

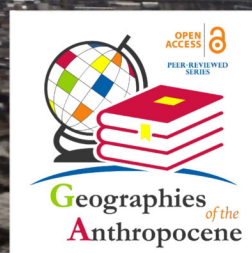
THE ANTHROPOCENE AND ISLANDS:

VULNERABILITY, ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE TO NATURAL HAZARDS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Miquel Grimalt Gelabert - Anton Micallef - Joan Rossello Geli
Editors

Preface by
Ilan Kelman

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Miquel Grimalt Gelabert, Anton Micallef, Joan Rossello Geli (Eds.)

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Cover: imaginary representation of a tsunami that impacted an island. Source: pixabay.com

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3. When the giant shakes. Anthropology of the seismicity of Ischia, an island-volcano in the Mediterranean Sea

Giovanni Gugg¹

Abstract

Ischia is an Italian volcanic island in the central Mediterranean Sea, sadly famous in the last two centuries because in 1883 a strong earthquake destroyed the town of Casamicciola and killed over 2300 people. During the twentieth century the island has not suffered other disasters of geological origin and has seen a conspicuous increase in tourism, therefore urbanization. However, the nature of the place has not changed, so in summer 2017 a new earthquake shook the town of Casamicciola, causing two deaths and thousands of displaced people. This opened a debate on the relationship between human beings and their environment, on the type of development followed in the last century, on the model of reconstruction to be carried out, on safety in a tourist resort and, moreover, isolated in the sea. The paper addresses these issues using the analytical tools of cultural anthropology, maintaining a long-term perspective.

Keywords: Ischia island, earthquake, anthropology of disaster, tourism, development

1. Introduction: a dragon called Typhaeus

In the popular literature of Ischia, it is said that under the island resides Typhaeus, a giant with a hundred heads who, in order to realize the ambitions of his mother Gaia, rebelled against Zeus, who, however, prevailed after a fierce struggle and confined him to the subsoil of the island of *Pithecusae*, which thus began to erupt fire and hot water, as well as being shaken by the restlessness of the monster (Vuoso, 2002). Although the myth of Typhaeus was born in Cilicia, his recourse as an allegorical figure of the unstable Ischian geomorphology is due to the importance of the island in classical

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times as a «crossroads of the ancient world» (Buchner, 1994) and has adapted so well that there is a reflection of the giant also on the surface, through the popular and official toponymy that describes the places just in its function, such as the village of Panza, the fumaroles of La Bocca and other places (Di Meglio, 2007). In the founding legend of Ischia, Typhaeus is a dragon that wants to take the place of Jupiter, but that the father of the gods manages to stop by throwing the island at him, to crush him with Mount Epomeo. Trapped underground, the monster is not dead, so it occasionally wiggles and spits fire, which provides not only the subject of a popular narrative, but more deeply a picture of meaning that, from generation to generation of Ischians, has allowed on the one hand to emphasize its local belonging and, on the other, to exorcise fears and find accessible explanations for events considered exceptional.

Although the last eruption dates to 1302, Ischia, in fact, is together with the Campi Flegrei and Vesuvius one of the three active volcanoes in the province of Naples. From a geological point of view, the duration of its cycles of alternation between quiescence and active phase is typically 10000 years (Civetta et al., 2016). This involves long phases of apparent absence of activity, sporadically interrupted by earthquakes of low magnitude located at shallow depths in the north of the island and accompanied by widespread fumarolic and hydrothermal manifestations. It should be noted that, as it is still active, the volcano of Ischia has the potential to erupt in the future, with particularly worrying effects due to the intense urbanization that has affected its territory during the twentieth century.

2. A century and a half of tourism and two earthquakes

The seismic history of the island began in 1228 and has the usual characteristics of seismicity in volcanic areas, i.e., earthquakes of low energy, but of high intensity (Luongo, 2016, p. 15). Most of the seismic events recorded in the last eight centuries have as epicenter the northern slope of Mount Epomeo, the one corresponding to the municipalities of Casamicciola Terme and Lacco Ameno. The nineteenth century was the century with more earthquakes: in 1828 there were some victims and various material damages in Casamicciola, leaving the memory of itself in the collective memory for several decades, at least until the catastrophic shock of 28 July 1883, which was preceded by strong earthquakes already in 1880 and 1881. The earthquake of 1883, the first in unified Italy and the most intense ever recorded in Ischia, is also the most widely documented both in literature and

in archive sources: it caused 2,333 deaths and the destruction of the historical and environmental heritage of some areas of the island; the greatest damage occurred in Casamicciola and in Lacco Ameno, where out of 1,061 houses surveyed only 19 remained standing (only one in Casamicciola) (Polverino, 1996, p. 31).

At the time Ischia was a destination for wealthy and international tourism, attracted by the presence of spa establishments and the healthiness of its sea, so the seismic disaster had a great reverberation in the national and foreign press and a considerable emotional impact, which gave rise to a saying, soon spread throughout the country: «A Casamicciola happened», as an expression of ruin, disorder, confusion. That event marked the end of an era and a new beginning for tourism in Ischia: «The origin before [the deterioration of the relationship between nature and artifice], also in terms of architectural characterization, dates back to the time of the Casamicciola earthquake, which ended the golden season of nineteenth-century tourism and began to change the relationship with the landscape and the natural and built environment», of which twentieth-century mass tourism will be a dominant element (Maglio, 2017, p. 329).

