

# Alice's Home

## COOP CARD\*

**Location:** Castel Volturno

**Year of foundation:** 2011

**Sector:** Social cooperative

**Key themes:** Decent work, immigrants' inclusion, confiscated properties from the mafia



## CONTEXT

Castel Volturno is a town in the province of Caserta, in Southern Italy. Here, immigrants represent a half of the total population, and they essentially live in conditions of slavery even today. Several dramatic events have happened in this municipality, such as the murder in 1989 of Jerry Esslan Masslo, an immigrant from South Africa exploited working in the tomato crops. This event triggered one of the biggest anti-racist demonstrations in Italy and brought about the first national law on immigration. Later in 1994, the priest Peppe Diana was also killed in the town because of his defiance of the mafia. The town would then be the site of the 2008 Castel Volturno massacre where six African immigrants were shot down. In this part of Italy, the mafia organisation known as “Nuova Camorra Organizzata” (New Organised Camorra) and, led by the boss Cutolo, spread terror until the end of the 1980s when they were replaced by another mafia organisation. Due to the systematic burial of toxic waste along with numerous bonfires lit by organised criminal organisations, the area is referred to as the “Land of Fires”.

## AUTHORS

Sara Vicari, Andrea Mancori, Cécile Berranger, Giorgia Amato

\*Information collected during a field work carried out in August 2018.

This pollution has had a devastating impact on the health of the local population, as well as on agriculture and on the whole local economy. In response, a large group of people has come together to resist the harsh conditions and keep fighting against criminal organisations, racism and environmental devastation. These people are the main drivers of a massive and revolutionary cultural change.

## COOP STORY

The project Casa di Alice (Alice's Home) was founded within this context of cultural transformation. It was established in a building confiscated from the mafia boss Pupetta Maresca. This building is now the headquarters of the cooperative known as Altri Orizzonti – Jerry Essan Masslo. The cooperative was set up in 2011 by a group of young volunteers from the Jerry Essan Masslo Association, itself created in 1989 when seven doctors and a social worker decided to act in response to the murder of Jerry Masslo. Since then, the association has carried out projects of cultural integration and social and health assistance, in particular for immigrants. Alice's Home was initially given to the association, and then, when the Altri Orizzonti – Jerry Essan Masslo cooperative was set up, this mission became the heart of the economic and social projects of the cooperative. The final aim of the projects is to address the needs of difficult areas such as Castel Volturno. Some initiatives of the cooperative are as follows:

- The social tailoring initiative “Made in Castel Volturno”, which is a tangible result of how Italian and African tailors can craft clothes together and create an opportunity for decent work, dignity and intercultural exchange.
- The project for local development “Buona Terra” (The Good Land), which involves producing organic tomato sauce on uncontaminated lands confiscated from the Mafia. This project aims to promote decent work and innovative collaboration among farmers and throughout the whole value chain by including social cooperatives in processing activities and selling the final product to joint purchasing groups like DESBRI.



## SELECTED QUOTE

“Cooperatives that have flourish in this area are those that try to build an economic structure that is different from the past, based on the principle of solidarity rather than gains from criminal activity. Solidarity starts from the assumption that we must leave no one behind because if even only one person is left behind the entire economic system will collapse”

Renato Natale - President of Jerry Masslo Association



## KEY LEARNING POINTS

- Even in the most difficult areas, controlled by organised crime, collective action can be the catalyst for a massive cultural transformation with a strong social, economic and environmental impact.
- Laws in support of collective action, like the one on confiscated properties, can be the starting point for the development of initiatives like “Casa di Alice”, by fighting the criminal economy with social economy projects.
- Local people and immigrants can live together, without exploitation, without preconceptions, working together for a more inclusive and fair society.

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