

Bioorthogonal non-canonical amino acid tagging - BONCAT -

**These slides contain general information on BONCAT as well as a list of important microbial ecology related papers that used BONCAT.
Feel free to use and share these slides. We ask to please cite our lab when using them. The DOI is listed on this slide.**

BONCAT is a Next-generation physiology approach

Definition: ...any combination of techniques that analyze the phenotype of an individual cell in a microbiome in a non-destructive way, which enables the physical separation of this cell based solely on its phenotype for subsequent, downstream applications

Specifically, BONCAT is a type of substrate analog probing (SAP)

SAP uses molecules that carry either a fluorescence tag or a side group amenable to azide-alkyne click chemistry to obtain information on the overall biosynthetic activity or specific enzymatic function of the cell.

Hatzenpichler et al., 2020

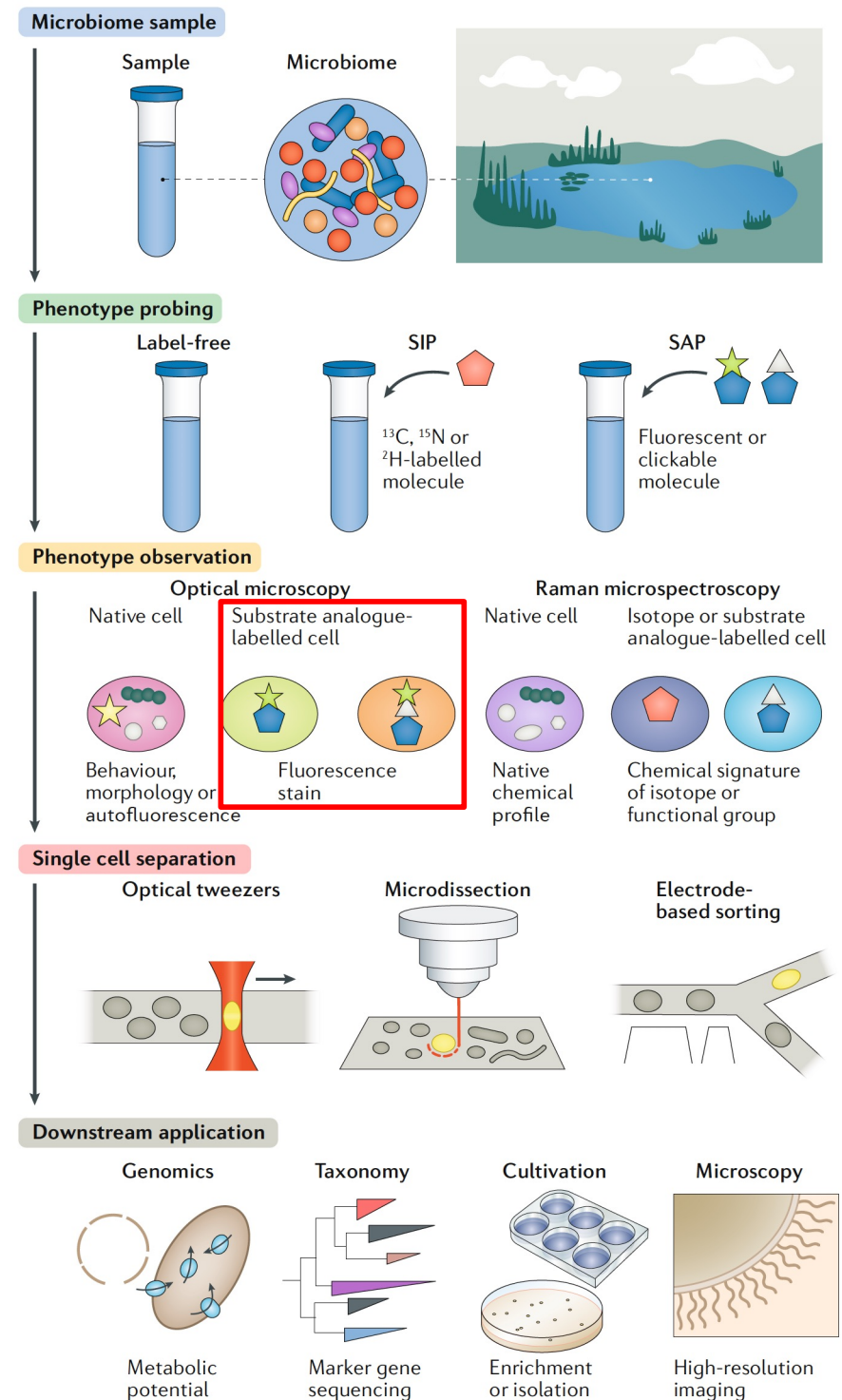


Fig. 2 | Next-generation physiology workflow to study microorganisms.

