

September 26, 2024

Brief Report of August Forum Synergies Scholarship programme training at Porto di Terra Association.

Jessica spent about a month with our organization, being able to observe the seasonal transition from summer to fall. By staying at the organization's headquarters, she became stimulatingly integrated both into the activities of the association and into the life of the community that inhabits the St. Nicholas Valley, where the association is located. The association welcomed Jessica at a special time, not only of summer events but also of celebration for renewing the lease of the land where she is based and of reviewing the organizational models behind the activities that take place throughout the year.

We chose to support her internship journey by presenting the association through 4 different reference persons, two women and two men, who play different roles and bring different aspects to the organization, and therefore to the internship. Both the more productive aspects, related to subsistence farming, as well as those of land management and enhancement, and others related to political, cultic and educational work. However, Laura Maniscalco, president of the association and collaborator of the women's small business Armònia, in which she is involved in nature tourism, played the role of the main mentor of Jessica's journey.

Jessica's first week was connected to the preparation and implementation of the *Transporto Organico 4.0* festival, a festival that we implement every year with the mission of generating an encounter between different arts and cultures, quality and culturally meaningful food, and a spirit of sharing. Jessica's participation in the team, from the set-up days to the final feedback, was invaluable, both for her practical contribution to the organization and for the insight and suggestions she provided afterwards.

The second- and third-weeks Jessica was introduced to the work of different community members' gardens and water management. In two shifts of volunteer work per day, Jessica participated in the production of gardens that different members do through neighborhood collaborations, both to produce fresh greens and to produce canned goods, and she participated in part of the ongoing restoration of the traditional water channelization system, which works by fall. In addition to learning practical work, we were able to dialogue about the social and ecological functioning and function of the canals in the area, their functioning as a common good, and also to the impact of depopulation and neo-population in progress. During this period, contact with Laura allowed for an in-depth exploration of the topics of medicinal plants, their cultivation, recipes of transformations and possible uses.



The fourth week focused instead on meeting some of the projects and networks with which the organization collaborates. Jessica was invited to participate in informal meetings and events at the headquarters of other associations, including in the nearby city of Palermo. The function of this phase of the internship is to share the themes and actors of the network work that Porto di Terra implements. In particular, land management, fire prevention, educational programming and agroecology network building were discussed.



In addition, throughout the period Jessica was involved in community life, informal moments of food processing, fruit, plant and mushroom picking, and other activities. At the same time, she was a key support in running the association's office, especially in some activities essential to the seasonal transition.



Jessica's stay was provided initially in a camping tent purchased for her, and secondarily in a room in the association headquarters dedicated to her. Meals were provided, in addition to sporadic snacks during outings, to learn about local cuisine, shopping from local stores and producers and cooking in the association headquarters. Through the synergy budget, it was also possible to purchase small gardening tools that Jessica was able to use and that future volunteers and trainees can later use.

The confrontation with Jessica was an excellent example of peer exchange for the association and has deeply enriched relationships and the association's journey.

Polizzi Generosa, OCT. 26, 2024,

Signature

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