

Understanding the Mafia.

Session 1. Introduction. Definitions. Origins.

Introduction.



Figure 1. Diaz, Alejandro. "La Mafia è una sola". *Antimafia*, 2019.

The aim.

This project aims at **understanding the mafia**. To do so the project aims at **establishing a reflective and formative path** that allows a group of young people to **first explore and educate themselves** and **then transmit the knowledge** gained from this first part, to the others.

The approaches.

Two approaches:

- 1) Learning together, though discussion rather than having me just telling you about the Mafia. This because...
 - ... I'm not an expert.
 -I believe that it is a more efficient to learning, understanding and remembering
- 2) Directed towards people that do know the Italian culture. This because...
 - ... we want to deconstruct stereotypes attributed to the mafia and Italians all being mafiosi.

The set up.

This project is set up in two parts.

- I. Educating ourselves.
- II. Educating others.

I. Educating ourselves.

This first part will be carried out in six informative sessions:

1. **Session 1.** Introduction. Definitions. Origins.
2. **Session 2.** Women. Evolutions.
3. **Session 3.** Interdisciplinary analysis.
4. **Session 4.** The businesses of the mafia.
5. **Session 5.** A global phenomenon: focus on the Mediterranean.
6. **Session 6.** The fight against the mafia and its innocent victims.

II. Educating others.

This second part will consist in **summarizing the knowledge** we have gained **and the personal take ons** from it through an artistic project.

We will create various **collages** summarizing and honoring the innocent victims of the mafia.

We will try to exhibit it on the **21 March**, day of remembrance.

Definitions.

Brainstorming.

What is the Mafia?

What does the term Mafia mean? Where does it come from?

What do you think of when you hear the word Mafia?

Defining the term Mafia, a polysemous word.

I. Etymology.

- Vespri Siciliani in 1282 “*death to the French*” (Veltri, Antilibano)
- screma of a mother whose daughter was raped (Veltri, Antilibano)
- Tuscan word maffia meaning *misery* (Fioretti 65, Veltri)

Luigi Capuana: “*mafiosa was the name given to a beautiful girl, mafioso to an object that the french would call chic*” (Fioretti 70).

- Arabic words Ma-Hias (*bravado*) or Mu’afak (*protection of the weak*) or Maha (*a cave of rocks*) (Veltri, Antilibano, Fioretti 69).

II. Its evolving definition: the written uses of the term

- the theatrical play “I mafiusi di la Vicaria”, **1863** (Fioretti 65, Antilibano)
- prefect of Palermo Filippo Gualtiero, 1865 (Fioretto 66, Veltri).
- 1871 law of public security (Veltri, Bianchieri 3263).
- law n. 646, or the **law Rognoni - La Torre**, passed on 13 september **1982**:

*Article 416-bis - Mafia related associations are composed of **at least three people** and which **make use of intimidation** and establish the principle **omertà** within the population, as to commit their crimes. They are able in such way to **manage or control** in an indirect or direct manner **economic activities, grants, authorizations, contracts and public services** either **to gain profit or unjust advantages** for oneself or others. All materials and means used to commit the crime can be **confiscated** (“LEGGE 13”).*

- evolution of **set of laws**: 1986 law n. 663, (with the article 41-bis), 1991, law decree n. 143 and 8, law decree of 1994, 1996 the law n. 109, law n. 159 passed in 2009, laws n.225 of 2010 and n. 3 of 2012 (“La legislazione”)

III. Its evolving definition: the media

- Fabrizio Fioretti : media creates **harmful consequences**, distroting image of the mafia(Fioretti 74-5).
 - American 1972 *The Godfather* (Fioretti 73).
 - American television series *The Sopranos* (1999-2007) (Fioretti 74).
 - 2008 video game *Mafia Wars*
 - From 2011 to 2016 a reality TV show *Mob Wives*
- **Roberto Saviano** television news as strategic military advantage for the mafia (Saviano 115).
- Despite these harmful effects, the media, with its film and news indutry, can also have extroardinary **capacities to educate the public opinion and denounce the mafia.**
 - TV series, movies, protests, documentaries and podcasts recounting the atrocities of the mafia and brining light to episodes and events that still today are obscure and are in need of clarification.

Let's analyze our thoughts.

