

The Landfill in the Countryside:
Waste Management and Government of the Population in Campania *
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Introduction: Ethnography of a Refusal

The so-called *waste crisis* has devastated Campania for the past eighteen years. It overlaps the speculative socioeconomic planning that characterizes the recent economic development of the region, largely through investments in the building sector and waste disposal. The land between the provinces of Naples, Caserta, and Avellino is inextricably associated with the intense exploitation of its soil, private real estate speculation, and incremental industrial delocalization, followed by the delocalization of the service industry (Di Costanzo 2013) and more widespread legal and illegal dumping grounds (Rabitti 2008). The same speculative projects have also contributed to the progressive impoverishment of rural areas in the region. If territory and population are the primary elements of modern power (Foucault 2004), the profound transformation of this territory coincides with the government of its population. The last large-scale waste crisis that began in summer 2007 is a significant case in point: regardless of the devastation of entire areas because of the construction of new dumps and storage sites, the rebellion of the population in attempting to protect the local environment and public health has been pejoratively described by official sources as NIMBY, especially in its reiteration of rhetorical strategies associated with the more traditional *questione meridionale* (Gramsci 2007) and by consolidating processes of ethnicization and orientalism (Said 1977; Schneider 1998). Such a narrative deprives the social protests of their political dimension and redefines them in more *naturalistic* terms (Petrillo 2009).

The following two essays recount the processes of socio-economic transformation in a cross-section of the suburbs of Naples and in two rural settings in the backcountry of Campania after dumping grounds were built there. We emphasize the political considerations that justify the choice of these areas as locations for waste disposal as well as the administrative strategies for governing the local populations. The sociological analysis is the result of broader ethnographic research conducted during the waste crisis in 2007-2008 by URiT, the acronym of our research group for social topography at the Università degli Studi Suor Orsola Benincasa in Naples. The goal of our research, conducted over a period of six months while living among the people who were protesting against the dumping grounds, is to present a map of the struggles in Pianura, Gianturco, Chiaiano (metropolitan areas), in Marigliano (a community in the *Triangle of death*), Savignano Irpino (Avellino), and in Sant'Arcangelo Trimonte (Benevento). Testimony from these places clearly confronts the environmental disaster, voices fears, and also demonstrates the local population's ability to resist. Through the protests against the presence of new dumping grounds, people have unmasked the accusations of backwardness traditionally used to describe them in a bold and irreversible act of collective *parrhesia* (Petrillo 2009). In light of the results of our research, the following essays are a blueprint of these areas and their population. *Notes from the Underground* traces the borders of an area that has always been ecologically abused or *scraped* (Koolhaas 2001) and re-defines a population continually threatened with marginalization. Marigliano is the void: there are not an adequate sewage system and public

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services, but the garbage is stockpiled, especially toxic waste whose presence substantiates the enforcement of a political agenda that is a politics of life itself (Rose 2006) and therefore also of death. *The Waste Highway* runs through Savignano Irpino and Sant’Arcangelo Trimonte, far from the urban chaos, where people lived well before dumping grounds transformed these places into marginalized areas, erased old memories, and transformed the identity of the people. Facts and circumstances were updated when these essays were written and the fires of the revolt had already gone out. What we would like to demonstrate is that *nothing will ever be the way it was*, since these areas continue to be *raped*. People are more and more aware that when an emergency becomes a daily fact of life, recurrent injustices legitimize legal intervention and military action to redirect each abuse to reason of government.

1. Marigliano: Notes from the Underground

Cars rush along the overpass a few meters from the Boscofangone purification plant, a short distance from the exit of the Asse di Supporto¹, called Marigliano Industrial Zone. It was here that the Special Commission on the waste crisis in Campania, in accordance with ordinance 31 (January 21, 2008), designated the site where garbage was to be stockpiled to stem the new crisis that had struck the region. Open land and cultivated fields surround it; potatoes and tomatoes are still grown there, although what once was the *Campania felix* is now called *Triangle of death* (di Gennaro 2009; Iovene 2008). Slightly beyond the area, industrial plants and installations for the wholesale trade have set up shop. To the north lie the Polvica mines, nine caverns in the mountain that mark the border between the provinces of Naples, Caserta, and Avellino.

