

## **“IT IS AS IF THEY WERE KILLING THE LAND”: COMMUNITY RESISTANCE IN DOÑA JUANA AND THEIR STRUGGLE AGAINST ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE**

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### **Abstract**

This text is a critical essay that presents a constant comparison between the postulates of an academic theory (environmental justice) and a real-life case of a community in Bogotá facing the struggles of living next to the city's only waste disposal landfill (*Doña Juana*). The objective of the text is to demonstrate that environmental justice theory is not comprised solely of abstract concepts, but that its ideas can be clearly proven in a daily and situated case, such as the one of the low-income agricultural communities living next to the landfill in Bogotá. To develop the argument, an extensive literature review, both in environmental justice theory and the *Doña Juana* tragedy, was conducted. The conclusions include that the *Doña Juana* situation is definitely an environmental injustice case, as the inhabitants close to the landfill have had to suffer disproportionate environmental damages due to their belonging to certain social categories.

**Keywords:** environmental justice; Doña Juana Landfill; community resistance; environmental injustice; political ecology

Under a capitalist system, bodies are differentiated according to their value. The dynamics of that system make access to basic goods depend on purchasing power, ethnicity, gender, or the form of production of individuals. This is evident in different aspects of social life, but one in particular that will be dealt with in this text is the environment. Environmental damages, thought by conservative and

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ultraliberal ecologists as “universally shared by virtue of the global effects generated by the failure to conserve natural resources”<sup>1</sup> are actually disproportionately distributed depending on the degree of vulnerability of certain social groups. It is in this discussion that the case of the *Doña Juana* Landfill (RSDJ) in Bogotá, Colombia, is introduced. The landfill, located on the southwestern side of the city, is the place where nearly 100% of the conventional waste generated by the entire Capital District and seven surrounding municipalities arrive. Due to this, it has been the scene of several environmental tragedies that translate into physical damage for the vulnerable communities that surround it, which, over the years, have organized together to confront the landfill that is destroying their crops. Therefore, this text wishes to demonstrate that the location of the *Doña Juana* Landfill is a case of environmental injustice and a crime against life and land, so much so that it has awakened forms of community resistance against a modern, capitalist, and industrial state.

The methodology used is qualitative, and both primary and secondary sources were consulted. For the secondary sources, a literature review was conducted. The review included chapters of books, journal articles, and theses that portrayed the main ideas of environmental justice theory. Authors such as Rob White, Diane Sicotte, and Robert Bullard, all of whom are highly relevant to the environmental justice theory, were included in the literature review. Additionally, authors such as Professor Molano and María Estrada, who have made a historical reconstruction of the trajectory of the landfill, were included too. For the primary sources, the *Doña Juana newspaper*, written by the inhabitants of the area, was consulted, along with magazines and interviews with people living close to the landfill. Subsequently, the texts were analyzed using speech analysis and hermeneutics methods.

The text will be divided as follows: first, there will be an explanation of what is Environmental Justice, then there will be a contextualization of the case of *Doña Juana*. After, it will be argued why it is considered a case of environmental injustice and a crime against life, to end with the forms of resistance and organization that are taking place in the communities neighboring the landfill.

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<sup>1</sup> Guimarães, Virginia; Oliveira, Thula: *Injusticia ambiental, racismo ambiental y el marco para la estratificación socio-racial en zonas de sacrificio: el caso del barrio de Santa Cruz en Rio de Janeiro*, n.d, [https://law.yale.edu/sites/default/files/area/center/kamel/sela16\\_pires\\_cv\\_sp.pdf](https://law.yale.edu/sites/default/files/area/center/kamel/sela16_pires_cv_sp.pdf) (10.06.2020).

## 1. What is Environmental Justice?

Environmental justice, defined as:

The mechanism which critically addresses how unequal societies, from an economic or social point of view, allocate most of the environmental damages –derived from development– to low-income groups, social groups that suffer discrimination, traditional ethnic communities, working class neighborhoods, marginalized and vulnerable populations.<sup>2</sup>

is a movement that emerged in 1980 as a result of the activism of African American communities in the United States. Nowadays, it is used to describe a global network of social movements critical of the disparities that were caused by the expansion of a neocolonial logic related to modern industrial development.<sup>3</sup>

