

## **From marching for change to producing the change: reconstructions of the Italian anti-mafia movement**

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### **Abstract**

*The article discusses the shifts in Italian anti-mafia activism from its origins in the nineteenth century to today. The claims, the modes of action and the actors involved have in fact varied concurrently with the metamorphosis of the mafia, the Italian state and society. Previous waves of anti-mafia protest were prevalently class-based and often followed the massacre of heroes who stood up to corruption. On the other hand today's panorama is characterised by a growing number of civil society organisations that are producing commercial products which contrast the mafia economy through the creation of an alternative market. The analyses draw on existing literature and on my own qualitative data collected from May-September 2014. The concluding remarks reflect on the shape that anti-mafia activism takes within the capitalist market economy.*

**Keywords:** Anti-mafia, social movement, social entrepreneurship, mafia, social cooperatives, voluntarism, protest economy, branding, activism, performative citizenship.

### **Introduction**

Since their first manifestations in the mid-nineteenth century, anti-mafia sentiments and collective action have undergone a series of deep transformations. The claims, the modes of action and the actors involved have shifted concurrently with the metamorphosis of the mafia, the Italian state and society. Differently from previous waves of anti-mafia protest, which were prevalently class-based and often followed the massacre of heroes who stood up to corruption (Santino, 2009), today's panorama is characterised by a growing number of civil society organisations that are producing commercial products which contrast the mafia economy through to creation of an alternative market.

The mafia itself has undergone a series of transformations since the nineties. Mass killings and internal gang wars have been replaced by tacit financial rivalries, which are progressively globalising as the different criminal organisations are able to communicate and collaborate through extensive trading practices. This is facilitated by the growing opacity of financial transactions, which makes distinguishing between licit and illicit capital flows problematic (Santino, 2011b:14). The mafias have been accumulating so much capital in the past twenty years, that it is hard for them to reinvest it. Therefore money laundering through licit businesses in Finland, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Ireland and the United Kingdom has become a common

strategy (Transcrime, 2014). Collaboration with non-European criminal organisations is also increasing, as Russian, Chinese, Columbian and Nigerian groups infiltrate the market in a period in which social and economic disparity is more obvious and illegal capital is one of the most convenient strategies to circumvent the problem.

Accordingly the anti-mafia struggle in Italy has taken an economic turn too, as it is now blatant that criminalising and incarcerating bosses is no longer sufficient. Yet the existing body of literature on the anti-mafia struggle has for a long time concentrated its attentions on institutional efforts to deal with the problem, and research on grass-root, bottom-up activism is still relatively meagre (Mattoni 2013). The past decades have represented a florid moment for experimenting new ways of educating, spreading value and fighting corruption in Italy. As is true for many social movements, online spaces have allowed for an increased level of visibility, the immediacy of emotional expression, and rich exchanges of information and resources which, in this scenario, have contributed to the creation of a protest economy.

This article highlights the transformations at play within the movement by beginning with a historical overview. This summary is necessary as the existing literature is primarily in Italian (limiting therefore the possibility for researchers and activists to learn from these experiences), and because it is a precondition to understand the current transformations of anti-mafia activism, which I investigate in the second part of the text. The analysis draws from existing literature as well as observations made on online platforms used by activists and from my own ethnographic fieldwork carried out throughout 2014. The fieldwork took place between May and September, when I interviewed and corresponded with 19 key informants (2 AddioPizzo activists, 8 Libera activists, 2 employees of Libera shops in Pisa and Palermo, 3 relatives of mafia victims, 1 magistrate and 3 mafia scholars). The main part of my work on the field however took place in July, when I used participant observation methods (Spradley, 1980) in 3 volunteer camps, where I worked in contact with 5 different social cooperatives<sup>1</sup> which operate on assets confiscated from the mafia. This methodology allowed me to be in close contact with 17 people who directly administer and work on confiscated land, as well as about 40 volunteers

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<sup>1</sup> In Sicily I worked with Placido Rizzotto, Pio la Torre, LiberEssenze and Valorizziamoci. Apart from volunteering with physical work, I collaborated with Libera Palermo in holding 2 workshops and translating 4 for the German participants, which gave me an insight on what the organisation felt was important to communicate to the volunteers. In Apulia I worked on the lands administered by Terra Aut and Pietra di Scarto cooperatives. The choice of going to Sicily was dictated by a historical factor, namely that it is the region where the movement started and is therefore more established. Apulia was chosen because of the different nature of the mafia which is being challenged: the cooperatives in that region are in fact working with international mafias and human trafficking as a focus, and are relatively new initiatives. Both experiences allowed me to snowball-sample and open the field up further. This way, I got in contact with other organisations with which I had numerous interactions that have helped me get a more overarching overview of the field (Santa Chiara Association, Ubuntu, Impresa Etica, Nelson Mandela Ghetto Aut Association, Avvocati di Strada, Emergency, CGIL, Coop Estense, Casa Sankara, Banca di Credito Cooperativo, ARCI, SPI).

from Italy and Germany that decided to spend their summer experiencing and contributing to the anti-mafia movement. The analyses of the concrete practices, placed in a historical context, allow me to conclude with some reflections on the transformations of activist practices within the capitalist market.

### **Tracing the origins**

In order to speak of an anti-mafia movement it is first necessary to briefly reflect upon the mafia itself. Today the common use of the term mafia is extremely broad; it can be used to describe street-attitudes and well as institutional corruption, it can point towards the Eastern Yakuza as well as the Western “Outfit”. Within this context I narrow the geographic focus to the Italian scene, which other than being the birthplace of the term mafia, is also the most developed in terms of institutional, political and cultural anti-mafia efforts. With regards to the more descriptive delimitation of what the term mafia comprehends, the choice is more difficult. This is due to the fact that the mafia is an extremely complex social phenomenon, marked by a remarkable flexibility to work *across* social classes (from street criminals to high-end bureaucrats) and *between* legal and illegal spheres of influence (from the ghettos to the state) (Lupo, 2007). The mafia has across time proven to be polymorphic and entrepreneurial and has sewn itself into and out of different political parties, social classes and economic sectors.

As a result of this epochal issue, the Italian legislation has made a clear distinction between criminal associations and mafia associations. Mafia associations, according to the law<sup>2</sup>, have a particular use of intimidation, where subjection is achieved through the use *omertá*, a supposed code of honour which implies virility and self-justice: a passive attitude of acceptance, an active choice of not collaborating with institutions and not interfering in the activities (legal or illegal) of others. This “code of silence”, which has been well represented and further mystified by the film industry, has been aptly appropriated and manipulated by the mafia itself, to increase social control (Lupo, 2004).

The analyses that follow look at grass-root initiatives that have made it their prerogative to oppose these types of attitudes- used to increase economic and territorial power- in one way or another. To facilitate the reading of this longitudinal reconstruction, I find it useful to bring forward Santino’s (2011a:59) periodization of the mafia, which although simplistic in this form, can help understand the development of the Italian economy overall:

1. *Italian Unification- 1950s: The Agrarian Mafia.* The economy of southern Italy is agricultural, and thus the mafia develops primarily as the entrepreneurial force which administers the land of the aristocracy,

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<sup>2</sup> Article 416 bis of the Penal Code, introduced in 1982, also known as the Rognoni/La Torre law.

controlling the farming class. The mafia also mediates the relationships between the centre and periphery of the national administrative organs.

2. *1960s: The Urban-Entrepreneurial Mafia.* As the tertiary sector grows, the mafia begins to have a prominent role in accessing and gaining control to public funds, especially in the construction industry. The mafia develops particularly in relation to, as well as inside, the state bourgeoisie (the middle-upper class which had close contact to, or was directly involved in, administering institutional power).
3. *1970s-onwards: The Financial Mafia.* This period is marked by an increased internationalization, particularly with the growth of wealth linked to the drug industry. The massive amounts of capital lead to, in the eighties, a competition over the control of resources which cause violent clashes between clans that have spill-overs outside the organisations. These prompt the end of the golden age for the Sicilian mafia (Cosa Nostra) and the growingly transversal, invisible and globalised character of organised crime.

