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RESEARCH ARTICLE

SILENCING CITIZEN PROTEST: LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL RESISTANCE IN THE LAND OF FIRES

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ABSTRACT: The main topic of this case study is local community response to environmental contamination resulting from corruption and waste mismanagement. The field research was carried out in part of a massive Italian district colloquially referred to as the "land of fires" where illegal wastes dumped by the mafia routinely burned. A document analysis, participant observation and semi-structured interviews were conducted. Abandoned by those tasked with protecting public and environmental health, one might expect widespread concern, activism and protest. The case study supports the theory in terms of citizen mobilization while clarifying conditions that discourage public protest and action. The waste companies and the governmental institutions intended to regulate them were perceived as jointly complicit. Those who did not protest appeared to be caught in a classic double bind in which any response they made was wrong. Fear that the contamination and fires were harming their health demanded action. Yet, citizens dreaded that such efforts would bring mob and institutions' reprisal and did not have practical effective outcomes. This dilemma is fully explored, and the results are discussed within an eco-historical perspective. The case study is also updated to reflect more recent conditions that inspired widespread protest in the same affected region.

KEYWORDS: Contamination, Environmental resistance, Fear, Protest, Waste

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1. Introduction: The Defense of Place

Considerable attention has been paid in the literature to the tendency of communities to oppose unwanted or feared environmental change. Historical terms for this phenomenon include NIMBY (“Not in My Backyard Syndrome”) and LULU (“Locally Unwanted Land Use”) (Gibson, 2005). LULU represents an academic definition that refers to the object of conflict, such as plants perceived as polluting and damaging and for this reason rejected. The acronym NIMBY is used as a stigmatizing label by the mainstream media and the supporters of the plants or land use (Della Porta, Piazza, Bertuzzi, and Sorci 2019). NIMBYism is considered to be not a social movement about the common good of communities, but a small group movement that skews the system in its own advantage, using political opportunities to obtain outcomes at the expense of other people and their rights and to be conservative and oppose in egotistical way to the social change (della Porta and Piazza 2007). When the communities are blamed to be characterized from NIMBY syndrome, we can often see the action of environmental stigma. Environmental stigma marks those affected as being selfish, or deficient, devalued, compounding disabling. Association with contaminated and degraded environments serves to contaminate and degrade the perception and reputation of those affected, rendering them simultaneously victims of environmental harm and social discredit. Environmental injustice is a further implication because, while environmental stigma causes social stigma, the reverse is equally true. Social stigma invites environmental stigma. A further implication is what Edelstein (2002) calls “perpetual jeopardy.” Environmental stigma creates a positive feedback loop by inviting more degrading and hazardous activities to an already blemished region. In short, future dumping is more likely in a place that already has dump sites.

Where the larger community stands to be marked by stigma, harmed by disclosure and visibility of its defects, the social pressure against activism can be itself disabling. This frequently occurs around such issues as tourism, housing values and demand, the ability to attract regional investment and the market vulnerability of food products. On the other side, the idea to reject absolutely this type of plants is reflected in the phrase “Not in Anybody’s Backyard” (NIABY) (Gibbs 1982) and in the phrase “Not on Planet Earth” (NOPE, Robinson 1999), that are opposed to the stigmatized term NIMBY. Furthermore, this type of social movements have also been described as a call on a community to mobilize against local imposition of an environmental threat to address the underlying issues, reflected in terms such as “Local Environmental Resistan-

ce” or “NIMBI” (“Now I must become involved”) (Edelstein 2004). In this way, it reflects the focus on the action rather than the object of the conflict or the self-interest request.

Common to all these terms is the expectation that community members will mobilize to respond to undesired environmental changes. We observe, indeed, protests at local level have not diminished while environmental organisations at national level have become more institutionalized and less characterized by the protest (to a greater or lesser degree) (della Porta and Diani 2004). At the time of our research, despite several LULU movements in Italy such as NoTav (high speed railway), the no-landfills movement was still not able to involve a large group of participants. In this paper, we review research results that shed light on why the expectation to defend place is not likely to be met by a large part of the local community in some conditions and which factors should change to enhance citizens' involvement.

2. Relevant Theory

Protest was the overarching frame for citizen mobilization in response to unwanted conditions within which this project was undertaken. Generically, it is viewed as a form of non-conventional political participation (Mannarini, Legittimo and Talò 2008) involving collective action against a shared disadvantage in order to improve conditions by advancing the status, power or influence of the affected community (Tajfel and Turner, 1981; Wright et al. 1990). Protest can be understood as an unfolding social drama where actors engage in activities taken from set repertoires of contention but elaborated through improvisation and innovation. More than 200 different forms of protest were identified to fulfill seven core functions of providing information, raising funds, garnering publicity, mobilizing the base, building solidarity, applying political pressure and undertaking direct action targeting decision makers. Focusing on social protest by affected communities against big projects, protest is seen as strategic action designed to influence decision making, either directly or by influencing public opinion via the use of the media and the internet (Hanna, Vanclay, Langdon, and Arts 2015).

Following from the work of Edelstein and his Environmental Turbulence theory (2004), protest occurs when a condition of disabling can morph into a counter condition “enabling”: when people believe they are exposed to hazards, are not being protected by government or industry from harm, do not receive sufficient support from

their existing social networks and share common conditions of threat with proximate or networked others with whom they can collaborate. Networking creates a process of contamination in action which facilitates the transformation of identity, trust and community (della Porta and Mosca 2006). Collective action is viewed as an enabling response that helps individuals and communities address environmental stressors. Turbulence upends normal life and subjects its victims to changed conditions described in the theory according to three psycho-social spheres, the lifescape, lifestyle and lifestrain. Lifescape refers to the core understandings people hold about their lives, including their control over significant factors affecting them, their health, the safety of one's home and surrounding environment and the trustworthiness of their social and institutional networks. Lifestyle refers to the patterns of behaviors and activities that comprise daily life. Lifestrain refers to the ability to cope with challenges and the consequences for psychological health and wellbeing and relationships. It is by understanding how environmental conditions affect these spheres that the potential for a problem-oriented coping strategy, such as collective action, can be understood.

While a protest may reflect ideology expressed as ideas, emotions, commitment and/or values (Hornsey et al. 2006), in our usage, it is grounded in real conditions. A given protest develops in response to an asymmetrical power relationship between actors where the interests of at least one group are threatened. It derives its legitimacy and urgency from the fact that decision makers have not addressed this predicament.