First, some definitions

bioorthogonal

non-interacting with cellular functionalities

non-canonical

synthetic, not part of biological machinery

Click chemistry

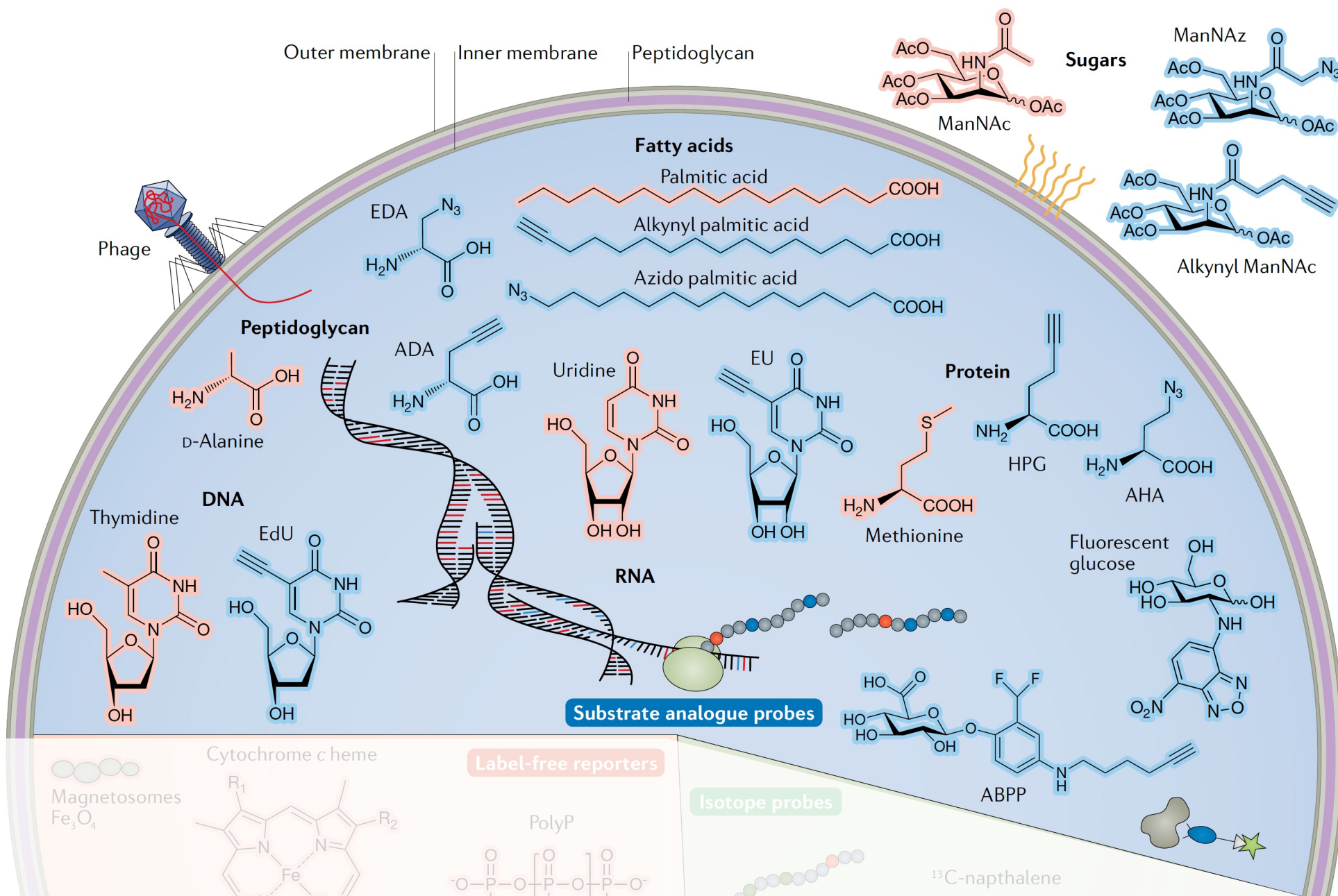
complete conversion of reagents to single product

+ mild conditions

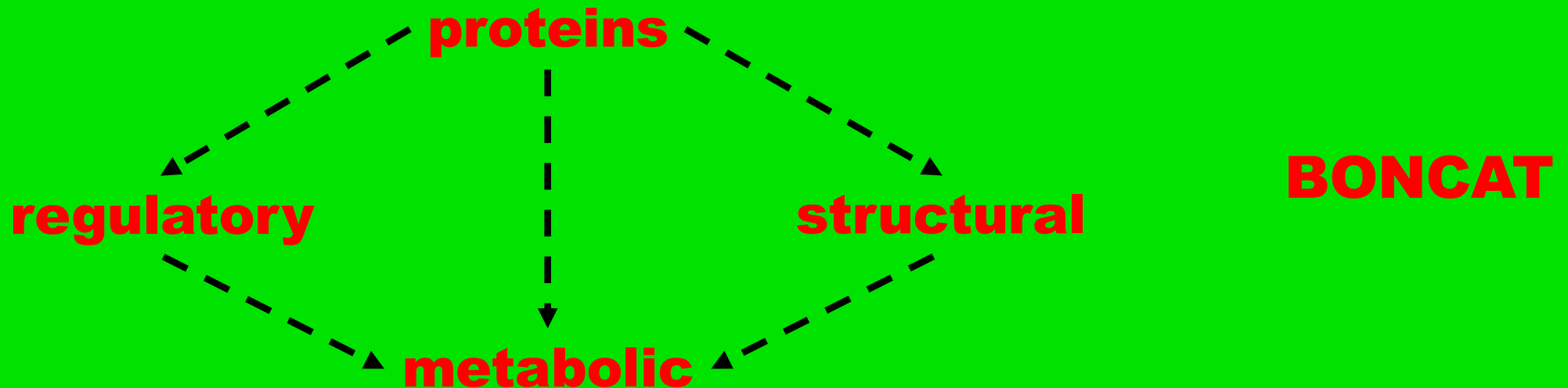
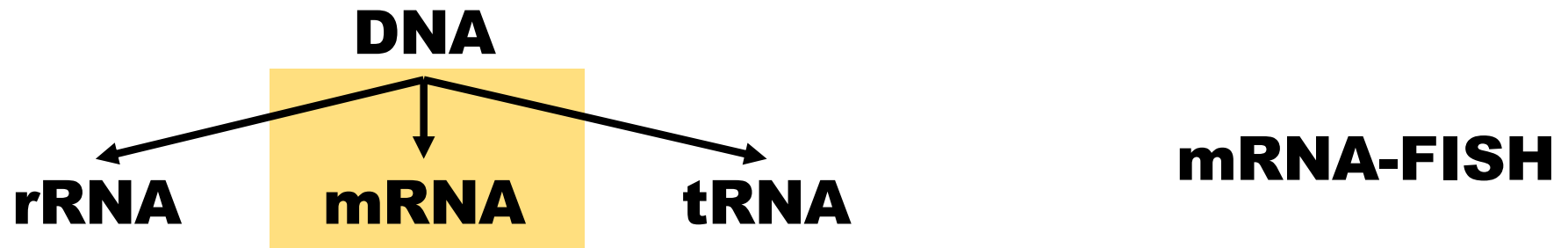
+ very fast

+ in water

Examples for clickable substrate analogs



Activity assays on individual cell level



**build-up of biomass
& growth**

isotopic labeling

Limitations and advantages of BONCAT

uptake and incorporation differ between species

Methionine-rich samples are tough (need mM concentrations)

hard to quantitate amount of new proteins in uncultured cells

potential for cell inactivation or community shifts (can be controlled!)

links cellular identity and function (Hatzenpichler et al. 2014)

fluorescence-based *in situ* activity studies (Hatzenpichler et al. 2014)

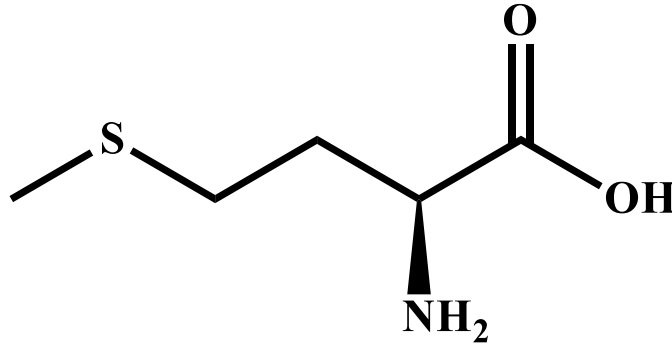
metabolic screening (Reichart et al. 2020)

activity-based cell-sorting (Hatzenpichler et al. 2016)

