



EmpowHer
PERMACULTURE



PERMACULTURE DESIGN COURSE
EmpowHER Permaculture
Curriculum and
Methodological Framework

AGENZIA NAZIONALE
ERASMUS+ **INDIRE**

 Co-funded by
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GIOVANI
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DRUŠTVO ZA
PERMAKULTURO
SLOVENIJE

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Table of content



1. General Training Information.....	3
2. Introduction.....	4
2.1 Adopted Guidelines	6
2.2 How to Use This Curriculum.....	7
3. PDC/Training Objectives.....	8
3.1 General Objectives	
3.2 Specific Objectives	
4. Feminine Qualities ↔ Permaculture Principles.....	9
4.1 Feminine Qualities and Permaculture Principles Mapping.....	10
5. General Training Agenda (13 days)	11
Day 1 – Building the Learning Community.....	11
Day 2 – Ethics, Principles and Observation.....	12
Day 3 – Systems and Landscape.....	12
Day 4 – Ecology, Design and Sustaining Life Systems.....	13
Day 5 – Soil, Cycles and Celebration.....	13
Day 6 – Water, Boundaries and Collective Resources.....	14
Day 7 – Diversity, Margins and Integration (Free day)	14
Day 8 – Care, Relationships and Zone 1 Systems.....	15
Day 9 – Zones, Edges and Productive Diversity.....	16
Day 10 – Living Spaces, Self-Regulation and Adaptive Technologies.....	17
Day 11 – Entering the Design Process.....	18
Day 12 – Group Design Process.....	19
Day 13 – Completion, Future Pathways and Celebration.....	20
6. How to integrate the cards.....	22
6.1 Use of the cards.....	22
6.2 Role of the cards within the PDC.....	23
6.3 Using the cards beyond the PDC.....	23
7. Detailed Activity Sheets.....	24
Activity 1: Daily Card–Feminine Practice and Permaculture Principle.....	24
Activity 2: Group Culture and Living Together.....	25
Activity 3: Daily Reflection and Closing Circle.....	26
Activity 4: Mid-term Evaluation and Adaptive Facilitation.....	27
Activity 5: Soul Sisters – Peer Support and Presence Practice.....	28
8. Recommendations and observations.....	29
8.1 Balance between content, process and integration.....	29
8.2 Time management and daily rhythm.....	30
8.3 Engagement with the EmpowHer cards and feminine dimensions.....	30
8.4 Design process and learning outcomes.....	30
8.5 Facilitation dynamics and self-reflection.....	31
8.6 Long-term impact and follow-up.....	32
8.7 Transferability and Adaptation.....	32
9. Closing Note: Learning, Care and Continuity.....	33
10. Resources.....	34

General Training Information



Permaculture Design Course – Empowering Women: Nurturing Women’s Empowerment through Permaculture

- Location: Laconi, Sardinia (Italy)
- Duration: 13days (residential training)

Partners involved:

- Giovani Iddocca (IT) – Host organisation
- Zeleno Doba (RS) – Partner organisation (WP4 lead)
- Društvo za permakulturo Slovenije (SI) – Partner organisation
- Kinoniki Sineteristiki Epihirisi (GR) – Partner organisation

Participants:

12 women (3 per country), plus trainers and facilitators - 5 in total

Evaluation tools:

Pre-training form, post-training form, mid-term evaluation and final evaluation. Qualitative and quantitative feedback was collected before, during and after the training to support reflection, learning, and future improvement.



Introduction



The Permaculture Design Course – Empowering Women was developed as a residential training programme that combines the core content of a standard Permaculture Design Course with a **specific focus on women’s empowerment in rural area.**

The curriculum follows the structure and minimum content requirements of the **Italian Permaculture Academy** and aligns with internationally recognised **Permaculture Design Course (PDC 72h) standards.** It covers permaculture ethics and principles, systems thinking, ecological design and applied design processes. Alongside these technical components, the course intentionally integrates elements of social permaculture, participatory learning and reflective practice, addressing the social, relational and personal dimensions of sustainability.

The PDC was designed as an Erasmus+ Training Course in order to be accessible and free for participants. A 13-day immersive learning process, enabling participants to progressively explore permaculture concepts through a balanced combination of theoretical input, practical activities, collective reflection and individual integration. The daily rhythm supports gradual learning while allowing space for rest, informal exchange and reflection.



Introduction



A distinctive feature of this PDC is the integration of the **EmpowHer cards**, developed within the project as a methodological tool to support awareness, dialogue and design processes. The cards are used throughout the training as prompts for reflection and group work, **empowering participants to connect feminine qualities with permaculture ethics, principles and women's practices.**

By linking feminine qualities with permaculture ethics and principles, the course broadens the understanding of permaculture beyond land-based design and highlights its relevance for social systems, community processes and women-led initiatives. The training also functions as a testing and learning space, exploring how a standard PDC can be adapted to **empower a specific target group.**

This curriculum is shared as an open reference for permaculture educators, facilitators and practitioners interested in adapting PDC formats to specific social contexts, particularly women-centred and community-based learning environments.