Various factors have been found to predict protest. These include collective identity, collective efficacy and a sense of injustice (Klandermans 1984, 1997; van Zomeren 2013; van Zomeren, Spears and Leach 2008; Simon et al. 1998). Regarding defense of the land, protest is also related to place attachment and social embeddedness (Mannarini, Roccato, Fedi, and Rovere 2009). From the study of LULUs movements in Italy, it was shown that the definition of the identity of the protesters comes prior to the definition of interest and it fosters a positive sense of community (della Porta and Piazza 2007). Changes of identity and the shared aim to affect the decision-making process linked the protest campaigns of Italy and framed them into the global justice movement (ibidem). The LULUs Italian movements innovated the democratic processes: citizens' committees, environmental associations, grassroots unions, radical left-wing groups and squatted social centres (della Porta and Piazza 2008) were able to organise themselves and campaign directly.

The search for universal values and for a change in the economic and social paradigm, was a common ground of the Italian LULUs movements that disconfirmed the

'NIMBYism' label by founding a Not On the Planet Earth (NOPE) process (della Porta et al. 2019). Their mobilization started from the defence of the environment and citizens' health, from the damages produced for instance by the building of the high-speed railway (TAV), geo-satellite communications inside the nearby US Navy base (MUOS), trans-adriatic pipeline (TAP) and the passage of large ships in Venetian lagoon. The committees contacted several experts that criticized the reasons of the counterparts (Pellizzoni 2011) and elaborated future scenarios bringing their ideology and mission to grow in generality in connection with issues like quality jobs, popular sovereignty, alternative developmental models and rejection of large infrastructures, the fight against corruption, and mafia linked to the realization of the projects (Piazza and Sorci 2017).

Other factors hinder the citizen action to occur, such as perceived costs and anticipated negative consequences as economic loss, time spent, risks for personal safety, social isolation and stigma (Mannarini, Fedi, and Trippetti 2009; Wandersman, Florin, Friedmann, and Meier 1987). Affected individuals may be isolated from other victims with whom they might collaborate and organize. They may be so disabled that they lack the coping resources and ability to make active response or be distracted by other coping demands, such as earning a livelihood, caring for their family or land or competing problems (Edelstein 2004). Also, in Italian LULUs movements, the protesters complained about limited resources because of the economic crisis, that made organizing transnational actions difficult (della Porta and Piazza 2007).

Finally, protest could be analyzed as an eco-historical phenomenon, considering the influences of several levels of the context on it (Edelstein 2004). It is further recognized that impacts occur along a continuum of social process stretching from the individual to larger society and that such impacts can occur simultaneously at different levels, are mutually interactive and nested and they occur in an eco-historical context that imports past meanings and is set in a landscape of understood threat. In this framework and considering similarities or differences with other LULUs Movements in Italy, our results will be discussed. By examining the movement in a local town, we expected to understand factors that may have silenced some citizens from visibly demanding immediate action to end this long-lasting and impactful environmental injustice while providing opportunities for others to channel their need for involvement in this issue into more structured organizations.

3. The no-landfill protest: an update

The research was conducted at the end of 2009 and the beginning of 2010 in Giugliano in Campania, a town in the Italian region Campania plagued by serious contamination problems from industrial and municipal waste disposal. In addition to poorly designed legal landfills that had released pollution harming environmental and human health, the mafia had illegally dumped toxic wastes in landfills as well as random locations of the region which were routinely set afire, dispersing hazards widely.

At the time of our research, there were steadily less than twenty highly committed activists, often wearing hats in the several organizations working on the waste issues. Just for them, protest meant a lifestyle, while for the others it was seen just as an action ignited during emergencies, that was hardly sustained over the time. Here we will give an update of the protest, the phase and actions that happened after our research, to get some useful indications on how to transform a protest into a larger collective action that involves more citizens and unites activists.

Some five years from the beginning of this study, the movement of protesters finally became large enough to arouse the attention of the national and international public. This result can be attributed to several factors that we will try to briefly explain in order. The hypothesis of the influence of these factors, is based on other research findings, documents reading and the direct participation in the mobilization of the first author who became an activist too.

The peak of demonstration, the so-called "Raging River," occurred in 2013, when 70.000 people took to the streets to demand immediate action from the government to end the "biocide" and protect their rights to life, health and a safe environment. The Raging River reflected a change of strategy. The relatively isolated cadre of highly committed citizens succeeded in bridging territories and forging stronger ties to other civil society groups, disseminating their considerable knowledge and expertise and involving a much larger segment of the community. A coalition called Stop Biocide was formed by the joining of three major clusters of smaller associations to fight for a better management of urban waste, remediation of thousands of contaminated sites in the region, an end to waste trafficking and implementation of systematic health screening of the Campania population (D'Alisa et al. 2017).

As demonstrated by a social network analysis, there was a significant increase in network density from 2008 to 2014 between local grassroots environmental associations, local branches of national and international environmental associations, research

centers and health and public institutions (D'Alisa et al. 2015). Connections were built with regional and national organizations, overcoming previous distrust that in our report resulted as obstacle. Other interesting characteristics of this activism were identified. Leaders playing the most central roles tended to be individuals with the greatest environmental and health knowledge and concern, the closest ties to the land and often themselves suffering from illness potentially linked to the environment and now focused on living a healthy lifestyle (D'Alisa et al. 2017). These findings supported our results, whereas personal experience of health consequences was identified by key informants as one of the major determinants of increased risk perception and, thus, a willingness to protest (see theme 5). In line with Edelman's Environmental Turbulence Theory (2004), the shared experience of contamination made local communities more resilient and shaped risk beliefs.

These coalitions had the capacity to undertake major media events. Media in turn played a key role in making "the Land of Fires" a national and international issue. Among the leaders who ignited the protest was a priest who proclaimed that he was tired of conducting the funerals of children who died from environmental exposures. Along with other leaders, he lobbied politicians, wrote critical articles, organized huge marches and joined with campaigners. In a very effective campaign, 150.000 postcards with pictures of children who died from cancer were sent to the President of the Italian Republic and to Pope Francis (Iengo and Armerio 2017). These images became the icons of the movement, exhibited during several demonstrations in the region by mothers who became key activists of the movement. The campaign had the effect of countering prevalent narratives that played on environmental stigma to blame the victims. Indeed, "Toxic narratives" that attributed the higher cancer incidence to the lifestyle of Campania residents rather than the extreme pollution were so prevalent that they had even been adopted by the Italian Minister of Health (Armerio et al. 2019).

As such undeniable versions of the truth were shared, it made the problem visible to all observers. The new narrative served to promote advocacy and foster scientific investigations, journalistic inquiries and legal battles (ibidem). Key to this success is reaching the degree of visibility where the balance of stigmatizing inhibitors is shifted.

