

Case delle Erbe

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Keywords: *micro eco-economy, mountains, sustainable tourism, Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), health*
Geening effects: *conservation, maintenance of ecosystems, increasing respect for biodiversity, self-sufficiency*
Geographical area: *Apennines (and beyond)*

Description and contents

The Case delle Erbe network contributes to the conservation of natural micro environments, the maintenance of small mountain communities and their secular traditions, increasing self-sufficiency and biocentric knowledge, including the stimulation of a micro eco-economy. The sectors of interest are cultural, environmental, and socio-economic.

The Case Delle Erbe represents a network of people, small economic realities and collaborations promoting the rediscovery of wild plants for uses that were once a well-known part of local traditions, especially in mountain areas. It is a spontaneous movement, created without government funding, born in the Apennines (Capracotta, first centre). Unlike agriculture the economy and tradition of harvesting wild plants does not require expensive machinery, outbuildings or land ownership. Foraging is growing in popularity with people of all ages and all incomes, allowing people to reconnect to local biodiversity, history, and with training, become custodians of ecosystems. The movement is based on revitalising the knowledge of the local culture and rediscovering the values of self-production and authentic, simple, high quality, wild foods. Through these actions a micro eco-economy is being created with an "exchange and donation" that is difficult to monetise because it goes beyond money, to stimulate sharing knowledge, sharing time and sharing care or well-being. Taken as a whole, the movement of Case Delle Erbe contributes to an alternative food network using environmental education, and fulfilling all three "pillars" of sustainability; environmental sustainability, economic sustainability and socio-cultural sustainability.

