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SOCIAL ENTERPRISE & NATURAL CAPITAL

An opportunity for
young people and local communities

Study Visit

Tornareccio (Italy), 21-27 November 2022

INTRODUCTION



All kinds of green areas (Nature reserves, Protected parks, sites of biodiversity interest, community gardens, etc.) are fundamentally important for the protection of 'Natural Capital' and for human well-being through the provision of 'Ecosystem Services' (environmental, social, economic, cultural and infrastructural). It is very important to initiate and/or consolidate paths of interaction between these areas and young people in order to facilitate processes of personal development, active involvement and inclusion in economic and social life.

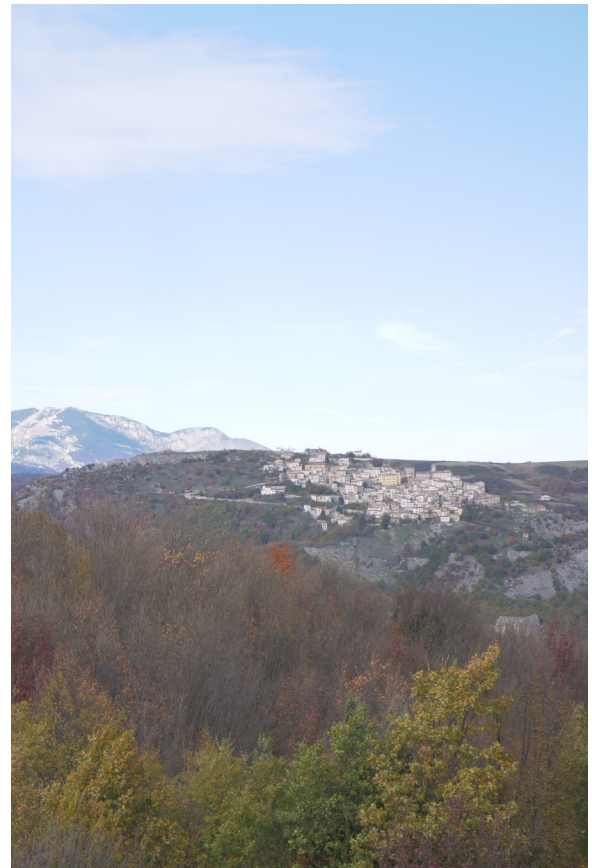
Through a three year educational, formative and experiential path, we intend to increase skills and knowledge on how to develop social entrepreneurship in the framework of natural capital in order to stimulate practical engagement of young people with fewer opportunities, reflecting on their own social role and participation in the process of development and socio-economic growth of communities. Social enterprises meet the needs of individuals and communities by undertaking an inclusive economic activity of social utility and therefore add value to local development through networking and direct involvement as well as the promotion of sustainable well-being that guarantees services, equal opportunities and the reduction of inequalities.



Through several workshops and activities on social entrepreneurship linked to natural capital and sustainable lifestyles this three year programme will lead to the activation of at least ten 'idea incubators' in different local communities around Europe.

Directly involved in the activities are 160 participants from 9 European countries, hundreds of young people and citizens, and several local and international partners/stakeholders. The process is intended to impact rural areas in and/or near protected areas through the development of new sustainable economic projects able to compensate for limited existing opportunities.

The project is realised within the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Commission and the Agenzia Nazionale per i Giovani with the support of the Abruzzo Institute of Protected Areas.



INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

ARCI Chieti (Italy)

Estestvoizpitateli (Bulgaria)

Shtek House (Serbia)

Agenda 21 (Romania)

Just do it (Poland)

ORA Network (Gernany)

Association Broz (Slovakia)

Association SUNCE (Croatia)

Le Fagotin (Belgium)

