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PLENARY LECTURES

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Plenary lecture

Moving across sectors, languages and boundaries: young people and women as agents of change in complex socio-ecological systems

Marine environments are threatened globally by several phenomena – climate change, pollution, overfishing among others. In this evolving framework, hyper-specialised expert knowledge has shown its limits in ensuring a sustainable relationship, based on respect and gaining mutual benefit, between human populations and the oceans, and in proposing solutions to the challenges positioned at the interfaces among ecological systems, society and governance. Faced with such complexity, part of the scientific community has questioned its own social role, methods and objectives, with the objective of forging new links not only with society at large, but also and simultaneously with ecological systems. Academic

reflections proposed various models for fruitfully governing the complexity of socio-ecological systems, favouring the exchange and integration of knowledge and also attaching importance to values and non-rational aspects of negotiations between actors (Funtowicz & Ravetz, 1993; Gibbons et al., 1994; Jasanoff, 2004; Stephenson et al., 2021). One common aspect of these approaches is the need to broaden the range of social actors involved in defining and solving problems, in order to build socially robust, relevant, inclusive and ethically respectful knowledge, oriented towards shared future scenarios. Among these actors, it is particularly necessary, especially in a democratic knowledge society, to involve citizenship in defining problems (Giuffredi et al., 2021), sharing knowledge and identifying shared solutions. In particular, some transversal categories, such as young people (Cappelletto et al., 2021) and women, are able to play a crucial role as agents of change, capable of moving across sectors, languages and boundaries, if they are given enough space and genuine empowerment. In this context, the work of the young Ambassadors of the Euro-Mediterranean BlueMed initiative will be specifically analysed, in the context of the other similar initiatives that have flourished in other basins, and the marine fieldwork storytelling realised through the "Donnammare" blog, within the SNAPSHOT project, will be presented.

Biosketch

Rita Giuffredi works in Milan at the Institute for Electromagnetic Sensing of the Environment of the National Research Council (IREA-CNR). After graduating in particle physics, she devoted to further develop her studies on science with a master's degree in science communication at SISSA in Trieste and a PhD focusing on narratives in EU research policy discourses, carried out at the University of Bologna. At the same time, she worked for four years at CERN (Geneva) as a science communicator within a European project for the development of new diagnostic tools based on technologies developed at high-energy physics colliders (PicoSEC-MCNet). Since 2018, she has been collaborating with the European H2020 project BlueMed CSA, which was in charge of coordinating and promoting the European initiative of the same name on research and innovation for "Blue" growth in the Mediterranean area (BLUEMED Initiative - Research and Innovation for Blue Growth and Jobs in the Mediterranean area); she dealt with the aspects related to science communication, and public and youth engagement. She is also involved since 2021 in the BRIDGES project, oriented towards the emergence and critical discussion of scientists' narratives and experimenting hybrid, reflexive and transdisciplinary research practices, focusing on complex socio-ecological issues, and in particular on the case study of soil fertility. Her research interests mainly focus on knowledge production, research policies, the relationship between science and democracy and the public communication of science.

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Selected publications

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