

1 **Life history evolution in response to changes in metapopulation**
2 **structure in an arthropod herbivore**

3

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30

31 **Abstract**

- 32 1. *The persistence and dynamics of populations largely depends on the way they are*
33 *configured and integrated into space and the ensuing eco-evolutionary dynamics.*
- 34 2. *We manipulated spatial and temporal variation in patch size in replicated*
35 *experimental metapopulations of the herbivore mite *Tetranychus urticae* and*
36 *followed evolutionary dynamics over approximately 30 generations.*
- 37 3. *A significant divergence in life history traits, physiological endpoints and gene*
38 *expression was recorded in the spatially and spatiotemporally variable*
39 *metapopulation, but also a remarkable convergence relative to the stable reference*
40 *metapopulation in traits related to size and fecundity and in its transcriptional*
41 *regulation.*
- 42 4. *The observed evolutionary dynamics are tightly linked to demographic changes, more*
43 *specifically frequent episodes of resource shortage that increased the reproductive*
44 *performance of mites on tomato, a challenging host plant. This points towards a*
45 *general, adaptive stress response in stable spatial variable and spatiotemporal*
46 *variable metapopulations that pre-adapts a herbivore arthropod to novel*
47 *environmental stressors.*

48 **Introduction**

49 Changes in land-use levy a strong pressure on our **natural habitat** and leads to habitat loss
50 and isolation, which are both a major threat for biodiversity (Dirzo & Raven 2003). Species
51 conservation therefore relies largely on optimal reserve planning which in turn is rooted
52 within the principles of metapopulations (Levins 1969; Hanski 1998). This concept defines
53 population-extinction dynamics and eventually extinction thresholds within in networks of
54 interconnected habitat patches. Most spatially structured populations can be classified as
55 *patchy* or *mainland-island* metapopulations (Harrison & Taylor 1997), and the omnipresence
56 of classical Levin's metapopulations has been recently questioned (Fronhofer *et al.* 2012).
57 This spatial variation in habitat availability not only affects patch occupancy dynamics, it also
58 impacts the local- and metapopulation-level demography. Some of us demonstrated
59 experimentally that spatial variation in habitat availability decreases variance in
60 metapopulation size at the metapopulation level (**De Roissart, Wang & Bonte 2015**).
61 Conversely, spatiotemporal variation in habitat availability increases patch extinction rates,
62 but decreases local population and metapopulation sizes. These demographic changes
63 minimised metapopulation-level variability in mainland-island metapopulations, relative to
64 classical and patchy ones.

65

66 Because of these changes in population dynamics, selection pressures in metapopulations
67 are expected to act on more than one level of population structure (Olivieri, Couvet &
68 Gouyon 1990). For instance, in metapopulations where local population extinctions occur
69 regularly, increased **dispersal rates are selected relative** to metapopulations where
70 extinctions are rare or where patch sizes or heterogeneous, since long-term survival is only
71 possible if genotypes are able to re-colonise patches from where they have become locally
72 extinct. With increasing asymmetry in patch size, however, dispersal will evolve to lower
73 rates because benefits of dispersal are only prevalent for a minority of the individuals (Travis
74 & Dytham 1999). Additional and/or alternative adaptive strategies might also evolve through
75 the adjustment of sex-ratio (Macke *et al.* 2011), age-at-death (Dytham & Travis 2006) and
76 density-dependency (Bierbaum, Mueller & Ayala 1989) according to changes in spatial
77 structure and associated variation in the prevalence and strength of local resource
78 competition (Clark 1978; Cameron *et al.* 2013, 2014) and other stressors (Margulis & Sagan
79 2000; Parsons 2005).

80

81 While evolutionary theory to date is centred on single trait dynamics, multivariate selection
82 in life history and physiology is anticipated in response to changes in spatial habitat
83 configuration. These evolutionary responses then simultaneously feedback on the ecological
84 dynamics, rendering both ecology and evolution heavily intertwined. We now begin to
85 understand such eco-evolutionary dynamics in either natural or experimental
86 metapopulations (Bell & Gonzalez 2011). The importance of eco-evolutionary dynamics is
87 most obvious in metapopulations where dispersal determines the genetic composition and
88 demography of different populations (Kokko & Lopez-Sepulcre 2007). Seminal examples
89 include the Glanville fritillary (Hanski and Mononen 2011) or stick insect metapopulations
90 (Farkas *et al.* 2013). Often, these eco-evolutionary dynamics lead to evolutionary rescue, the
91 process where adaptive evolution allows a population (Gomulkiewicz & Holt 1995),
92 metapopulation (Bell & Gonzalez 2011; Travis *et al.* 2013) or an expanding population
93 (Boeye *et al.* 2013) to recover from negative growth as a result from environmental change
94 (Gomulkiewicz & Holt 1995). Evolutionary rescue is known to be strongly determined by
95 demographic and genetic factors of local populations, but also by entire metapopulation
96 changes (Carlson, Cunningham & Westley 2014).

97

98 The genetic basis of life history differentiation can now be disentangled by the development
99 of several -omic approaches. Transcriptomic analyses may uncover genes that significantly
100 alter their transcript levels as a response to the implemented selection pressure and provide
101 detailed insights on the pleiotropic effects underlying phenotypic. For instance, in *Drosophila*
102 *melanogaster*, many genes that are up- or downregulated in response to stress are equally
103 associated with mobility and aggression (Wheat 2012). In the spider mite *Tetranychus*
104 *urticae*, transcriptomic analysis of populations that developed pesticide resistance or that
105 were exposed to challenging host plants reveals the presence of common adaptive
106 responses and identified key **candidates genes** for xenobiotic adaptation in this polyphagous
107 mite (Dermauw *et al.* 2013)

108

109 Experimental evolution in artificial metapopulations provides a unique formal test to
110 understand to which degree spatial variation in habitat availability affects life history
111 divergence (Kawecki *et al.* 2012). We installed three types of experimental metapopulation

112 inhabited by spider mites (*T. urticae*; Fig. 1): a stable metapopulation consisting of patches of
113 similar size (the patchy metapopulation; HOM), a metapopulation where habitat quality
114 varies in space and time (the classical metapopulation; TEM) and a metapopulation where
115 patches are of different size (the mainland-island metapopulation; SPA). We earlier
116 documented how this variation in spatial structure affected demographic changes (De
117 Roissart *et al.* 2015) and now report on the evolutionary phenomic changes as measured at
118 the end of that experiment. Following the observed changes in demography and theoretical
119 expectations outlined above, we predicted that:

120

- 121 1. Asymmetry in patch and population size in mainland-island metapopulations selects
122 for lower dispersal rates, while in classical metapopulations, the spatiotemporal
123 variation in population size leads to higher evolved dispersal rates
- 124 2. Increased local extinction rates and local population variability in classical
125 metapopulation selects for faster life histories, i.e. increased fecundity, decreased
126 longevity and/or reduced developmental time
- 127 3. Low local and metapopulation variability in mainland-island metapopulations
128 increase local competition and therefore select for a more male-biased sex ratio
129 and/or increased developmental time (age-at-maturity).

