

Understanding the Mafia.

Session 3. Interdisciplinary analysis.

A little recap of the last session.



Figure 16. “Ndrangheta, Camorra, Cosa Nostra... Rencontre avec Roberto Saviano, spécialiste des mafias”. *Courrier International*. 2020.

Interdisciplinary approach.

While this section will try and **isolate the various disciplines** that have tried **to analyze the mafia**, we will see that **these are all in some way interconnected** and that an interdisciplinary approach is hence the best way to get a more complete understanding of it. This section will also try and answer the following question of **how understanding the mafia relates our studies**.

Anthropology.

The discipline.

- “the science of humanity”
- professor Ulf Hannerz : study of “human beings in aspects ranging from the biology and evolutionary history of *Homo sapiens* to the features of society and culture that decisively distinguish humans from other animal species”.
- many different forms, hence has branched off into four groups;
 - physical anthropology,
 - cultural anthropology or ethnology,
 - social anthropology,
 - linguistic anthropology
 - psychological anthropology (Hannerz).
- Can the mafia be looked through an anthropological perspective? In what ways?

Cultural anthropology.

- cultural anthropology, gives a quite complete analysis of the phenomenon mafioso
- all associations mafiosi are very different in its origins and organisation
 - we can talk about a common “**culture of mafia**” (Palermo 1)
- culture: (defined by anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor, in 1871): “the complex whole which includes **knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom**, and say any other **capabilities** and **habits** acquired by man as a **member of society**” (Hannerz).
- the mafia was able to expand and “colonize” many other regions of Italy and the world
- “culture of mafia” : notion of **belonging and identity** that not only encompasses the affiliated individuals, but **society as a whole**, setting laws, customs and habits that must be respected by all (Palermo 1, 2,5-6).
 - culture composed of **three values**, dictating social norms and codes:
 - 1) **honor**, (those affiliated and loyal)
 - 2) **secrecy** and
 - 3) **omertà** (those that witness and remain silent) (Palermo 5-6, Ziliotto, Giannini 14-15, Maugeri)
- **Leonardo Sciascia**, in 1979: “*when I denounce the mafia, at the same time I suffer because within me, just like in any other sicilian, there is still the continuous presence and need of feeling mafioso. Hence, combatting the mafia, I fight also against myself; it's like a laceration*” (Palermo 6-7).
- Giovanni Falcone with the help of Tommaso Buscetta, concluded that the way to understand criminal mechanisms is to **understand its culture** and hence the internal, human, dynamics that form it.
 - This because it allows the **creation of a parallel culture**, just as strong but antagonistic. It is what we call in Italy today the **cultura della legalità**, culture or legality (Ziliotto).

According to the **criminologist Fabio Giannini**, there are a few key factors allowing the associations mafiose to thrive:

- 1) **absence of a strong identity,**
- 2) **lack of feeling of belonging to society or institutions,**
might be due to exploitative governative powers, as in Sicily,
- 3) **lack of rights and established law of violence.**

To what extent do you agree?

What do you think is the anthropological and cultural environment that allows associations mafiose to thrive (Giannini 42-43)?

Criminology.

The discipline.

- **18th century**, started to **question the justice system** with its brutal tactics and its questionable efficiency.
 - ex. Cesare Beccaria
- various disciplines were combined to try and **explain crime and delinquency**:
 - looking at its **causes**, its **correction** and its **prevention**.
- the discipline of criminology: last decades of the 20th evolved to include **victimology**
 - the study “of the victims of crime, the relationships between victims and criminals, and the role of victims in the criminal events themselves” (Bernard and Mannheim).

Causes of crime.

- crime caused by a **mix of factors that interact with each other:**
 - biological,
 - psychological,
 - sociocultural and
 - environmental factors (Giannini 15).
- **Criminality:** “**function of the person with the environment,** that under anthropological terms, is conceived as an external factor that influences on the character of the person” (Giannini 18).

Economics.

The discipline.

- social science that seeks to “analyze and describe the **production, distribution, and consumption of wealth**”.
- study the “human behavior as a **relationship** between **given ends and scarce means**” (Blaug).

Mafia and profit.

