

1       **Next-generation sequencing showing potential leachate**  
2       **influence on bacterial communities around a landfill in**  
3       **China**

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21 **ABSTRACT**

22 The impact of contaminated leachate on groundwater from landfills is well known but specific  
23 effects on bacterial consortia are less well-studied. Bacterial communities in landfill and an  
24 urban site located in Suzhou, China were studied using Illumina high-throughput sequencing. A  
25 total number of 153944 good quality reads were produced and sequences assigned to 6388  
26 operational taxonomic units (OTUs). Bacterial consortia consisted of up to 16 phyla including  
27 *Proteobacteria* (31.9 to 94.9% at landfill, 25.1 to 43.3% at urban sites), *Actinobacteria* (0 to  
28 28.7% at landfill, 9.9 to 34.3% at urban sites), *Bacteroidetes* (1.4 to 25.6% at landfill, 5.6 to  
29 7.8% at urban sites), *Chloroflexi* (0.4 to 26.5% at urban sites only) and unclassified bacteria.  
30 *Pseudomonas* was the dominant (67-93%) genus in landfill leachate. Arsenic concentrations in  
31 landfill raw leachate (RL) ( $1.11 \times 10^3$   $\mu\text{g/L}$ ) and fresh leachate (FL2) ( $1.78 \times 10^3$   $\mu\text{g/L}$ ), and  
32 mercury concentrations in RL (10.9  $\mu\text{g/L}$ ) and FL2 (7.37  $\mu\text{g/L}$ ) were higher than Chinese State  
33 Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA) standards for leachate in landfills. Shannon  
34 diversity index and Chao 1 richness estimate showed RL and FL2 lacked richness and diversity  
35 when compared with other samples. This is consistent with stresses imposed by elevated arsenic  
36 and mercury and has implications for ecological site remediation by bioremediation or natural  
37 attenuation.

38

39 **Keywords** Landfill, leachate, bacterial diversity, *Pseudomonas*, Arsenic.

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## 46 INTRODUCTION

47 Municipal landfill waste compositions can range from food wastes to high-strength detergents,  
48 solvents and pharmacological products comprising a broad spectrum of xenobiotic and  
49 recalcitrant toxic compounds with potential harmful ecological impacts (Köchling et al., 2015,  
50 Song et al., 2015a). Although modern landfills in well-regulated economies are highly  
51 engineered and monitored, older or informal (unplanned, uncontrolled) landfills worldwide are  
52 sources of leachate which, unless correctly collected and treated, can cause serious reductions in  
53 the quality of water bodies and groundwater sources (Li et al., 2014, Zhang et al., 2013a).  
54 Previous studies have indicated a diverse range of heavy metal concentrations in leachates (Song  
55 et al., 2015b, Zhang et al., 2013a). Heavy metals have been previously shown to directly  
56 influence the bacterial community composition of various environments (Muller et al., 2001,  
57 Vishnivetskaya et al., 2011, Sandaa et al., 1999, Mor et al., 2006, Yao et al., 2017). Long term  
58 studies have shown a strong influence of mercury towards the bacterial community of a river  
59 basin and soil (Muller et al., 2001).

60  
61 To study complex microbial ecosystems such as leachate, molecular techniques have several  
62 advantages over culture-based techniques as they allow the analysis of uncultured organisms and  
63 provide higher resolution measurements closer to the complete microbial profile (Staley et al.,  
64 2011). Analysing the microbial community around a landfill can potentially determine whether  
65 the leachate is being transported through the landfill liner into the natural soil and groundwater,  
66 via changes in the diversity and composition of bacterial consortia as different species are more  
67 or less tolerant of elevated pollutant concentrations (Wang et al., 2017, El-Salam and Abu-Zuid,  
68 2015, Vukanti et al., 2009).

69

70 Previous studies on heavy metal influence towards microbial communities were performed using  
71 PCR-DGGE and GS 454 FLX pyrosequencing (Muller et al., 2001, Yao et al., 2017,  
72 Vishnivetskaya et al., 2011). Next generation sequencing (NGS) methods can assist in the  
73 identification of very rare taxa in the landfill samples (Köchling et al., 2015, Song et al., 2015a).  
74 NGS provides efficient, multiple level details of the operational taxonomical units (OTUs),  
75 richness and diversity, so it can be used to identify both similarities and differences between  
76 sites. Furthermore, the rapidity and portability of NGS methods and apparatus, for example,  
77 Nanopore (Oxford Nanopore Technologies, Oxford, UK) mean that sequencing of microbial  
78 consortia now presents a potentially rapid, low-cost option for the detection of leachate impacts  
79 on natural groundwater consortia and hence mapping of contaminant plumes based on  
80 ecological, rather than chemical, indicators (Brown et al., 2017).

81

82 Understanding the environmental conditions and bacterial community is of utmost importance  
83 when it comes to cleaning up the contaminants by employing techniques such as biodegradation.  
84 It is a microbial process that degrade contaminants found in the environment. Over the past 20  
85 years, in-situ biodegradation has successfully been applied to various environments with  
86 different level of degrading abilities depending on the bacteria (Meckenstock et al., 2015). The  
87 process requires careful identification of the degrading bacteria prior to implementation.  
88 Generally, constant monitoring of the microbial activity is also required to ensure constant and  
89 consistent microbial activity over time. For example, Adetutu et al. (2015) utilised biostimulation  
90 (BS), biostimulation-bioaugmentation (BS-BA) and monitored natural attenuation (MNA)  
91 approaches to bioremediate groundwater polluted with trichloroethene (TCE). Next-generation

92 sequencing was an effective technique to study the microbial community dynamics throughout  
93 while performing the dechlorination process.

94

95 In the present work, we investigated the potential for NGS to identify potential impacts on soil  
96 and groundwater bacterial communities due to heavy metal-rich landfill leachate in a conurbation  
97 in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, China. The objectives of this study were i) to characterize the  
98 composition of the bacterial communities of a selected landfill (leachate, soil and groundwater)  
99 and a non-landfill site in same conurbation, hereby referred to as “urban” (soil and groundwater);  
100 ii) to compare the unique and dominant bacterial taxa among the landfill and urban samples; and  
101 iii) to investigate and compare the bacterial diversity and heavy metal concentration of the soil  
102 and groundwater samples from a landfill and urban site. The study not only adds to the  
103 knowledge in respect of leachate impacts on subsurface consortia under urban areas, but assesses  
104 the potential of NGS for rapid monitoring of environmental impacts from landfills, and has  
105 implications for the design and implementation of biological remediation options such as natural  
106 attenuation or *in situ* microbially-induced carbonate precipitation.

107

## 108 **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### 109 **Sample locations**

110 The selected landfill (located at 31°14'18.31"N 120°33'3.09"E) began operation in 1993 and  
111 receives about 1,500 tons/day of household wastes and industrial wastes from the Suzhou  
112 conurbation. A new landfill was constructed in 2006 on the surface of the older landfill (Rong et  
113 al., 2011). The urban site samples were collected from an area that was previously used for  
114 agriculture prior to reclamation for industrial development. The two sites are approximately 27

115 km from each other. The two sites are approximately 27 km from each other. Suzhou is situated  
116 on top of a 200 m deep sequence of Quaternary sediments. The depth of drift reduces to 0m  
117 directly to the West and South West of the City (Jiangsu Provincial Bureau of Geological and  
118 Mineral Exploration, 1984). At depth the bedrock is composed of Devonian quartzite and shales  
119 of the Wutong Formation, the sandstones shales and quartzites of the Maoshan Group and zones  
120 of Carboniferous limestone (the karstic features of which are known commercially as Taihu  
121 Stone, exposed at Dongting Mountain and in Linwu Cave) which forms the hills to the south and  
122 west of the city. This sequence is intruded by the Suzhou Granite which is exposed to the West  
123 of the city centre. The variable erosive bedrock surface, has been infilled by alluvial and  
124 lacustrine sediments of the lower flood plains of the Yangtze River. The subsurface materials  
125 vary from clays to silty sands (Shi et al., 2012). The structure of the quaternary strata below  
126 ground varies at the very large scale, due to the movement of the rivers and changes in the extent  
127 and location of the lakes with time. However, the extent of variation has been limited by the  
128 volume of materials being deposited within a geologically short period of time. Some of the  
129 silty/sandy subsurface zones are a result of reworking of loess by the Yangtze River. The silty  
130 sands have sufficient porosity to act as aquifer materials (Ma et al., 2011). Pumping works from  
131 these aquifers have caused the collapse of their porous structure resulting in approximately 1 m  
132 of settlement across the region increasing to 1.4m towards city centres, and reducing to 0m  
133 towards the locations of large permanent lakes (Shi et al., 2012). Details regarding Suzhou  
134 landfill construction and waste were briefly discussed by Rong et al. (2011).