Each point of validation further inflamed the nascent movement. In one celebrated instance, an ex-affiliate of the Camorra turned informant, giving several interviews where he publicly revealed links between politicians and the mob and disclosed previously unknown sites where his clan had buried toxic waste in return for huge payoffs (Di Chio and Martini 2009). In 2014, the City Council of Giugliano was dissolved due to

camorra infiltration, and the Italian government publicly recognized the serious environmental damage and poisoning of the territory.

These developments made possible a political step to address the contamination issues. We could say that the movement passed through three steps: 1. local communities affected by contamination went through turbulence and many form local groups; 2. When local groups formed, they networked with or merged into regional groups that have professionalized and specialized in function; 3. The density of victims and their visibility created a voting block able to win elections and nominate officials who will be responsive to their problems. Indeed, several protesters joined a novel grassroots political party, filed for candidacy and were elected to Parliament. There followed Law 6/2014, the first concrete legislative action to address the waste issue. Through this legislation, the government declared the illegal burning of toxic waste a crime, invested money and resources in mapping the agriculture territory in the region in order to prevent cultivation in the most contaminated areas, coordinated land reclamation and established screening and public health in the region. The law has led to an increased number of arrests, a reduction of fires, sequestration of the assets of companies engaged in improper waste management, the collection of tons of waste from streets and approval of a cancer registry to allow better monitoring of health in the territory. Following the 2018 election, the new party occupied government positions and successfully nominated to the post of Italian Minister of Environment an ex-commander of the environmental police who had discovered several illegal landfills in the Land of Fires. Finally, a way had been found to tame the Land of Fires, although there was concern that the law and the decrees so far approved did not end corruption of the waste industry. Instead, according some authors, it served to shift wastes to somebody else's backyard by pushing illegal waste activities to less regulated areas, such as the Balkans (Slaybaugh 2016). Hence, the waste management remains a multifactorial issue that has to be addressed on several systemic and ecological levels.

Although protest has changed over the time, we are going to present the results of our research in order to understand the factors hindering and fostering protest, that could be valid not just for this case but could be generalized to similar cases of LULUs movements.

4. The Case Study Method

The case study is based on three main sources for gathering data: document analysis, participant observation and semi-structured interviews. In particular, we analyzed self-produced documents, as well as reports of the groups circulated through mailing lists and reports made by organizations such as the Italian environmental organization “Legambiente”. These documents tracked the history of the territory and the waste problem, the economic and cultural visions, and a social profile of the community. Some limitations should be underlined: the little sample of interviewees, not representative, and an unbalanced sample of non-activists and activists.

For the participant observation, the first author participated to the demonstrations, the sit-ins and the meetings of the activists to plan strategies of mobilization. During these meetings, he took several notes that were analysed to have a description of the context, the community and the type of participation. Observations occurred during public meetings held in the last three months of 2009 and during landfill demonstrations and sit-ins held later the next year. While earning the trust of activists, we observed the form and extent of participation in the anti-waste groups and identified key community informants for subsequent conversations.

The third source of data included a qualitative study on fifteen in-depth interviews with key actors and participants involved in the mobilizations. The fifteen key informants were interviewed, including activists, politicians, educators and businesspeople. The sample was predominantly male (12 out of 15), middle aged (between 27 to 45 years old) and activist (10 out of 15). The characteristics regarding sex and age corresponded to the most represented among the protesters in the town (Scafuto 2011).

Activists were compounded of civic participants and local politicians, identified during the observational study and were recruited for their commitment to protest and their role as community leaders. Indeed, interviewees were selected partially by making use of the existing networks among the population studied (Salganik and Heckathorn 2004), and partially through the suggestions of the key activists that we met in several local and national assemblies and in crucial protest events through a snowball sampling (Goodman 1961) that helped to identify, especially, non-activists, who held important community roles, jobs or environmental or political expertise. All but one key informant, i.e. the current mayor, invited to participate consented to do so. When recruited, participants were informed about the research goals and that results would be shared at a public meeting.

Table 1. Characteristics of key informants (n=15)

Type of participation	Gender	Role
Activists/Civic participants	5 Men	3 Committee key people
	3 Women	3 Committee and environmental organizations key people
		2 Environmental organizations key people
Activists/Political participants	2 Men	1 Ex-major, current councilor
		1 Ex-town councilor
Non-activists	5 Men	2 Local Entrepreneurs
		1 School Principle
		2 Technical consultants in environmental issues

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted. They regarded six topics, about risk and protest representation, the assignment of responsibility of the waste problem, the type of protest, explicit motivations to partake or not in the protest, contextual and community factors hindering or promoting protest. The interviews lasted about an hour and a half and were taped and fully transcribed.

Table 2. Interview topics and questions

General Topics	Specific Topics	Questions
1. Representation of risk	Knowledge about risk, perceived seriousness and reaction to risk	<p>What do you know about problem of waste disposal?</p> <p>According to you, how do citizens perceive risk deriving from dump sites and waste fires exposure?</p> <p>How do you/citizens react to this exposure?</p>

2. Responsibility assignment	Which social actors or institutions are blamed	Who is responsible for the waste problem? To what extent are you and/or others responsible for the problem?
3. Representation of protest	Groups' activities, aims, efficacy	What do you think about protest against dump sites and fires?
4. Explicit motivations for protest or not	Individual and group motivations	How did your participation start in the protest movement? Why didn't you join the protest movement?
5. Context of reference	Contextual factors that promote or hinder protest	What are the main contextual obstacles to protest?
6. Cultural characteristics of community type	Dominant culture with regards to protest	What does protest mean for your co-citizens?

Overall, the case study sought answers to a series of questions.

How did the specific context affect participation? Which reasons drove the interviewees to decide to join or not the protest and what obstacles did they find? What role did environmental stigma play in discouraging protest and feelings of belonging to the community of protesters? These questions became the focus of our research, as well as an attempt to frame all these factors in an eco-historical context. We were interested in whether the dynamics of social participation were consistent with the Theory of Environmental Turbulence and why more widespread grassroots protest and action was not in evidence at that time.

5. Results

The documents, the notes of the observation and the interviews were subjected to Thematic Analysis (Silverman 2000), where the content was broken up into 600 codes,

reassembled into 59 categories, organized into 16 thematic dimensions and reduced to 5 themes (see Table 3). Here we describe these five themes, involving “The town and its unsustainable growth,” “The split of the Community” and “Social distrust”; “The protest forms, aims, costs and benefits” and “Uncertainty and Risk” in light of their related dimensions and codes.