- study carried out by the University of Reggio Calabria in **2013**: the mafia has a profit equivalent to **15% of the GDP per capita of Italy**.
 - first Camorra
 - then 'ndrangheta and
 - lastly cosa nostra.
- **Drugs, prostitution and extortion** alone generate **20 billion euros annually** (Mercadante).
- the mafia has become an entrepreneur accumulating capital in four summative processes;
 - 1) the formation of financial resources through various criminal activities,
 - 2) using the resources to produce new illegal activities,
 - 3) money laundering and
 - 4) reinvestment of that money in the legal circuits of the economy (Chiabrande 3).

- How can an **accurate estimation** of such profits be calculated **as they are all hidden**? How can be **differentiate between** the money that has been accumulated from **legal and illegal sources** when we know that the mafia reinvests clean money in the legal economic circuits?
- What do you think are the **main activities or markets** in which the mafia acts and gains profit? (We will see in Session 4 and 5!!)

‘Borghesia mafiosa’ - the bourgeoisie mafiosa.

- Umberto Santino: concept of *borghesia mafiosa*
 - crystallizes since the 1970s
 - expansion of associations mafiose both on a national and international level, due to globalization, and the accumulation of illegal profits due to the triumph of capitalism and liberalism.
- Globalization and criminological effects;
 - in the **peripheries**, where the **marginalization** induces individuals to recur to illegal methods to gain economic stability and social status,
 - in the **urban centers**, where **financialization** makes it hard to distinguish between the legal and illegal capitals.
- → Santino : while the State tries to combat the mafia by incarcerating the presumed heads of the mafia, they are not touching the *borghesia mafiosa*, found within the State and the political and economic powers (“La psicologia”, Pezzino 196, Sulli, Santino).
- What are some of the factors that allowed the mafia to expand and “colonize”? Migration?

Neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism seems to **favor the mafia**, “or at least act with its same objectives”. They both have at the basis, an **ideology of enrichment**, with the only difference that capitalism allegedly uses legal **means** while the mafia illegal ones (Sulli).

- Is there a type of market and economy that could counteract this one and maybe even contrast the mafia?

History.

The discipline.

- the **reconstruction of events in chronological order**, explaining their **causes**, using primary and secondary **sources** (“History”).
 - allows us to understand how phenomena and events form, evolve and reoccur.
- How can we reconstruct the history of associations mafiose when the mafia is “a phenomenon that tries to be invisible but at the same time has the necessity to be perceived by society as present and powerful” (Giannini 6, Soraci, “Analisi criminologica”, Maugeri)? What legitimate sources can be used?

Legal studies.

Legal response to crime in Italy.

The **italian penal code**, identifies **different typologies of deviance** that are dealt with differently in its **retributive consequence**.

- typologies depend on;
 - 1) the delinquent capacity of an individual (122 c.p.),
 - 2) the criminal capacity of an individual,
 - 3) whether an offender pleaded guilty or not, and
 - 4) the extent to which the individual poses a threat to society (penal code art. 102,103, 105, 108, 133, 203) (Giannini 21-22).
- The delinquent and **criminal capacity are judged** based on three **characteristics**;
 - 1) psychological state of offender,
 - 2) a crime of passion, or
 - 3) recurring criminal offense (Giannini 23).

Law n.646.

As previously seen, with the establishment of the law n. 646, or law Rognoni - La Torre, passed on 13 september 1982 we not only have a clear, legal definition of the mafia and its associations, but also a measure of holding such actors accountable and punishable.

- According to the criminologist Fabio Giannini, in his studies on **mafiosi incarcerated before the art. 41 bis**, he notes that within prisons mafiosi exert a dominant power and influence on the rest of the incarcerated and that **incarceration is actually used to elevate one's prestige** and operates as a place for **new encounters and recruitment** (Giannini 33). **Is incarceration an efficient** method of holding mafiosi accountable and putting a stop to the mafia? What other **methods of justice** (restorative, re-investment) and accountability could be used?

Political science.

The discipline.

- study of governance through the perspective of **power** - the ability to get the wanted outcomes.
- Initially studying purely **the State**, its organs and its institutions, has evolved to **broaden the study** to also include the “societal, cultural, and psychological factors that mutually influence the operation of government and the body politic” (Roskin).

Power and legitimacy.

- sociocultural background in which the mafia evolved: the lack of a functioning State
 - unfulfilled social contract, in which the State does not guarantee the protection of its people.
 - the mafia provides an alternative to the inefficiency of the State (Palermo 3, Ziliotto, “La psicologia”, Gribaudo 183, Catanzaro 185, Sulli).
- **“Where the State does not arrive, the mafia does”** (Melissari 70).
Can the mafia be considered a State within the State? Where does it derive its legitimacy? From the services and protection it provides at first?