THE STUDY VISIT

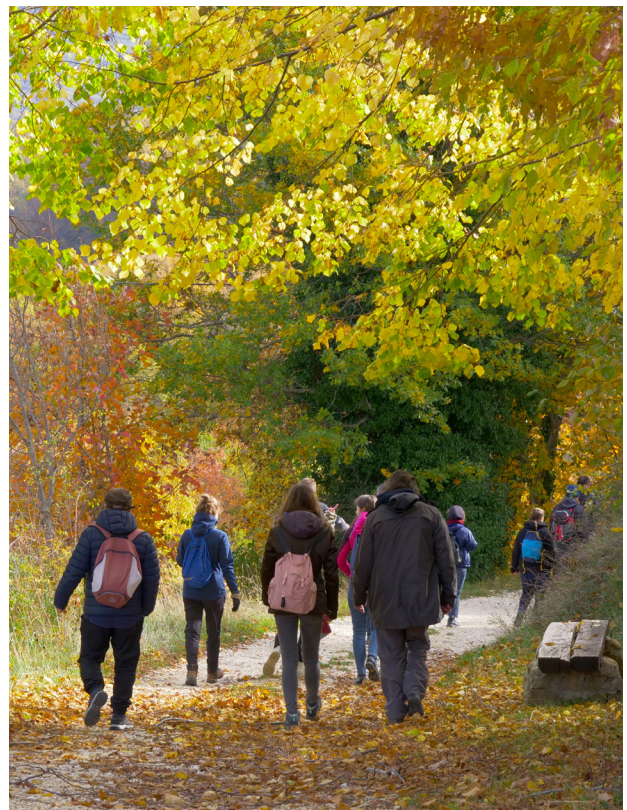
The Study Visit was the first activity of the project and took place from 21st to 27th of November 2023 in the inner part of the Abruzzo Region, amongst the Apennine mountains. The project was based in the Municipality of Tornareccio but allowed us to explore different locations in the region, in particular in the provinces of Chieti and Teramo.

The environmental peculiarities of the area allowed us to achieve the overall aim of the trip; to visit, learn about and acquire positive examples of social enterprises, and to gain firsthand experience of positive models for sustainable development connecting social enterprise and natural capital. Participants were youth workers, youth leaders, volunteers, educators from the 9 involved countries.

During the week we took several interactive field trips, including visits to the Abruzzo Institute of Protected Areas, Cooperatives and Associations, the "L'Istrice" Environmental Educational Center, local food producers, beekeepers, nature reserves and the "Legambiente" Centro del Riuso. Through these we had the opportunity to observe, learn about and experience first hand good practices carried out in a particularly advanced context. Many of these practices are applicable to facilitating the inclusion and involvement of young people in their local community. We investigated different aspects of sustainable development, such as green jobs opportunities, environmental protection and promotion of territories, promotion of quality food products and environmental education, in order to have a deep pool of ideas and innovations to draw from. The activities and visits we carefully chosen to offer a wide and inspiring range of methodologies, tools and practices which can improve the level of intervention and give continuity to the activities that the partners carry out in their local communities and to make more effective and efficient the processes of participation and social inclusion that mainly concern young people.

During the Study Visit the participants were put into small groups, each acting as an 'Editorial Board', and tasked with documenting each of the field trips. Their reports have all been collected in this dossier.

Enjoy your reading!



EXPLORING ATRI AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

November 23, 2022

By Jean Luc, Olivier, Marius & Sancho

CALANCHI DI ATRI



Our first destination for the day was the Nature Reserve 'Calanchi di Atri', located close to the town of Atri. The name of the reserve comes from its main feature, visible as soon as you arrive at the Visitors' Centre; the so-called 'badlands', or 'calanchi' in Italian. These relief formations are the result of the soil composition of the area; a combination of sand and clay that has eroded over the years due to deforestation. The reserve includes the hills of the calanchi plus a part of the valley below them.

The reserve status was declared in 1995, mainly for the protection of the Crested Porcupine (*Hystrix Cristata*) but of course it is also a safe haven for many other kinds of local fauna and flora.

www.riservacalanchidiatri.it



Photo: Yiğit Karaalioğlu - [instagram.com/yigit.photo/](https://www.instagram.com/yigit.photo/)



Vinum Hadrianum



The reserve is not only important for nature. Its soil is also ideal for growing grapes, specifically two varieties typical of Abruzzo and the region around Atri; Montepulciano and Montonico.