Adopted Guidelines



The curriculum is aligned with internationally recognised Permaculture Design Course (PDC) standards and follows the minimum content requirements applied by the Italian Permaculture Academy¹ within its certified PDC programmes.

In line with established PDC practice, the curriculum covers the following **core thematic areas**:

- Introduction to permaculture and permaculture as a design system
- Ethics and principles of permaculture (Holmgren and Mollison)
- Observation and interaction with natural and social systems; systems thinking
- Patterns in nature and society; scale of permanence
- Design methodologies, element analysis and functional relationships
- Climate, microclimate, landscape reading and aspects of the landscape
- Water cycles, water management and earthworks
- Soil ecology, soil fertility and regeneration
- Plants, trees, productive systems and integrated pest management
- Zones and sectors
- Built environment, natural building and alternative low-impact technologies
- Social permaculture, community processes and alternative economics
- Women in permaculture and urban permaculture
- Design for resilience, adaptation and change; disaster preparedness and response
- Group design work and final design project

These themes are distributed across the training days in a progressive learning flow, ensuring continuity between **theory, observation, practical application and design work**. The structure emphasises **experiential learning, site-based observation and the integration of ecological and social dimensions**.

The adopted guidelines allow for contextual adaptation, recognising that permaculture education benefits from being responsive to place, culture and the specific needs of the learning group. This enables the curriculum to function both as a complete Permaculture Design Course and as a flexible reference that can be adapted to other rural, community-based or women-centred learning contexts

¹ Vademecum for a 72-hour PDC course on topics certified by the Italian Academy of Permaculture: Introduction and History of Permaculture, Basics of Ecology, Ethics and Principles, Models in Nature, Climate and Microclimate, Design Strategies (Zones, Sectors, Functional Analysis), Soil, Water, Plants, Design Strategies, Appropriate Technologies (Gardens, Structures, Energy), Social and Urban Permaculture, Economics in Permaculture, Final Design Exercise

How to use this Curriculum



This curriculum is designed as a flexible and adaptable reference for permaculture educators, facilitators and organizations.

It can be used:

- As a guide to creating an accredited PDC, to be included as a project in an **Erasmus+ Training Course**, in order to make it accessible, free, and sustainable for participants and teachers.²
- as a complete 13-day residential Permaculture Design Course with an integrated women-centred and relational approach;
- as a methodological inspiration for adapting standard PDC formats to specific target groups, particularly women-centred or community-based contexts;
- as a source of transferable facilitation practices, such as daily rhythm design, card-based reflection, group agreements and adaptive evaluation;
- as a modular resource, where individual sections (daily agenda, card integration, activity sheets or design process) can be selected and adjusted according to time, place and learning context.

Educators are encouraged to adapt the curriculum with sensitivity to local realities, group dynamics and cultural contexts, while maintaining coherence between technical learning, social processes and experiential integration.

² Starting from the concept of decolonizing Permaculture ([source 1](#), [source 2](#)), this project aims to bring Permaculture to as many people as possible, because if permaculture stems from the knowledge of primitive peoples, it deserves to be reawakened in all of us, without economic limitations.

PDC Objectives



General Objectives

The general objectives were to develop and implement a Permaculture Design Course adapted to women's empowerment, while strengthening women's capacity to engage with ecological and social challenges in their communities.

The training aimed to:

- Develop and implement a women-centred adaptation of a standard Permaculture Design Course, aligned with internationally recognised PDC standards;
- Test and apply the EmpowHer cards as a methodological tool within a PDC learning process;
- Strengthen women's empowerment in rural and community contexts through permaculture-based approaches;
- Provide participants with practical permaculture tools to address ecological, climate-related and social challenges;
- Explore approaches that can be transferred and adapted to other rural, community-based and cultural contexts, supporting the replicability of the training model.

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the training were to:

- Support participants in developing awareness of their personal, social and community value as women and changemakers;
- Enable participants to apply permaculture ethics and principles to empowerment-related and social topics;
- Foster the growth of a supportive learning community based on care, trust and mutual responsibility;
- Strengthen participants' capacity to design regenerative solutions in ecological, social and community contexts;
- Contribute to capacity building for ecological and community-oriented initiatives, including women-led projects and forms of livelihood.

Feminine Qualities

↔ Permaculture Principles

Within the EmpowHer Permaculture project, a set of 12 feminine qualities³ was identified as a framework to recognise, value and make visible women's knowledge, capacities and ways of relating to the world. These qualities emerge from lived experience, traditional practices, community roles and contemporary forms of women's engagement in ecological and social transformation.

In this training, feminine qualities were intentionally mapped and connected to permaculture ethics and principles, creating a shared language between personal empowerment and ecological design.

Rather than being treated as abstract or symbolic concepts, the qualities were used as practical reference points throughout the course, supporting reflection, dialogue and design processes.

