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A TALE OF REVERSE DEVIANCE: NON-COMPLIANT SPATIAL PRACTICES IN THE LAND OF GOMORRAH

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Abstract

Racketeering local activities, though less relevant in terms of financial turnover, still represents a distinctive feature of mafia-like organisations for it provides them with striking social power. Mafias constitute indeed forms of governance that heavily rely on the acquiescence, if not on the consensus, of the community which they are rooted in. I thus argue that territoriality is critical for a comprehensive understanding of the mafia phenomenon: territories contribute to the reproduction of mafia groups not only in ecological terms, providing human and economic resources to organised crime, but also in cultural ones, forming symbolic and representational spaces that play an active role in the socialisation of the norms at the bottom of people's compliance. The production of space in areas policed by mafia groups is the dynamics that I sought to account for by undertaking field research in the surroundings of Caserta, also known as Gomorrah, where the clout of the Camorra (the Neapolitan mafia) is notorious and yet to be tarnished. I focused on non-compliant spatial practices for illuminating, by contrast, how space takes part to the construction of the mafia governance: the findings presented in this paper come from participant observation and in-depth interviews conducted in former properties of the Camorra where two worker cooperatives installed themselves and started legal businesses in outright contrast with organised crime. This process of reterritorialisation, I argue, discloses the sociological intersection between space and mafia, raising relevant policy implications about the fight against such form of organised crime.

Introduction

Compared to other forms of organised crime, Italian mafias stand out by virtue of the contradictory union between an unscrupulous capitalist entrepreneurship and a primitive cultural heritage (Arlacchi, 1986). Criminal networks such as the Camorra in Campania and the 'Ndrangheta in Calabria have proven their capability to exploit globalisation and make profit on transnational crime without losing the grip on their places of origin, being their status historically rooted in the governance of the local economy (Hess, 1973; Blok, 1974). As a matter of fact, criminal networks still benefit from large acquiescence in some rural and urban areas of Southern Italy policed by local mafia groups, which functionally replace the state in many respects (Gambetta, 1996; Varese, 2010). This breach of the sovereignty of the state questions the very assumption of the rule of law, highlighting a grey zone where the code of silence is a social norm and the distinction between licit and illicit fades away (Pardo, 1996; Abraham and Van Schendel, 2005; Pine, 2012).

In this paper, I focus on the grey zone of people subject to the mafia authority, which is at the heart of the societal dimension of Italian organised crime. Because territoriality is of great importance for mafia-like organisations (Paoli, 2003; Campana, 2011; Varese, 2011; Allum, 2014), I adopted a spatial perspective for my research, arguing that the sociology of space may add an original contribution to the topic: spatial practices of people coping with organised crime in their daily life can serve as a privileged point of observation to account for the mafia social power. The present study is an ethnography of a reterritorialisation process located in the surroundings of Caserta, which territories have been notoriously tyrannised by the Camorra (Varese, 2009). The reterritorialisation draws upon the non-compliant spatial practices of two worker cooperatives that, in outright contrast with organised crime, run legal businesses in former properties of the Camorra. This process, subverting the morals of the grey zone, illuminates by contrast its social norms and highlights the importance of the cultural construction of space for the mafia governance.

The ethnographic material presented in the paper comes from participant observation and in-depth interviews conducted in July 2013 in Sessa Aurunca and in Castel Volturno, where the worker cooperatives take place. I spent two weeks on the field, first volunteering with other participants in a summer camp that involved both educational and working tasks, and then visiting the field on my own to record interviews with members and employees of the

cooperatives. Goals and methods of the research were made clear to everyone from the beginning: since I grew up in Naples, dealing with the grey zone for most of my childhood, my personal biography played a major role in granting trust from the interviewed. However, in light of the ethical stance underlying the reterritorialisation process, I was able to dodge many of the obstacles that might have ravelled my research in such a tricky field (Becker, 1967; Kovats-Bernat, 2002).