The most famous direct testimony of that catastrophe is by Benedetto Croce, at the time seventeen years old, the only survivor of his family after the collapse of their holiday home, who tells of that terrible experience between the «Contributo alla critica di me stesso» (1918) and the «Memorie della mia vita» (1966): «I came to light at high night and found myself buried up to my neck, and the stars twinkled on my head [...]. Towards morning (but later), I was taken out, if I remember correctly, by two soldiers and laid out on a stretcher in the open air. The dizziness of the domestic misfortune that had struck me, the morbid state of my organism that did not suffer from any specific disease and seemed to suffer from all of them, the lack of clarity about myself and the path to follow, the uncertain concepts about the ends and meaning of living, and the other combined anxieties of youth, took away all joy of hope and bowed to consider me withered before blossom, old before young». The earthquake changed Croce's life both in his affections and in his thoughts: «Those years were my most painful and gloomy years: the only years in which, many times in the evening, I laid my head on the pillow and longed very hard not to wake up in the morning, and even thoughts of suicide arose» (Croce, 1966, p. 23).

The earthquake in Casamicciola represents the first serious catastrophe with which the national government had to deal, which promulgated the first anti-seismic regulations in the post-unification period. The «Building Regulations for the Municipalities of the Island of Ischia damaged by the

earthquake of 28 July 1883» came into force on 15 September 1884 - with «indefinite validity» - and indicated the prescriptions for new buildings (it was recommended to use the “baraccato” (shack) system), the definition and delimitation of “dangerous zones”, the regulations for damaged and dangerous buildings, the establishment of the Special Building Commission with the task of executing and having executed the provisions contained in the Regulations (Castagna, 1984). Among the many political and scientific figures who intervened on the scene of the disaster, significant work was undertaken, on a political level, by Francesco Genala, Minister of Public Works, and, on a cognitive level, by Giulio Grablovitz, founder, and director of the Casamicciola Geodynamic Observatory, who arrived in Ischia in 1884, where he would remain for the rest of his life. During the emergency and during the planning phase for the reconstruction, the choices made by Minister Genala were decisive: he stayed on the island for about a month, visited the most damaged places, followed the scientific debate that attributed the extent of the damage to the way of building and as mentioned, favored the promulgation of the Building Regulations. The year after the earthquake, on the other hand, Grablovitz landed on the island, which studied the geological nature of the territory, developing one of the first monitoring systems for an active volcano and working concretely to disseminate the results of its research to the population (Carlino et al., 2011).

One hundred and thirty-four years after the terrible earthquake of 1883, on the evening of 21 August 2017 a new, very intense, and localized earthquake shook Casamicciola and some neighboring towns: two women died and there were thousands of displaced persons, of which I write more extensively in the following pages.

The island of Ischia has been known since ancient times for the sweetness of its climate, the fertility of its lands and, above all, for the numerous thermal springs and rich in minerals, around which its tourist celebrity has developed. As Annunziata Berrino reports in her “Storia del turismo in Italia” (History of tourism in Italy) (2011), still in the mid-nineteenth century her offer of services was quite modest, because there were just «two not excellent establishments, two good houses of health - that of Dr Chevalley de Rivaz and the Maison Sauv e -, a very well maintained Ospedale della Misericordia which can hold up to 600 people, but still without drinking water» (p. 103). It was only in June 1864 that the name of Ischia went around the world because General Giuseppe Garibaldi stayed in Casamicciola to treat a wound he sustained in Aspromonte, with the thermal waters of Stabilimento Manzi (D’Ascia 1867, p. 433). From that moment, for about twenty years, the fame of the island grew, until it was abruptly cancelled by the terrible shock of July

1883, which caused the destruction of Casamicciola itself and the death of over 2300 people.

That dramatic event marked, says Andrea Maglio, the end of the «golden season of nineteenth-century tourism» (2017, p. 329), leading to a profound change in the relationship with the landscape and the natural and built environment, which would characterize the following century and its mass tourism. It was a catastrophe in the etymological sense of the term: after it, the island was no longer the same; it was a lasting and substantial fracture of the social order and the material conditions of the community, as well as the perception of itself and its sense of security. In other words, recovering from the trauma and losses was an enormous effort, which lasted decades and caused further suffering, as the numbers of emigrants at the turn of the century show. The trauma had profound psychic and cultural repercussions, as Giuseppe Mercalli testified in 1884: «When I was in Ischia the newspapers reported the prophecy (!) of a professor, I don't know if German or French, according to which on September 15th the island of Ischia would have sunk entirely. Many people, especially women, were greatly frightened: and they wanted me to be able to say whether they really expected such a catastrophe. To reassure them, I replied that I would stay on the island until the 15th of September, so much so that I was sure that, in the present state of science, such prophecies are nothing but charlatanism of a bad kind» (Mercalli, 1884a, p. 4).

In a recent essay, the Ischian anthropologist Ugo Vuoso observed something similar for the earthquake of 21 August 2017, when in Casamicciola Terme, Lacco Ameno and Forio «rescuers were able to record several cases of inaction, reactive depression and various other degrees of psychological distress among the survivors and displaced persons. This time the trauma linked to the loss of the sense of place was detected and highlighted by the displaced people who were aware of the loss of home, of domesticity, of not being in that “world in which just before I was and now is no more”» (Vuoso, 2019, p. 28).