Table 3 - Categories and Themes- The town and its unsustainable Growth, The split of the Community and Social distrust

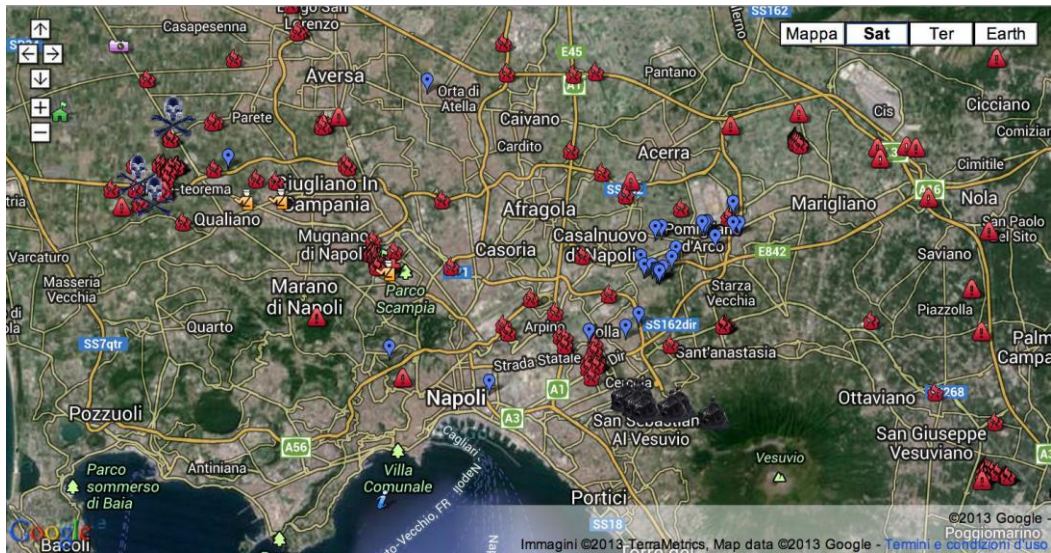
Theme	Thematic Dimensions	Categories
1. The town and its Unsustainable Growth	Context evaluations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of the town as a metastasis 2. Lack of infrastructure and services 3. Few recognized centers of gathering
	Personal/affective evaluations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Ambivalent place attachment 5. Absence of historical memory 6. Nostalgia for the past and still searching for land beauty 7. Living in the town as it was temporary 8. Planning to go away
2. The split of the Community	Beliefs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Citizens as individualist 10. Citizens as resigned and powerless 11. Local culture against participation
	Relations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Self- and hetero-attributed stigma 13. Perception of two divided communities
3. Social Distrust	Attitude towards institutions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 14. Recriminations related to relational injustice 15. Citizens' wish of compensation for damage 16. Disappointment of positive expectations 17. Mistrust towards several institution targets 18. Intra-institutional conflict 19. Complaining about the lack of control 20. Charge of incompetence 21. Charge of willful blindness 22. Charge of carelessness
	Attitude towards doctors/	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 23. Charge of being neutral

Media/	24. Accepting of moral responsibility
Protest committees /associations	25. Protest group heterogeneity/ division 26. Stressed difference between committee/associations 27. Unfavorable attitude toward non activists

5.1. The town and its unsustainable growth

An area comprising between the northern part of Naples and the southern of Caserta came to be branded as the "Land of Fires" because of the frequently repeated poisonous ritual of burning toxic wastes, (Legambiente 2003). Although some twenty-five hundreds of these unpermitted sites were found on 1,076 km² in 57 townships throughout the Land of Fires area, they were particularly concentrated in Giugliano (Legambiente 2013; Iovine 2008) for this reason this area was selected for our study. Comprising a land mass of 36.53 square miles, it is a community of 124,000 people located on the coastal plain. The high fertility of this specific town's soils makes it one of the most important sources of fruit and vegetables within Italy, with the prevalence of an agriculture and commercial economy (Legambiente 2013).

Figure 1: Map of the Land of fires, with the location of Giugliano in *Campania* (laterradeifuochi.it)



The value of rich farmland notwithstanding, the region became known for another notable characteristic. A criminal association formed by the Camorra (a known criminal organization), industrial entrepreneurs, freemasons and local and national politicians chose the area as the disposal site for industrial, construction and hospital wastes. Over a period of decades, both legal and illegal dump sites became numerous there (De Rosa 2016).

Giugliano itself was home to six large landfills, many eventually taken over by the judiciary when it became known that they contained untreated hazardous wastes. Following the principle of perpetual jeopardy (Edelstein, 2004), the presence of the landfills subsequently invited siting of several Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) plants. RDF is a fuel manufactured from municipal waste for burning in garbage incinerators. The largest RDF plant, locally dubbed the Taverna del Re, stored six million bales of mixed and untreated waste as feedstock for RDF and occupied an area of 130 hectares (Legambiente 2013).

Contamination by a range of chemicals, primarily dioxins and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), was documented in the region's air, soil, water, animals and humans (Livesay 2015). Among the local population, both cancer mortality and neonatal malformation were found to have a significant positive correlation to exposure to illegal toxic waste dump sites (Mazza et al. 2018).

The import of these wastes to the Land of Fires was a result of the practice of what one observer termed “armed capitalism” (D’Alisa, Germani, Falcone, and Morone 2017), toxic waste trafficking by industry employing Camorra to find cheap means of disposal. As a result of this practice, beginning in the 1980s, millions of tons of hazardous waste arrived in Campania from Northern Italy and Northern Europe and was dumped without even the most basic environmental safeguards (De Rosa, 2013). The dumping was permitted through a combination of bribery and corruption to overcome enforcement powers already weakened at both national and regional levels by bureaucratic inefficiency, political patronage and criminal malfeasance (D’Alisa, Forno, and Maurano 2015). In the last decades, in the same period of the waste trafficking, the town was also transformed from a rural area to a city with high urban sprawl, through the crime of illegal building, perpetuated by a criminal association including some parts of the local government, as the Judiciary Court proved since 2008, asking for arresting technicians and police officers.

Indeed, the crime of illegal building crossed that one of the waste disposals, several quarries where building materials were extracted, could be filled up with wastes. Consequently, a much denser and congested city core was created while pushing development out to the margins. Improper decision making, fed by the criminal and profit logics, and its consequences came to dominate the experience of place. Effects included not just illegal building, sprawl, but also poor infrastructures, roads, water shortages, paralyzing traffic jams, lack of public transit and loss of green space. Furthermore, these factors increased material and energy use and waste creation. More landfills were opened. Municipal landfills began to take waste from other towns or the big city of Naples to deal with the declared emergency. And toxic and industrial waste was illegally disposed of at these facilities. Following the concept of perpetual jeopardy, the communities receiving these wastes became further marginalized, making them vulnerable to additional environmental damages and environmental injustice (see also Petrillo 2009). Indeed, environmentalism is now equated with social justice and civil rights, as literature showed (Bullard and Johnson 2000).