The research is presented as follows. Section 1 deals with different accounts of Italian mafias to both provide context for the reader about the setting of the ethnography and illustrate the analytical framework which the conceptualisation of the mafia phenomenon relies on. Section 2 addresses methodology, with particular regard to the epistemological issues concerning the spatial perspective adopted by the researcher and the research strategy overall. Section 3 presents the data gathered during the fieldwork, attempting an interpretation in accordance with the extant literature on the grey zone and the mafia governance. Lastly, the conclusions add some final remarks on the intersection between space and mafia-like organisations, and its policy implications.

All the quotes are the author's translation. Personal names have been changed, though all the participants in this study gave their consent to the publication of informal conversations and recorded interviews occurred during the ethnography.

1. Historical, sociological, and legal accounts of the mafia phenomenon

The academic interest towards organised crime increased significantly in the '20s when alcohol prohibition, causing the rise and proliferation of illegal markets in the United States, drew a lot of attention from government and scholars. Since then, the study of organised crime has been strongly related to governmental policies, which have often influenced the academic insight into such phenomenon (Varese, 2010). Yet, the dependence of criminology on the legal account of organised crime may be problematic: policy-makers' enthusiasm in fighting criminal organisations usually produces misinterpretations about their multi-faceted nature, especially as for the societal dimension which these organisations are embedded in (Ruggiero, 2001). This warning is particularly relevant to the case of Italian mafias, which long-lasting success also rests on idiosyncratic aspects that need to be conciliated with a more general framework of analysis for the study of organised crime.

The insurgence of the earliest mafia-like organisations is generally dated back in the 19th century, during the struggle for national sovereignty in Italy (Lupo, 2011; Marmo, 2011). Most southern communities, which used to live off of a rural economy in the shade of foreigner rulers, did not recognise the unification movement led by the North, claiming their independence even after the formation of the Italian state was officially declared. Several groups characterised by patron-client relationships arose, organising the local governance in spite of the new Italian government: scholars have accounted for both daily routines and political events witnessing the constitution of a social counter-power linked to the uprising of these groups in Southern Italy (Hobsbawm, 1971; Gambetta, 1988; Pagden, 1988). In a broader sense, they became outlaw as consequence of the unification process, yet they kept enough social and political legitimacy, along with military and economic resources, for engaging in relations of power with the Italian state. As a matter of fact, members of these groups, given their status, were even recruited by the state police to ensure public order (Arlacchi, 1986; Pine, 2012).

Police functions (including the repression of deviant behaviours) and economic regulation were indeed critical features of traditional mafias before they changed from status-oriented to profit-oriented organisations (Hess, 1973; Blok, 1974; Arlacchi, 1986). However, although contemporary mafia groups have worldwide economic interests that make the racketeering of local activities less relevant in terms of financial turnover (Abraham and Van Schendel, 2005), they still work as local governances, attaching great value to the social legitimation of their power (Sciarrone, 2006). Paoli (2004) maintains that mafia-like organisations, though springing up as unions which rules apply only to their members, act as institutions which authority applies *erga omnes*. The process of institutionalisation is specular to the insurgence of the state: mafia groups turn into territorial and political organisations, providing people with regular or undeclared jobs, granting family allowances to the relatives of arrested or dead mafiosi, and policing entire urban and rural areas. The institutionalisation of mafia groups can thus be functionally associated with the insurgence of the state (Varese, 2010).

The analytical framework proposed by Varese considers mafia-like organisations as part of a seamless continuum with the state, both of them attempting to control the entire supply of protection (namely, the monopoly on violence) rather than single markets. Accordingly, if a power vacuum exists, someone will attempt to fill it. In fact, Varese (2006) argues that the recent proliferation of mafia groups in Northern Italy mainly depends on the lack of institutional control

over certain sectors of the local economy: the 'Ndrangheta succeeded in migrating there because the state had retreated, generating a power vacuum and replicating the same conditions that flawed the Italian state-building process in the 19th century. Whilst this explanatory pattern is backed by other authors' argumentations (Tilly, 1985; Gambetta, 1996), Varese himself talks about the migration of pre-existing mafia groups rather than the insurgence of autochthonous organised crime (Varese, 2006). Thus, holding true the importance of the historical legacy of the mafia, its account cannot be reduced to sole economic factors (Paoli, 2002; Allum and Sands, 2004).

