

IALE-Europe PhD course - Landscape Ecology for Nature Restoration: Perspectives across Habitats and Disciplines

Introduction

Since 2012, IALE-Europe has organised international PhD Courses in Landscape Ecology under the umbrella of its baseline 'From Pattern and Process to People and Action'. The upcoming edition will be jointly organised by IALE-Europe and IALE Italy.

The course will be held from **30 November - 5 December 2026 in Bari (IT)**

The course aims to set the stage for the participants to reflect on their PhD research within the wider landscape ecological thinking by interacting with young and notably senior researchers. It will consist of a mixture of lectures on scientific concepts and tools, coaching sessions in groups according to research topics, feedback sessions on students' papers, discussion time, and a field trip to explore the area of the PhD course. Each edition gathers around 24 participating PhD researchers and a team of international lecturers.

Topic and theme

Landscape Ecology is the discipline that studies the interactions between spatial patterns and processes in landscapes across scales, integrating both biophysical and societal aspects of landscapes. The theoretical discourses and paradigms in landscape ecology link natural sciences with related human disciplines. It offers the opportunity to integrate the fundamental scientific approach of landscape ecology within planning and policy.

The focus of this course will be on Nature Restoration and how the transdisciplinary approach of landscape ecology can contribute to this across diverse habitats. Despite hosting the largest network of protected areas in the world, Europe's nature is in alarming decline, with more than 80% of the habitats in poor or bad conservation status. Nature restoration efforts may facilitate biodiversity increase, maintain ecosystem services, buffer against climate change, build resilience to natural disasters, and reduce risks to food security for the present and future needs of millions of people. A key instrument to support the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the Nature Restoration Regulation is the first continent-wide, comprehensive law of its kind to set binding targets for restoring degraded ecosystems. But to achieve multiple and often conflicting goals which imply trade-offs assessment between different restoration targets and dominant land uses, there is a need for an inter-sectorial, interdisciplinary, multi-level approach which goes beyond a site-based or habitat patch-based focus, considering the wider landscape. Landscape ecology, by its nature, has the characteristics and can

provide the methods and tools to address restoration needs within and beyond protected areas in a densely populated and ecologically transformed Europe.

Evolving towards inter- and transdisciplinary approaches is fundamental when addressing nature restoration across the diversity of European landscapes. This requires a true interaction between natural and social sciences and between science, policy and practice. This means that the course will address topics from both the natural and social sciences – more specifically focus on integration them – and how approaches, theories, and tools from both can inspire a landscape ecological approach to understanding and answering the current changes in the environment and society.

Targeted audience and course format

The course is open to PhD researchers from all over the world at different stages of their PhD research. To create an open atmosphere and to increase interaction, the course is limited to a maximum of 24 students. The course will be interesting for PhD students in geography, biology, environmental sciences, ecology and biosciences, as well as in social sciences and planning with research or a clear link to different aspects of nature restoration, landscapes, and landscape ecology. Feel free to contact the course organisation if you want to discuss whether the course would fit your PhD trajectory.

The course format combines lectures, coaching sessions and group discussions, all designed to be interactive and guided by the participant's learning questions.

The program is built around theoretical lectures focusing on different concepts, approaches and related applications in nature restoration and landscape ecology, as well as sessions on specific research skills.

Fee

The course fee is appr. 300€. This is covering the cost for the transfer from Bari to Martina Franca and back, accommodation, breakfast, lunches and coffee breaks, course materials. The dinners and travel to/from Bari are not included.

Becoming a member of IALE is necessary to register for the PhD course, as the course will be funded by IALE International, IALE-Europe, and IALE Italy.

If you are a member of a national chapter of IALE, you can contact your chapter to request for funding (<https://iale-europe.eu/community>).

Venue

The PhD course will be co-organised with the University of Bari Aldo Moro. The course will take place in the facilities of the Eastern Murge Nature Reserve Section "Galeone", in Martina Franca (Taranto) in the region of Puglia.

See: <https://rgpbio.it/riserva/murge-orientali/>

The course will use the accommodation, including lecture facilities, kitchen and double bedrooms.

Registration

30 September 2026 - Deadline for 1st stage registration: submission of the application form and abstract of a paper (max. 500 words)

Applications should be sent to veerle.vaneetvelde@ugent.be

15 October 2026 – Final confirmation of acceptance/enrolment

For more information, please contact Theo van der Sluis (Theo.vanderSluis@wur.nl) or Veerle van Eetvelde (Veerle.vanEetvelde@ugent.be)