Paradise Lost?: Understanding Social Embeddedness Through Crisis and Violence in the Neapolitan "Land of Fires"

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Understanding embeddedness through crisis and violence in the Neapolitan 'Land of Fires'

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ABSTRACT

Since the mid-90s three million people living in the metropolitan area of Naples (Italy) have been facing one of the most dramatic socio-ecological crisis witnessed in Western Europe. This is a crisis orchestrated by Mafia-like organizations (e.g. the Neapolitan Mafia also known as Camorra) and their interest in the illegal management of waste disposal and incineration in the shadow of a weak state, a phenomenon often referred to as the 'Land of Fires'. Using evidence from this prolonged socio-ecological crisis, in this chapter, we attempt to inductively mobilise the Polanyian notion of embeddedness, to understand the establishment and expansion of a waste economy in diffused violent social and economic relations. We particularly attempt to extend the notion of 'embedded economy', building on the work of Karl Polanyi (1944). We argue that the process of social embeddedness through illegal and violent practices are particularly intense in contexts of socio-ecological crises, where the expropriation of land and destruction of nature is coupled with the disarticulation of the role of the state by criminal organizations.

Keywords: Socio-ecological crisis, waste economy, organized violence, social embeddedness, commodification

INTRODUCTION

Since the mid-90s, three million people living in the metropolitan area of Naples (Italy) have been facing one of the most catastrophic and dramatic socio-ecological crisis witnessed in Western Europe. This is a crisis orchestrated by Mafia-like organizations, e.g. the Neapolitan Mafia also known as Camorra, and private businesses, due to their economic interest in the management of waste disposal and incineration. While a mixed of legal and illegal waste economy emerged, in the shadow of a weak national state, thousands of local citizens have initiated public protest and grassroots movements to oppose to the impact of the crisis on their health and the surrounding environment. This well-documented phenomenon has been labelled the 'Land of Fires' (LoF) (D'Alisa et al., 2017; Berruti and Palestino, 2020), in relation to the diffused practice of burning of waste and rubbish in the streets and farmlands. However, what the LoF defines is a wider human and economic geography of continued socio-ecological and political struggles, due to the presence of an illegal and violent regime (D'Alisa et al., 2010; D'Alisa et al., 2017). This regime emerged in the general void of legality and accountability of the public authorities and private businesses in charge of managing waste (Iengo and Armiero, 2017; Cavotta et al., 2021), and more in general the absence of the (Italian) state in 'regulating' violence in this region (Armiero and D'Alisa, 2013; Berruti and Palestino, 2020). This crisis also reflects the complexity and ambiguity of institutional dynamics beyond this specific geography, where the expansion of so-called market economies generates illegal political, economic and social practices, with which they have deeply intertwined over time (D'Alisa et al., 2017). In this context, illegal waste management activities have become one of the many 'markets' for the Neapolitan Camorra, and other forms of organised crime (D'Amato et al., 2015; Lucchini and Membretti, 2016). At the same time, despite the continued crisis, and the extreme socio-ecological conditions, collective actions (e.g. NGOs) and social movements to fight these practices have struggled to emerge, with civil society organisations and political activists failing to mobilise resources in a large and effective scale (Scafuto and La Barbera, 2016; Lucchini and Membretti, 2016). Between the Neapolitan Mafia and the environmentalist activists, both the state and private businesses assumed a rather ambiguous role, contributing to the emergence of both the legal and illegal waste economies, on one hand, and the silencing and marginalisation of the environmentalist movement, on the other hand (Berruti and Palestino, 2020).

In our view, the emergence of the waste economy in the socio-ecological crisis of the Land of Fires offers an opportunity to reflect on what Karl Polanyi (1944) defined as the 'double movement' and the processes of embeddedness and dis-embeddedness of an economy. The double movement is often described as a two-stage mechanism (Goodwin, 2018): first, a process towards the creation of a market economy and the 'fictitious' commodification of key resources, such as land and labour, leading to the disruption of the

social and political life of involved actors. Then, the emergence of a spontaneous 'counter-movement' which Polanyi indicates as stemming from the need of the involved actors to oppose the commodification process and to (re-)establish socio-political relations, and re-embed the economy in the social and political life (Polanyi, 1944). However, in the case of the waste economy of the Land of Fires we also observe another dimension in which 'the oscillation' between commodification and de-commodification takes place, because this is an economy in which the *embeddedness* process unfolds in diffused illegal and violent social relations, affecting various groups and organizations, and of which we still know very little. So, we suggest, the double movement does not only takes place in the economic, social and political (environmental) spectrum of our life, but also in the legal and illegal dimension, as well as the violent and non-violent dimension, adding an interesting and so far unexplored dimensions to the analysis of processes of embeddedness. Based on this intellectual premise, and given the rich empirical context of the LoF crisis, our work tackles the broader question of whether we can better understand the emergence of an intertwined legal and illegal (waste) economy by mobilising both Polanyi's notions of anthropological and economic embeddedness (Vančura, 2011). In so doing, our work aims at contributing to the nascent literature on the role of institutions, and economic organisations, in the production and reproduction of socio-ecological crises, extending the rich Polanyian tradition (see Goodwin, 2018; 2022), and the different notions of anthropological and economic embeddedness, to contexts in which organised violence dominates social, political and economic life.

The chapter is organised as follows: section two presents a brief conceptual background to define our approach to embeddedness in context of diffused violence and socio-ecological crises. We then present the methodology adopted in our study. In section four, we present the key findings of our analysis. Section 5 is dedicated to the discussion of our findings and further conceptualisation of the notion of embeddedness.