135  
136 The landfill sampling comprised of two leachates, soil from three different locations around the  
137 landfill (samples LS1, LS2 and LS3) and one groundwater from the landfill monitoring well

138 (samples BHGW) (Table 1). Leachate samples were either fresh (FL2, collected from an outlet  
139 pipe that runs beneath the landfill) or raw leachate (RL, sampled from a leachate pond). Soil  
140 samples were collected using a Spiral auger at 30cm depth. The first soil location was near the  
141 leachate pond; the second was close to agricultural land on the boundary of the site; and the third  
142 soil location was close to the groundwater monitoring borehole. The groundwater was collected  
143 at an approximate depth of 4 meters using a hand-held slow flow peristaltic pump. The samples  
144 were collected from well below the groundwater surface such that any residual floating matter  
145 would not be collected. Groundwater and leachate were collected in sterile high density  
146 polyethylene plastic bottles and soil samples were collected in a sterile plastic zip lock bags and  
147 transported to the laboratory under ambient temperature conditions, then stored in a cold room  
148 (4°C) prior to analysis.

149  
150 To contrast the bacterial community from the landfill, soil (samples USS1 and USSur1) and  
151 groundwater (samples USGW) samples were collected from the urban site. Two samples from  
152 the two different locations in an urban area were selected for the soil sampling which were 200  
153 meters apart. The groundwater borehole was chosen for the groundwater sampling. Ground water  
154 was collected at a depth of 4 meters. The first location of the soil sampling was located closer to  
155 the urban site groundwater and the second location of the soil sample was an isolated location.

156

### 157 **Physicochemical analysis of soil and water samples**

158 The following heavy metals were analysed for all samples: mercury (Hg), arsenic (As), cadmium  
159 (Cd), copper (Cu), lead (Pb), zinc (Zn) and chromium (Cr). The heavy metals were analyzed at  
160 Tsingcheng Environment Company in Suzhou, China. Mercury and arsenic were analysed using  
161 Atomic Fluorescence Spectroscopy (AFS 2100, Haiguang Instruments Co. Ltd); zinc, lead and

162 copper were analysed using Inductively Coupled Plasma-Atomic Emission Spectroscopy ( ICP  
163 710, Agilent Technologies); cadmium was analysed using graphite furnace-Atomic Absorption  
164 Spectroscopy (240Z, Agilent technologies) and chromium was analysed using Flame-Atomic  
165 Absorption Spectroscopy (ICP 710, Agilent technologies). The pH of soil, groundwater and  
166 leachate samples was measured using a Suntex<sup>®</sup> TS 3000 pH/Temp portable probe in the  
167 Department of Environmental Science at XJTLU. The samples were stored at +4°C prior to  
168 analysis.

169

## 170 **Preparation and extraction of DNA from soil, leachate and groundwater samples**

### 171 *Preparation of samples for DNA extraction*

172 One liter of groundwater was filtered on a 0.22 µm pore size polycarbonate membrane filter  
173 (Millipore, USA) using a vacuum pump. Samples were filtered and the filters were placed in  
174 sterile Petri dishes and stored at -20°C until they were used for DNA extraction. Due to the  
175 nature of the sample (high turbidity), 50 ml of leachate was centrifuged at 5000 rpm for 5  
176 minutes and both the pellet and the supernatant were collected. The supernatant was filtered in a  
177 0.22 µm membrane filter (Millipore, USA) and both pellet and membrane filter were used for  
178 DNA extraction. Soil samples were weighed (0.25 g) and used for DNA extraction.

179

### 180 *DNA extraction*

181 The genomic DNA from all the samples was extracted using a commercial DNA extraction Kit  
182 (MO BIO Power soil<sup>®</sup> DNA kit, USA) according to the manufacturer protocol. 50 µl of elution  
183 buffer was used to elute the DNA samples and these were frozen at -20 °C until further  
184 processing for bacterial community analysis. The DNA was quantified using Nanodrop (Thermo  
185 Scientific, Waltham, MA, USA) and examined by agarose gel electrophoresis (1% w/v).

186

**187 Bacterial community analysis by next-generation sequencing**

188 The bacterial diversity and community composition of soil, leachate and groundwater samples  
189 were studied by NGS using the Illumina MiseqPE250 platform. NGS was carried out at  
190 Shanghai Majorbio Pharmaceutical Technology Limited, China. 16S rRNA genes (V4 region)  
191 were amplified by PCR using 515F (5'barcoded GTGCCAGCMGCCGCGG3') and 806R  
192 (5'GGACTACHVGGGTWTCTAAT3') primer sets. PCR reactions contained in 20 µl: 4 µl of  
193 5× FastPfu Buffer, 2 µl of 2.5 mM dNTPs, 0.8µl of forward and revers primers (5 µM), 0.4 µl of  
194 FastPfu polymerase, 10 ng of template DNA and DD water up to 20 µl. PCR conditions: a ABI  
195 GenAmp 9700 thermocycler was used. Initial denaturation 3 minutes at 95°C was followed by  
196 28 cycles of 30 s at 95°C, 30 s at 55°C and 30 s at 72°C; final extension was carried out at 72°C  
197 for 10 min. The purified amplicons were pooled and sequenced on an Illumina MiSeq platform.  
198 Chimeric sequences were removed and the operational taxonomic units (OTUs) were clustered  
199 with 97% similarity cutoff using UPARSE (Edgar, 2013). The phylogenetic affiliation of each  
200 16S rRNA sequence was analysed by RDP classifier against the SILVA data base (Pruesse et al.,  
201 2007). The sequences were submitted to National Centre for Biotechnological Information  
202 (NCBI) Short Read Archive (SRA) database under the accession numbers SAMN06339740 to  
203 SAMN06339748.

**204 Data analyses**

205 The diversity within each sample (alpha diversity) was calculated by Shannon (H') and Simpson  
206 (D) diversity indices, abundance based coverage estimator (ACE) and Chao 1 richness estimator  
207 using MOTHUR (<http://www.mothur.org>). The diversity between samples were compared (beta  
208 diversity) by non-metric multidimensional scaling (NMDS) and cluster analysis by using QIIME.  
209 The relationship between the environmental parameters (pH and heavy metals) and bacterial

210 community was assessed by redundancy analysis (RDA) or canonical correspondence analysis  
211 (CCA) by using R language vegan package.

212

## 213 **RESULTS**

### 214 **pH and heavy metals**

215 Tables 2 and 3 show that the soil samples from the landfill and urban site were slightly acidic  
216 while landfill groundwater (BHGW), raw leachate (RL) and fresh leachate (FL2) sample were  
217 alkaline. To ensure accuracy in the results, two samples were collected for the landfill sites. The  
218 two readings labelled as <sup>(1)</sup> and <sup>(2)</sup> were taken from the same pool at slightly different location  
219 and interval. The Arsenic concentrations in RL and FL2 were 11.1-12.3 to 17.8-18.4 times  
220 higher than the Chinese SEPA guideline concentration value for landfill of 100 µg/L – Class V  
221 (Yang et al., 2008). Mercury concentrations were an order of magnitude higher in RL and FL2  
222 samples and in the BHGW (landfill groundwater) than the Chinese SEPA guideline values (Yang  
223 et al., 2008). Heavy metal concentrations of the soil samples from the landfill were within the  
224 guideline range (Table 3). The As concentration of urban site soil 1 and 2 (USS1 and USSUR1)  
225 was at the threshold tolerance value of the guideline range. The heavy metal concentration of Hg  
226 in BHGW was found to be 340 times higher than USGW.

