

The garbage crisis , the ecological justice and environmental migrants in Campania (Southern Italy) by Romina Amicolo, PhD in Philosophy of Law

Some events or phenomena relating to the environment that may lead to migration and provide the basis for a typology of environmental transformations include: 1) natural disasters and sudden disasters; 2) gradual environmental degradation and slow-onset disasters; 3) environmental conflicts; 4) environmental destruction as a consequence of or as a weapon in conflicts; 5) environmental conservation; 6) development projects (such as dam construction); 7) industrial accidents (such as Chernobyl). Further sub-categories are based on distinctions such as: 1) human – made or natural change; 2) climate change – induced or all environmental change; 3) temporary or permanent migration; 4) internal or international/cross – border migration.

According to these criteria, the garbage crisis in Campania, a region of the Southern Italy, is an example of environmental transformation, which should be considered a human – made environmental degradation. In Campania, in fact, lack of modern technology for waste storage and treatment, an inefficient bureaucratic apparatus and Camorra, a local Mafia, involvement into the business of waste disposal, created the current ecological disaster. There is growing evidence that the accumulation of waste in Campania has heavily contaminated the natural environment and has determined a sudden drop in the health condition of local inhabitants. According to a recent study of the World Health Organization, such contamination reached dangerous levels and has produced a considerable increase in the number of deaths caused by cancer, respiratory illnesses, and also genetic malformations. Since the mid-1990s the Italian government declared the state of emergency for waste disposal in Campania. The Government has been unable to solve the crisis, while with its lack of intervention it has allowed local organized crime to profit from a very lucrative business.

If the adaptation pathways are: «1) resilience (maintaining the status quo); 2) transition (incremental change) and 3) transformation (radical change) (Pelling, 2011), the local demonstrations and direct actions in various areas of Campania, can be considered a transformation, which wants to realize a «sustainable development»(Adger, 2009). In the last few years, in fact, civil responses have increased and indignation mounted among people from different sectors of the population. Occupations of landfills, petitions to local courts and marches have tried to break the silence and to call for the attention of national and regional governments. In this context it's evident that the environmental transformation adaptation decisions have justice consequences across as well as within generations. «The contemporary garbage struggle reveals that the distribution of power among social groups affects not only their social relations, but also the ecology of the urban/rural environments and, ultimately, of the human bodies inhabiting them.»(Armiero, 2008).

During the demonstration against the Giugliano thermovalorizer on 28th of September 2013, a woman said: "We run away from Naples because we don't want to die of cancer. Before people leave Naples and Campania, because of unemployment; today people leave Naples and Campania because of ecological disaster. They don't want to die". Ecomigrants has been suggested as a concept that reflect that migration frequently has both an economic and ecological element and a clear separation is difficult. The small- scale farmer of Campania, who finally abandons his land due to gradual soil degradation, leaves because there is an increasing lack of opportunities of livelihood. In this aspect he or she is like the so - called economic migrant. Gradual environmental degradation can cause significantly more far – reaching and permanent migration than sudden disasters. The question of choice is linked to the degree of severity. The objective of this research is avoid the risk that in Campania many migrants will be treated as economic migrants instead of environmental migrant because of a liberal-political interpretation of law.

Keywords: ecological disaster, Campania, ecomigrants, ecological justice, adaptation, transformation, garbage struggle.