The relevance of the biodiversity to function relationship in heterotrophic aquatic systems under stress

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Accepted Dissertation thesis for the partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Doctor of Natural Science Fachbereich Natur- und Umweltwissenschaften Rheinland-Pfälzische Technische Universität Kaiserslautern-Landau (RPTU)

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Date of oral examination: March 21th, 2024

Declaration

I hereby declare that I independently conducted the work presented in this thesis entitled "The relevance of the biodiversity to function relationship in heterotrophic aquatic systems under stress". All used assistances are mentioned and involved contributors either are co-authors of or are acknowledged in the respective publication. Artificial intelligence tools have not been used in any part of this thesis. Moreover, this thesis has never been submitted elsewhere for an examination, as a thesis or for evaluation in a similar context to any department of this university or any scientific institution. I am aware that a violation of the aforementioned conditions can have legal consequences.

Dübendorf, 30/08/2024

Place, date Signature Signature

The results presented in this cumulative thesis are documented one manuscript that is currently under revision (**Appendix I**) and in two peer-reviewed publications (**Appendix II and III**). Since many researchers contributed to the work I present in this thesis (see **Appendix IV**), I will use the plural form when presenting and discussing these results.

Appendix I

Gonçalves, S., Post, R., Konschak, M., Zubrod, J., Feckler, A., & Bundschuh, M. (2023). Leaf Species-Dependent Fungicide Effects on the Function and Abundance of Associated Microbial Communities. Bulletin of Environmental Contamination and Toxicology, 110(5), 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00128-023-03728-2

Appendix II

Gonçalves, S., Feckler, A., Pollitt, A., Baschien, C., Michael, J., Schreiner, V. C., Zubrod, J. P., Bundschuh, M. (2024). Elevated Fungicide and Nutrient Concentrations Change Structure but not Function of Aquatic Microbial Communities. Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry, 43(6), 1300–1311. https://doi.org/10.1002/etc.5863

Appendix III

Gonçalves, S., Pollitt, A., Pietz, S., Feckler, A., & Bundschuh, M. (2024). Microbial community history and leaf species shape bottom-up effects in a freshwater shredding amphipod. Science of the Total Environment, 912, 168926. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2023.168926

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank Prof. Mirco Bundschuh and Dr. Alexander Feckler for their supervision, for the challenges and encouragement, but especially for the support, patience and trust they gave me in the last five years.

I would also like to thank Dr. Jochen Zubrod for the constructive ideas and help with the first steps of the project. Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Christiane Baschien for the fruitful collaboration and for taking part of the examination board. Many thanks also to Prof. Dr. Martin Entling for accepting chairing the dissertation committee.

Many hours were spent in the laboratory, so I have also to thank everyone who helped or taught me. This includes again Dr. Alexander Feckler, Therese Bürgi, Patrick Baudy, Marco Konschak and Britta Wahl-Ermel.

The Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) is acknowledged for funding the BIO2FUN project (411020793).

Many thanks to all my colleagues and PhD students at RTPU Landau and to our secretary Christina Kraemer.

This is probably the shortest thank you I can write, but I do have to thank the many people who directly and indirectly contributed to this work and my wellbeing during this chapter. During the PhD we get absorbed in our research, "Am I do it right? Is it good enough? Is it relevant?" we always want more and forget that life is running on the sidelines. Life goes on, people come and go, you come and go, PhD finishes, and the only (important) things that stay are the skills developed and the extraordinary and inspiring people you meet. I am grateful to all of you for the unique and unforgettable memories.

I have to thank in particular: - My core lifetime friends: Claudia Pereira, Cristiana Paulo, Mariana Mota and Patricia Oliveira; - My German family: Dr. Elena Adams, Nina Röder; Dr. Dominic Englert; Dr. Verena Gerstle; Dr. Sebastien Pietz; Annika Pollitt; Frederik Meyer; Dr. Alexander Feckler and Dr. Hannah Chimel; - My fellow mates from the Functional Aquatic Ecotoxicology group @RPTU; - My new friends and colleagues from Utox @Eawag; - My dearest Dr. Bonnie Bailet and Nadine Belkouteb; - My closest family and my cats for the continuous and unconditional love and encouragement.

Thank you! Obrigada!

Contents

ABSTRACT

Expansion of agricultural land-use and the associated application of agrochemicals can have deleterious effects on local freshwater microbial communities, with consequences for the entire ecosystem. Leaf litter decomposition is a key process in stream ecosystems being partially driven by microbial communities (particularly fungi and bacteria). Leaf-associated microbial communities are responsible for making the nutrients and energy bound in leaves available for higher trophic levels of heterotrophic food webs. Moreover, these microbial communities increase the nutritional quality of leaf litter for shredders, as they produce proteins and lipids while degrading the indigestible components of leaf litter. When exposed to anthropogenic pressures, such as the increased exposure to nutrients and fungicides associated with agricultural land-use, the structure and function of these microbial communities can be affected. In addition, the leaf species on which these microbial communities grow may act as a supplementary filter for the community structure and response to stressors. These factors and their interaction may jointly modify leaves' nutritional quality for higher trophic level, potentially affecting activities such as shredders' feeding and development. Despite the importance of leaf litter decomposition, little is known about the underlying mechanisms or processes driving the changes in function and structure (mainly in the aquatic hyphomycetes [AH] community) of leaf-associated microbial communities. Moreover, fungicide effects on leaf litter decomposition were investigated almost exclusively with black alder leaves due to their favourable traits to consumers (i.e., low recalcitrance and high nutrient content). Simultaneously, little is known about fungicide effects on microbial colonisation and decomposition of other leaf species, with less favourable traits or potential unknown consequences for the wider food web. The aims of this thesis are therefore to assess individually: - the effects of fungicide exposure on leaf-associated microbial communities colonising different leaf species; the effects of combined fungicide and nutrient exposure on microbial communities with different exposure history; - the potential effects on shredders' development resulting from feeding on different leaf species colonised by communities with different exposure history. These aims were assessed through a set of complex laboratory bioassays taking into account the environmental relevance of the tested stressors and communities.

Overall, we show that microbial communities colonising leaves with less favourable traits (i.e., higher recalcitrance and lower nutrient levels such as European beech) potentially may suffer increased fungicide effects, affecting their function (i.e., leaf litter decomposition). While leaf species with more favourable traits such as black alder, enabled leaf-associated microorganisms to acquire leaf-bound energy and more easily resist potential effects induced by fungicide exposure. Moreover, our results also point towards the need to expand our mechanistic understanding on how different leaf species interact with the effects of chemical stressors on the function and structure of microbial communities. The latter is not only important due to the expected changes of leaf species input into streams but also because those can potentially translate into different food quality for shredder organisms. Secondly, leaf litter decomposition did not differ between fungicide treatments or exposure histories. While increasing levels of nutrients tended to buffer for the non-significant fungicide-induced effects on leaf decomposition. However, fungal community composition substantially changed at environmentally relevant fungicide concentrations. For example, in most communities tolerant AH species of the genus *Tetracladium*, known by its superior leaf decomposition efficiency, dominated at high fungicide exposure independent of exposure history. Since the changes in the fungal community composition seem decoupled from its function, our results are therefore supporting the principle of species dominance. This principle elaborates that highly efficient decomposers are responsible for maintaining leaf litter decomposition despite changes in the community structure. However, changes in the community structure can potentially affect other functions provided by fungi, such as increasing the nutritional quality of leaves for shredders. Finally, we also show that leaf species identity has a more substantial impact on gammarids' development relative to the exposure history of the microbial community colonising the leaves. Moreover, the sex-specific feeding responses of gammarids raise questions on earlier procedures, demanding further research.

1. INTRODUCTION

In forest-dominated catchments, stream ecosystems are maintained by the decomposition of allochthonous organic carbon, mainly subsidized in the form of terrestrial leaf litter (Fisher & Likens, 1973; Minshall, 1967; Nelson & Scott, 1962). In such environments, the leaf litter is colonised by aquatic microorganisms, such as aquatic hyphomycetes (AH; a polyphyletic group of asexual fungi; Baschien et al., 2006) and bacteria (Gessner et al., 1999). In this context, microbial communities' efficiency to colonise and consequently decompose leaf litter is assumed to be mainly a function of their fungal species-specific traits (Baudy et al., 2021), as well as the chemical composition of leaf species used as substrate (Hladyz et al., 2011; Melillo et al., 1982; Schindler, M. H., 2009). In fact, nutrients and structural components of leaves (i.e., recalcitrant components such as lignin) can influence microbial colonisation dynamics (Gessner & Chauvet, 1994; Melillo et al., 1982; Webster & Benfield, 1986). Once the leaf litter colonisation is successful, these microorganisms produce exoenzymes responsible for breaking down mono-, di- and polysaccharides into more usable and accessible compounds for the higher food web (Evans & Hedger, 2001; Hieber & Gessner, 2002). Moreover, this conditioning process by bacteria and fungi increases the leaves' nutritional quality and palatability for leaf-shredding invertebrates. The microbial conditioning indirectly promotes leaf litter decomposition through the stimulation of shredders' feeding activity (Bärlocher & Kendrick, 1975; Cummins, 1974). This stimulation of feeding ultimately results in the production of fine particulate organic matter, an essential resource for collectors and deposit-feeding organisms (Bundschuh & McKie, 2016). Thus, driven by the crucial role in stream food webs, changes in leaf-associated microbial communities can have far-reaching ecological consequences (Gessner et al., 2010).

The type of substrate used for colonisation (i.e., leaf species identity) may act as a filter for leaf-associated microbial communities due to leaf species' unique recalcitrance and nutrient levels. Most of the studies assessing impacts of chemicals, such as fungicides, on this type of communities used black alder (*Alnus glutinosa* (L.) Gaertn.) as a model leaf species. Black alder is considered representative of temperate riparian ecosystems (Bjelke et al., 2016); however, other leaf litter species are also ecologically highly relevant as they are present in the riparian ecosystem (Gessner et al., 2010). Black alders' richness in nutrients and relatively low share of recalcitrant substances (Gulis, 2001; Melillo et al., 1982) supports microbial growth and activity through an easy access to nutrients and thus being the first to be colonised and decomposed by the microbial communities (Artigas et al., 2004; Graça & Canhoto, 2006). On the other hand, other leaf species with less favourable traits (i.e., lower nutrient content and higher content in recalcitrant substances) are colonised and decomposed slower, enabling the constant input of nutrients all year long (Gessner et al., 2010). As a result, these different leaf traits may question the transferability of results obtained with black alder-associated microbial communities exposed to stressors to other leaf litter species with deviating traits.

At the same time, the structure and function (i.e., leaf litter decomposition) of leaf-associated microbial communities is shaped by the surrounding environment, for example by the type of catchments' land-use, which can influence chemical input of anthropogenic origin (Canhoto et al., 2016). A repeated or continuous exposure to anthropogenic chemicals, for instance due to agricultural land-use, is characterised by the released of pesticides such as fungicides (Tilman et al., 2001) and nutrients. This type of exposure can trigger changes in leaf-associated microbial communities' function and structure (Feckler et al., 2018; Fernández et al., 2015). While fungicides mainly reduced leaf litter decomposition (Fernández et al., 2015), nutrients, on the other hand, are generally associated with a higher microbial activity (Ferreira et al., 2015). Additionally, previous studies have shown that communities' exposure history impacts their functional response to stressors (i.e., fungicides and nutrients, Feckler et al., 2018). In this context, Feckler et al. (2018) have shown that communities with exposure history, such as impacted by agriculture, compared to communities without exposure history, from near-natural streams, displayed higher functional (leaf litter decomposition) tolerance towards fungicides. The latter findings suggest that a history of exposure to nutrients and fungicides may also act as a filter selecting for tolerant (and partly more efficient) species, in this case of AH species, as they are considered major drivers for leaf litter decomposition (Gessner et al., 2007). Although Feckler et al. (2018) findings have been straightforward, its applicability required an expansion of true microbial communities' replicates (independent natural communities) with and without an "exposure history".

In addition, leaf litter palatability and its nutritional quality for shredders has been shown to be modified under constant exposure to fungicides (Fernández et al., 2015; Konschak et al., 2020; Zubrod et al., 2015). However, it remains unclear if changes in microbial communities and nutritional quality of leaves prevail after long-term field exposure to fungicide peaks (i.e., even when communities and leaves are no longer actively exposed to fungicides). Once more, most of the studies assessing the direct effects of fungicides used black alder as substrate for microbial colonisation and shredders' feeding. It may therefore be questioned whether the effects observed using black alder are transferable to leaf species with differing traits (lower nutrient contents and/or higher degree of recalcitrance).

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Despite the growing number of studies exploring the effects of stressors on leaf litter-associated microbial communities, our mechanistic understanding of how these communities respond to different stressors, how stressors and other factors can influence microbial function and structure as well as potential induced changes on trophic relationships is still limited. The main goal of this thesis was to create and explore data on the direct and indirect effects of multi-stressors (fungicides and nutrients) and factors as land-use (i.e., exposure history) and different substrate (i.e., leaf species) on aquatic microbial communities associated with leaf litter and their direct consumers. Previous studies mostly used only one type of leaf species as a substrate for microbial colonisation to assess effects of different stressors. However, this is hardly the case found in natural environments, where microbes colonise whatever mixture of leaves it is available. Moreover, different studies have shown the effects of fungicides and nutrients, alone or in combination on leaf-associated microbial communities; however, those studies mostly focus on one type of community, having very few environmental field replicates, or used single species of fungi. Additionally, previous studies focused on the direct effects of fungicides on primary consumers, while the indirect effects (e.g., through dietary exposure) and underlying mechanisms remain unclear.

In this thesis, we tried to address these knowledge gaps, bringing to light the following research questions in the respective papers:

- I. Effects of fungicides on leaf-associated microbial communities colonising different leaf species: in presence of fungicides, are the microbial communities colonising different types of leaf litter (different quality) equally suffering the same structural and functional changes? (**Appendix I**).
- II. Effects of combined exposure to fungicides and nutrients on leafassociated microbial communities with differing exposure history: Is a different exposure history influencing structural and consequently functional responses to stressors of leaf-associated microbial communities? (**Appendix II**).

III. Microbial community exposure history and leaf species effects on *Gammarus fossarum:* Are primary consumers such as shredders affected by different food sources derived from leaf associated microbial communities colonising different leaf species (**Appendix I**)? Is community exposure history (**Appendix II**) acting as an additional factor with potential consequences for wider trophic levels? (**Appendix III**).

Figure 1. Conceptual overview of the research questions (**Papers I, II, III**) in this thesis.

3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

3.1 General experimental designs

Paper I - Effects of fungicides on leaf-associated microbial communities colonising different leaf species

In this study, leaf species with distinct traits were used: black alder, with relatively higher content in nutrients and lower in recalcitrant substances, compared to Norway maple (*Acer platanoides* L.) and European beech (*Fagus sylvatica* L.; Abelho, 2001; Gessner & Chauvet, 1994; **Appendix I**) respectively. Leaf material was collected in the same region, as in Paper II, and stored at -20 ºC until use. The leaf-associated microbial community was generated using alder leaves in mesh bags deployed in a pristine stream for 14 days (Fig. 2 – Step 1). In the laboratory, the same leaves were acclimatised and homogenised to prepare a microbial inoculum for the exposure assay (Fig. 2 – Step 2; see details in material and methods **Appendix I**).

Figure 2. Overview of the study design. Step 1: Generation of inocula from a near-natural stream, Rodenbach, Germany (49°33´N, 8°´2´O) for 14 d; Step 2: Inocula acclimatisation to laboratory, leaves are cleaned and conditioned in channels for 28 d with medium renewal and addition of unconditioned leaves every 7 d; Step 3: Exposure assay- the generated inocula was used to condition the pre-experiment prepared leaf strips from 3 different leaf species: black alder; Norway maple and European beech. In 1 L beakers, leaf strips were exposed to increasing concentrations fungicides, over 21 d with medium and fungicide renewal every 7 d. Created with BioRender.com

 Five fungicides, covering a wide range of modes of action, were used and the chosen concentrations followed earlier studies (e.g., Zubrod et al., 2015, Table 1): 0 (fungicide-free control), 3, 30, 300 and 3000 μg/L. For each leaf species, 150 strips were cut out from unconditioned leaves, dried and pre-weighed, leading to a total of 50 replicates per leaf species to be evenly split among five fungicide treatments (n=10), with a fully-crossed 3x5-factorial design for 21 days (Fig. 2 – Step 3; See **Appendix I**). Each replicate consisted of a 1 L glass beaker filled with 750 mL nutrient medium (Dang et al., 2005), 3 g microbial inoculum (wet weight i.e., of pre-conditioned leaves), 3 unconditioned leaf strips in mesh bags preventing the strips from sticking together and ensuring the accessibility of the leaf material for microorganisms, as well as the fungicide mixture. Experiments were conducted at $16 \pm 1^{\circ}$ C under continuous aeration, in darkness and medium renewal every 7 days (Fig. 2). At the end of the experiment, leaf litter decomposition rates were quantified as a functional endpoint, following Benfield (2007). Additionally, ergosterol content (as a proxy for fungal biomass; (Gessner, 2005) and bacterial density (Buesing, 2005) were measured to quantify microbial abundance as structural endpoints (see **Appendix I** for details).

Table 1. Information on the fungicide mixture components, their product names, manufacturers, active ingredient concentrations, nominal concentrations, and mode of action. Table taken from Appendix I.

Substance	Product name	Manufacturer	Active ingredient concentration	Nominal concentration $(\mu g/L)$	Mode of action
Azoxystrobin	Ortiva	Syngenta	250 g/L	0; 0.5; 5;	Inhibition of
		Agro		50;500	mitochondrial respiration
Carbendazim	Derosol	Bayer crop	600 g/kg	0; 0.5; 5;	Inhibition of
		science		50;500	mitosis and cell division
Cyprodinil	Chorus	Syngenta	500 g/kg	0; 0.5; 5;	Inhibition of amino
		Agro		50:500	acid and protein synthesis
Quinoxyfen	Fortess	Dow Agro	250 g/L	0; 1; 10;	Perturbation of
	250	Science		100;1000	signal transduction
Tebuconazole	Folicur	Bayer crop	250 g/L	0; 0.5; 5;	Inhibition of sterol
		science		50;500	biosynthesis

Paper II - Effects of combined exposure to fungicides and nutrients on leaf-associated microbial communities with differing exposure history

The upstream land-use defined the exposure history of leaf-associated microbial communities (Fig. 3). Pristine streams surrounded by forest-dominated catchments (P; sites P1, P2 and P3) were chosen as sampling locations, as well as streams impacted by either wastewater discharge (W; sites W1, W2 and W3) or vineyard run-off (V; sites V1 and V2; severe draughts during autumn 2019 did not allow to assess V3; see details in **Appendix II**). Three independent semi-static bioassays were performed during April-May (sites P1, W1 and V1); July-August (sites P2, W2 and V2) and September-October (sites P3 and W3) 2019. Each assay followed a 3x4x4-factorial design with a duration of 21 days and included one community per exposure type (i.e., P-, W- and V-community; Fig. 3 – Step 1).

Black alder (*Alnus glutinosa* (L.) Gaertn.) leaves were collected in the same region in the preceding years (stored frozen -20 ºC until use) and deployed in mesh bags at the sampling sites. The leaves were colonised by the local community of microorganisms for 14 days (Fig. 3 - Step 2, **Appendix II**). In the laboratory, the same leaves were acclimatised and homogenised to prepare a microbial inocula for the exposure phase (Fig. 3 – Step 3 & 4, see details in **Appendix II**). The exposure phase was conducted by exposing microbial communities to increasing concentrations of a fungicide mixture (0-300 µg/L, same fungicides as in Table 1, see mixture details in **Appendix II**) crossed with four increasing nutrient concentrations (Fig. 3 – Step 5). The nutrient and fungicide concentrations were selected based on previous studies (Feckler et al., 2018; Zubrod et al., 2015). The nutrient medium composition largely followed Dang et al. (2005) but was adjusted in terms of $NO₃-N$ (0.2, 2.0, 10.0 and 18.0 mg/L) and PO_4 -P (0.02, 0.2, 1.0 and 1.8 mg/L) concentrations. In the following, these nutrient concentrations are referred to as very low, low, moderate and high. The fully crossed design resulted in 48 treatments, each replicated five times (see details in **Appendix II**). Each replicate consisted of 20 leaf discs (Ø 20 mm cut from frozen and uncolonised leaves, dried and weighted to the nearest 0.01 mg), 5 mL of inocula suspension, 1 mL of fungicide stock solution, and autoclaved nutrient medium (final volume of 50 mL) in sterilized 150-mL Erlenmeyer flasks. The flasks were closed with

Figure 3. Schematic overview of the study design. Step 1: Selection of sampling sites based on upstream land-use. Step 2: Generating inocula from pristine (P) streams, or streams impacted by wastewater discharge (W) and vineyard run-off (V) by deploying alder leaves in the field for 14 days; Step 3: Inocula acclimatisation to laboratory conditions; leaves from each sampling site and uncolonised leaves are further microbially colonized for 7 day; Step 4: Inocula (leaves) homogenisation in nutrient media per exposure history and respective; Step 5: Exposure assay – the inocula prepared were used to microbially colonize leaf discs in Erlenmeyer flasks, while being exposed to increasing concentrations of nutrients and fungicides over 21 day, with media and fungicides being renewed every 7 day. Created with BioRender.com. Figure taken from Appendix II.

sterile culture cellucotton plugs allowing air exchange, kept at 16 ± 1 °C in darkness under continuous orbital shaking at 75 rpm, while the nutrient medium together with the fungicide mixture was renewed every seven days (**Appendix II**).

At the end of the experiment, we measured microbially-mediated leaf litter decomposition (Benfield, 2007) and exoezyme activity (Baudy et al., 2021; DeForest, 2009) as a functional endpoints. Aditionally, the communities' structure was studied via fungal and bacterial abundance (Manerkar et al., 2008) and fungal community composition through next generation sequencing (NGS; Carl et al., 2022). See detailed information for methods in **Appendix II**.

