

LOST AND FOUND

Processes of abandonment of the architectural and urban heritage
in inner areas. Causes, effects, and narratives (Italy, Albania, Romania)

Edited by Annunziata Maria Oteri

ArchistoR
EXTRA



"Il risultato dell'esperimento". Il caso di Africo e del suo territorio come esempio di trasformazione ambientale nell'Italia del dopoguerra

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Il saggio analizza i processi di trasformazione ambientale e sociale nelle aree rurali dell'Italia del dopoguerra, attraverso il caso di studio del trasferimento del centro urbano di Africo, in Calabria, a seguito delle alluvioni degli anni 1950. Osservando le conseguenze ambientali, sociali e politiche prodotte dall'impatto dei due cicloni mediterranei del 1951 e del 1953 sul contesto già precario dei centri rurali dell'Aspromonte, la ricerca mostra come i modelli di sviluppo sociale ed economico opposti, quello agro-silvo-pastorale montano e quello agricolo urbano costiero, abbiano sviluppato un ampio dibattito nella politica e nell'opinione pubblica nazionale e locale, determinando schieramenti trasversali ai consolidati schieramenti politici. Il trasferimento della popolazione e la ricostruzione del nuovo centro di Africo sulla costa determinarono processi di resistenza alle decisioni imposte dall'alto. I movimenti politici popolari e i gruppi di azione collettiva, organizzati in varie forme, cercarono di affermare le loro istanze per il ripristino identitario, istituzionale, territoriale, sociale ed economico della loro comunità politica "dal basso", contro una trasformazione ambientale imposta che non teneva conto della loro vocazione territoriale e che non produsse gli effetti di sviluppo desiderati.

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Processi di abbandono del patrimonio architettonico e urbano nelle
aree interne. Cause, effetti, narrazioni (Italia, Albania Romania)

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“The Result of the Experiment”. The Case of Africo and its Territory as an Example of Environmental Transformation in Post-War Italy

Antonio Buttiglione

In October 1951 and in October 1953 two medicanes (Mediterranean cyclones) hit Calabria. The first, of greater proportions, affected the western Mediterranean, from eastern Spain to southern France and all over Italy, where the greatest damages were recorded in the Polesine and southern Calabria. The second hit the eastern Mediterranean, and in Italy eastern Sicily and southern Calabria. These were exceptional events which had some precedents in the past decades, but they occurred in those years with an unprecedented scale and violence. These were aggravated by the localization of atmospheric effects in areas where the combination of factors outside the storms, such as the particular circulation of wind currents, amplified the power of converging torrential rains, thunderstorms, whirlwinds and swells (figs. 1-2)¹.

