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Mafia-Type Organized Crime in the Gentrifying City.

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KEYWORDS

Organized crime, grey area, gentrification, touristification, Italian mafia

ABSTRACT

This article aims to propose the analytic tools to investigate the relationship between mafia-type organized crime and gentrification. The topic is introduced by a brief overview of the mafia's defining features and the concept of "grey area". Subsequently, global economic trends and public administrations' measures are seen as the basis of a neoliberal framework attractive for mafioso's investment. In order to analyze how mafiosi behave about urban transformation, I propose two frames: "participation" and "marginalization" in their turn decline according to the territorial variable, considering traditional and non-traditional areas. The former case is more likely to happen in relation to mafia's activities in the legal economy. The latter case refers more to the decrease of the mafia's territorial control. Overall, the main research question concerns what transformations occur in the grey area in terms of actors and their position in the network in a gentrifying city.

Introduction

On 16th January 2019, the media reported a bomb blast in front of the famous pizzeria Sorbillo in the heart of Naples. The mafia was immediately held responsible for the attack, many identifying it as a mechanism of intimidation in an extortion racket. This had a considerable echo in the media and the tourism sector was hastily labeled as the new victim of mafia-type organized crime.

If we want to understand more about the relation between gentrification – in the case of Naples as touristification – and the mafia, we need to adopt a wider perspective, and we need to consider the various levels of current transformations. On the one hand, tourism is one of the growing industries of recent decades and increasingly attractive for investors looking for high profitability¹. Many mafia groups have capital to place on the market (derived from an illicit source or from activities in the legal economy) and in various cases their choices are taken as if they were “normal” investors, contributing to main capital flows. On the other hand, a macro-phenomenon like globalization cannot explain alone micro-level decisions of mafia groups. The territorial power must be considered as it represents an essential resource for the reproduction and expansion of the mafia.² Lastly, it is useful to follow a path considering, first, the macro-society level, secondly, the micro level. Studying the changes at the micro level can help to explain the changes of the macro ones³.

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The direction and the scope of the influence between urban transformations and mafia-type organized crime are not defined: mafia groups can participate in a gentrification process increasing their activities, especially in the legal economy, but they can also be negatively impacted by these changes on the territory. Actors, who use methods typically mafiosi, can lobby on the interests about the transformations of urban environment. Further investigations must focus on specific cases in order to build medium-range theories to enhance the existing literature.

1 Sergi Yanes – anthropologist, interview 1, October 2018.

2 Sciarrone Rocco, *Mafie vecchie, mafie nuove*, (Roma: Donzelli, 2009), 26.

3 The path presented is clearly similar to the Coleman Boat, for an explanation of this analytical tool see, among others, Filippo Barbera, “A Star is Born? The Authors, Principles and Objectives of Analytical Sociology,” Papers 80 (Barcelona: Península, 2006); David C. McClelland, *The Achieving Society*, (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1961).

This article aims to propose four ideal-types of relations between gentrification and mafia-type organized crime, focusing especially on the consequences that external interest on an urban area have on the presence of mafia groups, as a guide for further investigations. Due to the particular complexity of variables: different mafias (Cosa Nostra, 'Ndrangheta, and camorra)⁴, different characteristics of mafia groups, and differences between mafia's traditional and non-traditional territories, a contextual framework and general understanding of these variables needs to be outlined.

The mafia and the "grey area": a brief overview

The definition of the mafia is particularly complex and often misrepresented and stereotyped in the common thought. It is useful to recap some features before delving into how it evolves when its territory undergoes a process of gentrification. The mafia can be considered an ideal-type of organized crime that is deeply embedded in the society through forms of control and regulation of political, institutional, and economic spheres at the local level⁵. The mafia's power comes from a specific use of violence and, especially, from *external* relationships with different actors. To study of this network of people, the concept of "grey area"⁶ fits the purpose. Going deep inside, we find an entwining of relations and businesses composed of relationships of collusion and interpenetration between *mafiosi* and members of the political, administrative, entrepreneurial, and liberal profession universe, mostly part of the ruling class⁷. Mafia members are not usually the center of this network, they use their social

4 The different configurations of the mafias take shape "according to the structure of the organization, which may be centralized to a greater or lesser extent, and the management of their activities, which may be coordinated or conflictual in character" Rocco Sciarrone and Luca Storti, "The territorial expansion of mafia-type organized crime. The case of the Italian mafia in Germany," *Crime, Law and Social Change* 61 (2014).