227

### 228 **Bacterial diversity**

229 Table 4 shows the number of reads obtained from the landfill samples varied from 13611 to  
230 20464 and in urban site, it ranged from 14015 to 22643. The maximum reads obtained from LS3  
231 and lowest from LS2 in the landfill environment. In urban site, USSUR1 had the lowest reads  
232 compared to other urban samples. OTU values ranged from 139 to 1018 for the landfill samples  
233 compared to 168 to 1167 in the urban site samples. FL2 had the lowest number and BHGW had  
234 the highest number of OTUs. In the urban site, USGW had the lowest OTU read compared to

235 USS1 which had the highest OTU read of 1224. The bacterial richness and diversity (Shannon  
236  $H'$  index) of the urban soil samples (USS1 and USSUR1) were the highest of all the samples.  
237 Species diversity estimates obtained for the abundance-based coverage estimators (ACE) and the  
238 Chao1 index was higher in the urban site soil samples when compared to the landfill soil  
239 samples, despite As concentrations an order of magnitude higher in the urban site soil samples  
240 than in the landfill soil samples. Furthermore, the landfill groundwater (BHGW) had more  
241 bacterial diversity than the urban groundwater (USGW) by every metric despite the Hg  
242 concentration in BHGW being more than 340 times higher than USGW (Table 2).

243

#### 244 **Bacterial community structure**

245 Figure 1 shows the bacterial community composition at phylum level in both landfill and urban  
246 site samples. Among all the phyla, only *Proteobacteria* and *Bacteroidetes* were found to be  
247 present in all the samples. The phylum *Proteobacteria* was dominant in all the samples from  
248 landfill site with their abundance ranging from 31.4% to 94.9% in the landfill samples. Across  
249 the urban site, their abundance ranged from 25.1% to 43.3% with USGW possessing a lower  
250 abundance compared to the USS1 and USSUR1. *Bacteroidetes* abundance ranged from 1.42% to  
251 25.64% among the landfill samples with FL2 having the lowest abundance and LS2 the highest.  
252 In the urban site, samples they ranged from 5.69% to 7.86% in abundance with USGW having  
253 the higher presence of *Bacteroidetes*. Members of phylum *Actinobacteria* were found in all the  
254 samples except the leachate samples. The relative abundance of *Actinobacteria* ranged from  
255 12.6 % to 28.6% and from 9.9% to 34.3% for the landfill site and urban site, respectively.  
256 USGW was again found to be higher for *Actinobacteria*. *Chlamydiae* was only found in USGW  
257 at 24.1%. *Firmicutes* and *Thermotogae* were only found in the RL sample with 6.4% and 8.2%  
258 abundance, respectively.

259  
260 Figure 2 shows that at the order level, *Pseudomonadales* and *Sphingobacteriales* were present in  
261 all samples. *Pseudomonadales* were dominant in the landfill samples at RL (69.96 %), FL2  
262 (92.97 %), LS2 (25.29 %) and LS3 (16.11 %). In LS2 and LS3, either *Xanthomonadales*  
263 (11.04% and 14.09%) or *Flavobacteriales* (20.88% and 10.55%) were the second or third  
264 dominant orders observed. However, in USGW samples, *Frankiales* (34.06%) and *Chlamydiales*  
265 (24.09%) were dominant and their abundance was either <1% or absent in other samples from  
266 both sites. *Sphingobacteriales* were found to be the second dominant order at 8.5% for BHGW  
267 and 7.81% for USGW. *Flavobacteriales* were present in higher percentages in LS2 (20.88%) and  
268 LS3 (10.55%) but their abundance were found to be less than <2% in other samples.

269  
270 At genus level, the bacterial communities from the two sites were more diverse and unique.  
271 Figure 3a shows that *Pseudomonas* was the most dominant genus observed in FL2 and RL with a  
272 relative abundance of 92.9 and 69.9%, respectively. This genus was also dominant in LS2 and  
273 LS3 but their relative abundance was less (16-25%) as compared to leachate samples.  
274 *Sphingomonas* (6.5%) was found to be dominant in BHGW. In contrast the urban site samples  
275 (Figure 3b) show *Sporichthyaceae\_unclassified* (34%) to be dominant followed by  
276 *Candidatus\_Rhabdochlamydia* (24%) and *Sediminibacterium* (5.83%) in USGW sample.  
277 *Thiobacillus*, *Anaerolineaceae\_uncultured* and *Nitrosomonadaceae\_uncultured* were dominant in  
278 USS1 and USSUR1 samples.

279  
280 Cluster analysis and NMDS was performed on the landfill and urban site samples (Fig. 4a, 4b,  
281 5a, 5b). Fig 4a indicates a high level of similarity among the LS1, LS2 and LS3, BHGW, USS1

282 and USSUR1 samples. RL, FL2 and USGW are shown to be unique compared to the rest of the  
283 samples. Cluster analysis shown in Fig 5a and 5b support the results observed for RL, FL2 and  
284 USGW in Fig 4a. Fig 4b shows the least level of similarity observed among RL, FL2, LS1, LS2,  
285 LS3, USS1 and USSUR1 samples.

286

287 To study the relationship between environmental parameters and bacterial community  
288 composition, both multivariate redundancy analysis (RDA) and canonical correspondence  
289 analysis (CCA) were performed and compared since the length of the first axis gradient were  
290 between 3.0 and 4.0. Fig. 6 shows the RDA plot of the influence of As, Pb, Hg and pH on the  
291 soil samples from the different locations. The USS1 and USSUR1 samples were mainly  
292 correlated with the As and Pb content in the soil. The LS3 samples exhibited the reverse pattern  
293 and were correlated with the pH and Hg concentration in the soil. Canonical correspondence  
294 analysis (CCA) was performed to determine the possible linkages between the bacterial  
295 communities and environmental parameters by examining the leachate and groundwater samples.  
296 Canonical correspondence analysis (CCA) showed a negative correlation between As, pH, Hg  
297 and the bacterial community of the samples, indicating that they had the biggest impacts on the  
298 bacterial community of these samples (Fig. 7). Arsenic was the major factor that negatively  
299 correlated with bacterial communities from FL2 and RL samples. CCA identified both pH and  
300 heavy metals in the samples as a major environmental factor in affecting bacterial communities.

301

## 302 **DISCUSSION**

### 303 **Comparison of pH and heavy metals between sites**

304 The pH of leachate samples RL and FL2 were 7.78 and 8.12, respectively (Table 2). This range  
305 of pH has been reported in other landfill leachate studies conducted in China (Song et al., 2015a,

306 Song et al., 2015b, Li et al., 2014). Since this landfill has an onsite incinerator, the alkaline pH  
307 could be attributed to the disposal of ash in the landfill. The pH of BHGW and urban site  
308 groundwater (USGW) was also alkaline at 8.2 and 7.75, respectively (Table 2). The pH values of  
309 landfill and urban site soil were between 6.6 and 7.1 which indicate that the samples are slightly  
310 more acidic in nature than the natural groundwater (Table 3). The pH values of the soil are not  
311 surprising given the sites were previously used as agricultural lands (Zou et al., 2014) and the  
312 regional presence of limestone formations (Jiangsu Provincial Bureau of Geological and Mineral  
313 Exploration, 1984).

314  
315 The heavy metal concentrations for As and Hg were above the guidelines range in both leachate  
316 samples (Table 2). These hazardous ranges of As and Hg could be due to the solid waste  
317 decomposition (mostly from waste water and MSW) and indicates the age of the landfill (more  
318 than 10 years old) (Zhang et al., 2013b, Huang et al., 2013, Huang et al., 2003). The Hg level in  
319 BHGW was 340 times higher when compared with USGW, indicating a possible percolation of  
320 mercury from the landfill leachate to landfill groundwater. Very low concentrations in LS1, LS2  
321 & LS3 indicating Hg-bearing leachate and groundwater are not interacting with the soils. On this  
322 chemical evidence, it might be concluded that at this site, the near surface environment around  
323 the landfill remains relatively uncontaminated and leachate was not percolating directly to the  
324 groundwater below the water table (Roling et al., 2001) (Wang et al., 2011).

