

Fabio Pollice, Patrizia Miggiano¹

“Il tempo dei giganti”. A mosaic of minute stories for a film-documentary account of the Xylella case in Salento

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Abstract

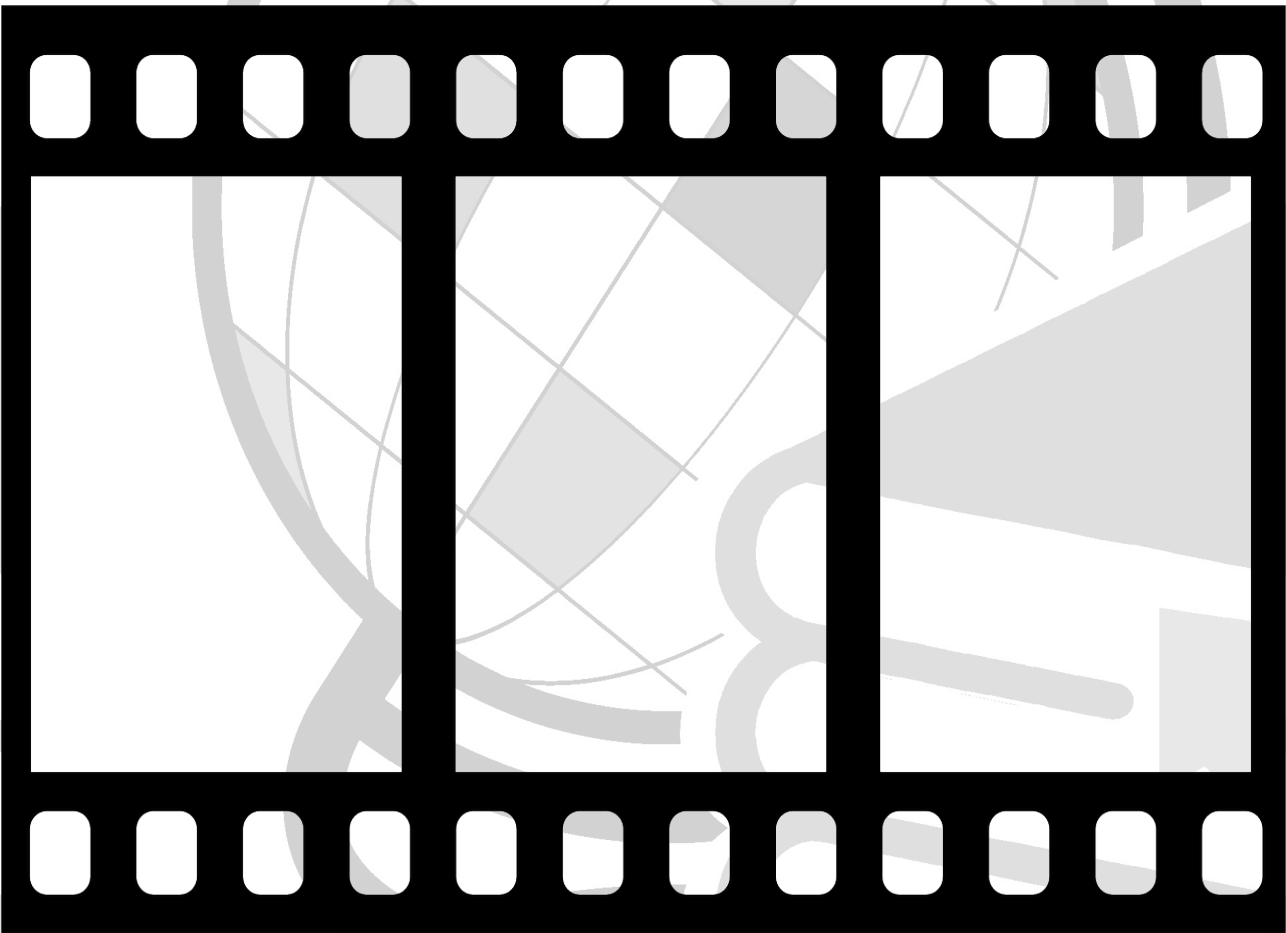
Il contributo si propone di offrire una riflessione critica sull'utilizzo degli strumenti visivi, con particolare riferimento al linguaggio del film-documentario, per esplorare la percezione sociale del disastro fitosanitario in atto in Puglia, noto con il nome del patogeno che ne è stata la causa, *Xylella fastidiosa* (Wells et al., 1987; Saponari et al., 2017, Morelli et al., 2021). Dal 2013, anno della sua prima comparsa nel Salento, le stime registrano una propagazione che ha interessato circa 750.000 ettari di uliveti in tutta la Puglia, causando il disseccamento di vaste distese di ulivi secolari, un patrimonio paesaggistico e naturale di incommensurabile valore, oltre che un riferimento identitario per la penisola salentina. Partendo dall'analisi di un caso di studio offerto dal recente documentario *Il tempo dei giganti* (2022), un ricco mosaico di *small stories*, si intende osservare non meramente l'ontologia del fenomeno, quanto piuttosto il conflitto di interpretazioni da esso generato, inteso come campo di formazione dialettica di vettori di lettura e regimi interpretativi. Infine, si rifletterà sui possibili scenari futuri e sulla necessità di un ripensamento dei modelli agricoli pugliesi, che tenga conto delle caratteristiche morfologiche, pedologiche e climatiche della regione, al fine di garantire la tutela e la salvaguardia della biodiversità per fare del Salento un vero laboratorio di sostenibilità, un'opportunità per ripartire dopo la catastrofe e ripensare il paesaggio, l'agricoltura e le pratiche.