Paper III - **Microbial community exposure history and leaf species effects on** *Gammarus fossarum*

Bottom-up effects on shredders were assessed by focusing on leaf-associated microbial communities with distinct exposure history (first factor) using previously studied sites in Paper II: one pristine site (P1 – mainly dominated by forest in the nature conservation area) and one site characterised by repeated fungicide exposure in viticulture (V2, without riparian vegetation; Fig. 4; Fernández et al., 2015; Schneeweiss et al., 2022). The remaining factors to be assessed referred to the leaf species (alder and beech and their mixture) and the *Gammarus* sex (male and female), in a 2x3x2 factorial design (n=20, Fig. 4). Black alder and European beech were selected to represent a low and high degree of recalcitrance, respectively (Artigas et al., 2012; Gulis, 2001; **Appendix III**).

Stream water from both sites (P and V; 25 L) was collected weekly and used for conditioning leaves of alder, beech, and their mixture, generating distinct leafassociated microbial communities in separate 50-L stainless-steel channels, kept at 20 ± 1 °C in darkness under permanent aeration inducing water movement for 14 days (Fig. 4 - Step 1). This step resulted in six food sources for *G. fossarum* during the feeding assay (Fig. 4 – Step 2). The conditioning step was repeated weekly to ensure the provisioning of food with comparable quality over the entire study duration, namely 21 days. *G. fossarum* were collected from the same P site and transported to the lab to be divided by diameter (1.3-2 mm; Franke, 1997) and sex (Fielding et al., 2003; Pascoe et al., 1995). *Gammarus* were kept in aerated test medium for 14 days and acclimatized to 20 ± 1 °C in darkness while being fed with unconditioned alder leaves (see details **Appendix III**).

During the feeding assay, leaf discs from the food source prepared were cut and offered to the *Gammarus*. Each replicate consisted of a 250-mL glass beaker equipped with 2 cages (see Zubrod et al., 2015, Fig. 4 – Step 2) and filled with 250 mL test medium (SAM-5S; Borgmann, 1996; automatically renewed twice a day). Every seventh day, remaining leaf discs and faeces were retrieved and gammarids were translocated to a new beaker with fresh leaf discs. The remaining leaf discs and old medium were collected to determine feeding rate and faeces production (Zubrod et al., 2011). At the experiment termination, also surviving *Gammarus* (mortality did not

Figure 4. Schematic overview of the study design. Step 1: Preparation for the feeding experiment: generating inocula and collecting test organisms – sampling stream water and *Gammarus fossarum* from a near-natural stream (pristine, P- community). Simultaneously, a stream surrounded by viticulture (V- community) was sampled. In the laboratory, the stream water was used to microbially colonise alder and beech leaves or a mixture of both in stainless steel channels under continuous aeration (green lines). Gammarids were separated by diameter and sex and kept in aerated medium, while fed with alder leaves *ad libitum* during acclimatization (14 d). Step 2: 21 d feeding experiment with a 2x3x2-factorial design (n=40). Per replicate 8 discs (Ø=16 mm) were cut of leaves generated in step 1, here only exemplified for alder treatment. Four leaf discs of each leaf species combination were fed to each gammarid, and another 4 leaf discs were used to control for leaf mass loss (orange rectangle), separated by a watch glass (grey line). Created with BioRender.com. Figure taken from Appendix III.

exceed 5%) were shock frozen in liquid nitrogen and stored at −80 °C (see details **Appendix III**).

Leaf-associated microbial communities (used as food sources) were characterised by their exoenzyme activity (Baudy et al., 2021; DeForest, 2009) as a functional endpoint, and ten AH species composition as well as fungal and bacterial abundances (Manerkar et al., 2008) as structural endpoints. Additionally, responses of *Gammarus* to the food source were assessed by measuring their growth rate in terms of biomass increase, feeding rate and faeces production (Zubrod et al., 2011), as well as their energy reserves in the form of neutral lipid fatty acid (NLFA) profiles (Bligh & Dyer, 1959; Konschak et al., 2020; see detailed information **Appendix III**).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Paper I - Effects of fungicides on leaf-associated microbial communities colonising different leaf species

Alder and maple were decomposed faster than beech in the absence of fungicides (Fig. 5; **Appendix I**). In the presence of fungicides, leaf litter decomposition, fungal biomass and partially bacterial density were negatively impacted for all leaf species (Fig.5; p<0.05, Table 2; **Appendix I**). For leaf litter decomposition, the interaction term of the factor "leaf species" and "fungicide" was non-significant (p>0.9; Table 2; **Appendix I**), pointing to a similar response pattern of leaf litter decomposition (decreasing) among leaf species with increasing fungicide concentrations. Nevertheless, relevant differences between leaf species can be found as the highest reductions in decomposition rates varied by a factor of two (12 vs 21 and 20% reduction for alder, maple, and beech, respectively, between control and 3000 μg/L; **Appendix I**). The decreases found in leaf litter decomposition support the negative impacts of the fungicides and tended to increase for leaf species with less favourable traits. These combined effects were particularly pronounced for fungal biomass, measured as ergosterol (Table 3, **Appendix I**).

Figure 5. Concentration-response models (solid lines; shaded lines indicating corresponding 95% Cls; $n = 10$) for the leaf litter decomposition rate, k (d⁻¹), as a function of the total fungicide concentration for the different leaf species alder, maple and beech. Figure taken from Appendix I.

Fungal biomass was lower in alder leaves when compared to maple and beech (Table 3). This observation may be explained as the fungal biomass is a group measure, which does not take in account the AH single species composition and therefore the potential replacement of less efficient fungal species by species with a higher decomposition efficiency (Baudy et al., 2021a). Moreover, as alder offers close to optimal conditions for microbial communities' growth (Artigas et al., 2012), the alderassociated fungal biomass might have already peaked before the termination of the experiment (Baldy et al., 1995). On the contrary, the maximum of ergosterol for maple and beech may not yet have been reached at test termination (**Appendix I**). Bacterial density results, on the other hand, have not shown a consistent pattern between leaf species and increasing concentrations of fungicides, which likely supports their minor but not negligible contribution to leaf litter decomposition (Hieber & Gessner 2002).

Despite significant changes in decomposition rates not being found for alder compared to control in our study, significant changes of this function were detected for alder in a previous study (Zubrod et al., 2015). At the same time, the effect size observed (~20%) for alder at 3000 μg/L is in accordance with Zubrod et al. (2015).

Enpoint	Source of variation	Df	Sum Sq	Mean Sq	F value	P-value
Leaf litter decomposition rate	Leaf species	2	0.0107	0.0054	66.394	p < 0.001
	Fungicide	4	0.0009	0.0002	2.824	0.027
	Leaf species fungicide	x_{8}	0.0002	0.0001	0.387	0.926
	Residuals	135	0.0108	0.0001		
Fungal biomass (ergosterol)	Leaf species	2	396.2	198.1	21.118	p < 0.001
	Fungicide	4	2751.7	687.9	73.341	p < 0.001
	Leaf species fungicide	x_{8}	290.5	36.3	3.872	p < 0.001
	Residuals	135	1266.3	9.4		
Bacterial density	Leaf species	2	1.25x10 ¹⁸	6.26x10 ¹⁷	31.205	p < 0.001
	Fungicide	4	$2.10x10^{17}$	5.25x10 ¹⁶	2.618	0.038
	Leaf species fungicide	x_{8}	1.37x10 ¹⁷	$1.71x10^{16}$	0.855	0.557
	Residuals	130	$2.61x10^{18}$	$2.01x10^{16}$		

Table 2. Output for statistical analysis of the rank-based ANOVA. Degrees of freedom (Df); sum of squares (Sum Sq); mean squares (Mean Sq). P-values printed bold indicate statistical significance. Table taken from Appendix I.

For the other leaf species, the decomposition rate was affected similarly between maple and beech, with effect size being twice as high when compared to alder. Maple and beech showed a non-significant reduction in the leaf litter decomposition rate of up to ~20% at the two highest fungicide concentrations (300- 3000 μg/L). Changes in fungal biomass support this pattern (see also Zubrod et al.,

2015), with a lower reduction of the ergosterol concentration on alder relative to beech or maple among fungicide treatments (**Appendix I**). Additionally, an interaction of "leaf species" and "fungicide" was only found for fungal biomass, suggesting a non-additive effect of both factors. These observations suggest that alder leaves traits' (high nutrient levels and low recalcitrance) enable microbial communities to acquire leaf-bound energy more easily to withstand potential effects induced by fungicide exposure (Solé et al., 2012).

Table 3. Bacterial density, as number of cells per mg leaf dry weight, and ergosterol concentration, as µg per mg of leaf dry weight, of different leaf species (alder, maple, and beech) \pm 95% CIs., for the increasing fungicide concentrations. Table taken from Appendix I.

Leaf species	Fungicide concentration (µg/L)	Bacterial density (number of cells 10 ⁸ /mg leaf dw)	Ergosterol concentration (µg/mg leaf dw)	
	$\mathbf 0$	3.04 ± 0.68	$8.40 \pm$	1.17
	3	3.33 ± 0.44	$6.55 \pm$	1.07
alder	30	2.08 ± 0.21	$6.90 \pm$	1.10
	300	2.48 ± 0.40	$4.86 \pm$	0.92
	3000	2.40 ± 0.29	$0.56 \pm$	0.15
	0	3.49 ± 0.27	$14.11 \pm$	0.80
maple	3	4.60 ± 0.79	$14.79 \pm$	1.00
	30	3.90 ± 0.64	$11.03 \pm$	0.99
	300	2.56 ± 0.19	$5.90 \pm$	0.82
	3000	3.52 ± 0.28	$0.82 \pm$	0.06
	$\mathbf 0$	1.33 ± 0.10	$12.70 \pm$	0.75
beech	3	1.53 ± 0.24	11.82 \pm	1.20
	30	1.67 ± 0.19	$11.54 \pm$	1.03
	300	0.88 ± 0.10	$3.87 \pm$	0.43
	3000	1.51 ± 0.08	$0.14 \pm$	0.04

Despite statistically non-significant (Table 2), this interpretation is backed by fungal biomass being more reduced under fungicide exposure on the most recalcitrant and least nutrient-rich leaf species (namely beech) – an observation made by Artigas et al. (2012) and supported by the present study. In their study, the presence of 30 μg tebuconazole/L induced a 60% higher reduction in fungal biomass associated with more recalcitrant black poplar (*Populus nigra* L.) relative to alder. The differences in fungicide effects between maple and alder, both with comparable decomposition rates, are potentially related to maple having a comparatively smooth surface on both leaf sides which makes the colonisation and penetration by fungi more challenging (Kearns & Bärlocher, 2008). Consequently, fungal propagules are exposed to fungicides for a

longer period, which increases the effects on leaf litter decomposition. On alder, however, the propagules can quickly attach and grow into the leaf (Kearns & Bärlocher, 2008), which may provide protection, reducing the fungicide exposure. Moreover, some fungicides only act on the propagules of fungi and not on growing mycelium (Escudero-Leyva et al., 2022). Even though these findings may seem of little relevance, the combination of leaf traits (nutrients, recalcitrant substances, surface) with fungicide stress may have contributed to the more pronounced fungicide effect at higher concentrations in beech and maple leaves (**Appendix I**).

4.2 Paper II - Effects of combined exposure to fungicides and nutrients on leaf-associated microbial communities with differing exposure history

Effects of fungicides on microbial communities with differing exposure histories.

Increasing fungicide concentrations did not significantly affect leaf litter decomposition, independent of the nutrient concentration used (Fig. 6, Table 4, **Appendix II**), or the relative investment in degrading recalcitrant carbon (i.e., ratio of oxidase per total hydrolase enzymatic activity). Instead, a positive effect on the leaf litter decomposition was observed for communities originally sampled from P- and Wstreams at 30 and 300 µg/L (see **Appendix II** for details). However, the same pattern was not found for microbial community composition, also reported by e.g., Feckler et al., 2018; Fernández et al., 2015. If at low fungicide concentrations (3 and 30 µg/L), bacterial and fungal abundance were not affected, at 300 µg/L, fungicides had a negative impact (up to 60%) on the fungal abundance.

Figure 6. Dose-response models for the microbial breakdown rate $(k_{\text{microbia}}(d^{-1}))$ as a function of the total fungicide concentration, displayed separately for the four different nutrient levels (VLow-very low, Low, Mod - moderate and High). Shaded lines indicating corresponding 95% confidence bands (n = 5). P: pristine; W: wastewater; V: vineyard runoff. Figure taken from Appendix II.

Table 4. Output for statistical analysis, aligned ranks transformation ANOVA of leaf microbial decomposition, bacterial and fungal DNA operon copies (for respective relevant post-hoc testing see paper I); ANOVA run in univariate data (Recalcitrance ratio); PERMANOVA run in multivariate data (community composition). Df, degrees of freedom; Df res, residual degrees of freedom for each model: F value, ratio of variances; SE, standard error of the estimate SS, sum of squares; p-values printed in bold indicate statistical significance. Table taken from Appendix II.

The negative impact on fungal abundance was independent of the exposure history or nutrient concentration (p<0.05; Table 4; **Appendix II**). Moreover, independent of the fungicide concentration, the bacterial and fungal abundances were consistently lower

in the V-communities compared to the equivalent treatment in the W- and Pcommunities, however not statistically significant (**Appendix II**).

Figure 7. Non-metric multidimensional scaling (NMDS) plots for leaf-associated aquatic hyphomycete communities originating from streams with differing land-use in their catchments (Pristine, Wastewater treatment plants, Vineyard). Nutrient levels are indicated by symbols: very low= squares, low= triangles, high = circles. Colours indicate fungicide concentrations: 0 μ g/L and 30 μ g/L = dark blue, 300 μ g/L = light blue. Spider webs connect the samples of each treatment at their respective group centroid. The stress value is provided as a measure of "goodness-of-fit" for NMDS, with a reasonable fit indicated when below 0.2 (Clarke, 1993). Figure taken from Appendix II.

In addition to the impacts on fungal abundances, a similar pattern was observed for fungal community composition (Fig. 7). Controls and treatments with lower fungicide concentrations (<30 µg/L) had similar community composition, whereas in higher fungicide concentration the fungal species composition differed substantially (p=0.001; Table 4; Fig. 7). Differences found in species composition were dependent of the nutrient levels and exposure history (p=0.001; Table 4; **Appendix II**). These results partially contradict the existence of the link between fungal community structure and function (Hooper et al., 2012). Instead, the results point towards functional stability reached due to functional similarity and the dominance of tolerant and simultaneously more efficient AH species in leaf litter decomposition (Ferreira & Chauvet, 2012; Pascoal et al., 2005), despite community shifts (reviewed in Feckler & Bundschuh, 2020). This assumption is supported by our community composition data, where the tolerant genus *Tetracladium* with a higher leaf litter decomposition efficiency (e.g., Andrade et al., 2016; Duarte et al., 2006; Zubrod et al., 2015; Zubrod et al., 2015) was more frequent at high fungicide concentration, independent of exposure history (**Appendix II**). While other fungal species considered tolerant have also become more frequent with increasing fungicide concentrations, knowledge on their traits is limited and partly contradicting hampering a mechanistic interpretation (e.g., Bundschuh et al., 2011; Pascoal et al., 2005). For example, Bundschuh et al. (2011) reported that *F. curvula* was less abundant at higher fungicide concentrations while more present under control conditions. Contrarily, we found this species most frequently in the presence of fungicides suggesting phenotypic plasticity (e.g.,Quainoo et al., 2016).

Our findings therefore support the principle of stable functioning being mediated by the dominance of highly efficient decomposers. These results are supported by earlier studies (reviewed in Feckler & Bundschuh 2020), pointing to a maintained leaf litter decomposition function when the microbial community is dominated by a few species with superior traits compensating biodiversity loss (Dangles & Malmqvist, 2004).

Effects of nutrients on microbial communities with differing exposure histories.

Increasing nutrient concentrations were significantly favourable for leaf litter decomposition (p<0.0001; Table 4; Fig. 6), especially at moderate and high nutrient levels, while the effect strength depended on the exposure history (p=0.005; Table 6; **Appendix II**). The effect of moderate and high nutrient levels may be explained by the dynamic energy budget theory (Kooijman, 2000), in which microbial growth and function is supported by the ease of accessing nutrients from the medium as more energy is available for producing exoenzymes needed for leaf litter decomposition (Bärlocher & Corkum, 2003). Similar findings have been reported by Feckler et al. (2018) supporting our assumption: higher leaf litter decomposition in treatments with higher nutrient availability (see also Pascoal & Cássio, 2004; Suberkropp et al., 2010). Consequently, it is likely that in ecosystems with higher nutrient inputs, changes in the microbial function due to stress exposure being less pronounced due to "extra" energy from the available nutrients (see Rossi et al., 2018 but also see Fernández et al., 2016). Nevertheless, community structure was significantly affected by exposure history, with P-communities being characterised by up to 20-fold higher bacterial and fungal abundances compared to W- and V-communities within the same nutrient level (see **Appendix II**). Whereas leaf litter decomposition was slightly higher in W- compared to P-communities (~15%; p<0.003, **Appendix II**), while the function of P-communities was 40% higher than V-communities (p<0.01; **Appendix II**). These opposing observations may be an experimental artefact since changes in the fungal community composition and consequently its composition in terms of functional traits are not accounted for the proxies used for bacterial and fungal microbial abundances (Englert et al., 2015; Rossi et al., 2018). It is likely that microbes characterised by a high leaf litter decomposition efficiency dominate over those with a lower efficiency capable of maintaining the function (e.g., Reiss et al., 2010).

Combining chemical stressors and exposure history.

Overall, we found changes in the community structure at high fungicide exposures (300 µg/L) across all exposure histories. Additionally, the factors "fungicides" or "history" did not affect the degradation of recalcitrant carbon by microbial communities, but the increasing levels of nutrients tended to buffer the nonsignificant fungicide-induced effects on leaf litter decomposition. However, we expected more pronounced effects of the fungicides on P- communities compared to the pre-exposed W- and V- communities. The presence of some tolerant species, such as *T. marchalianum*, also in P-communities, may explain this observation. These results (high variability and non-consistent patterns) point towards a significant role of local communities and colonisation dynamics (Mora-Gómez et al., 2016). Therefore, the impacts of these last factors should be individually expanded in further research, also including other relevant factors not assessed here as season.

4.3 Paper III - Microbial community exposure history and leaf species effects on *Gammarus fossarum*

Responses of sexes of *Gammarus* to different food qualities.

Chemical signals from fungi and bacteria can attract shredders, promoting their feeding activity on colonised leaf material (Lange et al., 2005). However, the role of bacteria in gammarids' nutrition remains largely ignored. Unfortunately, our results on bacterial abundance did not provide a clear pattern and consequently any interpretation of bacteria's role would speculative (Table 5; **Appendix III**). Moreover, the overall fungal abundance (operon copies) in this study was up to 40 % lower but statistically insignificant in treatments where beech was present compared to alder only (Table 5; **Appendix III**). This observation is partially in accordance with the findings of Paper I, where leaf species with deviating traits (e.g., alder vs beech) are colonised by structurally different microbial communities (**Appendix I**). Both suggest a likely lower nutritional value of the food sources for gammarids when beech leaves are present. However, literature rather proposes a shredders' preference for certain AH species (i.e., AH community is considered the main driver of leaf litter palatability for shedders; Arsuffi & Suberkropp, 1984). Indeed, in the present study the AH community composition (evaluated by ten representative AH species) varied significantly between P- and V-communities ("exposure history"; p=0.004), among "leaf species" (p=0.001) and an interaction between thereof was observed (p=0.048; Fig. 8, **Appendix III**).

Table 5. Mean (with 95 % confidence intervals: 10⁸ operon copies/mg leaf dw; n=3, fungal and bacterial operon copies of microbial communities colonising the leaves used as food for *G. fossarum* during the 21-d lasting feeding assay. P: pristine; V: vineyard run-off. Taken from Appendix III.

Species such as *Alatospora acuminata* and *Flagellospora curvula* were present in all treatments but were significantly reduced (~70%) on beech leaves conditioned by the V- relative to the P-community (**Appendix III**). These results are partially in

Figure 8. Non-metric multidimensional scaling (NMDS) plot for leaf-associated aquatic hyphomycete communities. Leaf species are indicated by symbols (alder = circles, beech = squares, the mixture of both = triangles). Colours indicate the source of microbial inocula: pristine stream water (P) = black and vineyard run-off stream water (V) = grey. Spider webs connect the samples of each treatment at their respective group centroid. The stress value is provided as a measure of "goodness-of-fit" for NMDS, with a reasonable fit indicated when below 0.2 (Clarke,1993). Figure taken from Appendix III.

accordance with the changes found for V-communities in Paper II (**Appendix II**). Nevertheless, in the present study no relation between shedders' preference (Fig. 9) and fungal biomass or enzymatic production (table 5; **Appendix III**) could be established (Suberkropp et al., 1983). Instead, it is likely that the individual AH species traits, such as secondary metabolites (Arsuffi & Suberkropp, 1984), or mycelia's glyceride or FA content (Arce Funck et al., 2015; Cargill et al., 1985) are motivating shedders' preferences for specific fungal species. In this context and independent of the leaf species, AH species considered more palatable (e.g., *A. acuminata, F. curvula*; Suberkropp et al., 1983; Arsuffi & Suberkropp, 1989) had equally high or higher biomasses on leaves conditioned by the P- relative to the V-community. These AH species are also expected to be more nutritional (Arce Funck et al., 2015; Rong et al., 1995) for *Gammarus.* In contrast, species such as *Tetracladium marchalianum* or

Tricladium angulatum, also expected to be less nutritional, were absent or had a lower biomass on leaves conditioned by the P-community compared to leaves conditioned by the V-community (as in e.g., Arsuffi & Suberkropp, 1989; Bärlocher, 1973; Gonçalves et al., 2014). This pattern suggests that more tolerant species, eventually dominate stressed fungal communities (e.g., *T. marchalianum;* Solé et al., 2008; Bundschuh et al., 2011). Moreover, patterns between AH species composition and different leaf species were not consistent. Consequently, a generalizable pattern of AH community composition among substrates or the origin of the microbial inoculum is not abstractable.