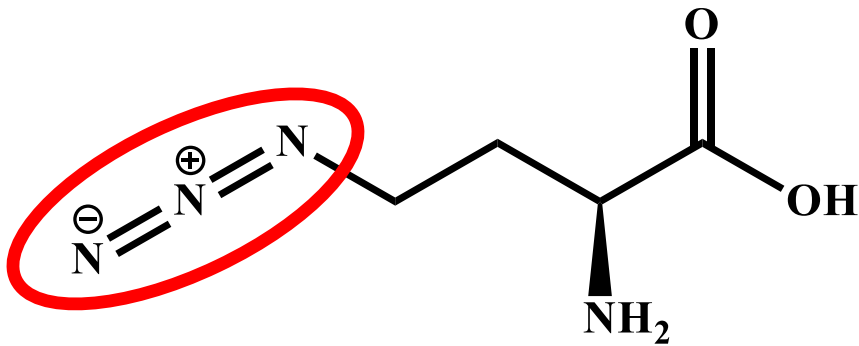
fast + highly selective + cheap + easily available

1 h azide-alkyne ~\$500 epifluorescence-scope

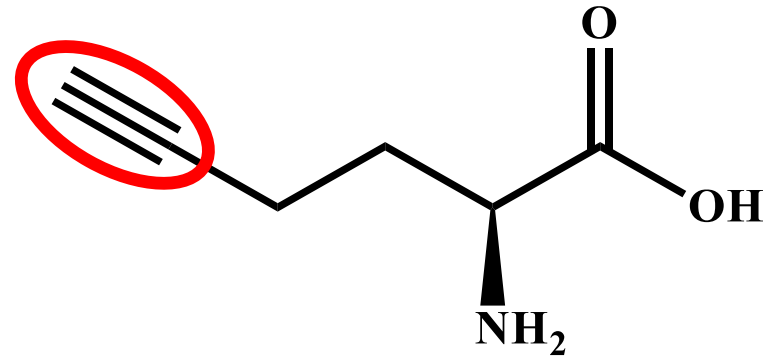
Non-canonical amino acids



L-Methionine
Met



L-Azidohomoalanine
AHA

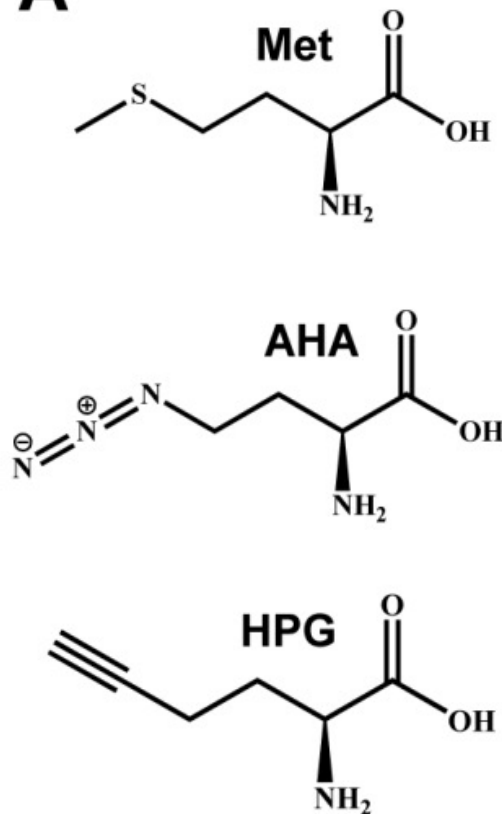


L-Homopropargylglycine
HPG

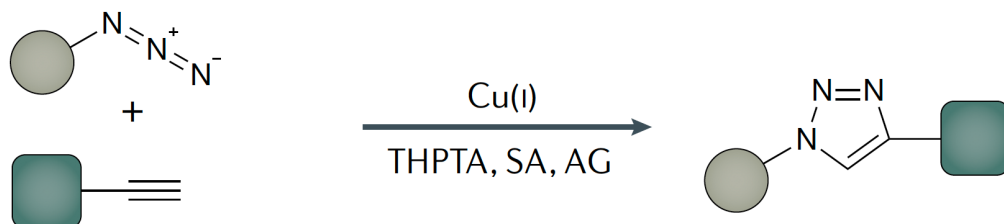
synthetic amino acids
incorporate into new proteins instead of Met

