

The Shapes of Water.

Exploring Coastal Biodiversity at the Waterscapes Summer School with An Interdisciplinary Approach

This contribution presents an innovative proposal for biodiversity education based on the BEAT research findings and applied within coastal environments. Thanks to collaboration between the Departments of Human Sciences for Education and Biotechnology and Biosciences at the University of Milan-Bicocca, an interdisciplinary, place-based, experiential approach has been implemented during the Summer School Waterscapes.

Waterscapes in Heritage and Environment is an international summer school for Master's and PhD students. It was conceived and is promoted by the University of Bergamo, in partnership with the University of Belgrade, and has been running since 2022. From 2024 onwards, the National Biodiversity Future Centre (NBFC) has also partnered with the project thanks to the involvement of a multidisciplinary research team from the University of Milan-Bicocca and involving Master's and PhD students in education, anthropology, marine sciences and biology.

Waterscapes is structured as a one-week residential programme delivered aboard a floating classroom sailing along the Croatian coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Its comprehensive methodological framework delivers multidisciplinary content through theoretical seminars, environmental explorations, and practical activities. The itinerary is designed to explore the relationship between water and the lands it surrounds, from the perspective of the water itself. For example, from a biological perspective, the programme addresses a range of topics related to marine biodiversity exploration, ecosystem dynamics, and conservation practices. These themes are explored through seminars and underwater field activities, encouraging participants to observe and analyse coastal habitats directly and to interconnect biological, educational, and anthropological/sociological dimensions.

The presentation looks at the suggested combined approach to biodiversity education, aimed at bringing together active methods – through activities based on the BEAT toolkit – with specialist knowledge on biology and coastal environment starting from the interests and questions raised by the group of participants.