130 **Materials and methods**

131 **Experimental setup of the artificial metapopulations**

132 Metapopulation dynamics of *Tetranychus urticae* were studied using experimental
133 microcosms. We used as a base population the “LS-VL” *T. urticae* strain, because it is known
134 to be highly evolvable due to its genetic variability (Van Leeuwen *et al.* 2008; Fronhofer,
135 Stelz & Lutz 2014). Artificial metapopulations consisted of a transparent plastic box with 9
136 patches arranged in a 3 x 3 lattice. We constructed three types of artificial metapopulations
137 with an equal metapopulation-level carrying capacity but varying spatial configuration of the
138 patches. Patches were detached bean (*Phaseolus vulgaris* L.) leaves placed on a Tanglefood
139 layer in closed boxes. This hostile matrix prevents mites from leaving the patches. Bean
140 leaves were renewed on a weekly basis to avoid starvation of the mites. The size of the bean
141 leaves introduced to each patch was dependent upon the treatment. Two times a week, for
142 8 hours a wind current (1.5m/s) was induced by a fan and allowed aerial dispersal. Three
143 metapopulation types were installed each of which was replicated three times. With
144 exception of the HOM metapopulation, all replicates are similar regarding the specific
145 attributes but different in exact spatial configuration. The three metapopulation types are:

146

- 147 i) a patchy metapopulation consisting of nine patches weekly refreshed with leaves
148 of 20 cm² (spatially homogenous distribution of resources; further referred to as
149 HOM)
- 150 ii) a mainland-island metapopulation consisting of three patches of standard leaf
151 size (20 cm²) and three of double size; another three patches of these
152 metapopulations remained constantly empty (spatial heterogeneous distribution
153 of resources; further referred to as SPA)
- 154 iii) a spatiotemporal heterogeneous metapopulation (further referred to as TEM) in
155 which we assigned nine single-patch resources (standard leaf) randomly to one of
156 the nine patches. Due to this algorithm, the distributions of the resources (and
157 thus local carrying capacity or island size) changed weekly among the nine
158 patches and varied between zero (no resource renewal and local extinction) and
159 double or exceptionally triple island size. In consequence, patch sizes and thus
160 local carrying capacities fluctuated over time and space, but we ensured again a
161 constant metapopulation carrying capacity (9 x 20 cm²) over time.

162

163 At the beginning of the experiment, 20 randomly collected adult female mites, from the base
164 population, were assigned to each patch within each metapopulation type and allowed to
165 establish the triplicated populations. All metapopulations were kept under controlled
166 conditions (23°C, 16:8 LD photoperiod, 85% humidity).

167

168 **Quantification of mite life-history**

169 Spider mite life-history traits were measured at the initiation of the experiment and after 10
170 months, corresponding to approximately 30 mite generations. All traits were measured on
171 F2 mites (raised for two generations in common garden on detached leaf discs) to minimise
172 maternal and environmental effects caused for instance by local conditions of crowding.
173 Young inseminated females of each experimental metapopulation were individually allowed
174 to oviposit on bean leaf discs. Leaf discs were placed with the abaxial part upwards on
175 moistened filter paper to prevent mites from escaping and to maintain leaf turgor. Different
176 life history parameters of the descendants were recorded daily: juvenile survival,
177 developmental time (time from egg until the adult stage), fecundity (daily number of eggs),
178 **adult** longevity and sex-ratio. Since spider mites deposit the majority of their eggs during the
179 first seven days after maturity, we monitored fecundity only during that period. Dispersal
180 propensity of the mites was assessed by transferring mated females to test arenas for trials
181 of aerial dispersal (after two whole generations under common garden to avoid confounding
182 maternal effects). The experimental setup for aerial dispersal assessment was identical to
183 the one applied in (Li & Margolies 1994) (details in Appendix S1 in supporting information).

184

185 **Mite performance**

186 Mite performance was followed by quantifying rate of intrinsic growth as a proxy of fitness
187 (Cameron *et al.* 2013). To detect possible differences in individual performance between
188 treatments, an integrated individual-level fitness measure, the rate of intrinsic growth (r_m),
189 was calculated by combining the estimated parameter distributions of the different life
190 history parameters according (see statistical analyses) to the equation $\sum e^{-r_m x} l_x f_x = 1$ (with l_x
191 survival till maturity x and f_x the number of female offspring at age x) which represents the
192 contribution of each female to the number of females in the subsequent generation. We

193 performed 10000 simulations and reported the mean value and standard deviation while
194 testing its significance in comparing whether 2.5% tails of the distribution overlap. We
195 additionally measured a set of physiological endpoints (mass, glucose, trehalose and
196 triglycerid levels) after the common garden treatment at the start of the experiment and
197 after 30 generations of selection in a metapopulation context as indicators for mite
198 performance. All physiological parameters were measured following (Laparie *et al.* 2012) on
199 F2 mites (Appendix S1 in supporting material).