The environmental justice movement challenged the thesis that environmental risks and damages are suffered equally by all human beings regardless of social class, race, or gender, so that we are all affected by environmental degradation.<sup>4</sup> On the contrary, it showed that the universality of harm is not verified in practice, and, for example, a series of studies reported a certain pattern: incinerators and polluting industries are located in minority and low-income neighborhoods.<sup>5</sup> Robert Bullard, one of the founders of this movement, called attention to how the social costs produced by unequal development in the capitalist system have disproportionately affected different social groups. Therefore, it can be said that all people and communities are not created equal.<sup>6</sup>

The environmental justice movement emerged as a new approach that challenged the environmental movement in the United States, which had focused on wildlife preservation and population control. This early environmental movement was composed primarily of the upper and middle classes, with high levels of education and great access to economic resources. Even though a wide variety of documentation showed that African Americans, low-income groups, and the working class were subject to a disproportionate amount of pollution and other

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> White, Rob: “Environmental Justice and Harm to Humans”, in *Environmental Harm: An Eco-Justice Perspective*, Bristol University Press, United Kingdom 2013, pp. 43–74.

<sup>4</sup> Guimarães; Oliveira: *Injusticia ambiental, ...*, art. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Higgins, Robert: “Race & Environmental Equity: An Overview of the Environmental Justice Issue in the Policy Process”, in *Polity*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (1993), The University of Chicago Press, pp. 281–300.

<sup>6</sup> Bullard, Robert: “Environmental Justice in the 21st Century: Race Still Matters”, in *Phylon (1960–)*, Vol. 49, No. 3/4, (2001), Clark Atlanta University, pp. 72–94.

environmental damage in their neighborhoods and workplaces, these groups had been marginalized from the national environmental movement.<sup>7</sup> That classical environmentalism has an emphasis on preservation and outdoor recreation; it is what Alier has called *the cult of wilderness*.<sup>8</sup> There, it is intended to make a separation between the natural and the human presence, and the environment is understood as a luxury – not as a daily necessity. There is another type of environmentalism apart from the environmental justice, Alier calls it *the gospel of eco-efficiency*.<sup>9</sup> It involves regulations and sustainable development, it considers that the increase in income leads in the first place to an increase in pollution, but, in the end, it leads to its reduction (however, who are those affected by that first increase?). *Eco-justice* or *environmentalism of the poor* is the name given by Alier to the environmental justice movement but focused on the Global South, which consists of a critical third world response to previous environmentalisms and draws attention to the geographical displacement of waste sinks.

As a result, in recent years it has been mentioned that environmental justice does not only encompass African Americans and other ethnic communities, but also the impoverished and marginalized communities. In this text, I also want to add another category almost not addressed by the theorists of this movement: peasants, who play a major role in the case of *Doña Juana*.

## 2. The case of *Doña Juana* Landfill

Considering the definitions presented above, I will now provide a description of the case to be discussed. The *Doña Juana* Landfill occupies 596 hectares in the south of Bogotá (the city has been constructed in such way that, in general, the south – as opposed to the north – holds high levels of poverty), located between the localities of *Ciudad Bolívar*, *Usme* and *Tunjuelito*. It is also located in a rural area of the city: in the vicinity of the *Mochuelo Alto* and *Mochuelo Bajo* hamlet, and in the *Tunjuelo* river basin – which is the largest watershed in Bogotá, making it an essential element within the ecological structure of the city.<sup>10</sup> It was inaugurated on November 1, 1988, when the waste of all citizens began to arrive at this

<sup>7</sup> Bullard: “Excerpts from ‘Environmentalism and Social Justice’”, in *Environment and Society: A Reader*, NYU Press, 2017, pp. 87–96.

<sup>8</sup> Alier, Joan: *El ecologismo de los pobres: conflictos ambientales y lenguajes de valoración*, Icaria, Barcelona 2009.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Molano, Frank: “El Relleno Sanitario Doña Juana En Bogotá: La producción política de un paisaje tóxico, 1988–2019”, in *Historia Crítica*, Vol. 1, No. 74 (2019), Universidad de los Andes, pp. 127–49.

point. Landfills like this one followed a transnational historical process, emerged in the 1930s as one of the options for waste disposal, along with the discourse of environmentally sustainable cities, “today questioned by the polluting effects and socio-environmental damage they have generated”.<sup>11</sup>