Keywords: Xylella; Salento; cinema documentario; documentari geografici; ambiente; paesaggio

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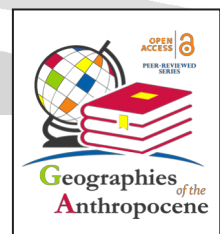
CINEMA, DISASTERS AND THE ANTHROPOCENE

Enrico Nicosia, Lucrezia Lopez (Editors)



Foreword by David McEntire

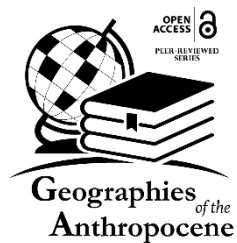
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Cinema, Disasters and the Anthropocene

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Editors



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7. “Il tempo dei giganti”. A mosaic of minute stories for a film-documentary account of the Xylella case in Salento

Fabio Pollice¹, Patrizia Miggiano²

Abstract

The paper aims to encourage a critical reflection on the use of visual tools, with particular reference to the language of film-documentary, to explore the social perception of the phytosanitary disaster underway in Puglia, known by the name of the pathogen that was its cause, *Xylella fastidiosa* (Wells *et al.*, 1987; Saponari *et al.*, 2017, Morelli *et al.*, 2021).

Since 2013, the year of its first appearance in Salento, estimates record a propagation that has affected about 750,000 hectares of olive groves throughout Puglia, causing the desiccation of vast expanses of centuries-old olive trees, a landscape and natural heritage of immeasurable value and, moreover, an identity reference for Salento peninsula.

Starting from the analysis of a case study offered by the recent documentary *Il tempo dei giganti*, a rich mosaic of minute stories regarding the outbreak –the intention is to observe not the ontology of the phenomenon, but rather the conflict of interpretations generated by it, understood as a field of dialectic formation of reading vectors and interpretative regimes.

Finally, we will reflect on possible future scenarios and on the need for a rethinking of Puglian agricultural models that take into account the morphological, soil and climatic characteristics limatic characteristics of the region, in order to guarantee the protection and safeguarding of biodiversity to make Salento a true laboratory of sustainability. This will help local actors and the population, to rebuild after the catastrophe and rethink the landscape, agriculture and practices.