Azide-alkyne click chemistry reactions

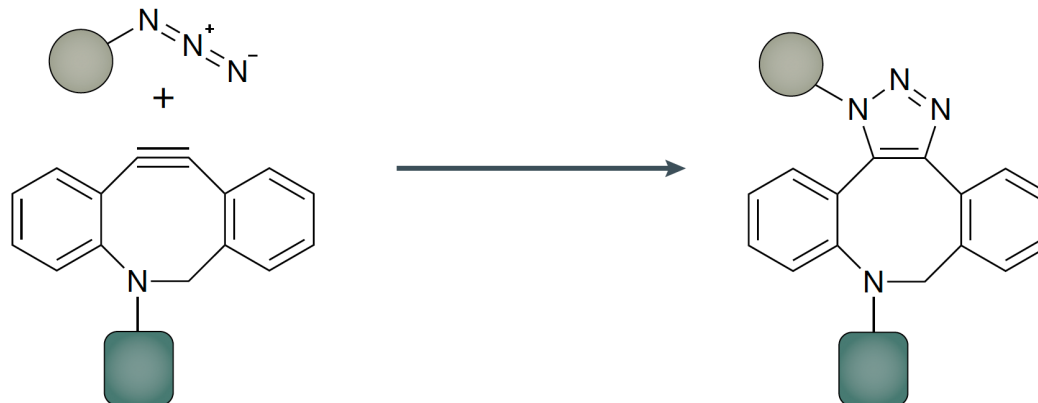
A



b Copper catalysed



c Strain promoted

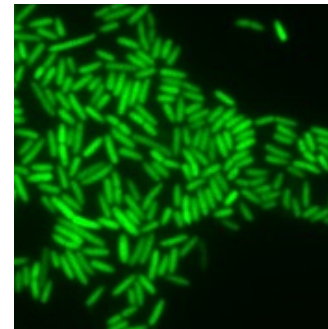
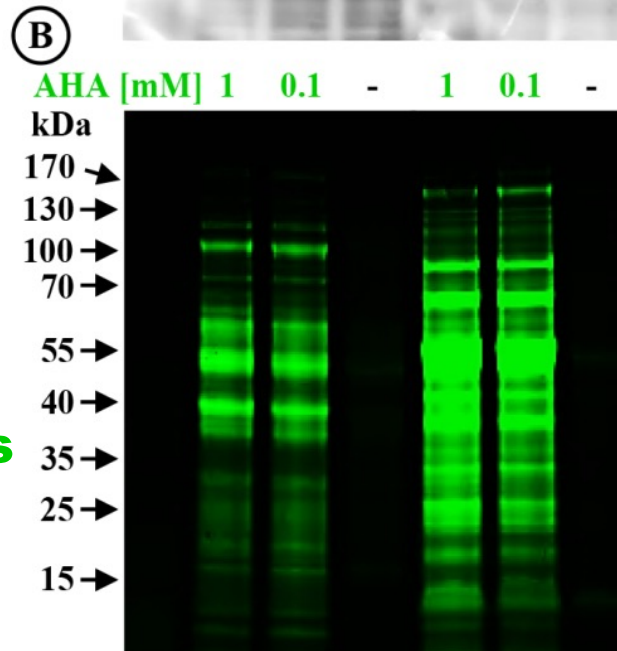
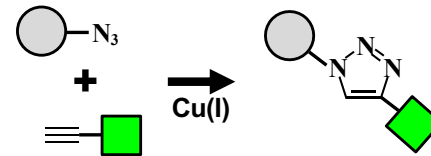
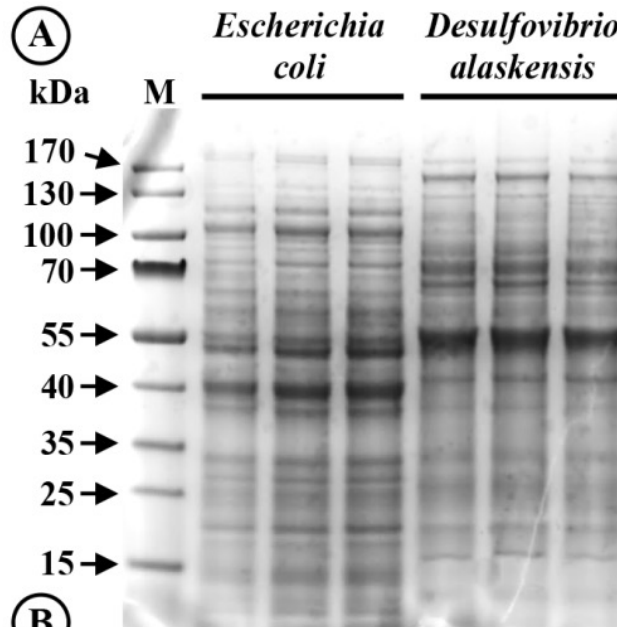


A. Structures of Met and its surrogates AHA and HPG, which compete with Met during translation.

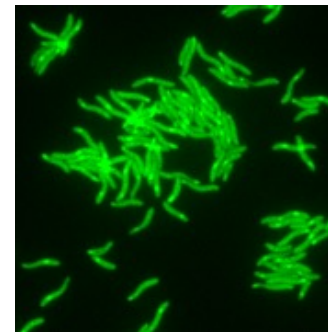
B. In Cu(I)-catalyzed click chemistry an azide group (N_3) is linked to a terminal alkyne residue, yielding a triazole conjugate.

C. Strain-promoted click chemistry allows the copper-less conjugation of an azide group (N_3) with a cyclo-octyne-carrying molecule, yielding a triazole conjugate.

Incorporation into newly made proteins

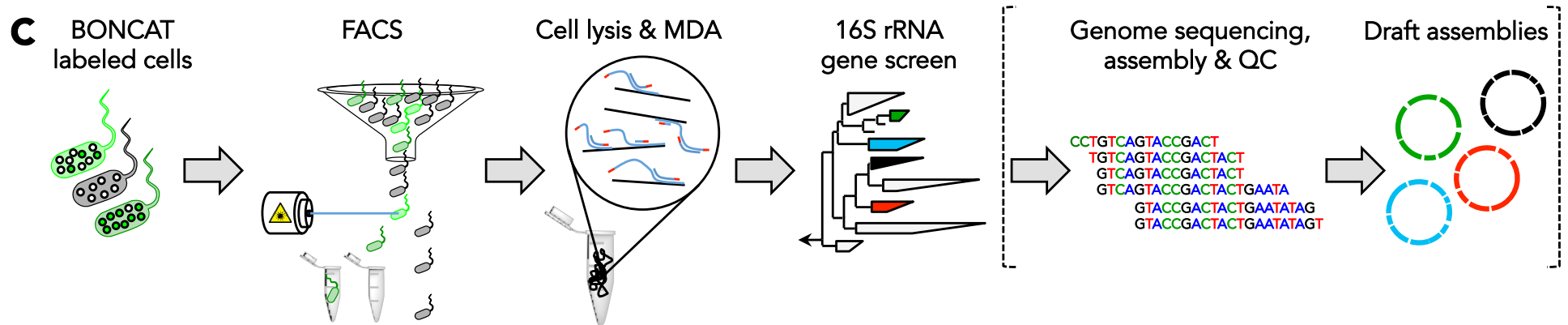
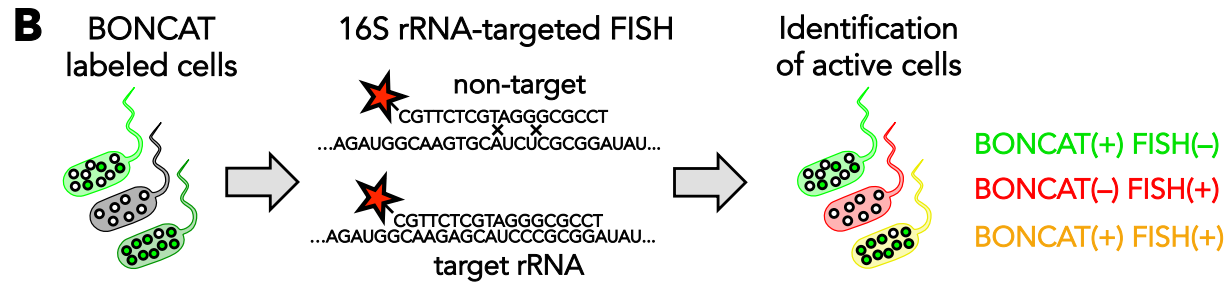
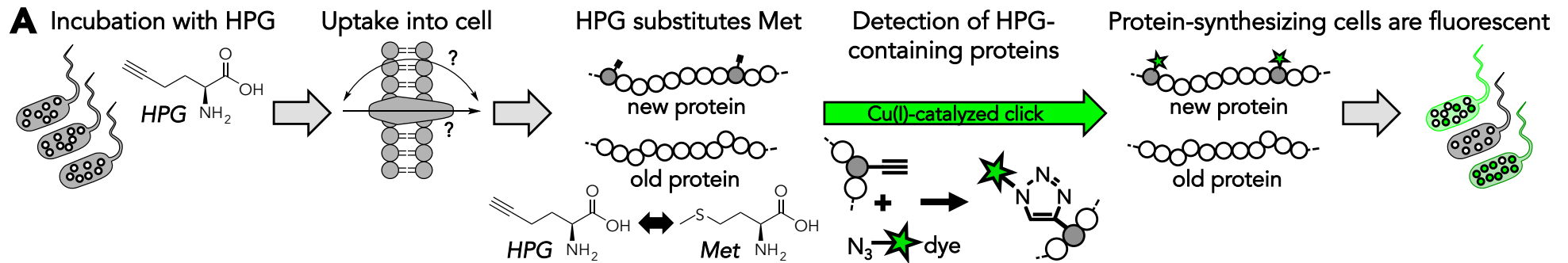


