

# INTRODUCTION

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The sociological discipline has been facing mafia organizations issues for many years, with lines of analysis often partial and not exhaustive of the subject matter. The reasons are several. Firstly, the presence of a plurality of approaches to the study of the phenomenon, from the sociological to the anthropological point of view, from the historical to the more purely legal and so on; all these approaches of course are to be integrated into a cognitive effort that refuses the pure and sterile descriptiveness.

*In secundis*, these fields of study deal with different ways of considering the Mafia and, more generally, the criminal organizations, proposing studies that move on a double line of interpretation. On the one hand, the “culturalist” assumptions, which define these organizations in terms of family and *clan* values, with a special focus on the so-called bonding social capital and insider values of affiliation. On the other hand, what could be defined “organizational” analyses, which detect the presence of a practical functionality acting rationally in terms of “opphelimity” and in line with the aims of the organization, and focus more on the explanatory thesis favoring the bridging social capital and outsider organizations references.

A third factor, which makes such studies polymorphic and often subject to simplistic interpretations, is bound to the diachronic and diatopic components of the subject matter. The gangs change over time, and more and more are characterized as criminal organizations operating at a “glocal” level, maintaining control over the territories of origin and carrying out new and different activities even in distant countries. Nowadays they are far from the “cap and shotgun” stereotype which has been characterizing them for over a century. What is meant by the term Mafia today is in fact a heterogeneous reality, which includes organizations with very disparate stories and structure: from the Black Mafia to the Mexican Mafia, from the Albanian to the Chinese (the “Triad”), from the Russian to the Japanese mafia (the “Yakuza”) and so on. So much so that

Misha Glenny, highlighting its globalizing features, defined it “McMafia” referring to fast-food chains-style such as McDonald's. Even in Italy, this term is used to refer to various criminal organizations of the South: the Camorra, the 'Ndrangheta, the Apulian mafia, the “Stidda” (*star*) and so on.

In this issue, we attempted to propose some lines of interpretation not so much on the phenomenon itself, but on its social perception. So we moved along the inconvenient (and dangerous) ridge that separates the idiographic from the nomological approach, the case study from the generalizing perspective, the *micro* from *macro*, trying to find a “middle way” that would overcome the cultural shibboleth between the paradigms of the sociological discipline.

In particular, the articles move on a double-track: the social perception of the Italian Mafia abroad, with particular reference to the Netherlands, Germany, UK and Spain, and the complementary perception of foreign mafias in Italy, specifically the Chinese, Nigerian and Romanian ones.

Compared to the Dutch situation, the Italian Mafia, that in the eighties settled mainly in the capital, nowadays takes advantage of the country's geographical position as a “hub” to other destinations, especially for illegal trafficking in narcotic drugs. Making use of official statistics, the authors propose an accurate analysis of the presence of Cosa Nostra, 'Ndrangheta and Camorra in the Netherlands.

The situation in Germany is analyzed starting from the 2007 bloody massacre in Duisburg, which claimed the lives of six young Italians. The author makes use of various kinds of sources (academic, political and media) to provide an analysis of the phenomenon in Germany from a criminological perspective.

The author of the essay on the United Kingdom focuses primarily on the media, providing an accurate analysis of the television field and the press, as well as the official reports of the police forces. The conclusions attest a substantial perception of the Mafia still tied to the traditional and “romantic” stereotypes of the phenomenon.

The article on the Spanish situation highlights the conditions that helped the Italian mafia to establish and thrive for some time in the Iberian Peninsula, which has become a place of refuge for many bosses. The conclusions state that the current economic crisis might make these organizations not only more dangerous, but also more specialized in seeking new markets and new revenue streams.

As regards foreign mafias in Italy, the first contribution relates to the Chinese mafia; starting from a definitional framework of the phenomenon

and a discussion on its actual presence, it analyzes the main trades of this mafia, its internal structure and the main affiliation logics.

The Nigerian mafia is analyzed through academic, investigative, journalistic and media sources. Then the structure of this form of mafia is explained, as well as its peculiarities compared to other organizations. In the conclusions, the author underlines the cognitive deficit, which probably will be remedied in the next few years, partly due to the pervasiveness of this criminal system.

The perception of the Romanian mafia in Italy is described by the author through official sources, in particular the Investigative Anti-Mafia Directorate; its roots in Italy and the major areas in which the organization develops its activities are then discussed, with a case study related to the region of Emilia Romagna.

In the experience section of the Journal, two more purely ideographic articles are presented: the first is on the international presence of the 'Ndrangheta, which makes use of recent and very interesting tables; the second, through an integrated approach (which the authors define theoretical, statistical and juridical), proposes an exploratory analysis of the application of the crime of mafia association of foreign criminal organizations.

This issue of the new Journal "Sicurezza e Scienze Sociali", in short, tries to combine the three fundamental pillars of sociology: theory, method and social usability. It is no coincidence that the authors are not only academics but also people who are concerned with the phenomenon at the institutional level. The articles - the reader will be able to realize it - while maintaining a rigid scientific structure in fact try to outline also frameworks and social policies that make this issue suitable for a heterogeneous target, between the academic and professional world, including associations and reporters. This issue addresses to all those who not only limit themselves to the study of Mafia in a theoretical way, but try day by day to fight it in the real world.