Block and Chambliss (1981) put stress on this point, qualifying mafia-like organisations as power syndicates on the societal side and as enterprise syndicates on the economic side: despite minor differences, Italian mafias like Cosa Nostra in Sicily, the 'Ndrangheta in Calabria, and the Camorra in Campania all fit this definition (Paoli, 2004). Among the non-economic features that distinguish these criminal networks from other forms of organised crime, territoriality, intended as both the functional bond and the cultural attachment of mafia groups to their places of origin, stands out as one of the most relevant. Even if involved in transnational crime, mafia groups always set up headquarters in their home territories, seeking social consensus and political leverage for securing a large stake in the local governance (Allum, 2014; Martone, 2014). As for Italian mafias, the societal dimension that ties them to their home territories has proven to be so prominent to be taken also into account by the law. Art. 416bis of the criminal code says:

Crime association is mafia-like when those belonging to [the criminal organisation] take advantage of the intimidating power, the subjugation, and the code of silence that stem from [their partnership] in order to commit crimes, to directly or indirectly take over economic activities, franchises, authorisations, contracts and public utilities either to make profit or to enjoy unfair advantages for themselves or for others, to obstruct free elections or to provide votes either for themselves or for others at the elections.

Several elements mentioned by the law, such as the notion of subjugation or the code of silence, explicitly refer to the sociological understanding of the mafia, depicting its social power (Arlacchi, 1986). Many anti-mafia prosecutors have backed this account, breaking down the mafia power into social consensus, economic power, political power, and territorial sovereignty

(Pepino and Nebiolo, 2006). Giovanni Falcone (1991: 71), one year before Cosa Nostra killed him, wrote:

I trust institutions, and I believe that it is the lack of civism that provokes Sicilians' faults: clashing the state, failing back to their own families and clans, looking for alibis to live and work in perfect anomie, and in defiance of any collective rule. Does the mafia originate from something else than a mixture of anomie and primitive violence? The same mafia that, essentially, is nothing but the need for order, that is to say, the need for the state.

What Falcone calls anomie, rather than endemic social disorganisation, is the power vacuum that the mafia has filled with its own set of values and behaviours. Many of these, such as the code of silence, the bribery, and the supply of private protection, are so widespread to be conceivable as an alternative form of social organisation. Hence, the social acquiescence (if not the consensus) in the mafia governance is critical for making sense of the societal dimension of Italian organised crime, which is epitomised by mafia groups' attachment to their home territory.

As I elucidated so far, the culture of the mafia is historically rooted in the material governance of the economy. Yet, motivations and behaviours of the social actors who comply with its authority can be framed in persistent cultural patterns that deserve autonomous analysis for a better understanding of the mafia phenomenon overall. In this respect, one of the first enquiries that drew on a pure sociological insight was conducted throughout the '60s in Sicily by Ferrarotti (1978), who employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to let Sicilians' thoughts and opinions illuminate the social construction of Cosa Nostra. Most recently, anthropologists have directed their gaze towards the grey zone entailed by the social acquiescence of those ones who cope with the mafia in their daily life, though they neither belong to any mafia group nor are involved in criminal enterprises of any sort (Pardo, 1996; Pine, 2012).

For my part, I contend that, being territoriality such a distinctive feature of mafia-like organisations (Paoli, 2003; Campana, 2011; Varese, 2011; Allum, 2014), territories should not be regarded just in ecological terms as stated by most criminological accounts concerning the environment. Rather, they should be acknowledged as social spaces taking actively part to the cultural construction of the aforementioned grey zone and, therefore, of the mafia social power. On the one hand, it is well-known that Italian mafias set great value on symbols (Gambetta,

1991); on the other, drawing on the long wave of the spatial turn in social sciences (Urry, 2001; Warf and Arias, 2008), it has been suggested that more attention should be paid to the relationship between organised crime and geography (Hall, 2010). Hence, I argue that a spatial perspective is worth to be explored for better interpreting the intersection between mafia and space.

2. Methodology and mafia spaces as research fields

Making a critical departure from the neo-Cartesian notion of space and focusing on its social dimension, Lefebvre (1991: 73) maintains that space is a process made out of living spatial relations rather than a neutral, inert, and pre-existing scenography:

Social space is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather, it subsumes things produced and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity – their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder.