Keywords: Xylella; Salento; film non-fiction; documentary; environment; landscape

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*Those who will live after us,
two or three hundred years from now,
and for whom we are preparing the way,
will they remember us with a good word?*

Cechov, *Zio Vanja* (1896)

1. Introduction

In Salento, the southern territory of Puglia, the most serious phytosanitary emergency of the century is underway, resulting in the rapid desiccation (CoDiRo) of millions of olive trees. It is caused by an aerobic gram-negative bacterium, named *Xylella Fastidiosa*, which multiplies in the xylem vessels involved in the transport of nutrients and minerals from the roots to the upper section of the plant, often with lethal effects (Wells *et al.*, 1987; Saponari *et al.*, 2017, Morelli *et al.*, 2021). It is included in the A1 list of the Eppo (European and Mediterranean plant protection organization).

Hitherto absent in Europe, the bacterium has caused enormous damage in the United States and South America over the years (Beretta *et al.*, 1996; Müller *et al.*, 2022). The first cases were detected in 2013 in Salento, around Gallipoli, near Alezio and the provincial road 361 affecting around 8,000 hectares. Since then, according to estimates by Confagricoltura, Italy's national agricultural association, and the government's own records, the infection has spread to 750,000 hectares of olive groves throughout Puglia. It is estimated that around 21,000,000 olive trees have died or have been cut down to prevent the spread of the disease, which has particularly affected Lecce, Brindisi and part of the Taranto area, with a consequent loss of 33,000 jobs in the olive oil sector (www.confagricoltura.it; <https://gd.eppo.int/taxon/XYLEFA/distribution>; <http://gd.eppo.int/taxon/XYLEFA/distribution>).

The disaster is even more dramatic if one takes into account the fact that 30% of the plants affected by the epidemic are centuries-old olive trees, constituting a historical-cultural, landscape and natural heritage of immeasurable value³ (Figure 1).

³ Regional Law 14/2007, *Tutela e valorizzazione del paesaggio degli ulivi monumentali della Puglia* banned the uprooting and trade in olive trees over 100 years old and recognized that human care was indispensable to preserve their state of health.



Figure 1 - *Olive trees in Salento following the Xylella fastidiosa epidemic.*
Photograph by Davide Barletti

Driving through Salento, starting from the north, one notices that the effects of the massive infection are not immediately noticeable. Proceeding southwards, however, the olive trees gradually begin to show signs of desiccation. However, from a moving car it is not always easy to distinguish the grey from the green, especially as the ride gives a view only of the olive trees in the first row, the ones closest to the road (Figure 2). As one travels down the Ionian coast, however, it becomes increasingly difficult not to notice the increasingly widespread and evident desiccation, until the dramatic panorama that unfolds as one enters provincial road 101, on a long viaduct that turns towards the sea. Here, in fact, the road rises considerably, revealing a ghostly curtain of dry, grey olive groves stretching as far as the eye can see. These are scenarios that compose and decompose like a gloomy kaleidoscope, in which the human imprint is visible in the desperate attempts to contain the epidemic. So far, though, none of these attempts have led to a halt. On the contrary, Xylella continues to advance northwards, threatening the territories of the European Union.

2. Olive ergo sum

Over time, various solutions to the disaster have been proposed, most notably the Silletti Plan (2015), named after the then director of the Puglia Region of the State Forestry Corps and special commissioner for the Xylella emergency. This envisaged the division of the territory into three parts

(infected zone, buffer zone, prophylaxis zone) and regulated eradication, felling and monitoring protocols. There have also been more recent proposals to replant olive trees resistant or tolerant to the *Xylella* bacterium (belonging to the two cultivars *Favolosa* and *Leccino*), in place of those dead or eradicated (Figure 2).

The local population's yearning to overcome the emergency, however, has unfortunately clashed - and continues to clash - with a series of errors and delays in the management of the epidemic. These still persist and bog down any possible recovery or at least containment of the disaster, and has generated complex reactions among the locals, both socially and emotionally.

In fact, the olive tree represents an identity reference for the area. Both the tree and the production of olive oil have historically been associated with a constellation of affective meanings and values, which have been further invigorated and strengthened – as well as modified - by the tourist gaze on Salento.

Salento is clearly historically an agrarian landscape; the result of the interaction between human beings and the environment, but in particular, the result of a conscious and systematic imprinting on the natural landscape (Sereni, 1961). It can therefore be said that the Salento landscape has over the centuries reflected the changing social conditions, the evolution of culture and collective practices and the progress of agricultural techniques.