Before this, since 1922, the first garbage dump in Bogotá was also located in a southern neighborhood: *El Quiroga*. There, waste was burned with oil. Later, in 1980, there were two garbage dumps, also located in low-income neighborhoods: *el Cortijo* and *Gibraltar*.<sup>12</sup> In 1984, a study contracted by the *Corporación Autónoma Regional de Cundinamarca* (CAR) chose the new location, and it was planned that the landfill would operate until 2000 (today, 24 years later, it is still active). When the *Doña Juana* Landfill began to be adapted, complaints from neighbors about poor management began. Since 2000, two foreign and private operators have managed it. However, there was a controversy on September 2009 when it was being decided who would be the new operator, as a journalist from *El Espectador* witnessed a conversation, in a restaurant in the north of Bogotá, in which they were planning how to put *Proactiva* out of business.<sup>13</sup> Apart from the private interests that are evidently hidden in what they call the *garbage business*, this is also an example of how decisions about what happens in the south are made from the comfort of the north.

In the early morning of September 27, 1997, there was an explosion of accumulated gases resulting from the poor management of waste from the landfill, this explosion exposed more than one million tons of solid waste that quickly spread over an area of fifteen hectares, damming the *Tunjuelo* riverbed. “It is one of the greatest environmental tragedies that Bogotá has experienced.”<sup>14</sup> This environmental catastrophe affected about 61,000 inhabitants of the localities of *Ciudad Bolívar*, *Usme*, *Rafael Uribe*, *Kennedy*, *Tunjuelito* and *San Cristobal*; 902 neighborhoods of those localities, all located south of the city. In the days following the tragedy and due to the environmental conditions present in the areas surrounding the landfill, the population could not make effective and calm use of the outdoor space, since, as there were multiple contaminating factors, health risks might originate.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, the waste dammed and infected the waters of the *Tunjuelo* River, and,

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>12</sup> Estrada, María; Marín, Mayda: “Seguimiento a la aplicación de los estándares de reparación integral en la acción de grupo del relleno sanitario Doña Juana”, in *Ratio Juris*, Vol. 14, No. 29 (2019), Universidad Autónoma Latinoamericana, pp. 109–128.

<sup>13</sup> Molano: “El Relleno Sanitario Doña Juana En Bogotá...”, *art. cit.*, p. 130.

<sup>14</sup> Garnica, Juan; Pérez, César: *Doña Juana Un Vecino Incómodo*, 2017, <https://repository.urosario.edu.co/sitios/14212> (25.05.2020).

<sup>15</sup> Estrada; Marín: “Seguimiento a la aplicación de los estándares...”, *art. cit.*, pp. 109–128.

at that time, nauseating gases spread through the air in the south of the city. In the following weeks, citizens suffered from respiratory infections, vomiting, diarrhea, and allergies. Several studies conclude that this was a catastrophe foretold, known in advance by the district, which had no plans to protect the population around the landfill.<sup>16</sup>

The inhabitants of the area filed a lawsuit, the process of which lasted more than a decade and culminated in a condemnation of the district and its obligation to pay a certain amount of money to about 1,300 people (out of a total of 60,000 affected). The amount of money has decreased over the years and, even so, until 2019, not even half of the affected people had been paid.<sup>17</sup> They have had to go through long processes, queues, and spend on transportation, but more than 20 years later they still had not received their compensation. On the contrary, with the passing of the years, the mayors continue to expand the landfill. All this increased the nonconformism and social mobilization of the inhabitants near the landfill and, as Professor Molano states, “the landfill, thought as a technical solution to the problem of urban garbage, ended up aggravating the conditions of social and environmental inequality of the poor periphery of Bogotá”.<sup>18</sup>

### 3. Environmental injustice and crime against life

The third part will be to justify why what happened in the *Doña Juana* Landfill undoubtedly constitutes a case of environmental injustice. A feature of cost-benefit processes is that they compare the costs of locating certain potentially risky elements in poor or minority neighborhoods with the potential benefits. These costs include the idea that certain lands that are worth less are less likely to be resisted.<sup>19</sup> Thus, because those communities have neither political nor economic capital, they cannot resist the environmental damage being imposed on them. This has been called, from the environmental justice movement, *the path of least resistance*: in which certain communities are chosen to put unwanted elements because they do not have social capital, political power, or legal studies/knowledge to fight against it.<sup>20</sup> This is the case of the peasants or people of scarce resources who have *Doña*

<sup>16</sup> Molano: “El Relleno Sanitario Doña Juana En Bogotá...”, *art. cit.*, pp. 127–49.

