

THE ORGANIZATION OF A MASS EDUCATION PROGRAM
IN ORDER TO MITIGATE EARTHQUAKE HAZARDS
IN CALABRIA

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Introduction

This paper is intended to be an account of one of the first experiences in mass education undertaken by a local government in Italy, after the approval of the official rules of application of civil protection (Law No. 996 of December 8, 1970).¹ Indeed, after the last earthquake in Irpinia (November 23, 1980), many local governments situated in seismic territories, have been concerned by the lack of local emergency plans for natural calamities. The rules of application for civil protection give them the possibility of organizing a local emergency network, with the technical support of experts, engineers and scientists knowledgeable of such problems, in cooperation with central authorities. The civil protection program of the Commune of Rende was made possible by the cooperation of the local administration, interested in taking the lead in this field, of the Department of Sociology of the University of Calabria, and of the Irpi Institute of the National Research Council of Italy.²

The Commune of Rende (5,479 km²; 13,157 inhabitants according to the 1971 Census) is located a few miles north of the city of Cosenza in Calabria, and actually constitutes one of the new, developing suburbs of this city. It was struck by an earthquake, affecting the whole Cosentine Valley, on the 20th of February 1980, causing considerable damage to buildings and infrastructure. A few weeks after that event, a research team from the Department of Sociology of the University of Calabria, in cooperation with Rende's Social Center, carried out a survey of 295 families living in the Commune. Four subsamples were selected according to social class and type of dwelling. Although the survey was not specifically designed to meet the requirements of a program of mass education, which was later requested by the local administration, it certainly served as a source of practical information to the research team. In this paper, indeed, some of the findings from the survey will precede the description of the structure of the program which is based upon them.