200

201 **Differential gene expression after experimental evolution**

202 To examine the effects of metapopulation structure on the mite transcriptome, Agilent dual
203 colour gene expression micro-array analysis was performed on female mites raised for two
204 generations in a common garden of every selection regime. The microarray data have been
205 deposited in the Gene Expression Omnibus (GEO) (accession number: GSE55623). For the
206 hierarchical clustering, data of previous *T. urticae* studies were incorporated (Bryon *et al.*
207 2013; Zhurov *et al.* 2014). Final statistical processing and analysis was conducted in limma
208 (Smyth 2005). Gene Ontology (GO) annotation was executed using Blast2GO software
209 (Conesa *et al.* 2005). Using the Blast2GO generated annotation and the statistical output of
210 limma as input, Gene Set Analysis (GSA) was performed with the Bioconductor package
211 piano (Parametric Analysis of Gene set Enrichment, PAGE)(Väremo, Nielsen & Nookaew
212 2013). More details of the gene expression and GO-term analysis are provided in Appendix 1
213 from Supporting Material.

214

215 **Performance on a challenging new host**

216 Our LS-VL base population has been maintained on bean for more than 10 years. We
217 assessed performance on a novel suboptimal host by quantifying isofemale growth rate on
218 tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum*; variety MoneyMaker) grown under controlled laboratory
219 conditions (23°C, 16:8 L:D photoperiod). Experimental arenas were constructed with leaves
220 from 4-week old tomato plants. Moist tissue paper was used to cover 10 cm² leaf edges that
221 prevented mites from escaping. Twenty fertilized F2 females (raised for two generations in
222 common garden to reduce maternal and environmental effects) from each artificial
223 metapopulation were placed on a leaf-arena and allowed to establish a population. All leaf-
224 arenas were kept under controlled conditions (23°C, 16:8 L:D photoperiod). Population

225 growth was assessed weekly for 3 weeks by counting the number of eggs, juveniles, adult
226 males and females.

227

228 **Statistical analysis**

229 **We first tested for overall multivariate divergence in life history** after experimental evolution
230 **and subsequently used GLMM to test the univariately according to the imposed treatments** .

231 The measured traits follow different statistical distributions and therefore applied a
232 Permutational Multivariate Analysis of Variance (PERMANOVA). Because our measurements
233 were taken with different units on different scales, the correctly estimated replicate-level
234 averages of the life history and physiological endpoints (see GLMM further) were scaled
235 prior to PERMANOVA analysis based on Euclidean distances among replicates belonging to
236 one of the three metapopulation treatments (PERMANOVA; with ADONIS function in R;
237 (Anderson 2005). To visualise metapopulation divergence based on life history, Nonmetric
238 Multidimensional Scaling (NMDS) analyses were performed on the scaled distance matrix (all
239 life history and physiological traits) using the METAMDS function (vegan library, R.2.15.1;).
240 The significantly diverging traits were subsequently identified by a Multivariate Analysis of
241 Variance (MANOVA) on the scaled averaged data per replicate.

242

243 We examined how metapopulation type affected the different life history traits and
244 physiological endpoints using generalized linear mixed models (GLMM). The model included
245 metapopulation type (HOM, SPA, TEM) as fixed factor and each individual metapopulation as
246 a random effect to control for dependency among the **three** replicates from each
247 metapopulation treatment. Depending on the dependent variable, a Gaussian (all
248 physiological endpoints), Poisson (fecundity, developmental time, longevity and population
249 size on the novel host) or binomial error (sex ratio, juvenile mortality) structure was
250 modelled with appropriate link functions. Non-significant contributions ($P > 0.05$) were
251 removed by backwards procedure. Effective degrees of freedom were estimated using
252 Kenward-Rogers procedure. All analyses were conducted with SAS 9.3 (SAS Institute Inc
253 2006) by using the GLIMMIX procedure.

254

255 **Results**

256 **Population-level divergence in life history traits**

257 **Experimental evolution caused significant divergence in life history traits between the**
258 **treatments (PERMANOVA $F_2= 2.75$; $p=0.03$).** MANOVA analyses showed sex-ratio ($F_2=7.77$;
259 $p=0.02$) and fecundity ($F_2=10.35$; $p=0.01$) as the two main life history endpoints underlying
260 this divergence. A detailed analysis on the individual trait distribution after experimental
261 evolution confirmed divergence in fecundity and sex ratio, but also in longevity (Table 1; Fig
262 2). An analysis of the trait variation at the start of the experiment is provided in Appendix S2
263 from the supporting material.

264

265 The average proportion of male offspring was higher in clutches originating from the SPA
266 metapopulations ($0.34 \pm 0.02SE$) relative to the HOM ($0.26 \pm 0.02SE$). Mites from the SPA
267 and TEM treatment evolved a high daily fecundity ($t=-3.79$; $p=0.01$) than those from the
268 HOM treatment (respectively $5.21 \pm 0.28SE$ and $5.59 \pm 0.28SE$ versus $4.31 \pm 0.25SE$). Similarly,
269 mites that evolved in the SPA ($35.20 \pm 2.01SE$) and TEM treatment ($36.91 \pm 2.1SE$) had a
270 significantly higher fecundity ($t=-3.53$, $p=0.0014$) than those from the reference population
271 HOM ($27.61 \pm 2.01SE$).

272

273 Mites that evolved in the TEM metapopulations **died earlier after reaching maturity** ($9.65 \pm$
274 $0.42SE$ days) than mites from homogeneous (HOM) metapopulations (after $11.24 \pm 0.45SE$
275 days) and spatial variable (SPA) metapopulations (after $11.62 \pm 0.47SE$ days) (Fig. 2C). Under
276 the prevailing lab conditions, males developed in 7.99 days on average while the female
277 reached maturity after 8.40 days ($t=-3.28$; $p=0.0010$). Mites from homogeneous
278 metapopulations reached maturity earlier (7.97 ± 0.12) than mites from the spatially
279 heterogeneous (SPA) metapopulation (8.43 ± 0.11) ($t=-2.85$; $p=0.012$) (Fig. 2D). The
280 interaction between sex and treatment was not significant ($F_{2,2228}=0.25$; $p=0.78$). No
281 significant differences in juvenile survival of mites among treatments were observed
282 ($F_{2,7.201}=0.25$; $p=0.79$), and no differences were detected in aerial dispersal propensity
283 ($F_{2,5.185}=0.02$; $p=0.98$).

284

285 The simulated growth rate at the start of the experiment was 3.56 (SD=0.19). After
286 experimental evolution, growth rates were slightly lower in the homogeneous

287 metapopulation treatment relative to the other two, but this difference was not significant
288 based on the inferred 95% confidence intervals ($r_{\text{Hom}}=3.38$, $SD=0.21$; $r_{\text{TEMP}}=3.52$; $SD=0.20$;
289 $r_{\text{SPA}}=3.55$, $SD=0.19$).