How many of the terms used to describe the mafia
are historically or currently used to define the mafia?

What does it say about our knowledge on the topic or
the way in which society shapes this knowledge?

How many of our thoughts are based on stereotypes?

What do you think is the best definition to use when talking about the mafia?

Origins.

Cosa nostra.

- Sicily, 1812 with the abolition of the feudal system (Leone, Veltri, Fioretti 72)
- started by helping the more vulnerable, soon driven by profit and power
- territory split and controlled by *cosche*, with *omertà*
- Unification of Italy brings dispute and the *questione meridionale*
 - 1877 Franchetti and Sonnino report: politics protects the mafia
 - becomes politicized and undermined
- 1925: Mussolini and his repressive campaign against the Mafia
 - Cesare Mori
 - establishment of Cosa nostra in the US
- 1943: Cosa nostra stronger than ever

What do you think were the **motivations that led Mussolini** to become the first ‘politician’ to **publicly acknowledge** the mafia’s existence and **start a fight against it?**

Structure of Cosa nostra.

- recruitemet: blood affiliation with *uomini d'onore* or exceptional skills
- pyramid-like structure:
 - basis made of *cosche* or *famiglie*
 - *picciotti* or *soldati*
 - *capodecina*
 - *rappresentante*
 - provincial commission with *capimandamento*
 - interprovincial commission with the *cupola*
- elections form within

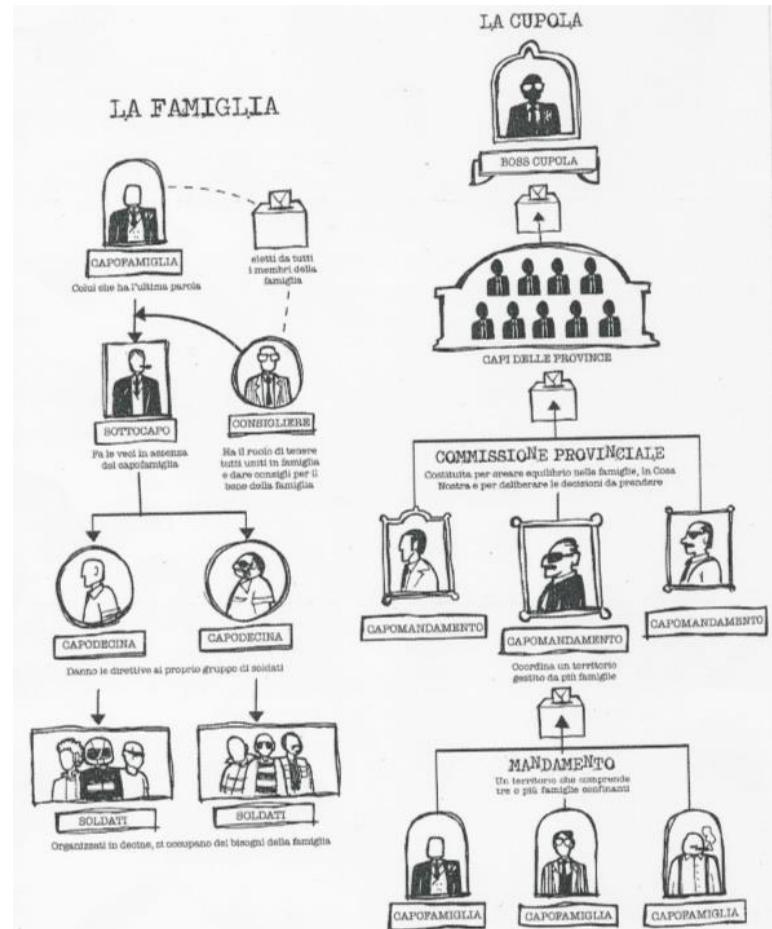


Figure 2. Mariani, Federico. "La mafia spiegata ai ragazzi". Arnoldo Mondadori Editore S.p.A. 2010, pg. 144.

Let's talk.

It is interesting because within the pyramid-like structure, the system takes the appearance of a democracy, with a system of elections, but this is rather flawed and hence it takes the form of a dictatorship. Why do you think they nonetheless establish flawed elections? Is it because having a democratic facade is fundamental for their legitimacy of maintenance?

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