5 Salvatore Lupo, *Che cos'è la mafia* (Torino: Donzelli, 2007), VIII.

6 On the opportunity to consider the grey area as an "organizational field" see especially Sciarrone et al., "Mafia e comitati di affari. Edilizia, appalti ed energie rinnovabili in provincia di Trapani," in *Alleanze nell'ombra. Mafie ed economie locali in Sicilia e nel Mezzogiorno*, ed. Rocco Sciarrone (Roma: Donzelli, 2011).

7 Rocco Sciarrone, "Tra Sud e Nord. Le mafie nelle aree non tradizionali," in *Mafie del Nord. Strategie criminali e contesti locali*, ed. Rocco Sciarrone (Roma: Donzelli, 2014). See also Maurizio Catino, "Colletti bianchi e mafie. Le relazioni pericolose nell'economia del Nord Italia", *Stato e Mercato* 112, no.1 (2018).

capital as a bridge⁸, often connecting parts of the network that, otherwise, would not interact with one another. This ambiguous activity as “middle-men” is also a relevant resource for mafia reproduction through time and space. In a gentrifying city, we must understand what transformations occur in the grey area in terms of actors and their position in the network.⁹

As far as the mafia phenomenon is concerned, I would like to point out that within the mafia, different levels of action overlap. First, a mafioso is a member of a mafia group, but also an individual with its own business, strategy, and social capital. They often have an entrepreneurial career independent of their group, where they manage profits coming from illegal activities and from legal personal businesses. Second, inside mafia organizations there are different levels of hierarchies between groups, families, or business cartels¹⁰. Third, alliances between mafia groups exist especially in non-traditional territories.

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Because of the complexity of mafia organizations, and the social dynamics therein, empirical studies require a combination of research methods. The methods most frequently employed are the examination of judicial documents and of reports made by institutional or independent research institutes, a press review, as well as interviews to privileged witnesses such as journalists, members of the law enforcement, judges, anti-mafia associations, other people informed or involved in mafia activities. Moreover, when the purpose is to investigate the mafia’s role in the gentrifying city, research should try to reconstruct the network of the grey area and an analysis of the entrepreneurial activities which can relate to mafia’s interests in the legal economy¹¹. An urban geography perspective is encouraged in order to maintain the analysis connected to the territorial space¹².

8 Rocco Sciarbone and Luca Storti. “The territorial expansion of mafia-type organized crime.” *Crime, Law and Social Change* 61 (2014): 37-70.

9 I suggest ideal questions that can lead a study, remembering the grey area is not quantifiable, it is hard to map and even more to interpret when changes occur.

10 Adaptation of Sciarbone, “Le mafie nelle aree non tradizionali,” 32-3.

11 For a detailed dissertation on mafias in the legal economy see Rocco Sciarbone and Luca Storti, *Le mafie nell’economia legale* (Bologna; il Mulino, 2019).

12 For an application of urban political geography to criminal activities in Naples see Luigi Mascellaro, “Territorialità e camorra: una proposta di lettura geografica dell’attività criminale, in *Traffici criminali. Camorra, mafie e reti internazionali dell’illegalità*, ed. Gabriella Gribaudo (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2009).

