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RESEARCH ARTICLE

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN ITALY

Francesca Rosignoli

University of Rome "La Sapienza"

ABSTRACT: Environmental Justice (EJ) in Italy is still an underdeveloped topic by academics. Notwithstanding a narrow range of works in the frame of environmental justice has been published over the years, contributions are more likely to be isolated. The reasons giving evidence of that are: (1) the lack of a systematic survey of the literature; (2) the absence of an interpretative effort aimed at showing the major strength and key features of the environmental justice in Italy.

The main goal of this article is to fill this gap by providing both the state-of-the-art related to the existing literature on EJ in Italy and an interpretation of the centrality of the conflict (and its positive evaluation) in the Italian discourse on EJ within the framework of the *Italian theory*.

KEYWORDS: Italian Theory, Environmental Conflicts, Environmental Justice

CORRESPONDING AUTHORS: Francesca Rosignoli, f.rosignoli@yahoo.it

1. Introduction: The rise of the topic of Environmental Justice

Although the term "Environmental Justice" first appeared in Italy in the early 2000s¹, since the 1960s numerous environmental conflicts have occurred and even if not la-

¹ I will better explain this argument in paragraph 2.

belled as environmental justice struggles, they are likely to be framed through the lens of the environmental justice paradigm. I then proceed to discuss the most relevant environmental struggles occurred over that period.

One of the most important cases which can be used to trace the beginning of EJ movement in Italy is the Partinico² case, and more broadly non-violent protests of world-wide significance³ against the widespread social discrimination, poverty, and organized crime in Sicily conducted by Danilo Dolci.

Known as the 'Gandhi of Sicily' or 'Italian Gandhi', Dolci is generally considered one of the protagonists of non-violent movements as well as fight against organized crime in Italy. By this paragraph, an additional reading of his social commitment in the perspective of the EJ will be provided, due to his community-based focus and his interest in environmental policies as means to fight against poverty, social injustices and organized crime.

With regard to the narrow focus on community, of particular importance are revolutionary methods enacted by Dolci to force regional and national government to foster policies to combat poverty and promote employment in Sicily, such as: hunger strikes, sit-down protests, bottom-up planning, and non-violent demonstrations. At the core of his strategies, indeed, there is the idea of Grassroots Participation⁴: a bottom-up approach according to which the population works *with* the population – and not *for* the population. In doing so, the resulting participative democracy aims at creating an egalitarian community work which translates social needs into participated actions in the interest of the common good.

The second aspect of Dolci's activism close to the concept of EJ, relies on the attention devoted by him on possible environmental policies aimed at solving water-related environmental conflicts.

As he admitted:

we're all Sons of water, but I have a very special relationship with water, the source of life; in Partinico (Montelepre) I learned a great lesson in civilization

² A 30 kilometres town from Palermo, western Sicily.

³ In 1958, Dolci was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize. Furthermore, he was twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), and received the 1989 Jamnalal Bajaj International Award of the Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation of India.

⁴ Dolci used the Socratic method for empowerment of communities, in order to promote social awareness and cultural interaction.

and freedom from local farmers, having water-related conflicts as a starting point(Dolci, 2010: 14)⁵.

The starting point of EJ in Italy, in fact, can be considered his commitment in Partinico case: claim for equal access to water.

From 1952 to 1956 Dolci and a group of volunteers directly experienced the everyday conditions of the most disadvantaged part of local population in Partinico⁶. Not only by collecting data on living conditions⁷, but also by interviewing ordinary people about their lives, reporting their stories first hand with their exact words, Dolci made known the miserable living conditions of the area, in its work *The Outlaws of Partinico* (Dolci 1956a). This sociological investigation allowed Dolci to argue that local people became bandits, being forced to break the law because of the poverty.

After showing the mafia-nepotistic structures, including the link between politicians and the Mafia, especially during election periods⁸, Dolci concluded that the building of the dam on the river Jato would enable local communities to irrigate their land without paying the mafia protection money (the so-called *pizzo*). To this end, i.e. the achievement of equal access to water, several struggles, popular mobilizations, and hunger strikes were organized.

First pressures through non-violent means started in January 1956, when Dolci gathered over one thousand people for a collective hunger strike to protest the illegal fishing. Although dissolved by the authorities, on the ground that collective hunger strike is illegal, further protests took place in Partinico on February 2, 1956. The innovative method advanced by Dolci was the so-called "strike in reverse" (working without pay): just as workers strike by refraining from working, so unemployed can strike by working. By this method, about 150 unemployed men were involved to mend a public road in order to force regional and national government to finance the building of the dam on Jato river.

⁵ My translation in English of (Dolci, 2010: 14): "Siamo tutti figli dell'acqua, però io ho un rapporto particolare con l'acqua, fonte di vita; a Partinico, a Montelepre ho imparato dai contadini una grande lezione di civiltà e di libertà, proprio partendo dai conflitti sull'acqua".

⁶ As Dolci said when he moved from northern Italy to Sicily, that was "the poorest place" he "had ever known"; in this regard, see also the description of the poorest part of Sicily provided by Dolci in (Ragone, 2011: 16): "there are no sewers neither true roads. The unemployment is a normal condition. The fishermen often come back with empty nets for the over-exploitation that fishing boats of foreign areas perpetuate in those waters, using illegal fishing methods. The children don't have any meeting place but the road".

⁷ See for instance the first thirty pages of Report on Partinico (*Relazione su Partinico*), in (Dolci 1956a).

⁸ See also (Dolci 1967; Dolci 1962).

The main goal of the protest was to provide the equal access to water, by challenging Mafia's monopoly of water supply, and denouncing the lack of electricity, running water or sewers, and the dire conditions of local communities.

However, as a result of such unauthorized public work, Dolci and some farmers involved in the strike⁹ were arrested by the police for obstruction, upsetting the public opinion who felt the arrest as a kind of injustice. Piero Calamandrei, one of the most famous Italian lawyers of that time, defended him for free. Famous writers such as Ignazio Silone, Alberto Moravia and Carlo Levi also protested for that unreasonable, unfair process (Fofi 2006; Dolci 1956b).

Despite the Court sentenced Dolci for occupying public land without permission, the process became an opportunity for a new approach to water. Few years later, work on the dam on Jato finally began in 1963. Mafia-nepotistic system had less influence so that people no longer recommended the mafia to get a job and local mafia gradually started to go to jail (Dolci 2010).

As a result, the dam is still considered the symbol of the struggle for the improvement of living conditions of the population of western Sicily and civic engagement against the influence of the mafia over the territory. Dolci's capacity to involve affected population in non-violent struggles and hunger strikes, by giving them a voice also through the first radio station in Partinico¹⁰, is of great importance and leads to consider him one of the 'fathers' of environmental justice and 'ecologists of poor'. By suggesting that construction of dams was likely to solve both the causes of poverty and social injustice, and to reduce Mafia's intimidating influences on politics, Dolci implicitly recognized that a 'good' environmental policy would reduce economic and social inequalities (Dolci, 1956a: 78).

