

1 **Review article: Brief history of volcanic risk in the Neapolitan area (Campania,**
2 **Southern Italy): A critical review**

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7
8 **Abstract**

9 The presence of three active volcanoes (Vesuvius, Campi Flegrei and Ischia Island) along the coast
10 of Naples did not contained the huge expansion of the urbanised zones around them. On the contrary,
11 since the Greco-Roman era, volcanoes have featured among the favourite sites for people colonising
12 the Campania region. The stable settlements around Vesuvius, Campi Flegrei caldera and Ischia were
13 progressively enlarged, attaining maximum growth rate between 1950 and 1980. Between 1982 and
14 1984, Neapolitans faced the last and most dramatic volcanic crises, which occurred at Campi Flegrei
15 (Pozzuoli), without an eruption. Since that time, volcanologists have focused their attention on the
16 problem of risks associated with eruptions in the Neapolitan area, but a systematic strategy to reduce
17 the very high volcanic risk of this zone is still lacking. A brief history of volcanic risk in the
18 Neapolitan district is narrated here in an effort to provide new food for thought for the scientific
19 community that works for the mitigation of volcanic risk in this area.

20
21 **Keywords:** Neapolitan volcanoes, volcanic risk, volcanic hazard, risk mitigation, human settlements.

22
23 **1. Introduction**

24 The region surrounding Naples is one of the most-risky volcanic areas in the world, due to the
25 presence of three active volcanoes, Vesuvius, Campi Flegrei caldera and the Island of Ischia, which
26 is inhabited by more than 1,500,000 people, directly exposed to the risk (Alberico et al., 2011;
27 Carlino, 2019) (Fig. 1). These volcanoes are capable of generating a wide range of eruptions, from
28 gentle lava flow to those triggering catastrophic effects and were active in historical times (the last
29 eruption occurring in 1944 at Vesuvius, in 1538 at Campi Flegrei and in 1302 at Ischia). Larger
30 eruptions at Vesuvius have devastated entire territories around the volcano, up to a distance of 10–20
31 km from the vent, as was observed in 79 AD (Pompei) and 1,800 BC(Avellino), respectively. At least
32 two large caldera-forming eruptions occurred at Campi Flegrei (the Campania Ignimbrite (CI), ~39
33 ka, and the Neapolitan Yellow Tuff (NYT), ~15 ka, which involved the entire Campania Plain, such
34 as the case of the CI event. At Ischia, a large eruption occurred about 55 ka ago, while the subsequent

35 activity was mostly confined within the island (de Vita et al., 2010; De Vivo et al., 2006;
36 Mastrolorenzo et al., 2006; Piochi et al., 2005). In Figure 2, a sketch of the eruptive history of
37 Vesuvius, Campi Flegrei and Ischia is presented (Piochi et al., 2005).

38 On one hand, volcanoes and their activity produced fertile soils for farming, hot waters and lakes for
39 human recreation, raw materials and natural inlets along the coast for sea navigators (Carlino et al.,
40 2010a; Scarpati et al., 2016). These features make the Neapolitan area a favourable site for human
41 settlements and the development of a local economy. However, volcanic activity has greatly
42 devastated the area and left behind many victims (Scarpati et al., 2013). The city of Naples itself
43 stands on various volcanic centres and, in particular, on the extended deposits of the NYT eruption
44 (~15 ka); this eruption triggered the collapse of the present Campi Flegrei caldera (Isaia et al., 2009;
45 Scarpati et al., 2013), the eastern rim of which is the site where an important residential area of the
46 city (the *Posillipo hill*) stands (Fig. 3). Analysing the most crucial historical moments that marked
47 the relationship between humans and Neapolitan volcanoes is fundamental to understanding why so
48 many people are nowadays residing in such a hazardous area. On the other hand, we need to also
49 analyse the development of the research in volcanology and its impact in mitigating the risk of this
50 highly inhabited area. In the long history of relations between humans and Neapolitan volcanoes, a
51 few notable milestone events must be mentioned: the Pompei 79 AD eruption, reconstructed by the
52 letters of Plinian the Younger; the eruption of Vesuvius of 1631 which, after almost 500 years of
53 quiescence, ushered a long period of continuous volcanic activity ending in 1944; the systematic
54 exploration of Pompei (buried by the 79 AD event) starting from 1748; the foundation of the
55 “Osservatorio Vesuviano” (Vesuvius Observatory) under the Bourbons domination in 1841; the
56 eruption of Vesuvius in 1944, which closed the activity of the volcano and the unrests crises at Campi
57 Flegrei caldera in 1970–72 and 1982–84 (Barberi et al., 1984; Cubellis et al., 2015; Giacomelli et al.,
58 2003; Perrotta & Scarpati, 2009; Scandone et al., 2008). Particularly, in this paper, the latter two
59 crises at Campi Flegrei will be discussed, as they occurred during a challenging time in the field of
60 earth science and when volcano-monitoring networks were being improved and policies for
61 management and prevention of the risks in the Neapolitan area altered (Carlino, 2019). Starting from
62 that time, the problem of volcanic hazard and risk in the Neapolitan area has been systematically
63 treated by several authors, trying to quantify the equation of the risk: $risk = hazard \times vulnerability \times$
64 $exposed\ value$ (see Blong, 1996 and the references therein). A larger part of the studies has been
65 aimed at assessing the hazard and, to a lesser extent, the risk (see, for instance, Mastrolorenzo et al.,
66 2006; Petrosino et al., 2004; Scandone et al., 1993) and the risk perception of communities exposed
67 to potential volcanic activity (Carlino et al., 2008; Ricci et al., 2013). On the other hand, the primary
68 drivers of vulnerability may be socio-economic, cultural and political, and so policy changes and
69 reduction of social inequality are more important than merely measuring vulnerability itself. As

70 discussed later, this topic encompasses social and policy sciences rather than volcanology. Other
71 authors have debated the criteria adopted to identify the most risked area in the Neapolitan volcanic
72 district (e.g. the red zones), criticising the emergency plan of Vesuvius or proposing an alternative
73 perspective to reduce the risk (De Natale et al., 2020; De Vivo et al., 2010; Dobran, 2000, 2007;
74 Matsrolorenzo et al., 2006; Rolandi, 2010). Although this district has been becoming increasingly
75 vulnerable for about 50 years, only in recent times (starting from early 2000) have attempts been
76 made to reduce its exposed values, though unsuccessfully. Possibly, a more general analysis, from
77 both the historical and scientific points of view, to understand the reasons why the attempts to reduce
78 the volcanic risk in the Neapolitan area have systematically failed is necessary. This paper does not
79 intend to examine such a complex issue, which deserves a wider, longer and multidisciplinary
80 discussion, but sparing a thought for this topic is essential. This paper reports a brief history of
81 volcanic risk in the Neapolitan area and an account of recent studies and policies adopted to reduce
82 the risk. As it will be shown, new proposals to mitigate the volcanic risk of this area could be
83 ineffective if we do not analyse the reasons why previous attempts have failed. Furthermore, it is
84 important to define, as clearly as possible, the role of volcanologists in facing volcanic emergency
85 and risk education policies in this highly urbanised area.

