

Plenary 2 : wednesday 23 November, 8:45 - 9 :30

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Giving anthropocene a chance. Ecological restoration to respond to the environmental crisis.

Global degradation has a negative impact on the well-being of at least 3.2 billion people and represents a cost of more than 10% of the annual gross world product in loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. Alongside climate change, unsustainable land and ocean uses threaten the survival of a quarter of global species and affect the provision of ecosystem services crucial to our well-being. Ecological restoration can help protect biodiversity, increase the provision of ecosystem services, including carbon sequestration, and improve human well-being. The UN Decade of Ecological Restoration 2021-2030 and the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 define a new framework to meet global environmental challenges and improve the status of European nature. Researchers, practitioners, and policymakers across Europe should join forces to define restoration strategies that are based on a thorough understanding of social-ecological systems. These strategies must address multiple management scales, integrating ecological restoration into land-use planning, and responding to the challenge posed by international commitments. The European proposal of Nature Restoration Law will entail the need to (i) update the proposed guidelines at national and subnational level, (ii) develop prioritization frameworks and define priority areas for restoration, integrating top-down and bottom-up initiatives, (iii) analyze the consequences of different restoration scenarios, (iv) design operational participation protocols in the different phases of restoration programs, and (v) explore business opportunities in urban and rural settings. In this presentation, I will summarize the Nature Restoration Law, review its challenges and opportunities, and propose a multidisciplinary approach for translating the law into national guidelines and priorities for ecological restoration. The approach is structured along 5 main axes: diagnose, prioritization, financing and cost-effectiveness, social impact and participation, and quality, and it is currently being developed in a project led by the Spanish Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge, involving ca. 100 experts.