

SESSION 5. ECOMAFIA.



A special session, in collaboration with Environnementon. This session is a rather hands on session that has a relatively low amount of information that is given out. This because the aim of this session is to thoroughly think of this phenomenon and consequently; 1) come up with solutions, 2) create a factsheet combining what we have learned and the solutions we have idealized that will be handed out at the discussion panel.

Ecomafia. It is a term that was first introduced by the association Legambiente in 1994 to “indicate the interlacement between clans and dishonest entrepreneurs that regulate special waste - products of industries that are toxic and dangerous - illegally” (Veltri). This term was coined as the consequence of the statement released in 1992 by the pentito Nunzio Perrella, which stated that waste is gold for them. In fact, it is a business that is estimated to generate 9 billion euros annually (Veltri). While this process has expanded throughout Italy, finding all the empty space to use and fill with waste, the three main regions affected are Campania, Sicily and Puglia (Veltri, Saviano 315, 318, Giannini 9). This is extremely harmful not just to the environment as it becomes a dumpster and absorbs all the toxic waste, but it is also extremely dangerous for the inhabitants of such lands, which register an elevated rate of cancers and illness compared to the rest of Italy (Saviano 315, Veltri).



Figure 1. “La criminalità dei rifiuti”. Redazione Web, 24 december 2019.

Regulation of waste. The regulation of waste in Italy is dictated by the legislative decree Ronchi, which states that waste has to be managed to favor; 1) a reduction of waste in its quantity and toxicity, 2) the recycling of waste to generate new materials, and 3) the disposal of waste through combustion or a landfill only when no more energy can be taken from it. As it can become very expensive soon, many industries have put this regulation aside and turned towards the association mafiose (Veltri).

The process. The mechanism starts with entrepreneurs of industries that want to get rid of their waste at the lowest price. They get into contact with waste storage centers which collect their waste and mix it with ordinary waste (Saviano 316). A very note center in that works in the south is “Rifiuti S.p.a”, which has been reported by Legambiente as an abusive waste collector (Veltri). Chemists then step in to cancel the odors and traces of the toxic waste mixed within the ordinary one. The last important step is the transportation of the waste into the pre-established destination in which the waste will be disposed (Saviano 315). It is important to note that while many actors are involved and carry out important parts, it is the mafia that controls this business in close, but indirect cooperation with politicians, as the mafia uses stakeholders as intermediaries (Saviano 316).

La terra dei fuochi, the land of fires. When land becomes too scarce to be able to become a dumpster, the waste is either; 1) ‘accidentally’ drowned in the sea (Veltri), 2) transported to less developed countries, such as Albania, Costa Rica, Romania, Mozambique, Somalia and Nigeria (Saviano 323) or 3) burnt (Saviano 325). In Campania, due to the heavy burning of toxic waste, the triangle Giugliano-Villaricca-Qualiano has been renamed *terra dei fuochi* or land of fires (Saviano 325, Veltri). In these lands, which augments its area by 30% annually, there is a high concentration of fires started by the youth of the Rom community, which earns 50 euros for every pile of waste they manage to burn (Saviano 325). The problem is that by burning such waste very highly elevated levels of dioxin is released, polluting both the land and the air (Saviano 325, Veltri, Montante and Saso 112, 143).



Figure 2. Caporale, Antonello. “Napoli, la terra dei fuochi: aria infetta, rifiuti e tumori attorno al Vesuvio”. *Il fatto quotidiano*, 9 november 2013.

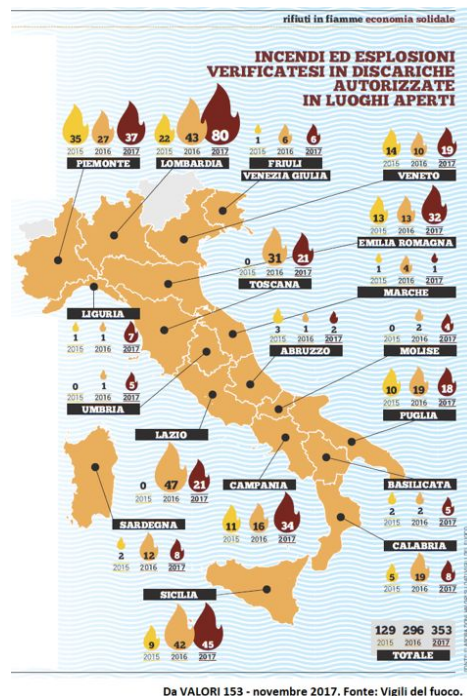


Figure 3. Del Prete, Federico. “La nuova “Terra dei Fuochi”? La Lombardia. Intanto la criminalità ambientale fattura 16,6 miliardi l’anno, più della droga”. *Business Insider*, 18 december 2019.

Potential solutions. Saviano claims that to be able to dispose and clean the waste that has been accumulated up to 2006, it will take around 56 years and that hence, the only solution is to establish incinerators (Saviano 324). Another important step that an individual can take is to look at waste as a resource and hence recycle as by doing so much waste can be regained and reused. Recycling is not only good as it regains materials but it is also a cost reduction

for the State and its levels of taxes. As consumerism has been on a rise it is important to also keep in mind, when buying goods, this process as to critically reflect on whether what we want to buy is truly necessary or not (Veltri).

Brainstorm. This is the part of the session in which we will look at potential solutions to then be able to create a factsheet combining what we have learned and the solutions we have idealized that will be handed out at the discussion panel. Here are some questions that might be considered for the brainstorming:

- Do you agree with Saviano in his claim that the only solution is to establish incinerators?
- Should we rethink the way in which we look at waste? Rethink the way we consume?
- What drives consumerism? Social and economic factors (Veltri)?
- What should the State do? Draft and implement new laws? What should these look like? Should they be focusing on the production of certain wastes rather than their disposal?
- How do we enforce the laws that have already been put in place? More controls? How can you detect toxic waste that has been chemically hidden?

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