

Marco Armiero and Massimo De Angelis

Anthropocene: Victims, Narrators, and Revolutionaries

### The Return of Grand Narratives and Their Ghosts

**T**he grand narratives are back. After a long emphasis on multiple and partial stories, global metanarratives are again gaining ground.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, it is not historians but scientists who have created the most powerful historical narrative of the previous decades. This narrative does not speak anymore of structural injustices, economic progress, or inevitable revolutions. In fact, it relies not at all on ideologies but on the brute facts of science—or at least this is how the story goes. The Anthropocene is literally based on geological strata accumulating the traces of humans in the texture of the planet (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000). But the Anthropocene is also a historical tale that goes far beyond the specific issues studied by geologists. Planetary boundaries are not inscribed into the soil; nevertheless, they delimit the contours of the Anthropocene, setting the possibilities for survival of humans on earth (Rockström et al. 2009; Steffen et al. 2015a, 2015b). While the geological strata will tell us whether—or even when—the Anthropocene began, planetary boundaries instead reveal whether—or even when—the Anthropocene will end, crashing

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against the biophysical limits of the planet. As Ben Dibley (2012) has argued, the geologic Anthropocene and planetary boundaries are part of the same global narrative; in both cases scientists have taken the lead in proposing an all-inclusive explanation of the present crisis and even of its possible outcomes.

The Anthropocene is a grand narrative because it proposes universal truths, or laws, and considers universal agents, working rather poorly with the nuisances of the specific, which is, instead, the daily bread of social scientists and humanities scholars. There is no room for differences in the geological strata or in planetary boundaries. The Anthropocene is the age of one planet and all humans as a whole; never has the “We” been more powerful in a historical narrative than now (Chakrabarty 2009).

Critical scholars have argued that such universalism erases hierarchies, power relations, and historical inequalities. Rightly, Jason W. Moore (2014) has proposed calling the new age the Capitalocene, remarking that capitalism, not a biological and indefinite human species, has actually shaped the planet. For example, according to a recent study by Oxfam (2015), the richest 10 percent of people in the world are responsible for 50 percent of lifestyle emissions. Also, it is through capitalist development—measured in gross domestic product growth—that greenhouse gases have accumulated in the atmosphere, fish stocks have been depleted, biodiversity halved, and so on, one horrifying statistic after another. Capital as a social force appropriates nature for its own use, not the anthropos. All the same, the repressive, military, financial, and ideological/marketing apparatuses through which global capitalism orients social forces continue to disregard the many barriers necessary to maintain the earth’s delicate Holocene equilibrium. Meanwhile, other social forces orient themselves to do just the opposite, to heal, to value outside the criteria of capital, to struggle to stay within ecological limits, to create new ways to socially cooperate within those limits, to establish resilient livelihoods providing commons that are also ecologically sustainable.

Thus the question comes naturally, once we rescale the notion of social conflict and put it at the heart of our contemporary moment: If capitalism as a system is the agent of the Anthropocene, what revolutionary subject can overthrow it (Barca 2016)? The mainstream idea seems to suggest that scientists can be the revolutionary subject in the Anthropocene. Since the contradictions of this new era are not as apparent as those of capitalism, one needs special skills or even tools to recognize its challenges. But the recipes of the scientists are turned into energy-efficient new technologies that, used in a regime of capitalist growth, cannot reverse the wheel of the Anthropocene.

Efficiency is, after all, only a ratio (Piercen 2005), the reduction of which does not bring about absolute cuts of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) gases or agents of ocean acidification. Capital's systemic *conatus*<sup>2</sup> of self-preservation is accumulation, which translates into endless striving for economic growth. Thus far, decoupling growth from emissions has been only a dream.