Finally, the variable concerning the role of organized crime emphasized by Dolci, best known as a member of the anti-mafia movement, is likely to play an important role in environmental issues in the near future and still nowadays¹¹.

Another important case of environmental injustice in Italy is the case of Vajont dam, best known as the Vajont disaster. In spite of warnings from many experts, describing the geological instability of Mount Toc on the southern side of the basin prior to the disaster (Merlin 1997; Vastano 2003), the Vajont dam was however completed in 1959.

⁹ The list of the people involved in the process is to be found in (Fofi, 2006: 49): Dolci, Zanini, Termini, Speciale, Abbate; cf. (Dolci 1956b).

¹⁰ For a clear understanding of Dolci's struggle to challenging the Italian state monopoly on broadcasting, see (Dolci, 2008: 3).

¹¹ Among others, academics and journalists report the role played by Camorra (Mafia operating in Naples) in the illegal dumping of toxic waste in the so-called "terra dei fuochi" (i.e. Land of Fires) in Campania region.

Located in the valley of the Vajont River under Mount Toc, in the municipality of Erto and Casso, 100 km north of Venice, the dam was built by Società Adriatica di Elettricità (Adriatic Energy Corporation), having the electricity supply and distribution monopoly in northern Italy. As warned by some scientists, the disaster finally happened on October 9, 1963, when about 300 million cubic metres of rock fell from Mount Toc into the Vajont reservoir (Armiero, 2011: 174). The landslide caused a fifty million cubic metre wave that, as a sort of man-made tsunami, partially overcame the dam and, moving at about 100 km/h, hit the villages of Erto, Casso, Castellavazzo, Codissago, Pirago, Villanova, Faè, Rivalta and the town of Longarone (Armiero, 2011: 174). This latter was almost completely destroyed. Although the dam remained surprisingly intact, the impacts caused by the landslide were worse than expected resulting in flooding and destruction of the Piave valley. Attempts to control the landslide by lowering its level came too late to prevent the disaster, and about 2,000 people were killed (Armiero 2011). After the tragedy, numerous hearings, trials, reports, and literary works demonstrated that this event occurred because the company and the Italian government have covered up evidence and reports warning against the risks¹². As observed above for Partinico-case, a key feature of this tragedy relies on the influence exercised by a subject (Adriatic Energy Corporation) having the monopoly on the supply of a certain good (electricity). In this regard, Merlin was the first to shed a light on such aspect, by emphasizing the key role played by the monopoly enterprise in the lack of any resistance from politics and science:

After all, we don't care much about SADE, the killer monopoly company: it did business like all private entrepreneurs of the world. Knowing it would do business with impunity, knowing they would let it do. SADE was the puppeteer moving all the strings. It moved the puppets - scientists and politicians - like it wanted. It was the power, since the real power had abdicated...But up here, on the Friulian slope known as "grande Vajont", local community experienced a "story" prior to the disas-

¹² The newspaper *l'Unità*, first reported the responsibilities of the government and company, by supporting and confirming articles previously published by Tina Merlin (journalist and partisan during the Second World War), who denounced company's management in the Vajont project; as reported by Armiero, from 2008, Vajont disaster is listed among the five 'precautionary tales', i.e. the five worst disasters caused by humans, being a classic example of the consequences of the failure of engineers and geologists to understand the nature of the problem that they were trying to deal with (Armiero, 2011: 176). See also *Five Cautionary Tales and Five Good News Stories*, International Year of Planet Earth— Global Launch Event 12–13 February 2008, text available at http://www.iswn.it/en/press_releases/2008/international_year_of_planet_earth_global_launch_event_12_13_february_2008.

ter, which was missing in Longarone. That's a story of people, still largely unknown. It is a story of struggles, uprising, civic engagement against the powerful and its vexation and laws, violation of state law, license to kill, defense of law, and justice¹³.

In addition, Merlin gives a particular emphasis on the enslavement of both scientists and politicians, by explicitly arguing that Vajont tragedy

will always symbolize the lasting shame of science and politics. A dangerous combination closely linking almost all prominent academics to economic power, in this case the electricity monopoly SADE, about twenty years ago. In turn, SADE used political power, in this case Christian Democratic Party, in order to carry out public works of public utility - so to speak - for making huge profits. In return, political power was in safe, being supported and financed by economic power. Like in every bargain, the rule was - and still nowadays - that of exchange¹⁴.

The Vajont tragedy, a powerful case useful to explain the unequal distribution of environmental burdens and benefits, has been recently framed by Armiero (Armiero 2011) through the lens of the environmental justice, on the ground that

the story of the Vajont speaks of corruption, of connivances between political and economic powers, of the enslavement of science; it can be described as a metaphor of Italian modernization, conquering the Alpine Valley for the wealth of the nation... And the story I am going to tell has all the basic ingredients of an archetypal narra-

¹³My translation in English of (Merlin, 1997: 20): "La SADE, il monopolio che uccise, in fondo ci interessa poco: faceva i suoi affari come tutti gli imprenditori privati del mondo. Sapendo che li poteva impunemente fare, che glieli lasciavano fare. Era il burattinaio che tirava i fili e faceva muovere i burattini - scienziati e politici - come voleva. Il potere era lei, perché il vero potere aveva abdicato... Ma quassù, sul versante friulano del "grande Vajont" prima del disastro si è vissuta una "storia" che è mancata a Longarone. Una storia di popolo, ancora sconosciuta. Di lotte, ribellioni, partecipazione civile contro i potenti, le loro angherie, le loro leggi, la trasgressione delle leggi dello Stato, la licenza di uccidere, la difesa del diritto, la rivendicazione della giustizia".

¹⁴My translation in English of (Merlin, 1997: 18): "Resterà un monumento a vergogna perenne della scienza e della politica. Un connubio che legava strettissimamente, vent'anni fa, quasi tutti gli accademici illustri al potere economico, in questo caso al monopolio elettrico SADE. Che a sua volta si serviva del potere politico, in questo caso tutto democristiano, per realizzare grandi imprese a scopo di pubblica utilità - si fa per dire - dalle quali si ricavava o avrebbe ricavato enormi profitti. In compenso il potere politico era al sicuro sostenuto e foraggiato da coloro i quali si prostituiva. La regola era - ed è ancora - come in tutti gli affari vantaggiosi, quella dello scambio".

tion of environmental injustice: the power of a big corporation, the resistance of local communities, the complicity of the authorities, the politicization of science(Armiero, 2011: 174).