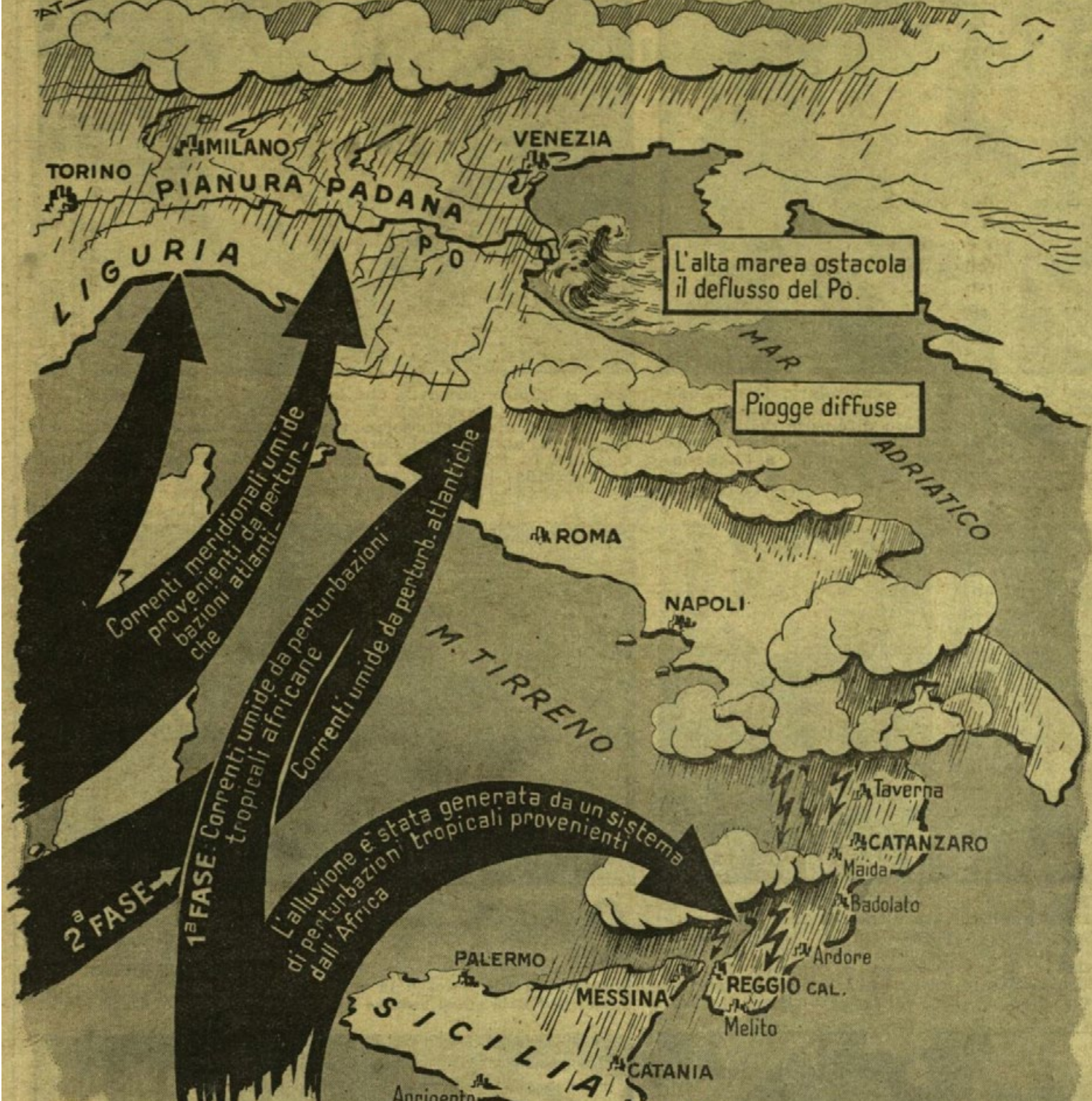
Observers and witnesses on the spot, as well as analysts and meteorologists, realized that they were facing an unusual situation. The correspondent of the newspaper «La Stampa» on 16 October 1951 wrote about «a violent thunderstorm with cyclonic character that has no precedent» with «strong wind», «violent whirlwinds» and «violent swells», and that in Africo, in the mountains of the Aspromonte, the landslide that had practically destroyed the town had been preceded by a

1. FLAOUNAS *et al.* 2022; PETRUCCI, PASQUA 2014; PETRUCCI, PASQUA, POLEMIO 2013.



Figure 1. Weather forecast for October 1951 («La Stampa», 18 October 1951).

On the next page, figure 2. Weather forecast for October 1953 («La Domenica del Corriere», 8 November 1953).



lightning storm and an «immense blast»². The meteorologists of «Il Corriere della Sera» analyzing the violence of the cyclone of 1953 spoke of «abnormal rainfall» caused by «“explosive” clouds» and advanced the hypothesis that the frequency of these exceptional events could depend on the convergence of «chromospheric eruptions of the Sun» with the numerous experiments of explosion of atomic devices carried out in those years by the United States of America and the Soviet Union³. The American correspondents of the Associated Press in 1953 recorded «torrential rains which followed the cloudbursts», which «struck the mountains» and caused «floods» with «boiling waters» which produced a devastation «worst since 1908 Quake» (fig. 3)⁴.

In addition to a large number of victims, the damage to the territory and infrastructure was enormous. Storms and whirlwinds caused the “explosion” of the rivers and mountains. The water and mud caused floods, landslides and flooding that left dozens of urban centres unusable and thousands displaced. In 1951, some towns in the province of Reggio Calabria, already seriously affected by the earthquake of 1908, the floods of the 1920s and a territory subjected to massive deforestation in previous years, as Africo, were declared totally destroyed. The cyclone of 1953 hit a territory still devastated by the previous one and made even more difficult any intervention for the consolidation of territories⁵.

1. The “environmental catastrophe”. The Mediterranean cyclones of 1951 and 1953 and their impact on the territorial instability and political debate