Marigliano is a town of 31,000 inhabitants on the Agro Nolano plain in the province of Naples, about 20 km from the provincial capital. The town has a polycentric urban organization, a central nucleus surrounded by satellites dispersed on the edges of the territory. Over the years, new elements have adjoined the original outlying clusters, a trend that unifies the center of the old towns but also create overlapping, intersections, and discontinuities. From the 1970s onward, the former small agricultural center and market town has been transformed by a more urban model of construction blocks, large buildings, and the intense exploitation of the land. What has happened to Marigliano is not unlike the fate of many small communities in the backcountry of Naples. After post-war reconstruction, strong demographic growth, and the almost complete building of Neapolitan territory (Allum 2003), between the 1970s and 2011, the population of Naples gradually decreased by about 250,000. The earthquake that struck Campania in 1980 accelerated the *slippage* out of the city. Population and economic growth increased in the province and played a significant role in residential choice and productivity that was formerly enjoyed by Naples (Coppola and Viganoni 1997). Apartment blocks, built-up area, unauthorized and informal sites, highway intersections, cement bridges and columns, industrial and commercial areas, fields and orchards, mines and

¹ Tangenziale, Asse Mediano, and Asse di Supporto are the main axes of a dense network of roads forming a perpendicular grid that regulate traffic in the area north of Naples and extend into other provinces in Campania, especially Caserta and Avellino.

legal and illegal dumping grounds have progressively come to define the present layout of the plain of Campania.

Antonietta is a 55-year-old math teacher at a local high school. She grew up in Marigliano and can pinpoint moments that mark the town's history:

Marigliano was a typical farm town with a ducal castle that had kept its 'inner circle of prominent figures'. Like many of the agricultural towns around Nola, it has changed over the past thirty years, in the 1970s and especially after the earthquake.

Tommaso—age 58, one of the founders of an environmental association that seeks to protect and recover local agricultural products—explains how the infrastructures produced the project to transform the urban Neapolitan area (Di Costanzo 2013):

Agriculture has been marginalized here and replaced by a series of commercial sites that rained down from the higher-ups. Residential and commercial properties and arteries of communication that overran the territory took away a lot of agricultural land where farming once flourished.

During the 1970s and 1980s the countryside was no longer considered a natural resource but only as a breeding ground of exhaustion and poverty. As older farmers turned away from farming that had become less lucrative and young people aspired to new jobs, public service, or factory work², the now abandoned land was free to serve new purposes. It provided the real estate market with locations where new factories and other businesses could be built. In this regard, Antonietta underscores the role of large landowners in the transformation:

A lot of the land here belonged to families who lived in Naples and leased their land. In many cases, when the farmers abandoned agriculture for other pursuits, the land was still leased but for other speculative purposes, including the underground disposal of garbage.

The Special Commission chose a site that, although in the Marigliano area, was only a few hundred meters from residential neighborhoods in Polvica.

Polvica is a suburb of 4,000 inhabitants under the administration of Nola, although it is actually closer to Cicciano, Marigliano, and Cancellò. Its developed area is generally limited to a few hundred meters along the road that links Cancellò and Cicciano and skirts the mountain that had become exfoliated by the dynamiting done in order to extract material needed for building; on the opposite side, the town faces Boscofangone, the industrial zone, and the deputation plant. Many who live there still depend on farming, others work in the enormous quarries or for businesses in the nearby industrial area. Not quite thirty, Antonio works for a public transportation company. A few feet from the entrance to the purification plant, he talks about Polvica and its economy:

Seventy per cent of the population here are farmers, but potatoes and tomatoes don't grow well any more. When I was a boy, my father grew tomatoes that were two meters tall; now they might reach 50 centimeter before they sink and the earth swallows them up. The land still provides the growers' livelihood; maybe ten years ago these people had ten or fifteen parcels of land and planted potatoes in winter and tobacco in summer. But now the same person has only two or three parcels left, and still has to earn a living from them. [...] They plant potatoes, and if they can sell them, they sell them. Otherwise ... Nowadays you have

² In the same period, the area became more important as the focus of the Pomigliano d'Arco automobile industry.

to put a sign at the checkout stand that tells where the produce came from. So tell me how a farmer who goes to market with a crate of potatoes marked *Boscofangone* can sell those potatoes?

At the end of the 1970s, the area between the territory of Marigliano and Nola near Boscofangone was exactly where what would become the largest wholesale center in Europe, CIS—with a surface area of over one million square meters—arose. Later, the Campano Interport and Vulcano Buono Service Center were built. Owned and controlled by a single group of entrepreneurs, they now occupy 4.5 million square meters. With its large logistical capability connected to the ports in the region, various infrastructures, and local manufacturing sectors, the Agro Nolano plain has become the new gateway to Naples, its new city limits.