Space should not be understood as ideal or real per se; it is rather the product of a mutual relation between material and cultural processes. Lefebvre (1991) points out three key concepts making up the dialectic that leads to the social production of space: *i*) “spatial practices” refers to everyday life’s material production of space through the spatial relations set by the activities of a given community; *ii*) “representations of space” refers to the cognition of physical and architectonical spaces reflecting certain relations of production; *iii*) “representational spaces” refers to the symbolisation and idealisation of space resulting from the synthesis of all of the above. Although Lefebvre was mainly interested in the capitalist production of abstract space whereby homogenisation, hierarchisation, and social fragmentation come along, I argue that, within a diverse level of analysis, his triad can usefully apply to the spatial processes at play in mafia territories. In fact, mafia territories are not just locations where the criminal activities occur; rather, they are social spaces where the competition for sovereignty between organised crime and the state blurs the borders between the licit and the illicit, merging the mafia spatial practices with the morals of the actors dealing with this grey zone (Abraham and Van Schendel, 2005). In other words, the mafia incumbency is socially mediated also through the cultural construction of space, which reflects and reinforces the social norms dictated by mafia groups.

The constructivist approach to the mafia spatial dimension might seem at odds with the realist assumptions beneath the analytical framework of the organised crime insurgence discussed above, which puts much emphasis on the role played by the state (Varese, 2010). Yet, I suggest that one possible answer to this point has already filtered through the former paragraphs. Stating that structural factors can account for the rise of mafia-like organisations whilst cultural ones contribute to their persistence, I contend that either a realist or a constructivist approach can be adopted depending on the angle from which one aims to investigate such phenomenon: they are still two sides of the same coin. Hence, I decided to prioritise the research puzzle over any other epistemological consideration that might have bounded the topic to philosophically compelling yet empirically limiting frameworks (Becker, 1996). Obviously, I do not intend to belittle the ramifications for any sociological research agenda of so different ontological interpretations of the social world. However, attempting to accommodate the idiosyncratic traits of Italian mafias with a broader criminological understanding of organised crime, I carried out this ethnography being convinced that, above all, different research methods can serve different research goals (Mahoney and Goertz, 2006).

Coming to the research methods, I conducted an ethnographic study about the production of space in the province of Caserta, where the dominion of the clans (mafia groups) forming the criminal network also known as the Camorra is so pervasive that the whole area has been bitterly renamed after Saviano's worldwide best-seller "Gomorrah" (Pine, 2008; Varese, 2009). I focused on the reterritorialisation process led by two worker cooperatives that, openly challenging the Camorra, run legal businesses in lands and properties that the state sequestered from the clans. Subverting the spatial practices that used to define the spatial relations dictated by the Camorra, the reterritorialisation can illuminate, by contrast, how space takes part to the mafia governance. Because I was born and raised in Naples, my personal biography could help me to overcome the histrionic attitude that most people enact in the grey zone, making harder for the researcher to decode their real thoughts (Pine, 2012). In this case, however, the research strategy mostly rested on a shared ethical stance against organised crime, making things a little easier (Becker, 1967). Moreover, this strategy allowed me to get access to the field going around the code of silence and minimising the danger intrinsic to the research topic (Kovats-Bernat, 2002).

The research findings presented in the next section come from participant observation and in-depth interviews conducted in July 2013 in Sessa Aurunca and in Castel Volturno, where the

worker cooperatives take place. Firstly, I took part with other volunteers in a summer camp organised by Libera, the NGO coordinating most of the worker cooperatives that have settled in former mafia properties; then, I visited both the cooperatives on my own to record the interviews. During my stay, the activities in which I was involved included several tasks (farming, dairying, hedging, and various types of unskilled labour), lectures and testimonies on the mafia topic, and visits to the surroundings. Along with my field notes, I recorded sixteen interviews with cooperative members, employees, and volunteers. In addition, I took note of an informal yet meaningful conversation occurred with a farm manager who does business with one of the cooperatives. Every person cited in this study was made aware of the research scope and explicitly agreed to the utilisation of the following ethnographic material.

