RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE LAND OF FIRES
Evaluating a State Law to Restore the Narrative Power of Local Communities

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ABSTRACT: This study proposes a public evaluation of the Law 6/2014, approved by Italian Parliament to counteract a longstanding waste emergency in the area known as Land of Fires, in the provinces of Naples and Caserta, Campania region. The authors intended to explore, together with its recipients and from a sociological perspective, a state law, its impact, and the complex and interactive link between health and popular mobilization. It is intended, therefore, to propose a concrete idea of evaluation that is not impose from above and managed by neutral evaluators (technical experts). Based on in-depth work field, the evaluation process described here is configured as a non-hierarchical participative act, realized through a methodology aimed at encouraging self-control practices, taking possession of their own context by subjects that are not evaluated but rather co-evaluator, within a space of negotiation that can also become a field of conflict, open to different interpretations.

KEYWORDS: Empowerment, Evaluation, Health, Participation, Participatory democracy, Social movements, Law

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1.Policy evaluation as an exercise of participatory democracy

This article is based on the major research project *Democracy and Health* conducted between the end of 2014 and the first semester of the 2015. The project was developed by *Fondazione Soleterre* in cooperation with the University of Milano-Bicocca and University Suor Orsola Benincasa of Naples. The main objective was the evaluation of the impact on health of the law 6/2014, which was not merely aimed at cutting cost in the health system, but rather represented an environmental strategy to fight the "urban waste emergency" in that area of Campania region between Naples and Caserta known as "Land of Fires" (Legambiente 2003). The evaluation was carried out through an innovative implementation of the Anglo-Saxon approach of the *Health Impact Assessment* (Linzalone et al. 2014). The reference point of the evaluation was the holistic and integrated concept of "health" provided by the World Health Organization's approach "Health in all policies" (Baum et al. 2014). According to the WHO, "health" is regarded as an undergoing process involving an individual, the society and the environment. Consequently, the "wellbeing" is a complex and situated experience which cannot be limited to medical variables.

From a methodological point of view, we suggest a radical alternative to the standard evaluation, which is characterized by blurred procedures managed by "backstage" specialists (AutAut 360/2013). Our approach entails an open and participatory process, developed in a highly critical social context, subjected to a massive media exposure. The evaluation process focused on a State law, which was evaluated from a sociological point of view, paying attention to its overall impact on the Land of Fires inhabitants' health.

Policy makers usually resort to evaluation tools which measure the effectiveness of politics thorough a benchmarking approach. The latter tend to organize whole branches of human activities (Espeland and Stevens 2008; Lascoumes and Le Galès 2005) without taking into account that evaluation is itself subject to limits and conditions, such as technologies, criteria, rules and conventions of the field and evaluators' reflexivity (Lamont 2012).

The concept of evaluation, with the twofold meaning of a political measure and a procedure that determines a value from given standards (Thévenot 2010), is widespread all over the western society. On the contrary, in this article we propose an evaluative approach which is not driven by "neutral" and invisible evaluators, but rather for subjects internal to the social context. The outcomes of an evaluation which disregards a neutral and symmetric approach (Doganova et al. 2014) and accepts that every cognitive tools embody a point of view on social reality may be criticized for their lack of objectivity. Nonetheless, we accepted this challenge. We took the approach to intersubjectivity

(Schütz 1974) as the heuristic reference point for an evaluation which aims to create an opportunity of learning and debate (Membretti 2016)[1].

This evaluation is supported by an in-depth fieldwork and, with respect to the Italian context, it appears as a *sui generis* and pioneering project. On one side, this is mainly due to the fact that the idea of evaluating globally and systematically the effects of a single law on a population in a given territory is still quite uncommon (whilst it is widespread the practice of evaluating public policies as a whole) (Martini and Sisti 2009). On the other side, our approach is regarded as a participatory and a-hierarchical evaluative activity (Membretti 2010), achieved through a methodology that allows subjects to appropriate their own context. As a matter of fact, subjects here are not evaluated, but rather they are co-evaluators within a context of negotiation, which eventually may generate alternative discourses. This process is likely to challenge the monopoly of public discourse owned by state institutions (de Leonardis 1997; 2006) and the sources of information about public policies (Salais 2013; Borghi and Giullari 2015).

In doing so, the evaluation evolves into a learning process (of practices, research tools, methods of data collection and organization) for all subjects involved (researchers/evaluators, subjects/co-evaluators). As well, it stimulates the co-production of contextualized knowledge within a territory (Membretti 2009) and triggers a fruitful cycle between policies, institutions and other actors, thus fostering capabilities on a local level (Cortese 2011). This path can be defined as an "endless redefinition" of goods, problems and social solutions (de Leonardis 1998) which foster a "public sphere of debate" (Habermas 1997).

To some extent, our evaluation approach is similar to the action research (Lewin 1946), which emphasizes the intersubjective and contextualized dimensions of the scientific knowledge. It argues that an investigation within a social field modifies the reality observed and therefore brings into life the issue of social and political implications from the research (Orefice 2003; Barbier, 2007; Coghlan and Brydon-Miller 2014). Action research allows to redistribute power, through a process of mutual knowledge transfer and democratic participation. In doing so, it provides the opportunity of pondering ongoing dynamics and outlining possible scenarios of change (Biggeri et al. 2013).