Accordingly, the actors involved in the anti-mafia movement appear to be diverse in these phases and use different tools and platforms to express their claims.

### **Workers' movements and collective rentals**

The first grass-root struggles against the mafia occur more or less at the time of the birth of the mafia itself. Prominent mafia historian Salvatore Lupo notes that to label connections between socio-political powers and criminality as being *mafiosi* in character, it is a prerequisite that these operate within modern state institutions. In contexts of ancien régime it was both praxis and law that established personal ties, unequal rights and particular privileges regarding the use of force, and therefore these same relationships were seen as “physiological rather than pathological and [were not] so scandalous as to require a specific word to define their illicit character” (2004:51)<sup>3</sup>. In other words, before modern state institutions were established in Sicily, before the official abolition of the feudal system in 1812 and the process of “democratization of violence” (*ibidem*), which saw the progressive legal transfer of the right of use of force from aristocracy to the state, one cannot talk of illegality as mafia.

It is therefore in a post-unitary scene, which crowned a longer process of administrative reforms that had started during the Bourbonic rule<sup>4</sup>, that the first forms of resistance against the mafia have been identified.

This first wave of protest saw the Sicilian Workers's Leagues (*Fasci Siciliani*) as protagonists (Santino, 2009). These leagues emerged as a response to an international period of economic recession which lasted from 1888 to 1894 and

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<sup>3</sup> Author's own free translation. This applies to all references in Italian.

<sup>4</sup> Sicily was under Bourbonic rule from 1734 to 1860 (Li Vigni, 1992).

hit the Sicilian working class particularly harshly (Luzzato, 1955) due to the inadequacy of its socio-political structures to the economic transformations which took place. Although the economy of the region had since 1860 showed progressive growth both in terms of quantity of mined sulphur and in the scale of agricultural trade markets, the working class suffered from the use of backward technologies, the exploitation of its minors and of an increase in taxation which was disproportionately distributed in the midst of a period marked by protectionism<sup>5</sup>. The workers' leagues therefore emerged as a response to a system of social injustice, in a time of sensitisation to social claims, which were institutionalised in both catholic and secular realms with the issuing of the *Rerum Novarum* encyclical (1891) first, and the birth of the Italian Socialist Party (1892) then (Santino, 2009).

It is on this terrain that one of the first concrete cases of socialist action in Italy took place, counting an estimate of 350,000 members circa including farmers, constructors, sulphur miners and artisans (Renda, 1977). Although the leagues were heterogeneous in social composition and political aims<sup>6</sup>, their general objectives were analogous: a larger share in outputs, a fixed minimum wage, 14 years as the worker's age limit and a reduction in work hours. The question here is; why are these workers' movements also considered part of the anti-mafia movement?

Although these claims are not explicitly (or at least solely)<sup>7</sup> against the mafia, they questioned the labour relationships and power structures of the time which saw the wealthy agrarian class using the *gabellotti* or private tenants as their executive force. The *gabellotti* were in fact rural entrepreneurs who either took payment for the use of the lands, or sub-let the land to *sotto-gabellotti* and they would often hire guards (*campieri*) to manage their assets.

These actors effectively dominated 19<sup>th</sup> century Sicily and were certainly not willing to let their status quo be questioned easily. The Crispi government supported this vision by officially banning the leagues and arresting and prosecuting the leaders of the *Fasci*. It is estimated that 108 civilians were killed by Crispi's soldiers and the mafia guards (*campieri*) from 1891-1894 (Santino, 2009). This is a fundamental factor for the definition of the movement; not only

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<sup>5</sup> In 1887 the Historical left extended the protective tariffs from the textile and steel industries to the agricultural sector in order to compete with the lower priced wheat exported by the US. This process was seen as a strategy of the "Agrarian-industrial block" by Gramsci (1966), who saw this as a coalition between the northern industrial class and to the southern agrarian class to dominate the subordinate masses.

<sup>6</sup> Some exponents of the movement were even destined to become mafia bosses, and there were cases in which the leagues incorporated mafia elements in their regulations (such as killing dissidents who refused to strike, or drawing out the names of members who should carry out thefts of wheat and blood-sealing the promise of denying in the case in which they were caught) (Ganci, 1977:341).

<sup>7</sup>Some of the leagues (Santo Stefano Quisquina, Santa Caterina Vilarmosa and Paternó) explicitly addressed the mafia in their statutes by banning them from the joining the *Fasci* (Renda, 1977:143).

was the agrarian mafia and the power structures which it embodied contested, but it also directly responded and stood its ground by repressing the movement.

“The antimafia allows for us to see the mafia” (Lupo, 2007:8) and thereby understand the context which is under contestation. Until the about the end of the Second World War, the mafia was tightly connected to the agrarian class and the respective political representatives. Although these forces continued to dominate socio-economic relationships, thus acting as push-factors in the first wave of Sicilian emigration (Renda, 1987), their legitimacy was nonetheless contested in various other occasions.

One important event was the protests which followed the assassination of the Mayor of Palermo, Emanuele Notarbartolo, in 1893. Notarbartolo had tried to fight financial speculations and corruption, and was therefore an “uncomfortable” political figure. In 1899 the people of Palermo organised the first demonstration against the mafia, which gathered thousands of citizens who wanted justice and truth about the murder (Santino, 2009:117).

Even more pertinent to this context, are the entrepreneurial practices of the peasant movement at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Amongst the forms of organisation practiced by the Sicilian peasant movement, the first and possibly the most singular of all was the so-called collective rental<sup>8</sup>, which was a special form of agrarian cooperative of production and labour, having the aim of eliminating the intermediation of the tenants<sup>9</sup>, and the direct management of the land (Sturzo, 1974:68).

These proto-cooperatives were initiated by both catholic and socialist figures and tried to tend to two different needs, one political and one economic, respectively; the will to put an end to the mafia’s intermediation, and the craving for land (Santino, 2009:127).

Collective rentals emerged in four different regions of Italy: Sicily, Emilia, Piedmont and Lombardy. The appearance of these cooperatives was clearly linked to different contexts and needs, and nowhere but in Sicily was the organisation linked to the issue of the large land estates and the mafia. Yet Sicily had the largest number of rentals: 53 in 1906, counting 15.900 partners and covering 39.800 hectares of land (Renda, 1972: 145). Although these collective rentals substituted the *gabellotti* and were therefore at risk of becoming new subjects through which old and new client relationships could be channelled (Lupo, 1987), the fact that they emerged in such numbers is incoherent with the idea that Sicily lacks in cooperative tradition and horizontal solidarity<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *affittanza collettiva*

<sup>9</sup> *gabellotti*

<sup>10</sup> For a detailed and brilliant analysis of Putnam’s dichotomous division between a civic and an uncivic Italy in *Making Democracy Work* see Lupo, 1993.

(Gunnarson, 2014; Putnam, 1993). The words of Sydney Sonnino, Tuscan politician who was sent to Sicily in 1876 with Leopoldo Franchetti to write a report about the conditions of the farmers for the Parliament, support this view:

The spirit of association is very strong amongst Sicilian farmers; they however lack instruction and moral education to extrapolate all the fruits that the association is capable of bearing (Sonnino, 1975:247).

Other forms of solidaristic social entrepreneurship were the catholic rural credit unions. These micro-credit agencies aimed at helping the poorer members of society who were forced to resort of usurers and were forced into debt and bankruptcy. These institutions were born in Veneto in 1896 but soon reached Sicily, which in just a decade proved to have the highest number of rural credit unions per municipality<sup>11</sup>.