However, due to its both national¹⁵ and international¹⁶ relevance, the case that is more likely to become a landmark within the history of EJ in Italy is the dramatically famous Seveso disaster. Such disaster, intended to change both the ecological and industrial culture of the whole Europe, refers to an industrial accident occurred in a chemical manufacturing plant named ICMESA (Industrie Chimiche Meda Società Azionaria), approximately 20 kilometers north of Milan, that particularly affected the community of Seveso.

The tragedy happened on July 10, 1976(AA.VV. 1976a; Galimberti et al. 1977; Ramondetta & Repossi 1988; Centemeri 2006), when a bursting disc on a chemical reactor ruptured at the chemical plant(Centemeri, 2006: 12). Due to overheating, an interruption in the production cycle, and outdated equipment, a cloud of chemicals containing 2,3,7,8-Tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin ('TCDD' or 'dioxin'), was accidentally released into the atmosphere. The toxic cloud fell to an area of 1810 hectares, including the municipality of Seveso and other surrounding communities, such as Meda, Desio, and Cesano Maderno(Ramondetta & Repossi, 1988: 20). About 3,000 kg of chemicals were released into the air, including 2,4,5-trichlorophenol, used in the manufactured of herbicides, and from about 300 grams to 130 kg of dioxin(Centemeri, 2006: 25-26; Ramondetta & Repossi, 1988: 20). ICMESA, however, failed to handle the emergency. Due to the dioxin, severe skin disorders, such as chloracne broke out on people exposed to the cloud, especially on children. Although there were no human deaths linked to the disaster, on 13th July animals started to die(Ramondetta & Repossi 1988). By 1978, 80,000 animals were slaughtered(Centemeri, 2006: 47). The houses of 41 families were demolished and remediation continued until the early 80s(Centemeri, 2006: 47).

Like Love Canal case¹⁷, Seveso accident had in the first place a particular relevance for its effects on public opinion. As reported by Giorgio Nebbia,

¹⁵In Italy, as an answer to the accident at Seveso, ecological protest gave rise to one of the most important national environmental organizations, *Lega per l'ambiente*. Founded in 1980, it changed its name to *Legambiente* in 1992. In the 1987 elections to the national parliament, the Green Party (*I Verdi*) received around one million votes (2.5 percent) and for the first time gained 13 seats in the lower house and two in the Senate.

¹⁶It gave a significant impulse to the enforcement of the Aarhus Convention by the EU.

¹⁷ See also (Biocca & De Lussu 1981).

Seveso accident had a much stronger effect on public opinion. Local authorities did not know what to do; various miraculous and ineffective remedies were proposed to decontaminate the areas exposed to dioxin; people, especially pregnant women, were terrified about the future of their children; for the first time there was talk of the need to authorize abortions (Nebbia, 2014: 185)¹⁸.

In addition, the Journal *Sapere*, directed by Giulio Maccacaro (1924-1977)¹⁹, denounced dangers and risks deriving from factories built without precautions throughout the country, by an entire issue dedicated to the scientific and technical aspects related to the accident (AA.VV. 1976b).

Finally, as mentioned above, the disaster also provided strong resonance at international level, by giving impulse to the creation of the European Community's Seveso Directive, a new system of industrial regulation. Prior to the adoption of Seveso Directive, each Member State of the European Community had established its own rules for managing industrial safety. By contrast, Seveso accident had certainly the merit to give rise to numerous scientific studies and standardized industrial safety regulations, opening debates about a new EC regulatory framework for ensuring the safety of hazardous installations²⁰.

As legislative response to the accident, the Seveso Directive was introduced into European law in 1982, in order to improve the safety of sites containing large quantities of dangerous substances.

After the tragedies occurred in Bhopal, India with the Union Carbide factory accident in 1984 and in Basel, Switzerland with the Sandoz chemical spill in 1986, the Council Directive 82/501/EEC on major-accident hazards – the Seveso Directive – was amended

¹⁸ My translation of (Nebbia, 2014: 185): “Ma l’incidente di Meda ebbe un ben più forte effetto sull’opinione pubblica. Gli amministratori locali non sapevano che cosa fare; vari rimedi miracolosi e inefficaci furono proposti per decontaminare le zone su cui si era sparsa la diossina; le persone, soprattutto le donne incinte, erano terrorizzate sul futuro dei loro figli; per la prima volta a chiare lettere si parlò della necessità di autorizzare degli aborti”.

¹⁹ Giulio Alfredo Maccacaro was Professor of Medical Statistics and Biometrics at the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, University of Milan. His research interests were: the analysis of the relationship between science and power; statistical methods applied to medicine; research into diseases caused by environmental and work-related factors.

²⁰ Before the disaster Seveso, see the following industrial accidents involving TCP: 1949 Monsanto (USA); 1953 BASF (Germany); 1960 Dow Chemical (USA); 1963 Phillips Duphar (Netherlands); 1968 Coalite Chemical Productions (UK).

in 1987 by Directive 87/216/EEC and in 1988 by Directive 88/610/EEC in order to broaden the scope of the Directive including the storage of dangerous substances²¹.

In 1996, Directive 96/82/EC (Seveso II) replaced the Seveso Directive. Seveso II included a new revision and extension of the scope; the introduction of new requirements related to safety management systems; emergency planning and land-use planning and reinforcement of provisions on inspections to be carried out by Member States (Altiero & Dakli, 2015: 67-68). In response to other industrial accidents²², the Directive was extended by Directive 2003/105/EC. In doing so, provisions on risks related to the storage/processing activities in certain mining facilities, the processing of explosive substances and the storage of ammonium nitrate and ammonium nitrate based fertilizers, were also introduced (Altiero & Dakli, 2015: 68).

In turn, the Seveso II Directive 96/82/EC was repealed by the Directive - 2012/18/EU (Seveso III). The most important changes introduced by the Seveso III Directive are listed as follows: technical updates required to comply with EU Regulation on the classification of dangerous; enhanced guarantees on access to information, justice and participation in decision-making for citizens; measures to improve the availability and the sharing of information; stricter standards for inspections. Member States will have to transpose the Directive by 1 June 2015 (Altiero & Dakli, 2015: 68)²³.

Overall, the Seveso Directives have provided a legal framework of reference for rules governing major accident hazards in Europe, based on the essential principles of preventive action, public participation, and public information, as well as on the precautionary principle. By addressing how to prevent and control threats to the human and natural environment, Seveso Directives are certainly considered a benchmark for industrial accident policy as well as a model for legislation in many countries in the world.

However, as discussed above, Seveso disaster was just one among many industrial accidents, or more generally pollution cases from industrial plants on a certain territory.

Indeed, just few months after Seveso disaster, a second toxic cloud released into the atmosphere several tons of potassium carbonate and bicarbonate solution containing arsenic trioxide (Assennato, Bisceglia, De Nichilo, Grassi, & Lo Izzo, 2005: 84)²⁴. The ac-

²¹ See <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/seveso/>

²² See for instance the Baia Mare cyanide spill (2000, Romania), the Enschede firework disaster (2000, Netherlands) and the AZF explosion (2001, France).