86

87 **2. The progressive human settlement of Neapolitan volcanoes**

88 The history of Neapolitan volcanoes harks back to before the birth of Christ, when the first stable
89 population settled in the plain along Vesuvius and the Campi Flegrei caldera (Pappalardo, 2007). The
90 great Greek geographer Strabo (64 B.C.–19 A.D) provided in his work “Geography” one of the first
91 descriptions of the Campania Plain and its surroundings, commenting on the splendour of these
92 places, dominated by the presence of Vesuvius and bordered by mountains extending along the sea
93 forming the Gulf of Naples (Strabone, XIV-XXIII A.D.). The first and most ancient human
94 settlements in Campania date back to the Palaeolithic period, primarily along the coasts of the
95 Sorrento Peninsula. According to Mastrolorenzo et al., (2006), , the first evidence of disrupted human
96 activity due to volcanic eruption in this area dates back about 3,800 years.. This is in fact the age of
97 an ancient Bronze Age village near Nola, about 11 km north of Mount Vesuvius, where archaeologists
98 excavated a human village with several findings in a state of excellent conservation. A massive
99 explosion of Vesuvius (the Avellino eruption, 3,800 years ago) had sealed the village beneath hot ash
100 (Mastrolorenzo et al., 2006), in a fate similar to that of Pompeii a few thousand years later. That was
101 when the natural environment of Vesuvius showed a less friendly face, and humankind was
102 confronted with unexpected adversities. In fact, the geology and the landscape of Campania were the
103 chief attractions for the populations colonising this area, which Romans later called “Campania felix”

104 (from Latin “felix” = lucky, happy) (Montone, 2010). The expression derives not only from the beauty
105 of the place but also from its soil, made fertile by the volcanic activity, the presence of streams and
106 the gentle climate. The broad river and coastal plains, the modest mountain ranges overlooking them,
107 the steam and the various volcanic areas, the thermal waters and natural coastal inlets to protect sailors
108 – all combined together to transform the area into the crossroads of different civilisations (Carlino,
109 2019). The Campi Flegrei area is also linked to a myth, possibly due to the suggestion recalled by the
110 continuous emission of hot steam and the boiling of mud pots. It was there, along the Lake of Averno
111 (a volcanic crater close to the city of Pozzuoli), that the ancients placed the cave of the Cumaean
112 Sibyl (mentioned in the famous literary work “L’Eneide” of Virgilio) and the entrance to the afterlife
113 (Azcu, 2013). This crater lake exhaled vapours and volcanic gases that probably kept some animals
114 away, from which it derived its Greek name, “aoèrnov”, that is, “without birds”. Following the
115 migration of the Etruscan population, from central Italy to the Campania plain from the 9th to the 5th
116 century B.C., the first early urban centres were established (Maiuri, 1957). These immigrants
117 predominantly settled in the fertile lowlands of the Campanian Plain, along the rivers or close to the
118 river-mouths. With the arrival of the Greeks and the development of maritime trade, the inhabitants
119 of Campania migrated towards coastal areas and started settling in the volcanic areas of Ischia (called
120 “Pithecusae”) and, later, of Campi Flegrei and Vesuvius (D’Ascia, 1867). The Greeks arrived
121 between the 9th and 8th centuries B.C., from a long and narrow island close to the coast of modern-
122 day south-east Greece, namely Euboea. On the Phlegrean side, ancient signs of stable habitation
123 dating to between the 7th and 6th centuries B.C. were discovered in the Rione Terra, the old town in
124 present-day Pozzuoli (Pappalardo, 2007). The historical centre of this town stands on a small volcanic
125 promontory that, at that time, played host to a modest Cumaean mooring. Between 529 and 528 B.C.,
126 some Samnite exiles, banned by the tyrant Polycrates, founded a colony on the promontory named
127 Dikaiarchia, meaning “Just Government”, integrated into a territory still controlled from Cumae
128 (Anecchino, 1996). In 194 B.C., the Romans transformed this small colony into a town called
129 Puteolis (hereafter Pozzuoli), thus named for its abundance of thermal springs. The town soon became
130 an imposing port and warehousing area for large quantities of foodstuffs. Earlier, the Greeks had
131 moved eastwards, forming the first inhabited elements of the city of Naples (called Pharthenophe),
132 between Mount Echia (Fig. 3), an upland of volcanic origin, and the island of Megaride where Castel
133 dell’Ovo stands today (Ghirelli, 2015). The Greek population was faced with the hazard of volcanoes
134 on the island of Ischia. In fact, their migration from Ischia towards the coast of Campania was possibly
135 influenced by the eruptions in the western and southern parts of the island from the 5th century B.C.
136 onwards. Amidst the lavas and the ash of the 5th century B.C. eruption and close to the port of Ischia,
137 an old ground level was excavated containing potsherds and other archaeological finds from the 6th
138 and 5th centuries B.C., demonstrating the existence of an ancient Greek settlement destroyed in the
139 eruption (Carlino et al., 2010a). Strabo bore witness to the eruptions in the Greco-Roman era, writing:

140 “...in ancient times a series of extraordinary events took place on the island of Pitheculusae. [...] when
141 Mount Epomeo, which rises in the middle of the island, was shaken by earthquakes and erupted fire
142 and (again) swept away everything that lay between itself and the shore and into the sea. At the same
143 time a part of the ground, reduced to ash and thrown upwards, fell back onto the island like a
144 maelstrom and the sea retreated for a distance of three stadia (about 500 m) and, flowing back shortly
145 afterward, flooded the island, extinguishing the fire. Such was the deafening noise that the inhabitants
146 of the mainland fled from the coast to the inner regions of Campania.” The towns of Naples and
147 Pozzuoli and the villages in the Vesuvius area, such as Pompeii, were expanding rapidly, with its
148 citizens having to deal with the adverse forces generated by the volcanic nature of the area. While in
149 historical times (starting from the former civilised human settlements), the Campi Flegrei caldera and
150 the island of Ischia generated small eruptions, the Vesuvius, contrarily, demonstrated its power with
151 the 79 A.D. eruption, which seriously affected the cities of Pompei and Ercolano and the southern
152 part of the volcano (Giacomelli et al., 2003). During the longest period of expansion of the Western
153 Roman Empire, the cities around the volcanoes had expanded progressively. The volcanic activity of
154 Ischia in the early centuries before Christ and its insular nature had, however, contained its
155 demographic expansion. On the other hand, the quiescence of the Campi Flegrei in eruptive terms
156 did not imply that the volcanic nature of these places had been forgotten; the continuous puffs of
157 steam and the hot thermal springs served as haunting symbols. However, in the minds of the people
158 at least, the hostile nature of these places, sometimes sinister, was associated with the mood of the
159 gods and not the actual nature of the area itself (Carlino, 2019). In this emerged the perception of
160 natural disasters as divine punishments for humankind, a view that remained rooted in culture up to
161 the 17th century (Cocco, 2012). With Galileo Galilei (1564–1642), a gradual change in the approach
162 to the study of earth science and the risk related to natural phenomena occurred.

163 A crucial moment in the history of volcanic risk in the Neapolitan area came in 1631 when, after a
164 long quiescence, Vesuvius awoke with an explosive (sub-plinian) eruption, beginning an almost
165 continuous eruptive activity that ceased only in 1944 at the end of World War II (Cocco, 2012;
166 Kilburn & McGuire, 2001; Rosi et al., 1993). However, here too a theological meaning was attributed
167 to this calamitous event, as an expiation of punishments. In this sense, the eruption of 1631
168 symbolised an event that, in the coming centuries, affected not only volcanology but also other
169 political, sociological, literary and, above all, religious disciplines (Scarth, 2009). Although
170 Aristotelian science still dominated in the 17th century, it was also the beginning of its end as a result
171 of the works of the Galileans and Cartesians (Fiorentino, 2015). The period witnessed immense
172 cultural transformations, with new impulses in the field of scientific research with the introduction of
173 the experimental method by Galileo (Rossi, 2020). Further support and impetus to the scientific

174 revolution were lent by the foundation of the Royal Society of London in 1662 and of Académie
175 Royale des Sciences in Paris.

176 Actually, the Vesuvius eruption of 1631 was the first event that focused attention on the problem of
177 volcanic risk. In fact, the suggestion to mitigate the volcanic risk at Vesuvius was first formally
178 proposed by the viceroy of Naples, Emmanuele Fonseca, in 1632. The viceroy placed an epigraph in
179 the town of Portici (in the Granatello area), inviting the local population to abandon the Vesuvius
180 area and recalling the catastrophic effects of the 1631 eruption. Many years later, for this inscription,
181 the expression “*the paradox of Granatello*” was coined by Nazzaro (2001), referring to the reluctance
182 of Vesuvians to consider the risk (Nazzaro, 2001; Gugg, 2018).