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[1] Also significant is the contribution of the pragmatic tradition on evaluation (Dewey 1916, 1939), which regards the concrete situation evaluated as the starting point for suggesting actions aimed to shared goals (De Munck and Zimmerman 2015). The latter are shared because were constituted after an enquiry process to which people involved could participate. This tradition inspired much research on the definition of critical situations (Cefaï e t al. 2015), and more general on participation and democracy (Zask 2011), thus highlighting how emotions driven evaluation influence our perception on public interest issues (Quéré and Terzi 2013).

2.Self-organization and participation: the case of Campania

As widely acknowledged in the literature about social movements, protests and collective actions tend to follow an established pattern (Della Porta and Diani 2006, 182), drawing from a limited repertoire of feasible options for achieving a set of goals: to persuade and coerce the authorities, to express a common identity, to strengthen a system of values, to mobilize resources in the conflict with other subjects resisting the change (Tilly 1978; Tarrow 1998; Taylor and Van Dyke 2004). The repertoire of actions is not affected only by strategies adopted by previous movements or by the spillover between contemporary movements (Meyer and Whittier 1994; Whittier 2004), but also by the political and social environment. Indeed, the ways social movements take action are intrinsically tied to their vision of society, the target of critiques and the change they want to achieve.

Currently, in western countries social movements are facing two challenges. First, considering the ongoing deterioration of welfare systems and the withdrawing of the State, they deal with public institutions which are unable and unwilling to take on new demands of social justice and equality coming from various sections of society. Second, given the individualized structure of contemporary society, they face difficulties in building enduring networks of solidarity and cooperation, which are an essential resource for collective action (D'Alisa et al. 2015).

Therefore, it seems interesting to focus on connections within local communities, which face the contamination of their own environment, as well as on processes which accelerate cultural changes at a social and individual level. Thanks to connections, these communities seek to organize and resist contamination, dispossession and impoverishment. They develop a sense of belonging through the development of "grassroots public politics" (Paba 2009), i.e, forms of action "which bring recipients into practices, and release them from indifference and social invisibility by means of active inclusion practices" (Paba 2010, 104-105). The latter are grounded in the human, social and spatial contexts and enhance interactivity, thus providing relational goods. They are formed on subjects' peculiarities (Sandercock 2000) and are aimed to different, yet entwined goals. These modes of political action are dedicated to local justice issues (Elster and Colombo 1995), and connect various relational networks because of their circular nature, their free services and case-by-case based practices, focused on ways of doing rather than things to do.

Following Arnstein (1969), several scholars have studied popular participation in public policies, following the idea of participatory democracy as a necessary completion of

representative democracy, as the former envisions information, consultation and partnership between public authority and local communities (Wates 2010). The reference point are empowerment practices developed not only in process of decision making and skill-related meaning production, but also in the management of decisions' effects (Gangemi 2009). As underlined by Maggio (2014), the demand for public participation, throughout decision-making processes related to territory transformation, is increasing. The multiplicity of experiences, goals, methods, and tools requires to take into consideration not only participants' characteristics but also territorial, social and political contexts in the process of analysis. These issues emerge in the social and ecological conflicts of the Land of Fires, ill-famed for the socio environmental impact of decades of illegal garbage trade and contamination due to the poor and often illicit management of the waste disposal (Carabellese and Maurano 2013; Armiero e D'Alisa 2012; D'Alisa et al. 2010).

In the last decades, the area between Naples and Caserta witnessed an ecocide[2] with illegal dumps and underground landfill, water pollution and the combustion of more or less toxic waste. This is one of the most populated areas in Italy, where demographic pressure goes hand in hand with very critical housing conditions, for what concerns both the quality of private and/or public accommodations and the unauthorised construction development. This context has been diminished by years of bad government and institutional indifference, attested by high levels of unemployment, school dropout, juvenile delinquency, absolute and relative poverty, which all set far above the national average rate (ISTAT 2013).

According to a recent investigation by the National Institute of Health (Istituto Superiore di Sanità) (2012), water and land contamination caused by illegal underground landfill is a real and quantifiable problem, while health conditions of the population of Campania is worse than the rest of Italy. In the two provinces considered there is a high rate of cancer, new born with congenic malformations and deaths due to cancer-related consequences. Many scientific investigations associate the high rate of cancer within the population with the waste-based pollution (Senior and Mazza 2004; Fazzo et al. 2008; Martuzzi et al. 2009; Rivezzi et al. 2013).

Furthermore, Campania is the Italian region with the highest concentration of industrial waste disposal coming from the rest of Europe (Marfella 2013). The local economy is predominantly based on agriculture, food processing and the industrial sector, where the production of toxic waste is significant. This results into illegal toxic waste disposal and/or incineration, with the pollution of air, soil and aquifers. The spread of such illegal

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[2] The informed destruction of natural environment with enormous damages to the population's health.

practices is due to the sparse availability of appropriate technologies, even though the influence of local mafia (*Camorra*) plays a pivotal role. Because of the expensive cost, many entrepreneurs tend to resort to more affordable services provided by specialized firms which operate apparently in a legal way, but are actually bound to the organized crime (the so called "ecomafias"). Considering the inadequacy of the traceability system, numerous toxic wastes are demoted from dangerous to non-dangerous throughout the process that will lead to their illegal disposals.