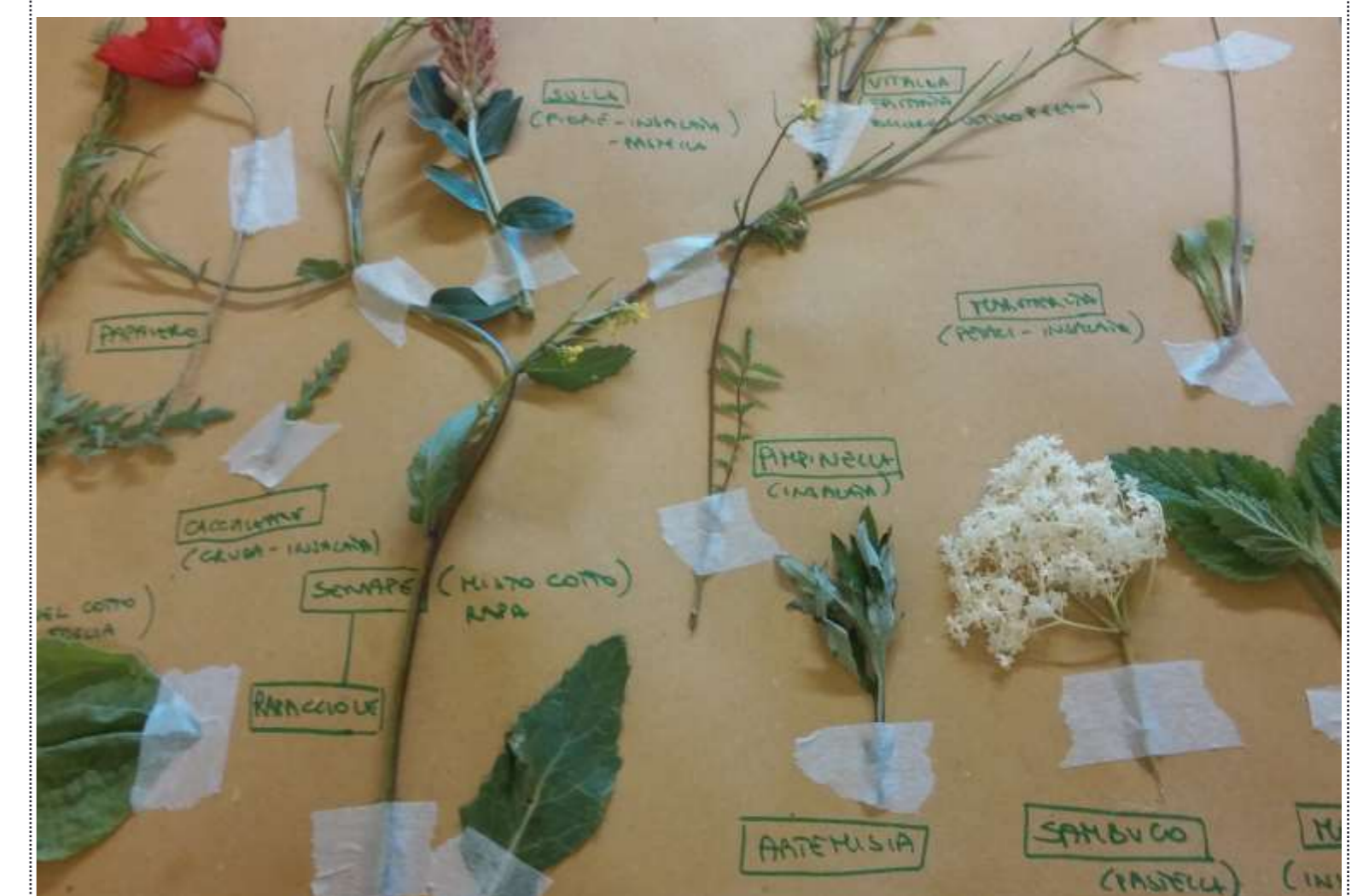
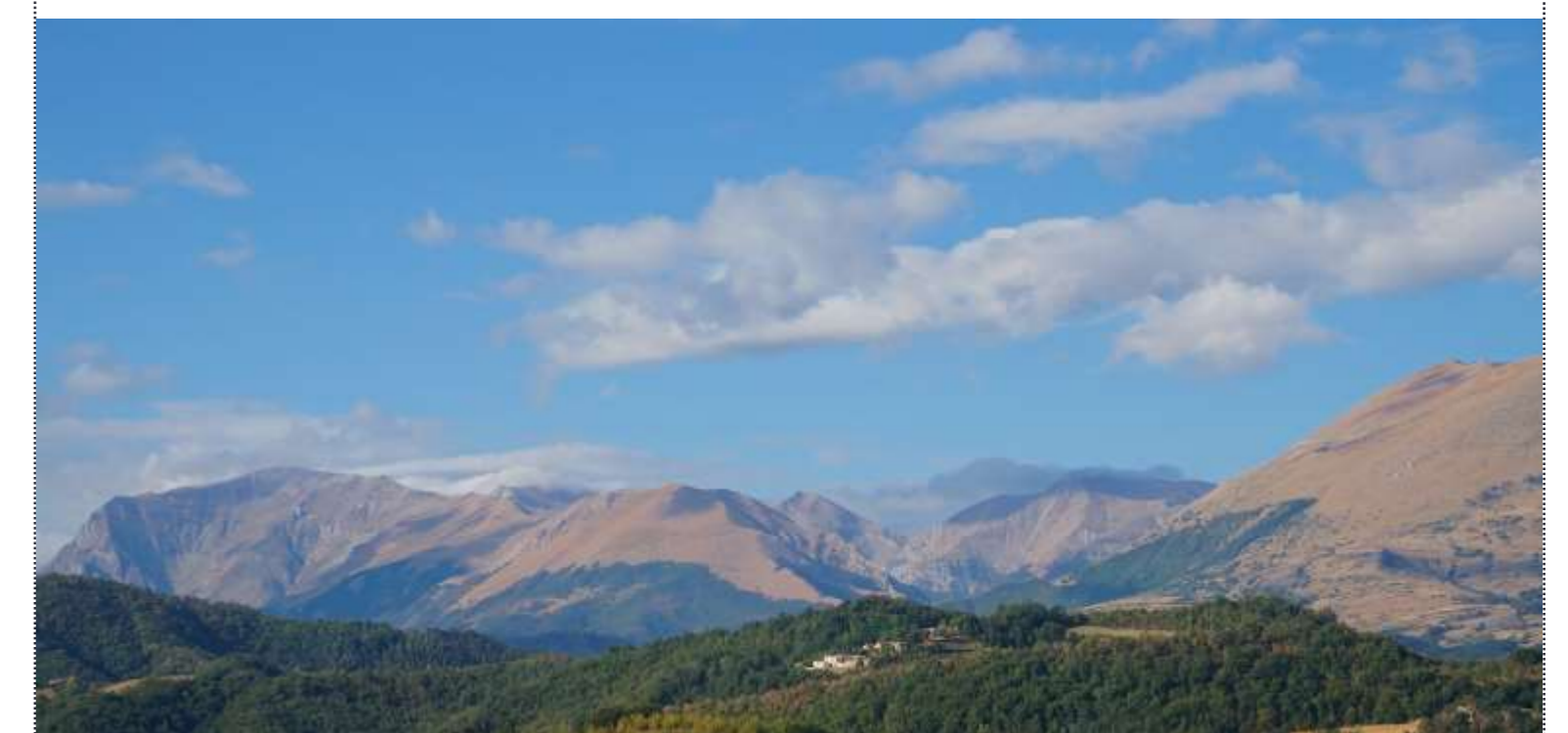
Results and Green Economy dimensions

