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Rights of Resistance: The Garbage Struggles for Environmental Justice in Campania, Italy

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Even when we manage to touch on the productive, ontological dimension of the problematic and the resistances that arise there, however, we will still not be in the position . . . to point to any already existing and concrete elaboration of a political alternative to Empire. And no such effective blueprint will ever arise from a theoretical articulation such as ours. It will arise only in practices. At a certain point in his thinking Marx needed the Paris Commune in order to make the leap and conceive communism in concrete terms as an effective alternative to capitalist society.

—Hardt and Negri, Empire, 206

Introduction: Amazonia in the Backyard

The recorder was already off, and we were leaving. We had talked with T. for almost an hour about her involvement in the movement against the building of a massive garbage dump in Chiaiano, a hilly and wooded northwestern suburb of Naples, Italy (ACE 1w.a). 1 We were starting a collection of interviews; although we wanted an open conversation, we still had some key questions that we wanted to ask our “active citizens.” One was about their previous political engagement; was this anti-garbage mobilization their first experience as “political activists”? In the literature on the environmental justice movement, the issue of activists’ political experience has always been controversial, with some stressing the naïveté of those movements, which are composed of people with no political experience, 2 and others

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1ACE (Archives of the Ecological Conflicts) is an oral history project by the authors and Simon Maurano, interviewing people involved in the struggles over garbage and incinerators. The original project is in the process of expanding, gathering various collections of interviews made independently by several scholars. See www.landscapeofresistance.webnode.com.

2Lois Gibbs, leader of the Love Canal movement, declared in a well-known video interview that she had been just a “normal housewife” before getting involved in the fight for environmental justice. See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PrzqPego4a/.
emphasizing their connections with the civil rights movement and activism for social justice. Like many other activists we had interviewed, T. had no doubt; she was just a “regular housewife” dragged into the political realm by the need to defend her and her family’s health and neighborhood. One should never put too much faith in technology, though. Once the recorder was off, we noticed a beautiful photograph hanging on the wall of T.’s dining room. It was a picture of some sort of campground in the middle of a forest, and T. was there among other people. But the forest in question did not look like the chestnut woods near Chiaiano where the controversial dump was planned, nor were the other people the usual Neapolitan activists. In fact, that picture took us to a place far away from Naples: Amazonia, where T. had spent some time working with the Sem Terra movement. “Oh no, that was not politics, it was through the church that I went there” (ACE 1w.a), she explained off the record, leaving us with a feeling of how the space of politics, personal mobilization, and the self-narratives about who we are, are not obvious issues. That picture suggested something about the issue of scales in which environmental struggles must be placed: is Chiaiano a localized conflict affected by a NIMBY syndrome, or is it rather part of the many environmental justice conflicts emerging all around the world?

We agree with Fagan (2004) that “the relation between the global and the local is never a straightforward one.” In fact, we believe that Amazonia and Chiaiano wood are closer than we used to think. We can recognize, in both cases, a strong quest for environmental justice and people fighting against a mix of violent repression and rule by “experts.”

Combining the interviews gathered in our Archive of the Ecological Conflicts with our own experience as activists, we will address two main questions: How have the struggles for environmental justice changed the space of politics, the forms of personal mobilization, and their narrative? And how do garbage struggles in Naples shape the idea and practice of citizenship in their articulation with the legal and discursive imposition of a permanent “state of emergency?” In the very making of the conflict, new subjectivities are shaped, representing themselves as “uncivil society,” which challenge the governmentality project from below (Foucault 1991). In this paper we understand governmentality as the ensemble of the practices through which governments produce “good” citizens—that is, subjects best suited to accomplish the government’s policies. Hence, we aim to “free” the Campania3 case from alleged localism. The garbage struggles of Naples have not yet entered into the global narrative on environmental justice and the fight for ecological democracy. We believe they should, and our research aims to place them within the broader context of this counter-hegemonic cosmopolitan mobilization (Santos and Rodriguez-Garavito 2005).