<sup>17</sup> Estrada; Marín: “Seguimiento a la aplicación de los estándares...”, *art. cit.*, pp. 109–128.

<sup>18</sup> Molano: “El Relleno Sanitario Doña Juana En Bogotá...”, *art. cit.*, p. 127.

<sup>19</sup> Higgins: “Race & Environmental Equity...”, *art. cit.*, pp. 281–300.

<sup>20</sup> Sicotte, Diane: *From Workshop to Waste Magnet: Environmental Inequality in the Philadelphia Region*, Rutgers University Press, Nature, Society and Culture, New Jersey 2016.

Juana as their neighbor, who fought when the district gave the approval to build the landfill there without consulting them. The decision to locate the landfill there also obeyed certain interests and the cost-benefit model. In September 1984, it was proposed that Bogotá should have four landfills: *El Codito*, in the north; *Protecho*, in the west; *Alicachín*, in the southwest; and *Tunjuelito*, in the southeast. There was no technical reason why in 1984 *El Codito* was excluded and, therefore, it was assumed that it was related to the idea that the garbage could inconvenience the upper classes, since in the locality where it is located (*Usaquén*) there were neighborhoods occupied by high-income people, while the lower classes would not have major inconveniences with its proximity.<sup>21</sup> This was confirmed a few months later when it was said that the main reason to desist from that initiative was the fear of the district administration that the upper classes would oppose having a landfill near their residences. Finally, it was decided that the landfill would be located in *Doña Juana* due to its socio-spatial advantage, as it was close to marginalized neighborhoods in the south of the city, which was an additional advantageous factor.<sup>22</sup>

To further elaborate on the above, one can think about the differences made by the capitalist and industrial system in cities: depending on land profits, some areas deserve improvements, while others are seen as repositories of waste.<sup>23</sup> People placed in this second type fit into the category of *socially replaceable victims*, meaning that no one cares what happens to these individuals as they are already seen as devalued by the community at large. If the victims are perceived as degraded in some sense, it does not seem unfair if something bad happens to them.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, the moment a universal and environmental problem is perceived as a socially significant issue, the solution is to make it a particular problem for specific groups. This has been called, from the environmental justice theory, the *Not-in-my-backyard phenomenon*, which refers to how the inevitable effects of a capitalist and industrial society must end up in someone's *backyard*, "but whose backyard? Usually that of poor and African American communities".<sup>25</sup>

The case of *Doña Juana* demonstrates how some people are more concerned about what may happen to citizens if this landfill disappears than about the consequences that the inhabitants of the area are already experiencing – even the same inhabitants are the ones who reproduce that concern because they are already

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<sup>21</sup> Molano: "El Relleno Sanitario Doña Juana En Bogotá...", *art. cit.*, pp. 127–49.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Sicotte: *From Workshop to Waste Magnet...*, *op. cit.*

<sup>24</sup> White: "Environmental Justice and Harm to Humans", *op. cit.*

<sup>25</sup> Bullard: "Excerpts from 'Environmentalism and Social Justice'", *art. cit.*, p. 87.

used to their position being inferior and irrelevant, the only way for people to help them is to show that it could also be a problem for the rest of the citizenship. In an interview with the director of one of the schools in *Mochuelo Alto*, he said that the children “not only suffer from respiratory and digestive diseases, but also from psychological trauma. In the imaginary of the children and their families is that because they are poor and live in the south they must put up with the landfill.”<sup>26</sup>

Stratified capitalist economies were organized in such a way that the risks, disadvantages, and damage derived from an economic system based on dispossession fell on certain bodies. With respect to such unequal distribution, within the environmental justice movement, there is the term *sacrifice zones*: places reserved for city waste and polluting activities.<sup>27</sup> These are seen as places that can be sacrificed in terms of population and health.<sup>28</sup> In that sense, when certain lands are seen as exploitable, the people who live there are also seen as such. That is the case of *Doña Juana*, where I will now expose some of the costs that the inhabitants of the area have had to experience by living in a place of sacrifice.

