

Natural Hazards and Disaster Risk Reduction Policies

Loredana Antronico, Fausto Marincioni (Eds.)

Geographical and historical processes of human settlements in the Etna Region. A person-place relation approach

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Abstract

Etna volcano is primarily characterized by Strombolian activities, happening at the top craters or opening in mouths on the sides of the mountain, often producing temporary cones largely diffused along the slopes. There is a scientific and popular consensus about the existence of an actual but not immediate danger to people. The chapter deals with the geographical and historical process of human settlement diffusion in the Etna region over the last century and a half, considering social, cultural and economic motivations of people who voluntarily chose to live in this area, setting out a conscious coexistence with the biggest active volcano in Europe. Definitions of ‘sense of place’ and ‘place attachment’ have been assumed as cultural geography's benchmarks for the analysis. Secondary and primary data have been achieved making a placed case study, and following the procedure suggested by Grounded Theory, namely mixing sources of diverse nature and comparing with the personal knowledge and geographical experience of the author. Main results are that all people are perfectly conscious of living in a risky place; but the love their home and their landscape, which is both the landscape of family memories and an important base for economic activities. The chapter gives a positive contribution in explaining the seemingly *irrational* behavior of people living under the shadow of an active volcano.

Keywords: Etna volcano, risk, perception, person-place, topophilia.

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