In Salento we can say that a system tied to ancient agricultural practices and traditions persists, and “the same cultivation practices [are] cyclically marked by the turning of the seasons”⁴ (Martella, 2022, p. 2022) - all the more reason for local communities to assign an identity value to the olive-growing landscape that is greater than its economic value.

It is actually rather strange that today we recognize the identity value of a tree crop that had a markedly exogenous matrix. The development of olive growing in Salento between the 17th and 19th centuries was, in fact, linked to the production of *lampante*, or lighting, oil for the European market. During this time, oil was used as fuel in the lamps for domestic lighting in the cities of Europe, but the main beneficiaries were the large landowners and the companies that managed the oil trade. On closer inspection, this particular form of production and distribution could be considered an embryonic phase of globalization in which Salento constituted the historical counterpart of what some developing countries are today. This cultivation system reflects the needs of more economically developed countries, with little attention paid to the basic food, let alone the economic, needs of the local population. This

⁴ Translation by the authors.

created, now as then, an unequal exchange, which did not return to the territory the market value that it produced.

In the end, all this was forgotten, and the olive trees ended up imposing themselves as an identity reference together with other elements of the rural landscape of Salento, such as the dry-stone walls and the characteristic *pagliare*, also functionally linked to the cultivation, so much so as to transform a contingency into a territorial vocation.

Reflecting on all this is a first step in attempting to fully grasp the universe of meanings that have matured over time around the olive tree, olive production, and the semantic and symbolic *chiaroscuro* of the trajectories of territorialization that ensue - around which the local population has built its own project of resistance and regeneration.



Figure 2 - Decay of an olive tree in a centuries-old olive grove.
Photograph by Patrizia Miggiano

3. “Il tempo dei giganti”

Recounting the disaster and the reactions of the local community is a way of responding to the urgent need to maintain interest in the often emotionally connoted ancient bond of affection that binds the people of Salento to its *giganti*, its giants. The documentary film *Il tempo dei giganti* [The age of the giants] recreates this iconosphere, bearing witness to the spread, to the

attempts to halt the epidemic, and to the difficulties and contradictions of the policies implemented. It is freely inspired by the book of the same name by Stefano Martella, directed by Davide Barletti and Lorenzo Conte, and produced by Dinamo Film and Fluid Produzioni. Through a rich mosaic of visions and ‘minute stories’, the film rather than following the ontology of the phenomenon, focusses on the conflict of interpretations generated by it (Ricoeur, 1969), understood as a field of dialectical formation of vectors of reading and regimes of interpretation of the phenomenon (Figure 3).



Figure 3 - A moment in the making of the film documentary “Il tempo dei Giganti”, released in cinemas in 2022.

Photograph by Davide Barletti

A film of this nature can certainly represent an opportunity to problematize or regenerate meanings and broaden the idea of plurality, starting from the small narratives of everyday life, the authentic terrain for the political rewriting of the practices of attribution of meaning by communities (Lefebvre, 1968; Jedlowski, 2009). It is “the stories that are almost immobile to the eye, [the] gently sloping stories”, which compose “the living, fragile, quivering ‘History’” (Foucault, 1969, p. 7 and p. 14)⁵.

⁵ Translation by the authors.

It should be noted that the film is just part of a dynamic framework of visual narratives, photographic and audiovisual, regarding the Salento bacteriological disaster. As to the film itself, documentary production focusing on Xylella has proved to be popular in recent years. Co-production funding and crowdfunding campaigns have led to both quality and a plurality of narratives being produced, each one bearing a particular view of the phenomenon and each certainly worthy of attention. Consider, for example, *Semina il vento* [Sowing the wind] (2020) by Danilo Caputo, *Amalaterra* [Lovetheearth] (2018) by Gabriele Greco, the *Legnovivo* [Livewood] project (2019) by Filippo Bellantoni, or the documentary testimony by Edoardo Winspeare, entitled *Requiem per gli Ulivi di Puglia* [Requiem for the olive trees in Puglia] (2020), to name but a few.