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3Campania is Italy’s second largest region. Nearly 6 million people live in its 5,250 square miles (13,590 square kilometers). Campania is bordered to the west by the Mediterranean Sea, and its capital is Naples.
Campania at the Forefront

Campania is a region in the southern part of Italy, one of the poorest and most densely populated in the country. The waste conflict addressed in this paper takes place mainly in the metropolitan area of Naples, a large and complex urban/rural system. With more than 4 million inhabitants, it is the most densely populated area in Italy and one of the most overcrowded areas in Europe. The production of waste per capita in Campania is not higher than in the rest of Italy. Campania has nearly 10 percent of the total national population but produces 9 percent of Italy’s urban waste and 4 percent of its total national hazardous waste (APAT 2008). Nevertheless, Campania, and Naples in particular, are performing poorly in terms of waste-sorted collection and recycling. In 2007, just 13.5 percent of Campania’s waste was sorted collection, while the national average was 27.5 percent (Ispra 2008). However, none of the conventional indicators measuring waste management shows that the garbage situation in Campania is at a crisis point. The only useful indicator is the density of waste disposed—that is, the kilograms of waste produced daily per square kilometer (D’Alisa, et al. 2012). Indeed, with 491 kg/d/km², the density of waste disposed in Campania is double the national average. In addition to the legal disposal of waste, Campania is also strongly impacted by the illegal traffic in toxic waste, which, by

Figure 1. Map of Campania
Throughout the ‘80s
An illegal joint venture among the Camorra, state apparatus and enterprises of the north of Italy started to use Campania land as the ultimate disposing site of hazardous waste.

1980s
Judicial power closed landfills deemed exhausted or illegal.
Early in the ‘90s

1994
National government declared the “state of emergency,” creating a special agency, the Committee for the Waste Emergency in Campania, which was entrusted to solve the problem.

1990s
The Commissioner for waste emergency in Campania issued a public tender for the construction and management of the waste facilities. FIBE, a consortium of Italian and German enterprises won the tender.

1998

2000s
The journal Lancet Oncology published “The Triangle of Death,” which correlated illegal dumps with the incidence of certain kinds of tumors in the area around Acerra.

2004
In Acerra, the location of the incinerator, a large and violent clash among police and citizens took place, marking the beginning of the period of harsh repression.

2007
The Commissioner tried to reopen the old landfill in Pianura, a district in Naples. For different reasons, neither the people nor the Camorra wanted it. The violent clash with the police in Pianura turned the waste emergency in Campania into an international issue.

2008
The government issued Decree No. 90, which makes protests in the vicinity of landfills, incinerators, or any facility related to waste management a felony.

Throughout the ‘80s

Figure 2. Chronological sketch of the Campania waste crisis

definition, is extremely difficult to quantify. There are approximately 2,500 highly contaminated sites in Campania today.

With the legal landfills filled to capacity (D’Alisa and Armiero 2011), spiralling amounts of illegal waste, and the absence of a regional waste management plan, in 1994 the central government declared a regional waste emergency and delegated full power for waste management in Campania to a special authority: the Committee for the Waste Emergency in Campania (Commissariato di Governo per l’Emergenza Rifiuti in Campania, hereafter CWE). In 1998 FIBE, a consortium of Italian and German enterprises, won the public tender for the construction of the waste facilities, which included two incinerators, and the management of the entire waste cycle. From its inception, CWE mishandled the garbage crisis. Instead of seeking the most effective and efficient technology and equipment for the job, it awarded the tender based on the lowest cost of the project and promises to get the operation up and running most quickly. Furthermore, it is arguable that the “delivery or pay” provision, which requires each municipality to send a certain amount of garbage to the incinerator or pay a penalty, has actually contributed to the low rate of recycling in Naples and Campania.

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4The Italian NGO, Legambiente, which coined the term “ecofamia,” has estimated that 13 million tons of waste have been illegally disposed of in Campania between 2006 and 2008 (Legambiente 2009, 79).
Why Campania is an Environmental Justice Case and What it Implies for Democracy

T. is one of the activists from a grassroots organization fighting against the so-called “waste emergency” in Naples. Like thousands of other people from Campania, T. rejects having to pay the price for a policy of waste disposal based on dumps and incinerators—a plan that sacrifices some areas for the benefit of “the rest” and, above all, for the unending spiral of producing-consuming-removing.

The struggle over garbage and incinerators in Campania must be framed within the worldwide movement for environmental justice (EJ), which involves the unequal distribution of burdens and risks; the creation of “sacrifice zones”; the usual path of least resistance targeting low-income, peripheral communities; the denial strategy that governments and private corporations use regarding environmental and health damages; and the exclusion from the decision-making process of the people most affected by the very decisions (Bullard 1990; Martínez-Alier 2002).