Toward a neoliberal city

Gentrification is embedded in the process of a neoliberalization of the city, which in turn gives public administration more tasks and expectations¹³. According to Bauman, administrators are “desperately overworked”¹⁴. The motivation should be sought in the connection between global and local dynamics. Global problems, or “over-local” issues, that originate far from the local view are perceived as remote and obscure. These issues only become a political issue when they have a local impact¹⁵. Examples of over-local problems are, *inter alia*, de-industrialization, destruction of means of support, economic crisis, pollution, and in general, the environmental crisis. These issues of globalization occur on a local level, particularly cities, thereby city dwellers and their politicians are called to deal with an impossible task: “find local solutions to global contradictions”¹⁶.

Overall, public administrations are losing economic power and are trying to find new ways to recover income and rent. This contributes directly or indirectly to extracting richness from the city and opening the door to the market- to private interests. After the 2008 financial crisis, two methods adopted by many public administrations were the flexibilization and the deregulation of certain sectors to encourage economic recovery¹⁷. These measures left space for national and foreign investment (including capital of “dubious” origin), while local communities were unlikely to take advantage of this “growth”. Through the frame of neoliberalism, gentrification gives a name to a radical urban transformation that is attractive to investors, companies, visitors, commuters, and the few inhabitants able to take advantage of their newfound higher social positions. The gentrified city is depoliticized, sterilized, and “subdued” meaning that conflicts are hidden or calmed. Terms such as “touristification”, “disneyfication”, or “museumification” all refer to forms of gentrification – highlighting what galvanizes the process – “Everything is the same: cities

13 Giovanni Semi, Speech given at the conference: Gentrification and crime: new configurations and challenges for the city, Palermo, May 6, 2019.

14 Zygmunt Bauman, *Fiducia e paura nella città* (Milano: Mondadori, 2005), 20.

15 Ibid., 18.

16 Ibid., 19. My translation.

17 Josè A. Mansilla, “Hem d’entendre el turisme com una fàbrica social,” filmed April 2019 at Betevè, Spain, Video, <https://beteve.cat/terricones/jose-a-mansilla/?fbclid=IwAR1Tjh9FKfRuoRti-WCFWz9ut1P5ZERmaAxPUap5uXHUVmheGsVV1xcNhE>.

have ended up being a place where socialize, turning themselves into a market”¹⁸.

Mafia's behaviors in gentrifying areas

When studying a gentrifying area where at least one mafia group is locally active, the main question concerns how mafiosi interact with urban transformation and, specifically for the grey area, how actors and their balance of power change. This can be understood through two frames: “participation” and “marginalization”. Participation implies active mafia groups contributing to the process by investing in gentrifying areas as entrepreneurs in the legal economy. Since they have at their disposal large amounts of capital, these organizations are likely to choose expanding markets and sectors where they can also employ their skills and resources. Both in areas of historical genesis and territorial expansion, mafiosi prefer certain types of activities. These activities are called “traditional” sectors that, according to Dagnes et al. are

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Characterized by low barriers to enter the market, and do not imply any particular technological content but rather reward the ability to stay on the territory and the organizational flexibility, such as construction, trade, and catering, in which it is also possible to recycle money directly earning higher revenue than profit originating from solely these activities¹⁹.

As such, mafia's members are also familiar with the import-export sector. This is often used as a vehicle for illegal trafficking. In addition to import-export, mafiosi are active with private security, especially for nightlife where they apply their distinctive specialized use of violence²⁰. Today, the transforming urban environment – particularly in the form of touristification – seems to open the doors to mafia activities as the “traditional” mafia sectors encounter fast-growing opportunities. As companies that are created solely for money

18 Ibid. My translation.

19 Joselle Dagnes et al., “Le mafie italiane all'estero: un'agenda di ricerca”. *Meridiana* 87 (2016): 168. My translation.

20 Ibid.

laundering purposes “distort European economies because their constant cash flow gives them an unfair advantage in the marketplace”²¹, mafia-type organizations can contribute to disorganized and decentralized fast-growing urban transformations. At the same time, the mafia tries to reduce glaring crimes in order not to attract the attention of antimafia counter-action and of the public opinion²².

Moreover, mafia-type organizations can also suffer the consequences of gentrification. I have identified three possible ways.