Il tempo dei giganti narrates the journey of a man, Giuseppe, to his father's land in the plains of the monumental olive trees in the Valle d'Itria, where the epidemic is imminent. Giuseppe will have to explain to the elderly farmer why and how their lives will be disrupted by the spreading infection, hitherto unknown in Italy.

On his journey to his father, Giuseppe wanders through a post-apocalyptic landscape, linking the local to the global, anchoring the Xylella case to the broader phenomena of desertification and climate change.

Wandering home, Giuseppe gradually weaves a thick web of stories in which characters embody various facets of the epidemic; focusing on the causes and possible scenarios. The film takes in the heterogeneity that has characterized the perception of the disaster. It underlines how the reactions of the local population are mostly marked by distrust of the explanations offered by science, by conspiracy theories, by various forms of intolerance, at the tendency towards resignation, or denial of the problem, and towards alternative cures. The film also recognizes the universe of subjects who have been working daily to alleviate the scale and spectre of disaster and to nourish "the profound and naive effort to remake life" (Pasolini, 1957, p. 65)⁶.

The film thus presents a number of narrative levels. A first level bears the portraits of a number of local characters who, in different ways and in different capacities, had personal and direct experience of the disaster. Here we find, recounting his everyday life, a farmer from the small town of Alliste, who proudly guarded the oldest tree in Salento, the 'Giant of Alliste', dating back some two thousand years, as attested by the latest census of monumental trees in Salento (Gennaio, De Santis, Medagli, 2000).

⁶ Translation by the authors.

It is a majestic tree, bedridden by the infection, and has received a constant stream of visitors: researchers, botanists, healers, the media and schoolchildren.

When it became known that the oldest olive tree had fallen ill, calls came from all over the world to save it: environmentalists, ordinary people, even celebrities [...]. Dozens of scientists were involved in trying to save it. Each with their own product. Each with their own therapy. On the trunks of the trees around the Giant are still plaques with numbers, because when the monumental tree was under the care of one team, the others, while waiting, began experiments on the centenarian trees near by [...]. Each centenarian was assigned its own team of scientists. The Giant and the other centenarians were surrounded by equipment usually used for chemotherapy, which allowed the liquid solutions to be released at a very slow pace: in general over three, four days (Martella, 2020, pp. 19-20).⁷

Now the skeleton of this giant, a lifeless witness to the tragedy, stands out on a depopulated and bleak horizon, the same one that surrounds the gnarled *Patriarca* [Patriach] (Figure 4) in the countryside around Scorrano, an extraordinary example of the ancient agronomic practice of *slupatura*. This is the process of emptying the olive tree (trunks and thickest branches) of its deadwood, leaving the large internal cavities to shelter up to five people from storms or the intense summer heatwave (Martella, 2022, p. 26).

⁷ Translation by the authors.



Figure 4 - *The 'Patriarch' in the Scorrano countryside.*
Photograph by Patrizia Miggiano.

On the same narrative plane is Donato Boscia, manager of the research team at the National Research Centre in Bari, one of the scientists in charge of studying species resistant to the bacterium, He has also been the target of particularly unpleasant delegitimization campaigns.

This opens the way to reflecting on one of the features that has most characterized the heated public debate on *Xylella* in Salento, namely the opposition between science and anti-science, which has given rise to the most varied interpretations of its causes and attempts at solutions. These include the invective against the CNR research team, accused of having deliberately piloted the spread of the contagion to the south, to Salento, to economically favour the regional capital, Bari, to the north.

Despite these attacks, the team's scientific work has nevertheless continued over the years, and has investigated the disaster from a multifactorial perspective. The team finally concluded that:

in Salento the conditions for an explosive cocktail were created: [...] the ideal climate, a particularly abundant vector population effective in transmitting the bacterium; numerous abandoned and therefore unweeded plots; the arrival of a particularly virulent strain whose preferred host is the olive tree; and finally [...] the olive tree

monoculture. In Salento, the bacterium has found uninterrupted expanses of this strain of olive. (Martella, 2020, p. 21)⁸

It is precisely the issue of Salento's agro-economy, centred exclusively on olive growing, with its consequent impact on biodiversity, that should be placed at the centre of any solution and environmental regeneration strategy. As in some developing countries, in fact, monoculture represents a major ecosystem and environmental risk in terms of reduced biodiversity, soil infertility and the spread of pests and fungal diseases.