325  
326 The concentration of As in RL & FL2 was very high in comparison to other landfills in Jiangsu  
327 province which was between 0.03 to 0.113 mg/L. (Yang et al., 2008). Given that both sites were  
328 agricultural land prior to rapid urbanisation in the late 20th century, agri-chemical residues

329 within the soil at USS1 & USSUR1 could explain the elevated arsenic levels (Zou et al., 2014).  
330 The remaining heavy metals were analyzed from both sites and are typical of soils in urban  
331 contexts subject to uncontrolled disposal of consumer and industrial chemicals, road runoff and  
332 deposition of airborne pollutants (Mor et al., 2006). (Wijesekara et al., 2014). This context of  
333 high background contamination presents the key challenge for both chemical and  
334 microbiological investigation of leachate impacts.

335

### 336 **Analysis of bacterial community structure in landfill**

#### 337 *Comparison OTU and community composition among samples*

338 Figs. 4 and 5 shows OTU based NMDS and cluster analysis plots which demonstrate the level of  
339 similarity among the samples from both sites. When aggregated together, similarity between  
340 landfill soil samples (LSO) and urban site soil samples (USO) was high when compared against  
341 the similarity between groundwater samples from both sites (Fig. 4a). Landfill groundwater  
342 (BHGW) consortia were also closely similar with the soil samples. The reason behind the low  
343 similarity between the groundwater samples could be due to the poor diversity and richness of  
344 the urban groundwater (USGW) (Table 3). It is also clear that the bacterial communities in the  
345 raw and fresh leachate were markedly distinct from any of the soil or groundwater communities;  
346 this is evident at both genus and order level (Figs. 2 and 3). On the basis of bacterial community  
347 analysis, the dramatic differences between leachate and environmental samples offer the  
348 potential for fingerprinting the presence of leachate contamination through identification of  
349 leachate-specific DNA in environmental samples. Although such detailed mapping was not  
350 possible in this study, we note that all three landfill soil samples contained *Pseudomonas*, in  
351 common with the leachate samples, which was not present in soils or groundwater from non-

352 landfill locations. This may indicate surface or in-soil transport of leachates not evident from the  
353 heavy metals analysis.

354

355 ***Dominant phyla and genera in both sites***

356 Leachate samples RL and FL2 had the least diverse phyla detection, in contrast to other landfill  
357 leachate studies (Song et al., 2015a, Wang et al., 2017). The high concentration of As and Hg in  
358 RL and FL2 could have inhibited the growth of other phyla, whereas *Pseudomonas* spp. have  
359 recently been identified as key members of arsenotrophic consortia in contaminated groundwater  
360 environments in Bangladesh (Sultana et al., 2017). The low diversity in leachate samples,  
361 compared with samples taken from within the landfill (e.g.,(Wang et al., 2017) may also be due  
362 to the concentration of landfill microbiota within surface-attached biofilms rather than in mobile  
363 planktonic forms (Costerton and Wilson, 2004). Landfill and urban site soil and groundwater  
364 samples shared most of the phyla except for *Chlamydiae*; which was only found in USGW. As  
365 far as we are aware, this is the first study to observe significant presence of *Chlamydiae* in urban  
366 groundwater microbial consortia; interestingly, given the high levels of lead and zinc in the  
367 urban soils, the phyla has previously been isolated in groundwater samples affected by lead-mine  
368 tailings (Zhang et al., 2008) .

369

370 *Proteobacteria* were most dominantly found in leachate samples from landfills (Song et al.,  
371 2015a, Song et al., 2015b) and aquifer sediments (Wan et al., 2012). It has been reported that  
372 members of *Proteobacteria* involved in the degradation of aromatic oils such as polycyclic  
373 aromatic hydrocarbons (Vukanti et al., 2009). These bacteria have been found to lose dominance  
374 in older leachate samples (Köchling et al., 2015) and they were detected at highly abundant  
375 levels in aged refuse from Shanghai landfills (Xie et al., 2012). *Actinobacteria* was found in the

376 soil and groundwater samples from both sites but not in the leachate samples. This was not  
377 expected as *Actinobacteria* has previously been found in leachate samples (Vukanti et al., 2009).  
378 The high arsenic and mercury concentrations of leachate could perhaps have restricted their  
379 growth. *Actinobacteria* are responsible for organic matter degradation contributing to carbon  
380 turnover (Song et al., 2015b). Since landfills receive waste ranging from households to  
381 industries, the amount of organic matter present in the soil could be a reason behind their  
382 presence in landfill soil compared to urban site soil. *Bacteroidetes* was observed in abundance at  
383 BHGW being twice as much as USGW. While LS2 & LS3 had three times the dominance as  
384 USS1 & USSUR1 which could possibly indicate early stages of organic matter degradation  
385 within the landfill samples as they commonly contain more soluble and easily degradable  
386 material (Schmidtova and Baldwin, 2011). *Bacteroidetes* tend to become more dominant than  
387 Proteobacteria as the waste in the landfill ages (Köchling et al., 2015). *Firmicutes* was only  
388 found to be dominant in the leachate samples which suggest that they are able to withstand and  
389 survive the toxic heavy metal concentrations found in the leachate. They have also been found in  
390 other toxic chemical environments such as sewers and drainage (Rodrigues et al., 2014).  
391 Environmental factors may have fundamental impacts on the structure and function diversity of  
392 bacterial communities in landfill. Analysis from RDA showed that LS1, LS2, LS3 and BHGW  
393 were not influenced by pH and heavy metals, where USS1 and USur1 were shown to be lightly  
394 influenced by As and Pb. In this study, analysis from CCA has shown that higher concentrations  
395 of As and Hg influence the bacterial community of leachate. pH was also shown to significantly  
396 influence the bacterial community of leachate. The findings from this paper are consistent with  
397 previous results that show that heavy metals influence the bacterial community of landfill (Yao  
398 et al., 2017).

399

**400 Potential of NGS for fingerprinting leachate interactions with soil and groundwater**

401 In this study, Illumina MiSeq technique was used to investigate the bacterial community in  
402 samples collected from landfill and urban sites. Bacterial richness and abundance were found to  
403 vary significantly among the landfill and urban site samples. Further bacterial analysis revealed  
404 lack of diversity in leachate samples when compared with soil and groundwater samples. OTU  
405 data from NGS could be used in mapping the interactions between the samples at a site. In our  
406 study, OTU data helped in understanding the similarity among the samples from both sites. More  
407 studies are now being published using MiSeq methodology since it offers high-resolution  
408 microbial community data which helps us in understanding the influence of external factors such  
409 as heavy metals towards soil and groundwater microbial consortia. Further study needs to be  
410 conducted to understand the long term effects of leachate interactions with soil and groundwater  
411 in a landfill to observe the changes in microbial community.

412

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419

**420 Conflict of Interest**

421 The authors mentioned in this paper have no conflict of interest regarding the paper's content  
422 and submission.

423

424 **Ethical approval**

425 This article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by any of  
426 the authors.

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533 **Table captions:**

534 **Table 1.** Collection and description for landfill samples.

535 **Table 2.** pH and heavy metal composition in landfill leachate (RL & FL2) and ground water  
536 samples (BHGW) and urban site groundwater sample (USGW) respectively; <sup>(1)</sup> represents the  
537 first reading and <sup>(2)</sup> represents the second reading. ND = Not detected

538 **Table 3.** pH and heavy metal composition of samples obtained from landfill (LS1, LS2 & LS3)  
539 and urban site (USS1 & USSUR1) soil respectively; <sup>(1)</sup> represents the first reading and <sup>(2)</sup>  
540 represents the second reading. ND = Not detected

541 **Table 4.** Bacterial diversity based on 16S rRNA gene retrieved by NGS from a landfill and an  
542 urban site. ACE = Abundance based coverage estimators

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543 **Figure captions:**

544 **Fig 1.** Phylum level bacterial community composition observed in the samples collected from  
545 landfill site (a) and an urban site (b). FL2 = fresh leachate; RL = raw leachate; LS1, LS2 and LS3  
546 = landfill soil; BHGW = landfill ground water; USGW = urban site ground water; USS1 and  
547 USSUR1 = urban site soil samples.

548  
549 **Fig 2.** Bacterial community composition and cluster analysis at order level in samples collected  
550 from landfill site and an urban site. FL2 = fresh leachate; RL = raw leachate; LS1, LS2 and LS3  
551 = landfill soil locations; BHGW = landfill ground water; USGW = urban site ground water;  
552 USS1 and USSUR1 = urban site soil samples.