Offering affordable or free food and eco-therapy are increasingly important in times of recession and upheaval such as the Apennines have experienced. The Case Delle Erbe teaches the public how to harvest wild plants in a sustainable manner, which is crucial for Italy to continue its special tradition of *Intangible Cultural Heritage* connected to the knowledge of plants and the rich biodiversity of Italy's mountain regions. In Italy is documented that the culture of harvesting wild plants has attracted people of all social classes from Antiquity onward, often placing a special importance on the role of women transmitting this experiential knowledge. This knowledge has endured and provided a key to life for the population at many times throughout history. Today, during climate change and recession, it is particularly important to train people to harvest sustainably in order to conserve this precious resource of high quality food and well-being.

A key result of the Case Delle Erbe is that people can learn to avoid industrial farming and rely less on supermarkets, thereby reducing the chain of pesticides and herbicides, mass production, long-distance transport, refrigeration, packaging and marketing. Resource efficiency, connected to environmental awareness, empowers participants to become custodians of environmental equilibrium. Learning to respect plants and biodiversity, while improving people's health, offers a synergy of anthropocentric and biocentric benefits - a green message our society is in urgent need of.



Demonstration and learning workshop



Plant recognition work sheet

Context

Currently there is a project financed by the Central Italy Earthquake Committee. (reference + contact franca.anitapoli@gmail.com). The project is called "Le erbe della Sibilla" and will assist in the training and formation of wild plants in 20 accommodation facilities (B & B, agritourisms, restaurants, holiday homes) of the Sibillini area within the municipalities of: Montemonaco, Montefortino, Smerillo, Montefalcone Appennino, Monte San Martino, Comunanza, Amandola, Sarnano. The project includes recognition in the field of alimurgic plants, their cuisine and their promotion for eco-tourism with the use of social media through a targeted marketing path.

Recipients good practice is growing internationally:

All people can rediscover wild plants characteristic of mountain environments with their native uses. Now in Romania a Casa delle Erbe has already been created (<https://facebook.com/lazurca.mirela>) and there is growing collaboration with the monastery of Bingen in Germany and in Chile.

Transferability

Mountain character:

This eco-economy is suited to mountains that have a low percentage of agricultural land, and at the same time have the need to protect the environment while generating greater economic benefits from non-agricultural land.

The Case delle Erbe integrates with visitors' motivations in the mountains, where the main attraction lies in experiencing "wild" nature, and "distinctive" mountain cultures. This alternative economy bridges the urban/ rural divide by teaching visitors and local populations alike, how to take care of biodiversity, the environment and sustainable traditions.

Conferenza internazionale

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