If the CIS, Interporto, and Vulcano Buono are the center of the enormous commercial hub, Marigliano, Nola, and Acerra are the vortex of the *Triangle of death*, a broad territory where toxic waste is illegally dumped and where high incidences of liver cancer, leukaemia, and lymphoma are found (Senior and Mazza 2004).

The primary vector of economic development in the area appears to be logistical management—the manipulation and transportation of merchandise and waste, toxic or not:

From the 1970s to the present, many new land developments have been created around Boscofangone on the outskirts of Nola. But the original altruistic intentions of developing and decongesting the urban centers were not always successful. For instance, people still complain today about the overall degradation of the area where so many illegal dumping sites have been set up. Hundred of toxic drums reappeared a few months ago near enclosure of Alenia factory (Fusco 2001).

Investments in infrastructure and industrial plants that should have brought work, wealth, and development seem conversely to have doomed the area. “Instead of bringing prosperity, they only brought in poison”, says Ornella—a forty-year-old woman from Marigliano—as she looks out at the trajectory of the Asse di Supporto that connects the province of Naples with Caserta. All the elements in this area that mark the surface of the landscape also seem to designate another underground landscape that lies several meters beneath the earth; its cartography is composed of lines and cubic meters that correspond to areas and masses of drums spread out beneath the surface, between *scraped* and *scaped* (Koolhaas 2001). Using printed maps and Google Maps, Nunzia—one of the founders of an association for the protection of the right to health—shows us the whole area between Marigliano and Polvica di Nola, especially the industrial area there and near Regi Lagni. As she relates:

Garbage and waste accumulate so easily here ... for instance, blue water was discovered along the railroad tracks. All this evidence confirms the rumors we’ve always heard that when public works projects were done here, like the railroad or when the Regi Lagni canals were concretized, or when the ASI was built in Nola, and the Asse di Supporto, the holes in the ground were filled with toxic waste. This area is the heart of the triangle of death, where toxic waste has been dumped forever.

Among people there are persistent references to the discovery of waste, and numerous inquiries are conducted into the trafficking and illegal dumping of toxic waste (Ceglie 2009). Marigliano has been included in the remediation project as provided for by the law 426/98³.

³ The law 426/98 established the *Sito di Interesse Nazionale Litorale Domitio Flegreo e Agro Aversano*. Its goal is to restore the territories between the provinces of Naples and Caserta, which are threatened with serious

Yet despite the establishment of Special Commission on land rehabilitation, the work of decontamination has come to a standstill. Two geologists, a husband and wife team, decided to move forward together with others and conduct a reconnaissance mission with analyses of the territory using the most readily available equipment while awaiting the official assessment. Raffaele explains the difficulties of working this way:

What we did was not a normal cleanup and it became difficult to do site assessments. Cleanups are usually done in specifically demarcated areas where what occurred there is known as well as what will be found. But this is an enormous area, no one knows exactly what has been dumped, or where, or how it was done. You cannot simply say that everything is contaminated here or that it's all clean and healthy without concrete data. You don't know what you may uncover.

As the entire territory was gradually being transformed into a disposal ground, the population identified more and more strongly with their local areas: committees, associations, and many private citizens mobilized to voice their own refusal of yet another solid waste facility. Here in the second ring of the backcountry of Naples, between Asse Mediano and Asse di Supporto, the third and the seventh circles of Dante's *Inferno* collide: the local inhabitants are considered to be heavy drinkers and smokers who neglect personal hygiene⁴, in other words, they are likened to the gluttonous and self-abusive in Dante's *Inferno* who are doomed to wallow in the mud of a countryside that is drying up and caving in. But these same people are fighting the new punishments inflicted upon them.

The presence of numerous legal and illegal dumping grounds, various waste treatment plants, and countless incidences of dumping toxic waste in this area in the province of Naples over the past years has proliferated to such an extent that mobilization efforts have begun to confront the decision to open yet another waste storage area where people live. "At first it was clear that we had to oppose it, then we began to formulate our ideas through further discussion", Carmine explains. Constantly required to justify their refusal, directly and indirectly requested to take personal responsibility by the commission on the waste crisis, and confronted with the fabrication of a *selfish refusal* widely spread by the media, the protesters found their own voice as they inverted and reversed the arguments *provided* by their opposition. They engaged in a verbal tug-of-war, with "struggles, victories, wounds, domination, and servitude inflicted by words" (Foucault 1971, 4). The various associations and committees formed over the years provided a platform for experience and consciousness-raising around the issue. A push was made for the reduction and modification of consumer habits, and new types of waste treatment plants with low environmental impact were discussed. To preserve the environment and the public health, alternative solutions for waste management were also proposed, as Luca—a 27-year-old warehouse worker—says:

Begin to live closer to the land, take a different approach to the environment and human relations, adopt a different way of managing things... in a self-regulating society. We can borrow from the past not as a step backward but to improve what we already have. Like the TAV and other large-scale projects, the

pressure from individuals and other parties more interested in the illegal waste disposal. Defined by the ministerial decree of 10 January, 2000 and subsequently integrated by ministerial decrees on March 8, 2001 and January 31, 2006, the area includes seventy-seven communities in the provinces of Naples and Caserta and extends over approximately 179.412 hectares.