The different leaf species with different palatability described above should have had an impact on G*ammarus*' physiology. *Gammarus'* growth rate was significantly impacted by the leaf species (p=0.001) and showed a significant interaction of leaf species and the sex (p=0.005; **Appendix III**). Based on Gammarus' growth (Fig. 9), both sexes did not perform well when fed with beech only, a potential consequence of its higher recalcitrance and conditioning with less nutritional AH species (**Appendix I & III**). Moreover, males and females showed different growth patterns despite the partially high variability within treatments. Males and females grew faster, up to 60%, when feeding on alder and the mixture of both leaf species, compared to when feeding on beech, a pattern independent of the exposure history (**Appendix III**). Additionally, the feeding rate of females was slightly (5-30%) but consistently and significantly higher than that of males (p=0.048). Despite female feeding rate being higher than that of males, females produced less faces compared to males (~10-20% less production of faeces by females; Fig. 9 c & f; **Appendix III**). Faeces production was also higher when gammarids were feeding on the mixture of both leaf species, independent of sex and source of the microbial inoculum, which may be a consequence of a promoted feeding rate partially observed in this treatment (Fig. 9 b & e; **Appendix III**).

These results point towards different feeding preferences between males and females, which may be explained by sex-specific requirements and life history strategies. Male *Gammarus* live longer and have larger sizes than females, aiming to increase their competitiveness and support mate-guarding (Pöckl, 1992; Pöckl et al., 2003; Pöckl & Humpesch, 1990). Thus, males strive for resources optimising their growth. Addtionally to having the lowest feeding rate, males still grew faster (i.e., fed with alder), indicating an efficient use of high-quality leaf litter colonised by an AH

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Figure 9. Mean (± 95% confidence intervals, n=20) a), b) growth rate as µg biomass gain/day, c), d) feeding rate as mg leaf material/mg gammarid/day, e), f) faeces production as mg faeces/mg gammarid/day of male and female gammarids, respectively, consuming alder (black), beech (light grey) or their mixture (dark grey) colonized by microbes with distinct exposure histories: P pristine; V vineyard. Figure taken from Appendix III.

community of presumably high nutritional quality. When beech leaves are introduced in the mixture, the food quality decreases leading to a higher feeding rate but lower growth of males. This observation suggests compensatory feeding, a mechanism by which organisms consume higher amounts of low-quality food to meet their nutritional requirements (Feckler et al., 2015; Rasmussen et al., 2012). NLFA profiles of male gammarids showed no significant differences among treatments (**Appendix III**). However, male gammarids exclusively feeding on beech had strongly reduced highly unsaturated (essential) FAs, such as ALA and EPA. Furthermore, the same pattern of NLFA profile was not observed with *Gammarus* fed on the mixture of both leaf species, supporting the assumption that alder may compensate for lower food quality of beech leaves. While these changes suggest implications in the physiology of the organisms, the reliability of the observed trends needs further support by follow-up experiments including data on female gammarids. Moreover, the shift to laboratory conditions and potentially lower quality food affected the gammarids, which had overall lower NLFAs' concentration compared to individuals from the start of the bioassay. It is likely that the not only gammarids supplement their dietary needs with other sources in the field (e.g., algae; Guo et al., 2016, 2018).

On the other land, females' strategy is to increase their size to enhance fecundity and carry eggs (Pöckl, 1990, 1992), with the latter also affecting their mobility and thus ability to exploit food resources (Lewis & Loch-Mally, 2010). We, consequently, assume females will constantly feed on any leaf species available to survive and wait for better conditions supporting growth, moulting and brood development. Earlier studies support our assumptions; Bakkar et al. (2017) demonstrated that male and female sesarmid crabs produced faeces with a different chemical signature when feeding on mangrove leaves, suggesting a sex-specific digestive process. Additionally, females may have evolved to use a mixed quality of food due to competitive nature behaviour (e.g., cannibalism as food preference over sex, (Dick et al., 1990; Dick, 1995; Ironside et al., 2019; Ward, 1983; Ward & Porter, 1993) and size advantage of males. Which is reflected in the present study by the efficient use of recalcitrant leaves, however this assumption needs further verification. Our results show a not straightforward relation from male to female responses, and thus any extrapolation (commonly used in previous studies due to reduced intratreatment variability; Pascoe et al., 1995; Fielding et al., 2003) needs particular attention because of their relevance for population development. Overall, the present study suggests that the leaf species identity, and thus the substrate on which the microbial communities grow, has a larger impact on the physiology of the next trophic level (i.e., the shredders) than the microbial community as such. As this observation is based on a limited number of community history replicates (i.e., one P-community and one V-community), its general applicability needs further scrutiny.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis, we tried to evaluate the effects of a common mixture of fungicides on leaf-associated microbial communities colonising different leaf species (i.e., substrate; **Appendix I**). Moreover, we tried to increase our understanding on the effects of different stressors, such as fungicides and nutrients, which have been frequently tested in previous studies, with expansion of field replication on exposure history (i.e., land-use) of leaf-associated microbial communities (**Appendix II**). Finally, we assessed if primary consumers feeding and development can be affected by food sources with different quality (i.e., leaf-associated microbial communities with different exposure history and colonising different leaf species; **Appendix III**).

More favourable traits (higher nutrient content and lower recalcitrance levels) of certain leaf species, such as black alder, enabled leaf-associated microorganisms to acquire leaf-bound energy and more easily resist the effects induced by fungicide exposure and thus being able to maintain the leaf-litter decomposition function (**Appendix I**). However, our research also shows the need to extend the knowledge on how leaf species' traits interact with stressors or other factors on the function and structure of microbial communities (**Appendix I & III**). The latter is particularly relevant as over the last decades and all across Europe, alder trees are being replaced in riparian zones. This replacement is happening due to different causes, such as habitat exploitation and pathogen infections, which will become more and more frequent. Consequently, changes in the composition of tree species along riverbanks are more expected. These changes in tree composition can either further diversify the leaf litter input into streams, due to the appearance of new tree species, or narrow down leaf litter diversity. In both cases, leaf litter susceptibility to be decomposed and used as a food source for shredder organism can suffer changes (**Appendix III**).

Secondly, increasing fungicide concentrations and exposure history did not affect leaf litter decomposition. Whereas increasing nutrient levels, tended to buffer the non-significant fungicide-induced effects on the function as it supports the microbial growth and its function (more energy for exoenzyme production). Moreover, substantial changes were found on the fungal community composition at environmentally relevant fungicide concentrations. Our results support the principle of species dominance, with highly efficient decomposers maintaining leaf litter decomposition function (functional stability); possibly at the expense of other functions provided by fungi (e.g., increase palatability for shredders; **Appendix II**). These changes at the fungal community composition level combined with the lack of alterations at the functional level (i.e., leaf litter decomposition), raises potential concerns as in many cases only functional endpoints are used to assess the impact on the environment while structural changes remain unnoticed. This is an important subject as aquatic fungi have a key role in ecosystems, regulating aquatic food webs in a bottom-up direction (**Appendix II & III**). The fungal species considered more tolerant and efficient in leaf-litter decomposition are often rejected and not as nutritional for shredders, potentially affecting their development (**Appendix II & III**). Additionally, due to the high variability and nonconsistent patterns found among the studied communities likely explained by different the sampling season and the respective naturally differing enzyme activities (Bastias et al., 2022), future research should be conducted. In this context, to further assess local (field) communities, potential community colonisation dynamics role and individual fungal traits will expand our mechanistic understanding of leaf-associated communities' response to multiple stress scenarios.

Finally, leaf species identity has a higher impact on the physiology of shredder invertebrate *G. fossarum*, relative to the community colonising the leaf material (**Appendix III**). Moreover, the interaction of both leaf species and exposure history (i.e., different AH community structure and composition) results in a sex-specific change of gammarids' feeding strategies to different food sources (**Appendix III**). An unexpected result that raises questions on earlier procedures, where responses of only one sex or using undifferentiated sex were evaluated. In this context, sex-specific responses are not yet properly considered (**Appendix III**). Consequently, we hope future research will expand the replication using both sexes and looking into energy reserves to assess physiological responses of organism such as *Gammarus*. This demand for a more comprehensive assessment will hopefully develop the on potential bottom-up related effects in the wider food web.

This thesis provides a novel perspective on the effects of stressors in leafassociated microbial communities and their potential wider effects. Therefore, our findings can be used as a basis for further and refined research to deepen the understansting on how leaf-associated communities respond to different chemical stressors and environmental factors. Moreover, as it shown in this thesis the role of defined traits of individual AH species is a key point to influence the function of these

microbial communities (i.e., leaf litter decomposition and increased nutritional quality for shredders). Thus, future studying should be designed to not only look into fungal individual traits but also include microbial colonisation dynamics, leaf species traits and sex-specific responses from shredder invertebrates, as suggested above.

This type of research is of up-most importance since worldwide increasing population and the consequent need for higher food production pressures agriculture expansion into pristine areas. Arable land-use is associated with the application of agrochemicals can affect local freshwater communities with consequences for the entire aquatic ecosystem. Under a climate change scenario, pests, such as fungi, have a higher chance to expand to higher latitudes. The latter together with agriculture landuse has the potential to change the leaf species composition and increases the frequency of pest control agents' application, increasing the potentially negative effects on freshwater communities. Further research has yet to be developed to deepen or understanding on how these stressors, factors and their interaction may jointly modify leaves' nutritional quality for shedders.

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7. APPENDIX

Appendix I and **III** represent the latest versions accepted by the respective journal. **Appendix II** is the latest version of the manuscript under review.

Appendix I

Leaf Species-Dependent Fungicide Effects on the Function and Abundance of Associated Microbial Communities.

Gonçalves, S., Post, R., Konschak, M., Zubrod, J., Feckler, A., & Bundschuh, M. Accepted in Bulletin of Environmental Contamination and Toxicology, 110(5), 1– 7(2023). https://doi.org/10.1007/s00128-023-03728-2

Appendix II

Elevated Fungicide and Nutrient Concentrations Change Structure but not Function of Aquatic Microbial Communities.

Gonçalves, S., Feckler, A., Pollitt, A., Baschien, C., Michael, J., Schreiner, V. C., Zubrod, J. P., Bundschuh, M.

Accepted in Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry, 43(6), 1300–1311. https://doi.org/10.1002/etc.5863

Appendix III

Microbial community history and leaf species shape bottom-up effects in a freshwater shredding amphipod.

Gonçalves, S., Pollitt, A., Pietz, S., Feckler, A., & Bundschuh, M.

Accepted in Science of the Total Environment, 912, 168926. (2024). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2023.168926

7.1 APPENDIX I

Leaf species-dependent fungicide effects on the function and abundance of associated microbial communities

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ABSTRACT

Microbially-mediated leaf litter decomposition is a critical ecosystem function in running waters within forested areas, which can be affected by fungicides. However, fungicide effects on leaf litter decomposition have been investigated almost exclusively with black alder leaves, a leaf species with traits favourable to consumers (i.e., low recalcitrance and high nutrient content). At the same time, little is known about fungicide effects on microbial colonisation and decomposition of other leaf species with less favourable traits. In this 21-day lasting study, we explore the effects of increasing fungicide sum concentrations (0 to 3000 $\mu q/L$) on microbial colonisation and decomposition of three leaf species (black alder, Norway maple and European beech) differing in terms of recalcitrance and nutrient content. Leaf litter decomposition rate, leaf-associated fungal biomass and bacterial density were quantified to observe potential effects at the functional level. Beech, as the species with the least favourable leaf traits, showed a substantially lower decomposition rate (50%) in absence of fungicides than alder and maple. In the presence of high fungicide concentrations (300-3000 µg/L), beech showed a concentration-related decrease not only in microbial leaf litter decomposition but also fungal biomass. This suggests that favourable traits of leaf litter (as for alder and maple) enable leaf-associated microorganisms to acquire leaf-bound energy more easily to withstand potential effects induced by fungicide exposure. Our results indicate the need to deepen our understanding on how leaf species' traits interact with the impact of chemical stressors on the leaf decomposition activity of microbial communities.

Keywords: recalcitrance level, leaf traits, aquatic fungi, fungicides

GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT

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INTRODUCTION

Leaf litter decomposition is a key process in streams within forested catchments (Fisher and Likens 1973), which is inter alia driven by microbes such as bacteria and fungi, especially aquatic hyphomycetes (AH; Hieber and Gessner 2002). These microorganisms contribute directly to leaf litter decomposition, with their extracellular enzymes breaking down mono-, diand polysaccharides (Evans and Hedger 2001). In this context, the efficiency of microorganisms to decompose leaf litter is assumed to be a function of microorganisms' species-specific characteristics (Baudy et al. 2021) as well as the chemical composition of leaf species (Melillo et al. 1982; Hladyz et al. 2009; Schindler, 2009). In fact, the levels of leaves' nutrients and structural (recalcitrant) components influence microbial colonization dynamics (Melillo et al. 1982; Webster and Benfield 1986; Gessner and Chauvet 1994).

In addition, anthropogenic chemicals are known to alter microbial colonization and decomposition of leaf litter. One group of chemicals that received increasing attention over the last decade is fungicides, which are designed to affect fungal pest species in agriculture (Zubrod et al. 2019). After their application, fungicides can reach surface water bodies, for example via runoff (Süß et al. 2014), where they interact with non-target organisms, such as microorganisms involved in leaf litter decomposition (Zubrod et al. 2011; Feckler et al. 2017). However, most studies addressing fungicide effects on leaf litter decomposition used black alder (*Alnus glutinosa* L. (Gaertn.)) as a model leaf species (e.g., Bundschuh et al. 2011; Fernández et al. 2015). While black alder may be considered representative of temperate riparian ecosystems (Bjelke et al. 2016), leaf litter of other tree species is also ecologically highly relevant (Gessner et al. 2010). As black alder leaf litter has a high nutrient content paired with a low share of recalcitrant substances, such as lignin (e.g., Melillo et al. 1982; Gulis 2001), it becomes the first to be colonized and decomposed by microorganisms. At the same time, the decomposition of other leaf species with less favourable traits happens slower, enabling the constant input of nutrients all year long (Gessner et al., 2010). Thus, the transferability of results obtained with black alder to other leaf litter species with deviating characteristics may be questioned.

In order to investigate the impact of different leaf species on the function of leafassociated microbial communities under fungicide exposure, the present study made use of three leaf species with distinct characteristics: black alder (referred to as alder), which due to its characteristics has a slightly and substantially higher decomposition rate compared to Norway maple (*Acer platanoides* L.; referred to as maple) and European beech (*Fagus sylvatica* L.; referred to as beech; Gessner and Chauvet 1994; Abelho 2001). These leaf species were colonized by aquatic microorganisms while being exposed to increasing concentrations of a fungicide mixture over 21 days. Leaf litter decomposition rates were

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quantified as a functional endpoint. Additionally, ergosterol content (as a proxy for fungal biomass) and bacterial density were measured to quantify microbial abundance. We expected (i) that alder and maple will be decomposed faster than beech in absence of fungicides, (ii) fungicides will negatively affect leaf-associated microorganisms' function, independent of the leaf species and (iii) the magnitude of fungicide effects on microbial leaf litter decomposition increases with increasing level of recalcitrance. This hypothesis is derived from the dynamic energy budget theory (Kooijman 2000) suggesting an elevated investment of energy to obtain nutrients from the leaves, leaving less for other processes including detoxification.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Leaf material was collected in the vicinity of Landau, Germany: alder leaves were collected in autumn 2017 (49°11´N; 8°´5´O), while beech leaves and maple leaves were collected in autumn 2016 and 2015 (49°12´N; 8°´6´O), respectively. All leaves were stored at -20°C until use. To generate a near-natural inoculum of leaf-associated microorganisms, alder leaves were submerged in litterbags (mesh size: 0.5 mm; 10 leaves per bag) for 14 days in the Rodenbach, Germany (49°33´N, 8°´2´O). Subsequently, leaves were cleaned under tap water to remove adhering sediment and submerged for another 28 days in a stainless-steel channel filled with nutrient medium (Dang et al. 2005) being renewed every 7 days, under constant aeration and in darkness at 16 \pm 1°C. Unconditioned alder leaves were added to generate an inoculum of various decomposition stages supposedly harbouring a higher fungal diversity (Gessner et al. 1993). This inoculum was subsequently used for the fungicide exposure assay.

For each leaf species, 150 unconditioned leaves were cut to strips (approximately 7.5 x 5 cm2). Leaf strips were leached for 24 h in nutrient medium to reduce potential impacts of leachates on microbially-driven leaf litter decomposition during the experiment (Gessner et al. 1999). Subsequently, leaf strips were dried at 60 °C for 24 h and weighted to the nearest 0.01 mg. Each replicate consisted of three dried and pre-weighed leaf strips, leading to a total of 50 replicates per leaf species to be evenly split among five fungicide treatments (n=10). The fungicide mixture used in the present study was composed of five fungicides covering a wide range of modes of action (Tab. S1). Fungicide test concentrations were chosen following earlier studies (e.g, Zubrod et al. 2015) using a spacing factor of ten: 0 (fungicide-free control), 3, 30, 300 and 3000 μg/L, with proper spiking being confirmed elsewhere (e.g., Zubrod et al., 2015b).

For the experiment, a fully-crossed 3x5-factorial test design was used. Each of the three leaf species was exposed to the five fungicide concentrations, including a fungicide-free control. Before test initiation, dried leaf strips were rehydrated for 24 h in nutrient medium before being introduced into mesh bags (mesh size: 0.5 mm). Mesh bags prevented the three leaf strips from sticking together and ensuring the accessibility of the leaf material for microorganisms. Each replicate consisted of a 1-L glass beaker filled with 750 mL nutrient medium, 3 g microbial inoculum (wet weight; i.e., of pre-conditioned leaves), the three leaf strips as well as the fungicide mixture. Experiments were conducted at 16 \pm 1°C under continuous aeration and in darkness. To avoid evaporation of nutrient medium, the beakers were covered with plastic foil, while the medium was renewed every seven days (including fungicide stocks). After 21 days, all leaf strips were removed from the test system and two leaf discs with a diameter of 16 mm were punched out of each leaf strip with a cork borer. One leaf disc from each leaf strip was used for leaf mass quantification and dried at 60°C for 24 h. The second leaf disc from each leaf strip was fixed in 2% formaldehyde solution (with 0.1% sodium pyrophosphate) and stored at 4°C for bacterial density analysis. The remaining material of the leaf strips was collected for leaf decomposition measurements as well as for ergosterol analysis and was stored at -20°C until further use. To quantify the leaf decomposition, the leaf discs for mass correction and the remaining leaf strips were freeze-dried for 24 h and weighed to the nearest 0.01 mg.

The leaf-associated ergosterol was quantified as a proxy for fungal biomass according to Gessner (2005). After extraction in alkaline methanol, ergosterol was purified by solid-phase extraction (Sep-Pak Vac RC tC18 500 mg sorbent, Waters) and quantified by highperformance liquid chromatography (1200 Series, Agilent Technologies). The bacterial density was quantified following (Buesing 2005). Briefly, bacterial cells were detached from the leaf discs using an ultrasonic probe (Sonopuls HD 2070 with TT 13 probe, both Bandelin, Germany) and filtered over aluminium oxide membrane filters (pore size 0.2 μm, Whatman). Filters were subsequently stained with SYBR Green II (Molecular Probes, Eugene, OR, USA). Twenty digital images were taken for each replicate under an epifluorescence microscope (Axio Scope.A1, Carl Zeiss Micro Imaging). Bacterial cells were counted using Axio Vision Rel 4.8 (Carl Zeiss Micro Imaging) and normalised to leaf dry mass.

The microbial leaf decomposition rate $k(d⁻¹)$ was calculated following (Benfield 2007). Concentration-response models (including lognormal, log-logistic, Weibull, Cedergreen–Ritz– Streibig, and Michaelis–Menten models) were fitted separately for alder, beech and maple to assess the functional response to the five tested fungicide concentrations. The best-fitting models were selected based on visual judgment and Akaike's information criterion (all models and their respective parameters are reported in Tab. S4). The data on leaf decomposition, fungal biomass and bacterial density were checked for normal distribution and heteroscedasticity via Shapiro–Wilk and Levene's tests, respectively. Significant influences of the factors "fungicide treatment" and "leaf species" as well as their interaction were examined using rank-based two-way analyses of variance (ANOVA). For each leaf species, differences between control and individual fungicide treatments were checked with Wilcoxon rank sum tests followed by Bonferroni correction (Zar 2010). Moreover, we base our interpretation on both statistical significance and effect sizes, considering the criticism of null hypothesis significance testing (i.e., the difference between treatments (Newman, 2009). R version 4.2.1 for Windows (R Core Team 2022) was used for the execution of the statistical tests and the creation of figures. The graphical abstract was created in BioRender.com.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Leaf species significantly influenced the decomposition rate, fungal biomass and bacterial density (Fig. 1; Tab. 1 and 3; p<0.001). As hypothesised, beech leaves were decomposed slower than alder and maple in absence of fungicides. In general, alder leaves were decomposed fastest, followed by maple and beech (Fig.1). This observation is in accordance with former studies (e.g., Abelho, 2001) and is likely explained by a higher content of recalcitrant substances, such as lignin, in combination with low levels of nutrients in beech leaves (Melillo et al. 1982; Bastias et al. 2018). These leaf characteristics should restrict the colonisation of beech leaves by microbes, which in turn slows down decomposition. In contrast, leaf litter characterised by a lower recalcitrance and an elevated nutrient content (mainly nitrogen; Gulis, 2001), such as maple and alder, should also support fungal growth and consequently being more efficiently degraded (Artigas et al. 2004; Graça and Canhoto 2006).