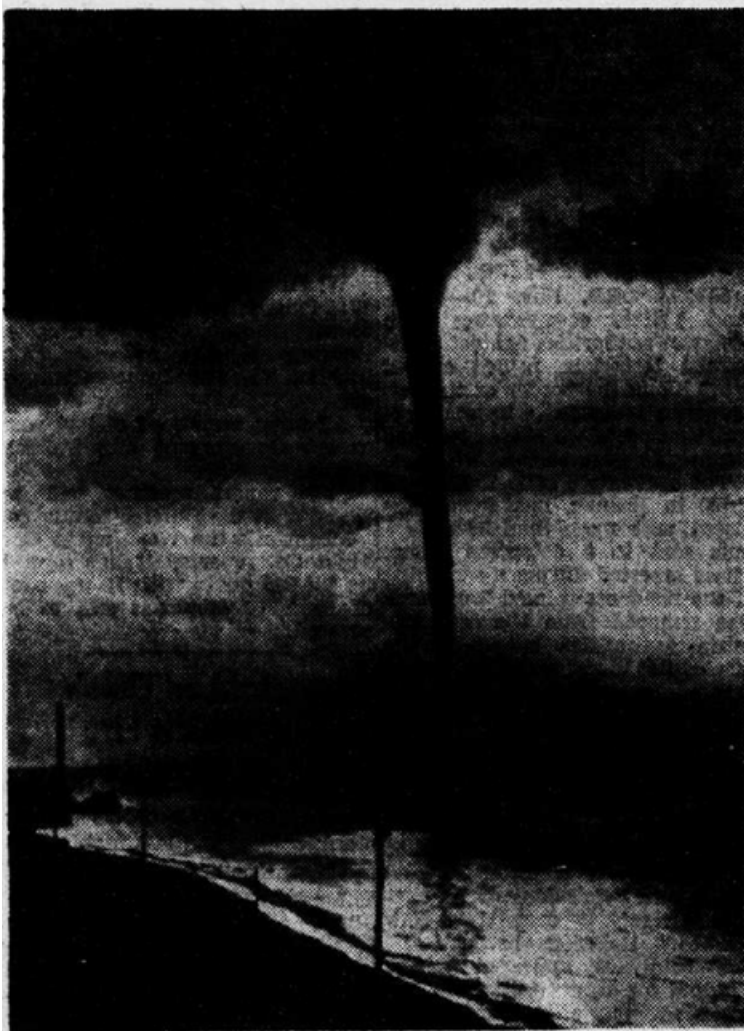
In 1951 the first intervention to face the emergency was totally borne by the small forces of the *Prefettura* of Reggio Calabria. Fire brigades, the *Carabinieri* and many civilian volunteers were in charge of rescuing the displaced and repairing the most important structures and infrastructures. The subsequent intervention of the government to send funds, equipment, materials and reinforcements of men and means of the Civil Engineering Department (*Genio Civile*) was limited by the chronic shortage of means available to the Republic in the post-war period and the immediate occurrence of the flood of the Polesine, and the main effort of the government was concentrated on the latter. In

2. *Un ciclone sulla Sicilia 1951; Tragico bilancio 1951.*

3. *Piogge che non finivano più 1953.*

4. *Rains Hit South Italy 1953; 100 Feared Drowned 1953.*

5. Archivio di Stato di Reggio Calabria (ASRC), *Prefettura di Reggio Calabria, Ufficio Provinciale di Assistenza Post-Bellica*, b. 10, f. 2, 4, 8.



MEDITERRANEAN WATERSPOUT—This waterspout formed itself off the Calabrian Coast near Sicily during cloudbursts which lashed Southern Italy early this month. The water front of Reggio Calabria is in the foreground. —AP Wirephoto.

Figure 3. The cyclone off the coast of Reggio Calabria in October 1951 photographed by an American photographer of the Associated Press («The Evening Star», 10 November 1951).

1953 the structure of emergency equipment was more efficient and characterized by the use of more modern means, such as helicopters, in one of the first operational uses in rescue operations of these vehicles in Italy, that was highlighted by the national press, to underline the progress of republican structures in a country that was heading towards the modernity of the “economic miracle”⁶.

The government intervention was added in a conspicuous way by that of dozens of private, cultural and political associations throughout Italy, the Catholic Church and various foreign governments. The National Association for the Interests of Southern Italy (*Associazione Nazionale per gli Interessi del Mezzogiorno d'Italia*) of senator Umberto Zanotti Bianco made available funds and technical for clinics, kindergartens and temporary schools, the Union of the Italian Women (*Unione delle Donne Italiane*) proposed to take charge of the housing of displaced children, the Pontifical Assistance Organization (*Pontificia Opera di Assistenza*) provided food and accommodation in the facilities of the diocese, the government of Sweden provided barracks for the temporary villages, the United States Navy sent a destroyer for the naval transports, the government of the Soviet Union sent a ship with a cargo of grain. The contest of solidarity between ecclesiastical bodies, civic associations, foreign governments and even parties, both government and opposition, was very important in cementing the national unity of Italian society in the new republican system. Especially because it was to intervene in a peripheral context of the nation that just recently had returned to the limelight of the national scene for its backwardness thanks to an extensive photographic report on the conditions of Africo by photographer Tino Petrelli published in the journal «L'Europeo» in 1948⁷. Solidarity, in the natural disasters of post-war Italy, was also immediately transformed into a political competition aimed at winning electoral consensus, but above all to legitimize the forces that were referring to the political-opposing ideologies of liberal democracies and Soviet communist regimes, within the two blocs of the global Cold War⁸.