290

291 **Divergence in physiological endpoints**

292 Although not significant ($F_{2,32}=3.08$; $p=0.06$), a trend towards a lower mass per 50 mites was
293 observed for mites from homogeneous metapopulations ($424 \pm 25\text{SE } \mu\text{g}$) compared to mites
294 from metapopulations with spatial ($510 \pm 25\text{SE } \mu\text{g}$) or spatiotemporal variation ($441 \pm 31\text{SE}$
295 μg). Glucose levels were significantly different among the metapopulation treatments
296 ($F_{2,67}=3.52$; $p=0.03$; Fig. 3), with the lowest levels for HOM ($1.39 \pm 0.25\text{SE}$) relative to those
297 from SPA ($2.33 \pm 0.25\text{SE}$) ($t=-2.64$; $p=0.027$). No significant differences in trehalose
298 ($F_{2,60}=0.43$; $p=0.51$) or triglyceride level were observed among treatments ($F_{2,56}=2.07$;
299 $p=0.14$).

300

301 **Divergence in gene expression**

302 Based on genome-wide gene-expression data of adult female mites raised under common
303 garden for two generations, SPA and TEM treatments diverged from the control HOM
304 regime, in a parallel direction. We found 152 and 181 differentially expressed genes in SPA
305 and TEM lines, respectively, using the HOM treatment as reference (FDR-corrected p -value
306 <0.05 and \log_2 -converted fold change (FC) >0.585) (Fig. 4). Fig. S1 depicts the expression
307 patterns of the triplicated lines within each treatment separately. Of these differentially
308 expressed genes, 81.6% and 70.7% exhibited down-regulation in SPA and TEM, relative to
309 HOM, respectively (Fig. 4, Fig. S1 in supporting material). Pearson correlation indicated that
310 the altered transcript levels in SPA and TEM were significantly correlated ($\rho=0.80$, $df=260$,
311 $p<0.0001$).

312

313 Using Blast2GO (Conesa *et al.* 2005), a total of 164 Biological Process GO-sets were assigned
314 to the differentially expressed genes that were associated with evolution in the TEM and SPA
315 regimes. Approximately half of these GO-terms ($n=84$) were present in both treatments.
316 Twenty gene sets were significantly up- and down-regulated in either the SPA or TEM
317 regimes, relative to HOM (Fig. 5). The associated labels of the GO-IDs are listed in Table S1 in
318 supporting Material. Using this GSA, we observed a convergence in the down-regulation of

319 genes involved in methionine biosynthesis (Fig. S3 in supporting material). In contrast, the
320 transcriptional responses to TEM and SPA selection pressures diverged in the gene sets of
321 which members were associated with gluconeogenesis and interconnected pathways and in
322 gene sets of which members code for glycoside hydrolases (Fig. 5 and Fig. S2 in supporting
323 material).

324

325 **Population performance on novel hosts**

326 After one week of challenging the novel host, mite survival did not differ according to the
327 spatial setting to which they evolved ($F_{2,122}=2.19$; $p=0.12$). However, significant differences in
328 fecundity were observed ($F_{2,122}=66.81$; $p<0.0001$), with a lower number of deposited eggs in
329 mites that evolved in the homogeneous populations ($49.33 \pm 1.07SE$ eggs) relative to SPA
330 ($68.29 \pm 1.29SE$ eggs) and TEM (55.83 ± 1.17 eggs). All pairwise differences were significant
331 (Fig.6A). After three weeks, the first cohort of offspring matured which differed in
332 population size among treatments ($F_{2,5.635}=5.83$; $p=0.04$; Fig. 6B). Again, population sizes
333 were lowest in mites originating from HOM ($5 \pm 0.90SE$) relative to SPA ($10.26 \pm 1.71SE$) and
334 TEM ($10.62 \pm 1.77SE$).

335

336

337 Discussion

338 While there is an increasing awareness that changes in spatial structure affect population
339 dynamics, and that these ecological dynamics interact with evolutionary trajectories, there is
340 a limited understanding of how these reciprocal eco-evolutionary interactions are governed
341 by metapopulation-level selection pressures. We followed a phenomic approach in which we
342 contrasted life history traits, physiological endpoints and transcriptomes from mites that
343 evolved in classical and mainland-island metapopulations with those that evolved in stable
344 patchy metapopulations. Using stable patchy metapopulations (HOM) as a reference, mites
345 from the spatially (mainland-island, SPA) and spatiotemporally (classical, TEM) variable
346 metapopulations showed evolutionary convergence in traits related to size and fecundity
347 and in its transcriptional regulation of methionine biosynthesis. However, these mites
348 equally evolutionary diverged in longevity, sex ratio, glucose content and in the expression
349 of genes involved in gluconeogenesis and that code for glycoside hydrolases (Fig. S2 in
350 supporting information). **Despite this divergence in the separate life traits, overall
351 population growth rate on the ancestral host did not differ among the treatments because
352 of different population-level trade-offs.**

353

354 Relative to HOM, spatiotemporal variation in habitat availability in the classical
355 metapopulations (TEM) generated high levels of local variation in population density and on
356 average lower metapopulation sizes due to frequent patch extinctions and lagged
357 colonisation dynamics (De Roissart *et al.* 2015). Mites evolving in these metapopulations
358 showed a significant down-regulation of transcription of genes associated with
359 gluconeogenesis and ATP production (Fig. S2). Genes of the gluconeogenesis pathway affect
360 various metabolic fluxes and energy production and are known to influence life history traits
361 (e.g. dispersal, life span and basal metabolic rate), which determine survival in a
362 metapopulation structure. Here, mite adaptation to spatiotemporal dynamics led to an
363 increased fecundity and reduced adult longevity, which may have been mediated by the
364 transcriptional changes in their gluconeogenesis pathway (Fig S2 in supporting information).
365 These altered traits **and resulting trade-off** reflect a change in resource allocation between
366 survival and reproduction (Magalhães *et al.* 2007), leading to the evolution of more *r*-

367 strategic traits (Ronce, Perret & Olivieri 2000; Wheat & Hill 2014). In general, the evidence
368 for the existence of such trade-offs is poorly documented.