Figure 1. Concentration-response models (solid lines; shaded lines indicating corresponding 95% CIs; n = 10) for the leaf litter decomposition rate, k (d-1), as a function of the total fungicide concentration for the different leaf species alder, maple and beech.

In this study, alder was decomposed faster than maple and beech despite lower levels of alderassociated fungal biomass (Fig. 1; Tab. 2). Fungal biomass ignores the AH (aquatic hyphomycete) species composition and the potential replacement of less active fungal species by species with a higher decomposition efficiency (Baudy et al. 2021). Moreover, the alderassociated fungal biomass might have already peaked before the termination of the experiment (Baldy et al. 1995). This assumption is supported by Artigas et al. (2012), who

reported a peak in alder-associated ergosterol levels after 14 days under optimal conditions. Contrarily, for maple and beech, the maximum of ergosterol may not have been reached at test termination.

Fungicide exposure negatively impacted leaf litter decomposition, fungal biomass and partially bacteria density for all leaf species (Fig.1, Tab.1 and 3; p<0.05). Although the observed effect sizes were small (5-12%), likely due to the fungicide concentrations not being high enough to impact fungicide-tolerant AH species (Zubrod et al., 2019), leaf litter decomposition rates decreased with increasing fungicide concentrations independent of the leaf species (Fig. 1). The interaction term of the factor "leaf species" and "fungicide" was nonsignificant (p>0.9; Tab.1 and S3, Fig. S1), which points to a similar response pattern of the microbial communities in terms of leaf litter decomposition among leaf species with increasing fungicide concentrations. Nevertheless, the highest reductions in decomposition rates varied by a factor of two (12 vs 21 and 20% reduction for alder, maple, and beech, respectively, between control and 3000 μg/L; Tab. S2) pointing to relevant differences between leaf species. While the reductions between the second highest (i.e.,300) and highest (i.e., 3000 μg/L) treatment were also noteworthy (i.e., 14%, 7% and 34% for alder, maple and beech, respectively). These reductions of leaf decomposition support the negative impact of the fungicide mixture, which tended to increase with less favourable leaf species traits (higher recalcitrance and decreasing nutrient levels) and was particularly pronounced for fungal biomass (Tab. 2). In contrast to fungal biomass, bacterial density differed slightly between maple and alder but was reduced for beech, independent of the fungicide concentrations. Hence, consistent pattern in bacteria density was not observed, supporting their minor contribution to leaf decomposition (Hieber and Gessner 2002).

Table 2. Bacterial density, as number of cells per mg leaf dry weight, and ergosterol concentration, as µg per mg of leaf dry weight, of different leaf species (alder, maple, and beech) \pm 95% CIs., for the increasing fungicide concentrations. Table taken from Appendix II.

For the tested fungicide concentrations, no significant changes in decomposition rates were found for alder in comparison to the control. In a previous study (Zubrod et al. 2015) with the same fungicide mixture at comparable concentrations, however, significant changes in the leaf decomposition rate were detected for alder, which might be related to a substantially higher statistical power due to higher replication ($n=49$) relative to the present study ($n=10$). Nonetheless, the effect size observed for alder at the highest fungicide concentration (i.e., 3000 μg/L) is in accordance with Zubrod et al. (2015). For the other leaf species, the decomposition rate was affected similarly between maple and beech, with effect size being twice as high when compared to alder. Maple and beech showed a non-significant reduction in the leaf decomposition rate of up to \sim 20% at the two highest fungicide concentrations (300-3000 μg/L). Changes in fungal biomass support this pattern (see also Zubrod et al. 2015a), with a lower reduction of the ergosterol concentration on alder relative to beech or maple among fungicide treatments (Tab. 2). Moreover, fungal biomass was the only evaluated endpoint to show an interaction between leaf species and fungicide exposure, suggesting a non-additive effect of both variables. Based on our within species data, the latter findings suggest that traits of alder leaves (high nutrient levels and low recalcitrance) enable leafassociated microorganisms to acquire leaf-bound energy more easily to withstand potential effects induced by fungicide exposure (Solé et al. 2012). This interpretation has not been supported by statistical significance (Tab. 1), however it is backed by fungal biomass data being more reduced under fungicide exposure on the most recalcitrant and least nutrient-rich leaf species (namely beech) – an observation made by Artigas et al. (2012). In their study, the presence of 30 μg tebuconazole/L induced a 60% higher reduction in fungal biomass associated with more recalcitrant black poplar (*Populus nigra* L.) relative to alder. The discrepancies in fungicide effects between maple and alder, which both should be comparably well decomposable, might be related to maple having a relatively smooth surface on both leaf sides making colonisation and penetration by fungi more challenging (Kearns and Bärlocher 2008). Consequently, fungal propagules are exposed to fungicides for a longer duration. On alder, however, the fungal propagules can quickly attach and grow into the leaf (Kearns and Bärlocher, 2008), which may provide protection and reduced fungicide exposure. Moreover, some fungicides only act on the propagules of fungi and not on growing mycelium (Escudero-Leyva et al. 2022). While this aspect seems of little relevance in absence or at low levels of fungicides, the combination of leaf surface traits with fungicide stress may have contributed to the more pronounced fungicide effect at higher concentrations in beech and maple leaves. Similarly, bacterial density was not substantially affected by fungicide exposure (Tab. S3), suggesting again a minor relevance of leaf recalcitrance and nutrient content for bacterial colonisation (Feckler et al., 2017).

CONCLUSION

Overall, this study shows that higher recalcitrance and lower nutrient levels in leaf litter potentially may lead to increased fungicide effects during its decomposition. This seems particularly relevant in the light of alder replacement in riparian zones over the last decades across Europe due to different causes, such as habitat exploitation and pathogen infections (Brasier et al. 1995, 1999, 2004; Graça and Canhoto 2006; Richardson et al. 2007; Husson et al. 2015). Therefore, changes in tree species composition along riverbanks are expected (Bjelke et al. 2016) further diversifying the leaf litter and its susceptibility to be decomposed. Thus, understanding the leaf litter decomposition activity of local microbial communities is essential to expand our research on how leaf litter traits interact with the impact of chemical stressors.

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Supplementary information for the paper:

Leaf species-dependent fungicide effects on the function and abundance of associated microbial communities

Table S1. Information on the fungicide mixture components, their product names, manufacturers, active ingredient concentrations, nominal concentrations, and mode of action.

Table S2. Leaf litter decomposition rate, k, per day, of increasing total fungicide concentrations for the different leaf species alder, maple, and beech.

Table S3. Statistical output of pairwise comparisons between the individual fungicide concentrations using Wilcoxon rank sum tests with subsequent Bonferroni correction. P-values printed bold indicate statistical significance.

Table S4. Fitted models and their respective parameterization separated by leaf species.

Figure S1. Interactions plots between factors "Fungicide" and "Leaf species" for a) Leaf decomposition rate; b) Bacterial density; and c) Ergosterol (Fungal biomass estimate). Lines in green, blue and orange indicate different leaf species, Alder, Maple and Beech, respectively. If the two lines on the interaction plot are parallel, then there is no interaction effect. If the lines intersect, then there is likely an interaction effect.

7.2 APPENDIX II

Elevated Fungicide and Nutrient Concentrations Change Structure but not Function of Aquatic Microbial Communities.

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ABSTRACT
Leaf decomposition is a key process in stream ecosystems within forested catchments driven by microbial communities, particularly fungi and bacteria. These microorganisms make nutrients and energy bound in leaves available for wider parts of the food web. Leaf-associated microorganisms are subjected to anthropogenic pressures, such as the increased exposure to nutrients and fungicides associated with land-use change. In this study, we assessed the sensitivity of leaf-associated microbial communities with differing exposure histories, namely from pristine (P) streams, and streams impacted by wastewater (W) and agricultural run-off (vineyards; V). In the laboratory, microbial communities were exposed to increasing nutrient $(NO₃-N: 0.2-18.0 mg/L, PO₄-P: 0.02-1.8 mg/L)$ and fungicide concentrations (sum concentration 0-300 µg/L) in a fully crossed 3x4x4-factorial design over 21 days. Leaf decomposition and exoenzyme activity were measured as functional endpoints, while fungal community composition and microbial abundance served as structural variables. Overall, the results showed that leaf decomposition did not differ between fungicide treatments or exposure histories. Nonetheless, substantial changes of the fungal community composition were observed when exposed to environmentally relevant fungicide concentrations. The observed changes in the fungal community composition support the principle of species dominance, with highly efficient decomposers maintaining leaf decomposition; potentially at the expense of other functions provided by fungi.

KEYWORDS: leaf decomposition, community structure, land-use, exposure history

GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT

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INTRODUCTION

Leaf litter of terrestrial origin represents a significant energy source for aquatic ecosystems, such as rivers and streams within forested catchments (Fisher & Likens, 1973). The energy stored in leaf litter is made available to wider parts of the food web through leaf decomposition, which represents a key ecosystem process (Minshall, 1967; Nelson & Scott, 1962). For this process, bacteria and fungi are considered central (Dighton & White, 1983; Webster, 2007). Through their extracellular enzymatic capability, these microorganisms convert recalcitrant oligo- and polysaccharides into assimilable mono- and disaccharides, ultimately fuelling a wider part of the food web (Boulton & Boon, 1991; Hieber & Gessner, 2002).

Leaf decomposition in rivers and streams is, however, influenced by the catchments' land-use and associated stressors. For example, the influx of nutrients and pesticides into surface waters, which have been linked to agricultural land-use (Tilman et al., 2001), affects leaf-associated microbial communities. While nutrients generally stimulate microbial activity up to a certain concentration (Ferreira et al., 2015), fungicides are mainly associated with a reduction in leaf decomposition (e.g., Fernández et al., 2015; Zubrod et al., 2015). Moreover, the microbial communities' functional response to fungicides and nutrients is influenced by the communities' exposure histories (Feckler et al., 2018; Gardeström et al., 2016). In fact, the functional tolerance of leaf-associated microbial communities, measured through their leaf decomposition rate, towards fungicides was observed to be higher when sampled from streams impacted by agriculture (i.e., with exposure history) compared to near-natural streams (i.e., without exposure history; Feckler et al., 2018). This observation suggests that previous exposure to fungicides acts as a filter selecting for tolerant (and partly more efficient in terms of leaf decomposition) species, with the fungal group of aquatic hyphomycetes (AH) being considered as the its major driver (Gessner et al., 2007).

An earlier study (Feckler et al., 2018) acknowledged that the general applicability of the findings requires an expansion of true replicates (i.e., microbial communities with and without an "exposure history"). Our study expands the dataset by sampling from streams associated with different land uses and increasing the number of replicates at each site, as a more robust basis of comparison for earlier findings. Leaf-associated microbial communities were sampled from pristine (P) streams, and streams impacted by wastewater (W) as well as run-off from the locally dominating crop, namely vineyards (V), each independently replicated three times (i.e., nine sites in total). It was expected that leaf-associated microbial communities from V-impacted stream sections structurally and functionally adapted to moderate nutrient and high fungicide exposure, representing the major chemical stressors used in such catchments (Tilman et al., 2001; Zubrod et al., 2019; Fernández eta al., 2015). Microbial communities impacted by W are expected to be adapted to relatively high nutrient concentrations, while being exposed to a broad range of organic micropollutants including fungicides. Within the same sampling region, leaf-associated microbial communities sampled from P-streams were included to establish a baseline for the microbial communities' responses to fungicides and nutrients (sampling region as in Fernández et al., 2015).

In the laboratory, these microbial communities were exposed to environmentally relevant but increasing nutrient and fungicide concentrations, involving a fully crossed 3x4x4 factorial design over 21 days. Besides microbially-mediated leaf decomposition, we analysed the communities' exoezyme activities as well as fungal and bacterial abundances approximated by real-time polymerase chain reaction (qPCR), and fungal community compositions through next generation sequencing (NGS). We hypothesized that (i) microbiallymediated leaf decomposition will be reduced with increasing fungicide levels, while the effects will be more pronounced for microbial communties from P-streams than for W- and V-streams (see Feckler et al., 2018). This leaf decomposition pattern (ii) should be reflected in a higher activity of enzymes degrading recalcitrant carbon in W- and V- compared to P-communities, due to the colonisation of leaves by more tolerant microbial communities with higher enzymatic capabitily (e.g., Baudy et al., 2021). Moreover, (iii) increasing nutrient levels should buffer the negative fungicide effects through the provisioning of additional and easily assimilable energy compared to treatments with lower nutrients (e.g., Ferreira et al., 2015 but see Fernández et al., 2016). Finally, (iv) changes in leaf decomposition in response to elevated nutrient and fungicide exposure are linked to shifts in the community structure (bacterial, fungal abundances and fungal community composition) favouring more tolerant and more efficient AH species. In this context, community changes were expected to be more prominent in Pthan for W- and V-communities, with the latter being already shaped through exposures.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

General experimental design.

The exposure histories of the leaf-associated microbial communities were defined by the land-uses upstream of the sampling sites (Fig. 1). Factors as different soil properties, light availability, photosynthetic differences of the independent sites are might change the properties of the leaves and leaf-associated microbial communities, they were in the present study consider as naturally part of the factor exposure history. The communities were sampled from pristine streams with forest-dominated catchments (P; sites P1, P2 and P3 as replicates), as well as from streams impacted by either wastewater discharge (W; sites W1, W2 and W3 as replicates) or vineyard run-off (V; sites V1 and V2 as replicates; severe draughts during autumn 2019 did not allow to assess V3; see Table S1). We performed three independent semi-static bioassays in April/May (sites P1, W1 and V1), July/August (sites P2, W2 and V2) and September/October (sites P3, W3 and V3) in 2019. Each of the bioassays, was planned to include one community per exposure type (i.e., P-, W- and V-community), following a 3x4x4 factorial design with a duration of 21 days (Fig. 1, 2 & 3; Table S1). Such a sequential procedure was employed as the number of experimental units (i.e., 720) for the entire experiment would not have been manageable in parallel.

Figure 1. Map of the major land-use for the sampling region. Green, orange, and red represent forest, crops and urban area, respectively. Dark lines represent major stream segments. Letters represent different land-use categories upstream of the sampling sites, i.e., pristine – P (1-3), wastewater treatment effluent - W (1-3), and vineyard - V (1-3) and their catchments based on Sentinel-2 10 m land-use map (Karra et al., 2021).

During each of these bioassays, pre-stored black alder (*Alnus glutinosa* (L.) Gaertn.) leaves were deployed in the respective stream and let to colonise by microorganisms (see section Preparation of microbial inocula and leaf material).. Later in the laboratory, microorganisms were exposed to four increasing concentrations of a fungicide mixture (0-300 µg/L; Table S2; see section Chemicals) as well as four nutrients concentrations. The nutrient and fungicide mixture concentrations were selected based on previous studies (Feckler et al., 2018; Zubrod et al., 2015). The nutrient medium composition largely followed Dang et al. (2005), but with adjusted NO₃-N (0.2, 2.0, 10.0 and 18.0 mg/L) and PO₄-P (0.02, 0.2, 1.0 and 1.8 mg/L) concentrations at a fixed ratio of 10:1 (Fig. 3) to mimic a natural nutrient gradient in streams (Feckler et al., 2018). In the following, these nutrient concentrations are referred to as very low, low, moderate and high. The fully crossed design resulted in a total of 48 treatments, each replicated five times.

Figure 2. Schematic overview of the inocula preparation. Step 1: Generating inocula from pristine (P) streams, or streams impacted by wastewater discharge (W) and vineyard runoff (V) by deploying alder leaves in the field for 14d; Step 2: Inocula acclimatisation to laboratory conditions; leaves from each sampling site and uncolonized leaves are further microbially colonized for 7 d; Step 3: Inocula (leaves) homogenisation in nutrient media per exposure history and respective Created with BioRender.com

Preparation of microbial inocula and leaf material.

The microbial inocula were obtained from streams near Landau, Germany (Table S1; Fig. 1), by submerging black alder leaves in litterbags (10 leaves with different sizes per bag; 15 x 15 cm; mesh size = 1 mm; n = 50) at each sampling site for 14 days (Fig. 2). Leaf material originated from trees within the same region sampled before abscission during autumn 2017 and 2018 was visually inspected for damages and infections (excluded) and divided per size (stored at -20 °C until use). Freezing may cause minor changes in leaf decomposition (Bärlocher 1992; Boyero et al., 2016), only relevant when extrapolating to field conditions. After field colonization, the leaf material was transported to the lab in stream water. In the laboratory, leaves were carefully cleaned from invertebrates and sediment particles under running tap water. This previous step can potentially change the microbial assemblages; however, it is the same for all replicates and necessary, as the impact of invertebrates' feeding could confound our final results heavily. The inoculum from each sampling site was subsequently placed in an individual stainless-steel container (120 \times 30 \times 20 cm; volume 50 L) filled with 25 L of constantly

aerated stream water from the respective sampling site at 16 \pm 1 °C in darkness for seven days. In addition, another 500 uncolonized black alder leaves were added to increase habitat diversity enhancing the chances of maintaining a diverse microbial community, driven by two stages of leaf decomposition (Gessner et al., 1993).

Exposure assay

Figure 3. Exposure assay – the inocula prepared were used to microbially colonize leaf discs in Erlenmeyers flasks, while being exposed to increasing concentrations of nutrients and fungicides over 21 d, with media and fungicides being renewed every 7 d. Created with BioRender.com

Chemicals.

The fungicide mixture consisted of five active ingredients, namely azoxystrobin, carbendazim, cyprodinil, quinoxyfen, and tebuconazole, contained in pesticide formulations commonly applied in the region (Landesamt für Umwelt, 2016). The modes of toxic action, active ingredients and respective manufactures of the fungicide formulations are presented in Table S2. Total nominal concentrations used were 0 (control), 3 & 30 (environmental relevant concentrations), and 300 µg/L (high contamination). To confirm nominal concentrations of the individual fungicides, samples were taken from the test Erlenmeyer's approximately 2 h after test initiation as well as just before the weekly medium exchange (see section "Exposure assay") and analysed using liquid chromatography– high resolution mass spectrometry (Thermo Fisher Scientific, Dreieich, Germany) following published protocols (as in Fernández et al., 2014; SI A.2.1). Although measured sum concentrations deviated partly by up to 30% from the nominal levels (Table S3), mainly due to insufficient quantification limits (3 µg/L) or potential fungicide attachment to leaf material, the spacing factor between tested concentrations was reached justifying the use of nominal concentrations in the following.

Exposure assay.

Prior to test initiation, leaf discs $(Ø 20$ mm) were cut from frozen and uncolonised leaves, pooled in groups of 20, dried at 60 ºC for 24 h, and weighed to the nearest 0.01 mg. Forty-eight hours before the initiation of each bioassay, dried and pre-weighted leaf discs were leached in autoclaved nutrient medium with treatment-matched nutrient concentrations. This is an important step to reduce potentially confounding impacts of leachates released from fresh leaves. Five additional replicates per nutrient concentration were included, which were used to correct for additional leaching-induced and physical leaf mass loss. Furthermore, 9.9 g wet weight leaf material from the stainless-steel containers (see above) were transferred to 150 mL of nutrient medium with treatment-matched nutrient levels and homogenised on ice using an Ultra-Turrax® T25 (IKA®-Werke, Staufen, Germany) to generate microbial inocula suspensions. Subsequently, 5 mL of these suspensions, 20 pre-weighted and leached leaf discs, and 1 mL of fungicide stock solution were transferred into sterilized 150 mL Erlenmeyer flasks, and autoclaved nutrient medium was added to reach a final volume of 50 mL. Erlenmeyer flasks were closed with sterile culture cellucotton plugs allowing air exchange, kept at 16 \pm 1 °C in darkness under continuous orbitally shaking at 75 rpm, while the nutrient medium together with the fungicide mixture was renewed every seven days. After 21 days, the bioassay was terminated and leaf discs were recovered. From the 20 leaf discs, two random leaf discs were analysed of the leaf-associated microbial communities and one leaf disc was used to quantify exoenzyme activities. For these purposes, leaf discs were lyophilized and weighed to the nearest 0.01 mg. The dry weight of the remaining 17 discs (dried at 60 °C for 24 h and weighed to the nearest 0.01 mg) was used to estimate the microbially-mediated decomposition rates (see data analysis section for details; Benfield, 2007).

Exoenzyme activity.

Hydrolase and oxidase activities were quantified using the method described by DeForest (2009) but modified for its use to analyse leaf litter (see Baudy et al., 2021). Detailed information is provided in the Supplementary Information (SI) A.2.2. Enzymatic activities were expressed as μmoL of degraded substrate/mg leaf dry weight/hour (DeForest, 2009). Subsequently, the data was used to calculate the recalcitrance ratio of the leaf material as normalised oxidases per total hydrolases activities (Table S4). The higher the ratio of oxidase to hydrolase activities, the greater is the relative investment for degradation of recalcitrant carbon (Romero-Olivares et al., 2017).

Characterisation of leaf-associated microbial communities.

Fungal and bacterial abundances. The FastDNA® Spin Kit for Soil in combination with the FastPrep™-24 5G Instrument (MP Biomedicals, Germany) was used to extract DNA from leaf material. In addition, we processed empty extraction tubes as negative controls in each extraction run. The amounts of fungal and bacterial operon copies were quantified as proxies for overall leaf-associated fungal and bacterial abundances, respectively, via SYBR® Green reactions (Manerkar et al., 2008). qPCR solutions with a total of 10 µL consisted of 2.8 μL of DNAse free water, 0.1 μL of forward primer, 0.1 μL of reverse primer (both at 10 μmoL/μL, from biomers.net GmbH, Ulm, Germany, see more details in Table S5), 2 μL of 50-fold diluted DNA extract, and 5 μL of PowerUp™ SYBR® Green Master Mix (Applied Biosystems Massachusetts, USA). PCR cycling conditions consisted of initial denaturation at 95 °C for 2 min, followed by 40 cycles of denaturation at 95 °C for 15 s, annealing at 55 °C for 15 s, and extension at 72 °C for 60s. At the end of each run, a melting curve analysis was performed to ensure the specificity of the assays. qPCR reactions were performed on a Mastercycler® ep gradient S (Eppendorf, Hamburg, Germany) using 0.2-mL 8-tube strips covered with clear optical 8-cap strips (Sarstedt AG & Co. KG, Nümbrecht, Germany). Results were dry weight normalized to the respective leaf discs. Further details on the assays are provided in the Supplementary Information (Table S5).