183 The continuous activity of Vesuvius pushed many scholars and artists to visit the volcano (during the
184 famous Grand Tour epoch) and, at the urging of few intellectuals, the idea of a volcano observatory
185 was born gradually (Luongo, 1997). Particularly, an important impetus came from Sir William
186 Hamilton (1730–1803), who arrived in Naples in 1764 as the British “Envoy Extraordinary to the
187 Kingdom of the Two Sicilies”. Hamilton’s amateur activity inspired the intuition of active volcano
188 surveillance and later, in 1841 (under the Bourbon Kingdom), the first volcanological observatory in
189 the world was founded, the Vesuvius Observatory (Cubellis et al., 2015). It was a great moment for
190 the Neapolitan School of Volcanology. Then, the interest of this new institution was mainly devoted
191 to the observation of the eruptive activity and to the development of new instruments to monitor the
192 volcano dynamic, such as the electromagnetic seismograph designed by Luigi Palmieri (1855–1896)
193 (Palmieri, 1880). Thus, the attention was mainly directed at the volcanic hazard.

194 Later on, with the increase of population, the problem of volcanic risk grew critical, because of the
195 exponential increase of the exposed value. The increase of population in the Neapolitan volcanic
196 district was possibly sustainable, with respect to volcanic risk, up to the economic boom of Italy
197 following the Second World War (Carlino, 2019). Immediately after this war, western civilisation
198 suffered a long economic crisis. A global-scale response to the crisis was the activation of the
199 Marshall Plan (the European Recovery Program, lasting from April 1948 to December 1951), whose
200 aim was the creation of stable economic conditions to guarantee the survival of democratic
201 institutions. The plan contributed to the renewal of the western European chemical, engineering and
202 steel industries and to a rise in gross national products between 15 and 25% (The Marshal Plan;
203 <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/marshall-plan-1>). The demographic increase in the
204 province of Naples and the consequent expansion of urban areas since the end of the Second World
205 War have been largely influenced by the country’s economic choices following the Industrial
206 Revolution, a process beginning in the 19th century. For instance, the first mechanical plants began
207 in Pozzuoli in Campi Flegrei where, in 1885, a factory for the construction of naval artillery was set

208 up. The increase of population and postwar industrial activity mainly involved the Vesuvius area in
209 conjunction with the volcano's quiescent state following its most recent eruption in 1944 (Carlino,
210 2019). The Campi Flegrei were also affected by a migratory flow (albeit to a lesser extent) particularly
211 in the districts of Fuorigrotta and Bagnoli (located inside the caldera), reflecting a strong phase of
212 urban growth, especially following the expansion of the Bagnoli industrial area in 1954 (Andriello et
213 al., 1991). The social and environmental change within the Campi Flegrei area had been drastic and
214 often sudden, but the area around Vesuvius was even more badly affected. This latter came under
215 attack from rampant "cementification" not following any town planning criteria, especially
216 concerning the volcanic risk. In the westernmost sector of the volcano, at the border with the eastern
217 outskirts of Naples, oil refineries and various mechanical industries were developed along the coastal
218 strip, while between Portici and Torre Annunziata, residential areas expanded enormously (D'Aprile,
219 2014). Agricultural land in many areas was converted into construction sites so that the landscape of
220 farming and forestry use was transformed into a typically urban, densely populated environment,
221 contrasting sharply with Vesuvius in the background. Between the 1950s and 1990s, the entire
222 Vesuvius area witnessed uncontrolled speculative building with an exponential increase in residential
223 areas, so as to make unrecognisable the boundaries between the towns that, especially in the coastal
224 sector, became merely an expanse of housing and villas (Carlino, 2019; Luongo, 1997). In the whole
225 metropolitan area belonging to Naples, an increase of 1,000,000 residents occurred between 1950 and
226 1980 (Censimento Popolazione Città Metropolitana Napoli, 1861–2001). In this chaotic growth, the
227 architectural beauties around Vesuvius leftover from the time of the Grand Tour, the historic villas,
228 were engulfed and new buildings covered the lava flows arising from Vesuvius's most recent activity
229 (Lancaster, 2008). This was a bad sign of the decline of local culture and of the corruption of the
230 political establishment (Berdini, 2010; Curci et al., 2018).

231 With the onset of globalisation and the expansion of international markets, the industrial activities in
232 the areas of Campi Flegrei went bankrupt. This definitively closed Bagnoli's industrial district in
233 1992 leading to an attempt to reclaim the area, with numerous halts and course changes, taking place
234 in the sector east of the city of Naples closer to Vesuvius. Meanwhile, the unbroken quiescence of
235 Vesuvius since 1944 gradually transformed the volcano from a perceived risk to a "passive" actor in
236 the landscape. This step resulted in inevitable demographic growth that did not take the security
237 implications into account while the boom in the construction industry extended the cities around the
238 volcano with increasingly invasive settlements. Between 1950 and 1981, the town of Portici alone,
239 now one of the most densely populated places in the world, saw the population rise from just over
240 30,000 to about 84,000 (ISTAT Censimento popolazione e abitazioni). The cities around Vesuvius
241 extended centripetally, approaching more and more frequently the areas repeatedly affected by recent
242 eruptions. If the quiescence of Vesuvius has caused a progressive decline in the perception of volcanic

243 risk, the territorial management policies until the end of the last century have continuously postponed
244 to posterity the issue of the risks involved in spite of the continual efforts of the scientific community
245 (Carlino et al., 2008). Only relatively recently, following the unrest in the Campi Flegrei caldera in
246 1982–84, scientists, local authorities and the Civil Protection faced the problem of excessive
247 anthropic pressure in the Neapolitan volcanic area, but an organic plan for decongesting one of the
248 areas of the greatest volcanic risk is still lacking.

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251 **3. The last experience of volcanic emergency in the Neapolitan district: Pozzuoli 1970–1984**

252 A fundamental moment in the history of volcano emergency in Campania was the episode of volcanic
253 unrest of Campi Flegrei caldera affecting the town of Pozzuoli in 1970–72 and 1982–84, respectively.
254 During those years, the ground of the town experienced the maximum cumulative uplift of about 3
255 meters, forcing the local authorities to evacuate the town during both episodes (Barberi et al., 1984).
256 By the beginning of the 1970s, the phenomenon of *bradyseism* (a Greek origin word which describes
257 the up and down movement of the ground) was largely forgotten, since the last time it had occurred
258 was more than 400 years before when an uplift of about 20 m culminated in the eruption of Monte
259 Nuovo in 1538, the most recent volcanic event at Campi Flegrei (Di Vito et al., 2016). In 1970,
260 monitoring networks for volcano surveillance did not exist in the area. In fact, the inversion in the
261 movement of the ground was signalled by fishermen, who suddenly managed to pass with their small
262 boats beneath an arch at the entrance of the small harbour of Pozzuoli while standing, while it had
263 normally been necessary to bend down (Carlino, 2019). The uplift, in the first phase, was almost
264 aseismic, while the Vesuvius Observatory decided to undertake a new elevation survey performed by
265 the engineers of the Genio Civile to estimate the real amount of the ground uplift. The results
266 indicated that the floor of the Serapeum of Pozzuoli (a ruin of an ancient Roman market) had risen
267 by about 0.70 m since the last surveys and that the area affected by this phenomenon included the
268 entire town (Longo, 2019; Luongo, 2013). The concern about the volcano uplift focused the attention
269 on the hazard related to a possible eruption. There was no consensus among scientists; thus, scientific
270 meetings took place to understand the possible evolution of the phenomenon might and the associated
271 volcanic risk. Experts such as the volcanologists Alfred Rittman and Izumi Yokoyama participated
272 in the debate together with the researchers of Vesuvius Observatory. However, the physical model
273 adopted by the Japanese researchers associated the observed uplift with a high probability of an
274 eruption. In 1972, the centre of Pozzuoli was evacuated, although the unrest was characterised by a
275 modest seismic activity, while the maximum uplift was about 1.7 m and ended without eruption

276 (Yokoyama, 1970). The evacuees were placed in the new Toiano district, whose construction was
277 accelerated during the final stages of the bradyseismic episode. The 1970–72 bradyseism crisis,
278 possibly was not handled in a transparent way, and this experience was complicated by the lack of
279 sufficient knowledge about the physics of the volcano phenomenon (Longo, 2019). This last fact,
280 along with the virtual absence of a monitoring network, determined the decision to evacuate the centre
281 of Pozzuoli, although the perceptible signs of a possible eruption were low, and all the local residents
282 criticised this decision. Nonetheless, it was during that period that earth science experienced new
283 important studies and projects, also strengthening the monitoring networks and the assessment of
284 seismic and volcanic hazards in the world.