3. Challenging the Camorra on its own ground: a tale of reverse deviance

The province of Caserta covers a vast area just above the city of Naples, extending up to the border between Campania and Lazio. Many of the dreadful crime stories reported in Saviano's famed book (2006) took place there, and the whole area is now sadly regarded as the land of Gomorrah. In 2008, just for mentioning one of the cruellest episode recorded, Castel Volturno hosted the massacre of seven African immigrants perpetrated by the Casalesi, one of the many clans constituting the Camorra, who were claiming their sovereignty over the local drug market. Beyond such an unprecedented manslaughter, though, there is the ordinary life of thirteen thousand other migrants, mostly exploited on a daily basis through the *caporalato* (the illegal recruitment of agricultural workers for very low wages). Since the migratory flux has started, such practice happened to be normal in Castel Volturno, which came to be the first city ever in Italy with a major immigrant population.

The Castel Volturno massacre is not the only crime news concealing a whole iceberg below it. Nearby, in the same year, the dioxin scandal has cast a shadow on the buffalo mozzarella industry, one of the most representative and successful business in the area. Police enquiries found out a well-established illegal traffic of industrial wastes from Northern Italy to Campania, which side effects were the pollution of farming and breeding activities, including the production of mozzarella (that turned out to be contaminated by dioxin). Whilst drawing attention to the new issue of the ecomafia, namely the systematic exploitation of the environment by mafia groups, the dioxin scandal also shed light on the grey zone enshrouding the whole buffalo mozzarella industry: random quality checks decided by the state police found that, basically, all the

producers had cheated on the usage of original local milk. As a consequence, the consortium in charge of the production standards decided to formally allow the usage of imported milk by decision of its ten major members. Yet, six of them were already under investigation by anti-mafia prosecutors.

As with the migrants in Castel Volturno, most ambiguous practices in the buffalo mozzarella industry could be hardly defined as deviant in sociological terms, since they involve the whole economic sector. On the average, producing buffalo mozzarella with local milk costs about 5.50€per kilo, plus 0.50€per kilo for transportation; yet, mass retailers sell it for 6.50€per kilo. There are no enterprises that can survive on these profit margins in the free market. Nonetheless, producers and consumers comply, even if many of them are perfectly aware that the tricks that keep the final price so low might harm both their business and their health.

Salvatore, better known as Tore, is a master dairyman employed at “Le Terre di Don Peppe Diana”, a worker cooperative named after the anti-mafia priest murdered in 1994 in Casal di Principe. The cooperative is placed in a former estate of the Camorra near Castel Volturno, twenty kilometres away from Casal di Principe. The estate has been converted in a dairy in 2012; the cooperative also manages ninety hectares of apple and peach orchards. Tore, on his hand, has been crafting buffalo mozzarella since he was ten. He changed nine dairy companies throughout his life before he arrived at “Le Terre” six months ago, at the age of sixty. When I asked him about the above mentioned issues about the mozzarella industry, stressing that his new employer tackle them in overt opposition to the Camorra, he replied as follows:

I never wanted to raise problems. I work, I'm an employee; so what's the worst thing they can do to me? They can tell me not to work here anymore? Well, the morning after, I'd still have the same problems; are you going to solve them? No? Then I'll solve them by myself, going to work somewhere else. [...] My problem is always the same: I must work. This boss or that boss, he just has to provide for a wage, nothing more.

Pronouncing his statement, Tore sounded neither angry nor afflicted. He dropped school and started working at ten for helping out his large family: the very nature of his problem has never been called into question. He agreed to work for “Le Terre” when his former employer had to fire him because of the economic crisis. Thus, although the product he is contributing to put on

the market is made in a former estate of the Camorra and is named “Il G(i)usto della Mozzarella” (a word game for “tasteful and lawful mozzarella”), he believes this changes nothing for him. If “they” (referring to the camorristi) should intimidate him somehow, he would simply look for another employer, since “we” (including me among those who could not solve his problem) cannot challenge “their” authority thus far. Hence, I tried to ask him what authority he is subject to, and whether he had ever had recourse to formal institutions for addressing any sort of issue:

I never had any issue because we are people minding our own business; we don’t bother anyone, we’re workers. I’m that kind of guy who has always wandered around at night. Always. I minded my own business. And now that I’m sixty, I can say I’m fine. I feel fine. I’m friendly with everyone, even with [incomprehensible], we meet up, we have a coffee, I do my job, you do yours. I don’t care about what other people do, except for my family.