The grassroot group we analyzed tried to empower themselves and improve the way health and environmental policies were administered. The perception of unsustainable growth of the town, was a common feeling emerging from the interviewees (cfr. Theme 1., Table 3). Two respondents used the analogy of cancer in describing Giugliano’s pattern of rapid local growth as a “metastasis.” This uncontrolled and unsustainable growth was identified as the root cause of the prevalence in this town of dump sites

and waste trafficking issue and the factor that split the community apart and made collective action difficult. The strain of daily life in Giugliano was further amplified by the social changes accompanying growth, including the lack of cultural and recreational services and loss of peasant culture. Along with what was found in the analysis of other Italian LULU movements, there was a deep critique of the traditional concept of progress, it was considered that the 'growth machines' were made greedier by the economic crisis and by political collusion (della Porta et al. 2019). Among those who tried to resist change, the no-landfills protesters denounced this age as the age of capital, characterized by the dualism nature/society, and its relation between environmental problems and economic growth (Moore 2014).

The key informants considered the changes produced by the economic growth to be a cause of alienation, noting that many people now hoped to move away from the area. The diminished place attachment that resulted from a suburban rather than place-based experience further discouraged the level of commitment needed to motivate people to protest. Following on the concept of environmental stigma, living in a degraded area fosters disengagement and a desire to move. The area is thus further neglected. Even key informants evidenced ambivalence when they talked about their own place attachment.

There is a sentence that I often say: yes, there is the mob and illegal building, the sea is not clean, I cannot enjoy the fruit of my farmland. But this is my land! Here I have my roots. And then, this is what I am, I am Giuglianese! But I would prefer not to be. It is difficult to say [...]. it's like being marked [...] trying to change the situation and always beating your head against the same rubber wall (Activist; Id.3).

Respondents also referred to the beauty of the territory, the signs that nature was viable despite all the deterioration.

The day before yesterday I went to Patria Lake, and I saw wonderful birds. The canes were still there with the task of purifying water. This observation leads me to live fully my land. Sunday mornings, I get up early to visit my land: both new places and the places I have already seen. Nature offers signs of life and endurance. I still catch sight of great beauty. I think: If the birds, canes and fishes can survive despite the contamination that must be a miracle (Activist; Id.1).

Long term residents could draw on their feelings of nostalgia for how the place was before the environmental decay. Newcomers lacked these memories. They lacked prior attachment and had little cause to develop it.

5.2. The split of the Community and social distrust

There was a clear relational schism caused because the waste crisis was a broader impact of rapid urbanization and thus could be blamed with some justification on newcomers by the native citizens who mostly lived in the Town Center. As this quote illustrates, some interviewees described the newcomers as invaders and destroyers of the environment.

I've seen this territory growing up, and it really was better here when there were only natives of Giugliano who respected and supported each other. And we also were ashamed of doing certain bad things that now the new residents easily do, because they do not feel a sense of belonging to this land. Our land is not their land. Pollution is not due to our people (Non-activist; Id. 6)

On their part, the newcomers, who mostly lived in the town periphery, felt marginalized and exploited because they did not receive the same public amenities or have the same proximate access to public facilities as downtown residents despite paying the same taxes. One informant returned to the common metaphor of cancer to describe this alienation of newcomers.

Like a metastasis, the periphery seems to be in search of independence from a body that does not want it (Non-activist; Id.12).

The split of the community was also represented by a loss of the idea of commons. Some interviewees, especially politicians, saw the lack of collective interest as a major reason for the absence of greater public protest. An average elector, in their view, pursued personal interests when he approached politicians and not the wellbeing of common values such as community and the environment. This type of community, represented as particularistic and fragmented, appeared different from other local Italian communities, such as the NoTav, which have been described as more united also thanks to their delimited geographical identity (Mannarini et al. 2009).

The citizens come just to ask you for their own private interests. For example, they want their political representative to remove the garbage bin from their neighborhood or, more often, they want him to provide them with a job. There is a relationship between citizens and institutions which is characterized by political nepotism (Activist; Id.11).

Another widespread view, emerging both from the interviewees and the observational study, represented the average citizens as resigned, powerless or unable to contribute to solving the problem. The protesters were usually complaining about the small number of participants during the meetings and attributed the main reason to the self-interest logic or the sense of hopelessness of their co-citizens. The hopelessness would be predicted according to Edelstein's (2004) findings about loss of personal control and the concept of disabling in the wake of contamination. In this instance, disabling was further compounded by the 1994 declaration of a waste emergency. Acting under emergency powers, government adopted an even more centralized and authoritarian decision-making process in an attempt to solve the waste crisis that increased a sense of psychological helplessness. That this step was taken without public consultation fomented a secondary crisis of democracy (D'Alisa, Buralassi, Healy, and Walter 2010). Even activists felt helpless, as this remark conveys.

The government only gives lip service to what the citizens want and need, because it has already decided what to do (Activist; Id.8).

Beyond this sense of helplessness was an evident internalization of environmental stigma, expressed as a sense of shame at being a resident of "the land of fires." Environmental stigma fed community conflict and, thus, prevented united action.

I feel ashamed of all the rubbish that we have in the countryside, and I sometimes think we deserve this condition and all the bad the other people, the outsiders, think about us (Non-activist; Id.13).

The distrust caused by environmental stigma and the resulting blame and alienation discouraged cooperation among citizens and between citizens and institutions. Distrust was a common element emerging in all the interviews and public meetings and demonstrations and it was addressed toward several targets (see Theme 3., Table 3). Political institutions were accused of colluding with the illegal system either deliberately

because of corruption or inadvertently due to technical incompetence or gaps in legal authority to address landfills and toxic waste problems. Willful blindness about these problems was attributed to politicians, who were thought to be corrupt and to pursue their personal interest rather than the common good.

Camorra and politics are the responsible ones here. They are often very close. The criminal organization steps in where the politicians, state, government, and local administrations do not act as they should. This place is used by all those who want to illegally dispose waste to save money because legal waste disposal is more expensive. (Activist; Id. 9)

An extreme insult was the practice of policing citizen protest and demonstrations while the illegal waste practices were allowed to continue unabated.

Why is there not an actual patrol in the territory? Why don't the soldiers patrol the countryside where toxic waste is burnt instead of staking out the legalized landfills and hitting citizens who try to defend their land? Because there is no will to solve the problem. Politicians are just interested to their career (Activist; Id. 4).

The twenty year-long emergency of municipal waste disposal was considered by respondents as merely a cover up of the actual emergency of toxic waste dumping. In addition to indiscriminate illegal dumps, much toxic waste had been improperly dumped in many municipal solid waste landfills not designed for such materials.