285 Following the Campi Flegrei caldera unrest of 1970–72, the Italian peninsula was severely tested
286 with the devastating earthquakes of Friuli in 1976 (leaving about 1,000 people dead and more than
287 100,000 displaced) and the one in Campania-Basilicata in 1980 (with about 3,000 deaths and 280,000
288 dis- placed) (Boschi & Bordieri, 1998). Subsequently, a National Civil Protection service was
289 established in Italy. Thus, when a new bradyseismic crisis occurred in Pozzuoli in 1982, the scientific
290 community and the national and local authorities were better prepared to handle the emergency
291 (Luongo, 2013). The Vesuvius Observatory had strengthened its surveillance network so that,
292 throughout 1972–1981, it was possible to record a tendency to ground subsidence and a new uplift in
293 1982. In the summer of that year, it became clear that a new episode of bradyseism was underway
294 (Cannatelli et al., 2020). It was most dramatic compared to the previous one. Continuous and
295 significant seismic activity was recorded since spring 1983. Pozzuoli was shaken by hundreds of
296 seismic events a day, while the population was frightened by the roars accompanying the earthquakes
297 and the continued ground movements which wrought widespread damage on the city's ancient
298 buildings. A further increase of seismic activity occurred between September and October 1983,
299 peaking on 4th October with a shallow magnitude 4.0 earthquake, spreading panic among the
300 population, damaging several buildings in the historic centre of Pozzuoli and being clearly felt in
301 Naples (Branno et al., 1984). The ground uplift in the Pozzuoli area reached a maximum rate of the
302 order of centimetres per day. The main concern about the situation was primarily related to the
303 damage to the buildings caused by the shallow earthquakes (2–3 km in depth). Accordingly, the
304 Vesuvius Observatory and the National Group for Volcanology, responsible for surveillance,
305 presented a seismic hazard map of the Phlegraean area, demonstrating that the level of risk in the
306 historical centre of Pozzuoli had become very high, especially because of the high vulnerability of
307 the buildings at risk (Luongo, 2013). A further concern related to the possibility of an eruption, for
308 which the recorded uplift and the seismic activity appeared as clear precursors, although the
309 likelihood of an eruption was considered low by the director of the Vesuvius Observatory. On 1st
310 April 1984, a new dramatic seismic crisis, with continuous swarms throughout the morning, hit the

311 town of Pozzuoli. At this stage, the problem of the evacuation was faced, also considering the
312 possibility of an eruption inside the caldera of Campi Flegrei. In collaboration with the Central
313 Government, the evacuation plan was drawn up and, following the meetings between monitoring staff
314 and civil defence authorities it was decided to evacuate about 25,000 people from the centre of
315 Pozzuoli. The evacuees were relocated to the new settlement area of Monteruscello, which was built
316 in a few years, a few kilometres north-west of the centre of Pozzuoli, considered a safer area than the
317 coastal strip.

318 During the 1984 emergency, an effective communication system was established between the
319 monitors, the Civil Protection Service and the citizenry, and the crisis was handled with maximum
320 transparency, especially in light of the 1970 experience (Luongo, 2013). Particularly, the monitoring
321 info-centre, close to Pozzuoli, was activated to ensure the correct management and spreading of
322 information about the ongoing events. Meanwhile, as the plan was actualised the unrest seemed to
323 decrease in intensity, and in December 1984 the uplifting and seismic activity ceased, marking the
324 end of the crisis (Barberi & Carapezza, 1996). Pozzuoli remained for few years like a “ghost town”
325 while local and central governments were deciding on the future of the city. Pozzuoli was later rebuilt
326 without limiting the anthropic pressure that should have been contained within thresholds that would
327 make the volcanic risk acceptable. Today, the municipality of Pozzuoli has about 82,000 residents,
328 representing a coveted residential site for Neapolitan people.

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332 **4. The debate about the volcanic risk in the Neapolitan area**

333 The subject of volcanic risk and its mitigation in the Neapolitan area has very important implications
334 because this zone involves at least 1,500,000 people who are potentially exposed to a very large
335 eruption (Mastrolorenzo et al., 2006). Otherwise, given the long history of volcanic risk in the
336 Neapolitan area and the current very high risk of the area, two preliminary inquiries are required: i)
337 can we find a new paradigm or an alternative plan to reduce the high risk? and ii) how feasible is it
338 in the Neapolitan area? We do not have a unique response to the questions, but to analyse the issue,
339 we have to revert to the last Campi Flegrei caldera unrest between 1982 and 1984, culminating in the
340 evacuation of the town of Pozzuoli (Barberi & Carapezza, 1996). After this event, a strong debate
341 ensued (among scientists, citizens and politicians) about the possible solutions to reduce the volcanic
342 risk in the densely inhabited Neapolitan area.

343 Between 1980 and 1990, the problem of volcanic risk in the Neapolitan area was considered by the
344 National Group of Volcanology (GNV) (see De Vivo et al., 2010 and references therein), while the
345 one of territorial planning was discussed during several Italian workshops, and the few solutions
346 focused primarily on two actions (Leone, 1987; Ulisse, 1984): i) the short-term one with the
347 preparation of the evacuation plans, ii) the long-term one, which provided the actions and methods,
348 aimed to reduce the demographic pressure in the riskiest areas. As highlighted by Leone (1987), the
349 latter is not simple, because it cannot be forced, while developing a new organisational set-up of the
350 whole Campania Region would be necessary by planning a “new geography” of the services industry
351 and the productive activities, allowing a spontaneous relocation of the residents from the risk areas.

352 After the last Campi Flegrei caldera unrest ended in 1984, the volcano rested again (up to 2005), but
353 not the debate about volcanic risk. Later, responding to the solicitations and concerns emanating from
354 the scientific and institutional world, and following the foundation of the Italian Civil Protection, the
355 attention was mainly focused on Vesuvius, the most inhabited volcano of the district. The volcanic
356 risk in this area was evaluated by Scandone et al., (1993), in terms of human losses, and according to
357 the equation: $Risk = Exposed\ Value \times Vulnerability \times Hazard$ (Blong, 1996). The authors evaluated
358 the hazard based on the entire history of the volcano and identified the events likely to cause loss of
359 human lives as those with Volcanic Explosivity Index (VEI) $> \sim 3$. Later on, the first evacuation plan
360 for the Vesuvius area was released by the Civil Protection in 1995.