Fungal community composition. The DNA extracts (see above) were used to perform NGS according to the protocol in Carl et al. (2022). For each of the studied communities (P1- 3, V 1-2 and W1-3), three levels of fungicides (0, 30 and 300 μg/L) and nutrients (very low, low and high) were evaluated, omitting the low and medium concentrations, respectively. This narrowed focus is motivated by the expected effects at higher fungicide concentration and the fact that these nutrient concentrations reflect the range reported for the sampling sites (Table S1) or excess of nutrients compared to sampling sites (high concentration).

Preparation of leaf samples for sequencing on the Illumina MiSeq are described in Carl et al. (2022), with detailed information being provided in SI A.2.3. Amplicon libraries of the fungal ITS2 rDNA gene were generated using a mix of five forward primers ('ITS3tagmix') and one reverse primer ('ITS4ngs';Tedersoo et al., 2014, 2015). PCR products were pooled for each sample to account for the technical bias of PCR reactions (Lindahl et al., 2013). For metabarcoding, barcodes, sequencing adaptors, and indices were ligated to the products of the first PCR. The resulting ITS2 library was sequenced on the Illumina MiSeq System using the chemistry of a 600-cycle MiSeq Reagent Kit v3 (Illumina, San Diego, USA). Indices were demultiplexed, followed by barcode demultiplexing using an inhouse script of Leibniz Institute DSMZ (https://github.com/boykebunk/amplicon). Sequences were processed with PIPITS (Version 2.4, Gweon et al., 2015, https://github.com/hsgweon/pipits/releases), Taxonomic assignment was performed using the trained datasets of the Ribosomal Database Project (RDP) classifier (UNITE DB version February 02, 2019). Of this, PIPITS created an OTU (operational taxonomic unit) table for every sample, which was assigned according to the 'Species Hypothesis' (SH) of the UNITE database (Nilsson et al., 2019). Classification of OTUs was curated as described in Carl et al. (2022). In brief, (i) classification assigned to OTUs was re-blasted against NCBI reference databases (nucleotide collection of GenBank BLAST®; megablast within 'blastn' web application; https://blast.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/Blast.cgi), (ii) corrected, if necessary, as detailed in Carl et al. (2022), and (iii) OTUs assigned to the same species hypothesis were merged to one taxon to lessen the marker bias of the ITS region, OTUs leading to the same species curation were merged per sample. The criteria used for the curation of each OTU were: (i) significant similarity to any BLAST-hit of a fungal taxon (≥95%), (ii) reasonable coverage of sequence (≥95%), (iii) highest e-value (ratio between coverage and similarity of the sequence), and (iv) reliably published sequence (reference database, isolate voucher, publication yes/ no) fungal ITS rDNA region (Heeger et al. 2018; Table S7). Within the whole dataset, 178 taxa passed our quality criteria. From these 178 taxa, those appearing only once were excluded from further analysis to reduce random noise, while this procedure did not influence the overall outcome of our analyses. The remaining 93 taxa were used to characterize the fungal community in each treatment (Table S6; S7).

Data analysis.

The variables "exposure history" and "season" (time of the sampling) were highly correlated (multicollinearity); thus, "season" was excluded from further analysis as this study was design to focus on "exposure history". Data obtained from microbial inocula collected from sampling sites with common land-use were used as replicates for data analysis. This pooling approach allowed us to generalize the findings and draw more robust conclusions about the microbial communities from P-, W- and V-streams and their responses to the experimental conditions. Microbially-mediated leaf decomposition rates, expressed as *kmicrobial* (d-1), were calculated according to Benfield (2007):

kmicrobial =
$$
\frac{-\ln(dwf/(dwi * l))}{t}
$$

where *dwf* and *dwi* refer to the final and the initial dry weights of leaf discs, *l* is a dimensionless empirical factor used to correct for the leaf mass loss due to leaching (which is dependent of the treatments and in this study ranged between 0.74-0.81), and *t* is the decomposition time (21 d). Subsequently, we fitted dose-response models ("drm"-command) on the leaf decomposition rates of each exposure history and nutrient level against fungicide concentrations. The best fitting models (always lower limit at 0) were chosen based on visual judgment and Akaike's information criterion (Table S8, for detailed information).

Shapiro–Wilk tests and Levene's tests were used to test for normality of residuals and homoscedasticity of univariate data (all data except fungal community composition). If the assumptions for parametric testing were met (only for enzyme activity), analyses were run on the original data by applying three-factor analyses of variance (ANOVA) with the independent variables, exposure history ("history"), fungicide exposure ("fungicide"), and nutrient concentration ("nutrient"), followed by post-hoc comparisons for main effects with Bonferroni p-value adjustment. Since the assumptions for parametric testing were violated for microbiallymediated leaf decomposition as well as fungal and bacterial abundances, aligned rank transformation ANOVA tests were used instead. To simplify the comparisons and statistical testing, the very low nutrient level at 0 µg fungicides/L was set as control for P-communities, while for W- and V-communities the control was set at the low nutrient level and 0 µg fungicides/L, due to measured higher nutrient background levels at the sampling sites where W- and V-communities were obtained from (seeTable S1).

For multivariate data (i.e., fungal community composition), to compare fungal communities from each exposure treatment at the species level, a presence-absence table (1/0; Table S7) was generated and non-metric multidimensional scaling plots (NMDS; Clarke, 1993) were generated using the Jaccard coefficient. The assumption of homogeneous withingroup dispersion was tested using the "betadisper" function within the R-package "vegan". Subsequently, a factorial permutational multivariate analysis of variance (PERMANOVA, Anderson et al., 2005) was performed on the original data with 999 permutations to assess the individual and combined effects of the independent variables ("history", "fungicide", and "nutrient"), applying the Jaccard coefficient (Real et al., 1996) as a distance measure between groups. Statistics were conducted and figures were prepared using R version 4.2.1 (R Core Team, 2022) as well as the add-on packages "vegan" (Oksanen et al., 2009), "ggplot2" and "ggh4x" (Wickham, 2016), "tidyr" (Wickham, Vaughan, et al., 2023), "dplyr" (Wickham, François, et al., 2023), "rstatix" (Alboukadel, 2023), "visreg" (Breheny & Burchett, 2017) and "ARTool" (Kay et al., 2021). The graphical abstract and Fig. 2 and 3 were created in Biorender.com. Note that the term "significant(ly)" refers to statistical significance (p <0.05) throughout the study.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Contrary to our first hypothesis (i), increasing fungicide concentrations (p>0.05; Fig. 4; Table 1) did not affect microbially-mediated leaf decomposition. Instead, P- and Wcommunities seemed to benefit from fungicide exposure at 30 and 300 µg/L (Fig. S1), observed as non-significant 30% increases in leaf decomposition rates compared to the respective fungicide-free controls (Table S10). The effect of fungicides was not reflected in the microbial communities' relative investment in degrading recalcitrant carbon (i.e., recalcitrance

ratio; Table S4), which was not significantly affected by the factors "history" and "fungicide" (p>0.4; Table 1 & S10), opposing our second hypothesis (ii). In support of our third (iii) and partially contradicting our fourth (iv) hypotheses, increasing levels of nutrients tended to buffer for the non-significant fungicide-induced effects on leaf decomposition compared to fungicidefree treatments (Fig. S1; Table S10). Additionally, fungal community composition was significantly changed by increasing fungicide concentrations (see below). However, changes in the fungal community structure seems decoupled from its function, represented by leaf decomposition (see Feckler & Bundschuh, 2020).

Effects of fungicides on microbial communities with differing exposure histories.

In addition to the positive effects on leaf decomposition of communities from P- and Wstreams, fungicides induced significant effects on the leaf-associated microbial community structure, namely on bacterial and fungal abundances (both p<0.01; Table 1), which have also been reported elsewhere (e.g., Feckler et al, 2018; Fernández et al., 2015). The bacterial and fungal abundances showed no significant changes at low to intermediate fungicide

Figure 4. Dose-response models for the microbial breakdown rate (k_{microbia} (d⁻¹)) as a function of the total fungicide concentration (log10 scale), displayed separately for the four different nutrient levels. Shaded lines indicating corresponding 95% confidence bands (n $= 5$).

concentrations (3 and 30 µg/L; Fig. S5 & S6; Table 1; S1 & S12; p<0.05) compared to the respective controls. While in Fernández et al, (2015) bacterial density tended to increase in vineyard impacted sites. However, across all fungicide concentrations, the abundances were consistently lower in the V-community compared to the equivalent treatment in the W- and Pcommunities (Table 1; S10; S11& S12). Moreover, the high fungicide concentration (300 µg/L) negatively affected fungal abundances, reflected in an up to 60% reduced fungal abundance independent of the history or nutrient level (p<0.05; Table 1; S11 & S12; Fig. S6).

Besides impacts on fungal abundance, fungal communities of the control and lower fungicide concentrations (0 and 3 µg/L) showed considerable similarity, while a substantial difference relative to the highest fungicide concentration was uncovered – a pattern observed across all nutrient levels ($p=0.001$; Fig. 5). The same pattern among fungicide concentrations was also reported in terms of fungal taxa richness (Fig. S7, S8 & S9). Moreover, fungal community composition differed among exposure histories (p=0.001, Table 1). Thus, these observations partially contradict the hypothesised link between the fungal community structure and their function (hypothesis iv), as we expected to see an effect on the function leaf decomposition based on the diversity and abundance changes of the fungal species within the community. Our results are pointing towards functional stability despite community shifts (reviewed in Feckler & Bundschuh, 2020). Functional stability could be achieved due to functional similarity (Eisenhauer et al., 2023) within microbial communities and an increase in the dominance of tolerant fungal species that are at the same time more efficient in leaf decomposition (Ferreira & Chauvet, 2012; Pascoal et al., 2005). This assumption is supported by the NGS data, since in most of the cases tolerant AH species of the genus *Tetracladium (T. marchalianum, T. breve, T. setigerum)* with a superior leaf decomposition efficiency (e.g., Andrade et al., 2016; Duarte et al., 2006; Zubrod et al., 2015) dominated at high fungicide exposure independent of exposure history (Table S7). Besides the increasing relevance of the genus *Tetracladium,* the species *Lemonniera terrestris, Flagellospora curvula*, and *Fusarium oxysporum* were more frequently detected with increasing fungicide concentrations. While those species are considered tolerant, knowledge on their traits is limited and partly contradicting, hampering a mechanistic interpretation (Bundschuh et al., 2011; Pascoal et al., 2005). Nonetheless, Bundschuh et al. (2011) *found F. curvula* to be most abundant under control conditions with decreasing appearance at higher fungicide concentrations. In contrast, we found this species most frequently in presence of fungicides. The opposite pattern is observed for *C. aquatica*: Pascoal et al. (2005) frequently detected this species in polluted streams of Northern Portugal, whereas we found this species more frequently in the absence of fungicides suggesting phenotypic plasticity (e.g., Quainoo et al., 2016). Notwithstanding, our findings support the principle of stable functioning being mediated by the dominance of highly efficient decomposers. These results are supported by other studies (reviewed in Feckler &

Table 1. Output for statistical analyses, namely aligned ranks transformation ANOVA for microbial leaf decomposition as well as bacterial and fungal abundance (respective post-hoc testing in Table S11), ANOVA for recalcitrance ratio, and PERMANOVA for fungal community composition. Df, degrees of freedom; Df res, residual degrees of freedom for each model; F value, ratio of variances; SE, standard error of the estimate; SS, sum of squares. p-values printed in bold indicate statistical significance.

Bundschuh 2020), pointing to a maintained functional performance (i.e., leaf decomposition) when the microbial community is dominated by a few species with superior traits that compensate biodiversity loss (Dangles & Malmqvist, 2004).

Effects of nutrients on microbial communities with differing exposure histories.

Leaf decomposition significantly benefited from increasing nutrient concentrations (hypothesis iii), while the effect strength depended on the exposure history ($p=0.005$; Table 1). Especially at moderate and high nutrient levels, leaf decomposition increased by up to 30%, 18% and 7% for P-, W- and V-communities (Table S10), respectively, relative to the respective control scenarios (Table S10; Fig. 4). These observations may be explained by the dynamic energy budget theory (Kooijman, 2000), namely that the ease of accessing nutrients from the medium supports microbial growth and thus the functional performance as more energy is available for producing exoenzymes needed for leaf degradation (Bärlocher & Corkum, 2003). This assumption is also supported by Feckler et al. (2018), who studied equivalents to the Pand V-communities assessed here, observing higher leaf decomposition in treatments with higher nutrient availability (see also Pascoal & Cássio, 2004; Suberkropp et al., 2010). Thus, we assume that in ecosystems with higher nutrient inputs, changes in the function due to

Figure 5. Non-metric multidimensional scaling (NMDS) plots for leaf-associated aquatic hyphomycete communities originating from streams with differing land-use in their catchments (Pristine, Wastewater treatment plants, Vineyard). Nutrient levels are indicated by symbols: very low= squares, low= triangles, high = circles. Colours indicate fungicide concentrations: 0 µg/L and 30 μ g/L = dark blue, 300 μ g/L = light blue. Spider webs connect the samples of each treatment at their respective group centroid. The stress value is provided as a measure of "goodness-of-fit" for NMDS, with a reasonable fit indicated when below 0.2 (Clarke, 1993).

chemical stress exposure being less pronounced due to "free" energy from the available nutrients (see Rossi et al., 2018 but also see Fernández et al., 2016).

Despite the positive effect of nutrients on leaf decomposition, microbial abundances were significantly affected by exposure history, with P-communities being characterised by up to 20-fold higher bacterial and fungal abundances compared to W- and V-communities within the same nutrient level (Table S10, S11 & S12; Fig. S5 & S6). Contrary to the structural parameters, the leaf decomposition performed by W-communities was slightly (up to 15%) but significantly (p <0.003) higher in comparison to the P-communities, while in V-communities the function was up to 40% significantly lower than in P-communities (p<0.01; Tables 1 & S10, Fig. 4). This observation may be an experimental artefact since the proxies used for microbial abundances (bacterial and fungal) do not account for changes in the fungal community composition and consequently its composition in terms of functional traits (Englert et al., 2015; Rossi et al., 2018). It may be that microbes characterised by a high leaf decomposition efficiency dominate over those with a lower efficiency capable of maintaining the function (e.g., Reiss et al., 2010).

Combining chemical stressors and exposure history.

Our study found changes in community structures at high fungicide exposure across all exposure histories. We expected more pronounced effects of fungicides on P-communities compared to communities with exposure history (W- and V-communities). This expectation was not met, potentially due to the presence of some tolerant species, such as *T. marchalianum*, also in P-communities. The latter could also have happened due to the relatively low fungicide concentrations used here compared to other studies. Although sum fungicide concentrations of 300 µg/L are above the high end of environmentally relevant concentration ranges (Landesamt für Umwelt, 2016; e.g. sum pesticide concentrations measured during rainfall events went up to 83.4 µg/L in Bereswill et al., 2022), these levels have been too low to obtain more pronounced responses in leaf decomposition and community structure during laboratory studies (see Feckler et al., 2017; Gonçalves et al., 2023; Zubrod, et al., 2015). Under field conditions, however, lower concentrations of fungicides contributed to changes on the fungal community structure (e.g., Fernández et al., 2016). Moreover, the high variability and non-consistent patterns found among our three bioassays could be explained by the different sampling season and the respective naturally differing enzyme activities (Bastias et al., 2022). The latter suggests that the local community and potentially the colonisation dynamics play a significant role, which should be further and individually studied (Mora-Gómez et al., 2016).

CONCLUSION

Overall, the present study shows that leaf decomposition was not affected by increasing fungicide concentrations and "fungicides" or "history" did not affect that degradation of recalcitrant carbon by microbial communities. While increasing levels of nutrients tended to buffer the non-significant fungicide-induced effects on leaf decomposition. The presence of higher nutrient levels eased the access to nutrients supporting microbial growth and functional performance, as more energy is available for producing exoenzymes needed for leaf degradation. Moreover, increasing fungicide concentrations changed significantly the fungal community composition across all the exposure histories. The changes found on their structure seemed decoupled from its function, represented by leaf decomposition, which points towards functional stability despite community shifts. The changes in fungal species composition in this and previous studies, suggest phenotypic plasticity and supporting the principle of stable functioning being mediated by the dominance of highly efficient decomposers. This fewer species with superior traits maintain functional performance while compensating biodiversity loss. Additionally, future studies should further assess local communities and potentially the colonisation dynamics role in response to nutrient and fungicide stressors.

In conclusion, our study points to the benefits of a combined assessment of ecosystem structure and function, which not only supports the interpretation of the data but also fuels the research field related to the link between biodiversity and ecosystem function – particularly in the context of chemical stressors. The changes in the fungal community composition under fungicide exposure despite functional stability raises potential concerns, as in case only functional measures are used to assess environmental impacts, structural changes remain unnoticed. This concern is informed by the key role of aquatic fungi in ecosystems, which is regulating aquatic food webs in a bottom-up direction (Arsuffi & Suberkropp, 1989; Gonçalves et al., 2014). Fungal species considered tolerant are often not only rejected by but also not as nutritional for shedders, which can potentially influence their fitness and development (e.g., Gonçalves et al., 2023b).As our mechanistic understanding of this bottom-up regulation is limited, future research is needed, including the consideration of fungal traits under multiple stress scenarios (Loreau et al., 2001)

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Supplementary information:

Elevated Fungicide and Nutrient Concentrations Change Structure but not Function of Aquatic Microbial Communities.

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A1- Tables and figures

Table S1 - Information on sampling sites, location, date of sampling and water parameters: pH, Temperature, Conductivity, Oxygen, NO₃, PO₄.

Table S1 continuation

Table S2 – Information on the fungicide mixture, their product names, manufacturers, active ingredient concentrations, nominal test concentrations (used in this study as a mixture), and mode of action.

Table S3 – Measured and nominal fungicide concentrations along the assays, excluding Quinoxyfen, which was not measured due to high residuals. (LOQ - limit of quantification; Initial- initial fungicide spike sampling; initial + 2h- sampling after 2h of spiking; 7d- sampling after 7days).

Table S4 – Investment in recalcitrant carbon degradation calculated as the ratio of oxidases divided by total hydrolases using square-root transformed data. The lower the ratio the higher the relative investment in recalcitrant carbon degradation.

Community history Pristine Wastewater Vineyard

Table S5 - Information on qPCR assay developed by Manerkar et al. (2008): Targeted group, primers (Baker & Cowan, 2003; White et al., 1990) used including the template sequences as well as technical properties including melting temperature, amplified region and length (bp).

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Tausonia pullulans KY646441 *Tausonia pullulans*

S53 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 **S53 S54** 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 **S54 S55** 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 **S55**

Table S8 – Dose- response model parameters used for Fig. 1. P: pristine; W:wastewater V: vineyard run-off.

Table S9 - Surface plot model parameters used for figure S1. P: pristine; W: wastewater V: vineyard run-off

Total Land-use fungicide NO3-N levels History concentra $\begin{array}{c|c}\n \text{mean} & \text{sd} & \text{ci}\n\hline\n 254592.86 & 339126.92\n\end{array}$ tion ug/L Sub_h PEPvariation to variation to control % Pristine % V_Low 254592.86 339126.92 297257.85 Low | 83791.56 100914.97 88455.87 | -203.84 Ω Mod | 239215.36 306537.02 | 268691.54 | C-6.43 High 631732.76 1.17E+06 1022372.46 59.70
V Low 166343.89 231206.03 202661.02 5-53.05 166343.89 231206.03 202661.02 -53.05 Low | 352309.99 | 518261.59 | 454276.32 | | 27.74 3 Mod 442396.82 1.22E+06 1070029.59 42.45 $\overline{)}$ 30 High | 158992.04 342404.70 300130.95 FM 300130.95 FM 30013 P V_Low 148084.77 194907.54 170844.00 -71.92 Low | 312916.43 | 697368.47 | 611270.42 | 18.64 30 Mod 139190.90 206563.85 181061.20 -82.91 High | 130587.21 | 159930.94 | 140185.65 | | -94.96 V Low $\left| \frac{156452.29}{321402.44} \right| 281721.66$ $\left| \frac{1}{1000} \right| 62.73$ Low 125815.85 175058.22 153445.30 -102.35 125815.85 175058.22 1534
69862.32 98187.45 860
70140.83 105056.79 920
mean sd ci
174823.06 230948.07 2024 300 Mod | 69862.32 98187.45 86065.10 | -264.42 High | 70140.83 |105056.79 | 92086.34 | -262.97 V_Low $\left| \begin{array}{cc} 174823.06 & 230948.07 & 202434.91 \end{array} \right|$ $\left| \begin{array}{cc} -93.22 & -45.63 \end{array} \right|$ Low 337785.06 490801.42 430206.42 0.00 75.19 0 Mod $|308602.13|318389.14|279080.39|$ -9.46 $|22.48$ High 294293.84 628459.86 550869.36 -14.78 -114.66 V_Low 197086.63 229391.11 201070.18 71.39 -71.39 15.60 Low 114203.18 266738.21 233806.35 -195.78 -208.49 3 Mod 765786.99 2.18E+06 1911558.60 55.89 42.23
High 182570.29 165078.05 144697.29 -85.02 12.91 $\overline{)}$ 30 \overline{H} High | 182570.29 | 165078.05 | 144697.29 | | 35.02 **WWTP** V_Low |135279.96|187911.43| 164711.63| | -149.69| -9.47 Low 76215.85 89720.73 78643.69 -343.20 -310.57 30 Mod 107894.81 152439.96 133619.52 -213.07 -29.01 High | 120039.34 | 140237.34 | 122923.45 | | 181.40 | 120039.34 | 140237.34 | 122923.45 | | | | | | | | | | | | V_Low | 88240.47| 106796.11| 93610.92| | -282.80| -77.30 Low | 96922.22 116605.94 102209.61 | -248.51 | -29.81 96922.22 116605.94 1022

305974.98 616829.70 5406

57171.27 74183.81 650

mean sd ci

202487.36 400266.12 3508 300 Mod | 305974.98 616829.70 | 540675.07 | 540675.07 | 20.40 | 77.17 High | 57171.27| 74183.81| 65024.97| | -490.83| -22.69 V Low $\left| \frac{202487.36}{400266.12} \right|$ 350848.73 -63.16 -25.73 Low 330379.03 992794.04 870222.34 0.00 74.64 0 Mod 213230.14 177267.40 155381.73 -54.94 -12.19 High 263786.38 387197.73 339393.78 -25.24 -139.49 V_Low 1354409.13 831560.41 728894.84 6.78 6.78 53.06 Low 192452.83 323046.50 283162.74 -71.67 -83.06 3 Mod | 352653.74 | 576298.13 | 505147.58 | | 6.32 | 525.45 $\overline{)}$ 30 High | 257234.83 | 326240.67 | 285962.56 | 28.43 | 28.19 VYRO V_Low $\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|}\n\hline\n137331.46 & 243277.34 & 213241.99 & -140.57 & -7.83 \\
\hline\n\end{array}$ Low 172119.48 281860.39 247061.52 -91.95 -81.80 30 Mod | 77538.72 92119.48 80746.28 | 326.08 -79.51 High 106615.83 92850.08 81386.68 -209.88 -22.48 V_Low 116821.76 215222.44 188650.79 -182.81 -33.92 Low 210620.26 224880.21 197116.20 -56.86 40.26 300

 $\textsf{Mod} \qquad | \, 200505.50 \, | \, 302811.51 \, | \, 265425.99 \, | \, | \qquad \quad$ -64.77 65.16 High 226911.00 248874.30 218147.95 -45.60 69.09

Table S11 - Post-hoc testing of aligned ranks transformation ANOVA, for leaf decomposition, bacterial and fungal operon copies as proxies for their abundance. Df, degrees of freedom; ratio of variances; SE, standard error of the estimate. P: pristine; W: wastewater V: vineyard run-off.