That is why a few years ago several enthusiasts decided to revive a tradition dating back to Ancient Roman times. The wines of Vinum Hadrianum are produced in a traditional way, within the boundaries of the reserve and with huge respect for the nature, using old methodology and natural materials only. To do that they had to clear the area of debris and human-created garbage before restoring the old vineyards.

www.vinumhadrianum.com

Associazione L'Istrice

Visits to the reserve begin at the Centro Visite which was opened in 2016 by Associazione L'Istrice.

The association was created by local people with a passion for environmental education. The three pillars of the organization are sustainability, awareness and belonging.

Initially they started with environmental education activities aimed at students from local schools but they gradually expanded their range with different workshops based on a nature-friendly, zero-impact approach using only natural materials. After years of partnering with other NGOs from the area, and other regions in Italy, Istrice Association is now one of the leading examples of successful educational projects in Abruzzo.



During our visit we had the chance to experience one of these educational activities; pasta making. For that Istrice Association have provided the Centre with the famous 'Guitarra', a device for producing traditional pasta from Abruzzo. The activity is organized in the Centre and is suitable for children and adults alike. After all participants in our project made their own dough, they had the chance to try using the guitarra. And then we had lunch prepared with it by members of Istrice.

Now, with our energy reserves replenished, it was time to visit the town itself.

facebook.com/associazioneistriceabruzzo/



WITHIN THE TOWN BOUNDARIES

After enjoying the surroundings of Atri, it was time to get to know the town itself. For this we turned to CulTurA, an organization of local guides. We met with Eleonora, and she told us a bit about her home town. Atri has an ancient history dating back to pre-Roman times. The area didn't have enough water so when the town fell under Roman jurisdiction, the Romans took it upon themselves to provide a reliable source of water both for the irrigation of the surrounding agricultural lands as well as for the needs of the town itself.

www.cultourabruzzo.it



THE TUNNELS

For the first purpose they dug a system of tunnels under the town to collect and store water. Parts of the network remain to this day and they are open for visitors. We were able to see firsthand the structure of the soil under the city, an interesting combination of gravel mixed with clay and sand to form a type of conglomerate.

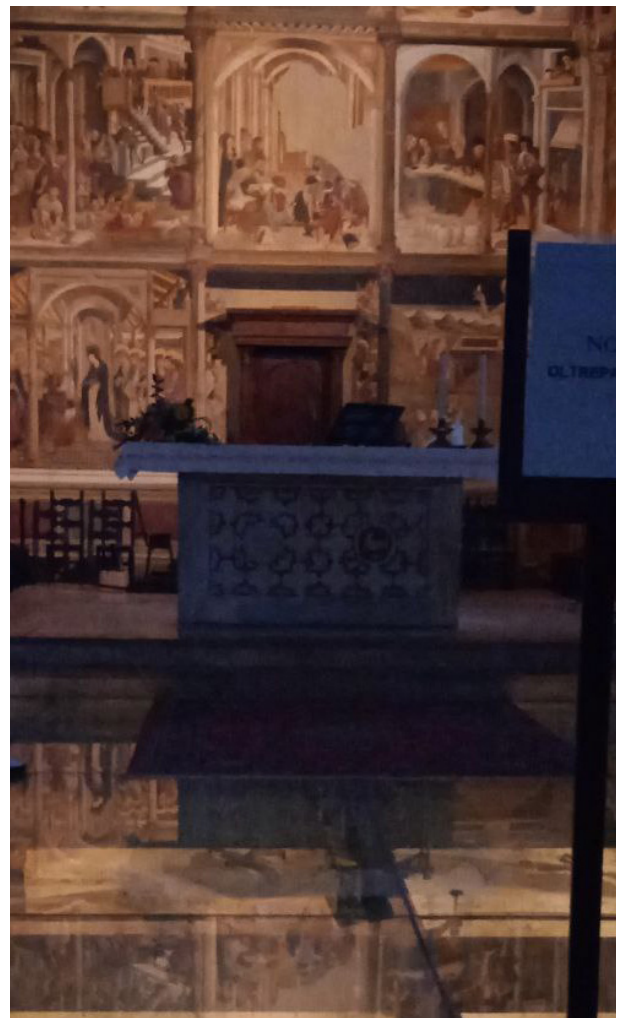
At certain places the original Roman plastering of the walls of the tunnels was visible. It was put there to improve the water-holding capacity of these underground reservoirs.