According to Low and Gleeson (1998), the term environmental justice indicates the struggles for an equal distribution of environmental risks and benefits among classes, races, and genders. As in the risk society theorized by Ulrich Beck, EJ activists claim their right to be protected from any kind of harm and demand the application of the precautionary principle instead of pollute-and-pay strategies. However, while Beck stressed the post-class character of the risk society, arguing that no social status barriers could actually stop the harm coming from modernity (Beck 1992, 35–36; 91–102), an EJ approach goes exactly in the opposite direction. Class, gender, and race are primary in the distribution of risks.

Therefore, EJ expanded not only the boundaries of citizens’ rights to live, work, study, and play in a healthy environment, but also the boundaries of the “environment”; it does not include just parks, wilderness, and landscapes, but everything surrounding humans (Novotny 2000). Actually, the very frontier between surrounding and surrounded is blurred by the EJ paradigm, placing the human body at the crossroads of this meeting. As Marx has written, humans are natural objects, and their bodies are porous entities in a dialectical relationship with external nature (Merchant 2005, 143). Thus, defending the environment and preserving human health become the same struggle (Armiero 2008, 63–64).

6The fact that some of the actors in the Campania conflict founded the Italian Network on Social and Environmental Justice shows that this definition is not just a hypothesis of the authors. See http://www.reteambientalesociale.org/argomenti/giustizia-ambientale-e-sociale.html.
7“The precautionary principle states that if an action or policy has a suspected risk of causing harm to the public or to the environment, in the absence of scientific consensus that the action or policy is harmful, the burden of proof that it is not harmful falls on those taking the action.” Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Precautionary_principle.
8See Faber 1998 for more on class and risk exposures.
According to Robert Bullard, although class is a significant issue, EJ has always basically been a racial issue (Bullard 1990, xvi). Of course, in the United States the race issue is a constitutive character of that society and provides a powerful discourse in terms of political mobilization and legal recognition. Nevertheless, even Bullard recognizes that after race, class is the main variable affecting the unequal distribution of environmental burdens and benefits (Bullard 1990, 138).

Therefore, in the absence of racially discriminated minorities, can we frame the garbage struggle in Naples as an EJ issue? We believe we can on two counts: first, because at the local level, individual communities such as Chiaiano are targeted to become a “wasteland”; and second, because the region of Campania—one of the poorest in Italy—has become the cheap trash can of the rich industries of the North (Iacuelli 2007, 13–15; 47–48). The latter have been able to shift the cost of earning their profits to Campania residents, employing the Camorra, the Neapolitan mafia, to illegally dispose of their hazardous waste for significantly less than it costs to dispose of it legally.

Thus, environmental justice conflicts are occurring in Campania. Furthermore, we believe these conflicts should be seen and analyzed as an experiment in new forms of participation, which are reshaping the borders among politics, science, and the self. As the Campania conflict makes clear, a just society must include the environment in the political sphere; for it is from here that the EJ and ecological democracy discourse has risen.

Historically, the relationship between ecology and democracy has been a controversial issue, and remains so today (Bramwell 1985; Stephens 2001). Tensions regarding conceptions of democracy are evident in the most radical environmental movements. For example, when Earth First! declares that no compromise is admissible in defense of Mother Earth, the organization is challenging the core of every “real” democratic system—that is, compromise (Ball 2006, 133). Several scholars have stressed the impossibility of democracy, as we understand it, to deal with complex environmental problems, which should be decided by environmental experts (Ophuls 1977; Catton 1980; Heilbroner 1991). At the other end of the spectrum, others have argued that environmentalism results in “green Calvinism,” the tendency in environmental politics to impose personal lifestyle choices through a strong centralized power (Doherty and de Geus 1996, 3).

The counterargument has focused on the necessity of decentralizing power; the slogan “small is beautiful” has been applied not just to the economy but also to political engineering, imagining a world of small communities in which citizens are

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9Antonello Petrillo, referring to a longstanding tradition of political discourse which has “racialized” the differences between Northern and Southern Italy, has argued that a racial narrative is hidden in the Campania case (Petrillo 2009, 20–23). According to that characterization, the South was a provincial but still radical otherness, repository of primitiveness, savagery and archaism, the archetypal land of any kind of pre-modern rebellion (Armiero 2011, 62–75). The same concepts, imaginaries, and key words and phrases have been employed to stigmatize the current waste crisis.
involved in decision-making processes rather than being simple targets of specific (environmental) policies. The ideal model is a participatory or direct democracy as opposed to representative democracy.