These forms of direct resistance to the mafia continued throughout the beginning of the 20th century and were accompanied by workers' strikes which obtained some outcomes in terms of work conditions for the farmers but also resulted in the assassination of prominent activists such as Bernardino Verro<sup>12</sup> in 1915.

The First World War increased unrest amongst the farmers who were not only promised land and rights which they were not accordingly given, but were also called to the front to fight a war which tore them away from their property. These conditions led to the rise of bandit groups which refused military conscription and more generally antagonised the established social order by surviving as fugitives by robbing and sacking. Although these groups were the expression of a social discontent, they were soon used politically by the mafia and the state to repress the increasingly unpopular agrarian union (*ibidem*).

1947 was an important year with regards to this; as the threat of Fascism faded, the antifascist unity was dismantled and the Christian Democratic Party (DC) gradually drifted away from the Left and started shifting its alliances towards the conservative classes and the mafia. Yet the first regional elections showed a strong victory of the Left and of the agrarian movement. This result was certainly not to the taste of the agrarian class, the mafia or their institutional counterpart which swiftly showed a firm fist. On a symbolic date, annual Worker's Day celebration in Portella della Ginestra, the Giuliano Bandits<sup>13</sup> shot

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<sup>11</sup> The province of Girgenti (Sicily) reached a "cooperative density" (number of unions/number of municipalities) of 1,78 in 1911, followed by: Bologna (1,40), Palermo (1,03) and Verona (0,84) (La Loggia, 1953).

<sup>12</sup> Verro was the socialist major of Corleone and had been condemned for political crimes connected to his involment in the *fasci*. After having received amnesty he was re-elected and murdered in broad daylight by 13 mafiosi (Santino, 2009:140).

<sup>13</sup> The Giuliano Bandits were one of the most prominent bandit groups in Sicily. Numerous sources testify their interaction with formal institutions (Casarubbea, 1997, 1998; La Bella & Mecarolo 2003; Lupo 2004).

onto the crowd and killed 12 civilians and injured 30 (Santino, 2009:203). Although the official declarations denied any political content in the massacre, the message was clear: a new political liaison had been formed and the Left were not welcome.

### **Solitary heroism**

The workers' movements also lost much terrain in their more direct forms of dissent. In fact, although the amount of cooperatives and collective rentals which were administered was high, and the cooperatives (both leftist and Christian Democrat) held a one-week-event dedicated to the movement, there were stronger forces which aimed at supplanting these efforts<sup>14</sup>. Furthermore the 1950 regional agrarian reform did not even mention them as subjects (further weakening the farming class which continued to migrate in search of greener pastures), and the list of trade-unionists which were murdered grew longer (*ibidem*).

This period indeed marked one of the final crises of the large estate agricultural economy, and thus the mafia began selling their property and finding new channels in which to invest. As the economy began progressively industrialising throughout the fifties and the sixties, the entrepreneurial mafia skilfully followed this trend and began shifting its interests towards more urban areas, home of the tertiary sector and official political institutions.

Perhaps mirroring this shift in interests, the anti-mafia movement began using more formal institutional channels, losing therefore its mass features. However, it was largely due to the fact that the cooperatives and the labour unions were notably weakened that it was the Italian Communist Party (PCI) which took on the fight of the farmers against the mafia and the Christian Democrats with whom they devised (Mattoni, 2013). These institutional efforts, which took place in Palermo and the newly established Anti-Mafia Commission<sup>15</sup>, did however not succeed in stopping the mafia from investing heavily in the construction industry, building up entire sections of Palermo in collaboration with large construction companies and municipal administrators who managed the contracts.

Although this period of transformation lost its mass feature compared to the past, this did not mean that neither the mafia nor the anti-mafia had perished. Indeed, there were some singular cases of charismatic grass-root activists who

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<sup>14</sup> Internal forces also hit the cooperatives harshly: the president of the USCA (socialist association of cooperatives) robbed the entire treasury and disappeared in 1948 (Santino, 2009:210).

<sup>15</sup> The Anti-mafia Commission was established in the parliament in 1963 as a reaction to a period of intense internal mafia wars (1961-63). The creation of the Commission had been proposed since 1948, and only produced a report in 1976 without reaching legislative or political outcomes before 1982 (Santino, 2009:263).



stood up to the mafia in creative ways as the more formal paths led to cul-de-sacs.

Danilo Dolci, who was a philanthropic pacifist, writer, pedagogue and activist from the Trieste region, moved to Sicily in 1952 to explore the poorest area of what he saw as the edge of Europe. In Sicily he had a personal mission of educating and empowering the poor using Socratic maeutics. Through these methods, he organised a “reverse-strike” based on the idea that if you wanted to achieve something as a worker, you should refuse to work, but if you wanted to achieve something while unemployed you should work. Dolci gathered a hundred unemployed Sicilians in Partinico who symbolically started fixing an abandoned public road, but he was soon arrested for obstruction. Once he was released, he had gained so much public attention that he was barely obstructed in his project to construct the Jato dam in 1967. Although his initial aims were not directly mafia related, his attention to the poor and the marginalised soon led him to fight the oppressors. The construction of the Jato dam was in fact aimed at breaking the mafia’s monopoly over hydric resources in the area, which suffered from a lack of irrigation that caused poor agricultural yields and contributed to the emigration process. Apart from mobilising weaker parts of society and leading various hunger strikes, Dolci did an impressive amount of research and collected important declarations on prominent politicians and was therefore arrested for false claims (Santino, 2009; Grasso, 1956).

Another striking figure is Giuseppe Impastato, who was born into a mafia family and began showing opposition to his own father in his adolescence and was therefore thrown out of his home. He began being engaged politically in 1965 when he joined the far-left section of the socialist party (PSIUP) and started a political magazine, *L’idea Socialista*, where he published an article entitled “Mafia: a Mountain of Shit” which caused threats to all the editors and deeper ruptures with his family. Nonetheless Impastato continued his activity through student demonstrations and marches. One of his fundamental actions was the organisation of protests amongst small estate owners who were in the process of being expropriated due to the construction of a new runway at the Airport of Palermo. Despite his young age Impastato was extremely perceptive and was more than aware of the economic transformations of the mafia at the time, which were investing more of their capital in drugs and had progressively been expanding their Atlantic trade routes since the 1950s. The airport would in fact become a cardinal node of the heroin market between the United States and Europe- trade route which would later be called the “Pizza connection” by the FBI<sup>16</sup>. Impastato also started a satirical political radio channel “Radio Aut” where he discussed the relationship between politics, mafia, drugs and the

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<sup>16</sup> In the period that went from the seventies to the eighties, the Sicilian mafia produced, refined and shipped most of the heroin consumed in the United States and Europe (Falcone and Padovani: 1991). In 1979 the FBI began a massive investigation of the phenomenon. The name of the complex operation derives from the fact that Pizza parlours were used as fronts for this market. The Pizza Connection trial was longest criminal jury trial in the history of United States’ federal courts (Blumenthal, 1988).

Badalamenti clan. His voice however became too loud, and on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 1978 he was kidnapped, tied to the rail-tracks and exploded with TNT (Casa Memoria, 2014).

In this case, the fight between the mafia and the anti-mafia took place within a family and after Giuseppe's death the Impastato family reacted combatively:

My mother was revolutionary because after the death of my brother she did not seek vengeance, but opened her door to everyone. She was revolutionary because, in her days, widows closed their doors (Impastato, Giovanni<sup>17</sup> 2014, personal interview 28th May).