Doing overt research, I made no mystery of my interest in the Camorra. Tore showed to be perfectly aware of what the subject of our conversation was, but he never addressed it directly. He used instead roundabout expressions, glancing and smiling from time to time, and alluding to the camorristi as “them”, if necessary, for “they” are alien to his family as much as formal institutions are. His words immediately summon the powerful images of amoral familism and distrust that are discussed in the ethnographic works of Banfield (1958) and Belmonte (1979). In the end, authority is a matter of who dictates the rules, and for Tore there is not much distance between the Camorra and the state. As many people living in the grey zone, Tore does not endorse criminal networks per se; yet, he does not trust formal institutions either, which claim to sovereignty is likely to jeopardise the social and economic equilibrium guaranteed by the Camorra (Pardo, 1996).

In this respect, the volunteers and I have been told an illuminating story about authority and compliance in a mafia space. In Sessa Aurunca, where the second worker cooperative takes place, the local beetroot market used to rely on laissez-faire for a long time before the intervention of the Camorra. Most people were discontented because the beetroot price, being object of predatory competition, fluctuated a lot in a day: some farmers retained their supplies till late, waiting for the price to rise at the expense of those ones who sold the beetroots in the morning. Then, the camorristi forced all the farmers to compensate their proceeds in accordance with the daily average price, which resulted from the total mean of all the sales occurred during the day. This

story perfectly fits in the aforementioned framework that accounts for the insurgence of organised crime (Varese, 2010), emphasising its mediatory and regulatory functions (Arlacchi, 1986).

Aurelio, a family man and cooperative member who was born and raised in Sessa Aurunca, is used to tell this story to the summer camp volunteers for the very purpose of stressing the difference between ordinary crime and organised crime. Almost all the volunteers are indeed from Northern Italy because, as he says, his fellow countrymen are either too old to change their mind or too young to contradict their parents and take part in the cooperative activities. Aurelio himself experienced a social censure for questioning the morals of the grey zone: when he set up his cooperative in a land formerly owned by the Camorra, some people broke into the estate, wrecking and ravaging around. For a while, Aurelio and his partners had to sleep inside the estate, not so much for watching over as for publicly rejecting the intimidation. Drawing on the classic typology of deviance proposed by Merton (1938), Aurelio and his partners can be classified as rebels who rise up against the rules of the social context they are embedded in. However, because those rules stem from the governance of a criminal organisation, their behaviour can be rather labelled as a form of reverse deviance, which goals and means paradoxically coincide with those ones promoted by the state; they are deviants insofar as they relate to the morality of the grey zone (Becker, 2008).

Whether the retaliation suffered by Aurelio's cooperative was commanded by the same camorristi that used to own the land before him, it is unknown. Yet, whoever committed it, the very fact that the retaliation happened in return for the reterritorialisation process is extremely meaningful. Even though I did not watch it live, I also witnessed this pattern during my fieldwork. One night, someone trespassed on the peach orchard, damaging the irrigation system and other farm implements. Here too, who committed the fact remains unknown, but suspicions fall on the farmer who had firstly got the allotment of the orchards when the police state sequestered them. Afterwards, the farmer came out to be close to the clan that owned the land before the seizure, so the court reassigned the orchards to "Le Terre". Here follows the account of Lorenzo, the cooperative agronomist:

Despite the trial [had reassigned the orchards], they had to come forest rangers, local policemen, carabinieri, and civil servants to send [the farmer] away. Finally he left the apple orchard, though continuing to pick up some peaches.

We kept on going with our job, but you can picture the atmosphere. He threatened us, he sent people to [intimidate] me. I'm not going to tell you the whole story, I don't want to dramatise, but I got personal problems.