⁴ In many cases, the authorities and the media attribute the increase of tumors and blood diseases in Campania to the *traditional* poor eating habits, alcohol abuse, tobacco smoking, and the substandard hygienic living conditions of the local population in the region.

incinerator does not represent progress that contributes in any meaningful way to the quality of life without adversely affecting the immediate environment. It is more like a step backwards that only conforms to criteria of economical reasoning.

Attention was focused on the entire area and the quality of public health in the region, but the people's refusal was centered on the defense of the body in the face of imminent threats. The preservation and self-control of people's physical being was at stake. Grazia—a 52-year-old woman from Faibano, a hamlet within the community of Marigliano—makes this stance clear:

It's not simply because it's rubbish or because it stinks that we don't want it in our backyard. It's because of what the earth conceals and because of the mortality rate in this little town. An incredible number of deaths are caused by tumors. Other times the tumors are found in the intestines or on the liver. Everyone knows about them but nothing is done about it. The ASL⁵ in Marigliano came to a place right near here and quarantined goats and sheep... If you quarantine free-range animals, this means that the area is contaminated, highly contaminated. [...] Even so, they keep on doing whatever they want.

Antonio, who is from Polvica, talks about the seriousness of the situation but also explains how measures taken by the authorities contradict themselves:

We have a critical situation here because babies are born deformed, and by the time they are two, some of them have leukemia; there are incidences of cancer among five and six year olds. They put up '*no grazing*' signs everywhere. Pasturing is forbidden in the whole area because the territory is so highly contaminated with dioxin, but then we are allowed to grow lettuces and salad greens. Sheep are not allowed to graze on the land but people can consume what is produced by this soil. This is completely normal state of affairs for the administrative authorities. It's all OK.

Many people ask how more waste can be dumped on one of the most contaminated sites in Europe that desperately need to be cleaned up. Such a paradox reveals the contradictions between local ordinances and arrangements. Marco—age 38, lawyer in Marigliano—makes the point that:

We are not insisting on the right to refuse the presence of the dumping ground as much as we are demanding our right to life. People's health is in danger. This protest is no longer a subject for debate or discussion or further reflection. We are in a state of emergency. I'm not the only one saying it; scientists and doctors all corroborate that we are being poisoned to death.

As the socialized state, which was politically able to offer help and protection, slowly disappears, more and more gaps in the system become apparent: whoever searches for a government that can act as a good shepherd and also offers guidelines for ethical good conduct will not find it (Foucault 2004). This dilemma is what seems to *perplex* Ennio—age 66, a retired officer with the Italian finance police:

So who is going to protect us? Who is going to tell us how laws should be carried out and respected? Who is supposed to tell us if we should be good or bad? Who is obligated to tell us these things, if not the State that has clearly demonstrated in this instance that it is completely ineffectual in this region where its voice is not heard? This is what is most disconcerting, because we don't feel protected by anyone. If we do have a constitution and an article 32 that sanctions the preservation of public health, who is going to guarantee it for us? [...] Who is going to help and assist us? We feel disoriented. As for myself, after years of being on the side of the power of law and order, I now see that everything I did during all those years of professional

⁵ Local system for the health assistance.

service is not what I thought I had accomplished but something completely different. It drives me crazy, because I can no longer tell the difference between truth and lies.

Marta—a 37-year-old resident of Marigliano—wonders if the choice to build yet another site there is because the local inhabitants are already considered to be *dead*. The locals are at risk of becoming more and more like the territory, constantly in decline, where everything is lacking except for waste. Both the territory and its people seem to share the same fate: garbage, waste, and wasted lives (Bauman 2004).

There is a town with a population of 31,000 that doesn't have a sewage system. When the winter rains come, the road becomes a rolling river that can barely be crossed by car, let alone on foot. The water carries away everything and then some, garbage, liquids, whatever lies in its path. Since Marigliano doesn't have adequate sewers or none at all, when the town is flooded, the few sewers that are there flood the streets and sidewalks, shops and homes ... you can imagine what can happen. [...] The basic essentials of life are lacking here: no sewers, no proper schools, not enough roads, or enough light on public roads. It's a town in a continual state of decay.