According to Harvey (2003), accumulation by contamination is the process through which the capitalistic system impose prices on communities, resorting to strategies that degrade life conditions of specific social groups, meanwhile looking for new opportunities of growth (Demaria and D'Alisa 2013). In Campania, the changes needed in order to support this process have led to an unequal distribution of power, with the consequent decrease of democratic opportunities for negotiation on environmental issues and the loss of the basic health, safety and self-determination rights for local communities (D'Alisa et al. 2010; Armiero e D'Alisa 2012). The social and environmental consequences have slowly revealed their size: according to data provided by the ARPAC (Campania Regional Agency for Environment Protection), in the region there are 2551 polluted sites so far, the majority of which is concentrated in the area between Naples and Caserta (Caggiano and De Rosa 2015).

Daily perception of degradation has encouraged some citizens to mobilize in order to gain first-hand information about the causes and the effects of the accumulation and disposal of waste in the area. Local committees were created for the purpose and started to produce independent knowledge about the issue (Armiero 2014), focusing not only on technological and scientific aspects but also on the effects on the ecosystem of inequalities within the distribution of power. The grassroots pressure has grown through self-organization and lobbying, stressing the emphasis on public participation and the networking between territories and their communities. Facing threat to their own health, these a-political subjects mobilized and joined forces with already existing organized entities (associations, political groups, community and parish centers).

It is possible to identify two recent phases of grassroots environmentalism in Campania. The first (2000-2011) was characterized by more than a decade of struggles, supported by the opposition of local communities to the emergency measures of the State on the urban waste issue (Festa 2012). Thousands of people, mainly residents in the deprived areas of Naples' and the surrounding areas, rose up against the waste management regime imposed from above and, in face of the repressive stand of authorities, some organized themselves in local resident committees (Petrillo 2009). More precisely, since the autumn 2007, Naples and the neighbouring area were the stage of a series of

uprisings stemming from local population's concern about the location of waste disposals.

During the second ongoing phase, started in 2012, local movements addressed their claims towards the physical and symbolical appropriation of the territories. Along with the end of the emergency regime, in 2009, every attempt of managing the issue of waste by public institutions collided with the heritage of 6 million tons of waste provisionally accumulated close to cultivated areas (Caggiano and De Rosa 2015). Despite an array of arrests and the dissolution of firms involved in the illegal traffic of toxic waste, criminal practices survived, keeping a low profile. Indeed, beside to significant but sporadic popular demonstrations, more restrict groups of activists continued to organize campaign and monitor environmental conditions.

Social mobilization in Campania is characterized by heterogeneity, due to the inter-class nature of the issue (which involves residents of the most deprived areas, large sectors of the middle class and part of the scientific community), to the multiplicity of strategies adopted, to the more or less collaborative relations with public institutions and to the disagreement about priorities' agenda. In any case, what started as a commitment of local unrelated movements has slowly turned into a recognisable regional coalition, brought together by a common struggle (Caruso F. 2008). *Coordinamento Comitati Fuochi* is the most significant rassemblement of activists, which gather together more than a hundred of committees. Through the mobilization of citizens without previous political experience, the Coordinamento has been able to organize several marches and demonstrations to induce the central government to take action against contamination. The underlying logic aims to the appropriation of life spaces (Leff 2012), being aware that the exclusion of the community from the decision making process has, in the past years, left room for blurred interests in exploitation of the territory. Regarding this point, the emphasis on the interdependence between healthiness of the land and the wellbeing of residents aims to unrevealed risks connected to the enduring mafia culture and the intrinsic distortions of the capitalistic economy.

3.Local activism and health protection: early results from a participatory evaluation of the Law 6/2014

The history of legislation on environmental safeguard intersects with the long urban waste crisis in Campania, characterized by violations of European norms, investigations, inquiries and disciplinary provisions. Mistakes, greed and profit driven choices, coupled

with the concern of local mafia in maintaining a precarious and emergency situation suitable for illegal and lucrative toxic waste disposal, have caused serious damage on the economy, environment and citizens' health. Given the citizens' demand for environment and health protection, Italian institutions issued several regulatory interventions. In 2001 the Law n. 93 ("Disposizioni in campo ambientale") introduced the crime of illegal waste traffic, while in 2006 the legislative decree n. 152 ("Testo Unico sull'Ambiente") set a regulation on environmental issues, including the introduction of administrative crimes, i.e., punishable with a fine. The latter included illegal waste combustion (art. 256-bis), which was ultimately turned into a penal crime. Last, the Law n. 6, 6th of February 2014 (Legge 6), which amended the so called "Land of Fires Law" (Dl 136/2013), regulated the environmental issue from a technical and judicial/penal point of view. In order to reduce criminality, the latter entailed several preventive actions that affect the whole waste disposal cycle and introduced a well-defined set of environmental crimes.

As already mentioned, the process of evaluation has examined this regulatory provision not from a juridical point of view, but rather from a sociological perspective, considering both the overall impact on health and the complex and interactive link between civil activism and the Law issuing. It was indeed an action research, with a methodology aimed to foster self-control practices and citizens' awareness of their own social context.

As argued by the World Health Organization (WHO 2008), people's health is deeply intertwined not only to national health systems' conditions, but also to biological aspects, life styles, social relations, work conditions, housing and global and international influences. In all countries, health and diseases follow a social gradient: lower is the socioeconomic condition of people, worse is their health. Most of the causes of diseases, which eventually lead to premature deaths, are tied to the conditions in which individuals born, grow, live, work and age, that is to say, to the so called "social determinants of health" (Marmot e Wilkinson 2003)[3]. These circumstances are influenced by the distribution of money and power at a local, national and global level, which in turn is affected by political choices. Space allocation of people plays a crucial role for what concerns their life expectancies and the possibilities of developing those capabilities which allow people to accomplish their own life goals (Sen 1993).