553  
554 **Fig 3.** Genus level bacterial community composition observed in the samples collected from  
555 landfill site (a) and an urban site (b). FL2=fresh leachate; RL= raw leachate; LS1, LS2 and LS3  
556 = landfill soil; BHGW= landfill ground water; USGW= urban site ground water; USS1 and  
557 USSUR1= urban site soil samples.

558  
559 **Fig 4.** Cluster analysis based on order level bacterial abundance. (a) LEA, USO, LSO; (b) GW,  
560 LEA, LSO. FL2=fresh leachate; RL= raw leachate; LS1, LS2 and LS3 = landfill soil; BHGW=  
561 landfill ground water; USGW= urban site ground water; USS1 and USSUR1= urban site soil  
562 samples; GW=combination of groundwater from both sites.

563  
564 **Fig 5.** Non-metric multidimensional scaling (NMDS) analysis of sequences. (a) LF and US; (b)  
565 LEA, LSO, USO. FL2 = fresh leachate; RL = raw leachate; LS1, LS2 and LS3 = landfill soil  
566 locations; BHGW = landfill ground water; LF = combination of all landfill samples; USGW =  
567 urban site ground water; USS1 and USSUR1 = urban site soil samples; US = combination of all  
568 urban sites.

569  
570 **Fig 6.** Redundancy analysis (RDA) of soil bacterial communities in landfill and urban site soil  
571 samples. RDA1 explained 89.2 %, and RDA2 explained 7.65 % of the total variance. LS1, LS2  
572 and LS3 = landfill soil locations USS1 and USSUR1 = urban site soil samples , respectively

573 **Fig 7.** Canonical correspondence analysis (CCA) of bacterial communities in RL, FL2, BHGW  
574 and USGW. CCA1 explained 49.01 %, and CCA2 explained 45.97 % of the total variance. FL2  
575 = fresh leachate; RL = raw leachate; BHGW = landfill ground water; USGW = urban site ground  
576 water, respectively.

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Table 1

<b>Samples acronyms</b>	<b>Sample name</b>	<b>Reason for collection</b>
RL	Raw Leachate	Due to its long term storage in the landfill that might influence variation in the microbial diversity.
FL2	Fresh Leachate	Provides an in depth understanding on the microbial diversity when compared with raw leachate
LS1	Landfill soil location 1	Closer to the landfill which might provide data on any leakage from leachate.
LS2	Landfill soil location 2	Closer to the agricultural land; data can be used to compare with landfill soil location 1.
LS3	Landfill soil location 3	Closer to the groundwater monitoring borehole; data can be used to compare the permeability of the landfill.
BHGW	Landfill groundwater monitoring borehole	Only functioning borehole used to check the contamination levels of the groundwater.
USGW	Urban site groundwater	Accessible borehole close to the soil locations.
USS1	Urban site soil sample 1	Location of the soil sampling was located closer to the urban site groundwater. It was collected from the surface.
USSur1	Urban site soil sample 2	Isolated soil location 500 m away from USS1 and USGW. It was collected 30 cm depth.

Table 2

	<b>pH</b>	<b>Mercury</b> ( $\mu\text{g/L}$ )	<b>Arsenic</b> ( $\mu\text{g/L}$ )	<b>Cadmium</b> ( $\mu\text{g/L}$ )	<b>Copper</b> ( $\mu\text{g/L}$ )	<b>Lead</b> ( $\mu\text{g/L}$ )	<b>Zinc</b> ( $\mu\text{g/L}$ )	<b>Chromium</b> ( $\mu\text{g/L}$ )
RL <sup>1</sup>	7.78	10.9	1.11x10 <sup>3</sup>	ND	ND	ND	ND	0.508
RL <sup>2</sup>	7.9	11.42	1.23x10 <sup>3</sup>	ND	ND	ND	ND	0.581
<b>FL2<sup>1</sup></b>	8.12	7.37	1.78x10 <sup>3</sup>	ND	0.107	0.027	ND	0.586
FL2 <sup>2</sup>	8.3	8.20	1.84x10 <sup>3</sup>	ND	ND	ND	ND	0.541
BHGW <sup>1</sup>	8.2	12.7	ND	ND	0.048	ND	0.186	0.015
BHGW <sup>2</sup>	8.25	5.59	ND	ND	ND	ND	0.062	0.011
USGW	7.75	0.037	ND	ND	ND	0.078	0.030	ND

Table 3

	pH	Mercury (mg/kg)	Arsenic (mg/kg)	Cadmium (mg/kg)	Copper (mg/kg)	Lead (mg/kg)	Zinc (mg/kg)	Chromium (mg/kg)
LS1 <sup>1</sup>	6.71	0.175	0.766	ND	69.5	10.3	49.1	62.3
LS1 <sup>2</sup>	6.87	0.152	0.854	ND	75.3	10.1	81.4	67.3
LS2 <sup>1</sup>	6.63	0.150	0.937	ND	79.3	5.72	55.7	70.4
LS2 <sup>2</sup>	6.42	0.184	0.726	ND	77.2	7.90	71.2	71.5
LS3 <sup>1</sup>	7.1	0.146	0.998	ND	79.5	6.91	76.9	73.8
LS3 <sup>2</sup>	6.95	0.143	0.907	ND	71.8	8.73	64.8	68.2
USS1	6.82	0.075	11.3	0.169	5.8	27.6	64.9	43.45
USSUR1	6.74	0.058	9.28	0.137	7.57	26.3	63.6	50.2

Table 4

Sample ID	Number of Reads	Number of OTUs	ACE index	Chao 1 richness estimate	Shannon diversity index (H')	Simpson diversity index (D)	Coverage
					0.97		
RL	15386	154	159	164	2.06	0.3716	0.999
FL2	15746	139	174	163	0.98	0.6584	0.997
LS1	15313	996	1109	1103	5.77	0.0089	0.989
LS2	13611	647	892	862	3.43	0.125	0.983
LS3	20464	875	1080	1112	4.49	0.0516	0.989
BHGW	20141	1018	1201	1259	5.6	0.0093	0.988
USGW	22643	168	189	190	2.65	0.177	0.999
USS1	16625	1224	1331	1332	6.1	0.0056	0.989
USSUR1	14015	1167	1322	1328	5.94	0.0079	0.983