Added to this is the fact that, in Salento, the debate and the reactions of the local population have mostly focused on the impact of the disaster on the landscape and its consequences in terms of tourist revenue. Yet, despite the importance of the issue, little has been discussed, and continues not to be discussed, about the environmental repercussions. The massive eradication of the plants, in fact, will irreversibly compromise the biomass needs that were provided by the olive trees, causing significant damage to the soil. Direct exposure to the sun's rays increases the temperature and overheats the soil. Once the tree cover is lost, the soils undergo a gradual process of degradation, starting with the leaching of the soil due to the action of atmospheric agents. This is a major issue in an area where the fertile soil layer is already quite thin.

In this Manichaean antinomy, these polarized righteous positions between science and anti-science, anti-science crusaders in particular have attempted to make their mark in this desperate race against time, proposing alternative and certainly unofficial therapies. In a number of cases, ancient popular wisdom still stubbornly prevails. There is no doubt that the *Xylella* case represents a perfect observatory of fluctuating opinion, of a real battleground between different visions, each of which can tell us much about how dominant (and variant) interpretative schemes of social phenomena form.

Il tempo dei giganti highlights the dialectical process underlying the formation of opinions, and also provides an extremely interesting investigation for geographers as it also provides an overview of the experiences connected to the territory, thus telling not the truth *about the* territory, but *of the* territory.

On the narrative level of the characters involved in the *Xylella* case, we also find Roberto Gennaio, photographer and author of the impressive census of monumental olive trees, entitled *Titans. Monumental olive trees in Salento* (2013), the result of more than ten years' work and thus predating the spread of the bacterium. This makes it possible to observe the phenomenon in its

⁸ Translation by the authors.

temporal unfolding, and consequently in an eminently diachronic perspective, which is able to highlight the extent of the transformations that have occurred in the territory. Consequently, the work is an important visual mediator of memory, offered by the photographic artefact (Barthes, 1980; Sontag, 1977 and 2003), which acts both as an objective document of the past and as a complex medium (Samuel, 1996), capable of guaranteeing the consciousness of the present through the “insurance of memory” (Calzoni, 2007, p. 327).

Finally, the narrative plane includes a number of other characters. There are virtuous entrepreneurs who have courageously attempted over the years to graft trees that were destined to die, experimenting with the cultivation of resistant cultivars. There are activists, as in the case of the Capo di Leuca association, *Manu Manu Riforesta!* [Time to reforest!]. This association has been able to purchase land, loan for use or be donated abandoned land. It has also raised awareness thanks to its social and institutional networking. Finally, in synergy with the University of Salento and its Botanical Garden, it is working to contain the damage caused by climate change and the ongoing process of desertification in the local area.

A second narrative plane includes what in a Greek tragedy would be called the chorus, a group of ten illustrious *coryphaei*, who objectively narrate the tragedy for the audience. In *Il tempo dei giganti* they are the *super partes* experts who analyze the phenomenon from a scientific point of view. This gives rise to a composite discourse in which the geographical, sociological, anthropological, epidemiological, botanical and communicative points of view converge. Undoubtedly, the presence of such a rich academic debate also makes the documentary important from a scientific point of view. The documentary, in this sense constitutes a precious testimony not only of the social perception of the emergency, but also of the viewpoints of intellectuals who, in various capacities and perspectives, attempt to offer answers and comfort to the local population.

The third narrative plane presents us with the complex and at the same time fascinating question of *what about the future?* Nature’s response to the present will take time, and certainly will take more than just one human generation. From this distance we are not able to see what is to come; but if we adopt the Jonasian “responsibility principle” (Jonas, 1979) and embrace the need to ‘make our own’ the need to care for future generations, then perhaps we could try to tie up the threads of those lives that seem disjointed and indifferent to each other's destinies. The responsibility principle would allow us to realise the extent that we are all united by the same challenge: the incessant and eternal effort to remake life.