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[3] According to the World Health Organization, health is "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being" which allows everyone to face his or her own personal and social growth. The so called "social determinants of health" can modify positively or negatively a population's health. They are connected to some general dimensions such as social and economic conditions (income, education, work, housing), personal and family related life styles, the physical and social environment, the availability of social services and healthcare and genetic.

The approach adopted in this research is widely inspired by the theoretical and methodological framework of the *Health Impact Assessment*, HIA (VIS in Italian). The HIA started in Europe in the early 1990s (Birley 1995) as a development of the existing procedures of environmental impact assessment (Daclon 1996). Hence, it developed within this holistic framework, which regards health as the result of social, economic and environmental processes (Lalonde 1974). Hence, the HIA is defined as "*the combination of procedures, methods and tools by which policies, programmes or projects may be judged, as well as to its potential effects on the health of a community, and the distribution of those effects within the populati*on" (OMS 1999). The objective of this kind of evaluation is to produce decisions based on a shared and well established knowledge, so that public policies can guarantee the overall well-being of individuals and communities, as well as the sustainability of their own environment.

Hence, the HIA suggests a multidisciplinary process (based on epidemiologic, toxicological, medical, sociological, statistical, communicative, and participative skills), in order to provide evaluations inspired by values such as democracy, equality, sustainable development, ethical use of scientific knowledge. This process is shaped on some fundamental characteristics: the consultation of all individuals involved through a conscious discussion, the participation of policy makers with the specific request of taking on responsibilities, the assessment of all alternatives available in order to maximize the positive effects and minimize the negative ones, the proposal of tools for the evaluation and monitoring of expected effects.

The project "*Democracy and Health*" has resorted to the toolbox provided by the HIA, developing its own peculiar evaluative approach (influenced also by experience gained by some of the researchers involved in previous evaluative processes in the socio-healthcare field promoted by Fondazione Soleterre)[4]. The project was organized according to the following steps:

1) *Steering group*: Establishment of a small group in charge for the supervision of the whole evaluative process. The group was made up of evaluators (University of Milano-Bicocca and University Suor Orsola Benincasa of Naples), by Fondazione Soleterre and some experts who had already dealt with issues related to Land of Fires)

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[4] We refer to the project "Evaluation of the social impact of the pediatric oncologic Programme in Kiev, Ukraine" realized in 2013. Information available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279286188_Valutazione_di_Impatto_Sociale_del_Programma_di_Oncologia_Pediatrica_-_Kiev_Ucraina?ev=prf_pub.

2) *Policy analysis:* Analysis of the Law, the impact of which was to be evaluated, with respect to the socio- environmental context. The analysis focused on the logical foundation of the Law, on the circumstances and procedures of its application, on the affected population, on the key informers and relevant stakeholders, on the relationship between this Law and other policies, and last, on existing data about related policy' evaluations. Hence, we defined the dimensions of the object of analysis, identifying the aspects on which the Law could impact. We also introduced hypothesis on plausible/possible effects on health, relying on current knowledge.

3) *Profiling*: Mapping of the socio-geographic and environmental context, both from a quantitative and qualitative point of view, relying on existing data (institutional dataset, journalistic inquires, data provided by communities involved and so on). Collection and analysis of data related to the relevant indexes (socio-demographic, health, epidemiological, environmental data), followed by the identification of local trend (time series). Execution of an exploratory field study led by some evaluators, in order to deepen the issue of the illegal combustion of waste through interviews and first-hand observations.

4) *Social determinants of health:* List of the social determinants of health, relevant to the evaluation of the Law, basing on the previous analysis and with reference to the scientific literature on the topic. The latter have been divided in five categories, each of them articulated in specific influencing factors (determinants in the restricted sense). The five categories were listed as it follows: a) biological factors (gender, age, genetic); b) individual and family life styles (personal behavior, self-security, work condition, level of education, incomes, self-esteem, family structure, means of transportation, and so on); c) social environment (culture, peer influence, discrimination, social support, opportunities for local participation, job opportunities, and so on); d) physical environment and life conditions (environment quality, housing and work conditions, public safety, public services, and so on); e) socio-economical, cultural and environmental conditions (local and supralocal public policies, local and supralocal availability of public services, and so on). This list of determinants was then validated trough some individual interviews with qualified witnesses (experts, journalists, local stakeholders), and possibly modified and integrated according to the feedback collected during interviews.

5) *Tools for analysis and participation:* development of tools for involving stakeholders in the evaluation of the Law (draft of individual semi-structured interviews

and focus groups, strategy for communicating the final results). These tools were tested with some qualified witnesses and stakeholders.

