Acknowledgements

Now, it is the time.

It has been four years since I left China for my PhD project, and has been eleven years since I left home for the university study. Now, at this very moment of completing my PhD thesis, it is the time to look back, to think about yesterday once more. I appreciate China Scholarship Council (CSC) and Soil Biotechnology Foundation to provide me financial support in Groningen. Also, there are so many people that I’d like to acknowledge.

A good beginning is half of the battle. As for me, a good supervisor is half of the PhD career. I am so lucky that I have a marvelous supervisor, Prof. dr. ir. Jan Dirk van Elsas. I would like to appreciate him for giving me this opportunity to work in Microbial Ecology group, for all the help in these years, and for all the guidance in the work. I have learned so much from him. He is so active, so creative, so positive and so supportive all the time. He inspired me and gave me confidence when I was upset. I am so thankful! I also would like to thank Prof. dr. Joana Falcao Salles, as the co-supervisor and the first person that I met in the group when I came here in 2013, for her valuable suggestions in my project.

Colleagues are also very important for scientists. I would like to acknowledge Corine, Joukje, Chantal, Joyce and Yvonne, for their help and patience in the paperwork. They made the office life easier. I thank Jolanda, for organizing the lab, the most important place for me to collect the data of my thesis, perfect; Marc, who helped me in electron microscopy.

Dr. Miaozhi, the executive daily supervisor in the beginning of my PhD project, I am so grateful for all her help. She helped me to get familiar with the lab, showed me soil microcosm preparation, which is the basis of my PhD project, and gave me suggestions when I had problems in lab work… It was too numerous to count. Thank you! I also thank Dr. Jan Warmink for his help and suggestions in my PhD project. He is an experienced talent in this area, and was so kind to help me. To Jakob and Frank, thank you for your smart and hard work in the lab. It was so great to work with you wise people. I also would like to thank Jakob for his help in translation of Dutch summary.
My thanks also go to Irshad and Renata for their helpful collaboration and discussion in the project.

Thanks go to Larisa & Paul for all their gifts, jokes, games and parties. I was so happy to work in the lab and share the bench with her. To Miao Wang, an expert in data analysis, she showed me a new area in science. Xiu Jia and Qian Chen, two cute ladies, their appearance makes life colorful. Mukil, Maryam, Edisa and Stefanie Vink, who together made the office life exciting. I also would like to thank other people in the group currently: Cyrus, a petri dish pyramid constructor; Jan Veldsink, Adjie, Diego, Maju, Francisco, Juliana, Tom Jensma, and those who have left the group: Zhiyuan, Siwen, Stephanie Jurburg, Pilar, Patricia, Manoj, Britt, Victor, Arjen, Julia, Elisa, Layanne, Joelma, Michele, Daniel, Doroteia, Eder, Rachel, Pedro, Mylenne, Armando, Thais, Deborah and Camila.

Life is more than research. I have some friends in the daily life: Chen Bin, a wise man, an advisor, a listener, and a barber; Lijuan, the best chef I have known in Groningen; Shishi, a funny and hard-working lady. I appreciate their accompany in the last four years. I also would like to thank Jiang Xun, who made the best roast chicken. Wang Jie, a kind lady, who helped me to get familiar with the living environment around. Jinfeng, an excellent Chinese neighbour. My thanks also goes to Zhao Peiliang, Wu Beibei, Jiang Yizhi, Guo Weiteng, Zhang Xukai, Sanne, He Sheng & Feng Yanfang, Wu Min & Zhang Xuewen, Geng Yanping, Hao Wensi, Yin Huifang, Meng Xiangfeng, Bai Yuxiang, Li Ruiqian, Zhou Liang, Yi Yanglei, Cao Haojie, Li Qian, Song Chunxu, Deng Jingjing, Yang Qingkai, Liu Ling, Zhang Rongjing, Wang Yingruo & Zhou Qihui, Yu Nana, Wang Leping, Jiang Bin, Sun Yu, Wu Jing, Zhang Yi, Li Linyang, Wang Peng.

Before I started my PhD project, I had training in Prof. dr. Kong Jian’s group. She gave me a chance to start my scientific career and cared about me when I was a master student in her group, as well as when I am in Groningen. I appreciate it. I thank Dr. Kong Wentao, who taught me the basic and advanced practical lab skills, and Dr. Sun Zhilan, who helped me a lot in the past few years.
Liu Songni, I would like to thank you for the happiness that we shared and will share in the future, as well as all your encouragement and support. Also, I thank my aunts, who supported my application of the scholarship.

My deepest appreciation goes to my family. I am so lucky to receive the love from my parents, to have their advice in the fork road of my life, and to provide me endless support in pursuing my dream. When I have to make crucial decisions in my life, they can always have reasonable discussion, and give me freedom to make my own choices. They are the strongest backup in my life. My dear sisters, life is so beautiful to be with you. We had amazing memories in growing up. You are such incredible gifts. I cannot be like this without your accompany. Uncle Zhongxi, I miss you so much.

Thank you all!