361 After its foundation in 1999, the Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia (INGV) became the
362 reference scientific institution for the Civil Protection, to assess the volcanic hazard and continuously
363 update it for Neapolitan volcanoes. As regards Vesuvius, the extension of the most hazardous zone
364 (i.e. the Red Zone) involves about 600,000 inhabitants, who must be evacuated in case of eruption
365 (Protezione Civile: Update of the National Emergency Plan for Vesuvius). The extension of the Red
366 Zone was obtained considering a medium energy scenario for the next eruption (a sub-plinian
367 eruption) such as the one in 1631. The emergency plan for Vesuvius foresees a part of the population
368 spontaneously moving away from the Red Zone during the pre-alarm phase (Fig. 1). Depending on
369 the state of the volcano, the actions to be taken are defined within the emergency plan by the different
370 levels of alertness in which the scientific and monitoring activities are decided upon depending on
371 the assessment of the hazard. The lowest level (a “green” alert level) corresponds to the quiescence
372 of the volcano, during which there are no significant changes in the parameters being monitored. If
373 these changes are detected, however, the protocol provides for a transition to a level of attention
374 (“yellow”), during which there is an intensification of monitoring activities and a more frequent
375 assessment of the condition of the volcano by the Civil Protection agency and the Italian
376 Commissione Grandi Rischi (Major Risks Commission). The levels above this are those of pre-alarm

377 (“orange”) and alarm (“red”), which, for the latter, involve the evacuation of the population from the
378 Red Zone. The Vesuvius evacuation plan has been updated and modified during the time. At present,
379 at least three days (compared to the previous three weeks) would be required to effectively evacuate
380 600,000 inhabitants. This should correspond to the actual possibility of forecasting the eruption with
381 this level of forewarning. The last choice was also based on the forecasting experiences of the 1980
382 Mt. Saint Helens (USA) and 1991 Pinatubo (Philippine) eruptions (Pinatubo Volcano Observatory
383 Team, 1991; Swanson et al, 1983). The plan posed, among the scientific community, a number of
384 concerns and criticisms about the actual possibility of forecasting the next eruption in advance and
385 evacuating at least 600,000 people at risk. In the framework of this debate, an alternative plan to
386 mitigate the volcanic risk of Vesuvius area was proposed by Flavio Dobran (*Vesuvius 2000 plan*,
387 Dobran 2006, 2007). Although the first work of Flavio Dobran was published in 2006, the
388 dissemination of his plan took place a few years earlier, with an intense information campaign around
389 the Vesuvius area. More than an emergency or evacuation plan, *Vesuvius 2000* proposed a new
390 paradigm of development to reduce the risk of the area. The main intention of this proposal was “...to
391 produce guidelines for transforming high-risk areas around Vesuvius into safe and prosperous
392 communities. This would be accomplished through interdisciplinary projects involving engineers,
393 environmentalists, urban planners, economists, educators, geologists, sociologists, historians, and
394 the public” (Dobran, 2007). Among the general aims of *Vesuvius 2000* plan, the decreasing of the
395 resident population density in the most-risky areas was proposed, as well as improving the resistance
396 of the buildings to seismic shaking, the quality of infrastructure and the resilience of urban centres.
397 Furthermore, Dobran (2006, 2007) showed that given the strong historical and social connection
398 between “Vesuvius people” and their land, the diminishing of urban pressure in most of the risky
399 zones represented a very long-term aim, needing a complete social, cultural, urbanistic and economic
400 reconsideration of the Vesuvius area and surroundings. This long-term action will minimise the
401 economic and social costs of the evacuation of people from the red zone in case of an eruption. The
402 great challenge of the ambitious *Vesuvius 2000* plan was therefore that people around the volcano
403 acquired the awareness of the environment in which they lived and participated in the solution of this
404 difficult conundrum (Dobran, 2006).

405 After the solution proposed by Dobran (2006, 2007), a wide literature about the methods and the
406 actions devoted to reduction and management of volcanic risk, and also of natural risks in general,
407 was proposed by different authors, and in which most detailed descriptions of the limits of each
408 solution and the case history were reported (Barcklay et al., 2008, 2015; Chester et al., 2000; Fearnley
409 et al., 2017; Jenkins & Haynes, 2011; Hansjürgens et al., 2008; Hicks et al., 2014; Hossain et al.,
410 2017; Newhall & Punongbayan, 1996; Papale, 2017; Peterson et al, 1993; Petrazzuoli & Zuccaro,
411 2004; Petrosino et al., 2004; Small & Naumann, 2001; Spence et al., 2007; Usamah & Haynes, 2012;

412 Wisner, 2003). Furthermore, some of the above researches also demonstrate that a volcanic
413 resettlement program must be directed by meaningful consultation with the impacted community, as
414 also suggested by Dobran (2006), which also shares in the decision making.

415 What happened in the period following the first releasing of the Vesuvius emergency plan and of the
416 alternative paradigm *Vesuvius 2000* proposed by Flavio Dobran? The latter was not welcomed by the
417 political establishment and remained a mere proposal. On the other hand, the former (the institutional
418 one) only partially guaranteed the restraint or decreasing of anthropic pressure around the volcano.
419 To deal with this problem, a new plan called *Vesuvia* ([https://www.viveretraivulcani.it/il-progetto-
420 vesuvia/](https://www.viveretraivulcani.it/il-progetto-vesuvia/)) was approved in 2003 by the Campania Region (Legge regionale n. 21/2003, “Legge del
421 Vesuvio”, http://www.sito.regione.campania.it/leggi_regionali2003/lr21_2003.htm). The intent of
422 this project was to lighten the demographic pressure around the Vesuvius volcano. This intent would
423 be promoted by offering economic incentives (up to 30 thousand euros) to the population (living in
424 the red zone) willing to relocate themselves outside the dangerous areas. The project expects to reduce
425 the number of people living in the red zone over a period of about 20 years by evacuating at least
426 100,000 people from this zone (Gugg, 2018). A further aim of *Vesuvia* was also the reconversion of
427 available buildings into tourist reception facilities, to create an opportunity of valorisation of the great
428 cultural and natural heritage of the Vesuvius volcano. ([http://www.cngeologi.it/wp-
429 content/uploads/2017/08/Casa-Italia_Rapporto-sicurezza-rischi_naturali-patrimonio-abitativo.pdf](http://www.cngeologi.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Casa-Italia_Rapporto-sicurezza-rischi_naturali-patrimonio-abitativo.pdf)).
430 Three years from the launch of the project, there was a reduction of residents in the red zone of only
431 0.1%, prompting the promoters of the project to abandon the endeavour. It was a resounding flop.
432 The reasons for the failure were described by Gugg (2018). Among the reasons reported, the lack of
433 involvement of the majors and the local communities in the development of the project was probably
434 the most critical. Additionally, as also described by the *Vesuvius 2000* plan (Dobran 2006, 2007), a
435 relocation of people from the red zone outside the Vesuvius volcano is very unlikely without long-
436 term economic and social policies stimulating Vesuvius people to move to safer zones. It is clear that
437 in a complex social, cultural and urban context such as that of Naples and surroundings, the choice
438 to reduce the volcanic risk by relocating a part of people in the red zones (Campi Flegrei and
439 Vesuvius) outside the most-risky areas and by increasing the volcanic perception is a very gruelling
440 challenge (Carlino, 2019). Furthermore, the policies to improve the vulnerability of edifices against
441 disasters (and reduce the risk) have rarely been adopted in Italy, as demonstrated for instance by
442 heavy damages suffered by many cities after moderate earthquakes recently (Valensise et al., 2017).
443 The main issues, in this case, are related to the actual perception of risk in general (as well as of
444 volcanic risk in particular), but mainly to the morals and personal profit of politicians in taking
445 specific actions to reduce the risk and to other social and political problems of the Neapolitan area
446 (Carlino et al., 2008; Donovan and Oppenheimer, 2015; Donovan, 2019; Luongo, 1997). For instance,