EMBEDDING AN ECONOMY IN VIOLENT RELATIONS AND THE PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION OF *SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL CRISES*

Extant literature has started to recognise socio-ecological crises emerging in geographies of violence, where economic and social life have been exploited and violated through extended and prolonged relations of dispossession, victimization, abuse, corruption, and intimidation, amongst others (Kilby, 2013; Costas and Grey, 2019). In parliamentary democracies, contexts of crises due to organized crime are expected to be ruled and controlled by the state, producing and reproducing the Weberian notion of 'state monopoly of violence' (Acemoglu et al., 2013; Bohm and Pascucci, 2020). However, the state can fail to establish or maintain such a 'monopoly' due to various conditions, for example historical, cultural,

ethnical and geographical reasons (Bohm and Pascucci, 2020). Moreover, the state can fail to establish or maintain its monopoly of violence as part of a wider process in which economic organisations, for example corporates, support the logic of d*is-embedding the economy from a system of legal and social relations*, by disrupting traditional forms of institutions, regulatory frameworks, and norms of social protection. In the Great Transformation, Karl Polanyi (1944) has addressed the process of embedding and dis-embedding economies through the lenses of commodification and de-commodification, and what he defines as double movement (Goodwin, 2018; 2022). Central to his argument there is the idea that an economy relying only on self-regulating markets, and anonymised relations, should be regarded as an utopic assumption, leading to provoke a 'counter-movement' and the re-establishment of some form of social structures and institutions (Block, 2003). The notion of embeddedness, in a wider Polanyian sense (Vančura, 2011; Wood 2019), is of particular relevance here. The key idea of Polanyi's analysis to embeddedness focuses on the relationship between the individual and society, of the place of the individual in society, and in the economy at various times in social history (Vančura, 2011). From this perspective, human nature requires that individual actions be "embedded" in social relationships, constituting the 'normal condition' of social existence throughout human history (Wood et al., 2019). However, Polnayi also mobilised an idea of 'economic embeddedness' in relation to the level (or degree) of social and political control over means of production and distribution, in a given economic organisation or economy (Vančura, 2011). He distinguished in this way, between different forms of production and distribution that are completely unaffected by forms of socio-political control, as such dis-embedded, like market economies, or more socially or politically controlled, as in the case of socialist economies (Vančura, 2011).

We argue that this Polanyian approach to the notions of embeddedness is crucial to understand the complex relation between state and organised crime in context of diffused violence. This approach offers a conceptual and analytical alternative to the Weberian notion of state monopoly of violence, to navigate the intertwined nature of an illegal and legal economy, where Mafia-like organizations, organised crime more in general, operate at the intersection of social, political and economic life. This intersectionality is a distinct factor in our view. It creates processes of commodification and de-commodification, for example of land and labour, influenced primarily by violence and subjugation, extreme alienation and oppression where the expropriation of land and destruction of nature is coupled with diffused dispossession, public health disruption, and the erosion of the role of the state (Ağar and Böhm, 2018; Bohm and Pascucci, 2020). This dynamic is of particular relevance when considering how Mafia-like organizations have managed to create *markets in contexts of extreme violence, expulsion, displacement and dispossession*. Mimicking practices of necro-capitalism, these organizations thrive by dispossession and the subjugation of life to the power of death (Banerjee, 2008). Organized crime manages or protects illegal businesses

such as drugs (Sandberg, 2012) or arms trafficking (Raab and Milward, 2003), but also infiltrates legal economies, creating partnerships and alliances with state representatives and private businesses (Vaccaro and Palazzo, 2015; Cavotta et al., 2021). Organized crime operates in markets such as toxic-waste processing, construction, renewable energies, banking, agriculture and sometimes control significant portions of these markets (Cavotta et al., 2021). These are (illegal) market economies that develop in parallel to legal ones. These economies tend to produce and reproduce an erosion of a collective 'sense of place' and belonging, leading to the disruption of social relations and the legitimization of dispossession and displacement for the victimised actors, with profound institutional and political implications (Scafuto and La Barbera, 2016; D'Alisa et al., 2017). In fact, when illegal and criminal practices are tolerated, or even encouraged by the absence or failure of the state to maintain a monopoly of violence, this is giving to organised crime the opportunity to 'socialise' markets based on dispossession and displacement (Armiero and D'Alisa, 2013). This process also creates conditions for a permanent socio-ecological crisis due to the positioning of the organised crime at the intersection of economic, social and political life. For example, while burning or dumping waste challenges the state's rules and norms, and contradicts the very meaning of what is legal and socially acceptable, simultaneously it works as a process of legitimizing illegal practices by establishing norms emerging in the void of recognition of the state as a meaningful institution. In other words, burning and dumping waste in someone's property is violating the idea of a state monopoly of violence, while legitimizing organizations, like the Neapolitan Camorra, as an institutional and economic actor (D'Amato and Zoli, 2012; D'Alisa et al., 2017). The presence of competing legal and illegal market economies create continuous tensions not only between the state and violent organizations, but also among and between other social and economic actors, enacting processes of place dispossession, and displacement (Harvey, 2002). Looking at these tensions is of particular interest to theorize about how forms of social embeddedness emerge in the production and reproduction of socio-ecological crises (Ekers and Prudham, 2017; Ağar and Böhm, 2018; Bohm and Pascucci, 2020).

Starting from this initial conceptualisation, we engaged in the investigation of a rich empirical case based on data collected in the waste economy and socio-ecological crisis of the Land Fires in Naples (Italy). In so doing, we attempted to understand the emergence of an intertwined legal and illegal (waste) economy by mobilising both Polanyi's notions of embeddedness (Goodwin, 2018; Wood et al., 2019), and particularly the distinction between anthropological and economic embeddedness (Vančura, 2011). Based on our findings, in the discussion session we get back to this point and present our conceptualisation of embeddedness in context of violent relations and socio-ecological crises, and reflect on the Polanyian notions of anthropological and economic embeddedness in contexts of organised violence, where relations of dispossession and displacement dominates social, political and economic life (Goodwin, 2018; 2022).

METHODOLOGY

Research context

This paper is part of a broader research project aiming at understanding the complexity of the Land of Fires crisis, investigating its socio-ecological effects and particularly for providing evidence on the contamination of the environment, with the specific purpose of informing evidence-based public policies. In line with an inductive focus, this chapter reports the qualitative case study approach used to design the data collection and analysis and then to conceptualise embeddedness in context of violent relations and socio-ecological crises. Our case study focuses on how different actors, such as environmentalist activists and NGOs, the state, private businesses, and the Neapolitan Mafia (also called camorra) mobilised in the emergence of the waste economy in the unfolding of the socio-ecological crisis of the Land of Fires. This research context provided rich empirical evidence and data for our analysis and ambition to theorise processes of embeddedness of nascent market economies, in context of intense violent relations and a weak national state.