The absence of reflection on revolutionary practices and subjects is the main weakness of the radical critique of the Anthropocene. The risk is to envision the Anthropocene as a space for villains and victims but not for revolutionaries. Several scholars have uncovered the depoliticizing effect of the Anthropocene (see, e.g., Swyngedouw 2011, 2013; Houston 2013); nonetheless, revealing the unequal distribution of responsibilities in the making of the current ecological crisis does not automatically imply a quest for revolutionary alternatives embedded in practices of subjectification, commoning, and sabotage. In this respect, we believe that it is crucial to challenge the (in)visibility and (un)knowability of the Anthropocene beyond geological strata and planetary boundaries. We argue that, as the Capitalocene, the Anthropocene has left its traces in the bodies of people upon which the new epoch has been created. The traces of the Capitalocene are not only in geological strata but also in the biological and genetic strata of human bodies (Alaimo 2010); exploitation, subordination, and inequalities are inscribed into the human body and experienced, visible and knowable, by subalterns without the mediation of—many times actually in opposition to—mainstream scientific knowledge. The Capitalocene also forces the bodily boundaries of the subaltern toward thresholds, the crossing of which will radically change their lives, if not place in question their very survival. Placing the bodily experience of subalterns at the center of our analysis does not question the existence of a global threat for the planet, but instead aims to individuate the revolutionary practices and unearth the alternative processes of knowledge production that not only question the capitalistic system rather than try to fix it but also defend or build alternatives.

To enhance our arguments, we rely on a few empirical cases of contamination and resistance. More specifically, we build on the findings of the global Environmental Justice Organisations, Liabilities and Trade (EJOLT) atlas of environmental conflicts and on our own research on struggles against toxic contamination in Campania, Italy. Looking at the Anthropocene from place-based struggles over contamination illuminates the stratification, or the embodying, of the Anthropocene's violence in the organosphere<sup>3</sup>—what we call the Wastocene—and how this may create revolutionary subjects through the experience of resistance and commoning. Against the abstract “we” of

the Anthropocene and its governmentalization of the self, a revolutionary project encompasses the making of collective identities out of struggles, building on the embodied experience of capitalist violence. We inflect the concept of Capitalocene with our own concept of Wasteocene, which stresses the contaminating nature of capitalism and its perdurance within the socio-biological fabric, its accumulation of externalities inside both the human and the earth's body. We envision the Wasteocene as a feature of the Capitalocene, especially adapted to demystify the mainstream narratives of the Anthropocene. As we illustrate below, while clearly imposing the violence of capitalism on humans and nonhumans, the Wasteocene as the Anthropocene can easily deliver the "we" message, thereby blaming all, fostering technological fixes, and relying on the experts for diagnosis and solutions. However, a revolutionary subject cannot be created simply by naming. While using *Capitalocene* or *Wasteocene* may reveal actual injustices inscribed in the Anthropocene, these terms on their own do not transform victims and affected individuals into revolutionary subjects. As we illustrate through our second example, the constitution of revolutionary subjects occurs in the making and experience of the Wasteocene, in an antagonistic relationship with the forces that create it.

### Resisting the Anthropocene: Evidence from the EJOLT Atlas

In short, neither a species nor a gas but a particular mode of production has affected different realms of ecological systems to a degree of starting a new geological era (Malm and Hornborg 2014). This is correct, only to the extent that we understand *capital* as the class relations of struggle (Cleverly 1979) plus something else, an outside that is constituted in this struggle (De Angelis 2007). In this sense, the *anthropos* in the Anthropocene is actually a misplaced subject. To the extent that we are talking about the Capitalocene, we need to replace the universalistic "we" of the human species—the "We" of the Anthropocene—with a different "we," one that is constituted through two interrelated moments of the same subjectivity, two different modulations. The first is the "we" of the working class that struggles to overcome its own condition as disciplined waged and unwaged workers and also strives to overcome deep divisions in power and access to wealth within the planetary working class broadly defined: essentially, an anti-neoliberal stance. The second is a corresponding "we" made of a multitude of subjects whose practices are outside the value practices of capital, often in the shape of commons systems (Hardt and Negri 2000, 2005; De Angelis 2017). We have thus social movements and commons, struggling subjects and commoners.

