

The Italian earthquakes: Lieux de memorie, missing memory

Silvia Lotti

Can you imagine *earthquakes sites of memory*, according to the definition of P.Nora? Can an earthquake site of memory exist, which will give back the dimension of destruction, if, by definition, a reconstruction of buildings follows every earthquake? Is an earthquake site of memory like this until you can see the destruction, or these sites can be only the uninhabited villages, like the ones you see in the south of Italy?

The sites of memory represent an important concept for the construction of a collective and abiding memory of earthquakes, given the potential spread across the entire peninsula. But, if left alone, they remain only a starting point for the processing of a community and national memory, which now is completely missing. A certain type of memory exists, but it is fragmentary, territorial, bound to the single earthquakes. Creating a national memory, instead, could be desirable in view of the construction of a culture of prevention, the main actual urgency. Indeed, the assumptions for a processing path on earthquakes, linked to the sites of memory, are already present, in form of seeds in Italian literature.

Furthermore, every earthquake represents a trauma: the solidarity of Italian people has grown during the years and it is simple to notice that between a victim of the Friuli-Venezia-Giulia earthquake (1976) and a victim of the Emilia-Romagna earthquake (2012) there is empathy. Indeed, J.Dickie suggests the Messina earthquake in the 1908 like an indicator of a wave of patriotism that seemed to not exist in that moment. Earthquakes make the Unity of Italy, because they happen from the north to the south of the peninsula.

Can the creation of a day on the civil calendar, bound to the celebration of the remembrance of all the Italian earthquakes, be a way to build this kind of memory?

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