This approach allowed participants to experience permaculture not only as a land-based design system, but also as a framework applicable to social systems, community processes and women-led initiatives.

By linking inner qualities with external design principles, the course supported participants in recognising their own experience and knowledge as valid resources for regenerative action.

Each activity within the PDC was designed to recognise one or more feminine qualities and relate them to corresponding permaculture principles. This mapping supported coherence across the training and helped participants connect technical content with personal insight and collective learning.

The table on the next page presents the mapping between the identified feminine qualities and the permaculture principles linked, together with a brief indication of how these connections were activated in practice.

³ When this manual refers to feminine qualities, we would like to specify that these are qualities of the feminine understood as the masculine-feminine dualism that every human being carries within themselves, regardless of the gender with which they identify.



Feminine Qualities and Permaculture Principles Mapping



Feminine Quality	Related Permaculture Principle	How it was activated in the training
Holistic Thinking	Observe and interact	Systems thinking exercises, group reflection, whole-system design approaches
Cyclicity	Catch and store energy	Working with natural cycles, linking with the moon cycle, reflection on rhythms, seasonal awareness
Resistance	Obtain a yield	Linking empowerment with agency, tangible outcomes and purposeful action
Adaptability	Apply self-regulation and accept feedback	Feedback loops, learning from experience, adapting designs and processes
Regeneration	Use and value renewable resources and services	Regenerative practices in ecological and social contexts
Resilience	Produce no waste	Transforming challenges into resources and learning opportunities
Vision for the future	Design from patterns to details	Long-term thinking, visioning exercises and design strategies for disasters
Empathy	Integrate rather than segregate	Group processes, listening practices, inclusion and relationship-building, residential PDC itself
Care and nurturing	Use small and slow solutions	Care-based approaches, attention to pace, well-being and sustainability
Horizontal leadership	Use and value diversity	Participatory decision-making, shared responsibility and collaboration
Intuition	Use edges and value the marginal	Valuing inner knowledge, marginal voices and alternative perspectives
Creativity	Creatively use and respond to change	Creative expression, adaptive design and innovative responses

General Training Agenda (13 days)



The training follows a progressive day-by-day learning rhythm that combines standard PDC content with a women-centred and relational approach. Each day has a clear thematic focus, supported by a balance of theory, observation, practical work and reflection. Feminine practices and permaculture principles are used as daily anchors to support coherence and integration throughout the training, with each day opening through a shared, card-based moment and closing with collective reflection.

Day 1 – Building the Learning Community

Daily card: Accabadora | Permaculture focus: Earth Care, People Care, Fair Share

Focus of the day

Getting to know each other, group culture and foundations of the learning community.

Key learning areas

- Getting to know each other and building trust
- Group culture and living together
- Introduction to women-centred PDC
- Site observation and farm tour
- Introduction to permaculture ethics and principles



Day 2 – Ethics, Principles and Observation

Daily card: Sa Reina | Permaculture focus: Observe and Interact

Focus of the day

Ethics, principles and observation as foundations of permaculture practice.

Key learning areas

- Embodied opening and group reconnection
- Permaculture ethics and principles
- Attitudes and values in permaculture
- Patterns in nature and society
- Observation-based outdoor exercises



Day 3 – Systems and Landscape

Daily card: Levadoras | Permaculture focus: Catch and Store Energy



Focus of the day

Exploring social and ecological systems, spatial relationships and landscape dynamics as a basis for resilient design.

Key learning areas

- Social permaculture and social systems
- Zones and sectors in permaculture design
- Reflection on Zone 5 and its presence or absence
- Climate and microclimate
- Reading the landscape and external influences

Day 4 – Ecology, Design and Sustaining Life Systems

Daily card: Zdravilstvo modrih žena | Permaculture focus: Obtain a Yield

Focus of the day

Connecting ecological principles, design methods and questions of sustainability, resilience and fair share.

Key learning areas

- Core principles of ecology linked with permaculture principles
- Design methodologies and element analysis
- Design for disasters and resilience
- Alternative economic models and the principle of fair share
- Mid-term evaluation



Day 5 – Soil, Cycles and Celebration

Daily card: Čuvarke slave | Permaculture focus: Produce No Waste



Focus of the day

Understanding soil as a living system and exploring cycles of care, regeneration and celebration within ecological and social processes.

Key learning areas

- Women's roles and perspectives in permaculture
- Soil ecology, fertility and regeneration
- Integrated pest management
- Practical soil work and observation - Hot compost making
- Cycles of care, renewal and celebration

Day 6 – Water, Boundaries and Collective Resources

Daily card: Alijansa ženskih pokreta | Permaculture focus: Use & Value Renewable Resources and Services

Focus of the day

Exploring water as a vital, shared and renewable resource, while reflecting on boundaries, cooperation and collective responsibility in ecological and social systems.