E. coli
respiring glucose

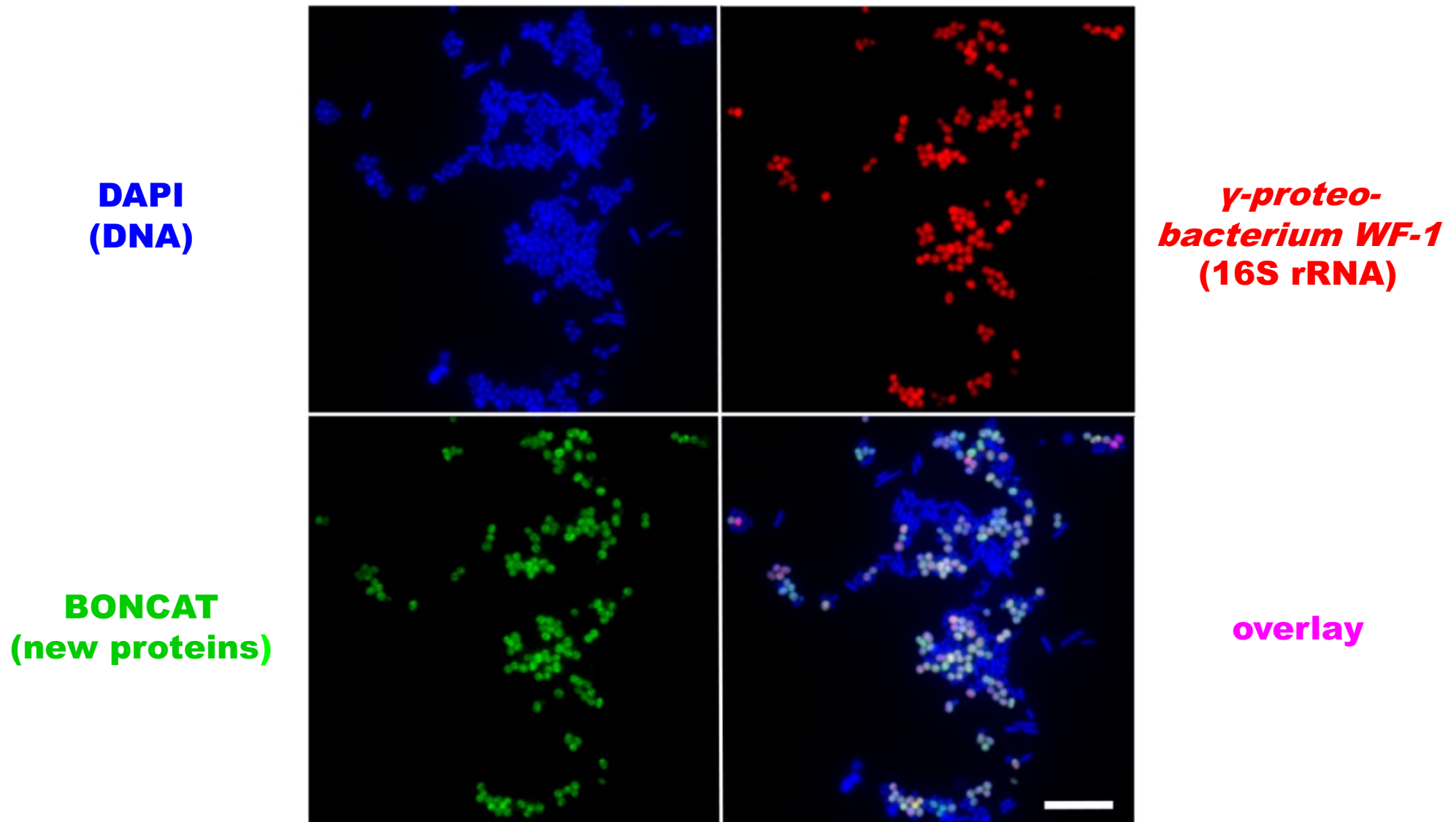


D. alaskensis
sulfate reducer

Visualizing, identifying, and sorting translationally active microbes



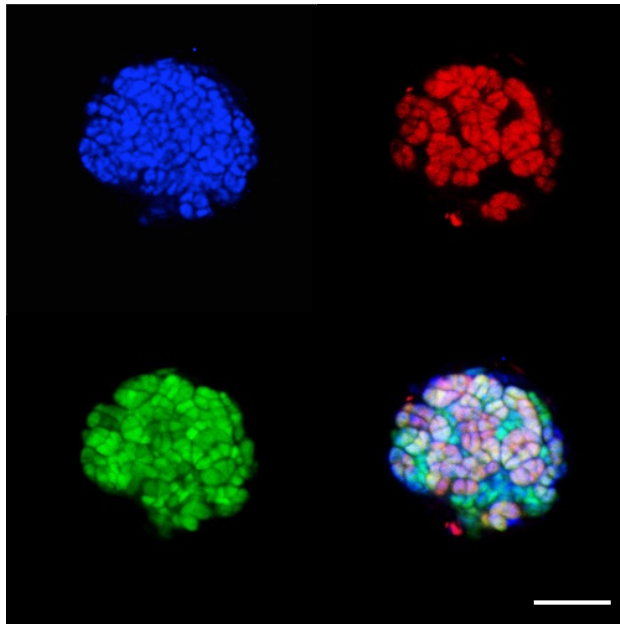
Identification of translationally active cells