Power.

- source of power: monopolize the use of **violence** and **intimidations** in exchange for peace (Ziliotto, Gribaudo 183, Chiabrando 1, Maugeri).
 - also **corruption** (“La psicologia”, Sulli).
 - → use what Joseph Nye refers to as ‘**hard power**’ - the use or threat of use of force or coercion, determined by military and economic outcomes (Nye).
- If we define **terrorism** as the use of violence to achieve a political agenda, can the mafia’s use of violence and intimidations be considered terrorism? Do terrorist organizations give some sort of protection in exchange for soldiers?

Organization or regime.

- in depth analysis on the various structure of the associations mafiosi should be needed, but from the previously mentioned organizational methods, we can see that different approaches are used.
- What regimes can be associated with these structures?

International relations.

If we consider the mafia to be a State within a State we can then analyze its relations with all of the associations mafiose within the world.

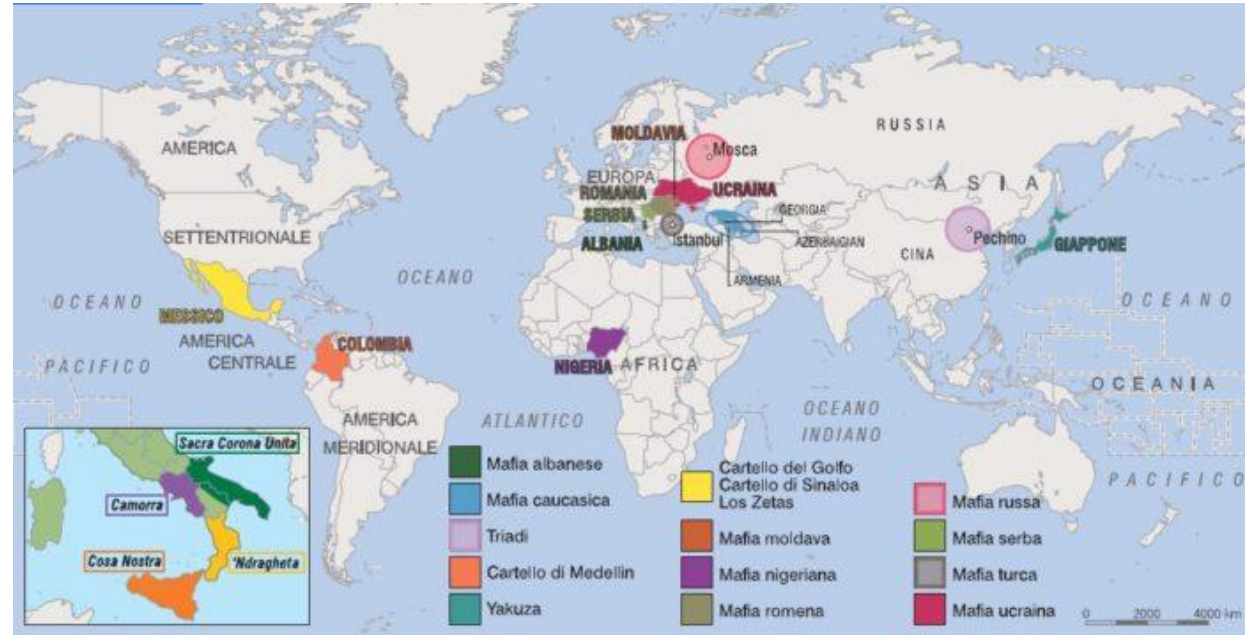


Figure 17. “Le mafie in Italia e nel mondo”. Studia Rapido.

Psychology.

The discipline.

The study of “**mental states** and **process** and **behaviour** in humans and other animals” (Mischel).

“Il pensiero mafioso”, the thought mafioso.

- two fundamental forces determining one's *pensiero*:
 - 1) egocentrism : one's thoughts centered around oneself,
 - 2) sociocentrism : one's thoughts on the social group one belongs to
- psychologist Innocenzo Fiore: the *pensiero mafioso*, based on the concept of family.
 - The family, has become the only source of belonging within the society and hence the biological family coincides with the societal family.
 - → the individual within a family is not able to make any independent and autonomous decisions and allows for *cosa nostra* to remain strong (“La psicologia”, Giannini 8, 17, Soraci, Maugeri).
 - The maternal culture: xchange between the protection/care of the mother and the total obedience from the child
 - dominant culture within the family mafiosa.
 - mother has a fundamental role in the socialization process and transmission of values mafiosi (Giannini 16).
 - *uomo d'onore*, man of honor, which reinforces the notion of belonging and of solidarity (Soraci, Veltri).