The Capitalocene thus is constituted not only by capitalists and disciplined workers but also by other value worlds and practices that create alternatives to it. Take, for example, the superb ecological justice atlas project produced by the EJOLT (2015) team. Here are described only a small fraction of contested sites of environmental struggles in the world, in which, on one side, are the forces of capital and, on the other, is localized opposition to it, often associated with a different way for people to relate to nature and to one another. The variety of cases included in the EJOLT atlas is extraordinary: 436 land acquisition conflicts, 308 cases of mineral ore exploration, 280 struggles over water access rights and entitlements, 208 cases of deforestation, and 141 cases regarding waste facilities, just to mention the largest categories. While illustrating what environmental injustice is, each of these cases in turn makes visible some of the victims/revolutionaries (depending on what moment of the cycle of struggle is selected) and some of the villains.

Take, for example, carbon offsetting, the “strategy” sanctioned by the Kyoto Protocol as a way for governments and private companies to earn carbon credits to be exchanged on dedicated markets as part and parcel of the “financialization of nature” (Bond 2015). This is not the place to review the absurdity of using the logic of market metrics to deal with the greatest of all environmental issues, climate change, or the speculative enrichment of the few in a fluctuating “carbon price,” within a mechanism criticized even by Pope Francis (2015).<sup>4</sup> For our purpose, carbon offsetting implies the clashing between two types of “*anthropos*,” two types of human social and value practices: on the one hand, those who are willing to substitute existing local forests with eucalyptus plantations to gain the right to sell carbon credits on the market to heavy polluters elsewhere in the world and, on the other, the displaced communities that would have taken care of those forests for their own livelihoods. The discourse of the Anthropocene hides this huge cleavage within humanity, this endless struggle between the logic of the reproduction of commoners and the profiting of capitalists. Just as the term *capitalists* corresponds to the subject position of those who control and direct capitalist processes, *commoners* designates social subjects who collectively control, direct, and engage in the reproduction of commons and for which the relation to capital may be often necessary but does not exhaust their social being and activity (see De Angelis 2017).

In Bukaleba, Uganda, for instance, one type of *anthropos*, instituted as the Norwegian company Green Resources, acquired in 1996 a fifty-year license to 9,165 hectares of land from the government in the Bukaleba Central Forest Reserve. Green Resources also has plantations in Tanzania and Mozambique, and it is the largest plantation in Africa outside the Republic of

South Africa. The project in Bukaleba has produced approximately one hundred thousand tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent in offsets. More is expected due to the establishment of a new charcoal plant. The economic value of that project depends on the price of carbon, which is today relatively low, at around €8 a ton in the European market. Let us say that €1 million is the price for the violent displacement of thirteen communities that have lost their rights to use the forest commons, the abuses of remaining community members arrested for trespassing in what is now a no-grazing zone, the environmental degradation of rivers and lakes due to the plantation's use of agrochemicals, and also the damage being done to biodiversity by clearing indigenous trees to make space for nonnative pine and eucalyptus trees. Biodiversity is a key indicator of the Anthropocene, and in this case it is obviously reduced not because the local *anthropos* wanted it to be so. Carbon offsetting operations like these do not necessarily reduce carbon, since they have replaced local species of trees, and there are great doubts that carbon credit mechanisms will result in lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.<sup>5</sup> Clearly, the victims here are also agents; violence used on resisting subjects is always the means to reduce subjects to victims.

The case of the state of Orissa in eastern India reveals the same kind of clash of interests and values. Here the Indian company J R Power Gen Private Limited signed a memorandum of understanding with the Orissa government to develop a power plant at Kishore Nagar and build a 1,980 megawatt thermal plant. In 2009 the state government issued notes for the acquisition of the land, highly fertile ground for rice paddies and other crops. Clearly, clashing value practices are evident in this case, with the company wanting to profit and the locals wanting to reproduce their livelihoods and protect the local environment (a means for their own livelihood reproduction). A movement of local farmers and communities has developed, occupying railroads and stopping trains, demanding that the project be scrapped and that the government instead keep its promises for a local irrigation project (Samal 2012).