In both earthquakes in 1883 and 2017 there were deaths, injuries, collapses and abandonments, and in both cases the reason for the disaster was immediately attributed to the homes: old and dilapidated in 1883, unauthorized and “papier-mâché” in 2017. The blaming process is inevitable in case of disaster and is always aimed at identifying a responsibility, which on these occasions coincided with the blaming of the victims: At the end of the nineteenth century it was written that the inhabitants of Casamicciola «although they knew the danger (most of the locals in the summer, hosting the holidaymakers, lived in ephemeral dwellings, with roofs covered with

reeds and branches, as reported in the chronicles) were very careful not to share it with those holidaymakers who instead went to thicken the number of deaths» (Vuoso, 2019, p. 28); three years ago, instead, the accent was placed on the floors raised above the old barracks in order to increase the number of beds, in view of the transformation into a b&b.

The economic system developed on the island during the twentieth century led to massive tourism, which devoured land, history and culture. Over the years, the growing prosperity, the consequent cementing and motorization, as well as the overpopulation of certain areas and the flight from the countryside, have led to a radical transformation of the land and its use: in the last 50 years the urbanized areas on the island have more than tripled, going from 410 hectares to about 1300 hectares (WWF 2018) and, at the same time, the agricultural space has dramatically contracted, because in the 80's on the island there were 1000 hectares of vineyards, with 3400 farms, but thirty years later the hectares have been reduced to 240, while there are 500 farms (Di Gennaro, 2019). In a first phase, this has enjoyed the full consensus of the entire population, but in a more recent phase a need has emerged to safeguard and requalify the territory. There was a time when tourism-economic development was favorably supported by the whole community because it came from a social cohesion between political interests and population; today, instead, the growth of anthropic pressure is increasingly averted because it is associated with negative scenarios that speak of increased traffic, pollution, environmental disfigurement, marginalization of the natives, social fragilization.

As a side effect, alongside important real estate investments that have produced large land returns, over the years illegal building has developed. From a sociological and economic perspective, this is a phenomenon that can be framed in two ways. On the one hand as an apparent redistribution of income, motivated by the fact that a house, although abusive, is worth more than just land. On the other hand, as a disincentive to wage claims in the tourism sector (and not only), due first to the perception that the house owned is a social advancement and, secondly, to a convenient generalized silence about the way it has been built. On a symbolic scale, this becomes socially acceptable through self-absorption (“necessity squatting”) and self-justification (“indispensability squatting”), even when one is not confronted with cases of poverty. These concepts have no legal basis, yet they have managed to articulate an economy around themselves in which lawyers, surveyors, construction companies, material suppliers, laborer gravitate.

3. The earthquake of 21 August 2017

After 134 years of substantial seismic calm, on the evening of 21 August 2017 a new earthquake devastated the island of Ischia, in particular - as in all nineteenth-century earthquakes - the towns of Casamicciola Terme and Lacco Ameno: a six-second shock caused old buildings to collapse, irreparably damaging dozens of homes, leading to the evacuation of the Rizzoli hospital and the flight of hundreds of tourists poured over the island's piers to return to Pozzuoli and Naples. Above all, ladies Lina Balestrieri and Marilena Romanini died under the ruins of dilapidated buildings, dozens of people were injured, and three children were saved from the rubble after 16 hours of apprehension. The earthquake was of magnitude 4, but rather superficial: 1.73 km deep, near Piazza Majo, in the hilly and historical part of Casamicciola. At 8:57 p.m. a bang upsets the northern side of Ischia, in a mass of bricks and sheets, blackouts and shouting, frenetic bustle and sirens, helicopters and dog units, but in addition tourists swarming with trolleys and at a fast pace.

They dig all night long, especially in La Rita, where Ciro (11 years old), Matthias (8 years old) and Pasquale (7 months old) were buried under their house. Their rescue becomes a national case, the televisions follow the story relentlessly, hopefully of course, but also in search of the hero, who becomes the eldest brother who, after pushing the second son with him under the bed, with a broom handle beats against the rubble for a long time to be heard by the rescuers, who can only find them the next day after noon. The iconic image of the whole disaster is related to the rescue of Pasquale, the newborn baby: at 4 a.m. the firemen pull him out of the debris and, with a singular play of light and shadow due to the photoelectric cells and with a crossing of hands outstretched and glances drawn, Antonio Dilaurenzo takes a photograph that is immediately compared to a Caravaggio, between drama and hope, fatigue and miracle, chronicle, and aesthetics.

Perseverance, heroism, and emotion do not stop another type of narrative, that of urban illegality, according to which Ischia becomes «the capital island of illegalism», where one resident out of two builds outside the law, says the Civil Protection, and even, adds “Il Mattino” of Naples, in certain areas such as the place of the rescue of the little brothers «90% of the houses were built illegally on landslides». Everyone talks about illegal building, from Legambiente to the Order of Geologists, including Vincenzo De Luca, president of the Campania Region, who - overturning the paradigm - even accuses environmentalism, which «stopped everything for 25 years». Illegalism is a broad category in which a wide range of illegalities, both small and large, converge, and which historically can have very different causes, so