### **Excellent cadavers and mass protests**

Although Impastato's death had spurred a national demonstration which counted up to 2000 participants, it is only in the eighties that the fight against the mafia truly takes wide-spread national characteristics (Mattoni, 2013:339; Santino, 2009). The eighties were some of the bloodiest years in the history of Palermo<sup>18</sup>. The cause of this increase of violence has been linked to the increase of the mafia's capital at the time. The two main groups which administered Palermo's drug traffic (inter alia), the Corleone families (allied with some historical Palermo families such as the Greco) and the Palermo families began fighting for hegemony, particularly because of Riina's<sup>19</sup> will to impose himself as an "absolute monarch" (Santino, 2009:313). The murders also spilled-over into the outside world, and for the first time<sup>20</sup> since 1893 was the violence of the clans aimed at institutional figures, intimidating the political system as a whole (Lupo, 2004:291). Amongst the more prominent victims are the President of the Region, the leader of the main opposition party Pio la Torre, General-Prefect Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa, other political figures, key law enforcers and magistrates.

Although many have interpreted these acts as an attack to the state, it is important to remember that the victims of these murders were individuals who were particularly and passionately involved in the fight against not only the mafia but also the flaws of the state, and were therefore considered threats at a *personal* level rather than at institutional level (Santino, 2009: 314; Lupo, 2004: 293).

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<sup>17</sup> Giovanni is Giuseppe's only brother. He lives in Cinisi and is active in telling his family's story in *Casa Memoria*, the house in which Giuseppe lived and is now open to the public.

<sup>18</sup> Between 1978 and 1984, 332 mafia related homicides, of which 203 were internal to the groups, and circa 1000 victims in total (including cases of *white lupara*-or bodies which were never found) have been documented (Chinnici and Santino, 1989).

<sup>19</sup> Salvatore Riina, currently under arrest, was the head of the Corleone faction.

<sup>20</sup> With the exception of the 1971 assassination of Attorney General Pietro Scaglione (*ibidem*).

However the reactions to these massacres were certainly perceived as an attack to the state, to democracy, to justice, to the health of Italian institutions and not solely as attacks to individuals who were devoted to a cause. These were excellent cadavers, which represented a greater stake. The reaction of civil society was therefore also national. The headings of the main national newspapers after the assassination of Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa in 1982 both read: “A National Issue” (Santino, 2009:319). Other than the mass scale participation to his and Pio la Torre’s funerals in Palermo, other areas of Italy began mobilising too.

In 1985, young students in Campania started marching against the Camorra which was gaining strength and new anti-mafia associations begin emerging in Northern Italy<sup>21</sup> as well. In 1984 the establishment of the National Anti-mafia Coordination is the first attempt to unite anti-mafia associations, and although this organ was short-lived because of the many different ideological backgrounds of the 38 adherent associations, it led to the formation of a new National Coordination in 1986 to which individuals could participate rather than associations (Mattoni, 2013: 340).

Yet associations have throughout the years become the prevalent oppositional form of the anti-mafia. The movement has in fact moved away from being channelled through labour unions and parties (although some contact remains), and the forms of collective action are initiated directly by citizens (Dalla Chiesa, 1983). Furthermore, the role of institutions is growingly transformed from being an object of contestation to a potential ally. This does of course not entail that the movement has stopped contesting the state, but that it is in a peculiar dual position to the state: it is both pro and anti-state, as it is trying to reform the system using principles that belong to the system itself. It is pro-system because it does not aim at radically changing the terms of the social contract, but rather aims at guaranteeing their upholding. It is anti-system because it questions the quality of the social order by wanting to cleanse the state from criminal power (Dalla Chiesa, 1983:58).

Along with the actors, the forms of protest have also transformed, especially after the death of the two judges Falcone and Borsellino in 1992. The two judges had carried out important investigations which led to the Maxi trial- a one and a half year trial which charged 475 criminals for mafia related crimes. Their murders incited a series of emotional manifestations of dissent and solidarity. One woman hung a sheet from her balcony that read: “Palermo asks for justice” and was soon imitated by so many in her action that a “sheet committee” was formed where the participants all shared their personalised slogans in a common form (Mattoni, 2013). In June citizens formed a human chain from the Justice Palace to the magnolia tree in front of Falcone’s home, which has become a symbolic place for the resistance to the mafia, and is covered in flowers, banners and slogans. Another group of women organised a one month

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<sup>21</sup> “Circolo Società Civile” was founded in Milan in 1985 to spread critical knowledge about the mafias (Mattoni, 2013:340).

hunger strike to plea for the removal from office of various law enforcers considered responsible for Falcone's safety. In response and in support of this action, eight deputy prosecutors resigned to "denounce the impossibility of performing their functions against the mafia" (Santino, 2009:374). In July 17 year old Rita Atria, daughter of a mafioso from Partanna, committed suicide in desperation: she had collaborated with Borsellino and was under protection in Rome. Her funeral in is an important emotional moment where women from Palermo carry her tomb on their shoulders (*ivi*).

Another important theme that began taking foot within the movement is extortion. Extortion is one of the practices employed by the mafia to gain territorial control which has the longest tradition. Throughout the eighties and the nineties a growing number of businessmen began reporting threats and racket-related violence, receiving an escalating amount of media coverage and support from trade associations. In January 1991 Libero Grassi, owner of a clothing industry, decided to denounce his extorters and announced that he was not willing to pay the requested sum. Although he received some sympathetic declarations of solidarity, Grassi was murdered 7 months later and portrayed as a "hero" who was killed by the indifference of the state, of trade associations, of fellow businessmen and the mafia. It was clear that Palermo was not yet ready to oppose this form of economic dictatorship. However, only about 150 kilometres away, the first anti-racket association emerged in Capo D'Orlando in 1990. Differently to Palermo, the extorters which pressured the businesses in Capo D'Orlando did not have a strong and historical presence on the territory, but came from the adjacent town of Tortorici which was poor and where crime was a key to economic and social advancement. Capo D'Orlando had been experiencing an economic boom tied to tourism and commerce and was therefore very enticing. After a series of violent acts the newly born association successfully charged the extorters and won the case in 1991. This association would soon be an example for others which slowly emerged nationally (Santino, 2009).

Probably one of the most fundamental moments in bringing the anti-mafia to a national level was the foundation of *Libera Association* in 1995, which was born out of the necessity to coordinate all the anti-mafia efforts which were blossoming nationwide. Although its intent was initially to act as a support group for the less prominent or indirect victims of the mafia<sup>22</sup>, Libera soon became the umbrella organisation which today unites more than 1600 associations. Just one year after its establishment, Libera initiated a petition and collected one million signatures to push for law 109/96, which allows for the social use of mafia confiscated assets. This law basically permits citizens to use goods which have been confiscated, to actualise social projects. The need to requalify these assets comes from the fact that the goods which are confiscated are often thriving businesses; therefore freezing them is not a total victory from the part of the state because in fact, many jobs and capitals are frozen. By

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<sup>22</sup> Marcone, Daniela, daughter of a mafia victim and Libera Activist, Personal Interview, 25th July 2014.

allowing for these goods to be used socially, this law aims at circumventing this problem.

## Recent developments

The fact that Libera emerged in the mid-nineties is coherent with the quantitative growth in grass-root anti-mafia associations in the same period (Ramella and Trigilia, 1997). The past two decades are in fact characterised by an increase in individuals, groups and associations which are acting towards a common cause through education, commemorations, and the administration of confiscated assets.

The preponderance of these types of subjects within the grass-root anti-mafia scene today is strictly connected to the nature of the mafia's relationship to public institutions, and the role of these institutions within the public sphere. The nineties were emblematic with regards to these interactions: in 1992, a turgid corruption scandal, *Tangentopoli* (Bribesville), hit most political parties and led to the incarceration of many public figures. The strong belief that state presence within the economy was what favoured corruption began to take foot, and resulted in a de-regulation policy which aimed at minimising state involvement through liberalisation and privatisation measures (Tridico, 2013). These were however carried out inefficiently, and resulted in the creation of private monopolies, which were not followed by private investments (CNEL, 2007). This period is colloquially referred to as the Second Republic<sup>23</sup>, as the historical national parties (both the Christian Democrats and the Italian Socialist Party) almost vanished from the political scene, inaugurating the Berlusconi era, which certainly did not break the line of corruption but further mediatized it.