In the network of conflicts represented in the EJOLT atlas, one finds in each of them not “humans” but *anthropos* socially constituted along opposing positionalities and giving rise to different social forces pursuing conflicting goals, moved by clashing values. Clearly, there are always ambiguities in struggles; activists can be co-opted, commoners can receive compensation and leave (paying later the price for squalid forms of urbanizations that never matched what was promised), but the point remains: *to the extent that the Anthropocene is the Capitalocene, the anthropos is constituted through struggle.*

It goes without saying that there are counterexamples; in many instances alternative ways of doing and valuing are co-opted within capital's initiatives. One example is the development of Aboriginal-controlled carbon markets in Australia. In other cases, the livelihoods of the poor are pitted against conservation agendas, such that what used to be a common forest is now a state- or private-managed site, with corresponding prohibitions on local (often) indigenous groups grazing, hunting, fishing, and gathering food, wood, and fodder, thus leaving them destitute. These and many other cases would seem to show that we should abandon old political categories assuming binary contestants. The world is more complex; there are multitudes after all, not masses of revolutionary subjects. And, we would add, fortunately so, because complexity, and its varieties of measure, is the stuff of commons and their resilience, if mechanisms of self-regulation of this complexity are to be found. Sometimes capital co-opts the specific variety of particular commons. For example, the Fish River carbon credit is one of the projects in Australia to valorize Aboriginals and their knowledge of low carbon bush burning, in view of producing carbon credits that are then sold and reinvested in indigenous jobs and maintenance of the land. The Fish River Fire Project (2015) has managed to reduce the area burned in the late dry season from about 36 percent in the period between 2000 and 2009 to approximately 1 percent in 2012. Greenhouse gases are reduced, indigenous knowledge is put to work, and good jobs are created for indigenous people.

Carbon credits and cap-and-trade mechanisms are anathema to many environmentalist movements, not only because they are rife with corruption, but also because they cannot achieve the needed drastic reduction of greenhouse emissions. On average, we think this is true. But it is also clear that if a way for the commons exists to tap into this clearly capitalist mechanism, the alternative being destitution, then so be it: people need to eat, hence interaction between the commons and the capitalist system is necessary until local commons find alternative ways to integrate among themselves. Thus, in a complex world, there exist both value binaries and accommodation, that is, a temporary suspension of those binaries in order for each system to use the complexity of the other, or, in Niklas Luhmann's (1995) terms, *structural coupling*. In the Australian case, an absolutely ineffective global system for reducing greenhouse cases—the carbon market—uses the complexity of Aboriginal knowledge to gain legitimacy and expand into new, more “corporate responsible” areas. Nonetheless, indigenous knowledge is preserved and used, indigenous people and their communities access income, and—in this case—carbon is potentially sequestered, since every

year bush fires are controlled through indigenous techniques that have proved successful for this task. Binaries can exist within complex systems, as long as we understand that complexity is also made of structural coupling among otherwise opposed systems and temporary accommodations, or *deals*. But the fate of the deal, its own resilience, depends in this case on the destiny of a mechanism being heavily contested, in which what is clearly at stake is a binary that is in tension, and also on the site of struggle. But we should ask ourselves the question: What will become of these examples of good practices if the sham of carbon markets were to collapse under the weight of its own ineffectiveness?

### Out of the Wasteocene

While the EJOLT atlas is a crucial tool to visualize the spatial dimensions of the Anthropocene, to project it almost literally onto the land, one might ask what the Anthropocene would look like if we were to focus our attention on the body. Strata of toxins have sedimented into the human body, to the point of being inscribed into the genetic memory of humans, according to the most recent studies in epigenetics (Guthman and Mansfield 2013). Exploring the Anthropocene through the human body might offer more insights about social inequalities than the geological obsession with the precise starting point of the new era can. It also may allow us to better understand how revolutionary subjects are *produced*, something a case study is better set up to do. As we demonstrate, the embodiment of inequalities in the human body produces not only victims but also rebellious subjects who do not comply with the neoliberal narrative of the Anthropocene.