The two married geologists note Marigliano's decline but emphasize that it now faces choices that concern the entire region but also impinge on individual lives. Raffaele articulates the issue: "We have come to a crossroads and must now figure out if this is a safe place to live or not". Maria, his wife, adds: "We had left the area and lived in Rome, but we decided to come back home. Now if we can't get what we want here, we will have to reconsider our choices".

Everyone's greatest fear—that the destiny of this doomed area is written on the wall—is reflected in the words of Antonio—age 27—who lives in Polvica:

We all know from the start that a cleanup of our neighborhoods is an impossible mission because only a magic wand could get rid of everything ... but even so, please do something! What do they offer instead? Waste refineries, industrial zones, RDFs (refuse derived fuels), mines, what else can they bring in? They are putting us in the position of leaving our homes and walking out, because who do you think would want to buy them? Only a crazy person. You have to close your doors and walk away. You are forced to leave the area and they make out like bandits.

2. The 90bis State Road: a Waste Highway

In the land of the ancient Samnites, Sant'Arcangelo Trimonte appears at kilometer 15 of state road 90bis⁶. The hamlet belongs to the mountain community of Fortone and occupies an area of only 9.8 km², so small that it cannot be found on any geographical map of Italy.

Nonetheless, one day, as if a cruel spell had been cast, someone found out that approximately 300 families lived in precisely that spot, about 30 Km from Benevento (Petrillo 2009). The inquirer probably imagined that these people were bored by the largely agrarian economy, and so thought she would live up the place and its inhabitants and bring them into the modernity (Bauman 2002). But no one in Sant'Arcangelo had ever complained of boredom. As in any rural setting, the rhythms of daily life were largely defined by working in

⁶ The SS 90bis is the state highway that runs through Puglia, an artery connecting the Tyrrhenian Sea with the Adriatic.

the fields, and farming reflected the strength of the historical, social, and cultural values in the area.

For many years, heaps of grain, tobacco, and grapes seem to have satisfied the human needs of the 664 residents who occupy 376 homes (ISTAT 2011). Sant’Arcangelo would have been ignored if one calamitous day the umpteenth waste crisis had not broken out in Campania (Rabitti 2008). The hamlet paid the price for the new state of emergency with a dumping ground of 900 m³ of waste in the Noceccie district.

Where to turn? If you hop on the 90bis, you can run away. If you turned left, you would be traveling toward Naples, the hotbed of the waste crisis. Better to turn right and head towards Puglia. Driving east over a road full of twists and turns, at kilometer 67 of the state road 90bis, you come to Savignano Irpino. It resembles Sant’Arcangelo, a quiet little town of 1,647 inhabitants that occupies 38.2 km², about 72 km from Avellino (ISTAT 2011).

Here too, the local tastes and smells are those of farm life and land whose purpose is to be cultivated (Piedimonte 2007). Anna—age 37, a worker—relates:

Even immigrants don’t come here because there’s so little work; almost everyone farms or raises animals. About ten people work at the elementary school, another ten at the city hall, three or four work at the Fiat factory nearby, one works at the hospice or at the hospital in Ariano Irpino. Then there’s the local mayor and pharmacist.

It’s quiet at three in the afternoon, and the town seems empty. But 548 families live there. Incredible but true, because here, too, an evil spell has broken the tranquility since, in the name of the waste crisis, it was deemed necessary to build a dumping ground for 700,000 tons of waste in the Pustarza district⁷.

Wherever you drive on the 90bis, already since June 2008, you find waste compactors as you approach Noceccie or Pustarza. Of course neither magic nor an evil spell is actually behind this phenomenon, but rather a bio-political project (Cavalletti 2005) generated by the waste crisis that became an act of social politics with unavoidable moral consequences “insofar as it affects groups perceived as minorities” (Castel 1995, 81).

The dumping grounds in Sant’Arcangelo and Savignano were spawned by bio-political strategies that are connected to the political systems and the demographic evaluations. More explicitly, both towns are in geographically marginalized areas, and their economy is irrelevant to the productive pressures of globalization. The number of inhabitants there is insignificant in terms of any reckoning of voter distribution among the electorate (Barry, Osborne, Rose 1996). This has been a learning experience for Anna, who asks:

Who has any use for our grain? We produce only a little, and it certainly costs more than what comes from China. We grow things mainly for ourselves. We are no longer competitive as farmers because of globalization. And there are so few of us that we pose no threat to politicians who don’t care if they lose our votes. We live far from beautiful cities, so no one can see the disgrace of the dumping or inhale the stench of the garbage.