Key learning areas

- Water cycle and urban water management
- Scale of permanence and site analysis
- Reading landscapes and water flows (visible and invisible)
- Rural water systems and earthworks
- Practical water-related work - Real time Model building exercise for water harvesting earthworks
- Boundaries, cooperation and sustaining collective processes



Day 7 – Diversity, Margins and Integration (Free day)

Daily card: Panattare | Permaculture focus: Use & Value Diversity



Focus of the day

Creating space for rest, integration and individual rhythms, while reflecting on diversity, belonging and the value of marginal perspectives within ecological and social systems.

Key learning areas

- Integration and rest within an intensive learning process
- Diversity, uniqueness and marginality
- Personal rhythm and self-care
- Informal learning and individual reflection
- Valuing contribution beyond productivity

Day 8 – Care, Relationships and Zone 1 Systems

Daily card: Grammata | Permaculture focus: Integrate Rather Than Segregate

Focus of the day

Exploring integration as a core permaculture and social principle, through everyday systems of care, relationships and energy flows close to home (Zone 1).

Key learning areas

- Social permaculture and relational systems
- Zone 1: everyday life, care and responsibility
- Composting and organic waste management
- Trees and energy transactions
- Practical work in Zone 1 systems - No-till market garden, vegetable bed preparation and planting



Day 9 – Zones, Edges and Productive Diversity

Daily card: S'abbreadora | Permaculture focus: Use Edges and Value the Marginal

Focus of the day

Exploring productive landscapes across different zones, with particular attention to edges, diversity and marginal spaces as sources of resilience and abundance.

Key learning areas

- Zones 4 and 5: wild systems, observation and minimal intervention
- Zone 3: productive systems and management
- Zone 2: food forests, diversity and intensification
- Practical work in Zone 2 - Turning an orchard into a food forest: interplanting species, fertilising, aerating, mulching and propagating plants to create a multi-layered 2-line Agroforestry (syntropic-like) system
- Understanding edges and marginal spaces as areas of high potential





Day 10 – Living Spaces, Self-Regulation and Adaptive Technologies

Daily card: Majstorice | Permaculture focus: Apply Self-Regulation and Accept Feedback



Focus of the day

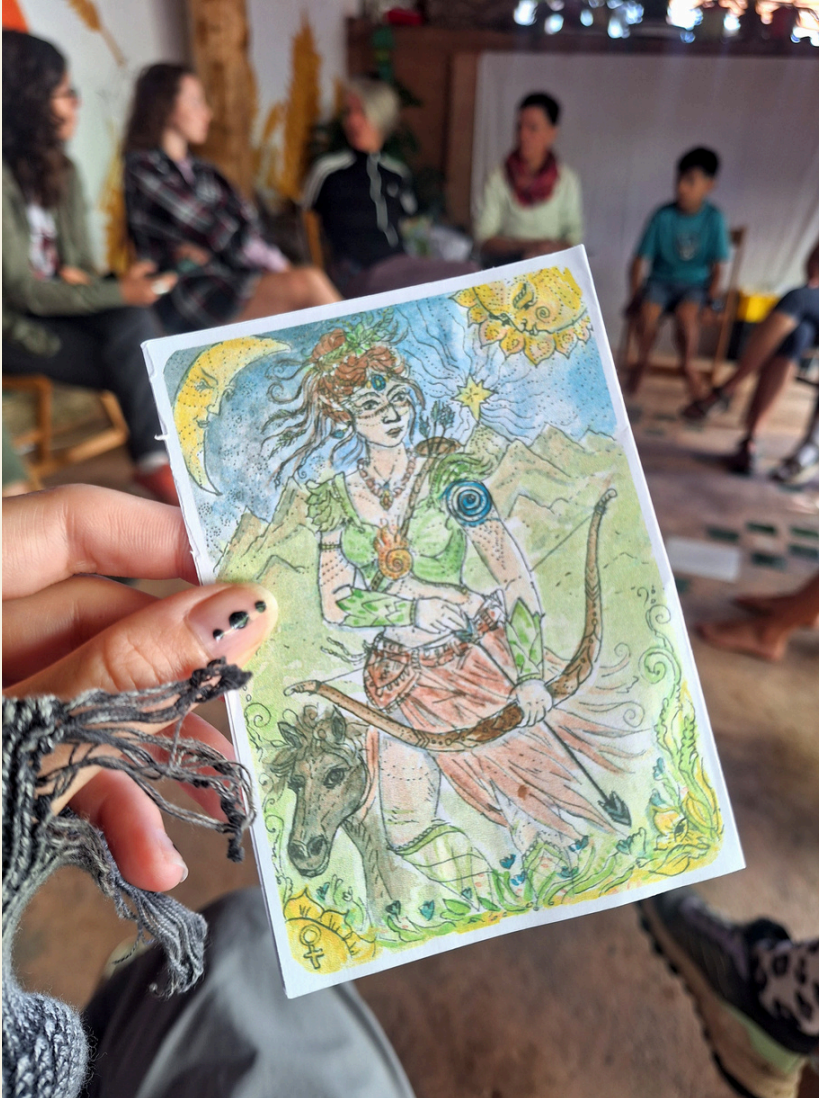
Exploring living environments, self-sufficiency and adaptive responses through built space, everyday practices and appropriate technologies, with attention to feedback, limits and long-term sustainability.