369

370 Mainland-island metapopulations (SPA) are characterised by both a low local and
371 metapopulation-level variability in population size, large metapopulation sizes and low
372 metapopulation-level dispersal (De Roissart *et al.* 2015). We detected no such pattern at the
373 individual level. This contrasts with theoretical predictions (Ronce *et al.* 2000) and can be
374 explained by the densities in the trials at which differences are not expressed, the
375 behavioural lability which hides potential minor average differences, or the overruling impact
376 of kin competition in our system that hides potential minor differences in this behaviour.

377 More importantly, however, an evolution towards more male biased, fecund and slowed
378 aging strategies relative to mites from patchy metapopulations (HOM) was detected. Sex
379 ratio changes are known to evolve in response to local resource (Clark 1978) or mate
380 competition (Macke *et al.* 2011). While mites from stable metapopulations with low
381 dispersal and stable local population sizes are expected to evolve more female biased sex-
382 ratios due to elevated kin-competition, our results point in the direction of resource
383 competition. Spider mites show scramble competition, with fast resource depletion when
384 population sizes are high (Krips *et al.* 1998). As such, slowing down population growth by
385 extending age-at-maturity (Cameron *et al.* 2014; Monro & Marshall 2014) and more male-
386 biased sex ratios (Johnson 1988; Zhurov *et al.* 2014) can be considered as an adaptive
387 strategy under stable conditions and elevated resource competition. The significantly higher
388 transcription in gene sets that code for glycoside hydrolases, enzymes which are crucial for
389 the digestion of complex carbohydrates in an arthropod herbivore's diet and consequently a
390 higher feeding efficiency (Terra & Ferreira 1994), can be regarded as a consequence of mite
391 adaptation to the stable conditions and the resulting elevated resource competition.

392 Interestingly, two of the differentially expressed *GH* genes (*tetur29g01280* and
393 *tetur29g01230*) code for glycoside hydrolases of the GH32 family and seem to have been
394 incorporated in the mite's genome by a horizontal gene transfer event from a bacterial
395 donor species (Grbić *et al.* 2011). The mite genome harbours a remarkable number of
396 horizontally transferred genes and the observed evolutionary response in the transcription
397 of these *GH* genes to metapopulation selection seems to support the hypothesis that

398 horizontal gene transfer is a driving force in the adaptive evolution of spider mites (Grbic et
399 al. 2011).

400

401 Despite the evolved divergent phenotypic profiles reported above, life history traits and
402 genome-wide gene-expression showed an overall convergence in the spatial and
403 spatiotemporal variable metapopulation configurations, relative to the stable patchy one.
404 The convergence is apparent in (a) similar evolution of higher fecundity rates and to a lesser
405 degree sex-ratio, age and mass-at-maturity, (b) and increased glucose content and (c) the
406 identical direction of the differential expression of 71 genes (including genes of the
407 methionine anabolic pathway; see Fig. S3 in supporting information). Increased fecundity
408 shows trade-offs with longevity and sex ratio in respectively the TEM and SPA
409 metapopulation. Therefore, mites did not evolve an increased per capita growth rate and on
410 average reached maturity at later age. **A slower growth, is typically associated with**
411 **competitive environments (Kawecki 1993). For the SPA treatment, such increased**
412 **competitive interactions have been discussed above, but densities were on average lower in**
413 **the TEM treatments (De Roissart et al. 2015),** rendering high densities as a common
414 competitive environment a poor explanation for the detected convergence. **Systematic high**
415 **densities in the SPA treatments and resource limitation combined with unoccupied patches**
416 **in the TEM treatment (De Roissart et al. 2015)** must have led to more frequent episodes of
417 *per capita* resource shortage, relative to the HOM metapopulations. Elevated glucose levels
418 have been associated with responses to cope with increased starvation resistance in a
419 ground beetle (Laparie et al. 2012) and are typically associated with low metabolic rates
420 under food limitation (Packard & Boardman 1999; Božič & Woodring 2015). A slower
421 development and higher glucose levels of mites from the SPA and TEM are thus in
422 concordance with evolutionary trajectories towards stress resistance (Sulmon et al. 2015).

423

424 Our theory of a general stress response was further supported by the transcriptional
425 responses. First, identical expression profiles of a GO-term related to methionine synthesis
426 indicates a common response that could interfere with methylation processes. Such
427 methylation is often induced by general, oxidative stresses, for instance –and in line with our
428 findings- due to compensatory growth after food restriction (De Block & Stoks 2008).
429 Moreover, the more frequent resource shortage experienced by TEM and SPA populations

430 may have restricted their access to sulfur-rich proteins containing methionine from *P.*
431 *vulgaris* (George *et al.* 1993). During the common garden experiment, the increased access
432 to the beans for SPA and TEM may have reduced the need for methionine synthesis, an
433 amino acid that has been proven a key player in driving fecundity in *Drosophila*
434 *melanogaster* (Zajitschek *et al.* 2013).

435 Significantly up-and down-regulated gene sets upon adaptation to (spatio)temporal stress
436 included sets that are associated with basal metabolic pathways. Genetic changes in these
437 pathways are a common response to environmental stressors, with enzymes of the
438 gluconeogenesis/glycolysis and citric acid pathways as one of the prime targets (Marden
439 2013). It is interesting to notice that glucose 6-phosphatase shares a substrate with PGI (see
440 Figure S2 in supporting material), a protein previously connected to performance in specific
441 metapopulation structures in butterfly species (Wheat & Hill 2014). It may therefore
442 represent an important link between stress resistance and dynamics in metapopulations.

443

444

445 Adaptive metabolic changes are known to lead to the development of cross-tolerance in
446 organisms, enabling organisms to cope with unfamiliar stressors. We demonstrated that
447 evolutionary dynamics resulting from changes of the metapopulation spatial structure, pre-
448 adapt mites to cope with a challenging novel host. This is an important finding which
449 definitively needs more study in other (model) organisms. In general, such an evolutionary
450 response is expected to have a strong impact on community- and food web dynamics under
451 natural conditions (Farkas *et al.* 2013). We show that altered population dynamics due to
452 changes in metapopulation spatial structure may induce general stress resistance responses.
453 Since multiple stressors are jointly operational under global change, evolutionary responses
454 towards changes in spatial structure and the coupled spatiotemporal variation in
455 demography may offset the need for adaptation to other environmental stressors by
456 maintaining a general stress response and lead to evolutionary rescue (Carlson *et al.* 2014).