So, the dumping creates *non-places* (Augé 1992), and the invasion of power (Bourdieu 2000) and waste changes the social space in a spectacle space.

⁷ Construction of the dumping grounds in the Noceccie and Pustarza districts was decided by legal decree 87/2007.

Although Savignano and Sant’Arcangelo people are few in number, peaceable, and unpretentious, they are called upon to transform themselves: no longer farmers, growers, manual or salaried workers, but citizens who are called upon to resist exclusion (Castel 1995). Antonio—age 51, a farmer in Sant’Arcangelo—cries as he relates how his land was taken away:

When you are notified of an expropriation, it’s as if they were telling you that your son just died in Iraq. This is a poor people’s war. My brother-in-law sacrificed a lot to buy this land, and he’ll go to his grave knowing that it doesn’t belong to him anymore. This piece of paper only states that the land is no longer ours, but it doesn’t say when they will give us the money or how the value of the land will be appraised.

The dumping ground at Pustarza opened at 9:30 on the morning of June 13, 2008. Driving along the 90bis, approximately fifty compactors arrive daily at the site and deposit 1,500 tons of rubbish from the region there (Petrillo 2009). A few days later, on June 25, the dumping ground at Nocecchie was opened, and we witnessed a distressing spectacle. The shepherds and farmers who were out irrigating the fields until the previous evening had disappeared. Only two days after the Nocecchie dumping ground opened, the pungent but reassuring smell of the pigsties was replaced by the nauseating stench of garbage. The quiet hamlet had suddenly become unhinged in a swirl of people and rumors.

We should not forget that the territory around Savignano and Sant’Arcangelo had already witnessed two regional dumping grounds, set up in the early 1990s according to the same criteria and procedures. These sites already forced the local population to resist a dispositive that modifies deeply their lives. Tonino—age 53—is a farmer in Savignano, from the Pustarza area, points with his finger toward the nearby dumping ground called Difesa Grande. Located 2.5 km from Pustarza, it was made off limits in March 2004 (Petrillo 2009). Tonino points out a landslide that descends into the valley and reaches the road where the train tracks lie near Savignano Scalo. He resignedly explains:

That’s a landslide that went as far as the road that the garbage trucks come on, so they will have to go through the towns instead, and there will be more pollution and noise, more traffic, and more accidents.

After the third dumping ground opened, we met a group of old men in Sant’Arcangelo in a bar on the only small square in the town. They play cards there and drink a good local wine. Between a swig and his next card, one of the men, Pino—age 81, a former cattle farmer—explains what the third dump brought to their land in its wake:

All our houses are at risk. Some are physically threatened because they lie below the dump, and if there’s another landslide, it’s all over. The others are at risk insofar as they have lost all their value, which has completely depreciated. We should organize a Rubbish Tour that would bring young people to all the places where there are dumping grounds. This is the only way to realize how the environment is being polluted.

The dumping ground is perceived as a danger because it provokes the discussion of a social standing that was only achieved after a great deal of effort. This status is now threatened by the devaluation of the local land and real estate.

From the belvedere on the Viale delle Vittorie one can see the entire Nocecchie district, which was one a large expanse of grain fields and olive groves. It is now an ugly sight: piles

of waste litter the new dumping ground while the two former dumping sites lie abandoned. Nicola—age 56, a railway worker—explains:

Everyone has access to the tanks. Only a few days ago that gate was put in, but anyone can open it. This tube is supposed to suction off the leachate. In fact, they don't siphon at night, but they do add more waste, God only knows what.

Paolo, who was a farmer and is now 84 years old, thinks of the dumping ground as an instrument that erases the memory of a past and of a place, where the old-fashioned farms still thrived, with tools strewn over the barnyard, where watch dogs and chickens roaming freely, and an enormous barn rose that housed over twenty milking cows. Ernesto—age 44, driver—has a similar home and explains:

I started this farm business for my two sons who are in college but have decided to invest their future here. The dumping ground is a disgrace, and it's only 200 meters away from our farm. No one will ever buy my products. All my orders have already been cancelled. Of all the places in this great, wide world, this had to fall on us. We have been sold out by politicians the way they once traded slaves.