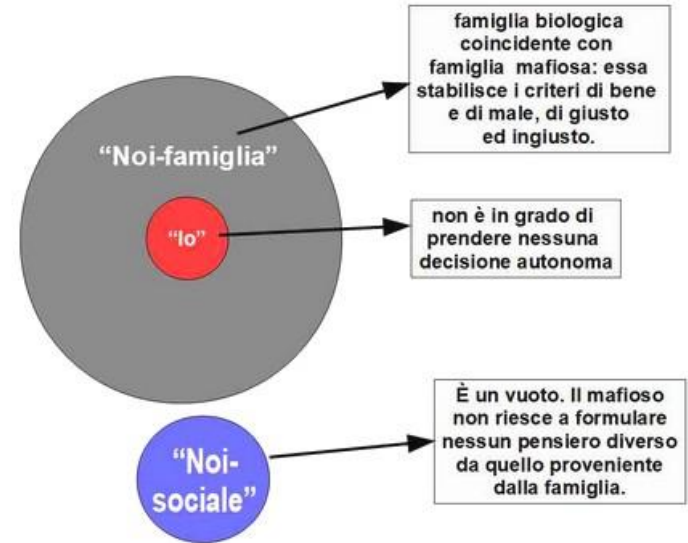


Figure 18. “L’universo psichico del mafioso”,

Because the *pensiero mafioso* is so ingrained within an individual mafioso, and that studies conducted by **Bursten in 1973** show that there is a **lack of guilt and moral conscious in the personality of the mafioso** (Soraci).

- To what extent are the *pentiti* -collaborators of justice - actually *pentiti* - repented - for their actions and willing to change mentality and have everyone against them?
- Could it be a tactic for personal gains?
- What can bring about repentance and the willingness to collaborate with justice?

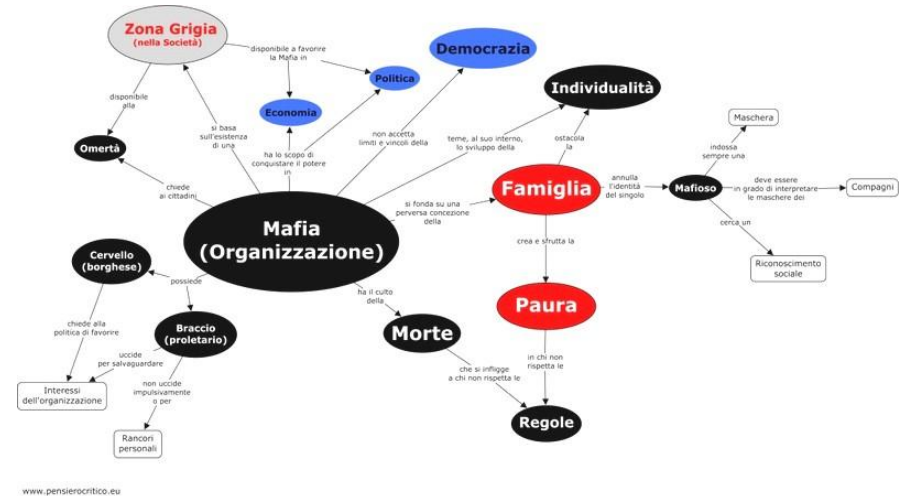


Figure 19. "Mappa concettuale della Mafia",

The experiment “Lucifer effect”.

In **1971** the psychologist **Philip Zimbardo** carried out a study to conclude that **violence is primarily dependent on the environment and not the nature of the individual** (“La psicologia”). And this is a clear example of how important it is to take a multidisciplinary approach.

Communication.

“Communication is an essential condition of life and social arrangement as it contributes to the creation of a sense of belonging and allows for the transmission of information within the members of society” (Giannini 40, Maugeri).