The direct involvement of citizens in the development of the waste management plan is completely absent in Campania. Indeed, the 1994 declaration of the state of emergency regarding waste management has imposed an authoritarian system. Therefore, the environmental struggles in the region should be analyzed as a crisis of democracy rather than a case of waste emergency (D’Alisa, et al. 2010).

**Beyond Democracy, or the Perpetual State of Emergency**

As justice, democracy, and the environment are connected, so too are the lack of democracy, environmental injustice, and the environment intertwined. Campania is a clear example of this relationship. Eleven Commissioners have been appointed to solve the waste crisis in Campania. Under the guise of the state of emergency, which guarantees the power to bypass laws and procedures in the name of urgent needs, they imposed solutions that violated European, Italian, and regional laws.

We believe that the emergency regime has not only granted legal justification for the environmental injustice but is actually a pillar for perpetuating it. The alleged state of emergency has effectively silenced opposition, enabled the illegal disposal of toxic waste to continue, and hidden, if not the complicity, then at least the inefficiency of local governments. Through both legal repression and repression via propaganda, the state of emergency has erased even the possibility of alternatives, shifting public attention away from the issue of long-term and structural environmental injustice to that of managing the “emergency” by means of technocratic rule. Therefore, to understand the Campania garbage crisis and place it within the larger experience of the environmental justice movement, we need to look at the state of permanent emergency as a political response to that crisis and understand how it has depoliticized the issue of unequal distribution of environmental burdens and risk.

Clearly, a garbage crisis that has gone on for nearly 20 years is anything but an emergency, which *The Oxford Reference Dictionary* (1986) defines as “a sudden, urgent, usually unexpected occurrence or occasion requiring immediate action.” Is the characterization of the garbage crisis as an emergency just another bit of Italian folklore? Everyone knows that Italy, and especially its South, is a land where what is temporary likely becomes permanent, and legality has always been challenged by the exception, blurring the borders between what is legal and illegal.

But the case of the waste emergency is different. It is not the daily beyond-the-rules arrangement of a chaotic Mediterranean city; this time it is the State that has imposed this arrangement and declared a state of emergency in Campania. While the state of emergency creates a legal limbo in which the regular rules are suspended,
politically it opened the way for radical changes, offering up the society as a gigantic laboratory for testing new theories and practices, which happened to offer some groups the opportunity of making huge profits (Agamben 2005; Klein 2007, 156).

The Campania case is a patent example of Klein’s shock doctrine; according to judicial investigations, the garbage crisis has been a deliberate strategy put into place by the Commissioner of Waste Emergency and the Impregilo corporation to impose their waste disposal regime in order to gain the maximum profit from the sale and rent of land for the storage of garbage.

As stated earlier, we believe that the option to use the tool of imposing an emergency and, above all, retaining it for about 20 years becomes the central issue in this crisis. The state of emergency gives special powers to the deputy officer running the CWE, removes the issue from the “normal” democratic dialectic, bypasses rules and procedures (including an environmental impact assessment), and finally, allows an increase in repression against any kind of dissent.

We consider the state of emergency to be a powerful manifestation of the governmentality project (Foucault 1991), aiming to rule over people’s bodies and spaces. Its implementation leaves basically two options: adapting to the measures imposed or being outside the law, rhetorically and legally speaking.

Under such a regime, asserting the right to live in a healthy environment becomes an act of rebellion. We use the word rebellion intentionally to stress the “primitiveness” that, according to the mainstream narrative, characterized this resistance. Governmentality proposes “rational” and “modern” solutions, which seek to regulate both the flux of materials and the organization of spaces—even people’s bodies—under its control. It asserts that in situations like that of Campania, the space of politics must be drastically reduced. Thus, the market, technology, and scientific expertise should dictate solutions to the crisis.