First, a common issue in regenerating processes is the fight against street drug sale usually made by groups of residents (often organized in association) and law enforcement. This counter-action leads to a necessary reorganization of drug selling methods and/or to a displacement of sales area: a change that may affect negatively mafia groups²³ in their narcotics traffic. According to research conducted in Manhattan’s Lower East Side from March 1999 to March 2001 to analyzing the changes in the drug market during the process of gentrification, the street sale disappeared. This gave way to a new curriers and a growing importance of secondary markets, “the use of a person who is not a “professional dealer” to facilitate the purchase of drugs, a person who, in essence, works as an agent for the consumer rather than the distributor”²⁴.

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Second, still regarding the increased law-enforcement control, mafia activities are likely to be investigated with greater intensity in order to pacify the neighborhood. By “cleaning up the neighborhood”, law-enforcement makes it more attractive for private investment. This in turn leads to a reduction of racket extortion or, as previously mentioned, street-level drug dealing. However, this counter-action is focused only on “visible” criminal activities, there is still no evidence suggesting increased investigations regarding whole mafia groups.

21 Felia Allum, “Italian Mafia activities are expanding abroad and European police forces are still unprepared”, *The conversation*, December 13, 2018, <https://theconversation.com/italian-mafia-activities-are-expanding-abroad-and-european-police-forces-are-still-unprepared-108714>.

22 Giuseppe Pignatone and Michele Prestipino, *Modelli criminali* (Bari: Laterza, 2019), 83.

23 Sometimes drug dealers form part of a mafia group, but most frequently they report to a smaller and less-organized criminal group which deals only with drug deal.

24 Ric Curtis et al., *We Deliver: The gentrification of drug markets on Manhattan’s Lower East Side* (Rockville: National Institute of Justice, 2002), 4.

Third, mafia groups usually exercise regulative power in their territories, but when the process of gentrification starts, the area involved becomes more and more attractive to various actors – i.e. investors, entrepreneurs, financial holdings – that can compete with mafiosi. The mafia group then must work out a strategy to preserve its power and its activities as urban transformation affects all aspects of the city: from residents to real estate market, to the local economy, to even illegal activities. According to Sciarrone, the mafia phenomenon is able to adapt to social changes thanks to the variability of its organizational structure²⁵. Of course we cannot operate under the assumption that this general character is always the case, especially when rapid wide urban transformations are taking place. Therefore, mafia groups can be marginalized in their territory if they are not able to adjust and impose new forms of regulation and to take advantage of emerging economic opportunities.

Both kinds of mafia roles concerning a gentrification process – “participation” and “marginalization” – can decline according to the territorial variable, considering both traditional and non-traditional areas²⁶. We should remember that, in the latter case, we can also see significant differences depending on the length of presence in a new territory and on the prevalent activities conducted by mafiosi (illicit trafficking, control of the territory, economic activities).

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MAFIA BEHAVIOUR	HOME TERRITORY	NON-TRADITIONAL TERRITORY
PARTICIPATION	REINFORCING	INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES
MARGINALIZATION	UNDERMINING	UNATTRACTIVENESS

FIG. 1 Mafia's behaviours in gentrifying areas in its home territory and in non-traditional ones

25 Sciarrone, *Mafie vecchie mafie nuove*, 22.

26 A vast literature exists on mafia's expansion. For the Italian case see, among others, Rocco Sciarrone, ed. *Mafie del nord* (Roma: Donzelli, 2014); Nando Dalla Chiesa, *Passaggio a Nord: La colonizzazione mafiosa* (Torino: Gruppo Abele, 2016). For the international expansion see, inre alia, Federico Varese, *Mafie in movimento: come il crimine organizzato conquista nuovi territori* (Torino: Einaudi, 2011); Felia Allum, *The invisible Camorra*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 2016); Anna Sergi and Anita Lavorgna, *Ndrangheta* (Basinstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

The table (Fig. 1) presents four ideal-types of effects on mafia's behavior by a gentrification process, it can be used as a guide for the analysis when approaching both phenomena in a certain territory. The typology considers gentrification as the independent variable: the mafia's behavior is influenced by this urban transformation. With a lower degree, we have to consider also that actors related to mafia groups can have a role in shaping the urban transformations, accelerating it, or slowing it down. In order to explain each category, I will provide examples narrowing it down to the camorra, a mafia-type organization historically based in Campania²⁷.