Nobody speaks of the Anthropocene in the “Land of Fires,” the area in the Neapolitan hinterland where illegal dumping of toxic waste is affecting the lives of thousands of people.<sup>6</sup> Evidently, people living and dying there use other words and have other worries. It is not that they are unaware victims; rather, decades of mobilization have created expert communities (D’Alisa et al. 2010) well informed on the complex matter of body/environment relationships (Armiero 2014). It was thanks to the work of grassroots activists that the attention of public opinion and the authorities shifted from the trash in the Neapolitan streets to the invisible threat of toxic waste, affecting mainly the subaltern communities living at the fringe of the metropolis (D’Alisa and Armiero 2013).

Looking at what has been called the Anthropocene from the Land of Fires or other underclass neighborhoods overlooking more or less legal



dumps might be an interesting experiment. From several points of view, waste can be considered the essence of the Anthropocene; both symbolically and materially, it embodies humans' ability to affect the environment to the point of transforming it into a gigantic dump. Archeologists know very well that a dumpsite is the mirror of a society; cultures—and their relationships with the environment—are inscribed into the strata of garbage (Rathje and Murphy 2001). Precisely as in the Anthropocene discourse, as also with waste, history is mixed with the earth in a material sense, becoming legible through the stratification upon which our world is built. Waste also represents the ironic conundrum of humans' relationships with the environment: the wealthier the society becomes, the more waste it produces, jeopardizing its very existence. That garbage is a luxury for rich societies has been said many times. This does not mean that the poor do not have waste; rather, it says something about who produces garbage and who gets it. Isn't this the perfect metaphor for the Anthropocene? The metaphor becomes even more effective because waste is the typical trope of an Anthropocene kind of environmentalist discourse. While complaining about waste, everybody concurs in its production, and thereby any protest over waste becomes questionable. With waste, as with the Anthropocene, it is a matter not of antagonist politics but of self-reflexivity or expertise. In short, what is needed is the governmentalization of both the self and society. "Do you recycle?" The neoliberal project brings back everything to the individual, who is asked to face the consequences of his or her actions and make the changes needed, following the instructions of the experts. We argue that both the Anthropocene discourse and the waste discourse conflate the individual and the society at large—or, using the Anthropocene vocabulary, the species. If people live in this mess—either the local wasteland of the Land of Fires or the global dump of climate change—they should only blame themselves as members of the universal human species or, in the optimistic version, act as a member of the same universal human species to improve the situation.

In the case of the Land of Fires, and more broadly of the Neapolitan waste crisis, the governmentalization project has been effective, imposing a sense of guilt and shame on the affected people. Employing the evergreen rhetoric of southern Italians as uncivilized subjects, the mainstream public discourse has blamed local people for their alleged unwillingness to recycle, their complicity with illegal disposal of toxics, and, in general, their style of life. The uncivilized Neapolitans smoke, drink, and eat too much, while, obviously, they do not exercise at all. Indeed, the Land of Fires is the perfect Anthropocene laboratory; capitalism infiltrates every living and nonliving

thing, imposing its logic over socioecological relationships. Making profit out of contamination—what Federico Demaria and Giacomo D’Alisa (2013) have called accumulation through contamination—capitalism enters into the body of subaltern people in two ways: on the one hand, it occupies cells with cancer and other diseases related to its organization of labor and space; on the other hand, it imposes an ideology of the cure of the self that is based on individual choices, establishing what a healthy lifestyle should be. Precisely as in the optimistic Anthropocene, in this Wasteocene story humans can make the “right” choices and solve the problems they have created if only they listen to the experts and follow their advice; no mention is made of structural injustices or power asymmetries.