In this scenario, where there is a growing amount of public awareness around national scandals and judicial hearings, and with the advancement of the idea of the mafia as a truly national problem, civil society is increasingly organising itself outside evasive political parties and weakened labour unions. The activities of the movement are gradually distancing themselves from being immediate reactions to violent events (Renda, 1993; Mattoni, 2013) and are instead becoming daily performances of a worldview which contrasts that of the mafia. Significantly, this occurs in a time where the mafia is more latent and has moved away from the manifesting itself through acts of physical violence to acts of structural and cultural violence (Galtung, 1990).

The recent forms of anti-mafia activism can thus be seen as expressions of what Martin Albrow calls *performative citizenship*. In *The Global Age* (1997) he argues that citizens and movements are increasingly independent from nation-

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<sup>23</sup> Although this term is technically incorrect, as it only denotes a political shift rather than an actual constitutional reform, it is widely used to describe the massive change in the Italian political scene.

states, which are losing authority, and have developed new forms of action which use co-ordinated “open networking”.

In an important sense they are actually *performing the state*, creating it through practices which they have learned as the colonized and skilful citizens of the nation-state. This is where the penetration of the modern state into everyday life has prepared its citizens for a new and proactive role (*ibidem*: 177).

These “embedded” civic capacities also emerge *because* of a lack of state, a problem which has been described by many of my informants and confirmed by Gunnarson’s study on Addiopizzo (2014)<sup>24</sup>, which shows a particularly low trust towards the political system compared to other institutions and organisations amongst adherents. I find this quote from an activist involved in Libera quite explanatory:

I sometimes find that the state expects us to do their job, and this is because we are so visible and acknowledged, so they trust us to have the “know-how”. For instance, we are the ones who point out to the prefects which need more reallocated confiscated land: we know where the mafia is most active and they lean on us (Personal interview, 5<sup>th</sup> July 2014).

The following paragraphs take a closer look at concrete practices that have shaped them movement in the past two decades.

### **Education, information, sensitisation**

Ramella and Trigilia (1997) describe the anti-mafia mobilisation in the nineties as rotating around three main practices:

1. Prevention through social work in the areas with the highest level of mafia infiltration.
2. Awareness raising, particularly through scholastic institutions.
3. The organisation of celebrations and demonstrations.

These tactics are the cardinal nodes of what can be defined as the cultural anti-mafia, which focuses on transforming society from below, mainly through educational practices aimed at fostering a civic culture on which the mafia should be hindered in taking root. Many of the organisations’ activities are in fact aimed at schools and universities, where seminars are held and courses are financed in order to increase knowledge on the topic, foster research and spur debates. The diffusion of digital devices has brought this activity online, where numerous webpages are dedicated to collecting and diffusing textual and audio

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<sup>24</sup> AddioPizzo is an organization which opposes extortion. See page 15.

information. Some examples of this are the *Radio Kreattiva*, a web-radio financed by Bari municipality since 2005 and run by the city's students, or *Stampo Antimafioso* which emerged in 2011 with the aim of documenting and cataloguing news and research related to the mafia in Northern Italy (Mattoni, 2013:346). Some of the more established mafia research centres such as the *Centro Siciliano di Documentazione Giuseppe Impastato* have also created websites that share information and articles, and *Transcrime*, a research centre which focuses on international crime, is especially active in publishing reports, statistics and papers on their website as well as on social media platforms. Apart from academic content, other activists and associations such as *Sottoterra Movimento Antimafie*, *(R)esistenza Anticamorra*, *VALORizziamoci*, *Casa Memoria Felicia e Peppino Impastato* (just to mention a handful) post events, thoughts, experiences and news which is collected daily and shared by other members. This, according to many of my informants, is key to recruitment:

I think that if I didn't have the possibility to show what I do with the volunteers through Facebook and Instagram, I wouldn't be able to encourage others to join us. It is much easier to involve people if you show them the cool things which you create! I have to adapt: times are changing, and for once they are helping me in my activity (Merra, Vito 2014, personal interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> July).

Additionally these central actors collect individual online emotional expressions from Facebook, Twitter and Instagram which occur during protests, demonstrations or daily activities of the organisations. By re-tweeting and sharing, the immediacy of the impressions and ideas is kept alive, and the single activists are brought into the front-line in voicing a particular mood, expressing an idea or informing the public of an event, thereby creating an open online network of information and capital. This is of course not a specificity of the anti-mafia movement but a wide-spread characteristic of online knowledge production in the information age.

### **A protest economy**

Although these informative and educational practises are still very central today, the turn of the century has added some new elements to anti-mafia-activism which have led to the creation of a protest economy.

When I go to the Zen<sup>25</sup> and talk to kids about the Mafia as something horrible, and I tell them the story of the heroes who have stood up to it and been murdered, they look at me and think: "Great. My father is in jail and my mother is a whore. What do they care about Falcone? That's why we have to show them

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<sup>25</sup> Zen is a particularly difficult neighbourhood in the North of Palermo. The area has experienced high crime rates and mafia infiltrations.

that the anti-mafia is a concrete alternative, that it works, that it employs people (Libera Activist 2014, personal interview, 10<sup>th</sup> July)”.

Since the beginning of the 2000s<sup>26</sup>, the movement has effectively started tackling the mafia from an economic perspective. What I am referring to is the growing network of producers and consumers of mafia-free products; a group of social enterprises which have launched a series of products, both material (i.e. tomatoes grown on mafia-confiscated land) and immaterial (i.e. touristic excursions aimed experiencing the mafia and anti-mafia). The production of these goods is one which directly involves activists through voluntarism and reflects co-creative practices in almost all phases of the process. Some of the most successful enterprises within this network are Libera Terra, which is Libera’s economic arm and brand that markets the agricultural output of the adherent cooperatives administering confiscated farmlands. Another association is AddioPizzo, which emerged in Palermo in 2005 with the aims of economically and psychologically supporting entrepreneurs who refuse to pay extortion money, and of empowering consumers by giving them agency in supporting these “clean” businesses (Gunnarson, 2014; Forno and Gunnarson 2011). Both these enterprises are directed at proving that it is possible to thrive economically while respecting the law and that it is possible to create revenue that does not feed into the mafia. Both these enterprises furthermore include the category of political consumers in their actions making consumption one of the most central mobilisation strategies (Forno and Gunnarson, 2011:42).

These more “normalised” acts of protest begin to emerge in a time where the mafia is progressively globalising and connecting to other groups of organised crime. Their relations are increasingly difficult to trace as they get lost in the opacity of financial transactions which are so exponential that it can even be difficult to launder them into front businesses (Yardley, 2014), which makes distinguishing between “licit” and “illicit” capital increasingly challenging (Santino, 2011b:14). It is perhaps not a chance that it is through something as micro and tangible as political production and consumption that the movement is expressing its opposition to these invisible powers.

If we reflect retrospectively, this is not the first time that the movement has taken a stance against the mafia through a social business model. In the first phase of the movement, various farmers in fact opposed the mafia by collectively renting land so as to eliminate the intermediation of the *gabellotti*, who hoarded wealth and repressed the working class. Today’s anti-mafia economy is similarly trying to replace the mafia, which is far more complex and invisible. Comparing the current productive practices to this historical precedent allows me to bring forward the novelties of contemporary practices.

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<sup>26</sup> The first cooperative (NoEmarginazione) on a confiscated asset actually emerged in 1996 in Partinico (in the province of Palermo), but it is not before 2001 that this tendency begins to take foot with the first pilot experience of Libera Terra brand (Forno and Gunnarson, 2011:42).