447 political timescales generally limit the amount of capital invested in the volcanic risk reduction.
448 Basically; as reported by Donovan (2019), “*if a politician is only in power for 4 years*” (and this time
449 is the best case in Italy!) “*the probability of an eruption at a particular volcano within that timeframe*
450 *is usually very low, and so, the personal-political cost-benefit analysis indicates that there are more*
451 *socially acceptable policies to invest in*”. This is possibly one of the main reasons why a long-term
452 plan for risk reduction such as *Vesuvius2000* was rejected by the political establishment. The example
453 reported by Donovan (2019) appears particularly true for the Neapolitan area, where the volcanic risk
454 increased exponentially during the last 50 years, and no policies have contained this trend. This aspect
455 was also debated by De Vivo et al., (2010) who stated that while the Italian Civil Protection tries to
456 convince people to dislocate from the risk zone, it does not take a stand against the illegal buildings
457 in the red zone. Otherwise, from the institutional point of view, the latter problem does not involve
458 Civil Protection, because the management control of illegal buildings and their compliance with the
459 seismic risk primarily involves the municipalities (*Decreto Legislativo 18 agosto 2000, n. 267; Testo*
460 *unico delle disposizioni legislative e regolamentari in materia edilizia, d.P.R. n. 380/2001*). In this
461 regard, the seismic risk associated with the volcano-tectonics earthquakes is not neglectable as well,
462 at least for Campi Flegrei and Ischia. A representative case is the Island of Ischia. In 1883, the island
463 was hit by a moderate and shallow earthquake (with magnitude around 4.5, Cubellis and Luongo,
464 1998), which devastated its northern sector (Casamicciola town) and had more than 2300 victims
465 (Carlino et al., 2010b). This event was followed by an almost seismic silence, up to 2017. At least
466 during the last 25 years, the scientific community urged the island local authorities and the
467 municipality of Casamicciola to take actions favouring the mitigation of seismic risk in the island
468 (Cubellis and Luongo, 1998; Luongo et al., 2012). However, this message went unnoticed, up to 21
469 August 2017, when an $M_L4.0$ earthquake occurred in Casamicciola town and caused two victims,
470 tens of injuries and heavy damage in the upper part of the municipality (De Novellis et al., 2018).
471 From the above considerations, it appears that conciliating the emergency plans, drawing the red
472 zones of volcanoes, and regulating for the seismic risk, with the actual economic and land-use
473 planning policies in the Neapolitan area are a hard purpose to attain.

474 Recently, in August 2016, the emergency planning for the volcanic risk of the Campi Flegrei was
475 updated (Protezione Civile: Update of the National Emergency Plan for Campi Flegrei), and the area
476 of the new Red Zone to be evacuated as a precautionary measure in case of an eruption, was defined,
477 together with the Yellow Zone, which is potentially exposed to a high concentration of falling ash
478 (Fig. 1). As for Vesuvius, the Red Zone and the Yellow Zone were defined by the Civil Protection in
479 agreement with the Campania Region and based on the indications provided by the scientific
480 community. As a whole, and considering that an emergency plan for the island of Ischia (Gulf of
481 Naples) is still lacking, about 1,000,000 people could be directly affected by a moderate to large

482 eruption (VEI 3–4) in the red zones of Campi Flegrei and Vesuvius, respectively. The high number
483 of people exposed to the risk and the uncertainty in eruptions forecasting (Sparks, 2003) motivated
484 some authors to criticise the evacuation plans and the risk reduction policies in the Neapolitan district
485 (De Natale et al., 2020; Rolandi, 2010). Particularly and recently, De Natale et al. (2020) have
486 questioned how the very high volcanic risk in the Neapolitan area can be effectively mitigated. The
487 authors focused the attention on two evacuation-related problems: i) the extremely high number of
488 people to evacuate in case of an impending eruption; ii) the lack of plans today to rehabilitate such a
489 high number of evacuated people (600,000 and 700,000 for Campi Flegrei Caldera and Vesuvius,
490 respectively). The analysis of De Natale et al. (2020) is not new, since their main conclusions, as well
491 as the weaknesses they highlighted in respect to the present emergency plans, were already stated by
492 other authors, and in particular by Dobran (2006, 2007, *Vesuvius 2000* plan). It is important to
493 highlight that some works criticising the evacuation plans (De Natale et al., 2020; Dobran 2006) do
494 not exclude their effectiveness if a number of actions to mitigate the risk are carried on. Unfortunately,
495 what we have seen during the last 40 years of volcanic risk management in the Neapolitan area is a
496 predominance of emergency policies in respect to that of prevention. The result is that the present
497 volcanic risk, given the current high values of society, appears non-acceptable.

498 **5. The role of volcanologists**

499 In the framework of the discussed topics, a fundamental issue is the role of volcanologists in
500 managing volcanic risk and crises. It was, in many cases, misinterpreted by people living in the
501 Neapolitan area. The role and responsibilities of volcanologists in volcanic hazard evaluation, risk
502 mitigation and crisis response have been outlined by the International Association for Volcanology
503 and Chemistry of the Earth's Interior (IAVCEI). Their main responsibility is to improve the scientific
504 knowledge of volcanoes to better understand how they work and provide the most robust eruption
505 forecasts, and to educate the local and global community (mainly exposed to eruptions) to the
506 volcanic risk, making people more perceptive of the risk itself. The latter is fundamental to evoking
507 an amenable response from people to an evacuation (IAVCEI, 2016). Anyway, the main task of
508 volcanologists is to provide as robust a forecast of an eruption as possible. It is well-known how
509 problematic it is to obtain a clear picture of the progression of volcano processes during unrests and
510 to understand what the actual state of the volcano is (critical state or not). In general (but not always),
511 as the eruption approaches the number and the amplitude (or energy) of geophysical and geochemical
512 signals increases, the uncertainty in the forecast should decrease (Carlino, 2019; Decker, 1986;
513 Kilburn, 2003; Robertson et al., 2016; Sparks, 2003; Sparks & Cashman, 2017;) (Fig. 4). An unsolved
514 question is whether, and at what moment, the volcano approaches the critical state during an unrest;
515 that is the moment when the physical processes occurring within the volcano are irreversible and the

516 volcano erupts (Fig. 4). This is the most critical issue because the promulgation of a false alarm or a
517 missed alarm will adversely affect 600,000–1,500,000 people living in the Neapolitan area (De Natale
518 et al., 2020). During the last 20 years, the monitoring networks for the surveillance of the Vesuvius,
519 Campi Flegrei and Ischia volcanoes have been greatly improved, reaching one of the best standards
520 worldwide (www.ov.ingv.it). This effort should correspond to a reduction of the uncertainty in
521 forecasting the next eruption although it depends on the capacity of volcanologists to correctly
522 decipher the volcano signals. Beyond the efforts of scientists to improve their understanding of
523 volcanic processes and provide more robust forecasts, communicating the systemic uncertainty of the
524 forecast to the public is fundamental. This can be done effectively only with a proficient direct
525 communication network between volcanologists and the media (Haynes et al, 2008). This is also a
526 very important topic, particularly when the communication of an ongoing volcanic crisis involves
527 large metropolitan areas like Naples and its surroundings. The example of what occurred during the
528 1982–84 unrest is emblematic of this view. During that crisis, a unique channel of communication
529 was established between the Vesuvius Observatory and the press while the observatory was
530 continuously communicating with the Minister for the Coordination of the Civil Protection (Luongo,
531 2013). The activation of the information centre for the citizens of Pozzuoli and the straight link
532 between the latter and the direction of the Vesuvius Observatory generated confidence among people.
533 How would it have turned out if the same crisis had happened today? The unrest and the evacuation
534 at Pozzuoli occurred in an era without the internet and social media (Facebook, Twitter and
535 WhatsApp) which, nowadays, represent the main rapid dissemination channels of news and
536 information. Social media platforms are disruptors of traditional communication, opening up new
537 opportunities for scientists to communicate (Dong et al., 2020) but, on the other hand, bestowing the
538 right to evaluate or criticise scientific decisions on everyone. This could lead to misinterpretations or
539 distortions of scientific broadcasts and information and, consequently, to false alarms or unjustified
540 panic among the population, in case of a volcanic crisis. This circumstance, albeit not related to a
541 volcanic crisis, occurred recently before the commencement of the Campi Flegrei Deep Drilling
542 Project, at Campi Flegrei, a project aimed at scientifically investigating the caldera (Carlino, 2019).
543 The project worried many local residents about the possible disturbance that the scientific drilling
544 would unleash in the volcanic system. Just before the onset of the drilling, the declarations spreading
545 on social networks and newspapers assumed an increasingly alarming tone (sometimes to the limit of
546 the paradoxical) such as to seriously worry the municipal administration of Naples, which had cleared
547 the drilling. The climax was reached in October 2010 when the national newspaper “Il Mattino” led
548 with the front-page title: “If you touch the volcano, Naples will explode” (Carlino, 2019, page 265).
549 The project was temporarily suspended by the Naples administration to further clarify its aim and
550 associated risk. This fact highlights that the position of volcanologists in communicating the hazard
551 and the risk in densely inhabited regions like Naples is very tricky because the communication occurs

552 within a complex social system where many people exposed to the risk are involved. Furthermore, a
553 number of studies demonstrate that Neapolitans have a low perception of risk and a low level of risk
554 education (Carlino et al., 2010b; Ricci et al., 2013).