Key learning areas

- Self-sufficiency and personal/systemic autonomy
- Urban permaculture and everyday resilience
- Zone 0: living spaces and natural building
- Relationship between shelter, materials and climate

Day 11 – Entering the Design Process

Daily card: Partizanke | Permaculture focus: Creatively Use and Respond to Change



Focus of the day

Moving from learning to application. The day connects hands-on experience with the formal introduction to the design process.

Key learning areas

- Adaptation and responsiveness through practice
- Natural building (practical work) - Bench making: From rock foundations to cob building
- Connecting theory with real examples and questions
- Introduction to the permaculture design process
- Core design tools: elements, relationships, zoning, sectors, water flows, scale of permanence
- Formation of design groups

Day 12 – Group Design Process

Daily card: Pirotске ćilimarke | Permaculture focus: Design from Patterns to Details

Focus of the day

A full-day immersion into the collaborative permaculture design process, bringing together learning from the entire course into a coherent group design.

Key learning areas

- Client interview and clarification of context, needs and priorities
- Collective site analysis and interpretation
- Application of permaculture tools (patterns, zones, sectors, water flows, scale of permanence)
- Translating patterns into concrete design decisions
- Collaborative decision-making, iteration and feedback



Day 13 – Completion, Future Pathways and Celebration

Daily card: Thesmophoria | Permaculture focus: Use Small and Slow Solutions

Focus of the day

Bringing the design process to completion, celebrating, and creating space for reflection, evaluation and future orientation.

Key learning areas

- Final preparation of group designs
- Presentation and collective sharing of design work
- Reflection on the learning journey and group process
- Evaluation of the training experience (including Erasmus+ elements)
- Recognition of participation and certification
- Exploring next steps and continuation beyond the course
- Celebration of learning, collaboration and personal growth



This general training agenda reflects an integrated learning journey that weaves together permaculture education, women's empowerment and relational learning. Through a carefully designed rhythm of theory, observation, practice, reflection and celebration, the course supports both technical competence and personal transformation. Feminine practices, embodied learning and collective processes are not treated as add-ons, but as essential elements of sustainable design and community resilience. The agenda is offered as a living reference for permaculture educators and practitioners interested in adapting PDC formats to specific social contexts, particularly women-centred, community-based and regenerative learning environments.



NSA ŽENSKIH POKRETA
Women's solidarity



♀ Resistance
♀ Trust your inner voice. Your strength can heal and protect
♀ Obtain a yield



DORA
Jal

teates



♀ Regeneration
♀ Build together. Change
♀ Use & value re



♀ brings lasting
services
CUVARKE SLAVE
Ritual Keepers

are brings
egate



♀ Intuitive
♀ Trust in th
♀ U



MAJSTORI
Raw earth build

♀ Adaptability
♀ Stay grounded and sh
self-re



OPHOR
fertility



♀ Resilience
♀ Keep traditions alive. Your roots make you unbreakable
♀ Produce no waste



SA REINA
Leader in rural work



ACCABADO
Death care

How to integrate the cards



The EmpowHer cards are an integral facilitation tool within the Permaculture Design Course. They support the daily rhythm of the training, emotional integration and the connection between permaculture principles and women's lived experience.

The cards are based on women's practices collected through the EmpowHer project and further explored in the EmpowHer Booklet. Within this PDC, a selected set of 13 cards was used, with one card accompanying each training day in alignment with the overall course structure.

Use of the cards

OPENING OF THE DAY

Each training day begins with the introduction of one EmpowHer card. The facilitator briefly presents:

- the women's practice represented on the card,
- the feminine quality connected to it,
- and the permaculture principle linked to the day's learning focus.

The card is introduced through a short embodied, reflective or relational activity (such as movement, pair work or circle sharing), creating a shared emotional and thematic entry point into the day.

HOLDING THE CARD THROUGHOUT THE DAY

The card remains present as a reference throughout the day. It is not used to explain technical content, but to support awareness, allowing participants to notice how the feminine quality or practice resonates with learning topics, group processes and personal insights.

CLOSING AND REFLECTION

Each day closes with reflection questions connected to the daily card. These reflections support:

- personal integration of learning;
- connection between inner processes and design work;
- continuity of reflection across the course.

Role of the cards within the PDC

Within the PDC, the cards function as a supportive methodological layer that bridges knowledge, experience and reflection. They allow the course to be held not only as technical training, but also as a learning process that values intuition, care, relationships and collective knowledge, elements repeatedly highlighted as important by participants during evaluation.

While 13 practices were used as daily cards during the course, the EmpowHer Booklet presents a broader range of women's practices, offering additional context and inspiration beyond the daily card work.

Using the cards beyond the PDC

Although integrated into the daily rhythm of this PDC, the EmpowHer cards are designed to be adaptable and transferable. They can be used independently in workshops, community processes, reflection circles or educational settings, either individually or as a set.