4. The front line and what is to come

Giuseppe's father awaits the arrival of the barbarians in the Itria Valley. Around him there is no desert yet; but there is perception of the threat, placing the soul in the anxious and tense condition of those who wait.

Thus, while the first part of the documentary recounts what has been - the forms of the disaster and the universe of reactions; the second part turns its gaze to the future, handing the spectator a complex and demanding question: *what shall we do?*

In attempting an immediate response, we come across a vision that first of all envisages a regeneration of the Salento landscape, thus taking up the challenge of converting catastrophe into a positive change. This first response, however, in turn opens up the equally age-old question of *how do we do this?* Also, given that, from a scientific point of view, there are still questions regarding the Xylella case still to be explored, and as we have seen, whatever the science says, there are other narratives that have yet to be resolved, how can we even now think about restarting?

We are then helped by Friedrich Nietzsche's admonition: "they who have a why can endure any how" (Nietzsche, 1889, p. 26)⁹. The 'why' is the opportunity to make Salento a great laboratory of sustainability in the Mediterranean, a model of virtuous design and experimentation, precisely because of the disaster that has struck it.

In other words, it is necessary, as of now, to rethink in collective and sustainable terms not local reconstruction, but rather the wider landscape and ecology of the territory as a whole, starting from a genuine reconsideration of the agro-economic model employed to date.

In this sense, the assessment of the particular morphological and soil and climatic characteristics of the Puglian region is the first necessary step; all the more so in view of the changes that have occurred in the climate, agriculture and to the local terrain. A rethinking of the agro-economic system today cannot disregard an assessment of these transformations and the resulting conditions, which mirror global changes. This is all the more true with reference to the need to work on reforestation, since increasing forestation means improving soil temperature and, consequently, the health of plants (Figure 5).

⁹ Translation by the authors.



Figure 5 - Detail of the felling of an olive tree after the failure of measures to contain the infection.

Photograph by Patrizia Miggiano.

This type of project is highly articulated, requiring: first involvement and debate, then agreement between the scientific community, local actors and the population. These are the fundamental elements that must be taken into account well before any redefinition of agricultural practices or landscape in Salento. These two elements are profoundly interconnected, so it is clear that in order to rethink a landscape one must first rebuild agriculture.

A virtuous redevelopment project for the Salento landscape and agriculture will therefore necessarily depend on the presence of four fundamental factors: (a) government action, supported by strong institutional and political coordination, giving rise to a governance model capable of guaranteeing public investment that is in turn attractive to private investment; (b) the provision of real involvement of the scientific community, since any political action, if it is to guarantee effective and timely solutions to the emergency, must impose a sound scientifically-accredited strategy to the work of redeveloping agriculture and the landscape; c) the involvement of the local population, which can and must return to taking care of its own territory, becoming aware of the fact that its own future is intimately tied to its ability to reinterpret the landscape and make this hermeneutic and, at the same time, regenerative process its own in the long term; d) the maturing of an awareness

of the need to rethink the landscape, placing sustainability as a priority objective.

The local population, in fact, is mostly convinced that the only way forward is to work to re-establish the *status quo*; to restoring the pre-existing agro-economy, meaning a return to an entirely olive-growing landscape. But such a course of action, given the need to make such an arrangement economically viable, would entail the development of an intensive monoculture. As we know, this would be unsustainable from an environmental point of view, first and foremost because of the water requirements associated with it, but also because of the negative effects it would have on biodiversity. Instead, it is necessary to renounce this iconic but museographic view of the landscape due to the unsustainability.

The local community must be accompanied towards this change of view; and then they need to form an integral part of the project to create a more biodiverse landscape that reflects the Salento identity, taking into account both the needs of sustainability and the need to restore beauty to the territory.

This aspect appears to be of particular importance if we consider that it is neither possible nor advisable to delegate the entire work of rethinking and agro-landscape construction to the government. Following a catastrophe that has severely affected the experiences, practices and customs linked to an area, it is right that communities take on the Heideggerian project of *poetically* inhabiting the Earth; that is, of establishing a relationship of care and construction of beauty with it.

