Special Issue

Functional Diversity of Soil Microbial Communities in Environments Shaped by Anthropogenic Activities

Message from the Guest Editors

The current geological epoch, i.e., the Anthropocene, is profoundly affected by the expansion of environments shaped by human activities such as agriculture, industry, urbanization, etc. As a consequence, the human population is facing, on the one hand, the consequences of more than half of the terrestrial ecosystems having turned into anthropogenic ecosystems, and on the other hand, the dependence on services provided by ecosystems of unknown functional mechanisms. Soil microbial communities are undoubtedly key players in vital ecosystem processes such as primary production, decomposition, nutrient cycling, and carbon storage. For a long time, taxonomic richness has been used as an indirect measure of the potential contribution of microbial communities in the functioning of ecosystems. In recent decades, this perspective has been challenged, and the diversity of functions performed by microbial communities has received increasing recognition as the missing link between biodiversity patterns and ecosystem functions.

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