changes in temperature and soil moisture have been shown to induce a shift in chemically-mediated interactions in the plant holobiont that further led to shifts in the community composition (see section 'Current trends: infochemicals across plant and seaweed holobionts in response to climate change stressors and other abiotic factors') (Xu et al., 2018). In plants, in addition to temperature, water availability is an important factor that controls microbial activity in soil (Insam & Seewald, 2010), and the production of infochemicals depending on their physico-chemical properties (e.g. water solubility). For example, monoterpene emission by soil microbes, including α-pinene and limonene was shown to increase with decreasing soil moisture (Asensio et al., 2007). It seems likely that chemically-mediated interactions in the plant holobiont are affected by soil warming and lower water availability (Asensio et al., 2007; Meisner & de Boer, 2018), thus modulating the plant hosts' response to drought.

Almost a decade ago, it was demonstrated for the first time that an entire suite of surface associated metabolites from the surface of the brown seaweed *Fucus vesiculosus* can play a strong selective role in recruiting epibacteria on the surface of seaweed (Lachnit *et al.*, 2010). However, no evidence could be demonstrated for the beneficial role of such microbes and the purpose of chemically mediated recruitment of microbes. Recently, infochemicals from the surface of the red seaweed holobiont *Agarophyton vermicullophylum* were shown to engage in chemically mediated

microbial 'gardening' by specifically attracting beneficial microbes while deterring detrimental pathogens (Saha & Weinberger, 2019). Although it is evident that seaweed holobiont infochemicals play a strong selective role in structuring the seaweed holobiont, how these seaweed holobiont infochemicals may change under stressors has not yet been well addressed while investigating responses of seaweed holobionts under climate change.

Variation in abiotic factors due to changes in season or location can cause a variation in such chemically mediated interactions at the surface of seaweeds (Saha & Wahl, 2013). Recent work by (Paix et al., 2019), demonstrated that temporal factors like seasonality can be positively correlated to the presence of certain infochemicals on the surface of the brown macroalga Taonia atomaria. While the 'spring period' cluster was mainly characterized by dipeptides and positively correlated with a single bacterial taxon of the Alteromonadaceae family, the 'summer period' cluster was dominated by epibacterial taxa (including Erythrobacteraceae, Rhodospirillaceae, Oceanospirillaceae and Flammeovirgaceae) and showed positive correlations with a few metabolites like DMSP and proline, known as seaweed antimicrobial compounds. Climate change induced regional stressors, like for example low salinity, can cause an altered bacterial community composition on the surface of seaweeds. Thus, acclimation can be mediated by changes in the microbiota. For example, in brown algae the genus Ectocarpus, presence of certain specific bacteria was found to facilitate adaptation to low salinity environment (Dittami et al., 2016). The authors found that the Ectocarpus strain 371 (originally isolated from freshwater) was unable to survive in diluted seawater medium (DSWM) upon removal of bacteria through an antibiotic treatment. Cultures treated with antibiotics in seawater medium did not survive the transfer to DSWM, even after several weeks of recovery. To reestablish the capacity of antibiotic-treated strain 371 to acclimate to DSWM, the strain was re-inoculated with medium from nonantibiotic treated cultures. Bacterial strains specifically responsible for this adaptation to low salinity treatment were not identified. Similarly, in plants, increased abundance and activity of monoderm bacteria, which lack an outer cell membrane and contain thick cell walls was shown to be correlated with the adaptation to drought (Xu et al., 2018). Given that surface microbiota can change in response to the surface infochemistry in terrestrial plants (as evidenced above), like terrestrial plants, we do not know yet whether this altered microbiota may assist the seaweed with regard to adaptation to climate change stressor via the production of infochemicals.

### **Perspectives**

Given that environmental factors like season and location can drive changes in the infochemistry and thereby drive responses of the microbiota, we hypothesize that climate-change-induced stressors like increased mean temperature can also induce quantitative or qualitative changes in the host and or microbiota emitted infochemicals of plants and seaweeds. Such changes have already been observed for DMSP in corals, where increased production of DMSP in thermally stressed corals attracted the pathogenic bacteria *Vibrio coralliilyticus* (Garren *et al.*, 2014). Seaweeds are

also known to be prolific producers of DMSP (Van Alstyne & Puglisi, 2007), which can be both catabolized and metabolized by marine bacteria. This serves as an example of how increased temperatures may lead to an increased exudation of DMSP on the surface of seaweeds (and also released DMSP into the water column), which may not only attract beneficial bacteria (Kessler et al., 2018) but also pathogenic microbes, thus leading to dysbiosis and ultimately resulting in diseased holobionts. Climate change stressors, like increased mean temperature or ocean acidification have been found to cause shifts in microbial communities of seaweeds (Minich et al., 2018) or maintain stable communities i.e. microbiota did not change with pCO2 levels (Cavalcanti et al., 2018). However, unlike terrestrial plants we do not know how these altered epibacterial profiles may result in an alteration of the infochemicals produced by these surface microbiotas. We also do not know how such an alteration in the infochemistry of plants and seaweeds under climate-change-induced stressors may affect the tritrophic ecological interactions mediated by these plant and seaweed holobiont infochemicals.

Both plant and seaweed holobiont research is currently aimed at understanding how holobionts adapt to climate change stressors (Classen et al., 2015; Duarte et al., 2017; Simon et al., 2019). However, it is currently not known who is responding first to climate change stressors: the host or the microbiota, or both simultaneously? Infochemicals from microorganisms seem to play a pivotal role in enabling plants to increase their environmental tolerance. But, unlike terrestrial plants, this aspect has not been studied so far in seaweeds as mentioned earlier (section 'Future trends: Integration of chemical ecology in holobiont under climate change studies'). We also do not know for both plant and seaweed holobionts if there are key infochemicals or specific classes of infochemicals (e.g. terpenes) that drive climate change adaptation and if so, can they be induced, for example through microbiome engineering, in order to support holobiont survival/adaptation?

The underlying infochemical-mediated mechanisms driving changes in host-microbe interaction are strikingly unexplored despite sufficient evidence (described earlier). Infochemicals can thus be regarded as a 'missing link' in our understanding of holobiont responses to climate change and should be investigated while investigating the responses of plant and macroalgal holobionts to climate change. There is an obvious need to prioritize the inclusion of chemical ecology in plant and seaweed holobiont research. This will lead to a better understanding and assessment of how climate-change-induced stressors affect interactions in plant and seaweed holobionts. Understanding these interactions and underlying mechanisms will allow us to harness the goods and services provided by terrestrial and marine holobionts that are imperative to the health of ecosystems and to human health.

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### **Author contributions**

RS and MS conceived the idea, designed, and planned the research and wrote the manuscript. RS and MS contributed equally to this

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