457

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464

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607 Arabidopsis and the cell-content-feeding chelicerate herbivore spider mite. *Plant*
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609

610 **Author contributions**

611 ADR, DB & TVL designed the study, ADR & NW performed the research, ADR wrote the first
612 draft of the manuscript and analyzed the data, and all authors contributed substantially to
613 revisions.

614

615 **Supporting information**

616 Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of this article.

617 Appendix S1: additional information methodologies

618 Appendix S2: trait variation at the start of the experiment

619 Table S1: GO labels

620 Fig S1: expression heatmap

621 Fig S2: citric acid cycle, glycolysis and gluconeogenesis

622 Fig S3: methionine synthesis pathway

623

624

625

626 **Figure legends**

627

628 **Figure 1:** Spider mites as a model for experimental evolution (mature female, on bean).

629 Photo credit by Gilles San Martin

630

631

632 **Figure 2: Effects of variation in metapopulation structure on life history parameters (mean**

633 **values \pm SE) of mites.** A: longevity, B: total fecundity, C: sex ratio (males/total clutch size), D:

634 developmental time; E: Daily fecundity. Dotted lines represent parameter values before 30

635 generations of selection. Equal notations indicate non-significant contrast for the respective

636 measurements. Error bars represent standard errors.

637

638

639 **Figure 3: Effects of variation in metapopulation structure on glucose level (nmol) per 50**

640 **mites (mean values \pm SE).**Equal notations indicate non-significant contrast for the respective

641 measurements. Error bars represent standard errors.

642

643 **Figure 4: Scatterplot showing the \log_2 -scaled fold change of the differentially expressed**

644 **genes in SPA and TEM, using HOM as reference.** The inset represents a Venn-diagram

645 depicting the number of differentially expressed genes in the TEM and SPA lines, relative to

646 HOM. The labels on the \log_2 -scaled x- and y-axis represent the non-transformed fold change

647 (FC) values.

648

649 **Figure 5: Gene set analysis of biological processes for differentially expressed genes in**

650 **spider mites after adaptation to spatial and spatiotemporal variability.** Nodes and edges

651 represent gene sets and overlap of members between interconnected sets, respectively.

652 Using PAGE, red, blue and grey indicate whether a gene set was significantly up-regulated,

653 down-regulated or not differentially expressed, respectively (Varemo et al., 2013). Gene sets

654 are labelled with the GO-ID (corresponding GO-labels are listed in Table S1 in the supporting

655 material). Green, orange and purple halos surrounding nodes show which gene sets code for
656 genes involved in methionine biosynthesis, gluconeogenesis and interconnected pathways,
657 and genes coding for glycoside hydrolases, respectively.

658

659 **Figure 6: Effects of long-term evolution in the different metapopulation contexts on**
660 **population growth on a novel host (mean values \pm SE).** A: number of eggs after one week,
661 B: number of female offspring reaching adulthood after 21 days. Equal notations indicate
662 non-significant contrast for the respective measurements. Error bars represent standard
663 errors.

664

665 **Tables**

666 **Table 1:** Results for fixed effects from mixed linear models with fecundity, developmental
 667 time, sex-ratio, longevity and juvenile survival as response variable.

Factor	Num df	Den df	F	p
668				
Daily fecundity				669
Treatment	2	8.732	9.34	0.0068
Day	1	1891	693.77	<.0001
Day*Treatment	2	1891	2.99	0.0507
Total fecundity				
Treatment	2	106.2	6.79	0.0017
Sex-Ratio				
Treatment	2	189.8	3.55	0.0308
Developmental time				
Treatment	2	2228	4.09	0.0168
Sex	1	228	10.78	0.0010
Treatment*Sex	2	2228	0.25	0.7782
Longevity				
Treatment	2	158	5.43	0.0053
Juvenile survival				
Treatment	2	7.201	0.25	0.7882