Reinforcing: the mafia takes advantage of gentrification in its home territory

Getting back to Naples, the city of the pizzeria Sorbillo, we can find a common thread between the urban transformation and the interests of the clans embedded – not without conflicts – in the various neighborhoods. I will present the case of the Spanish neighborhoods, an area in the historical center delimited by via Toledo and Corso Vittorio Emanuele and characterized by straight streets mostly in a grid pattern that in some places create enclosed narrow spaces which lend themselves to be controlled by criminal groups²⁸. Historically, it was a place of artisan workshops, but also of illegal activities as smuggling and prostitution in relation to the vicinity to the harbor²⁹. Indeed until the 1990s, it was the emblem of insecurity and of the territorial control of the camorra where extortion, and cigarette and drug trafficking were commonplace³⁰. But looking at today, in the part of the neighborhood closer to via Toledo, an arterial road, restaurants, bars, and bed and breakfasts (including Airbnbs) are opening; mixing tradition and innovation to create a protected

27 When analyzing a mafia-type organized crime, it is important to take into account its specific features, for the camorra see especially Luciano Brancaccio, *I clan di Camorra*, (Roma: Donzelli 2017); Gabriella Gribaudo, eds., *Traffici criminali. Camorra, mafie e reti internazionali dell'illegalità*, (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2009).

28 Gabriella Gribaudo, "Clan camorristi a Napoli: radicamento locale e traffici internazionali," in *Traffici criminali. Camorra, mafie e reti internazionali dell'illegalità*, ed. Gribaudo Gabriella (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2009), 196.

29 Ibid.

30 Antonio Acierno, "Periferie napoletane: recinti di insicurezza," Paper presented at the national conference *Planum Quante periferie? Quali politiche di governo del territorio*, Naples, 2007.

and thrilling environment all in favor of tourists and non-local students. In addition to the changing makeup of the city, other less visible transformations are occurring, first and foremost being in the real estate market.

While Spanish neighborhoods are no doubts gentrifying, other central areas of Naples are going through this process as well. The starting point dates back to the 1990s when an urban renewal program began and the city center became a popular residential area for university students. This first change in the population of the residents leads to an increase in foot traffic in the alleys. “Some [camorra] clans – such as Lo Russo, Iorio, Ragosta – already began to invest in commercial activities in the center, especially in catering and street food”³¹.

42 Nevertheless, at the beginning of the 2000s the urban renewal process suffered a setback due to the so-called “waste emergency” (where other camorra clans played an important role together with some entrepreneurs and politicians). Only around the year 2010 that the urban transformation bounced back: “Naples had changed its face, becoming a place to go to enjoy the historical center where it was possible to have local handicraft (first of all nativity scene arts), quality dining at reasonable prices, very high artistic and cultural heritage, and extraordinary experiences”³². The tourist industry has increased – and still is increasing – very rapidly, so much so that in 2018, Naples was visited by 3.7 million tourists, positioning itself as the fourth city in Italy for number of visitors after Roma, Venice, and Milan³³.

To understand the new position of the camorra in this gentrifying city, we have to consider two dimensions: *power syndicate and enterprise syndicate*³⁴. Starting from “power syndicate”, law enforcement succeeded in many antimafia investigations that weakened some

31 Mariano Di Palma, “Come cambia la camorra dentro la gentrificazione,” *Jacobin Italia*, January 29, 2019, <https://jacobinitalia.it/come-cambia-la-camorra-dentro-la-gentrificazione>. My translation.

32 Ibid.

33 Istat, “Turismo in Italia nel 2018,” Accessed October 18, 2019, <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/232137>.