SANTA MARIA ASSUNTA CATHEDRAL



The second challenge for the Romans was the water supply for the town itself. For that they used another type of reservoir; cisterns dug into the foundations of the buildings. During rainfall water filtered through special layers of stones, gravel and sand, and then it was collected through holes in the ceiling of the cisterns.

We visited two examples of this. The Cathedral of Santa Maria of the Assumption is built directly on top of on, and by no accident. During Roman times this was the location of the Roman Thermae, and after the fall of the Roman Empire the Christian population decided to use one of the pools of the baths for baptism. Of course, at present the cistern is empty, and actually it is being used as the crypt of the cathedral.



The old baptism basin.

PALAZZO DUCALE DI ATRI

The second example is located under the Palazzo Ducale di Atri, also known as Acquaviva Palace. In contrast to the single cistern under the Cathedral, here the water reservoirs consist of several rooms that are interconnected and water can flow freely. The cisterns are open for visitors who can clearly see the system of holes that let the water in, as well as the mark of the highest water level, about 3 metres above the floor.



Holes for water collection

SUMMARY

It was inspiring to learn that our guide Eleonora, and her organization, were also connected with the Nature Reserve we visited in the morning. CulTurA was created on the principle of sustainable society and is the result of the project 'The CAP in the Protected Areas' where Calanchi di Atri Reserve were partners.

Nature Reserve Calanchi di Atri and the town of Atri itself are an example of places where nature, cultural heritage and environmental education come together. The activities of Istrice Association have helped to the local community in more than one way. They have provided a healthier environment for everyone, with pristine nature. They have also collected and restored historical knowledge about the area and preserved it for the younger generations. Their efforts have inspired other organizations to start the production of traditional products – a great way to provide a source of income locally whilst emphasizing local culture to visitors of Abruzzo.

Last but not least, their activities are focused on education, and with time they have managed to create a healthy, functional network of local NGOs, associations for citizens' and producers' and institutions which now contribute to a better social environment for the whole region. Istrice Association, the Nature Reserve and CulTurA together serve as an example how professional experience gained through nature conservation can be transferred to other spheres such as cultural management for a holistic approach to sustainability.

CONTACTS

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CENTRO DEL RIUSO - ATESSA

November 24, 2022

By Lubor & Boro

Based on Presentation by Rebecca Virtú - Legambiente Atezza
and Giuseppe - Vice mayor, Environmental Dept, Atezza municipality

The Centro del Riuso project started in 2017 as a follow up to the 'Barteriamo' project, which was a free exchange for goods. The group expanded from a few activities per year to having a physical space to receive unwanted goods and to offer them to people who can use them. Initially they were located at the Convent 'San Pasquale' then moved to the present site in 2019. The site is managed by Ecologica Lanciano ECOLAN, which is a company with both private and public elements and is in fact part of the Atezza Municipality. They are in charge of the waste management for the area.



The Waste Management Centre is open Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from 9-12 noon. It is open to all citizens, not just from Atezza. The main reason they started the Centre for Reuse was to give a longer life to goods and avoid waste where possible. The service they provide meant that they became by default a social service as they could provide goods needed to vulnerable people. They also started to provide furniture etc to other NGOs as well as schools.

In March 2022 the Museum of Cultural Tradition opened and they approached the Centre for Reuse for artefacts that represent life in Abruzzo from the past.

Another reason that Legambiente decided to open the centre was that they did a need analysis and found that there was a gap in the availability of collection facilities for recyclable goods such as clothing, which existed in other areas but not in Atezza. This would bring environmental benefits, social benefits and the potential for networking at a local level.

