



**MONALISA**  
COMMUNITY OF KNOWLEDGE



## Café Talk | Topic

Artificial intelligence, machine learning and remote sensing against land degradation and desertification

*Save  
the  
Date*

**30 October 2025 | 10:30 CET | Online**

**FREE Registration required | English**



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## The MONALISA Café talks



This second event by the Community of Knowledge of Monalisa, a community to build a common arena for key experts, including researchers, technical experts, policymakers and civil society, to share insights, co-create solutions and scale up successful actions as well as stimulate a discussion.

Monalisa is an Innovation Action HE Project under the Soil Mission devoted to monitoring, preventing and restore Mediterranean drylands with innovative solutions to reverse Land Degradation and Desertification (LDD).

## Café Talk Agenda

Thursday, 30 October | 10:30 CET | Online | Free



Moderated by

**Francesca Assennato**, ISPRA, Italy

supported by the Rapporteur **Marco Di Leginio**, ISPRA, Italy

### SPECIAL GUESTS

**Neil Simms**

Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), Australia

**Gregory Giuliani**

University of Geneva & UN Environment/Science Division/GRID-Geneva, Switzerland

The session will also feature 4 young researchers from the MONALISA Community of Knowledge's first Open Call, sharing their innovative work and perspectives.

Let's explore how the MONALISA Project can accelerate the adoption of these practices across research and policy.

**Registration needed [here](#)**

**Event Language:** English

\*Chat questions during the café & answers at the end, Google Survey during the café

## Topic n.2: AI, ML, and remote sensing against land degradation and desertification



The 2nd Café Talk will present a new topic and stimulate a discussion in an informal way, in front of a coffee cup! Two relevant Keynote speakers will explore the methodological approaches and recent updates on Artificial intelligence, Machine learning and Remote sensing against land degradation and desertification. In June Monalisa Community of Knowledge launched an Open Call for young researchers: during the 2nd Café talk the 4 young researchers who participated will present their work. This will be a starting point for a discussion among the Community on how the Monalisa Project can facilitate the development of these practices.



## NEIL SIMMS

Neil is a research scientist with more than 25 years' experience in the application of Earth observation (EO) technologies to address environmental problems. Neil led the development of EO methods used by more than 140 countries to measure land degradation in the UN SDGs, and co-leads the GEO Land Degradation Neutrality Flagship. Neil was Program Manager of the Space Technology Future Science Platform and led the development and implementation of the impact strategy for AquaWatch Australia. Neil led the 2024 State of the Climate report and is currently developing EO strategies linking the assessment of habitat condition, land degradation, biodiversity and climate impacts.



## GREGORY GIULIANI

Gregory Giuliani is the Head of the Digital Earth Unit and Swiss Data Cube Project Leader at GRID-Geneva of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and a Senior Lecturer at the University of Geneva's Institute for Environmental Sciences.

He holds a BSc in Earth Sciences and an MSc and PhD in Environmental Sciences. Gregory's research focuses on Land Change Science and how Earth observations can be used to monitor and assess environmental changes and support sustainable development. Interdisciplinary is a key element for generating new ideas and innovations in his research.



## FRANCESCA ASSENNATO

Francesca Assennato is the Head of Integrated monitoring and analysis of land use, territorial transformations and desertification Unit of the Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA), Italy. Environmental engineer, PhD in Energy and Environment, her research deals with soil health, land degradation and desertification assessment, sustainable management of soil and land, ecosystem services and policy development, with a holistic approach recognizing soil as living and dynamic resource. She is involved in several activities on land degradation and desertification related to UNCCD, as well as coordinating ISPRA participation in several European projects in the HORIZON and LIFE programs and involved in the Soil Mission clustering activities. She is actively supporting the Italy contribution for the European Soil Monitoring Law definition and its future national implementation.



## MARCO DI LEGINIO

Marco Di Leginio is a long-experienced geologist at ISPRA. His current activities concern land cover/land use analysis at both national and local level, through remote sensing techniques for earth observation and in particular the environmental assessment related to urban sprawl and soil sealing indicators.

Marco is involved in several projects, aiming at collecting data and indicators on land degradation processes and in the assessment of indicator 15.3.1 applying UNCCD (United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification) methodology and/or alternative approaches. He is also a member of the working group supporting activities related to UNCCD and of EioNET Land system group.