In the Wasteocene as in the Anthropocene, instead of speaking of capitalism and injustice, the mainstream narrative focuses on consumerism—“everybody is responsible”—and technology—“experts can fix this.” But revolutionary subjects rise neither from guilt nor from a blind trust in the experts. Victimization leads not to a collective sense of agency but more likely to an appeal for justice to some superior authorities. In the waste crisis of Campania all these different feelings and paths have been mobilized. People have felt ashamed to be identified with garbage; they have been victimized, crying for help from the authorities or experts. Nonetheless, that experience has also created resisting communities, recalcitrant to the governmentalizing project.

In an interview, M. (2012), a middle-aged woman who has participated in the struggles against a landfill in her community, stated clearly what was at stake in that mobilization. When we asked her how she became interested in waste, she testily replied: “I am interested not in waste but in commons.” Later she explained that opposing the construction of a waste facility was only part of a wider struggle to defend the commons; among those commons she also included public health. For M., fighting against a poorly planned landfill and the cutting of public funds to the health system were two sides of the same battle. Strange as it may seem, the mobilization over waste in Campania has been accompanied by a wider experimentation of commoning; not by chance, a coalition of grassroots groups has chosen as its name *Rete Commons* (Commons Network). The staple mobilization practice has been the *presidio*, that is, the permanent public assembly of all citizens who wish to be involved in the decisions regarding their communities (Armiero and Sgueglia 2016). During the years of mobilization—more or less from 2004 to 2009—the *presidio* was both a practice and a place; it generally started as an extemporary picket in the street to block some construc-

tion project and it evolved toward a more permanent setting. In this sense it embodies a commoning practice, claiming a space and filling it with a new institution, the permanent assembly. In several cases, the presidios became the alter egos of the official sites where decisions have to be made, mainly the municipal councils. In the memories of activists, the presidio was not only a space where the protest was organized; it was also a social space, where a new community was shaped.<sup>7</sup> In underclass neighborhoods squeezed between cheap housing and shopping malls, the presidio was much more than a picket against a landfill. It was literally the experimentation of new collective practices that aimed to stop not only the next waste dump but also the reproduction of the social dump made of isolation, the commodification of free time, and the annihilation of public spaces. In most of the cases, the presidios had rather short lives, like temporary autonomous zones (Bey 1991), even if the research is still to be done on what they have left in the communities and among the people (De Rosa and Caggiano 2015). We argue that the current vitality of the political landscape in Naples is largely connected to that season of commoning. As examples, we should mention here the flourishing of several *centri sociali* (social centers) at the forefront in the struggles to reclaim urban spaces; some of them, such as Insurgencia, are strongly connected to the waste struggles;<sup>8</sup> the experience of Critical Mass, in the construction of a common platform among all kinds of grassroots groups toward the 2016 municipal election; and the city's current government, probably the most leftist among the local administrations in the entire country, and its support of these commoning experiences. On March 9, 2015, the Neapolitan municipal government formalized the existence of what legal scholar and activist Nicola Capone (2015) has defined as an urban common use, granting the right to manage squatter buildings "for the advantage of the local community," following a logic that goes beyond private as well as public property. However, we believe that the most relevant legacy of the presidios is the present practice of citizens' assemblies: during 2016, in almost every district of Naples, citizens have gathered periodically in public assemblies to decide about the future of their communities. Under the slogan "The city decides" and with an explicit Zapatista platform (Insurgencia 2016), a radical leftist coalition has won the 2016 municipal election, forcing the mainstream opinion makers and politicians to talk of a "Neapolitan anomaly."

Although deeply Neapolitan, those grassroots groups have been global in their ambitions, building a wide network of political connections. Since 2014, activists from Insurgencia have traveled to the Syrian city of Kobane, establishing an organic cooperation with Kurdish militants. The revolution

in Rojava (Northern Syria) has become a source of inspiration for the Neapolitan activists thanks to its blend of autonomy, social ecology, and socialism. Other groups have built a significant relationship with the municipal experience of Barcelona, prefiguring a coalition of what they define as the European rebel cities.