The trips to Reggio Calabria and the affected areas of the President of the Italian Republic Luigi Einaudi and the head of government Alcide De Gasperi were nevertheless carried out with a view to affirm the stability of the republican regime and national unity and harmony in a period of strong political conflicts (fig. 4)⁹.

6. Ivi, b. 10, f. 19, 20, 21; *L'alluvione in Calabria* 1953.

7. ASRC, *Prefettura di Reggio Calabria, Ufficio Provinciale di Assistenza Post-Bellica*, b. 10, f. 7, f. 20; b. 19, f. 114; b. 24, f. 129; *Gli aiuti della Democrazia Cristiana* 1951; *I portuali di Genova* 1951; *Le autocolonne per gli alluvionati* 1952; *Tre autocolonne con aiuti* 1952.

8. BOTTA 1977.

9. *Il Presidente Einaudi in visita* 1951; *Le trionfali giornate di De Gasperi* 1952.



Figure 4. The President of the Italian Republic Luigi Einaudi visiting the flood-stricken areas in Calabria in October 1951.

2. From consolidation to relocation. The environmental restoration of the mountain without men and the model of urban coastal modernization

Beyond the desired national harmony, the arrangement of territories after natural disasters fed from 1951 to 1955 a lively debate at national and local level which, while on the one hand was conditioned by ideological and political affiliations, on the other hand, it encouraged the emergence of cross-cutting positions in supporting alternative socio-economic visions¹⁰.

In the Parliament and in national political newspapers and magazines, the government and many Liberal and Christian Democrat politicians argued for the need to move all affected towns on the Ionian coast, with the construction of new settlements in a view to modernizing and increasing agricultural production of essences in the coastal plains and valleys. Many Socialist and Communist politicians agreed with this modernizing vision, but they proposed the expropriation of coastal land and the agrarian reform with the allocation of land to the inhabitants of the new towns, and the hydro-geological restoration of mountain territories, reforestation and water regulation¹¹.

Other personalities and intellectual and political groups supported a vision already proposed by Umberto Zanotti Bianco in previous years, that of consolidating the existing settlements, restoring the hydro-geological system, developing the traditional social and economic life patterns, with the construction of facilities and the reclamation of river valleys. This view was shared by the majority of the Calabrian technicians and intellectuals, but it highlighted the development of fractures within national and local political groups. Don Luigi Sturzo and many Christian Democrat politicians from Calabria supported it against the government and the national party. One of the main exponents of Calabrian Communists, Gennaro Miceli, engineer who had worked on the reclamations of the fascist regime, and who had already proposed a government action in this direction, supported it against the national party and the Calabrian Communist deputy Eugenio Musolino, one of the most convinced supporters of the relocation of the towns on the coast. Miceli proposed that the mountain reclamation should, in addition to securing the areas, also promote the modernization of agro-forestry and pastoral activities, with new techniques for land management and forests,

10. BOTTA 2020; WESTAD 2017.

11. Atti Parlamentari della Camera dei Deputati, I Legislatura, *Discussione e votazione della legge per i danni delle alluvioni del 20 dicembre 1951*; Ivi, II Legislatura, *Discussione e votazione della legge per i danni delle alluvioni del 17 dicembre 1953*; Ivi, *Interrogazione del deputato Eugenio Musolino sulla sistemazione montana e sul trasferimento dei centri del 24 settembre 1954*; *I paesi minacciati dalle frane 1952*; ALICATA 1953. The *Atti della Camera dei Deputati* are taken from the online portal *Legislature Precedenti* of the *Camera dei Deputati*: www.legislatureprecedenti.camera.it.

modern machines and cooperative production institutes, coordinating the action of small owners and providing work for workers¹².

The executive action of the government was accompanied by intense parliamentary activity, aimed not only at giving a strong democratic legitimacy to interventions on territories, but also at discussing and outlining a new territorial planning for the internal mountain areas of the country, in the wider plan for post-war reconstruction.

The Chamber of Deputies of the Italian Parliament set up three special committees, in the first and second legislatures, to examine, discuss and approve government measures.

The Special Commission on Flood Measures of 1952 discussed the amendment of Law no. 9 of 10 January 1952, it was mainly concerned with the damage caused by the Polesine flood and counted only three Calabrian components out of 25, Gennaro Miceli, Communist, secretary, Giacomo Mancini, Socialist, and Vittorio Pugliese, a Christian Democrat. The decision to relocate the towns was already taken here, with private construction 50 % being borne by the State and public construction of the main buildings and infrastructures. The commission amended the law by adding public construction of churches, parish buildings and schools. Deputy Miceli intervened several times against the relocation. The law was approved by a majority and the Socialists and Communists abstained¹³.