When they started to recognise that they were becoming a social service then they enlarged the partnership with the social sector. Sometimes the Social Services office would recommend a person who needed support but also the Centre for Reuse would recommend a person or family to the Social Services that might need extra support. During the Covid pandemic they tried to be open as much as possible as this aspect of their work was particularly valuable.

Legambiente also found that through the Centre for Reuse they were in touch with a whole new part of the community who did not follow their normal activities.

Inside the Centre for Reuse there were books, DVD's, kitchen appliances, clothes, ornaments, toys and much more. Customers decide their own price in exchange for the goods they take.

For larger items of furniture the Centre for Reuse is tries to put donators in touch with reusers so that they can collect the items directly without the need to bring the items to the centre.

After 5 years Rebecca is very proud of the service which is moving towards a circular economy and is becoming sustainable. They now have a strong partnership with Atessa Municipality and with the local community. They currently have one employee for this social enterprise.



The new challenge is to be able to becompletely sustainable without the need for funding. They are focussing more on the education of the community in recycling, not only to give a second life to goods but also to reduce the production and consumption of new goods, as well as reducing the need to transport these goods and to dispose of them after use.

Atessa Municipality offer a waste collection which is called 'Door-to-door'. They collect different categories such as glass or paper and cardboard on different days. For all the rest they collect and bring to the waste recycling centre by appointment. When these goods arrive anything that can be reused is passed on to the Centre for Reuse. People bringing their items on their own can drive in and deposit them into one of a series of skips for the different categories of waste such as green waste, tyres etc.



Electrical items go to a separate area where they are checked for operation and safety before they are passed for reuse complete or component parts separated for recycling.

The Municipality have also created a number of Eco Islands at strategic points around the area where they can use their residents card to gain entry and leave their waste items like old clothing, shoes etc as well as take free water from a machine there.

Address: Largo Municipio, 1, 66041 Atessa CH
Phone: 0872 850421

facebook.com/centrodelriusoatessa

APICOLTURA LUCA FINOCCHIO

November 24, 2022

By Paula, Justyna, Lina, Anna & Vasilena

Founded in 1970, the beekeeping company Apicoltura Luca Finocchio is situated in the village of Tornareccio. It's a successful family business recognised worldwide, from USA to Japan. Starting with just a few dozen beehives, now they take care of around 1,200 beehives in Italy.

It all started when Luca Finocchio's father, the company founder, came back from a few years of emigration to his hometown and started the business based on the local heritage of beekeeping. Nowadays, Luca handles production, his wife extraction, while his daughter Fabiana and her husband commercialisation and packaging respectively. Today, their main goal is to produce high quality products, which brought them awards from expo events in New York and Dubai.



Their system of honey production is based on the nomadism technique, where beehives are moved to different areas. It gives the opportunity to local farmers to take advantage of pollination for their flowers. Besides the beekeeping and production the business has been enriched with the Educational Farm, founded 20 years ago. Luca's other daughter Lisa, a teacher, contributed with non-formal learning modules on bees' life cycle, their importance in ecosystem functioning and honey production. Thanks to the educational and cooperation part, this business is a great example of a social enterprise.

During the visit, Luca and Fabiana gave us a tour of the didactic room of the Educational farm. There we learned about the beehive structure, nectar collecting and storing, bee longevity, hierarchy and their communication.



Fabiana showed us the extraction process during which some of us could experience cutting the beeswax barrier to get to the honey. The visit was enriched with the tasting of coriander, acacia and melata honey activating our 4 senses. We observed the colour and consistency, fragrance, taste, and texture of the honey.

The last stop was the visit of the Apicoltura Luca Finocchio shop which also serves as a small museum. There we discovered a wide palette of bee products: mono- and multi-flowered honey, beeswax, beer, soap, cosmetics, propolis, candies and many more.

We also had the pleasure to meet Tornareccio's Mayor who wished us a warm welcome and expressed appreciation towards the project's impact on the village and the local community.

Grazie mille!



Warm welcome and sweet experience made our souls melt!