34 Alan Block (1980, cited in Sciarrone, *Mafie vecchie, mafie nuove*, 44) proposed to distinguish analytically the mafia’s organizational formula between *power syndicate and enterprise syndicate*. The former refers to the ability to control a certain territory, the latter refers to the practice of illegal trafficking from which derives the ability to take action over legal and illegal markets.

historical clans like Giuliano, Contini e Mazarella and worked to pacify the city center. But another type of clan – called “gangster” clan³⁵ – is taking this empty space in the territorial control. They are younger, more violent, and without strongly held values: “blurred” and always in conflict with one another and the historical clans³⁶.

In gentrified areas, the power syndicate can frequently move from a criminal group to another but, overall, street-level crimes and intimidation decrease. While the enterprise syndicate tend to stay in the hands of historical clans. As far as the enterprise-syndicate dimension is concerned, the historical clans have all but disappeared from the Neapolitan city center. According to one Italian prosecutor who conducted the last operation against the Secondigliano Alliance, this mafia-type organization had a precise strategy: “It resorts to homicide only in exceptional cases [...], exercises a suffocating extortive pressure on every kind of commercial activities, and controls directly or with front men an impressive number of companies in the most disparate sectors”³⁷. “The judiciary’s arrest warrants focused on activities between 2011 and 2016, seizing real estate and goods with a net worth €130m”³⁸. Assets include restaurants, bars, supermarkets, shops, car parks, garages as well as cars, motorbikes, diamonds, and luxury watches³⁹. According to a press report, camorra groups frequently buy properties at judiciary auctions at very low prices and convert them for the tourist industry, just like a private holding⁴⁰.

35 Gribaudo, “Clan camorristi a Napoli.”

36 Felia Allum, “Mafia in Naples is still going strong and we must not forget how it affects everyday life in the city,” *The conversation*. July 17, 2019, <https://theconversation.com/mafia-in-naples-is-still-going-strong-and-we-must-not-forget-how-it-affects-everyday-life-in-the-city-120177>.

Di Palma, “Come cambia la camorra dentro la gentrificazione.”

37 Felice Naddeo, “Camorra, scacco all’Alleanza di Secondigliano: 126 arresti. La base logistica era un ospedale di Napoli”, *Corriere del Mezzogiorno*, June 26, 2019, https://corrieredelmezzogiorno.corriere.it/napoli/cronaca/19_giugno_26/camorra-scacco-all-alleanza-secondigliano-oltre-100-arresti-160fa744-97df-11e9-b6e5-18c900c5070a.shtml?refresh_ce-cp. My translation.

38 Allum, “Mafia in Naples.”

39 Ibid.

40 Rossella Strianese, “Napoli sotto sfratto. Povertà, camorra, turisticizzazione: è allarme sociale,” filmed in December 2018 by OttoChannel, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oX7eljCHULI>.

Undermining: the mafia is affected by gentrification in its home territory

It is more difficult to understand whether a mafia group undermines gentrification compared to the case of participation, first because it is less interesting for judicial purposes or journalistic inquiries. As such, social scientists cannot count on them for documentary sources. In the Neapolitan case, the most relevant disadvantage for camorra clans seems to be hurdles to street-level drug deal and illegal traffics in the gentrifying areas; more precisely, they need to reorganize these activities, moving to other areas of the city or changing the way of dealing illegal goods to the new clientele that throngs the city center.

Changing commercial activities are also a challenge for mafia groups that want to keep their territorial control, especially when they deal with big retail chains. In wider terms, when new external actors come into play, the mafiosi must negotiate a beneficial relationship. They can count on their reputation but they are dissuaded from using violence for intimidation because of the easy outbreak of public attention, which in turn, may trigger a wave of law-enforcement counter-action and public mobilization.

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Investment opportunities: the mafia is taking advantage of gentrification in non-traditional territories

In the mafia's territorial expansion, gentrification is mainly related to an increase in its investment opportunities in the legal economy. When the mafia moves from its home territory, the accumulation of wealth often prevails on the search for power⁴¹. The following illustrative case study will be about the mafia's expansion in Europe, especially in Spain.