Katherine Marentes, who has lived for 26 years near *Doña Juana*, says that the area has become a hell: flies invaded them, they appear even in the food (“if you sit down with a piece of potato, the first thing you eat is the flies”), and the nauseating smell of waste is getting stronger every day.<sup>29</sup> Among others, they have sanitary problems, a rarefied environment due to continuous fumes, invasion of their habitat by flies and rodents, noises from compactors, uncovered waste areas, not to mention the landscape of mountains of garbage and trucks dumping waste – very different from other sectors of the city. The director of the rural school attests that respiratory illnesses and allergies are the common denominator among the children: “The serious thing is that people are getting sick because of the concentration of gases. Neither work nor study, who studies with that smell?”<sup>30</sup> The University *del Valle* evaluated the impacts of the landfill on the health of its neighbors after the 1997 emergency: they found that children presented lower than average weight and height indexes, and that they were more prone to eye and respiratory tract

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<sup>26</sup> Garnica; Pérez: *Doña Juana Un Vecino Incómodo*, art. cit.

<sup>27</sup> Guimarães; Oliveira: *Injusticia ambiental*, ..., art. cit.

<sup>28</sup> Bullard: “Addressing Environmental Racism”, in *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 1 (2019), pp. 237–242.

<sup>29</sup> El Espectador: *Las moscas que colmaron la paciencia de los vecinos del relleno Doña Juana*, 2017, <https://www.elespectador.com/bogota/las-moscas-que-colmaron-la-paciencia-de-los-vecinos-del-relleno-dona-juana-article-708061> (25.05.2020).

<sup>30</sup> Garnica; Pérez: *Doña Juana Un Vecino Incómodo*, art. cit.

irritation. In adults, they identified severe and chronic lung diseases, as well as a deterioration of their physical functions.<sup>31</sup>

It is important to keep in mind that what happened with the *Doña Juana* Landfill also constitutes a crime against life and the earth. Within the environmental justice movement, it is included a view of ecology as an interdependence between human and non-human nature, mutual support, and co-evolution.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the good of the community cannot be thought of outside of its interdependence with the physical and biological environment, the non-human world, and the ecosystem in which they produce. This vision, in the case of *Doña Juana*, is personified by the peasants of *Mochuelo Alto* and *Bajo*, who make a living growing food that ends up in the central supply centers of Bogotá. The area is surrounded by fertile mountains with different types of crops. One farmer commented “before *Doña Juana* this was beautiful, one could grow good potatoes. Now that is very difficult, it is as if they had killed the land.”<sup>33</sup> This makes the crime against the population twofold: they affect their health and their fertile lands.

Ninety-eight percent of the inhabitants of the village of *Mochuelo Alto* indicate that the presence of the landfill has affected them not only environmentally, but also in their customs, economy, and loss of identity with their territory.<sup>34</sup> The mayor of *Ciudad Bolívar*, Cristian Robayo, is even more forceful and maintains that what is happening in this locality is very serious, because the decisions made regarding the landfill are against life and territory. Despite their economic interests arising from their agricultural activities and their modes of survival, a very interesting characteristic of the relationship of these inhabitants with their territory is that it gives them a certain identity, especially in the recognition of their rurality that they are so proud of, “because this element differentiated them from a big city full of conflicts, as is Bogotá, where relations of solidarity and community are increasingly disappearing”.<sup>35</sup> The inhabitants of *Mochuelo Alto*

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<sup>31</sup> Méndez, Fabián: *Evaluación del impacto del Relleno Sanitario Doña Juana en la salud de grupos poblacionales en su área de influencia*, 2006, <https://manuelarmiento.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/evaluacionImpactoRSDJ.pdf> (30.05.2024).

<sup>32</sup> Prindeville, Diane-Michele: “The Role of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Class in Activists’ Perceptions of Environmental Justice”, in *New Perspectives on Environmental Justice: Gender, Sexuality, and Activism*, Rutgers University Press, New Jersey 2004, pp. 93–108.

<sup>33</sup> Dulce, Laura: *La lucha campesina por acabar con el relleno Doña Juana*, 2017, <https://www.elespectador.com/bogota/la-lucha-campesina-por-acabar-con-el-relleno-dona-juana-articulo-708263> (29.05.2020).

<sup>34</sup> Ardila: *El padre de Doña Juana*, 2010, <https://www.elespectador.com/impreso/bogota/articuloimpreso-208088-el-padre-de-dona-juana> (29.05.2020).