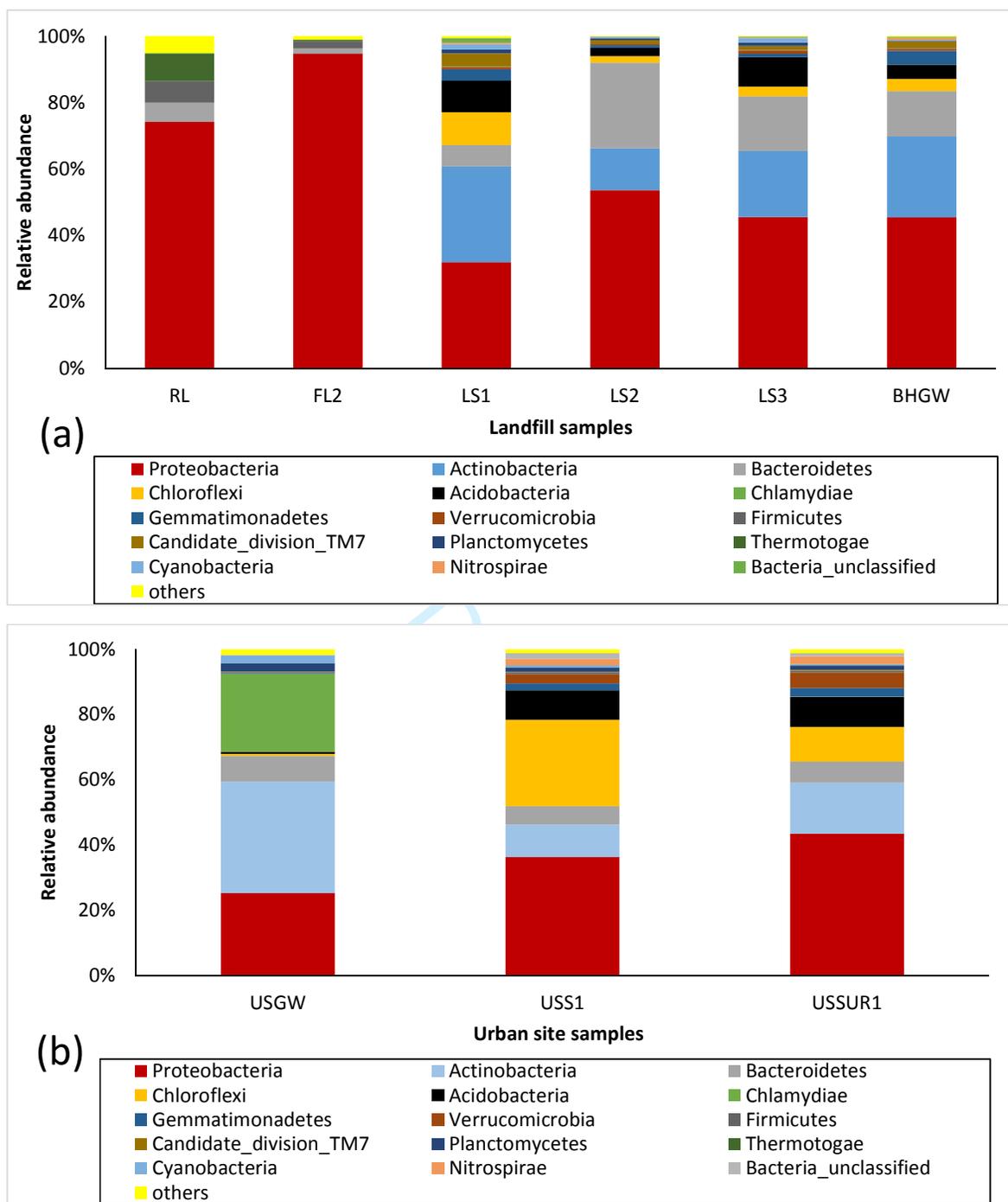


Fig 1.

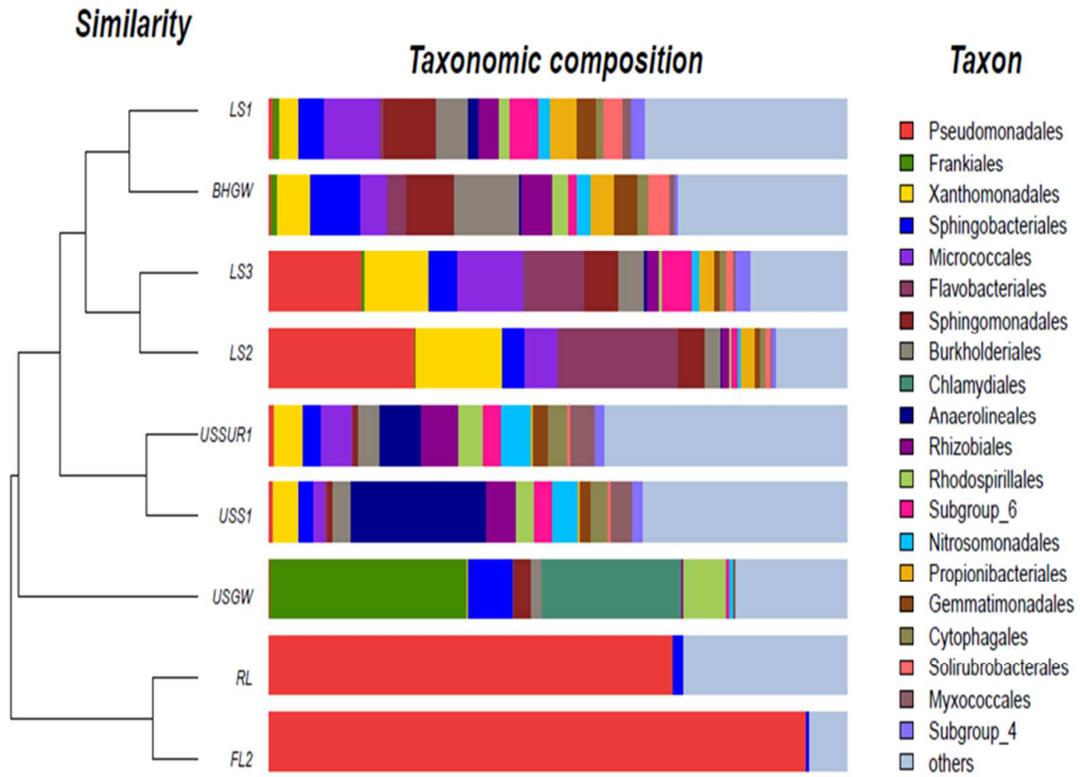


Fig 2.

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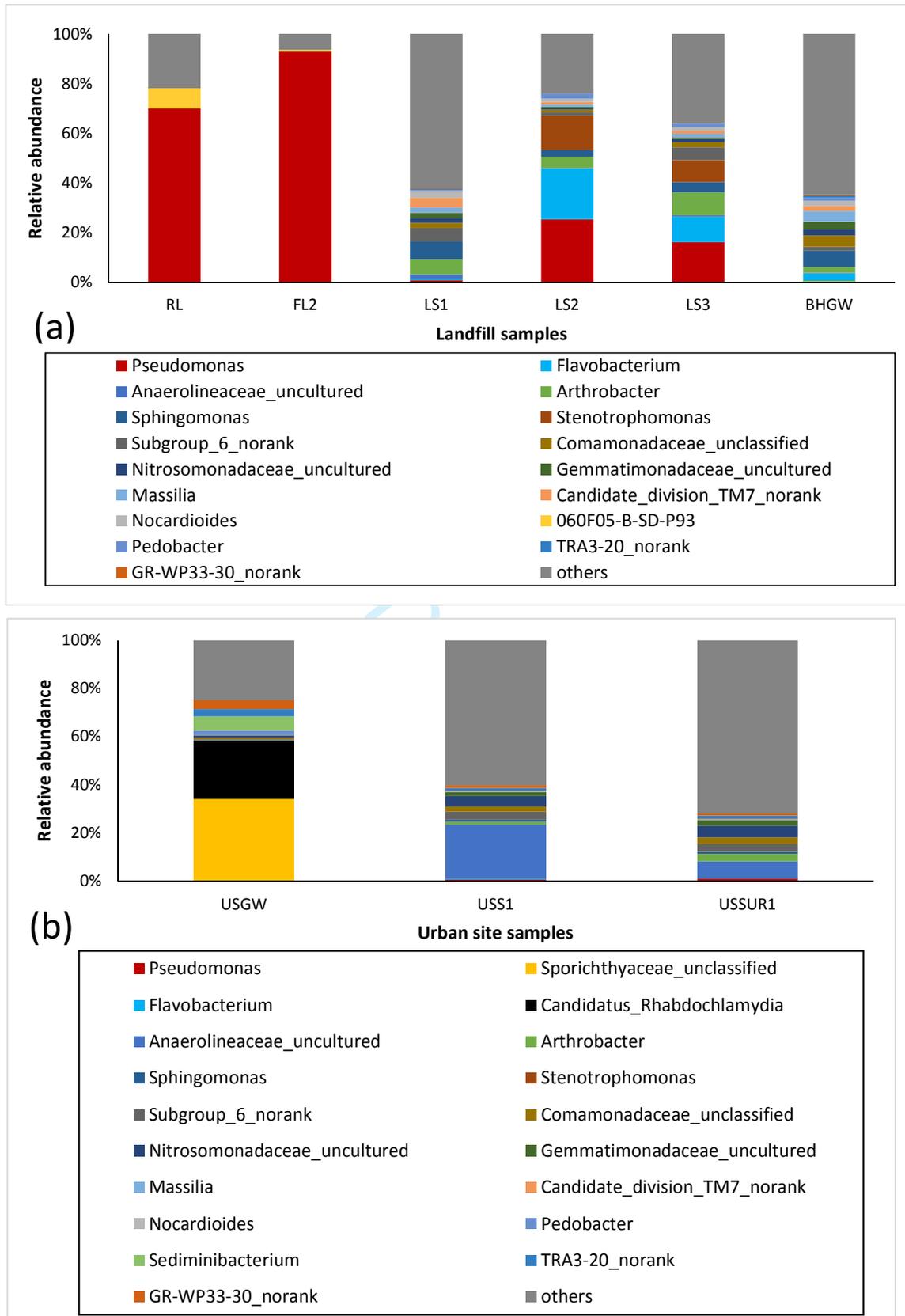
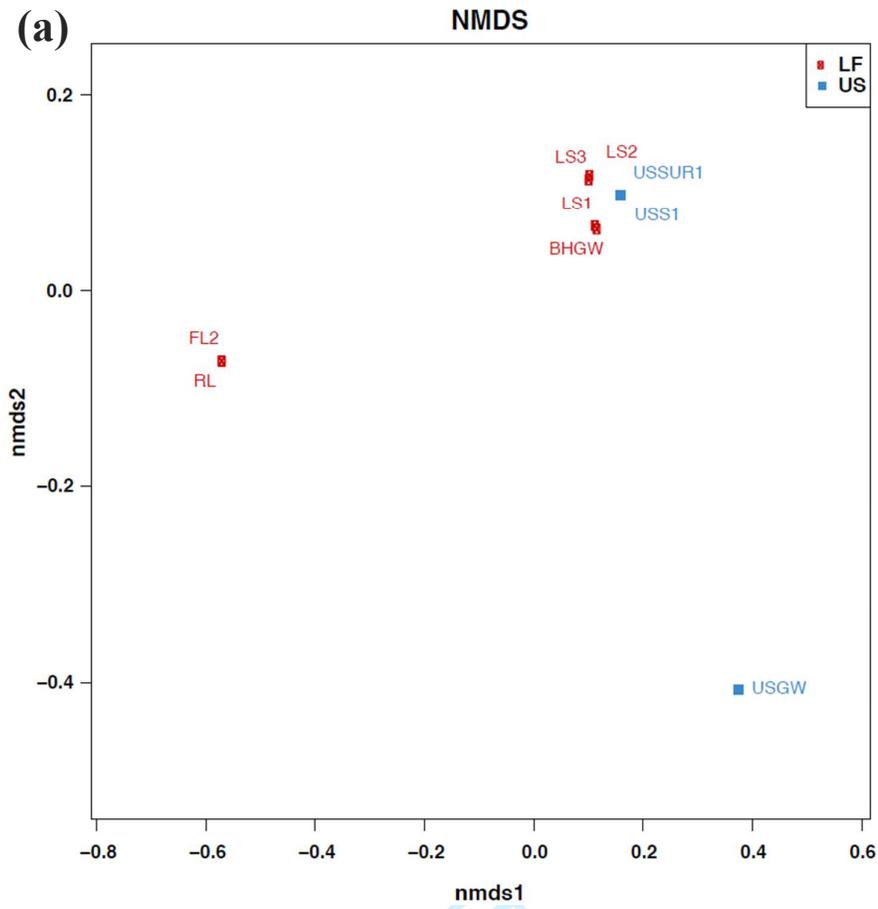