6) *Involvement of stakeholders*: The core of the whole evaluation process was the involvement of multiple stakeholders, who operate and work in the Land of Fires or professionally deal with it. The main objectives of this phase were: a) to inform, that is to say to provide the communities involved with a detailed synthesis of the Law under evaluation; b) to participate, that is to say to foster and support the subjective and participatory judgment of the communities on the determinants' impact on health; c) to promote the awareness and empowerment of individuals, with respect to the evaluated dimensions, and their ability of exercising control over their own health and that of their community. The involvement of stakeholders was made possible thanks to the establishment of relational networks between the two Universities, Fondazione Soleterre and all the active agents involved, reached by direct and indirect contact[5]. Hence, considering the information provided by local agents, we created a list of the associations, local institutions, informal groups of citizens and experts of the field who could be invited to participate to the evaluative process, due to their ability to represent the socio-cultural and political diversity which characterize the context, as well as the social milieu of those involved in the issue. The list was quite diverse for each Province (Naples and Caserta) and it included actors form different social and political-administrative realities, but also from the mass media, which were interested in the legislative provision or had a say in the issue (experts, journalists, institutional representatives). The involvement of stakeholders and experts in the evaluative process also entailed the collection of documents produced by these actors (public statements, dossiers, articles, videos, etc…), some qualitative semi-structured interviews, territorial-based focus groups with the representative of local realities, and last, the circulation of data collected.

7) *Final Evaluation:* The final evaluation was realized within the context of the *steering group*, basing on data collected. The evaluation aimed to identify the expected positive and negative effects related to the Law and to highlight possible corrective actions to control and optimize the Law's impact on health .

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[5] The main contribution was provided by: ARCI Caserta; Legambiente Campania; Association of Medical Doctors for the Environment, - ISDE; self-managed social centre Ex Canapificio; Campania Rights and Health Forum; Arci Punto 99, Grumo Nevano; House of Arts, Succivo; Centre of Volunteers of Caserta; Coordinamento Comitati Fuochi; the parish of Parco Verde in Caivano, Naples; action group No Coma, Palma Campania; WWF Campania; self-managed social centre Spartaco, S. Maria Capua Vetere.

8) *Restitution:* Production of a report to be shared (through face to face meetings and social networks) with all realities involved, with the participation of evaluators, in order to promote the review of final evaluative considerations, the analysis of proposals for intervention, the development of sharing/cooperative local networks and, lastly, the identification of future objectives for lobbying.

9) *Final report*: Production of a final report of the evaluative process for the purposes of public disclosure, institutional and scientific lobbying, including further data collected during the restitution phase. The report formalized the hypothesis of intervention in terms of policies' guidelines.

10) *Dissemination:* Organization of networks for the promulgation of the final results (through an open process of communication and sharing), aimed both to the dissemination of findings and to support forms of interventions with respect to the dimensions of the Law's impact on health.

The central phase of the involvement of experts and stakeholders in the evaluative process was carried out between January and May 2015. During these months, we conducted a set of qualitative interviews and some focus groups with the representatives of the medical-scientific community, institutions, media and civil society, in view of the evaluation of all the aspects highlighted so far[6].

The approval of the Law 6/2014 was contrastingly welcomed by those who, for years, have been bearing the social, urban and rural decay of their own land. If some of them

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[6] The subjects interviewed were fourteen: Michele Buonomo, President of Legambiente Campania; Donato Cafagna, Commissioner for toxic fires in Campania; Francesco Saverio Caruso, Researcher, Department of Political and Social Science, University of Calabria; Giuseppe Ciociola, Journalist of *Avvenire*; Sergio Costa, Chief of the State Forestry Corp in Campania; Mario De Biase, Commissioner for Reclamation in Giugliano in Campania and Castelvolturno; Antonio Marfella, Medical doctor in oncology at the Hospital Pascale in Naples and member of the association Doctors for the Environment ISDE; Antonio Maria Mira, journalist of *Avvenire*; Biagi Napolano, counsellor of the Centre for Volounteering CSV-Assovoce in Caserta; Renato Natale, Medical doctor and major of Casal di Principe (Caserta); Maurizio Patriciello, parish priest of the quarter of Parco Verde in Caivano, Napoli; Gaetano Rivezzi, Medical doctor in neonatology at the Hospital Sant'Anna in Caserta and representative of the association Doctors for the Environment ISDE; Nello Trocchia, journalist, *La7*, *L'Espresso, Il Fatto Quotidiano*; Sergio Vellante, Full professor of Management Engineering for the Environment at Seconda Università degli Studi in Naples.
The focus groups – which entailed the participation of representatives of the civil society, belonging to associations, committees, local entities dealing with the issue of health, environmental and social participation – were realized in three central areas of the Land of Fires (Caserta, Naples and Santa Maria Capua Vetere) and involved 21 individuals. During the preliminary interviews and the exploratory study in that area, other twenty people were involved, including journalists, experts, associations' representatives, politicians and citizens.

were enthusiastic about the regulator provision, others pointed to its several theoretical and practical pitfalls. Above all, they pointed to the missed implementation of some of the provisions, especially those referred to already existing tools (for instance, the Register of Tumors), and to the almost exclusively focus on the executors of the illegal waste combustion crime, than on instigators. Moreover, the Law failed to face some issues which local stakeholders regarded as crucial, such as the inaccurate disposal and traceability of the waste subject to tax evasion. When, at the beginning of interviews and focus groups, we asked to define the meaning of "community in health", the totality of interviewees pointed to the rate of diseases and death causes and agreed that the rates of the latter are much more critical in the territory of Land of Fires than the regional, national and international average. From this statement, the thick description does not diminish in its substance, but in characteristics regarded as salient for the health of a community: if, on one hand, some individuals highlighted the importance of an efficient integrated health system, capable to quickly adapt to challenges, on the other hand some pointed to the need of solid democratic institutions, able to competently fight local criminality, so to guarantee a peaceful community life, supported by a participatory system of practices.