The effect of the state of emergency, however, has been quite the opposite of what authorities intended—that is, the depoliticization of the issue and the imposition of a technocratic approach. Instead everything—science, technology, the market, spaces, and bodies—has become political. Fighting for the politicization

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10 On the state of emergency as a global characteristic of the “late neoliberal regimes,” see Petrillo 2009, 28–31.
11 Impregilo is the main company in the FIBE consortium.
12 This was revealed in the judicial inquiry code named “Rompiballe,” which has a double meaning in Italian: “breaking the bales (that is, the so-called eco-bales, fuel from garbage),” which are accumulated in millions of tons of waste that are waiting to be burned in the incinerator, and a more colloquial meaning, which might be translated as “being a pain in the neck.” According to the prosecutors, the corporation triggered the emergency in order to force the authorities to accept their requests (Saraceno 2007, 326). For more on this judicial inquiry, see Sodano and Trocchia (2010, 296–308); and, especially, Rabitti (2008, 138).
13 On the mainstream discourse about the primitiveness of the protesters, see Petrillo 2009, 36.
14 On the depoliticization of environmental politics as a tool to prevent “the politicization of particulars” and elude “choice and freedom (other than those tolerated by the consensus),” see Swyngedouw 2009, 609–610.
of the process and of the very objects in question—the metabolic relationships linking production and consumption with the environment and people’s bodies—is what is at stake. This, in turn, creates room for conflict and democratic participation.

**Resisting What? Primitive Incinerators and Modern Rebels**

It is not easy to describe the CWE’s exit strategy from the crisis, since it is difficult to illustrate something that is based on ambiguity, lack of clarity, and even secrecy. Furthermore, the imposition of the emergency plan confuses stopgap measures with structural solutions.

At the same time, it is easy to understand the government plan to deal with the emergency, since it has been based on two simple pillars: incinerators and landfills. The fulcrum of the entire plan has always been the incinerator. Decree 90 authorized the construction of four incinerators in Campania. A national law authorized state financial support for the construction and management of the incinerators, designating them as renewable energy producers. This, in turn, made them profitable enterprises, because as with other renewable energy producers, the incinerators are permanently subsidized by a 7 percent increase in electric bills paid by the citizenry, independent of future and rather improbable profits. The incinerator at Acerra, the only one now operating in Campania, produces 107 Mw—which translates into approximately €100,000,000 per year in revenue and perfectly matches the emergency philosophy. The shock of the garbage crisis makes it possible to impose technical and rapid solutions through which the corporation can accumulate huge profits because it is allowed to socialize the costs. This is indeed a story of cost shifting success rather than market failure (Martínez-Alier, et al. 1998, 281).

Apart from incinerators, landfills are the only other solution to deal with the garbage that the government will consider. Despite the fact that the Impregilio Corporation had won the public bid for the construction and management of the waste facilities in Campania on the grounds that its bid was the lowest and it promised a short construction time, construction took about nine years instead of the 300 days in the proposal. The delay meant that the garbage—both the urban waste and the storage of millions of tons of ecoballe, or fuel, from garbage destined for the incinerator—kept piling up (D’Alisa, 2010a). In addition, the plants intended to produce fuel from waste have never worked properly. Consequently, the state of emergency has dealt with the situation by allowing waste that does not meet the standard for fuel to be burned in an incinerator (Rabitti 2008).

15 Judge Rosanna Saraceno writes in her judgment against the Impreglio Corp. that “they have not complied with the terms of the contract with regard to the production of CDR (fuel from garbage), therefore using false CER codes (European Catalogue of Waste) which were not representative of the waste it was actually treating and disposing of.” The judge also accused the corporation of covering up functional problems with the CDR production facilities (Saraceno 2007, 5–6).
The architects of this plan appeal to modernization, scientific knowledge, and promise a win-win scenario in the form of monetary compensation and/or jobs for the communities sacrificed to host the waste infrastructures. They characterize the EJ activists in the opposite way—technophobic, unscientific, and NIMBY-oriented. This narrative portrays the South as a land of backwardness that lacks civic-mindedness (Banfield 1958; Ferragina 2009).

Although we believe that a huge part of this conflict has been fought rhetorically in words and narratives intended to delegitimize any opposition, the state of emergency has also employed violence and repression as a basic ingredient of its strategy. Former Prime Minister Berlusconi’s law (Decree 90/2008, which became law 123/2008) brought in the military to repress opposition and prevent the possibility of mediation. The resulting suspension of the ordinary rights of citizenship was the logical consequence of the emergency strategy.