Such results were the outcome of a deliberately concocted plan. As later it was proved, the "urban waste crisis" was a joint venture of the Camorra, corrupt companies and politicians implemented in order to boost waste company profits while helping waste generator's to cheaply dispose of toxic wastes by evading environmental regulations (D'Alisa et al. 2015). This distrust in politics linked these protesters to the other Italian LULU movements. As for these other movements, the fight against a unique "corrupt-mafia system" that produced unwanted public works is a crucial issue (Piazza and Sorci 2017).

Table 4. Categories and Themes- The protest forms, aims, costs and benefits; Uncertainty and Risk perception

Theme	Thematic Dimensions	Categories
4. The protest forms, aims, costs and benefits	Representation of protest	28. As a Lifestyle 29. As action during the emergencies 30. Different depending on its types
	Personal explicit motivations	31. Need of comparing and acquiring information 32. Driven by positive emotions 33. Driven by a sense of anger as a spur to action 34. Driven by sense of social responsibility 35. Driven by a will to restore a positive image of the place
	Protest costs	36. Potential cost for personal safety 37. Cost for the consequences of protest repress 38. Cost of time lost 39. Civil costs 40. Social costs 41. Economic costs 42. Risk of political manipulation
	Protest method	43. Communication difficulties between institutions and citizens 44. Communication difficulties between committees and citizens 45. Extraordinary or ordinary action
	Personal control/self-efficacy	46. Negative efficacy beliefs (in political representatives and in no-activists) 47. Limited positive efficacy beliefs (in activists)
	Collective efficacy	48. Negative efficacy beliefs (in political representatives and in non-activists) 49. Limited positive efficacy beliefs (in technical representatives and in activists)
5. Uncertainty and Risk perception	Knowledge/Evaluation of landfills and damages	50. High personal awareness of problem 51. Environmental vulnerability awareness 52. Responsibility attributed to others 53. Information increases with new network 54. Knowledge of problem but not how to deal with it 55. Overwhelming of other daily issues 56. Willful blindness 57. Meanings of the degradation as a symbol of disinterest
	Health concern	58. Risk perceived in community as lacking 59. Risk mainly related to proximity

The closing down of political opportunities, above all at the national level, and the collusion between business, that is also expressed by camorra interests, and political power are factors that hindered the opportunity of citizens to be listened by political institutions (della Porta and Piazza 2007).

Beyond the failure of government, most journalists, physicians and health institutions were accused by our sources with colluding to conceal risks and failing to stand up to demand solutions of the problem. An exception were the handful of trusted journalists and physicians who assisted the activists' effort to establish a cancer registry capable of collecting valid data on local mortality in excess and the influence of environmental contamination.

Distrust also reflected schisms within the civil society sector responding to the waste crisis. So many local informal small groups and organizations formed to address a problem that was repeated locally across an entire region that they found themselves in turf battles with each other and particularly with well established, formally structured environmental organizations. Some interviewees cited the lack of union in the protest as less credible and effective, and consequently as discouraging the attraction of new sympathizers. As a result, actions carried out by some organizations served more to expose their weakness than their strength. Even local emergent groups representing affected communities had difficulty navigating this complex landscape of organizations. On one hand, there were too many responders but divided; on the other, there were not enough.

5.3. The protest forms, aims, costs and benefits

As would be expected, the waste crisis roused the attention of local civic associations in the Campania region and inspired activist anti-landfill committees (cfr. Theme 4, Table 4).

In Giugliano, as it resulted from the observation, there was a moderate mobilization, with at maximum few hundred people mustering for such major emergencies as dumping of garbage on the streets or government decisions to temporarily reopen closed landfills already filled to capacity. At the end of 2007, there was a significant protest often mentioned by activists during the interviews and the meetings. After three months of sit-ins, conflicts with police, they finally got the closure of the biggest landfill, Taverna del Re, that later unfortunately was re-opened. In 2009, during our participant

observation, the protest was again ignited because the central government ordered the waste disposal from the city of Naples to the Giugliano rubbish dumps in order to buffer the long-lasting crisis of municipal waste. At that point, the first author participated in what was the first large demonstration in Giugliano that involved 1.500 citizens, many of them young students, stimulated by the schools and the parishes, not just by the committees and political representatives who opposed the choice of the government. However, also after this demonstration, there was still hard to get a steady participation and attention on the waste issue.

Two phases of mobilization were evident (Lucchini and Membretti 2016) but at the time of our research, the movement was still in his first phase. The first (2000-2011) involved opposition of local communities to the State's emergency measures on urban waste. The 1994 declaration of a waste emergency reinforced disabling in the local community. Acting under emergency powers, government adopted an even more centralized and authoritarian decision-making process in an attempt to solve the waste crisis that increased a sense of psychological helplessness. That this step was taken without public consultation fomented a secondary crisis of democracy (D'Alisa, Burgalassi, Healy, and Walter 2010). Collectively, these groups, although they were not enough united and organized, functioned as a movement responding to government plans to build or re-open waste landfills and incinerators and promoted a pro-active NIABY focus on the underlying problems of waste production and disposal, composting, recycling, landfill remediation. The second ongoing phase, beginning in 2012, focused on the problem of toxic and industrial waste management and the issue's physical and symbolic appropriation of the region. During this time, local groups joined regional networks with names such as "the Commons Network," "the Campania Citizens for an Alternative Waste Plan Network" and "the Land of Fires Alliance." This ongoing phase and the reasons of the increased mobilization are explained in the last session, as we mentioned, to update the case study with a follow-up.

As it emerged from the participant observation, protests assumed different forms. Picketing occurred at waste sites about to be opened and sit-ins at municipal councils, public meetings were organized, alternative waste management strategies were researched, expert consultants were contacted, proposals were developed, and efforts were made to influence local institutions to adopt new strategies. Committees and organizational leaders built up their technical expertise about waste management and lobbied or confronted politicians. Regarding toxic waste disposal, communication and information activities were also present, even though not such organized and not so

many as in the second phase. They were mostly characterized by web communication, video- and photo-reporting of the fires, geo-mapping the contaminated sites and waste fires and spread of scientific data of health issues. These forms of protest and environmental action were also confirmed by interviews.

The communication aim resulted the most important aim to be pursued. The interviews and the public meetings made clear that activists were individually and collectively driven by a vision of socio-political change rather than a belief that any given protest effort would resolve the problem. They did not wield the power to achieve decisive outcomes. For them, collective action was useful for disseminating an understanding of the complexity of the waste crisis even if, at most, it caused only a temporary closure of the landfills. This perspective was useful, given the overwhelmingly disempowering context. Survival of their sense of efficacy required a downsizing of expectations about likely practical effects of the protest in favor of emphasizing the values of participation in itself. By elevating ideological over instrumental motivations (van Zomeren, Spears and Postmes 2008), their intentions for the protest were much more likely to be rewarded.