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FIELD TRIP TO BORRELLO

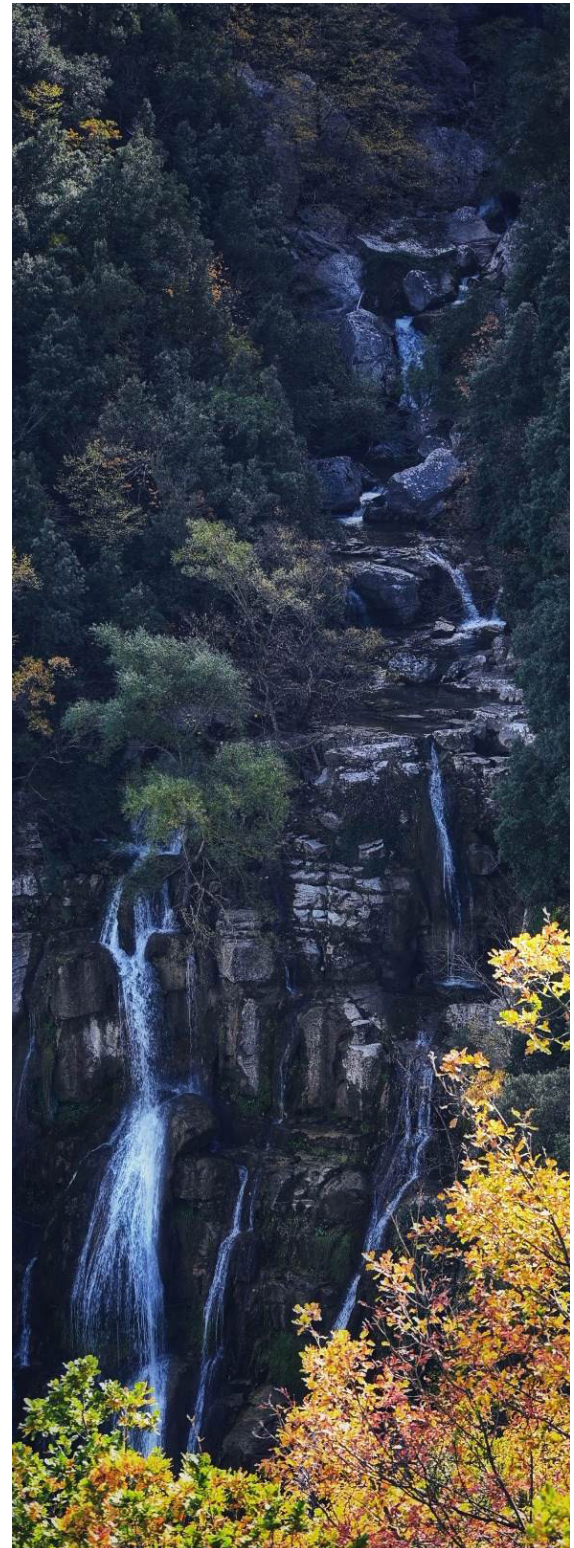
November 25, 2022

By Anja, Borislav, Manuela & Martina

CASCADE DEL VERDE

The "Cascade del Rio Verde" Regional Nature Reserve WWF Oasis, was established in 2001 and is located in the territory of Borrello (Chieti), on the border with Molise. The protected area of extraordinary beauty, is located in the middle valley of the Sangro river and extends over a total area of 287.50 hectares, at an altitude between 400 and 900 m. Inside the Reserve lies one of the wonders of the Abruzzo region: the spectacular "Cascade del Verde" (or Rio Verde), the highest natural waterfall in Italy and among the largest in the entire European continent.

The monumental waterfalls, formed by a triple consecutive jump which overall measures about 200 metres, are fed by the perennial waters of the Rio Verde - the flow of which obviously varies throughout the year (in spring it is considerably higher) and crash noisily between cyclopean overhanging rock ramparts surrounded by luxuriant vegetation. The waters of the stream, characterized by a high biological quality, are home to some valuable faunal elements, such as the rare crayfish (*Austropotamobius Pallipes*), the river crab (*Potamon Fluvatile*) and the Brown trout (*Salmo Trutta*). Among the rare mammals there are the polecat (*Mustela putorius*) and the wild cat (*Felis Silvestris*). Among predatory mammals there are wolves (*Canis Lupus*) and small population of bears (*Ursus Arctos Marsicanus*). As a secondary, there are packs of wolfdogs because of the hunters who discard some of the dogs that sometimes cross breed with wolves and attack their prey which can become a problem also for the people because wolfdogs more easily interact with people. As far as the flora is concerned, the presence of Maidenhair fern (*Adiantum Capillus Veneris*) and rare species of wild orchids are certainly worthy of note.