555 As a whole, beyond the effort that scientists are expending to improve the robustness of the volcanic
556 eruptions forecast, a further effort is necessary to promulgate the culture of volcanic risk and promote
557 open debates with the local population and authorities. In other words, volcanologists should be more
558 present on the territory (not only during an ongoing volcanic unrest) and they should be an open book,
559 not an acquired skill (Fearnley et al., 2017; Goodstain, 2010). This approach is fundamental to
560 improving the confidence of people in a scientific institution such as INGV.

561

562 **6. Conclusions**

563 The past experiences concerning the management of volcanic risk in the Neapolitan area reveal the
564 complexity of devising a collaboration around the active volcanoes of Vesuvius, Campi Flegrei
565 caldera and Ischia Island to reduce the risk in such densely inhabited areas. The history of volcanic
566 risk in this area demonstrates the tendency to not consider, or to underestimate, the risk (which
567 otherwise is a human attitude). Nonetheless, we cannot reduce the problem of the high volcanic risk
568 of the Neapolitan area to this latter consideration only. The present development of the urbanised
569 areas around the volcanoes of Naples is the result of a very long history and stratification of different
570 cultures and populations that settled the Neapolitan area and its surroundings as a scenic and useful
571 place to live, since the Bronze Age. This history left a huge cultural heritage in its wake but also a
572 demanding socio-economic condition, especially around Vesuvius. Thus, as also highlighted by
573 Galliard (2008), in many cases the historical and cultural heritage and political economy remain of
574 much greater importance and may override the choice of people in the face of volcanic hazards. This
575 fact emphasises the importance of understanding the complex contexts of the Neapolitan area in
576 proposing policies to reduce volcanic risk. It appears evident, for instance, that the choice of people
577 not to relocate themselves outside the red zone of Vesuvius and to remain in their native towns,
578 despite the perceived threats, has little to do with volcanic activity. This point, already discussed by
579 Galliard (2008), suggests that, in such a complex social context, the policies for volcanic risk
580 mitigation need to go far beyond only prevention of relatively rare events. A different and more
581 general approach is thus required, and rational access and the use of resources to adapt the social and
582 economic development of the area to its natural vocation should be aimed at. This is a long-term
583 objective conflicting with the short-sighted policies adopted by the Campania Region and the Central
584 Government. Consequently, the proposals to re-convert the riskiest areas of Neapolitan volcanoes

585 into lower-risk zones using a different (and long-term) paradigm of development (e.g. Dobran, 2006,
586 2007) are struggling to take off. Simultaneously, the proposed economic incentives (*Vesuvia* project)
587 to relocate people from the red zone (at Vesuvius) towards safer areas was a failure as well.
588 Accordingly, these failures first have to do with a wrong territorial policy, and secondly with the
589 volcanology.

590 Furthermore, at least during the last 25 years, the policies for the reduction of volcanic risk in the
591 Neapolitan area have been disconnected from their natural, social and politico-economic context.
592 This is possibly the result of a not so holistic approach to the problem of volcanic risk reduction
593 which, particularly in this area, is unavoidable and, on the contrary, requires an openly discussed
594 method between academics of all disciplines, policymakers and stakeholders (Dovovan, 2019).
595 Finally, after about 40 years of debates around the volcanic risk in the Neapolitan area, an analysis
596 of the reasons why the strategies aimed to reduce the risk in this area systematically failed is required.
597 This step is necessary to propose more reliable solutions for the risk reduction in a very large and
598 urbanised territory such as that of Neapolitan volcanoes. A further effort is also required by
599 Neapolitan scientists to connect the territorial governance structures and local (at risk) communities
600 to the scientific network. In this framework, scientists must pay further attention to avoid
601 politicisation of volcanology when advising the authorities (Donovan, 2019).

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603 **Competing interests of interest:** The author declares that he has no conflict.

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607

608 **Figure captions**

609 Fig.1. The Neapolitan volcanic area with the three active volcanoes, Vesuvius, Campi Flegrei caldera
610 and the Island of Ischia. The limits of the red zones of the evacuation plans for Vesuvius and Campi
611 Flegrei caldera are reported, respectively (from www.protezionecivile.gov). More than 1,000,000 of
612 people are living in both the red zones. A plan for the island of Ischia is currently in progress (base
613 map is from Google Earth).

614 Fig. 2. A timeline of volcanic activity history at Vesuvius, Campi Flegrei and Ischia Island. The most
615 important eruptions are reported. Red and blue color indicates increasing and decreasing of volcanic
616 activity, respectively.

617 Fig. 3. The city of Naples with the location of the eruptive vents associated with different eruptive
618 periods. The dotted line represents the eastern boundary of the caldera of Campi Flegrei (modified
619 after Scarpati et al., 2013 and Carlino, 2019; base map is from Google Earth).

620 Fig. 4. A qualitative sketch describing the possible state of a volcano approaching an eruption and its
621 forecast reliability. For a quiescent volcano the reawakening is generally associated with the onset of
622 seismic activity indicating the variation of stress field within the volcano. The latter is generally due
623 to circulation of pressurized fluids in the crust and, eventually, to magma migration at shallow level.
624 This dynamic is accompanied by others precursors (ground deformations and variation of fluids
625 emission) which make the forecast more reliable as the eruption is approached. The point at which
626 the volcano overcomes the critical state, is the moment (t_c) in which the physical processes occurring
627 within the volcano are irreversible, that is to say the volcano will erupt. Volcanologists cannot predict
628 the time (t_e) because the processes are chaotic and the forecast has a probabilistic nature (after,
629 Carlino, 2019).

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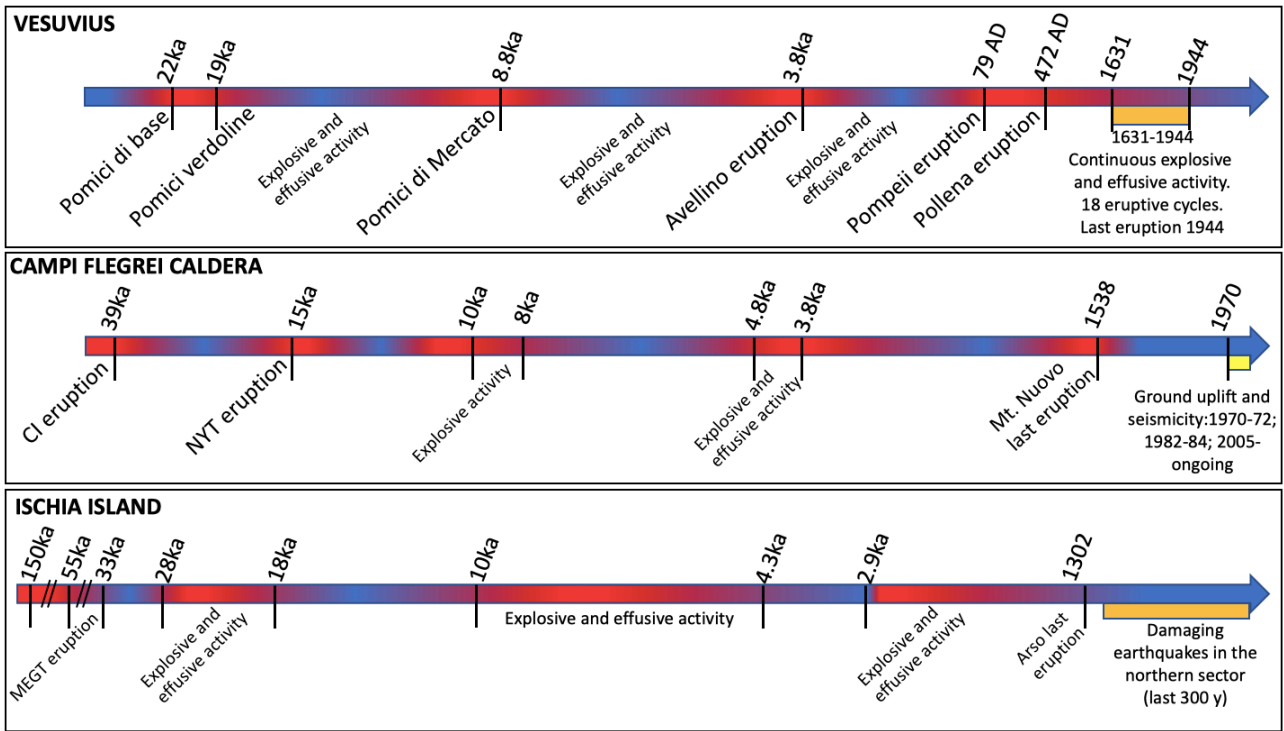
641 **Figures**