Data collection and analysis

We followed an inductive and interpretative approach to theorizing (Gehman et al., 2018), with an initial goal to understand, broadly speaking, processes of collective forms of protest in the Land of Fires, as well as state intervention, for example through legislative and policing acts, the Neapolitan Mafia and private businesses. In so doing, we used a chronological and process methodological approach (Langley 2009; Langley et al. 2013). When we started our data collection in 2013, the research team wanted to develop a case study and to map out the dynamics of the crisis through a longitudinal perspective. Two of the authors grew up in the metropolitan area of Naples, providing rich experience of and access to different actors involved in the crisis, local political activists, journalists and bloggers, as well as NGOs and social collectives. Hence, the research team collected data using multiple sources, starting from a wealth of secondary data, particularly archival data from researchers, journalists, bloggers and documentaries. Then the authors integrated these sources by interviewing activists and farmers. Table 1 below summarizes the types of data collected.

Table 1. Overview of data sources

Category	Data Sources	# Entries
Secondary data		
Press articles	*Newspapers, blogs*	25
Documentaries	*Web, TV*	12

Archival documents	*EU, Italian National parliament, regional council*	45
Academic publications	*Journal articles, chapters and monographs (books)*	34
Primary data		
Interviews	*Interviews with activists*	3
	Interviews with farmers representatives	2
	Interviews with farmers	11

In our analysis, we relied principally on retrospective accounts to reconstruct responses to the crisis, and any form of protest in the area or in relation to Land of Fires, starting from to the origin up to the date of the interview. First, we interviewed actors about their first-hand knowledge of the crisis and asked the same questions to all our key informants. Second, we asked informants to recall specific events rather than generalized information or opinions. Last, to reduce hindsight bias, we asked informants to remember a time when they thought that the Land of Fires crisis started, any episode that had affected the actors, events related to social unrests in the specific neighbourhood or area, and any other critical events. Ultimately, these interviews provided rich data on how interviewees experienced the crisis and how they positioned themselves with regard to contestation waves. Besides, to triangulate the data and to prevent the inaccuracy addressed above, we gathered a consequent data set based on multiple types of archival documents. Data encompasses a large variety of formats, amongst which newspapers articles, activist blog posts and public authorities archival documents including regulations, national and public laws, public reports, documentary videos, press releases, radio and television shows and press articles. This data helped not only to better comprehend the context in which the Land of Fires crisis arose but also to observe the different actors involved and their public positioning.

FINDINGS

Our findings inform our research focus on understand and theorize processes of embeddedness in a geography of socio-ecological crisis located in the heart of the metropolitan area of Naples. In this geography, an intertwined legal and illegal market economy has been established to manage waste, and at the same time defines an example of *contexts of extreme violence, expulsion, displacement and dispossession*. This analysis has helped the research team to identify the key turning points of the crisis and the key thematic dimensions in terms of embeddedness processes. In this section, we first present the chronological narratives of the crisis, using temporal bracketing. Then, we present how key events informing the crisis relate to forms of social,

political and economic resistance and mobilization, particularly looking at the role of social movements, the state, private businesses, and Mafia-like organizations.

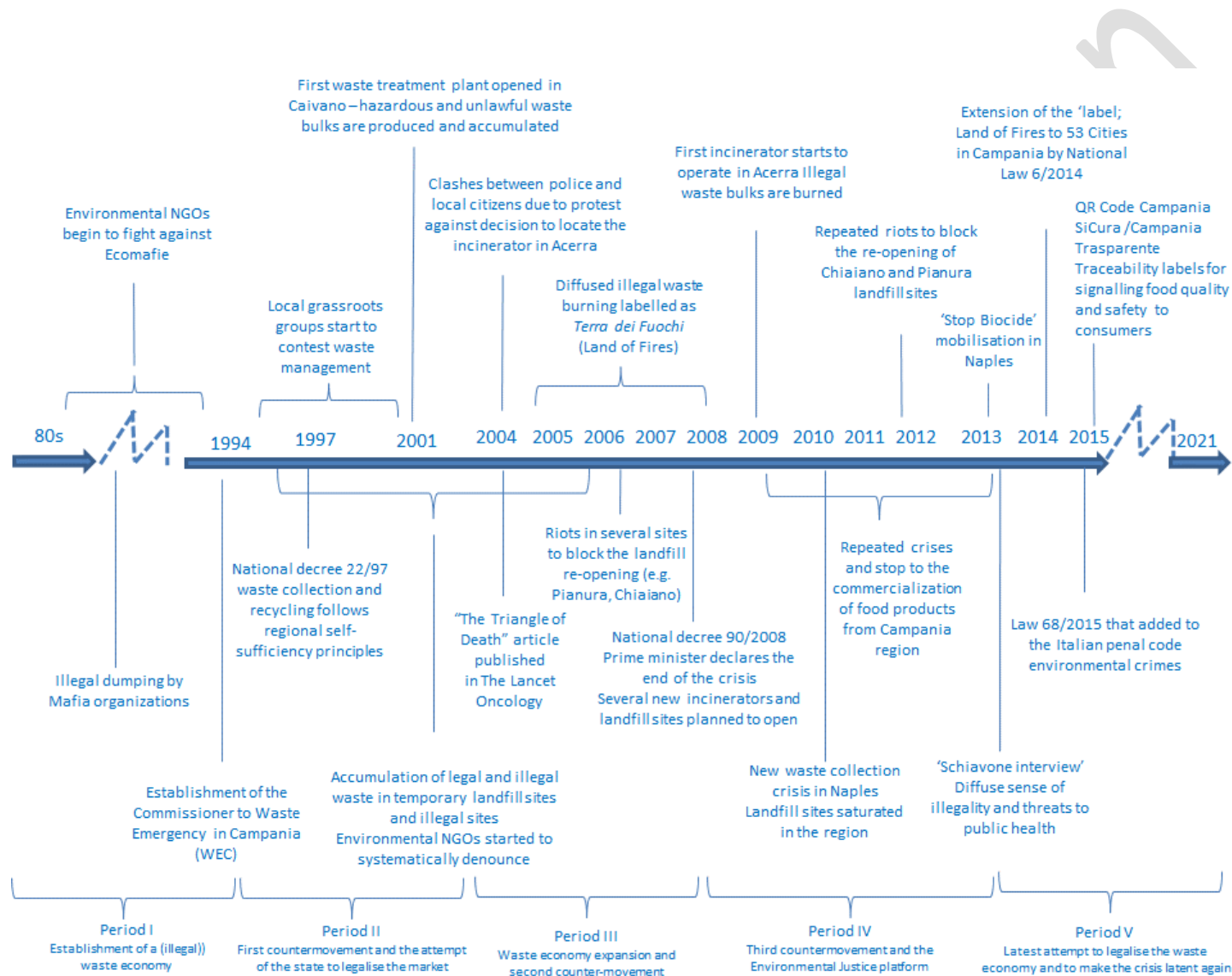**Temporal analysis: emergence of an intertwined legal and illegal waste economy**

In this section, key events characterizing the socio-ecological crisis of the Land of Fires have been reconstructed, documented and succinctly narrated. Figure 1 presents a timeline and overview of the key stages of the crisis in the Land of Fires, from its origin into the recent years.