<sup>35</sup> Caicedo, Leidy: *Hablando de medio ambiente y nos mandaron el basurero encima: las resistencias en Mochuelo Alto frente al relleno sanitario Doña Juana*, 2016, <http://repository.udistrital.edu.co>

have found in their space a reason to vindicate the social identification that was reinforced with the struggle of this sector against a common problem: the landfill. In this way, the community has generated a greater attachment to the land, since it is not valued only because productive maintenance activities are developed there, but because it is an icon of struggle, persistence, and opposition to the burdens of state entities.

In the same logic of the environmental justice movement, it is said that it is the vulnerable who are most likely to suffer from an expropriation of their lands or a radical transformation of them. This often occurs because certain regimes or companies use violence against those who dare to threaten their political or economic interests.<sup>36</sup> To begin this discussion in the case of *Doña Juana*, it is pertinent to contrast that the firm that justified the location of the landfill affirmed that a favorable condition of that location was the absence of population; however, the testimonies of the community reject it, as they affirm that the first settlers of the *Vereda* appeared at the end of the 1940s, as a consequence of the fertility of that territory.<sup>37</sup> Subsequently, the lady who owned the *hacienda* sold the land, for which the peasants still reproach her today.

#### 4. Forms of resistance and organization

Finally, I will argue how all of the above influenced the creation or acceleration of community processes occurring in the neighborhoods or hamlets in the vicinity of the landfill. According to the environmental justice movement, it is important to broaden the participation of the affected social groups in the democratic processes of defining policies that imply an alteration in their territories or territorialities.<sup>38</sup> Thus, they can stimulate the creation of alternative development models that guarantee democratic access and sustainable use of environmental resources. Consequently, this movement is based on citizens who organize themselves in community to confront what has affected their lives.<sup>39</sup>

The aggression against social protest is something that the neighboring inhabitants of *Doña Juana* have experienced. Tired of being a territory destined to be

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/bitstream/11349/3074/1/CaicedoCardenasLeidyMarcela2016.pdf (29.05.2020).

<sup>36</sup> White: "Environmental Justice and Harm to Humans", *op. cit.*

<sup>37</sup> Quintero, Diana: "El Papel De La gestión Territorial En La ubicación De Rellenos Sanitarios. Caso De Estudio: Relleno Sanitario Doña Juana, Bogotá, Colombia", in *Perspectiva Geográfica*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 251–276.

<sup>38</sup> Guimarães; Oliveira: *Injusticia ambiental*, *art. cit.*

<sup>39</sup> Higgins: "Race & Environmental Equity...", *art. cit.*, pp. 281–300.

the exclusive container for the garbage generated by the entire city, popular protest was encouraged; one that wanted, among other things, to defend a territory that had been turned into a toxic landscape<sup>40</sup>, to refuse to accept that the only form of waste treatment in the capital was the sanitary landfill and to claim another model of sanitation that included the closure of the landfill.

One of the biggest strikes was the southern strike in September 2017, fomented by the *Asamblea del Sur*. This was formed 30 years ago by leaders from the localities of *Ciudad Bolívar*, *Usme* and *Tunjuelito*. The peasants participating in the strike say they are tired of being treated as ignorant and naive, “but we will not move from the entrance of the landfill until they give us the solution we have been demanding for 20 years”.<sup>41</sup> During the strike, they shouted to the authorities that they could no longer stand living next to the landfill, which is to blame for their illnesses, for the fact that their crops have decreased and that their animals are dying. They also marched because the community perceives that the state and private actors have not listened to their proposals and needs, and that there are particular interests in the actors who manage and decide to maintain the same model.<sup>42</sup>

Considering everything written so far, one of the most important elements in this case is to notice that in these community resistance processes there is a strong anti-capitalist component; the protagonists do not call it so explicitly, but they do propose new models more friendly to life and land. In this regard, it has been written by environmental justice that such problems open the possibility of proposing post-capitalist policies where there is compatibility between production, the community, and the good state of the ecosystem. On the other hand, there is literature that problematizes garbage as a material that is the result of cultural logics and practices of specific societies; in that sense, “for Western civilization garbage is the representation of evil, disorder and filth”.<sup>43</sup>

Inhabitants of *Ciudad Bolívar* say it is not possible to continue with a model that has put an end to rurality and that only favors the operators, who do not care about waste classification but about accumulation. Contrary to this, farmers of

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<sup>40</sup> Molano: “El Relleno Sanitario Doña Juana En Bogotá...”, *art. cit.*, pp. 127–149.