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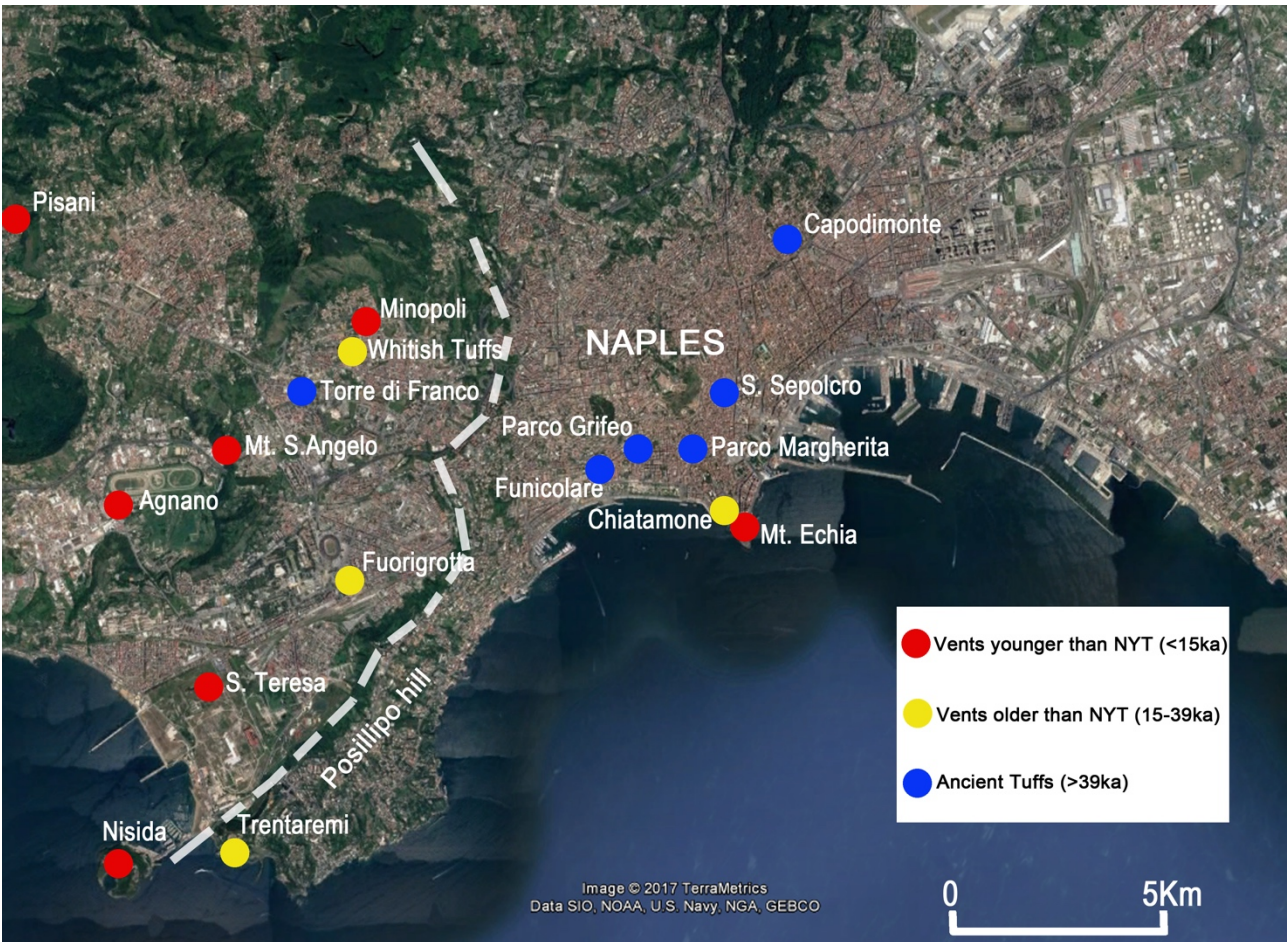
643 **Fig.1**

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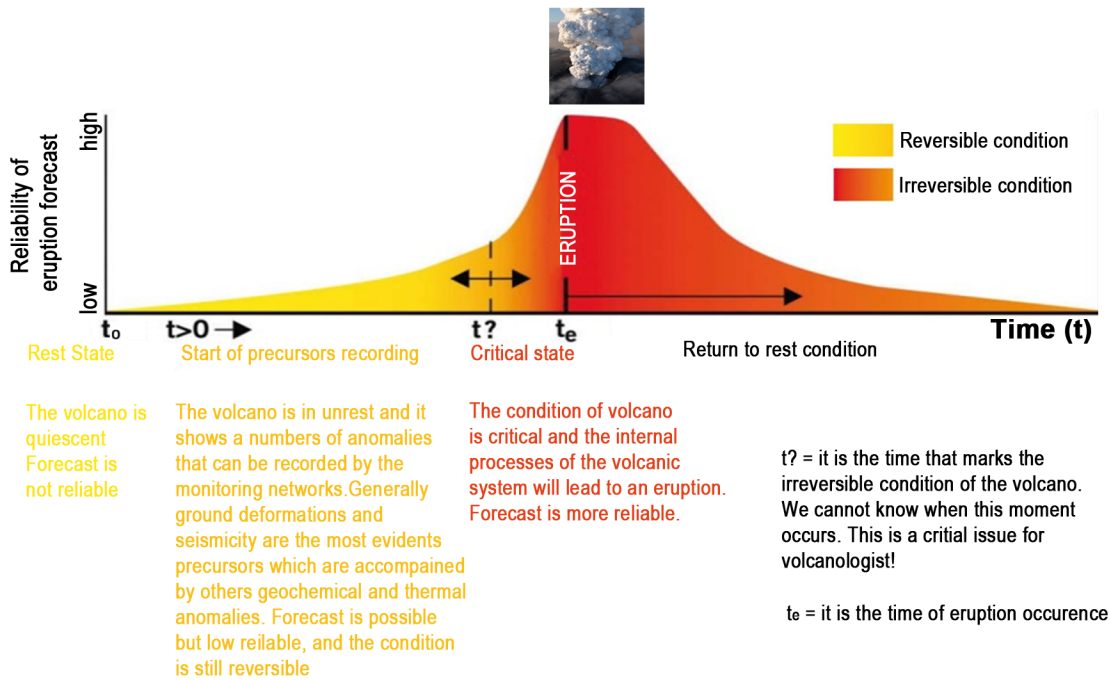
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Fig.2



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Fig. 3



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670 **Fig.4**

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