²³cf. <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/seveso/legislation.htm>

²⁴ Cf. Nebbia reporting that, due to the explosion of the reactor, 10,000 kg of arsenic compounds fell to the town of Manfredonia (Nebbia, 2014: 219).

cident, occurred in Manfredonia (a town located in Apulia, a region in Southern Italy) at the Enichem petrochemical plant (ENI) on 26th September 1976, was not surprisingly labelled as the 'Seveso del Sud' (the Seveso of South). About one hundred and fifty people arrived at the local hospital for arsenic poisoning. Findings reported by Assennato show that

the magnitude of the event induced the Institute of Occupational Health of Bari University to perform a survey on 1,188 of the 1,639 workers employed by ANIC, SCD, and their contracting firms at the time of the accident at the Manfredonia Petrochemical plant. The tests were performed during the 50 days immediately after the accident, with the aims preventing the onset of any organic lesions and of obtaining parameters to assess the exposure of the factory workers. There was a higher frequency of urinary arsenic values $>1,000 \mu\text{g/L}$ (the value that was indicated as a biological limit for occupationally exposed subjects) among the workers living in Manfredonia compared with those living elsewhere, demonstrating that pollution had occurred in the town of Manfredonia. The simultaneous increase in transaminases demonstrated a real effect on the liver, albeit slight (Assennato et al., 2005: 84).

Built at the end of the 1960s in Manfredonia, the Enichem petrochemical plant (ENI) producing fertilizers and caprolactam, was one of the numerous petrochemical industrial poles supported by the "growth pole" development strategy (Assennato et al. 2005).

Among the others²⁵, Cengio, Porto Marghera (Bortolozzo 1998; Benatelli et al. 2002; Casson 2007), Massa Carrara²⁶, Ravenna, Ferrara, Porto Torres (Ruju 2009), Valle del Sacco (industrial site along the Sacco river, Lazio region), Taranto, Brindisi, Priolo, and Gela (Saitta & Pellizzoni 2009) can be certainly added to the environmental justice cases in Italy, since they basically reiterate the same scheme and variables, emerging from the national industrial development strategy. As for energy supply plants, they were generally built in economic depressed areas of the country, in close proximity to existing urban settlements, as a result of a top-down exercise of power disempowering local

²⁵For a comprehensive list of industrial pollutants sites see: (Wagner 2011; Pergolizzi 2012; Poggio & Ruzzenenti 2012; Barocci 2000).

²⁶On July 17, 1988, one more industrial accident like the ones in Seveso and Manfredonia, occurred at the Farmoplant chemical factory (Massa). The explosion and fire in tanks containing up to 11,000 gallons of insecticide released a cloud of black smoke over the vacation areas. More than 150 people were admitted to the hospitals for headaches, vomiting and other diseases caused by the smoke.

communities in decision-making procedure. For the sake of modernization (in the 1960s), and still nowadays in the name of economic growth²⁷, Italian governance applies similar strategies and mechanisms notwithstanding the current regulations protecting environment, human health, and, above all, essential democratic principles reaffirmed by Aarhus Convention's pillars on public information, consultation and access to justice.

Among the several environmental *injustice* cases still having negative impacts on human health and the environment, it is worth mentioning the environmental contamination in the Municipality of Gela (Sicily). Indeed, according to the *Istituto Superiore di Sanità* (National Institute of Health-ISS), congenital anomalies still occur in live births and still-births residing in Gela (Sicily)²⁸, included in the list of the 57 National Priority Contaminated Sites²⁹. Since the industrial area of Gela was declared "at high risk of environmental crisis" in 1990, little has been done to clean the polluted site and reduce the health outcomes due to pollution exposure (Guerriero et al. 2011).

Due to the presence of large petrochemical industrial plants and to widely diffuse environmental pollution, high levels of many chemical compounds have been detected in soil, water, groundwater, air sediments, fish and shellfish (Guerriero et al. 2011). In addition, observed negative health effects have reinforced the hypothesis of a causal role of risk factors present in Gela on the etiology of malformations (Sicilia et al. 2006). Accordingly, ENI's trial for environmental pollution caused by its petrochemical plants, poisoning ecosystem and local communities in over 50 years, was initiated on 13th January 2016.

The families of thirty children born malformed have actually claimed compensation from the oil company held liable for their children's malformations.

²⁷For instance, such approach was reaffirmed on 11th November 2014, when the Law No. 164 (known as Sblocca Italia) came into power.

²⁸ See (Bianchi, Bianca, Barone, & Pierini, 2014: 220): "Statistically significant excesses emerge with respect to the references for genital anomalies, and for urinary and total anomalies including not-specified diagnoses. For cardiovascular and limb anomalies (including not-specified clubfoot), the excess is significant only in comparison with Italian figures. The prevalence of hypospadias of 46.7/10,000 shows statistically significant excesses compared to European and Italian reference values, of 1.7 and 2.3 times, respectively. The study confirms a high prevalence of hypospadias, estimated between the value observed in the previous twelve-year study and the one reported for the area of Priolo-Augusta-Melilli for the years 1990-1998; and higher than those reported in literature, with sporadic exceptions. The observed data, as well as the documented presence in the environment and in biological fluids of dangerous pollutants in periconceptional exposures, support a plausibility of multifactorial aetiology for hypospadias".

²⁹The list is available at

http://www.isprambiente.gov.it/it/temi/suoloeterritorio/siticontaminati/riferimenti_normativi_sin_aprile_2014.pdf

As a result, Gela case is emblematic in showing how industrial sites still lacking of a proper decontamination remain significant, dangerous sources of pollution. The price of the so-called *miracolo economico* (Italian economic miracle), which took place between the end of the Second World War and late 1960s in Italy, still disproportionately burdens communities living close to industrial plants. Neither current regulations (for the most of the cases not implemented), nor scientific evidences assessing the damage costs to health and the environment resulting from pollutants emitted from industrial facilities, are likely to play any (significant) role in inverting this trend³⁰. Therefore, the lack of participation and existing, recurring schemes imposed upon local population cause people's resentment of and resistance to industrial plants, public works impacting health and environment, and waste facilities.

A significant body of literature has particularly focused on environmental struggles over garbage facilities in Campania region, by investigating the Land of Fires case. This case concerns the area adjacent to the northeast of Naples and the southwest of Caserta, which was strongly affected by the illegal disposal of toxic waste. Since the 1980s, the Camorra (Neapolitan mafia) has been burning and/or burying special waste, often mixed with urban waste (Armiero & D'Alisa, 2013: 9).