Bar = 10 μ m

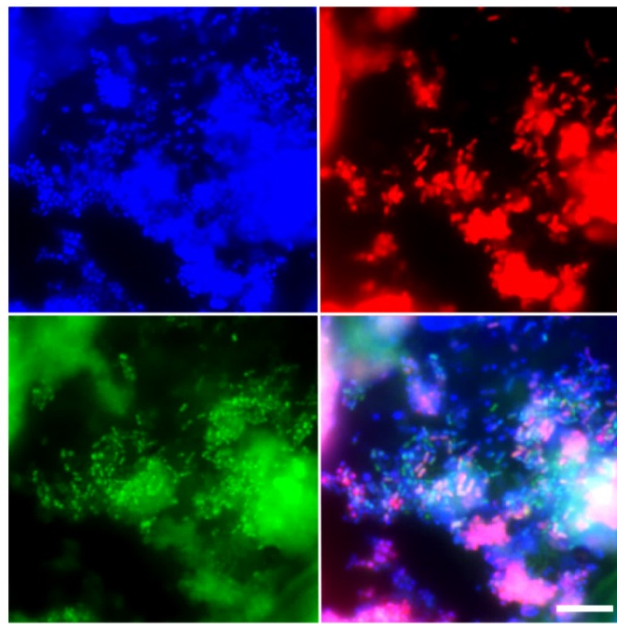
BONCAT-FISH of uncultured microbes

Arch915



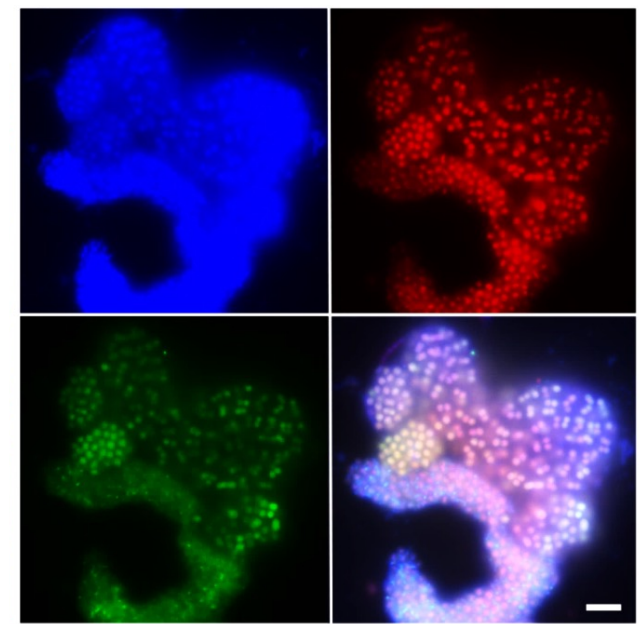
**Methane seep
ANME-SRB consortium**

EUB338 I-III



Tongue biofilm and saliva

Gam42a + competitor



**Freshwater from Lily
pond on Caltech campus**

**DAPI
(DNA)**

**BONCAT
(new proteins)**

**FISH
(rRNA)**

Overlay

Hatzenpichler *et al.*, 2014; Hatzenpichler *et al.*, 2015; Hatzenpichler *et al.*, 2016

Hatzenpichler lab

Visualizing new proteins *in situ*

**generally applicable
(works for all taxonomies and
physiologies tested so far)**

**in *E. coli*, detectable after 2%
of generation time**

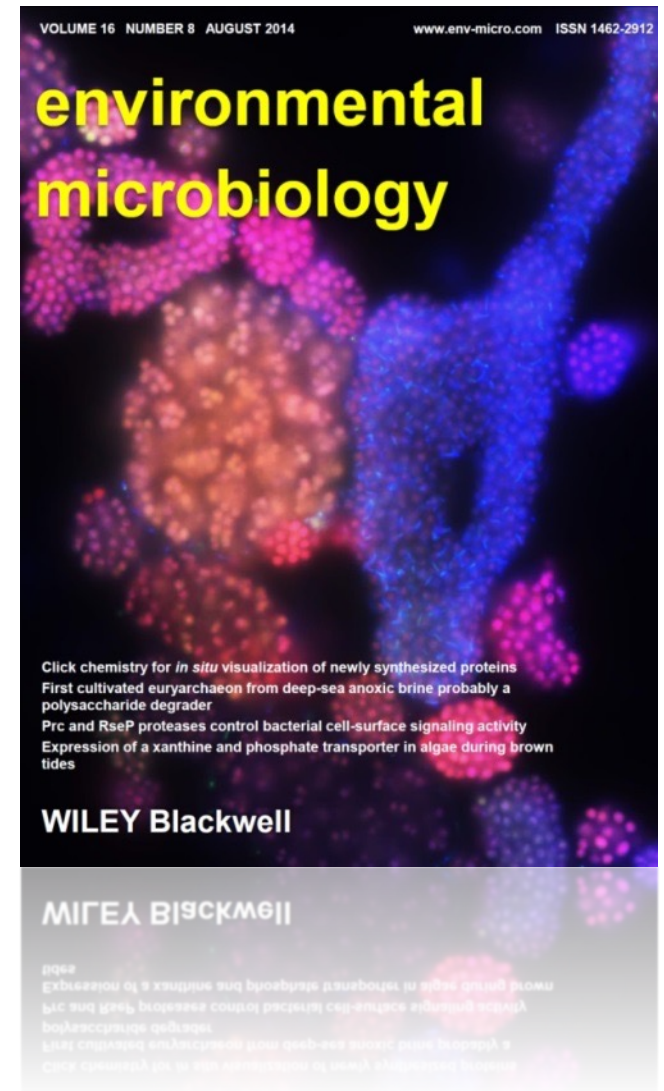
**In environmental samples, cells are
detectable after 3.3-7% of generation
time**

