

Nature-based reef solution for coastal protection and marine biodiversity enhancement

Valentina Girelli

Valentina Alena Girelli, a researcher with the Geomatics group at DICAM Unibo, plays a vital role in the NatuReef project by monitoring the beachfront where the reef will be installed. The initial survey conducted in early November 2023 gathered topographic data, which, when combined with bathymetric data, will inform the project's design.

What inspired you to become a surveyor?

A: Surprisingly, I stumbled into this career path. During my final year of Engineering, I decided to take a photogrammetry course on a whim. Little did I know it would change my life. A friend encouraged me, but it was the professor, Gabriele Bitelli, who truly ignited my passion. I owe my academic journey and current profession to him.

What aspect of your work do you find most compelling?

I consider myself incredibly fortunate to have the best job in the world. Topographic research isn't confined to the office; it takes me to extraordinary places. From Turkey to Uzbekistan, and even ancient sites like Herculaneum and Pompeii, I've had the privilege of seeing these locations from unique perspectives. I particularly cherish moments like surveying the underground Neptune Fountain in Bologna. Moreover, the interdisciplinary nature of my work allows me to collaborate with colleagues from diverse backgrounds, fostering continuous learning and growth.

Reflecting on your career, what has been your greatest success or challenge?

Despite two decades in the field, I remain a temporary researcher. While some might view this as a setback, I consider it a triumph. I've had the privilege of pursuing work that I'm passionate about and enjoy every day. Sure, there have been challenges, especially on the emotional front, but they've been outweighed by the fulfilment of engaging in stimulating projects and working alongside inspiring colleagues and students.

What are your aspirations for the future?

My aspiration is simple: to continue doing what I love. Additionally, I aspire to become a proficient professor. Notably, at Unibo, I strive to become the first female associate professor in my scientific field.