Organized crime groups exploit business opportunities in non-traditional areas, above all, thanks to their constant cash flow supplied by illegal activities that allows them to easily set up companies mainly for money laundering purposes⁴². Spain can be viewed as a

41 Sciarrone, *Mafie vecchie mafie nuove*, 27.

42 Allum, "Italian Mafia activities."

privileged destination for mafia members in Europe for various context factors, above all for camorristi. The study of the clans' presence in this country helps us understand how mafia-type organized crime takes advantage of investment opportunities in processes of urban transformation, also in this case mainly related to the tourism industry.

In the 1990s, the Nuvoletta clan began to invest in the Canaries, and in 2011 an investigation led to the confiscation of real estates, bank accounts, yachts, and a tourist resort, called “Marina Palace”, in Adeje (Tenerife). The only attempt at the mafia's infiltration in local politics in Spain was also discovered⁴³. The Nuvoletta were soon flanked by the Polverino, a clan emerging exactly from the former one, progressively carving out space of autonomy in absence of violence⁴⁴. The Polverino clan was active in drug trafficking and, again, investment in the real estate market in apartments and commercial premises near Tarragona and in various towns in Andalusia. More recently, in 2017, members of the clans Nuvoletta, Licciardi, and Contini were arrested between Italy, Spain, and Germany for drug trafficking and money laundering. Their aim being to open and close businesses and restaurants frequently changing their management. The investigation focused on two restaurants and one bar, all located in the center of Barcelona.

According to a Spanish Lieutenant Colonel who coordinates counter-action against the Italian mafia, these are only a few examples of widespread presence of the camorra clans, which can manage to take control of some service sectors- for instance, motorbike rental in Ibiza⁴⁵. The most important Italian mafia activity is the buying of real estate, mainly earmarked for tourist rent. All established Italian mafia investment in Spain is located in tourist destinations with a particular connection to the Mediterranean coast and to the islands – both Canaries and Baleares – and to the capital Madrid. The progressive touristification of cities – such as Barcelona, Valencia, Palma de Mallorca, Malaga, and Madrid – opens more and more opportunities

43 Spanish Lieutenant Colonel, interview 3, November 2018.

44 Carolina Castellano, “Narcotraffico e camorre: storie e rappresentazioni”, in *Affari di Camorra*, ed. Luciano Brancaccio and Carolina Castellano (Roma: Donzelli, 2015).

Joan Queralt, *La Gomorra catalana* (Barcelona: Angle Editorial, 2011).

45 Spanish Lieutenant Colonel, interview 3, November 2018.

for mafia investment in the “confusion” of these markets often deregulated and even with speculative dynamics.

In conclusion, in Spain (as in other countries besides Italy) investigations on money laundering or organized crime are perceived as less important compared to illegal trafficking and drug dealing, leaving space for the mafia’s expansion in the legal economy, often attracted by profitable investments in the urban environment and also in touristic areas. Indeed, the Spanish journalist Joan Queralt affirms that when someone invests money it does not matter where it comes from⁴⁶.

Unattractiveness: the mafia is affected by gentrification in non-traditional territories

In some cases, gentrification can change the urban environment in the direction of reducing context factors that make a place fragile – or even attractive – to the mafia’s infiltration and reproduction. With regards non-traditional territories where the mafia is embedded, the situation might be similar to the case of marginalization in traditional areas, where urban transformation reduces favorable conditions to the proliferation of mafia activities. Meanwhile, when considering mafia’s attempts of expansion, the category referred to unattractiveness is less verifiable compared to the others, because it concerns what lacks in terms of favorable context factors rather than what can be possibly attributed to mafia’s activities. Even so, it is useful to make some assumptions.