We have decided to focus on the violent repression against the movement for several reasons: First, the monopoly on legal violence is one of the most relevant constituencies of the State, and the state of emergency blurs the borders between what has been considered a “proper” use of violence and its abuse. Second, the feeling of being abused by those, namely, the police, who should protect la gente perbene (the good people) is a recurring topic in interviews with the activists who emphasize the striking contradiction between the extreme violence used against them and the unwillingness of the State to confront the Camorra’s dumping of all sorts of toxic waste. In the mainstream narrative about the Campania movement, the Camorra has also been used to criminalize activists. For example, even those who did not accuse the activists of being in cahoots with the Camorra always pose the same question: Where were all those activists when the Camorra was polluting their lands?

In his book Scuorno, which is the word for shame in the Neapolitan dialect, the Neapolitan journalist and writer Francesco Durante clearly expresses this sentiment:

> When the dumps were managed by the Camorra, no one has ever opposed them... Our right to be cowards includes the possibility to protest only if on the other side there is the law, which does not scare us too much (Durante 2008, 92).

Durante’s widely accepted critique ignores the numerous denouncements made by organizations and individuals against the Camorra.16 As several activists have

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16Here are just a few examples of denunciations Campania environmental and political organizations and individuals have made against the Camorra: In 1985 Angelo Genovese, an environmentalist and member of the Italian Communist Party, was elected to the municipal council of Torre Annunziata where he criticized the involvement of the Camorra in waste management (ACE 4m). In 1986 the local branch of Friends of the Earth denounced the mayor of Nocera Inferiore, a town not far from Naples, for allowing the dumping of toxic waste in the municipal territory (in S.O.S. Ambiente, April 1986, 31). In 1989 the Italian Communist Party mobilized experts and civic society to reveal the illegal system of dumping in the Vesuvius area (Tortora 1989a).
repeatedly asked in interviews: “Where were those people in uniforms with their helicopters and armored vehicles when the Camorra was raping our land?”\textsuperscript{17}

The State’s lack of response to the Camorra’s illegal waste disposal compared to its harsh repression against protesters in the garbage struggles has outraged the activists. In their own narratives, the Campania EJ activists see the repression as evidence that the State thinks of them as second-class citizens—not even citizens, but subjects.

T. recounts the events of May 23, 2008 in Chiaiano:

The news arrived that the police in riot gear were advancing against us ... they were ready to attack. Attacking whom? Us? Me? Armed to the teeth with their helmets, shields and batons. ... That day at the roundabout Titanic there were L. and E., both university students, there was L. who works in the public school, there were V. and G. both white-haired retired old men; there were many more people who were as scared as I was, but who had chosen, as did I, to be there and express their dissent to the opening of a dump in the Chiaiano Wood. We decided that the women should be at the frontline of the march trying to avoid direct contact between the cops and our men. ... At that point we were still thinking that the police would never use violence against peaceful female demonstrators with their arms raised. But we were wrong. ... Suddenly, the second row of the agents started to use their batons against us (ACE 1w.b).

Interviews with local activists are full of similar stories. A. experienced her first charge by the police at Serre, a little town in the province of Salerno where some landfills were in use, despite the fact that they were very close to a World Wildlife Fund site that is rich in biodiversity. At sunrise, when only a few activists were present, the police began its assault in Serre, following the typical military strategy of attacking the protesters when their numbers were limited (ACE 2w). This was A.’s first violent confrontation with the police, and although she was practicing her best techniques of passive resistance, she ended up requiring medical attention (ACE 2w).

The most significant police violence took place on August 29, 2004 in Acerra at a demonstration against the building of the incinerator. Recalling the event, M.
stressed a common feeling: the sensation of estrangement, astonishment at what was happening, the discovery of an upside-down world in which unarmed citizens were trapped in an old potato factory by policemen, and reassuring figures—uniformed officers—who were transformed into thugs (ACE 3w).

We were like sheep brought to the slaughter. The police took us to a narrow road and then charged us. I had never been in a demonstration in my life and I did not understand even the burning of my eyes from tear gas. Then I heard the screams coming from the potato factory, it is there that the cops had beaten them up. I saw ambulances, broken heads, blood; it was a shock (ACE 3w).

M., T. and A., all women, candidly revealed that they were not ready for that kind of confrontation; they were not habitual participants in political marches. Until then, they had experienced the governmentality plan over both their bodies and lands through the discourses of experts, the delegitimization of their claims as citizens, and their exclusion from decision-making processes; the other face of power—helmets, shields, and batons—had been unknown to them.