In the Wasteocene as in the Anthropocene, the revolutionary subject is not a preconstituted entity, ready to be mobilized when needed. Not even geographical marginality, or being marginal to a national or regional metropolis, is enough to determine the revolutionary subject. Nor is some archetypical local community the depository of the new revolution. As we have illustrated, in the case of the Campania waste struggles it is an embodied experience that has generated a resisting community. Basically, the community does not preexist the mobilization but is produced through commoning, that is, through shared practices and shared narratives.

Our interpretation goes against the naturalization/celebration of community. The arrival of an exploitative corporation does not necessarily produce revolutionary subjects. In the case of Naples, the presence of a diffuse radical counterculture—the *centri sociali*—and the mobilization of a cohort of radical scholars have met with the bodily experience of injustice. In the places where there was nothing to mobilize, the evolution of the waste struggles toward the creation of commons and commoning institutions did not materialize. However, we are not envisioning the usual hegemonic and vanguard relationship between the masses and some sort of organized Marxist groups (*centri sociali* instead of the “glorious party”). In the hodgepodge of the waste crisis, radical activists, citizens, and militant scholars have developed a new vocabulary, creative practices, and hybrid identities, reinventing themselves rather than only guiding the masses.

Whereas the Anthropocene narrative ignores capitalism, choosing instead to speak of human species, in the Wasteocene, speaking of capitalism does not hide its effects on bodies; on the contrary, it is the very place where resisting subjects are made. The traces of the Wasteocene are accumulated into the bodies of subaltern subjects, but they are not only clues, inert strata proving that some global process has affected that inner environment. Acting on and through the body, those traces create both sick people and resisting subjects. The experience of the capitalistic making of the body uncovers the power inequalities inscribed into the Wasteocene; in many cases it can create identities from a shared experience of subalternity and cries for justice (Iengo and Armeiero 2017). The case of Campania reveals also that a revolutionary agenda cannot be delegated to the authority of some impartial scientific knowledge; in fact, the causal connections between toxic

waste and toxic bodies are still controversial in the scientific debate—even if nowadays it is recognized more widely than a decade ago, when activists started to make those claims (Armiero 2014; Cantoni 2016). We neither aim to undermine the need for more scientific research nor support some obscurantist campaign against science. Our point is that science is a battlefield rather than a blueprint ready to be applied to save the day. In the 1970s, Italian urban planner Virginio Bettini (1976) wrote about the opposition between an ecology of power and a class ecology. He was writing in the aftermath of the Seveso disaster (an industrial “accident” near Milan) when, once more in recent Italian history, it became manifest that science was not the land where power disappeared. It is only through struggle that the science of capital can serve the revolutionary needs of subalterns.

## Conclusion

Naomi Klein (2014) in her book *This Changes Everything* describes the emergence of what she defines as global Blockadia. Everywhere people are getting organized to resist the expansion of capital in their bodies and communities. At the checkpoints of this global Blockadia, the Anthropocene ceases to be an abstract category and becomes an embodied and socially determined reality; in other words, it stops being the Anthropocene and appears for what it really is: the Capitalocene, many times under the guise of what we have defined here as the Wasteocene. What Blockadia does is to clearly undermine the universalism of the Anthropocene narrative, breaking it up through the fault lines of class, race, and gender. Blockades divide the social field: one cannot be on both sides of a checkpoint at the same time. In disrupting the universalism of the Anthropocene, global Blockadia has also another function, that is, making visible what is hidden in the Anthropocene. According to Henrik Ernstson and Erik Swyngedouw (2015), violence stays invisible in the Anthropocene. As in the Greek classical theater, in the Anthropocene violence cannot be represented on-scene; it is obscene, evoked but invisible to the public. The Anthropocene projects violence into the future, the coming apocalypse, or into the past, the debate on the original sin producing it, but stays largely blind on the ongoing violence (Barca 2014). As the Invisible Committee (2009: 73–74) has stated: “You have to admit: this whole ‘catastrophe,’ which they so noisily inform us about, it doesn’t really touch us. At least not until we are hit by one of its foreseeable consequences. It may concern us, but it doesn’t touch us. And that is the real catastrophe.”