As far as Jason Hackworth is concerned, gentrification is “the production of urban space for progressively more affluent users”⁴⁷. Mafiosi who try to integrate into the social tissue, clash with the difficulty of adapting the services they offer or, more in general, their interests to the changing urban environment. The new influential actors of the city are usually big companies with considerable economic power that may compete with the mafia’s resources. Moreover, relationships and balances can be modified in the grey area. For instance,

46 Joan Queralt – Spanish journalist, interview 2, October 2018.

47 Jason Hackworth, “Postrecession gentrification in New York City,” *Urban Affairs Review* 37 (2002): 815.

the limitation of power in the city government – with which mafiosi often maintain good or corruptive relationships – gives way to large companies and financial powers.

Conclusion

Although it is complicated to understand the trajectory of criminal affairs, this brief analysis of the Neapolitan case shows as the displacement of the camorra's interests follows economic opportunities and changes in the social tissue. The fast-growing tourism industry is a breeding ground for historical camorra clans, and in general for “well-organized” mafia groups, as they can easily invest their capital remaining in their well-known city. Also non-traditional territories, as shown in some touristic Spanish regions, offer a similar situation, where the camorra can put to good use its money in sectors where it is typically involved, such as catering, hospitality, construction and real estate⁴⁸.

Considering the role of public institutions in the complex relationship between gentrification and organized crime, at the political level, governments should try to regulate timely fast-growing sectors in order not to let the mafia do it for them. Today, one of the most important sector to pay close attention to is certainly the tourism industry. Prompt investigations without any prejudice⁴⁹ would be useful to prosecute the mafia's expansion especially in non-traditional territories, and in the legal economy. Moving on to the social level, social antimafia can be affected by the weakening of the local social bonds involved in gentrification and also by the mafia's changing methods, which lead to a decline in violence, focusing instead on economic activities. Fast-growing economies often have a low level of regulation thus creating an attractive environment for investment where the mafia's interests can enter as a single mafioso, as a

48 Direzione Investigativa Antimafia, *Relazione del Ministro dell'Interno al Parlamento*, July-Dicember 2017, 277.

49 According to Pignatone and Prestipino (*Modelli criminali*, 79), many people who work in the antimafia counter-action share the collective imagination of a mafia embedded in the areas of historical genesis in southern Italy, which should have a large number of members, a system of strict rules, a military-like control of the territory where it is rooted and a continuous use of violence. This stereotypical image of the Italian mafia is also widespread abroad and affects negatively the recognition of mafia groups that, instead, are adapting to current transformations.

group or in partnership with other actors (probably involved in the grey area). As Martone suggested, the mafia can adapt to the neoliberal model thanks to the reticular context where it is inserted and not because of a mere acquisition of abilities⁵⁰.

Nevertheless, a direct relationship between gentrification and the growth of organized crime is still not verified. The consequences of urban transformation can vary leading to reinforce criminal organizations or to weaken them. The former case is more likely to happen for economic activities, the latter for the territorial control. The entrepreneurial activities of mafia groups – and organized crime in general – are inserted both in specific territorial dynamics and in international economic trends. Future research on the subject of economic trends and organized crime should focus on the relationship between gentrification and mafia-type organized crime in order to understand whether there are any peculiar aspects of these criminal organizations that facilitate the participation in the urban transformation towards a neoliberal environment; or whether these groups make their investment choices mainly according to the opportunity of current economic contingencies. Furthermore, social studies should also be concerned with the type of participation in the process of gentrification: how the mafia is able to adapt to the new urban configurations, how, and if, the mafia contributes to gentrification processes, and whether the mafia is negatively affected by gentrification. Further research that combines the study of urban transformation and of the mafia – always thought as part of a grey area – is essential to investigate this relationship that today is particularly interesting as both phenomena spread globally.

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50 Vittorio Martone, Lesson. University of Turin, April 2017.

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Interviews⁵¹

Interview 1, Sergi Yanes – anthropologist, Autonomous University of Barcelona.

Interview 2, Joan Queralt – Spanish journalist.

Interview 3, Spanish Lieutenant Colonel.

⁵¹ The interviews were conducted between October and November 2018 by the author.