it should be analyzed with attention and knowledge, otherwise it risks having a double counter-productive effect: on the one hand, to blame the victims and, on the other, to divert attention from the wider problem in which this is included: the cementing - above all legal - of the now former “Green Island”. The urbanization that has invaded Ischia since the 1950s certainly brings with it one of the highest rates of illegal building in Italy, and therefore in Europe, but also an anthropic pressure that has congested the space and raised the intensity of car traffic, that does not have a valid system for the disposal of urban liquid waste, that pushes to the - social and geographical - margins those who do not have the strength to keep up with the economic whirlwind and, above all, that devours land and relations like any other expanding “industry”. Even in the less desirable areas of the island, the cost of housing is now prohibitive, so, explains Francesco Rispoli, «the abuse of necessity has been a powerful social shock absorber and an extraordinary device for building electoral fortunes (and economic fortunes, as far as the abuse of speculation is concerned)» (Rispoli, 2010, p. 14). If elsewhere the change - of the imaginary and land use - has been more gradual, in Ischia this process has taken place in a radical and sudden way: through the captivating image of itself that it has managed to convey, the island has turned into a laboratory of wide and branched tourist entrepreneurship affected by a real constructive “fever” that has made it explode demographically and economically, but not as much from the point of view of services and infrastructure, moreover without planning and control. A certain idea of development - unbridled and unlimited - has immoderately consumed the soil and the ecosystem; the lack of an ethic of responsibility has led to a current situation in which especially the youngest Ischians risk having a non-future, if not concrete dramas, as in 2006, when an entire family was swept away by a landslide due to soil sealing, and in 2015, when a man died for the same reason.

About the earthquake of 2017, what is evident is a progressive fading of the memory of the catastrophe of 1883, since most of the damage observed by ISPRA suggests a poor maintenance of the buildings built after the earthquake at the end of the 19th century. Although they were earthquake-proof due to the knowledge and techniques of the time, today they are very fragile, especially because the adhesive in the bricks has deteriorated and is poorly maintained. However, from the point of view of seismic engineering, buildings appear to be “burdened” by successive superfetation which, when combined with the existing ones without binding them to adjacent structures, have increased their overall vulnerability (ISPRA, 2017, p. 15).

Years later, while the state of emergency decreed by the government persists, there are more than two thousand displaced persons, all living on the

island between second homes and relatives' homes, except for a quarter still in hotels or other closed accommodation facilities; they are gathered in the “Risorgimento nuovamente” (We will rise again) committee and are strongly willing to return to their homes in the *red zone*. The modalities for a return are beyond being defined and, as a result, the timescales still seem rather long. After an initial emergency commissioner, Giuseppe Grimaldi, appointed at the end of August 2017, on 9 August 2018 the government initiated a change of phase, appointing a commissioner for reconstruction, Carlo Schilardi, former prefect and already commissioner for calamitous events in other Italian provinces. Those involved - mayors and earthquake victims - welcomed the new appointment, which, Pasquale Raicaldo reports, «is a strong sign of optimism. [...] Ischia must now send a strong message to the world: the red zone must not be abandoned but made absolutely safe».

4. Scientific and territorial fragility

After the rescue of the siblings and the discourse on illegal building, the public debate focused on the scientific controversy regarding the calculation of the magnitude and the location of the hypocenter.

Difficulties on the measurement of magnitude (there are various types) immediately emerged, as well as on the identification of the point where the earthquake occurred, and only after four days were shared data available. On the same night of the earthquake, the INGV first shifted the magnitude from M3.6 to M4.0, then re-evaluated the hypocenter from 10 km deep to 5 km, but still locating it in the middle of the sea and not under the inhabited center, as the institute itself later ascertained. To start the comparison (which then lasted for many months) was the seismologist Enzo Boschi (former president of the INGV), who after two and a half hours from the tremor, on Twitter expressed some doubts about the first scientific evaluation: «Although without access to data, I think that 3.6 magnitude of the earthquake of Ischia is an underestimation. The depth is also to be verified». During the night, a rather heated discussion developed with the geologist Alessandro Amato (INGV researcher), who said: «Enzo, I'm surprised at you. You should know how it works. No discrepancies. Different estimates at different times. What a disappointment...». For days there were numerous statements and interviews from the director of the INGV, Carlo Doglioni, and the director of the Vesuvian Observatory, Francesca Bianco, which motivated the data released to the press, including their subsequent variations, and explained the hypotheses on which the scientists were working (among others: was it an

earthquake of tectonic or volcanic origin?), but on 23 August, on Facebook, the volcanologist Giuseppe Luongo (former director of the OV) expressed further doubts: «the data on the epicenter do not justify the effects observed on land [...], as the damage on the coast is insignificant compared to those in the inland area. With this scenario it is unlikely that the epicenter is at sea. [In other words,] the epicenter location obtained with seismic instrumentation contrasts with the epicenter of the damage. This difference, I believe, is due to the distribution of the stations on the continent, while the epicenter is outside the network». The post has been very relaunched and “Il Mattino”, the main Neapolitan daily newspaper, has also dealt with it, to which the professor declared: «I have been studying the island of Ischia for over 30 years and that earthquake happened exactly where it was supposed to happen and where it has always happened historically [...]. One of the most important information for a scientist is the geological history of a site and based on stories from remote times we can reconstruct its tectonics, its volcanology». Because of this mistake, Luongo added, «scientific research is mortally wounded. [It is] too embarrassing an error, I was silent for a few days, but I couldn't go any further because I wouldn't want to make a wrong datum become historical». The following day, invited by some residents of Casamicciola, Luongo further specified this position in a press conference on the island: «One could not be silent, also because when a wrong scientific datum becomes historical, it becomes heavy: that datum conditions the future, it conditions a development of research and knowledge» (in: Mazzella 2017, p. 7), without forgetting that the first seismographic information, although provisional, has above all the function of directing first aid, so that a macroscopic error can have serious and concrete reverberations. The error derives from a technical constraint, since the first localization of an earthquake is always automatic because the system processes data coming from the various local stations and, through a model based on the speed of seismic waves, identifies an epicenter and a hypocenter. However, if such a procedure works in Irpinia or in Central Italy, where the network of seismic detectors is rather ramified, the same cannot be said for Ischia and the other so-called “decentralized areas”. We find ourselves, therefore, in one of those historical conjunctures highlighted by Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison in which «objectivity is afraid of subjectivity» (Daston, Galison, 2007, p. 374). In the so-called «truth-to-nature era», i.e., the period from the 19th to the 21st century in which «truth-to-nature» reached its peak and assumed a metaphysical dimension, an aspiration to reveal a reality accessible only with difficulty, the idea of objectivity has progressively turned into an apparently absolute concept when referred to technologically advanced instruments,