In 1953, after the second flood, the Special Commission for Flood Affected Areas in Calabria of 1953 was set up and had 29 members, almost all from Calabria. No member of the commission took a position against the relocation. Communist member Fausto Gullo mentioned the discussion of the problem. Liberal member Antonio Capua and Communist member Eugenio Musolino strongly supported the relocation. Law n. 938 of 27 December 1953 was passed unanimously, which restated the previous one but included the hydro-geological restoration of mountain territories. However, what was imposed was not the vision of the reclamation of the valleys in the perspective of development of territories, but that of environmental consolidation with forest restoration and water regulation, excluding any economic activity¹⁴.

12. ASRC, *Prefettura di Reggio Calabria, Ufficio Provinciale di Assistenza Post-Bellica*, b. 25, f. 138; Atti Parlamentari della Camera dei Deputati, I Legislatura, *Intervento del deputato Gennaro Miceli sullo Stato di previsione del Ministero dell'Agricoltura e delle Foreste del 1949-1950 del 24 ottobre 1949*; *Ivi*, *Intervento del deputato Gennaro Miceli sui Provvedimenti per le popolazioni colpite dai disastri naturali del 20 dicembre 1951*; ZANOTTI BIANCO 1954; STURZO 1951A; STURZO 1951B.

13. Atti Parlamentari della Camera dei Deputati, I Legislatura, *Legge per i danni delle alluvioni del 1951, Proposta, relazione, discussioni e votazione*.

14. *Ivi*, II Legislatura, *Legge per i danni delle alluvioni del 1953, Progetto, discussione e votazione*.

The Special Commission for Extraordinary Measures for Calabria was set up in 1955 to draw up a general action plan and included 33 members, almost all of them from Calabria. No member of the commission took a position against the move and many supported the appropriateness of a compromise measure that would have secured substantial funds to be invested in Calabria. Law n. 1177 of 26 November 1955 was approved with a single vote against, which reaffirmed the previous one but increased to 90 % the state coverage for private constructions and established the financing of a large hydro-geological restoration plan and the reforestation of mountain areas¹⁵.

After the flood of 1951, the entire population of Africo was dispersed between the barracks built in the *Lazzaretto* in Reggio Calabria, some school buildings of Bova Marina and the hotel facilities of the village of Gambarie on the Aspromonte¹⁶.

The consolidation and reconstruction of the old town were excluded from the outset. A proposal to rebuild the town in another mountain area near the previous one was strongly opposed by the municipal administration and the population of Bova, which indicated the action of the inhabitants of Africo on the mountainous territory, with the deforestation for pastures and terraces for agriculture as the main cause of the land's instability and as a danger also for Bova and the valleys below. The mayor of Bova proposed the relocation of the inhabitants of Africo in a new town at the end of the coastal valley of the La Verde river, and the seizure of the vast mountain territory of Africo, to be subjected to hydro-geological restoration and reforestation¹⁷. The conflicts between the municipalities of Bova and Africo on the competence and use of the vast mountain State territories managed in promiscuity in the modern age, dated back to at least the nineteenth century, since the Bourbon government decided to divide and disband the promiscuity in 1828¹⁸.

The unprecedented convergence between the parish priest of Africo and the communist politician Eugenio Musolino was important in the decision to move the town on the Ionian coast. The parish priest assured the willingness of the inhabitants to adhere to the proposal by sending petitions to the prefect of Reggio Calabria on behalf of the population¹⁹. Eugenio Musolino, principal representative of the Reggio Calabria section of the Italian Communist Party, interested in the works of the reclamation consortiums controlled by the party and to coordinate the union activity of the manpower employed

15. *Ivi*, *Legge per la Calabria del 1955, Progetto, discussioni e votazioni*.

16. ASRC, *Prefettura di Reggio Calabria, Ufficio Provinciale di Assistenza Post-Bellica*, b. 10, f. 4, 19.

17. *Ivi*, b. 15, f. 98, 99, 100, 101.

18. Archivio di Stato di Napoli (ASNA), *Ministero dell'Interno, Secondo Inventario*, b. 1842, f. 11.

19. ASRC, *Prefettura di Reggio Calabria, Ufficio Provinciale di Assistenza Post-Bellica*, b. 25, f. 138.

in the fields of jasmine on the coast, was heavily involved in national politics. In questions to the Senate he explicitly argued that the «development of the civil and economic life» of the inhabitants of Africo would only be possible by moving them to the coast in a flat area near the railway, and this would also be «convenient for the State» and the «La Verde river reclamation district». Musolino supported the need for the «exchange» of the «old flooded district» on the mountains with the new territory on the coast, which would allow «civil life» transforming the «agricultural and pastoral population» into «direct farmers» and «owners», freeing it from «deep distress» and from «idleness». The rhetoric of modernity was used to promote, through relocation, also a social transformation according to what were then shared canons of development. According to Musolino with the reclamation of the valley of the La Verde river, 400 hectares of land would have been obtained from the river bed, which would certainly have been more useful to the inhabitants than the old uneven mountainous territory²⁰. The local newspapers also reported that the development of the inhabitants of Africo in the new territory would be ensured by the allocation of land in the valley of the La Verde river, and the spread of this news was important in favoring, at least in an initial moment, the relocation of the population to the new town²¹.