From focus groups emerged similar definitions, even though some specific aspects were emphasized because of the collective interaction between participants. The interviewees of the Caserta focus group stressed the importance of "accessing all essential information in order to exercise control over their own health", highlighting the need of a thicker dialogue between institutions and the civil society. Contrary, during the focus groups of Santa Maria Capua Vetere and Naples, the emphasis was laid on the public nature of services, thus stigmatizing the health system's *de facto* privatization which is supposed to take place in that area.

In the evaluative process the discussion around the concept of "health" was crucial, according both to an holistic and integrated meaning, as suggested by the project promoters. This discussion was organized around the request of evaluating the impact of the Law 6 on the "determinants of health". Referring to an initial group of "individual and family related determinants" (genetic factors, risks connected to the environmental situation and life, empowerment), the participants agreed on the substantial zero impact of the Law. They stressed the inadequate implementation of the health tools envisioned (screening of the population for diagnosis and prevention purposes) and the lack of procedures put in place, the limited circulation of information about the issue and the absence of proper structure for the hospitalization of people with specific pathologies. Furthermore, in one of the focus groups it emerged how the civil society tried to remedy (at

least partially) to what is lacking, for instance various associations of doctors autono-mously organized screening and free checkup services.

Therefore, the overall judgment of the interviewees was negative and controversial: with many of them highlighting how the Law 6 deals exclusively with environmental and crime related issues, without taking into consideration the contribution of the civil soci-ety in reporting, monitoring and reclaiming. There was a general agreement in recogniz-ing the lack of institutional networks between authorities and the civil society, and hence the weak incentive to activism, collective participation and active citizenship practices.

"As always, policy makers try to blow out and delimitate a problem. The Law 6 certifies what people and associations have claimed for years, yet now we should deepen and go straight to the core of the problem. There is a widespread worry that the central govern-ment is not willing to do so, because propagating more information on what has hap-pened and is happening may incite a revolution. Nonetheless, now that Campania is done, problems will emerge somewhere else" (Antonio Marfella, oncologist)

"The management of this problem is still in the hands of those who created it, and not of those citizens willing to resolve it. We should not forget that, very often and not just in Italy, communities affected by the illegal waste disposal are the most socially culturally and economically deprived, and are poorly equipped to protect themselves" (Naples Fo-cus group).

The participants of the focus group of Caserta also argued that the Law 6/2014 does not affect the compulsory administration to which Campania is still subjected, as it basi-cally represents an imposition from above.

"Because of the ongoing compulsory administration, the population is subjected to top-down choices, without being called into question, and the Law 6 did not change this trend. Behind this compulsory administration there is an ill-conceived competition be-tween the local level and the national level with respect to the control of the expenditure. Far from guaranteeing the efficiency, the compulsory administration has excluded the community from choices. This is even aggravated by the not exactly faultless manage-ment, which is also too accessible to criminal organizations".

For what concerns the political-institutional issue, despite recognizing the globally ir-relevant impact of the Law 6 with respect to the expected goals, the participants of the focus group of Naples also highlighted an unintentional effect of the Law. As a matter of fact, this Law has contributed to keeping the citizens' attention engaged towards these issues so that the approval of the Law may reignite the pride of the local population against political class paralysis.

Regarding the second group of determinants of health, related to the "impact of the Law 6 on the social, physical and economic environment (pollution, food security, quality

of social relations, criminality), stakeholders confirmed a perception of a global ineffectiveness. Regulations in terms of soil, water and air protection, even if they were envisioned, have not yet been implemented. Furthermore, the evaluation of their impact is strictly subordinated to those activities of characterization, securing and reclaiming which were either delayed, not completely realized or not yet initiated.

On the contrary, with respect to the quality of food, many interviewees positively regarded the increasing checks, as they contribute to draw attention to the issue. Still, some of them pointed to the risk of criminalizing the food farming sector and promoting a distorted perception about the quality of local food, so to damage the local economy. Related to the topic of control, other stakeholders denounced the paucity and inefficiency of the military presence in the area, the incoherent and frequent use of dedicated resources and the inadequate information and training provided to members of the armed forces. All of this translate into the substantial irrelevance of the intervention meant to fight the core of the problem, that is to say, the illegal production and disposal of waste, which indirectly stimulates the criminal industry.

Other interviewees were discouraged by the narrow view of the Law, as it does not take into consideration that the phenomenon cannot be fought with conventional deterrents, nor it can be reduced to a merely health issue. Rather, it is connected to and dependent on the characteristics of the socio-economical system, whose dynamics are not contemplated in the Law, possibly in order to avoid what is basically a fundamental part of the local production of Campania (from a purely economic perspective, as many argued, waste disposal generates prosperity, being correlated to a substantial illegal production). Many interviewees shared their expectations regarding the approval of the normative regulation which introduces the environmental crime in the penal law (as it actually happened in May, 2015). Some of them highlighted a perverse aspect of the Law, which emerged from a crucial combination: on one hand, the lack of specific criteria for the participation to the public competitions for toxic waste disposal management; on the other hand, the possibility of exceptionally assigning this public competition avoiding the anti-mafia supervision. This may lead to some sort of "institutionalization of local criminality", thus allowing the firms which contributed, more or less directly, to the pollution of the land to access without any control the public competitions and to obtain funds for land reclaim.