**FISH-BONCAT links function
and identity of a cell**

**BONCAT correlates with other growth
Proxies (e.g., SIP-nanoSIMS, MAR)**

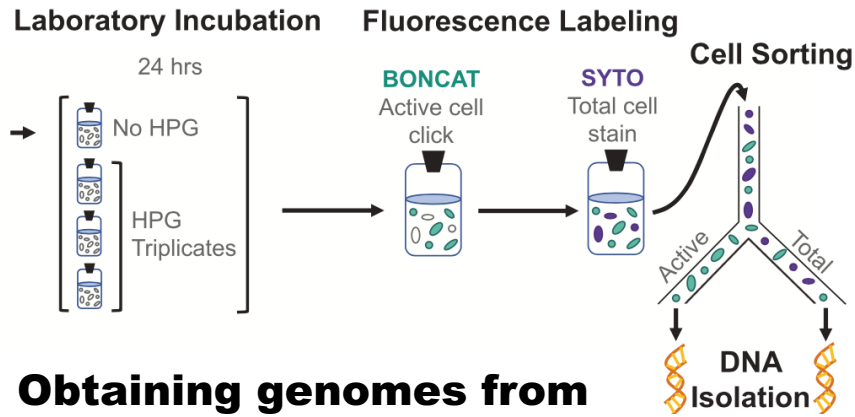
Hatzenpichler *et al.*, 2014 and 2016

Hatzenpichler lab



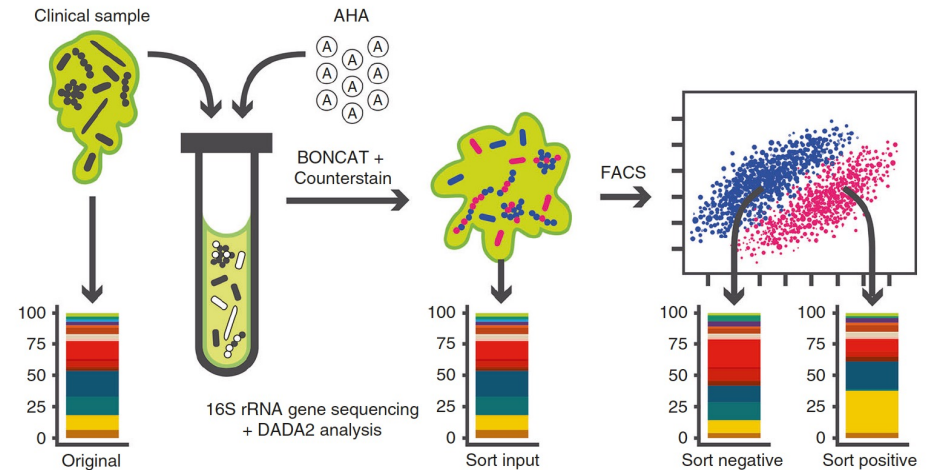
Hatzenpichler *et al.*, 2014

Research examples

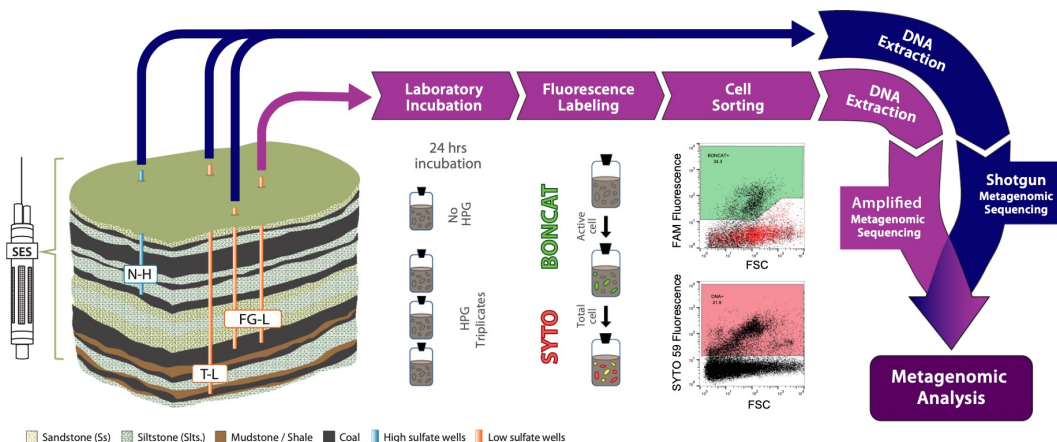


Obtaining genomes from active cells to link phenotype and genotype
McKay & Smith et al., 2021

Active lung microbiome of cystic fibrosis patients Valentini et al., 2020

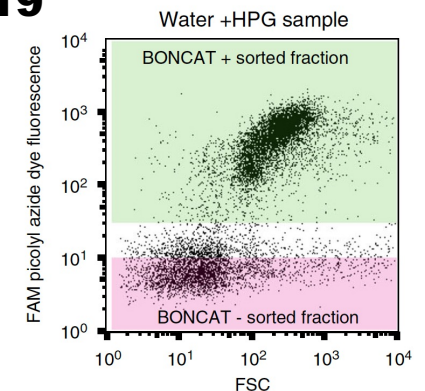


Metagenomes of protein-synthesizing cells from the subsurface Schweitzer et al., 2022



Sorting and identifying active fraction of cells in soil with BONCAT-FACS

Couradeau et al., 2019



BONCAT in microbial ecology, as of June 2024

Hatzenpichler R et al. *In situ* visualization of newly synthesized proteins in environmental microbes using amino acid tagging and click chemistry

Environ Microbiol, 16: 2568-2590 (2014)

- first application of BONCAT to uncultured microbes; development of BONCAT-FISH; correlation of BONCAT with nanoSIMS

Samo TJ et al. Broad distribution and high proportion of protein synthesis active marine bacteria revealed by click chemistry at the single cell level

Front Microbiol, 1: 48 (2014)

- application of BONCAT to seawater; correlation of BONCAT with microautoradiography

Hatzenpichler R and Orphan VJ Detection of protein-synthesizing microorganisms in the environment via bioorthogonal non-canonical amino acid tagging (BONCAT)

Book chapter for Hydrocarbon and Lipid Microbiology Protocols, Springer Protocols Handbooks, doi 10.1007/8623_2015_61 (2015)

- description of how to design and protocols for how to perform BONCAT-experiments using AHA and HPG

Hatzenpichler R et al. Visualizing *in situ* translational activity for identifying and sorting slow-growing archaeal-bacterial consortia

Proc Natl Acad Sci USA, 113: E4069-E4078 (2016)

- development of activity-based cell-sorting via bioorthogonal labeling (BONCAT-FACS); applied BONCAT-(CARD)FISH and BONCAT-FACS to deep-sea sediment consortia catalyzing the anaerobic oxidation of methane with sulfate

Leizeaga et al. Using Click-Chemistry for Visualizing *in Situ* Changes of Translational Activity in Planktonic Marine Bacteria

Front Microbiol, 8: 2360 (2017)

Pasulka AL et al. Interrogating marine virus-host interactions and elemental transfer with BONCAT and nanoSIMS-based methods

Environ Microbiol, 20: 671-692 (2018)

- first application of BONCAT to environmental phages and viruses; estimate of marine viral production rates by BONCAT and nanoSIMS

Couradeau et al. Probing the active fraction of soil microbiomes using BONCAT-FACS

Nat Comm, 10: 2770 (2019)

- first application of BONCAT to soil samples; reports that a surprisingly high proportion of soil microbes is translationally active

Sebastian et al. High Growth Potential of Long-Term Starved Deep Ocean Opportunistic Heterotrophic Bacteria

Front Microbiol, 10: 760 (2019)

Kjeldsen et al., On the evolution and physiology of cable bacteria

Proc Natl Acad Sci USA, 116 (38) 19116-19125 (2019)

- Uses BONCAT to study the activity of individual cells along cable bacteria filaments

BONCAT in microbial ecology, as of June 2024

Steward et al. Metabolic Implications of Using BioOrthogonal Non-Canonical Amino Acid Tagging (BONCAT) for Tracking Protein Synthesis

Front Microbiol, 11:197 (2020)

➤ shows that growing E. coli with AHA or HPG alters ~15 % of global mass features (LC-MS). 7 % change if cells are grown on methionine.