These local supports helped the government to move the town to the coast and to redefine the land use of mountain areas. It would certainly have been easier and cheaper to rebuild the town in the plain near the state road and railway, where it would also have been easier to control public order. The population of Africo, in fact, in previous years had given rise, for various and complex reasons, to continuous clashes with the *Carabinieri*, and in 1944 to a real revolt in which the *Carabinieri* and the authorities were forced to leave the town, that for several days was under the control of insurgent bands²².

In 1953, after a first attempt to build a new settlement on the mountain, near the old one, of which some buildings were built but without infrastructures and services, work began on the construction of Africo Nuovo on the coast. The development of the new town was very slow and until 1955 only the streets, a few houses, the church and the parish, to which the function of the school was entrusted, and the aqueduct were built. The population was gradually concentrated in the new

20. Atti Parlamentari del Senato, I Legislatura, *Interrogazione del senatore Eugenio Musolino sul trasferimento di Africo del 25 marzo 1952*; Ivi, *Interrogazione del senatore Eugenio Musolino sul trasferimento di Africo del 31 ottobre 1952*. The *Atti Parlamentari* are taken from the online portal of the *Senato*: www.senato.it.

21. *Assicurato l'avvenire* 1953.

22. PARISI 2021.

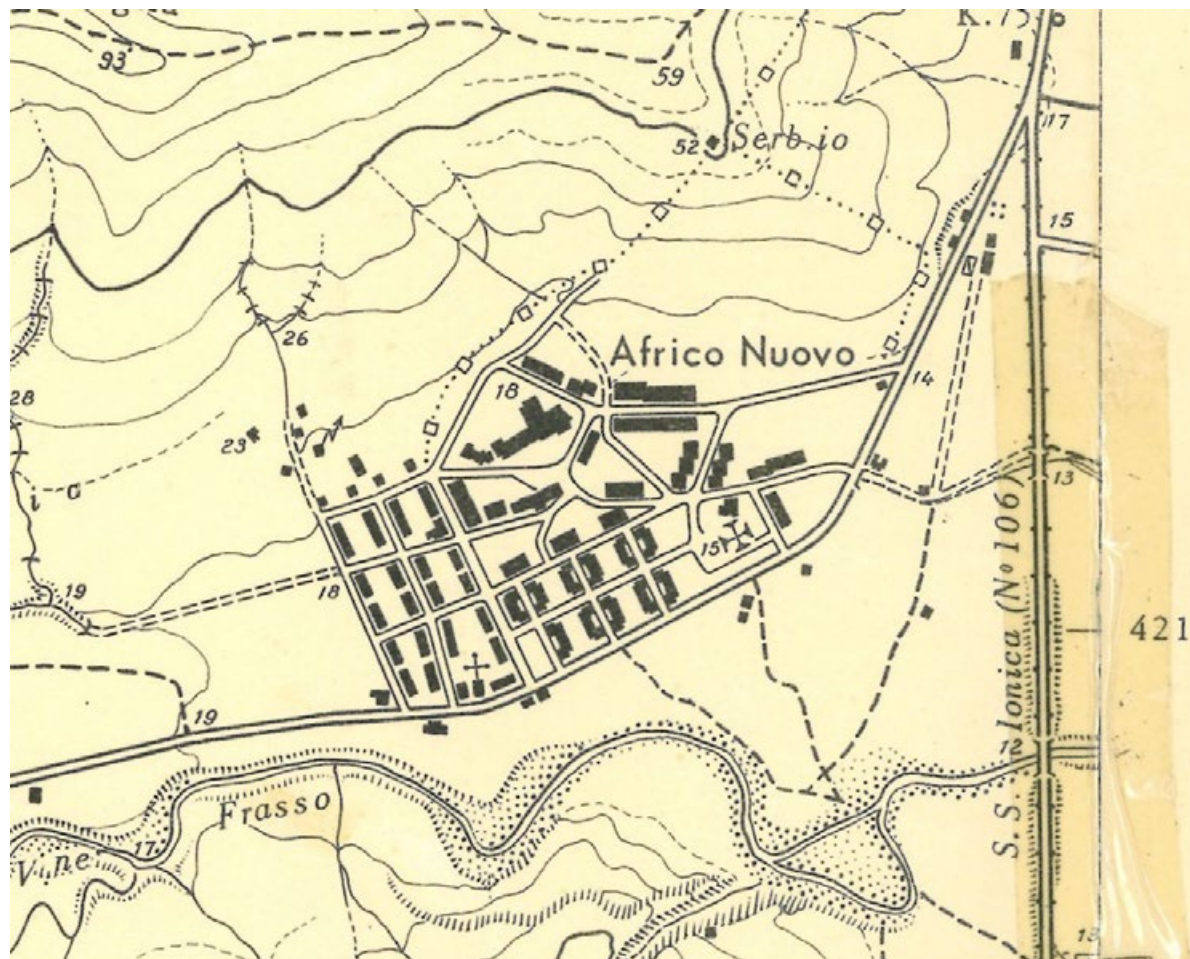


Figure 5. Africo Nuovo (the «Carta d'Italia» of 1960).

town and was mostly housed in temporary barracks. Only in 1955, when the 90 % contribution was paid, the construction of new houses began, and only in the following years the construction of the town hall and other public buildings began. In 1964 many families were still living in the barracks built by the Swedish government, which were also damaged, despite the fact that since 1961 the government have allocated funds for the construction of public housing. It was only in 1966, with the work of the Minister of Public Works, the Calabrian Socialist Giacomo Mancini, that the barracks were dismantled and the families were housed in public housing (fig. 5)²³.

3. The difficult environmental adaptation of Africo Nuovo. Resistance, insurgencies, agricultural exploitation and assistance

Both before the decision to move the town and during the construction of Africo Nuovo, numerous forms of opposition and resistance to the population's displacement emerged. These forms, which led to the formation of collective action groups, developed through multiple forms. In any case they were motivated, besides the will to not abandon the old place of the town, also above all by the need to be close to the places where they exercised their activities related to pastoralism and mountain agriculture, expression of the construction over time of a deep environmental link between the community, the urban centre and the territory, in a system not in line with the trends of the time, but nevertheless harmonious²⁴.