Lorenzo is a young man in his thirties. He earned a degree in agronomics and, when he looked for his first job, the worker cooperative drew his attention. I asked him more about the dispute with the threatening farmer:

That guy is well-known in the area, so nobody was willing to buy [our] fruit. Not because he's a camorrista, though; I don't know about that and I don't care, honestly, but it's his attitude to be camorrista, if not him as an individual. [...] In March, when there was the demonstration in memory [of Don Peppe Diana], we came here [to the orchards] with a greengrocer whom we were making a deal with. Well, when we arrived, we found him waiting for us: he threatened the greengrocer, who got scared and dismissed the deal. You can picture it: the world fell apart around me [since] we were building a bridge with an honest person of this community. It was a promising start; instead, we had to draw back.

The retaliation replicated the typical pattern of the traditional mafia, which usual targets were tree branches and farm implements (Hess, 1973). Lorenzo made clear that the farmer (was he guilty or not) had a certain attitude peculiar to the typical camorrista (regardless of his effective affiliation to any criminal network), implying the existence of a specific mind-set at the bottom of the mafia phenomenon (Arlacchi, 1986) and defining the latter as a cultural system rather than a mere organisation (Pine, 2012). Like Aurelio, Lorenzo can be labelled as a rebel: luckily, because he is extremely resolute in pursuing his deviant goals, he did not lose heart when he had to draw back and he eventually found another greengrocer. Instead, the case of the farmworkers who have been employed by the cooperative without endorsing the reterritorialisation process per se, like Tore did, is different. They are half-dozen young locals who help Lorenzo to take care of the orchards. I asked him how they reacted to the repeated threats and intimidations:

They got scared. [...] Not shocked, I mean... we must be down-to-earth. Workers don't come to work for us because they believe in our project, at the very beginning. They get the job to earn a living. But [they come to work for us]

also because we pay them on a regular basis, and we treat them like human beings. [...] You know, [here] the farmworker contracts, in inverted commas, are 80% *caporalato*, and this is shocking for a human being, this is shameful. Just picture a family man who owes five euros to another guy who does nothing, only because that guy found him a one day job; I mean, this is not just *camorria* [dialectal for tyranny, abuse of power], this is even worse! [So] once they can earn their living [working for us], they become passionate, you bet! Once they see the silver lining in the way we do things, they become keen on the project, and they feel responsible for what we're doing; you start offering them just a job, but it's up to them to make it possible in the end.

Like Tore, the farmworkers were looking for a job in the first place. According to Lorenzo, though, they interiorised the rationale of the reterritorialisation process as soon as they realised the difference between a regular job and the *caporalato*, that is, the difference between work and toil (Pardo, 1996). In fact, the reterritorialisation process ties together the economic opportunity of a regular job with the symbolic value of a material space taken away from the Camorra, attempting to produce a lawful space in the grey zone (Lefebvre, 1991; Abraham and Van Schendel, 2005). By contrast, the idealisation of the home territory of the Camorra emerges from the surroundings, disclosing the cultural construction of the mafia space. The contrast appears even clearer if seen through the eyes of the volunteers who were approaching Gomorrah for the first time. One of the activities planned for the summer camp was the visit to Villaggio Coppola (the Coppola Village), a *frazione* (administrative division) of Castel Volturno named after the entrepreneur who built it in the late '60s. Villaggio Coppola was originally thought as a touristic town, yet it turned out to have been raised up illegally on a state ownership: to this day, it still counts about 130,000 living units distributed over several monster buildings that spoil the stunning landscape around it. Daniele, a young volunteer from Switzerland, summarised as follows his fellows' common reaction:

I was shocked, because I wondered how was it possible for an entrepreneur to build illegally not one house, not one building, but an entire city. I thought that the system itself wasn't working out.

People have been living in Villaggio Coppola for decades now, and the state managed to pull down only one of the buildings of what is the largest land-use infringement ever happened in

Italy. As representational space, Villaggio Coppola is the exemplification of the spatial processes that the worker cooperatives are attempting to subvert by regenerating former mafia spaces seized by the state. In this respect, the rebellion against the aforementioned ambiguous practices of the buffalo mozzarella industry are particularly notable because of the cultural and economic importance that that gastronomic product has always had for Caserta and its neighbourhoods, as stated by Domenico, another cooperative member who works in the dairy with Tore:

I want to stress two things: the Camorra makes business more than casualties and shambles, and in the area of Caserta business cannot prescind from the major economic sector [that is, food processing]. That's why buffalo mozzarella, nay the whole buffalo supply chain, from stock-breeding to milk processing and everything standing in the middle, has always been in the sight of mafia groups, which run dairies and set rules. Our project is so important because this product is something for which Caserta is famous worldwide.