Due to continuous burning of toxic waste, the area was later called 'the Land of Fires' (la terra dei fuochi). In addition to Seveso disaster, 'The Land of Fires' case is also likely to be considered an important benchmark within the Italian history of EJ, above all, due to the legislative response provided by national government. Initially brought to public attention by Saviano (Saviano 2008), the case has aroused strong feelings, particularly among the victims' families, but also among the population generally, until the resulting pressure of media, reports, movies, public opinion and environmental NGOs (for instance Legambiente) finally forced national government to introduce the Law against Eco-Crimes. Accordingly, by the Law No. 68 of 22 May 2015 the first provisions dealing with crimes against environment have been introduced in Italian Criminal Code.

³⁰ Val d'Agri case (oil districts in Basilicata region, southern Italy), seems to confirm this assertion. As denounced by *Legambiente Basilicata*, Law No. 164 "excludes local authorities in decision making, making Basilicata a sort of colony for drills". In fact, the aforementioned Law No. 164 (known as *Sblocca Italia*), came into power in 2014, explicitly disempowers both local government and local communities, by introducing facilitated procedures, which inhibit the influence of those latter in terms of decision making and participation. Accordingly, on January 11, 2016, the Constitutional Court handed down decision No. 7, ruling that the provisions of Article 1 (2)(4); Article 1 (10-bis); Article 1 (11) of *Legislative Decree No. 133/2014* (which became, after amendment, *Law No 164 of 11 November 2014*), are held to be unconstitutional.

2. Environmental Justice as an emerging topic within Italian debate

The topic of Environmental Justice entered Italian cultural life through the environmental association *A Sud*. Founded in 2003, it is still the only environmental organization specifically operating in the field of Environmental Justice in Italy. A recent study conducted by *A Sud* in 2013 provides a short overview of the use of the term and environmental justice-oriented actions by other environmental associations. Entitled *Dallo sviluppo sostenibile alla giusta sostenibilità* (From Sustainable Development to Just Sustainability) (Di Pierri & Spizzichino 2013), the report provides a mapping of numerous civil society actors within Rome urban area, which includes the ring and 121 urban municipalities located around the capital, as possible main subjects for the development and practical implementation of a political transition program (*Progetto Strategico della Provincia di Roma*) in terms of environmental and social sustainability. The main problem that emerged from the analysis of almost 40 grassroots movement and their strategies to implement such political program, is the lack of adequate parameters to assess the effectiveness of social and environmental policies enacted by public authorities. Therefore, the research has been oriented towards the use of the *Just Sustainability Index*³¹, which allows integrating both evaluations in terms of environmental effectiveness of policies and of social improvement, in the frame of environmental justice as an emerging paradigm.

A Participatory Research Method³² has been also used in order to examine the best strategies to implement the political program at stake and to measure the just sustainability of the actors.

The outcomes of the research show that, despite of a low degree of integration in terms of environmental justice issues within most of the programming documents examined³³, there is however a significant awareness of fairness and justice emerging from numerous implementations of good practices both in environmental and social justice perspective.

This seems to suggest that the Italian discourse on environmental justice has been introduced by a bottom-up process. In this context, the keyword is *environmental conflicts* rather than *environmental injustices*.

³¹ The Just Sustainability Index was developed by Julian Agyeman in (Agyeman 2005); see also (Agyeman & Evans 2004).

³² For more information concerning methodology used in this study see (Di Pierri and Spizzichino 2013: 54-55).

³³ As reported in (Di Pierri and Spizzichino 2013: 60-61), the study has considered programming and policy documents as well as the mission of the organizations involved in the project.

Indeed, whereas Italian environmentalism has mainly focused on more traditional topics, such as the protection of nature or landscape (Armiero 2014b), environmental injustices are more likely to be observed in terms of environmental conflicts³⁴.

The basic idea of this approach is that there are fragile areas (characterized by low population density, high percentage of elderly people, few job opportunities and services, remoteness from urban centres or major communication routes (Osti and Pellizzoni 2013: 5) in which environmental conflicts take place, either because they have significant environmental resources which have been misappropriated³⁵, or because they are affected by negative externalities (e.g. waste facilities).

As reported by the tenth edition of Nimby Forum (national database on environmental conflicts³⁶), contested infrastructures and facilities in Italy amount to 355, and largely concern electricity plants, waste facilities, and road or rail infrastructure.

According to the literature (Bobbio & Zeppetella 1999; Maggiolini & Pomatto 2014), six interpretations of conflicts can be summarized by the following key words: particularism, spreading dissension, disproportionate costs involved in relation to the benefits gained, places against flows, development model (Bobbio 2011).

The first two lines of interpretation negatively evaluate environmental conflicts, because they are considered as the reflection of the lack of governance of state institutions, due to the society fragmentation and the crisis of representative democracy (Maggiolini and Pomatto 2014: 120-121). A third strand of research largely focuses on the unfair allocation of negative externalities, particularly when not followed by meaningful benefits or compensation (Maggiolini & Pomatto 2014). Rather than focusing on the mere existence/concentration of negative externalities in a certain territory, the fourth reading of environmental conflicts emphasizes the perception of risks related to those negative externalities (Maggiolini & Pomatto 2014).

In addition, the fifth line of reasoning concerns the negative impacts of such externalities in terms of social status of territories. Yet, according to this interpretation,

³⁴ See among others, (Maggiolini & Pomatto 2014); (Osti & Pellizzoni 2013); (Armiero 2008).

³⁵ See among the others the case of oil extraction in Basilicata region examined in (Bubbico & Nardoza 2013).

³⁶ Founded in 2004, Nymby Forum is a research project on environmental conflicts managed by a non-profit called *Aris - Agenzia di Ricerche Informazione e Società*. Please find more information on <http://www.nimbyforum.it>; for a comprehensive understanding of the amount of environmental conflicts see also the Documentation Centre on Environmental Conflicts (CDCA), founded in Italy in October 2007 on <http://cdca.it/en/>; and the Italian Atlas of environmental conflicts, the first Italian open georeferenced Web Platform - built by an interdisciplinary team composed of researchers, journalists, activists and territorial committees - gathering information on the major environmental conflicts in Italy available at <http://cdca.it/en/atlane-italiano-dei-conflitti>.

what really matters is not the perception of risks, rather environmental conflicts reflect struggles in symbolic terms, in the sense that places/territories are resistant to undesirable/unwanted flows affecting their social status (Maggiolini & Pomatto 2014).

Finally, the sixth strand is the only one that positively evaluates environmental struggles, since protesters are more likely to be considered as ‘guardians’ promoting the common good of society as a whole (Maggiolini & Pomatto 2014).

In the following paragraph, I give a particular emphasis on this last interpretation, in accordance with EJ main focus on communities and, above all, to specifically investigate the major strength of EJ in Italy.