The numerous petitions sent to State authorities testify the willingness of the population to stay in the old town to rebuild or to move to a new town in the mountain area in contact with the activities of agro-pastoral economy. Petitions were in several cases sent by individuals with their families, such as that of Pasquale Favasulo, sent on 15 July 1953 to the prefect of Reggio Calabria, asking for help to rebuild his house near the old town and its activities, so that he could return from France, from the industrial department of the Moselle, where he had emigrated with his family to work as a labourer. The resistance to relocation was always motivated by the problem of work, which was perceived as difficult in the new territory. On 26 January 1954, Giovanni Marti

23. ASRC, *Prefettura di Reggio Calabria, Ufficio Provinciale di Assistenza Post-Bellica*, b. 15, f. 98, 99, 100, 101; *Ivi, Genio Civile di Reggio Calabria, Opere di trasferimento e consolidamento abitato*, b. 13, 32; *Atti Parlamentari della Camera dei Deputati, IV Legislatura, Interrogazione del deputato Adolfo Fiumanò sulla situazione delle abitazioni di Africo Nuovo del 22 giugno 1964*; *Ivi, Interrogazione del deputato Adolfo Fiumanò sulle abitazioni di Africo Nuovo del 19 dicembre 1966*.

24. TETI 2014. On the collective action groups see OLSON 1965; HARDIN 1982. On the relationship between urban centres and territory in environmental history see SANSÀ, MILITELLO 2024; HAUMANN, KNOLL, MARES 2020.

sent a petition to the prefect asking for the possibility of returning to the old town because in the new one life was assured only by subsidies and government assistance, mostly insufficient, that his son had to leave to work as a construction worker, while in the old town he could return and work with his father²⁵.

Many other petitions were collective, signed by dozens of individuals on behalf of their families, and are the most obvious testimony to the formation of collective action groups that acted for the restoration of the community. In these forms of public action, it is evident that the link between social groups and territory, in the sense of a claim to institutional identity belonging and the use and management of commons such as pastures and municipal forests, led to the emergence of a political collectivity²⁶. On 12 August 1953, 72 individuals from Africo on behalf of their families presented to the ministers of the Interior, Public Works, Agriculture and Forests, and to the prefect of Reggio Calabria the two points of their request, that is the reconstruction of the town «in the original territory of the Municipality» and the exclusion of the forest land from the prohibitions to economic activities provided for by the law on mountain reclamation, because in the new territory «it is impossible to ensure work to procure the necessary means of subsistence» and «they see no possibility of life for the present or the future» besides «the misery in which the whole population will find itself»²⁷. On 10 October 1953 another collective petition sent to the Minister of the Interior and the prefect signed by 35 individuals with their families noted that they had agreed to move to the new town for work opportunities and health care, but that being the untenable situation they asked to return to their lands or to move to another territory on condition that they were given a house and an extension of land²⁸.