Agostino is one of Ernesto's sons. Age 22, he is a farmer and an university student majoring in geology. He proudly shows us the collection of geological artifacts he has found while digging on their land. He handles them carefully as if they were diamonds, proof of the historical richness and value of his land. Then his grandmother Carmela—age 82—arrives, her flushed face and worn hands bearing witness to a life of hard work. She relates:

We have already had to pay our dues many times, first for the oil excavations in 1961 that caused a landslide and many deaths, then when we had the earthquake, and now with the dumping grounds. They're trying the get water from a stone.

During the site assessments in Sant'Arcangelo before the construction of the third dumping ground, a geologist from Arpac⁸ explained to us:

I have been working with urban waste for years, and I know that it is not dangerous. Nevertheless, we are doing an assessment of the land, but we can visually see that there is no pollution. This area is suitable, and the two old dumping grounds will have to be cleaned up.

Nicola, whom we heard from earlier, offers a swift and fierce reply:

He's using his eyes to establish what we are going to die from? Sure, the area is suitable for subsequent contamination. Our land has a very *high* hydro-geological instability.

The geologist replies that the land does not have a *high* hydro-geological instability but only an hydro-geological instability, and that because of new technologies and the design of the project, there will not be any problems.

Nicola quickly rebuts:

Eliminate the word *highly* and you can change the fate of a small town like ours. Don't you realize that when you sink those long black arms into our soil you hit water only a few meters beneath the surface? It's the survival of the fittest here. You had better believe that there's danger. Our mayor passed a local ordinance forbidding transit in via Vado (the road that goes to the dumping ground) of all heavy vehicles

⁸ The regional environmental protection agency in Campania.

because of potential landslides and danger to the road. The police commissioner who is second-in-command confirmed that De Gennaro and other super-powers issued a decree revoking the mayor's ordinance.

Savignano people also evidence the geological fragility of their land. Not coincidentally, a few days after the opening of the dumping ground in the Pustarza district, the road caved in near Ciccotonno because of the weight of the compactors and broke the pipes of the aqueduct (Petrillo 2009).

The facts will ultimately prove that the people are right.

The dumping ground in Sant'Arcangelo was sequestered on March 18, 2011 by the investigation unit of the environmental police and the forest ranger because of the pollution damage caused by the illegal disposal of leachate. At the time of the sequestration, there were cracks in the walls of the dumping ground and leachate loss. The investigation unit also provided evidence of the excessive slope of the land where the site was built and the fact that the area was seismically active and at risk of landslides. The sequestration report also stressed that by comparison with the previous dumping grounds, no clean-up action had been taken. Furthermore, early analyses revealed the presence of beta-hexachlorocyclohexane in the milk from some farmers that exceeded the maximum allowable limits. However, a directive issued by Gianluca Aceto, an alderman for environment of the province of Benevento, denied that the pollution was produced by waste material, stressing instead the presence of nitrates, arsenic, and uranium in areas above and away from the dumping ground supposedly introduced by humans through the use of agricultural fertilizers (Farese 2012).

But the local population had already warned officials of the dangers the waste sites presented in their protests against the dumping grounds in 2008. Anna explains once again, insistently:

We are putting up a fight because we don't want any more toxic waste and because we don't believe in the check-ups and controls. There are whole trucks loaded with everything under the sun buried at Difesa Grande.

Not by coincidence, in 2010 it was discovered that asbestos was being dumped at the waste site in Pustarza (Geremicca and Brandolini 2010). Furthermore, as Anna relates, in January 2011 the Carabinieri⁹ pressed charges against six haulers who were on their way to the dumping ground at Pustarza because the compactors there were leaking leachate.

The preordained destruction of the environment had always been one of the main arguments of the anti-dumping movement in Savignano and Sant'Arcangelo, despite Donato Greco's announcement¹⁰ on April 22, 2008, while working on a taskforce of technical experts for the police prefecture in Benevento. He declares:

I understand why you refer to the visual impact of a dumping ground but not its impact on public health, which has been statistically confirmed as non-existent. All the same, the your health conditions will be monitored weekly.

⁹ Italian police

¹⁰ Donato Greco is the director of the Center for Disease Prevention and Control at the Ministry of Health, as well as one of the technical experts working on the Commission for the waste crisis.

From the standpoint of the biomedical proportions of the crisis (Rose 2007), people are defending their land in order to defend their lives. Turning the order of the discourse, Nicola declare:

I am supposed to be a responsible citizen. This means I'm not supposed to smoke or drink, but then you bring in your garbage and dump it in my house. People have to understand that this garbage equals death, and they should be afraid for their children's lives.