Period I (80s – 1994): emergence of the illegal waste economy and commodification of land

The first stage of the crisis unfolded for roughly two decades, from the early 80s until the mid-90s, through illegal practices involving the Neapolitan Mafia organizations operating in the area of Naples and Caserta, and connected to the increased demand for managing industrial waste streams, both nationally and internationally (Iacuelli, 2007; Armiero and D'Alisa, 2012). This first stage of the crisis can be considered as 'silent', unfolding 'under-cover', and without significant evidence of 'state interventions' to contrast the illegal activities, while the protest and opposition from civil society organizations is confined to the activism of a few environmental NGOs (Armiero and D'Alisa, 2012). This is the stage where an illegal market economy is established, at the intersection of the state inability to control violence and legality in this region, the interest of private businesses to dispose toxic and costly waste, and the limited capacity of environmentalists to contrast this process. The key process here is the commodification of land as 'space' for disposing the illegal waste streams, from creation of non-authorised/illegal landfills in farmlands, to the use of former mining sites and industrial estates, to the diffusion of micro-dumping and burning in peri-urban areas and neighbourhoods.

Figure 1 – Timeline and key events of the socioecological crisis

Period II (1994 – 2001): first countermovement and the attempt of the state to legalise the market

In 1994, the central government declared a regional waste emergency and delegated full power for waste management in Campania to a special authority: the Committee for the Waste Emergency (CWE) in Campania. A stage of formalised and politicized crisis began (Armiero, 2008; Armiero and D'Alisa, 2012). The Italian national parliament and government formally had to recognise the inadequacy of the regional council to address the waste management problems, amid increasing concerns for public health, and evidence of the connection between illegal waste management and dumping in peripheral urban areas and farmlands, and the activities of the Neapolitan Mafia (D'Alisa et al., 2010). The reason behind the formalization of the crisis was the evident inability of the Campania's Regional Council to comply with rules and norms set in the Regional Law 10/1993, in particular the lack of the planned Regional Waste Disposal Plan, while the disposal capacity of the region was decreasing drastically (D'Alisa et al., 2010). In 1997 the crisis spread out dramatically also as a consequence of the national government decree 22/97 "Implementation of Directive 91/156 / EEC on waste, Directive 91/689 / EEC on hazardous waste and Directive 94/62 / EC on packaging and packaging waste". This act of national legislation introduced the obligation to implement a recycling plan at regional level through the management of 'separate waste collection streams' and within the administrative boundaries of the region. While this top-down approach had the purpose of mitigate the waste management crisis in Campania, it created the opposite effects, and in fact it exacerbated the crisis due to the absence of a system of collection and treatment plants, making the efforts of the population to differentiate waste steams useless, and imposing to continue to use landfill sites. In 2000 FIBE, a consortium of Italian and German enterprises, won a public tender for the construction of two incinerators and seven plants for transforming waste into refuse derived fuel, i.e. combustible waste blocks known popularly in Italy as "ecoballe", with the state outsourcing the control of the management of the entire waste cycle to private corporations (Armiero and D'Alisa, 2012). The system of public bids and tendering, such as the one awarded to FIBE had the purpose of legalise the waste market, also in light of emerging concerns form environmentalist NGOs and a nascent platform of grassroots movements opposing the waste management approach of the state and the CWE. However, this process failed to tackle the crisis by seeking long-term and participatory solutions, creating an ineffective, opaque and equally lucrative waste economy. The procedures for assigning the bids were particularly bureaucratises and lacking forms of basic transparency, and most importantly of social and environmental justice. For instance the CWE awarded the tender to FIBE, based on the 'lowest cost of the project' principle, instead of seeking the 'most effective and efficient technology and equipment' rule. The tender also indicated a ''delivery or pay'' provisioning scheme for the regional municipalities, thus requiring each municipality to send a certain amount of garbage to the incinerator or pay a penalty, has actually contributed to the low rate of recycling in Naples and Campania (D'Alisa et al., 2010; Armero and D'Alisa, 2012). In parallel, waste bulks ('eco-balle') were produced without meeting the legal standards to be burned in the incinerators. Without incinerators, an ineffective waste collection, all existing

landfill sites in the region reached their full capacity, and the ill-designed and treated waste bulks started to be accumulated in new sites. Moreover, without new sites and incinerators operating in the region the waste stopped to be collected in the metropolitan area of Naples and Caserta, with episodes of illegal burning and dumping spreading in many areas of the region. The scale of the crisis increased, reaching national and international attention, deeply affecting the political and social dynamics. The crisis unfolded in a vicious cycle of top-down and authoritarian decisions by the CWE and the regional council (Armiero and D'Alisa, 2012), with protests from local grassroots organizations being labelled as 'Not-In-My-Backyard' type of mobilization (D'Alisa et al., 2010). Several scholars have also pointed out at the hidden racism by which the crisis was narrated, with local citizens being depicted as lazy, violent, uncivil and acting as criminals.

Period III (2001 – 2008): waste economy expansion and second counter-movement

In 2001 a new stage of the crisis started when, amid unclear public procurement rules and procedures, the first facility for waste treatment was officially opened in Caivano. As said, by tendering to FIBE waste treatment plants, CWE wanted to quickly fix the crisis by creating a cycle of differentiated waste streams, and the creation of two incinerators for energy recovery from the unrecyclable fraction of those streams. The continued emergency of the late 90s had pushed the CWE to increase the capacity of existing landfill sites in the region, and similarly the identification of new sites (Falcone et al., 2020). It is at the intersection of this continued emergency, and increasing needs to identify 'quick fixes' under the pressure of a mounting tension with the local population, that the Neapolitan Mafia repositioned their business interests, profiting from both legal and illegal waste management practices (Armier and D'Alisa, 2012). Moreover, the more the pressure was mounting from below, the more urgent public interventions needed to be actualized, facilitating a rather scattered and ineffective public decision-making process (D'Alisa et al., 2010). The announcement of the opening of the first waste treatment plant, and the start of the construction of the first incinerator in the municipality of Acerra, a dozen kilometres away from Naples, fuelled the protests from local citizens and collectives (Falcone et al., 2020). Furthermore, the production of waste bulks not compliant with national and European environmental standards, created de facto a chain of illegal waste treatment practices within the boundaries of the state activities. The absence of any functioning incinerator also meant the rapid accumulation of waste bulks that were known to be toxic and dangerous for public health. In 2004 a prominent group of scientists published a paper in Lancet Oncology journal, indicated a disproportioned distribution of health risks, and cancer particularly, in the area of the crises, now labelled by the scientists as the 'Triangle of Death' (D'Alisa et al., 2010; Falcone et al., 2020). The report brought to light the detrimental socio-ecological conditions affecting public health as determined