The “tasteful and lawful” mozzarella produced by the cooperative embodies the goals of the reterritorialisation process, having great symbolic value. Furthermore, it is worth to mention that, whilst most products from other worker cooperatives coordinated by Libera are traded by an in-house consortium, buffalo mozzarella is a fresh product and, as such, must be sold directly on the free market on a daily basis. Thus, the economic enterprise that Domenico and his partners have embarked on is not to be underestimated as emphasised by Alberto, the cooperative bookkeeper:

What we do must be sustainable, must be competitive, and so it is, even though we know that someone might filibuster or intimidate us. We are aware [that it could happen], since we're on a former mafia property: we could be troublesome for someone, because we're providing the community with new opportunities, with choices.

Alberto's account was corroborated by a meaningful episode that I witnessed during my last day in Castel Volturno. I followed another cooperative member, Leo, to the buffalo breeding farm from which the cooperative gets its supply of milk. Once there, he started bargaining with the manager either for reducing the following month's supply of milk or for bringing the price down, because the cooperative needed to produce less mozzarella in August. The farm manager, with a peremptory tone, replied that he could not tell his buffalos to make less milk: they were

agreed on a one-year contract and no discounts were admitted. The scene felt quite tough. Yet, taking me aside, the farm manager told me not to get impressed for what he defined ordinary business' role-playing: if necessary, he would have negotiated because, economically speaking, the cooperative was by far the most trustworthy customer he had dealt with.

Conclusions

The account of the reterritorialisation process presented in this paper provides an original insight into the social dynamics of the mafia phenomenon, illuminating some key aspects of the grey zone that enshrouds the space of Gomorrah. Of course, Gomorrah is not a monolith. Other than the grey zone, the province of Caserta portrays also a faceted context crossed by diverse interests and conflicts; people's subjection to the mafia authority holds true only to some extent, as proven by the non-compliant spatial practices enacted in former mafia spaces. Yet, the retaliations experienced by the worker cooperatives are emblematic of the social control that mafia groups exert on the grey zone (Ianni and Reuss-Ianni, 1972). In fact, in addition to the general wariness of many fellow countrymen, the cooperative members incurred quasi-formal sanctions, for the Camorra is a quasi-state yearning for social recognition (Sciarrone, 2006; Martone, 2014).

More generally, reterritorialisation processes like that one discussed here can also serve as useful benchmarks for the implementation of anti-mafia policies. On the one hand, the disclosure of the grey zone is critical for the correct understanding of the idiosyncratic traits of Italian criminal networks: if not adequately contextualised, anti-corruption policies and other measures against organised crime are indeed liable to be ineffective (Paoli and Fijnaut, 2006; Polese, 2008). On the other hand, the reappropriation of former mafia spaces gets together both a top-down and a bottom-up approach to the fight against the mafia: the action from below of the worker cooperatives is made possible by the intervention from above of the state, which represses organised crime and seizes its properties in the first place (Cayli, 2011; Di Maggio, 2011). The necessity for the state intervention relates back to the analytical framework for the insurgence of organised crime. In order for associationalism to develop and to be beneficial for the society, the state has to unfold its territorial sovereignty through extensive infrastructural investments and efficient bureaucracy (Skocpol, 1996); where these conditions are unfulfilled, social capital per se has proven to be unable to prevent the proliferation of mafia groups (Varese, 2006).

In conclusion, although the regeneration processes of former mafia territories cannot dig into the new transnational dimension of Italian criminal networks, they constitute relevant case studies for making sense of the profound intersection between mafia and space, both in terms of a better sociological understanding of the mafia phenomenon overall and in terms of the policy implications for the fight against organised crime. Given the great value that mafia groups still attach to territoriality, I hope that further research in the sociology of space will deepen some of the cues provided in this paper, adding substantive contributions to the topic.

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