- communication is mainly nonverbal (Giannini 40, Maugeri).
 - As the mafia is “a phenomenon that tries to be invisible but at the same time has the necessity to be perceived by society as present and powerful”(Giannini 6, Soraci, “Analisi criminologica”, Maugeri), it has **created** a whole new **set of codified, nonverbal ways to communicate** with each other.
 - psychological analysis of communication: nonverbal communication creates relationships, an image of oneself, completes a verbal communication, and substitutes verbal communication.
 - nonverbal communication occurs based on cultural, socio-emotional and physical environmental factors (Giannini 40).
 - This way of communicating is **crucial to decode within prisons** as it allows for the transmission of messages from within to the outside (Giannini 41).
- How can we decode the nonverbal communication of the mafia?

Sociology.

The discipline.

It is a social science that studies the **human societies**. It looks at **collective aspects of human behavior** related to the **institutions, communities, populations** (gender, racial or age groups) (Form and Faris).

- Is there a typical model of a mafioso (Giannini 43)?

Social class.

- the mafia does not only recruit those from the lower socioeconomic classes
 - Many mafiosi are educated and highly qualified.
 - the mafia manages to infiltrate **all social classes** hence it is analyzed as a rather **cultural anthropological phenomenon** (“Analisi criminologica”).
- **How and why** does an **individual choose to enter** and become part of an association mafiosa (Giannini 43)? What pushes people to interpret **criminal deviance as a cultural value, social prestige and economic success** (Giannini 4)?

Recruitment.

- **the media** plays a fundamental role in the perception one has on the mafia and has **created a heroic image** for some, incentivizing them to join.
- hate one can have for the State and inefficient institutions: another incentivizer to join
- **labeling theory**, once an individual has been incarcerated and labeled as a criminal, the chances are higher that the individual will get stigmatized and end up believing the label and potentially joining the mafia (“Analisi criminologica”).
 - in fact, in Giannini’s study: prisons were a strategic location for the recruitment of new members (Giannini 33).
- The mafia, can provide employment
- Once a person decides to join:
 - 1) the individual will have to **undertake many tests** and examinations to make sure the individual is not an undercover agent and will be **loyal to the mafia** (Veltri, “Analisi criminologica”).
 - 2) if tests are passed, phase of manipulation: the mafia will rigidly control the individual’s life, limit the ability to think independently, intimidate and isolate the individual.
 - 3) if achieved the scopes, the individual will be given a function and will be persuaded that they play a fundamental role in the organization.
 - This creates a great sense of belonging, devotion and loyalty. Often times, the individual will have the conviction that only death will part him from the mafia (“Analisi criminologica”).
 - very **generalized** recruitment process that is **not fully applicable to all associations mafiose** (Maugeri).
- Where the State is not present and there is high unemployment to what extent is working for the mafia a decision?

Theology.

The discipline.

It is a **philosophically oriented** discipline that **explore religious themes** such as God, humanity, the world, and salvation. It is **traditionally restricted** because it mainly focuses on **Christianity** (Louth and Thielicke).

A distorted religion.

- religious or spiritual aspect engrained in the functioning or original ideology of the mafia.
 - boss mafiosi while they are crude and brutal, they are also able to gain, what Max Weber would refer to as **charismatic authority**.
 - ex. boss **Francesco Schiavone alias “Sandokan”**, from the camorra, made many portraits representing Jesus, which instead of the face usually associated with Jesus, he would have his own face (Saviano 279, Soraci).
 - idolize their leaders and actions by associating them with the notions of sacrifice and martyr
 - strictly follow the rituals and practices of the Catholic Church (Soraci, Giannini 45).
 - educated since a young age on Catholicism and have received all the the religion’s sacraments such as baptism and first communion.
 - **God** is for the mafioso, **the justice of the mafia** and hence why their killings are justified as a sacrifice (Giannini 45).
- To what extent can we talk about religion? Could it be called, rather an epic story, as the legend of how the three associations mafiosi were created?

The Catholic Church and the mafia.

- only recently the Catholic Church has condemned the mafia
- previously had an ambivalent and in some cases collaborative relation with it.
 - under the Archbishop of Palermo Cardinale Pappalardo, the Catholic Church started to publicly denounce the mafia
 - still some questionable actions brought by the Church
 - ex. some cases where priests help boss mafiosi with their *latitanza* - hiding as they are wanted from the State.
 - Friar Mario Frittitta was arrested in the 90s, accused of helping the boss Pietro Aglieri. While he never denied this, the friar justified himself by saying that the **cleric have to purify people, especially boss mafiosi** (Esposit, Melloni 254).
- many actions to counter the mafia: foundation of the association ***Libera***, in **1995** by the **priest Luigi Ciotti** (Melloni 253).

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