Fig 3.



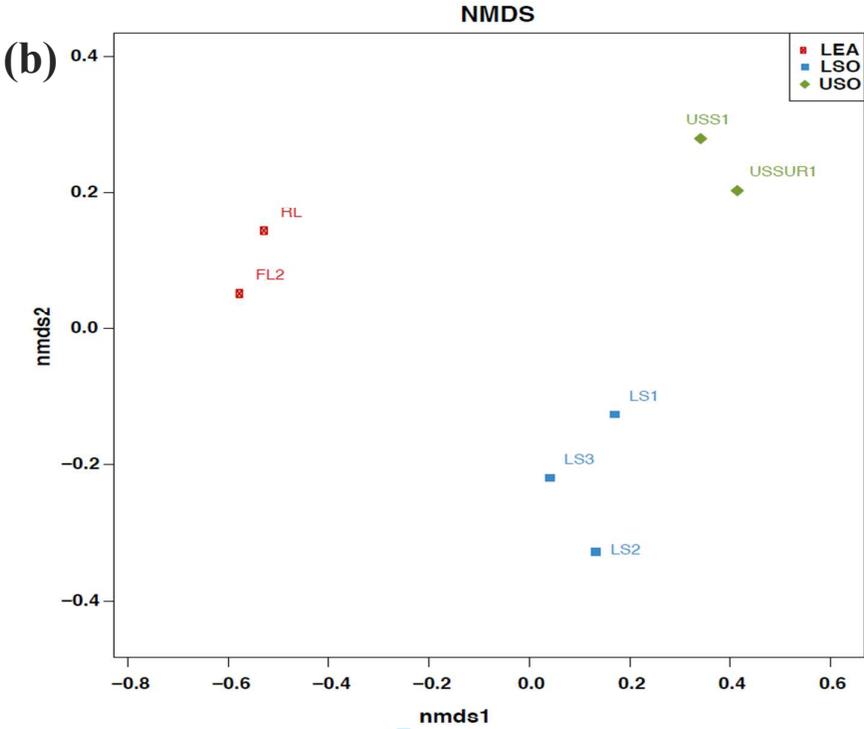


Fig 4.

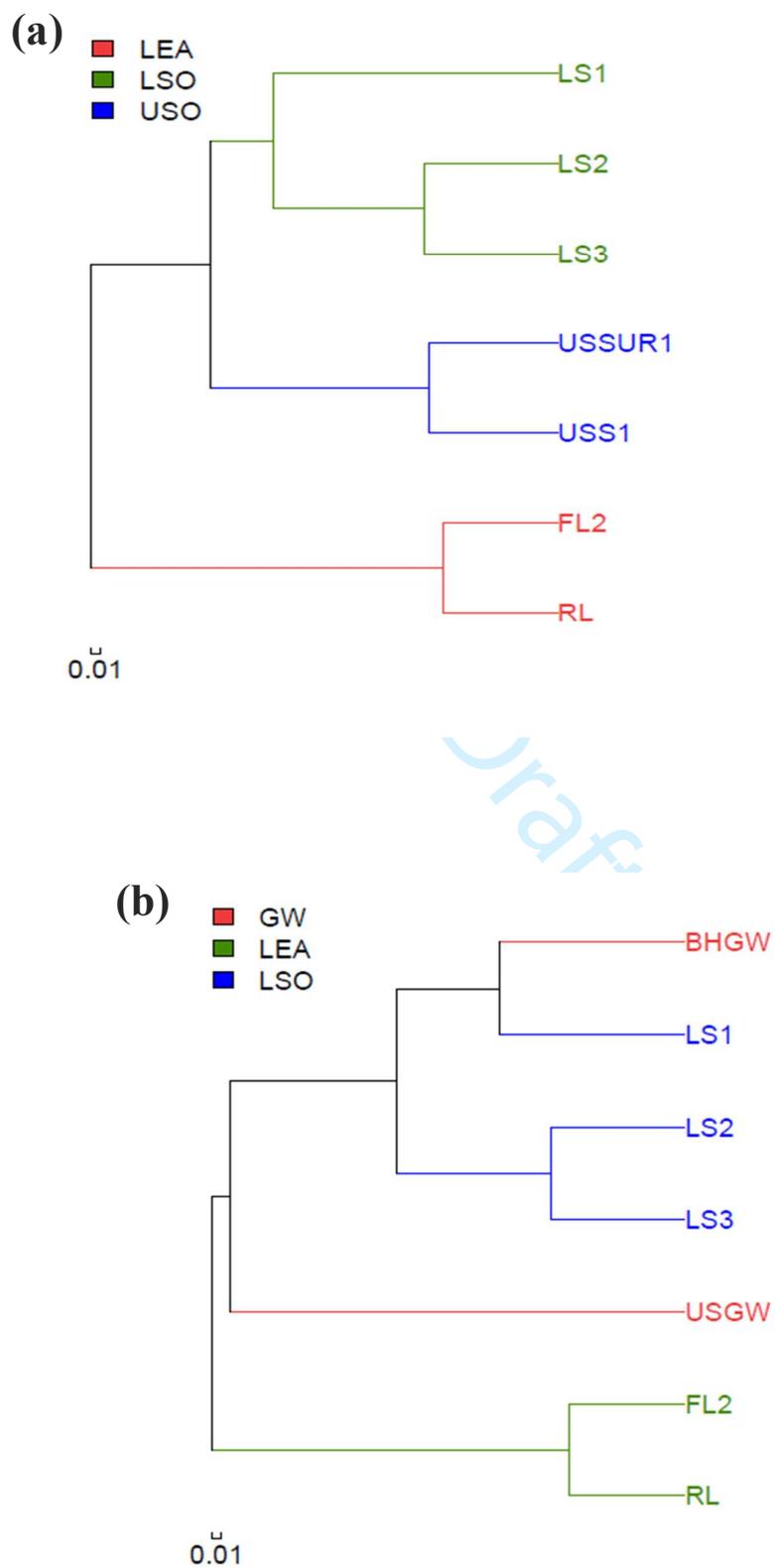


Fig 5.