Even if interviewees recognized that movements' activism and citizens' participation preceded, if not even induced, the Law's approval, they also acknowledged that the legislator utterly disregarded the issue of active citizenship. The Law did not entail mechanisms for encouraging and ensuring the dialogue and collaboration with local associa-

tions. According to some interviewees, many of the latter, dissatisfied with the norma-
tive regulation and discouraged by the scant consideration, are losing their strength,
heading toward a growing "social disaggregation", which is even aggravated by the po-
litical confrontation before the local elections of June 2016.

For what concerns the last group of determinants of health, referred to the "impact
of the Law on institutional and political dynamics", essential public services (particularly
the health sector) were the most mentioned within the Law's criticisms. Whilst the Law
entails a set of measures for collecting and monitoring data on the impact on health, the
latter are inefficiently put into practice, also because of the inadequacy of services
meant for their implementation. Hence, those interviewed taking for granted the irrele-
vancy of the impact of such deficient regulatory dispositions. Campania is indeed af-
fected by a serious health sector disarray, as many public facilities were closed or down-
sized within a general rearrangement aimed to dramatically cut expenses. Thus, the feel-
ing of mistrust in public institutions seems unavoidable. This is coupled with "a ruling
class colonized by business and criminal interests" (Naples focus group) which puts into
practice laws only in appearance concerned with local demands and needs, whereas
they are nothing but the expression of demagogical tactics, appropriating popular lan-
guages and issues. Participants considered the State unable to implement proper tools
for responding to grassroots demands, given the inadequacy of solutions offered, their
obsolete nature and inconsistency with the very core of the problem. Apparently, there
is an unbridgeable gap between grassroots demands and institutional responses.

As a consequence, the Law 6 is regarded as a bureaucratic expression of an already
underway process and it just increased the existing and inadequately implemented nor-
mative body, both at the Italian and European level. Possibly, existing laws could be ad-
equate and effective, if they only were implemented. Moreover, according to interview-
ees, the ongoing production of laws specifically targeted on the territory, and thus not
relevant at a national level, maintains the stigmatization if not criminalization of this
area. The Land of Fires is indeed institutionalized at a juridical and administrative level,
by virtue of a State's law which recognized and delimited it, even though the official (and
media) argument identifies a geographic area with uncertain borders, which sometimes
overlaps with the entire Campania region, so to promote a hyper-cultural and objectify-
ing interpretation of the issue, resulted from a supposed "southern way of being" with
a degrading meaning (Lumley e Morris 1999).

Therefore, interviews shared an interpretation of the Law 6 as a regulation which can-
not significantly impact on the related legislation already characterized by the "historical
collision between State, Camorra and the Big Business" (Naples focus group) that lead
to the miserable conditions we have been witnessing for decades.

Nonetheless, one of the medical doctors interviewed wanted to highlight, against the general opinion, that there may be a connection between the emanation of the Law 6 and the approval of the following bill on environmental crimes in May 2015. The emanation of the Law and the simultaneous publication of the medical-scientific report "*SENTIERI*"[7] can be seen as two interconnected aspects, the political and the scientific one, both likely to be integrated within a more well-structured and virtuous legislation. However, concluding with a bitter remark: *"In these days in every municipalities of Campania the environmental issue has been discussed with awareness, which is astonishing if we just think to the previous decade. This social dynamism has decreased after the Law's approval, because nothing has been done to keep alive the civil consciousness and to foster activism, whereas a strictly political-administrative discourse was favoured. If someone screams and there is no feedback, nobody screams no more".*

Once we asked to reflect on further, and also radically different, institutional and normative interventions to face the Land of Fires problems, as one would expect, different perspectives emerge, which depend on an interviewee's stand with respect to the general topic, his or her role and professional profile. The first argument is the dialogue between institutions, promoted thorough the establishment of local bodies, clearing houses and facilitators organisms, which allow activists to turn from resilience to critical mass (Caserta focus group). Beside this argument, the request of new interventions is oriented towards new tools which may improve existing facilities and procedures (for instance: agricultural and food products certifications, investments to improve the quality and accessibility of health services, attribution of crime investigation tasks to the ARPAC, incentives to recycling and so on). Last, there is a more articulated and broaden perspective, suggested by those who argue in favour of a change in the development paradigm, suggesting as a reference model that of the "happy de-growth".

From the background it emerges the belief that an institutional and non-declaratory mode of action needs the involvement of the civil society: *"Maybe the Law 6 was the last chance, missed, for the population of Campania. Hopefully it is not, but this is the evidence so far. We do not need more laws, but a daily grassroots commitment to discuss, criticise and envisage new solutions and the strength of proposing them" (Caserta focus group).*

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[7] The "*National Epidemiological Study on Territories and Settlements exposed to Pollution Risk*" ("*SENTIERI*"), started in 2007 within the strategic national plan "*Environment and Health*", coordinated by the National Institute of Health and financed by the Ministry of Health.

4.Concluding remarks: evaluation as a restitution of the narrative power to local communities

The label "Lands of Fires" has been successful, contributing to develop the population's awareness of the dilemmas of their own life context. Thanks to the abrupt attention by mass-media and to the activism (Caruso F. 2008; Iovene 2008; Pellegrino and Cori 2011), Land of Fires has catalysed the attention, even if we should not underestimate the ambivalent effects of it. This broad background (Goffman 1997), resulted from persisting processes of socio-territorial marginalization, was overturned shortly into a space for representation, with popular protests, militarization of landfills, self-organization of committees, fights and attempts of negotiation. It became the stage of an "unfiltered and uncovered biopolitics" (Petrillo 2003). The latter, relying on an institutional and mass-media interpretation supporting the interests of waste delocalization, depicts local actors as members of an archaic and anti-modern society, in a precarious balance between the heritage of the "amoral familism" (Banfield 2006) and the contemporary "nimby" syndrome (Pellegrino 2013). In newspapers and journals, on the TV news, according to the experts' words and politicians' declarations, social activism of Campania has little to deal with protesters' apparent claims (the waste issue), and a lot more with the depth of their nature: the cultural backwardness, the exacerbated localisms opposing every "modern" solutions, the interconnections with economic and criminal interests (Petrillo 2008).