Table S12 - Means \pm sd of fungal and bacterial operon copies (10 \degree /mg leaf dry weight; n=3) as a proxy for abundances, of microbial communities colonizing alder leaves after fungicide and nutrient exposure.

Figure S1. Two-dimensional surface plots displaying the microbial leaf litter decomposition rate ($k_{microbial}$ (d⁻¹); n = 5 for each tested combination of fungicides and nutrients) observed for the each of the community history categories against a surface defined by the total fungicide concentration and the NO₃-N concentration (as one representative for the nutrient treatment). P: pristine; W:wastewater V: vineyard run-off

Figure S2. Two-dimensional surface plots displaying the microbial breakdown rate ($k_{\text{microbial}}$; n = 5 for each tested combination of fungicides and nutrients) observed for the each of the studied communities against a surface defined by the total fungicide concentration and the $NO₃-N$ concentration. P: pristine; W:wastewater V: vineyard run-off

Figure S3. Heatmaps displaying square root-transformed activities, in μmol of degraded substrate/g leaf dry mass/hour, of β-1,4-glucosidase (BGL; targeting cellulose), β-1,4-xylosidase (XYL; targeting hemicellulose), cellobiohydrolase (CEL; targeting cellulose), phosphatase (PHO; targeting phosphate esters), phenol oxidase (PHE; targeting lignin) and peroxidase (PER; targeting lignin). Leaf species are shown on the Y-axis, while the community histories are shown on the x-axis (P: pristine; W:wastewater V: vineyard run-off).

Figure S4. Heatmaps displaying square root-transformed activities, in μmol of degraded substrate/g leaf dry mass/hour, of β-1,4-glucosidase (BGL; targeting cellulose), β-1,4-xylosidase (XYL; targeting hemicellulose), cellobiohydrolase (CEL; targeting cellulose), phosphatase (PHO; targeting phosphate esters), phenol oxidase (PHE; targeting lignin) and peroxidase (PER; targeting lignin). Leaf species are shown on the Y-axis, while the community histories are shown on the x-axis (P: pristine; W: wastewater treatment plant; V: vineyard).

standard deviation, n = 3). P - Pristine; W- wastewater; V- vineyard.

Figure S6. Fungal operon copy number (n = 3) as a proxy for abundance for each tested combination of fungicides and nutrients (mean values ± standard deviation, n = 3). P - Pristine; W- wastewater; V- vineyard.

Figure S7. Number of curated genera for each tested combination of fungicides and nutrients (mean values ± standard deviation, n = 3). P - Pristine; W- wastewater; V- vineyard.

Figure S8. Number of curated OTUs (Operational taxonomic units) as a proxy for taxa richness for each tested combination of fungicides and nutrients (mean values \pm standard deviation, $n = 3$). P - Pristine; W- wastewater; V- vineyard.

Figure S9. Number of curated species via Genbank (ncbi) for each tested combination of fungicides and nutrients (mean values ± standard deviation, n = 3). P - Pristine; W- wastewater; V- vineyard.

A.2 Material and methods

A.2.1 Protocol for fungicide measurements according to Fernández et al., 2014

A subsample of thawed medium was taken after vortexed. These subsamples were centrifuged at 4000 rpm for 30 minutes and the supernatants were used further chemical analysis. A ratio of 10% methanol was used to extract samples and standards (PESTANAL from Sigma-Aldrich). Exactive (LC-HRMS) Orbitrap system (Thermo Fisher Scientific Corporation) was used to measure both samples and standards. While 50 x 2.1 mm Thermo Hypersil GOLD™ column (1.9 mm particle size) was used for fungicide separation, in this study the mobile phase used was $H₂O/MeOH$ with 0.1% formic acid (without 4 mM NH4 formate). The injection volume used was 20 µg/L and the calibration curve matrix matched with used medium. More detailed information can be found in Fernández, D., Vermeirssen, E.L.M., Bandow, N., Muñoz, K., Schäfer, R.B., 2014. Calibration and field application of passive sampling for episodic exposure to polar organic pesticides in streams. Environmental Pollution 194, 196–202. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envpol.2014.08.001.

A.2.2 Exoenzyme activity

To quantify hydrolases and oxidases activities, we use the method described by DeForest (2009) but modified for leaf litter (see Baudy et al. 2021). Hydrolases, namely β-1,4 glucosidase (BGL; EC 3.2.1.21; targeting cellulose), cellobiohydrolase (CEL; EC 3.2.1.91; targeting cellulose), β-1,4-xylosidase (XYL; EC 3.2.1.37; targeting hemicellulose), and phosphatases (PHO; EC 3.1.3.1 and 3.1.3.2; targeting phosphate esters), were measured fluorometrically using fluorescent (MUF, methylumbelliferone)-linked artificial substrates. Oxidases, namely phenol oxidase (PHE; EC 1.10.3.2; targeting lignin) and peroxidase (PER; EC 1.11.1.7; targeting lignin), were measured colorimetrically employing L-3,4 dihydroxyphenylalanine (L-DOPA).

After thawing, 1 leaf disc (2 cm diameter) was homogenized in 350 mL of nutrient medium using an Ultra-turrax® blender (IKA®-Werke GmbH and Co. KG, Germany) at 24,000 rpm. For hydrolase analyses, black flat-bottom 96-well 300-μL plates (Thermo Fisher Scientific, USA) were incubated in darkness for 1 h on a rotary shaker (model KS 15; Edmund Bühler GmbH, Germany) at 120 rpm, whereupon 10 μL 1M NaOH were added to terminate reactions and enhance fluorescence (DeForest 2009). Fluorescence was measured at 365 nm excitation and 450 nm emission using a microplate reader (Infinite 200, Tecan Group; Switzerland). Oxidases were measured in clear flat-bottom 96-well 300-μL plates (Thermo Fisher Scientific, USA), after incubation for 2 h on a rotary shaker. Absorbance was measured at 450 nm using a microplate reader. The medium containing the homogenized leaves was filtered through preweighed glass fibre filters (GF/6, Whatman, Dassel, Germany) and dried at 60 °C for 24 h to determine leaf dry mass to the nearest 0.01 mg. Enzymatic activity was expressed as μmol of degraded substrate/g leaf dry mass/hour (DeForest 2009). Further details on substrate concentrations, plate layout and calculations can be found in Baudy et al. (2021).

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A.2.3 Next generation sequencing - **Protocol from Carl et al. 2022**

Preparation of leaf samples for sequencing on the Illumina MiSeq platform included DNA extraction and a 3-step-PCR with DNA extracts (Lindahl et al., 2013), followed by cleanup, DNA concentration measurements, equalization, and pooling of the resulting PCR products. Total DNA was extracted using the FastDNA SPIN Kit for Soil and the FastPrep-24 instrument (MP Biomedicals, Solon, USA. Further extraction steps were performed according to the manufacturer's protocol including the recommendations of extended time for debris centrifugation (15 min), protein precipitation on ice, and incubation of resuspended binding matrix for 5 min at 55 °C and 550 rpm before elution of DNA in 75 $\mu\mu\mu$ of the supplied PCR grade water. DNA extracts were stored at 4 ºC until needed. Amplicon libraries of the fungal ITS2 rDNA gene were generated using a mix of five forward primers ('ITS3tagmix') and one reverse primer ('ITS4ngs'), which address more than 95% of the known fungal kingdom (Tedersoo et al., 2014, 2015). PCR was conducted using the Phusion High-Fidelity DNA Polymerase (Thermo Fisher Scientific, Waltham, USA) in 20 μL reactions with 12.2 μL water (PCR grade), 4 μL 5× HF buffer (supplied with DNA polymerase, 1 mM final MgCl2 concentration), 1.6 μL dNTPs (Thermo Fisher Scientific, 2.5 mM each) and 0.5 μL each of 20 pM forward primer mix (5 primer with 4 pM each) and reverse primer. PCR was run on a thermal cycler (Bio-rad C100 touch, Hercules, USA) with 30 s initial denaturation at 98ºC, 30 amplification cycles of 10 s at 98 ºC, 30 s primer annealing at 55 ºC, and 1 min elongation at 72 ºC followed by a final elongation at 72 ºC for 10 min. All DNA-extracts were diluted 100-fold using the PCR grade water from the extraction kit in order to reduce the influence of PCR inhibitors and to avoid further clean-up steps that might lead to the loss of DNA. All diluted DNA extracts were amplified twice and the PCR products were pooled for each sample to account for the technical bias of PCR reactions (Lindahl et al., 2013). For metabarcoding, two more PCRs were performed, where barcodes, sequencing adaptors, and indices were ligated to the products of the first PCR. To achieve a distinct sample assignment of sequences, samples were grouped into 9 indices with 9 barcodes. To prevent cross-contamination of different treatments by potential barcode hoppers (Nilsson et al., 2019), samples of the same

treatment were ligated with one index only. PCR products were always stored at 4 ºC until further processing and the amplification success for all reactions was checked via electrophoresis on 1% agarose gels for products of the first and second PCR (pre-amplification and barcoding), or 1.7% agarose gels for index PCR products, respectively. After barcoding and indexing, the resulting index PCR products were purified with innuPREP PCR pure Kit (Analytik Jena, Jena, Germany) and their DNA concentration was quantified using the QuantiT PicoGreen dsDNA assay (Invitrogen, Carlsbad, USA). All PCR products were then diluted with PCR grade water to a final concentration of 4 nM, before they were pooled in a 1.5 ml tube (4 μL per sample). The resulting ITS2 library was then sequenced on the Illumina MiSeq System at a concentration of 4.4 pM with a 0.6 pM addition of an Illumina generated PhiX control library using the chemistry of a 600-cycle MiSeq Reagent Kit v3 (Illumina, San Diego, USA). PairPaired-end sequencing generated 2×300 bp reads. Demultiplexing of indices was performed automatically in the MiSeq sequencer according to a predefined sample sheet including the index sequences, whereas barcodes were demultiplexed using an in-house script of the Leibniz Institute DSMZ (https://github.com/boykebunk/ amplicon). Subsequently, sequences were processed with PIPITS (Version 2.4, Gweon et al., 2015, https://github.com/hsgweon/pipits /releases), an automated pipeline, which was especially recommended for Illumina derived sequences (Anslan et al., 2018; Nilsson et al., 2019). PIPITS includes sequence quality filtering with fastx, extraction of ITS subregions with ITSx, chimera filtering according to the UNITE UCHIME database, as well as clustering of OTUs with VSEARCH. Thus, ITS2 sequences were extracted from raw reads with relaxed threshold values for removal of flanking genes (Bengtsson-Palme et al., 2013). An ITS sequence similarity threshold of 97% was used for the generation of operational taxonomic units (OTUs). Taxonomic assignment was performed using the trained datasets of the RDP classifier (UNITE DB version February 02, 2019). In this way, PIPITS created an OTU table for every sample, which was assigned according to the 'Species Hypothesis' (SH) of the UNITE database (Nilsson et al., 2018).

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Microbial community history and leaf species shape bottom-up effects in a freshwater shredding amphipod

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ABSTRACT

Arable land use and the associated application of agrochemicals can affect local freshwater communities with consequences for the entire ecosystem. For instance, the structure and function of leaf-associated microbial communities can be affected by pesticides, such as fungicides. Additionally, the leaf species on which these microbial communities grow reflects another environmental filter for community structure. These factors and their interaction may jointly modify leaves' nutritional quality for higher trophic levels. To test this assumption, we studied the structure of leaf-associated microbial communities with distinct exposure histories (pristine [P] vs vineyard run off [V]) colonising two leaf species (black alder, European beech, and a mixture thereof). By offering these differently colonised leaves as food to male and female individual of the leaf-shredding amphipod *Gammarus fossarum* (Crustacea; Amphipoda) we assessed for potential bottom-up effects. The growth rate, feeding rate, faeces production and neutral lipid fatty acid profile of the amphipod served as response variable in a 2x2x3-factorial test design over 21d. A clear separation of community history (P vs V), leaf species and an interaction between the two factors was observed for the leafassociated aquatic hyphomycete (i.e., fungal) community. Sensitive fungal species were reduced by up to 70% in V- compared to P-communities. *Gammarus'* growth rate, feeding rate and faeces production were affected by the factor leaf species. Growth was negatively affected when *Gammarus* were fed with beech leaves only, whereas the impact of alder and the mixture of both leaf species was sex-specific. Overall, this study case highlights that leaf species identity had a more substantial impact on gammarids relative to the microbial community itself. Furthermore, the sex-specificity of the observed effects (excluding lipid fatty acid, profile which was only measured for male) questions the procedure of earlier studies, that is using either only one sex or not being able to differentiate between males and females. However, these results need additional verification to support a reliable extrapolation.

Keywords: Leaf litter breakdown, Shredders, Aquatic fungi, Exposure history, Food quality, Fatty acids

GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT

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INTRODUCTION

The decomposition of allochthonous organic carbon, such as terrestrial leaf litter, is a fundamental ecosystem-level process in streams with forest-dominated catchments (Fisher & Likens, 1973; Minshall, 1967; Nelson & Scott, 1962). After leaching of soluble organic substances, leaf litter is colonised by aquatic microorganisms, such as aquatic hyphomycetes (AH; a polyphyletic group of asexual fungi; Baschien, Marvanová & Szewzyk, 2006; Ferreira et al., 2016) and bacteria (Gessner, Chauvet & Dobson, 1999). These microorganisms decompose leaf litter by producing exoenzymes responsible for the transformation of complex leaf compounds into more usable and accessible transformation products (Hieber & Gessner, 2002). Moreover, the activity of bacteria and fungi increases the leaves' palatability and nutritional value for leafshredding invertebrates, also defined as conditioning. Thereby, microbial conditioning indirectly promotes leaf litter decomposition though the stimulation of shredders' feeding activity (Cummins, 1974; Bärlocher & Kendrick, 1975), which ultimately results in the production of fine particulate organic matter that is an essential resource for collectors and deposit-feeding organisms (Bundschuh & McKie, 2016). Driven by this crucial role in stream food webs, changes in leaf-associated microbial communities can have far-reaching ecological consequences (M. O. Gessner et al., 2010).

The structure of leaf-associated microbial communities is shaped by their surrounding environment, including chemicals of anthropogenic origin (Canhoto, Gonçalves & Bärlocher, 2016). A repeated or continuous exposure to anthropogenic chemicals favours the occurrence of tolerant species with consequences for the communities' functioning (Blanck, 2002; Feckler et al., 2018). Indeed, laboratory studies suggest that constant exposure to antimicrobial substances, such as fungicides, can affect leaf palatability (Fernández et al., 2015; Zubrod et al., 2015) and leaf nutritional quality for shredders (Wallace et al., 2015; Zubrod et al., 2015b; Konschak et al., 2020). It remains, however, unclear whether agricultural field relevant exposure patterns, amongst others characterized by repeated fungicide exposures (Zubrod et al., 2019), can modify both the leaf-associated microbial community and the nutritional quality of leaves for shredders.

At the same time, the leaf species identity may function as an additional filter for microbial communities due to their unique recalcitrance and nutrient levels (e.g., Cornwell et al., 2008; Hladyz et al., 2009; Swan, Gluth & Horne, 2009; Frainer et al., 2016; Grossman, Cavender-Bares & Hobbie, 2020; Wang et al., 2020). In fact, most studies assessing impacts of chemicals on leafassociated microbial communities have been performed with black alder (*Alnus glutinosa* (L.) GAERTN.) leaves, which are characterised by high nitrogen and phosphorous concentrations (Gulis, 2001) combined with a low degree of recalcitrance (Melillo, Aber & Muratore, 1982; Malanson, 1993; Gulis, 2001). Consequently, this leaf species likely supports microbial growth and activity through a relatively easy access to nutrients (Gulis, 2001). It may therefore be questioned whether effects of chemicals observed using black alder are transferable to leaf species of a lower quality, characterised by low nutrient concentrations or a high degree of recalcitrance.

To address this knowledge gap, we assessed bottom-up effects on shredders by focusing on leaf-associated microbial communities from distinct streams, one pristine site (P) and one site characterised by repeated fungicide exposure in viticulture (V; Fernández et al., 2015), conditioning two leaf species and their mixture. As leaf species we selected black alder and European beech (*Fagus sylvatica* L.), representing a low and high degree of recalcitrance, respectively (Gulis, 2001; Artigas et al., 2012). Leaf-associated microbial communities were characterised by their exoenzyme activity as a functional endpoint, and AH species composition as well as fungal and bacterial biomasses using species- and group-specific quantitative real-time polymerase chain reaction (qPCR) assays, respectively. Subsequently, those conditioned leaves were offered as food to *Gammarus fossarum* (KOCH) over 21 days. Responses of male and female *Gammarus* were assessed by measuring their growth rate in terms of biomass increase, feeding rate and faeces production, as well as their energy reserves in the form of neutral lipid fatty acid (NLFA) profiles (was only assessed for male individuals). The use of both sexes is motivated by the deviating life history strategies and thus ecological roles in ecosystems (e.g., Pöckl & Humpesch, 1990). Nonetheless, a transferability of results between sexes has been assumed (Naylor at al.,1989; Malbouisson et al., 1995). We hypothesised that i) independent of the exposure history of the microbial community, low quality leaf species (i.e., beech) will be mostly conditioned by AH species that are conjectured as capable of degrading highly recalcitrant material (Baudy, Zubrod, Konschak, Kolbenschlag, et al., 2021). Since published evidence (e.g., Feckler et al., 2018; Bundschuh et al., 2011) suggests that those species are more tolerant to fungicides (due to the land use around their sampling site), the hypothesised pattern of microbial colonization should be especially pronounced for the pre-disturbed (V) community when compared to the pristine (P) community. At the same time, these more tolerant fungal species that are able to degrade highly recalcitrant material (e.g., Baudy et al.*,* 2021), represent a less nutritional food for shedders (Arsuffi & Arsuffi & Suberkropp, 1989; Graça et al., 2001), which will be reflected in a lower food intake, growth rate and altered NLFA profile in both *Gammarus*' sexes. On the other hand, ii) the higher nitrogen concentration and lower recalcitrance of alder leaves will enable AH species with a more limited ligninolytic enzymatic capability to colonise such leaves, compensating for potential differences in palatability of microbial communities from the Prelative to V-community. Consequently, alder leaves should provide a comparatively highquality food for *Gammarus* through higher fungal biomass and diversity. Moreover, iii) the mixture of leaf species increases AH diversity because of increasing habitat diversity (M. O.

Gessner et al., 2010). At the same time, the anticipated lower food quality of beech leaves is compensated by a stimulated feeding on alder leaves, which is reflected by a higher *Gammarus* growth rate. Finally, it was hypothesised that iv) the responses of male and female gammarids to the different food qualities are comparable.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2.1 General study design

We used a 2x3x2-factorial design, where the first factor was the exposure history of the leaf-associated microbial communities sampled from streams dominated either by forest (mainly beech; pristine – P; P-community) or agricultural (vineyard run-off – V, without riparian vegetation; V-community) land use in their catchment, which is supported by earlier publications (Fernández et al., 2015; Schneeweiss et al., 2022). The second factor refers to the leaf species (i.e., alnus and beech) and their mixture, colonised by two leaf-associated microbial communities served as inoculum and the third to *Gammarus* sex. The leafassociated microbial communities were characterised through group- or species-specific qPCR as well as their enzymatic activity. In addition, the conditioned leaf material served as food for *Gammarus* (males and females) in a 21-day lasting feeding assay (n=40; Fig. 1). The impact on *Gammarus*' growth rate, absolute feeding rate, faeces production and NLFA profile were assessed.