In order to reduce complexity, I have chosen to use Libera Terra and the cooperatives which operate on confiscated assets as my comparative basis.

	<b>Collective Rentals (XIX Century)</b>	<b>Social Cooperatives (Confiscated Assets)</b>
<b>Main Actors</b>	Private Citizens Labour Unions Political Parties Catholic Credit Unions	Private Citizens Civil Society Organisations The State Volunteers Consumers
<b>Referent Object</b>	<i>Gabellotti</i> Labour Laws	Local & International Mafias Environmental Degradation The State
<b>Platforms</b>	Proto-cooperatives Legal Instances Micro-credit agencies	Social Cooperatives Legal Instances “Ethical” Banks The Market Voluntarism The Land (Organic Farming Practices)
<b>Tools</b>	Demonstrations Formal statutes/agreements/claims	Demonstrations Formal statutes/agreements/claims On and off line recruitment and promotion Brands Tourism

### *Main actors*

Although the two experiences take place in two extremely different economic and political conditions, they both tackle a social issue taking an entrepreneurial stand point by directly substituting the actor which is under contestation. The protagonists of the action are clearly different; during the period of the collective rentals, these initiatives were taken up by groups of farmers which were politically linked to socialist or catholic labour unions. At the same time, catholic credit unions supported poor farmers in their financial fight against usury. Today’s panorama is mainly made up of private citizens forming unions, organisations and cooperatives, although an important number of them are still linked to catholic voluntarism and workers’ unions which makes it understandable why the leader of the organisation, Don Luigi Ciotti (a priest), is so popular. This charismatic figure has been very capable in gathering the sympathies of different groups of activists, and has become a sort of “idol”:

We are being affected by what I call *ciottism*. It seems that everything the man says is law. He attracts so much media attention though that it is natural that we follow him; whatever we do is covered so widely that we have to be careful in making mistakes. The more established you are, the more you attract vipers (Libera activist, 2014, personal interview, 24<sup>th</sup> July).

What is new is that the state is directly involved in these practices. It is through the judicial system that the assets are confiscated and it is a national administrative organ<sup>27</sup> which reallocates it to cooperatives which compete for its use. The 109/96 law is aimed at “commoning” public property; although the confiscated private goods become public in terms of property, they effectively often remain enclosed in terms of use. This is indeed what often happens to most confiscated goods today; although the number of confiscated goods was 12944 as of January 2013 (ANBSC) (11237 real estate and 1707 enterprises) and is growing thanks to effective institutional efforts, many of them remain frozen state property because it is difficult to reallocate them<sup>28</sup>.

Managing a confiscated asset requires a lot of capital investment, especially when it comes to agricultural land which has been abandoned for years. A frequent problem cooperatives face is the access to credit, as these goods are only up for use and therefore banks are not willing to lend out money without a secure return for their investments. Nonetheless some forms of “ethical” banking, coupled with state and EU subsidies, are helping the cooperatives in accessing credit and in alleviating the pressure of the mortgages which weigh on the good from previous owners (Forno, 2011:106). Discussions on the possibility of selling the confiscated goods in question have been numerous, as have propositions of the state running them directly<sup>29</sup>.

However Libera, who has become one of the main actors involved in promoting the reallocation of these goods, has taken a clear stand to avoiding these policies as they believe that there is a risk that these goods are acquired by corrupt privates. The use of the goods is therefore trying to remain as open as possible, even though it is clear that Libera (although an umbrella organisation) dominates the scene, making it difficult for cooperatives which are independent to compete with their expertise and voice.

Another important difference in terms of actors is the massive increase in numbers of people involved. The contemporary social cooperatives are in fact often linked to Estate Liberi, a programme aimed at opening up of confiscated lands to volunteers which contribute by farming and fixing up the often

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<sup>27</sup> The National Agency for confiscated assets, established in 2010, has the duty to assign the goods to appropriate cooperatives who have social ends to their projects, but also to monitor the correct use of these goods (Forno, 2011:104).

<sup>28</sup> In worse cases, confiscated businesses have been administered directly by state representatives who mismanaged them and led them to bankruptcy as occurred to the Cavallotti family (Viviani, 2014).

<sup>29</sup> Pecoraro, Giuseppe, AddioPizzo activist, Personal Interview, 30<sup>th</sup> May 2014.

decadent structures. In the summer of 2014, 8000 people spent seven to ten days on one of the 34 lands which host volunteers (Ansa, 2014). In July I participated in Libera's first International Camp in San Giuseppe Jato, which hosted a group of German activists and further demonstrates a tendency to expand the participation across national borders. The expansion is also occurring thanks to the fact that the cooperatives produce agricultural products, which are branded. This allows for these material vectors of anti-mafia identity to be transported, shelved and picked up by consumers. The German activists had for instance first heard of the movement thanks to the commodities which they bought for the fair-trade shop they ran.

Both the consumers and the volunteers contribute to the cooperatives in an economic sense as well as in social terms. In fact, not only do the volunteers donate wealth in terms of work, but they also pay a fee<sup>30</sup> which contributes to the expenses of living there and to some extent also to the budget of the cooperative as a whole<sup>31</sup>.

### *Referent object*

The object of contestation is appropriately different today than it was in the nineteenth century. The agrarian mafia of the time was simply a network of individuals (*gabellotti*) who unjustly administered land, and repressed the farming class. The proto-cooperatives attempted to circumvent the problem, but were also linked to labour unions and socialist parties as they aimed at improving their formal worker's rights. Despite the abyssal difference in terms of employment conditions today, many of the same themes are still relevant. One of the main objectives of today's cooperatives is to create (fair and legal) employment opportunities for young and disadvantaged members of society, so this form of production is also aimed at creating work opportunities which are more than scarce given the times. In this sense today's anti-mafia has expanded its referent object from a visible or concrete group of mafiosi to an entire economic regime of stagnation and corruption, whose passwords are crisis and precarity. This can be seen for instance in the emphasis placed by many of my respondents on the need to create jobs:

Q. Why don't you use machines to harvest if your workload if it is so big?

A. Machines!? I'm here to make us all work! All you youngsters without a future... Machines may be cheaper in the long run, but we want change. Who else will give you jobs? The state? Your Iphone?<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> A fee which, even if affordable, makes this type of voluntarism more common amongst members of the middle class with a generally high level of education, which corresponds to the general social extraction of today's anti-mafia movement overall (Gunnarson, 2014; Forno, 2011; Santino, 2009).

<sup>31</sup> Fortunato, Emanuela, Libera Puglia, Personal Interview July 2014.

<sup>32</sup> Farmer, Pio La Torre Cooperative, 8th July 2014.

Libera and Gruppo Abele<sup>33</sup> have also pronounced themselves on issues of unemployment in campaigns such as *Miseria Ladra* (2014), focusing on the recession and the consequent impoverishment of many citizens who are prone to collaborate with the mafia. The campaign, containing a 19 point programme which addresses local and international institutions, includes points such as the active enforcement of a minimum salary, the promotion of employment policies, stopping austerity measures and rendering banking agencies more flexible towards crisis strangled debtors.

Another expansion in terms of what is being contested is of geographical nature. The fact that the mafia has expanded nationally and internationally in its enterprises is apparent both in the fact that the confiscated assets, and consequently the cooperatives, are physically located from the south to the north of Italy, where the 'Ndrangheta<sup>34</sup> is particularly strong, but also in the types of activities which the cooperatives are promoting on these assets. An example of the work is that of *Pietra di Scarto* and *Terra AUT*, two cooperatives which are not part of *Libera Terra Group* but which administer confiscated land. Their activities take place in *Cerignola*, which is in *Apulia* and is in one of Italy's most productive agricultural areas. The high quantity of seasonal work linked primarily to tomatoes and olives attracts a lot of migrants and criminal groups who traffic and enslave the workers to conditions of limited freedom and miserable wages. The work of the two cooperatives is therefore focused on international human trafficking, and their opposition to the mafia is expressed in their creation of seasonal work places for migrants to demonstrate that it is possible to do things differently, and legally. The volunteers participate in the political and cultural activities which link the cooperative to other organisations which fight against migrant exploitation, but also actively produce the tomatoes and requalify the confiscated buildings.