<sup>41</sup> Dulce: *La lucha campesina...*, *art. cit.*

<sup>42</sup> Buitrago, Jonathan: *La participación comunitaria como agente en la disminución de los impactos ambientales y en la salud, generados por el Relleno Sanitario Doña Juana. Análisis desde el Modelo Analítico de Desarrollo Institucional (IAD) en los habitantes de la vereda Mochuelo Alto, localidad de Ciudad Bolívar*, 2019, <https://repository.javeriana.edu.co/bitstream/handle/10554/44098/Camilo%20ultima%20edicion%2003%20de%20Junio%20%281%29.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y> (29.05.2020).

<sup>43</sup> Ortiz, Erika: *Relatos de violencia ambiental: el caso de Doña Juana*, 2016, <https://repository.urosario.edu.co/server/api/core/bitstreams/c877391d-3552-471e-943d-e18d404cc51e/content> (30.05.2020).

the area have proposed different alternatives: when asked how the farmer of this region should be and what he has to do today, Robin Corredor, an inhabitant, said the following:

He should be a farmer of the 21st century, that is, not a *gringo* farmer full of machinery and state-of-the-art technology with satellite monitoring, no. But a farmer who knows how to take advantage of what he has, that is, the soil resources: to have productive forests and different crops.<sup>44</sup>

They also state: “if the landfill did not exist, I think this would be a very rich area to enjoy, there would be another production model that would be more agricultural and with better living conditions for the entire population”.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, three community initiatives have emerged in the area: one called *Don't take the stone out of the mountain*, created by a movement of young people from different neighborhoods in the south of Bogotá to wage environmental struggles; another called *The Wheel of Memory*, an initiative of teacher Diana Castañeda from a school in the neighborhood that consists of creating, from art, a corporal and environmental awareness in relation to each other so that it is presented as a dialectical correspondence and a form of solution to both structural and subjective problems that are presented especially to young people and children in this context<sup>46</sup>, and another that questions how to implement a project to recycle organics and generate compost that both recyclers and peasants can use to make vegetable gardens and soothe hunger.<sup>47</sup>

This is how to understand the magnitude of the importance of the resistances that are forming within the communities adjacent to the *Doña Juana* Landfill. Through their different forms of action, they are opposing a clear situation of environmental injustice, while caring for and claiming their territories. Making these community resistances visible and supporting them is a good first step to question the normalized past where some communities have been left behind and have had to suffer disproportionate environmental damages because of their belonging to certain social categories. Moreover, it is fair to ask how they will be compensated for their prolonged suffering. Support is essential because the community remains

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<sup>44</sup> Ortiz, Rolfé; Robin: “Un gran líder visionario de Mochuelo Bajo”, in *Periódico Doña Juana*, Vol. 20, (2018), UAESP, p. 15.

<sup>45</sup> Buitrago, Jonathan: *La participación comunitaria...*, art. cit.

<sup>46</sup> Garnica; Pérez: *Doña Juana Un Vecino Incómodo*, art. cit.

<sup>47</sup> Semana: *Así es vivir al lado del relleno sanitario Doña Juana*, 2018, <https://www.semana.com/web/articulo/mochuelo-alto-la-vereda-vecina-al-relleno-de-dona-juana/319> (29.05.2020).

at permanent risk: even when the engineers consider that the mountain, with all the waste it has, is becoming a breeding ground for a fire to break out, and even when in 2015 another landslide occurred and gases again contaminated the south of the city, the former major Peñalosa said that they would take advantage of the years of life the landfill had left.<sup>48</sup> Until the last edition of this article in 2024, the *Doña Juana* Landfill was still working normally. The view from the houses in *Mochuelo Alto* shows a contrast between the mountains of garbage and the green countryside. This contrast can be understood as an opposition between a capitalist, modern and industrial system that reproduces social and environmental differences and marginalizes some bodies, and a form of production that is friendly to the regeneration of the land and the reproduction of life. In the end, without peasants and food, society does not survive, while without capitalism and inequality the most vulnerable finally get a chance to live.

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<sup>48</sup> Garnica; Pérez: *Doña Juana Un Vecino Incómodo*, art. cit.