although they are - still and inevitably - historical and fallible. The subjectivity explicitly claimed by some exponents of the debate does not deny the usefulness, indeed the need for increasingly precise instruments of detection and calculation: these are fundamental for that «journey into substance» - a journey of enlightenment origin at the same time geographical, scientific, artistic, philosophical - that Barbara Maria Stafford defined «the “realization” of nature» (Stafford, 1984), i.e., a rationalistic interpretation of the external world. This vision has become progressively more inert and opaque, so to claim a certain subjectivity today intends to underline the indispensable importance of mediation, of the filter, of interpretation in the light of specific historical and theoretical readings: «When the procedure is automatic - said Luongo - the error can happen, but then it takes an operator; he must put constraints, that is, the solutions can be infinite [and only by putting constraints] do the solutions shrink» (in: Mazzella, 2017, p. 9).

Already on the earthquake of 1883 the confrontation between scientists was quite heated. The controversy between Luigi Palmieri and Giuseppe Mercalli is a striking example. Where Palmieri, an eminence of the time, was convinced that «the island of Ischia [had] suffered an immense disaster, but not a great earthquake» (Palmieri, Oglialoro 1884), Mercalli in his “Memoria” (1884a) and in a further note after it (Mercalli 1884b), was based on his own field work to underline, instead, that «the disaster of 28 July [1883], although for its dynamism and the ruins it caused is less than many other Italian earthquakes, it is nevertheless an earthquake of great intensity and violence» (Mercalli, 1884b, p. 848, 849).

After more than a century, the earthquake of 2017 in Casamicciola has reopened discussions and comparisons between different sensibilities and approaches that are certainly constantly part of the scientific field, however - beyond the controversy and different interpretations of the phenomenon - it is considered «an earthquake to be understood», an event that, evidently, places contemporary seismologists before their instrumental limits, if not before theoretical adjustments and reformulation of scenarios.

In addition to spatial, individual and community upheavals, every disaster always poses a profound question: «who are we really?». In this regard, Ariel Dorfman, journalist, and witness of the Chilean earthquake in 2010, believes that every crisis is an opportunity to reflect not only on how and when to rebuild infrastructure and housing, but also «our precarious identity» (Dorfman 2010). In other words, it means addressing existential issues that allow us to rebuild the community, as well as homes. The 2017 earthquake forced us to ask ourselves some thorny, almost intimate questions: what is the island of Ischia today? What has it become in a couple of generations? What

relationship have its inhabitants developed with the ecosystem, especially about its geology?

We didn't see some distortions in time, or we ignored them, because in reality someone noticed and warned us already forty years ago. The cementification of Ischia became a national theme in 1977, when "La Stampa" published an article by Adriaco Luise entitled «A luxury hotel in Ischia on the ruins of a necropolis». It was not the authorities or politicians who denounced the destruction, but the children of the primary school of Ischia Porto, who wrote an appeal to preserve their land from devastation and violence. The Aragonese castle was being gutted by the construction of 35 residential homes and the demolition of centuries-old walls, in a conscious cancellation of the past and local identity.

Since then, entire pine forests and long stretches of coastline have been cleared and the land consumption has been incalculable, except for the dramatic outcome of too many tragedies: from the four German tourists swept away by a landslide in June 1978 on the Maronti beach, to the Buono family, wiped out in April 2006 by a mud flow from Mount Vezzi, to the terrible earthquake of 2017 between Piazza Majo and the village of Fango.

Three years after that earthquake, reconstruction has not yet begun in Casamicciola; the state funds allocated to the displaced people were only released on 3 March 2019 by the extraordinary commissioner Carlo Schilardi and since then, according to the local authorities, «the worst is behind us» (Zivelli, 2019). The statement is challenging, because the real challenge starts now: reconstruction is a very delicate phase, whose effects (positive or negative) may show themselves long afterwards. Showing caution would be the wiser choice, especially since no in-depth and contextual (and therefore time-consuming) analysis has been made of the social and functional complexity of the affected area, i.e., a reflection between the necessary pragmatism of a rapid intervention and an equally necessary consideration of how to intervene, for whom, and for what purpose. As pointed out by geographers Sara Bonati and Giuseppe Forino following the disaster of Genoa's Morandi Bridge, after a disaster it is essential to discuss urban complexity and provide a critical and detailed overview of that specific reality: «It is not just a matter of reconstructing, but of doing so in function of a dynamic context, of a city in constant change in its social and economic structure» (Bonati and Forino, 2018).

5. The social elaboration of trauma

The earthquake upsets time and space, relationships and looks; the earthquake lasts over time and tests not only the places, but also the community living in them, well beyond the emergency phase. The shock causes a “total social discontinuity” because next to the loved ones the territorial references and social relationships are lost: the disaster takes on a totalizing character that turns to disorder and disorientation, so it brings out the need for a rebalancing, sometimes a redefinition or, in any case, a reorganization - of oneself and the group. This opens up a time of crisis in which a territorial and social recomposition is attempted, with uncertainty and expectation, but also with dynamism and potentiality: we are looking for shelters, not only physical - from rubble, atmospheric agents and winter cold - but also cultural, in the sense that we want a way to elaborate what happened and to keep past, present and future together; we yearn for continuity in the break-ups or, in any case, we have recourse to a connective network that protects against disintegration and keeps the generations together.