Most recognized project that is going on in this nature park is the “Rewilding of the Apennine mountains” with the white-clawed crayfish, that have continuity and is very successful practice. Local scientist and expert in this field elaborated that this area was always rich in this species but huge anthropological impact led this autochthonous species to extinction. In one period, they reintroduced another species of the crayfish (Californian), because of the commercial reasons, that made imbalance in this ecosystem. This way brought natural inhabitants in danger and had an negative impact so they had to reintroduce the autochthonous species; the white-clawed crayfish.

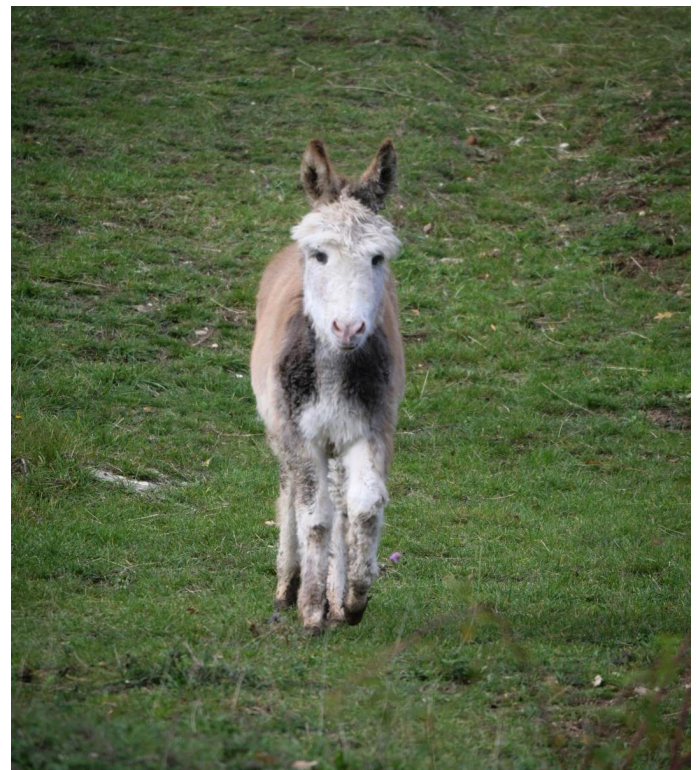


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DONKEYSCIOTTE



This Association was established in 2018 with a clear idea to build a didactical and therapeutic farm related with socialization workshops with vulnerable groups and children with disabilities. The idea was to keep and train therapeutic animals (in this case donkeys) to follow methodology of onotherapy and practice. The donkeys were not chosen by chance, they are a big part of history in this area.



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THE SARACENI DOOR



The Saraceni Door is a natural door formed by three rocks. In the past, before the Roman empire, a Sannitic population that was living here was named Caracini and this door was taking their name. After the Middle Age, with the raids of the Saracens along the Adriatic coast, the name of the door was changed to Saraceni even if they never arrived in Borrello.

In the area close to the doors there are several caves. Legend says that this cave system is connected to all the nearby villages and that the Saraceni snuck into Borrello through the caves. The Presence of this cave system behaves like a buffer zone between stones in case of earthquakes or landslide. These caves are also used by animals as burrows and shelters in the winter since it is warmer underneath.

Near to this door there are piles of rock that people have used for different purposes but it has recently been discovered that those stones actually had a purpose; they were tombs. The tombs are still a mystery because more research is needed to define them precisely.



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We are all just human beings: for this reason it is possible that
this dossier contains mistakes and inaccuracies.

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