by several years of illegal waste disposal and landfill, coupled with diffused ecological problems. The need to identify areas to store the waste bulks led to the creation of 'temporary' open-air warehouses in former landfill sites or newly identify sites, mostly in using farmland in the metropolitan areas of Naples. In parallel, mounting evidence of the wrongdoing of the Neapolitan Mafia was becoming accessible to the wider public. The idea of considering the metropolitan area of Naples and Caserta, a wide contaminated area was making ground in the public opinion as well as in the political debate.

An intertwined illegal and legal waste economy is established and cemented at the intersection of the state intervention, private businesses and Neapolitan Mafia interests in this period. This 'movement' to further expand the waste economy, perpetrated by both 'legal' and 'illegal' actors, defines the emergence of the second 'counter-movement', this time originated and enacted by grassroots movements and environmental activists. During the period between 2004 to 2008 several clashes between local activists and the police took place, including riots at landfill sites in the region. Quite dramatic is the episode of significant police violence that took place on August 29, 2004 in Acerra at a demonstration against the building of the incinerator (Armiero and D'Alisa, 2013). Violent repression of citizens' protests took place in various sites through this period, and again in 2008 violent clashes were witnessed in Chiaiano and Pianura, again against citizens who were protesting against the re-opening of landfill sites. In between 2002 and 2008, several grassroots organizations were established in this period, such as the Campania Network for Environment and Health (RCSA) and Waste Regional Coordination (CO.RE.RI), against the mounting evidence of the environmental and public health risks (see next section for a more detailed analysis of these organizations). However, and against any evidence, at the end of 2008 the Prime Minister, representing the national government, declared that the waste management crisis was over, and issued the Decree 90/2008. This legislative act authorised the establishment of ten new landfills, the building of four new incinerators in Campania, and the ordering of the national military to monitor waste facilities now defined as areas of national strategic interest and creating limitations to forms of protest and oppositions from activists (D'Alisa et al., 2010).

Period IV (2009 – 2013): third countermovement and the Environmental Justice platform

Despite the numerous attempts to keep the emergency under control, and the opening of the first incinerator in Acerra in 2009, a new state of emergency was again declared in 2010, when waste collection was interrupted in the city of Naples due to the saturation of landfill sites. The need to identify new sites re-emerged in the public debate fuelling new forms of protests in the municipalities listed as suitable places. Both landfill sites and areas to store the waste bulks for the incinerators start to be placed in farming areas, while previously dismissed sites

were re-opened in attempt to increase the regional capacity to stock waste. The decree 90/2008 and the violent riots in Chiaino and Pianura of the same year had accelerated the 'militarization' of the crisis by the state and particularly the CWE. Several organizations formed wider alliance to contrast the oppressive dynamics with the state. Collective forms of protests were embedded in diverse networks of activists and socio-political platforms due to the activism of local grassroots organizations in several municipalities in Campania, as well as Naples (Falcone et al, 2020). From these platforms, the 'Stop the Biocide' movement emerged to claim Environmental Justice to all citizens in Campania, and against the authoritative approach of the CWE and the state. In 2013, a huge mobilisation was organised in the city of Naples, probably representing the peak of street mobilization of the movement (Falcone et al., 2020). The crisis also affected groups that were not so active in previous periods, and particularly farmers and their representatives. During 2011 and 2012 the crisis had spread out into the 'countryside', and in 2013 a new stage of the crisis emerged, this time impacting the farming communities more directly. In an interview to a national media, the former head of one of Neapolitan Mafia organizations, Carmine Schiavone, declared that the practice of illegally landfill toxic wastes in farmlands around the urban fringe and countryside had started in the 80s and had been more extensive than the public authorities had thought or NGOs has denounced. Despite the protests and contestations, and the attempt of farmers' organizations to enact food quality control and safety measures, as well as the support of national and regional authorities, many farmers were confronted with the prospect of economic bankruptcy, being unable to commercialise their products. This time, professional organizations and farmers representatives guided a parallel form of protest, and lobbied both national and regional authorities for fixing the crisis and deploy economic compensations. In 2013-2014 a series of actions take place to put in place a traceability and food quality system ('QR Code Campania Sicura – QR Code Safe Campania'). After much lobbying and protesting, the crisis is contained into a problem of waste management and apparently decoupled from safety and quality issues related to agri-food production.

Period V (2014 - present): the latest attempt to legalise the waste economy and to make the crisis latent again

From the end of 2013 the crisis changed again, involving a series of legislative acts to re-organise the approach to environmental crimes in Italy and its regional administrations. In November 2013, for example, the massive mobilization in Naples forced the national legislator to declare the burning of waste a crime (Law Decree 136/2013), while before it was considered only a misdemeanour (Falcone et al., 2020). It also had indirectly contributed to introduce a new title in the Italian penal code dedicated to environmental crime (D'Alisa et al., 2017). After decades of political struggles and postponement, the movement for Environmental Justice in Campania forced an acceleration of the approval process, and the related legislative act of the Law 68/2015 (Falcone et al., 2020). In parallel, the regional council issued a resolution to update the Urban Solid Waste Management Plan, and to build new and more efficient biological treatment plants and enhance the recycling system at regional level. Although forms of collective protest are still present in various events, particularly in relation to the decision to build a biological treatment plant for the organic fraction in the industrial zone of

Pomigliano d'Arco, near Acerra, they become dispersed, fragmented and sporadic. With the beginning of the Covid-19 emergency, in 2020, and a series of lock-downs and restrictions on mobility, forms of collective protest have practically disappeared.