What could we do? Beyond the garrisons on the landfills and the organization of events to get the Media spotlight on the problem? We hindered some trucks dropping off waste but we are not strong enough to prevent every truck from doing so. We were few and bludgeoned by police. We often say: "If we were 10 or 20,000, we would be able to do more. Hence the major impact of the protest was to spread knowledge: to uncover the current actual problem that was unknown before (Activist; Id.5).

Given the lack of material reward or even a sense of actual accomplishment, most activists reported being motivated by a sense of responsibility and avoiding a sense of guilt.

I must do my own, for my sons, my students and for myself. If we will succeed to gain something, it should be great. Otherwise, I will fight regardless as long I will live (Activist; Id.15).

While activists felt engaged and proactive in such activities, non-activists expressed the opposite, reflecting the aforementioned hopelessness underscored by the abstract but not practical level of accomplishment.

That the value of protest was more ideological than practical additionally made it much harder to overcome obstacles to participation, including the known risks and

costs that it entailed. Foremost among risks noted by informants was the threat to personal safety implied by the intimidating presence of Camorra. Some citizens were dissuaded from participation by explicit threats.

During a demonstration in the town, Camorra men pass by the square, they check who is participating in the meeting, and then they go to report that to their boss (Activist; Id.9).

We uncovered a big truth, so big we didn't succeed to manage it. We took severe risks, and we were blackmailed to stop our activities. Some friends' cars were damaged (Activist, Id.1).

Additionally, interviewees also feared being arrested or beaten by police. Such retribution especially occurred during demonstrations against waste disposal practices. For some, this threat dissuaded involvement in protest activities altogether. Others, angered at this perceived injustice, became even more motivated to openly defy such intimidation.

When police bludgeoned us, some of us became more and more angry, so they want to protest more. Other people, instead, became frightened. The fear caused them to say: "It's better for me to stay at home. I can't solve this problem anyway." (Activist; Id.5).

Local entrepreneurs were reluctant to participate out of fear of future reprisals to their businesses by the local government.

If I could mask myself, I would go immediately to protest, but if the town councilors recognize me, how can I keep my business? They will try to hinder me. I will not get permits on time, etc. (Non-activist; Id.12).

A major impediment was the amount of time protest demands. Depending on the type and structure of work, job security, and the amount of free time available, time was seen as a luxury to expend, particularly given the low rewards and high costs. And then there was the reception given those who devoted their time and energy to the cause. Activists became a lightning rod for blame and anger. Because publicizing the contamination and waste problems damaged the image of their region, they were blamed for causing environmental stigma and the resulting loss of tourism, investment and property appeal. If they were attacked by others, activists additionally reported that their involvement in protest jeopardized the support of their previous social net-

works and tarnished their social reputation. Isolated from their old networks, they gravitated to a new community of co-activists who shared both their values and behaviors as well as their social stigma. Activists were tainted by even a hint of interest in pursuing public office, as if the term politician was a pejorative term. In fact, politics was perceived by interviewees as a “dirty business” pursued by people already or likely to be corrupted. Politicians had to accept the blame and distrust heaped on them, expressing in their interviews a sense of isolation. When sincere about making a difference, they further expressed frustration at being ineffectual and compared to all the other incompetent or corrupted politicians.

I thought that if I became a politician, I was able to make the difference. I realized it is very difficult, because the affecting variables are multiple and actually you have few buttons to press. Behind any button, there are 300,000 bureaucratic procedures, 400,000 political steps, and you have to convince people who do not care about anything, and therefore you are always alone (Activist; Id. 8).

Hence, there was awareness of the already experienced costs by activists during their participation, and the anticipation or expectation of negative future costs, which can be seen as protest risks (e.g., being arrested or beaten, losing social reputation, civic rights) (Wilfang and McAdam 1991). The contextual constraints crossed with personal and biographical constraints, such as time to devote to participation, depending also by their age and life cycle, that have been shown to be barriers to participation when the costs of activism have reached high levels (ibidem).

5.4. Uncertainty and Risk perception

Activists during the meetings and the interviews argued that average citizens were not knowledgeable about protest activities and tools for addressing the pollution issues. Moreover, some had not yet personally experienced problems due to the contamination as they themselves had; the immediate sensory experiences such as breathing in the stench of the wastes or the experience of health problems related to pollution suffered by themselves, friends or loved ones (cfr. Theme 5, Table 4). Just as Edelstein’s prior work suggests (2004), it often takes this level of personal exposure to recognize and accept the hazard. To act on the hazard was yet another matter. Many co-

ped by reorienting their lives elsewhere, escaping physically from their own town and region, particularly on weekends and holidays. Others did not engage in active coping at all, engaging in fatalism and helplessness, perceiving themselves as victims of unavoidable events. And some never accepted the hazard, engaging in outright denial of the problem. Denial, itself, was even seen as a long-term cultural characteristic of a region lying at the base of Vesuvius, a volcano with a deadly history and threatening future.

It is like smoking addiction, it damages seriously health, but I go on smoking. Here many people are fatalist. They say: "I live here, I can't do anything. Maybe it's not true that I will become sick". Most people have this mindset, and they are used to not predicting the environmental hazards, living in a big volcanic area (Activist; Id.1).

I think there is a lot of fear of becoming sick, especially to contract a cancer. Here people don't want to think about it, they want to have a distraction from the problem. It's a defense mechanism. For example, I sometimes laugh about the absurdity of problem. Humor is a defense as well; it decreases the level of anxiety (Activist; Id.7).

The shift from perceiving oneself as safe to having been "contaminated" is dramatic and overwhelming. It involves a shift from the perception of abstract risks to concrete outcomes of risks realized. Activists played a key role in giving the public information and bringing them to accept that threat. As their social networks expanded, they more easily spread information and modeled new social norms and beliefs about risk perception which served to reinforce the motivation to protest.

My experience starts about 10-12 years ago, thanks to R., who's the president of L. (a pro-environment organization). I had an unclear perception of something I did not know, but I knew it was in the air; it was like you know there is a problem but most of the people hide it; it exists but you don't have to say that. Hence, walking with R. in our territory, I began to understand what was going on (Activist; Id. 3).

Knowledge of contamination raised many issues. The incompatibility of an agricultural region permeated with waste disposal sites naturally made people suspicious about the safety of the food. Beyond the issue of local consumption, agricultural exports were a major source of local income. The threat of environmental stigma was real.