Their role is not to prescribe actions or interpretations, but to open space for awareness, dialogue and connection between inner processes and systemic change.



Detailed Activity Sheets

The following activity sheets describe a selected set of cross-cutting facilitation practices that shaped the learning process throughout the course. Rather than detailing all thematic sessions, these activities highlight the core methodological elements that supported rhythm, group cohesion, reflection and adaptive facilitation across the entire training. They can be applied independently or adapted to other Permaculture Design Courses and women-centred learning contexts.

ACTIVITY 1: DAILY CARD – FEMININE PRACTICE AND PERMACULTURE PRINCIPLE

Type of activity: Reflective / educational

Learning objectives

- Introduce a clear daily thematic focus through a selected feminine practice
- Connect feminine qualities with permaculture ethics and principles
- Support embodied and experiential learning alongside theoretical input
- Create continuity and coherence throughout the course

Materials: Printed EmpowHer Cards, Card guidelines (for facilitators), Visible space to place the card during the day.

Steps

- At the opening of each day, one EmpowHer Card is introduced by the facilitator.
- The facilitator briefly presents the women's practice, its cultural background and its link to a permaculture principle.
- Participants are invited to observe the card and reflect on how it relates to their experience or the day's focus.

- The card remains visible throughout the day as a reference point.
- At the end of the day, the card is revisited during the closing circle.

Outputs

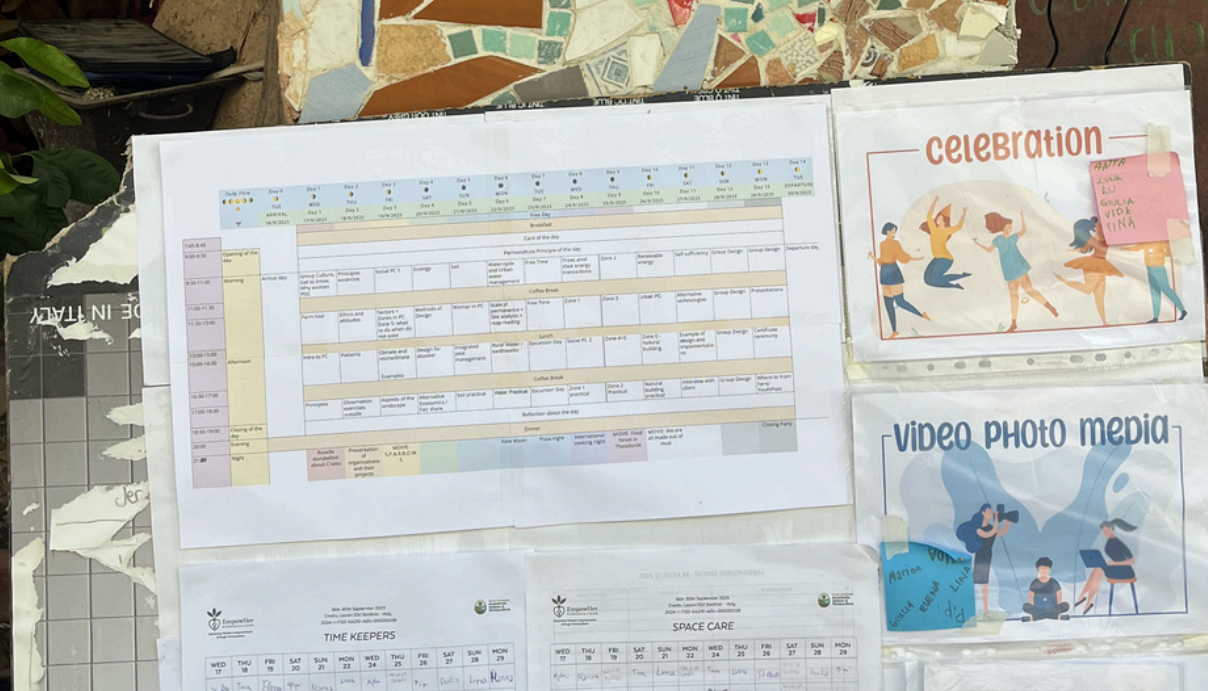
- Clear thematic orientation for the day
- Increased understanding of links between feminine practices and permaculture principles.

Observed results

- Participants reported that the daily card helped them follow the learning process more easily
- Abstract principles became more accessible through lived experience

Collected feedback

- Participants appreciated having one clear daily focus
- Cards supported both emotional and cognitive connections to the content



ACTIVITY 2: GROUP CULTURE AND LIVING TOGETHER

Type of activity: Group process / reflective

Learning objectives

- Support the creation of a shared group culture based on trust and care
- Increase awareness of individual and collective needs in shared living
- Clarify roles, boundaries and responsibilities

Materials

- Flipchart or large paper
- Markers

Steps

1. The facilitator introduces the purpose of creating shared agreements.
2. Participants reflect on personal needs, limits and expectations related to shared living and learning.
3. Through group discussion, key principles for living and learning together are identified.
4. Practical arrangements and responsibilities are agreed upon collectively.
5. Agreements remain visible throughout the course.