671 **Figures**

672

673 **Figure 1**

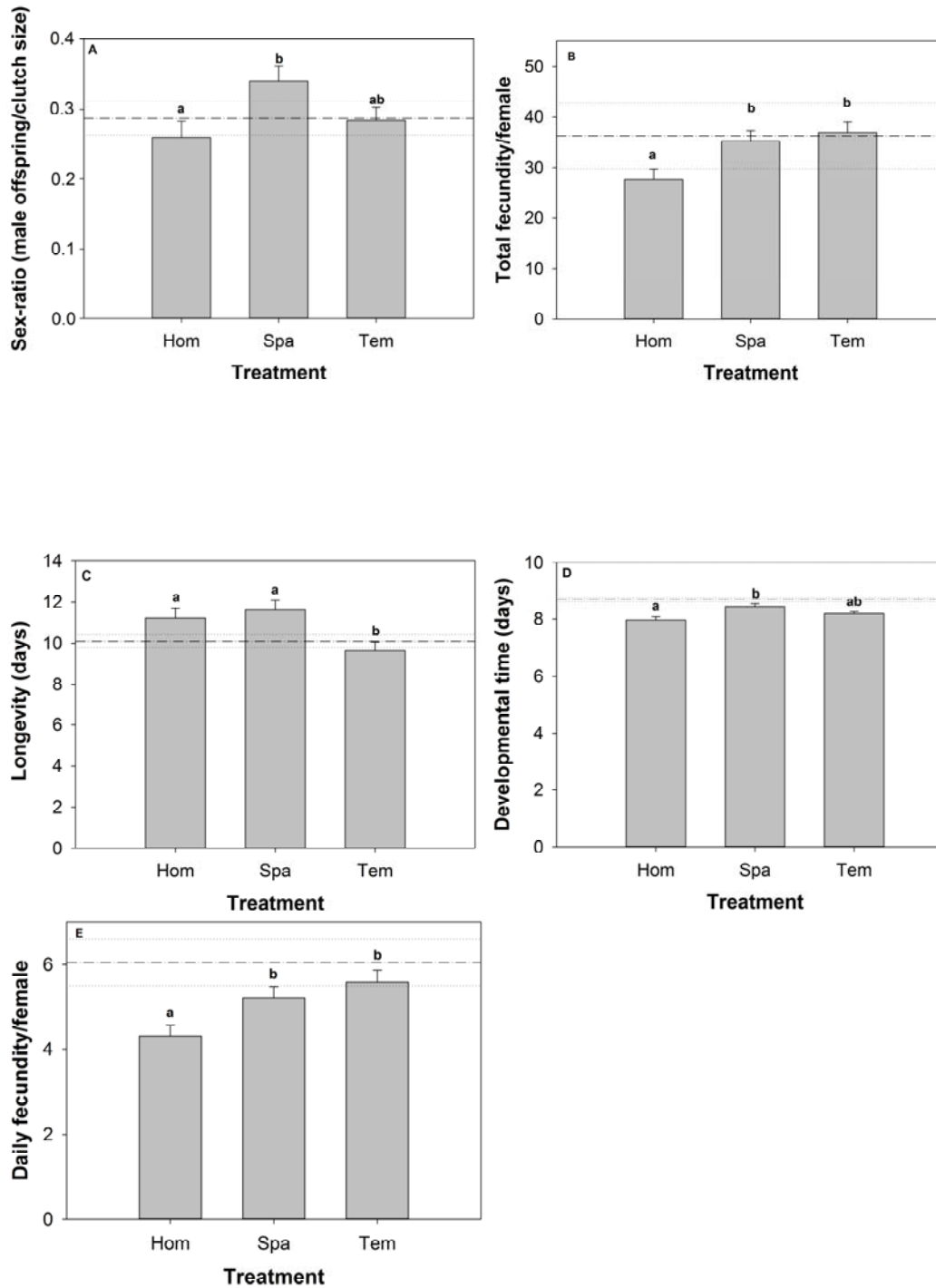


674

675

676 **Figure 2**

677



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680

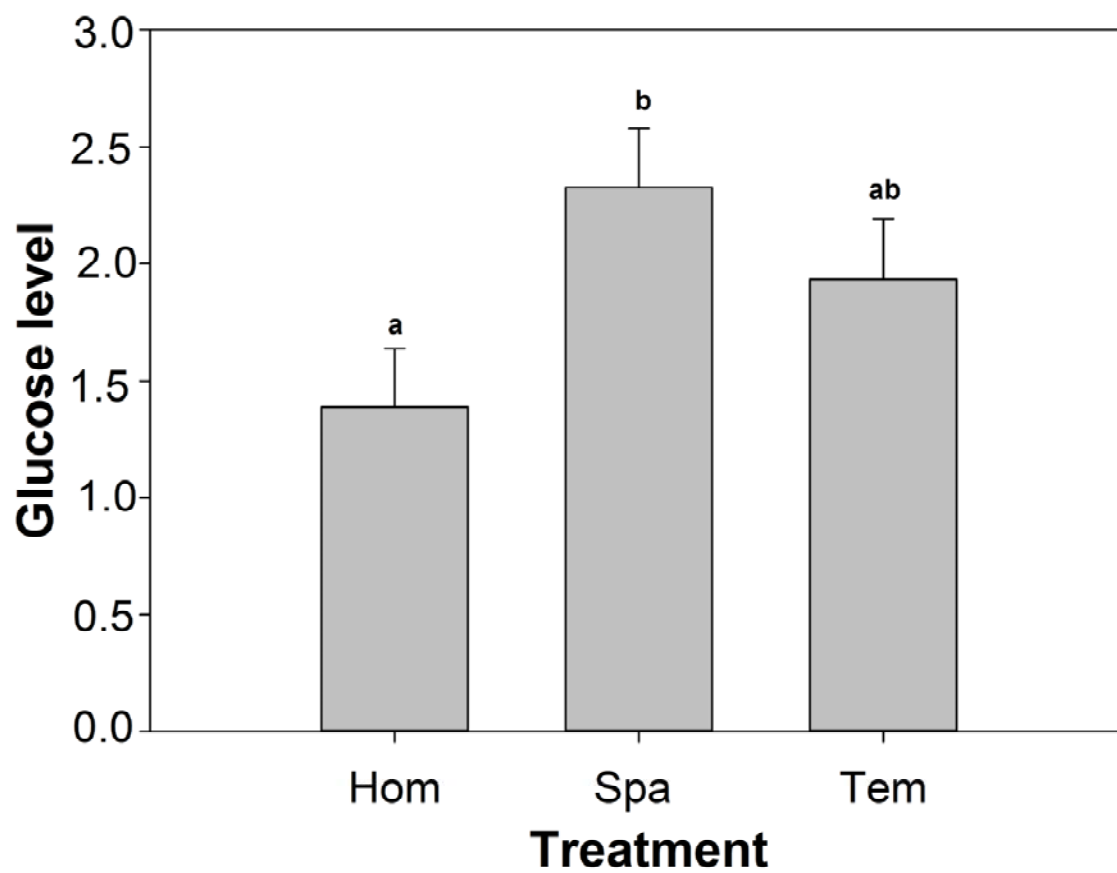
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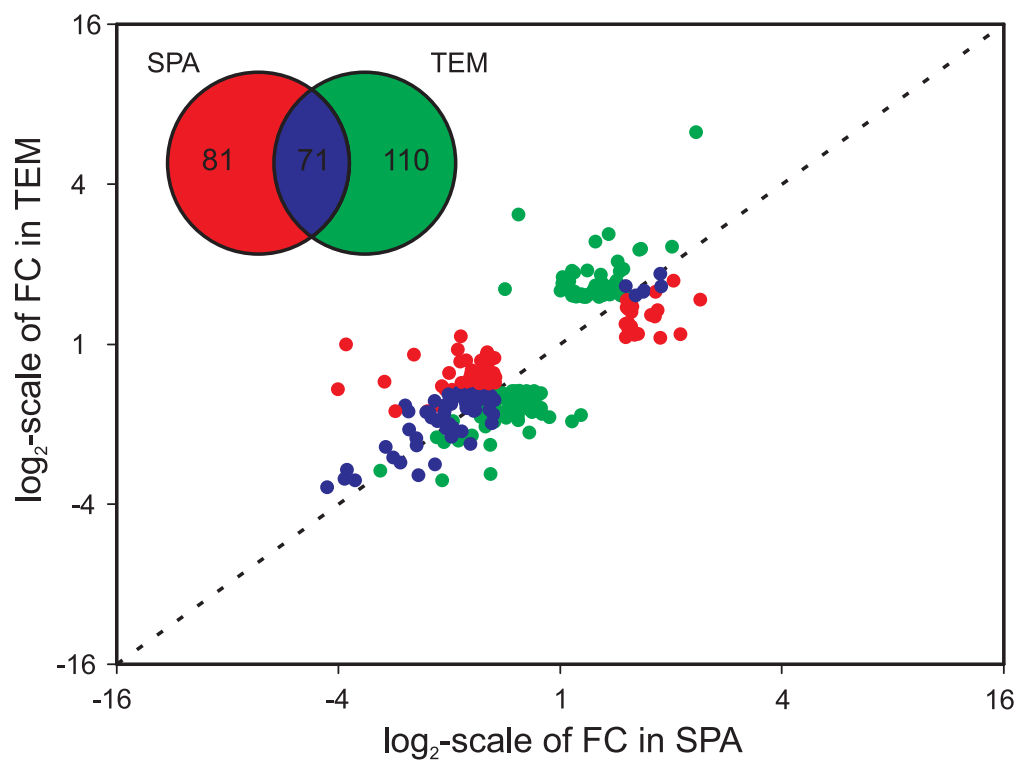
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685 **Figure 3**