A first step is the «pooling of the drama» (Langumier, 2008), which on the one hand attests to the truly catastrophic nature of the event and, on the other hand, relativizes the experience of individuals put in relation to what others have experienced: the event is dramatized as a whole, but at the same time the individual drama is relativized within a framework of misfortune in which one of the extremes is the victims and their relatives. This happens on various occasions and with different modalities and intensity: from institutional tributes (the Head of State visited the displaced persons on 29 August 2017) to religious rites (from the funerals of the victims to special masses and processions, passing through some folkloric practices), from interviews with the mass media to the constitution of a committee of the earthquake victims, from protest marches to the reopening of a bar among the ruins.

Shelters are sought for the present and hypothesized for the future, on several levels: some call for the establishment of a single municipality for the island of Ischia (currently divided into six different municipalities) in order to facilitate protocols and avoid bureaucratic redundancies; others propose the reopening of the Geophysical Observatory of Casamicciola and its conversion into a «European Centre for scientific research on seismicity and volcanism of the island of Ischia and the whole Mediterranean» (Luongo in: Mazzella, 2017); others still hope for greater efficiency and integration of civil protection procedures on the island, especially during the tourist season.

To share the drama means to narrate and imagine; the disaster is declined in a discourse in which the search for shelter is a life drive, between self-

determination and re-creation. In this regard, two experiences of the first post-seismic year in Casamicciola are particularly significant: the garrison in Piazza Majo and a school laboratory of creative writing.

The Majo area, the epicenter of all the earthquakes in Ischia from the nineteenth century to the present day, is an area that was completely rebuilt after 1883 and in which, today, the buildings are again gutted or supported by a grid of poles and reinforcements. In the center of the square, exactly on the surface where, until the catastrophe of the 19th century, the parish church of Santa Maria Maddalena (Luongo et al., 2006), a few days after the earthquake of 2017, a garrison of residents rose and, over the months, it gradually expanded from a simple tent to a large shack with television, refrigerator, wardrobes, tables, chairs... Of the building that is the symbol of the old square, the heart of the historic Casamicciola, for 135 years all that remains is a portion of the wall of the left aisle, recognizable by some niches in which statues of Catholic saints are preserved, yet it is on that very perimeter that the locals wanted to put down roots, as an editorial of a local web journal underlines: «these people stay at the Majo because they feel lost, lost, because they want to be a community again, because they want to be with Franco, with Maria who is also afraid of herself, with Antonuccio and Ciro, with Duilio and with Fenina who cooks and makes coffee with Anna at all hours». Theirs is a physical narration among the wounds of the territory, a discourse in which the bodies mend the temporal fracture; the inhabitants of Piazza Majo are not holding up a hovel, but, on the contrary, they are rebuilding their identity shelter, a shelter that reconnects yesterday and tomorrow, that is able to nourish old and new sociality.

At the same time, during the school year that began a few weeks after the earthquake, the fourth-year students of two Ischian high schools, urged by Tommaso Ariemma, their philosophy teacher, elaborated numerous stories inspired by the evening of the earthquake. After analysis in class and comparisons of styles and plots, the texts were combined in a publication: “Immaginare ripari. Il terremoto a Ischia del 21 agosto in 19 racconti” (Imagine shelters. The earthquake in Ischia on 21 August in 19 stories) (Ariemma 2018). The didactic experiment is very stimulating because it is also a document on the representation and perception of the disaster: 17-year-old adolescents have elaborated and reinvented an event that will remain for their whole life in a unique dimension, fixed in their memory and, perhaps, present like few other days:

«[That evening,] once in bed, I slept very deeply, almost as if my body had wanted to give me a clue as to what would then be

the tranquillity that would dwell in me for the rest of my life» (Ester, p. 29); «I only feel my heart that was and still is here, in this set of fallen walls but which represent my nest, my place, my refuge» (Rossella, p. 102).

Sublimating dynamics and relationships, and developing alternative endings, the stories of the students of Ischia narrate surprises and rebirths:

«They were together again, incredibly. The wounded island had had the power to make them find each other again» (Claudia, p. 57); «They were still alive, but the house had collapsed. We had difficult years ahead of us, but they were still with me and I felt reborn» (Luigi, p. 80).

Like a dreamlike vision that transmutes reality, the narrative of the young people of Ischia overcomes the drama by looking at the future; the protagonist of the story “Ithaca” is an emigrant who returns to Casamicciola after many decades, just after the earthquake: part of an impulse from the United States, he faces the journey with apprehension, he moves with pain among wreckage and debris, yet in the end he says that it was one of the most beautiful moments of his life: «It was an exciting day, I felt as good as ever» (Ida, p. 78). Despite the shattered country and the suffering he and his relatives suffered, the repatriated old man still found his world, the one he had left as a child, but now he did not see the shortcomings, but something more: he met his grandchildren and even his great-grandchildren, recognizing them as his own kind, that is, as the future of himself and his land.

