

My open future

I thought I knew.

After all, I had done it frenetically over the past five years. Going places. Volunteering. Living abroad. Living in Italy. Speaking Italian, eating Italian, dreaming Italian. Working with Italians. Making friends with them, falling in love even...

But the truth is that I didn't know. I couldn't have known.

Now, ten months into my EVS here in Matera, I look back on it all and I am humbled. And filled with gratitude for the countless gifts and teachings I have been blessed with.

For the people I have met and the friendships we've sown. For us feeling at home with each other. For all the baking and cooking, exploring other cultures and our own imaginative potential. For learning more about a green and sustainable life. And for gardening. The way plants can teach us about listening to our needs and caring. The way a harvest reminds us to rejoice in our work and also to let go, preparing the soil so that there is enough space and nutrients available for the next planting season. For the flow of languages that confuse and amuse and inspire new associations. For brushing up my English and deepening my Italian, to the point that it feels closer to me than my native language. For all the events, the many concerts and performances, the poetry of it all. For being reminded every time about the healing power of Beauty. For working with kids and their knowledge of things adults have long forgotten. For working with adults who have forgotten kindness and curiosity and who have helped me remember. Remember to look inside and look outside, to set healthy boundaries and respect my own rhythms and times. And helped me consider how I live, what is important for me and how I should set about creating the life I want for myself.

“Open Future”. This is Matera's slogan as European Capital of Culture. A city whose long story talks about resilience, but it also carries a strong sense of shame. Matera has managed to reinvent itself and stand strong against the challenges of time.

I remember when I first read about this. The sense of joy and empowerment it gave to me. I remember thinking to myself that if I were to go on this project somehow my tiny personal history would meet and overlap with the great story of this ancient city. The vulnerability, the openness, the growth. The difficulties and limitations that lead to creativity and innovation. The sense of dwelling in possibilities. This is how it feels right now. Like my future is wide open.