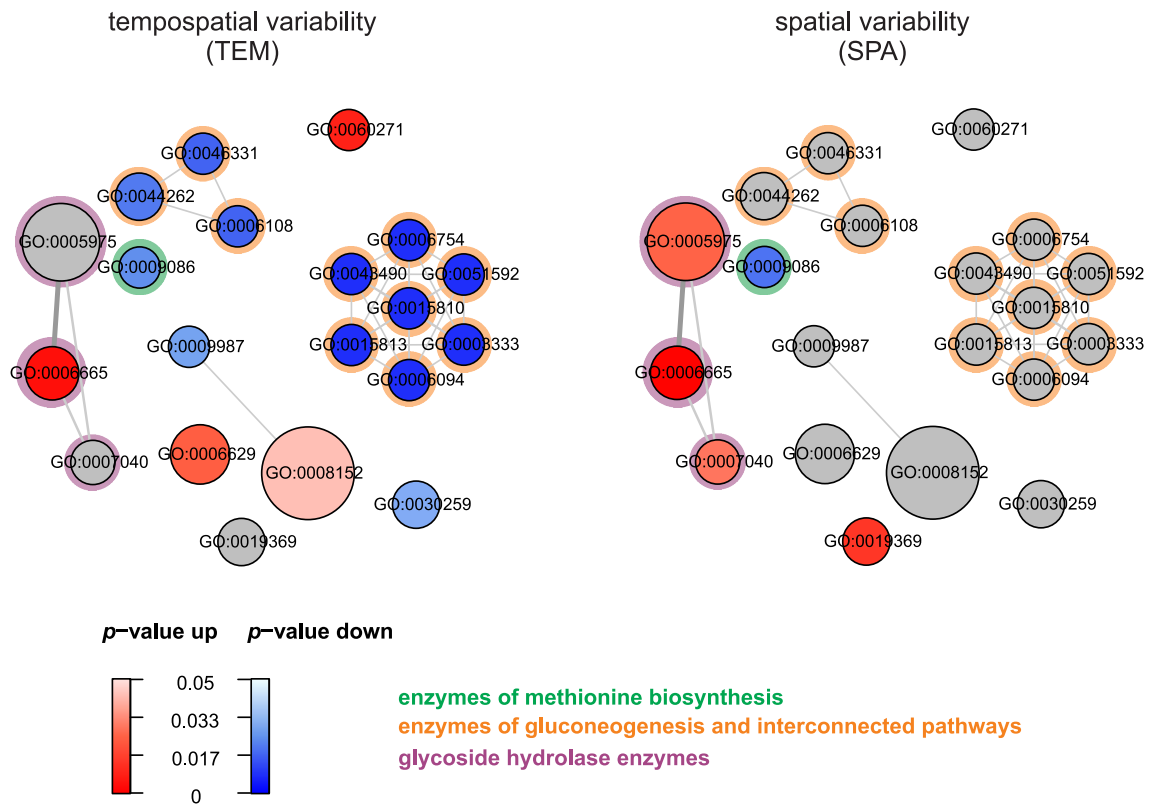
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687 **Figure 4**



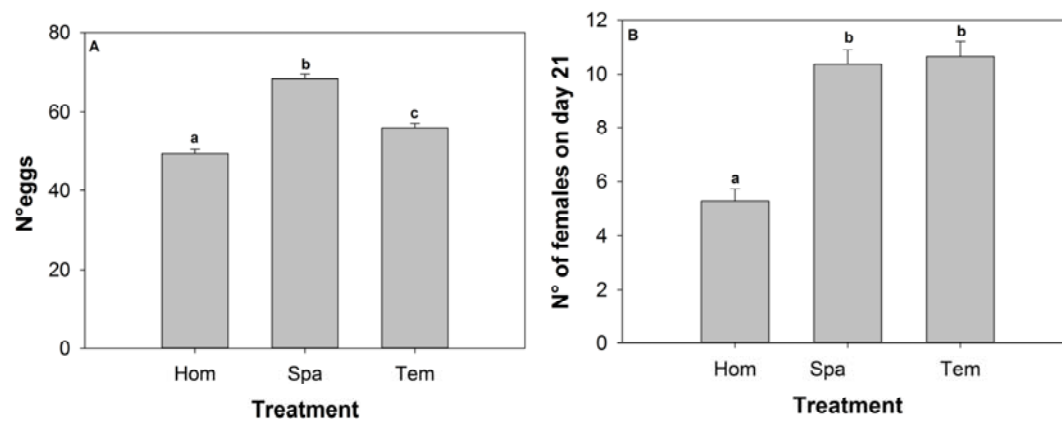
688

689 **Figure 5**



690

691 **Figure 6**



692

693