The example of Campania sets itself within the complex issue of social participation and interaction between citizens and democratic legitimate power, in a context in which health and body become central. On one hand, the body represents the conflict border and health represents the chance of translating resistance to power into a legitimate discourse. On the other hand, people's inability of "taking care of themselves" through proper life styles and hygienic behaviours allows their own delegitimization and the State intervention on shared and solid basis.

Meanwhile, the recourse to emergency legislative decrees is only an aspect, even if resounding, of the ways in which exception deeply affects the texture of contemporary democracies. The exception finds often a justification in the *public safety*, regarded as the protection of the *essentials of life*, that is to say, of essential resources, goods and services (Valverde and Dubber 2006). Within this category, we also find both the physical safety and the preservation of levels in the quality of life. The State, representing itself as a undefined guarantor of safety, is legitimated to intervene when citizens' lives are threatened by circumstances defined as "exceptional", avoiding the ties imposed by ordinary laws.

Within this context, "localism" does not represent an analytical category but rather a political accuse, which blends "contrasting interpretation of individual selfishness and ideology, extreme rationality and obscure fears" (Della Porta e Piazza 2008), in order to confine into a dimension of illegitimacy most of the contemporary political movements (Jobert 1998). Many authors have dedicated their efforts to criticize at an empirical level the inconsistency of this accuse, showing that reality entails much more complex aspects and that many local collective actors attempt to set their claims within more general perspective (Della Porta 2004; Özen 2013), to translate particularism into universalistic values (Bobbio 1999; Trom 1999), to learn participative and emancipating practices (Caruso L. 2008).

Accordingly, the activity of evaluation discussed so far shows a local society strongly embedded in its own territory (we could say grabbed on to it, in a mixture of desperation and determination), even if extremely diversified, fragmented and characterized by ancient and more recent social divisions. When there are occasions for collective learning, for the cooperative building of knowledge and for horizontal communication, such as the case of "*Democracy and Health*" project, it seems to appear a least common denominator with respect to the multiple stands: it is the will of people of re-appropriating a self-defining discursive power regarding their own biological and social space and the dynamics which affect it, regaining the right of naming things. A first step towards the re-appropriation of their own life project, both from and individual and collective point of view.

If it is true that the post-modern condition sees the gradual decline of "big narrations" (Lyotard 2002) in favour of a technical-scientific and denotative knowledge, the social need for self-narration seems equally strong, considering that - as argued by Stern (2000) - there cannot be a real comprehension of the world and of ourselves without a narration, regarded as an attribution of meaning and a gradual awareness of our "being in the world". Even if on a small scale, these social narrations attribute a meaning to the daily experience and, at the same time, resist to the dispossessing discursive power of those (media, institutions, political and economic actors) who have the resources and tools for defining the social reality in a permeating and overwhelming way, in the name of the supposed technical and scientific objectivity of their prevailing narrations.

We here experimented a logic and a practice of social citizenship aiming, through the valorization of multiple grassroots narrations, to power redistribution and to the exercise of capabilities in a broad meaning (the right of exerting capabilities), as opposing to paternalistic or private visions of the public space (de Leonardis 1998). This power of definition has been stolen to the population of Campania, primary by imposing from

above the emergency lexicon of the special management of waste, and then by the approval of the Law 6/2014 which framed the narration of the Land of Fires in aseptic and reductive terms. The procedures for the application and monitoring of the Law 6 show the abstract and dispossessing character of this normative regulation, with respect to the stakeholders' possibility of defining autonomously the quality of their own health.

Nonetheless, disregarding its contents and its real impact on the multiple dimensions of the wellbeing within a territory, the emanation of the Law, even before its actual application, seems to have an unexpected result: it is the indirect contribution to local reflexivity, which can be interpreted as a process of collective learning, of social empowerment and development of unexpected capabilities with respect to inactive public actors which proved themselves to be unable to take action. The long and dramatic "learning process" faced by local communities of the Land of Fires in their clash with the biopolitics of waste seems to find now, in the critical discussion and inter-subjective evaluation of the Law, some sort of "public examination" which tests skills and knowledge gained in the field. Beyond the judgment of citizens and stakeholders on this Law, the most relevant fact is about the social dynamics which have been activated around, against or in favour of it, which may represent a possible, even if arduous, process of social emancipation.

This seems to confirm that local mobilizations, such as the one we analyzed, placing themselves at the intersection between dimensions of daily life and politics, could, under certain conditions, play a strategic role also at an extra local level, breaking the dispositive of isolation of the individual and denouncing the power-knowledge bond as a privilege (Foucault, 1989). This forms of grassroots participation choose as their target the multiple ways in which the scientific legitimated knowledge is structured and propagated, starting from the institutional level and mass media. Interacting, gaining information, facing a self-taught learning process, local communities discover that solutions promoted by central authorities are not necessarily the most effective and advanced, nor they are free from embezzlements and blurred connections.

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