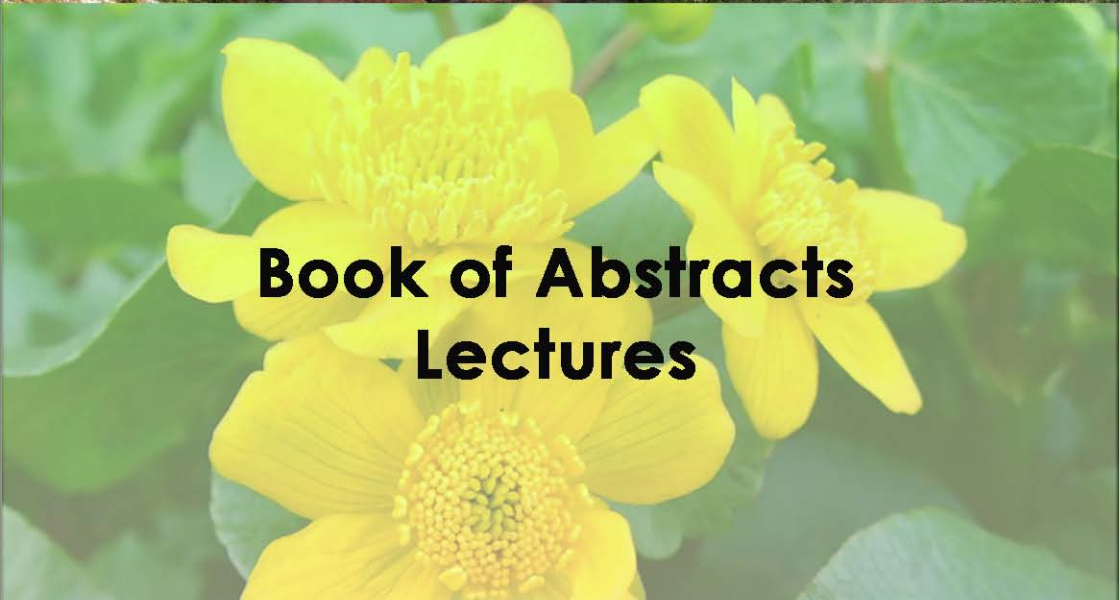


# 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of European Vegetation Survey

Roma (Italy), April 6-9 2016



## Book of Abstracts Lectures



European  
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Survey



DIPARTIMENTO  
DI BIOLOGIA AMBIENTALE

SAPIENZA  
UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA



Società Botanica Italiana

# 25<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN VEGETATION SURVEY

Roma 6-9 April 2016

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## LONG-TERM ABANDONMENT OF CROPLANDS IN THE SUB-MEDITERRANEAN CLIMATE DOES NOT LEAD PER SE TO THE RECOVERY OF THE SEMI-NATURAL HERB COMMUNITIES DEEMED WORTHY OF CONSERVATION IN THE EU HABITATS DIRECTIVE

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Abandoned croplands can be considered a new category of “scattered elements” of mountain landscapes. To gain deeper understanding of the conservation status (*sensu* Directive 92/43/EEC) of abandoned cropland in the northern Apennines, we coupled the concepts of the social behavior type (SBT) and the functional assessment of plant communities. SBTs refer to behaviour and ecological attributes of species at a given observation level and allow the understanding of the plant community conservation status, while the functional approach may help in predicting changes of species composition along disturbance and stress gradients.

We found that topographic and soil conditions drive the species assemblage in pastures after crop abandonment, but long-term abandonment does not lead *per se* to the recovery of the semi-natural grassland communities deemed worthy of conservation in the EEC Directive. This was mainly due to the lack of appropriate disturbance regimes that allows the spread of dominant tall herbs, which, in turn, reduces the site suitability for subordinate plants. Moreover, their spread fosters the presence of elements such as ruderals and fringe species.

We conclude that, these abandoned croplands have a good potential to develop into Habitat of 92/43/EEC Directive but without appropriate management plans they will remain of low representativeness.

KEYWORDS: ABANDONMENT, CROPLAND, MANAGEMENT, GRASSLAND RECOVERY, PROTECTED HABITATS, ELLENBERG INDICATOR VALUES, PLANT FUNCTIONAL TRAITS, SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR TYPES



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