There are several types of hazardous chemicals and they produce cancer or malformations, because they are introduced in human body through the food chain. It's a social alarm (Activist; Id.4).

The problem of waste concerns the whole of Italy, and it is a matter of the whole world because our lifestyle is aimed at an overwhelming production. How could we dispose and manage toxic waste? The answer is that it should not exist anymore. Have we to continue to send it out to other developing countries? (Activist; Id.9)

6. Discussion of results and conclusion

The results can be analyzed using Edelstein's Model of Social Process in Eco-historical Context (2004) by examining the interaction of dynamics at the individual, social-relational, organizational, institutional, community and societal levels.

On a societal level, rapid urbanization and sprawl had overwhelmed the traditionally centered communities of the Campania region, whose Giugliano is a representative case, while national/regional decisions about waste disposal simultaneously concentrated hazardous and municipal waste disposal sites in the same area. These were decisions beyond the control of the population. Hence, this level promoted a sense of helplessness, because there was not a participative decision-making, not even a formal empowerment (Rich et al. 1995).

On a community level, the geographical community was fragmented, socially and spatially, by urbanization and sprawl, cracking schisms between old and new residents, center and periphery, breaking previous social bonds and creating a less cohesive and more conflictive social environment that did not uniformly invite participation.

On the organizational level, despite of the cadre of experienced activists, protest groups were not enough united in the battle against the waste management, had difficulty attracting new participants and could only mobilize part of the community to gain necessary clout around significant milestone events.

And on the institutional level, the ubiquity of corruption, distrust of politicians and officials and the influence of corporations and the mob made it hard to believe that anyone was looking out for public or environmental safety. The affected population was vulnerable to a spiral of environmental destruction.

The Land of Fires is also a story of environmental and social injustice (see Pellow 2004). The Camorra profited from illegally trafficking toxic wastes from industries

seeking to save money and it was protected by a corrupted administrative and bureaucratic system (D'Alisa et al. 2017). Distrust is a crucial factor that ties this case study to the literature on contaminated communities (Edelstein 2004).

Meanwhile, at an individual and social relationship level, these changes were manifested in an increasingly individualistic culture, particularly evident, among those who had little historical connection with the past. Old-timers lived in the center immersed in a deeper historical context, using traditional public spaces that recalled the past and invited nostalgia for the way things used to be. They drew on detailed memories to chart the path that undesired transformation had taken, conscious of the consequences of change valued by them as losses of community quality. These individuals were identified by interviewers more likely as activists, along with previous results on the connection between place attachment and collective action (Edelstein 2004).

Believing citizens to be more driven by self-interests than collective aim or participating just if they were physically close to the problem was accompanied, also in the same interviews and meetings, by another representation of people as powerless or resigned.

Indeed, eco-historical context was disabling in multiple ways and caused helplessness. Community life was traditionally governed by corruption and the Camorra. A sense of democratic involvement may never have been historically present, as some authors underlined talking of a pre-democratic labor (Cori and Pellegrino 2011). The waste crisis was a democracy crisis where corruption prevented any authentic involvement of the local community in decision making essential to the health of people and place (D'Alisa et al. 2010). This corrupt system blamed the protesters and stigmatized them as suffering from the NIMBY Syndrome and working for their own self-interest through connection to economic and criminal interests (see Petrillo 2009). These dynamics were similar to the other Italian LULUs Movements about the reasons to protest and to silence the protest and framed also the no-landfills fight in the environmental justice movement.

It was evident from the interviews and the observation of the authors that several respondents felt resigned and perceived their co-citizens as powerless too, likely to cope with the risk through behavioral detachment or avoidance rather than activism. People were silenced by the sense that no one was listening but also by the explicit fear that they would be threatened or harmed if they spoke out. The loss of personal control, another crucial factor in the literature on contamination (Edelstein 2004), was due to the contamination and to the untrustworthy relationship with the institutions.

Beyond the fear of reprisals and a sense of helplessness, people seemed immobilized by fear and uncertainty arising from cancer and environmental stigma. A corroborating study in the same area found an inverse correlation between the fear of cancer and activism for the general public, although not for those who identify with a community of activists (Scafuto and La Barbera 2016).

Given this overall disabling eco-historical context, it is notable that emergence of a counteracting enabling dynamic was hardly a simple response. There was a cadre of core activists responding to the situation who evidenced self and collective efficacy. In contrast with non-activists, activists appeared to be energized by the constraints. They were clearly reading the signals differently. Their involvement was driven by their sense of injustice at having been victimized by contamination. Similar to NoTav Movement (Mannarini et al. 2009), the more they were unfairly treated by the institutions, the more their sense of injustice increased and their commitment to protest, too (Scafuto and La Barbera 2016). Furthermore, as confirmed in a recent study, activists were likely to have family or friends or to have themselves suffered a serious disease possibly caused by environmental contamination (D'Alisa et al. 2017). As the distrust of institutions increased, they found each other and formed emergent organizations which offered reliable sources of information, support and power otherwise not possible in the novel situation (Edelstein 2004). Such organizing was shown to promote a sense of individual and collective empowerment (Edelstein and Wandersman 1987; Rich, Edelstein, Hallmann, and Wandersman 1995) and to reinforce protest. Activists seemed to counter-balance concern over environmental stigma with values that motivated them to protest, including place attachment, the desire for justice and the activists' personal experience of environmental problems and health issues.

These factors could explain the different reaction in activists and non-activists. They tended to be ideologically driven, valuing duty, responsibility and the desire to right injustice rather than instrumental reasons such as a sense of efficacy (see van Zomeren, Spears and Postmes 2008; Hornsey et al. 2006) and the achievement of concrete outcomes (Scafuto and La Barbera 2016). However, they were mostly successful in their efforts to organize and communicate effectively but not in actions that might definitively close the landfills, clean up the contaminated sites and curtail the environmental threat.

The study we presented showed some interesting and preliminary results that bolster pre-existing literature on contaminated communities and protest, adding some further insights on eco-historical factors that hinder and promote protest. Following

from the longitudinal follow-up, the study also offers a useful view on how from a disabling context, an “organizers makerspace” can be created where new narratives offered a visible and undeniable version of the oppression and reinforced a sense of community. The use of collective coping strategies made individuals more able to deal with emotions, such as anxiety, fear and pain, and in the meanwhile made possible to act a political change, through an empowering process. Moreover, our findings call for further research in order to understand the differences between activists and non-activists, and verify also through quantitative methods how and why participation changed over the intervening time and the role of the factors that we hypothesized in our conclusion to promote a larger involvement and a better unity between activists.

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