An intertwined illegal and legal waste economy emerging from a geography of diffused violence

Our chronological analysis maps out the key periods in which we observe the production and reproduction of a geography of socio-ecological crisis, affecting the territory of the Land of Fires over the past 40 years. Our data indicate a first stage of latent socio-ecological crisis, with the state, private businesses and Mafia organizations actively articulating their 'waste economies' amid an accumulation of social and political unrest. Then, we observe a stage of further expansion of an illegal waste economy, embedded in diffused relations of violence and dispossession, with the state attempting to legitimise a legal market economy for waste, amid social protest and opposition to the deterioration of public and environmental health. Then, a final stage of the crisis, where the legal and illegal markets are socially and economically intertwined neglecting forms of social participatory mechanisms or democratic processes. This quote summarises the overarching process:

> *'The direct involvement of citizens in the development of the waste management plan is completely absent in Campania. Indeed, the 1994 declaration of the state of emergency regarding waste management has imposed an authoritarian system. Therefore, the environmental struggles in the region should be analyzed as a crisis of democracy rather than a case of waste emergency'* (Armiero and D'Alisa, 2013: 58)

All these stages have been emerging through what we have identified as three critical movements and counter-movements, shaped by the relations between the state, private businesses, the Neapolitan Camorra and grassroots organisations and the Environmental Justice movement. Figure 2 visualizes these key dynamics, and how they relate to processes of embeddedness, either anthropological or economic, at the intersection of legal and illegal practices. The first movement and countermovement is characterised by the state *attempting at establishing legal 'market's for waste collection and management*, by minimizing the relevance and urgency of the crisis, focusing solely on urban waste, and delegitimizing social unrest and protest through soft repression. The Neapolitan Mafia, instead, was focused on disrupting legal markets and facilitating continued crises for establishing illegal practices to manage waste, profiting from the illegal practices of burning and dumping waste. This is the stage where the waste commodification is coupled with the commodification of the land needed for the establishment of the illegal market economy. We identify this stage as *the emergent articulation of State – Mafia embeddedness of the waste economy (Theme 1)*, in which social unrest and contestation was accumulated amid illegal practices from both the state, private businesses and the organized crime:

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> *'The case of the struggles over garbage disposal and incinerators in Campania [...] is the by-product of the combination between the inefficiency and corruption of local institutions and the criminal activities of the Neapolitan mafia, the camorra.'* (Armiero, 2008: 6).

Our findings indicate that a process of production and reproduction of a geography of crisis was shaped by the state increased authoritarianism to establish a market economy of waste, based on state-support of corporate investments, and amid evidence of its inefficiency and lack of democratic procedures. Hence, while the State is 'dis-embedding' the waste economy from its social context, away from the citizens who are embodying the crisis, with the deteriorating of their health and living conditions, the Mafia organizations are deploying all their strengths to socially and economically embed an illegal market economy, and create fixes to the crisis. What is emerging in this stage are the conditions for the establishment of an economy of violence and dispossession, enacted in parallel by the state, private businesses and the Mafia organizations:

> *' [...] the authoritarian regime had the social effect of fuelling the resentment of the local communities by excluding them from decisional processes and undermining the participation of the uncorrupted segment of the population. People from the Land of Fires found themselves trapped between the militarization of their area by the national government and the spread of criminal organizations engaged in the illegal quarrying of building materials, producing quarries extremely well suited to recycling as unauthorized waste dumps'* (Berrutti and Palestino, 2019: 279)

In 2008, despite the evidence of an unresolved crisis, the garbage accumulating in the streets of Naples, and the need to provide quick fixes, the State escalated the level of intervention and *control of the waste economy through a coercive and observable repression* (Earl, 2003). In parallel, and to react to the prospect of an ever increasing number of landfill sites and incinerators, as established by the authoritarian act of the Decree 30/2008, grassroots organizations and social collectives formed a wider and more visible platform, an articulated social movement for Environmental Justice, *to re-affirming the need of a legalised waste economy*, reclaiming the right to use the territory and the farmland to enhance both public and environmental health, thus emphasizing the relevance of webs of relations between humans and the environment (Armiero and D'Alisa, 2013). In parallel, Mafia organizations continued their *institutional and social manoeuvring to keep exploiting the waste economy and the commodification of its resources, particularly land,* and navigating through legal and illegal practices to take advantage of the expansion of the waste crisis:

> *'The architects of this plan appeal to modernization, scientific knowledge, and promise a win-win scenario in the form of monetary compensation and/or jobs for the communities sacrificed to host the*