Outputs

- Shared agreements and practical arrangements
- Increased clarity around group responsibilities

Observed results

- Reduced tension and misunderstandings
- Stronger sense of safety and belonging

Collected feedback

- Participants highlighted the importance of addressing living arrangements early
- Clear agreements supported focus on learning

ACTIVITY 3: DAILY REFLECTION AND CLOSING CIRCLE

Type of activity: Group process / reflective

Learning objectives

- Support integration of daily learning
- Encourage self-reflection and emotional awareness
- Strengthen group cohesion through attentive listening
- Create a clear transition into rest time

Materials

- Daily reflection questions
- Talking piece (optional)

Steps

1. Participants gather in a closing circle.
2. The facilitator recalls the daily focus and card.
3. One or two reflection questions are introduced.
4. Participants share voluntarily, without discussion or feedback.
5. The circle closes with a short grounding moment.

Outputs

- Increased awareness of learning and emotional processes
- Deeper integration of permaculture concepts

Observed results

- Participants experienced the reflections as grounding and essential
- Emotional balance was supported during intensive days

Collected feedback

- Structured reflection time was highly valued
- Questions helped link theory with personal experience



ACTIVITY 4: MID-TERM EVALUATION AND ADAPTIVE FACILITATION

Type of activity: Reflective / adaptive facilitation

Learning objectives

- Create space for collective reflection on the learning process
- Identify emerging needs, challenges and strengths
- Adjust facilitation in response to feedback
- Model self-regulation as a permaculture practice

Materials

- Flipchart or large paper
- Markers

Steps

1. Participants are invited into a mid-term evaluation space.
2. The purpose of evaluation is introduced as care, feedback and course correction.
3. Participants share reflections on pace, content and group dynamics.
4. Feedback is gathered transparently and visibly.
5. The facilitation team agrees on adaptations together with the group.

Outputs

- Shared understanding of group needs
- Adjustments to rhythm or facilitation approach

Observed results

- Participants felt heard and respected
- Overload was reduced in the second part of the course

Collected feedback

- Flexibility of the facilitation team was highly appreciated
- Mid-term evaluation was experienced as rebalancing and supportive





ACTIVITY 5: SOUL SISTERS – PEER SUPPORT AND PRESENCE PRACTICE

Type of activity: Group process / relational support

Learning objectives

- Support a sense of emotional safety and belonging throughout the course
- Encourage peer-to-peer support and gentle accountability
- Reduce feelings of isolation during intensive learning processes
- Strengthen relational awareness as part of women-centred learning

Materials: Paper slips with participants' names, Container or basket for drawing names

Steps

- On the first day of the course, participants draw the name of their "soul sister."
- Each pair agrees on how they would like to stay in contact during the training period.
- The form of contact is intentionally left open and self-defined (e.g. frequency, duration, mode of communication).

- Soul sisters are encouraged to check in with each other in ways that feel supportive and manageable.
- No formal structure or obligation is imposed; the practice remains flexible and voluntary.

Outputs

- Informal peer-support pairs
- Increased sense of presence and relational continuity during the course

Observed results

- Participants often reported feeling less alone during the learning process
- The awareness of having someone "there" created a subtle sense of support, even when contact was minimal or symbolic

Collected feedback

- Although this practice was not formally evaluated, facilitators observed its positive impact on emotional safety
- The mere existence of the pairing was perceived as supportive, regardless of the intensity of interaction.

Recommendations and observations

This section complements participants' feedback by bringing together insights from the post-training evaluation and reflections from the facilitation team based on their lived experience of the process. The observations below aim to support learning, adaptation and improvement of future editions, while recognising the overall value and impact of the training.

Balance between content, process and integration

While the course successfully delivered a wide range of high-quality permaculture content, both participants and facilitators recognised that the overall learning load was very intensive. The amount of theoretical input, combined with a tight daily schedule, at times limited space for integration, reflection and deeper engagement with experiential and relational aspects of the course.

For future iterations, it is recommended to further reduce and **prioritise practical content**, acknowledging that much information is now widely accessible through online resources. This would allow more time to be dedicated to:

- the design process itself,
- social permaculture and community dynamics
- more practical/work session (considered by some participants to be truly empowering, for instance turn the hot compost every day or use machinery such as a saw or brush cutter)
- experiential and embodied learning connected to women's empowerment.

Such a shift would support deeper understanding and long-term integration, rather than information accumulation.



Time management and daily rhythm

Both facilitators and participants highlighted the importance of clearly protected time for daily closing, reflection and evaluation. Although these moments were recognised as essential, they were at times shortened due to programme overruns.

Future courses would benefit from clearer boundaries around:

- protected time for daily closing circles,
- collective reflection and emotional integration, and
- more time for mid-term and final evaluation.