What is also central in today's anti-mafia economy is the issue of the environment, which is personified and protected a victim. The cooperatives in fact prioritise the use of organic farming methods, avoiding the use of industrial pesticides other than the copper and sulphur. This is in line with the shift in interest of the mafia itself, which is increasingly investing in renewable energy as well as the waste disposal sector, which is particularly evident with the environmental disaster in *Campania* region. The municipalities of *Naples* and *Caserta* have been in fact dramatically polluted due to the illegal disposal of house-hold, industrial and toxic operated by the *Camorra* which, taking advantage of the limits of the region's incinerators and landfills, have made illegal waste disposal a lucrative business. The presence of dioxin and heavy metals in the waste has led to the contamination of entire food chains and resulted in a crisis of *Bufala mozzarella* producers as well as having been

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<sup>33</sup> Gruppo Abele is a social association founded in 1965 by don Luigi Ciotti, the president of *Libera*.

<sup>34</sup> The 'Ndrangheta is a mafia organisation which has origins in *Calabria* and is as of today probably the most powerful criminal organisation in the world, in terms of revenue (*Transcrime*, 2014).

correlated to a peak in cancer cases in the so called “Triangle of Death” (Senior and Mazza, 2004).

This turn also mirrors the generalised growth of attention to environmental issues within society. As opposed to other areas of food consumption in Italy which have decreased by 3,7%, the demand for organic products has grown by 8,8% in 2013 (FIRAB, 2014). Sicily and Southern Italy in general, lead in the production of these products (also due to the favourable climatic conditions which facilitate production), whilst it is the Central and Northern regions who top consumption. This is linked to the fact that consumers of organic products are usually inhabitants of urban areas and have a higher level of education and income (Forno, 2011). In fact, Southern Italian consumers have a lower level of income and have more access to products which are sold directly by small-scale producers. The majority of the confiscated land which has been successfully reallocated is accordingly in Southern Italy; so the choice of organic farming is also geographically facilitated. Yet the decision of using organic principles is not just strategic for the marketing of the produce, but also for its inherent symbolism. It further enforces the idea of a “clean” market. Firstly, because organic production requires more work-force, which is one of the movement’s goals; by ensuring the respect of workers’ rights, the labour which is produced is “clean” and contrasts systemic corruption. Secondly, there is a purely non-human element in this symbolic cleansing which is equally strong; as Francesco Galante, spokesman for Libera Terra puts it (The Salt, 2014): “To be organic is a form of respect. The idea is being kind to the soil itself: to start anew, to take symbolic poisons and real poisons from the soil itself.”

### *Platforms and tools*

The expansion in terms of what can be considered mafia has necessarily required a broader spectrum of resources, arenas and tools by today’s anti-mafia. While the proto-cooperatives which emerged in the nineteenth century were aimed at increasing access to land and empowering the farmers, the claims of today’s cooperatives are far more multifaceted and diverse, which is most obviously mirrored in the complexity of the cooperative form; proto-cooperatives only shared the use of the lands and initial investments (Santino, 2009:125-126), whilst more than a century later, the cooperatives have fully developed into providing mutual social, economic and cultural capital. The intent of these cooperatives is to expand the benefit of these capitals to the wider public, and rather than being primarily aimed at its members, they are aimed at a broader social share, thus in Blumer’s words transforming from an expressive to an active social movement (1951).

The promotion of today’s anti-mafia culture takes on instruments of a mature capitalist society, where individuals are *always* consumers. It is therefore not a coincidence that the movement has also turned to citizens in their role of consumers, and that it is through the language of brands that the movement speaks to its consumers.

In *The Ethical Economy* Arvidsson and Peitersen trace a synoptic history of brands which I will try to render even more shortly for the purpose of this context. Originally brands were basically symbols for products, which gave them some sort of specific identity which consumers could identify with and thus purchase. Already at this initial stage, brands were a “new kind of connecting device” to others who manifested similar choices in their purchases. In the sixties, with the spread of television and more differentiated media, companies began understanding that consumers had rather fluid lifestyles rather than fixed tastes for particular things, so brands began constructing contexts within which particular tastes for things could be hybridised and matched (a good example is Marlboro’s forging of new types of masculinity). As media became further diversified throughout the eighties, the products and the consumers they appealed to became increasingly global, so the “mixes and matches” between different normative fields and objects became even more diversified, making the connection between a brand and a specific product-Marlboro and a cigarette-more difficult. The increased availability of communication technologies has additionally shifted the boundaries between production and consumption, making it easier for people to make their own music and fashion or, in this case, political product. This means that brands themselves come to rely more and more on consumers (or prosumers) to evolve their products, and that brands become less and less symbolic and more and more social. Brands (and their underlying communities) have transformed from being a mere symbolic expression of identity to the concrete entrepreneurial productive force of that same identity.

An illustration of this is AddioPizzo, whose history starts with a symbol of expression which quickly becomes an aggregative technology. The association started up in 2004 when a group of friends, upon deciding to start up a business in Palermo, realised that they had a very high chance of paying *pizzo* (protection money) and therefore considered putting it in their budget<sup>35</sup>. Soon after, these friends materialised their rage and indignation into a sticker which they spread throughout the city reading: “An entire people who pays *pizzo* is a people without dignity”. The media coverage of this message was broad and soon everyone was talking about it, also because the last memory of anti-extortion activist in Palermo ended tragically, as described earlier with the case of Libero Grassi. The group of friends decided to act on this wave of attention, and started (wisely) acting upon consumers rather than entrepreneurs.

They literally went knocking, door to door, to collect signatures of people who were willing to buy *pizzo*-free products. (...) This was a hard process, and it clearly started with the closest relatives and networks (*ibidem*).

After a year of campaigning, the regional newspaper published their dedication to fighting *pizzo*, supported by the 3500 names of consumers who were willing

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<sup>35</sup> Pecoraro, Giuseppe, AddioPizzo Activist, 30th May 2014.

to act critically (Gunnarson, 2014; Forno, 2011). What followed was the gradual inclusion of entrepreneurs which started as a list of 100 adherents in 2006, and is today a network of 916 businesses, officially supported by 11467 consumers (AddioPizzo, 2014). AddioPizzo has also recently launched an official AddioPizzo card, which the consumer can use in the network of businesses and donate a quota of each purchase to a “collective investment”- a project which aims at requalifying Palermo. AddioPizzo also organises touristic activities to promote these businesses through their AddioPizzo Travel component, and has started an actual brand in 2010 which is aimed at

Further promoting the products which are characterized by **excellent quality level** but also by the fact they are made **respecting lawfulness, principles of sustainability and respect for the environment**. The agricultural products are strictly organic, while the crafted products are aimed at recycling, reutilising and promoting small artisans or cooperatives which work with the social inclusion of subjects which are particularly at risk of being marginalised (*ivi*).

The visibility and credibility gained through these brands is powerful, making it easier to denounce violent acts and making extorters “afraid of coming into the branded shops because we are too loud now”<sup>36</sup>, as one of the methods employed by the movement is to place an AddioPizzo sticker in the window of the shops which are part of the network.

The success of AddioPizzo and the cooperatives linked to Libera Terra, can in this optic be seen as being linked to their capacities to create connections between people who have similar worldviews and who develop an “affective proximity” (Arvidsson and Peitersen, 2013) with the brand and products with which they identify. The consequent community which has developed around these products is able to make connections and organise social processes in productive ways.