Savignano and Sant'Arcangelo people refer to numerous studies that have by now proven the existence of a direct relationship between exposure to the gamut of toxic agents produced by the waste and the increase in the number of deaths caused by malignant tumors and leukemia. The increasing number of fetal and animal deformities is also clearly higher among the population living near the dumping grounds. Campania has been in a steady cycle of waste crises since 1994; it was already defined in the OMS report in 1997 as one of the regions with the highest number of inhabitants potentially at risk due to exposure to toxic waste (Petrillo 2009).

Furthermore, again in 2008, even as the Savignano and Sant'Arcangelo people continued to emphasize the problematic issues related to the intrusion of compactors, public health, and the economic disenfranchisement of the local land and property, the order of discourse speeches by Sandra Lonardo Mastella¹¹, that in the previously task force on April 22 reported on the management of the *benefits* received by the land that accommodates the dumping ground (Chiarello 2008). The reaction of people was merciless, as Gianni—age 56, architect in Sant'Arcangelo—demonstrates:

First they made a political marriage over the dumping grounds and now they're inviting us to the wedding banquet. But we're stuck with bill for every last course. The community has the responsibility of creating new jobs related to the new waste facility, which means more cronyism and more votes to be bought. It's as if rules and regulations have become totally personalized. Regarding the waste issue, there is no legality.

Assunta is a 55-year-old teacher in Sant'Arcangelo. Her response to the issue of the *benefits* is even harsher:

Benefits? Compensation agreements? This isn't about compensation. Mr. President, let's compensate this way, OK? You buy my land at the full market price, as if it weren't next door to the waste facility, and I'll go away. It's obvious to us, if not to you, that if all we end up with is dispensations and disregard, it means that we no longer exist. It's like when parents are bringing up their children, and husband and wife don't agree, so one of them makes a rule, and the other make the exception. So for the child anything and everything becomes a possible exception, especially if there's a crisis!

Coming full circle, we must not forget that it was only in July 2012 that discussion was begun to award 24 million euros as relief and compensation to the communities that *accommodated* the dumping grounds (Calabrese 2012).

Antonella, age 34, spells it out:

You cannot put a price on my life, my children's lives, and our home. No compensation, no relief is good enough. Since the dumping ground has been in our midst, I can't have a good life. My husband and I decided to stay here because it's where we were born, and where our children were born. There's not a lot here, but it was enough for us. I do house cleaning, I have a little land myself, and my husband is a mason. I have a

¹¹ At the time, Sandra Lonardo Mastella was the President of the regional council in Campania.

house that I worked my behind off to buy. But now we're not doing well. My girls can't go onto the road because of the waste trucks. One is already sick with asthma. When I take down my washing, it already stinks of garbage, and my husband is going to lose jobs: who would ever want to build a house in this area now?

Confirming the reasonableness of the positions enunciated by Savignano and Sant'Arcangelo people, the waste crisis still reverberated through Campania in September 2010 (Geremicca 2010). As Nicola relates, the official documentation presented by the European Union in January 2012 states that the residual capacity of the two waste facilities is still considered to be at minimal levels and it will be non-detectable by December 2012.

Completing the picture, a violent death occurred at the site while the umpteenth load was being amassed at the dumping ground; the first load alone contained 130 thousand tons of waste (Petrillo 2009). On October 22, 2008, as we approached the Nocechie district nestled among gentle hills facing Puglia, we found the site that was dumping death closed in mourning. A wreath of flowers hung on the gate of the facility, put there by the mothers of the Committee for Public Health and the Environment in Sant'Arcangelo. Only nineteen years old, the surveyor Pasquale Russo, was dead, his body crushed by a state-of-the-art Caterpillar D6N on the fiftieth day of his first assignment.

It is hot, and the sun is as oppressive as the silence, interrupted only by the buzzing of flies on the piles of rubbish. The garbage is a bulging hump already ten meters high, surrounded by a fence guarded by the aeronautical force, since the dumping ground area is classified as *a theatre of national operations* to distinguish the waste facilities from military foreign missions. Massimiliano Bolis, the captain of the Carabinieri, returned only a few evenings ago from Kabul. With hardly a moment to drop off duffle bag, he is already here on a new death mission (Corbo 2008). Individuals continue to die because of the dumping grounds and at the sites themselves, as Nicola reaffirms:

We are like the sheep in Acerra, resignedly closed in a pen and waiting to be slaughtered by dioxin poisoning. We used to have the cleanest air here, but now we're going to die because of the garbage, enlisted into the service of the political and especially the economic interests of unscrupulous criminals.

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