On 21 August 2018, exactly one year after the earthquake, institutional commemorations were held in Casamicciola Terme and Lacco Ameno, such as the extraordinary municipal councils of the two towns of Ischia, but some would have preferred them jointly, given the commonality of problems; there was also a visit - unannounced and rather sudden - by the then Vice-President of the Council Di Maio, the laying of a wreath on the rubble with a minute's silence for the victims and, finally, a solemn mass in the presence of Bishop Pietro Lagnese in the harbor square. The main celebrations - civil and religious - therefore excluded the red zone, so many residents decided to desert them, preferring to remember the victims in private. Considering the choice made by the authorities yet another «further disgrace to the community», the committee of the earthquake victims made it known that they did not want to be named, nor that they would speak on their behalf, since the decision was made to commemorate the victims in an autonomous

way, putting up signs and placing flowers on the rubble, throwing balloons and lanterns, but above all finding themselves at the garrison in Piazza Majo.

The commemoration is not a formality, it serves to remember who is no longer there and to keep the memory of those who were saved, in that attempt to mend the fracture with which one wants to reconnect both the fragments of the community and the time of before with that of after. It is an opportunity to reflect on what one was and what one wants to be again, perhaps on what one wants to improve with respect to the past; an opportunity to collectively understand what has been done in the meantime and, consequently, what still needs to be done, to prevent similar disasters from happening again in the future, to become aware of the fragilities in which one is immersed, so as to commit oneself to face them with concrete actions and not only with declarations and communiqués. The commemoration is to repeat «Yes, there really was an earthquake», as the bishop reiterated three times during the homily, because in national silence it is necessary to remember it, underline it and shout it; because finally we cross that allegorical threshold of the metal tunnel in Via Spezieria which, although it does not lead to any healing or new birth as in the rites described by van Gennepe, can nevertheless stimulate a sort of initiation towards another dimension, of rethinking the relationship with the territory and the interpersonal and institutional relationship. It is a still uncertain and distant dimension, perhaps utopian, but it is part of that “thinking big” to which some friends of the island have exhorted during this period of latency and suspension, neglect and distance, struggle, and resistance.

6. A forest of bureaucracy

At present, reaching the red area of Casamicciola, in the hilly part, means crossing a “narrow passage”, not only in a physical sense, but above all symbolically, because it leads both to the disaster area and to a suspended time that reflects on a state of uncertainty and expectation, of contrition and torment. At the beginning of February 2018 Piazza Majo, almost isolated for the previous six months, was once again easier to reach thanks to a metal and tubular tunnel along Via Spezieria, the main artery connecting it with the coastal town of the municipality, which, by caging the surrounding buildings, makes the stretch of road safe, to transform that space into an enormous threshold. The tunnel is a sinuous and slightly uphill path, metallic and rather dark, which, without wanting to abuse van Gennepe’s formula on rites of passage, like a filter predisposes to a change of look: going through it, one

takes a leap back in time, a few moments after the shock, with the roofs collapsed, the walls demolished, the piles of bricks in front of the gates become crooked and immersed in a heavy silence that is broken only when the small truck of the soldiers guarding the area passes. The buildings in Piazza Majo are all propped up, as are many houses as far as Fango of Lacco Ameno, yet there, in that liminal space, years after the earthquake nothing else has happened, time has stopped or, in any case, it has begun to flow slowly, much slower than the rest of the island and the country, because only one bar has resumed its activity and just a few sparse residents have begun, independently, a restoration of their damaged home.

In just the first year after the disaster, the bureaucracy produced as many as two commissioners (the first one for emergency, then replaced by the one for reconstruction), but no specific decree, as happened in 1884, when the government of the time issued a specific “Building Regulations” for the island. Yet in that first post-seismic year there were plenty of opportunities: Italy had two executives and two parliaments, Domenico De Siano, resident on the island, was elected for a second term of office in the Senate, and Giosi Ferrandino at the European Parliament and Maria Grazia Di Scala at the Regional Council of Campania; numerous national politicians visited the earthquake sites, including the two most in view of the current legislature: Matteo Salvini and Luigi Di Maio, both party leaders and ministers for a long time. Although they held different roles and were present in different political situations, both expressed their closeness to the devastated population and their desire to revive the villages affected. The first said that «often and willingly the enemy of citizens and mayors is bureaucracy», so «in the Italy I have in mind there are full powers to local administrators in case of emergency management and in case of order and security management». The second ensured empathy and commitment to the Ischians, who «will have a friendly government», given that until now «they have been treated as inferior earthquake victims». This commitment was reaffirmed on 6 September 2018, when Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte in turn visited the disaster areas and launched a message: «Enough talk of emergency, we have to restart. And today we are here to give substance to the hope of all these people. We have a decree ready for the earthquake in Ischia. I will present it myself next week in the Council of Ministers».

Concrete opportunities to overcome controversies and announcements took place in July and September of that year. The first case was when the governmental decree no. 55 of 29 May 2018, «Interventions for the people affected by the earthquake of 2016», i.e., of the Marche, Umbria, Lazio and Abruzzo, was converted into law, and in which, as requested by the

oppositions, the inhabitants of Casamicciola Terme, Lacco Ameno and Forio could be included, but the amendment by four MPs of the Democratic Party (PD) was rejected. The second, during the discussion of the Parliamentary Commissions meeting on the decree 91/2018, «Extension of terms provided for by legislative provisions», the so-called “Decreto Milleproroghe”, in which thirty members of Forza Italia proposed that the provisions of art. 9 («Extension of terms on seismic events», which supplements the converted decree 55/2018) were also extended «to the municipalities of the island of Ischia due to the seismic events that occurred on 21 August 2017», but also in this case without success. In other words, Ischia remained outside any “ad hoc” post-earthquake legislation, as Di Maio and Conte had announced, but was included in the “Genoa Decree”, which became necessary after the tragedy of the Morandi bridge on 14 August 2018.

