

Waste Sustainability, Environmental Management and Mafia: Analysing Geographical and Economic Dimensions

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Abstract

Waste management/disposal performances and a desirable delinking between income and waste trends are influenced by socio economic, institutional and policy factors. In highly regionalised settings many idiosyncratic factors of local interest influence waste management and disposal. The role of crime activities that exploit illegal/non market rents and their geographical spillovers are key issues that have yet to be explored. Through an impact on policy enforcement costs, crime activities in a defined area and their geographical spillovers may negatively affect legal forms of waste management and disposal. Given its high regional heterogeneity and known plague of Mafia in areas affected by recent 'waste crisis', Italy is a compelling case study for the analysis. In full consistence to a theoretical model that analyzes how legal disposal (landfill), illegal disposal and recyclable waste levels are influenced by waste tariff and crime, a 1999-2008 panel econometric analysis on Italian provinces shows that separated collection and legal forms of waste disposal are lower when crime is present. Crime activities erode and slow down the enhancement of waste management and disposal brought about by socio economic, structural factors and by the introduction of newly crafted economic minded tariffs. Estimates also show that for separated collection the negative effect of crime comes even from outside the province, thus highlighting significant spatial phenomena.

Keywords: waste tariffs, crime, mafia, waste management and disposal, enforcement costs, recycling

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