

Interview about Ride 4 Creation

Our Eco-bites team interviewed Francesco and Massimiliano, two young Italians who have devised a project to spread the word about Laudato si and that are trying to live it by small actions.

- Short presentation of yourself and of the project.

My name is Francesco M. Di Pietro, I am 30 years old, I am a community development worker and a graduate in Human Rights and Ethics of International Cooperation. I have always been interested in the protection of the environment and passionate about sports and, in particular, about cycling.



I'm Massimiliano and I'm 31. Born and raised in Campobasso - Molise. Like Francesco I was animator of the Policoro Project, engaged in the professional and formative accompaniment of the young people of my land. I have always been passionate and dedicated to intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Currently I work for the social and economic-cultural integration of the "so-called" migrants. I am project designer and manager, especially in the area of social innovation and culture.

The project **Ride 4 Creation (R4C)** first took shape in 2017, during a morning walk from Santa Maria degli Angeli in Assisi. At the beginning it was a game, but then we set our mind to get to Assisi walking: a feat that would have taken a long time. That game, then, has slowly evolved to something more feasible: a cycle for creation, from Sulmona to Assisi, to highlight the beauties and difficulties of the territories crossed, to meet the communities and to stimulate them in terms of environmental sustainability and slow mobility, and with them to start an ecological conversion, animated by Laudato si.

- What is the motivation?

We draw our inspiration from the Encyclical of Pope Francis, Laudato si. Our desire was to put it into practice - in our small way trying to raise awareness in the communities we meet on the way, to trigger new ideas and initiatives, individual and collective engagement, workshops for circular

economy, etc. The Holy Father has explained to us that everything is connected - humanity (in both inner and outer dimensions), flora, fauna, God.

The complexity of the reality that we experience every day reveals to us that the social and environmental crises are intimately connected. By intervening on one, it is possible to tackle on the other. And we can all, really all, intervene, that is, do something to improve the situation by starting with small daily actions.

- How did you kick start the project and whom with?

The words written by Pope Francis in the *Laudato si'* were the trigger for everything. We began by working on the theoretical contents, forming ourselves in that paradigm of value which directs our action: integral ecology, the care and cherishing of Creation, the superiority of Time over Space. Then, we worked on our concrete itinerary, preparing every stage, short stops, the difficulties and the beauties, the communities with whom to relate and share reflections and prayers on our Common Home. We had technical difficulties, as it is natural on a first experience, and we struggled: but the encounters we had, rewarded our efforts.

- What was the most striking/surprising experience in meeting the communities that received you on the way? Did you find people who want to get involved too?

It was nice to be welcomed by the communities to whom we explained about **Ride 4 creation**, both in organised meetings, and when we stopped to chat with strangers along the way. Even during the short breaks, even if for a brief talk, it was wonderful. We felt the warmth of everyone. And really everyone encouraged us to continue our ride.

The most striking encounter was with Maria a stubborn, strong woman from Pratola Peligna. She shared with us her experience as a rider on four wheels, in wheelchair, since she was three years old. She filled us with joy by telling us how touched she was by our project and therefore she wanted to give us a prayer to take to the end to Saint Francis.

Maria's strength accompanied us till the end of our journey.

- How the pathway/trip affected your mindset for the meeting? Did it clear your mind/ how was it enriching?

This kind of journey, on the one hand, drains your mental and physical energies, but it also restores them. This happens especially in the encounter with the other.

In addition, travelling this way allows you to think in depth about things that really matter. You have to keep it simple. The superfluous, material or otherwise, must be put aside.

- Next challenges on the way?

We do not want to limit ourselves to the experience of the first trip, which we have called “Ride 4 creation 1.0”. I WE have also been in other parts of Italy, meeting the local communities, sharing moments of reflection-action for the care and enhancement of creation and agreeing with them a commitment to “reciprocity” - i.e. to stimulate them to implement measurable change, ecological conversion.

We consider Ride 4 Creation as a traveling workshop, open to the involvement of other riders ready to cycle with us. To achieve this ambitious but feasible project, we need the support of people, skills and financial resources, which we are trying to gather by participating in calls for grants and launching crowdfunding campaigns (one, related to giving Tuesday, has already been launched! [Here](#))

- Which are the next destinations to continue with the initiative?

We are already working on Ride 4 Creation 2.0. We are planning to cycle from Matera in Basilicata to Santa Maria di leuca in Apulia, in May 2020, on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the publication of Laudato Si’. Moreover, we also plan to replicate in other parts of Italy our “creative incursions”, ie moments of encounter with local communities to talk and stimulate ecological conversion.

Last but not least, it is essential to strengthen our communication to make us known and increase the range of cycles, involving new communities. We thank the team of Eco-bites for interviewing us and having spoken about our history hoping to export it to new parts of in Italy and beyond. Follow our journey on FB: [Ride4Creation!](#)



Interview and Translation by Eleonora Vitale