The expression of the will to settle in the old place was also manifested in extra-legal ways by the return to the unusable town of single families and groups, and there were acts of resistance and attacks on the forces of the *Carabinieri* sent to carry out the evictions, such as those of 5 families who in 1958 declared to the commander of the *Carabinieri* not wanting to leave their precarious homes, and to receive funding to rebuild them in the town²⁹.

25. ASRC, *Prefettura di Reggio Calabria, Ufficio Provinciale di Assistenza Post-Bellica*, b. 25, f. 139.

26. OSTROM 1990; DE MOOR 2008.

27. ASRC, *Prefettura di Reggio Calabria, Ufficio Provinciale di Assistenza Post-Bellica*, b. 25, f. 138.

28. *Ivi*, b. 25, f. 139.

29. *Ivi*, b. 25, f. 156.

Other symbolic gestures aimed at the same purpose, such as the refusal by the inhabitants to go to the municipality of Bianco provisionally for documents, and the will to keep open the municipal office in the old town until the end of 1954, despite the great distance from the coast³⁰.

The social and economic situation of Africo Nuovo led to growing instability and political radicalization until the end of the 1950s³¹. The possibility of obtaining hundreds of hectares of land from the reclamation of the bed of the La Verde river did not occur, and indeed the territory was excluded from the agrarian reform for Calabria. The only job opportunities, besides emigration, which was increasingly important, were offered by seasonal hires as workers of the consortium for the hydro-geological and forestry restoration of mountain areas and as workers of the schoolyards for public works, and the possibility for women to work as farm labourers in the estates of jasmine plantations for essences. Wages and working conditions favored the expansion of trade union activity and participation in the Italian Communist Party, with the creation of the local federation and a massive increase in votes at national and local elections. The strikes and trade union agitations of the labourers and also of the numerous unemployed, organized spontaneously and by individual militants rather than coordinated by the party and trade union structures, caused repeated occupations of the highway and railway and frequent clashes, even violent, with the *Carabinieri*. These direct and extra-legal actions, aimed not only at affirming the right to work in the new territory, but also the control of the city administration, led to popular movements to claim “from below” a political community³². Women were in the front line of these movements, as on 4 July 1956 when 300 people gathered in the streets and occupied the town hall, setting up a commission of 10 members, including two women, who asked the prefect of Reggio Calabria to remove the prefectorial commissioner, accused of not dealing with the problems of the town and even having underestimated the conditions of the population with the authorities, and the employment of 130 workers laid off by the reclamation consortium. The intervention of the *Carabinieri* repressed the agitation, and the authorities promised to take the requests into account. The situation did not improve, however, and a few days later, on 8 July, «women and children» led a demonstration of 150 people, workers, labourers and craftsmen who occupied the railway

30. *Ivi*, b. 25, f. 157.

31. STAJANO 2015.

32. DE MOOR 2008. A previous case of popular political movement on the territory had occurred in the “republic” of Caulonia in 1945; MISIANI 1994.



Figure 6. A demonstration by women farm workers of the jasmine fields of the Ionian coast of Reggio Calabria («L'Unità», 10 August 1966).

to protest against the «poverty and unemployment» of the population, and was removed after clashes with the *Carabinieri* of Africo Nuovo, Bianco, Bovalino and with the police of Locri (fig. 6)³³.

The state of social tension was partially reduced by the mass hiring of forestry workers with the start of the hydro-geological reclamation works of the mountains and coastal valleys following the special law for Calabria of 1955, but government assistance policies certainly did not have a structural effect on the development of the new territory. The case of the school-yard for the road from the town to the railway station, which employed hundreds of workers for several years to build a road of some hundred meters is emblematic of the futility of these policies, and served only to train workers who got the job by emigrating in Italy and abroad³⁴. The transformation of the community's environmental context, which in the light of urban and economic modernization had not taken into account the territorial vocation of the population, in the short and long term determined that, as the inhabitants themselves wrote in their petitions, «the results of the experiment» had not had the desired effect³⁵.

33. ASRC, *Prefettura di Reggio Calabria, Ufficio Provinciale di Assistenza Post-Bellica*, b. 25, f. 155.

34. *Ibidem*; Atti Parlamentari della Camera dei Deputati, II Legislatura, *Interrogazione del deputato Eugenio Musolino sull'apertura di un cantiere di Africo Nuovo del 18 gennaio 1956*.

35. ASRC, *Prefettura di Reggio Calabria, Ufficio Provinciale di Assistenza Post-Bellica*, b. 25, f. 139.

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