3. Italian Theory and the Environmental Justice discourse in Italy

Actually, such positive evaluation of conflicts is far from being a proper novelty within the Italian political tradition. In fact, the theoretical framework over the centrality of the conflict (and its positive evaluation) in the Italian discourse on EJ can be found in what Roberto Esposito terms the *Italian theory* (Esposito 2012). By shedding a light on the influence of Machiavellian republicanism on the emphasis on struggle within the Italian cultural tradition, Esposito particularly analyses the *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livy*³⁷ by Machiavelli. In this work, Machiavelli takes the ancient republic of Rome as its model and emphasizes the role of the people in the ‘public administration’ of the city as ‘guardians of liberty’, as tribunes were in Rome. To use Machiavelli’s words:

all the laws that are favorable to liberty result from partisan struggles between the nobility and the people (Machiavelli 1950: 119).

In this perspective, civic participation (*partecipazione*) is conceived as the “inevitable clash of interests within and among diverse competing political forces, and it embraces a view of the republic as a ‘theatre of turbulence’ (Dietz 1998: 20)”. By dwelling upon this particular feature of Machiavellian republicanism, Esposito has set such *immanentization of antagonism*, i.e. the immanent relation between struggle and order, among the three paradigmatic theoretical axes of the specificity of Italian thought. As a result, the emphasis on the conflict and its positive evaluation, since protesters are conceived as ‘guardians of liberty’ promoting the common good of society as a

³⁷ See English translation and comment in (Machiavelli 1950).

whole, is confirmed by this theory and is likely to show a major strength (or at least a key feature) of participative democracy related to environmental issues in Italy³⁸.

4. Environmental Justice Research in Italy

As observed for environmental movements, which scarcely use the term and do not define themselves as part of that movement (Armiero 2014b), environmental justice in Italy is likewise not a much-debated topic by academics. Indeed, academic debate on the topic of environmental injustice is also still rare, being, instead, largely favored the term *environmental conflicts*.

However, a narrow range of works (Certomà 2007; Cesaroni et al. 2010; Martuzzi et al. 2010; Pellizzoni 2014; Pellizzoni 2011a; Germani et al. 2011; Germani et al. 2014; Germani 2011; Armiero & D'Alisa 2012; Armiero 2014a) in the frame of environmental justice as well as articles focusing on the impact of socioeconomic factors on environmental outcomes, have been published over the years. Among the first empirical analyses examining social inequalities in exposures to environmental pollution, it is worth mentioning the study conducted by Forastiere (Forastiere et al. 2007) on air pollution and its relation with socioeconomic status (SES). Despite the lack of an explicit mention of the term 'environmental justice', it is definitely one of the first publication correlating income, socioeconomic factors and environmental pollution (traffic emission in the city of Rome). Similarly, the research on waste generation and landfill diversion in its correlation with social inequalities by Mazzanti (Mazzanti et al. 2009) is among the few empirical studies on the topic.

First traces of the term 'environmental justice' can be found in the Journal *Filosofia e Questioni Pubbliche* with an article by Chiara Certomà (Certomà 2007) on the ethical implications of unaccountable exploitation of natural resources in its close link with future generations.

Further traces of the term appeared in 2010, when a study on health effects of waste-related exposure, including the interplay between environmental and social factors, was published (Martuzzi et al. 2010). Findings have provided evidence suggesting that "observed inequalities in exposure and health represent a case of environmental injustice as they are the result of social processes and may be prevented, at least partially (Martuzzi, Mitis, and Forastiere 2010: 21)". Few months after the publication

³⁸Concerning the centrality of the "conflict" as the key word to understand Italian environmentalism see also: (Nebbia 2015; Armiero 2004; Armiero 2008); on the positive interpretation of environmental conflicts and protesters conceived as 'guardians of liberty' promoting the common good of society as a whole see also (Maggiolini & Pomatto 2014; Della Porta & Piazza 2008; Fedi & Mannarini 2008; Cafaro 2010).

of this research, the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health held in Parma (Italy), was mainly focused on health-related environmental justice issues (WHO 2010). Adopted by 53 Member States, the so-called *Parma Declaration* required states to take measures for reducing health risks of vulnerable groups and social/gender inequalities (Ranzi & Costa 2011). As part of the project, Italy contributes to draw up a comparative international report on social inequalities, by using twelve environmental risk indicators available in almost every country, to address economic impacts of environmental risk factors on health (Ranzi & Costa 2011). The establishment of indicators to monitor the inequalities in correlation with air pollution exposure and the proximity to polluted sites or potentially harmful to human health and the environment, is also among the most desirable goals (Ranzi & Costa 2011).

Thereafter, a growing body of literature on Environmental Justice has been published. Among the topics explored by academics through the lens of EJ, deserve to be mentioned: air pollution (Germani 2011; Germani et al. 2011; Germani et al. 2014); transportation (road or rail infrastructure)³⁹; waste facilities⁴⁰; urban planning⁴¹; the role of environmental justice, science and ethics in new local mobilizations (Pellizzoni 2014; Osti & Pellizzoni 2013).

In addition, as reported by Pellizzoni (Pellizzoni 2014), some scholars such as Vitale, Podestà, Della Porta and Piazza (Vitale 2007; Della Porta & Piazza 2008; Podestà & Vitale 2011; Pellizzoni 2011a) contribute to describe the EJ areas of concern, by analyzing the main claims at the basis of emerging social mobilizations in Italy. Particularly, they point out human activities impacting environment, safety and landscape, such as: public works (Bobbio & Zeppetella 1999) (airports, road infrastructures, telecommunications; chemical plants, waste facilities); GM crops; housing policies and urban redevelopment.

Among the most relevant contributions, of particular importance is the set of empirical investigations conducted by Germani over environmental inequalities related to air pollution in 2011.

³⁹ On the new railway line Torino-Lione and new motorway in Genova cases see (Maggiolini & Pomatto 2014); concerning the new railway line Torino-Lione see also (Della Porta & Piazza 2008; Caruso 2010); for a general overview related to environmental conflicts over public works see (Fedi & Mannarini 2008).

⁴⁰ On waste management in Campania, see (Armiero & D'Alisa 2012; Armiero 2014a; Avallone 2014); on nuclear waste issues see (Binotto 2013; Di Nucci 2015).

⁴¹ See the last book of Chiara Certomà (Certomà 2016), in which she examines the critical gardening phenomenon in urban contexts in relation to environmental justice issues by the means of a comparative analysis of the environmental injustices in Rome and the actions put forward by the critical gardening movement in the city.

In exploring which kind of environmental inequalities emerges from empirical analysis, Germani has examined the relationship between income, demographic characteristics and concentrations of air industrial pollutants within the Italian provinces⁴². Her findings reveal that air releases tend to be higher in provinces with high concentration of females as households' head and with high concentration of children. This suggests that, rather than along racial or ethnic terms, environmental justice issues in Italy are more likely to manifest in terms of social categories and gender composition. To use the words of Germani,

the results of the research yield new insights in the sense that they do not find evidence of any environmental discrimination based on ethnicity, suggesting that environmental justice issues in Italy are not likely to be perceived in racial and ethnic terms but rather in terms of social categories and gender composition of the population(Germani 2011:23)⁴³.