This will be possible if we start from the recognition of the affective-emotional bond that exists between the people of Salento and their identity references; but also and above all by virtue of the foundation of new agro-economic models and a new entrepreneurial fabric that can sustain such a complex process of regeneration.

Indeed, there is a need to entrust the territory and its woundedness into the hands of a new agricultural entrepreneurship, acting as a new incubator of agricultural realities. This would suggest that the focus be on the young people, who will become the entrepreneurs, providing and taking-up the employment; setting up innovative agricultural enterprises such as precision agriculture, and enhancing the value of a land in harmony with the ecosystem. This would certainly allow for a renewal of know-how, which takes into account the particular characteristics of the Salento before defining any techniques, objectives or strategies.

The University, for its part, is tasked to foster entrepreneurial projects, provided that they themselves clearly include a mission statement addressing the need to make the younger generations aware that the present moment is crucial for the future of our territory. Indeed, our future is now at stake, for

which we must not only create sustainable enterprises, but also support them both financially and in terms of grounded advice and information.

This will only be possible by virtue of a real strategic convergence between all the institutions and actors interested in taking Salento as a training-school of landscape and agriculture for the entire Mediterranean area, linking past, present and future.

This phytosanitary catastrophe has been an emotional upset and a painful loss for both locals and visitors alike, due to the way that the beauty that had gradually developed over centuries has now suddenly and irreversibly gone.

The idea of landscape as a cultural product is in the awareness that what we perceive is a snapshot of a very long process that is not, and never will be, granted to us on a silver platter. Time and custom do not grant us the ability or indeed the right to constrain the landscape to our will. The landscape itself changes, transforms, degrades and regenerates incessantly.

Humankind, far from being a mere witness to these changes, should act as a creator and should take the responsibility for these transformations and endow the territory with even more beauty. Each generation is decisive for the future of the Earth, which means acting now for the future and acting in the local for the global.

The cinematic narrative in *Il tempo dei Giganti* acts as a story for the spirit of the times, because it offers a sincere and complete picture of the changes taking place, of the circulation of ideas, of the perception of a phenomenon that stands on the edge of tragedy and rebirth.

Supporting this are the many associations, cooperatives, businesses, and realities in the area that are promoting an economically and culturally sustainable vision of the territory and its agriculture.

This inscribes the disaster in a broader *life-death-life* cycle, which gathers and gives voice to the full range of desires and hopes of the local people and their obstinate yearning to overcome the emergency.

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Filmography

Il tempo dei giganti (in uscita), directed by Davide Barletti and Lorenzo Conte

Amalaterra (2018), directed by Gabriele Greco

Requiem per gli Ulivi di Puglia (2020), directed by Edoardo Winspeare

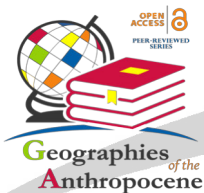
Legnovivo (2019), directed by Filippo Bellantoni

Semina il vento (2020), directed by Danilo Caputo

The Anthropocene concept identifies a geological era in which human action leads to changes on a planetary scale with long-term irreversible effects. This volume collects insights into geographical research, with a specific look at the challenges of the future, and the potential of visual communication offered by cinema, documentaries and television series. In fact, fiction could represent the appropriate medium to examine the notions of the Anthropocene, being a language of global diffusion and highly evocative since it uses the engagement of narration and entertainment to convey messages of vital importance, arousing emotions in the viewer, shared awareness and, finally, responsibility. In the Anthropocene era, the challenge of climate change is not a problem of science but a failure of politics. And politics fails because the Great Acceleration has led to the good life and certainly a better life for people everywhere. Who is willing to give up the great stuff of the Great Acceleration? What would that new life look like? What kind of challenges does the future propose? Some of these questions, among others, are raised in the chapters of the present volume. The different geographical contexts and approaches, here collected, can play an important clarifying function, to reduce the complexity of (today's) social, economic, political, and technological reality, presenting a much deeper vision of reality than it appears to us, and at the same time offering us the means to navigate it. Thus, the volume deals with these issues in three sections, moving from narrative methods to the representation of ecological disasters and finally analysing a more specific topic.

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