### **Consuming the change**

Although the two forms of protest are distant in time and in context, I find it useful to look at them comparatively to see how much has changed in the more entrepreneurial part of anti-mafia activism. Today’s activists have in fact reframed their negative heritage into an asset which can effectively become the infrastructure of an alternative worldview, and have done so by using instruments which are the very fruit of a late capitalist market economy. Through the use of brands, they have managed to create connections between people who share an identity, and who through a common object are able to support a cause in creative ways. The resulting products blur the boundaries between economic and cultural spheres, where “material culture is taken as the

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<sup>36</sup> “*Facemu troppu scrusciu*” AddioPizzo entrepreneur, personal interview, 30th May 2014.

transfer of things in order to produce symbolic, social and affective values” (Knudsen et al 2014:1).

The success of these products also reflects a demand from critical consumers, who have begun to see consumption as a mean to create an identity and express a particular will. Clive Hamilton describes the process of changing our unsustainable consumption patterns as a sort of death of the subject, as when we are asked to change the way we consume, we are asked to change who we are (Lewis and Potter, 2011:9). Yet it is possible to turn this around and view the consumer as an agent whose desire is transformation, and whose most accessible political medium is his wallet. Critical consumption can in this sense be considered an attempt to create a different realm of political governance.

Anti-mafia activism has in fact turned to this very sphere of action -the market- which has been fundamental for its growth, both nationally and internationally. This is important to reflect upon, particularly for activists and especially because the advanced capitalist model within which we operate today is often portrayed as a place where there is no space for political transformation, and is described as a unified, totalising and singular system (Gibson-Graham, 1993). In a historical moment in which the capitalist market is so central to many political struggles, it is important to reflect upon how it can be used beneficially to obtain one’s aims, rather than opposing it unconditionally. The transformations of the anti-mafia movement represent numerous successful ways of using and reinterpreting the market to spread immaterial and material value.

Markets *can* be a space of care as well as of consumption. As we become more attuned to how our actions as consumers affect the ability of others to survive well, the market becomes less a space of enchantment and unbridled pleasure and more a space of learning and collective responsibility (Gibson-Graham, 2013:104).

The inclusion of volunteers in the production of the goods is particularly important for the creation of this type value. Not only do the volunteers contribute to the creation of concrete goods with their work-force, but they also help fund the cooperative’s expenses and the activities with a fee, which covers cultural excursions, workshops and seminars. These take place on confiscated spaces which are bursting in symbolic content, and on which highly experiential activities take place to trigger common emotional reactions which strengthen the sense of cohesion. One volunteer from Lombardy<sup>37</sup> described his experience in Apulia as follows:

It’s so much better than watching television. I mean they keep telling you that people are poor, that crime rate is high and that there are people being trafficked

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<sup>37</sup> Turconi, Gianbattista, Libera Activist, personal interview, 26th July 2014.



from all over Africa to pluck our tomatoes. But seeing it! Experiencing it! Wow! I didn't actually believe that people down here couldn't respect traffic, that people down here lived so differently. You have to experience it to actually believe it. And it's important to believe it because after all we are a country.

In this sense the volunteer can be also be considered a consumer of experiences, which according to Joseph Pine (1999) is a central feature of today's economy. Pine argues that consumers are in fact no longer satisfied with goods and services, but that they increasingly demand to purchase experiences. The growing tourist industry is a clear example of this shift in consumption, which is mirrored by the fact that the anti-mafia has also turned to tourists to enforce their movement.

It is through the creation of these micro-experiences that the cooperatives have engaged activists, volunteers and tourists; involving them, informing them, making them feel emotionally absorbed in their daily opposition to the mafia. One activist<sup>38</sup> commented on a visit we took in Casa Memoria, a memorial site where an 11 year old child was murdered by the mafia:

I have never been to this place before, but I will certainly promise myself to return again at least every month. The emotions I feel, the anger and sense of injustice makes me feel like it's worth fighting and living. It makes me feel proud of my lifestyle and work.

It is through these experiences that activists find sense and feel pleasure in a sort of "collective (auto) therapy of desire" (Berardi, 2011:131):

There is no ethics that can be effective and not repressive if not one which is founded on the correspondence between one's actions and one's pleasure. The attention of the ethical thought must thus move from the field of universal norms to the field of desire, and must be thought of as collective (auto)therapy of desire. (...) Ethics must thus be transformed to therapy, in the opening of one's perceptive channels, in the comprehension of the fact that it is only in the other's pleasure that I can find mine.

## **Conclusions**

This paper is an effort to reconstruct the main characteristics of anti-mafia sentiments and collective action from their origins to today. Through this historical analysis it has been possible to trace the different phases which the mafia has undergone and the respective shapes which anti-mafia activism has moulded into, to oppose these forces.

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<sup>38</sup> Umberto di Maggio, Libera focus group discussion, July 2014.

When the mafia was mainly present in the agrarian sector, administering the aristocracy's land and mediating the newly born relationships between the centre and the periphery of the state, the anti-mafia took on the shoes of the *Fasci*, marching for labour rights and contesting the power relationships which dominated nineteenth century Sicily. In this phase labour unions and political parties were an important channel for these claims, but these were also accompanied by the spontaneous entrepreneurial activities which have been discussed with the example of the collective rentals. The agrarian mafia and the newly unified state repressed these initiatives in various occasions, and although the workers' movement grew stronger in consensus and achieved some legislative progress, it began to lose its mass features from the 1950s onwards when its claims were taken on mainly by the Italian Communist Party (PCI), which was a minor political force compared to the Christian Democratic Party which devised more and more with the conservative classes and the mafia.

From the 1950s onwards, the mafia became a more skilful state entrepreneur, infiltrating the tertiary sector and accessing institutional power as well as expanding its cross-Atlantic alliances. Due to the weakened labour unions and institutional channels, the anti-mafia movement was in this phase primarily characterised by solitary heroes whom stood up to corruption and violence through cultural media.

The 1970s marked an economic boom for the mafia due to the growingly financial economy, the expansion of the drug market and its international partners. The explosion in financial capital resulted in a fierce war between the two main factions of the Sicilian mafia, which had gory spill-overs within civil society and resulted in the assassination of key institutional figures that had been particularly active in fighting Cosa Nostra. This resulted in an intense period of mass protests, demonstrations and emotional reactions nationally, which echoed the idea that the mafia could no longer be seen as a regional issue but that the entire social contract on which Italy was built was at stake.

The last decades have been times of latency for both the mafia and its grass-root opponents. Although we have extensive knowledge and data on the amount of capital which is accumulated the manifestations of this wealth and power is invisible, with isolated exceptions of manifest conflict. It is within this context that the movement is acting in more silent manners, creating a daily cultural opposition to the mafia through education, awareness raising and research carried out mainly by civil society organisations and private citizens. But today's referent object cannot be tackled solely through awareness raising and institutions, towards which trust is crumbling as fast as austerity measures are being imposed, to cover an inconceivably heavy debt which should be paid through an anaemic GDP. Today's referent object speaks a global language of exponential financial growth, which everyone speaks but few understand. How to oppose the criminal accumulation of value in a system which allows for speculation on any tradable good or financial instrument?

Finance is not a monetary tradition of a certain quantity of physical goods, but a linguistic effect. (...) There is no enemy, nobody to negotiate with, but mathematical implications, automatic social concatenations that you cannot take apart or avoid (Berardi, 2011:70).

The anti-mafia movement has chosen to answer through the production of an alternative market, where employment, transparency and solidarity are central. It has chosen to negotiate with products that oppose *omertá*, by branding an anti-mafia identity which gives consumers some of the agency which is so volatile in times of crisis.

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