Also, the ordered probit regression, the demographic and economic data are implemented with the additional variable 'pending proceedings' which is a measure of the inefficiency of law enforcement in terms of number of pending trials in each province(Germani, Morone, and Testa 2014: 13; Germani et al. 2011:21). Indeed, trial and appeal delays and the large number of pending proceedings are one of the major problems associated with the inefficiency of justice in Italy. Therefore, by exploring this additional variable, Germani finds that judicial inefficiency (a measure of the inefficiency of law enforcement) is also associated with higher levels of pollution. "In other words, provinces with high judicial inefficiency are more likely to experience more releases than provinces with lower judicial efficiency(Germani, Morone, and Testa 2014:15)".

As she points out, the results given above suggest that

a better implementation, all through the territory, of the local enforcement of environmental laws can play an important role in creating the conditions for

⁴²ibid.; despite the lack of an explicit mention of the term EJ, see also Forastiere, F., Stafoggia, M., Tasco, C., Picciotto, S., Agabiti, N., Cesaroni, G., & Perucci, C. a. (2007). Socioeconomic status, particulate air pollution, and daily mortality: Differential exposure or differential susceptibility. *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, 50(3), 208–216.

⁴³ cf. (Germani et al. 2011; Germani et al. 2014).

better relationships between firms and judicial institutions improving, thus, the overall environmental quality(Germani, Morone, and Testa 2014: 18)⁴⁴.

In addition, a large body of research involves few scholars in dealing with EJ and waste facilities.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning a range of works on environmental struggles over garbage facilities in Campania region (southern Italy), recently published in the frame of environmental justice(Petrillo 2009; Armiero & D'Alisa 2012; Martuzzi et al. 2010). Among the numerous works dealing with the so-called *Land of Fires* case⁴⁵, the aforementioned 2010 study on the role of health inequalities and inequities in waste management had already referred to previous research(Martuzzi et al. 2009) reporting that

cancer mortality and congenital anomalies of populations living in 196 municipalities of two provinces of Campania, southern Italy, were recently investigated. The study area was characterized by more than 20 years of waste mismanagement (with the involvement of organized crime), including uncontrolled waste disposal, release of toxic substances and illegal waste burning. A positive correlation ($r = 0.30$) was found at municipality level between a waste exposure indicator (built using 227 waste facilities sites–138 of which illegal) and a deprivation index(Marco Martuzzi, Mitis, and Forastiere 2010: 22-23).

The findings of these previous studies concerning the impact of waste dumping on the community in Campania region have been reaffirmed on 11th January 2016, when the Superior Institute of Health (ISS) reported that residents of the Land of Fires area have *excessive* cancer and mortality rates with respect to the national average(Comba et al. 2011). By updating the previous report on the epidemiological situation in such area, the ISS found that in Caserta's 23 provinces, there is an excess of hospitalization for leukemia among children under the age of 14. In Naples' 32 provinces the same age group suffer an alarming rate of tumors in the central nervous system, particularly among babies. Children living in poor areas seem to be more vulnerable than those living in less deprived areas, because they can combine several factors such as chronic diseases and less healthy diets, which can lead to further negative effects on health. A

⁴⁴ cf.(Germani et al. 2011: 28).

⁴⁵ The Land of Fires case refers to the waste mismanagement in an area known as "Terra dei fuochi" (Land of Fires), including 55 *Comuni* (municipalities) within the provinces of Caserta and Naples (Campania region).

higher number of cancers across all ages, including malignant breast, stomach and throat tumors, has been reported as well.

Overall, the ISS study found a higher than average death rate and hospitalization for diverse illnesses and multiple causes⁴⁶.

From a different perspective, Armiero gives its contribution by explicitly dealing with environmental struggles over garbage facilities in Campania, through the lens of the EJ(Armiero & D'Alisa 2012; Armiero 2014a; D'Alisa & Armiero 2013)⁴⁷.

Partly through a focus on the community involved, partly through political and legal pathways, Armiero creates a narrative by examining the legal and discursive imposition of a permanent 'state of emergency' as the main cause of local communities disempowering⁴⁸. In particular, he refers to the fact that "in 1994 the central government declared a regional waste emergency and delegated full power for waste management in Campania to a special authority: Committee for the Waste Emergency (CWE) in Campania (*Commissariato di governo per l'emergenza rifiuti*)(Armiero and D'Alisa 2012: 55)". However, such state of emergency, which was expected to be temporary and limited in time, was retained for about 20 years, until 2009. It follows that,

the framing of the waste crisis in terms of an "emergency," while disempowering local communities, has reinforced the agency of "official experts" and technocratic knowhow— thus diminishing the space for democratic discussion and grassroots participation in the decision-making process(Armiero and D'Alisa 2013: 6; D'Alisa et al. 2010: 239-249).

In addressing the relationship between ecology and democracy, Armiero points out that the resulting suspension of the ordinary rights of citizenship is the logical consequence of the emergency strategy. By establishing such 'emergency regime', the deputy officer running the CWE replaced the 'normal' democratic dialectic, bypassed rules and procedures (including the environmental impact assessment) and depoliticized the issue of unequal distribution of environmental burdens and risk(Armiero and D'Alisa 2012: 59). Notwithstanding the major emphasis on the Land of Fires-case, Armiero also suggests to (re)interpret other cases of environmental struggles within the environ-

⁴⁶See also http://www.iss.it/binary/pres/cont/TERRA_DEI_FUOCHI.pdf

⁴⁷ For a more comprehensive understanding of environmental justice mobilization in the Campania region see also (Petrillo 2009).

⁴⁸ See also (Avallone 2014: 85-86).

mental history of Italy in the frame of Environmental Justice⁴⁹. To this end, he makes use of a conflict-based approach, by particularly emphasizing the 'conflict' as a key word in addressing Italian environmental injustices.

As reported by Armiero,

a garbage dump in a neighbourhood, cancer in a body, the transformation of a forest into a wood quarry: these signs in the ecological landscape exhibit changes in technological/cultural systems; I argue that those signs also need to be interpreted as a manifestation of socio-ecological relations informed by power. I will illustrate that a conflict-based approach enables us to see these relations(Armiero 2008: 60).

As mentioned above, in fact, the centrality of conflict certainly plays an important role in identifying the major strength of environmental justice discourse in Italy.

By looking at the literature, one can observe that the topic of environmental conflicts has been largely developed in place of, or in addition to, environmental injustices. The symposium on "Environmental Justice. The distribution of natural resources among tenacious areas and fragile areas" which took place in Rovigo (13-14 April 2012), indeed, is more likely to confirm this observation, since it combined the term environmental injustices and environmental conflicts.

