

IT IS NOT CIARAN, IT IS CLIMATE EMERGENCY. A GLOBAL CHANGE IS URGENT

A storm has been sweeping across Europe in recent days: it is Ciaran, with its heavy rains and 130 km/h winds, which caused death and damage in Belgium, France, Great Britain, Spain, Germany, and Italy, where seven people have already died, entire villages have been submerged, hospitals have been flooded, and roads have been cut off by mudslides and floods.

The Italian chapter of Democratizing Work Network has been contributing for months to the organisation of a weekend of events, talks and meetings in Campi Bisenzio, in the outskirts of Florence, entitled *Un Mondo in Convergenza (A Converging World)*, from 3 to 5 November. An event conceived with Collettivo di Fabbrica GKN, Banca Etica Firenze, and the national network Fuori Mercato to intersect and strengthen reflections on the future of work, climate justice movements, ethical finance and mutualism claiming the urgency of ecological transition and a radical rethinking of the current production paradigm.

Among the organisers the GKN workers' collective has been occupying its factory for more than two years after the bosses abruptly ran away, dismissing 430 workers via email. The workers' collective is trying to revive its work through a sustainable reindustrialisation plan supported by Banca Etica Firenze, which celebrates its 20 years anniversary. Part of this solidarity network, Fuori Mercato is a network of organisations promoting economic exchange activities, concrete solidarity and conflictual mutualism.

The environmental disaster struck Tuscany, and the municipality of Campi Bisenzio in particular, where GKN is located: rivers flooded and infrastructures collapsed, obliging to cancel the event and spreading a sense of despondency: we were ready to talk about the implementation of new productive and political paths towards climate and social justice, but reality has overtaken us.

We must face reality: it is no longer possible to speak about the climate emergency being concerned just with climate change and its impacts. The Ciaran storm is just one symptom of the wider global ecological crisis that also passed through the pandemic. In that period fragilities of welfare and territories clearly emerged, as well as the unsustainability of the capitalist model in relation to pollution levels, working conditions and equality.

We want to fight toxic narratives on climate change. The majority of economic and political elites employ climate change as a synonym for exceptional and unpredictable events with fatal consequences. This narrative helps to avoid their responsibilities in fostering the toxic development model responsible for climate change; this model weakens our ability to face extreme events such as Ciaran.

We want to be clear: climate change is not a hoax; there is nothing new in storms like Ciaran. In times of climate emergency, we all need to move beyond the search for the origins of societal fragilities. The regions with the most terrific consequences of Ciaran (Tuscany, Emilia-Romagna and Veneto) are some of the regions where the industrial development concentrated: cement flows choked the rivers and covered the valleys preventing the soil from absorbing water. The insane industrial development itself erased the collective knowledge that protected these territories for centuries, substituting them with powerful technological resources and infrastructures unfit to compensate for the enormous amount of human labour

and knowledge cancelled by the industrialization. Farmers, sharecroppers, and miserable labourers have been a vigilant presence that daily protected our territories for centuries, while now our land and valleys are under constant danger.

Finance capitalism has further weakened our resilience: this is the case of many privatisation waves aimed at dismantling public corporations managing railways, highways, electricity and other strategic infrastructures. This led to an inversion of their social functions, which ended up protecting economic interests instead of serving the common good. Now we have to face both threats of the climate emergency, and the lack of (cultural and material) strategic resources to fix our territories. In this perspective, decision makers, despite their public announcements on the climate crisis, seem to perpetuate the same contradictions responsible for the fragilities of our territories. The recovery plan funds have been mainly employed by European governments to finance large-scale projects whose goal is not implementing a more sustainable development model, but preserving (and even expanding) the existing one.

We firmly believe that bringing together struggles for climate justice, democratisation of enterprises and decommodification of labour is necessary. This belief inspired the founders of the global network Democratizing Work. It is the same belief that in recent months led us to plan the debates in Campi Bisenzio now cancelled because of the floods. While we are writing, the organisations with which we organised the debates are providing support to the population affected by Ciaran.

The workers' collective of GKN factory is coordinating the collection of equipment and first aid materials. With them, many other organisations in the area are coordinating the volunteers who are shovelling mud and helping the population hit by the storm. A dynamic we have already seen during other natural disasters in Italy and elsewhere: thousands of - mostly young - people directly mobilising in defence of those communities affected by the consequences of climate change. In our opinion, this is one of the most evident result of the social mobilisation happening in the most recent time around climate change. They are not only restoring what Ciaran has destroyed, but they are already building an alternative based on the policy of care.

First and immediate forms of solidarity remind us, in the midst of the emergency, that the protection of people comes first. Caring for people rebuilds the sense of unity that profit and consumer logics have deprived and nullified. The need to restore meaning to lives and territories devastated by a development model unfit of generating balanced and stable well-being emerges powerfully.

In many other recent and less recent cases, the solidarity of ordinary people has shown the gap between ordinary life, where we all contribute to feeding a development model that leads to self-destruction, and life in extreme conditions where the needs for care of people and territories become clear and indisputable.

This latest tragedy also shows that solidarity emerging during extreme events should turn into solidarity able to imagine effectively how to avoid further disasters. Solidarity should always preserve the common good and this should be the focus leading every single choice of policymakers and of those who, in different ways, contribute to economic and social development.

We believe the time has come for solidarity to become a driving value for strategic choices focused on caring for people and territories, not just a restorative principle. Finally, we believe that uniting struggles lies at the heart of the generative concept of solidarity,

as workers fighting for their dignity and rights, farmers against the oppressive power of agribusiness, younger generations claiming environmental justice and activists against masters of wars are showing every day around the globe.

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