Valentini et al. Bioorthogonal non-canonical amino acid tagging reveals translationally active subpopulations of the cystic fibrosis lung microbiota

Nature Comm, 11: 2287 (2020)

➤ Case study that applies BONCAT and BONCAT-FACS to cystic fibrosis patients' lung microbiomes

Lindivat et al. Bioorthogonal Non-canonical Amino Acid Tagging Combined With Flow Cytometry for Determination of Activity in Aquatic Microorganisms

Front Microbiol, 11: 1929 (2020)

Reichert et al. Activity-based cell sorting reveals responses of uncultured archaea and bacteria to substrate amendment

The ISME J, 14: 2851-2861 (2020)

➤ Uses BONCAT-FACS to detect changes in single cell activity of a hot spring microbial community incubated in the presence of various growth substrates or under changing physicochemical conditions

Riva et al. Conversion of Rutin, a Prevalent Dietary Flavonol, by the Human Gut Microbiota

Front Microbiol, 11: 585428 (2020)

Taguer et al. Translational activity is uncoupled from nucleic acid content in bacterial cells of the human gut microbiota

Gut Microbes, 13: e1903289 (2021)

➤ First application of BONCAT to human gut microbes (stool samples).

Chen et al. Isolating and characterizing translationally active fraction of anammox microbiota using bioorthogonal non-canonical amino acid tagging

Chem Eng J, 418: 129411 (2021)

Michels et al. Amino acid analog induces stress response in marine Synechococcus

Appl Environm Microbiol, DOI: 10.1128/AEM.00200-21 (2021)

Bergkessel and Delavaine. Diversity in Starvation Survival Strategies and Outcomes among Heterotrophic Proteobacteria

Microb Physiol, DOI: 10.1159/000516215 (2021)

BONCAT in microbial ecology, as of June 2024

Marlow et al. Spatially resolved correlative microscopy and microbial identification reveal dynamic depth- and mineral- dependent anabolic activity in salt marsh sediment

Environ Microbiol, doi:10.1111/1462-2920.15667 (2021)

➤ BONCAT, resin embedding, fluorescence microscopy, electron microscopy, and energy dispersive X-ray spectroscopy are combined to reveal the spatial patterning of translationally active cells around specific mineral particles in heterogenous salt marsh sediment

Martinez-Varela et al. Bacterial responses to background organic pollutants in the northeast subarctic Pacific Ocean

Environ Microbiol, doi:10.1111/1462-2920.15646 (2021)

Du and Behrens. Tracking de novo protein synthesis in the activated sludge microbiome using BONCAT-FACS

Water Research, 205: 117696 (2021)

McKay, Smith et al. Activity-based, genome-resolved metagenomics uncovers key populations and pathways involved in subsurface conversions of coal to methane

The ISME J, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41396-021-01139-x> (2021)

➤ First study to combine BONCAT-FACS with metagenomics of sorted cells, thus directly linking phenotype and genotype of uncultured cells.

Madill et al., Activity-Based Cell Sorting Reveals Resistance of Functionally Degenerate *Nitrospira* during a Press Disturbance in Nitrifying Activated Sludge

mSystems, <https://doi.org/10.1128/mSystems.00712-21> (2021)

Taguer et al., Changes in Gut Bacterial Translation Occur before Symptom Onset and Dysbiosis in Dextran Sodium Sulfate-Induced Murine Colitis

mSystems, 6: e00507-21 (2021)

Schweitzer et al., Subsurface hydrocarbon degradation strategies in low- and high-sulfate coal seam communities identified with activity-based metagenomics

Biofilms and Microbiomes, 8:7 <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41522-022-00267-2> (2022)

Berjón-Otero et al., Visualization of giant virus particles using BONCAT labeling and STED microscopy

bioRxiv, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.07.14.202192> (2022)

Birnstiel et al., Structure and activity of marine bacterial communities responding to plastic leachates

Science of the Total Environment, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2022.155264>

BONCAT in microbial ecology, as of October 2024

Volland et al. A centimeter-long bacterium with DNA contained in metabolically active, membrane-bound organelles

Science, Vol 376, Issue 6600: 1453-1458 (2022)

Wang et al. Detection and Quantification of Antimicrobial-Resistant Cells in Aquatic Environments by Bioorthogonal Noncanonical Amino Acid Tagging

Environ Sci Tech, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.est.2c05024>

Bradley et al. Active and dormant microorganisms on glacier surfaces

Geobiology 2022, DOI: 10.1111/gbi.12535

Kostešić et al. Microbial diversity and activity of biofilms from geothermal springs in Croatia

Preprint 2023, <https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-2652246/v1>

Trexler et a. BONCAT-FACS-Seq reveals the active fraction of a biocrust community undergoing a wet-up event

Front Microbiol, Volume 14 - 2023 <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmicb.2023.1176751>

Romera-Castillo et al. Diversity of marine bacteria growing on leachates from virgin and weathered plastic: Insights into potential degraders

Eviron Microbiol, DOI: 10.1111/1758-2229.13305 (2024)

Kohtz et al. Cultivation and visualization of a methanogen of the phylum Thermoproteota

Nature, DOI: 10.1038/s41586-024-07631-6 (2024)

Schaible et al. Multicellular magnetotactic bacteria are genetically heterogeneous consortia with metabolically differentiated cells

PLOS Biology, 10.1371/journal.pbio.3002638 (2024)

Lin et al. High-Throughput Single-Cell Metabolic Labeling, Sorting, and Sequencing of Active Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria in the Environment

Environ Sci Tech, <https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.est.4c02906> (2024)

Mattelin et al., Specialization of Alcanivorax species in colonizing diverse plastics

Eviron Microbiol, DOI: 10.1111/1462-2920.16698 (2024)