In this sense, revolution in, against, and beyond the Anthropocene is a struggle not only for visibility on the part of invisible subjects (Holloway

2002: 97) but also for visibility of the processes of exploitation and violence producing the Anthropocene.<sup>9</sup> That revolution also raises the urgency to constitute something new through commoning, which implies building connections among existing and new commons, blending protest, and making new circuits of resilient and sustainable production in commons (P. M. 2014).

In this article we have employed a few cases of local resistance against environmental injustice in order to demystify the mainstream narrative of the Anthropocene. In uncovering the violence inherent to the Anthropocene and its fictitious universalistic ethos, we propose a twofold denaturalization. On the one hand, we rebut the “naturalization” of a way of production and its ecological outcomes; it is capitalism and not the human species that is the force behind the current socioecological crisis. On the other hand, while the Anthropocene/Capitalocene narrative aims to organize people through time and space, subtracting from this organization is the basic form of disobedience that makes it possible to build alternatives to it. As Jacques Rancière (2004: 36) has written: “Any subjectification is a disidentification, removal from the naturalness of a place, the opening up of a subject space where anyone can be counted since it is the space where those of no account are counted, where a connection is made between having a part and having no part.”

While one can say that in the cases we have presented there is always a deep connection to the places—something along the lines of Raymond Williams’s and David Harvey’s (1995) militant particularism or what Thomas Nail (2012) has called neoterritorialization—nonetheless, in its progressive versions it actually implies “relocating” the specific places into wider global frames of exploitation and resistance. It is not by chance that the communities living in what we have defined as the Wasteocene of the Neapolitan region have built a connection with the Kurds’s struggles that has led to the granting of Neapolitan honorary citizenship to the Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan by the leftist municipal government.

The opposition to the universalistic Anthropocene is not the return of the local but the making of new commons and common identities through commoning.

## Notes

- 1 It is not by chance that a few years ago Cambridge University Press released *The History Manifesto* (Guldi and Armitage 2014), an ambitious project, as the title unequivocally reveals, which aims to return history to a global explanation of human society.
- 2 The term is used by Spinoza with reference to the tendency, or endeavor, of self-preservation. See Damasio 2003: 79.

- 3 We use the term *organosphere* to refer to the inner socio-natural system of the human and more-than-human body. We are in debt to Robert Emmett for suggesting this word to us.
- 4 In his “Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si*,” Pope Francis (2015: 126) states: “The strategy of buying and selling ‘carbon credits’ can lead to a new form of speculation which would not help reduce the emission of polluting gases worldwide. This system seems to provide a quick and easy solution under the guise of a certain commitment to the environment, but in no way does it allow for the radical change which present circumstances require. Rather, it may simply become a ploy which permits maintaining the excessive consumption of some countries and sectors.”
- 5 For a review of the Bukaleba case, see also Lyons, Richards, and Westoby 2014.
- 6 The Land of Fires comprises an area between the provinces of Naples and Caserta marked by a continuous presence of toxic fires, generally ignited on purpose to cover the disposal of hazardous waste. This designation, coined by local activists, has been picked up by all major Italian newspapers in their reports on waste crisis in the Campania region.
- 7 Film festivals, activities for children, exhibitions, conferences, concerts, training courses, and social dinners were some of the events held at the presidio (from our informants and field notes).
- 8 The *centri sociali* are old, abandoned buildings occupied by young activists and transformed into centers for political, cultural, and recreational activities. On this experience, see Mudu 2004.
- 9 Precisely for capitalism as also for the Anthropocene, we need to recognize with David Harvey (2014: 5) the possibility that “we are often encountering symptoms rather than underlying causes and that we need to unmask what is truly happening underneath a welter of often mystifying surface appearances.”

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