waste infrastructures. They characterize the Environmental Justice activists in the opposite way technophobic, unscientific, and NIMBY-oriented.' (Armiero and D'Alisa, 2013: 61)
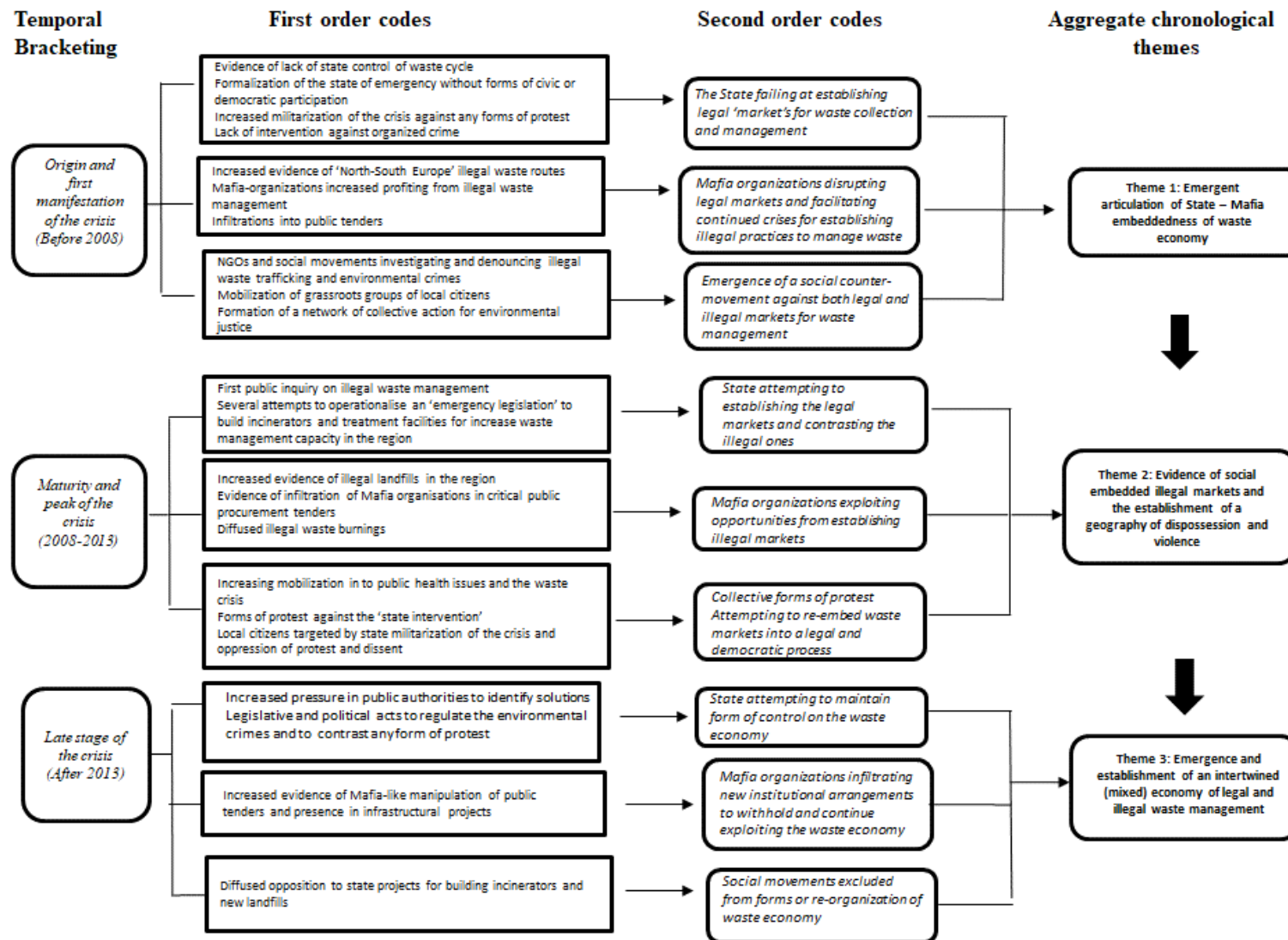
This is a stage of *emerging of social embedded illegal markets and the establishment of a geography of dispossession and violence* (Theme 2). While citizens organized in groups of protesters were accused to support or even being mobilised by the organized crime, creating a false sense of blurriness between activists and the Neapolitan Mafia's practices, the state and private businesses were illegally producing waste bulks, bringing illegal practices within the boundaries of 'legalized procedures', and Mafia representatives increasingly investing in side activities to profit from public tenders and procurement schemes.

'When the dumps were managed by the Camorra, no one has ever opposed them . . . Our right to be cowards includes the possibility to protest only if on the other side there is the law, which does not scare us too much' (original citation from Durante 2008 reported in Armiero and D'Alisa, 2012: 61).

The final stage of the crisis, after the great mobilization of 'Stop the Biocide' movement in 2013, is characterized by a profound *re-organization of the waste economy* enacted by the state, private businesses, and the Neapolitan Mafia, contributing to the *emergence and establishment of an intertwined (mixed) economy of legal and illegal waste management* (Theme 3).

Figure 2 – Chronological themes around the emergent of an intertwined legal and illegal waste economy

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Our findings narrate the emergence of a waste economy in the socio-ecological crisis of the Land of Fires. Our interpretative approach has led the research team to identify key dynamics between the involved actors and to anchor their interpretation and conceptualisation with the Polanyian notion of 'double movement': a processes of embeddedness and dis-embeddedness, commodification and de-commodification, in the making of an economy in a given historical and social context (Goodwin, 2022). Particularly, our findings indicate the presence of multiple and recursive 'oscillations' – e.g. commodification/de-commodification processes - which we believe are key to understand, and thus conceptualise, why an illegal and legal economy may emerge.

In the analysed case of the emergence, establishment and expansion of a waste economy in the Land of Fires, we observe that these 'oscillations' are taking place in a geography of diffused (pre-existing) illegal and violent relations, affecting various groups and organizations. We believe this is a key point to begin the conceptualisation of the socio-ecological crisis and the establishment of the waste economy. Particularly our inductive work supports the further conceptualisation of the Polanyian idea of (dis-)*embeddedness* of a market economy, however particularly concerning contexts of diffused illegal and violent social and economic relations. We believe this adds to the nascent literature in this specific field of inquiry, for instance looking at dynamics of commodification of land and natural resources in the Global South, as well as the exploitation and marginalisation of indigenous communities, minorities and various social groups in market economies (Goodwin, 2018; 2022).

Contribution to the notion of double movement and embeddedness

Our first attempt to extend the notion of 'embedded economy' builds on the initial work of Polanyi (1944), presented in the Great Transformation, and extensively debated in the economic sociology literature (Goodwin, 2018). Particularly we focus on the idea, mobilised by some scholars in recent years (Vancura, 2011), of the distinction present in Polanyi's work between an 'anthropological' and 'economic' embeddedness. If we look at on our findings, and the temporality of events and 'oscillations', this distinction can become useful to understand the role of the different actors in the crisis, and the overarching process of emergence and establishment, and further expansion of a waste economy. In fact, the first tension between commodification and de-commodification manifest at the intersection of the economic activities of the organised crime (e.g. Neapolitan mafia), on one hand, and the state/private businesses, on the other hand. In this stage there is still very limited mobilisation of social actors, mostly confined to environmentalist NGOs. In our view, the establishment of the waste economy, as an economic mechanism to cope with the socio-ecological crisis of the waste disposal and management can be largely explained by the idea of commodification of waste and land, which takes place in the accumulation of the crisis and its first manifestation. Using a Polanyian

metaphor, the waste becomes a lucrative commodity because creates the economic need of being disposed at lower possible costs, thus leading to the commodification of land, as place for disposal and incineration. This creates the condition for transforming the territory of Naples and Campania region into a 'satanic mill' of oppression, exploitation and violence in order to produce and reproduce waste disposal of any sort. From this standpoint, the Neapolitan Mafia, with the complicity of the state and the collusion of interested businesses accelerate a process of commodification of land through dispossession, subjugation and marginalisation of other actors, particularly farmers and local citizens, particularly by dumping and burning waste illegally. Equally, from looking at the notion of 'economic embeddedness', these criminal organisations manage an illegal waste market through social relations of diffused violence and forms of abuse and exploitation. In the initial stage of the crisis, it is the state to attempt to enact a form of counter-movement, not because challenging the idea to resolve the waste management problem through a market economy approach, but trying to dis-embed this economy from criminal and illegal social and economic practices. Similar to the idea of creating a 'duopoly' in the waste economy, the outcome of this attempt by the state is the *establishment of the waste economy, both legal and illegal, through the articulation of state-Mafia social, political and economic relations*.