It is also important to allow participants enough free time to digest what they have learned, as well as offering sessions to do together, such as the full moon session in this course or cooking together and offering an international dinner. These turned out to be really intense activities.

Safeguarding these spaces is seen as a key condition for maintaining balance, care and sustainability within an intensive residential training format.

Engagement with the EmpowHer cards and feminine dimensions

It was recognised that the full potential of the EmpowHer cards was not fully explored during the course. While the cards provided a meaningful daily anchor, limited time was available to deepen engagement with the feminine qualities and practices they represent.

For future editions, it is recommended to:

- allocate more dedicated time to working with the cards,
- create clearer links between the cards and the design process, and
- allow deeper exploration of feminine perspectives within permaculture education.

This would support a more embodied, coherent and integrated experience of the women-centred approach.

Design process and learning outcomes

The course included a group design process toward the end of the programme. In reflection, the facilitation team agreed that one day was not sufficient for participants to fully integrate learning and apply permaculture tools with confidence.

For future iterations, it is recommended to:

- extend the design phase,
- allow more time for client interaction, iteration and feedback, and
- strengthen the connection between design work, social dynamics and empowerment themes.

This adjustment would enhance both learning quality and participant confidence.

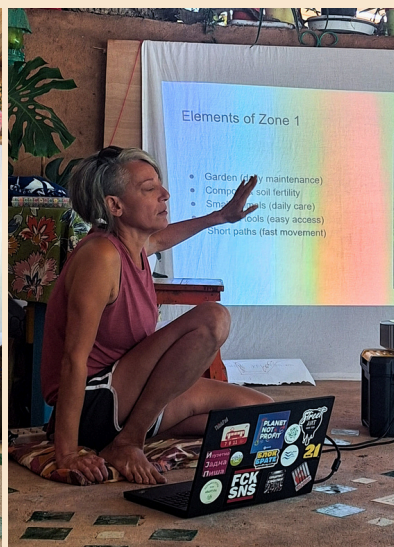
Facilitation dynamics and self-reflection

The facilitation process itself emerged as a significant learning space. While the course achieved its main objectives — including accessibility, inclusiveness, high-quality teaching and positive participant feedback — the facilitation team experienced moments of fatigue, tension and challenge.

These dynamics highlighted the importance of:

- strong alignment within facilitation teams,
- openness to feedback and shared decision-making,
- ongoing self-reflection as an integral part of facilitation practice
- Mutual care, the same care guaranteed to participants should also be guaranteed to trainers
- sharing any difficulties and discussing them with the participants themselves, so as not to create clear divisions between those who teach and those who learn.

The challenges encountered were understood not as failures, but as valuable feedback for improving collaboration, role clarity and collective care in future courses, particularly in programmes with a strong relational and women-centred focus.



Long-term impact and follow-up

Participants engaged with the course on multiple levels: through the formal curriculum and through the group experience itself. While learning outcomes were visible by the end of the training, the facilitation team recognised that deeper impacts — particularly in relation to personal processes, empowerment and application in real-life contexts — unfold over time.

A follow-up evaluation was conducted approximately two months after the training, offering initial insights into how learning, design skills and relational processes continued to influence participants' lives and work. Based on this experience, future editions could explore additional or longer-term follow-up evaluations to support ongoing reflection and integration.

Transferability and Adaptation

This curriculum is designed as an open and adaptable reference. While it was implemented as a 13-day residential training, individual elements — such as the daily rhythm, card-based facilitation, group agreements, reflection practices and the design process — can be adapted to shorter trainings, non-residential formats or different target groups.

The structure allows educators and facilitators to scale content and depth according to context, while maintaining coherence between technical learning, social processes and experiential integration.



Closing Note: Learning, Care and Continuity



The EmpowHer Permaculture Design Course was conceived not only as a training programme, but as a living learning process rooted in care, relationships and responsibility toward people, land and future generations.

Throughout the course, participants engaged with permaculture both as a practical design system and as a framework for understanding social dynamics, community processes and personal agency. The integration of feminine qualities, experiential learning and reflective practice supported a holistic approach to sustainability, in which technical knowledge and lived experience are held with equal value.

This curriculum is shared as an open and adaptable reference. It reflects one concrete implementation shaped by place, people and context, while remaining flexible enough to be adjusted to different learning environments, timeframes and target groups. Educators and facilitators are encouraged to adapt its elements with sensitivity to local realities, group needs and cultural contexts.

Ultimately, the course reaffirmed that meaningful learning requires time, trust and space for integration. What is nurtured through attention, patience and collective care continues to grow — in designs, in communities and in the lives of those who carry the learning forward.



Resources



EmpowHer Booklet

[Find resources here](#)

in English, Italian, Greek, Slovenian, Serbian

if you would like to translate these resources into other languages, we would be delighted! Please write to info@giovaniddocca.it

EmpowHer Cards - for printing

in English, Italian, Greek, Slovenian, Serbian

[Find resources here](#)





EmpowHer

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