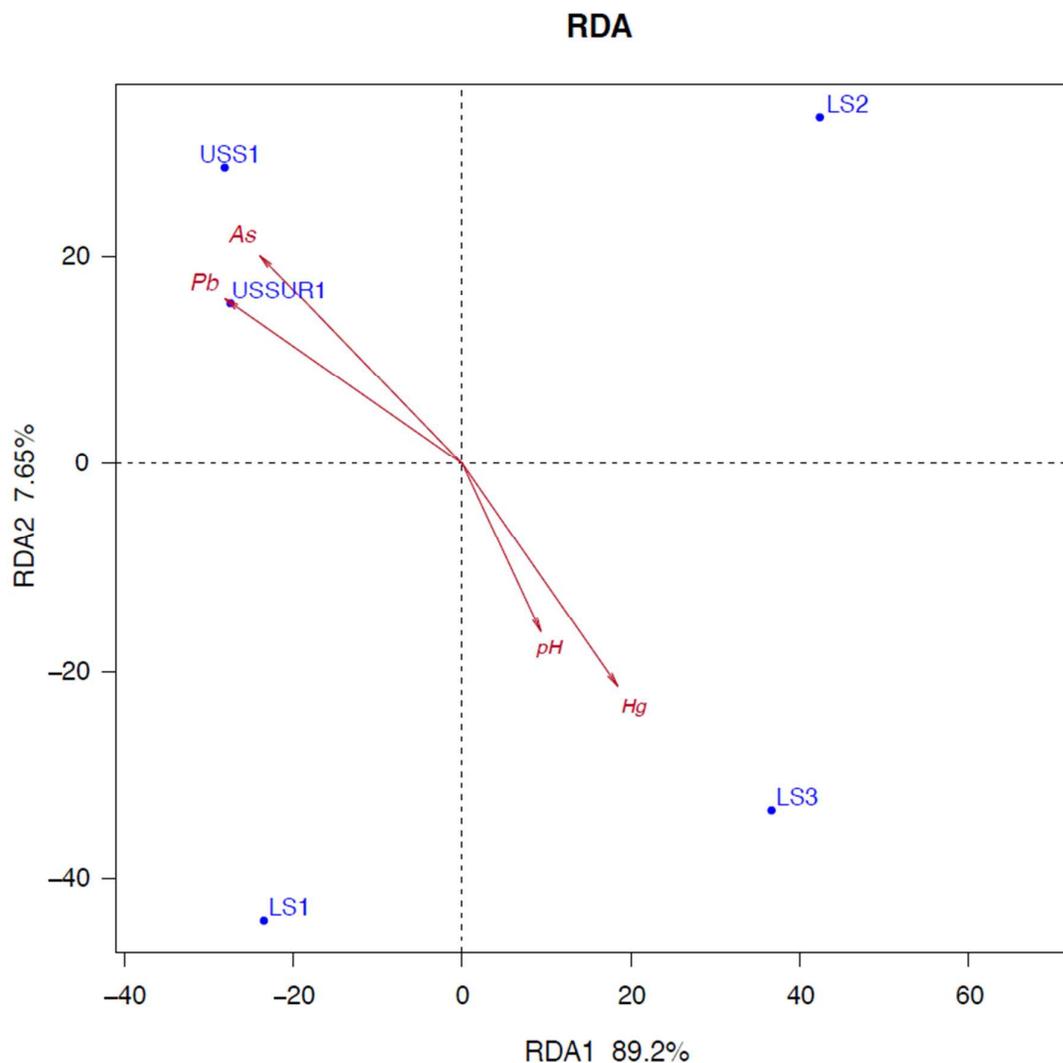


Fig 6.

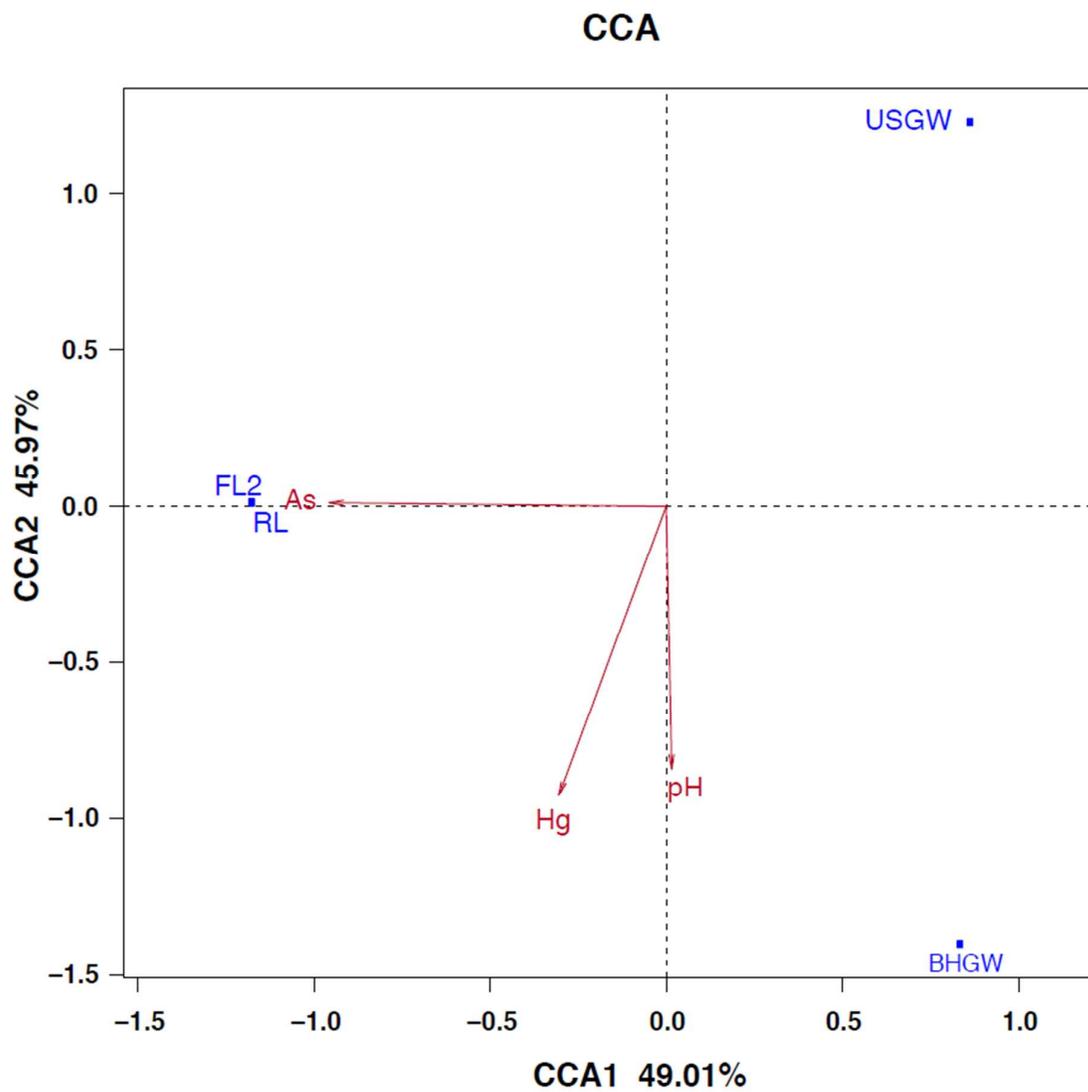


Fig 7.