2.2 Sources and procedures of leaf material and microbial communities

The study was initiated in March 2021 largely following published protocols (Zubrod, Bundschuh & Schulz, 2010) . Briefly, stream water was collected from: a pristine stream (P; Hainbach, Germany, 49° 14' N, 8° 09' E) dominated by forest originated in the nature conservation area (Palatinate Forest Nature Park); and a stream in the agricultural landscape – namely viticulture – with a known history of fungicide exposure as documented elsewhere (V; Modenbach, Germany, 49°25'N, 8°11'E; see more detailed information on chemical characterization in supplementary information, SI, A.1 Table S1-S5; Fernández et al.*,* 2015; Schneeweiss et al.*,* 2022; Landesamt für Umwelt, 2016). The temperature of stream water at the time of sampling was between 8.0 and 8.8ºC. The leaves were collected at the time of leaf fall in autumn 2019 close to Landau, Germany (49° 11' N 8° 7' E) and stored at -20°C until use. The conditioning was realised in separate 50-L stainless-steel channels, kept at 20 \pm 1 ºC in darkness under permanent aeration inducing water movement, for 14 days with a water exchange, freshly collected from the stream, after seven days. Each channel contained, 25 L stream water used to colonise 500 g of unconditioned alder or beech leaves as well as their mixture (250 g of each leaf species). This procedure resulted in six food sources (two inocula

Figure 1 – Schematic overview of the study design. Step 1: Preparation for the feeding experiment: generating inocula and collecting test organisms – sampling stream water and *Gammarus fossarum* from a near-natural stream (pristine, P- community). Simultaneously, a stream surrounded by viticulture (V- community) was sampled. In the laboratory, the stream water was used to microbially colonize alder and beech leaves or a mixture of both in stainless steel channels under continuous aeration (green lines). Gammarids were separated by diameter and sex and kept in aerated medium, while fed with alder leaves *ad libitum* during acclimatization (14 d). Step 2: 21 d feeding experiment with a 2x3-factorial design (n=40). Per replicate 8 discs (Ø=16 mm) were cut of leaves generated in step 1, here only exemplified for alder treatment. Four leaf discs of each leaf species combination were fed to each gammarid, and another 4 leaf discs were used to control for leaf mass loss (orange rectangle), separated by a watch glass (grey line).

crossed with two leaf species and their mixture) provided to the test species *G. fossarum* (20 males and 20 females) as food source over 21 days (Fig.1). The conditioning was repeated weekly, including stream water collection (i.e.,7d and 14d after the initial colonization), ensuring the provisioning of food with comparable quality over the entire study duration.

2.3 Long-term feeding assay

Coinciding with the first stream water sampling, *G. fossarum* were collected from the Hainbach. In the laboratory, *Gammarus* were passively size separated using sieves with decreasing mesh sizes (Franke, 1997). Adults passing a sieve with a mesh size of 2.0 mm but being retained by 1.3 mm were selected for this experiment. Specimen were subsequently separated by sex, identified by their position in pre-copula pairs (Fielding et al., 2003; Pascoe et al., 1995). *Gammarus* were kept in aerated test medium (SAM-5S; Borgmann, 1996) for 14d and acclimatized to 20 ± 1 ºC in darkness while being fed *ad libitum* with unconditioned black alder leaves, ensuring *Gammarus* had access to a good quality food source (Bloor, 2011).

During the feeding assay, *Gammarus* were offered six food sources as detailed in section 2.2. Therefore, eight leaf discs (\varnothing =16 mm) were cut from two conditioned leaves, to ensure comparable results on the leaf mixture treatment, including one leaf from each species, and allocated to one replicate, with 40 replicates (20 male plus 20 female gammarids) being prepared for each treatment (Fig. 1). Each replicate consisted of a 250-mL glass beaker and was equipped with a cylindrical mesh cage made from stainless-steel (mesh size: 0.5 mm) containing one *Gammarus* and four leaf discs (two from each leaf). A second, rectangular mesh cage contained the remaining four leaf discs controlling for microbial leaf mass loss. A watch glass separated these two cages preventing adhesion of *Gammarus'* faeces to the leaf discs in the rectangular cage (see Zubrod et al.*,* 2015b; Fig.1). Replicates were filled with 250 mL test medium (SAM-5S; Borgmann, 1996), which was automatically renewed twice a day. The flowrate was selected to not remobilise the faeces, which was identified during a preliminary experiment. Moreover, every seventh day, remaining leaf discs and faeces were retrieved and gammarids were translocated to a new beaker with fresh medium and fresh leaf discs. The remaining leaf discs from each cage were collected, dried at 60 °C for 24 h and weighed to the nearest 0.01 mg. The old medium was filtered through pre-weighed glass fibre filters (GF/6, Whatman, Dassel, Germany), dried and weighed as detailed above to determine faeces production. At the termination of the experiment (after 21 days), surviving *Gammarus* (mortality did not exceed 5%) were shock frozen in liquid nitrogen and stored at −80 °C before being freeze-dried and weighed to the nearest 0.01 mg. Those organisms were used to determine growth rates and assess the NLFA profile of five randomly chosen male *Gammarus* per treatment (section 2.5). The sole focus on male *Gammarus* is motivated by the endeavour to reduce intra-treatment variability (Pascoe et al.*,* 1995; Fielding et al.*,* 2003). Similarly, leaf discs (after 7 days in the test system with *Gammarus*) from the rectangular cage of five randomly chosen replicates were frozen at -20 °C for further analysis. Two of these leaf discs were used to assess microbial community composition (section 2.4.1) and the remaining two leaf discs served the activity analyses of exoenzymes (section 2.4.2). Replicates containing dead *Gammarus* (not exceeding 5%) were excluded from any analyses.

2.4 Characterisation of the leaf-associated microbial communities

2.4.1 Quantitative real-time PCR

DNA was extracted using the FastDNA® Spin Kit for Soil in combination with the FastPrep™-24 5G Instrument (MP Biomedicals, Germany) generally according to the manufacturer's protocol. Fungal and bacterial DNA was quantified following Baudy et al. (2019) and Manerkar, Seena & Bärlocher (2008) using qPCR reactions. On the species level (10 common and co-occurring AH species; Zubrod et al.*,* 2015), the amount of DNA was measured as a proxy for fungal biomass based on species-specific TaqMan® qPCR reactions (Applied Biosystems, USA). On the group level, the amount of fungal and bacterial operon copies was measured as a proxy for overall fungal and bacterial biomass via SYBR® Green reactions slightly adapted (Manerkar, Seena & Bärlocher, 2008). PCR reaction mixtures were prepared with 2.8 μL of distilled water, 0.1 μL of forward primer, 0.1 μL of reverse primer, 2 μL DNA extract, and 5 μL of master mix PowerUp™ SYBR® Green, (Applied biosystems). PCR reactions consisted of initial denaturation at 95 °C for 2 min, followed by denaturation at 95 °C for 15 s, annealing at 55 °C for 15 s, and extension at 72 °C for 60 s for 40 cycles. Both types of qPCR reactions were performed on a Mastercycler® ep gradient S (Eppendorf, Germany) using 0.2-mL 8-tube strips covered with clear optical 8-cap strips (Sarstedt AG & Co. KG, Nümbrecht, Germany). More details on the assays and data analyses are provided in the Supplementary Information (A2; Table S6 and S7).

2.4.2 Exoenzyme activity

To quantify hydrolases' and oxidases' activities, we use the method described by DeForest (2009) but modified for leaf litter (see Baudy et al., 2020); detailed information on enzyme names, respective substrates, and targets is provided in the Supplementary Information A.2. Enzymatic activity was expressed as μmol of degraded substrate/mg leaf dry weight/hour (DeForest, 2009). Further details on substrate concentrations, plate layout and calculations can be found in Baudy et al. (2020). Additionally, we used enzyme activities to calculate the recalcitrance ratio of the leaf material, after square root transformation to reduce the effect of dominant enzyme activities, as normalised oxidases per total hydrolases activity (Table 2). The higher the ratio oxidase/hydrolase activity, the greater is the relative investment for degradation of recalcitrant carbon (Romero-Olivares et al., 2017).

2.5 Characterisation of *Gammarus*' physiological fitness

2.5.1 Growth, feeding and egestion rate

The individuals' growth rate was determined by subtracting the average (±sd) dry weight of 20 male (4.89 \pm 1.06 mg) plus 20 female (3.00 \pm 1.07 mg) lyophilized gammarids collected at the start of the bioassay, from the *Gammarus*' dry weight (after lyophilization) at test termination considering their respective sex, divided by the duration of the experiment (µg biomass gain/d). Although our approach to estimate growth might carry severe uncertainty, alternative approaches, such as the quantification of wet weight before and after the experiment substantially increases stress (unpublished studies point to a substantially higher mortality). The latter will potentially carry severer consequences for the data and conclusions that can be drawn thereof. The individuals collected at the start of the experiment were also used for NLFA profile analysis (see below) to which changes in NLFA profiles of all treatment groups have been related. The consumption of leaf material was calculated using the weight difference between the discs offered as food to the *Gammarus* in the cylindrical cage and those placed in the rectangular cage, divided by the final weight of the respective gammarid and time of the assay (i.e., 21 d; mg consumed leaf material/ mg Gammarus/d; Zubrod et al., 2011). Faeces production was calculated by subtracting the initial filter dry weight from the final filter dry weight divided by the final weight of the respective gammarid and time between food renewals (mg faeces/mg *Gammarus*/d; Zubrod et al.*,* 2011).

2.5.2 Fatty acid analyses

Five randomly chosen male gammarids from each treatment plus five male individuals collected at the start of the bioassay were lyophilized and weighed to the nearest 0.01 mg for TAG FAs (Triacylglyceride fatty acids i.e., NLFAs) profiling following Bligh & Dyer (1959) and Konschak et al. (2020). We deliberately chose to analyse NLFAs, rather than phospholipid FA, as they are an important energy storage in invertebrates (Azeez et al., 2014) and are more readily affected by changes in the organisms' diet (Iverson, 2012). *Gammarus* were homogenized in a chloroform:methanol:water mixture (1:2:0.8; v:v:v). Subsequently, a TAG with three deuterated 18:0 FAs (Tristearin-D105, Larodan, Solna, Sweden) was added as internal standard, followed by chloroform and water addition to reach a chloroform:methanol:water ratio of 2:2:1.8 (cf. Bligh and Dyer, 1959). The samples were stored overnight at 4 °C. TAGs were separated from glycolipids and phospholipids by solid phase extraction (Chromabond® easy polypropylene columns, Macherey-Nagel, Düren, Germany; conditioned with 4 mL chloroform) and elution with 4 mL chloroform. Afterwards, the solvent was evaporated at 40 °C under a constant stream of nitrogen in a dry heat incubator (VLM Metall- blockthermostate, VLM GmbH, Bielefeld, Germany). TAGs were subsequently solved in 100 μL of dichloromethane and NLFAs were transesterified to fatty acid methyl esters (FAME) using trimethylsulfonium hydroxide (Sigma-Aldrich, St. Louis, US-MO). FAME were analysed via gas chromatography with flame-ionization detection (GC-FID; Trace GC Ultra, Thermo Fisher Scientific, Bremen, Germany) using a Restek FAMEWAX column (30 m x 0.25 mm, 0.25 µm film thickness) and helium (1.4 mL/min) as carrier gas. FAMEs in each sample were determined using the retention times of FAME standards (37-component FAME Mix, Supelco CRM47885) and FAs were quantitatively analysed via external standard calibration (i.e., μg NLFA/mL). NLFA concentrations were corrected using extraction blanks and the recovery rate of the internal standard. The corrected NLFA concentrations were extrapolated to the total sample volume and normalized to *Gammarus*' dry weights (i.e., mg NLFA/g dry sample mass). The results are presented as difference relative to the subsamples of *Gammarus* collected at the start of the experiment.

2.6 Statistics and figures

Visual inspection, Shapiro–Wilk tests and Levene's tests were used to test for normality of the residuals and homoscedasticity of univariate data. When presumptions for parametric testing were met, two-factor or three-factor analyses of variance (ANOVA) were applied depending on the assessed variable (see Table S8-S10). As the presumptions for parametric testing were violated for data on the number of bacterial operon copies, a two-factor Kruskal-Wallis test, followed by a Bonferroni correction, was used to assess the individual and combined effect of the microbial communities' history and leaf species. Please note that considering the criticism of null-hypothesis significance testing we base our interpretation on both statistical significance and effect sizes (i.e., the difference between treatments (Newman, 2009; Feckler et al., 2018)).

Multivariate data (AH species composition and NLFA profiles) were square roottransformed to reduce the effect of dominant AH species or FAs (Happel et al., 2017). Afterwards, permutational multivariate analyses of variance (PERMANOVA) on transformed data were performed to assess the individual and combined impact of the microbial communities' history and leaf species, applying Bray-Curtis dissimilarities as a distance measure between groups. The assumption of homogeneous within-group dispersion was tested using the "betadisper" function and was fulfilled for all groups. Furthermore, AH species composition was displayed for graphical interpretation via non-metric multidimensional scaling plots using Bray-Curtis dissimilarities (NMDS; Clarke, 1993). Statistics and figures were conducted with R version 4.2.1 for Windows (R Core Team, 2022) as well as the add-on packages "vegan", "ggplot2", "multcomp", "rstatix" and "ggh4x". The graphical abstract was created in Biorender.com. Note that the term "significant(ly)" refers to statistical significance (p<.05) throughout the study.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Leaf-associated microbial communities

The number of fungal operon copies was lower (up to 40%) on beech and the mixture of alder and beech compared to alder alone. Although statistically not significant, this impact was more pronounced for the V- relative to the P-community (Tables 1 and S8-S10). Bacterial operon copies were three-fold more abundant on leaves in the mixture conditioned by the Pcompared to the V-community (Table 1), but the difference was not statistically significant (Table S8).

Table 1. Mean (with 95 % confidence intervals; 10^8/mg leaf dw; n=3, fungal and bacterial operon copies of microbial communities colonizing the leaves used as food for G. fossarum during the 21-d lasting feeding assay. P: pristine; V: vineyard run-off.

Figure 2 – Non-metric multidimensional scaling (NMDS) plot for leaf-associated aquatic hyphomycete communities. Leaf species are indicated by symbols (alder = circles, beech = squares, the mixture of both = triangles). Colours indicate the source of microbial inocula: pristine stream water (P) = black and vineyard run-off stream water (V) = grey. Spider webs connect the samples of each treatment at their respective group centroid. The stress value is provided as a measure of "goodness-of-fit" for NMDS, with a reasonable fit indicated when below 0.2 (Clarke,1993).

The AH community composition assessed through the quantification of DNA of 10 species, showed a difference between treatments. In fact, the factors community history (P vs V; p=0.004), leaf species (p=0.001) and an interaction between leaf species and community history (p=0.048; Fig. 2, Table S10; S12; S13) had a statistically significant impact in the community composition. Some species, such as *Alatospora acuminata* and *Flagellospora curvula*, were present in all treatments but with ~70% significantly lower abundance on beech leaves conditioned by the V- relative to the P-community was detected, these results suggest a shift in the relative contribution of individual species to the AH community (Tables S12-15).

Figure 3 – Heatmaps displaying square root-transformed activities (μmol of degraded substrate/g leaf dry mass/hour) of β-1,4-glucosidase (BGL; targeting cellulose), β-1,4 xylosidase (XYL; targeting hemicellulose), cellobiohydrolase (CEL; targeting cellulose), phosphatase (PHO; targeting phosphate esters), phenol oxidase (PHE; targeting lignin) and peroxidaseperoxidase (PER; targeting lignin). Leaf species are shown on the Yaxis, while the community histories are shown on the x-axis (P: pristine; V: vineyard run-off).

A distinct pattern of the overall enzymes' activity was found for each of the treatments (Fig. 3) with only one enzyme (namely peroxidase) showing a significant interaction of microbial community history and leaf species (p=0.016; Table S9). Higher ligninolytic activity was found in all treatments conditioned by the V- compared to the P-community. Additionally, beech-associated microbes showed a higher hydrolase activity. On the contrary, alderassociated microbes showed a higher enzyme activity targeting phosphate esters and lignin (see also Table S16; SI A.3). The recalcitrance ratio (Table 2) of alder and beech leaves conditioned by the P-community was about 30% higher relative to their counterparts conditioned with the V-community. However, the opposite was observed in the mixture of alder and beech leaves, where the recalcitrance ratio of leaves conditioned by the P-community were 25% lower relative to the V-community. Moreover, alder leaves had overall the highest recalcitrance ratio.

Table 2. Investment in recalcitrant carbon degradation calculated as the ratio of oxidases divided by total hydrolases using square-root transformed data. The lower the ratio the higher the relative investment in recalcitrant carbon degradation (Romero-Olivares, Allison & Treseder, 2017). P: pristine; V: vineyard.

3.2 *Gammarus'* physiological fitness

Gammarus' growth rate was significantly impacted by the leaf species (p=0.001, Table S9) and showed a significant interaction of leaf species and the sex (p=0.005; Table S9). Male gammarids grew faster when fed with alder compared to male gammarids fed with the mixture of alder and beech (up to 60% depending on the inoculum) and beech leaves only (up to 115% depending on the inoculum; Fig. 4a). In contrast, the growth rate obtained for female gammarids was in extreme cases 21 times higher when fed with the mixture of alder and beech leaves compared to treatments in which only one of the leaf species was offered – a pattern independent of the inoculum (Fig. 4d). Additionally, a negative average growth rates obtained for one of the treatments, with the magnitude of the effect in combination with the variation within the data set pointing towards a growth stagnation or a slight loss in weight (Fig.4a & b). This observation may also be a consequence of a methodological artefact of the method chosen to calculate growth (see section 2.5.1).

Moreover, the feeding rate of females was slightly (5-30%) but consistently and significantly higher than that of males (p=0.048; Table S9). *Gammarus'* feeding rate was significantly influenced by the leaf species ($p=0.014$) and the interaction of community history and leaf species (p=0.004; Table S9) suggesting a substrate-dependent role of the source of the microbial inoculum. Finally, the feeding rate showed a similar pattern among treatments for both sexes while the effect sizes were more pronounced for males (Fig. 4b).

While the feeding rate of female gammarids was higher than that of males, the reverse pattern was observed for the faeces production. Females produced with ~10-20% significantly less faeces than males (Fig. 4c, f; $p=0.008$; Table S9). Moreover, faeces production was $$ independent of sex and source of the microbial inoculum – higher when feeding on the mixture

Figure 4. Mean (± 95% confidence intervals, n=20) a), b) growth rate as µg biomass gain/day, c), d) feeding rate as mg leaf material/mg gammarid/day, e), f) faeces production as mg faeces/mg gammarid/day of male and female gammarids, respectively, consuming alder (black), beech (light grey) or their mixture (dark grey) colonized by microbes with distinct exposure histories: P pristine; V vineyard. of both leaf species (Fig. 4c, f). This observation is supported by a significant effect of the factor leaf species (p=0.0001, Table S9) and may be a consequence of a promoted feeding rate partially observed in those treatments (Fig. 4 b, e).

As displayed in Table 3, no significant differences among treatments in the NLFA profiles of male gammarids were found (Table S10). This includes all NLFA groups (saturated FAs, SAFA; monounsaturated FAs, MUFA; polyunsaturated FAs, PUFA) and biologically important FAs and their precursors, such as eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA; C20:5n-3), alphalinolenic acid (ALA; C18:3n-3), and linoleic acid (LIN; C18:2n-6). Although the overall changes in NLFA profiles among treatments are statistically non-significant, gammarids have partly up to fifty percent lower levels of essential FAs and their precursors compared to the experiment initiation (see Table 3 for further details). While these changes suggest implications in the physiology of the organisms, the reliability of the observed trends needs further support by follow-up experiments.

Table 3. Percentage variation to the pre-experimental status of total, saturated (SAFA), monosaturated (MUFA) and polysaturated (PUFA) fatty acid content as well as linoleic acid (LIN; C18:2n-6), alpha-linolenic acid (ALA; C18:3n-3), and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA; C20:5n-3) , that represent FA with biological interest (expressed as %total FA content per mg dry weight) of male *G. fossarum* subjected to different treatments during the 21-d lasting feeding assay. Statistical analyses are displayed in Table 1. P pristine; V vineyard run-off.

4. DISCUSSION

Gammarus' physiology was partially affected by the tested combinations of leaf species and leaf-associated microbial communities with differing exposure histories. Beech leaves alone resulted, for both sexes and independent of the microbial community, in lower growth rates compared to alder leaves, with effect sizes being more pronounced for the Vthan for the P-community, which supports our first hypothesis. In support of our second hypothesis, alder (directly or indirectly) supports *Gammarus'* physiology more efficiently. Moreover, alder seems capable of compensating for the reduced presence of nutritional AH species in the beech-associated microbial community when offered together with beech (see hypothesis (iv)). Additionally, sex played a central role in the responses of *Gammarus* to the different treatments, which contradicts hypothesizes (iv). Consequently, extrapolation of responses among sex is not advisable. However, the partially high variability rendered some of the high effect sizes as statistically insignificant despite its potential biological relevance. Consequently, our strategy to base data interpretation on both statistical significance and effect sizes is further supported (Newman, 2008). Nonetheless, this strategy could introduce some uncertainty to our interpretation and discussion, which requires follow-up initiatives more specifically testing hypotheses that emerge based on the present study.