The brutal repression of the police changed the tactics employed by the activists. But more than this, as T. clearly says, it forever changed their lives, their ways of thinking about the State, and how they saw their role in it. For sure, the radicalization of the conflict revealed different streams in the EJ movement in Campania, often creating divisions among them, while sometimes forging unusual alliances.

The most violent confrontation in the garbage struggle between activists and police took place in 2008 in Pianura, a low-income neighborhood in Naples (De Biase 2009). Activists there challenged the police forcefully and won, stopping the reopening of an old landfill that had operated for about 50 years.

How much the violent protests have helped or jeopardized the movement in Pianura has been a controversial issue in the collective memory of the movement, and the interviews collected in Pianura reflect these mixed feelings. While almost everybody condemns any form of violence, some stress the “social construction” of Pianura as the ultimate pre-modern jacqueries, with the mainstream media distorting the story by showing only that part of the movement. Others, also stressing the social construction of the Pianura case, claim that the explosion of violence was the result of making peripheries into “social dumps” as a consequence of the gentrification of the inner city. Finally, those who have a strong reactionary political agenda prefer a

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18For instance, in B.’s own words: “In the 1950s and 60s the upper-middle classes have enclosed the best areas of the city for them[elves], and in this operation they needed to create social dumps, that is, peripheries as Pianura” (ACE 1m).
binary narrative, blaming the violence on groups of young, radical left activists, who they say are alien to the local community.\textsuperscript{19}

Many observers and commentators have used the Pianura case to reiterate the standard narrative to justify repression: that the protesters are violent, are linked to the Camorra, and are ignorant because in burning garbage and other objects to build barricades, they have produced the dioxin that they pretend to fight (Tessitore 2005, 35–37; Scotto di Luzio 2008, 68–70; Imarisio 2008, 39–53). Many actors were involved in the struggle in Pianura, including young students of anti-globalization movements, who are used to dealing with state repression, and organized groups of soccer fan clubs, who regularly confront the police at soccer stadiums. The Camorra, which both had significant economic interests at stake and was comfortable operating in the context of violence, was also there offering its military support.

The riot in Pianura was an extraordinary mix of new EJ activism, which included both urban youth and “classical” Marxist radicals.\textsuperscript{20} An ongoing judicial investigation will eventually clarify the crimes that occurred during the riots. However, the Pianura riots—with its images of protesters attacking fire trucks, which have shocked “civilized” Neapolitans and Italians—have been used to discredit the movement.

As the Pianura case shows, the garbage activists of Campania are anything but a homogeneous movement; rather, the movement is strongly characterized by a plurality of approaches and strategies. We can only offer a sketchy representation of the movement here. Describing, even if only briefly, the evolution of participants’ experiences makes clear that this movement did not exist when the struggles began. To the contrary, the movement was created in direct response to the conflict, and its particular evolution has been powerfully shaped by the confrontation with governmentality.

Among the myriad of acronyms that have come into existence since 2003, two main groups represent the vast majority of the activists in this struggle: the Campania Network for Environment and Health (RCSA, in Italian) and the Waste Regional Coordination (CO.RE.RI., in Italian). RCSA formed in 2005 on the basis of the embryonic social mobilization in Acerra; this coalition brought together organizations, communities and movements grounded in an

\textsuperscript{19}This is, for instance, the thesis sustained by Marco Nonno, one of the key figures in the Pianura protest and a right-wing party member of the municipal council. In his book as well as in an interview with us (ACE Marco Nonno), Nonno has stated that young leftist activists were responsible for the riots in Pianura. Currently, Nonno is on trial for the violence that occurred in Pianura.

\textsuperscript{20}Oreste Scalzone, a historical leader of the Italian radical Left, was in Pianura during the riots and acted as one of the main speakers at the January 9, 2008 demonstration organized by the Rete Campana Salute e Ambiente (Health and the Environment Campania Network), a coalition of the most radical groups engaged in EJ struggles in Naples. Scalzone’s talk is available at http://orestescalzone.over-blog.com/article-15534498.html.
anti-capitalist discourse. Although CO.RE.RI. was founded in 2008, it has early connections to the work done by the Alarm for Toxic Waste Committee, a network of civil society, non-government, cultural and religious organizations, and intellectuals concerned with the illegal disposal of hazardous waste in the region and its health consequences. The two groups have very different social, cultural and political orientations; however, both networks advocate the zero waste platform, an international strategy calling for the separate collection and, above all, reduction of waste generation through radical changes in the consumerist lifestyle.