The second double movement, instead, assumes the more 'standard' Polanyian connotation, with social groups spontaneously reacting to the persistence of the socio-ecological crisis, unresolved by the newly established waste market, and exacerbated by the initial effect of the 'satanic mill': diffused pollution, land degradation, victimisation and exploitation, deterioration of public and environmental health. The increased evidence of the commodified land, coupled with the effect of deterioration of the quality of life, health and ecology of the place, is the trigger for this reaction, which takes places prevailing in the dimension of the legal waste market. However, the economic embeddedness perpetrated by the Neapolitan Mafia to manage the illegal waste market, through violent practices of dispossession, through the expropriation of land and destruction of nature, is not directly address by the counter-movement. Instead, it is the more evident overarching 'dis-embeddedness' of the overall waste economy to mobilise social unrest, making the state the more obvious target for the protest and forms of contestation. It seems to emerge an impossibility by these social groups to identify and challenge the embeddedness of practices of violence and dispossession in the social fabric of this geography. This is what we have defined as *emergence of social embedded illegal markets and the establishment of a geography of dispossession and violence.*

Finally, during the last part of the analysis crisis, the process of commodification accelerates. The state and the mafia are practically hardly distinguishable in their practices of land expropriation, dispossession and exploitation. There is a further disarticulation or erosion of the role of the state by criminal organizations such as the Neapolitan mafia, while an increased separation and hostility manifests between social groups and movements of local citizens, the state and its representatives.

Again, a new process of commodification and de-commodification takes place, at a larger scale, involving more communities and places, and creating an even larger 'satanic mill' of waste production and reproduction. This is a stage where the entire region is the 'satanic mill' where dispose, burn, dump, manage waste as economically needed. The line between what is legal and what is now is blur and practically undistinguishable to the eyes of citizens, social movements and various forms of protest that constitute the 'Stop the Biocide' platform. From their point of view, the state, private business and the Mafia organizations all key economic actors managing a profitable and lucrative waste economy. They have little or no interest to preserve public health and the environment. They have little or no interest to challenge the diffused violence and exploitation which takes place in the 'satanic mill' of the Land Fires. They can only try to oppose to the *emergence and establishment of an intertwined (mixed) economy of legal and illegal waste management*.

Looking at our study, we suggest to consider to further theorise the notion of double movement. The Polanyian idea of alternating processes of commodification and de-commodification does not only affects the economic, social and political (environmental), but should also consider a legal and illegal dimension (e.g. the rules and norms in place, and more in general regulatory regimes), as well as a violent and non-violent dimension. Adding these dimensions makes the notion of double movement even more powerful and insightful, allowing scholars to navigate an interesting and so far unexplored dimension to the analysis of processes of embeddedness. Particularly, mobilising the debate around the distinction between 'anthropological' and 'economic' embeddedness is promising (Vančura, 2011).

Contribution to understanding socio-ecological crisis in diffused violent relations

Based on the considerations presented so far, in this concluding section we reflect on the role of institutions and economic organisations in the production and reproduction of socio-ecological crises, extending the rich Polanyian tradition to contexts in which organised violence dominates social, political and economic life (Goodwin, 2018). This section develops presents our considerations in two ways. First, we acknowledge the role of organised crime, namely Mafia-like organizations, as relevant actors in processes of social and economic embeddedness. The establishment of an illegal market of waste is based on the opportunity created by the state in dis-embedding the legal economy from its social context, thus creating a window of opportunity for social and economic actors, like Mafia organizations, and simultaneously by the use of social mechanisms of violence and dispossession to embed, instead, the illegal economy. This 'movement' and 'counter-movement' assumes some conceptual relevance from a Polanyian perspective: recognizing the role of organised crime is particularly important as the state and private companies did enact limited (direct) violence themselves in the attempt to establish a legal waste economy. However, the entanglement of illegal

and legal activities of our case (D'Alisa et al, 2010; Armiero and D'Alisa, 2012) indicate they contributed to (and perhaps profited from) the establishment of a geography of socio-ecological crisis. Second and as a consequence of this first point, our studies provides a more fine-grained analysis of two distinct forms of embeddedness, often referred to as 'anthropological' and 'economic' embeddedness (see Vančura, 2011) both relevant to understand the violent access to natural resources to manage waste by different actors in the economic geography of the Land of Fires. On one hand we suggest that the state has failed to facilitate the embedding of the waste economy in a legal process of negotiation and democratic participation with social and political actors in this geography, and simultaneously identifying 'quick fixes' to the crisis even outside legally sounding procedures. On the other hand, we point at how, in the shadow of state's failures, the mafia organizations have been able to legitimise the establishment of an illegal waste economy, and to continue enhancing profit accumulation in the region. This process of dis-embeddedness and (re-)embeddedness have led to the emergence of an intertwined legal and illegal waste economy.

This result also contributes to existing knowledge that aims at unpacking the geography of socio-ecological crises, by exploring how social and economic dynamics may hinder collective responses to the crisis. Our research provides an illustration of a geography of violence and dispossession for which social and economic practices, and policies, led by co-existing legal and illegal institutionalized agents, here the Mafia and the state. This resulted in the emergence and sustaining of a major crisis while overall hampering the emergence of effective and creative responses led by civil society to the environmental issues. Our analysis suggests more specifically that the increasing clashes in the interactions between the state and the environmental justice movement elided any forms of the mafia organization regarding the crisis. Indeed, after a long period of neglect of the Neapolitan territory, the state exercised power to repress civil society collective action rather than channelled or promoted new social or economic relations to address the crisis. In that sense, the solutions led by the state remained predominantly dis-embedded from the local social context, while initiatives proposed by local communities stayed at the local level and never scaled into effective economic mechanism to tackle the crisis at regional or national level. The mafia, on the other hand, engaged in strategic ambiguity, using its positioning at the intersection of legal and illegal, mobilising form of diffused violence and oppression, to spur the crisis while remaining out of public (state and social movements) scrutiny.

Acknowledgements

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