4.1 Leaf-associated microbial communities

The overall fungal and bacterial biomass, approximated by operon copies, were statistically insignificant among treatments suggesting a limited capacity of these parameters to explain the responses of gammarids' feeding. Although fungi and bacteria's chemical signals are considered attractive to shredders (Lange et al.*,* 2005), the role of bacteria in their nutrition remains largely ignored. In contrast, literature suggests a preference of shredders for certain AH species (Arsuffi & Suberkropp, 1984). Indeed, in the present study the AH community composition varied significantly between P- and V-communities and among leaf species. The leaf associated microbial community, in particular AH community, is driving the palatability of leaf litter for shedders. However, no relation between shedders' preference and fungal biomass or enzymatic production could be established (Suberkropp et al., 1983). Instead, shedders' preferences for specific fungal species seems to be a function of the individual AH species traits, such as secondary metabolites (Arsuffi & Suberkropp, 1984), or mycelia's glyceride or FA content (Cargill et al., 1985; Arce Funck et al., 2015). Against this background, species considered more palatable (e.g., *A. acuminata, F. curvula*; (Arsuffi & Suberkropp, 1989; Suberkropp et al., 1983)) had equally high or higher biomasses on leaves conditioned by the Prelative to the V-community, independent on the leaf species. Those AH species are also assumed more nutritional (Arce Funck et al., 2015; Rong et al., 1995) to leaf-shredding organisms such as *Gammarus*. On the other hand, less nutritional AH species (such as *Tetracladium marchalianum or Tricladium angulatum*) were either absent or had a lower biomass on leaves conditioned by the P-community compared to leaves conditioned by the Vcommunity. This pattern is in accordance with several studies (e.g., Bärlocher, 1973; Arsuffi & Suberkropp, 1989; Gonçalves et al., 2014), suggesting that more tolerant species, such as *T. marchalianum* (Maltby et al., 1995), ultimately dominate stressed AH communities (Bundschuh, Zubrod, Kosol, et al., 2011; Solé et al., 2008). Furthermore, AH species patterns are less consistent among leaf species. *Neonectria lugdunensis* is either clearly dominating on alder conditioned by the P-community or is the second most abundant species when the Vcommunity served as inoculum. This pattern is not confirmed for beech or the mixture of beech and alder. At the same time, *N. lugdunensis* is among the least preferred AH species for detritivores according to Arsuffi & Suberkropp (1989). Consequently, a generalizable pattern of AH community composition among substrates or the origin of the microbial inoculum is not abstractable, particularly as shedders' feeding preference for AH species is variable (e.g., Gonçalves et al., 2014). Moreover, we would like to highlight that laboratory conditions, which may include temperature differences relative to the field (Carl et al., 2022) and the presence of shredders' faeces (Díaz Villanueva et al., 2011), can impact microbial communities. By monitoring the succession of these communities over the study's duration, the magnitude of the effects could be quantified in future studies, further supporting a reasonable interpretation of the results presented here.

4.2 Responses of *Gammarus* to different food qualities

The fact that different leaf species presented different palatability should have had, according to our hypotheses, an impact on *Gammarus'* physiology. Based on *Gammarus'* growth, both sexes did not perform well when fed with beech only, a potential consequence of its higher recalcitrance and conditioning with less nutritional AH species, such as *N. lugdunensis*. Moreover, males and females showed different general growth patterns: despite the partially high variability within treatments, it may be abstracted that males and females grew faster when feeding on alder and the mixture of both leaf species, respectively, a pattern independent of the leaf-associated microbial community.

This observation of differing preferences may be explained by sex-specific requirements and life history strategies: although literature on this topic is scarce, studies have reported that male *Gammarus* live longer and have larger sizes than females with the aim to increase their competitiveness and support mate-guarding (Pöckl & Humpesch, 1990; Pöckl, 1992; Pöckl, Webb & Sutcliffe, 2003), suggesting that males strive for resources optimising their growth. Indeed, males grew faster when their feeding rate was the lowest (i.e., fed with alder) pointing to an efficient use of high-quality leaf litter additionally characterised by an AH community of presumably high nutritional quality. The introduction of beech into the leaf mixture decreases the food quality, as does the presumed nutritional quality of the AH community, leading to a higher feeding rate but lower growth of males. The latter indicates compensatory feeding, a mechanism by which organisms consume higher amounts of low-quality food to meet their nutritional requirements (Feckler et al., 2015; Rasmussen, Wiberg-Larsen, Baattrup-Pedersen, Friberg, et al., 2012). Although FA profiles did not show significant changes in male gammarids exclusively feeding on beech, highly unsaturated (essential) FAs, such as ALA and EPA, were more strongly reduced compared to the test initiation. This observation was not confirmed when the mixture of both leaf species served as food. Even though data on female gammarids is lacking this observation supports the assumption that alder may compensate for lower food quality of beech leaves.

The generally lower NLFAs' concentration compared to individuals from the start of the bioassay, points towards the fact that gammarids were fed with lower quality food in the lab compared to the situation in the field, where they are able to supplement their dietary needs with other sources (e.g., algae; Guo et al., 2016; 2018) . Earlier studies have shown that laboratory conditions (e.g., changes in temperature, flux, or nutrient availability as for example derived from the amphipod faeces) can change the microbial community compared to field conditions (Carl et al., 2022). These changes in physical and chemical conditions potentially select more tolerant species, with potential implications in food quality as explained in the previous section. These more tolerant fungal species are often less palatable to *Gammarus*, potentially interfering with their feeding and physiology. This calls for further efforts to quantify the impact of such confounding factors, for example through the monitoring of the succession within the microbial community over the study duration. Moreover, the experiment was initiated in March and thus prior to the usual first fungicide application of the growing season. This fact points to the possibility for recolonization of AH from less or even uncontaminated upstream sections influencing the V-community of our study as documented for invertebrates (Orlinskiy et al., 2015). At test initiation we assumed, however, a change in AH communities when sampled from streams in vineyards (i.e., V-community) due to repeated fungicide exposure over the last years or even decades. Consequently, and contrary to our assumption, the impact of fungicide exposure in AH communities may be assumed to be buffered by recolonization over the winter season. Re-running the experiment during or shortly after the main fungicide application period may be recommended to capture a field relevant worst-case scenario.

In contrast to males, females increase their size to enhance fecundity and carry eggs (Pöckl, 1990, 1992), with the latter also affecting their mobility and thus ability to exploit food resources (Lewis & Loch-Mally, 2010). We, consequently, assume females will constantly feed on any leaf species available to survive and wait for better conditions supporting growth, moulting and brood development. Bakkar et al. (2017) supports our assumptions, demonstrating that male and female sesarmid crabs produced faeces with a different chemical signature when feeding on mangrove leaves, suggesting a sex-specific digestive process. Moreover, due to competitive behaviour (e.g., cannibalism as food preference over sex, Ward, 1983; Dick, Irvine & Elwood, 1990; Ward & Porter, 1993; Dick, 1995; Ironside et al., 2019) and size advantage of males over females, the latter may have evolved to use a mixed quality of food, which is reflected by the efficient use of recalcitrant leaves in the present study. While this

assumption needs further verification also in the field, it points to the fact that an extrapolation – also at the physiological level – from males to females (commonly used in previous studies due to reduced intra-treatment variability; Pascoe et al.*,* 1995; Fielding et al.*,* 2003) is not straightforward and needs particular attention because of their relevance for population development.

Overall, the present study suggests that the leaf species identity, and thus the substrate on which the microbial communities grow, has a larger impact on the physiology of the next trophic level (i.e., the shredders) than the microbial community as such. As this observation is based on a fairly limited number of community history replicates (i.e., one Pcommunity and one V-community), its general applicability needs further scrutiny.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

The interaction of leaf species and community history shaped the leaf-associated AH community composition. This stirs up a sex-specific change of gammarids' fitness as shown by differences in their growth. Particularly the sex-specific response to the different substrates questions the procedure of earlier studies using either only one sex or not being able to differentiate sex. Consequently, sex-specific responses are not yet properly considered. Moreover, the lack of a clear pattern in energy reserves on males (here the NLFA profile) calls not only for expanding replication but also the use of both sexes in physiological assessment, which is supported by the sex-specific growth pattern in response to the food sources. Thereby, a more comprehensive pattern on potential bottom-up related effects in the wider food web can be developed.

Acknowledgments & Funding: We thank V. Gerstle, S. Kolbenschlag, S. Oster and T. Schmitt for the technical support. The project was funded through the German Research Foundation (DFG; project number 411020793)

Author contributions: Conceptualisation: MB. Developing methods: SP. Conducting the research: SG; AP; SP; AF. Data analysis: SG. Data interpretation: SG, AP, AF, MB. Preparation of figures & tables: SG. Writing: all.

Data Availability Statement: Data are available from the authors upon reasonable request.

Conflict of interest statement: The authors do not see a conflict of interest with the publication of this paper.

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Supplementary information for

Microbial community history and leaf species shape bottom-up

effects in a freshwater shredding amphipod

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A.1 Physical and chemical parameters of the studied region

Table S1 - Information on environmental parameters of the pristine stream (P; Hainbach, 49° 14' N, 8° 09' E) and a stream in the agricultural landscape – (V; Modenbach, 49°25'N, 8°11'E), adapted from Gonçalves et al. (submitted). Nutrient concentrations were analysed on-site with Visocolor® test kits (Macherey-Nagel, Düren, Germany). Water temperature, pH, electrical conductivity and dissolved oxygen were measured using a multiparameter analyser Multi 340i (WTW, Weilheim, Germany) and flow velocity was measured with a flow meter (Höntzsch, Waiblingen, Germany).

Table S2 – Characterization of the sampling region, which included 17 sampling sites in different streams covering a gradient of fungicide exposure, forest to vineyards (maximum distance of 4 km) during the summer of 2012, adapted from Fernández et al., 2015. Nutrient concentrations were analysed on-site with Visocolor® test kits (Macherey-Nagel, Düren, Germany). Water temperature, pH, electrical conductivity and dissolved oxygen were measured using a multiparameter analyser Multi 340i (WTW, Weilheim, Germany) and flow velocity was measured with a flow meter (Höntzsch, Waiblingen, Germany).

Table S3 - Frequency of detection of pesticides measured during summer 2012 by Fernández et al., 2015 in vineyard sites corresponding to the same sampling region as the present study.

Table S4 – Information on environmental variables characterising sites of Hainbach and Modenbach during summer 2019, adapted from Schneeweiss et al., 2022. Nutrient concentrations indicate the amount of nitrogen or phosphor in the respective compound (i.e. NH_4 -N, NO₃-N, NO₂-N, PO₄-P).

Table S5 – Pesticides number and concentration in ng/L found on the interest sites during summer 2019, adapted from Schneeweiss et al., 2022.

A.2 Methods & data analysis

Table S6 - Information on qPCR assay developed by Baudy et al. (2019): designations, targeted species, including the used model strain (DSM number from the German Collection of microorganisms and cell culture at the Leibniz institute-DSMZ) and template sequences' GenBank accession number as well as technical properties including length, melting temperature, guanine-cytosine content, binding region, and amplicon length.

Table S7 - Information on qPCR assay developed by Manerkar et al. (2008): Targeted group, primers (Baker & Cowan, 2003; White et al., 1990) used including the template sequences as well as technical properties including melting temperature, amplified region and length (bp).

Table S8- Output for statistical analyses for fungal and bacterial DNA copy numbers. df, degrees of freedom; SS, sum of squares; MS, mean squares.

Table S9 - Output for statistical analyses for Peroxidase, growth, feeding rate and faeces production. df, degrees of freedom; SS, sum of squares; MS, mean squares. p-values printed in bold indicate statistical significance.

Table S10 - Output for statistical analyses for multivariate data, AH composition and fatty acids profile. df, degrees of freedom; SS, sum of squares; MS, mean squares. p-values printed in bold indicate statistical significance.

Table S11 - Mean of measured endpoints: fungal and bacterial 10⁸DNA copy numbers; lipid fatty acid profile, saturated FAs, SAFA; monounsaturated FAs, MUFA; polyunsaturated FAs, PUFA, growth rate, feeding rate, faeces production ± sd.

Table S12 - Means of AH species composition DNA quantity (ng DNA per mg of leaf dry weight) measured via qPCR and respective AH individual species biomass estimation following Baudy et al. (2019) in mg AH culture dry weight per ng DNA measured

Table S13 – The contribution (in %) of each AH species to the community based on biomass estimated using qPCR (Table S4) separated by treatment. P: pristine; V: vineyard run-off.

Table S14 - Output for statistical analyses (Kruskal-Wallis and Pairwise Wilcox test with pvalue adjustment BH) of the AH species biomass.

Table S15 - Output for simper analysis of community composition.

A.3 Exoenzyme activity

A.3.1 Material and Methods

To quantify hydrolases and oxidases activities, we use the method described by DeForest (2009) but modified for leaf litter (see Baudy et al. 2020). Hydrolases, namely β-1,4 glucosidase (BGL; EC 3.2.1.21; targeting cellulose), cellobiohydrolase (CEL; EC 3.2.1.91; targeting cellulose), β-1,4-xylosidase (XYL; EC 3.2.1.37; targeting hemicellulose), and phosphatases (PHO; EC 3.1.3.1 and 3.1.3.2; targeting phosphate esters), were measured fluorometrically using fluorescent (MUF, methylumbelliferone)-linked artificial substrates. Oxidases, namely phenol oxidase (PHE; EC 1.10.3.2; targeting lignin) and peroxidase (PER; EC 1.11.1.7; targeting lignin), were measured colorimetrically employing L-3,4 dihydroxyphenylalanine (L-DOPA).

After thawing, leaf discs were homogenized in 350 mL of SAM-5S using an Ultraturrax® blender (IKA®-Werke GmbH and Co. KG, Germany) at 24,000 rpm. For hydrolase analyses, black flat-bottom 96-well 300-μL plates (Thermo Fisher Scientific, USA) were incubated in darkness for 1 h on a rotary shaker (model KS 15; Edmund Bühler GmbH, Germany) at 120 rpm, whereupon 10 μL 1M NaOH were added to terminate reactions and enhance fluorescence (DeForest 2009). Fluorescence was measured at 365 nm excitation and 450 nm emission using a microplate reader (Infinite 200, Tecan Group; Switzerland). Oxidases were measured in clear flat-bottom 96-well 300-μL plates (Thermo Fisher Scientific, USA), after incubation for 2 h on a rotary shaker. Absorbance was measured at 450 nm using a microplate reader. The medium containing the homogenized leaves was filtered through preweighed glass fiber filters (GF/6, Whatman, Dassel, Germany) and dried at 60 ºC for 24 h to determine leaf dry mass. Enzymatic activity was expressed as μmol of degraded substrate/g leaf dry mass/hour (DeForest 2009). Further details on substrate concentrations, plate layout and calculations can be found in Baudy et al. (2020).

Table S16 - Output of two-way ANOVA as run on enzyme activity data.

A.3.2 Results

A distinct pattern of the overall enzymes' activity was found for each of the treatments (Fig.3). However, only the enzyme Peroxidase showed a significant interaction of community history x leaf species (p=.016; Table 2). Higher ligninolytic activity (PHE and PER) were found in all treatments conditioned by the V- compared to the P-community. Additionally, and independent of the community history, beech-associated microbes showed a higher activity of the hydrolase enzymes XYL and CEL that target hemicellulose and cellulose, respectively. On the contrary, alder-associated microbes showed a higher activity of PHO, PHE, and PER, targeting phosphate esters and lignin, respectively. In addition, XYL and CEL activity was also

higher when alder stemming in the P-communities. The opposite, a lower activity was observed for leaves previously being colonised with V- impacted microbes. Unexpectedly, oxidase enzymes responsible for the lignin degradation were higher in the presence of alder in both P and V-impacted communities. The combination of both leaf species resulted in a higher activity of hydrolases (XYL and CEL) independent of the microbial community history, and as observed for beech leaves.

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Gonçalves S., Feckler A., Pollitt A., Baschien C., Michael J., Schreiner V. C, Zubrod J. P., Bundschuh M., Increasing fungicide and nutrient concentrations change structure but not function of aquatic microbial communities *(submitted)*

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7.4 APPENDIX IV

Author contribuitions

Appendix I

Increasing fungicide and nutrient concentrations change structure but not function of aquatic microbial communities

Conceptualisation: MB. Conducting the research: SG; AP; JM; VS; AF; CB. Data analysis: SG; CB; AF; JZ. Data interpretation: SG; CB; AF; MB. Preparation figures & tables: SG. Writing: all.

Appendix II

Leaf Species-Dependent Fungicide Effects on the Function and Abundance of Associated Microbial Communities.

Conceptualization: MB, JZ.

Methodology:RP, MK, JZ.

Formal analysis and investigation: SG, RP, AF.

Writing and original draft preparation: SG.

Writing, review and editing: all.

Funding acquisition: MB.

Appendix III

Microbial community history and leaf species shape bottom-up effects in a freshwater shredding amphipod

Conceptualisation: MB.

Developing methods: SP.

Conducting the research: SG; AP; SP; AF.

Data analysis: SG.

Data interpretation: SG, AP, AF, MB.

Preparation of figures & tables: SG.

Writing: all.

7.5 APPENDIX V - Curriculum vitae

Peer-reviewed publications

Gonçalves, S., Baschien, C., Feckler, A., Bundschuh, M. (**in prep**). *qPCR & NGS methods to study leaf litter community composition under stress.*

Gonçalves, S., Feckler, A., Pollitt, A., Pietz, S., Schreiner, V. C., Bundschuh, M. (**in prep***). Individual traits of aquatic hyphometes under fungicide and nutrient stress*

Feckler, A., Pietz, S., **Gonçalves, S.**, Gerstle, V., Risse-Buhl, U., Bundschuh, M. (**under review**). *Detritivore physiology and growth benefit from algal presence during microbial leaf colonization*

Gonçalves, S., Feckler, A., Pollitt, A., Baschien, C., Michael, J., Schreiner, V. C., Zubrod, J. P., Bundschuh, M. (**under review**). *Increasing fungicide and nutrient concentrations change structure but not function of aquatic microbial communities*

Gonçalves, S., Pollitt, A., Pietz, S., Feckler, A., & Bundschuh, M. (**2024**). *Microbial community history and leaf species shape bottom-up effects in a freshwater shredding amphipod.* Science of the Total Environment, 912, 168926. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2023.168926

Gonçalves, S., Post, R., Konschak, M., Zubrod, J., Feckler, A., & Bundschuh, M. (**2023**). *Leaf Species-Dependent Fungicide Effects on the Function and Abundance of Associated Microbial Communities*. Bulletin of Environmental Contamination and Toxicology, 110(5), 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00128-023- 03728-2

Feckler, A., Baudy-Groh, P., Friedrichs, L., **Gonçalves, S**., Lüderwald, S., Risse-Buhl, U., & Bundschuh, M. (**2023**). *Diatoms Reduce Decomposition of and Fungal Abundance on Less Recalcitrant Leaf Litter via Negative Priming*. Microbial Ecology, 86(4), 2674–2686. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00248-023-02268-w

S. Gonçalves, S.F.P. Almeida, E. Figueira, M. Kahlert, *Valve teratologies and Chl c in the freshwater diatom Tabellaria fl occulosa as biomarkers for metal* c ontamination. doi:10.1016/j.ecolind.2019.01.032.

S. Gonçalves, M. Kahlert, S.F.P. Almeida, E. Figueira, *Assessing Cu impacts on freshwater diatoms: biochemical and metabolomic responses of Tabellaria flocculosa (Roth) Kützing*, Sci. Total Environ. 625 (**2018**). doi:10.1016/j.scitotenv.2017.12.320.

S. Gonçalves, M. Kahlert, S.F.P. Almeida, E. Figueira, *A freshwater diatom challenged by Zn: Biochemical, physiological and metabolomic responses of Tabellaria flocculosa(Roth) Kützing*, Environ. Pollut. 238 (**2018**). doi:10.1016/j.envpol.2018.01.111.

S.M. Esteves, S.F.P. Almeida, **S. Gonçalves**, F. Rimet, A. Bouchez, E. Figueira, *Sensitive vs. tolerant Nitzschia palea (Kützing) W. Smith strains to atrazine: a biochemical perspective*, Ecotoxicology. 27 (**2018**) 860–870. doi:10.1007/s10646- 018-1953-1.

I. Lavoie, P.B. Hamilton, S. Morin, S. Kim Tiam, M. Kahlert, **S. Gonçalves**, E. Falasco, C. Fortin, B. Gontero, D. Heudre, M. Kojadinovic-Sirinelli, K. Manoylov, L.K. Pandey, J.C. Taylor, *Diatom teratologies as biomarkers of contamination: Are all deformities ecologically meaningful?*, Ecol. Indic. 82 (**2017**). doi:10.1016/j.ecolind.2017.06.048.

Conference contributions (presenting author)

Gonçalves, S., Post, R., Konschak, M., Zubrod, J., Feckler, A., & Bundschuh, M**.** *Leaf Species-Dependent Fungicide Effects on the Structure and Function of Leaf-Associated Microbial Communities.* SETAC Europe 33th Annual Meeting – Dublin 2023

S. Gonçalves, A. Pollitt, A. Feckler, M. Bundschuh, Dietary Effect Pathway in *Gammarus fossarum* (Crustacea ;Amphipoda): Influence of Land-Use and Leaf Substrate. Platform presentation, SETAC Europe 32th Annual Meeting – Copenhagen 2022

S. Gonçalves, J. Zubrod, A. Pollitt, J. Michael, A. Feckler, M. Bundschuh, *Does history really matter? Aquatic microbial communities'functioning under multiple stress.* Poster presentation, SETAC Europe 30th Annual Meeting – SETAC SciCon 2020

S. Gonçalves, J. Zubrod, A. Pollitt, J. Michael, A. Feckler, M. Bundschuh, *Aquatic microbial communities' functioning under stress*. Poster presentation, Toronto 2019, SETAC North America.

S. Gonçalves, S.F.P. Almeida, E. Figueira, M. Kahlert, *Freshwater diatom Tabellaria flocculosa teratologies and Chl c as biomarkers for Cu and Zn contamination.* Poster presentation, Limnologia, AIL Coimbra 2018 meeting Awarded 3rd place best poster presentation.

S. Gonçalves, M. Kahlert, S.F.P. Almeida, E. Figueira, *Assessing Cu im pacts on freshwater diatoms: biochemical and metabolomic responses of Tabellaria flocculosa (Roth) Kützing*. Poster presentation, ROME 2018 Setac meeting

S. Gonçalves, M. Kahlert, S.F.P. Almeida, E. Figueira, *Effects of metal contamination on Diatoms*. Oral presentation,YES SETAC Meeting Gasnesville, Flórida, USA February 2016