**Civil vs. Uncivil Society**

Civil society can be considered the space of active citizenship; as James Scott has argued, a weak civil society is fertile ground for what he defined as a “high modernist project” (Scott 1998, 49). The incinerator in Acerra cannot be compared with the Three Gorges Dams or a nuclear plant, of course. But in scale, it was the southern Italian version of a society- and environment-shaping modernist project. It was, and is, presented as a victory of technology, economic efficiency, and order triumphing over the chaos that had trapped the entire region.

However, if the definition of civil society is that of a set of institutions and free associations that counterbalance the power of the State while at the same time belonging to it, this definition can fit only part of the EJ movement in Campania. Generally speaking, “traditional” civil society has been rather weak in the Campania struggle. For instance, mainstream Neapolitan academia did not play any role in the mobilization, and even refused to host the 2009 Zero Waste Conference (ACE 4m).21 Most of the intellectuals and middle class were simply frightened or appalled by the urban riots throughout the region. Strong divides both between movement activists and non-participants and within the movement itself have occurred over whether to engage in dialogue with governmental institutions vs. just engaging in conflict; whether to endorse cooptation into or outright support for political parties vs. refusal to compromise; and whether to trust in the judicial system vs. direct action.

In exact opposition to the classical definition of “civil society,” some groups of activists have defined themselves as “uncivil society.” These groups, for example, refused to participate in the regional waste forum institutionalized in 2008 by the Campania regional government, because they considered it a governmental attempt

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21The only exception is the Assise della Città di Napoli e del Mezzogiorno (The Permanent Assembly of Naples and Southern Italy), gathered around Gerardo Marotta, founder of the Institute for the Philosophical Studies, where professionals and academics, together with young university students, have opened a public forum for discussion on this issue.
to co-opt the grassroots movement. These groups do not share the values of upper-middle-class activists. Disparaged and labelled “uncivilized” for their forms of protests and their unfamiliarity with recycling practices, these more radical activists have chosen to re-appropriate the term “uncivil” as a radical and provoking opposition to current Western civilization, which is based on the concept of social and technological progress. The activists who define themselves as members of the “uncivil society” simply declare their rejection of adhering *sic et simpliciter* to the values of modernity (D’Alisa 2010b).

To us, their “uncivility” refers to their deep refusal to accept the governmentality project, to their unwillingness to allow it to rule their bodies, or to be told by experts whether they are sick or healthy. Their protests and argumentation did not follow the rules of acceptable opposition; they choose confrontation instead of mediation. For those people, the struggle for EJ has become a process of reconstruction/invention of a community, the recovering of local knowledge, and the building of solidarity connections. They invented urban and peri-urban communities where the sense of belonging has ceased to be connected to the “general” society. Deprived of the basic rights to live in a healthy environment, to make decisions about their territories, even to move freely, their allegiances are to their small communities rather than the State. The experience of repression plays an important role in this shift, cementing solidarities and shaping identities—“we, the oppressed,” and “they, the others”—oppressors or those indifferent, in a Gramscian sense, to the cause.

In their local coalition between civil and uncivil societies, as well as in their national alliance with the communities in Val di Susa fighting against the high-speed train, the activists from Campania are not exclusivist; hence they forge “highly unique and often unlikely alliances” (Swyngedouw 2000, 74), even when they do not recognize the global political meaning of their local actions—as in the case of T.’s characterization of her experience in the Amazon forest. As Fagan (2004) has argued, “every local action is a ‘glocal action,’ precisely where it is a networked political action.”

As Hardt and Negri have pointed out, the opposition is not between local identities and global homogenization and networks (Hardt and Negri 2000, 44–45). “Placed-based” struggles, which are by definition anti-Empire and thus seem to live outside of any specific place, are building an alternative globalization, a new cosmopolitanism from below (Santos 2007, 64). So, indeed, there is a new international movement, and, if we are lucky, it might not have any central committee and/or politburo, but will have a good website.

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22 On the sense of belonging generated by these environmental conflicts, also see Maurano 2010.
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