In 2013, this symposium was followed by the publication of the first issue *Conflitti e ingiustizie ambientali nelle aree fragili* (Environmental conflicts and injustices in fragile areas) in the Journal *Partecipazione e Conflitto* which was inspired by, and partly includes, the lectures held during the conference(Osti & Pellizzoni 2013).

The aim of the publication was to give a voice to "minor environmental conflicts(Osti and Pellizzoni 2013: 6)", by shedding a light on case studies concerning local, neglected communities. In particular, four case studies related to Italy have been examined in the Journal: wind farms in Northern Apennines(Mengozzi 2013); oil extraction in Basilicata region(Bubbico & Nardoza 2013); pollution of the river Po between Milan and Polesine(Carrosio 2013); landfill in Tuscany region(Caspretti 2013). One of the most relevant contributions of both the symposium and the Journal's issue, was made by Pellizzoni(Pellizzoni 2014)⁵⁰. Due to his own interest in the subject, the author has devoted particular attention to the role of environmental justice, science and ethics within the emerging EJ movements in Italy, by comparing them with the protests occurred

⁴⁹He himself provides an interpretation of the Vajont tragedy from the EJ perspective in (Armiero 2011: 174); concerning the Environmental History see also: (Barca 2012a; Barca 2012b).

⁵⁰ See also (Pellizzoni 2011b).

in the 1970s. After showing both similarities (for instance regarding the organizational structure, the single issue approach, the distrust for the institutional policy, and the value of experience) and differences (particularly focusing on counter-expertise and individual engagement), he argues that to properly understand new local mobilizations, one has to consider the changes in the forms of government corresponding to the rise of *governance* and neoliberal governmental rationality. As clarified by Pellizzoni,

environmental justice, conceived as a new perspective and action program, is more likely to comply with the neo-liberal interpretation of a sort of post-political society made up of stakeholders, fragmented into a series of conflicts on specific issues without having an overall vision of structural inequalities or antagonisms. Not surprisingly, the rise of environmental justice paradigm has gone hand in hand with the rise of multi-level governance(Pellizzoni 2014: 24)⁵¹.

In 2014, the entire issue of another Journal (*Prisma Economia Società Lavoro*), entitled *Conflitti Ambientali. Ricerche, Politiche, Comunicazione* (Environmental Conflicts. Research, Policies, Communication), was also dedicated to the topic of environmental conflicts(Rugiero 2014).

The primary aim of the Journal was to critically examine that part of the literature which negatively evaluates environmental conflicts conceived as expression of local self-interest, particularism, and 'NIMBY' syndrome. Unlike this part of the literature, the goal of the Journal is to demonstrate that NIMBY formula has been frequently involved to delegitimize protests and justify trading strategies and symbolic marketing of social mobilisations against unwanted land use(Rugiero 2014; Pellizzoni 2011a).

Among the most significant articles devoted to the topic are to be mentioned case studies concerning waste-related environmental conflicts in Campania(Avallone 2014), and decisional process concerning the construction of the new railway line Turin-Lyon and a new motorway in Genova(Maggiolini & Pomatto 2014).

5. Conclusion

⁵¹ My translation in English of (Pellizzoni 2014: 24): “la giustizia ambientale, come prospettiva e programma d’azione, sembra insomma allinearsi, consapevolmente o meno, alla visione neoliberale di una società post-politica fatta di stakeholder, ossia frammentata in una serie di conflitti su tematiche specifiche ma priva di una visione complessiva in merito alla produzione sistematica di diseguaglianze o alla presenza di antagonismi strutturali. Non a caso la diffusione della giustizia ambientale è andata di pari passo con la propagazione della governance multilivello”.

The state-of-the-art of the literature on EJ in Italy and preliminary clarifications about environmental associations dealing with EJ-related issues have demonstrated that EJ can be still considered a young topic in the Italian debate. Both academics and activists, indeed, largely frame environmental issues by the term environmental conflicts and its positive evaluation. This aspect suggests the centrality of conflict as a major strength of EJ in Italy. By this article, Esposito's interpretation over the *immanentization of antagonism*, conceived as an expression of the specificity of Italian thought, is used to theoretically frame and interpret such emphasis on the conflict as a key feature of participative democracy related to environmental issues in Italy.

Although publications examined above appear rather isolated and EJ is far from being taken up as a new paradigm guiding local or national environmental policies, a significant impulse to move forward the debate on EJ has been given over the last years.

In this regard, 2015 may be well considered a turning point, being marked by three events of great importance: the enactment of Law No. 68/2015, introducing the first provisions dealing with crimes against environment in the Italian Criminal Code; the publication of *Laudato si'* Encyclical of Pope Francis; and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change at COP 21.

By the Law No. 68 of 22 May 2015, a set of new environmental crimes, including ad hoc aggravating circumstances concerning mafia activities, cases of injury or death, and a doubling of limitation period, has been introduced. Those new provisions definitely represent a major success for the main environmental organizations and affected population, that after over 20 years of struggles, finally have a meaningful legal tool for contrasting environmental crimes.

As for Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato si'* presented in Vatican on 18th June 2015, it can be observed that environmental issues faced by the Pope, such as pollution, global warming, depletion of natural resources, waste management, global inequality, let look his encyclical like a sort of religious manifesto of Environmental Justice.

Pope Francis' encyclical, addressed to all people of good will, has definitely contributed to greater environmental awareness and moved the debate on environmental justice forward.

Not surprisingly, a further international meeting on Environmental Justice and Climate Change organized by the Italian Sustainable Development Foundation (Fondazione Sviluppo Sostenibile)⁵² took place at the Augustinian Patristic Institute on 10th September 2015, in Rome.

⁵² Please find more information at <http://www.fondazionevilupposostenibile.org/english/>

On the eve of the COP21 Summit in Paris, International experts and key actors of the international negotiations were invited to share their views on Environmental Justice issues and Climate Change, in response to the Catholic Church's position on environmental challenges expressed through Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato si'*.

The most part of the participants has expressed many expectations from the COP21, claiming long term investments, de-carbonization of the global economy, collaboration between developed and developing countries, urging all nations to sign ambitious targets to reach an agreement where global warming is held below 2 degrees Celsius. As key driving argument, some of them have stressed the high risks that we are taking in terms of food security, poverty and climate refugees increase, floods and desertification of the southern Europe as well. Such risks and expected damages, indeed, are going to disproportionately burden more exposed and vulnerable (and less responsible) developing countries.

In conclusion, as recalled by the majority of the participants, the great influence and leadership of Pope Francis has certainly played a key role to encourage 'good environmental justice-practices', and political actions, but increased political commitment at the EU and international levels must be advanced. In this context, a more comprehensive understanding of social conflicts over access and use of natural resources towards a common political ecology for globalizing Environmental Justice is definitely required.

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AUTHOR'S INFORMATION

Francesca Rosignoli is associate researcher in the Department of Political Sciences at the Sapienza University of Rome