A first version of that text had found the opposition of the island's mayors because the procedures for granting and disbursing contributions to the victims of the earthquake were intended to impose the presentation of the building title, without taking into account amnesties. In fact, this is a nerve that had emerged in the winter of 2017-2018, when the commissioner for the Ischian emergency, Giuseppe Grimaldi, had circulated, as usual, the forms on which the earthquake victims should have indicated the damage suffered for the subsequent quantification of the relief by the State, but on the same files they should have indicated - always as usual - also any different volumes made over time, so that today's result is the gradual stalling of the procedure.

A second text, the one presented in art. 25 of the “Genoa Decree” has provided for a real amnesty for illegal buildings, even though they are in areas at significant seismic and landslide risk. Locally there are those who interpret it as the only article that opens «an opportunity and a possibility», but the diametrically opposed opinion is Legambiente, for which it is «a building amnesty that would endanger people and relaunch new abuses», especially because it would abolish the rules on landscape and hydrogeological protection.

7. Conclusions: abandonment or rebirth?

Three years after the 2017 earthquake the situation has not changed much, with paradoxes, delays, forgiveness, and an inevitable blame. Above all, locally there is a certain discouragement, in fact the most affected part, Piazza Majo, is now defined by residents as “the New Pompeii”. As local journalist Giuseppe Mazzella wrote,

«In recent years, the “decision-makers” have produced nothing. Members of Parliament. Ministers, Governors, councilors, experts, have not produced anything concrete except to continue an “emergency”, to provide the “CAS” which stands for “Autonomous Accommodation Contribution” to about 2400 displaced persons from the collapsed or uninhabitable houses of the three municipalities affected by the earthquake: Casamicciola, Lacco Ameno and Forio» (Mazzella, 2020).

That earthquake devastated various areas of the island of Ischia, but above all it turned the lives of those who lived there upside down; thousands of people are still displaced and live with chronic uncertainty about the future: will they return to Maio and Fango? Will there be reconstruction, and in what terms? If so, will they one day live safely in their new homes? We have a duty to consider the hardest hypothesis, that those centers do not resurrect; on the other hand, cities and human communities are born, grow, go into crisis, get sick, heal, but sometimes die (Gugg, 2020). So, what to do? How to “medicate” a locality wounded by a disaster? What we know is that we identify the basic factors of a virtuous reconstruction process: a community, a will, a possibility. In the case of Casamicciola, is there political and popular will to be reborn? Which cultural institutions are resisting? Does the devastated community still have any chance to meet and debate, or is it fatally exhausted and dissolved? Is there memory? Is there an idea of the future?

It is not enough to rebuild the collapsed buildings, but to build a less vulnerable city; it is not enough to bring back the old inhabitants, but to restart the economy and make it produce more equity; it is not enough to respond to the needs of the displaced people, but to recreate a sense of place. This can be done by fostering and supporting participation, cooperation, and democratic dialogue (Gugg, 2018).

It is not a question of building “resilient cities” or “resistant” in itself, because, however important and vital they may be, neither emergency practices nor anti-seismic techniques are exhaustive responses to risk, but we must aim for “urban resilience”. It may seem like a play on words, but it is a radical change of perspective that focuses on the creation and preservation of a physical and social ecosystem in which memory and knowledge can dialogue, where sustainability and renewal can nourish each other, in which inclusion and relationship are the mainstays of a stronger and more far-sighted coexistence, both among the inhabitants and with the environment.

One possible tool to use is shared administration, which in Italy is still a relatively small but growing phenomenon. The principle is that alongside “material reconstruction”, in which active citizens contribute significantly to improving the quality of life of all members of the community, there is also a “moral reconstruction”, in the sense that taking care of everyone's goods emphasizes a sense of responsibility and belonging, solidarity and the capacity for initiative. The hope is that a new dynamism will emerge for which the term “security” takes on a meaning similar to that of “common good” (Gugg, 2016). In this sense, the interventions to be carried out on the island of Ischia and in the earthquake-stricken areas, must be inspired by considerations on living and man/environment relations, certainly perpetuating a vision of the territory centered on the sea and coastal tourism, but in a fairer and more sustainable way than those experienced in the last century. In other words, rigorous, inter-municipal and far-sighted territorial planning is necessary, the only one that can aspire to renew and perpetuate the good life of Ischia, as shown by the recent recognition given by the judges of Vinitaly 2019 to the Mazzella family of the Campagnano locality for their “best winery in Italy” (Di Gennaro, 2019).

The question that must be constantly asked can only be the following: which and for which Casamicciola is being rebuilt? Whatever future we want to pursue, it is a question of identifying a path marked by strong elements of concreteness: the example of Mazzella's winemakers shows that it is not enough to have extraordinary grapes, because it is necessary to make that system productive, that is also remunerative and dignified, otherwise the abandonment will continue and, with it, the erosion of the soil and the community. This can happen with a new collective pact, in which the attention is not placed only on the single product, but on the overall picture, which is not restricted to the “red zone”, but coincides with the entire island; the look to keep must be at the same time vast and deep, transversal and complex, and above all it must scrutinize tomorrow with the awareness of the historical path that has led to the present state, with its fragilities and contradictions. It is necessary to reconstruct a vision of the island that does not yet exist, but which will come if we proceed with patience and listening skills.

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